The
Treasury of David
(In One Volume)

By

C. H. Spurgeon

(19 June 1834 — 31 January 1892)

This PDF was originally scanned for archive by: Liz-Ridolfo, in six volumes, to whom I offer my gratitude and greatest respect for the dedication of time and the effort required to produce a quality scan of one volume, much less six. I mean no offense by my efforts as they were only made possible by those of Liz-Ridolfo and are a logical extension of those efforts.

The original six-volume archive, by Liz-Ridolfo, was downloaded for personal use. Finding them without bookmarks, I decided to bookmark them to facilitate their use (something I do frequently). Then, being somewhat lazy and wanting to simplify the management of the six files, I decided to combine the volumes into one PDF. Their being superfluous, the volume cover images and blank pages were deleted and these two intro pages were added.

Of course, the original six volumes are still available for those wanting an archive of the six-volume set.

Some Psalms by Category:

Royal Psalms: 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144.
Michtam (engraved) Psalms: 16, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60.
Maschil (wisdom or instruction) Psalms: 32, 42, 44, 45, 52, 53, 54, 55, 74, 78, 88, 89, 142.
Psalms of Degrees (or ascents): Psalm 120 through Psalm 134
Confidence Psalms: 4, 11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 91, 125, 131.
Imprecatory Psalms: 5, 17, 28, 35, 40, 55, 59, 70, 71, 79, 80, 94, 129, 137, 139, 140.
Acrostic (alphabetical) Psalms: 9 & 10 (linked by acrostic), 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145[1]

---

[1] A 14th verse (nun) is missing in most translations but appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, The Companion Bible[2], Rotherham's Emphasized Bible[2] (EBR) and the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). To complete the 22 verses of the acrostic, the following text should be appended to verse 13:

"Faithful is Yahweh in all His words,
And kind in all His works." (EBR)

[2] See Footnote or comments.

Indexed by: Valiant Sons Ministry

THE

TREASURY OF DAVID:

CONTAINING

AN ORIGINAL EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS;

A COLLECTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS FROM THE WHOLE RANGE OF LITERATURE;

A SERIES OF HOMILETICAL HINTS UPON ALMOST EVERY VERSE;

AND LISTS OF WRITERS UPON EACH PSALM.

IN SIX VOLUMES

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

VOL. I.

PSALM I. TO XXVI.

33430

MARSHALL BROTHERS, LTD.

PUBLISHERS

LONDON, EDINBURGH AND NEW YORK.

C. H. SPURGEON IN HIS PULPIT.

Specially drawn for "The Treasury of David" by E. H. Fitchew.

PREFACE.

My Preface shall at least possess the virtue of brevity, as I find it difficult to impart to it any other.

The delightful study of the Psalms has yielded me boundless profit and ever-growing pleasure; common gratitude constrains me to communicate to others a portion of the benefit, with the prayer that it may induce them to search further for themselves. That I have nothing better of my own to offer upon this peerless book is to me matter of deepest regret; that I have anything whatever to present is subject for devout gratitude to the Lord of grace. I have done my best, but, conscious of many defects, I heartily wish I could have done far better.

The Exposition here given is my own. I consulted a few authors before penning it, to aid me in interpretation and arouse my thoughts; but, still I can claim originality for my comments, at least so I honestly think. Whether they are better or worse for that, I know not; at least I know I have sought heavenly guidance while writing them, and therefore I look for a blessing on the printing of them.

The collection of quotations was an after-thought. In fact, matter grew upon me which I thought too good to throw away. It seemed to me that it might prove serviceable to others, if I reserved portions of my reading upon the various Psalms; those reserves soon acquired considerable bulk, so much so that even in this volume only specimens are given and not the bulk.

One thing the reader will please clearly to understand, and I beg him to bear it in mind: *I am far from endorsing all I have quoted.* I am neither responsible for the scholarship or orthodoxy of the writers. The names are given that each author may bear his own burden; and a variety of writers have been quoted that the thoughts of many minds might be before the reader. Still I trust nothing evil has been admitted; if it be so it is an oversight.

The research expended on this volume would have occupied far too much of my time, had not my friend and amanuensis, Mr. John L. Keys, most diligently aided me in investigations at the British Museum, Dr. Williams's Library, and other treasuries of theological lore. With his help I have ransacked books by the hundred, often without finding a memorable line as a reward, but at other times with the most satisfactory result. Readers little know how great labour the finding of but one pertinent extract may involve; labour certainly I have not spared: my earnest prayer is that some measure

of good may come of it to my brethren in the ministry and to the church at large.

The Hints to Preachers are very simple, and an apology is due to my ministerial readers for inserting them, but I humbly hope they may render assistance to those for whom alone they are designed, viz., lay preachers whose time is much occupied, and whose attainments are slender.

Should this first volume meet with the approbation of the judicious, I shall hope by God's grace to continue the work as rapidly as I can consistently with the research demanded and my incessant pastoral duties. Another volume will follow in all probability in twelve months' time, if life be spared and strength be given.

It may be added, that although the comments were the work of my health, the rest of the volume is the product of my sickness. When protracted illness and weakness laid me aside from daily preaching, I resorted to my pen as an available means of doing good. I would have preached had I been able, but as my Master denied me the privilege of thus serving him, I gladly availed myself of the other method of bearing testimony for his name. O that he may give me fruit in this field also, and his shall be all the praise.

INDEX

OF AUTHORS QUOTED OR REFERRED TO.

Abbot, George (1651), 386
Abbot, Robert (1646), 288
Abenezra, 45, 266, 357
Adam, Thomas (1701—1784), 5, 15, 20, 63, 76, 121, 122, 123, 146, 157, 168, 170, 191, 265, 289, 344, 346, 421
Adams, Thomas (1614), 52
Addison, Joseph (1671—1719), 169, 236
Ainsworth, Henry (—1622), 1, 8, 15, 25, 49, 74, 102, 106, 141, 160, 192, 256, 257, 284, 358, 363, 389
Airay, Henry (1560—1616), 320
Albertus, Magnus, 321
Alexander, Joseph Addison (1856), 13, 28, 161, 192, 321
Alexander, William Lindsay (1862), 265
Alleine, Richard (1611—1681), 137, 172
Ambrose (340—397), 32, 61
Ambrose, Isaac (1592—1674), 308, 320, 386
Amyraldus (1596—1664), 132
Anderson, John (1856), 264
Andrewes, Launcelot (1555—1626), 318, 339, 343, 363, 384
Annesley, Samuel (1620—1696), 400
Anselm, John (1034—1109), 157
Aristotle (B.C. 384), 170, 276
Arnot, William (1858), 310
Arvine, K. (1859), 403, 425
Ashwood, Bartholomew (1688), 6
Askew, Anne (1546), 120, 132
Augustine (353—429), 4, 6, 25, 30, 61, 72, 77, 93, 102, 108, 115, 157, 160, 168, 170, 180, 198, 223, 277, 286, 318, 319, 322, 357, 372, 409, 423
Austin, William (1637), 207-209
Ayguan, Michael (1416), 104, 146

Bacon, Francis (1560—1626), 253
Baker, Sir Richard (1568—1645), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 362, 364
Bakius, 335
Baldwin, William Charles (1863), 226
Bale, John (1495—1563), 120
Bales, Peter (1547—1610), 221
Ball, John (1585—1640), 103, 157, 205
Barclay, John (1734—1798), 179,
Bargrave, Isaac (1623), 423, 425
Barnes, Albert (1798—1870), 26, 29, 40, 73, 231, 420
Baro, Peter (1560), 183, 185
Barth, T. C. (1865), 290, 371
Basil (326—379), 181, 258
Bate, John (1865), 279
Bates, William (1625—1699), 18, 268
Baxter, Richard (1615—1691), 60, 105
Bede (672—735), 221
Beecher, Henry Ward (1862), 232, 357
Bellarmine, Robert (1542—1621), 337, 381
Bennet, Benjamin (1728), 182
Bernard (1091—1157), 383, 408
Berridge, John (1716—1793), 404
Beza, Theodore de (1519—1605), 83, 224
Bible, Critical and Explanatory Pocket [Psalms edited by B. M. Smith.] (1867), 202
Bible, Kitto's Pictorial (1855), 77, 249, 264, 340
Bible, Religious Tract Society's Commentary upon the, 226
Bion (B.C. 280), 146
Blair, Hugh (1718—1800), 9
Bochart, Samuel (1599—1667), 265
Bogan, Zachary (1625—1659), 321, 361
Bonar, Andrew A. (1859), 38, 54, 71, 74, 126, 132, 198, 291, 303, 384, 398, 413
Bonaventure (1221—1274), 210, 347
Book of Symbols, The (1844), 146
Boothroyd, Benjamin (—1836), 102
Boston, Thomas (1676—1732), 74, 179, 181, 182, 426
Bouchier, Barton (1855), 106, 146, 174, 204, 305, 413, 420
Bowes, G. S. (1860), 287
Bownd, Nicholas (1604), 304, 306
Boys, John (1571—1625), 179, 180, 181, 210, 276, 280, 283, 286, 380, 381, 385, 389
Bradbury, Charles (1785), 186, 201, 254, 258, 310, 323, 347
Bradford, John (1510—1555), 288
Bridge, William (1600—1670), 318
Bridges, Charles (1850), 144
Brooks, Thomas (1608—1680), 39, 41, 51, 72, 104, 122, 138, 147, 148, 168, 204, 212, 287
Brown, John (1853), 249, 252, 253, 255, 259, 263, 264, 265, 266
Bruce, James (1730—1794), 252
Bunyan, John (1628—1688), 159
Burder Samuel (1812), 286, 308, 371
Burgess, Anthony (1656), 279, 292, 294, 420
Burnet, Gilbert (1643—1714-5), 50
Burroughs, Jeremiah (1599—1646), 72, 76, 222, 224, 225, 228, 231,
Bush, George (1796—), 188
Butler, Samuel (1600—1680), 427
Byfield, Nicholas (1579—1622), 206

Calmet, Augustine (1672—1757), 324
Calvin, John (1509—1564), 60, 73, 88, 108, 188, 264, 380, 384, 402, 404, 409, 411, 424
Capel, Richard (1586—1656), 108, 202 293, 337

Carlyle, Thomas, 87
Cartwright, Christopher (1602—1658), 184, 186
Caryl, Joseph (1602—1673), 6, 14, 20, 40, 50, 52, 64, 72, 89, 90, 93, 105, 106, 120, 123, 125, 136, 138, 205, 207, 223, 226, 227, 230, 251, 258, 263, 280, 283, 297, 321, 350, 367, 399, 419
Cassiodorus (470—560), 132, 139, 335
Castalio, Sebastian (1515—1563), 286
Cowdray, Robert (1609), 168, 183, 204, 224, 251, 252, 262, 280, 420, 422
Chalmers, Thomas (1780—1847), 82, 87
Chandler, Samuel (1693—1766), 255 256, 257, 258
Charnock, Stephen (1628—1680), 16, 17, 29, 87, 108, 115, 118, 119, 125, 137, 139, 196, 200, 209, 221, 223, 404
Chevallier, Temple (1827), 278
Chillingworth, William (1602—1643), 167
Chrysostom (347—407), 104, 147, 276
Cicero, 279
Clarke, Adam (1760—1832), 4, 7, 41, 84, 199, 405
Clarke, Samuel (1599—1682), 159
Clarkson, David (1621—1686), 52, 146, 166, 202, 306
Clerke, Richard (1634), 171
Cobbet, Thomas (1608—1686), 408
Cobbin, Ingram (1846), 381, 419
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772—1834), 169
Coles, Elisha (1688), 402
Colvill, William (1655), 212, 213, 231
Corbet, Richard (1632), 206
Cox, F. A. (1852), 381
Cotta, Giovanni, 169
Coverdale, Miles (1487—1568), 74
Cowper, William (1566—1619), 28, 53, 101
Cowper, William (1731—1800), 131, 265
Cragge, John (1657), 212, 281, 322
Craik, Henry (1680), 279
Cromwell, Oliver (1599—1658), 267
Cruden, Alexander (1701—1770), 187, 296
Cruso, Timothy (1657—1697), 153, 203, 206, 254, 420
Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature (Kitto's) 27, 265
Cyclopædia of Illustrations (1865), 279
Cyprian, 170, 222

Dale, Thomas (1847), 364
Daly, Robert (1861), 361
Davies, Benjamin (1866), 27
Day, Martin (1660), 367
Delany, Patrick (1686—1768), 380
Delitzsch, Franz (1868), 335
De Wette, Wilhelm (1850), 27
Dick, Thomas (1850), 81
Dickson, David (1583—1662), 37, 39, 61, 147, 234, 252, 307, 310, 322, 339, 410, 426
Diodati, John (1576—1649), 116, 118, 119 225, 264, 323, 382, 384
Dionysius (1471), 264, 307, 308, 336, 340
Dod, John (1547—1645), 173, 174
Donne, John (1573—1631), 19, 61, 62, 64, 65
Dove, Henry (1690), 260, 261
Downame, George (—1634), 180, 184, 190
Du Bartas, Guillaume de Saluste (1544—1590), 276
Duncan, Mary B. (1866), 350
Dunsterville, Edward (1642) 144
Dunwell, F. H. (1855), 61, 306
Durant, John (1620), 358
Durham, James (1622—1658), 319
Dyer, William (1696), 16, 77
Dyke, Jeremiah (—1620), 252, 408

Edwards, J. (1856), 226
Edwards, Jonathan (1703—1758), 281, 407
Eusebius, (267—338), 335
Evans, Christmas (1766—1838), 334, 387
Ewald, Henrich, 27, 71

Fawcett, John (1823), 235
Fenner, William (1600—1640), 372, 398, 399, 401, 411
Flavel, John (1627—1691), 43, 250, 254, 336
Fletcher, Giles (1588—1623), 175
Foxe, John (1517—1587), 81
Frame, James (1858), 198
Frank, Mark (1613—1664), 308, 382
Franké, Augustus Hermann (1668—1727), 309
Fra Thomé de Jesu (See Thomé)
French, W., and Skinner G. (1842), 139
Frost, John (1657), 229, 230
Fry, John (1842), 4, 101, 149
Fuller, Andrew (1754—1815), 155, 156, 348, 388
Fuller, Thomas (1608—1661), 54, 76, 86, 123, 132, 134, 136, 202, 398, 400, 402, 403

Gadsby, John (1862), 121, 281, 365, 367, 384
Gataker, Thomas (1574—1654), 154
Geddes, Alexander (1737—1802), 223, 265
Gerhohus (1093—1169), 307, 339, 344, 409
Gesenius, Friedrich H. W. (1786—1842), 27
Gilfillan, George (1852), 250
Gill, John (1697—1771), 65, 73, 185, 207, 225, 304, 307, 319, 339, 412
Gilpin, Richard (1677), 59, 119, 120
Godwyn, Thomas (1587—1643), 425
Good, John Mason (1764—1827), 25, 149, 275
Goodhart, C. J. (1848), 349
Goodwin, Thomas (1600—1679), 39, 53, 83, 84, 85, 126, 148, 173, 201, 203, 211, 233, 258, 261, 262, 287, 296, 404, 405, 410
Gotthold (See Scriver).
Gouge, Thomas (1605—1681), 72, 222
Gouge, William (1575—1653), 225, 251, 335, 341, 347
Gower, J. A. (1831). (See " Plain explanation " etc.) [Anon].
Gray, Andrew (1616), 127
Greenham, Richard (1531—1591), 198, 199, 200, 201, 205
Greenhill, William (1591—1677), 51, 52, 104, 106, 118, 171, 403
Griffith, Matthew (1634), 253
Grosse, Alexander (1632), 40
Gurnall, William (1617—1679), 17, 26, 27, 51, 52, 53, 55, 75, 94, 108, 124, 137, 138, 155, 201, 204, 206, 224, 226, 234, 338, 348, 370, 383, 410, 427
Guthrie, Thomas, 85

Haak, Theodore (1618—1657), 132
Hacket, H. B. (1852), 207
Haldane, Robert (1764—1842), 53
Hall, Joseph (1574—1656), 88, 148, 155, 387
Halle, Dr., 286
Hammond, Henry (1605—1660), 62, 102, 257, 264, 424

Hapstone, Dalman (1867), 321
Hardy, Nathanael (1618—1670), 286, 292, 363, 371, 406
Hare, Charles Julius (1841), 284
Hawker, Robert (1753—1827), 108, 148
Hengstenberg, E. W. (1845), 75, 101, 189, 335, 420
Henry, Matthew (1662—1714), 4, 15, 26, 157, 225, 308, 322, 401, 411
Heraud, J. A., 107
Herbert, George (1593—1632), 91
Herder, J. G. Von (1744—1803), 27
Hervey, James (1713—1758), 278, 365, 383
Hervey, Mrs., 370
Heywood, Oliver (1629—1702), 267
Hilary, 19
Hitchcock, Edward (1867), 278
Homer, 265
Homilies, The Book of, (1547), 365
Hood, Thomas (1789—1845), 291
Hooker, Richard (1554—1600), 116
Hooper, John (1495—1555), 369
Hopkins, Ezekiel (1633—1690), 138, 139, 229, 292
Horne, George (1730—1792), 43, 65, 94, 107, 146, 157, 318, 323, 342, 344, 411
Horsley, Samuel (1733—1806), 71, 132
Horton, Thomas (—1673), 39, 341
Howard, Theodosia A. Viscountess Powerscourt (1861), 361, 367
Howe, John (1630—1705), 107, 147, 167, 225, 226, 230, 231, 234
Hughes, George (1642), 206, 207
Hull, John (1615), 358
Humboldt, F. H. Alexander Von (1769—1859), 86
Hurrion, John (1675—1731), 309, 320
Hutcheson, George (1657), 154, 345

Illustrated Commentary, 340
Irons, Joseph (1786—1852), 144, 305
Irving, Edward (1792—1834), 116, 117

Jackson, Arthur (1593—1666), 15, 400
Jacomb, Thomas (1622—1687), 305
Jamieson, John (1789), 166
Jamieson, Robert (1843), 384
Janeway, James (1636—1674), 88, 89, 203, 257, 366, 370, 386
Jarchi (1040—), 251
Jermin, Michael (—1659), 409
Jewell, John (1522—1571), 72
Josephus, Flavius (37—93), 255
Juvenal, 171

Kay, W. (1871), 251
Keble, John (1792—1866), 144, 388
Kempis, Thomas à (1380—1471), 6
Kennicott, Benjamin (1718—1783), 294
Kimchi, David (—1240), 300, 364
King, John (1559), 29, 127, 128, 135, 227
Kitto, John (1804—1854), 76, 264, 266, 379 (See also Cyclopædia).

Lake, Arthur (—1626), 298
Lange, J. P. (1864), 345
Latimer, Hugh (1480—1555), 127, 190, 427
Lavington, Samuel (1726—1807), 199, 366
Layard, Austin H. (1853), 364
Leighton, Robert (1611—1684), 37, 49, 86, 127, 254
Littleton, Adam (1627—1694), 190, 288, 294
Lockyer, Nicholas (1612—1684-5), 259
Lorinus, John (1569—1634), 266, 383
Love, Christopher (1618—1651), 403
Lowth, Robert (1710—1787), 253
Ludolph (1350), 335, 389
Luther, Martin (1483), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 17, 18, 30, 49, 53, 102, 115, 182, 221, 307, 335, 336, 341, 345, 347, 351, 383

Macduff, J. R. (1866), 358, 363
Maclaren, Alexander (1863), 372
Maimonides, Moses (1135—1200), 187
Mant, Richard (1776—1849), 75, 230, 252, 264, 310, 321, 322
Manton, Thomas (1620—1677), 53, 73, 84, 85, 149, 224, 284, 293
Marbury, Edward (1649), 104, 125, 251, 264, 307, 422
Martin, Samuel (1860), 317, 319
Mason, William (1719—1791), 297
Massillon, Jean Baptiste (1663—1742), 371
Mather, Samuel (1626—1671), 235
Mayer, John (1653), 76, 84, 93, 102, 106, 349
M'Cartree, Mrs., 43
M'Cosh, James (1850), 270
Melvill, Henry (1798—1871), 91-93, 310
Merrick, James (1720—1769), 265
Michaelis, John Henry (1668—1738), 249
Milton, John (1608—1674), 107, 226, 256, 279, 322
Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat Baron de (1689—1755), 149
Moore, Hannah (1745—1833), 253
Morison, John (1829), 74, 120, 121, 122, 230, 254, 256, 286, 304, 322, 337, 339, 343, 345, 349, 410
Mossom, Robert (1657), 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 408, 409, 412, 413
Moulin, Peter du (1600—1684), 153
Mudge, Zachary (1744), 204
Muffet, Peter (1594), 116
Muis, Simon de (1587—1644), 404
Musculus, Wolfgang (1497—1563), 174, 279

Neale, John Mason (1860), 170, 342, 422
Needham, John (1768), 40
Ness, Christopher (1621—1705), 330
Newton, John (1725—1807), 20, 340
Nicholson, William (—1671), 139
Nouet, James (1847), 321, 386
Noyes, George R. (1846), 202

Origen, 172
Owen, John (1616—1683), 164-166, 174, 371

Page, Samuel (1646), 138
Palmer, Anthony (1678), 408
Parkhurst, John (1728—1797), 74, 203
Pascal, Blaise (1623—1662), 89, 145
Patrick, Symon (1626—1707), 104
Paulinus, 180
Paxton, George (1762—1837), 346
Payson, Edward (1783—1827), 117-118
Pendlebury, Henry (1626—1695), 386
Perkins, William (1558—1602), 185, 372
Perowne, J. J. Stewart (1864), 221, 317, 336, 339, 381, 420
Phillips, G. (1846), 398, 419
Philpot, John (—1555), 423
Pitcairn, David (1851), 14, 15, 17

Plain Explanation of the difficult Passages in the Psalms (1831) [Anon], 371
Plato, 217
Playfere, Thomas (1604), 63, 181, 223, 224, 267, 281, 338
Plumer, William S. (1867), 16, 71, 103, 105, 252, 256, 257, 264, 304, 309, 319, 358, 412, 421
Plutarch, 276
Pool, Matthew (1624—1679), 74, 183, 202, 257, 265, 307, 310, 342, 364, 365, 371, 409, 411, 413, 425
Pope, Alexander (1688—1744), 265
Porter, Ebenezer (1834), 383
Porter, J. L. (1867), 360
Posidonius, 186
Power, Philip Bennet (1862), 28, 42, 102, 368
Powerscourt, Viscountess (1861), 361, 367
Practical Illustrations of the Book of Psalms [Anon] (1826), 347
Prime, John (1588), 369

Quarles, Francis (1592—1644), 74, 105, 106, 145, 223

Ranew, Nathaniel (1672), 6
Rayment, J. (1630), 40
Religious Tract Society's Commentary (see Bible), 226
Remigius (900), 266
Reyner, Edward (1600—1670), 50
Reynolds, Edward (1599—1676), 127
Ribera, 83
Richardson, John (—1654), 19, 280
Richardson, William (1825), 400
Roberts, Joseph (1835), 225, 308, 340, 346, 371
Robinson, Ralph (1614—1655), 174, 363
Rogers, Daniel (1573—1652), 85
Rogers, Mrs. (1856), 362, 421
Rogers, Timothy (1660—1729), 54, 63, 154, 155, 156, 205, 337
Rollock, Robert (1555—1598), 199
Row, John (1677), 335, 337, 338
Russel, Robert (1705), 296
Rutherford, Samuel (1600—1661), 154, 321
Ryland, H. R. (1853), 303, 317, 338, 380

Sacy, Louis Isaac le Maistre de (1613—1684), 266
Selter, H. G. (1840), 296
Sanderson, Robert (1587—1662–3), 296
Sandys, George (1577—1643), 256
Saurin, James (1677—1730), 120
Schimmelpennick, Mary Anne (1825), 380
Scot, James (1774), 389, 426
Scott, Thomas (1747), 342
Scottish Version (1649), 256
Scriver, Christian (1629—1693), 425
Scudder, H. (1633) 41
Secker, William (1660), 41, 73, 76, 123, 181, 200, 201, 361, 372, 408,
Sedgwick, Obadiah (1600), 277, 289, 290, 291, 294, 360, 368, 371
Selden, John (1584—1654), 185
Shakespeare, William (1564—1616), 186
Sheffield, John (1654), 147
Sherlock, Thomas (1676—1761), 297
Sibbs, Richard (1577—1635), 27, 76, 105, 171, 384, 412
Sidney, Edwin (1866), 284
Simeon, Charles (1759—1836), 129, 268
Skinner, G. (see French).
Smith, B. M. (In the Critical and Explanatory Pocket Bible).
Smith, Henry (1560—1591), 14, 41, 103, 117, 124, 138, 189
Smith, James (1802—1862), 33
Smith, Miles (1624), 228, 263
Smith, Samuel (1588—), 358, 359
Socrates, 225
South, Robert (1633—1716), 106
Spencer, John (—1654), 51, 64, 94, 381
Spring, Gardiner, 149
Spurstowe, William (—1666), 232, 233
Stanley, Arthur Penrhyn (1864), 7, 255
Steele, Richard (—1692), 250
Sternhold, Thomas (—1549), 240
Sterry, Peter (1649), 266
Stevenson, John (1842), 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 350, 351, 361, 362, 366
Stock, Richard (—1626), 60, 118, 200, 287, 288, 407
Stoughton, John (—1639), 285
Stoughton, John (1860), 357
Stowell, Hugh, 366
Streat, William (1654), 281, 335
Street, Stephen (1790), 265
Strong, William (—1654), 258, 259, 260, 261, 348
Struther, William (1633), 369, 412
Stuckley, Lewis (—1687), 64, 75, 117, 172, 422, 423
Sturm, Christopher Christian (1750—1786), 86
Swinnock, George (1627—1673), 40, 50, 51, 156, 383, 421, 422, 423
Symonds, Joseph (1639), 200, 224, 338
Symson, Archibald (1638), 59, 60, 61, 62, 398

Taylor, Jeremy (1613—1667), 169, 184, 322
Tertullian, 386
Theodoret (393—457), 25
Tholuck, Augustus F. (1856), 255, 256, 279, 320
Thomé de Jesu, Fra (—1582), 340, 343
Thomson, James (1700—1748), 157, 280
Thomson, W. M. (1859), 121, 360, 362, 363, 368
Thornton, J. (1826), 364
Trapp, John (1611—1669), 4, 8, 14, 15, 53, 54, 64, 65, 87, 103, 106, 120, 144, 149, 157, 159, 166, 172, 174, 179, 186, 191, 204, 206, 263, 266, 287, 304, 306, 307, 318, 320, 338, 342, 343, 344, 357, 364, 372, 383, 384, 400, 403, 404, 405, 409, 411, 413
Tremellius, 50
Turnbull, Richard (1606), 179, 184, 185, 186, 189, 191
Turner, Joseph M. W. (1775—1851), 281
Turner, Samuel (1759—1802), 308
Turner, William (1697), 77
Tymme, Thomas (1634), 26, 103, 229, 370

Valdis, Juan de (—1540), 201
Vance, W. Ford (1827), 43
Vaughan, Henry (1621—1695), 50
Venning, Ralph (1620—1673), 203, 228, 287
Verschoyle, Hamilton (1843), 305, 310, 317
Victorinus, Hugo (1130), 409

Vieyra, Antonio de (1608—1697), 405
Vincent, Nathaniel (—1697), 293
Virgil, 145
Voltaire, F. M. A. B., 16

Walford, William (1837), 285, 427
Ward, Samuel (1577—1639), 158
Wardlaw, Ralph (1779—1853), 319
Washbourne, Thomas (1654), 90
Watson, Thomas (1660), 4, 6, 19, 27, 28, 29, 39, 41, 64, 72, 86, 103, 104, 123, 126, 127, 171, 173, 211, 212, 224, 234, 260, 286, 339, 411, 421
Watts, Isaac (1674—1748), 194
Wedderburn, Alexander (1701), 336
Weemse, John (—1636), 189
Weiss, Benjamin (1856), 235, 382
Westminster Assembly's Annotations (1651) 251
Whitchurche, E. (1547), 341
Whitfield, George (1714—1770), 419
Wilcocks, Thomas (1586), 8, 64, 128, 308
Wilcox, Daniel (1676), 227
Willan, Edward (1645), 211
Willett, Andrew (1562—1621), 172
Williams, Griffith (1636), 124, 145
Williams, Isaac (1864), 84, 310, 317, 343, 383, 384
Willison, John (1680—1750), 158
Wilson, Thomas (1653), 54, 171
Wilson, W. (1860), 83, 132, 149, 156, 265, 280, 287, 307, 308, 420
Wishart, George (—1546), 81
Wolcombe, R. (1612), 144–5
Wood, J. G. (1869), 335, 346
Wordsworth, Christopher (1868), 198, 251, 380, 399, 419, 426
Wordsworth, William (1770—1850), 279

Xenophon, 265

Young, Edward (1681—1765), 87, 91, 388

Zigabenus (1125), 257

EXPOSITIONS OF THE PSALMS.

PSALM I.

TITLE.—*This Psalm may be regarded as* THE PREFACE PSALM, *having in it a notification of the contents of the entire Book. It is the psalmist's desire to teach us the way to blessedness, and to warn us of the sure destruction of sinners. This then, is the matter of the first Psalm, which may be looked upon, in some respects, as the text upon which the whole of the Psalms make up a divine sermon.*

DIVISION.—*This Psalm consists of two parts: in the first (from verse* 1 *to the end of the* 3*rd) David sets out wherein the felicity and blessedness of a godly man consisteth, what his exercises are, and what blessings he shall receive from the Lord. In the second part (from verse* 4 *to the end) he contrasts the state and character of the ungodly, reveals the future, and describes, in telling language, his ultimate doom.*

EXPOSITION.

BLESSED *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

"*BLESSED*"—see how this Book of Psalms opens with a benediction, even as did the famous Sermon of our Lord upon the Mount! The word translated "blessed" is a very expressive one. The original word is plural, and it is a controverted matter whether it is an adjective or a substantive. Hence we may learn the multiplicity of the blessings which shall rest upon the man whom God hath justified, and the perfection and greatness of the blessedness he shall enjoy. We might read it, "Oh, the blessednesses!" and we may well regard it (as Ainsworth does) as a joyful acclamation of the gracious man's felicity. May the like benediction rest on us!

Here the gracious man is described both negatively (verse 1) and positively (verse 2). He is a man *who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.* He takes wiser counsel, and walks in the commandments of the Lord his God. To him the ways of piety are paths of peace and pleasantness. His footsteps are ordered by the Word of God, and not by the cunning and wicked devices of carnal men. It is a rich sign of inward grace when the outward walk is changed, and when ungodliness is put far from our actions. Note next, *he standeth not in the way of sinners.* His company is of a choicer sort than it was. Although a sinner himself, he is now a blood-washed sinner, quickened by the Holy Spirit, and renewed in heart. Standing by the rich grace of God in the congregation of the righteous, he dares not herd with the multitude that do evil. Again it is said, "*nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*" He finds no rest in the atheist's scoffings. Let others make a mock of sin, of eternity, of hell and heaven, and of the Eternal God; this man has learned better philosophy than that of the infidel, and has too much sense of God's presence to endure to hear his name blasphemed. The seat of the scorner may be very lofty, but it is very near to the gate of hell; let us flee from it, for it shall soon be empty, and destruction shall swallow up the man who sits therein. Mark the gradation in the first verse:

He walketh not	in the counsel	of the	ungodly,
Nor *standeth*	in the *way*	of	*sinners.*
Nor SITTETH	in the SEAT	of	SCORNFUL.

When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely *walk* in the counsel of the careless and *ungodly,* who forget God—the evil is rather practical than habitual—but after that, they become habituated to evil, and they

stand in the way of open *sinners* who wilfully violate God's commandments; and if let alone, they go one step further, and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others, and thus they *sit in the seat of the scornful.* They have taken their degree in vice, and as true Doctors of Damnation they are installed, and are looked up to by others as Masters in Belial. But the blessed man, the man to whom all the blessings of God belong, can hold no communion with such characters as these. He keeps himself pure from these lepers; he puts away evil things from him as garments spotted by the flesh; he comes out from among the wicked, and goes without the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ. O for grace to be thus separate from sinners.

And now mark his positive character. "*His delight is in the law of the Lord.*" He is not *under* the law as a curse and condemnation, but he is *in* it, and he delights to be in it as his rule of life; he delights, moreover, to *meditate* in it, to read it *by day*, and think upon it *by night.* He takes a text and carries it with him all day long; and in the night-watches, when sleep forsakes his eyelids, he museth upon the Word of God. In the *day* of his prosperity he sings *psalms* out of the Word of God, and in the *night* of his affliction he comforts himself with *promises* out of the same book. "The law of the Lord" is the daily bread of the true believer. And yet, in David's day, how small was the volume of inspiration, for they had scarcely anything save the first five books of Moses! How much more, then, should we prize the whole written Word which it is our privilege to have in all our houses! But, alas, what ill-treatment is given to this angel from heaven! We are not all Berean searchers of the Scriptures. How few among us can lay claim to the benediction of the text! Perhaps some of you can claim a sort of negative purity, because you do not walk in the way of the ungodly; but let me ask you—Is your delight in the law of God? Do you study God's Word? Do you make it the man of your right hand—your best companion and hourly guide? If not, this blessing belongeth not to you.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

"*And he shall be like a tree planted;*" not a wild tree, but "a tree *planted*," chosen, considered as property, cultivated and secured from the last terrible uprooting, for "every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up:" Matthew xv. 13. "*By the rivers of water;*" so that even if one river should fail, he hath another. The rivers of pardon and the rivers of grace, the rivers of the promise and the rivers of the communion with Christ, are never-failing sources of supply. He is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, *that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;*" not unseasonable graces, like untimely figs, which are never full-flavoured. But the man who delights in God's Word, being taught by it, bringeth forth patience in the time of suffering, faith in the day of trial, and holy joy in the hour of prosperity. Fruitfulness is an essential quality of a gracious man, and that fruitfulness should be seasonable. "*His leaf also shall not wither;*" his faintest word shall be everlasting; his little deeds of love shall be had in remembrance. Not simply shall his fruit be preserved, but *his leaf* also. He shall neither lose his beauty nor his fruitfulness. "*And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*" Blessed is the man who hath such a promise as this. But we must not always estimate the fulfilment of a promise by our own eye-sight. How often, my brethren, if we judge by feeble sense, may we come to the mournful conclusion of Jacob, "All these things are against me!" For though we know our interest in the promise, yet are we so tried and troubled, that sight sees the very reverse of what that promise foretells. But to the eye of faith this word is sure, and by it we perceive that our works are prospered, even when everything seems to go against us. It is not outward prosperity which the Christian most desires and values; it is soul prosperity which he longs for. We often, like Jehoshaphat, make ships to go to Tarshish for gold, but they are broken at Ezion-geber; but even here there is a true prospering, for it is often for the soul's health that we should be poor, bereaved, and persecuted. Our worst things are often our best things. As there is a curse wrapped up in the wicked man's mercies, so there is a blessing concealed in the righteous man's crosses, losses, and sorrows. The trials of the saint are a divine husbandry, by which he grows and brings forth abundant fruit.

4 The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

We have now come to the second head of the Psalm. In this verse the contrast of the ill estate of the wicked is employed to heighten the colouring of that fair and pleasant picture which precedes it. The more forcible translation of the Vulgate and of the Septuagint version is—"*Not so the ungodly, not so.*" And we are hereby to understand that whatever good thing is said of the righteous is not true in the case of the ungodly. Oh! how terrible is it to have a double negative put upon the promises! and yet this is just the condition of the ungodly. Mark the use of the term "*ungodly*," for, as we have seen in the opening of the Psalm, these are the beginners in evil, and are the least offensive of sinners. Oh! if such is the sad state of those who quietly continue in their morality, and neglect their God, what must be the condition of open sinners and shameless infidels? The first sentence is a negative description of the ungodly, and the second is the positive picture. Here is their *character*—"*they are like chaff*," intrinsically worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away. Here, also, mark their *doom*—"*the wind driveth away;*" death shall hurry them with its terrible blast into the fire in which they shall be utterly consumed.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

They shall stand there to be judged, but not to be acquitted. Fear shall lay hold upon them there; they shall not stand their ground; they shall flee away; they shall not stand in their own defence; for they shall blush and be covered with eternal contempt.

Well may the saints long for heaven, for no evil men shall dwell there, "*nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*" All our congregations upon earth are mixed. Every Church has one devil in it. The tares grow in the same furrows as the wheat. There is no floor which is as yet thoroughly purged from chaff. Sinners mix with saints, as dross mingles with gold. God's precious diamonds still lie in the same field with pebbles. Righteous Lots are this side heaven continually vexed by the men of Sodom. Let us rejoice then, that in "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" above, there shall by no means be admitted a single unrenewed soul. Sinners cannot live in heaven. They would be out of their element. Sooner could a fish live upon a tree than the wicked in Paradise. Heaven would be an intolerable hell to an impenitent man, even if he could be allowed to enter; but such a privilege shall never be granted to the man who perseveres in his iniquities. May God grant that we may have a name and a place in his courts above!

6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Or, as the Hebrew hath it yet more fully, "The Lord is *knowing* the way of the righteous." He is constantly looking on their way, and though it may be often in mist and darkness, yet the Lord knoweth it. If it be in the clouds and tempest of affliction, he understandeth it. He numbereth the hairs of our head; he will not suffer any evil to befall us. "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job xxiii. 10.) "*But the way of the ungodly shall perish.*" Not only shall *they* perish themselves, but *their way* shall perish too. The righteous carves his name upon the rock, but the wicked writes his remembrance in the sand. The righteous man ploughs the furrows of earth, and sows a harvest here, which shall never be fully reaped till he enters the enjoyments of eternity; but as for the wicked, he ploughs the sea, and though there may seem to be a shining trail behind his keel, yet the waves shall pass over it, and the place that knew him shall know him no more for ever. The very "way" of the ungodly shall perish. If it exist in remembrance, it shall be in the remembrance of the bad; for the Lord will cause the name of the wicked to rot, to become a stench in the nostrils of the good, and to be only known to the wicked themselves by its putridity.

May the Lord cleanse our hearts and our ways, that we may escape the doom of the ungodly, and enjoy the blessedness of the righteous!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—As the book of the Canticles is called the Song of Songs by a Hebraism, it being the most excellent, so this Psalm may not unfitly be entitled, the Psalm of Psalms, for it contains in it the very pith and quintessence of Christianity. What Jerome saith on St. Paul's epistles, the same may I say of this Psalm; it is short as to the composure, but full of length and strength as to the matter. This Psalm carries blessedness in the frontispiece; it begins where we all hope to end: it may well be called a Christian's Guide, for it discovers the quicksands where the wicked sink down in perdition, and the firm ground on which the saints tread to glory.—*Thomas Watson's Saints' Spiritual Delight*, 1660.

This whole Psalm offers itself to be drawn into these two opposite propositions: a godly man is blessed, a wicked man is miserable; which seem to stand as two challenges, made by the prophet: one, that he will maintain a godly man against all comers, to be the only Jason for winning the golden fleece of blessedness; the other, that albeit the ungodly make a show in the world of being happy, yet they of all men are most miserable.—*Sir Richard Baker*, 1640.

I have been induced to embrace the opinion of some among the ancient interpreters (Augustine, Jerome, etc.), who conceive that the first Psalm is intended to be descriptive of the character and reward of the JUST ONE, *i.e.* the Lord Jesus. —*John Fry, B.A.*, 1842.

Verse 1.—The psalmist saith more to the point about true happiness in this short Psalm than any one of the philosophers, or all of them put together; they did but beat the bush, God hath here put the bird into our hand.—*John Trapp*, 1660.

Verse 1.—Where the word *blessed* is hung out as a sign, we may be sure that we shall find a godly man within.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 1.—The seat of the drunkard is the seat of the scornful.—*Matthew Henry*, 1662—1714.

Verse 1.—"*Walketh* NOT . . . . . NOR *standeth* . . . . . NOR *sitteth*," etc. Negative precepts are in some cases more absolute and peremptory than affirmatives; for to say, "that hath walked in the counsel of the godly," might not be sufficient; for, he might walk in the counsel of the godly, and yet walk in the counsel of the ungodly too; not both indeed at once, but both at several times; where now, this negative clears him at all times.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 1.—The word אִישׁ *haish* is emphatic, *that man*; that one among a *thousand* who lives for the accomplishment of the end for which God created him.—*Adam Clarke*, 1844.

Verse 1.—"*That walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.*" Mark certain circumstances of their differing characters and conduct. I. The *ungodly man* has his *counsel.* II. The *sinner* has his *way;* and III. The *scorner* has his *seat.* The *ungodly man* is unconcerned about religion; he is neither zealous for his own salvation nor for that of others; and he *counsels* and *advises* those with whom he converses to adopt his plan, and not trouble themselves about praying, reading, repentance, etc., etc.; "there is no need for such things; live an honest life, make no fuss about religion, and you will fare well enough at last." Now, "blessed is the man who walks not in this man's counsel," who does not come into his measures, nor act according to his plan.

The *sinner* has his particular *way* of transgressing; one is a *drunkard*, another *dishonest*, another *unclean.* Few are given to every species of vice. There are many *covetous* men who abhor *drunkenness*, many *drunkards* who abhor *covetousness*; and so of others. *Each has his easily besetting sin;* therefore, says the prophet, "*Let the wicked* forsake HIS WAY." Now, *blessed is he who stands not in such a man's* WAY.

The *scorner* has brought, in reference to himself, all religion and moral feeling to an end. He has *sat down*—is utterly confirmed in impiety, and makes a mock at sin. His conscience is seared, and he is a believer in all unbelief. Now, *blessed is the man who sits not down in his* SEAT.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—In the Hebrew, the word "*blessed*" is a plural noun, *ashrey* (*blessednesses*), that is, all blessednesses are the portion of that man who has not gone away, etc.; as though it were said, "All things are well with that man who," etc. Why do you hold any dispute? Why draw vain conclusions? If a man has found that

pearl of great price, to love the law of God and to be separate from the ungodly, all blessednesses belong to that man; but, if he does not find this jewel, he will seek for all blessednesses but will never find one! For as all things are pure unto the pure, so all things are lovely unto the loving, all things good unto the good; and, universally, such as thou art thyself, such is God himself unto thee, though he is not a creature. He is perverse unto the perverse, and holy unto the holy. Hence nothing can be good or saving unto him who is evil; nothing sweet unto him unto whom the law of God is not sweet. The word "*counsel*" is without doubt here to be received as signifying decrees and doctrines, seeing that no society of men exists without being formed and preserved by decrees and laws. David, however, by this term strikes at the pride and reprobate temerity of the ungodly. First, because they will not humble themselves so far as to walk in the law of the Lord, but rule themselves by their own counsel. And then he calls it their "counsel," because it is their prudence, and the way that seems to them to be without error. For this is the destruction of the ungodly—their being prudent in their own eyes and in their own esteem, and clothing their errors in the garb of prudence and of the right way. For if they came to men in the open garb of error, it would not be so distinguishing a mark of blessedness not to walk with them. But David does not here say, "in the folly of the ungodly," or "in the error of the ungodly;" and therefore he admonishes us to guard with all diligence against the appearance of what is right, that the devil transformed into an angel of light do not seduce us by his craftiness. And he contrasts the counsel of the wicked with the law of the Lord, that we may learn to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing, who are always ready to give counsel to all, to teach all, and to offer assistance unto all, when they are of all men the least qualified to do so. The term "*stood*" descriptively represents their obstinacy, and stiff-neckedness, wherein they harden themselves and make their excuses in words of malice, having become incorrigible in their ungodliness. For "to stand," in the figurative manner of Scripture expression, signifies to be firm and fixed: as in Rom, xiv. 4, "To his own master he standeth or falleth: yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." Hence the word "column" is by the Hebrew derived from their verb "to stand," as is the word statue among the Latins. For this is the very self-excuse and self-hardening of the ungodly—their appearing to themselves to live rightly, and to shine in the eternal show of works above all others. With respect to the term "*seat*," to sit in the seat, is to teach, to act the instructor and teacher; as in Matt. xxiii. 2, "The scribes sit in Moses' chair." *They* sit in the seat of pestilence, who fill the church with the opinions of philosophers, with the traditions of men, and with the counsels of their own brain, and oppress miserable consciences, setting aside, all the while, the word of God, by which alone the soul is fed, lives, and is preserved.—*Martin Luther*, 1536—1546.

Verse 1.—"*The scornful.*" *Peccator cum in profundum venerit contemnet*—when a wicked man comes to the depth and worst of sin, he despiseth. Then the Hebrew will despise Moses (Exodus ii. 14), "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" Then Ahab will quarrel with Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 18), because he doth not prophesy good unto him. Every child in Bethel will mock Elisha (2 Kings ii. 23), and be bold to call him "bald pate." Here is an original drop of venom swollen to a main ocean of poison: as one drop of some serpents' poison, lighting on the hand, gets into the veins, and so spreads itself over all the body till it hath stifled the vital spirits. God shall "laugh you to scorn," (Psalm ii. 4), for laughing him to scorn; and at last despise you that have despised him in us. That which a man spits against heaven, shall fall back on his own face. Your indignities done to your spiritual physicians shall sleep in the dust with your ashes, but stand up against your souls in judgment.—*Thomas Adams*, 1614.

Verse 2.—"*But his will is in the law of the Lord.*" The "will," which is here signified, is that delight of heart, and that certain pleasure, in the law, which does not look at what the law promises, nor at what it threatens, but at this only; that "the law is holy, and just, and good." Hence it is not only a love of the law, but that loving delight in the law which no prosperity, nor adversity, nor the world, nor the prince of it, can either take away or destroy; for it victoriously bursts its way through poverty, evil report, the cross, death, and hell, and in the midst of adversities, shines the brightest.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—"*His delight is in the law of the Lord.*"—This *delight* which the prophet

here speaks of is the only delight that neither blushes nor looks pale ; the only delight that gives a repast without an after reckoning ; the only delight that stands in construction with all tenses ; and like Æneas Anchyses, carries his parents upon his back.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—" *In his law doth he meditate.*" In the plainest text there is a world of holiness and spirituality ; and if we in prayer and dependence upon God did sit down and study it, we should behold much more than appears to us. It may be, at once reading or looking, we see little or nothing ; as Elijah's servant went once, and saw nothing ; therefore he was commanded to look seven times. What now ? says the prophet, " I see a cloud rising, like a man's hand ; " and by-and-by, the whole surface of the heavens was covered with clouds. So you may look lightly upon a Scripture and see nothing ; *meditate often upon it,* and there you shall see a light, like the light of the sun."—*Joseph Caryl,* 1647.

Verse 2.—" *In his law doth he meditate day and night.*"—The good man doth *meditate on the law of God day and night.* The pontificians beat off the common people from this common treasury, by objecting this supposed difficulty. Oh, the Scriptures are hard to be understood, do not you trouble your heads about them ; we will tell you the meaning of them. They might as well say, heaven is a blessed place, but it is a hard way to it ; do not trouble yourselves, we will go thither for you. Thus in the great day of trial, when they should be saved by their book, alas ! they have no book to save them. Instead of the Scriptures they can present images; these are the laymen's books; as if they were to be tried by a jury of carvers and painters, and not by the twelve apostles. Be not you so cheated ; but study the gospel as you look for comfort by the gospel. He that hopes for the inheritance, will make much of the conveyance.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 2.—To " *meditate,*" as it is generally understood, signifies to discuss, to dispute ; and its meaning is always confined to a being employed in words, as in Psalm xxxii. 30, " The mouth of the righteous shall meditate wisdom." Hence Augustine has, in his translation, " chatter " ; and a beautiful metaphor it is—as chattering is the employment of birds, so a continual conversing in the law of the Lord (for talking is peculiar to man), ought to be the employment of man. But I cannot worthily and fully set forth the gracious meaning and force of this word ; for this " meditating " consists first in an intent observing of the words of the law, and then in a comparing of the different Scriptures ; which is a certain delightful hunting, nay, rather a playing with stags in a forest, where the Lord furnishes us with the stags, and opens to us their secret coverts. And from this kind of employment, there comes forth at length a man well instructed in the law of the Lord to speak unto the people.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—" *In his law doth he meditate day and night.*" The godly man will read the Word by *day,* that men, seeing his good works, may glorify his Father who is in heaven ; he will do it in the *night,* that he may not be seen of men : by *day,* to show that he is not one of those who dread the light ; by *night,* to show that he is one who can shine in the shade : by *day,* for that is the time for working—work whilst it is day ; by *night,* lest his Master should come as a thief, and find him idle. —*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—I have no rest, but in a nook, with *the book.—Thomas à Kempis,* 1380—1471.

Verse 2.—" *Meditate.*" Meditation doth discriminate and characterise a man ; by this he may take a measure of his heart, whether it be good or bad ; let me allude to that ; " For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Prov. xxiii. 7. As the meditation is, such is the man. Meditation is the touchstone of a Christian ; it shows what metal he is made of. It is a spiritual index ; the index shows what is in the book, so meditation shows what is in the heart.—*Thomas Watson's Saints' Spiritual Delight.*

Meditation chews the cud, and gets the sweetness and nutritive virtue of the Word into the heart and life : this is the way the godly bring forth much fruit. —*Bartholomew Ashwood's Heavenly Trade,* 1688.

The naturalists observe that to uphold and accommodate bodily life, there are divers sorts of faculties communicated, and these among the rest : 1. An attractive faculty, to assume and draw in the food ; 2. A retentive faculty, to retain it when taken in ; 3. An assimilating faculty, to concoct the nourishment ; 4. An augmenting faculty, for drawing to perfection. Meditation is all these. It helps judgment, wisdom, and faith to ponder, discern, and credit the things which reading

and hearing supply and furnish. It assists the memory to lock up the jewels of divine truth in her sure treasury. It has a digesting power, and turns special truth into spiritual nourishment; and lastly, it helps the renewed heart to grow upward and increase its power to know the things which are freely given to us of God.—*Condensed from Nathaniel Ranew*, 1670.

Verse 3.—"*A tree.*"—There is one tree, only to be found in the valley of the Jordan, but too beautiful to be entirely passed over; the oleander, with its bright blossoms and dark green leaves, giving the aspect of a rich garden to any spot where it grows. It is rarely if ever alluded to in the Scriptures. But it may be the tree planted by the streams of water which bringeth forth his fruit in due season, and "whose leaf shall not wither."—*A. P. Stanley, D.D., in "Sinai and Palestine."*

Verse 3.—"*A tree planted by the rivers of water.*"—This is an allusion to the Eastern method of cultivation, by which rivulets of water are made to flow between the rows of trees, and thus, by artificial means, the trees receive a constant supply of moisture.

Verse 3.—"*His fruit in his season.*"—In such a case expectation is never disappointed. Fruit is expected, fruit is borne, and it comes also in the time in which it should come. A godly education, under the influences of the divine Spirit, which can never be withheld where they are earnestly sought, is sure to produce the fruits of righteousness; and he who reads, prays, and meditates, will ever *see* the *work* which God has given him to do; the *power* by which he is to perform it; and the *times*, *places*, and *opportunities* for doing those things by which God can obtain most glory, his own soul most good, and his neighbour most edification.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—"*In his season.*" The Lord reckons the times which pass over us, and puts them to our account: let us, therefore, improve them, and, with the impotent persons at the pool of Bethesda, step in when the angel stirs the water. Now the church is afflicted, it is a season of prayer and learning; now the church is enlarged, it is a season of praise; I am now at a sermon, I will hear what God will say; now in the company of a learned and wise man, I will draw some knowledge and counsel from him; I am under a temptation, now is a fit time to lean on the name of the Lord; I am in a place of dignity and power, let me consider what it is that God requireth of me in such a time as this. And thus as the tree of life bringeth fruit every month, so a wise Christian, as a wise husbandman, hath his distinct employments for every month, bringing forth his fruit in his season.—*John Spencer's Things New and Old*, 1658.

Verse 3.—"*In his season.*" Oh, golden and admirable word! by which is asserted the liberty of Christian righteousness. The ungodly have their stated days, stated times, certain works, and certain places; to which they stick so closely, that if their neighbours were perishing with hunger, they could not be torn from them. But this blessed man, being free at all times, in all places, for every work, and to every person, will serve you whenever an opportunity is offered him; whatsoever comes into his hands to do, he does it. He is neither a Jew, nor a Gentile, nor a Greek, nor a barbarian, nor of any other particular person. He gives his fruit in his season, so often as either God or man requires his work. Therefore his fruits have no name, and his times have no name.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3.—"*His leaf also shall not wither.*" He describes the fruit before he does the leaf. The Holy Spirit himself always teaches every faithful preacher in the church to know that the kingdom of God does not stand in word but in power. 1 Cor. iv. 20. Again, "Jesus began both to do and to teach." Acts i. 1. And again, "Which was a prophet mighty in deed and word." Luke xxiv. 19. And thus, let him who professes the word of doctrine, first put forth the fruits of life, if he would not have his fruit to wither, for Christ cursed the fig tree which bore no fruit. And as Gregory saith, that man whose life is despised is condemned by his doctrine, for he preaches to others, and is himself reprobated.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3.—"*His leaf also shall not wither.*" The Lord's trees are all evergreens. No winter's cold can destroy their verdure; and yet, unlike evergreens in our country, they are all fruit bearers.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 3.—"*And whatsoever he doeth,* [or, *maketh or taketh in hand*] *shall prosper.*" And with regard to this "prospering," take heed that thou understandest not a carnal prosperity. This prosperity is hidden prosperity, and lies entirely secret in spirit; and therefore if thou hast not this prosperity that is by faith, thou shouldst rather judge thy prosperity to be the greatest adversity. For as the devil bitterly

hates this leaf and the word of God, so does he also those who teach and hear it, and he persecutes such, aided by all the powers of the world. Therefore thou hearest of a miracle the greatest of all miracles, when thou hearest that all things prosper which a blessed man doeth.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3.—A critical journal has shown that instead of "*Whatsoever it doeth shall prosper,*" the rendering might be, "*Whatsoever it produceth shall come to maturity.*" This makes the figure entire, and is sanctioned by some MSS. and ancient versions.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—Outward prosperity, if it follow close walking with God, is very sweet; as the cipher, when it follows a figure, adds to the number, though it be nothing in itself.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Chaff.*" Here by the way, we may let the wicked know they have a thanks to give they little think of; that they may thank the godly for all the good days they live upon the earth, seeing it is for their sakes and not for their own that they enjoy them. For as the chaff while it is united and keeps close to the wheat, enjoys some privileges for the wheat's sake, and is laid up carefully in the barn; but as soon as it is divided, and parted from the wheat, it is cast out and scattered by the wind; so the wicked, whilst the godly are in company and live amongst them, partake for their sake of some blessedness promised to the godly; but if the godly forsake them or be taken from them, then either a deluge of water comes suddenly upon them, as it did upon the old world when Noah left it; or a deluge of fire, as it did upon Sodom, when Lot left it, and went out of the city.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—"*Driveth away,*" or tosseth away; the Chaldee translateth for "wind," "whirlwind."—*Henry Ainsworth,* 1639.

This shows the vehement tempest of death, which sweeps away the soul of the ungodly.

Verse 5.—"*Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,*" etc. And may not a reason also be conceived thus, why the ungodly can never come to be of the congregation of the righteous: the righteous go a way that God knows, and the wicked go a way that God destroys; and seeing that these ways can never meet, how should the men meet that go these ways? And to make sure work that they shall never meet indeed, the prophet expresseth the way of the righteous by the first link of the chain of God's goodness, which is his *knowledge;* but expresseth the way of the wicked by the last link of God's justice, which is his *destroying;* and though God's justice and his mercy do often meet, and are contiguous one to another, yet the first link of his mercy and the last link of his justice can never meet, for it never comes to destroying till God be heard to say *Nescio vos,* "*I know you not,*" and *nescio vos* in God, and God's knowledge, can certainly never possibly meet together.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—The Irish air will sooner brook a toad, or a snake, than heaven a sinner.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*" Behold how David here terrifies us away from all prosperous appearances, and commends to us various temptations and adversities. For this "way" of the righteous all men utterly reprobate; thinking also, that God knoweth nothing about any such way. But this is the wisdom of the cross. Therefore, it is God alone that knoweth the way of the righteous, so hidden is to it the righteous themselves. For his right hand leads them on in a wonderful manner, seeing that it is a way, not of sense, nor of reason, but of faith only; even of that faith that sees in darkness, and beholds things that are invisible.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 6.—"*The righteous.*" They that endeavour righteous living in themselves and have Christ's righteousness imputed to them.—*Thomas Wilcocks,* 1586.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—May furnish an excellent text upon "Progress in Sin," of "The Purity of the Christian," or "The Blessedness of the Righteous." Upon the last subject speak of the believer as BLESSED—1. By God; 2. In Christ; 3. With all blessings; 4. In all circumstances; 5. Through time and eternity; 6. To the highest degree.

Verse 1.—Teaches a godly man to beware, (1) of the opinions, (2) of the practical life, and (3) of the company and association of sinful men. Show how meditation upon the Word will assist us in keeping aloof from these three evils.

The insinuating and progressive nature of sin.—*J. Morison.*

Verse 1, *in connection with the whole Psalm.* The wide difference between the righteous and the wicked.

Verse 2.—THE WORD OF GOD. 1. The believer's delight in it. 2. The believer's acquaintance with it. We long to be in the company of those we love.

Verse 2.—I. What is meant by "the law of the Lord." II. What there is in it for the believer to delight in. III. How he shows his delight, thinks of it, reads much, speaks of it, obeys it, does not delight in evil.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The benefits, helps, and hindrances of meditation.

Verse 3.—"*The fruitful tree.*" I. Where it grows. II. How it came there. III. What it yields. IV. How to be like it.

Verse 3.—"*Planted by the rivers of water.*" I. The origination of Christian life, "*planted.*" II. The streams which support it. III. The fruit expected from it.

Verse 3.—Influence of religion upon prosperity.—*Blair.*

The nature, causes, signs, and results of true prosperity.

"*Fruit in his season;*" virtues to be exhibited at certain seasons—patience in affliction; gratitude in prosperity; zeal in opportunity, etc.

"*His leaf also shall not wither;*" the blessing of retaining an unwithered profession.

Verses 3, 4.—See No. 280 of "Spurgeon's Sermons."—"The Chaff Driven Away."

Sin puts a negative on every blessing.

Verse 5.—The sinner's double doom. 1. Condemned at the judgment-bar. 2. Separated from the saints. Reasonableness of these penalties, "therefore," and the way to escape them.

"*The congregation of the righteous*" viewed as the church of the first-born above. This may furnish a noble topic.

Verse 6 (*first sentence*).—A sweet encouragement to the tried people of God. The knowledge here meant. 1. *Its character.*—It is a knowledge of observation and approbation. 2. *Its source.*—It is caused by omniscience and infinite love. 3. *Its results.*—Support, deliverance, acceptance, and glory at last.

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—His way of pleasure, of pride, of unbelief, of profanity, of persecution, of procrastinating, of self-deception, etc.; all these shall come to an end.

PSALM II.

TITLE.—*We shall not greatly err in our summary of this sublime Psalm if we call it* THE PSALM OF MESSIAH THE PRINCE; *for it sets forth as in a wondrous vision the tumult of the people against the Lord's anointed, the determinate purpose of God to exalt his own Son, and the ultimate reign of that Son over all his enemies. Let us read it with the eye of faith, beholding, as in a glass, the final triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ over all his enemies. Lowth has the following remarks upon this Psalm: "The establishment of David upon his throne, notwithstanding the opposition made to it by his enemies, is the subject of the Psalm. David sustains in it a twofold character, literal and allegorical. If we read over the Psalm, first with an eye to the literal David, the meaning is obvious, and put beyond all dispute by the sacred history. There is indeed an uncommon glow in the expression and sublimity in the figures, and the diction is now and then exaggerated, as it were on purpose to intimate, and lead us to the contemplation of higher and more important matters concealed within. In compliance with this admonition, if we take another survey of the Psalm as relative to the person and concerns of the spiritual David, a noble series of events immediately rises to view, and the meaning becomes more evident, as well as more exalted. The colouring which may perhaps seem too bold and glaring for the king of Israel, will no longer appear so when laid upon his great Antitype. After we have thus attentively considered the subjects apart, let us look at them together, and we shall behold the full beauty and majesty of this most charming poem. We shall perceive the two senses very distinct from each other, yet conspiring in perfect harmony, and bearing a wonderful resemblance in every feature and lineament, while the analogy between them is so exactly preserved, that either may pass for the original from whence the other was copied. New light is continually cast upon the phraseology, fresh weight and dignity are added to the sentiments, till, gradually ascending from things below to things above, from human affairs to those that are Divine, they bear the great important theme upwards with them, and at length place it in the height and brightness of heaven."*

DIVISION.—*This Psalm will be best understood if it be viewed as a four-fold picture. (In verses* 1, 2, 3) *the Nations are raging;* (4 *to* 6) *the Lord in heaven derides them;* (7 *to* 9) *the Son proclaims the decree; and* (*from* 10 *to end*) *advice is given to the kings to yield obedience to the Lord's anointed. This division is not only suggested by the sense, but is warranted by the poetic form of the Psalm, which naturally falls into four stanzas of three verses each.*

EXPOSITION.

WHY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying,*
3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

We have, in these first three verses, a description of the hatred of human nature against the Christ of God. No better comment is needed upon it than the apostolic song in Acts iv. 27, 28: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." The Psalm begins abruptly with an angry interrogation; and well it may: it is surely but little to be wondered at, that the sight of creatures in arms against their God should amaze the psalmist's mind. We see the *heathen raging,* roaring like the sea, tossed to and fro with restless waves, as the ocean in a storm; and then we mark the people in their hearts *imagining a vain thing* against God. Where there is much rage there is generally some folly, and in this case there is an excess of it. Note, that the commotion is not caused by the people only, but their leaders foment the rebellion. "*The kings of the earth set themselves.*" In determined malice they arrayed themselves in opposition against God. It was not temporary rage, but deep-seated hate, for they *set themselves* resolutely to withstand the Prince of Peace. "*And the rulers take counsel*

together." They go about their warfare craftily, not with foolish haste, but deliberately. They use all the skill which art can give. Like Pharaoh, they cry, " Let us deal wisely with them." O that men were half as careful in God's service to serve him wisely, as his enemies are to attack his kingdom craftily. Sinners have their wits about them, and yet saints are dull. But what say they ? what is the meaning of this commotion ? " *Let us break their bands asunder.*" " Let us be free to commit all manner of abominations. Let us be our own gods. Let us rid ourselves of all restraint." Gathering impudence by the traitorous proposition of rebellion, they add—" *let us cast away ;* " as if it were an easy matter,—" let us fling off ' *their cords from us.*' " What ! O ye kings, do ye think yourselves Samsons ? and are the bands of Omnipotence but as green withs before you ? Do you dream that you shall snap to pieces and destroy the mandates of God—the decrees of the Most High—as if they were but tow ? And do ye say, " Let us cast away their cords from us ? " Yes ! There are monarchs who have spoken thus, and there are still rebels upon thrones. However mad the resolution to revolt from God, it is one in which man has persevered ever since his creation, and he continues in it to this very day. The glorious reign of Jesus in the latter day will not be consummated, until a terrible struggle has convulsed the nations. His coming will be as a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, and the day thereof shall burn as an oven. Earth loves not her rightful monarch, but clings to the usurper's sway : the terrible conflicts of the last days will illustrate both the world's love of sin and Jehovah's power to give the kingdom to his only Begotten. To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light. We may judge ourselves by this, do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us ?

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall have them in derision.

Let us now turn our eyes from the wicked council-chamber and raging tumult of man, to the secret place of the majesty of the Most High. What doth God say ? What will the King do unto the men who reject his only-begotten Son, the Heir of all things ?

Mark the quiet dignity of the Omnipotent One, and the contempt which he pours upon the princes and their raging people. He has not taken the trouble to rise up and do battle with them—he despises them, he knows how absurd, how irrational, how futile are their attempts against him—he therefore *laughs* at them.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

After he has laughed he shall *speak ;* he needs not smite ; the breath of his lips is enough. At the moment when their power is at its height, and their fury most violent, *then* shall his Word go forth against them. And what is it that he says ?—it is a very galling sentence—" *Yet,*" says he, " despite your malice, despite your tumultuous gatherings, despite the wisdom of your counsels, despite the craft of your lawgivers, ' *yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*' " Is not that a grand exclamation ! He has already done that which the enemy seeks to prevent. While they are proposing, he has disposed the matter. Jehovah's will is done, and man's will frets and raves in vain. God's Anointed is appointed, and shall not be disappointed. Look back through all the ages of infidelity, hearken to the high and hard things which men have spoken against the Most High, listen to the rolling thunder of earth's volleys against the Majesty of heaven, and then think that God is saying all the while, " Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Yet Jesus reigns, yet he sees of the travail of his soul, and " his unsuffering kingdom yet shall come " when he shall take unto himself his great power, and reign from the river unto the ends of the earth. Even now he reigns in Zion, and our glad lips sound forth the praises of the Prince of Peace. Greater conflicts may here be foretold, but we may be confident that victory will be given to our Lord and King. Glorious triumphs are yet to come ; hasten them, we pray thee, O Lord ! It is Zion's glory and joy that her King is in her, guarding her from foes, and filling her with good things. Jesus sits upon the throne of grace, and the

throne of power in the midst of his church. In him is Zion's best safeguard; let her citizens be glad in him.

"Thy walls are strength, and at thy gates
A guard of heavenly warriors waits;
Nor shall thy deep foundations move,
Fixed on his counsels and his love.

Thy foes in vain designs engage;
Against his throne in vain they rage,
Like rising waves, with angry roar,
That dash and die upon the shore."

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my son; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

This Psalm wears something of a dramatic form, for now another person is introduced as speaking. We have looked into the counsel-chamber of the wicked, and to the throne of God, and now we behold the Anointed declaring his rights of sovereignty, and warning the traitors of their doom.

God has laughed at the counsel and ravings of the wicked, and now Christ the Anointed himself comes forward, as the Risen Redeemer, "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. i. 4. Looking into the angry faces of the rebellious kings, the Anointed One seems to say, "If this sufficeth not to make you silent, '*I will declare the decree.*'" Now this decree is directly in conflict with the device of man, for its tenour is the establishment of the very dominion against which the nations are raving. "*Thou art my Son.*" Here is a noble proof of the glorious Divinity of our Immanuel. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" What a mercy to have a Divine Redeemer in whom to rest our confidence! "*This day have I begotten thee.*" If this refers to the Godhead of our Lord, let us not attempt to fathom it, for it is a great truth, a truth reverently to be received, but not irreverently to be scanned. It may be added, that if this relates to the Begotten One in his human nature, we must here also rejoice in the mystery, but not attempt to violate its sanctity by intrusive prying into the secrets of the Eternal God. The things which are revealed are enough, without venturing into vain speculations. In attempting to define the Trinity, or unveil the essence of Divinity, many men have lost themselves: here great ships have foundered. What have we to do in such a sea with our frail skiffs?

"*Ask of me.*" It was a custom among great kings to give to favoured ones whatever they might ask. (See Esther v. 6; Matt. xiv. 7.) So Jesus hath but to ask and have. Here he declares that his very enemies are his inheritance. To their face he declares this decree, and "Lo! here," cries the Anointed One, as he holds aloft in that once pierced hand the sceptre of his power, "He hath given me this, not only the right to be a king, but the power to conquer." Yes! Jehovah hath given to his Anointed a rod of iron with which he shall break rebellious nations in pieces, and, despite their imperial strength, they shall be but as potters' vessels, easily dashed into shivers, when the rod of iron is in the hand of the omnipotent Son of God. Those who will not bend must break. Potters' vessels are not to be restored if dashed in pieces, and the ruin of sinners will be hopeless if Jesus shall smite them.

"Ye sinners seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there."

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

The scene again changes, and counsel is given to those who have taken counsel to rebel. They are exhorted to obey, and give the kiss of homage and affection to him whom they have hated.

" Be wise."—It is always wise to be willing to be instructed, especially when such instruction tends to the salvation of the soul. " Be wise *now, therefore ;* " delay no longer, but let good reason weigh with you. Your warfare cannot succeed, therefore desist and yield cheerfully to him who will make you bow if you refuse his yoke. O how wise, how infinitely wise is obedience to Jesus, and how dreadful is the folly of those who continue to be his enemies ! *" Serve the Lord with fear ;* " let reverence and humility be mingled with your service. He is a great God, and ye are but puny creatures ; bend ye, therefore, in lowly worship, and let a filial fear mingle with all your obedience to the great Father of the Ages. *" Rejoice with trembling."*—There must ever be a holy fear mixed with the Christian's joy. This is a sacred compound, yielding a sweet smell, and we must see to it that we burn no other upon the altar. Fear, without joy, is torment ; and joy, without holy fear, would be presumption. Mark the solemn argument for reconciliation and obedience. It is an awful thing to *perish* in the midst of sin, in the very *way* of rebellion ; and yet how easily could *his wrath* destroy us suddenly. It needs not that his anger should be heated seven times hotter ; let the fuel kindle *but a little*, and we are consumed. O sinner ! Take heed of the terrors of the Lord ; for " our God is a consuming fire." Note the benediction with which the Psalm closes :—*" Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."* Have we a share in this blessedness ? Do we trust in *him ?* Our faith my be slender as a spider's thread ; but if it be real, we are in our measure blessed. The more we trust, the more fully shall we know this blessedness. We may therefore close the Psalm with the prayer of the apostles :— " Lord, increase our faith."

The first Psalm was a contrast between the righteous man and the sinner; the second Psalm is a contrast between the tumultuous disobedience of the ungodly world and the sure exaltation of the righteous Son of God. In the first Psalm, we saw the wicked driven away like chaff ; in the second Psalm, we see them broken in pieces like a potter's vessel. In the first Psalm, we beheld the righteous like a tree planted by the rivers of water ; and here, we contemplate Christ, the Covenant Head of the righteous, made better than a tree planted by the rivers of water, for *he* is made king of all the islands, and all the heathen bow before him and kiss the dust ; while he himself gives a blessing to all those who put their trust in him. The two Psalms are worthy of the very deepest attention ; they are, in fact, the preface in the entire Book of Psalms, and were by some of the ancients, joined into one. They are, however, two Psalms ; for Paul speaks of this as the second Psalm. (Acts xiii. 33.) The first shows us the character and lot of the righteous ; and the next teaches us that the Psalms are Messianic, and speak of Christ the Messiah—the Prince who shall reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. That they have both a far-reaching prophetic outlook we are well assured, but we do not feel competent to open up that matter, and must leave it to abler hands.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—*" Why do nations make a noise,"* tumultuate or rage ? The Hebrew verb is not expressive of an internal feeling, but of the ourward agitation which denotes it. There may be an allusion to the rolling and roaring of the sea, often used as an emblem of popular commotion, both in the Scriptures and the classics. The past tense of this verb (*why have they raged ?*) refers to the commotion as already begun, while the future in the next clause expresses its continuance.—*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*, 1850.

Verse 1.—*" Rage."* The word with which Paul renders this in the Greek denotes rage, pride, and restiveness, as of horses that neigh, and rush into the battle.

Ἐφρύαξαν, from Φρυάσσω, to snort or neigh, properly applied to a high-mettled horse. See Acts iv. 25.

Verse 1.—"*A vain thing.*" A medal was struck by Diocletian, which still remains bearing the inscription, "The name of Christians being extinguished." And in Spain, two monumental pillars were raised, on which were written :— I. "Diocletian Jovian Maximian Herculeus Cæsares Augusti, for having extended the Roman Empire in the east and the west, and for having extinguished the name of Christians, who brought the Republic to ruin." II. "Diocletian Jovian Maximian Herculeus Cæsares Augusti, for having adopted Galerius in the east, for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ, for having extended the worship of the gods." As a modern writer has elegantly observed: "We have here a monument raised by Paganism, over the grave of its vanquished foe. But in this, 'the people imagined a vain thing;' so far from being deceased, Christianity was on the eve of its final and permanent triumph, and the stone guarded a sepulchre empty as the urn which Electra washed with her tears. Neither in Spain, nor elsewhere, can be pointed out the burial place of Christianity; it is not, for the living have no tomb."

Verses 1—4.—Herod, the fox, plotted against Christ, to hinder the course of his ministry and mediatorship, but he could not perform his enterprise; 'tis so all along, therefore it is said, "*Why do the heathen imagine a vain thing?*" A vain thing, because a thing successless, their hands could not perform it. It was vain, not only because there was no true ground of reason why they should imagine or do such a thing, but vain also because they laboured in vain, they could not do it, and therefore it follows, "*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*" The Lord see what fools they are, and men (yea, themselves) shall see it. The prophet gives us an elegant description to this purpose. Isaiah lix. 5, 6. "*They weave the spider's web . . . . . Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works.*" As if he had said, they have been devising and setting things in a goodly frame to catch flies; they have been spinning a fine thread out of their brains, as the spider doth out of her bowels; such is their web, but when they have their web they cannot cut it out, or make it up into a garment. They shall go naked and cold, notwithstanding all their spinning and weaving, all their plotting and devising. The next broom that comes will sweep away all their webs and the spiders too, except they creep apace. God loves and delights to cross worldly proverbs and worldly craft.—*Joseph Caryl*, 1647.

Verse 2.—The *many* had done their part, and now the *mighty* show themselves. —*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*They banded themselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed.*" But why did they band themselves against the Lord, or against his Anointed? What was their desire of him? To have his goods? No, he had none for himself; but they were richer than he. To have his liberty? Nay, that would not suffice them, for they had bound him before. To bring the people into dislike of him? Nay, that would not serve them, for they had done so already, until even his disciples were fled from him. What would they have then? his blood? Yea, "they took counsel," saith Matthew, "to put him to death." They had the devil's mind, which is not satisfied but with death. And how do they contrive it? He saith, "they took counsel about it."—*Henry Smith*, 1578.

Verse 2.—"*Against Jehovah and against his Anointed.*" What an honour it was to David to be thus publicly associated with Jehovah! And, because he was HIS anointed, to be an object of hatred and scorn to the ungodly world! If this very circumstance fearfully augmented the guilt, and sealed the doom of these infatuated heathen, surely it was that which above everything else would preserve the mind of David calm and serene, yea, peaceful and joyful notwithstanding the proud and boastful vauntiness of his enemies . . . . . When writing this Psalm David was like a man in a storm, who hears only the roaring of the tempest, or sees nothing but the raging billows threatening destruction on every side of him. And yet his faith enabled him to say, "*The people imagine a vain thing.*" They cannot succeed. They canot defeat the counsels of heaven. They cannot injure the Lord's Anointed.—*David Pitcairn*, 1851.

Verse 3.—Resolved they were to run riot as lawless, and aweless, and therefore they slander the sweet laws of Christ's kingdom as bonds and thick cords, which are signs of slavery. Jer. xxvii. 2, 6, 7. But what saith our Saviour? "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." It is no more burden to a regenerate man than

wings to a bird. The law of Christ is no more as bands and cords, but as girdles and garters which gird up his loins and expedite his course.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*He that sitteth in the heavens.*" Hereby it is clearly intimated, (1) that the Lord is far above all their malice and power, (2) that he seeth all their plots, looking down on all; (3) that he is of omnipotent power, and so can do with his enemies as he lists. "Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he pleased." Psalm cxv. 3.—*Arthur Jackson*, 1643.

Verse 4.—"*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh,*" etc. Sinners' follies are the just sport of God's infinite wisdom and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of Satan, which in our eyes are formidable, in his are despicable.—*Mathew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.*" They scoff at us, God laughs at them. Laugh? This seems a hard word at the first view: are the injuries of his saints, the cruelties of their enemies, the derision, the persecution of all that are round about us, no more but matter of laughter? Severe Cato thought that laughter did not become the gravity of Roman consuls; that it is a diminution of states, as another told princes; and is it attributed to the Majesty of heaven? According to our capacities, the prophet describes God, as ourselves would be in a merry disposition, deriding vain attempts. He laughs, but it is in scorn; he scorns, but it is with vengeance. Pharaoh imagined that by drowning the Israelite males, he had found a way to root their name from the earth; but when at the same time, his own daughter, in his own court, gave princely education to Moses, their deliverer, did not God laugh?

Short is the joy of the wicked. Is Dagon put up to his place again? God's smile shall take off his head and his hands, and leave him neither wit to guide nor power to subsist . . . . . We may not judge of God's works until the fifth act: the case, deplorable and desperate in outward appearance, may with one smile from heaven find a blessed issue. He permitted his temple to be sacked and rifled, the holy vessels to be profaned and caroused in; but did not God's smile make Belshazzar to tremble at the handwriting on the wall? Oh, what are his frowns, if his smiles be so terrible!—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4.—The expression, "*He that sitteth in the heavens,*" at once fixes our thoughts on a being infinitely exalted above man, who is of the earth, earthly. And when it is said, "HE shall *laugh,*" this word is designed to convey to our minds the idea, that the greatest confederacies amongst kings and peoples, and their most extensive and vigorous preparations, to defeat HIS purposes or to injure HIS servants, are in HIS sight altogether insignificant and worthless. HE looks upon their poor and puny efforts, not only without uneasiness or fear, but HE laughs at their folly; HE treats their impotency with derision. He knows how HE can crush them like a moth when HE pleases, or consume them in a moment with the breath of HIS mouth. How profitable it is for us to be reminded of truths such as these! Ah! it is indeed "*a vain thing*" for the potsherds of the earth to strive with the glorious Majesty of Heaven.—*David Pitcairn.*

Verse 4.—"*The Lord,*" in Hebrew, Adonai, mystically signifieth my stays, or my sustainers—my pillars. Our English word "Lord" hath much the same force, being contracted of the old Saxon word "Llaford," or "Hlafford," which cometh from "Laef," to sustain, refresh, cherish.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 4.—"*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them: the Lord shall have them in derision.*" This tautology or repetition of the same thing, which is frequent in the Scriptures, is a sign of the thing being established: according to the authority of the patriarch Joseph (Gen. xli. 32), where, having interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh he said, "And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." And therefore, here also, "*shall laugh at them,*" and "*shall have them in derision,*" is a repetition to show that there is not a doubt to be entertained that all these things will most surely come to pass. And the gracious Spirit does all this for our comfort and consolation, that we may not faint under temptation, but lift up our heads with the most certain hope; because "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Hebrews x. 37.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 5.—"*Vex them;*" either by horror of conscience, or corporal plagues; one way or the other he will have his pennyworths of them, as he always has had of the persecutors of his people.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 5, 9.—It is easy for God to destroy his foes . . . . . Behold Pharaoh, his wise men, his hosts, and his horses plouting and plunging, and sinking like lead in the Red sea. Here is the end of one of the greatest plots ever formed against God's chosen. Of thirty Roman emperors, governors of provinces, and others high in office, who distinguished themselves by their zeal and bitterness in persecuting the early Christians, one became speedily deranged after some atrocious cruelty, one was slain by his own son, one became blind, the eyes of one started out of his head, one was drowned, one was strangled, one died in a miserable captivity, one fell dead in a manner that will not bear recital, one died of so loathsome a disease that several of his physicians were put to death because they could not abide the stench that filled his room, two committed suicide, a third attempted it, but had to call for help to finish the work, five were assassinated by their own people or servants, five others died the most miserable and excruciating deaths, several of them having an untold complication of diseases, and eight were killed in battle, or after being taken prisoners. Among these was Julian the apostate. In the days of his prosperity he is said to have pointed his dagger to heaven defying the Son of God, whom he commonly called the Galilean. But when he was wounded in battle, he saw that all was over with him, and he gathered up his clotted blood, and threw it into the air, exclaiming, "Thou hast conquered, O thou Galilean." Voltaire has told us of the agonies of Charles IX. of France, which drove the blood through the pores of the skin of that miserable monarch, after his cruelties and treachery to the Huguenots.—*William S. Plummer, D.D., LL.D.*, 1867.

Verse 6.—"*Yet have I set my King.*" Notice—1. The royal office and character of our glorious Redeemer: he is a King, "This name he hath on his vesture and on his thigh." Rev. xix. 16. 2. The authority by which he reigns; he is "*my King*," says God the Father, and I have set him up from everlasting: "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The world disowns his authority, but I own it; I have set him, I have "given him to be head over all things to the church." 3. His particular kingdom over which he rules; it is over "*my holy hill of Zion*"—an eminent type of the gospel church. The temple was built upon Mount Zion and therefore called a *holy hill*. Christ's throne is in his church, it is his head-quarters, and the place of his peculiar residence. Notice the firmness of the divine purpose with respect unto this matter. "*Yet have I set*" him "*King;*" *i.e.*, whatever be the plots of hell and earth to the contrary, he reigns by his Father's ordination.—*Stephen Charnock*, 1628—1680.

Verse 6.—"*Yet have I set my* KING," etc.—Jesus Christ is a threefold King. *First*, his enemies' King; *secondly*, his saints' King; *thirdly*, his Father's King.

First. Christ is his enemies' King, that is, he is King over his enemies. Christ is a King above all kings. What are all the mighty men, the great, the honourable men of the earth to Jesus Christ? They are but like a little bubble in the water; for if all the nations, in comparison to God, be but as the drop of the bucket, or the dust of the balance, as the prophet speaks in Isaiah xl. 15, how little then must be the kings of the earth! Nay, beloved, Christ Jesus is not only higher than kings, but he is higher than the angels; yea, he is the head of angels; and, therefore, all the angels in heaven are commanded to worship him. Col. ii. 12 Heb. i. 6 . . . . . He is King over all kingdoms, over all nations, over all governments, over all powers, over all people Dan. vii. 14 . . . . . The very heathen are given to Christ, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Psalm ii. 8.

Secondly. Jesus Christ is his saints' King. He is King of the bad, and of the good; but as for the wicked, he rules over them by his power and might; but the saints, he rules in them by his Spirit and graces. Oh! this is Christ's spiritual kingdom, and here he rules in the hearts of his people, here he rules over their consciences, over their wills, over their affections, over their judgments and understandings, and nobody hath anything to do here but Christ. Christ is not only the King of nations, but the King of saints; the one he rules over, the other he rules in.

Thirdly. Jesus Christ is his Father's King too, and so his Father calls him: "*I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.*" Well may he be our King, when he is God's King. But you may say, how is Christ the Father's King? Because he rules for his Father. There is a twofold kingdom of God committed to Jesus Christ; *first*, a spiritual kingdom, by which he rules in the hearts of his people, and so is King of saints; and, *secondly*, a providential kingdom, by which he rules the affairs

of this world, and so he is King of nations.—*Condensed from William Dyer's Christ's Famous Titles*, 1665.

Verse 6.—"*Zion.*" The *name* "Zion" signifies a "distant view" (*speculam.*) And the church is called "a distant view" (*specula*), not only because it views God and heavenly things by faith (that is, afar off), being wise unto the things that are above, not unto those that are on the earth: but also, because there are within her true viewers, or seers, and watchmen in the spirit, whose office it is to take charge of the people under them, and to watch against the snares of enemies and sins; and such are called in the Greek bishops (επισκοποι), that is, spyers or seers; and you may for the same reason give them, from the Hebrew, the appellation of Zionians of Zioners.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 7.—The dispute concerning the eternal filiation of our Lord betrays more of presumptuous curiosity than of reverent faith. It is an attempt to explain where it is far better to adore. We could give rival expositions of this verse, but we forbear. The controversy is one of the most unprofitable which ever engaged the pens of theologians.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 8.—"*Ask of me.*" The priesthood doth not appear to be settled upon Christ by any other expression than this, "Ask of me." The Psalm speaks of his investiture in his kingly office; the apostle refers this to his priesthood, his commission, for both took date at the same time; both bestowed, both confirmed by the same authority. The office of asking is grounded upon the same authority as the honour of king. Ruling belonged to his royal office, asking to his priestly. After his resurrection, the Father gives him a power and command of asking.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 8.—As the limner looks on the person whose picture he would take, and draws his lines to answer him with the nearest similitude that he can, so God looks on Christ as the archetype to which he will conform the saint, in suffering, in grace, in glory; yet so that Christ hath the pre-eminence in all. Every saint must suffer, because Christ suffered: Christ must not have a delicate body under a crucified head; yet never any suffered, or could, what he endured. Christ is holy, and therefore so shall every saint be, but in an inferior degree; an image cut in clay cannot be so exact as that engraved on gold. Now, our conformity to Christ appears, that as the promises made to him were performed upon his prayers to his Father, his promises made to his saints are given to them in the same way of prayer: "*Ask of me*," saith God to his Son, "*and I shall give thee.*" And the apostle tells us, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." God hath promised support to Christ in all his conflicts. Isaiah xlii. 1. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold;" yet he prayed "with strong cries and tears," when his feet stood within the shadow of death. A seed is promised to him, and victory over his enemies, yet for both these he prays. Christ towards us acts as a king, but towards his Father as a priest. All he speaks to God is by prayer and intercession. So the saints, the promise makes them kings over their lusts, conquerors over their enemies; but it makes them priests towards God, by prayer humbly to sue out those great things given in the promise.—*William Gurnall*, 1617—1679.

Verse 8.—It will be observed in our Bible that two words of verse eight are in italics, intimating that they are not translations of the Hebrew, but additions made for the purpose of elucidating the meaning. Now if the "*thee*" and the "*for*" are left out, the verse will read thus, "Ask of me, and I shall give the heathen, thine inheritance, and thy possession, the uttermost parts of the earth." And this reading is decidedly preferable to the other. It implies that by some previous arrangement on the part of God, he had already assigned an inheritance of the heathen, and the possession of the earth, to the person of whom he says, "Thou art my Son." And when God says, "I will give," etc., he reveals to his Anointed, not so much in what the inheritance consisted, and what was the extent of possession destined for him, as the promise of his readiness to bestow it. The heathen were already "the inheritance," and the ends of the earth "the possession," which God had *purposed* to give to his Anointed. Now he says to him, "Ask of me," and he *promises* to fulfil his purpose. This is the idea involved in the words of the text, and the importance of it will become more apparent, when we consider its application to the *spiritual* David, to the true Son of God, "whom he hath appointed the heir of all things."

Verse 9.—The "*rod*" has a variety of meanings in Scripture. It might be of different materials, as it was employed for different purposes. At an early period, a wooden rod came into use as one of the insignia of royalty, under the name of sceptre. By degrees the sceptre grew in importance, and was regarded as characteristic of an empire, or of the reign of some particular king. A golden sceptre denoted wealth and pomp. The right, or straight sceptre of which we read in Psalm xlv. 6, is expressive of the justice and uprightness, the truth and equity, which shall distinguish Messiah's reign, after his kingdom on earth has been established. But when it is said in Rev. xix. 15, that he, "whose name is called the Word of God," will smite the nations, and "rule them with a rod of iron," if the rod signifies "his sceptre," then the "iron" of which it is made must be designed to express the severity of the judgments which this omnipotent "King of kings" will inflict on all who resist his authority. But to me it appears doubtful whether the "rod of iron" symbolizes the royal sceptre of the Son of God at his second advent. It is mentioned in connection with "a sharp sword," which leads me to prefer the opinion that it also ought to be regarded as a weapon of war; at all events, the "rod of iron" mentioned in the Psalm we are endeavouring to explain, is evidently not the emblem of sovereign power, although represented as in the hands of a king, but an instrument of correction and punishment. In this sense the word "rod" is often used ..... When the correcting rod, which usually was a wand or cane, is represented, as in the second Psalm, to be of "iron" it only indicates how weighty, how severe, how effectual the threatened chastisement will be—it will not merely bruise, but it will break. "*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.*"

Now it is just such a complete breaking as would not readily be effected excepting by *an iron rod*, that is more fully expressed in the following clause of the verse, "Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The completeness of the destruction, however, depends on two things. Even an iron rod if gently used, or used against a hard and firm substance, might cause little injury; but, in the case before us, it is supposed to be applied with great force, "Thou shalt *dash* them;" and it is applied to what will prove as brittle and frangible as "*a potter's vessel*"—"Thou shalt dash them *in pieces.*" ..... Here, as is other respects, we must feel that the predictions and promises of this Psalm were but very partially fulfilled in the history of the literal David. Their real accomplishment, their awful completion, abides the day when the spiritual David shall come in glory and in majesty as Zion's King, with a rod of iron to dash in pieces the great antichristian confederacy of kings and peoples, and to take possession of his long-promised and dearly-purchased inheritance. And the signs of the times seem to indicate that the coming of the Lord draws nigh.—*David Pitcairn*

Verse 10.—"*Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings,*" etc. As Jesus is King of kings and Judge of judges, so the gospel is the teacher of the greatest and wisest. If any are so great as to spurn its admonitions, God will make little of them; and if they are so wise as to despise its teachings, their fancied wisdom shall make fools of them. The gospel takes a high tone before the rulers of the earth, and they who preach it should, like Knox and Melville, magnify their office by bold rebukes and manly utterances even in the royal presence. A clerical sycophant is only fit to be a scullion in the devil's kitchen.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—"*Serve the Lord with fear.*" This fear of God qualifies our joy. If you abstract fear from joy, joy will become light and wanton; and if you abstract joy from fear, fear then will become slavish.—*William Bates, D.D.*, 1625—1699.

Verse 11.—"*Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*" There are two kinds of serving and rejoicing in God. First, a serving in security, and a rejoicing in the Lord without fear; these are peculiar to hypocrites, who are secure, who please themselves, and who appear to themselves to be not unuseful servants, and to have great merit on their side, concerning whom it is said (Psalm x. 5), "Thy judgments are far above out of his sight;" and also afterwards (Psalm xxxvi. 1), "There is no fear of God before his eyes." These do righteousness without judgment at all times; and permit not Christ to be the Judge to be feared by all, in whose sight no man living is justified. Secondly, a serving with fear and a rejoicing with trembling; these are peculiar to the righteous who do righteousness at all times, and always rightly attemper both; never being without judgments, on the one hand, by which they are terrified and brought to despair of themselves and of all

their own works ; nor without that righteousness, on the other, on which they rest, and in which they rejoice in the mercy of God. It is the work of the whole lives of these characters to accuse themselves in all things, and in all things to justify and praise God. And thus they fulfil that word of Proverbs, " Blessed is the man that feareth alway " (xxviii. 14) ; and also that of Philip, iv. 4, " Rejoice in the Lord alway." Thus, between the upper and nether mill-stone (Deut. xxiv. 6), they are broken in pieces and humbled, and the husks thus being bruised off, they come forth the all-pure wheat of Christ.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 11.—The fear of God promotes spiritual joy ; it is the morning star which ushers in the sunlight of comfort. " Walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." God mingles joy with fear, that fear may not be slavish. —*Thomas Watson,* 1660.

Verse 12.—" *Kiss,*" a sign of love among equals : Gen. xxxiii. 4 ; 1 Sam. xx. 41 ; Rom. xvi. 16 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 20. Of subjection in inferiors : 1 Sam. x. 1. Of religious adoration in worshippers : 1 Kings xix. 18 ; Job xxxi. 27.—*John Richardson, Bishop of Ardagh,* 1655.

Verse 12.— " *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry.*" From the Person, *the Son,* we shall pass to the act (*Osculamini, kiss the Son*) ; in which we shall see, that since this is an act which licentious men have depraved (carnal men do it, and treacherous men do it—*Judas* betrayed his Master by a kiss), and yet God commands this, and expresses love in this ; everything that hath, or may be abused, must not therefore be abandoned ; the turning of a thing out of the way, is not a taking of that thing away, but good things deflected to ill uses by some, may be by others reduced to their first goodness. Then let us consider and magnify the goodness of God, that hath brought us into this distance, that we may *kiss the Son,* that the expressing of this love lies in our hands, and that, whereas the love of the church, in the Old Testament, even in the Canticle, went no farther but to the *Osculatur me* (*O that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth !* Cant. i. 1), now, in the Christian church, and in the visitation of a Christian soul, he hath invited us, enabled us to kiss him, for he is presentially amongst us. This leads us to give an earnest persuasion and exhortation *to kiss the Son,* with all those affections, which we shall there find to be expressed in the Scriptures, in that testimony of true love, *a holy kiss.* But then lest that persuasion by love should not be effectual and powerful enough to us, we shall descend from that duty, to the danger, from love, to fear, " *lest he be angry ;*" and therein see first, that God, who is love, can be angry ; and then, that this God who is angry here, is the Son of God, he that hath done so much for us, and therefore in justice may be angry ; he that is our Judge, and therefore in reason we are to fear his anger : and then, in a third branch, we shall see how easily this anger departs—a kiss removes it.

Verse 12.—" *Kiss the Son.*" That is, embrace him, depend upon him all these ways : as thy kinsman, as thy sovereign ; at thy going, at thy coming ; at thy reconciliation, in the truth of religion in thyself, in a peaceable unity with the church, in a reverent estimation of those men, and those means whom he sends. Kiss him, and be not ashamed of kissing him ; it is that which the spouse desired, " *I would kiss thee, and not be despised.*" Cant. vii. 1. If thou be despised for loving Christ in his gospel, remember that when David was thought base, for dancing before the ark, his way was to be more base. If thou be thought frivolous for thrusting in at service, in the forenoon, be more frivolous, aud come again in the afternoon : " *Tanto major requies, quanto ab amore Jesu nulla requies ;* " * " The more thou troublest thyself, or art troubled by others for Christ, the more peace thou hast in Christ." . . . . . " *Lest he be angry.*" Anger, as it is a passion that troubles, and disorders, and discomposes a man, so it is not in God ; but anger, as it is a sensible discerning of foes from friends, and of things that conduce, or disconduce to his glory, so it is in God. In a word, Hilary hath expressed it well : " *Pæna patientis, ira decernentis ;* " " Man's suffering is God's anger." When God inflicts such punishments as a king justly incensed would do, then God is thus angry. Now here, our case is heavier ; it is not this great, and almighty, and majestical God, that may be angry—that is like enough ; but even the *Son,* whom we must *kiss,* may be *angry ;* it is not a person whom we consider merely as God, but as man ; nay, not as man neither, but *a worm, and no man,* and he may be angry, and angry

* Gregory.

to our ruin ..... "*Kiss the Son*," and he will not *be angry;* if he be, kiss the rod, and he will be angry no longer—love him lest he be; fear him when he is angry: the preservative is easy, and so is the restorative too: the balsamum of this kiss is all, to suck spiritual milk out of the left breast, as well as out of the right, to find mercy in his judgments, reparation in his ruins, feasts in his lents, joy in his anger.—*From Sermons of John Donne, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's*, 1621—1631.

Verse 12.—"*Kiss the Son.*" To make peace with the Father, kiss the Son. "Let him kiss me," was the church's prayer. Cant. i. 2. Let us kiss him—that be our endeavour. Indeed, the Son must first kiss us by his mercy, before we can kiss him by our piety. Lord, grant in these mutual kisses and interchangeable embraces now, that we may come to the plenary wedding supper hereafter; when the choir of heaven, even the voices of angels, shall sing epithalamiums, nuptial songs, at the bridal of the spouse of the Lamb.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—"*If his wrath be kindled but a little;*" the Hebrew is, if his nose or nostril be kindled but a little; the nostril, being an organ of the body in which wrath shows itself, is put for wrath itself. Paleness and snuffling of the nose are symptoms of anger. In our proverbials, to take a thing in snuff, is to take it in anger.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—"*His wrath.*" Unspeakable must the wrath of God be when it is kindled fully, since perdition may come upon the *kindling of it but a little.—John Newton.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—Shows us the nature of sin, and the terrible results of it if it could reign.

Verse 1.—*Nothing is more irrational than irreligion.* A weighty theme.

The reasons why sinners rebel against God, stated, refuted, lamented, and repented of.

The crowning display of human sin in man's hatred of the Mediator.

Verses 1 *and* 2.—Opposition to the gospel, unreasonable and ineffectual.—*Two sermons by John Newton.*

Verses 1 *and* 2.—These verses show that all trust in man in the service of God is vain. Inasmuch as men oppose Christ, it is not good to hang our trust upon *the multitude* for their number, *the earnest* for their zeal, *the mighty* for their countenance, or *the wise* for their counsel, since all these are far oftener against Christ than for him.

Verse 2.—"Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 495, "The Greatest Trial on Record."

Verse 3.—The true reason of the opposition of sinners to Christ's truth, viz.: their hatred of the restraints of godliness.

Verse 4.—God's derision of the rebellious, both now and hereafter.

Verse 5.—*The voice of wrath.* One of a series of sermons upon the voices of the divine attributes.

Verse 6.—*Christ's sovereignty.* 1. The opposition to it: "yet." 2. The certainty of its existence: "*Yet have I set.*" 3. The power which maintains it: "*have I set.*" 4. The place of its manifestation: "*my holy hill of Zion.*" 5. The blessings flowing from it.

Verse 7.—The divine decree concerning Christ, in connection with the decrees of election and providence. The Sonship of Jesus.

This verse teacheth us faithfully to declare, and humbly to claim, the gifts and calling that God hath bestowed upon us.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 8.—Christ's inheritance.—*William Jay.*

Prayer indispensable.—*Jesus must ask.*

Verse 9.—*The ruin of the wicked.* Certain, irresistible, terrible, complete, irretrievable, "like a potter's vessel."

The destruction of systems of error and oppression to be expected. The gospel an iron rod quite able to break mere pots of man's making.

Verse 10.—True wisdom, fit for kings and judges, lies in obeying Christ.

The gospel, a school for those who would learn how to rule and judge well. They may consider its principles, its exemplar, its spirit, etc.

Verse 11.—*Mingled experience.* See the case of the women returning from the sepulchre. Matt. xxviii. 8. This may be rendered a very comforting subject, if the Holy Spirit direct the mind of the preacher.

True religion, a compound of many virtues and emotions.

Verse 12.—*An earnest invitation.* 1. *The command.* 2. *The argument.* 3. *The benediction* upon the obedient.—"Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 260.

Last clause.—Nature, object, and blessedness of saving faith.

PSALM III.

TITLE.—" A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his Son." *You will remember the sad story of David's flight from his own palace, when, in the dead of the night, he forded the brook Kedron, and went with a few faithful followers to hide himself for awhile from the fury of his rebellious son. Remember that David in this was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, too, fled; he, too, passed over the brook Kedron when his own people were in rebellion against him, and with a feeble band of followers he went to the garden of Gethsemane. He, too, drank of the brook by the way, and therefore doth he lift up the head. By very many expositors this is entitled* THE MORNING HYMN. *May we ever wake with holy confidence in our hearts, and a song upon our lips!*

DIVISION.—*This Psalm may be divided into four parts of two verses each. Indeed, many of the Psalms cannot be well understood unless we attentively regard the parts into which they are to be divided. They are not continuous descriptions of one scene, but a set of pictures of many kindred subjects. As in our modern sermons, we divide our discourse into different heads, so it is in these Psalms. There is always unity, but it is the unity of a bundle of arrows, and not of a single solitary shaft. Let us now look at the Psalm before us. In the first two verses you have David making a complaint to God concerning his enemies; he then declares his confidence in the Lord* (3, 4), *sings of his safety in sleep* (5, 6), *and strengthens himself for future conflict* (7. 8).

EXPOSITION.

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many *are* they that rise up against me.

2 Many *there be* which say of my soul, *There is* no help for him in God. Selah.

The poor broken-hearted father complains of the multitude of his enemies, and if you turn to 2 Samuel xv. 12, you will find it written that " the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom," while the troops of David constantly diminished! *" Lord how are they increased that trouble me!"* Here is a note of exclamation to express the wonder of woe which amazed and perplexed the fugitive father. Alas! I see no limit to my misery, for my troubles are enlarged! There was enough at first to sink me very low; but lo! my enemies multiply. When Absalom, my darling, is in rebellion against me, it is enough to break my heart; but lo! Ahithophel hath forsaken me, my faithful counsellors have turned their backs on me; lo! my generals and soldiers have deserted my standard. " How are they increased that trouble me!" Troubles always come in flocks. Sorrow hath a numerous family.

" Many are they that rise up against me." Their hosts are far superior to mine! Their numbers are too great for my reckoning!

Let us here recall to our memory the innumerable hosts which beset our Divine Redeemer. The legions of our sins, the armies of fiends, the crowd of bodily pains, the host of spiritual sorrows, and all the allies of death and hell, set themselves in battle against the Son of Man. O how precious to know and believe that he has routed their hosts, and trodden them down in his anger! They who would have troubled us he has removed into captivity, and those who would have risen up against us he has laid low. The dragon lost his sting when he dashed it into the soul of Jesus.

David complains before his loving God of the worst weapon of his enemies' attacks, and the bitterest drop of his distresses. " Oh!" saith David, *" many there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God."* Some of his distrustful friends said this sorrowfully, but his enemies exultingly boasted of it, and longed to see their words proved by his total destruction. This was the unkindest cut of all, when they declared that his God had forsaken him. Yet David knew in his own conscience that he had given them some ground for this exclamation, for he had committed sin against God in the very light of day. Then they flung his crime

with Bathsheba into his face, and they said, " Go up, thou bloody man ; God hath forsaken thee and left thee." Shimei cursed him and swore at him to his very face, for he was bold because of his backers, since multitudes of the men of Belial thought of David in like fashion. Doubtless, David felt this infernal suggestion to be staggering to his faith. If all the trials which come from heaven, all the temptations which ascend from hell, and all the crosses which arise from earth, could be mixed and pressed together, they would not make a trial so terrible as that which is contained in this verse. It is the most bitter of all afflictions to be led to fear that there is no help for us in God. And yet remember our most blessed Saviour had to endure this in the deepest degree when he cried, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " He knew full well what it was to walk in darkness and to see no light. This was the curse of the curse. This was the wormwood mingled with the gall. To be deserted of his Father was worse than to be the despised of men. Surely we should love him who suffered this bitterest of temptations and trials for our sake. It will be a delightful and instructive exercise for the loving heart to mark the Lord in his agonies as here portrayed, for there is here, and in very many other Psalms, far more of David's Lord than of David himself.

" *Selah.*" This is a musical pause ; the precise meaning of which is not known. Some think it simply a rest, a pause in the music ; others say it means, " Lift up the strain—sing more loudly—pitch the tune upon a higher key—there is nobler matter to come, therefore retune your harps." Harp-strings soon get out of order and need to be screwed up again to their proper tightness, and certainly our heart-strings are evermore getting out of tune. Let " Selah " teach us to pray

> " O may my heart in tune be found
> Like David's harp of solemn sound."

At least, we may learn that wherever we see " Selah," we should look upon it as a note of observation. Let us read the passage which precedes and succeeds it with greater earnestness, for surely there is always something excellent where we are required to rest and pause and meditate, or when we are required to lift up our hearts in grateful song. " SELAH."

3 But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me ; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

Here David avows his confidence in God. " *Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me.*" The word in the original signifies more than a shield ; it means a buckler round about, a protection which shall surround a man entirely, a shield above, beneath, around, without and within. Oh ! what a shield is God for his people ! He wards off the fiery darts of Satan from beneath, and the storms of trials from above, while, at the same instant, he speaks peace to the tempest within the breast. Thou art " *my glory.*" David knew that though he was driven from his capital in contempt and scorn, he should yet return in triumph, and by faith he looks upon God as honouring and glorifying him. O for grace to see our future glory amid present shame ! Indeed, there is a present glory in our afflictions, if we could but discern it ; for it is no mean thing to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. David was honoured when he made the ascent of Olivet, weeping, with his head covered ; for he was in all this made like unto his Lord. May we learn, in this respect, to glory in tribulations also ! " *And the lifter up of mine head*"—thou shalt yet exalt me. Though I hang my head in sorrow, I shall very soon lift it up in joy and thanksgiving. What a divine trio of mercies is contained in this verse !—defence for the defenceless, glory for the despised, and joy for the comfortless. Verily we may well say, " There is none like the God of Jeshurun."

" *I cried unto the Lord with my voice.*" Why doth he say, " with my voice ? " Surely, silent prayers are heard. Yes, but good men often find that, even in secret, they pray better aloud than they do when they utter no vocal sound. Perhaps, moreover, David would think thus :—" My cruel enemies clamour against me ; *they* lift up their voices, and, behold, *I* lift up mine, and my cry outsoars them all. They clamour, but the cry of my voice in great distress pierces the very skies, and is louder and stronger than all their tumult ; for there is one in the sanctuary who

hearkens to me from the seventh heaven, and he hath *' heard me out of his holy hill.'* " Answers to prayers are sweet cordials for the soul. We need not fear a frowning world while we rejoice in a prayer-hearing God.

Here stands another *Selah.* Rest awhile, O tried believer, and change the strain to a softer air.

5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.
6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set *themselves* against me round about.

David's faith enabled him to *lie down;* anxiety would certainly have kept him on tiptoe, watching for an enemy. Yea, he was able to sleep, *to sleep* in the midst of trouble, surrounded by foes. " So he giveth his beloved sleep." There is a sleep of presumption; God deliver us from it! There is a sleep of holy confidence; God help us so to close our eyes! But David says he *awaked* also. Some sleep the sleep of death; but he, though exposed to many enemies, reclined his head on the bosom of his God, slept happily beneath the wing of Providence in sweet security, and then awoke in safety. " *For the Lord sustained me.*" The sweet influence of the Pleiades of promise shone upon the sleeper, and he awoke conscious that the Lord had preserved him. An excellent divine has well remarked—" This quietude of a man's heart by faith in God, is a higher sort of work than the natural resolution of manly courage, for it is the gracious operation of God's Holy Spirit upholding a man above nature, and therefore the Lord must have all the glory of it."

Buckling on his harness for the day's battle, our hero sings, " *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.*" Observe that he does not attempt to under-estimate the number or wisdom of his enemies. He reckons them at tens of thousands, and he views them as cunning huntsmen chasing him with cruel skill. Yet he trembles not, but looking his foeman in the face he is ready for the battle. There may be no way of escape; they may hem me in as the deer are surrounded by a circle of hunters; they may surround me on every side, but in the name of God I will dash through them; or, if I remain in the midst of them, yet shall they not hurt me; I shall be free in my very prison.

But David is too wise to venture to the battle without prayer; he therefore betakes himself to his knees, and cries aloud to Jehovah.

7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

His only hope is in his God, but that is so strong a confidence, that he feels the Lord hath but to *arise* and he is saved. It is enough for the Lord to stand up, and all is well. He compares his enemies to wild beasts, and he declares that God hath broken their jaws, so that they could not injure him; " *Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*" Or else he alludes to the peculiar temptations to which he was then exposed. They had spoken against him; God, therefore, has smitten them upon the cheek bone. They seemed as if they would devour him with their mouths; God hath broken their teeth, and let them say what they will, their toothless jaws shall not be able to devour him. Rejoice, O believer, thou hast to do with a dragon whose head is broken, and with enemies whose teeth are dashed from their jaws!

8 Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD: thy blessing *is* upon thy people. Selah.

This verse contains the sum and substance of Calvinistic doctrine. Search Scripture through, and you must, if you read it with a candid mind, be persuaded that the doctrine of salvation by grace alone is the great doctrine of the word of God: " *Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.*" This is a point concerning which we are daily fighting. Our opponents say, " Salvation belongeth to the free will of man; if not to man's merit, yet at least to man's will;" but we hold and teach that salvation from first to last, in every iota of it, belongs to the Most High God. It is God that chooses his people. *He* calls them by his grace; *he* quickens them by his Spirit, and keeps them by his power. It is not of man, neither by man; " not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." May we all learn this truth experimentally, for our proud flesh and blood will never permit us to learn it in any other way. In the last sentence the peculiarity and

speciality of salvation are plainly stated: " *Thy blessing is upon thy people.*" Neither upon Egypt, nor upon Tyre, nor upon Nineveh; thy blessing is upon thy chosen, thy blood-bought, thine everlastingly-beloved people. " *Selah:* " lift up your hearts, and pause, and meditate upon this doctrine. " Thy blessing is upon thy people." Divine, discriminating, distinguishing, eternal, infinite, immutable love, is a subject for constant adoration. Pause my soul, at this *Selah*, and consider thine own interest in the salvation of God; and if by humble faith thou art enabled to see Jesus as thine by his own free gift of himself to thee, if this greatest of all blessings be upon thee, rise up and sing—

" Rise, my soul! adore and wonder!
Ask, 'O why such love to me?'
Grace hath put me in the number
Of the Saviour's family:
Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks to thee."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—With regard to the authority of the TITLES, it becomes us to speak with diffidence, considering the very opposite opinions which have been offered upon this subject by scholars of equal excellence. In the present day, it is too much the custom to slight or omit them altogether, as though added, nobody knows when or by whom, and as, in many instances, inconsistent with the subject-matter of the Psalm itself: while Augustine, Theodoret, and various other early writers of the Christian church, regard them as a part of the inspired text; and the Jews still continue to make them a part of their chant, and their rabbins to comment upon them.

It is certainly unknown who invented or placed them where they are: but it is unquestionable that they have been so placed from time immemorial; they occur in the Septuagint, which contains also in a few instances titles to Psalms that are without any in the Hebrew; and they have been copied after the Septuagint by Jerome. So far as the present writer has been able to penetrate the obscurity that occasionally hangs over them, they are a direct and most valuable key to the general history or subject of the Psalms to which they are prefixed; and, excepting where they have been evidently misunderstood or misinterpreted, he has never met with a single instance in which the drift of the title and its respective Psalm do not exactly coincide. Many of them were, doubtless, composed by Ezra at the time of editing his own collection, at which period some critics suppose the whole to have been written; but the rest appear rather to be coeval, or nearly so, with the respective Psalms themselves, and to have been written about the period of their production. —*John Mason Good, M.D., F.R.S.*, 1854.

See title. Here we have the first use of the word *Psalm.* In Hebrew, *Mizmor*, which hath the signification of pruning, or cutting off superfluous twigs, and is applied to songs made of short sentences, where many superfluous words are put away.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Upon this note an old writer remarks, " Let us learn from this, that in times of sore trouble men will not fetch a compass and use fine words in prayer, but will offer a prayer which is pruned of all luxuriance of wordy speeches."

Whole Psalm.—Thus you may plainly see how God hath wrought in his church in old time, and therefore should not discourage yourselves for any sudden change; but with David, acknowledge your sins to God, declare unto him how many there be that vex you and rise up against you, naming you Huguenots, Lutherans, Heretics, Puritans, and the children of Belial, as they named David. Let the wicked idolators brag that they will prevail against you and overcome you, and that God hath given you over, and will be no more your God. Let them put their trust in Absalom, with his large golden locks; and in the wisdom of Ahithophel, the wise counsellor; yet

say you, with David, "*Thou, O Lord, art my defender, and the lifter up of my head.*" Persuade yourselves, with David, that the Lord is your defender, who hath compassed you round about, and is, as it were, a "*shield*" that doth cover you on every side. It is he only that may and will compass you about with glory and honour. It is he that will thrust down those proud hypocrites from their seat, and exalt the lowly and meek. It is he which will "*smite*" your "enemies on *the cheek bone*," and burst all their teeth in sunder. He will hang up Absalom by his own long hairs; and Ahithophel through desperation shall hang himself. The bands shall be broken and you delivered; for this belongeth unto the Lord, to save his from their enemies, and to bless his people, that they may safely proceed in their pilgrimage to heaven without fear.—*Thomas Tymme's "Silver Watch Bell,"* 1634.

Verse 1.—Absalom's faction, like a snowball, strangely gathered in its motion. David speaks of it as one amazed; and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged, should almost generally revolt from him, and rebel against him, and choose for their head such a silly, giddy young fellow as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many! And how little fidelity and constancy is to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects as much as ever any king had, and yet now of a sudden he had lost them! As people must not trust too much to princes (Psalm cxlvi. 3), so princes must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ the Son of David had many enemies, when a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," how were they then increased that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange if the stream be against them, and the powers that threaten them grow more and more formidable.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—When the believer questions the power of God, or his interest in it, his joy gusheth out as blood out of a broken vein. This verse is a sore stab indeed.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God; you cannot vex him with anything so much as if you offer to persuade him, "*There is no help for him in God.*" David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spread Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord; they say, "*There is no help for me in thee;*" but, Lord, if it be so, I am undone. They say to my soul, "*There is no salvation*" (for so the word is) "*for him in God;*" but, Lord, do thou say unto my soul, "*I am thy salvation*" (Psalm xxxv. 3), and that shall satisfy me, and in due time silence them.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 2, 4, 8.—"*Selah* סֶלָה. Much has been written on this word, and still its meaning does not appear to be wholly determined. It is rendered in the Targum or Chaldee paraphrase, לְעָלְמִין, *lealmin, for ever,* or *to eternity.* In the Latin Vulgate, it is omitted, as if it were no part of the text. In the Septuagint it is rendered Διάψαλμα, supposed to refer to some variation or modulation of the voice in singing. Schleusner, *Lex.* The word occurs seventy-three times in the Psalms, and three times in the book of Habakkuk (iii. 3, 9, 13). It is never translated in our version, but in all these places the original word *Selah* is retained. It occurs only in poetry, and is supposed to have had some reference to the singing or cantillation of poetry, and to be probably a musical term. In general, also, it indicates a pause in the sense, as well as in the musical performance. Gesenius (*Lex.*) supposes that the most probable meaning of this musical term or note is *silence* or *pause,* and that its use was, in chanting the words of the Psalm, to direct the singer *to be silent, to pause a little,* while the instruments played an interlude or harmony. Perhaps this is all that can now be known of the meaning of the word, and this is enough to satisfy every reasonable enquiry. It is probable, if this was the use of the term, that it would commonly correspond with the sense of the passage, and be inserted where the sense made a pause suitable; and this will doubtless be found usually to be the fact. But any one acquainted at all with the character of musical notation will perceive at once that we are not to suppose that this would be invariably or necessarily the fact, for the musical pauses by no means always correspond with pauses in the sense. This word, therefore, can furnish very little assistance in determining the meaning of the passages where it is found. Ewald supposes, differing from this view, that it rather indicates that in the places where it occurs the voice is to be raised, and that it is synonymous with *up, higher, loud,* or *distinct,* from סָלַל,

sal, סלל *salal, to ascend.* Those who are disposed to enquire further respecting its meaning, and the uses of musical pauses in general, may be referred to Ugolin, " Thesau. Antiq. Sacr.," tom. xxii.—*Albert Barnes*, 1868.

Verses 2, 4, 8.—*Selah*, סלה, is found seventy-three times in the Psalms, generally at the end of a sentence or paragraph ; but in Psalm lv. 19 and lvii. 3, it stands in the middle of the verse. While most authors have agreed in considering this word as somehow relating to the *music*, their conjectures about its precise meaning have varied greatly. But at present these two opinions chiefly obtain. Some, including Herder, De Wette, Ewald (*Poet Bücher*, i. 179), and Delitzsch, derive it from סלה, or סלל, *to raise* and understand an *elevation* of the voice or music ; others, after Gesenius, in *Thesaurus*, derive it from סלה, *to be still* or *silent*, and understand a pause in the singing. So Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, and Tholuck. Probably *selah* was used to direct the singer to be silent, or to pause a little, while the instruments played an interlude (so Sept., διάψαλμα) or symphony. In Psalm ix. 16, it occurs in the expression *higgaion selah*, which Gesenius, with much probability, renders *instrumental, pause ; i.e.*, let the instruments strike up a symphony, and let the singer pause. By Tholuck and Hengstenberg, however, the two words are rendered *meditation, pause ; i.e.*, let the singer meditate while the music stops.—*Benjamin Davis, Ph.D., LL.D., article Psalms, in Kitto's Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature.*

Verse 3.—" *Lifter up of my head.*" God will have the body partake with the soul—as in matters of grief, so in matters of joy ; the lanthorn shines in the light of the candle within.—*Richard Sibbs*, 1639.

There is a lifting up of the head by elevation to office, as with Pharaoh's butler ; this we trace to the divine appointment. There is a lifting up in honour after shame, in health after sickness, in gladness after sorrow, in restoration after a fall, in victory after a temporary defeat ; in all these respects the Lord is the lifter up of our head.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—When prayer leads the van, in due time deliverance brings up the rear.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 4.—" *He heard me.*" I have often heard persons say in prayer, " Thou art a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God," but the expression contains a superfluity, since for God to hear is, according to Scripture, the same thing as to answer.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—" *I laid me down and slept ; I awaked : for the Lord sustained me.*" The title of the Psalm tells us when David had this sweet night's rest ; not when he lay on his bed of down in his stately palace at Jerusalem, but when he fled for his life from his unnatural son Absalom, and possibly was forced to lie in the open field under the canopy of heaven. Truly it must be a soft pillow indeed that could make him forget his danger, who then had such a disloyal army at his back hunting of him ; yea, so transcendent is the influence of this peace, that it can make the creature lie down as cheerfully to sleep in the grave, as on the softest bed. You will say that child is willing that calls to be put to bed ; some of the saints have desired God to lay them at rest in their beds of dust, and that not in a pet and discontent with their present trouble, as Job did, but from a sweet sense of this peace in their bosoms. " Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," was the swan-like song of old Simeon. He speaks like a merchant that had got all his goods on ship-board, and now desires the master of the ship to hoist sail, and be gone homewards. Indeed, what should a Christian, that is but a foreigner here, desire to stay any longer for in the world, but to get his full lading in for heaven ? And when hath he that, if not when he is assured of his peace with God ? This peace of the gospel, and sense of the love of God in the soul, doth so admirably conduce to the enabling of a person in all difficulties, and temptations, and troubles, that ordinarily, before he calls his saints to any hard service, or hot work, he gives them a draught of this cordial wine next their hearts, to cheer them up and embolden them in the conflict.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 5.—Gurnall, who wrote when there were houses on old London Bridge, has quaintly said, " Do you not think that they sleep as soundly who dwell on London Bridge as they who live at Whitehall or Cheapside ? for they know that the waves which rush under them cannot hurt them. Even so may the saints rest quietly over the floods or trouble or death, and fear no ill."

Verse 5.—Xerxes, the Persian, when he destroyed all the temples in Greece, caused the temple of Diana to be preserved for its beautiful structure: that soul which hath the beauty or holiness shining in it, shall be preserved for the glory of the structure; God will not suffer his own temple to be destroyed. Would you be secured in evil times? Get grace and fortify this garrison; a good conscience is a Christian's fort-royal. David's enemies lay round about him; yet saith he, "*I laid me down and slept.*" A good conscience can sleep in the mouth of a cannon; grace is a Christian's coat of mail, which fears not the arrow or bullet. True grace may be shot at, but can never be shot through; grace puts the soul into Christ, and there it is safe, as the bee in the hive, as the dove in the ark. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 1.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord sustained me.*" It would not be unprofitable to consider the sustaining power manifested in us while we lie asleep. In the flowing of the blood, heaving of the lung, etc., in the body and the continuance of mental faculties while the image of death is upon us.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.*" The psalmist will trust, *despite appearances.* He will not be afraid though ten thousands of people have set themselves against him round about. Let us here limit our thoughts to this one idea, "despite appearances." What could look worse to human sight than this array of ten thousands of people? Ruin seemed to stare him in the face; wherever he looked an enemy was to be seen. What was one against ten thousand? It often happens that God's people come into circumstances like this; they say, "All these things are against me;" they seem scarce able to count their troubles; they cannot see a loophole through which to escape; things look very black indeed; it is great faith and trust which says under these circumstances "I will not be afraid."

These were the circumstances under which Luther was placed, as he journeyed towards Worms. His friend Spalatin heard it said, by the enemies of the Reformation, that the safe conduct of a heretic ought not to be respected, and became alarmed for the reformer. "At the moment when the latter was approaching the city, a messenger appeared before him with this advice from the chaplin, 'Do not enter Worms!' And this from his best friend, the elector's confidant, from Spalatin himself! . . . . . But Luther, undismayed, turned his eyes upon the messenger, and replied, 'Go and tell your master, that even should there be as many devils in Worms as tiles upon the housetops, still I would enter it.' The messenger returned to Worms, with this astounding answer: 'I was then undaunted,' said Luther, a few days before his death, 'I feared nothing.'"

At such seasons as these, the reasonable men of the world, those who walk by sight and not by faith, will think it reasonable enough that the Christian should be afraid; they themselves would be very low if they were in such a predicament. Weak believers are now ready to make excuses for us, and we are only too ready to make them for ourselves; instead of rising above the weakness of the flesh, we take refuge under it, and use it as an excuse. But let us think prayerfully for a little while, and we shall see that it should not be thus with us. To trust only when appearances are favourable, is to sail only with the wind and tide, to believe only when we can see. Oh! let us follow the example of the psalmist, and seek that unreservedness of faith which will enable us to trust God, come what will, and to say as he said, "*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.*"—*Philip Bennett Power's 'I wills' of the Psalms*, 1862.

Verse 6.—"*I will not be afraid,*" etc. It makes no matter what our enemies be, though for number, legions; for power, principalities; for subtilty, serpents; for cruelty, dragons; for vantage of place, a prince of the air; for maliciousness, spiritual wickedness; stronger is he that is in us, than they who are against us; nothing is able to separate us from the love of God. In Christ Jesus our Lord, we shall be more than conquerors.—*William Cowper*, 1612.

Verse 7.—"*Arise, O Lord,*" Jehovah! This is a common scriptural mode of calling upon God to manifest his presence and his power, either in wrath or favour. By a natural anthropomorphism, it describes the intervals of such manifestation as periods of inaction or of slumber, out of which he is besought to rouse himself. "*Save me,*" even me, of whom they say there is no help for him in God. "*Save me, O my God,*" mine by covenant and mutual engagement, to whom I therefore have a

right to look for deliverance and protection. This confidence is warranted, moreover, by experience. "*For thou hast,*" in former exigencies, "*smitten all mine enemies,*" without exception "(*on the*) *cheek*" or *jaw*, an act at once violent and insulting. —*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*

Verse 7.—"*Upon the cheek bone.*"—The language seems to be taken from a comparison of his enemies with wild beasts. The cheek bone denotes the bone in which the teeth are placed, and to break that is to disarm the animal.—*Albert Barnes, in loc.*

Verse 7.—When God takes vengeance upon the ungodly, he will smite in such a manner as to make them feel his almightiness in every stroke. All his power shall be exercised in punishing and none in pitying. O that every obstinate sinner would think of this, and consider his unmeasurable boldness in thinking himself able to grapple with Omnipotence!—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 8.—"*Salvation belongeth unto the Lord:*" parallel passage in Jonah ii. 9, "*Salvation is of the Lord.*" The mariners might have written upon their ship, instead of Castor and Pollux, or the like device, *Salvation is the Lord's;* the Ninevites might have written upon their gates, *Salvation is the Lord's;* and whole mankind, whose cause is pitted and pleaded by God against the hardness of Jonah's heart, in the last, might have written on the palms of their hands, *Salvation is the Lord's.* It is the argument of both the Testaments, the staff and supportation of heaven and earth. They would both sink, and all their joints be severed, if the salvation of the Lord were not. The birds in the air sing no other notes, the beasts in the field give no other voice, than *Salus Jehovæ*, Salvation is the Lord's. The walls and fortresses to our country's gates, to our cities and towns, bars to our houses, a surer cover to our heads than a helmet of steel, a better receipt to our bodies than the confection of apothecaries, a better receipt to our souls than the pardons of Rome, is *Salus Jehovæ*, the salvation of the Lord. *The Salvation of the Lord* blesseth, preserveth, upholdeth all that we have; our basket and our store, the oil in our cruses, our presses, the sheep in our fold, our stalls, the children in the womb, at our tables, the corn in our field, our stores, our garners; it is not the virtue of the stars, nor nature of all things themselves, that giveth being and continuance to any of these blessings. And, "What shall I more say?" as the apostle asked (Heb. xi.), when he had spoken much, and there was much more behind, but time failed him. Rather, what should I not say? for the world is my theatre at this time, and I neither think nor can feign to myself anything that hath not dependence upon this acclamation, *Salvation is the Lord's.* Plutarch writeth, that the Amphictions in Greece, a famous council assembled of twelve sundry people, wrote upon the temple of Apollo Pythius, instead of the Iliads of Homer, or songs of Pindarus (large and tiring discourses), short sentences and memoratives, as, *Know thyself, Use moderation, Beware of suretyship*, and the like; and doubtless though every creature in the world, whereof we have use, be a treatise and narration unto us of the goodness of God, and we might weary our flesh, and spend our days in writing books of that inexplicable subject, yet this short apothegm of Jonah comprehendeth all the rest, and standeth at the end of the song, as the altars and stones that the patriarch set up at the parting of the ways, to give knowledge to the after-world by what means he was delivered. I would it were daily preached in our temples, sung in our streets, written upon our door-posts, painted upon our walls, or rather cut with an adamant claw upon the tables of our hearts, that we might never forget salvation to be the Lord's. We have need of such remembrances to keep us in practice of revolving the mercies of God. For nothing decayeth sooner than love: *nihil facilius quam amor putrescit.* And of all the powers of the soul, memory is most delicate, tender, and brittle, and first waxeth old, *memoria delicata, tenera, fragilis, in quam primum senectus incurrit;* and of all the apprehensions of memory, first benefit *primum senescit beneficium.*—*John King's Commentary on Jonah*, 1594.

Verse 8.—"*Thy blessing is upon thy people.*" The saints are not only blessed when they are comprehensors, but while they are viators. They are blessed before they are crowned. This seems a paradox to flesh and blood: what, reproached and maligned, yet blessed! A man that looks upon the children of God with a carnal eye, and sees how they are afflicted, and like the ship in the gospel, which was covered with waves (Matt. viii. 24), would think they were far from blessedness. Paul brings a catalogue of his sufferings (2 Cor. xi. 24—26), "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck," etc. And those Christians

of the first magnitude, of whom the world was not worthy, "Had trails of cruel mockings and scourgings, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword." Heb. xi. 36, 37. What! and were all these during the time of their sufferings blessed? A carnal man would think, if this be to be blessed, God deliver him from it. But, however sense would give their vote, our Saviour Christ pronounceth the godly man blessed; though a mourner, though a martyr, yet blessed. Job on the dunghill was blessed Job. The saints are blessed when they are cursed. Shimei did curse David (2 Samuel xvi. 5), "He came forth and cursed him;" yet when he was cursed David he was blessed David. The saints though they are bruised, yet they are blessed. Not only they shall be blessed, but they are so. Psalm cxix. 1. "Blessed are the undefiled." Psalm iii. 8. "*Thy blessing is upon thy people.*" —*Thomas Watson.*

As a curious instance of Luther's dogmatical interpretations, we give very considerable extracts from his rendering of this Psalm without in any degree endorsing them. —*C. H. S.*

Whole Psalm.—That the meaning of this Psalm is not historical, is manifest from many particulars, which militate against its being so understood. And first of all, there is this which the blessed Augustine has remarked; that the words, "I laid me down to sleep and took my rest," seem to be the words of Christ rising from the dead. And then that there is at the end the blessing of God pronounced upon the people, which manifestly belongs to the whole church. Hence, the blessed Augustine interprets the Psalm in a threefold way: first, concerning Christ the head; secondly concerning the whole of Christ, that is, Christ and his church, the head and the body; and thirdly, figuratively, concerning any private Christian. Let each have his own interpretation. I, in the meantime, will interpret it concerning Christ; being moved so to do by the same argument that moved Augustine —that the fifth verse does not seem appropriately to apply to any other but Christ. First, because, "lying down" and "sleeping," signify in this place altogether a natural death, not a natural sleep. Which may be collected from this—because it then follows, "and rose again." Whereas if David had spoken concerning the sleep of the body, he would have said, "and awoke;" though this does not make so forcibly for the interpretation of which we are speaking, if the Hebrew word be closely examined. But again, what new thing would he advance by declaring that he laid him down and slept? Why did he not say also that he walked, ate, drank, laboured, or was in necessity, or mention particularly some other work of the body? And moreover, it seems an absurdity under so great a tribulation, to boast of nothing else but the sleep of the body; for that tribulation would rather force him to a privation from sleep, and to be in peril and distress; especially since those two expressions, "I laid me down," and "I slept," signify the quiet repose of one lying down in his place, which is not the state of one who falls asleep from exhausture through sorrow. But this consideration makes the more forcibly for us—that he therefore glories in his rising up again because it was the Lord that sustained him, who raised him up while sleeping, and did not leave him in sleep. How can such a glorying agree, and what new kind of religion can make it agree, with any particular sleep of the body? (for in that case, would it not apply to the daily sleep also?) and especially, when this sustaining of God indicates at the same time an utterly forsaken state in the person sleeping, which is not the case in corporal sleep; for there the person sleeping may be protected even by men being his guards; but this sustaining being altogether of God, implies, not a sleep, but a heavy conflict. And lastly, the word HEKIZOTHI itself favours such an interpretation; which, being here put absolutely and transitively, signifies, "I caused to arise or awake." As if he had said, "I caused myself to awake, I roused myself." Which certainly more aptly agrees with the resurrection of Christ than with the sleep of the body; both because those who are asleep are accustomed to be roused and awaked, and because it is no wonderful matter, nor a matter worthy of so important a declaration, for any one to awake of himself, seeing that it is what takes place every day. But this matter being introduced by the Spirit as a something new and singular, is certainly different from all that which attends common sleeping and waking.

Verse 2.—"*There is no help for him in his God.*" In the Hebrew the expression is simply, "in God," without the pronoun "*his*," which seems to me to give clearness and force to the expression. As if he had said, They say of me that I am not only deserted and oppressed by all creatures, but that even God, who is present with all things, and preserves all things, and protects all things, forsakes me as the only thing out of the whole universe that he does not preserve. Which kind of temptation Job seems also to have tasted where he says, "Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee?" vii. 20. For there is no temptation, no, not of the whole world together, nor of all hell combined in one, equal unto that wherein God stands contrary to a man, which temptation Jeremiah prays against (xvii. 17), "Be not a terror unto me; thou art my hope in the day of evil;" and concerning which also the sixth Psalm following saith, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger;" and we find the same petitions throughout the psaltery. This temptation is wholly unsupportable, and is truly hell itself; as it is said in the same sixth Psalm, "for in death there is no remembrance of thee," etc. In a word, if you have never experienced it, you can never form any idea of it whatever.

Verse 3.—"*For thou, O Lord, art my helper, my glory, and the lifter up of my head.*" David here contrasts three things with three; helper, with many troubling; glory, with many rising up; and the lifter up of the head, with the blaspheming and insulting. Therefore, the person here represented is indeed alone in the estimation of man, and even according to his own feelings also; but in the sight of God, and in a spiritual view, he is by no means alone; but protected with the greatest abundance of help; as Christ saith (John xvi. 32), "Behold, the hour cometh when ye shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." ..... The words contained in this verse are not the words of nature, but of grace; not of free-will, but of the spirit of strong faith; which, even though seeing God, as in the darkness of the storm of death and hell, a deserting God, acknowledges him a sustaining God; when seeing him as a persecuting God, acknowledges him a helping God; when seeing him as a condemner, acknowledges him a Saviour. Thus this faith does not judge of things according as they seem to be, or are felt, like a horse or mule which have no understanding; but it understands things which are not seen, for "hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" Romans viii. 24.

Verse 4.—"*I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.*" In the Hebrew, the verb is in the future, and is, as Hieronymus translates it, "I will cry," and, "he shall hear;" and this pleases me better than the perfect tense; for they are the words of one triumphing in, and praising and glorifying God, and giving thanks unto him who sustained, preserved, and lifted him up, according as he had hoped in the preceding verse. For it is usual with those that triumph and rejoice, to speak of those things which they have done and suffered, and to sing a song of praise unto their helper and deliverer; as in Psalm lxvi. 16, "Come, then, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue." And also Psalm lxxxi. 1, "Sing aloud unto God our strength." And so again, Exodus xv. 1, "Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." And so here, being filled with an overflowing sense of gratitude and joy, he sings of his being dead, of his having slept and rose up again, of his enemies being smitten, and of the teeth of the ungodly being broken. This it is which causes the change; for he who hitherto had been addressing God in the second person, changes on a sudden his address to others concerning God, in the third person, saying, "*and he heard me*," not "and thou heardest me;" and also, "*I cried unto the Lord*," not "I cried unto thee," for he wants to make all know what benefits God has heaped upon him; which is peculiar to a grateful mind.

Verse 5.—"*I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.*" Christ, by the words of this verse signifies his death and burial..... For it is not to be supposed that he would have spoken so importantly concerning mere natural rest and sleep; especially since that which precedes, and that which follows, compel us to understand him as speaking of a deep conflict and a glorious victory over his enemies. By all which things he stirs us up and animates us to faith in God, and commends unto us the power and grace of God; that he is able to raise us up from the dead; an example of which he sets before us, and proclaims it unto us as wrought in himself . . . . . And this is shown also farther in his using gentle words, and such as tend wonderfully to lessen the terror of death. "*I laid*

me down (saith he), *and slept.*" He does not say, I died and was buried ; for death and the tomb had lost both their name and their power. And now death is not death, but a sleep ; and the tomb not a tomb, but a bed and resting place ; which was the reason why the words of this prophecy were put somewhat obscurely and doubtfully, that it might by that means render death most lovely in our eyes (or rather most contemptible), as being that state from which, as from the sweet rest of sleep, an undoubted arising and awaking are promised. For who is not most sure of an awaking and arising, who lies down to rest in a sweet sleep (where death does not prevent) ? This person, however, does not say that he died, but that he laid him down to sleep, and that therefore he awaked. And moreover, as sleep is useful and necessary for a better renewal of the powers of the body (as Ambrosius says in his hymn), and as sleep relieves the weary limbs, so is death also equally useful, and ordained for the arriving at a better life. And this is what David says in the following Psalm, " I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for thou, Lord, in a singular manner hast formed me in hope." Therefore, in considering death, we are not so much to consider death itself, as that most certain life and resurrection which are sure to those who are in Christ ; that those words (John viii. 51) might be fulfilled, " If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." But how is it that he shall never see it ? Shall he not feel it ? Shall he not die ? No ! he shall only see sleep, for, having the eyes of his faith fixed upon the resurrection, he so glides through death, that he does not even see death ; for death, as I have said, is to him no death at all. And hence, there is that also of John xi. 25, " He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Verse 7.—" *For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone ; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*" Hieronymus uses this metaphor of " *cheek bones,*" and " *teeth,*" to represent cutting words, detractions, calumnies, and other injuries of the same kind, by which the innocent are oppressed : according to that of Proverbs xxx. 14, " There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men." It was by these that Christ was devoured, when, before Pilate he was condemned to the cross by the voices and accusations of his enemies. And hence it is that the apostle saith (Gal. v. 15), " But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

Verse 8.—" *Salvation is of the Lord, and thy blessing is upon thy people.*" A most beautiful conclusion this, and, as it were, the sum of all the feelings spoken of. The sense is, it is the Lord alone that saves and blesses : and even though the whole mass of all evils should be gathered together in one against a man, still, it is the Lord who saves : salvation and blessing are in his hands. What then shall I fear ? What shall I not promise myself ? When I know that no one can be destroyed, no one reviled, without the permission of God, even though all should rise up to curse and to destroy ; and that no one of them can be blessed and saved without the permission of God, how much soever they may bless and strive to save themselves. And as Gregory Nazianzen says, " Where God gives, envy can avail nothing ; and where God does not give labour can avail nothing." And in the same way also Paul saith (Rom. viii. 31), " If God be for us, who can be against us ? " And so, on the contrary, if God be against them, who can be for them ? And why ? Because " *salvation is of the Lord,*" and not of them, nor of us, for " vain is the help of man."—*Martin Luther.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—" *The saint telling his griefs to his God.* (1) His right to do so. (2) The proper manner of telling them. (3) The fair results of such holy communications with the Lord.

When may we expect increased troubles ? Why are they sent ? What is our wisdom in reference to them ?

Verse 2.—The lie against the saint and the libel upon his God.

Verse 3.—The threefold blessing which God affords to his suffering ones—Defence, Honour, Joy. Show how all these may be enjoyed by faith, even in our worst estate.

Verse 4.—(1) In dangers we should pray. (2) God will graciously hear. (3) We should record his answers of grace. (4) We may strengthen ourselves for the future by remembering the deliverances of the past.

Verse 5.—(1) Describe sweet sleeping. (2) Describe happy waking. (3) Show how both are to be enjoyed, "*for the Lord sustained me.*"

Verse 6.—Faith surrounded by enemies and yet triumphant.

Verse 7.—(1) Describe the Lord's past dealing with his enemies; "thou hast." (2) Show that the Lord should be our constant resort, "O Lord," "O my God." (3) Enlarge upon the fact that the Lord is to be stirred up: "Arise." (4) Urge believers to use the Lord's past victories as an argument with which to prevail with him.

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—Our enemies vanquished foes, toothless lions.

Verse 8 (*first clause*).—Salvation of God from first to last. (See the exposition).

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—They were blessed *in* Christ, *through* Christ, and shall be blessed *with* Christ. The blessing rests upon their persons, comforts, trials, labours, families, etc. It flows from grace, is enjoyed by faith, and is insured by oath, etc. —*James Smith's Portions*, 1802—1862.

PSALM IV.

TITLE.—*This Psalm is apparently intended to accompany the third, and make a pair with it. If the last may be entitled* THE MORNING PSALM, *this from its matter is equally deserving of the title of* THE EVENING HYMN. *May the choice words of the 8th verse be our sweet song of rest as we retire to our repose!*

"Thus with my thoughts composed to peace,
I'll give mine eyes to sleep;
Thy hand in safety keeps my days,
And will my slumbers keep."

The Inspired title runs thus: "To the chief Musician on Neginoth, a Psalm of David." *The chief musician was the master or director of the sacred music of the sanctuary. Concerning this person carefully read* 1 Chron. vi. 31, 32; xv. 16—22; xxv. 1, 7. *In these passages will be found much that is interesting to the lover of sacred song, and very much that will throw a light upon the mode of praising God in the temple. Some of the titles of the Psalms are, we doubt not, derived from the names of certain renowned singers, who composed the music to which they were set.*

On Neginoth, *that is, on stringed instruments, or* hand *instruments, which were played on with the hand alone, as harps and cymbals. The joy of the Jewish church was so great that they needed music to set forth the delightful feelings of their souls, our holy mirth is none the less overflowing because we prefer to express it in a more spiritual manner, as becometh a more spiritual dispensation. In allusion to these instruments to be played on with the hand, Nazianzen says. "Lord I am an instrument for thee to touch." Let us lay ourselves open to the Spirit's touch, so shall we make melody. May we be full of faith and love, and we shall be living instruments of music.*

Hawker says "The Septuagint read the word which we have rendered in our translation chief musician Lamenetz, *instead of* Lamenetzoth, *the meaning of which is* unto the end." *From whence the Greek and Latin fathers imagined, that all psalms which bear this inscription refer to the Messiah* the great end. *If so, this Psalm is addressed to Christ; and well it may, for it is all of Christ, and spoken by Christ, and hath respect only to his people as being one with Christ. The Lord the Spirit give the reader to see this, and he will find it most blessed.*

DIVISION.—*In the first verse David pleads with God for help. In the second he expostulates with his enemies, and continues to address them to the end of verse* 5. *Then from verse* 6 *to the close he delightfully contrasts his own satisfaction and safety with the disquietude of the ungodly in their best estate. The Psalm was most probably written upon the same occasion as the preceding, and is another choice flower from the garden of affliction. Happy is it for us that David was tried, or probably we should never have heard these sweet sonnets of faith.*

EXPOSITION.

HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me *when I was* in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

This is another instance of David's common habit of pleading past mercies as a ground for present favour. Here he reviews his Ebenezers and takes comfort from them. It is not to be imagined that he who has helped us in six troubles will leave us in the seventh. God does nothing by halves, and he will never cease to help us until we cease to need. The manna shall fall every morning until we cross the Jordan.

Observe, that David speaks first to God and then to men. Surely we should all speak the more boldly to men if we had more constant converse with God. He who dares to face his Maker will not tremble before the sons of men.

The name by which the Lord is here addressed, "*God of my righteousness,*" deserves notice, since it is not used in any other part of Scripture. It means, Thou art the author, the witness, the maintainer, the judge, and the rewarder of my righteousness; to thee I appeal from the calumnies and harsh judgments of men. Herein is wisdom, let us imitate it and always take our suit, not to the petty courts of human opinion, but into the superior court, the King's Bench of heaven.

" Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." A figure taken from an army enclosed in a defile, and hardly pressed by the surrounding enemy. God hath dashed down the rocks and given me room ; he hath broken the barriers and set me in a large place. Or, we may understand it thus :—" God hath enlarged my heart with joy and comfort when I was like a man imprisoned by grief and sorrow." God is a never-failing comforter.

" Have mercy upon me." Though thou mayest justly permit my enemies to destroy me, on account of my many and great sins, yet I flee to thy mercy, and I beseech thee *hear my prayer*, and bring thy servant out of his troubles. The best of men need mercy as truly as the worst of men. All the deliverances of saints, as well as the pardons of sinners, are the free gifts of heavenly grace.

2 O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn* my glory into shame ? *how long* will ye love vanity, *and* seek after leasing ? Selah.

In this second division of the Psalm, we are led from the closet of prayer into the field of conflict. Remark the undaunted courage of the man of God. He allows that his enemies are great men (for such is the import of the Hebrew words translated —*sons of men*), but still he believes them to be foolish men, and therefore chides them, as though they were but children. He tells them that they *love vanity, and seek after leasing*, that is, lying, empty fancies, vain conceits, wicked fabrications. He asks them *how long* they mean to make his honour a jest, and his fame a mockery ? A little of such mirth is too much, why need they continue to indulge in it ? Had they not been long enough upon the watch for his halting ? Had not repeated disappointments convinced them that the Lord's anointed was not to be overcome by all their calumnies ? Did they mean to jest their souls into hell, and go on with their laughter until swift vengeance should turn their merriment into howling ? In the contemplation of their perverse continuance in their vain and lying pursuits, the Psalmist solemnly pauses and inserts a *Selah*. Surely we too may stop awhile, and meditate upon the deep-seated folly of the wicked, their continuance in evil, and their sure destruction ; and we may learn to admire that grace which has made us to differ, and taught us to *love* truth, and *seek* after *righteousness*.

3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself : the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

" But know." Fools will not learn, and therefore they must again and again be told the same thing, especially when it is such a bitter truth which is to be taught them, viz :—the fact that the godly are the chosen of God, and are, by distinguishing grace, set apart and separated from among men. Election is a doctrine which unrenewed men cannot endure, but nevertheless, it is a glorious and well-attested truth, and one which should comfort the tempted believer. Election is the guarantee of complete salvation, and an argument for success at the throne of grace. HE who chose us for himself will surely hear our prayers. The Lord's elect shall not be condemned, nor shall their cry be unheard. David was king by divine decree, and we are the Lord's people in the same manner ; let us tell our enemies to their faces, that they fight against God and destiny, when they strive to overthrow our souls. O beloved, when you are on your knees, the fact of your being *set apart* as God's own peculiar treasure, should give you courage and inspire you with fervency and faith. " Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him ? " Since he chose to love us he cannot but chose to hear us.

4 Stand in awe, and sin not : commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

" Tremble and sin not." How many reverse this counsel and sin but tremble not. O that men would take the advice of this verse and *commune with their own hearts*. Surely a want of thought must be one reason why men are so mad as to despite Christ and hate their own mercies. O that for once their passions would be quiet and let them *be still*, that so in solemn silence they might review the past, and meditate upon their inevitable doom. Surely a thinking man might have enough sense to discover the vanity of sin and the worthlessness of the world. Stay, rash sinner, stay ere thou take the last leap. Go to *thy bed* and think upon thy ways.

Ask counsel of thy pillow, and let the quietude of night instruct thee! Throw not away thy soul for nought! Let reason speak! Let the clamorous world be still awhile, and let thy poor soul plead with thee to bethink thyself before thou seal its fate, and ruin it for ever! *Selah.* O sinner! pause while I question thee awhile in the words of a sacred poet,—

"Sinner, is thy heart at rest?
Is thy bosom void of fear?
Art thou not by guilt oppress'd?
Speaks not conscience in thine ear?

Can this world afford thee bliss?
Can it chase away thy gloom?
Flattering, false, and vain it is;
Tremble at the worldling's doom!

Think, O sinner, on thy end,
See the judgment-day appear,
Thither must thy spirit wend,
There thy righteous sentence hear.

Wretched, ruin'd, helpless soul,
To a Saviour's blood apply;
He alone can make thee whole,
Fly to Jesus, sinner, fly!"

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

Provided that the rebels had obeyed the voice of the last verse, they would now be crying,—"What shall we do to be saved?" And in the present verse, they are pointed to the *sacrifice*, and exhorted to *trust in the Lord*. When the Jew offered sacrifice righteously, that is, in a spiritual manner, he thereby set forth the Redeemer, the great sin-atoning Lamb; there is, therefore, the full gospel in this exhortation of the Psalmist. O sinners, flee ye to the sacrifices of Calvary, and there put your whole confidence and *trust*, for he who died for men is the LORD JEHOVAH.

6 *There be* many that say, Who will shew us *any* good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

We have now entered upon the third division of the Psalm, in which the faith of the afflicted one finds utterance in sweet expressions of contentment and peace.

There were many, even among David's own followers, who wanted to *see* rather than to believe. Alas! this is the tendency of us all! Even the regenerate sometimes groan after the sense and sight of prosperity, and are sad when darkness covers all good from view. As for worldlings, this is their unceasing cry. "*Who will shew us any good?*" Never satisfied, their gaping mouths are turned in every direction, their empty hearts are ready to drink in any fine delusion which impostors may invent; and when these fail, they soon yield to despair, and declare that there is no good thing in either heaven or earth. The true believer is a man of a very different mould. His face is not downward like the beasts', but upward like the angels'. He drinks not from the muddy pools of Mammon, but from the fountain of life above. The light of God's countenance is enough for him. This is his riches, his honour, his health, his ambition, his ease. Give him this, and he will ask no more. This is joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Oh, for more of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that our fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ may be constant and abiding!

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.

"It is better," said one, "to feel God's favour one hour in our repenting souls, than to sit whole ages under the warmest sunshine that this world affordeth." Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn, or wine in the vat. Corn and wine are but fruits of the world, but the light of God's countenance is the ripe fruit of heaven. "Thou art with me," is a far more blessed cry than "Harvest home." Let my granary be empty, I am yet full of blessings if Jesus Christ smiles upon me; but if I have all the world, I am poor without Him.

We should not fail to remark that this verse is the *saying* of the righteous man, in opposition to the saying of the many. How quickly doth the tongue betray the character! "*Speak*, that I may see thee!" said Socrates to a fair boy. The metal of a bell is best known by its sound. Birds reveal their nature by their song. Owls cannot sing the carol of the lark, nor can the nightingale hoot like the owl. Let us, then, weigh and watch our words, lest our speech should prove us to be foreigners, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Sweet Evening Hymn! I shall not sit up to watch through fear, but I will *lie down;* and then I will not lie awake listening to every rustling sound, but I will lie down *in peace and sleep*, for I have nought to fear. He that hath the wings of God above him needs no other curtain. Better than bolts or bars is the protection of the Lord. Armed men kept the bed of Solomon, but we do not believe that he slept more soundly than his father, whose bed was the hard ground, and who was haunted by blood-thirsty foes. Note the word "*only*," which means that God alone was his keeper, and that though alone, without man's help, he was even then in good keeping, for he was "alone with God." A quiet conscience is a good bedfellow. How many of our sleepless hours might be traced to our untrusting and disordered minds. They slumber sweetly whom faith rocks to sleep. No pillow so soft as a promise; no coverlet so warm as an assured interest in Christ.

O Lord, give us this calm repose on thee, that like David we may lie down in peace, and sleep each night while we live; and joyfully may we lie down in the appointed season, to sleep in death, to rest in God!

Dr. Hawker's reflection upon this Psalm is worthy to be prayed over and fed upon with sacred delight. We cannot help transcribing it.

"Reader! let us never lose sight of the Lord Jesus while reading this psalm. He is the Lord our righteousness; and therefore, in all our approaches to the mercy seat, let us go there in a language corresponding to this which calls Jesus the Lord our righteousness. While men of the world, from the world are seeking their chief good, let us desire his favour which infinitely transcends corn and wine, and all the good things which perish in the using. Yes, Lord, *thy favour is better than life itself.* Thou causest them that love thee to inherit substance, and fillest all their treasure.

Oh! thou gracious God and Father, hast thou in such a wonderful manner set apart one in our nature for thyself? Hast thou indeed chosen one out of the people? Hast thou beheld him in the purity of his nature,—as one in every point godly? Hast thou given him as the covenant of the people? And hast thou declared thyself well pleased in him? Oh! then, well may my soul be well pleased in him also. Now do I know that my God and Father will hear me when I call upon him in Jesus' name, and when I look up to him for acceptance for Jesus' sake? Yes, my heart is fixed, O Lord, my heart is fixed; Jesus is my hope and righteousness, the Lord will hear me when I call. And henceforth will I both lay me down in peace and sleep securely in Jesus, accepted in the Beloved; for *this is the rest wherewith the Lord causeth the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing.*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*Hear me when I call*," etc. Faith is a good orator and a noble disputer in a strait; it can reason from God's readiness to hear: "*Hear me when I call, O God.*" And from the everlasting righteousness given to the man in the justification of his person: "*O God of my righteousness.*" And from God's constant justice in defending the righteousness of his servant's cause: "*O God of my righteousness.*" And from both present distresses and those that are by-past, wherein he hath been, and from by-gone mercies received: "*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.*" And from God's grace, which is able to answer all objections from the man's unworthiness or ill-deserving: "*Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*"—*David Dickson*, 1653.

Verse 1.—"*Hear me.*" The great Author of nature and of all things does nothing

in vain. He instituted not this law, and, if I may so express it, art of praying, as a vain and insufficient thing, but endows it with wonderful efficacy for producing the greatest and happiest consequences. He would have it to be the key by which all the treasures of heaven should be opened. He has constructed it as a powerful machine, by which we may, with easy and pleasant labour, remove from us the most dire and unhappy machinations of our enemy, and may with equal ease draw to ourselves what is most propitious and advantageous. Heaven and earth, and all the elements, obey and minister to the hands which are often lifted up to heaven in earnest prayer. Yea, all works, and, which is yet more and greater, all the words of God obey it. Well known in the sacred Scriptures are the examples of Moses and Joshua, and that which James (v. 17) particularly mentions of Elijah, whom he expressly calls ὁμοιοπαθὴς, *a man subject to like infirmities* with ourselves, that he might illustrate the admirable force of prayer, by the common and human weakness of the person by whom it was offered. And that Christian legion under Antoninus is well known and justly celebrated, which, for the singular ardour and efficacy of its prayers, obtained the name of κεραυνοβόλος, *the thundering legion.—Robert Leighton, D.D., Archbishop of Glasgow*, 1611—1684.

Verse 2.—*" O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah."* Prayer soars above the violence and impiety of men, and with a swift wing commits itself to heaven, with happy omen, if I may allude to what the learned tell us of the augury of the ancients, which I shall not minutely discuss. Fervent prayers stretch forth a strong, wide-extended wing, and while the birds of night hover beneath, they mount aloft, and point out, as it were, the proper seats to which we should aspire. For certainly there is nothing that cuts the air so swiftly, nothing that takes so sublime, so happy, and so auspicious a flight as prayer, which bears the soul on its pinions, and leaves far behind all the dangers, and even the delights of this low world of ours. Behold this holy man, who just before was crying to God in the midst of distress, and with urgent importunity entreating that he might be heard, now, as if he were already possessed of all he had asked, taking upon him boldly to rebuke his enemies, how highly soever they were exalted, and how potent soever they might be even in the royal palace.—*Robert Leighton, D.D.*

Verse 2.—*" O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?"* etc. We might imagine every syllable of this precious Psalm used by our Master some evening, when about to leave the temple for the day, and retiring to his wonted rest at Bethany (verse 8), after another fruitless expostulation with the men of Israel. And we may read it still as the very utterance of his heart, longing over man, and delighting in God. But further, not only is this the utterance of the Head, it is also the language of one of his members in full sympathy with him in holy feeling. This is a Psalm with which the righteous may make their dwellings resound, morning and evening, as they cast a sad look over a world that rejects God's grace. They may sing it while they cling more and more every day to Jehovah, as their all-sufficient heritage, now and in the age to come. They may sing it, too, in the happy confidence of faith and hope, when the evening of the world's day is coming, and may then fall asleep in the certainty of what shall greet their eyes on the resurrection morning—

" Sleeping embosomed in his grace,
Till morning-shadows flee."

Andrew A. Bonar, 1859.

Verse 2.—*" Love Vanity."* They that love sin, love *vanity;* they chase a bubble, they lean upon a reed, their hope is as a spider's web.

" Leasing." This is an old Saxon word signifying falsehood.

Verse 2.—*" How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?"* " Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." This our first parents found, and therefore named their second son Abel, or vanity. Solomon, that had tried these things, and could best tell the vanity of them, he preacheth this sermon over again and again, " Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." It is sad to think how many thousands there be that can say with the preacher, " Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" nay, swear it, and yet follow after these things as if there were no other glory, nor felicity, but what is to be found in these things they call vanity. Such men will sell Christ, heaven, and their souls, for a trifle, that call these things vanity, but do not cordially

believe them to be vanity, but set their hearts upon them as if they were their crown, the top of all their royalty and glory. Oh! let your souls dwell upon the vanity of all things here below, till your hearts be so thoroughly convinced and persuaded of the vanity of them, as to trample upon them, and make them a footstool for Christ to get up, and ride in a holy triumph in your hearts.

Gilemex, king of Vandals, led in triumph by Belisarius, cried out, " Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The fancy of Lucian, who placeth Charon on the top of a high hill, viewing all the affairs of men living, and looking on their greatest cities as little birds' nests, is very pleasant. Oh, the imperfection, the ingratitude, the levity, the inconstancy, the perfidiousness of those creatures we most servilely affect! Ah, did we but weigh man's pain with his payment, his crosses with his mercies, his miseries with his pleasures, we should then see that there is nothing got by the bargain, and conclude, " Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Chrysostom said once, " That if he were the fittest in the world to preach a sermon to the whole world, gathered together in one congregation, and had some high mountain for his pulpit, from whence he might have a prospect of all the world in his view, and were furnished with a voice of brass, a voice as loud as the trumpets of the archangel, that all the world might hear him, he would choose to preach upon no other text than that in the Psalms, O mortal men, *' How long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing? '* "—*Thomas Brooks*, 1608—1680.

Verse 2.—*" Love Vanity."* Men's affections are according to their principles; and every one loves that most *without him* which is most suitable to somewhat *within him: liking* is founded in *likeness*, and has therefore that word put upon it. It is so in whatsoever we can imagine; whether in temporals or spirituals, as to the things of this life, or of a better. Men's love is according to some working and impression upon their own spirits. And so it is here in the point of vanity; those which are vain persons, they delight in vain things; as children, they love such matters as are most agreeable to their childish dispositions, and as do suit them in that particular. Out of the heart comes all kind of evil.—*Thomas Horton*, 1675.

Verse 3.—*" The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself."* When God chooseth a man, he chooseth him for himself; for himself to converse with, to communicate himself unto him as a friend, a companion, and his delight. Now, it is holiness that makes us fit to live with the holy God for ever, since without it we cannot see him (Heb. xii. 14), which is God's main aim, and more than our being his children; as one must be supposed a man, one of mankind, having a soul reasonable, ere we can suppose him capable of adoption, or to be another man's heir. As therefore it was the main first design in God's eye, before the consideration of our happiness, let it be so in ours.—*Thomas Goodwin*, 1600—1679.

Verse 3.—What rare persons the godly are: " The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." Prov. xii. 26. As the flower of the sun, as the wine of Lebanon, as the sparkling upon Aaron's breastplate, such is the orient splendour of a person embellished with godliness . . . . . The godly are precious, therefore they are set apart for God, *" Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself."* We set apart things that are precious; the godly are set apart as God's peculiar treasure (Psalm cxxxv. 4); as his garden of delight (Cant. iv. 12); as his royal diadem (Isaiah xliii. 3); the godly are the excellent of the earth (Psalm xvi. 3); comparable to fine gold (Lam. iv. 2); double refined. Zech. xiii. 9. They are the glory of the creation. Isaiah xlvi. 13. Origen compares the saints to sapphires and crystals: God calls them jewels. Mal. iii. 17.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—*" The Lord will hear when I call unto him."* Let us remember that the experience of one of the saints concerning the verity of God's promises, and of the certainty of the written privileges of the Lord's people, is a sufficient proof of the right which all his children have to the same mercies, and a ground of hope that they also shall partake of them in their times of need.—*David Dickson*, 1653.

Verse 4.—*" Stand in awe, and sin not."* Jehovah is a name of great power and efficacy, a name that hath in it five vowels, without which no language can be expressed; a name that hath in it also three syllables, to signify the Trinity of persons, the eternity of God, One in Three and Three in One; a name of such dread and reverence amongst the Jews, that they tremble to name it, and therefore they use the name *Adonai* (*Lord*) in all their devotions. And thus ought every one to *" stand in awe, and sin not,"* by taking the name of God in vain; but to

sing praise, and honour, to remember, to declare, to exalt, to praise and bless it; for holy and reverend, only worthy and excellent is his name.—*Rayment*, 1630.

Verse 4.—"*Commune with your own heart.*" The language is similar to that which we use when we say, "Consult your better judgment," or, "Take counsel of your own good sense."—*Albert Barnes, in loc.*

Verse 4.—If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, accustom thyself to soliloquies, I mean to conference with thyself. He needs never be idle that hath so much business to do with his own soul. It was a famous answer which Antisthenes gave when he was asked what fruit he reaped by all his studies. By them, saith he, I have learned both to live and talk with myself. Soliloquies are the best disputes; every good man is best company for himself of all the creatures. Holy David enjoineth this to others, "*Commune with your own hearts upon your bed, and be still.*" "*Commune with your own hearts;*" when ye have none to speak with, talk to yourselves. Ask yourselves for what end ye were made, what lives ye have led, what times ye have lost, what love ye have abused, what wrath ye have deserved. Call yourselves to a reckoning, how ye have improved your talents, how true or false ye have been to your trust, what provision ye have laid in for an hour of death, what preparation ye have made for a great day of account. "*Upon your beds.*" Secrecy is the best opportunity for this duty. The silent night is a good time for this speech. When we have no outward objects to disturb us, and to call our eyes, as the fool's eyes are always, to the ends of the earth; then our eyes, as the eyes of the wise, may be in our heads; and then our minds, like the windows in Solomon's temple, may be broad inwards. The most successful searches have been made in the night season; the soul is then wholly shut up in the earthly house of the body, and hath no visits from strangers to disquiet its thoughts. Physicians have judged dreams a probable sign whereby they might find out the distempers of the body. Surely, then, the bed is no bad place to examine and search into the state of the soul. "*And be still.*" Self-communion will much help to curb your headstrong, ungodly passions. Serious consideration, like the casting up of earth amongst bees, will allay inordinate affections when they are full of fury, and make such a hideous noise. Though sensual appetites and unruly desires are, as the people of Ephesus, in an uproar, pleading for their former privilege, and expecting their wonted provision, as in the days of their predominancy, if conscience use its authority, commanding them in God's name, whose officer it is, to keep the king's peace, and argue it with them, as the town-clerk of Ephesus, "We are in danger to be called in question for this days's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this day's concourse;" all is frequently by this means hushed, and the tumult appeased without any further mischief.—*George Swinnock*, 1627—1673.

Verse 4.—"*Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.*" When we are most retired from the world, then we are most fit to have, and usually have, most communion with God. If a man would but abridge himself of sleep, and wake with holy thoughts, when deep sleep falleth upon sorrowful labouring men, he might be entertained with visions from God, though not such visions as Eliphaz and others of the saints have had, yet visions he might have. Every time God communicates himself to the soul, there is a vision of love, or mercy, or power, somewhat of God in his nature, or in his will, is showed unto us. David shows us divine work when we go to rest. The bed is not all for sleep: "*Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.*" Be still or quiet, and then commune with your hearts; and if *you* will commune with your hearts, God will come and commune with your hearts too, his Spirit will give you a loving visit and visions of his love.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—"*Stand in awe.*"

> With sacred *awe* pronounce his name,
> Whom words nor thoughts can reach.
>
> *John Needham*, 1768.

Verse 6.—Where Christ reveals himself there is satisfaction in the slenderest portion, and without Christ there is emptiness in the greatest fulness.—*Alexander Grosse, on enjoying Christ*, 1632.

Verse 6.—"*Many,*" said David, "*ask who will shew us any good?*" meaning

riches, and honour, and pleasure, which are not good. But when he came to godliness itself, he leaves out "*many*," and prayeth in his own person, "*Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;*" as if none would join with him.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 6.—"*Who will shew us any good?*" This is not a fair translation. The word *any* is not in the text, nor anything equivalent to it; and not a few have quoted *it*, and preached upon the text, placing the principal emphasis upon this illegitimate. The place is sufficiently emphatic. There are *multitudes who say, Who will shew us good?* Man wants *good;* he hates *evil* as evil, because he has *pain, suffering,* and *death* through it; and he wishes to find that *supreme good* which will content his heart, and save him from evil. But men mistake this good. They look for a good that is to gratify their *passions;* they have no notion of any happiness that does not come to them through the *medium of their senses.* Therefore they reject *spiritual good,* and they reject the supreme God, by whom alone all the powers of the soul of man can be gratified.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"*Lift thou up,*" etc. This was the blessing of the high priest and is the heritage of all the saints. It includes reconciliation, assurance, communion, benediction, in a word, the fulness of God. Oh, to be filled therewith!—*C. H. S.*

Verses 6, 7.—Lest riches should be accounted evil in themselves, God sometimes gives them to the righteous; and lest they should be considered as the *chief good,* he frequently bestows them on the wicked. But they are more generally the portion of his enemies than his friends. Alas! what is it to receive and not to be received? to have none other dews of blessing than such as shall be followed by showers of brimstone? We may compass ourselves with sparks of security, and afterwards be secured in eternal misery. This world is a floating island, and so sure as we cast anchor *upon* it, we shall be carried away *by* it. God, and all that he has made, is not more than God without anything that he has made. He can never want treasure who has such a golden mine. *He* is enough without the creature, but the *creature* is not anything without him. It is, therefore, better to enjoy him without anything else, than to enjoy everything else without him. It is better to be a wooden vessel filled with wine, than a golden one filled with water. *William Secker's Nonsuch Professor,* 1660.

Verse 7.— What madness and folly is it that the favourites of heaven should envy the men of the world, who at best do but feed upon the scraps that come from God's table! Temporals are the bones; spirituals are the marrow. Is it below a man to envy the dogs, because of the bones? And is it not much more below a Christian to envy others for temporals, when himself enjoys spirituals? *Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou hast put gladness in my heart.*" The comforts which God reserves for his mourners are filling comforts (Rom. xv. 13); "The God of hope fill you with joy" (John xvi. 24); "Ask that your joy may be full." When God pours in the joys of heaven they fill the heart, and make it run over (2 Cor. vii. 4); "I am exceeding joyful;" the Greek is, I overflow with joy, as a cup that is filled with wine till it runs over. Outward comforts can no more fill the heart than a triangle can fill a circle. Spiritual joys are satisfying (Psalm lxiii. 5); "My heart shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips;" "*Thou hast put gladness in my heart.*" Worldly joys do put gladness into the face, but the spirit of God puts gladness into the heart; divine joys are heart joys (Zech. x. 7; John xvi. 22); "Your heart shall rejoice" (Luke i. 47); "My spirit rejoiced in God." And to show how filling these comforts are, which are of a heavenly extraction, the Psalmist says they create greater joy than when "*corn and wine increase.*" Wine and oil may delight but not satisfy; they have their vacuity and indigence. We may say, as Zech. x. 2, "They comfort in vain;" outward comforts do sooner cloy than cheer, and sooner weary than fill. Xerxes offered great rewards to him that could find out a new pleasure; but the comforts of the Spirit are satisfactory, they recruit the heart (Psalm xciv. 19), "Thy comforts delight my soul." There is as much difference between heavenly comforts and earthly, as between a banquet that is eaten, and one that is painted on the wall.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 8.—It is said of the husbandman, that having cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and riseth day and night, and the seed springs and grows he knoweth

not how. Mark iv. 26, 27. So a good man having by faith and prayer cast his care upon God, he resteth night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him according to his holy will.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8.—When you have walked with God from morning until night, it remaineth that you *conclude* the day well, when you would give yourself to rest at night. Wherefore, first look back and take a strict view of your whole carriage that *day past.* Reform what you find amiss; and rejoice, or be grieved, as you find you have done well or ill, as you have advanced or declined in grace that day. Secondly, since you cannot sleep in safety if God, who is your *keeper* (Psalm cxi. 4, 5), do not *wake and watch for you* (Psalm cxxvii, 1); and though you have *God* to watch when you sleep, you cannot be safe, if he that watcheth be your *enemy.* Wherefore it is very convenient that at night you renew and confirm your peace with God by faith and prayer, commending and committing yourself to God's tuition by prayer (Psalm iii. 4, 5; Psalm xcii. 2), with thanksgiving before you go to bed. Then shall you lie *down in safety.* Psalm iv. 8. All this being done, yet while you are *putting off* your apparel, when you are *lying down,* and when you are *in bed,* before you sleep, it is good that *you commune with* your *own heart.* Psalm iv. 4. If possibly you can fall asleep with *some heavenly meditation,* then will your sleep be *more sweet* (Prov. iii. 21, 24, 25); and *more secure* (Prov. vi. 21, 22); your *dreams* fewer, or more *comfortable;* your head will be fuller of good thoughts (Prov. vi. 22), and your heart will be in a *better frame* when you *awake,* whether in the night or in the morning.—*Condensed from Henry Scudder's Daily Walk,* 1633.

Verse 8.—"*I will both,*" etc. We have now to retire for a moment from the strife of tongues and the open hostility of foes, into the stillness and privacy of the chamber of sleep. Here, also, we find the "I will" of trust. "*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.*" God is here revealed to us as exercising *personal care in the still chamber.* And there is something here which should be inexpressibly sweet to the believer, for this shows the minuteness of God's care, the individuality of his love; how it condescends and stoops, and acts, not only in great, but also in little spheres; not only where glory might be procured from great results, but where nought is to be had save the gratitude and love of a poor feeble creature, whose life has been protected and preserved, in a period of helplessness and sleep. How blessed would it be if we made a larger recognition of God in the still chamber; if we thought of him as being there in all hours of illness, of weariness, and pain; if we believed that his interest and care are as much concentrated upon the feeble believer there as upon his people when in the wider battle field of the strife of tongues. There is something inexpressibly touching in this "laying down" of the Psalmist. In thus lying down he voluntarily gave up guardianship of himself; he resigned himself into the hands of another; he did so completely, for in the absence of all care he slept; there was here a perfect trust. Many a believer lies down, but it is not to sleep. Perhaps he feels safe enough so far as his body is concerned, but cares and anxieties invade the privacy of his chamber; they come to try his faith and trust; they threaten, they frighten, and alas! prove too strong for trust. Many a poor believer might say, "I will lay me down, but not to sleep." The author met with a touching instance of this, in the case of an aged minister whom he visited in severe illness. This worthy man's circumstances were narrow, and his family trials were great; he said, "The doctor wants me to sleep, but how can I sleep with care sitting on my pillow?" It is the experience of some of the Lord's people, that although equal to an emergency or a continued pressure, a reaction sets in afterwards; and when they come to be alone their spirits sink, and they do not realise that strength from God, or feel that confidence in him which they felt while the pressure was exerting its force. . . . . There is a trial in stillness; and oftentimes the still chamber makes a larger demand upon loving trust than the battle field. O that we could trust God more and more with personal things! O that he were the God of our chamber, as well as of our temples and houses! O that we could bring him more and more into the minutiæ of daily life! If we did thus, we should experience a measure of rest to which we are, perhaps, strangers now; we should have less dread of the sick chamber; we should have that unharassed mind which conduces most to repose, in body and soul; we should be able to say, "I will lie down and sleep, *and leave to-morrow with God!*" Ridley's brother offered to remain with him during the night preceding his martyrdom, but the bishop declined, saying,

that " he meant to go to bed, and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his life."—*Philip Bennett Power's ' I Wills ' of the Psalms.*

Verse 8.—Due observation of Providence will both beget and secure inward tranquility in your minds amidst the vicissitudes and revolutions of things in this unstable vain world. " *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for the Lord only maketh me dwell in safety.*" He resolves that sinful fears of events shall not rob him of his inward quiet, nor torture his thoughts with anxious presages: he will commit all his concerns into that faithful fatherly hand that had hitherto wrought all things for him; and he means not to lose the comfort of one night's rest, nor bring the evil of to-morrow upon the day; but knowing in whose hand he was, wisely enjoys the sweet felicity of a resigned will. Now this tranquility of our minds is as much begotten and preserved by a due consideration of providence as by anything whatsoever.—*John Flavel*, 1627—1691.

Verse 8.—Happy is the Christian, who having nightly with this verse, committed himself to his bed as to his grave, shall at last, with the same words, resign himself to his grave as to his bed, from which he expects in due time to arise, and sing a morning hymn with the children of the resurrection.—*George Horne, D.D.*, 1776.

Verse 9.—" *Sleep.*"

" How blessed was that *sleep*
The sinless Saviour knew!
In vain the storm-winds blew,
Till he awoke to others' woes,
And hushed the billows to repose.

How beautiful is *sleep*—
The *sleep* that Christians know!
Ye mourners! cease your woe,
While soft upon his Saviour's breast,
The righteous sinks to endless rest."

Mrs. M'Cartree.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Is full of matter for a sermon upon, *past mercies a plea for present help.* The first sentence shows that believers desire, expect, and believe in a God that heareth prayer. The title—*God of my righteousness*, may furnish a text (see exposition), and the last sentence may suggest a sermon upon, " The best of saints must still appeal to God's mercy and sovereign grace."

Verse 2.—*Depravity of man* as evinced (1) by continuance in despising Christ, (2) loving vanity in his heart, and (3) seeking lies in his daily life.

Verse 2.—The length of the sinner's sin. " How long? " May be bounded by repentance, shall be by death, and yet shall continue in eternity.

Verse 3.—*Election.*—Its aspects towards God, our enemies, and ourselves.

Verse 3.—" *The Lord will hear when I call unto him.*" Answers to prayer certain to special persons. Mark out those who can claim the favour.

Verse 3.—*The gracious Separatist.* Who is he? Who separated him? With what end? How to make men know it?

Verse 4.—The sinner directed to review himself, that he may be convinced of sin.—*Andrew Fuller*, 1754—1815.

Verse 4.—" *Be still.*" Advice—good, practical, but hard to follow. Times when seasonable. Graces needed to enable one to be still. Results of quietness. Persons who most need the advice. Instances of its practice. Here is much material for a sermon.

Verse 5.—The nature of those sacrifices of righteousness which the Lord's people are expected to offer.—*William Ford Vance*, 1827.

Verse 6.—The cry of the world and the church contrasted. *Vox populi* not always *Vox Dei.*

Verse 6.—The cravings of the soul all satisfied in God.

Verses 6, 7.—An assurance of the Saviour's love, the source of unrivalled joy.

Verse 7.—The believer's joys. (1) Their source, " *Thou;* " (2) their season—

even now—" *Thou hast ;* " (3) their position, " *in my heart ;* " (4) their excellence, " *more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*"

Another excellent theme suggests itself—" The superiority of the joys of grace to the joys of earth ; " or, " Two sort of prosperity—which is to be the more desired ? "

Verse 8.—The peace and safety of the good man.—*Joseph Lathrop, D.D.*, 1805.

Verse 8.—A bedchamber for believers, a vesper song to sing in it, and a guard to keep the door.

Verse 8.—The Christian's good-night.

Verses 2 *to* 8.—The means which a believer should use to win the ungodly to Christ. (1). Expostulation, verse 2. (2.) Instruction, verse 3. (3.) Exhortation, verses 4, 5. (4.) Testimony to the blessedness of true religion, as in verses 6, 7. (5.) Exemplification of that testimony by the peace of faith, verse 8.

PSALM V.

TITLE.—" To the Chief Musician upon Nehiloth, a Psalm of David." *The Hebrew word Nehiloth is taken from another word, signifying " to perforate," " to bore through," whence it comes to mean a pipe or a flute; so that this song was probably intended to be sung with an accompaniment of wind instruments, such as the horn, the trumpet, flute, or cornet. However, it is proper to remark that we are not sure of the interpretation of these ancient titles, for the Septuagint translates it, " For him who shall obtain inheritance," and Aben Ezra thinks it denotes some old and well-known melody to which this Psalm was to be played. The best scholars confess that great darkness hangs over the precise interpretation of the titles; nor is this much to be regretted, for it furnishes an internal evidence of the great antiquity of the Book. Throughout the first, second, third, and fourth Psalms, you will have noticed that the subject is a contrast between the position, the character, and the prospects of the righteous and of the wicked. In this Psalm you will note the same. The Psalmist carries out a contrast between himself made righteous by God's grace, and the wicked who opposed him. To the devout mind there is here presented a precious view of the Lord Jesus, of whom it is said that in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalm should be divided into two parts, from the first to the seventh verse, and then from the eight to the twelfth. In the first part of the Psalm David most vehemently beseeches the Lord to hearken to his prayer, and in the second part he retraces the same ground.*

EXPOSITION.

GIVE ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.

There are two sorts of prayers—those expressed in words, and the unuttered longings which abide as silent meditations. Words are not the essence but the garments of prayer. Moses at the Red Sea cried to God, though he said nothing. Yet the use of language may prevent distraction of mind, may assist the powers of the soul, and may excite devotion. David, we observe, uses both modes of prayer, and craves for the one a hearing, and for the other a *consideration*. What an expressive word! *" Consider my meditation."* If I have asked that which is right, give it to me; if I have omitted to ask that which I most needed, fill up the vacancy in my prayer. " Consider my meditation." Let thy holy soul *consider* it as presented through my all-glorious Mediator: then regard thou it in thy wisdom, weigh it in the scales, judge thou of my sincerity, and of the true state of my necessities, and answer me in due time for thy mercy's sake! There may be prevailing intercession where there are no words; and alas! there may be words where there is no true supplication. Let us cultivate the *spirit* of prayer which is even better than the *habit* of prayer. There may be seeming prayer where there is little devotion. We should begin to pray before we kneel down, and we should not cease when we rise up.

2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

" The voice of my cry." In another Psalm we find the expression, " The voice of my weeping." Weeping has a voice—a melting, plaintive tone, an ear-piercing shrillness, which reaches the very heart of God: and *crying* hath a voice—a soul-moving eloquence; coming from *our* heart it reaches *God's* heart. Ah! my brothers and sisters, sometimes we cannot put our prayers into words: they are nothing but a *cry:* but the Lord can comprehend the meaning, for he hears a voice in our cry. To a loving father his children's cries are music, and they have a magic influence which his heart cannot resist. *" My King and my God."* Observe carefully these little pronouns, " *my* King, and *my* God." They are the pith and marrow of the plea. Here is a grand argument why God should answer prayer—because he is *our* King and *our* God. We are not aliens to him: he is the King of our

country. Kings are expected to hear the appeals of their own people. We are not strangers to him; we are his worshippers, and he is our God: ours by covenant, by promise, by oath, by blood.

"*For unto thee will I pray.*" Here David expresses his declaration that he will seek to God, and to God alone. God is to be the only object of worship: the only resource of our soul in times of need. Leave broken cisterns to the godless, and let the godly drink from the Divine fountain alone. "Unto thee *will I* pray." He makes a resolution, that as long as he lived he would pray. He would never cease to supplicate, even though the answer should not come.

3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.

Observe, this is not so much a prayer as a resolution, "'*My voice shalt thou hear,*' I will not be dumb, I will not be silent, I will not withhold my speech, I *will* cry to thee, for the fire that dwells within compels me to pray." We can sooner die than live without prayer. None of God's children are possessed with a dumb devil.

"*In the morning.*" This is the fittest time for intercourse with God. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. While the dew is on the grass, let grace drop upon the soul. Let us give to God the mornings of our days and the morning of our lives. Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night. Devotion should be both the morning star and the evening star.

If we merely read our English version, and want an explanation of these two sentences, we find it in the figure of an archer, "*I will direct my prayer unto thee,*" I will put my prayer upon the bow, I will direct it towards heaven, and then when I have shot up my arrow, *I will look up* to see where it has gone. But the Hebrew has a still fuller meaning than this—"I will *direct* my prayer." It is the word that is used for the laying in order of the wood and the pieces of the victim upon the altar, and it is used also for the putting of the shewbread upon the table. It means just this: "I will arrange my prayer before thee;" I will lay it out upon the altar in the morning, just as the priest lays out the morning sacrifice. I will *arrange* my prayer; or, as old Master Trapp has it, "I will marshal up my prayers," I will put them in order, call up all my powers, and bid them stand in their proper places, that I may pray with all my might, and pray acceptably.

"*And will look up,*" or, as the Hebrew might better be translated, "'I will look out,' I will look out for the answer; after I have prayed, I will expect that the blessing shall come." It is a word that is used in another place where we read of those who watched for the morning. So will I watch for thine answer, O my Lord! I will spread out my prayer like the victim on the altar, and I will look up, and expect to receive the answer by fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice.

Two questions are suggested by the last part of this verse. Do we not miss very much of the sweetness and efficacy of prayer by a want of careful meditation before it, and of hopeful expectation after it? We too often rush into the presence of God without forethought or humility. We are live men who present themselves before a king without a petition, and what wonder is it that we often miss the end of prayer? We should be careful to keep the stream of meditation always running; for this is the water to drive the mill of prayer. It is idle to pull up the flood-gates of a dry brook, and then hope to see the wheel revolve. Prayer without fervency is like hunting with a dead dog, and prayer without preparation is hawking with a blind falcon. Prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit, but he works by means. God made man, but he used the dust of the earth as a material: the Holy Ghost is the author of prayer, but he employs the thoughts of a fervent soul as the gold with which to fashion the vessel. Let not our prayers and praises be the flashes of a hot and hasty brain, but the steady burning of a well-kindled fire.

But, furthermore, do we not forget to watch the result of our supplications? We are like the ostrich, which lays her eggs and looks not for her young. We sow the seed, and are too idle to seek a harvest. How can we expect the Lord to open the windows of his grace, and pour us out a blessing, if we will not open the windows of expectation and look up for the promised favour? Let holy preparation link hands with patient expectation, and we shall have far larger answers to our prayers.

4 For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

And now the Psalmist having thus expressed his resolution to pray, you hear him putting up his prayer. He is pleading against his cruel and wicked enemies. He uses a most mighty argument. He begs of God to put them away from him, because they were displeasing to God himself. "*For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.*" "When I pray against my tempters," says David, "I pray against the very things which thou thyself abhorrest." *Thou* hatest evil: Lord, I beseech thee, deliver *me* from it!

Let us learn here the solemn truth of the hatred which a righteous God must bear towards sin. *He has no pleasure in wickedness*, however wittily, grandly, and proudly it may array itself. Its glitter has no charm for him. Men may bow before the successful villainy, and forget the wickedness of the battle in the gaudiness of the triumph, but the Lord of Holiness is not such-an-one as we are. "*Neither shall evil dwell with thee.*" He will not afford it the meanest shelter. Neither on earth nor in heaven shall evil share the mansion of God. Oh, how foolish are we if we attempt to entertain two guests so hostile to one another as Christ Jesus and the devil! Rest assured, Christ will not live in the parlour of our hearts if we entertain the devil in the cellar of our thoughts. "*The foolish shall not stand in thy sight.*" Sinners are fools written large. A little sin is a great folly, and the greatest of all folly is great sin. Such sinful fools as these must be banished from the court of heaven. Earthly kings were wont to have fools in their trains, but the only wise God will have no fools in his palace above. "*Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*" It is not a little dislike, but a thorough hatred which God bears to workers of iniquity. To be hated of God is an awful thing. O let us be very faithful in warning the wicked around us, for it will be a terrible thing for them to fall into the hands of an angry God! Observe, that evil speakers must be punished as well as evil workers, for "*thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing.*" All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. A man may lie without danger of the law of man, but he will not escape the law of God. Liars have short wings, their flight shall soon be over, and they shall fall into the fiery floods of destruction. "*The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.*" Bloody men shall be made drunk with their own blood, and they who began by deceiving others shall end with being deceived themselves. Our old proverb saith, "Bloody and deceitful men dig their own graves." The voice of the people is in this instance the voice of God. How forcible is the word *abhor!* Does it not show us how powerful and deep-seated is the hatred of the Lord against the workers of iniquity?

7 But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: *and* in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

With this verse the first part of the Psalm ends. The Psalmist has bent his knee in prayer: he has described before God, as an argument for his deliverance, the character and the fate of the wicked; and now he contrasts this with the condition of the righteous. "*But as for me, I will come into thy house.*" I will not stand at a distance, I will come into thy sanctuary, just as a child comes into his father's house. But I will not come there by my own merits; no, I have a multitude of sins, and therefore I will come *in the multitude of thy mercy.* I will approach thee with confidence because of thy immeasurable grace. God's judgments are all numbered, but his mercies are innumerable; he gives his wrath by weight, but without weight his mercy. "*And in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple,*"—towards the temple of thy holiness. The temple was not built on earth at that time; it was but a tabernacle; but David was wont to turn his eyes spiritually to that temple of God's holiness where between the wings of the Cherubim Jehovah dwells in light ineffable. Daniel opened his window towards Jerusalem, but we open our hearts towards heaven.

8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies ; make thy way straight before my face.

Now we come to the second part, in which the Psalmist repeats his arguments, and goes over the same ground again.

"*Lead me, O Lord,*" as a little child is led by its father, as a blind man is guided by his friend. It is safe and pleasant walking when God leads the way. "*In thy righteousness,*" not in *my* righteousness, for that is imperfect, but in *thine*, for thou art righteousness itself. "*Make thy way,*" not *my* way, "*straight before my face.*" Brethren, when we have learned to give up our own way, and long to walk in God's way, it is a happy sign of grace ; and it is no small mercy to see the way of God with clear vision straight before our face. Errors about duty may lead us into a sea of sins, before we know where we are.

9 For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth ; their inward part *is* very wickedness ; their throat *is* an open sepulchre ; they flatter with their tongue.

This description of depraved man has been copied by the Apostle Paul, and, together with some other quotations, he has placed it in the second chapter of Romans, as being an accurate description of the whole human race, not of David's enemies only, but of all men by nature. Note that remarkable figure, "*Their throat is an open sepulchre,*" a *sepulchre* full of loathsomeness, of miasma, of pestilence and death. But, worse than that, it is an *open* sepulchre, with all its evil gases issuing forth, to spread death and destruction all around. So, with the throat of the wicked, it would be a great mercy if it could always be closed. If we could seal in continual silence the mouth of the wicked it would be like a sepulchre shut up, and would not produce much mischief. But "their throat is an *open* sepulchre," consequently all the wickedness of their heart exhales, and comes forth. How dangerous is an open sepulchre ; men in their journeys might easily stumble therein, and find themselves among the dead. Ah ! take heed of the wicked man, for there is nothing that he will not say to ruin you ; he will long to destroy your character, and bury you in the hideous sepulchre of his own wicked throat. One sweet thought here, however. At the resurrection there will be a resurrection not only of bodies, but characters. This should be a great comfort to a man who has been abused and slandered. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun." The world may think you vile, and bury your character ; but if you have been upright, in the day when the graves shall give up their dead, this open sepulchre of the sinner's throat shall be compelled to give up your heavenly character, and you shall come forth and be honoured in the sight of men. "*They flatter with their tongue.* Or, as we might read it, "They have an oily tongue, a smooth tongue." A smooth tongue is a great evil ; many have been bewitched by it. There be many human ant-eaters that with their long tongues covered with oily words entice and entrap the unwary and make their gain thereby. When the wolf licks the lamb, he is preparing to wet his teeth in its blood.

10 Destroy thou them, O God ; let them fall by their own counsels ; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions ; for they have rebelled against thee.

"*Against thee :*" not against *me*. If they were *my* enemies I would forgive them, but I cannot forgive *thine*. We are to forgive *our* enemies, but God's enemies it is not in our power to forgive. These expressions have often been noticed by men of over refinement as being harsh, and grating on the ear. "Oh !" say they, "they are vindictive and revengeful." Let us remember that they might be translated as prophecies, not as wishes ; but we do not care to avail ourselves of this method of escape. We have never heard of a reader of the Bible who, after perusing these passages, was made revengeful by reading them, and it is but fair to test the nature of a writing by its effects. When we hear a judge condemning a murderer, however severe his sentence, we do not feel that we should be justified in condemning others for any private injury done to us. The Psalmist here speaks as a judge, *ex officio ;* he speaks as God's mouth, and in condemning the wicked he gives us no excuse whatever for uttering anything in the way of malediction upon those who have caused us personal offence. The most shameful

way of cursing another is by pretending to bless him. We were all somewhat amused by noticing the toothless malice of that wretched old priest of Rome when he foolishly cursed the Emperor of France with his blessing. He was blessing him in form and cursing him in reality. Now, in direct contrast we put this healthy commination of David, which is intended to be a blessing by warning the sinner of the impending curse. O impenitent man, be it known unto thee that all thy godly friends will give their solemn assent to the awful sentence of the Lord, which he shall pronounce upon thee in the day of doom! Our verdict shall applaud the condemning curse which the Judge of all the earth shall thunder against the godless.

In the following verse we once more find the contrast which has marked the preceding Psalms.

11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

Joy is the privilege of the believer. When sinners are destroyed our rejoicing shall be full. They laugh first and weep ever after; we weep now, but shall rejoice eternally. When they howl we shall *shout,* and as they must groan for ever, so shall we *ever shout* for joy. This holy bliss of ours has a firm foundation, for O Lord, we are *joyful in thee.* The eternal God is the well-spring of our bliss. We love God, and therefore we delight in him. Our heart is at ease in our God. We fare sumptuously every day because we feed on him. We have music in the house, music in the heart, and music in heaven, for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song; he also is become our salvation.

12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield.

Jehovah has ordained his people the heirs of blessedness, and nothing shall rob them of their inheritance. With all the fulness of his power he will bless them, and all his attributes shall unite to satiate them with divine contentment. Nor is this merely for the present, but the blessing reaches into the long and unknown future. "*Thou Lord, wilt bless the righteous.*" This is a promise of infinite length, of unbounded breadth, and of unutterable preciousness.

As for the defence which the believer needs in this land of battles, it is here promised to him in the fullest measure. There were vast shields used by the ancients as extensive as a man's whole person, which would surround him entirely. So says David, "*With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*" According to Ainsworth there is here also the idea of being crowned, so that we wear a royal helmet, which is at once our glory and defence. O Lord, ever give to us this gracious coronation!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.*" It is certain that the greater part of men, as they babble out vain, languid, and inefficacious prayers, most unworthy the ear of the blessed God, so they seem in some degree to set a just estimate upon them, neither hoping for any success from them, nor indeed seeming to be at all solicitous about it, but committing them to the mind as vain words, which in truth they are. But far be it from a wise and pious man, that he should so foolishly and coldly trifle in so serious an affair; his prayer has a certain tendency and scope, at which he aims with assiduous and repeated desires, and doth not only pray that he may pray, but that he may obtain an answer; and as he firmly believes that it may be obtained, so he firmly, and constantly, and eagerly urges his petition, that he may not flatter himself with an empty hope. *Robert Leighton, D.D.*

Verses 1, 2.—Observe the order and force of the words, "*my cry,*" "*the voice of my prayer;*" and also, "*give ear,*" "*consider,*" "*hearken.*" These expressions all evince the urgency and energy of David's feelings and petitions. First, we

have, "*give ear;*" that is, hear me. But it is of little service for the words to be heard, unless the "*cry,*" or the roaring, or the meditation, be *considered.* As if he had said, in a common way of expression, I speak with deep anxiety and concern, but with a failing utterance; and I cannot express myself, nor make myself understood as I wish. Do thou, therefore, understand from my feelings more than I am able to express in words. And, therefore, I add my "*cry;*" that what I cannot express in words for thee to hear, I may by my "*cry*" signify to thine understanding. And when thou hast understood me, then, O Lord "*Hearken unto the voice of my prayer,*" and despise not what thou hast thus heard and understood. We are not, however, to understand that hearing, understanding, and hearkening, are all different acts in God, in the same way as they are in us; but that our feelings towards God are to be thus varied and increased; that is, that we are first to desire to be heard, and then, that our prayers which are heard may be understood; and then, that being understood, they may be hearkened unto, that is, not disregarded.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—"*Meditation*" fits the soul for supplication; meditation fills the soul with good liquor, and then prayer broaches it, and sets it a-running. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue, "Lord, make me to know mine end." Psalm xxxix. 3, 4. Nay, to assure us that meditation was the mother which bred and brought forth prayer, he calls the child by its parent's name, "*Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.*" Meditation is like the charging of a piece, and prayer the discharging of it. "Isaac went into the field to meditate." Genesis xxiv. 63. The Septuagint, the Geneva translation, and Tremellius, in his marginal notes on it, read it to "pray;" and the Hebrew word שיח used there signifieth both to *pray* and *meditate;* whereby we may learn they are very near akin; like twins, they be in the same womb, in the same word. Meditation is the best beginning of prayer, and prayer is the best conclusion of meditation. When the Christian, like Daniel, hath first opened the windows of his soul by contemplation, then he may kneel down to prayer.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 3.—"*My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord.*"

When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like; our bodies but forerun
The spirit's duty; true hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flowers do to the sun:
Give him thy first thoughts, then, so shalt thou keep
Him company all day, and in him sleep.

Yet never sleep the sun up; prayer should
Dawn with the day, there are set awful hours
'Twixt heaven and us; the manna was not good
After sun-rising, for day sullies flowers.
Rise to prevent the sun; sleep doth sins glut,
And heaven's gate opens when the world's is shut.

Walk with thy fellow creatures; note the hush
And whisperings amongst them. Not a spring
Or leaf but hath his *morning* hymn; each bush
And oak doth know I AM—canst thou not sing?
O leave thy cares and follies! Go this way,
And thou art sure to prosper all the day.

Henry Vaughan, 1621—1695.

Verse 3.—"*My voice shalt thou hear in the morning.*" "*In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee,*" said Heman. That is the fittest time for devotion, you being then fresh in your spirits, and freest from distractions. Which opportunity for holy duties may fitly be called *the wings of the morning.*—*Edward Reyner,* 1658.

Verse 3.—"*In the morning.*" "In the days of our fathers," says Bishop Burnet, "when a person came early to the door of his neighbour, and desired to speak with the master of the house, it was as common a thing for the servants to tell him with freedom—'My master is at prayer,' as it now is to say, 'My master is not up.'"

Verse 3.—"*In the morning I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,*" or *I will marshal my prayer,* I will bring up petition after petition, pleading after pleading, even till I become like Jacob, a prince with God, till I have won the field and got the day. Thus the word is applied by a metaphor both to disputations

with men and supplications to God. Further, we may take the meaning plainly without any strain of rhetoric, *Set thy words in order before me.* Method is good in everything, either an express or covert method. Sometimes it is the best of art to cover it; in speaking there is a special use of method, for though, as one said very well (speaking of those who are more curious about method than serious about matter), *"Method never converted any man;"* yet method and the ordering of words is very useful. Our speeches should not be heaps of words, but words bound up; not a throng of words, but words set in array, or, as it were, in rank and file.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—*" I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."* In the words you may observe two things: first, David's posture in prayer; secondly, his practice after prayer. First, his posture in prayer, *" I will direct my prayer unto thee."* Secondly, his practice after prayer, *" And I will look up."* The prophet in these words, makes use of two military words. First, he would not only pray, but marshal up his prayers, he would put them in battle array; so much the Hebrew word ערך imports. Secondly, when he had done this, then he would be as a spy upon his watch-tower, to see whether he prevailed, whether he got the day or no; and so much the Hebrew word צפה imports. When David had set his prayers, his petitions, in rank and file, in good array, then he was resolved he would look abroad, he would look about him to see at what door God would send in an answer of prayer. He is either a fool or a madman, he is either very weak or very wicked, that prays and prays, but never looks after his prayers; that shoots many an arrow towards heaven, but never minds where his arrows alight.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 3.—David would *direct his prayer to God and look up;* not down to the world, down to corruption, but up to God what he would speak. Psalm lxxxv. 8. " I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Let the resolution of the prophet be thine, " I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." Micah vii. 7.—*William Greenhill,* 1650.

Verse 3.—*" I will direct my prayer to thee, and will look up,"* that is, I will trade, I will send out my spiritual commodities, and expect a gainful return; I will make my prayers, and not give them for lost, but look up for an answer. God will bring man home by a way contrary to that by which he wandered from him. Man fell from God by distrust, by having God in suspicion; God will bring him back by trust, by having good thoughts of him. Oh, how richly laden might the vessel which thou sendest out come home, wouldst thou but long and look for its return! —*George Swinnock.*

Verse 3.—Faith hath a supporting art after prayer: it supports the soul to expect a gracious answer: *" I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,"* or I will look; for what, but for a return? An unbelieving heart shoots at random, and never minds where his arrow lights, or what comes of his praying; but faith fills the soul with expectation. As a merchant, when he casts up his estate, he counts what he hath sent beyond sea, as well as what he hath in hand; so doth faith reckon upon what he hath sent to heaven in prayer and not received, as well as those mercies which he hath received, and are in hand at present. Now this expectation which faith raiseth in the soul after prayer, appears in the power that it hath to quiet and compose the soul in the interim between the sending forth, as I may say, the ship of prayer, and its return home with its rich lading it goes for, and it is more or less, according as faith's strength is. Sometimes faith comes from prayer in triumph, and cries, *Victoria.* It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian's soul before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. Yea, it will make the Christian disburse his praises for the mercy long before it is received..... For want of looking up many a prayer is lost. If you do not believe, why do you pray? And if you believe, why do you not expect? By praying you seem to depend on God; by not expecting, you again renounce your confidence. What is this, but to take his name in vain? O Christian, stand to your prayer in a holy expectation of what you have begged upon the credit of the promise.... Mordecai, no doubt, had put up many prayers for Esther, and therefore he waits at the king's gate, looking what answer God would in his providence give thereunto. Do thou likewise.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—*" Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness."* As a man that cutteth with a dull knife is the cause of cutting, but not of the ill-cutting

and hacking of the knife—the knife is the cause of that; or if a man strike upon an instrument that is out of tune, he is the cause of the sound, but not of the jarring sound—that is the fault of the untuned strings; or, as a man riding upon a lame horse, stirs him—the man is the cause of the motion, but the horse himself of the halting motion: thus God is the author of every action, but not of the evil of that action—that is from man. He that makes instruments and tools of iron or other metal, he maketh not the rust and canker which corrupteth them, that is from another cause; nor doth that heavenly workman, God Almighty, bring in sin and iniquity; nor can he be justly blamed if his creatures do soil and besmear themselves with the foulness of sin, for he made them good.—*Spencer's Things New and Old.*

Verses 4—6.—Here the Lord's alienation from the wicked is set forth gradually, and seems to rise by six steps. First, *he hath no pleasure in them;* secondly, *they shall not dwell with them;* thirdly, he casteth them forth, *they shall not stand in his sight;* fourthly, his heart turns from them, *thou hatest all the workers of iniquity;* fifthly, his hand is turned upon them, *thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing;* sixthly, his spirit riseth against them, and is alienated from them, *the Lord will abhor the bloody man.* This estrangement is indeed a *strange* (yet a certain) *punishment to "the workers of iniquity."* These words, *"the workers of iniquity,"* may be considered two ways. First, as intending (not all degrees of sinners, or sinners of every degree, but) the highest degree of sinners, great, and gross sinners, resolved and wilful sinners. Such as sin industriously, and, as it were, artificially, with skill and care to get themselves a name, as if they had an ambition to be accounted *workmen* that need not be ashamed in doing that whereof all ought to be ashamed; these, in strictness of Scripture sense, are *"workers of iniquity."* Hence note, *notorious sinners made sin their business, or their trade.* Though every sin be *a work of iniquity,* yet only some sinners are *"workers of iniquity;"* and they who are called so, make it their calling to sin. We read of some *who love and make a lie.* Rev. xxii. 15. A lie may be told by those who neither love nor make it; but there are lie-makers, and they, sure enough, are lovers of a lie. Such craftsmen in sinning are also described in Psalm lviii. 2.—"Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth." The psalmist doth not say, they had wickedness in their heart, but they did work it there; *the heart is a shop within, an underground shop;* there they did closely contrive, forge, and hammer out their wicked purposes, and fit them into actions.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—What an astonishing thing is sin, which maketh the God of love and Father of mercies an enemy to his creatures, and which could only be purged by the blood of the Son of God! Though all must believe this who believe the Bible, yet the exceeding sinfulness of sin is but weakly apprehended by those who have the deepest sense of it, and will never be fully known in this world.—*Thomas Adam's Private Thoughts,* 1701—1784.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—*"Thou hatest all workers of iniquity."* For what God thinks of sin, see Deut. vii. 22; Prov. vi. 16; Rev. ii. 6, 15; where he expresseth his detestation and hatred of it, from which hatred proceeds all those direful plagues and judgments thundered from the fiery mouth of his most holy law against it; nay, not only the work, but *worker* also of iniquity becomes the object of his hatred. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—*"Thou hatest all workers of iniquity."* If God's hatred be against the workers of iniquity, how great is it against iniquity itself! If a man hate a poisonous creature, he hates poison much more. The strength of God's hatred is against sin, and so should we hate sin, and hate it with strength; it is an abomination unto God, let it be so unto us. Prov. vi. 16—19, "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him; a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—Those whom the Lord hates must perish. But he hates impenitent sinners, *"Thou hatest all workers of iniquity."* Now, who are so properly workers of iniquity as those who are so eager at it that they will not leave this work, though they be in danger to perish for it? Christ puts it out of doubt. The workers of iniquity must perish. Luke xiii. 27. Those whom the Lord will tear in his wrath must perish with a witness; but those whom he hates, he tears, &c.

Job xvi. 8. What more due to such impenitent sinners than hatred! What more proper than wrath, since they treasure up wrath? Rom. ii. Will he entertain those in the bosom of love whom his soul hates? No; destruction is their portion. Prov. xxi. 15. If all the curses of the law, all the threatenings of the gospel, all judgments in earth or in hell, will be the ruin of him, he must perish. If the Lord's arm be strong enough to wound him dead, he must die. Psalm lxviii. 21. . . . . Avoid all that Christ hates. If you love, approve, entertain that which is hateful to Christ, how can he love you? What is that which Christ hates? The psalmist (Psalm xlv. 7) tells us, making it one of Christ's attributes, to hate wickedness. . . . As Christ hates iniquity, so the "*workers of iniquity.*" You must not love them, so as to be intimate with them, delight in the company of evil doers, openly profane, scorners of godliness, obstructors of the power of it. 2 Cor. vi. 14—18. If you love so near relations to wicked men, Christ will have no relation to you. If you would have communion with Christ in sweet acts of love, you must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor those that act them.—*David Clarkson, B.D.*, 1621—1686.

Verse 6.—"*Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing,*" whether in jest or earnest. Those that lie in jest will (without repentance) go to hell in earnest.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing,*" etc. In the same field wherein Absalom raised battle against his father, stood the oak that was his gibbet. The mule whereon he rode was his hangman, for the mule carried him to the tree, and the hair wherein he gloried served for a rope to hang. Little know the wicked how everything which now they have, shall be a snare to trap them when God begins to punish them.—*William Cowper*, 1612.

Verse 7.—"*In thy fear will I worship.*" As natural fear makes the spirits retire from the outward parts of the body to the heart, so a holy fear of miscarrying, in so solemn a duty, would be a means to call thy thoughts from all exterior carnal objects, and fix them upon the duty in hand. As the sculpture is on the seal, so will the print on the wax be; if the fear of God be deeply engraven on thy heart, there is no doubt but it will make a suitable impression on the duty thou performest. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 7.—David saith, "*In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.*" The temple did shadow forth the body of our Lord Christ, the Mediator, in whom only our prayers and services are accepted with the Father which Solomon respected in looking towards the temple.—*Thomas Manton, D.D.*, 1620—1677.

Verse 7.—"*But as for me,*" etc. A blessed verse this! a blessed saying! The words and the sense itself, carry with them a powerful contrast. For there are two things with which this life is exercised, HOPE and FEAR, which are, as it were, those two springs of Judges i. 15, the one from above, the other from beneath. *Fear* comes from beholding the threats and fearful judgments of God; as being a God in whose sight no one is clean, every one is a sinner, every one is damnable. But *hope* comes from beholding the promises, and the all-sweet mercies of God; as it is written (Psalm xxv. 6), "Remember, O Lord, thy lovingkindnesses, and thy tender mercies which have been ever of old." Between these two, as between the upper and nether millstone, we must always be ground and kept, that we never turn either to the right hand or to the left. For this turning is the state peculiar to hypocrites, who are exercised with the two contrary things, security and presumption. *Martin Luther.*

Verse 9.—If the whole soul be infected with such a desperate disease, what a great and difficult work is it to regenerate, to restore men again to spiritual life and vigour, when every part of them is seized by such a mortal distemper! How great a cure doth the Spirit of God effect in restoring a soul by sanctifying it! To heal but the lungs or the liver, if corrupted, is counted a great cure, though performed but upon one part of thee; but all thy inward parts are very rottenness. "*For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness: their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.*" How great a cure is it then to heal thee! Such as is only in the skill and power of God to do.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 9.—"*Their throat is an open sepulchre.*" This figure graphically portrays the filthy conversation of the wicked. Nothing can be more abominable to the senses than an open sepulchre, when a dead body beginning to putrefy steams forth

its tainted exhalations. What proceeds out of their mouth is infected and putrid; and as the exhalation from a sepulchre proves the corruption within, so it is with the corrupt conversation of sinners.—*Robert Haldane's "Expositions of the Epistle to the Romans,"* 1835.

Verse 9.—*"Their throat is an open sepulchre."* This doth admonish us, (1) that the speeches of natural unregenerate men are unsavoury, rotten, and hurtful to others; for, as a sepulchre doth send out noisome savours and filthy smells, so evil men do utter rotten and filthy words. (2) As a sepulchre doth consume and devour bodies cast into it, so wicked men do with their cruel words destroy others; they are like a gulf to destroy others. (3) As a sepulchre, having devoured many corpses, is still ready to consume more, being never satisfied, so wicked men, having overthrown many with their words, do proceed in their outrage, seeking whom they may devour.—*Thomas Wilson*, 1653.

Verse 9.—*"Their inward part,"* etc. Their hearts are storehouses for the devil.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—All those portions where we find apparently prayers that breathe revenge, are never to be thought of as anything else than the *breathed assent of righteous souls* to the justice of their God, who taketh vengeance on sin. When taken as the words of Christ himself, they are no other than an echo of the Intercessor's acquiescence at last in the sentence on the barren fig-tree. It is as if he cried aloud, "Hew it down now, I will intercede no longer, the doom is righteous, *destroy them, O God; cast them out in* (or, for) *the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee.*" And in the same moment he may be supposed to invite his saints to sympathise in his decision; just as in Rev. xviii. 20, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets." In like manner, when one of Christ's members, in entire sympathy with his Head, views the barren fig-tree from the same point of observation, and sees the glory of God concerned in inflicting the blow, he too can cry, "Let the axe smite!" Had Abraham stood beside the angel who destroyed Sodom, and seen how Jehovah's name required the ruin of these impenitent rebels, he would have cried out, "Let the shower descend; let the fire and brimstone come down!" not in any spirit of revenge; not from want of tender love to souls, but from intense earnestness of concern for the glory of his God. We consider this explanation to be the real key that opens all the difficult passages in this book, where curses seem to be called for on the head of the ungodly. They are no more than a carrying out of Deut. xxvii. 15—26, "Let all the people say, Amen," and an entering into the Lord's holy abhorrence of sin, and delight in acts of justice expressed in the "Amen hallelujah," of Rev. xix. 3.—*Andrew A. Bonar*, 1859.

Verse 10.—(*Or imprecatory passages generally*). Lord, when in my daily service I read David's Psalms, give me to alter the accent of my soul according to their several subjects. In such Psalms wherein he confesseth his sins, or requesteth thy pardon, or praiseth for former, or prayeth for future favours, in all these give me to raise my soul to as high a pitch as may be. But when I come to such Psalms wherein he curseth his enemies, O there let me bring my soul down to a lower note. For those words were made only to fit David's mouth. I have the like breath, but not the same spirit to pronounce them. Nor let me flatter myself, that it is lawful for me, with David, to curse thine enemies, lest my deceitful heart entitle mine enemies to be thine, and so what was religion in David, prove malice in me, whilst I act revenge under the pretence of piety.—*Thomas Fuller, D.D.*, 1608—1661.

Verse 12.—When the strong man armed comes against us, when he darts his fiery darts, what can hurt us, if God compass us about with *his lovingkindness as with a shield?* He can disarm the tempter and restrain his malice, and tread him under our feet. If God be not with us, if he do not give us sufficient grace, so subtle, so powerful, so politic an enemy, will be too hard for us. How surely are we foiled, and get the worse, when we pretend to grapple with him in our own strength! How many falls, and how many bruises by those falls have we got, by relying too much on our own skill? How often have we had the help of God when we have humbly asked it! And how sure are we to get the victory, *if Christ pray for us that we do not fail!* Luke xxii. 31. Where can we go for shelter but unto God our Maker! When this lion of the forest does begin to roar, how will he terrify and vex us, till he that permits him for awhile to trouble us, be pleased to chain him up again!—*Timothy Rogers*, 1691.

Verse 12.—" *As with a shield.*" Luther, when making his way into the presence of Cardinal Cajetan, who had summoned him to answer for his heretical opinions at Augsburg, was asked by one of the Cardinal's minions, where he should find a shelter, if his patron, the Elector of Saxony, should desert him? " Under the shelter of heaven! " was the reply. The silenced minion turned round and went his way.

Verse 12.—" *With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*" The shield is not for the defence of any particular part of the body, as almost all the other pieces are: helmet, fitted for the head; plate designed for the breast; and so others, they have their several parts, which they are fastened to; but the shield is a piece that is intended for the defence of the whole body. It was used therefore to be made very large; for its broadness, called a gate or door, because so long and large, as in a manner to cover the whole body. And if the shield were not large enough at once to cover every part, yet being a movable piece of armour, the skilful soldier might turn it this way or that way, to catch the blow or arrow from lighting on any part they were directed to. And this indeed doth excellently well set forth the universal use that faith is of to the Christian. It defends the whole man: every part of the Christian by it is preserved . . . . . The shield doth not only defend the whole body, but it is a defence to the soldier's armour also; it keeps the arrow from the helmet as well as head, from the breast and breastplate also. Thus faith, it is armour upon armour, a grace that preserves all the other graces.—*William Gurnall.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1, 2.—Prayer in its threefold form. " *Words, meditation, cry.*" Showing how utterance is of no avail without heart, but that fervent longings and silent desires are accepted, even when unexpressed.

Verse 3.—The excellence of morning devotion.

Verse 3 (*last two clauses*).—1. Prayer directed. 2. Answers expected.

Verse 4.—God's hatred of sin an example to his people.

Verse 5.—" *The foolish.*" Show why sinners are justly called fools.

Verse 7.—" *Multitude of thy mercy.*" Dwell upon the varied grace and goodness of God.

Verse 7.—The devout resolution.

Verse 7.—I. Observe the *singularity* of the resolution. II. Mark the *object* of the resolution. It regards the service of God in the sanctuary. " I will come into thine *house* . . . . . in thy fear will I *worship* towards thy *holy temple.*" III. The *manner* in which he would accomplish the resolution. (1) Impressed with a sense of the divine goodness: " I will come into thy house in *the multitude of thy mercy.*" (2) Filled with holy veneration: " And *in thy fear* will I worship."—*William Jay*, 1842.

Verse 8.—God's guidance needed always, and especially when enemies are watching us.

Verse 10.—Viewed as a threatening. The sentence, " Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions," is specially fitted to be the groundwork of a very solemn discourse.

Verse 11.—I. The character of the righteous: *faith and love.* II. The privileges of the righteous. (1) *Joy*—great, pure, satisfying, triumphant (*shout*), constant (*ever*). (2) *Defence*—by power, providence, angels, grace, etc.

Verse 11.—Joy in the Lord both a duty and a privilege.

Verse 12 (*first clause*).—*The divine blessing upon the righteous.* It is ancient, effectual, constant, extensive, irreversible, surpassing, eternal, infinite.

Verse 12 (*second clause*).—A sense of divine favour a defence to the soul.

PSALM VI.

TITLE.—*This Psalm is commonly known as the first of* THE PENITENTIAL PSALMS,* *and certainly its language well becomes the lip of a penitent, for it expresses at once the sorrow* (*verses* 3, 6, 7), *the humiliation* (*verses* 2 *and* 4), *and the hatred of sin* (*verse* 8), *which are the unfailing marks of the contrite spirit when it turns to God. O Holy Spirit, beget in us the true repentance which needeth not to be repented of. The title of this Psalm is,* " To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith,‡ A Psalm of David," *that is, to the chief musician with stringed instruments, upon the eight, probably the octave. Some think it refers to the bass or tenor key, which would certainly be well adapted to this mournful ode. But we are not able to understand these old musical terms, and even the term " Selah," still remains untranslated. This, however, should be no difficulty in our way. We probably lose but very little by our ignorance, and it may serve to confirm our faith. It is a proof of the high antiquity of these Psalms that they contain words, the meaning of which is lost even to the best scholars of the Hebrew language. Surely these are but incidental (accidental I might almost say, if I did not believe them to be designed by God), proofs of their being, what they profess to be, the ancient writings of King David of olden times.*

DIVISION.—*You will observe that the Psalm is readily divided into two parts. First, there is the Psalmist's plea in his great distress, reaching from the first to the end of the seventh verse. Then you have, from the eighth to the end, quite a different theme. The Psalmist has changed his note. He leaves the minor key, and betakes himself to sublime strains. He tunes his note to the high key of confidence, and declares that God hath heard his prayer, and hath delivered him out of all his troubles.*

EXPOSITION.

O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?

4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

5 For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

Having read through the first division, in order to see it as a whole, we will now look at it verse by verse. " *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger.*" The Psalmist is very conscious that he deserves to be rebuked, and he feels, moreover, that the rebuke in some form or other must come upon him, if not for condemnation, yet for conviction and sanctification. " Corn is cleaned with wind, and the soul with chastenings." It were folly to pray against the golden hand which enriches us by its blows. He does not ask that the rebuke may be totally withheld, for he might thus lose a blessing in disguise; but, " Lord, rebuke me not in *thine anger.*" If thou remindest me of my sin, it is good; but, oh, remind me not of it as one incensed against me, lest thy servant's heart should sink in despair. Thus saith Jeremiah, " O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." I know that I must be chastened, and though I shrink from the rod yet do I feel that it will be for my benefit; but, oh, my God, " *chasten me not in thy hot displeasure,*" lest the rod become a sword, and lest in smiting, thou shouldest also kill. So may we pray that the chastisements of our gracious God, if they may not

* The other six are, xxxii., xxxviii., li., cii., cxxx., cxliii. ‡ 1 Chron. xv. 21.

be entirely removed, may at least be sweetened by the consciousness that they are "not in anger, but in his dear covenant love."

2, 3. "*Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak.*" Though I deserve destruction, yet let thy mercy pity my frailty. This is the right way to plead with God if we would prevail. Urge not your goodness or your greatness, but plead your sin and your littleness. Cry, "*I am weak*," therefore O Lord, give me strength and crush me not. Send not forth the fury of thy tempest against so weak a vessel. Temper the wind to the shorn lamb. Be tender and pitiful to a poor withering flower, and break it not from its stem. Surely this is the plea that a sick man would urge to move the pity of his fellow if he were striving with him, "Deal gently with me, 'for I am weak.'" A sense of sin had so spoiled the Psalmist's pride, so taken away his vaunted strength, that he found himself weak to obey the law, weak through the sorrow that was in him, too weak, perhaps, to lay hold on the promise. "*I am weak.*" The original may be read, "I am one who droops," or withered like a blighted plant. Ah! beloved, we know what this means, for we, too, have seen our glory stained, and our beauty like a faded flower.

"*O Lord heal me; for my bones are vexed.*" Here he prays for *healing*, not merely the mitigation of the ills he endured, but their entire removal, and the curing of the wounds which had arisen therefrom. His bones were "*shaken*,' as the Hebrew has it. His terror had become so great that his very bones shook; not only did his flesh quiver, but the bones, the solid pillars of the house of manhood, were made to tremble. "My bones are shaken." Ah, when the soul has a sense of sin, it is enough to make the bones shake; it is enough to make a man's hair stand up on end to see the flames of hell beneath him, an angry God above him, and danger and doubt surrounding him. Well might he say, "My bones are shaken." Lest, however, we should imagine that it was merely bodily sickness—although bodily sickness might be the outward sign—the Psalmist goes on to say, "*My soul is also sore vexed.*" Soul-trouble is the very soul of trouble. It matters not that the bones shake if the soul be firm, but when the soul itself is also sore vexed this is agony indeed. "*But thou, O Lord, how long?*" This sentence ends abruptly, for words failed, and grief drowned the little comfort which dawned upon him. The Psalmist had still, however, some hope; but that hope was only in his God. He therefore cries, "O Lord, how long?" The coming of Christ into the soul in his priestly robes of grace is the grand hope of the penitent soul; and, indeed, in some form or other, Christ's appearance is, and ever has been, the hope of the saints.

Calvin's favourite exclamation was "Domine usque quo"—"*O Lord, how long?*" Nor could his sharpest pains, during a life of anguish, force from him any other word. Surely this is the cry of the saints under the altar, "O Lord, how long?" And this should be the cry of the saints waiting for the millennial glories, "Why are his chariots so long in coming; Lord, how long?" Those of us who have passed through conviction of sin knew what it was to count our minutes hours, and our hours years, while mercy delayed its coming. We watched for the dawn of grace, as they that watch for the morning. Earnestly did our anxious spirits ask, "O Lord, how long?"

4 "*Return, O Lord; deliver my soul.*" As God's absence was the main cause of his misery, so his return would be enough to deliver him from his trouble. "*Oh save me for thy mercies' sake.*" He knows where to look, and what arm to lay hold upon. He does not lay hold on God's left hand of justice, but on his right hand of mercy. He knew his iniquity too well to think of merit, or appeal to anything but the grace of God.

"*For thy mercies' sake.*" What a plea that is! How prevalent it is with God! If we turn to justice, what plea can we urge? but if we turn to mercy we may still cry, notwithstanding the greatness of our guilt, "Save me for thy mercies' sake."

Observe how frequently David here pleads the name of Jehovah, which is always intended where the word LORD is given in capitals. Five times in four verses we here meet with it. Is not this a proof that the glorious name is full of consolation to the tempted saint? Eternity, Infinity, Immutability, Self-existence, are all in the name Jehovah, and all are full of comfort.

5. And now David was in great fear of death—death temporal, and perhaps death eternal. Read the passage as you will, the following verse is full of power. "*For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?*" Churchyards are silent places; the vaults of the sepulchre echo not with songs. Damp earth covers dumb mouths. "O Lord?" said he, "if thou wilt spare me I

will praise thee. If I die, then must my mortal praise at least be suspended; and if I perish in hell, then thou wilt never have any thanksgiving from me. Songs of gratitude cannot rise from the flaming pit of hell. True, thou wilt doubtless be glorified, even in my eternal condemnation, but then, O Lord, I cannot glorify thee voluntarily; and among the sons of men, there will be one heart the less to bless thee." Ah! poor trembling sinners, may the Lord help you to use this forcible argument. It is for God's glory that a sinner should be saved. When we seek pardon, we are not asking God to do that which will stain his banner, or put a blot on his escutcheon. He delighteth in mercy. It is his peculiar, darling attribute. Mercy honours God. Do not we ourselves say, "Mercy blesseth him that gives, and him that takes?" And surely, in some diviner sense, this is true of God, who, when he gives mercy, glorifies himself.

6, 7.—The Psalmist gives a fearful description of his long agony: "*I am weary with my groaning.*" He had groaned till his throat was hoarse; he had cried for mercy till prayer became a labour. God's people may groan, but they may not grumble. Yea, they must groan, being burdened, or they will never shout in the day of deliverance. The next sentence, we think, is not accurately translated. It should be, "*I shall make my bed to swim every night,*" (when nature needs rest, and when I am most alone with my God). That is to say, my grief is fearful even now, but if God do not soon save me, it will not stay of itself, but will increase, until my tears will be so many, that my bed itself shall swim. A description rather of what he feared would be, than of what had actually taken place. May not our forebodings of future woe become arguments which faith may urge when seeking present mercy? "*I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.*" As an old man's eye grows dim with years, so says David, my eye is grown red and feeble through weeping. Conviction sometimes has such an effect upon the body, that even the outward organs are made to suffer. May not this explain some of the convulsions and hysterical attacks which have been experienced under convictions in the revivals in Ireland? Is it surprising that some should be smitten to the earth, and begin to cry aloud; when we find that David himself made his bed to swim, and grew old while he was under the heavy hand of God? Ah! brethren, it is no light matter to feel one's self a sinner, condemned at the bar of God. The language of this Psalm is not strained and forced, but perfectly natural to one in so sad a plight.

8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.

10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return *and* be ashamed suddenly.

8. Hitherto, all has been mournful and disconsolate, but now-

> "Your harps, ye trembling saints,
> Down from the willows take."

Ye must have your times of weeping, but let them be short. Get ye up, get ye up, from your dunghills! Cast aside your sackcloth and ashes! Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

David has found peace, and rising from his knees he begins to sweep his house of the wicked. "*Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*" The best remedy for us against an evil man is a long space between us both. "Get ye gone; I can have no fellowship with you." Repentance is a practical thing. It is not enough to bemoan the desecration of the temple of the heart, we must scourge out the buyers and sellers, and overturn the tables of the money changers. A pardoned sinner *will hate the sins* which cost the Saviour his blood. Grace and sin are quarrelsome neighbours, and one or the other must go to the wall.

"*For the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.*" What a fine Hebraism, and what grand poetry it is in English! "He hath heard the voice of my weeping." Is there a voice in weeping? Does weeping speak? In what language doth it utter its meaning? Why, in that universal tongue which is known and understood in all the earth, and even in heaven above. When a man weeps, whether he be a Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, it has the same meaning in it. Weeping is the eloquence of sorrow. It is an unstammering orator, needing

no interpreter, but understood of all. Is it not sweet to believe that our tears are understood even when words fail! Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate intercession which will wear its way right surely into the very heart of mercy, despite the stony difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will "weep" when I cannot plead, for thou hearest the voice of my weeping.

9. "*The Lord hath heard my supplication.*" The Holy Spirit had wrought into the Psalmist's mind the confidence that his prayer was heard. This is frequently the privilege of the saints. Praying the prayer of faith, they are often infallibly assured that they have prevailed with God. We read of Luther that, having on one occasion wrestled hard with God in prayer, he came leaping out of his closet crying, "*Vicimus, vicimus;*" that is, "We have conquered, we have prevailed with God." Assured confidence is no idle dream, for when the Holy Ghost bestows it upon us, we know its reality, and could not doubt it, even though all men should deride our boldness. "*The Lord will receive my prayer.*" Here is past experience used for future encouragement. *He hath, he will.* Note this, O believer, and imitate its reasoning.

10. "*Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed.*" This is rather a prophecy than an imprecation, it may be read in the future. "All my enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed." *They shall return and be ashamed instantaneously,*—in a moment;—their doom shall come upon them suddenly. Death's day is doom's day, and both are sure and may be sudden. The Romans were wont to say, "The feet of the avenging Deity are shod with wool." With noiseless footsteps vengeance nears its victim, and sudden and overwhelming shall be its destroying stroke. If this were an imprecation, we must remember that the language of the old dispensation is not that of the new. We pray *for* our enemies, not *against* them. God have mercy on them, and bring them into the right way.

Thus the Psalm, like those which precede it, shows the different estates of the godly and the wicked. O Lord, let us be numbered *with* thy people, both now and for ever!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—David was a man that was often exercised with sickness and troubles from enemies, and in all the instances almost that we meet with in the Psalms of these his afflictions, we may observe the outward occasions of trouble brought him under the suspicion of God's wrath and his own iniquity; so that he was seldom sick, or persecuted, but this called on the disquiet of conscience, and brought his sin to remembrance; as in this Psalm, which was made on the occasion of his sickness, as appears from verse eight, wherein he expresseth the vexation of his soul under the apprehension of God's anger; all his other griefs running into this channel, as little brooks, losing themselves in a great river, change their name and nature. He that was at first only concerned for his sickness, is now wholly concerned with sorrow and smart under the fear and hazard of his soul's condition; the like we may see in Psalm xxxviii, and many places more.—*Richard Gilpin*, 1677.

Verse 1.—"*Rebuke me not.*" God hath two means by which he reduceth his children to obedience; his word, by which he rebukes them; and his rod, by which he chastiseth them. The word precedes, admonishing them by his servants whom he hath sent in all ages to call sinners to repentance: of the which David himself saith, "Let the righteous rebuke me;" and as a father doth first rebuke his disordered child, so doth the Lord speak to them. But when men neglect the warnings of his word, then God as a good father, takes up the rod and beats them. Our Saviour wakened the three disciples in the garden three times, but seeing that served not, he told them that Judas and his band were coming to awaken them whom his own voice could not waken.—*A. Symson*, 1638.

Verse 1.—"*Jehovah, rebuke me not in thine anger,*" etc. He does not altogether refuse punishment, for that would be unreasonable; and to be without it, he judged would be more hurtful than beneficial to him; but what he is afraid of is the wrath

of God, which threatens sinners with ruin and perdition. To anger and indignation David tacitly opposes fatherly and gentle chastisement, and this last he was willing to bear.—*John Calvin*, 1509—1564.

Verse 1.—" *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger.*"

The anger of the Lord? Oh, dreadful thought!
How can a creature frail as man endure
The tempest of his wrath? Ah, whither flee
To 'scape the punishment he well deserves?
Flee to the cross! the great atonement there
Will shield the sinner, if he supplicate
For pardon with repentance true and deep,
And faith that questions not. Then will the frown
Of anger pass off the face of God,
Like a black tempest cloud that hides the sun. *Anon.*

Verse 1.—" *Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger,*" etc.; that is, do not lay upon me that thou hast threatened in thy law; where anger is not put for the decree, nor the execution, but for the denouncing. So (Matt. iii. 11, and so Hos. xi. 9), " I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger," that is, I will not execute my wrath as I have declared it. Again, it is said, he executes punishment on the wicked; he declares it not only, but executeth it, so anger is put for the execution of anger.—*Richard Stock*, 1641.

Verse 1.—" *Neither chasten me in thine hot displeasure.*"

O keep up life and peace within,
If I must feel thy chastening rod!
Yet kill not me, but kill my sin,
And let me know thou art my God.
O give my soul some sweet foretaste
Of that which I shall shortly see!
Let faith and love cry to the last,
" Come, Lord, I trust myself with thee!"

Richard Baxter, 1615—1691.

Verse 2.—" *Have mercy upon me, O Lord.*" To fly and escape the anger of God, David sees no means in heaven or in earth, and therefore retires himself to God, even to him who wounded him that he might heal him. He flies not with Adam to the bush, nor with Saul to the witch, nor with Jonah to Tarshish; but he appeals from an angry and just God to a merciful God, and from himself to himself. The woman who was condemned by King Philip, appealed from Philip being drunken to Philip being sober. But David appeals from one virtue, justice, to another, mercy. There may be appellation from the tribunal of man to the justice-seat of God; but when thou art indicted before God's justice-seat, whither or to whom wilt thou go but to himself and his mercy-seat, which is the highest and last place of appellation? " I have none in heaven but thee, nor in earth besides thee." . . . . David, under the name of *mercy*, includeth all things, according to that of Jacob to his brother Esau, " I have gotten mercy, and therefore I have gotten all things." Desirest thou any thing at God's hands? Cry for *mercy*, out of which fountain all good things will spring to thee.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 2.—" *For I am weak.*" Behold, what rhetoric he useth to move God to cure him, " *I am weak,*" an argument taken from his weakness, which indeed were a weak argument to move any man to show his favour, but is a strong argument to prevail with God. If a diseased person would come to a physician, and only lament the heaviness of his sickness, he would say, God help thee; or an oppressed person come to a lawyer, and show him the estate of his action and ask his advice, that is a golden question; or to a merchant to crave raiment, he will either have present money or a surety; or a courtier favour, you must have your reward ready in your hand. But coming before God the most forcible argument that ye can use is your necessity, poverty, tears, misery, unworthiness, and confessing them to him, it shall be an open door to furnish you with all things that he hath. . . . . The tears of our misery are forcible arrows to pierce the heart of our heavenly Father, to deliver us and pity our hard case. The beggars lay open their sores to the view of the world, that the more they may move men to pity them. So let us deplore our miseries to God, that he, with the pitiful Samaritan, at the sight of our wounds, may help us in due time.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 2.—" *Heal me,*" etc. David comes not to take physic upon wantonness, but because the disease is violent, because the accidents are vehement; so vehement, so violent, as that it hath pierced *ad ossa*, and *ad animam*, " *My bones are vexed, and my soul is sore troubled,*" therefore " *heal me;* " which is the reason upon which he grounds this second petition, " *Heal me, because my bones are vexed,*" etc.—*John Donne.*

Verse 2.—" *My bones are vexed.*" The Lord can make the strongest and most insensible part of man's body sensible of his wrath when he pleaseth to touch him, for here David's bones are vexed.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—The term " *bones* " frequently occurs in the psalms, and if we examine we shall find it used in three different senses. (1.) It is sometimes applied literally to our blessed Lord's human body, to the body which hung upon the cross, as, " They pierced my hands and my feet; I may tell all my bones." (2.) It has sometimes also a further reference to his mystical body the church. And then it denotes all the members of Christ's body that stand firm in the faith, that cannot be moved by persecutions, or temptations, however severe, as, " All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee? " (3.) In some passages the term bones is applied to the soul, and not to the body, to the inner man of the individual Christian. Then it implies the strength and fortitude of the soul, the determined courage which faith in God gives to the righteous. This is the sense in which it is used in the second verse of Psalm vi., " *O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.*"—*Augustine, Ambrose, and Chrysostom; quoted by F. H. Dunwell, B.A., in " Parochial Lectures on the Psalms,*" 1855.

Verse 3.—" *My soul.*" Yokefellows in sin are yokefellows in pain; the soul is punished for informing, the body for performing, and as both the informer and performer, the cause and the instrument, so shall the stirrer up of sin and the executer of it be punished.—*John Donne.*

Verse 3.—" *O Lord, how long?* " Out of this we have three things to observe; first, that there is an appointed time which God hath measured for the crosses of all his children, before which time they shall not be delivered, and for which they must patiently attend, not thinking to prescribe time to God for their delivery, or limit the Holy One of Israel. The Israelites remained in Egypt till the complete number of four hundred and thirty years were accomplished. Joseph was three years and more in the prison till the appointed time of his delivery came. The Jews remained seventy years in Babylon. So that as the physician appointeth certain times to the patient, both wherein he must fast, and be dieted, and wherein he must take recreation, so God knoweth the convenient times both of our humiliation and exaltation. Next, see the impatiency of our nature in our miseries, our flesh still rebelling against the Spirit, which oftentimes forgetteth itself so far, that it will enter into reasoning with God, and quarrelling with him as we may read of Job, Jonas, etc., and here also of David. Thirdly, albeit the Lord delay his coming to relieve his saints, yet hath he great cause if we could ponder it; for when we were in the heat of our sins, many times he cried by the mouth of his prophets and servants, " O fools, how long will you continue in your folly? " And we would not hear; and therefore when we are in the heat of our pains, thinking long, yea, every day a year till we be delivered, no wonder it is if God will not hear; let us consider with ourselves the just dealing of God with us; that as he cried and we would not hear, so now we cry, and he will not hear.—*A. Symson.*

Verse 3.—" *O Lord, how long?*" As the saints in heaven have their *usque quo*, how long, Lord, holy and true, before thou begin to execute judgment? So, the saints on earth have their *usque quo*. How long, Lord, before thou take off the execution of this judgment upon us? For, our deprecatory prayers are not mandatory, they are not directory, they appoint not God his ways, or his times; but as our postulatory prayers are, they also are submitted to the will of God, and have all in them that ingredient, that herb of grace, which Christ put into his own prayer, that *veruntamen, yet not my will, but thy will be fulfilled;* and they have that ingredient which Christ put into our prayer, *fiat voluntas, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven;* in heaven there is no resisting of his will; yet in heaven there is a soliciting, a hastening, an accelerating of the judgment, and the glory of the resurrection; so though we resist not his corrections here upon earth, we may humbly present to God the sense which we have of his displeasure, for this sense and apprehension of his corrections is one of the principal reasons why he sends

them ; he corrects us therefore that we might be sensible of his corrections ; that when we, being humbled under his hand, have said with his prophet, "*I will bear the wrath of the Lord because I have sinned against him*" (Mic. vii. 9), he may be pleased to say to his correcting angel, as he did to his destroying angel, *This is enough*, and so burn his rod now, as he put up his sword then.—*John Donne.*

Verse 4.—"*Return, O Lord, deliver my soul,*" etc. In this his besieging of God, he brings up his works from afar off, closer ; he begins in this Psalm, at a deprecatory prayer ; he asks nothing, but that God would do nothing, that he would forbear him—*rebuke me not, correct me not.* Now, it costs the king less to give a pardon than to give a pension, and less to give a reprieve than to give a pardon, and less to connive, not to call in question, than either reprieve, pardon, or pension ; to forbear is not much. But then as the mathematician said, that he could make an engine, a screw, that should move the whole frame of the world, if he could have a place assigned him to fix that engine, that screw upon, so that it might work upon the world ; so prayer, when one petition hath taken hold upon God, works upon God, moves God, prevails with God, entirely for all. David then having got this ground, this footing in God, he brings his works closer ; he comes from the deprecatory to a postulatory prayer ; not only that God would do nothing against him, but that he would do something for him. God hath suffered man to see *Arcana imperii*, the secrets of his state, how he governs—he governs by precedent ; by precedents of his predecessors, he cannot, he hath none ; by precedents of other gods he cannot, there are none ; and yet he proceeds by precedents, by his own precedents, he does as he did before, *habenti dat*, to him that hath received he gives more, and is willing to be wrought and prevailed upon, and pressed with his own example. And, as though his doing good were but to learn how to do good better, still he writes after his own copy, and *nulla dies sine linea.* He writes something to us, that is, he doth something for us every day. And then, that which is not often seen in other masters, his copies are better than the originals ; his latter mercies larger than his former ; and in this postulatory prayer, larger than the deprecatory, enters our text, "*Return, O Lord ; deliver my soul : O save me,*" etc.—*John Donne.*

Verse 5.—"*For in death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who will give thee thanks ?*" Lord, be thou pacified and reconciled to me . . . for shouldst thou now proceed to take away my life, as it were a most direful condition for me to die before I have propitiated thee, so I may well demand what increase of glory or honour will it bring unto thee ? Will it not be infinitely more glorious for thee to spare me, till by true contrition I may regain thy favour ?—and then I may live to praise and magnify thy mercy and thy grace : thy mercy in pardoning so great a sinner, and then confess thee by vital actions of all holy obedience for the future, and so demonstrate the power of thy grace which hath wrought this change in me ; neither of which will be done by destroying me, but only thy just judgments manifested in thy vengeance on sinners.—*Henry Hammond, D.D.*, 1659.

Verse 6.—"*I fainted in my mourning.*" It may seem a marvellous change in David, being a man of such magnitude of mind, to be thus dejected and cast down. Prevailed he not against Goliath, against the lion and the bear, through fortitude and magnanimity ? But now he is sobbing, sighing, and weeping as a child ! The answer is easy ; the diverse persons with whom he hath to do occasioneth the same. When men and beasts are his opposites, then he is more than a conqueror ; but when he hath to do with God against whom he sinned, then he is less than nothing.

Verse 6.—"*I caused my bed to swim.*" . . . . Showers be better than dews, yet it is sufficient if God at least hath bedewed our hearts, and hath given us some sign of a penitent heart. If we have not rivers of waters to pour forth with David, neither fountains flowing with Mary Magdalen, nor as Jeremy, desire to have a fountain in our head to weep day and night, nor with Peter weep bitterly ; yet if we lament that we cannot lament, and mourn that we cannot mourn : yea, if we have the smallest sobs of sorrow and tears of compunction, if they be true and not counterfeit, they will make us acceptable to God ; for as the woman with the bloody issue that touched the hem of Christ's garment, was no less welcome to Christ than Thomas, who put his fingers in the print of the nails ; so, God looketh not at the quantity, but the sincerity of our repentance.

Verse 6.—"*My bed.*" The place of his sin is the place of his repentance, and so

it should be; yea, when we behold the place where we have offended, we should be pricked in the heart, and there again crave him pardon. As Adam sinned in the garden, and Christ sweat bloody tears in the garden. "Examine your hearts upon your beds, and convert unto the Lord;" and whereas ye have stretched forth yourselves upon your bed to devise evil things, repent there and make them sanctuaries to God. Sanctify by your tears every place which ye have polluted by sin. And let us seek Christ Jesus on our own bed, with the spouse in the Canticles, who saith, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth."—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 6.—"*I water my couch with tears.*" Not only I *wash*, but also I *water*. The faithful sheep of the great Shepherd go up from the *washing* place, every one bringeth forth twins, and none barren among them. Cant. iv. 2. For so Jacob's sheep, having conceived at the watering troughs, brought forth strong and party-coloured lambs. David likewise, who before had erred and strayed like a lost sheep, making here his bed a washing place, by so much the less is barren in obedience, by how much the more he is fruitful in repentance. In Solomon's temple stood the caldrons of brass, to wash the flesh of those beasts which where to be sacrificed on the altar. Solomon's father maketh a water of his tears, a caldron of his bed, an altar of his heart, a sacrifice, not of the flesh of unreasonable beasts, but of his own body, a living sacrifice, which is his reasonable serving of God. Now the Hebrew word here used signifies properly, to cause to swim, which is more than simply to wash. And thus the Geneva translation readeth it, I cause my bed every night to swim. So that as the priests used to swim in the molten sea, that they might be pure and clean, against they performed the holy rites and services of the temple, in like manner the princely prophet washeth his bed, yea, he swimmeth in his bed, or rather he causeth his bed to swim in tears, as in a sea of grief and penitent sorrow for his sin.—*Thomas Playfere*, 1604.

Verse 6.—"*I water my couch with my tears.*" Let us water our bed every night with our tears. Do not only blow upon it with intermissive blasts, for then like fire, it will resurge and flame the more. Sin is like a stinking candle newly put out, it is soon lighted again. It may receive a wound, but like a dog it will easily lick itself whole; a little forbearance multiplies it like Hydra's heads. Therefore, whatsoever aspersion the sin of the day has brought upon us, let the tears of the *night* wash away.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verses 6, 7.—Soul-trouble is attended usually with great pain of body too, and so a man is wounded and distressed in every part. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger, says David. "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." Job vi. 4. Sorrow of heart contracts the natural spirits, making all their motions slow and feeble; and the poor afflicted body does usually decline and waste away; and, therefore, saith Heman, "My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave." In this inward distress we find our strength decay and melt, even as wax before the fire, for sorrow darkeneth the spirits, obscures the judgment, blinds the memory as to all pleasant things, and beclouds the lucid part of the mind, causing the lamp of life to burn weakly. In this troubled condition the person cannot be without a countenance that is pale, and wan, and dejected, like one that is seized with strong fear and consternation; all his motions are sluggish, and no sprightliness nor activity remains. A merry heart doth good, like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones. Hence come those frequent complaints in Scripture: My moisture is turned into the drought of the summer: I am like a bottle in the smoke; my soul cleaveth unto the dust: my face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelid is the shadow of death. Job xvi. 16, xxx. 17, 18—19. My bones are pierced in me, in the night season, and my sinews take no rest; by the great force of my disease is my garment changed. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. Many times indeed the trouble of the soul does begin from the weakness and indisposition of the body. Long affliction, without any prospect of remedy, does, in process of time, begin to distress the soul itself. David was a man often exercised with sickness and the rage of enemies; and in all the instances almost that we meet with in the Psalms, we may observe that the outward occasions of trouble brought him under an apprehension of the wrath of God for his sin. (Psalm vi. 1, 2; and the reasons given, verses 5 and 6.) All his griefs running into this most terrible thought, that God was his enemy. As little brooks lose themselves in a great river, and change their name and nature, it most frequently

happens, that when our pain is long and sharp, and helpless and unavoidable, we begin to question the sincerity of our estate towards God, though at its first assault we had few doubts or fears about it. Long weakness of body makes the soul more susceptible of trouble, and uneasy thoughts.—*Timothy Rogers on Trouble of Mind.*

Verse 7.—"*Mine eye is consumed.*" Many make those eyes which God hath given them, as it were two lighted candles to let them see to go to hell ; and for this God in justice requiteth them, that seeing their minds are blinded by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, God I say, sendeth sickness to debilitate their eyes which were so sharp-sighted in the devil's service, and their lust now causeth them to want the necessary sight of their body.

Verse 7.—"*Mine enemies.*" The pirates seeing an empty bark, pass by it ; but if she be loaded with precious wares, then they will assault her. So, if a man have no grace within him, Satan passeth by him, as not a convenient prey for him, but being loaded with graces, as the love of God, his fear, and such other spiritual virtues, let him be persuaded that according as he knows what stuff is in him, so will he not fail to rob him of them, if in any case he may.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 7.—That eye of his that had looked and lusted after his neighbour's wife is now dimmed and darkened with grief and indignation. He had wept himself almost blind.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—"*Depart from me,*" etc., *i.e.*, you may now go your way ; for that which you look for, namely, my death, you shall not have at this present ; *for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping, i.e.*, has graciously granted me that which with tears I asked of him.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 8.—"*Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*" May not too much familiarity with profane wretches be justly charged upon church members ? I know man is a sociable creature, but that will not excuse saints as to their carelessness of the choice of their company. The very fowls of the air, and beasts of the field, love not heterogeneous company. " Birds of a feather flock together." I have been afraid that many who would be thought eminent, of a high stature in grace and godliness, yet see not the vast difference there is between nature and regeneration, sin and grace, the old and the new man, seeing all company is alike unto them.—*Lewis Stuckley's " Gospel Glass,"* 1667.

Verse 8.—"*The voice of my weeping.*" Weeping hath a voice, and as music upon the water sounds farther and more harmoniously than upon the land, so prayers, joined with tears, cry louder in God's ears, and make sweeter music than when tears are absent. When Antipater had written a large letter against Alexander's mother unto Alexander, the king answered him, " One tear from my mother will wash away all her faults." So it is with God. A penitent tear is an undeniable ambassador, and never returns from the throne of grace unsatisfied. *Spencer's Things New and Old.*

Verse 8.—The wicked are called "*workers of iniquity,* because they are free and ready to sin, they have a strong tide and bent of spirit to do evil, and they do it not to halves but throughly ; they do not only begin or nibble at the bait a little (as a good man often doth), but greedily swallow it down, hook and all ; they are fully in it, and do it fully ; they make a work of it, and so are " *workers of iniquity.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—Some may say, " My constitution is such that I cannot weep ; I may as well go to squeeze a rock, as think to get a tear." But if thou canst not weep for sin, canst thou grieve ? Intellectual mourning is best ; there may be sorrow where there are no tears, the vessel may be full though it wants vent ; it is not so much the weeping eye God respects as the broken heart ; yet I would be loath to stop their tears who can weep. God stood looking on Hezekiah's tears (Isaiah xxxviii. 5), " I have seen thy tears." David's tears made music in God's ears, " *The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.*" It is a sight fit for angels to behold, tears as pearls dropping from a penitent eye.—*T. Watson.*

Verse 8.—"*The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.*" God hears the voice of our looks, God hears the voice of our tears sometimes better than the voice of our words ; for it is the Spirit itself that makes intercession for us. Rom. viii. 26. *Gemitibus inenarrabilibus,* in those *groans,* and so in those *tears,* which we *cannot utter ; ineloquacibus,* as Tertullian reads that place, devout, and simple tears, which cannot speak, speak aloud in the ears of God ; nay, tears which we

cannot utter; not only not utter the force of the tears, but not utter the very tears themselves. As God sees the water in the spring in the veins of the earth before it bubble upon the face of the earth, so God sees tears in the heart of a man before they blubber his face; God hears the tears of that sorrowful soul, which for sorrow cannot shed tears. From this casting up of the eyes, and pouring out the sorrow of the heart at the eyes, at least opening God a window through which he may see a wet heart through a dry eye; from these overtures of repentance, which are as those imperfect sounds of words, which parents delight in, in their children, before they speak plain, a penitent sinner comes to a verbal and a more express prayer. To these prayers, these vocal and verbal prayers from David, God had given ear, and from this hearing of those prayers was David come to this thankful confidence, "*The Lord hath heard, the Lord will hear.*"—*John Donne.*

Verse 8.—What a strange change is here all on a sudden! Well might Luther say, "Prayer is the leech of the soul, that sucks out the venom and swelling thereof." "Prayer," said another, "is an exorcist with God, and an exorcist against sin and misery." Bernard saith, "How oft hath prayer found me despairing almost, but left me triumphing, and well assured of pardon!" The same in effect saith David here, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." What a word is that to his insulting enemies! Avaunt! come out! vanish! These be words used to devils and dogs, but good enough for a Doeg or a Shimei. And the Son of David shall say the same to his enemies when he comes to judgment.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*The Lord hath heard my supplication,*" etc. The Psalmist three times expresses his confidence of his prayers being heard and received, which may be either in reference to his having prayed so many times for help, as the apostle Paul did (2 Cor. xii. 8); and as Christ his antitype did (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44); or to express the certainty of it, the strength of his faith in it, and the exuberance of his joy on account of it.—*John Gill, D.D.*, 1697—1771.

Verse 10.—"*Let all mine enemies be ashamed,*" etc. If this were an imprecation, a malediction, yet it was medicinal, and had *rationem boni*, a charitable tincture and nature in it; he wished the men no harm as men. But it is rather *prædictorium*, a prophetical vehemence, that if they will take no knowledge of God's declaring himself in the protection of his servants, if they would not consider that God had heard, and would hear, had rescued, and would rescue his children, but would continue their opposition against him, heavy judgments would certainly fall upon them; their punishment should be certain, but the effect should be uncertain; for God only knows whether his correction shall work upon his enemies to their mollifying, or to their obduration. . . . In the second word, "*Let them be sore vexed,*" he wishes his enemies no worse than himself had been, for he had used the same word of himself before, *Ossa turbata, My bones are vexed;* and, *Anima turbata, My soul is vexed;* and considering that David had found this vexation to be his way to God, it was no malicious imprecation to wish that enemy the same physic that he had taken, who was more sick of the same disease than he was. For this is like a troubled sea after a tempest; the danger is past, but yet the billow is great still; the danger was in the calm, in the security, or in the tempest, by misinterpreting God's corrections to our obduration, and to a remorseless stupefaction; but when a man is come to his holy vexation, to be troubled, to be shaken with the sense of the indignation of God, the storm is past, and the indignation of God is blown over. The soul is in a fair and near way of being restored to a calmness, and to reposed security of conscience that is come to this holy vexation.—*John Donne.*

Verse 10.—"*Let all mine enemies* [*or all mine enemies shall*] *be ashamed, and sore vexed,*" etc. Many of the mournful Psalms end in this manner, to instruct the believer that he is continually to look forward, and solace himself with beholding that day, when his warfare shall be accomplished; when sin and sorrow shall be no more; when sudden and everlasting confusion shall cover the enemies of righteousness; when the sackcloth of the penitent shall be exchanged for a robe of glory, and every tear become a sparkling gem in his crown; when to sighs and groans shall succeed the songs of heaven, set to angelic harps, and faith shall be resolved into the vision of the Almighty.—*George Horne.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—*A Sermon for afflicted souls.* I. God's twofold dealings. (1) *Rebuke* by a telling sermon, a judgment on another, a slight trial in our own person, or a solemn monition in our conscience by the Spirit. (2) *Chastening.* This follows the other when the first is disregarded. Pain, losses, bereavements, melancholy, and other trials. II. The evils in them to be most dreaded, anger and hot displeasure. III. The means to avert these ills. Humiliation, confession, amendment, faith in the Lord, etc.

Verse 1.—The believer's greatest dread, the anger of God. What this fact reveals in the heart? Why it is so? What removes the fear?

Verse 2.—The *argumentum ad misericordiam.*

Verse 2.—*First sentence—Divine healing.* 1. What precedes it, *my bones are vexed.* 2. How it is wrought. 3. What succeeds it.

Verse 3.—The impatience of sorrow; its sins, mischief, and cure.

Verse 3.—A fruitful topic may be found in considering the question, How long will God continue afflictions to the righteous?

Verse 4.—"*Return, O Lord.*" A prayer suggested by a sense of the Lord's absence, excited by grace, attended with heart searching and repentance, backed by pressing danger, guaranteed as to its answer, and containing a request for all mercies.

Verse 4.—The prayer of the deserted saint. 1. *His state:* his soul is evidently in bondage and danger: 2. *His hope:* it is in the Lord's *return.* 3. *His plea:* mercy only.

Verse 5.—The final suspension of earthly service considered in various practical aspects.

Verse 5.—The duty of praising God while we live.

Verse 6.—Saints' tears in quality, abundance, influence, assuagement, and final end.

Verse 7.—The voice of weeping. What it is.

Verse 8.—The pardoned sinner forsaking his bad companions.

Verse 9.—Past answers the ground of present confidence. He *hath*, he *will.*

Verse 10.—The shame reserved for the wicked.

PSALM VII.

TITLE.—" Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite."—*" Shiggaion of David." As far as we can gather from the observations of learned men, and from a comparison of this Psalm with the only other Shiggaion in the Word of God (Hab.* iii.), *this title seems to mean "variable songs," with which also the idea of solace and pleasure is associated. Truly our life-psalm is composed of variable verses ; one stanza rolls along with the sublime metre of triumph, but another limps with the broken rhythm of complaint. There is much bass in the saint's music here below. Our experience is as variable as the weather in England.*

From the title we learn the occasion of the composition of this song. It appears probable that Cush the Benjamite had accused David to Saul of treasonable conspiracy against his royal authority. This the king would be ready enough to credit, both from his jealousy of David, and from the relation which most probably existed between himself, the son of Kish, and this Cush, or Kish, the Benjamite. He who is near the throne can do more injury to a subject than an ordinary slanderer.

This may be called the SONG OF THE SLANDERED SAINT. *Even this sorest of evils may furnish occasion for a Psalm. What a blessing would it be if we could turn even the most disastrous event into a theme for song, and so turn the tables upon our great enemy. Let us learn a lesson from Luther, who once said, " David made Psalms ; we also will make Psalms, and sing them as well as we can to the honour of our Lord, and to spite and mock the devil."*

DIVISION.—*In the first and second verses the danger is stated, and prayer offered. Then the Psalmist most solemnly avows his innocence* (3, 4, 5). *The Lord is pleaded with to arise to judgment* (6, 7). *The Lord, sitting upon his throne, hears the renewed appeal of the Slandered Supplicant* (8, 9). *The Lord clears his servant, and threatens the wicked* (10, 11, 12, 13). *The slanderer is seen in vision bringing a curse upon his own head* (14, 15, 16) *while David retires from trial singing a hymn of praise to his righteous God. We have here a noble sermon upon that text : " No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."*

EXPOSITION.

O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust : save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me :

2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending *it* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.

David appears before God to plead with him against the Accuser, who had charged him with treason and treachery. The case is here opened with an avowal of confidence in God. Whatever may be the emergency of our condition we shall never find it amiss to retain our reliance upon our God. *" O Lord my God,"* mine by a special covenant, sealed by Jesus' blood, and ratified in my own soul by a sense of union to thee ; *" in thee,"* and in thee only, *" do I put my trust,"* even now in my sore distress. I shake, but my rock moves not. It is never right to distrust God, and never vain to trust him. And now, with both divine relationship and holy trust to strengthen him, David utters the burden of his desire—*" save me from all them that persecute me."* His pursuers were very many, and any one of them cruel enough to devour him ; he cries, therefore, for salvation from them *all*. We should never think our prayers complete until we *ask for* preservation from *all* sin, and all enemies. *" And deliver me,"* extricate me from their snares, acquit me of their accusations, give a true and just deliverance in this trial of my injured character. See how clearly his case is stated ; let us see to it, that we know what we would have when we are come to the throne of mercy. Pause a little while before you pray, that you may not offer the sacrifice of fools. Get a distinct idea of your need, and then you can pray with the more fluency of fervency.

" Lest he tear my soul." Here is the plea of fear co-working with the plea of faith. There was one among David's foes mightier than the rest, who had both

dignity, strength, and ferocity, and was, therefore, "*like a lion.*" From this foe he urgently seeks deliverance. Perhaps this was Saul, his royal enemy; but in our own case there is one who goes about like a lion, seeking whom he may devour, concerning whom we should ever cry, "Deliver us from the Evil One." Notice the vigour of the description—"*rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.*" It is a picture from the shepherd-life of David. When the fierce lion had pounced upon the defenceless lamb, and had made it his prey, he would rend the victim in pieces, break all the bones, and devour all, because no shepherd was near to protect the lamb or rescue it from the ravenous beast. This is a soul-moving portrait of a saint delivered over to the will of Satan. This will make the bowels of Jehovah yearn. A father cannot be silent when a child is in such peril. No, he will not endure the thought of his darling in the jaws of a lion, he will arise and deliver his persecuted one. Our God is very pitiful, and he will surely rescue his people from so desperate a destruction. It will be well for us here to remember that this is a description of the danger to which the Psalmist was exposed from slanderous tongues. Verily this is not an overdrawn picture, for the wounds of a sword will heal, but the wounds of the tongue cut deeper than the flesh, and are not soon cured. Slander leaves a slur, even if it be wholly disproved. Common fame, although notoriously a common liar, has very many believers. Once let an ill word get into men's mouths, and it is not easy to get it fully out again. The Italians say that good repute is like the cypress, once cut, it never puts forth leaf again; this is not true if our character be cut by a stranger's hand, but even then it will not soon regain its former verdure. Oh, 'tis a meanness most detestable to stab a good man in his reputation, but diabolical hatred observes no nobility in its mode of warfare. We must be ready for this trial, for it will surely come upon us. If God was slandered in Eden, we shall surely be maligned in this land of sinners. Gird up your loins, ye children of the resurrection, for this fiery trial awaits you all.

3 O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;
4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:)
5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take *it;* yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.

The second part of this wandering hymn contains a protestation of innocence, and an invocation of wrath upon his own head, if he were not clear from the evil imputed to him. So far from hiding treasonable intentions in his hands, or ungratefully requiting the peaceful deeds of a friend, he had even suffered his enemy to escape when he had him completely in his power. Twice had he spared Saul's life; once in the cave of Adullam, and again when he found him sleeping in the midst of his slumbering camp; he could, therefore, with a clear conscience, make his appeal to heaven. He needs not fear the curse whose soul is clear of guilt. Yet is the imprecation a most solemn one, and only justifiable through the extremity of the occasion, and the nature of the dispensation under which the Psalmist lived. *We* are commanded by our Lord Jesus to let our yea be yea, and our nay, nay; "for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." If we cannot be believed on our word, we are surely not to be trusted on our oath; for to a true Christian his simple word is as binding as another man's oath. Especially beware, O unconverted men! of trifling with solemn imprecations. Remember the woman at Devizes, who wished she might die if she had not paid her share in a joint purchase, and who fell dead there and then with the money in her hand.

Selah. David enhances the solemnity of this appeal to the dread tribunal of God by the use of the usual pause.

From these verses we may learn that no innocence can shield a man from the calumnies of the wicked. David had been scrupulously careful to avoid any appearance of rebellion against Saul, whom he constantly styled "the Lord's anointed;" but all this could not protect him from lying tongues. As the shadow follows the substance, so envy pursues goodness. It is only at the tree laden with fruit that men throw stones. If we would live without being slandered we must wait till we get to heaven. Let us be very heedful not to believe the flying rumours which are always harassing gracious men. If there are no believers in lies there will be but a dull market in falsehood, and good men's characters will be

safe. Ill-will never spoke well. Sinners have an ill-will to saints, and therefore, be sure they will not speak well of them.

6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me *to* the judgment *that* thou hast commanded.

7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high.

We now listen to a fresh prayer, based upon the avowal which he has just made. We cannot pray too often, and when our heart is true, we shall turn to God in prayer as naturally as the needle to its pole.

"*Arise, O Lord, in thine anger.*" His sorrow makes him view the Lord as a judge who had left the judgment-seat and retired into his rest. Faith would move the Lord to avenge the quarrel of his saints. "*Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies*"—a still stronger figure to express his anxiety that the Lord would assume his authority and mount the throne. Stand up, O God, rise thou above them all, and let thy justice tower above their villainies. "*Awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.*" This is a bolder utterance still, for it implies sleep as well as inactivity, and can only be applied to God in a very limited sense. He never slumbers, yet doth he often seem to do so; for the wicked prevail, and the saints are trodden in the dust. God's silence is the patience of longsuffering, and if wearisome to the saints, they should bear it cheerfully in the hope that sinners may thereby be led to repentance.

"*So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about.*" Thy saints shall crowd to thy tribunal with their complaints, or shall surround it with their solemn homage: "*for their sakes therefore return thou on high.*" As when a judge travels at the assizes, all men take their cases to his court that they may be heard, so will the righteous gather to their Lord. Here he fortifies himself in prayer by pleading that if the Lord will mount the throne of judgment, multitudes of the saints would be blessed as well as himself. If I be too base to be remembered, yet "*for their sakes,*" for the love thou bearest to thy chosen people, come forth from thy secret pavilion, and sit in the gate dispensing justice among the people. When my suit includes the desires of all the righteous it shall surely speed, for "shall not God avenge his own elect?"

8 The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity *that* is in me.

9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

If I am not mistaken, David has now seen in the eye of his mind the Lord ascending to his judgment-seat, and beholding him seated there in royal state, he draws near to him to urge his suit anew. In the last two verses he besought Jehovah to arise, and now that he is arisen, he prepares to mingle with "the congregation of the people" who compass the Lord about. The royal heralds proclaim the opening of the court with the solemn words, "*The Lord shall judge the people.*" Our petitioner rises at once, and cries with earnestness and humility, "*Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.*" His hand is on an honest heart, and his cry is to a righteous Judge. He sees a smile of complacency upon the face of the King, and in the name of all the assembled congregation he cries aloud, "*Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just.*" Is not this the universal longing of the whole company of the elect? When shall we be delivered from the filthy conversation of these men of Sodom? When shall we escape from the filthiness of Mesech and the blackness of the tents of Kedar?

What a solemn and weighty truth is contained in the last sentence of the ninth verse! How deep is the divine knowledge!—"*he trieth.*" How strict, how accurate, how intimate his search!—"*he trieth the hearts,*" the secret thoughts, "*and reins,*" the inward affections. "All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

10 My defence *is* of God, which saveth the upright in heart.

11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day.

12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.

The judge has heard the cause, has cleared the guiltless, and uttered his voice against the persecutors. Let us draw near, and learn the results of the great assize. Yonder is the slandered one with his harp in hand, hymning the justice of his Lord, and rejoicing aloud in his own deliverance. "*My defence is of God, which saveth the upright heart.*" Oh, how good to have a true and *upright* heart. Crooked sinners, with all their craftiness, are foiled by the upright in heart. God defends the right. Filth will not long abide on the pure white garments of the saints, but shall be brushed off by divine providence, to the vexation of the men by whose base hands it was thrown upon the godly. When God shall try our cause, our sun has risen, and the sun of the wicked is set for ever. Truth, like oil, is ever above, no power of our enemies can drown it; we shall refute their slanders in the day when the trumpet wakes the dead, and we shall shine in honour when lying lips are put to silence. O believer, fear not all that thy foes can do or say against thee, for the tree which God plants no winds can hurt. "*God judgeth the righteous,*" he hath not given thee up to be condemned by the lips of persecutors. Thine enemies cannot sit on God's throne, nor blot thy name out of his book. Let them alone, then, for God will find time for his revenges.

"*God is angry with the wicked every day.*" He not only detests sin, but is angry with those who continue to indulge in it. We have no insensible and stolid God to deal with; he can be angry, nay, he is angry to-day and every day with you, ye ungodly and impenitent sinners. The best day that ever dawns on a sinner brings a curse with it. Sinners may have many feast days, but no safe days. From the beginning of the year even to its ending, there is not an hour in which God's oven is not hot, and burning in readiness for the wicked, who shall be as stubble.

"*If he turn not, he will whet his sword.*" What blows are those which will be dealt by that long uplifted arm! God's sword has been sharpening upon the revolving stone of our daily wickedness, and if we will not repent, it will speedily cut us in pieces. Turn or burn is the sinner's only alternative. "*He hath bent his bow and made it ready.*" Even now the thirsty arrow longs to wet itself with the blood of the *persecutor*. The bow is bent, the aim is taken, the arrow is fitted to the string, and what, O sinner, if the arrow should be let fly at thee even now! Remember, God's arrows never miss the mark, and are, every one of them, "instruments of death." Judgment may tarry, but it will not come too late. The Greek proverb saith, "The mill of God grinds late, but grinds to powder."

14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.

15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made.

16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

In three graphic pictures we see the slanderer's history. A woman in travail furnishes the first metaphor. "*He travaileth with iniquity.*" He is full of it, pained until he can carry it out, he longs to work his will, he is full of pangs until his evil intent is executed. "*He hath conceived mischief.*" This is the original of his base design. The devil has had doings with him, and the virus of evil is in him. And now behold the progeny of this unhallowed conception. The child is worthy of its father, his name of old was "the father of lies," and the birth doth not belie the parent, for *he brought forth falsehood*. Thus, one figure is carried out to perfection; the Psalmist now illustrates his meaning by another taken from the stratagems of the hunter. "*He made a pit and digged it.*" He was cunning in his plans, and industrious in his labours. He stooped to the dirty work of digging. He did not fear to soil his own hands, he was willing to work in *a ditch* if others might fall therein. What mean things men will do to wreak revenge on the godly. They hunt for good men, as if they were brute beasts; nay, they will not give them the fair chase afforded to the hare or the fox, but must secretly entrap them, because they can neither run them down nor shoot them down. Our enemies will not meet us to the face, for they fear us as much as they pretend to despise us. But

let us look on to the end of the scene. The verse says, he "*is fallen into the ditch which he made.*" Ah! there he is, let us laugh at his disappointment. Lo! he is himself the beast, he has hunted his own soul, and the chase has brought him a goodly victim. Aha, aha, so should it ever be. Come hither and make merry with this entrapped hunter, this biter who has bitten himself. Give him no pity, for it will be wasted on such a wretch. He is but rightly and richly rewarded by being paid in his own coin. He cast forth evil from his mouth, and it has fallen into his bosom. He has set his own house on fire with the torch which he lit to burn a neighbour. He sent forth a foul bird, and it has come back to its nest. The rod which he lifted on high, has smitten his own back. He shot an arrow upward, and it has "*returned upon his own head.*" He hurled a stone at another, and it has "*come down upon his own pate.*" Curses are like young chickens, they always come home to roost. Ashes always fly back in the face of him that throws them. "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him" (Ps. cix. 17.) How often has this been the case in the histories of both ancient and modern times. Men have burned their own fingers when they were hoping to brand their neighbour. And if this does not happen now, it will hereafter. The Lord has caused dogs to lick the blood of Ahab in the midst of the vineyard of Naboth. Sooner or later the evil deeds of persecutors have always leaped back into their arms. So will it be in the last great day, when Satan's fiery darts shall all be quivered in his own heart, and all his followers shall reap the harvest which they themselves have sown.

17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

We conclude with the joyful contrast. In this all these Psalms are agreed; they all exhibit the blessedness of the righteous, and make its colours the more glowing by contrast with the miseries of the wicked. The bright jewel sparkles in a black foil. *Praise* is the occupation of the godly, their eternal work, and their present pleasure. *Singing* is the fitting embodiment for praise, and therefore do the saints make melody before the Lord Most High. The slandered one is now a singer: his harp was unstrung for a very little season, and now we leave him sweeping its harmonious chords, and flying on their music to the third heaven of adoring praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"Shiggaion," though some have attempted to fix on it a reference to the moral aspect of the world as depicted in this Psalm, is in all probability to be taken as expressing the *nature of the composition.* It conveys the idea of something *erratic* (שגה, to wander) in the style; something not so calm as other Psalms; and hence *Ewald* suggests that it might be rendered, "a confused ode," a Dithyramb. This characteristic of excitement in the style, and a kind of disorder in the sense, suits Habakkuk iii. 1, the only other place where the word occurs.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—Whatever might be the occasion of the Psalm, the real subject seems to be the Messiah's appeal to God against the false accusations of his enemies; and the predictions which it contains of the final conversion of the whole world, and of the future judgment, are clear and explicit.—*Samuel Horsley, LL.D.*, 1733—1806.

Verse 1.—"*O Lord, my God, in thee do I put my trust.*" This is the first instance in the Psalms where David addresses the Almighty by the united names Jehovah and my God. No more suitable words can be placed at the beginning of any act of prayer or praise. These names show the ground of the confidence afterwards expressed. They "denote at once supreme reverence and the most endearing confidence. They convey a recognition of God's infinite perfections, and of his covenanted and gracious relations."—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 2.—"*Lest he tear my soul like a lion,*" etc. It is reported of tigers, that they enter into a rage upon the scent of fragrant spices; so do ungodly men at the blessed savour of godliness. I have read of some barbarous nations, who, when the sun shines hot upon them, they shoot up their arrows against it; so do wicked men at the light and heat of godliness. There is a natural antipathy between the spirits of godly men and the wicked. Genesis iii. 15. "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed."—*Jeremiah Burroughs*, 1660.

Verse 3.—"*O Lord, my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands.*" In the primitive times the people of God were then a people under great reproach. What strange things does Tertullian tell us they reproached them withal; as that in their meetings they made Thyestes suppers, who invited his brother to a supper, and presented him with a dish of his own flesh. They charged them with uncleanness because they met in the night (for they durst not meet in the day), and said, they blew out the candles when they were together, and committed filthiness. They reproached them for ignorance, saying, they were all unlearned; and therefore the heathens in Tertullian's time used to paint the God of the Christians with an ass's head, and a book in his hand, to signify that though they pretended learning, yet they were an unlearned, silly people, rude and ignorant. Bishop Jewel in his sermon upon Luke xi. 5, cites this out of Tertullian, and applies it to his time:—"Do not our adversaries do the like," saith he, "at this day, against all those that profess the gospel of Christ? Oh, say they, who are they that favour this way? they are none but shoemakers, tailors, weavers, and such as were never at the university;" they are the bishop's own words. He cites likewise Tertullian a little after, saying, that the Christians were accounted the public enemies of the State. And Josephus tells us of Apollinaris, speaking concerning the Jews and Christians, that they are more foolish than any barbarian. And Paulus Fagius reports a story of an Egyptian, concerning the Christians, who said, "They were a gathering together of a most fifthy, lecherous people;" and for the keeping of the Sabbath, he says, "they had a disease that was upon them, and they were fain to rest the seventh day because of that disease." And so in Augustine's time, he hath this expression, "Any one that begins to be godly, presently he must prepare to suffer reproach from the tongues of adversaries;" and this was their usual manner of reproach, "What shall we have of you, an Elias? a Jeremy?" And Nazianzen in one of his orations says, "It is ordinary to reproach, that I cannot think to go free myself." And so Athanasius, they called him Sathanasius, because he was a special instrument against the Arians. And Cyprian, they called him Coprian, one that gathers up dung, as if all the excellent things that he had gathered in his works were but dung.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 3.—"*If I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands.*" I deny not but you may, and ought to be sensible of the wrong done to your name, for as "a good name is a precious ointment" (Cant. i. 3), so to have an evil name is a great judgment; and therefore you ought not to be insensible of the wrong done to your name by slanders and reproaches, saying, "Let men speak of me what they please, I care not, so long as I know mine own innocency," for though the testimony of your own innocency be a ground of comfort unto you, yet your care must be not only to approve yourselves unto God, but also unto men, to be as careful of your good names as possibly ye can; but yet you are not to manifest any distemper or passion upon the reproachful speeches of others against you.—*Thomas Gouge*, 1660.

Verse 3.—It is a sign that there is some good in thee if a wicked world abuse thee. "*Quid mali feci?*" said Socrates, what evil have I done that this bad man commends me? The applause of the wicked usually denotes some evil, and their censure imports some good.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—"*If there be iniquity in my hands.*" Injustice is ascribed to the *hand*, not because injustice is always, though usually it be, done by the hand. With the hand men take away, and with that men detain the right of others. David speaks thus (1 Chron. xii. 17), "Seeing there is no wrong in mine hands;" that is, I have done no wrong.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 3, 4.—A good conscience is a flowing spring of assurance. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." 2 Cor. i. 12. "Beloved,

if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." 1 John iii. 21. A good conscience has sure confidence. He who has it sits in the midst of all combustions and distractions, Noah-like, all sincerity and serenity, uprightness and boldness. What the probationer disciple said to our Saviour, "Master, I will follow thee whithersover thou goest," that a good conscience says to the believing soul; I will stand by thee; I will strengthen thee; I will uphold thee; I will be a comfort to thee in life, and a friend to thee in death. "Though all should leave thee, yet will I never forsake thee."—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 4.—"*Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.*" Meaning Saul, whose life he twice preserved, once in Engedi, and again when he slept on the plain.—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—"*If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me.*" To do evil for good, is human corruption; to do good for good, is civil retribution; but to do good for evil, is Christian perfection. Though this be not the grace of nature, yet it is the nature of grace.—*William Secker.*

Verse 4.—Then is grace victorious, and then hath a man a noble and brave spirit, not when he is overcome by evil (for that argueth weakness), but when he can overcome evil. And it is God's way to shame the party that did the wrong, and to overcome him too; it is the best way to get the victory over him. When David had Saul at an advantage in the cave, and cut off the lap of his garment, and did forbear any act of revenge against him, Saul was melted, and said to David, "Thou art more righteous than I." 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. Though he had such a hostile mind against him, and chased and pursued him up and down, yet when David forbore revenge when it was in his power it overcame him, and he falls a-weeping.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 5.—"*Let him tread down my life upon the earth.*" The allusion here is to the manner in which the vanquished were often treated in battle, when they were rode over by horses, or trampled by men in the dust. The idea of David is, that if he was guilty he would be willing that his enemy should triumph over him, should subdue him, should treat him with the utmost indignity and scorn.—*Albert Barnes, in loc.*

Verse 5.—"*Mine honour in the dust.*" When Achilles dragged the body of Hector in the dust around the walls of Troy, he did but carry out the usual manners of those barbarous ages. David dares in his conscious innocence to imprecate such an ignominious fate upon himself if indeed the accusation of the black Benjamite be true. He had need have a golden character who dares to challenge such an ordeal.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"*The judgment which thou hast ordained.*" In the end of the verse he shows that he asks nothing but what is according to the appointment of God. And this is the rule which ought to be observed by us in our prayers; we should in everything conform our requests to the divine will, as John also instructs us. 1 John iv. 14. And, indeed, we can never pray in faith unless we attend, in the first place, to what God commands, that our minds may not rashly and at random start aside in desiring more than we are permitted to desire and pray for. David, therefore, in order to pray aright, reposes himself on the word and promise of God; and the import of his exercise is this: Lord, I am not led by ambition, or foolish headstrong passion, or depraved desire, inconsiderately to ask from thee whatever is pleasing to my flesh; but it is the clear light of thy word which directs me, and upon it I securely depend.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—"*The congregation of the people:*" either, 1. A great number of all sorts of people, who shall observe thy justice, and holiness, and goodness in pleading my righteous cause against my cruel and implacable oppressor. Or rather, 2. The whole body of thy people Israel, by whom both these Hebrew words are commonly ascribed in Holy Scripture. "*Compass thee about;*" they will, and I, as their king and ruler in thy stead, will take care that they shall come from all parts and meet together to worship thee, which in Saul's time they have grossly neglected, and been permitted to neglect, and to offer to thee praises and sacrifices for thy favour to me, and for the manifold benefits which they shall enjoy by my means, and under my government. "*For their sakes;*" or, *for its sake, i.e.*, for the sake of thy con-

gregation, which now is woefully dissipated and oppressed, and has in a great measure lost all administration of justice, and exercise of religion. "*Return thou on high,*" or, *return to thy high place, i.e.* to thy tribunal, to sit there and judge my cause. An allusion to earthly tribunals, which generally are set up on high above the people. 1 Kings x. 19.—*Matthew Pool*, 1624—1679.

Verse 8.—Believers! let not the terror of that day dispirit you when you meditate upon it; let those who have slighted the Judge, and continue enemies to him and the way of holiness, droop and hang down their heads when they think of his coming; but lift ye up your heads with joy, for the last day will be your best day. The Judge is your Head and Husband, your Redeemer and your Advocate. Ye must appear before the judgment-seat; but ye shall not come into condemnation. His coming will not be against you, but for you. It is otherwise with unbelievers, *a neglected Saviour* will be a *severe Judge.*—*Thomas Boston*, 1676—1732.

Verse 9.—"*The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.*" As common experience shows that the workings of the mind, particularly the passions of joy, grief, and fear, have a very remarkable effect on the *reins* or *kidneys* (see Prov. xxiii. 16; Psalm lxxiii. 21), so from their retired situation in the body, and their being hid in fat, they are often used to denote the most secret workings and affections of the soul. And to "see or examine the *reins*," is to see or examine those most secret thoughts or desires of the soul.—*John Parkhurst*, 1762.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—"*The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.*"

> "I that alone am infinite, can try
> How deep within itself thine heart doth lie.
> Thy seamen's plummet can but reach the ground,
> I find that which thine heart itself ne'er found."
>
> *Francis Quarles*, 1592—1644.

Verse 9.—"*The heart*" may signify the cogitations, and the "*reins*" the affections.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 10.—"*My defence is of God.*" Literally, "*My shield is upon God,*" like Psalm lxii. 8, "My salvation is *upon* God." The idea may be taken from the armour-bearer, ever ready at hand to give the needed weapon to the warrior.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 11.—"*God judgeth the righteous,*" etc. Many learned disputes have arisen as to the meaning of this verse; and it must be confessed that its real import is by no means easily determined: without the words written in italics, which are not in the orginal, it will read thus, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry every day." The question still will be, is this a good rendering? To this question it may be replied, that there is strong evidence for a contrary one. AINSWORTH translates it, "God *is* a just judge; and God angrily threateneth every day." With this corresponds the reading of COVERDALE'S Bible, "God is a righteous judge, and God is ever threatening." In King Edward's Bible, of 1549, the reading is the same. But there is another class of critics who adopt quite a different view of the text, and apparently with much colour of argument. BISHOP HORSLEY reads the verse, "God is a righteous judge, although he is not angry every day." In this rendering he seems to have followed most of the ancient versions. The VULGATE reads it, "God is a judge, righteous, strong, and patient; will he be angry every day?" The SEPTUAGINT reads it, "God is a righteous judge, strong, and longsuffering; not bringing forth his anger every day." The SYRIAC has it, "God is the judge of righteousness; he is not angry every day." In this view of the text Dr. A. Clarke agrees, and expresses it as his opinion that the text was first corrupted by the CHALDEE. This learned divine proposes to restore the text thus, "לא, *el*, with the vowel point *tseri*, signifies God; לא, *al*, the same letters, with the point *pathach*, signifies *not.*" There is by this view of the original no repetition of the divine name in the verse, so that it will simply read, as thus restored, "God is a righteous judge, and is NOT angry every day." The text at large, as is intimated in the VULGATE, SEPTUAGINT, and some other ancient versions, conveys a strong intimation of the longsuffering of God, whose hatred of sin is unchangeable, but whose anger against transgressors is marked by infinite patience, and does not burst forth in vengeance every day.—*John Morison, in "An Exposition of the Book of Psalms,"* 1829.

Verse 11.—"*God is angry.*" The original expression here is very forcible. The true idea of it appears to be, to *froth* or *foam at the mouth* with indignation.—*Richard Mant, D.D.*, 1824.

Verses 11, 12.—God hath set up his royal standard in defiance of all the sons and daughters of apostate Adam, who from his own mouth are proclaimed rebels and traitors to his crown and dignity; and as against such he hath taken the field, as with fire and sword, to be avenged on them. Yea, he gives the world sufficient testimony of his incensed wrath, by that of it which is revealed from heaven daily in the judgments executed upon sinners, and those many but of a span long, before they can show what nature they have by actual sin, yet crushed to death by God's righteous foot, only for the viperous kind of which they come. At every door where sin sets its foot, there the wrath of God meets us. Every faculty of soul, and member of body, are used as a weapon of unrighteousness against God; so every one hath its portion of wrath, even to the tip of the tongue. As man is sinful all over, so is he cursed all over. Inside and outside, soul and body, is written all with woes and curses, so close and full, that there is not room for another to interline, or add to what God hath written.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 11—13.—The idea of God's righteousness must have possessed great vigour to render such a representation possible. There are some excellent remarks upon the ground of it in Luther, who, however, too much overlooks the fact, that the Psalmist presents before his eyes this form of an angry and avenging God, primarily with the view of strengthening by its consideration his own hope, and pays too little regard to the distinction between the Psalmist, who only indirectly teaches what he described as part of his own inward experience, and the prophet: "The prophet takes a lesson from a coarse human similitude, in order that he might inspire terror unto the ungodly. For he speaks against stupid and hardened people, who would not apprehend the reality of a divine judgment of which he had just spoken; but they might possibly be brought to consider this by greater earnestness on the part of man. Now, the prophet is not satisfied with thinking of the sword, but he adds thereto the bow; even this does not satisfy him, but he describes how it is already stretched, and aim is taken, and the arrows are applied to it as here follows. So hard, stiff-necked, and unabashed are the ungodly, that however many threatenings may be urged against them, they will still remain unmoved. But in these words he forcibly describes how God's anger presses hard upon the ungodly, though they will never understand this until they actually experience it. It is also to be remarked here, that we have had so frightful a threatening and indignation against the ungodly in no Psalm before this; neither has the Spirit of God attacked them with so many words. Then in the following verses, he also recounts their plans and purposes, shows how these shall not be in vain, but shall return again upon their own head. So that it clearly and manifestly appears to all those who suffer wrong and reproach, as a matter of consolation, that God hates such revilers and slanderers above all other characters."—*E. W. Hengstenberg, in loc.*, 1845.

Verse 12.—"*If he turn not,*" etc. How few do believe what a quarrel God hath with wicked men? And that not only with the loose, but the formal and hypocritical also? If we did we would tremble as much as to be among them as to be in a house that is falling; we would endeavour to "save" ourselves "from this untoward generation." The apostle would not so have abjured them, so charged, so entreated them, had he not known the danger of wicked company. "*God is angry with the wicked every day;*" *his bow is bent, the arrows are on the string;* the instruments for their ruin are all prepared. And is it safe to be there where the arrows of God are ready to fly about our ears? How was the apostle afraid to be in the bath with Cerinthus! "Depart," saith God by Moses, "from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." How have the baskets of good figs suffered with the bad! Is it not prejudicial to the gold to be with the dross? Lot had been ruined by his neighbourhood to the Sodomites if God had not wrought wonderfully for his deliverance. Will you put God to work miracles to save you from your ungodly company? It is dangerous being in the road with thieves whilst God's hue and cry of vengeance is at their backs. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." The very beasts may instruct you to consult better for your security: the very deer are afraid of a wounded chased deer, and therefore for their preservation thrust him out of their company.—*Lewis Stuckley.*

Verse 12.—"*If he turn not, he will whet his sword,*" etc. The whetting of the

sword is but to give a keener edge that it may cut the deeper. God is silent as long as the sinner will let him ; but when the sword is whet, it is to cut ; and when the bow is bent, it is to kill ; and woe be to that man who is the butt.—*William Secker.*

Verse 13.—"*He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death ; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.*" It is said that God hath ordained his arrows against the persecutors ; the word signifies such as burn in anger and malice against the godly ; and the word translated *ordained*, signifies God hath wrought his arrows ; he doth not shoot them at random, but he works them against the wicked. Illiricus hath a story which may well be a commentary upon this text in both the parts of it. One Felix, Earl of Wartenberg, one of the captains of the Emperor Charles V., swore in the presence of divers at supper, that before he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans. Here was one that burned in malice, but behold how God works his arrows against him : that very night the hand of God so struck him, that he was strangled and choked in his own blood ; so he rode not, but bathed himself, not up to the spurs, but up to the throat, not in the blood of the Lutherans, but in his own blood before he died.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 13.—"*He ordaineth his arrows.*" This might more exactly be rendered, " He maketh his arrows burning." This image would seem to be deduced from the use of fiery arrows.—*John Kitto*, 1804—1854.

Verse 14.—"*Behold, he travaileth with iniquity,*" etc. The words express the *conception*, *birth*, *carriage*, and *miscarriage*, of a *plot* against David. In which you may consider :—(1.) What his *enemies* did. (2.) What *God* did. (3.) What *we all* should do : his enemies' *intention*, God's *prevention*, and our *duty ;* his enemies' intention, *he travaileth with iniquity, and conceiveth mischief ;* God's prevention, *he brought forth a lie ;* our duty, *Behold* . . . . . Observe the aggravation of the sin, *he conceiveth.* He was not put upon it, or forced into it ; it was voluntary. The more liberty we have not to sin, makes our sin the greater. He did not this in passion, but in cold blood. The less will, less sin.—*Richard Sibbs.*

Verse 14.—"*He travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief.*" All note that conceiving is before travailing, but here travailing, as a woman in labour, goeth first ; the reason whereof is, that the wicked are so hotly set upon the evil which they maliciously intend, that they would be immediately acting of it if they could tell how, even before they have conceived by what means ; but in fine they bring forth but a lie, that is, they find that their own hearts lied to them, when they promised good success, but they had evil. For their haste to perpetrate mischief is intimated in the word rendered " *persecutors* " (verse 13), which properly signifieth *ardentes, burning ;* that is, with a desire to do mischief—and this admits of no delay. A notable common-place, both setting forth the evil case of the wicked, especially attempting anything against the righteous, to move them to repentance—for thou hast God for thine enemy warring against thee, whose force thou canst not resist—and the greedy desire of the wicked to be evil, but their conception shall all prove abortive.—*J. Mayer, in loc.*

Verse 14.—"*And hath brought forth falsehood.*" Every sin is a lie.—*Augustine.*

Verse 14.—

" Earth's entertainments are like those of Jael,
Her left hand brings me milk, her right, a nail."

Thomas Fuller.

Verses 14, 15.—"*They have digged a pit for us* "—and that low, unto hell—"*and are fallen into it themselves.*"

" No juster law can be devised or made,
Than that sin's agents fall by their own trade."

The order of hell proceeds with the same degrees ; though it give a greater portion, yet still a just proportion, of torment. These wretched guests were too busy with the waters of sin ; behold, now they are in the depth of a pit, " where no water is." Dives, that wasted so many tuns of wine, cannot now procure water, not a pot of water, not a handful of water, not a drop of water, to cool his tongue. *Desideravit guttam, qui non dedit micam.** A just recompense ! He would not give a crumb ; he shall not have a drop. Bread hath no smaller fragment than a crumb, water

* Aug. Hom. 7.

no less fraction than a drop. As he denied the least comfort to Lazarus living, so Lazarus shall not bring him the least comfort dead. Thus the pain for sin answers the pleasure of sin . . . . . Thus damnable sins shall have semblable punishments ; and as Augustine of the tongue, so we may say of any member . . . . . If it will not serve God in action, it shall serve him in passion.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 15.—"*He made a pit and digged it.*" The practice of making pitfalls was anciently not only employed for ensnaring wild beasts, but was also a stratagem used against men by the enemy, in time of war. The idea, therefore, refers to a man who, having made such a pit, whether for man or beast, and covered it over so as completely to disguise the danger, did himself inadvertently tread on his own trap, and fall into the pit he had prepared for another.—*Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 16.—That most witty of commentators, Old Master Trapp, tells the following notable anecdote, in illustration of this verse :—That was a very remarkable instance of Dr. Story, who, escaping out of prison in Queen Elizabeth's days, got to Antwerp, and there thinking himself out of the reach of God's rod, he got commission under the Duke of Alva to search all ships coming thither for English books. But one Parker, an English merchant, trading to Antwerp, laid his snare fair (saith our chronicler), to catch this foul bird, causing secret notice to be given to Story, that in his ship were stores of heretical books, with other intelligence that might stand him in stead. The Canonist conceiving that all was quite sure, hasted to the ship, where, with looks very big upon the poor mariners, each cabin, chest, and corner above-board were searched, and some things found to draw him futher on : so that the hatches must be opened, which seemed to be unwillingly done, and great signs of fear were showed by their faces. This drew on the Doctor to descend into the hold, where now in the trap the mouse might well gnaw, but could not get out, for the hatches were down, and the sails hoisted up, which, with a merry gale were blown into England, where ere long he was arraigned, and condemned of high treason, and accordingly executed at Tyburn, as he had well deserven.

Verse 16.—The story of Phalaris's bull, invented for the torment of others, and serving afterwards for himself, is notorious in heathen story . . . . . It was a voluntary judgment which Archbishop Cranmer inflicted on himself when he thrust that very hand into the fire, and burnt it, with which he had signed to the popish articles, crying out, "*Oh, my unworthy right hand!*" but who will deny that the hand of the Almighty was also concerned in it ?—*William Turner in "Divine Judgments by way of Retaliation,"* 1697.

Verse 17.—To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them; to bless him for miseries is the way to remove them : no good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved ; no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently endured.—*William Dyer.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The necessity of faith when we address ourselves to God. Show the worthlessness of prayer without trust in the Lord.

Verses 1, 2.—Viewed as a prayer for deliverance from all enemies, especially Satan the lion.

Verse 3.—Self-vindication before men. When possible, judicious, or serviceable. With remarks upon the spirit in which it should be attempted.

Verse 4.—"*The best revenge.*" Evil for good is devil-like, evil for evil is beast-like, good for good is man-like, good for evil is God-like.

Verse 6.—How and in what sense divine anger may become the hope of the righteous.

Fire fought by fire, or man's anger overcome by God's anger.

Verse 7.—"*The congregation of the people.*" 1. Who they are. 2. Why they congregate together with one another. 3. Where they congregate. 4. Why they choose such a person to be the centre of their congregation.

Verse 7.—The gathering of the saints around the Lord Jesus.

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—The coming of Christ to judgment for the good of his saints.

Verse 8.—The character of the Judge before whom we all must stand.

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—(1) By changing their hearts ; or (2) by restraining their wills, (3) or depriving them of power, (4) or removing them. Show the times when, the reasons why, such a prayer should be offered, and how, in the first sense, we may labour for its accomplishment.

Verse 9.—This verse contains two grand prayers, and a noble proof that the Lord can grant them.

Verse 9.—The period of sin, and the perpetuity of the righteous :—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—"*Establish the just.*" By what means and in what sense the just are established, or, the true established church.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—God's trial of men's hearts.

Verse 10.—"*Upright in heart.*" Explain the character.

Verse 10.—The believer's trust in God, and God's care over him. Show the action of faith in procuring defence and protection, and of that defence upon our faith by strengthening it, etc.

Verse 11.—The Judge, and the two persons upon their trial.

Verse 11 (*second clause*).—God's present, daily, constant, and vehement anger, against the wicked.

Verse 12.—See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 106. " Turn or Burn."

Verses 14, 15, 16.—Illustrate by three figures the devices and defeat of persecutors.

Verse 17.—The excellent duty of praise.

Verse 17.—View the verse in connection with the subject of the Psalm, and show how the deliverance of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked are themes for song.

PSALM VIII.

TITLE.—" To the Chief Musician upon Gittith, a Psalm of David." *We are not clear upon the meaning of the word Gittith. Some think it refers to Gath, and may refer to a tune commonly sung there, or an instrument of music there invented, or a song of Obededom the Gittite, in whose house the ark rested, or, better still, a song sung over Goliath of Gath. Others, tracing the Hebrew to its root, conceive it to mean a song for the winepress, a joyful hymn for the treaders of grapes. The term Gittith is applied to two other Psalms* (lxxxi. *and* lxxxiv.), *both of which, being of a joyous character, it may be concluded, that where we find that word in the title, we may look for a hymn of delight.*

We may style this Psalm the song of the Astronomer : let us go abroad and sing it beneath the starry heavens at eventide, for it is very probable that in such a position, it first occurred to the poet's mind. Dr. Chalmers says, " There is much in the scenery of a nocturnal sky, to lift the soul to pious contemplation. That moon, and these stars, what are they ? They are detached from the world, and they lift us above it. We feel withdrawn from the earth, and rise in lofty abstraction from this little theatre of human passions and human anxieties. The mind abandons itself to reverie, and is transferred in the ecstasy of its thought to distant and unexplored regions. It sees nature in the simplicity of her great elements, and it sees the God of nature invested with the high attributes of wisdom and majesty."

DIVISION.—*The first and last verses are a sweet song of admiration, in which the excellence of the name of God is extolled. The intermediate verses are made up of holy wonder at the Lord's greatness in creation, and at his condescension towards man. Poole, in his annotation, has well said, " It is a great question among interpreters, whether this Psalm speaks of man in general, and of the honour which God puts upon him in his creation ; or only of the* man Christ Jesus. *Possibly both may be reconciled and put together, and the controversy, if rightly stated, may be ended, for the scope and business of this Psalm seems plainly to be this : to display and celebrate the great love and kindness of God to mankind, not only in his creation, but especially in his redemption by Jesus Christ, whom, as he was man, he advanced to the honour and dominion here mentioned, that he might carry on his great and glorious work. So Christ is the principal subject of this Psalm, and it is interpreted of him, both by our Lord himself* (*Matt.* xxi. 16), *and by his holy apostle* (1 *Cor.* xv. 27 ; *Heb.* ii. 6, 7).

EXPOSITION.

O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth ! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Unable to express the glory of God, the Psalmist utters a note of exclamation. O Jehovah our Lord ! We need not wonder at this, for no heart can measure, no tongue can utter, the half of the greatness of Jehovah. The whole creation is full of his glory and radiant with the excellency of his power ; his goodness and his wisdom are manifested on every hand. The countless myriads of terrestrial beings, from man the head, to the creeping worm at the foot, are all supported and nourished by the Divine bounty. The solid fabric of the universe leans upon his eternal arm. Universally is he present, and everywhere is his name excellent. God worketh ever and everywhere. There is no *place* where God is not. The miracles of his power await us on all sides. Traverse the silent valleys where the rocks enclose you on either side, rising like the battlements of heaven till you can see but a strip of the blue sky far overhead ; you may be the only traveller who has passed through that glen ; the bird may start up affrighted, and the moss may tremble beneath the first tread of human foot ; but God is there in a thousand wonders, upholding yon rocky barriers, filling the flowercups with their perfume, and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of his mouth. Descend, if you will, into the lowest depths of the ocean, where undisturbed the water sleeps, and the very sand is motionless in unbroken quiet, but the glory of the Lord is there, revealing its excellence in the silent palace of the sea. Borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, but God is there. Mount to the highest heaven, or dive into the deepest

hell, and God is in both hymned in everlasting song, or justified in terrible vengeance. Everywhere, and in every place, God dwells and is manifestly at work. Nor on earth alone is Jehovah extolled, for his brightness shines forth in the firmament above the earth. His glory exceeds the glory of the starry heavens ; above the region of the stars he hath set fast his everlasting throne, and there he dwells in light ineffable. Let us adore him "who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea ; who maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south." (Job ix. 8, 9.) We can scarcely find more fitting words than those of Nehemiah, "Thou even thou, art Lord alone ; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all ; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee." Returning to the text we are led to observe that this Psalm is addressed to God, because none but the Lord himself can fully know his own glory. The believing heart is ravished with what it sees, but God only knows the glory of God. What a sweetness lies in the little word *our*, how much is God's glory endeared to us when we consider our interest in him as our Lord. *How excellent is thy name !* no words can express that excellency ; and therefore it is left as a note of exclamation. The very *name* of Jehovah is excellent, what must his person be. Note the fact that even the heavens cannot contain his glory, it is set *above the heavens*, since it is and ever must be too great for the creature to express. When wandering amid the Alps, we felt that the Lord was infinitely greater than all his grandest works, and under that feeling we roughly wrote these few lines :—

Yet in all these how great soe'er they be,
We see not Him. The glass is all too dense
And dark, or else our earthborn eyes too dim.

Yon Alps, that lift their heads above the clouds
And hold familiar converse with the stars,
Are dust, at which the balance trembleth not,
Compared with His divine immensity.
The snow-crown'd summits fail to set Him forth,
Who dwelleth in Eternity, and bears
Alone, the name of High and Lofty One.
Depths unfathomed are too shallow to express
The wisdom and the knowledge of the Lord,
The mirror of the creatures has no space
To bear the image of the Infinite.
'Tis true the Lord hath fairly writ His name,
And set His seal upon creation's brow.
But as the skilful potter much excels
The vessel which he fashions on the wheel,
E'en so, but in proportion greater far,
Jehovah's self transcends His noblest works.
Earth's ponderous wheels would break, her axles snap,
If freighted with the load of Deity.
Space is too narrow for the Eternal's rest,
And time too short a footstool for His throne.
E'en avalanche and thunder lack a voice,
To utter the full volume of His praise.
How then can I declare Him ! Where are words
With which my glowing tongue may speak His name !
Silent I bow, and humbly I adore.

2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

Nor only in the heavens above is the Lord seen, but the earth beneath is telling forth his majesty. In the sky, the massive orbs, rolling in their stupendous grandeur, are witnesses of his power in great things, while here below, the lisping utterances of babes are the manifestations of his strength in little ones. How often will children tell us of a God whom we have forgotten ! How doth their simple prattle refute those learned fools who deny the being of God ! Many men have been made to hold their tongues, while sucklings have borne witness to the glory of the God of heaven. It is singular how clearly the history of the church expounds this verse. Did not the children cry "Hosannah !" in the temple, when proud Pharisees were silent and contemptuous ? and did not the Saviour quote these very words as a justification of their infantile cries ? Early church history records many amazing

instances of the testimony of children for the truth of God, but perhaps more modern instances will be most interesting. Foxe tells us, in the Book of Martyrs, that when Mr. Lawrence was burnt in Colchester, he was carried to the fire in a chair, because, through the cruelty of the Papists, he could not stand upright, several young children came about the fire and cried, as well as they could speak, " Lord, strengthen thy servant, and keep thy promise." God answered their prayer, for Mr. Lawrence died as firmly and calmly as any one could wish to breathe his last. When one of the Popish chaplains told Mr. Wishart, the great Scotch martyr, that he had a devil in him, a child that stood by cried out, " A devil cannot speak such words as yonder man speaketh." One more instance is still nearer to our time. In a postcript to one of his letters, in which he details his persecution when first preaching in Moorfields, Whitfield says, " I cannot help adding that several little boys and girls, who were fond of sitting round me on the pulpit while I preached, and handed to me people's notes—though they were often pelted with eggs, dirt, &c., thrown at me—never once gave way ; but, on the contrary, every time I was struck, turned up their little weeping eyes, and seemed to wish they could receive the blows for me. God make them, in their growing years, great and living martyrs for him who, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, perfects praise ! " He who delights in the songs of angels is pleased to honour himself in the eyes of his enemies by the praises of little children. What a contrast between the glory above the heavens, and the mouths of babes and sucklings ! yet by both the name of God is made excellent.

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ;

4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou visitest him ?

At the close of that excellent little manual entitled " The Solar System," written by Dr. Dick, we find an eloquent passage which beautifully expounds the text :— A survey of the solar system has a tendency to moderate the pride of man and to promote humility. Pride is one of the distinguishing characteristics of puny man, and has been one of the chief causes of all the contentions, wars, devastations, systems of slavery, and ambitious projects which have desolated and demoralized our sinful world. Yet there is no disposition more incongruous to the character and circumstance of man. Perhaps there are no rational beings throughout the universe among whom pride would appear more unseemly or incompatible than in man, considering the situation in which he is placed. He is exposed to numerous degradations and calamities, to the rage of storms and tempests, the devastations of earthquakes and volcanoes, the fury of whirlwinds, and the tempestuous billows of the ocean, to the ravages of the sword, famine, pestilence, and numerous diseases ; and at length he must sink into the grave, and his body must become the companion of worms ! The most dignified and haughty of the sons of men are liable to these and similar degradations as well as the meanest of the human family. Yet, in such circumstances, man—that puny worm of the dust, whose knowledge is so limited, and whose follies are so numerous and glaring—has the effrontery to strut in all the haughtiness of pride, and to glory in his shame.

When other arguments and motives produce little effect on certain minds, no considerations seem likely to have a more powerful tendency to counteract this deplorable propensity in human beings, than those which are borrowed from the objects connected with astronomy. They show us what an insignificant being—what a mere atom, indeed, man appears amidst the immensity of creation ! Though he is an object of the paternal care and mercy of the Most High, yet he is but as a grain of sand to the whole earth, when compared to the countless myriads of beings that people the amplitudes of creation. What is the whole of this globe on which we dwell compared with the solar system, which contains a mass of matter ten thousand times greater ? What is it in comparison of the hundred millions of suns and worlds which by the telescope have been described throughout the starry regions ? What, then, is a kingdom, a province, or a baronial territory, of which we are as proud as if we were the lords of the universe and for which we engage in so much devastation and carnage ? What are they, when set in competition with the glories of the sky ? Could we take our station on the lofty pinnacles of heaven, and look down on this scarcely distinguishable speck of earth, we should be ready to exclaim with Seneca, " Is it to this little spot that the great

designs and vast desires of men are confined? Is it for this there is so much disturbance of nations, so much carnage, and so many ruinous wars? Oh, the folly of deceived men, to imagine great kingdoms in the compass of an atom, to raise armies to decide a point of earth with the sword!" Dr. Chalmers, in his Astronomical Discourses, very truthfully says, "We gave you but a feeble image of our comparative insignificance, when we said that the glories of an extended forest would suffer no more from the fall of a single leaf, than the glories of this extended universe would suffer though the globe we tread upon, 'and all that it inherits, should dissolve.'"

5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet:

7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, *and whatsoever* passeth through the paths of the sea.

These verses may set forth man's position among the creatures before he fell; but as they are, by the apostle Paul, appropriated to man as represented by the Lord Jesus, it is best to give most weight to that meaning. In order of dignity, man stood next to the angels, and a little lower than they; in the Lord Jesus this was accomplished, for he was made a little lower than the angels by the suffering of death. Man in Eden had the full command of all creatures, and they came before him to receive their names as an act of homage to him as the vicegerent of God to them. Jesus in his glory, is now Lord, not only of all living, but of all created things, and, with the exception of him who put all things under him, Jesus is Lord of all, and his elect, in him, are raised to a dominion wider than that of the first Adam, as shall be more clearly seen at his coming. Well might the Psalmist wonder at the singular exaltation of man in the scale of being, when he marked his utter nothingness in comparison with the starry universe.

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels—a little lower in nature, since they are immortal, and but a little, because time is short; and when that is over, saints are no longer lower than the angels. The margin reads it, "A little while inferior to." *Thou crownest him.* The dominion that God has bestowed on man is a great *glory and honour* to him; for all dominion is honour, and the highest is that which wears the crown. A full list is given of the subjugated creatures, to show that all the dominion lost by sin is restored in Christ Jesus. Let none of us permit the possession of any earthly creature to be a snare to us, but let us remember that we are to reign over them, and not to allow them to reign over us. Under our feet we must keep the world, and we must shun that base spirit which is content to let worldly cares and pleasures sway the empire of the immortal soul.

9 O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Here, like a good composer, the poet returns to his key-note, falling back, as it were, into his first state of wondering adoration. What he started with as a proposition in the first verse, he closes with as a well proven conclusion, with a sort of *quod erat demonstrandum.* O for grace to walk worthy of that excellent name which has been named upon us, and which we are pledged to magnify!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*Gittith,*" was probably a musical instrument used at their rejoicings after the vintage. The vintage closed the civil year of the Jews, and this Psalm directs us to the latter-day glory, when the Lord shall be King over all the earth, having subdued all his enemies. It is very evident that the vintage was adopted as a figurative representation of the final destruction of all God's enemies. Isaiah lxiii. 1—6; Rev. xix. 18—20. The ancient Jewish interpreters so understood

this Psalm, and apply it to the mystic vintage. We may then consider this interesting composition as a prophetic anticipation of the kingdom of Christ, to be established in glory and honour in the " world to come," the habitable world. Heb. ii. 5. We see not yet all things put under his feet, but we are sure that the Word of God shall be fulfilled, and every enemy, Satan, death, and hell, shall be for ever subdued and destroyed, and creation itself delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Rom. viii. 17—23. In the use of this Psalm, then, we anticipate that victory, and in the praise we thus celebrate, we go on from strength to strength till, with him who is our glorious Head, we appear in Zion before God.—*W. Wilson, D.D., in loc.*

Whole Psalm.—Now, consider but the scope of the Psalm, as the apostle quoteth it to prove the world to come. Heb. ii. Any one that reads the Psalm would think that the Psalmist doth but set forth old Adam in his kingdom, in his paradise, made a little lower than the angels—for we have spirits wrapped up in flesh and blood, whereas they are spirits simply—a degree lower, as if they were dukes, and we marquises ; one would think, I say, that this were all his meaning, and that it is applied to Christ but by way of allusion. But the truth is, the apostle bringeth it in to prove and to convince these Hebrews, to whom he wrote, that that Psalm was meant of Christ, of that man whom they expected to be the Messiah, the Man Christ Jesus. And that he doth it, I prove by the sixth verse—it is the observation that Beza hath—" One in a certain place," quoting David, διεμαρτύρατο, hath testified ; so we may translate it, hath testified it, *etiam atque etiam*, testified most expressly ; he bringeth an express proof for it that it was meant of the Man Christ Jesus ; therefore it is not an allusion. And indeed it was Beza that did first begin that interpretation that I read of, and himself therefore doth excuse it and make an apology for it, that he diverteth out of the common road, though since many others have followed him.

Now the scope of the Psalm is plainly this : in Rom. v. 14, you read that Adam was a type of him that was to come. Now in Psalm viii. you find there Adam's world, the type of a world to come ; he was the first Adam, and had a world, so the second Adam hath a world also appointed for him ; there are his oxen and his sheep, and the fowls of the air, whereby are meant other things, devils perhaps, and wicked men, the prince of the air ; as by the heavens there, the angels, or the apostles rather—" the heavens declare the glory of God ; " that is applied to the apostles, that were preachers of the gospel.

To make this plain to you, that that Psalm where the phrase is used, " All things under his feet," and quoted by the apostle in Eph. i. 22—therefore it is proper—was not meant of man in innocency, but of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ ; and therefore, answerably, that the world there is not this world, but a world on purpose made for this Messiah, as the other was for Adam.

First, it was not meant of man in innocency properly and principally. Why ? Because in the second verse he saith, " Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." There were no babes in the time of Adam's innocency, he fell before there were any. Secondly, he addeth, " That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger ; " the devil that is, for he showed himself the enemy there, to be a manslayer from the beginning. God would use man to still him ; alas ! he overcame Adam presently. It must be meant of another therefore, one that is able to still this enemy and avenger.

Then he saith, " How excellent is thy name in all the earth ! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." Adam had but paradise, he never propagated God's name over all the earth ; he did not continue so long before he fell as to beget sons ; much less did he found it in the heavens.

Again, verse 4, " What is man, and the son of man ? " Adam, though he was man, yet he was not the son of man ; he is called indeed, " the son of God " (Luke iii. 38), but he was not *filius hominis*. I remember Ribera urgeth that.

But take an argument the apostle himself useth to prove it. This man, saith he, must have all subject to him ; all but God, saith he ; he must have the angels subject to him, for he hath put all principalities and powers under his feet, saith he. This could not be Adam, it could not be the man that had this world in a state of innocency ; much less had Adam all under his feet. No, my brethren, it was too great a vassalage for Adam to have the creatures thus bow to him. But they are thus to Jesus Christ, angels and all ; they are all under his feet, he is far above them.

Secondly, it is not meant of man fallen, that is as plain; the apostle himself saith so. "We see not," saith he, "all things subject unto him." Some think that it is meant as an objection that the apostle answereth; but it is indeed to prove that man fallen cannot be meant in Psalm viii. Why? Because, saith he, we do not see anything, all things at least, subject unto him; you have not any one man, or the whole race of man, to whom all things have been subject; the creatures are sometimes injurious to him. We do not see him, saith he; that is, the nature of man in general considered. Take all the monarchs in the world, they never conquered the whole world; there was never any one man that was a sinner that had all subject to him. "But we see," saith he—mark the opposition—"but we see Jesus," that Man, "crowned with glory and honour;" therefore, it is this Man, and no man else; the opposition implieth it" . . . So now it remaineth then, that it is only Christ, God-man, that is meant in Psalm viii. And indeed, and in truth, Christ himself interpreteth the Psalm of himself; you have two witnesses to confirm it, Christ himself and the apostle. Matt. xxi. 16. When they cried hosanna to Christ, or "save now," and made him the Saviour of the world, the Pharisees were angry, our Saviour confuteth them by this very Psalm: "Have ye not read," saith he, "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" He quoteth this very Psalm which speaks of himself; and Paul, by his warrant, and perhaps from that hint, doth thus argue out of it, and convince the Jews by it.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 1.—"*How excellent is thy name in all the earth!*" How illustrious is the name of Jesus throughout the world! His incarnation, birth, humble, and obscure life, preaching, miracles, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, are celebrated through the whole world. His religion, the gifts and graces of his Spirit, his people—Christians, his gospel, and the preachers of it, are everywhere spoken of. No name is so universal, no power and influence so generally felt, as those of the Saviour of mankind. Amen.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—"*Above the heavens;*" not in the heavens, but "*above the heavens;*" even greater, beyond, and higher than they; "angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him." As Paul says, he hath "ascended up far above all heavens." And with this his glory above the heaven is connected, his sending forth his name upon earth through his Holy Spirit. As the apostle adds in this passage, "He hath ascended up far above all heavens; and he gave some apostles." And thus here: "Thy name excellent in all the world;" "Thy glory above the heavens."—*Isaac Williams.*

Verse 2.—"*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength,*" etc. In a prophetic manner, speaking of that which was to be done by children many hundreds of years after, for the asserting of his infinite mercy in sending his Son Jesus Christ into the world to save us from our sins. For so the Lord applieth their crying, "Hosannah to the Son of David" in the temple. And thus both Basil and other ancients, and some new writers also understand it. But Calvin will have it meant of God's wonderful providing for them, by turning their mothers' blood into milk, and giving them the faculty to suck, thus nourishing and preserving them, which sufficiently convinceth all gainsayers of God's wonderful providence towards the weakest and most shiftless of all creatures.—*John Mayer,* 1653.

Verse 2.—Who are these "*babes and sucklings?*" 1. Man in general, who springeth from so weak and poor a beginning as that of babes and sucklings, yet is at length advanced to such power as to grapple with, and overcome the enemy and the avenger. 2. David in particular, who being but a ruddy youth, God used him as an instrument to discomfit Goliath of Gath. 3. More especially our Lord Jesus Christ, who assuming our nature and all the sinless infirmities of it, and submitting to the weakness of an infant, and after dying is gone in the same nature to reign in heaven, till he hath brought all his enemies under his feet. Psalm cx. 1, and 1 Cor. xv. 27. Then was our human nature exalted above all other creatures, when the Son of God was made of a woman, carried in the womb. 4. The apostles, who to outward appearance were despicable, in a manner children and sucklings in comparison of the great ones of the world; poor despised creatures, yet principal instruments of God's service and glory. Therefore 'tis notable, that when Christ glorifieth his Father for the wise and free

dispensation of his saving grace (Matt. xi. 25), he saith, " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes," so called from the meanness of their condition. . . . And you shall see it was spoken when the disciples were sent abroad, and had power given them over unclean spirits. " In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." This he acknowledged to be an act of infinite condescension in God. 5. Those children that cried *Hosanna* to Christ, make up part of the sense, for Christ defendeth their practice by this Scripture. . . . 6. Not only the apostles, but all those that fight under Christ's banner, and are listed into his confederacy, may be called babes and sucklings; first, because of their condition; secondly, their disposition. . . . . 1. Because of their condition. . . . God in the government of the world is pleased to subdue the enemies of his kingdom by weak and despised instruments. 2. Because of their disposition: they are most humble spirited. We are told (Matt. xviii. 3), " Except ye be converted, and become as little children," etc. As if he had said, you strive for pre-eminence and worldly greatness in my kingdom; I tell you my kingdom is a kingdom of babes and containeth none but the humble, and such as are little in their own eyes, and are contented to be small and despised in the eyes of others, and so do not seek after great matters in the world. A young child knoweth not what striving or state meaneth, and therefore by an emblem and visible representation of a child set in the midst of them, Christ would take them off from the expectation of a carnal kingdom.—*Thomas Manton*, 1620—1677.

Verse 2.—" *That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.*" This very confusion and revenge upon Satan, who was the cause of man's fall, was aimed at by God at first; therefore is the first promise and preaching of the gospel to Adam brought in rather in sentencing him than in speaking to Adam, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, it being in God's aim as much to confound him as to save poor man.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2.—The work that is done in love loses half its tedium and difficulty. It is as with a stone, which in the air and on the dry ground we strain at but cannot stir. Flood the field where it lies, bury the block beneath the rising water; and now, when its head is submerged, bend to the work. Put your strength to it. Ah! it moves, rises from its bed, rolls on before your arm. So, when under the heavenly influences of grace the tide of love rises, and goes swelling over our duties and difficulties, a child can do a man's work, and a man can do a giant's. Let love be present in the heart, and " *out of the mouth of babes and sucklings* God ordaineth strength."—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

Verse 2.—" *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings,*" etc. That poor martyr, Alice Driver, in the presence of many hundreds, did so silence Popish bishops, that she and all blessed God that the proudest of them could not resist the spirit in a silly woman; so I say to thee, " *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings*" God will be honoured. Even thou, silly worm, shalt honour him, when it shall appear what God hath done for thee, what lusts he hath mortified, and what graces he hath granted thee. The Lord can yet do greater things for thee if thou wilt trust him. He can carry thee upon eagles' wings, enable thee to bear and suffer strong affliction for him, to persevere to the end, to live by faith, and to finish thy course with joy. Oh! in that he hath made thee low in heart, thy other lowness shall be so much the more honour to thee. Do not all as much and more wonder at God's rare workmanship in the ant, the poorest bug that creeps, as in the biggest elephant? That so many parts and limbs should be united in such a little space; that so poor a creature should provide in the summer-time her winter food. Who sees not as much of God in a bee as in a greater creature? Alas! in a great body we look for great abilities and wonder not. Therefore, to conclude, seeing God hath clothed thy uncomely parts with the more honour, bless God, and bear thy baseness more equally; thy greatest glory is yet to come, that when the wise of the world have rejected the counsel of God, thou hast (with those poor publicans and soldiers), magnified the ministry of the gospel. Surely the Lord will also be admired in thee (1 Thess. i.), a poor silly creature, that even thou wert made wise to salvation and believest in that day. Be still poor in thine own eyes, and the Lord will make thy proudest scornful enemies to worship at thy feet, to confess God hath done much for thee, and wish thy portion when God shall visit them.—*Daniel Rogers*, 1642.

Verse 3.—"*When I consider.*" Meditation fits for humiliation. When David had been contemplating the works of creation, their splendour, harmony, motion, influence, he lets the plumes of pride fall, and begins to have self-abasing thoughts. "*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him?*"—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—"*When I consider thy heavens,*" etc. David surveying the firmament, broke forth into this consideration: "*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast created, what is man?*" etc. How cometh he to mention the moon and stars, and omit the sun? the other being but his pensioners, shining with that exhibition of light which the bounty of the sun allots them. It is answered, this was David's night meditation, when the sun, departing to the other world, left the lesser lights only visible in heaven; and as the sky is best beheld by day in the glory thereof, so too it is best surveyed by night in the variety of the same. Night was made for man to rest in. But when I cannot sleep, may I, with the Psalmist, entertain my waking with good thoughts. Not to use them as opium, to invite my corrupt nature to slumber, but to bolt out bad thoughts, which otherwise would possess my soul.—*Thomas Fuller*, 1608—1661.

Verse 3.—"*Thy heavens.*" The carnal mind sees God in nothing, not even in spiritual things, his word and ordinances. The spiritual mind sees him in everything, even in natural things, in looking on the heavens and the earth and all the creatures—"THY *heavens;*" sees all in that notion, in their relation to God as his work, and in them his glory appearing; stands in awe, fearing to abuse his creatures and his favours to his dishonour. "*The day is thine, and the night also is thine;*" therefore ought not I to forget thee through the day, nor in the night.—*Robert Leighton, D.D.*

Verse 3.—"*The stars.*" I cannot say that it is chiefly the contemplation of their infinitude, and the immeasurable space they occupy, that enraptures me in the stars. These conditions rather tend to confuse the mind; and in this view of countless numbers and unlimited space there lies, moreover, much that belongs rather to a temporary and human than to an eternally abiding consideration. Still less do I regard them absolutely with reference to the life after this. But the mere thought they are so far beyond and above everything terrestrial—the feeling, that before them everything earthly so utterly vanishes to nothing—that the single man is so infinitely insignificant in the comparison with these worlds strewn over all space—that his destinies, his enjoyments, and sacrifices, to which he attaches such a minute importance—how all these fade like nothing before such immense objects; then, that the constellations bind together all the races of man, and all the eras of the earth, that they have beheld all that has passed since the beginning of time, and will see all that passes until its end; in thoughts like these I can always lose myself with a silent delight in the view of the starry firmament. It is, in very truth, a spectacle of the highest solemnity, when, in the stillness of night, in a heaven quite clear, the stars, like a choir of worlds, arise and descend, while existence, as it were, falls asunder into two separate parts; the one, belonging to earth, grows dumb in the utter silence of night, and thereupon the other mounts upward in all its elevation, splendour, and majesty. And, when contemplated from this point of view, the starry heavens have truly a moral influence on the mind.—*Alexander Von Humboldt*, 1850.

Verse 3.—"*When I consider thy heavens,*" etc. Could we transport ourselves above the moon, could we reach the highest star above our heads, we should instantly discover new skies, new stars, new suns, new systems, and perhaps more magnificently adorned. But even there, the vast dominions of our great Creator would not terminate; we should then find, to our astonishment, that we had only arrived at the borders of the works of God. It is but little that we can know of his works, but that little should teach us to be humble, and to admire the divine power and goodness. How great must that Being be who produced these immense globes out of nothing, who regulates their courses, and whose mighty hand directs and supports them all. What is the clod of earth which we inhabit, with all the magnificent scenes it presents to us, in comparison of those innumerable worlds? Were this earth annihilated, its absence would no more be observed than that of a grain of sand from the sea shore. What then are provinces and kingdoms when compared with those worlds? They are but atoms dancing in the air, which are discovered to us by the sunbeams. What then am I, when reckoned among the infinite number of God's creatures? I am lost in mine own nothingness! But

little as I appear in this respect, I find myself great in others. There is great beauty in this starry firmament which God has chosen for his throne! How admirable are those celestial bodies! I am dazzled with their splendour, and enchanted with their beauty! But nothwithstanding this, however beautiful, and however richly adorned, yet this sky is void of intelligence. It is a stranger to its own beauty, while I, who am mere clay, moulded by a divine hand, am endowed with sense and reason. I can contemplate the beauty of these shining worlds; nay, more, I am already, to a certain degree, acquainted with their sublime Author; and by faith I see some small rays of his divine glory. O may I be more and more acquainted with his works, and make the study of them my employ, till by a glorious change I rise to dwell with him above the starry regions.—*Christopher Christian Sturm's "Reflections,"* 1750—1786.

Verse 3.—"*Work of God's fingers.*" That is most elaborate and accurate: a metaphor from embroiderers, or from them that make tapestry.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*When I consider thy heavens,*" etc. It is truly a most Christian exercise to extract a sentiment of piety from the works and the appearances of nature. It has the authority of the sacred writers upon its side, and even our Saviour himself gives it the weight and the solemnity of his example. "Behold the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet your heavenly Father careth for them." He expatiates on the beauty of a single flower, and draws from it the delightful argument of confidence in God. He gives us to see that taste may be combined with piety, and that the same heart may be occupied with all that is serious in the contemplations of religion, and be at the same time alive to the charms and the loveliness of nature. The Psalmist takes a still loftier flight. He leaves the world, and lifts his imagination to that mighty expanse which spreads above it and around it. He wings his way through space, and wanders in thought over its immeasurable regions. Instead of a dark and unpeopled solitude, he sees it crowded with splendour, and filled with the energy of the divine presence. Creation rises in its immensity before him, and the world, with all which it inherits, shrinks into littleness at a contemplation so vast and so overpowering. He wonders that he is not overlooked amid the grandeur and the variety which are on every side of him; and, passing upward from the majesty of nature to the majesty of nature's Architect, he exclaims, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest deign to visit him?" It is not for us to say whether inspiration revealed to the psalmist the wonders of the modern astronomy. But, even though the mind be a perfect stranger to the science of these enlightened times, the heavens present a great and an elevating spectacle, an immense concave reposing upon the circular boundary of the world, and the innumerable lights which are suspended from on high, moving with solemn regularity along its surface. It seems to have been at night that the piety of the Psalmist was awakened by this contemplation; when the moon and the stars were visible, and not when the sun had risen in his strength and thrown a splendour around him, which bore down and eclipsed all the lesser glories of the firmament.—*Thomas Chalmers, D.D.*, 1817.

Verse 3.—"*Thy heavens*":—

> This prospect vast, what is it?—weigh'd aright.
> 'Tis nature's system of divinity,
> And every student of the night inspires.
> 'Tis elder Scripture, writ by God's own hand:
> Scripture authentic! uncorrupt by man.
>
> *Edward Young.*

Verse 3.—"*The stars.*" When I gazed into these stars, have they not looked down on me as if with pity from their serene spaces, like eyes glistening with heavenly tears over the little lot of man!—*Thomas Carlyle.*

Verses 3, 4.—"*When I consider thy heavens,*" etc. Draw spiritual inferences from occasional objects. David did but wisely consider the heavens, and he breaks out into self-abasement and humble admirations of God. Glean matter of instruction to yourselves, and praise to your Maker from everything you see; it will be a degree of restoration to a state of innocency, since this was Adam's task in paradise. Dwell not upon any created object only as a *virtuoso*, to gratify your rational curiosity, but as a Christian, call religion to the feast, and make a spiritual improvement. No creature can meet our eyes but affords us lessons worthy of our thoughts, besides the general notices of the power and wisdom of the Creator. Thus may the sheep read us a lesson of patience, the dove of innocence, the ant and bee

raise blushes in us for our sluggishness, and the stupid ox and dull ass correct and shame our ungrateful ignorance. . . . . He whose eyes are open cannot want an instructor, unless he wants a heart.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—"*What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*" etc. My readers must be careful to mark the design of the Psalmist, which is to enhance, by this comparison, the infinite goodness of God; for it is, indeed, a wonderful thing that the Creator of heaven, whose glory is so surpassingly great as to ravish us with the highest admiration, condescends so far as graciously to take upon him the care of the human race. That the Psalmist makes this contrast may be inferred from the Hebrew word אֱנוֹשׁ, *enosh*, which we have rendered *man*, and which expresses the frailty of man rather than any strength or power which he possesses. . . . . Almost all interpreters render פָּקַד, *pakad*, the last word of this verse, *to visit;* and I am unwilling to differ from them, since this sense suits the passage very well. But as it sometimes signifies *to remember*, and as we will often find in the Psalms the repetition of the same thought in different words, it may here be very properly translated *to remember;* as if David had said, "This is a marvellous thing, that God thinks upon men, and remembers them continually."—*John Calvin*, 1509—1564.

Verse 4.—"*What is man?*" But, O God, what a little lord hast thou made over this great world! The least corn of sand is not so small to the whole earth, as man is to the heaven. When I see the heavens, the sun, the moon, and stars, O God, what is man? Who would think thou shouldst make all these creatures for one, and that one well-near the least of all? Yet none but he can see what thou hast done; none but he can admire and adore thee in what he seeth: how had he need to do nothing but this, since he alone must do it! Certainly the price and value of things consist not in the quantity; one diamond is worth more than many quarries of stone; one loadstone hath more virtue than mountains of earth. It is lawful for us to praise thee in ourselves. All thy creation hath not more wonder in it than one of us: other creatures thou madest by a simple command; MAN, not without a divine consultation: others at once; man thou didst form, then inspire: others in several shapes, like to none but themselves; man, after thine own image: others with qualities fit for service; man, for dominion. Man had his name from thee; they had their names from man. How should we be consecrated to thee above all others, since thou hast bestowed more cost on us than other!—*Joseph Hall, D.D., Bishop of Norwich*, 1574—1656.

Verse 4.—"*What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him?*" And (Job vii. 17, 18) "What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning?" Man, in the pride of his heart, seeth no such great matter in it; but a humble soul is filled with astonishment. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah lvii. 15. Oh, saith the humble soul, will the Lord have respect unto such a vile worm as I am? Will the Lord acquaint himself with such a sinful wretch as I am? Will the Lord open his arms, his bosom, his heart to me? Shall such a loathsome creature as I find favour in his eyes? In Ezek. xvi. 1—5, we have a relation of the wonderful condescension of God to man, who is there resembled to a wretched infant cast out in the day of its birth, in its blood and filthiness, no eye pitying it; such loathsome creatures are we before God; and yet when he passed by, and saw us polluted in our blood, he said unto us, "Live." It is doubled because of the strength of its nature; it was "the time of love" (verse 8). This was love indeed, that God should take a filthy, wretched thing, and spread his skirts over it, and cover its nakedness, and swear unto it, and enter into a covenant with it, and make it his; that is, that he should espouse this loathsome thing to himself, that he would be a husband to it; this love unfathomable, love inconceivable, self-principle love; this is the love of God to man, for God is love. Oh, the depth of the riches of the bounty and goodness of God! How is his love wonderful, and his grace past finding out! How do you find and feel your hearts affected upon the report of these things? Do you not see matter of admiration and cause of wonder? Are you not as it were launched forth into an ocean of goodness, where you can see no shore, nor feel no bottom? Ye may make a judgment of yourselves by the motions and affections that ye feel in yourselves at the mention of this. For thus Christ judged

of the faith of the centurion that said unto him, " Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof. When Jesus heard this, he marvelled, and said to them that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Matthew viii. 8–10. If, then, you feel not your souls mightily affected with the condescension of God, say thus unto your souls, What aileth thee, O my soul, that thou art no more affected with the goodness of God ? Art thou dead, that thou canst not feel ? Or art thou blind that thou canst not see thyself compassed about with astonishing goodness ? Behold the King of glory descending from the habitation of his majesty, and coming to visit thee ! Hearest not thou his voice, saying, " Open to me, my sister: behold, I stand at the door and knock. Lift up yourselves, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in ? " Behold, O my soul, how he waits still while thou hast refused to open to him ! Oh, the wonder of his goodness ! Oh, the condescension of his love, to visit me, to sue unto me, to wait upon me, to be acquainted with me ! Thus work up your souls into an astonishment at the condescension of God.—*James Janeway*, 1674.

Verse 4.—*Man*, in Hebrew—infirm or miserable man—by which it is apparent that he speaks of man not according to the state of his creation, but as fallen into a state of sin, and misery, and mortality. *Art mindful of him, i.e.*, carest for him, and conferrest such high favours upon him. *The son of man*, Heb., *the son of Adam* that great apostate from and rebel against God ; the sinful son of a sinful father—his son by likeness of disposition and manners, no less than by procreation ; all which tends to magnify the divine mercy. *That thou visitest him*—not in anger, as that word is sometimes used, but with thy grace and mercy, as it is taken in Gen. xxi. 1 ; Ex. iv. 31 ; Psalm lxv. 9 ; cvi. 4 ; cxliv. 3.

Verse 4.—*" What is man ? "* The Scripture gives many answers to this question. Ask the prophet Isaiah, *" What is man ? "* and he answers (xl. 6), man is " grass "—" All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." Ask David, *" What is man ? "* He answers (Psalm lxii. 9), man is *" a lie,"* not a liar only, or a deceiver, but *" a lie,"* and a deceit. All the answers the Holy Ghost gives concerning man, are to humble man : man is ready to flatter himself, and one man to flatter another, but God tells us plainly what we are. . . . . It is a wonder that God should vouchsafe a gracious look upon such a creature as man ; it is wonderful, considering the distance between God and man, as man is a creature and God the creator. *" What is man,"* that God should take notice of him ? Is he not a clod of earth, a piece of clay ? But consider him as a sinful and an unclean creature, and we may wonder to amazement : what is an unclean creature that God should magnify him ? Will the Lord indeed put value upon filthiness, and fix his approving eye upon an impure thing ? One step further ; what is rebellious man, man an enemy to God, that God should magnify him ! what admiration can answer this question ? Will God prefer his enemies, and magnify those who would cast him down ? Will a prince exalt a traitor, or give him honour who attempts to take away his life ? The sinful nature of man is an enemy to the nature of God, and would pull God out of heaven ; yet God even at that time is raising man to heaven : sin would lessen the great God, and yet God greatens sinful man.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—*" What is man ? "* Oh, the grandeur and littleness, the excellence and the corruption, the majesty and meanness of man !—*Pascal*, 1623—1662.

Verse 4.—*" Thou visitest him."* To visit is, first, to afflict, to chasten, yea, to punish ; the highest judgments in Scripture come under the notions of visitations. " Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children " (Ex. xxxiv. 7), that is, punishing them. . . . And it is a common speech with us when a house hath the plague, which is one of the highest strokes of temporal affliction, we use to say, " Such a house is visited." Observe then, afflictions are visitations. . . . Secondly, to visit, in a good sense, signifies to show mercy, and to refresh, to deliver and to bless ; " Naomi heard how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." Ruth i. 6. " The Lord visited Sarah," etc. Gen xxi. 1, 2. That greatest mercy and deliverance that ever the children of men had, is thus expressed, " The Lord hath visited and redeemed his people." Luke i. 68. Mercies are visitations ; when God comes in kindness and love to do us good, he visiteth us. And these mercies are called visitations in two respects: 1. Because *God comes near to us* when he doth us good ; mercy is a drawing near to a soul, a drawing near to a place. As when God sends a judgment, or afflicts, he is said to depart and go away from

that place ; so when he doth us good, he comes near, and as it were applies himself in favour to our persons and habitations. 2. They are called a visitation because of *the freeness of them.* A visit is one of the freest things in the world ; there is no obligation but that of love to make a visit ; because such a man is my friend and I love him, therefore I visit him. Hence, that greatest act of free grace in redeeming the world is called a visitation, because it was as freely done as ever any friend made a visit to see his friend, and with infinite more freedom. There was no obligation on man's side at all, many unkindnesses and neglects there were ; God in love came to redeem man. Thirdly, to visit imports an act of care and inspection, of tutorage and direction. The pastor's office over the flock is expressed by this act (Zech. x. 3 ; Acts xv. 36) ; and the care we ought to have of the fatherless and widows is expressed by visiting them. " Pure religion," saith the apostle James, " is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction " (chap. i. 27) ; and in Matt. xxv. 34, Christ pronounceth the blessing on them who, when he was in prison, visited him, which was not a bare seeing, or asking ' how do you,' but it was care of Christ in his imprisonment, and helpfulness and provision for him in his afflicted members. That sense also agrees well with this place, Job vii. 17, 18, " *What is man, that thou shouldst visit him ?* "—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—" *What is man, that thou art mindful of him ? or the son of man, that thou visitest him ?* "

Lord, what is man that thou
So mindful art of him ? Or what's the son
Of man, that thou the highest heaven didst bow,
And to his aide didst runne ?

Man's but a piece of clay
That's animated by thy heavenly breath,
And when that breath thou tak'st away,
He's clay again by death.
He is not worthy of the least
Of all thy mercies at the best.

Baser than clay is he,
For sin hath made him like the beasts that perish,
Though next the angels he was in degree ;
Yet this beast thou dost cherish.
He is not worthy of the least,
Of all thy mercies, he's a beast.

Worse than a beast is man,
Who after thine own image made at first,
Became the divel's sonne by sin. And can
A thing be more accurst ?
Yet thou thy greatest mercy hast
On this accursed creature cast.

Thou didst thyself abase,
And put off all thy robes of majesty,
Taking his nature to give him thy grace,
To save his life didst dye.
He is not worthy of the least
Of all thy mercies ; one's a feast.

Lo ! man is made now even
With the blest angels, yea, superior farre.
Since Christ sat down at God's right hand in heaven,
And God and man one are.
Thus all thy mercies man inherits
Though not the least of them he merits.

Thomas Washbourne. D.D., 1654.

Verse 4.—" *What is man ?* "—

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful is man !
How passing wonder HE who made him such !
Who centred in our make such strange extremes !
From different natures marvellously mix'd,
Connexion exquisite of distant worlds !
Distinguish'd link in being's endless chain !

Midway from nothing to the Deity!
A beam ethereal, sullied and absorb'd,
Though sullied and dishonour'd, still divine!
Dim miniature of greatness absolute!
An heir of glory! a frail child of dust!
Helpless, immortal! insect *infinite!*
A worm! a god! I tremble at myself,
And in myself am lost.

Edward Young, 1681—1775.

Verses 4—8.—"*What is man*," etc.

——Man is ev'ry thing,
And more: he is a tree, yet bears no fruit;
A beast, yet is, or should be more:
Reason and speech we onely bring.
Parrats may thank us, if they are not mute,
They go upon the score.

Man is all symmetrie,
Full of proportions, one limbe to another,
And all to all the world besides:
Each part may call the farthest, brother.
For head with foot hath private amitie,
And both with moons and tides.

Nothing hath got so farre,
But man hath caught and kept it, as his prey.
His eyes dismount the highest starre:
He is in little all the sphere.
Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they
Finde their acquaintance there.

For us the windes do blow;
The earth doth rest, heav'n move, and fountains flow.
Nothing we see, but means our good,
As our *delight*, or as our *treasure*:
The whole is, either our cupboard of *food*,
Or cabinet of *pleasure*.

The starres have us to bed;
Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws:
Musick and light attend our head.
All things unto our *flesh* are kinde
In their *descent* and *being*; to our *minde*
In their *ascent* and *cause*.

Each thing is full of dutie:
Waters united are our navigation;
Distinguished, our habitation;
Below, our drink; above, our meat:
Both are our cleanlinesse. Hath one such beautie?
Then how are all things neat!

More servants wait on man,
Than he'l notice of: in ev'ry path
He treads down that which doth befriend him,
When sicknesse makes him pale and wan.
Oh, mightie love! Man is one world, and hath
Another to attend him.

George Herbert, 1593.

Verse 5.—"*Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels.*" Perhaps it was not so much in nature as in position that man, as first formed, was inferior to the angels. At all events, we can be sure that nothing higher could be affirmed of the angels, than that they were made in the image of God. If, then, they had originally superiority over man, it must have been in the degree of resemblance. The angel was made immortal, intellectual, holy, powerful, glorious, and in these properties lay their likeness to the Creator. But were not these properties given also to man? Was not man made immortal, intellectual, holy, powerful, glorious? And if the angel excelled the man, it was not, we may believe, in the possession of properties which had no counterpart in the man; both bore God's image, and both therefore

had lineaments of the attributes which centre in Deity. Whether or not these lineaments were more strongly marked in the angel than in the man, it were presumptuous to attempt to decide; but it is sufficient for our present purposes that the same properties must have been common to both, since both were modelled after the same divine image; and whatever originally the relative positions of the angel and the man, we cannot question that since the fall man has been fearfully inferior to the angels. The effect of transgression has been to debase all his powers, and so bring him down from his high rank in the scale of creation; but, however degraded and sunken, he still retains the capacities of his original formation, and since these capacities could have differed in nothing but degree from the capacities of the angel, it must be clear that they may be so purged and enlarged as to produce, if we may not say to restore, the equality..... Oh! it may be, we again say, that an erroneous estimate is formed, when we separate by an immense space the angel and the man, and bring down the human race to a low station in the scale of creation. If I search through the records of science, I may indeed find that, for the furtherance of magnificent purposes, God hath made man "a little lower than the angels;" and I cannot close my eyes to the melancholy fact, that as a consequence upon apostasy there has been a weakening and a rifling of those splendid endowments which Adam might have transmitted unimpaired to his children. And yet the Bible teems with notices, that so far from being by nature higher than men, angels even now possess not an importance which belongs to our race. It is a mysterious thing, and one to which we scarcely dare allude, that there has arisen a Redeemer of fallen men, but not of fallen angels. We would build no theory on so awful and inscrutable a truth; but is it too much to say, that the interference on the behalf of man and the non-interference on the behalf of angels, gives ground for the persuasion, that men occupy at least not a lower place than angels in the love and the solicitude of their Maker? Besides, are not angels represented as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation?" And what is the idea coveyed by such a representation, if it be not that believers, being attended and waited on by angels, are as children of God marching forwards to a splendid throne, and so elevated amongst creatures, that those who have the wind in their wings, and are brilliant as a flame of fire, delight to do them honour? And, moreover, does not the repentance of a single sinner minister gladness to a whole throng of angels? And who shall say that this sending of a new wave of rapture throughout the hierarchy of heaven does not betoken such immense sympathy with men as goes far towards proving him the occupant of an immense space in the scale of existence? We may add also, that angels learn of men; inasmuch as Paul declares to the Ephesians, that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." And when we further remember, that in one of those august visions with which the Evangelist John was favoured, he beheld the representatives of the church placed immediately before the eternal throne, whilst angels, standing at a greater distance, thronged the outer circle, we seem to have accumulated proof that men are not to be considered as naturally inferior to angels—that however they may have cast themselves down from eminence, and sullied the lustre and sapped the strength of their first estate, they are still capable of the very loftiest elevation, and require nothing but the being restored to their forfeited position, and the obtaining room for the development of their powers, in order to their shining forth as the illustrious ones of the creation, the breathing, burning images of the Godhead..... The Redeemer is represented as submitting to be humbled—"made a little lower than the angels," for the sake or with a view to the glory that was to be the recompense of his sufferings. This is a very important representation—one that thould be most attentively considered; and from it may be drawn, we think, a strong and clear argument for the divinity of Christ.

We could never see how it could be humility in any creature, whatever the dignity of his condition, to assume the office of a Mediator and to work out our reconciliation. We do not forget to how extreme degradation a Mediator must consent to be reduced, and through what suffering and ignominy he could alone achieve our redemption; but neither do we forget the unmeasured exaltation which was to be the Mediator's reward, and which, if Scripture be true, was to make him far higher than the highest of principalities and powers; and we know not where would have been the amazing humility, where the unparalleled condescension, had any mere creature consented to take the office on the prospect of such a recompense. A being who knew that he should be immeasurably elevated if he did a certain thing, can hardly be commended

for the greatness of his humility in doing that thing. The nobleman who should become a slave, knowing that in consequence he should be made a king, does not seem to us to afford any pattern of condescension. He must be the king already, incapable of obtaining any accession to his greatness, ere his entering the state of slavery can furnish an example of humility. And, in like manner, we can never perceive that any being but a divine Being can justly be said to have given a model of condescension in becoming our Redeemer . . . . . If he could not lay aside the perfections, he could lay aside the glories of Deity; without ceasing to be God he could appear to be man; and herein we believe was the humiliation—herein that self-emptying which Scripture identifies with our Lord's having been "made a little lower than the angels." In place of manifesting himself in the form of God, and thereby centering on himself the delighted and reverential regards of all unfallen orders of intelligences, he must conceal himself in the form of a servant, and no longer gathering that rich tribute of homage, which had flowed from every quarter of his unlimited empire, produced by his power, sustained by his providence, he had the same essential glory, the same real dignity, which he had ever had. These belonged necessarily to his nature, and could no more be parted with, even for a time, than could that nature itself. But every outward mark of majesty and of greatness might be laid aside; and Deity, in place of coming down with such dazzling manifestations of supremacy as would have compelled the world he visited to fall prostrate and adore, might so veil his splendours, and so hide himself in an ignoble form, that when men saw him there should be no "beauty that they should desire him." And this was what Christ did, in consenting to be "made a little lower than the angels;" and in doing this he emptied himself, or "made himself of no reputation." The very being who in the form of God had given its light and magnificence to heaven, appeared upon earth in the form of a servant; and not merely so—for every creature is God's servant, and therefore the form of a servant would have been assumed, had he appeared as an angel or an archangel—but in the form of the lowest of these servants, being "made in the likeness of men"—of men the degraded, the apostate, the perishing.—*Henry Melvill, B.D.*, 1854.

Verses 5, 6.—God magnifies man in the work of creation. The third verse shows us what it was that raised the Psalmist to this admiration of the goodness of God to man: "*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; Lord, what is man?*" God in the work of creation made all these things serviceable and instrumental for the good of man. What is man, that he should have a sun, moon, and stars, planted in the firmament for him? What creature is this? When great preparations are made in any place, much provisions laid in, and the house adorned with richest furnitures, we say, "*What is this man that comes to such a house?*" When such a goodly fabric was raised up, the goodly house of the world adorned and furnished, we have reason admiringly to say, What is this man that must be the tenant or inhabitant of his house? There is yet a higher exaltation of man in the creation; man was magnified with the stamp of God's image, one part whereof the Psalmist describes in the sixth verse, "*Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet,*" etc. Thus man was magnified in creation. What was man that he should have the rule of the world given him? That he should be lord over the fish of the sea, and over the beasts of the field, and over the fowls of the air? Again, man was magnified in creation, in that God set him in the next degree to the angels; "*Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels;*" there is the first part of the answer to this question, man was magnified in being made so excellent a creature, and in having so many excellent creatures made for him. All which may be understood of man as created in God's image; but since the transgression it is peculiar to Christ, as the apostle applies it (Heb. ii. 6), and if those who have their blood and dignity restored by the work of redemption, which is the next part of man's exaltation.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 5—8.—Augustine having allegorised much about the wine-presses in the title of this Psalm, upon these words, "What is man, or the son of man," the one being called אֱנוֹשׁ, from *misery*, the other אָדָם, the *Son of Adam*, or *man*, saith, that by the first is meant man in the state of sin and corruption, by the other, man regenerated by grace, yet called the son of man because made more excellent by the change of his mind and life, from old corruption to newness, and from an old to a new man; whereas he that is still carnal is miserable; and then ascending from the body to the head, Christ, he extols his glory as being set over all things, even the

angels and heavens, and the whole world as is elsewhere showed that he is. Eph. i. 21. And then leaving the highest things he descended to "*sheep and oxen*;" whereby we may understand *sanctified men* and *preachers*, for to *sheep* are the *faithful* often compared, and *preachers* to *oxen*. 1 Cor. ix. "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." "*The beasts of the field*" set forth the *voluptuous* that live at large, going in the broad way: *the fowls of the air*, the *lifted up by pride*: "*the fishes of the sea*," such as through a covetous desire of riches pierce into the lower parts of the earth, as the fishes dive to the bottom of the sea. And because men pass the seas again and again for riches, he addeth, "*that passeth through the way of the sea*," and to that of diving to the bottom of the waters may be applied (1 Tim. vi. 9), "They that will be rich, fall into many noisome lusts, that drown the soul in perdition." And hereby seem to be set forth the three things of the world of which it is said, "they that love them, the love of the Father is not in them." "The lust of the heart" being sensuality; "the lust of the eyes," covetousness; to which is added, "the pride of life." Above all these Christ was set, because without all sin; neither could any of the devil's three temptations, which may be referred hereunto, prevail with him. And all these, as well as "sheep and oxen," are in the church, for which it is said, that into the ark came all manner of beasts, both clean and unclean, and fowls; and all manner of fishes, good and bad, came into the net, as it is in the parable. All which I have set down, as of which good use may be made by the discreet reader.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 6.—"*Thou hast put all things under his feet.*" Hermodius, a nobleman born, upbraided the valiant captain Iphicrates for that he was but a shoemaker's son. "My blood," saith Iphicrates, "taketh beginning at me; and thy blood, at thee now taketh her farewell;" intimating that he, not honouring his house with the glory of his virtues, as the house had honoured him with the title of nobility, was but as a wooden knife put into an empty sheath to fill up the place; but for himself, he, by his valorous achievements was now beginning to be the raiser of his family. Thus, in the matter of spirituality, he is the best gentleman that is the best Christian. The men of Berea, who received the word with all readiness, were more noble than those of Thessalonica. The burgesses of God's city be not of base lineage, but truly noble; they boast not of their generations, but their regeneration, which is far better; for, by their second birth they are the sons of God, and the church is their mother, and Christ their elder brother, the Holy Ghost their tutor, angels their attendants, and all other creatures their subjects, the whole world their inn, and heaven their home.—*John Spencer's "Things New and Old."*

Verse 6.—"*Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands*," etc. For thy help against wandering thoughts in prayer . . . . . labour to keep thy distance to the world, and that sovereignty which God hath given thee over it in its profits and pleasures, or whatever else may prove a snare to thee. While the father and master know their place, and keep their distance, so long children and servants will keep theirs by being dutiful and officious; but when they forget this, the father grows fond of the one, and the master too familiar with the other, then they begin to lose their authority, and the others to grow saucy and under no command; bid them go, and it may be they will not stir; set them a task, and they will bid you do it yourself. Truly, thus it fares with the Christian; all the creatures are his servants, and so long as he keeps his heart at a holy distance from them, and maintains his lordship over them, not laying them in his bosom, which God hath put "*under his feet*," all is well; he marches to the duties of God's worship in a goodly order. He can be private with God, and these not be bold to crowd in to disturb him.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 7, 8.—He who rules over the material world, is Lord also of the intellectual or spiritual creation represented thereby. The souls of the faithful, lowly and harmless are the sheep of his pasture; those who, like oxen, are strong to labour in the church, and who, by expounding the Word of Life, tread out the corn for the nourishment of the people, own him for their kind and beneficent Master; nay, tempers fierce and untractable as the beasts of the desert, are yet subject to his will; spirits of the angelic kind, that, like the birds of the air, traverse freely the superior region, move at his command; and those evil ones whose habitation is in the deep abyss, even to the great leviathan himself, all are put under the feet of King Messiah.—*George Horne, D.D.*

Verse 8.—Every dish of fish and fowl that comes to our table, is an instance of this dominion man has over the works of God's hands, and it is a reason of our subjection to God our chief Lord, and to his dominion over us.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"*O Lord, our Lord.*"—Personal appropriation of the Lord as ours. The privilege of holding such a portion.

"*How excellent,*" etc. The excellence of the name and nature of God in all places, and under all circumstances.

Sermon or lecture upon the glory of God in creation and providence.

"*In all the earth.*" The universal revelation of God in nature and its excellency.

"*Thy glory above the heavens.*" The incomprehensible and infinite glory of God.

"*Above the heavens.*" The glory of God outsoaring the intellect of angels, and the splendour of heaven.

Verse 2.—Infant piety, its possibility, potency, "strength," and influence, "that thou mightest still," etc.

The strength of the gospel not the result of eloquence or wisdom in the speaker.

Great results from small causes when the Lord ordains to work.

Great things which can be said and claimed by babes in grace.

The stilling of the powers of evil by the testimony of feeble believers.

The stilling of the Great Enemy by the conquests of grace.

Verse 4.—Man's insignificance. God's mindfulness of man. Divine visits. The question, "What is man?" Each of these themes may suffice for a discourse, or they may be handled in one sermon.

Verse 5.— Man's relation to the angels.

The position which Jesus assumed for our sakes.

Manhood's crown—the glory of our nature in the person of the Lord Jesus.

Verses 5, 6, 7, 8.—The universal providential dominion of our Lord Jesus.

Verse 6.—Man's rights and responsibilities towards the lower animals.

Verse 6.—Man's dominion over the lower animals, and how he should exercise it.

Verse 6 (*second clause*).—The proper place for all worldly things, "*under his feet.*"

Verse 9.—The wanderer in many climes enjoying the sweetness of his Lord's name in every condition.

PSALM IX.

TITLE.—"To the Chief Musician upon Muth-labben, a Psalm of David." *The meaning of this title is very doubtful. It may refer to the tune to which the Psalm was to be sung, so Wilcocks and others think; or it may refer to a musical instrument now unknown, but common in those days; or it may have a reference to Ben, who is mentioned in* 1 Chron. xv. 18, *as one of the Levitical singers. If either of these conjectures should be correct, the title of Muth-labben has no teaching for us, except it is meant to show us how careful David was that in the worship of God all things should be done according to due order. From a considerable company of learned witnesses we gather that the title will bear a meaning far more instructive, without being fancifully forced: it signifies a Psalm concerning the death of the Son. The Chaldee has, "concerning the death of the Champion who went out between the camps," referring to Goliath of Gath, or some other Philistine, on account of whose death many suppose this Psalm to have been written in after years by David. Believing that out of a thousand guesses this is at least as consistent with the sense of the Psalm as any other, we prefer it; and the more especially so because it enables us to refer it mystically to the victory of the Son of God over the champion of evil, even the enemy of souls (verse* 6). *We have here before us most evidently a triumphal hymn; may it strengthen the faith of the militant believer, and stimulate the courage of the timid saint, as he sees here* THE CONQUEROR, *on whose vesture and thigh is the name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

ORDER.—*Bonar remarks, "The position of the Psalms in their relations to each other is often remarkable. It is questioned whether the present arrangement of them was the order in which they were given forth to Israel, or whether some later compiler, perhaps Ezra, was inspired to attend to this matter, as well as to other points connected with the canon. Without attempting to decide this point, it is enough to remark that we have proof that the order of the Psalms is as ancient as the completing of the canon, and if so, it seems obvious that the Holy Spirit wished this book to come down to us in its present order. We make these remarks, in order to invite attention to the fact, that as the eight caught up the last line of the seventh, this ninth Psalm opens with an apparent reference to the eighth:—*

> "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart;
> I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.
> I will be glad and rejoice in thee. (Comp. Song i. 4; Rev. xix. 7.)
> I will sing to THY NAME, O thou Most High." Verses 1, 2.

*As if "*The Name,*" so highly praised in the former Psalm, were still ringing in the ear of the sweet singer of Israel. And in verse* 10, *he returns to it, celebrating their confidence who "know" that "*name*" as if its fragrance still breathed in the atmosphere around."*

DIVISION.—*The strain so continually changes, that it is difficult to give an outline of it methodically arranged: we give the best we can make. From verses* 1 *to* 6 *is a song of jubilant thanksgiving; from* 7 *to* 12, *there is a continual declaration of faith as to the future. Prayer closes the first great division of the Psalm in verses* 13 *and* 14. *The second portion of this triumphal ode, although much shorter, is parallel in all its parts to the first portion, and is a sort of rehearsal of it. Observe the song for past judgments, verses* 15, 16; *the declaration of trust in future justice,* 17, 18; *and the closing prayer,* 19, 20. *Let us celebrate the conquests of the Redeemer as we read this Psalm, and it cannot but be a delightful task if the Holy Ghost be with us.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL praise *thee,* O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.

3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.

4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.

5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.

6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.

1. With a holy resolution the songster begins his hymn; *I will praise thee, O Lord.* It sometimes needs all our determination to face the foe and bless the Lord in the teeth of his enemies; vowing that whoever else may be silent *we* will bless his name; here, however, the overthrow of the foe is viewed as complete, and the song flows with sacred fulness of delight. It is our duty to praise the Lord; let us perform it as a privilege. Observe that David's praise is all given to the Lord. Praise is to be offered to God alone; we may be grateful to the intermediate agent, but our thanks must have long wings and mount aloft to heaven. *With my whole heart.* Half heart is no heart. *I will show forth.* There is true praise in the thankful telling forth to others of our heavenly Father's dealings with us; this is one of the themes upon which the godly should speak often to one another, and it will not be casting pearls before swine if we make even the ungodly hear of the loving-kindness of the Lord to us. *All thy marvellous works.* Gratitude for one mercy refreshes the memory as to thousands of others. One silver link in the chain draws up a long series of tender remembrances. Here is eternal work for us, for there can be no end to the showing forth of *all* his deeds of love. If we consider our own sinfulness and nothingness, we must feel that every work of preservation, forgiveness, conversion, deliverance, sanctification, &c., which the Lord has wrought for us, or in us is a *marvellous* work. Even in heaven, divine loving-kindness will doubtless be as much a theme of surprise as of rapture.

2. Gladness and joy are the appropriate spirit in which to praise the goodness of the Lord. Birds extol the Creator in notes of overflowing joy, the cattle low forth his praise with tumult of happiness, and the fish leap up in his worship with excess of delight. Moloch may be worshipped with shrieks of pain, and Juggernaut may be honoured by dying groans and inhuman yells, but he whose name is Love is best pleased with the holy mirth, and sanctified gladness of his people. Daily rejoicing is an ornament to the Christian character, and a suitable robe for God's choristers to wear. God loveth a *cheerful* giver, whether it be the gold of his purse or the gold of his mouth which he presents upon his altar. *I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.* Songs are the fitting expressions of inward thankfulness, and it were well if we indulged ourselves and honoured our Lord with more of them. Mr. B. P. Power has well said, "The sailors give a cheery cry as they weigh anchor, the ploughman whistles in the morning as he drives his team; the milkmaid sings her rustic song as she sets about her early task; when soldiers are leaving friends behind them, they do not march out to the tune of the Dead March in 'Saul,' but to the quick notes of some lively air. A praising spirit would do for us all that their songs and music do for them; and if only we could determine to praise the Lord, we should surmount many a difficulty which our low spirits never would have been equal to, and we should do double the work which can be done if the heart be languid in its beating, if we be crushed and trodden down in soul. As the evil spirit in Saul yielded in the olden time to the influence of the harp of the son of Jesse, so would the spirit of melancholy often take flight from us, if only we would take up the song of praise."

3. God's presence is evermore sufficient to work the defeat of our most furious foes, and their ruin is so complete when the Lord takes them in hand, that even flight cannot save them, they fall to rise no more when he pursues them. We must be careful, like David, to give all the glory to him whose presence gives the victory. If we have here the exultings of our conquering Captain, let us make the triumphs of the Redeemer the triumphs of the redeemed, and rejoice with him at the total discomfiture of all his foes.

4. One of our nobility has for his motto, "I will maintain it;" but the Christian has a better and more humble one, "Thou hast maintained it." "God and my right," are united by my faith: while God lives my right shall never be taken from me. If we seek to maintain the cause and honour of our Lord we may suffer reproach and misrepresentation, but it is a rich comfort to remember that he who

sits in the throne knows our hearts, and will not leave us to the ignorant and ungenerous judgment of erring man.

5. God rebukes before he destroys, but when he once comes to blows with the wicked he ceases not until he has dashed them in pieces so small that their very name is forgotten, and like a noisome snuff their remembrance is put out for ever and ever. How often the word "thou" occurs in this and the former verse, to show us that the grateful strain mounts up directly to the Lord as doth the smoke from the altar when the air is still. My soul send up all the music of all thy powers to him who has been and is thy sure deliverance.

6. Here the Psalmist exults over the fallen foe. He bends as it were, over his prostrate form, and insults his once vaunted strength. He plucks the boaster's song out of his mouth, and sings it for him in derision. After this fashion doth our Glorious Redeemer ask of death, "Where is thy sting?" and of the grave, "Where is thy victory?" The spoiler is spoiled, and he who made captive is led into captivity himself. Let the daughters of Jerusalem go forth to meet their King, and praise him with timbrel and harp.

7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.

8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.

12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

In the light of the past the future is not doubtful. Since the same Almighty God fills the throne of power, we can with unhesitating confidence, exult in our security for all time to come.

7. The enduring existence and unchanging dominion of our Jehovah, are the firm foundations of our joy. The enemy and his destructions shall come to a perpetual end, but God and his throne shall *endure for ever*. The eternity of divine sovereignty yields unfailing consolation. By the throne being *prepared for judgment*, are we not to understand the swiftness of divine justice. In heaven's court suitors are not worn out with long delays. Term-time lasts all the year round in the court of King's Bench above. Thousands may come at once to the throne of the Judge of all the earth, but neither plaintiff nor defendant shall have to complain that he is not prepared to give their cause a fair hearing.

8. Whatever earthly courts may do, heaven's throne ministers judgment in uprightness. Partiality and respect of persons are things unknown in the dealings of the Holy One of Israel. How the prospect of appearing before the impartial tribunal of the Great King should act as a check to us when tempted to sin, and as a comfort when we are slandered or oppressed.

9. He who gives no quarter to the wicked in the day of judgment, is the defence and refuge of his saints in the day of trouble. There are many forms of oppression; both from man and from Satan oppression come to us; and for all its forms, a refuge is provided in the Lord Jehovah. There were cities of refuge under the law, God is our refuge-city under the gospel. As the ships when vexed with tempest make for harbour, so do the oppressed hasten to the wings of a just and gracious God. He is a high tower so impregnable, that the hosts of hell cannot carry it by storm, and from its lofty heights faith looks down with scorn upon her enemies.

10. Ignorance is worst when it amounts to ignorance of God, and knowledge is best when it exercises itself upon *the name* of God. This most excellent knowledge leads to the most excellent grace of faith. O, to learn more of the attributes and character of God. Unbelief, that hooting nightbird, cannot live in the light of divine knowledge, it flies before the sun of God's great and gracious name. If we read this verse literally, there is, no doubt, a glorious fulness of assurance in the

names of God. We have recounted them in the "Hints for Preachers," and would direct the reader's attention to them. By knowing his name is also meant an experimental acquaintance with the attributes of God, which are everyone of them anchors to hold the soul from drifting in seasons of peril. The Lord may hide his face for a season from his people, but he never has utterly, finally, really, or angrily, *forsaken them that seek him.* Let the poor seekers draw comfort from this fact, and let the finders rejoice yet more exceedingly, for what must be the Lord's faithfulness to those who find if he is so gracious to those who seek.

"O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who fall how kind thou art,
How good to those who seek.

"But what to those who find, ah, this
Nor tongue nor pen can show
The love of Jesus what it is,
None but his loved ones know."

11. Being full of gratitude himself, our inspired author is eager to excite others to join the strain, and praise God in the same manner as he had himself vowed to do in the first and second verses. The heavenly spirit of praise is gloriously contagious, and he that hath it is never content unless he can excite all who surround him to unite in his sweet employ. Singing and preaching, as means of glorifying God, are here joined together, and it is remarkable that, connected with all revivals of gospel ministry, there has been a sudden outburst of the spirit of song. Luther's Psalms and Hymns were in all men's mouths, and in the modern revival under Wesley and Whitfield, the strains of Charles Wesley, Cennick, Berridge, Toplady, Hart, Newton, and many others, were the outgrowth of restored piety. The singing of the birds of praise fitly accompanies the return of the gracious spring of divine visitation through the proclamation of the truth. Sing on brethren, and preach on, and these shall both be a token that the Lord still dwelleth in Zion. It will be well for us when coming up to Zion, to remember that the Lord dwells among his saints, and is to be had in peculiar reverence of all those that are about him.

When an inquest is held concerning the blood of the oppressed, the martyred saints will have the first remembrance; he will avenge his own elect. Those saints who are living shall also be heard; they shall be exonerated from blame, and kept from destruction, even when the Lord's most terrible work is going on; the man with the inkhorn by his side shall mark them all for safety, before the slaughtermen are permitted to smite the Lord's enemies. The humble cry of the poorest saints shall neither be drowned by the voice of thundering justice nor by the shrieks of the condemned.

13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:

14 That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

Memories of the past and confidences concerning the future conducted the man of God to the mercy seat to plead for the needs of the present. Between praising and praying he divided all his time. How could he have spent it more profitably? His first prayer is one suitable for all persons and occasions, it breathes a humble spirit, indicates self knowledge, appeals to the proper attributes, and to the fitting person. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord.* Just as Luther used to call some texts little Bibles, so we may call this sentence a little prayer-book; for it has in it the soul and marrow of prayer. It is multum in parvo, and like the angelic sword turns every way. The ladder looks to be short, but it reaches from earth to heaven.

What a noble title is here given to the Most High. *Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death!* What a glorious lift! In sickness, in sin, in despair, in temptation, we have been brought very low, and the gloomy portal has seemed as if it would open to imprison us, but, underneath us were the everlasting arms, and, therefore, we have been uplifted even to the gates of heaven. Trapp quaintly says, "He commonly reserveth his hand for a dead lift, and rescueth those who

were even talking of their graves." We must not overlook David's object in desiring mercy, it is God's glory: "*that I may show forth all thy praise.*" Saints are not so selfish as to look only to self; they desire mercy's diamond that they may let others see it flash and sparkle, and may admire Him who gives such priceless gems to his beloved. The contrast between the gates of death and the gates of the New Jerusalem is very striking; let our songs be excited to the highest and most rapturous pitch by the double consideration of whence we are taken, and to what we have been advanced, and let our prayers for mercy be made more energetic and agonizing by a sense of the grace which such a salvation implies. When David speaks of his showing forth *all* God's praise, he means that, in his deliverance grace in all its heights and depths would be magnified. Just as our hymn puts it:—

"O the length and breadth of love!
Jesus, Saviour, can it be?
All thy mercy's height I prove,
All the depth is seen in me."

Here ends the first part of this instructive psalm, and in pausing awhile we feel bound to confess that our exposition has only flitted over its surface, and has not digged into the depths. The verses are singularly full of teaching, and if the Holy Spirit shall bless the reader, he may go over this Psalm, as the writer has done scores of times, and see on each occasion fresh beauties.

15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

16 The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.

In considering this terrible picture of the Lord's overwhelming judgments of his enemies, we are called upon to ponder and meditate upon it with deep seriousness by the two untranslated words, Higgaion, Selah. Meditate, pause. Consider, and tune your instrument. Bethink yourselves and solemnly adjust your hearts to the solemnity which is so well becoming the subject. Let us in a humble spirit approach these verses, and notice, first, that the character of God requires the punishment of sin. *Jehovah is known by the judgment which he executeth;* his holiness and abhorrence of sin are thus displayed. A ruler who winked at evil would soon be known by all his subjects to be evil himself, and he, on the other hand, who is severely just in judgment reveals his own nature thereby. So long as our God is God, he will not, he cannot spare the guilty; except through that one glorious way in which he is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. We must notice, secondly, that the manner of his judgment is singularly wise, and indisputably just. He makes the wicked become their own executioners. "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made, &c." Like cunning hunters they prepared a pitfall for the godly and fell into it themselves: the foot of the victim escaped their crafty snares, but the toils surrounded themselves: the cruel snare was laboriously manufactured, and it proved its efficacy by snaring its own maker. Persecutors and oppressors are often ruined by their own malicious projects. "Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves;" the contentious are involved in ruinous costs; the vicious are devoured with fierce diseases; the envious eat their own hearts; and blasphemers curse their own souls. Thus, men may read their sin in their punishment. They sowed the seed of sin, and the ripe fruit of damnation is the natural result.

17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God.

18 For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall *not* perish for ever.

17. The justice which has punished the wicked, and preserved the righteous, remains the same, and therefore in days to come, retribution will surely be meted out. How solemn is the seventeenth verse, especially in its warning to forgetters of God. The moral who are not devout, the honest who are not prayerful, the benevolent who are not believing, the amiable who are not converted, these must all have their portion with the openly wicked in the hell which is prepared for the

devil and his angels. There are whole nations of such; the forgetters of God are far more numerous than the profane or profligate, and according to the very forceful expression of the Hebrew, the nethermost hell will be the place into which all of them shall be hurled headlong. Forgetfulness seems a small sin, but it brings eternal wrath upon the man who lives and dies in it.

18. Mercy is as ready to her work as ever justice can be. Needy souls fear that they are forgotten; well, if it be so, let them rejoice that they *shall not alway* be so. Satan tells poor tremblers that their hope shall perish, but they have here divine assurance that *their expectation shall not perish for ever.* "The Lord's people are a humbled people, afflicted, emptied, sensible of need, driven to a daily attendance on God, daily begging of him, and living upon the hope of what is promised;" such persons may have to wait, but they shall find that they do not wait in vain.

19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

20 Put them in fear, O LORD, *that* the nations may know themselves *to be but* men. Selah.

19. Prayers are the believer's weapons of war. When the battle is too hard for us, we call in our great ally, who, as it were, lies in ambush until faith gives the signal by crying out, "Arise, O Lord." Although our cause be all but lost, it shall be soon won again if the Almighty doth but bestir himself. He will not suffer man to prevail over God, but with swift judgments will confound their gloryings. In the very sight of God the wicked will be punished, and he who is now all tenderness will have no bowels of compassion for them, since they had no tears of repentance while their day of grace endured.

20. One would think that men would not grow so vain as to deny themselves to be but men, but it appears to be a lesson which only a divine schoolmaster can teach to some proud spirits. Crowns leave their wearers *but men*, degrees of eminent learning make their owners not more than *men*, valour and conquest cannot elevate beyond the dead level of "*but men;*" and all the wealth of Crœsus, the wisdom of Solon, the power of Alexander, the eloquence of Demosthenes, if added together, would leave the possessor but a man. May we ever remember this, lest like those in the text, we should be *put in fear.*

Before leaving this Psalm, it will be very profitable if the student will peruse it again as the triumphal hymn of the Redeemer, as he devoutly brings the glory of his victories and lays it down at his Father's feet. Let us joy in his joy, and our joy shall be full.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—We are to consider this song of praise, as I conceive, to be the language of our great Advocate and Mediator, "in the midst of the church giving thanks unto God," and teaching us to anticipate by faith his great and final victory over all the adversaries of our peace temporal and spiritual, with especial reference to his assertion of his royal dignity on Zion, his holy mountain. The victory over the enemy, we find by the fourth verse, is again ascribed to the decision of divine justice, and the award of a righteous judge, who has at length resumed his tribunal. This renders it certain, that the claim preferred to the throne of the Almighty, could proceed from the lips of none but our MELCHIZEDEC.—*John Fry, B.A.*, 1842.

Verse 1.—"*I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart.*" As a vessel by the scent thereof tells what liquor is in it, so should our mouths smell continually of that mercy wherewith our hearts have been refreshed: for we are called vessels of mercy.—*William Cowper*, 1612.

Verse 1.—"*I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.*" The words, "*With my whole heart,*" serve at once to show the greatness of the deliverances wrought for the psalmist, and to distinguish him from the hypocrites—the coarser, who praise the Lord for his goodness merely with the lips; and the more refined, who praise him with just half their heart,

while they secretly ascribe the deliverance more to themselves than to him. "*All thy wonders*," the marvellous token of thy grace. The Psalmist shows by this term, that he recognised them in all their greatness. Where this is done, there the Lord is also praised with the whole heart. *Half-heartedness*, and the depreciation of divine grace, go hand in hand. The ב is the ב *instrum.* The heart is the instrument of praise, the mouth only its organ.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—When we have received any special good thing from the Lord, it is well, according as we have opportunities, to tell others of it. When the woman who had lost one of her ten pieces of silver, found the missing portion of her money, she gathered her neighbours and her friends together, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost." We may do the same; we may tell friends and relations that we have received such-and-such a blessing, and that we trace it directly to the hand of God. Why have we not already done this? Is there a lurking unbelief as to whether it really came from God; or are we ashamed to own it before those who are perhaps accustomed to laugh at such things? Who knows so much of the marvellous works of God as his own people; if they be silent, how can we expect the world to see what he has done? Let us not be ashamed to glorify God, by telling what we know and feel he has done; let us watch our opportunity to bring out distinctly the fact of his acting; let us feel delighted at having an opportunity, from our own experience, of telling what must turn to his praise; and them that honour God, God will honour in turn; if we be willing to talk of his deeds, he will give us enough to talk about.—*P.B. Power, in 'I Wills' of the Psalms.*

Verses 1, 2.—"*I will confess unto thee, O Lord, with my whole heart*," etc. Behold, with what a flood of the most sweet affections he says that he "*will confess*," "*show forth*," "*rejoice*," "*be glad*," and "*sing*," being filled with ecstasy! He does not simply say, "*I will confess*," but, "with my heart," and "*with my whole heart.*" Nor does he propose to speak simply of "*works*," but of the "*marvellous works*" of God, and of "*all*" those "*works.*" Thus his spirit (like John in the womb) exults and rejoices in God his Saviour, who has done great things for him, and those marvellous things which follow. In which words are opened the subject of this Psalm: that is, that he therein sings the marvellous works of God. And these works are wonderful, because he converts, by those who are nothing, those who have all things, and, by the ALMUTH who live in hidden faith, and are dead to the world, he humbles those who flourish in glory, and are looked upon in the world. Thus accomplishing such mighty things without force, without arms, without labour, by the cross only and blood. But how will his saying, that he will show forth "*all*" his marvellous works, agree with that of Job. ix. 10, "which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number"? For who can show forth all the marvellous works of God? We may say, therefore, that these things are spoken in that excess of feeling in which he said (Psalm vi. 6), "I will water my couch with my tears." That is, he hath such an ardent desire to speak of the wonderful works of God, that, as far as his wishes are concerned, he *would* set them "*all*" forth, though he *could* not do it, for love has neither bounds nor end: and as Paul saith (1 Cor. xiii. 7), "Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things;" hence it can do all things, and does do all things, for God looketh at the heart and spirit.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3.—"*When mine enemies are turned back*," etc. *Were turned back*, repulsed, and put to flight. To render this in the present time, as our translators did, is certainly improper; it destroys the coherence, and introduces obscurity. Ainsworth saw this, and rendered in the past, "When mine enemies turned backward." "*At thy presence.*" That is, by thine anger. For as God's presence or face denotes his favour to such as fear and serve him, so it denotes his anger towards the wicked. "The face of Jehovah is against them that do evil."—*B. Boothroyd*, 1824.

Verse 3.—"*They shall fall and perish.*" It refers to those that either faint in a march, or are wounded in a battle, or especially that in flight meet with galling haps in their way, and so are galled and lamed, rendered unable to go forward, and so fall, and become liable to all the chances of pursuits, and as here, are overtaken and perish in the fall.—*Henry Hammond, D.D.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou hast rebuked the heathen*," etc.—Augustine applieth all this mystically, as is intimated (verse 1) that it should be applied for. "I will speak,"

said he, " of all thy wonderful works ; " and what so wonderful as the turning of the spiritual enemy backward, whether the devil, as when he said, " Get thee behind me, Satan ; " or the old man, which is turned backward when he is put off, and the new man put on ?—*John Mayer.*

Verse 8.—" *He shall judge the world in righteousness.*" In this judgment tears will not prevail, prayers will not be heard, promises will not be admitted, repentance will be too late ; and as for riches, honourable titles, sceptres, and diadems, these will profit much less ; and the inquisition shall be so curious and diligent, that not one light thought nor one idle word (not repented of in the life past), shall be forgotten. For truth itself hath said, not in jest, but in earnest, " Of every idle word which men have spoken, they shall give an account in the day of judgment." Oh, how many which now sin with great delight, yea, even with greediness (as if we served a god of wood or of stone, which seeth nothing, or can do nothing), will be then astonished, ashamed, and silent ! Then shall the days of thy mirth be ended, and thou shalt be overwhelmed with everlasting darkness ; and instead of thy pleasures, thou shalt have everlasting torments.—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 8.—" *He shall judge the world in righteousness.*" Even Paul, in his great address on Mars' Hill, a thousand years after, could find no better words in which to teach the Athenians the doctrine of the judgment-day than the Septuagint rendering of this clause.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 8.—The guilty conscience cannot abide this day. The silly sheep, when she is taken, will not bleat, but you may carry her and do what you will with her, and she will be subject ; but the swine, if she be once taken, she will roar and cry, and thinks she is never taken but to be slain. So of all things the guilty conscience cannot abide to hear of this day, for they know that when they hear of it, they hear of their own condemnation. I think if there were a general collection made through the whole world that there might be no judgment-day, then God would be so rich that the world would go a-begging and be a waste wilderness. Then the covetous judge would bring forth his bribes ; then the crafty lawyer would fetch out his bags ; the usurer would give his gain, and a double thereof. But all the money in the world will not serve for our sin, but the judge must answer his bribes, he that hath money must answer how he came by it, and just condemnation must come upon every soul of them ; then shall the sinner be ever dying and never dead, like the salamander, that is ever in the fire and never consumed.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 9.—It is reported of the Egyptians that, living in the fens, and being vexed with gnats, they used to sleep in high towers, whereby, those creatures not being able to soar so high, they are delivered from the biting of them : so would it be with us when bitten with cares and fear, did we but run to God for refuge, and rest confident of his help.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—" *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.*" Faith is an intelligent grace ; though there can be knowledge without faith, yet there can be no faith without knowledge. One calls it quicksighted faith. Knowledge must carry the torch before faith. 2 Tim. i. 12. " For I know whom I have believed." As in Paul's conversion a light from heaven " shined round about him " (Acts ix. 3), so before faith be wrought, God shines in with a light upon the understanding. A blind faith is as bad as a dead faith : that eye may as well be said to be a good eye which is without sight, as that faith is good without knowledge. Devout ignorance damns ; which condemns the church of Rome, that think it a piece of their religion to be kept in ignorance ; these set up an altar to an unknown God. They say ignorance is the mother of devotion ; but sure where the sun is set in the understanding, it must needs be night in the affections. So necessary is knowledge to the being of faith, that the Scriptures do sometimes baptise faith with the name of knowledge. Isa. liii. 11. " By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." Knowledge is put there for faith.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 10.—" *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee : for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.*" The mother of unbelief is ignorance of God, his faithfulness, mercy, and power. *They that know thee, will trust in thee.* This confirmed Paul, Abraham, Sarah, in the faith. " I know whom I have believed. and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him

against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12. "He is faithful that promised," and "able also to perform." Heb. x. 23, and xi. 11; Rom. iv. 21. The free promises of the Lord are all certain, his commandments right and good, the recompense of reward inestimably to be valued above thousands of gold and silver; trust therefore in the Lord, O my soul, and follow hard after him. Thou hast his free promise, who never failed, who hath promised more than possibly thou couldst ask or think, who hath done more for thee than ever he promised, who is good and bountiful to the wicked and ungodly; thou doest his work, who is able and assuredly will bear thee out. There is a crown of glory proposed unto thee above all conceit of merit; stick fast unto his word, and suffer nothing to divide thee from it. Rest upon his promises though he seem to kill thee; cleave unto his statutes though the flesh lust, the world allure, the devil tempt by flatteries or threatenings to the contrary.—*John Ball*, 1632.

Verse 10.—"*They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.*" They can do no otherwise who savingly know God's sweet attributes, and noble acts for his people. We never trust a man till we know him, and bad men are better known than trusted. Not so the Lord; for where his name is ointment poured forth, the virgins love him, fear him, and rejoice in him, and repose upon him.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 12.—"*When he maketh inquisition for blood he remembereth them.*" There is a time when God will make inquisition for innocent blood. The Hebrew word *doresh*, from *darash*, that is here rendered *inquisition*, signifies not barely to seek, to search, but to seek, search, and enquire with all diligence and care imaginable. Oh, there is a time a-coming when the Lord will make a very diligent and careful search and enquiry after all the innocent blood of his afflicted and persecuted people, which persecutors and tyrants have spilt as water upon the ground; and woe to persecutors when God shall make a more strict, critical, and careful enquiry after the blood of his people than ever was made in the inquisition of Spain, where all things are carried with the greatest diligence, subtlety, secrecy, and severity. O persecutors, there is a time a-coming, when God will make a strict enquiry after the blood of Hooper, Bradford, Latimer, Taylor, Ridley, etc. There is a time a-coming, wherein God will enquire who silenced and suspended such-and-such ministers, and who stopped the mouths of such-and-such, and who imprisoned, confined, and banished such-and-such, who were once burning and shining lights, and who were willing to spend and be spent that sinners might be saved, and that Christ might be glorified. There is a time when the Lord will make a very narrow enquiry into all the actions and practices of ecclesiastical courts, high commissions, committees, assizes, etc, and deal with persecutors as they have dealt with his people.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 12.—"*When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them.*" There is *vox sanguinis*, a voice of blood; and "he that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" It covered the old world with waters. The earth is filled with cruelty; it was *vox sanguinis* that cried, and the heavens heard the earth, and the windows of heaven opened to let fall judgment and vengeance upon it.—*Edward Marbury*, 1649.

Verse 12.—"*When he maketh inquisition for blood,*" etc. Though God may seem to wink for a time at the cruelty of violent men, yet will call them at last to a strict account for all the innocent blood they have shed, and for their unjust and unmerciful usuage of meek and humble persons; whose cry he never forgets (though he doth not presently answer it), but takes a fit time to be avenged of their oppressors.—*Symon Patrick, D.D.*, 1626—1707.

Verse 12.—"*He maketh inquisition for blood.*" He is so stirred at this sin, that he will up, search out the authors, contrivers, and commissioners of this scarlet sin, he will avenge for blood.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 12.—"*He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.*" Prayer is a haven to the shipwrecked man, an anchor to them that are sinking in the waves, a staff to the limbs that totter, a mine of jewels to the poor, a healer of diseases, and a guardian of health. Prayer at once secures the continuance of our blessings, and dissipates the clouds of our calamities. O blessed prayer! thou art the unwearied conqueror of human woes, the firm foundation of human happiness, the source of ever-enduring joy, the mother of philosophy. The man who can pray truly, though languishing in extremest indigence, is richer than all beside, whilst the wretch who never bowed the knee, though proudly sitting as monarch of all nations, is of all men most destitute.—*Chrysostom.*

Verse 14.—"*That I may show forth all thy praise,*" etc. To show forth *all* God's praise is to enter largely into the work. An occasional "*God, I thank thee,*" is no fit return for a perpetual stream of rich benefits.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 15.—"*The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made,*" etc. While they are digging pits for others, there is a pit a-digging and a grave a-making for themselves. They have a measure to make up, and a treasure to fill, which at length will be broken open, which, methinks, should take off them which are set upon mischief from pleasing themselves in their plots. Alas! they are but plotting their own ruin, and building a Babel which will fall upon their own heads. If there were any commendation in plotting, then that great plotter of plotters, that great engineer, Satan, would go beyond us all and take all the credit from us. But let us not envy Satan and his in their glory. They had need of something to comfort them. Let them please themselves with their trade. The day is coming wherein the daughter of Sion shall laugh them to scorn. There will be a time wherein it shall be said, "Arise, Sion, and thresh." Micah iv. 13. And usually the delivery of God's children is joined with the destruction of his enemies; Saul's death, and David's deliverance; the Israelites' deliverance, and the Egyptians' drowning. The church and her opposites are like the scales of a balance; when one goes up, the other goes down.—*Richard Sibbs.*

Verses 15—17. It will much increase the torment of the damned, in that their torments will be as large and strong as their understandings and affections, which will cause those violent passions to be still working. Were their loss never so great, and their sense of it never so passionate, yet if they could but lose the use of their memory, those passions would die, and that loss being forgotten, would little trouble them. But as they cannot lay by their life and being, though then they would account annihilation of singular mercy, so neither can they lay aside any part of their being. Understanding, conscience, affections, memory, must all live to torment them, which should have helped to their happiness. And as by these they should have fed upon the love of God, and drawn forth perpetually the joys of his presence, so by these must they now feed upon the wrath of God, and draw forth continually the dolours of his absence. Therefore, never think, that when I say the hardness of their hearts, and their blindness, dulness, and forgetfulness shall be removed, that therefore they are more holy and happy than before: no, but morally more vile, and hereby far more miserable. Oh, how many times did God by his messengers here call upon them, "Sinners, consider whither you are going. Do but make a stand awhile, and think where your way will end, what is the offered glory that you so carelessly reject: will not this be bitterness in the end?" And yet these men would never be brought to consider, But in the latter days, saith the Lord, they shall perfectly consider it, when they are *ensnared in the work of their own hands,* when God hath arrested them, and judgment is passed upon them, and vengeance is poured out upon them to the full, then they cannot choose but consider it, whether they will or no. Now they have no leisure to consider, nor any room in their memories for the things of another life. Ah! but then they shall have leisure enough, they shall be where they shall have nothing else to do but consider it: their memories shall have no other employment to hinder them; it shall even be engraven upon the tables of their hearts. God would have the doctrine of their eternal state to have been written on the posts of their doors, on their houses, on their hands, and on their hearts: he would have had them mind it and mention it, as they rise and lie down, and as they walk abroad, that so it might have gone well with them at their latter end. And seeing they rejected this counsel of the Lord, therefore shall it be written always before them in the place of their thraldom, that which way soever they look they may still behold it.—*Richard Baxter.*

Verse 16.—"*The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.*" Now if the Lord be known by the judgment which he executeth; then, the judgment which he executeth must be known; it must be an open judgment; and such are very many of the judgments of God, they are acted as upon a stage. And I may give you an account in three particulars why the Lord will sometimes do justice in the place of beholders, or in the open sight of others. First, that there may be witnesses enough of what he doth, and so a record of it be kept, at least in the minds and memories of faithful men for the generations to come. Secondly, the Lord doth it not only that he may have witnesses of his justice, but also that his justice and

the proceedings of it, may have effect and a fruit upon those who did not feel it, nor fall under it. This was the reason why the Lord threatened to punish Jerusalem in the sight of the nations. Ezek. v. 6, 7, 8, 14, 15. . . . . God would execute judgment in Jerusalem, a city placed in the midst of the nations that as the nations had taken notice of the extraordinary favours, benefits, deliverances, and salvations which God wrought for Jerusalem, so they might also take notice of his judgments and sore displeasure against them. Jerusalem was not seated in some nook, corner, or by-place of the world, but in the midst of the nations, that both the goodness and severity of God towards them might be conspicuous . . . . . God lets some sinners suffer, or punisheth them openly, both because he would have all others take notice that he dislikes what they have done, as also because he would not have others do the like, lest they be made like them, both in the matter and manner of their sufferings. 'Tis a favour as well as our duty, to be taught by other men's harms, and to be instructed by their strokes to prevent our own . . . . . Thirdly, God strikes some wicked men in open view, or in the place of beholders for the comfort of his own people, and for their encouragement. Psalm lviii. 10, 11. "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance;" not that he shall be glad of the vengeance, purely as it is a hurt or a suffering to the creature; but the righteous shall be glad when he seeth the vengeance of God as it is a fulfilling of the threatening of God against the sin of man, and an evidence of his own holiness . . . . . It is said (Exod. xiv. 30, 31), that God having overwhelmed the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the Israelites saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore: God did not suffer the carcases of the Egyptians to sink to the bottom of the sea, but caused them to lie upon the shore, that the Israelites might see them; and when Israel saw that dreadful stroke of the Lord upon the Egyptians, it is said, "The people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses." Thus they were confirmed in their faith by God's open judgments upon the Egyptians. They were smitten in the place of beholders, or in the open sight of others.—*Condensed from Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16.—"*The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth;*" when he lays his hand upon sinners, saints tremble, consider his power, majesty, greatness, the nature of his judgments, and so judge themselves, and remove out of the way whatever may provoke . . . . . As fire begets a splendour round about where it is, so do the judgments of God set out to the world his glory, justice, holiness.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 16.—"*Snared in the work of his own hands.*" The wages that sin bargains with the sinner are life, pleasure and profit; but the wages it pays him with are death, torment, and destruction. He that would understand the falsehood and deceit of sin, must compare its promises and its payments together.—*Robert South, D.D.*, 1633—1716.

Verse 16.—"*Higgaion, Selah,*" that is, as Ainsworth renders it, "Meditation, Selah:" showing this ought to be seriously considered of. The word "*Higgaion*" is again had (Psalm xcii. 3); being mentioned among other musical instruments, whereby we may gather it to be one of them; for there is psaltery, nable, higgaion, and harp.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 16.—"*The wicked is snared in the works of his own hands.*" Not only do we read it in the word of God, but all history, all experience, records the same righteous justice of God, in snaring the wicked in the work of their own hands. Perhaps the most striking instance on record, next to Haman on his own gallows, is one connected with the horrors of the French Revolution, in which we are told that, "within nine months of the death of the queen Marie Antoinette by the guillotine, every one implicated in her untimely end, her accusers, the judges, the jury, the prosecutors, the witnesses, all, every one at least whose fate is known, perished by the same instrument as their innocent victim." "In the net which they had laid for her was their own foot taken—into the pit which they digged for her did they themselves fall."—*Barton Bouchier*, 1855.

Verse 17.—The ungodly at death must undergo God's fury and indignation. "*The wicked shall be turned into hell.*" I have read of a loadstone in Ethiopia which hath two corners, with one it draws the iron to it, with the other it puts the iron from it; so God hath two hands, of mercy and justice; with the one he will draw the godly to heaven, with the other he will thrust the sinner to hell; and oh, how dreadful is that place! It is called a fiery lake (Rev. xx. 15); a lake, to denote the plenty of torments in hell; a fiery lake to show the fierceness of them: fire is

the most torturing element. Strabo in his geography mentions a lake in Galilee of such a pestiferous nature that it scaldeth off the skin of whatsoever is cast into it; but, alas! that lake is cool compared with this fiery lake into which the damned are thrown. To demonstrate this fire terrible, there are two most pernicious qualities in it. 1. It is sulphureous, it is mixed with brimstone (Rev. xxi. 8), which is unsavoury and suffocating. 2. It is inextinguishable; though the wicked shall be choked in the flames, yet not consumed (Rev. xx. 10); "And the devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Behold the deplorable condition of all ungodly ones in the other world, they shall have a life that always dies, and a death that always lives: may not this affright men out of their sins, and make them become godly? unless they are resolved to try how hot the hell-fire is.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 17.—"*The wicked shall be turned into hell,*" etc. By "*the wicked*" man we must understand unregenerate persons, whoever they are that are in a state of unregeneracy . . . . . That person is here spoken of us a "*wicked*" man that "*forgets God,*" who does not think of him frequently, and with affection, with fear and delight, and those affections that are suitable to serious thoughts of God . . . . . To forget God and to be a wicked person is all one. And these two things will abundantly evince the truth of this assertion: namely, that this forgetfulness of God excludes the prime and main essentials of religion, and also includes in it the highest and most heinous pieces of wickedness, and therefore must needs denominate the subject, a wicked person. . . . . Forgetfulness of God excludes the principal and essential parts of religion. It implies that a man doth neither esteem nor value the all-sufficiency and holiness of God, as his happiness and portion, as his strength and support; nor doth he fear him, nor live in subjection to his laws and commands, as his rule; nor doth he aim at the glory of God as his end: therefore every one who thus forgets God must certainly be a wicked person . . . . . To exclude God out of our thoughts and not to let him have a place there, not to mind, nor think upon God, is the greatest wickedness of the thoughts that can be. And, therefore, though you cannot say of such a one, he will be drunk, or he will swear, cozen, or oppress; yet if you can say he will forget God, or that he lives all his days never minding nor thinking upon God, you say enough to speak him under wrath, and to turn him into hell without remedy.—*John Howe*, 1630—1705.

Verse 17.—"The wicked shall be turned into hell." לִשְׁאוֹלָה, *Lisholah—headlong into hell, down into hell.* The original is very emphatic.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 17.—All wickedness came originally with the wicked one from hell; thither it will be again remitted, and they who hold on its side must accompany it on its return to that place of torment, there to be shut up for ever. The true state both of "nations," and the individuals of which they are composed, is to be estimated from one single circumstance; namely, whether in their doings they remember, or "forget God." Remembrance of him is the well-spring of virtue; forgetfulness of him, the fountain of vice.—*George Horne, D.D.*

Verse 17.—

Hell, their fit habitation, fraught with fire
Unquenchable, the house of woe and pain.

John Milton, 1608—1674.

Verse 17.—

Will without power, the element of *hell,*
Abortive all its acts returning still
Upon itself; . . . . . Oh, anguish terrible!
Meet guerdon of self-love, its proper ill!
Malice would scowl upon the foe he fears;
And he with lip of scorn would seek to kill;
But neither sees the other, neither hears—
For darkness each in his own dungeon bars,
Lust pines for dearth, and grief drinks its own tears—
Each in its solitude apart. Hate wars
Against himself, and feeds upon his chain,
Whose iron penetrates the soul it scars,
A dreadful solitude each mind insane,
Each its own place, its prison all alone,
And finds no sympathy to soften pain.

J. A. Heraud.

Verse 18.—"*For the needy shall not alway be forgotten,*" etc. This is a sweet promise for a thousand occasions, and when pleaded before the throne in his name who comprehends in himself every promise, and is indeed himself the great promise of the Bible, it would be found like all others, yea and amen.—*Robert Hawker, D.D.*, 1820.

Verse 18.—"*The expectation of the poor shall not perish.*" A heathen could say, when a bird, scared by a hawk, flew into his bosom, I will not betray thee unto thy enemy, seeing thou comest for sanctuary unto me. How much less will God yield up a soul unto its enemy, when it takes sanctuary in his name, saying, Lord I am haunted with such a temptation, dogged with such a lust; either thou must pardon it, or I am damned; mortify it, or I shall be a slave to it; take me into the bosom of thy love for Christ's sake; castle me in the arms of thy everlasting strength; it is in thy power to save me from, or give me up into the hands of my enemy; I have no confidence in myself or any other: into thy hands I commit my cause myself, and rely on thee. This dependence of a soul undoubtedly will awaken the almighty power of God for such a one's defence. He hath sworn the greatest oath that can come out of his blessed lips, even by himself, that such as thus fly for refuge to hope in him, shall have strong consolation. Heb. vi. 17. This indeed may give the saint the greater boldness of faith to expect kind entertainment when he repairs to God for refuge, because he cannot come before he is looked for; God having set up his name and promises as a strong tower, both calls his people into these chambers and expects they should betake themselves thither.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 18.—As sometimes God is said to hear us in not hearing, us, so we may say he should sometimes deny us if he did not delay us. It is (saith Chrysostom) like money, which lying long in the bank, comes home at last with a duck in its mouth, with use upon use; when money is out a great time, it makes a great return: we can stay thus upon men, and cannot we, shall not we, stay upon the Lord, and for the Lord, for a large return. God causeth us by delay to make the more prayers; and the more we pray, the longer we stay, the more comfort we shall have, and the more sure we are that we shall have it in the latter end. Distinguish between denying and delaying. . . . . In God *our Father* are all dimensions of love, and that in an infinite degree; infinitely infinite: what if he defer us? so do we our children, albeit we mean no other but to give them their own asking, yet we love to see them wait, that so they may have from us the best things when they are at the best, in the best time, and in the best manner: if a mother should forget her only boy, yet God hath an infinite memory, he nor can, nor will forget; the expectation of the *waiter* shall not fail *for ever*, that is, *never*.—*Richard Capel.*

Verse 19.—"*Arise, O Lord,*" etc. What does this mean? Are we to consider the Psalmist as praying for the destruction of his enemies, as pronouncing a malediction, a curse upon them? No; these are not the words of one who is wishing that mischief may happen to his enemies; they are the words of a prophet, of one who is foretelling, in Scripture language, the evil that must befall them on account of their sins.—*Augustine.*

Verse 20.—"*Put them in fear, O Lord,*" etc. We should otherwise think ourselves gods. We are so inclined to sin that we need strong restraints, and so swelled with a natural pride against God, that we need thorns in the flesh to let out the corrupt matter. The constant hanging the rod over us makes us lick the dust, and acknowledge ourselves to be altogether at the Lord's mercy. Though God hath pardoned us, he will make us wear the halter about our necks to humble us.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 20.—"*That the nations may know themselves to be but men.*" The original word is אנוש, *enosh;* and therefore it is a prayer that they may know themselves to be but miserable, frail, and dying men. The word is in the singular number, but it is used collectively.—*John Calvin.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. The only object of our praise—" thee, O Lord." II. The abundant themes of praise—" all thy marvellous works." III. The proper nature of praise—" with my whole heart."—*B. Davies.*

Verse 1.—" *I will show forth.*" Endless employment and enjoyment.

Verse 1.—" *Thy marvellous works.*" Creation, Providence, Redemption, are all marvellous, as exhibiting the attributes of God in such a degree as to excite the wonder of all God's universe. A very suggestive topic.

Verse 2.—Sacred song: its connection with holy gladness.

The duty, excellence, and grounds of holy cheerfulness.

Verse 4.—(1) The rights of the righteous are sure to be assailed, (2) but equally sure to be defended.

Verse 6.—I. The great enemy. II. The destructions he has caused. III. The means of his overthrow. IV. The rest which shall ensue.

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—The eternity of God—the comfort of saints, the terror of sinners.

Verse 8.—The justice of God's moral government, especially in relation to the last great day.

Verse 9.—Needy people, needy times, all-sufficient provision.

Verse 10.—I. All-important knowledge—" know thy name." II. Blessed result—" will put their trust in thee." III. Sufficient reason—" for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."—*T. W. Medhurst.*

Knowledge, Faith, Experience, the connection of the three.

Verse 10.—The names of God inspire trust. JEHOVAH *Jireh, Tsidkenu, Rophi, Shammah, Shalom, Nissi,* ELOHIM, SHADDAI, ADONAI, etc.

Verse 11.—I. Zion, what is it? II. Her glorious inhabitant, what doth he? III. The twofold occupation of her sons—" sing praises," " declare among the people his doings." IV. Arguments from the first part of the subject to encourage us in the double duty.

Verse 12.—I. God on awful business. II. Remembers his people; to spare, honour, bless, and avenge them. III. Fulfils their cries, in their own salvation, and overthrow of enemies. A consolatory sermon for times of war or pestilence.

Verse 13.—" *Have mercy upon me, O Lord.*" The publican's prayer expounded, commended, presented, and fulfilled.

Verse 13.—" *Thou liftest me up from the gates of death.*" Deep distresses. Great deliverances. Glorious exaltations.

Verse 14.—" *I will rejoice in thy salvation.*" Especially because it is *thine,* O God, and therefore honours thee. In its freeness, fulness, suitability, certainty, everlastingness. Who can rejoice in this? Reasons why they should always do so.

Verse 15.—*Lex talionis.* Memorable instances.

Verse 16.—Awful knowledge; a tremendous alternative as compared with verse 10.

Verse 17.—A warning to forgetters of God.

Verse 18.—Delays in deliverance. I. Unbelief's estimate of them—" forgotten," " perish." II. God's promise—" not always." III. Faith's duty—wait.

Verse 19.—" *Let not man prevail.*" A powerful plea. Cases when employed in Scripture. The reason of its power. Times for its use.

Verse 20.—A needful lesson, and how it is taught.

PSALM X.

Since this Psalm has no title of its own, it is supposed by some to be a fragment of Psalm ix. *We prefer, however, since it is complete in itself, to consider it as a separate composition. We have had instances already of Psalms which seem meant to form a pair (Ps.* i. *and* ii., *Ps.* iii. *and* iv.), *and this, with the ninth, is another specimen of the double Psalm.*

The prevailing theme seems to be the oppression and persecution of the wicked; we will, therefore, for our own guidance, entitle it, THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED.

DIVISION.—*The first verse, in an exclamation of surprise, explains the intent of the Psalm, viz., to invoke the interposition of God for the deliverance of his poor and persecuted people. From verse* 2 *to* 11, *the character of the oppressor is described in powerful language. In verse* 12, *the cry of the first verse bursts forth again, but with a clearer utterance. In the next place (verses* 13—15), *God's eye is clearly beheld as regarding all the cruel deeds of the wicked; and as a consequence of divine omniscience the ultimate judgment of the oppressed is joyously anticipated (verses* 16—18). *To the Church of God during times of persecution, and to individual saints who are smarting under the hand of the proud sinner, this Psalm furnishes suitable language both for prayer and praise.*

EXPOSITION.

WHY standest thou afar off, O LORD? *why* hidest thou *thyself* in times of trouble?

To the tearful eye of the sufferer the Lord seemed to *stand* still, as if he calmly looked on, and did not sympathize with his afflicted one. Nay, more, the Lord appeared to be *afar off*, no longer "a very present help in trouble," but an inaccessible mountain, into which no man would be able to climb. The presence of God is the joy of his people, but any suspicion of his absence is distracting beyond measure. Let us, then, ever remember that the Lord is nigh us. The refiner is never far from the mouth of the furnace when his gold is in the fire, and the Son of God is always walking in the midst of the flames when his holy children are cast into them. Yet he that knows the frailty of man will little wonder that when we are sharply exercised, we find it hard to bear the apparent neglect of the Lord when he forbears to work our deliverance.

"*Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?*" It is not the trouble, but the hiding of our Father's face, which cuts us to the quick. When trial and desertion come together, we are in as perilous a plight as Paul, when his ship fell into a place where two seas met (Acts xxvii. 41). It is but little wonder if we are like the vessel which ran aground, and the fore-part stuck fast, and remained unmovable, while the hinder part was broken by the violence of the waves. When our sun is eclipsed, it is dark indeed. If we need an answer to the question, "Why hidest thou thyself?" it is to be found in the fact that there is a "needs-be," not only for trial, but for heaviness of heart under trial (1 Pet. i. 6); but how could this be the case, if the Lord should shine upon us while he is afflicting us? Should the parent comfort his child while he is correcting him, where would be the use of the chastening? A smiling face and a rod are not fit companions. God bares the back that the blow may be felt; for it is only *felt* affliction which can become *blest* affliction. If we are carried in the arms of God over every stream, where would be the trial, and where the experience, which trouble is meant to teach us?

2 The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.

4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God:* God *is* not in all his thoughts.

5 His ways are always grievous; thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight: *as for* all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for *I shall* never *be* in adversity.

7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue *is* mischief and vanity.

8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.

9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

10 He croucheth, *and* humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.

11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see *it*.

2. The second verse contains the formal indictment against the wicked: "*The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.*" The accusation divides itself into two distinct charges,—pride and tyranny; the one the root and cause of the other. The second sentence is the humble petition of the oppressed: "*Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.*" The prayer is reasonable, just, and natural. Even our enemies themselves being judges, it is but right that men should be done by as they wished to do to others. We only weigh you in your own scales, and measure your corn with your own bushel. Terrible shall be the day, O persecuting Babylon! when thou shalt be made to drink of the winecup which thou thyself hast filled to the brim with the blood of saints. There are none who will dispute the justice of God, when he shall hang every Haman on his own gallows, and cast all the enemies of his Daniels into their own den of lions.

3. The indictment being read, and the petition presented, the evidence is now heard upon the first count. The evidence is very full and conclusive upon the matter of *pride*, and no jury could hesitate to give a verdict against the prisoner at the bar. Let us, however, hear the witnesses one by one. The first testifies that he is a boaster. "*For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire.*" He is a very silly boaster, for he glories in a mere desire: a very brazen-faced boaster, for that desire is villainy; and a most abandoned sinner, to boast of that which is his shame. Bragging sinners are the worst and most contemptible of men, especially when their filthy desires,—too filthy to be carried into act—become the theme of their boastings. When Mr. Hate-Good and Mr. Heady are joined in partnership, they drive a brisk trade in the devil's wares. This one proof is enough to condemn the prisoner at the bar. Take him away, jailor! But stay, another witness desires to be sworn and heard. This time, the impudence of the proud rebel is even more apparent; for he "*blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.*" This is insolence, which is pride unmasked. He is haughty enough to differ from the Judge of all the earth, and bless the men whom God hath cursed. So did the sinful generation in the days of Malachi, who called the proud happy, and set up those that worked wickedness (Mal. iii. 15). These base pretenders would dispute with their Maker; they would—

> "Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
> Rejudge his justice, be the god of God."

How often have we heard the wicked man speaking in terms of honour of the covetous, the grinder of the poor, and the sharp dealer! Our old proverb hath it—

> "I wot well how the world wags;
> He is most loved that hath most bags."

Pride meets covetousness, and compliments it as wise, thrifty, and prudent. We say it with sorrow, there are many professors of religion who esteem a rich man, and flatter him, even though they know that he has fattened himself upon the flesh and blood of the poor. The only sinners who are received as respectable are covetous men. If a man is a fornicator, or a drunkard, we put him out of the church; but who ever read of church discipline against that idolatrous wretch,—

the covetous man? Let us tremble, lest we be found to be partakers of this atrocious sin of pride, "blessing the covetous, whom Jehovah abhorreth."

4. The proud boastings and lewd blessing of the wicked have been received in evidence against him, and now his own face confirms the accusation, and his empty closet cries aloud against him. "*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.*" Proud hearts breed proud looks and stiff knees. It is an admirable arrangement that the heart is often written on the countenance, just as the motion of the wheels of a clock find their record on its face. A brazen face and a broken heart never go together. We are not quite sure that the Athenians were wise when they ordained that men should be tried in the dark lest their countenances should weigh with the judges; for there is much more to be learned from the motions of the muscles of the face than from the words of the lips. Honesty shines in the face, but villainy peeps out at the eyes.

See the effect of pride; it kept the man from seeking God. It is hard to pray with a stiff neck and an unbending knee. "*God is not in all his thoughts:*" he thought much, but he had no thoughts for God. Amid heaps of chaff there was not a grain of wheat. The only place where God is not is in the thoughts of the wicked. This is a damning accusation; for where the God of heaven is not, the Lord of hell is reigning and raging; and if God be not in our thoughts, our thoughts will bring us to perdition.

5. "*His ways are always grievous.*" To himself they are hard. Men go a rough road when they go to hell. God has hedged-up the way of sin: O what folly to leap these hedges and fall among the thorns! To others, also, his ways cause much sorrow and vexation; but what cares he? He sits like the idol god upon his monstrous car, utterly regardless of the crowds who are crushed as he rolls along. "*Thy judgments are far above out of his sight:*" he looks high, but not high enough. As God is forgotten, so are his judgments. He is not able to comprehend the things of God; a swine may sooner look through a telescope at the stars than this man study the Word of God to understand the righteousness of the Lord. "*As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.*" He defies and domineers; and when men resist his injurious behaviour, he sneers at them, and threatens to annihilate them with a puff. In most languages there is a word of contempt borrowed from the action of puffing with the lips, and in English we should express the idea by saying, "He cries 'Pooh! Pooh!' at his enemies." Ah! there is one enemy who will not thus be puffed at. Death will puff at the candle of his life and blow it out, and the wicked boaster will find it grim work to brag in the tomb.

6. The testimony of the sixth verse concludes the evidence against the prisoner upon the first charge of pride, and certainly it is conclusive in the highest degree. The present witness has been prying into the secret chambers of the heart, and has come to tell us what he has heard. "*He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.*" O impertinence run to seed! The man thinks himself immutable, and omnipotent too, for *he*, *he* is never to be in adversity. He counts himself a privileged man. He sits alone, and shall see no sorrow. His nest is in the stars, and he dreams not of a hand that shall pluck him thence. But let us remember that this man's house is built upon the sand, upon a foundation no more substantial than the rolling waves of the sea. He that is too secure is never safe. Boastings are not buttresses, and self-confidence is a sorry bulwark. This is the ruin of fools, that when they succeed they become too big, and swell with self-conceit, as if their summer would last for ever, and their flowers bloom on eternally. Be humble, O man! for thou art mortal, and thy lot is mutable.

The second crime is now to be proved. The fact that the man is proud and arrogant may go a long way to prove that he is vindictive and cruel. Haman's pride was the father of a cruel design to murder all the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar builds an idol; in pride he commands all men to bow before it; and then cruelty stands ready to heat the furnace seven times hotter for those who will not yield to his imperious will. Every proud thought is twin brother to a cruel thought. He who exalts himself will despise others, and one step further will make him a tyrant.

7. Let us now hear the witnesses in court. Let the wretch speak for himself, for out of his own mouth he will be condemned. "*His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud.*" There is not only a little evil there, but his mouth is full of it. A three-headed serpent hath stowed away its coils and venom within the den of his black mouth. There is *cursing* which he spits against both God and men, *deceit* with which he entraps the unwary, and *fraud* by which, even in his

common dealings, he robs his neighbours. Beware of such a man: have no sort of dealing with him: none but the silliest of geese would go to the fox's sermon, and none but the most foolish will put themselves into the society of knaves. But we must proceed. Let us look under this man's tongue as well as in his mouth; "*under his tongue is mischief and vanity.*" Deep in his throat are the unborn words which shall come forth as mischief and iniquity.

8. Despite the bragging of this base wretch, it seems that he is as cowardly as he is cruel. "*He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.*" He acts the part of the highwayman, who springs upon the unsuspecting traveller in some desolate part of the road. There are always bad men lying in wait for the saints. This is a land of robbers and thieves; let us travel well armed, for every bush conceals an enemy. Everywhere there are traps laid for us, and foes thirsting for our blood. There are enemies at our table as well as across the sea. We are never safe, save when the Lord is with us.

9. The picture becomes blacker, for here is the cunning of the lion, and of the huntsman, as well as the stealthiness of the robber. Surely there are some men who come up to the very letter of this description. With watching, perversion, slander, whispering, and false swearing, they ruin the character of the righteous, and murder the innocent; or, with legal quibbles, mortgages, bonds, writs, and the like, they catch the poor, and draw them into a net. Chrysostom was peculiarly severe upon this last phase of cruelty, but assuredly not more so than was richly merited. Take care, brethren, for there are other traps besides these. Hungry lions are crouching in every den, and fowlers spread their nets in every field.

Quarles well pictures our danger in those memorable lines,—

> "The close pursuers' busy hands do plant
> Snares in thy substance; snares attend thy want;
> Snares in thy credit; snares in thy disgrace;
> Snares in thy high estate; snares in thy base;
> Snares tuck thy bed; and snares surround thy board;
> Snares watch thy thoughts; and snares attack thy word;
>
> Snares in thy quiet; snares in thy commotion;
> Snares in thy diet; snares in thy devotion:
> Snares lurk in thy resolves; snares in thy doubt;
> Snares lie within thy heart, and snares without;
> Snares are above thy head, and snares beneath;
> Snares in thy sickness; snares are in thy death."

O Lord! keep thy servants, and defend us from all our enemies!

10. "*He croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.*" Seeming humility is often armour-bearer to malice. The lion crouches that he may leap with the greater force, and bring down his strong limbs upon his prey. When a wolf was old and had tasted human blood, the old Saxon cried, "Ware, wolf!" and we may cry, "Ware, fox!" They who crouch to our feet are longing to make us fall. Be very careful of fawners; for friendship and flattery are deadly enemies.

11. As upon the former count, so upon this one; a witness in forthcoming, who has been listening at the keyhole of the heart. Speak up, friend, and let us hear your story. "*He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.*" This cruel man comforts himself with the idea that God is blind, or, at least, forgetful: a fond and foolish fancy, indeed. Men doubt Omniscience when they persecute the saints. If we had a sense of God's presence with us, it would be impossible for us to ill-treat his children. In fact, there can scarcely be a greater preservation from sin than the constant thought of "thou, God, seest me."

Thus has the trial proceeded. The case has been fully stated; and now it is but little wonder that the oppressed petitioner lifts up the cry for judgment, which we find in the following verse:—

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand; forget not the humble

With what bold language will faith address its God! and yet what unbelief is mingled with our strongest confidence. Fearlessly the Lord is stirred up to

arise and lift up his hand, yet timidly is he begged not to forget the humble; as if Jehovah could ever be forgetful of his saints. This verse is the incessant cry of the Church, and she will never refrain therefrom until her Lord shall come in his glory to avenge her of all her adversaries.

13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require *it*.

14 Thou hast seen *it*; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite *it* with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil *man*: seek out his wickedness *till* thou find none.

In these verses the description of the wicked is condensed, and the evil of his character traced to its source, viz., atheistical ideas with regard to the government of the world. We may at once perceive that this is intended to be another urgent plea with the Lord to show his power, and reveal his justice. When the wicked call God's righteousness in question, we may well beg him to teach them terrible things in righteousness. In verse 13, the hope of the infidel and his heart-wishes are laid bare. He despises the Lord, because he will not believe that sin will meet with punishment: "*he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.*" If there were no hell for other men, there ought to be one for those who question the justice of it. This vile suggestion receives its answer in verse 14. "*Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand.*" God is all-eye to see, and all-hand to punish his enemies. From Divine oversight there is no hiding, and from Divine justice there is no fleeing. Wanton mischief shall meet with woeful misery, and those who harbour spite shall inherit sorrow. Verily there is a God which judgeth in the earth. Nor is this the only instance of the presence of God in the world; for while he chastises the oppressor, he befriends the oppressed. "*The poor committeth himself unto thee.*" They give themselves up entirely into the Lord's hands. Resigning their judgment to his enlightenment, and their wills to his supremacy, they rest assured that he will order all things for the best. Nor does he deceive their hope. He preserves them in times of need, and causes them to rejoice in his goodness. "*Thou art the helper of the fatherless.*" God is the parent of all orphans. When the earthly father sleeps beneath the sod, a heavenly Father smiles from above. By some means or other, orphan children are fed, and well they may when they have such a Father.

15. In this verse we hear again the burden of the Psalmist's prayer: "*Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man.*" Let the sinner lose his power to sin; stop the tyrant, arrest the oppressor, weaken the loins of the mighty, and dash in pieces the terrible. They deny thy justice: let them feel it to the full. Indeed, they shall feel it; for God shall hunt the sinner for ever: so long as there is a grain of sin in him it shall be sought out and punished. It is not a little worthy of note, that very few great persecutors have ever died in their beds: the curse has manifestly pursued them, and their fearful sufferings have made them own *that* divine justice at which they could at one time launch defiance. God permits tyrants to arise as thorn-hedges to protect his church from the intrusion of hypocrites, and that he may teach his backsliding children by them, as Gideon did the men of Succoth with the briers of the wilderness; but he soon cuts up these Herods, like the thorns, and casts them into the fire. Thales, the Milesian, one of the wise men of Greece, being asked what he thought to be the greatest rarity in the world, replied, "To see a tyrant live to be an old man." See how the Lord breaks, not only the arm, but the neck of proud oppressors! To the men who had neither justice nor mercy for the saints, there shall be rendered justice to the full, but not a grain of mercy.

16 The LORD *is* King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.

17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

The Psalm ends with a song of thanksgiving to the great and everlasting King, because he has granted the desire of his humble and oppressed people, has defended the fatherless, and punished the heathen who trampled upon his poor and afflicted children. Let us learn that we are sure to speed well, if we carry our complaint to the King of kings. Rights will be vindicated, and wrongs redressed, at his throne. His government neglects not the interests of the needy, nor does it tolerate oppression in the mighty. Great God, we leave ourselves in thine hand; to thee we commit thy church afresh. Arise, O God, and let the man of the earth—the creature of a day—be broken before the majesty of thy power. Come, Lord Jesus, and glorify thy people. Amen and Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—There is not, in my judgment, a Psalm which describes the mind, the manners, the works, the words, the feelings, and the fate of the ungodly with so much propriety, fulness, and light, as this Psalm. So that, if in any respect there has not been enough said heretofore, or if there shall be anything wanting in the Psalms that shall follow, we may here find a perfect image and representation of iniquity. This Psalm, therefore, is a type, form, and description of that man, who, though he may be in the sight of himself and of men more excellent than Peter himself, is detestable in the eyes of God; and this it was that moved Augustine, and those who followed him, to understand the Psalm of ANTICHRIST. But as the Psalm is without a title, let us embrace the most general and common understanding of it (as I said), and let us look at the picture of ungodliness which it sets before us. Not that we would deny the propriety of the acceptation in which others receive it, nay, we will, in our general acceptation of the Psalm, include also its reference to ANTICHRIST. And, indeed, it will not be at all absurd if we join this Psalm with the preceding, in its order thus. That David, in the preceding spoke of the ungodly converted, and prayed for those who were to be converted. But that here he is speaking of the ungodly that are still left so, and in power prevailing over the weak ALMUTH, concerning whom he has no hope, or is in a great uncertainty of mind, whether they ever will be converted or not.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—"*Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?*" The answer to this is not far to seek, for if the Lord did not hide himself it would not be a time of trouble at all. As well ask why the sun does not shine at night, when for certain there could be no night if he did. It is essential to our thorough chastisement that the Father should withdraw his smile: there is a needs be not only for manifold temptations, but that we be in heaviness through them. The design of the rod is only answered by making us smart. If there be no pain, there will be no profit. If there be no hiding of God, there will be no bitterness, and consequently no purging efficacy in his chastisements.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—"*Times of trouble*" should be times of confidence; fixedness of heart on God would prevent fears of heart. Psalm cxii. 7. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed." How? "Trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid." Otherwise without it we shall be as light as a weather-cock, moved with every blast of evil tidings, our hopes will swim or sink according to the news we hear. Providence would seem to sleep unless faith and prayer awaken it. The disciples had but little faith in their Master's account, yet that little faith awakened him in a storm, and he relieved them. Unbelief doth only discourage God from showing his power in taking our parts.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 2.—"*The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.*" THE OPPRESSOR'S PLEA. I seek but what is my own by law; it was his own free act and deed—the execution lies for goods and body; and goods or body I will have, or else my money. What if his beggarly children pine, or his proud wife perish? they perish at their own charge, not mine; and what is that to me? I must be paid, or he lie by it until I have my utmost farthing, or his bones. The law is just and good; and,

being ruled by that, how can my fair proceedings be unjust? What is thirty in the hundred to a man of trade? Are we born to thrum caps or pick straws? and sell our livelihood for a few tears, and a whining face? I thank God they move me not so much as a howling dog at midnight. I'll give no day if heaven itself would be security. I must have present money, or his bones. . . . . Fifteen shillings in the pound composition! I'll hang first. Come, tell me not of a good conscience: a good conscience is no parcel of my trade; it hath made more bankrupts than all the loose wives in the universal city. My conscience is no fool: it tells me my own is my own, and that a well crammed bag is no deceitful friend, but will stick close to me when all my friends forsake me. If to gain a good estate out of nothing, and to regain a desperate debt which is as good as nothing, be the fruits and sign of a bad conscience, God help the good. Come, tell me not of griping and oppression. The world is hard, and he that hopes to thrive must gripe as hard. What I give I give, and what I lend I lend. If the way to heaven be to turn beggar upon earth, let them take it that like it. I know not what you call oppression, the law is my direction; but of the two, it is more profitable to oppress than to be oppressed. If debtors would be honest and discharge, our hands were bound; but when their failing offends my bags, they touch the apple of my eye, and I must right them.—*Francis Quarles.*

Verse 2.—That famous persecutor, Domitian, like others of the Roman emperors, assumed divine honours, and heated the furnace seven times hotter against Christians because they refused to worship his image. In like manner, when the popes of Rome became decorated with the blasphemous titles of *Masters of the World*, and *Universal Fathers*, they let loose their blood-hounds upon the faithful. Pride is the egg of persecution.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—"*Pride*," is a vice which cleaveth so fast unto the hearts of men, that if we were to strip ourselves of all faults one by one, we should undoubtedly find it the very last and hardest to put off.—*Richard Hooker*, 1554—1600.

Verse 3.—"*The wicked boasteth*," etc. He braggeth of his evil life, whereof he maketh open profession; or he boasteth that he will accomplish his wicked designs; or glorieth that he hath already accomplished them. Or it may be understood that he commendeth others who are according to the desires of his own soul; that is, he respecteth or honoureth none but such as are like him, and them only he esteemeth. Psalm xxxvi. 4, and xlix. 18; Rom. i. 32.—*John Diodati*, 1648.

Verse 3.—"*The wicked . . . blesseth the covetous.*" Like will to like, as the common proverb is. Such as altogether neglect the Lord's commandments not only commit divers gross sins, but commend those who in sinning are like themselves. For in their affections they allow them, in their speeches they flatter and extol them, and in their deeds they join with them and maintain them.—*Peter Muffet*, 1594.

Verse 3.—"*The covetous.*" Covetousness is the desire of possessing that which we have not, and attaining unto great riches and worldly possessions. And whether this be not the character of trade and merchandise and traffic of every kind, the great source of those evils of over-trading which are everywhere complained of, I refer to the judgment of the men around me, who are engaged in the commerce and business of life. Compared with the regular and quiet diligence of our fathers, and their contentment with small but sure returns, the wild and widespread speculation for great gains, the rash and hasty adventures which are daily made, and the desperate gamester-like risks which are run, do reveal fully surely that a spirit of covetousness hath been poured out upon men within the last thirty or forty years. And the providence of God corresponding thereto, by wonderful and unexpected revolutions, by numerous inventions for manufacturing the productions of the earth, in order to lead men into temptation, hath impressed upon the whole face of human affairs, a stamp of earnest worldliness not known to our fathers: insomuch that our youth do enter life no longer with the ambition of providing things honest in the sight of men, keeping their credit, bringing up their family, and realising a competency, if the Lord prosper them, but with the ambition of making a fortune, retiring to their ease, and enjoying the luxuries of the present life. Against which crying sin of covetousness, dearly beloved brethren, I do most earnestly call upon you to wage a good warfare. This place is its seat, its stronghold, even this metropolitan city of Christian Britain; and ye who are called by the grace of God out of the great thoroughfare of Mammon, are so elected for the express purpose of testifying against this and all other the backslidings of the church planted

here; and especially against this, as being in my opinion, one of the most evident and the most common of them all. For who hath not been snared in the snare of covetousness?—*Edward Irving*, 1828.

Verse 3.—"*The covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.*" Christ knew what he spake when he said, "No man can serve two masters." Matt. vi. 24. Meaning God and the world, because each would have all. As the angel and the devil strove for the body of Moses (Jude 9), not who should have a part, but who should have the whole, so they strive still for our souls, who shall have all. Therefore, the apostle saith, "The love of this world is enmity to God (James iv. 4), signifying such emulation between these two, that God cannot abide the world should have a part, and the world cannot abide that God should have a part. Therefore, the love of the world must needs be enmity to God, and therefore the lovers of the world must needs be enemies to God, and so no covetous man is God's servant, but God's enemy. For this cause covetousness is called idolatry (Eph. v. 5), which is the most contrary sin to God, because as treason sets up another king in the king's place, so idolatry sets up another god in God's place.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 4.—"*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.*" He is judged a proud man (without a jury sitting on him), who when condemned will not submit, will not stoop so low as to accept of a pardon. I must indeed correct myself, men are willing to be justified, but they would have their duties to purchase their peace and the favour of God. Thousands will die and be damned rather than they will have a pardon upon the sole account of Christ's merits and obedience. Oh, the cursed pride of the heart! When will men cease to be wiser than God? To limit God? When will men be contented with God's way of saving them by the blood of the everlasting covenant? How dare men thus to prescribe to the infinitely wise God? Is it not enough for thee that thy destruction is of thyself? But must thy salvation be of thyself too? Is it not enough that thou hast wounded thyself, but wilt thou die for ever, rather than be beholden to a plaister of free grace? Wilt be damned unless thou mayest be thine own Saviour? God is willing ("God so loved the world that he gave his only Son"), art thou so proud as that thou wilt not be beholden to God? Thou wilt deserve, or have nothing. What shall I say? Poor thou art, and yet proud; thou hast nothing but wretchedness and misery, and yet thou art talking of a purchase. This is a provocation. "God resisteth the proud," especially the spiritually proud. He that is proud of his clothes and parentage, is not so contemptible in God's eyes as he that is proud of his abilities, and so scorns to submit to God's methods for his salvation by Christ, and by his righteousness alone.—*Lewis Stuckley.*

Verse 4.—"*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.*" The pride of the wicked is the principal reason why they will not seek after the knowledge of God. This knowledge it prevents them from seeking in various ways. In the first place, it renders God a disagreeable object of contemplation to the wicked, and a knowledge of him as undesirable. Pride consists in an unduly exalted opinion of one's self. It is, therefore, impatient of a rival, hates a superior, and cannot endure a master. In proportion as it prevails in the heart, it makes us wish to see nothing above us, to acknowledge no law but our own wills, to follow no rule but our own inclinations. Thus it led Satan to rebel against his Creator, and our first parents to desire to be as gods. Since such are the effects of pride, it is evident that nothing can be more painful to a proud heart than the thoughts of such a being as God; one who is infinitely powerful, just and holy; who can neither be resisted, deceived, nor deluded; who disposes, according to his own sovereign pleasure, of all creatures and events; and who, in an especial manner, hates pride, and is determined to abase and punish it. Such a being pride can contemplate only with feelings of dread, aversion, and abhorrence. It must look upon him as its natural enemy, the great enemy, whom it has to fear. But the knowledge of God directly tends to bring this infinite, irrestible, irreconcilable enemy full to the view of the proud man. It teaches him that he has a superior, a master, from whose authority he cannot escape, whose power he cannot resist, and whose will he must obey, or be crushed before him, and be rendered miserable for ever. It shows him what he hates to see, that, in despite of his opposition, God's counsel shall stand, that he will do all his pleasure, and that in all things wherein men deal proudly, God is above them. These truths torture the proud unhumbled hearts of the wicked, and hence they hate that knowledge of God which teaches these

truths, and will not seek it. On the contrary, they wish to remain ignorant of such a being, and to banish all thoughts of him from their minds. With this view, they neglect, pervert, or explain away those passages of revelation which describe God's true character, and endeavour to believe that he is altogether such a one as themselves.

How foolish, how absurd, how ruinous, how blindly destructive of its own object, does pride appear! By attempting to soar, it only plunges itself in the mire; and while endeavouring to erect for itself a throne, it undermines the ground on which it stands, and digs its own grave. It plunged Satan from heaven into hell; it banished our first parents from paradise; and it will, in a similar manner, ruin all who indulge in it. It keeps us in ignorance of God, shuts us out from his favour, prevents us from resembling him, deprives us in this world of all the honour and happiness which communion with him would confer; and in the next, unless previously hated, repented of, and renounced, will bar for ever against us the door of heaven, and close upon us the gates of hell. O then, my friends, beware, above all things, beware of pride! Beware, lest you indulge it imperceptibly, for it is perhaps, of all sins, the most secret, subtle, and insinuating.—*Edward Payson, D.D.*, 1783—1827.

Verse 4.—David speaks in Psalm x. of great and potent oppressors and politicians, who see none on earth greater than themselves, none higher than they, and think therefore that they may *impune* prey upon the smaller, as beasts use to do; and in the fourth verse this is made the root and ground of all, that God is not in all his thoughts. "*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.*" The words are diversely read, and all make for this sense. Some read it, "No God in all his crafty presumptuous purposes;" others, "All his thoughts are, there is no God." The meaning whereof is not only that among the swarm and crowd of thoughts that fill his mind, the thought of God is seldom to be found, and comes not in among the rest, which yet is enough for the purpose in hand; but further, that in all his projects and plots, and consultations of his heart (the first reading of the words intends), whereby he contrives and lays the plot, form, and draught of all his actions, he never takes God or his will into consideration or consultation, to square and frame all accordingly, but proceeds and goes on in all, and carries on all as if there were no God to be consulted with. He takes not him along with him, no more than if he were no God; the thoughts of him and his will sway him not. As you use to say, when a combination of men leave out some one they should advise with, that such a one is not of their counsel, is not in the plot; so nor is God in their purposes and advisings, they do all without him. But this is not all the meaning, but farther, all their thought is, that there is no God. This is there made the bottom, the foundation, the groundwork and reason of all their wicked plots and injurious projects, and deceitful carriages and proceedings, that seeing there is no God or power above them to take notice of it, to regard or requite them, therefore they may be bold to go on.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 4.—"*Of his countenance.*" Which pride he carrieth engraven in his very countenance and forehead, and makes it known in all his carriages and gestures. "*Will not seek,*" namely, he contemneth all divine and human laws, he feareth not, respecteth not God's judgments; he careth for nothing, so he may fulfil his desires; enquires after, nor examines nothing; all things are indifferent to him.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 4.—"*All his thoughts are,* there is *no God;*" thus some read the passage. Seneca says, there are no atheists, though there would be some; if any say there is no God, they lie; though they say it in the day time, yet in the night when they are alone they deny it; howsoever some desperately harden themselves, yet if God doth but show himself terrible to them, they confess him. Many of the heathens and others, have denied that there is a God, yet when they were in distress, they did fall down and confess him, as Diagoras, that grand atheist, when he was troubled with the strangullion, acknowledged a deity which he had denied. These kind of atheists I leave to the tender mercies of God, of which I doubt it whether there be any for them.—*Richard Stock.*

Verse 4.—"*God is not in all his thoughts.*" It is the black work of an ungodly man or an atheist, that God is not in all his thoughts. What comfort can be had in the being of God without thinking of him with reverence and delight? A God forgotten is as good as no God to us.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—Trifles possess us, but "*God is not in all our thoughts,*" seldom the

sole object of them. We have durable thoughts of transitory things, and flitting thoughts of a durable and eternal good. The covenant of grace engageth the whole heart to God, and bars anything else from engrossing it; but what strangers are God and the souls of most men! Though we have the knowledge of him by creation, yet he is for the most part an unknown God in the relations wherein he stands to us, because a God undelighted in. Hence it is, as one observes, that because we observe not the ways of God's wisdom, conceive not of him in his vast perfections, nor are stricken with an admiration of his goodness, that we have fewer good sacred poems than of any other kind. The wits of men hang the wing when they come to exercise their reasons and fancies about God. Parts and strength are given us, as well as corn and wine to the Israelites, for the service of God, but those are consecrated to some cursed Baal, Hosea ii. 8. Like Venus in the poet, we forsake heaven to follow some Adonis.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verses 4, 5.—The world hath a spiritual fascination and witchcraft, by which, where it hath once prevailed, men are enchanted to an utter forgetfulness of themselves and God, and being drunk with pleasures, they are easily engaged to a madness and height of folly. Some, like foolish children, are made to keep a great stir in the world for very trifles, for a vain show; they think themselves great, honourable, excellent, and for this make a great bustle, when the world hath not added one cubit to their stature of real worth. Others are by this Circe transformed into savage creatures, and act the part of lions and tigers. Others, like swine, wallow in the lusts of uncleanness. Others are unmanned, putting off all natural affections, care not who they ride over, so they may rule over or be made great. Others are taken with ridiculous frenzies, so that a man that stands in the cool shade of a sedate composure would judge them out of their wits. It would make a man admire to read of the frisks of Caius Caligula, Xerxes, Alexander, and many others, who because they were above many men, thought themselves above human nature. They forgot they were born and must die, and did such things as would have made them, but that their greatness overawed it, a laughing-stock and common scorn to children. Neither must we think that these were but some few or rare instances of worldly intoxication, when the Scripture notes it as a general distemper of all that bow down to worship this idol. They live "without God in the world," saith the apostle, that is, they so carry it as if there were no God to take notice of them to check them for their madness. "*God is not in all his thoughts.*" Verse 4. "*The judgments of God are far above out of his sight;*" he puffs at his enemies (ver. 5), and saith in his heart, he "*shall never be moved.*" Verse 6. The whole Psalm describes the worldling as a man that hath lost all his understanding, and is acting the part of a frantic bedlam. What then can be a more fit engine for the devil to work with than the pleasures of the world?—*Richard Gilpin.*

Verse 5.—"*Grievous,*" or troublesome; that is, all his endeavours and actions aim at nothing but at hurting others. "*Are far above,*" for he is altogther carnal, he hath not any disposition nor correspondence with the justice of thy law, which is altogether spiritual; and therefore cannot lively represent unto himself thy judgments, and the issue of the wicked according to the said law. Rom. vii. 14; 1 Cor. ii. 14. "*He puffeth;*" he doth most arrogantly despise them, and is confident he can overthrow them with a puff.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.*" Because God does not immediately visit every sin with punishment, ungodly men do not see that in due time he judges all the earth. Human tribunals must of necessity, by promptness and publicity, commend themselves to the common judgment, but the Lord's modes of dealing with sin are sublimer and apparently more tardy, hence the bat's eyes of godless men cannot see them, and the grovelling wits of men cannot comprehend them. If God sat in the gate of every village and held his court there, even fools might discern his righteousness, but they are not capable of perceiving that for a matter to be settled in the highest court, even in heaven itself, is a far more solemn matter. Let believers take heed lest they fall in a degree into the same error, and begin to criticise the actions of The Great Supreme, when they are too elevated for human reason to comprehend them.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—"*The judgments of God are far above out of his sight.*" Out of his sight, as an eagle at her highest towering so lessons herself to view, that he sees not the talons, nor fears the grip. Thus man presumes till he hath sinned, and then despairs as fast afterwards. At first, "Tush, doth God see it?" At last, "Alas! will God

forgive it ?" But if a man will not know his sins, his sins will know him ; the eyes which presumption shuts, commonly despair opens.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 5.—"*As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.*" David describeth a *proud* man, *puffing at his enemies :* he is puffed up and swelled with high conceits of himself, as if he had some great matter in him, and he puffs at others as if he could do some great matter against them, forgetting that himself is but, as to his being in this world, a puff of wind which passeth away.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*As for all his enemies he puffeth at them ;*" literally, "*He whistles at them.*" He is given over to the dominion of gloomy indifference, and he cares as little for others as for himself. Whosoever may be imagined by him to be an enemy he cares not. Contempt and ridicule are his only weapons ; and he has forgotten how to use others of a more sacred character. His mental habits are marked by scorn ; and he treats with contempt the judgments, opinions, and practices of the wisest of men.—*John Morison.*

Verse 6.—"*He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved : for I shall never be in adversity.*" Carnal security opens the door for all impiety to enter into the soul. Pompey, when he had in vain assaulted a city, and could not take it by force, devised this stratagem in way of agreement ; he told them he would leave the siege and make peace with them, upon condition that they would let in a few weak, sick, and wounded soldiers among them to be cured. They let in the soldiers, and when the city was secure, the soldiers let in Pompey's army. A carnal settled security will let in a whole army of lusts into the soul.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 6.—"*He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved : for I shall never be in adversity.*" To consider religion always on the comfortable side ; to congratulate one's self for having obtained the end before we have made use of the means ; to stretch the hands to receive the crown of righteousness before they have been employed to fight the battle ; to be content with a false peace, and to use no efforts to obtain the graces to which true consolation is annexed: this is a dreadful calm, like that which some voyagers describe, and which is a very singular forerunner of a very terrible event. All on a sudden, in the wide ocean, the sea becomes calm, the surface of the water clear as a crystal, smooth as glass—the air serene ; the unskilled passenger becomes tranquil and happy, but the old mariner trembles. In an instant the waves froth, the winds murmur, the heavens kindle, a thousand gulfs open, a frightful light inflames the air, and every wave threatens sudden death. This is an image of many men's assurance of salvation.—*James Saurin,* 1677—1730.

Verse 7.—"*Under his tongue is mischief and vanity.*" The striking allusion of this expression is to certain venomous reptiles, which are said to carry bags of poison under their teeth, and with great subtlety to inflict the most deadly injuries upon those who come within their reach. How affectingly does this represent the sad havoc which minds tainted with infidelity inflict on the community ! By their perversions of truth, and by their immoral sentiments and practices, they are as injurious to the mind as the deadliest poison can be to the body.—*John Morison.*

Verse 7.—Cursing men are cursed men.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 7—9. In Anne Askew's account of her examination by Bishop Bonner, we have an instance of the cruel craft of persecutors : "On the morrow after, my lord of London sent for me at one of the clock, his hour being appointed at three. And as I came before him, he said he was very sorry of my trouble, and desired to know my opinion in such matters as were laid against me. He required me also boldly in any wise to utter the secrets of my heart ; bidding me not to fear in any point, for whatsoever I did say within his house no man should hurt me for it. I answered, 'For so much as your lordship hath appointed three of the clock, and my friends shall not come till that hour, I desire you to pardon me of giving answer till they come' " Upon this Bale remarks : "In this preventing of the hour may the diligent perceive the greediness of this Babylon bishop, or bloodthirsty wolf, concerning his prey. 'Swift are their feet,' saith David, 'in the effusion of innocent blood, which have fraud in their tongues, venom in their lips, and most cruel vengeance in their mouths.' David much marvelleth in the spirit that, taking upon them the spiritual governance of the people, they can fall into such frenzy or forgetfulness of themselves, as to believe it lawful thus to oppress the faithful, and to devour them with as little compassion as he that greedily devoureth a piece of bread. If such have read anything of God, they have little minded their true duty therein.

'More swift,' saith Jeremy, 'are our cruel persecutors than the eagles of the air. They follow upon us over the mountains, and lay privy wait for us in the wilderness.' He that will know the crafty hawking of bishops to bring in their prey, let him learn it here. Judas, I think, had never the tenth part of their cunning workmanship.'" *John Bale, D.D., Bishop of Ossory,* 1495—1563, *in "Examination of Anne Askew." Parker Society's Publications.*

Verse 8.—"*He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages,*" etc. The Arab robber lurks like a wolf among these sand-heaps, and often springs out suddenly upon the solitary traveller, robs him in a trice, and then plunges again into the wilderness of sand-hills and reedy downs, where pursuit is fruitless. Our friends are careful not to allow us to straggle about, or lag behind, and yet it seems absurd to fear a surprise here—Kaifa before, Acre in the rear, and travellers in sight on both sides. Robberies, however, do often occur, just where we now are. Strange country! and it has always been so. There are a hundred allusions to just such things in the history, the Psalms, and the prophets of Israel. A whole class of imagery is based upon them. Thus, in Psalm x. 8—10, "He sits in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: he lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net; he croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones." And a thousand rascals, the living originals of this picture, are this day crouching and lying in wait all over the country to catch poor helpless travellers. You observe that all these people we meet or pass are armed; nor would they venture to go from Acre to Kaifa without their musket, although the cannon of the castles seem to command every foot of the way. Strange, most strange land! but it tallies wonderfully with its ancient story.—*W. M. Thomson, D.D., in "The Land and the Book,"* 1859.

Verse 8.—My companions asked me if I knew the danger I had escaped. "No," I replied; "What danger?" They then told me that, just after they started, they saw a wild Arab skulking after me, crouching to the ground, with a musket in his hand; and that, as soon as he had reached within what appeared to them musket-shot of me, he raised his gun; but, looking wildly around him, as a man will do who is about to perpetrate some desperate act, he caught sight of them and disappeared. Jeremiah knew something of the ways of these Arabs when he wrote, (chap. iii. 2) "In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness;" and the simile is used in Psalm x. 9, 10, for the Arabs wait and watch for their prey with the greatest eagerness and perseverance.—*John Gadsby, in "My Wanderings,"* 1860.

Verse 8.—"*He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.*" All this strength of metaphor and imagery is intended to mark the assiduity, the cunning, the low artifice, to which the enemies of truth and righteousness will often resort in order to accomplish their corrupt and vicious designs. The extirpation of true religion is their great object; and there is nothing to which they will not stoop in order to effect that object. The great powers which have oppressed the church of Christ, in different ages, have answered to this description. Both heathen and papistical authorities have thus condescended to infamy. They have sat, as it were, in ambush for the poor of Christ's flock; they have adopted every stratagem that infernal skill could invent; they have associated themselves with princes in their palaces, and with beggars on their dunghill; they have resorted to the villages, and they have mingled in the gay and populous city; and all for the vain purpose of attempting to blot out a "name which shall endure for ever, and which shall be continued as long as the sun."—*John Morison.*

Verse 9.—"*He doth catch the poor.*" The poor man is the beast they hunt, who must rise early, rest late, eat the bread of sorrow, sit with many a hungry meal, perhaps his children crying for food, while all the fruit of his pains is served into Nimrod's table. Complain of this while you will, yet, as the orator said of Verres, *pecuniosus nescit damnari.* Indeed, a money-man may not be damnified, but he may be damned. For this is a crying sin, and the wakened ears of the Lord will hear it, neither shall his provoked hands forbear it. *Si tacuerint pauperes loquentur lapides.* If the poor should hold their peace, the very stones would speak. The fines, rackings, enclosures, oppressions, vexations, will cry to God for vengeance.

"The stone will cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. Hab. ii. 11. You see the beasts they hunt. Not foxes, nor wolves, nor boars, bulls, nor tigers. It is a certain observation, no beast hunts its own kind to devour it. Now, if these should prosecute wolves, foxes, &c., they should then hunt their own kind; for they are these themselves, or rather worse than these, because here *homo homini lupus*. But though they are men they hunt, and by nature of the same kind, they are not so by quality, for they are lambs they persecute. In them there is blood, and flesh, and fleece to be had; and therefore on these do they gorge themselves. In them there is weak armour of defence against their cruelties; therefore over these they may domineer. I will speak it boldly: there is not a mighty Nimrod in this land that dares hunt his equal; but over his inferior lamb he insults like a young Nero. Let him be graced by high ones, and he must not be saluted under twelve score off. In the country he proves a termagant; his very scowl is a prodigy, and breeds an earthquake. He would be a Cæsar, and tax all. It is well if he prove not a cannibal! Only Macro salutes Sejanus so long as he is in Tiberius's favour; cast him from that pinnacle, and the dog is ready to devour him.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 9.—"*He draweth him into his net.*" "They hunt with a net." Micah vii. 2. They have their politic gins to catch men; gaudy wares and dark shops (and would you have them love the light that live by darkness, as many shopkeepers?) draw and tole customers in, where the crafty leeches can soon feel their pulses; if they must buy, they shall pay for their necessity. And though they plead, We compel none to buy our ware, *caveat emptor;* yet with fine voluble phrases, damnable protestations, they will cast a mist of error before an eye of simple truth, and with cunning devices hunt them in. So some among us have feathered their nests, not by open violence, but politic circumvention. They have sought the golden fleece, not by Jason's merit, but by Medea's subtlety, by Medea's sorcery. If I should intend to discover these hunters' plots, and to deal punctually with them, I should afford you more matter than you would afford me time. But I limit myself, and answer all their plans with Augustine. Their tricks may hold *in jure fori*, but not *in jure poli*—in the common-pleas of earth, not before the king's bench in heaven. *Thomas Adams.*

Verse 9.—Oppression turns princes into roaring lions, and judges into evening wolves. It is an unnatural sin, against the light of nature. No creatures do oppress them of their own kind. Look upon the birds of prey, as upon eagles, vultures, hawks, and you shall never find them preying upon their own kind. Look upon the beasts of the forest, as upon the lion, the tiger, the wolf, the bear, and you shall ever find them favourable to their own kind; and yet men unnaturally prey upon one another, like the fish in the sea, the great swallowing up the small.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 10.—"*He croucheth, and humbleth himself,*" etc. There is nothing too mean or servile for them, in the attempt to achieve their sinister ends. You shall see his holiness the Pope washing the pilgrims' feet, if such a stratagem be necessary to act on the minds of the deluded multitude; or you shall see him sitting on a throne of purple, if he wishes to awe and control the kings of the earth.—*John Morison.*

Verse 10.—If you take a wolf in a lambskin, hang him up; for he is the worst of the generation.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 11.—"*He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten.*" Is it not a senseless thing to be careless of sins committed long ago? The old sins forgotten by men, stick fast in an infinite understanding. Time cannot raze out that which hath been known from eternity. Why should they be forgotten many years after they were acted, since they were foreknown in an eternity before they were committed, or the criminal capable to practise them? Amalek must pay their arrears of their ancient unkindness to Israel in the time of Saul, though the generation that committed them were rotten in their graves. 1 Sam. xv. 2. Old sins are written in a book, which lies always before God; and not only our own sins, but the sins of our fathers to be requited upon their posterity. "Behold it is written." Isa. lxv. 6. What a vanity is it then to be regardless of the sins of an age that went before us; because they are in some measure out of our knowledge, are they therefore blotted out of God's remembrance? Sins are bound up with him, as men do bonds, till they resolve to sue for the debt. "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up." Hosea

xlii. 12. As his foreknowledge extends to all acts that shall be done, so his remembrance extends to all acts that have been done. We may as well say, God foreknows nothing that shall be done to the end of the world, as that he forgets anything that hath been done from the beginning of the world.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 11.—*" He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will never see it."* Many say in their hearts, " God seeth them not," while with their tongues they confess he is an all-seeing God. The heart hath a tongue in it as well as the head, and these two tongues seldom speak the same language. While the head-tongue saith, " We cannot hide ourselves from the sight of God," the heart-tongue of wicked men will say, " God will hide himself from us, he will not see." But if their heart speak not thus, then as the prophet saith (Isa. xxix. 15), " They dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord ; " surely they have a hope to hide their counsels, else they would not dig deep to hide them. Their digging is nor proper, but tropical ; as men dig deep to hide what they would not have in the earth, so they by their wits, plots, and devices, do their best to hide their counsels from God, and they say, " Who seeth, who knoweth ? We, surely, are not seen either by God or man."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—The Scripture everywhere places sin upon this root. *" God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will never see it."* He hath turned his back upon the world. This was the ground of the oppression of the poor by the wicked, which he mentions, verses 9, 10. There is no sin but receives both its birth and nourishment from this bitter root. Let the notion of providence be once thrown out, or the belief of it faint, how will ambition, covetousness, neglect of God, distrust, impatience, and all other bitter gourds, grow up in a night ! It is from this topic all iniquity will draw arguments to encourage itself ; for nothing so much discountenances those rising corruptions, and puts them out of heart, as an actuated belief that God takes care of human affairs.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 11.—*" He hath said in his heart,"* etc. " Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Eccl. viii. 11. God forbears punishing, therefore men forbear repenting. He doth not smite upon their back by correction, therefore they do not smite upon their thigh by humiliation. Jer. xxxi. 19. The sinner thinks thus : " God hath spared me all this while, he hath eked out patience into longsuffering ; surely he will not punish." *" He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten."* God sometimes in infinite patience adjourns his judgments and puts off the sessions a while longer ; he is not willing to punish. 2 Peter iii. 9. The bee naturally gives honey, but stings only when it is angered. The Lord would have men make their peace with him. Isa. xxvii. 5. God is not like a hasty creditor that requires the debt, and will give no time for the payment ; he is not only gracious, but " waits to be gracious." (Isa. xxx. 18) ; but God by his patience would bribe sinners to repentance ; but alas ! how is this patience abused. God's longsuffering hardens : because God stops the vials of his wrath, sinners stop the conduit of tears.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 11.—*" He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will never see it."* Because the Lord continues to spare them, therefore they go on to provoke him. As he adds to their lives, so they add to their lusts. What is this, but as if a man should break all his bones because there is a surgeon who is able to set them again ? . . . . . Because justice seems to *wink*, men suppose her *blind ;* because she delays punishment, they imagine she denies to punish them ; because she does not always reprove them for their sins, they suppose she always approves of their sins. But let such know, that the silent arrow can destroy as well as the roaring cannon. Though the patience of God be *lasting*, yet it is not *everlasting.* —*William Secher.*

Verses 11, 12, 13.—The atheist denies God's ordering of sublunary matters. " Tush, doth the Lord see, or is there knowledge in the Most High ? " making him a maimed Deity, without an eye of providence, or an arm of power, and at most restraining him only to matters above the clouds. But he that dares to confine the King to heaven, will soon after endeavour to depose him and fall at last flatly to deny him.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 13.—*" He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it."*—As when the desperate pirate, ransacking and rifling a bottom, was told by the master, that though no law could touch him for the present, he should answer it at the day of

judgment, replied, " If I may stay so long ere I come to it, I will take thee and thy vessel too." A conceit wherewith too many land-thieves and oppressors flatter themselves in their hearts, though they dare not utter it with their lips.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verses 13, 14.—What, do you think that God doth not remember our sins which we do not regard? for while we sin the score runs on, and the Judge setteth down in that table of remembrance, and his scroll reacheth up to heaven. Item, for lending to usury ; item, for racking of rents ; item, for starching thy ruffs ; item, for curling thy hair ; item, for painting thy face ; item, for selling of benefices ; item, for starving of souls ; item, for playing at cards ; item, for sleeping in the church ; item, for profaning the Sabbath-day, with a number more hath God to call to account, for every one must answer for himself. The fornicator, for taking of filthy pleasure ; the careless prelate, for murthering so many thousand souls ; the landlord, for getting money from his poor tenants by racking of his rents ; see the rest, all they shall come like very sheep when the trumpet shall sound, and the heaven and earth shall come to judgment against them ; when the heavens shall vanish like a scroll, and the earth shall consume like fire, and all the creatures standing against them ; the rocks shall cleave asunder and the mountains shake and the foundation of the earth shall tremble, and they shall say to the mountain, Cover us, fall upon us, and hide us from the presence of his anger and wrath, whom we have not cared to offend. But they shall not be covered and hid ; but then shall they go the back way, to the snakes and serpents, to be tormented of devils for ever.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 14.—" *Thou hast seen it ; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hands,*" etc. This should be a terror to the wicked, to think that whatsoever they do, they do it in the *sight* of him that shall *judge* them, and call them to a strict account for every thought conceived against his majesty ; and therefore, it should make them afraid to sin ; because that when they burn with lust, and toil with hatred, when they scorn the just and wrong the innocent, they do all this, not only *in conspectu Dei*, within the compass of God's sight, but also in *sinu divinitatis*, in the bosom of that Deity, who, though he suffered them for a time to run on, like " a wild ass used to the wilderness," yet he will find them out at the last, and then cut them off and destroy them. And as this is terror unto the wicked, so it may be a comfort unto the godly to think that he who should hear their prayers and send them help, is so near unto them ; and it should move them to rely still upon him, because we are sure of his presence wherever we are.—*G. Williams*, 1636.

Verse 14.—" *The poor committeth himself unto thee.*" The awkwardness of our hearts to suffer comes much from distrust. An unbelieving soul treads upon the promise as a man upon ice ; at first going upon it he is full of fears and tumultuous thoughts lest it should crack. Now, daily resignation of thy heart, as it will give thee an occasion of conversing more with the thoughts of God's power, faithfulness, and other of his attributes (for want of familiarity with which, jealousies arise in our hearts when put to any great plunge), so also it will furnish thee with many experiences of the reality both of his attributes and promises ; which, though they need not any testimony from sense, to gain them credit with us, yet so much are we made of sense, so childish and weak is our faith, that we find our hearts much helped by those experiences we have had, to rely on him for the future. Look, therefore, carefully to this ; every morning leave thyself and ways in God's hand, as the phrase is. Psalm x. 14. And at night look again how well God hath looked to his trust, and sleep not till thou hast affected thy heart with his faithfulness, and laid a stronger charge on thy heart to trust itself again in God's keeping in the night. And when any breach is made, and seeming loss befalls thee in any enjoyment, which thou hast by faith insured of thy God, observe how God fills up that breach, and makes up that loss to thee ; and rest not till thou hast fully vindicated the good name of God to thy own heart. Be sure thou lettest no discontent or dissatisfaction lie upon thy spirit at God's dealings ; but chide thy heart for it, as David did his. Psalm xlii. And thus doing, with God's blessing, thou shalt keep thy faith in breath for a longer race, when called to run it.—*W. Gurnall.*

Verse 14.—" *Thou art the helper of the fatherless.*" God doth exercise a more special providence over men, as clothed with miserable circumstances ; and therefore among his other titles this is one, to be a " *helper of the fatherless.*" It is the argument the church used to express her return to God ; Hosea xiv. 3, " For in

thee the fatherless find mercy." Now what greater comfort is there than this, that there is one presides in the world who is so wise he cannot be mistaken, so faithful he cannot deceive, so pitiful he cannot neglect his people, and so powerful that he can make stones even to be turned into bread if he please! . . . . . God doth not govern the world only by his will as an absolute monarch, but by his wisdom and goodness as a tender father. It is not his greatest pleasure to show his sovereign power, or his inconceivable wisdom, but his immense goodness, to which he makes the other attributes subservient.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 14.—"*Thou hast seen it,*" etc. If God did not see our ways, we might sin and go unpunished; but forasmuch as he seeth them with purer eyes than to behold iniquity and approve it, he is engaged both in justice and honour to punish all that iniquity of our ways which he seeth or beholdeth. David makes this the very design of God's superintendency over the ways of men: "*Thou hast seen it: for thou beholdest mischief and spite to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.*" Thus the Psalmist represents the Lord as having taken a view or survey of the ways of men. "*Thou hast seen.*" What hath God seen? Even all that wickedness and oppression of the poor spoken of in the former part of the Psalm, as also the blasphemy of the wicked against himself (verse 13), "*Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.*" What saith the Psalmist concerning God, to this vain, confident man? "*Thou,*" saith he, "*beholdest mischief and spite;*" but to what purpose? the next words tell us that—"*to requite it with thy hand.*" As thou hast seen what mischief they have done spitefully, so in due time thou wilt requite it righteously. The Lord is not a bare spectator, he is both a rewarder and an avenger. Therefore, from the ground of this truth, that the Lord seeth all our ways, and counteth all our steps, we, as the prophet exhorts (Isaiah iii. 10, 11), may "say to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." We may also say, "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Only idols which have eyes and see not, have hands and strike not.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—"*Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.*" Let the poor know that their God doth take care of them, to visit their sins with rods who spoil them, seeing they have forgotten that we are members one of another, and have invaded the goods of their brethren; God will arm them against themselves, and beat them with their own staves; either their own compassing and over-reaching wits shall consume their store, or their unthrifty posterity shall put wings upon their riches to make them fly; or God shall not give them the blessing to take use of their wealth, but they shall leave to such as shall be merciful to the poor. Therefore let them follow the wise man's counsel (Eccles. x. 20), "Curse not the rich, no, not in thy bedchamber;" let no railing and unchristian bitterness wrong a good cause; let it be comfort enough to them that God is both their supporter and avenger. Is it not sufficient to lay all the storms of discontent against their oppressors, that God sees their affliction, and cometh down to deliver and avenge them?—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 14.—"*Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand,*" etc. God considers all your works and ways, and will not you consider the works, the ways of God? Of this be sure, whether you consider the ways of God, his word-ways, or work-ways, of this be sure, God will consider your ways, certainly he will; those ways of yours which in themselves are not worth the considering or looking upon, your sinful ways, though they are so vile, so abominable, that if yourselves did but look upon them and consider them, you would be utterly ashamed of them; yea, though they are an abomination to God while he beholds them, yet he will behold and consider them. The Lord who is of purer eyes than to behold any the least iniquity, to approve it, will yet behold the greatest of your iniquities, and your impurest ways to consider them. "*Thou,*" said David, "*beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it:*" God beholdeth the foulest, dirtiest ways of men, their ways of oppression and unrighteousness, their ways of intemperance and lasciviousness, their ways of wrath and maliciousness, at once to detest, detect, and requite them. If God thus considereth the ways of men, even those filthy and crooked ways of men, should not men consider the holy, just and righteous ways of God?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 14—18.—"*God delights to help the poor.*" He loves to take part with

the best, though the weakest side. Contrary to the course of most, who when a controversy arises use to stand in a kind of indifferency or neutrality, till they see which part is strongest, not which is justest. Now if there be any consideration (besides the cause) that draws or engages God, it is the weakness of the side. He joins with many, because they are weak, not with any, because they are strong; therefore he is called *the helper of the friendless, and with him the fatherless* (the orphans) *find mercy.* By fatherless we are not to understand such only whose parents are dead, but any one that is in distress; as Christ promiseth his disciples; "*I will not leave you orphans,*" that is, helpless, and (as we translate) *comfortless;* though ye are as children without a father, yet I will be a father to you. Men are often like those clouds which dissolve into the sea; they send presents to the rich, and assist the strong; but God sends his rain upon the dry land, and lends his strength to those who are weak. . . . . The prophet makes this report to God of himself (Isaiah xxv. 4): "*Thou hast been a strength to the poor,* a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm," etc.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16.—"*The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.*" Such confidence and faith must appear to the world strange and unaccountable. It is like what his fellow citizens may be supposed to have felt (if the story be true) toward that man of whom it is recorded, that his powers of vision were so extraordinary, that he could distinctly see the fleet of the Carthaginians entering the harbour of Carthage, while he stood himself at Lilybœum, in Sicily. A man seeing across an ocean, and able to tell of objects so far off! he could feast his vision on what others saw not. Even thus does faith now stand at its Lilybœum, and see the long tossed fleet entering safely the desired haven, enjoying the bliss of that still distant day, as if it was already come.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 17.—There is a humbling act of faith put forth in prayer. Others style it praying in humility; give me leave to style it praying in faith. In faith which sets the soul in the presence of that mighty God, and by the sight of him, which faith gives us, it is that we see our own vileness, sinfulness, and abhor ourselves, and profess ourselves unworthy of any, much less of those mercies we are to seek for. Thus the sight of God had wrought in the prophet (Isaiah vi. 5), "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." And holy Job speaks thus (Job xlii. 5, 6), "Now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This is as great a requisite to prayer as any other act; I may say of it alone, as the apostle (James i. 7), that without it we shall receive nothing at the hands of God! God loves to fill empty vessels, he looks to broken hearts. In the Psalms how often do we read that God hears the prayers of the humble; which always involves and includes faith in it. Psalm ix. 12, "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble," and Psalm x. 17, "*Lord thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.*" To be deeply humbled is to have the heart prepared and fitted for God to hear the prayer; and therefore you find the Psalmist pleading *sub forma pauperis,* often repeating, "I am poor and needy." And this prevents our thinking much if God do not grant the particular thing we do desire. Thus also Christ himself in his great distress (Psalm xxii), doth treat God (verse 2), "O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season am not silent. Our fathers trusted in thee. They cried unto thee, and were delivered. But I am a worm, and no man; reproached of men, and despised of the people; (verse 6) "and he was "heard" in the end "in what he feared." And these deep humblings of ourselves, being joined with vehement implorations upon the mercy of God to obtain, is reckoned into the account of praying by faith, both by God and Christ. Matt. viii.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 17.—"*Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble.*" A spiritual prayer is a *humble* prayer. Prayer is the asking of an alms, which requires humility. "The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke xviii. 13. God's incomprehensible glory may even amaze us and strike a holy consternation into us when we approach nigh unto him: "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee." Ezra ix. 6. It is comely to see a poor nothing lie prostrate at the feet of its Maker. "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." Gen. xviii. 27. The lower the heart descends, the higher the prayer ascends.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 17.—" *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble,*" etc. How pleasant is it, that these benefits, which are of so great a value both on their own account, and that of the divine benignity from whence they come, should be delivered into our hands, marked, as it were, with this grateful inscription, *that they have been obtained by prayer!—Robert Leighton.*

Verse 17.—" *The desire of the humble.*" Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God in the name of Christ, for such things as are agreeable to his will. It is an offering of our *desires.* Desires are the soul and life of prayer; words are but the body; now as the body without the soul is dead, so are prayers unless they are animated with our desires: " *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble.*" God heareth not words, but *desires.—Thomas Watson.*

Verse 17.—God's choice acquaintances are humble men.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 17.—He that sits nearest the dust, sits nearest heaven.—*Andrew Gray, of Glasgow,* 1616.

Verse 17.—There is a kind of omnipotency in prayer, as having an interest and prevalency with God's omnipotency. It hath loosed iron chains (Acts xvi. 25, 26); it hath opened iron gates (Acts xii. 5—10); it hath unlocked the windows of heaven (1 Kings xviii. 41); it hath broken the bars of death (John xi. 40, 43). Satan hath three titles given in the Scriptures, setting forth his malignity against the church of God: a dragon, to note his malice; a serpent, to note his subtlety; and a lion, to note his strength. But none of all these can stand before prayer. The greatest malice of Haman sinks under the prayer of Esther; the deepest policy, the counsel of Ahithophel, withers before the prayer of David; the largest army, a host of a thousand Ethiopians, run away like cowards before the prayer of Asa.—*Edward Reynolds,* 1599—1676.

Verse 18.—" *To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,*" etc. The tears of the poor fall down upon their cheeks, *et ascendunt ad cœlum,* and go up to heaven and cry for vengeance before God, the judge of widows, the father of widows and orphans. Poor people be oppressed even by laws. Woe worth to them that make evil laws against the poor, what shall be to them that hinder and mar good laws? What will ye do in the day of great vengeance when God shall visit you? he saith he will hear the tears of the poor woman, when he goeth on visitation. For their sake he will hurt the judge, be he never so high, he will for widows' sakes change realms, bring them into temptation, pluck his judges' skins over their heads. Cambyses was a great emperor, such another as our master is, he had many lord deputies, lord presidents, and lieutenants under him. It is a great while ago since I read the history. It chanced he had under him in one of his dominions a briber, a gift-taker, a gratifier of rich men; he followed gifts as fast as he that followed the pudding; a handmaker in his office, to make his son a great man, as the old saying is " Happy is the child whose father goeth to the devil." The cry of the poor widow came to the emperor's ear, and caused him to slay the judge quick, and laid his skin in his chair of judgment, that all judges that should give judgment afterward, should sit in the same skin. Surely it was a goodly sign, a goodly monument, the sign of the judge's skin. I pray God we may once see the sign of the skin in England. Ye will say, peradventure, that this is cruelly and uncharitably spoken. No, no; I do it charitably, for a love I bear to my country. God saith, " I will visit." God hath two visitations; the first is when he revealeth his word by preachers; and where the first is accepted, the second cometh not. The second visitation is vengeance. He went to visitation when he brought the judge's skin over his ears. If this word be despised, he cometh with the second visitation with vengeance.—*Hugh Latimer,* 1480—1555.

Verse 18.—" *Man of the earth,*" etc. In the eighth Psalm (which is a circular Psalm ending as it did begin, " O Lord our God, how excellent is thy name in all the world!" That whithersoever we turn our eyes, upwards or downwards, we may see ourselves beset with his glory round about), how doth the prophet base and discountenance the nature and whole race of man; as may appear by his disdainful and derogatory interrogation, "What is man that thou art mindful of him; and the Son of Man, that thou regardest him?" In the ninth Psalm, " Rise, Lord; let not man have the upper hand; let the nations be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O Lord, that the heathen may know themselves to be but men." Further, in the tenth Psalm, " Thou judgest the fatherless and the poor, that the man of the earth do no more violence."

The Psalms, as they go in order, so, methinks they grow in strength, and each hath a weightier force to throw down our presumption. 1. We are "men," and the "sons of men," to show our descent and propagation. 2. "Men in our own knowledge," to show that conscience and experience of infirmity doth convict us. 3. "Men of the earth," to show our orginal matter whereof we are framed. In the twenty-second Psalm, he addeth more disgrace; for either in his own name, regarding the misery and contempt wherein he was held, or in the person of Christ, whose figure he was, as if it were a robbery for him to take upon him the nature of man, he falleth to a lower style, *at ego sum vermis et non vir;* but I am a worm, and no man. For as corruption is the father of all flesh, so are the worms his brethren and sisters, according to the old verse—

"First man, next worms, then stench and loathsomeness,
Thus man to no man alters by changes."

Abraham, the father of the faithful (Genesis xviii.), sifteth himself into the coarsest man that can be, and resolveth his nature into the elements whereof it first rose. "Behold I have begun to speak to my Lord, being dust and ashes." And if any of the children of Abraham, who succeed him in the faith, or any of the children of Adam, who succeed him in the flesh, thinketh otherwise, let him know that there is a threefold cord twisted by the finger of God, that shall tie him to his first original, though he contend till his heart break. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord" (Jer. xxii); that is, earth by creation, earth by continuance, earth by resolution. Thou camest earth, thou remainest earth, and to earth thou must return.—*John King.*

Verse 18.—"*The man of the earth.*" Man dwelling in the earth, and made of earth.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The answer to these questions furnishes a noble topic for an experimental sermon. Let me suggest that the question is not to be answered in the same manner in all cases. Past sin, trials of graces, strengthening of faith, discovery of depravity, instruction, etc., etc., are varied reasons for the hiding of our Father's face.

Verse 2.—Religious persecution in all its phases based on pride.

Verse 3.—God's hatred of covetousness: show its justice.

Verse 4.—Pride the barrier in the way of conversion.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Thoughts in which God is not, weighed and condemned.

Verse 5.—"*Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.*" Moral inability of men to appreciate the character and acts of God.

Verse 6.—The vain confidence of sinners.

Verse 8.—Dangers of godly men, or the snares in the way of believers.

Verse 9.—The ferocity, craftiness, strength, and activity of Satan.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—The Satanic fisherman, his art, diligence, success, etc.

Verse 10.—Designing humility unmasked.

Verse 11.—Divine omniscience and the astounding presumption of sinners.

Verse 12.—"*Arise, O Lord.*" A prayer needful, allowable, seasonable, etc.

Verse 13 (*first clause*).—An astounding fact, and a reasonable enquiry.

Verse 13.—Future retribution: doubts concerning it. 1. By whom indulged: "*the wicked.*" II. Where fostered: "*in his heart.*" III. For what purpose; *quieting of conscience*, etc. IV. With what practical tendency: "*contemn God.*" He who disbelieves hell distrusts heaven.

Verses 13, 14.—Divine government in the world. I. Who doubt it? and why? II. Who believe it? and what does this faith cause them to do?

Verse 14 (*last clause*).—A plea for orphans.

Verse 16.—The Eternal Kingship of Jehovah.

Verse 17 (*first clause*).—I. The Christian's character—"*humble.*" II. An attribute of the Christian's whole life—"*desire:*" he desires more holiness, communion, knowledge, grace, and usefulness; and then he desires glory. III. The Christian's great blessedness—"*Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble.*"

Verse 17 (*whole verse*).—I. Consider the *nature* of gracious desires. II. Their *origin.* III. Their *result.* The three sentences readily suggest these divisions, and the subject may be very profitable.

PSALM XI.

SUBJECT.—*Charles Simeon gives an excellent summary of this Psalm in the following sentences :—" The Psalms are a rich repository of experimental knowledge. David, at the different periods of his life, was placed in almost every situation in which a believer, whether rich or poor, can be placed ; and in these heavenly compositions he delineates all the workings of the heart. He introduces, too, the sentiments and conduct of the various persons who were accessory either to his troubles or his joys ; and thus sets before us a compendium of all that is passing in the hearts of men throughout the world. When he penned this Psalm he was under persecution from Saul, who sought his life, and hunted him ' as a partridge upon the mountains.' His timid friends were alarmed for his safety, and recommended him to flee to some mountain where he had a hiding-place, and thus to conceal himself from the rage of Saul. But David, being strong in faith, spurned the idea of resorting to any such pusillanimous expedients, and determined confidently to repose his trust in God."*

To assist us to remember this short, but sweet Psalm, we will give it the name of " THE SONG OF THE STEDFAST."

DIVISION. *From* 1 *to* 3, *David describes the temptation with which he was assailed, and from* 4 to 7, *the arguments by which his courage was sustained.*

EXPOSITION.

IN the LORD put I my trust : how say ye to my soul, Flee *as* a bird to your mountain ?

2 For, lo, the wicked bend *their* bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.

3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do ?

These verses contain an account of a temptation to distrust God, with which David was, upon some unmentioned occasion, greatly exercised. It may be, that in the days when he was in Saul's court, he was advised to flee at a time when this flight would have been charged against him as a breach of duty to the king, or a proof of personal cowardice. His case was like that of Nehemiah, when his enemies, under the garb of friendship, hoped to entrap him by advising him to escape for his life. Had he done so, they could then have found a ground of accusation. Nehemiah bravely replied, " Shall such a man as I flee ? " and David, in a like spirit, refuses to retreat, exclaiming, " *In the Lord put I my trust : how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain ?* " When Satan cannot overthrow us by presumption, how craftily will he seek to ruin us by distrust ! He will employ our dearest friends to argue us out of our confidence, and he will use such plausible logic, that unless we once for all assert our immovable trust in Jehovah, he will make us like the timid bird which flies to the mountain whenever danger presents itself. How forcibly the case is put ! The bow is bent, the arrow is fitted to the string : " Flee, flee, thou defenceless bird, thy safety lies in flight ; begone, for thine enemies will send their shafts into thy heart ; haste, haste, for soon wilt thou be destroyed ! " David seems to have felt the force of the advice, for it came home *to his soul ;* but yet he would not yield, but would rather dare the danger than exhibit a distrust in the Lord his God. Doubtless, the perils which encompassed David were great and imminent ; it was quite true that his enemies were *ready* to *shoot privily* at him ; it was equally correct that the very *foundations* of law and justice were *destroyed* under Saul's unrighteous government : but what were all these things to the man whose trust was in God alone ? He could brave the dangers, could escape the enemies, and defy the injustice which surrounded him. His answer to the question, " What can the righteous do ? " would be the counter-question, " What cannot they do ? " When prayer engages God on our side, and when faith secures the fulfilment of the promise, what cause can there be for flight, however cruel and mighty our enemies ? With a sling and a stone, David had

smitten a giant before whom the whole hosts of Israel were trembling, and the Lord, who delivered him from the uncircumcised Philistine, could surely deliver him from King Saul and his myrmidons. There is no such word as "impossibility" in the language of faith; that martial grace knows how to fight and conquer, but she knows not how to flee.

4 The LORD *is* in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne *is* in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

5 The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup.

7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

David here declares the great source of his unflinching courage. He borrows his light from heaven—from the great central orb of deity. The God of the believer is never far from him; he is not merely the God of the mountain fastnesses, but of the dangerous valleys and battle plains.

"*Jehovah is in his holy temple.*" The heavens are above our heads in all regions of the earth, and so is the Lord ever near to us in every state and condition. This is a very strong reason why we should not adopt the vile suggestions of distrust. There is one who pleads his precious blood in our behalf in the temple above, and there is one upon the throne who is never deaf to the intercession of his Son. Why, then, should we fear? What plots can men devise which Jesus will not discover? Satan has doubtless desired to have us, that he may sift us as wheat, but Jesus is in the temple praying for us, and how can our faith fail? What attempts can the wicked make which Jehovah shall not behold? And since he is in his holy temple, delighting in the sacrifice of his Son, will he not defeat every device, and send us a sure deliverance?

"*Jehovah's throne is in the heavens;*" he reigns supreme. Nothing can be done in heaven, or earth, or hell, which he doth not ordain and over-rule. He is the world's great Emperor. Wherefore, then, should we flee? If we trust this King of kings, is not this enough? Cannot he deliver us without our cowardly retreat? Yes, blessed be the Lord our God, we can salute him as Jehovah-nissi; in his name we set up our banners, and, instead of flight, we once more raise the shout of war.

"*His eyes behold.*" The eternal Watcher never slumbers; his eyes never know a sleep. "*His eyelids try the children of men:*" he narrowly inspects their actions, words and thoughts. As men, when intently and narrowly inspecting some very minute object, almost close their eyelids to exclude every other object, so will the Lord look all men through and through. God sees each man as much and as perfectly as if there were no other creature in the universe. He sees us always; he never removes his eye from us; he sees us entirely, reading the recesses of the soul as readily as the glancing of the eye. Is not this a sufficient ground of confidence, and an abundant answer to the solicitations of despondency? My danger is not hid from him; he knows my extremity, and I may rest assured that he will not suffer me to perish while I rely alone on him. Wherefore, then, should I take the wings of the timid bird, and flee from the dangers which beset me.

"*The Lord trieth the righteous:*" he doth not hate them, but only tries them. They are precious to him, and therefore he refines them with afflictions. None of the Lord's children may hope to escape from trial, nor, indeed, in our right minds, would any of us desire to do so, for trial is the channel of many blessings.

"'Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the cross;
But the Saviour's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss.

* * * * *

Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to his feet—
Lay me low, and keep me there.

Did I meet no trials here—
No chastisement by the way—
Might I not, with reason, fear
I should prove a cast-away!

Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not—would not, if he might."

William Cowper.

Is not this a very cogent reason why we should not distrustfully endeavour to shun a trial?—for in so doing we are seeking to avoid a blessing.

"*But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth:*" why, then, shall I flee from these wicked men? If God hateth them, I will not fear them. Haman was very great in the palace until he lost favour, but when the king abhorred him, how bold were the meanest attendants to suggest the gallows for the man at whom they had often trembled! Look at the black mark upon the faces of our persecutors, and we shall not run away from them. If God is in the quarrel as well as ourselves, it would be foolish to question the result, or avoid the conflict. Sodom and Gomorrah perished by a fiery hail, and by a brimstone shower from heaven; so shall all the ungodly. They may gather together like Gog and Magog to battle, but the Lord will rain upon them "an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone:" Ezek. xxxviii. 22. Some expositors think that in the term "horrible tempest," there is in the Hebrew an allusion to that burning, suffocating wind, which blows across the Arabian deserts, and is known by the name of Simoom. "A burning storm," Lowth calls it, while another great commentator reads it "wrathwind;" in either version the language is full of terrors. What a tempest will that be which shall overwhelm the despisers of God! Oh! what a shower will that be which shall pour out itself for ever upon the defenceless heads of impenitent sinners in hell! Repent, ye rebels, or this fiery deluge shall soon surround you. Hell's horrors shall be your inheritance, your entailed estate, "the portion of your cup." The dregs of that cup you shall wring out, and drink for ever. A drop of hell is terrible, but what must a full cup of torment be? Think of it—a cup of misery, but not a drop of mercy. O people of God, how foolish is it to fear the faces of men who shall soon be faggots in the fire of hell! Think of their end, their fearful end, and all fear of them must be changed into contempt of their threatenings and pity for their miserable estate.

The delightful contrast of the last verse is well worthy of our observation, and it affords another overwhelming reason why we should be stedfast, unmovable, not carried away with fear, or led to adopt carnal expedients in order to avoid trial. "*For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.*" It is not only his office to defend it, but his nature to love it. He would deny himself if he did not defend the just. It is essential to the very being of God that he should be just; fear not, then, the end of all your trials, but "be just, and fear not." God approves, and, if men oppose, what matters it? "*His countenance doth behold the upright.*" We need never be out of countenance, for God countenances us. He observes, he approves, he delights in the upright. He sees his own image in them, an image of his own fashioning, and therefore with complacency he regards them. Shall we dare to put forth our hand unto iniquity in order to escape affliction? Let us have done with by-ways and short turnings, and let us keep to that fair path of right along which Jehovah's smile shall light us. Are we tempted to put our light under a bushel, to conceal our religion from our neighbours? Is it suggested to us that there are ways of avoiding the cross, and shunning the reproach of Christ? Let us not hearken to the voice of the charmer, but seek an increase of faith, that we may wrestle with principalities and powers, and follow the Lord, fully going without the camp, bearing his reproach. Mammon, the flesh, the devil, will all whisper in our ear, "Flee as a bird to your mountain;" but let us come forth and defy them all. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." There is no room or reason for retreat. Advance! Let the vanguard push on! To the front! all ye powers and passions of our soul. On! on! in God's name, on! for "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The most probable account of the occasion of this Psalm is that given by Amyraldus. He thinks it was composed by David while he was in the court of Saul, at a time when the hostility of the king was beginning to show itself, and before it had broken out into open persecution. David's friends, or those professing to be so, advised him to flee to his native mountains for a time, and remain in retirement, till the king should show himself more favourable. David does not at that time accept the counsel, though afterwards he seems to have followed it. This Psalm applies itself to the establishment of the church against the calumnies of the world and the compromising counsel of man, in that confidence which is to be placed in God the Judge of all.—*W. Wilson, D.D., in loc.*, 1860.

Whole Psalm.—If one may offer to make a modest conjecture, it is not improbable this Psalm might be composed on the sad murder of the priests by Saul (1 Sam. xxii. 19), when after the slaughter of Abimelech, the high priest, Doeg, the Edomite, by command from Saul, "slew in one day fourscore and five persons which wore a linen ephod." I am not so carnal as to build the spiritual church of the Jews on the material walls of the priests' city at Nob (which then by Doeg was smitten with the edge of the sword), but this is most true, that "knowledge must preserve the people;" and (Mal. ii. 7), "The priests' lips shall preserve knowledge;" and then it is easy to conclude, what an earthquake this massacre might make in the *foundations of religion.—Thomas Fuller.*

Whole Psalm.—Notice how remarkably the whole Psalm corresponds with the deliverance of Lot from Sodom. This verse, with the angel's exhortation, "Escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed," and Lot's reply, "I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil take me and I die." Genesis xix. 17—19. And again, "*The Lord's seat is in heaven*, and *upon the ungodly he shall rain snares, fire, brimstone, storm and tempest*," with "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of heaven:" and again, "*His countenance will behold the thing that is just*," with "Delivered just Lot . . . . for that righteous man vexed his righteous soul with their ungodly deeds." 2 Peter ii. 7, 8.—*Cassiodorus* (A.D., 560) *in John Mason Neale's "Commentary on the Psalms, from Primitive and Mediæval Writers,"* 1860.

Whole Psalm.—The combatants at the Lake Thrasymene are said to have been so engrossed with the conflict, that neither party perceived the convulsions of nature that shook the ground—

> "An earthquake reeled unheedingly away,
> None felt stern nature rocking at his feet."

From a nobler cause, it is thus with the soldiers of the Lamb. They believe, and, therefore, make no haste; nay, they can scarcely be said to feel earth's convulsions as other men, because their eager hope presses forward to the issue at the advent of the Lord.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—"*I trust in the Lord: how do ye say to my soul, Swerve on to your mountain like a bird?*" (others, "*O thou bird.*") Saul and his adherents mocked and jeered David with such taunting speeches, as conceiving that he knew no other shift or refuge, but so betaking himself unto wandering and lurking on the mountains; hopping, as it were, from one place to another like a silly bird; but they thought to ensnare and take him well enough for all that, not considering God who was David's comfort, rest and refuge.—*Theodore Haak's "Translation of the Dutch Annotations, as ordered by the Synod of Dort, in* 1618." London, 1657.

Verse 1.—"*With Jehovah I have taken shelter; how say ye to my soul, Flee, sparrows, to your hill?*" "*Your hill*," that hill from which you say your help cometh: a sneer. Repair to that boasted hill, which may indeed give you the help which it gives the sparrow: a shelter against the inclemencies of a stormy sky, no defence against our power.—*Samuel Horsley, in loc.*

Verse 1.—"*In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?*" The holy confidence of the saints in the hour of great trial is beautifully illustrated by the following ballad which Anne Askew, who was burned at Smithfield in 1546, made and sang when she was in Newgate:—

Like as the armèd knight,
Appointed to the field,
With this world will I fight,
And Christ shall be my shield.

Faith is that weapon strong,
Which will not fail at need:
My foes, therefore, among
Therewith will I proceed.

As it is had in strength
And force of Christe's way,
It will prevail at length,
Though all the devils say nay.

Faith in the fathers old
Obtained righteousness;
Which make me very bold
To fear no world's distress.

I now rejoice in heart,
And hope bids me do so;
For Christ will take my part,
And ease me of my woe.

Thou say'st Lord, whoso knock,
To them wilt thou attend:
Undo therefore the lock,
And thy strong power send.

More enemies now I have
Than hairs upon my head:
Let them not me deprave,
But fight thou in my stead.

On thee my care I cast,
For all their cruel spite:
I set not by their haste;
For thou art my delight.

I am not she that list
My anchor to let fall
For every drizzling mist,
My ship substantial.

Not oft use I to write,
In prose, nor yet in rhyme;
Yet will I shew one sight
That I saw in my time.

I saw a royal throne,
Where justice should have sit,
But in her stead was one
Of moody, cruel wit.

Absorbed was righteousness.
As of the raging flood:
Satan, in his excess,
Sucked up the guiltless blood.

Then thought I, Jesus Lord,
When thou shall judge us all,
Hard it is to record
On these men what will fall.

Yet, Lord, I thee desire,
For that they do to me,
Let them not taste the hire
Of their iniquity.

Verse 1.—"*How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?*" We may observe, that David is much pleased with the metaphor in frequently comparing himself to a bird, and that of several sorts: first, to an eagle (Psalm ciii. 5), "My youth is renewed like the eagle's;" sometimes to an owl (Psalm cii. 6), "I am like an owl in the desert;" sometimes to a pelican, in the same verse, "Like a pelican in the wilderness;" sometimes to a sparrow (Psalm cii. 7), "I watch, and am as a sparrow;" sometimes to a partridge, "As when one doth hunt a partridge." I cannot say that he doth compare himself to a dove, but he would compare himself (Psalm lv. 6), "O that I had the wings of a dove, for then I would flee away, and be at rest." Some will say, How is it possible that birds of so different a feather should all so fly together as to meet in the character of David? To whom we answer, That no two men can more differ one from another, than the same servant of God at several times differeth from himself. David in prosperity, when commanding, was like an *eagle;* in adversity, when contemned, like an *owl;* in devotion, when retired, like a *pelican;* in solitariness, when having no company, like a *sparrow;* in persecution, when fearing too much company (of *Saul*), like a *partridge*. This general metaphor of a *bird*, which David so often used on himself, his enemies in the first verse of this Psalm used on him, though not particularising the kind thereof: "*Flee as a bird to your mountain;*" that is, speedily betake thyself to thy God, in whom thou hopest for succour and security.

Seeing this counsel was both good in itself, and good at this time, why doth David seem so angry and displeased thereat? Those his words, "*Why say you to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?*" import some passion, at leastwise, a disgust of the advice. It is answered, David was not offended with the counsel, but with the manner of the propounding thereof. His enemies did it ironically in a gibing, jeering way, as if his flying thither were to no purpose, and he unlikely to find there the safety he sought for. However, David was not hereby put out of conceit with the counsel, beginning this Psalm with this his firm resolution, "*In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye then to my soul,*" etc. Learn we from hence, when men give us good counsel in a jeering way, let us take the counsel, and practise it; and leave them the jeer to be punished for it. Indeed, corporal cordials may be envenomed by being wrapped up in poisoned papers; not so good spiritual

advice where the good matter receives no infection from the ill manner of the delivery thereof. Thus, when the chief priests mocked our Saviour (Matt. xxvii. 43), "He trusteth in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him." Christ trusted in God never a whit the less for the fleere and flout which their profaneness was pleased to bestow upon him. Otherwise, if men's mocks should make us to undervalue good counsel, we might in this age be mocked out of our God, and Christ, and Scripture, and heaven; the apostle Jude, verse 18, having foretold that in the last times there should be mockers, walking after their own lusts.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 1.—It is as great an offence to make a new, as to deny the true God. "*In the Lord put I my trust;*" how then "*say ye unto my soul*" (ye seducers of souls), "*that she should fly unto the mountains as a bird;*" to seek unnecessary and foreign helps, as if the Lord alone were not sufficient? "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and he that delivereth me, my God, and my strength; in him will I trust: my shield, the horn of my salvation, and my refuge. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so shall I be safe from mine enemies." "Whom have I in heaven but thee," amongst those thousands of angels and saints, what Michael or Gabriel, what Moses or Samuel, what Peter, what Paul? "and there is none in earth that I desire in comparison of thee."—*John King*, 1608.

Verse 1.—In temptations of inward trouble and terror, it is not convenient to dispute the matter with Satan. David in Psalm xlii. 11, seems to correct himself for his mistake; his soul was cast down within him, and for the cure of that temptation, he had prepared himself by arguments for a dispute; but perceiving himself in a wrong course, he calls off his soul from disquiet to an immediate application to God and the promises, "Trust still in God, for I shall yet praise him;" but here he is more aforehand with his work; for while his enemies were acted by Satan to discourage him, he rejects the temptation at first, before it settled upon his thoughts, and chaseth it away as a thing that he would not give ear to. "*In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?*" And there are weighty reasons that should dissuade us from entering the lists with Satan in temptation of inward trouble.—*Richard Gilpin.*

Verse 1.—The shadow will not cool except in it. What good to have the shadow though of a mighty rock, when we sit in the open sun? To have almighty power engaged for us, and we to throw ourselves out of it, by bold sallies in the mouth of temptation! The saints' falls have been when they have run out of their trench and stronghold; for, like the conies, they are a weak people in themselves, and their strength lies in the rock of God's almightiness, which is their habitation.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 1.—The saints of old would not accept deliverances on base terms. They scorned to fly away for the enjoyment of rest except it were with the wings of a dove, covered with silver innocence. As willing were many of the martyrs to die, as to dine. The tormentors were tired in torturing Blandina. "We are ashamed, O Emperor! The Christians laugh at your cruelty, and grow the more resolute," said one of Julian's nobles. This the heathen counted obstinacy; but they knew not the power of the Spirit, nor the secret armour of proof which saints wear about their hearts.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*For, lo, the wicked bend their bow,*" etc. This verse presents an unequal combat betwixt *armed power, advantaged with policy,* on the one side; and *naked innocence* on the other. First, *armed power*: "*They bend their bows, and make ready their arrows,*" being all the artillery of that age; secondly, *advantaged with policy*: "*that they may privily shoot,*" to surprise them with an ambush unawares, probably pretending amity and friendship unto them; thirdly, *naked innocence*: if innocence may be termed naked, which is its own armour; "*at the upright in heart.*"—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 2.—"*For, lo, the ungodly bend their bow, and make ready their arrows within the quiver: that they may privily shoot at them which are true of heart.*" The plottings of the chief priests and Pharisees that they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill him. They bent their bow, when they hired Judas Iscariot for the betrayal of his Master; they made ready their arrows within the quiver when they sought "false witnesses against Jesus to put him to death." Matt. xxvi. 59. "*Them which are true of heart.*" Not alone the Lord himself, the only true and righteous, but his apostles, and the long line of those who should faithfully cleave to him from that time to this. And as with the Master, so with the servants: witness

the calumnies and the revilings that from the time of Joseph's accusation by his mistress till the present day, have been the lot of God's people.—*Michael Ayguan*, 1416, *in J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 2.—"*That they may secretly shoot at them which are upright in heart.*" They bear not their bows and arrows as scarecrows in a garden of cucumbers, to fray, but *to shoot*, not at stakes, but men ; their arrows are *jacula mortifera* (Psalm vii.), deadly arrows, and lest they should fail to hit, they take advantage of the dark, of privacy and secrecy ; they shoot *privily*. Now this is the covenant of hell itself. For what created power in the earth is able to dissolve that work which *cruelty* and *subtlety*, like Simeon and Levi, brothers in evil, are combined and confederate to bring to pass ? Where subtlety is ingenious, insidious to invent, cruelty barbarous to execute, subtlety giveth counsel, cruelty giveth the stroke. Subtlety ordereth the time, the place, the means, accommodateth, concinnateth circumstances ; cruelty undertaketh the act : subtlety hideth the knife, cruelty cutteth the throat : subtlety with a cunning head layeth the ambush, plotteth the train, the stratagem ; and cruelty with as savage a heart, sticketh not at the dreadfullest, direfullest objects, ready to wade up to the ankles, the neck, in a whole red sea of human, yea, country blood : how fearful is their plight that are thus assaulted !—*John King.*

Verse 3.—"*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do ?*" But now we are met with a giant objection, which with Goliath must be removed, or else it will obstruct our present proceedings. Is it possible that the *foundations of religion* should be destroyed ? Can God be in so long a sleep, yea, so long a lethargy, as patiently to permit the ruins thereof ? If he looks on, and yet doth not see these *foundations* when destroyed, where then is his *omnisciency ?* If he seeth it, and cannot help it, where then is his *omnipotency ?* If he seeth it, can help it, and will not, where then is his *goodness* and *mercy ?* Martha said to Jesus (John xi. 21), " Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But many will say, Were God effectually present in the world with his aforesaid attributes, surely the *foundations* had not *died*, had not been *destroyed*. We answer negatively, that it is impossible that the *foundations* of religion should ever be *totally* and *finally destroyed*, either in relation to the church in general, or in reference to every true and lively member thereof. For the first, we have an express promise of Christ. Matt. xvi. 18. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." *Fundamenta tamen stant inconcussa Sionis.* And as for every particular Christian (2 Tim. ii. 19), " Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." However, though for the reasons aforementioned in the objections (the inconsistency thereof with the attributes of God's omnipotency, omnisciency, and goodness), the *foundations* can never totally and finally, yet may they partially be destroyed, *quoad gradum*, in a fourfold degree, as followeth. First, *in the desires and utmost endeavours of wicked men.*

They bring their { 1. *Hoc velle*, 2. *Hoc agere*, 3. *Totum posse.*

If they *destroy* not the foundations, it is no thanks to them, seeing all the world will bear them witness they have done *their best* (that is, *their worst*), what their might and malice could perform. Secondly, *in their own vainglorious imaginations :* they may not only vainly boast, but also verily believe that they have *destroyed the foundations*. Applicable to this purpose, is that high rant of the Roman emperor (Luke ii. 1) : " And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." All the world ! whereas he had, though much, not all in Europe, little in Asia, less in Africa, none in America, which was so far from being conquered, it was not so much as known to the Romans. But *hyperbole* is not a figure, but the ordinary language of pride ; because indeed Augustus had very much, he proclaimeth himself to have all the world. . . . Thirdly, *the foundations may be destroyed* as to all outward visible illustrious apparition. The church in persecution is like unto a ship in a tempest ; down go all their masts, yea, sometimes for the more speed they are forced to cut them down: not a piece of canvas to play with the winds, no sails to be seen; they lie close knotted to the very keel, that the tempest may have the less power upon them, though when the storm is over, they can hoist up their sails as high, and spread their canvas as broad as ever before. So the church in the time of persecution

feared, but especially *felt*, loseth all gayness and gallantry which may attract and allure the eyes of beholders, and contenteth itself with its own secrecy. In a word, on the work-days of affliction she weareth her worst clothes, whilst her best are laid up in her wardobe, in sure and certain hope that God will give her a *holy* and *happy day*, when with joy she shall wear her best garments. Lastly they may be *destroyed* in the *jealous apprehensions* of the best saints and servants of God, especially in their melancholy fits. I will instance in no puny, but in a star of the first magnitude and greatest eminency, even Elijah himself complaining (1 Kings xix. 10): "And I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 3.—"*If.*" It is the only word of comfort in the text, that what is said is not *positive, but suppositive;* not thetical, but hypothetical. And yet this comfort which is but a spark (at which we would willingly kindle our hopes), is quickly sadded with a double consideration. First, impossible suppositions produce impossible consequences, "As is the mother, so is the daughter." Therefore, surely God's Holy Spirit would not suppose such a thing but what was feasible and possible, but what either had, did, or might come to pass. Secondly, the Hebrew word is not the conditional *im, si, si forte*, but *chi, quia, quoniam*, because, and (although here it be favourably rendered *if*), seemeth to import, more therein, that the sad case had already happened in David's days. I see, therefore, that this *if*, our only hope in the text, is likely to prove with Job's friends, but a miserable comforter. Well, it is good to know the worst of things, that we may provide ourselves accordingly; and therefore let us behold this doleful case, not as doubtful, but as done; not as feared, but felt; not as suspected, but at this time really come to pass.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 3.—"*If the foundations*," etc. My text is an answer to a tacit objection which some may raise; namely, that the righteous are wanting to themselves, and by their own easiness and inactivity (not daring and doing so much as they might and ought), betray themselves to that bad condition. In whose defence David shows, that if God in his wise will and pleasure seeth it fitting, for reasons best known to himself to suffer religion to be reduced to terms of extremity, it is not placed in the power of the best man alive to remedy and redress the same. "*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*" My text is hung about with *mourning*, as for a funeral sermon, and contains: First, a sad case supposed, "*If the foundations be destroyed.*" Secondly, a sad question propounded, "*What can the righteous do?*" Thirdly, a sad answer implied, namely, that they can do just nothing, as to the point of re-establishing the destroyed foundation.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 3.—"*If the foundations be destroyed*," etc. The civil foundation of a nation or people, is their laws and constitutions. The order and power that's among them, that's the foundation of a people; and when once this foundation is destroyed, "*What can the righteous do?*" What can the best, the wisest in the world, do in such a case? What can any man do, if there be not a foundation of government left among men? There is no help nor answer in such a case but that which follows in the fourth verse of the Psalm, "*The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men;*" as if he had said, in the midst of these confusions, when as it is said (Psalm lxxxii. 5), "All the foundations of the earth are out of course;" yet God keeps his course still, he is where he was and as he was, without variableness or shadow of turning.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—"*The righteous.*" The righteous indefinitely, equivalent to the righteous universally; not only the righteous as a single arrow, but in the whole sheaf; not only the righteous in their personal, but in their diffusive capacity. Were they all collected into one body, were all the righteous living in the same age wherein the *foundations are destroyed*, summoned up and modelled into one corporation, all their joint endeavours would prove ineffectual to the re-establishing of the fallen *foundations*, as not being man's work, but only God's work to perform.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 3.—"*The foundations.*" *Positions*, the things formerly fixed, placed, and settled. It is not said, if the roof be ruinous, or if the side walls be shattered, but if the *foundations*.

Verse 3.—"*Foundations be destroyed.*" In the plural. Here I will not warrant my skill in architecture, but conceive this may pass for an undoubted truth: it

is possible that a building settled on several entire *foundations* (suppose them *pillars*) close one to another, if one of them fall, yet the structure may still stand, or rather hang (at the least for a short time) by virtue of the *complicative*, which it receiveth from such foundations which still stand secure. But in case there be a total rout, and an utter ruin of all the *foundations*, none can fancy to themselves a possibility of that building's subsistence.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 3.—"*What* CAN *the righteous?*" The *can* of the righteous is a limited *can*, confined to the rule of God's word; they *can* do nothing but what they *can* lawfully do. 2 Cor. xiii. 8. "For we *can* do nothing against the truth, but for the truth:" *Illud possumus, quod jure possumus.* Wicked men can do anything; their conscience, which is so wide that it is none at all, will bear them out to act anything how unlawful soever, to stab, poison, massacre, by any means, at any time, in any place, whosoever standeth betwixt them and the effecting their desires. Not so the righteous; they have a rule whereby to walk, which they will not, they must not, they dare not, cross. If therefore a righteous man were assured, that by the breach of one of God's commandments he might restore decayed religion, and re-settle it *statu quo prius*, his hands, head, and heart are tied up, he *can* do nothing, because *their damnation is just who say* (Rom. iii. 8), "*Let us do evil that good may come thereof.*"

Verse 3.—"*Do.*" It is not said, *What can they think?* It is a great blessing which God hath allowed injured people, that though otherwise oppressed and straitened, they may freely enlarge themselves in their thoughts.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 3.—Sinning times have ever been the saints' praying times: this sent Ezra with a heavy heart to confess the sin of his people, and to bewail their abominations before the Lord. Ezra ix. And Jeremiah tells the wicked of his degenerate age, that "his soul should weep in secret places for their pride." Jer. xiii. 17. Indeed, sometimes sin comes to such a height, that this is almost all the godly can do, to get into a corner, and bewail the general pollutions of the age. "*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*" Such dismal days of national confusion our eyes have seen, when foundations of government were destroyed, and all hurled into military confusion. When it is thus with a people, "*What can the righteous do?*" Yes, this they may, and should do, "fast and pray." There is yet a God in heaven to be sought to, when a people's deliverance is thrown beyond the help of human policy or power. Now is the fit time to make their appeal to God, as the words following hint: "*The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven;*" in which words God is presented sitting in heaven as a temple, for their encouragement, I conceive, in such a desperate state of affairs, to direct their prayers thither for deliverance. And certainly this hath been the engine that hath been instrumental, above any, to restore this poor nation again, and set it upon the foundation of that lawful government from which it had so dangerously departed.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—The infinite understanding of God doth exactly know the sins of men; he knows so as to consider. He doth not only know them, but intently behold them: "*His eyelids try the children of men,*" a metaphor taken from men, that contract the eyelids when they would wistly and accurately behold a thing: it is not a transient and careless look.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—"*His eyes behold,*" etc. God searcheth not as man searcheth, by enquiring into that which before was hid from him; his searching is no more but his beholding; he seeth the heart, he beholdeth the reins; God's very sight is searching. Heb. iv. 13. "All things are naked and opened unto his eyes," τετραχηλισμένα, *dissected or anatomised.* He hath at once as exact a view of the most hidden things, the very entrails of the soul, as if they had been with never so great curiosity anatomised before him.—*Richard Alleine,* 1611—1681.

Verse 4.—"*His eyes behold,*" etc. Consider that God not only sees into all you do, but he sees it to that very end that he may examine and search into it. He doth not only behold you with a common and indifferent look, but with a searching, watchful, and inquisitive eye: he pries into the reasons, the motives, the ends of all your actions. "*The Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.*" Rev. i. 14, where Christ is described, it is said, *his eyes are as a flame of fire:* you know the property of fire is to search and make trial of those things which are exposed unto it, and to separate the dross from the pure metal: so, God's eye is like fire, to try and examine the actions of men: he

knows and discerns how much your very purest duties have in them of mixture, and base ends of formality, hypocrisy, distractedness, and deadness : he sees through all your specious pretences, that which you cast as a mist before the eyes of men when yet thou art but a juggler in religion : all your tricks and sleights of outward profession, all those things that you use to cozen and delude men withal, cannot possibly impose upon him : he is a God that can look through all those fig-leaves of outward profession, and discern the nakedness of your duties through them.—*Ezekiel Hopkins, D.D.*

Verse 4.—"*His eyes behold,*" etc. Take God into thy counsel. Heaven overlooks hell. God at any time can tell thee what plots are hatching there against thee.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—"*His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.*" When an offender, or one accused for any offence, is brought before a judge, and stands at the bar to be arraigned, the judge looks upon him, eyes him, sets his eye upon him, and he bids the offender look up in his face ; "Look upon me," saith the judge, "and speak up : " guiltiness usually clouds the forehead and clothes the brow ; the weight of guilt holds down the head ! *the evil doer hath an ill look*, or dares not look up ; how glad is he if the judge looks off him. We have such an expression here, speaking of the Lord, the great Judge of heaven and earth : "*His eyelids try the children of men,*" as a judge tries a guilty person with his eye and reads the characters of his wickedness printed in his face. Hence we have a common speech in our language, such a one *looks suspiciously*, or, *he hath a guilty look.* At that great gaol-delivery described in Rev. vi. 16, All the prisoners cry out *to be hid from the face of him that sat upon the throne.* They could not look upon Christ, and they could not endure Christ should look on them ; the eyelids of Christ try the children of men. . . . Wickedness cannot endure to be under the observation of any eye, much less of the eye of justice. Hence the actors of it say, "*Who seeth us ?*" It is very hard not to show the guilt of the heart in the face, and it is as hard to have it seen there.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord trieth the righteous.*" Except our sins, there is not such plenty of anything in all the world as there is of troubles which come from sin, as one heavy messenger came to Job after another. Since we are not in paradise, but in the wilderness, we must look for one trouble after another. As a bear came to David after a lion, and a giant after a bear, and a king after a giant, and Philistines after a king, so, when believers have fought with poverty, they shall fight with envy ; when they have fought with envy, they shall fight with infamy ; when they have fought with infamy, they shall fight with sickness ; they shall be like a labourer who is never out of work.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord trieth the righteous.*"—Times of affliction and persecution will distinguish the precious from the vile, it will difference the counterfeit professor from the true. Persecution is a Christian's touchstone, it is a *lapis lydius* that will try what metal men are made of, whether they be silver or tin, gold or dross, wheat or chaff, shadow or substance, carnal or spiritual, sincere or hypocritical. Nothing speaks out more soundness and uprightness than a pursuing after holiness, even then when holiness is most afflicted, pursued, and persecuted in the world : to stand fast in fiery trials argues much integrity within.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 5.—Note the singular opposition of the two sentences. God hates the wicked, and therefore in contrast he loves the righteous ; but it is here said that he tries them : therefore it follows that to try and to love are with God the same thing.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"*Upon the wicked he shall rain snares.*" Snares to hold them ; then if they be not delivered, follow fire and brimstone, and they cannot escape. This is the case of a sinner if he repent not ; if God pardon not, he is in the snare of Satan's temptation, he is in the snare of divine vengeance ; let him therefore cry aloud for his deliverance, that he may have his feet in a large room. The wicked lay snares for the righteous, but God either preventeth them that their souls ever escape them, or else he subventeth them : "The snares are broken, and we are delivered." No snares hold us so fast as those of our own sins ; they keep down our heads, and stoop us that we cannot look up : a very little ease they are to him that hath not a seared conscience.—*Samuel Page*, 1646.

Verse 6.—"*He shall rain snares.*" As in hunting with the lasso, the huntsman

casts a snare from above upon his prey to entangle its head or feet, so shall the Lord from above with many twistings of the line of terror, surround, bind, and take captive the haters of his law.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"*He shall rain snares,*" etc. He shall rain upon them when they least think of it even in the midst of their jollity, as rain falls on a fair day. Or, he shall rain down the vengeance when he sees good, for it rains not always. Though he defers it, yet will it rain.—*William Nicholson, Bishop of Gloucester, in "David's Harp Strung and Tuned,"* 1662.

Verse 6.—"*Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest.*" The strange dispensation of affairs in this world is an argument which doth convincingly prove that there shall be such a day wherein all the *involucra* and entanglements of providence shall be clearly unfolded. Then shall the riddle be dissolved, why God hath given this and that profane wretch so much wealth, and so much power to do mischief: is it not *that they might be destroyed for ever?* Then shall they be called to a strict account for all that plenty and prosperity for which they are now envied; and the more they have abused, the more dreadful will their condemnation be. Then it will be seen that God gave them not as mercies, but as "*snares.*" It is said that God "*will rain on the wicked snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest:*" when he scatters abroad the desirable things of this world, riches, honours, pleasures, etc., then he rains "*snares*" upon them; and when he shall call them to an account for these things, then he will rain upon them "*fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest*" of his wrath and fury. Dives, who caroused on earth, yet, in hell could not obtain so much as one poor drop of water to cool his scorched and flaming tongue: had not his excess and intemperance been so great in his life, his fiery thirst had not been so tormenting after death; and therefore, in that sad item that Abraham gives him (Luke xvi. 25), he bids him "*remember, that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*" I look upon this as a most bitter and a most deserved sarcasm; upbraiding him for his gross folly, in making the trifles of this life his good things. Thou hast received thy good things, but now thou art tormented. Oh, never call Dives's purple and delicious fare *good things*, if they thus end in torments! Was it good for him to be wrapped in purple who is now wrapped in flames? Was it good for him to fare deliciously who was only thereby fatted up against the day of slaughter?—*Ezekiel Hopkins.*

Verse 6.—"*Snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.*" After the judgment follows the condemnation: pre-figured as we have seen, by the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. "*Snares:*" because the allurements of Satan in this life will be their worst punishments in the next; the fire of anger, the brimstone of impurity, the tempest of pride, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. "*This shall be their portion;*" compare it with the Psalmist's own saying, "The Lord himself is the portion of my inheritance and my cup." Psalm xvi. 5.—*Cassiodorus, in J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 6.—"*The portion of their cup.*" Heb., the allotment of their cup. The expression has reference to the custom of distributing to each guest his mess of meat.—*William French and George Skinner,* 1842.

Verse 7.—That God may give grace without glory is intelligible; but to admit a man to communion with him in glory without grace, is not intelligible. It is not agreeable to God's holiness to make any inhabitant of heaven, and converse freely with him in a way of intimate love, without such a qualification of grace: "*The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright;*" he looks upon him with a smiling eye, and therefore he cannot favourably look upon an unrighteous person; so that this necessity is not founded only in the command of God that we should be renewed, but in the very nature of the thing, because God, in regard of his holiness, cannot converse with an impure creature. God must change his nature, or the sinner's nature must be changed. There can be no friendly communion between two of different natures without the change of one of them into the likeness of the other. Wolves and sheep, darkness and light, can never agree. God cannot love a sinner as a sinner, because he hates impurity by a necessity of nature as well as a choice of will. It is as impossible for him to love it as to cease to be holy.—*Stephen Charnock.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Faith s bold avowal, and brave refusal.

Verse 1.—Teacheth us to trust in God, how great soever our dangers be; also that we shall be many times assaulted to make us put far from us this trust, but yet that we must cleave unto it, as the anchor of our souls, sure and steadfast. —*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 1.—The advice of cowardice, and the jeer of insolence, both answered by faith. Lesson—Attempt no other answer.

Verse 2.—The craftiness of our spiritual enemies.

Verse 3.—This may furnish a double discourse. I. *If God's oath and promise could remove*, what could we do? Here the answer is easy. II. *If all earthly things fail*, and the very State fall to pieces, what can we do? We can suffer joyfully, hope cheerfully, wait patiently, pray earnestly, believe confidently, and triumph finally.

Verse 3.—Necessity of holding and preaching foundation truths.

Verse 4.—The elevation, mystery, supremacy, purity, everlastingness, invisibility, etc., of the throne of God.

Verses 4, 5.—In these verses mark the fact that the children of men, as well as the righteous, are tried; work out the contrast between the two trials in their design and result, etc.

Verse 5.—"*The Lord trieth the righteous.*" I. Who are tried? II. What in them is tried?—Faith, love, etc. III. In what manner?—Trials of every sort. IV. How long? V. For what purposes?

Verse 5.—"*His soul hateth.*" The thoroughness of God's hatred of sin. Illustrate by providential judgments, threatenings, sufferings of the Surety, and the terrors of hell.

Verse 5.—The trying of the gold, and the sweeping out of the refuse.

Verse 6. "*He shall rain.*" Gracious rain and destroying rain.

Verse 6.—The portion of the impenitent.

Verse 7.—The Lord possesses righteousness as a personal attribute, loves it in the abstract, and blesses those who practise it.

PSALM XII.

TITLE. *This Psalm is headed,* "To the Chief Musician upon Sheminith, a Psalm of David," *which title is identical with that of the sixth Psalm, except that Neginoth is here omitted. We have nothing new to add, and therefore refer the reader to our remarks on the dedication of Psalm VI. As Sheminith signifies the eight, the Arabic version says it is concerning the end of the world, which shall be the eighth day, and refers it to the coming of the Messiah: without accepting so fanciful an interpretation, we may read this song of complaining faith in the light of His coming who shall break in pieces the oppressor. The subject will be the better before the mind's eye if we entitle this Psalm:* "GOOD THOUGHTS IN BAD TIMES." *It is supposed to have been written while Saul was persecuting David, and those who favoured his cause.*

DIVISION.—*In the first and second verses David spreads his plaint before the Lord concerning the treachery of his age; verses* 3 *and* 4 *denounce judgments upon proud traitors; in verse* 5, *Jehovah himself thunders out his wrath against oppressors; hearing this, the Chief Musician sings sweetly of the faithfulness of God and his care of his people, in verses* 6 *and* 7; *but closes on the old key of lament in verse* 8, *as he observes the abounding wickedness of his times. Those holy souls who dwell in Mesech, and sojourn in the tents of Kedar, may read and sing these sacred stanzas with hearts in full accord with their mingled melody of lowly mourning and lofty confidence.*

EXPOSITION.

HELP, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: *with* flattering lips *and* with a double heart do they speak.

"*Help, Lord.*" A short, but sweet, suggestive, seasonable, and serviceable prayer; a kind of angel's sword, to be turned every way, and to be used on all occasions. Ainsworth says the word rendered "help," is largely used for all manner of saving, helping, delivering, preserving, etc. Thus it seems that the prayer is very full and instructive. The Psalmist sees the extreme danger of his position, for a man had better be among lions than among liars; he feels his own inability to deal with such sons of Belial, for "he who shall touch them must be fenced with iron;" he therefore turns himself to his all-sufficient Helper, the Lord, whose help is never denied to his servants, and whose aid is enough for all their needs. "*Help, Lord,*" is a very useful ejaculation which we may dart up to heaven on occasions of emergency, whether in labour, learning, suffering, fighting, living, or dying. As small ships can sail into harbours which larger vessels, drawing more water, cannot enter, so our brief cries and short petitions may trade with heaven when our soul is wind-bound, and business-bound, as to longer exercises of devotion, and when the stream of grace seems at too low an ebb to float a more laborious supplication. "*For the godly man ceaseth;*" the death, departure, or decline of godly men should be a trumpet-call for more prayer. They say that fish smell first at the head, and when godly men decay, the whole commonwealth will soon go rotten. We must not, however, be rash in our judgment on this point, for Elijah erred in counting himself the only servant of God alive, when there were thousands whom the Lord held in reserve. The present times always appear to be peculiarly dangerous, because they are nearest to our anxious gaze, and whatever evils are rife are sure to be observed, while the faults of past ages are further off, and are more easily overlooked. Yet we expect that in the latter days, "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," and then we must the more thoroughly turn from man, and address ourselves to the Churches' Lord, by whose help the gates of hell shall be kept from prevailing against us. "*The faithful fail from among the children of men;*" when godliness goes, faithfulness inevitably follows; without fear of God, men have no love of truth. Common honesty is no longer common, when common irreligion leads to universal godlessness. David

had his eyes on Doeg, and the men of Ziph and Keilah, and perhaps remembered the murdered priests of Nob, and the many banished ones who consorted with him in the cave of Adullam, and wondered where the state would drift without the anchors of its godly and faithful men. David, amid the general misrule, did not betake himself to seditious plottings, but to solemn petitionings; nor did he join with the multitude to do evil, but took up the arms of prayer to withstand their attacks upon virtue.

"*They speak vanity every one with his neighbour.*" They utter that which is vain *to hear*, because of its frivolous, foolish, want of worth; vain to *believe*, because it was false and lying; vain to *trust to*, since it was deceitful and flattering; vain to *regard*, for it lifted up the hearer, filling him with proud conceit of himself. It is a sad thing when it is the fashion to talk vanity. "Ca' me, and I'll ca' thee," is the old Scotch proverb; give me a high-sounding character, and I will give you one. Compliments and fawning congratulations are hateful to honest men; they know that if they take they must give them, and they scorn to do either. These accommodation-bills are most admired by those who are bankrupt in character. Bad are the times when every man thus cajoles and cozens his neighbour. "*With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.*" He who puffs up another's heart, has nothing better than wind in his own. If a man extols me to my face, he only shows me one side of his heart, and the other is black with contempt for me, or foul with intent to cheat me. Flattery is the sign of the tavern where duplicity is the host. The Chinese consider a man of two hearts to be a very base man, and we shall be safe in reckoning all flatterers to be such.

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, *and* the tongue that speaketh proud things:

4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips *are* our own: who *is* lord over us?

Total destruction shall overwhelm the lovers of flattery and pride, but meanwhile how they hector and fume! Well did the apostle call them "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." Free-thinkers are generally very free-talkers, and they are never more at ease than when railing at God's dominion, and arrogating to themselves unbounded license. Strange is it that the easy yoke of the Lord should so gall the shoulders of the proud, while the iron bands of Satan they bind about themselves as chains of honour: they boastfully cry unto God, "Who is lord over us?" and hear not the hollow voice of the evil one, who cries from the infernal lake, "I am your lord, and right faithfully do ye serve me." Alas, poor fools, their pride and glory shall be cut off like a fading flower! May God grant that our soul may not be gathered with them. It is worthy of observation that flattering lips, and tongues speaking proud things, are classed together: the fitness of this is clear, for they are guilty of the same vice, the first flatters another, and the second flatters himself, in both cases a lie is in their right hands. One generally imagines that flatterers are such mean parasites, so cringing and fawning, that they cannot be proud; but the wise man will tell you that while all pride is truly meanness, there is in the very lowest meanness no small degree of pride. Cæsar's horse is even more proud of carrying Cæsar, than Cæsar is of riding him. The mat on which the emperor wiped his shoes, boasts vaingloriously, crying out, "I cleaned the imperial boots." None are so detestably domineering as the little creatures who creep into office by cringing to the great; those are bad times, indeed, in which these obnoxious beings are numerous and powerful. No wonder that the justice of God in cutting off such injurious persons is matter for a Psalm, for both earth and heaven are weary of such provoking offenders, whose presence is a very plague to the people afflicted thereby. Men cannot tame the tongues of such boastful flatterers; but the Lord's remedy if sharp is sure, and is an unanswerable answer to their swelling words of vanity.

5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him.

In due season the Lord will hear his elect ones, who cry day and night unto him, and though he bear long with their oppressors, yet will he avenge them speedily. Observe that the mere oppression of saints, however silently they bear it, is in

itself a cry to God: Moses was heard at the Red Sea, though he said nothing; and Hagar's affliction was heard despite her silence. Jesus feels with his people, and their smarts are mighty orators with him. By-and-by, however, *they* begin to sigh and express their misery, and then relief comes post-haste. Nothing moves a father like the cries of his children; he bestirs himself, wakes up his manhood, overthrows the enemy, and sets his beloved in safety. A *puff* is too much for the child to bear, and the foe is so haughty, that he laughs the little one to scorn; but the Father comes, and then it is the child's turn to laugh, when he is set above the rage of his tormentor. What virtue is there in a poor man's sighs, that they should move the Almighty God to arise from his throne. The needy did not dare to speak, and could only sigh in secret, but the Lord heard, and could rest no longer, but girded on his sword for the battle. It is a fair day when our soul brings God into her quarrel, for when his bare arm is seen, Philistia shall rue the day. The darkest hours of the Church's night are those which precede the break of day. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Jesus will come to deliver just when his needy ones shall sigh, as if all hope had gone for ever. O Lord, set thy *now* near at hand, and rise up speedily to our help. Should the afflicted reader be able to lay hold upon the promise of this verse, let him gratefully fetch a fulness of comfort from it. Gurnal says, "As one may draw out the wine of a whole hogshead at one tap, so may a poor soul derive the comfort of the whole covenant to himself through one promise, if he be able to apply it." He who promises to set us in safety, means thereby preservation on earth, and eternal salvation in heaven.

6 The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

Verse 6.—What a contrast between the vain words of man, and the pure words of Jehovah. Man's words are yea and nay, but the Lord's promises are yea and amen. For truth, certainty, holiness, faithfulness, the words of the Lord are pure as well-refined silver. In the original there is an allusion to the most severely-purifying process known to the ancients, through which silver was passed when the greatest possible purity was desired; the dross was all consumed, and only the bright and precious metal remained; so clear and free from all alloy of error or unfaithfulness is the book of the words of the Lord. The Bible has passed through the furnace of persecution, literary criticism, philosophic doubt, and scientific discovery, and has lost nothing but those human interpretations which clung to it as alloy to precious ore. The experience of saints has tried it in every conceivable manner, but not a single doctrine or promise has been consumed in the most excessive heat. What God's words are, the words of his children should be. If we would be Godlike in conversation, we must watch our language, and maintain the strictest purity of integrity and holiness in all our communications.

7. To fall into the hands of an evil generation, so as to be baited by their cruelty, or polluted by their influence, is an evil to be dreaded beyond measure; but it is an evil foreseen and provided for in the text. In life many a saint has lived a hundred years before his age, as though he had darted his soul into the brighter future, and escaped the mists of the beclouded present: he has gone to his grave unreverenced and misunderstood, and lo! as generations come and go, upon a sudden the hero is unearthed, and lives in the admiration and love of the excellent of the earth; preserved for ever from the generation which stigmatised him as a sower of sedition, or burned him as a heretic. It should be our daily prayer that we may rise above our age as the mountain-tops above the clouds, and may stand out as heaven-pointing pinnacle high above the mists of ignorance and sin which roll around us. O Eternal Spirit, fulfil in us the faithful saying of this verse! Our faith believes those two assuring words, and cries, "*Thou shalt*," "*thou shalt*."

8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

8. Here we return to the fount of bitterness, which first made the Psalmist run to the wells of salvation, namely, the prevalence of wickedness. When those in power are vile, their underlings will be no better. As a warm sun brings out noxious flies, so does a sinner in honour foster vice everywhere. Our turf would not so swarm with abominables if those who are styled honourables did not give their

countenance to the craft. Would to God that the glory and triumph of our Lord Jesus would encourage us to walk and work on every side; as like acts upon like, since an exalted sinner encourages sinners, our exalted Redeemer must surely excite, cheer, and stimulate his saints. Nerved by a sight of his reigning power we shall meet the evils of the times in the spirit of holy resolution, and shall the more hopefully pray, "Help, Lord."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*Help, Lord.*" 'Twas high time to call to heaven for help, when Saul cried, "Go, kill me up the priests of Jehovah" (the occasion as it is thought of making this Psalm), and therein committed the sin against the Holy, as some grave divines are of opinion. 1 Sam. xxii. 17. David, after many sad thoughts about that slaughter, and the occasion of it, Doeg's malicious information, together with the paucity of his fast friends, and the multitude of his sworn enemies at court, breaks forth abruptly into these words, "*Help Lord,*" help at a dead lift. The Arabic version hath it, *Deliver me by main force,* as with weapons of war, for "the Lord is a man of war." Ex. xv. 3.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*The faithful.*" "*A faithful man,*" as a parent, a reprover, an adviser, one "without guile," "*who can find?*" Prov. xx. 6. Look close. View thyself in the glass of the word. Does thy neighbour or thy friend, find thee *faithful* to him? What does our daily intercourse witness? Is not the attempt to speak what is agreeable oft made at the expense of truth? Are not professions of regard sometimes utterly inconsistent with our real feelings? In common life, where gross violations are restrained, a thousand petty offences are allowed, that break down the wall between sin and duty, and, judged by the divine standard, are indeed guilty steps upon forbidden ground.—*Charles Bridges,* 1850.

Verse 1.—A "*faithful*" man must be, first of all, faithful to himself; then, he must be faithful to God; and then, he must be faithful to others, particularly the church of God. And this, as it regards ministers, is of peculiar importance. *Joseph Irons,* 1840.

Verse 1.—Even as a careful mother, seeing her child in the way when a company of unruly horses run through the streets in full career, presently whips up her child in her arms and taketh him home; or as the hen, seeing the ravenous kite over her head, clucks and gathers her chickens under her wings; even so when God hath a purpose to bring a heavy calamity upon a land, it hath been usual with him to call and cull out to himself, such as are his dearly beloved. He takes his choice servants from the evil to come. Thus was Augustine removed a little before Hippo (wherein he dwelt) was taken; Parœus died before Heidelburg was sacked; and Luther was taken off before Germany was overrun with war and bloodshed.—*Ed. Dunsterville in a Sermon at the Funeral of Sir Sim. Harcourt,* 1642.

Verse 1.—"*Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth,*" etc.:—

> Back then, complainer, loathe thy life no more,
> Nor deem thyself upon a desert shore,
> Because the rocks the nearer prospect close.
> Yet in fallen Israel are there hearts and eyes,
> That day by day in prayer like thine arise;
> Thou knowest them not, but their Creator known.
> Go, to the world return, nor fear to cast
> Thy bread upon the waters, sure at last
> In joy to find it after many days.
>
> *John Keble,* 1792—1866.

Verses 1, 2, 4.—Consider our markets, our fairs, our private contracts and bargains, our shops, our cellars, our weights, our measures, our promises, our protestations, our politic tricks and villanous Machiavelism, our enhancing of the prices of all commodities, and tell, whether the twelfth Psalm may not as fitly be applied to our times as to the days of the man of God; in which the feigning, and lying, and facing, and guile, and subtlety of men provoked the psalmist to cry out,

" Help, Lord ; for there is not a godly man left : for the faithful are failed from among the children of men : they speak deceitfully every one with his neighbour, flattering with their lips, and speak with a double heart, which have said, With our tongue we will prevail ; our lips are our own : who is Lord over us ? "—R. Wolcombe. 1612.

Verse 2.—*" They speak vanity every one with his neighbour : with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak."* The feigned zeal is just like a waterman, that looks one way and rows another way ; for this man *pretends* one thing and *intends* another thing ; as Jehu pretended the zeal of God's glory, but his aim was at his master's kingdom ; and his zeal to God's service was but to bring him to the sceptre of the kingdom. So Demetrius professed great love unto Diana, but his drift was to maintain the honour of his profession ; and so we have too many that make great show of holiness, and yet their hearts aim at other ends ; but they may be sure, though they can deceive the world and destroy themselves, yet not God, who knoweth the secrets of all hearts.—*Gr. Williams,* 1636.

Verse 2.—*" They speak vanity."*—

> Faithless is earth, and faithless are the skies !
> Justice is fled, and truth is now no more !
> *Virgil's Æneid,* IV. 373.

Verse 2.—*" With a double heart."* Man is nothing but insincerity, falsehood, and hypocrisy, both in regard to himself and in regard to others. He does not wish that he should be told the truth, he shuns saying it to others ; and all these moods, so inconsistent with justice and reason, have their roots in his heart.—*Blaise Pascal.*

Verse 2.—*" With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak."* There is no such stuff to make a cloak of as religion ; nothing so fashionable, nothing so profitable : it is a livery wherein a wise man may serve two masters, God and the world, and make a gainful service by either. I serve both, and in both myself, by prevaricating with both. Before man none serves his God with more severe devotion : for which, among the best of men, I work my own ends, and serve myself. In private, I serve the world ; not with so strict devotion, but with more delight ; where fulfilling of her servants' lusts, I work my end and serve myself. The house of prayer who more frequents than I ? In all Christian duties who more forward than I ? I fast with those that fast, that I may eat with those that eat. I mourn with those that mourn. No hand more open to the cause than mine, and in their families none prays longer and with louder zeal. Thus when the opinion of a holy life hath cried the goodness of my conscience up, my trade can lack no custom, my wares can want no price, my words can need no credit, my actions can lack no praise. If I am covetous it is interpreted providence ; if miserable, it is counted temperance ; if melancholy, it is construed godly sorrow ; if merry, it is voted spiritual joy ; if I be rich, it is thought the blessing of a godly life ; if poor, supposed the fruit of conscionable dealing ; if I be well spoken of, it is the merit of holy conversation ; if ill, it is the malice of malignants. Thus I sail with every wind, and have my end in all conditions. This cloak in summer keeps me cool, in winter warm, and hides the nasty bag of all my secret lusts. Under this cloak I walk in public fairly with applause, and in private sin securely without offence, and officiate wisely without discovery. I compass sea and land to make a proselyte ; and no sooner made, but he makes me. At a fast I cry Geneva, and at a feast I cry Rome If I be poor, I counterfeit abundance to save my credit ; if rich, I dissemble poverty to save charges. I most frequent schismatical lectures, which I find most profitable ; from thence learning to divulge and maintain new doctrines ; they maintain me in suppers thrice a week. I use the help of a lie sometimes, as a new stratagem to uphold the gospel ; and I colour oppression with God's judgments executed upon the wicked. Charity I hold an extraordinary duty, therefore not ordinarily to be performed. What I openly reprove abroad, for my own profit, that I secretly act at home, for my own pleasure. But stay, I see a handwriting in my heart which damps my soul. It is charactered in these said words, " Woe be to you, hypocrites." Matt. xxiii. 13.—*Francis Quarles' " Hypocrite's Soliloquy."*

Verse 2.—*" With flattering lips,"* etc. The world indeed says that society could not exist if there were perfect truthfulness and candour between man and man ; and that the world's propriety would be as much disturbed if every man said what he pleased, as it was in those days of Israelitish history, when every man did that

which was right in his own eyes. The world is assuredly the best judge of its own condition and mode of government, and therefore I will not say what a libel does such a remark contain, but oh, what a picture does it present of the social edifice, that its walls can be cemented and kept together only by flattery and falsehood.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 2.—"*Flattering lips.*" The philosopher Bion being asked what animal he thought the most hurtful, replied, "That of wild creatures a tyrant, and of tame ones a flatterer." The flatterer is the most dangerous enemy we can have. Raleigh, himself a courtier, and therefore initiated into the whole art of flattery, who discovered in his own career and fate its dangerous and deceptive power, its deep artifice and deeper falsehood, says, "A flatterer is said to be a beast that biteth smiling. But it is hard to know them from friends—they are so obsequious and full of protestations; for, as a wolf resembles a dog, so doth a flatterer a friend." —*The Book of Symbols*, 1844.

Verse 2.—"*They speak with a double heart.*" The original is, "A heart and a heart:" one for the church, another for the change; one for Sundays, another for working-days; one for the king, another for the pope. A man without a heart is a wonder, but a man with two hearts is a monster. It is said of Judas "There were many hearts in one man;" and we read of the saints, "There was one heart in many men." Acts. iv. 32. *Dabo illis cor unum;* a special blessing.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 2.—When men cease to be faithful to their God, he who expects to find them so to each other will be much disappointed. The primitive sincerity will accompany the primitive piety in her flight from the earth; and then interest will succeed conscience in the regulation of human conduct, till one man cannot trust another farther than he holds him by that tie. Hence, by the way, it is, that though many are infidels themselves, yet few choose to have their families and dependants such; as judging, and rightly judging, that true Christians are the only persons to be depended on for the exact discharge of social duties.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—"*The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips,*" etc. They who take pleasure in deceiving others, will at the last find themselves most of all deceived, when the Sun of truth, by the brightness of his rising, shall at once detect and consume hypocrisy.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—"*Cut off lips and tongues.*" May there not be here an allusion to those terrible but suggestive punishments which Oriental monarchs were wont to execute on criminals? Lips were cut off and tongues torn out when offenders were convicted of lying or treason. So terrible and infinitely more so are the punishments of sin.—*C. H. S.*

Verses 3, 4.—It need not now seem strange to tell you that the Lord is the owner of our bodies, that he has so much propriety therein that they are more his than ours. The apostle tells us as much. 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Glorify God in your bodies which are his." Our bodies and every member thereof, are his: for if the whole be so, no part is exempted. And therefore they spake proud things, and presumptuously usurped the propriety of God, who said, "*Our lips are our own;*" as though their lips had not been his who is Lord and Owner of all, but they had been lords thereof, and might have used them as they list. This provoked God to show what right he had to dispose of such lips and tongues, by *cutting them off.*—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 4.—"*Who have said, With our tongues will we prevail; who is Lord over us?*" So it was: twelve poor and unlearned men on the one side, all the eloquence of Greece and Rome arrayed on the other. From the time of Tertullus to that of Julian the apostate, every species of oratory, learning, wit, was lavished against the church of God; and the result, like the well-known story of that dispute between the Christian peasant and the heathen philosopher, when the latter, having challenged the assembled fathers of a synod to silence him, was put to shame by the simple faith of the former "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I command thee to be dumb." *Who is Lord over us?* "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" Ex. v. 2. "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" Job. xxi. 15. "Who is that God that shall deliver you?" Dan. iii. 15.—*Michael Ayguan, in J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 4.—"*Our lips are our own.*" If we have to do with God, we must quit claim to ourselves and look on God as our owner; but this is fixed in the hearts of men, We will be our own; we will not consent to the claim which God makes to us: "*Our lips are our own.*" Wicked men might as well say the same thing of their whole selves; our bodies, strength, time, parts, etc., are our own, and who is Lord over us?—*John Howe.*

Verse 4.—From the faults of the wicked we must learn three contrary lessons; to wit: 1. That nothing which we have is our own. But, 2. Whatsoever is given to us of God is for service to be done to him. 3. That whatsoever we do or say, we have a Lord over us to whom we must be answerable when he calleth us to account.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*For the oppression of the poor,*" etc. When oppressors and persecutors do snuff and puff at the people of God, when they defy them, and scorn them, and think that they can with a blast of their breath blow them away, then God will arise to judgment, as the Chaldee has it; at that very nick of time when all seems to be lost, and when the poor, oppressed, and afflicted people of God can do nothing but sigh and weep, and weep and sigh, then the Lord will arise and ease them of their oppressions, and make their day of extremity a glorious opportunity to work for his own glory and his people's good. Matt. xxii. 6, 7. "And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 5.—Fear ye, whosoever ye be, that do wrong the poor; you have power and wealth, and the favour of the judges, but they have the strongest weapons of all, sighings and groanings, which fetch help from heaven for them. These weapons dig down houses, throw up foundations, overthrow whole nations.—*Chrysostom.*

Verse 5.—"*For the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord.*" God is pleased to take notice of *every grace*, even the least and lowest, and every gracious inclination in any of his servants. *To fear his name* is no great matter, yet these have a promise. *To think on his name* less, yet set down in a "book of remembrance." God sets down how many good *thoughts* a poor soul hath had. As evil thoughts in wicked men are taken notice of—they are the first fruits of the evil heart (Matt. xv. 19)—so good thoughts are they which lie uppermost, and best discover a good heart. *A desire* is a small matter, especially of the poor man, yet God regards the desire of the poor, and calls a good desire the greatest kindness; "The desire of a man is his kindness." A *tear* makes no great noise, yet hath a voice, "God hath heard the voice of my weeping." It is no pleasant water, yet God bottles it up. *A groan* is a poor thing, yet is the best part of a prayer sometimes (Rom. viii. 26); *a sigh* is less, yet *God is awakened and raised up by it.* Psalm xii. 5. *A look* is less than all these, yet this is regarded (Jonah ii. 4); *breathing* is less, yet (Lam. iii. 56), the church could speak of no more; *panting* is less than breathing, when one is spent for lack of breath, yet this is all the godly can sometimes boast of. Psalm xlii. 1. The description of a godly man is ofttimes made from his least *quod sic.* Blessed are the *poor*, the *meek*, they that *mourn*, and they who *hunger* and *thirst.* Never did Hannah pray better than when she could get out never a word, but cried, "Hard, hard heart." Nor did the publican, than when he smote his breast and cried, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Nor Mary Magdalene, than when she came behind Christ, sat down, wept, but kept silence. How sweet is music upon the *waters!* How fruitful are the lowest valleys! Mourning hearts are most musical, lowest most fruitful. The good shepherd ever takes most care of his weak lambs and feeble sheep. The father makes most of the least, and the mother looks most after the sick child. How comfortable is that of our Saviour, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish!" And that heaven is not to be entered but by such as are like the little child.—*John Sheffield,* 1654.

Verse 5.—"*The oppression of the poor.*" Insolent and cruel oppressing of the poor is a sin that brings desolating and destroying judgments upon a people. God sent ten wasting judgments one after another upon Pharaoh, his people, and land, to revenge the cruel oppression of his poor people. "Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: for the Lord will plead their cause." Prov. xxii. 22, 23. To rob and oppress the rich is a great sin; but to

rob and oppress the poor is a greater; but to rob and oppress the poor because he is poor, and wants money to buy justice, is the top of all inhumanity and impiety. To oppress any one is sin; but to oppress the oppressed is the height of sin. Poverty, and want, and misery, should be motives to pity; but oppressors make them the whetstones of their cruelty and severity, and therefore the Lord will plead the cause of his poor oppressed people against their oppressors without fee or fear; yea, he will plead their cause with pestilence, blood, and fire. Gog was a great oppressor of the poor (Ezekiel xxxviii. 8—14), and God pleads against him with pestilence, blood, and fire (verse 22); "and I will plead against him, with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone."—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 6.—"*The words of the Lord are pure words,*" etc. How beautifully is this verse introduced, by way of contrast to what was said before concerning! Do sinners talk of vanity? let saints then speak of Jesus and his gospel. Do they talk impure words? then let the faithful use the pure words of God, which like silver, the more used, the more melted in the fire, the more precious will they be. It is true, indeed, despisers will esteem both God and his word as trifling; but oh, what an unknown treasure doth the word, the promises, the covenant relation of the divine things of Jesus contain! They are more to be desired than gold, yea, than pure gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 6.—"*The words of the Lord are pure words,*" etc. They that purify silver to the purpose, use to put it in the fire again and again, that it may be thoroughly tried. So is the truth of God; there is scarce any truth but hath been tried over and over again, and still if any dross happen to mingle with it, then God calls it in question again. If in former times there have been Scriptures alleged that have not been pertinent to prove it, that truth shall into the fire again, that what is dross may be burnt up; the Holy Ghost is so curious, so delicate, so exact, he cannot bear that falsehood should be mingled with the truths of the gospel. That is the reason, therefore, why that God doth still, age after age, call former things in question, because that there is still some dross one way or other mingled with them; either in the stating the opinions themselves, or else in the Scriptures that are brought and alleged for them, that have passed for current, for he will never leave till he have purified them. The doctrine of God's free grace hath been tried over, and over, and over again. Pelagius begins, and he mingles his dross with it: he saith, grace is nothing but nature in man. Well, his doctrine was purified, and a great deal of dross purged out. Then come the semi-Pelagians, and they part stakes; they say, nature can do nothing without grace, but they make nature to concur with grace, and to have an influence as well as grace; and the dross of that was burnt up. The Papists, they take up the same quarrel, but will neither be Pelagians nor semi-Pelagians, yet still mingle dross. The Arminians, they come, and they refine popery in that point anew; still they mingle dross. God will have this truth tried seven times in the fire, till he hath brought it forth as pure as pure may be. And I say it is because that truth is thus precious.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—The Scripture is the sun; the church is the clock. The sun we know to be sure, and regularly constant in his motions; the clock, as it may fall out, may go too fast or too slow. As then, we should condemn him of folly that should profess to trust the clock rather than the sun, so we cannot but justly tax the credulity of those who would rather trust to the church than to the Scripture.—*Bishop Hall.*

Verse 6.—"*The words of the Lord are pure words.*" Men may inspect detached portions of the Book, and please themselves with some things, which, at first view, have the semblance of conniving at what is wrong. But let them read it, let them read the whole of it; let them carry along in their minds the character of the persons to which the different portions of it were addressed; the age of the world, and the circumstances under which the different parts of it were written, and the particular objects which even those portions of it have in view, which to an infidel mind appear the most exceptionable; and they may be rationally convinced that, instead of originating in the bosom of an impostor, it owes its origin to men who wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Let them scrutinise it with as much severity as they please; only let their scrutiny be well informed, wisely directed, and with

a fair and ingenuous mind, and we have no fears for the issue. There are portions of it on which ignorance and folly have put constructions that are forced and unnatural, and which impure minds have viewed in shadows reflected from their own impurity. Montesquieu said of Voltaire, *Lorsque Voltaire lit un livre, il le fait, puis il écrit contre ce qu'il a fait :* " When Voltaire reads a book, he makes it what he pleases, and then writes against what he has made." It is no difficult matter to besmear and blot its pages, and then impute the foul stains that men of corrupt minds have cast upon it, to its stainless Author. But if we honestly look at it as it is, we shall find that like its Author, it is without blemish and without spot.—*Gardiner Spring, D.D.*

Verse 6.—" *The words of the Lord are pure words : as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*" The expression may import two things : first, the infallible certainty of the word ; and, secondly, the exact purity. First, the infallible certainty of the word, as gold endureth in the fire when the dross is consumed. Vain conceits comfort us not in a time of trouble ; but the word of God, the more it is tried, the more you will find the excellency of it—the promise is tried, as well as we are tried, in deep afflictions ; but, when it is so, it will be found to be most pure, " The word of the Lord is tried ; he is a buckler to all those that trust in him " (Prov. xxx. 5) ; as pure gold suffers no loss by the fire, so the promises suffer no loss when they are tried, but stand to us in our greatest troubles. Secondly, it notes the exact perfection of the word : there is no dross in silver and gold that hath been often refined ; so there is no defect in the word of God.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 6.—Fry thus translates this verse :—

> The words of Jehovah are pure words—
> Silver refined in the crucible—
> Gold, seven times washed from the earth.

צָרוּף though sometimes applied to express the purity of silver, is more strictly an epithet of gold, from the peculiar method made use of in separating it from the soil by repeated washings and decantations.—*John Fry, in loc.*

Verse 6.—" *Seven times.*" I cannot but admit that there may be a mystic meaning in the expression " *seven times*," in allusion to the seven periods of the church, or to that perfection, implied in the figure seven, to which it is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. This will be more readily allowed by those who admit of the prophetic interpretation of the seven epistles of the Book of Revelation. *W. Wilson, D.D., in loc.*

Verse 8.—" *When the vilest men are exalted :*" Heb., *vilities*, οὐτίδανοι, the abstract for the concrete, *quisquiliæ*, οὐτίδανοι. Oft, empty vessels swim aloft, rotten posts are gilt with adulterate gold, the worst weeds spring up bravest. Chaff will get to the top of the fan, when good corn, as it lieth at the bottom of the heap, so it falls low at the feet of the fanner. The reason why wicked men " *walk* " on every side, are so brisk, so busy (and who but they ?) is given to be this, because losels and rioters were exalted. See Prov. xxviii. 12, 18, and xxix. 2. As rheums and catarrhs fall from the head to the lungs and cause a consumption of the whole body, so it is in the body politic. As a fish putrefies first in the head and then in all the parts, so here. Some render the text thus, " *When they* (that is, the wicked) *are exalted*," it is a " *shame* for the sons of men," that other men who better deserve preferment, are not only slighted, but vilely handled by such worthless ambitionists, who yet the higher they climb, as apes, the more they discover their deformities."—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—Good thus translates this verse :—

> Should the wicked advance on every side ;
> Should the dregs of the earth be uppermost ?

The original is given literally, זֻלּוּת means " fœces, fœculences, dregs." רוֹם is here an adverb, and imports *uppermost*, rather than *exalted*.—*J. Mason Good, in loc.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"*Help, Lord.*" I. The Prayer itself, short, suggestive, seasonable, rightly directed, vehement. II. Occasions for its use. III. Modes of its answer. IV. Reasons for expecting gracious reply.

First two clauses.—Text for funeral of an eminent believer.

Whole verse.—I. *The fact bewailed*—describe godly and faithful, and show how they fail. II. *The feeling excited.* Mourning the loss, fears for church, personal need of such companions, appeal to God. III. *The forebodings aroused.* Failure of the cause, judgments impending, etc. IV. *The faith remaining:* "Help, Lord."

Verse 1.—Intimate connection between yielding honour to God and honesty to man, since they decline together.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—A discourse upon the prevalence and perniciousness of vain talk.

The whole verse.—Connection between flattery and treachery.

"*A double heart.*" Right and wrong kinds of hearts, and the disease of duplicity.

Verse 3.—God's hatred of those twin sins of the lips—Flattery and Pride (which is self flattery). Why he hates them. How he shows his hatred. In whom he hates them most. How to be cleansed from them.

Verse 3, 4.—I. *The revolt of the tongue.* Its claim of power, self-possession, and liberty. Contrast between this and the believer's confession, "we are not our own." II. *The method of its rebellion*—"flattery, and speaking proud things." III. *The end of its treason*—"cut off."

Verse 5.—The Lord aroused—How! Why! What to do! When!

Last clause.—Peculiar danger of believers from those who despise them and their special safety. Good practical topic.

Verse 6.—The purity, trial, and permanency of the words of the Lord.

Seven crucibles in which believers try the word. A little thought will suggest these.

Verse 7.—Preservation from one's generation in life and for ever. A very suggestive theme.

Verse 8.—*Sin in high places specially infectious.* Call to the rich and prominent to remember their responsibility. Thankfulness for honourable rulers. Discrimination to be used in choice of our representatives, or civic magistrates.

PSALM XIII.

OCCASION.—*The Psalm cannot be referred to any especial event or period in David's history. All attempts to find it a birthplace are but guesses. It was, doubtless, more than once the language of that much tried man of God, and is intended to express the feelings of the people of God in those ever-returning trials which beset them. If the reader has never yet found occasion to use the language of this brief ode, he will do so ere long, if he be a man after the Lord's own heart. We have been wont to call this the "How Long Psalm." We had almost said the Howling Psalm, from the incessant repetition of the cry "how long?"*

DIVISION.—*This Psalm is very readily to be divided into three parts :—the question of anxiety*, 1, 2 ; *the cry of prayer*, 3, 4 ; *the song of faith*, 5, 6.

EXPOSITION.

HOW long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having* sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

"*How long?*"—This question is repeated no less than four times. It betokens very intense desire for deliverance, and great anguish of heart. And what if there be some impatience mingled therewith ; is not this the more true a portrait of our own experience? It is not easy to prevent desire from degenerating into impatience. O for grace that, while we wait on God, we may be kept from indulging a murmuring spirit! "*How long?*" Does not the oft-repeated cry become a very HOWLING? And what if grief should find no other means of utterance? Even then, God is not far from the voice of our roaring ; for he does not regard the music of our prayers, but his own Spirit's work in them in exciting desire and inflaming the affections.

"*How long?*" Ah! how long do our days appear when our soul is cast down within us!

> "How wearily the moments seem to glide
> O'er sadness! How the time
> Delights to linger in its flight!"

Time flies with full-fledged wing in our summer days, but in our winters he flutters painfully. A week within prison-walls is longer than a month at liberty. Long sorrow seems to argue abounding corruption ; for the gold which is long in the fire must have had much dross to be consumed, hence the question "how long?" may suggest deep searching of heart. "*How long wilt thou forget me?*" Ah, David! how like a fool thou talkest! Can God *forget?* Can Omniscience fail in memory? Above all, can Jehovah's heart forget his own beloved child? Ah! brethren, let us drive away the thought, and hear the voice of our covenant God by the mouth of the prophet, "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands ; thy walls are continually before me." "*For ever?*" Oh, dark thought! It was surely bad enough to suspect a temporary forgetfulness, but shall we ask the ungracious question, and imagine that the Lord will for ever cast away his people? No, his anger may endure for a night, but his love shall abide eternally. "*How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?*" This is a far more rational question, for God may hide his face, and yet he may remember still. A hidden face is no sign of a forgetful heart. It is in love that his face is turned away ; yet to a real child of God, this hiding of his Father's face is terrible, and he will never be at ease until once more he hath his Father's smile. "*How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?*" There is in the original the idea of "laying up" counsels in his heart, as if his devices had become innumerable but unavailing. Herein we have often been like David, for we have considered and reconsidered day after day, but have not discovered the happy device by which to escape from our trouble.

Such store is a sad sore. Ruminating upon trouble is bitter work. Children fill their mouths with bitterness when they rebelliously chew the pill which they ought obediently to have taken at once. *"How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?"* This is like wormwood in the gall, to see the wicked enemy exulting while our soul is bowed down within us. The laughter of a foe grates horribly upon the ears of grief. For the devil to make mirth of our misery is the last ounce of our complaint, and quite breaks down our patience; therefore let us make it one chief argument in our plea with mercy.

Thus the careful reader will remark that the question "how long?" is put in four shapes. The writer's grief is viewed, as it seems to be, as it is, as it affects himself within, and his foes without. We are all prone to play most on the worst string. We set up monumental stones over the graves of our joys, but who thinks of erecting monuments of praise for mercies received? We write four books of Lamentations and only one of Canticles, and are far more at home in wailing out a *Miserere* than in chanting a *Te Deum.*

3 Consider *and* hear me, O Lord my God lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep* of death;

4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; *and* those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

But now prayer lifteth up her voice, like the watchman who proclaims the day-break. Now will the tide turn, and the weeper shall dry his eyes. The mercy-seat is the life of hope and the death of despair. The gloomy thought of God's having forsaken him is still upon the Psalmist's soul, and he therefore cries, *"Consider and hear me."* He remembers at once the root of his woe, and cries aloud that it may be removed. The final absence of God is Tophet's fire, and his temporary absence brings his people into the very suburbs of hell. God is here entreated to *see* and *hear*, that so he may be doubly moved to pity. What should we do if we had no God to turn to in the hour of wretchedness?

Note the cry of faith, *"O Lord* MY *God!"* Is it not a very glorious fact that our interest in our God is not destroyed by all our trials and sorrows? We may lose our gourds, but not our God. The title-deed of heaven is not written in the sand, but in eternal brass.

"Lighten mine eyes:" that is, let the eye of my faith be clear, that I may see my God in the dark; let my eye of watchfulness be wide open, lest I be entrapped, and let the eye of my understanding be illuminated to see the right way. Perhaps, too, here is an allusion to that cheering of the spirits so frequently called the enlightening of the eyes because it causes the face to brighten, and the eyes to sparkle. Well may we use the prayer, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord!" for in many respects we need the Holy Spirit's illuminating rays. *"Lest I sleep the sleep of death."* Darkness engenders sleep, and despondency is not slow in making the eyes heavy. From this faintness and dimness of vision, caused by despair, there is but a step to the iron sleep of death. David feared that his trials would end his life, and he rightly uses his fear as an argument with God in prayer; for deep distress has in it a kind of claim upon compassion, not a claim of right, but a plea which has power with grace. Under the pressure of heart sorrow, the Psalmist does not look forward to the sleep of death with hope and joy, as assured believers do, but he shrinks from it with dread, from which we gather that bondage from fear of death is no new thing.

Another plea is urged in the fourth verse, and it is one which the tried believer may handle well when on his knees. We make use of our arch-enemy for once, and compel him, like Samson, to grind in our mill while we use his cruel arrogance as an argument in prayer. It is not the Lord's will that the great enemy of our souls should overcome his children. This would dishonour God, and cause the evil one to boast. It is well for us that our salvation and God's honour are so intimately connected, that they stand or fall together.

Our covenant God will complete the confusion of all our enemies, and if for awhile we become their scoff and jest, the day is coming when the shame will change sides, and the contempt shall be poured on those to whom it is due.

5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

6 I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

What a change is here! Lo, the rain is over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come. The mercy-seat has so refreshed the poor weeper, that he clears his throat for a song. If we have mourned with him, let us now dance with him. David's heart was more often out of tune than his harp. He begins many of his Psalms sighing, and ends them singing; and others he begins in joy and ends in sorrow; "so that one would think," says Peter Moulin, "that those Psalms had been composed by two men of a contrary humour." It is worthy to be observed that the joy is all the greater because of the previous sorrow, as calm is all the more delightful in recollection of the preceding tempest.

"Sorrows remembered sweeten present joy."

Here is his avowal of his confidence: "*But I have trusted in thy mercy.*" For many a year it had been his wont to make the Lord his castle and tower of defence, and he smiles from behind the same bulwark still. He is sure of his faith, and his faith makes him sure; had he doubted the reality of his trust in God, he would have blocked up one of the windows through which the sun of heaven delights to shine. Faith is now in exercise, and consequently is readily discovered; there is never a doubt in our heart about the existence of faith while it is in action; when the hare or partridge is quiet we see it not, but let the same be in motion and we soon perceive it. All the powers of his enemies had not driven the Psalmist from his stronghold. As the shipwrecked mariner clings to the mast, so did David cling to his faith; he neither could nor would give up his confidence in the Lord his God. O that we may profit by his example, and hold by our faith as by our very life!

Now hearken to the music which faith makes in the soul. The bells of the mind are all ringing, "*My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.*" There is joy and feasting within doors, for a glorious guest has come, and the fatted calf is killed. Sweet is the music which sounds from the strings of the heart. But this is not all; *the voice* joins itself in the blessed work, and the tongue keeps tune with the soul, while the writer declares, "*I will sing unto the Lord.*"

"I will praise thee every day.
Now thine anger's turned away;
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice."

The Psalm closes with a sentence which is a refutation of the charge of forgetfulness which David had uttered in the first verse, "*He hath dealt bountifully with me.*" So shall it be with us if we wait awhile. The complaint which in our haste we utter shall be joyfully retracted, and we shall witness that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?*" etc. The departures of God from true believers are never final; they may be tedious, but they are temporary. As the evil spirit is said to depart from Christ for a season (Luke iv. 13; though he quitted that temptation, he did not quit his design, so as to tempt no more), so the good Spirit withdraws from those that are Christ's for a season only, 'tis with a purpose of coming again. When he hath most evidently forsaken, 'tis as unquestionable that sooner or later he will return; and the happiness of his return will richly recompense for the sadness of his desertion; Isa. liv. 7, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee;" here is not only a gathering after a forsaking, but "*great mercies*" to make amends for "*a small moment.*" He who hath engaged to be our God for ever, cannot depart for ever.—*Timothy Cruso*, 1696.

Verse 1.—"*How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?*" Whatever be the pressing need of Christ's followers in troubles, and their constant cleaving to duty for all that; and whatever be Christ's purpose of love towards them, yet he seeth it fit ofttimes not to come to them at first, but will let the trial go on till it come to a height, and be a trial indeed, and put them seriously to it; for before he came

he lets them row "about five and twenty or thirty furlongs" (the last of which make near four miles, eight furlongs going to a mile); and (Mark vi. 48) he came not till the fourth watch of the night, which is the morning watch. We are indeed very sparing of ourselves in trouble, and do soon begin to think that we are low and tried enough, and therefore would be delivered; but our wise Lord seeth that we need more.—*George Hutcheson*, 1657.

Verse 1.—"*How long*," etc. Enquire into the cause of God's anger. He is never angry but when there is very great reason, when we force him to be so. What is that accursed thing in our hearts, or in our lives, for which God hides his face, and frowns upon us? What particular disobedience to his commands is it for which he has taken up the rod? Job x. 2; "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me;" as if he should say, Lord, my troubles and my sorrows are very well known.... We must not cease to be solicitous to know what are the particular sins that have made him to tear us up by the roots, to throw us down as with a whirlwind; what is it that has made him so long angry with us, and so long to delay his help, that if any evil be undiscovered in our souls, we may lament it with a seasonable grief, and get a pardon for it. It is not the common course of God's providence to cover his servants with so thick a darkness as this is, which our troubled souls labour under in the day, or rather in the night of his displeasure; and, therefore, we may with humility desire to know why he proceeds with us in a way that is so singular; for it is some way delightful to the understanding to pierce into the reasons and causes of things.—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verse 1.—"*How long wilt thou forget me*," etc. For God *to forget* David, not to mind him, or look after him, is much! If his eye be never so little once off us, the spiritual adversary is ready presently to seize on us, as the kite on the chick if the hen look not carefully after it.... As a father will sometimes cross his son to try the child's disposition, to see how he will take it, whether he will mutter and grumble at it, and grow humorous and wayward, neglect his duty to his father because his father seemeth to neglect him, or make offer to run away and withdraw himself from his father's obedience because he seemeth to carry himself harshly and roughly towards him, and to provoke him thereunto; so doth God likewise ofttimes cross his children and seemeth to neglect them, so to try their disposition, what metal they are made of, how they stand affected towards him: whether they will neglect God because God seemeth to neglect them, forbear to serve him because he seemeth to forget them, cease to depend upon him because he seemeth not to look after them, to provide for them, or to protect them. Like Joram's prophane pursuivant, "This evil," saith he, "is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Or whether they will still constantly cleave to him, though he seem not to regard them, nor to have any care of them; and say with Isaiah, "Yet will I wait upon God, though he have hid his face from us, and I will look for him though he look not on us;" for, "They are blessed that wait on him; and he will not fail in due time to show mercy unto all them that do so constantly wait on him." Isa. viii. 17; xxx. 18. As Samuel dealt with Saul; he kept away till the last hour, to see what Saul would do when Samuel seemed not to keep touch with him. So doth God with his saints, and with those that be in league with him; he withdraweth himself oft, and keeps aloof oft for a long time together to try what they will do, and what courses they will take when God seemeth to break with them and to leave them in the suds, as we say; amidst many difficulties much perplexed, as it was with David at this time.—*Thomas Gataker*, 1637.

Verse 1.—1. For desertions. I think them like lying fallow of lean and weak land for some years, while it gathers sap for a better crop. It is possible to gather gold, where it may be had, with moonlight. Oh, if I could but creep one foot, or half a foot, nearer in to Jesus, in such a dismal night as that when he is away, I should think it a happy absence! 2. If I knew that the Beloved were only gone away for trial, and further humiliation, and not smoked out of the house with new provocations, I would forgive desertions and hold my peace at his absence. But Christ's bought absence (that I bought with my sin), is two running boils at once, one upon each side; and what side then can I lie on? 3. I know that, as night and shadows are good for flowers, and moonlight and dews are better than a continual sun, so is Christ's absence of special use, and that it hath some nourishing virtue in it, and giveth sap to humility, and putteth an edge on hunger, and furnisheth a fair field to faith to put forth itself, and to exercise its fingers in gripping it seeth not what.—*Samuel Rutherford*, 1600—1661.

Verses 1, 2.—That which the French proverb hath of sickness is true of all evils, that they come on horseback and go away on foot; we have often seen that a sudden fall, or one meal's surfeit, has stuck by many to their graves; whereas pleasures come like oxen, slow and heavily, and go away like post-horses, upon the spur. Sorrows, because they are lingering guests, I will entertain but moderately, knowing that the more they are made of the longer they will continue: and for pleasures, because they stay not, and do but call to drink at my door, I will use them as passengers with slight respect. He is his own best friend that makes the least of both of them.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verses 1, 2.—"*How* LONG *will thou forget me? How* LONG *wilt thou hide thy face from me? How* LONG *shall I take counsel in my soul?*" The intenseness of the affliction renders it trying to our fortitude; but it is by the continuance of it that patience is put to the test. It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting. In the first case, the soul collects all its strength, and feels in earnest to call in help from above; but, in the last, the mind relaxes, and sinks into despondency. When Job was accosted with evil tidings, in quick succession, he bore it with becoming fortitude; but when he could see no end to his troubles, he sunk under them.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verses 1—4.—Everything is strangely changed; all its comeliness, and beauty, and glory, vanishes when the *life* is gone: life is the pleasant thing; 'tis sweet and comfortable; but death with its pale attendants, raises a horror and aversion to it everywhere. The saints of God dread the removal of his favour, and the hiding of his face; and when it is hid, a faintness and a cold amazement and fear seizes upon every part, and they feel strange bitterness, and anguish, and tribulation, which makes their joints to tremble, and is to them as the very pangs of death.—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verses 1, 5, 6.—Prayer helps towards the increase and growth of grace, by drawing the habits of grace into exercise. Now, as exercise brings benefit to the body, so does prayer to the soul. Exercise doth help to digest or breathe forth those humours that clog the spirits. One that stirs little we see grow pursy, and is soon choked up with phlegm, which exercise clears the body of. Prayer is the saint's exercise-field, where his graces are breathed; it is as the wind to the air, it brightens the soul; as bellows to the fire, which clears the coal of those ashes that smother them. The Christian, while in this world, lives in an unwholesome climate; one while, the delights of it deaden and dull his love of Christ; another while, the trouble he meets in it damps his faith on the promise. How now should the Christian get out of these distempers, had he not a throne of grace to resort to, where if once his soul be in a melting frame, he (like one laid in a kindly sweat), soon breathes out the malignity of his disease, and comes ino his right temper again? How often do we find the holy prophet, when he first kneels down to pray, full of fears and doubts, who, before he and the duty part, grows into a sweet familiarity with God, and repose in his own spirit! (Psalm xiii. 1) He begins his prayer as if he thought God would never give him a kind look more: "*How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?*" But by that time he had exercised himself a little in duty, his distemper wears off, the mists scatter, and his faith breaks out as the sun in its strength, verses 5, 6: "*I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord.*" Thus his faith lays the cloth, expecting a feast ere long to be set on: he that now questioned whether he should ever hear good news from heaven, is so strong in faith as to make himself merry with the hopes of that mercy which he is assured will come at last. Abraham began with fifty, but his faith got ground on God every step till he brought down the price of their lives to ten.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 1, 6.—Whatever discouragements thou meetest with in thine attendance on God in ordinances, be like the English jet, fired by water, and not like our ordinary fires, quenched by it; let them add to, not diminish, thy resolution and courage; let not one repulse beat thee off; be violent, give a second storm to the kingdom of heaven. Parents sometimes hide themselves to make their children continue seeking. He that would not at first open his mouth, nor vouchsafe the woman of Canaan a word, doth, upon her continued and fervent petitions, at last open his hand and give her whatsoever she asks: "O woman, be it unto thee as thou wilt." Continued importunity is undeniable oratory. And truly, if after all thy pains thou findest Jesus Christ, will it not make amends for thy long patience? Men that venture often at a lottery, though they take blanks twenty times, if afterwards

they get a golden bason and ewer, it will make them abundant satisfaction. Suppose thou shouldst continue knocking twenty, nay, forty years, yet if at last, though but one hour before thou diest thy heart be opened to Christ, and he be received into thy soul, and when thou diest heaven be opened to thee, and thy soul received into it, will it not infinitely requite thee for all thy labour? Oh, think of it, and resolve never to be dumb while God is deaf, never to leave off prayer till God return a gracious answer. And for thy comfort, know that he who began his Psalm with, "*How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?*" comes to conclude it with, "*I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.*"—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 2.—"*How long?*" There are many situations of the believer in this life in which the words of this Psalm may be a consolation, and help to revive sinking faith. A certain man lay at the pool of Bethesda, who had an infirmity thirty and eight years. John v. 5. A woman had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, before she was "loosed." Luke xiii. 11. Lazarus all his life long laboured under disease and poverty, till he was released by death and transferred to Abraham's bosom. Luke xvi. 20—22. Let every one, then, who may be tempted to use the complaints of this Psalm, assure his heart that God does not forget his people, help will come at last, and, in the meantime, all things shall work together for good to them that love him.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 2.—"*How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?*" There is such a thing as to pore on our guilt and wretchedness, to the overlooking of our highest mercies. Though it be proper to know our own hearts, for the purposes of conviction, yet, if we expect consolation from this quarter, we shall find ourselves sadly disappointed. Such, for a time, appears to have been the case of David. He seems to have been in great distress; and as is common in such cases, his thoughts turned inward, casting in his mind what he should do, and what would be the end of things. While thus exercised, he had *sorrow in his heart daily:* but, betaking himself to God for relief, he succeeded, *trusting in his mercy, his heart rejoiced in his salvation.* There are many persons, who, when in trouble, imitate David in the former part of this experience: I wish we may imitate him in the latter.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verses 2, 4.—"*How shall mine enemy be exalted over me?*" 'Tis a great relief to the miserable and afflicted, to be pitied by others. It is some relief when others, though they cannot help us, yet seem to be truly concerned for the sadness of our case; when by the kindness of their words and of their actions they do a little smooth the wounds they cannot heal; but 'tis an unspeakable addition to the cross, when a man is brought low under the sense of God's displeasure, to have men to mock at his calamity, or to revile him, or to speak roughly; this does inflame and exasperate the wound that was big enough before; and it is a hard thing when one has a dreadful sound in his ears to have every friend to become a son of thunder. It is a small matter for people that are at ease, to deal severely with such as are afflicted, but they little know how their severe speeches and their angry words pierce them to the very soul. 'Tis easy to blame others for complaining, but if such had felt but for a little while what it is to be under the fear of God's anger, they would find that they could not but complain. It cannot but make any person restless and uneasy when he apprehends that God is his enemy. It is no wonder if he makes every one that he sees, and every place that he is in, a witness of his grief; but now it is a comfort in our temptations and in our fears, that we have so compassionate a friend as Christ is to whom we may repair, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15.—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verse 3.—"*Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.*" In time of sickness and grief, the "eyes" are dull and heavy; and they grow more and more so as death approaches, which closes them in darkness. On the other hand, health and joy render the organs of vision bright and sparkling, seeming, as it were, to impart "light" to them from within. The words, therefore, may be fitly applied to a recovery of the body natural, and thence, of the body politic, from their respective maladies. Nor do they less significantly describe the restoration of the soul to a state of spiritual health and holy joy, which will manifest themselves in like manner,

by " the eyes of the understanding being enlightened ; " and in this case, the soul is saved from the sleep of sin, as the body is in the other, from the sleep of death.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—Why dost *thou hide thy face?* happily thou wilt say, None can see thy face and live. Ah, Lord, let me die, that I may see thee ; let me see thee, that I may die : I would not live, but die ; that I may see Christ, I desire death ; that I may live with Christ, I despise life.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—" *How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?* " Oh, excellent hiding, which is become my perfection ! My God, thou hidest thy treasure to kindle my desire ! Thou hidest thy pearl, to inflame the seeker ; thou delayest to give, that thou mayest teach me to importune ; seemest not to hear, to make me persevere.—*John Anselm,* 1034—1109.

Verse 4.—

Ah ! can you bear contempt ; the venom'd tongue
Of those whom ruin pleases, the keen sneer,
The lewd reproaches of the rascal herd ;
Who for the selfsame actions, if successful,
Would be as grossly lavish in your praise ?
To sum up all in one—can you support
The scornful glances, the malignant joy,
Or more detested pity of a rival—
Of a triumphant rival ?

James Thomson, 1700—1748.

Verse 4.—" *And those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved* "—compose comedies out of my tragedies.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—" *I have trusted in thy mercy ; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.*" Faith rejoiceth in tribulations, and triumpheth before the victory. The patient is glad when he feels his physic to work, though it make him sick for the time because he hopes it will procure health. We rejoice in afflictions, not that they are joyous for the present, but because they shall work for our good. As faith rejoiceth, so it triumpheth in assurance of good success ; for it seeth not according to outward appearance, but when all means fail, it keepeth God in sight, and beholdeth him present for our succour.—*John Ball.*

Verse 5.—" *I have trusted in thy mercy ; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.*" Though passion possess our bodies, let " patience possess our souls." The law of our profession binds us to a warfare ; *patiendo vincimus,* our troubles shall end, our victory is eternal. Here David's triumph (Psalm xviii. 38—40), " I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise ; they are fallen under my feet. Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the neck of mine enemies," etc. They have wounds for their wounds ; and the treaders down of the poor are trodden down by the poor. The Lord will subdue those to us that would have subdued us to themselves ; and though for a short time they rode over our heads, yet now at last we shall everlastingly tread upon their necks. Lo, then, the reward of humble patience and confident hope. *Speramus et superamus.* Deut. xxxii. 31. " Our God is not as their God, even our enemies being judges." Psalm xx. 7. " Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses." But no chariot hath strength to oppose, nor horse swiftness to escape, when God pursues. Verse 8. " They are brought down and fallen ; we are risen and stand upright." Their trust hath deceived them ; down they fall, and never to rise. Our God hath helped us ; we are risen, not for a breathing space, but to stand upright for ever.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 5.—None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those that live by faith.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—Wherefore I say again, " Live by faith ; " again I say, always live by it, rejoice through faith in the Lord. I dare boldly say it is thy fault and neglect of its exercise if thou suffer either thy own melancholy humour or Satan to interrupt thy mirth and spiritual alacrity, and to detain thee in dumps and pensiveness at any time. What if thou beest of a sad constitution ? of a dark complexion ? Is not faith able to rectify nature ? Is it not stronger than any hellebore ? Doth not an experienced divine and physician worthily prefer one dram of it before all the drugs in the apothecary's shop for this effect ? Hath it not sovereign virtue in it, to excerebrate all cares, expectorate all fears and griefs, evacuate the mind

of all ill thoughts and passions, to exhilarate the whole man? But what good doth it to any to have a cordial by him if he use it not? To wear a sword, soldier-like, by his side, and not to draw it forth in an assault? When a dump overtakes thee, if thou wouldst say to thy soul in a word or two, "Soul, why art thou disquieted? know and consider in whom thou believest," would it not presently return to its rest again? Would not the Master rebuke the winds and storms, and calm thy troubled mind presently? Hath not every man something or other he useth to put away dumps, to drive away the evil spirit, as David with his harp? Some with merry company, some with a cup of sack, most with a pipe of tobacco, without which they cannot ride or go. If they miss it a day together they are troubled with rheums, dulness of spirits. They that live in fens and ill airs dare not stir out without a morning draught of some strong liquor. Poor, silly, smoky helps, in comparison with the least taste (but for dishonouring faith I would say whiff) or draught of faith.—*Samuel Ward*, 1577—1653.

Verse 6.—"*I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.*" Faith keeps the soul from sinking under heavy trials, by bringing in former experiences of the power, mercy, and faithfulness of God to the afflicted soul. Hereby was the Psalmist supported in distress. Oh, saith faith, remember what God hath done both for thy outward and inward man: he hath not only delivered thy body when in trouble, but he hath done great things for thy soul; he hath brought thee out of a state of black nature, entered into a covenant relation with thee, made his goodness pass before thee; he hath helped thee to pray, and many times hath heard thy prayers and thy tears. Hath he not formerly brought thee out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and put a new song in thy mouth, and made thee to resolve never to give way to such unbelieving thoughts and fears again? and how unbecoming is it for thee now to sink in trouble?—*John Willison*, 1680—1750.

Verse 6.—"*I will sing unto the Lord.*" Mr. John Philpot having lain for some time in the bishop of London's coal-house, the bishop sent for him, and amongst other questions, asked him why they were so merry in prison? singing (as the prophet speaks) *Exultantes in rebus pessimis*, rejoicing in your naughtiness, whereas you should rather lament and be sorry. Mr. Philpot answered, "My lord, the mirth which we make is but in singing certain Psalms, as we are commanded by Paul to rejoice in the Lord, singing together hymns and Psalms, for we are in a dark, comfortless place, and therefore, we thus solace ourselves. I trust, therefore, your lordship will not be angry, seeing the apostle saith, 'If any be of an upright heart, let him sing Psalms;' and we, to declare that we are of an upright mind to God, though we are in misery, yet refresh ourselves with such singing." After some other discourse, saith he, "I was carried back to my lord's coal-house, where I, with my six fellow prisoners, do rouze together in the straw, as cheerfully (I thank God) as others do in their beds of down." And in a letter to a friend, he thus writes: "Commend me to Mr. Elsing and his wife, and thank them for providing me some ease in my prison; and tell them that though my lord's coal-house be very black, yet it is more to be desired of the faithful than the Queen's palace. The world wonders how we can be so merry under such extreme miseries; but our God is omnipotent, who turns misery into felicity. Believe me, there is no such joy in the world, as the people of God have under the cross of Christ: I speak by experience, and therefore believe me, and fear nothing that the world can do unto you, for when they imprison our bodies, they set our souls at liberty to converse with God; when they cast us down, they lift us up; when they kill us, then do they send us to everlasting life. What greater glory can there be than to be made conformable to our Head, Christ? And this is done by affliction. O good God, what am I, upon whom thou shouldst bestow so great a mercy? This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the way, though it be narrow, which is full of the peace of God, and leadeth to eternal bliss. Oh, how my heart leapeth for joy that I am so near the apprehension thereof! God forgive me my unthankfulness and unworthiness of so great glory. I have so much joy, that though I be in a place of darkness and mourning, yet I cannot lament; but both night and day am so full of joy, as I never was so merry before; the Lord's name be praised for ever. Our enemies do fret, fume, and gnash their teeth at it. O pray instantly that this joy may never be taken from us; for it passeth all the delights in this world. This is the peace of God that passeth all understanding. This peace, the

more his chosen be afflicted, the more they feel it, and therefore cannot faint neither for fire nor water."—*Samuel Clarke's "Mirrour,"* 1671.

Verse 6.—"*I will sing unto the Lord.*" How far different is the end of this Psalm from the beginning!—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*I will sing unto the Lord,*" etc. I never knew what it was for God to stand by me at all turns, and at every offer of Satan to afflict me, etc., as I have found him since I came in hither; for look how fears have presented themselves, so have supports and encouragements; yet, when I have started, even as it were at nothing else but my shadow, yet God, as being very tender of me, hath not suffered me to be molested, but would with one Scripture or another, strengthen me against all; insomuch that I have often said, *Were it lawful, I could pray for greater trouble, for the greater comfort's sake.* Eccles. vii. 14; 2 Cor. i. 5.—*John Bunyan,* 1628—1688.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The apparent length of sorrow, only apparent. Contrast with days of joy, with eternal misery and eternal joy. Impatience, and other evil passions, cause the seeming length. Means of shortening, by refusing to forestall, or to repine afterwards.

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—Hiding of the divine face. Why at all? Why from me? Why so long?

Verse 2.—Advice to the dejected, or the soul directed to look out of itself for consolation.—*A. Fuller.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—*Self-torture,* its cause, curse, crime, and cure.

Verse 2.—"*Having sorrow in my heart daily.*" I. The cause of daily sorrow. Great enemy, unbelief, sin, trial, loss of Jesus' presence, sympathy with others, mourning for human ruin. II. The necessity of daily sorrow. Purge corruptions, excite graces, raise desires heavenward. III. The cure of daily sorrow. Good food from God's table, old wine of promises, walks with Jesus, exercise in good works, avoidance of everything unhealthy.—*B. Davis.*

Verse 2.—(*second clause*).—Time anticipated when defeat shall be turned into victory.

Verse 3.—By accommodating the text to the believer. I. True character of Satan, "enemy." II. Remarkable fact that his enemy is exalted over us. III. Pressing enquiry, "How long?"—*B. Davis.*

Verse 3.—"*Lighten mine eyes.*" A prayer fit for (1) Every benighted sinner. (2) Every seeker of salvation. (3) Every learner in Christ's school. (4) Every tried believer. (5) Every dying saint.—*B. Davis.*

Verse 4.—Noteth the nature of the wicked two ways; namely, the more they prevail the more insolent they are; they wonderfully exult over those that are afflicted.—*T. Wilcocks.*

Verse 5.—Experience and perseverance. "I have," "my heart shall."

Verse 6.—The bountiful giver and the hearty singer.

The whole Psalm would make a good subject, showing the stages from mourning to rejoicing, dwelling especially upon the turning point, prayer. There are two verses for each, mourning, praying, rejoicing.—*A. G. Brown.*

PSALM XIV.

TITLE.—*This admirable ode is simply headed, "* To the Chief Musician by David." *The dedication to the Chief Musician stands at the head of fifty-three of the Psalms, and clearly indicates that such Psalms were intended, not merely for the private use of believers, but to be sung in the great assemblies by the appointed choir at whose head was the overseer, or superintendent, called in our version, " the Chief Musician," and by Ainsworth, " the master of the Music." Several of these Psalms have little or no praise in them, and were not addressed directly to the Most High, and yet were to be sung in public worship ; which is a clear indication that the theory of Augustine lately revived by certain hymn-book makers, that nothing but praise should be sung, is far more plausible than Scriptural. Not only did the ancient Church chant hallowed doctrine and offer prayer amid her spiritual songs, but even the wailing notes of complaint were put into her mouth by the sweet singer of Israel who was inspired of God. Some persons grasp at any nicety which has a gloss of apparent correctness upon it, and are pleased with being more fancifully precise than others ; nevertheless it will ever be the way of plain men, not only to magnify the Lord in sacred canticles, but also, according to Paul's precept, to teach and admonish one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord.*

*As no distinguishing title is given to this Psalm, we would suggest as an assistance to the memory, the heading—*CONCERNING PRATICAL ATHEISM. *The many conjectures as to the occasion upon which it was written are so completely without foundation, that it would be a waste of time to mention them at length. The apostle Paul, in Romans* iii., *has shown incidentally that the drift of the inspired writer is to show that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin ; there was, therefore, no reason for fixing upon any particular historical occasion, when all history reeks with terrible evidence of human corruption. With instructive alterations, David has given us in Psalm* liii. *a second edition of this humiliating psalm, being moved of the Holy Ghost thus doubly to declare a truth which is ever distasteful to carnal minds.*

DIVISION.—*The world's foolish creed (verse* 1*); its practical influence in corrupting morals,* 1, 2, 3. *The persecuting tendencies of sinners,* 4 ; *their alarms,* 5 ; *their ridicule of the godly,* 6 ; *and a prayer for the manifestation of the Lord to his people's joy.*

EXPOSITION.

THE fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good.

" *The fool.*" The Atheist is *the* fool pre-eminently, and *a* fool universally. He would not deny God if he were not a fool by nature, and having denied God it is no marvel that he becomes a fool in practice. Sin is always folly, and as it is the height of sin to attack the very existence of the Most High, so is it also the greatest imaginable folly. To say there is no God is to belie the plainest evidence, which is obstinacy ; to oppose the common consent of mankind, which is stupidity ; to stifle consciousness, which is madness. If the sinner could by his atheism destroy the God whom he hates there were some sense, although much wickedness, in his infidelity ; but as denying the existence of fire does not prevent its burning a man who is in it, so doubting the existence of God will not stop the Judge of all the earth from destroying the rebel who breaks his laws ; nay, this atheism is a crime which much provokes heaven, and will bring down terrible vengeance on the fool who indulges it. The proverb says, "A fool's tongue cuts his own throat," and in this instance it kills both soul and body for ever : would to God the mischief stopped even there, but alas ! one fool makes hundreds, and a noisy blasphemer spreads his horrible doctrines as lepers spread the plague. Ainsworth, in his " Annotations," tells us that the word here used is *Nabal*, which has the signification of fading, dying, or falling away, as a withered leaf or flower ; it is a title given to the foolish man as having lost the juice and sap of wisdom, reason, honesty, and godliness. Trapp hits the mark when he calls him " that sapless fellow, that carcase of a man, that walking sepulchre of himself, in whom all religion and right reason is withered

and wasted, dried up and decayed." Some translate it *the apostate*, and others *the wretch*. With what earnestness should we shun the appearance of doubt as to the presence, activity, power and love of God, for all such mistrust is of the nature of folly, and who among us would wish to be ranked with the fool in the text? Yet let us never forget that all unregenerate men are more or less such fools.

The fool "*hath said in his heart.*" May a man with his mouth profess to believe, and yet in heart say the reverse? Had he hardly become audacious enough to utter his folly with his tongue? Did the Lord look upon his thoughts as being in the nature of words to him though not to man? Is this where man first becomes an unbeliever?—in his heart, not in his head? And when he talks atheistically, is it a foolish heart speaking and endeavouring to clamour down the voice of conscience? We think so. If the affections were set upon truth and righteousness, the understanding would have no difficulty in settling the question of a present personal Deity, but as the heart dislikes the good and the right, it is no wonder that it desires to be rid of that Elohim, who is the great moral Governor, the Patron of rectitude and the Punisher of iniquity. While men's hearts remain what they are, we must not be surprised at the prevalence of scepticism; a corrupt tree will bring forth corrupt fruit. "Every man," says Dickson, "so long as he lieth unrenewed and unreconciled to God is nothing in effect but a madman." What wonder then if he raves? Such fools as those we are now dealing with are common to all time, and all countries; they grow without watering, and are found all the world over. The spread of mere intellectual enlightenment will not diminish their number, for since it is an affair of the heart, this folly and great learning will often dwell together. To answer sceptical cavillings will be labour lost until grace enters to make the mind willing to believe; fools can raise more objections in an hour than wise men can answer in seven years, indeed it is their mirth to set stools for wise men to stumble over. Let the preacher aim at the heart, and preach the all-conquering love of Jesus, and he will by God's grace win more doubters to the faith of the gospel than any hundred of the best reasoners who only direct their arguments to the head.

"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,*" or "*no God.*" So monstrous is the assertation, that the man hardly dared to put it as a positive statement, but went very near to doing so. Calvin seems to regard this saying "no God," as hardly amounting to a syllogism, scarcely reaching to a positive, dogmatical declaration; but Dr. Alexander clearly shows that it does. It is not merely the wish of the sinner's corrupt nature, and the hope of his rebellious heart, but he manages after a fashion to bring himself to assert it, and at certain seasons he thinks that he believes it. It is a solemn reflection that some who worship God with their lips may in their hearts be saying, "no God." It is worthy of observation that he does not say there is no Jehovah, but there is no Elohim; Deity in the abstract is not so much the object of attack, as the covenant, personal, ruling and governing presence of God in the world. God as ruler, lawgiver, worker, Saviour, is the butt at which the arrows of human wrath are shot. How impotent the malice! How mad the rage which raves and foams against him in whom we live and move and have our being! How horrible the insanity which leads a man who owes his all to God to cry out, "*No God*"! How terrible the depravity which makes the whole race adopt this as their hearts' desire, "no God"!

"*They are corrupt.*" This refers to all men, and we have the warrant of the Holy Ghost for so saying; see the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Where there is enmity to God, there is deep, inward depravity of mind. The words are rendered by eminent critics in an active sense, "they have done corruptly:" this may serve to remind us that sin is not only in our nature passively as the source of evil, but we ourselves actively fan the flame and corrupt ourselves, making that blacker still which was black as darkness itself already. We rivet our own chains by habit and continuance.

"*They have done abominable works.*" When men begin with renouncing the Most High God, who shall tell where they will end? When the Master's eyes are put out, what will not the servants do? Observe the state of the world before the flood, as pourtrayed in Genesis vi. 12, and remember that human nature is unchanged. He who would see a terrible photograph of the world without God must read that most painful of all inspired Scriptures, the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Learned Hindoos have confessed that the description is literally correct in Hindostan at the present moment; and were it not for the restraining grace of God, it would be so in England. Alas! it is even here but too correct a

picture of things which are done of men in secret. Things loathsome to God and man are sweet to some palates.

"*There is none that doeth good.*" Sins of omission must abound where transgressions are rife. Those who do the things which they ought not to have done, are sure to leave undone those things which they ought to have done. What a picture of our race is this! Save only where grace reigns, there is none that doeth good; humanity, fallen and debased, is a desert without an oasis, a night without a star, a dunghill without a jewel, a hell without a bottom.

2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God.

3 They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one

"*The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men.*" As from a watch-tower, or other elevated place of observation, the Lord is represented as gazing intently upon men. He will not punish blindly, nor like a tyrant command an indiscriminate massacre because a rumour of rebellion has come up to his ears. What condescending interest and impartial justice are here imagined! The case of Sodom, visited before it was overthrown, illustrates the careful manner in which Divine Justice beholds the sin before it avenges it, and searches out the righteous that they perish not with the guilty. Behold then the eyes of Omniscience ransacking the globe, and prying among every people and nation, "*to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.*" He who is looking down knows the good, is quick to discern it, would be delighted to find it; but as he views all the unregenerate children of men his search is fruitless, for of all the race of Adam, no unrenewed soul is other than an enemy to God and goodness. The objects of the Lord's search are not wealthy men, great men, or learned men; these, with all they can offer, cannot meet the demands of the great Governor: at the same time, he is not looking for superlative eminence in virtue, he seeks for *any that understand* themselves, their state, their duty, their destiny, their happiness; he looks for any that *seek God*, who, if there be a God, are willing and anxious to find him out. Surely this is not too great a matter to expect; for if men have not yet known God, if they have any right understanding, they will seek him. Alas! even this low degree of good is not to be found even by him who sees all things; but men love the hideous negation of "No God," and with their backs to their Creator, who is the sun of their life, they journey into the dreary region of unbelief and alienation, which is a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death without any order and where the light is as darkness.

"*They are all gone aside.*" Without exception, all men have apostatized from the Lord their Maker, from his laws, and from the eternal principles of right. Like stubborn heifers they have sturdily refused to receive the yoke, like errant sheep they have found a gap and left the right field. The original speaks of the race as a whole, as a totality; and humanity as a whole has become depraved in heart and defiled in life. "*They have altogether become filthy;*" as a whole they are spoiled and soured like corrupt leaven, or, as some put it, they have become putrid and even stinking. The only reason why we do not more clearly see this foulness is because we are accustomed to it, just as those who work daily among offensive odours at last cease to smell them. The miller does not observe the noise of his own mill, and we are slow to discover our own ruin and depravity. But are there no special cases, are all men sinful? "Yes," says the Psalmist, in a manner not to be mistaken, "they are." He has put it positively, he repeats it negatively, "*There is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" The Hebrew phrase is an utter denial concerning any mere man that he of himself doeth good. What can be more sweeping? This is the verdict of the all-seeing Jehovah, who cannot exaggerate or mistake. As if no hope of finding a solitary specimen of a good man among the unrenewed human family might be harboured for an instant. The Holy Spirit *is not* content with saying all and altogether, but adds the crushing threefold negative, "*none, no, not one.*" What say the opponents to the doctrine of natural depravity to this? Rather what do we *feel* concerning it? Do we not confess that we by nature are corrupt, and do we not bless the sovereign grace which has renewed us in the spirit of our minds, that sin may no more have dominion over us, but that grace may rule and reign?

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

Hatred of God and corruptness of life are the motive forces which produce persecution. Men who having no saving knowledge of divine things, enslave themselves to become workers of iniquity, have no heart to cry to the Lord for deliverance, but seek to amuse themselves with devouring the poor and despised people of God. It is hard bondage to be a "*worker of iniquity;*" a worker at the galleys, or in the mines of Siberia, is not more truly degraded and wretched; the toil is hard and the reward dreadful; those who have no knowledge choose such slavery, but those who are taught of God cry to be rescued from it. The same ignorance which keeps men bondsmen to evil, makes them hate the freeborn sons of God; hence they seek to eat them up "*as they eat bread,*"—daily, ravenously, as though it were an ordinary, usual, every-day matter to oppress the saints of God. As pikes in a pond eat up little fish, as eagles prey on smaller birds, as wolves rend the sheep of the pasture, so sinners naturally and as a matter of course persecute, malign, and mock the followers of the Lord Jesus. While thus preying, they forswear all praying, and in this act consistently, for how could they hope to be heard while their hands are full of blood?

5 There were they in great fear: for God *is* in the generation of the righteous.

Oppressors have it not all their own way, they have their fits of trembling and their appointed seasons of overthrow. *There*—where they denied God and hectored against his people; *there*—where they thought of peace and safety, they were made to quail. "*There were they*"—these very loud-mouthed, iron-handed, proud-hearted Nimrods and Herods, these heady, high-minded sinners—"*there were they in great fear.*" A panic terror seized them: "they feared a fear," as the Hebrew puts it; an undefinable, horrible, mysterious dread crept over them. The most hardened of men have their periods when conscience casts them into a cold sweat of alarm. As cowards are cruel, so all cruel men are at heart cowards. The ghost of past sin is a terrible spectre to haunt any man, and though unbelievers may boast as loudly as they will, a sound is in their ears which makes them ill at ease.

"*For God is in the generation of the righteous.*" This makes the company of godly men so irksome to the wicked because they perceive that God is with them. Shut their eyes as they may, they cannot but perceive the image of God in the character of his truly gracious people, nor can they fail to see that he works for their deliverance. Like Haman, they instinctively feel a trembling when they see God's Mordecais. Even though the saint may be in a mean position, mourning at the gate where the persecutor rejoices in state, the sinner feels the influence of the believer's true nobility and quails before it, for God is there. Let scoffers beware, for they persecute the Lord Jesus when they molest his people; the union is very close between God and his people, it amounts to a mysterious indwelling, for God is in the generation of the righteous.

6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD *is* his refuge.

Notwithstanding their real cowardice, the wicked put on the lion's skin and lord it over the Lord's poor ones. Though fools themselves, they mock at the truly wise as if the folly were on their side; but this is what might be expected, for how should brutish minds appreciate excellence, and how can those who have owl's eyes admire the sun? The special point and butt of their jest seems to be the confidence of the godly in their Lord. What can your God do for you now? Who is that God who can deliver out of our hand? Where is the reward of all your praying and beseeching? Taunting questions of this sort they thrust into the faces of weak but gracious souls, and tempt them to feel ashamed of their refuge. Let us not be laughed out of our confidence by them, let us scorn their scorning and defy their jeers; we shall need to wait but a little, and then the Lord our refuge will avenge his own elect and ease himself of his adversaries, who once made so light of him and of his people.

7 Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

Natural enough is this closing prayer, for what would so effectually convince atheists, overthrow persecutors, stay sin, and secure the godly, as the manifest appearance of Israel's great Salvation? The coming of Messiah was the desire of the godly in all ages, and though he has already come with a sin-offering to purge away iniquity, we look for him to come a second time, to come without a sin-offering unto salvation. O that these weary years would have an end! Why tarries he so long? He knows that sin abounds and that his people are down-trodden; why comes he not to the rescue? His glorious advent will restore his ancient people from literal captivity, and his spiritual seed from spiritual sorrow. Wrestling Jacob and prevailing Israel shall alike rejoice before him when he is revealed as their salvation. O that he were come! What happy, holy, halcyon, heavenly days should we then see! But let us not count him slack, for behold, he comes, he comes quickly! Blessed are all they that wait for him.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—There is a peculiar mark upon this Psalm, in that it is twice in the Book of Psalms. The fourteenth Psalm and the fifty-third Psalm are the same with the alteration of one or two expressions at most. And there is another mark put upon it, that the apostle transcribes a great part of it.—Rom. iii. 10—12.

It contains a description of a most deplorable state of things in the world—ay, in Israel; a most deplorable state, by reason of the general corruption that was befallen all sorts of men, in their principles, and in their practices, and in their opinions.

First, it was a time when there was a mighty prevalent *principle* of atheism got into the world, got among the great men of the world. Saith he, "That is their principle, they say in their hearts, 'There is no God.'" It is true, they did not absolutely profess it; but it was the principle whereby all their actings were regulated and which they conformed unto. "*The fool,*" saith he, "*hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" Not this or that particular man, but the fool—that is, those foolish men; for in the next word he tells you "*They are corrupt;*" and verse 3, "*They are all gone aside.*" "The fool" is taken indefinitely for the great company and society of foolish men, to intimate that whatsoever they were divided about else, they were all agreed in this. "They are all a company of atheists," saith he, "practical atheists."

Secondly, their *affections* were suitable to this principle, as all men's affections and actions are suitable to their principles. What are you to expect from men whose principle is, that there is no God? Why, saith he, for their affections, "They are corrupt;" which he expresseth again (verse 3), "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy." "All gone aside." The word in the original is, "They are all grown sour;" as drink, that hath been formerly of some use, but when grown vapid—lost all its spirits and life—it is an insipid thing, good for nothing. And, saith he, "*They are altogether become filthy*"—"become stinking," as the margin hath it. They have corrupt affections, that have left them no life, no savour; but stinking, corrupt lusts prevail in them universally. They say, "There is no God;" and they are filled with stinking, corrupt lusts.

Thirdly, if this be their principle and these their affections, let us look after their *actions*, to see if they be any better. But consider their actions. They be of two sorts:—1. How they act in the world, 2. How they act towards the people of God.

1. How do they act in the world? Why, consider that, as to their duties which they omit, and as to the wickednesses which they perform. What good do they do? Nay, saith he, "*None of them doeth good.*" Yea, some of them. "*No, not one.*" Saith he, verses 1, 3, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." If there was any one among them that did attend to what was really good and useful in the world, there was some hope. "No," saith he, "their principle is atheism, their affections are corrupt; and for good, there is not one of them doeth any good—they omit all duties."

What do they do for evil? Why saith he, "*They have done abominable works*"—"works." saith he, "not to be named, not to be spoken of—works which God abhors, which all good men abhor." "Abominable works," saith he, "such as the very light of nature would abhor;" and give me leave to use the expression of the Psalmist—"Stinking, filthy works." So he doth describe the state and condition of things under the reign of Saul, when he wrote this Psalm.

2. "If thus it be with them, and if thus it be with their own ways, yet they let the people of God alone; they will not add that to the rest of their sins." Nay, it is quite otherwise, saith he, "*They eat up my people as they eat bread.*" "Those workers of iniquity have no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD." What is the reason why he brings it in in that manner? Why could he not say, "They have no knowledge that do such abominable things;" but brings it in thus, "They have no knowledge who eat up my people as they eat bread"? "It is strange, that after all my dealings with them and declaration of my will, they should be so brutish as not to know this would be their ruin. Don't they know this will devour them, destroy them, and be called over again in a particular manner?" In the midst of all the sins, and greatest and highest provocations that are in the world, God lays a special weight upon the eating of his people. They may feed upon their own lusts what they will; but, "Have they no knowledge, that they eat up my people as they eat bread?"

There are very many things that might be observed from all this; but I aim to give but a few hints from the Psalm.

Well, what is the state of things now? You see what it was with them. How was it with the providence of God in reference unto them? Which is strange, and a man would scarce believe it in such a course as this is, he tells you (verse 5), notwithstanding all this, they were in great fear. "*There were they in great fear,*" saith he. May be so, for they saw some evil coming upon them. No, there was nothing but the hand of God in it; for in Psalm liii. 5, where these words are repeated, it is, "There were they in great fear, where no fear was"—no visible cause of fear; yet they were in great fear.

God by his providence seldom gives an absolute, universal security unto men in their height of sin, and oppression, and sensuality, and lusts; but he will secretly put them in fear where no fear is: and though there be nothing seen that should cause them to have any fear, they shall act like men at their wits' end with fear.

But whence should this fear arise? Saith he, it ariseth from hence, "*For God is in the generation of the righteous.*" Plainly they see their work doth not go on; their meat doth not digest with them; their bread doth not go well down. "They were eating and devouring my people, and when they came to devour them, they found God was among them (they could not digest their bread); and this put them in fear; quite surprised them." They came, and thought to have found them a sweet morsel: when engaged, God was there filling their mouth and teeth with gravel; and he began to break out the jawbone of the terrible ones when they came to feed upon them. Saith he, "God was there." (Verse 5.)

The Holy Ghost gives an account of the state of things that was between those two sorts of people he had described—between the fool and the people of God—them that were devouring, and them that had been utterly devoured, had not God been among them. Both were in fear—they that were to be devoured, and those that did devour. And they took several ways for their relief; and he showeth what those ways were, and what judgment they made upon the ways of one another. Saith he, "*Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge.*"

There are the persons spoken of—they are "the poor;" and that is those who are described in the verses foregoing, the people that were ready to be eaten up and devoured.

And there is the hope and refuge that these poor had in such a time as this, when all things were in fear; and that was "the LORD." The poor maketh the Lord his refuge.

And you may observe here, that as he did describe all the wicked as one man, "the fool," so he describes all his own people as one man, "the poor"—that is, the poor man: "Because the LORD is his refuge." He keeps it in the singular number. Whatsoever the people of God may differ in, they are all as one man in this business.

And there is the way whereby these poor make God their refuge. They do it by "counsel," saith he. It is not a thing they do by chance, but they look upon

it as their wisdom. They do it upon consideration, upon advice. It is a thing of great wisdom.

Well, what thoughts have the others concerning this acting of theirs? The poor make God their refuge; and they do it by counsel. What judgment, now, doth the world make of this counsel of theirs? Why, they "shame it;" that is, they cast shame upon it, contemn it as a very foolish thing, to make the Lord their refuge. "Truly, if they could make this or that great man their refuge, it were something; but to make the Lord their refuge, this is the foolishest thing in the world," say they. To shame men's counsel, to despise their counsel as foolish, is as great contempt as they can lay upon them.

Here you see the state of things as they are represented in this Psalm, and spread before the Lord; which being laid down, the Psalmist showeth what our duty is upon such a state of things—what is the duty of the people of God, things being thus stated. Saith he, "Their way is to go to prayer:" verse 7, "*O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.*" If things are thus stated, then cry, then pray, "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion," etc. There shall a revenue of praise come to God out of Zion, to the rejoicing of his people.—*John Owen.*

Verse 1.—"*The fool.*" That sapless fellow, that carcase of a man, that walking sepulchre of himself, in whom all religion and right reason is withered and wasted, dried up and decayed. That apostate in whom natural principles are extinct, and from whom God is departed, as when the prince is departed, hangings are taken down. That mere animal that hath no more than a reasonable soul, and for little other purpose than as salt, to keep his body from putrefying. That wicked man hereafter described, that studieth atheism.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*The fool,*" etc. The world we live in is a world of fools. The far greater part of mankind act a part entirely irrational. So great is their infatuation, that they prefer time to eternity, momentary enjoyments to those that shall never have an end, and listen to the testimony of Satan in preference to that of God. Of all folly, that is the greatest, which relates to eternal objects, because it is the most fatal and when persisted in through life, entirely remediless. A mistake in the management of temporal concerns may be afterwards rectified. At any rate, it is comparatively of little importance. But an error in spiritual and eternal matters, as it is in itself of the greatest moment, if carried through life, can never be remedied; because after death there is no redemption. The greatest folly that any creature is capable of, is that of denying or entertaining unjust apprehensions of the being and perfections of the great Creator. Therefore, in a way of eminence, the appellation of *fool* is given by the Spirit of God, to him who is chargeable with this guilt. "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*"—*John Jamieson, M.A.*, 1789.

Verse 1.—"*The fool,*" a term in Scripture signifying a wicked man, used also by the heathen philosophers to signify a vicious person, נָבָל as coming from נָבַל signifies the extinction of life in men, animals, and plants; so the word נָבַל is taken, Isaiah xl. 7, נָבַל צִיץ "the flower fadeth" (Isaiah xxviii. 1), a plant that hath lost all that juice that made it lovely and useful. So a fool is one that hath lost his wisdom and right notion of God and divine things, which were communicated to man by creation; one dead in sin, yet one not so much void of rational faculties, as of grace in those faculties; not one that wants reason, but abuses his reason.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 1.—"*The fool hath said,*" etc. This folly is bound up in every heart. It is bound, but it is not tongue-tied; it speaks blasphemous things against God, *it says* there is "*no God.*" There is a difference indeed in the language: gross sins speak this louder, there are crying sins; but though less sins speak it not so loud they whisper it. But the Lord can hear the language of the heart, the whisperings of its motions, as plainly as we hear one another in our ordinary discourse. Oh, how heinous is the least sin, which is so injurious to the very being of the great God! *David Clarkson.*

Verse 1.—"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" If you will turn over some few leaves as far as the fifty-third Psalm, you shall not only find my text, but this whole Psalm, without any alteration, save only in the fifth verse, and that not at all in the sense neither. What shall we say? Took the Holy Spirit of God such especial particular notice of the sayings and deeds of a *fool*, that one expression of them would not serve the turn? Or, does the babbling and madness of a fool

so much concern us, as that we need to have them urged upon us once and again, and a third time in the third of the Romans? Surely not any one of us present here, is this fool! Nay, if any one of us could but tell where to find such a fool as this, that would offer to say, though in his heart, "*There is no God*," he should not rest in quiet, he should soon perceive we were not of his faction, We that are able to tell David an article or two of faith more than ever he was acquainted with! Nay, more; can we with any imaginable ground of reason be supposed liable to any suspicion of atheism, that are able to read to David a lecture out of his own Psalms, and explain the meaning of his own prophecies much clearer than himself which held the pen to the Holy Spirit of God? Though we cannot deny but that in other things there may be found some spice of folly and imperfection in us, but it cannot be imagined that we, who are almost cloyed with the heavenly manna of God's word, that can instruct our teachers, and are able to maintain opinions and tenets, the scruples whereof not both the universities in this land, nor the whole clergy are able to resolve, that it should be possible for us ever to come to that perfection and excellency of folly and madness, as to entertain thought that *there is no God:* nay, we are not so uncharitable as to charge a Turk or an infidel with such a horrible imputation as this.

Beloved Christians, be not wise in your own conceits: if you will seriously examine the third of Romans (which I mentioned before), you shall find that Paul, out of this Psalm, and the like words of Isaiah, doth conclude the whole posterity of Adam (Christ only excepted), under sin and the curse of God; which inference of his were weak and inconcluding, unless every man of his own nature were such a one as the prophet here describes; and the same apostle in another place expresses, "*Even altogether without God in the world*," *i.e.*, not maintaining it as an opinion which they would undertake by force of argument to confirm, That there is no God: for we read not of above three or four among the heathens that were of any fashion, which went thus far; but such as though in their discourse and serious thoughts they do not question a deity, but would abhor any man that would not liberally allow unto God all his glorious attributes, yet in their hearts and affections they deny him; they live as if there was no God, having no respect at all to him in all their projects and therefore, indeed and in God's esteem, become formally, and in strict propriety of speech very atheists.—*William Chillingworth*, 1602—1643.

Verse 1.—"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" Why do men resist God's authority, against which they cannot dispute? and disobey his commands, unto which they cannot devise to frame an exception? What but the spirit of enmity, can make them regret "so easy a yoke," reject so "light a burden," shun and fly off from so peaceful and pleasant paths? yea, and take ways that so manifestly "take hold of hell, and lead down to the chambers of death," rather choosing to perish than obey? Is not this the very height of enmity? What further proof would we seek of a disaffected and implacable heart? Yet to all this we may cast in that fearful addition, their saying in their heart, "*No God;*" as much as to say, "O that there were none!" This is enmity not only to the highest pitch of *wickedness*, to wish their common parent extinct, the author of their being, but even unto *madness* itself. For in the forgetful heat of this transport, it is not thought on that they wish the most absolute impossibility; and that, if it were possible, they wish, with his, the extinction of their own and of all being; and that the sense of their hearts, put into words, would amount to no less than a direful and most horrid execration and curse upon God and the whole creation of God at once! As if, by the blasphemy of their poisonous breath, they would wither all nature, blast the whole universe of being, and make it fade, languish, and droop into nothing. This is to set their mouth against heaven and earth, themselves, and all things at once, as if they thought their feeble breath should overpower the omnipotent Word, shake and shiver the adamantine pillars of heaven and earth, and the Almighty *fiat* be defeated by their *nay*, striking at the root of all! So fitly is it said "The *fool* hath in his heart" muttered thus. Nor are there few such fools; but this is plainly given us as the common character of apostate man, the whole revolted race, of whom it is said in very general terms, "They are all gone back, there is none that doeth good." This is their sense, one and all, that is, comparatively; and the true state of the case being laid before them, it is more their temper and sense to say, "No God," than to repent, "and turn to him." What mad enmity is this! Nor can we devise into what else to resolve it.—*John Howe.*

Verse 1.—"*The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.*" He that shall deny

there is a God, sins with a very high hand against the light of nature; for every creature, yea, the least gnat and fly, and the meanest worm that crawls upon the ground will confute and confound that man that disputes whether there be a God or no. The name of God is written in such full, fair and shining characters upon the whole creation, that all men may run and read that there is a God. The notion of a deity is so strongly and deeply impressed upon the tables of all men's hearts, that to deny a God is to quench the very principles of common nature; yea, it is formally *deicidium*, a killing of God, as much as in the creature lies. There are none of these atheists in hell, for the devils believe and tremble. James ii. 19. The Greek word φρίσσουσι, that is here used, signifies properly the roaring of the sea; it implies such an extreme fear, as causeth not only trembling, but also a roaring and screeching out. Mark vi. 49; Acts xvi. 29. The devils believe and acknowledge four articles of our faith. Matt. viii. 29. (1.) They acknowledge God; (2.) Christ; (3) The day of judgment; (4.) That they shall be tormented then; so that he that doth not believe that there is a God, is more vile than a devil. To deny there is a God, is a sort of atheism that is not to be found in hell.

"On earth are atheists many,
In hell there is not any."

Augustine, speaking of atheists saith, "That albeit there be some who think, or would persuade themselves, that there is no God, yet the most vile and desperate wretch that ever lived would not say, there was no God." Seneca hath a remarkable speech, *Mentiuntur qui dicunt se non sentire Deum esse: nam etsi tibi affirmant interdiù noctu tamen dubitant.* They lie, saith he, who say they perceive not there is a God; for although they affirm it to thee in the daytime, yet by night they doubt of it. Further, saith the same author, I have heard of some that deny that there was a God; yet never knew the man, but when he was sick he would seek unto God for help; therefore they do but lie that say there is no God; they sin against the light of their own consciences; they who most studiously go about to deny God, yet cannot do it but some check of conscience will fly in their faces. Tully would say that there was never any nation under heaven so barbarous as to deny that there was a God.—*T. Brooks.*

Verse 1.—"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" Popery has not won to itself so great wits as atheism; it is the superfluity of wit that makes atheists. These will not be beaten down with impertinent arguments; disordered hail-shot of Scriptures will never scare them; they must be convinced and beaten by their own weapons. "Hast thou appealed to Cæsar? To Cæsar thou shalt go." Have they appealed to reason? Let us bring reason to them, that we may bring them to reason. We need not fear the want of weapons in that armoury, but our own ignorance and want of skill to use them. There is enough even in philosophy to convince atheism, and make them confess, "We are foiled with our own weapons;" for with all their wit atheists are fools.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 1.—As there is no wound more mortal than that which plucketh forth man's heart or soul; so, likewise, is there no person or pestilence of greater force suddenly in men to kill all faith, hope, and charity, with the fear of God, and consequently to cast them headlong into the pit of hell, than to deny the principle and foundation of all religion—namely, that there is a God.—*Robert Cawdray's "Treasury or Storehouse of Similes,"* 1609.

Verse 1.—"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*"—Who in the world is a verier fool, a more ignorant, wretched person, than he that is an atheist? A man may better believe there is no such man as himself, and that he is not in being, than that there is no God; for himself can cease to be, and once was not, and shall be changed from what he is, and in very many periods of his life knows not that he is; and so it is every night with him when he sleeps; but none of these can happen to God; and if he knows it not, he is a fool. Can anything in this world be more foolish than to think that all this rare fabric of heaven and earth can come by chance, when all the skill of art is not able to make an oyster? To see rare effects, and no cause; an excellent government and no prince; a motion without an immovable; a circle without a centre; a time without eternity; a second without a first; a thing that begins not from itself, and therefore, not to perceive there is something from whence it does not begin, which must be without beginning; these things are so against philosophy and natural reason, that he must needs be a beast in his understanding that does not assent to them; this is the atheist: "*The*

fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." That is his character ; the thing framed, says that nothing framed it ; the tongue never made itself to speak, and yet talks against him that did ; saying, that which is made, is, and that which made it, is not. But this folly is as infinite as hell, as much without light or bound, as the chaos of the primitive nothing.—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1613—1667.

Verse 1.—" *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" A wise man, that lives up to the principles of reason and virtue, if one considers him in his solitude as taking in the system of the universe, observing the mutual dependence and harmony by which the whole frame of it hangs together, beating down his passions, or swelling his thoughts with magnificent ideas of providence, makes a nobler figure in the eye of an intelligent being, than the greatest conqueror amidst the pomps and solemnities of a triumph. On the contrary, there is not a more ridiculous animal than an atheist in his retirement. His mind is incapable of rapture or elevation : he can only consider himself as an insignificant figure in a landscape, and wandering up and down in a field or a meadow, under the same terms as the meanest animals about him, and as subject to as total a mortality as they, with this aggravation, that he is the only one amongst them who lies under the apprehension of it. In distresses he must be of all creatures the most helpless and forlorn ; he feels the whole pressure of a present calamity, without being relieved by the memory of anything that is past, or the prospect of anything that is to come. Annihilation is the greatest blessing that he proposes to himself, and a halter or a pistol the only refuge he can fly to. But if you would behold one of these gloomy miscreants in his poorest figure, you must consider them under the terrors or at the approach of death. About thirty years ago, I was a shipboard with one of these vermin, when there arose a brisk gale, which could frighten nobody but himself. Upon the rolling of the ship he fell upon his knees, and confessed to the chaplain, that he had been a vile atheist and had denied a Supreme Being ever since he came to his estate. The good man was astonished, and a report immediately ran through the ship, that there was an atheist upon the upper deck. Several of the common seamen, who had never heard the word before, thought it had been some strange fish ; but they were more surprised when they saw it was a man, and heard out of his own mouth, " That he never believed till that day that there was a God." As he lay in the agonies of confession, one of the honest tars whispered to the boatswain, " That it would be a good deed to heave him overboard." But we were now within sight of port, when of a sudden the wind fell, and the penitent relapsed, begging all of us that were present, as we were gentlemen, not to say anything of what had passed. He had not been ashore above two days, when one of the company began to rally him upon his devotion on shipboard, which the other denied in so high terms, that it produced the lie on both sides, and ended in a duel. The atheist was run through the body, and after some loss of blood, became as good a Christian as he was at sea, till he found that his wound was not mortal. He is at present one of the free-thinkers of the age, and now writing a pamphlet against several received opinions concerning the existence of fairies.—*Joseph Addison* (1671—1719), *in* " *The Tattler.*"

Verse 1.—

" ' There is no God,' the fool in secret said :
' There is no God that rules or earth or sky.'
Tear off the band that binds the wretch's head,
That God may burst upon his faithless eye !
Is there no God ?—The stars in myriads spread,
If he look up, the blasphemy deny ;
While his own features, in the mirror read,
Reflect the image of Divinity.
Is there no God ?—The stream that silver flows,
The air he breathes, the ground he treads, the trees,
The flowers, the grass, the sands, each wind that blows,
All speak of God ; throughout, one voice agrees,
And, eloquent, his dread existence shows :
Blind to thyself, ah, see him, fool, in these ! " *Giovanni Cotta.*

Verse 1.—

" The owlet, *Atheism*,
Sailing on obscene wings across the noon,
Drops his blue-fringed lids, and shuts them close,
And, hooting at the glorious sun in heaven,
Cries out, ' Where is it ? ' "

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772—1834.

Verse 1.—"*They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.*" Sin pleaseth the flesh. *Omne simile nutrit simile.* Corruption inherent is nourished by the accession of corrupt actions. Judas's covetousness is sweetened with unjust gain. Joab is heartened and hardened with blood. 1 Kings ii. 5. Theft is fitted to and fatted in the thievish heart with obvious booties. Pride is fed with the officious compliments of observant grooms. Extortion battens in the usurer's affections by the trolling in of his moneys. Sacrilege thrives in the church-robber by the pleasing distinctions of those sycophant priests, and helped with their not laborious profit. Nature is led, is fed with sense. And when the citadel of the heart is once won, the turret of the understanding will not long hold out. As the suffumigations of the oppressed stomach surge up and cause the headache, or as the thick spumy mists, which vapour up from the dark and foggy earth, do often suffocate the brighter air, and to us more than eclipse the sun, the black and corrupt affections, which ascend out of the nether part of the soul, do no less darken and choke the understanding. Neither can the fire of grace be kept alive at God's altar (man's heart), when the clouds of lust shall rain down such showers of impiety on it. *Perit omne judicium, cum res transit ad affectum.* Farewell the perspicuity of judgment, when the matter is put to the partiality of affection.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 1.—"*They are corrupt, they have done abominable things: there is none that doeth good.*" "Men," says Bernard, "because they are *corrupt* in their minds, become *abominable* in their doings: *corrupt* before God, *abominable* before men. There are three sorts of men of which none doeth good. There are those who neither understand nor seek God, and they are the dead: there are others who understand him, but seek him not, and they are the wicked. There are others that seek him but understand him not, and they are the fools." "O God," cries a writer of the middle ages, "how many are here at this day who, under the name of Christianity, worship idols, and are abominable both to thee and to men! For every man worships that which he most loves. The proud man bows down before the idol of worldly power; the covetous man before the idol of money; the adulterer before the idol of beauty; and so of the rest." And of such, saith the apostle, "They profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being *abominable* and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Titus i. 16. "*There is none that doeth good.*" Notice how Paul avails himself of this testimony of the epistle to the Romans, where he is proving concerning "both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." Rom. iii. 9.—*John Mason Neale, in loc.*

Verse 1.—The argument of my text is the atheist's divinity, the brief of his belief couched all in one article, and that negative too, clean contrary to the fashion of all creeds, "*There is no God.*" The article but one; but so many absurdities tied to the train of it, and itself so irreligious, so prodigiously profane, that he dares not speak it out, but saith it softly to himself, in secret, "*in his heart.*" So the text yields these three points; Who is he? *A "fool."* What he saith, "*no God.*" How he speaks it, "*in his heart.*" A fool, his bolt, and his draught. I will speak of them severally . . . . . There is a child in years, and there is a child in manners, *ætate et moribus*, saith Aristotle. So there is a fool; for fools and children both are called νηπιοι. There is a fool in wit, and there is a fool in life; *stultus in scientia, et stultus in conscientia*, a witless and a graceless fool. The latter is worthy of the title as the first; both void of reason; not of the faculty but of the use. Yea, the latter fool is indeed the more kindly of the twain; for the sot would use his reason if he could; the sinner will not though he may. It is not the natural, but the moral fool that David means, the wicked and ungracious person, for so is the sense of the original term . . . . . It is time we leave the person, and come unto the act. What hath this fool done? Surely nothing; he hath only *said.* What hath he *said?* Nay, nothing either; he hath only *thought:* for to *say in heart*, is but to *think.* There are two sorts of saying in the Scripture, one meant indeed so properly, the other but in hope; one by word of mouth, the other by thought of heart. You see the Psalmist means here the second sort. The bolt the fool here shoots is atheism: he makes no noise at the loss of it, as bowmen use; he draws and delivers closely, and stilly, out of sight, and without sound: he saith, "*God is not,*" but "*in heart.*" The heart hath a mouth; *intus est os cordis*, saith Augustine. God, saith Cyprian, is *cordis auditor*, he hears the heart; then belike it hath some speech. When God said to Moses, *quare clamas?* why criest thou? we find no words he uttered: *silens auditur*, saith Gregory, he is heard through saying nothing. There is a silent speech (Psalm iv. 4), "Commune with your own heart," saith David, "and be

still." Speech is not the heart's action, no more than meditation is the mouth's. But sometimes the heart and mouth exchange offices; *lingua mea meditabitur*, saith David. Psalm xxxv. 28. There is *lingua meditans*, a musing tongue; here is *cor loquens*, a speaking heart. And to say the truth, the philosopher saith well, it is the heart doth all things, *mens videt, mens audit, mens loquitur*. It is the heart that speaks, the tongue is but the instrument to give the sound. It is but the heart's echo to repeat the words after it. Except when the tongue doth run before the wit, the heart doth dictate to the mouth; it suggests what it shall say. The heart is the soul's herald: look what she will have proclaimed, the heart reads it, and the mouth cries it. The tongue saith nought but what the heart saith first. Nay, in very deed, the truest and kindest speech is the heart's. The tongue and lips are Jesuits, they lease, and lie, and use equivocations: flattery, or fear, or other by-respect, other wry respect adulterate their words. But the heart speaks as it means, worth twenty mouths, if it could speak audibly.—*Richard Clerke. D.D.*, 1634 (*one of the translators of our English Bible*).

Verses 1, 4.—The Scripture give this as a cause of the notorious courses of wicked men, that "God is not in all their thoughts." Psalm x. 4. They forget there is a God of vengeance and a day of reckoning. "*The fool*" would needs enforce upon his heart, that "*there is no God*," and what follows: "*Corrupt they are, there is none doeth good: they eat up my people as bread*," etc. They make no more bones of devouring men and their estates, than they make conscience of eating a piece of bread. What a wretched condition hath sin brought man unto, that the great God who "filleth heaven and earth" (Jer. xxiii. 24) should yet have no place in the heart which he hath especially made for himself! The sun is not so clear as this truth, that God is, for all things in the world are because God is. If he were not, nothing could be. It is from him that wicked men have that strength they have to commit sin, therefore sin proceeds from atheism, especially these plotting sins; for if God were more thought on, he would take off the soul from sinful contrivings, and fix it upon himself.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 2.—"*To see if there were any that did understand . . seek God.*" None seek him aright, and as he ought to be sought, nor can do while they live in sin; for men in seeking God fail in many things: as, First, men seek him not for himself. Secondly, they seek him not alone, but other things with him. Thirdly, they seek other things before him, as worldlings do. Fourthly, they seek him coldly or carelessly. Fifthly, they seek him inconstantly; example of Judas and Demas. Sixthly, they seek him not in his word, as heretics do. Seventhly, they seek him not in all his word, as hypocrites do. Lastly, they seek him not seasonably and timely, as profane, impenitent sinners do; have no care to depend upon God's word, but follow their own lusts and fashions of this world.—*Thomas Wilson*, 1653.

Verses 2, 3.—What was the issue of God's so looking upon men? "*They are all gone aside*," that is, from him and his ways; "*They are altogether become filthy;*" their practices are such as make them stink; "*There is none that doeth good, no, not one;*" of so many millions of men as are upon the earth, there is not one doeth good. There were men of excellent parts then in the world, men of soul, but not one of them did know God, or seek after God: Paul therefore hath laid it down for a universal maxim, that the animal, natural, or intellectual man, receives not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, and so are rejected by him.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 3.—The ungodly are "vile" persons (Nah. i. 14). "I will make thy grave; for thou art vile." Sin makes men base, it blots their name, it taints their blood: "*They are altogether become filthy;*" in the Hebrew it is, they are become stinking. Call wicked men ever so bad, you cannot call them out of their name; they are "swine" (Matt. vii. 6); "vipers" (Matt. iii. 7); "devils" (John vi. 70). The wicked are the dross and refuse (Psa. cxix. 119); and heaven is too pure to have any dross mingle with it.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—"*Altogether become filthy.*" Thus the Roman satirist describes his own age:

> "Nothing is left, nothing, for future times
> To add to the full catalogue of crimes;
> The baffled sons must feel the same desires,
> And act the same mad follies as their sires,
> Vice has attained its zenith." *Juvenal, Sat.* 1.

Verse 3.—" *There is none that doeth good, no not one.*" Origen maketh a question how it could be said that there was none, neither among the Jews nor Gentiles, that did any good; seeing there were many among them which did clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and did other good things: he hereunto maketh this answer:—That like as one that layeth a foundation, and buildeth upon it a wall or two, yet cannot be said to have built a house till he have finished it; so although those might do some good things, yet they attained not unto perfect goodness, which was only to be found in Christ. But this is not the apostle's meaning only to exclude men from the perfection of justice; for even the faithful and believers were short of that perfection which is required; he therefore showeth what men are by nature, all under sin and in the same state of damnation, without grace and faith in Christ: if any perform any good work, either it is of grace, and so not of themselves, or if they did it by the light of nature, they did it not as they ought, and so it was far from a good work indeed.—*Andrew Willet* (1562—1621), *on Romans* iii, 10.

Verse 4.—" *Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?*" Men's ignorance is the reason why they fear not what they should fear. Why is it that the ungodly fear not sin? Oh, it's because they know it not. " *Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?*" Sure enough they have none, for " *they eat up my people as they eat bread;*" such morsels would scald their mouths, they would not dare to be such persecutors and destroyers of the people of God; they would be afraid to touch them if they did but know what they did.—*Richard Alleine.*

Verse 4.—" *Who eat up my people as they eat bread.*"—That is, *quotidiè*, daily, saith Austin; as duly as they eat bread; or, with the same eagerness and voracity. These man-eaters, these Λαοβόροι, cruel cannibals, make no more conscience to undo a poor man, than to eat a good meal when they are hungry. Like pickerels in a pond, or sharks in the sea, they devour the poorer, as those do the lesser fishes; and that many times with a plausible, invisible consumption; as the usurer, who, like the ostrich, can digest any metal; but especially money.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—" *Who eat up my people as they eat bread.*" Oh, how few consult and believe the Scriptures setting forth the enmity of wicked men against God's people! The Scripture tells us " *they eat up God's people as bread,*" which implies a strange inclination in them to devour the saints, and that they take as great delight therein as a hungry man in eating, and that it is natural to them to molest them. The Scripture compares them, for their hateful qualities, to the lions and bears, to foxes for subtlety, to wild bulls, to greedy swine, to scorpions, to briers and thorns (grievous and vexing things). The Scripture represents them as industrious and unwearied in their bloody enterprises, they cannot sleep without doing mischief. Herodias had rather have the blood of a saint than half a kingdom. Haman would pay a great fine to the king that the scattered Jews (who keep not the king's laws) may be cut off. Wicked men will run the hazard of damning their own souls, rather than not fling a dagger at the apple of God's eye. Though they know what one word—aha!—cost, yet they will break through all natural, civil, and moral obligations, to ruin God's people. The Holy Ghost calls them " implacable " men, fierce and headstrong; they are like the hot oven for fury, like the sea for boundless rage; yet " who hath believed " this Scripture " report "? Did we believe what enemies all wicked men are unto all saints, we should not lean to our own prudence and discretion to secure us from any danger by these men; we would get an ark to secure us from the deluge of their wrath; if at any time we be cast among them and delivered, we would bless God with the three children, that the hot fiery oven did not consume us; we would not wonder when we hear of any of their barbarous cruelty, but rather wonder at God's restraining them every day; we would be suspicious of receiving hurt when cast among light and frothy companions; we would shun their company as we do lions and scorpions; we would never commit any trust or secret into their hands; we would not be light-hearted whilst in their society; we would not rely on their promises any more than we would on the promise of the devil, their father; we would long for heaven, to be delivered from " the tents of Kedar; " we would not count any of the saints secured from danger, though related to any great wicked man; we would not twist ourselves with them by matching ourselves or children to these sons and daughters of Belial; neither would we make choice of devils to be our servants.—*Lewis Stuckley.*

Verse 4.—This is an evil world. It hates the people of God. " Because ye are

not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John xv. 19. Haman's hatred was against the whole seed of the Jews. When you can find a serpent without a sting, or a leopard without spots, then may you expect to find a wicked world without hatred to the saints. Piety is the target which is aimed at. "They are mine adversaries because I follow the thing that good is." Psalm xxxviii. 20. The world pretends to hate the godly for something else, but the ground of the quarrel is holiness. The world's hatred is implacable: anger may be reconciled, hatred cannot. You may as soon reconcile heaven and hell as the two seeds. If the world hated Christ, no wonder that it hates us. "The world hated me before it hated you." John xv. 18. Why should any hate Christ? This blessed Dove had no gall, this rose of Sharon did send forth a most sweet perfume; but this shows the world's baseness, it is a Christ-hating and a *saint-eating* world.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—"*There were they in great fear.*" That we may not mistake the meaning of the point, we must understand that this faintheartedness and cowardliness doth not always come upon presumptuous sinners when they behold imminent dangers, for though none of them have true courage and fortitude, yet many of them have a kind of desperate stoutness and resolution when they do, as it were, see death present before their faces; which proceedeth from a kind of deadness that is upon their hearts, and a brawniness that hath overgrown their conscience to their greater condemnation. But when it pleaseth the Lord to waken them out of the dead slumber, and to set the worm of conscience awork within them, then this doctrine holdeth true without any exception, that the boldest sinners prove at length the basest cowards: and they that have been most audacious in adventuring upon the most mischievous evils, do become of all others most timorous when God's revenging hand seizeth upon them for the same.—*John Dod*, 1547—1645.

Verse 5.—"*God is in the generation of the righteous;*" that is, he favours that generation or sort of men; God is in all generations, but such he delights in most: the wicked have cause enough to fear those in whom God delights.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—The King of Glory cannot come into the heart (as he is is said to come into the hearts of his people as such; Psalm xxiv. 9, 10), but some glory of himself will appear; and as God doth accompany the word with majesty because it is his word, so he doth accompany his own children, and their ways, with majesty, yea, even in their greatest debasements. As when Stephen was brought before the council as a prisoner at the bar for his life, then God manifested his presence to him, for it is said, "his face shone as the face of an angel of God." (Acts vi. 15); in a proportionable manner it is ordinarily true what Solomon says of all righteous men, "A man's wisdom makes his face to shine." Eccles. viii. 1. Thus Peter also speaks (1 Peter iv. 14): "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you, for the Spirit," not only of God, or of grace, but "of glory, resteth upon you." And so in the martyrs; their innocency and carriage, and godly behaviour, what majesty had it with it! What an amiableness in the sight of the people, which daunted, dashed and confounded their most wretched oppressors; so that although the wicked persecutors "*did eat up God's people as bread*" (verse 4), yet it is added that they were in great fear upon this very account, that "*God is in the generation of the just.*" Verse 5. God stands, as it were, astonished at their dealings: "*Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge,*" (so in the words afore) "*that eat up my people as bread,*" and make no more ado of it than a man doth that heartily eats of his meat? They seem to do thus, they would carry it and bear it out; but for all that they are in great fear whilst they do thus, and God strikes their hearts with terror then when they most insult. Why? For, "*God is in the generation of, or dwelleth in the just,*" and God gives often some glimmerings, hints, and warnings to the wicked (such as Pilate had concerning Christ), that his people are righteous. And this you may see in Phil. i. 28: "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." In that latter passage, I observe that an assurance of salvation, and a spirit of terror, and that of God, is given to either. In the Old Testament it is recorded of David (1 Sam. xviii. 12), that although Saul hated him (verse 9), and sought to destroy him (verses 10, 11), "yet Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul;" which is the reason in hand. God manifested his presence in David, and struck Saul's conscience with his godly and wise carriage, and that made him afraid.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"*Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge.*"

In the fifty-third Psalm it is, "Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them." Of course, the allusion is totally different in each; in this Psalm it is the indignant remonstrance of the Psalmist with "the workers of iniquity" for undervaluing and putting God's poor to shame; the other affirms the final shame and confusion of the ungodly, and the contempt in which the Lord holds them. In either case it sweetly illustrates God's care of his poor, not merely the poor in spirit, but literally the poor and lowly ones, the oppressed and the injured. It is this character of God which is so conspicuously delineated in his word. We may look through all the Shasters and Vedas of the Hindoo, the Koran of the Mahometan, the legislation of the Greek, and the code of the Roman, aye, and the Talmud of the Jew, the bitterest of all; and not in one single line or page shall we find a vestige or trace of that tenderness, compassion, or sympathy for the wrongs, and oppressions, and trials, and sorrows of God's poor, which the Christian's Bible evidences in almost every page.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 6.—"*Ye have shamed.*" Every fool that saith in his heart there is no God, hath out of the same quiver a bolt to shoot at goodness. Barren Michal hath too many sons, who, like their mother, jeer at holy David.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*Ye have shamed,*" saith he, "*the counsel of the poor.*" There is nothing that wicked men do so despise as the making God a refuge—nothing which they scorn in their hearts like it. "They shame it," saith he, "It is a thing to be cast out of all consideration. The wise man trusts in his wisdom, the strong man in his strength, the rich man in his riches; but this trusting in God is the foolishest thing in the world." The reasons of it are—1. They know not God; and it is a foolish thing to trust one knows not whom. 2. They are enemies to God, and God is their enemy; and they account it a foolish thing to trust their enemy. 3. They know not the way of God's assistance and help. And—4. They seek for such help, such assistance, such supplies as God will not give; to be delivered, to serve their lusts; to be preserved, to execute their rage, filthiness, and folly. They have no other design or end of these things; and God will give none of them. And it is a foolish thing in any man to trust God to be preserved in sin. It is true their folly is their wisdom, considering their state and condition. It is a folly to trust in God to live in sin, and despise the counsel of the poor.—*John Owen.*

Verse 6.—"*Ye have made a mock of the counsel of the poor:*" and why? "*because the Lord is his trust.*" This is the very true cause, whatsoever other pretences there be. Whence observe this doctrine; that true godliness is that which breeds the quarrel between God's children and the wicked. Ungodly men may say what they list, as, namely, that they hate and dislike them for that they are proud and saucy in meddling with their betters; for that they are so scornful and disdainful towards their neighbours; for that they are malcontent, and turbulent, and I know not what; but the true reason is yielded by the Lord in this place, to wit, because they make him their stay and their confidence, and will not depend upon lying vanities as the men of the world do.—*John Dod.*

Verse 6.—"*The Lord is his refuge.*"—Be persuaded actually to hide yourselves with Jesus Christ. To have a hiding-place and not to use it, is as bad as to want one; fly to Christ; run into the holes of this Rock.—*Ralph Robinson,* 1656.

Verse 7.—"*O that the salvation,*" etc. Like as when we be in quiet, we do pray either nothing at all, or very coldly unto God; so in adversity and trouble, our spirit is stirred up and enkindled to prayer, whereof we do find examples everywhere in the Psalms of David: so that affliction is as it were the sauce of prayer, as hunger is unto meat. Truly their prayer is usually unsavoury who are without afflictions, and many of them do not pray truly, but do rather counterfeit a prayer, or pray for custom.—*Wolfgang Musculus,* 1497—1563.

Verse 7.—"*Out of Zion.*" Zion the church is no Saviour, neither dare we trust in her ministers or ordinances, and yet salvation comes to men through her. The hungry multitudes are fed by the hands of the disciples, who delight to act as the servitors of the gospel feast. Zion becomes the site of the fountain of healing waters which shall flow east and west till all nations drink thereat. What a reason for maintaining in the utmost purity and energy all the works of the church of the living God!—*C. H. S.*

Verse 7.—"*When the Lord turneth the captivity of his people: then shall Jacob rejoice and Israel shall be glad.*"—Notice that by Israel we are to understand those other sheep which the Lord has that are not of this fold, but which he must also

bring, that they may hear his voice. For it is Israel, not Judah ; Sion, not Jerusalem. "*When the Lord turneth the captivity of his people.*" "*Then,*" as it is in the parallel passage, "*were we like unto them that dream.*" A glorious dream indeed, in which, fancy what we may, the half of the beauty, the half of the splendour, will not be reached by our imagination. "*The captivity*" of our souls to the law of concupiscence, of our bodies to the law of death ; the captivity of our senses to fear ; the captivity, the conclusion of which is so beautifully expressed by one of our greatest poets :—namely, *Giles Fletcher* (1588—1623), *in his "Christ's Triumph over Death."*

"No sorrow now hangs clouding on their brow ;
No bloodless malady impales their face ;
No age drops on their hairs his silver snow ;
No nakedness their bodies doth embrace ;
No poverty themselves and theirs disgrace ;
No fear of death the joy of life devours ;
No unchaste sleep their precious time deflowers ;
No loss, no grief, no change, wait on their winged hours."

John Mason Neale, in loc.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—The folly of atheism.

Verse 1.—Atheism of the heart.—*Jamieson's Sermons on the Heart.*

Verse 1 (*whole verse*).—Describe : I. The creed of the fool. II. The fool who holds the creed : or thus, Atheism. I. Its source : "*the heart.*" II. Its creed : "*no God.*" III. Its fruits : "*corrupt,*" etc.

Verse 1.—I. The great source of sin—alienation from God. II. Its place of dominion—the heart. III. Its effect upon the intellect—makes man a fool. IV. Its manifestations in the life—acts of commission and omission.

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—The lantern of Diogenes. Hold it up upon all classes, and denounce their sins.

Verse 2.—I. Condescending search. II. Favoured subjects. III. Generous intentions.

Verse 2.—What God looks for, and what we should look for. Men usually are quick to see things congruous to their own character.

Verses 2, 3.—God's search for a naturally good man ; the results ; lessons to be learned therefrom.

Verse 3.—Total depravity of the race.

Verse 4.—"*Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge ?*" If men rightly knew God, his law, the evil of sin, the torment of hell, and other great truths, would they sin as they do ? Or if they know these and yet continue in their iniquities, how guilty and foolish they are ! Answer the question both positively and negatively, and it supplies material for a searching discourse.

Verse 4.—(*first clause*).—The crying sin of transgressing against light and knowledge.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Absence of prayer, a sure mark of a graceless state.

Verse 5.—The foolish fears of those who have no fear of God.

Verse 5.—The Lord's nearness to the righteous, its consequences to the persecutor, and its encouragement to saints.

Verse 6.—The wisdom of making the Lord our refuge.—*John Owen.*

Verse 6.—Describe I. The poor man here intended. II. His counsel. III. His reproach. IV. His refuge.

Verse 6.—Trust in God, a theme for mockery to fools only. Show its wisdom.

Verse 7.—Longings for the Advent.

Verse 7.—"*Out of Zion.*" The church, the channel of blessings to men.

Verse 7.—Discourse to promote revival. I. Frequent condition of the church, "captivity." II. Means of revival—the Lord's coming in grace. III. Consequences, "rejoice," "be glad."

Verse 7.—Captivity of soul. What it is. How provided for. How accomplished. With what results.

PSALM XV.

SUBJECT, &c.—*This Psalm of David bears no dedicatory title at all indicative of the occasion upon which it was written, but it is exceedingly probable that, together with the twenty-fourth Psalm, to which it bears a striking resemblance, its composition was in some way connected with the removal of the ark to the holy hill of Zion. Who should attend upon the ark was a matter of no small consequence, for because unauthorised persons had intruded into the office, David was unable on the first occasion to complete his purpose of bringing the ark to Zion. On the second attempt he is more careful, not only to allot the work of carrying the ark to the divinely appointed Levites* (1 Chron. xv. 2), *but also to leave it in charge of the man whose house the Lord had blessed, even Obededom, who, with his many sons, ministered in the house of the Lord.* (1 Chron. xxvi. 8, 12.) *Spiritually we have here a description of the man who is a child at home in the Church of God on earth, and who will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever above. He is primarily Jesus, the perfect man, and in him all who through grace are conformed to his image.*

DIVISION.—*The first verse asks the question; the rest of the verses answer it. We will call the Psalm* THE QUESTION AND ANSWER.

EXPOSITION.

LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

1.—THE QUESTION. *Jehovah.* Thou high and holy One, who shall be permitted to have fellowship with thee? The heavens are not pure in thy sight, and thou chargedst thine angels with folly, who then of mortal mould shall dwell with thee, thou dread consuming fire? A sense of the glory of the Lord and of the holiness which becomes his house, his service, and his attendants, excites the humble mind to ask the solemn question before us. Where angels bow with veiled faces, how shall man be able to worship at all? The unthinking many imagine it to be a very easy matter to approach the Most High, and when professedly engaged in his worship they have no questionings of heart as to their fitness for it; but truly humbled souls often shrink under a sense of utter unworthiness, and would not dare to approach the throne of the God of holiness if it were not for him, our Lord, our Advocate, who can abide in the heavenly temple, because his righteousness endureth for ever. "*Who shall abide in thy tabernacle?*" Who shall be admitted to be one of the household of God, to sojourn under his roof and enjoy communion with himself? "*Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*" Who shall be a citizen of Zion, and an inhabitant of the heavenly Jerusalem? The question is raised, because it is a question. All men have not this privilege, nay, even among professors there are aliens from the commonwealth, who have no secret intercourse with God. On the grounds of law no mere man can dwell with God, for there is not one upon earth who answers to the just requirements mentioned in the succeeding verses. The questions in the text are asked of the *Lord*, as if none but the Infinite Mind could answer them so as to satisfy the unquiet conscience. We must know from the Lord of the tabernacle what are the qualifications for his service, and when we have been taught of him, we shall clearly see that only our spotless Lord Jesus, and those who are conformed unto his image, can ever stand with acceptance before the Majesty on high.

Impertinent curiosity frequently desires to know who and how many shall be saved; if those who thus ask the question, "Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" would make it a soul-searching enquiry in reference to themselves they would act much more wisely. Members of the visible church, which is God's tabernacle of worship, and hill of eminence, should diligently see to it, that they have the preparation of heart which fits them to be inmates of the house of God. Without the wedding-dress of righteousness in Christ Jesus, we have no right to sit at the banquet of communion. Without uprightness of walk we are not fit for the imperfect church on earth, and certainly we must not hope to enter the perfect church above.

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

3 *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.

5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

2.—THE ANSWER. The Lord in answer to the question informs us by his Holy Spirit of the character of the man who alone can dwell in his holy hill. In perfection this holiness is found only in the Man of Sorrows, but in a measure it is wrought in all his people by the Holy Ghost. Faith and the graces of the Spirit are not mentioned, because this is a description of outward character, and where fruits are found the root may not be seen, but it is surely there. Observe the accepted man's *walk, work and word.* "*He that walketh uprightly,*" he keeps himself erect as those do who traverse high ropes; if they lean on one side over they must go, or as those who carry precious but fragile ware in baskets on their heads, who lose all if they lose their perpendicular. True belivers do not cringe as flatterers, wriggle as serpents, bend double as earth-grubbers, or crook on one side as those who have sinister aims; they have the strong backbone of the vital principle of grace within, and being themselves upright, they are able to walk uprightly. Walking is of far more importance than talking. He only is right who is *up*right in walk and *down*right in honesty. "*And worketh righteousness.*" His faith shows itself by good works, and therefore is no dead faith. God's house is a hive for workers, not a nest for drones. Those that rejoice that everything is done for them by another, even the Lord Jesus, and therefore hate legality, are the best doers in the world upon gospel principles. If we are not positively serving the Lord, and doing his holy will to the best of our power, we may seriously debate our interest in divine things, for trees which bear no fruit must be hewn down and cast into the fire. "*And speaketh the truth in his heart.*" The fool in the last Psalm spoke falsely in his heart; observe both here and elsewhere in the two Psalms, the striking contrast. Saints not only desire to love and speak truth with their lips, but they seek to be true within; they will not lie even in the closet of their hearts, for God is there to listen; they scorn double meanings, evasions, equivocations, white lies, flatteries, and deceptions. Though truths, like roses, have thorns about them, good men wear them in their bosoms. Our heart must be the sanctuary and refuge of truth, should it be banished from all the world beside, and hunted from among men; at all risk we must entertain the angel of truth, for truth is God's daughter. We must be careful that the heart is really fixed and settled in principle, for tenderness of conscience towards truthfulness, like the bloom on a peach, needs gentle handling, and once lost it were hard to regain it. Jesus was the mirror of sincerity and holiness. Oh, to be more and more fashioned after his similitude!

3. After the positive comes the negative. "*He that backbiteth not with his tongue.*" There is a sinful way of backbiting with the heart when we think too hardly of a neighbour, but it is the tongue which does the mischief. Some men's tongues bite more than their teeth. The tongue is not steel, but it cuts, and its wounds are very hard to heal; its worst wounds are not with its edge to our face, but with its back when our head is turned. Under the law, a night hawk was an unclean bird, and its human image is abominable everywhere. All slanderers are the devil's bellows to blow up contention, but those are the worst which blow at the back of the fire. "*Nor doeth evil to his neighbour.*" He who bridles his tongue will not give a licence to his hand. Loving our neighbour as ourselves will make us jealous of his good name, careful not to injure his estate, or by ill example to corrupt his character. "*Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*" He is a fool if not a knave who picks up stolen goods and harbours them; in slander as well as robbery, the receiver is as bad as the thief. If there were no gratified hearers of ill reports, there would be an end of the trade of spreading them. Trapp says, that "the tale-bearer carrieth the devil in his tongue, and the tale-hearer carries the devil in his ear." The original may be translated, "endureth;" implying that it is a sin to endure or tolerate tale-bearers. "Show that man out!" we should say of a drunkard, yet it is very questionable if his unmannerly behaviour will do us so much mischief

as the tale-bearer's insinuating story. "Call for a policeman!" we say if we see a thief at his business; ought we to feel no indignation when we hear a gossip at her work? Mad dog! Mad dog!! is a terrible hue and cry, but there are few curs whose bite is so dangerous as a busybody's tongue. Fire! fire!! is an alarming note, but the tale-bearer's tongue is set on fire of hell, and those who indulge it had better mend their manners, or they may find that there is fire in hell for unbridled tongues. Our Lord spake evil of no man, but breathed a prayer for his foes; we must be like him, or we shall never be with him.

4. "*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.*" We must be as honest in paying respect as in paying our bills. Honour to whom honour is due. To all good men we owe a debt of honour, and we have no right to hand over what is their due to vile persons who happen to be in high places. When bad men are in office, it is our duty to respect the office, but we cannot so violate our consciences as to do otherwise than contemn the men; and on the other hand, when true saints are in poverty and distress, we must sumpathize with their afflictions and honour the men none the less. We may honour the roughest cabinet for the sake of the jewels, but we must not prize false gems because of their setting. A sinner in a gold chain and silken robes is no more to be compared with a saint in rags than a rushlight in a silver candlestick with the sun behind a cloud. The proverb says, that "ugly women, finely dressed, are the uglier for it," and so mean men in high estate are the more mean because of it. "*He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*" Scriptural saints under the New Testament rule "swear not at all," but their word is as good as an oath: those men of God who think it right to swear, are careful and prayerful lest they should even seem to overshoot the mark. When engagements have been entered into which turn out to be unprofitable, "the saints are men of honour still." Our blessed Surety swore to his own hurt, but how gloriously he stood to his suretiship! what a comfort to us that he changeth not, and what an example to us to be scrupulously and precisely exact in fulfilling our covenants with others! The most far-seeing trader may enter into engagements which turn out to be serious losses, but whatever else he loses, if he keeps his honour, his losses will be bearable; if that be lost all is lost.

5 "*He that putteth not out his money to usury.*" *Usury* was and is hateful both to God and man. That a lender should share with the borrower in gains made by his money is most fitting and proper; but that the man of property should eat up the poor wretch who unfortunately obtained a loan of him is abominable. Those who grind poor tradesmen, needy widows, and such like, by charging them interest at intolerable rates, will find that their gold and their silver are cankered. The man who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord must shake off this sin as Paul shook the viper into the fire. "*Nor taketh reward against the innocent.*" Bribery is a sin both in the giver and the receiver. It was frequently practised in Eastern courts of justice; that form of it is now under our excellent judges almost an unheard-of thing; yet the sin survives in various forms, which the reader needs not that we should mention; and under every shape it is loathsome to the true man of God. He remembers that Jesus instead of taking reward against the innocent died for the guilty.

5 "*He that doeth these things shall never be moved.*" No storm shall tear him from his foundations, drag him from his anchorage, or uproot him from his place. Like the Lord Jesus, whose dominion is everlasting, the true Christian shall never lose his crown. He shall not only be *on* Zion, but *like* Zion, fixed and firm. He shall dwell in the tabernacle of the Most High, and neither death nor judgment shall remove him from his place of privilege and blessedness.

Let us betake ourselves to prayer and self-examination, for this Psalm is as fire for the gold, and as a furnace for silver. Can we endure its testing power?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?*"—In that the church of Christ upon earth is a "*tabernacle*," we may note, that neither the church itself nor the members of it, have any fixed or firm seat of habitation in this world: "Arise, depart, for this is not your rest." Micah ii. 10. "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Heb. xiii. 14. God's tabernacle, being a movable

temple, wandered up and down, sometimes in the desert, sometimes in Shiloh, sometimes among the Philistines, sometimes in Kirjathjearim, and never found any settled place till it was translated into the mountain of God : even so the church of God wandereth as a straggler and a stranger in the wilderness of this world, being destitute, tormented, and afflicted on every side, persecuted from this city to that, and never enjoying any constant habitation of sound and sure rest until it be translated unto "*God's holy hill.*" The verb גור *gur* (as the learned in Hebrew note) signifying to dwell as a stranger, or a sojourner, imports that a citizen of heaven is a pilgrim on earth ..... In that the church is a *tabernacle*, we may see that it is not a fort, compassed about with any strong walls, armed with any human forces ; and yet such as keep within her are defended from heat of sun, and hurt of storms. Her strength is not here, but from above, for Christ her Head is in all her troubles a present help, a refuge against the tempest, a shadow against the heat. Isa. xxv. 4. The church on earth is indeed a *tabernacle*, but it is *God's* tabernacle, wherein he dwelleth as in his house ; "Lord, who shall abide in *thy* tabernacle ?" for to this end the Lord commanded the tabernacle to be made, that he might dwell among them ; and again, whereas he promised by Moses to set his tabernacle among them the blessed apostle construeth it of his dwelling among them. 2 Cor. vi. 16. "You are," saith he, "the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." To the same purpose, God is said elsewhere to dwell in Sion, and to walk in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, that is, in the midst of the seven churches in the midst of his city (Psa. xlvi. 5), in the midst of his people. Isa. xii. 6.—*John Boys, D.D., Dean of Canterbury*, 1571—1625.

Verse 1.—"*Lord, who shall abide,*" etc. If David, a man endued with an excellent and divine spirit, one in whom singular wisdom, rare knowledge, and deep understanding of hidden secrets appeared, who being taught of God in heavenly things, far surpassed and exceeded in wisdom all his teachers and counsellors, did notwithstanding desire to know the sheep from the goats, the good from the bad, the saints from the hypocrites, the true worshippers of God from dissemblers, the true inhabitants of the holy tabernacle from the intruders of the wicked, lest therein he should be deceived ; how great cause have we, in whom neither the like spirit, neither such wisdom, nor equal knowledge, nor comparable understanding, by many degrees appeareth to fear our own weakness, to doubt of our own judgments, to confess our own infirmity, and to suspect the subtle sleights and coloured pretences of men : and for further knowledge in hidden, deep, and secret things, with David to demand and ask this question, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle ? who shall dwell in thy holy hill ?" ..... Where David saith, "Who shall abide in thy holy hill ?" he giveth us to understand that there is no true and sound rest but in the *holy hill of the Lord*, which is the church. Then the wicked and ungodly which are not of God's house, of his *holy hill*, of the church, have no quiet, rest, nor sound peace ; but they are in continual perplexity, continual torment, continual disquietness of their minds.—*Richard Turnbull*, 1606.

Verse 1.—"*Abide in thy tabernacle,*" etc.—The worshippers in the outer court only will get their eternal abode without among the dogs, sorcerers, etc.; but they that shall be inhabitants of heaven, come further in, even unto the tabernacle itself: their souls are fed at his table, they find the smell of his garments as of myrrh, aloes, and cassia ; and if they miss it at any time, it is the grief of their souls, and they are never at rest till they recover it again.—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 1.—"*Who shall dwell,*" etc.

> "Now, who is he ? Say, if ye can,
> Who *so* shall gain the firm abode ?
> Pilate shall say, 'Behold the Man !'
> And John, 'Behold the Lamb of God !'"
>
> *John Barclay, quoted by A. A. Bonar, in loc.*

Verse 1.—"*Holy Hill.*"—Heaven is aptly compared to a hill, hell to a hole. Now who shall ascend unto this holy mount ? None but those whom this mount comes down unto, that have sweet communion with God in this life present, whose conversation is in heaven, though their commoration be for awhile upon earth, who do here eat, and drink, and sleep, eternal life.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 1, 2.—The disguising and counterfeiting of hypocrites in all ages, occasioned haply this query : for, as Paul speaks, "all are not Israel that are of Israel," a great

many living in the church are not of the church, according to that of the doctors upon this place, *multi sunt corpore qui non sunt fide, multi nomine qui non sunt nomine.* Wherefore David, here perceiving that sundry people were shuffled into God's tabernacle like goats among the sheep, and tares among the corn, being Jews outwardly, but not inwardly, deceiving others often, and sometimes themselves also, with a bare profession of religion, and false opinion of true piety, cometh unto God (as to the searcher and trier of the hearts of men, acquainted with all secrets, and best understanding who are his own), saying unto him, O Lord, forsomuch as there is so much unsoundness and hypocrisy reigning among those that dwell in thy tabernacle, professing thy word, and frequenting the places of thy worship; I beseech thee most humbly, to declare to thy people some tokens and cognizances by which a true subject of thy kingdom may be discerned from the children of this world. Here then, observe, that an external profession of faith, and outward communion with the church of God, is not sufficient unto salvation, unless we lead an incorrupt life correspondent to the same, doing the thing which is right, and speaking the truth in our heart. And, therefore, the silly Papist is exceedingly deceived in relying so much upon the church's outside, to wit upon the succession of Roman bishops, upon the multitudes of Roman Catholics, upon the power and pomp of the Roman synagogue, crying as the Jews in old time, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," our church is the temple of the Lord. The carnal and careless gospeller is deceived also, placing all his religion in the formal observation of outward service, for a mere verbal Christian is a real atheist, according to that of Paul (Titus i. 16), "In word they profess that they know God, but in their works they deny him;" and so many who seem to sojourn in God's tabernacle for a time, shall never rest upon his "*holy hill;*" and this assertion is expressly confirmed by Christ himself: "Not every one (saith he) that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 21—23. Consider this, all ye which are Christians in lip only, but not in life, making a mask of religion, or rather a very vizard, with eyes, and mouth, and nose, fairly painted and proportioned to all pretences and purposes. O think on this, all ye that forget God, he that dwelleth on high, and beholds the things here below, suffers none *to rest upon the mountain of his holiness* but such as *walk uprightly, doing that which is just, and speaking that which is true.—John Boys.*

Verse 2.—"*He that walketh uprightly,*" etc.—If neither the golden reason of excellency can move us, nor the silver reason of profit allure us, then must the iron reason of necessity enforce us to *integrity* and *uprightness of heart.* For first, such is the necessity thereof, that without integrity the best graces we seem to have are counterfeit, and, therefore, but glorious sins; the best worship we can perform is but hypocrisy, and therefore abominable in God's sight. For uprightness is the soundness of all grace and virtues, as also of all religion and worship of God, without which they are unsound and nothing worth. And first, as touching graces, if they be not joined with uprightness of heart, they are sins under the masks or vizards of virtue, yea, as it may seem, double sins: for as Augustine saith, *Simulata æquitas est duplex iniquitas, quia et iniquitas est, et simulatio:* Feigned equity is double iniquity, both because it is iniquity, and because it is feigning.—*George Downame, D.D.,* 1604.

Verse 2.—"*He that walketh uprightly.*"—Here two questions are moved: First. Why David describes a sound member of the church, and inheritor of heaven, by works rather than by faith, seeing the kingdom of heaven is promised unto faith, and the profession thereof also maketh one a member of the visible church? Secondly. Why, among all the fruits of faith, almost innumerable, he makes choice of those duties especially which concern our neighbours? To the first, answer may be, that in this, and in all other places of Holy Scripture, where good works are commanded or commended in any, faith is ever presupposed, according to that apostolical maxim, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" "Without me," saith our blessed Saviour, "ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5); and without faith in him it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6); *fides est operum fomes,* as Paulinus wittily: "*Faith* (as our church speaks), *is the nest of good works;* albeit our birds

be never so fair, though haply we *do that which is right, and speak that which is true*, yet all these will be lost, except it be brought forth in a true belief." Aristides was so just in his government that he would not tread awry for any respect to friend or despite of foe. Pomponius is said to have been so true, that he never made lie himself, nor suffered a lie in other. Curtius at Rome, Menæceus at Thebes, Codrus at Athens, exposed themselves unto voluntary death, for the good of their neighbours and country: yet, because they wanted the rest of true faith in the world's Saviour where to lay their young, we cannot (if we speak with our prophet here from God's oracle), say that they shall ever rest upon his holy hill. Another answer may be, that faith is an inward and hidden grace, and many deceive themselves and others with a feigned profession thereof, and therefore the Holy Spirit will have every man's faith to be tried and known by their fruits, and howsoever eternal life be promised to faith, and eternal damnation be threatened against infidelity, yet the sentence of salvation and condemnation shall be pronounced according to works, as the clearest evidence of both. It is truly said, out of Bernard, that although our good works are not *causa regnandi*, yet they be *via regni*, the causeway wherein, albeit not the cause wherefore, we must ascend God's holy hill. To the second demand, why the duties immediately belonging to God, are not mentioned here, but only such as concern our brother? Answer is made, that this question is propounded of such as, living in the visible church, openly profess the faith, and would seem to be devout, hearing the word of God, and calling upon his name; for of such as are profane atheists, and do not so much as make a semblance of holiness, there is no question to be made, for, without all doubt, there can be no resting place for such in the kingdom of heaven. Now that we may discern aright which of those that profess religion are sound, and which unsound; the marks are not to be taken from an outward hearing of the word, or receiving of the sacraments, and much less from a formal observation of human traditions in God's tabernacle (for all these things hypocrites usually perform), but from the duties of righteousness, giving every man his due, because the touchstone of piety towards God is charity towards our brother. "Herein," saith John, "are the children of God known, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."—*John Boys.*

Verse 2.—There is no ascertaining the quality of a tree but by its fruits. When the wheels of a clock move within, the hands on the dial will move without. When the heart of a man is sound in conversion, then the life will be fair in profession. When the conduit is walled in, how shall we judge of the spring but by the waters which run through the pipes?—*William Secker.*

Verse 2.—"*And worketh righteousness.*" A man must first be righteous before he can work righteousness of life. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." 1 John iii. 7. The tree makes the fruit, not the fruit the tree; and therefore the tree must be good before the fruit can be good. Matt. vii. 18. A righteous man may make a righteous work, but no work of an unrighteous man can make him righteous. Now, we become righteous only by faith, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. Rom. v. 1. . . . . Wherefore let men work as they will, if they be not true believers in Christ, they are not workers of righteousness; and, consequently they will not be dwellers in heaven. Ye must then close with Christ in the first place, and by faith receive the gift of imputed righteousness, or ye will never truly bear this character of a citizen of Zion. A man shall as soon force fruit out of a branch broken off from the tree and withered, as work righteousness without believing in, and uniting with Christ. These are two things by which those that hear the gospel are ruined.—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 2.—"*Worketh righteousness.*" Jacob's ladder had stairs, upon which he saw none standing still, but all either ascending, or else descending by it. Ascend you likewise to the top of the ladder, to heaven, and there you shall hear one say, "My Father doth now work, and I work also." Whereupon Basil noteth that King David having first said, "*Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?*" adds then, not he that hath wrought righteousness heretofore, but *he that doth now work righteousness*, even as Christ saith, "My Father doth now work, and I work also."—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verse 2.—But here observe David saith, "that *worketh* righteousness;" not that talks about, thinks about, or hears of, righteousness; because, "not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law, shall be justified." What then do we owe unto others? That which Christ saith (Matt. vii.), "Whatsoever ye would that

men should do unto you, do ye also unto them," even unto your enemies: that is, to injure no one, to succour those that suffer injury, and to do good unto all men. But these things, I say, are spoken especially unto those who have respect of persons; as if he had said, It is not because thou art a priest, nor because thou art of a religious order, nor because thou prayest much, nor because thou dost miracles, nor because thou teachest excellently, nor because thou art dignified with the title of father, nor because thou art the doer of any work (except righteousness), that thou shalt rest in the holy hill of the Lord; for if thou be destitute of the work of righteousness, neither all thy good works, nor thy indulgences, nor thy votes and suffrages, nor thy intercessions, shall avail thee anything. Therefore, the truth is firm; that it is the walker without spot, and the doer of righteousness, that shall rest in the tabernacle of the Lord. Yet how many are there, who build, increase and adorn churches, monasteries, altars, vessels, garments, etc., who, all the while never so much as think of the works of righteousness; nay, who tread righteousness under foot that they may work these their own works, and because of them hope to gain the pardon of their unrighteousness, while thousands are deceived by these means! Hence, in the last day, Christ will say, "I was an hungered, I was thirsty, I was naked, I was in prison, I was a stranger." He will not say one word about those works which are done and admired at this day. And on the other hand, it is of no account against thee that thou art a layman, or poor, or sick or contemptible, or how vile soever thou art, if thou workest righteousness, thou shalt be saved. The only work that we must hope will be considered and accounted of, is the work of righteousness: all other works that either urge or allure us on under a show of godliness, are a thing of nought.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—"*And speaketh the truth in his heart.*" Anatomists have observed that the tongue in man is tied with a double string to the heart. And so in *truth spoken* there is necessary a double agreement of our words. 1. With our heart. That is, to the speaking of truth, it is necessary our words agree with our mind and thoughts about the thing. We must speak as we think, and our tongues must be faithful interpreters of our mind; otherwise we lie, not speaking as we think. So what is truth in itself may be spoken by a man, and yet he be a liar; namely, if he does not think as he speaks. 2. With the thing as it is in itself. Though we think a thing to be so, which is not so, we lie, when we affirm it; because it is not as we say, though we really think it is so. For our mistaken notions of things can never stamp lies to pass current for truths. 2 Thess ii. 11.—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 2.—I this day heard a sermon from Psalm xv. 2, "*And speaketh the truth in his heart.*" . . . . . O my soul, receive the admonition that has been given thee! Study truth in the inward parts; let integrity and truth always accompany thee, and preserve thee: speak the truth in thy heart. I am thankful for any conviction and sense I have of the evil of lying; Lord, increase my abhorrence of it: as a further assistance and help against this mean, sordid, pernicious vice, I would endeavour, and resolve, in pursuit of the directions laid before us in the sermon, to mortify those passions and corruptions from whence this sin of lying more ordinarily flows, and which are the chief occasion of it, as "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" (Matt. xv. 19); so, from the same fountain proceed evil words. And I would, with the greatest zeal, set myself against such corruptions as upon observation I find more commonly betray me into this iniquity: pride often indites our speech, and coins many a lie; so envy, covetousness, malice, etc. I would endeavour to cleanse myself from all this filthiness: there never will be a mortified tongue while there is an unmortified heart. If I love the world inordinately, it is a thousand to one I shall be often stretching a point to promote a worldly interest; and if I hate my brother, it is the same odds I shall reproach him. Lord, help me to purge the fountain, and then the streams will be pure. When the spring of a clock, and all the movements are right, the hand will go right; and so it is here. The tongue follows the inward inclination. I would resolve to do nothing that may need a lie. If Gehazi's covetousness had not shamed him, he had not wanted a lie to excuse him, "He that walks uprightly, walks surely" and safely in this, as well as other respects. Prov. x. 9. May I do nothing that is dishonourable and mean, nothing that cannot bear the light, and then I shall have little temptation to lying. I would endeavour for a lively sense of the eye of God upon me, acting and speaking in his presence. Lord, I desire to set thee always before me; thou understandest my thoughts as perfectly as others do my words. I would consider before I speak, and not speak much or rashly. Prov. xxix. 20. I would often think of the severity of a future

judgment, when every secret shall be made manifest, and the hypocrite and liar exposed before angels and men. Lastly, I would frequently beg divine assistance herein. Psalm cxix. 29 ; Prov. xxx. 8. O my God, help me in my future conduct, remove from me the way of lying ; may the law of kindness and truth be in my tongue ; may I take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I bewail my past miscarriages in this respect, and flee to thy mercy through the blood of Christ ; bless to me the instructions that have been this day given me ; let no iniquity prevail against me ; "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, and cleanse me from secret faults." I commit my thoughts, desires, and tongue, to thy conduct and government ; may I think and act in thy fear, and always speak the truth in my heart.—*Benjamin Bennet's "Christian Oratory,"* 1728.

Verses 2, 5.—As the eagle casteth off her beak, and so reneweth her youth, and the snake strippeth off her old skin, and so maketh herself smooth : even so he that will enter into the joys of God, and rest upon his holy mountain, must, as the Scripture speaks, put off the old man and put on the new, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, repenting truly, speedily, steadily.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 3.—*" He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour."* Lamentation for the gross neglect of this duty, or the frequent commission of this sin. What tears are sufficient to bewail it ? How thick do censures and reproaches fly in all places, at all tables, in all conventions ! And this were the more tolerable, if it were only the fault of ungodly men, of strangers and enemies to religion ; for so saith the proverb, " Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked." When a man's heart is full of hell, it is not unreasonable to expect that his tongue should be set on fire of hell ; and it is no wonder to hear such persons reproach good men, yea, even for their goodness. But alas ! the disease doth not rest here, this plague is not only among the Egyptians but Israelites too. It is very doleful to consider how professors sharpen their tongues like swords against professors ; and one good man censures and reproaches another, and one minister traduceth another ; and who can say, " I am clean from this sin " ? O that I could move your pity in this case ! For the Lord's sake pity yourselves, and do not pollute and wound your consciences with this crime. Pity your brethren ; let it suffice that godly ministers and Christians are loaded with reproaches by wicked men—there is no need that you should combine with them in this diabolical work. You should support and strengthen their hands against the reproaches of the ungodly world, and not add affliction to the afflicted. O pity the world, and pity the church which Christ hath purchased with his own blood, which methinks bespeaks you in the words, " Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends ; for the hand of God hath touched me." Job. xix. 21. Pity the mad and miserable world, and help it against this sin ; stop the bloody issue ; restrain this wicked practice amongst men as much as possibly you can, and lament it before God, and for what you cannot do yourselves, give God no rest until he shall please to work a cure.—*Matthew Poole,* 1624—1679.

Verse 3.—*" He that backbiteth not,"* etc. Detraction or slander is not lightly to be passed over, because we do so easily fail in this point. For the good name of a man, as saith Solomon, is a precious thing to every one, and to be preferred before much treasure, insomuch that it is no less grievous to hurt a man with the tongue than with a sword : nay, ofttimes the stroke of a tongue is grievouser than the wound of a spear, as it is in the French proverb. And therefore the tongue must be bridled, that we hurt not in any wise the good name of our neighbour ; but preserve it unto him safe and sound as much as in us shall lie. That which he addeth touching evil or injury not to be done to our neighbour, is like unto that which we have seen already concerning the working or exercising of righteousness. He would have us therefore so to exercise all upright dealing, that we might be far from doing any damage or wrong to our neighbours. And by the name of neighbour, is meant every man and woman, as it is plain and evident. For we are all created of God, and placed in this world that we might live uprightly and sincerely together. And therefore he breaketh the law of human society (for we are all tied and bound by this law of nature) that doth hurt or injury to another. The third member of this verse is, *nor that reproacheth another,* or, that maintaineth not a false report given one against another ; which latter particle seemeth to be the better, since he had spoken before expressly, touching the good name of another, not to be hurt or wronged with our tongue. To the which fault this is next in degree, wherewith we are too

much encumbered, and which we scarce acknowledge to be a fault, when we further and maintain the slanders devised and given out by another against a man, either by hearing them or by telling them forth to others, as we heard them. For why? It seemeth for the most part to be enough for us if we can say, that we feign not this or that, nor make it of our own heads, but only tell it forth as we heard it of others, without adding anything of our own brain. But as oft as we do this we fail in our duty doing, in not providing for our neighbour's credit, as were requisite for the things, which being uttered by others ought to be passed over in silence and to lie dead, we gather up, and by telling them forth, disperse them abroad, which whether it be a sin or no, when as we ought by all means possible to wish and do well unto our neighbour, all men do see. And therefore thou that travellest towards eternal life, must not only not devise false reports and slanders against other men, but also not so much as have them in thy mouth being devised by others, neither by any means assist or maintain them in slandering; but by all honest and lawful means, provide for the credit and estimation of thy neighbour, so much as in thee lieth.—*Peter Baro, D.D.*, 1560.

Verse 3.—"*He that backbiteth not with his tongue.*" The Hebrew word רָגַל signifieth to play the spy, and by a metaphor to *backbite* or *slander*, for *backbiters* and whisperers, after the manner of spies, go up and down dissembling their malice, that they may espy the faults and defects of others, whereof they may make a malicious relation to such as will give ear to their slanders. So that *backbiting* is a malicious defamation of a man behind his back . . . . . And that the citizen of heaven doth and ought to abhor from *backbiting*, the horrible wickedness of this sin doth evince. For first, Lev. xix. 16, where it is straightly forbidden, the "*tale-bearer*" is compared to a pedlar: "Thou shalt not walk about with tales and slanders, as it were a pedlar among thy people." So much רָכִיל signifieth. For as the pedlar having bought his wares of some one or more goeth about from house to house that he may sell the same to others; so *backbiters* and *tale-bearers*, gathering together tales and rumours, as it were wares, go from one to another, that such wares as either themselves have invented, or have gathered by report, they may utter in the absence of their neighbour to his infamy and disgrace. Likewise Psalm l. 20, it is condemned as a notable crime, which God will not suffer to go unpunished; Ezek. xxii. 9, it is reckoned among the abominations of Jerusalem, for which destruction is denounced against it; and Rom. i. 29, 30, among the crimes of the heathen, given over unto a reprobate sense, this is placed: they were "*whisperers and backbiters.*"—*George Downame.*

Verse 3.—"*He that backbiteth not.*" He that is guilty of backbiting, that speaks evil of another behind his back, if that which he speaks be false, is guilty of lying, which is prejudicial to salvation. If that which he speaks be true, yet he is void of charity in seeking to defame another. For as Solomon observes, "Love covereth all sins." Prov. x. 12. Where there is love and charity, there will be a covering and concealing of men's sins as much as may be. Now, where charity is wanting, their salvation is not to be expected. 1 Cor. xiii. 1, etc.; 1 John iii. 14, 15.—*Christopher Cartwright*, 1602—1658.

Verse 3.—"*Backbiteth not.*" This crime is a conjugation of evils, and is productive of infinite mischiefs; it undermines peace, and saps the foundation of friendship; it destroys families, and rends in pieces the very heart and vitals of charity; it makes an evil man party, and witness, and judge, and executioner of the innocent. *Bishop Taylor.*

Verse 3.—"*Backbiteth.*" The scorpion hurteth none but such as he toucheth with the tip of his tail; and the crocodile and basilisk slay none but such as either the force of their sight, or strength of their breath reacheth. The viper woundeth none but such as it biteth; the venomous herbs or roots kill none but such as taste, or handle, or smell them, and so come near unto them; but the poison of slanderous tongues is much more rank and deadly; for that hurteth and slayeth, woundeth and killeth, not only near, but afar off; not only at hand, but by distance of place removed; not only at home, but abroad, not only in our own nation but in foreign countries; and spareth neither quick nor dead.—*Richard Turnbull.*

Verse 3.—"*Backbiteth.*" The word here used comes from a root signifying *foot*, and denotes a person who goes about from house to house, speaking things he should not (1 Tim. v. 13); and a word from this root signifies *spies;* and the phrase here may point at persons who creep into houses, pry into the secrets of families, divulge them, and oftentimes represent them in a false light. Such are ranked

among the worst of men, and are very unfit to be in the society of saints, or in a church of Christ. See Rom. i. 30.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"*Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*" The saints of God must not be too light of hearing, much less of believing all tales, rumours, and reports of their brethren; and charity requireth that we do not only stop and stay them, but that we examine them before we believe them. Saul, the king, too light of belief in this point, believed the slanderous and false reports of David's enemies, who put into Saul's head that David imagined evil against him. Yea, David himself showed his great infirmity in that, that without due examination and proof of the matter, he believed the false report of Ziba against Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan; of whom to David the king, persecuted by Absalom his son, Ziba reported falsely, that he should say, "This day shall the house of Israel restore unto me the kingdom of my father." The example of whose infirmity in Scripture reproved, must not we follow; but let us rather embrace the truth of that heavenly doctrine which, through God's Spirit, here he preacheth, that we believe not false reports against our neighbours.—*Richard Turnbull.*

Verse 3.—Despise not thy neighbour, but think thyself as bad a sinner, and that the like defects may befall thee. If thou canst not excuse his doing, excuse his intent which may be good; or if the deed be evil, think it was done of ignorance; if thou canst no way excuse him, think some great temptation befell him, and that thou shouldst be worse if the like temptation befell thee; and give God thanks that the like as yet hath not befallen thee. Despise not a man being a sinner, for though he be evil to-day, he may turn to-morrow.—*Williams Perkins*, 1558—1602.

Verses 3, 4, 5.—They that cry down moral honesty, cry down that which is a great part of religion, my duty towards God, and my duty towards man. What care I to see a man run after a sermon, if he cozens and cheats as soon as he comes home? On the other side, morality must not be without religion, for it so, it may change as I see convenience. Religion must govern it. He that has not religion to govern his morality, is not a dram better than my mastiff-dog; so long as you stroke him, and please him, and do not pinch him, he will play with you as finely as may be, he is a very good moral mastiff; but if you hurt him, he will fly in your face, and tear out your throat.—*John Seldon*, 1584—1654.

Verse 4.—"*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned,*" etc. When wicked Jehoram, king of Israel, came to Eliseus, the prophet, to ask counsel of the Lord, and to entreat for waters, having in company Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, being virtuous; the prophet showeth his contempt to the one being wicked, and his reverence to the other, being godly, faithful and virtuous, said, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." 2 Kings iii. 14. Thus was the wicked *vile* in his sight; thus did he not flatter the ungodly. In like manner godly Mordecai, the Jew, having Haman the ambitious and proud Agagite in contempt, would in no wise bow the knee unto him in sign of honour, as the rest of the people did; for which cause he was extremely hated, menaced and molested of proud and wicked Haman. To wink at their wickedness, to uphold them in their iniquity, to fawn upon them and flatter them, to praise them when they deserve just reproof, is, as it were, an honouring of them; to which, as to a most grievous sin, the prophet denounceth a most bitter curse: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Isaiah v. 20.—*Richard Turnbull.*

Verse 4.—"*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned.*" To *contemn* the wicked and honour the godly, are opposite the one to the other. But the former may seem not to be sufficiently beseeming to a godly man. For why should he contemn or despise others, who is commanded by all means to care for the credit of others, as we heard even now? Nay, a godly man, letting others go, ought to search into himself, and to accuse himself, but not to judge of others. But this saying of the prophet is to be understood rather of the faults than of the person. As every man therefore is to be loved, so are the faults of every man to be hated of the godly. For so is God himself, whom we desire to be like unto, that we might dwell with him, affected and disposed. For why? he hateth no man, nay, he hateth nothing at all in this whole universal world, but only sin. For he is the author and preserver of all things that be; and therefore doth good and wisheth well to all; only of sin he is not the author, but the free and unconstrained will of man and

Satan. Notwithstanding God doth so greatly hate sin, that by reason thereof he doth sometimes neglect and forsake men, yea, and have them in contempt. So then a godly man hateth no man, nor contemneth any; but yet notwithstanding he disliketh sin in sinful men, and that he sticketh not to let them perceive either by reproving them, or shunning their company, or by doing of some other thing, whereby they may know they are misliked of good men for their enormities, and see themselves to be contemned of others for their wicked and ungodly life. A good man therefore must not flatter the ungodly in their ungracious attempts, but must freely declare that he disalloweth their course and conversation.—*Peter Baro.*

Verse 4.—"*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned.*" Augustine, as Posidonius writeth, showing what hatred he had to tale-bearers and false reporters of others, had two verses written over his table; by translation these:—

> "He that doth love with bitter speech the absent to defame,
> Must surely know that at this board no place is for the same."

Richard Turnbull.

Verse 4.—"*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned.*" The burgess of the New Jerusalem, *reprobos reprobat, et probos probat;* he cannot flatter any man, nor fancy such as in whom he findeth not *aliquid Christi,* something of the image of God. A golden Colosse stuffed with rubbish, he cannot stoop to, "*But he honoureth them that fear the Lord,*" as the only earthly angels, though never so mean and despicable in the world's eye. Mr. Fox, being asked whether he remembered not such a poor servant of God who had received succour from him in time of trouble? answered "I remember him well; I tell you, I forget the lords and ladies, to remember such."—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*He honoureth them that fear the Lord.*" Though the godly some way or other be injurious unto us, we ought nevertheless to honour and not to despise them. So Joseph did Mary, though he supposed her to have dealt injuriously with him; and she had done so, indeed, if it had been with her as he imagined. Calvin's resolution concerning Luther was very admirable in this respect. They differed much about the presence of Christ in the sacrament; and Luther being of a vehement spirit, wrote bitterly against those that did hold otherwise in that point than himself did. This enforced some, who were more nearly concerned in the business, to prepare to answer Luther; which Calvin understanding, and fearing lest they, being provoked by Luther's tartness, should deal with him in the like kind, he wrote unto Bullinger, a prime man among them, persuading and exhorting him to carry the business so as to show all due respect unto Luther, considering what worth and excellency there was in him, however he had demeaned himself in that particular. And he adds, that he often used to say, that although Luther should call him devil, yet he would do him that honour to acknowledge him a choice servant of God. —*Christopher Cartwright.*

Verse 4.—"*He honoureth them that fear the Lord.*" I have read of one that said, If he should meet a preacher and an angel together, he would first salute the preacher and then the angel.—*Charles Bradbury's "Cabinet of Jewels,"* 1785.

Verse 4.—"*He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*"

> "His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;
> His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate;
> His tears pure messengers, sent from his heart;
> His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth."

William Shakespere.

Verse 5.—The Puritanic divines are almost all of them against the taking of any interest upon money, and go the length of saying that one penny per cent. per annum will shut a man out of heaven if persisted in, It appeared to me to be useless to quote opinions in which I cannot agree, especially as this would occupy space better employed. The demanding of excessive and grinding interest is a sin to be detested; the taking of the usual and current interest in a commercial country is not contrary to the law of love. The Jews were not engaged in commerce, and to lend money even at the lowest interest to their fellow farmers in times of poverty would have been usurious; but they might lend to strangers, who would usually be occupied in commerce, because in the commercial world, money is a fruitful thing, and the lender has a right to a part of its products; a loan to enable a non-trader to live over a season of want is quite another matter.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—"*He that putteth not out his money to usury.*" By usury is generally understood the gain of anything above the principal, or that which was lent, exacted only in consideration of the loan, whether it be in money, corn, wares, or the like. It is most commonly taken for an unlawful profit which a person makes of his money or goods. The Hebrew word for usury signifies biting. The law of God prohibits rigorous imposing conditions of gain for the loan of money or goods, and exacting them without respect to the condition of the borrower, whether he gain or lose; whether poverty occasioned his borrowing, or a visible prospect of gain by employing the borrowed goods. It is said in Exod. xxii. 25, 26, "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an *usurer*, neither shalt thou lay upon him *usury*," etc. And in Lev. xxv. 35, 36, 37, "If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen into decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner, that he may live with thee: take thou no *usury* of him," etc. This law forbids the taking *usury* from a brother that was poor, an Israelite reduced to poverty, or from a proselyte; but in Deut. xxiii. 20, God seems to tolerate *usury* towards strangers; "Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon *usury*." By *strangers*, in this passage, some understand the Gentiles in general, or all such as were not Jews, excepting proselytes. Others think that by *strangers* are meant the Canaanites, and the other people that were devoted to slavery and subjection; of these the Hebrews were permitted to exact *usury*, but not of such *strangers* with whom they had no quarrel, and against whom the Lord had not denounced his judgments. The Hebrews were plainly commanded in Exod. xxii. 25, etc., not to receive *usury* for money from any that borrowed from necessity, as in that case in Neh. v. 5, 7. And such provision the law made for the preserving of estates to their families by the year of jubilee; for a people that had little concern in trade, could not be supposed to borrow money but out of necessity: but they were allowed to lend upon *usury* to strangers, whom yet they must not oppress. This law, therefore, in the strictness of it, seems to have been peculiar to the Jewish state; but in the equity of it, it obligeth us to show mercy to those we have advantage against, and to be content to share with those we lend to in loss, as well as profit, if Providence cross them. And upon this condition, a valuable commentator says, "It seems as lawful for me to receive interest for money, which another takes pains with, improves, but runs the hazard of in trade, as it is to receive rent for my land, which another takes pains with, improves, but runs the hazard of in husbandry."—*Alexander Cruden*, 1701—1770.

Verse 5.—"*He that putteth not out his money to usury.*" "*If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee.*" Exod. xxii. 25. Rather, according to the letter of the original, "If thou lend money to my people, even to a poor man with thee." The Israelites were a people but little engaged in commerce, and therefore could not in general be supposed to borrow money but from sheer necessity; and of that necessity the lender was not to take advantage by usurious exactions. The law is not to be understood as a prohibition of interest at any rate whatever, but of excessive interest or usury. The clause, "Thou shalt not be to him as an usurer," is equivalent to saying, "Thou shalt not domineer and lord it over him rigorously and cruelly." That this class of men were peculiarly prone to be extortionate and oppressive in their dealings with debtors would seem to be implied by the etymology of the original term for *usury* (נֶשֶׁךְ *neshek*), which comes from a root signifying *to bite;* and in Neh. v. 2—5, we have a remarkable case of the bitter and grinding effects resulting from the exercise of the creditor's rights over the debtor. A large portion of the people had not only mortgaged their lands, vineyards and houses, but had actually sold their sons and daughters into bondage, to satisfy the claims of their grasping creditors. In this emergency Nehemiah espoused the cause of the poor, and compelled the rich, against whom he called the people together, to remit the whole of their dues; and, moreover, exacted from them an oath that they would never afterwards oppress their poor brethren for the payment of those debts. This was not because every part of those proceedings had been contrary to the letter of the Mosaic law, but because it was a flagrant breach of equity under the circumstances. It was taking a cruel and barbarous advantage of the necessities of their brethren, at which God was highly indignant, and which his servants properly rebuked. From this law the Hebrew canonists have gathered a general rule, that "Whoso exacteth of a poor man, and knoweth that he hath not aught to pay with, he transgresseth against this prohibition, Thou shalt not be to him as an exacting creditor." (*Maimonides, in Ainsworth.*) We

nowhere learn from the institutes delivered by Moses that the simple taking of interest, especially from the neighbouring nations (Deut. xxiii. 19, 20), was forbidden to the Israelites; but the divine law would give no countenance to the griping and extortionate practices to which miserly money-lenders are always prone. The deserving and industrious poor might sometimes be reduced to such straits, that pecuniary accommodations might be very desirable to them; and towards such God would inculcate a mild, kind, and forbearing spirit, and the precept is enforced by the relation which they sustained to him: *q.d.*, "Remember that you are lending to *my* people, *my* poor; and therefore take no advantage of their necessities. Trust me against the fear of loss, and treat them kindly and generously."—*George Bush, in "Notes on the Book of Exodus,"* 1856.

Verse 5.—"*He that putteth not out his money to usury.*" With respect to the first clause, as David seems to condemn all kinds of usury in general, and without exception, the very name has been everywhere held in detestation. But crafty men have invented specious names under which to conceal the vice; and thinking by this artifice to escape, they have plundered with greater excess than if they had lent on usury avowedly and openly. God, however, will not be dealt with and imposed upon by sophistry and false pretences. He looks upon the thing as it really is. There is no worse species of usury than an unjust way of making bargains, where equity is disregarded on both sides. Let us, then, remember that all bargains, in which the one party unrighteously strives to make gain by the loss of the other party, whatever name may be given to them, are here condemned. It may be asked, whether all kinds of usury are to be put into this denunciation, and regarded as alike unlawful? If we condemn all without distinction, there is a danger lest many, seeing themselves brought into such a strait as to find that sin must be incurred, in whatever way they can turn themselves, may be rendered bolder by despair, and may rush headlong into all kinds of usury without choice or discrimination. On the other hand, whenever we concede that something may be lawfully done in this way, many will give themselves loose reins, thinking that a liberty to exercise usury, without control or moderation, has been granted them. In the first place, therefore, I would, above all things, counsel my readers to beware of ingeniously contriving deceitful pretexts by which to take advantage of their fellow men, and let them not imagine that anything can be lawful to them which is grievous and hurtful to others. . . . . It is not without cause that God has in Lev. xxv. 35, 36, forbidden usury, adding this reason: "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take thou no usury of him, or increase." We see that the end for which the law was framed was that man should not cruelly oppress the poor, who ought rather to receive sympathy and compassion. This was, indeed, a part of the judicial law which God appointed for the Jews in particular; but it is a common principle of justice, which extends to all nations, and to all ages, that we should keep ourselves from plundering and devouring the poor who are in distress and want. Whence it follows, that the gain which he who lends his money upon interest acquires, without doing injury to any one, is not to be included under the head of unlawful usury. The Hebrew word נֶשֶׁךְ *neshek*, which David employs, being derived from another word which signifies *to bite*, sufficiently shows that usuries are condemned in so far as they involve in them, or lead to, a license of robbing or plundering our fellow men. Ezekiel, indeed (chapters xviii. 17, and xxii. 12), seems to condemn the taking of any interest whatever upon money lent; but he, doubtless, has an eye to the unjust and crafty arts of gaining by which the rich devoured the poor people. In short, provided we had engraven on our hearts the rule of equity which Christ prescribes in Matt. vii. 12, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," it would not be necessary to enter into lengthened disputes concerning usury.—*John Calvin, in loc.*

Verse 5 (*first clause*).—The Mosaic law forbids the lending of money for interest to an Israelite. Exod. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 37; Deut. xxiii. 19; Prov. xxviii. 8; Ezek. xviii. 8. In several of the passages referred to, it is expressly supposed that money is lent only to the poor, a supposition which has its ground in the simple relations of the Mosaic times, in which lending, for the purpose of speculation and gain, had no existence. Such lending ought only to be a work of brotherly love; and it is a great violation of that if any one, instead of helping his neighbour, takes advantage of his need to bring him into still greater straits. The Mosaic regulation

in question has, accordingly, its import also for New Testament times. With the interest-lending of capitalists, who borrow for speculation, it has nothing to do. This belongs to a quite different matter, as is implied even by the name נשך, *a mordendo*, according to which only such usury can be meant as plagues and impoverishes a neighbour. By unseasonable comparison with our modes of speech, many would expound, " His money he puts not to interest."—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5 (*first clause*).—The worm called in Latin *teredo*, whereof Pliny hath reported something in his story, breeding in wood, to the touch is soft, yet it hath such teeth as endeavoureth and consumeth the hard timber. So the usurer is a soft beast at first to handle, but in continuance of time the hardness of his teeth will eat thee up, both flesh and bone, if thou beware not. He pleadeth love, but not for thy sake, but for his own ; for as the ivy colleth and claspeth the oak as a lover, but thereby it groweth up and overtoppeth the oak, and sucketh out the juice and sap thereof, that it cannot thrive nor prosper ; so the usurer colleth, embraceth, and claspeth in arms the borrower, that thereby himself may grow richer, and suck all wealth, goods, and riches from him, that he never thriveth or prospereth after. The pleasure the usurer showeth is like the playing of the cat with the silly mouse : the cat playeth with the mouse, but the play of the cat is the death of the mouse. The usurer pleasureth the borrower ; but the pleasure of the usurer is the undoing of the borrower. The fox through craft slideth and tumbleth, and maketh much pastime till he come to the prey, then he devoureth : the usurer maketh many fair speeches, giveth out many fair promises, pretendeth very great kindness, until he have got thee within his compass, then he crusheth and cruciateth thee. The usurer preyeth upon the poor, he waxeth rich of the penury of his brother, he clotheth himself with the coat of the naked, he gathereth riches of the indigency and want of his neighbour ; he feedeth himself of the bread of the hungry, and devoureth his poor brother, as the great beasts do the smaller ; than which, saith Ambrose, there is no greater inhumanity and cruelty, no greater wretchedness and iniquity, as Chrysostom in many places, and Basil upon this Psalm, have well observed.—*Richard Turnbull.*

Verse 5.—The rich make the poor to fill them ; for *usurers* feed upon the poor, even as great fishes devour the small. Therefore, he which said, Let there not be a beggar in Israel (Deut. xv. 4), said too, Let there not be an usurer in Israel. For if there be usurers in Israel there will be beggars in Israel ; for usurers make beggars, even as lawyers make quarrellers. . . . It is a miserable occupation to live by sin, and a great comfort to a man when he looketh upon his gold and silver, and his heart telleth him, All this is well gotten ; and when he lieth upon his death-bed, and must leave all to his children, he can say unto them, I leave you mine own ; but the usurer cannot say, I leave you mine own, but I leave you other men's ; therefore the usurer can never die in peace, because if he die before he maketh restitution, he dieth in his sin.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 5.—Biting *usurers* were so abhorred in the primitive church, that as they condemned the usurer himself, so they made the scribes, who wrote the bonds, and also the witnesses, incapable of any benefit ; and that no testament or latter will, written by such should be valid. The house of the usurer was called *domus Satanæ*, the house of the devil ; and they ordained that no man should eat or drink with such usurers, nor fetch fire from them ; and after they were dead that they should not be buried in Christian burial. The conclusion of this is (Ezek. xviii. 13), this sin is matched with theft ; and verse 11, with adultery ; and verse 12, with violence ; it is the daughter of oppression and sister to idolatry, and he that doth these things shall not *dwell in God's holy hill.* Albeit, these worldings think themselves more honest than thieves and adulterers, yet the Lord maketh their case all alike.—*John Weemse*, 1636.

Verse 5.—" *Taketh reward against the innocent.*"—I am sure this is *scala inferni*, the right way to hell, to be covetous, to take bribes, and pervert justice. If a judge should ask me the way to hell, I should show him this way : First, let him be a covetous man ; let his heart be poisoned with covetousness. Then let him go a little further and take bribes ; and, lastly, pervert judgments. Lo, here is the mother, and the daughter, and the daughter's daughter. Avarice is the mother ; she brings forth bribe-taking, and bribe-taking perverting of judgment. There lacks a fourth thing to make up the mess, which, so help me God, if I were judge, should be *hangum tuum*, a Tyburn tippet to take with him ; an it were the judge

of the King's Bench, my Lord Judge of England, yea, an it were my Lord Chancellor himself, to Tyburn with him.—*Hugh Latimer.*

Verse 5.—"*Taketh reward against the innocent.*" I come to corrupt lawyers and advocates, who so often *take rewards against the innocent*, as they do take upon them the defence of such causes as they in their own conscience are persuaded to be evil and unjust. Which being so common a fault among lawyers, as that very few which plead causes, either in civil or ecclesiastical courts, do seem to make any conscience thereof, to whom all is fish that cometh to their nets; therefore all lawyers are to be exhorted to apply this note unto themselves.—*George Downame.*

Verse 5.—"*He that doeth.*" 'Tis not said he that *professes* this or that, or he that *believes* thus and thus, or he that is of such or such an *opinion* or *way of worship*, or he that sets up *new lights*, and pretends the *Spirit* for his immediate guide; 'tis not he that *hears* much or *talks* much of religion; no, nor he that *preaches* and *prays* much, nor he that *thinks* much of these things, and *means well;* but 'tis he that "*doeth these things*"—that is actually employed about them—that is the religious and truly godly man. 'Tis not, I say, a formal *professor*, a confidant *solifidian*, a wild *opinionist*, a high flown *perfectist;* it is not a constant *hearer*, or a mighty *talker*, or a laborious *teacher*, or a *gifted brother*, or a simple *well-wisher* must pass; but 'tis the honest and sincere *doer* of these things, that will abide the test and stand the trial; when all other flashy pretences shall, in those searching flames, be burnt and consumed like "hay and stubble," as the apostle expresses it. To wear Christ's livery and to do him no service is but to mock a gracious Master; to own him in our *profession* and deny him in our *practice*, is, with Judas, to betray him with a kiss of homage; with the rude soldiers to bow the knee before him, and, in the meantime, to beat his sacred head with his reeden sceptre, and with Pilate to crown him with thorns, to crucify the Lord and write over his head, "King of the Jews:" in a word, to grieve him with our honours, and wound him with our acknowledgments. A Christian profession without a life answerable, will be so far from saving any one, that 'twill highly aggravate his condemnation; when a dissembled friendship at the great day of discoveries shall be looked upon as the worst of enmities. A mere outside formality of worship, is at best but Prometheus' sacrifice, a skeleton of bones and a religious cheat. . . . The harmless humour of *meaning well* is not enough to approve a man's spiritual state, to acquit obligations, or to ascertain his expectations. For he that bids us "eschew evil" does immediately subjoin, that we must "follow" and "hold fast that which is good." It will be no good account not to have done evil, unless we make it appear that we have been doing good too; since the non-commission of great sins will not excuse our omission of great duties. In the busy commonwealth of bees, the drone without a sting, as she has no weapon for mischief, so, wanting a tool for employ, is deservedly cashiered the hive.—*Condensed from Adam Littleton, D.D.*, 1627—1694.

Verse 5.—"*He that doeth these things, shall never be moved.*" Mark how the prophet saith not, he that readeth these things, or he that heareth these things, but he that *doth* them, shall never be removed. For were it enough to read or hear these precepts, then should an infinite number of vain and wicked persons enter into, and continue in the church, which notwithstanding have no place therein; for there are very few, or none at all, which have not read, or at least have not heard these things, yet they will not do them. Neither doth he say, he that talketh of these things, but he that *doth* them; for many now in these days can talk gloriously of uprightness, justice, truth, in whom notwithstanding, there is neither upright dealings, nor sound righteousness, nor unfeigned truth to be found. Many can say that slander is sin, injury is iniquity, to receive false reports is uncharitable, that it becometh not the saints to flatter the wicked, that to break promise and falsify their oaths is unseemly, to give upon usury is oppression, to receive bribes against the innocent is extreme cruelty; yet themselves backbite and hurt their neighbour, they themselves believe every tale that is brought them, they flatter and fawn upon the wicked for advantage, they swear and forswear for commodity, they oppress through usury, and receive gifts of bribery against the innocent; and so in word they speak of these things, but *do them not* indeed. . . . . Neither doth David say he that preacheth these, "*shall never be removed,*" for then not only many other wicked persons, which can speak of, yea many ungodly men which can also preach of virtue, should have the place in the Lord's tabernacle, and rest upon his holy hill; but also among others, even Balaam the covetous prophet, should have a sure place in God's tabernacle; for he could say,

'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more" (Num. xxii. 18); yet he took rewards; yet he was carried away with covetousness, as much as in him lay, to work the destruction of Israel, the innocent people of the Lord.—*Richard Turnbull.*

Verse 5.—"*Shall never be moved.*" Moved he may be for a time, but not removed for ever. His soul is bound up in the bundle of life, near unto the throne of glory; when the souls of the wicked are restless as a stone in the midst of a sling, saith the Targum in 1 Sam. xxv.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—The holy soul is the love of God, the joy of angels; her eyes dare look upon the glorious Judge whom she knows to be her Saviour. Her heart is courageous; she dares stand the thunder; and when guilty minds creep into corners, she is confident in him that he will defend her. She challengeth the whole world to accuse her of injustice, and fears not the subornation of false witnesses, because she knows the testimony of her own conscience. Her language is free and bold, without the guiltiness of broken stops. Her forehead is clear and smooth, as the brow of heaven. Her knees are ever bent to the throne of grace; her feet travelling towards Jerusalem; her hands weaving the web of righteousness. Good men bless her; good angels guard her; the Son of God doth kiss her; and when all the world shall be turned to a burning pile, she shall be brought safe to the mountain of joy, and set in a throne of blessedness for ever.—*Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Qualifications for church membership on earth and in heaven. A subject for self-examination.

Verse 1.—I. *Comparison of the church to the tabernacle.* God's presence manifested, sacrifice offered, and vessels of grace preserved in it; mean externally, glorious within. II. *Comparison of its double position to that of the tabernacle.* Moving in the wilderness, and fixed on the hill. III. Enquire into qualifications for admittance into church and tabernacle. Parallel with the priests, etc.

Verse 1.—The great question. Asked by idle curiosity, despair, godly fear, earnest enquirer, soul troubled by falls of others, holy faith. Give answer to each.

Verse 1.—The citizen of Zion described.—*Thomas Boston's Sermons.*

Verse 1.—Anxiety to know the true saints, how far lawful and profitable.

Verse 1.—God the only infallible discerner of true saints.

Verse 2.—"*He that walketh uprightly.*" I. What he must be. He must be upright in heart. A man himself bent double cannot walk uprightly. II. How he must act. Neither from impulse, ambition, gain, fear, or flattery. He must not be warped in any direction, but stand perpendicularly. III. What he must expect. Snares, etc. to trip him. IV. Where he must walk. Path of duty, the only one in which he can walk uprightly. V. Where he must look. Up, right-up, and then he will be upright.

Verse 2.—"*Speaketh the truth in his heart.*" Subject:—Heart falsehood and heart truth.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—The citizen of Zion an upright walker.

Verse 2 (*middle clause*).—The citizen of Zion, a worker of righteousness.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The citizen of Zion, a speaker of truth.—*Four Sermons in Thomas Boston's Works.*

Verse 3.—The evils of detraction. It affects three persons here mentioned: the backbiter, the suffering neighbour, and the taker-up of the reproach.

Verse 3.—"*Nor taketh up a reproach.*" The sin of being too ready to believe ill reports. Common, cruel, foolish, injurious, wicked.

Verse 4.—The duty of practically honouring those who fear the Lord. Commendation, deference, assistance, imitation, etc.

Verse 4.—The sin of estimating persons other than by their practical characters.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—The Lord Jesus as our unchanging Surety, his oath and his hurt.

Verse 5.—The evidences and privileges of godly men.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—The fixedness and safety of the godly.

PSALM XVI.

TITLE.—MICHTAM OF DAVID. *This is usually understood to mean* THE GOLDEN PSALM, *and such a title is most appropriate, for the matter is as the most fine gold. Ainsworth calls it "David's jewel, or notable song." Dr. Hawker, who is always alive to passages full of savour, devoutly cries, "Some have rendered it* precious, *others* golden, *and others,* precious jewel; *and as the Holy Ghost, by the apostles Peter and Paul, hath shown us that it is all about the Lord Jesus Christ, what is here said of him is precious, is golden, is a jewel indeed!" We have not met with the term* Michtam *before, but if spared to write upon Psalms* lvi., lvii., lviii., lix. *and* lx., *we shall see it again, and shall observe that like the present these Psalms, although they begin with prayer, and imply trouble, abound in holy confidence and close with songs of assurance as to ultimate safety and joy. Dr. Alexander, whose notes are peculiarly valuable, thinks that the word is most probably a simple derivative of a word signifying to* hide, *and signifies a secret or mystery, and indicates the depth of doctrinal and spiritual import in these sacred compositions. If this be the true interpretation it well accords with the other, and when the two are put together, they make up a name which every reader will remember, and which will bring the precious subject at once to mind.* THE PSALM OF THE PRECIOUS SECRET.

SUBJECT.—*We are not left to human interpreters for the key to this golden mystery, for, speaking by the Holy Ghost, Peter tells us, "David speaketh concerning* HIM." (Acts ii. 25). *Further on in his memorable sermon he said, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before* spake of the resurrection of Christ, *that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."* (Acts ii. 29—31.) *Nor is this our only guide, for the apostle Paul, led by the same infallible inspiration, quotes from this Psalm, and testifies that David wrote of the man through whom is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins.* (Acts xiii. 35—8.) *It has been the usual plan of commentators to apply the Psalm both to David, to the saints, and to the Lord Jesus, but we will venture to believe that in it "* Christ is all; *" since in the ninth and tenth verses, like the apostles on the mount, we can see "no man but Jesus only."*

DIVISION.—*The whole is so compact that it is difficult to draw sharp lines of division. It may suffice to note our Lord's prayer of faith, verse* 1, *avowal of faith in Jehovah alone,* 2, 3, 4, 5, *the contentment of his faith in the present,* 6, 7, *and the joyous confidence of his faith for the future* (8, 11.)

EXPOSITION.

PRESERVE me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

"Preserve me," keep, or save me, or as Horsley thinks, *"guard me,"* even as body-guards surround their monarch, or as shepherds protect their flocks. Tempted in all points like as we are, the manhood of Jesus needed to be preserved from the power of evil; and though in itself pure, the Lord Jesus did not confide in that purity of nature, but as an example to his followers, looked to the Lord, his God, for preservation. One of the great names of God is "the Preserver of men," (Job vii. 20), and this gracious office the Father exercised towards our Mediator and Representative. It had been promised to the Lord Jesus in express words, that he should be preserved, Isa. xlix. 7, 8. "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." This promise was to the letter fulfilled, both by providential deliverance and sustaining power, in the case of our Lord. Being preserved himself, he is able to restore the preserved of Israel, for we are "preserved in Christ Jesus and called." As one with him, the elect were preserved in his preservation, and we may view this mediatorial

supplication as the petition of the Great High Priest for all those who are in him. The intercession recorded in John xvii. is but an amplification of this cry, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*." When he says "preserve me," he means his members, his mystical body, himself, and all in him. But while we rejoice in the fact that the Lord Jesus used this prayer for his members, we must not forget that he employed it most surely for himself; he had so emptied himself, and so truly taken upon him the form of a servant, that as man he needed divine keeping even as we do, and often cried unto the strong for strength. Frequently on the mountain-top he breathed forth this desire, and on one occasion in almost the same words, he publicly prayed, "Father, save me from this hour." (John xii. 27.) If Jesus looked out of himself for protection, how much more must we, his erring followers, do so!

"*O God.*" The word for God here used is EL אל, by which name the Lord Jesus, when under a sense of great weakness, as for instance when upon the cross, was wont to address the Mighty God, the Omnipotent Helper of his people. We, too, may turn to *El*, the Omnipotent One, in all hours of peril, with the confidence that he who heard the strong cryings and tears of our faithful High Priest, is both able and willing to bless us in him. It is well to study the name and character of God, so that in our straits we may know how and by what title to address our Father who is in heaven.

"*For in thee do I put my trust,*" or, *I have taken shelter in thee.* As chickens run beneath the hen, so do I betake myself to thee. Thou art my great overshadowing Protector, and I have taken refuge beneath thy strength. This is a potent argument in pleading, and our Lord knew not only how to *use* it with God, but how to yield to its power when wielded by others upon himself. "According to thy faith be it done unto thee," is a great rule of heaven in dispensing favour, and when we can sincerely declare that we exercise faith in the Mighty God with regard to the mercy which we seek, we may rest assured that our plea will prevail. Faith, like the sword of Saul, never returns empty; it overcomes heaven when held in the hand of prayer. As the Saviour prayed, so let us pray, and as he became more than a conqueror, so shall we also through him; let us when buffeted by storms right bravely cry to the Lord as he did, "in thee do I put my trust."

2 *O my soul,* thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my Lord: my goodness *extendeth* not to thee:

3 *But* to the saints that *are* in the earth, and *to* the excellent, in whom *is* all my delight.

4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* hasten *after* another *god:* their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

5 The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

"*O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.*" In his inmost heart the Lord Jesus bowed himself to do service to his Heavenly Father, and before the throne of Jehovah his soul vowed allegiance to the Lord for our sakes. We are like him when our soul, truly and constantly in the presence of the heart-searching God, declares her full consent to the rule and government of the Infinite Jehovah, saying, "Thou art my Lord." To avow this with the lip is little, but for *the soul* to say it, especially in times of trial, is a gracious evidence of spiritual health; to profess it before men is a small matter, but to declare it before Jehovah himself is of far more consequence. This sentence may also be viewed as the utterance of appropriating faith, laying hold upon the Lord by personal covenant and enjoyment; in this sense may it be our daily song in the house of our pilgrimage.

"*My goodness extendeth not to thee.*" The work of our Lord Jesus was not needful on account of any necessity in the Divine Being. Jehovah would have been inconceivably glorious had the human race perished, and had no atonement been offered. Although the life-work and death-agony of the Son did reflect unparalleled lustre upon every attribute of God, yet the Most Blessed and Infinitely Happy God stood in no need of the obedience and death of his Son; it was for our sakes that the work of redemption was undertaken, and not because of any lack or want on the part of the Most High. How modestly does the Saviour here estimate his

own goodness! What overwhelming reasons have we for imitating his humility! "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" (Job xxxv. 7.)

"*But to the saints that are in the earth.*" These sanctified ones, although still upon the earth, partake of the results of Jesus' mediatorial work, and by his goodness are made what they are. The peculiar people, zealous for good works, and hallowed to sacred service, are arrayed in the Saviour's righteousness and washed in his blood, and so receive of the goodness treasured up in him; these are the persons who are profited by the work of the man Christ Jesus; but that work added nothing to the nature, virtue, or happiness of God, who is blessed for evermore. How much more forcibly is this true of us, poor unworthy servants, not fit to be mentioned in comparison with the faithful Son of God! Our hope must ever be that haply some poor child of God may be served by us, for the Great Father can never need our aid. Well may we sing the verses of Dr. Watts:

"Oft have my heart and tongue confess'd
How empty and how poor I am;
My praise can never make thee blest,
Nor add new glories to thy name.
Yet, Lord, thy saints on earth may reap
Some profit by the good we do;
These are the company I keep,
These are the choicest friends I know."

Poor believers are God's receivers, and have a warrant from the Crown to receive the revenue of our offerings in the King's name. Saints departed we cannot bless; even prayer for them is of no service; but while they are here we should practically prove our love to them, even as our Master did, for they are *the excellent of the earth.* Despite their infirmities, their Lord thinks highly of them, and reckons them to be as nobles among men. The title of "His Excellency" more properly belongs to the meanest saint than to the greatest governor. The true aristocracy are believers in Jesus. They are the only Right Honourables. Stars and garters are poor distinctions compared with the graces of the Spirit. He who knows them best says of them, "*in whom is all my delight.*" They are his Hephzibah and his land Beulah, and before all worlds his delights were with these chosen sons of men. Their own opinion of themselves is far other than their Beloved's opinion of them; they count themselves to be less that nothing, yet he makes much of them, and sets his heart towards them. What wonders the eyes of Divine Love can see w ere the hands of Infinite Power have been graciously at work. It was this quicksighted affection which led Jesus to see in us a recompense for all his agony, and sustained him under all his sufferings by the joy of redeeming us from going down into the pit.

The same loving heart which opens towards the chosen people is fast closed against those who continue in their rebellion against God. Jesus hates all wickedness, and especially the high crime of idolatry. The text while it shows our Lord's abhorrence of sin, shows also the sinner's greediness after it. Professed believers are often slow towards the true Lord, but sinners "*hasten after another god.*" They run like madmen where we creep like snails. Let their zeal rebuke our tardiness. Yet theirs is a case in which the more they haste the worse they speed, for *their sorrows are multiplied* by their diligence in multiplying their sins. Matthew Henry pithily says, "They that multiply gods multiply griefs to themselves; for whosoever thinks one god too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough." The cruelties and hardships which men endure for their false gods is wonderful to contemplate; our missionary reports are a noteworthy comment on this passage; but perhaps our own experience is an equally vivid exposition; for when we have given our heart to idols, sooner or later we have had to smart for it. Near the roots of our self-love all our sorrows lie, and when that idol is overthrown, the sting is gone from grief. Moses broke the golden calf and ground it to powder, and cast it into the water of which he made Israel to drink, and so shall our cherished idols become bitter portions for us, unless we at once forsake them. Our Lord had no selfishness; he served but one Lord, and served him only. As for those who turn aside from Jehovah, he was separate from them, bearing their reproach without the camp. Sin and the Saviour had no communion. He came to destroy, not to patronize or be allied with the works of the devil. Hence he refused the testimony of unclean spirits as to his divinity, for in nothing would he have fellowship with darkness. We should be careful above measure not to connect

ourselves in the remotest degree with falsehood in religion; even the most solemn of Popish rites we must abhor. "*Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer.*" The old proverb says, "It is not safe to eat at the devil's mess, though the spoon be never so long." The mere mentioning of ill names it were well to avoid,—"*nor take up their names into my lips.*" If we allow poison upon the lip, it may ere long penetrate to the inwards, and it is well to keep out of the mouth that which we would shut out from the heart. If the Church would enjoy union with Christ, she must break all the bonds of impiety, and keep herself pure from all the pollutions of carnal will-worship, which now pollute the service of God. Some professors are guilty of great sin in remaining in the communion of Popish churches, where God is as much dishonoured as in Rome herself, only in a more crafty manner.

"*The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.*" With what confidence and bounding joy does Jesus turn to Jehovah, whom his soul possessed and delighted in! Content beyond measure with his portion in the Lord his God, he had not a single desire with which to hunt after other gods; his cup was full, and his heart was full too; even in his sorest sorrows he still laid hold with both his hands upon his Father, crying, "My God, my God;" he had not so much as a thought of falling down to worship the prince of this world, although tempted with an "all these will I give thee." We, too, can make our boast in the Lord; he is the meat and the drink of our souls. He is our portion, supplying all our necessities, and our cup yielding royal luxuries; our cup in this life, and our inheritance in the life to come. As children of the Father who is in heaven, we inherit, by virtue of our joint heirship with Jesus, all the riches of the covenant of grace; and the portion which falls to us sets upon our table the bread of heaven and the new wine of the kingdom. Who would not be satisfied with such dainty diet? Our shallow cup of sorrow we may well drain with resignation, since the deep cup of love stands side by side with it, and will never be empty. "*Thou maintainest my lot.*" Some tenants have a covenant in their leases that they themselves shall maintain and uphold, but in our case Jehovah himself maintains our lot. Our Lord Jesus delighted in this truth, that the Father was on his side, and would maintain his right against all the wrongs of men. He knew that his elect would be reserved for him, and that almighty power would preserve them as his lot and reward for ever. Let us also be glad, because the Judge of all the earth will vindicate our righteous cause.

6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places;* yea, I have a goodly heritage.

7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

Jesus found the way of obedience to lead into "*pleasant places.*" Notwithstanding all the sorrows which marred his countenance, he exclaimed, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." It may seem strange, but while no other man was ever so thoroughly acquainted with grief, it is our belief that no other man ever experienced so much joy and delight in service, for no other served so faithfully and with such great results in view as his recompense of reward. The joy which was set before him must have sent some of its beams of splendour a-down the rugged places where he endured the cross, despising the shame, and must have made them in some respects pleasant places to the generous heart of the Redeemer. At any rate, we know that Jesus was well content with the blood-bought portion which the lines of electing love marked off as his spoil with the strong and his portion with the great. Therein he solaced himself on earth, and delights himself in heaven; and he asks no more "GOODLY HERITAGE" than that his own beloved may be with him where he is and behold his glory. All the saints can use the language of this verse, and the more thoroughly they can enter into its contented, grateful, joyful spirit the better for themselves, and the more glorious to their God. Our Lord was poorer than we are, for he had not where to lay his head, and yet when he mentioned his poverty he never used a word of murmuring; discontented spirits are as unlike Jesus as the croaking raven is unlike the cooing dove. Martyrs have been happy in dungeons. "From the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison the Italian martyr dated his letter, and the presence of God made the gridiron of Laurence pleasant to him." Mr. Greenham was bold enough to say, "They never felt God's

love, or tasted forgiveness of sins, who are discontented." Some divines think that discontent was the first sin, the rock which wrecked our race in paradise; certainly there can be no paradise where this evil spirit has power, its slime will poison all the flowers of the garden.

"*I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel.*" Praise as well as prayer was presented to the Father by our Lord Jesus, and we are not truly his followers unless our resolve be, "I will bless the Lord." Jesus is called Wonderful, Counsellor, but as man he spake not of himself, but as his Father had taught him. Read in confirmation of this, John vii. 16; viii. 28; and xii. 49, 50; and the prophecy concerning him in Isaiah xi. 2, 3. It was our Redeemer's wont to repair to his Father for direction, and having received it, he blessed him for giving him counsel. It would be well for us if we would follow his example of lowliness, cease from trusting in our own understanding, and seek to be guided by the Spirit of God. "*My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.*" By the reins understand the inner man, the affections and feelings. The communion of the soul with God brings to it an inner spiritual wisdom which in still seasons is revealed to itself. Our Redeemer spent many nights alone upon the mountain, and we may readily conceive that together with his fellowship with heaven, he carried on a profitable commerce with himself; reviewing his experience, forecasting his work, and considering his position. Great generals fight their battles in their own mind long before the trumpet sounds, and so did our Lord win our battle on his knees before he gained it on the cross. It is a gracious habit after taking counsel from above to take counsel within. Wise men see more with their eyes shut by night than fools can see by day with their eyes open. He who learns from God and so gets the seed, will soon find wisdom within himself growing in the garden of his soul; "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left." The night season which the sinner chooses for his sins is the hallowed hour of quiet when believers hear the soft still voices of heaven, and of the heavenly life within themselves.

8 I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

The fear of death at one time cast its dark shadow over the soul of the Redeemer, and we read that "he was heard in that he feared." There appeared unto him an angel, strengthening him; perhaps the heavenly messenger reassured him of his glorious resurrection as his people's surety, and of the eternal joy into which he should admit the flock redeemed by blood. Then hope shone full upon our Lord's soul, and, as recorded in these verses, he surveyed the future with holy confidence because he had a continued eye to Jehovah, and enjoyed his perpetual presence. He felt that thus sustained, he could never be driven from his life's grand design; nor was he, for he stayed not his hand till he could say, "It is finished." What an infinite mercy was this for us! In this immoveableness, caused by simple faith in the divine help, Jesus is to be viewed as our exemplar; to recognize the presence of the Lord is the duty of every believer; "*I have set the Lord always before me;*" and to *trust* the Lord as our champion and guard is the privilege of every saint; "*because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*" The apostle translates this passage, "I foresaw the Lord always before my face;" Acts ii. 25; the eye of Jesus' faith could discern beforehand the continuance of divine support to his suffering Son, in such a degree that he should never be moved from the accomplishment of his purpose of redeeming his people. By the power of God at his right hand he foresaw that he should smite through all who rose up against him, and on that power he placed the firmest reliance. He clearly foresaw that he must die, for he speaks of his flesh resting, and of his soul in the abode of separate spirits; death was full before his face, or he would not have mentioned corruption; but such was his devout reliance upon his God, that he sang over the tomb, and rejoiced

in vision of the sepulchre. He knew that the visit of his soul to Sheol, or the invisible world of disembodied spirits, would be a very short one, and that his body in a very brief space would leave the grave, uninjured by its sojourn there; all this made him say, "*my heart is glad*," and moved his tongue, the *glory* of his frame, to *rejoice* in God, the strength of his salvation. Oh for such holy faith in the prospect of trial and of death! It is the work of faith, not merely to create a peace which passeth all understanding, but to fill the heart full of gladness until the tongue, which, as the organ of an intelligent creature, is our glory, bursts forth in notes of harmonious praise. Faith gives us living joy, and bestows dying rest. "*My flesh also shall rest in hope.*"

Our Lord Jesus was not disappointed in his hope. He declared his Father's faithfulness in the words, "*thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*," and that faithfulness was proven on the resurrection morning. Among the departed and disembodied Jesus was not left; he had believed in the resurrection, and he received it on the third day, when his body rose in glorious life, according as he had said in joyous confidence, "*neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*" Into the outer prison of the grave his body might go, but into the inner prison of corruption he could not enter. He who in soul and body was pre-eminently God's "Holy One," was loosed from the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. This is noble encouragement to all the saints; die they must, but rise they shall, and though in their case they shall see corruption, yet they shall rise to everlasting life. Christ's resurrection is the cause, the earnest, the guarantee, and the emblem of the rising of all his people. Let them, therefore, go to their graves as to their beds, resting their flesh among the clods as they now do upon their couches.

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay;
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory through death led the way."

Wretched will that man be who, when the Philistines of death invade his soul, shall find that, like Saul, he is forsaken of God; but blessed is he who has the Lord at his right hand, for he shall fear no ill, but shall look forward to an eternity of bliss.

11.—"*Thou wilt shew me the path of life.*" To Jesus first this way was shown, for he is the first-begotten from the dead, the first-born of every creature. He himself opened up the way through his own flesh, and then trod it as the forerunner of his own redeemed. The thought of being made the path of life to his people, gladdened the soul of Jesus. "*In thy presence is fulness of joy.*" Christ being raised from the dead ascended into glory, to dwell in constant nearness to God, where joy is at its full for ever: the foresight of this urged him onward in his glorious but grievous toil. To bring his chosen to eternal happiness was the high ambition which inspired him, and made him wade through a sea of blood. O God, when the worldling's mirth has all expired, for ever with Jesus may we dwell "*at thy right hand*," where "*there are pleasures for evermore;*" and meanwhile, may we have an earnest by tasting thy love below. Trapp's note on the heavenly verse which closes the Psalm is a sweet morsel, which may serve for a contemplation, and yield a foretaste of our inheritance. He writes, "Here is as much said as can be, but words are too weak to utter it. For *quality* there is in heaven joy and pleasures; for *quantity*, a fulness, a torrent whereat they drink without let or loathing; for *constancy*, it is at God's right hand, who is stronger than all, neither can any take us out of his hand; it is a constant happiness without intermission: and for *perpetuity* it is for evermore. Heaven's joys are without measure, mixture, or end."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—There is a diversity of opinion as to the meaning of the title of this Psalm. It is called "*Michtam of David*," but *Michtam* is the Hebrew word untranslated—the Hebrew word in English letters—and its signification is involved in obscurity. According to some, it is derived from a verb which means *to hide*, and denotes a mystery or secret. Those who adopt this view, regard the title as indicating a

depth of doctrinal and spiritual import in the Psalm, which neither the writer nor any of his contemporaries had fathomed. According to others, it is derived from a verb which means *to cut, to grave, to write,* and denotes simply a writing of David. With this view agree the Chaldee and Septuagint versions, the former translating it, "a straight sculpture of David;" and the latter, "an inscription upon a pillar to David." Others again, look upon "*Michtam,*" as being derived from a noun which means gold, and they understand it as denoting a golden Psalm—a Psalm of surpassing excellence, and worthy of being written in letters of gold. This was the opinion of our translators, and hence they have rendered it on the margin—"*A golden Psalm of David.*" The works of the most excellent Arabian poets were called golden, because they were written in letters of gold; and this golden song may have been written and hung up in some conspicuous part of the Temple. Many other interpretations have been given of this term, but at this distance of time, we can only regard it as representing some unassignable peculiarity of the composition.—*James Frame,* 1858.

Title.—Such are the riches of this Psalm, that some have been led to think the obscure title, "*Michtam,*" has been prefixed to it on account of its *golden stores.* For פָּז is used of the "gold of Ophir" (*e.g.,* Psalm xlv. 9), and מִכְתָּם might be a derivative from that root. But as there is a group of five other Psalms (namely, lvi., lvii., lviii., lix., lx.), that bear this title, whose subject-matter is various, but which all end in a *tone of triumph, it* has been suggested that the Septuagint may be nearly right in their Στηλογραφία, as if "A Psalm to be hung up or inscribed on a pillar to commemorate victory." It is, however, more likely still that the term "*Michtam*" (like "*Maschil*"), is a musical term, whose real meaning and use we have lost, and may recover only when the ransomed house of Israel return home with songs. Meanwhile, the subject-matter of this Psalm itself is very clearly this—*the righteous one's satisfaction with his lot.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—Allow that in verse ten it is clear that our Lord is in this Psalm, yet the application of every verse to Jesus *in Gethsemane* appears to be far-fetched, and inaccurate. How verse nine could suit the agony and bloody sweat, it is hard to conceive, and equally so is it with regard to verse six. The "cup" of verse five is so direct a contrast to that cup concerning which Jesus prayed in anguish of spirit, that it cannot be a reference to it. Yet we think it right to add, that Mr. James Frame has written a very valuable work on this Psalm, entitled, "Christ in Gethsemane," and he has supported his theory by the opinion of many of the ancients. He says, "All the distinguished interpreters of ancient days, such as Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustine, explain the Psalm as referring to the Messiah, in his passion and his victory over death and the grave, including his subsequent exaltation to the right hand of God;" and in a foot note he gives the following quotations: *Jerome.*—"The Psalm pertains to Christ, who speaks in it. . . . . It is the voice of our King, which he utters in the human nature that he had assumed, but without detracting from his divine nature. . . . The Psalm pertains to his passion." *Augustine.*—"Our King speaks in this Psalm in the person of the human nature that he assumed, at the time of his passion, the royal title inscribed will show itself conspicuous."—*C. H. S.*

Whole Psalm.—The present Psalm is connected in thought and language with the foregoing, and linked on to the following Psalm by catchwords. It is entitled in the Syriac and Arabic versions, a Psalm on the Election of the Church, and on the Resurrection of Christ."—*Christopher Wordsworth, D.D.,* 1868.

Verse 1.—"*Preserve me, O God.*" Here David desireth not deliverance from any special trouble, but generally prayeth to be fenced and defended continually by the providence of God, wishing that the Lord would continue his mercy towards him unto the end, and in the end; whereby he foresaw it was as needful for him to be safe guarded by God, his protection in the end, as at the time present; as also how he made no less account of it in his prosperity than in adversity. So that the man of God still feared his infirmity, and therefore acknowledgeth himself ever to stand in need of God his help. And here is a sure and undoubted mark of the child of God, when a man shall have as great a care to continue and grow in well-doing, as to begin; and this paying for the gift of final perseverance is a special note of the child of God. This holy jealousy of the man of God made him so to desire to be preserved at all times, in all estates, both in soul and body.—*Richard Greenham,* 1531—1591.

Verse 1.—"*For in thee do I put my trust.*" Here the prophet setteth down the cause why he prayeth to God: whereby he declareth, that none can truly call upon God unless they believe. Rom. x. 14. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" In regard whereof, as he prayeth to God to be his Saviour, so he is fully assured that God will be his Saviour. If, then, without faith we cannot truly call upon God, the men of this world rather prate like parrots than pray like Christians, at what time they utter these words; for that they trust not in God they declare both by neglecting the lawful means, and also in using unlawful means. Some we see trust in friends; some shoulder out, as they think, the cross with their goods; some fence themselves with authority; others bathe and baste themselves in pleasure to put the evil day far from them; others make flesh their arm; and others make the wedge of gold their confidence; and these men when they seek for help at the Lord, mean in their hearts to find it in their friends, good authority and pleasure, howsoever for fear, they dare not say this outwardly. Again, here we are to observe under what shelter we may harbour ourselves in the showers of adversity, even under the protection of the Almighty. And why? "Whoso dwelleth in the secret of the Most High, shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty." And here in effect is showed, that whosoever putteth his trust in God shall be preserved; otherwise the prophet's reason here had not been good. Besides, we see he pleadeth not by merit, but sueth by faith, teaching us that if we come with like faith, we may obtain the like deliverance.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 2.—"*O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.*" I wish I could have heard what you said to yourself when these words were first mentioned. I believe I could guess the language of some of you. When you heard me repeat these words, "*O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord,*" you thought, "I have never said anything to the Lord, unless when I cried out, Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Has not something like this passed in your minds? I will try again. When I first mentioned the text, "Let me consider," you secretly said, "I believe that I did once say to the Lord, Thou art my Lord; but it was so long ago, that I had almost forgotten it; but I suppose that it must have been at such a time when I was in trouble. I had met with disappointments in the world; and then, perhaps, I cried, Thou art my portion, O Lord. Or, perhaps, when I was under serious impressions, in the hurry of my spirits, I might look up to God and say, Thou art my Lord. But, whatever I could or did formerly say, I am certain that I cannot say it at present." Have none of you thought in this manner? I will hazard one conjecture more; and I doubt not but in this case I shall guess rightly. When I repeated these words, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord;" "So have I," thought one; "So have I," thought another; I have said it often, but I said it with peculiar solemnity and pleasure, when, in an act of humble devotion, I lately threw my ransomed, rescued, grateful soul at his feet, and cried, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds." The very recollection of it is pleasant; and I shall now have an opportunity of renewing my vows, and hope to recover something of the divine serenity and joy which I at that time experienced."—*Samuel Lavington's Sermons*, 1810.

Verse 2.—"*Thou art my Lord.*" He acknowledgeth the Lord Jehovah; but he seeth him not as it were then afar off, but drawing near unto him, he sweetly embraceth him; which thing is proper unto faith, and to that particular applying which we say to be in faith.—*Robert Rollock*, 1600.

Verse 2.—"*My goodness extendeth not to thee.*" I think the words should be understood of what the Messiah was doing for men. My goodness, טוּבָתִי *tobhathi*, "my bounty" is not to thee. What I am doing can add nothing to thy divinity; thou art not providing this astonishing sacrifice because thou canst derive any excellence from it; but this bounty extends *to the saints*—to all the spirits of just men made perfect, whose bodies are still in the earth; and to the excellent, אַדִּירֵי *addirey*, "the noble or super-eminent ones," those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. The saints and illustrious ones not only taste of my goodness, but enjoy my salvation. Perhaps *angels* themselves may be intended; they are not uninterested in the incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord. They *desire to look into these* things; and the victories of the cross in the conversion of sinners cause joy among the angels of God.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*My goodness extendeth not to thee;*" "My well-doing extendeth not to thee." Oh, what shall I render unto thee, my God, for all thy benefits towards me? what shall I repay? Alas! I can do thee no good, for mine imperfect goodness cannot pleasure thee who art most perfect and goodness itself; my well-doing can do thee no good, my wickedness can do thee no harm. I receive all good from thee, but no good can I return to thee; wherefore I acknowledge thee to be most rich, and myself to be most beggarly; so far off is it that thou standest in any need of me. Wherefore I will join myself to thy people, that whatsoever I have they may profit by it; and whatsoever they have I may profit by it, seeing the things that I have received must be put out to loan, to gain some comfort to others. Whatsoever others have, they have not for their own private use, but that by them, as by pipes and conduits, they liberally should be conveyed unto me also. Wherefore in this strain we are taught, that if we be the children of God, we must join ourselves in a holy league to his people, and by mutual participation of the gifts of God, we must testify each to other, that we be of the number and communion of saints; and this is an undoubted badge and cognizance of him that loveth God, if he also loveth them that are begotten of God. Wherefore, if we so profess ourselves to be of God and to worship him, then we must join ourselves to the church of God which with us doth worship God. And this must we do of necessity, for it is a branch of our belief that there is a communion of saints in the church; and if we believe that there is a God, we must also believe that there is a remnant of people, unto whom God revealeth himself, and communicateth his mercies, in whom we must have all our delight, to whom we must communicate according to the measure of grace unto every one of us.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 2.—"*My goodness extendeth not to thee.*" Oh, how great is God's goodness to you! He calls upon others for the same things, and conscience stands as Pharaoh's taskmasters, requiring the tale of bricks but not allowing straw; it impels and presseth, but gives no enlargement of heart, and buffets and wounds them for neglect: as the hard creditor that, taking the poor debtor by the throat, saith, "Pay me that thou owest me," but yields him no power to do it; thus God might deal with you also, for *he oweth not assistance to us;* but *we owe obedience* to him. Remember, we had power, and it is just to demand what we cannot do, because the weakness that is in us is of ourselves: we have impoverished ourselves. Therefore, when in much mercy he puts forth his hand into the work with thee, be very thankful. If the work be not done, he is no loser; if done, and well done, he is no gainer. Job xxii. 2; xxxv. 6—8. But the gain is all to thee; all the good that comes by it is to thyself.—*Joseph Symonds,* 1639.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—It is a greater glory to us that we are allowed to serve God, than it is to him that we offer him that service. He is not rendered happy by us; but we are made happy by him. He can do without such earthly servants; but we cannot do without such a heavenly Master.—*William Secker.*

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—There is nothing added to God: he is so perfect, that no sin can hurt him; and so righteous, that no righteousness can benefit him. *O Lord, my righteousness extendeth not to thee! thou hast no need of my righteousness.* Acts xvii. 24, 25. God hath no need of anything.—*Richard Stock,* 1641.

Verse 2.—As Christ is the head of man, so is God the head of Christ (1 Cor. xi. 3); and as man is subject unto Christ, so is Christ subject to God; not in regard of the divine nature, wherein there is an equality, and consequently no dominion of jurisdiction; nor only in his human nature, but in the economy of a Redeemer, considered as one designed, and consenting to be incarnate, and take our flesh; so that after this agreement God had a sovereign right to dispose of him according to the articles consented to. In regard of his undertaking and the advantage he was to bring to the elect of God upon earth, he calls God by the solemn title of "his Lord." "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth." It seems to be the speech of Christ in heaven, mentioning the saints on earth as at a distance from him. I can add nothing to the glory of thy majesty, but the whole fruit of my meditation and suffering will redound to the saints on earth.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verses 2, 3.—"*My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints.*" God's goodness to us should make us merciful to others. It were strange indeed a soul should come out of his tender bosom with a hard uncharitable heart. Some children do not indeed take after their earthly parents, as Cicero's son, who had nothing of his father but his name; but God's children all partake of their heavenly Father's

nature. Philosophy tells us, that there is no reaction from the earth to the heavens; they indeed shed their influences upon the lower world, which quicken and fructify it, but the earth returns none back to make the sun shine the better. David knew that *his goodness extendeth not unto God*, but this made him reach it forth to his brethren. Indeed, God hath left his poor saints to receive the rents we owe unto him for his mercies. An ingenuous guest, though his friend will take nothing for his entertainment, yet, to show his thankfulness, will give something to his servants. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 3.—"*But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.*"—My brethren, look upon saintship as the greatest excellency to love it. So did Christ. His eye was "upon the excellent ones in the earth;" that is, upon the saints, who were excellent to him; yea, also even when not saints, because God loved them. Isaiah xliii. 4. It is strange to hear how men by their speeches will undervalue a saint as such, if without some other outward excellency. For whilst they acknowledge a man a saint, yet in other respects, they will contemn him; "He is a holy man," they will say, "but he is weak," etc. But is he a saint? And can there be any such other imperfection or weakness found as shall lay him low in thy thoughts in comparison of other carnal men more excellent? Hath not Christ loved him, bought him, redeemed him?—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 3.—"*But to the saints.*" I understand that a man then evinces affection towards God, and towards those who love God, when his soul yearns after them—when he obliges himself to love them by practically serving and benefiting them—acting towards them as he would act towards God himself were he to see him in need of his service, as David says he did.—*Juan de Valdes*, 1550.

Verse 3.—"*The saints.*" The Papists could abide no saints but those which are in heaven; which argueth that they live in a kingdom of darkness, and err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God; for if they were but meanly conversant in the Scriptures, in the holy epistles, they should find almost in every epistle mention made of the saints who are thereunto called in Jesus Christ, through whom they are sanctified by the Holy Ghost. And mark, he calleth them "*excellent.*" Some think rich men to be excellent, some think learned men to be excellent, some count men in authority so to be, but here we are taught that those men are *excellent* who are sanctified by God's graces.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 3.—By David's language, there were many singular saints in his day: "*To the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.*" Was it so then, and should it not be so now? We know the New Testament outshines the Old as much as the sun outshines the moon. If we then live in a more glorious dispensation, should we not maintain a more glorious conversation? . . . . . "*The excellent.*" Were the sun to give no more delight than a star, you could not believe he was the regent of the day; were he to transmit no more heat than a glow-worm, you would question his being the source of elementary heat. Were God to do no more than a creature, where would his Godhead be? Were a man to do no more than a brute, where would his manhood be? Were not a saint to *excel* a sinner, where would his sanctity be?—*William Secker.*

Verse 3.—Ingo, an ancient king of the Draves, who making a stately feast, appointed his nobles, at that time Pagans, to sit in the hall below, and commanded certain poor Christians to be brought up into his presence-chamber, to sit with him at his table, to eat and drink of his kingly cheer, at which many wondering, he said, he accounted Christians, though never so poor, a greater ornament to his table, and more worthy of his company than the greatest peers unconverted to the Christian faith; for when these might be thrust down to hell, those might be his comforts and fellow princes in heaven. Although you see the stars sometimes by their reflections in a puddle, in the bottom of a well, or in a stinking ditch, yet the stars have their situation in heaven. So, although you see a godly man in a poor, miserable, low, despised condition, for the things of this world, yet he is fixed in heaven, in the region of heaven: "Who hath raised us up," saith the apostle, "and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."—*Charles Bradbury's "Cabinet of Jewels,"* 1785.

Verse 3.—To sum up all, we must know that we neither do nor can love the godly so well as we should do; but all is well if we would love them better, and do like ourselves the less because we do love them no more, and that this is common or usual with me, then I am right: so that we are to love the godly first because God

commands it, because they are good; and in these cases our faith doth work by our love to good men. Next, when I am at the worst, like a sick sheep, I care not for the company of other sheep, but do mope in a corner by myself; but yet I do not delight in the society of goats or dogs, it proves that I have some good blood left in me; it is because for the present I take little or no delight in myself or in my God, that I delight no better in the godly: yet as I love myself for all that, so I may be said to love them for all this. Man indeed is a sociable creature, a company-keeper by nature when he is himself; and if we do not associate ourselves with the ungodly, though for the present, and care not much to show ourselves amongst the godly, the matter is not much, it is a sin of infirmity, not a fruit of iniquity. The disciples went from Christ, but they turned not to the other side as Judas did, who did forsake his Master and joined himself to his Master's enemies, but they got together. Some say Demas did repent (which I think to be the truth), and then he did "embrace this present world," but for the present fit: put case he did forsake Paul; so did better men than he. Indeed as long as a man hath his delights about him, he will embrace the delights of this present world, or the delights which belong to the world to come; join with Paul, or cleave to the world. In this temptation our stay is, first, that we care not for the company of goats; next, that as we should, so we would, and desire that we may take delight in the company of sheep, to count them the only *excellent* men in the world, *in whom is all our delight.* The conclusion is, that to love the saints as saints, is a sound proof of faith; the reason is, for that we cannot master our affections by love, but first we must master our understandings by faith.—*Richard Capel*, 1586—1656.

Verse 4.—"*Drink offerings of blood.*" The Gentiles used to offer, and sometimes to drink part of the blood of their sacrifices, whether of beasts or of men, as either of them were sacrificed.—*Matthew Poole.*

Verse 4.—"*Drink offerings of blood.*" It is uncertain whether this expression is to be understood literally to be blood, which the heathen actually mixed in their libations when they bound themselves to the commission of some dreadful deed, or whether their libations are figuratively called offerings of blood to denote the horror with which the writer regarded them.—*George R. Noyes, in loc*, 1846.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—A sin rolled under the tongue becomes soft and supple, and the throat is so short and slippery a passage, that insensibly it may slide down from the mouth into the stomach; and contemplative wantonness quickly turns into practical uncleanness.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance.*" If the Lord be thy portion, then thou mayst conclude omnipotency is my portion, immensity, all-sufficiency, etc. Say not, If so, then I should be omnipotent, etc. There is a vast difference betwixt identity and interest, betwixt conveying of a title and transmutation of nature. A friend gives thee an invaluable treasure, and all the securities of it that thou canst desire; wilt thou deny it is thine because thou art not changed into its nature? The attributes are thine, as thy inheritance, as thy lands are thine; not because thou art changed into their nature, but because the title is conveyed to thee, it is given thee, and improved for thy benefit. If another manage it, who can do it with greater advantage to thee than thou to thyself, it is no infringement of thy title . . . . . The Lord is our *portion*, and this is incomparably more than if we had heaven and earth; for all the earth is but as a point compared with the vastness of the heavens, and the heavens themselves are but a point compared with God. What a large possession have we then! There is no confiscation of it, no banishment from it. Our portion fills heaven and earth, and is infinitely above heaven and below earth, and beyond both. Poor men boast and pride themselves of a kingdom, but we have more than all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof. Christ has given us more than the devil could offer him.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 5.—"*Portion of mine inheritance and of my cup,*" may contain an allusion to the daily supply of food, and also to the inheritance of Levi. Deut. xviii. 1, 2. "*Critical and Explanatory Pocket Bible.*" *By A. R. Fausset and B. M. Smith*, 1867.

Verses 5, 6.—"*The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance: the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.*" "Blessed are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people whose God is the Lord." No greater mercy can be bestowed upon any people, family, or person, than this, for God to dwell among them. If we value this mercy according to the excellency

and worth of that which is bestowed, it is the greatest; if we value it according to the good will of him that gives it, it will appear likewise to be the greatest favour. The greatness of the good will of God in giving himself to be our acquaintance, is evident in the nature of the gift. A man may give his estate to them to whom his love is not very large, but he never gives himself but upon strong affection. God gives abundantly to all the works of his hands; he causeth the sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good, and the rain to descend upon the just and the unjust; but it cannot be conceived that he should give himself to be a portion, a friend, father, husband, but in abundance of love. Whosoever therefore shall refuse acquaintance with God, slighteth the greatest favour that ever God did bestow upon man. Now, consider what a high charge this is; to abuse such a kindness from God is an act of the greatest vileness. David was never so provoked as when the king of Ammon abused his kindness, in his ambassadors, after his father's death. And God is highly provoked when his greatest mercies, bestowed in the greatest love, are rejected and cast away. What could God give more and better than himself? . . . . . Ask David what he thinks of God; he was well acquainted with him, he dwelt in his house, and by his good will would never be out of his more immediate presence and company: enquire, I pray, what he found amiss in him. That you may know his mind the better, he hath left it upon record in more than one or two places, what a friend he hath had of God. "*The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.*" Why, what is that you boast of so much, O David? Have not others had kingdoms as well as you? No, that's not the thing; a crown is one of the least jewels in my cabinet: "*The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.*"—*James Janeway.*

Verses 5, 6.—Take notice not only of the mercies of God, but of God in the mercies. Mercies are never so savoury as when they savour of a Saviour.—*Ralph Venning*, 1620—1673.

Verse 6.—"*The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.*" Bitter herbs will go down very well, when a man has such delicious "meats which the world knows not of." The sense of our Father's love is like honey at the end of every rod; it turns stones into bread, and water into wine, and the valley of trouble into a door of hope; it makes the biggest evils seem as if they were none, or better than none; for it makes our deserts like the garden of the Lord, and when we are upon the cross for Christ, as if we were in paradise with Christ. Who would quit his duty for the sake of suffering, that hath such relief under it? Who would not rather walk in truth, when he hath such a cordial to support him, than by the conduct of fleshly wisdom, to take any indirect or irregular method for his own deliverance?—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 6.—"*The lines.*" Probably alluding to the division of the land by lot, and the measuring of it off by ropes and lines. David believed in an overruling destiny which fixed the bounds of his abode, and his possessions; he did more, he was satisfied with all the appointment of the predestinating God.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 7.—"*I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel.*" The Holy Ghost is a spirit of counsel, powerfully instructing and convincingly teaching how to act and walk, for he directs us to set right steps, and to walk with a right foot, and thereby prevents us of many a sin, by seasonable instruction set on upon our hearts with a strong hand; as Isaiah viii. 11. For, as the same prophet says (Isaiah xi. 2), he is the spirit of counsel and of might. Of counsel to direct; of might, to strengthen the inner man. Such he was to Christ the Head, of whom it is there spoken. For instance, in that agony (on the determination of which our salvation depended), and conflict in the garden, when he prayed, "Let this cup pass," it was this good Spirit that counselled him to die; and he blesseth God for it. "I bless the Lord that hath given me counsel." It was that counsel that in that case caused his heart to say, "Not my will, but thine."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 7.—"*My reins.*" Common experience shows that the workings of the mind, particularly the passions of joy, grief, and fear, have a very remarkable effect on the reins or kidneys, and from their retired situation in the body, and their being hid in fat, they are often used in Scripture to denote the most secret working of the soul and affections.—*John Parkhurst.*

Verse 7.—"*My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.*" This shows that God, who, he says, was always present to him, had given him some admonition

in his dreams, or at least his waking thoughts by night, from whence he gathered a certain assurance of his recovery; possibly he might be directed to some remedy. Antonine thanks the gods for directing him in his sleep to remedies.—*Z. Mudge, in loc*, 1744.

Verse 7.—"*My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.*" We have a saying among ourselves that "the pillow is the best counsellor;" and there is much truth in the saying, especially if we have first committed ourselves in prayer to God, and taken a prayerful spirit with us to our bed. In the quiet of its silent hours, undisturbed by the passions, and unharassed by the conflicts of the world, we can commune with our own heart, and be instructed and guarded as to our future course even "*in the night season.*" David especially seems to have made these seasons sources of great profit as well as delight. Sometimes he loved to meditate upon God as he lay upon his bed; and it was no doubt as he meditated on the Lord's goodness and on the way by which he had led him, that he was, as it were, constrained, even at midnight, to arise and pray. While, therefore, we acknowledge the pillow to be a good counsellor, let us with David here acknowledge also that it is the Lord who gives the counsel, and sends the instruction in the night season.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 8.—"*I have set the Lord always before me.*" David did not by fits and starts set the Lord before him; but he "*always*" set the Lord before him in his course; he had his eye upon the Lord, and so much the Hebrew word imports: I have equally set the Lord before me; that is the force of the original word, that is, I have set the Lord before me, at one time as well as another, without any irregular affections or passions, etc. In every place, in every condition, in every company, in every employment, and in every enjoyment, I have set the Lord equally before me; and this raised him, and this will raise any Christian, by degrees, to a very great height of holiness.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 8.—"*I have set the Lord always before me.*" Hebrew, I have *equally set*, or proposed. The apostle translateth it, "I foresaw the Lord always before my face." Acts ii. 25. I set the eye of my faith full upon him, and suffer it not to take to other things; I look him in the face, *oculo irretorto*, as the eagle looketh upon the sun; and *oculo adamantino*, with an eye of adamant, which turns only to one point: so here *I have equally set the Lord before me*, without irregular affections and passions. And this was one of those lessons that his *reins had taught* him, that the Holy Spirit had dictated unto him.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—"*I have set the Lord* ALWAYS *before me.*" Like as the gnomon doth ever behold the north star, whether it be closed and shut up in a coffer of gold, silver, or wood, never losing its nature; so a faithful Christian man, whether he abound in wealth or be pinched with poverty, whether he be of high or low degree in this world, ought continually to have his faith and hope surely built and grounded upon Christ, and to have his heart and mind fast fixed and settled in him, and to follow him through thick and thin, through fire and water, through wars and peace, through hunger and cold, through friends and foes, through a thousand perils and dangers, through the surges and waves of envy, malice, hatred, evil speeches, railing sentences, contempt of the world, flesh, and devil, and even in death itself, be it never so bitter, cruel, and tyrannical, yet never to lose sight and view of Christ, never to give over faith, hope, and trust in him.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 8.—"*I have set the Lord always before me.*" By often thinking of God, the heart will be enticed into desires after him. Isaiah xxvi. 8. "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee;" and see what follows, verse 9: "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." Love sets the soul on musing, and from musing to praying. Meditation is prayer in bullion, prayer in the ore—soon melted and run into holy desires. The laden cloud soon drops into rain; the piece charged soon goes off when fire is put to it. A meditating soul is in *proxima potentia* to prayer.—*William Gurnall,*

Verse 8.—"I *have set the Lord always before me,*" etc. He that by faith eyes God continually as his protector in trouble "*shall not be moved*" with any evil that he suffers, and he that eyes God by faith as his pattern in holiness, shall not be moved from doing that which is good. This thought—*the Lord is at our right hand*—keeps us from turning either to the right hand or to the left. It is said of Enoch, that "he walked with God" (Genesis v. 22), and though the history of his life be very short, yet 'tis said of him a second time (verse 24), that "he walked with God."

He walked so much with God that he walked as God: he did not "*walk*" (which kind of walking the apostle reproves, 1 Cor. iii. 3), "*as men.*" He walked so little like the world that his stay was little in the world. "He was not," saith the text, "for God took him." He took him from the world to himself, or, as the author to the Hebrews reports it, "he was translated that he should not see death, for he had this testimony, that he pleased God."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—"*Because he is at my right hand,*" etc. Of ourselves we stand not at any time, by his power we may overcome at all times. And when we are sorest asaulted he is ever ready *at our right hand* to support and stay us that we shall not fall. He hath well begun, and shall happily go forward in his work, who hath in truth begun. For true grace well planted in the heart, how weak, soever, shall hold out for ever. All total decays come from this—that the heart was never truly mollified, nor grace deeply and kindly rooted therein.—*John Ball.*

Verse 8.—"*He is at my right hand.*" This phrase of speech is borrowed from those who, when they take upon them the patronage, defence, or tuition of any, will set them on their right hand, as in place of most safeguard. Experience confirmeth this in children, who in any imminent danger shroud and shelter themselves under their father's arms or hands, as under a sufficient buckler. Such was the estate of the man of God, as here appeareth, who was hemmed and edged in with the power of God, both against present evils, and dangers to come.—*Richard Greenham*

Verse 8.—Even as a column or pillar is sometimes on thy right hand, and sometimes on thy left hand, because thou dost change thy standing, sitting, or walking, for it is unmovable and keepeth one place; so God is sometimes favourable and bountiful unto thee, and sometimes seemeth to be wroth and angry with thee, because thou dost fall from virtue to vice, from obedience and humility to pride and presumption; for in the Lord there is no change, no, not so much as any shadow of change. He is immutable, always one and everlasting. If thou wilt bend thyself to obedience, and to a virtuous and godly life, thou shalt ever have him a strong rock, whereupon thou mayst boldly build a castle and tower of defence. He will be unto thee a mighty pillar, bearing up heaven and earth, whereto thou mayst lean and not be deceived, wherein thou mayst trust and not be disappointed. He will ever be at thy right hand, that thou shalt not fall. He will take thy part, and will mightily defend thee against all enemies of thy body and of thy soul; but if thou wilt shake hands with virtue, and bid it adieu, and farewell, and, forsaking the ways of God, wilt live as thou list, and follow thy own corruption, and make no conscience of aught thou doest, defiling and blemishing thyself with all manner of sin and iniquity, then be sure the Lord will appear unto thee in his fury and indignation. From his justice and judgments none shall ever be able to deliver thee.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 9.—"*My heart is glad.*" Men may for a time be hearers of the gospel, men may for order's sake pray, sing, receive the sacraments; but if it be without joy, will not that hyprocrisy in time break out? Will they not begin to be weary? Nay will they not be as ready to hear any other doctrine? Good things cannot long find entertainment in our corruptions, unless the Holy Ghost hath changed us from our old delights to conceive pleasure in these things.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 9.—"*My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.*" His inward joy was not able to contain itself. We testify our pleasure on lower occasions, even at the gratification of our senses; when our ear is filled with harmonious melody, when our eye is fixed upon admirable and beauteous objects, when our smell is recreated with agreeable odours, and our taste also by the delicacy and rareness of provisions; and much more will our soul show its delight, when its faculties, that are of a more exquisite constitution, meet with things that are in all respects agreeable and pleasant to them; and in God they meet with all those: with his light our understanding is refreshed, and so is our will with his goodness and his love.—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verse 9.—"*Therefore my heart is glad,*" etc. That is, I am all over in very good plight, as well as heart can wish, or require; I do over-abound exceedingly with joy; "God forgive me mine unthankfulness and unworthiness of so great glory" (as that martyr said): "In all the days of my life I was never so merry as now I am in this dark dungeon," etc. Wicked men rejoice in appearance, and not in heart (2 Cor. v. 12); their joy is but skin deep, their mirth frothy and flashy, such as wetteth the mouth, but warmeth not the heart. But David is *totus totus, quantus quantus exultabundus;* his *heart, glory, flesh,* (answerable, as some

think to that of the apostle, 1 Thess. v. 23; *spirit, soul, and body*) were all overjoyed.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*My flesh shall rest in hope.*" If a Jew pawned his bed-clothes, God provided mercifully that it should be restored before night: "For," saith he, "that is his covering: wherein shall he sleep?" Exodus xxii. 27. Truly, hope is the saint's covering, wherein he wraps himself, when he lays his body down to sleep in the grave: "*My flesh*," saith David, "*shall rest in hope.*" O Christian, bestir thyself to redeem thy hope before this sun of thy temporal life goes down upon thee, or else thou art sure to lie down in sorrow. A sad going to the bed of the grave he hath who hath no hope of a resurrection to life.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 9.—"*My flesh shall rest in hope.*" That hope which is grounded on the word, gives rest to the soul; 'tis an anchor to keep it steady. Heb. vi. 13. Which shows the unmovableness of that which our anchor is fastened to. The promise sustains our faith, and our faith is that which supports us. He that hopes in the Word as David did (Psalm cxix. 81), lays a mighty stress upon it; as Samson did when he leaned upon the pillars of the house, so as to pull it down upon the Philistines. A believer throws the whole weight of all his affairs and concernments, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, upon the promises of God, like a man resolved to stand or fall with them. He ventures himself, and all that belongs to him, entirely upon this bottom, which is in effect to say, if they will not bear me up, I am content to sink; I know that there shall be a performance of those things which have been told me from the Lord, and therefore I will incessantly look for it.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 10.—"*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*," etc. The title of this golden text may be—*The embalming of the dead saints:* the force whereof is to free the souls from dereliction in the state of death, and to secure the bodies of God's saints from corruption in the grave. It is the art which I desire to learn, and at this time, teach upon this sad occasion,* even the preparing of this confection against our burials.—*George Hughes*, 1642.

Verse 10.—Many of the elder Reformers held that our Lord in soul actually descended into hell, according to some of them to suffer there as our surety, and according to others to make a public triumph over death and hell. This idea was almost universally, and, as we believe, most properly repudiated by the Puritans. To prove this fact, it may be well to quote from Corbet's witty itinerary of,

> "Foure clerkes of Oxford, doctors two, and two
> That would be docters."

He laments the secularisation of church appurtenances at Banbury, by the Puritans whom he describes as,

> ——— "They which tell
> That Christ hath nere descended into hell,
> But to the grave."
>
> *C. H. S. The quotation is from Richard Corbet's Poems*, 1632.

Verse 10.—"*My soul in hell.*" Christ in soul descended into hell, when as our surety he submitted himself to bear those hellish sorrows (or equivalent to them), which we were bound by our sins to suffer for ever. His descension is his projection of himself into the sea of God's wrath conceived for our sins, and his ingression into most unspeakable straits and torments in his soul, which we should else have suffered for ever in hell. This way of Christ's descending into hell is expressly uttered in the person of David, as the type of Christ. Psalm lxxxvi. 13; cxvi. 3; lxix. 1–3. Thus the prophet Isaiah saith, "His soul was made an offering." Isaiah liii. 10. And this I take it David means, when he said of Christ, "*Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.*" Psalm xvi; Acts ii. And thus Christ descended into hell when he was alive, not when he was dead. Thus his soul was in hell when in the garden he did sweat blood, and on the cross when he cried so lamentably, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvi. 38.—*Nicholas Byfield's "Exposition of the Creed,"* 1676.

Verse 10.—"*In hell.*" *Sheol* here, as *hades* in the New Testament, signifies the state of the dead, the separate state of souls after death, the invisible world of souls, where Christ's soul was, though it did not remain there, but on the third day returned

* A Funeral Sermon.

to its body again. It seems best of all to interpret this word of the grave as it is rendered; Gen. xlii. 38; Isaiah xxxviii. 18.—*John Gill.*

Verse 10.—"*Thine Holy One.*" *Holiness* preserves the soul from dereliction, in the state of death, and the body of the saint from corruption in the grave. If it be desired by any that doubt of it, to see the clear issue of this from the text, I shall guide them to read this text with a great accent upon that term, "*Thine Holy One,*" that they may take special notice of it, even the quality of that man exempted from these evils. In this the Spirit of God puts an emphasis upon *holiness*, as counter-working and prevailing over death and the grave. It is this and nothing but this, that thus keeps the man, dead and buried, from desertion in death, and corruption in the grave.—*George Hughes.*

Verse 10.—The great promise to Christ is, that though he took a corruptible body upon him, yet he should "*not see corruption,*" that is, *partake of corruption*, corruption should have no communion with, much less power over him.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10.—Quoted by the apostle Peter (Acts ii. 27); on which Hackett (*Com. in loc.*) observes:—"The sense then may be expressed thus: Thou wilt not give me up as a prey to death; he shall not have power over me, to dissolve the body and cause it to return to dust."

Verse 11.—In this verse are four things observable:—1. *A Guide*, THOU. 2. *A Traveller*, ME. 3. *A Way*, THE PATH. 4. *The End*, LIFE, described after. For that which follows is but the description of this life.

This verse is a proper subject for a *meditation*. For, all three are solitary. *The guide* is but one; the *traveller*, one; the *way*, one; and the *life*, the only one. To meditate well on this is to bring all together; and at last make them all but *one*. Which that we may do, let us first seek our *Guide*.

The Guide. Him we find named in the first verse—Jehovah. Here we may begin, as we ought in all holy exercises, with *adoration*. For, "unto him all knees shall bow;" nay, unto his *name*. For holy is his name. Glory be to thee, O God! He is *Deus*, therefore *holy;* he is *Deus fortis*, therefore *able*. "For the strength of the hills is his;" and if there be a *way* on earth, he can "*show*" it; for in his hands are all the corners of the earth. But is he *willing* to "*show*"? Yes, though he be *Deus, holy* (which is a word terrible to poor flesh and blood), yet he is *Deus meus*, my holiness. That takes away servile fear. He is *meus*, we have a property in him; and he is willing: "*Thou wilt show,*" etc. And that you may know *he will guide*, David shows a little above how diligently he will guide. First, he will *go before*, he will lead the way himself: if I can but follow, I shall be sure to go right. And he that hath a *guide* before him, and will not follow, is worthy to be left behind. But say, I am willing, I do desire to go, and I do follow: what if, through faintness in the long way, I fall often? or, for want of care step out of the way, shall I not then be left behind? Fear not; for "He is at my right hand, so that I shall not slip." Verse 8. This is some comfort indeed. But we are so soon weary in this way, and do fall and err so often, that it would weary the patience of a good *guide* to lead us but one day. Will he bear with us, and continue to the end? Yes, always; or this text deceives us; for all this is found in the eighth verse. We must have *him* or none; for he is one, and the only one. So confessed Asaph: "Whom have I on earth but thee?" Seek this *good Guide*, he is easy to be found: "Seek, and ye shall find." You shall find that he is first *holy;* secondly, *able;* thirdly, *willing;* fourthly, *diligent;* and fifthly, *constant*. O my soul! to follow him, and he will make thee both *able* to follow to the end; and *holy* in the end.

The traveller. Having found the *Guide*, we shall not long seek for one that wants him; for, see, here is a *man out of his way*. And that will soon appear if we consider his condition. For, he is a *stranger* ("*Thou wilt show me*"); and what am I? "I am a stranger, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were," says he, in another place. But this was in the old time under the law; what, are we, their sons, in the gospel, any other? Peter tells us no: that we are strangers and pilgrims too; that is, travellers. We travel, as being *out of our country;* and we are strangers to those we converse with. For neither the natives be our friends, nor anything we possess truly our own. It is time we had *animum revertendi;* and surely so we have if we could but pray on the *way*. *Converte nos Domine*. But it is so long since we came hither, we have forgot the way home: *obliti sunt montis mei*. Yet still we are travelling; and, we think, homewards. For all hope well: *oculi omnium sperant*

in te. But *right,* like pilgrims, or rather, wanderers. For we scarce know if we go right; and, which is worse, have little care to enquire.

"*Me.*" David still keeps the singular number. As there is but *one* guide, so he speaks in the person but of *one traveller.* There is somewhat, peradventure, in that. It is to show his *confidence.* The Lord's prayer is in the plural, but the creed in the singular. We may pray that God would guide *all;* but we can be confident for none but ourselves. "*Thou wilt show,*" or thou dost, or hast, as some translate: all is but to show particular confidence. "*Thou wilt show me;*" *me,* not *us,* a number indefinite wherein I *may be* one; but *me* in particular that am out of the way; that am myself *alone;* that must walk in "*the path*" *alone.* Either I must follow, or go before others; I must work for myself alone; believe for myself alone; and be saved by one alone. *The way* in this text that I must walk is but one; nay, it is but a "*path*" where but one can go: this is no highway, but a *way* of sufferance by favour: it is none of ours. It is no *road;* you cannot hurry here, or gallop by troops: it is but *semita,* a small *footpath* for one to go alone in. Nay, as it is a *way* for *one alone,* so it is *a lonely way: preparate vias ejus in solitudine,* saith John, and he knew which way God went, who is our *Guide in solitudine:* there is the sweetness of solitariness, the comforts of meditation. For God is never more familiar with man than when man is *in solitudine, alone,* in his *path* by himself. Christ himself came thus, all *lonely;* without troop, or noise, and ever avoided the tumultuous multitude, though they would have made him a king. And he never spake to them but in parables; but to *his* that sought him, *in solitudine,* in private, he spake plain; and so doth he still love to do to the soul, in private and particular. Therefore well said David, "*Thou wilt show me,*" in particular, and in the singular number. But how shall I know that I, in particular, shall be taught and *showed* this *way?* This prophet, that had experience, will tell us: *mites docebit,* the *humble he will teach.* Psalm xxv. 9. If thou canst humble thyself, thou mayst be sure to see thy *guide;* Christ hath crowned this virtue with a blessing: "Blessed are the meek;" for them he will call to him and teach. But thou must be humble then. For heaven is built like our churches, high-roofed within, but with a strait low gate; they then that enter there must stoop, ere they can see God. Humility is the mark at every cross, whereby thou shalt know if thou be in the way: if any be otherwise minded, God also shall reveal it unto you, for, "*Thou wilt show.*"

"*The path.*" But let us now see *what* he will *show* us: "*the path.*" We must know, that as men have *many paths* out of their highway—the world—but they all end in destruction; so God hath *many paths* out of his highway, the word, but they all end in salvation. Let us oppose ours to his (as indeed they are opposite), and see how they agree. *Ours* are not worth *marking, his marked* with an *attendite,* to begin withal; *ours* bloody, *his* unpolluted; *ours* crooked, *his* straight; *ours* lead to hell, *his* to heaven. Have not we strayed then? We had need to turn and take another path, and that quickly: we may well say, *semitas nostras, à viâ tuâ.* Well, here is *the Book,* and here are the *ways* before you; and he will *show* you. Here is *semita mandatorum,* in the one hundred-and-nineteenth Psalm, verse thirty-five; here is *semita pacifica* (Prov iii. 17); here is *semita æquitatis* (Prov. iv. 11); here is *semita justitiæ* (Psalm xxiii. 3); here is *semita judicii* (Prov. xvii. 23); and many others. These are, every one of them, *God's ways;* but these are somewhat too many and too far off: we must seek the *way* where all these meet, and that will bring us into "*the path;*" these are many, but I will show you yet "a more excellent way," saith Paul. 1 Cor. xii. 31.

We must begin to enter at *via mandatorum;* for till then we are in the dark and can distinguish no *ways,* whether they be good or bad. But there we shall meet with a *lantern* and a *light* in it. Thy commandment is a lantern, and the law a light. Prov. vi. 23. Carry this with thee (as a good man should, *lex Dei in corde ejus*); and it will bring thee into the *way.* And see how careful our *Guide* is; for lest the wind should blow out this light, he hath put it into a lantern to preserve it. For the fear, or sanction, of the "commandments," preserves the memory of the law in our hearts, as a lantern doth a light burning within it. The law is the light, and the commandment the lantern. So that neither flattering Zephyrus, nor blustering Boreas shall be able to blow it out, so long as the fear of the sanction keeps it in. This is *lucerna pedibus* (Psalm cxix. 105); and will not only *show* thee where thou shalt tread, but what pace thou shalt keep. When thou hast this light, take Jeremy's counsel; enquire for *semita antiqua,* before thou goest any further. "Stand (saith

he) in the ways and behold and ask for the old way; which is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." This will bring you some whither where you may *rest* awhile. And whither is that? Trace this *path*, and you shall find this "old way" to run quite through all the Old Testament till it end in the New, the gospel of peace, and there is *rest*. And that this is so Paul affirms. For the law, which is the "old way," is but the pedagogue to the gospel. This then is "a more excellent way" than the law, the ceremonies whereof in respect of this were called "beggarly rudiments." When we come there, we shall find the way pleasant and very *light*, so that we shall plainly see before us that *very path*, that *only path*, "the path of life" (*semita vitæ*), in which the gospel ends, as the law ends in the gospel. Now what is *semita vitæ* that we seek for? "All the ways of God are *truth*," saith David. Psalm cxix. 151. He doth not say they are *veræ*, or *veritates*, but *veritas;* all one truth. So, all the *ways* of God end in one truth. *Semita vitæ*, then, is *truth*. And so sure a *way* to life is *truth*, that John says, he had "no greater joy" than to hear that his sons "walked in truth." 3 John i. 3. "No greater joy:" for it brings them certainly to a joy, than which there is none greater. *Via veritatis* is "the gospel of truth." but *semita vitæ* is the truth itself. Of these, Esay prophesied, *et erit ibi semita et via*, etc. "There shall be a path, and a way;" and the way shall be called *holy*, the proper epithet of the gospel: "*the holy gospel*," that is *the way*. But the *path* is the epitome of this *way* (called in our text, by way of excellence, "*the path*," in the singular); than which there is no other. "The gospel of your salvation," saith Paul, is "the word of truth;" and "thy word is truth," saith our Saviour to his Father. *Truth*, then, is "*the path of life*," for it is the epitome of the gospel, which is the *way*. This is that truth which Pilate (unhappy man) asked after, but never stayed to be resolved of. He himself is the word; the word is the truth; and the truth is "*the path of life*," trodden by all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs and confessors, that ever went to heaven before us. The abstract of the gospel, the gate of heaven, *semita vitæ*, "*the path of life*," even Jesus Christ the righteous, who hath beaten the way for us, gone himself before us, and left us the prints of his footsteps for us to follow, where he himself sits ready to receive us. So, the law is the light, the gospel is the way, and Christ is "*the path of life*."—*William Austin*, 1637.

Verse 11.—It is Christ's triumphing in the consideration of his exaltation, and taking pleasure in the fruits of his sufferings: "*Thou wilt show me the paths of life*." God hath now opened the way to paradise, which was stopped up by a flaming sword, and made the path plain by admitting into heaven the head of the believing world. This is part of the joy of the soul of Christ; he hath now a fulness of joy, a satisfying delight instead of an overwhelming sorrow; a "fulness of joy," not only some sparks and drops as he had now and then in his debased condition; and that in the presence of his Father. His soul is fed and nourished with a perpetual vision of God, in whose face he beholds no more frowns, no more designs of treating him as a servant, but such smiles that shall give a perpetual succession of joy to him, and fill his soul with fresh and pure flames. Pleasures they are, pleasantness in comparison whereof the greatest joys in this life are anguish and horrors. His soul hath joys without mixture, pleasures without number, a fulness without want, a constancy without interruption, and a perpetuity without end.—*Stephen Charnock*.

Verse 11.—"*In thy presence*," etc. To the blessed soul resting in Abraham's bosom, there shall be given an immortal, impassible, resplendent, perfect, and glorious body. Oh, what a happy meeting will this be, what a sweet greeting between the soul and body, the nearest and dearest acquaintance that ever were! What a welcome will that soul give to her beloved body! Blessed be thou (will she say), for thou hast aided me to the glory I have enjoyed since I parted with thee; blessed art thou that sufferedst thyself to be mortified, giving "thy members as weapons of righteousness unto God." Rom. vi. 13. Cheer up thyself, for now the time of labour is past, and the time of rest is come. Thou wast sown and buried in the dust of earth with ignominy, but now raised in glory; sown in weakness, but raised in power; sown a natural body, but raised a spiritual body; sown in corruption, but raised in incorruption. 1 Cor. xv. 43. O my dear companion and familiar, we took sweet counsel together, we two have walked together as friends in God's house (Psalm lv. 14), for when I prayed inwardly, thou didst attend my devotions with bowed knees and lifted-up hands outwardly. We two have been fellow labourers in the works of the Lord, we two have suffered together, and now we two shall ever reign together; I will enter again into thee, and so both of us together will

enter into our Master's joy, where we shall have *pleasures at his right hand for evermore.*

The saints, entered as it were into the chamber of God's presence, shall have joy to their ears in hearing their own commendating and praise, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. xxv. 21); and in hearing the divine language of heavenly Canaan; for our bodies shall be *vera et viva*, perfect like Christ's glorious body, who did both hear other and speak himself after his resurrection, as it is apparent in the gospels' history. Now, then, if the words of the wise spoken in due places be like "apples of gold with pictures of silver" (Prov. xxv. 11), if the mellifluous speech of Origen, the silver trumpet of Hillary, the golden mouth of Chrysostom, bewitched as it were their auditory with exceeding great delight; if the gracious eloquence of heathen orators, whose tongues were never touched with a coal from God's altar, could steal away the hearts of their hearers, and carry them up and down whither they would, what a "*fulness of joy*" will it be to hear not only the sanctified, but also the glorified tongues of saints and angels in the kingdom of glory? . . . . . Bonaventure fondly reports at all adventure, that St. Francis hearing an angel a little while playing on a harp, was so moved with extraordinary delight, that he thought himself in another world. Oh! what a "*fulness of joy*" will it be to hear more than twelve legions of angels, accompanied with a number of happy saints which no man is able to number, all at once sing together, "Hallelujah, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." "And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Rev. iv. 8; v. 13. If the voices of mortal men, and the sound of cornet, trumpet, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and other well-tuned instruments of music, passing through our dull ears in this world be so powerful, that all our affections are diversely transported according to the divers kinds of harmony, then how shall we be ravished in God's presence when we shall hear heavenly airs with heavenly ears!

Concerning "*fulness of joy*" to the rest of the senses I find a very little or nothing in holy Scriptures, and therefore seeing God's Spirit will not have a pen to write, I may not have a tongue to speak. Divines in general affirm, that the smelling, and taste, and feeling, shall have joy proportionable to their blessed estate, for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality; the body which is sown in weakness is to be raised in power; it is sown a natural body, but it is raised a spiritual body, buried in dishonour, raised in glory; that is, capable of good, and, as being impassible, no way subject to suffer evil, insomuch that it cannot be hurt if it should be cast into hell fire, no more than Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, were hurt in the burning oven. In one word, God is not only to the souls, but also to the bodies of the saints, *all in all things;* a glass to their sight, honey to their taste, music to their hearing, balm to their smelling.—*John Boys.*

Verse 11.—"*In thy presence is fulness of joy.*" The saints on earth are all but *viatores*, wayfaring men, wandering pilgrims far from home; but the saints in heaven are *comprehensores*, safely arrived at the end of their journey. All we here present for the present, are but mere strangers in the midst of danger, we are losing ourselves and losing our lives in the land of the dying. But ere long, we may find our lives and ourselves again in heaven with the Lord of life, being found of him in the land of the living. If when we die, we be in the Lord of life, our souls are sure to be bound up in the bundle of life, that so when we live again we may be sure to find them in the life of the Lord. Now we have but a dram, but a scruple, but a grain of happiness, to an ounce, to a pound, to a thousand weight of heaviness; now we have but a drop of joy to an ocean of sorrow; but a moment of ease to an age of pain; but then (as St. Austin very sweetly in his *Soliloquies*), we shall have endless ease without any pain, true happiness without any heaviness, the greatest measure of felicity without the least of misery, the fullest measure of joy that may be, without any mixture of grief. Here therefore (as St. Gregory the divine adviseth us), let us ease our heaviest loads of sufferings, and sweeten our bitterest cups of sorrows with the continual meditation and constant expectation of *the fulness of joy in the presence of God, and of the pleasure at his right hand for evermore.*

"*In thy presence*, is," etc., *there it is*, not there it was, nor there it may be, nor there it will be, but *there it is*, there it *is* without cessation or intercision, there it always hath been, and is, and must be. It is an assertion *æternæ veritatis*, that is

always true, it may at any time be said that there it *is*. "In thy presence *is* the fulness of joy;" and herein consists the consummation of felicity; for what does any man here present wish for more than joy? And what measure of joy can any man wish for more than fulness of joy? And what kind of fulness would any man wish for rather than this fulness, the fulness κατ' ἐξοχήν? And where would any man wish to enjoy this fulness of joy rather than in the presence of God, which is the ever-flowing and the over-flowing fountain of joy? And when would any man wish for this enjoyment of the fulness of joy in the very fountain of joy rather than presently, constantly, and incessantly? Now all these desirables are encircled within the compass of the first remarkable, to make up the consummation of true felicity. "*In thy presence is fulness of joy.*"—"*The Consummation of Felicity,*" by *Edward Willan*, 1645.

Verse 11.—The human nature of Christ in heaven hath a double capacity of glory, happiness and delight; one on that mere fellowship and communion with his Father and the other persons, through his personal union with the Godhead. Which joy of his in this fellowship, Christ himself speaks of as to be enjoyed by him: "*In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.*" And this is a constant and settled fulness of pleasure, such as admits not any addition or diminution, but is always one and the same, and absolute and entire in itself; and of itself alone sufficient for the Son of God, and heir of all things to live upon, though he should have had no other comings in of joy and delight from any creature. And this is his natural inheritance.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 11.—"*In thy presence is* FULNESS *of joy.*" In heaven they are free from want; they can want nothing there unless it be want itself. They may find the want of evil, but never find the evil of want. Evil is but the want of good, and the want of evil is but the absence of want. God is good, and no want of good can be in God. What want then can be endured in the presence of God, where no evil is, but all good that the fulness of joy may be enjoyed? Here some men eat their meat without any hunger, whilst others hunger without any meat to eat, and some men drink extremely without any thirst, whilst others thirst extremely without any drink. But in the glorious presence of God, not any one can be pampered with too much, nor any one be pined with too little. They that gather much of the heavenly manna, "have nothing over;" and "they that gather little have no lack. They that are once possessed of that presence of God, are so possessed with it that they can never feel the misery of thirst or hunger.—*Edward Willan.*

Verse 11.—"*Fulness.*" Every soul shall there enjoy an infinite happiness, because it shall enjoy infinite goodness. And it shall be for ever enjoyed, without disliking of it, or losing of it, or lacking any of it. Every soul shall enjoy as much good in that presence, by the presence of that good, as it shall be able to receive, or to desire to receive. As much as shall make it fully happy. Every one shall be filled so proportionately full; and every desire in any soul shall be fulfilled so perfectly in that presence of glory, with the glory of that presence, that no one shall ever wish for any more, or ever be weary of that it has, or be willing to change it for any other.—*Edward Willan.*

Verse 11.—"*Fulness of joy.*" When a man comes to the sea, he doth not complain that he wants his cistern of water: though thou didst suck comfort from thy relations; yet when thou comest to the ocean, and art with Christ, thou shalt never complain that thou hast left thy cistern behind. There will be nothing to breed sorrow in heaven; there shall be *joy, and nothing but joy*, heaven is set out by that phrase, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Here joy enters into us, there we enter into joy; the joys we have here are from heaven; the joys that we shall have with Christ are without measure and without mixture. "*In thy presence is fulness of joy.*"—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 11.—"*In thy presence is fulness of joy.*" In this life our joy is mixed with sorrow like a prick under the rose. Jacob had joy when his sons returned home from Egypt with the sacks full of corn, but much sorrow when he perceived the silver in the sack's mouth. David had much joy in bringing up the ark of God, but at the same time great sorrow for the breach made upon Uzza. This is the Lord's great wisdom to temper and moderate our joy. As men of a weak constitution must have their wine qualified with water for fear of distemper, so must we in this life (such is our weakness), have our joy mixed with sorrow, lest we turn giddy and insolent. Here our joy is mixed with fear (Psalm ii.), "Rejoice with trembling;" the women departed from the sepulchre of our Lord "with fear and

great joy." Matthew xxviii. 8. In our regenerate estate, though we have joy from Christ that is "formed in us," yet the impression of the terrors of God before the time of our new birth remains in us; as in a commotion of the sea by a great tempest after a stormy wind hath ceased, yet the impression of the storm remains and makes an agitation. The tender mother recovering her young child from danger of a fall hath joy from the recovery; but with much fear with the impression of the danger: so after we are recovered here from our dangerous falls by the rich and tender mercies of our God, sometime preventing us, sometime restoring us, though we rejoice in his mercy, and in our own recovery out of the snares of Satan, yet in the midst of our joy the remembrance of former guiltiness and danger do humble our hearts with much sorrow, and some trepidation of heart. As our joy here is mixed with fears, so with sorrow also. Sound believers do look up to Christ crucified, and do rejoice in his incomparable love, that such a person should have died such a death for such as were enemies to God by sinful inclinations and wicked works; they look down also upon their own sins that have wounded and crucified the Lord of glory, and this breaketh the heart, as a widow should mourn, who by her froward and lewd behaviour hath burst the heart of a kind and loving husband.

The sound believers look to their small beginnings of grace, and they rejoice in the work of God's hands; but when they compare it with that original and primitive righteousness, they mourn bitterly, as the elders of Israel did at the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra iii. 12); "They who had seen the first house wept." But in heaven our joy will be full, without mixture of sorrow (John xvi. 20); "Your sorrow," saith our Lord, "shall be turned into joy." Then will there be no sorrow for a present trouble, nor present fear of future troubles. Then their eye will deeply affect their heart: the sight and knowledge of God the supreme and infinite good will ravish, and take up all their heart with joy and delight. Peter in the Mount (Matthew xvii.), was so affected with that glorious sight, that he forgot both the delights and troubles that were below; "It is good to be here," said he. How much more will all worldly troubles and delights be forgot at that soul-satisfying sight in heaven, which is as far above that of Peter in the Mount, as the third heaven is above that Mount, and as the uncreated is above the created glory!—*William Colvill's "Refreshing Streams,"* 1655.

Verse 11.—"*In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*" Mark, for quality, there are *pleasures;* for quantity, *fulness;* for dignity, *at God's right hand;* for eternity, *for evermore.* And millions of years multiplied by millions, make not up one minute to this eternity of joy that the saints shall have in heaven. In heaven there shall be no sin to take away your joy, nor no devil to take away your joy; nor no man to take away your joy. "Your joy no man taketh from you." John xvi. 22. The joy of the saints in heaven is never ebbing, but always flowing to all contentment. The joys of heaven never fade, never wither, never die, nor never are lessened nor interrupted. The joy of the saints in heaven is a constant joy, an everlasting joy, in the root and in the cause, and in the matter of it and in the objects of it. "Their joy lasts for ever whose objects remain for ever"—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 11.—"*Pleasures for evermore.*" The soul that is once landed at the heavenly shore is past all storms. The glorified soul shall be for ever bathing itself in the *rivers of pleasure.* This is that which makes heaven to be heaven, "We shall be ever with the Lord." 1 Thess. iv. 17. Austin saith, "Lord, I am content to suffer any pains and torments in this world, if I might see thy face one day; but alas! were it only a day, then to be ejected heaven, it would rather be an aggravation of misery;" but this word, "*ever with the Lord,*" is very accumulative, and makes up the garland of glory: a state of eternity is a state of security.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 11.—This then may serve for a ground of comfort to every soul distressed with the tedious bitterness of this life; for short sorrow here, we shall have eternal joy; for a little hunger, an eternal banquet; for light sickness and affliction, everlasting health and salvation; for a little imprisonment, endless liberty; for disgrace, glory. Instead of the wicked who oppress and afflict them, they shall have the angels and saints to comfort and solace them, instead of Satan to torment and tempt them, they shall have Jesus to ravish and affect them. Joseph's prison shall be turned into a palace; Daniel's lions' den into the presence of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; the three children's hot fiery furnace, into the New Jerusalem of pure gold; David's Gath, into the tabernacle of the living God.—*John Cragge's "Cabinet of Spirituall Jewells,"* 1657.

Verse 11.—This heavenly feast will not have an end, as Ahasuerus's feast had, though it lasted many days; but *"At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." William Colvill.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Michtam of David.—Under the title of "The Golden Psalm," Mr. Canon Dale has published a small volume, which is valuable as a series of good simple discourses, but ought hardly to have been styled "an exposition." We have thought it right to give the headings of the chapters into which his volume is divided, for there is much showiness, and may be some solidity in the suggestions.

Verse 1.—*The seeking of the gold.* The believer conscious of danger, trusting in God only for deliverance.

Verses 2, 3.—*The possessing of the gold.* The believer looking for justification to the righteousness of God alone, while maintaining personal holiness by companionship with the saints.

Verses 4, 5.—*The testing of the gold.* The believer finding his present portion, and expecting his eternal inheritance in the Lord.

Verse 6.—*The prizing or valuing of the gold.* The believer congratulating himself on the pleasantness of his dwelling and the goodness of his heritage.

Verses 7, 8.—*The occupying of the gold.* The believer seeking instruction from the counsels of the Lord by night, and realising his promise by day.

Verses 9, 10.—*The summing or reckoning of the gold.* The believer rejoicing and praising God for the promise of a rest in hope and resurrection into glory.

Verse 11.—*The perfecting of the gold.* The believer realising at God's right hand the fulness of joy and the pleasures for evermore.

Upon this suggestive Psalm we offer the following few hints out of many—

Verse 1.—The prayer and the plea. The preserver and the truster. The dangers of the saints and the place of their confidence.

Verse 2.—*"Thou art my Lord."* The soul's appropriation, allegiance, assurance and avowal.

Verses 2, 3.—The influence and sphere of goodness. No profit to God, or departed saints or sinners, but to *living men.* Need of promptness, etc.

Verses 2, 3.—Evidence of true faith. I. Allegiance to divine authority. II. Rejection of self-righteousness. III. Doing good to the saints. IV. Appreciation of saintly excellence. V. delight in their society.

Verse 3.—*Excellent of the earth.* May be translated noble, wonderful, magnificent. They are so in their new birth, nature, clothing, attendance, heritage, etc., etc.

Verse 3.—*"In whom is all my delight."* Why Christians should be objects of our delight. Why we do not delight in them more. Why they do not delight in us. How to make our fellowship more delightful.

Verse 3.—Collection sermon for poor believers. I. Saints. II. Saints on the earth. III. These are excellent. IV. We must delight in them. V. We must extend our goodness to them.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—Sorrows of idolatry illustrated in heathens and ourselves.

Second clause.—The duty of complete separation from sinners in life and lip.

Verse 5.—Future inheritance and present cup found in God. (See Exposition).

Last clause.—What our "lot" is. What danger it is in. Who defends it.

Verse 6.—*"Pleasant places."* Bethlehem, Calvary, Olivet, Tabor, Zion, Paradise, etc. II. *Pleasant purposes,* which made these lines fall to me. III. *Pleasant praises.* By service, sacrifice, and song.

Verse 6 (*second clause*).—I. A heritage. II. A goodly heritage. III. I have it. IV. Yea, or the Spirit's witness.

Verse 6.—*"A goodly heritage."* That which makes our portion good is—I. The favour of God with it. II. That it is from a Father's hand. III. That it comes through the covenant of grace. IV. That it is the purchase of Christ's blood. V. That it is an answer to prayer, and a blessing from above upon honest endeavours.

Verse 6.—We may put this acknowledgment into the mouth of—I. *An indulged child of providence.* II. *An inhabitant of this favoured country.* III. *A Christian with regard to his spiritual condition.—William Jay.*

Verse 7.—*Taking counsel's opinion.* Of whom? Upon what? Why? When? How? What then?

Verse 7.—Upward and inward, or two schools of instruction.

Verse 8.—Set the Lord always before you as—I. Your *protector.* II. Your *leader.* III. *Your example.* IV. Your *observer.—William Jay.*

Verses 8, 9.—A sense of the divine presence our best support. It yields. I. Good confidence concerning things without. "*I shall not be moved.*" II. Good cheer within. "*My heart is glad.*" III. Good music for the living tongue. "*My glory rejoiceth.*" IV. Good hope for the dying body. "*My flesh also,*" etc.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—I. The saint's Sabbath (*rest*). II. His sarcophagus (*in hope*). III. His salvation (for which he *hopes*).

Verses 9, 10.—Jesus cheered in prospect of death by the safety of his soul and body; our consolation in him as to the same.

Verse 10.—Jesus dead, the place of his soul and his body. A difficult but interesting topic.

Verses 10, 11.—Because he lives we shall live also. The believer, therefore, can also say, "Thou wilt show *me* the path of life." This life means the blessedness reserved in heaven for the people of God after the resurrection. It has three characters. The first regards its *source*—it flows from "*his presence.*" The second regards its plenitude—it is "*fulness*" of joy. The third regards its *permanency*—the pleasures are "*for evermore.*"—*William Jay.*

Verse 11.—A sweet picture of heaven. (See Exposition.)

PSALM XVII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—A Prayer of David. *David would not have been a man after God's own heart, if he had not been a man of prayer. He was a master in the sacred art of supplication. He flies to prayer in all times of need, as a pilot speeds to the harbour in the stress of tempest. So frequent were David's prayers that they could not all be dated and entitled; and hence this simply bears the author's name, and nothing more. The smell of the furnace is upon the present Psalm, but there is evidence in the last verse that he who wrote it came unharmed out of the flame. We have in the present plaintive song,* AN APPEAL TO HEAVEN *from the persecutions of earth. A spiritual eye may see Jesus here.*

DIVISIONS.—*There are no very clear lines of demarcation between the parts; but we prefer the divisions adopted by that precious old commentator, David Dickson. In verses* 1—4, *David craves justice in the controversy between him and his oppressors. In verses* 5 *and* 6, *he requests of the Lord grace to act rightly while under the trial. From verse* 7—12, *he seeks protection from his foes, whom he graphically describes; and in verses* 13 *and* 14, *pleads that they may be disappointed; closing the whole in the most comfortable confidence that all would certainly be well with himself at the last.*

EXPOSITION.

HEAR the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned lips.

2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.

3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night; thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing; I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.

4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer.

1. "*Hear the right, O Lord.*" He that has the worst cause makes the most noise; hence the oppressed soul is apprehensive that its voice may be drowned, and therefore pleads in this one verse for a hearing no less than three times. The troubled heart craves for the ear of the great Judge, persuaded that with him to hear is to redress. If our God could not or would not hear us, our state would be deplorable indeed; and yet some professors set such small store by the mercy-seat, that God does not hear them for the simple reason that they neglect to plead. As well have no house if we persist like gipsies in living in the lanes and commons; as well have no mercy-seat as be always defending our own cause and never going to God. There is more fear that *we* will not hear the Lord than that the Lord will not hear us. "*Hear the right;*" it is well if our case is good in itself and can be urged as a right one, for right shall never be wronged by our righteous Judge; but if our suit be marred by our infirmities, it is a great privilege that we may make mention of the righteousness of our Lord Jesus, which is ever prevalent on high. *Right* has a voice which Jehovah always hears; and if my wrongs clamour against me with great force and fury, I will pray the Lord to hear that still louder and mightier voice of the right, and the rights of his dear Son. "Hear, O God, the just One;" *i.e.*, "hear the Messiah," is a rendering adopted by Jerome, and admired by Bishop Horsley, whether correct or not as a translation, it is proper enough as a plea. Let the reader plead it at the throne of the righteous God, even when all other arguments are unavailing.

"*Attend unto my cry.*" This shows the vehemence and earnestness of the petitioner; he is no mere talker, he weeps and laments. Who can resist a cry? A real hearty, bitter, piteous cry, might almost melt a rock, there can be no fear of its prevalence with our heavenly Father. A cry is our earliest utterance, and in many ways the most natural of human sounds; if our prayer should like the

infant's cry be more natural than intelligent, and more earnest than elegant, it will be none the less eloquent with God. There is a mighty power in a child's cry to prevail with a parent's heart. "*Give ear unto my prayer.*" Some repetitions are not vain. The reduplication here used is neither superstition nor tautology, but is like the repeated blow of a hammer hitting the same nail on the head to fix it the more effectually, or the continued knocking of a beggar at the gate who cannot be denied an alms. "*That goeth not out of feigned lips.*" Sincerity is a *sine quâ non* in prayer. Lips of deceit are detestable to man and much more to God. In intercourse so hallowed as that of prayer, hypocrisy even in the remotest degree is as fatal as it is foolish. Hypocritical piety is double iniquity. He who would feign and flatter had better try his craft with a fool like himself, for to deceive the all-seeing One is as impossible as to take the moon in a net, or to lead the sun into a snare. He who would deceive God is himself already most grossly deceived. Our sincerity in prayer has no merit in it, any more than the earnestness of a mendicant in the street; but at the same time the Lord has regard to it, through Jesus, and will not long refuse his ear to an honest and fervent petitioner.

2. "*Let my sentence come forth from thy presence.*" The Psalmist has now grown bold by the strengthening influence of prayer, and he now entreats the Judge of all the earth to give sentence upon his case. He had been libelled, basely and maliciously libelled; and having brought his action before the highest court, he, like an innocent man, has no desire to escape the enquiry, but even invites and sues for judgment. He does not ask for secrecy, but would have the result come forth to the world. He would have sentence pronounced and executed forthwith. In some matters we may venture to be as bold as this; but except we can plead something better than our own supposed innocence, it were terrible presumption thus to challenge the judgment of a sin-hating God. With Jesus as our complete and all-glorious righteousness we need not fear, though the day of judgment should commence at once, and hell open her mouth at our feet, but might joyfully prove the truth of our hymn writer's holy boast—

> "Bold shall I stand in that great day;
> For who ought to my charge shall lay?
> While, through thy blood, absolved I am
> From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

"*Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.*" Believers do not desire any other judge than God, or to be excused from judgment, or even to be judged on principles of partiality. No; our hope does not lie in the prospect of favouritism from God, and the consequent suspension of his law; we expect to be judged on the same principles as other men, and through the blood and righteousness of our Redeemer we shall pass the ordeal unscathed. The Lord will weigh us in the scales of justice fairly and justly; he will not use false weights to permit us to escape, but with the sternest equity those balances will be used upon us as well as upon others; and with our blessed Lord Jesus as our all in all we tremble not, for we shall not be found wanting. In David's case, he felt his cause to be so right that he simply desired the Divine eyes to rest upon the matter, and he was confident that equity would give him all that he needed.

3. "*Thou hast proved mine heart.*" Like Peter, David uses the argument, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." It is a most assuring thing to be able to appeal at once to the Lord, and call upon our Judge to be a witness for our defence. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." "*Thou hast visited me in the night.*" As if he had said, "Lord, thou hast entered my house at all hours; and thou hast seen me when no one else was nigh; thou hast come upon me unawares and marked my unrestrained actions, and thou knowest whether or no I am guilty of the crimes laid at my door." Happy man who can thus remember the omniscient eye, and the omnipresent visitor, and find comfort in the remembrance. We hope we have had our midnight visits from our Lord, and truly they are sweet; so sweet that the recollection of them sets us longing for more of such condescending communings. Lord, if, indeed, we had been hypocrites, should we have had such fellowship, or feel such hungerings after a renewal of it? "*Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing.*" Surely the Psalmist means nothing hypocritical or wicked in the sense in which his slanderers accused him; for if the Lord should put the best of his people into the crucible, the dross would be a fearful sight, and would make penitence

open her sluices wide. Assayers very soon detect the presence of alloy, and when the chief of all assayers shall, at the last, say of us that he has found nothing, it will be a glorious hour indeed—" They are without fault before the throne of God." Even here, as viewed in our covenant Head, the Lord sees no sin in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel; even the all-detecting glance of Omniscience can see no flaw where the great Substitute covers all with beauty and perfection. " *I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.*" Oh those sad lips of ours! we had need purpose to purpose if we would keep them from exceeding their bounds. The number of diseases of the tongue is as many as the diseases of all the rest of the man put together, and they are more inveterate. Hands and feet one may bind, but who can fetter the lips? iron bands may hold a madman, but what chains can restrain the tongue? It needs more than a purpose to keep this nimble offender within its proper range. Lion-taming and serpent-charming are not to be mentioned in the same day as tongue-taming, for the tongue can no man tame. Those who have to smart from the falsehoods of others should be the more jealous over themselves; perhaps this led the Psalmist to register this holy resolution; and, moreover, he intended thereby to aver that if he had said too much in his own defence, it was not intentional, for he desired in all respects to tune his lips to the sweet and simple music of truth. Nothwithstanding all this David was slandered, as if to show us that the purest innocence will be bemired by malice. There is no sunshine without a shadow, no ripe fruit unpecked by the birds.

4. " *Concerning the works of men.*" While we are in the midst of men we shall have their works thrust under our notice, and we shall be compelled to keep a corner in our diary headed " concerning the works of men." To be quite clear from the dead works of carnal humanity is the devout desire of souls who are quickened by the Holy Spirit. " *By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.*" He had kept the highway of Scripture, and not chosen the bye-paths of malice. We should soon imitate the example of the worst of men if the grace of God did not use the Word of God as the great preservative from evil. The paths of the destroyer have often tempted us; we have been prompted to become destroyers too, when we have been sorely provoked, and resentment has grown warm; but we have remembered the example of our Lord, who would not call fire from heaven upon his enemies, but meekly prayed, " Father, forgive them." All the ways of sin are the paths of Satan,—the Apollyon or Abaddon, both of which words signify the destroyer. Foolish indeed are those who give their hearts to the old murderer, because for the time he panders to their evil desires. That heavenly Book which lies neglected on many a shelf is the only guide for those who would avoid the enticing and entangling mazes of sin; and it is the best means of preserving the youthful pilgrim from ever treading those dangerous ways. We must follow the one or the other; the Book of Life, or the way of death; the word of the Holy Spirit, or the suggestion of the Evil Spirit. David could urge as the proof of his sincerity that he had no part or lot with the ungodly in their ruinous ways. How can we venture to plead our cause with God, unless we also can wash our hands clean of all connection with the enemies of the Great King?

5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not.
6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, *and hear* my speech.

5. Under trial it is not easy to behave ourselves aright; a candle is not easily kept alight when many envious mouths are puffing at it. In evil times prayer is peculiarly needful, and wise men resort to it at once. Plato said to one of his disciples, " When men speak ill of thee, live so that no one will believe them;" good enough advice, but he did not tell us how to carry it out. We have a precept here incorporated in an example; if we would be preserved, we must cry to the Preserver, and enlist divine support upon our side. " *Hold up my goings*"—as a careful driver holds up his horse when going down hill. We have all sorts of paces, both fast and slow, and the road is never long of one sort, but with God to hold up our goings, nothing in the pace or in the road can cast down. He who has been down once and cut his knees sadly, even to the bone, had need redouble his zeal when using this prayer; and all of us, since we are so weak on our legs through Adam's fall, had need use it every hour of the day. If a perfect father fell, how shall an imperfect son dare to boast? " *In thy paths.*" Forsaking Satan's paths,

he prayed to be upheld in God's paths. We cannot keep *from* evil without keeping *to* good. If the bushel be not full of wheat, it may soon be once more full of chaff. In all the appointed ordinances and duties of our most holy faith, may the Lord enable us to run through his upholding grace! "*That my footsteps slip not.*" What! slip in God's ways? Yes, the road is good, but our feet are evil, and therefore slip, even on the King's highway. Who wonders if carnal men slide and fall in ways of their own choosing, which, like the vale of Siddim, are full of deadly slime-pits? One may trip over an ordinance as well as over a temptation. Jesus Christ himself is a stumbling-block to some, and the doctrines of grace have been the occasion of offence to many. Grace alone can hold up our goings in the paths of truth.

6. "*I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God.*" Thou hast always heard me, O my Lord, and therefore I have the utmost confidence in again approaching thine altar. Experience is a blessed teacher. He who has tried the faithfulness of God in hours of need, has great boldness in laying his case before the throne. The well of Bethlehem, from which we drew such cooling draughts in years gone by, our souls long for still; nor will we leave it for the broken cisterns of earth. "*Incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.*" Stoop out of heaven and put thine ear to my mouth; give me thine ear all to myself, as men do when they lean over to catch every word from their friend. The Psalmist here comes back to his first prayer, and thus sets us an example of pressing our suit again and again, until we have a full assurance that we have succeeded.

7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against them*.

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings.

9 From the wicked that oppress me, *from* my deadly enemies, *who* compass me about.

10 They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.

11 They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;

12 Like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

7. "*Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness.*" Marvellous in its antiquity, its distinguishing character, its faithfulness, its immutability, and above all, marvellous in the wonders which it works. That marvellous grace which has redeemed us with the precious blood of God's only begotten, is here invoked to come to the rescue. That grace is sometimes hidden; the text says, "Shew it." Present enjoyments of divine love are matchless cordials to support fainting hearts. Believer, what a prayer is this! Consider it well. O Lord, shew thy marvellous lovingkindness; shew it to my intellect, and remove my ignorance; shew it to my heart, and revive my gratitude; shew it to my faith, and renew my confidence; shew it to my experience, and deliver me from all my fears. The original word here used is the same which in Psalm iv. 3 is rendered *set apart*, and it has the force of, Distinguish thy mercies, set them out, and set apart the choicest to be bestowed upon me in this hour of my severest affliction. "*O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.*" The title here given to our gracious God is eminently consolatory. He is the God of salvation; it is his present and perpetual habit to save believers; he puts forth his best and most glorious strength, using his right hand of wisdom and might, to save all those, of whatsoever rank or class, who trust themselves with him. Happy faith thus to secure the omnipotent protection of heaven! Blessed God, to be thus gracious to unworthy mortals, when they have but grace to rely upon thee! The right hand of God is interposed between the saints and all harm; God is never at a loss for means; his own bare hand is enough. He works without tools as well as with them.

8. "*Keep me as the apple of the eye.*" No part of the body more precious, more tender, and more carefully guarded than the eye; and of the eye, no portion more peculiarly to be protected than the central apple, the pupil, or, as the Hebrew calls it, "the daughter of the eye." The all-wise Creator has placed the eye in a well-protected position; it stands surrounded by projecting bones like Jerusalem

encircled by mountains. Moreover, its great Author has surrounded it with many tunics of inward covering, besides the hedge of the eyebrows, the curtain of the eyelids, and the fence of the eyelashes; and, in addition to this, he has given to every man so high a value for his eyes, and so quick an apprehension of danger, that no member of the body is more faithfully cared for than the organ of sight. Thus, Lord, keep thou me, for I trust I am one with Jesus, and so a member of his mystical body. "*Hide me under the shadow of thy wings.*" Even as the parent bird completely shields her brood from evil, and meanwhile cherishes them with the warmth of her own heart, by covering them with her wings, so do thou with me, most condescending God, for I am thine offspring, and thou hast a parent's love in perfection. This last clause is in the Hebrew in the future tense, as if to show that what the writer had asked for but a moment before he was now sure would be granted to him. Confident expectation should keep pace with earnest supplication.

9. "*From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.*" The foes from whom David sought to be rescued were *wicked* men. It is hopeful for us when our enemies are God's enemies. They were *deadly enemies*, whom nothing but his death would satisfy. The foes of a believer's soul are mortal foes most emphatically, for they who war against our faith aim at the very life of our life. Deadly sins are deadly enemies, and what sin is there which hath not death in its bowels? These foes *oppressed* David, they laid his spirit waste, as invading armies ravage a country, or as wild beasts desolate a land. He likens himself to a besieged city, and complains that his foes *compass him about.* It may well quicken our business upward, when all around us, every road, is blockaded by deadly foes. This is our daily position, for all around us dangers and sins are lurking. O God, do thou protect us from them all.

10. "*They are inclosed in their own fat.*" Luxury and gluttony beget vainglorious fatness of heart, which shuts up its gates against all compassionate emotions and reasonable judgments. The old proverb says that full bellies make empty skulls, and it is yet more true that they frequently make empty hearts. The rankest weeds grow out of the fattest soil. Riches and self-indulgence are the fuel upon which some sins feed their flames. Pride and fulness of bread were Sodom's twin sins. (Ezek. xvi. 49.) Fed hawks forget their masters; and the moon at its fullest is furthest from the sun. Eglon was a notable instance that a well-fed corporation is no security to life, when a sharp message comes from God, addressed to the inward vitals of the body. "*With their mouth they speak proudly.*" He who adores himself will have no heart to adore the Lord. Full of selfish pleasure within his heart, the wicked man fills his mouth with boastful and arrogant expressions. Prosperity and vanity often lodge together. Woe to the fed ox when it bellows at its owner, the poleaxe is not far off.

11. "*They have now compassed us in our steps.*" The fury of the ungodly is aimed not at one believer alone, but at all the band; they have compassed *us.* All the race of the Jews were but a morsel for Haman's hungry revenge, and all because of one Mordecai. The prince of darkness hates all the saints for their Master's sake. The Lord Jesus is one of the *us*, and herein is our hope. He is the Breaker, and will clear a way for us through the hosts which environ us. The hatred of the powers of evil is continuous and energetic, for they watch every *step*, hoping that the time may come when they shall catch us by surprise. If our spiritual adversaries thus compass every step, how anxiously should we guard all our movements, lest by any means we should be betrayed into evil! "*They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth.*" Trapp wittily explains this metaphor by an allusion to a bull when about to run at his victim; he lowers his head, looks downward, and then concentrates all his force in the dash which he makes. It most probably denotes the malicious jealousy with which the enemy watches the steps of the righteous; as if they studied the ground on which they trod, and searched after some wrong footmark to accuse them for the past, or some stumbling-stone to cast in their future path to trip them in days to come.

12. Lions are not more greedy, nor their ways more cunning than are Satan and his helpers when engaged against the children of God. The blood of souls the adversary thirsts after, and all his strength and craft are exercised to the utmost to satisfy his detestable appetite. We are weak and foolish like sheep; but we have a shepherd wise and strong, who knows the old lion's wiles, and is more than a match for his force; therefore will we not fear, but rest in safety in the fold. Let

us beware, however, of our lurking foe; and in those parts of the road were we feel most secure, let us look about us lest, peradventure, our foe should leap upon us.

13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is* thy sword:

14 From men *which are* thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, *which have* their portion in *this* life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid *treasure:* they are full of children, and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.

13. *"Arise, O Lord."* The more furious the attack, the more fervent the Psalmist's prayer. His eye rests singly upon the Almighty, and he feels that God has but to rise from the seat of his patience and the work will be performed at once. Let the lion spring upon us, if Jehovah steps between we need no better defence. When God meets our foe face to face in battle, the conflict will soon be over. *"Disappoint him."* Be beforehand with him, outwit and outrun him. Appoint it otherwise than he has appointed, and so disappoint him. *"Cast him down."* Prostrate him. Make him sink upon his knees. Make him bow as the conquered bows before the conqueror. What a glorious sight will it be to behold Satan prostrate beneath the foot of our glorious Lord! Haste, glorious day! *"Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword."* He recognizes the most profane and oppressive as being under the providential rule of the King of kings, and used as a sword in the divine hand. What can a sword do unless it be wielded by a hand? No more could the wicked annoy us, unless the Lord permitted them so to do. Most translators are, however, agreed that this is not the correct reading, but that it should be as Calvin puts it, "Deliver my soul from the ungodly man by thy sword." Thus David contrasts the sword of the Lord with human aids and reliefs, and rests assured that he is safe enough under the patronage of heaven.

14. Almost every word of this verse has furnished matter for discussion to scholars, for it is very obscure. We will, therefore, rest content with the common version, rather than distract the reader with divers translations. *"From men which are thy hand."* Having styled the ungodly a sword in his Father's hand, he now likens them to that hand itself, to set forth his conviction that God could as easily remove their violence as a man moves his own hand. He will never slay his child with his own hand. *"From men of the world,"* mere earthworms; not men of the world to come, but mere dwellers in this narrow sphere of mortality; having no hopes or wishes beyond the ground on which they tread. *"Which have their portion in this life."* Like the prodigal, they have their portion, and are not content to wait their Father's time. Like Passion in the "Pilgrim's Progress," they have their best things first, and revel during their little hour. Luther was always afraid lest he should have his portion here, and therefore frequently gave away sums of money which had been presented to him. We cannot have earth and heaven too for our choice and portion; wise men choose that which will last the longest. *"Whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure."* Their sensual appetite gets the gain which it craved for. God gives to these swine the husks which they hunger for. A generous man does not deny dogs their bones; and our generous God gives even his enemies enough to fill them, if they were not so unreasonable as never to be content. Gold and silver which are locked up in the dark treasuries of the earth are given to the wicked liberally, and they therefore roll in all manner of carnal delights. Every dog has his day, and they have theirs, and a bright summer's day it seems; but ah! how soon it ends in night! *"They are full of children."* This was their fondest hope, that a race from their loins would prolong their names far down the page of history, and God has granted them this also; so that they have all that heart can wish. What enviable creatures they seem, but it is only seeming! *"They are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes."* They were fat housekeepers, and yet leave no lean wills. Living and dying they lacked for nothing but grace, and alas! that lack spoils everything. They had a fair portion within the little circle of time, but eternity entered not into their calculations. They were penny wise, but pound foolish; they remembered the present, and forgot the future; they fought for the shell, and lost the kernel. How fine a description have we here of many a successful merchant, or popular statesman; and it is, at first sight, very showy and tempting, but in contrast with the glories of the world to come, what are these paltry molehill

joys. Self, self, self, all these joys begin and end in basest selfishness; but oh, our God, how rich are those who begin and end in thee! From all the contamination and injury which association with wordly men is sure to bring us, deliver thou us, O God!

15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

15. *"As for me."* "I neither envy nor covet these men's happiness, but partly have and partly hope for a far better." To behold God's face and to be changed by that vision into his image, so as to partake in his righteousness, this is my noble ambition; and in the prospect of this I cheerfully waive all my present enjoyments. My satisfaction is to come; I do not look for it as yet. I shall sleep awhile, but I shall wake at the sound of the trumpet; wake to everlasting joy, because I arise in thy likeness, O my God and King! Glimpses of glory good men have here below to stay their sacred hunger, but the full feast awaits them in the upper skies. Compared with this deep, ineffable, eternal fulness of delight, the joys of the worldling are as a glowworm to the sun, or the drop of a bucket to the ocean.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—*"A prayer of David."* Since many of the Psalms consist of *prayers*, the question may be asked why such an inscription more especially belongs to this. But though the others contain divers prayers mixed with other matters, this is a supplication through its whole course.—*The Venerable Bede*, 672—735.

Verse 1.—*"Hear . . . attend . . . give ear."* This petition repeated thrice, indicates a great power of feeling and many tears; because the craft of the ungodly, in truth, grieves and afflicts the spiritual man more than their power and violence, for we can get a knowledge of open force and violence, and, when we see the danger, can in some way guard against it.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—*"That goeth not out of feigned lips."*—There are such things as *"feigned lips;"* a contradiction between the heart and the tongue, a clamour in the voice and scoffing in the soul, a crying to God, "Thou art my father, the guide of my youth;" and yet speaking and doing evil to the utmost of our power (Jer. iii. 4, 5), as if God could be imposed upon by fawning pretences, and, like old Isaac, take Jacob for Esau, and be cozened by the smell of his garments; as if he could not discern the negro heart under an angel's garb. . . . This is an unworthy conceit of God, to fancy that we can satisfy for inward sins, and avert approaching judgments by external offerings, by a loud voice, with a false heart, as if God (like children), would be pleased with the glittering of an empty shell, or the rattling of stones, the chinking of money, a mere voice, and crying without inward frames and intentions of service.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 1.—*"Not out of feigned lips."* It is observable, that the eagle soareth on high, little intending to fly to heaven, but to gain her prey; and so it is that many do carry a great deal of seeming devotion in lifting up their eyes towards heaven; but they do it only to accomplish with more ease, safety, and applause their wicked and damnable designs here on earth; such as without are Catos, within Neros; hear them, no man better; search and try them, no man worse; they have Jacob's voice, but Esau's hands; they profess like saints, but practise little Satans; they have their long prayers, but short prayings; they are like apothecaries' gallipots—having without the title of some excellent preservative, but within they are full of deadly poison; counterfeit holiness is their cloak for all manner of villanies, and the midwife to bring forth all their devilish designs. —*Peter Bales, in Spencer's "Things New and Old."*

Verse 1.—*"Not out of feigned lips."* Not only a righteous cause, but a righteous prayer are urged as motives why God should hear. Calvin remarks on the importance of joining prayer to the testimony of a good conscience, lest we defraud God of his honour by not committing all judgment to him.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 1.—Though thy prayers be never so well framed in regard of words, and

reverently performed as to thy external gestures; yet all is nothing, *if thy heart be not in the duty.* For prayer is not a work of the head, or hand, or eyes only, but chiefly a work of the heart, and therefore called in Scripture, the "pouring out of the soul" (1 Sam. i. 15); and the "pouring out of the heart." Psalm lxii. 8. And, indeed, the very soul of prayer lieth in the pouring out of the soul before the Lord. Whensoever, therefore, thou drawest near unto God in prayer, let it be with thine heart and soul, otherwise thou canst have no assurance of audience, and acceptance; for as Cyprian speaketh, *Quomodo te audiri a Deo postulas*, etc. How canst thou expect the Lord should hear thee, when thou hearest not thyself? or that he should regard thy prayers, when thou regardest not what thou prayest? Certainly that prayer reacheth not the heart of God, which reacheth not our own.—*Thomas Gouge*, 1605—1681.

Verse 2.—David appeals unto God to judge the righteousness of his heart towards Saul—"*Let my sentence come forth from thy presence.*" From Saul and his courtiers there comes a hard sentence; they call me traitor, they call me rebel; but, Lord, leave me not unto their sentence, "*Let my sentence come from thy presence;*" that I know will be another sentence than what cometh from them, for thou hast proved me, and tried me, and findest nothing in me.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast proved mine heart:*"—

What! take it at adventure, and not try
What metal it is made of? No, not I.
  Should I now lightly let it pass,
Take sullen lead for silver, sounding brass,
  Instead of solid gold, alas!
What would become of it in the great day
Of making jewels, 'twould be cast away.

The heart thou giv'st me must be such a one,
As is the same throughout. I will have none
  But that which will abide the fire.
'Tis not a glitt'ring outside I desire,
  Whose seeming shows do soon expire:
But real worth within, which neither dross,
Nor base alloys, make subject unto loss.

If, in the composition of thine heart,
A stubborn, steely wilfulness have part,
  That will not bow and bend to me,
Save only in a mere formality
  Of tinsel-trimm'd hypocrisy,
I care not for it, though it show as fair
As the first blush of the sun-gilded air.

The heart that in my furnace will not melt,
When it the glowing heat thereof hath felt,
  Turn liquid, and dissolve in tears
Of true repentance for its faults, that hears
  My threat'ning voice, and never fears,
Is not an heart worth having. If it be
An heart of stone, 'tis not an heart for me.

The heart, that, cast into my furnace, spits
And sparkles in my face, falls into fits
  Of discontented grudging, whines
When it is broken of its will, repines
  At the least suffering, declines
My fatherly correction, is an heart
On which I care not to bestow mine art.

* * * * *

The heart that vapours out itself in smoke.
And with these cloudy shadows thinks to cloke
  Its empty nakedness, how much
Soever thou esteemest, it is such
  As never will endure my touch.

I'll bring it to my furnace, and there see
What it will prove, what it is like to be.
If it be gold, it will be sure
The hottest fire that can be to endure.
And I shall draw it out more pure.
Affliction may refine, but cannot waste
That heart wherein my love is fixed fast.

Francis Quarles.

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast visited me in the night,*" etc. In the night the soul is free from business with the world, and therefore freest for business with God; and then did God prove and visit David, that is, examine and sift him, by calling to his mind all his ways and works in former passages; and the issue of this trial was *he found nothing;* not that his soul was empty of good things, or that there was nothing evil in him; but God, upon examination, found nothing of that evil in him which some men suspected him of; namely, either any ill will or evil design against Saul, in reference to whom he called his cause a righteous cause, or "*the right*" (verse 1); "Hear the right, O Lord."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3 (*third clause, New Translation*).—"*Thou hast smelted me, and found in me no dross.*" A metaphor taken from the smelting of metals to purify them from extraneous matter.—*Geddes.*

Verse 3.—"*Proved . . . visited in the night . . . tried.*" Tribulation, whereby, when examined, I was found righteous, is called not only night, in that it is wont to disturb with fear, but fire in that it actually burns.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—"*I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.*"—Wherefore, if thou be upon a mountain, look not backward again unto Sodom as Lot's wife did; if thou be within the ark, fly not out again into the world as Noah's crow did; if thou be well washed, return not again to the mire as the hog doth; if thou be clean, run not again to thy filth, as the dog doth; if thou be going towards the land of Canaan, think not on the flesh-pots of Egypt; if thou be marching against the host of Midian, drink not of the waters of Harod; if thou be upon the housetop, come not down; if thou have set thy hand to the plough, look not behind thee; remember not those vices which are behind thee.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verses 3, 4, 5.—Where there is true grace, there is hatred of all sin, for hatred is πρὸς τὸ γένος. Can a man be resolved to commit what he hates? No, for his inward aversion would secure him more against it than all outward obstacles. As this inward purpose of a good man is against all sin, so more particularly against that which doth so easily beset him. David seems in several places to be naturally inclined to lying, but he takes up a particular resolution against it: (verse 3), "*I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress;*" נִטַּרְתִּי—I have contrived to waylay and intercept the sin of lying when it hath an occasion to approach me. A good man hath not only purposes, but he endeavours to fasten and strengthen those purposes by prayer; so David (verse 5), "*Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*" He strengthens himself by stirring up a liveliness in duty, and by avoiding occasions of sin; (verse 4), "*I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer;*" whereas, a wicked man neither steps out of the way of temptation, nor steps up to God for strength against it.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—"*Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer:*" as if he had said, Would you know how it comes to pass that I escape those ungodly works and practices which men ordinarily take liberty to do? I must ascribe it to the good word of God; it is this I consult with, and by it I am kept from those foul ways whereinto others, that make no use of the word for their defence, are carried by Satan the destroyer. Can we go against sin and Satan with a better weapon than Christ used to vanquish the tempter with? And, certainly, Christ did it to set us an example how we should come armed into the field against them; for Christ could with one beam shot from his Deity (if he had pleased to exert it), have as easily laid the bold fiend at his foot, as afterward he did them that came to attack him; but he chose rather to conceal the majesty of his Divinity, and let Satan come up closer to him, that so he might confound him with the word, and thereby give him a proof of that sword of his saints, which he was to leave them for their defence against the same enemy. The devil is set out by the leviathan (Isaiah xxvii. 1), him God threatens to punish with his strong sword; alluding to that great fish, the whale, which fears no fish

like the sword-fish, by whom this great devourer of all other fish is so often killed; for, receiving one prick from his sword, he hasteneth to the shore, and beats himself against it till he dies. Thus the devil, the great devourer of souls, who sports himself in the sea of this world, as the leviathan in the waters, and swallows the greatest part of mankind without any power to make resistance against him, is himself vanquished by the word. When he has to do with a saint armed with this sword, and instructed how to use this weapon, he then, and not till then, meets his match.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—"*By the word of thy lips,*" etc. It is a great relief against temptations to have the word ready. The word is called, "The sword of the Spirit," Eph. vi. 17. In spiritual conflicts there is none like to that. Those that ride abroad in time of danger, will not be without a sword. We are in danger, and had need handle the sword of the Spirit. The more ready the Scripture is with us, the greater advantage in our conflicts and temptations. When the devil came to assault Christ, he had Scripture ready for him, whereby he overcame the tempter. The door is barred upon Satan, and he cannot find such easy entrance when the word is hid in our hearts, and made use of pertinently. "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong." Where lies their strength? "And the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." 1 John ii. 14. Oh, it is a great advantage when we have the word not only by us, but in us, engrafted in the heart; when it is present with us, we are more able to resist the assaults of Satan. Either a man forgets the word, or hath lost his affection to it, before he can be drawn to sin.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 5.—"*Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*" Lord, whatsoever the wrath of Saul be against me, yet let neither that, nor any other thing put me out of thy way, but keep my heart close unto thee, and keep my paths in thy way; let not my footsteps so much as slide from thee, for, Lord, they watch for my halting; if they can find but the least slip from me, they take advantage of it to the utmost; and I am a poor and a weak creature, therefore Lord help me, that my footsteps may not slide.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 5.—"*Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*" As a stone cast up into the air cannot go any higher, neither yet there abide when the power of the hurler ceaseth to drive it; even so, seeing our corrupt nature can go downward only, and the devil, the world, and the flesh, driveth to the same way; how can we proceed further in virtue, or stand therein, when we are tempted, if our merciful and good God do not by his Holy Spirit, from time to time, guide and govern us?—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 5.—"*Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*" Lord, hold me up, that I may hold out. Thou hast set the crown at the end of the race; let me run the race, that I may wear the crown. It was Beza's prayer, and let it be ours, "Lord, perfect what thou hast begun in me, that I may not suffer shipwreck when I am almost at the haven."—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—In fierce assaults and strong temptations, when Satan layeth siege to the soul, shooting his fiery darts, and using stratagems of policy, joining his endeavours with our corruptions, as wind with tide, then we have cause to pray as David, "*Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*" The apostle also found he had need of help from heaven when he was assaulted, and therefore he prayed "*thrice,*" that the thing that he feared might depart from him. 2 Cor. xii. Christ hath taught us to pray daily, "Lead us not into temptation," for it is dangerous; and then temptations are most dangerous, when, 1. *Most suitable*—when Satan joins with our disposition or constitution; 2. *Continual;* 3. When *opportunity* and power is greatest.—*Joseph Symonds.*

Verse 6.—"*I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me.*" I have cried, says the Psalmist, because thou hast heard me. One would think he should have said contrariwise: thou hast heard me because I have cried; yet, he says, I have cried because thou hast heard me; to show that crying doth not always go before hearing with God, as it doth with us; but that God will not only hear our cry, but also hear us before we cry, and will help us.—*T. Playfere.*

Verse 6.—"*I have called upon thee,*" etc. Prayer is the best remedy in a calamity. This is indeed a true *catholicon*, a general remedy for every malady. Not like the empiric's *catholicon*, which sometimes may work, but for the most part fails, but

that which upon assured evidence and constant experience hath its *probatum est;* being that which the most wise, learned, honest, and skilful Physician that ever was, or can be, hath prescribed, even he that teacheth us how to bear what is to be borne, or how to heal and help what hath been borne.—*William Gouge*, 1575—1653.

Verse 6.—I have called upon thee formerly, therefore, Lord, hear me now. It will be a great comfort to us if trouble, when it comes, finds the wheels of prayer a-going, for then may we come with the more boldness to the throne of grace. Tradesmen are willing to oblige those that have been long their customers.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8.—"*Keep me as the apple of the eye.*" He prays for deliverance (verse 7), "*Show thy marvellous lovingkindness*" to me; Lord, my straits they are marvellous, I know not what to do, whither to turn me, but my eyes are towards thee; as straits are marvellous, so let the lovingkindness of God be marvellous towards me, and "*Keep me as the apple of thy eye.*" O Lord, unto them I am but a dog, a vile creature in the eyes of Saul and those about him: but blessed be thy name, I can look up to thee, and know that I am dear unto thee *as the apple of thy eye.* All the saints of God are dear to God at all times, but the persecuted saints, they are the apple of God's eye; if at any time they are dear to God, then especially when they are most persecuted; now they are *the apple of his eye*, and *the apple of an eye* is weak, and little able to resist any hurt, but so much the more is the man tender of the apple of his eye. The saints are weak and shiftless for themselves, but the Lord is so much the more tender over them.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 8.—Does it not appear to thee to be a work of providence, that considering the weakness of the eye, he has protected it with eyelids, as with doors, which whenever there is occasion to use it are opened, and are again closed in sleep? And that it may not receive injury from the winds, he has planted on it eyelashes like a strainer; and over the eyes has disposed the eyebrows like a penthouse, so that the sweat from the head may do no mischief.—*Socrates, in Xenophon.*

Verse 9.—"*From the wicked:*" as though he had said, They are equally enemies to thee and me; not more opposite to me by their cruelty, than by their wickedness they are to thee. Vindicate then, at once, thyself, and deliver me."—*John Howe.*

Verse 10.—"*They are inclosed in their own fat,*" or *their fat has inclosed them;* either their eyes, that they can hardly see out of them, or their hearts, so that they are stupid and senseless, and devoid of the fear of God; the phrase is expressive of the multitude of their wealth, and increase of power, by which they were swelled with pride and vanity, and neither feared God nor regarded man; so the Targum paraphrases it, "their riches are multiplied, their fat covers them."—*John Gill.*

Verse 10.—"*They are inclosed in their own fat.*" Their worldly prosperity puffeth them up, and makes them insensible and obdurate against all reason and just fear; and the Scripture doth use this term of a fattened heart in this sense, because that the fat of man hath no feeling in it, and those that are very fat are less subject to the passion of fear.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 10.—"*They are inclosed in their own fat.*" To say a man is fat, often means he is very proud. Of one who speaks pompously it is said, "What can we do? *tassi kullap ināl,*" that is, "from the fat of his flesh he declares himself." "Oh, the fat of his mouth! how largely he talks!" "Take care, fellow! or I will restrain the fat of thy mouth."—*J. Roberts, in "Oriental Illustrations:"* 1844.

Verse 11.—"*They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth.* A man who has people watching him to find out a cause for accusation against him to the king, or to great men, says, "Yes, they are around my legs and my feet; their eyes are always open; they are ever watching my "*suvadu,*" "steps;" that is, they are looking for the impress or footsteps in the earth. For this purpose the eyes of the enemies of David were "*bowing down to the earth.*"—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 11.—"*They have now compassed us in our steps.*" Like those who destroy game by battue, and so make a ring around their prey from which their victims cannot escape.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—"*They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth.*" The allusion

probably is to the huntsman tracing the footmarks of the animal he pursues.—*Religious Tract Society's Commentary.*

Verse 11.—"*They have set their eyes bowing to the earth.*" It is an allusion, as I conceive, to hunters, who go poring upon the ground to prick the hare, or to find the print of the hare's claw, when the hounds are at a loss, and can make nothing of it by the scent.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—"*Like a lion,*" etc. In "*Paradise Lost,*" we have a fine poetical conception of the arch enemy prowling around our first parents when he first beheld their happiness, and resolved to ruin them.

——— About them round
A lion now, he stalks with fiery glare;
Then, as a tiger, who by chance hath spied
In some purlieu, two gentle fawns at play,
Straight crouches close, then rising, changes oft
His couchant watch, as one who chose his ground,
Whence rushing he might surest seize them both,
Grip'd in each paw.

John Milton.

Verse 12.—We were consulting as to the best means of getting at a rhinoceros cow which we saw standing at some distance under a tree, when a troop of impalas came charging down, with a fine old lioness after them. We went and saw her lying down, but so flat to the ground, head and all, that no man could shoot with any certainty; and she never for a moment took her eyes from us. When we got up to her, she was lying down flat as a plate to the ground; but her head might have been on a pivot, as her watchful eye glared on us all round, without appearing to move her body, as we decreased the circle, in the hopes she would stand up and give us a fair chance of a shot behind the shoulder. . . . I looked for a tree to climb up, near enough to make tolerably sure of my shot, and was just getting up one, when the lioness made off.—*William Charles Baldwin, F.R.G.S., in "African Hunting,"* 1863.

Verse 13.—"*The wicked, which is thy sword.*"—The devil and his instruments both are God's instruments, therefore "*the wicked*" are called his "*sword,*" his "axe" (Psalm xvii. 13; Isaiah x. 15); now let God alone to wield the one, and handle the other. He is but a bungler that hurts and hackles his own legs with his own axe; which God should do if his children should be the worse for Satan's temptations. Let the devil choose his way, God is a match for him at every weapon. If he will try it by force of arms, and assaults the saints by persecution, as the "Lord of hosts" he will oppose him. If by policy and subtlety, he is ready there also. The devil and his whole council are but fools to God; nay, their wisdom foolishness.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 13, 14.—"*Thy sword. . . . thy hand.*" Thou canst as easily command and manage them, as a man may wield his sword, or move his hand. Wilt thou suffer thine own sword, thine own hand, to destroy thine own servant?—*J. Howe.*

Verse 14 (*first clause*).—How wonderful are the dispensations of the providence of God, who can use even the wicked to promote the present happiness and the final salvation of his saints!—*J. Edwards, M.A.,* 1856.

Verse 14.—"*Men of the world, which have their portion in this life.*" Time and this lower world, bound all their hopes and fears. They have no serious believing apprehensions of anything beyond this present life; therefore, have nothing to withhold them from the most injurious violence, if thou withhold them not; men that believe not another world, are the ready actors of any imaginable mischiefs and tragedies in this.—*John Howe.*

Verse 14.—"*Men which are thy hand,*" etc. What shall we say then? Because God maketh use of thy sins, art thou excused? Is not thine evil evil, because he picketh good out of it? Deceive not thyself therein. When thou hast done such service to thy Master and Maker, though seven and seven years, as Jacob did service to Laban, thou shalt lose thy wages and thy thanks too. Oh, well were thou if thou didst but lose, for thou shalt also gain a sorrowful advantage. It is unprofitable, nay, miserable service which thou hast thus bestowed. Babylon shall be the hammer of the Lord a long time to bruise the nations, himself afterwards bruised; Asshur

his rod to scourge his people, but Asshur shall be more scourged. These hammers, rods, axes, saws, other instruments, when they have done their offices, which they never meant, shall be thrown themselves into the fire, and burnt to ashes. Satan did service to God, it cannot be denied, in the afflicting of Job, winnowing of Peter, buffeting of Paul, executing of Judas, and God did a work in all these, either to prove patience, or to confirm faith, or to try strength, or to commend justice; yet is Satan "reserved in chains, under darkness, to the retribution of the great day." Judas did service to God, in getting honour to his blessed name for the redemption of mankind, whilst the world endureth, yet was his wages an alder-tree to hang himself upon, and which is worse, he hangeth in hell for eternal generations. He had his wages, and lost his wages. That which the priest gave him, he lost, and lost his apostleship, but gained the recompense of everlasting unhappiness, and lies in the lowest lake, for the worm and death to gnaw upon without ceasing. *John King.*

Verse 14.—"*Thy hand.*" The hand of God, his correcting or cherishing hand, sometimes is an immediate, and sometimes a mediate hand. Sometimes it is immediate, when God by himself doth chasten, or punish, or afflict, when no second cause doth appear or intervene. So it may seem Satan means, when he saith (Job i. 11), "*Put forth thy hand,*" that is, do it thine own self, let no other have the handling of Job but thyself. God doth send such immediate afflictions; a man is afflicted in his body, in his estate, and many other ways, and he cannot find anything in the creature whence it should come; it is an immediate stroke of God, he cannot see how, or which way, or at what door this evil came in upon him; therefore it is called a creating of evil. Isaiah xlv. 7. "I make peace, and create evil." Now creation is out of nothing, there is nothing out of which it is wrought. So many times God bringeth evil upon a people or person when there is no appearance of second causes, no matter out of which it is made, but it comes as a creature, formed by the only hand of God. Sometimes likewise it is called God's hand, when it is the hand of a creature; it is God's hand in a creature's hand; God's hand when it is the hand of wicked men, God's hand when it is Satan's hand. So that place is translated (Psalm xvii. 13, 14), "*Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: from men which are thy hand:*" so that "*thy hand*" may be understood of an instrument; Satan himself is God's hand to punish in that sense, as wicked men here are said to be God's hand: "*from men which are thy hand,*" though there be other readings of that place; some read it, *deliver me from men by thy hand;* and others, *deliver me from men of thy hand;* but our translation may very well carry the sense of the original in it, "*from men which are thy hand;*" as Nebuchadrezzar, that wicked king, is called *God's servant* (Jer. xliii. 10), "I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar my servant:" God speaks of him as his servant, or as his *hand* in the thing.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—"*Men of the world, which have their portion in this life.*" The large portion of the wicked in the things of this world, may tell the righteous of how little value this is, in the account of God; in that these things are often given to his enemies plentifully, when denied in such a measure to his children. Now this cannot be because he loves or favours his enemies most; but because these lower things, given them in what degree soever, are so mean in his account, as that his chosen may learn by his distribution of them, to regard them as he does; namely, as no part of their felicity, but as common favours to all his creatures, good or bad, enemies or friends.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 14.—"*Men which have their portion in this life.*" God gives wicked men a portion here to show unto them what little good there is in all these things, and to show the world what little good there is in all the things that are here below in the world. Certainly if they were much good they should never have them: it is an argument there is no great excellency in the strength of body, for an ox hath it more than you; an argument there is no great excellency in agility of body, for a dog hath it more than you; an argument no great excellency in gay clothes, for a peacock hath them more than you; an argument there is not any great excellency in gold and silver, for the Indians that know not God have them more than you; and if these things had any great worth in them, certainly God would never give them to wicked men—a certain argument. As it is an argument there is no great evil in affliction in this world, because that the saints are so much afflicted; so no great argument there is any great good in this world, for the wicked they enjoy so much of it. Luther hath such an expression as this in his comment upon Genesis,

saith he, "The Turkish empire, as great as it is, is but a crumb, that the Master of the family, that God, casts to dogs:" the whole Turkish empire, such an esteem had Luther of it; and indeed it is no more. All the things of the world, God in giving of them to Turks and wicked ones, his enemies, shows there is not much excellency and good in them: God therefore will cast them promiscuously up and down in the world, because he looks upon them as worthless things; God doth not so much regard whether men be prepared to give him the glory of them, yea or no, they shall have them; however he is content to venture them. Indeed, when God comes unto his choice mercies in Christ, there he looks to have glory from them, and he doth never give them to any, but first he prepares them, that they may give him the glory of those mercies. But it is otherwise with others; as, suppose you see a man gathering of crabs, although swine be under the tree, he cares not much to drive them away; they are but crabs, let them have them; but if he were gathering any choice and precious fruit, if any swine should come under, he drives them away. As for outward things, crabs, the Lord suffers the swine of the world to come grunting and take them up; but when he comes to his choice mercies in his Christ, there he makes a distinction. Oh, this is precious fruit! A blacksmith that is working upon iron, though a great many cinders and little bits of iron fly up and down, he regards them not; but a goldsmith that is working upon gold, he preserves every rag, and every dust of gold; and a lapidary that is working upon precious stones, every little bit he will be sure to preserve; a carpenter that is only hewing of timber, he regards it not much if chips fly up and down; but it is not so with a lapidary. So these outward things are but as the chips and cinders, and such kind of things as those are, and therefore God ever gives a portion to wicked men out of them.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 14.—"*Men which have their portion in this life.*" I have read of Gregory, that being advanced to preferment, professed that there was no Scripture that went so to his heart, that struck such a trembling into his spirit, that daunted him so much, as this Scripture did:—"Here you have your reward, son; in your lifetime you have had your pleasure." Oh, this was a dreadful Scripture that sounded in his ears continually, as Hierom speaks of that Scripture, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment:" night and day he thought that Scripture sounded in his ears; so Gregory:—"Here you have your reward; in this life you have had your pleasure." This was the Scripture that night and day sounded in his ears. O that it might please God to assist so far, to speak out of this Scripture to you, that I might make this Scripture ring in your ears even when you lie upon your beds, after the sermon is done; that yet you may think this Scripture rings in your ears: "*Men of this world, who have their portion in this life.*"—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 14.—"*Which have their portion in this life.*" The earth and the commodities thereof God distributeth without respect of persons, even to them that are his children by creation only, and not by adoption. But yet there is a difference between the prosperity of the one and the other; for the one is but with anxiety of heart (even in laughter their heart is heavy); the others' is with cheerfulness and joy in the Spirit; the one's is a pledge of the greater preferment in the world to come, the others' is their *whole* portion, and as if God should say, "Let them take *that* and look for no more." The one's is with the blessing of the people, who wish they had more; the others' with their curse and hatred, who are grieved that they have so much."—*Miles Smith.*

Verse 14.—"*Their portion in this life.*" The good man's *best*, and the bad man's worst, lie in *shall be's* (Isaiah iii. 10, 11), in reversion. Here Dives had nothing but his "good things," but hereafter he had no good thing. Here Lazarus had his "evil things," but afterwards no evil thing. The good man when he dies, takes his leave of, and departs from, all evil; and the evil man when he dies, takes his leave of, and departs from, all his goods, which was all the good he had. "Now he is comforted, but thou art tormented." Luke xvi. 25. Oh! 'tis a sad thing to have one's *portion of good* only in this life.—*Ralph Venning's "Helps to Piety,"* 1620—1673.

Verse 14.—"*This life.*" There is yet another thing to be seen far more monstrous in this creature; that whereas he is endued with reason and counsel, and knoweth that this life is like unto a shadow, to a dream, to a tale that is told, to a watch in the night, to smoke, to chaff which the wind scattereth, to a water-bubble, and such-like fading things; and that life to come shall never have end; he yet nevertheless setteth his whole mind most carefully upon this present life, which is to-day,

and to-morrow is not; but of the life which is everlasting he doth not so much as think. If this be not a monster, I know not what may be called monstrous.—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 14.—What wicked men possess of this world is all that ever they can hope for: why should we grudge them filled bags, or swelling titles! it is their whole portion; they now receive their good things. Hast thou food and clothing? that is children's fare; envy not ungodly men, who flaunt it in the gallantry of the world: they have more than you; but it is all they are like to have; the Psalmist gives us an account of their estate. They are *the men of* this *world, which have their portion in this life, and whose bellies God filleth with his hid treasure.* Whereas thou, O Christian, who possessest nothing, art heir-apparent of heaven, co-heir with Jesus Christ, who is the heir of all things, and hast an infinite mass of riches laid up for thee; so great and infinite, that all the stars of heaven are too few to account it by: you have no reason to complain of being kept short; for all that God hath is yours, whether prosperity or adversity, life or death, all is yours. What God gives is for your comfort; what he denies or takes away is for your trial: it is for the increase of those graces which are far more gracious than any temporal enjoyment. If, by seeing wicked and ungodly men flow in wealth and ease, when thou art forced to struggle against the inconveniences and difficulties of a poor estate, thou hast learnt a holy contempt and disdain of the world, believe it, God hath herein given thee more than if he had given thee the world itself.—*Ezekiel Hopkins.*

Verse 14.—To show that wicked men have often the greatest *portion in this world,* I need not speak much; the experience of all ages since the beginning of the world confirms it, your own observation, I believe, can seal to it; however, Scripture abundantly evinces it. The first *murderer* that ever was, carries possession in his very name: *Cain* signifies so much. Gen. iv. 8. Go on in the whole series of Scripture, and you shall find Joseph persecuted by his brethren; Esau (as Rivet observes on Gen. xxxii.), advanced in the world for a time far above Jacob; go on, and you find the Israelites, God's peculiar, in captivity, and Pharaoh upon the throne; Saul ruling, and David in a cave, or in a wilderness; Job upon the dunghill; Jeremy in the dungeon; Daniel in the den, and the children in the furnace, and Nebuchadnezzar on the throne. In the New Testament you have Felix on the bench, Paul at the bar; Dives in the palace, Lazarus at his gate (Luke xvi. 19); he clothed in purple, Lazarus in rags and overspread with sores; he banqueted and fared deliciously every day, the other desired but the crumbs from the table, and could not have them; Dives beset with his rich and stately attendance, Lazarus hath no other society but the dogs which came to lick his sores; all which Austin and Tertullian against Marcion (lib. 4), conceive to be a true history of what was really acted, though others think it parabolical. Job tells us that "the tabernacles of robbers" sometimes "prosper" (Job xii. 6), which prosperity he at large describes (chap. xxi. from verses 7 to 14); exalted in "*power,*" verse 7; multiplied in their *posterity,* verses 8, 11; *safe at home,* verse 9; *increased abroad,* verse 10; have their fill of *pleasure,* verse 12, and *wealth* at will, verse 13. David speaks his own experience of this. Psalm xxxvii. 35; lxxiii. 7. So in the text, they enjoy not only common favours, as air to breathe in, earth to walk on; their bellies are filled with his "*hid treasure,*" and that not for themselves only, but for their posterity too; they "*leave the rest of their substance to their babes;*" in a word, "*they have their portion in this life.*"—*John Frost,* 1657.

Verse 14.—A master or lord pays his *servant* his present wages, while he cuts his *son* short in his allowance during his nonage, that he may learn to depend upon his father for the inheritance. Thus doth God, the great Lord of all, deal with his *slaves,* who serve him for the hire of some temporal advantage; he gives them their present reward and wages; but though his goodness hath determined a better *portion* to be a reward to the piety and obedience of his *children,* yet he gives it them in reversion, little in hand, that they may learn to live upon the promise, and by faith to depend upon the goodness and faithfulness of their Father for their heavenly inheritance; that they, walking not by sight but faith (which is a Christian's work and condition here), may "not look at the things which are seen," etc. 2 Cor iv. 18. . . . This discovers that rotten foundation upon which many men build their hopes of heaven. Surely (are many ready to argue) if God did not love me he would not give me such a portion in the world. Deceive not thyself in a matter of so great concernment. Thou mayest as well say God loved Judas, because he had the

bags, or Dives, because he fared deliciously, who are now roaring in hell.—*John Frost.*

Verse 14.—The word which denotes the "*belly*" may have been fixed, by the divine Spirit, to indicate the fact, that a very great proportion of the sin of worldly and depraved characters is connected with the indulgence of base and degrading lusts; and that they abuse the very bounty of heaven, in riveting the chain of sense upon their unhappy souls. But let them remember, that their sensual idolatries will, at last, be followed up by the most fearful visitations of divine wrath.—*John Morison.*

Verse 14.—"*Whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure.*" Wicked men may abound in earthly things. They may have the earth and the fulness of it, the earth, and all that is earthly; their bellies are filled by God himself with hidden treasure. Precious things are usually hidden, and all that's named treasure, though it be but earthly, hath a preciousness in it. Hidden treasures of earth fill their bellies who slight the treasures of heaven, and whose souls shall never have so much as a taste of heavenly treasures: riches and honour are the lots of their inheritance who have no inheritance among those whose lot is glory. They have the earth in their hands (Job ix. 24), who have nothing of heaven in their hearts; they bear sway in the world who are slaves to the world; they govern and order others at their will who are led captive by Satan at his will. Be not offended and troubled to see the reins of government in their hands who know not how to govern themselves, or to see them rule the world who are unworthy to live in the world.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—"*Whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure.*" The hearts of saints only are filled with the "*hidden manna*," but the bellies of the wicked are often filled with *hidden treasure;* that is, with those dainties and good things which are virtually hidden in, and formally spring out of, the belly and bowels of the earth. The Lord easily grants them their wish in such things, and gives them "*their portion*," which is all their portion, "*in this life.*" For as they are but common professors, so these are but common mercies, such as many of his enemies receive, who are but fatted as oxen for the slaughter, and fitted for destruction. True happiness is not to be judged by lands or houses, by gold or silver. The world is a narrow bound: unless we get beyond the creature, and set our hopes above this world, we cannot be happy. As hypocrites desire, so they attain much of the world, but they shall attain no more, how much soever they seem to desire it.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—"*Whose belly thou fillest.*" That is, their sensual appetite, as oftentimes that term is used (Rom. xvi. 18; Phil. iii. 19), "*with thy hid treasures;*" namely the riches which either God is wont to hide in the bowels of the earth, or lock up in the repository of providence, dispensing them at his own pleasure.—*John Howe.*

Verse 14.—"*Whose belly thou fillest,*" etc.:—

> Thou from thy hidden store,
> Their bellies, Lord, hast fill'd;
> Their sons are gorg'd, and what is o'er,
> To their sons' sons they yield.
>
> *Richard Mant.*

Verse 14.—"*They are full of children.*" So it appears by that which follows, it ought to be read, and not according to that gross, but easy (ὑῶν for υἱῶν), mistake of some transcribers of the seventy. As if in all this he pleaded thus: "Lord, thou hast abundantly indulged those men already, what need they more? They have themselves, from thy unregarded bounty, their own vast swollen desires sufficiently filled, enough for their own time; and when they can live no longer in their persons, they may in their posterity, and leave not strangers, but their numerous offspring, their heirs. Is it not enough that their avarice be gratified, except their malice be also? that they have whatsoever they can conceive desirable for themselves, unless they may also infer whatever they can think mischievous on me?" To this description of his enemies, he *ex opposito*, subjoins some account of himself in this his closure of the Psalm. "*As for me,*" here he is at his statique point; and, after some appearing discomposure, his spirit returns to a consistency, in consideration of his own more happy state, which he opposes and prefers to theirs, in the following respects. That *they* were wicked, *he* righteous. "I will behold thy face in righteousness." That *their* happiness was worldly, terrene, such only as did spring from the earth; *his* heavenly and divine, such as should

result from the face and image of God. *Theirs* present, temporary, compassed within this life; *his* future, everlasting, to be enjoyed when he should awake. *Theirs* partial, defective, such as would but gratify their bestial part, fill their bellies; *his* adequate, complete (the εὐδαιμονία τοῦ συνετοῦ, *a happiness of proportion*), such as should satisfy the man. "I shall be *satisfied*," etc.—*John Howe.*

Verse 14.—"*They are full of children.*" Margin, *their children are full.* The margin probably expresses the sense of the Hebrew better than the text. The literal rendering would be, "satisfied are their sons;" that is, they have enough to satisfy the wants of their children. The expression, "they are full of children," is harsh and unnatural, and is not demanded by the original, or by the main thought in the passage. The obvious signification is, that they have enough for themselves and for their children.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 15.—"*I will behold thy face.*" I look upon the face of a stranger and it moves me not; but upon a friend, and his face presently transforms mine into a lively, cheerful aspect. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the face of a man his friend" (Prov. xxvii. 17), puts a sharpness and a quickness into his looks. The soul that loves God, opens itself to him, admits his influences and impressions, is easily moulded and wrought to his will, yields to the transforming power of his appearing glory. There is no resistant principle remaining when the love of God is perfected in it; and so overcoming is the first sight of his glory upon the awaking soul, that it perfects it, and so his likeness, both at once.—*John Howe.*

Verse 15.—"*I will behold*," etc. In the words we have, 1. The time of his complete and consummate happiness—"*When I awake.*" 2. The matter of his happiness, and the manner of enjoying it; the matter and object—"*God's face, or likeness;*" the manner of enjoying—"*I will behold thy face.*" 3. His perfect disposition and condition in the state of happiness—"*I shall behold in righteousness,*" having my heart perfectly conformed to the will of God, the perfect and adequate rule of righteousness. 4. The measure of his happiness—"*I shall be satisfied;*" my happiness will be full in the measure, without want of anything that can make me happy; all my desires shall be satisfied, and my happiness in respect of duration shall be eternal, without a shadow or fear of a change.—*William Colvill.*

Verse 15.—He doth profess his resolution, yet notwithstanding all the danger he was in, to go on in the ways of God, and expects a gracious issue; *but I*, saith he, "*will behold thy face in righteousness;*" indeed, I cannot behold the face of the king without danger to me; there are a great many that run to kill me, and they desire his face; but though I cannot see his face, yet, Lord, I shall behold *thy* face; "*I will behold thy face*," and it shall be "*in righteousness;*" I will still keep on in the ways of righteousness, and "*when I awake*"—for I believe that these troubles will not hold long—I shall not sleep in perpetual sleep, but *I shall awake* and be delivered, and then "*I shall be satisfied with thy likeness:*" there shall be the manifestation of thy glory to me, that shall satisfy me for all the trouble that I have endured for thy name's sake, that my soul shall say, I have enough.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 15.—"*I shall be satisfied*," etc. The fulness of the felicity of heaven may appear if we *compare it with the joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit.* Such they are, as that the Scripture styles them *strong consolations* (Heb. vi. 17); *full joys* (John xv. 11); *joy unspeakable and full of glory* (1 Pet. i. 8); *abounding consolations.* 2 Cor. i. 5. And yet all the joy and peace that believers are partakers of in this life is but as a drop to the ocean, as a single cluster to the whole vintage, as the thyme or honey upon the thigh of a bee to the whole hive fully fraught with it, or as the break and peep of day to the bright noontide. But yet these tastes of the water, wine, and honey of this celestial Canaan, with which the Holy Spirit makes glad the hearts of believers, are both far more desirable and satisfactory than the overflowing streams of all earthly felicities. And there are none who have once tasted of them, but say as the Samaritan woman did, "Lord, give me that water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." John iv. 15. So also the first and early dawnings of the heavenly light fill the soul with more serenity, and ravish it with more pure joy, than the brightest sunshine of all worldly splendour can ever do. I have read of a devout person who but dreaming of heaven, the signatures and impression it made upon his fancy were so strong, as that when he awake he knew not his cell, could not distinguish the night from the day, nor

difference by his taste, oil from wine; still he was calling for his vision and saying, *Redde mihi campos floridos, columnam auream, comitem Hieronymum, assistentes angelos:* give me my fresh and fragrant fields again, my golden pillar of light, Jerome my companion, angels my assistants. If heaven in a dream produce such ecstacies as drown and overwhelm the exercises of the senses to inferior objects, what trances and complacencies must the fruition of it work in those who have their whole rational appetite filled, and their body beautified with its endless glory?—*William Spurstow,* 1656.

Verse 15.—"*I shall be satisfied.*" Have you never seen how when they were finishing the interior of buildings they kept the scaffolding up? The old Pope, when he had Michael Angelo employed in decorating the interior of that magnificent structure, the Sistine Chapel, demanded that the scaffolding should be taken down so that he could see the glowing colours that with matchless skill were being laid on. Patiently and assiduously did that noble artist labour, toiling by day, and almost by night, bringing out his prophets and sibyls and pictures wondrous for their beauty and significance, until the work was done. The day before it was done, if you had gone into that chapel and looked up, what would you have seen? Posts, planks, ropes, lime, mortar, slop, dirt. But when all was finished, the workmen came, and the scaffolding was removed. And then, although the floor was yet covered with rubbish and litter, when you looked up, it was as if heaven itself had been opened, and you looked into the courts of God and angels. Now, the scaffolding is kept around men long after the fresco is commenced to be painted; and wondrous disclosures will be made when God shall take down this scaffolding body, and reveal what you have been doing. By sorrow and by joy; by joys which are but bright colours, and by sorrows which are but shadows of bright colours; by prayer; by the influences of the sanctuary; by your pleasures; by your business; by reverses; by successes and by failures; by what strengthened your confidence, and by what broke it down; by the things that you rejoiced in, and by the things that you mourned over—by all that God is working in you. And you are to be perfected, not according to the things that you plan, but according to the divine pattern. Your portrait and mine are being painted, and God by wondrous strokes and influences is working us up to his own ideal. Over and above what you are doing for yourself, God is working to make you like him. And the wondrous declaration is, that when you stand before God, and see what has been done for you, you shall be "*satisfied.*" Oh, word that has been wandering solitary and without a habitation ever since the world began, and the morning stars sang together for joy! Has there ever been a human creature that could stand on earth while clothed in the flesh, and say, "I am satisfied"? What is the meaning of the word? Sufficiently filled; filled full; filled up in every part. And when God's work is complete, we shall stand before him, and, with the bright ideal and glorified conception of heavenly aspiration upon us, looking up to God, and back on ourselves, we shall say, "I am satisfied;" for we shall be like him. Amen. Why should we not be satisfied?—*Henry Ward Beecher, in "Royal Truths,"* 1862.

Verse 15.—"*When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.*" He speaks here of the resurrection; he calls it an awaking, for you know death is called a sleep. "Those that are asleep in the Lord shall rise first." He had spoken before of those that had put their happiness in the comforts of this life, suitable to their bodies, to the animal state of their bodies; that is clear by the fourteenth verse, "Deliver me from the men that are thine hand, O Lord, who have their portion in this life, whose belly thou fillest with thy treasure: they are full of children, and leave to them outward things," bodily things. "But as for me," said he, "I will behold thy face in thy righteousness" (there is the vision of God which is his happiness in his soul): "and I shall be satisfied when I awake" (when I rise again), "with thine image." It is not the image of God only upon himself that he means here. Why? Because that doth not satisfy a holy heart, but it is that image of the invisible God which the human nature of Jesus Christ is, who, in opposition to all these outward pleasures, will be all in all to us; he is a spiritual creature, his human nature is spiritualised, made glorious, and our bodies shall be made spiritual likewise. "The body is made for the Lord, and the Lord for the body," and this when they are both raised up; Christ is raised up already, and because he hath ordained the one to be serviceable to the other, he will also raise up our bodies; and when he doth raise me up, saith David, though other men have their

bellies full here, and have animal pleasures they delight in; yet when I shall awake at latter day, and shall see this image of thine, shall see thy Son, I shall be satisfied: "When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thine image."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 15.—"*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" In this Psalm holy David's afflictions are neither few nor small; his *innocency* that is wounded by malicious slanderers, his *life* that is in jeopardy by deadly enemies that compass him about; his *present condition* that is embittered unto him by the pressing wants of a barren wilderness, while his foes live deliciously in Saul's court. And yet under the weight and combination of so many sore evils, David carries himself as one that is neither hopeless nor forsaken, yea, lays his estate in the balance against theirs, and in this low ebb of his, vies with them for happiness; and at last shutting up the Psalm with a triumphant *epiphonema*, concludes himself to be by far the better man. "*As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" They, 'tis true, enjoy the face of their king, whose favour is as a cloud of latter rain promising a fruitful harvest of many blessings, "*but I*," saith he, "*shall behold the face of God* in righteousness," whose loving-kindness is better than life, clothed with all its royalties. They have their bellies filled with hidden treasure, having more than a common hand of bounty opened unto them; but I have more gladness put into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased. They have their portion in hand, and as being men of this world; but I have mine laid up in the other: "*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" In these words we have his and every believer's eternal happiness in the other life, set forth in three particulars as a most effectual antidote against present troubles and temptations that arise from the malice of wicked men against them.—*William Spurstow.*

Verse 15.—"*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" The saints in heaven have not yet awaked in God's likeness. The bodies of the righteous still sleep, but they are to be satisfied on the resurrection morn, when they awake. When a Roman conqueror had been at war, and won great victories, he would return to Rome with his soldiers, enter privately into his house, and enjoy himself till the next day, when he would go out of the city to re-enter it publicly in triumph. Now, the saints, as it were, enter privately into heaven without their bodies; but on the last day, when their bodies wake up, they will enter into their triumphal chariots. Methinks I see that grand procession, when Jesus Christ first of all, with many crowns on his head, with his bright, glorious, immortal body, shall lead the way. Behind him come the saints, each of them clapping their hands, or pouring sweet melody from their golden harps; all entering in triumph. And when they come to heaven's gates, and the doors are opened wide to let the King of glory in, how will the angels crowd at the windows and on the housetops, like the inhabitants in the Roman triumphs, to watch the pompous procession, and scatter heaven's roses and lilies upon them, crying, "Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." "I shall be satisfied" in that glorious day when all the angels of God shall come to see the triumphs of Jesus, and when his people shall be victorious with him.—*Spurgeon's Sermons.*

Verse 15.—"*I shall be satisfied . . . with thy likeness.*" Let a man who is thirsty be brought to an ocean of pure water, and he has enough. If there be enough in God to satisfy the angels, then sure there is enough to satisfy us. The soul is but finite, but God is infinite. Though God be a good that satisfies, yet he does not surfeit. Fresh joys spring continually from his face; and he is as much to be desired after millions of years by glorified souls as at the first moment. There is a fulness in God that satisfies, and yet so much sweetness that the soul still desires. God is a *delicious* good. That which is the chief good must ravish the soul with pleasure; there must be in it rapturous delight and quintessence of joy. *In Deo quadam dulcedine delectatur anima immo rapitur:* the love of God drops such infinite suavity into the soul as is unspeakable and full of glory. If there be so much delight in God, when we see him only by faith (1 Peter i. 8), what will the joy of vision be, when we shall see him face to face! If the saints have found so much delight in God while they were suffering, oh, what joy and delight will they have when they are being crowned! If flames are beds of roses, what will it be to lean on the bosom of Jesus! What a bed of roses that will be! God is a *superlative* good. He is better than anything you can put in competition with him; he is better than health, riches, honour. Other things maintain life, he gives life. Who would put anything in balance with the Deity? Who would weigh a feather against a mountain of

gold? God excels all other things more infinitely than the sun the light of a taper. God is an *eternal* good. He is the Ancient of days, yet never decays, nor waxes old. Daniel vii. 9. The joy he gives is eternal, the crown fadeth not away. 1 Peter v. 4. The glorified soul shall be ever solacing itself in God, feasting on his love, and sunning itself in the light of his countenance. We read of the river of pleasure at God's right hand; but will not this in time be dried up? No. There is a fountain at the bottom which feeds it. Psalm xxxvi. 9. "With the Lord is a fountain of life." Thus God is the chief good, and the enjoyment of God for ever is the highest felicity of which the soul is capable.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 15.—"*When I awake,*" etc. The sincere Christian is progressive, never at his journey's end till he gets to heaven; this keeps him always in motion, advancing in his desires and endeavours forward: he is thankful for little grace, but not content with great measures of grace. "*When I awake,*" saith David, "*I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.*" He had many a sweet entertainment at the house of God in his ordinances. The Spirit of God was the messenger that brought him many a covered dish from God's table, inward consolations which the world knew not of. Yet David has not enough, it is heaven alone that can give him his full draught. They say the Gauls, when they first tasted of the wines of Italy, were so taken with their lusciousness and sweetness, that they could not be content to trade thither for this wine, but resolved they would conquer the land where they grew. Thus the sincere soul thinks it not enough to receive a little now and then of grace and comfort from heaven, by trading and holding commerce at a distance with God in his ordinances here below, but projects and meditates a conquest of that holy land and blessed place from which such rich commodities come, that he may drink the wine of that kingdom in that kingdom.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 15.—"*When I awake.*" How apt and obvious is the analogy between our awaking out of natural sleep, and the holy soul's rising up out of the darkness and torpor of its present state into the enlivening light of God's presence? It is truly said so to *awake* at its first quitting these darksome regions, when it lays aside its cumbersome night-veil. It doth so more perfectly in the joyful morning of the resurrection-day when mortality is swallowed up in life, and all the yet hovering shadows of it are vanished and fled away. And how known and usual an application this is of the metaphorical terms of sleeping and awaking in Holy Writ, I need not tell them who have read the Bible. Nor doth this interpretation less fitly accord to the other contents of this verse; for to what state do the sight of God's face, and satisfaction with his likeness, so fully agree, as to that of future blessedness in the other world? But then the contexture of discourse in this and the foregoing verse together, seems plainly to determine us to this sense: for what can be more conspicuous in them, than a purposed comparison, an opposition of two states of felicity mutually to each other? That of the wicked whom he calls *men of time* (as the words מִמְתֵי מֵחֶלֶד are rendered by Pagninus—*Homines de tempore*—and do literally signify) and whose portion, he tells us, is in this life: and the righteous man's, his own; which he expected not to be till he should awake, that is, not till after his life.—*John Howe.*

Verse 15.—There is a sleep of deadness of spirit, out of which the shining of God's loving countenance doth awake a believer and revive the spirit of the contrite ones; and there is a sleep of death bodily, out of which the lovingkindness of the Lord shall awake all his own in the day of the resurrection, when he shall so change them into the similitude of his own holiness and glorious felicity that they shall be fully contented for ever: and this first and second delivery out of all trouble may every believer expect and promise to himself. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."—*David Dickson.*

Verse 15.—There is a threefold meaning in this verse, inasmuch as it is in Christ alone, the firstborn from the dead, the express image of Jehovah's glory, that the saints will rise immortal, incorruptible, and be like the angels in heaven. 1. They will greatly delight in the glorious state in which they will rise. 2. They will greatly delight in Jesus, in whom, and by whom, resurrection and immortality are brought to light; and 3. They will delight greatly in beholding the blessed and reconciled countenance of Jehovah, the Father, whom no eye of flesh can see. This is the difference between the appearance of God to Israel on Mount Sinai, and the happy state in which the saints will behold him in the resurrection. Glorious as the scene on Sinai was, yet the Lord said to Israel, "You have seen no תְּמוּנָה (*Temunah*),

no manner of similitude," or likeness, or countenance; but David speaks of the spiritual glory of the triumphant saints in the resurrection, when they shall see Jehovah as he is, and rejoice in his beatific presence for ever and ever.—*Benjamin Weiss, in loc*, 1858.

Verse 15.—Everlasting life and salvation in heaven, is not a truth revealed only by the gospel, but was well known, clearly revealed, and firmly believed, by the saints of old. They had assurance of this, that they should live with God for ever in glory. "*When I awake, with thy likeness.*" Psalm xvii. 15. "Thou wilt receive me to glory." Psalm lxxiii. 24. "*In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*" Psalm xvi. 11. They looked for another country, whereof Canaan was but a type and shadow, as the apostle shows in the epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xi. 16. They knew there was an eternal state of happiness for the saints, as well as an eternal state of misery for the wicked; they did believe this in those days.—*Samuel Mather on the "Types,"* 1705.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The voice of Jesus—our Righteousness, and our own voice. Work out the thought of both coming up to the ear of heaven, noting the qualities of our prayer as indicated by the psalmist's language, such as earnestness, perseverance, sincerity, etc.

Verse 2.—"*Let my sentence come forth from thy presence.*" I. When it will come. II. Who dare meet it *now*. III. How to be among them.

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast proved mine heart.*" The metal, the furnace, the refiner, etc.

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast visited me in the night.*" I. Glorious visitor. II. Favoured individual. III. Peculiar season. IV. Refreshing remembrance. V. Practical result.

Verse 3 (*last sentence*).—Transgressions of the lip, and how to avoid them.

Verse 4.—The highway and the by-paths. *The world and sin.* "*The paths of the destroyer*"—a significant name for transgression.

Verse 5.—"*Hold up.*" I. Who? God. II. What? "*My goings.*" III. When? Present tense. IV. Where? "*In thy paths.*" V. Why? "*That my footsteps slip not.*"

Verse 5.—Let me observe David and learn to pray as he prayed, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." I. See his *course*. He speaks of his "goings." Religion does not allow a man to sit still. He speaks of his goings "in God's paths." These are threefold. (1). The path of his *commands*. (2). The path of his *ordinances*. (3). The path of his *dispensations*. II. His *concern* respecting this course. It is the language of—(1) *conviction;* (2) *of apprehension*; (3) of *weakness;* (4) of *confidence.*—*William Jay.*

Verse 6.—*Two words*, both great, though little, "call" and "hear." *Two persons*, one little and the other great, "I," "Thee, O God." *Two tenses:* past, "I have;" future, "Thou wilt." *Two wonders*, that we do not call more, and that God hears such unworthy prayers.

Verse 7 (*first sentence*).—See Exposition. A view of divine lovingkindness desired.

Verse 7.—"*O thou,*" etc. God, the Saviour of believers.

Verse 8.—Two most suggestive emblems of tenderness and care. Involving in the one case *living unity*, as the eye with the body, and in the other, *loving relationship*, as the bird and its young.

Verse 14.—"*Men of the world, which have their portion in this life.*" Who they are? What they have? Where they have it? What next?

Verse 14.—"*Men which are thy hand.*" Providential control and use of wicked men.

Verse 15.—This is the language (1) of a man whose mind is made up; who has decided for himself; who does not suspend his conduct upon the resolution of others. (2) Of a man rising in life, and with great prospects before him. (3) It is the language of a Jew.

Verse 15.—*The beholding of God's face* signifies two things. I. The enjoyment of his favour. II. Intimate communion with him.—*William Jay.*

Verse 15.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 25. Title, "The Hope of Future Bliss." Divisions. I. The Spirit of this utterance. II. The matter of it. III. The contrast implied in it.

Verse 15.—To see God and to be like him, the believer's desire.—*J. Fawcett.*

PSALM XVIII.

TITLE.—" To the chief Musician, *a Psalm* of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day *that* the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." *We have another form of this Psalm with significant variations* (2 Sam. xxii), *and this suggests the idea that it was sung by David at different times when he reviewed his own remarkable history, and observed the gracious hand of God in it all. Like Addison's hymn beginning, " When all thy mercies, O my God," this Psalm is the song of a grateful heart overwhelmed with a retrospect of the manifold and marvellous mercies of God. We will call it* THE GRATEFUL RETROSPECT. *The title deserves attention. David, although at this time a king, calls himself* " the servant of Jehovah," *but makes no mention of his royalty ; hence we gather that he counted it a higher honour to be the Lord's servant than to be Judah's king. Right wisely did he judge. Being possessed of poetic genius, he served the Lord by composing this Psalm for the use of the Lord's house ; and it is no mean work to conduct or to improve that delightful part of divine worship, the singing of the Lord's praises. Would that more musical and poetical ability were consecrated, and that our* chief musicians *were fit to be trusted with devout and spiritual psalmody. It should be observed that the words of this song were not composed with the view of gratifying the taste of men, but were* spoken unto Jehovah. *It were well if we had a more single eye to the honour of the Lord in our singing, and in all other hallowed exercises. That praise is little worth which is not directed solely and heartily to the Lord. David might well be thus direct in his gratitude, for he owed all to his God, and in the day of his deliverance he had none to thank but the Lord whose right hand had preserved him. We too should feel that to God and God alone we owe the greatest debt of honour and thanksgiving.*

If it be remembered that the second and the forty-ninth verses are both quoted in the New Testament (Heb. ii. 13 ; Rom. xv. 9) *as the words of the Lord Jesus, it will be clear that a greater than David is here. Reader, you will not need our aid in this respect : if you know Jesus you will readily find him in his sorrows, deliverance, and triumphs all through this wonderful Psalm.*

DIVISION.—*The first three verses are the proem or preface in which the resolve to bless God is declared. Delivering mercy is most poetically extolled from verse* 4 *to verse* 19 ; *and then the happy songster, from verse* 20 *to* 28, *protests that God had acted righteously in thus favouring him. Filled with grateful joy he again pictures his deliverance, and anticipates future victories from verse* 29—45 ; *and in closing speaks with evident prophetic foresight of the glorious triumphs of the Messiah, David's seed and the Lord's anointed.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL love thee, O LORD, my strength.

2 The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer ; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust ; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower.

3 I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised : so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

1. " *I will love thee, O Lord.*" With strong, hearty affection will I cling to thee ; as a child to its parent, or a spouse to her husband. The word is intensely forcible, the love is of the deepest kind. " I will love heartily, with my inmost bowels." Here is a fixed resolution to abide in the nearest and most intimate union with the Most High. Our triune God deserves the warmest love of all our hearts. Father, Son and Spirit have each a claim upon our love. The solemn purpose never to cease loving naturally springs from present fervour of affection, It is wrong to make rash resolutions, but this when made in the strength of God is most wise and fitting. " *My strength.*" Our God is the strength of our life, our graces, our works, our hopes, our conflicts, our victories. This verse is not found in 1 Sam. xxii., and is a most precious addition, placed above all and after all to form the pinnacle of the temple, the apex of the pyramid. Love is still the crowning grace.

2. "*The Lord is my rock and my fortress.*" Dwelling among the crags and mountain fastnesses of Judea, David had escaped the malice of Saul, and here he compares his God to such a place of concealment and security. Believers are often hidden in their God from the strife of tongues and the fury of the storm of trouble. The clefts of the Rock of Ages are safe abodes. "*My deliverer,*" interposing in my hour of peril. When almost captured the Lord's people are rescued from the hand of the mighty by him who is mightier still. This title of "*deliverer*" has many sermons in it, and is well worthy of the study of all experienced saints. "*My God;*" this is all good things in one. There is a boundless wealth in this expression; it means, my perpetual, unchanging, infinite, eternal good. He who can say truly "my God," may well add, "my heaven, my all." "*My strength;*" this word is really "*my rock,*" in the sense of strength and immobility. My sure, unchanging, eternal confidence and support. Thus the word rock occurs twice, but it is no tautology, for the first time it is a rock for concealment, but here a rock for firmness and immutability. "*In whom I will trust.*" Faith must be exercised, or the preciousness of God is not truly known; and God must be the object of faith, or faith is mere presumption. "*My buckler,* warding off the blows of my enemy, shielding me from arrow or sword. The Lord furnishes his warriors with weapons both offensive and defensive. Our armoury is completely stored so that none need go to battle unarmed. "*The horn of my salvation,*" enabling me to push down my foes, and to triumph over them with holy exultation. "*My high tower,*" a citadel high planted on a rocky eminence beyond the reach of my enemies, from the heights of which I look down upon their fury without alarm, and survey a wide landscape of mercy reaching even unto the goodly land beyond Jordan. Here are many words, but none too many; we might profitably examine each one of them had we leisure, but summing up the whole, we may conclude with Calvin, that David here equips the faithful from head to foot.

3. In this verse the happy poet resolves to invoke the Lord in joyful song, believing that in all future conflicts his God would deal as well with him as in the past. It is well to pray to God as to one who deserves to be praised, for then we plead in a happy and confident manner. If I feel that I can and do bless the Lord for all his past goodness, I am bold to ask great things of him. That word *So* has much in it. To be saved singing is to be saved indeed. Many are saved mourning and doubting; but David had such faith that he could fight singing, and win the battle with a song still upon his lips. How happy a thing to receive fresh mercy with a heart already sensible of mercy enjoyed, and to anticipate new trials with a confidence based upon past experiences of divine love!

> "No fearing or doubting with Christ on our side,
> We hope to die shouting, 'The Lord will provide.'"

4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears.

7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness *was* under his feet.

10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him *were* dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.

12 At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed, hail *stones* and coals of fire.

13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail *stones* and coals of fire.

14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

In most poetical language the Psalmist now describes his experience of Jehovah's delivering power. Poesy has in all her treasures no gem more lustrous than the sonnet of the following verses; the sorrow, the cry, the descent of the Divine One, and the rescue of the afflicted, are here set to a music worthy of the golden harps. The Messiah our Saviour is evidently, over and beyond David or any other believer, the main and chief subject of this song; and while studying it we have grown more and more sure that every line here has its deepest and profoundest fulfilment in Him; but as we are desirous not to extend our comment beyond moderate bounds, we must leave it with the devout reader to make the very easy application of the passage to our once distressed but now triumphant Lord.

4. "*The sorrows of death compassed me.*" Death like a cruel conqueror seemed to twist round about him the cords of pain. He was environed and hemmed in with threatening deaths of the most appalling sort. He was like a mariner broken by the storm and driven upon the rocks by dreadful breakers, white as the teeth of death. Sad plight for the man after God's own heart, but thus it is that Jehovah dealeth with his sons. "*The floods of ungodly men made me afraid.*" Torrents of ungodliness threatened to swamp all religion, and to hurry away the godly man's hope as a thing to be scorned and despised; so far was this threat fulfilled, that even the hero who slew Goliath began to be afraid. The most seaworthy bark is sometimes hard put to it when the storm fiend is abroad. The most courageous man, who as a rule hopes for the best, may sometimes fear the worst. Beloved reader, he who pens these lines has known better than most men what this verse means, and feels inclined to weep, and yet to sing, while he writes upon a text so descriptive of his own experience. On the night of the lamentable accident at the Surrey Music Hall, the floods of Belial were let loose, and the subsequent remarks of a large portion of the press were exceedingly malicious and wicked; our soul was afraid as we stood encompassed with the sorrows of death and the blasphemies of the cruel. But oh, what mercy was there in it all, and what honey of goodness was extracted by our Lord out of this lion of affliction! Surely God hath heard me! Art thou in an ill plight? Dear friend, learn thou from our experience to trust in the Lord Jehovah, who forsaketh not his chosen.

5. "*The sorrows of hell compassed me about.*" From all sides the hell-hounds barked furiously. A cordon of devils hemmed in the hunted man of God; every way of escape was closed up. Satan knows how to blockade our coasts with the iron war-ships of sorrow, but, blessed be God, the port of all prayer is still open, and grace can run the blockade bearing messages from earth to heaven, and blessings in return from heaven to earth. "*The snares of death prevented me.*" The old enemy hunts for his prey, not only with the dogs of the infernal kennel, but also with the snares of deadly craft. The nets were drawn closer and closer until the contracted circle completely prevented the escape of the captive:—

> 'About me cords of hell were wound,
> And snares of death my footsteps bound."

Thus hopeless was the case of this good man, as hopeless as a case could be, so utterly desperate that none but an almighty arm could be of any service. According

to the four metaphors which he employs, he was bound like a malefactor for execution; overwhelmed like a shipwrecked mariner; surrounded and standing at bay like a hunted stag; and captured in a net like a trembling bird. What more of terror and distress could meet upon one poor defenceless head?

6. "*In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God.*" Prayer is that postern gate which is left open even when the city is straitly besieged by the enemy; it is that way upward from the pit of despair to which the spiritual miner flies at once when the floods from beneath break forth upon him. Observe that he *calls*, and then *cries;* prayer grows in vehemence as it proceeds. Note also that he first invokes his God under the name of Jehovah, and then advances to a more familiar name, "*my God;*" thus faith increases by exercise, and he whom we at first viewed as Lord is soon seen to be our God in covenant. It is never an ill time to pray; no distress should prevent us from using the divine remedy of supplication. Above the noise of the raging billows of death, or the barking dogs of hell, the feeblest cry of a true believer will be heard in heaven. "*He heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.*" Far up within the bejewelled walls, and through the gates of pearl, the cry of the suffering suppliant was heard. Music of angels and harmony of seraphs availed not to drown or even to impair the voice of that humble call. The king heard it in his palace of light unsufferable, and lent a willing ear to the cry of his own beloved child. O honoured prayer, to be able thus through Jesus' blood to penetrate the very ears and heart of Deity. The voice and the cry are themselves heard directly by the Lord, and not made to pass through the medium of saints and intercessors; "My cry came before *Him;*" the operation of prayer with God is immediate and personal. We may cry with confident and familiar importunity, while our Father himself listens.

7. There was no great space between the cry and its answer. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is swift to rescue his afflicted. David has in his mind's eye the glorious manifestations of God in Egypt, at Sinai, and on different occasions to Joshua and the judges; and he considers that his own case exhibits the same glory of power and goodness, and that, therefore, he may accommodate the descriptions of former displays of the divine majesty into his hymn of praise. "*Then the earth shook and trembled.*" Observe how the most solid and immovable things feel the force of supplication. Prayer has shaken houses, opened prison doors, and made stout hearts to quail. Prayer rings the alarm bell, and the Master of the house arises to the rescue, shaking all things beneath his tread. "*The foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because of his wrath.*" He who fixed the world's pillars can make them rock in their sockets, and can upheave the cornerstones of creation. The huge roots of the towering mountains are torn up when the Lord bestirs himself in anger to smite the enemies of his people. How shall puny man be able to face it out with God when the very mountains quake with fear? Let not the boaster dream that his present false confidence will support him in the dread day of wrath.

8. "*There went up a smoke out of his nostrils.*" A violent oriental method of expressing fierce wrath. Since the breath from the nostrils is heated by strong emotion, the figure portrays the Almighty Deliverer as pouring forth smoke in the heat of his wrath and the impetuousness of his zeal. Nothing makes God so angry as an injury done to his children. He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye. God is not subject to the passions which govern his creatures, but acting as he does with all the energy and speed of one who is angry, he is here aptly set forth in poetic imagery suitable to human understandings. The opening of his lips is sufficient to destroy his enemies; "*and fire out of his mouth devoured.*" This fire was no temporary one but steady and lasting; "*Coals were kindled by it.*" The whole passage is intended to depict God's descent to the help of his child, attended by earthquake and tempest: at the majesty of his appearing the earth rocks, the clouds gather like smoke, and the lightning as flaming fire devours, setting the world on a blaze. What grandeur of description is here! Bishop Mant very admirably rhymes the verse thus:—

> "Smoke from his heated nostrils came,
> And from his mouth devouring flame;
> Hot burning coals announced his ire,
> And flashes of careering fire."

9. Amid the terror of the storm Jehovah the Avenger descended, bending beneath his foot the arch of heaven. "*He bowed the heavens also, and came down.*" He came in haste, and spurned everything which impeded his rapidity. The thickest gloom concealed his splendour, "*and darkness was under his feet;*" he fought within the dense vapours, as a warrior in clouds of smoke and dust, and found out the hearts of his enemies with the sharp falchion of his vengeance. Darkness is no impediment to God; its densest gloom he makes his tent and secret pavilion. See how prayer moves earth and heaven, and raises storms to overthrow in a moment the foes of God's Israel. Things were bad for David before he prayed, but they were much worse for his foes so soon as the petition had gone up to heaven. A trustful heart, by enlisting the divine aid, turns the tables on its enemies. If I must have an enemy let him not be a man of prayer, or he will soon get the better of me by calling in his God into the quarrel.

10. There is inimitable grandeur in this verse. Under the Mosaic system the cherubim are frequently represented as the chariot of God; hence Milton, in "Paradise Lost," writes of the Great Father,—

> "He on the wings of cherubim
> Uplifted, in paternal glory rode
> Far into chaos."

Without speculating upon the mysterious and much-disputed subject of the cherubim, it may be enough to remark that angels are doubtless our guards and ministering friends, and all their powers are enlisted to expedite the rescue of the afflicted. "*He rode upon a cherub, and did fly.*" Nature also yields all her agents to be our helpers, and even the powers of the air are subservient: "*yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.*" The Lord comes flying when mercy is his errand, but he lingers long when sinners are being wooed to repent. The flight here pictured is as majestic as it is swift; "flying all abroad" is Sternhold's word, and he is not far from correct. As the eagle soars in easy grandeur with wings outspread, without violent flapping and exertion, so comes the Lord with majesty of omnipotence to aid his own.

11. The storm thickened, and the clouds pouring forth torrents of rain combined to form the secret chamber of the invisible but wonder-working God. "Pavilioned in impervious shade" faith saw him, but no other eye could gaze through the "*thick clouds of the skies.*" Blessed is the darkness which encurtains my God; if I may not see him, it is sweet to know that he is working in secret for my eternal good. Even fools can believe that God is abroad in the sunshine and the calm, but faith is wise, and discerns him in the terrible darkness and threatening storm.

12. Suddenly the terrible artillery of heaven was discharged; the *brightness* of lightning lit up the clouds as with a glory proceeding from him who was concealed within the cloudy pavilion; and volleys of hailstones and coals of fire were hurled forth upon the enemy. The lightnings seemed to cleave the clouds and kindle them into a blaze, and then hailstones and flakes of fire with flashes of terrific grandeur terrified the sons of men.

13. Over all this splendour of tempest pealed the dread thunder. "*The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice.*" Fit accompaniment for the flames of vengeance. How will men bear to hear it at the last when addressed to them in proclamation of their doom, for even now their hearts are in their mouths if they do but hear it muttering from afar? In all this terror David found a theme for song, and thus every believer finds even in the terrors of God a subject for holy praise. "*Hailstones and coals of fire*" are twice mentioned to show how certainly they are in the divine hand, and are the weapons of Heaven's vengeance. Horne remarks that "every thunderstorm should remind us of that exhibition of power and vengeance, which is hereafter to accompany the general resurrection;" may it not also assure us of the real power of him who is our Father and our friend, and tend to assure us of our safety while he fights our battles for us. The prince of the power of the air is soon dislodged when the cherubic chariot is driven through his dominions; therefore let not the legions of hell cause us dismay. He who is with us is greater than all they that be against us.

14. The lightnings were darted forth as forked arrows upon the hosts of the foe, and speedily "*scattered them.*" Boastful sinners prove to be great cowards when Jehovah enters the lists with them. They despise his words, and are very

tongue-valiant, but when it comes to blows they fly apace. The glittering flames, and the fierce bolts of fire *"discomfited them."* God is never at a loss for weapons. Woe be unto him that contendeth with his Maker! God's arrows never miss their aim; they are feathered with lightning, and barbed with everlasting death. Fly, O sinner, to the rock of refuge before these arrows stick fast in thy soul.

15. So tremendous was the shock of God's assault in arms that the order of nature was changed, and the bottoms of rivers and seas were laid bare. *"The channels of waters were seen;"* and the deep cavernous bowels of the earth were upheaved till *"the foundations of the world were discovered."* What will not Jehovah's *"rebuke"* do? If *"the blast of the breath of thy nostrils,"* O Lord, be so terrible, what must thine arm be? Vain are the attempts of men to conceal anything from him whose word unbars the deep, and lifts the doors of earth from their hinges! Vain are all hopes of resistance, for a whisper of his voice makes the whole earth quail in abject terror.

16. Now comes the rescue. The Author is divine, *"He sent;"* the work is heavenly, *"from above;"* the deliverance is marvellous, *"He drew me out of many waters."* Here David was like another Moses, drawn from the water; and thus are all believers like their Lord, whose baptism in many waters of agony and in his own blood has redeemed us from the wrath to come. Torrents of evil shall not drown the man whose God sitteth upon the floods to restrain their fury.

17. When we have been rescued, we must take care to ascribe all the glory to God by confessing our own weakness, and remembering the powers of the conquered enemy. God's power derives honour from all the incidents of the conflict. Our great spiritual adversary is a *"strong enemy"* indeed, much too strong for poor, weak creatures like ourselves, but we have been delivered hitherto and shall be even to the end. Our weakness is a reason for divine help; mark the force of the *"for"* in the text.

18. It was an ill day, a day of *calamity*, of which evil foes took cruel advantage while they used crafty means utterly to ruin him, yet David could say, *"but the Lord is my stay."* What a blessed *but* which cuts the Gordian knot, and slays the hundred-headed hydra! There is no fear of deliverance when our stay is in Jehovah.

19. *"He brought me forth also into a large place."* After pining awhile in the prison-house Joseph reached the palace, and from the cave of Adullam David mounted to the throne. Sweet is pleasure after pain. Enlargement is the more delightful after a season of pinching poverty and sorrowful confinement. Besieged souls delight in the broad fields of the promise when God drives off the enemy and sets open the gates of the environed city. The Lord does not leave his work half done, for having routed the foe he leads out the captive into liberty. Large indeed is the possession and place of the believer in Jesus, there need be no limit to his peace, for there is no bound to his privilege. *"He delivered me, because he delighted in me."* Free grace lies at the foundation. Rest assured, if we go deep enough, sovereign grace is the truth which lies at the bottom of every well of mercy. Deep sea fisheries in the ocean of divine bounty always bring the pearls of electing, discriminating love to light. Why Jehovah should delight in us is an answerless question, and a mystery which angels cannot solve; but that he does delight in his beloved is certain, and is the fruitful root of favours as numerous as they are precious. Believer, sit down, and inwardly digest the instructive sentence now before us, and learn to view the uncaused love of God as the cause of all the loving-kindness of which we are the partakers.

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

22 For all his judgments *were* before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.

23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;

26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.

27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.

28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

20. "*The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness.*" Viewing this Psalm as prophetical of the Messiah, these strongly-expressed claims to righteousness are readily understood, for his garments were white as snow; but considered as the language of David they have perplexed many. Yet the case is clear, and if the words be not strained beyond their original intention, no difficulty need occur. Albeit that the dispensations of divine grace are to the fullest degree sovereign and irrespective of human merit, yet in the dealings of Providence there is often discernible a rule of justice by which the injured are at length avenged, and the righteous ultimately delivered. David's early troubles arose from the wicked malice of envious Saul, who no doubt prosecuted his persecutions under cover of charges brought against the character of "the man after God's own heart." These charges David declares to have been utterly false, and asserts that he possessed a grace-given righteousness which the Lord had graciously rewarded in defiance of all his calumniators. Before God the man after God's own heart was a humble sinner, but before his slanderers he could with unblushing face speak of the "*cleanness of his hands*" and the righteousness of his life. He knows little of the sanctifying power of divine grace who is not at the bar of human equity able to plead innocence. There is no self-righteousness in an honest man knowing that he is honest, nor even in his believing that God rewards him in providence because of his honesty, for such is often a most evident matter of fact; but it would be self-righteousness indeed if we transferred such thoughts from the region of providential government into the spiritual kingdom, for there grace reigns not only supreme but sole in the distribution of divine favours. It is not at all an opposition to the doctrine of salvation by grace, and no sort of evidence of a Pharisaic spirit, when a gracious man, having been slandered, stoutly maintains his integrity, and vigorously defends his character. A godly man has a clear conscience, and knows himself to be upright; is he to deny his own consciousness, and to despise the work of the Holy Ghost, by hypocritically making himself out to be worse than he is? A godly man prizes his integrity very highly, or else he would not be a godly man at all; is he to be called proud because he will not readily lose the jewel of a reputable character? A godly man can see that in divine providence uprightness and truth are in the long run sure to bring their own reward; may he not, when he sees that reward bestowed in his own case, praise the Lord for it? Yea rather, must he not show forth the faithfulness and goodness of his God? Read the cluster of expressions in this and the following verses as the song of a good conscience, after having safely outridden a storm of obloquy, persecution, and abuse, and there will be no fear of our upbraiding the writer as one who set too high a price upon his own moral character.

21. Here the assertion of purity is repeated, both in a positive and a negative form. There is "*I have*" and "*I have not,*" both of which must be blended in a truly sanctified life; constraining and restraining grace must each take its share. The words of this verse refer to the saint as a traveller carefully keeping to "*the ways of the Lord,*" and "*not wickedly,*" that is, designedly, wilfully, persistently, defiantly forsaking the ordained pathway in which God favours the pilgrim with his presence. Observe how it is implied in the expression "*and have not wickedly departed from my God,*" that David lived habitually in communion with God, and knew him to be his own God, whom he might speak of as "*my God.*" God never departs from his people, let them take heed of departing from him.

22. "*For all his judgments were before me.*" The word, the character, and the actions of God should be evermore before our eyes; we should learn, consider, and reverence them. Men forget what they do not wish to remember, but the excellent attributes of the Most High are objects of the believer's affectionate and delighted admiration. We should keep the image of God so constantly before us that we become in our measure conformed unto it. This inner love to the right must be the main spring of Christian integrity in our public walk. The fountain must be filled with love to holiness, and then the streams which issue from it will

be pure and gracious. "*I did not put away his statutes from me.*" To put away the Scriptures from the mind's study is the certain way to prevent their influencing the outward conversation. Backsliders begin with dusty Bibles, and go on to filthy garments.

23. "*I was also upright before him.*" Sincerity is here claimed; sincerity, such as would be accounted genuine before the bar of God. Whatever evil men might think of Him, David felt that he had the good opinion of his God. Moreover, freedom from his one great besetting sin he ventures also to plead, "*I kept myself from mine iniquity.*" It is a very gracious sign when the most violent parts of our nature have been well guarded. If the weakest link in the chain is not broken, the stronger links will be safe enough. David's impetuous temper might have led him to slay Saul when he had him in his power, but grace enabled him to keep his hands clean of the blood of his enemy; but what a wonder it was, and how well worthy of such a grateful record as these verses afford! It will be a sweet cordial to us one of these days to remember our self-denials, and to bless God that we were able to exhibit them.

24. God first gives us holiness, and then rewards us for it. We are his workmanship; vessels made unto honour; and when made, the honour is not withheld from the vessel; though, in fact, it all belongs to the Potter upon whose wheel the vessel was fashioned. The prize is awarded to the flower at the show, but the gardener reared it; the child wins the prize from the schoolmaster, but the real honour of his schooling lies with his master, although instead of receiving he gives the reward.

25. The dealings of the Lord in his own case, cause the grateful singer to remember the usual rule of God's moral government; he is just in his dealings with the sons of men, and metes out to each man according to his measure. "*With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.*" Every man shall have his meat weighed in his own scales, his corn meted in his own bushel, and his land measured with his own rod. No rule can be more fair, to ungodly men more terrible, or to the generous more honourable. How would men throw away their light weights, and break their short yards, if they could but believe that they themselves are sure to be in the end the losers by their knavish tricks? Note that even the merciful need mercy; no amount of generosity to the poor, or forgiveness to enemies, can set us beyond the need of mercy. Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.

26. "*With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.*" The sinner's frowardness is sinful and rebellious, and the only sense in which the term can be applied to the Most Holy God is that of judicial opposition and sternness, in which the Judge of all the earth will act at cross-purposes with the offender, and let him see that all things are not to be made subservient to wicked whims and wilful fancies. Calvin very forcibly says, "This brutish and monstrous stupidity in men compels God to invent new modes of expression, and as it were to clothe himself with a different character. There is a similar sentence in Leviticus xxvi. 21—24, where God says, "and if ye walk contrary unto (or perversely with) me, then will I also walk contrary unto (or perversely, or roughly, or at random with) you." As if he had said that their obstinacy and stubbornness would make him on his part forget his accustomed forbearance and gentleness, and cast himself recklessly or at random against them. We see then what the stubborn at length gain by their obduracy; it is this, that God hardens himself still more to break them in pieces, and if they are of stone, he causes them to feel that he has the hardness of iron. The Jewish tradition was that the manna tasted according to each man's mouth; certainly God shows himself to each individual according to his character.

27. "*For thou wilt save the afflicted people.*" This is a comforting assurance for the poor in spirit whose spiritual griefs admit of no sufficient solace from any other than a divine hand. They cannot save themselves nor can others do it, but God will save them. "*But wilt bring down high looks.*" Those who look down on others with scorn shall be looked down upon with contempt ere long. The Lord abhors a proud look. What a reason for repentance and humiliation! How much better to be humble than to provoke God to humble us in his wrath! A considerable number of clauses occur in this passage in the future tense; how forcibly are we thus brought to remember that our present joy or sorrow is not to have so much weight with us as the great and eternal future!

28. *" For thou wilt light my candle."* Even the children of the day sometimes need candle-light. In the darkest hour light will arise; a candle shall be lit, it will be comfort such as we may fittingly use without dishonesty—it will be our own candle; yet God himself will find the holy fire with which the candle shall burn; our evidences are our own, but their comfortable light is from above. Candles which are lit by God the devil cannot blow out. All candles are not shining, and so there are some graces which yield no present comfort; but it is well to have candles which may by and by be lit, and it is well to possess graces which may yet afford us cheering evidences. The metaphor of the whole verse is founded upon the dolorous nature of darkness and the delightfulness of light; " truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; " and even so the presence of the Lord removes all the gloom of sorrow, and enables the believer to rejoice with exceeding great joy. The lighting of the lamp is a cheerful moment in the winter's evening, but the lifting up of the light of God's countenance is happier far. It is said that the poor in Egypt will stint themselves of bread to buy oil for the lamp, so that they may not sit in darkness; we could well afford to part with all earthly comforts if the light of God's love could but constantly gladden our souls.

29 For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

30 *As for* God, his way *is* perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.

31 For who *is* God save the LORD? or who *is* a rock save our God?

32 *It is* God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

33 He maketh my feet like hinds' *feet,* and setteth me upon my high places.

34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.

39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

41 They cried, but *there was* none to save *them: even* unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; *and* thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people *whom* I have not known shall serve me.

44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.

45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.

Some repetitions are not vain repetitions. Second thoughts upon God's mercy should be and often are the best. Like wines on the lees our gratitude grows stronger and sweeter as we meditate upon divine goodness. The verses which we have now to consider are the ripe fruit of a thankful spirit; they are apples of gold as to matter, and they are placed in baskets of silver as to their language. They describe the believer's victorious career and his enemies' confusion.

29. *" For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over*

a wall." Whether we meet the foe in the open field or leap upon them while they lurk behind the battlements of a city, we shall by God's grace defeat them in either case; if they hem us in with living legions, or environ us with stone walls, we shall with equal certainty obtain our liberty. Such feats we have already performed, hewing our way at a run through hosts of difficulties, and scaling impossibilities at a leap. God's warriors may expect to have a taste of every form of fighting, and must by the power of faith determine to quit themselves like men; but it behoves them to be very careful to lay all their laurels at Jehovah's feet, each one of them saying, *"by my God"* have I wrought this valiant deed. Our *spolia optima*, the trophies of our conflicts, we hereby dedicate to the God of Battles, and ascribe to him all glory and strength.

30. *"As for God, his way is perfect."* Far past all fault and error are God's dealings with his people; all his actions are resplendent with justice, truth, tenderness, mercy, and holiness. Every way of God is complete in itself, and all his ways put together are matchless in harmony and goodness. Is it not very consolatory to believe that he who has begun to bless us will perfect his work, for all his ways are *"perfect?"* Nor must the divine *"word"* be without its song of praise. *"The word of the Lord is tried,"* like silver refined in the furnace. The doctrines are glorious, the precepts are pure, the promises are faithful, and the whole revelation is superlatively full of grace and truth. David had tried it, thousands have tried it, we have tried it, and it has never failed. It was meet that when way and word had been extolled, the Lord himself should be magnified; hence it is added, *"He is a buckler to all those that trust in him."* No armour of proof or shield of brass so well secures the warrior as the covenant God of Israel protects his warring people. He himself is the buckler of trustful ones; what a thought is this! What peace may every trusting soul enjoy!

31. Having mentioned his God, the Psalmist's heart burns, and his words sparkle; he challenges heaven and earth to find another being worthy of adoration or trust in comparison with Jehovah. His God, as Matthew Henry says, is a None-such. The idols of the heathen he scorns to mention, snuffing them all out as mere nothings when Deity is spoken of. *"Who is God save the Lord?"* Who else creates, sustains, foresees, and overrules? Who but he is perfect in every attribute, and glorious in every act? To whom but Jehovah should creatures bow? Who else can claim their service and their love? *"Who is a rock save our God?"* Where can lasting hopes be fixed? Where can the soul find rest? Where is stability to be found? Where is strength to be discovered? Surely in the Lord Jehovah alone can we find rest and refuge.

32. Surveying all the armour in which he fought and conquered, the joyful victor praises the Lord for every part of the panoply. The girdle of his loins earns the first stanza: *"It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect."* Girt about the loins with power from heaven, the warrior was filled with vigour, far above all created might; and, whereas, without this wonderous belt he would have been feeble and effeminate, with relaxed energies and scattered forces, he felt himself, when braced with the girdle of truth, to be compact in purpose, courageous in daring, and concentrated in power; so that his course was a complete success, so undisturbed by disastrous defeat as to be called "perfect." Have we been made more than conquerors over sin, and has our life hitherto been such as becometh the gospel? Then let us ascribe all the glory to him who girt us with his own inexhaustible strength, that we might be unconquered in battle and unwearied in pilgrimage.

33. The conqueror's feet had been shod by a divine hand, and the next note must, therefore, refer to them. *"He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places."* Pursuing his foes the warrior had been swift of foot as a young roe, but, instead of taking pleasure in the legs of a man, he ascribes the boon of swiftness to the Lord alone. When our thoughts are nimble, and our spirits rapid, like the chariots of Amminadib, let us not forget that our best Beloved's hand has given us the choice favour. Climbing into impregnable fortresses, David had been preserved from slipping, and made to stand where scarce the wild goat can find a footing; herein was preserving mercy manifested. We, too, have had our *high places* of honour, service, temptation, and danger, but hitherto we have been kept from falling. Bring hither the harp, and let us emulate the Psalmist's joyful thanksgiving; had we fallen, our wailings must have been terrible; since we have stood, let our gratitude be fervent.

34. "*He teacheth my hands to war.*" Martial prowess and skill in the use of weapons are gratefully acknowledged to be the result of divine teaching; no sacrifice is offered at the shrine of self in praise of natural dexterity, or acquired skilfulness; but, regarding all warlike prowess as a gift of heavenly favour, thankfulness is presented to the Giver. The Holy Spirit is the great Drill-master of heavenly soldiers. "*So that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.*" A bow of brass is probably meant, and these bows could scarcely be bent by the arms alone, the archer had to gain the assistance of his foot; it was, therefore, a great feat of strength to bend the bow, so far as even to snap it in halves. This was meant of the enemies' bow, which he not only snatched from his grasp, but rendered useless by breaking it in pieces. Jesus not only destroyed the fiery suggestions of Satan, but he broke his arguments with which he shot them, by using Holy Scripture against him; by the same means we may win a like triumph, breaking the bow and cutting the spear in sunder by the sharp edge of revealed truth. Probably David had by nature a vigorous bodily frame; but it is even more likely that, like Samson, he was at times clothed with more than common strength; at any rate, he ascribes the honour of his feats entirely to his God. Let us never wickedly rob the Lord of his due, but faithfully give unto him the glory which is due unto his name.

35. "*Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation.*" Above all we must take the shield of faith, for nothing else can quench Satan's fiery darts; this shield is of celestial workmanship, and is in all cases a direct gift from God himself; it is the channel, the sign, the guarantee, and the earnest of perfect salvation. "*Thy right hand hath holden me up.*" Secret support is administered to us by the preserving grace of God, and at the same time Providence kindly yields us manifest aid. We are such babes that we cannot stand alone; but when the Lord's right hand upholds us, we are like brazen pillars which cannot be moved. "*Thy gentleness hath made me great.*" There are several readings of this sentence. The word is capable of being translated, "thy *goodness* hath made me great." David saw much of benevolence in God's action towards him, and he gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but to the goodness of God. "Thy *providence*" is another reading, which is indeed nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is the bud of which providence is the flower; or goodness is the seed of which providence is the harvest. Some render it, "thy *help*," which is but another word for providence; providence being the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Certain learned annotators tell us that the text means, "thy *humility* hath made me great." "Thy *condescension*" may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas which he have already mentioned, as well as that of humility. It is God's making himself little which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little that if God should manifest his greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under his feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do, looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. While these are the translations which have been given to the adopted text of the original, we find that there are other readings altogether; as for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, "thy discipline"—thy fatherly correction—"hath made me great;" while the Chaldee paraphrase reads, "thy word hath increased me." Still the idea is the same. David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness and graciousness of his Father in heaven. Let us all feel this sentiment in our own hearts, and confess that whatever of goodness or greatness God may have put upon us, we must cast our crowns at his feet, and cry, "*thy gentleness hath made me great.*"

36. "*Thou hast enlarged my steps.*" A smooth pathway leading to spacious possessions and camping-grounds had been opened up for him. Instead of threading the narrow mountain paths, and hiding in the cracks and corners of caverns, he was able to traverse the plains and dwell under his own vine and fig tree. It is no small mercy to be brought into full Christian liberty and enlargement, but it is a greater favour still to be enabled to walk worthily in such liberty, not being permitted to slip with our feet. To stand upon the rocks of affliction is the result of gracious upholding, but that aid is quite as much needed in the luxurious plains of prosperity.

37. The preservation of the saints bodes ill for their adversaries. The Amalekites thought themselves clear away with their booty, but when David's God guided him in the pursuit, they were soon overtaken and cut in pieces. When God is with us sins and sorrows flee, and all forms of evil are "*consumed*" before the power

of grace. What a noble picture this and the following verses present to us of the victories of our glorious Lord Jesus!

38. The destruction of our spiritual enemies is complete. We may exult over sin, death and hell, as disarmed and disabled *for* us by our conquering Lord; may he graciously give them a like defeat *within* us.

39 and 40. It is impossible to be too frequent in the duty of ascribing all our victories to the God of our salvation. It is true that we have to wrestle with our spiritual antagonists, but the triumph is far more the Lord's than ours. We must not boast like the ambitious votaries of vainglory, but we may exult as the willing and believing instruments in the Lord's hands of accomplishing his great designs.

41. "*They cried, but there was none to save them; even unto the Lord, but he answered them not.*" Prayer is so notable a weapon that even the wicked will take to it in their fits of desperation. Bad men have appealed to God against God's own servants, but all in vain; the kingdom of heaven is not divided, and God never succours his foes at the expense of his friends. There are prayers to God which are no better than blasphemy, which bring no comfortable reply, but rather provoke the Lord to greater wrath. Shall I ask a man to wound or slay his own child to gratify my malice? Would he not resent the insult against his humanity? How much less will Jehovah regard the cruel desires of the enemies of the church, who dare to offer their prayers for its destruction calling its existence schism, and its doctrine heresy!

42. The defeat of the nations who fought with King David was so utter and complete that they were like powders pounded in a mortar; their power was broken into fragments and they became as weak as dust before the wind, and as mean as the mire of the roads. Thus powerless and base are the enemies of God now become through the victory of the Son of David upon the cross. Arise, O my soul, and meet thine enemies, for they have sustained a deadly blow, and will fall before thy bold advance.

> "Hell and my sins resist my course,
> But hell and sin are vanquish'd foes;
> My Jesus nail'd them to his cross,
> And sung the triumph when he rose."

43. "*Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people.*" Internal strife is very hard to deal with. A civil war is war in its most miserable form; it is a subject for warmest gratitude when concord rules within. Our poet praises Jehovah for the union and peace which smiled in his dominions, and if we have peace in the three kingdoms of our spirit, soul, and body, we are in duty bound to give Jehovah a song. Unity in a church should assuredly excite like gratitude. "*Thou hast made me the head of the heathen; a people whom I have not known shall serve me.*" The neighbouring nations yielded to the sway of Judah's prince. Oh when shall all lands adore King Jesus, and serve him with holy joy? Surely there is far more of Jesus than of David here. Missionaries may derive rich encouragement from the positive declaration that heathen lands shall own the Headship of the Crucified.

44. "*As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me.*" Thus readily did the once struggling captain become a far-renowned victor, and thus easy shall be our triumphs. We prefer, however, to speak of Jesus. In many cases the gospel is speedily received by hearts apparently unprepared for it. Those who have never heard the gospel before, have been charmed by its first message, and yielded obedience to it; while others, alas! who are accustomed to its joyful sound, are rather hardened than softened by its teachings. The grace of God sometimes runs like fire among the stubble, and a nation is born in a day. "Love at first sight" is no uncommon thing when Jesus is the wooer. He can write Cæsar's message without boasting, *Veni, vidi, vici*; his gospel is in some cases no sooner heard than believed. What inducements to spread abroad the doctrine of the cross!

45. "*The strangers shall fade away.*" Like sear leaves or blasted trees our foes and Christ's foes shall find no sap and stamina remaining in them. Those who are strangers to Jesus are strangers to all lasting happiness; those must soon fade who refuse to be watered from the river of life. "*And be afraid out of their close places.*" Out of their mountain fastnesses the heathen crept in fear to own allegiance to Israel's king, and even so, from the castles of self-confidence and the dens of carnal security, poor sinners come bending before the Saviour, Christ the Lord. Our sins which have entrenched themselves in our flesh and blood as in impregnable forts, shall yet be

driven forth by the sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit, and we shall serve the Lord in singleness of heart.

Thus with remembrances of conquests in the past, and with glad anticipations of victories yet to come the sweet singer closes the description, and returns to exercise of more direct adoration of his gracious God.

46 The LORD liveth; and blessed *be* my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

47 *It is* God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.

48 He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

46. "*The Lord liveth.*" Possessing underived, essential, independent and eternal life. We serve no inanimate, imaginary, or dying God. He only hath immortality. Like loyal subjects let us cry, Live on, O God. Long live the King of kings. By thine immortality do we dedicate ourselves afresh to thee. As the Lord our God liveth so would we live to him. "*And blessed be my rock.*" He is the ground of our hope, and let him be the subject of our praise. Our hearts bless the Lord, with holy love extolling him.

Jehovah lives, my rock be blest!
Praised be the God who gives me rest!

"*Let the God of my salvation be exalted.*" As our Saviour, the Lord should more than ever be glorified. We should publish abroad the story of the covenant and the cross, the Father's election, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's regeneration. He who rescues us from deserved ruin should be very dear to us. In heaven they sing, "Unto him that loved us and washed us in his blood;" the like music should be common in the assemblies of the saints below.

47. "*It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.*" To rejoice in personal revenge is unhallowed and evil, but David viewed himself as the instrument of vengeance upon the enemies of God and his people, and had he not rejoiced in the success accorded to him he would have been worthy of censure. That sinners perish is in itself a painful consideration, but that the Lord's law is avenged upon those who break it is to the devout mind a theme for thankfulness. We must, however, always remember that vengeance is never ours, vegeance belongeth unto the Lord, and he is so just and withal so long-suffering in the excercise of it, that we may safely leave its administration in his hands.

48. From all enemies, and especially from one who was pre-eminent in violence, the Lord's anointed was preserved, and at the last over the head of Saul and all other adversaries he reigned in honour. The like end awaits every saint, because Jesus who stooped to be lightly esteemed among men is now made to sit far above all principalities and powers.

49. Paul cites this verse (Rom. xv. 9): "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." This is clear evidence that David's Lord is here, but David is here too, and is to be viewed as an example of a holy soul making its boast in God even in the presence of ungodly men. Who are the despisers of God that we should stop our mouths for them? We will sing to our God whether they like it or no, and force upon them the knowledge of his goodness. Too much politeness to traitors may be treason to our King.

50. This is the winding-up verse into which the writer throws a fulness of expression, indicating the most rapturous delight of gratitude. "*Great deliverance.*" The word "*deliverance*" is plural, to show the variety and completeness of the salvation; the adjective "*great*" is well placed if we consider from what, to what, and how we are saved. All this mercy is given to us in our King, the Lord's Anointed, and those are blessed indeed who as his seed may expect mercy to be built up for evermore. The Lord was faithful to the literal David, and he will not break his

covenant with the spiritual David, for that would far more involve the honour of his crown and character.

The Psalm concludes in the same loving spirit which shone upon its commencement; happy are they who can sing on from love to love, even as the pilgrims marched from strength to strength.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The general argument of the Psalm may be thus stated: it is a magnificent eucharistic ode. It begins with a celebration of the glorious perfections of the Divinity, whose assistance the speaker had so often experienced. He describes, or rather, he delineates, his perils, the power of his enemies, his sudden deliverance from them, and the indignation and power of his divine deliverer manifested in their overthrow. He paints these in so lively colours, that while we read we seem to see the lightning, to hear the thunders, to feel the earthquake. He afterwards describes his victories, so that we seem to be eye-witnesses of them, and take part in them. He predicts a wide-extended empire, and concludes with a lofty expression of grateful adoration of Jehovah, the Author of all his deliverances and triumphs. The style is highly oratorical and poetical, sublime, and full of uncommon figures of speech. It is the natural language of a person of the highest mental endowments, under a divine inspiration, deeply affected by remarkable divine benefits, and filled with the most lofty conceptions of the divine character and dispensations.—*John Brown, D.D.*, 1853.

Whole Psalm.—Kitto, in "The Pictorial Bible," has the following note upon 2 Samuel xxii.:—"This is the same as the eighteenth Psalm . . . . The Rabbins reckon up seventy-four differences between the two copies, most of them very minute. They probably arose from the fact that the poem was, as they conjecture, composed by David in his youth, and revised in his later days when he sent it to the chief musician. The present is, of course, supposed to be the earlier copy."

Whole Psalm.—The eighteenth Psalm is called by Michaelis more artificial, and less truly terrible than the Mosaic odes. In structure it may be so, but surely not in spirit. It appears to many besides us, one of the most magnificent lyrical raptures in the Scriptures. As if the poet had dipped his pen in "the brightness of that light which was before his eye," so he describes the descending God. Perhaps it may be objected that the *nodus* is hardly worthy of the *vindex*—to deliver David from his enemies, could Deity ever be imagined to come down? But the objector knows not the character of the ancient Hebrew mind. God in its view had not to descend from heaven; he was nigh—a cloud like a man's hand might conceal—a cry, a look might bring him down. And why should not David's fancy clothe him, as he came, in a panoply befitting his dignity, in clouds spangled with coals of fire? If he was to descend, why not in state? The proof of the grandeur of this Psalm is in the fact, that it has borne the test of almost every translation, and made doggerel erect itself, and become divine. Even Sternhold and Hopkins its fiery whirlwind lifts up, purifies, touches into true power, and then throws down, helpless and panting, upon their ancient common. Perhaps the great charm of the eighteenth, apart from the poetry of the descent, is the exquisite and subtle alternation of the *I* and the *Thou*. We have spoken of parallelism, as the key to the mechanism of Hebrew song. We find this as existing between David and God—the delivered and the deliverer—beautifully pursued throughout the whole of this Psalm. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised." "He sent from above; he took me; he drew me out of many waters." "Thou wilt light my candle." "Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation." "Thou hast girded me with strength unto battle." "Thou hast given me the necks of mine enemies." "Thou hast made me the head of the heathen." It has been ingeniously argued, that the existence of the *I* suggests, inevitably as a polar opposite, the thought of the *Thou*, that the personality of man proves thus the personality of God; but, be this as it may, David's per-

ception of that personality is nowhere so intense as here. He seems not only to see, but to feel and touch, the object of his gratitude and worship.—*George Gi fillan, in "The Bards of the Bible,"* 1852.

Whole Psalm.—He that would be wise, let him read the Proverbs; he that would be holy, let him read the Psalms. Every line in this book breathes peculiar sancitity. This Psalm, though placed among the first, was penned among the last, as the preface assures us, and is left as the epitome of the general history of David's life. It is twice recorded in the Scripture (2 Sam. xxii., and in this book of Psalms), for the excellency and sweetness thereof; surely that we should take double notice of it. Holy David, being near the shore, here looks on his former dangers and deliverances with a thankful heart, and writes this Psalm to bless the Lord: as if each of you that are grown into years should review your lives and observe the wonderful goodness and providence of God towards you; and then sit down and write a modest memorial of his most remarkable mercies, for the comfort of yourselves and posterity; an excellent practice. What a comfort would it be for you to read how good your God was to your father or grandfather, that are dead and gone! So would your children rejoice in the Lord upon the reading of his goodness to you; and you cannot have a better pattern for this than holy David, who wrote this Psalm when he was threescore and seven years old; when he had outlived most of his troubles, and almost ready for his journey to his Father in heaven, he resolves to leave this good report of him upon earth. And I pray mark how he begins: he sets not up trophies to himself, but triumphs in his God—*"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength."* As the *love of God* is the beginning of all our mercies, so *love to God* should be the end and effect of them all. As the stream leads us to the spring, so all the gifts of God must lead us to the giver of them. Lord, thou hast saved me from sickness, *"I will love thee;"* from death and hell, *"I will love thee;* on me thou hast bestowed grace and comfort, *"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength."* And after he had heaped on God all the sweet names he could devise (verse 2), as the true saint thinks he can never speak too well of God, or too ill of himself, then he begins his narative. 1. Of his *dangers* (verse 4); *"Snares of death," "Floods of ungodly men," "Sorrows of hell."* Hell and earth are combined against each holy man, and will trouble sufficiently in this world, if they cannot keep him out of a better. 2. Of his *retreat*, and that was, earnest prayer to God (verse 6), *"I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God."* When our prayers are cries ardent and importunate, then they speed: *"My cry came before him, even into his ears."* The mother trifles while the child whimpers, but when he raises his note—strains every nerve and cries every vein—then she throws all aside, and gives him his desire. While our prayers are only whispers, our God can take his rest; but when we fall to crying, "Now will I arise, saith the Lord." 3. Of his *rescue* (verses 7 to 20), by the powerful and terrible arm of the Lord, who is in a lofty strain brought in to his servant's help, as if he would mingle heaven and earth together, rather than leave his child in the lion's paws. 4. Of the *reason* of this gracious dealing of God with him (verse 20, etc.) He was a righteous person, and he had a righteous cause. And thereupon he turns to God, saying, Thou hast dealt with me just as thou art wont to do, for *"with the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright."—Richard Steele's "Plain Discourse upon Uprightness,"* 1670.

Whole Psalm.—Sometimes the Lord cheers and comforts the hearts of his people with smiling and reviving providences, both public and personal. There are times of lifting up, as well as casting down by the hand of providence. The scene changes, the aspects of providence are very cheerful and encouraging; their winter seems to be over; they put off their garments of mourning; and then, ah, what sweet returns are made to heavenly gracious souls! Doth God lift them up by prosperity? they also will lift up their God by praises. See title, and verses 1—3 of Psalm xviii. So Moses, and the people with him (Exodus xv.), when God had delivered them from Pharaoh, how do they exalt him in a song of thanksgiving, which for the elegancy and spirituality of it, is made an emblem of the doxologies given to God in glory by the saints. Rev. xv. 1.—*John Flavel.*

Title.—*"The servant of the Lord;"*—the name given to Moses (Josh. i. 1, 13, 15, and in nine other places of that book) and to Joshua (Josh. xxiv. 29; Judg. ii. 8); but to none other except David (here, and in the title to Ps. xxxvi.). Cp. Acts xiii. 36, ὑπηρετήσας. This is significant; reminding us of the place occupied by David in the history of Israel. He was the appointed successor of Moses and Joshua,

who extended the power of Israel over the whole region allotted to them by Divine promise.—*W. Kay*, 1871.

Title.—This Psalm, which is entitled a *shirah* (or song), is David's hymn of praise to God for his deliverance from all his enemies (see the title, and above, 2 Sam. xxii), and has an appropriate place in the present group of Psalms, which speak of resurrection after suffering. It is entitled a Psalm of David, "*the servant of the Lord*," and thus is coupled with another Psalm of deliverance, Ps. xxxvi.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*I will love thee, O Lord.*"—The word whereby the Psalmist expresseth his entire affection, in the noun signifieth a womb, and importeth such an affection as cometh from the innermost part of man (רֶחֶם matrix), from his bowels, from the bottom of his heart, as we speak. It is, therefore, oft put for such pity and compassion as moveth the bowels. Some, therefore, thus translate that phrase, "From my innermost bowels will I love thee, O Lord." To give evidence of his entire and ardent love of God, he oft professeth his wonderful great love to God's commandments, whereof he saith with admiration, "Oh, how I love thy law! I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. I love them exceedingly" (Psalm cxix. 97, 127, 167); therefore, he saith to God, "Consider how I love thy precepts" (verse 159).—*William Gouge*, 1575—1653.

Verse 1.—"*I will love thee.*" Intimately as a mother loves the child that comes out of her womb.—*Westminster Assembly's Annotations*, 1651.

Verses 1, 2.—God hath, as it were, made himself over to believers. David doth not say, God will give or bestow salvation upon me; but he saith, "He is the horn of my salvation." It is God himself who is the salvation and the portion of his people. They would not care much for salvation if God were not their salvation. It more pleaseth the saints that they enjoy God, than that they enjoy salvation. False and carnal spirits will express a great deal of desire after salvation, for they like salvation, heaven, and glory well; but they never express any longing desire after God and Jesus Christ. They love salvation, but they care not for a Saviour. Now that which faith pitcheth most upon is God himself; he shall be my salvation, let me have him, and that is salvation enough; he is my life, he is my comfort, he is my riches, he is my honour, and he is my all. Thus David's heart acted immediately upon God, "*I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*" It pleased holy David more that God was his strength, than that God gave him strength; that God was his deliverer, than that he was delivered; that God was his fortress, his buckler, his horn, his high tower, than that he gave him the effect of all these. It pleased David, and it pleases all the saints more that God is their salvation, whether temporal or eternal, than that he saves them: the saints look more at God than at all that is God's.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 1, 2.—David speaks like one in love with God, for he doth adorn him with confession of praise, and his mouth is filled with the praise of the Lord, which he expresseth in this exuberancy and redundancy of holy oratory.—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord is my rock.*" As the rocks that are hard to be clambered unto are good refuges to fly unto from the face of pursuers, so God is the safety of all such as in distress do fly to him for succour.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 2.—"*My deliverer.*" He who betook himself to one of these inaccessible retreats, was sometimes obliged by famine to surrender to his enemy, who lay in wait for him beneath; but Jehovah gives him not only security but liberty; not only preserves him, as it were, in an inaccessible retreat, but at the same time enables him to go forth in safety.—*Jarchi.*

Verse 2.—"*The horn of my salvation.*" The allusion here is doubtful. Some have supposed the reference to be to the horns of animals, by which they defend themselves and attack their enemies. "God is to me, does for me, what their horns do for them." Others consider it as referring to the well-established fact, that warriors were accustomed to place horns, or ornaments like horns, on their helmets. The horn stands for the helmet; and "the helmet of salvation" is an expression equivalent to "a saving, a protecting helmet." Others consider the reference as to the corners or handles of the altar in the court of the tabernacle or temple, which are called its horns. Others suppose the reference to be to the highest point of a lofty and precipitous mountain, which we are accustomed to call its peak. No

doubt, in the Hebrew language, horn is used for mountain as in Isaiah v. 1. A very fertile mountain is called a horn of oil. The sense is substantially the same, whichever of these views we take; though, from the connection with "shield" or "buckler," I am induced to consider the second of these views as the most probable. It seems the same idea as that expressed, Psalm cxl. 7, "Thou hast covered," and thou wilt cover "my head in the day of battle."—*John Brown.*

Verse 2.—"*The horn of my salvation.*" Horns are the well-known emblems of strength and power, both in the sacred and profane writers; by a metaphor taken from horned animals, which are frequently made subjects of comparison by poetical writers, and the strength of which, whether for offence or defence, consists principally in their horns. Bruce speaks of a remarkable head-dress worn by the governors of provinces in Abyssinia, consisting of a large broad fillet, bound upon their foreheads and tied behind their heads, and having in the middle of it a horn, or a conical piece of silver, gilt, about four inches long, much in the shape of our common candle extinguishers. It is called *kirn* or horn, and is only worn on reviews or parades after victory. He supposes this, like other Abyssinian usages, to be taken from the Hebrews, and is of opinion that there are many allusions to the practice in Scripture, in the expressions, "lifting up the horn," "exalting the horn," and the like.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord is my high tower.*" If a man do run to a tower, yet if that be a weak and an insufficient tower, without men and munition, and a ruinous shaken tower; or if a man do make choice of a tower, a strong sufficient tower, yet if in his danger he betake not himself to that tower, but he sit still; or if he sit not still, yet he but only go and walk on easily towards it, he may well be met withal, and a danger may arrest him, surprise him, and cut him off before he get the tower over his head. But the man that will be safe, as he must choose a strong tower, so he must go to, nay, *run* into that tower. Running will not secure a man unless the tower be strong . . . . . David was got unto his *tower*, and in that *tower* there was thundering ordnance, and David put fire to them by prayer, verse 6, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears." Here David prays and gives fire to the cannon, and what followed? See verses 7, 8, 13, 14. "Then the earth shook and trembled," etc. "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils," etc. "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them." There were no guns nor ordnance invented and in use in David's time, and yet David's prayers being in this tower, did him as good service against his enemies as all the ordnance and cannons in the world have done. David had thundering ordnance, and with them discomfited his enemies long before powder and guns were invented. It is a memorable and well known story of that Christian legion that was in Marcus Aurelius's army: the enemy being in great straits, those Christian soldiers did by their prayers not only procure rain, by which his languishing army was refreshed, but also obtained hail mixed with thunderbolts against his enemies, upon which he honoured them with the name of *Legio fulminatrix*, the Thundering Legion. They used David's cannon against the enemy, and discharged that thundering ordnance by their prayers, and that to the confusion of their enemies.—*Jeremiah Dyke's "Righteous Man's Tower,"* 1639.

Verse 2.—"*My high tower.*" Even as the fowls of the air, that they may escape the nets and snares of the fowlers, are wont to fly up on high; so we, to avoid the infinite snares of innumerable temptations, must fly to God; and lift up ourselves from the corruptions, lying vanities, and deceitful sleights of the world.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 3.—"*I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.*" Prayer and invocation of God should always be joined with praises and thanksgivings, and used as a means whereby faith shall extract the good which it knoweth is in God, and of which he hath made promise.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*So shall I be saved from mine enemies.*" Whoso comes to God as he should will not call in vain. The right kind of prayer is the most potent instrumentality known on earth.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 4.—"*Sorrows of death.*" It is heaven's peculiar to be the land of the living; all this life is at most but the *shadow* of death, the *gate* of death, the *sorrows*

of death, the *snares* of death, the *terrors* of death, the *chambers* of death, the *sentence* of death, the *savour* of death, the *ministration* of death, the *way* of death. *Matthew Griffith.* 1634.

Verse 4.—"*The bands or cords of death encompassed me.*" It is not very easy to fix the precise meaning of the phrase, "bands" or "cords" of death. It may either be considered as equivalent to "the bands by which the dead are bound," in which case, to be encircled with the bands of death is just a figurative expression for being dead; or it may be considered as equivalent to the bands in which a person is bound in the prospect of a violent death, and by which his violent death is secured, he being prevented from escaping. It has been supposed by some, that the allusion is to the ancient mode of hunting wild animals. A considerable tract of country was surrounded with strong ropes. The circle was gradually contracted, till the object of pursuit was so confined as to become an easy prey to the hunter. These cords were the cords of death, securing the death of the animal. The phrase is applicable to our Lord in both senses; but as "the floods" of wickedness, or the wicked, are represented as making him afraid subsequently to his being encircled with the cords of death, I am disposed to understand it in the latter of these two senses.—*John Brown.*

Verse 4.—"*The floods.*" There is no metaphor of more frequent occurrence with the sacred poets, than that which represents dreadful and unexpected calamities under the images of overwhelming waters. This image seems to have been especially familiar with the Hebrews, inasmuch as it was derived from the peculiar habit and nature of their own country. They had continually before their eyes the river Jordan, annually overflowing its banks, when at the approach of summer the snows of Libanus and the neighbouring mountains melted, and, suddenly pouring down in torrents, swelled the current of the river. Besides, the whole country of Palestine, although it was not watered by many perennial streams, was, from the mountainous character of the greater part of it, liable to numerous torrents, which precipitated themselves through the narrow valleys after the periodical rainy seasons. This image, therefore, however known, and adopted by other poets, may be considered as particularly familar and, as it were, domestic with the Hebrews; who accordingly introduce it with greater frequency and freedom.—*Robert Lowth* (*Bishop*), 1710—1787.

Verse 5.—"*The snares of death prevented me.*" The word "*snares,*" signifies such traps or gins as are laid for birds and wild beasts. The English word "prevent" has changed its meaning in some measure since our authorised translation of the Bible was made. Its original meaning is to "come before."—*John Brown.*

Verse 6.—"*In my distress.*" If you listen even to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Spirit hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see, in needleworks and embroideries, it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground; judge, therefore, of the pleasures of the heart by the pleasures of the eye. Certainly virtue is like precious odours—most fragrant when they are crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.—*Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, etc.,* 1561—1626.

Verse 6.—"*I called upon the Lord and cried.*" Prayer is not eloquence but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; it is the cry of faith to the ear of mercy.—*Hannah Moore,* 1745—1833.

Verse 6.—"*He heard my voice out of his temple,*" etc. The Ædiles or chamberlains among the Romans, had ever their doors standing open for all who had occasion of request or complaint to have free access to them. "God's mercy-doors are wide open to the prayers of his faithful people." The Persian kings held it a piece of their silly glory to deny an easy access to their greatest subjects. It was death to solicit them uncalled. Esther herself was afraid. But the king of heaven manifesteth himself to his people, he calls to his spouse, with, "Let me see thy face, let me hear thy voice," etc., and assigneth her negligence herein as the cause of her soul-sickness. The door of the tabernacle was not of any hard or debarring matter, but a veil, which is easily penetrable. And whereas in the temple none came near to worship, but only the high priest, others stood without in the outer court. God's

people are now a kingdom of priests, and are said to worship in the temple, and at the altar. Rev. xi. 1. "Let us therefore draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith:" "let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. x. 22; iv. 16.—*Charles Bradbury's "Cabinet of Jewels,"* 1785.

Verse 6.—Oh! how true is that saying, that "Faith is safe when in danger, and in danger when secure; and prayer is fervent in straits, but in joyful and prosperous circumstances, if not quite cold and dead, at least lukewarm." Oh, happy straits, if they hinder the mind from flowing forth upon earthly objects, and mingling itself with the mire; if they favour our correspondence with heaven, and quicken our love to celestial objects, without which, what we call life, may more properly deserve the name of death!—*Robert Leighton, D.D.*

Verses 6, 7.—The prayer of a single saint is sometimes followed with wonderful effects; "*In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth:*" what then can a thundering legion of such praying souls do? It was said of Luther, *iste vir potuit cum Deo quicquid voluit,* That man could have of God what he would; his enemies felt the weight of his prayers; and the church of God reaped the benefits thereof. The Queen of Scots professed she was more afraid of the prayers of Mr. Knox, than of an army of ten thousand men. These were mighty wrestlers with God, howsoever contemned and vilified among their enemies. There will a time come when God will hear the prayers of his people who are continually crying in his ears, "How long, Lord, how long?"—*John Flavel.*

Verse 7.—"*Then the earth shook and trembled.*" The word רגז signifies, to move or shake violently: it is employed, also, to denote the reeling and staggering of a drunken man. Jer. xxv. 16.—*John Morison, in loc.*

Verse 7.—Let no appearing impossibilities make you question God's accomplishment of any of his gracious words. Though you cannot see how the thing can be done, 'tis enough if God hath said that he will do it. There can be no obstructions to promised salvation which we need to fear. He who is the God of this salvation and the Author of the promise will prepare his own way for the doing of his own work, so that "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low." Luke iii. 5. Though the valleys be so deep that we cannot see the bottom, and the mountains so high that we cannot see the tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one and level the other. Isaiah lxiii. 1. "I that speak in righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save." If anything would keep back the kingdom of Christ, it would be our infidelity; but he will come though he should find no faith on the earth. See Rom. iii. 3. Cast not away your confidence because he defers his performances. Though providences run cross, though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure and faithful word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within yourselves as Psalm lxxvii. 8; "Doth his promise fail for evermore?" The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time, will be hastened in his time, which is always the more convenient season. Accuse him not of slowness who hath said, "I come quickly," that is, he comes as soon as all things are ready and ripe for his appearance. 'Tis as true that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise" (2 Peter iii. 9), as that he is never guilty of breaking his promise. Wait, therefore, how long soever he tarry; do not give over expecting: the heart of God is not turned though his face be hid; and prayers are not flung back, though they be not instantly answered.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verses 7, 8.—The volcanic phenomena of Palestine open a question of which the data are, in a scientific point of view, too imperfect to be discussed; but there is enough in the history and literature of the people to show that there was an agency of this kind at work. The valley of the Jordan, both in its desolation and vegetation, was one continued portent; and from its crevices ramified even into the interior of Judæa the startling appearances, if not of the volcano, at least of the earthquake. Their historical effect in the special theatres of their operation will appear as we proceed; but their traces on the permanent feeling of the nation must be noticed here. The writings of the psalmists and prophets abound with indications which

escape the eye of a superficial reader. Like the soil of their country, they actually heave and labour with the fiery convulsions which glow beneath their surface.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.*

Verses 7—9.—While Jesus hung on the cross a preternatural " darkness covered all the land ; " and no sooner had he yielded up his spirit, than " the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top even to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened ; and many bodies of the saints that slept arose, and came out of the graves, after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."—*John Brown.*

Verses 7—9.—In the night in which the Idumæans lay before Jerusalem, there arose a prodigious tempest and fierce winds, with most vehement rains, frequent lightnings, and terrible thunderings, and great roarings of the shaken earth ; and it was manifest that the state of the universe was disordered at the slaughter of men ; so that one might guess that these were signs of no small calamity . . . . . At the day of Pentecost, when the priests, by night, went into the inner temple, according to their custom, to execute their office, they said they perceived, first of all, a shake and a noise, and after that a sudden voice, " Let us go hence." . . . . . A few days after the feast of unleavened bread, a strange and almost incredible sight was seen, which would, I suppose, be taken for a mere fable, were it not related by such as saw it, and did not the miseries which followed appear answerable to the signs ; for, before the sun set, were seen on high, in the air, all over the country, chariots and armed regiments moving swiftly in the clouds, and encompassing the city.—*Flavius Josephus,* 37—103.

Verse 8.—" *There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,*" עָלָה עָשָׁן בְּאַפּוֹ. Or there *ascended into his nose,* as the words, literally rendered, signify. The ancients placed the seat of anger in the nose, or nostrils ; because when it grows warm and violent, it discovers itself, as it were, by a heated vehement breath, that proceeds from them.—*Samuel Chandler, D.D., F.R. and A.S.S.,* 1766.

Verses 8—19.—David calls the full force of poetical imagery to aid, to describe in a becoming manner the marvels of his deliverances. He means to say that they were as manifest as the signs of heaven and earth, as sudden and powerful as the phenomena in the kingdom of nature surprise terrified mortals. *Deliverance* being his theme, he might have taken the figure from the *peaceable* phenomena of the heavens. But since man heeds heaven more in *anger* than in *blessing,* and regards God more when he descends on earth in the *storm* than in the *rainbow,* David describes the blessed condescension of God by the figure of a tempest. In order to thoroughly appreciate the beauty and truthfulness of this figure, we should endeavour to realise the full power of an Oriental storm, as it is described in Psalm xxix. Solitary lightning precedes the discharge—this is meant by the *coals* in verse 8: the clouds approach the mountain summits—*the heavens bow,* as verse 9 has it ; the storm shakes its pinions ; enwrapped in thick clouds as in a tent, God descends to the earth; hail (not unfrequently attending Eastern storms) and lightning issue from the black clouds, through the dissolving layers of which is seen the fiery splendour which hides the Lord of nature. He speaks, and thunder is his voice ; he shoots, and flashes of lightning are his arrows. At his rebuke, and at the blast of his breath the earth recedes—the sea foams up, and its beds are seen—the land bursts, and the foundations of the world are discovered. And lo ! an arm of deliverance issues forth from the black clouds, and the destructive fire grasps the wretched one who had cried out from the depths, pulls him forth, and delivers him from all his enemies ! Yes, the hand of the Lord has done marvellous things in the life of David. But the *eye of faith* alone could perceive in them all the hand of God. Thousands whose experiences of the delivering hand of God are not less signal than those of David, stop short at the powers of nature, and instead of bending the knee before the All-merciful God, content themselves to express with cold hearts their admiration of the changes of the destiny of man.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, D.D., Ph.D.* 1856.

Verse 9.—" *He bowed the heavens also, and came down.*" As in a tempest the clouds come nearer to the earth, and from the mountains to the valleys, so the Psalmist adopts this figure peculiar to such occasions as described God's near approach to judgment (Psalm cxliv. 5, etc. ; Heb. iii. 6); "*and darkness* was *under his feet.*" We have here the increase of the horrors of the tempest, and its still nearer approach, but God is not yet revealed, it is darkness under his feet. Thick darkness was the

people are now a kingdom of priests, and are said to worship in the temple, and at the altar. Rev. xi. 1. "Let us therefore draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith:" "let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. x. 22; iv. 16.—*Charles Bradbury's "Cabinet of Jewels,"* 1785.

Verse 6.—Oh! how true is that saying, that "Faith is safe when in danger, and in danger when secure; and prayer is fervent in straits, but in joyful and prosperous circumstances, if not quite cold and dead, at least lukewarm." Oh, happy straits, if they hinder the mind from flowing forth upon earthly objects, and mingling itself with the mire; if they favour our correspondence with heaven, and quicken our love to celestial objects, without which, what we call life, may more properly deserve the name of death!—*Robert Leighton, D.D.*

Verses 6, 7.—The prayer of a single saint is sometimes followed with wonderful effects; "*In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth:*" what then can a thundering legion of such praying souls do? It was said of Luther, *iste vir potuit cum Deo quicquid voluit*, That man could have of God what he would; his enemies felt the weight of his prayers; and the church of God reaped the benefits thereof. The Queen of Scots professed she was more afraid of the prayers of Mr. Knox, than of an army of ten thousand men. These were mighty wrestlers with God, howsoever contemned and vilified among their enemies. There will a time come when God will hear the prayers of his people who are continually crying in his ears, "How long, Lord, how long?"—*John Flavel.*

Verse 7.—"*Then the earth shook and trembled.*" The word רגז signifies, to move or shake violently: it is employed, also, to denote the reeling and staggering of a drunken man. Jer. xxv. 16.—*John Morison, in loc.*

Verse 7.—Let no appearing impossibilities make you question God's accomplishment of any of his gracious words. Though you cannot see how the thing can be done, 'tis enough if God hath said that he will do it. There can be no obstructions to promised salvation which we need to fear. He who is the God of this salvation and the Author of the promise will prepare his own way for the doing of his own work, so that "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low." Luke iii. 5. Though the valleys be so deep that we cannot see the bottom, and the mountains so high that we cannot see the tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one and level the other. Isaiah lxiii. 1. "I that speak in righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save." If anything would keep back the kingdom of Christ, it would be our infidelity; but he will come though he should find no faith on the earth. See Rom. iii. 3. Cast not away your confidence because he defers his performances. Though providences run cross, though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure and faithful word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within yourselves as Psalm lxxvii. 8; "Doth his promise fail for evermore?" The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time, will be hastened in his time, which is always the more convenient season. Accuse him not of slowness who hath said, "I come quickly," that is, he comes as soon as all things are ready and ripe for his appearance. 'Tis as true that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise" (2 Peter iii. 9), as that he is never guilty of breaking his promise. Wait, therefore, how long soever he tarry; do not give over expecting: the heart of God is not turned though his face be hid; and prayers are not flung back, though they be not instantly answered.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verses 7, 8.—The volcanic phenomena of Palestine open a question of which the data are, in a scientific point of view, too imperfect to be discussed; but there is enough in the history and literature of the people to show that there was an agency of this kind at work. The valley of the Jordan, both in its desolation and vegetation, was one continued portent; and from its crevices ramified even into the interior of Judæa the startling appearances, if not of the volcano, at least of the earthquake. Their historical effect in the special theatres of their operation will appear as we proceed; but their traces on the permanent feeling of the nation must be noticed here. The writings of the psalmists and prophets abound with indications which

escape the eye of a superficial reader. Like the soil of their country, they actually heave and labour with the fiery convulsions which glow beneath their surface.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.*

Verses 7—9.—While Jesus hung on the cross a preternatural "darkness covered all the land;" and no sooner had he yielded up his spirit, than "the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top even to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that slept arose, and came out of the graves, after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."—*John Brown.*

Verses 7—9.—In the night in which the Idumæans lay before Jerusalem, there arose a prodigious tempest and fierce winds, with most vehement rains, frequent lightnings, and terrible thunderings, and great roarings of the shaken earth; and it was manifest that the state of the universe was disordered at the slaughter of men; so that one might guess that these were signs of no small calamity . . . . . At the day of Pentecost, when the priests, by night, went into the inner temple, according to their custom, to execute their office, they said they perceived, first of all, a shake and a noise, and after that a sudden voice, "Let us go hence." . . . . . A few days after the feast of unleavened bread, a strange and almost incredible sight was seen, which would, I suppose, be taken for a mere fable, were it not related by such as saw it, and did not the miseries which followed appear answerable to the signs; for, before the sun set, were seen on high, in the air, all over the country, chariots and armed regiments moving swiftly in the clouds, and encompassing the city.—*Flavius Josephus,* 37—103.

Verse 8.—"*There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,*" עָלָה עָשָׁן בְּאַפּוֹ. Or there *ascended into his nose,* as the words, literally rendered, signify. The ancients placed the seat of anger in the nose, or nostrils; because when it grows warm and violent, it discovers itself, as it were, by a heated vehement breath, that proceeds from them.—*Samuel Chandler, D.D., F.R. and A.S.S.,* 1766.

Verses 8—19.—David calls the full force of poetical imagery to aid, to describe in a becoming manner the marvels of his deliverances. He means to say that they were as manifest as the signs of heaven and earth, as sudden and powerful as the phenomena in the kingdom of nature surprise terrified mortals. *Deliverance* being his theme, he might have taken the figure from the *peaceable* phenomena of the heavens. But since man heeds heaven more in *anger* than in *blessing,* and regards God more when he descends on earth in the *storm* than in the *rainbow,* David describes the blessed condescension of God by the figure of a tempest. In order to thoroughly appreciate the beauty and truthfulness of this figure, we should endeavour to realise the full power of an Oriental storm, as it is described in Psalm xxix. Solitary lightning precedes the discharge—this is meant by the *coals* in verse 8: the clouds approach the mountain summits—*the heavens bow,* as verse 9 has it; the storm shakes its pinions; enwrapped in thick clouds as in a tent, God descends to the earth; hail (not unfrequently attending Eastern storms) and lightning issue from the black clouds, through the dissolving layers of which is seen the fiery splendour which hides the Lord of nature. He speaks, and thunder is his voice; he shoots, and flashes of lightning are his arrows. At his rebuke, and at the blast of his breath the earth recedes—the sea foams up, and its beds are seen—the land bursts, and the foundations of the world are discovered. And lo! an arm of deliverance issues forth from the black clouds, and the destructive fire grasps the wretched one who had cried out from the depths, pulls him forth, and delivers him from all his enemies! Yes, the hand of the Lord has done marvellous things in the life of David. But the *eye of faith* alone could perceive in them all the hand of God. Thousands whose experiences of the delivering hand of God are not less signal than those of David, stop short at the powers of nature, and instead of bending the knee before the All-merciful God, content themselves to express with cold hearts their admiration of the changes of the destiny of man.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, D.D., Ph.D.* 1856.

Verse 9.—"*He bowed the heavens also, and came down.*" As in a tempest the clouds come nearer to the earth, and from the mountains to the valleys, so the Psalmist adopts this figure peculiar to such occasions as described God's near approach to judgment (Psalm cxliv. 5, etc.; Heb. iii. 6); "*and darkness* was *under his feet.*" We have here the increase of the horrors of the tempest, and its still nearer approach, but God is not yet revealed, it is darkness under his feet. Thick darkness was the

me had not God upheld and supported me when I was in danger of perishing. God was to the Psalmist מִשְׁעָן, *for a staff* to support him. What the staff is to one that is ready to fall, the means of recovering and preserving him; that was God to David in the time of his extremity. For he several times preserved him from Saul, when he, David, thought his destruction by him almost unavoidable. See 1 Sam. xxiii. 26, 27.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 18.—"*They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay.*" When Henry the Eighth had spoken and written bitterly against Luther; saith Luther, Tell the Henries, the bishops, the Turks, and the devil himself, do what they can, we are the children of the kingdom, worshipping of the true God, whom they, and such as they, spit upon and crucified. And of the same spirit were many martyrs. Basil affirms of the primitive saints, that they had so much courage and confidence in their sufferings, that many of the heathens seeing their heroic zeal and constancy, turned Christians.—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 20.—"*The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.*" We must stand our ground, and be stiff for ourselves against all misjudgings. It is good to be zealously affected always in a good matter, whether it respects the glory of God immediately and alone, or whether it respects the credit of our brethren or our own. To desire to be famous in the world, and as those giants in the old world (Gen. vi. 4), men of renown, or, as the original text hath it, men of name, is a very great vanity; but to protect and preserve our good name is a great and necessary duty.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 21.—"*I have not wickedly departed from my God;*" that is, with a purpose and resolution of heart to continue in a way of sinning; and that is the property of sincerity. A man indeed may be overtaken and surprised by a temptation, but it is not with a resolution to forsake God and to cleave unto the sin, or rest in it. He will not sleep in it, spare it, or favour it; that is, to do wickedly against God, to have a double heart and a double eye; to look upon two objects, partly at God and partly at sin; so to keep God, as to keep some sin also, as it is with all false-hearted men in the world. They look not upon God alone, let them pretend to religion never so much, yet they look not unto God alone, but upon something else together with God; as Herod regarded John, but regarded his Herodias more; and the young man in the gospel, comes to Christ, yet he looks after his estate; and Judas followed in Christ, yet looks after the bag; this is *to depart wickedly from God.*—*William Strong,* 1650.

Verse 21 (*last clause*).—Although a godly man may break a particular commandment again and again against knowledge, yet his knowledge never suffers him to go so far as to venture knowingly to break the covenant of grace with God, and to depart from him; when he hath gone on so far in a sin as he comes to apprehend he must break with God, and lose him if he goes on any further, this apprehension stays him, stops and brings him back again; he may presumptuously venture (though seldom; and always to his cost) to commit an act of sin against knowledge, because he may withal think, that by one act the covenant is not broken, nor all friendship and love hazarded between God and him, nor his interest in the state of grace, nor God, quite lost by it, though he may well think he would be displeased with him; but if he should begin to allow himself in it, and to continue to go on again and again in it, then he knows the covenant would be broken, it cannot stand with grace; and when this apprehension comes, and comes in strongly, he cannot sin against it, for this were to cast away the Lord, and to depart wickedly from him, now so he doth not. So David, though he sinned highly and presumptuously, yet says he, "*I have not departed wickedly from my God;*" that is, I have not so far departed from him as though I apprehended I should utterly lose my interest in him, yet I would go on. No; for he is my God, there lies the consideration that kept him from departing from him. So Psalm xliv. 17, "We have not dealt falsely in thy covenant," says the church there. Many acts of displeasing him may pass and be ventured, but if the holy soul thinks that the covenant lay at stake, that he and God must utterly part and break off, thus far he will never go.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verses 22, 23.—An unsound soul will not take notice of such a precept as opposeth his special sin; such a precept must go for a blank, which the soul throws by, and will not think of, but as conscience now and then puts him in mind of it, whether

he will or no. But it is not so with a man in whom sincerity is: that precept which doth most oppose that sin to which he is most inclined, he labours to obey as well as any other. An unsound soul sets so many of God's statutes before him, as rulers to walk by, as suits with himself and the times, and no more. Such precepts as oppose his special corruptions, or displease the times, and so expose him to suffering, these he baulks and puts away, as David here saith, and calls them as the rotten Scribes and Pharisees were wont to do, "least commandments," small things not to be regarded; which rottenness Christ took up roundly in those ironical words, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, shall be called the least in the kingdom of God." Godly sincerity makes no difference of greatest and least between the precepts of God, but sets all before a man as a rule to walk by, and makes the soul laborious to observe all. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Psalm cxix. 6.—*Nicholas Lockyer*, 1649.

Verse 23.—"*I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.*" He who says, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart;" and who by the apostle, in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, is identified with Jesus Christ, says also (verse 12), "innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore mine heart faileth me;" and in the forty-first Psalm, "He whose familiar friend, to whom he had committed a trust, who ate of his bread, lifted up his heel against him," whom our Lord in the thirteenth chapter of the gospel of John identifies with himself, says (verse 4), "Lord, be merciful to me: heal my soul for I have sinned;" I am guilty "before thee." The difficulty is removed by the undoubtedly true principle—the principle which, above all others, gives Christianity its peculiar character—"He who knew no sin, was made sin;" "On his righteous servant, Jehovah made to fall the iniquities of us all." In this sense, "innumerable iniquities compassed him," the inquities made to fall on him made "his" as to their liabilities—by divine appointment laid hold of him. In the sense of *culpa*—blame-worthiness—he had no sin. In the sense of *reatus*—liability to the penal effects of sin—never had any one so much sin to bear as he—"He bore the sins of many."—*John Brown.*

Verse 23.—"*I was upright before him.*" Hence observe:—first, that a godly man may have his heart upright and perfect even in the imperfection of his ways. Secondly, a man that is sincere is in God's account a perfect man: sincerity is the truth of all grace, the highest pitch that is to be attained here. Thirdly, sincerity of heart gives a man boldness even in the presence of God, notwithstanding many failings. The Lord doth "charge his angels with folly," how much more man that "dwells in a house of clay"? Job. iv. David, whose faith failed, and who had said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul," and whose tongue had faltered also to Abimelech, the priest; three or four several lies he had told; yet David can say to God, that he was *perfect* with him for all that. It is a strange boldness that the saints have in the presence of God by virtue of the new covenant. All their sins shall be laid open at the last day as a cancelled bond, that they wonder how they shall look upon them and not blush; but the same spirit of sonship that shall give them perfect boldness then, doth give them boldness in a great measure even now in this life; that they shall be able to say, "Neither height nor depth," etc., nothing "shall separate us from the love of Christ."—*William Strong.*

Verse 23.—"*I was upright,*" etc. An upright Christian will not allow himself in any known sin; he dares not touch the forbidden fruit. Gen xxxix. 9. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Though it be a complexion-sin, he disinherits it. There is no man but doth propend and incline more to one sin than another; as in the body there is one humour predominant, or as in the hive there is one master-bee; so in the heart there is one master-sin; there is one sin which is not only near to a man as the garment, but dear to him as the right eye. This is Satan's fort-royal, all his strength lies here; and though we beat down his out-works, gross sin, yet if we let him hold this fort of complexion-sin, it is as much as he desires. The devil can hold a man as fast by this one link, as by a whole chain of vices. The fowler hath the bird fast enough by one wing. Now, an upright Christian will not indulge himself in this complexion-sin: "*I was upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity.*" An upright Christian takes the sacrificing knife of mortification, and runs it through his dearest sin. Herod did many things,

but there was one sin so dear to him, that he would sooner behead the prophet, than behead that sin. Herod would have a gap for his incest. An upright heart is not only angry with sin (which may admit of reconciliation), but hates sin; and if he sees this serpent creeping into his bosom, the nearer it is the more he hates it.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 23.—"*I kept myself.*" Kept himself! Who made man his own keeper? It's the Lord that is his keeper: he is the keeper of Israel, and the preserver of man. If a man cannot keep himself from sorrow, how is he able to keep himself from sin? God indeed in our first conversion works upon us as he did upon the earth, or Adam's body in paradise, before he breathed a soul into it, and made it a living creature; such a power as Christ put forth on Lazarus in his grave, for we are "dead in trespasses and sins;" but yet being living he must walk and act of himself, the Lord will have us to co-operate together with him, for we are built upon Christ, not as dead, but as "living stones." 1 Pet. ii. 5. The grace whereby we are made alive is his, and the power is his; he it is that works in us both to will and to do, when we perform anything; and yet by his grace we do it also; *ille facit ut nos faciamus, quæ præcepit* (*Augustine*).—*William Strong.*

Verse 23.—"*I kept myself from mine iniquity.*" It is possible to keep ourselves from such sins as David did, who professes here of himself great sincerity, that he had *kept* himself from that *iniquity* to which he was strongly tempted, and which he was prone to fall into. The method which holy David made use of gives us the first and best direction; and that is, by constant and fervent prayer to implore the divine aid and the continual assistance of his Holy Spirit, that God would not only keep us from falling into them, but even turn our hearts from inclining to them, and help us to see our folly and our danger. For alas! we are not able of ourselves to help ourselves, not so much as to think a good thought, much less to resist an evil inclination, or a strong temptation; but "our sufficiency is of God:" "It is God (says the Psalmist here), that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect:" verse 32. . . . . Next, that we take care to avoid such things and decline such occasions as are most likely to snare us and gain upon us, lest one thing hook in another, and we be caught in the gin before we suspect the danger.—*Henry Dove*, 1690.

Verse 23.—"*Mine iniquity.*" A man's darling sin may change with the change of a man's condition, and some occasion that may present itself. What was Saul's and Jehu's sin before they came unto the crown we know not; but surely it was that wherein their lust did afterwards run out—the establishing a kingdom upon their posterity. Wantonness may be the darling of a man's youth, and worldliness the darling of his age; and a man's being raised unto honour, and having the opportunities that he had not in times past, the lust may run in another channel, he having now such an opportunity as before he never expected.—*William Strong.*

Verse 23.—"*Mine iniquity.*" There is some particular sin to which one is more prone than to another, of which he may say by way of emphasis, 'tis "*mine iniquity*," at which he may point with his finger, and say, "That's it." . . . . There are more temptations to some sins than others, from the different professions or courses of life men take upon themselves. If they follow the court I need not tell you what temptations and snares there are to divers sins, and what danger there is of falling into them, unless your vows for virtue, and a tender regard to the honour which cometh of God only, keep you upright. If they be listed in the camp, that tempts them to rapine and violence, neglect of God's worship, and profaneness. If they exercise trading and merchandise, they meet with greater enticements to lying and cozening, over-reaching and unjust dealing; and the mystery of some trades, as bad men manage them, is a downright "mystery of iniquity." If husbandry, to anxiety about the things of the world, a distrust of God's providence, or murmuring against it. Nay, I could wish in the most sacred profession of all there might be an exception made in this particular; but Paul tells us that even in his days "some preached Christ even of envy and strife," some for filthy lucre only, as well as "some of good will." Phil. i. 15.—*Henry Dove.*

Verse 23.—"*Mine iniquity.*" The actual reign of sin is commonly of some particular master-lust, which is as the viceroy over all the rest of the sins in the soul, and commands them all as lord paramount, and makes them all subservient and subordinate unto it; and this is according to custom, calling, constitution, abilities, relations, and according to the different administrations of the Spirit of God; for though God be not the author of sin, yet he is the orderer of sin. So that

it is that way of sin and death that a man chooseth to himself, he having looked abroad upon all the contentments of the world, his own corrupt inclination doth choose unto himself to follow with greatest sweetness and contentment and delight as that wherein the happiness of his life consists; that as in the body there is in every one some predominant humour, so there is in the body of sin also; that as in the natural man, though there be all the faculties, yet some faculties are in some more lively and vigorous than in others, some are more witty, some are more strong, some quick of sight, some have a ready ear, and others a nimble tongue, etc. So it is in the old man also; there is all the power of sin in an unregenerate man, but in some more dexterous one way than another; as men in the choice of calling, some have a greater inclination to one thing than to another, so it is in the choice of contentments also: as in the appetite for food, so it is in lust, being nothing else but the appetite of the creature corrupted to some sinful object.—*William Strong.*

Verse 23.—*Growth in mortification* . . . . . Men may deceive themselves when they estimate their progress herein by having overcome such lusts as their natures are not so prone unto. The surest way is to take a judgment of it from the decay of a man's bosom-sin, even as David did estimate his uprightness by his "*keeping himself from his iniquity;*" so a man of his growth in uprightness, When physicians would judge of a consumption of the whole, they do it not by the falling away of any part whatever, as of the flesh in the face alone, or any the like; such a particular abatement of flesh in some one part may come from some other cause; but they use to judge by the falling away of the brawn of the hands, or arms and thighs, etc., for these are the more solid parts. The like judgments do physicians make upon other diseases, and of the abatement of them from the decrease in such symptoms as are pathognomical, and proper, and peculiar to them. In like manner also the estimate of the progress of the victories of a conqueror in an enemy's kingdom is not taken from the taking or burning of a few villages or dorps, but by taking the forts and strongest holds, and by what ground he hath won upon the chief strength, and by what forces he hath cut off the main army. Do the like in the decrease of, and victory over, your lusts.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 23.—We must always remember that though the grace of God prevents us, that we may have a good will, and works in us when we have it, that so we may find success; yet in vain do we expect the continuance of his help without diligent endeavours. Whilst he assists our weakness, he does not intend to encourage our laziness, and therefore we are also "to labour, and strive according to his working, which worketh in us mightily," as the apostle expresses it, Col. i. 29.—*Henry Dove.*

Verses 24—26.—As you may see a proportion between sins and punishments which are the rewards of them, that you can say, Such a sin brought forth this affliction, it is so like the father; so you might see the like proportion between your prayers and your walking with God, and God's answers to you, and his dealings with you. So did David; "*According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me,*" etc. His speech notes some similitude or likeness; as, for example, the more by-ends or carnal desires you had in praying, and the more you mingled of these with your holy desires, and the more want of zeal, fervency, etc., were found in your prayers, the more you shall, it may be, find of bitterness mingled with the mercy, when it is granted, and so much imperfection, and want of comfort in it. So says David in this same Psalm (verses 25, 26), "*With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure.*" Pure prayers have pure blessings; *et è contra*, "*With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.*" And again, as you in praying sometimes slackened and grew cold, so you might see the business in like manner to cool, and cast backward; as, "When Moses' hands were down, Amalek prevailed; but when they were lifted up, Israel had the better." Exod. xvii. 12. God let him see a proportion, which argued his prayer was the means of prevailing. A man finds in praying that his suit sometimes sticks, and goes not on as he expected; this is because he gives not so good a fee as he was wont, and doth not ply God and solicit him; but on the contrary, when he was stirred up to pray, then still he found things to go well. By this a man may clearly see that it was the prayer which God did hear and regarded. Thus, likewise, when a man see hills and dales in a business, fair hopes often and then all dashed again, and the thing in the end brought to pass, let him look back upon his prayers. Didst not thou in like manner just deal with God? when thou hadst prayed earnestly, and thought thou hadst even carried it, then dash all again by interposing some sin, and thus again and again? Herein God would have you

observe a proportion, and it may help you to discern how and when they are answered and obtained by prayer, because God deals thus with you therein in such a proportion to your prayers.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verses 24—27.—Even as the sun, which, unto eyes being sound and without disease, is very pleasant and wholesome, but unto the same eyes, when they are feeble, sore and weak, is very troublesome and hurtful, yet the sun is ever all one and the selfsame that was before; so God, who hath ever shown himself benign and bountiful to those who are kind and tender-hearted towards his saints, and are merciful to those who show mercy. But unto the same men, when they fall into wickedness and grow to be full of beastly cruelty, the Lord showeth himself to be very wrathful and angry, and yet is one and the same immutable God from everlasting to everlasting.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 25.—"*With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.*" "*An upright*"—the same word is oft translated "perfect," he is good throughout, though not thoroughly; not one that personates religion, but that is a religious person. He is perfect, because he would be so. So Noah is termed (Gen. vi. 9); "Noah was a just man and perfect (*i.e.*, upright) in his generation:" he was a good man in a bad age. He was like a glowing spark of fire in a sea of water, which is perfect goodness; and therefore the Holy Ghost doth so hang upon his name, as if he could not give over—it is an excellent preacher's observation—verse 8, "But Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God. And Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah: Noah begat three sons." Noah, Noah, Noah, I love the sound of thy name; and so are all your names precious to God, though hated by men, if the name of God be dear and sweet to you. 'Tis also sometimes translated "plain." Gen. xxv. 27. Jacob was איש תם, "a plain," that is, an upright man, "dwelling in tents." Esau was "*a cunning* hunter," but Jacob was a plain man without welt or gard; you might well know his heart by his tongue, save once when Rebekah put a cunning trick into his head, otherwise he was a most "*upright*," downright man. And the plain meaning of it is, a simple, cordial, unfeigned, and exact man: this is the man we are looking for.

"*Man.*" This substantive the Hebrews use to drown in the adjective, but here the Holy Ghost exhibits a word, and a choice one too, signifying *a strong, valiant man;* the same word (Psalm xlv. 3), "O mighty man!" that's meant of our Lord Christ, who was a most strong and valiant man, that could meet the wrath of God, the malice of the devil, and the sin of man, in the face, and come off with triumph. And so the Dutch translate this clause in 2 Sam. xxii.: "With the right valiant person, thou behavest thyself upright." In short, if the words were literally translated, they run thus:—*a man of uprightness:* that is every way you behold him, an upright man: like an even die, cast him which way you will he will be found square and right; a stiff and strong man to tread down both lusts within and temptations without; an *Athanasius contra mundum*, a *Luther contra Romam;* this is a man of an excellent spirit, and such is our upright man. "*Thou wilt show thyself upright,*" or, "wilt be upright with him;" for one word in the Hebrew makes all these six, "Thou wilt *upright* it with him." If men will deal plainly with God, he will deal plainly with them. He that is upright in performing his duty shall find God upright in performing his promises. It is God's way to carry to men as they carry to him. If thou hast a design to please him, he will have a design to please thee; if thou wilt echo to him when he calls, he'll echo to thee when thou callest. On the other side; if a man will wrestle with God, he will wrestle with him; if thou wilt be fast and loose with him, and walk *frowardly* towards him, thou shalt have as good as thou bringest; if thou wilt provoke him with never-ending sins, he will pursue thee with never-ending torments; if thou wilt sin in *tuo eterno*, thou must suffer in *suo eterno*, and every man shall find like for like . . . . . An upright heart is *single without division.* Unto an hypocrite there be "gods many and lords many," and he must have an heart for each; but to the *upright* there is but one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ, and one heart will serve them both. He that fixes his heart upon the creatures, for every creature he must have an heart, and the dividing of his heart destroys him. Hos. x. 2. Worldly profits knock at the door, he must have an heart for them; carnal pleasures present themselves, he must have an heart for them also; sinful preferments appear, they must have an heart too—*Necessariorum numerus parvus, opinionum nullus;* of necessary objects the

number is few, of needless vanities the number is endless. The *upright* man hath made choice of God and hath enough.—*Richard Steele.*

Verse 25.—"*With the merciful,*" etc. In Jupiter's hall-floor there are set two barrels of gifts, the one of good gifts or blessings, the other of evil gifts or plagues. Thus spake Homer falsely of Jupiter; it may be truly spoken of the true God, Jehovah; that he hath in his hand two cups, the one of comforts, the other of crosses, which he poureth out indifferently for the good and for the bad; "*with the kind* (*or merciful*) *he will shew himself kind, and with the froward, froward.*" Now this is not to make God the author of evil, but of justice, which is good; *quorum deus non est author eorum est justus ultor,* saith Augustine; "God is not the author of sin, but he punisheth the sinner justly."—*Miles Smith* (*Bishop*), 1632.

Verse 26—"*With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure,*" etc. But doth the Lord take colour from every one he meets, or change his temper as the company changes? That's the weakness of sinful man: he cannot do so with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of changing. God is pure, and upright with the unclean and hypocritical, as well as with the pure and upright, and his actions show him to be so. God shows himself froward with the froward when he deals with him as he hath said he will deal with the froward—deny them and reject them. God shows himself pure with the pure, when he deals with them as he hath said he will—hear them and accept them. Though there be nothing in purity and sincerity which deserveth mercy, yet we cannot expect mercy without them. Our comforts are not grounded upon our graces, but our comforts are the fruits or consequents of our graces.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 26.—"*The froward one.*" Here, as in the first promise, the two combatants stand contrasted—the seed of the woman and the serpent—the benignantly bountiful, perfect, pure One, and the froward one, whose works he came to destroy, and who made it his great business to circumvent him whom he feared. The literal meaning of the word is "tortuous," or "crooked," and both the ideas of perversity and cunning which the figure naturally suggests, are very applicable to "that old serpent the devil." From the concluding part of the sentence, I think there is no doubt that it is the latter idea that is intended to be conveyed. God cannot deal perversely with any one; but he outwits the wise, and takes the cunning in their own craftiness.—*John Brown.*

Verse 26.—"*With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.*" The Hebrew word in the root signifieth to wrest or writhe a thing, or to wrest or turn a thing, as wrestlers do their bodies. Hence by a trope, it is translated often to wrestle, because a cunning man in wrestling, turneth and windeth his body, and works himself in and out every way, to get an advantage of his adversary any way; therefore your cunning-headed men, your crafty men, are fitly presented under this word; they are like wrestlers who turn and wind themselves in and out, and lie for all advantages; or as we speak, they "lie at catch." A man knows not where to have them, or what they mean when they speak plainest, or swear solemnest; when we think we see their faces, we see but their vizards; all their promises and performances too are under a disguise . . . . . And this word is applied to the Lord himself, "*With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward;*" that is, if men will be winding and turning, and thinking to catch others or over-reach the Lord himself with tricks and turnings of wit, the Lord will meet and answer them in their own kind; he can turn as fast as they, he can put himself into such intricate labyrinths of infinite wisdom and sacred craft, as shall entangle and ensnare the most cunning wrestler or tumbler of them all. He will Cretize the Cretians, supplant the supplanters of his people.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 26.—"*Wilt shew thyself froward.*" It is a similitude taken from wrestlers, and noteth a writhing of one's self against an adversary. Compare herewith Deut. xxxii. 5. "They are a perverse and crooked generation," the same two words that are here in this text; the latter importeth that they wriggled and writhed after the manner of wrestlers that wave up and down, and wind the other way, when one thinks to have him here or there. But all will not serve their turn to save them from punishment. God will be sure to meet with them, his Word will lay hold on them, and their sin shall find them out.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 27.—"*The afflicted people.*" The word rendered "*afflicted,*" properly signifies "poor" or "needy." The persons spoken of are obviously afflicted ones, for they need to be saved or delivered; but it is not their affliction, so much as their

poverty, that is indicated by the epithet here given them; and, from the poor being contrasted, not with the wealthy, but with the proud—for that is the meaning of the figurative expression, "the man of high looks"—it seems plain that, though the great body of the class referred to have always been found among the comparatively "poor in this world," the reference is to those poor ones whom our Lord represents as "poor in spirit."—*John Brown.*

Verse 27.—"*High looks:*" namely, *the proud;* the raising up of the eyebrows being a natural sign of that vice. Psalm ci. 5; Prov. vi. 17.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 28.—"*For thou wilt light my candle,*" etc. The Psalmist speaks in this place of artificial light; "*a candle,*" or "lamp;" which has been supposed to be illustrated by the custom prevailing in Egypt of never suffering their houses to be without lights, but burning lamps even through the night, so that the poorest people would rather retrench part of their food than neglect it. Supposing this to have been the ancient custom, not only in Egypt, but in the neighbouring countries of Arabia and Judæa, "the lighting of the lamp" in this passage may have had a special allusion. In the parallel passage, 2 Sam. xxii. 29, Jehovah is figuratively styled the "lamp" of the Psalmist, as above.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 28 (*first clause*).—"*Thou also shalt*"—when none else can. And notice too, how here, and often elsewhere, the Psalmist begins with speaking *of* God, and ends with speaking *to* him. So the bride in the Canticles, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of *his* mouth, for *thy* love is better than wine."—*Dionysius the Carthusian* (1471), *quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 29.—"*By thee I have run through a troop,*" etc. David ascribes his victories to God, declaring that, under his conduct, he *had broken through the wedges or phalanxes* of his enemies, and had taken by storm their fortified cities. Thus we see that, although he was a valiant warrior, and skilled in arms, he arrogates nothing to himself.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 29.—"*By my God have I leaped over a wall;*" or, "taken a fort."—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 29.—"*Leaped over a wall.*" This probably refers to his having taken some remarkable town by scaling the ramparts.—*John Kitto, in "The Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 31.—"*For who is God save the Lord?*" Here first in the Psalms, occurs the name *Eloah,* rendered *God.* It occurs more than *fifty* times in the Scriptures, but only *four* times in the Psalms. It is the singular of Elohim. Many have supposed that this name specially refers to God as an object of religious worship. That idea may well be prominent in this place.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 32.—"*It is God that girdeth me with strength.*" One of the few articles of Eastern dress which I wore in the East, was the *girdle,* which was of great use us a support to the body in the long and weary camel-rides through the Desert. The support and *strengthening* I received in this way, gave me a clearer idea than I had before the meaning of the Psalmist.—*John Anderson, in "Bible from Bible Lands,"* 1856.

Verse 33.—"*He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places:*" that is, he doth give swiftness and speed to his church; as Augustine interpreteth it, *transcendendo spinosa, et umbrosa implicamenta hujus sæculi,* passing lightly through the thorny and shady incumbrances of this world. "He will make me walk upon my high places." David saith, "He setteth me upon high places." For, consider David, as he then was, when he composed this Psalm, it was at the time when God had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. For then God set his feet on high places, settling his kingdom, and establishing him in the place of Saul.—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 33.—"*He maketh my feet like hinds' feet:*" מְשַׁוֶּה רַגְלַי כְּאַיָּלוֹת. Celerity of motion was considered as one of the qualities of an ancient hero. Achilles is celebrated for being *πόδας ὠκύν.* Virgil's Nisus is hyperbolically described, "*Et ventis et fulminis ocior alis;*" and the men of God, who came to David, "Men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler," are said

to have had "faces like the faces of lions," and to have been "as swift as the roes upon the mountains.") 1 Chron. xii. 8. Asahel is described as "light of foot as a wild roe" (2 Sam. ii. 18); and Saul seems called the *roe* (in the English translation, "the beauty) of Israel." 2 Sam. i. 19. It has been said that the legs of the hind are straighter than those of the buck, and that *she* is swifter than *he* is; but there is no sufficient proof of this. Gataker gives the true account of it when he says, "The female formula is often used for the species." This is not uncommon in Hebrew. The female ass obviously stands for the ass species. Gen. xii. 16; Job. i. 3; xlii. 12. Some (at the head of whom is Bochart, *Hierozoicon*, P. i. L. ii. c. 17), have supposed the reference to be to the peculiar hardness of the hoof of the roe, which enables it to walk firmly, without danger of falling, on the roughest and rockiest places. Virgil calls the hind "*æri-pedem*," brass-footed. Others suppose the reference to be to its agility and celerity. There is nothing to prevent our supposing that there is a reference to both these distinguishing qualities of the hind's feet. *John Brown.*

Verse 33.—"*He maketh my feet like hinds' feet*," etc. *He maketh me able to stand on the sides of mountains and rocks*, which were anciently used as fastnesses in time of war. The feet of the sheep, the goat, and the hart are particularly adapted to standing in such places. Mr. Merrick has here very appositely cited the following passage from Xenophon; *Lib. de Venatione:* Επισκοπειν δει εχοντα τας κυνας τας μεν εν ορεσι εστωσας 'λαφους. See also Psalm civ. 18, where the same property of standing on the rocks and steep cliffs is attributed to the wild goat.—*Stephen Street, M.A., in loc.*, 1790.

Verse 34.—"*He teacheth my hands to war*," etc. To him I owe all that military skill, or strength, or courage, which I have. My strength is sufficient, not only to bend "a *bow of steel*," but to break it.—*Matthew Poole.*

Verse 34.—"*Steel.*" The word so rendered in the authorised version, properly means "copper" (נְחוּשָׁה). It is doubtful if the Hebrews were acquainted with the process of hardening iron into steel, for though the "northern iron" of Jer. xv. 12, has been supposed by some to be steel, this is by no means certain; it may have only been a superior sort of iron.—*William Lindsay Alexander, in "Kitto's Cyclopædia."*

Verse 34.—The drawing of a mighty bow was a mark of great slaughter and skill.

> "So the great master drew the mighty bow,
> And drew with ease. One hand aloft display'd,
> The bending horns, and one the string essay'd."
>
> *Alexander Pope*, 1688—1744. [*Translation of Homer.*

Verses 37, 38:—

> Oh, I have seen the day,
> When with a single word,
> God helping me to say,
> "My trust is in the Lord;"
> My soul has quelled a thousand foes,
> Fearless of all that could oppose.
>
> *William Cowper*, 1731—1800.

Verse 38.—"*I have wounded them*," etc. Greater is he that is in us than he that is against us, and God shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. Rom. xv. 20. *W. Wilson.*

Verses 38—40.—Though passion possess our bodies, let "patience possess our souls." The law of our profession binds us to a warfare; *patiendo vincimus*, our troubles shall end, our victory is eternal. Hear David's triumph, "*I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast given me the necks of mine enemies*," etc. They have wounds for their wounds; and the treaders down of the poor are trodden down by the poor. The Lord will subdue those to us that would have subdued us to themselves; and though for a short time they rode over our heads, yet now at last we shall everlastingly tread upon their necks. Lo, then, the reward of humble patience and confident hope!—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 39.—To be well girt was to be well armed in the Greek and Latin idioms, as well as in the Hebrew.—*Alexander Geddes, LL.D.*, 1737—1802.

Verse 41.—" *They shall cry, but there shall be none to help them,*" etc. Sad examples enough there are of the truth of this prophecy. Of Esau it is written that he " found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. xii. 17. Of Antiochus, though he vowed in his last illness, " that also he would become a Jew himself, and go through all the world that was inhabited, and declare the power of God, yet," continues the historian, "for all this his pains would not cease, for the just judgment of God was come upon him." 2 Macc. ix. 17, 18. But most appropriately to this passage, it is written of Saul, " When he enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams nor by Urim, nor by prophets." 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. And therefore, the prophet warns us: " Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains (Jer. xiii. 16): as Saul's feet, indeed, stumbled on the dark mountains of Gilboa. " *Even unto the Lord shall they cry:*" but not, as it has been well remarked, by a Mediator: and so, crying to him in their own name, and by their own merits, they cry in vain.—*John Lorinus* (1569—1634), *and Remigius* (900), *quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 41.—" *Even unto the Lord.*" As nature prompteth men in an extremity to look up for help; but because it is but the prayer of the flesh for ease, and not of the Spirit for grace, and a good use of calamities, and not but in extreme despair of help elsewhere, therefore God hears them not. In Samuel it is, " They looked, but there was none to save them," *q.d.*, If they could have made any other shift, God should never have heard of them.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 42.—" *I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets,*" or rather " of the streets." In the East, all household refuse and filth is cast forth into the streets, where all of it that is at all edible is soon cleared away by birds and dogs, and all that is not is speedily dried up by the sun. To cast forth any one, therefore, as the dirt of the streets, is a strong image of contempt and rejection.—*John Kitto.*

Verses 43, 44.—If these words can be explained literally of David, they apply much more naturally to Jesus Christ, who has been delivered from the strivings of the Jewish people; when, after the terrible opposition he met with on their part, to the establishment of the gospel, he was made the head of the Gentiles who were a strange people, and whom he had not formerly acknowledged as his, but who nevertheless obeyed him with astonishing readiness as soon as they heard his voice. *Louis Isaac le Maistre de Stacy,* 1613—1684.

Verse 45.—The first clause is comparatively easy. " *The strangers shall fade away*"—" shall gradually wither and disappear;" but the second clause is very difficult, " *They shall be afraid out of their close places.*" One Jewish scholar interprets it, " They shall fear for the prisons in which I will throw them and keep them confined."* Another, " They shall tremble in their castles to which they have betaken themselves for fear of me." Another,† " They shall surrender themselves from their fortresses." The general meaning is plain enough. The class referred to are represented as reduced to a state of complete helpless subjugation. As to the event referred to, if we keep to the rendering of our translators the meaning may be, " The Pagans, retired now generally to villages and remote places, shall gradually dwindle away, and fearfully anticipate the complete extinction of their religion." This exactly accords with history. If with some interpreters we read, " The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid because of their prisons," then the meaning may be, " that they who only feigned submission, when persecution for the word should arise should openly apostatise." This, too, would be found consonant with fact. The first of these interpretations seems the more probable.—*John Brown.*

Verse 46.—" *The Lord liveth: and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.*"—Let us unite our hearts in this song for a close of our praises. Honours *die,* pleasures *die,* the world *dies;* but " *The Lord liveth.*" My flesh is as *sand;* my fleshly life, strength, glory, is as *a word written on sand;* but *blessed be my* ROCK." Those are for a moment; this stands for ever. The curse shall devour those; everlasting blessings on the head of this. Let outward salvations vanish; let the saved be crucified; let the " *God* " of our salvations " *be exalted.*" This Lord is *my rock;* this God is *my salvation.*—*Peter Sterry,* 1649.

* Jarchi. † Abenezra.

Verse 46.—"*The Lord liveth.*" Why do you not oppose one God to all the armies of evils that beset you round? why do you not take the more content in God when you have the less of the creature to take content in? why do you not boast in your God? and bear up yourselves big with your hopes in God and expectations from him? Do you not see young heirs to great estates act and spend accordingly? And, why shall you, being the King of heaven's son, be lean and ragged from day to day, as though you were not worth a groat? O sirs, live upon your portion, chide yourselves for living besides what you have. There are great and precious promises, rich, enriching mercies; you may make use of God's all-sufficiency; you can blame none but yourselves if you be defective or discouraged. A woman, truly godly for the main, having buried a child, and sitting alone in sadness, did yet bear up her heart with the expression, "God lives"; and having parted with another, still she redoubled, "Comforts die, but God lives." At last her dear husband dies, and she sat oppressed and most overwhelmed with sorrow. A little child she had yet surviving, having observed what before she spoke to comfort herself, comes to her and saith, "Is God dead, mother? is God dead?" This reached her heart, and by God's blessing recovered her former confidence in her God, who is a *living* God. Thus do you chide yourselves; ask your fainting spirits under pressing outward sorrows, is not God alive? and why then doth not thy soul revive? why doth thy heart die within thee when comforts die! Cannot a living God support thy dying hopes? Thus, Christians, argue down your discouraged and disquieted spirits as David did.—*Oliver Heywood's "Sure Mercies of David."* 1672.

Verse 47.—"*It is God.*" Sir, this is none other than the hand of God; and to him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with him. The General served you with all faithfulness and honour; and the best commendation I can give him is that I dare say he attributes all to God, and would rather perish than assume to himself."—*Written to the Speaker of the House of Commons, after the battle of Naseby, June* 14, 1645, *by* OLIVER CROMWELL.

Verse 49.—I admire King David a great deal more when I see him in the quire than when I see him in the camp; when I see him singing as the sweet singer of Israel, than when I see him fighting as the worthy warrior of Israel. For fighting with others he did overcome all others; but singing, and delighting himself, he did overcome himself.—*Thomas Playfere.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Love's resolve, love's logic, love's trials, love's victories.

James Hervey has two sermons upon "Love to God" from this text.

Verse 2.—The many excellences of Jehovah to his people.

Verse 2.—God the all-sufficient portion of his people.—*C. Simeon's Works*, Vol. v., p. 85.

Verse 3.—Prayer resolved upon; praise rendered; result anticipated.

Verses 4—6.—Graphic picture of a distressed soul, and its resorts in the hour of extremity.

Verse 5 (*first clause*).—The condition of a soul convinced of sin.

Verse 5 (*second clause*).—The way in which snares and temptations are, by Satanic craft, arranged so as to forestall or prevent us.

Verse 6.—The time, the manner, the hearing, and the answering of prayer.

Verse 7.—The quaking of all things in the presence of an angry God.

Verse 10.—Celestial and terrestrial agencies subservient to the divine purposes.

Verse 11.—The darkness in which Jehovah hides. Why? When? What then? etc.

Verse 13.—"*Hailstones and coals of fire.*" The terrific in its relation to Jehovah.

Verse 16.—The Christian, like Moses, "one taken out of the water." The whole verse a noble subject; may be illustrated by life of Moses.

Verse 17.—The saint's pæan of victory over Satan, and all other foes.

Verse 17 (*last clause*).—Singular but sound reason for expecting divine help.

Verse 18.—The enemy's "craft," "*They prevented me in the day of my calamity.*" The enemy chained. "*But the Lord was my stay.*"

Verse 19.—The reason of grace, and the position in which it places its chosen ones.

Verse 21.—Intregrity of life, its measure, source, benefit, and dangers.

Verse 22.—The need of considering sacred things, and the wickedness of carelessly neglecting them.

Verse 23.—The upright heart and its darling sin.—*W. Strong's Sermons.*

Verse 23.—*Peccata in delictis;* a discourse of bosom sins.—*P. Newcome.*

Verse 23.—The sure trial of uprightness.—*Dr. Bates.*

Verse 26.—Echoes, in providence, grace, and judgment.

Verse 25.—Equity of the divine procedure.—*C. Simeon.*

Verse 27.—Consolation for the humble, and desolation for the proud.

Verse 27 (*second clause*).—The bringing down of high looks. In a way of grace and justice. Among saints and sinners, etc. A wide theme.

Verse 28.—A comfortable hope for an uncomfortable state.

Verse 29.—Believing exploits recounted. Variety, difficulty in themselves, ease in performance, completeness, impunity, and dependence upon divine working.

Verse 30.—God's way, word, and warfare.

Verse 31.—A challenge. I. To the *gods*. World, pleasure, etc. Which among these deserve the name? II. To the *rocks*, self-confidence, superstition, etc. On which can we trust?

Verses 32—34.—Trying positions, gracious adaptations, graceful accomplishments, secure abidings, grateful acknowledgement.

Verse 35.—"*The shield of thy salvation.*" What it is? Faith. Whence it comes? "Thou hast given." What it secures? "Salvation." Who have received it?

Verse 35.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 683. "Divine Gentleness Acknowledged."

Verse 36.—Divine benevolence in the arranging of our lot.

Verse 39.—The Red Cross Knight armed for the fray.

Verse 41.—Unavailing prayers—on earth and in hell.

Verse 42.—The sure overthrow, final shame, and ruin of evil.

Verse 43 (*last clause*).—Our natural and sinful distance from Christ, no bar to grace.

Verse 44.—Rapid advance of the gospel in some places, slow progress in others. Solemn considerations.

Verse 46.—The living God, and how to bless and exalt him.

Verse 50.—The greatness of salvation, "*great deliverance;*" its channel, "*the King;*" and its perpetuity, "*for evermore.*"

PSALM XIX.

SUBJECT.—*It would be idle to enquire into the particular period when this delightful poem was composed, for there is nothing in its title or subject to assist us in the enquiry. The heading, "To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David," informs us that David wrote it, and that it was committed to the Master of the service of song in the sanctuary for the use of the assembled worshippers. In his earliest days the Psalmist, while keeping his father's flock, had devoted himself to the study of God's two great books—nature and Scripture; and he had so thoroughly entered into the spirit of these two only volumes in his library, that he was able with a devout criticism to compare and contrast them, magnifying the excellency of the Author as seen in both. How foolish and wicked are those who instead of accepting the two sacred tomes, and delighting to behold the same divine hand in each, spend all their wits in endeavouring to find discrepancies and contradictions. We may rest assured that the true "Vestiges of Creation" will never contradict Genesis, nor will a correct "Cosmos" be found at variance with the narrative of Moses. He is wisest who reads both the world-book and the Word-book as two volumes of the same work, and feels concerning them, "My Father wrote them both."*

DIVISION.—*This song very distinctly divides itself into three parts, very well described by the translators in the ordinary heading of our version. The creatures show God's glory,* 1—6. *The word showeth his grace,* 7—11. *David prayeth for grace,* 12—14. *Thus praise and prayer are mingled, and he who here sings the work of God in the world without, pleads for a work of grace in himself within.*

EXPOSITION.

THE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

3 *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard.

4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

5 Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

1. *"The heavens declare the glory of God."* The book of nature has three leaves, heaven, earth, and sea, of which heaven is the first and the most glorious, and by its aid we are able to see the beauties of the other two. Any book without its first page would be sadly imperfect, and especially the great Natural Bible, since its first pages, the sun, moon, and stars, supply light to the rest of the volume, and are thus the keys, without which the writing which follows would be dark and undiscerned. Man walking erect was evidently made to scan the skies, and he who begins to read creation by studying the stars begins the book at the right place.

The *heavens* are plural for their variety, comprising the watery heavens with their clouds of countless forms, the aerial heavens with their calms and tempests, the solar heavens with all the glories of the day, and the starry heavens with all the marvels of the night; what the Heaven of heavens must be hath not entered into the heart of man, but there in chief all things are telling the glory of God. Any part of creation has more instruction in it than human mind will ever exhaust, but the celestial realm is peculiarly rich in spiritual lore. The heavens *declare*, or are *declaring*, for the continuance of their testimony is intended by the participles employed; every moment God's existence, power, wisdom, and goodness, are being sounded abroad by the heavenly heralds which shine upon us from above. He who would guess at divine sublimity should gaze upward into the starry vault; he who would imagine infinity must peer into the boundless expanse; he who desires

to see divine wisdom should consider the balancing of the orbs; he who would know divine fidelity must mark the regularity of the planetary motions; and he who would attain some conceptions of divine power, greatness, and majesty, must estimate the forces of attraction, the magnitude of the fixed stars, and the brightness of the whole celestial train. It is not merely glory that the heavens declare, but the "*glory of God*," for they deliver to us such unanswerable arguments for a conscious, intelligent, planning, controlling, and presiding Creator, that no unprejudiced person can remain unconvinced by them. The testimony given by the heavens is no mere hint, but a plain, unmistakeable declaration; and it is a declaration of the most constant and abiding kind. Yet for all this, to what avail is the loudest declaration to a deaf man, or the clearest showing to one spiritually blind? God the Holy Ghost must illuminate us, or all the suns in the milky way never will.

"*The firmament sheweth his handy-work;*" not *handy*, in the vulgar use of that term, but hand-work. The expanse is full of the works of the Lord's skilful, creating hands; hands being attributed to the great creating Spirit to set forth his care and workmanlike action, and to meet the poor comprehension of mortals. It is humbling to find that even when the most devout and elevated minds are desirous to express their loftiest thoughts of God, they must use words and metaphors drawn from the earth. We are children, and must each confess, "I think as a child, I speak as a child." In the expanse above us God flies, as it were, his starry flag to show that the King is at home, and hangs out his escutcheon that atheists may see how he despises their denunciations of him. He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down an atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar. Strange is it that some who love God are yet afraid to study the God-declaring book of nature; the mock-spirituality of some believers, who are too heavenly to consider the heavens, has given colour to the vaunts of infidels that nature contradicts revelation. The wisest of men are those who with pious eagerness trace the goings forth of Jehovah as well in creation as in grace; only the foolish have any fears lest the honest study of the one should injure our faith in the other. Dr. M'Cosh has well said, "We have often mourned over the attempts made to set the works of God against the Word of God, and thereby excite, propagate, and perpetuate jealousies fitted to separate parties that ought to live in closest union. In particular, we have always regretted that endeavours should have been made to depreciate nature with a view of exalting revelation; it has always appeared to us to be nothing else than the degrading of one part of God's works in the hope thereby of exalting and recommending another. Let not science and religion be reckoned as opposing citadels, frowning defiance upon each other, and their troops brandishing their armour in hostile attitude. They have too many common foes, if they would but think of it, in ignorance and prejudice, in passion and vice, under all their forms, to admit of their lawfully wasting their strength in a useless warfare with each other. Science has a foundation, and so has religion; let them unite their foundations, and the basis will be broader, and they will be two compartments of one great fabric reared to the glory of God. Let the one be the outer and the other the inner court. In the one, let all look, and admire and adore; and in the other, let those who have faith kneel, and pray, and praise. Let the one be the sanctuary where human learning may present its richest incense as an offering to God, and the other the holiest of all, separated from it by a veil now rent in twain, and in which, on a blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, we pour out the love of a reconciled heart, and hear the oracles of the living God."

2. "*Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*" As if one day took up the story where the other left it, and each night passed over the wondrous tale to the next. The original has in it the thought of pouring out, or welling over, with speech; as though days and nights were but as a fountain flowing evermore with Jehovah's praise. Oh to drink often at the celestial well, and learn to utter the glory of God! The witnesses above cannot be slain or silenced; from their elevated seats they constantly preach the knowledge of God, unawed and unbiassed by the judgments of men. Even the changes of alternating night and day are mutely eloquent, and light and shade equally reveal the Invisible One; let the vicissitudes of our circumstances do the same, and while we bless the God of our days of joy, let us also extol him who giveth "songs in the night."

The lesson of day and night is one which it were well if all men learned. It should be among our day-thoughts and night-thoughts to remember the flight of time, the changeful character of earthly things, the brevity both of joy and sorrow,

the preciousness of life, our utter powerlessness to recall the hours once flown, and the irresistible approach of eternity. Day bids us labour, night reminds us to prepare for our last home; day bids us work for God, and night invites us to rest in him; day bids us look for endless day, and night warns us to escape from everlasting night.

3. "*There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*" Every man may hear the voices of the stars. Many are the languages of terrestrials, to celestials there is but one, and that one may be understood by every willing mind. The lowest heathen are without excuse, if they do not discover the invisible things of God in the works which he has made. Sun, moon, and stars are God's travelling preachers; they are apostles upon their journey confirming those who regard the Lord, and judges on circuit condemning those who worship idols.

The margin gives us another rendering, which is more literal, and involves less repetition; "*no speech, no words, their voice is not heard;*" that is to say, their teaching is not addressed to the ear, and is not uttered in articulate sounds; it is pictorial, and directed to the eye and heart; it touches not the sense by which faith comes, for faith cometh by hearing. Jesus Christ is called the Word, for he is a far more distinct display of Godhead than all the heavens can afford; they are, after all, but dumb instructors; neither star nor sun can arrive at a word, but Jesus is the express image of Jehovah's person, and his name is the Word of God.

4. "*Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*" Although the heavenly bodies move in solemn silence, yet in reason's ear they utter precious teachings. They give forth no literal *words*, but yet their instruction is clear enough to be so described. Horne says that the phrase employed indicates a language of signs, and thus we are told that the heavens speak by their significant actions and operations. Nature's words are like those of the deaf and dumb, but grace tells us plainly of the Father. By their line is probably meant the *measure* of their domain which, together with their testimony, has gone out to the utmost end of the habitable earth. No man living beneath the copes of heaven dwells beyond the bounds of the diocese of God's Court-preachers; it is easy to escape from the light of ministers, who are as stars in the right hand of the Son of Man; but even then men, with a conscience yet unseared, will find a Nathan to accuse them, a Jonah to warn them, and an Elijah to threaten them in the silent stars of night. To gracious souls the voices of the heavens are more influential far, they feel the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and are drawn towards their Father God by the bright bands of Orion.

"*In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.*" In the midst of the heavens the sun encamps, and marches like a mighty monarch on his glorious way. He has no fixed abode, but as a traveller pitches and removes his tent, a tent which will soon be taken down and rolled together as a scroll. As the royal pavilion stood in the centre of the host, so the sun in his place appears like a king in the midst of attendant stars.

5. "*Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.*" A bridegroom comes forth sumptuously apparelled, his face beaming with a joy which he imparts to all around; such, but with a mighty emphasis, is the rising Sun. "*And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.*" As a champion girt for running cheerfully addresses himself to the race, so does the sun speed onward with matchless regularity and unwearying swiftness in his appointed orbit. It is but mere play to him; there are no signs of effort, flagging or exhaustion. No other creature yields such joy to the earth as her bridegroom the sun; and none, whether they be horse or eagle, can for an instant compare in swiftness with that heavenly champion. But all his glory is but the glory of God; even the sun shines in light borrowed from the Great Father of Lights.

> "Thou sun, of this great world both eye and soul,
> Acknowledge Him thy greater; sound His praise
> Both when thou climb'st, and when high noon hast gained.
> And when thou fall'st."

6. "*His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it.*" He bears his light to the boundaries of the solar heavens, traversing the zodiac with steady motion, denying his light to none who dwell within his range. "*And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*" Above, beneath, around, the heat of the sun exercises an influence. The bowels of the earth are stored with the ancient produce of the solar rays, and even yet earth's inmost caverns feel

their power. Where light is shut out, yet heat and other more subtle influences find their way.

There is no doubt a parallel intended to be drawn between the heaven of grace and the heaven of nature. God's way of grace is sublime and broad, and full of his glory; in all its displays it is to be admired and studied with diligence; both its lights and its shades are instructive; it has been proclaimed, in a measure, to every people, and in due time shall be yet more completely published to the ends of the earth. Jesus, like a sun, dwells in the midst of revelation, tabernacling among men in all his brightness; rejoicing, as the Bridegroom of his church, to reveal himself to men; and, like a champion, to win unto himself renown. *He* makes a circuit of mercy, blessing the remotest corners of the earth; and there are no seeking souls, however degraded and depraved, who shall be denied the comfortable warmth and benediction of his love—even death shall feel the power of his presence, and resign the bodies of the saints, and this fallen earth shall be restored to its pristine glory.

7 The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord *is* sure, making wise the simple.

8 The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the *Lord is* pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward.

In the three following verses we have a brief but instructive hexapla containing six descriptive titles of the word, six characteristic qualities mentioned, and six divine effects declared. Names, nature, and effect are well set forth.

7. "*The law of the Lord is perfect;*" by which he means not merely the law of Moses but the doctrine of God, the whole run and rule of sacred Writ. The doctrine revealed by God he declares to be perfect, and yet David had but a very small part of the Scriptures, and if a fragment, and that the darkest and most historical portion, be perfect, what must the entire volume be? How more than perfect is the book which contains the clearest possible display of divine love, and gives us an open vision of redeeming grace. The gospel is a complete scheme or law of gracious salvation, presenting to the needy sinner everything that his terrible necessities can possibly demand. There are no redundancies and no omissions in the Word of God, and in the plan of grace; why then do men try to paint this lily and gild this refined gold? The gospel is perfect in all its parts, and perfect as a whole: it is a crime to add to it, treason to alter it, and felony to take from it.

"*Converting the soul.*"—Making the man to be returned or restored to the place from which sin had cast him. The practical effect of the Word of God is to turn the man to himself, to his God, and to holiness; and the turn or conversion is not outward alone, "*the soul*" is moved and renewed. The great means of the conversion of sinners is the Word of God, and the more closely we keep to it in our ministry the more likely are we to be successful. It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls. When the law drives and the gospel draws, the action is different but the end is one, for by God's Spirit the soul is made to yield, and cries, "Turn me, and I shall be turned." Try men's depraved nature with philosophy and reasoning, and it laughs your efforts to scorn, but the Word of God soon works a transformation.

"*The testimony of the Lord is sure.*" God bears his testimony against sin, and on behalf of righteousness; he testifies of our fall and of our restoration; this testimony is plain, decided, and infallible, and is to be accepted as sure. God's witness in his Word is so sure that we may draw solid comfort from it both for time and eternity, and so sure that no attacks made upon it, however fierce or subtle, can ever weaken its force. What a blessing that in a world of uncertainties we have something sure to rest upon! We hasten from the quicksands of human speculations to the *terra firma* of Divine Revelation.

"*Making wise the simple.*" Humble, candid, teachable minds receive the word, and are made wise unto salvation. Things hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes. The persuadable grow wise, but the cavillers continue fools. As a law or plan the Word of God converts, and then as a testimony it instructs; it is not enough for us to be converts, we must continue to be disciples; and if we have felt the power of truth, we must go on to prove its certainty by experience. The perfection of the gospel converts, but its sureness edifies; if we would be edified it becomes us not to stagger at the promise through unbelief, for a doubted gospel cannot make us wise, but truth of which we are assured will be our establishment.

8. "*The statutes of the Lord are right.*" His precepts and decrees are founded in righteousness, and are such as are right or fitted to the right reason of man. As a physician gives the right medicine, and a counsellor the right advice, so does the Book of God. "*Rejoicing the heart.*" Mark the progress; he who was converted was next made wise and is now made happy; that truth which makes the heart right then gives joy to the right heart. Free grace brings heart-joy. Earthborn mirth dwells on the lip, and flushes the bodily powers; but heavenly delights satisfy the inner nature, and fill the mental faculties to the brim. There is no cordial of comfort like that which is poured from the bottle of Scripture.

"Ketire and read thy Bible to be gay."

"*The commandment of the Lord is pure.*" No mixture of error defiles it, no stain of sin pollutes it; it is the unadulterated milk, the undiluted wine. "*Enlightening the eyes,*" purging away by its own purity the earthly grossness which mars the intellectual discernment: whether the eye be dim with sorrow or with sin, the Scripture is a skilful oculist, and makes the eye clear and bright. Look at the sun and it puts out your eyes, look at the more than sunlight of Revelation and it enlightens them; the purity of snow causes snow-blindness to the Alpine traveller, but the purity of God's truth has the contrary effect, and cures the natural blindness of the soul. It is well again to observe the gradation; the convert became a disciple and next a rejoicing soul, he now obtains a discerning eye, and as a spiritual man discerneth all things, though he himself is discerned of no man.

9. "*The fear of the Lord is clean.*" The doctrine of truth is here described by its spiritual effect, viz., inward piety, or the fear of the Lord; this is clean in itself, and cleanses out the love of sin, sanctifying the heart in which it reigns. Mr. Godly-fear is never satisfied till every street, lane, and alley, yea, and every house and every corner of the town of Mansoul is clean rid of the Diabolonians who lurk therein. "*Enduring for ever.*" Filth brings decay, but cleanness is the great foe of corruption. The grace of God in the heart being a pure principle is also an abiding and incorruptible principle, which may be crushed for a time, but cannot be utterly destroyed. Both in the Word and in the heart, when the Lord writes, he says with Pilate, "What I have written, I have written;" he will make no erasures himself, much less suffer others to do so. The revealed will of God is never changed; even Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfil, and even the ceremonial law was only changed as to its shadow, the substance intended by it is eternal. When the governments of nations are shaken with revolution, and ancient constitutions are being repealed, it is comforting to know that the throne of God is unshaken, and his law unaltered.

"*The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether;*"—jointly and severally the words of the Lord are true; that which is good in detail is excellent in the mass; no exception may be taken to a single clause separately, or to the book as a whole. God's judgments, all of them together, or each of them apart, are manifestly just, and need no laborious excuses to justify them. The judicial decisions of Jehovah, as revealed in the law, or illustrated in the history of his providence, are truth itself, and commend themselves to every truthful mind; not only is their power invincible, but their justice is unimpeachable.

10. "*More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold.*" Bible truth is enriching to the soul in the highest degree; the metaphor is one which gathers force as it is brought out;—gold—fine gold—much fine gold; it is good, better, best, and therefore it is not only to be desired with a miser's avidity, but with more than that. As spiritual treasure is more noble than mere material wealth, so should it be desired and sought after with greater eagerness. Men speak of solid gold, but what is so solid as solid truth? For love of gold pleasure is forsworn, ease renounced, and life endangered; shall we not be ready to do as much for love

of truth? "*Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*" Trapp says, "Old people are all for profit, the young for pleasure; here's gold for the one, yea, the finest gold in great quantity; here's honey for the other, yea, live honey dropping from the comb." The pleasures arising from a right understanding of the divine testimonies are of the most delightful order; earthly enjoyments are utterly contemptible, if compared with them. The sweetest joys, yea, the sweetest of the sweetest falls to his portion who has God's truth to be his heritage.

11. "*Moreover by them is thy servant warned.*" We are warned by the Word both of our duty, our danger, and our remedy. On the sea of life there would be many more wrecks, if it were not for the divine storm-signals which give to the watchful a timely warning. The Bible should be our Mentor, our Monitor, our Memento Mori, our Remembrancer, and the Keeper of our Conscience. Alas, that so few men will take the warning so graciously given; none but servants of God will do so, for they alone regard their Master's will. Servants of God not only find his service delightful in itself, but they receive good recompense; "*In keeping of them there is great reward.*" There is a wage, and a great one; though we earn no wages of debt, we win great wages of grace. Saints may be losers for a time, but they shall be glorious gainers in the long run, and even now a quiet conscience is in itself no slender reward for obedience. He who wears the herb called heart's-ease in his bosom is truly blessed. However, the main reward is yet to come, and the word here used hints as much, for it signifies *the heel*, as if the reward would come to us at the end of life when the work was done;—not while the labour was in the hand, but when it was gone and we could see the heel of it. Oh, the glory yet to be revealed! It is enough to make a man faint for joy at the prospect of it. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Then shall we know the value of the Scriptures when we swim in that sea of unutterable delight to which their streams will bear us, if we commit ourselves to them.

12 Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*.

13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

12. "*Who can understand his errors?*" A question which is its own answer. It rather requires a note of exclamation than of interrogation. By the law is the knowledge of sin, and in the presence of divine truth, the Psalmist marvels at the number and heinousness of his sins. He best knows himself who best knows the Word, but even such an one will be in a maze of wonder as to what he does not know, rather than on the mount of congratulation as to what he does know. We have heard of a comedy of errors, but to a good man this is more like a tragedy. Many books have a few lines of errata at the end, but our errata might well be as large as the volume if we could but have sense enough to see them. Augustine wrote in his older days a series of Retractations; ours might make a library if we had enough grace to be convinced of our mistakes and to confess them. "*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*" Thou canst mark in me faults entirely hidden from myself. It were hopeless to expect to see all my spots; therefore, O Lord, wash away in the atoning blood even those sins which my conscience has been unable to detect. Secret sins, like private conspirators, must be hunted out, or they may do deadly mischief; it is well to be much in prayer concerning them. In the Lateran Council of the Church of Rome, a decree was passed that every true believer must confess his sins, all of them, once in a year to the priest, and they affixed to it this declaration, that there is no hope of pardon but in complying with that decree. What can equal the absurdity of such a decree as that? Do they suppose that they can tell their sins as easily as they can count their fingers? Why, if we could receive pardon for all our sins by telling every sin we have committed in one hour, there is not one of us who would be able to enter Heaven, since, besides the sins that are known to us and that we may be able to confess, there are a vast mass of sins, which are as truly sins as those which we lament, but which are secret, and come not beneath our eyes. If we had eyes like those of God, we should think very differently of ourselves. The transgressions which we see and confess are but

like the farmer's small samples which he brings to market, when he has left his granary full at home. We have but a very few sins which we can observe and detect, compared with those which are hidden from ourselves and unseen by our fellow-creatures.

13. *"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."*—This earnest and humble prayer teaches us that saints may fall into the worst of sins unless restrained by grace, and that therefore they must watch and pray lest they enter into temptation. There is a natural proneness to sin in the best of men, and they must be held back as a horse is held back by the bit or they will run into it. Presumptuous sins are peculiarly dangerous. All sins are great sins, but yet some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion, and is full of the essential marrow of traitorous rejection of God; but there be some sins which have in them a greater development of the essential mischief of rebellion, and which wear upon their faces more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High. It is wrong to suppose that because all sins will condemn us, that therefore one sin is not greater than another. The fact is, that while all transgression is a greatly grievous and sinful thing, yet there are some transgressions which have a deeper shade of blackness, and a more double scarlet-dyed hue of criminality than others. The presumptuous sins of our text are the chief and worst of all sins; they rank head and foremost in the list of iniquities. It is remarkable that though an atonement was provided under the Jewish law for every kind of sin, there was this one exception: "But the soul that sinneth presumptuously shall have no atonement; it shall be cut off from the midst of my people." And now under the Christian dispensation, although in the sacrifice of our blessed Lord there is a great and precious atonement for presumptuous sins, whereby sinners who have erred in this manner are made clean, yet without doubt, presumptuous sinners, dying without pardon, must expect to receive a double portion of the wrath of God, and a more terrible portion of eternal punishment in the pit that is digged for the wicked. For this reason is David so anxious that he may never come under the reigning power of these giant evils. *"Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."* He shudders at the thought of the unpardonable sin. Secret sin is a stepping-stone to presumptuous sin, and that is the vestibule of "the sin which is unto death." He who is not wilful in his sin, will be in a fair way to be innocent so far as poor sinful man can be; but he who tempts the devil to tempt him is in a path which will lead him from bad to worse, and from the worse to the worst.

14. *"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer."* A sweet prayer, and so spiritual that it is almost as commonly used in Christian worship as the apostolic benediction. *Words of the mouth* are mockery if the heart does not *meditate;* the shell is nothing without the kernel; but both together are useless unless *accepted;* and even if accepted by man, it is all vanity if not acceptable in *the sight of God.* We must in prayer view Jehovah as our *strength* enabling, and our *Redeemer* saving, or we shall not pray aright, and it is well to feel our personal interest so as to use the word *my,* or our prayers will be hindered. Our near Kinsman's name, our Goel or Redeemer, makes a blessed ending to the Psalm; it began with the heavens, but it ends with him whose glory fills heaven and earth. Blessed Kinsman, give us now to meditate acceptably upon thy most sweet love and tenderness.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The magnificent scenery to which the poem alludes is derived entirely from a contemplation of nature, in a state of pastoral seclusion; and a contemplation indulged in, at noontide or in the morning, when the sun was travelling over the horizon, and eclipsing all the other heavenly bodies by his glory. On which account it forms a perfect contrast with the eighth Psalm, evidently composed in the evening, and should be read in connection with it, as it was probably written nearly at the same time: and as both are songs of praise derived from natural phenomena, and therefore peculiarly appropriate to rural or pastoral life.—*John Mason Good.*

Whole Psalm.—The world resembleth a divinity-school, saith Plutarch, and Christ, as the Scripture telleth, is our doctor, instructing us by his works, and by his words. For as Aristotle had two sorts of writings, one called *exoterical*, for his common auditors, another acroamatical, for his private scholars and familiar acquaintance: so God hath two sorts of books, as David intimates in this Psalm; namely, the book of his creatures, as a common-place book for all men in the world: "*The heavens declare the glory of God,*" verses 1—6; the book of his Scriptures as a statute-book for his domestical auditory, the church: "*The law of the Lord is an undefiled law,*" verses 7, 8. The great book of the creatures in folio, may be termed aptly *the shepherd's kalendar*, and the *ploughman's alphabet*, in which even the most ignorant may run (as the prophet speaks) and read. It is a letter patent, or open epistle for all, as David, in our text, *Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world; there is neither speech nor language but have heard of their preaching.* For albeit, heaven, and the sun in heaven, and the light in the sun are mute, yet *their voices* are well understood, catechising plainly the first elements of religion, as, namely, that there is a God, and that this God is but one God, and that this one God excelleth all other things infinitely both in might and majesty. *Universus mundus* (as one pithily) *nihil aliud est quàm Deus explicatus:* the whole world is nothing else but God expressed. So St. Paul, Rom. i. 20: God's *invisible things*, as his eternal power and Godhead, "are clearly seen" by the creation of the world, "being understood by the things that are made." The heavens declare this, and the firmament showeth this, and the day telleth this, and the night certifieth this, the sound of the thunder proclaimeth, as it were, this in all lands, and the words of the whistling wind unto the ends of the world. More principally *the sun, which as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course.* The body thereof (as mathematicians have confidently delivered) is one hundred and sixty-six times bigger than the whole earth, and yet it is every day carried by the finger of God so great a journey, so long a course, that if it were to be taken on the land, it should run every several hour of the day two hundred and twenty-five German miles. It is true that God is incapable to sense, yet he makes himself, as it were, visible in his works; as the divine poet (Du Bartas) sweetly:—

> "Therein our fingers feel, our nostrils smell,
> Our palates taste his virtues that excel,
> He shows him to our eyes, talks to our ears,
> In the ordered motions of the spangled spheres."

So "*the heavens declare,*" that is, they make men declare the glory of God, by their admirable structure, motions, and influence. Now, the preaching of *the heavens* is wonderful in three respects. 1. As preaching all the night and all the day without intermission: verse 2. *One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another.* 2. As preaching in every kind of language: verse 3, *There is neither speech, nor language, but their voices are heard among them.* 3. As preaching in every part of the world, and in every parish of every part, and in every place of every parish: verse 4, *Their sound is gone into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.* They be diligent pastors, as preaching at all times; and learned pastors, as preaching in all tongues; and catholic pastors, as preaching in all towns. Let us not then in this University (where the voices of so many great doctors are heard), be like to truants in other schools, who gaze so much upon the babies*, and gilded cover, and painted margent of their book, that they neglect the text and lesson itself. This is *God's primer*, as it were, for all sorts of people; but he hath another book proper only for his domestical auditory the church: "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation, neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws." Psa. cxlvii. 19, 20. Heathen men read in his primer, but Christian men are well acquainted with his Bible. The primer is a good book, but it is imperfect; for after a man hath learned it he must learn more; but "*the law of the Lord,*" that is, the body of the Holy Scriptures, is a most absolute canon of all doctrines appertaining either to faith or good manners; it is a *perfect law, converting the soul, giving wisdom to the simple, sure, pure, righteous, and rejoicing the heart,*" etc.—*John Boys.*

Whole Psalm. Saint Chrysostom conjectures that the main intention of the greatest part of this Psalm consists in the discovery of divine providence, which

* The pictures or illustrations of a book.

manifests itself in the motions and courses of the heavenly bodies, concerning, which the Psalmist speaketh much, from verse 1 to verse 7. Saint Austin upon the place, is of a quite different opinion, who conjectures that Christ is the whole subject of this Psalm; whose person is compared to the sun for excellency and beauty, and the course of whose doctrine was dispersed round about the world by his apostles, to which Saint Paul alludes (Rom. x. 18); "Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth," etc., and the efficacy of whose gospel is like the heat of the sun, which pierceth into the very heart of the earth, so that into the secrets of the soul. I confess this allegorical exposition is not altogether impertinent, neither is that literal exposition of Saint Chrysostom to be blamed, for it hath its weight. But to omit all variety of conjectures, this Psalm contains in it:

1. A double kind of *the knowledge of God*, of which one is *by the book of the creature;* and this divines call a natural knowledge: there is not any one creature, but it is a leaf written all over with the description of God; his eternal power and Godhead may be understood by the things that are seen, saith the apostle. Rom. i. 20. And, as every creature, so especially "*the heavens*" do lead us to the knowledge of a God: so verse 1 of this Psalm: "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork;*" they are the theatres, as it were, of his wisdom, and power, and glory. Another is *by the book of Scripture;* and this knowledge is far more distinct and explicit: with the other even the heathens do grope after a deity, but with this Christians do behold God, as it were, with open face. The characters here are now fresh, spiritual, complete, and lively. The word of God is the singular means to know God aright. Look, as the light which comes from the sun, so that word of God, which is light, is the clearest way to know God who is light itself. Hence it is that the Psalmist stands much upon this from verse 7 to verse 12, where he sets open the word in its several encomiums and operations; namely, in its perfection, its certainties and firmness; its righteousness, and purity, and truth; and then in its efficacy—that it is a converting word, an enlightening word, an instructing word, a rejoicing word, a desirable word, a warning word, and a rewarding word.

2. *A singular and experimental knowledge of himself.*—So it seemeth, that that word which David did so much commend, he did commend it from an experimental efficacy; he had found it to be a righteous, and holy, and pure, and discovering word, laying open, not only visible and gross transgressions, but also, like the light of the sun, those otherwise unobserved and secret atoms of senses flying within the house; I mean in the secret chambers of the soul.—*Obadiah Sedgwick*, 1660.

Verse 1.—"*The heavens declare the glory of God,*" etc.—The eminent saints of ancient times were watchful observers of the objects and operations of nature. In every event they saw the agency of God; and, therefore, they took delight in its examination. For they could not but receive pleasure from witnessing the manifestations of his wisdom and beneficence, whom they adored and loved. They had not learned, as we have in modern times, to interpose unbending laws between the Creator and his works; and then, by giving inherent power to these laws, virtually to remove God away from his creation into an ethereal extramundane sphere of repose and happiness. I do not say that this is the universal feeling of the present day. But it prevails extensively in the church, and still more in the world. The ablest philosophers of modern times do, indeed, maintain that a natural law is nothing more than the uniform mode in which God acts; and that, after all, it is not the efficiency of the law, but God's own energy, that keeps all nature in motion; that he operates immediately and directly, not remotely and indirectly, in bringing about every event, and that every natural change is as really the work of God as if the eye of sense could see his hand turning round the wheels of nature. But, although the ablest philosophy of modern times has reached this conclusion, the great mass of the community, and even of Christians, are still groping in the darkness of that mechanical system which ascribes the operations of the natural world to nature's laws instead of nature's God. By a sort of figure, indeed, it is proper, as the advocates of this system admit, to speak of God as the author of natural events, because he originally ordained the laws of nature. But they have no idea that he exerts any direct and immediate agency in bringing them about; and, therefore, when they look upon these events they feel no impression of the presence and active agency of Jehovah.

But how different, as already remarked, were the feelings of ancient saints. The Psalmist could not look up to heaven without exclaiming, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.*" When he cast his eyes abroad upon the earth, his full heart cried out, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." In his eye everything was full of God. It was God who "sent springs into the valleys, which run among the hills." When the thunder-storm passed before him, it was "God's voice in the heavens, and his lightnings that lighted the world." When he heard the bellowings, and saw the smoke of the volcano, it was "God who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke."—*Edward Hitchcock, D.D., LL.D.*, 1867.

Verse 1.—"*The heavens declare,*" etc. Man has been endued by his Creator with mental powers capable of cultivation. He has employed them in the study of the wonderful works of God which the universe displays. His own habitation has provided a base which has served him to measure the heavens. He compares his own stature with the magnitude of the earth on which he dwells; the earth, with the system in which it is placed; the extent of the system, with the distance of the nearest fixed stars; and that distance again serves as a unit of measurement for other distances which observation points out. Still no approach is made to any limit. How extended these wonderful works of the Almighty may be no man can presume to say. The sphere of creation appears to extend around us indefinitely on all sides; "to have its centre everywhere, its circumference nowhere." These are considerations which from their extent almost bewilder our minds. But how should they raise our ideas toward their great Creator, when we consider that all these were created from nothing, by a word, by a mere volition of the Deity. "Let them be," said God, and they were. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." "For he spake, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm xxxiii. 6, 9. What must be that power which so formed worlds on worlds; worlds in comparison of which this earth which we inhabit sinks into utter nothingness! Surely when we thus lift up our thoughts to the heavens, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained, we must feel, if we can ever feel, how stupendous and incomprehensible is that Being who formed them all; that "*the heavens*" do indeed "*declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*"—*Temple Chevallier, in "The Hulsean Lectures for* 1827."

Verse 1.—I have often been charmed and awed at the sight of the nocturnal heavens, even before I knew how to consider them in their proper circumstances of majesty and beauty. Something like magic has struck my mind, on transient and unthinking survey of the æthereal vault, tinged throughout with the purest azure, and decorated with innumerable starry lamps. I have felt, I know not what, powerful and aggrandising impulse, which seemed to snatch me from the low entanglements of vanity, and prompted an ardent sigh for sublimer objects. Methought I heard, even from the silent spheres, a commanding call to spurn the abject earth, and pant after unseen delights. Henceforth I hope to imbibe more copiously this moral emanation of the skies, when, in some such manner as the preceding, they are rationally seen, and the sight is duly improved. The stars, I trust, will teach as well as shine, and help to dispel both nature's gloom and my intellectual darkness. To some people they discharge no better a service than that of holding a flambeau to their feet, and softening the horrors of their night. To me and my friends may they act as ministers of a superior order, as counsellors of wisdom, and guides to happiness! Nor will they fail to execute this nobler office, if they gently light our way into the knowledge of their adored Maker—if they point out with their silver rays our path to his beatific presence.—*James Hervey, A.M.*, 1713—1758.

Verse 1.—Should a man live underground, and there converse with the works of art and mechanism, and should afterwards be brought up into the open day, and see the several glories of the heaven and earth, he would immediately pronounce them the works of such a Being as we define God to be.—*Aristotle.*

Verse 1.—When we behold "*the heavens,*" when we contemplate the celestial bodies, can we fail of conviction? Must we not acknowledge that there is a Divinity, a perfect Being, a ruling intelligence, which governs; a God who is everywhere

and directs all by his power? Anybody who doubts this may as well deny there is a sun that lights us. Time destroys all false opinions, but it confirms those which are formed by nature. For this reason, with us as well as with other nations, the worship of the gods and the holy exercises of religion, increase in purity and extent every day.—*Cicero.*

Verse 1.—*"The heavens declare the glory of God,"* etc. They discover his *wisdom*, his *power*, his *goodness;* and so there is not any one creature, though never so little, but we are to admire the Creator in it. As a chamber hung round about with looking-glasses represents the face upon every turn, thus all the world doth the mercy and the bounty of God; though that be visible, yet it discovers an invisible God and his invisible properties.—*Anthony Burgess*, 1656.

Verse 1.—None of the elect are in that respect so unwise as to refuse to hear and consider the works and words of God as not appertaining unto him. God forbid. No man in the world doth with more fervency consider the works of God, none more readily lift up their ears to hear God speak than even they who have the inward revelation of the Holy Spirit.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 1.—During the French revolution Jean Bon St. André, the Vendean revolutionist, said to a peasant, "I will have all your steeples pulled down, that you may no longer have any object by which you may be reminded of your old superstitions." "But," replied the peasant, "*you cannot help leaving us the stars.*"—*John Bate's "Cyclopædia of Moral and Religious Truths,"* 1865.

Verse 1.—*"The heavens declare the glory of God"*—

How beautiful this dome of sky,
And the vast hills in fluctuation fixed
At thy command, how awful! Shall the soul,
Human and rational, report of thee
Even less than these? Be mute who will, who can,
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice.
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,
Cannot forget thee here, where thou hast built
For thine own glory, in the wilderness!

William Wordsworth, 1770—1850.

Verse 1.—*"The firmament sheweth his handywork"*—

The glittering stars
By the deep ear of meditation heard,
Still in their midnight watches sing of him.
He nods a calm. The tempest blows his wrath:
The thunder is his voice; and the red flash
His speedy sword of justice. At his touch
The mountains flame. He shakes the solid earth,
And rocks the nations. Nor in these alone—
In ev'ry common instance God is seen.

James Thomson.

Verse 1.—

These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair. Thyself how wondrous, then
Unspeakable, who sitt'st above these heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.

John Milton.

Verses 1, 2.—In order more fully to illustrate the expressive richness of the Hebrew, I would direct the attention of my reader to the beautiful phraseology of the XIX. Psalm. The literal reading of the first and second verses may be thus given:—

"The heavens are *telling* the glory of God,
The firmament *displaying* the work of his hands;
Day unto day *welleth forth* speech,
Night unto night *breatheth out* knowledge."

Thus the four distinct terms in the original are preserved in the translation; and the overflowing fulness with which day unto day pours forth divine instruction, and the gentle whisperings of the silent night, are contrasted as in the Hebrew.—*Henry Craik*, 1860.

Verses 1—4.—Though all preachers on earth should grow silent, and every human mouth cease from publishing the glory of God, the heavens above will never cease to declare and proclaim his majesty and glory. They are for ever preaching; for, like an unbroken chain, their message is delivered from day to day and from night to night. At the silence of one herald another takes up his speech. One day, like the other, discloses the same spectacles of his glory, and one night, like the other, the same wonders of his majesty. Though nature be *hushed* and *quiet* when the sun in his glory has reached the zenith on the azure sky—though the world keep her *silent* festival when the stars shine brightest at night—yet, says the Psalmist, *they speak;* ay, holy silence itself is a speech, provided there be the ear to hear it.—*Augustus T. Tholuck.*

Verses 1—4.—"*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork.*" If the heavens declare the glory of God, we should observe what that glory is which they declare. The heavens preach to us every day. . . . . "*Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*" Sun, moon, and stars are preachers; they are universal, they are natural apostles. The world is their charge; "*their words,*" saith the Psalm, "*go to the end of the world.*" We may have good doctrine from them, especially this doctrine in the text, of the wisdom and power of God. And it is very observable that the apostle alludes to this text in the Psalm for a proof of gospel preaching to the whole world. Rom. x. 18. The gospel, like the sun, casts his beams over, and sheds his light into all the world. David in the Psalm saith, "*Their line is gone out,*" etc. By which word he shows that the heavens, being so curious a fabric, made, as it were, by a line and level, do clearly, though silently, preach the skill and perfections of God. Or, that we may read divine truths in them as a line formed by a pen into words and sentences (the original signifies both a measuring line and a written line), letters and words in writing being nothing but lines drawn into several forms or figures. But the Septuagint, whose translation the apostle citeth, for *Kavam, their line,* read *Kolam, their sound;* either misreading the word or studiously mollifying the sense into a nearer compliance with the latter clause of the verse, "*And their words to the end of the world.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 1—4.—Like as the sun with his light beneficially comforteth all the world, so Christ, the Son of God, reacheth his benefits unto all men, so that they will receive them thankfully, and not refuse them disobediently.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 2.—"*Day unto day,*" etc. But what is the meaning of the next word —*One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another?* Literally, *dies diem dicit,* is nothing else but *dies diem docet.* One day telleth another, is one day teacheth another. The day past is instructed by the day present: every new day doth afford new doctrine. The day is a most apt time to learn by reading and conference; the night a most fit time for invention and meditation. Now that which thou canst not understand this day thou mayest haply learn the next, and that which is not found out in one night may be gotten in another. Mystically (saith Heirom), Christ is this "*day,*" who saith of himself, "I am the light of the world," and his twelve apostles are the twelve hours of the day; for Christ's Spirit revealed by the mouths of his apostles the mysteries of our salvation, in other ages not so fully known unto the sons of men. *One day telleth another,* that is, the spiritual utter this unto the spiritual; and *one night certifieth another,* that is, Judas insinuates as much unto the Jews in the night of ignorance, saying, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he, lay hold on him." Matt. xxvi. 28. Or, the Old Testament only shadowing Christ is *the night,* and the New Testament plainly showing Christ, is *the day.*—*John Boys.*

Verse 2.—"*Day unto day,*" or day after day; the vicissitude or continual succession of day and night speaketh much divine knowledge. The assiduity and constancy without any intermission by the heavens preaching is hereby expressed.—*John Richardson.*

Verse 2.—"*Uttereth,*" poureth forth abundantly; "*sheweth,*" demonstrates clearly and effectively, without ambiguity. Job xxxvi. 2. Many in the full light of gospel day, hear not that speech, who yet in the night of affliction and trouble, or in the conviction of their natural darkness, have that knowledge communicated to them which enables them to realise the joy that cometh in the morning.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 2.—"*Sheweth knowledge.*" We may illustrate the differing measures

in which natural objects convey knowledge to men of differing mental and spiritual capacity by the story of our great English artist. He is said to have been engaged upon one of his immortal works, and a lady of rank looking on remarked, "But, Mr. Turner, I do not see in nature all that you describe there." "Ah, Madam," answered the painter, "do you not wish you could?"—*C. H. S.*

Verse 3.—"*There is no speech,*" etc. The sunset was one of the most glorious I ever beheld, and the whole earth seemed so still that *the voice of neither God nor man was heard.* There was not a ripple upon the waters, not the leaf of a tree nor even of a blade of grass moving, and the rocks upon the opposite shore reflected the sun's "after-glow," and were again themselves reflected from or in the river during the brief twilight, in a way I do not remember ever to have beheld before. No! I will not say *the voice of God* was not heard; it spoke in the very stillness as loud as in roaring thunder, in the placid scene as in rocks and cliffs impassable, and louder still in *the heavens and in the firmament,* and in the magnificent prospect around me. His wondrous works declared him to be near, and I felt as if the very ground upon which I was treading was holy.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 4.—"*Their line is gone out,*" etc. "Their *sound* went," etc. Rom. x. 18. The relations which the gospel of Christ Jesus hath to the Psalms of David I find to be more than to all the Bible besides, that seldom anything is written in the New Testament, but we are sent to fetch our proofs from these. The margin here sends me to the Psalm, and the Psalm sends me back to this again; showing that they both speak one thing. How comes it then that it is not one, for "*line*" and "*sound*" are not one thing? Is there not some mistake here? Answer—To fetch a proof from a place is one thing, an allusion is another. Sometimes the evangelists are enforced to bring their proofs for what they write out of the Old Testament, else we should never believe them, and then they must be very sure of the terms, when they say, "This was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken," etc. But the apostle was not now upon that account; only showing to the Romans the marvellous spreading of the gospel, alluding to this passage of David discoursing of "*the heavens,*" to which the prophet compared the publication of the word; the sun and moon and stars not only shining through, but round all the earth. The same subject Paul was now upon, and for this purpose makes use of a term fitter to express the preaching of the gospel, by the word "*sound,*" than that other word expressing the limitations of the law, by the word "*line:*" both of these agreeing that there is no fitter comparison to be fetched from anything in nature than from "*the heavens,*" their motions, revolutions, influences upon sublunary bodies; also in their eclipses, when one text seems to darken another, as if it were put out altogether by crossing and opposing, which is but seemingly so to the ignorant, they agree sweetly enough in themselves; no bridegroom can agree better with his bride, nor rejoice more to run his course. So they both conclude in this, that the sun never saw that nation yet where the world of truth, in one degree or other (all the world, you must think, cannot be right under the meridian) hath not shined.—*William Streat, in "The Dividing of the Hoof,"* 1654.

Verse 4.—"*Unto the end of the world.*" Venantius Fortunatus eleven hundred years ago witnesses to the peregrinations of Paul the apostle.

> He passed the ocean's curled wave,
> As far as islands harbours have;
> As far as Brittain yields a bay,
> Or Iceland's frozen shore a stay.
>
> *John Cragge,* 1557.

Verse 4.—"*Their line is gone out through all the earth,*" etc. The molten sea did stand upon twelve oxen, that is, as Paul doth interpret it, upon twelve apostles (1 Cor. ix. 10); which in that they looked four ways, east, west, north, and south, they did teach all nations. And in that they looked three and three together, they did represent the blessed Trinity. Not only teaching all nations, but also in that sea of water, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore, though the two kine which carried the ark wherein were the tables of the law, went straight and kept one path, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left; yet these twelve oxen which carried the molten sea, signifying the doctrine of the gospel, went not straight, neither kept one path, but turned into

the way of the Gentiles; yea, they looked all manner of ways, east, west, north, and south. And those two kine stood still and lowed no more when they came to the field of Joshua, dwelling in Bethshemesh, that is, the house of the sun. To note, that all the kine, and calves, and sacrifices, and ceremonies of the old law were to cease and stand still when they came to Jesus, who is the true Joshua, dwelling in heaven, which is the true Bethshemesh. But these twelve oxen were so far from leaving off, either to go, or to low, when they came to Christ, that even then they went much faster and lowed much louder; so that now "*their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words to the end of the world;*" and "*in them hath God set*" Bethshemesh, that is, a house or "*tabernacle for the sun.*" Therefore, as the material sun, through the twelve signs of the Zodiac, goeth forth from the uttermost parts of the heaven, and runneth about to the end of it again: in like sort, the spiritual *Sun of Righteousness*, by the twelve apostles, as by twelve signs, hath been borne round about the world, that he might be not only "the glory of his people Israel," but also "a light to lighten the Gentiles;" and that all, "*all* the ends of the earth might see the salvation of our God."—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verses 4—6.—It appears to me very likely that the Holy Ghost in these expressions, which he most immediately uses about the rising of the sun, has an eye to the rising of the Sun of Righteousness from the grave, and that the expressions that the Holy Ghost here uses are conformed to such a view. The times of the Old Testament are times of night in comparison of the gospel day, and are so represented in Scripture, and therefore the approach of the day of the New Testament dispensation in the birth of Christ, is called the day-spring from on high visiting the earth (Luke i. 78), "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us;" and the commencing of the gospel dispensation as it was introduced by Christ, is called the Sun of Righteousness rising. Mal. iv. 2. But this gospel dispensation commences with the resurrection of Christ. Therein the Sun of Righteousness rises from under the earth, as the sun appears to do in the morning, and comes forth as a bridegroom. He rose as the joyful, glorious bridegroom of his church; for Christ, especially as risen again, is the proper bridegroom, or husband, of his church, as the apostle teaches (Rom. vii. 4), "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." He that was covered with contempt, and overwhelmed in a deluge of sorrow, has purchased and won his spouse, for he loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself; now he comes forth as a bridegroom to bring home his purchased spouse to him in spiritual marriage, as he soon after did in the conversion of such multitudes, making his people willing in the day of his power, and hath also done many times since, and will do in a yet more glorious degree. And as the sun when it rises comes forth like a bridegroom gloriously adorned, so Christ in his resurrection entered on his state of glory. After his state of sufferings, he rose to shine forth in ineffable glory as the King of heaven and earth, that he might be a glorious bridegroom, in whom his church might be unspeakably happy. Here the Psalmist says that God *has placed a tabernacle for the sun in the heavens:* so God the Father had prepared an abode in heaven for Jesus Christ; he had set a throne for him there, to which he ascended after he rose. The sun after it is risen ascends up to the midst of heaven, and then at that end of its race descends again to the earth; so Christ when he rose from the grave ascended up to the height of heaven, and far above all heavens, but at the end of the gospel day will descend again to the earth. It is here said that the risen sun "rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." So Christ, when he rose, rose as a man of war, as the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle; he rose to conquer his enemies, and to show forth his glorious power in subduing all things to himself, during that race which he had to run, which is from his resurrection to the end of the world, when he will return to the earth again. . . . That the Holy Ghost here has a mystical meaning, and has respect to the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and not merely the light of the natural sun, is confirmed by the verses that follow in which the Psalmist himself seems to apply them to the word of God, which is the light of that Sun, even of Jesus Christ, who himself revealed the word of God: see the very next words, "The law of the Lord is perfect," etc.—*Jonathan Edwards*, 1703—1758.

Verse 5.—"*Which is as a bridegroom,*" etc. The sun is described like a bride-

groom coming out of his chamber, dressed and prepared, and as a giant rejoicing to run his race; but though the sun be thus prepared, and dressed, and ready, yet if the Lord send a writ and a prohibition to the sun to keep within his chamber, he cannot come forth, his journey is stopped. Thus also he stops man in his nearest preparations for any action. If the Lord will work, who shall let it? Isaiah xliii. 13. That is, there is no power in heaven or earth which can hinder him. But if the Lord will let, who shall work? Neither sun, nor stars, nor men, nor devils, can work, if he forbids them. The point is full of comfort.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*Which is as a bridegroom,*" etc. The Sun of Righteousness appeared in three signs especially; *Leo, Virgo, Libra.* 1. In *Leo*, roaring as a lion, in the law; so that the people could not endure his voice. 2. In *Virgo*, born of a pure virgin in the gospel. 3. In *Libra*, weighing our works in his balance at the day of judgment. Or as Bernard distinguisheth his threefold coming aptly—*venit ad homines, venit in homines, venit contra homines:* in the time past he came *unto* men as upon this day *; in the time present, he comes by his spirit *into* men every day; in the time future, he shall come *against* men at the last day. The coming here mentioned is his coming in the flesh—for so the fathers usually gloss the text—he came forth of the virgin's womb, "*as a bridegroom out of his chamber.*" As a *bridegroom*, for the King of heaven at this holy time made a great wedding for his Son. Matt. xxii. 1. Christ is the *bridegroom*, man's nature the bride, the conjunction and blessed union of both in one person is his marriage. The best way to reconcile two disagreeing families is to make some marriage between them: even so, the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us in the world that he might hereby make our peace, reconciling God to man and man to God. By this happy match the Son of God is become the Son of Man, even flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bones; and the sons of men are made the sons of God, "of his flesh and of his bones," as Paul saith, Eph. v. 30. So that now the church being Christ's own spouse, saith, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." Cant. vi. 3. My sin is his sin, and his righteousness is my righteousness. He who knew no sin, for my sake was made sin; and I, contrariwise, having no good thing, am made the righteousness of God in him: I which am *brown* by persecution, and *black* by nature (Cant. i. 5), so foul as the sow that walloweth in the mire, through his favour am comely, without spot or wrinkle, so white as the snow, like a lily among thorns, even the fairest among women. Cant. ii. 2. This happy *marriage* is not a *mar age*, but it makes a *merry age*, being "the consolation of Israel," and comfort of Jerusalem's heart. Indeed, Christ our husband doth absent himself from us in his body for a time; but when he did ascend into heaven he took with him our pawn, namely his flesh; and he gave us his pawn, namely, his Spirit, assuring us that we shall one day, when the world is ended, enter with him into the wedding chamber, and there feast with him, and enjoy his blessed company for evermore.—*John Boys.*

Verse 6.—"*There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*"—This is literally the case. The earth receives its heat from the sun, and by conduction, a part of it enters the crust of our globe. By convection, another portion is carried to the atmosphere, which it warms. Another portion is radiated into space, according to laws yet imperfectly understood, but which are evidently connected with the colour, chemical composition, and mechanical structure of parts of the earth's surface. At the same time the ordinary state of the air, consisting of gases and vapour, modifies the heat rays and prevents scorching. Thus, the solar heat is equalised by the air. Nothing on earth or in air is hid from the heat of the sun. . . . Even the colour of some bodies is changed by heat. . . . Heat also is in bodies in a state which is not sensible, and is therefore called latent heat, or heat of fluidity, because it is regarded as the cause of fluidity in ponderable substances. It can fuse every substance it does not decompose below the melting point, as in the case of wood. Every gas may be regarded as consisting of heat, and some basis of ponderable matter, whose cohesion it overcomes, imparting a tendency to great expansion, when no external obstacle prevents, and this expansive tendency is their elasticity or tension. Certain gases have been liquefied under great pressure, and extreme cold. Heat, also, at certain temperatures, causes the elasticity of vapours to overcome the atmospheric pressure which can no longer restrain them. An example of this is the boiling point of water; and, indeed, in every case the

* The Nineteenth Psalm is one "appointed to be read" on *Christmas Day.*

true instance is the boiling point. Philosophers are agreed that the affinity of heat for any ponderable substance is superior to all other forces acting upon it. No ponderable matters can combine without disengagement of heat. . . . And the same occurs from every mechanical pressure and condensation of a body. In all these cases, and many more, there are like evidences of the presence and influences of heat; but the facts now advanced are sufficient to show us the force of the expression, that in terrestrial things nothing is hid from, or can by any possibility escape the agency of heat.—*Edwin Sidney, A.M., in "Conversations on the Bible and Science,"* 1866.

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—"*There is nothing hid from the heat,*" nothing from the light of Christ. It is not solely on the mountain top that he shines, as in the days before he was fully risen, when his rays, although unseen by the rest of the world, formed a glory round the heads of his prophets, who saw him while to the chief part of mankind he was still lying below the horizon. Now, however, that he is risen, he pours his light through the valley, as well as over the mountain; nor is there any one, at least in these countries, who does not catch some gleams of that light, except those who burrow and hide themselves in the dark caverns of sin. But it is not light alone that Christ sheds from his heavenly tabernacle. As nothing is hid from his light, neither is anything hid from his heat. He not only enlightens the understanding, so that it shall see and know the truth; he also softens, and melts, and warms the heart, so that it shall love the truth, and calls forth fruit from it, and ripens the fruit he has called forth; and that too on the lowliest plant which creeps along the ground, as well as the loftiest tree. . . . .

Though while he was on earth, he had fullest power of bestowing every earthly gift, yet, in order that he should be able to bestow heavenly gifts with the same all-healing power, it was necessary that he should go up into heaven. When he had done so, when he had ascended into *his tabernacle in the heavens*, then, he promises his disciples, he would send down the Holy Spirit of God, who should bring them heavenly gifts, yea, who should enter into their hearts, and make them bring forth all the fruits of the Spirit in abundance; should make them abound in love, in peace, in longsuffering, in gentleness, in goodness, in faith, in meekness, in temperance. These are the bright heavenly rays, which, as it were, make up the pure light of Christ; *and from this heat nothing is hid.* Even the hardest heart may be melted by it; even the foulest may be purified.—*Julius Charles Hare, M.A.*, 1841.

Verse 7.—"*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.*" To man fallen, the law only convinceth of sin, and bindeth over to death, it is nothing but a killing letter; but the gospel, accompanied by the power of the Spirit, bringeth life. Again, it is said, "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;*" therefore it seems the law may also be a word of salvation to the creature. I answer; by the law there, is not meant only that part of the word which we call the covenant of works, but there it is put for the whole word, for the whole doctrine of the covenant of life and salvation; as Psalm i. 2: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." And if you take it in that stricter sense, then it converteth the soul but by accident, as it is joined with the gospel, which is the ministry of life and righteousness, but in itself it is the law of sin and death. Look, as a thing taken simply, would be poison and deadly in itself, yet mixed with other wholesome medicines, it is of great use, is an excellent physical ingredient; so the law is of great use as joined with the gospel, to awaken and startle the sinner, to show him his duty, to convince him of sin and judgment; but it is the gospel properly that pulls in the heart.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 7.—*The law*, or doctrine, an orderly manner of instruction, an institution or disposition, called in Hebrew *torah*, which implies both doctrine and an orderly disposition of the same. Therefore where one prophet, relating David's words, saith *the law* of man (2 Sam. vii. 19), another saith, *the orderly estate*, or, *course* of man. 1 Cor. xvii. 17. The Holy Ghost, in Greek, calls it *Nomos*, a law (Heb. viii. 10), from Jer. xxxi. 33. This name is most commonly ascribed to the precepts given by Moses at Mount Sinai (Deut. xxxii. 4; Mal. iv. 4; John i. 17, and vii. 19); it is also largely used for all his writings. For the history of Genesis is called *law* (Gal. iv. 21), from Gen. xvi. And though sometimes the law be distinguished from the Psalms and Prophets (Luke xvi. 16, and xxiv. 24), yet the other prophets' books are called *law* (1 Cor. xiv. 21), from Isa. xxviii. 11; the Psalms are also thus named (John x. 24 and xv. 25), from Psalm lxxxii. 6 and xxxv. 19. Yea, one Psalm

is called a *law* (Psalm lxxviii. 1); and the many branches of Moses' doctrine as the *law* of the sin-offering, etc., Lev. vi. 25. And generally it is used for any *doctrine*, as the *law* of works, the *law* of faith, etc. Rom. iii. 27.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 7.—"*Converting the soul.*" This version conveys a sense good and true in itself, but is not in accordance with the design of the Psalmist which is, to express the divine law on the feelings and affections of good men. The Hebrew terms properly mean, "bringing back the spirit," when it is depressed by adversity, by refreshing and consoling it: like food, it restores the faint, and communicates vigour to the disconsolate.—*William Walford*, 1837.

Verse 7.—"*Converting the soul.*" The heart of man is the most free and hard of anything to work upon, and to make an impression and stamp upon this hard heart, this heart that is so stony, adamantine, "harder than the nether millstones," as the Scripture teacheth. To compel this free-will, this *Domina sui actus*, the queen in the soul, the empress, it cannot be without a divine power, without a hand that is omnipotent; but the ministers do this by the Word—they mollify, and wound, and break this heart, they incline, and bow, and draw this free-will whither the spirit listeth. And Clemens Alexandrinus is not afraid to say, that if the fables of Orpheus and Amphion were true—that they drew birds, beasts, and stones, with their ravishing melody—yet the harmony of the Word is greater, which translates men from Helicon to Zion, which softens the hard heart of man obdurate against the truth, that "raises up children to Abraham of stones," that is (as he interprets), of unbelievers, which he calls stocks and stones, that put their trust in stones and stocks; which metamorphoses men that are beastlike, wild birds for their lightness and vanity, serpents for their craft and subtlety, lions for their wrath and cruelty, swine for voluptuousness and luxury, etc.; and charms them so that of wild beasts they become tame men; that makes living *stones* (as he did others) come of their own accord to the building of the walls of Jerusalem (as he of Thebes), to the building of a living temple to the everliving God. This must needs be a truly persuasive charm, as he speaks.—*John Stoughton's "Choice Sermons,"* 1640.

Verse 7.—"*Making wise the simple.*" The apostle Paul in Eph. i. 8, expresseth conversion, and the whole work inherently wrought in us, by the making of a man wise. It is usual in the Scriptures, and you may ofttimes meet with it: "*converting the soul,*" "*making wise the simple.*" The beginning of conversion, and so all along, the increase of all grace to the end, is expressed by wisdom entering into a man's heart. "If wisdom enter into thy heart," and so goes on to do more and more; not unto thy head only—a man may have all that, and be a fool in the end, but when it entereth into the heart, and draws all the affections after it, and along with it, "when knowledge is pleasant to thy soul," then a man is converted; when God breaks open a man's heart, and makes wisdom fall in, enter in, and make a man wise.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 7.—This verse, and the two next following, which treat of God's law, are in Hebrew, written each of them with ten words, according to the number of the ten commandments, which are called the ten words. Exodus xxxiv. 28.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verses 7, 8.—"*The testimony of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,*" revealing the object, ennobling the organ.—*Richard Stock.*

Verses 7—11.—All of us are by nature the children of wrath; our souls are like the *porches* of Bethesda (John v.), in which are lodged a great many "sick folk, blind, halt, withered;" and the Scriptures are like the *pool* of Bethesda, into which whosoever entereth, after God's Holy Spirit hath a little stirred the water, is "made whole of whatsoever disease he hath." He that hath anger's frenzy, being as furious as a lion, by stepping into this pool shall in good time become as gentle as a lamb; he that hath the blindness of intemperance, by washing in this pool shall easily see his folly; he that hath envy's rust, avarice's leprosy, luxury's palsy, shall have means and medicines here for the curing of his maladies. *The word of God* is like the drug *catholicon*, that is instead of all purges; and like the herb *panaces*, that is good for all diseases. Is any man heavy? *the statutes of the Lord rejoice the heart:* is any man in want? *the judgments of the Lord are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and by keeping of them there is great reward:* is any man ignorant? *the testimonies of the Lord give wisdom to the simple*, that is, to little ones, both in standing and understanding. In standing, as unto little Daniel, little John the evangelist, little Timothy: to little ones in under-

standing; for the great philosphers who were the wizards of the world, because they were not acquainted with God's law became fools while they professed themselves wise. Rom. i. 22. But our prophet saith, "I have more understanding than all my teachers, because thy testimonies are my meditation," and my study. Psalm cxix. 99. To conclude, whatsoever we are by corruption of nature, God's law *converteth* us, and maketh us to speak with new tongues, and to sing new songs unto the Lord, and to become new men and new creatures in Christ. 2 Cor. v. 17.—*J. Boys.*

Verse 8.—"*The statutes.*" Many divines and critics, and Castalio in particular, have endeavoured to attach a distinct shade of meaning to the words, *law, testimony, the statutes, commandments, fear, judgments,* occurring in this context. תּוֹרָה, *the law,* has been considered to denote the preceptive part of revelation. עֵדוּת, *the testimony,* has been restricted to the doctrinal part. פִּקּוּדִים, *the statutes,* has been regarded as relating to such things as have been given in charge. מִצְוָה, *the commandment,* has been taken to express the general body of the divine law and doctrine. יִרְאָה, *religious fear.* מִשְׁפָּטִים, *the judgments,* the civil statutes of the Mosaic law, more particularly the penal sanctions.—*John Morison.*

Verse 8.—"*The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.*" How odious is the profaneness of those Christians who neglect the Holy Scriptures, and give themselves to reading other books! How many precious hours do many spend, and that not only on work days, but holy days, in foolish romances, fabulous histories, lascivious poems! And why this, but that they may be cheered and delighted, when as full joy is only to be had in these holy books. Alas! the joy you find in those writings is perhaps pernicious, such as tickleth your lust, and promoteth contemplative wickedness. At the best it is but vain, such as only pleaseth the fancy and affecteth the wit; whereas these holy writings (to use David's expression), are "*right, rejoicing the heart.*" Again, are there not many who more set by Plutarch's morals, Seneca's epistles, and such like books, than they do by the Holy Scriptures? It is true, Beloved, there are excellent truths in those moral writings of the heathen, but yet they are far short of these sacred books. Those may comfort against outward trouble, but not against inward fears; they may rejoice the mind, but cannot quiet the conscience; they may kindle some flashy sparkles of joy, but they cannot warm the soul with a lasting fire of solid consolations. And truly, brethren, if ever God give you a spiritual ear to judge of things aright, you will then acknowledge there are no bells like to those of Aaron's, no harp like to that of David's, no trumpet like to that of Isaiah's, no pipes like to those of the apostle's; and, you will confess with Petrus Damianus, that those writings of heathen orators, philosophers, poets, which formerly were so pleasing, are now dull and harsh in comparison of the comfort of the Scriptures.—*Nathanael Hardy, D.D.,* 1618—1670.

Verse 10.—"*Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.*" Love the word written. Psa. cxix. 97. "Oh, how love I thy law!" "Lord," said Augustine, "let the holy Scriptures be my chaste delight." Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a garden, every truth is a fragrant flower, which we should wear, not on our bosom, but in our heart. David counted the word "*sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.*" There is that in Scripture which may breed delight. It shows us the way to riches: Deut. xxviii. 5, Prov. iii. 10; to long life: Psa. xxxiv. 12; to a kingdom: Heb. xii. 28. Well, then, may we count those the *sweetest hours* which are spent in reading the holy Scriptures; well may we say with the prophet (Jer. xv. 16), "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and they were the joy and rejoicing of my heart."—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 10.—"*Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.*" There is no difference made amongst us between the delicacy of honey in the comb and that which is separated from it. From the information of Dr. Halle, concerning the diet of the Moors of Barbary, we learn that they esteem honey a very wholesome breakfast, "and the most delicious that which is in the comb with the young bees in it, before they come out of their cases, whilst they still look milk-white." (*Miscellanea Curiosa,* vol. iii. p. 382.) The distinction made by the Psalmist is then perfectly just and conformable to custom and practice, at least of more modern, and probably, equally so of ancient times.—*Samuel Burder, A.M., in "Oriental Customs,"* 1812.

Verse 11.—"*Moreover by them is thy servant warned.*" A certain Jew had formed a design to poison Luther, but was disappointed by a faithful friend, who sent Luther a portrait of the man, with a warning against him. By this, Luther knew the murderer and escaped his hands. Thus the word of God, O Christian, shows thee the face of those lusts which Satan employs to destroy thy comforts and poison thy soul.—*G. S. Bowes, B.A., in "Illustrative Gatherings for Preachers and Teachers,"* 1860.

Verse 11.—"*In keeping of them there is great reward.*" This "*keeping of them*" implies great carefulness to know, to remember, and to observe; and the "*reward*" (lit. "the end"), *i.e.*, the recompense, is far beyond anticipation.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 11.—"*In keeping of them there is great reward.*" Not only for keeping, but in keeping of them, there is great reward. The joy, the rest, the refreshing, the comforts, the contents, the smiles, the incomes that saints now enjoy, in the ways of God, are so precious and glorious in their eyes, that they would not exchange them for ten thousands worlds. Oh! if the vails,* be thus sweet and glorious before pay-day comes, what will be that glory that Christ will crown his saints with for cleaving to his service in the face of all difficulties, when he shall say to his Father, "Lo, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." Isa. viii. 18. If there be so much to be had in the wilderness, what then shall be had in paradise!—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 11.—"*In keeping of them there is great reward.*" Not only *for keeping* but *in keeping* of them. As every flower hath its sweet smell, so every good action hath its sweet reflection upon the soul: and as Cardan saith, that every precious stone hath some egregious virtue; so here, righteousness is its own reward, though few men think so, and act accordingly. Howbeit, the chief reward is not till the last cast, till we come to heaven. The word here rendered "*reward*," signifieth *the heel*, and by a metaphor, the *end* of a work, and the *reward* of it, which is not till the end.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11.—"*Reward.*" Though we should not serve God for a reward, yet we shall have a reward for our service. The time is coming when ungodliness shall be as much prosecuted by justice, as in times past godliness had been persecuted by injustice. Though our reward be not for our good works, yet we shall have our good works rewarded, and have a good reward for our works. Though the best of men (they being at the best but unprofitable servants) deserve nothing at the hands of God, yet they may deserve much at the hands of men; and if they have not the recompense they deserve, yet it is a kind of recompense to have deserved. As he said, and nobly, "I had rather it should be said, Why doth not Cato's image stand here? than that it should be said, Why doth it stand here?"—*Ralph Venning.* 1620—1673.

Verse 12.—"*Who can understand his errors?*" After this survey of the works and word of God, he comes at last to peruse the third book, his *conscience;* a book which though wicked men may keep shut up, and naturally do not love to look in to it, yet will one day be laid open before the great tribunal in the view of the whole world, to the justifying of God when he judges, and to impenitent sinners' eternal confusion. And what finds he here? A foul, blurred copy that he is puzzled how to read; "*who*," says he, "*can understand his errors?*" Those notions which God had with his own hand imprinted upon conscience in legible characters, are partly defaced and slurred with scribble and interlinings of "*secret faults;*" partly obliterated and quite razed out with capital crimes, "presumptuous sins." And yet this *manuscript* cannot be so abused, but it will still give in evidence for God; there being no argument in the world that can with more force extort an acknowledgment of God from any man's conscience than the conviction of guilt itself labours under. For the sinner cannot but know he has transgressed a law, and he finds within him, if he is not past all sense, such apprehensions that though at present he "walk in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes" (as the wise man ironically advises the young man to do, Ecc. xi. 9), yet he knows (as the same wise man there from his own experience tells him) that "for all these things God will bring him into judgment." The *conscience* being thus convicted of sin, where there is any sense of true piety the soul will, with David, here address itself to God for pardon, that it may be "*cleansed from secret faults;*" and for grace, that by its restraints, and

* Gratuities, presents.

preventions, and assistances, it may be "*kept back from presumptuous sins,*" and if unhappily engaged, that it may be freed at least from the "*dominion*" of them—"*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me,*" etc.—*Adam Littleton.*

Verse 12.—The prophet saith, "*Who can understand his own faults?*" No man can, but God can; therefore reason after this manner, as Saint Bernard saith: I know and am known; I know but in part, but God knows me and knows me wholly; but what I know, I know but in part. So the apostle reasons; "I know nothing of myself, yet am I not hereby justified."

Admit that thou keepest thyself so free, and renewest thy repentance so daily that thou knowest nothing by thyself, yet mark what the apostle adds farther; "Notwithstanding, I do not judge myself I am not hereby justified, but he that judgeth me is the Lord." This is the condition of all men; he that is infinite knows them; therefore they should not dare to judge themselves, but with the prophet David, in Psalm xix., entreat the Lord that he would cleanse them from their secret sins.—*Richard Stock.*

Verse 12.—"*Who can understand his own errors?*" None can to the depth and bottom. In this question there are two considerables:—1. A concession; 2. A confession. He makes a grant that *our life is full of errors;* and the Scriptures say the same, while they affirm that "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. liii. 6); "I have gone astray like a lost sheep" (Psa. cxix. 176); that the "house of Israel" hath "lost sheep," Matt. x. 6. I need not reckon up the particulars, as the errors of our senses, understandings, consciences, judgments, wills, affections, desires, actions, and occurrences. The whole man *in nature* is like a tree nipped at root, which brings forth worm-eaten fruits. The whole man *in life* is like an instrument out of tune, which jars at every stroke. If we cannot understand them, certainly they are very many.—*Robert Abbot,* 1646.

Verse 12.—"*Who can understand his errors?*" If a man repent not until he have made confession of all his sins in the ear of his ghostly father, if a man cannot have absolution of his sins until his sins be told by tale and number in the priest's ear; in that, as David saith, *none* can understand, much less, then, utter all his sins: *Delicta quis intelligat?* "*Who can understand his sins?*" In that David of himself complaineth elsewhere how that his "sins are overflowed his head, and as a heavy burden do depress him" (Psa. xxxviii. 4); alas! shall not a man by this doctrine be utterly driven from repentance? Though they have gone about something to make plasters for their sores, of confession or attrition to assuage their pain, bidding a man to hope well of his contrition, though it be not so full as is required, and of his confession, though he have not numbered all his sins, if so be that he do so much as in him lieth; dearly beloved, in that there is none but that herein he is guilty (for who doth as much as he may?) trow ye that this plaster is not like salt for sore eyes? Yes, undoubtedly, when they have done all they can for the appeasing of consciences in these points, this is the sum, that we yet should hope well, but yet so hope that we must stand in a mammering* and doubting whether our sins be forgiven. For to believe *remissionem peccatorum,* that is to be certain of "forgiveness of sins," as our creed teacheth us, they count it a presumption. Oh, abomination! and that not only herein, but in all their penance as they paint it.—*John Bradford* (*Martyr*) 1510—1555.

Verse 12.—"*Who can understand his errors?*" By "*errors*" he means his unwitting and inconsiderate mistakes. There are sins, some of which are committed when the sun shines—*i.e.,* with light and knowledge; and then, as it is with colours when the sun shines, you may see them; so these, a man can see, and know, and confess them particularly to be transgressions. There are other sins which are committed either in the times of ignorance, or else (if there be knowledge), yet with unobservance. Either of these may be so heaped up in the particular number of them, that as a man did when he did commit them, take no notice of them; so now, after the commission, if he should take the brightest candle to search all the records of his soul, yet many of them would escape his notice. And, indeed, this is a great part of our misery, that we cannot understand all our debts. We can easily see too many, yet many more lie, as it were, dead and out of sight. To sin is one great misery, and then to forget our sins is a misery too. If in repentance we could set the battle in array, point to every individual sin in the true and

* Hesitating.

particular times of acting and re-acting, oh, how would our hearts be more broken with shame and sorrow, and how would we adore the richness of the treasure of mercy which must have a multitude in it to pardon the multitude of our infinite errors and sins. But this is the comfort; though we cannot understand every particular sin, or time of sinning, yet if we be not idle to search and cast over the books, and if we be heartily grieved for these sins which we have found out, and can by true repentance turn from them unto God, and by faith unto the blood of Jesus Christ, I say that God, who knows our sins better than we can know them, and who understands the true intentions and dispositions of the heart—that if it did see the unknown sins it would be answerably carried against them—he will for his own mercy sake forgive them, and he, too, will not remember them. Nevertheless, though David saith, " *Who can understand his errors ?* " as the prophet Jeremiah spake also, " The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it ? " yet must we bestir ourselves at heaven to get more and more heavenly light, to find out more and more of our sinnings. So the Lord can search the heart; and, though we shall never be able to find out all our sins which we have committed, yet it is proper and beneficial for us to find out yet more sins than yet we do know. And you shall find these in your own experience; that as soon as ever grace entered your hearts, you saw sin in another way than you ever saw it before; yea, and the more grace hath traversed and increased in the soul the more full discoveries hath it made of sins. It hath shown new sins as it were; new sins, not for their being, not as if they were not in the heart and life before, but for their evidence and our apprehension. We do now see such wages and such inclinations to be sinful which we did not think to be so before. As physic brings those humours which had their residence before now more to the sense of the patient, or as the sun makes open the motes of dust which were in the room before, so doth the light of the word discover more corruption.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 12.—" *Who can understand his errors ?* " Who can tell how oft he offendeth ? No man. The hairs of a man's head may be told, the stars appear in multitudes, yet some have undertaken to reckon them; but no arithmetic can number our sins. Before we can recount a thousand we shall commit ten thousand more; and so rather multiply by addition than divide by subtraction; there is no possibility of numeration. Like Hydra's head, while we are cutting off twenty by repentance, we find a hundred more grown up. It is just, then, that infinite sorrows shall follow infinite sins.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—" *Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*" It is the desire of a holy person to be cleansed, not only from public, but also from *private and secret sins.* Rom. vii. 24. " O wretched man (saith Paul), who shall deliver me ? " Why, O blessed apostle ! what is it that holds thee ? What is it that molests thee ? Thy life, thou sayest, was unblamable before thy conversion, and since thy conversion. Phil. iii. Thou hast exercised thyself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Acts xxiv. 16. And yet thou criest out, " O wretched man," and yet thou complainest, " Who shall deliver me ? " Verily, brethren, it was not sin abroad, but at home: it was not sin without, but at this time sin within; it was not Paul's sinning with man, but Paul's sinning within Paul: oh ! that " law of his members warring (secretly within him) against the law of his mind; " this, this made that holy man so to cry out, so to complain. As Rebekah was weary of her life, not as we read for any foreign disquietments, but because of domestic troubles: " The daughters of Heth " within the house made her " weary of her life; " so the private and secret birth of corruption within Paul—the workings of that—that was the cause of his trouble, that was the ground of his exclamation and desires, " Who shall deliver me ? " I remember that the same Paul adviseth the Ephesians as " to put off the former conversation " so " to put on the renewed spirit of the mind " (Eph. iv. 22, 23); intimating that there are sins lurking within as well as sins walking without; and that true Christians must not only sweep the door, but wash the chamber; my meaning is, not only come off from sins which lie open in the conversation, but also labour to be cleansed from sins and sinning which remain secret and hidden in the spirit and inward disposition.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 12.—" *Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*" Learn to see thy spots. Many have unknown sins, as a man may have a mole on his back and himself never know it. Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults. But have we not spots whereof we are not ignorant ? In diseases sometimes nature is strong enough to put forth

spots, and there she cries to us by these outward declarations that we are sick. Sometimes she cannot do it but by the force of cordials. Sometimes conscience of herself shows us our sins; sometimes she cannot but by medicines, arguments that convince us out of the holy word. Some can see, and will not, as Balaam; some would see, and cannot, as the eunuch; some neither will nor can, as Pharaoh; some both can and will, as David. . . . We have many spots which God does not hear from us, because we see them not in ourselves. Who will acknowledge that error, whereof he does not know himself guilty? The sight of sins is a great happiness, for it causeth an ingenuous confession.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—"*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*"—The law of the Lord is so holy that forgiveness must be prayed for, even for hidden sins. (*Note*—This was a principal text of the Reformers against the auricular confession of the Roman Catholics.)—*T. C. Barth's "Bible Manual,"* 1865.

Verse 12.—"*Secret faults.*" Sins may be termed "*secret*" either, 1. *When they are coloured and disguised*—though they do fly abroad, yet not under that name, but apparelled with some semblance of virtues. Cyprian complains of such tricks in his second epistle, which is to Donatus. 2. *When they are kept off from the stage of the world;* they are like fire in the chimney; though you do not see it, yet it burns. So many a person, like those in Ezekiel, "commit abominations in secret"—that is, so as the public eye is not upon them. He is sinful, and acts it with the greatest vileness; all the difference betwixt another sinner and him is this—that he is, and the other saith he is, a sinner. Just as 'twixt a book shut and a book opened; that which is shut hath the same lines and words, but the other being opened every man may see and read them. 3. *When they are kept, not only from the public eye, but from any mortal eye;* that is, the carnal eye of him who commits the sins sees them not: he doth, indeed, see them with the eye of conscience, but not with an eye of natural sense. Even those persons with whom he doth converse, and who highly commend the frame of his ways, cannot yet see the secret discoursings and actings of sin in his mind and heart. For, brethren, all the actings of sin are not without, they are not visible; but there are some, yea, the most dangerous actings within the soul, where corruption lies as a fountain and root. The heart of man is a scheme of wickedness; nay, a man saith that in his heart which he dares not speak with his tongue, and his thought will do that which his hands dare not to execute. Well, then, sin may be called "*secret*" when it is sin, and acted as sin, even there, where none but God and conscience can see. Methinks sin is like a candle in a lantern, where the shining is first within and then bursting out at the windows; or like evils and ulcerous humours, which are scabs and scurvy stuff, first within the skin, and afterwards they break out to the view on the outside. So it is with sin; it is a malignant humour and a fretting leprosy, diffusing itself into several secret acts and workings within the mind, and then it breaks abroad and dares adventure the practice of itself to the eye of the world; and be it that it may never see the light, that it may be like a child born and buried in the womb, yet as that child is a man, a true man there closeted in that hidden frame of nature, so sin is truly sin, though it never gets out beyond the womb which did conceive and enliven it.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 12.—"*Secret faults.*" "*Secret sins*" are more dangerous to the person in some respects than open sins. For *a man doth, by his art of sinning, deprive himself of the help of his sinfulness.* Like him who will carry his wound covered, or who bleeds inwardly, help comes not in because the danger is not descried nor known. If a man's sin breaks out there is a minister at hand, a friend near, and others to reprove, to warn, to direct; but when he is the artificer of his lusts, he bars himself of all public remedy, and takes great order and care to damn his soul, by covering his "*secret sins*" with some plausible varnish which may beget a good opinion in others of his ways. *A man does by his secrecy give the reins unto corruption:* the mind is fed all the day long either with sinful contemplations or projectings, so that the very strength of the soul is wasted and corrupted. Nay, *secret actings do but heat and inflame natural corruption.* As in shouldering in a crowd, when one hath got out of the door, two or three are ready to fall out after; so when a man hath given his heart leave to act a secret sin, this begets a present, and quick, and strong flame in corruption to repeat and multiply and throng out the acts. Sinful acts are not only fruits of sin, but helps and strengths, all sinning being more sinful by more sinning, not only in the effects but in the cause: the spring and cause of sin will grow mad and insolent hereby, and more corrupt; this being a

truth, that if the heart gives way for one sin, it will be ready for the next; if it will yield to bring forth once at the devil's pleasure, it will bring it forth twice by its own motion. A man by "*secret sins*" *doth but polish and square the hypocrisy of his heart*: he doth strive to be an exact hypocrite; and the more cunning he is in the palliating of his sinnings, the more perfect he is in his hypocrisy.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 12.—"*Secret faults.*" Beware of committing acts which it will be necessary to conceal. There is a singular poem by Hood, called "The Dream of Eugene Aram"—a most remarkable piece it is indeed, illustrating the point on which we are now dwelling. Aram had murdered a man, and cast his body into the river—"a sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme." The next morning he visited the scene of his guilt—

"And sought the black accursed pool,
With a wild misgiving eye;
And he saw the dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry."

Next he covered the corpse with heaps of leaves, but a mighty wind swept through the wood and left the secret bare before the sun—

"Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep;
On land or sea though it should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep."

In plaintive notes he prophesies his own discovery. He buried his victim in a cave, and trod him down with stones, but when years had run their weary round, the foul deed was discovered and the murderer put to death.

Guilt is a "grim chamberlain," even when his fingers are not bloody red. Secret sins bring fevered eyes and sleepless nights, until men burn out their consciences, and become in very deed ripe for the pit. Hypocrisy is a hard game to play at, for it is one deceiver against many observers; and for certain it is a miserable trade, which will earn at last, as its certain climax, a tremendous bankruptcy. Ah! ye who have sinned without discovery, "Be sure your sin will find you out;" and bethink you, it may find you out ere long. Sin, like murder, will come out; men will even tell tales about themselves in their dreams. God has made men to be so wretched in their consciences that they have been obliged to stand forth and confess the truth. Secret sinner! if thou wantest the foretaste of damnation upon earth, continue in thy secret sins; for no man is more miserable than he who sinneth secretly, and yet trieth to preserve a character. Yon stag, followed by the hungry hounds, with open mouths, is far more happy than the man who is pursued by his sins. Yon bird, taken in the fowler's net, and labouring to escape, is far more happy than he who hath weaved around himself a web of deception, and labours to escape from it, day by day making the toils more thick and the web more strong. Oh the misery of secret sins! One may well pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—*Spurgeon's Sermon* (No. 116), on "Secret Sins."

Verse 12.—The sin through ignorance (שְׁגִיאָה) is the same that David prays against in Psalm xix. 12, "Who can understand his *errors* (שְׁגִיאוֹת)? cleanse thou me from secret things!" These are not sins of omission, but acts committed by a person, when at the time, he did not suppose that what he did was sin. Although he did the thing deliberately, yet he did not perceive the sin of it. So deceitful is sin, we may be committing that abominable thing which cast angels into an immediate and an eternal hell, and yet at the moment be totally unaware! Want of knowledge of the truth, and too little tenderness of conscience to hide it from us. Hardness of heart and a corrupt nature cause us to sin unperceived. But here again the form of the Son of Man appears! Jehovah, God of Israel, institutes sacrifice for *sins of ignorance*, and thereby discovers the same compassionate and considerate heart that appears in our High Priest, "who can have compassion on *the ignorant!*" Heb. v. 2. Amidst the types of this tabernacle, we recognise the presence of Jesus—it is his voice that shakes the curtains, and speaks in the ear of Moses, "If a soul shall sin through ignorance!" The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!—*Andrew A. Bonar, in "Commentary on Leviticus,"* ch. iv. v. 2.

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—This is a singular difference between pharisaical and real sanctity: that is curious to look abroad, but seeth nothing at home: so that Pharisee condemned the Publican, and saw nothing in himself worthy of blame; but this careful to look at home, and searcheth into the secret corners, the very spirit of the mind. So did good David when he prayed, "*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*"—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 12.—Our corruptions have made us such combustible matter, that there is scarce a dart thrown at us in vain: when Satan tempts us, it is but like the casting of fire into tinder, that presently catcheth: our hearts kindle upon the least spark that falls; as a vessel that is brimful of water, upon the least jog, runs over. Were we but true to ourselves, though the devil might knock by his temptations, yet he could never burst open the everlasting doors of our hearts by force or violence: but, alas! we ourselves are not all of one heart and one mind: Satan hath got a strong party within us, that, as soon as he knocks, opens to him, and entertains him. And hence it is, that many times, small temptations and very petty occasions draw forth great corruptions; as a vessel, that is full of new liquor, upon the least vent given, works over into foam and froth; so truly, our hearts, almost upon every slight and trivial temptation, make that inbred corruption that lodgeth there, swell and boil, and run over into abundance of scum and filth in our lives and conversations.—*Ezekiel Hopkins.*

Verse 12.—Sins are many times hid from the godly man's eye, though he commits them, because he is not diligent and accurate in making a search of himself, and in an impartial studying of his own ways. If any sin be hid, as Saul was behind the stuff, or as Rahab had hid the spies, unless a man be very careful to search, he shall think no sin is there where it is. Hence it is that the Scripture doth so often command that duty of *searching* and *trying*, of examining and communing with our hearts. Now what need were there of this duty, but that it is supposed many secrets and subtle lusts lie lurking in our hearts, which we take no notice of? If then the godly would find out their hidden lusts, know the sins they not yet know, they must more impartially judge themselves; they must take time to survey and examine themselves; they must not in an overly and slight manner, but really and industriously look up and down as they would search for thieves; and they must again and again look into this dark corner, and that dark corner of their hearts, as the woman sought for the lost groat. This self-scrutiny and self-judging, this winnowing and sifting of ourselves, is the only way to see what is chaff and what is wheat, what is mere refuse and what is enduring.—*Anthony Burgess.*

Verse 12.—Sin is of a growing and advancing nature. From weakness to wilfulness, from ignorance to presumption, is its ordinary course and progress. The cloud that Elijah's man saw, was at first no bigger than a hand's-breadth, and it threatened no such thing as a general tempest; but yet, at last, it overspread the face of the whole heavens; so truly, a sin that at first ariseth in the soul but as a small mist, and is scarcely discernible; yet, if it be not scattered by the breath of prayer, it will at length overspread the whole life, and become most tempestuous and raging. And therefore, David, as one experienced in the deceitfulness of sin, doth thus digest and methodise his prayer: first against secret and lesser sins; and then against the more gross and notorious; as knowing the one proceeds and issues from the other: Lord, *cleanse me from my secret faults;* and this will be a most effectual means to preserve and *keep thy servant from presumptuous sins.*—*Ezekiel Hopkins.*

Verses 12, 13.—That there is a difference betwixt *infirmities* and *presumptuous sins* is not to be denied; it is expressly in the Holy Scripture. Papists say that the man who doth a mortal sin is not in the state of grace; but for venials, a man may commit (in their divinity) who can tell how many of them, and yet be in Christ for all that! I hope there is no such meaning in any of our divines as to tie up men's consciences, to hang on such a distinction of sins; since it is beyond the wit of man to set down a distinct point between mortal and venial sins. Now when it is an impossible matter punctually to set down to the understanding of man which is, and which is not a venial sin, they must pardon me for giving the least way to such divinity as must needs leave the conscience of a man in a maze and labyrinth. I find that the nature of infirmities doth so depend upon circumstances, that that is an infirmity in one man which is a gross sin in another; and some men plead for themselves that the things they do are but infirmities. He that *will* sin, and when he hath done will say—not to comfort his soul against Satan, but—

to flatter himself in his sin, that it is but an infirmity; for aught I know, he may go to hell for his infirmities. Besides, if that be good divinity, that a man who is in the state of grace may do infirmities, but not commit gross sins, then I would I could see a man that would undertake to find us out some rule out of the word, by which a sinner may find by his sin, when he is in Christ and when out of Christ; at what degrees of sinning—where lies the mathematical point and stop—that a man may say, "Thus far may I go and yet be in grace; but if I step a step farther, then I am none of Christ's." We all know that sins have their latitude; and for a man to hang his conscience on such a distinction as hath no rule to define where the difference lies, is not safe divinity. The conscience on the rack will not be laid and said with forms and quiddities. The best and nearest way to quiet the heart of man is to say, that be the sin a sin of *infirmity* when we strive and strive but yield at last; or, of *precipitancy*, when we be taken in haste, as he was who said in his haste, "All men are liars;" or, a mere *gross* sin in the matter: ay, say it be a *presumptuous* sin, yet if we allow it not, it hinders not but we are in Christ, though we do with reluctancy act and commit it. And I say that we do resist it if we do not allow it. For let us not go about to deny that a godly man during his being a godly man may possibly commit *gross* and *presumptuous sins;* and for infirmities, if we allow them and like them that we know to be sins, then we do not resist them; and such a man who allows himself in one is guilty of all, and is none of Christ's as yet. Be the sin what it will, James makes no distinction; and, where the law distinguisheth not, we must not distinguish. I speak not of *doing* a sin, but *allowing;* for a man may do it, and yet allow it not; as in Paul (Rom. vii. 15, 16), "That which I would not, that I do;" and he that allows not sin doth resist it. Therefore, a man may resist it, hate it, and yet do it. All the difference that I know is this: 1. That a man may live after his conversion all his days, and yet never fall into a gross sin. By gross here I mean *presumptuous* sins also. So David saith not "*cleanse*," but KEEP BACK *thy servant from presumptuous sins*." We may, then, be *kept* from them. I speak not that all are, but some be; and, therefore, in itself all might be. 2. For lesser sins, "*secret faults*," we cannot live without them—they are of daily and almost hourly incursions; but yet we must be *cleansed* from them, as David speaks. Daily get your pardon; there is a pardon, of course, for them; they do not usually distract and plague the conscience, but yet we must not see them and allow them; if we do our case is to be pitied, we are none of Christ's as yet. 3. Great staring sins a man cannot usually and commonly practise them, but he shall allow them. So Psalm xix. 13, "*Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me*," implying that except we be kept back from them they will *have dominion over us*. It follows, "*then shall I be upright;*" so that the man in whom *gross or presumptuous sin or sins* have no *dominion*, he is an *upright man.—Richard Capel.*

Verses 12, 13.—The Psalmist was sensible of sin's force and power; he was weary of sin's dominion; he cries unto God to deliver him from the reign of all the sins he knew; and those sins which were secret and concealed from his view, he begs that he might be convinced of them. and throughly cleansed from them. The Lord can turn the heart perfectly to hate the sin that was most of all beloved; and the strength of sin is gone when once 'tis hated; and as the hatred grows stronger and stronger, sin becomes weaker and weaker daily.—*Nathaniel Vincent*, 1695.

Verse 13.—"*Keep back thy servant also from all presumptuous sins.*" He doth desire absolutely to be kept from "*presumptuous sins;*" but then, he adds by way of supposition and reserve, that if he could not by reason of his naughty heart be kept from them, yet that they might not have full power and dominion over him.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 13.—"*Keep back thy servant.*" It is an evil man's cross to be restrained, and a good man's joy to be *kept back* from sin. When sin puts forth itself, the evil man is putting forth his hand to the sin; but when sin puts forth itself, the good man is putting forth his hand to heaven; if he finds his heart yielding, out he cries, *O keep back thy servant.* An evil man is *kept back* from sin, as a friend from a friend, as a lover from his lover, with knit affections and projects of meeting; but a good man is *kept back* from sin, as a man from his deadly enemy, whose presence he hates, and with desires of his ruin and destruction. It is the good man's misery that he hath yet a heart to be more tamed and mastered; it is an evil man's vexation and discontent, that still, or at any time, he is held in by cord or bridle. And

thus you see what David aims at in desiring to be *kept back from presumptuous sins*, namely, not a mere suspension, but a mortification, not a not acting only, but a subduing of the inclination ; not for a time, but for ever.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 13.—"*Keep back thy servant,*" etc. Even all the people of God, were they not kept by God's grace and power, they would every moment be undone both in soul and body. It is not our grace, our prayer, our watchfulness keeps us, but it is the power of God, his right arm, supports us ; we may see David praying to God that he would "*keep*" him in both these respects from temporal dangers (Psalm xvii. 8, 9 ; "*keep me,*") etc. ; where he doth not only pray to be kept, but he doth insinuate how carefully God keeps his people, and in what precious account their safety is, even as "the apple of the eye," and for spiritual preservation he often begs it. Though David be God's "*servant*" yet he will, like a wild horse, run violently, and that into "*presumptuous sins,*" if God "*keep*" him not "*back,*" yea, he prayeth that God would "*keep*" the particular parts of his body that they sin not : "keep the door of my lips" (Psalm cxli. 3) ; he entreateth God to "*keep*" his lips and to set a watch about his mouth, as if he were not able to set guard sure enough : thus much more are we to pray that God would "*keep*" our hearts, our minds, our wills, our affections, for they are more masterful.—*Anthony Burgess.*

Verse 13.—"*Keep back thy servant.*" God *keeps back* his servants from sin 1. *By preventing grace*, which is, by infusing such a nature as is like a bias into a bowl, drawing it aside another way ; 2. *By assisting grace*, which is a further strength superadded to that first-implanted nature of holiness ; like a hand upon a child holding him in ; 3. *By quickening grace*, which is, when God doth enliven our graces to manifest themselves in actual opposition ; so that the soul shall not yield, but keep off from entertaining the sin ; 4. *By directing grace*, which is, when God confers that effectual wisdom to the mind, tenderness to the conscience, watchfulness to the heart, that his servants become greatly solicitous of his honour, scrupulously jealous of their own strength, and justly regardful of the honour of their holy profession ; 5. *By doing grace*, which is, when God effectually inclines the hearts of his servants to the places and ways of their refuge, safeties, and preservation from sin, by enlarging the spirit of supplication, and framing the heart to the reverent and affectionate use of his ordinances.—*Condensed from Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 13.—"*Thy servant :*" as if he had said, "O God, thou art my Lord, I have chosen thee, to whom I will give obedience ; thou art he whom I will follow ; I bestow all that I am on thee. Now a Lord will help his servant against an enemy, who for the Lord's service is the servant's enemy. O my Lord, help me ! I am not able by my own strength to uphold myself, but thou art All-sufficiency "—"*Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.*" . . . Beloved, it is a great thing to stand in near relations to God ; and then it is a good thing to plead by them with God, forsomuch as nearer relations have strongest force with all. The servant can do more than a stranger, and the child than a servant, and the wife than a child. . . . . There be many reasons against sinning. . . . Now this also may come in, namely, the speciality of our relation to God, that we are his children, and he is our Father ; we are his servants, and he is our Lord : though the common obligations are many and sufficient, yet the special relations are also a further tie: the more near a person come to God, the more careful he should be not to sin against God.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 13.—"*Presumptuous sins.*" The Rabbins distinguish all sins unto those committed בִּשְׁגָגָה *ignorantly*, and זְדוֹן *presumptuously.*—*Benjamin Kennicott, D.D.*, 1718—1783.

Verse 13.—"*Presumptuous sins.*" When sin grows up from act to delight, from delight to new acts, from repetition of sinful acts to vicious indulgence, to habit and custom and a second nature, so that anything that toucheth upon it is grievous and strikes to the man's heart ; when it is got into God's place, and requires to be loved with the whole strength, makes grace strike sail, and other vices do it homage, demands all his concerns to be sacrificed to it and to be served with his reputation, his fortunes, his parts, his body and soul, to the irreparable loss of his time and eternity both—this is the height of its *dominion*—then sin becomes "exceeding sinful," and must needs make strange and sad alterations in the state of saints themselves, and be great hindrances to them in their way to Heaven, having brought them so near to Hell.—*Adam Littleton.*

Verse 13.—"*Presumptuous sins.*" The distribution of sins into sins of *ignorance*, of *infirmity*, and of *presumption*, is very usual and very useful, and complete enough without the addition (which some make) of a fourth sort, to wit, sins of *negligence*

or *inadvertency*, all such sins being easily reducible to some of the former three. The ground of the distinction is laid in the soul of man, where there are three distinct prime faculties, from which all our actions flow—the understanding, the will, and the sensual appetite or affections. . . . The enquiry must be, when a sin is done, where the fault lay most; and thence it must have the right denomination. 1. If the *understanding* be most in fault, not apprehending that good it should, or not aright, the sin is so done, though possibly it may have in it somewhat both of infirmity and presumption withal, is yet properly a sin of *ignorance*. 2. If the main fault be in the *affections*, through some sudden passion or perturbation of mind, blinding, or corrupting, or but outrunning the judgment—as of fear, anger, desire, joy, or any of the rest—the sin thence arising, though perhaps joined with some ignorance or presumption withal, is yet properly a sin of *infirmity*. But if the understanding be competently informed with knowledge, and not much blinded or transported with the incursion of any sudden, or violence of any vehement perturbation, so as the greatest blame must remain upon the untowardness of the *will*, resolvedly bent upon the evil, the sin arising from such *wilfulness*, though probably not free from all mixture of ignorance and infirmity withal, is yet properly *a wilful presumption*, such a *presumptuous sin* as we are now in treaty of. Rules are soonest learned and best remembered when illustrated with fit examples; and of such the rich storehouse of the Scripture affordeth us in each kind variety and choice enough, whence it shall suffice us to propose but one eminent of each sort. *The men*, all of them for their holiness, of singular and worthy renown: David, St. Peter, and St. Paul. *The sins*, all of them for their matter, of the greatest magnitude: murdering of the innocent, abnegation of Christ, persecution of the church: Paul's persecution a grievous sin, yet a sin of *ignorance;* Peter's denial a grievous sin, yet a sin of *infirmity;* David's murder, a far more grievous sin than either of both, because a sin of *presumption*. St. Paul, before his conversion, whilst he was Saul, persecuted and wasted the church of God to the utmost of his power, making havoc of the professors of Christ, entering into their very houses, and haling thence to prison, both men and women; and posting abroad with letters into remote quarters, to do all the mischief he could, everywhere with great fury, as if he had been mad, breathing out, wherever he came, nothing but threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. His *affections* were not set against them through any personal provocations, but merely out of zeal to the law; and surely his zeal had been good had it not been blind. Nor did his *will* run cross to his judgment, but was led by it, for he "verily thought in himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus;" and verily his will had been good had it not been misled. But the error was in his *understanding*, his judgment being not yet actually convinced of the truth of the Christian religion. He was yet fully persuaded that Jesus was an impostor, and Christianity a pestilent sect, raised by Satan, to the disgrace and prejudice of Moses and the law. If these things had indeed been so, as he apprehended them, his *affections* and *will*, in seeking to root out such a sect, had been not only blameless, but commendable. It was his erroneous judgment that poisoned all, and made that which otherwise had been zeal, to become persecution. But, however, the first discernible obliquity therein being in the *understanding*, that persecution of his was therefore *a sin of ignorance*, so called, and under that name condemned by himself. 1 Tim. i. 13. But such was not Peter's denial of his Master. He *knew* well enough who he was, having conversed so long with him, and having, long before, so amply confessed him. And he *knew* also that he ought not, for anything in the world, to have denied him. That made him so confident before that he *would not* do it, because he was abundantly satisfied that he *should not* do it. Evident it is, then, that Peter wanted no *knowledge*, either of the Master's person, or of his own duty; and so no plea left him of *ignorance*, either *facti* or *juris*. Nor was the fault so much in his *will* as to make it a sin properly of *presumption*. For albeit *de facto* he did deny him when he was put to it, and that with fearful oaths and imprecations, yet was it not done with any prepensed apostasy, or out of design, yea, he came rather with a *contrary resolution*, and he still honoured his Master *in his heart*, even then when he denied him with his tongue; and as soon as ever the watchword was given him by the second cock, to prefer to his consideration what he had done, it grieved him sore that he had so done, and he wept bitterly for it. We find no circumstance, in the whole relation, that argueth any deep obstinacy in his *will*. But in his *affections*, then! Alas! there was the fail! A sudden qualm of fear surprising his soul when he saw his Master so despite-

fully used before his face (which made him apprehensive of what hard usage himself might fall under if he should there and then have owned him) took from him for that time the benefit and use of his reason, and so drew all his thoughts to this one point—how to decline the present danger—that he had never a thought at so much liberty as to consult his judgment, whether it were a sin or no. And this, proceeding from such a sudden distemper of passion, Peter's denial was a sin properly of *infirmity*. But David's sin, in contriving the death of Uriah, was of a yet higher pitch, and of a deeper dye than either of these. He was no such stranger in the law of God as not to know that the wilful murder of an innocent party, such as he also knew Uriah to be, was a most loud crying sin; and therefore nothing surer than that it was not merely a sin of *ignorance*. Neither yet was it a sin properly of *infirmity*, and so capable of that extenuating circumstance of being done in the heat of anger, as his uncleanness with Bathsheba was in the heat of lust, although that extenuation will not be allowed to pass there, unless *in tanto* only, and as it standeth in comparison with this fouler crime. But having time and leisure enough to bethink himself what he was about, he doth it *in cool blood*, and with much advised *deliberation*, plotting and contriving this way and that way to perfect his design. He was *resolved*, whatsoever should become of it, to have it done; in regard of which *settled resolution of his will*, this sin of David was therefore a high *presumptuous sin*.—*Robert Sanderson* (*Bishop of Lincoln*), 1587—1662-3.

Verse 13.—"*Presumptuous sins.*" David prays that God would keep him back from "*presumptuous sins*," from known and evident sins, such as proceed from the choice of the perverse will against the enlightened mind, which are committed with deliberation, with design, resolution, and eagerness, against the checks of conscience, and the motions of God's spirit: such sins are direct rebellion against God, a despising of his command, and they provoke his pure eyes.—*Alexander Cruden.*

Verse 13.—"*Then shall I be innocent from the great transgression.*" It is in the motions of a tempted soul to sin, as in the motions of a stone falling from the brow of a hill; it is easily stopped at first, but when once it is set a-going, who shall stay it? And therefore it is the greatest wisdom in the world to observe the first motions of the heart, to check and stop it there.—*G. H. Salter.*

Verse 13.—"*The great transgression.*" Watch very diligently against all sin; but above all, take special heed of those sins that come near to the sin against the Holy Ghost; and these are, hypocrisy, taking only the outward profession of religion, and so dissembling and mocking of God; sinning wilfully against conviction of conscience, and against great light and knowledge, sinning presumptuously, with a high hand. These sins, though none of them are the direct sin against the Holy Ghost, yet they will come very near to it: therefore take special heed of them, lest they, in time, should bring you to the committing of that unpardonable sin.—*Robert Russel*, 1705.

Verse 13.—"*Let them not have dominion over me.*" Any small sin may get the upper-hand of the sinner and bring him under in time, and after that is once habituated by long custom so as he cannot easily shake off the yoke, neither redeem himself from under the tyranny thereof. We see the experiment of it but too often and too evidently in our common swearers and drunkards. Yet do such kind of sins, for the most part, grow on by little and little, steal into the throne insensibly, and do not *exercise dominion* over the enslaved soul till they have got strength *by many and multiplied acts*. But a *presumptuous sin* worketh a great alteration in the state of the soul *at once*, and by one single act advanceth marvellously, weakening the spirit, and giving a mighty advantage to the flesh, even to the hazard of *a complete conquest*.—*Robert Sanderson.*

Verse 13.—To sin presumptuously is the highest step. So in David's account; for first he prays, "*Lord keep me from secret sins*," which he maketh sins of ignorance, and then next he prays against "*presumptuous sins*," which, as the opposition shows, are sins against knowledge; for says he, "if they get dominion over me, I shall not be free from that great offence," that is, that unpardonable sin which shall never be forgiven: so as these are nearest it of any other, yet not so as that every one that falls into such a sin commits it, but he is nigh to it, at the next step to it. For to commit that sin, but two things are required—light in the mind, and malice in the heart; not malice alone, unless there be light, for then that apostle had sinned it, so as knowledge is the parent of it, it is "after receiving the knowledge of the truth." Heb. x. 27, 28.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 13.—Happy souls, who, under a sense of peace through the blood of Jesus, are daily praying to be kept by the grace of the Spirit. Such truly know themselves, see their danger of falling, will not, dare not palliate or lesson the odious nature, and hateful deformity of their sin. They will not give a softer name to sin than it deserves, lest they depreciate the infinite value of that precious blood which Jesus shed to atone its guilt. Far will they be from flattering themselves into a deceitful notion that they are perfect, and have no sin in them. The spirit of truth delivers them from such errors; he teacheth them as poor sinners to look to the Saviour, and to beseech him to "*keep back*" the headstrong passions, the unruly lusts, and evil concupiscences which dwell in their sinful natures. Alas! the most exalted saint, the most established believer, if left to himself, how soon might the blackest crimes, the most "*presumptuous sins*," get the "*dominion*" over him! David had woeful experience of this for a season. He prays from a heartfelt sense of past misery, and the dread of future danger, and he found the blessing of that covenant-promise: "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 14.—*William Mason*, 1719—1791, *in "A Spiritual Treasury for the Children of God."*

Verse 14.—"*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord*," was David's prayer. David could not bear it, that a word or a thought of his should miss acceptation with God. It did not satisfy him that his actions were well witnessed unto men on earth, unless his very thoughts were witnessed to by the Lord in heaven.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—"*Let the words of my mouth*," etc. The best of men have their failing, and an honest Christian may be a weak one; but weak as he may be, the goodness and sincerity of his heart will entitle him to put the petition of this verse, which no hypocrite or cunning deceiver can ever make use of.—*Thomas Sherlock* (*Bishop*), 1676—1761.

Verse 14.—"*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.*" Fast and pray; Lord, I do fast, and I would pray; for to what end do I withhold sustenance from my body if it be not the more to cheer up my soul? my hungry, my thirsty soul? But the bread, the water of life, both which I find nowhere but in thy word, I partake not but by exercising my soul therein. This I begin to do, and fain would do it well, but in vain shall I attempt except thou do bless: bless me then, O Lord; bless either part of me, both are thine, and I would withhold neither part from thee. Not my body; I would set my tongue on work to speak of thee; not my soul, I would exercise my heart in thinking on thee; I would join them in devotion which thou hast joined in creation. Yea, Lord, as they have conspired to sin against thee, so do they now consort to do their duty to thee; my tongue is ready, my heart is ready; I would think, I would speak; think upon thee, speak to thee. But, Lord, what are my *words?* what are my *thoughts?* Thou knowest the thoughts of men, that they are altogether vanity, and our words are but the blast of such thoughts; both are vile. It were well it were no more; both are wicked, my heart a corrupt fountain, and my tongue an unclean stream; and shall I bring such a sacrifice to God? The halt, the lame, the blind, though otherwise the beasts be clean, yet are they sacrifices abominable to God: how much more if we offer those beasts which are unclean? And yet, Lord, my sacrifice is no better, faltering words, wandering thoughts, are neither of them presentable to thee; how much less evil thoughts and idle words? Yet such are the best of mine. What remedy? If any, it is in thee, O Lord, that I must find it, and for it now do I seek unto thee. Thou only, O Lord, canst hallow my tongue, and hallow my heart that my tongue may speak, and my heart think that which may "*be acceptable unto thee*," yea, that which may be thy delight. Do not I lavish? Were it not enough that God should bear with, that he should not punish, the defects of my words, of my thoughts? May I presume that God shall accept of me? nay, delight in me? Forget I who the Lord is? Of what majesty? Of what felicity? Can it stand with his Majesty to vouchsafe acceptance? with his felicity to take content in the words of a worm? in the thoughts of a wretch? And, Lord, I am too proud that vilify myself so little, and magnify thee no more. But see whither the desire of thy servant doth carry him; how, willing to please, I consider not how hard it is for dust and ashes to please God, to do that wherein God should take content. But Lord, here is my comfort, that I may set God to give content unto God; God is *mine*, and I cannot want

access unto God, if God may approach himself. Let me be weak, yet God is strong; O Lord, thou are "*my strength.*" Let me be a slave to sin, God is a *Saviour;* O Lord, thou art *my Saviour;* thou hast *redeemed* me from all that woful state whereunto Adam cast me, yea, thou hast built me upon a rock, strong and sure, that the gates of hell might never prevail against me. These two things hast thou done for me, O Lord, and what may not he presume of for whom thou hast done these things! I fear not to come before thee. I presume my devotion shall content thee; be thine eyes never such all-seeing eyes, I will be bold to present my inward, my outward man before thee; be thy eyes never so holy eyes, I will not fly with Adam to hide my nakedness from thee, for I am able to keep my ground; seeing I am supported by *my Lord*, I doubt not but to prove a true Israelite, and to prevail with God. For all my woe, for all my sin, I will not shrink, nay, I will approach, approach to thee, for thou art "*My Redeemer.*" The nearer I come to thee, the freer shall I be both from sin and woe. Oh, blessed state of man who is so weak, so strong; so wretched, and so happy; weak in himself, strong in God; most happy in God, though in himself a sinful wretch. And now, my soul, thou wouldst be devout; thou mayst be what thou wouldst: sacrifice to God thy words, sacrifice to God thy thoughts, make thyself a holocaust, doubt not but thou shalt be accepted, thou shalt content even the most glorious the most holy eyes of God. Only presume not of thyself, presume on him; build thy words, build thy thoughts upon thy *Rock*, they shall not be shaken; free thy words, free thy thoughts (thoughts and words enthralled to sin), by thy Saviour, and thy sacrifice shall be accepted. So let me build on thee, so let me be enlarged by thee, in soul, in body, that "*The words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord. my strength and my Redeemer.*"—*Arthur Lake* (*Bishop*), *in* "*Divine Meditations,*" 1629,

---

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"Chalmers' Astronomical Discourses" will suggest to the preacher many ways of handling this theme. The power, wisdom, goodness, punctuality, faithfulness, greatness, and glory of God are very visible in the heavens.

Verses 1—5.—Parallel between the heavens and the revelation of Scripture, dwelling upon Christ as the central Sun of Scripture.

Verse 1.—"*The heavens declare the glory of God.*" Work in which we may unite, the nobility, pleasure, usefulness, and duty of such service.

Verse 2.—Voices of the day and of the night. Day and night thoughts.

Verse 3.—The marginal reading, coupled with verse four, suggests the eloquence of an unobtrusive life—silent yet heard.

Verse 4.—In what sense God is revealed to all men.

Verses 4, 5, 6.—The Sun of righteousness. I. His tabernacle. II. His appearance as a Bridegroom. III. His joy as a champion. IV. His circuit and his influence.

Verse 5.—"*Rejoiceth as a strong man,*" etc. The joy of strength, the joy of holy labour, the joy of the anticipated reward.

Verse 6.—The permeating power of the gospel.

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—Holy Scripture. I. What it is—"law." II. Whose it is—"of the Lord." III. What is its character—"perfect." IV. What its result—"converting the soul."

Verse 7 (*second clause*).—I. Scholars. II. Class-book. III. Teacher. IV. Progress.

Verses 7, 8, 9.—The Hexapla. *See Notes.*

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—The wisdom of a simple faith.

Verse 8 (*first clause*). The heart-cheering power of the Word. I. Founded in its righteousness. II. Real in its quality. III. Constant in its operation.

Verse 8 (*second clause*).—Golden ointment for the eyes.

Verse 9.—The purity and permanence of true religion, and the truth and justice of the principles upon which it is founded.

Verse 10.—Two arguments for loving God's statutes—Profit and Pleasure.

Verse 10.—The inexpressible delights of meditation on Scripture.

Verse 11 (*first clause*).—I. What? "Warned." II. How? "By them." III. Who? "Thy servant." IV. When? "Is"—present.

Verse 11 (*second clause*).—Evangelical rewards—"*In*," not *for* keeping.

Verse 12.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No 116. "Secret Sins."

Verses 12, 13.—The three grades of sin—secret, presumptuous, unpardonable.

Verse 13.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 135. "Presumptuous Sins."

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—"*The great transgression.*" What it is not, may be, involves, and suggests.

Verse 14.—A prayer concerning our holy things.

Verse 14.—All wish to please. Some please *themselves*. Some please *men*. Some seek to please *God*. Such was David. I. The prayer shows his *humility*. II. The prayer shows his *affection*. III. The prayer shows a *consciousness of duty*. IV. The prayer shows a *regard to self-interest*.—*William Jay*.

Verse 14.—The harmony of heart and lips needful for acceptance.

PSALM XX.

SUBJECT.—*We have before us a* National Anthem, *fitted to be sung at the outbreak of war, when the monarch was girding on his sword for the fight. If David had not been vexed with wars, we might never have been favoured with such Psalms as this. There is a needs be for the trials of one saint, that he may yield consolation to others. A happy people here plead for a beloved sovereign, and with loving hearts cry to Jehovah, "God save the King." We gather that this song was intended to be sung in public, not only from the matter of the song, but also from its dedication "* To the Chief Musician." *We know its author to have been Israel's sweet singer, from the short title, "* A Psalm of David." *The particular occasion which suggested it, it would be mere folly to conjecture, for Israel was almost always at war in David's day. His sword may have been hacked, but it was never rusted. Kimchi reads the title,* concerning David, *or,* for David, *and it is clear that the King is the subject as well as the composer of the song. It needs but a moment's reflection to perceive that this hymn of prayer is prophetical of our Lord Jesus, and is the cry of the ancient church on behalf of her Lord, as she sees him in vision enduring a great fight of afflictions on her behalf. The militant people of God, with the great Captain of salvation at their head, may still in earnest plead that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in his hand. We shall endeavour to keep to this view of the subject in our brief exposition, but we cannot entirely restrict our remarks to it.*

DIVISION.—*The first four verses are a prayer for the success of the king. Verses* 5, 6, *and* 7 *express unwavering confidence in God and his Anointed; verse* 8 *declares the defeat of the foe, and verse* 9 *is a concluding appeal to Jehovah.*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;

3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.

4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.

1. "*The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.*" All loyal subjects pray for their king, and most certainly citizens of Zion have good cause to pray for the Prince of Peace. In times of conflict loving subjects redouble their pleas, and surely in the sorrows of our Lord his church could not but be in earnest. All the Saviour's days were days of trouble, and he also made them days of prayer; the church joins her intercession with her Lord's, and pleads that he may be heard in his cries and tears. The agony in the garden was especially a gloomy hour, but he was heard in that he feared. He knew that his Father heard him always, yet in that troublous hour no reply came until thrice he had fallen on his face in the garden; then sufficient strength was given in answer to prayer, and he rose a victor from the conflict. On the cross also his prayer was not unheard, for in the twenty-second Psalm he tells us, "thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." The church in this verse implies that her Lord would be himself much given to prayer; in this he is our example, teaching us that if we are to receive any advantage from the prayers of others, we must first pray for ourselves. What a mercy that we *may* pray in the day of trouble, and what a still more blessed privilege that no trouble can prevent the Lord from hearing us! Troubles roar like thunder, but the believer's voice will be heard above the storm. O Jesus, when thou pleadest for us in our hour of trouble, the Lord Jehovah will hear thee. This is a most refreshing confidence, and it may be indulged in without fear.

"*The name of the God of Jacob defend thee;*" or, as some read it, "set thee in a high place." By "*the name*" is meant the revealed character and Word of God; we are not to worship "the unknown God," but we should seek to know the covenant God of Jacob, who has been pleased to reveal his name and attributes to his people. There may be much in a royal name, or a learned name, or a venerable name, but it

will be a theme for heavenly scholarship to discover all that is contained in the divine name. The glorious power of God defended and preserved the Lord Jesus through the battle of his life and death, and exalted him above all his enemies. His warfare is now accomplished in his own proper person, but in his mystical body, the church, he is still beset with dangers, and only the eternal arm of our God in covenant can defend the soldiers of the cross, and set them on high out of the reach of their foes. The day of trouble is not over, the pleading Saviour is not silent, and the name of the God of Israel is still the defence of the faithful. The name, "*God of Jacob*," is suggestive; Jacob had his day of trouble, he wrestled, was heard, was defended, and in due time was set on high, and his God is our God still, the same God to all his wrestling Jacobs. The whole verse is a very fitting benediction to be pronounced by a gracious heart over a child, a friend, or a minister, in prospect of trial; it includes both temporal and spiritual protection, and directs the mind to the great Source of all good. How delightful to believe that our heavenly Father has pronounced it upon our favoured heads!

2. "*Send thee help from the sanctuary.*" Out of heaven's sanctuary came the angel to strengthen our Lord, and from the precious remembrance of God's doings in his sanctuary our Lord refreshed himself when on the tree. There is no help like that which is of God's sending, and no deliverance like that which comes out of his sanctuary. The sanctuary to us is the person of our blessed Lord, who was typified by the temple, and is the true sanctuary which God has pitched, and not man: let us fly to the cross for shelter in all times of need, and help will be sent to us. Men of the world despise sanctuary help, but our hearts have learned to prize it beyond all material aid. They seek help out of the armoury, or the treasury, or the buttery, but we turn to the sanctuary. "*And strengthen thee out of Zion.*" Out of the assemblies of the pleading saints who had for ages prayed for their Lord, help might well result to the despised sufferer, for praying breath is never spent in vain. To the Lord's mystical body the richest good comes in answer to the pleadings of his saints assembled for holy worship as his Zion. Certain advertisers recommend a strengthening plaster, but nothing can give such strength to the loins of a saint as waiting upon God in the assemblies of his people. This verse is a benediction befitting a Sabbath morning, and may be the salutation either of a pastor to his people, or of a church to its minister. God in the sanctuary of his dear Son's person, and in the city of his chosen church is the proper object of his people's prayers, and under such a character may they confidently look to him for his promised aid.

3. "*Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Selah.*" Before war kings offered sacrifice, upon the acceptance of which they depended for success; our blessed Lord presented himself as a victim, and was a sweet savour unto the Most High, and then he met and routed the embattled legions of hell. Still does his burnt sacrifice perfume the courts of heaven, and through him the offerings of his people are received as *his* sacrifices and oblations. We ought in our spiritual conflicts to have an eye to the sacrifice of Jesus, and never venture to war until first the Lord has given us a token for good at the altar of the cross, where faith beholds her bleeding Lord. "*Selah.*" It is well to pause at the cross before we march onward to battle, and with the Psalmist cry "Selah." We are too much in a hurry to make good haste. A little pausing might greatly help our speed. Stay, good man, there is a haste which hinders; rest awhile, meditate on the burnt sacrifice, and put thy heart right for the stern work which lieth before thee.

4. "*Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.*" Christ's desire and counsel were both set upon the salvation of his people; the church of old desired for him good speed in his design, and the church in these latter days, with all her heart desires the complete fulfilment of his purpose. In Christ Jesus sanctified souls may appropriate this verse as a promise; they shall have their desire, and their plans to glorify their Master shall succeed. We may have our own will when our will is God's will. This was always the case with our Lord, and yet he said, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." What need for submission in our case; if it was necessary to him, how much more for us!

5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.

7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

5. "*We will rejoice in thy salvation.*" In Jesus there is salvation; it is his own, and hence it is called thy *salvation;* but it is ours to receive and ours to rejoice in. We should fixedly resolve that come what may, we will rejoice in the saving arm of the Lord Jesus. The people in this Psalm, before their king went to battle, felt sure of victory, and therefore began to rejoice beforehand; how much more ought we to do this who have seen the victory completely won! Unbelief begins weeping for the funeral before the man is dead; why should not faith commence piping before the dance of victory begins? Buds are beautiful, and promises not yet fulfilled are worthy to be admired. If joy were more general among the Lord's people, God would be more glorified among men; the happiness of the subjects is the honour of the sovereign. "*And in the name of our God we will set up our banners.*" We lift the standard of defiance in the face of the foe, and wave the flag of victory over the fallen adversary. Some proclaim war in the name of one king and some of another but the faithful go to war in Jesu's name, the name of the incarnate God, Immanuel, God with us. The times are evil at present, but so long as Jesus lives and reigns in his church we need not furl our banners in fear, but advance them with sacred courage.

"Jesu's tremendous name
Puts all our foes to flight;
Jesus, the meek, the angry Lamb
A lion is in fight."

The church cannot forget that Jesus is her advocate before the throne, and therefore she sums up the desires already expressed in the short sentence, "*The Lord fulfil all thy petitions.*" Be it never forgotten that among those petitions is that choice one, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am."

6. "*Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed.*" We live and learn, and what we learn we are not ashamed to acknowledge. He who thinks he knows everything will miss the joy of finding out new truth; he will never be able to cry, "now know I," for he is so wise in his own conceit that he knows all that can be revealed and more. Souls conscious of ignorance shall be taught of the Lord, and rejoice as they learn. Earnest prayer frequently leads to assured confidence. The church pleaded that the Lord Jesus might win the victory in his great struggle, and now by faith she sees him saved by the omnipotent arm. She evidently finds a sweet relish in the fragrant title of "anointed;" she thinks of him as ordained before all worlds to his great work, and then endowed with the needful qualifications by being anointed of the Spirit of the Lord; and this is evermore the choicest solace of the believer, that Jehovah himself hath anointed Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour, and that our shield is thus the Lord's own anointed. "*He will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.*" It is here asserted confidently that God's holiness and power would both come to the rescue of the Saviour in his conflict, and surely these two glorious attributes found congenial work in answering the sufferer's cries. Since Jesus was heard, we shall be; God is in heaven, but our prayers can scale those glorious heights; those heavens are holy, but Jesus purifies our prayers, and so they gain admittance; our need is great, but the divine arm is strong, and all its strength is "saving strength;" that strength, moreover, is in the hand which is most used and which is used most readily—the right hand. What encouragements are these for pleading saints!

7. Contrasts frequently bring out the truth vividly, and here the church sets forth the creature-confidences of carnal men in contrast with her reliance upon the Prince Immanuel and the invisible Jehovah. "*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses.*" Chariots and horses make an imposing show, and with their rattling, and dust, and fine caparisons, make so great a figure that vain man is much taken with them; yet the discerning eye of faith sees more in an invisible God than in all these. The most dreaded war-engine of David's day was the war-chariot, armed with scythes, which mowed down men like grass: this was the boast and glory of the neighbouring nations; but the saints considered the name of Jehovah to be a far better defence. As the Israelites might not keep horses, it was natural for them to regard the enemy's cavalry with more than usual dread. It is, therefore, all the greater evidence of faith that the bold songster can here disdain even the horse of

Egypt in comparison with the Lord of hosts. Alas, how many in our day who profess to be the Lord's are as abjectly dependent upon their fellow-men or upon an arm of flesh in some shape or other, as if they had never known the name of Jehovah at all. Jesus, be thou alone our rock and refuge, and never may we mar the simplicity of our faith. "*We will remember the name of the Lord our God.*" "Our God" in covenant, who has chosen us and whom we have chosen; this God is our God. The name of our God is JEHOVAH, and this should never be forgotten; the self-existent, independent, immutable, ever-present, all-filling I AM. Let us adore that matchless name, and never dishonour it by distrust or creature-confidence. Reader, you must *know* it before you can *remember* it. May the blessed Spirit reveal it graciously to your soul!

8 They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.
9 Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.

8. How different the end of those whose trusts are different! The enemies of God are uppermost at first, but they ere long are brought down by force, or else fall of their own accord. Their foundation is rotten, and therefore when the time comes it gives way under them; their chariots are burned in the fire, and their horses die of pestilence, and where is their boasted strength? As for those who rest on Jehovah, they are often cast down at the first onset, but an Almighty arm uplifts them, and they joyfully stand upright. The victory of Jesus is the inheritance of his people. The world, death, Satan and sin, shall all be trampled beneath the feet of the champions of faith; while those who rely upon an arm of flesh shall be ashamed and confounded for ever.

9. The Psalm is here recapitulated. That Jesus might himself be delivered, and might then, as our King, hear us, is the two-fold desire of the Psalm. The first request is granted, and the second is sure to all the seed; and therefore we may close the Psalm with the hearty shout "God save the King." "God save King Jesus, and may he soon come to reign."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is the prayer which the church might be supposed offering up, had all the redeemed stood by the cross, or in Gethsemane, in full consciousness of what was doing there. Messiah, in reading these words, would know that he had elsewhere the sympathy he longed for, when he said to the three disciples, "Tarry ye here, and watch with me." Matt. xxvi. 38. It is thus a pleasant song, of the sacred singer of Israel, to set forth the feelings of the redeemed in their Head, whether in his sufferings or in the glory that was to follow.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—There are traces of liturgical arrangement in many of the Psalms. There is frequently an adaptation to the circumstances of public worship. Thus, when the Jewish church wished to celebrate the great act of Messiah the High Priest making a sacrifice for the people on the day of atonement, as represented in the twenty-second Psalm, a subject so solemn, grand, and affecting, was not commenced suddenly and unpreparedly, but first a suitable occasion was sought, proper characters were introduced, and a scene in some degree appropriate to the great event was fitted for its reception. The priests and Levites endeavour to excite in the minds of the worshippers an exalted tone of reverential faith. The majesty and power of God, all the attributes which elevate the thoughts, are called in to fill the souls of the worshippers with the most intense emotion; and when the feelings are strung to the highest pitch, an awful, astounding impression succeeds, when the words are slowly chanted, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" We are to suppose, then, that the series of Psalms, from the twentieth to the twenty-fourth inclusive, was used as a service or office in the public worship of the Jewish church.* *R. H. Ryland, M.A., in "The Psalms Restored to Messiah," 1853.*

Whole Psalm.—Really good wishes are good things, and should be expressed in words and deeds. The whole Psalm thus teaches. Christian sympathy is a great

* This is a purely gratuitous statement, but is less unlikely than many other assertions of annotators who have a cause to plead.—*C. H. S.*

branch of Christian duty. There may be a great deal of obliging kindness in that which costs us little.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.*" All the days of Christ were *days of trouble.* He was a brother born for adversity, a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. . . . . But more particularly it was a "*day of trouble*" with him when he was in the garden, heavy and sore amazed, and his sweat was, as it were, droops of blood falling on the ground, and his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; but more especially this was his case when he hung upon the cross . . . . . when he bore all the sins of his people, endured the wrath of his Father, and was forsaken by him. Now, in this "*day of trouble,*" both when in the garden and on the cross, he prayed unto his Father, as he had been used to do in other cases, and at other times; and the church here prays that God would hear and answer him, as he did.—*Condensed from John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*The name.*" Whereas they say, "*The name of the God of Jacob,*" thereby they mean God himself; but they thus speak of God because all the knowledge that we have of God ariseth from the knowledge of his name, and as to that end he hath given himself in the Scriptures sundry names, that thereby we might know not only what he is in himself, so far as it is meet for us to know, but especially what he is to us, so by them, and them principally, we know him to be, as he is, not only in himself, but unto us. . . . . From this knowledge of the name of God ariseth confidence in prayer! as when they know him, and here call him "*the God of Jacob,*" that is, he that hath made a covenant of mercy with him and with his posterity, that he will be their God and they shall be his people, that they may be bold to flee to him for succour, and confidently call upon him in the day of their trouble to hear them, and to help them, as they do. And the more that they know of his name, that is, of his goodness, mercy, truth, power, wisdom, justice, etc., so may they the more boldly pray unto him, not doubting but that he will be answerable unto his name. . . . For as among men, according to the good name that they have for liberality and pity, so will men be ready to come unto them in their need, and the poor will say, "I will go to such an house for they have a good name, and are counted good to the poor, and merciful, all men speak well of them for their liberality;" and this name of theirs giveth the encouragement to come boldly and often. So when we know God thus by his name, it will make us bold to come unto him in prayer. . . . . Or, if a man be never so merciful, and others know it not, and so they are ignorant of his good name that he hath, and that he is worthy of, they cannot, with any good hope, come unto him, for they know not what he is; they have heard nothing of him at all. So when, by unbelief, we hardly conceive of God and of his goodness, or for want of knowledge are ignorant of his good name, even of all his mercy, and of his truth, pity and compassion that is in him, and so know not his great and glorious name, we can have little or no heart at all to come unto him in trouble, and seek unto him for help by prayer, as these did here; and this maketh some so forward unto prayer, they are so well acquainted with *the name of God,* that they doubt not of speeding, and others again are so backward unto it, they are so wholly ignorant of his name.—*Nicholas Bownd,* 1604.

Verse 1.—"*The name of the God of Jacob defend thee.*" This is a beautiful allusion to the history of the patriarch Jacob. Jehovah had appeared for him, when he fled from his brother Esau, at Bethel, and Jacob said to his household, "Let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, *who answered m in the day of my distress,* and was with me in the way which I went." Gen. xxxv. 3.—*John Morison.*

Verse 1.—"*The name of the God of Jacob defend thee.*" Hebrew, "*set thee in an high place,*" such as God's name is. Prov. xviii. 10. "The righteous runneth into it and is safe," as in a tower of brass, or town of war. By *the name of God* is meant, *Deus nominatissimus,* the most renowned God, saith Junius, and "worthy to be praised," as Psalm xviii. 3; and he is called the God of Jacob here, saith another, first, because Jacob was once in the like distress (Gen. xxxii. 6, 7); secondly, because he prayed to the like purpose (Gen. xxxv. 3); thirdly, because he prevailed with God as a prince; "and there God spake with us" (Hosea xii. 4); fourthly, because *God of Jacob* is the same with "God of Israel," and so the covenant is pleaded.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*The name of the God of Jacob defend thee.*"—There is an assurance of thy protection, of thy safety, in the midst of ten thousand foes, and of thy per-

severance to the end. But you will say, how will the name of the God of Jacob defend me? Try it. I have, over and over again; therefore I speak what I do know and testify what I have seen. "*The name of the God of Jacob defend thee.*" I was once goaded by a poor silly Irish papist to try it, who told me, in his consummate ignorance and bigotry, that if a priest would but give him a drop of holy water, and make a circle with it around a field full of wild beasts, they would not hurt him. I retired in disgust at the abominable trickery of such villains, reflecting, what a fool I am that I cannot put such trust in my God as this poor deluded man puts in his priest and a drop of holy water! And I resolved to try what "*the name of the God of Jacob*" would do, having the Father's fixed decrees, the Son's unalterable responsibility, and the Spirit's invincible grace and operation around me. I tried it and felt my confidence brighten. O brethren, get encircled with covenant engagements, and covenant blood, and covenant grace, and covenant promises, and covenant securities: then will "the Lord *hear you in the time of trouble, and the name of the God of Jacob will defend you.*"—*Joseph Irons.*

Verse 1.—A sweeter wish, or a more consolatory prayer for a child of sorrow was never uttered by man, "*The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.*" And who is there of the sons of men to whom a "*day of trouble*" does not come, whose path is not darkened at times, or with whom is it unclouded sunshine from the cradle to the grave? "Few plants," says old Jacomb, "have both the morning and the evening sun;" and one far older than he said, "Man is born to trouble." A "*day of trouble,*" then, is the heritage of every child of Adam. How sweet, as I have said, how sweet the wish, "*The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.*" It is the prayer of another in behalf of some troubled one, and yet it implies that the troubled one himself had also prayed, "*The Lord hear thee*"—hear and answer thine own prayer!—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verses 1, 2.—The scene presented in this place to the eye of faith is deeply affecting. Here is the Messiah pouring out his heart in prayer in the day of his trouble; his spouse overhears his agonising groans; she is moved with the tenderest sympathy towards him; she mingles her prayers with his; she entreats that he may be supported and defended..... It may now, perhaps, be said, he is out of the reach of trouble, he is highly exalted, he does not want our sympathies or our prayers. True; yet still we may pray for him—see Matthew xxv. 40—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We can pray for him in his members. And thus is fulfilled what is written in Psalm lxxii. 15, "And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: *prayer* also shall be made for him continually (that is, in his suffering members): and daily shall he be praised" (that is, in his own admirable person).—*Hamilton Verschoyle,* 1843.

Verses 1—5.—These are the words of the people, which they spake unto God in the behalf of their king; and so they did as David desired them, namely, pray for him. If they did thus pray for him, being desired thereunto, and it was their bound duty so to do, and they knew it to be so, and therefore did make conscience of it, and it had been a great fault for them to have failed in it; then by consequence it followeth of necessity, that whensoever any of our brethren or sisters in Christ shall desire this duty at our hands, we must be careful to perform it; and it were a fault not to be excused in us, both against God and them, to fail in it. Therefore we must not think that when godly men and women at their parting or otherwise, desire our prayers, and say, "I pray you pray for me," or, "remember me in your prayers," that these are words of course (though I do not deny, but that many do so use them, and so doing they take the name of God in vain); but we should be persuaded, that out of the abundance of their feeling of their own wants they speak unto us, and so be willing by our prayers to help to supply them. And especially we should do it when they shall make known their estate unto us, as here David did to the people, giving them to understand that he should or might be in great danger of his enemies, and so it was "*a time of trouble*" unto him, as he called it.... Most of all this duty of prayer ought to be carefully performed when we have promised it unto any upon such notice of their estate. For as all promises ought to be kept, yea, though it be to our own hindrance, so those most of all that so nearly concern them. And as if when any should desire us to speak to some great man for them, and we promise to do it, and they trust to it, hoping that we will be as good as our words; it were a great deceit in us to fail them, and so to frustrate their expectation; so when any have desired us to speak to God for them, and upon our promise they would comfort themselves over it, if we should by negligence deceive them, it were

a great fault in us, and that which the Lord would require at our hands, though they should never know of it. Therefore, as we ought daily to pray one for another unasked, as our Saviour Christ hath taught us, " O our Father which art in heaven," etc., so more specially and by name should we do it for them that have desired it of us. And so parents especially should not forget their children in their prayers, which daily ask their blessing, and hope to be blessed of God by their prayers. Secondarily, if we should neglect to pray for them that have desired it at our hands, how could we have any hope that others whom we have desired to pray for us should perform that duty unto us ? Nay, might not we justly fear that they would altogether neglect it, seeing we do neglect them ? and should it not be just with God so to punish us ? according to the saying of our Saviour Christ, " With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Matt. vii. 2. And I remember that this was the saying of a reverend father in the church, who is now fallen asleep in the Lord, when any desired him to pray for them (as many did, and more than any that I have known), he would say unto them, " I pray you pray for me, and pray that I may remember you, and then I hope I shall not forget you." Therefore if we would have others pray for us, let us pray for them.—*Nicholas Bownd.*

Verses 1, 5.—In the first verse the Psalmist says, " *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble ;* " and in the fifth he says, "*The Lord perform all thy petitions.*" Does he in both these cases refer to one and the same time ? The prayers mentioned in the first verse are offered in " *the day of trouble,*" in the days of his flesh ; are the petitions to which he refers in the fourth verse also offered in the days of his flesh ? Many think not. Before our blessed Saviour departed out of this world, he prayed to the Father for those whom he had given him, that he would keep them from the evil of the world, that they might be one, even as he was one with the Father. He prayed too for his murderers. After his ascension into heaven, he sat down at the right hand of the Father, where he " maketh intercession for us." " If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." It is to this, as many think, that the prophet refers when he says, " *The Lord perform all thy petitions ;* " to the intercession which he is continually making for us.—*F. H. Dunwell.*

Verse 2.—" *Send thee help from the sanctuary.*" Here we see the nature of true faith, that it causeth us to see *help* in *heaven*, and so to pray for it when there is none to be seen in the earth. And this is the difference between faith and unbelief ; that the very unbelievers can by reason conceive of help, so long as they have any means to help them ; but if they fail they can see none at all ; so they are like unto those that are purblind, who can see nothing but near at hand. But faith seeth afar off, even into heaven, so that it is " the evidence of things that are not seen ; " for it looketh unto the power of God, who hath all means in his hand, or can work without them, who made all of nothing, and " calleth the things that be not, as though they were." So that as the holy martyr Stephen, when his enemies were ready to burst for anger and gnash at him with their teeth, looked steadfastly into heaven, and saw Christ standing at the right hand of God ready to defend him ; so faith in the promises of the word doth see help in heaven ready for us, when there are no means in earth.—*Nicholas Bownd.*

Verse 2.—" *Send thee help from the sanctuary.*" Why " *from the sanctuary,*" but because the Lord presented himself there as upon the mercy-seat ! The sanctuary was in Zion, the mercy-seat was in the sanctuary, the Lord was in the mercy-seat ; he would have himself set forth as residing there. Herein they pray, and pray in faith for help and strength.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 2.—" *Strengthen thee out of Zion.*" That is, out of the assemblies of the saints, where they are praying hard for thy welfare.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—" *Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice.*" " *All thy offerings :* " the humiliation that brought him from heaven to earth ; the patient tabernacling in the womb of the holy Virgin ; the poor nativity ; the hard manger ; ox and ass for courtiers ; the weary flight into Egypt ; the poor cottage in Nazareth ; the doing all good, and bearing all evil ; the miracles, the sermons, the teachings ; the being called a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners ; the attribution of his wondrous deeds to Beelzebub. "*And accept thy burnt sacrifice.*" As every part of the victim was consumed in a burnt sacrifice, so what limb, what sense of our dear Lord did not agonise in his passion ? The

thorny crown on his head: the nails in his hands and feet; the reproaches that filled his ears; the gloating multitude on whom his dying gaze rested; the vinegar and the gall; the evil odours of the hill of death and corruption. The ploughers ploughed upon his back, and made long furrows; his most sacred face was smitten with the palm of the hand, his head with the reed. What could have been done more for the vineyard than he did not do in it? Isa. v. 4. So, what more could have been borne by the vine, that this dear Vine did not bear? "*Remember*" them now, O Father, call to mind for us sinners, for us miserable sinners, and for our salvation, "*all*" these "*offerings;*" "*accept,*" instead of our eternal punishment, who are guilty, his "*burnt sacrifice,*" who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth!—*Dionysius, and Gerhohus* (1093—1169), *quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 3.—"*Accept:*" Hebrew, "*turn to ashes,*" by fire from heaven, in token of his acceptance as was usual.—*Matthew Poole.*

Verse 3.—"*That thy burnt offering may be fat.*" That is, abundant, fruitful, and full. But here we must understand this burnt offering, as we did the sacrifice, in a spiritual sense, as we have before observed. Thus Christ offered up himself wholly upon the cross to be consumed by the fire of love. And here, instead of "all thy sacrifice," it might be rendered "the whole of thy sacrifice." Even as burnt sacrifice (*holocaustum*) signifies the whole of it being burnt with fire. By which groaning of the Spirit, he shows and teaches the righteous, that they should pray and hope that none of their sufferings shall be vain, but that all shall be well-pleasing, remembered, and fully acceptable.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3.—"*Selah.*"*—This word, in the judgment of the learned, is sometime *vox optantis*, the voice of one that wisheth, equivalent to *amen;* or *vox admirantis*, the voice of one admiring, showing some special matter; or *vox affirmantis*, of one affirming, avouching what is said; or *vox meditantis*, of one meditating, requiring consideration of what is said. But withal, it is a rest in music. Jerome saith it is *commutatio metri*, or *vicissitudo canendi.*—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 4.—"*Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.*" Let us here call to mind the zealous and earnest desire of the Redeemer to accomplish his work, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." Luke xii. 50. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke xxii. 15); that he might leave a memorial of his sufferings and death, for the strengthening and refreshing of their souls. These earnest desires and anticipations did the Father satisfy, as of one with whom he was well pleased.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 4.—"*Fulfil all thy counsel;*" whatever was agreed upon in the counsel and covenant of peace between him and his Father, relating to his own glory, and the salvation of his people.—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—"*Fulfil all thy counsel.*" Answer thee, *ad cardinem desiderii*, as a father, Augustine, expresseth it; let it be unto thee even as thou wilt. Sometimes God doth not only grant a man's prayer, but fulfilleth his counsel; that is, in that very way, by that very means, which his judgment pitched upon in his thoughts.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5 (*first clause*).—Whosoever do partake with Christ's subjects in trouble, shall share with them also in the joy of their deliverance; therefore it is said, "*We will rejoice in thy salvation.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*In the name of our God.*" As those cried out, Judges vii. 20, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon;" and as we have it in Joshua vi. 20, "And the people shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell down;" and king Abiah, crying out with his men in the same, killed five hundred thousand of the children of Israel; and so now also, according to the military custom in our day, the soldiers boast in the name and glory of their general, in order to encourage themselves against their enemies. And it is just this custom that the present verse is now teaching, only in a godly and religious manner.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 5.—"*In the name of our God we will set up our banners.*" The banners formerly so much used were a part of military equipage, borne in times of war to assemble, direct, distinguish, and encourage the troops. They might possibly be used for other purposes also. Occasions of joy, splendid processions, and especially

* See pages 23, 26, 27, 35, 318.

a royal habitation, might severally be distinguished in this way. The words of the Psalmist may perhaps be wholly figurative: but if they should be literally understood, the allusion of erecting a banner in the name of the Lord, acknowledging his glory, and imploring his favour, might be justified from an existing practice. Certain it is that we find this custom prevalent on this very principle in other places, into which it might originally have been introduced from Judea. Thus Mr. Turner (*Embassy to Thibet*, p. 31), says, "I was told that it was a custom with the Soobah to ascend the hill every month, when he sets up a white flag, and performs some religious ceremonies, to conciliate the favour of a dewta, or invisible being, the genius of the place, who is said to hover about the summit, dispensing at his will, good and evil to every thing around him."—*Samuel Burder's "Oriental Customs,"* 1812.

Verse 5.—"*In the name of our God we will set up our banners.*" In all religious as well as warlike processions the people carry banners. Hence, on the pinnacles of their sacred cars, on the domes or gateways of their temples, and on the roof of a new house, may be seen the banner of the caste or sect, floating in the air. Siva the Supreme, also, is described as having a banner in the celestial world.—*Joseph Roberts' "Oriental Illustrations."*

Verse 5.—"*In the name of our God we will set up our banners.*" 1. We will wage war in his name, we will see that our cause be good, and make his glory our end in every expedition; we will ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; we will follow his conduct, implore his aid, and depend upon it, and refer the issue to him. David went against Goliath in the name of the Lord of hosts. 1 Sam. xvii. 45. 2. We will celebrate our victories in his name. When "*we lift up our banners*" in triumph, and set up our trophies, it shall be "*in the name of our God*," he shall have all the glory of our success, and no instrument shall have any part of the honour that is due to him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"*We will set up our banners.*"—Confession of Christ, as the only name whereby we can be saved, is the "*banner*" which distinguishes his faithful people. O that this confession were more distinct, more pure, more zealous, in those who seem to be his followers, then would they be more united, more bold, in the profession of their religion, more successful in the cause of Christ, terrible as an army with "*banners.*" Cant. vi. 4.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 5.—"*Our banners.*" Will you know the staff, the colours, and the flag or streamer of this ensign? Why, the staff is his cross, the colours are blood and water, and the streamer the gospel, or preaching of them to the world. The staff that carried the colours was of old time fashioned like a cross, a cross bar near the top there was, from which the flag or streamer hung; so as it were prefiguring, that all the hosts and armies of the nations were one day to be gathered under the *banner of the cross*, to which soldiers should daily flow out of all the nations and kingdoms of the earth.—*Mark Frank*, 1613—1664.

Verse 5.—"*The Lord fulfil all thy petitions,*" for thyself and for others, now that thou sittest on the right hand of the Father, pleading for us and showing thy side and thy wounds.—*Dionysius, quoted by Isaac Williams.*

Verse 6.—"*Now know I.*" A sudden change of number, speaking in the person of one, thereby to note the unity and consent of the people to this prayer, as though they had been all one, and uttered it all with one mouth. "*The Lord will help his anointed;*" that is, his king, whom he hath established. See Psalm ii. 2; xviii. 50. "*And will hear him* (see verse 1), *from his sanctuary.*" One readeth it thus—"from the heavens of his holiness;" meaning, from heaven where his holiness dwelleth. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 6.—"*He will hear him.*" I would be glad of the prayers of all the churches of Christ; O that there were not a saint on earth but that I were by name in his morning and evening prayer (whosoever thou art that readest, I beseech thee pray for me); but above all, let me have a property in those prayers and intercessions that are proper only to *Christ;* I am sure then I should never miscarry: Christ's prayers are heavenly, glorious, and very effectual.—*Isaac Ambrose*, 1592—1674.

Verse 6.—"*His anointed.*" As priests, and sometimes kings and prophets, were among the Jews *anointed* to their offices, so our Saviour was anointed as a Prophet, to preach glad tidings to the meek; as a Priest, to bind up the broken-hearted; and as a King to deliver the captives. As the unction means designation and ordination, it is properly applied to the divine person of the Mediator: he is

spoken of as God, who was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." Heb. i. 8, 9. As the anointing with the Holy Spirit signifies the *gifts* and *aids* of the Holy Spirit, it terminates upon his human nature only, and not his divine person, which has all the perfections in itself, and cannot properly, in the sense last mentioned be said to be anointed with the Holy Spirit. But yet as the human nature is taken into a subsistence in his divine person, the anointed may properly enough be predicated and affirmed of his Person. The unction of our Redeemer has a great *stress* laid upon it in Scripture. And therefore we read, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" 1 John v. 1; ii. 22. Our Saviour's enemies were sensible of this, when they made an order, that if "any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." John ix. 22. Our Saviour's anointing was *superior* to that of any other, and more excellent as to the work to which he was consecrated. The apostles and others, who are called his followers, had the Spirit *by measure*, but Christ *without measure*. He is "fairer than the sons of men" (Psalm xlv. 2); and had a glory as the "only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John i. 14, 16); and of his fulness the apostles and all others receive. Christ's anointing answers to that of Aaron his type; the precious ointment which was "poured upon his head, ran down to the skirts of his garments." Psalm cxxxiii. 2.

Our Saviour was so anointed, as to "fill all in all." Eph. i. 23. He filleth all his members, and all their faculties, with all those measures of the Spirit, which they ever receive.—*Condensed from John Hurrion*, 1675—1731.

Verse 7.—"*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.*"—About Michaelmas I was in the utmost extremity, and having gone out in very fine weather, I contemplated the azure heavens, and my heart was so strengthened in faith (which I do not ascribe to my own powers, but solely to the grace of God), that I thought within myself, "What an excellent thing it is when we have nothing, and can rely upon nothing, but yet are acquainted with the living God, who made heaven and earth, and place our confidence alone in him, which enables us to be so tranquil even in necessity!" Although I was well aware that I required something that very day, yet my heart was so strong in faith that I was cheerful, and of good courage. On coming home I was immediately waited upon by the overseer of the workmen and masons, who, as it was Saturday, required money to pay their wages. He expected the money to be ready, which he wished to go and pay, but enquired, however, whether I had received anything. "Has anything arrived?" asked he. I answered, "No, but I have faith in God." Scarcely had I uttered the words when a student was announced, who brought me thirty dollars from some one, whom he would not name. I then went into the room again, and asked the other "how much he required this time for the workmen's wages?" He answered, "Thirty dollars." "Here they are," said I, and enquired at the same time, "if he needed any more?" He said, "No," which very much strengthened the faith of both of us, since we so visibly saw the miraculous hand of God, who sent it at the very moment when it was needed.—*Augustus Herman Franke*, 1663—1727.

Verse 7.—"*Some trust in chariots,*" etc.—Vain is the confidence of all wickedness. In war, chariots, horses, navies, numbers, discipline, former successes, are relied on; but the battle is not to the strong. "Providence favours the strong battalions" may sound well in a worldling's ear, but neither Providence nor the Bible so teaches. In peace, riches, friends, ships, farms, stocks, are relied upon, yet they can neither help nor save. Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 7.—"*We will remember the name of the Lord our God.*" By *the name of God* is generally understood, in Holy Writ, the various properties and attributes of God: these properties and attributes make up and constitute the *name* of God. As when Solomon says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." And, by remembering, considering, meditating upon this name of God, the Psalmist represents himself as comforted or strengthened, whatever might be the duties to which he was called, or the dangers to which he was exposed. Others were for looking to other sources of safety and strength, "some trusting in chariots, and some in horses;" but the Psalmist always set himself to the "remembering the name of the Lord our God:" and always, as it would seem, with satisfaction and success. And here is the peculiarity of the passage on which we wish to dwell, and from which we hope to draw important lessons and

truths—the Psalmist "remembers the name of the Lord his God;" not any one property or attribute to God; but the whole combination of divine perfections. And he "*remembers*" this "name;" the expression implying, not a transient thought, but meditation—consideration; and yet the result of the recollection is gladness and confidence.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 7.—It is easy to persuade papists to lean on priests and saints, on old rags and painted pictures—on any idol; but it is hard to get a Protestant to trust in the living God.—*William Arnot*, 1858.

Verse 7.—Weak man cannot choose but have some confidence without himself in case of apparent difficulties, and natural men do look first to some earthly thing wherein they confide. "*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses,*" some in one creature, some in another. The believer must quit his confidence in these things, whether he have them or want them, and must rely on what God hath promised in his word to do unto us. "*But we will remember the name of the Lord our God,*" *David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—They that "*trust in chariots and horses,*" will have no king but Cæsar; but the "armies in heaven" which follow thee have themselves no arms, and no strength but in following thee.—*Isaac Williams.*

Verse 7.—Numa being told that his enemies were coming upon him, as he was offering sacrifices, thought it was sufficient for his safety that he could say, I am about the service of my God. When Jehoshaphat had once established a preaching ministry in all the cities of Judah, then, and not till then, the fear of the Lord fell on the neighbouring nations, and they made no war; albeit, he had before that placed forces in all the fenced cities.—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 7:—

"Some their warrior horses boast,
Some their chariots marshall'd host;
But our trust will we proclaim
In our God Jehovah's name."

Richard Mant.

Verse 8.—"*They are brought down*" from their horses and chariots in which they trusted. Hebrew: *they bowed down*, as being unable to stand longer because of their mortal wounds. Compare Judges v. 27. "*Stand upright.*" Standing firmly upon our legs, and keeping the field, as conquerors use to do.—*Matthew Poole.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

This Psalm has been much used for coronation, thanksgiving, and fast sermons, and no end of nonsense and sickening flattery has been tacked thereto by the trencher-chaplains of the world's church. If kings had been devils, some of these gentry would have praised their horns and hoofs; for although some of their royal highnesses have been very obedient servants of the prince of darkness, these false prophets have dubbed them "most gracious sovereigns," and have been as much dazzled in their presence as if they had beheld the beatific vision.—*C. H. S.*

Whole Psalm.—A loyal song and prayer for subjects of King Jesus.

Verse 1.—Two great mercies in great trouble—hearing at the throne, and defence from the throne.

Verses 1, 2.—I. The Lord's trouble in its nature and its cause. II. How the Lord exercised himself in his trouble. III. We ought not to be unmoved spectators of the trouble of Jesus.—*Hamilton Verschoyle.*

Verses 1—3.—A model of good wishes for our friends. I. *They include personal piety.* The person who is spoken of prays, goes to the sanctuary, and offers sacrifice. We must wish our friends grace. II. *They point upward.* The blessings are distinctly recognised as divine. III. *They do not exclude trouble.* IV. *They are eminently spiritual.* Acceptance, etc.

Verse 2.—Sanctuary help—a suggestive topic.

Verse 3.—God's ceaseless respect to the sacrifice of Jesus.

Verses 3, 4.—The great privilege of this fourfold acceptance in the Beloved.

Verse 5.—Joy in salvation, to be resolved on and practised.

Verse 5.—*Setting up the banner.* Open avowal of allegiance, declaration of war, index of perseverance, claim of possession, signal of triumph.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—The prevalence of our Lord's intercession, and the acceptance of our prayers through him.

Verse 6.—"*His anointed.*" Our Lord as the Anointed. When? With what unction? How? For what offices? etc.

Verse 6.—"*He will hear him.*" The ever-prevalent Intercessor.

Verse 6.—God's "*saving strength;*" the strength of his most used and most skilful hand.

Verse 6 (*first clause*).—"*Now know I.*" The moment when faith in Jesus fills the soul. The time when assurance is given. The period when a truth gleams into the soul, etc.

Verse 7.—*Creature confidence.* Apparently mighty, well adapted, showy, noisy, etc. *Faithful trust.* Silent, spiritual, divine, etc.

Verse 7.—"*The name of the Lord our God.*"—Comfortable reflections from the name and character of the true God.

Verse 8.—*Tables turned.*

Verse 9.—"*Save, Lord.*" One of the shortest and most pithy prayers in the Bible.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—I. To whom we come, and what then. "*To a king.*" II. How we come, and what it means. "*We call.*" III. What we want, and what it implies. "*Hear us.*"

PSALM XXI.

SUBJECT.—*The title gives us but little information; it is simply,* To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David. *Probably written by David, sung by David, relating to David, and intended by David to refer in its fullest reach of meaning to David's Lord. It is evidently the fit companion of Psalm Twenty, and is in its proper position next to it. Psalm Twenty anticipates what this regards as realized. If we pray to-day for a benefit and receive it, we must, ere the sun goes down, praise God for that mercy, or we deserve to be denied the next time. It has been called David's triumphant song, and we may remember it as* The Royal Triumphal Ode. *"The king" is most prominent thoroughout, and we shall read it to true profit if our meditation of him shall be sweet while perusing it. We must crown him with the glory of our salvation; singing of his love, and praising his power. The next Psalm will take us to the foot of the cross, this introduces us to the steps of the throne.*

DIVISION.—*The division of the ranslators will answer every purpose. A thanksgiving for victory, verses* 1 *to* 6. *Confidence of further success, verses* 7 *to* 13.

EXPOSITION.

THE king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.

3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

4 He asked life of thee, *and* thou gavest *it* him, *even* length of days for ever and ever.

5 His glory *is* great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

1. *"The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord."* Jesus is a Royal Personage. The question, "Art thou a King then?" received a full answer from the Saviour's lips: "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this prupose came I into this world, that I might bear witness unto the truth." He is not merely *a* King, but *the* King; King over minds and hearts, reigning with a dominion of love, before which all other rule is but mere brute force. He was proclaimed King even on the cross, for there, indeed, to the eye of faith, he reigned as on a throne, blessing with more than imperial munificence the needy sons of earth. Jesus has wrought out the salvation of his people, but as a man he found his strength in Jehovah his God, to whom he addressed himself in prayer upon the lonely mountain's side, and in the garden's solitary gloom. That strength so abundantly given is here gratefully acknowledged, and made the subject of joy. The Man of Sorrows is now anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Returned in triumph from the overthrow of all his foes, he offers his own rapturous *Te Deum* in the temple above, and joys in the power of the Lord. Herein let every subject of King Jesus imitate the King; let us lean upon Jehovah's strength, let us joy in it by unstaggering faith, let us exult in it in our thankful songs. Jesus not only has thus rejoiced, but he *shall* do so as he sees the power of divine grace bringing out from their sinful hiding-places the purchase of his soul's travail; we also shall rejoice more and more as we learn by experience more and more fully the strength of the arm of our covenant God Our weakness unstrings our harps, but his strength tunes them anew. If we cannot sing a note in honour of our own strength, we can at any rate rejoice in our omnipotent God.

"And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!" Everything is ascribed

to God; the source is *thy strength* and the stream is *thy salvation*. Jehovah planned and ordained it, works it and crowns it, and therefore it is his salvation. The joy here spoken of is described by a note of exclamation and a word of wonder: "*how greatly!*" The rejoicing of our risen Lord must, like his agony, be unutterable. If the mountains of his joy rise in proportion to the depth of the valleys of his grief, then his sacred bliss is high as the seventh heaven. For the joy which was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and now that joy daily grows, for he rests in his love and rejoices over his redeemed with singing, as in due order they are brought to find their salvation in his blood. Let us with our Lord rejoice in salvation, as coming from God, as coming to us, as extending itself to others, and as soon to encompass all lands. We need not be afraid of too much rejoicing in this respect; this solid foundation will well sustain the loftiest edifice of joy. The shoutings of the early Methodists in the excitement of the joy were far more pardonable than our own lukewarmness. Our joy should have some sort of inexpressibleness in it.

2. "*Thou hast given him his heart's desire.*" That desire he ardently pursued when he was on earth, both by his prayer, his actions, and his suffering; he manifested that his heart longed to redeem his people, and now in heaven he has his desire granted him, for he sees his beloved coming to be with him where he is. The desires of the Lord Jesus were from his heart, and the Lord heard them; if our hearts are right with God, he will in our case also "fulfil the desire of them that fear him."

"*And hast not withholden the request of his lips.*" What is in the well of the heart is sure to come up in the bucket of the lips, and those are the only true prayers where the heart's desire is first, and the lip's request follows after. Jesus prayed vocally as well as mentally; speech is a great assistance to thought. Some of us feel that even when alone we find it easier to collect our thoughts when we can pray aloud. The requests of the Saviour were not withheld. He was and still is a prevailing Pleader. Our Advocate on high returns not empty from the throne of grace. He asked for his elect in the eternal council-chamber, he asked for blessings for them here, he asked for glory for them hereafter, and his requests have speeded. He is ready to ask for us at the mercy-seat. Have we not at this hour some desire to send up to his Father by him? Let us not be slack to use our willing, loving, all-prevailing Intercessor.

"*Selah.*" Here a pause is very properly inserted, that we may admire the blessed success of the king's prayers, and that we may prepare our own requests which may be presented through him. If we had a few more quiet rests, a few more Selahs in our public worship, it might be profitable.

3. "*For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.*" The word *prevent* formerly signified to precede or go before, and assuredly Jehovah preceded his Son with blessings. Before he died saints were saved by the anticipated merit of his death, before he came believers saw his day and were glad, and he himself had his delights with the sons of men. The Father is so willing to give blessings through his Son, that instead of his being constrained to bestow his grace, he outstrips the Mediatorial march of mercy. "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you." Before Jesus calls the Father answers, and while he is yet speaking he hears. Mercies may be bought with blood, but they are also freely given. The love of Jehovah is not caused by the Redeemer's sacrifice, but that love, with its blessings of goodness, preceded the great atonement, and provided it for our salvation. Reader, it will be a happy thing for thee if, like thy Lord, thou canst see both providence and grace preceding thee, forestalling thy needs, and preparing thy path. Mercy, in the case of many of us, ran before our desires and prayers, and it ever outruns our endeavours and expectancies, and even our hopes are left to lag behind. Prevenient grace deserves a song; we may make one out of this sentence, let us try. All our mercies are to be viewed as "*blessings;*" gifts of a blessed God, meant to make us blessed; they are "*blessings of goodness,*" not of merit, but of free favour; and they come to us in a *preventing way*, a way of prudent foresight, such as only preventing love could have arranged. In this light the verse is itself a sonnet!

"*Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.*" Jesus wore the thorn-crown, but now wears the glory-crown, It is a "*crown,*" indicating royal nature, imperial power, deserved honour, glorious conquest, and divine government. The crown is of the richest, rarest, most resplendent, and most lasting order—"*gold,*" and that gold of the most refined and valuable sort, "*pure gold,*" to indicate the excellence

of his dominion. This crown is set upon his head most firmly, and whereas other monarchs find their diadems fitting loosely, his is fixed so that no power can move it, for Jehovah himself has set it upon his brow. Napoleon crowned himself, but Jehovah crowned the Lord Jesus; the empire of the one melted in an hour, but the other has an abiding dominion. Some versions read, "a crown of precious stones;" this may remind us of those beloved ones who shall be as jewels in his crown, of whom he has said, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels." May we be set in the golden circlet of the Redeemer's glory, and adorn his head for ever!

4. "*He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.*" The first words may suit King David, but the length of days for ever and ever can only refer to the King Messiah. Jesus, as man, prayed for resurrection and he received it, and now possesses it in immortality. He died once, but being raised from the dead he dieth no more. "Because I live, ye shall live also," is the delightful intimation which the Saviour gives us, that we are partakers of his eternal life. We had never found this jewel, if he had not rolled away the stone which covered it.

5. "*His glory is great in thy salvation.*" Immanuel bears the palm; he once bore the cross. The Father has glorified his Son, so that there is no glory like unto that which surroundeth him. See his person as it is described by John in the Revelation; see his dominion as it stretches from sea to sea; see his splendour as he is revealed in flaming fire. Lord, who is like unto thee? Solomon in all his glory could not be compared with thee, thou once despised Man of Nazareth! Mark, reader: salvation is ascribed to God; and thus the Son, as our Saviour, magnifies his Father; but the Son's glory is also greatly seen, for the Father glorifies his Son.

"*Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.*" Parkhurst reads, "splendour and beauty." These are put upon Jesus, as chains of gold, and stars and tokens of honour are placed upon princes and great men. As the wood of the tabernacle was overlaid with pure gold, so is Jesus covered with glory and honour. If there be a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory for his humble followers, what must there be for our Lord himself? The whole weight of sin was laid upon him; it is but meet that the full measure of the glory of bearing it away should be laid upon the same beloved person. A glory commensurate with his shame he must and will receive, for well has he earned it. It is not possible for us to honour Jesus too much; what our God delights to do, we may certainly do to our utmost. Oh for new crowns for the lofty brow which once was marred with thorns!

> "Let him be crowned with majesty
> Who bowed his head to death,
> And be his honours sounded high
> By all thing that have breath."

6. "*For thou hast made him most blessed for ever.*" He is most blessed in himself, for he is God over all, blessed for ever; but this relates to him as our Mediator, in which capacity blessedness is given to him as a reward. The margin has it, *thou hast set him to be blessings;* he is an overflowing wellspring of blessings to others, a sun filling the universe with light. According as the Lord sware unto Abraham, the promised seed is an everlasting source of blessings to all the nations of the earth. He is set for this, ordained appointed, made incarnate with this very design, that he may bless the sons of men. Oh that sinners had sense enough to use the Saviour for that end to which he is ordained, viz., to be a Saviour to lost and guilty souls.

"*Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.*" He who is a blessing to others cannot but be glad himself; the unbounded good-doing of Jesus ensures him unlimited joy. The loving favour of his Father, the countenance of God, gives Jesus exceeding joy. This is the purest stream to drink of, and Jesus chooses no other. His joy is full. Its source is divine. Its continuance eternal. Its degree exceeding all bounds. The countenance of God makes the Prince of Heaven glad; how ought we to seek it, and how careful should we be lest we should provoke him by our sins to hide his face from us! Our anticipations may cheerfully fly forward to the hour when the joy of our Lord shall be shed abroad on all the saints, and the countenance of Jehovah shall shine upon all the blood-bought. So shall we "enter into the joy of our Lord."

So far all has been "the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that

feast." Let us shout and sing with them, for Jesus is our King, and in his triumphs we share a part.

7 For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved.

8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

11 For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, *which* they are not able *to perform.*

12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, *when* thou shalt make ready *thine arrows* upon thy strings against the face of them.

13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: *so* will we sing and praise thy power.

7. *"For the king trusteth in the Lord."* Our Lord, like a true King and leader, was a master in the use of the weapons, and could handle well the shield of faith, for he has set us a brilliant example of unwavering confidence in God. He felt himself safe in his Father's care until his hour was come, he knew that he was always heard in heaven; he committed his cause to him that judgeth right, and in his last moments he committed his spirit into the same hands. The joy expressed in the former verses was the joy of faith, and the victory achieved was due to the same precious grace. A holy confidence in Jehovah is the true mother of victories. This Psalm of triumph was composed long before our Lord's conflict began, but faith overleaps the boundaries of time, and chants her "Io triumphe," while yet she sings her battle song.

"Through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved." Eternal mercy secures the mediatorial throne of Jesus. He who is Most High in every sense, engages all his infinite perfections to maintain the throne of grace upon which our King in Zion reigns. He was not moved *from* his purpose, nor *in* his sufferings, nor *by* his enemies, nor shall he be moved *from* the completion of his designs. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Other empires are dissolved by the lapse of years, but eternal mercy maintains his growing dominion evermore; other kings fail because they rest upon an arm of flesh, but our monarch reigns on in splendour because he trusteth in Jehovah. It is a great display of divine mercy to men that the throne of King Jesus is still among them: nothing but divine mercy could sustain it, for human malice would overturn it to-morrow if it could. We ought to trust in God for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom, for in Jehovah the King himself trusts: all unbelieving methods of action, and especially all reliance upon mere human ability, should be for ever discarded from a kingdom where the monarch sets the example of walking by faith in God.

8. *"Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee."* The destruction of the wicked is a fitting subject for joy to the friends of righteousness; hence here, and in most scriptural songs, it is noted with calm thanksgiving. "Thou hast put down the mighty from their seats," is a note of the same song which sings, "and hast exalted them of low degree." We pity the lost for they are men, but we cannot pity them as enemies of Christ. None can escape from the wrath of the victorious King, nor is it desirable that they should. Without looking for his flying foes he will find them with his hand, for his presence is about and around them. In vain shall any hope for escape, he will find out all, and be able to punish all, and that too with the ease and rapidity which belong to the warrior's right hand. The finding out relates, we think, not only to the discovery of the hiding-places of the haters of God, but to the touching of them in their tenderest parts, so as to cause the severest suffering. When he appears to judge the world hard hearts will be subdued into terror, and proud spirits humbled into shame. He who has the key of human nature can touch all its springs at his will, and find out the means of bringing the utmost confusion and terror upon those who aforetime boastfully expressed their hatred of him.

9. "*Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger.*" They themselves shall be an oven to themselves, and so their own tormentors. Those who burned with anger against thee shall be burned by thine anger. The fire of sin will be followed by the fire of wrath. Even as the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah went up to heaven, so shall the enemies of the Lord Jesus be utterly and terribly consumed. Some read it, "thou shalt put them as it were into a furnace of fire." Like faggots cast into an oven they shall burn furiously beneath the anger of the Lord; "they shall be cast into a furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." These are terrible words, and those teachers do not well who endeavour by their sophistical reasonings to weaken their force. Reader, never tolerate slight thoughts of hell, or you will soon have low thoughts of sin. The hell of sinners must be fearful beyond all conception, or such language as the present would not be used. Who would have the Son of God to be his enemy when such an overthrow awaits his foes? The expression, "the time of thine anger," reminds us that as now is the time of his grace, so there will be a set time for his wrath. The judge goes upon assize at an appointed time. There is a day of vengeance of our God; let those who despise the day of grace remember this day of wrath.

"*The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.*" Jehovah will himself visit with his anger the enemies of his Son. The Lord Jesus will, as it were, judge by commission from God, whose solemn assent and co-operation shall be with him in his sentences upon impenitent sinners. An utter destruction of soul and body, so that both shall be swallowed up with misery, and be devoured with anguish, is here intended. Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! Who can endure it? Lord, save us from it, for Jesu's sake.

10. "*Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth.*" Their life's work shall be a failure, and the result of their toil shall be disappointment. That in which they prided themselves shall be forgotten; their very names shall be wiped out as abominable, "*and their seed from among the children of men.*" Their posterity following in their footsteps shall meet with a similar overthrow, till at last the race shall come to an end. Doubtless the blessing of God is often handed down by the righteous to their sons, as almost a heirloom in the family, while the dying sinner bequeaths a curse to his descendants. If men will hate the Son of God, they must not wonder if their own sons meet with no favour.

11. "*For they intended evil against thee.*" God takes notice of intentions. He who would, but could not, is as guilty as he who did. Christ's church and cause are not only attacked by those who do not understand it, but there are many who have the light and yet hate it. Intentional evil has a virus in it which is not found in sins of ignorance; now as ungodly men with malice aforethought attack the gospel of Christ, their crime is great, and their punishment will be proportionate. The words "*against thee*" show us that he who intends evil against the poorest believer means ill to the King himself: let persecutors beware.

"*They imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.*" Want of power is the clog on the foot of the haters of the Lord Jesus. They have the wickedness to *imagine*, and the cunning to *devise*, and the malice to *plot* mischief, but blessed be God, they fail in ability; yet they shall be judged as to their hearts, and the will shall be taken for the deed in the great day of account. When we read the boastful threatenings of the enemies of the gospel at the present day, we may close our reading by cheerfully repeating, "*which they are not able to perform.*" The serpent may hiss, but his head is broken; the lion may worry, but he cannot devour; the tempest may thunder, but cannot strike. Old Giant Pope bites his nails at the pilgrims, but he cannot pick their bones as aforetime. Growling forth a hideous "non possumus," the devil and all his allies retire in dismay from the walls of Zion, for the Lord is there.

12. "*Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.*" For a time the foes of God may make bold advances, and threaten to overthrow everything, but a few ticks of the clock will alter the face of their affairs. At first they advance impudently enough, but Jehovah meets them to their teeth, and a taste of the sharp judgments of God speedily makes them flee in dismay. The original has in it the thought of the wicked being set as a butt for God to shoot at, a target for his wrath to aim at. What a dreadful situation! As an illustration upon a large scale, remember Jerusalem during the siege; and for a specimen in an individual, read the story

of the death-bed of Francis Spira. God takes sure aim ; who would be his target ? His arrows are sharp and transfix the heart ; who would wish to be wounded by them ? Ah, ye enemies of God, your boastings will soon be over when once the shafts begin to fly !

13. *" Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength."* A sweet concluding verse. Our hearts shall join in it. It is always right to praise the Lord when we call to remembrance his goodness to his Son, and the overthrow of his foes. The exaltation of the name of God should be the business of every Christian ; but since such poor things as we fail to honour him as he deserves, we may invoke his own power to aid us. Be high, O God, but do thou maintain thy loftiness by thine own almightiness, for no other power can worthily do it.

" So will we sing and praise thy power." For a time the saints may mourn, but the glorious appearance of their divine Helper awakens their joy. Joy should always flow in the channel of praise. All the attributes of God are fitting subjects to be celebrated by the music of our hearts and voices, and when we observe a display of his *power*, we must extol it. He wrought our deliverance alone, and he alone shall have the praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The last Psalm was a litany before the king went forth to battle This is apparently a *Te Deum* on his return.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D., in the " Book of Psalms : a New Translation, with Introductions and Notes,"* 1864.

Whole Psalm.—The prayer which the church offers up at the conclusion of the preceding Psalm now issues in a hymn of praise, the result of a believing view of the glory which is to follow, when Messiah's sufferings are ended. This is one of the beautiful songs of which we find many in Scripture, prepared by the Holy Spirit to awaken and enliven the hopes and expectations of the church while she waits for the Lord, and to give utterance to her joy at the time of his arrival. The theme is Messiah's exaltation and glory, and the time chosen for its delivery is just the moment when darkness covered the earth, and all nature seemed about to die with its expiring Lord. Scripture deals largely in contrasts. It seems to be suitable to the human mind to turn from one extreme to another. Man can endure any change, however violent and contradictory, but a long continuance, a sameness either of joy or sorrow, has a debilitating and depressing effect.—*R. H. Ryland.*

Whole Psalm.—" After this I looked . . . and behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne." Rev. iv. 1, 2. Such may be considered as the description of this Psalm, after the foregoing prayer. " He who in the preceding Psalm," says St. Jerome, " was prayed for as having taking the form of a servant, in this is King of kings, and Lord of lords."—*Isaac Williams.*

Whole Psalm.—I am persuaded that there is not one who consents to the application of the preceding Psalm to Christ in his trouble, who will fail to recognise in this, Christ in his triumph. There he was in the dark valley—the valley of Achor ; now he is on the mount of Zion ; there he was enduring sorrow and travail ; now he remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a spiritual seed is born into the world ; there he was beset with deadly enemies, who encompassed him on every side ; but here he has entered upon that which is written in Psalm lxxviii. 65, 66, " Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts : he put them to a perpetual reproach."—*Hamilton Verschoyle.*

Whole Psalm.—As you have already observed in the heading of this Psalm, it is said to have been composed by David. He wrote of himself in the third person, and as *" the king."* He penned the Psalm, not so much for his own use, as for his people's. It is, in fact, a national anthem, celebrating the majesty and glory of David, but ascribing both to God—expressing confidence in David's future, but building that confidence upon God alone.—*Samuel Martin, in " Westminster Chapel Pulpit,"* 1860.

Verse 1.—"*Thy strength . . . thy salvation.*" So you have two words, "*virtus* and *salus*," strength and salvation. Note them well; for not *virtus* without *salus*, nor *salus* without *virtus*, neither without the other is full, nor both without *Tua Domine. In virtute* is well, so it have *in salute* after it. For not in strength alone is there matter of joy, every way considered. No, not in *God's strength*, if it have not *salvation* behind it. Strength, not to smite us down, but strength to deliver; this is the joyful side. Now turn it the other way. As strength, if it end in salvation, is just cause for joy, so salvation, if it go with strength, makes joy yet more joyful; for it becomes a strong salvation, a mighty deliverance.—*Launcelot Andrews* (*Bishop*), 1555—1626, *in* "*Conspiracie of the Gowries.*"

Verse 1.—"*In thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice.*" Oh, it is good rejoicing in the strength of that arm which shall never wither, and in the shadow of those wings which shall never cast their feathers! in him that is not there yesterday and here to-day, but the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! For as he is, so shall the joy be.—*Launcelot Andrews.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast given him the desire of his soul.*" He desired to eat the passover, and to lay down his life when he would and again when he would to take it; and thou hast given it to him. "*And hast not deprived him of the good pleasure of his lips.*" "My peace," saith he, "I leave with you;" and it was done.—*Augustine, in loc.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—Good men are sure to have out their prayers either in money, or in money's worth, as they say—in that very thing, or a better.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*Selah.*" See pp. 23, 26, 27, 35, 307.

Verse 3.—"*For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.*" The Son of God could not be more ready to ask for the blessings of the divine goodness, than the Father was to give them; and his disposition is the same towards all his adopted sons. Christ, as King and Priest, weareth a crown of glory, represented by the purest and most resplendent of metals—gold. He is pleased to esteem his saints, excelling in different virtues, as the rubies, the sapphires, and the emeralds, which grace and adorn that crown. Who would not be ambitious of obtaining a place therein?—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast prevented him with the blessings of goodness.*" As if he should say, "Lord, I never asked a kingdom, I never thought of a kingdom, but thou hast prevented me with the blessings of thy goodness." . . . . From whence I take up this note or doctrine, that it is a sweet thing and worthy of all our thankful acknowledgments, to be prevented with the blessings of God's goodness, or God's good blessings. . . . It is no new thing for God to walk in a way of preventing love and mercy with the children of men. Thus he hath always dealt, doth deal, and will deal; thus he hath always dealt with the world, with the nations of the world, with great towns and places, with families, and with particular souls. . . . As for particular souls, you know how it was with Matthew the publican, sitting at the receipt of custom. "Come and follow me," says Christ; preventing of him. And you know how it was with Paul: "I was a blasphemer, and I was a persecutor, but I obtained mercy." How so? Did he seek it first? 'No,' says he, 'I went breathing out threatenings against the people of God, and God met me, and unhorsed me; God prevented me with his grace and mercy.' Thus Paul. And pray tell me what do you think of that whole chapter of Luke—the fifteenth? There are three parables: the parable of the lost groat, of the lost sheep, and of the lost son. The woman lost her groat, and swept to find it, but did the groat make first towards the woman, or the woman make after the groat first? The shepherd lost his sheep, but did the sheep make first after the shepherd, or the shepherd after the sheep? Indeed, it is said concerning the lost son, that he first takes up a resolution, "I will return home to my father," but when his father saw him afar off, he ran and met him, and embraced him, and welcomed him home. Why? But to show that the work of grace and mercy shall be all along carried on in a way of preventing love.—*Condensed from William Bridge*, 1600—1670.

Verse 3.—"*For thou hast prevented him with the blessings of sweetness.*" Because he had first quaffed the blessing of thy sweetness, the gall of our sins did not hurt him.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou preventest him.*" The word "*prevent*" is now generally used

to represent the idea of hindrance. "*Thou prevent'st him,*" would mean commonly, "Thou hinderest him." But here the word "prevent" means *to go before.* Thou goest before him with the blessings of thy goodness as a pioneer, to make crooked ways straight, and rough places smooth; or, as one who strews flowers in the path of another, to render the way beautiful to the eye and pleasant to the tread.—*Samuel Martin.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—The text is an acknowledgment of God's goodness. God had anticipated David's wants; and he writes. "*Thou preventest*—thou goest before him—*with goodness.*" The words "*blessings of goodness*" suggest that God's gifts are God's love embodied and expressed. And this greatly enhances the value of our blessings—that they are cups as full of God and of God's kindness as of happiness and blessedness.—*Samuel Martin.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—A large portion of our blessing is given us before our asking or seeking. Existence, reason, intellect, a birth in a Christian land, the calling of our nation to the knowledge of Christ, and Christ himself, with many other things, are unsought bestowed on men, as was David's right to the throne on him. No one ever asked for a Saviour till God of his own motion promised "the seed of the woman."—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.*" Christ may be said to have a fourfold glory, or crown. 1. As God co-essential with the Father; "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Heb. i. 2, 3. 2. He hath a crown and glory as Mediator, in respect of the power, authority, and glory wherewith he is invested as God's great deputy, and anointed upon the hill of Zion, having power, and a rod of iron, even in reference to enemies. 3. He hath a crown and glory in respect of the manifestation of his glory in the executing of his offices, when he makes his mediatory power and glory apparent in particular steps: thus sometimes he is said *to take his power to him* (Rev. xi. 17); and is said *to be crowned* when the white horse of the gospel rides in triumph. Rev. vi. 2. The last step of this glory will be in the day of judgment; in short, this consists in his exercising his former power committed to him as Mediator. 4. There is a crown and glory which is in a manner put on him by particular believers, when he is glorified by them, not by adding anything to his infinite glory, but by their acknowledging of him to be so.—*James Durham,* 1622—1658.

Verse 3.—The "*crown of pure gold*" has respect to his exaltation at the right hand of God, where he is crowned with glory and honour, and this "*crown*" being of "*pure gold,*" denotes the purity, glory, solidity, and perpetuity of his kingdom.—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—"*He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.*" The glory of God is concerned in Christ's living for ever. 1. The glory of his *faithfulness:* for eternal life and blessedness were pledged to Immanuel in covenant as the reward of his work (Psalm cx. 1—4; Isaiah ix. 6, 7, etc.); and it was in the anticipation and confident hope of this, that he "endured the cross, despising the shame." Heb. xii. 2; Psalm xvi. 8—11. 2. The glory of his *justice.* The justice of God was honoured and fully satisfied in all its righteous demands by the death of Christ. His subsequent life is the expression on the part of God of that satisfaction. His perpetual life is a permanent declaration that in him and his finished work the everlasting righteousness of Jehovah rests for ever satisfied. Death can "never more have dominion over him:" for to inflict the penalty again would be a violation of justice. 3. The glory of his *grace.* The glory of this grace he now lives actively to promote. John xvii. 2. By living "*ever*" at God's right hand, he appears as an eternal memorial of God's love in making him our Mediator and Substitute—our Saviour from sin and wrath; and his permanent appearance there will keep all heaven perpetually in mind that "by the grace of God they are what they are," owing all to the sovereign mercy of God through Jesus Christ. He shall appear as the blessed medium through which all the gifts and joys of salvation shall flow to the guilty for evermore. Thus the power of God and all his moral attributes secure the perpetuity of the life of the risen and exalted Saviour.—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

Verse 4.—"*He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him.*" He asked a resurrection saying "Father, glorify thy Son;" and thou gavest it him, "*Length of days for ever and ever.*" The prolonged ages of this world which the church was to have, and after them an eternity, world without end.—*Augustine.*

Verse 4.—"*He asked life of thee,*" etc. Thus God is better to his people than their prayers; and when they ask but one blessing, he answereth them as Naaman did Gehazi, with Nay, take two. Hezekiah asked but one life, and God gave him fifteen years, which we reckon at two lives and more. He giveth liberally and like himself; as great Alexander did when he gave the poor beggar a city; and when he sent his schoolmaster a ship full of frankincense, and bade him sacrifice freely.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 4—8.—If David had before been without the symbol of his royal dignity, namely, the diadem, he was the more justified in praising the goodness of God, which had now transferred it from the head of an enemy to his own.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 5.—"*His glory is great in thy salvation.*"—I remember one dying and hearing some discourses of Jesus Christ; "Oh," said she, "speak more of this—let me hear more of this—be not weary of telling his praise; I long to see him, how should I but long to hear of him?" Surely I cannot say too much of Jesus Christ. On this blessed subject no man can possibly hyperbolise. Had I the tongues of men and angels, I could never fully set forth Christ. It involves an eternal contradiction, that the creature can see to the bottom of the Creator. Suppose all the sands on the sea-shore, all the flowers, herbs, leaves, twigs of trees in woods and forests, all the stars of heaven, were all rational creatures; and had they that wisdom, and tongues of angels to speak of the loveliness, beauty, glory, and excellency of Christ, as gone to heaven, and sitting at the right hand of his Father, they would, in all their expressions, stay millions of miles on this side Jesus Christ. Oh, the loveliness, beauty, and glory of his countenance! Can I speak, or you hear of such a Christ? And are we not all in a burning love, in a seraphical love, or at least in a conjugal love? O my heart, how is it thou art not love sick? How is it thou dost not charge the daughters of Jerusalem as the spouse did: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem if ye find my beloved, that ye shall tell him, that I *am* sick of love." Cant. v. 8.—*Isaac Ambrose.*

Verse 5.—"*Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.*" If it be demanded whether Christ were exalted unto his glory and dignity, according to both his natures, both his Godhead and his manhood, I answer, according to both. According to his Godhead, not as it is considered in itself, but inasmuch as his Godhead, which from his birth unto his death did little show itself, after his resurrection was made manifest in his manhood; for, as the apostle saith (Rom. i. 4), "He was declared mightily to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead," even by the resurrection, and after his resurrection from the dead, he which was thought only to be man, was most plainly manifested likewise to be God. Now, as touching his manhood, he was therein exalted unto highest majesty in the heavenly places, not only shaking off all infirmities of man's nature, but also being beautified and adorned with all qualities of glory, both in his soul and in his body, yet so that he still retaineth the properties of a true body, for even as he was man, he was set at the right hand of the Father, to rule and reign over all, till all his enemies be destroyed, and put under his feet. To knit up all in a word, Christ, God, and man, after his resurrection, was crowned with glory and honour, even such as plainly showed him to be God, and was set on the throne of God, there to rule and reign as sovereign Lord and King, till he come in the clouds to judge both quick and dead. Here, then, is both matter of comfort and consolation unto the godly, and likewise of fear and astonishment unto the wicked and ungodly.—*Henry Airay*, 1560—1616.

Verse 5 (*last clause.*)—Christ was "a man of sorrows" on earth, but he is full of joy in heaven. He that "wipes away all tears from the eyes of his people," surely has none of his own. There was a *joy set before him* before he suffered, and doubtless it was given him when he sat down at God's right hand. We may take the latter to be an actual donation of the former; the joy he had in prospect when he suffered he had in possession when he came to his throne. This is the time of his receiving the Father's public approbation, and the tokens of his love, before the whole heavenly assembly, which must be matter of great joy to him who so much valued and delighted in his Father's love.—*John Hurrion*, 1675—1731.

Verse 5.—Happy he who hath a bone, or an arm, to put the crown upon the head of our highest King, whose chariot is paved with love. Were there ten thousand millions of heavens created above these highest heavens, and again as many above them, and as many above them, till angels were wearied with counting, it were but

too low a seat to fix the princely throne of that Lord Jesus (whose ye are) above them all.—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 6.—"*Thou hast made him exceeding glad:*" literally, "brightened him," possibly in allusion to the brightness of Moses' face.—*Dalman Hapstone, M.A., in "The Ancient Psalms . . . . A Literal Translation and Notes,"* etc, 1867.

Verse 6.—"*Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.*" Though this be metaphorically used for *favour*, yet is the speech not all metaphor, and that well-experienced Christians will tell you.—*Zachary Bogan, in "The Mirth of a Christian Life,"* 1653.

Verse 6 (*first clause*).—Literally, as in the Bible marginal translation, "Thou hast set him *to be* blessings for ever." Most truly said of the King in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—"*Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.*" By a kind of climax in the form of expression, "*hand*," is followed by "*right hand*," a still more emphatic sign of active strength. To "*find*," in this connection, includes the ideas of detecting and reaching. Compare 1 Sam. xxiii. 17; Isaiah x. 10; in the latter of which places the verb is construed with a preposition (ל), as it is in the first clause of the verse before us, whereas in the other clause it governs the noun directly. If any difference of meaning was intended, it is probably not greater than that between *find* and *find out* in English. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 8.—"*Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.*" Saul killed himself, for fear of falling into the hands of his enemies, and thought death less terrible than the shame that he would have endured in seeing himself in their power. What will it be then "to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31), of an offended God? of God unchangeably determined to be avenged? "Who can stand before his indignation?" says the prophet Nahum (chap. i. 6). Who will dare look on him? Who will dare show himself? "*Who may abide the day of his coming*" (Mal. iii. 2) without shuddering and fainting for fear? If Joseph's brethren were so terrified that they "could not answer him," when he said, "I am Joseph your brother," how will it be with sinners, when they shall hear the voice of the Son of God, when he shall triumph over them in his wrath, and say unto them, "I am he" whom ye despised; "I am he" whom ye have offended; "I am he" whom ye have crucified? If these words, "I am he," overthrew the soldiers in the garden of Olives (John xviii. 6), though spoken with extreme gentleness, how will it be when his indignation bursts forth, when it falls upon his enemies like a thunderbolt, and reduces them into dust? Then will they cry out in terror and say to the mountains, "*Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.*" Rev. vi. 16.—*James Nouet.*

Verse 8.—"*Thine hand shall find out,*" etc. It is not meant only of a discovery of a person (though it be a truth, that the Lord will discover all that are his enemies), but *thine hand shall find them out*, is, it shall take hold of them, grasp them, and arrest them. "Thine hand shall find out" *all* "thine enemies," though close, though covert enemies; not only thy above-ground enemies, but thy under-ground enemies; as well those that undermine thee, as those that assault thee.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.*" How then shall it fare with sinners, when, after all, shall come that general fire so often foretold, which shall either fall from heaven, or ascend out of hell, or (according to Albertus Magnus), proceed from both, and shall devour and consume all it meets with? Whither shall the miserable fly, when that river of flames, or (to say better), that inundation and deluge of fire shall so encompass them, as no place of surety shall be left where nothing can avail but a holy life; when all besides shall perish, in that universal ruin of the whole world? What lamentations were in Rome, when it burnt for seven days together! What shrieks were heard in Troy, when it was wholly consumed with flames! What howling and astonishment in Pentapolis, when those cities were destoyed with fire from heaven! What weeping was there in Jerusalem, when they beheld the house of God, the glory of their kingdom, the wonder of the world, involved in fire and smoke! Imagine what these people

felt; they saw their houses and goods on fire, and no possibility of saving them; when the husband heard the shrieks and cries of his dying wife; the father, of his little children; and, unawares, perceived himself so encompassed with flames, that he could neither relieve them, nor free himself. What shall it then profit the worldlings, to have rich vessels of gold and silver, curious embroideries, precious tapestries, pleasant gardens, sumptuous palaces, and all what the world now esteems, when they shall with their own eyes, behold their costly palaces burnt, their rich and curious pieces of gold melted, and their flourishing and pleasant orchards consumed, without power to preserve them or themselves? All shall burn, and with it the world, and all the memory and fame of it shall die; and that which mortals thought to be immortal, shall then end and perish.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger.*" They shall not only be cast into a furnace of fire (Matt. xiii. 42), but he shall make them themselves as a fiery oven or furnace, they shall be their own tormentors, the reflections and terrors of their own consciences will be their hell. Those that might have had Christ to rule and save them, but rejected him, and fought against him, even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them to eternity a fiery oven to themselves.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven:*" thou shalt make them on fire within, by the consciousness of their ungodliness: "*In the time of thy countenance;*" in the time of thy manifestation.—*Augustine.*

Verse 9.—"*As a fiery oven,*" where the burning is extremely hot, the heat striking upon what is in it from all sides, above, below, and about, on all hands, and the door closed from going out, or from suffering any cool refreshment to come in.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 9.—"*As a fiery oven.*" Shall make them like a vault of fire, literally, "*an oven,*" as in our translation, or "furnace of fire." Bishop Horsley remarks, "It describes the smoke of the Messiah's enemies perishing by fire, ascending like the smoke of a furnace. 'The smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever and ever.'" How awfully grand is that description of the ruins of the cities of the plain, as the prospect struck on Abraham's eye on the fatal morning of their destruction! "And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Milton puts it—

> "Overhead the dismal hiss
> Of fiery darts in flaming volleys flew,
> And flying vaulted either host with fire."

Richard Mant.

Verse 9.—The Chaldee reads:—"The fire of Gehenna, or hell."—*John Morison.*

Verse 9.—"*The time of thine anger.*" If God be willing to pour out his heavy displeasure upon those that displease him, what can hinder his mighty arm from performing? Creatures indeed may be angry, but oftentimes, like drones without stings, cannot hurt; as cannons charged with powder without shot only make a roaring; like the Pope's Bulls, threaten many, hurt none but those whose consciences are enslaved. Saul may be angry at David, but cannot find him out; but from God's all-piercing eye none can hide himself. Satan may desire to kill Job, Jonah may be angry till death for Nineveh's preservation; yet God puts a bit in both their mouths, who, if he be angry, nothing can be holden out of his reach. Princes, if they take captives, may have them rescued from them again, as Lot was from the King of Sodom; bought with a price, as Joseph of the Ishmaelites. But no power can rescue us from God's anger, no ransom but Christ's blood redeem us. God's will being set afoot, all his attributes follow; if his will say, Be angry, his eye seeks out the object of his anger, and finds it; his wisdom tempers the cup, his hand whets the sword, his arm strikes the blow. Thus you see there is a time of God's anger for sin, because he will have it so.—*John Cragge.*

Verse 9.—"*The fire shall devour them.*" Being troubled by the vengeance of the Lord, after the accusation of their conscience, they shall be given up to eternal fire to be devoured.—*Augustine.*

Verse 9.—I have read that a frown of Queen Elizabeth killed Sir Christopher Hatton, the Lord Chancellor of England. What then shall the frowns of the King of nations do? If the rocks rend, the mountains melt, and the foundations of the earth tremble under his wrath; how will the ungodly sinner appear when he comes

in all his royal glory to take vengeance on all that knew him not, and that obeyed not his glorious gospel.—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 10.—"*Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.*" A day is coming when all the "*fruits*" of sin, brought forth by sinners in their words, their writings, and their actions shall be "*destroyed;*" yea, the tree itself, which had produced them, shall be rooted up, and cast into the fire. The "*seed*" and posterity of the wicked, if they continue in the way of their forefathers, will be punished like them. Let parents consider, that upon their principles and practices may depend the salvation or destruction of multitudes after them. The case of the Jews, daily before their eyes, should make them tremble.—*George Horne.*

Verse 11.—"*They intended,*" or warped. Hebrew, *hvae bent or stretched.* A similitude taken from weavers, who warp their yarn before they weave: or from archers, who, when they have bent their bow and put in their arrow, do take their aim.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 12.—"*Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back,*" or, *thou shalt set them as a butt, "when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.*" The judgments of God are called his "*arrows,*" being sharp, swift, sure, and deadly. What a dreadful situation, to be set as a mark and "*butt*" at which these arrows are directed! View Jerusalem encompassed by the Roman armies without, and torn to pieces by the animosity of desperate and bloody factions within! No farther commentary is requisite upon this verse.—*George Horne.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The joy of Jesus and of his people in the strength and salvation of God.

Verses 1, 2.—The doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ contained in the text, may be considered under three heads:—I. *As an answer to prayer.* II. *His joy therein—even in the resurrection.* III. As a necessary appendage to this—*our own individual concern in his glory and in his joy.—Hamilton Verschoyle.*

Verse 2.—The successful Advocate.

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—Preventing mercies.

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—GOD GOING BEFORE US, or, God's anticipation of our necessities by his merciful dispensations. God prevents us with the blessings of his goodness:—I. When we come into the world. II. When we become personal transgressors. III. When we enter upon the duties and upon the cares of mature life. IV. When, in the general course of life, we enter upon new paths. V. In the dark "valley of the shadow of death." VI. By giving us many mercies without our asking for them; and thus creating occasion, not for prayer, but for praise only. VII. By opening to us the gate of heaven, and by storing heaven with every provision for our blessedness.—*Samuel Martin.*

Verse 3 (*second clause*).—Jesus crowned. I. His previous labours. II. The dominion bestowed. III. The character of the crown. IV. The divine coronant.

Verse 4.—Jesus ever living.

Verse 5.—The glory of the Mediator.

Verse 6.—The blessedness of Jesus.

Verse 7.—Jesus, an example of faith and of its results.

Verse 8.—The secret sinner unearthed, and deprived of all hope of concealment.

Verses 8, 9.—The certainty and terror of the punishment of the wicked.

Verses 11, 12.—The guilt and punishment of evil intentions.

Verse 12.—The retreat of the grand army of hell.

Verse 13.—*A devout Doxology.* I. God exalted. II. God alone exalted. III. God exalted by his own strength. IV. His people singing his praise.

PSALM XXII.

TITLE.—" To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar. **A Psalm of David.**" *This ode of singular excellence was committed to the most excellent of the temple songsters; the chief among ten thousand is worthy to be extolled by the chief Musician; no meaner singer must have charge of such a strain; we must see to it that we call up our best abilities when Jesus is the theme of praise.* The *words* Aijeleth Shahar *are enigmatical, and their meaning is uncertain; some refer them to a musical instrument used upon mournful occasions, but the majority adhere to the translation of our margin, " Concerning the hind of the morning." This last interpretation is the subject of much enquiry and conjecture. Calmet believes that the Psalm was addressed to the music master who presided over the band called the " Morning Hind," and Adam Clarke thinks this to be the most likely of all the conjectural interpretations, although he himself inclines to the belief that no interpretation should be attempted, and believes that it is a merely arbitrary and unmeaning title, such as Orientals have always been in the habit of appending to their songs. Our Lord Jesus is so often compared to a hind, and his cruel huntings are so pathetically described in this most affecting psalm, that we cannot but believe that the title indicates the Lord Jesus under a well-known poetical metaphor; at any rate, Jesus is that Hind of the morning concerning whom David here sings.*

SUBJECT.—*This is beyond all others* THE PSALM OF THE CROSS. *It may have been actually repeated word by word by our Lord when hanging on the tree; it would be too bold to say that it was so, but even a casual reader may see that it might have been. It begins with, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? " and ends, according to some, in the original with " It is finished." For plaintive expressions uprising from unutterable depths of woe we may say of this Psalm, " there is none like it." It is the photograph of our Lord's saddest hours, the record of his dying words, the lachrymatory of his last tears, the memorial of his expiring joys. David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense, but, as the star is concealed by the light of the sun, he who sees Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David. Before us we have a description both of the darkness and of the glory of the cross, the sufferings of Christ and the glory which shall follow. Oh for grace to draw near and see this great sight! We should read reverently, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as Moses did at the burning bush, for if there be holy ground anywhere in Scripture it is in this Psalm.*

DIVISION.—*From the commencement to the twenty-first verse is a most pitiful cry for help, and from verse* 21 *to* 31 *is a most precious foretaste of deliverance. The first division may be sub-divided at the tenth verse, from verse* 1 *to* 10 *being an appeal based upon covenant relationship; and from verse* 10 *to* 21 *being an equally earnest plea derived from the imminence of his peril.*

EXPOSITION.

MY God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so* far from helping me, *and from* the words of my roaring?

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

3 But thou *art* holy, *O thou* that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

6 But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying,*

8 He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

9 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.

10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.

1. "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" This was the startling cry of Golgotha: Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani. The Jews mocked, but the angels adored when Jesus cried this exceeding bitter cry. Nailed to the tree we behold our great Redeemer in extremities, and what see we? Having ears to hear let us hear, and having eyes to see let us see! Let us gaze with holy wonder, and and mark the flashes of light amid the awful darkness of that midday-midnight. First, our Lord's faith beams forth and deserves our reverent imitation; he keeps his hold upon his God with both hands and cries twice, "*My God, my God!*" The spirit of adoption was strong within the suffering Son of Man, and he felt no doubt about his interest in his God. Oh that we could imitate this cleaving to an afflicting God! Nor does the sufferer distrust the power of God to sustain him, for the title used—"*El*"—signifies *strength*, and is the name of the Mighty God. He knows the Lord to be the all-sufficient support and succour of his spirit, and therefore appeals to him in the agony of grief, but not in the misery of doubt. He would fain know why he is left, he raises that question and repeats it, but neither the power nor the faithfulness of God does he mistrust. What an enquiry is this before us! "*Why hast thou forsaken me?*" We must lay the emphasis on every word of this saddest of all utterances. "*Why?*" what is the great cause of such a strange fact as for God to leave his own Son at such a time and in such a plight? There was no cause in him, why then was he deserted? "*Hast:*" it is done, and the Saviour is feeling its dread effect as he asks the question; it is surely true, but how mysterious! It was no threatening of forsaking which made the great Surety cry aloud, he endured that forsaking in very deed. "*Thou:*" I can understand why traitorous Judas and timid Peter should be gone, but *thou*, my God, my faithful friend, how canst thou leave me? This is worst of all, yea worse than all put together. Hell itself has for its fiercest flame the separation of the soul from God. "*Forsaken:*" if thou hadst chastened I might bear it, for they face would shine; but to forsake me utterly, ah! why is this? "*Me:*" thine innocent, obedient, suffering Son, why leavest thou *me to* perish? A sight of self seen by penitence, and of Jesus on the cross seen by faith will best expound this question. Jesus is forsaken because our sins had separated between us and our God.

"*Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*" The Man of Sorrows had prayed until his speech failed him, and he could only utter moanings and groanings as men do in severe sicknesses, like the roarings of a wounded animal. To what extremity of grief was our Master driven! What strong crying and tears were those which made him too hoarse for speech! What must have been his anguish to find his own beloved and trusted Father standing afar off, and neither granting help nor apparently hearing prayer. This was good cause to make him "roar." Yet there was a reason for all this which those who rest in Jesus as their Substitute well know.

2. "*O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not.*" For our prayers to appear to be unheard is no new trial, Jesus felt it before us, and it is observable that he still held fast his believing hold on God, and cried still, "*My God.*" On the other hand his faith did not render him less importunate, for amid the hurry and horror of that dismal day he ceased not his cry, even as in Gethsemane he had agonized all through the gloomy night. Our Lord continued to pray even though no comfortable answer came, and in this he set us an example of obedience to his own words, "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." No daylight is too glaring, and no midnight too dark to pray in; and no delay or apparent denial, however grievous, should tempt us to forbear from importunate pleading.

3. "*But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*" However ill things may look, there is no ill in thee, O God! *We* are very apt to think and speak hardly of God when we are under his afflicting hand, but not so the obedient Son. He knows too well his Father's goodness to let outward circumstances libel his character. There is no unrighteousness with the God of Jacob, he deserves

no censures; let him do what he will, he is to be praised, and to reign enthroned amid the songs of his chosen people. If prayer be unanswered it is not because God is unfaithful, but for some other good and weighty reason. If we cannot perceive any ground for the delay, we must leave the riddle unsolved, but we must not fly in God's face in order to invent an answer. While the holiness of God is in the highest degree acknowledged and adored, the afflicted speaker in this verse seems to marvel how the holy God could forsake him, and be silent to his cries. The argument is, thou art holy, oh! why is it that thou dost disregard thy holy One in his hour of sharpest anguish? We may not question the holiness of God, but we may argue from it, and use it as a plea in our petitions.

4. "*Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*" This is the rule of life with all the chosen family. Three times over is it mentioned, they *trusted*, and *trusted*, and *trusted*, and never left off trusting, for it was their very life; and they fared well too, for *thou didst deliver them.* Out of all their straits, difficulties, and miseries faith brought them by calling their God to the rescue; but in the case of our Lord it appeared as if faith would bring no assistance from heaven, he alone of all the trusting ones was to remain without deliverance. The experience of other saints may be a great consolation to us when in deep waters if faith can be sure that their deliverance will be ours; but when we feel ourselves sinking, it is poor comfort to know that others are swimming. Our Lord here pleads the past dealings of God with his people as a reason why he should not be left alone; here again he is an example to us in the skilful use of the weapon of all prayer. The use of the plural pronoun "*our*" shows how one with his people Jesus was even on the cross. We say, "Our Father which art in heaven," and he calls those "our fathers" through whom we came into the world, although he was without father as to the flesh.

5. "*They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.*" As if he had said, "How is it that I am now left without succour in my overwhelming griefs, while all others have been helped?" We may remind the Lord of his former lovingkindnesses to his people, and beseech him to be still the same. This is true wrestling; let us learn the art. Observe, that ancient saints *cried* and *trusted*, and that in trouble we must do the same; and the invariable result was that they were not ashamed of their hope, for deliverance came in due time; this same happy portion shall be ours. The prayer of faith can do the deed when nothing else can. Let us wonder when we see Jesus using the same pleas as ourselves, and immersed in griefs far deeper than our own.

6. "*But I am a worm, and no man.*" This verse is a miracle in language. How could the Lord of glory be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels, but even lower than men. What a contrast between "I AM" and "*I am a worm*"! yet such a double nature was found in the person of our Lord Jesus when bleeding on the tree. He felt himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless, down-trodden worm, passive while crushed, and unnoticed and despised by those who trod upon him. He selects the weakest of creatures, which is all flesh; and becomes, when trodden upon, writhing, quivering flesh, utterly devoid of any might except strength to suffer. This was a true likeness of himself when his body and soul had become a mass of misery—the very essence of agony—in the dying pangs of crucifixion Man by nature is but a worm; but our Lord puts himself even beneath man, on account of the scorn which was heaped upon him and the weakness which he felt, and therefore he adds, "*and no man.*" The privileges and blessings which belonged to the fathers he could not obtain while deserted by God, and common acts of humanity were not allowed him, for he was rejected of men; he was outlawed from the society of earth, and shut out from the smile of heaven. How utterly did the Saviour empty himself of all glory, and become of no reputation for our sakes! "*A reproach of men*"—their common butt and jest; a byword and a proverb unto them: the sport of the rabble, and the scorn of the rulers. Oh the caustic power of reproach, to those who endure it with patience, yet smart under it most painfully! "*And despised of the people.*" The *vox populi* was against him. The very people who would once have crowned him then contemned him, and they who were benefited by his cures sneered at him in his woes. Sin is worthy of all reproach and contempt, and for this reason Jesus, the Sinbearer, was given up to be thus unworthily and shamefully entreated.

7, 8. "*All they that see me laugh me to scorn.*" Read the evangelistic narrative of the ridicule endured by the Crucified One, and then consider, in the light of this

expression, how it grieved him. The iron entered into his soul. Mockery has for its distinctive description "cruel mockings;" those endured by our Lord were of the most cruel kind. The scornful ridicule of our Lord was universal; all sorts of men were unanimous in the derisive laughter, and vied with each other in insulting him. Priest and people, Jews and Gentiles, soldiers and civilians, all united in the general scoff, and that at the time when he was prostrate in weakness and ready to die. Which shall we wonder at the most, the cruelty of man or the love of the bleeding Saviour? How can we ever complain of ridicule after this?

"*They shoot out the lip, they shake the head.*" These were gestures of contempt. Panting, grinning, shaking of the head, thrusting out of the tongue, and other modes of derision were endured by our patient Lord; men made faces at him before whom angels vail their faces and adore. The basest signs of disgrace which disdain could devise were maliciously cast at him. They punned upon his prayers, they made matter for laughter of his sufferings, and set him utterly at nought. Herbert sings of our Lord as saying,—

> "Shame tears my soul, my body many a wound;
> Sharp nails pierce this, but sharper that confound;
> Reproaches which are free, while I am bound.
> Was ever grief like mine?"

"*Saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*" Here the taunt is cruelly aimed at the sufferer's faith in God, which is the tenderest point in a good man's soul, the very apple of his eye. They must have learned the diabolical art from Satan himself, for they made rare proficiency in it. According to Matthew xxvii. 39—44, there were five forms of taunt hurled at the Lord Jesus; this special piece of mockery is probably mentioned in this psalm because it is the most bitter of the whole; it has a biting, sarcastic irony in it, which gives it a peculiar venom; it must have stung the Man of Sorrows to the quick. When we are tormented in the same manner, let us remember him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and we shall be comforted. On reading these verses one is ready, with Trapp, to ask, Is this a prophecy or a history? for the description is so accurate. We must not lose sight of the truth which was unwittingly uttered by the Jewish scoffers. They themselves are witnesses that Jesus of Nazareth trusted in God: why then was he permitted to perish? Jehovah had aforetime delivered those who rolled their burdens upon him: why was this man deserted? Oh that they had understood the answer! Note further, that their ironical jest, "*seeing he delighted in him,*" was true. The Lord did delight in his dear Son, and when he was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, he still was well pleased in him. Strange mixture! Jehovah delights in him, and yet bruises him; is well pleased, and yet slays him.

9. "*But thou art he that took me out of the womb.*" Kindly providence attends with the surgery of tenderness at every human birth; but the Son of Man, who was marvellously begotten of the Holy Ghost, was in an especial manner watched over by the Lord when brought forth by Mary. The destitute state of Joseph and Mary, far away from friends and home, led them to see the cherishing hand of God in the safe delivery of the mother, and the happy birth of the child; that Child now fighting the great battle of his life, uses the mercy of his nativity as an argument with God. Faith finds weapons everywhere. He who wills to believe shall never lack reasons for believing. "*Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.*" Was our Lord so early a believer? Was he one of those babes and sucklings out of whose mouths strength is ordained? So it would seem; and if so, what a plea for help! Early piety gives peculiar comfort in our after trials, for surely he who loved us when we were children is too faithful to cast us off in our riper years. Some give the text the sense of "gave me cause to trust, by keeping me safely," and assuredly there was a special providence which preserved our Lord's infant days from the fury of Herod, the dangers of travelling, and the ills of poverty.

10. "*I was cast upon thee from the womb.*" Into the Almighty arms he was first received, as into those of a loving parent. This is a sweet thought. God begins his care over us from the earliest hour. We are dandled upon the knee of mercy, and cherished in the lap of goodness; our cradle is canopied by divine love, and our first totterings are guided by his care. "*Thou art my God from my mother's belly.*" The psalm begins with "*My God, my God,*" and here, not only is the claim repeated, but its early date is urged. Oh noble perseverance of faith, thus to con-

tinue pleading with holy ingenuity of argument! Our birth was our weakest and most perilous period of existence; if we were then secured by Omnipotent tenderness surely we have no cause to suspect that divine goodness will fail us now. He who was our God when we left our mother will be with us till we return to mother earth, and will keep us from perishing in the belly of hell.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near; for *there is* none to help
12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.
13 They gaped upon me *with* their mouths, *as* a ravening and a roaring lion.
14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.
17 I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me.
18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.
19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.
20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.
21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

The crucified Son of David continues to pour out his complaint and prayer. We need much grace that while reading we may have fellowship with his sufferings. May the blessed Spirit conduct us into a most clear and affecting sight of our Redeemer's woes.

11. "*Be not far from me.*" This is the petition for which he has been using such varied and powerful pleas. His great woe was that God had forsaken him, his great prayer is that he would be near him. A lively sense of the divine presence is a mighty stay to the heart in times of distress. "*For trouble is near; for there is none to help.*" There are two "*fors*," as though faith gave a double knock at mercy's gate; that is a powerful prayer which is full of holy reasons and thoughtful arguments. The nearness of trouble is a weighty motive for divine help; this moves our heavenly Father's heart, and brings down his helping hand. It is his glory to be our very present help in trouble. Our Substitute had trouble in his inmost heart, for he said, "the waters have come in, even unto my soul;" well might he cry, "*be not far from me.*" The absence of all other helpers is another telling plea. In our Lord's case none either could or would help him, it was needful that he should tread the winepress alone; yet was it a sore aggravation to find that all his disciples had forsaken him, and lover and friend were put far from him. There is an awfulness about absolute friendlessness which is crushing to the human mind, for man was not made to be alone, and is like a dismembered limb when he has to endure heart-loneliness.

12. "*Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Basham have beset me round.*" The mighty ones in the crowd are here marked by the tearful eye of their victim. The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers, and captains bellowed round the cross like wild cattle, fed in the fat and solitary pastures of Bashan, full of strength and fury; they stamped and foamed around the innocent One, and longed to gore him to death with their cruelties. Conceive of the Lord Jesus as a helpless, unarmed, naked man, cast into the midst of a herd of infuriated wild bulls. They were brutal as bulls, many, and strong, and the Rejected One was all alone, and bound naked to the tree. His position throws great force into the earnest entreaty, "Be not far from me."

13. "*They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.*" Like hungry cannibals they opened their blasphemous mouths as if they were about to swallow the man whom they abhorred. They could not vomit forth their anger fast enough through the ordinary aperture of their mouths, and therefore set the

doors of their lips wide open like those who gape. Like roaring lions they howled out their fury, and longed to tear the Saviour in pieces, as wild beasts raven over their prey. Our Lord's faith must have passed through a most severe conflict while he found himself abandoned to the tender mercies of the wicked, but he came off victorious by prayer; the very dangers to which he was exposed being used to add prevalence to his entreaties.

14. Turning from his enemies, our Lord describes his own personal condition in language which should bring the tears into every loving eye. "*I am poured out like water.*" He was utterly spent, like water poured upon the earth; his heart failed him, and had no more firmness in it than running water, and his whole being was made a sacrifice, like a libation poured out before the Lord. He had long been a fountain of tears; in Gethsemane his heart welled over in sweat, and on the cross he gushed forth with blood; he poured out his strength and spirit, so that he was reduced to the most feeble and exhausted state. "*All my bones are out of joint,*" as if distended upon a rack. Is it not most probable that the fastening of the hands and feet, and the jar occasioned by fixing the cross in the earth, may have dislocated the bones of the Crucified One? If this is not intended, we must refer the expression to that extreme weakness which would occasion relaxation of the muscles and a general sense of parting asunder thoroughout the whole system. "*My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.*" Excessive debility and intense pain made his inmost life to feel like wax melted in the heat. The Greek liturgy uses the expression, "thine unknown sufferings," and well it may. The fire of Almighty wrath would have consumed our souls for ever in hell; it was no light work to bear as a substitute the heat of an anger so justly terrible. Dr. Gill wisely observes, "if the heart of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, melted at it, what heart can endure or hands be strong, when God deals with them in his wrath?"

15. "*My strength is dried up like a potsherd.*" Most complete debility is here portrayed; Jesus likens himself to a broken piece of earthenware, or an earthen pot, baked in the fire till the last particle of moisture is driven out of the clay. No doubt a high degree of feverish burning afflicted the body of our Lord. All his strength was dried up in the tremendous flames of avenging justice, even as the paschal lamb was roasted in the fire. "*My tongue cleaveth to my jaws;*" thirst and fever fastened his tongue to his jaws. Dryness and a horrible clamminess tormented his mouth, so that he could scarcely speak. "*Thou hast brought me into the dust of death;*" so tormented in every single part as to feel dissolved into separate atoms, and each atom full of misery; the full price of our redemption was paid, and no part of the Surety's body or soul escaped its share of agony. The words may set forth Jesus as having wrestled with Death until he rolled into the dust with his antagonist. Behold the humiliation of the Son of God! The Lord of Glory stoops to the dust of death. Amid the mouldering relics of mortality Jesus condescends to lodge!

Bishop Mant's version of the two preceding verses is forcible and accurate:—

> "Pour'd forth like water is my frame;
> My bones asunder start;
> As wax that feels the searching flame,
> Within me melts my heart.
> My wither'd sinews shrink unstrung
> Like potsherd dried and dead:
> Cleaves to my jaws my burning tongue
> The dust of death my bed."

16. We are to understand every item of this sad description as being urged by the Lord Jesus as a plea for divine help; and this will give us a high idea of his perseverance in prayer. "*For dogs have compassed me.*" Here he marks the more ignoble crowd, who, while less strong than their brutal leaders, were not less ferocious, for there they were howling and barking like unclean and hungry dogs. Hunters frequently surround their game with a circle, and gradually encompass them within an ever-narrowing ring of dogs and men. Such a picture is before us. In the centre stands, not a panting stag, but a bleeding, fainting man, and around him are the enraged and unpitying wretches who have hounded him to his doom. Here we have the "hind of the morning" of whom the psalm so plaintively sings, hunted by bloodhounds, all thirsting to devour him. *The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:* thus the Jewish people were unchurched, and that which called itself an

assembly of the righteous is justly for its sins marked upon the forehead as an assembly of the wicked. This is not the only occasion when professed churches of God have become synagogues of Satan, and have persecuted the Holy One and the Just. *They pierced my hands and my feet.* This can by no means refer to David, or to any one but Jesus of Nazareth, the once crucified but now exalted Son of God. Pause, dear reader, and view the wounds of thy Redeemer.

17. So emaciated was Jesus by his fastings and sufferings that he says, "*I may tell all my bones.*" He could count and re-count them. The posture of the body on the cross, Bishop Horne thinks, would so distend the flesh and skin as to make the bones visible, so that they might be numbered. The zeal of his Father's house had eaten him up; like a good soldier he had endured hardness. Oh that we cared less for the body's enjoyment and ease and more for our Father's business! It were better to count the bones of an emaciated body than to bring leanness into our souls.

"*They look and stare upon me.*" Unholy eyes gazed insultingly upon the Saviour's nakedness, and shocked the sacred delicacy of his holy soul. The sight of the agonizing body ought to have ensured sympathy from the throng, but it only increased their savage mirth, as they gloated their cruel eyes upon his miseries. Let us blush for human nature and mourn in sympathy with our Redeemer's shame. The first Adam made us all naked, and therefore the second Adam became naked that he might clothe our naked souls.

18. "*They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*" The garments of the executed were the perquisites of the executioners in most cases, but it was not often that they cast lots at the division of the spoil; this incident shows how clearly David in vision saw the day of Christ, and how surely the Man of Nazareth is he of whom the prophets spake: "these things, *therefore*, the soldiers did." He who gave his blood to cleanse us gave his garments to clothe us. As Ness says, "this precious Lamb of God gave up his golden fleece for us." How every incident of Jesus' griefs is here stored up in the treasury of inspiration, and embalmed in the amber of sacred song; we must learn hence to be very mindful of all that concerns our Beloved, and to think much of everything which has a connection with him. It may be noted that the habit of gambling is of all others the most hardening, for men could practise it even at the cross-foot while besprinkled with the blood of the Crucified. No Christian will endure the rattle of the dice when he thinks of this.

19. "*But be not thou far from me, O Lord.*" Invincible faith returns to the charge, and uses the same means, viz., importunate prayer. He repeats the petition so piteously offered before. He wants nothing but his God, even in his lowest state. He does not ask for the most comfortable or nearest presence of God, he will be content if he is not far from him; humble requests speed at the throne. "*O my strength, haste thee to help me.*" Hard cases need timely aid: when necessity justifies it we may be urgent with God as to time and cry, "make haste;" but we must not do this out of wilfulness. Mark how in the last degree of personal weakness he calls the Lord "*my strength;*" after this fashion the believer can sing, "when I am weak, then am I strong."

20. "*Deliver my soul from the sword.*" By the sword is probably meant entire destruction, which as a man he dreaded; or perhaps he sought deliverance from the enemies around him, who were like a sharp and deadly sword to him. The Lord had said, "Awake, O sword," and now from the terror of that sword the Shepherd would fain be delivered as soon as justice should see fit. "*My darling from the power of the dog.*" Meaning his soul, his life, which is most dear to every man. The original is, "my only one," and therefore is our soul dear, because it is our only soul. Would that all men made their souls their darlings, but many treat them as if they were not worth so much as the mire of the streets. *The dog* may mean Satan that infernal Cerberus, that cursed and cursing cur; or else the whole company of Christ's foes, who though many in number were as unanimous as if there were but one, and with one consent sought to rend him in pieces. If Jesus cried for help against the dog of hell, much more may we. *Cave canem*, beware of the dog, for his power is great, and only God can deliver us from him. When he fawns upon us, we must not put ourselves in his power; and when he howls at us, we may remember that God holds him with a chain.

21. "*Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.*" Having experienced deliverance in the past from great enemies, who

were strong as the unicorns, the Redeemer utters his last cry for rescue from death, which is fierce and mighty as the lion. This prayer was heard, and the gloom of the cross departed. Thus faith, though sorely beaten, and even cast beneath the feet of her enemy, ultimately wins the victory. Is was so in our Head, it shall be so in all the members. We have overcome the unicorn, we shall conquer the lion, and from both lion and unicorn we shall take the crown.

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

25 My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

28 For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S: and he *is* the governor among the nations.

29 All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

The transition is very marked; from a horrible tempest all is changed into calm. The darkness of Calvary at length passed away from the face of nature, and from the soul of the Redeemer, and beholding the light of his triumph and its future results the Saviour smiled. We have followed him through the gloom, let us attend him in the returning light. It will be well still to regard the words as a part of our Lord's soliloquy upon the cross, uttered in his mind during the last few moments before his death.

22. "*I will declare thy name unto my brethren.*" The delights of Jesus are always with his church, and hence his thoughts, after much distraction, return at the first moment of relief to their usual channel; he forms fresh designs for the benefit of his beloved ones. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." Among his first resurrection words were these, "Go to my brethren." In the verse before us, Jesus anticipates happiness in having communication with his people; he purposes to be their teacher and minister, and fixes his mind upon the subject of his discourse. The *name, i.e.*, the character and conduct of God are by Jesus Christ's gospel proclaimed to all the holy brotherhood; they behold the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him, and rejoice greatly to see all the infinite perfections manifested in one who is bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. What a precious subject is the name of our God! It is the only one worthy of the only Begotten, whose meat and drink it was to do the Father's will. We may learn from this resolution of our Lord, that one of the most excellent methods of showing our thankfulness for deliverances is to tell to our brethren what the Lord has done for us. We mention our sorrows readily enough; why are we so slow in declaring our deliverances? "*In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.*" Not in a little household gathering merely does our Lord resolve to proclaim his Father's love, but in the great assemblies of his saints, and in the general assembly and church of the first-born. This the Lord Jesus is always doing by his representatives, who are the heralds of salvation, and labour to praise God. In the great universal church Jesus is the One authoritative teacher, and all others, so far as they are worthy to be called

teachers, are nothing but echoes of his voice. Jesus, in this second sentence, reveals his object in declaring the divine name, it is that God may be praised; the church continually magnifies Jehovah for manifesting himself in the person of Jesus, and Jesus himself leads the song, and is both precentor and preacher in his church. Delightful are the seasons when Jesus communes with our hearts concerning divine truth; joyful praise is the sure result.

23. "*Ye that fear the Lord praise him.*" The reader must imagine the Saviour as addressing the congregation of the saints. He exhorts the faithful to unite with him in thanksgiving. The description of "fearing the Lord" is very frequent and very instructive; it is the beginning of wisdom, and is an essential sign of grace. "I am a Hebrew and I fear God" was Jonah's confession of faith. Humble awe of God is so necessary a preparation for praising him that none are fit to sing to his honour, but such as reverence his word; but this fear is consistent with the highest joy, and is not to be confounded with legal bondage, which is a fear which perfect love casteth out. Holy fear should always keep the key of the singing pew. Where Jesus leads the tune none but holy lips may dare to sing. "*All ye the seed of Jacob glorify him.*" The genius of the gospel is praise. Jew and Gentile saved by sovereign grace should be eager in the blessed work of magnifying the God of our salvation. *All* saints should unite in the song; no tongue may be silent, no heart may be cold. Christ calls us to glorify God, and can we refuse? "*And fear him all ye the seed of Israel.*" The spiritual Israel all do this, and we hope the day will come when Israel after the flesh will be brought to the same mind. The more we praise God the more reverently shall we fear him, and the deeper our reverence the sweeter our songs. So much does Jesus value praise that we have it here under his dying hand and seal that all the saints must glorify the Lord.

24. "*For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.*" Here is good matter and motive for praise. The experience of our covenant Head and Representative should encourage all of us to bless the God of grace. Never was man so afflicted as our Saviour in body and soul from friends and foes, by heaven and hell, in life and death; he was the foremost in the ranks of the afflicted, but all those afflictions were sent in love, and not because his Father despised and abhorred him. 'Tis true that justice demanded that Christ should bear the burden which as a substitute he undertook to carry, but Jehovah always loved him, and in love laid that load upon him with a view to his ultimate glory and to the accomplishment of the dearest wish of his heart. Under all his woes our Lord was honourable in the Father's sight, the matchless jewel of Jehovah's heart. "*Neither hath he hid his face from him.*" That is to say, the hiding was but temporary, and was soon removed; it was not final and eternal. "*But when he cried unto him, he heard.*" Jesus was heard in that he feared. He cried *in extremis* and *de profundis*, and was speedily answered; he therefore bids his people join him in singing a *Gloria in excelsis*.

Every child of God should seek refreshment for his faith in this testimony of the Man of Sorrows. What Jesus here witnesses is as true to-day as when it was first written. It shall never be said that any man's affliction or poverty prevented his being an accepted suppliant at Jehovah's throne of grace. The meanest applicant is welcome at mercy's door:—

> "None that approach his throne shall find
> A God unfaithful or unkind."

25. "*My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation.*" The one subject of our Master's song is the Lord alone. The Lord and the Lord only is the theme which the believer handleth when he gives himself to imitate Jesus in praise. The word in the original is "from thee,"—true praise is of celestial origin. The rarest harmonies of music are nothing unless they are sincerely consecrated to God by hearts sanctified by the Spirit. The clerk says, "Let us sing to the praise and glory of God;" but the choir often sing to the praise and glory of themselves. Oh when shall our service of song be a pure offering? Observe in this verse how Jesus loves the public praises of the saints, and thinks with pleasure of the great congregation. It would be wicked on our part to despise the twos and threes; but, on the other hand, let not the little companies snarl at the greater assemblies as though they were necessarily less pure and less approved, for Jesus loves the praise of the great congregation. "*I will pay my vows before them that fear him.*" Jesus dedicates himself anew to the carrying out of the divine purpose in fulfilment of his vows

made in anguish. Did our Lord when he ascended to the skies proclaim amid the redeemed in glory the goodness of Jehovah? And was that the vow here meant? Undoubtedly the publication of the gospel is the constant fulfilment of covenant engagements made by our Surety in the councils of eternity. Messiah vowed to build up a spiritual temple for the Lord, and he will surely keep his word.

26. "*The meek shall eat and be satisfied.*" Mark how the dying Lover of our souls solaces himself with the result of his death. The spiritually poor find a feast in Jesus, they feed upon him to the satisfaction of their hearts; they were famished until he gave himself for them, but now they are filled with royal dainties. The thought of the joy of his people gave comfort to our expiring Lord. Note the characters who partake of the benefit of his passion; "*the meek*," the humble, and lowly. Lord make us so. Note also the certainty that gospel provisions shall not be wasted, "*they shall eat;*" and the sure result of such eating, "*and be satisfied.*" "*They shall praise the Lord that seek him.*" For a while they may keep a fast, but their thanksgiving days must and shall come. "*Your heart shall live for ever.*" Your spirits shall not fail through trial, you shall not die of grief, immortal joys shall be your portion. Thus Jesus speaks even from the cross to the troubled seeker. If his dying words are so assuring, what consolation may we not find in the truth that he ever liveth to make intercession for us! They who eat at Jesus' table receive the fulfilment of the promise, "Whosoever eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

27. In reading this verse one is struck with the Messiah's missionary spirit. It is evidently his grand consolation that Jehovah will be known thoughout all places of his dominion. "*All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord.* Out from the inner circle of the present church the blessing is to spread in growing power until the remotest parts of the earth shall be ashamed of their idols, mindful of the true God, penitent for their offences, and unanimously earnest for reconcilation with Jehovah. Then shall false worship cease, "*and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee*," O thou only living and true God. This hope which was the reward of Jesus is a stimulus to those who fight his battles.

It is well to mark the order of conversion as here set forth; they shall "*remember*"—this is reflection, like the prodigal who came unto himself; "*and turn unto Jehovah*—this is repentance, like Manasseh who left his idols and "*worship*"—this is holy service, as Paul adored the Christ whom once he abhorred.

28. "*For the kingdom is the Lord's.*" As an obedient Son the dying Redeemer rejoiced to know that his Father's interests would prosper through his pains. "The Lord reigneth" was *his* song as it is ours. He who by his own power reigns supreme in the domains of creation and providence, has set up a kingdom of grace, and by the conquering power of the cross that kingdom will grow until all people shall own its sway and proclaim that "*he is the governor among the nations.*" Amid the tumults and disasters of the present the Lord reigneth; but in the halcyon days of peace the rich fruit of his dominion will be apparent to every eye. Great Shepherd, let thy glorious kingdom come.

29. "*All they that be fat upon earth*," the rich and great are not shut out, Grace now finds the most of its jewels among the poor, but in the latter days the mighty of the earth "*shall eat*," shall taste of redeeming grace and dying love, and shall "*worship*" with all their hearts the God who deals so bountifully with us in Christ Jesus. Those who are spiritually fat with inward prosperity shall be filled with the marrow of communion, and shall worship the Lord with peculiar fervour. In the covenant of grace Jesus has provided good cheer for our high estate, and he has taken equal care to console us in our humiliation, for the next sentence is, "*all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him.*" There is relief and comfort in bowing before God when our case is at its worst; even amid the dust of death prayer kindles the lamp of hope.

While all who come to God by Jesus Christ are thus blessed, whether they be rich or poor, none of those who despise him may hope for a blessing. "*None can keep alive his own soul.*" This is the stern counterpart of the gospel message of "look and live." There is no salvation out of Christ. We must hold life, and have life as Christ's gift, or we shall die eternally. This is very solid evangelical doctrine, and should be proclaimed in every corner of the earth, that like a great hammer it may break in pieces all self-confidence.

30. "*A seed shall serve him.*" Posterity shall perpetuate the worship of the Most High. The kingdom of truth on earth shall never fail. As one generation

is called to its rest, another will arise in its stead. We need have no fear for the true apostolic succession; that is safe enough. "*It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.*" He will reckon the ages by the succession of the saints, and set his accounts according to the families of the faithful. Generations of sinners come not into the genealogy of the skies. God's family register is not for strangers, but for the children only.

31. "*They shall come.*" Sovereign grace shall bring out from among men the bloodbought ones. Nothing shall thwart the divine purpose. The chosen shall come to life, to faith, to pardon, to heaven. In this the dying Saviour finds a sacred satisfaction. Toiling servant of God, be glad at the thought that the eternal purpose of God shall suffer neither let nor hindrance. "*And shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born.*" None of the people who shall be brought to God by the irresistible attractions of the cross shall be dumb, they shall be able to tell forth the righteousness of the Lord, so that future generations shall know the truth. Fathers shall teach their sons, who shall hand it down to their children; the burden of the story always being "*that he hath done this,*" or, that "It is finished." Salvation's glorious work is done, there is peace on earth, and glory in the highest. "It is finished," these were the expiring words of the Lord Jesus, as they are the last words of this Psalm. May we by living faith be enabled to see our salvation finished by the death of Jesus!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—Aijeleth Shahar. The title of the twenty-second Psalm is Aijeleth Shahar —*the morning hart.* The whole Psalm refers to Christ, containing much that cannot be applied to another: parting his garments, casting lots for his vesture, etc. He is described as a kindly, meek and beautiful hart, started by the huntsmen at the dawn of the day. Herod began hunting him down as soon as he appeared. Poverty, the hatred of men, and the temptation of Satan, joined in the pursuit. There always was some "dog," or "bull," or "unicorn," ready to attack him. After his first sermon the huntsmen gathered about him, but he was too fleet of foot, and escaped. The church had long seen the Messiah "like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains," had "heard the voice of her Beloved," and had cried out, "Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills;" sometimes he was even seen with the dawn of the day, in the neighbourhood of the temple, and beside the enclosures of the vineyards. The church requested to see him "on the mountains of Bether," and upon "the mountains of spices." The former probably signifying the place of his sufferings, and the latter the sublime acclivities of light, glory, and honour, where the "hart" shall be hunted no more. But in the afternoon, the huntsmen who had been following the "young roe" from early day-break, had succeeded in driving him to the mountains of Bether. Christ found Calvary a craggy, jagged, and fearful hill—"a mountain of division." Here he was driven by the huntsmen to the edges of the awful precipices yawning destruction from below, while he was surrounded and held at bay by all the beasts of prey and monsters of the infernal forest. The "unicorn," and the "bulls of Bashan," gored him with their horns; the great "lion" roared at him; and the "dog" fastened himself upon him. But he foiled them all. In his own time be bowed his head and gave up the ghost. He was buried in a new grave; and his assailants reckoned upon complete victory. They had not considered that he was a "morning hart." Surely enough, at the appointed time, did he escape from the hunter's net, and stand forth on the mountains of Israel ALIVE, and *never*, NEVER to die again. Now he is with Mary in the garden, giving evidence of his own resurrection; in a moment he is at Emmaus, encouraging the too timid and bewildered disciples. Nor does it cost him any trouble to go thence to Galilee to his friends, and again to the Mount of Olives, "on the mountains of spices," *carrying with him the day-dawn,* robed in life and beauty for evermore.—*Christmas Evans,* 1766—1838.

Title.—It will be very readily admitted that the *hind* is a very appropriate emblem of the suffering and persecuted righteous man who meets us in this Psalm. . . . . That the *hind* may be a figurative expression significant of suffering innocence, is put

beyond a doubt by the fact, that the wicked and the persecutors in this Psalm, *whose peculiar physiognomy is marked by emblems drawn from the brute creation*, are designed by the terms *dogs, lions, bulls*, etc.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Title.—" *The hind.*" Much extraordinary symbolism has by old authors been conjured up and clustered around the hind. According to their curious natural history, there exists a deadly enmity between the deer and the serpent, and the deer by its warm breath draws serpents out of their holes in order to devour them. The old grammarians derived *Elaphas*, or hart, from *elaunein tous opheis*, that is, of driving away serpents. Even the burning a portion of the deer's horns was said to drive away all snakes. If a snake had escaped the hart after being drawn out by the hart by its breath, it was said to be more vehemently poisonous than before. The timidity of the deer was ascribed to the great size of its heart, in which they thought was a bone shaped like a cross.—*Condensed from Wood's " Bible Animals," by C. H. S.*

Whole Psalm,—This is a kind of gem among the Psalms, and is peculiarly excellent and remarkable. It contains those deep, sublime, and heavy sufferings of Christ, when agonizing in the midst of the terrors and pangs of divine wrath and death which surpass all human thought and comprehension. I know not whether any Psalm throughout the whole book contains matter more weighty, or from which the hearts of the godly can so truly perceive those sighs and groans, inexpressible by man, which their Lord and Head, Jesus Christ, uttered when conflicting for us in the midst of death, and in the midst of the pains and terrors of hell. Wherefore this Psalm ought to be most highly prized by all who have any acquaintance with temptations of faith and spiritual conflicts.—*Martin Luther.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm, as it sets out the sufferings of Christ to the full, so also his three great offices. His sufferings are copiously described from the beginning of the Psalm to verse 22. The prophetical office of Christ, from verse 22 to verse 25. That which is foretold about his vows (verse 25), hath respect to his priestly function. In the rest of the Psalm the kingly office of Christ is set forth. *William Gouge, D.D* (1575—1653), *in " A Commentary on the whole Epistle to the Hebrews."**

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm seems to be less a prophecy than a history. *Cassiodorus.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm must be expounded, word for word, entire and in every respect, of Christ only; without any allegory, trope, or *anagoge.—Bakius, quoted by F. Delitzsch, D.D., on Hebrews*, ii. 12.

Whole Psalm.—A prophecy of the passion of Christ, and of the vocation of the *Gentiles.—Eusebius of Cæsarea.*

Verse 1.—" *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" We contrast this with John xvi. 32, " *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*" That these words in David were not withstanding the words of Christ, there is no true believer ignorant; yet how cross our Lord's words in John! Answer:—It is one thing to speak out of present sense of misery, another thing to be confident of a never-separated Deity. The condition of Christ in respect of his human state (not the divine), is in all outward appearances, like ours; we conceive the saints' condition very lamentable at times, as if God were for ever gone. And Christ (to teach us to cry after God the Father, like children after the mother, whose very stepping but at the door, ofttimes makes the babe believe, and so saith that his father is gone for ever), presents in his own sufferings how much he is sensible of ours in that case. As for his divine nature, he and his Father can never sunder in that, and so at no time is he alone, but the Father is always with him.—*William Streat, in " The Dividing of the Hoof,"* 1654.

Verse 1.—" *My God, my God,*" etc. There is a tradition that our Lord, hanging on the cross, began, as we know from the gospel, this Psalm; and repeating it and those that follow gave up his most blessed spirit when he came to the fifth verse of the thirty-first Psalm. However that may be, by taking these first words on his lips he stamped the Psalm as belonging to himself.—*Ludolph, the Carthusian (ci ca.* 1350), *in J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 1.—" *My God, my God,*" etc. It was so sharp, so heavy an affliction to Christ's soul, that it caused him who was meek under all other sufferings as a lamb,

* Reprinted in Nichol's Series of Commentaries.

to roar under this like a lion. For so much those words of Christ signify, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*" It comes from a root that signifies to howl or roar as a lion, and rather signifies the noise made by a wild beast than the voice of a man. And it is as much as if Christ had said, O my God, no words can express my anguish, I will not speak, but roar, howl out my complaints. Pour it out in volleys of groans. I roar as a lion. It's no small matter will make that majestic creature to roar. And sure so great a spirit as Christ's would not have roared under a slight burden.

Did God really forsake Jesus Christ upon the cross? then from the desertion of Christ singular consolation springs up to the people of God; yea, manifold consolation. Principally it's a support in these two respects, as it is *preventive* of your final desertion and a comfortable pattern to you in your present sad desertions. 1. Christ's desertion is *preventive* of your final desertion. Because he was forsaken for a time you shall not be forsaken for ever. For he was forsaken for you. It is every way as much for the dear Son of God, the darling delight of his soul, to be forsaken of God for a time, as if such a poor inconsiderable thing as thou art shouldst be cast off to eternity. Now, this being equivalent and borne in thy room, must needs give thee the highest security in the world that God will never finally withdraw from thee. 2. Moreover, this sad desertion of Christ becomes a comfortable *pattern* to poor deserted souls in divers respects; and the proper business of such souls, at such times, is to eye it believingly. Though God deserted Christ, yet at the same time he powerfully supported him. His omnipotent arms were under him, though his pleased face was hid from him. He had not indeed his smiles, but he had his supportations. So, Christian, just so shall it be with thee. Thy God may turn away his face, he will not pluck away his arm. When one asked of holy Mr. Baines how the case stood with his soul, he answered, "Supports I have, though suavities I want." Our Father in this deals with us as we ourselves sometimes do with a child that is stubborn and rebellious. We turn him out of doors and bid him begone out of our sight, and there he sighs and weeps; but however for the humbling of him, we will not presently take him into house and favour; yet we order, at least permit the servants to carry him meat and drink: here is fatherly care and support, though no former smiles or manifested delights . . . . . Though God forsook Christ, yet at that time he could justify God. So you read, "O my God (saith he), I cry in the day time; but thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent; but thou art holy." Is not thy spirit according to thy measure, framed like Christ's in this; canst thou not, say even when he writes bitter things against thee, he is a holy, faithful and good God for all this! I am deserted but not wronged. There is not one drop of injustice in all the sea of my sorrows. Though he condemned me I must and will justify him: this also is Christ-like.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 1.—"*My God, my God.*" The repetition is expressive of fervent desire—"*My God,*" in an especial sense, as in his words after the resurrection to Mary Magdalene, "I ascend unto my God, and your God;" "My God," not as the Son of God only, but in that nature which he hath assumed, as the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased; who is loved of the Father and who loveth the Father more than the whole universe. It is observed that this expression, "My God," is three times repeated.—*Dionysius, quoted by Isaac Williams.*

Verse 1.—"*My God.*" It was possible for Christ by *faith* to know that he was beloved of God, and he did know that he was beloved of God, when yet as to *sense* and *feeling* he tasted of God's *wrath.* Faith and the want of sense are not inconsistent; there may be no present sense of God's love, nay, there may be a present sense of his wrath, and yet there may be faith at the same time.—*John Row's "Emmanuel,"* 1680.

Verse 1.—This word, "*My God,*" takes in more than all the philosophers in the world could draw out of it.—*Alexander Wedderburn,* 1701.

Verse 1.—That there is something of a singular force, meaning, and feeling in these words is manifest from this—the evangelists have studiously given us this verse in the very words of the Hebrew, in order to show their emphatic force. And moreover I do not remember any one other place in the Scriptures where we have this repetition, ELI, ELI.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—"*Why?*" Not the "*why*" of impatience or despair, not the sinful questioning of one whose heart rebels against his chastening, but rather the cry of a lost child who cannot understand why his father has left him, and who longs to see his father's face again.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 1.—"*My roaring.*" שְׁאָגָה seems primarily to denote the roaring of a lion; but, as applied to intelligent beings, it is generally expressive of profound mental anguish poured forth in audible and even vehement strains. Psalm xxxviii. 9; xxxiii. 3; Job iii. 24. Thus did the suffering Messiah pour forth strong crying and tears, to him that was able to save him from death. Heb. v. 7.—*John Morison.*

Verse 1.—When Christ complains of having been forsaken by God, we are not to understand that he was forsaken by the First Person, or that there was a dissolution of the hypostatic union, or that he lost the favour and friendship of the Father; but he signifies to us that God permitted his human nature to undergo those dreadful torments, and to suffer an ignominious death, from which he could, if he chose, most easily deliver him. Nor did such complaints proceed either from impatience or ignorance, as if Christ were ignorant of the cause of his suffering, or was not most willing to bear such abandonment in his suffering; such complaints were only a declaration of his most bitter sufferings. And whereas, through the whole course of his passion, with such patience did our Lord suffer, as not to let a single groan or sigh escape from him, so now, lest the bystanders may readily believe that he was rendered impassible by some superior power; therefore, when his last moments were nigh, he protests that he is true man, truly passible: forsaken by his Father in his sufferings, the bitterness and acuteness of which he then intimately felt. *Robert Bellarmine* (*Cardinal*), 1542—1621.

Verse 1.—Divines are wont commonly to say, that Christ, from the moment of his conception, had the sight of God, his human soul being immediately united to the Deity, Christ from the very moment of his conception had the sight of God. Now for our Saviour, who had known experimentally how sweet the comfort of his Father's face had been, and had lived all his days under the warm beams and influences of the Divinity, and had had his soul all along refreshed with the sense of the Divine presence, for him to be left in that horror and darkness, as to have no taste of comfort, no glimpse of the Divinity breaking in upon his human soul, how great an affliction must that needs be unto him!—*John Row.*

Verse 1.—Desertion is in itself no sin; for Christ endured its bitterness, ay, he was so deep in it, that when he died, he said, "*Why hast thou forsaken me?*" A total, a final desertion ours is not; partial the best have had and have. God turns away his face, David himself is troubled: "*The just shall live by faith,*" and not by feeling.—*Richard Capel.*

Verse 1.—Oh! how will our very hearts melt with love, when we remember that as we have been distressed for our sins against him; so he was in greater agonies for us? We have had gall and wormwood, but he tasted a more bitter cup. The anger of God has dried up our spirits, but he was scorched with a more flaming wrath. He was under violent pain in the garden, and on the cross; ineffable was the sorrow that he felt, being forsaken of his Father, deserted by his disciples, affronted and reproached by his enemies, and under a curse for us. This Sun was under a doleful eclipse, this living Lord was pleased to die, and in his death was under the frowns of an angry God. The face was then hid from him that had always smiled before; and his soul felt that horror and that darkness which it had never felt before. So that there was no separation between the divine and human nature, yet he suffered pains equal to those which we had deserved to suffer in hell for ever. God so suspended the efficacies of his grace that it displayed in that hour none of its force and virtue on him. He had no comfort from heaven, none from his angels, none from his friends, even in that sorrowful hour when he needed comfort most. Like a lion that is hurt in the forest, so he roared and cried out, though there was no despair in him; and when he was forsaken, yet there was trust and hope in these words, "*My God, my God.*"—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verse 1.—Here is comfort to *deserted souls;* Christ himself was deserted; therefore, if thou be deserted, God dealeth no otherwise with thee than he did with Christ. Thou mayst be beloved of God and not feel it; Christ was so, he was beloved of the Father, and yet had no present sense and feeling of his love. This may be a great comfort to holy souls under the suspension of those comforts and manifestations which sometimes they have felt; Christ himself underwent such a suspension, therefore such a suspension of divine comfort may consist with God's love. Thou mayst conclude possibly, "I am a hypocrite, and therefore God hath forsaken me;" this is the complaint of some doubting Christians, "I am a hypocrite, and therefore God hath forsaken me;" but thou hast no reason so to conclude: there was no failure in Christ's obedience, and yet Christ was forsaken in point of comfort; there-

fore desertion, in point of comfort, may consist with truth of grace, yea, with the highest measure of grace; so it did in our Saviour.—*John Row.*

Verse 1.—Lord, thou knowest what it is for a soul to be forsaken, it was sometime thine own case when thou complainedst, "*My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" not, O my Lord! but that thou hadst a divine supportment, but thou hadst not (it seemeth) that inward joy which at other times did fill thee; now thou art in thy glory, pity *a worm* in misery, that mourns and desires more after thee than all things: Lord, thou paidst dear for my good, let good come unto me.—*Joseph Symonds*, 1658.

Verse 1.—The first verse expresses a species of suffering that never at any other time was felt in this world, and never will be again—the vengeance of the Almighty upon his child—"My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—*R. H. Ryland.*

Verse 2.—"*O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not,*" etc. How like is this expostulation to that of a human child with its earthly parent! It is based on the ground of relationship—"I am thine; I cry day and night, yet I am not heard. Thou art my God, yet nothing is done to silence me. In the daytime of my life I cried; in this night season of my death I intreat. In the garden of Gethsemane I occupied the night with prayers; with continual ejaculations have I passed through this eventful morning. O my God, thou hast not yet heard me, therefore am I not yet silent; I cannot cease till thou answerest." Here Christ urges his suit in a manner which none but filial hearts adopt. The child knows that the parent yearns over him. His importunity is strengthened by confidence in paternal love. He keeps not silence, he gives him no rest because he confides in his power and willingness to grant the desired relief. This is natural. It is the argument of the heart, an appeal to the inward yearnings of our nature. It is also scriptural, and is thus stated, "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13. *John Stevenson, in "Christ on the Cross,"* 1842.

Verse 2.—The princely prophet says, "*Lord, I cry unto thee in the daytime, but thou hearest not, also in the night time, and yet this is not to be thought folly to me.*"* Some perhaps would think it a great point of folly for a man to cry and call unto him who stops his ears, and seems not to hear. Nevertheless, this folly of the faithful is wiser than all the wisdom of the world. For we know well enough, that howsoever God seem at the first not to hear, yet the Lord is a sure refuge *in due time—in affliction.* Psalm ix. 9.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verses 2, 3.—Well, what hears God from him, now he hears nothing from God, as to the deliverance prayed for? No murmuring at God's proceedings; nay, he hears quite the contrary, for he justifies and praises God: "*But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*" Observe whether thou canst not gather something from the manner of God's denying the thing prayed for, which may sweeten it to thee! Haply thou shalt find he denies thee, but it is with a smiling countenance, and ushers it in with some expressions of grace and favour, that may assure thee his denial proceeds not from displeasure. As you would do with a dear friend, who, may be, comes to borrow a sum of money of you; lend it you dare not, because you see plainly it is not for his good; but in giving him the denial, lest he should misinterpret it, as proceeding from want of love and respect, you preface it with some kind of language of your hearty affection to him, as that you love him, and therefore deny him, and shall be ready to do for him more than that comes to. Thus God sometimes wraps up his denials in such sweet intimations of love, as prevents all jealousies arising in the hearts of his people.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 2, 3.—They that have conduit-water come into their houses, if no water come they do not conclude the spring to be dry, but the pipes to be stopped or broken. If prayer speed not, we must be sure that the fault is not in God, but in ourselves; were we but ripe for mercy, he is ready to extend it to us, and even waits for the purpose.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*But thou art holy.*" Here is the triumph of faith—the Saviour stood like a rock in the wide ocean of temptation. High as the billows rose, so did his faith, like the coral rock, wax greater and stronger till it became an island of salvation to our shipwrecked souls. It is as if he had said, "It matters not what I endure.

* Septuagint version.

Storms may howl upon me; men depise; devils tempt; circumstances overpower; and God himself forsake me, still God is holy; there is no unrighteousness in him."—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 3.—"*But thou art holy.*" Does it seem strange that the heart in its darkness and sorrow should find comfort in this attribute of God? No, for God's holiness is but another aspect of his faithfulness and mercy. And in that remarkable name, "the Holy One *of Israel*," we are taught that he who is the "*holy*" God is also the God who has made a covenant with his chosen. It would be impossible for an Israelite to think of God's holiness without thinking also of that covenant relationship. "Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God am holy," were the words in which Israel was reminded of their relation to God. See especially Lev. xix. 1. We see something of this feeling in such passages as Psalm lxxxix, 16—19; xcix. 5—9; Hosea xi. 8, 9; Isaiah xli. 14; xlvii. 4.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—Were temptations never so black, faith will not hearken to an ill word spoken against God, but will justify God always.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 4, 5.—Those who look upon this Psalm as having a primary reference to the King of Israel, attribute great beauty to these words, from the very pleasing conjecture that David was, at the time of composing them, sojourning at Mahanaim, where Jacob, in his distress, wrestled with the angel, and obtained such signal blessings. That, in a place so greatly hallowed by associations of the past, he should make his appeal to the God of his fathers, was alike the dictate of patriarchal feeling and religion.—*John Morison, D.D., in "Morning Meditations."*

Verse 5.—"*Thou didst deliver them,*" but thou wilt not deliver me; nay, rather thou didst deliver them because thou wilt not deliver me.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 6.—"*But I am a worm, and no man.*" A fisherman, when he casts his angle into the river, doth not throw the hook in bare, naked, and uncovered, for then he knows the fish will never bite, and therefore he hides the hook within a worm, or some other bait, and so, the fish, biting at the worm, is catched by the hook. Thus Christ, speaking of himself, saith, "*Ego vermis et non homo.*" He, coming to perform the great work of our redemption, did cover and hide his Godhead within the worm of his human nature. The grand water-serpent, Leviathan, the devil, thinking to swallow the worm of his humanity, was caught upon the hook of his divinity. This hook stuck in his jaws, and tore him very sore. By thinking to destroy Christ, he destroyed his own kingdom, and lost his own power for ever.—*Lancelot Andrews.*

Verse 6.—"*I am a worm.*" Christ calls himself "*a worm*" . . . . on account of the opinion that men of the world had of him. . . . . The Jews esteemed Christ as a worm, and treated him as such; he was loathsome to them and hated by them; every one trampled upon him, and trod him under foot as men do worms. . . . . The Chaldee paraphrase renders it here *a weak worm;* and though Christ is the mighty God, and is also the Son of man, whom God made strong for himself; yet there was a weakness in his human nature, and he was crucified through it, 2 Cor. xiii. 4: and it has been observed by some, that the word תּוֹלַעַת there used signifies the scarlet worm, or the worm that is in the grain or berry with which scarlet is dyed; and like this scarlet worm did our Lord look, when by way of mockery he was clothed with a scarlet robe; and especially when he appeared in his dyed garments, and was red in his apparel, as one that treadeth in the wine fat; when his body was covered with blood when he hung upon the cross, which was shed to make crimson and scarlet sins as white as snow.—*John Gill.*

Verse 6.—"*I am a worm.*" An humble soul is emptied of all swelling thoughts of himself. Bernard calls humility a self-annihilation. Job xxii. 29. "Thou wilt save the humble;" in the Hebrew it is, "Him that is of low eyes." An humble man hath lower thoughts of himself than others can have of him; David, though a king, yet looked upon himself as "*a worm:*" "*I am a worm, and no man.*" Bradford a martyr, yet subscribes himself "a sinner." Job x. 15. "If I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head:" like the violet, a sweet flower, but hangs down the head.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 6.—"*A worm.*" So trodden under foot, trampled on, maltreated, buffeted and spit upon, mocked and tormented, as to seem more like a worm than a man. Behold what great contempt hath the Lord of Majesty endured, that his confusion

may be our glory; his punishment our heavenly bliss! Without ceasing impress this spectacle, O Christian, on thy soul!—*Dionysius, quoted by Isaac Williams.*

Verse 6.—"*I am a worm.*" Among the Hindoos, when a man complains and abhors himself, he asks: "What am I? A worm! a worm!" "Ah, the proud man! he regarded me as a worm, well should I like to say to him, 'We are all worms.'" "Worm, crawl out of my presence."—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 7.—"*All they that see me laugh me to scorn,*" etc. Imagine this dreadful scene. Behold this motley multitude of rich and poor, of Jews and Gentiles! Some stand in groups and gaze. Some recline at ease and stare. Others move about in restless gratification at the event. There is a look of satisfaction on every countenance. None are silent. The velocity of speech seems tardy. The theme is far too great for one member to utter. Every lip, and head, and finger, is now a tongue. The rough soldiers, too, are busied in their coarse way. The work of blood is over. Refreshment has become necessary. Their usual beverage of vinegar and water is supplied to them. As they severally are satisfied, they approach the cross, hold some forth to the Saviour, and bid him drink as they withdraw it. Luke xxiii. 36. They know he must be suffering an intense thirst, they therefore aggravate it with the mockery of refreshment. Cruel Romans! and ye, O regicidal Jews! Was not death enough? Must mockery and scorn be added? On this sad day Christ made you *one* indeed! Dreadful unity—which constituted you the joint mockers and murderers of the Lord of glory!—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 7.—"*All they that see me laugh me to scorn,*" etc. There have been persons in our own days, whose crimes have excited such detestation that the populace would probably have torn them in pieces, before, and even after their trial, if they could have had them in their power. Yet when these very obnoxious persons have been executed according to their sentence, if, perhaps, there was not one spectator who wished them to escape, yet neither was one found so lost to sensibility as to insult them in their dying moments. But when Jesus suffers, *all that see him laugh* him *to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head;* they insult his character and his hope.—*John Newton.*

Verse 7.—"*They shoot out the lip.*" To protrude the lower lip is, in the East, considered a very strong indication of contempt. Its employment is chiefly confined to the lower orders.—*Illustrated Commentary.*

Verses 7, 8.—It was after his crucifixion, and during the hours that he hung upon the cross, that his sufferings in this way—the torment of beholding and hearing the scorn and mockery which was made of the truth of his person and doctrine—exceedingly abounded, and in such and so many kinds of mockery and insult that some consider this to have been the chiefest pain and sorrow which he endured in his most sacred passion. For as, generally, those things are considered the most painful to endure of which we are most sensible, so it seems to these persons, that sufferings of this kind contain in them more cause for feeling than any other sufferings. And, therefore, although all the torments of the Lord were very great, so that each one appears the greatest, and no comparison can be made between them; yet, nevertheless, this kind of suffering appears to be the most painful. Because in other troubles, not only the pain and suffering of them, but the troubles themselves, in themselves, may be desired by us, and such as we suffer for love's sake, in order by them to evince that love. Wherefore, the stripes, the crown of thorns, the buffetings, the cross, the gall, the vinegar, and other bodily torments, besides that they torment the body, are often a means for promoting the divine honour, which it holds in esteem above all else. But to blaspheme God, to give the lie to eternal truths, to deface the supreme demonstrations of the divinity and majesty of the Son of God (although God knoweth how to extract from these things the good which he intends), nevertheless are, in their nature, things, which, from their so greatly affecting the divine honour, although they may be, for just considerations, endured, can never be desired by any one, but must be abhorrent to all. Our Lord then, being, of all, the most zealous for the divine honour, for which he also died, found in this kind of suffering, more than in all other, much to abhor and nothing to desire. Therefore with good reason it may be held to be the greatest of all, and that in which, more than in all other, he exhibited the greatest suffering and patience. *Fra Thomé de Jesu, in "The Sufferings of Jesus,"* 1869.

Verses 7—9.—All that see me made but a laughynge stocke on me, they mocked me wyth their lyppes, and wagged theyr heades at me. Sayenge, thys

vyllayne referred all thynges to the Lord, let him now delyver hym yf he wyll, for he loveth hym well. But yet thou arte he whyche leddest me oute of my mother's wombe myne one refuge, even from my mother's teates. As sone as I came into this worlde, I was layde in thy lappe, thou art my God even from my mother's wombe.—*From "The Psalter of David in English, truly translated out of Latyn," in "Devout Psalms," etc., by E. Whitchurche*, 1547.

Verse 8.—Here are recorded some of those very words, by which the persecutors of our Lord expressed their mockery and scorn. How remarkable to find them in a Psalm written so many hundred years before!—*John Stevenson.*

Verses 9, 10.—Faith is much strengthened by constant evidences of God's favour. Herewith did he support his faith that said to God, "*Thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.*" "Thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels." Psalm lxxi. 5, 6. It was not only the disposition of Obadiah towards God, but also the evidence that thereby he had of God's affection towards him, that made him with confidence say to Elijah, "I fear the Lord from my youth." 1 Kings xviii. 12. By long continuance of ancient favour, many demonstrations are given of a fast, fixed and unremovable affection. So as if, by reason of temptations, one or more evidences should be questioned, yet others would remain to uphold faith, and to keep it from an utter languishing, and a total falling away. As when a house is supported by many pillars, though some be taken away, yet by the support of them which remain, the house will stand.—*Willtam Gouge.*

Verses 9, 10.—David acknowledges ancient mercies, those mercies which had been cast upon him long ago, these were still fresh and new in his memory, and this is one affection and disposition of a thankful heart—to remember those mercies which another would have quite forgotten, or never thought of. Thus does David here; the mercies of his *infancy*, and his *childhood*, and his *younger years*, which one would have imagined, that now in his age had been quite out of his mind; yet these does he here stir up himself to remember and bring to his thoughts. "*Took me out of the womb:*" when was that? It may have been threescore years ago when David penned the Psalms. He thinks of those mercies which God vouchsafed him *when he was not capable of thinking*, nor considering what was bestowed upon him; and so are we taught hence to do, in an imitation of his holy example which is here set before us: those mercies which God hath bestowed in our minority we are to call to mind and acknowledge in our riper years.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verses 9, 10.—Here the tribulation begins to grow lighter, and hope inclines towards victory; a support, though small, and sought out with deep anxiety, is now found. For after he had felt that he had suffered without any parallel or example, so that the wonderful works of God as displayed toward the fathers afforded him no help, he comes to the wonderful works of God toward himself, and in these he finds the goodwill of God turned towards him, and which was displayed towards him alone in so singular a way.—*Martin Luther.*

Verses 9, 10.—The bitter severity of the several taunts with which his enemies assailed our Lord, had no other effect than to lead the Saviour to make a direct appeal to his Father. . . . . That appeal is set before us in these two verses. It is of an unusual and remarkable nature. The argument on which it is founded is most forcible and conclusive. At the same time, it is the most seasonable and appropriate that can be urged. We may thus paraphrase it, "I am now brought as a man to my extremity. It is said that God disowns me; but it cannot be so. My first moment of existence he tenderly cared for. When I could not even ask for, or think of his kindness, he bestowed it upon me. If, of his mere good pleasure he brought me into life at first, he will surely not forsake me when I am departing out of it. In opposition, therefore, to all their taunts, I can and I will appeal to himself. Mine enemies declare, O God, that thou hast cast me off—*but thou art he that took me out of the womb.* They affirm that I do not, and need not trust in thee; but *thou didst make me hope* (or, *keptest me in safety*, margin) *when I was upon my mother's breasts.* They insinuate that thou wilt not acknowledge me as thy Son; but *I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly.*"—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 10.—"*I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.*" There is a noble passage in Eusebius, in which he shows the connection between our Lord's incarnation and his passion: that he might well comfort himself while hanging on the cross by the remembrance that the very same body then "marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (Isaiah lii. 14), was that which had been glorified by the Father with such singular honour, when the Holy Ghost came upon Mary, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her. That this body, therefore, though now so torn and so mangled, as it had once been the wonder, so it would for ever be the joy, of the angels; and having put on immortality, would be the support of his faithful people to the end of time—*J. M. Neale, in loc.*

Verse 10.—I was like one forsaken by his parent, and wholly cast upon Providence. I had no father upon earth, and my mother was poor and helpless.—*Matthew Poole.*

Verse 11.—"*Be not far from me; for trouble is near;*" and so it is high time for thee to put forth a helping hand. *Hominibus profanis mirabilis videtur hæc ratio*, to profane persons, this seemeth to be a strange reason, saith an interpreter; but it is a very good one, as this prophet knew, who therefore makes it his plea.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 12.—"*Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.*" These animals are remarkable for the proud, fierce, and sullen manner in which they exercise their great strength. Such were the persecutors who now beset our Lord. These were first, human, and secondly, spiritual foes; and both were alike distinguished by the proud, fierce, and sullen manner in which they assaulted him.—*John Stevenson.*

Verses 12, 13.—"Bashan" was a fertile country (Numb. xxxii. 4), and the cattle there fed were fat and "strong." Deut. xxxii. 14. Like them, the Jews in that good land "waxed fat and kicked," grew proud and rebelled; forsook God "that made them, and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation."—*George Horne.*

Verse 13.—A helpless infant, or a harmless lamb, surrounded by furious bulls and hungry lions, aptly represented the Saviour encompassed by his insulting and bloody persecutors.—*Thomas Scott*, 1747—1881.

Verse 14.—"*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.*" He was faint. *Such* a feeling of languor and faintness supervened that language fails to express it, and the emblem of "water poured out" is employed to represent it. As the water falls from the vessel to the earth, see how its particles separate farther and farther from each other. Its velocity increases as it falls. It has no power to stay itself midway, much less to return to its place. It is the very picture of utter weakness. So did our Lord feel himself to be when hanging on the cross. He was faint with weakness. The sensations experienced when about to faint away are very overpowering. We appear to our own consciousness to be nothing but weakness, as water poured out. All our bones feel relaxed and out of joint; we seem as though we had none. The strength of bone is gone, the knitting of the joints is loosened, and the muscular vigour fled. A sickly giddiness overcomes us. We have no power to bear up. All heart is lost. Our strength disappears like that of wax, of melting wax, which drops upon surrounding objects, and is lost. Daniel thus describes his sensations on beholding the great vision, "There remained no strength in me: for my vigour was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength." Dan. x. 8. In regard, however, to the faintness which our Lord experienced, we ought to notice this additional and remarkable circumstance, that he did not altogether faint away. The relief of insensibility he refused to take. When consciousness ceases, all perception of pain is necessarily and instantly terminated. But our Lord retained his full consciousness throughout this awful scene; and patiently endured for a considerable period, those, to us, insupportable sensations which precede the actual swoon.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 14.—"*I am poured out like water:*" that is, in the thought of my enemies I am utterly destroyed. "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." 2 Sam. xiv. 14. "What marvel," asks St. Bernard, "that the name of the Bridegroom should be as ointment poured forth, when he himself, for the greatness of his love, was poured forth like water!"—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 14.—"*I am poured out like water*," *i.e.*, I am almost past all recovery, as water spilt upon the ground.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 14.—"*All my bones are out of joint.*" The *rack* is devised as a most exquisite pain, even for terror. And the *cross* is a *rack*, whereon he was stretched till, saith the Psalm, "*all his bones were out of joint.*" But even to *stand*, as he *hung*, three long hours together, holding up but the arms at length, I have heard it avowed of some that have felt it, to be a pain scarce credible. But the hands and the feet being so cruelly *nailed* (part, of all other, most sensible, by reason of the texture of sinews there in them most) it could not but make his pain out of measure painful. It was not for nothing, that *dolores acerrimi dicuntur cruciatus* (saith the heathen man), that the most sharp and bitter pains of all other have their name from hence, and are called *cruciatus*—pains like those of the *cross*. It had a meaning, that *they gave him*, that he had (for his *welcome* to the cross) a cup mixed with gall or myrrh; and (for his *farewell*) *a sponge of vinegar;* to show by the one the *bitterness*, and by the other the *sharpness* of the pains of this painful death.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 14.—"*All my bones are out of joint.*" We know that the greatest and most intolerable pain that the body can endure, is that arising from a bone out of its place, or dislocated joint. Now when the Lord was raised up upon the cross, and his sacred body hung in the air from the nails, all the joints began to give, so that the bones were parted the one from the other so visibly that, in very truth (as David had prophesied) *they might tell all his bones*, and thus, throughout his whole body, he endured acute torture. Whilst our Lord suffered these torments, his enemies, who had so earnestly desired to see him crucified, far from pitying him, were filled with delight, as though celebrating a victory.—*Fra Thomè de Jesu.*

Verse 15.—"*My strength is dried up*," etc. Inflammation must have commenced early and violently in the wounded parts—then been quickly imparted to those that were strained, and have terminated in a *high degree of feverish burning over the whole body.* The animal juices would be thus dried up, and the watery particles of the blood absorbed. The skin parched by the scorching sun till midday would be unable to supply or to imbibe any moisture. The loss of blood at the hands and feet would hasten the desiccation. Hence our Lord says, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." The fever would devour his small remaining strength. And THIRST, that most intolerable of all bodily privations, must have been overpowering. His body appeared to his feeling like a potsherd that had been charred in the potter's kiln. It seemed to have neither strength nor substance left in it. So feeble had he become, so parched and dried up that CLAMMINESS OF THE MOUTH, one of the forerunners of immediate dissolution, had already seized him; "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death."—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 15.—"*My strength is dried up;*" not as in the trial of gold and silver, but "*like a potsherd*," as the earthen vessel dried up by the heat, spoken in humiliation.—*Isaac Williams, in loc.*

Verse 15.—"*A potsherd.*" חֶרֶשׂ, rendered *potsherd*, is a word which denotes a piece of earthenware, frequently in a broken state. As employed in the verse under consideration, it seems to derive considerable illustration from the corresponding word in ARABIC, which expresses roughness of skin, and might well convey to the mind an idea of the bodily appearance of one in whom the moisture of the fluids had been dried up by the excess of grief.—*John Morison.*

Verse 15.—That hour what his feelings were it is dangerous to define: we know them not; we may be too bold to determine of them. To very good purpose it was that the ancient Fathers of the Greek church in their liturgy, after they had recounted all the particular pains, as they are set down in his passion, and by all and by everyone of them called for mercy, do, after all, shut up with this Δι αγνωστων κοπῶν κὶ βασάνων ελέησον κὶ σῶσον ἡμᾶς. By thine unknown sorrows and sufferings, felt by thee, but not distinctly known by us, have mercy upon us and save us.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 16.—"*Dogs have compassed me.*" So great and varied was the malignity exhibited by the enemies of our Lord, that the combined characteristics of two species of ferocious animals were not adequate to its representation. Another emblematical figure is therefore introduced. The assembly of the wicked is compared to that of "dogs" who haunt about the cities, prowl in every corner snarl

over the carrion, and devour it all with greediness—like "dogs," with their wild cry in full pursuit, with unfailing scent tracking their victim, with vigilant eye on all its movements, and with a determination which nothing can falter, they run it on to death. The Oriental mode of hunting, both in ancient and modern times, is murderous and merciless in the extreme. A circle of several miles in circumference is beat round; and the men, driving all before them, and narrowing as they advance, inclose the prey on every side. Having thus made them prisoners, the cruel hunters proceed to slaughter at their own convenience. So did the enemies of our Lord: long before his crucifixion it is recorded that they used the most treacherous plans to get him into their power.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 16.—"*Dogs have compassed me.*" At the hunting of the lion, a whole district is summoned to appear, who, forming themselves first into a circle, enclose a space of four or five miles in compass, according to the number of the people and the quality of the ground which is pitched upon for the scene of action. The footmen advance first, rushing into the thickets with their dogs and spears, to put up the game; while the horsemen, keeping a little behind, are always ready to charge upon the first sally of the wild beast. In this manner they proceed, still contracting their circle, till they all at last close in togther, or meet with some other game to divert them.—*Dr. Shaw's Travels, quoted in Paxton's "Illustrations of Scripture."*

Verse 16.—"*They pierced my hands and my feet;*" namely, when they nailed Christ to the cross. Matt. xxvii. 35; John xx. 25. Where let me simulate, saith a learned man, the orator's gradation, *Facinus vincire civem Romanum*, etc. It was much for the Son of God to be bound, more to be beaten, most of all to be slain; *Quid dicam in crucem tolle?* but what shall I say to this, that he was crucified? That was the most vile and ignominious; it was also a cruel and cursed kind of death, which yet he refused not; and here we have a clear testimony for his cross. *John Trapp.*

Verse 16.—"*They pierced my hands and my feet.*" Of all sanguinary punishments, that of crucifixion is one of the most dreadful—no vital part is immediately affected by it. The hands and feet which are furnished with the most numerous and sensitive organs, are perforated with nails, which must necessarily be of some size to suit their intended purpose. The tearing asunder of the tender fibres of the hands and feet, the lacerating of so many nerves, and bursting so many blood-vessels, must be productive of intense agony. The nerves of the hand and foot are intimately connected, through the arm and leg, with the nerves of the whole body; their laceration therefore must be felt over the entire frame. Witness the melancholy result of even a needle's puncture in even one of the remotest nerves. A spasm is not unfrequently produced by it in the muscles of the face, which locks the jaws inseparably. When, therefore the hands and feet of our blessed Lord were transfixed with nails, he must have felt the sharpest pangs shoot through every part of his body. Supported only by his lacerated limbs, and suspended from his pierced hands, our Lord had nearly six hours' torment to endure.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 16.—"*They pierced my hands and my feet.*" That evangelical prophet testifies it, "Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." Isaiah xlix. 16. Were we not engraven there when his hands were pierced for us? "They digged my hands and my feet." And they digged them so deep, that the very prints remained after his resurrection, and their fingers were thrust into them for evidence sake. Some have thought that those scars remain still in his glorious body, to be showed at his second appearing: "They shall see him whom they have pierced." That is improbable, but this is certain; there remains still an impression upon Christ's hands and his heart, the sealing and wearing of the elect there, as precious jewels.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 17.—"*I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.*" The skin and flesh were distended by the posture of the body on the cross, that the bones, as through a thin veil, became visible, and might be counted.—*George Horne.*

Verse 17.—"*I may tell all my bones.*" For, as the first Adam by his fall, lost the robe of innocence, and thence forth needed other garments, so the second Adam vouchsafed to be stripped of his earthly vestments, to the end it might hereafter be said to us, "Bring forth the first robe, and put it on him." Luke xv. 22.—*Gerhohus, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 17.—"*They look and stare upon me.*" Sensitively conscious of his condition

upon the cross, the delicate feelings of the holy Saviour were sorely pained by the gaze of the multitude. With impudent face they looked upon him. To view him better they halted as they walked. With deliberate insolence they collected in groups, and made their remarks to each other on his conduct and appearance. Mocking his naked, emaciated, and quivering body, they "looked and stared upon him."—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 17.—"*They look and stare upon me.*" Oh, how different is that look which the awakened sinner directs to Calvary, when faith lifts up her eye to him who agonised, and bled, and died, for the guilty! And what gratitude should perishing men feel, that from him that hangs upon the accursed tree there is heard proceeding the inviting sound, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and besides me there is none else."—*John Morison.*

Verse 18.—"*They part my garments,*" etc. Perfectly naked did the cruciarii hang upon the cross, and the executioners received their clothes. There is nothing to show that there was a cloth even round the loins. The clothes became the property of the soldiers, after Roman usage. The outer garment was divided probably into four, by ripping up the seams. Four soldiers were counted off as a guard, by the Roman code. The under garment could not be divided, being woven; and this led the soldiers to the dice-throwing.—*J. P. Lange, D.D., on Matthew* xxvii. 35.

Verse 18.—"*They part my garments,*" etc. Instruments will not be wanting to crucify Christ, if it were but for his old clothes, and those but little worth; for these soldiers crucify him, though they got but his garments for their reward. Christ did submit to suffer naked, hereby to teach us:—1. That all flesh are really naked before God by reason of sin (Exodus xxxii. 25; 2 Chron. xxviii. 19), and therefore our Surety behoved to suffer naked. 2. That he offered himself a real captive in his sufferings, that so he might fully satisfy justice by being under the power of his enemies, till he redeemed himself by the strong hand, having fully paid the price; for therefore did he submit to be stripped naked, as conquerors use to do with prisoners. 3. That by thus suffering naked he would expiate our abuse of apparel, and purchase to us a liberty to make use of suitable raiment, and such as becometh us in our station. 4. That by this suffering naked he would purchase unto them who flee to him to be covered with righteousness and glory, and to walk with him in white for ever, and would point out the nakedness of those who, not being found clothed with his righteousness, shall not be clothed upon with immortality and glory. 2 Cor. v. 2, 3. 5. He would also by this, teach all his followers to resolve on nakedness in their following of him, as a part of their conformity with their Head (1 John iv. 17; Rom. viii. 35; Heb. xi. 37), and that therefore they should not dote much on their apparel when they have it.—*George Hutcheson,* 1657.

Verse 18.—"*And cast lots upon my vesture.*" Trifling as this act of casting the lot for our Lord's vesture may appear, it is most significant. It contains a double lesson. It teaches us how greatly that seamless shirt was valued; how little he had to whom it belonged. It seemed to say, this garment is more valuable than its owner. As it was said of the thirty pieces of silver, "A goodly price at which I was prized at of them;" so may we say regarding the casting of the lot, "How cheaply Christ was held!"—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 20.—"*My darling*" had better be rendered "my lonely, or solitary one." For he wishes to say that his soul was lonely and forsaken by all, and that there was no one who sought after him as a friend, or cared for him, or comforted him: as we have it, Psalm cxlii. 4, "Refuge failed me; no one cared for my soul; I looked on my right hand, but there was no one who would know me;" that is, solitude is of itself a certain cross, and especially so in such great torments, in which it is most grievous to be immersed without an example and without a companion. And yet, in such a state, everyone of us must be, in some suffering or other, and especially in that of death; and we must be brought to cry out with Psalm xxv. 16, "Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted."—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 20.—"*The dog.*" It is scarcely possible for a European to form an idea of the intolerable nuisance occasioned in the villages and cities of the East, by the multitude of dogs that infest the streets. The natives, accustomed from their earliest years to the annoyance, come to be regardless of it; but to a stranger, these creatures are the greatest plague to which he is subjected; for as they are never allowed to enter a house, and do not constitute the property of any particular

owner, they display none of those habits of which the domesticated species among us are found susceptible, and are destitute of all those social qualities which often render the dog the trusty and attached friend of man. . . . . The race seems wholly to degenerate in the warm regions of the East, and to approximate to the character of beasts of prey, as in disposition they are ferocious, cunning, bloodthirsty, and possessed of the most insatiable voracity: and even in their very form there is something repulsive; their sharp and savage features; their wolf-like eyes; their long hanging ears; their straight and pointed tails; their lank and emaciated forms, almost entirely without a belly, give them an appearance of wretchedness and degradation, that stands in sad contrast with the general condition and qualities of the breed in Europe. . . . . These hideous creatures, dreaded by the people for their ferocity, or avoided by them as useless and unclean, are obliged to prowl about everywhere in search of a precarious existence. . . . . They generally run in bands, and their natural ferocity, inflamed by hunger, and the consciousness of strength, makes them the most troublesome and dangerous visitors to the stranger who unexpectedly finds himself in their neighbourhood, as they will not scruple to seize whatever he may have about him, and even, in the event of his falling, and being otherwise defenceless, to attack and devour him. . . . These animals, driven by hunger, greedily devour everything that comes in their way; they glut themselves with the most putrid and loathsome substances that are thrown about the cities, and of nothing are they so fond as of human flesh, a repast, with which the barbarity of the despotic countries of Asia frequently supplies them, as the bodies of criminals slain for murder, treason, or violence, are seldom buried, and lie exposed till the mangled fragments are carried off by the dogs.—*From "Illustrations of Scripture, by the late Professor George Paxton, D.D., revised and enlarged by Robert Jamieson,"* 1843.

Verse 21.—"*Save me from the lion's mouth.*" Satan is called a lion, and that fitly; for he hath all the properties of the lion: as bold as a lion, as strong as a lion, as furious as a lion, as terrible as the roaring of a lion. Yea, worse: the lion wants subtlety and suspicion; herein the devil is beyond the lion. The lion will spare the prostrate, the devil spares none. The lion is full and forbears, the devil is full and devours. He seeks all; let not the simple say, He will take no notice of me; nor the subtle, He cannot overreach me; nor the noble say, He will not presume to meddle with me; nor the rich, He dares not contest with me; for he seeks to devour all. He is our common adversary, therefore let us cease all quarrels amongst ourselves, and fight with him.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 21.—"*Save me . . . from the horns of the unicorns.*" Those who are in great trouble from the power or cruelty of others, often cry out to their gods, "Ah! save me from the tusk of the elephant from the mouth of the tiger and the tusks of the boar, deliver me, deliver me!" "Who will save me from the horn of the *Kundam?*" This animal is now extinct in these regions, and it is not easy to determine what it was; the word in the Sathur—*Agarāthe*—is rendered "jungle cow."—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 21.—"*The horns of the unicorns.*" On turning to the Jewish Bible we find that the word רְאֵם is translated as buffalo, and there is no doubt that this rendering is nearly the correct one, and at the present day naturalists are nearly agreed that the reêm of the Old Testament must have been now the extinct urus. . . . . The presence of these horns affords a remarkable confirmation to a well-known passage in Julius Cæsar's familar "Commentaries." "The uri are little inferior to elephants in size" ("*magnitudine paulo infra elephantos*;") "but are bulls in their nature, colour, and figure. Great is their strength, and great their swiftness; nor do they spare man or beast when they have caught sight of them."—*J. G. Wood, M.A., F.L.S., in "Bible Animals,"* 1869.

Verse 22.—"*I will declare thy name unto my brethren.*" Having thus obtained relief from the oppressive darkness, and regained conscious possession of the joy and light of his Father's countenance, the thoughts and desires of the Redeemer flow into their accustomed channel. The glory of God in the salvation of his church.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 22.—"*My brethren.*" This gives evidence of the low condescension of the Son of God, and also of the high exaltation of sons of men; for the Son of God to be a brother to sons of men is a great degree of humiliation, and for sons of men to be made brethren with the Son of God is a high degree of exaltation; for Christ's

brethren are in that respect sons of God, heirs of heaven, or kings, not earthly, but heavenly; not temporary, but everlasting kings . . . . . This respect of Christ to his brethren is a great encouragement and comfort to such as are despised and scorned by men of this world for Christ's professing of them.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 24.—"*For he hath not despised nor abhorred the prayer of the poor, neither hath he hid his face from me; but when I cried unto him, he heard me.*" Let him, therefore, that desires to be of the seed of Israel, and to rejoice in the grace of the gospel, become poor, for this is a fixed truth, our God is one that has respect unto the poor! And observe the fulness and diligence of the prophet. He was not content with having said "will not despise," but adds, "and will not abhor;" and again, "will not turn away his face;" and again, "will hear." And then he adds himself as an example, saying "When I cried," as our translation has it. As if he had said, "Behold ye, and learn by my example, who have been made the most vile of all men, and numbered among the wicked; when I was despised, cast out, rejected, behold! I was held in the highest esteem, and taken up, and heard. Let not this state of things, therefore, after this, my encouraging example, frighten you; the gospel requires a man to be such a character before it will save him." These things, I say, because our weakness requires so much exhortation, that it might not dread being humbled, nor despair when humbled, and thus might, after the bearing of the cross, receive the salvation.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 25.—"*My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation,*" etc. The joy and gratitude of our adorable Lord rise to such a height at this great deliverance, his heart so overflows with fresh and blessed consciousness of his heavenly Father's nearness, that he again pours forth the expression of his praise. By its repetition, he teaches us that this is not a temporary burst of gratitude, but an abiding determination, a full and settled resolution.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 25.—"*In the great congregation.*" Saints are fittest witnesses of sacred duties. That which, in Psa. cxvi. 14, is implied under this particle of restraint, "his," in "the presence of all his people," is in Psa. xxii. 25, more expressly noted by a more apparent description, thus: "*I will pay my vows before them that fear him.*" None but true saints do truly fear God. 1. This property of God's people, that they fear the Lord, showeth that they will make the best use of such sacred, solemn duties performed in their presence. They will glorify God for this your zeal; they will join their spirits with your spirit in this open performance of duty; they will become followers of you, and learn of you to vow and pay unto the Lord, and that openly, publicly. 2. As for others, they are no better than such hogs and dogs as are not meet to have such precious pearls and holy things cast before them, lest they trample them under their feet.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 26.—"*The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him; your heart shall live for ever.*" A spiritual banquet is prepared in the church for the "*meek*" and lowly in heart. The death of Christ was the sacrifice for sin; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. The poor in spirit feed on this provision, in their hearts by faith, and are *satisfied*, and thus, whilst they "*seek*" the *Lord*, they "*praise*" him also, and their "*hearts*" (or souls), are preserved unto eternal life.—"*Practical Illustrations of the Book of Psalms,*" 1836.

Verse 26.—"*The meek.*" Bonaventure engraved this sweet saying of our Lord, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," in his study. O that this saying was engraved upon all your foreheads, and upon all your hearts!—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 26.—"*They shall praise the Lord that seek him; your heart shall live for ever.*" Now, I would fain know the man that ever went about to form such laws as should bind the *hearts* of men, or prepare such rewards as should reach the souls and consciences of men! Truly, if any mortal man should make a law that his subjects should love him with all their hearts and souls, and not dare, upon peril of his greatest indignation, to entertain a traitorous thought against his royal person, but presently confess it to him, or else he would be avenged on him, he would deserve to be more laughed at for his pride and folly, than Xerxes for casting his fetters into the Hellespont, to chain the waves into his obedience; or Caligula, that threatened the air, if it durst rain when he was at his pastimes, who durst not himself so much as look into the air when it thundered. Certainly a madhouse would be more fit for such a person than a throne, who should so far forfeit his reason,

as to think that the thoughts and hearts of men were within his jurisdiction.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 26.—"*Your heart,*" that is, not your outward man, but the hidden man of the heart (Ezek. xxxvi. 26); the new man which is created after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, "*shall live for ever.*" The life which animates it is the life of the Spirit of God.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 27.—"*All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him.*" This passage is a prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles. It furnishes us with two interesting ideas; the nature of true conversion—and the extent of it under the reign of the Messiah. 1. The NATURE of true conversion:—It is to "*remember*"—to "*turn to the Lord*"—and to "*worship before him.*" This is a plain and simple process. Perhaps the first religious exercise of mind of which we are conscious is reflection. A state of unregeneracy is a state of forgetfulness. God is forgotten. Sinners have lost all just sense of his glory, authority, mercy, and judgment; living as if there were no God, or as if they thought there was none. But if ever we are brought to be the subjects of true conversion, we shall be brought to remember these things. This divine change is fitly expressed by the case of the prodigal, who is said to have *come to himself*, or to his right mind. But further, true conversion consists not only in remembering but in "*turning to the Lord.*" This part of the passage is expressive of a cordial relinquishment of our idols, whatever they have been, and an acquiescence in the gospel way of salvation by Christ alone. Once more, true conversion to Christ will be accompanied with the "*worship*" of him. Worship, as a religious exercise, is the homage of the heart, presented to God according to his revealed will . . . . . 2. The EXTENT of conversion under the kingdom or reign of the Messiah: "*All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him.*" It was fit that the accession of the Gentiles should be reserved for the gospel day, that it might grace the triumph of Christ over his enemies, and appear to be what it is, "the travail of his soul." This great and good work, begun in the apostles' days, *must* go on, and "must increase," till "*All the ends of the world shall remember and turn,*" and "*all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him.*" Conversion work has been *individual;* God has gathered sinners one by one. Thus it is at present with us; but it will not be thus always. People will flock to Zion as doves to their windows. Further, conversion work has hitherto been circumscribed within certain parts of the world. But the time will come when "all the kindreds of the earth" shall worship. These hopes are not the flight of an ardent imagination; they are founded on the true sayings of God. Finally, while we are concerned for the world, let us not forget our own souls. So the whole world be saved and we lost, what will it avail us?—*Condensed from Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 27.—"*All the ends of the world shall* REMEMBER"—this is a remarkable expression. It implies that man has forgotten God. It represents all the successive generations of the world as but *one*, and then it exhibits that one generation, as if it had been once in paradise, suddenly remembering the Lord whom it had known there, but had long forgotten . . . . . The converted nations, we learn by this verse, will not only obtain remembrance of their past loss, but will also be filled with the knowledge of present duty.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 27.—"*All the nations of the world*" (יִזְכְּרוּ *jizkeru*, the same Hebrew root with אַזְכִּיר *azkir*) "*shall remember;*" why? what is that? or what shall they remember? Even this: they shall turn to the Lord, and worship him, in his name, in his ordinances; as is explained in the words following of the verse: "*And all the families of the nations*" (וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ *jishtachavu*, "shall bow" down themselves, or) "*worship before thee,*" etc. And so in Psalm lxxxvi. 9, "All nations whom thou hast made shall come" (וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ *vejishtachavu*) "and they shall worship before thee;" and how shall they do so? Even by recording, remembering, and making mention of the glory of thy name; as in the words following (וִיכַבְּדוּ לִשְׁמֶךָ *vicabbedu lishmecha,*) "and shall glorify thy name."—*William Strong's "Saints' Communion with God,"* 1656.

Verses 27, 28.—The one undeviating object of the Son all through was, the glory of the Father: he came to do his will, and he fulfilled it with all the unvarying intensity of the most heavenly affection. What, then, will not be the exuberant joy of his heart, when in his glorious kingdom, he shall see the Father beyond all measure glorified? . . . The praise and honour and blessing which will be yielded

to the Father in that day through him, so that God shall be all in all, will make him feel he underwent not a sorrow too much for such a precious consummation. . . . Every note of thanksgiving which ascends to the Father, whether from the fowls of the air, or the beasts of the field, or the fishes of the sea, or the hills, or the mountains, or the trees of the forest, or the rivers of the valleys—all shall gladden his heart, as sweet in the ears of God, for the sake of him who redeemed even them from the curse, and restored to them a harmony more musical than burst from them on the birthday of their creation. And man! renewed and regenerated man! for whose soul the blood was spilt, and for the redemption of whose body death was overcome, how shall the chorus of his thanksgiving, in its intelligent and articulate hallelujahs, be the incense which that Saviour shall still love to present unto the Father, a sweet-smelling savour through himself, who, that he might sanctify his people by his own blood, suffered without the camp. How are the channels choked up or impaired in this evil world, wherein the praises and glory of our God should flow as a river! How will Christ then witness, to the delight of his soul, all cleared and restored! No chill upon the heart, no stammering in the tongue, in his Father's praises! No understanding dull, or eye feeble, in the apprehension of his glory! No hand unready, or foot stumbling, in the fulfilling of his commandments. God, the glory of his creatures: his glory their service and their love; and *all* this the reward to Jesus of once suffering himself.—*C. J. Goodhart, M.A., in "Bloomsbury Lent Lectures,"* 1848.

Verse 29.—"*And they shall bow that go down into the dust; their soul liveth not:*" that is, *whose soul liveth not,* by an Hebraism; it being meant, that he who is of most desperate condition, being without hope of life and salvation, his sins are so notorious, shall "eat" also of this feast, and be turned to God to "worship" and serve him; being thus plucked out of the jaws of death and everlasting destruction, as it were, being before this very hour ready to seize upon him. The new translation, "*None can keep alive his own soul,*" as it agreeth not with the Hebrew, so it makes the sense more perplexed. By "*him that goeth down to the dust, whose soul liveth not,*" some understand the most miserably poor, who have nothing to feed upon, whereby their life may be preserved, yet shall feed also of this feast as well as the rich, and praise God. Ainsworth is for either spiritually poor and miserable, because most wicked, or worldly poor; and there is an exposition of Basil's, understanding by the rich, the rich in faith and grace, touching which, or the rich properly so called, he is indifferent. But because it is said, "*The fat of the earth,*" I prefer the former, and that the close of the verse may best answer to the first part; the latter by "*those that are going to the dust,*" understand the miserably poor. So that there is a commonplace of comfort for all, both richest, and poorest, if they be subjects of God's kingdom of grace: their souls shall be alike fed by him and saved.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 29.—"*All they that go down to the dust;*" either those who stand quivering on the brink of the grave, or those who occupy the humble, sequestered walks of life. As the great and opulent of the earth are intended in the first clause, it is not by any means unnatural to suppose that the image of going "*down to the dust,*" is designed to represent the poor and mean of mankind, who are unable to support themselves, and to provide for their multiplied necessities. If the grave be alluded to, as is thought by many eminent divines, the beautiful sentiment of the verse will be, that multitudes of dying sinners shall be brought to worship Jehovah, and that those who cannot save or deliver themselves shall seek that shelter which none can find but those who approach the mercy-seat. "Rich and poor," as Bishop Horne, observes, "are invited"—that is, to "worship God;" "and the hour is coming when all the race of Adam, as many as sleep in the 'dust' of the earth, unable to raise themselves from thence, quickened and called forth by the voice of the Son of Man, must bow the knee to King Messiah."—*John Morison.*

Verse 29.—To be brought to the dust, is, first, a circumlocution or description of death: "*Shall the dust praise thee, shall it declare thy truth?*" Psalm xxx. 9. That is shall I praise thee when I am among the dead? "*What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?*" Not that profit, sure, I cannot bring thee in the tribute of praise when my life's gone out. Secondly, to be brought to the dust is a description of any low and poor condition. "*All they that be fat upon earth* (that is, the great and mighty), "*shall eat and worship*" "*all they that go down to the dust*" (that is, the mean and base), "*shall bow before him.*" As if he had said,

rich and poor, high and low, the king and the beggar, have alike need of salvation by Jesus Christ, and must submit unto him, that they may be saved, for, as it there follows, "*none can keep alive his own soul.*" The capitivity of the Jews in Babylon is expressed under those notions of *death*, and of *dwelling in the dust* (Isaiah xxvi. 19); to show how low, that no power but his who can raise the dead, could work their deliverance.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 29.—"*None can keep alive his own soul.*" And yet we look back to our conversion, and its agonies of earnestness, its feelings of deep, helpless dependence—of Christ's being absolutely our daily, hourly need—supplier—as a *past* something—a stage of spiritual life which is *over*. And we are satisfied to have it so. The Spirit of God moved over our deadness, and breathed into us the breath of life. My soul became *a living soul*. But was this enough? God's word says, No. "None can *keep alive* his own soul." My heart says, No. Truth must ever answer to truth. I cannot (ah! have I not tried, and failed?) I cannot *keep alive* my own soul. We cannot live upon ourselves. Our physical life is kept up by supply from without—air, food, warmth. So must the spiritual life. Jesus gives, Jesus feeds us day by day, else must the life fade out and die. "None can *keep alive* his own soul." It is not enough to be made alive. I must be fed, and guided, and taught, and kept in life. Mother, who hast brought a living babe into the world, is your work done? Will you not nurse it, and feed it, and care for it, that it may be *kept alive?* Lord, I am this babe. I live indeed, for I can crave and cry. Leave me not, O my Saviour. Forsake not the work of thine own hands. In thee I live. Hold me, carry me, feed me, let me abide in thee. "For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul." In our work for God, we need to remember this. Is not the conversion, the arousing of sinners, the great, and with many, the sole aim in working for God? Should it be so? Let us think of this other work. Let us help to *keep alive*. Perhaps it is less distinguished, as it may be less distinguished to feed a starving child than to rescue a drowning man. But let us walk less by sight, more by faith. Let us not indeed neglect to call to life those who are spiritually dead. But oh! let us watch for the more hidden needs of the living—the fading, starving, fainting souls, which yet can walk and speak, and cover their want and sorrow. Let us be fellow-workers with God in *all* his work. And with a deep heart-feeling of the need of *constant* life supplies from above, let us try how often, how freely, we may be made the channels of those streams of the "water of life,"—for "none can keep alive his own soul."—*Mary B. M. Duncan, in "Bible Hours,"* 1866.

Verse 29.—Having considered the vastness and glory of the prospect, our Lord next contemplates the reality and minuteness of its accomplishment. He sets before his mind individual cases and particular facts. He appears to look upon this picture of the future as we do upon a grand historical painting of the past. It seems natural to gaze with silent admiration on the picture as a whole, then to fix the attention on particular groups, and testify our sense of the general excellence, by expatiating on the truth and beauty of the several parts.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 30.—"*A seed shall serve him.*" This figurative expression signifies Christ and his people, who yield true obedience to God—they are called by this name in a spiritual and figurative, but most appropriate sense. The idea is taken from the operations of the husbandman who carefully reserves every year a portion of his grain for seed. Though it be small, compared with all the produce of his harvest, yet he prizes it very highly and estimates it by the value of that crop which it may yield in the succeeding autumn. Nor does he look only to the quantity, he pays particular regard to the quality of the seed. He reserves only the best, nay, he will put away his own if spoiled, that he may procure better. The very smallest quantity of really good seed, is, to him, an object of great desire, and if by grievous failure of crops, he should not be able to procure more than a single grain, yet would he accept it thankfully, preserve it carefully, and plant it in the most favourable soil. Such is the source from which the metaphor is taken.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 31.—"*And shall declare his righteousness.*" The occupation of the seed is to "*declare*," to testify from their own experience, from their own knowledge and convictions, that grand subject, theme, or lesson, which they have learned..... They will declare the righteousness of God the Holy Ghost in his convictions of

sin, in his reproofs of conscience, in his forsaking of the impenitent, and in his abiding with the believer. And in a special manner, they will declare the righteousness of God the Son, during his human life, in his sufferings, and death, as man's surety, by which he "magnified the law, and made it honourable" (Isa. xlii. 21), and on account of which they are able to address him by this name, "The Lord our Righteousness." (Jer. xxiii. 6.)—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 31.—"*A people that shall be born.*" What is this? What people is there that is not born? According to my apprehensions I think this is said for this reason —because the people of other kings are formed by laws, by customs, and by manners; by which, however, you can never move a man to true righteousness: it is only a fable of righteousness, and a mere theatrical scene or representation. For even the law of Moses could form the people of the Jews unto nothing but unto hypocrisy. But the people of this King are not formed by laws to make up an external appearance, but they are begotten by water and by the Spirit unto a new creature of truth.—*Martin Luther.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—The volume entitled "Christ on the Cross," by Rev. J. Stevenson, has a sermon upon every verse. We give the headings, they are suggestive. *Verse* 1. The Cry. 2. The Complaint. 3. The Acknowledgment. 4–6. The Contrast. 6. The Reproach. 7. The Mockery. 8. The Taunt. 9, 10. The Appeal. 11. The Entreaty. 12, 13. The Assault. 14. The Faintness. 15. The Exhaustion. 16. The Piercing. 17. The Emaciation. 17. The Insulting Gaze. 18. The Partition of the Garments and Casting Lots. 19—21. The Importunity. 21. The Deliverance. 22. The Gratitude. 23. The Invitation. 24. The Testimony. 25. The Vow. 26. The Satisfaction of the Meek; the Seekers of the Lord praising Him; the Eternal Life. 27. The Conversion of the World. 28. The Enthronement. 29. The Author of the Faith. 30. The Seed. 31. The Everlasting Theme and Occupation. The Finish of the Faith.

Verse 1.—The Saviour's dying cry.

Verse 2.—*Unanswered prayer.* Enquire the reasons for it; encourage our hope concerning it; urge to continuance in importunity.

Verse 3.—Whatever God may do, we must settle it in our minds that he is holy and to be praised.

Verse 4.—God's faithfulness in past ages a plea for the present.

Verses 4, 5.—Ancient saints. I. Their life. "*They trusted.*" II. Their practice. "*They cried.*" III. Their experience. "*Were not confounded.*" IV. Their voice to us.

Verses 6—18.—Full of striking sentences upon our Lord's sufferings.

Verse 11.—A saint's troubles, his arguments in prayer.

Verse 20.—"*My darling.*" A man's soul to be very dear to him.

Verse 21 (*first clause*).—"*Lion's mouth.*" Men of cruelty. The devil. Sin. Death. Hell.

Verse 22.—Christ as a brother, a preacher, and a precentor.

Verse 22.—A sweet subject, a glorious preacher, a loving relationship, a heavenly exercise.

Verse 23.—*A threefold duty,* "praise him," "glorify him;" "fear him;" *towards one object,* "the Lord;" *for three characters,* "ye that fear him, seed of Jacob, seed of Israel," *which are but one person.*

Verse 23.—Glory to God the fruit of the tree on which Jesus died.

Verse 24.—A consoling fact in history attested by universal experience.

Verse 24 (*first clause*).—A common fear dispelled.

Verse 25.—Public praise. I. A delightful exercise—"praise." II. A personal participation—"My praise." III. A fitting object—"of thee." IV. A special source—"from thee." V. An appropriate place—"in the great congregation."

Verse 25 (*second clause*).—*Vows.* What vows to make, when and how to make them, and the importance of paying them.

Verse 26.—*Spiritual feasting.* The guests, the food, the host, and the satisfaction.

Verse 26 (*second clause*).—*Seekers who shall be singers.* Who they are? What they shall do? When? and what is the reason for expecting that they shall?

Verse 27 (*last clause*).—*Life everlasting.* What lives? Source of life. Manner of life. Why for ever? What occupation? What comfort to be derived from it?

Verse.—Nature of true conversion, and extent of it under the reign of the Messiah.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 27.—The universal triumph of Christianity certain.

Verse 27.—The order of conversion. See the Exposition.

Verse 28.—The empire of the Kings of kings as it is, and as it shall be.

Verse 29.—Grace for the rich, grace for the poor, but all lost without it.

Verse 29 (*last clause*).—A weighty text upon the vanity of self-confidence.

Verse 30.—The perpetuity of the church.

Verse 30 (*last clause*).—Church history, the marrow of all history.

Verse 31.—Future prospects for the church. I. Conversions certain. II. Preachers promised. III. Succeeding generations blest. IV. Gospel published. V. Christ exalted.

PSALM XXIII.

There is no inspired title to this Psalm, and none is needed, for it records no special events, and needs no other key than that which every Christian may find in his own bosom. It is David's Heavenly Pastoral; *a surpassing ode, which none of the daughters of music can excel. The clarion of war here gives place to the pipe of peace, and he who so lately bewailed the woes of the Shepherd tunefully rehearses the joys of the flock. Sitting under a spreading tree, with his flock around him, like Bunyan's shepherd-boy in the Valley of Humiliation, we picture David singing this unrivalled pastoral with a heart as full of gladness as it could hold; or, if the Psalm be the product of his after years, we are sure that his soul returned in contemplation to the lonely water-brooks which rippled among the pastures of the wilderness, where in early days he had been wont to dwell. This is the pearl of Psalms whose soft and pure radiance delights every eye; a pearl of which Helicon need not be ashamed, though Jordan claims it. Of this delightful song it may be affirmed that its piety and its poetry are equal, its sweetness and its spirituality are unsurpassed.*

The position of this Psalm is worthy of notice. It follows the twenty-second, which is peculiarly the Psalm of the Cross. There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the twenty-second Psalm. It is only after we have read, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" *that we come to* "The Lord is my Shepherd." *We must by experience know the value of the blood-shedding, and see the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly to know the sweetness of the good Shepherd's care.*

It has been said that what the nightingale is among birds, that is this divine ode among the Psalms, for it has sung sweetly in the ear of many a mourner in his night of weeping, and has bidden him hope for a morning of joy. I will venture to compare it also to the lark, which sings as it mounts, and mounts as it sings, until it is out of sight, and even then is not out of hearing. Note the last words of the Psalm—"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever;" *these are celestial notes, more fitted for the eternal mansions than for these dwelling places below the clouds. Oh that we may enter into the spirit of the Psalm as we read it, and then we shall experience the days of heaven upon the earth!*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

1. *"The Lord is my shepherd."* What condescension is this, that the Infinite Lord assumes towards his people the office and character of a Shepherd! It should be the subject of grateful admiration that the great God allows himself to be compared to anything which will set forth his great love and care for his own people. David had himself been a keeper of sheep, and understood both the needs of the sheep and the many cares of a shepherd. He compares himself to a creature weak, defenceless, and foolish, and he takes God to be his Provider, Preserver, Director, and, indeed, his everything. No man has a right to consider himself the Lord's sheep unless his nature has been renewed, for the scriptural description of unconverted men does not picture them as sheep, but as wolves or goats. A sheep is an object

of property, not a wild animal; its owner sets great store by it, and frequently it is bought with a great price. It is well to know, as certainly as David did, that we belong to the Lord. There is a noble tone of confidence about this sentence. There is no "if" nor "but," nor even "I hope so;" but he says, "The Lord *is* my shepherd." We must cultivate the spirit of assured dependence upon our heavenly Father. The sweetest word of the whole is that monosyllable, "*My*." He does not say, "The Lord is the shepherd of the world at large, and leadeth forth the multitude as his flock," but "The Lord is *my* shepherd;" if he be a Shepherd to no one else, he is a Shepherd to *me;* he cares for *me*, watches over *me*, and preserves *me*. The words are in the present tense. Whatever be the believer's position, he is even now under the pastoral care of Jehovah.

The next words are a sort of inference from the first statement—they are sententious and positive—"*I shall not want.*" I might want otherwise, but when the Lord is my Shepherd he is able to supply my needs, and he is certainly willing to do so, for his heart is full of love, and therefore "*I shall not want.*" I shall not lack for *temporal things*. Does he not feed the ravens, and cause the lilies to grow? How, then, can he leave his children to starve? I shall not want *for spirituals*, I know that his grace will be sufficient for me. Resting in him he will say to me, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." I may not possess all that I wish for, but "I shall not *want*." Others, far wealthier and wiser than I, may want, but *I shall not*." "The young lions *do* lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." It is not only "I do not want," but "*I shall not* want." Come what may, if famine should devastate the land, or calamity destroy the city, "*I shall not want.*" Old age with its feebleness shall not bring me any lack, and even death with its gloom shall not find me destitute. I have all things and abound; not because I have a good store of money in the bank, not because I have skill and wit with which to win my bread, but because "*The Lord is my Shepherd.*" The wicked always want, but the righteous never; a sinner's heart is far from satisfaction, but a gracious spirit dwells in the palace of content.

2. "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*" The Christian life has two elements in it, the contemplative and the active, and both of these are richly provided for. First, the contemplative, "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.*" What are these "*green pastures*" but the Scriptures of truth—always fresh, always rich, and never exhausted? There is no fear of biting the bare ground where the grass is long enough for the flock to lie down in it. Sweet and full are the doctrines of the gospel; fit food for souls, as tender grass is natural nutriment for sheep. When by faith we are enabled to find rest in the promises, we are like the sheep that lie down in the midst of the pasture; we find at the same moment both provender and peace, rest and refreshment, serenity and satisfaction. But observe: "He *maketh* me to lie down." It is the Lord who graciously enables us to perceive the preciousness of his truth, and to feed upon it. How grateful ought we to be for the power to appropriate the promises! There are some distracted souls who would give worlds if they could but do this. They know the blessedness of it, but they cannot say that this blessedness is theirs. They know the "*green pastures*," but they are not made to "*lie down*" in them. Those believers who have for years enjoyed a "full assurance of faith" should greatly bless their gracious God.

The second part of a vigorous Christian's life consists in gracious activity. We not only think, but we act. We are not always lying down to feed, but are journeying onward toward perfection; hence we read, "*he leadeth me beside the still waters.*" What are these "*still waters*" but the influences and graces of his blessed Spirit? His Spirit attends us in various operations, like waters—in the plural—to cleanse, to refresh, to fertilise, to cherish. They are "*still* waters," for the Holy Ghost loves peace, and sounds no trumpet of ostentation in his operations. He may flow into our soul, but not into our neighbour's, and therefore our neighbour may not perceive the divine presence; and though the blessed Spirit may be pouring his floods into one heart, yet he that sitteth next to the favoured one may know nothing of it.

> "In sacred silence of the mind
> My heaven, and there my God I find."

Still waters run deep. Nothing more noisy than an empty drum. That silence is golden indeed in which the Holy Spirit meets with the souls of his saints. Not

to raging waves of strife, but to peaceful streams of holy love does the Spirit of God conduct the chosen sheep. He is a dove, not an eagle; the dew, not the hurricane. Our Lord leads us beside these "*still waters;*" we could not go there of ourselves, we need his guidance, therefore is it said, "*he leadeth me.*" He does not drive us. Moses drives us by the law, but Jesus leads us by his example, and the gentle drawings of his love.

3. "*He restoreth my soul.*" When the soul grows sorrowful he revives it; when it is sinful he sanctifies it; when it is weak he strengthens it. "*He*" does it. His ministers could not do it if he did not. His Word would not avail by itself. "*He restoreth* my soul." Are any of us low in grace? Do we feel that our spirituality is at its lowest ebb? He who turns the ebb into the flood can soon restore our soul. Pray to him, then, for the blessing—"Restore thou me, thou Shepherd of my soul!"

"*He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*" The Christian delights to be obedient, but it is the obedience of love, to which he is constrained by the example of his Master. "*He leadeth* me." The Christian is not obedient to some commandments and neglectful of others; he does not pick and choose, but yields to all. Observe, that the plural is used—"the *paths* of righteousness." Whatever God may give us to do we would do it, led by his love. Some Christians overlook the blessing of sanctification, and yet to a thoroughly renewed heart this is one of the sweetest gifts of the covenant. If we could be saved from wrath, and yet remain unregenerate, impenitent sinners, we should not be saved as we desire, for we mainly and chiefly pant to be saved *from* sin and led in the way of holiness. All this is done out of pure free grace; "*for his name's sake.*" It is to the honour of our great Shepherd that we should be a holy people, walking in the narrow way of righteousness. If we be so led and guided we must not fail to adore our heavenly Shepherd's care.

4. "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*" This unspeakably delightful verse has been sung on many a dying bed, and has helped to make the dark valley bright times out of mind. Every word in it has a wealth of meaning. "Yea, though I *walk*," as if the believer did not quicken his pace when he came to die, but still calmly *walked* with God. To walk indicates the steady advance of a soul which knows its road, knows its end, resolves to follow the path, feels quite safe, and is therefore perfectly calm and composed. The dying saint is not in a flurry, he does not run as though he were alarmed, nor stand still as though he would go no further, he is not confounded nor ashamed, and therefore keeps to his old pace. Observe that it is not walking *in* the valley, but *through* the valley. We go through the dark tunnel of death and emerge into the light of immortality. We do not die, we do but sleep to wake in glory. Death is not the house but the porch, not the goal but the passage to it. The dying article is called a *valley*. The storm breaks on the mountain, but the valley is the place of quietude, and thus full often the last days of the Christian are the most peaceful in his whole career; the mountain is bleak and bare, but the valley is rich with golden sheaves, and many a saint has reaped more joy and knowledge when he came to die than he ever knew while he lived. And, then, it is not "the valley of death," but "the valley *of the shadow* of death," for death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains. Some one has said that when there is a shadow there must be light somewhere, and so there is. Death stands by the side of the highway in which we have to travel, and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across our path; let us then rejoice that there is a light beyond. Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man's pathway even for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of a sword cannot kill; the shadow of death cannot destroy us. Let us not, therefore, be afraid. "*I will fear no evil.*" He does not say there shall not be any evil; he had got beyond even that high assurance, and knew that Jesus had put all evil away; but "I will *fear* no evil;" as if even his fears, those shadows of evil, were gone for ever. The worst evils of life are those which do not exist except in our imagination. If we had no troubles but real troubles, we should not have a tenth part of our present sorrows. We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, but the Psalmist was cured of the disease of fearing. "I will fear *no evil*," not even the Evil One himself; I will not dread the last enemy, I will look upon him as a conquered foe, an enemy to be destroyed, "*For thou art with me.*" This is the joy of the Christian! "*Thou* art with me." The little child out at sea in the storm

is not frightened like all the other passengers on board the vessel, it is asleep in its mother's bosom; it is enough for it that its mother is with it; and it should be enough for the believer to know that Christ is with him. "*Thou* art with me; I have in having thee, all that I can crave: I have perfect comfort and absolute security, for *thou* art with me." "*Thy rod and thy staff*," by which thou governest and rulest thy flock, the ensigns of thy sovereignty and of thy gracious care—"*they comfort me.*" I will believe that thou reignest still. The rod of Jesse shall still be over me as the sovereign succour of my soul.

Many persons profess to receive much comfort from the hope that they shall not die. Certainly there will be some who will be "alive and remain" at the coming of the Lord, but is there so very much of advantage in such an escape from death as to make it the object of Christian desire? A wise man might prefer of the two to die, for those who shall not die, but who "shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air," will be losers rather than gainers. They will lose that actual fellowship with Christ in the tomb which dying saints will have, and we are expressly told they shall have no preference beyond those who are asleep. Let us be of Paul's mind when he said that "To die is gain," and think of "departing to be with Christ, which is far better." This twenty-third Psalm is not worn out, and it is as sweet in a believer's ear now as it was in David's time, let novelty-hunters say what they will.

5. "*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*" The good man has his enemies. He would not be like his Lord if he had not. If we were without enemies we might fear that we were not the friends of God, for the friendship of the world is enmity to God. Yet see the quietude of the godly man in spite of, and in the sight of, his enemies. How refreshing is his calm bravery! "*Thou preparest a table before me.*" When a soldier is in the presence of his enemies, if he eats at all he snatches a hasty meal, and away he hastens to the fight. But observe: "Thou *preparest* a table," just as a servant does when she unfolds the damask cloth and displays the ornaments of the feast on an ordinary peaceful occasion. Nothing is hurried, there is no confusion, no disturbance, the enemy is at the door and yet God prepares a table, and the Christian sits down and eats as if everything were in perfect peace. Oh! the peace which Jehovah gives to his people, even in the midst of the most trying circumstances!

> "Let earth be all in arms abroad,
> They dwell in perfect peace."

"*Thou anointest my head with oil.*" May we live in the daily enjoyment of this blessing, receiving a fresh anointing for every day's duties. Every Christian is a priest, but he cannot execute the priestly office without unction, and hence we must go day by day to God the Holy Ghost, that we may have our heads anointed with oil. A priest without oil misses the chief qualification for his office, and the Christian priest lacks his chief fitness for service when he is devoid of new grace from on high. "*My cup runneth over.*" He had not only enough, a cup full, but more than enough, a cup which overflowed. A poor man may say this as well as those in higher circumstances. "What, all this, and Jesus Christ too?" said a poor cottager as she broke a piece of bread and filled a glass with cold water. Whereas a man may be ever so wealthy, but if he be discontented his cup cannot run over; it is cracked and leaks. Content is the philosopher's stone which turns all it touches into gold; happy is he who has found it. Content is more than a kingdom, it is another word for happiness.

6. "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.*" This is a fact as indisputable as it is encouraging, and therefore a heavenly *verily*, or "*surely*" is set as a seal upon it. This sentence may be read, "*only* goodness and mercy," for there shall be unmingled mercy in our history. These twin guardian angels will always be with me at my back and my beck. Just as when great princes go abroad they must not go unattended, so it is with the believer. Goodness and mercy follow him always—"*all the days of his life*"—the black days as well as the bright days, the days of fasting as well as the days of feasting, the dreary days of winter as well as the bright days of summer. Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins. "*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*" "A servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." While I am here I will be a child at home with my God; the whole world shall be his house to me; and when I ascend into the upper chamber I shall not change my company, nor

even change the house; I shall only go to dwell in the upper storey of the house of the Lord for ever.

May God grant us grace to dwell in the serene atmosphere of this most blessed Psalm!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—David has left no sweeter Psalm than the short twenty-third. It is but a moment's opening of his soul; but, as when one, walking the winter street, sees the door opened for some one to enter, and the red light streams a moment forth, and the forms of gay children are running to greet the comer, and genial music sounds, though the door shuts and leaves the night black, yet it cannot shut back again all that the eyes, the ear, the heart, and the imagination have seen—so in this Psalm, though it is but a moment's opening of the soul, are emitted truths of peace and consolation that will never be absent from the world. The twenty-third Psalm is the nightingale of the Psalms. It is small, of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh! it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy, greater than the heart can conceive. Blessed be the day on which that Psalm was born! What would you say of a pilgrim commissioned of God to travel up and down the earth singing a strange melody, which, when one heard, caused him to forget whatever sorrow he had? And so the singing angel goes on his way through all lands, singing in the language of every nation, driving away trouble by the pulses of the air which his tongue moves with divine power. Behold just such an one! This pilgrim God has sent to speak in every language on the globe. It has charmed more griefs to rest than all the philosophy of the world. It has remanded to their dungeon more felon thoughts, more black doubts, more thieving sorrows, than there are sands on the sea-shore. It has comforted the noble host of the poor. It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the heart of the sick, of captives in dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illuminated; it has visited the prisoner, and broken his chains, and, like Peter's angel, led him forth in imagination, and sung him back to his home again. It has made the dying Christian slave freer than his master, and consoled those whom, dying, he left behind mourning, not so much that he was gone, as because they were left behind, and could not go too. Nor is its work done. It will go singing to your children and my children, and to their children, through all the generations of time; nor will it fold its wings till the last pilgrim is safe, and time ended; and then it shall fly back to the bosom of God, whence it issued, and sound on, mingled with all those sounds of celestial joy which make heaven musical for ever.—*Henry Ward Beecher, in "Life Thoughts."*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm may well be called David's *bucolicon*, or pastoral, so daintily hath he struck upon the whole string, through the whole hymn. *Est Psalmus honorabilis*, saith Aben-Ezra; it is a noble Psalm, written and sung by David, not when he fled into the forest of Hareth (1 Sam. xxii. 5), as some Hebrews will have it; but when as having overcome all his enemies, and settled his kingdom, he enjoyed great peace and quiet, and had one foot, as it were, upon the battlements of heaven. The Jews at this day use for most part to repeat this Psalm after they are sat down to meat.—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm.—Augustine is said to have beheld, in a dream, the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm rising before him as a tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. This twenty-third may be compared to the fairest flowers that grew around it. The former has even been likened to the sun amidst the stars—surely this is like the richest of the constellations, even the Pleiades themselves!—*John Stoughton, in "The Songs of Christ's Flock,"* 1860.

Whole Psalm.—Some pious souls are troubled because they cannot at all times, or often, use, in its joyous import, the language of this Psalm. Such should remember that David, though he lived long, never wrote but one twenty-third Psalm. Some of his odes do indeed express as lively a faith as this, and faith can walk in darkness. But where else do we find a whole Psalm expressive of personal confidence, joy, and

triumph, from beginning to end? God's people have their seasons of darkness and their times of rejoicing.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*" Let them say that will, "My lands shall keep me, I shall have no want, my merchandise shall be my help, I shall have no want;" let the soldier trust unto his weapons, and the husbandman unto his labour; let the artificer say unto his art, and the tradesman unto his trade, and the scholar unto his books, "These shall maintain me, I shall not want." Let *us* say with the church, as we both say and sing, "The Lord is my keeper, I shall not want." He that can truly say so, contemns the rest, and he that desires more than God, cannot truly say, the Lord is his, the Lord is this shepherd, governor and commander, and therefore I shall not want.—*John Hull, B.D., in "Lectures on Lamentations,"* 1617.

Verse 1.—"*The Lord is my shepherd; I want nothing:*" thus it may be equally well rendered, though in our version it is in the future tense.—*J. R. Macduff, D.D., in "The Shepherd and his Flock,"* 1866.

Verse 1.—"*The Lord is my shepherd.*" We may learn in general from the metaphor, that it is the property of a gracious heart to draw some spiritual use or other from his former condition. David himself having sometimes been a shepherd, as himself confesseth when he saith, "he took David from the sheepfold from following the sheep," etc., himself having been a shepherd, he beholds the Lord the same to him. Whatsoever David was to his flock—watchful over them, careful to defend them from the lion and the bear, and whatsoever thing else might annoy them, careful of their pasturage and watering, etc., the same and much more he beholds the Lord to himself. So Paul: "I was a persecutor, and an oppressor: but the Lord had mercy on me." This we may see in good old Jacob: "With this staff," saith he, "I passed over Jordan;" and that now God had blessed him and multiplied him exceedingly. The doctrine is plain; the reasons are, first, because true grace makes no object amiss to gather some gracious instruction: it skills not what the object be, so that the heart be gracious; for that never wants matter to work upon. And, secondly, it must needs be so, for such are guided by God's Spirit, and therefore are directed to a spiritual use of all things.—*Samuel Smith's "Chiefe Shepheard,"* 1625.

Verse 1.—"*Shepherd.*" May this sweet title persuade Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem: my meaning is, that those who as yet never knew what it was to be enfolded in the bosom of Jesus, who as yet were never lambs nor ewes in Christ's fold, consider the sweetness of this Shepherd, and come in to him. Satan deals seemingly sweet, that he may draw you into sin, but in the end he will be really bitter to you. Christ, indeed, is seemingly bitter to keep you from sin, hedging up your way with thorns. But he will be really sweet if you come into his flock, even notwithstanding your sins. Thou lookest into Christ's fold, and thou seest it hedged and fenced all about to keep you in from sin, and this keeps thee from entering; but oh! let it not. Christ, indeed, is unwilling that any of his should wander, and if they be unwilling too, it's well. And if they wander he'll fetch them in, it may be with his shepherd's *dog* (some affliction); but he'll not be, as we say, *dogged* himself. No, he is and will be sweet. It may be, now Satan smiles, and is pleasant to you while you sin; but know, he'll be bitter in the end. He that sings syren-like now, will devour lion-like at last. He'll torment you and vex you, and be burning and bitterness to you. O come in therefore to Jesus Christ; let him be now the shepherd of thy soul. And know then, he'll be sweet in endeavouring to keep thee from sin before thou commit it; and he'll be sweet in delivering thee from sin after thou hast committed it. O that this thought—that Jesus Christ is sweet in his carriage unto all his members, unto all his flock, especially the sinning ones, might persuade the hearts of some sinners to come in unto his fold.—*John Durant,* 1652.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—*Feedeth me,* or, is *my feeder, my pastor.* The word comprehendeth all duties of a good herd, as together feeding, guiding, governing, and defending his flock.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord is my shepherd.*" Now the reasons of this resemblance I take to be these:—First, one property of a good shepherd is, skill to know and judge aright of his sheep, and hence is it that it is a usual thing to set mark upon sheep, to the end that if they go astray (as of all creatures they are must subject to wander), the shepherd may seek them up and bring them home again. The same thing is affirmed of Christ, or rather indeed Christ affirmeth the same thing of himself,

"I know them, and they follow me." John x. 27. Yea, doubtless, he that hath numbered the stars, and calleth them all by their names, yea, the very hairs of our head, taketh special notice of his own children, "the sheep of his pasture," that they may be provided for and protected from all danger. Secondly, a good shepherd must have skill in the pasturing of his sheep, and in bringing them into such fruitful ground, as they may battle and thrive upon: a good shepherd will not suffer his sheep to feed upon rotten soil, but in wholesome pastures. . . . . Thirdly, a good shepherd, knowing the straying nature of his sheep, is so much the more diligent to watch over them, and if at any time they go astray, he brings them back again. This is the Lord's merciful dealing towards poor wandering souls. . . . Fourthly, a good shepherd must have will to feed his sheep according to his skill: the Lord of all others is most willing to provide for his sheep. How earnest is Christ with Peter, to "feed his sheep," urging him unto it three several times! Fifthly, a good shepherd is provided to defend his flock. . . . The Lord is every way provided for the safety and defence of his sheep, as David confesseth in this Psalm (verse 4), "*Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*" And again, "I took unto me two staves" (saith the Lord), "the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock." Zech. xi. 7. Sixthly, it is the property of a good shepherd, that if any of his sheep be weak and feeble, or his lambs young, for their safety and recovery he will bear them in his arms. The Lord is not wanting to us herein. Isa. xl. 11. And lastly, it is the property of a good shepherd to rejoice when the strayed sheep is brought home. The Lord doth thus rejoice at the conversion of a sinner. Luke xv. 7.—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord is my shepherd.*" I notice that some of the flock keep near the shepherd, and follow whithersoever he goes without the least hesitation, while others stray about on either side, or loiter far behind; and he often turns round and scolds them in a sharp, stern cry, or sends a stone after them. I saw him lame one just now. Not altogether unlike the good Shepherd. Indeed, I never ride over these hills, clothed with flocks, without meditating upon this delightful theme. Our Saviour says that the good shepherd, when he putteth forth his own sheep, goeth before them, and they follow. John x. 4. This is true to the letter. They are so tame and so trained that they *follow* their keeper with the utmost docility. He leads them forth from the fold, or from their houses in the villages, just where he pleases. As there are many flocks in such a place as this, each one takes a different path, and it is his business to find pasture for them. It is necessary, therefore, that they should be taught to follow, and not to stray away into the unfenced fields of corn which lie so temptingly on either side. Any one that thus wanders is sure to get into trouble. The shepherd calls sharply from time to time to remind them of his presence. They know his voice, and follow on; but, if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and, if it is repeated, they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger. This is not the fanciful costume of a parable, it is simple fact. I have made the experiment repeatedly. The shepherd goes before, not merely to point out the way, but to see if it is practicable and safe. He is armed in order to defend his charge, and in this he is very courageous. Many adventures with wild beasts occur, not unlike that recounted by David (1 Sam. xvii. 34—36), and in these very mountains; for though there are now no lions here, there are wolves in abundance; and leopards and panthers, exceeding fierce, prowl about the wild wadies. They not unfrequently attack the flock in the very presence of the shepherd, and he must be ready to do battle at a moment's warning. I have listened with intense interest to their graphic descriptions of downright and desperate fights with these savage beasts. And when the thief and the robber come (and come they do), the faithful shepherd has often to put his life in his hand to defend his flock. I have known more than one case in which he had literally to lay it down in the contest. A poor faithful fellow last spring, between Tiberias and Tabor, instead of fleeing, actually fought three Bedawin robbers until he was hacked to pieces with their khanjars, and died among the sheep he was defending. Some sheep always keep near the shepherd, and are his special favourites. Each of them has a name, to which it answers joyfully, and the kind shepherd is ever distributing to such, choice portions which he gathers for that purpose. These are the contented and happy ones. They are in no danger of getting lost or into mischief, nor do wild beasts or thieves come near them. The great body, however, are mere worldlings, intent upon their mere pleasures or selfish interests. They run from bush to bush, searching for variety or delicacies, and

only now and then lift their heads to see where the shepherd is, or, rather, where the general flock is, lest they get so far away as to occasion a remark in their little community, or rebuke from their keeper. Others, again, are restless and discontented, jumping into everybody's field, climbing into bushes, and even into leaning trees, whence they often fall and break their limbs. These cost the good shepherd incessant trouble.—*W. M. Thomson, D.D., in "The Land and the Book."*

Verse 1.—"*Shepherd.*" As we sat, the silent hillsides around us were in a moment filled with life and sound. The shepherds led their flocks forth from the gates of the city. They were in full view, and we watched them and listened to them with no little interest. Thousands of sheep and goats were there, grouped in dense, confused masses. The shepherds stood together until all came out. Then they separated, each shepherd taking a different path, and uttering as he advanced a shrill peculiar call. The sheep heard them. At first the masses swayed and moved, as if shaken by some internal convulsion; then points struck out in the direction taken by the shepherds; these became longer and longer until the confused masses were resolved into long, living streams, flowing after their leaders. Such a sight was not new to me, still it had lost none of its interest. It was perhaps one of the most vivid illustrations which human eyes could witness of that beautiful discourse of our Lord recorded by John, "And the sheep hear the shepherd's voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers," chap. x. 3—5. The shepherds themselves had none of that peaceful and placid aspect which is generally associated with pastoral life and habits. They looked more like warriors marching to the battle-field—a long gun slung from the shoulder, a dagger and heavy pistols in the belt, a light battle-axe or ironheaded club in the hand. Such were the equipments; and their fierce flashing eyes and scowling countenances showed but too plainly that they were prepared to use their weapons at any moment.—*J. L. Porter, A.M., in "The Giant Cities of Bashan,"* 1867.

Verse 1.—"*I shall not want.*" You must distinguish 'twixt *absence*, and 'twixt *indigence*. *Absence* is when some thing is not present; *indigence* or *want*, is when a needful good is not present. If a man were to walk, and had not a staff, here were something absent. If a man were to walk, and had but one leg, here were something whereof he were indigent. It is confessed that there are many good things which are absent from a good person, but no good thing which he wants or is indigent of. If the good be absent and I need it not, this is no want; he that walks without his cloak, walks well enough, for he needs it not. As long as I can walk carefully and cheerfully in my general or particular calling, though I have not such a load of accessories as other men have, yet I *want* nothing, for my little is enough and serves the turn. . . . . Our corruptions are still craving, and they are always inordinate, they can find more wants than God needs to supply. As they say of fools, they can propose more questions than twenty wise men need to answer. They in James iv. 3, did *ask*, but *received not;* and he gives two reasons for it:—1. This *asking* was but a *lusting:* "ye lust and have not" (verse 4): another, they did ask *to consume it upon their lusts* (verse 3). God will see that his people shall not want; but withal, he will never engage himself to the satisfying of their corruptions, though he doth to the supply of their conditions. It is one thing what the sick man wants, another what his disease wants. Your ignorance, your discontents, your pride, your unthankful hearts, may make you to believe that you dwell in a barren land, far from mercies (as melancholy makes a person to imagine that he is drowning, or killing, etc.); whereas if God did open your eyes as he did Hagar's, you might see fountains and streams, mercies and blessings sufficient; though not many, yet enough, though not so rich, yet proper, and every way convenient for your good and comfort; and thus you have the genuine sense, so far as I can judge of David's assertion, "*I shall not want.*"—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 1.—"*I shall not want.*" Only he that can want does not want; and he that cannot does. You tell me that a godly man wants these and these things, which the wicked man hath; but I tell you he can no more be said to "*want*" them than a butcher may be said to want Homer, or such another thing, because his disposition is such, that he makes no use of those things which you usually mean. 'Tis but only necessary things that he cares for, and those are not many. But *one* thing is necessary, and that he hath chosen, namely, *the better part.*

And therefore if he have nothing at all of all other things, he does not *want*, neither is there anything *wanting* which might make him rich enough, or by absence whereof his riches should be said to be deficient. A body is not *maimed* unless it have lost a principal part: only *privative* defects discommend a thing, and not those that are *negative*. When we say, there is nothing *wanting* to such-and-such a creature or thing that a man hath made, we mean that it hath all that belongs necessarily to it. We speak not of such things as may be added for compliments or ornaments or the like, such as are those things usually wherein wicked men excel the godly. Even so it is when we say that a godly man *wanteth nothing*. For though in regard of unnecessary goods he be "as having nothing;" yet in regard of others he is as if he possessed all things. He wants nothing that is necessary either for his glorifying of God (being able to do that best in and by his afflictions), or for God's glorifying of him, and making him happy, having God himself for his portion and supply of his wants, who is abundantly sufficient at all times, for all persons, in all conditions. *Zachary Bogan.*

Verse 1.—"*I shall not want.*" To be raised above the fear of want by committing ourselves to the care of the Good Shepherd, or by placing our confidence in worldly property, are two distinct and very opposite things. The confidence in the former case, appears to the natural man to be hard and difficult, if not unreasonable and impossible: in the latter it appears to be natural, easy, and consistent. It requires, however, no lengthened argument to prove that he who relies on the promise of God for the supply of his temporal wants, possesses an infinitely greater security than the individual who confides in his accumulated wealth. The ablest financiers admit that there must be appended to their most choice investments, this felt or expressed proviso—"So far as human affairs can be secure." . . . . . Since then no absolute security against want can be found on earth, it necessarily follows, that he who trusts in God is the most wise and prudent man. Who dare deny that the promise of the living God is an absolute security?—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 1.—"*I shall not want.*" The sheep of Christ may change their pasture, but they shall never want a pasture. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Matt vi. 25. If he grant unto us great things, shall we distrust him for small things? He who has given us heavenly beings will also give us earthly blessings. The great Husbandman never overstocked his own commons. *William Secker.*

Verse 1.—"*I shall not want.*" Ever since I heard of your illness, and the Lord's mercy in sustaining and restoring, I have been intending to write, to bless the Lord with my very dear sister, and ask for some words to strengthen my faith, in detail of your cup having run over in the hour of need. Is it not, indeed, the bleating of Messiah's sheep, "*I shall not want*"? "shall not want," because the Lord is our Shepherd! Our Shepherd the All-sufficient! nothing can unite itself to him; nothing mingle with him; nothing add to his satisfying nature; nothing diminish from his fulness. There is a peace and fulness of expression in this little sentence, known only to the sheep. The remainder of the Psalm is a drawing out of this, "*I shall not want.*" In the unfolding we find repose, refreshment, restoring mercies, guidance, peace in death, triumph, an overflowing of blessings; future confidence, eternal security in life or death, spiritual or temporal, prosperity or adversity, for time or eternity. May we not say, "*The Lord is my Shepherd*"? for we stand on the sure foundation of the twenty-third Psalm. How can we want, when united to him! we have a right to use all his riches. Our wealth is his riches and glory. With him nothing can be withheld. Eternal life *is* ours, with the promise that *all* shall be added; all *he* knows we want. Our Shepherd has learned the wants of his sheep by experience, for he was himself "led as a sheep to the slaughter." Does not this expression, dictated by the Spirit, imply a promise, and a full promise, when connected with his own words, "*I know my sheep*," by what painful discipline he was instructed in this knowledge, subjected himself to the wants of every sheep, every lamb of his fold, that he might be able to be touched with a feeling of their infirmities? The timid sheep has nothing to fear; fear not want, fear not affliction, fear not pain; "*fear not;*" according to your want shall be your supply, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; *therefore* will I trust in him."—*Theodosia A. Howard, Viscountess Powerscourt* (1830), *in "Letters,"* etc., *edited by Robert Daly, D.D.*, 1861.

Verse 1.—"*I shall not want.*" One of the poor members of the flock of Christ was reduced to circumstances of the greatest poverty in his old age, and yet he

never murmured. "You must be badly off," said a kind-hearted neighbour to him one day as they met upon the road, "you must be badly off; and I don't know how an old man like you can maintain yourself and your wife; yet you are always cheerful!" "Oh, no!" he replied, "we are not badly off, I have a rich Father, and he does not suffer me to want." "What! your father not dead yet? he must be very old indeed!" "Oh!" said he, "my Father never dies, and he always takes care of me!" This aged Christian was a daily pensioner on the providence of his God. His struggles and his poverty were known to all; but his own declaration was, that he never wanted what was absolutely necessary. The days of his greatest straits were the days of his most signal and timely deliverances. When old age benumbed the hand of his industry, the Lord extended to him the hand of charity. And often has he gone forth from his scanty breakfast, not knowing from what earthly source his next meal was to be obtained. But yet with David he could rely on his Shepherd's care, and say, "I shall not want;" and as certainly as he trusted in God, so surely, in some unexpected manner was his necessity supplied. *John Stevenson.*

Verse 1.—In the tenth chapter of John's gospel, you will find six marks of Christ sheep:—1. They *know their Shepherd;* 2. *They know his voice*; 3. They *hear him* calling them each by name; 4. They *love* him; 5. They *trust* him; 6. They *follow him.—In "The Shepherd King," by the Authoress of "The folded Lamb"* [*Mrs. Rogers*], 1856.

Verses 1—4.—Come down to the river; there is something going forward worth seeing. Yon shepherd is about to lead his flock across; and as our Lord says of the good shepherd—you observe that he goes before, and the sheep follow. Not all in the same manner, however. Some enter boldly, and come straight across. These are the loved ones of the flock, who keep hard by the footsteps of the shepherd, whether sauntering through green meadows by the still waters, feeding upon the mountains, or resting at noon beneath the shadow of great rocks. And now others enter, but in doubt and alarm. Far from their guide, they miss the ford, and are carried down the river, some more, some less; and yet, one by one, they all struggle over and make good their landing. Notice those little lambs. They refuse to enter, and must be driven into the stream by the shepherd's dog, mentioned by Job in his "parable." Poor things! how they leap, and plunge, and bleat in terror! That weak one yonder will be swept quite away, and perish in the sea. But no; the shepherd himself leaps into the stream, lifts it into his bosom, and bears it trembling to the shore. All safely over, how happy they appear! The lambs frisk and gambol about in high spirits, while the older ones gather round their faithful guide, and look up to him in subdued but expressive thankfulness. Now, can you watch such a scene, and not think of that Shepherd who leadeth Joseph like a flock; and of another river, which all his sheep must cross? He, too, goes before, and, as in the case of this flock, they who keep near him "fear no evil." They hear his sweet voice saying, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee." Isaiah xliii. 2. With eye fastened on him, they scarcely see the stream, or feel its cold and threatening waves. *W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 2.—"*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,*" etc. Not only he hath "*green pastures*" to lead me into, which shows his ability, but he *leads me into them,* which shows his goodness. He leads me not into pastures that are withered and dry, that would distaste me before I taste them; but he leads me into "*green* pastures," as well to please my eye with the verdure as my stomach with the herbage; and inviting me, as it were, to eat by setting out the meat in the best colour. A meat though never so good, yet if it look not handsomely, it dulls the appetite; but when besides the goodness it hath also a good look, this gives the appetite another edge, and makes a joy before enjoying. But yet the goodness is not altogether in the greenness. Alas! green is but a colour, and colours are but deceitful things; they might be green leaves, or they might be green flags or rushes; and what good were to me in such a greenness? No, my soul; the goodness is in being "green *pastures,*" for now they perform as much as they promise; and as in being *green* they were a comfort to me as soon as I saw them, so in being green "*pastures*" they are a refreshing to me now as soon as I taste them. As they are pleasant to look on, so they are wholesome to feed on: as they are sweet to be tasted, so they are easy to be digested; that I am now, methinks, in a kind of paradise and seem

not to want anything unless perhaps a little water with which now and then to wash my mouth, at most to take sometimes a sip: for though sheep be no great drinkers, and though their pastures being green, and full of sap, make drink the less needful; yet some drink they must have besides. And now see the great goodness of this Shepherd, and what just cause there is to depend upon his providence; for he lets not his sheep want this neither, but "*he leadeth them besides still waters*," not waters that roar and make a noise, enough to fright a fearful sheep, but waters "*still*" and quiet; that though they drink but little, yet they may drink that little without fear. And may I not justly say now, "*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want*"? And yet perhaps there will be *want* for all this; for is it enough that he lead them into green pastures and beside still waters? May he not lead them in, and presently take them out again before their bellies be half full; and so instead of making them happy, make them more miserable? set them in a longing with the sight, and then frustrate them of their expectation? No, my soul; the measure of this Shepherd's goodness is more than so. He not only leadeth them into green pastures, but "*he makes them to lie down*" *in them*—he leads them not in to post over their meat as if they were to eat a passover, and to take it *in transitu*, as dogs drink Nylus; but, "*he makes them to lie down in green pastures*," that they may eat their fill and feed at leisure; and when they have done, "*lie down*" and take their ease, that their after reckoning may be as pleasing as their repast.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"*He leadeth me.*" Our guiding must be mild and gentle, else it is not *duxisti*, but *traxisti*—drawing and driving, and no *leading*. *Leni spiritu non duri manu*—rather by an inward sweet influence to be *led*, than by an outward extreme violence to be forced forward. . . . Touching what kind of cattle, to very good purpose, Jacob, a skilful shepherd, answereth Esau (who would have had Jacob and his flocks have kept company with him in his *hunting* pace), Nay, not so, sir, said Jacob, it is a tender cattle that is under my hands, and must be softly driven, as they may endure: if one "should over drive them but one day," they would all die or be laid up for many days after. Gen xxxiii. 13.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 2.—"*He leadeth me*," etc. In ordinary circumstances the shepherd does not *feed* his flock, except by leading and guiding them where they may gather for themselves; but there are times when it is otherwise. Late in autumn, when the pastures are dried up, and in winter, in places covered with snow, he must furnish them food or they die. In the vast oak woods along the eastern sides of Lebanon, between Baalbek and the cedars, there are there gathered innumerable flocks, and the shepherds are all day long in the bushy trees, cutting down the branches, upon whose green leaves and tender twigs the sheep and goats are entirely supported. The same is true in all mountain districts, and large forests are preserved on purpose.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 2.—"*Lie down*"—"*leadeth.*" Sitting Mary and stirring Martha are emblems of contemplation and action, and as they dwell in one house, so must these in one heart.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 2.—This short but touching epitaph is frequently seen in the catacombs at Rome, "*In Christo, in pace*"—(In Christ, in peace). Realise the constant presence of the Shepherd of peace. "He maketh me to lie down!" "He leadeth me."—*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—"*Easily leadeth*," or "*comfortably guideth me:*" it noteth a soft and gentle leading, with sustaining of infirmity.—*H. Ainsworth.*

Verse 2.—"*Green pastures.*" Here are many pastures, and every pasture rich so that it can never be eaten bare; here are many streams, and every stream so deep and wide that it can never be drawn dry. The sheep have been eating in these pastures ever since Christ had a church on earth, and yet they are as full of grass as ever. The sheep have been drinking at these streams ever since Adam, and yet they are brim full to this very day, and they will so continue till the sheep are above the use of them in heaven!—*Ralph Robinson*, 1656.

Verse 2.—"*Green pastures . . . . . beside the still waters.*" From the top of the mound [of Arban on the Khabour] the eye ranged over a level country bright with flowers, and spotted with black tents, and innumerable flocks of sheep and camels. During our stay at Arban, the colour of these great plains was undergoing a continual change. After being for some days of a golden yellow, a new family of flowers would spring up, and it would turn almost in a night to a bright scarlet, which would again as suddenly give way to the deepest blue. Then the meadows would be mottled

with various hues, or would put on the emerald green of the most luxuriant of pastures. The glowing descriptions I had so frequently received from the Bedouins, of the beauty and fertility of the banks of the Khabour were more than realised. The Arabs boast that its meadows bear three distinct crops of grass during the year, and the wandering tribes look upon its wooded banks and constant green sward as a paradise during the summer months, where man can enjoy a cool shade, and beast can find fresh and tender herbs, whilst all around is yellow, parched, and sapless. *Austin H. Layard,* 1853.

Verse 2.—With guidance to "*green pastures,*" the Psalmist has, with good reason, associated guardianship beside "*still waters;*" for as we can only appropriate the word through the Spirit, so we shall ordinarily receive the Spirit through the word; not indeed only by hearing it, not only by reading it, not only by reflecting upon it. The Spirit of God, who is a most free agent, and who is himself the source of liberty, will come into the heart of the believer when he will, and how he will, and as he will. But the effect of his coming will ever be the realisation of some promise, the recognition of some principle, the attainment of some grace, the understanding of some mystery, which is already in the word, and which we shall thus find, with a deeper impression, and with a fuller development, brought home with power to the heart.—*Thomas Dale, M.A., in "The Good Shepherd,"* 1847.

Verse 2—"*Still waters;*" which are opposed to great rivers, which both affright the sheep with their noise, and expose them to the danger of being carried away by their swift and violent streams, whilst they are drinking at them.—*Matthew Poole.*

Verse 2.—"*Still waters;*" Hebrew, "Waters of rests," *ex quibus diligunt oves bibere,* saith Kimchi, such as sheep love to drink of, because void of danger, and yielding a refreshing air. Popish clergymen are called the "inhabitants of the sea," Rev. xii. 12, because they set abroach gross, troubled, brackish, and sourish doctrine, which rather bringeth barrenness to their hearts, and gnaweth their entrails than quencheth their thirst, or cooleth their heat. The doctrine of the gospel, like the waters of Siloe (Isa. viii. 8), run gently, but taste pleasantly.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*He restoreth my soul,*" etc. The subjects experimentally treated in this verse are, first, the believer's liability to fall, or deviate even within the fold of the church, else wherefore should he need to be "*restored?*" Next, the promptitude of the Good Shepherd to interpose for his rescue. "*He restoreth my soul.*" Then, Christ's subsequent care "*to lead him in the paths of righteousness;*" and, lastly, the reason assigned wherefore he will do this—resolving all into the spontaneousness, the supremacy, the omnipotence of grace. He will do all, "*for his own name's sake.*"—*Thomas Dale.*

Verse 3.—"*He restoreth my soul.*" The same hand which first rescued us from ruin, reclaims us from all our subsequent aberrations. Chastisement itself is blended with tenderness; and the voice which speaks reproof, saying, "They have perverted their way, and they have forsaken the Lord their God," utters the kindest invitation, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Nor is the voice unheard, and the call unanswered or unfelt. "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God." Jer. iii. 22. "When thou saidst, Seek my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."—*J. Thornton's "Shepherd of Israel,"* 1826.

Verse 3.—"*He restoreth my soul.*" He restores it to its original purity, that was now grown foul and black with sin; for also, what good were it to have "*green*" pastures and a *black* soul! He "*restores*" it to its natural temper in affections, that was grown distempered with violence of passions; for alas! what good were it to have "*still*" waters and *turbulent* spirits! He "*restores*" it indeed to life, that was grown before in a manner quite dead; and who could "*restore my soul*" to life, but he only that is the Good Shepherd and gave his life for his sheep?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*He shall convert my soul;*" turn me not only from sin and ignorance, but from every false confidence, and every deceitful refuge. "*He shall bring me forth in paths of righteousness;*" in those paths of imputed righteousness which are always adorned with the trees of holiness, are always watered with the fountains of consolation, and always terminate in everlasting rest. Some, perhaps, may ask, why I give this sense to the passage? Why may it not signify the paths of duty,

and the way of our own obedience? Because such effects are here mentioned as never have resulted, and never can result, from any duties of our own. These are not "*green pastures*," but a parched and blasted heath. These are not "*still waters*," but a troubled and disorderly stream. Neither can these speak peace or administer comfort when we pass through the valley and shadow of death. To yield these blessings, is the exalted office of Christ, and the sole prerogative of his obedience. *James Hervey.*

Verse 3.—"*He restoreth my soul:*" Hebrew He bringeth it back;" either, 1. From its errors or wandering; or, 2. Into the body, out of which it was even departing and fainting away. He reviveth or comforteth me.—*Matthew Poole.*

Verse 3.—"*Paths of righteousness.*" Alas! O Lord, these "*paths of righteousness*" have a long time so little been frequented, that prints of a *path* are almost clean worn out; that it is a hard matter now, but to find where the *paths* lie, and if we can find them, yet they are so narrow and so full of ruts, that without special assistance it is an impossible thing not to fall or go astray. Even so angels, and those no mean ones, were not able to go right in these "*paths of righteousness*," but for want of leading, went away and perished. O, therefore, thou the Great Shepherd of my soul, as thou art pleased of thy grace to lead me *into* them, so vouchsafe with thy grace to lead me *in* them; for though in themselves they be "paths of *righteousness*," yet to me they will be but paths of *error* if thou vouchsafe not, as well to lead me *in* them, as *into* them.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*Paths.*" In the wilderness and in the desert there are no raised paths, the paths being merely tracks; and sometimes there are six or eight paths running unevenly alongside each other. No doubt this is what is figuratively referred to in Psalm xxiii. 3, "*He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness*," all leading to one point.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 3.—"*For his name's sake.*" Seeing he hath taken upon him the *name* of a "*Good Shepherd*," he will discharge his part, whatever his sheep be. It is not their being *bad sheep* that can make him leave being a "*Good Shepherd*," but he will be "*good*," and maintain the credit of "his name" in spite of all their badness; and though no benefit come to them of it, yet there shall glory accrue to him by it, and "*his name*" shall nevertheless be magnified and extolled.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—"*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*" To "fear no evil," then, "in the valley of the shadow of death," is a blessed privilege open to every true believer! For death shall be to him no death at all, but a very deliverance from death, from all pains, cares, and sorrows, miseries and wretchedness of this world, and the very entry into rest, and a beginning of everlasting joy: a tasting of heavenly pleasures, so great, that neither tongue is able to express, neither eye to see, nor ear to hear them, no, nor any earthly man's heart to conceive them. . . . And to comfort all Christian persons herein, holy Scripture calleth this bodily death a sleep, wherein man's senses be, as it were, taken from him for a season, and yet, when he awaketh, he is more fresh than when he went to bed! . . . . Thus is this bodily death a door or entering into life, and therefore not so much dreadful, if it be rightly considered, as it is comfortable; not a mischief, but a remedy for all mischief; no enemy, but a friend; not a cruel tyrant, but a gentle guide: leading us not to mortality, but to immortality not to sorrow and pain, but to joy and pleasure, and that to endure for ever!—*Homily against the Fear of Death*, 1547.

Verse 4.—"*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*" Though I were called to such a sight as Ezekiel's vision, a valley full of dead men's bones; though the king of terrors should ride in awful pomp through the streets, slaying heaps upon heaps, and thousands should fall at my side, and ten thousands at my right hand, I will fear no evil. Though he should level his fatal arrows at the little circle of my associates, and put lover and friend far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness, I will fear no evil. Yea, though I myself should feel his arrow sticking fast in me, the poison drinking up my spirits; though I should in consequence of that fatal seizure, sicken and languish, and have all the symptoms of approaching dissolution, still I will fear no evil. Nature, indeed, may start back and tremble, but I trust that he who knows the flesh to be weak, will pity and pardon these struggles. However I may be afraid of the agonies of dying, I will fear no evil in death. The venom of his sting is taken away. The point of his arrow is blunted so that it can pierce no deeper than the body. My soul is

invulnerable. I can smile at the shaking of his spear; look unmoved on the ravages which the unrelenting destroyer is making on my tabernacle; and long for the happy period when he shall have made a breach wide enough for my heaven-aspiring spirit to fly away and be at rest.—*Samuel Lavington.*

Verse 4.—"*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*" "I want to talk to you about heaven," said a dying parent* to a member of his family. "We may not be spared to each other long. May we meet around the throne of glory, one family in heaven!" Overpowered at the thought, his beloved daughter exclaimed, "Surely you do not think there is any danger?" Calmly and beautifully he replied, "Danger, my darling! Oh, do not use that word! There can be no danger to the Christian, whatever may happen! All is right! All is well! God is love! All is well! Everlastingly well! Everlastingly well!"—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 4.—"*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*" What not fear then? Why, what friend is it that keeps up your spirits, that bears you company in that black and dismal region? He will soon tell you God was with him, and in those slippery ways he leaned upon his staff, and these were the cordials that kept his heart from fainting. I challenge all the gallants in the world, out of all their merry, jovial clubs, to find such a company of merry cheerful creatures as the friends of God are. It is not the company of God, but the want of it, that makes sad. Alas! you know not what their comforts be, and strangers intermeddle not with their joy. You think they cannot be merry when their countenance is so grave; but they are sure you cannot be truly merry when you smile with a curse upon your souls. They know that he spoke that sentence which could not be mistaken, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness." Prov. xiv. 13. Then call your roaring, and your singing, and laughter, mirth; but the Spirit of God calls it madness. Eccl. ii. 2. When a carnal man's heart is ready to die within him, and with Nabal, to become like a stone, how cheerfully then can those look that have God for their friend! Which of the valiant ones of the world can outface death, look joyfully into eternity? Which of them can hug a fagot, embrace the flames? This the saint can do, and more too; for he can look infinite justice in the face with a cheerful heart; he can hear of hell with joy and thankfulness; he can think of the day of judgment with great delight and comfort. I again challenge all the world to produce one out of all their merry companies, one that can do all this. Come, muster up all your jovial blades together; call for your harps and viols; add what you will to make the concert complete; bring in your richest wines; come, lay your heads together, and study what may still add to your comfort. Well, is it done? Now, come away, sinner, this night thy soul must appear before God. Well now, what say you, man? What! doth your courage fail you? Now call for your merry companions, and let them cheer thy heart. Now call for a cup, a whore; never be daunted, man. Shall one of thy courage quail, that could make a mock at the threatenings of the Almighty God? What so boon and jolly but now, and now down in the mouth! Here's a sudden change indeed! Where are thy merry companions, I say again? All fled? Where are thy darling pleasures? Have all forsaken thee? Why shouldst thou be dejected; there's a poor man in rags that's smiling? What! art thou quite bereft of all comfort? What's the matter, man? What's the matter? There's a question with all my heart, to ask a man that must appear before God to-morrow morning. Well, then, it seems your heart misgives you. What then did you mean to talk of joys and pleasures? Are they all come to this? Why, there stands one that now hath his heart as full of comfort as ever it can hold, and the very thoughts of eternity, which do so daunt your soul, raise his! And would you know the reason? He knows he is going to his Friend; nay, his Friend bears him company through that dirty lane. Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for God and the soul to dwell together in unity! This it is to have God for a friend. "Oh blessed is the soul that is in such a case; yea, blessed is the soul whose God is the Lord." Psa. cxliv. 15.—*James Janeway.*

Verse 4.—"*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.*" Any darkness is evil, but *darkness and the shadow of death* is the utmost of evils. David put the worst of his case and the best of his faith when he said, "*Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;*" that is, in the greatest evil I will fear no

* The late Rev. Hugh Stowell, Rector of Ballaugh, Isle of Man.

evil. . . . . Again, to be under the shadow of a thing, is to be under the power of a thing. . . . . Thus, to be under the shadow of death, is to be so under the power or reach of death, that death may take a man and seize upon him when it pleaseth. " *Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,*" that is, though I be so near death, that it seems to others death may catch me every moment, though I be under so many appearances and probabilities of extreme danger, that there appears an impossibility, in sense, to escape death, " *yet I will not fear.*" *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—" *Valley of the shadow of death.*" A valley is a low place, with mountains on either side. Enemies may be posted on those mountains to shoot their arrows at the traveller, as ever was the case in the East; but he *must* pass through it. The Psalmist, however, said he would fear no evil, not even the fiery darts of Satan, for the Lord was with him. The figure is not *primarily*, as is sometimes supposed, our dying moments, though it will beautifully bear that explanation; but it is the valley beset with enemies, posted on the hills. David was not only protected in that valley, but even in the presence of those enemies, his table was bountifully spread (verse 5). The Bedouin, at the present day often post themselves on the hills to harass travellers, as they pass along the valleys.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 4.—" *I will fear no evil.*" It hath been an ancient proverb, when a man had done some great matter, he was said to have " plucked a lion by the beard; " when a lion is dead, even to little children it hath been an easy matter. As boys, when they see a bear, a lion, or a wolf dead in the streets, they will pull off their hair, insult over them, and deal with them as they please; they will trample upon their bodies, and do that unto them being *dead*, which they durst not in the least measure venture upon whilst they are *alive*. Such a thing is *death*, a furious beast, a ramping lion, a devouring wolf, the *helluo generis humani* (eater up of mankind), yet Christ hath laid him at his length, hath been the *death of death*, so that *God's children* triumph over him, such as those refined ones in the ore of the church, those martyrs of the primitive times, who cheerfully offered themselves to the fire, and to the sword, and to all the violence of this hungry beast; and have played upon him, scorned and derided him, by the faith that they had in the life of Christ, who hath subdued him to himself. 1 Cor. xv.—*Martin Day*, 1660.

Verse 4.—" *Thou art with me.*" Do you know the sweetness, the security, the strength of " *Thou art with me*" ? When anticipating the solemn hour of death, when the soul is ready to halt and ask, How shall it then be? can you turn in soul-affection to your God and say, " There is nothing in death to harm me, while thy love is left to me" ? Can you say, " O death, where is thy sting" ? It is said, when a bee has left its sting in any one, it has no more power to hurt. Death has left its sting in the humanity of Christ, and has no more power to harm his child. Christ's victory over the grave is his people's. " At that moment I am with you," whispers Christ; " the same arm you have proved strong and faithful all the way up through the wilderness, which has never failed, though you have been often forced to lean on it all your weakness." " On this arm," answers the believer, " *I feel at home;* with soul-confidence, I repose on my Beloved; for he has supported through so many difficulties, from the contemplation of which I shuddered. He has carried over so many depths, that I know his arm to be the arm of love." How can that be dark, in which God's child is to have the accomplishment of the longing desire of his life? How can it be dark to come in contact with the light of life? It is " *his rod*," " *his staff;* " therefore they " *comfort.*" Prove him—prove him now, believer! it is your privilege to do so. It will be precious to him to support your weakness; prove that when weak, then are you strong; that you may be secure, his strength shall be perfected in your perfect weakness. Omnipotent love must fail before one of his sheep can perish; for, says Christ, " none shall pluck my sheep out of my hand." " I and my Father are one; " therefore we may boldly say, " *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.*"—*Viscountess Powerscourt.*

Verse 4.—" *Thy rod.*" Of the *virga pastoralis* there are three uses:—1. *Numerare oves*—to reckon up or count the sheep; and in this sense they are said " to pass under the rod" (Lev. xxvii. 32), the shepherd tells them one by one. And even so are the people of God called the rod of his inheritance (Jer. x. 16), such as he takes special notice or account of. And take the words in this sense—" *Thy rod doth comfort me*"—it holds well; *q.d.* " Though I am in such eminent dangers by reason of evil men, yet this is my comfort—I am not neglected of thee; thou

dost not suffer me to perish ; thou takest notice of me ; thou dost take and make an account of me ; thy special care looks after me." 2. *Provocare oves :* when the sheep are negligent and remiss in following or driving, the shepherd doth, with his rod, put them on, quicken their pace. And in this sense also David saith well, " *Thy rod doth comfort me ;* " for it is a work which doth breed much joy and comfort in the hearts of God's people, when God doth put them out of a lazy, cold, formal walking, and doth, some way or other, cause them to mend their pace, to grow more active and fervent in his service and worship. 3. *Revocare oves :* the sheep sometimes are *petulante divagantes*, idly and inconsiderably straying from the flock, grazing alone, and wandering after other pastures, not considering the dangers which attend them by such a separation and wandering ; and, therefore, the shepherd doth with his rod strike and fetch them in again, and so preserve them. In this sense also David might well say, " *Thy rod doth comfort me ;* " for it is a great comfort that the Lord will not leave his sheep to the ways of discomfort, but brings them off from sinful errings and wanderings, which always do expose them to their greatest dangers and troubles. So that the words do intimate a singular part of God's gubernation or careful providence of his flock.—*Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 4.—" *Rod and staff.*" The shepherd invariably carries a staff or rod with him when he goes forth to feed his flock. It is often bent or hooked at one end, which gave rise to the shepherd's crook in the hand of the Christian bishop. With this staff he rules and guides the flock to their green pastures, and defends them from their enemies. With it also he corrects them when disobedient, and brings them back when wandering. This staff is associated as inseparably with the shepherd as the goad is with the ploughman.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 4.—The Psalmist will trust, *even though all be unknown.* We find him doing this in Psalm xxiii. 4 : " *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*" Here, surely there is trust the most complete. We dread the unknown far above anything that we can see ; a little noise in the dark will terrify, when even great dangers which are visible do not affright : the unknown, with its mystery and uncertainty often fills the heart with anxiety, if not with foreboding and gloom. Here, the Psalmist takes the highest form of the unknown, the aspect which is most terrible to man, and says, that even in the midst of it he will trust. What could be so wholly beyond the reach of human experience or speculation, or even imagination, as " *the valley of the shadow of death,*" with all that belonged to it ? but the Psalmist makes no reservation against it ; he will trust where he cannot see. How often are we terrified at the unknown ; even as the disciples were, "who feared as they entered the cloud;" how often is the uncertainty of the future a harder trial to our faith than the pressure of some present ill ! Many dear children of God can trust him in all *known* evils ; but why those fears and forebodings and sinkings of heart, if they trust him equally for the *unknown ?* How much, alas ! do we fall short of the true character of the children of God, in this matter of the unknown ! A child practically acts upon the declaration of Christ that " sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," we, in this respect far less wise than he, people the unknown with phantoms and speculations, and too often forget our simple trust in God.—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 4.—" *For thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff comfort me. Thou shalt prepare a table before me, against them that trouble me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.*" Seeing thou art with me, at whose power and will all troubles go and come, I doubt not but to have the victory and upper hand of them, how many and dangerous soever they are ; for thy rod chasteneth me when I go astray, and thy staff stayeth me when I should fall—two things most necessary for me, good Lord ; the one to call me from my fault and error, and the other to keep me in thy truth and verity. What can be more blessed than to be sustained and kept from falling by the staff and strength of the Most High ? And what can be more profitable than to be beaten with his merciful rod when we go astray ? For he chasteneth as many as he loveth, and beateth as many as he receiveth into his holy profession. Notwithstanding, while we are here in this life, he feeds us with the sweet pastures of the wholesome herbs of his holy word, until we come to eternal life ; and when we put off these bodies, and come into heaven, and know the blessed fruition and riches of his kingdom, then shall we not only be his sheep, but also the guests of his everlasting banquet ; which, Lord, thou settest before all them that love thee in this world, and dost so anoint and make glad our minds with thine Holy Spirit, that no adversities nor troubles can make us sorry. In this sixth part, the

prophet declares the old saying amongst wise men, "It is no less mastery to keep the thing that is won, than it was to win it." King David perceives right well the same; and therefore, as before in the Psalm he said, the Lord turned his soul, and led him into the pleasant pastures, where virtue and justice reigned, *for his name's sake*, and not for any righteousness of his own; so saith he now, that being brought into the pastures of truth, and into the favour of the Almighty, and accounted and taken for one of his sheep, it is only God that keeps and maintains him, in the same state, condition, and grace. For he could not pass through the troubles and shadow of death, as he and all God's elect people must do, but only by the assistance of God, and, therefore, he saith, he passes through all peril because he was with him. *John Hooper* (*martyr*), 1495—1555.

Verse 4.—By the way, I note that David amidst his green pastures, where he wanted nothing, and in his greatest ease and highest excellency, recordeth the valley of misery and shade of death which might ensue, if God so would; and therewithal reckoneth of his safest harbour and firm repose, even in God alone. And this is true wisdom indeed, in fair weather to provide for a tempest; in health to think of sickness; in prosperity, peace and quietness, to forecast the worst, and with the wise emmet, in summer to lay up for the winter following. The state of man is full of trouble, the condition of the godly man more. Sinners must be corrected, and sons chastised, there is no question. The ark was framed for the waters, the ship for the sea; and happy is the mariner that knoweth where to cast anchor; but oh! blessed is the man that can take a right sanctuary, and knoweth whereupon to rely, and in whom to trust in the day of his need. "*I will not fear, for thou art with me.*" In this Psalm, I take it, is rather vouched not what the prophet always performed, but what in duty must be performed, and what David's purpose was to endeavour unto for the time to come. For after so many pledges of God's infinite goodness, and by the guidance of his rod and stay of his sheep-hook, God willing, he would not fear, and this is the groundwork of his affiance. Peter in the gospel by our Saviour, in consideration of infirmity through fear denying his Master, is willed after his conversion by that favourable aspect of our Saviour, to confirm his brethren, and to train them in constancy; for verily God requireth settled minds, resolute men, and confirmed brethren. So upon occasions past, David found it true that he should not have been heretofore at any time, and therefore professeth, that for the time to come he would be no marigold-servant of the Lord, to open with the sun and shut with the dew—to serve him in calmer times only, and at a need, to shoot neck out of collar, fearfully and faithlessly to slip aside or shrink away. Good people, in all heartless imperfections, mark, I pray you, that they who fear every mist that ariseth or cloud that appeareth—who are like the mulberry tree, that never shooteth forth or showeth itself, till all hard weather be past—who, like standers-by and lookers-on, neuters and internimists—who, like Metius Suffetius, dare not venture upon, nor enter into, nor endeavour any good action of greatest duty to God, prince, or country, till all be sure in one side—are utterly reproved by this ensample.—*John Prime*, 1588.

Verse 4.—The death of those that are under sin, is like a malefactor's execution: when he is panelled and justly convicted, one pulleth the hat doggedly from him, another his band, a third bindeth his hands behind his back; and the poor man, overcome with grief and fear, is dead before he die. But I look for the death of the righteous, and a peaceable end, that it shall be as a going to bed of an honest man: his servants with respect take off his clothes and lay them down in order; a good conscience then playing the page ordereth all, so that it confirmeth and increaseth his peace; it biddeth good night to Faith, Hope, and such other attending graces and gifts in the way—when we are come home to heaven there is no use of them—but it directeth Love, Peace, Joy, and other *home graces*, that as they conveyed us in the way, so they attend at death, and enter into the heavens with us. *William Struther.*

Verse 4.—The Lord willeth us in the day of our troubles to call upon him, adding this promise—that he will deliver us. Whereunto the prophet David did so trust, feeling the comfortable truth thereof at sundry times in many and dangerous perils, that he persuaded himself (all fear set apart), to undergo one painful danger, or other whatsoever; yea, if it were to "*walk in the valley of the shadow of death,*" that he should not have cause to fear; comforting himself with his saying (which was God's promise made unto all), "*For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*" Is God's "*staff*" waxen so weak, that we dare not now lean too much

thereon, lest it should break? or is he now such a changeling, that he will not be with us in our trouble according to his promise? Will he not give us his "*staff*" to stay us by, and reach us his hand to hold us up, as he hath been wont to do? No doubt but that he will be most ready in all extremity to help, according to his promise. The Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, saith thus; Fear not, for I will defend thee," etc. Isaiah xliii.—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 4.—Not long before he died, he blessed God for the assurance of his love, and said, He could now as easily die as shut his eyes; and added, Here am I longing to be silent in the dust, and enjoying Christ in glory. I long to be in the arms of Jesus. It is not worth while to weep for me. Then, remembering how busy the devil had been about him, he was exceedingly thankful to God for his goodness in rebuking him.—*Memoir of James Janeway.*

Verse 4.—When Mrs. Hervey, the wife of a missionary in Bombay, was dying, a friend said to her, that he hoped the Saviour would be with her as she walked through the dark valley of the shadow of death. "If this," said she, "is the dark valley, it has not a dark spot in it; all is light." She had, during most of her sickness, bright views of the perfections of God. "His awful holiness," she said, "appeared the most lovely of all his attributes." At one time she said she wanted words to express her views of the glory and majesty of Christ. "It seems," said she, "that if all other glory were annihilated and nothing left but his bare self, it would be enough; it would be a universe of glory!"

Verse 4, 5.—A readiness of spirit to suffer gives the Christian the true enjoyment of life. . . . The Christian, that hath this preparation of heart, never tastes more sweetness in the enjoyments of this life, than when he dips these morsels in the meditation of death and eternity. It is no more grief to his heart to think of the remove of these, which makes way for those far sweeter enjoyments, than it would be to one at a feast, to have the first course taken off, when he hath fed well on it, that the second course of all rare sweetmeats and banqueting stuff may come on, which it cannot till the other be gone. Holy David, in this place, brings in, as it were, a death's head with his feast. In the same breath almost, he speaks of his dying (verse 4), and of the rich feast he at present sat at through the bounty of God (verse 5), to which he was not so tied by the teeth, but if God, that gave him this cheer, should call him from it, to look death in the face, he could do it, and *fear no evil* when *in the valley of the shadow of it.* And what think you of the blessed apostle Peter? Had not he, think you, the true enjoyment of his life, when he could sleep so sweetly in a prison (no desirable place), fast bound between two soldiers (no comfortable posture), and this the very night before Herod would have brought him forth, in all probability, to his execution? no likely time, one would think, to get any rest; yet we find him, even there, thus, and then, so sound asleep, that the angel, who was sent to give him his gaol deliverance, smote him on the side to awake him. Acts xii. 6, 7. I question whether Herod himself slept so well that night, as this his prisoner did. And what was the potion that brought this holy man so quietly to rest? No doubt this preparation of the gospel of peace—*he was ready to die*, and that made him able to sleep. Why should that break his rest in this world, which if it had been effected, would have brought him to his eternal rest in the other?—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 4, 6.—The Psalmist expresseth an exceeding confidence in the midst of most inexpressible troubles and pressures. He supposes himself "*walking through the valley of the shadow of death.*" As "*death*" is the worst of evils, and comprehensive of them all, so the "*shadow*" of death is the most dismal and dark representation of those evils to the soul, and the "*valley*" of that shadow the most dreadful bottom and depth of that representation. This, then, the prophet supposed that he might be brought into. A condition wherein he may be overwhelmed with sad apprehensions of the coming of a confluence of all manner of evils upon him—and that not for a short season, but he may be necessitated to "*walk*" in them, which denotes a state of some continuance, a conflicting with most dismal evils, and in their own nature tending to death—is in the supposal. What, then, would he do if he should be brought into this estate? Saith he, "Even in that condition, in such distress, wherein I am, to my own and the eyes of others, hopeless, helpless, gone, and lost, 'I will fear no evil.'" A noble resolution, if there be a sufficient bottom and foundation for it, that it may not be accounted rashness and groundless confidence, but true spiritual courage and holy resolution. Saith he, "It is because the Lord is with me." But, alas! what if the Lord should now forsake thee in

this condition, and give thee up to the power of thine enemies, and suffer thee, by the strength of thy temptations, wherewith thou art beset, to fall utterly from him? Surely then thou wouldst be swallowed up for ever; the waters would go over thy soul, and thou must for ever lie down in the shades of death. "Yea," saith he, "but I have an assurance to the contrary; *'Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.'*"—*John Owen.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*" God doth not at all depend upon wicked men in the benediction of his servants; they concur not with him, neither *per modum principii*, for he alone is the cause; nor *per modum auxilii*, for he without them can bless his all: their malicious renitency of spirit, or attempt against God's blessing of his people, is too impotent to frustrate God's intention and pleasure. An effectual impediment must not only have contrariety in it, but superiority: a drop of water cannot put out the fire, for though it hath a contrary nature, yet it hath not greater power. Now the malice and contrivances of evil men are too short and weak for the divine intention of blessing, which is accompanied with an almighty arm. Evil men are but men, and God is a God; and being but men, they can do no more than men. The Lord will clear it to all the world, that he rules the earth, and that "his counsel shall stand;" and where he blesseth, that man shall be blessed; and whom he curseth, that man shall be cursed; that the creatures can do neither good nor evil; that his people are the generation of his care and love, though living in the midst of deadly enemies.—*Condensed from Obadiah Sedgwick.*

Verse 5.—"*In the presence of mine enemies:*" they seeing and envying and fretting at it, but not being able to hinder it.—*Matthew Poole.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*" In the East the people frequently anoint their visitors with some very fragrant perfume; and give them a cup or glass of some choice wine, which they are careful to fill till it runs over. The first was designed to show their love and respect; the latter to imply that while they remained there, they should have an abundance of everything. To something of this kind the Psalmist probably alludes in this passage.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou anointest my head with oil.*" Anointing the head with oil is a great refreshment. There are three qualities of oil—*lævor, nitor, odor*, a smoothness to the touch, brightness to the sight, fragrancy to the smell, and so, gratifying the senses, it must needs cause delight to those anointed with it. To this Solomon alludes when persuading to a cheerful life, he saith, "Let thy head lack no ointment." How fully doth this represent the Spirit's unction which alone rejoices and exhilarates the soul! It is called the "oil of gladness," and the "joy of the Holy Ghost."—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou anointest my head with oil.*" It is an act of great respect to pour perfumed oil on the head of a distinguished guest; the woman in the gospel thus manifested her respect for the Saviour by pouring "precious ointment" on his head. An English lady went on board an Arabian ship which touched at Trincomalee, for the purpose of seeing the equipment of the vessel, and to make some little purchases. After she had been seated some time in the cabin, an Arabian female came and poured perfumed oil on her head.—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou anointest my head with oil.*" In the East no entertainment could be without this, and it served, as elsewhere a bath does, for (bodily) refreshment. Here, however, it is naturally to be understood of the spiritual oil of gladness.—*T. C. Barth.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou anointest my head with oil.*" Thou hast not confined thy bounty merely to the necessaries of life, but thou hast supplied me also with its luxuries.—*In "A plain Explanation of Difficult Passages in the Psalms,"* 1831.

Verse 5.—"*Thou anointest my head with oil.*" The unguents of Egypt may preserve our bodies from corruption, ensuring them a long duration in the dreary shades of the sepulchre, but, O Lord, the precious perfumed oil of thy grace which thou dost mysteriously pour upon our souls, purifies them, adorns them, strengthens them, sows in them the germs of immortality, and thus it not only secures them from a transitory corruption, but uplifts them from this house of bondage into eternal blessedness in thy bosom.—*Jean Baptiste Massillon*, 1663—1742.

Verse 5.—"*My cup runneth over.*" He had not only a fulness of *abundance*,

but of *redundance*. Those that have this happiness must carry their cup upright, and see that it overflow into their poor brethren's emptier vessels.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—"*My cup runneth over.*" Wherefore doth the Lord make your cup run over, but that other men's lips might taste the liquor? The showers that fall upon the highest mountains, should glide into the lowest valleys. "Give, and it shall be given you," is a maxim little believed. Luke vi. 38.—*William Secker.*

Verse 5.—"*My cup runneth over.*" Or as it is in the Vulgate: *And my inebriating chalice, how excellent it is!* With this cup were the martyrs inebriated, when, going forth to their passion, they recognised not those that belonged to them; not their weeping wife, not their children, not their relations; while they gave thanks and said, "I will take the cup of salvation!"—*Augustine.*

Verse 6.—"*I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*" A wicked man, it may be, will turn into God's house, and say a prayer, etc., but the prophet would (and so all godly men must) *dwell* there *for ever*; his soul lieth always at the throne of grace, begging for grace. A wicked man prayeth as the cock croweth; the cock crows and ceaseth, and crows again, and ceaseth again, and thinks not of crowing till he crows again: so a wicked man prays and ceaseth, prays and ceaseth again; his mind is never busied to think whether his prayers speed or no; he thinks it is good religion for him to pray, and therefore he takes for granted that his prayers speed, though in very deed God never hears his prayers, nor no more respects them than he respects the lowing of oxen, or the gruntling of hogs.—*William Fenner, B.D.* (1600—1640), *in "The Sacrifice of the Faithful."*

Verse 6.—"*I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*" This should be at once the crown of all our hopes for the future, and the one great lesson taught us by all the vicissitudes of life. The sorrows and the joys, the journeying and the rest, the temporary repose and the frequent struggles, all these should make us sure that there is an end which will interpret them all, to which they all point, for which they all prepare. We get the table in the wilderness here. It is as when the son of some great king comes back from foreign soil to his father's dominions, and is welcomed at every stage in his journey to the capital with pomp of festival and messengers from the throne, until at last he enters his palace home, where the travel-stained robe is laid aside, and he sits down with his father at his table.—*Alexander Maclaren,* 1863.

Verse 6.—Mark David's resolute persuasion, and consider how he came unto it, namely, by experience of God's favour at sundry times, and after sundry manners. For before he set down this resolution, he numbered up divers benefits received of the Lord; *that he fed him in green pastures, and led him by the refreshing waters* of God's word; that he *restores him and leads him in the paths of righteousness;* that he strengthened him in great dangers, even of death, and preserveth him; that in despite of his enemies, he enricheth him with many benefits. By means of all these mercies of God bestowed on him, he came to be persuaded of the continuance of the favour of God towards him.—*William Perkins.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Work out the similitude of a shepherd and his sheep. He rules, guides, feeds, and protects them; and they follow, obey, love, and trust him. Examine as to whether we are sheep; show the lot of the goats who feed side by side with the sheep.

Verse 1 (*second clause*). The man who is beyond the reach of want for time and eternity.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—Believing rest. I. Comes from God—"*He maketh.*" II. Is deep and profound—"*lie down.*" III. Has solid sustenance—"*in green pastures.*" IV. Is subject for constant praise.

Verse 2.—The contemplative and the active element provided for.

Verse 2.—The freshness and richness of Holy Scripture.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—Onward. The Leader, the way, the comforts of the road, and the traveller in it.

Verse 3.—Gracious restoration, holy guidance, and divine motives.

Verse 4.—The soft silence of the Spirit's work.

Verse 4.—God's presence the only sure support in death.

Verse 4.—Life in death and light in darkness.

Verse 4 (*second clause*).—The calm and quiet of the good man's end.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—The tokens of divine government—the consolation of the obedient.

Verse 5.—The warrior feasted, the priest anointed, the guest satisfied.

Verse 5 (*last clause*). The means and uses of the continued anointings of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5.—Providential super-aboundings, and what is our duty concerning them.

Verse 6 (*first clause*).—The blessedness of content.

Verse 6.—On the road and at home, or heavenly attendants and heavenly mansions.

PSALM XXIV.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *From the title we learn nothing but the authorship; but this is interesting, and leads us to observe the wondrous operations of the Spirit upon the mind of Israel's sweet singer, enabling him to touch the mournful string in Psalm twenty-two, to pour forth gentle notes of peace in Psalm twenty-three, and here to utter majestic and triumphant strains. We can do or sing all things when the Lord strengtheneth us.*

This sacred hymn was probably written to be sung when the ark of the covenant was taken up from the house of Obed-edom, to remain within curtains upon the hill of Zion. The words are not unsuitable for the sacred dance of joy in which David led the way upon that joyful occasion. The eye of the Psalmist looked, however, beyond the typical upgoing of the ark to the sublime ascension of the King of glory. We will call it The Song of the Ascension.

DIVISION.—*The Psalm makes a pair with the fifteenth Psalm. It consists of three parts. The first glorifies* the true God, *and sings of his universal dominion; the second describes* the true Israel, *who are able to commune with him; and the third pictures the ascent of* the true Redeemer, *who has opened heaven's gates for the entrance of his elect.*

EXPOSITION.

THE earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

1. How very different is this from the ignorant Jewish notion of God which prevailed in our Saviour's day. The Jews said, "The holy land is God's, and the seed of Abraham are his only people;" but their great Monarch had long before instructed them,—"*The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*" The whole round world is claimed for Jehovah, "*and they that dwell therein*" are declared to be his subjects. When we consider the bigotry of the Jewish people at the time of Christ, and how angry they were with our Lord for saying that many widows were in Israel, but unto none of them was the prophet sent, save only to the widow of Sarepta, and that there were many lepers in Israel, but none of them was healed except Naaman the Syrian,—when we recollect, too, how angry they were at the mention of Paul's being sent to the Gentiles, we are amazed that they should have remained in such blindness, and yet have sung this Psalm, which shows so clearly that God is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. What a rebuke is this to those wiseacres who speak of the negro and other despised races as though they were not cared for by the God of heaven! If a man be but a man the Lord claims him, and who dares to brand him as a mere piece of merchandise! The meanest of men is a dweller in the world, and therefore belongs to Jehovah. Jesus Christ has made an end of the exclusiveness of nationalities. There is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but we all are one in Christ Jesus.

Man lives upon "*the earth*," and parcels out its soil among his mimic kings and autocrats; but the earth is not man's. He is but a tenant at will, a leaseholder upon most precarious tenure, liable to instantaneous ejectment. The great Landowner and true Proprietor holds his court above the clouds and laughs at the title-deeds of worms of the dust. The fee-simple is not with the lord of the manor nor the freeholder, but with the Creator. The "*fulness*" of the earth may mean its harvests, its wealth, its life, or its worship; in all these senses the Most High God is Possessor of all. The earth is full of God; he made it full and he keeps it full, notwithstanding all the demands which living creatures make upon its stores. The sea is full, despite all the clouds which rise from it; the air is full, notwithstanding all the lives which breathe it; the soil is full, though millions of plants derive their nourishment from it. Under man's tutored hand the world is coming to a greater fulness than ever, but it is all the Lord's; the field and the fruit, the earth and all earth's wonders are Jehovah's. We look also for a sublimer

fulness when the true ideal of a world for God shall have been reached in millennial glories, and then most clearly the earth will be the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. These words are now upon London's Royal Exchange, they shall one day be written in letters of light across the sky.

The term "*world*" indicates the habitable regions, wherein Jehovah is especially to be acknowledged as Sovereign. He who rules the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air should not be disobeyed by man, his noblest creature. Jehovah is the Universal King, all nations are beneath his sway: true Autocrat of all the nations, emperors and czars are but his slaves. Men are not their own, nor may they call their lips, their hearts, or their substance their own; they are Jehovah's rightful servants. This claim especially applies to us who are born from heaven. We do not belong to the world or to Satan, but by creation and redemption we are the peculiar portion of the Lord.

Paul uses this verse twice, to show that no food is unclean, and that nothing is really the property of false gods. All things are God's; no ban is on the face of nature, nothing is common or unclean. The world is all God's world, and the food which is sold in the shambles is sanctified by being my Father's, and I need not scruple to eat thereof.

2. In the second verse we have the reason why the world belongs to God, namely, because he has created it, which is a title beyond all dispute. "*For he hath founded it upon the seas.*" It is God who lifts up the earth from out of the sea, so that the dry land, which otherwise might in a moment be submerged, as in the days of Noah, is kept from the floods. The hungry jaws of ocean would devour the dry land if a constant flat of Omnipotence did not protect it. "*He hath established it upon the floods.*" The world is Jehovah's, because from generation to generation he preserves and upholds it, having settled its foundations. Providence and Creation are the two legal seals upon the title-deeds of the great Owner of all things. He who built the house and bears up its foundation has surely a first claim upon it. Let it be noted, however, upon what insecure foundations all terrestrial things are founded. Founded on the seas! Established on the floods! Blessed be God the Christian has another world to look forward to, and rests his hopes upon a more stable foundation than this poor world affords. They who trust in worldly things build upon the sea; but we have laid our hopes, by God's grace, upon the Rock of Ages; we are resting upon the promise of an immutable God, we are depending upon the constancy of a faithful Redeemer. Oh! ye worldlings, who have built your castles of confidence, your palaces of wealth, and your bowers of pleasure upon the seas, and established them upon the floods; how soon will your baseless fabrics melt, like foam upon the waters! Sand is treacherous enough, but what shall be said of the yet more unstable seas?

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6 This *is* the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

Here we have the true Israel described. The men who shall stand as courtiers in the palace of the living God are not distinguished by race, but by character; they are not Jews only, nor Gentiles only, nor any one branch of mankind peculiarly, but a people purified and made meet to dwell in the holy hill of the Lord.

3. "*Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?*" It is uphill work for the creature to reach the Creator. Where is the mighty climber who can scale the towering heights? Nor is it height alone; it is glory too. Whose eye shall see the King in his beauty and dwell in his palace? In heaven he reigns most gloriously, who shall be permitted to enter into his royal presence? God has made all, but he will not save all; there is a chosen company who shall have the singular honour of dwelling with him in his high abode. These choice spirits desire to commune with God, and their wish shall be granted them. The solemn enquiry of the text is repeated in another form. Who shall be able to "*stand*" or continue there?

He casteth away the wicked, who then can abide in his house? Who is he that can gaze upon the Holy One, and can abide in the blaze of his glory? Certainly none may venture to commune with God upon the footing of the law, but grace can make us meet to behold the vision of the divine presence. The question before us is one which all should ask for themselves, and none should be at ease till they receive an answer of peace. With careful self-examination let us enquire, "Lord, is it I?"

4. "*He that hath clean hands.*" Outward, practical holiness is a very precious mark of grace. To wash in water with Pilate is nothing, but to wash in innocency is all-important. It is to be feared that many professors have perverted the doctrine of justification by faith in such a way as to treat good works with contempt; if so, they will receive everlasting contempt at the last great day. It is vain to prate of inward experience unless the daily life is free from impurity, dishonesty, violence, and oppression. Those who draw near to God must have "*clean hands.*" What monarch would have servants with filthy hands to wait at his table? They who were ceremonially unclean could not enter into the Lord's house which was made with hands, much less shall the morally defiled be allowed to enjoy spiritual fellowship with a holy God. If our hands are now unclean, let us wash them in Jesu's precious blood, and so let us pray unto God, lifting up pure hands. But "*clean hands*" would not suffice, unless they were connected with "*a pure heart.*" True religion is heart-work. We may wash the outside of the cup and the platter as long as we please, but if the inward parts be filthy, we are filthy altogether in the sight of God, for our hearts are more truly ourselves than our hands are. We may lose our hands and yet live, but we could not lose our heart and still live; the very life of our being lies in the inner nature, and hence the imperative need of purity within. There must be a work of grace in the core of the heart as well as in the palm of the hand, or our religion is a delusion. May God grant that our inward powers may be cleansed by the sanctifying Spirit, so that we may love holiness and abhor all sin. The pure in heart shall see God, all others are but blind bats; stone-blindness in the eyes arises from stone in the heart. Dirt in the heart throws dust in the eyes.

The soul must be delivered from delighting in the grovelling toys of earth; the man who is born for heaven "*hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.*" All men have their joys, by which their souls are lifted up; the worldling lifts up his soul in carnal delights, which are mere empty vanities; but the saint loves more substantial things; like Jehoshaphat, he is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He who is content with the husks will be reckoned with the swine. If we suck our consolation from the breasts of the world, we prove ourselves to be its home-born children. Does the world satisfy thee? Then thou hast thy reward and thy portion in this life; make much of it, for thou shalt know no other joy.

"*Nor sworn deceitfully.*" The saints are men of honour still. The Christian man's word is his only oath; but that is as good as twenty oaths of other men. False speaking will shut any man out of heaven, for a liar shall not enter into God's house, whatever may be his professions or doings. God will have nothing to do with liars, except to cast them into the lake of fire. Every liar is a child of the devil, and will be sent home to his father. A false declaration, a fraudulent statement, a cooked account, a slander, a lie—all these may suit the assembly of the ungodly, but are detested among true saints: how could they have fellowship with the God of truth, if they did not hate every false way?

5. It must not be supposed that the persons who are thus described by their inward and outward holiness are saved by the merit of their works; but their works are the evidences by which they are known. The present verse shows that in the saints grace reigns and grace alone. Such men wear the holy livery of the Great King because he has of his own free love clothed them therewith. The true saint wears the wedding garment, but he owns that the Lord of the feast provided it for him, without money and without price. "*He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*" So that the saints need salvation; they receive righteousness, and "*the blessing*" is a boon from God their Saviour. They do not ascend the hill of the Lord as givers but as receivers, and they do not wear their own merits, but a righteousness whch they have received. Holy living ensures a blessing as its reward from the thrice Holy God, but it is itself a blessing of the New Covenant and a delightful fruit of the Spirit. God first gives us good works, and then rewards us for them. Grace is not obscured by God's

demand for holiness, but is highly exalted as we see it decking the saint with jewels, and clothing him in fair white linen; all this sumptuous array being a free gift of mercy.

6. "*This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.*" These are the regeneration, these are in the line of grace; these are the legitimate seed. Yet they are only seekers; hence learn that true seekers are very dear in God's esteem, and are entered upon his register. Even *seeking* has a sanctifying influence; what a consecrating power must lie in finding and enjoying the Lord's face and favour! To desire communion with God is a purifying thing. Oh to hunger and thirst more and more after a clear vision of the face of God; this will lead us to purge ourselves from all filthiness, and to walk with heavenly circumspection. He who longs to see his friend when he passes takes care to clear the mist from the window, lest by any means his friend should go by unobserved. Really awakened souls seek the Lord above everything, and as this is not the usual desire of mankind, they constitute a generation by themselves; a people despised of men but beloved of God. The expression "*O Jacob*" is a very difficult one, unless it be indeed true that the God of Jacob here condescends to be called Jacob, and takes upon himself the name of his chosen people.

The preceding verses correct the inordinate boastings of those Jews who vaunted themselves as the favourites of heaven; they are told that their God is the God of all the earth, and that he is holy, and will admit none but holy ones into his presence. Let the mere professor as he reads these verses listen to the voice which saith, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

"*Selah.*" Lift up the harp and voice, for a nobler song is coming; a song of our Well-beloved.

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

8 Who *is* this King of glory? The LORD is strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift *them* up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory. Selah.

7. These last verses reveal to us the great representative man, who answered to the full character laid down, and therefore by his own right ascended the holy hill of Zion. Our Lord Jesus Christ could ascend into the hill of the Lord because his hands were clean and his heart was pure, and if we by faith in him are conformed to his image we shall enter too. We have here a picture of our Lord's glorious ascent. We see him rising from amidst the little group upon Olivet, and as the cloud receives him, angels reverently escort him to the gates of heaven.

The ancient gates of the eternal temple are personified and addressed in song by the attending cohort of rejoicing spirits.

> "Lo his triumphal chariot waits,
> And angels chant the solemn lay,
> 'Lift up your heads, ye heavenly gates;
> Ye everlasting doors, give way.'"

They are called upon "*to lift up their heads,*" as though with all their glory they were not great enough for the Allglorious King. Let all things do their utmost to honour so great a Prince; let the highest heaven put on unusual loftiness in honour of "*the King of Glory.*" He who, fresh from the cross and the tomb, now rides through the gates of the New Jerusalem is higher than the heavens; great and everlasting as they are, those gates of pearl are all unworthy of him before whom the heavens are not pure, and who chargeth his angels with folly. "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates.*"

8. The watchers at the gate hearing the song look over the battlements and ask, "*Who is this King of glory?*" A question full of meaning and worthy of the meditations of eternity. Who is he in person, nature, character, office and work? What is his pedigree? What his rank and what his race? The answer given in a mighty wave of music is, "*The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty*

in battle." We know the might of Jesus by the battles whch he has fought, the victories which he has won over sin, and death, and hell, and we clap our hands as we see him leading captivity captive in the majesty of his strength. Oh for a heart to sing his praises! Mighty hero, be thou crowned for ever King of kings and Lord of lords.

9. "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.*" The words are repeated with a pleasing variation. There are times of deep earnest feeling when repetitions are not vain but full of force. Doors were often taken from their hinges when Easterns would show welcome to a guest, and some doors were drawn up and down like a portcullis, and may possibly have protruded from the top; thus literally lifting up their heads. The picture is highly poetical, and shows how wide heaven's gate is set by the ascension of our Lord. Blessed be God, the gates have never been shut since. The opened gates of heaven invite the weakest believer to enter.

Dear reader, it is possible that you are saying, "I shall never enter into the heaven of God, for I have neither clean hands nor a pure heart." Look then to Christ, who has already climbed the holy hill. He has entered as the forerunner of those who trust him. Follow in his footsteps, and repose upon his merit. He rides triumphantly into heaven, and you shall ride there too if you trust him. "But how can I get the character described?" say you. The Spirit of God will give you that. He will create in you a new heart and a right spirit. Faith in Jesus is the work of the Holy Spirit, and has all virtues wrapped up in it. Faith stands by the fountain filled with blood, and as she washes therein, clean hands and a pure heart, a holy soul and a truthful tongue are given to her.

10. The closing note is inexpressibly grand. Jehovah of hosts, Lord of men and angels, Lord of the universe, Lord of the worlds, is the King of glory. All true glory is concentrated upon the true God, for all other glory is but a passing pageant, the painted pomp of an hour. The ascended Saviour is here declared to be the Head and Crown of the universe, the King of Glory. Our Immanuel is hymned in sublimest strains. Jesus of Nazareth is Jehovah Sabaoth.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—It will be seen that this Psalm was written to be chanted in responsive parts, with two choruses. To comprehend it fully, it should be understood that Jerusalem, as the city of God, was by the Jews regarded as a type of heaven. It so occurs in the Apocalypse, whence we have adopted it in our poetical and devotional aspirations. The court of the tabernacle was the scene of the Lord's more immediate residence—the tabernacle his palace, and the ark his throne. With this leading idea in his mind, the most cursory reader— if there be cursory readers of the Bible—cannot fail to be struck with the beauty and sublimity of this composition, and its exquisite suitableness to the occasion. The chief musician, who was probably in this case the king himself, appears to have begun the sacred lay with a solemn and sonorous recital of these sentences:—

> "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;
> The world, and they that dwell therein.
> For he hath founded it upon the seas,
> And established it upon the floods."

The chorus of vocal music appears to have then taken up the song, and sung the same words in a more tuneful and elaborate harmony; and the instruments and the whole chorus of the people fell in with them, raising the mighty declaration to heaven. There is much reason to think that the people, or a large body of them, were qualified or instructed to take their part in this great ceremonial. The historical text says, "David, and *all the house of Israel played before the Lord* upon all manner of instruments," etc. We may presume that the chorus then divided, each singing in their turns, and both joining at the close—

> "For he hath founded it upon the seas,
> And established it upon the floods."

This part of the music may be supposed to have lasted until the procession reached the foot of Zion, or came in view of it, which, from the nature of the enclosed site, cannot be till one comes quite near to it. Then the king must be supposed to have stepped forth, and begun again, in a solemn and earnest tone—

" Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ?
Or who shall stand in his holy place ? "

To which the first chorus responds—

" He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

And then the second chorus—

" He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation."

This part of the sacred song may, in like manner, be supposed to have lasted till they reached the gate of the city, when the king began again in this grand and exalted strain :—

" Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in ! "

repeated then, in the same way as before, by the general chorus.

The persons having charge of the gates on this high occasion ask—

" Who is the King of glory ? "

To which the first chorus answers—

" It is Jehovah, strong and mighty—
Jehovah mighty in battle."

which the second chorus then repeats in like manner as before, closing it with the grand universal chorus,

" He is the King of glory ! He is the King of glory ! "

We must now suppose the instruments to take up the same notes, and continue them to the entrance to the court of the tabernacle. There the king again begins—

" Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;
And be ye lift, up, ye everlasting doors ;
And the King of glory shall come in."

This is followed and answered as before—all closing, the instruments sounding, the chorus singing, the people shouting—

" He is the King of Glory ! "

John Kitto's " Daily Bible Illustrations."

Whole Psalm.—The coming of the Lord of glory, the high demands upon his people proceeding from this, the absolute necessity to prepare worthily for his arrival, form the subject-matter of this Psalm.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Whole Psalm.—We learn from the rabbins, that this was one of certain Psalms which were sung in the performance of Jewish worship on each day in the week :—

The 24th Psalm on the 1st, the Lord's-day, our Sunday.

48th	,,	2nd	,,
82nd	,,	3rd	,,
94th	,,	4th	,,
81st	,,	5th	,,
93rd	,,	6th	,,
92	,,	7th, the Jewish Sabbath.	

This Psalm, then, appropriated to the Lord's-day, our Sunday, was intended to celebrate the resurrection of Messiah, and his ascension into heaven, there to

sit as a priest upon God's throne, and from thence to come down bringing blessings and mercies to his people.—*R. H. Ryland.*

Whole Psalm.—Anthem of praise, performed when the heads of the gates of Jerusalem were lifted up to receive the ark; and those of the Israelites who were ceremoniously clean, were alone permitted to accompany it into the court of the tabernacle. A Psalm of David. Verses 1, 2, chorus. 3. First voice. 4, 5. Second voice. 6. Chorus. 7. Semi-chorus accompanying the ark. 8. Voice from within the gates. 8. Chorus of priests accompanying the ark. 9. Chorus of priests and people with the ark. 10. Voice within the gates. 10. Grand chorus.—*From "The Psalms, with Prefatory Titles, etc., from the Port Royal Authors," by Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck,* 1825.

Whole Psalm. How others may think upon this point, I cannot say, nor pretend to describe, but for my own part, I have no notion of hearing, or of any man's ever having seen or heard, anything so great, so solemn, so celestial, on this side the gates of heaven.—*Patrick Delany, D.D.,* 1686—1768.

Verse 1.—"*The earth is the Lord's,*" that is, Christ's, who is the "Lord of lords" (Rev. xix. 16); for the whole world and all the things therein are his by a twofold title. First, by donation of God his Father, having "all power given unto him in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18), even whatsoever things the Father hath are his (John xvi. 15); and so consequently "made heir of all things." Heb. i. 2. Secondly, the earth is Christ's and all that therein is, by right of creation, for "*he founded it,*" saith our prophet, and that after a wonderful manner, "*upon the seas and floods.*" . . . All things then are Christ's, in respect of *creation,* "by whom all things were made" (John i. 3); in respect of *sustentation,* as upholding all things by his mighty word (Heb. i. 3); in respect of *administration,* as reaching from one end to another, and ordering all things sweetly (Wis. viii. 1); in one word—"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." Rom. xi. 36. From hence we may learn (1), That Christ is "the King of glory," "Lord of Hosts," even Almighty God. For he that made all, is "Lord over all;" he that is the Creator of heaven and earth is Almighty (saith our Creed); able to do whatsoever he will, and more than he will too—more by his absolute power, than he will by his actual—"able to raise up children unto Abraham" out of the very stones of the street, though he doth not actually produce such a generation. His almightiness evidently proves him to be God, and his *founding of the world* his almightiness; for "The gods that have not made the heaven and earth shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." Jer. x. 11. (2). Seeing the compass of the world and all they that dwell therein are the Lord's, it is plain that the church is not confined within the limits of one region, or glued, as it were, to one seat only. The Donatists in old time, would tie the church only to Cartenna in Africa, the Papists in our time to Rome in Italy; but the Scriptures plainly affirm that the golden candlesticks are removed from one place to another, and that the kingdom of God is taken away from one nation and given unto another country that brings forth the fruit thereof; in every region he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. Acts x. 35.—*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—"*The earth is Jehovah's.*"—The object of the beginning of the Psalm is to show that the Jews had nothing of themselves which could entitle them to approach nearer or more familiarly to God than the Gentiles. As God by his providence preserves the world, the power of his government is alike extended to all, so that he ought to be worshipped by all, even as he also shows to all men, without exception, the fatherly care he has about them.—*J. Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"*The earth is the Lord's.*" It is Christ's by creation (verse 2; John i. 1, 2), and it is his by resurrection (Matt. xxviii. 18), and by his glorious ascension into heaven, where he is enthroned King of the world in his human nature. This Psalm takes up the language of the first Ascension Psalm (Psalm viii.)—*Christopher Wordsworth, D.D. in loc.*

Verse 1.—St. Chrysostom, suffering under the Empress Eudoxia, tells his friend Cyriacus how he armed himself beforehand: *εἰ μέν βούλεται ἡ βασίλισσα ἐ ξορίσαι μέ,* etc. "I thought, will she banish me? '*The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*' Take away my goods? '*Naked came I into the world, and naked must I return.*' Will she stone me? I remembered Stephen. Behead me? John Baptist came into my mind," etc. Thus it should be with every one that intends to live and die comfortably: they must, as we say, lay up something for a rainy day; they

must stock themselves with graces, store up promises, and furnish themselves with experiences of God's lovingkindness to others and themselves too, that so, when the evil day comes, they may have much good coming thereby.—*John Spencer.*

Verse 1.—"*The earth is the Lord's.*" As David, in his youthful days, was tending his flocks on Bethlehem's fertile plains, the spirit of the Lord descended upon him, and his senses were opened, and his understanding enlightened, so that he could understand the songs of the night. The heavens proclaimed the glory of God, the glittering stars formed the general chorus, their harmonious melody resounded upon earth, and the sweet fulness of their voices vibrated to its utmost bounds.

"*Light* is the countenance of the Eternal," sung the setting sun: "I am the hem of his garment," responded the soft and rosy twilight. The clouds gathered themselves together and said, "We are his nocturnal tent." And the waters in the clouds, and the hollow voices of the thunders, joined in the lofty chorus, "The voice of the Eternal is upon the waters, the God of glory thundereth in the heavens, the Lord is upon many waters."

"He flieth upon my wings," whispered the winds, and the gentle air added, "I am the breath of God, the aspirations of his benign presence." "We hear the songs of praise," said the parched earth; "all around is praise; I alone am sad and silent." Then the falling dew replied, "I will nourish thee, so that thou shalt be refreshed and rejoice, and thy infants shall bloom like the young rose." "Joyfully we bloom," sang the refreshed meads; the full ears of corn waved as they sang, "We are the blessing of God, the hosts of God against famine."

"We bless thee from above," said the gentle moon; "We, too, bless thee," responded the stars; and the lightsome grasshopper chirped, "Me, too, he blesses in the pearly dew-drop." "He quenched my thirst," said the roe; "And refreshed me," continued the stag; "And grants us our food," said the beasts of the forest; "And clothes my lambs," gratefully added the sheep.

"He heard me," croaked the raven, "when I was forsaken and alone;" "He heard me," said the wild goat of the rocks, "when my time came, and I brought forth." And the turtle-dove cooed, and the swallow and other birds joined the song, "We have found our nests, our houses, we dwell upon the altar of the Lord, and sleep under the shadow of his wing in tranquillity and peace." "And peace," replied the night, and echo prolonged the sound, when chanticleer awoke the dawn, and crowed with joy, "Open the portals, set wide the gates of the world! The King of glory approaches. Awake! Arise, ye sons of men, give praises and thanks unto the Lord, for the King of glory approaches."

The sun arose, and David awoke from his melodious rapture. But as long as he lived the strains of creation's harmony remained in his soul, and daily he recalled them from the strings of his harp.—*From the "Legend of the Songs of the Night," in the Talmud, quoted in "Biblical Antiquities." By F. A. Cox, D.D., LL.D.*, 1852.

Verse 1.—The pious mind views all things in God, and God in all things.—*Ingram Cobbin*, 1839.

Verse 2.—"*He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.*" This *founding the land upon the seas*, and preparing it *upon the floods*, is so wonderfully wonderful, that Almighty God asked his servant Job, "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?" Job xxxviii. 6. Xerxes commanded his soldiers to fetter the waters of Hellispontus; and so God bindeth, as it were, the floods in fetters, as St. Basil plainly, *Ligatum est mare præcepto Creatoris quasi compedibus;* he saith unto the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, there shall it stay thy proud waves." "He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap; he layeth up the depth in storehouses" (Job xxxviii. 11; Psalm xxxiii. 7); so that without his leave not so much as one drop can overflow the land.—*John Boys.*

Verse 2.—(*New translation.*) "*For he hath founded it upon the seas, and upon streams doth he make it fast.*" The reference is no doubt to the account of the Creation, in Genesis, the dry land having emerged from the water, and seeming to rest upon it. (Comp. cxxxvi. 6; Prov. viii. 29.) It would, however, be quite out of place to suppose that in such language we have the expression of any theory, whether popular or scientific, as to the structure of the earth's surface: Job says (xxvi. 7), "He hangeth the earth upon nothing." Such expressions are manifestly poetical. See Job xxxviii. 6.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 2.—" *Upon the seas :* " that is, upon the great abyss of waters which is under the earth, enclosed in great hollow places, whence the heads of rivers do spring, and other waters bubble out upon the earth.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 2.—"*Above the floods he hath established it.*" Both the words עַל (Al) in the two clauses of this verse mean either " above " as we have rendered it, and refer to Gen. i. 9, 10, denoting that Jehovah hath called forth dry land from the midst of the seas, and established it above the floods, and hath set a boundary to the latter never to turn and overflow it (see Job xxxviii. 8 ; Psalm civ. chronologically Psalm vii. 9) ; or " by, or at," as they often denote, and refer to the same subject of the omnipotence of God in relation to the same quoted passages, *i.e.*, that though our globe is situated at or by the floods—is surrounded with mighty waters whose single wave could bury it for ever, still the Lord has so established it that this never can happen. This is a mighty reason why the earth and all its fulness and inhabitants belong to Jehovah.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 2.—Hereby is mystically meant, that he hath set his church above the waters of adversities, so that how high soever they arise, it is kept still above them in safety, and so shall be for evermore ; or it may agree thus—he will take in all nations to be his in grace, because all be his creatures ; he made them so admirable an habitation at the first, and upholds it still, showing hereby how much he regards them ; therefore he will now extend his favour further towards them, by taking them in to be his people.—*Augustine, quoted by Mayer.*

Verse 3.—" *Who shall ascend ?* " Indeed, if none must ascend but he that is clean and pure, and without vanity and deceit, the question is quickly answered, None shall, for there is none *so :* dust is our matter, so not clean ; defiled is our nature, so not pure ; lighter, the heaviest of us, than vanity, and deceitful upon the balance the best of us ; so no ascending so high for any of us. Yet there is One we hear of, or might have heard of to-day, that rose and ascended up on high, was thus qualified as the Psalmist speaks of, all clean and pure, no chaff at all, no guile found in his mouth. 1 Pet. ii. 22. Yea, but it was but One that was so ; what's that to all the rest? Yes, somewhat 'tis. *He* was our *Head,* and if the Head be once risen and ascended, the members will all follow after in their time.—*Mark Frank.*

Verse 3.—" *The hill of the Lord,*" can be no other than a hill of glory. His holy place is no less than the very place and seat of glory. And being such, you cannot imagine it but *hard to come by,* the very petty glories of the world are so. This is a *hill* of glory, hard to climb, difficult to ascend, craggy to pass up, steep to clamber, no plain campagnia to it, the broad easy way leads some whither else (Matt. vii. 13) ; the way to this is narrow (verse 14) ; 'tis rough and troublesome. To be of the number of Christ's true faithful servants is no slight work ; 'tis a fight, 'tis a race, 'tis a continual warfare ; fastings and watchings, and cold and nakedness, and hunger and thirst, bonds, imprisonments, dangers and distresses, ignominy and reproach, afflictions and persecutions, the world's hatred and our friends' neglect, all that we call hard or difficult is to be found in the way we are to go. A man cannot leave a lust, shake off bad company, quit a course of sin, enter upon a way of virtue, profess his religion or stand to it, cannot ascend the spiritual *hill,* but he will meet some or other of these to contest and strive with. But not only to ascend, but to *stand* there, as the word signifies ; to continue at so high a pitch, to be constant in truth and piety, that will be hard indeed, and bring more difficulties to contest with.—*Mark Frank.*

Verses 3, 4.—The Psalm begins with a solicitous enquiry, subjoins a satisfactory answer, and closes with a most pertinent but rapturous apostrophe. This is the enquiry, " *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ? or who shall stand in his holy place ?* " This is the answer, "*He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ;* " " *he shall receive the blessing* " of plenary remission " *from the Lord, and righteousness also from the God of his salvation :* " even that perfect righteousness which is not acquired by man, but bestowed by Jehovah ; which is not performed by the saint, but received by the sinner ; which is the only solid basis to support our hopes of happiness, the only valid plea for an admission into the mansions of joy. Then follows the apostrophe : the prophet foresees the ascension of Christ and his saints into the kingdom of heaven. He sees his Lord marching at the head of the redeemed world, and conducting them into regions of honour and joy. Suitably to such a view, and in a most beautiful strain of poetry, he addresses himself to the heavenly

portals. "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory,*" with all the heirs of his grace and righteousness, shall make their triumphant entry; "*shall enter in,*" and go out no more.—*James Hervey.*

Verses 3, 4.—It is not he who sings so well or so many Psalms, nor he who fasts or watches so many days, nor he who divides his own among the poor, nor he who preaches to others, nor he who lives quietly, kindly and friendly; nor, in fine, is it he who knows all sciences and languages, nor he who works all virtuous and all good works that ever any man spoke or read of, but it is he alone, who is pure within and without.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 4.—"*He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.*" Shall I tell you, then, who is a moral man in the sight of God? It is he that bows to the divine law as the supreme rule of right; he that is influenced by a governing regard to God in all his actions; he that obeys other commands spontaneously, because he has obeyed the first and great command, "Give me thy *heart.*" His conduct is not conformed to custom or expediency, but to one consistent, immutable standard of duty. Take this man into a court of justice, and call on him to testify, and he will not bear false witness. Give him the charge of untold treasures, he will not steal. Trust him with the dearest interests of yourself or family, you are safe, because he has a living principle of truth and integrity in his bosom. He is as worthy of confidence in the dark as at noonday; for he is a moral man, not because reputation or interest demands it, not because the eye of public observation is fixed upon him, but because the love and fear of God have predominant ascendancy in his heart.—*Ebenezer Porter, D.D.*, 1834.

Verse 4.—Conditions that suit none but Christ. [Bellarmine.] "*He that hath clean hands;*" "the clean of hands," Marg.:—those hands from which went forth virtue and healing; hands ever lifted up in prayer to God, or in blessing to man; hands stretched forth on the cross for the cleansing of the whole world.—*Isaac Williams, in loc.*

Verse 4.—"*Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,*" is read by Arius Montanus, "He that hath not received his soul in vain." Oh! how many receive their souls in vain, making no more use of them than the swine, of whom the philosopher observes, *cujus anima pro sale*, their souls are only for salt to keep their bodies from stinking. Who would not grieve to think that so choice a piece should be employed about so vain a use!—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 4.—"*Nor sworn deceitfully;*" or inured his tongue to any other kind of the language of hell's rotten communication, to the dishonouring of God, or deceiving of others. Perjury is here instanced for the rest, as one of the most heinous. But Peraldus reckoneth up four-and-twenty several sins of the tongue, all which every burgess of the New Jerusalem is careful to avoid, as the devil's drivel, no way becoming his pure lip.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—Now we come to the four conditions requisite to render such an ascent possible. 1. Abstinence from evil doing: "*He that hath clean hands.*" 2. Abstinence from evil thought: "*and a pure heart.*" 3. Who does that duty which he is sent into the world to do: "*That hath not lift up his mind unto vanity;*" or, as it is in the Vulgate, "*Who hath not received his soul in vain.*" And, 4. Remembers the vows by which he is bound to God: "*nor sworn to deceive.*" And in the fullest sense, there was but One in whom all these things were fulfilled; so that in reply to the question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" he might well answer, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." John iii. 13. "Therefore it is well written," says St. Bernard, "that such an High Priest became us, because he knows the difficulty of that ascent to the celestial mountain, he knows the weakness of us that have to ascend."—*Lorinus and Bernard, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 4.—Heaven is not won with good words and a fair profession. The doing Christian is the man that shall stand, when the empty boaster of his faith shall fall. The great talkers of religion are often the least doers. His religion is in vain whose profession brings not letters testimonial from a holy life.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 5.—"*He shall receive the blessing;*" as before, "Thou shalt set him to be a blessing." Psalm xxi. 6. His name is never without blessing. In him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. On the mount of his beatitudes, on the heavenly Mount Sion, crowned as "the Son of the blessed." "*From the Lord;*" even the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Eph. i. 3.—*Isaac Williams.*

Verse 5.—"*He shall receive . . . . righteousness.*" As for our own righteousness which we have without him, Esay telleth us, "it is a defiled cloth;" and St. Paul, that it is but "dung." Two very homely comparisons, but they be the Holy Ghost's own; yet nothing so homely as in the original, where they be so odious, as what manner of defiled cloth, or what kind of dung we have not dared to translate. Our own then being no better, we are driven to seek for it elsewhere. "*He shall receive his righteousness,*" saith the prophet; and "*the gift of righteousness,*" saith the apostle. Phil. iii. 8, 9; Rom. v. 17. It is then another, to be *given us*, and to be *received* by us, which we must seek for. And whither shall we go for it? Job alone dispatcheth this point (chap. xv. 15; iv. 18; xxv. 5.) Not to *the heavens* or *stars*, they are *unclean in his sight*. Not to the *saints*, for in them *he found folly*. Not to the *angels*, for neither in them found he *steadfastness*. Now, if none of these will serve, we see a necessary reason why Jehovah must be a part of this name, "the LORD our righteousness." Jer. xxiii. 6.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 6.—"*This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face.*" Christians must be seekers. This is *the generation of seekers*. All mankind, if ever they will come to heaven, they must be a generation of seekers. Heaven is a generation of finders, of possessors, of enjoyers, seekers of God. But here we are a generation of seekers. We want somewhat that we must seek. When we are at best, we want the accomplishment of our happiness. It is a state of seeking here, because it is a state of want; we want something alway. But to come more particularly to this *seeking the face of God*, or the presence of God. . . . . The presence of God meant here is, that presence that he shows *in the time of need, and in his ordinances*. He shows a presence in need and necessity, that is, a gracious presence to his children, a gracious face. As in want of direction, he shows his presence of light to direct them; in weakness he shows his strength; in trouble and perplexity he will show his gracious and comfortable presence to comfort them. In perplexity he shows his presence to set the heart at large, answerable to the necessity. So in need God is present with his children, to direct them, to comfort them, to strengthen them, if they need that.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 6.—"*This is the generation.*" By the demonstrative pronoun "*this,*" the Psalmist erases from the catalogue of the servants of God all counterfeit Israelites, who, trusting only to their circumcision and the sacrifice of beasts, have no concern about offering themselves to God; and yet, at the same time, they rashly thrust themselves into the church.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 6—"*That seek thy face, O Jacob.*" In Prov. vii. 15, and xxix. 26, we have "*seeking the face of*" in the sense of seeking the favour of, or showing delight in. Their delight is not in Esau, who got "the fatness of earth" (Gen xxvii 39) as his portion. And those writers may be right who consider Jacob as a name for Messiah, to whom belong the true birthright and blessing.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 6.—"*That seek thy face, O Jacob.*" He is "the seed of Jacob;" he is "the Holy One of Israel;" "the face of thine Anointed" is the face of him who is both God and man; for "we shall see him as he is."—*Isaac Williams.*

Verse 6.—"*O Jacob,*" or, O God of Jacob. As the church is called *Christ* (1 Cor. xii. 12), so God is here called "*Jacob;*" such a near union there is betwixt him and his people. Or, *this is* Jacob. So the true *seekers* are fitly called, first, because Israelites indeed (John i. 47; Rom. ix. 6); secondly, because they see God face to face, as Jacob did at Peniel (Gen. xxxii. 24—30); thirdly, because they also, as he, do bear away a blessing (Hos. xii. 4), even "righteousness from the God of their salvation," as in the verse aforegoing.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—"*Lift up your heads, O ye gates.*" The gates of the temple were indeed as described, very lofty and magnificent, in proportion to the gigantic dimensions of that extraordinary edifice. But the phrase, "*Lift up your heads,*" refers not so much to their loftiness, as to the upper part being formed so as to be lifted up; while the under portion opened in folding doors.—*Robert Jamieson, in Paxton's "Illustrations of Scripture."*

Verse 7.—"*Lift up your heads, O ye gates.*" At the castle of Banias, in Syria, are the remains of an ancient gate which was drawn up, like a blind, the gate fitting in grooves. This will fully explain the term.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 7.—"*Lift up.*" A phrase or term taken from triumphal arches or great porticoes, set up, or beautified and adorned for the coming in of great, victorious, and triumphant captains.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 7.—" *Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in.*" Some interpret this of the doors of our heart, according to that (Rev. iii. 20), " Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him," etc. In the gospel history, we find that Christ had a fourfold entertainment among men. Some received him into house, not into heart, as Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii. 44), who gave him no kiss nor water to his feet ; some into heart, but not into house, as the faithful centurion (Matt. viii. 8), esteeming himself unworthy that Christ should come under his roof ; some neither into house nor heart, as the graceless Gergesites (Matt. viii. 34) ; some both into house and heart, as Lazarus, Mary, Martha. John iii. 15 ; Luke x. 38. Now that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and that our bodies may be temples of his Holy Spirit, we must as our prophet exhorts here, *lift up our souls*, that is, in the words of St. Paul (Col. iii. 2), our affections must be set on things which are above, and not on things which are on earth : if we desire to lift up our hearts unto Christ's verity, we may not lift them up unto the world's vanity ; that is, we must not fasten our love too much upon the things of this life, but on those pleasures at God's right hand which are evermore ; that as we have borne the image of the first Adam, who was earthly, so we should bear the image of the second Adam, which is heavenly. 1 Cor. xv. 49. The prophane worldling sings a *Nunc dimittis* unto Christ, and saith as the devils, " Ah ! what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Narazeth ? " (Mark i. 24) ; and as Job reports his words, " Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Job xxi. 14. On the contrary, the religious soul, enjoying the possession of the Saviour, chanteth a merry *Magnificat*, and a pleasant *Te Deum :* she saith unto Christ, as Ruth unto Naomi (Ruth i. 16), " Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee." Nay, death itself shall not part us, for when I am loosed out of my body's prison, I hope to be with Christ ; as Ittai then unto David, I say unto Jesus, " As the Lord liveth, and as my Lord the king liveth, surely in what place the lord my king shall be, whether in death, or life, even there also will thy servant be." 2 Sam. xv, 21. O Lord, which art the God of my salvation, I lift my heart to thee, desirous to seek thee, both in the right *ubi*—where thou mayst be found, and in the right *quando*—while thou mayst be found. Psalm xviii. 47 ; xxv. 1. Open my dull ears and hard heart, that thy Son my Saviour may come in and dwell with me. Grant me grace that I may still hear while he calleth, open while he knocketh, and hold him also when I have him ; that I may both *ascend thine hill*, and *stand in thine holy places ;* that I may not only sojourn in thy tabernacle, but also rest and dwell upon the mountain of thine holiness.—*John Boys.*

Verse 7.—"*Everlasting doors.*" Heaven's gates are called "*everlasting,*" because they shall endure for ever, or because they be the doors unto the life which is everlasting.—*John Boys.*

Verse 7.—Whatever we may think of these things, David thought it high time for him to bid such a messenger welcome, and to open his heart for the receiving his God. Hear what he saith to his own heart and others : " *Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in.*" And because the door of men's hearts is locked, and barred and bolted, and men are in a deep sleep, and will not hear the knocking that is at the gate, though it be loud, though it be a king ; therefore David knocks again, " *Lift up, ye everlasting doors.*" Why, what haste, saith the sinner ? What haste ? Why, here's the King at your gates ; and that not an ordinary king neither ; he is a glorious King, that will honour you so far, if you open quickly, as to lodge within, to take up his abode in your house, to dwell with you. But the soul for all this doth not yet open, but stands still questioning, as if it were an enemy rather than a friend that stood there, and asks, " *Who is this King of glory ?* " Who ? He answers again, " *It is the Lord of Hosts ;* " he, that if you will not open quickly and thankfully too, can easily pull your house down about your ears ; he is the Lord of hosts, that King who hath a mighty army always at his command, who stand ready for their commission, and then you should know who it is you might have had for your friend ; " Lift up, therefore, your heads, O ye gates." Open quickly, ye that had rather have God for your friend than for your enemy. Oh, why should not the soul of every sinner cry out, Lord, the door is locked, and thou hast the key ; I have been trying what I can do, but the wards are so rusty that I cannot possibly turn the key ? But, Lord, throw the door off the hinges, anything in the world so thou wilt but come in and dwell here. Come, O mighty God, break through doors of iron, and bars of brass, and make way for thyself by thy love and power. Come, Lord, and

make thyself welcome; all that I have is at thy service; O fit my soul to entertain thee!—*James Janeway.*

Verse 7.—He hath left with us the earnest of the Spirit, and taken from us the earnest of our flesh, which he hath carried into heaven as a pledge that the whole shall follow after.—*Tertullian.*

Verse 7.—Christ is gone to heaven as a victor; leading sin, Satan, death, hell, and all his enemies in triumph at his chariot wheels. He has not only overcome his enemies for himself, but for all his people, whom he will make conquerors, yea, "more than conquerors." As he has overcome, so shall they also overcome; and as he is gone to heaven a victor, they shall follow in triumph. He is in heaven as a Saviour. When he came from heaven it was in the character of a Saviour; when on earth he obtained eternal salvation; in heaven he lives as a Saviour; when he comes again from heaven he will come as a Saviour; and when he will return, he will return as a Saviour. He is also gone to heaven as the rightful heir. He is not gone to heaven as a sojourner, but as "the heir of all things." He is the heir of heavenly glory and happiness, and believers are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." *Henry Pendlebury,* 1626—1695.

Verse 7.—"O clap your hands together, all ye people; sing unto God with the voice of melody. God is gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of the trump." Psalm xlvii. 1, 5. This Ark, which has saved the world from destruction, after floating on a deluge of blood, rests at length on the mountain. This innocent Joseph, whose virtue had been oppressed by the synagogue, is brought out of the dungeon to receive a crown. This invincible Samson has carried away the gates of hell, and goes in triumph to the everlasting hills. This victorious Joshua has passed over Jordan with the ark of the covenant, and takes possession of the land of the living. This Sun of righteousness, which had gone down ten degrees, returns backward to the place which it had left. He who was "a worm" at his birth, a Lamb in his passion, and a Lion in his resurrection, now ascends as an Eagle to heaven, and encourages us to follow him thither. This day heaven learns to endure man's presence, and men to walk above the stars; the heavenly Jerusalem receives its rightful King, the church its High Priest, the house of God its Heritor, the whole world its Ruler. "O sing praises, sing praises unto our God: O sing praises, sing praises unto our King." Psalm xlvii. 6—8. "God reigneth over the heathen, God sitteth upon his holy seat." "The princes of the people are joined unto" him; "he is very highly exalted" above them.—*From "The Life of Jesus Christ in Glory," translated from the French of James Nouet.*

Verses 7, 8.—Christ being now arrived at heaven's doors, those heavenly spirits that accompanied him began to say, "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in!*" to whom some of the angels that were within, not ignorant of his person, but admiring his majesty and glory, said again, "*Who is the King of glory?*" and then they answered, "*The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle;*" and thereupon those twelve gates of the holy city, of new Jerusalem, opened of their own accord, and Jesus Christ with all his ministering spirits entered in. O my soul, how should this heighten thy joy and enlarge thy comforts, in that Christ is now received up into glory? Every sight of Christ is glorious, and in every sight thou shouldst wait on the Lord Jesus Christ for some glorious manifestations of himself. Come, live up to the rate of this great mystery; view Christ as entering into glory, and thou wilt find the same sparkles of glory on thy heart. Oh! this sight is a transforming sight: "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 18. *Isaac Ambrose.*

Verses 7, 8.—Ye that are thus the living temples of the Lord, and have already entertained his sanctifying Spirit into you, do you lift up your hearts in the use of holy ordinances through faith, in joyful desires and assured expectation of him; yea, be you abundantly lift up by faith in the use of holy means, who are the everlasting habitation of an everlasting God, with a joyful and assured welcome of him; for so shall you invite and undoubtedly entertain the high and mighty Potentate, the Lord Christ into your souls, with the glorious manifestation and ravishing operation of his love, benefits, and graces. And know, O all ye faithful and obedient ones, for your courage and comfort, who, and of what quality this glorious King, the Lord Jesus is, whom the world despises but you honour. Why, he is the Almighty God, of power all-sufficient to preserve and defend his people and church, that in trust of

him do love and serve him, against all the strength and power of men and devils that do or shall malign or oppose themselves against them, and to put them to the foil, as we his Israel in the letter have found by experience for your instruction and corroboration that are his people in spirit.—*George Abbot, in "Brief Notes upon the whole Book of Psalms,"* 1651.

Verses 7—10.—Oh, what tongue of the highest archangel of heaven can express the welcome of thee, the King of glory, into these blessed regions of immortality? Surely the empyreal heaven never resounded with so much joy: God ascended with jubilation, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet. It is not for us, weak and finite creatures, to wish to conceive those incomprehensible, spiritual, divine gratulations, that the glorious Trinity gave to the victorious and now glorified human nature. Certainly, if, when he brought his only-begotten Son into the world, he said, "Let all the angels worship him;" much more now that he "ascends on high, and hath led captivity captive, hath he given him a name above all names, that at the name of Jesus all knees should bow." And if the holy angels did so carol at his birth, in the very entrance into that state of humiliation and infirmity with what triumph did they receive him now returning from the perfect achievement of man's redemption? and if, when his type had vanished Goliath, and carried his head into Jerusalem, the damsels came forth to meet him with dances and timbrels, how shall we think those angelical spirits triumphed in meeting of the great Conqueror of hell and death? How did they sing, "*Lift up your heads, ye gates! and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.*" Surely as he shall come, so he went; and, "Behold, he shall come with thousands of his holy ones; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand thousands stood before him;" from all whom, methinks I hear that blessed applause, "Worthy is the Lamb that was killed, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and praise: praise and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for evermore." And why dost not thou, O my soul, help to bear thy part with that happy choir of heaven? Why art not thou rapt out of my bosom, with an ecstacy of joy, to see this human nature of ours exalted above all the powers of heaven adored of angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim, and all those mighty and glorious spirits, and sitting there crowned with infinite glory and majesty?—*Joseph Hall.*

Verses 7—10—In the twenty-fourth Psalm, we have an account of the actual entrance of Christ into heaven. When the King of England wishes to enter the city of London, through the Temple Bar, the gate being closed against him, the herald demands entrance. "Open the gate." From within a voice is heard, "Who is there?" The herald answers, "The King of England!" The gate is at once opened, and the king passes, amidst the joyful acclamations of his people. This is an ancient custom, and the allusion is to it in this Psalm. "The Lord ascended with a shout;" he approached the heavenly portal—the herald in his escort demanded an entrance, "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.*" The celestial watchers within ask, "*Who is the King of glory?*" The heralds answer, "*The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.*" The question and answer being repeated once more, the gates lift up their heads, and the everlasting doors are lifted up. The Prince enters his Father's palace, greeted with the acclamations of heaven, all whose inhabitants unite in one shout of joy ineffable: "*The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory!*"—*Christmas Evans.*

Verses 7—10.—If we follow our Redeemer in his ascension and session at the right hand of God, where he is constituted Lord of all, angels, principalities, and powers being made subject to him, and where he sits till his enemies are made his footstool, we shall observe the tide of celestial blessedness rise higher and higher still. The return of a great and beloved prince, who should by only hazarding his life, have saved his country, would fill a nation with ecstacy. Their conversation in every company would turn upon him, and all their thoughts and joys concentrate in him. See then the King of kings, after having by death abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light; after spoiling the powers of darkness, and ruining all their schemes; see him return in triumph! There was something like triumph when he entered into Jerusalem. All the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" And the multitude answered, It is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth; and the very children sung, Hosannah to the Son of David: blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosannah in the highest! How much greater then must

be the triumph of his entry into the heavenly Jerusalem! Would not all the city be "moved" in this case, saying "*Who is this?*" See thousands of angels attending him, and ten thousand times ten thousand come forth to meet him! The entrance of the ark into the city of David was but a shadow of this, and the responsive strains which were sung on that occasion would on this be much more applicable.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verses 7—10.—Why is the song repeated? Why are the everlasting gates invited to lift up their heads a second time? We may not pretend here, or in any place, to know all the meaning of the divine Psalms. But what if the repetition of this verse was meant to put us in mind that our Saviour's ascension will be repeated also? He will not indeed die any more; death can no more have any dominion over him; "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." Neither of course can he rise again any more. But as he will come again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead, so after that descent he will have to ascend again. And I say, this second ascension may be signified by the Psalmist calling on the everlasting doors to lift up their heads a second time, and make way for the King of glory. Now observe the answer made this second time, "*Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.*" Before, it was "*the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle;*" now it is "*The Lord of Hosts.*" Christ ascending the first time, to intercede for us at his Father's right hand, is called "*The Lord mighty in battle.*" But Christ, ascending the second time, after the world hath been judged, and the good and bad separated for ever. is called "*the Lord of hosts.*" Why this difference in his divine titles? We may reverently take it, that it signifies to us the difference between his first and second coming down to earth, his first and second ascension into heaven. As in other respects his first coming was in great humility, so in this, that he came, in all appearance, alone. The angels were indeed waiting round him, but not visibly, not in glory. "He trode the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with him." He wrestled with death, hell and Satan, alone. Alone he rose from the dead: alone, as far as man could see, he went up to heaven. Thus he showed himself "the Lord mighty in battle," mighty in that single combat which he, as our champion, our David, victoriously maintained against our great enemy. But when he shall come down and go up the second time, he will show himself "the Lord of hosts." Instead of coming down alone in mysterious silence, as in his wonderful incarnation, he will be followed by all the armies of heaven. "The Lord my God will come, and all his saints with him." "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." "The Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father, and all the holy angels with him." "Thousand thousands will stand around him, and ten thousand times ten thousand will minister unto him." Instead of the silence of that quiet chamber at Nazareth, and of the holy Virgin's womb, there will be the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God accompanying him. Thus he will come down as the Lord of hosts, and as the Lord of hosts he will ascend again to his Father. After the judgment, he will pass again through the everlasting doors, with a greater company than before; for he will lead along with him, into the heavenly habitation, all those who shall have been raised from their graves and found worthy. Hear how the awful sight is described by one who will doubtless have a high place in that day near the Judge. The great apostle and prophet, St. Paul, says, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."—*John Keble, M.A.*

Verses 7—10.—

In his blessed life
I see the path, and in his death the price,
And in his great ascent the proof supreme
Of immortality. And did he rise?
Hear, O ye nations! hear it, O ye dead!
He rose! He rose! He burst the bars of death.
Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates!
And give the King of glory to come in.
Who is the King of glory? He who left
His throne of glory for the pangs of death.
Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates!
And give the King of glory to come in.
Who is the King of glory? He who slew
The ravenous foe that gorged all human race.
The King of glory, he whose glory filled
Heaven with amazement at his love to man,
And with divine complacency beheld
Powers most illumined 'wildered in the theme.

Edward Young.

Verses 7—10.—

Lift up your heads, ye gates, and, O prepare,
Ye living orbs, your everlasting doors,
The King of glory comes!
What King of glory? He whose puissant might
Subdued Abaddon, and the infernal powers
Of darkness bound in adamantine chains:
Who, wrapp'd in glory, with the Father reigns,
Omnipotent, immortal, infinite!

James Scott.

Verse 8.—"*Who is the King of glory?*" Christ in two respects is "*the King of glory.*" 1. For that all honour and glory belong properly to him—his is "the kingdom, the power, and the glory" (Matt. vi. 13), called in this regard, "The Lord of glory." 1 Cor. ii. 8. 2. For that Christ maketh us partakers of his glory, termed in this respect our glorious Lord Jesus. James ii. 1. If the Lord of hosts, strong and mighty in battle, be the King of glory, then Christ, (having conquered all his enemies, and made them his footstool, triumphing over death, and the devil which is the founder of death, and sin which is the sting of death, and the grave which is the prison of death, and hell itself which is the proper dominion of the devil and death) is doubtless in himself, "*the King of glory.*" And for as much as he died for our sins, and is risen again for our justification, and is ascended on high to give gifts unto men—in this life grace, in the next glory—what is he less than a "*King of glory*" towards us, of whom and through whom alone we that fight his battles are delivered from the hands of all that hate us, and so made victors (1 Cor. xv. 57), yea, "more than conquerors." Rom. viii. 37.—*John Boys.*

Verse 8.—"*The Lord strong and mighty.*" "*Strong and mighty.*" in subduing all adversaries; and overcoming death and the devil who had the power of death. *Ludolphus, quoted by Isaac Williams.*

Verse 10.—"*Jehovah of hosts,*" or, as the Hebrew is, *Jehovah Tsebaoth*, for so the word is used by the apostles, untranslated in the Greek, *Sabaoth.* Rom. ix. 29. It signifieth *hosts* or *armies* standing ready in martial order, and in battle array, and comprehendeth all creatures in heaven and in earth, which are pressed to do the will of God.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The great Proprietor, his estates and his servants, his rights and wrongs.

Verse 1.—"*The earth is the Lord's.*" I. *Mention other claimants*—idols: pope, man, devil, etc. II. *Try the suit.* III. *Carry out the verdict.* Use our substance, preach everywhere, claim all things for God. IV. *See how glorious the earth looks when she bears her Master's name.*

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—All men belong to God. His sons or his subjects, his servants or his serfs, his sheep or his goats, etc.

Verse 2.—Divine purposes accomplished by singular means.

Verse 2.—*Founded on the seas.* Instability of terrestrial things.

Verse 3.—The all-important question.

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—Connection between outward morality and inward purity.

Verse 4 (*second clause*).—Men judged by their delights.

Verse 4.—"*Clean hands.*" 1. How to get them clean. II. How to keep them clean. III. How to defile them. IV. How to get them clean again.

Verses 4, 5.—Character manifested and favour received.

Verse 5 (*second clause*).—The good man receiving righteousness and needing salvation, or the evangelical meaning of apparently legal passages.

Verse 6.—Those who truly seek fellowship with God.

Verse 7.—Accommodate the text to the entrance of Jesus Christ into our hearts.

I. There are obstacles, "*gates*," "*doors*." II. We must will to remove them: "*lift up*." III. Grace must enable us: "*be ye lift up*." IV. Our Lord will enter. V. He enters as "*King*," and "*King of glory*."

Verse 7.—The ascension and its teachings.

Verses 7—10.—I. His title—the Lord of hosts. II. His victories, implied in the expression, The Lord strong and mighty in battle. III. His mediatorial title, The King of glory. IV. His authoritative entrance into the holy place.—*John Newton's "Messiah."*

Verse 8.—The mighty Hero. His pedigree, his power, his battles, his victories.

Verse 10.—The sovereignty and glory of God in Christ.

PSALM XXV.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *David is pictured in this Psalm as in a faithful miniature. His holy trust, his many conflicts, his great transgressions, his bitter repentance, and his deep distresses are all here; so that we see the very heart of "the man after God's own heart." It is evidently a composition of David's later days, for he mentions the sins of his youth, and from its painful references to the craft and cruelty of his many foes, it will not be too speculative a theory to refer it to the period when Absalom was heading the great rebellion against him. This has been styled the second of the seven Penitential Psalms. It is the mark of a true saint that his sorrows remind him of his sins, and his sorrow for sin drives him to his God.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—*The twenty-two verses of this Psalm begin in the original with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in their proper order. It is the first instance we have of an inspired acrostic or alphabetical song. This method may have been adopted by the writer to assist the memory; and the Holy Spirit may have employed it to show us that the graces of style and the arts of poetry may lawfully be used in his service. Why should not all the wit and ingenuity of man be sanctified to noblest ends by being laid upon the altar of God? From the singularity of the structure of the Psalm, it is not easy to discover any marked divisions; there are great changes of thought, but there is no variation of subject; the moods of the writer's mind are twofold—prayer and meditation; and as these appear in turns, we shall thus divide the verses. Prayer from verses* 1 *to* 7; *meditation, verses* 8, 9, 10; *prayer, verse* 11; *meditation, verses* 12—15; *prayer, verses* 16 *to end.*

EXPOSITION.

UNTO thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.

4 Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.

5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou *art* the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they *have been* ever of old.

7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

1. "*Unto thee, O Lord.*"—See how the holy soul flies to its God like a dove to its cote. When the storm-winds are out, the Lord's vessels put about and make for their well-remembered harbour of refuge. What a mercy that the Lord will condescend to hear our cries in time of trouble, although we may have almost forgotten him in our hours of fancied prosperity. "*Unto thee, O Jehovah, do I lift up my soul.*" It is but mockery to uplift the hands and the eyes unless we also bring our souls into our devotions. True prayer may be described as the soul rising from earth to have fellowship with heaven; it is taking a journey upon Jacob's ladder, leaving our cares and fears at the foot, and meeting with a covenant God at the top. Very often the soul cannot rise, she has lost her wings, and is heavy and earth-bound; more like a burrowing mole than a soaring eagle. At such dull seasons we must not give over prayer, but must, by God's assistance, exert all our power to lift up our hearts. Let faith be the lever and grace be the arm, and the dead lump will yet be stirred. But what a lift it has sometimes proved! With all our tugging and straining we have been utterly defeated, until the heavenly loadstone of our Saviour's love has displayed its omnipotent attractions, and then our hearts have gone up to our Beloved like mounting flames of fire.

2. "*O my God.*" This title is more dear and near than the name Jehovah,

which is used in the first sentence. Already the sweet singer has drawn nearer to his heavenly helper, for he makes bold to grasp him with the hand of assured possession, calling him, my God. Oh the more than celestial music of that word—"*my God!*" It is to be observed that the Psalmist does not deny expression to those gracious feelings with which God had favoured him; he does not fall into loathsome mock modesty, but finding in his soul a desire to seek the Lord he avows it; believing that he had a rightful interest in Jehovah he declares it, and knowing that he had confidence in his God he professes it; "*O my God, I trust in thee.*" Faith is the cable which binds our boat to the shore, and by pulling at it we draw ourselves to the land; faith unites us to God, and then draws us near to him. As long as the anchor of faith holds there is no fear in the worst tempest; if that should fail us there would be no hope left. We must see to it that our faith is sound and strong, for otherwise prayer cannot prevail with God. Woe to the warrior who throws away his shield; what defence can be found for him who finds no defence in God? "*Let me not be ashamed*" Let not my disappointed hopes makes me feel ashamed of my former testimonies to thy faithfulness. Many were on the watch for this. The best of men have their enemies, and should pray against them that they may not see their wicked desires accomplished. "*Let not mine enemies triumph over me.*" Suffer no wicked mouth to make blasphemous mirth out of my distresses by asking "Where is thy God?" There is a great jealousy in believers for the honour of God, and they cannot endure that unbelievers should taunt them with the failure of their expectations from the God of their salvation. All other trusts will end in disappointment and eternal shame, but our confidences shall never be confounded.

3. "*Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed.*" Suffering enlarges the heart by creating the power to sympathize. If we pray eagerly for ourselves, we shall not long be able to forget our fellow-sufferers. None pity the poor like those who have been or are still poor, none have such tenderness for the sick as those who have been long in ill health themselves. We ought to be grateful for occasional griefs if they preserve us from chronic hard-heartedness; for of all afflictions, an unkind heart is the worst, it is a plague to its possessor, and a torment to those around him. Prayer when it is of the Holy Ghost's teaching is never selfish; the believer does not sue for monopolies for himself, but would have all in like case to partake of divine mercy with him. The prayer may be viewed as a promise; our Heavenly Father will never let his trustful children find him untrue or unkind. He will ever be mindful of his covenant. "*Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.*" David had given his enemies no provocation; their hatred was wanton. Sinners have no justifiable reason or valid excuse for transgressing; they benefit no one, not even themselves by their sins; the law against which they transgress is not harsh or unjust; God is not a tyrannical ruler, providence is not a bondage: men sin because they will sin, not because it is either profitable or reasonable to do so. Hence shame is their fitting reward. May they blush with penitential shame now, or else they will not be able to escape the everlasting contempt and the bitter shame which is the promotion of fools in the world to come.

4. "*Shew me thy ways, O Lord.*" Unsanctified natures clamour for their own way, but gracious spirits cry, "Not my will, but thine be done." We cannot at all times discern the path of duty, and at such times it is our wisdom to apply to the Lord himself. Frequently the dealings of God with us are mysterious, and then also we may appeal to him as his own interpreter, and in due time he will make all things plain. Moral, providential and mental forms of guidance are all precious gifts of a gracious God to a teachable people. The second petition, "*teach me thy paths,*" appears to mean more than the first, and may be illustrated by the case of a little child who should say to his father, "Father, first tell me which is the way, and then teach my little trembling feet to walk in it." What weak dependent creatures we are! How constantly we cry to the Strong for strength!

5. "*Lead me in thy truth, and teach me.*" The same request as in the last verse. The little child having begun to walk, asks to be still led onward by its parent's helping hand, and to be further instructed in the alphabet of truth. Experimental teaching is the burden of this prayer. Lead me according to thy truth, and prove thyself faithful; lead me into truth that I may know its preciousness, lead me by the way of truth that I may manifest its spirit. David knew much, but he felt his ignorance and desired to be still in the Lord's school; four times over in these two verses he applies for a scholarship in the college of grace. It were well for many professors

if instead of following their own devices, and cutting out new paths of thought for themselves, they would enquire for the good old ways of God's own truth, and beseech the Holy Ghost to give them sanctified understandings and teachable spirits. "*For thou art the God of my salvation.*" The Three-One Jehovah is the Author and Perfector of salvation to his people. Reader, is he the God of *your* salvation? Do you find in the Father's election, in the Son's atonement, and in the Spirit's quickening all the grounds of your eternal hopes? If so, you may use this as an argument for obtaining further blessings; if the Lord has ordained to save you, surely he will not refuse to instruct you in his ways. It is a happy thing when we can address the Lord with the confidence which David here manifests, it gives us great power in prayer, and comfort in trial. "*On thee do I wait all the day.*" Patience is the fair handmaid and daughter of faith; we cheerfully wait when we are certain that we shall not wait in vain. It is our duty and our privilege to wait upon the Lord in service, in worship, in expectancy, in trust all the days of our life. Our faith will be tried faith, and if it be of the true kind, it will bear continued trial without yielding. We shall not grow weary of waiting upon God if we remember how long and how graciously he once waited for us.

6. "*Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindnesses.*" We are usually tempted in seasons of affliction to fear that our God has forgotten us, or forgotten his usual kindness towards us; hence the soul doth as it were put the Lord in remembrance, and beseech him to recollect those deeds of love which once he wrought towards it. There is a holy boldness which ventures thus to deal with the Most High, let us cultivate it; but there is also an unholy unbelief which suggests our fears, let us strive against it with all our might. What gems are those two expressions, "*tender mercies and loving-kindnesses*"! They are the virgin honey of language; for sweetness no words can excel them; but as for the gracious favours which are intended by them, language fails to describe them.

> "When all thy mercies, O my God,
> My rising soul surveys,
> Transported with the view, I'm lost
> In wonder, love and praise."

If the Lord will only do unto us in the future as in the past, we shall be well content. We seek no change in the divine action, we only crave that the river of grace may never cease to flow.

"*For they have been ever of old.*" A more correct translation would be "from eternity." David was a sound believer in the doctrine of God's eternal love. The Lord's loving-kindnesses are no novelties. When we plead with him to bestow them upon us, we can urge use and custom of the most ancient kind. In courts of law men make much of precedents, and we may plead them at the throne of grace. "Faith," saith Dickson, "must make use of experiences and read them over unto God out of the register of a sanctified memory, as a recorder to him who cannot forget" With an unchangeable God it is a most effectual argument to remind him of his ancient mercies and his eternal love By tracing all that we enjoy to the fountain-head of everlasting love we shall greatly cheer our hearts, and those do us but sorry service who try to dissuade us from meditating upon election and its kindred topics.

7 "*Remember not the sins of my youth.*" Sin is *the* stumbling-block. This is the thing to be removed. Lord, pass an act of oblivion for all my sins, and especially for the hot-blooded wanton follies of my younger years. Those offences which we remember with repentance God forgets, but if we forget them, justice will bring them forth to punishment. The world winks at the sins of young men, and yet they are not so little after all; the bones of our youthful feastings at Satan's table will stick painfully in our throats when we are old men. He who presumes upon his youth is poisoning his old age. How large a tear may wet this page as some of us reflect upon the past! "*Nor my transgressions.*" Another word for the same evils. Sincere penitents cannot get through their confessions at a gallop; they are constrained to use many bemoanings, for their swarming sins smite them with so innumerable griefs. A painful sense of any one sin provokes the believer to repentance for the whole mass of his iniquities. Nothing but the fullest and clearest pardon will satisfy a thoroughly awakened conscience. David would have his sins not only forgiven, but forgotten.

"*According to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.*" David

and the dying thief breathe the same prayer, and doubtless they grounded it upon the same plea, viz, the free grace and unmerited goodness of Jehovah. We dare not ask to have our portion measured from the balances of justice, but we pray to be dealt with by the hand of mercy.

8 Good and upright *is* the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

10 All the paths of the LORD *are* mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

These three verses are a meditation upon the attributes and acts of the Lord. He who toils in the harvest field of prayer should occasionally pause awhile and refresh himself with a meal of meditation.

8. "*Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.*" Here the goodness and the rectitude of the divine character are beheld in friendly union; he who would see them thus united in bonds of perfect amity must stand at the foot of the cross and view them blended in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. It is no less true than wonderful that through the atonement the justice of God pleads as strongly as his grace for the salvation of the sinners whom Jesus died to save. Moreover, as a good man naturally endeavours to make others like himself, so will the Lord our God in his compassion bring sinners into the way of holiness and conform them to his own image; thus the goodness of our God leads us to expect the reclaiming of sinful men. We may not conclude from God's goodness that he will save those sinners who continue to wander in their own ways, but we may be assured that he will renew transgressors' hearts and guide them into the way of holiness. Let those who desire to be delivered from sin take comfort from this. God himself will condescend to be the teacher of sinners. What a ragged school is this for God to teach in! God's teaching is practical; he teaches sinners not only the doctrine, but *the way*.

9. "*The meek will he guide in judgment.*" Meek spirits are in high favour with the Father of the meek and lowly Jesus, for he sees in them the image of his only-begotten Son. They know their need of guidance, and are willing to submit their own understandings to divine will, and therefore the Lord condescends to be their guide. Humble spirits are in this verse endowed with a rich inheritance; let them be of good cheer. Trouble puts gentle spirits to their wits' ends, and drives them to act without discretion, but grace comes to the rescue, enlightens their mind to follow that which is just, and helps them to discern the way in which the Lord would have them to go. Proud of their own wisdom fools will not learn, and therefore miss their road to heaven, but lowly hearts sit at Jesu's feet, and find the gate of glory, for "*the meek will he teach his way.*" Blessed teacher! Favoured scholar! Divine lesson! My soul, be thou familiar with the whole.

10. This is a rule without an exception. God is good to those that be good. Mercy and faithfulness shall abound towards those who through mercy are made faithful. Whatever outward appearances may threaten we should settle it steadfastly in our minds that while grace enables us to obey the Lord's will we need not fear that Providence will cause us any real loss. There shall be mercy in every unsavoury morsel, and faithfulness in every bitter drop; let not our hearts be troubled, but let us rest by faith in the immutable covenant of Jehovah, which is ordered in all things and sure. Yet this is not a general truth to be trampled upon by swine, it is a pearl for a child's neck. Gracious souls, by faith resting upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus, *keep* the *covenant* of the Lord, and, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, they walk in *his testimonies;* these will find all things co-working for their good, but to the sinner there is no such promise. Keepers of the covenant shall be kept by the covenant; those who follow the Lord's commands shall find the Lord's mercy following them.

11 For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it *is* great.

This sentence of prayer would seem out of place were it not that prayer is always in its place, whether in season or out of season. Meditation having refreshed the Psalmist, he falls to his weighty work again, and wrestles with God for the remission of

his sin. "*For thy name's sake, O Lord.*" Here is a blessed, never-failing plea. Not for our sakes or our merits' sake, but to glorify thy mercy, and to show forth the glory of thy divine attributes. "*Pardon mine iniquity.*" It is confessed, it is abhorred, it is consuming my heart with grief; Lord forgive it; let thine own lips pronounce my absolution. "*For it is great.*" It weighs so heavily upon me that I pray thee remove it. Its greatness is no difficulty with thee, for thou art a great God, but the misery which it causes to me is my argument with thee for speedy pardon. Lord, the patient is sore sick, therefore, heal him. To pardon a great sinner will bring thee great glory, therefore for thy name's sake pardon me. Observe how this verse illustrates the logic of faith, which is clean contrary to that of a legal spirit; faith looks not for merit in the creature, but hath regard to the goodness of the Creator; and instead of being staggered by the demerits of sin it looks to the precious blood, and pleads all the more vigorously because of the urgency of the case.

12 What man *is* he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way *that* he shall choose.

13 His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.

14 The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.

15 Mine eyes *are* ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

12. "*What man is he that feareth the Lord?*" Let the question provoke self-examination. Gospel privileges are not for every pretender. Art thou of the seed royal or no? "*Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*" Those whose hearts are right shall not err for want of heavenly direction. Where God sanctifies the heart he enlightens the head. We all wish to choose our way; but what a mercy is it when the Lord directs that choice, and makes free-will to be good-will! If we make our will God's will, God will let us have our will. God does not violate our will, but leaves much to our choice; nevertheless, he instructs our wills, and so we choose that which is well-pleasing in his sight. The will should be subject to law; there is a way which we should choose, but so ignorant are we that we need to be taught, and so wilful that none but God himself can teach us effectually.

13. He who fears God has nothing else to fear. "*His soul shall dwell at ease.*" He shall lodge in the chamber of content. One may sleep as soundly in the little bed in the corner as in the Great Bed of Ware; it is not abundance but content that gives true ease. Even here, having learned by grace both to abound and to be empty, the believer dwells at ease; but how profound will be the ease of his soul for ever! There he will enjoy the "*otium cum dignitate;*" ease and glory shall go together. Like a warrior whose battles are over, or a husbandman whose barns are full, his soul shall take its ease, and be merry for ever. "*His seed shall inherit the earth.*" God remembers, Isaac for the sake of Abraham, and Jacob for the sake of Isaac. Good men's sons have a goodly portion to begin the world with, but many of them, alas! turn a father's blessing into a curse. The promise is not broken because in some instances men wilfully refuse to receive it; moreover, it is in its spiritual meaning that it now holds good; our spiritual seed do inherit all that was meant by "*the earth,*" or Canaan; they receive the blessing of the new covenant. May the Lord make us the joyful parents of many spiritual children, and we shall have no fears about their maintenance, for the Lord will make each one of them princes in all the earth.

14. "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.*" Some read it "the friendship:" it signifies familiar intercourse, confidential intimacy, and select fellowship. This is a great secret. Carnal minds cannot guess what is intended by it, and even believers cannot explain it in words, for it must be felt to be known. The higher spiritual life is necessarily a path which the eagle's eye hath not known, and which the lion's whelp has not travelled; neither natural wisdom nor strength can force a door into this inner chamber. Saints have the key of heaven's hieroglyphics; they can unriddle celestial enigmas. They are initiated into the fellowship of the skies; they have heard words which it is not possible for them to repeat to their fellows. "*And he will shew them his covenant.*" Its antiquity, security, righteousness, fulness, graciousness and excellence shall be revealed to their hearts

and understandings, and above all, their own part in it shall be sealed to their souls by the witness of the Holy Spirit. The designs of love which the Lord has to his people in the covenant of grace, he has been pleased to show to believers in the Book of Inspiration, and by his Spirit he leads us into the mystery, even the hidden mystery of redemption. He who does not know the meaning of this verse, will never learn it from a commentary; let him look to the cross for the secret lies there.

15. "*Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.*" The writer claims to be fixed in his trust, and constant in his expectation; he looks in confidence and waits in hope. We may add to this look of faith and hope the obedient look of service, the humble look of reverence, the admiring look of wonder, the studious look of meditation and the tender look of affection. Happy are those whose eyes are never removed from their God. "The eye," says Solomon, "is never satisfied with seeing," but this sight is the most satisfying in the world. "*For he shall pluck my feet out of the net.*" Observe the conflicting condition in which a gracious soul may be placed, his eyes are in heaven and yet his feet are sometimes in a net; his nobler nature ceases not to behold the glories of God, while his baser parts are enduring the miseries of the world. A net is the common metaphor for temptation. The Lord often keeps his people from falling into it, and if they have fallen he rescues them. The word "*pluck*" is a rough word, and saints who have fallen into sin find that the means of their restoration are not always easy to the flesh; the Lord plucks at us sharply to let us feel that sin is an exceeding bitter thing. But what a mercy is here! Believer, be very grateful for it. The Lord will deliver us from the cunning devices of our cruel enemy, and even if through infirmity we have fallen into sin, he will not leave us to be utterly destroyed but will pluck us out of our dangerous state; though our feet are in the net, if our eyes are up unto God, mercy certainly will interpose.

16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I *am* desolate and afflicted.

17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: *O* bring thou me out of my distresses.

18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.

19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.

20 O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.

21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

16. His own eyes were fixed upon God, but he feared that the Lord had averted his face from him in anger. Oftentimes unbelief suggests that God has turned his back upon us. If we know that we turn to God we need not fear that he will turn from us, but may boldly cry, "*Turn thee unto me.*" The ground of quarrel is always in ourselves, and when that is removed there is nothing to prevent our full enjoyment of communion with God. "*Have mercy upon me.*" Saints still must stand upon the footing of mercy; notwithstanding all their experience they cannot get beyond the publican's prayer, "Have mercy upon me." "*For I am desolate and afflicted.*" He was lonely and bowed down. Jesus was in the days of his flesh in just such a condition; none could enter into the secret depths of his sorrows, he trod the winepress alone, and hence he is able to succour in the fullest sense those who tread the solitary path.

> "Christ leads me through no darker rooms
> Than he went through before;
> He that into God's kingdom comes,
> Must enter by this door."

17. "*The troubles of my heart are enlarged.*" When trouble penetrates the heart it is trouble indeed. In the case before us, the heart was swollen with grief like a lake surcharged with water by enormous floods; this is used as an argument for deliverance, and it is a potent one. When the darkest hour of the night arrives we may expect the dawn; when the sea is at its lowest ebb the tide must surely turn; and when our troubles are enlarged to the greatest degree, then may we hopefully pray, "*O bring thou me out of my distresses.*"

18. "*Look upon mine affliction and my pain.*" Note the many trials of the saints; here we have no less than six words all descriptive of woe. "Desolate, and afflicted, troubles enlarged, distresses, affliction, and pain." But note yet more the submissive and believing spirit of a true saint; all he asks for is, "Lord, look upon my evil plight;" he does not dictate or even express a complaint; a look from God will content him, and that being granted he asks no more. Even more noteworthy is the way in which the believer under affliction discovers the true source of all the mischief, and lays the axe at the root of it. "*Forgive all my sins,*" is the cry of a soul that is more sick of sin than of pain, and would sooner be forgiven than healed. Blessed is the man to whom sin is more unbearable than disease, he shall not be long before the Lord shall both forgive his iniquity and heal his diseases. Men are slow to see the intimate connection between sin and sorrow, a grace-taught heart alone feels it.

19. "*Consider mine enemies.*" Watch them, weigh them, check them, defeat them. "*For they are many.*" They need the eyes of Argus to watch them, and the arms of Hercules to match them, but the Lord is more than sufficient to defeat them. The devils of hell and the evils of earth are all vanquished when the Lord makes bare his arm. "*They hate me with cruel hatred.*" It is the breath of the serpent's seed to hate; their progenitor was a hater, and they themselves must needs imitate him. No hate so cruel as that which is unreasonable and unjust. A man can forgive one who has injured him, but one whom he has injured he hates implacably. "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves," is still our Master's word to us.

20. "*O keep my soul*" out of evil, "*and deliver me*" when I fall into it. This is another version of the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"*Let me not be ashamed.*" This is the one fear which like a ghost haunted the Psalmist's mind. He trembled lest his faith should become the subject of ridicule through the extremity of his affliction. Noble hearts can brook anything but shame. David was of such a chivalrous spirit, that he could endure any torment rather than to be put to dishonour. "*For I put my trust in thee.*" And therefore the name of God would be compromised if his servants were deserted; this the believing heart can by no means endure.

21. "*Let integrity and uprightness preserve me.*" What better practical safeguards can a man require? If we do not prosper with these as our guides, it is better for us to suffer adversity. Even the ungodly world admits that "honesty is the best policy." The heir of heaven makes assurance doubly sure, for apart from the rectitude of his public life, he enlists the guardian care of heaven in secret prayer: "*for I wait on thee.*" To pretend to wait on God without holiness of life is religious hypocrisy, and to trust to our own integrity without calling upon God is presumptuous atheism. Perhaps the integrity and uprightness referred to are those righteous attributes of God, which faith rests upon as a guarantee that the Lord will not forfeit his word.

22. "*Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*" This is a very comprehensive prayer, including all the faithful and all their trials. Sorrow had taught the Psalmist sympathy, and given him communion with the tried people of God; he therefore remembers them in his prayers. *Israel*, the tried, the wrestling, the conquering hero, fit representative of all the saints. Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, in wars with Canaanites, in captivity, fit type of the church militant on earth. Jesus is the Redeemer from trouble as well as sin, he is a complete Redeemer, and from every evil he will rescue every saint. Redemption by blood is finished: O God, send us redemption by power. Amen and Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm—This is the first of the seven alphabetical Psalms, the others being the 34th, 37th, 111th, 112th, 119th, and 145th. They are specimens of that acrostic mode of writing which seems to have been once so fashionable among the Jews, as is testified by numerous instances of such composition, which are to be

met with in their works. Other poetic artifices were likewise adopted. We find many instances of poems being so constructed, that a prayer name, or some particular sentiment, would be not unfrequently expressed by the initial letters of the verses. See Bartolocci's "Bibliotheca Rabbinica," vol. ii. p. 260, where examples of such artifices are cited.—*George Phillips, B.D., in "The Psalms in Hebrew with a Commentary,"* 1846.

Whole Psalm.—This is the first fully *alphabetic* Psalm . . . . . The only lesson which the use of the *alphabetic* form may teach is this:—that the Holy Spirit was willing to throw his words into all the moulds of human thought and speech; and whatever ingenuity man may exhibit in intellectual efforts, he should consecrate these to his Lord, making him the *"Alpha and Omega"* of his pursuits.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—Saving grace is a secret that no man knows but the elect and the elect cannot know it neither without special illumination:—1. Special showing—*"Shew me thy ways, O Lord,"* saith David. 2. Barely showing will not serve the turn, but there must be a special teaching—*"Teach me thy paths,"* ver. 4. 3. Bare teaching will not avail neither, but there must be a special inculcative teaching—*"Teach me in thy ways,"* to ver. 8. 4. Inculcative teaching will not do the deed neither, but there must be a special directive teaching—*"Guide in judgment and teach,"* ver. 9. 5. Directive teaching will not be sufficient neither, but there must be a special manu-ductive teaching—*"Lead me forth in thy truth, and teach me,"* ver. 5. 6. Manu-ductive teaching will not be effectual, but there must ye also a special, choice teaching, a determination of the very will, an elective teaching—*"Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose,"* verse 12. And what secret is this? not common grace, for that is not the secret of the elect, but special and peculiar. grace. 1. The special grace of prayer—*"Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul,"* verse 1. 2. A special grace of faith—*"My God, I trust in thee,"* ver. 2. 3. A special grace of repentance—*"Remember not the sins of my youth,"* etc., verse 7. 4. A special grace of hope—*"My hope is in thee,"* verse 21. 5. A special grace of continual living in God's sight, and dependence upon God—*"Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord,"* verse 15. 6. Which is the root of all God's special and eternal favour and mercy—*"Remember, O Lord thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old,"* verse 6; even God's special mercy to him in particular, verse 11.—*William Fenner, in "Hidden Manna,"* 1626.

Whole Psalm.—In these four Psalms which immediately follow one another we may find the soul of David presented in all the several postures of piety—*lying, standing, sitting, kneeling.* In the twenty-second Psalm, he is lying all along, falling flat on his face, low grovelling on the ground, even almost entering into a degree of despair. Speaking of himself in the history of Christ in the mystery, "My God. why hast thou forsaken me?" In the twenty-third Psalm, he is *standing*, and through God's favour, in despite of his foes, trampling and triumphing over all opposition; "The Lord is my shepherd, therefore shall I lack nothing." In the twenty-fourth Psalm he is *sitting*, like a doctor in his chair, or a professor in his place, reading a lecture of divinity, and describing the character of that man—how he must be accomplished—"who shall ascend into the holy hill," and hereafter be partaker of happiness. In this twenty-fifth Psalm, he is *kneeling*, with hands and voice lifted up to God, and on these two hinges the whole Psalm turneth; the one is a hearty beseeching of God's mercy, the other a humble bemoaning of his own misery.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 1.—*"Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." The lifting up of the heart* presupposeth a former dejection of his soul. The soul of man is pressed down with sin and with the cares of this world, which, as lead doth the net, draweth it so down, that it cannot mount above till God send spiritual prayers, as cork to the net, to exalt it; which arise out of faith, as the flame doth out of the fire, and which must be free of secular cares, and all things pressing down, which showeth unto us that worldlings can no more pray than a mole is able to fly. But Christians are as eagles which mount upward. Seeing then the heart of man by nature is fixed to the earth, and of itself is no more able to rise therefrom than a stone which is fixed in the ground, till God raises it by his power, word, and workmen; it should be our principal petition to the Lord, that it would please him to draw us, that we might run after him; that he would exalt and lift up our hearts to heaven, that they may not lie still in the puddle of this earth.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 1.—*"Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul."* A godly man prays as a

builder builds. Now a builder first layeth a foundation, and because he cannot finish in one day, he comes the second day, and finds the frame standing that he made the first day, and then he adds a second day's work; and then he comes a third day and finds his two former days' work standing; then he proceeds to a third day's work, and makes walls to it, and so he goes on till his building be finished. So prayer is the building of the soul till it reach up to heaven; therefore a godly heart prays, and reacheth higher and higher in prayer, till at last his prayers reach up to God.—*William Fenner.*

Verse 1.—" *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul:*" *unto thee* in the fulness of thy merits, *unto thee* in the riches of thy grace; *unto thee* in the embraces of thy love and comforts of thy Spirit; *unto thee*, that thy thorns may be my crown, thy blood my balsam, thy curse my blessing, thy death my life, thy cross my triumph. Thus is my " life hid with Christ in God;" and if so, then where should be my soul, but where is my life? And, therefore, " *unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*" . . . . . O make good thy name of Lord unto me; as Lord, rebuke Satan and restrain all earthly and carnal affections, that they do not once dare to whisper a temptation to my soul, a distraction to my thoughts, whilst I am in communion with thee, in prayer at thy holy ordinance. Do thou as Lord, rule me by thy grace, govern me by thy Spirit, defend me by thy power, and crown me with thy salvation. Thou Lord, the preserver of heaven and earth, " thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Psalm cxlv. 16. O open now thine hand, thy bosom, thy bounty, thy love, and satisfy the desires of my longing soul, which I here " *lift up unto thee.*"—*Robert Mossom*, 1657.

Verse 1.—" *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*" Cyprian saith, that in the primitive times the minister was wont to prepare the people's minds to pray, by prefacing, *Sursum corda*, lift up your hearts. The Jews at this day write upon the walls of their synagogues these words, *Tephillah belo cavannah ceguph belo neshamah;* that is, A prayer without the intention of the affection is like a body without a soul. And yet their devotion is a mere outside, saith one—a brainless head and a soulless body: " This people draweth nigh to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Isaiah xxix. 13. A carnal man can as little *lift up his heart* in prayer, as a mole can fly. A David finds it a hard task; since the best heart is lumpish, and naturally beareth downwards, as the poise of a clock, as the lead of a net. Let us therefore " lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us;" and pray to God to draw us up to himself, as the loadstone doth the iron. *John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—" *Unto thee* I lift up my *soul.*" This follows by a natural consequence after the sublime appeal in the foregoing Psalm to the gates of heaven to *lift up* their heads to receive Christ, the Lord of hosts and the King of glory, ascending into heaven. As the Collect for Ascension-day expresses it, " Grant, O Lord, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens, so we may also in *heart* and *mind* thither *ascend;*" and for the Sunday after Ascension, " O God, who hast *exalted* thine only Son with great triumph to thy kingdom in heaven, send thy Holy Ghost to comfort us, and *exalt us* to the same place, whither our Saviour Christ is gone before."—*Christopher Wordsworth, in loc.*

Verse 1.—" *I lift up my soul,* alluding to the sacrifices, which were wont to be *lifted up.* Hence prayers not answered, not accepted, are said to be stopped from ascending. Lam. iii. 44. When you met with such expressions in the Old Testament concerning prayer, you must still understand them to be allusions to the sacrifices, because the sacrifices were *lifted up* and did ascend.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1.—" *My soul.* But how shall I call it mine, seeing it is thine, thine by purchase, thine having bought it with thy blood? Yea, is it not thy spouse whom thou hast wedded to thyself by thy Spirit through faith? And is not this holy sacrament the marriage feast? If so, sure then, my Jesus, I was lost in myself, till found in thee; and therefore my soul is now, and not till now, truly mine, in being wholly thine; so that I can say with confidence, " *I lift up my soul unto thee.*" *Robert Mossom.*

Verse 2, 3.—When David had prayed, " *O my God, I trust in thee; let me not be ashamed!*" In the next verse, as if conscious to himself that his prayers were too restrictive, narrow, and niggardly, he enlargeth the bounds thereof, and builds them on a broader bottom, " *Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed.* Thus it is that charity in the midst of our religious devotions must have *rehoboth* (room enough to

expatiate in). Our petitions must not be pent or confined to our own private good, but extended to the benefit of all God's servants, in what condition soever.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 3.—"*Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed.*" To wit, neither by their own disappointments, nor mine. For this last some add, because if he should fail of his hopes, he knew this would be a great discouragement of others.—*Arthur Jackson, M.A.*, 1593—1666.

Verse 3.—"*Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.*" All persons who transgress, do it, in some sense, without cause; since they cannot excuse or justify their conduct. God is so amiable and excellent in every part of his great name, that he deserves our constant reverence and love. His law is so holy, just, and good, and all his precepts concerning all things so righteous and calculated to make us happy, that the mouth of every transgressor must be stopped. Hence we all must be covered with shame, if dealt with according to our deserts, for all have sinned. But since God has promised to be merciful to those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel, shame will be the portion of those only who wilfully persist in their wickedness, and refuse to return to God by Jesus Christ. These then are the persons whom the Psalmist speaks of as transgressing without cause, and doubtless these have no cloak for their sin.—*William Richardson*, 1825.

Verse 3.—"*Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.*" Let shame be sent to the right owner, even to those that deal disloyally, unprovoked on my part. And so it was; for Achitophel hanged himself Absalom was trussed up by the hand of God, and dispatched by Joab; the people that conspired with him, partly perished by the sword, and partly fled home, much ashamed of their enterprise. Oh, the power of prayer! what may not the saints have for asking?—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Shew me thy ways, O Lord,*" etc. There are the "*ways*" of men, and the "*ways*" of God; the "*paths*" of sin, and the "*paths*" of righteousness: there are "*thy ways,*" and there are *my* ways; *thine* the ways of truth, *mine* the ways of error; *thine* which are good in thine eyes, and *mine* which are good in mine eyes; *thine* which lead to heaven, *mine* which lead to hell. Wherefore, "*Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths,*" lest I mistake mine own ways for thine; yea, lead me in the truth, and teach me, lest I turn out of thy ways into mine own: "*shew me thy ways,*" by the ministry of thy word; "*teach me thy paths,*" in the guidance of thy Spirit, "*lead me in thy truth,*" by the assistance of thy grace.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verses 4, 5, 9.—Do what you know, and God will teach you what to do. Do what you know to be your *present* duty, and God will acquaint you with your *future* duty as it comes to be *present.* Make it your business to avoid *known omissions,* and God will keep you from feared commissions. This rule is of great moment, and therefore I will charge it upon you by express Scripture. "*Shew me thy ways, O Lord,*" *i.e.*, those way wherein I cannot err. "*Teach me thy paths,*" *i.e.*, that narrow path which is too commonly unknown, those commands that are most strict and difficult, verse 5. "*Lead me in thy truth, and teach me,*" *i.e.*, teach me evidently, that I may not be deceived; so teach me, that I may not only know thy will, but do it. Here's his prayer, but what grounds hath he to expect audience? "*For thou art the God of my salvation,*" *q.d.*, thou Lord, wilt save me, and therefore do not refuse to teach me. "*On thee do I wait all the day,*" *i,e.*, the whole day, and every day. Other arguments are couched in the following verses, but *what* answer? verse 9, "*The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way,*" *i.e.*, those that submit their neck to his yoke, those that are not conceited that they can guide themselves; in necessary, great, and weighty matters they shall not err.—*Samuel Annesley, D.D.*, (1620—1696), *in* "*Morning Exercises at Cripplegate.*"

Verse 5.—"*Lead me in thy truth, and teach me.*" The soul that is unsatiable in prayer, he proceeds, he gets near to God, he gains something, he winds up his heart higher. As a child that seeth the mother have an apple in her hand, and it would fain have it, it will come and pull at the mother's hand for it: now she lets go one finger, and yet she holds it, and then he pulls again; and then she lets go another finger, and yet she keeps it, and then the child pulls again, and will never leave pulling and crying till it hath got it from its mother. So a child of God, seeing all graces to be in God, he draws near to the throne of grace begging for it, and by his earnest

and faithful prayers he opens the hands of God to him; God dealing as parents to their children, holds them off for awhile; not that he is unwilling to give, but to make them more earnest with God, to draw them the nearer to himself.—*William Fenner.*

Verse 5.—"*On thee do I wait all the day.*" We must "*wait all the day.*" 1. Though it be a *long* day, though we be kept waiting a great while, quite beyond our own reckoning; though when we have waited long, we are still put to wait longer, and are bid, with the prophet's servant, to go yet seven times (1 Kings xviii. 43), before we perceive the least sign of mercy coming . . . . . 2. Though it be a *dark* day, yet let us wait upon God "*all the day.*" Though while we are kept waiting for what God will do, we are kept in the dark concerning what he is doing, and what is best for us to do, yet let us be content to wait in the dark. Though we see not our signs, though there is none to tell us how long, yet let us resolve to wait, how long soever it may be; for though what God doth we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter when the mystery of God shall be finished . . . . . 3. Though it be a *stormy* day, yet we must wait upon God "*all the day.*" Though we are not only becalmed, and do not get forward, but though the wind be contrary, and drive us back; nay, though it be boisterous, and the church be tossed with tempests, and ready to sink, yet we must hope the best, yet we must wait, and weather the storm by patience. It is some comfort that Christ is in the ship; the church's cause is Christ's own cause, he has espoused it, and he will own it; he is embarked in the same bottom with his people, and therefore why are you fearful? . . . . *To wait on God,* is—1. To live a life of desire towards God; to wait on him as the beggar waits on his benefactor, with earnest desires to receive supplies from him, as the sick and sore at Bethesda's pool waited for the stirring of the water, and attended in the porches with desire to be helped in and healed. . . . . 2. It is to live a life of delight in God, as the lover waits on his beloved. Desire is love in motion, as a bird upon the wing; delight is love at rest, as a bird upon the rest; now, though our desire must still be so towards God, as that we must be wishing for more of God, yet our delight must be so in God, as that we must never wish for more than God. . . . . 3. It is to live a life of dependence on God, as the child waits on his father, whom he has confidence in, and on whom he casts all his care. To wait on God is to expect all good to come to us from him, as the worker of all good for us and in us, the giver of all good to us, and the protector of us from all evil. Thus David explains himself (Psalm lxii. 5), "My soul, wait thou only upon God," and continue still to do so, for "my expectation is from him." . . . . 4. It is to live a life of devotedness to God, as the servant waits on his master, ready to observe his will, and to do his work, and in everything to consult his honour and interest. To wait on God is entirely and unreservedly to refer ourselves to his wise and holy directions and disposals, and cheerfully to acquiesce in them, and comply with them. The servant that waits on his master, chooseth not his own way, but follows his master step by step. Thus must we wait on God, as those that have no will of our own but what is wholly resolved into his, and must therefore study to accommodate ourselves to his.—*Condensed from Matthew Henry, on "Communion with God."*

Verse 5.—"*On thee do I wait all the day.*" "*On thee,*" whose hand of bounty, whose bosom of love, yea, whose bowels of mercy are not only opened, but enlarged to all humble penitents. "*On thee do I wait,*" *wait* to hear the secret voice of thy Spirit, speaking peace unto my conscience, *wait* to feel the reviving vigour of thy grace, quickening mine obedience; *wait* to see the subduing power of thy Holy Spirit quelling my rebellious sin; *wait* to feel the cheering virtue of thy heavenly comforts, refreshing my fainting soul; for all these thy blessings, "*O thou God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day.*" "*All the day:*" being never satisfied with thy goodness, as not more eagerly to long after thy heavenly fulness; wherefore now refresh my faintings, quench not my desires; but the more freely thou givest, let me the more eagerly covet; the more sweet is thy mercy, let be the more eager my longings, that so my whole life on earth may be a continual breathing after that eternal fellowship and communion with thee in heaven; thus, thus, *let me wait,* even all my life, *all the day.*—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 6.—"*Thy tender mercies.*" Oh, how does one deep call upon another! The depth of my multiplied miseries, calls, loudly calls, upon the depth of thy manifold mercies; even *that mercy* whereby thou dost pardon my sin and help mine infirmities; *that mercy* whereby thou dost sanctify me by thy grace, and comfort me

by thy Spirit; *that mercy* whereby thou dost deliver me from hell, and possess me of heaven. "*Remember, O Lord,*" all those thy mercies, *thy tender mercies,* which have been "*of old*" unto thy saints.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 6.—"*Thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses . . . . have been ever of old.*" Let the ancientness of divine love draw up our hearts to a very dear and honourable esteem of it. Pieces of antiquity, though of base metal, and otherwise of little use or value, how venerable are they with learned men! and ancient charters, how careful are men to preserve them; although they contain but temporary privileges, and sometimes but of trivial moment! How then should the great charter of heaven, so much older than the world, be had in everlasting remembrance, and the thoughts thereof be very precious to us; lying down, rising up, and all the day long accompanying of us! . . . That which is from everlasting shall be to everlasting; if the root be eternal, so are the branches. . . . Divine love is an eternal fountain that never leaves running while a vessel is empty or capable of holding more; and it stands open to all comers: therefore, come; and if ye have not sufficient of your own, go and borrow vessels, empty vessels, not a few; "pay your debts out of it, and live on the rest" (2 Kings iv. 7), to eternity.—*Elisha Coles on "God's Sovereignty,"* 1678.

Verse 7.—"*Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.*" In the first place, considering that he had not begun only of late to commit sin, but that he had for a long time heaped up sin upon sin, he bows himself, if we may so speak, under the accumulated load; and, in the second place, he intimates, that if God should deal with him according to the rigour of the law, not only the sins of yesterday, or of a few days, would come into judgment against him, but all the instances in which he had offended, even from his infancy, might now with justice be laid to his charge. As often, therefore, as God terrifies us by his judgments and the tokens of his wrath, let us call to our remembrance, not only the sins which we have lately committed, but also all the transgressions of our past life, proving to us the ground of renewed shame and renewed lamentation.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—"*Remember not the sins of my youth.*" This may seem but a superfluous prayer of David; for whereas in charity it may and must be presumed that David long since had begged pardon for his youthful sins, that upon his begging God had granted it, that upon his granting God never revoked it. What need now had David to prefer this petition for pardon of antiquated sin, time out of mind committed by him, time out of mind remitted by God? To this objection I shape a fourfold answer. *First,* though David no doubt long since had been truly sorrowful for his youthful sins, yet he was sensible in himself, that if God would be extreme to mark what was done amiss, though he had repented of those sins, yet he had sinned in that his repentance. *Secondly,* though God had forgiven David's sins so far forth as to pardon him eternal damnation, yet he had not remitted unto him temporal afflictions which perchance pressing upon him at this present, he prayeth in this Psalm for the removing or mitigating of them. So then the sense of his words sounds thus, "*Remember not, Lord, the sins of my youth,*" that is, Lord, lighten and lessen the afflictions which lie upon me in this mine old age, justly inflicted on me for my youthful sins. *Thirdly,* God's pardon for sins past, is ever granted with this condition, that the party so pardoned is bound to his good behaviour for the time to come, which if he breaks, he deserves in the strictness of justice to forfeit the benefit of his pardon. Now David was guilty afterward in that grand transgression of Bathsheba and Uriah, which might in the extremity of justice have made all his youthful sins to be punished afresh upon him. *Lastly,* grant David certainly assured of the pardon of his youthful sins, yet God's servants may pray for those blessings they have in possession, not for the obtaining of that they have—that is needless—but for the keeping of what they have obtained, that is necessary. Yea, God is well pleased with such prayers of his saints, and interprets them to be praises unto him, and then these words, "*Remember not the sins of my youth,*" amount to this effect: blessed be thy gracious goodness, who hast forgiven me the sins of my youth.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 7.—"*Remember not the sins of my youth.*" David, after he was called by the power of the word, cries out, "*Lord, remember not,*" etc.; that gravelled and galled his conscience, the *sins* of his *youth* before his call. O beloved, the sins of your youth, though you should be Jobs converted, yet they will bring great disquietness and great horror when you come to age. The lusts of youth, and the

vanities of youth, and the sensual pleasures of your youthful days, they will lay a foundation of sorrow when you come to grey hairs to be near your graves. So Job. xx. 11.—*Christopher Love*, 1654.

Verse 7.—"*Remember not the sins of my youth;*" let them not move thee to punish or be avenged on me for them; as men, when they remember injuries, seek to be avenged on those who have done them.—*Willtam Greenhill.*

Verse 7.—"*Remember not the sins of my youth.*" It is not safe to be at odds with the "Ancient of days."—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—"*The sins of my youth.*" Before we come to the principal point we must first clear the text from the incumbrance of a double objection. The first is this:—It may seem (may some say) very improbable that David should have any sins of his youth, if we consider the principals whereupon his youth was past. The first was *poverty*. We read that his father Jesse passed for an *old* man, we read not that he passed for a *rich* man; and probably his seven sons were the principal part of his wealth. Secondly, *painfulness*. David, though the youngest, was not made a darling, but a drudge; sent by his father to follow the ewes big with young; where he may seem to have learned innocence and simplicity from the sheep he kept. Thirdly, *piety* (Psalm lxxi. 5), "For thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my trust from my youth." And again in the seventeenth verse of the same Psalm, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth:" David began to be good betimes, *a young saint*, and yet crossed that pestilent proverb, was no *old devil*. And what is more still, he was constantly in the furnace of affliction. Psalm lxxxviii. 15. "Even from my youth up, thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind." The question then will be this, How could that water be corrupted which was daily clarified? How could that steel gather rust which was daily filed? How could David's soul in his *youth* be sooty with sin, which was constantly scoured with suffering? But the answer is easy; for though David for the main were a man after God's own heart (the best transcript of the best copy), yet he, especially in his youth, had his faults and infirmities, yea, his sins and transgressions. Though the Scripture maketh mention of no eminent sin in his youth, the business with Bathsheba being justly to be referred to David's reduced and elder age. I will not conclude that David was of a wanton constitution because of a reddy complexion. It is as injurious an inference to conclude all bad which are beautiful, as it is a false and flattering consequence to say all are honest who are deformed. Rather we may collect David's youth guilty of wantonness from his having so many wives and concubines. But what go I about to do? Expect not that I should tell you the particular sins, when he could not tell his own. Psalm xix. "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" Or how can David's sins be known to me, which he confesseth were unknown to himself, which made him say, "O Lord, cleanse me from secret sins"? But to silence our curiosity, that our conscience may speak:—If David's youth, which was poor, painful, and pious, was guilty of sins, what shall we say, of such whose education hath been wealthy, wanton, and wicked? And I report the rest to be acted with shame, sorrow, and silence in every man's conscience.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 7.—"*The sins of my youth.*" Two aged disciples, one eighty-seven years old, one day met. "Well," enquired the younger of his fellow pilgrim, "how long have you been interested in religion?" "Fifty years," was the old man's reply. "Well, have you ever regretted that you began when young to devote yourself to religion?" "Oh, no!" said he, and the tears trickled down his furrowed cheeks; "I weep when I think of the sins of my youth; it is this which makes me weep now."—*From K. Arvine's "Cyclopædia of Moral and Religious Anecdotes,"* 1859.

Verse 7.—"*According to* THY *mercy," not mine;* for I have forsaken those *mercies* thou madest *mine own* (Jonah ii. 8; Psalm lix. 10, 17), in being cruel to myself by my sin, through distrust of thy promise, and upon presumption in thy mercy; yea, let it be, "*for* THY *goodness' sake,*" not *mine*, for in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no manner of thing that is good. Let thy goodness, then, be the motive, thy mercy the rule of all that grace, and of all those blessings thou vouchsafest unto my soul.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 7.—"*According to thy mercy.*" Moses was the first that brought up this happy expression, "*According to thy mercy*" (I know not where is is used by any other man), that is, according to the infinite mercy that is in thy heart and nature. David did next use it (Psalm xxv.), and in the great case of his sin and adultery

(Psalm li. 1), "that he would be merciful to him, according to the multitude of his mercies," And as he needed all the mercies in God, so he confessed the sin of his nature, and hath recourse to the mercies in God's nature. But it is Psalm xxv. 7, I pitch on; there he doth not content himself only with this expression, "*According to thy mercy,*" but he adds another phrase, "For thy mercy's sake," and "*goodness' sake.*" Muis observes in this coherence, "*Good and upright is the Lord*" (verse 8), that he centres in his nature. Thou hast a merciful nature; deal with me according to that, and for the sake of that, "according to thy mercy," "for thy goodness' sake." The meditation of that attribute was the foundation of his faith and prayer herein. When he hath done, he referreth himself to Moses, verse 11, "*For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*" He refers to that name proclaimed before Moses. Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7. But you will say, How do these expressions, "for thy name's sake," "for thy goodness' sake," "for thy mercy's sake," imply the same as "for himself," "for his own sake"? how do they involve the Godhead? Look to Isaiah xliii. 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake," that is, for myself. Isaiah xlviii. 11. "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it." You have it twice in one verse; and that which is "for mercy's sake" in one place, is "for mine own sake" in another, and behold it is I, I am he, as I am God, who doth it. What is this, but "Jehovah, Jehovah, God merciful"?—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—"*Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.*" As election is the effect of God's sovereignty, our pardon the fruit of his mercy, our knowledge a stream from his wisdom, our strength an impression of his power; so our purity is a beam from his holiness. As the rectitude of the creature at the first creation was the effect of his holiness, so the purity of the creature by a new creation, is a draught of the same perfection. He is called the Holy One of Israel more in Isaiah, that evangelical prophet, in erecting Zion, and forming a people for himself, than in the whole Scripture besides.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 8.—"*Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.*" Will not the Lord, who is good, be as gracious to his enemies as he requires us to be to ours? It is his own law, "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again." Exodus xxiii. 4. Now God meets us sinners, and all sinners as such are his enemies; he meets us straying like the beast without understanding; and what? will he not bring us again unto himself, the sole proprietary, by that first right of creation, and that more firm right of redemption?—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 9.—"*The meek will he guide in judgment;*" or, *the poor* (namely, in spirit), will he make to tread in judgment, to foot it aright, to walk judiciously, to behave themselves wisely, as David did (1 Sam. xxiv.), so that Saul feared him. Natural conscience cannot but stoop to the image of God, shining in the hearts and lives of the really religious.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*The meek will he guide in judgment.*" They have been made meek, *i.e.*, desirous of being taught, and praying to be so; but, being now sensible of unworthiness, they are afraid that God will not teach them. This may be done to other sinners but not to them. Therefore they are told who may expect teaching, even they who desire and pray for teaching.—*John Berridge*, 1716—1793.

Verse 9.—"*He will guide the poor in judgment.*" Never will this docility be found in any man, until the heart, which is naturally elated and filled with pride, has been humbled and subdued. As the Hebrew word denotes the *poor* or *afflicted*, and is employed in a metaphorical sense, to denote *the meek and humble*, it is probable that David, under this term, includes the afflictions which serve to restrain and subdue the frowardness of the flesh, as well as the grace of humility itself; as if he had said, When God has first humbled them, then he kindly stretches forth his hand to them, and leads and guides them throughout the whole course of their life.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9.—"*The meek,*" etc. Pride and anger have no place in the school of Christ. The Master himself is "meek and lowly of heart;" much more, surely, ought the scholars to be so. He who hath no sense of his ignorance, can have no desire, or capability of knowledge, human or divine.—*George Horne.*

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—The Lord will teach the humble his secrets, he will not teach proud scholars.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—Such as lie at his feet and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," such whose hearts are *supple* and *soluble*, tractable, and teachable, so that a *little child* may *lead them*. (Isaiah xi. 6.) Austin was such an one. Saith he, "I am here an old man ready to learn of a young man, my coadjutor in the ministry, who hath scarce been one year in the service."—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—"*All the paths of the Lord,*" אֹרְחוֹת *orchoth* signifies the tracks or ruts made by the wheels of wagons by often passing over the same ground. Mercy and truth are the paths in which God constantly walks in reference to the children of men; and so frequently does he show them mercy, and so frequently does he fulfil his truth, that his paths are easily discerned. How frequent, how deeply indented, and how multiplied are those tracks to every family and individual! Wherever we go, we see that God's mercy and truth have been there by the deep tracks they have left behind them. But he is more abundantly merciful to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies; *i.e.*, those who are conformed, not only to the letter, but to the spirit of his pure religion.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 10.—"*All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.*"—As his *nature* is *love and truth*, so all his *ways* are *mercy and truth*. They are "*mercy*" in respect of aiming at our good, and "*truth*" in respect of fulfilling his promises and faithful carriage to us; therefore whatsoever befalls thee, though it be clean contrary to thy expectation, interpret it in love. Many actions of men are such as a good interpretation cannot be put upon them, nor a good construction made of them; therefore interpreters restrain those sayings of love, that it believes all, etc.; that is, *credibilia*, all things believable, otherwise to put all upon charity, will eat out charity. But none of God's ways are such, but love and faith may pick a good meaning out of these. *A bono Deo nil nisi bonum*, from a good God there comes nothing but what is good; and therefore says Job, "Though he kill me, I will trust in him." Endeavour to spy out some end of his for good at the present, and if none ariseth to thy conjecture, resolve it into faith, and make the best of it.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 10.—"*Unto such as keep,*" etc.: he is never out of the road of mercy unto them.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 11.—"*For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*" I cannot do better than quote one of those beautiful passages of the great Vieyra, which gave him the character of the first preacher of his age:—"I confess, my God, that it is so; that we are all sinners in the highest degree." He is preaching on a fast on occasion of the threatened destruction of the Portuguese dominion in Brazil by the Dutch. "But so far am I from considering this any reason why I should cease from my petition, that I behold in it a new and convincing argument which may influence thy goodness. All that I have said before is based on no other foundation than the glory and honour of thy most holy Name. *Propter nomen tuum.* And what motive can I offer more glorious to that same Name, than that our sins are many and great? *For thy name's sake, O Lord, be merciful unto my sin, for it is great.* I ask thee, saith David, to pardon, not every-day sins, but numerous sins, but great sins: *multum est enim.* O motive worthy of the breast of God! Oh, consequence which can have force only when it bears on supreme goodness! So that in order to obtain remission of his sins, the sinner alleges to God that they are many and great. Verily so; and that not for love of the sinner nor for the love of sin, but for the love of the honour and glory of God; which glory, by how much the sins he forgives are greater and more numerous, by so much the more ennobles and exalts itself. The same David distinguishes in the mercy of God greatness and multitude: greatness, *secundum magnam misericordiam tuam;* multitude, *et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum.* And as the greatness of the divine mercy is immense, and the multitude of his lovingkindnesses infinite; and forasmuch as the immense cannot be measured, nor the infinite counted, in order that the one and the other may in a certain manner have a proportionate material of glory, it is necessary to the very greatness of mercy that the sins to be pardoned should be great and necessary to the very multitude of lovingkindnesses that they should be many. *Multum est enim.* Reason have I then, O Lord, not to be dismayed because our sins are many and great. Reason have I also to demand the reason from thee, why thou dost not make haste to pardon them?"—*Vieyra, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 11.—"*For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity.*" It is a very

usual notion by "*name*" to understand honour and glory. When God saith to David, "I have made thee a name like the name of men that are in the earth;" when the church saith to God, "Thou didst get thee a name as it is this day;" it is manifest that by name glory is intended. Suitable to this it is that famous men are called by the Hebrews, אַנְשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם (Gen. vi. 4), and by the Latins, *viri nominum*, men of name, in which sense the poet adorneth it with these epithets—

"Magnum et memorabile nomen,"

or great and memorable. Thus, when God forgiveth sin, he doth it *for his name's sake*, that is, for his own honour and glory. Indeed, God's own glory is the ultimate end of all his actions. As he is the first, so he is the last, the efficient, and the final cause; nor is there anything done by him which is not for him. The end of our actions must be his glory, because both our being and working are from him; but the end of his work is his own glory, because his being and acting are of and from himself. Among all divine works, there is none which more setteth forth his glory than this of remission. Sin, by committing it, brings God a great deal of dishonour, and yet, by forgiving it. God raiseth to himself a great deal of honour. "It is the glory of a man," and much more of God, "to pass by an offence;" as acts of power, so acts of grace, are exceeding honourable. The attributes of God's grace, mercy, goodness, clemency, shine forth in nothing so much as in pardoning sins. Paul speaks of riches of goodness which attend God's forbearance; how much greater riches must there needs be in forgiveness? Nay, indeed, God hath so ordered the way of pardon, that not only the glory of his mercy, but justice, yea, of his wisdom in the wonderful contemporation of both these, is very illustrious. *Nomen quasi notamen, quia notificat*, the name is that which maketh one known; and by remission of sins, God maketh known his choice and glorious attributes; and for this end it is that he vouchsafeth it. It is a consideration that may be our consolation. Since God forgiveth sins *for his name's sake*, he will be ready to forgive many sins as well as few, great as small; indeed, the more and greater our sins are, the greater is the forgiveness, and, consequently, the greater is God's glory; and therefore David, upon this consideration of God's name and glory, maketh the *greatness of his iniquity* a motive of forgiveness. Indeed, to run into gross sins, that God may glorify himself by forgiving them, is an odious presumption, but to hope that those gross sins we have run into may, and will, be forgiven by God to us, being truly penitent, *for his name's sake*, is a well grounded expectation, and such as may support our spirits against the strongest temptations to despair.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 11.—"*Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*" He pleads the greatness of his sin, and not the smallness of it: he enforces his prayer with this consideration, that his sins are very heinous. But how could he make this a plea for pardon? I answer, Because the greater his iniquity was, the more *need* he had of pardon. It is as much as if he had said, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is so great that I cannot bear the punishment; my sin is so great that I am in necessity of pardon; my case will be exceedingly miserable, unless thou be pleased to pardon me. He makes use of the greatness of his sin, to enforce his plea for pardon, as a man would make use of the greatness of calamity in begging for relief. When a beggar begs for bread, he will plead the greatness of his poverty and necessity. When a man in distress cries for pity, what more suitable plea can be urged than the extremity of his case? And God allows such a plea as this: for he is moved to mercy towards us by nothing in us, but the miserableness of our case. He doth not pity sinners because they are worthy, but because they need his pity. . . . Herein doth the *glory of grace* by the redemption of Christ much consist; namely, in its sufficiency for the pardon of the *greatest* sinners. The whole contrivance of the way of salvation is for this end, to glorify the free grace of God. God had it on his heart from all eternity to glorify this attribute; and therefore it is, that the device of saving sinners by Christ was conceived. The greatness of divine grace appears very much in this, that God by Christ saves the *greatest* offenders. The *greater* the guilt of any sinner is, the more glorious and wonderful is the grace manifested in his pardon. Rom. v. 20. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The apostle, when telling how great a sinner he had been, takes notice of the abounding of grace in his pardon, of which his great guilt was the occasion. 1 Tim. i. 13, 14. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and

love which is in Christ Jesus." The Redeemer is glorified, in that he proves sufficient to redeem those who are exceeding sinful, in that his blood proves sufficient to wash away the greatest guilt, in that he is able to save men to the uttermost, and in that he redeems even from the greatest misery. It is the honour of Christ to save the greatest sinners, when they come to him, as it is the honour of a physician that he cures the most desperate diseases or wounds. Therefore, no doubt, Christ will be willing to save the greatest sinners, if they come to him; for he will not be backward to glorify himself, and to commend the value and virtue of his own blood. Seeing he hath so laid out himself to redeem sinners, he will not be unwilling to show that he is able to redeem to the uttermost.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 11.—"*Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*" Is any man miserable, are his miseries great, are they spiritual, are they temporal? Undoubtedly, if he be humbled in the sense of them, and see himself unworthy of any mercy, he may still be assured of mercy. Though there be spiritual evils, yet if a man see himself wretched, and miserable, the more heavy he finds his iniquity to be, the more hope of mercy there is for him: the Lord's mercy is over all his works, therefore is he much more merciful to such. If a man hath a feeling of his miseries and unworthiness then he may use this argument for mercy, *my miseries are great:* even as David did, "*O Lord, be merciful to me, and pardon my iniquity, for it is great.*" And the more miserable men are in their own sense, the fitter objects they are for God to show mercy unto. Thus it was with the publican, and so with the prodigal; therefore never doubt, though thy iniquities be never so great, there is a sea of mercy in God. Bernard well observes the difference between justice and mercy; justice requires that there should be desert, but mercy looks upon them that are miserable; and, saith the father, true mercy doth affect misery; mercy doth not stand upon inquisition, but it is glad to find occasion of exercising itself.—*Richard Stock.*

Verse 11.—"*Mine iniquity . . . is great.*" Such who come to God to have their sins pardoned, they look upon them as great sins. "*Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.*" The original word as well signifies *many* as *great*—"My sins are great and many," many great sins lie upon me, pardon, oh! pardon them, O Lord, &c. . . . . In the opening of this point, I would show *why* such as come in a right way for pardon do look upon their sins as *great* sins. 1. Sinners that come to God for pardon and find it, do look upon their sins as *great sins, because* against a *great God,* great in power, great in justice, great in holiness. I am *a worm,* and yet sin, and that boldly against a God so *great;* for a worm to lift up himself against a great and infinite God; oh! this makes every little sin *great,* and calls for *great* vengeance from so *great* a God. 2. Because *they have sinned against great patience,* despising the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of God, which is called, "treasuring up wrath." Rom. ii. 4, 5. . . . 3. Sins do appear *great* because *against great mercies.* Oh! against how many mercies and kindnesses do sinners sin, and turn all the mercies of God into sin! . . . . 4. That which *greatens* sin in the eyes of poor sinners that cry for pardon, is, that *they have sinned against great light*—light in the conscience; this heightens sin exceedingly, especially to such as are under gospel means; and is indeed the sin of all in this nation; there's nothing more abaseth a soul than this, nothing makes it more difficult to believe pardon, when humbled for it. . . . . 5. *Continuance in sin* much *greatens* sin to a poor soul that is after pardon; especially such as are not very early converted. Psalm lxviii. 21. Oh! I added sin unto sin, saith a poor soul, spending the choice time of my youth in sin, when I might have been getting the knowledge of Jesus Christ and honouring of God. This lay close upon David's spirit, as appears from the seventh verse: "Oh! remember not the sins of my youth." Yet we do not find that David's youth was notoriously sinful; but inasmuch as he spent not his youth to get knowledge, and to serve the Lord fully, 'twas his burden and complaint before the Lord; much more such whose youth was spent in nothing but vanity, profaneness, lying, swearing, profaning of the Sabbath, sports, pastimes, excess of riot, and the like, when God lays it in upon their consciences, must be grievous and abominable to their souls. . . . . 6. *Multitudes of sins* do make sin appear great; this made David cry out for "multitude of mercies." Psalm li., and xl. 12. . . . . 7. Another thing that *greatens* sin is, that it was *against purposes and resolutions of forsaking such and such sins;* and yet all broken, sometimes against solemn vows, against prayers. . . . . 8. Sin appears *great* when seen by a poor soul, because it was *reigning* sin. Rom. v. 6. "Sin reigned unto death," etc. Oh! saith a poor humbled sinner, I did not only *commit* sin, but I was the *servant* and *slave* of sin. . . . . 9. Sin *in the fountain*

makes it great. As it may be said, there is more water in the fountain than in the pools and streams it makes. . . . . So in the nature, in the heart, is there, as in the fountain, and therefore 'tis more there than in the breakings forth of it in the outward man. . . . . 10. A sinner drawing nigh to God for pardon sees his sin as *great,* because thereby he was *led captive by the devil* at his will. . . . 11. Sin appears *great,* because *great is the wrath of God against sin.* Rom. ii. 12. The way of any sinner's deliverance from such wrath shows sin to be exceeding great *in the price and ransom that is paid for the salvation of him from his sins*—the price of the blood of the eternal Son of God. . . . . 13. Lastly, this consideration also *greatens* sin, inasmuch as a poor creature *hath drawn and tempted others* to sin with him, especially such as have lived more vainly and loosely, and it lies hard upon many a poor soul after thorough conviction.—*Anthony Palmer* (——1678), *in "The Gospel New-creature."*

Verse 11.—I plead not, Lord, my merits, who am less than the least of thy mercies and as I look not upon my merit, so nor do thou look upon my demerit; as I do not view my worthiness, so nor do thou view my unworthiness; but thou who art called *the God of mercy,* be unto me what thou art called; make good the glory of thine own name in being merciful unto my sin, of which I cannot say as Lot of Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" No, it is *great,* for that it is against thee so great a God and so good to me: *great,* for that my place, my calling, my office, is great. The sun, the higher it is, the less it seems; but my sins, the higher I am the greater they are, even in thine and others' eyes.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 11.—Plead we the greatness of our sins not to keep us from mercy, but to prevail for it: "*Pardon mine iniquity;*" why so? "*for it is great.*" "Heal my soul for I have sinned against thee." Psalm xli. 4. 'Do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee." Jer. xiv. 7. This is a strong plea, when sincerely urged by an humble and contrite spirit. It glorifieth God as one that is abundant in goodness, rich in mercy, and one with whom are forgivenesses and plenteous redemption; and it honoureth Christ as infinite in mercy. Hence also the Lord himself, when he would stir up himself to choice acts of mercy to his poor people, he first aggravateth their sin against him to the highest, and then he expresseth his royal act of grace to them. So Isaiah xliii. 22—25. "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel; thou hast not honoured me with thy sacrifices, but thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."—*Thomas Cobbet,* 1608—1686.

Verse 11.—"Oh," says Pharaoh, "take away these filthy frogs, this dreadful thunder!" But what says holy David? "Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant!" The one would be freed from punishment, the effect of sin; the other from sin, the cause of punishment. And it is most true that a true Christian man is more troubled at sin than at frogs and thunder; he sees more filthiness in sin than in frogs and toads, more horror than in thunder and lightning.—*Jeremiah Dyke's "Worthy Communicant,"* 1645.

Verse 11.—Pharaoh more lamented the hard strokes that were upon him, than the hard heart which was within him. Esau mourned not because he sold the birth-right, which was his sin, but because he lost the blessing, which was his punishment. This is like weeping with an onion; the eye sheds tears because it smarts. A mariner casts overboard that cargo in a tempest, which he courts the return of when the winds are silenced. Many complain more of the sorrows to which they are born, than of the sins with which they were born: they tremble more at the vengeance of sin, than at the venom of sin; one delights them, the other affrights them.—*William Secker.*

Verse 12.—"*What man is he that feareth the Lord?*" Blessed shall he be—1. In the sacred knowledge of Christ's will; "*Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*" 2. Blessed shall he be in the quiet peace of a good conscience; "*His soul shall dwell at ease.*" 3. Blessed he shall be in the present comfort of a hopeful progeny; "*His seed shall inherit the earth.*"—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 12.—"*What man is he that feareth the Lord?*" There is nothing so effectual to obtain grace, to retain grace, as always to be found before God not over wise, but *to fear:* happy art thou, if thy heart be replenished with three fears; a fear for received grace, a greater fear for lost grace, a greatest fear to recover grace.—*Bernard.*

Verse 12.—" *He that feareth the Lord.*" Present fear begetteth eternal security: fear God, which is above all, and no need to fear man at all.—*Augustine.*

Verse 12.—" *Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose,*" *i.e.*, that the good man shall pitch upon. God will direct him in all dealings to make a good choice, and will give good success. This is not in a man's own power to do. Jer. x. 23.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 13.—" *His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.*" The holy fear of God shall destroy all sinful fears of men, even as Moses' serpent devoured all those serpents of the magicians. The fear of God hath this good effect that it makes other things not to be feared; so that the soul of him who feareth the Lord doth dwell, as *in rest*, so in goodness; as *in peace*, so in patience, till this moment of time be swallowed up in the fulness of eternity, and he change his earthly dwelling for an heavenly mansion, and his spiritual peace for an everlasting blessedness.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 13.—" *His soul shall dwell at ease.*" *Shall tarry in good things*, as it is in the Vulgate. Unlike the soul of Adam, who, being put into possession of the delights of paradise, tarried there but a few days or hours.—*Gerhohus, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 13.—" *His soul shall dwell at ease.*" He expresses with great sweetness spiritual delectation, when he says, " *His soul shall tarry in good things.*" For whatever is carnally sweet yields without doubt a delectation for the time to such as enjoy it, but cannot tarry long with them; because, while by its taste it provokes appetite, by its transit it cheats desire. But spiritual delights, which neither pass away as they are tasted, nor decrease while they refresh, nor cloy while they satiate, can tarry for ever with their possessors.—*Hugo Victorinus* (1130), *quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 13 (*first clause*).—In the reception of the gifts of God, they do not devour them without feeling a sense of their sweetness, but really relish them, so that the smallest competency is of more avail to satisfy them that the greatest abundance is to satisfy the ungodly. Thus, according as every man is contented with his condition, and cheerfully cherishes a spirit of patience and tranquility, his soul is said *to dwell in good.*—*John Calvin.*

Verse 13.—" *The earth,*" or *the land*, to wit, Canaan; which was promised and given, as an earnest of the whole covenant of grace, and all its promises, and therefore it is synecdochically put for all of them. The sense is, his seed shall be blessed.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 14.—" *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,*" etc. It is the righteous that is God's friend, it is to him that God is joined in a loving familiarity, it is to him that God revealeth his secret, telling him what misery and torments he hath reserved for them who by wickedness flourish in this world. And indeed the Lord doth not more hate the wicked than he loves the godly: if he keeps far from the froward, as being an abomination unto him, his very secret shall be with the righteous, as with his dearest friend. It is an honour to him to whom a secret is committed by another, a greater honour to him to whom the king shall commit his own secret; but how is he honoured to whom God committeth his secret? for where the secret of God is, there is his heart and there is himself. Thus was his secret with St. John, of whom St. Bernard saith, by occasion of the beginning of his gospel, " Doth he not seem unto thee to have dived into the bowels of the divine Word, and from the secrets of his breast, to have drawn a sacred pith of concealed wisdom?" Thus was his secret with St. Paul, who saith, " We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which none of the princes of this world knew." 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8. St. Gregory reads, for the secret of God, as the Vulgar Latin doth *sermocinatio Dei*, the communication of God is with the righteous; but then addeth, *Dei sermocinari est per illustrationem suæ præsentiæ humanis mentibus arcana revelare*, God's communication is, by the illustration of his presence, to reveal secrets to the minds of men. But to consider the words somewhat more generally. There is no less a secret of godliness, than there is of any other trade or profession. Many profess an art or a trade, but thrive not by it, because they have not the secret and mystery of it; and many profess godliness, but are little the better for it, because they have not the true secret of it: he hath that, with whom God is in secret in his heart; and he that is righteous in secret, where no man sees him, he is the righteous man with whom the secret of the Lord is.—*Michael Jermin, D.D.*, 1591—1659.

Verse 14.—"*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,*" etc. There is a vital sense in which "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and in which all the realities of Christian experience are utterly hid from his perceptions. To speak to him of communion with God, of the sense of pardon, of the lively expectation of heaven, of the witness of the Holy Ghost, of the struggles of the spiritual life, would be like reasoning with a blind man about colours, or with one deaf about musical harmony.—*John Morison.*

Verse 14.—"*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,*" etc. Albeit the Lord's covenant with the visible church be open, and plain in itself to all men in all the articles thereof, yet it is a mystery to know the inward sweet fellowship which a soul may have with God by virtue of this covenant; and a man fearing God shall know this mystery, when such as are covenanters only in the letter do remain ignorant thereof; for to *the fearers of God* only is this promise made—that to *them* the Lord *will show his covenant.*—*David Dickson.*

Verse 14.—"*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.*" The gospel, though published to all the world, yet it is entitled a mystery, and a mystery hid, for none know it but the saints, who are taught of God, and are his scholars. John vi. 45. That place shows that there must be a secret teaching by God, and a secret learning. "If they have heard, and been taught of God." Now God teacheth none but saints, for all that are so taught come unto him: "Every one who hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Ay, but you will say, Do not many carnal men know the gospel, and discourse of things in it, through strength of learning, etc.? I answer out of the text (Col. i. 26, 27), that though they may know the things which the gospel reveals, yet not the riches and glory of them, that same rich knowledge spoken of in the word, they want, and therefore know them not; as a child and a jeweller looking upon a pearl, both look upon it, and call it by the same name; but the child yet knows it not as a pearl in the worth and riches of it as the jeweller doth, and therefore cannot be said to know it. Now in Matt. xiii. 45, a Christian only is likened to a merchantman, that finds a pearl of great price, that is, discovered to be so, and sells all he hath for it, for he knows the worth of it. But you will say, Do not carnal men know the worth of the things in the gospel, and can they not discourse of the rich grace of Christ, and of his worth? I answer, yes, as a man who hath gotten an inventory by heart, and the prices also, and so may know it; yet never was he led into the exchequer and treasury, to see all the jewels themselves, the wardrobe of grace, and Christ's righteousness, to see the glory of them; for these are all "spiritually discerned," as the apostle says expressly, 1 Cor. ii. 14.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 14.—"*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.*" The truth and sincerity of God to his people appears in the openness and plainness of his heart to them. A friend that is close and reserved, deservedly comes under a cloud in the thoughts of his friend; but he who carries, as it were, a window of crystal in his breast, through which his friend may read what thoughts are writ in his very heart, delivers himself from the least suspicion of unfaithfulness. Truly, thus open-hearted is God to his saints: "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.*" He gives us his key, that will let us into his very heart, and acquaint us what his thoughts are, yea, were, towards us, before a stone was laid in the world's foundation; and this is no other than his Spirit (1 Cor. ii. 10, 11), "One who knows the deep things of God;" for he was at the council-table in heaven, where all was transacted. This, his Spirit, he employed to put forth and publish in the Scriptures, indited by him, the substance of those counsels of love which had passed between the Trinity of Persons for our salvation; and that nothing may be wanting for our satisfaction, he hath appointed the same Holy Spirit to abide in his saints, that as Christ in heaven presents our desires to him, so he may interpret his mind out of his word to us; which word answers the heart of God, as face answers face in the glass.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 14.—"*The secret of the Lord.*" This "*secret*" is called a *secret* three ways. 1. *Secret* to the eye of sole nature, and thus it is not meant; for so the grace of Christ is a *secret* only to heathens and such as are blind as they, for common Christians know it—the rind of it. 2. *Secret* to the eye of taught nature, nor thus is it meant; for so the grace of Christ is a *secret* only to the ignorant sort of Christians; many carnal gospellers that sit under a good ministry know it and the bark of it. 3. *Secret* to the eye of enlightened nature, and thus it is meant; for so the grace of Christ is a *secret* to all unsanctified professors, whether learned or unlearned, namely, the

pith of it; for though great doctors and profound clerks, and deep studied divines unconverted, know the doctrine of grace, and the truth of grace; though they can dispute of grace and talk of the glory of grace, yea, and taste a little the good word of grace, yea, and understand it generally, it may be as well as St. Paul and St. Peter, as Judas did, yet the special and the spiritual knowledge thereof, for all their dogmatical illumination, is a *secret* unto them.—*William Fenner.*

Verse 14.—"*The secret.*" Arminius and his company ransack all God's *secrets*, divulge and communicate them to the seed of the woman, and of the serpent all alike; they make God's eternal love of election no *secret*, but a vulgar idea; they make the mystery of Christ, and him crucified, no *secret*, but like an apothecary's drug, catholical; they make the especial grace of God no *secret*, but a common quality; faith no *secret*, but a general virtue; repentance and the new creature no *secret*, but an universal gift; no *secret* favour to St. Peter, but make God a party *unto*, not to love St. Peter more than Judas; no *secret* intent to any one person more than another; but that Christ might have died for all him, and never a man saved; no *secret* working of the Lord in any more than other; but for anything that either God the Father hath done by creating, God the Son by redeeming, or God the Holy Ghost by sanctifying, all the world were left to their scrambling—take it if you will, if you will not, refuse. They say God would have men to be saved, but that he will not work it for his own part, rather for this man of that man determinatively that he be saved.—*William Fenner.*

Verse 14.—"*He will shew them his covenant,*" or, *and he will make them to know* (for the infinitive is here thought to be put for the future tense of the indicative, as it is Eccles. iii. 14, 15, 18; Hos. ix. 13; xii. 3), *his covenant, i.e.*, he will make them clearly to understand it, both its duties or conditions, and its blessings or privileges; neither of which ungodly men rightly understand. Or, he will make them to know it by experience, or by God's making it good to them; as, on the contrary, God threatens to make ungodly men to *know his breach of promise.* Numb. xiv. 34. Or, as it is in the margins of our Bibles, *and his covenant* (is, *i.e.*, he hath engaged himself by his promise or covenant) *to make them know* it, to wit his secret, *i.e.*, that he will manifest either his word or his favour to them.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 14.—It is neither learning nor labour that can give insight into God's secrets, those *Arcana imperii*, "The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xiii. 11. "The mind of Christ." 1 Cor. ii. 16. These things come by revelation rather than by discourse of reason, and must therefore be obtained by prayer. Those that diligently seek him shall be of his *Cabinet Council*, shall know his soul secrets, and be admitted into a gracious familiarity and friendship. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." John xv. 15.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 14.—Walking with God is the best way to know the mind of God; friends who walk together impart their secrets one to another: "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.*" Noah walked with God, and the Lord revealed a great *secret* to him, of destroying the old world, and having him in the ark. Abraham walked with God, and God made him one of his privy council: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Gen. xxiv. 40, and xviii. 17. God doth sometimes sweetly unbosom himself to the soul in prayer, and in the holy supper, as Christ made himself known to the disciples in the breaking of bread. Luke xxiv. 35.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 15.—"*Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.*" Though we cannot see him by reasons of our present distance and darkness, yet we must look towards him, towards the place where his honour dwells, as those that desire the knowledge of him and his will, and direct all to his honour as the mark we aim at, labouring in this, that "whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 15.—"*Mine eyes.*" As the sense of sight is very quick, and exercises an entire influence over the whole frame, it is no uncommon thing to find all the affections denoted by the term "*eyes.*"—*John Calvin.*

Verse 15.—"*He shall pluck my feet out of the net.*" An unfortunate dove, whose feet are taken in the snare of the fowler, is a fine emblem of the soul, entangled in the cares or pleasures of the world; from which she desires, through the power of grace, to fly away, and to be at rest, with her glorified Redeemer.—*George Horne.*

Verse 17.—"*The troubles of my heart are enlarged.*" Let no good man be surprised that his affliction is great, and to him of an unaccountable character. It has always been so with God's people. The road to heaven is soaked with the tears and blood of the saints.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 17.—"*O bring thou me out of my distresses.*" We may not complain of God, but we may complain to God. With submission to his holy will we may earnestly cry for help and deliverance.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 18.—"*Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.*" We may observe here, that *sickness and weakness of the body come from sin, and is a fruit of sin.* Some are weak, and some are sick, "for this cause." I shall not need to be long in the proof of that, which you have whole chapters for, as Deut. xxviii. 27, *seq.*; and many Psalms, cvii., and others. It is for the sickness of the soul that God visits with the sickness of the body. He aims at the cure of the soul in the touch of the body. And therefore in this case, when God visits with sickness, we should think our work is more in heaven with God than with men or physic. Begin first with the soul. So David (Psa. xxxii. 5), till he dealt roundly with God, without all kind of guile and confessed his sins, he roared; his moisture was turned into the thought of summer. But when he dealt directly and plainly with God, and confessed nis sins, then God forgave him them, and healed his body too. And therefore the best method, when God visits us in this kind, is to think that we are to deal with God. Begin the cure there with the soul. When he visits the body, it is for the soul's sake: "Many are weak and sickly among you."—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 18.—"*Look upon mine affliction and my pain.*" In sickness of body trust to Jesus, he is as powerful and as willing to help us now as he was to help others in the days of his flesh. All things are possible to us if we believe. It is but a word for him to rebuke all storms and tempests whatsoever. Let us not do like Asa, trust only in the physician, or in subordinate means, but know that all physic is but dead means without him. 2 Chron. xvi. 12. Therefore, with the means, run to Christ, that he may work with them, and know that virtue and strength comes from him to bless or curse all sort of means.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 19.—"*Consider mine enemies,*" etc. Or *look* upon them; but with another kind of look; so as he looked through the pillar of fire upon the Egyptians, and troubled them (Exod. xiv. 24), with a look of wrath and vengeance. The arguments he uses are taken both from the quantity and quality of his enemies, their number and their nature, "*For they are many;*" the hearts of the people of Israel, in general, being after Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 12, 13); and so the spiritual enemies of the Lord's people are many; their sins and corruptions, Satan, and his principalities and powers, and the men of this world. "*And they hate me with cruel hatred;*" like that of Simeon and Levi (Gen. xliv. 7); their hatred broke out in a cruel manner, in acts of force and cruelty; and it was the more cruel, inasmuch as it was without cause; and such is the hatred of Satan and his emissaries against the followers of Christ; who breathe out cruelty, thirst after their blood, and make themselves drunk with it; even their tender mercies are cruel, and much more their hatred.—*John Gill.*

Verse 19.—"*Consider mine enemies.*" God needeth not hound out many creatures to punish man, he doeth that on himself. There is no kind of creature so hurtful to itself as he. Some hurt other kinds and spare their own, but mankind in all sorts of injuries destroyeth itself. Man to man is more crafty than a fox, more cruel than the tiger, and more fierce than a lion, and in a word, if he be left to himself man unto man is a devil.—*William Struther's "Christian Observations,"* 1629.

Verses 19, 20.—"*Consider mine enemies. . . . . O keep my soul and deliver me.*" We may say of original concupiscence, strengthened and heightened by customary transgressions, its name is legion, for it is many. Hydra-like, it is a body with many heads; and when we cut off one head, one enormous impiety, there presently sprouts up another of like monstrous nature, like venomous guilt. From the womb then it is of original sin and sinful custom, as from the belly of the Trojan horse, there does issue forth a whole army of unclean lusts, to surround the soul in all its faculties, and the body too in all its members.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 20.—"*Let me be not ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.*" When David reaches verse 20, we are reminded of Coriolanus betaking himself to the hall of

Attius Tullus, and sitting as a helpless stranger there, claiming the king's hospitality, though aware of his having deserved to die at his hands. The Psalmist throws himself on the compassions of an injured God with similar feelings; "*I trust in thee!*"—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 21.—"*For I trust in, or wait on thee.*" As preservation is a continued creation, so is *waiting* a continued trusting; for, what trust believes by faith, it *waits for* by hope; and thus is trust a compound of both.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 22.—"*Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*" If thou wilt not pity and help me, yet spare thy people, who suffer for my sake, and in my sufferings.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 22.—"*Redeem Israel,*" etc. *In vita vel post mortem meam,** either whiles I live, or after my death. This is every good man's care and prayer. None is in case to pray for the church, that hath not first made his own peace with God.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 22.—This most beautiful of "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" closes with a sweet petition—such an one, as every one of the true Israel of God would wish to depart with on his lips, "*Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*" It breathes the same holy aspiration as the aged Simeon's, "Lord! now lettest thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."—*Barton Bouchier.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Heavenly machinery for uplifting an earthbound soul.

Verse 1.—Genuine devotion described and commended.

Verse 2.—The soul at anchor, and the two rocks from which it would be delivered.

Verse 3.—Shame out of place and in place.

Verse 4.—Practical divinity the best study; God the best teacher; Prayer the mode of entrance into the school.

Verses 4, 5. "*Shew.*" "*Teach.*" "*Lead.*" Three classes in the school of grace.

Verse 5.—I. Sanctification desired. II. Knowledge sought. III. Assurance enjoyed. IV. Patience exercised.

Verse 5.—"*Thou art the God of my salvation.*" A rich and overflowing text.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—How to spend the day with God.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 6.—The antiquity of mercy.

Verses 6, 7.—The three Remembers.

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—The best Act of Oblivion.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 7.—Oblivion desired and remembrance entreated. Note "*my,*" and "*thy.*"

Verse 8.—Opposing attributes co-working. God teaching sinners—a great wonder.

Verse 9.—"*The meek.*" Who they are? What are their privileges? How to be like them?

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—Moral purity needful to a well-balanced judgment.

Verse 10.—God's mercy and faithfulness in providence, and the persons who may derive comfort therefrom.

Verse 11.—A model prayer. Confession, argument, entreaty, etc.

Verse 11.—Great guilt no obstacle to the pardon of the returning sinner.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 12.—Holiness the best security for a well ordered life. Free-will at school, questioned and instructed.

Verse 13.—A man at ease for time and eternity.

Verse 14.—I. A secret, and who know it. II. A wonder, and who see it.

---

* Rabbi David

Verse 15. I. What we are like. A silly bird. II. What is our danger? "Net." III. Who is our friend? "The Lord." IV. What is our wisdom? "Mine eyes," etc.

Verse 16.—A desolate soul seeking heavenly company, and an afflicted spirit crying for divine mercy. Our God the balm of all our wounds.

Verses 16—18.—David is a petitioner as well as a sufferer; and those sorrows will never injure us that bring us near to God. Three things he prays for:—I. *Deliverance.* This we are called to desire, consistently with resignation to the divine will. II. *Notice.* A kind look from God is desirable at any time, in any circumstances; but in affliction and pain, it is like life from the dead. III. *Pardon.* Trials are apt to revive a sense of guilt.—*William Jay.*

Verse 17.—Special seasons of trouble and special resort to prayer for special deliverance.

Verse 18.—Two things are here taught us:—I. That a kind look from God is very desirable in affliction. II. That the sweetest cordial under trouble would be an assurance of divine forgiveness. I. That a kind look, etc. (subdivisions), 1. It is a look of special observation. 2. It is a look of tender compassion. 3. It is a look of support and assistance (with God, power and compassion go together). II. That the sweetest cordial, etc. (subdivisions), 1. Because trouble is very apt to bring our sins to remembrance. 2. Because a sense of pardon will in great measure remove all distressing fears of death and judgment. *Improvement.* 1. Let us adore the goodness of God, that one so great and glorious should bestow a favourable look upon any of our sinful race. 2. Let the benefit we have received from the Lord's looking upon us in *former* afflictions, engage us to *pray*, and encourage us to *hope*, that he will now look upon us again. 3. If a kind look from God be so comfortable, what must *heaven* be!—*Samuel Lavington.*

Verse 18.—I. It is well when our sorrows remind us of our sins. II. When we are as earnest to be forgiven as to be delivered. III. When we bring both to the right place in prayer. IV. When we are submissive about our sorrows—"*Look*," etc.—but very explicit about our sins—"*Forgive*," etc.

Verse 19.—The spiritual enemies of the saint. Their number, malice, craft, power, etc.

Verse 20.—Soul preservation. I. Its twofold character, "Keep," and "deliver." II. Its dreadful alternative, "Let me not be ashamed." III. Its effectual guarantee, "I put my trust in thee."

Verse 20.—A superhuman keeping, a natural fear, a spiritual trust.

Verse 21.—The open way of safety in action, and the secret way of safety in devotion.

Verse 22.—Jacob's life, as typical of ours, may illustrate this prayer.

Verse 22.—A prayer for the church militant.

PSALM XXVI.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *The sweet singer of Israel appears before us in this Psalm as one enduring reproach; in this he was the type of the great Son of David, and is an encouraging example to us to carry the burden of slander to the throne of grace. It is an ingenious surmise that this appeal to heaven was written by David at the time of the assassination of Ish-bosheth, by Baanah and Rechab, to protest his innocence of all participation in that treacherous murder; the tenor of the Psalm certainly agrees with the supposed occasion, but it is not possible with such a slender clue to go beyond conjecture.*

DIVISION.—*Unity of subject is so distinctly maintained, that there are no sharp divisions. David Dickson has given an admirable summary in these words:—"He appealeth to God, the supreme Judge, in the testimony of a good conscience, bearing him witness;* first, *of his endeavour to walk uprightly as a believer, verses* 1, 2, 3; secondly, *of his keeping himself from the contagion of the evil counsel, sinful courses, and example of the wicked, verses* 4, 5; thirdly, *of his purpose still to behave himself holily and righteously, out of love to the partaker of the public privileges of the Lord's people in the congregation, verses* 6, 7, 8. *Whereupon he prayeth to be free of the judgment coming upon the wicked, verses* 9, 10, *according as he had purposed to eschew their sins, verse* 11; *and he closeth his prayer with comfort and assurance of being heard, verse* 12.

EXPOSITION.

JUDGE me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; *therefore* I shall not slide.

2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

3 For thy lovingkindness *is* before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

1. *"Judge me, O Jehovah."*—A solemn appeal to the just tribunal of the heart-searching God, warranted by the circumstances of the writer, so far as regarded the particular offences with which he was wrongly charged. Worried and worn out by the injustice of men, the innocent spirit flies from its false accusers to the throne of Eternal Right. He had need have a clear case who dares to carry his suit into the King's Bench of heaven. Such an appeal as this is not to be rashly made on any occasion; and as to the whole of our walk and conversation, it should never be made at all, except as we are justified in Christ Jesus: a far more fitting prayer for a sinful mortal is the petition, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant." *"For I have walked in mine integrity."* He held integrity as his principle, and walked in it as his practice. David had not used any traitorous or unrighteous means to gain the crown, or to keep it; he was conscious of having been guided by the noblest principles of honour in all his actions with regard to Saul and his family. What a comfort it is to have the approbation of one's own conscience! If there be peace within the soul, the blustering storms of slander which howl around us are of little consideration. When the little bird in my bosom sings a merry song, it is no matter to me if a thousand owls hoot at me from without. *"I have trusted also in the Lord."* Faith is the root and sap of integrity. He who leans upon the Lord is sure to walk in righteousness. David knew that God's covenant had given him the crown, and therefore he took no indirect or unlawful means to secure it; he would not slay his enemy in the cave, nor suffer his men-at-arms to smite him when he slept unguarded on the plain. Faith will work hard for the Lord, and in the Lord's way, but she refuses so much as to lift a finger to fulfil the devices of unrighteous cunning. Rebecca acted out a great falsehood in order to fulfil the Lord's decree in favour of Jacob—this was unbelief; but Abraham left the Lord to fulfil his own purposes, and took the knife to slay his son—this was faith. Faith trusts God to accomplish his own decrees. Why should I steal when God has promised to supply my need? Why should I avenge myself when I know that the Lord has espoused my cause? Confidence in God

is a most effectual security against sin. *"Therefore I shall not slide."* Slippery as the way is, so that I walk like a man upon ice, yet faith keeps my heels from tripping, and will continue to do so. The doubtful ways of policy are sure sooner or later to give a fall to those who run therein, but the ways of honesty, though often rough, are always safe. We cannot trust in God if we walk crookedly; but straight paths and simple faith bring the pilgrim happily to his journey's end.

2. There are three modes of trial here challenged, which are said in the original to refer to trial by touch, trial by smell, and trial by fire. The Psalmist was so clear from the charge laid against him, that he submitted himself unconditionally to any form of examination which the Lord might see fit to employ. *"Examine me, O Lord."* Look me through and through; make a minute survey; put me to the question, cross-examine my evidence. *"And prove me."* Put me again to trial; and see if I would follow such wicked designs as my enemies impute to me. *"Try my reins and my heart."* Assay me as metals are assayed in the furnace, and do this to my most secret parts, where my affections hold their court; see, O God, whether or no I love murder, and treason, and deceit. All this is a very bold appeal, and made by a man like David, who feared the Lord exceedingly, it manifests a most solemn and complete conviction of innocence. The expressions here used should teach us the thoroughness of the divine judgment, and the necessity of being in all things profoundly sincere, lest we be found wanting at the last. Our enemies are severe with us with the severity of spite, and this a brave man endures without a fear; but God's severity is that of unswerving right, who shall stand against such a trial? The sweet singer asks "Who can stand before his cold?" and we may well enquire, "Who can stand before the heat of his justice?"

3. *"For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes."*—An object of memory and a ground of hope. A sense of mercy received sets a fair prospect before the faithful mind in its gloomiest condition, for it yields visions of mercies yet to come, visions not visionary but real. Dwell, dear reader, upon that celestial word *loving-kindness*. It has a heavenly savour. Is it not an unmatchable word, unexcelled, unrivalled? The goodness of the Lord to us should be before our eyes as a motive actuating our conduct; we are not under the bondage of the law, but we are under the sweet constraints of grace, which are far more mighty, although far more gentle. Men sin with the law before their eyes, but divine love when clearly seen, sanctifies the conversation. If we were not so forgetful of the way of mercy in which God walks towards us, we should be more careful to walk in the ways of obedience towards him. *"And I have walked in thy truth."* The Psalmist was preserved from sin by his assurance of the truthfulness of God's promise, which truth he endeavoured to imitate as well as to believe. Observe from this verse, that an experience of divine love will show itself in a practical following of divine truth; those who neglect either the doctrinal or practical parts of truth must not wonder if they lose the experimental enjoyment of it. Some *talk of* truth, it is better to *walk in* it. Some vow to do well in future, but their resolutions come to nothing; only the regenerate man can say *"I have walked* in thy truth."

4 I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.
5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.

So far from being himself an open offender against the laws of God, the Psalmist had not even associated with the lovers of evil. He had kept aloof from the men of Belial. A man is known by his company, and if we have kept ourselves apart from the wicked, it will always be evidence in our favour should our character be impugned. He who was never in the parish is not likely to have stolen the corn. He who never went to sea is clearly not the man who scuttled the ship.

4. *"I have not sat with vain persons."*—True citizens have no dealings with traitors. David had no seat in the parliament of triflers. They were not his boon companions at feasts, nor his advisers in council, nor his associates in conversation. We must needs see, and speak, and trade, with men of the world, but we must on no account take our rest and solace in their empty society. Not only the profane, but the vain are to be shunned by us. All those who live for this life only are vain, chaffy, frothy men, quite unworthy of a Christian's friendship. Moreover, as this vanity is often allied with falsehood, it is well to save ourselves altogether from this untoward generation, lest we should be led from bad

to worse, and from tolerating the vain, should come to admire the wicked. "*Neither will I go in with dissemblers.*" Since I know that hypocritical piety is double iniquity, I will cease all acquaintance with pretenders. If I must needs walk the same street, I will not enter the same door and spend my time in their society. The congregation of the hypocrites is not one with which we should cultivate communion; their ultimate rendezvous will be the lowest pit of hell, let us drop their acquaintance now! for we shall not desire it soon. They hang their beads around their necks, and carry the devil in their hearts. This clause is in the future tense, to indicate that the writer felt no desire to begin an acquaintance with characters whom up till then he had shunned. We must maintain the separated path with more and more circumspection as we see the great redemption day approaching. Those who would be transfigured with Jesus, must not be disfigured by conformity to the world. The resolution of the Psalmist suggests, that even among professed followers of truth we must make distinctions, for as there are vain persons out of the church, so there are dissemblers in it, and both are to be shunned with scrupulous decision.

5. "*I have hated the congregation of evil doers.*"—A severe sentence, but not too severe. A man who does not hate evil terribly, does not love good heartily. Men, as men, we must always love, for they are our neighbours, and therefore to be loved as ourselves; but evil doers, as such, are traitors to the Great King, and no loyal subject can love traitors. What God hates we must hate. The congregation or assembly of evil doers, signifies violent men in alliance and conclave for the overthrow of the innocent; such synagogues of Satan are to be held in abhorrence. What a sad reflection it is that there should be a congregation of evil doers as well as a congregation of the upright, a church of Satan as well as a church of God; a seed of the serpent as well as a seed of the woman; an old Babylon as well as a new Jerusalem; a great whore sitting upon many waters, to be judged in wrath, as well as a chaste bride of the Lamb to be crowned at his coming. "*And will not sit with the wicked.*" Saints have a seat at another table, and will never leave the King's dainties for the husks of the swine-trough. Better to sit with the blind, and the halt, and the lame, at the table of mercy, than with the wicked in their feasts of ungodliness, yea, better to sit on Job's dunghill than on Pharaoh's throne. Let each reader see well to his company, for such as we keep in this world, we are likely to keep in the next.

6 I will wash mine hands in innocency so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.

6. "*I will wash mine hands in innocency.*"—He would publicly avow himself to be altogether clear of the accusations laid against him, and if any fault in other matters could be truthfully alleged against him, he would for the future abstain from it. The washing of the hands is a significant action to set forth our having no connection with a deed, as we still say, "I wash my hands of the whole business." As to perfect innocence, David does not here claim it, but he avows his innocence of the crimes whereof he was slanderously accused; there is, however, a sense in which we may be washed in absolute innocence, for the atoning blood makes us clean every whit. We ought never to rest satisfied short of a full persuasion of our complete cleansing by Jesus' precious blood. "*So will I compass thine altar, O Lord.*" Priests unto God must take great care to be personally cleansed; the brazen laver was as needful as the golden altar; God's worship requires us to be holy in life. He who is unjust to man cannot be acceptably religious towards God. We must not bring our thankofferings with hands defiled with guilt. To love justice and purity is far more acceptable to God than ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts. We see from this verse that holy minds delight in the worship of the Lord, and find their sweetest solace at his altar; and that it is their deepest concern never to enter upon any course of action which would unfit them for the most sacred communion with God. Our eye must be upon the altar which sanctifieth both the giver and the gift, yet we must never draw from the atoning sacrifice an excuse for sin, but rather find in it a most convincing argument for holiness.

7. "*That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving.*" David was so far instructed that he does not mention the typical offering, but discerns the spiritual offering which was intended thereby, not the groans of bullocks, but songs of gratitude the spiritual worshipper presents. To sound abroad the worthy praises of the God of all grace should be the every-day business of a pardoned sinner. Let men slander us as they will, let us not defraud the Lord of his praises; let dogs bark, but let us like the moon shine on. "*And tell of all thy wondrous works.*" God's people should not be tongue-tied. The wonders of divine grace are enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing. God's works of love are wondrous if we consider the unworthiness of their objects, the costliness of their method, and the glory of their result. And as men find great pleasure in discoursing upon things remarkable and astonishing, so the saints rejoice to tell of the great things which the Lord hath done for them.

8. "*Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house.*" Into the abodes of sin he would not enter, but the house of God he had long loved, and loved it still. We were sad children if we did not love our Father's dwelling-place. Though we own no sacred buildings, yet the church of the living God is the house of God, and true Christians delight in her ordinances, services, and assemblies. O that all our days were Sabbaths! "*And the place where thine honour dwelleth.*" In his church where God is had in honour at all times, where he reveals himself in the glory of his grace, and is proclaimed by his people as the Lord of all. We come not together as the Lord's people to honour the preacher, but to give glory to God; such an occupation is most pleasant to the saints of the Most High. What are those gatherings where God is not honoured, are they not an offence to his pure and holy eyes, and are they not a sad stumbling-block to the people of God? It brings the scalding-tear upon our cheek to hear sermons in which the honour of God is so far from being the preacher's object, that one might almost imagine that the preacher worshipped the dignity of manhood, and thought more of it than of the Infinite Majesty of God.

9 Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:
10 In whose hand *is* mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.

9. "*Gather not my soul with sinners.*"—Lord, when, like fruit, I must be gathered, put me not in the same basket with the best of sinners, much less with the worst of them. The company of sinners is so distasteful to us here, that we cannot endure the thought of being bound up in the same bundle with them to all eternity. Our comfort is, that the Great Husbandman discerns the tares from the wheat, and will find a separate place for distinct characters. In the former verses we see that the Psalmist kept himself clear of profane persons, and this is to be understood as a reason why he should not be thrust into their company at the last. Let us think of the doom of the wicked, and the prayer of the text will forcibly rise to our lips; meanwhile, as we see the rule of judgment by which like is gathered to its like, we who have passed from death unto life have nothing to fear. "*Nor my life with bloody men.*" Our soul sickens to hear them speak; their cruel dispatches, in which they treat the shooting of their fellow-men as rare sport, are horrifying to us; Lord, let us not be shut up in the same prison with them; nay, the same paradise with such men would be a hell, if they remained as they now are.

10. "*In whose hands is mischief.*"—They have both hands full of it, plotting it and carrying it out. "*And their right hand,*" with which they are most dexterous, "*is full of bribes;*" like thieves who would steal with impunity, they carry a sop for the dogs of justice. He who gives bribes is every way as guilty as the man who takes them, and in the matter of our parliamentary elections the rich villain who gives the bribe is by far the worse. Bribery, in any form or shape, should be as detestable to a Christian as carrion to a dove, or garbage to a lamb. Let those whose dirty hands are fond of bribes remember that neither death nor the devil can be bribed to let them escape their well-earned doom.

11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

Here is the lover of godliness entering his personal protest against unrighteous gain. He is a Nonconformist, and is ready to stand alone in his Nonconformity.

Like a live fish, he swims against the stream. Trusting in God, the Psalmist resolves that the plain way of righteousness shall be his choice, and those who will, may prefer the tortuous paths of violence and deceit. Yet he is by no means a boaster, or a self-righteous vaunter of his own strength, for he cries for redemption and pleads for mercy. Our integrity is not absolute nor inherent, it is a work of grace in us, and is marred by human infirmity; we must, therefore, resort to the redeeming blood and the throne of mercy, confessing that though we are saints among men, we must still bow as sinners before God.

12 My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

The song began in the minor, but it has now reached the major key. Saints often sing themselves into happiness. The *even place* upon which our foot stands is the sure, covenant faithfulness, eternal promise and immutable oath of the Lord of Hosts; there is no fear of falling from this solid basis, or of its being removed from under us. Established in Christ Jesus, by being vitally united to him, we have nothing left to occupy our thoughts but the praises of our God. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and when assembled, let us not be slow to contribute our portion of thanksgiving. Each saint is a witness to divine faithfulness, and should be ready with his testimony. As for the slanderers, let them howl outside the door while the children sing within.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is coupled on to the foregoing by thoughts and words. At the close of the foregoing the Psalmist had prayed for *integrity* (verse 1). Unless this Psalm is regarded as a sequel to the preceding one, it will seem vainglorious; but being combined with the penitential acknowledgments of sin, and with the earnest supplications for pardon and grace, and with the earnest profession of faith that God has heard his prayer, which breathe forth in the foregoing Psalm, it will be seen that the declarations which the Psalmist now makes of integrity, are not assertions of human merit, but acknowledgments of divine mercy. As Augustine says, "*Non merita mea, sed misericordia tua, ante oculos meos est.*"—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity.*"—A good cause, a good conscience, and a good deportment, are good grounds of appeal to God.—*Ingram Cobbin.*

Verse 1.—"*Judge me, O Lord.*" Nothing is so pleasing to him that is upright as to know that God knoweth he is so. As it is a small matter with those who are sincere to be condemned by men, so it is not much with them to be commended or approved by them; for indeed neither "he that commendeth himself," as the apostle speaks (2 Cor. x. 18), nor he that is commended by others, "is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." The testimony, or letters commendatory of all the men in the world will do us no good, unless God give us his also.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1.—"*Judge me, O Lord.*" As an instance of appeal to heaven, we quote that mighty preacher of the Word, George Whitfield. "However some may account me a mountebank and an enthusiast, one that is only going to make you methodically mad; they may breathe out their invectives against me, yet Christ knows all; he takes notice of it, and I shall leave it to him to plead my cause, for he is a gracious Master. I have already found him so, and am sure he will continue so. Vengeance is his, and he will repay it."—*George Whitfield,* 1714-1770.

Verse 1.—"*Integrity.*" תֹּם, or תֻּמִּים is used of whatever is uninjured, or is free from any spot or blemish; and hence we find the term applied to an unblemished animal offered in sacrifice. Lev. i. 3; iii. 9.—*George Phillips.*

Verse 1.—"*Mine integrity.*" There is a force in the possessive pronoun "my,"

which must be attended to. The Psalmist intimates that he had proceeded in one uniform course, notwithstanding all the devices of his enemies.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 1.—"*I have trusted in the Lord.*" Trust in God is the *fountain* of "integrity." Whoever places his hope in God need not seek to advance his worldly interests by violating his duty towards his neighbour: he waits for everything *from above*, and is, at the same time, always determined that he will not be deprived of the favour of his heavenly Father through violating his commandments. —*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—"*I shall not slide.*" It is a striking word, as fully expressive of the completeness of God's protection and the security of his upholding hand as the Psalmist's language of the integrity of his walk and trust in God. It is not, as in our Prayer-book version, "I shall not fall," but it is, "*I shall not even slide;*" not even make a false step or stumble.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 2.—The Psalmist uses three words, "*examine*," "*prove*," "*try.*" These words are designed to include all the modes in which the reality of anything is tested; and they imply together that he wished the most *thorough* investigation to be made; he did not shrink from any test.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*Examine*"—"*prove*"—"*try.*" As gold, by fire, is severed and parted from dross, so singleness of heart and true Christian simplicity is best seen and made most evident in troubles and afflictions. In prosperity every man will seem godly, but afflictions do draw out of the heart whatsoever is there, whether it be good or bad.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 2.—"*Prove me.*" The work of conscience within us doth *prove* us. God hath set up a light within us, and when this is enlightened by the Word, then it makes a man's breast full of light. Now a faithful godly man loveth that this should be tender, active, speaking out of God's Word for every duty, and against every sin. You see the quickness of it in David, when it is said, "His heart smote him;" and 1 John iii., "If thy heart condemn thee, God is greater than thy heart." Alas! if thou within thy own self judgest thyself to sin thus and thus, God doth much more. Try thy integrity; art thou willing to have a tender conscience, and an informed conscience? Dost thou love to hear what that speaks out of God's Word? whether peace or duty? this is comfortable. But on the other side, if thou art a man that rebellest against the light of it, wouldst fain put out the sting of it, wouldst be glad to feel no such living thing in thy breast, then thou hast cause to suspect thyself. Oh, it is to be feared that there are many that give themselves to lusts, and carnal pleasures, that so they may put a foggy mist between their conscience and themselves. Others dig into the world, labouring to become senseless, that so there may be an eclipse of this light by the interposition of the earth. Others run to damnable heresies, denying Scriptures, God, heaven, hell; pleading for an universal salvation of all. What are these but refuges of guilty consciences? We must distinguish between our carnal concupiscence, and conscience; between deluded imaginations, and conscience; between an erroneous and scrupulous conscience, and a well-grounded and truly informed conscience; and when we have done so, we must follow conscience as far as that follows the Word.—*Anthony Burgess.*

Verse 2.—"*Reins . . . . . heart.*"—The "*reins*," as the seat of the lower animal passions; the "*heart*," as comprising not only the higher affections, but also the will and the conscience. He thus desires to keep nothing back; he will submit himself to the searching flame of the Great Refiner, that all dross of self-deception may be purged away.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—The practical effect of divine goodness is seen in this text. As the chief thing communicated from God is the divine nature, whereby we are made to resemble him, so the promises of God set home upon the soul are the means of communication; they are the milk and honey of the Scripture, which do not cherish the old man, but support the new; they are not pillows for sinful sloth, but spurs to holy diligence. The promises of grace animate the soul to duty; and when we thus see the goodness of the Lord, it encourages our subjection to his government.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verses 3, 4.—"*I have walked in thy truth, I have not sat with vain persons.*" Be as careful as thou canst, that the persons thou choosest for thy companions be such as fear God. The man in the gospel was possessed with the devil, who dwelt

amongst the tombs, and conversed with graves and carcases. Thou art far from walking after the good Spirit, if thou choosest to converse with open sepulchres, and such as are dead in sins and trespasses. God will not shake the wicked by the hand, as the Vulgate reads (Job viii. 20), neither must the godly man. David proves the sincerity of his course, by his care to avoid such society: *"I have walked in thy truth; I have not sat with vain persons."* There is a twofold *"truth."* 1. Truth of doctrine. Thy law is the truth, free from all dross of corruption and falsehood of error. 2. Truth of affection, or of the inward parts. This may be called *"thy truth,"* or God's truth, though man be the subject of it, partly because it proceedeth from him, partly because it is so pleasant to him; in which respect a broken heart is called the "sacrifice of God." Psalm li. 6. As if he had said, I could not have walked in the power of religion, and in integrity, if I had associated with vile and vain company; I could never have walked in thy precepts if I had *"sat with vain persons."* Observe the phrase, *"I have not sat with vain persons."* 1. Sitting is a posture of choice. It is at a man's liberty, whether he will sit or stand. 2. Sitting is a posture of pleasure. Men sit for their ease, and with delight; therefore, the glorified are said to "sit in heavenly places." Eph. ii. 6. 3. Sitting is a posture of staying or abiding. 2 Kings v. 3. Standing is a posture of going, but sitting of staying. The blessed, who shall for ever be with the Lord and his chosen, are mentioned "to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. viii. 11. David in neither of these senses durst *sit with vain persons.* He might, as his occasions required, use their company, but durst not knowingly choose such company. They could not be the object of his election who were not the object of his affection. *"I hate the congregation of evil doers,"* saith he. As sitting is a posture of pleasure, he did not sit with vain persons. He was sometimes amongst them to his sorrow, but not to his solace. They were to him, as the Canaanites to the Israelites, pricks in his eyes, and thorns in his sides. "Woe is *me*, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" Psalm cxx. 5. It caused grief, not gladness, that he was forced to be amongst the profane.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 4.—*"I have not sat with vain persons."* There is a necessary commerce with men in buying and selling, or as the apostle says, "We must needs go out of the world," but do not voluntarily choose the company of the wicked. 1 Cor. v. 10. "I have written unto you not to keep company," etc. 1 Cor. v. 11. Do not be too familiar with them. What do Christ's doves among birds of prey? What do virgins among harlots? The company of the wicked is very defiling, it is like going among them that have the plague. "They were mingled among the heathen and learned their works." If you mingle bright armour with rusty, the bright armour will not brighten the rusty, but the rusty armour will spoil the bright. Pharaoh taught Joseph to swear, but Joseph did not teach Pharaoh to pray.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 4.—*"Neither will I go in with dissemblers."* Chaldee: "I will not go in with those that hide themselves to do evil." Wickedness is uncandid, and loves concealment, while truth and righteousness are open, and seek scrutiny. Job xxiv. 13–17; John iii. 20, 21. None will deny that the candid man has far fewer troubles with his own conduct than the tortuous and deceitful. The righteous shun the wicked both for the *sin* and for the misery that are in their ways.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 4.—*"Dissemblers."* The hypocrite has much angel without, more devil within. He fries in words, freezes in works; speaks by ells, doth good by inches. He is a stinking dunghill, covered over with snow; a loose-hung mill that keeps great clacking, but grinds no grist; a lying hen that cackles when she hath not laid.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4.—*"Dissemblers."* Perhaps when the bright sunbeams of an early spring have robed all nature in a smiling garb, you have taken your little baskets, and gone in quest of a bank of sweet-smelling modest violets, and you may have found flowers so like them, in form and colour, that you have been deceived, and eagerly grasped your prize; but alas! the sweet odour which should have scented the gale, was found wanting, and betrayed the dog violet. An apt emblem this of those, who, "having the form of godliness, deny the power thereof." 2 Tim. iii. 5. —*Mrs. Rogers, in "The Shepherd King."*

Verses 4, 5.—As rotten apples corrupt those sound ones that do touch them

and lie close to them, even so the evil manners and bad conditions of the ungodly do infect those that keep them company.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verses 4, 5.—"It is difficult (saith a late ingenious writer) even to a miracle to keep God's commandments and evil company too." How suddenly after your soul-refreshments in your closet communion have you lost all your heats and spiritual fervencies, which you had in secret, and have instantly cooled by going forth into cold and corrupt air! When a saint hath been in private ravished with the love of God and the joys of heaven, and afterwards meets with company, which neither doth nor can speak one word of such matters, what a damp is it to him! What a quenching, as it were, of the Spirit of God in him! Nay, is not that true which one saith, that "the people of God do generally lose more by worldly men, that are of a blameless conversation before men, than they lose by wicked and profane men"?—*Lewis Stuckley.*

Verses 4, 5, 9.—He that would not be found amongst sinners in the other world, must take heed that he do not frequent their company in this. Those whom the constable finds wandering with vagrants, may be sent with them to the house of correction. "Lord," said a good woman, on her death bed, when in some doubt of her salvation, "send me not to hell amongst wicked men, for thou knowest I never loved their company all my life long." David deprecates their future doom upon the like ground, and argueth it as a sign of his sincerity: "*I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked. . . . O gather not my soul with sinners.*" Lord, I have not loved the wicked so well as to sit with them for a little time, and shall I live with them for ever? I have not lain amongst them rotting on the earth; and wilt thou gather my soul with those sticks for the unquenchable fire of hell? Lord, I have been so far from liking, that thou knowest I have loathed the congregation of evil doers. Do not I hate them that hate thee? Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred; and shall thy friends fare as thy foes? I appeal to thy Majesty, that my great comfort is in thy chosen. I rejoice only to be amongst thy children here, and shall I be excluded their company hereafter? "*O do not gather my soul with sinners,*" for the wine-press of thine eternal anger! Marcion, the heretic, seeing Polycarp, wondered that he would not own him. Do you not know me, Polycarp? Yea, saith Polycarp, "*Scio te esse primogenitum diaboli;*" "I know thee to be the firstborn of the devil," and so despised him.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 5.—"*I have hated the congregation of evil doers,*" etc. The hatred of God's enemies, *quà* his enemies—"yea, I hate them right sore" so entirely opposed to the indifferentism of the present day, has always been one distinguishing mark of his ancient servants. Witness Phinehas (Psalm cvi. 31); "And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore;" Samuel with Agag; Elias with the priests of Baal. And notice the commendation of the angel of Ephesus, "Thou canst not bear them that are evil." Rev. ii. 2.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 5.—"*I have hated the congregation of evil doers.*" We consider them as God's enemies, so we hate them; not their persons, but their vices; for that, as Augustine defineth, it is *odium perfectum*, a perfect hatred. And indeed it is the hatred that God beareth to his enemies; for "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. i. 18); not against their persons—they are his workmanship, and carry his image in some sort, though much disfigured; but against the unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, by which their persons do stand obnoxious to his displeasure. And thus I find the saints of God have triumphed over the wicked, as Israel over Pharaoh, and the Gileadites over the children of Ammon; not rejoicing in the destruction of God's creatures, but of God's enemies; and wishing with Deborah and Barak, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." This is no more but an applauding of the judgment of God, and a celebration of his justice.—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 5.—"*I have hated,*" etc. Consider that there can be no true friendship betwixt a godly and a wicked person; therefore it concerneth thee to be the more wary in thy choice. He that in factions hath an eye to power, in friendship will have an eye to virtue. Friendship, according to the philosopher, is one soul in two bodies. But how can they ever be of one soul that are as different as air and earth, and as contrary as fire and water? All true love is, *motus animi ad fruendum Deo propter ipsum; se et proximo propter Deum*—a motion of the soul towards

the enjoyment of God for himself, and his neighbours for God's sake; so that he can never truly love man who doth not love his Maker. God is the only foundation upon which we can build friendship; therefore such as live without him, cannot love us in him. That building which is loose, without this foundation can never stand long. A wicked man may call that profession he maketh to his brother by the name of love, but heathens can tell us that virtue alone is the hand which can twist the cords of love; that other combinations are but a confederacy, and all other but conjunctions in hypocrisy.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 5.—Wheresoever we perceive any people to worship God truly after his word, there we may be certain the church of Christ to be, unto the which we ought to associate ourselves, and to desire, with the prophet David, to praise God in the midst of this church. But if we behold, through the iniquity of time, congregations to be made with counterfeit religion, otherwise than the word of God doth teach, we ought then, if we be required to be companions thereof, to say again with David, "*I have hated the synagogue of the malignant, and will not sit with the wicked.*" In the Apocalypse, the church of Ephesus is highly commended, because she tried such as said they were apostles and were not in deed, and therefore would not abide the company of them. Further, God commanded his people that they should not seek Bethel, neither enter into Galgala, where idolatry was used, by the mouth of his prophet Amos.—*John Philpot* (*Martyr*). *Burnt at Smithfield*, 1555.

Verse 5.—How few consider how they harden wicked men by an intimacy with them, whereas withdrawment from them might be a means to make them ashamed! Whilst we are merry and jovial with them, we make them believe their condition is not deplorable, their danger is not great; whereas if we shunned them, as we would a bowed wall, whilst they remain enemies to the Lord, this might do them good, for the startling of them, and rousing of them out of their unhappy security and strong delusions wherein they are held.—*Lewis Stuckley.*

Verse 6.—"*I will wash mine hands in innocency.*" There are two eminent lavers in the gospel; the first, Christ's bath, a hot bath, *lavacrum sanguinis*, the laver of Christ's blood; the second, our bath, a cold bath, *lavacrum lachrimarum*, the laver of repentance. These two mixed together will prove a sovereign composition, wrought first by Christ himself when he sweat water and blood. The first is as that pool of Bethesda into which whosoever enters with *faith*, is healed; the blood of Christ is the true laver of regeneration, a fountain set open for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in. "The blood of Christ purgeth us from all sins." 1 John i. 7. We account it charity in mothers to feed their children with their own milk: how dear is the love of Christ, that both washeth and feeds us with his own blood! No sooner are we born in Christ, but just as our mother's, so Christ's blood is turned into milk, nourishing us to everlasting salvation. What is *calamus benjamini*, or storax, or a thousand rivers of oil, to make us clean, except the Lord purge and cleanse us? No; 'tis his blood "that speaks better things than the blood of Abel." "Unto him, therefore, that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever." Rev. i. 5, 6. But yet 'tis the second bath, the laver of repentance, that must apply and make the first operative. This bath of Mary Magdalene's repentance, it is a kind of rebaptisation, giving strength and effect to the first washing. And it implies a threefold act: first, to bruise our hearts by *contrition*; secondly, to lay our wounds open by *confession* to God; thirdly, to *wash our hands in innocency*, by *satisfaction* to men. . . . . Wash now and wash all; from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is nothing in us but wounds and sores; yet above all there is something here in it that David washeth his "*hands.*" Indeed it is not enough to come with wet eyes, if we come with foul hands, to offer with unwashen hands; the Gentiles would not do it. Contrition and confession to God make not up complete repentance without satisfaction to men. *Non remittitur peccatum nisi restituatur ablatum*:* it is as true as old, and in old father Latimer's English it is, "Either there must be restitution, open or secret, or else hell." Whoever repairs not the wrong, rejoiceth in the sin. Prov. ii. 14. Where there is no satisfaction, *Non agitur sed fingitur pœnitentia*," saith St. Augustine; and those who restore not all, wash not their whole hands, they dip only the tips of their fingers. Extortion,

* Augustine.

rapine, bribery, these are the sins of the hands (sins so proper to the Jews, that they may well conceive as they do that the devil lies all night on their hands, and that is it makes them so diligent in washing); but as for us Christians, unless these vipers be shaken off our hands, though ye cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, yet if you continue in your pollutions, God regards not your offering any more, nor will he receive it with good will at your hands. Matt. ii. 13.—*Isaac Bargrave's Sermon before the House of Commons*, 1623.

Verse 6.—"*I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.*" If *greatness* might have privileged this person from impurity, David was a king; if the *grace of his soul* might have freed him from the soil of sin, he was "a man after God's own heart." But let not great men put too much trust in their greatness; the longer the robe is, the more soil it contracts: great power may prove the mother of great damnation. And as for purity, there is a generation that say there's no sin in them, but they deceive themselves; there is no truth in them. Whatever Rome's φυσιόλογοι pretend for the power of nature, and of free will, we wretched sinners are taught to conceive more truly of our own infirmity. Christ's own apostle, stout Thomas, failed in the faith of his resurrection; Peter (whose chair is now the pretended seat of infallibility) denied his Master; David, "a man after God's own heart," hath need of *washing;* and who can say, I am pure in the sight of the Lord? Certainly, O Lord, no flesh is righteous in thy sight. No; this is the best ground of Christian felicity, if with David we fall to a sight of our own sins; if with the Publican we strike our own breasts, and not with the Pharisee, cast our eye so much upon other men's faults. Why should we, like tailors, measure all men but ourselves? as if the best of us had not sin enough of his own to think on. See how David calls himself to account for his own sins; "O Lord, I know mine iniquity, and my sin is ever before me." Oh, the powerful effect of Christian devotion, when by the reflective act of the understanding, science is turned into conscience, and our knowledge is but the glass of our own imperfection, the glass wherein the sight of our sins sends us presently to God, as it did David here, who makes this account only betwixt God and his own soul, "*I, O Lord.*" First, he takes his rise from humility and the sight of his own sins, and he soars up by the wings of faith to the throne of God's mercy: "*I, O Lord.*" He sees with his own eyes, and not only with the church, or the priest's spectacles; he is his own penitentiary and confessor; here's no intercession by saints, no masses, merits, indulgencies, trentals, dirges: all's done betwixt God and him: "*I, O Lord.*" With the eye of *humility* he looks to himself and his own misery; then with the eye of *faith* to God and his mercy, and from both these results a third virtue of *repentance* in the act of preparation, washing the soil of sin in the bath of sorrow: "*I will wash mine hands,*" etc.—*Isaac Bargrave.*

Verse 6.—"*I will wash my hands in purity.*" Referring in these words, to the ordinary use of the sacrifices, he makes a distinction between himself and those who professed to offer the same divine worship, and thrust themselves forward in the services of the sanctuary, as if they alone had the sole right to perform them. As David, therefore, and these hypocrites were one in this respect, that they entered the sanctuary, and surrounded the sacred altar together, he proceeds to show that he was a true worshipper, declaring that he not only diligently attended to the external rites, but came to worship God with unfeigned devotion. It is obvious that he alludes to the solemn rite of washing which was practised under the law. He, accordingly, reproves the gross superstition of hypocrites, who, in seeking only the purification of water, neglected true purification; whereas it was God's design, in the appointment of the outward sign, to put men in mind of their inward pollution, and thus to encourage them to repentance. The outward washing alone, instead of profiting hypocrites, kept them at a greater distance from God. When the Psalmist, therefore, says, "*I will wash my hands in innocence,*" he intimates that they only gather more pollution and filth by their washings. The Hebrew word, נִקָּיוֹן *nikkayon*, signifies the cleanness of anything, and is figuratively used for *innocence*. We thus see, that as hypocrites derive no moral purity whatever from their washings, David mocks at the labour with which they vainly toil and torment themselves in such rites.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 6.—"*I will wash mine hands,*" etc. David willing to express his coming with a pure heart to pray to God, doth it by this similitude of a priest; that as a priest *washes his hands*, and *then offers oblation*, so had he constantly joined *purity* and *devotion* together.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 6.—"*In innocency.*" The very ἀκμὴ and crown of all our preparation, the purest water we can wash in, is *innocency;* and *innocency* is a virtue of the heart as well as of the hand. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." James iv. 8. I could wish our washing might be like Cyprian's baptising, *ad tincturam*, even till we were dyed in repentance and the blood of Christ. Let the quantity of thy sins be the measure of thy repentance. First offer thine *innocency*, then thy sacrifice. It is not enough that you come this day by order, you must come with *innocency*. God requires the duty of the second table, as well as of the first; he abhors the outward act of piety where he finds no conscience and practice of *innocency.*—*Isaac Bargrave.*

Verse 6 (*first clause*).—One morning, as Gotthold was pouring water into a basin, he recollected the words of Scripture: "*I will wash my hands in innocency,*" a text which shows how diligently the royal prophet had endeavoured to lead a blameless life, and walk habitually in the fear of God. Upon this he mused, and said, Henceforth, my God, every time I pour out water to wash with, I will call to mind that it is my duty to cleanse my hands from wicked actions, my mouth from wicked words, and my heart from wicked lusts and desires, that so I may be enabled to lift holy hands unto thee, and with unspotted lips and heart worship thee, to the best of my ability. What will it profit me to strive after outward purity, if my heart is filthy and abominable in thy sight? Can the food nourish me which I have earned with polluted hands, or seized with violence and injustice, or eaten with insensibility and ingratitude? Ah! no, my God; far from me be food like this. My first care shall be to maintain a blameless walk; my next, when I have thoughtlessly defiled myself, to cleanse and wash away the stain, and remove mine iniquity from thine eyes. "*Purge me, O my God, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*" Psalm li. 7.—*Christian Scriver* (1629–1693), in "*Gotthold's Emblems.*"

Verse 6.—"*I will compass thine altar, O Lord.*" On the next day after this feast [the Feast of Tabernacles], the people compassed the altar seven times, with palm boughs in their hands, in the remembrance of the overthrow of Jericho. . . . Not only the boughs, but the days of this whole Feast of Tabernacles, were termed *Hosannotn*, from the usual acclamation of the people whilst they carried the boughs up and down.—*Thomas Godwyn, B.D.* (1587—1643), in "*Moses and Aaron.*"

Verse 6.—By the phrase *compassing the altar*, either he alludes to some Levitical custom of going about the altar, as the priests did in the oblation of their sacrifices; and the people, especially those of them who were more devout and zealous, who possibly moved from place to place, but still within their own court, that they might discern what was done on the several sides of the altar, and so be the more affected with it; or rather he implies that he would offer many sacrifices together, which would employ the priests round about the altar.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 8.—"*Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house,*" etc. "I have in my congregation," said a venerable minister of the gospel, "a worthy, aged woman, who has for many years been so deaf as not to distinguish the loudest sound, and yet she is always one of the first in the meeting. On asking the reason of her constant attendance (as it was impossible for her to hear my voice), she answered, 'Though I cannot hear you, I come to God's house because I love it, and would be found in his ways; and he gives me many a sweet thought upon the text when it is pointed out to me: another reason is, because there I am in the best company, in the more immediate presence of God, and among his saints, the honourable of the earth. I am not satisfied with serving God in private; it is my duty and privilege to honour him regularly in public." What a reproof this is to those who have their hearing, and yet always come to a place of worship late, or not at all!—*K. Arvine.*

Verse 9.—"*Gather not my soul with sinners.*" Now is the time that people should be in care and concern, that their souls be not gathered with sinners in the other world. In discoursing from this doctrine we shall—1. Consider some things implied in it. 2. Show who are the sinners, that we are to have a horror of our souls being gathered with in the other world. 3. What it is for one's soul to be gathered with sinners in the other world. 4. Consider this care and concern, or show what is implied in this earnest request, "Gather not my soul with sinners."

5. Give the reasons why we should be in such care and concern. 6. Make application.

Death is the gathering time, which the Psalmist has in view in the text. Ye have a time here that ye call the gathering time, about the term when the servants are going away, wherein ye gather your strayed sheep, that every one may get their own again. Death is God's gathering time wherein he gets the souls belonging to him, and the devil those belonging to him. They did go long together, but then they are parted; and saints are taken home to the congregation of saints, and sinners to the congregation of sinners. And it concerns us to say, "Gather not my soul with sinners." Whoever be our people here, God's people or the devil's, death will gather our souls to them.

It is a horrible thing to be gathered with sinners in the other world. To think of our souls being gathered with them there, may make the hair of one's head stand up. Many now like no gathering like the gathering with sinners; it is the very delight of their hearts, it makes a brave jovial life in their eyes. And it is a pain to them to be gathered with saints, to be detained before the Lord on a Sabbath-day. But to be gathered with them in the other world, is a horror to all sorts. 1. The saints have a horror of it, as in the text. To think to be staked down in their company in the other world would be a hell of itself to the godly. David never had such a horror of the society of the diseased, the persecuted, etc., as of sinners. He is content to be gathered with saints of whatever condition; but, "Lord," says he, "Gather not my soul with sinners." 2. The wicked themselves have a horror of it. Numb. xxiii. 10. "Let me die the death of the righteous," said the wicked Balaam, "and let my last end be like his." Though they would be content to live with them, or be with them in life, their consciences bear witness that they have a horror of being with them in death. They would live with sinners, but they would die with saints. A poor, unreasonable, self-condemning thought.—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 9.—"*Gather not my soul with sinners.*" Bind me not up in the same bundle with them, like the tares for the fire. Matt. xiii. 30. The contrast to this is seen in the following Psalm (verse 10), "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up;" literally, will *gather me* to his fold.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 9.—"*Gather not my soul with sinners.*" The Lord hath a harvest and a gleaning time also, set for cutting down and binding together, in the fellowship of judgments, God's enemies, who have followed the same course of sinning: for here we are given to understand that God will "*gather their souls,*" and so will let none escape.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 9.—"*Gather not my soul with sinners.*" After all, it may be objected that this concern seems to be common to saints and sinners. Even a wicked Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Numb. xxiii. 10. Take a few differences between them in this matter. 1. It is separation from Christ that makes the saints to have a horror at being gathered with sinners hereafter. Separation from Christ is the main ground of the believer's horror: but if other things were to be right with the sinner in the other world, he would be easy under separation from Christ. 2. The believer has a horror at being gathered with sinners on account of their filthiness; but the thing that makes the sinner concerned is the prospect of punishment. No doubt, a principle of self-preservation must make punishment frightful to all; but abstracted from that, the saints have a concern not to be gathered with sinners in the other world, upon account of their unholiness and filthiness. "He who is filthy, let him be filthy still," is enough to make a saint abhor the lot of sinners in the life to come. 3. The concern of the saints has a mighty influence upon them, to make them study holiness here; but sinners live unholy for all their concern. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John iii. 3. What hope? The hope of seeing Christ as he is, and of being perfectly like him, of being separated from sinners. 4. Lastly, the concern of the saints is such, that they do with purpose of heart come out from among sinners more and more in this world; but sinners are not concerned to be separated from sinners here. Balaam wished to die the death of the righteous; but he had no concern to live the life of the righteous, and to be separated from sinners here.—*James Scot,* 1773.

Verses 9—12.—David prays that God would not "gather his soul with sinners,

whose right hand is full of bribes;" such as, for advantage, would be bribed to sin, to which wicked gang he opposeth himself, verse 11: "*But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity;*" where he tells us what kept him from being corrupted and enticed, as they were, from God—it was his *integrity*. A soul walking in its integrity will take bribes neither from men, nor sin itself; and therefore he saith (verse 12), "His foot stood in an even place;" or, as some read it, "My foot standeth in righteousness."—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 10.—"*Their right hand is full of bribes.*" If the great men in Turkey should use their religion of Mahomet to sell, as our patrons commonly sell benefices here (the office of preaching, the office of salvation), it should be taken as an intolerable thing; the Turk would not suffer it in his commonwealth. Patrons be charged to see the office done, and not to seek a lucre and a gain by their patronship. There was a patron in England that had a benefice fallen into his hand, and a good brother of mine came unto him, and brought him thirty apples in a dish, and gave them to his man to carry them to his master. It is like he gave one to his man for his labour, to make up the gain, and so there was thirty-one. This man cometh to his master, and presented him with the dish of apples, saying, "Sir, such a man hath sent you a dish of fruit, and desireth you to be good unto him for such a benefice." "Tush, tush," quoth he, "this is no apple matter, I will none of his apples, I have as good as these (or any he hath) in mine own orchard." The man came to the priest again, and told him what his master said. "Then," quoth the priest, "desire him yet to prove one of them for my sake, he shall find them much better than they look for." He cut one of them, and found ten pieces of gold in it. "Marry," quoth he, "this is a good apple." The priest standing not far off, hearing what the gentleman said, cried out and answered, "they are all one apples, I warrant you, sir; they grew all on one tree, and have all one taste." "Well, he is a good fellow, let him have it," quoth the patron, etc. Get you a graft of this same tree, and I warrant you it shall stand you in better stead than all St. Paul's learning.—*Hugh Latimer.*

Verse 10.—"*Bribes.*" They that see furthest into the law, and most clearly discern the cause of justice, if they suffer the dust of bribes to be thrown into their sight, their eyes will water and twinkle, and fall at last to blind connivance. It is a wretched thing when justice is made a hackney that may be backed for money, and put on with golden spurs, even to the desired journey's end of injury and iniquity. Far be from our souls this wickedness, that the ear which should be open to complaints should be stopped with the earwax of partiality. Alas! poor truth, that she must now be put to the charges of a golden earpick, or she cannot be heard!—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 10.—

> What makes all doctrines plain and clear?
> About two hundred pounds a-year,
> And that which was proved true before
> Proved false again? Two hundred more.

Samuel Butler (1600—1680), *in* "*Hudibras.*" Part III. Canto I.

Verse 12 (*first clause*).—The upright man's "*foot,*" is said to "*stand in an even place;*" he walks not haltingly and uncomely, as those who go in unequal ways, which are hobbling, and up and down, or those whose feet and legs are not even (as Solomon saith), "The legs of the lame are not equal," and so cannot *stand in an even place*, because one is long and the other short; the sincere man's feet are *even*, and legs of a length, as I may say; his care alike conscientious to the whole will of God. The hypocrite, like the badger, hath one foot shorter than anotner; or, like a foundered horse, he doth not stand, as we say, right of all four; one foot at least you shall perceive he favours, loth to put it down.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 12.—"*On an even place.*" As a man whose feet are firmly fixed upon even ground is apprehensive of no fall, so the pious worshippers of Jehovah feel no dread lest their adversaries should finally triumph over them.—*William Walford.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. *Two inseparable companions*—faith and holiness. II. *The blessedness of the man who possesses them.* He needs not fear the judgment, nor the danger of the way. III. *The only means of procuring them.*

Verse 1 (*last sentence*).—The upholding power of trust in God.

Verse 2.—*Divine examinations.* Their variety, severity, searching nature, accuracy, certainty: when to be desired, and when to be dreaded.

Verse 3.—Delight for the eyes and safety for the feet; or the good man's sweet contemplation and holy practice; or the heavenly compound of godliness—motive, and motion, enjoying and acting, love and truth, free grace and good works.

Verse 3.—"*Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes.*" It might be well to follow David and to keep the lovingkindness of God before *our* eyes. This should be done in four ways:—I. As a subject of contemplation. II. As the source of encouragement. III. As an incitement to praise. IV. As an example for imitation.—*William Jay.*

Verse 4.—"*Vain persons.*" Who they are. Why they are to be avoided. What will become of them. "*Dissemblers.*" Describe this numerous family. Show what their objects are. The mischief done to believers by their craftiness. The need of shunning them, and their fearful end.

Verse 5.—*Bad company.* Cases of its evil results, excuses for it answered. warnings given, motives urged for relinquishing.

Verse 6.—The necessity of personal holiness in order to acceptable worship.

Verse 7.—I. The believer's calling—a publisher. II. The author selected, and the quality of his works. "*Thy wondrous works.*" III. The mode of advertising—"*voice of thanksgiving,*" "*tell,*" etc.

Verse 8.—God's house. Why we love it. What we love in it. How we show our love. How our love will be rewarded.

Verse 9.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 524. "The Saints' Horror at the Sinners' Hell."

Verse 11.—The best men needing redemption and mercy; or the outward walk before men, and the secret walk with God.

Verse 12.—Secure standing, honoured position, grateful praise.

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—Congregational Psalmody, and our personal share in it.

HUNT, BARNARD & CO., LTD., Printers, London and Aylesbury.

THE

TREASURY OF DAVID:

CONTAINING

AN ORIGINAL EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS;

A COLLECTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS FROM THE WHOLE RANGE OF LITERATURE;

A SERIES OF HOMILETICAL HINTS UPON ALMOST EVERY VERSE;

AND LISTS OF WRITERS UPON EACH PSALM.

IN SIX VOLUMES

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

VOL. II.

PSALM XXVII. TO LVII.

33431

WYCLIFFE COLLEGE LIBRARY

MARSHALL BROTHERS, LTD.

PUBLISHERS

LONDON, EDINBURGH, and NEW YORK.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF C. H. SPURGEON, AT KELVEDON.

Specially drawn for "The Treasury of David" by E. H. Fitchew.

PREFACE.

GREATLY encouraged by the generous reception awarded to my first volume, I have laboured on with diligence, and am now able to present the reader with the second instalment of my work. Whether life and health shall be given me to complete my task, which will probably extend to six volumes, remains with the gracious Preserver of men; but with his aid and allowance, my face is set towards that design, and I pray that my purpose may be achieved, if it be for the divine glory, and for the good of his church.

In this volume, which contains thirty-one sacred odes, we have several of the more memorable and precious of Zion's songs. In commenting upon some of them, I have been overwhelmed with awe, and said with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place, it is none other than the house of God." Especially was this case with the fifty-first; I postponed expounding it week after week, feeling more and more my inability for the work. Often I sat down to it, and rose up again without having penned a line. It is a bush burning with fire yet not consumed, and out of it a voice seemed to cry to me, "Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet." The Psalm is very human, its cries and sobs are of one born of woman; but it is freighted with an inspiration all divine, as if the Great Father were putting words into his child's mouth. Such a Psalm may be wept over, absorbed into the soul, and exhaled again in devotion; but, commented on—ah! where is he who having attempted it can do other than blush at his defeat?

I have followed the same plan as in the former volume, not only because I am committed to it by the law of uniformity, but also because it is on the whole advantageous. Some have suggested alterations, but many more have commended the very features which would have been improved away, and therefore I have continued in the selfsame method.

Greater use has, in this volume, been made of the Latin writers. Extracts have been made not only from those which are condensed in Pool's Synopsis; but from many others. These works are a mine of exposition far too little known. If the index shall serve to introduce fresh expositions to my ministerial readers, I shall not have laboured in vain.

The acknowledgments of obligation made in Volume I. might very justly be repeated as concerning Volume II.; the reader will consider them as again recorded. It may also be needful to repeat the statement that as I give the name of each Author quoted, each authority is personally responsible for his own sentiments; and I do not wish it to be supposed that I endorse all

PREFACE.

GREATLY encouraged by the generous reception awarded to my first volume, I have laboured on with diligence, and am now able to present the reader with the second instalment of my work. Whether life and health shall be given me to complete my task, which will probably extend to six volumes, remains with the gracious Preserver of men; but with his aid and allowance, my face is set towards that design, and I pray that my purpose may be achieved, if it be for the divine glory, and for the good of his church.

In this volume, which contains thirty-one sacred odes, we have several of the more memorable and precious of Zion's songs. In commenting upon some of them, I have been overwhelmed with awe, and said with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place, it is none other than the house of God." Especially was this case with the fifty-first; I postponed expounding it week after week, feeling more and more my inability for the work. Often I sat down to it, and rose up again without having penned a line. It is a bush burning with fire yet not consumed, and out of it a voice seemed to cry to me, "Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet." The Psalm is very human, its cries and sobs are of one born of woman; but it is freighted with an inspiration all divine, as if the Great Father were putting words into his child's mouth. Such a Psalm may be wept over, absorbed into the soul, and exhaled again in devotion; but, commented on—ah! where is he who having attempted it can do other than blush at his defeat?

I have followed the same plan as in the former volume, not only because I am committed to it by the law of uniformity, but also because it is on the whole advantageous. Some have suggested alterations, but many more have commended the very features which would have been improved away, and therefore I have continued in the selfsame method.

Greater use has, in this volume, been made of the Latin writers. Extracts have been made not only from those which are condensed in Pool's Synopsis; but from many others. These works are a mine of exposition far too little known. If the index shall serve to introduce fresh expositions to my ministerial readers, I shall not have laboured in vain.

The acknowledgments of obligation made in Volume I. might very justly be repeated as concerning Volume II.; the reader will consider them as again recorded. It may also be needful to repeat the statement that as I give the name of each Author quoted, each authority is personally responsible for his own sentiments; and I do not wish it to be supposed that I endorse all

that is inserted. It is often useful to us to know what has been said by authors whose views we could by no means accept.

More and more is the conviction forced upon my heart that every man must traverse the territory of the Psalms himself if he would know what a goodly land they are. They flow with milk and honey, but not to strangers; they are only fertile to lovers of their hills and vales. None but the Holy Spirit can give a man the key to the Treasury of David; and even he gives it rather to experience than to study. Happy he who for himself knows the secret of the Psalms.

If permitted by the Great Master whom I serve, I shall now proceed with another portion of this TREASURY OF DAVID; but the labour and research are exceedingly great, and my other occupations are very pressing, and therefore I must crave the patience of the Christian public.

C. H. Spurgeon

INDEX

OF AUTHORS QUOTED OR REFERRED TO.

Adams, Thomas (1614), 11, 99, 116, 134, 136, 147, 148, 154, 167, 191, 195, 206, 229, 332, 382, 396, 397, 398
Adkins, Richard, 100
Æschylus, 286
Ainsworth, Henry (—1622), 18, 147, 152, 153, 181, 212, 242, 247, 323, 366, 452, 453, 459
Airay, Henry (1560—1610), 101
Alexander, Joseph Addison (1850), 100, 111, 115, 284, 367, 392, 394, 395, 408, 436, 437, 452
Alexander, Thomas (1861), 411, 414, 420, 423
Alexander, William Lindsay (1862), 219
Alford, Henry (1810—1871), 328
Alleine, Richard (1611—1681), 76, 87, 130
Ambrose, (340—397), 155, 307, 345
Ambrose, Isaac (1592—1674), 27, 357
Anderson, James (1846), 147, 185, 423, 482
Andrewes, Lancelot (1555—1626), 358
Angier, John (1647), 483
Aquinas, Thomas (1224—1274), 345
Aristotle, 189
Arndt, John (1555—1621), 75
Arnot, William (1858), 166
Arrowsmith, John (1600—1660), 470
Arvieux, Laurent d' (1635—1702), 130
Arvine, K. (1859), 24, 378
Ash, Simeon (1642), 78
Athanasius, 329, 330
Augustine (353—429), 111, 112, 115, 116, 117, 150, 156, 333, 336, 358, 392, 428
Avrillon, Jean Baptiste Elias (1652—1729), 6, 8, 210
Ayguan, Michael (1416), 346, 457

Bacon, Francis (1560—1626), 438, 471
Bacon, William Thompson 113
Baker, Sir Richard (1568—1645), 6, 8, 14, 15, 18, 49, 54, 55, 111, 128, 129, 134, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 210, 211, 410, 412, 413, 415, 416, 420, 422
Ball, John (1585—1640), 118, 138, 414
Barclay, John (1734—1798), 35
Barlow, John (1618), 232, 283
Barnes, Albert (1798—1870), 12, 27, 38, 99, 100, 150, 209, 311, 366, 377, 453, 459, 469, 484
Barth, T. C. (1865), 192, 345
Basil (326—379), 36, 40, 128
Bate, Julius (1711—1771), 365
Baylie, Robert (1643), 183
Baxter, Richard (1615—1691), 71
Beddome, B. (1717—1795), 46, 146
Beecher, Henry Ward (1870), 481
Bellarmine, Robert (1542—1621), 16, 364
Benmohel, N. L. (1847), 244
Bernard (1091—1157), 345, 468
Bible, Berleb., 186
Bible, Pocket Commentary, 191
Biblical, Treasury, 119
Biddulph, Thomas Tregenna (1763—1838), 410, 415
Bingham, Charles H. (1836), 92
Binney, Thomas (1869), 131
Binnie, William (1870), 86, 115, 128, 150, 323, 346, 367, 485
Blackerby, Samuel (1673), 264, 461
Bogan, Zachary (1625—1659), 51, 130, 276, 287, 459
Bolton, Robert (1572—1631), 195
Bonar, Andrew A. (1859), 137, 146, 343, 355, 367, 391, 436, 481
Bonar, Horatius (1847), 228
Boothroyd, Benjamin (—1836), 395, 439
Bouchier, Barton (1855), 180, 263, 391, 395, 468
Bowes, G. S. (1860), 26, 55
Boys, John (1560—1643), 326, 332, 356, 357, 358, 421, 422, 479, 480, 482
Bradbury, Charles (1785), 6, 73
Bradford, John (1510—1555), 128
Bromiardus, Johannes de (1485), 264
Brooks, Thomas (1608—1680), 34, 51, 53, 150, 153, 156, 166, 188, 246, 248, 280, 288, 310
Browning, Robert (1849), 73
Bruce, Robert (1559—1631), 242
Buffon, Comte de (1707—1788), 116
Bunyan, John (1628—1688), 183, 209, 285, 382, 461, 469
Burder, George (1838), 114, 366
Burder, Samuel (1839), 165, 227, 365
Burgess, Daniel (1645—1712), 396
Burke, Edmund (1730—1797), 227
Burns, James D. (1823—1864), 185
Burroughs, Jeremiah (1599—1646), 332, 470 481
Burroughs, Thomas (1657), 220
Burton, William (1602), 266
Bush, George (1796—), 115
Buxtorf, John (1564—), 153
Byfield, Nicholas (1579—), 180
Bythner, Victorinus (—1670), 244, 323, 374

Calamy, Edmund (1600—1666), 120, 473
Calmet, Augustine (1672—1757), 322
Calvin, John (1509—1564), 12, 17, 25, 36, 39, 48, 65, 71, 72, 74, 116, 119, 150, 153, 185, 186, 210, 211, 243, 245, 261, 264, 265, 267, 308, 359, 380, 419, 421, 422, 443, 444, 468, 480

Cameron, Richard (1680), 349
Capel, Richard (1586—1656), 263
Carbone, Ludovic de, 181
Carlyle, Thomas (18——), 70
Carmichael, Alexander (1677), 91
Carter, Charles (1869), 100, 220
Cartwright, Christopher (1602), 68
Caryl, Joseph (1602—1673), 34, 37, 39, 40, 118, 153, 162, 164, 190, 205, 310, 333, 348, 359, 374, 375, 377, 378, 380, 383, 394, 397, 398, 399, 430, 459, 462, 471, 479
Caswell, Edward (1861), 336
Cawdray, Robert (1609), 36, 71, 100
Chalmers, Thomas (1780—1847), 262, 408
Chandler, Samuel (1693—1766), 48, 49, 52, 128, 137, 409, 410, 414, 415, 417, 423, 429, 443, 481
Charnock, Stephen (1628—1680), 76, 89, 250, 395, 398, 469, 472, 473
Cheynell, Francis (1645), 382
Christian Treasury, The (1848), 100, 132
Christophers, S. W. (1866), 344
Chrysostom (347—407), 70
Clarke, Adam (1760—1832), 12, 17, 48, 65, 66, 88, 113, 118, 133, 136, 190, 245, 260, 263, 308, 344, 355, 357, 409, 414, 418, 429, 438, 454, 457, 458, 472
Clarke, Samuel (1599—1682), 35, 128
Clarke, Samuel (1675—1729), 283
Clarkson, David (1621—1686), 17, 114, 132, 165, 187, 192, 249, 250, 308, 383
Cobbett, Thomas (1608—1686), 14, 54, 230
Coetlogon, Charles de (1775), 409, 411
Cole, Thomas (1627—1697), 212
Coleman, John Noble (1863), 452
Collinge, John (1623—1690), 282, 346
Colvill, William (1655), 167
Conybeare, W. J. (1856), 95
Coombs, Jesse (1867), 211
Coore, Richard (1687), 324, 331, 348
Cowper, William (1566—1619), 416, 417, 419, 421
Cox, Francis Elizabeth (1864), 184
Crabbe, George (1754—1832), 262
Crates, 379
Craven, Isaac (1630), 92, 146
Cresswell, Daniel (1776—1844), 74, 147, 153, 168, 189, 243, 245, 265, 309, 365, 395, 438
Crichett, George (1870), 70
Cruso, Timothy (1657—1697), 13, 163, 167
Culverwell, Nathaniel (—1650), 277

D., J. (1608), 376
" Daily Telegraph " (1869), 131
Damiano, Peter (988—1072), 137
Davenant, John (1562—1641), 357
Davidson, David (1836), 191
Davidson, Samuel (1852), 444
Davies, Sir John (1569—1626), 131, 155, 164, 228, 457
Davey, Dr., 326
Day, John (1609), 9
De Burgh, William (1860), 116, 183, 307
Defoe, Daniel (1663—1731), 251
Delitzsch, Franz (1869), 212, 249, 485
De Wette, Wilhelm (1850), 310
Dickson, David (1583—1662), 26, 65, 69, 73, 76, 131, 162, 163, 168, 183, 187, 249, 251, 263, 264, 308, 309, 311, 312, 327, 332, 336, 442, 444, 452, 453, 459, 468, 470, 472, 484
Dimock, Henry (1791), 420
Diodati, John (1576—1649), 37, 47, 70, 112, 180, 250, 329, 397
Dolben, J. (1665), 443
Donne, John (1573—1631), 97, 98, 99, 100, 205, 206, 460
Doolittle, Samuel (1693), 119
Doolittle, Thomas (1630), 119
Duncan, Mary B. (1825—1865), 51, 189, 208
Dunlop, William (1692—1720), 76, 128, 244, 296, 381
Duns, John (1868), 115, 193, 209, 415
Duppa, Brian (1588—1662), 281
Dyke, Jeremiah (1620), 472, 480

Eadie, John (1868), 92
Edwards, John (1637—1716), 375
Edwards, Jonathan (1703—1758), 163, 349, 375
Elwin, Fountain (1842), 96
Ephraem Syrus (—379), 133
Erasmus, Desiderus (1467—1536), 68
Erskine, Ralph (1685—1752), 18, 247, 345, 346
Estley, George (1603), 418
Estwick, Nicholas (1644), 229
Eusebius, (267—338), 309
Evans, James Harrington (1785—1849), 90
Ewald, Henrich, 219

Farindon, Anthony (1596—1658), 186
Faussett, A. R. (1866), 457, 459, 469, 480
Fenner, William (1600—1640), 397
Firmin, Giles (1617—1697), 209
Flavel, John (1627—1691), 53, 75, 248, 310, 311, 329, 336, 478, 479, 481
Fletcher, Giles (1588—1623), 357
Forbes, A. P. (1857), 408
" Four Friends " (1867), 345, 458
Fowler, Christopher (1610—1678), 26, 101
Frame, James (1869), 243, 244, 248, 249, 250, 251
Francis, Philip (1765), 36
Frank, Mark (1613—1664), 246, 325
French, W. and Skinner G. (1842), 398, 418, 457
Fry, John (1842), 188, 277
Fuller, Andrews (1754—1815), 167
Fuller, Thomas (1608—1661), 100, 137, 263, 399, 411

Gadsby, John (1862), 154, 229, 243, 278, 471
Gataker, Thomas (1574—1654), 117, 133, 382
Geir, Martin (1614—1681), 66, 112, 249, 251, 265, 356, 391, 397, 452, 471
Genebrard, Gilbert (1537—1597), 163
Gerhard, Paul (1606—1676), 184
Gibbens, Nicholas (1602—), 439
Gill, John (1697—1771), 120, 127, 130, 134, 150, 152, 185, 261, 310, 345, 391, 396, 397, 453, 457, 469
Gilpin, Richard (1677), 52, 483
Ginsberg, Christian D. (1863), 166
Gipps, George (1645), 396
Glascock, John (1659), 188, 189
Good, John Mason (1764—1827), 379
Goodwin, John (1593—1665), 135, 247
Goodwin, Thomas (1600—1679), 14, 245, 251, 264, 333, 413, 414, 438, 481
Gore, J. (1633), 193
Gotthold (see Scriver)
Gouge, Wm. (1575—1653), 26, 65, 206, 336

Gray, Andrew (1805—1861), 11
Greenhill, William (1591—1677), 95, 165, 168, 190
Gregory, 92
Grenada, Lewis de (1504—1588), 153
Griffith, Matthew (1633), 191
Grosvenor, Benjamin (1675—1758), 484
Grotius, Hugo (1583—1645), 115
Grove, John (1802), 454
Gurnall, William (1617—1679), 12, 41, 74, 76, 90, 91, 93, 129, 154, 222, 228, 231, 282, 283, 289, 307, 349, 376, 394, 398, 420, 430, 453, 458, 469, 470, 483
Guyon, Jeanne Bouvier de la Mothe (1648—1717), 335

Hall, Joseph (1574—1656), 348
Halyburton, Thomas (1674—1711), 151
Hamilton, James (1814—1867), 33
Hammond, Henry (1605—1660), 25, 68, 137, 245, 265, 343, 366, 458, 460, 462
Hapstone, Dalman (1867), 166, 331
Hardy, Nathanael (1618—1670), 75, 92, 93, 94, 133, 134, 180, 183, 194, 212, 224, 411
Hare, Francis (1740), 165
Harmer, Thomas (1715—1788), 92, 311
Harpur, George (1862), 323, 324, 325, 327, 328, 331
Hart, Joseph (1762), 240 (Poetry)
Hawker, Robert (1753—1827), 131, 324, 336, 443, 471
Hengstenberg, E. W. (1845), 51, 112, 114, 131, 242, 308, 309, 313, 365, 459
Henry, Matthew (1662—1714), 27, 54, 73, 76, 133, 134, 181, 193, 250, 266, 324, 355, 365, 437, 458
Herbert, George (1593—1632), 228, 280
Hervey, James (1713-14—1758), 184
Heywood Oliver (1629), 154, 278
Hieron, Samuel (1572—1617), 413
Hiller, Prescott, 473
Holdsworth, Richard (1590—1649), 118
Holy David and his Old English Translators Cleared [Anon] (1706), 324
Homes, Nath. (—1678), 295, 297
Hood, E. Paxton (1865), 73, 263, 297
Hopkins, Ezekiel (1633—1690), 155, 382
Horace, 36
Horne, George (1730—1792), 26, 36, 38, 54, 136, 187, 192, 230, 242, 261, 265, 356, 365, 430, 460, 468
Horsley, Samuel (1733—1806), 15, 40, 100, 109, 346, 397, 398
Horton, Thomas (—1673), 13, 14, 277, 278, 282, 285, 288, 413
Howe, John (1630—1705), 40, 182, 287, 366
Howson, J. S. (1856), 95
Hughes, Joseph (1822), 232
Hugo, Cardinal, 307
Huntington, William (1744—1813), 285
Hurst, Henry (1661), 473
Huss, John (1376—1415), 66
Hyde, Edward (1658), 325

Jackson, Arthur (1593—1666), 185, 187, 191, 208, 220, 243, 264, 265, 309, 322, 328, 334, 415, 429
Jamieson, John (1758—1838), 162
Janeway, James (1636—1674), 75, 135, 189
Jay, William (1769—1853), 94, 118, 120, 252
Jebb, John (1846), 161, 203, 323, 428
Jermin, Michael (—1659), 190
Jerome, (331—422), 185
Jewell, John (1522—1571), 73
Justin, Martyr, 111

Keble, John (1792—1866), 380
Ken, Thomas (1637—1710), 18
Kennedy, Benjamin Hall (1860), 375
Kennicott, Ben. (1718—1783), 294, 365, 375
Kimchi, David (—1240), 150
King, John (1559—1621), 54, 223, 439
Kinwellmersh, 101
Kitchen, John (1660), 116, 195
Kitto, John (1804—1854), 92, 229, 309, 479
Kollock, Henry (1822), 289

La Combe, Father, 334
Lake, Arthur (—1626), 94
Lange, J. P. (1864), 68, 266, 280, 284, 297, 312
Lapide, Cornelius à (—1637), 357
Larrabee, W. C. (1851), 350
Lavington, Samuel (1726—1807), 297
Lawrence, Matthew (1657), 283, 417
Layfielde, Edmund (1630), 181, 222, 223, 224, 227
Lee, S. (1625—1691), 210, 244, 251, 334, 483
Lee, Samuel (1783—1852), 25
Leifchild, John (1860), 24, 379
Leighton, Robert (1611—1684), 86, 90, 94, 219, 222, 223, 227, 230
Lightfoot, John (1602—1675), 49
Littleton, Adam (1627—1694), 410
Lockyer, Nicholas (1612—1684-5), 210
Lorinus, John (1569—1634), 87, 96
Love, Christopher (1618—1651), 93, 203, 223, 281, 284
Lowth, Robert (1710—1787), 203, 375
Luther, Martin (1483—1546), 86, 190, 196, 333, 344, 412

M., D. (1678), 12
Macgregor, Duncan (1869), 335
McCheyne, Robert Murray (1813—1843), 33 36, 38, 39, 420, 437, 470
Malan, Cæsar, 251
Manning, Henry Edward (1850), 454
Mant, Richard (1776—1849), 117, 130, 209, 331, 416, 431, 460
Manton, Thomas (1620—1677), 87, 88, 192, 230, 231, 313, 377
Marbury, Edward (1649), 50, 137
March, Henry (1823), 279, 280, 282, 284, 285, 286, 287, 290, 296, 298
Martyr, Peter (1500—1562), 438
Massillon, Jean Baptiste (1663—1742), 25, 26, 35, 36, 39
Mayer, John (1653), 11, 66, 307
Mede, Joseph (1586—1638), 246
Melancthon, Philip (1497—1560), 195
Melvill, Henry (1837), 99
Merrick, James (1720—1769), 15, 245
Metastasio, Pietro (1698—1782), 150
Michaelis, John Henry (1668—1738), 375
Milton, John (1608—1674), 365
Moll, Carl Bernard (1869), 250
Mollerus, D. H. (1639), 131 166
Monastier, Antoine, (1859), 73
Montague, M. (1844), 86
Montgomery, James (1771—1854), 35

Morier, J. P. (1801), 326
Morison, John (1829), 150, 222, 285, 296, 344, 375, 414, 416, 438, 482
Mosschus, (B.C. 250), 461
Mossom, Robert (1657), 9, 461, 53, 181
Mudge, Zachary (1744), 162
Muis, Simon de (1587—1644), 168, 357, 391, 452, 480
Munster, Sebastian (1489—1552), 164
Murcot, John (1657), 415

Nalton, James (1664), 136
Neale, John Mason (1860), 53, 111, 128, 130, 133, 163, 228, 260, 264, 276, 355, 374, 396, 410, 461
Ness, Christoper (1621—1705), 277, 414
Newton, Adelaide (1824—1854), 54
Nicholls, Benjamin Elliott (1858), 155
Nicholson, W. (—1671), 161, 364, 365, 471
Noyes, George R. (1846), 265

Offor, George (1862), 382
Offord, John (1868), 296
Origen, 228, 366
Orton, Job (1717—1783), 327
Owen, John (1616—1683), 249, 366

Page, Samuel (1646), 91, 220, 410, 411, 412, 417, 421, 422
Paley, William (1743—1805), 114
Parkhurst, John (1728—1797), 181
Parr, Elnathan (1651), 298
Parre, Richard (1617—1691), 195
Parsons, Benjamin (1797—1855), 263
Patrick, Symon (1626—1707), 184, 472
Paxton, George (1762—1837), 40, 229, 327, 344, 348
Payson, Edward (1783—1827), 327, 328
Pearce, Edward (1673), 324
Peden, Alexander (1682), 132, 310
Pennington, John (1656), 182, 186
Perkins, William (1558—1602), 87
Perowne, J. J. Stewart (1864), 66, 117, 149, 164, 166, 209, 246, 249, 263, 267, 276, 284, 296, 308, 312, 381, 392, 423, 430, 458, 460
Peters, Hugh (1645), 77
Phillips, George (1846), 294
Philpot, J. C. (1802—1869), 209
Pierson, Thomas (1570—1633), 11, 15
Pinchbeck, Edmund (1652), 168
Pineda, John de (1577—1637), 113
Pinke, William (1631), 117
Piscator, John (1546—1626), 166
Pitcairn, David (1846), 330
Pitman, J. R. (1846), 135
Pitts, Joseph (1704), 311
Plain Commentary, A (1859), 365
Playfere, Thomas (1604), 51, 95, 96, 130
Pledger, Elias (1677), 52, 469
Plumer, William S. (1867), 6, 7, 66, 162, 185, 209, 227, 264, 275, 297, 308, 331, 355, 365, 408, 429, 438, 458, 468, 483
Plumptre, E. H. (1870), 267
Pollock, Robert (1799—1827), 163
Polycarp, 66
Pool, Matthew (1624—1679), 12, 137, 222, 228, 230, 266, 309, 326, 356, 392, 394, 397, 410, 479, 480
Pope, Alexander (1688—1744), 9
Porter, Ebenezer (1834), 230
Porter, J. L. (1867), 364
Power, Philip Bennet (1862), 23, 24
Preston, John (1587—1628), 51, 336
Pridham, Arthur (1869), 243, 408
Propertius, 382
Pusey, E. B. (1853), 228, 418

Quarles, F. (1592—1644), 65, 69, 70, 376

Ranew, Nathaniel (—1672), 74, 221
Rawlinson, John (1618), 456
Raworth, Francis (1656), 262
Rees, John, 24
Reeve, J. W. (1860), 91
Reyner, Edward (1600—1670), 220
Reynolds, Edward (1599—1676), 72, 358
Reynolds, William (1657), 224
Richardson, John (—1654), 364, 469
Rivet, Andrew (1572—1651), 211
Robertson, F. W. (1816—1853), 288, 409
Rogers, Mrs. (1856), 229
Rogers, Samuel (1763—1855), 262
Rogers, Timothy (1660—1729), 50, 55, 75, 280
Row, John (1677), 326
Russell, Michael, (1781—1848), 92
Rutherford, Samuel (1600—1661), 70, 129, 229, 325
Ryland, R. H. 436, 458, 461

" Sacramental Meditations on Psalm xxvii." (1843), 6
Salter, H. G. (1840), 6, 289
Sanderson, Robert (1587—1662-3), 16
Sandys, George (1577—1643), 71
Saurin, James (1677—1730), 111
Scot, James (—1773), 358, 393
Scott, Thomas (1747—1821), 181, 188
Scriver, Christian [Gotthold] (1629—1693), 69, 74, 221
Secker, Thomas (1693—1768), 181
Secker, William (1660), 8, 17, 53, 75, 131, 227, 310, 356, 456
Sedgwick, Obadiah (1600), 15
Sedgwick, William (1609), 164
Segerson, Jeroninus (1551), 165
Seneca, 134
Shakspeare, W. (1564—1616), 71, 193, 227
Sharp, Thomas (1630—1693), 454, 457
Sheffield, John (1664), 8, 334
Sibbes, Richard (1577—1635), 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 116, 279, 288, 297, 378
Sibree, J. (1830), 394
Skinner, G. (see French)
Skinner, Robert (—1670), 17
Smiles, Samuel 289
Smith, David (1792—1867), 129
Smith, Henry (1560—1591), 136, 265, 280, 282, 418
Smith, J. Denham (1860), 289
Smith, Samuel (1588—), 410
Smyth, Zephaniah (1647), 152
Socrates, 219
Sophocles, 227
Spalding, John (1703), 136
" Spectator, The," 115
Spencer, John (—1654), 50, 72, 120, 181
Spring, Gardiner, 195
Spurstowe, William (—1666), 102
Stanley, Arthur Penrhyn (1864), 415
Steele, Richard (—1692), 11, 192, 323
Stoughton, John (—1639), 8, 72
Streat, William (1654), 312

Strickland, John (1601—1670), 347
Strigelius, Victorinus (1524—1569), 408
Strong, William (1656), 482
Struther, William (1633), 9, 52, 164, 212, 220, 350, 399
Stuart, Moses (1780—1852), 247
Stuckley, Lewis (—1687), 332
Sturm, Christopher (1750—1786), 113
Sutton, Christopher (—1692), 221
Swinnock, George (1627—1673), 135, 166, 187, 280, 366, 379, 395, 414
Sylvester, Matthew (1636—1708), 290
Symonds, Joseph (1639), 116, 210, 228
Symson, Archibald (1638), 86, 88, 91, 97, 98, 101, 409, 410, 414, 416

Targum, 188, 285
Taylor, Jeremy (1613—1667), 8, 264
Taylor, Thomas (1576—1632), 88, 91, 97, 98
Teat, Faithful (1656), 222, 378
Theodoret, (393—457), 366
Thevenot, Melchisedek (1621—1692), 130
Tholuck, Augustus F. (1856), 34, 131, 307, 336, 415, 438, 478, 485
Thomé de Jesu, Fra (—1582), 67, 419, 457
Thomson, Andrew (1826), 295
Thomson, W. M. (1859), 276, 286, 364, 416, 456, 482
Trapp, John (1611—1669), 15, 16, 25, 27, 34, 36, 40, 66, 95, 113, 116, 117, 134, 135, 136, 148, 151, 155, 163, 181, 182, 186, 191, 192, 195, 229, 246, 307, 308, 323, 325, 347, 350, 364, 391, 392, 394, 408, 417, 429, 443, 453, 468, 471
Troughton, William (1656), 329, 334, 335, 336
Tucker, W. H. (1840), 442, 443, 444
Tuckney, Anthony (1599), 70, 458
Tymme, Thomas (1634), 181, 185, 377, 380

Udall, Ephraim (1642), 41
Underhill, E. B. (1850), 312

Vatablus, Francis (1545), 154
Venema, Hermann (1697—1787), 151, 265, 391, 396, 397, 428, 429, 430, 431, 443, 444, 457, 462, 473, 479, 482
Verschoyle, Hamilton (1843), 70
Victorinus, Hugo, 357
Vinet, Alexander Rodolph (1797—1847), 55
Virgil, 348
Volney, Constantine F. C. Comte de (1755—1820), 38
Votier, (1652), 379

Wagner, George (1862), 9
Walford, William (1837), 152, 191, 208, 399
Walton, Isaac (1593—1683), 186
Waterland, Daniel (1683), 135
Watson, Thomas (1660), 7, 15, 25, 54, 88, 92, 94, 111, 134, 192, 206, 222, 263, 311, 379, 399
Watts, Isaac (1674—1748), 278, 391
Weemse, John (—1636), 114
Weiss, Benjamin (1856), 155, 204, 308, 443
Welch, John (1576—1622), 412
Wells, John (—1676), 112, 357, 483
Wesley, Charles (1708—1788), 344
Wesley, John (1703—1791), 350
Westfield, Thomas (1644), 194
Westminister Assembly's Annotations, 331, 460
White, Henry Kirke (1785—1806), 96
Whitecross, John, 101
Whitlock, John (1658), 195
Whitty, Dr., 92
Wilcocks, Thomas (1586), 181, 190, 308, 356
Wilcox, Daniel (1676—1733), 12, 67
Williams, Griffith (1636), 462
Willison, John (1680—1750), 18
Wilson, John (1847), 34
Wilson, W. (1860), 27, 186, 188, 192, 193, 247, 263, 264, 267, 313, 377, 417, 418, 419, 422, 471, 473
Witsius, Hermann (1636—1708), 207, 334
Wood, J. G. (1869), 349
Wordsworth, Christopher (1868), 36, 38, 40, 48, 68, 111, 137, 165, 180, 251, 307, 308, 322, 323, 328, 357, 380, 418, 437, 480
Wouter of Stoelwyk (1541), 189
Wright, Abraham (1661), 472
Wright, L. (1616), 461

Young, Edward (1681—1755), 2
Young, Richard (1655), 115, 132

Zinzendorf, Count Nicholas Louis (1684—1760), 325

PSALM XXVII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*Nothing whatever can be drawn from the title as to the time when this Psalm was written, for the heading, "* A Psalm of David," *is common to so many of the Psalms; but if one may judge from the matter of the song, the writer was pursued by enemies, verses* 2 *and* 3, *was shut out from the house of the Lord, verse* 4, *was just parting from father and mother, verse* 10, *and was subject to slander, verse* 12; *do not all these meet in the time when Doeg, the Edomite, spake against him to Saul? It is a song of cheerful hope, well fitted for those in trial who have learned to lean upon the Almighty arm. The Psalm may with profit be read in a threefold way, as the language of David, of the Church, and of the Lord Jesus. The plenitude of Scripture will thus appear the more wonderful.*

DIVISION.—*The poet first sounds forth his sure confidence in his God,* 1—3, *and his love of communion with him,* 4—6. *He then betakes himself to prayer,* 7—12, *and concludes with an acknowledgment of the sustaining power of faith in his own case, and an exhortation to others to follow his example.*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh they stumbled and fell.

3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will* I *be* confident.

1. *"The Lord is my light and my salvation."*—Here is personal interest, *"my light," "my salvation;"* the soul is assured of it, and therefore, declaring it boldly. *"My light"*—into the soul at the new birth divine light is poured as the precursor of salvation; where there is not enough light to see our own darkness and to long for the Lord Jesus, there is no evidence of salvation. Salvation finds us in the dark, but it does not leave us there; it gives light to those who sit in the valley of the shadow of death. After conversion our God is our joy, comfort, guide, teacher, and in every sense our light; he is light within, light around, light reflected from us, and light to be revealed to us. Note, it is not said merely that the Lord gives light, but that he *"is"* light; nor that he gives salvation, but that he is salvation; he, then, who by faith has laid hold upon God has all covenant blessings in his possession. Every light is not the sun, but the sun is the father of all lights. This being made sure as a fact, the argument drawn from it is put in the form of a question, *"Whom shall I fear?"* A question which is its own answer. The powers of darkness are not to be feared, for the Lord, our light, destroys them; and the damnation of hell is not to be dreaded by us, for the Lord is our salvation. This is a very different challenge from that of boastful Goliath, for it is based upon a very different foundation; it rests not upon the conceited vigour of an arm of flesh, but upon the real power of the omnipotent I AM. *"The Lord is the strength of my life."* Here is a third glowing epithet, to show that the writer's hope was fastened with a threefold cord which could not be broken. We may well accumulate terms of praise where the Lord lavishes deeds of grace. Our life derives all its strength from him who is the author of it; and if he deigns to make us strong we cannot be weakened by all the machinations of the adversary. *"Of whom shall I be afraid?"* The bold question looks into the future as well as the present. "If God be for us," who can be against us, either now or in time to come?

2. This verse records a past deliverance, and is an instance of the way in which experience should be employed to reassure our faith in times of trial. Each word is instructive. *"When the wicked."* It is a hopeful sign for us when the wicked hate us; if our foes were godly men it would be a sore sorrow, but as for the wicked their hatred is better than their love. *"Even mine enemies and my foes."*

There were many of them, they were of different sorts, but they were unanimous in mischief and hearty in hatred. "*Came upon me*"—advanced to the attack, leaping upon the victim like a lion upon its prey. "*To eat up my flesh,*" like cannibals they would make a full end of the man, tear him limb from limb, and make a feast for their malice. The enemies of our souls are not deficient in ferocity, they yield no quarter, and ought to have none in return. See in what danger David was; in the grip and grasp of numerous, powerful, and cruel enemies, and yet observe his perfect safety and their utter discomfiture! "*They stumbled and fell.*" God's breath blew them off their legs. There were stones in the way which they never reckoned upon, and over these they made an ignominious tumble. This was literally true in the case of our Lord in Gethsemane, when those who came to take him went backward and fell to the ground; and herein he was a prophetic representative of all wrestling believers who, rising from their knees shall, by the power of faith, throw their foes upon their faces.

3. "*Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.*" Before the actual conflict, while as yet the battle is untried, the warrior's heart, being held in suspense, is very liable to become fluttered. The encamping host often inspires greater dread than the same host in actual affray. Young tells us of some—

> "Who feel a thousand deaths in fearing one."

Doubtless the shadow of anticipated trouble is, to timorous minds, a more prolific source of sorrow than the trouble itself, but faith puts a strengthening plaister to the back of courage, and throws out of the window the dregs of the cup of trembling. "*Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*" When it actually comes to push of pike, faith's shield will ward off the blow; and if the first brush should be but the beginning of a war, yet faith's banners will wave in spite of the foe. Though battle should succeed battle, and one campaign should be followed by another, the believer will not be dismayed at the length of the conflict. Reader, this third verse is the comfortable and logical inference from the second, confidence is the child of experience. Have you been delivered out of great perils? then set up your ensign, wait at your watch-fire, and let the enemy do his worst.

4 One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

4. "*One thing.*" Divided aims tend to distraction, weakness, disappointment. The man of one book is eminent, the man of one pursuit is successful. Let all our affection be bound up in one affection, and that affection set upon heavenly things. "*Have I desired*"—what we cannot at once attain, it is well to desire. God judges us very much by the desire of our hearts. He who rides a lame horse is not blamed by his master for want of speed, if he makes all the haste he can, and would make more if he could; God takes the will for the deed with his children. "*Of the Lord.*" This is the right target for desires, this is the well into which to dip our buckets, this is the door to knock at, the bank to draw upon; desire of men, and lie on the dunghill with Lazarus: desire of the Lord, and be carried of angels into Abraham's bosom. Our desires of the Lord should be sanctified, humble, constant, submissive, fervent, and it is well if, as with the Psalmist, they are all molten into one mass. Under David's painful circumstances we might have expected him to desire repose, safety, and a thousand other good things, but no, he has set his heart on the pearl, and leaves the rest. "*That will I seek after.*" Holy desires must lead to resolute action. The old proverb says, "Wishers and woulders are never good housekeepers," and "wishing never fills a sack." Desires are seeds which must be sown in the good soil of activity for they will yield no harvest. We shall find our desires to be like clouds without

rain, unless followed up by practical endeavours. *"That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."* For the sake of communion with the King, David longed to dwell always in the palace; so far from being wearied with the services of the Tabernacle, he longed to be constantly engaged in them, as his life-long pleasure. He desired above all things to be one of the household of God, a home-born child, living at home with his Father. This is our dearest wish, only we extend it to those days of our immortal life which have not yet dawned. We pine for our Father's house above, the home of our souls; if we may but dwell there for ever, we care but little for the goods or ills of this poor life. "Jerusalem the golden" is the one and only goal of our heart's longings. *"To behold the beauty of the Lord."* An exercise both for earthly and heavenly worshippers. We must not enter the assemblies of the saints in order to see and be seen, or merely to hear the minister; we must repair to the gatherings of the righteous, intent upon the gracious object of learning more of the loving Father, more of the glorified Jesus, more of the mysterious Spirit, in order that we may the more lovingly admire, and the more reverently adore our glorious God. What a word is that, *"the beauty of the Lord!"* Think of it, dear reader! Better far—behold it by faith! What a sight will that be when every faithful follower of Jesus shall behold "the King in his beauty!" Oh, for that infinitely blessed vision! *"And to enquire in his temple."* We should make our visits to the Lord's house enquirers' meetings. Not seeking sinners alone, but assured saints should be enquirers. We must enquire as to the will of God and how we may do it; as to our interest in the heavenly city, and how we may be more assured of it. We shall not need to make enquiries in heaven, for there we shall know even as we are known; but meanwhile we should sit at Jesus' feet, and awaken all our faculties to learn of him.

5. This verse gives an excellent reason for the Psalmist's desire after communion with God, namely, that he was thus secured in the hour of peril. *"For in the time of trouble,"* that needy time, that time when others forsake me, *"he shall hide me in his pavilion:"* he shall give me the best of shelter in the worst of danger. The royal pavilion was erected in the centre of the army, and around it all the mighty men kept guard at all hours; thus in that divine sovereignty which almighty power is sworn to maintain, the believer peacefully is hidden, hidden not by himself furtively, but by the king, who hospitably entertains him. *"In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me."* Sacrifice aids sovereignty in screening the elect from harm. No one of old dared to enter the most holy place on pain of death; and if the Lord has hidden his people there, what foe shall venture to molest them? *"He shall set me up upon a rock."* Immutability, eternity, and infinite power here come to the aid of sovereignty and sacrifice. How blessed is the standing of the man whom God himself sets on high above his foes, upon an impregnable rock which never can be stormed! Well may we desire to dwell with the Lord who so effectually protects his people.

6. *"And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me."*—He is quite sure of it. Godly men of old prayed in faith, nothing wavering, and spoke of the answer to their prayers as a certainty. David was by faith so sure of a glorious victory over all those who beset him, that he arranged in his own heart what he would do when his foes lay all prostrate before him; that arrangement was such as gratitude suggested. *"Therefore will I offer in his tabernacles sacrifices of joy."* That place for which he longed in his conflict, should see his thankful joy in his triumphant return. He does not speak of jubilations to be offered in his palace, and feastings in his banqueting halls, but holy mirth he selects as most fitting for so divine a deliverance. *"I will sing."* This is the most natural mode of expressing thankfulness. *"Yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord."* The vow is confirmed by repetition, and explained by addition, which addition vows all the praise unto Jehovah. Let who will be silent, the believer when his prayer is heard, must and will make his praise to be heard also; and let who will sing unto the vanities of the world, the believer reserves his music for the Lord alone.

7 Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8 *When thou saidst,* Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

9 Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger:

thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

7. *"Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice."*—The pendulum of spirituality swings from prayer to praise. The voice which in the last verse was tuned to music is here turned to crying. As a good soldier, David knew how to handle his weapons, and found himself much at home with the weapon of "all prayer." Note his anxiety to be heard. Pharisees care not a fig for the Lord's hearing them, so long as they are heard of men, or charm their own pride with their sounding devotions; but with a genuine man, the Lord's ear is everything. The *voice* may be profitably used even in private prayer; for though it is unnecessary, it is often helpful, and aids in preventing distractions. *"Have mercy also upon me."* Mercy is the hope of sinners and the refuge of saints. All acceptable petitioners dwell much upon this attribute. *"And answer me."* We may expect answers to prayer, and should not be easy without them any more than we should be if we had written a letter to a friend upon important business, and had received no reply.

8. In this verse we are taught that if we would have the Lord hear our voice, we must be careful to respond to *his* voice. The true heart should echo the will of God as the rocks among the Alps repeat in sweetest music the notes of the peasant's horn. Observe, that the command was in the plural, to all the saints, *"Seek ye;"* but the man of God turned it into the singular by a personal application, *"Thy face, Lord, will I seek."* The voice of the Lord is very effectual where all other voices fail, *"When thou saidst,"* then my *"heart,"* my inmost nature was moved to an obedient reply. Note the promptness of the response—no sooner said than done; as soon as God said *"seek,"* the heart said, *"I will seek."* Oh, for more of this holy readiness! Would to God that we were more plastic to the divine hand, more sensitive of the touch of God's Spirit.

9. *"Hide not thy face far from me."* The word *"far"* is not in the original, and is a very superfluous addition of the translators, since even the least hiding of the Lord's face is a great affliction to a believer. The command to seek the Lord's face would be a painful one if the Lord, by withdrawing himself, rendered it impossible for the seeker to meet with him. A smile from the Lord is the greatest of comforts, his frown the worst of ills. *"Put not thy servant away in anger."* Other servants had been put away when they proved unfaithful, as for instance, his predecessor Saul; and this made David, while conscious of many faults, most anxious that divine long-suffering should continue him in favour. This is a most appropriate prayer for us under a similar sense of unworthiness. *"Thou hast been my help."* How truly can we join in this declaration; for many years, in circumstances of varied trial, we have been upheld by our God, and must and will confess our obligation. "Ingratitude," it is said, "is natural to fallen man," but to spiritual men it is unnatural and detestable. *"Leave me not, neither forsake me."* A prayer for the future, and an inference from the past. If the Lord had meant to leave us, why did he begin with us? Past help is but a waste of effort if the soul now be deserted. The first petition, *"leave me not,"* may refer to temporary desertions, and the second word to the final withdrawal of grace, both are to be prayed against; and concerning the second, we have immutable promises to urge. *"O God of my salvation."* A sweet title worthy of much meditation.

10. *"When my father and my mother forsake me."* These dear relations will be the last to desert me, but if the milk of human kindness should dry up even from their breasts, there is a Father who never forgets. Some of the greatest of the saints have been cast out by their families, and persecuted for righteousness' sake. *"Then the Lord will take me up."* Will espouse my cause, will uplift me from my woes, will carry me in his arms, will elevate me above my enemies, will at last receive me to his eternal dwelling place.

11. *"Teach me thy way, O Lord."* He does not pray to be indulged with his own way, but to be informed as to the path in which the righteous Jehovah would

have him walk. This prayer evinces an humble sense of personal ignorance, great teachableness of spirit, and cheerful obedience of heart. "*Lead me in a plain path.*" Help is here sought as well as direction; we not only need a map of the way, but a guide to assist us in the journey. A path is here desired which shall be open, honest, straightforward, in opposition to the way of cunning, which is intricate, tortuous, dangerous. Good men seldom succeed in fine speculations and doubtful courses; plain simplicity is the best spirit for an heir of heaven: let us leave shifty tricks and political expediences to the citizens of the world—the New Jerusalem owns plain men for its citizens. Esau was a cunning hunter, Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. "*Because of mine enemies.*" These will catch us if they can, but the way of manifest, simple honesty is safe from their rage. It is wonderful to observe how honest simplicity baffles and outwits the craftiness of wickedness. Truth is wisdom. "Honesty is the best policy."

12. "*Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies;*" or I should be like a victim cast to the lions, to be rent to pieces and utterly devoured. God be thanked that our foes cannot have their way with us, or Smithfield would soon be on a blaze again. "*For false witnesses are risen up against me.*" Slander is an old-fashioned weapon out of the armoury of hell, and is still in plentiful use; and no matter how holy a man may be, there will be some who will defame him. "Give a dog an ill name, and hang him;" but glory be to God, the Lord's people are not dogs, and their ill names do not injure them. "*And such as breathe out cruelty.*" It is their vital breath to hate the good; they cannot speak without cursing them; such was Paul before conversion. They who breathe out cruelty may well expect to be sent to breathe their native air in hell; let persecutors beware!

13 *I had fainted,* unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

13. Faintness of heart is a common infirmity; even he who slew Goliath was subject to its attacks. Faith puts its bottle of cordial to the lip of the soul, and so prevents fainting. Hope is heaven's balm for present sorrow. In this land of the dying, it is our blessedness to be looking and longing for our fair portion in the land of the living, whence the goodness of God has banished the wickedness of man, and where holy spirits charm with their society those persecuted saints who were vilified and despised among men. We must believe to see, not see to believe; we must wait the appointed time, and stay our soul's hunger with foretastes of the Lord's eternal goodness which shall soon be our feast and our song.

14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

14. "*Wait on the Lord.*" Wait at his door with prayer; wait at his foot with humility; wait at his table with service; wait at his window with expectancy. Suitors often win nothing but the cold shoulder from earthly patrons after long and obsequious waiting; he speeds best whose patron is in the skies. "*Be of good courage.*" A soldier's motto. Be it mine. Courage we shall need, and for the exercise of it we have as much reason as necessity, if we are soldiers of King Jesus. "*And he shall strengthen thine heart.*" He can lay the plaister right upon the weak place. Let the heart be strengthened, and the whole machine of humanity is filled with power; a strong heart makes a strong arm. What strength is this which God himself gives to the heart? Read the "Book of Martyrs," and see its glorious deeds of prowess; go to God rather, and get such power thyself. "*Wait, I say, on the Lord.*" David, in the words "*I say,*" sets his own private seal to the word which, as an inspired man, he had been moved to write. It is *his* testimony as well as the command of God, and indeed he who writes these scanty notes has himself found it so sweet, so reviving, so profitable to draw near to God, that on his own account he also feels bound to write, "*Wait,* I SAY, *on the Lord.*"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—*" The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"* Alice Driver, martyr, at her examination, put all the doctors to silence, so that they had not a word to say, but one looked upon another; then she said, " Have you no more to say? God be honoured, you be not able to resist the Spirit of God, in me, a poor woman. I was an honest poor man's daughter, never brought up at the University as you have been; but I have driven the plough many a time before my father, I thank God; yet, notwithstanding, in the defence of God's truth, and in the cause of my Master, Christ, by his grace I will set my foot against the foot of any of you all, in the maintenance and defence of the same; and if I had a thousand lives they should go for payment thereof." So the Chancellor condemned her, and she returned to the prison joyful.—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 1.—*" The Lord is my light,"* etc. St. John tells us, that " in Christ was life; and the life was the light of men;" but he adds that " the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." John i. 4, 5. There is a great difference between the *light*, and the eye that sees it. A blind man may know a great deal about the shining of the sun, but it does not shine for him—it gives him no light. So, to know that " God is light," is one thing (1 John i. 5), and to be able to say, " The Lord is *my* light," is quite another thing. The Lord must be the light by which the way of life is made plain to us—the light by which we may see to walk in that way—the light that exposes the darkness of sin—the light by which we can discover the hidden sins of our own hearts. When he is thus *our light*, then he is *our salvation* also. He is pledged to guide us right; not only to show us sin, but to save us from it. Not only to make us see God's hatred of sin, and his curse upon it, but also to draw us unto God's love, and to take away the curse. With the Lord lighting us along the road of salvation, who, or what need we fear? Our life is hid with Christ in God. Col. iii. 3. We are weak, very weak, but his " strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. xii. 9. With the Lord himself pledged to be the strength of our life, of whom need we be afraid?—*From Sacramental Meditations on the Twenty-seventh Psalm*, 1843.

Verse 1.—*" The Lord is my light."* *" Light"* which makes all things visible, was the first made of all visible things; and whether God did it for our example, or no, I know not; but ever since, in imitation of this manner of God's proceeding, the first thing we do when we intend to do anything, is to get us *" light."*—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 1.—*" The Lord is my light."* Adorable Sun, cried St. Bernard, I cannot walk without thee: enlighten my steps, and furnish this barren and ignorant mind with thoughts worthy of thee. Adorable fulness of light and heat, be thou the true noonday of my soul; exterminate its darkness, disperse its clouds; burn, dry up, and consume all its filth and impurities. Divine Sun, rise upon my mind, and never set.—*Jean Baptiste Elias Avrillon*, 1652—1729.

Verse 1.—*" Whom shall I fear?"* Neither spiritual nor military heroes do exploits through cowardice. Courage is a necessary virtue. In Jehovah is the best possible foundation for unflinching intrepidity.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—*"Of whom shall I be afraid?"* I have no notion of a timid, disingenuous profession of Christ. Such preachers and professors are like a rat playing at hide-and-seek behind a wainscot, who puts his head through a hole to see if the coast is clear, and ventures out if nobody is in the way; but slinks back again if danger appears. We cannot be honest to Christ except we are bold for him. He is either worth *all* we can lose for him, or he is worth *nothing.—H. G. Salter, A.M., in " The Book of Illustrations,"* 1840.

Verse 2.—*" When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell."* There is no such dainty dish to a malicious stomach, as the flesh of an enemy; it goes down without chewing, and they swallow it up whole like cormorants. But though malice have a ravenous stomach, yet she hath but slow digestion; though her teeth be sharp, yet her feet are lame, at least apt to stumble; and this made well for David, for when his enemies came upon him to eat up his flesh, because they came upon the feet of malice, *" they stumbled and fell."* A man may *stumble* and yet not *fall;* but to stumble and fall withal, is the proper stumbling of *" the wicked,"* and especially of the maliciously wicked;

and such, it seems, was the stumbling of David's enemies, because the enemies were such; and such I doubt not shall be the stumbling of mine enemies, because mine are such; and of what then, of whom now, should I be afraid?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"*When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*" He describes his enemies by their malice, and by their ruin. 1. His enemies were *cruel enemies,* blood-suckers, eaters of flesh. We call them cannibals. As indeed men that have not grace, if they have greatness, and be opposed, their greatness is inaccessible, one man is a devil to another. The Scripture calls them "wolves, that leave nothing till morning." Zeph. iii. 3. As the great fishes eat up the little ones, so great men they make no more conscience of eating up other men, than of eating bread; they make no more bones of overthrowing men and undoing them, than of eating bread. "They eat up my people as they eat bread." Psalm xiv. 4. 2. But notwithstanding their cruelty, *they were overthrown.* Saith David, "*When my foes came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*" For, indeed, God's children, when they are delivered, it is usually with the confusion of their enemies. God doth two things at once, because the special grievance of God's children it is from inward and outward enemies. He seldom or never delivers them but with the confusion of their enemies. This will be most apparent at the day of judgment, when Satan, and all that are led by his spirit, all the malignant church, shall be sent to their own place, and the church shall be for ever free from all kind of enemies. When the church is most free, then the enemies of the church are nearest to destruction; like a pair of balances, when they are up at the one end, they are down at the other. So when it is up with the church, down go the enemies.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 2.—"*The wicked, mine enemies.*" The wicked hate the godly; there is enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent. Gen. iii. 15. As in nature there is an antipathy between the vine and the bay-tree, the elephant and the dragon. Vultures have an antipathy against sweet smells: so in the wicked there is an antipathy against the people of God; they hate the sweet perfumes of their graces. It is true the saints have their infirmities; but the wicked do not hate them for these, but for their holiness; and from this hatred ariseth open violence: the thief hates the light, therefore would blow it out.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—There was great wisdom in the prayer of John Wesley: "Lord, if I must contend, let it not be with thy people." When we have for foes and enemies those who hate good men, we have at least this consolation, that God is not on their side, and therefore it is essentially weak.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Though an host should encamp against me,*" etc. He puts the case of the greatest danger that can be. Though an host should encompass me, "*my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident.*" Here is great *courage* for the time to come. *Experience breeds hope and confidence.* David was not so courageous a man of himself; but upon experience of God's former comfort and assistance, his faith brake as fire out of the smoke, or as the sun out of a cloud. Though I was in such-and-such perplexities, yet for the time to come, I have such confidence and experience of God's goodness, that I will not fear. He that seeth God by a spirit of faith in his greatness and power, he sees all other things below as nothing. Therefore, he saith here, he cares not for the time to come for any opposition; no, not of an army. "If God be with us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. He saw God in his power; and then, looking from God to the creature, alas! who was he? As Micah, when he had seen God sitting upon his throne; what was Ahab to him, when he had seen God once? So when the prophet David had seen God once, then "*though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear,*" etc.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 3.—"*Though an host should encamp against me,*" etc. If I love my God, and I love him with a noble-spirited love, all my enemies will fight against me in vain; I shall never fear them, and the whole world cannot harm me. Charity cannot be offended, because she takes offence at nothing. Enemies, enviers, slanderers, persecutors, I defy you; if I love, I shall triumph over your attacks. Ye can take away my goods; but if my love has a generous spirit, I shall be always rich enough, and ye cannot take away my love, which alone makes all my riches and treasures. Ye may blacken my reputation; but as I hold you cheaply quit of all homage of praise and applause, I, with all my heart, give you a free leave to blame and to defame. Happily for me, ye cannot blacken me before my God, and his

esteem alone makes amends to me, and rewards me, for all your contempt. Ye can persecute my body, but there I even will help you on by my penances; the sooner it shall perish, the sooner shall I be delivered from this domestic enemy, which is a burden to me. What harm, then, can ye do me? If I am resolved to suffer all and if I think I deserve all the outrages ye can do me, ye will only give more loftiness of spirit to my love, more brilliancy to my crown.—*Jean Baptiste Elias Avrillon.*

Verse 3.—Those who are willing to be combatants *for* God, shall also be more than conquerors *through* God. None are so truly courageous as those who are truly religious. If a Christian live, he knows by whose might he stands; and if he die, he knows for whose sake he falls. Where there is no confidence *in* God, there will be no continuance *with* God. When the wind of faith ceases to fill the sails, the ship of obedience ceases to plough the seas. The taunts of Ishmael shall never make an Isaac disesteem his inheritance.—*William Secker.*

Verses 3, 4.—The favourite grows great by the many favours, gifts, jewels, offices, the prince bestows on him. The Christian grows rich in *experiences*, which he wears as bracelets, and keeps as his richest jewels. He calls one *Ebenezer*—"hitherto God hath helped;" another *Naphtali*—"I have wrestled with God and prevailed;" another *Gershom*—"I was a stranger;" another *Joseph*—"God will yet add more;" and another, *Peniel*—"I have seen the face of God." 1 Sam. vii. 12; Gen. xxx. 8; Ex. ii. 22; Gen. xxx. 24, and xxxii. 30. I have been delivered from the *lion*, therefore shall be from the *bear;* from lion and bear, therefore from the *Philistines;* from the Philistine, therefore from *Saul;* from Saul, therefore God will deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me blameless to his heavenly kingdom.—*John Sheffield.*

Verse 4.—"*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*" Some interpreters vary concerning what the Psalmist aims at; I understand thus much in a generality, which is clear, that he means a communion and fellowship with God, which is that *one thing*, which if a Christian had, he needs desire no more: that we should all desire and desire again and be in love with, and that is enough even to satisfy us, the fruition of God, and the beholding of him in his ordinances, in his temple, to have correspondency and fellowship and communion with him there. O God, vouchsafe us that! Now this is so infinitely sweet, that it was the Psalmist's only desire, and the sum of all his desires here, and therefore much more in the tabernacle of heaven which doth make up the consummation and completeness of all our happiness.—*John Stoughton.*

Verse 4.—"*One thing have I desired of the Lord,*" etc. Seeing David would make but *one* request to God, why would he not make a greater? for, alas! what a poor request is this—to desire *to dwell in God's house?* and what to do? but only *to see?* and to see what? but only a *beauty*, a fading thing, at most but *to enquire;* and what is enquiring? but only to hear news; a vain fancy. And what cause in any of these why David should make it his request to God? But mark, O my soul, what goes with it! Take altogether—"*to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*" And now tell me, if there be, if there can be, any greater request to be made? any greater cause to be earnest about it? For though worldly beauty be a fading thing, yet "*the beauty of the Lord,*" shall continue when the world shall fade away; and though enquiring after news be a vain fancy, yet *to enquire in God's Temple* is the way to learn there is no new thing under the sun, and there it was that Solomon learned that "all is vanity." Indeed, this "*one thing,*" that David desires, is in effect that *unum necessarium* that Christ speaks of in the gospel; which Mary makes choice of there, as David doth here.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—"*One thing,*" etc. A heavenly mind gathers itself up into one wish and no more. "*One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require.*" Grant me thyself, O Lord, and I will ask no more. The new creature asks nothing of God, but to enjoy God: give me this, O Lord, and for the rest, let Ziba take all. I will part with all to buy that one pearl, the riches of heavenly grace.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Verse 4.—"*One thing.*" The first thing, then, is David's choice, summarily described in the word, "*one thing.*" So Christ confirmeth the prophet's word, while he called Mary's choice, "*one thing.*" Luke x. 42. And that for these three reasons: First, because it is not a common but a *chief* good. If there be any good above it, it is not the chief good; and if there be any good equal unto it, it is not

alone. Next, because it is the *last end* which we mind eternally to enjoy; if there be any end beyond it, it is not the last, but amids, and a degree to it. All mids and ends are used for it, but it is sought for itself, and, therefore, must be but one. Thirdly, it is a *centre* whereunto all reasonable spirits draw. As all lines from a circle meet in the centre, so every one that seeketh happiness aright meeteth in the chief good, as the only thing which they intend, and, therefore, must be *one*. *William Struther, in "True Happiness, or King David's Choice,"* 1633.

Verse 4.—"*One thing.*" Changes, great changes, and many bereavements there have been in my life. I have been emptied from vessel to vessel. But one thing has never failed—one thing makes me feel that my life has been *one;* it has calmed my joys, it has soothed my sorrows, it has guided me in difficulty, it has strengthened me in weakness. It is the *presence* of God—a faithful and loving God. Yes, brethren, the presence of God is not only *light*, it is *unity*. It gives *unity* to the heart that believes it—*unity* to the life that is conformed to it. It was the presence of God in David's soul that enabled him to say, "*One* thing have I desired of the Lord;" and in St. Paul's that enabled him to say, "This one thing I do."—*George Wagner, in the "Wanderings of the Children of Israel,"* 1862.

Verse 4.—"*One thing.*"—

> One master passion in the breast.
> Like Aaron s serpent, swallows up the rest.
>
> *Alexander Pope.*

Verse 4.—"*That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*" To approach continually unto the temple, and thither continually to repair was the *dwelling*, no doubt, here meant; to *dwell*, to reside continually there, not to come for a spurt or a fit. . . . And thus dwelt Hannah, the daughter of Phanuel, who is said, in the second of Luke, for the space of four score and four years not to have gone out of the temple. Not that she was there always, but often, saith Lyra; and venerable Bede to the same purpose. Not that she was never absent, no, not an hour; but for that she was often in the temple. And the same St. Luke, speaking of our Saviour's disciples, after they had seen him ascended into heaven—"They returned," saith he, "to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God," chapter xxiv. 52, 53. Thus, St. Austin's mother, in her time too, might be said to *dwell* in God's house, whereunto she came so duly and truly twice a day, "That she, in thy Scriptures," saith St. Austin, "might hear, O God, what thou saidst to her, and thou, in her prayers, what she said to thee." In a word, such were the Christians the same St. Austin speaks of in another place, whom he calleth *the emmets of God.* "Behold the emmet of God," saith he, "it riseth early every day, it runneth to God's church, it there prayeth, it heareth the lesson read, it singeth a Psalm, it ruminateth what it heareth, it meditateth thereupon, and hoardeth up within itself the precious corn gathered from that barn-floor." *John Day's "David's Desire to go to Church,"* 1609.

Verse 4.—"*That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*" In the beginning of the Psalm, David keeps an audit of his soul's accounts, reckoning up the large incomes and lasting treasures of God's bounty, grace, and mercy; the sum whereof is this: The Lord is my light and my life, my strength and my salvation. And now, where shall David design his presence, but where is his light? Where shall he desire his person, but where is his strength? Where shall he wish his soul, but where is his life? and where shall he fix his habitation, but where is his salvation? even in communion with his God; and this, especially, in the holy worship of his sanctuary. No wonder, then, if above all things he desires and seeks after this "*one thing,*" "*to dwell* in the house of the Lord," etc.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 4.—"*The house of the Lord.*" It [the tabernacle, the sanctuary] is called the house of God because he is present there, as a man delights to be present in his house. It is the place where God will be met withal. As a man will be found in his house, and there he will have suitors come to him, where he reveals his secrets. A man rests, he lies, and lodgeth in his house. Where is a man so familiar as in his house? and what other place hath he such care to protect and provide for as his house? and he lays up his treasures and his jewels in his house. So God lays up all the treasures of grace and comfort in the visible church. In the church he is to be spoken with as a man in his house. There he gives us sweet meetings; there are mutual, spiritual kisses. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Cant. i. 2. A man's house is his castle, as we say, that he will protect and provide for.

God will be sure to protect and provide for his church. Therefore he calls the church of God, that is, the tabernacle (that was the church at that time), *the house of God.* If we apply it to our times, that that answers the tabernacle now, is particular visible churches under particular pastors, where the means of salvation are set up. Particular visible churches now are God's tabernacle. The church of the Jews was a national church. There was but one church, but one place, and one tabernacle; but now God hath erected particular tabernacles. Every particular church and congregation under one pastor, their meeting is the church of God, a several church independent. *Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 4.—"*To behold the beauty of the Lord.*" That was one end of his desire, to dwell in the house of God; not to feed his eyes with speculations and goodly sights (as indeed there were in the tabernacle goodly things to be seen). No; he had a more spiritual sight than that. He saw the inward spiritual beauty of those spiritual things. The other were but outward things, as the apostle calls them. I desire to dwell in the house of the Lord, "*to behold the beauty of the Lord,*" the inward beauty of the Lord especially.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 4.—"*The beauty of the Lord.*" In connection with these words, we would try to show that the character of God is attractive, and fitted to inspire us with love for him, and to make us, as it were, run after him. The discussion of our subject may be arranged under three heads. I. Some of the elements of the beauty of the Lord. II. Where the beauty of the Lord may be seen. III. Peculiar traits of the beauty of the Lord. I. Some of the elements of the beauty of the Lord. God is a Spirit. Hence his beauty is spiritual, and its elements must be sought for in spiritual perfection. 1. One of the elements of this beauty is holiness. 2. But the elements of the divine beauty on which we intend at this time to dwell, are those which are included under the general description of God's mercy and grace. The attractiveness of these is more easily perceived, and their influence is sooner felt by persons in our fallen condition. It is mainly through the instrumentality of these that sinners are won over from their enmity against God, and that the Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts. 3. Another thing, which we may call an element of beauty in God, is the combination of his various attributes in one harmonious whole. The colours of the rainbow are beautiful, when taken one by one: but there is a beauty in the rainbow, which arises not from any single tint; there is a beauty in it which would not exist if the several hues were assumed in succession—a beauty which is the result of their assemblage and collocation, and consists in their blended radiance. In like manner do the several perfections, which co-exist and unite in the nature of God, produce a glorious beauty. Holiness is beautiful; mercy is beautiful; truth is beautiful. But, over and above, there is a beauty which belongs to such combinations and harmonies as the Psalmist describes, when he tells us, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep," etc. II. We are next to enquire where the beauty of the Lord may be seen. It may so far be seen in the *natural world.* The throne of nature, although in some respects clouds and darkness are round about it, is not without its rainbow of beauty, any more than the throne of grace. The beauty of the Lord may be seen in the *moral law.* In the law! Even so. In the unbending law, with its terrible anathema, his beauty and amiableness shine forth. The law is full of love. The duties of the law are duties of love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. The curse of the law is designed and employed for the maintenance of love. Obedience to the law, and the reign of love, are but different aspects of the same state of things. And one of the sublimest lessons of the law is the fact, that God is love. Again, the beauty of the Lord may be seen in the *gospel.* We see it, as it were, by reflection, in the law; in the gospel, we see it directly. The law shows us the hearts of men, as God would have them to be; the gospel shows us God's own heart. Again, the beauty of the Lord is seen in *Christ.* It is seen in Christ, for he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and he that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father. The beauty of the Lord is seen in Christ, when we consider him as the Father's gift, and when we look to his offices and to his character. The character of Christ was the finest spectacle of moral beauty which men or angels ever set their eyes on. III. We conclude by noticing some traits of the beauty of the Lord. 1. It never deceives. 2. It never fades. 3. It never loses its power. 4. It never dis-

appoints.—*Condensed from Andrew Gray* (1805—1861), *in "Gospel Contrasts and Parallels."*

Verse 4.—*"The beauty of the Lord."* The Lord's *beauty*, to be seen in his house, is not the beauty of his essence, for so no man can see God and live (Exod. xxxiii. 18, 20); before this glorious beauty the angels cover their faces with their wings (Isa. vi. 1, 2); but it is the beauty of his ordinances, wherein God doth reveal to the eyes of men's minds, enlightened by his Spirit, the pleasant beauty of his goodness, justice, love, and mercy in Jesus Christ.—*Thomas Pierson, M.A.*, 1570—1633.

Verse 4.—*"The beauty of the Lord."*—*"Beauty"* is too particular a word to express the fulness of the Holy Ghost, the pleasantness or the delight of God. Take the word in a general sense, in your apprehensions. It may be the object of all senses, inward and outward. Delight is most transcendent for pleasantness; for indeed God in his ordinances, is not only "beauty" to the eye of the soul, but is ointment to the smell, and sweetness to the taste, and all in all to all the powers of the soul. God in Christ, therefore, he is delightful and sweet. . . . *"The beauty of the Lord"* is especially the amiable things of God, which is his mercy and love, that makes all other things beautiful that is in the church.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 4.—*"To enquire in his temple."* The more grace the more business ye will find ye have to do with God in his ordinances; little grace hath little to do, and much grace hath much to do; he hath always business with God, special earnest business. *"To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple."* Oh, I have somewhat to enquire after; I am to do something by this duty, and therefore cannot trifle. He that comes to visit his friend in a compliment, he talks, he walks, he trifles, and goes home again; but he that comes upon business, he is full of it: he is like Abraham's honest and faithful servant. Gen. xxiv. 33. "And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told my errand." I have great business with the Lord, about the church, and about my soul, and I will not eat, nor talk, nor think, nor dally about anything, till I have told mine errand, or heard my Maker's errand unto me. And for this end it's a rare thing to carry somewhat always on the spirit, to spread before God, a heart pregnant with some needful request or matter whereof to treat with God. Psalm xlv. 1.—*Richard Steele's "Antidote against Distractions,"* 1673.

Verse 4.—It was David's earnest prayer, *"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple."* There are many that pray David's words, but not with David's heart. *Unum petii*, one thing have I desired, *de præterito*, for the time past; *et hoc requiram*, this I will still seek after, *de futuro*, for the time to come: I have required it long, and this suit I will urge till I have obtained it. What? To dwell in some of the houses of God all the days of my life, and to leave them to my children after me; not to serve him there with devotion, but to make the place mine own possession? These love the house of God too well; they love it to have and to hold: but because the conveyance is made by the lawyer, and not by the minister, their title will be found nought in the end; and if there be not a *nisi prius* to prevent them, yet at that great day of universal audit, the Judge of all the world shall condemn them. By this way, the nearer to the church, the further from God. The Lord's temple is ordained to gain us to him, not for us to gain it from him. If we love the Lord, we "will love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwelleth;" that so by being humble frequenters of his temple below, we may be made noble saints of his house above, the glorious kingdom of Jesus Christ.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4.—David being in this safe condition, what doth he now think upon or look at, as his main scope? Not as Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, to sit still and be merry, when he had overcome the Romans and all his enemies, as he sometime said to Cyneas, the philosopher, but to improve his rest to perpetual piety, in going from day to day to God's house, as Hannah is said afterwards to have done. Luke ii. And this, first, for the solace of his soul, in seeing the beauty of his sanctuary. Secondly, that he might still be directed aright and be safe. Thirdly, that he might yet be more highly exalted in kingly glory. Fourthly, for all this, as he should have abundant cause, sacrificing and singing Psalms to God without ceasing: see verses 5, 6.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 4.—O my soul, what sights have I seen in the house of God! what provisions have I tasted! what entertainments have I had! what enlargements in prayer and answers thereto! what impressions under his word, what enter-

tainment at his table, as he has sometimes brought me into his banqueting-house, and his banner over me has been love! And though I cannot, it may be, say so much of this as some others; yet what I have found, I cannot but remember with thankfulness, and desire more; and as this was *in the house of God, here* would I still desire to dwell.—*Daniel Wilcox*, 1676—1733.

Verse 5.—"*The time of trouble.*" Though God does not always deliver his people out of trouble, yet he delivers them from the evil of trouble, the despair of trouble, by supporting the spirit; nay, he delivers by trouble, for he sanctifies the trouble to cure the souls, and by less troubles delivers from greater.—*From a Broad Sheet in the British Museum, dated, "London: printed for D.M.*, 1678."

Verse 5.—"*He shall hide me.*" The word here used means to hide, to secrete, and then, to defend or protect. It would properly be applied to one who had fled from oppression, or from any impending evil, and who should be *secreted* in a house or cavern, and thus rendered safe from pursuers, or from the threatening evil.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 5.—"*Pavilion*" comes from *papilio*, a *butterfly*. It signifies a *tent* made of cloth stretched out on poles, which in form resembles in some measure the insect above named.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—"*In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.*" He alludes to the ancient custom of offenders, who used to flee to the tabernacle or altar, where they esteemed themselves safe. 1 Kings ii. 28.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 5.—"*In the secret of his tabernacle.*" Were there no other place, he would put me in the *holy of holies*, so that an enemy would not dare to approach me.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"*Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me.*" A man cannot drown so long as his head is above water. Now, it is the proper office of hope to do this for the Christian in times of any danger. Luke xxi. 28. "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh." A strange time, one would think, for Christ then to bid his disciples *lift up their heads* in, when they see other men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth (verse 26); yet now is the time of the rising of their sun, when others' is setting, and the blackness of darkness is overtaking others; because now the Christian's feast is coming, for which hope hath saved its stomach so long. "Your redemption draweth nigh." Two things make the head hang down—fear and shame; hope easeth the Christian's heart of both these, and so forbids him to give any sign of a desponding mind by a dejected countenance.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 6.—"*Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy.*" "Surely," some may say, "he could have called on God beyond the precincts of the temple, Wherever he wandered as an exile, he carried with him the precious promise of God, so that he needed not to put so great a value upon the sight of the external edifice. He appears, by some gross imagination or other, to suppose that God could be enclosed by wood and stones." But if we examine the words more carefully, it will be easy to see, that his object was altogether different from a mere sight of the noble building and its ornaments, however costly. He speaks, indeed, of the temple, but he places that beauty not so much in the goodliness that was to be seen by the eye, as in its being the celestial pattern which was shown to Moses, as it is written in Exod. xxv. 40: "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount." As the fashion of the temple was not framed according to the wisdom of man, but was an image of spiritual things, the prophet directed his eyes and all his affections to this object. Their madness is, therefore, truly detestable who wrest this place in favour of pictures and images, which, instead of deserving to be numbered among temple ornaments, are rather like dung and filth, defiling all the purity of holy things.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—"*When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*" In the former verse, David begins a prayer to God, "Hear, O Lord; have mercy upon me, and answer me." This verse is a ground of that prayer, "*Seek ye my face,*" saith God. The heart answers again, "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek;*" therefore I am encouraged to pray to thee. In the words are contained God's command and David's obedience. God's warrant and David's work

answerable, the voice and the echo: the voice, "*Seek my face;*" the rebound back again of a gracious heart, "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*" "*When thou saidst.*" It is not in the original. It only makes way to the sense. Passionate speeches are usually abrupt: "*Seek my face:*" "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." . . . *God is willing to be known.* He is willing to open and discover himself; God delights not to hide himself. God stands not upon state, as some emperors do that think their presence diminisheth respect. God is no such God, but he may be searched into. Man, if any weakness be discovered, we can soon search into the depth of his excellency; but with God it is clean otherwise. The more we know of him, the more we shall admire him. None admire him more than the blessed angels, that see most of him, and the blessed spirits that have communion with him. Therefore he hides not himself, nay, he desires to be known; and all those that have his Spirit desire to make him known. Those that suppress the knowledge of God in his will, what he performs for men, and what he requires of them, they are enemies to God and of God's people. They suppress the opening of God, clean contrary to God's meaning; "*Seek my face;*" I desire to be made known, and lay open myself to you. Therefore we may observe by the way, that when we are in any dark condition, that a Christian finds not the beams of God shining on him, let him not lay the blame upon God, as if God were a God that delighted to hide himself. Oh, no! it is not his delight. He loves not strangeness to his poor creatures. It is not a point of his policy. He is too great to affect* such poor things. No; the fault is altogether in us. We walk not worthy of such a presence; we want humility and preparation. If there be any darkness in the creature, that he finds God doth not so shine on him as in former times, undoubtedly the cause is in himself; for God saith, "*Seek my face.*" He desires to reveal himself.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 8.—"*When thou saidst, Seek ye my face,*" etc. All the Spirit's motions are seasonable, and therefore not to be put off; for delay is a kind of denial, and savours of such ungrateful contempt, as must needs be very displeasing to him. "*When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*" God does not only expect such an answer, but expects it immediately upon his call. Whenever he blows with his wind, he looks that we should spread our sails. If we refuse his offered help, we may deservedly want it when desired. As Christ withdrew himself from the spouse because she let him stand knocking so long at the door of her heart, and she still deferred to open, and tired out his loving forbearance with vain and frivolous excuses. Sol. Song, v. 2, etc. But as we must not omit the present performance of any duty which he excites unto, we must not check his influences by being weary of the duties which he assists us in: if we do not improve extraordinary aids by holding out the longer, we provoke him to depart.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 8.—"*When thou saidst, Seek ye my face,*" etc. We see here thus much, that God must *begin* with us, before we can *close with him;* God must seek us, before we can seek him; God must first desire that we should draw near to him, before we for our particulars are able to draw near unto God. Thou saidst, Seek my face; and then, and not till then my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 8.—"*When thou saidst,*" etc. Now God then speaks to the heart to pray when not only he puts upon the duty by saying to the conscience, This thou oughtest to do; but God's speaking to pray is such as his speech at first was, when he made the world, when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light:" so he says, let there be a prayer, and there is a prayer; that is, he pours upon a man a spirit of grace and supplication, a praying disposition; he puts in motives, suggests arguments and pleas to God; all which you shall find come in readily, and of themselves, and that likewise with a quickening heat and enlargement of affection, and with a lingering, and longing, and restlessness of spirit to be alone, to pour out the soul to God, and to vent and form those motions and suggestions into a prayer, till you have laid them together, and made a prayer of them. And this is a speaking to the heart. Observe such times when God doth thus, and neglect them not, then to strike whilst the iron is hot; thou hast then his ear; it is a special opportunity for that business, such a one as thou mayst never have the like. Suitors at court observe *molissima fandi tempora,* their times of begging when they have

* Choose=love.

kings in a good mood, which they will be sure to take the advantage of; but especially if they should find that the king himself should begin of himself to speak of the business which they would have of him: and thus that phrase of Psalm x. 17, that God prepares the heart, is understood by some, that God prepares the heart, and causeth the ear to hear; that is, he fashions it and composeth it into a praying frame. And sure it is a great sign that God means to hear us when himself shall thus indite the petition.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—"*When thou saidst,*" etc. And well may this be pleaded, in that God useth not so to stir up and strengthen us to seek him, but when he intendeth to be found of us. Psalm x. 17. "Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Jer. xxix. 13. "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." And God maketh it an argument to himself, that if he say to any inwardly as well as outwardly, "*Seek my face,*" he that speaketh righteousness cannot speak thus to them, and frustrate their prayers, and so bid them seek his face in vain. Isaiah xlv. 19, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain; I the Lord speak right things." If Ahasuerus bid his spouse to ask, surely he will not fail to grant her petition (Esther vii. 2); so here. And as when Christ called the blind man to come to him to tell him his grievance, it was truly said to him by them, "Be of good comfort, rise, for he calleth thee." Mark x. 49. So it is in this case.—*Thomas Cobbett.*

Verse 8.—"*My heart said unto thee.*" The heart is between God and our obedience, as it were, an ambassador. It understands from God what God would have done, and then it lays a command upon the whole man. The heart and conscience of man is partly divine, partly human. It hath some divinity in it, especially if the man be a holy man. God speaks, and the heart speaks. God speaks to the heart, and the heart speaks to us. And ofttimes when we hear conscience speaking to us, we neglect it; and as St. Augustine said of himself, "God spake often to me, and I was ignorant of it." When there is no command in the word that the heart directly thinks of (as indeed many profane careless men scarce have a Bible in their houses), God speaks to them thus; conscience speaks to them some broken command, that they learn against their wills. They heed it not, but David did not so. God said, "*Seek ye my face;*" his *heart* answers, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The heart looks upward to God, and then to itself, "*My heart said.*" It said to thee, and then to itself. First, his heart said to God, "Lord, I have encouragement from thee. Thou hast commanded that I should seek thy face." So his heart looked to God, and then it speaks to itself, "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*" It looks first to God, and then to all things that come from itself.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 8.—There are divers things considerable of us in this *answer* and *compliance* of David's with God's *command* or *invitation* to him. First, it was *seasonable, and in due time;* presently does David make this return: "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." This is the property and disposition of every wise and prudent Christian, to close with the very first opportunities of God's invitation. Secondly, this answer, as it was seasonable and present, so it was also *full and complete;* the performance was proportionable to the injunction. Ye shall have some kind of people in the world that God bids them do one thing and they will be sure to do the quite contrary; or, at least, not do as much as they should do, but do it by halves. But, now, here David makes return to God in the full extent and proportion of obedience. God said, "*Seek my face,*" and he answered, "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*" Thirdly, it was *real and entire, and sincere;* "My *heart* said." It is one thing to say it with the *mouth*, and it is another thing to say it with the *heart*. With the *mouth* it is both easy and ordinary, and nothing more usual. Lord, thy face will we seek, especially in any trouble or calamity, which is incident unto us; but for the heart to say it, that is not so frequent. Fourthly, it was *settled, and peremptory,* "Thy face will I seek;" there is nothing shall hinder me of it, or keep me from it, but I will do it against all opposition. Lastly, this protestation of David was *absolute and indefinite and unlimited;* "I will seek thy face;" without prescription of time, or place, or condition; not only now, but hereafter; not only for a time, but for ever, in all seasons, in all estates, in all circumstances, still I shall keep me to this—to hold my communion with thee. Then are we Christians, indeed, when we are so immutably and irreversibly and independently upon the opinions or practices of any other person.—*Condensed from Thomas Horton.*

Verse 8.—God hath promised his favour, and, therefore, his people may seek

his favour. Nay, he hath commanded his people to seek his favour, and therefore they should seek it. It is an unadvised folly, during the suspension of God's favour, to unson ourselves, and unpeople ourselves, *i.e.*, by denying the grace and spiritual relation which exist between us and God. That is not the way to gain favour; for when we have undone our relation of children we exclude ourselves from the expectation of favour. No, the wisest and surest way is to seek the renewing of God's loving countenance, and not to be driven away from God by our unbelief.—*Obadiah Sedgwick, in "The Doubting Believer,"* 1653.

Verse 9.—"*Hide not thy face far from me.*" When I seek thy face, vouchsafe, O God, not to hide thy face from me; for to what purpose should I seek it if I cannot find it? and what hope of finding it if thou be bent to hide it?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 9.—"*Put not thy servant away in anger.*" God puts away many in anger for their supposed goodness, but not any at all for their confessed badness.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*Thy servant.*" It is a blessed and happy thing to be God's true "*servant.*" Consider what the Queen of Sheba said of Solomon's servants (1 Kings x. 8): "Happy are these thy servants," etc. Now Christ Jesus is greater than Solomon (Matt. xii. 42), and so a better Master. Good earthly masters will honour good servants, as Prov. xxvii. 18, "He that waiteth on his master shall be honoured;" chap. xvii. 2, "A wise servant shall have a portion, or inheritance, among the brethren." But however some earthly masters may be Nabals and Labans, yet God will not be so: John xii. 26: "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour," see Luke xii. 37. The watchful servants are blessed; their master will make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them, as Matt. xxv. 21, 23: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—*Thomas Pierson.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou hast been my help; leave me not,*" etc. One act of mercy engages God to another. Men argue thus: I have showed you kindness already, therefore trouble me no more; but because God has shown mercy he is more ready still to show mercy; his mercy in election makes him justify, adopt, glorify.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 9.—"*Leave me not;*" rather, "dismiss me not;" "let not go thy hold of me." This is the proper sense of the Hebrew verb נטשׁ, to set a thing loose, to let it go, to abandon it.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 10.—"*When my father and my mother forsake me.*" As there seems to be some difficulty in supposing the Psalmist's parents to have "deserted" him, they might perhaps be said to have "*forsaken*" him (as Muis conjectures), that is, to have left him behind them, as being dead.—*James Merrick, M.A.*, 1720—1769.

Verse 10.—"*When my father and my mother forsake me.*" It is indeed the nature of all living creatures, though never so tender of their young ones, yet when they are grown to a ripeness of age and strength, to turn them off to shift for themselves; and even a father and a mother, as tender as they are, have yet somewhat of this common nature in them; for while their children are young they lead them by the hand, but when they are grown up they leave them to their own legs, and if they chance to fall let them rise as they can. But God even then takes his children up, for he knows of what they are made; he knows their strength must be as well supported as their weakness be assisted; he knows they must as well be taken up when they fall, as be held up when they stand.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 10.—"*Father and Mother.*" First, who are they? Properly and chiefly our natural parents, of whom we were begotten and born; to whom (under God) we owe our being and breeding. Yet here, not they only; but by *synecdoche* all other kinsfolks, neighbours, friends, acquaintances, or, indeed, more generally yet, all worldly comforts, stays, and helps whatsoever. 2. But, then, why these named the rathest, and the rest to be included in these? Because we promise to ourselves more help from them than from any of the other. We have a nearer relation to, and a greater interest in them than any other; and they of all other are the unlikeliest to forsake us. The very brute creatures forsake not their young ones. A hen will not desert her chickens, nor a bear endure to be robbed of her whelps. 3. But, then, thirdly, why *both* named—*father* and *mother* too? Partly because

it can hardly be imagined that both of them should forsake their child, though one should hap to be unkind. Partly because the *father's love* being commonly with more *providence*, the *mother's* with more *tenderness;* both together do better express than alone either would do, the abundant love of God towards us, who is infinitely dear over us, beyond the care of the most provident father, beyond the affection of the tenderest mother. 4. But, then, fourthly, when may they be said to *forsake* us? When at any time they leave us destitute of such help as we stand in need of; whether it be out of *choice*, when they list not to help us, though they might if they would; or out of *necessity*, when they cannot help us, though they would if they could.—*Robert Sanderson.*

Verse 10.—"*Then the Lord will take me up.*" But *dictum factum:* these are but *words:* Are there producible any *deeds* to make it good? Verily, there are, and that to the very letter. When Ishmael's mother, despairing of his life, had *forsaken* him, and laid him down gasping (his last, for ought she knew or could do to help it), in the wilderness, the Lord *took him up;* he opened a new spring of water, and opened her eyes to see it, and so the child was preserved. Genesis xxi. When Moses' parents had also *forsaken* him (for they durst not stand by him any longer), and laid him down among the rushy flags, the Lord *took him up* too. He provided him of a saviour, the king's own daughter, and of a nurse the child's own mother—and so he was preserved too. Exodus ii. 6—9. Take but two examples more, out of either Testament one. David and St. Paul, both *forsaken* of men, both *taken up* of God. How was David forsaken, in Psalm cxlii. 4, when he had looked upon his right hand, and saw no man that would know him; he had no place to fly unto, and no man cared for his soul. But all the while *Dominus ad dextris*, there was one at his right hand (though at first he was not aware of him), ready to *take him up;* as it there followeth, verse 5, "I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." And how St. Paul was forsaken; take it from himself, 2 Timothy iv. 16, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me:" a heavy case, and had been heavier had there not been one ready to take his part, at the next verse, "Nevertheless the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me," etc. What need we any more witnesses? *In ore duorum*—in the mouth of two such witnesses the point is sufficiently established. But you will yet say, these two might testify what they had already found *post factum.* But David, in the text, pronounceth it *de futuro*, beforehand, and that somewhat confidently: "*The Lord will take me up.*" As he doth also elsewhere: "Sure I am that the Lord will avenge the poor, and maintain the cause of the helpless." Psalm cxl. But is there any ground for that? Doubtless there is; a *double* ground; one in the *nature*, another in the *promise* of God. In his *nature* four *qualities* there are (we take leave so to speak, suitably to our own low apprehensions, for in the Godhead there are properly no *qualities*); but call them *qualities* or *attributes*, or what else you will; there are *four perfections* in God, opposite to those *defects* which in our *earthly parents* we have found to be the chief causes why they do so oft *forsake* us; which give us full assurance that he will *take us up* when all other succours fail us. Those are his *love*, his *wisdom*, his *power*, his *eternity*, and all in his nature. To which *four*, add his *promise*, and you have the fulness of all the assurance that can be desired.—*Robert Sanderson.*

Verse 10.—"*The Lord will take me up:*" Hebrew, *will gather me*, that is, take me into his care and keeping. In the civil law we find provision made for outcasts and friendless persons; some hospitals to entertain them, some liberties to comfort and compensate their trouble. 'Tis sure, that in God the forlorn and fatherless find mercy.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11.—"*Teach me thy way, O Lord.*" Having compared himself to an exposed, deserted infant, adopted by God, he anon fairly asks to be shown how to walk. He asks the grace of being able to observe all his holy commandments, which he never loses sight of through the whole one hundred-and-fifty Psalms. What else could he do? when it was the only path to that heavenly house of God, which he had just declared to be the only wish and desire of his heart.—*Robert Bellarmine* (*Cardinal*), 1542—1621.

Verse 11.—"*Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.*" If a man, travelling in the King's highway, be robbed between sun and sun, satisfaction is recoverable upon the county where the robbery was made; but if he takes his journey in the night, being an unseasonable time, then it is at his own peril, he must

take what falls. So, if a man keep in *God's ways*, he shall be sure of God's protection; but if he stray out of them, he exposeth himself to danger.—*Robert Skinner* (*Bishop*), 1636.

Verse 11.—"*Because of mine enemies.*" If once a man commence a professor, the eyes of all are upon him; and well they may, for his profession *in* the world is a separation *from* the world. Believers condemn those by their lives who condemn them by their lips. Righteous David saw many who were waiting to triumph in his mistakes. Hence the more they watched, the more he prayed: "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies." It may be rendered, *because of mine observers.* Christian, if you dwell in the open tent of licentiousness, the wicked will not walk backward, like modest Shem and Japheth, to cover your shame: but they will walk forward, like cursed Ham, to publish it. Thus they make use of your weakness as a plea for their wickedness. Men are merciless in their censures of Christians; they have no sympathy for their infirmity: while God weighs them in more equal scales, and says, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." While a saint is a *dove* in the eyes of God, he is only a *raven* in the estimation of sinners.—*William Secker.*

Verse 13.—"*I had fainted,*" etc. Study much the all-sufficiency, the power, the goodness, the unchangeableness of God. 1. The all-sufficiency of God. What fulness there is in him to make up all you can lose for him; what refreshments there are in him to sweeten all you can suffer for him. What fulness! You may as well doubt that all the waters of the ocean cannot fill a spoon, as that the divine fulness cannot be enough to you, if you should have nothing left in this world; for all the waters that cover the sea are not so much as a spoonful, compared with the boundless and infinite fulness of all-sufficiency. What refreshments in him! One drop of divine sweetness is enough to make one in the very agony of the cruellest death to cry out with joy, "The bitterness of death is past." Now in him there are not only drops, but rivers; not a scanty sprinkling, but an infinite fulness. 2. Eye much the power of God, how it can support under the cross, what it can bring to pass for you by the cross. No cross so sharp and grievous, but he can make it sweet and comfortable. No cross so heavy and intolerable, but he can make light and easy. No cross so ignominious and reproachful, but he can turn it to your honour. No cross so fastened to you, but he can easily remove it. 3. His *goodness.* His all-sufficiency and power make him able, his *goodness* makes him willing to do for his people under the cross what his all-sufficiency and almighty power can afford. His *goodness* sets his mighty power a-work for his suffering saints. His *goodness* sets his all-sufficiency, his fulness, abroach for them, so that it runs freely upon them; and never more freely than when they are under the cross. "*I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord,*" &c. What is it that makes you ready to *faint* under the cross, or thoughts and foresight of it? Look to the *goodness of God,* there is support.—*Condensed from David Clarkson.*

Verse 13.—"*I had fainted.*" The words in italics are supplied by our translators; but, far from being necessary, they injure the sense. Throw out the words *I had fainted,* and leave a *break* after the verse, and the elegant figure of the Psalmist will be preserved: "Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living"——what! what, alas! should have become of me!—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 13.—"*Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*" In the Hebrew this verse is elliptical, as Calvin here translates it. In the French version he supplies the ellipsis, by adding to the end of the verse the words, "C'estoit fait de moy," "I had perished." In our English version, the words, "I had fainted," are introduced as a supplement in the beginning of the verse. Both the supplement of Calvin, and that of our English version, which are substantially the same, doubtless explain the meaning of the passage; but they destroy the elegant abrupt form of the expression employed by the Psalmist, who breaks off in the middle of his discourse without completing the sentence, although what he meant to say is very evident.—*Editorial Note to Calvin, in loc.*

Verse 13.—Under sore trouble and distress, labour to exercise a strong and lively faith. It was a noble and heroic resolution in that holy man Job, under his singular trials (Job xiii. 15): "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" as if he had said, Let my strokes be never so sore and heavy, yet I will not let go my grips of his word and promises, I will not raze these foundations of my hope.

It was the way the Psalmist kept himself from sinking under his heavy burdens: "*I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*" . . . . Faith brings new strength and auxiliary supplies of grace from heaven, when the former supply is exhausted and spent; whereof David had the sweet experience here. As God doth plant and actuate grace in the soul, so he is pleased to come in with seasonable supplies and reinforcements to the weak and decayed graces of his people, answerable to their present exigences and pressures; and thus he doth from time to time feed the believer's lamp with fresh oil, give in more faith, more love, more hope, and more desires; and hereby he gives power to the faint, and strengthens the things which remain when ready to die.—*John Willison.*

Verse 13.—"*Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living:*" a cordial made up of three sovereign ingredients—a hope *to see;* and to see *the goodness of God;* and the goodness of God *in the land of the living.*—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 13.—"*The land of the living.*" Alas! what a *land of the living* is this, in which there are more dead than living, more under ground than above it; where the earth is fuller of graves than houses; where life lies trembling under the hand of death; and where death hath power to tyrannise over life! No, my soul, *there* only is the *land of the living* where there are none but the living; where there is a church, not militant, but triumphant; a church indeed, but no churchyard, because none dead, nor none that can die; where life is not passive, nor death active; where life sits crowned, and where death is swallowed up in victory.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 14.—"*Wait on the Lord, be of good courage.*" *Be comfortable,* hold fast (as the Greek hath), *be manly,* or, *quit thee as a man;* which word the apostle useth. 1 Cor. xvi. 13. These are the words of encouragement against remissness, fear, faintness of heart, or other infirmities.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 14.—"*Wait on the Lord, be of good courage.*"

Stand but your ground, your ghostly foes will fly—
Hell trembles at a heaven-directed eye;
Choose rather to defend than to assail—
Self-confidence will in the conflict fail:
When you are challenged you may dangers meet—
True *courage* is a fixed, not sudden heat;
Is always humble, lives in self-distrust,
And will itself into no danger thrust.
Devote yourself to God, and you will find
God fights the battles of a will resigned.
Love Jesus! love will no base fear endure—
Love Jesus! and of conquest rest secure.

Thomas Ken (*Bishop*), 1637—1710—**11.**

Verse 14.—Think not the government is out of Christ's hand, when men are doing many sad things, and giving many heavy blows to the work of God. No, no; men are but his hand; and it is the hand of God that justly and righteously is lying heavy upon his people. Look above men, then; you have not to do with them: there is a turn of matters, just as he is pleased to turn his hand.—*Ralph Erskine,* 1685—1752.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—The relation of illumination to salvation, or the need of light if men would be saved.

Verse 1.—The Christian hero, and the secret springs of his courage.

Verse 1.—The believer's fearless challenge.

Verse 2.—The character, number, power, and cruelty of the enemies of the church, and the mysterious way in which they have been defeated.

Verse 3.—Christian peace. I. Exhibited in the calm foresight of trouble.

II. Displayed in the confident endurance of affliction. III. Sustained by divine help and past experience (*verses* 1, 2). IV. Producing the richest results, glory to God, etc.

Verse 4.—Model Christian life. I. Unity of desire. II. Earnestness of action. III. Nearness of communion. IV. Heavenliness of contemplation. V. Progress in divine education.

Verse 4.—The affection of moral esteem towards God.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 4.—A breathing after God.—*R. Sibbes's Sermon.*

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Sabbath occupations and heavenly delights.

Verse 4 (*final clause*).—Matters for enquiry in the Temple of old opened up in the light of the New Testament.

Verse 5.—The threefold shelter. See Exposition.

Verse 6.—The saint's present triumph over his spiritual foes, his practical gratitude, and his vocal praises.

Verse 7.—Prayer. To whom addressed? How? "*Cry*," etc. When? *Left indefinite.* On what it is based? "*Mercy.*" What it needs? "*Hear*," "*answer.*"

Verse 8.—The heart in tune with its God. Note, the promptness, heartiness, personality, unreservedness, accuracy, and resolution of the response to the precept.

Verse 8.—The successful seeker.—*R. Sibbes's Sermon.*

Verse 8.—The echo. See Spurgeon's Sermons. No. 767.

Verse 9.—I. Desertion deprecated in all its forms. II. Experience pleaded. III. Divine aid implored.

Verse 9.—The horror of saints at the hell of sinners.—*James Scot.*

Verse 10.—The portion of the orphan, the comfort of the persecuted, the paradise of the departing.

Verse 11.—The plain man's pathway desired, described, divinely approved, "*thy way*," "*a plain way*," and divinely taught, "*teach me, O Lord*," "*lead me.*"

Verse 13.—Faith, its precedence of sight, its objects, its sustaining power.

Verse 13.—Believing to see. See Spurgeon's Sermons. No. 766.

Verse 14.—The believer's position, "*wait;*" his condition, "*good courage;*" his support, "*he shall*," etc.; his perseverance, "*wait*" repeated a second time; his reward.

PSALM XXVIII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*Again, the title,* "A Psalm of David," *is too general to give us any clue to the occasion upon which it was written. Its position, as following the twenty-seventh, seems to have been designed, for it is a most suitable pendant and sequel to it. It is another of those "songs in the night" of which the pen of David was so prolific. The thorn at the breast of the nightingale was said by the old naturalists to make it sing: David's griefs made him eloquent in holy psalmody. The main pleading of this Psalm is that the suppliant may not be confounded with the workers of iniquity for whom he expresses the utmost abhorrence; it may suit any slandered saint who, being misunderstood by men, and treated by them as an unworthy character, is anxious to stand aright before the bar of God. The Lord Jesus may be seen here pleading as the representative of his people.*

DIVISION.—*The first and second verses earnesty entreat audience of the Lord in a time of dire emergency. From verses* 2—5, *the portion of the wicked is described and deprecated. In verses* 6, 7, *and* 8, *praise is given for the Lord's mercy in hearing prayer, and the Psalm concludes with a general petition for the whole host of militant believers.*

EXPOSITION.

UNTO thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me, lest, *if* thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.

1. "*Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock.*"—A cry is the natural expression of sorrow, and is a suitable utterance when all other modes of appeal fail us; but the cry must be alone directed to the Lord, for to cry to man is to waste our entreaties upon the air. When we consider the readiness of the Lord to hear, and his ability to aid, we shall see good reason for directing all our appeals at once to the God of our salvation, and shall use language of firm resolve like that in the text, "I will cry." The immutable Jehovah is our *rock*, the immovable foundation of all our hopes and our refuge in time of trouble: we are fixed in our determination to flee to him as our stronghold in every hour of danger. It will be in vain to call to the rocks in the day of judgment, but our rock attends to our cries. "*Be not silent to me.*" Mere formalists may be content without answers to their prayers, but genuine suppliants cannot; they are not satisfied with the results of prayer itself in calming the mind and subduing the will—they must go further and obtain actual replies from heaven, or they cannot rest; and those replies they long to receive at once, if possible; they dread even a little of God's silence. God's voice is often so terrible that it shakes the wilderness; but his silence is equally full of awe to an eager suppliant. When God seems to close his ear, we must not therefore close our mouths, but rather cry with more earnestness; for when our note grows shrill with eagerness and grief, he will not long deny us a hearing. What a dreadful case should we be in if the Lord should become for ever silent to our prayers! This thought suggested itself to David, and he turned it into a plea, thus teaching us to argue and reason with God in our prayers. "*Lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.*" Deprived of the God who answers prayer, we should be in a more pitiable plight than the dead in the grave, and should soon sink to the same level as the lost in hell. We *must* have answers to prayer: ours is an urgent case of dire necessity; surely the Lord will speak peace to our agitated minds, for he never can find it in his heart to permit his own elect to perish.

2. This is much to the same effect as the first verse, only that it refers to future as well as present pleadings. Hear me! Hear me! "*Hear the voice of my supplications!*" This is the burden of both verses. We cannot be put off with a refusal when we are in the spirit of prayer; we labour, use importunity, and agonise in supplications until a hearing is granted us. The word "supplications," in the plural, shows the number, continuance, and variety of a good man's prayers,

while the expression, " hear *the voice,*" seems to hint that there is an inner meaning, or heart-voice, about which spiritual men are far more concerned than for their outward and audible utterances. A silent prayer may have a louder voice than the cries of those priests who sought to awaken Baal with their shouts. " *When I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle :* " which holy place was the type of our Lord Jesus ; and if we would gain acceptance, we must turn ourselves evermore to the blood-besprinkled mercy seat of his atonement. Uplifted hands have ever been a form of devout posture, and are intended to signify a reaching upward towards God, a readiness, an eagerness to receive the blessing sought after. We stretch out empty hands, for we are beggars ; we lift them up, for we seek heavenly supplies ; we lift them towards the mercy seat of Jesus, for there our expectation dwells. O that whenever we use devout gestures, we may possess contrite hearts, and so speed well with God.

3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief *is* in their hearts.

4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours : give them after the work of their hands ; render to them their desert.

5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

3. " *Draw me not away with the wicked.*"—They shall be dragged off to hell like felons of old drawn on a hurdle to Tyburn, like logs drawn to the fire, like fagots to the oven. David fears lest he should be bound up in their bundle, drawn to their doom ; and the fear is an appropriate one for every godly man. The best of the wicked are dangerous company in time, and would make terrible companions for eternity ; we must avoid them in their pleasures, if we would not be confounded with them in their miseries. " *And with the workers of iniquity.*" These are overtly sinful, and their judgment will be sure ; Lord, do not make us to drink of their cup. Activity is found with the wicked even if it be lacking to the righteous. Oh ! to be " workers " for the Lord. " *Which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.*" They have learned the manners of the place to which they are going : the doom of liars is their portion for ever, and lying is their conversation on the road. Soft words, oily with pretended love, are the deceitful meshes of the infernal net in which Satan catches the precious life ; many of his children are learned in his abominable craft, and fish with their father's nets, almost as cunningly as he himself could do it. It is a sure sign of baseness when the tongue and the heart do not ring to the same note. Deceitful men are more to be dreaded than wild beasts : it were better to be shut up in a pit with serpents than to be compelled to live with liars. He who cries " peace " too loudly, means to sell it if he can get his price. " Good wine needs no bush : " if he were so very peaceful he would not need to say so ; he means mischief, make sure of that.

4. When we view the wicked simply as such, and not as our fellow-men, our indignation against sin leads us entirely to coincide with the acts of divine justice which punish evil, and to wish that justice might use her power to restrain by her terrors the cruel and unjust ; but still the desires of the present verse, as our version renders it, are not readily made consistent with the spirit of the Christian dispensation, which seeks rather the reformation than the punishment of sinners. If we view the words before us as prophetic, or as in the future tense, declaring a fact, we are probably nearer to the true meaning than that given in our version. Ungodly reader, what will be your lot when the Lord deals with you according to your desert, and weighs out to you his wrath, not only in proportion to what you have actually done, but according to what you would have done if you could ? Our " *endeavours* " are taken as facts ; God takes the will for the deed, and punishes or rewards accordingly. Not in this life, but certainly in the next, God will repay his enemies to their faces, and give them the wages of their sins. Not according to their fawning words, but after the measure of their mischievous deeds, will the Lord mete out vengeance to them that know him not.

5. " *Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.*" God works in creation—nature teems with proofs of his wisdom and goodness, yet purblind atheists refuse to see him : he works in providence, ruling and overruling,

and his hand is very manifest in human history, yet the infidel will not discern him: he works in grace—remarkable conversions are still met with on all hands, yet the ungodly refuse to see the operations of the Lord. Where angels wonder, carnal men despise. God condescends to teach, and man refuses to learn. "*He shall destroy them:*" he will make them "behold, and wonder, and perish." If they would not see the hand of judgment upon others, they shall feel it upon themselves. Both soul and body shall be overwhelmed with utter destruction for ever and ever. "*And not build them up.*" God's curse is positive and negative; his sword has two edges, and cuts right and left. Their heritage of evil shall prevent the ungodly receiving any good; the ephah shall be too full of wrath to contain a grain of hope. They have become like old, rotten, decayed houses of timber, useless to the owner, and harbouring all manner of evil, and, therefore, the Great Builder will demolish them utterly. Incorrigible offenders may expect speedy destruction: they who will not mend, shall be thrown away as worthless. Let us be very attentive to all the lessons of God's word and work, lest being found disobedient to the divine will, we be made to suffer the divine wrath.

6 Blessed *be* the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

7 The LORD *is* my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

8 The LORD *is* their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed.

6. "*Blessed be the Lord.*" Saints are full of benedictions; they are a blessed people, and a blessing people; but they give their best blessings, the fat of their sacrifices, to their glorious Lord. Our Psalm was prayer up to this point, and now it turns to praise. They who pray well, will soon praise well: prayer and praise are the two lips of the soul; two bells to ring out sweet and acceptable music in the ears of God; two angels to climb Jacob's ladder; two altars smoking with incense; two of Solomon's lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh; they are two young roes that are twins, feeding upon the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. "*Because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.*" Real praise is established upon sufficient and constraining reasons; it is not irrational emotion, but rises, like a pure spring, from the deeps of experience. Answered prayers should be acknowledged. Do we not often fail in this duty? Would it not greatly encourage others, and strengthen ourselves, if we faithfully recorded divine goodness, and made a point of extolling it with our tongue? God's mercy is not such an inconsiderable thing that we may safely venture to receive it without so much as thanks. We should shun ingratitude, and live daily in the heavenly atmosphere of thankful love.

7. Here is David's declaration and confession of faith, coupled with a testimony from his experience. "*The Lord is my strength.*" The Lord employs his power on our behalf, and moreover, infuses strength into us in our hour of weakness. The Psalmist, by an act of appropriating faith, takes the omnipotence of Jehovah to be his own. Dependence upon the invisible God gives great independence of spirit, inspiring us with confidence more than human. "*And my shield.*" Thus David found both sword and shield in his God. The Lord preserves his people from unnumbered ills; and the Christian warrior, sheltered behind his God, is far more safe than the hero when covered with his shield of brass or triple steel. "*My heart trusted in him, and I am helped.*" Heart work is sure work; heart trust is never disappointed. Faith must come before help, but help will never be long behind-hand. Every day the believer may say, "I am helped," for the divine assistance is vouchsafed us every moment, or we should go back unto perdition; when more manifest help is needed, we have but to put faith into exercise, and it will be given us. "*Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.*" The heart is mentioned twice to show the truth of his faith and his joy. Observe the adverb "*greatly,*" we need not be afraid of being too full of rejoicing at the remembrance of grace received. We serve a great God, let us greatly rejoice in him. A song is the soul's fittest method of giving vent to its happiness, it were well if we were more like the singing lark, and less like the croaking raven. When the heart is glowing, the lips should not be silent. When God blesses us, we should bless him with all our heart.

8. "*The Lord is their strength.*"—The heavenly experience of one believer is a pattern of the life of all. To all the militant church, without exception, Jehovah is the same as he was to his servant David, "the least of them shall be as David." They need the same aid and they shall have it, for they are loved with the same love, written in the same book of life, and one with the same anointed Head. "*And he is the saving strength of his anointed.*" Here behold king David as the type of our Lord Jesus, our covenant Head, our anointed Prince, through whom all blessings come to us. He has achieved full salvation for us, and we desire saving strength from him, and as we share in the unction which is so largely shed upon him, we expect to partake in his salvation. Glory be unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has magnified the power of his grace in his only begotten Son, whom he has anointed to be a Prince and a Saviour unto his people.

9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

9. This is a prayer for the church militant, written in short words, but full of weighty meaning. We must pray for the whole church, and not for ourselves alone. "*Save thy people.*" Deliver them from their enemies, preserve them from their sins, succour them under their troubles, rescue them from their temptations, and ward off from them every ill. There is a plea hidden in the expression, "*thy people;*" for it may be safely concluded that God's interest in the church, as his own portion, will lead him to guard it from destruction. "*Bless thine inheritance.*" Grant positive blessings, peace, plenty, prosperity, happiness; make all thy dearly-purchased and precious heritage to be comforted by thy Spirit. Revive, refresh, enlarge and sanctify thy church. "*Feed them also.*" Be a shepherd to thy flock, let their bodily and spiritual wants be plentifully supplied. By thy word, and ordinances, direct, rule, sustain, and satisfy those who are the sheep of thy hand. "*And lift them up for ever.*" Carry them in thine arms on earth, and then lift them into thy bosom in heaven. Elevate their minds and thoughts, spiritualise their affections, make them heavenly, Christlike, and full of God. O Lord, answer this our petition, for Jesus' sake.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*Unto thee do I cry.*" It is of the utmost importance that we should have a *definite object* on which to fix our thoughts. Man, at the best of times, has but little power for realising abstractions; but least of all in his time of sorrow. Then he is helpless; then he needs every possible aid; and if his mind wander in vacancy, it will soon weary, and sink down exhausted. God has graciously taken care that this need not be done. He has so manifested himself to man in his word, that the afflicted one can fix his mind's eye on him, as the definite object of his faith, and hope, and prayer. "Call unto *me*, and *I* will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Jer. xxxiii. 3. This was what the Psalmist did; and the definiteness of God, as the object of his trust in prayer, is very clearly marked. And specially great is the privilege of the *Christian* in this matter. He can fix his eye on Jesus; he, without any very great stretch of imagination, can picture that Holy One looking down upon him; listening to him; feeling for him; preparing to answer him. Dear reader, in the time of your trouble, do not roam; do not send out your sighs into vacancy; do not let your thoughts wander, as though they were looking for some one on whom to fix; for some one to whom you could tell the story of your heart's need and desolation. Fix your heart as the Psalmist did, and say, "Unto *thee* will I cry." . . . Oh! how happy is that man, who feels and knows that when trouble comes, he cannot be bewildered and confused by the stroke, no matter how heavy it may be. Sorrow-stricken he will be, but he has his resource, and he *knows* it, and will avail himself of it. His is no vague theory of the general sympathy of God for man; his is a knowledge of God, as a personal and feeling God; he says with the Psalmist, "Unto *thee* will I cry."—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 1.—"*My rock.*" One day a female friend called on the Rev. William

Evans, a pious minister in England, and asked how he felt himself. "I am weakness itself," he replied; "but I am on the *Rock*. I do not experience those transports which some have expressed in the view of death; but my dependence is on the mercy of God in Christ. Here my religion began, and here it must end."

Verse 1.—"*My rock.*" The Rev. John Rees, of Crown Street, Soho, London, was visited on his death-bed by the Rev. John Leifchild, who very seriously asked him to describe the state of his mind. This appeal to the honour of his religion roused him, and so freshened his dying lamp, that raising himself up in his bed, he looked his friend in the face, and with great deliberation, energy, and dignity, uttered the following words:—"Christ in his person, Christ in the love of his heart, and Christ in the power of his arm, is the Rock on which I rest; and now" (reclining his head gently on the pillow), "Death, strike!"—*K. Arvine.*

Verse 1.—"*Be not silent to me.*" Let us next observe *what the heart desires from God.* It is that he would speak. "*Be not silent to me.*" Under these circumstances, when we make our prayer, we desire that God would let us know that he hears us, and that he would appear for us, and that he would say, he is our Father. And what do we desire God to say? We want him to let us know that he hears us; we want to hear him speak as distinctly to us, as we feel that we have spoken to him. We want to *know, not only by faith* that we have been heard, but *by God's having spoken to us on the very subject whereupon we have spoken to him.* When we feel thus assured that God has heard us, we can with the deepest confidence leave the whole matter about which we have been praying, in his hands. Perhaps an answer cannot come for a long time; perhaps things, meanwhile, seem working in a contrary way; it may be, that there is no direct appearance at all of God upon the scene; still faith will hold up and be strong; and there will be comfort in the heart, from the felt consciousness that God has heard our cry about the matter, and that he has told us so. We shall say to ourselves, "God knows all about it; God has in point of fact told me so; therefore I am in peace." And let it be enough for us that God tells us this, when he will perhaps tell us no more; let us not want to try and induce him to speak much, when it is his will to speak but little: the best answer we can have at certain times is simply the statement that "he hears;" by this answer to our prayer he at once encourages and exercises our faith. "It is said," said Rutherford, speaking of the Saviour's delay in responding to the request of the Syrophenician woman, "'*he answered* not a word,' but it is not said, he *heard* not a word. These two differ much. Christ often heareth when he doth not answer—his *not* answering *is an answer*, and speaks thus —'pray on, go on and cry, for the Lord holdeth his door fast bolted, not to keep you out, but that you may knock, and knock, and it shall be opened.'"—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 1.—"*Lest . . . I become like them that go down into the pit.*" Thou seest, great God, my sad situation. Nothing to me is great or desirable upon this earth but the felicity of serving thee, and yet the misery of my destiny, and the duties of my state, bring me into connection with men who regard all godliness as a thing to be censured and derided. With secret horror I daily hear them blaspheming the ineffable gifts of thy grace, and ridiculing the faith and fervour of the godly as mere imbecility of mind. Exposed to such impiety, all my consolation, O my God, is to make my cries of distress ascend to the foot of thy throne. Although for the present, these sacrilegious blasphemies only awaken in my soul emotions of horror and pity, yet I fear that at last they may enfeeble me and seduce me into a crooked course of policy, unworthy of thy glory, and of the gratitude which I owe to thee. I fear that insensibly I may become such a coward as to blush at thy name, such a sinner as to resist the impulses of thy grace, such a traitor as to withhold my testimony against sin, such a self-deceiver as to disguise my criminal timidity by the name of prudence. Already I feel that this poison is insinuating itself into my heart, for while I would not have my conduct resemble that of the wicked who surround me, yet I am too much biassed by the fear of giving them offence. I dare not imitate them, but I am almost as much afraid of irritating them. I know that it is impossible both to please a corrupt world and a holy God, and yet I so far lose sight of this truth, that instead of sustaining me in decision, it only serves to render my vacillation the more inexcusable. What remains for me but to implore thy help! Strengthen me, O Lord, against these declensions so injurious to thy glory, so fatal to the fidelity which is due to thee. Cause me to hear thy strengthening and encouraging voice. If the voice of thy grace be not

lifted up in my spirit, reanimating my feeble faith, I feel that there is but a step between me and despair. I am on the brink of the precipice, I am ready to fall into a criminal complicity with those who would fain drag me down with them into the pit.—*Jean Baptiste Massillon*, 1663—1742, *freely translated by C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—"*I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.*" Called דְּבִיר, *debhir*, because there-hence God spake and gave answer. Toward this (a type of Christ, the Word essential), David lifteth up his hands, that it might be as a ladder, whereby his prayer might get up to heaven.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*Draw me not away with the wicked . . . . which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.*" The godly man abhors dissimulation towards men; his heart goes along with his tongue, he cannot flatter and hate, commend and censure. "Let love be without dissimulation." Romans xii. 9. Dissembled love is worse than hatred; counterfeiting of friendship is no better than a lie (Psalm lxxviii. 36), for there is a pretence of that which is not. Many are like Joab: "He took Amasa by the beard to kiss him, and smote him with his sword in the fifth rib, that he died." There is a river in Spain, where the fish seem to be of a golden colour, but take them out of the water, and they are like other fish. All is not gold that glitters; there are some pretend much kindness, but they are like great veins which have little blood; if you lean upon them they are as a leg out of joint. For my part, I much question his truth towards God, that will flatter and lie to his friend. "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander is a fool." Proverbs x. 18.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—"*Draw me not out with.*" An allusion, I conceive, to a shepherd selecting out a certain portion of his flock. "*Reckon me not among.*"—*Professor Lee.*

Verse 3.—"*Draw me not away.*" אַל־תִּמְשְׁכֵנִי from מָשַׁךְ; that signifies, both to draw and apprehend, will be best rendered here, *seize not on me*, as he that *seizeth* on any to *carry* or *drag* him to *execution.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 4.—"*Give them according to their deeds,*" etc. Here, again, occurs the difficult question about praying for vengeance, which, however, I shall despatch in a few words. In the first place, then, it is unquestionable, that if the flesh move us to seek revenge, the desire is wicked in the sight of God. He not only forbids us to imprecate evil upon our enemies in revenge for private injuries, but it cannot be otherwise than that all those desires which spring from hatred must be disordered. David's example, therefore, must not be alleged by those who are driven by their own intemperate passion to seek vengeance. The holy prophet is not inflamed here by his own private sorrow to devote his enemies to destruction; but laying aside the desire of the flesh, he gives judgment concerning the matter itself. Before a man can, therefore, denounce vengeance against the wicked, he must first shake himself free from all improper feelings in his own mind. In the second place prudence must be exercised, that the heinousness of the evils which offend us drive us not to intemperate zeal, which happened even to Christ's disciples, when they desired that fire might be brought from heaven to consume those who refused to entertain their Master. Luke ix. 54. They pretended, it is true, to act according to the example of Elias, but Christ severely rebuked them, and told them that they knew not by what spirit they were actuated. In particular, we must observe this general rule, that we cordially desire and labour for the welfare of the whole human race. Thus it will come to pass, that we shall not only give way to the exercise of God's mercy, but shall also wish the conversion of those who seem obstinately to rush upon their own destruction. In short, David, being free from every evil passion, and likewise endued with the spirit of discretion and judgment, pleads here not so much his own cause as the cause of God. And by this prayer, he further reminds both himself and the faithful, that although the wicked may give themselves loose reins in the commission of every species of vice with impunity for a time, they must at length stand before the judgment-seat of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—"*Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours.*" Yes, great God, since thou hast from the beginning been only occupied in saving men, thou wilt surely strike with an eternal malediction these children of iniquity who appear to have been born only to be lost them-

selves, and to destroy others. Thy very benevolence towards mankind solicits thy thunders against these corrupters of society. The more thou hast done for our race, the more surely will the severity of thy justice reveal itself in destroying the wretches whose only study is to counteract thy goodness towards mankind. They labour incessantly to put men far away from thee, O my God, and in return thou wilt put them far away from thee for ever. They count it great gain to make their fellows thine enemies, and they shall have the desperate consolation of being such themselves to all eternity. What more fitting punishment for the wretches who desire to make all hearts rebel against thine adorable Majesty, than to lie through the baseness of their nature, under the eternal and frightful necessity of hating thee for ever.—*Jean Baptiste Massillon, rendered very freely by C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—"*Give them according to their deeds.*" The *Egyptians* killed the Hebrew male children, and God smote the firstborn of Egypt. *Sisera*, who thought to destroy Israel with his iron chariots, was himself killed with an iron nail, stuck through his temples. *Adoni-bezek*, Judges i. 5—7. *Gideon* slew forty elders of Succoth, and his sons were murdered by Abimelech. *Abimelech* slew seventy sons of Gideon upon one stone, and his own head was broken by a piece of millstone thrown by a woman. *Samson* fell by the "lust of the eye," and before death the Phillistines put out his eyes. *Agag*, 1 Sam. xx. 33. *Saul* slew the Gibeonites, and seven of his sons were hung up before the Lord. 2 Sam. xxi. 1—9. *Ahab*, after coveting Naboth's vineyard, 1 Kings xxi. 19, fulfilled 2 Kings ix. 24—26. *Jeroboam*, the same hand that was stretched forth against the altar was withered, 1 Kings xiii. 1—6. *Joab* having killed Abner, Amasa, and Absalom, was put to death by Solomon. *Daniel's accusers* thrown into the lions' den meant for Daniel. *Haman* hung upon the gallows designed for Mordecai. *Judas* purchased the field of blood, and then went and hanged himself. So in the history of *later days*, Bajazet was carried about by Tamerlane in an iron cage, as he intended to have carried Tamerlane. *Mazentius* built a bridge to entrap Constantine, and was overthrown himself on that very spot. *Alexander VI.* was poisoned by the wine he had prepared for another. *Charles IX.* made the streets of Paris to stream with Protestant blood, and soon after blood streamed from all parts of his body in a bloody sweat. *Cardinal Beaton* condemned George Wishart to death, and presently died a violent death himself; he was murdered in bed, and his body was laid out in the same window from which he had looked upon Wishart's execution.—*G. S. Bowes, in "Illustrative Gatherings."*

Verse 4.—"*Render to them their desert.*" Meditate on God's righteousness, that it is not only his will, but his nature to punish sin; sin must damn thee without Christ, there is not only a possibility or probability that sin may ruin, but without an interest in Christ it must do so; whet much upon thy heart that *must;* God cannot but hate sin, because he is holy; and he cannot but punish sin, because he is righteous. God must not forego his own nature to gratify our humours. —*Christopher Fowler, in "Morning Exercises,"* 1676.

Verse 4.—He prayeth against his enemies, not out of any private revenge, but being led by the infallible spirit of prophecy, looking through these men to the enemies of Christ, and of his people in all ages.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 4, 5.—In these verses, as indeed in most of the imprecatory passages, the imperative and the future are used promiscuously: "*Give them——render them——he shall destroy them.*" If therefore, the verbs, in all such passages, were uniformly rendered in the "future," every objection against the Scripture imprecations would vanish at once, and they would appear clearly to be what they are, namely, prophecies of the divine judgments, which have been since executed against the Jews, and which will be executed against all the enemies of Jehovah, and his Christ; whom neither the "works" of creation, nor those of redemption, can lead to repentance.—*George Horne.*

Verse 6.—"*He hath heard.*" Prayer is the best remedy in a calamity. This is indeed a true *catholicum*, a general remedy for every malady. Not like the empiric's *catholicum*, which sometimes may work, but for the most part fails: but that which upon assured evidence and constant experience hath its *probatum est;* being that which the most wise, learned, honest, and skilful Physician that ever was, or can be, hath prescribed—even he that teacheth us how to bear what is to be borne, or how to heal and help what hath been borne.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 7.—*" The Lord is my strength."* Oh, sweet consolation! If a man have a burthen upon him, yet if he have *strength* added to him, if the burthen be doubled, yet if his *strength* be trebled, the burden will not be heavier, but lighter than it was before to his natural strength; so if our afflictions be heavy, and we cry out, Oh, we cannot bear them! yet if we cannot bear them with our own strength, why may we not bear them with the strength of Jesus Christ? Do we think that Christ could not bear them? or if we dare not think but that Christ could bear them, why may not we come to bear them? Some may question, can we have the strength of Christ? Yes; that very strength is made over to us by faith, for so the Scripture saith frequently, *The Lord is our strength; God is our strength; The Lord Jehovah is our strength; Christ is our strength* (Psalm xxviii. 7; xliii. 2; cxviii. 14; Isaiah xii. 2; Hab. iii. 19; Col. i. 11); and, therefore, is Christ's strength ours, made over unto us, that we may be able to bear whatsoever lies upon us.—*Isaac Ambrose.*

Verse 7.—*" The Lord is my strength"* inwardly, *" and my shield"* outwardly. Faith finds both these in Jehovah, and the one not without the other, for what is a shield without strength, or strength without a shield? *" My heart trusted in him, and I am helped:"* the idea of the former sentence is here carried out, that outward help was granted to inward confidence.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 7.—*" My heart trusted in him, and I am helped."* Faith substantiateth things not yet seen; it altereth the tenses, saith one, and putteth the future into the present tense as here.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—*" The Lord is their strength:"* not mine only, but the strength of every believer. Note—the saints rejoice in their friends' comforts as well as their own; for as we have not the less benefit by the light of the sun, so neither by the light of God's countenance, for others sharing therein; for we are sure there is enough for all, and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their strength and ours; Christ their Lord and ours. 1 Cor. i. 2. He is their strength, the strength of all Israel, because he is the saving strength of *" his anointed," i.e.*, 1. Of David in the type: God in strengthening him that was their king and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself God's anointed, because it was the unction he had received that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and therefore entitled him to the divine protection. 2. Of Christ, his Anointed, his Messiah, in the antitype. God was his *" saving strength,"* qualified him for his undertaking, and carried him through it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—*" Lift them up."* The word here used may mean *sustain* them, or *support* them; but it more properly means *bear*, and would be best expressed by a reference to the fact, that the shepherd carries the feeble, the young, and the sickly of his flock in his arms, or that he lifts them up when unable themselves to rise.—*Albert Barnes.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—A sinner's wise resolution in the hour of despondency.

Verse 1.—The saint's fear of becoming like the ungodly.

Verse 1.—God's silence—what terror may lie in it.

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—How low a soul may sink when God hides his face.

Verses 1, 2.—Prayer. I. *Its nature—a " cry."* 1. The utterance of life. 2. The expression of pain. 3. The pleading of need. 4. The voice of deep earnestness. II. *Its object—" O Lord, my rock."* God is our Foundation, Refuge, and immutable Friend. III. *Its aim—" Hear," " Be not silent."* We expect an answer, a clear

and manifest answer, a speedy answer, a suitable answer, an effectual answer. IV. *Its medium*—"*Toward thy holy oracle.*" Our Lord Jesus, the true mercy seat, etc.

Verse 3.—The characters to be avoided, the doom to be dreaded, the grace to keep us from both.

Verse 4.—Measure for measure, or punishment proportioned to desert.

Verse 4.—Endeavour the measure of sin rather than mere result. Hence some are guilty of sins which they were unable to commit.

Verse 5.—Culpable negligence constantly persisted in, losing much blessing, and involving terrible condemnation.

Verse 6.—Answered prayers, a retrospect and song.

Verse 7.—The heart's possessions, confidence, experience, joy, and music.

Verse 7.—Adoring God for his mercies. I. What God is to the believer. II. What should be the disposition of our hearts towards him?—*C. Simeon.*

Verse 8.—All power given to believers because of their union with Jesus.

Verse 9.—"A prayer for the church militant." See Exposition and Spurgeon's Sermons, No. 768.

PSALM XXIX.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *The title affords us no information beyond the fact that David is the author of this sublime song.*

SUBJECT.—*It seems to be the general opinion of modern annotators, that this Psalm is meant to express the glory of God as heard in the pealing thunder, and seen in an equinoctial tornado. Just as the eighth Psalm is to be read by moonlight, when the stars are bright, as the nineteenth needs the rays of the rising sun to bring out its beauty, so this can be best rehearsed beneath the black wing of tempest, by the glare of the lightning, or amid that dubious dusk which heralds the war of elements. The verses march to the tune of thunderbolts. God is everywhere conspicuous, and all the earth is hushed by the majesty of his presence. The word of God in the law and gospel is here also depicted in its majesty of power. True ministers are sons of thunder, and the voice of God in Christ Jesus is full of majesty. Thus we have God's works and God's word joined together: let no man put them asunder by a false idea that theology and science can by any possibility oppose each other. We may, perhaps, by a prophetic glance, behold in this Psalm the dread tempests of the latter days, and the security of the elect people.*

DIVISION.—*The first two verses are a call to adoration. From 3 to 10 the path of the tempest is traced, the attributes of God's word are rehearsed, and God magnified in all the terrible grandeur of his power; and the last verse sweetly closes the scene with the assurance that the omnipotent Jehovah will give both strength and peace to his people. Let heaven and earth pass away, the Lord will surely bless his people.*

EXPOSITION.

GIVE unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.
2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

1. "*Give,*" *i.e.*, ascribe. Neither men nor angels can confer anything upon Jehovah, but they should recognise his glory and might, and ascribe it to him in their songs and in their hearts. "*Unto the Lord,*" and unto him alone, must honour be given. Natural causes, as men call them, are God in action, and we must not ascribe power to them, but to the infinite Invisible who is the true source of all. "*O ye mighty.*" Ye great ones of earth and of heaven, kings and angels, join in rendering worship to the blessed and only Potentate; ye lords among men need thus to be reminded, for ye often fail where humbler men are ardent; but fail no longer, bow your heads at once, and loyally do homage to the King of kings. How frequently do grandees and potentates think it beneath them to fear the Lord; but, when they have been led to extol Jehovah, their piety has been the greatest jewel in their crowns. "*Give unto the Lord glory and strength,*" both of which men are too apt to claim for themselves, although they are the exclusive prerogatives of the self-existent God. Let crowns and swords acknowledge their dependence upon God. Not to your arms, O kings, give ye the glory, nor look for strength to your host of warriors, for all your pomp is but as a fading flower, and your might is as a shadow which declineth. When shall the day arrive when kings and princes shall count it their delight to glorify their God? "All worship be to God only," let this be emblazoned on every coat of arms.

2. "*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*" A third time the admonition is given, for men are backward in glorifying God, and especially great men, who are often too much swollen with their own glory to spare time to give God his rightful praise, although nothing more is asked of them than is most just and right. Surely men should not need so much pressing to give what is due, especially when the payment is so pleasant. Unbelief and distrust, complaining and murmuring, rob God of his honour; in this respect, even the saints fail to give due glory to their King. "*Worship the Lord,*" bow before him with devout homage and sacred awe, and let your worship be such as he appoints. Of old, worship was cumbered with ceremonial, and men gathered around one dedicated building, whose solemn

pomp was emblematic of "*the beauty of holiness;*" but now our worship is spiritual, and the architecture of the house and the garments of the worshippers are matters of no importance; the spiritual beauty of inward purity and outward holiness being far more precious in the eyes of our thrice holy God. O for grace ever to worship with holy motives and in a holy manner, as becometh saints! The call to worship in these two verses chimes in with the loud pealing thunder, which is the church bell of the universe ringing kings and angels, and all the sons of earth to their devotions.

3 The voice of the LORD *is* upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord *is* upon many waters.

4 The voice of the LORD *is* powerful; the voice of the LORD *is* full of majesty.

5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.

8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of *his* glory.

10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.

3. "*The voice of the Lord is upon the waters.*" The thunder is not only poetically but instructively called "the voice of God," since it peals from on high; it surpasses all other sounds, it inspires awe, it is entirely independent of man, and has been used on some occasions as the grand accompaniment of God's speech to Adam's sons. There is peculiar terror in a tempest at sea, when deep calleth unto deep, and the raging sea echoes to the angry sky. No sight more alarming than the flash of lightning around the mast of the ship; and no sound more calculated to inspire a reverent awe than the roar of the storm. The children of heaven have often enjoyed the tumult with humble joy peculiar to the saints, and even those who know not God have been forced into unwilling reverence while the storm has lasted. "*The God of glory thundereth.*" Thunder is in truth no mere electric phenomenon, but is caused by the interposition of God himself. Even the old heathen spake of Jupiter Tonans; but our modern wise men will have us believe in laws and forces, and anything or nothing so that they may be rid of God. Electricity of itself can do nothing, it must be called and sent upon its errand; and until the almighty Lord commissions it, its bolt of fire is inert and powerless. As well might a rock of granite, or a bar of iron fly in the midst of heaven, as the lightning go without being sent by the great First Cause. "*The Lord is upon many waters.*" Still the Psalmist's ear hears no voice but that of Jehovah, resounding from the multitudinous and dark waters of the upper ocean of clouds, and echoing from the innumerable billows of the storm-tossed sea below. The waters above and beneath the firmament are astonished at the eternal voice. When the holy Spirit makes the divine promise to be heard above the many waters of our soul's trouble, then is God as glorious in the spiritual world as in the universe of matter. Above us and beneath us all is the peace of God when he gives us quiet.

4. "*The voice of the Lord is powerful.*" An irresistible power attends the lightning of which the thunder is the report. In an instant, when the Lord wills it, the force of electricity produces amazing results. A writer upon this subject, speaks of these results as including a light of the intensity of the sun in his strength, a heat capable of fusing the compactest metals, a force in a moment paralysing the muscles of the most powerful animals; a power suspending the all-pervading gravity of the earth, and an energy capable of decomposing and recomposing the closest affinities of the most intimate combinations. Well does Thompson speak of "the unconquerable lightning," for it is the chief of the ways of God in physical forces, and none can measure its power.

As the voice of God in nature is so powerful, so is it in grace; the reader will do well to draw a parallel, and he will find much in the gospel, which may be

illustrated by the thunder of the Lord in the tempest. His voice, whether in nature or revelation, shakes both earth and heaven; see that ye refuse not him that speaketh. If his voice be thus mighty, what must his hand be! beware lest ye provoke a blow. "*The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.*" The King of kings speaks like a king. As when a lion roareth, all the beasts of the forest are still, so is the earth hushed and mute while Jehovah thundereth marvellously.

"Tis listening fear and dumb amazement all."

As for the written word of God, its majesty is apparent both in its style, its matter, and its power over the human mind; blessed be God, it is the majesty of mercy wielding a silver sceptre; of such majesty the word of our salvation is *full* to overflowing.

5. "*The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars.*"

"Black from the stroke above, the smouldering pine
Stands a sad shatter'd trunk."

Noble trees fall prostrate beneath the mysterious bolt, or stand in desolation as mementoes of its power. Lebanon itself is not secure, high as it stands, and ancient as are its venerable woods: "*Yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.*" The greatest and most venerable of trees or men, may not reckon upon immunity when the Lord is abroad in his wrath. The gospel of Jesus has a like dominion over the most inaccessible of mortals; and when the Lord sends the word, it breaks hearts far stouter than the cedars.

6. "*He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.*" Not only the trees, but the mountains themselves move as though they frisked and leaped like young bulls or antelopes. As our own poets would mention hills and valleys known to them, so the Psalmist hears the crash and roar among the ranges of Libanus, and depicts the tumult in graphic terms. Thus sings one of our own countrymen:—

"Amid Carnarvon's mountains rages loud
The repercussive roar: with mighty crash
Into the flashing deep, from the rude rocks
Of Penmaen Mawr, heap'd hideous to the sky.
Tumble the smitten cliffs; and Snowdon's peak,
Dissolving, instant yields his wintry load.
Far seen, the heights of heathy Cheviot blaze,
And Thulè bellows through her utmost isles."

The glorious gospel of the blessed God has more than equal power over the rocky obduracy and mountainous pride of man. The voice of our dying Lord rent the rocks and opened the graves: his living voice still works the like wonders. Glory be to his name, the hills of our sins leap into his grave, and are buried in the red sea of his blood, when the voice of his intercession is heard.

7. "*The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.*" As when sparks fly from the anvil by blows of a ponderous hammer, so the lightning attends the thundering strokes of Jehovah.

"At first heard solemn o'er the verge of heaven,
The tempest growls; but as it nearer comes,
And rolls its awful burden on the wind,
The lightnings flash a larger curve, and more
The noise astounds: till overhead a sheet
Of livid flame discloses wide; then shuts
And opens wider; shuts and opens still
Expansive, wrapping ether in a blaze."

The thunder seems to divide one flash from another, interposing its deepening roar between the flash which precedes it and the next. That the flashes are truly flames of fire is witnessed by their frequently falling upon houses, churches, etc., and wrapping them in a blaze. How easily could the Lord destroy his rebellious creatures with his hot thunderbolts! how gracious is the hand which spares such great offenders, when to crush them would be so easy!

Flames of fire attend the voice of God in the gospel, illuminating and melting the hearts of men; by these he consumes our lusts and kindles in us a holy flame

of ever-inspiring love and holiness. Pentecost is a suggestive commentary upon this verse.

8. As the storm travelled, it burst over the desert. *"The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh."* God courts not the applause of men—his grandest deeds are wrought where man's inquisitive glance is all unknown. Where no sound of man was heard, the voice of God was terribly distinct. The vast and silent plains trembled with affright. Silence did homage to the Almighty voice. Low lying plains must hear the voice of God as well as lofty mountains; the poor as well as the mighty must acknowledge the glory of the Lord. Solitary and barren places are to be gladdened by the gospel's heavenly sound. What a shaking and overturning power there is in the word of God! even the conservative desert quivers into progress when God decrees it.

9. *"The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve,"* those timid creatures, in deadly fear of the tempest, drop their burdens in an untimely manner. Perhaps a better reading is, "the oaks to tremble," especially as this agrees with the next sentence, *and "discovereth the forests."* The dense shades of the forest are lit up with the lurid glare of the lightning, and even the darkest recesses are for a moment laid bare.

> "The gloomy woods
> Start at the flash, and from their deep recess
> Wide-flaming out, their trembling inmates shake."

Our first parents sought a refuge among the trees, but the voice of the Lord soon found them out, and made their hearts to tremble. There is no concealment from the fire-glance of the Almighty—one flash of his angry eye turns midnight into noon. The gospel has a like revealing power in dark hearts, in a moment it lights up every dark recess of the heart's ungodliness, and bids the soul tremble before the Lord.

"In his temple doth every one speak of his glory." Those who were worshipping in the temple, were led to speak of the greatness of Jehovah as they heard the repeated thunder-claps. The whole world is also a temple for God, and when he rides abroad upon the wings of the wind, all things are vocal in his praise. We too, the redeemed of the Lord, who are living temples for his Spirit, as we see the wonders of his power in creation, and feel them in grace, unite to magnify his name. No tongue may be dumb in God's temple when his glory is the theme. The original appears to have the force of "every one crieth Glory," as though all things were moved by a sense of God's majesty to shout in ecstasy, "Glory, glory." Here is a good precedent for our Methodist friends and for the Gogoniants of the zealous Welsh.

10. *"The Lord sitteth upon the flood."* Flood follows tempest, but Jehovah is ready for the emergency. No deluge can undermine the foundation of his throne. He is calm and unmoved, however much the deep may roar and be troubled: his government rules the most unstable and boisterous of created things. Far out on the wild waste of waters, Jehovah "plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm," *"Yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever."* Jesus has the government upon his shoulders eternally: our interests in the most stormy times are safe in his hands. Satan is not king, but Jehovah Jesus is; therefore let us worship him, and rejoice evermore.

11 The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

Power was displayed in the hurricane whose course this Psalm so grandly pictures; and now, in the cool calm after the storm, that power is promised to be the strength of the chosen. He who wings the unerring bolt, will give to his redeemed the wings of eagles; he who shakes the earth with his voice, will terrify the enemies of his saints, and give his children peace. Why are we weak when we have divine strength to flee to? Why are we troubled when the Lord's own peace is ours? Jesus the mighty God is our peace—what a blessing is this to-day! What a blessing it will be to us in that day of the Lord which will be in darkness and not light to the ungodly!

Dear reader, is not this a noble Psalm to be sung in stormy weather? Can you sing amid the thunder? Will you be able to sing when the last thunders are let loose, and Jesus judges quick and dead? If you are a believer, the last verse is your heritage, and surely that will set you singing.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—In this Psalm, the strength of Jehovah is celebrated; and the exemplification of it is evidently taken from a thunder-storm in Lebanon. The Psalm seems to be addressed to the angels. See Psalm lxxxix. 7. It thus begins:—

> " Render unto Jehovah, ye sons of the mighty,
> Render unto Jehovah glory and strength;
> Render to Jehovah the glory of his name;
> Bow down to Jehovah in the majesty of holiness!"

Immediately follows the description of the thunder-storm, in which it does not seem fanciful to observe the historical progression which is usual on such occasions. The first lines seem to describe only the noise of the thunder, the description growing more intense as the rumbling draws nearer.

> " The voice of Jehovah is above the waters;
> The God of glory thundereth
> Jehovah is louder than many waters,
> The voice of Jehovah in strength,
> The voice of Jehovah in majesty!"

But now the effects become visible; the storm has descended on the mountains and forests:—

> " The voice of Jehovah shivers the cedars,
> Even shivers Jehovah the cedars of Lebanon;
> And makes them to skip, like a calf;
> Lebanon and Sirion, like a young buffalo,
> The voice of Jehovah forketh the lightning's flash!"

From the mountains the storm sweeps down into the plains, where, however, its effects are not so fearful as on the mountains—

> " The voice of Jehovah causeth the desert to tremble—
> The voice of Jehovah causeth to tremble the desert of Kadesh—
> The voice of Jehovah causeth the oaks to tremble,
> And lays bare the forests!
> Therefore, in his temple every one speaks of his glory."

The description of the swollen torrents closes the scene—

> " Jehovah upon the rain-torrent sitteth.
> Yea, sitteth Jehovah a king for ever."

And the moral or application of the whole is—

> " Jehovah to his people will give strength.
> Jehovah will bless his people with peace."

Robert Murray M'Cheyne, 1813—1843.

Whole Psalm.—There is no phenomenon in nature so awful as a thunder-storm, and almost every poet from Homer and Virgil down to Dante and Milton, or rather down to Grahame and Pollok, has described it. In the Bible, too, we have a thunder-storm, the twenty-ninth Psalm—the description of a tempest, which, rising from the Mediterranean, and travelling by Lebanon and along the inland mountains, reaches Jerusalem, and sends the people into the temple-porticoes for refuge; and, besides those touches of terror in which the geographical progress of the tornado is described, it derives a sacred vitality and power from the presence of Jehovah in each successive peal.—*James Hamilton, D.D., in " The Literary Attractions of the Bible,"* 1849.

Whole Psalm.—A glorious Psalm of praise sung during a tempest, the majesty of which shakes universal nature, so much so that the greatness of the power of the Lord is felt by all in heaven and on earth. This Lord is the God of his people, who blesses them with strength and peace. To rightly appreciate the feelings of the bard, one ought to realise an Oriental storm, especially in the mountainous regions of Palestine, which, accompanied by the terrific echoes of the encircling mountains, by torrents of rain-like waterspouts, often scatters terror on man and

beast, destruction on cities and fields. Wilson, the traveller, describes such a tempest in the neighbourhood of Baalbek: "I was overtaken by a storm, as if the floodgates of heaven had burst; it came on in a moment, and raged with a power which suggested the end of the world. Solemn darkness covered the earth: the rain descended in torrents, and sweeping down the mountain side, became by the fearful power of the storm transmuted into thick clouds of fog." Compare also our Lord's parable, taken from life, in Matt. vii. 27.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, in loc.*

Verse 1.—"*Give unto the Lord.*" *Give, give, give.* This showeth how unwilling such are usually to give God his right, or to suffer a word of exhortation to this purpose.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*O ye mighty.*" The Septuagint renders it, *O ye sons of rams!* These bell-wethers should not cast their noses into the air, and carry their crest the higher, because the shepherd hath bestowed a bell upon them, more than upon the rest of the flock.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 1, 2.—There are three *gives* in these two verses:—"*Give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto his name.*" Glory is God's right, and he stands upon his right; and this the sincere Christian knows, and therefore he gives him his right, he gives him the honour and the glory that is due unto his name. But pray do not mistake me. I do not say that such as are really sincere do actually eye the glory of Christ in all their actions. Oh, no! This is a happiness desirable on earth, but shall never be attained till we come to heaven. Bye and base ends and aims will be still ready to creep into the best hearts, but all sincere hearts sigh and groan under them. They complain to God of them, and they cry out for justice, justice upon them; and it is the earnest desire and daily endeavours of their souls to be rid of them; and therefore they shall not be imputed to them, nor keep good things from them. But now take a sincere Christian in his ordinary, usual, and habitual course, and you shall find that his aims and ends in all his actions and undertakings are to glorify God, to exalt God, and to lift up God in the world. If the hypocrite did in good earnest aim at the glory of God in what he does, then the glory of God would swallow up his bye-aims and carnal ends, as Aaron's rod swallowed up the magicians' rods. Exod. vii. 10—12. Look, as the sun puts out the light of the fire, so the glory of God, where it is aimed at, will put out and consume all bye and base ends. This is most certain, that which is a man's great end, that will work out all other ends. He that sets up the glory of God as his chief end, will find that his chief end will by degrees eat out all low and base ends. Look, as Pharaoh's lean kine ate up the fat (Gen. xli. 4), so the glory of God will eat up all those fat and worldly ends that crowd in upon the soul in religious work. Where the glory of God is kept up as a man's greatest end, there all bye and base ends will be kept at an under.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 2.—"*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*" Which yet you cannot do, for his name is above all praise (Psalm cxlviii. 13); but you must aim at it. The Rabbins observe that God's holy name is mentioned eighteen several times in this Psalm; that great men especially may give him the honour of his name, that they may stand in awe and not sin, that they may bring presents to him who ought to be feared, and those also the very best of the best, since he is a great king, and standeth much upon his seniority. Mal. i. 14.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*Worship the Lord.*" If any should ask, Why is the Lord to be worshipped? Why must he have such high honours from those that are high? What doth he in the world that calls for such adoration? David answereth meteorologically as well as theologically, he answers from the clouds (verses 3, 4), "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty;" as if he had said, Although the Lord Jesus Christ will not set up an outward, pompous, political kingdom, such as that of Cyrus, Alexander, etc., yet by the ministry of the gospel he will erect a spiritual kingdom, and gather to himself a church that shall abide for ever, out of all the nations of the earth; for the gospel shall be carried and preached, to not only the people of Israel, the Jews, but to the Gentiles, all the world over, that the minds of men may be enlightened, awakened, and moved with that unheard of doctrine of salvation by Christ, which had been hid from ages and generations.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—" *The voice of the Lord is upon the waters : the God of glory thundereth : the Lord is upon many waters.*" Yes, great God, these torrents of tears which flow down from my eyes announce thy divine presence in my soul. This heart hitherto so dry, so arid, so hard ; this rock which thou hast struck a second time, will not resist thee any longer, for out of it there now gushes healthful waters in abundance. The selfsame voice of God which overturns the mountains, thunders, lightens, and divides the heaven above the sinner, now commands the clouds to pour forth showers of blessings, changing the desert of his soul into a field producing a hundredfold ; that voice I hear.—*J. B. Massillon.*

Verses 3—10.—" *The Lord,*" etc. All things which we commonly say are the effects of the natural powers of matter and laws of motion, are, indeed (if we will speak strictly and properly), the effects of God's acting upon matter continually and at every moment, either immediately by himself, or mediately by some created intelligent being. Consequently there is no such thing as the cause of nature, or the power of nature.—*Samuel Clarke,** 1675—1729.

Verses 3—10.—

The voice of the Lord on the ocean is known,
The God of eternity thundereth abroad ;
The voice of the Lord from the depth of his throne
Is terror and power ;—all nature is awed.

The voice of the Lord through the calm of the wood
Awakens its echoes, strikes light through its caves,
The Lord sitteth King on the turbulent flood,
The winds are his servants, his servants the waves.

James Montgomery, 1771—1854.

Verses 3—11.—

Messiah's voice is in the cloud,
The God of glory thunders loud.
Messiah rides along the floods,
He treads upon the flying clouds.
Messiah's voice is full of power,
His lightnings play when tempests lower.
Messiah's voice the cedars breaks,
While Lebanon's foundation quakes.
Messiah's voice removes the hills,
And all the plains with rivers fills.
The voice of their expiring God,
Shall make the rocks to start abroad ;
Mount Zion and Mount Sirion,
Shall bound along with Lebanon :
The flames of fire shall round him wreathe,
When he shall on the ether breathe.
Messiah's voice shall shake the earth,
And, lo ! the graves shall groan in birth,
Ten thousand thousand living sons
Shall be the issue of their groans.
The peace of God, the gospel sounds ;
The peace of God, the earth rebounds ;
The gospel everlasting shines
A light from God that ne'er declines.
This is the light Jehovah sends,
To bless the world's remotest ends.

Barclay's Paraphrase.

Verse 4.—" *The voice of the Lord.*" These vehement repetitions resemble a series of thunder-claps ; one seems to hear the dread artillery of heaven firing volley after volley, while peal on peal the echo follows the sound.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—" *The voice of the Lord is powerful.*" I would render unto God the glory due unto his name, for the admirable change which he has wrought in my heart. There was nothing to be found in me but an impious hardness and inveterate disorder. From this helpless state he changed me into a new man and made resplendent the glory of his name and the power of his grace. He alone can work such prodigies. Unbelievers who refuse to acknowledge the hand of God in creation must surely in this case admit, that " this is the finger of God." Yes, great God,

* " The friend and disciple of Newton."

chaos knows not how to resist thee, it hears thy voice obediently, but the obdurate heart repels thee, and thy mighty voice too often calls to it in vain. Thou art not so great and wonderful in creating worlds out of nothing as thou art when thou dost command a rebel heart to arise from its abyss of sin, and to run in the ways of thy commandments. To disperse a chaos of crime and ignorance by the majesty of thy word, to shed light on the direst darkness, and by the Holy Ghost to establish harmonious order where all was confusion, manifests in far greater measure thine omnipotence than the calling forth of heavenly laws and celestial suns from the first chaos.—*J. B. Massillon.*

Verse 4.—O may the evangelical " Boanerges " so cause the glorious sound of the gospel to be heard under the whole heaven, that the world may again be made sensible thereof; before that voice of the Son of Man, which hath so often called sinners to repentance, shall call them to judgment.—*George Horne.*

Verse 4.—Where the word of a king is, there is power, but what imperial voice shall be likened unto the majestic thunder of the Lord?—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—" *The voice of Jehovah.*" Philosophers think not that they have reasoned skilfully enough about inferior causes, unless they separate God very far from his works. It is a diabolical science, however, which fixes our contemplations on the works of nature, and turns them away from God. If any one who wished to know a man, should take no notice of his face, but should fix his eyes only on the points of his nails, his folly might justly be derided. But far greater is the folly of those philosophers, who, out of mediate and proximate causes, weave themselves vails lest they should be compelled to acknowledge the hand of God, which manifestly displays itself in his works.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—" *The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars,*" etc. Like as tempests when they arise, and lightning, quickly and in a trice, hurl down and overturn mountains and the highest trees; even so doth the Lord bring down with a break-neck fall, the proud, haughty, arrogant, and insolent, who set themselves against God, and seek the spoil of those that be quiet and godly.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 5.—" *The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars.*" The ancient expositors remind us that the *breaking* of the *cedar trees* by the wind, is a figure of the laying low of the lofty and proud things of this world, by the rushing mighty wind of the Holy Spirit, given on that day. *Confringit cedros Deus, hoc est humiliat superbos.* (S. Jerome, and so S. Basil.)—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—" *The Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.*"—What a shame is it then that our hard hearts break not, yield not, though thunder-struck with the dreadful menaces of God's mouth!—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—" *Breaketh the cedars of Lebanon:* "—

When high in air the pine ascends,
To every ruder blast it bends.
The palace falls with heavier weight,
When tumbling from its airy height;
And when from heaven the lightning flies.
It blasts the hills that proudest rise.

Horace, translated by Philip Francis, D.D., 1765.

Verse 5.—" *The cedars of Lebanon.*" These mighty trees of God, which for ages have stood the force of the tempest, rearing their ever-green colossal boughs in the region of everlasting snow, are the first objects of the fury of the lightning, which is well known to visit first the highest objects.—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne.*

Verse 6.—" *He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn;* " that is, the Lord by his thundering, powerful voice, first, will make them skip, as frighted with fear; and secondly, as revived with joy. Yet more (verse 7), " *The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire;* " that is, will send and divide to every one as they need (1 Cor. xii. 11), the Holy Spirit, who is compared to and called *fire* (Matt. iii. 11), and who came as with a thunder-storm *of a rushing mighty wind,* and with the appearance of *cloven tongues, like as of fire,* and sat upon each one of the apostles. Acts ii. 2, 3. Nor did this voice of thunder, accompanied with divided flames of fire reach Jerusalem only; for, as it follows (verse 8), " *The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh;* " that is, the Lord by the voice of the gospel shall go forth with power to those Gentiles,

who are like a wilderness, barren of goodness, and unmanured in spirituals, though they dwell in well-governed cities, and are well furnished with morals. It shall go forth also to those Gentiles who inhabit waste wildernesses, and are not so much as reduced to civility. These wildernesses, the thundering voice of the Lord hath shaken heretofore, and doth shake at this day, and will yet further shake, that the fulness of the Gentiles may come in. Many of these wildernesses hath the Lord turned into fruitful fields, and pleasant lands, by the voice of the gospel sounding among them. For in these wildernesses (as it followeth, verse 9), "*The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve;*" that is, they that were as wild, as untaught, and untamed as the *hind*, or any beast in the forest, he brings to the sorrows of their new birth, to repentance and gospel humiliation, and in doing this, "*he* (as the Psalmist goes on), *discovereth the forests;*" that is, opens the hearts of men, which are as thick set and full grown with vanity, pride, hypocrisy, self-love, and self-sufficiency, as also with wantonness and sensuality, as any forest is overgrown with thickets of trees and bushes, which deny all passage through, till cleared away with burning down or cutting up. Such an opening, such a discovery, doth the Lord make in the forests of men's hearts, by the sword and fire, that is, by the word and spirit of the gospel; and when all this is done, the forest becomes a *temple*, and as that verse concludes, "*In his temple doth every one speak of his glory.*" And if the *floods* of ungodliness rise up against this people, whom the thunder and lightning of the gospel have subdued to Christ, and framed into a holy temple, then the Psalmist assureth us (verse 10), "*The Lord sitteth upon the flood,*" that is, 'tis under his power, he ruleth and overruleth it; "*Yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever;*" and (verse 11), "*The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.*" Thus, the Lord "thundereth marvellously" (Job xxxvii. 5), and these are glorious marvels which he thundereth; he converts sinners.

Thus, though I like not their way who are given to allegorise the Scriptures, yet I doubt not but we may make a profitable use of this and many other Scriptures by way of allegory. This being an undeniable truth, which is the ground of it—that the Lord puts forth, as it were, the power of thunder and lightning in the preaching of his Word; these two things are to be marked.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*He maketh them also to skip like a calf.*" That is to say, he hath made the splinters and broken pieces of trees that have been struck with lightning, to fly up into the air, or when they have been shaken by the wind, storms, or by earthquakes.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 6.—The original is—

> "And makes them skip like a calf,
> Lebanon and Sirion, like a young buffalo."

At first sight it might appear that the cedars were still meant, and that Lebanon and Sirion were used by metonymy for the cedars which grew upon them. But, 1. We never hear of cedars growing upon Sirion, or Shenir, or Hermon, for it has all these names; and, 2. There is a parallel passage where this interpretation will hardly answer in Psalm cxiv. Describing the exodus of Israel, it says—

> "The mountains skipped like rams,
> And the little hills like lambs."

The same verb occurs here, the verb which means "to skip, to dance," used in Nahum iii. 2, to signify the jolting of chariots, and also in Joel ii. 5. In both these instances, rough motion, accompanied with noise, seems intended. Now, though this may very well be understood as a highly figurative description, as it undoubtedly is, of the usual effects of a thunder-storm; yet it is interesting to compare it with the following passage of Volney, which describes certain phenomena as frequent in Mount Lebanon, which may give a new meaning to the "*skipping of the mountains:*"—

"When the traveller," says he, "penetrates the interior of these mountains, the ruggedness of the roads, the steepness of the declivities, the depth of the precipices, have at first a terrific effect; but the sagacity of the mules which bear him soon inspires him with confidence, and enables him to examine at his ease the picturesque scenes which succeed one another, so as almost to bewilder him. There, as in the Alps, he sometimes travels whole days to arrive at a spot which was in

sight when he set out. He turns, he descends, he winds round, he climbs; and under the perpetual change of position, one is ready to think that a magical power is varying at every step the beauties of the landscapes. Sometimes villages are seen, ready as it were to slide down the deep declivities, and so disposed that the roofs of the one row of houses serve as a street to the row above. At another time, you see a convent seated on an isolated cone, like Marshaia in the valley of Tigré. Here a rock is pierced by a torrent, forming a natural cascade as at *Nahr-el-Leban;* there another rock assumes the appearance of a natural wall! Often on the sides, ledges of stones, washed down and left by the waters, resemble ruins disposed by art. In some places, the waters meeting with inclined beds, have undermined the intermediate earth, and have formed caverns, as at Nahr-el-Kelb, near Antoura. In other places, they have worn for themselves subterranean channels, through which flow little rivulets during part of the year, as at Mar Hama. Sometimes these picturesque circumstances have become tragical ones. Rocks loosened or thrown off their equilibrium by thaw or earthquake, have been known to precipitate themselves on the adjacent dwellings, and crush the inhabitants. An accident of this kind, about twenty years ago, buried a whole village near Mar Djordos, so as to leave no trace of its existence. More recently, and near the same spot, the soil of a hill planted with mulberry trees and vines detached itself by a sudden thaw, and, sliding over the surface of the rock which it had covered, like a vessel launched from the stocks, established itself entire in the valley below."—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne.*

Verse 7.—"*The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.*" By the power of God, the "*flames of fire*" are "*divided*" and sent abroad from the clouds upon the earth, in the terrible form of lightning, that sharp and glittering sword of the Almighty, which no substance can withstand. The same power of God goeth forth by his word, "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," penetrating, melting, enlightening, and inflaming the hearts of men. Acts ii. 3, Heb. iv. 12.—*George Horne.*

Verse 7.—"*The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.*" The voice of the Lord is here said to *divide the flames;* literally, *to hew out flames,* λατομεῖν φλόγας. The *Sept.* has διακόπτει φλόγα πυρός. In the words of Gesenius, "The voice of Jehovah *cutteth out flames* of fire, *i.e.*, "sendeth out divided flames of fire." This is (as Theodoret has observed) very descriptive of the divine action at Pentecost, sending forth *divided flames,* like "*tela trisulca,*" in the tongues of fire which were divided off from one heavenly source or fountain of flame, and sat upon the heads of the apostles, and which filled them with the fire of holy zeal and love.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 7.—"*Divideth the flames of fire.*" Marg., *cutteth out.* The Hebrew word חָצַב *khatzab* means properly *to cut, to hew, to hew out;* as for example, stones. The allusion here is undoubtedly to lightning; and the image is either that it seems to be cut out, or cut into tongues and streaks—or, more probably, that the *clouds* seem to be cut or hewed, so as to make openings or paths for the lightning. The eye is evidently fixed on the clouds, and on the sudden flash of lightning, as if the clouds had been *cleaved* or *opened* for the passage of it. The idea of the Psalmist is, that the "*voice of the Lord,*" or the thunder, seems to cleave or open the clouds for the flames of fire to play amidst the tempest.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 8.—"*The Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.*" That Kadesh-Naphtali is meant, the geographical position of Lebanon would make us believe, though this is not necessary. And, although Syria is much exposed to earthquakes—as, for example, that of Aleppo, in 1822, which was sensibly felt at Damascus—yet it does not seem necessary to imagine anything farther than the usual effects of a thunder-storm. The *oaks and forests* of verse 9, suit well with the description given of the lower limbs of Lebanon, which abound in "thickets of myrtle, woods of fir, walnut trees, carob tres, and Turkish oaks." And the *rain-torrent* of verse 10 is admirably descriptive of the sudden swell of the thousand streams which flow from Lebanon. According to modern travellers, the number of water-courses descending from Lebanon is immense; and the suddenness of the rise of these streams may be gathered from the contradictions in their accounts. The Nahr-el-Sazib is described by one as "a rivulet, though crossed by a bridge of six arches;" by another it is called "a large river." The Damour (the ancient

Tamyras), which flows immediately from Lebanon, is "a river," says Mandrell, "apt to swell much upon sudden rains; in which case, precipitating itself from the mountains with great rapidity, it has been fatal to many a passenger." He mentions a French gentleman, M. Spon, who, a few years before, in attempting to ford it, was hurried down by the stream, and perished in the sea. This is one instance of very many in the mountains of Lebanon, where the brook, which is usually nearly dry, becomes all at once an impassable torrrent. When Volney looked upon the rivers of Syria in summer, he doubted whether they could be called rivers. But had he ventured to cross them aftr a thunder-storm, his scepticism would no longer have had room or time to exercise itself, and he would have felt the propriety of the Psalmist's painting, where he says—

"Jehovah sitteth on the rain-torrents,
Jehovah sitteth a King for ever."

Robert Murray M'Cheyne.

Verse 8.—"*The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness.*" Great God, I have laboured to escape thee! I sought refuge for my remorse in a retreat where nothing might recall me to my God. Far away from the succours of religion, remote from all the channels which bring to me the waters of grace, apart from all whose reproving witness might restrain me from iniquity; yet even there, Great God, where I believed that I had found an asylum inaccessible to thine eternal mercy, wherein I could sin with impunity, even there, in that wilderness, thy voice arrested me and laid me at thy feet.—*J. B. Massillon.*

Verse 9.—"*The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve.*" With respect to the sense conveyed by the common reading, it may be observed, that hinds bring forth their young with great difficulty and pain, "bowing themselves, bruising their young ones, and casting out their sorrows" (Job xxxix. 4, 6); and it therefore heightens the description given of the terrific character of the thunder-storm, when the thunder which is here called "the voice of God" is represented as causing, through the terror which it inspires, the hinds in their pregnant state prematurely to drop their young; although, according to our ideas of poetical imagery, this may not accord so well with the other images in the passage, nor appear so beautiful and sublime as the image of the oaks trembling at the voice of Jehovah.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 9.—"*The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve.*" The care and tenderness of God towards beasts turns to his praise, as well as the care which he hath of, and the tenderness which he shows to believers. As it doth exceedingly advance the glory of God, that he takes care of wild beasts, so it may exceedingly strengthen the faith of man that he will take care of him. Doth the Lord take care of *hinds?* then certainly he takes care of those that particularly belong to him. There is a special providence of God towards these and such like creaures for the production of their young. He—if I may so speak with reverence—shows his midwifery in helping these savage beasts when their pains come upon them. As the Lord takes man, in an eminent manner, "out of the womb" (Psalm xxii. 9), so in a manner he takes beasts out of the womb too. "The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh;" so we translate it; but the word which we render "*shaketh*" is the same with that in Job xxxix. 2, which signifieth *to bring forth;* and hence, some very learned in the Hebrew tongue do not render as we, "The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness," but "The voice of the Lord maketh the wilderness *to bring forth;* the Lord maketh the wilderness of Kadesh *to bring forth;*" which is not to be understood of the vegetative creatures (that's a truth, the Lord makes the trees of the forest to bring forth both leaves and fruit), but it is meant of animals or living creatures there. And then when he saith, "The voice of the Lord maketh the wilderness to bring forth," the meaning is, the Lord makes the wild beast of the wilderness to bring forth; which seems to be the clear sense of the place by that which followeth; for the Psalmist having said this in general at the eight verse, "*The voice of the Lord maketh the wilderness to bring forth,*" he in the ninth verse gives the special instance of the *hind:* "*The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve.*" It is with great propriety, says one of the ancients, that Jehovah demands, "The birth of the

hinds dost thou guard?" (Job xxxix. 1), for since this animal is always in flight, and with fear and terror always leaping and skipping about, she could never bring her young to maturity without such a special protection. The providence of God, therefore, is equally conspicuous in the preservation of the mother and the fawn; both are the objects of his compassion and tender care; and, consequently, that afflicted man has no reason to charge his Maker with unkindness, who condescends to watch over the goats and the hinds. It seems to be generally admitted, that the hind brings forth her young with great difficulty; and so much appears to be suggested in the verse, "They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows." But if Pliny, and other naturalists are worthy of credit, divine providence has been graciously pleased to provide certain herbs, which greatly facilitate the birth; and by instinct, he directs the hind to feed upon them, when the time of gestation draws towards a close. Whatever truth there may be in this assertion, we know from higher authority, that providence promotes the parturition of the hind, by awakening her fears, and agitating her frame by the rolling thunder:—"*The voice of Jehovah* (a common Hebrew phrase, denoting thunder) *maketh the hinds to calve.*" Nor ought we to wonder, that so timorous a creature as the hind, should be so much affected by that awful atmospheric convulsion, when some of the proudest men that ever existed, have have been known to tremble. Augustus, the Roman Emperor, according to Suetonius, was so terrified when it thundered, that he wrapped a seal-skin round his body, with the view of defending it from the lightning, and concealed himself in some secret corner till the tempest ceased. The tyrant Caligula, who sometimes affected to threaten Jupiter himself, covered his head, or hid himself under a bed; and Horace confesses he was reclaimed from atheism by the terror of thunder and lightning, the effects of which he describes with his usual felicity. (Odes, b. i. 34.)—*George Paxton's "Illustrations of Scripture."*

Verse 9.—"*The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve.*" "*Cervi sunt predicatores,*" says S. Jerome, who bring forth souls to Christ by the gospel which is God's *voice;* and the stripping of the leaves of the forest by the voice of the Lord, represents their work in humbling the strong oaks and lofty cedars of the world by the power of the gospel, and in stripping the souls of the worldly-minded of their manifold disguises (S. Basil). Others apply it to the act of the preachers of God's word, disclosing the dark thickets of divine mysteries in the holy Scriptures by evangelical light set forth by the Holy Ghost (S. Jerome).—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—"*The voice of Jehovah makes havoc of the oaks, and strippeth bare the forests.*"—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 9.—"*In his temple.*"—Some conceive that this Psalm was appointed by David to be sung in the temple in time of thunder, which is not unlikely. There are writers who make God to be the nominative case to the verb speaketh; and render it thus, *in his temple doth he utter all his glory.* As much as to say, much of his glory God uttereth in his thunder, but all in his temple, for whatsoever there he speaketh with his mouth he fulfilleth it with his hand.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—David speaking in the former part of the Psalm of the effects of natural thunder only, towards the close of the Psalm applieth it to the Word of God, while he saith, "*And in his temple doth every one speak of his glory;*" that is, the word and ordinances of God, ministered in his church or temple, will put every one to acknowledge and speak of the glorious power of God, even much more than the mighty thunder which soundeth in our ears, or the subtle lightning which flasheth in our eyes. There is far more royal power in the thunder of the Word, than in the word of thunder. This terrifieth only to conviction, but that terrifieth to salvation; for after God speaks terror there in his threatenings, he speaks comfort in the promises; and when he hath affrighted us with a sense of our sins and of his wrath due to us for our sins, as with an horrible tempest, he presently refresheth us with the gentle gales of revealed grace, and with the pleasant amiable sunshine of his favour by Jesus Christ.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace;*" *i.e.*, he is in war their strength, and their felicity in peace; in war he is the Author of all that power wherewith they are enabled to oppose and overcome potent enemies; and in peace, he is their truly felicitating good, and makes them, by his own vouchsafed presence, a truly blessed people.—*John Howe.*

Verse 11.—" *The Lord will bless his people with peace.*" Though some precious souls that have closed with Christ, and embraced the gospel, be not at present brought to rest in their own consciences, but continue for awhile under some dissatisfaction and trouble in their own spirits, yet even then they have *peace* of conscience in a threefold respect; *in pretio, in promisso, in semine.* First, every true believer hath peace of conscience *in pretio;* the gospel puts that price into his hand, which will assuredly purchase it, and that is the blood of Christ. We say that is gold which is worth gold, which we may anywhere exchange for gold; such is the blood of Christ; it is peace of conscience, because the soul that hath this may exchange it for this. God himself cannot deny the poor creature that prays on these terms: Lord, give me peace of conscience; here is Christ's blood, the price of it. That which could pay the debt, surely can procure the receipt. Peace of conscience is but a discharge under God's hand, that the debt due to divine justice is fully paid. The blood of Christ hath done that the greater for the believer, it shall therefore do this the less. If there were such a rare potion that did infallibly procure health to every one that takes it, we might safely say, as soon as the sick man hath drunk it down, that he hath drunk his health, it is in him, though at present he doth not feel himself to have it: in time it will appear. Secondly, *In promisso.* Every true believer hath peace of conscience in the promise, and that we count as good as ready money in the purse, which we have sure bond for. " *The Lord will bless his people with peace.*" He is resolved on it, and then who shall hinder it? It is worth your reading the whole Psalm, to see what weight the Lord gives to this sweet promise, for the encouragement of our faith in expecting the performance thereof. Nothing more hard to enter into the heart of a poor creature (when all is in an uproar in his bosom, and his conscience threatening nothing but fire and sword, wrath, vengeance, from God for his sins), than thoughts or hopes of peace and comfort. Now the Psalm is spent in showing what great things God can do, and that with no more trouble to himself than a word speaking, " *The voice of the Lord is full of majesty*" (verse 4), " It breaks the cedars, it divides the flames, it shakes the wilderness, it makes the hinds to calve." This God that doth all this, promiseth *to bless his people with peace*, outward and inward; for without this inward peace, though he might give them peace, yet could he never bless them with peace as he there undertakes. A sad peace, were it not, to have quiet streets, but cutting of throats in our houses? yet infinitely more sad to have peace both in our streets and houses, but war and blood in our guilty consciences. What peace can a poor creature taste or relish, while the sword of God's wrath lies at the throat of conscience? not peace with God himself. Therefore Christ purchased peace of pardon, to obtain peace of conscience for his pardoned ones, and accordingly hath bequeathed it in the promise to them, " Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." John xiv. 27. Where you see he is both the testator to leave, and the executor of his own will, to give out with his own hands what his love hath left believers; so that there is no fear but his will shall be performed to the full, seeing himself lives to see it done. Thirdly, *In semine.* Every believer hath this inward peace in the seed. " Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Psalm xcvii. 11. Where sown, but in the believer's own bosom, when principles of grace and holiness were cast into it by the Spirit of God? Hence it is called " the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Heb. xii. 11. It shoots as naturally from holiness, as any fruit in its kind doth from the seed proper to it. It is, indeed, most true, that the seed runs and ripens into this fruit sooner in some than it doth in others. This spiritual harvest comes not alike soon to all, no more than the other that is outward doth; but here is the comfort—whoever hath a seed-time of grace pass over his soul, shall have his harvest-time also of joy.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 11.—" *Peace.*" There is a threefold " peace," *externa, interna, æterna;* temporal, spiritual, celestial peace. There is outward peace, the *blessing;* inward peace, the *grace;* and everlasting peace, of *glory.* And as in a stately palace there is a lodge or court that leads into the inmost goodly rooms, so external peace is the entrance or introduction to the inward lodgings of the sweet peace of conscience and of that eternal rest in which our peace in heaven shall be happy, inasmuch as external peace affords us many accommodations and helps to the gaining and obtaining both the one and the other.—*Ephraim Udall,* 1642.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The duty of ascribing our strength and the honour of it to God; the penalty of neglecting to do so; the pleasure of so doing.

Verse 1.—National glorying should be in the Lord.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—Royal dues, the royal treasury, loyal subjects paying their dues, the king receiving them. Smugglers and preventive men.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—Inspired ritualism. What to do? "*Worship.*" Whom? "*The Lord.*" How? "*In the beauty of holiness.*" Absence of all allusions to place, time, order, words, form, vestments, etc.

Verse 3.—God's voice heard in trouble and above trouble, or in great personal and national calamities.

Verse 4.—Power and majesty of the gospel. Illustrated by succeeding verses.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—"The majestic voice." See Spurgeon's Sermons, No. 87.

Verse 5.—The breaking power of the gospel.

Verse 6.—The unsettling power of the gospel.

Verse 7.—The fire which goes with the word. This is a wide subject.

Verse 8.—The arousing and alarming of godless places by the preaching of the word.

Verse 9.—The revealing power of the word of God in the secrets of man's heart, and its regenerating force.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—I. Matchless temple. II. Unanimous worship. III. Forcible motive. IV. General enthusiasm, "*glory.*" See Comment.

Verse 10.—The ever-present and undisturbed government of God.

Verse 11.—The twin blessings from the same source; their connection, and their consummation.

Verse 11.—The two wills, the two blessings, the one people, the one Lord.

PSALM XXX.

TITLE.—**A Psalm and Song at the Dedication of the House of David ; *or rather,* A Psalm ; a Song of Dedication for the House. By David.** *A song of faith since the house of Jehovah, here intended, David never lived to see. A Psalm of praise, since a sore judgment had been stayed, and a great sin forgiven. From our English version it would appear that this Psalm was intended to be sung at the building of that house of cedar which David erected for himself, when he no longer had to hide himself in the Cave of Adullam, but had become a great king. If this had been the meaning, it would have been well to observe that it is right for the believer when removing, to dedicate his new abode to God. We should call together our Christian friends, and show that where we dwell, God dwells, and where we have a tent, God has an altar. But as the song refers to the temple, for which it was David's joy to lay by in store, and for the site of which he purchased in his later days the floor of Ornan, we must content ourselves with remarking the holy faith which foresaw the fulfilment of the promise made to him concerning Solomon. Faith can sing—*

> **" Glory to thee for all the grace**
> **I have not tasted yet."**

Throughout this Psalm there are indications that David had been greatly afflicted both personally and relatively, after having, in his presumption, fancied himself secure. When God's children prosper one way, they are generally tried another, for few of us can bear unmingled prosperity. Even the joys of hope need to be mixed with the pains of experience, and the more surely so when comfort breeds carnal security and self-confidence. Nevertheless, pardon soon followed repentance, and God's mercy was glorified. The Psalm is a song, and not a complaint. Let it be read in the light of the last days of David, when he had numbered the people, and God had chastened him, and then in mercy had bidden the angel sheathe his sword. On the floor of Ornan, the poet received the inspiration which glows in this delightful ode. It is the Psalm of the numbering of the people, and of the dedication temple which commemorated the staying of the plague.

DIVISION.—*In verses* 1, 2, *and* 3, *David extols the Lord for delivering him. Verses* 4 *and* 5 *he invites the saints to unite with him in celebrating divine compassion. In* 6 *and* 7 *he confesses the fault for which he was chastened,* 8—10 *repeats the supplication which he offered, and concludes with commemorating his deliverance and vowing eternal praise.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL extol thee, O LORD ; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave : thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit.

1. *" I will extol thee."* I will have high and honourable conceptions of thee, and give them utterance in my best music. Others may forget thee, murmur at thee, despise thee, blaspheme thee, but " I will extol thee," for I have been favoured above all others. I will extol thy name, thy character, thine attributes, thy mercy to me, thy great forbearance to my people ; but, especially will I speak well of thyself ; " I will extol thee," O Jehovah, this shall be my cheerful and constant employ. *" For thou hast lifted me up."* Here is an antithesis, " I will exalt thee, for thou hast exalted me." I would render according to the benefit received. The Psalmist's praise was reasonable. He had a reason to give for the praise that was in his heart. He had been drawn up like a prisoner from a dungeon, like Joseph out of the pit, and therefore he loved his deliverer. Grace has uplifted us from the pit of hell, from the ditch of sin, from the Slough of Despond, from the bed of sickness, from the bondage of doubts and fears : have we no song to offer for all this ? How high has our Lord lifted us ? Lifted us up into the children's place, to be adopted into the family ; lifted us up into union with Christ, " to sit together

with him in heavenly places." Lift high the name of our God, for he has lifted us above the stars. "*And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.*" This was the judgment which David most feared out of the three evils; he said, let me fall into the hand of the Lord, and not into the hand of man. Terrible indeed were our lot if we were delivered over to the will of our enemies. Blessed be the Lord, we have been preserved from so dire a fate. The devil and all our spiritual enemies have not been permitted to rejoice over us; for we have been saved from the fowler's snare. Our evil companions, who prophesied that we should go back to our old sins, are disappointed. Those who watched for our halting, and would fain say, "Aha! Aha! So would we have it!" have watched in vain until now. O happy they whom the Lord keeps so consistent in character that the lynx eyes of the world can see no real fault in them. Is this our case? let us ascribe all the glory to him who has sustained us in our integrity.

2. "*O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.*" David sent up prayers for himself and for his people when visited with the pestilence. He went at once to head-quarters, and not roundabout to fallible means. God is the best physician, even for our bodily infirmities. We do very wickedly and foolishly when we forget God. It was a sin in Asa that he trusted to physicians and not to God. If we must have a physician, let it be so, but still let us go to our God first of all; and, above all, remember that there can be no power to heal in medicine of itself; the healing energy must flow from the divine hand. If our watch is out of order, we take it to the watchmaker; if body or soul be in an evil plight, let us resort to him who created them, and has unfailing skill to put them in right condition. As for our spiritual diseases, nothing can heal these evils but the touch of the Lord Christ: if we do but touch the hem of his garment, we shall be made whole, while if we embrace all other physicians in our arms, they can do us no service. "*O Lord my God.*" Observe the covenant name which faith uses—"*my God.*" Thrice happy is he who can claim the Lord himself to be his portion. Note how David's faith ascends the scale; he sang "O Lord" in the first verse, but it is "O Lord my God," in the second. Heavenly heart-music is an ascending thing, like the pillars of smoke which rose from the altar of incense. "*I cried unto thee.*" I could hardly pray, but I cried; I poured out my soul as a little child pours out its desires. I cried to my God: I knew to whom to cry; I did not cry to my friends, or to any arm of flesh. Hence the sure and satisfactory result—"*Thou hast healed me.*" I know it. I am sure of it. I have the evidence of spiritual health within me now: glory be to thy name! Every humble suppliant with God who seeks release from the disease of sin, shall speed as well as the Psalmist did, but those who will not so much as seek a cure, need not wonder if their wounds putrefy and their soul dies.

3. "*O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave.*" Mark, it is not, "I hope so;" but it is, "*Thou hast; thou hast; thou hast*"—three times over. David is quite sure, beyond a doubt, that God has done great things for him, whereof he is exceeding glad. He had descended to the brink of the sepulchre, and yet was restored to tell of the forbearance of God; nor was this all, he owned that nothing but grace had kept him from the lowest hell, and this made him doubly thankful. To be spared from the grave is much; to be delivered from the pit is more; hence there is growing cause for praise, since both deliverances are alone traceable to the glorious right hand of the Lord, who is the only preserver of life, and the only Redeemer of our souls from hell.

4 Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

5 For his anger *endureth* but a moment; in his favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning.

4. "*Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his.*" "Join my song; assist me to express my gratitude." He felt that he could not praise God enough himself, and therefore he would enlist the hearts of others. "*Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his.*" David would not fill his choir with reprobates, but with sanctified persons, who could sing from their hearts. He calls to you, ye people of God, because ye are *saints:* and if sinners are wickedly silent, let your holiness constrain *you* to sing. You are *his* saints—chosen, blood-bought, called, and set apart for God; sanctified on purpose that you should offer the daily sacrifice of praise. Abound

ye in this heavenly duty. "*Sing unto the Lord.*" It is a pleasing exercise; it is a profitable engagement. Do not need to be stirred up so often to so pleasant a service. "*And give thanks.*" Let your songs be grateful songs, in which the Lord's mercies shall live again in joyful remembrance. The very remembrance of the past should tune our harps, even if present joys be lacking. "*At the remembrance of his holiness.*" Holiness is an attribute which inspires the deepest awe, and demands a reverent mind; but still give thanks at the remembrance of it. "Holy, holy, holy!" is the song of seraphim and cherubim; let us join it not dolefully, as though we trembled at the holiness of God, but cheerfully, as humbly rejoicing in it.

5. "*For his anger endureth but a moment.*" David here alludes to those dispensations of God's providence which are the chastisement ordered in his paternal government towards his erring children, such as the plague which fell upon Jerusalem for David's sins; these are but short judgments, and they are removed as soon as real penitence sues for pardon and presents the great and acceptable sacrifice. What a mercy is this, for if the Lord's wrath smoked for a long season, flesh would utterly fail before him. God puts up his rod with great readiness as soon as its work is done; he is slow *to* anger and swift to end it. If his temporary and fatherly anger be so severe that it had need be short, what must be the terror of eternal wrath exercised by the Judge towards his adversaries? "*In his favour is life.*" As soon as the Lord looked favourably upon David, the city lived, and the king's heart lived too. We die like withered flowers when the Lord frowns, but his sweet smile revives us as the dews refresh the fields. His favour not only sweetens and cheers life, but it is life itself, the very essence of life. Who would know life, let him seek the favour of the Lord. "*Weeping may endure for a night;*" but nights are not for ever. Even in the dreary winter the day-star lights his lamp. It seems fit that in our nights the dews of grief should fall. When the Bridegroom's absence makes it dark within, it is meet that the widowed soul should pine for a renewed sight of the Well-beloved. "*But joy cometh in the morning.*" When the Sun of Righteousness comes, we wipe our eyes, and joy chases out intruding sorrow. Who would not be joyful that knows Jesus? The first beams of the morning bring us comfort when Jesus is the day-dawn, and all believers know it to be so. Mourning only lasts till morning: when the night is gone the gloom shall vanish. This is adduced as a reason for saintly singing, and forcible reason it is; short nights and merry days call for the psaltery and harp.

6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled.

6. "*In my prosperity.*" When all his foes were quiet, and his rebellious son dead and buried, then was the time of peril. Many a vessel founders in a calm. No temptation is so bad as tranquility. "*I said, I shall never be moved.*" Ah! David, you said more than was wise to say, or even to think, for God has founded the world upon the floods, to show us what a poor, mutable, movable, inconstant world it is. Unhappy he who builds upon it! He builds himself a dungeon for his hopes. Instead of conceiving that we shall never be moved, we ought to remember that we shall very soon be moved altogether. Nothing is abiding beneath the moon. Because I happen to be prosperous to-day, I must not fancy that I shall be in my high estate to-morrow. As in a wheel, the uppermost spokes descend to the bottom in due course, so is it with mortal conditions. There is a constant revolution; many who are in the dust to-day shall be highly elevated to-morrow; while those who are now aloft shall soon grind the earth. Prosperity had evidently turned the Psalmist's head, or he would not have been so self-confident. He stood by grace, and yet forgot himself, and so met with a fall. Reader, is there not much of the same proud stuff in all our hearts? let us beware lest the fumes of intoxicating success get into our brains and make fools of us also.

7. "*Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong.*" He ascribed his prosperity to the Lord's favour—so far good, it is well to own the hand of the Lord in all our stability and wealth. But observe that the good in a good man is not unmingled good, for this was alloyed with carnal security. His state he compares to a mountain, a molehill would have been nearer—we never think

too little of ourselves. He boasted that his mountain stood strong, and yet he had before, in Psalm xxix., spoken of Sirion and Lebanon as moving like young unicorns. Was David's state more firm than Lebanon? Ah, vain conceit, too common to us all! How soon the bubble bursts when God's people get conceit into their heads, and fancy that they are to enjoy immutability beneath the stars, and constancy upon this whirling orb. How touchingly and teachingly God corrected his servant's mistake: "*Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*" There was no need to come to blows, a hidden face was enough. This proves, first, that David was a genuine saint, for no hiding of God's face on earth would trouble a sinner; and, secondly, that the joy of the saint is dependent upon the presence of his Lord. No mountain, however firm, can yield us rest when our communion with God is broken, and his face is concealed. However, in such a case, it is well to be troubled. The next best thing to basking in the light of God's countenance, is to be thoroughly unhappy when that bliss is denied us.

"Lord, let me weep for nought for sin!
And after none but thee!
And then I would—O that I might,
A constant weeper be!"

8 I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.

9 What profit *is there* in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

8. "*I cried to thee, O Lord.*" Prayer is the unfailing resource of God's people. If they are driven to their wits' end, they may still go to the mercy-seat. When an earthquake makes our mountain tremble, the throne of grace still stands firm, and we may come to it. Let us never forget to pray, and let us never doubt the success of prayer. The hand which wounds can heal: let us turn to him who smites us, and he will be entreated of us. Prayer is better solace than Cain's building a city, or Saul's seeking for music. Mirth and carnal amusements are a sorry prescription for a mind distracted and despairing: prayer will succeed where all else fails.

9. In this verse we learn the form and method of David's prayer. It was an argument with God, an urging of reasons, a pleading of his cause. It was not a statement of doctrinal opinions, nor a narration of experience, much less a sly hit at other people under pretence of praying to God, although all these things and worse have been substituted for holy supplication at certain prayer-meetings. He wrestled with the angel of the covenant with vehement pleadings, and therefore he prevailed. Head and heart, judgment and affections, memory and intellect were all at work to spread the case aright before the Lord of love. "*What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?*" Wilt thou not lose a songster from thy choir, and one who loves to magnify thee? "*Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?*" Will there not be one witness the less to thy faithfulness and veracity? Spare, then, thy poor unworthy one for thine own name sake!

10. "*Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me.*" A short and comprehensive petition, available at all seasons, let us use it full often. It is the publican's prayer; be it ours. If God hears prayer, it is a great act of mercy; our petitions do not merit a reply. "*Lord, be thou my helper.*" Another compact, expressive, ever fitting prayer. It is suitable to hundreds of the cases of the Lord's people; it is well becoming in the minister when he is going to preach, to the sufferer upon the bed of pain, to the toiler in the field of service, to the believer under temptation, to the man of God under adversity; when God helps, difficulties vanish. He is the help of his people, a very present help in trouble. The two brief petitions of this verse are commended as ejaculations to believers full of business, denied to those longer seasons of devotion which are the rare privilege of those whose days are spent in retirement.

11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.

12 To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

11. Observe the contrast, God takes away the mourning of his people; and what does he give them instead of it? Quiet and peace? Ay, and a great deal more than that. "*Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing.*" He makes their hearts to dance at the sound of his name. He takes off their sackcloth. That is good. What a delight to be rid of the habiliments of woe! But what then? He clothes us. And how? With some common dress? Nay, but with that royal vestment which is the array of glorified spirits in heaven. "*Thou hast girded me with gladness.*" This is better than to wear garments of silk or cloth of gold, bedight with embroidery and bespangled with gems. Many a poor man wears this heavenly apparel wrapped around his heart, though fustian and corduroy are his only outward garb; and such a man needs not envy the emperor in all his pomp. Glory be to thee, O God, if, by a sense of full forgiveness and present justification, thou hast enriched my spiritual nature, and filled me with all the fulness of God.

12. "*To the end*"—namely, with this view and intent—"*that my glory*"—that is, my tongue or my soul—"*may sing praise to thee, and not be silent.*" It would be a shameful crime, if, after receiving God's mercies, we should forget to praise him. God would not have our tongues lie idle while so many themes for gratitude are spread on every hand. He would have no dumb children in the house. They are all to sing in heaven, and therefore they should all sing on earth. Let us sing with the poet:—

"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise:
Oh for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies."

"*O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.*"

"I'll praise him in life; I'll praise him in death;
I'll praise him as long as he lendeth me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow.
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*A Psalm and Song,*" etc. It is thought that when these two words of *Psalm and Song* are both put in the title of a Psalm, it is meant that the sound of instruments was to be joined with the voice when they were sung in the Temple, and that the voice went *before* when it is said *Song and Psalm*, and did come *after* when it is said *Psalm and Song.*—*John Diodati.*

Title.—*At the dedication of it.* חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת, The original word חָנַךְ signifies *initiari*, *ἐγκαινίζειν*, *rei novæ primam usurpationem.* So Cocceius, to initiate, or the first use that is made of anything. It was common, when any person had finished a house and entered into it, to celebrate it with great rejoicing, and keep a festival, to which his friends were invited, and to perform some religious ceremonies, to secure the protection of heaven. Thus, when the second temple was finished, the Priests and Levites, and the rest of the captivity, kept the dedication of the house of God with joy, and offered numerous sacrifices. Ezra vi. 16. We read in the New Testament (John x. 22), of *the feast of the dedication* appointed by Judas Maccabæus, in memory of the purification and restoration of the temple of Jerusalem, after it had been defiled and almost laid in ruins by Antiochus Epiphanes; and celebrated annually, to the time of its destruction by Titus, by solemn sacrifices, music, songs, and hymns, to the praises of God, and feasts, and everything that could give the people pleasure, for eight days successively. Josephus Ant. i. xii. § 7. Judas ordained, that "the days of the dedication should be kept in their season, from year to year, with mirth and gladness." 1 Mac. iv. 59. And that this was customary, even amongst private persons, to keep a kind of religious festival, upon their first entrance into a new house, appears from the order of God (Deut. xx. 5), that no person who had built a new house should be forced into the army, "if he

had not dedicated the house," *i.e.*, taken possession of it according to the usual ceremonies practised on such occasions; a custom this that hath more or less prevailed amongst all nations. Thus the Romans dedicated their temples, their theatres, their statues, and their palaces and houses. Suet. Octav. c. xliii. § 13; c. xxxi. § 9.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Title.—The present Psalm is the only one that is called a *shir*, or song, in the first book of the Psalms, *i.e.*, Psalms i.—xli. The word שיר *shir* is found in the titles of Psalms xlv., xlvi., xlviii., lxv.—lxviii., lxxv., lxxxiii., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., xcii., cviii., cxx.—cxxxiv. Psalm xviii. is entitled, "*a shirah* (or *song*) of deliverance from his enemies," and the present *shir* may be coupled with it.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Title.—As by offering the first fruits to God they acknowledged that they received the increase of the whole year from him, in like manner, by consecrating their houses to God, they declared that they were God's tenants, confessing that they were strangers, and that it was he who lodged, and gave them a habitation there. If a levy for war, therefore, took place, this was a just cause of exemption, when any one alleged that he had not yet dedicated his house. Besides, they were at the same time admonished by this ceremony, that every one enjoyed his house aright and regularly, only when he so regulated it that it was as it were a sanctuary of God, and that true piety and the pure worship of God reigned in it. The types of the law have now ceased, but we must still keep to the doctrine of Paul, that whatsoever things God appoints for our use are still "sanctified by the word of God and prayer." 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.—*John Calvin.*

Whole Psalm.—Calmet supposes it to have been made by David on the dedication of the place which he built on the threshing-floor of Araunah, after the grievous *plague* which had so nearly desolated the kingdom. 2 Sam. xxiv. 25; 1 Chron. xxi. 26. All the parts of the Psalm agree to this: and they agree to this so well, and to no other hypothesis, that I feel myself justified in modelling the comment on this principle alone.—*Adam Clarke.*

Whole Psalm.—In the following verses I have endeavoured to give the spirit of the Psalm, and to preserve the frequent antitheses.

I will exalt thee, Lord of hosts,
For thou'st exalted me;
Since thou hast silenced Satan's boasts,
I'll therefore boast in thee.

My sins had brought me near the grave,
The grave of black despair;
I look'd but there was none to save,
Till I look'd up in prayer.

In answer to my piteous cries,
From hell's dark brink I'm brought:
My Jesus saw me from the skies,
And swift salvation wrought.

All through the night I wept full sore,
But morning brought relief;
That hand, which broke my bones before,
Then broke my bonds of grief.

My mourning he to dancing turns,
For sackcloth joy he gives,
A moment, Lord, thine anger burns,
But long thy favour lives.

Sing with me then, ye favoured men,
Who long have known his grace;
With thanks recall the seasons when
Ye also sought his face.

C. H. S.

Verse 1.—"*I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up.*" I will lift thee up, for thou hast lifted me up.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—"*Thou hast lifted me up.*" דִּלִּיתָנִי. The verb is used, in its original meaning, to denote the *reciprocating motion of the buckets of a well,* one descending as the other rises, and *vice versa;* and is here applied with admirable propriety, to point out the various reciprocations and changes of David's fortunes, as described in this Psalm, as to prosperity and adversity; and particularly that gracious reverse of his afflicted condition which he now celebrates, God having raised him up to great honour and prosperity; for having built his palace, he "perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake."—2 Sam. v. 12.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast healed me.*" רְפָאתָנִי. The verb is used, either for the healing of bodily disorders (Psalm ciii. 3), or to denote the happy alteration of any person's affairs, either in private or public life, by the removal of any kind of distress, personal or national. Psalm cvii. 20; Isaiah xix. 22. So in the place before us: "*Thou hast healed me,*" means, Thou hast brought me out of my distresses, hast restored my health, and rendered me safe and prosperous. Under Saul, he was frequently in the most imminent danger of his life, out of which God wonderfully brought him, which he strongly expresses by saying, "*Thou hast brought up my soul from* Hades: *thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.*" I thought myself lost, and that nothing could prevent my destruction, and can scarce help looking on the deliverance thou hast vouchsafed me otherwise than as a kind of restoration from the dead: *Thou hast revived me,* or recovered me to life, *from amongst those who go down to the pit;* according to the literal rendering of the latter clause.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 4.—"*Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his.*" If it were to sing of another thing, I should require the whole quire of God's creatures to join in the singing; but now that it is to sing of God's "*holiness,*" what should profane voices do in the concert? None but "*saints*" are fit to sing of "holiness," and specially of God's holiness; but most specially with songs of holiness.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—"*Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his.*" As God requires outward and inward worship, so a spiritual frame for inward worship may be forwarded by the outward composure. Gazing drowsiness hinders the activity of the soul, but the contrary temper furthers and helps it. Singing calls up the soul into such a posture, and doth, as it were, awaken it: it is a lively rousing up of the heart. Singing God's praise is a work of the most meditation of any we perform in public. It keeps the heart longest upon the thing spoken. Prayer and hearing pass quick from one sentence to another; this sticks long upon it. Meditation must follow after hearing the word, and praying with the minister—for new sentences, still succeeding, give not liberty, in the instant, well to muse and consider upon what is spoken: but in this you pray and meditate. God hath so ordered this duty, that, while we are employed in it, we feed and chew the cud together. "Higgaion," or "Meditation," is set upon some passages of the Psalms, as Psalm ix. 16. The same may be writ up the whole duty, and all parts of it; namely, "Meditation." Set before you one in the posture to sing to the best advantage: eyes lifted to heaven, denote his desire that his heart may be there too; he hath before him a line or verse of prayer, mourning, praise, mention of God's works; how fairly now may his heart spread itself in meditation on the thing, while he is singing it over! Our singing is measured in deliberate time not more for music than meditation. He that seeks not, finds not, this advantage in singing Psalms—hath not yet learned what it means.—*John Lightfoot,* 1602—1675.

Verse 5.—"*His anger.*" Seeing God is often angry with his own servants, what cause have those of you who fear him, to bless him that he is not angry with you, and that you do not feel his displeasure! He sets up others as his mark against which he shoots his arrows; you hear others groaning for his departure, and yet your hearts are not saddened as theirs are; your eyes can look up towards heaven with hope, whilst theirs are clouded with a veil of sorrow; he speaks roughly to them, but comfortable words to you; he seems to set himself against them as his enemies, whilst he deals with you as a loving friend; you see a reviving smile in his face and they can discern nothing there but one continued and dreadful frown. O admire, and for ever wonder at the sovereign, distinguishing grace of God. Are you that are at ease better than many of his people that are now thrown

into a fiery furnace? Have you less dross than they? Have they sinned, think you, at a higher rate than you have ever done? He is angry with them for their lukewarmness, for their backsliding; and have your hearts always burned with love? Have your feet always kept his way and not declined? Have you never wandered? Have you never turned aside to the right hand or to the left? Surely you have; and therefore, what a mercy is it, that he is not angry with you as well as with them. . . . . Do not presume for all this; for though he is not angry yet with you, he may be so. This was the fault of David: "*In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved;*" but it immediately follows, "*Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*" The sun shines now upon you, the candle of the Lord does refresh your tabernacle; but you may meet with many storms, and clouds, and darkness before you come to your journey's end. The disciples were once greatly pleased with the glory of the transfiguration; and during the delightful interview between Christ, and Moses, and Elias, they thought themselves as in heaven; but a cloud came and obscured the preceding glory, and then the poor men were afraid. It is true the anger of God *endureth but for a moment;* but even that moment is very sad, and terrible beyond expression. Weeping endureth for "*a night;*" but it may be a very bitter and doleful night for all this. It is a night like that of the Egyptians: when they arose they saw all their first-born slain, and there was a hideous, universal cry and mourning throughout all the land. So this night of the anger of the Lord may destroy all our comforts, and make the first-born of our strength, the confidence and pleasure of our hopes to give up the ghost.—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verse 5.—"*In his favour is life.*"—Let us see wherein the weight of the blessing and cursing of sheep and goats doth lie. It is not the gift of eternal life that is our happiness in heaven; but as David saith, "*in his favour is life.*" If a damned soul should be admitted to the fruition of all the pleasures of eternal life without the favour of God, heaven would be hell to him. It is not the dark and horrid house of woe that maketh a soul miserable in hell, but God's displeasure, *ite maledicti.* If an elect soul should be cast thither, and retain the favour of God, hell would be an heaven to him, and his joy could not all the devils of hell take from him; his night would be turned into day.—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 5.—As an apprentice holds out in hard labour and (it may be) bad usage for seven years together or more, and in all that time is serviceable to his master without any murmuring or repining, because he sees that the time wears away, and that his bondage will not last always, but he shall be set at large and made a freeman in the conclusion: thus should everyone that groaneth under the burthen of any cross or affliction whatsoever, bridle his affections, possess his soul in patience, and cease from all murmuring and repining whatsoever, considering well with himself, that the rod of the wicked shall not always rest upon the lot of the righteous; that *weeping may abide at evening, but joy cometh in the morning;* and that troubles will have an end, and not continue for ever.—*John Spencer.*

Verse 5.—How often have we experienced the literal truth of that verse, "*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!*" How heavily does any trouble weigh on us *at night!* Our wearied nerve and brain seem unable to bear up under the pressure. Our pulse throbs, and the fevered restless body refuses to help in the work of endurance. Miserable and helpless we feel; and passionately weep under the force of the unresisted attack. At last sleep comes. Trouble, temptation, whatever it be that strives to overcome us, takes the one step too far which overleaps its mark, and by sheer force drives our poor humanity beyond the present reach of further trial. After such a night of struggle, and the heavy sleep of exhaustion, we awake with a vague sense of trouble. Our thoughts gather, and we *wonder* over our own violence, as the memory of it returns upon us. What was it that seemed so hopeless—so dark? Why were we so helpless and despairing? Things do not look so *now*—sad indeed still, but endurable—hard, but no longer impossible—bad enough perhaps, but we despair no more. "*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*" And so, when life with its struggles and toils and sins, bringing us perpetual conflict, ends at last in the fierce struggle of *death*, then God "giveth his beloved sleep." They sleep in Jesus, and awake to the joy of a morning which shall know no wane—the morning of joy. The Sun of Righteousness is beaming on them. Light is now on all their ways. And they can only wonder when they recall the despair and darkness, and toil, and violence of their earthly life, and say, as they have often said on earth, "Weeping

has endured only for *the night*, and now it is morning, and joy has come!" And our sorrows, our doubts, our difficulties, our long looks forward, with despair of enduring strength for so long a night of trial—Where are they? Shall we not feel as is so beautifully described in the words of one of our hymns—

> "When in our Father's happy land
> We meet our own once more,
> Then we shall scarcely understand
> Why we have wept before."
>
> *Mary B. M. Duncan*, 1825—1865.

Verse 5.—"*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*" Their mourning shall last but till morning. God will turn their winter's night into a summer's day, their sighing into singing, their grief into gladness, their mourning into music, their bitter into sweet, their wilderness into a paradise. The life of a Christian is filled up with interchanges of sickness and health, weakness and strength, want and wealth, disgrace and honour, crosses, and comforts, miseries and mercies, joys and sorrows, mirth and mourning; all honey would harm us, all wormwood would undo us; a composition of both is the best way in the world to keep our souls in a healthy constitution. It is best and most for the health of the soul that the south wind of mercy, and the north wind of adversity, do both blow upon it; and though every wind that blows shall blow good to the saints, yet certainly their sins die most, and their graces thrive best, when they are under the drying, nipping north wind of calamity, as well as under the warm, cherishing south wind of mercy and prosperity.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 5.—"*Joy cometh in the morning.*" The godly man's joy "*cometh in the morning,*" when the wicked man's goeth; for to him "the morning is even as the shadow of death." Job xxiv. 17. He is not only afraid of reproof and punishment, but he grieves and suffers sufficiently, though nobody should know of his actions, for the impair and loss, and misspence of his strength and his time and his money.—*Zachary Bogan.*

Verse 5.—In the second half of the verse, "*weeping*" is personified, and represented by the figure of a wanderer, who leaves in the morning the lodging, into which he had entered the preceding evening. After him another guest arrives, namely, "*joy.*"—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5.—The princely prophet says plainly, "*heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*" As the two angels that came to Lot lodged with him for a night, and when they had despatched their errand, went away in the morning; so afflictions, which are the angels or the messengers of God. God sendeth afflictions to do an errand unto us; to tell us we forget God, we forget ourselves, we are too proud, too self-conceited, and such like; and when they have said as they were bid, then presently they are gone.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verses 5—10.—When a man's heart is set upon the creatures, there being thorns in them all, therefore if he will grasp too much of them, or too hard, he shall find it. God's children are trained up so to it, that God will not let them go away with a sin; if they be too adulterously affected, they shall find a cross in such a thing. You may observe this in the thirtieth Psalm; there you may see the circle God goes in with his children. David has many afflictions, as appeareth by the fifth verse: I cried, and then God returned to me, and joy came. What did David then? "I said, I shall never be moved:" his heart grew wanton, but God would not let him go away so: "God turned away his face, and I was troubled." At the seventh verse he is, you see, in trouble again: well, David cries again, at the eighth and tenth verses, and then God turned his mourning into joy again. And this to be his dealing you shall find in all the Scriptures; but because we find this his dealing set so close together in this Psalm, therefore I name it.—*John Preston, D.D.* (1587—1628), *in "The Golden Scepter held forth to the Humble."*

Verse 6.—"*In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.*" Our entering upon a special service for God, or receiving a special favour from God, are two solemn seasons which Satan makes use of for temptation. . . . . We are apt to get proud, careless, and confident, after or upon such employments and favours; even as men are apt to sleep or surfeit upon a full meal, or to forget themselves when they are advanced to honour. Job's great peace and plenty made him, as he confesseth, so confident, that he concluded he should "die in his nest."

Chap. xxix. 18. David enjoying the favour of God in a more than ordinary measure, though he was more acquainted with vicissitudes and changes than most of men, grows secure in his apprehension that he "*should never be moved;*" but he acknowledgeth his mistake, and leaves it upon record as an experience necessary for others to take warning by, that when he became warm under the beams of God's countenance, then he was apt to fall into security; and this it seems was usual with him in all such cases—when he was most secure he was nearest some trouble or disquiet. "*Thou didst hide thy face*"—and then to be sure the devil will show him his—"*and I was troubled.*" Enjoyments beget confidence; confidence brings forth carelessness; carelessness makes God withdraw, and gives opportunity to Satan to work unseen. And thus, as armies after victory growing secure, are oft surprised; so are we oft after our spiritual advancements thrown down.—*Richard Gilpin.*

Verse 6.—"*In my prosperity.*" בְּשַׁלְוִי The word denotes *peace and tranquility, arising from an affluent, prosperous condition.* When God had settled him quietly on the throne, he thought all his troubles were over, and that he should enjoy uninterrupted happiness; and that God "*had made his mountain so strong, as that it should never be moved;*" *i.e.*, placed him as secure from all danger as though he had taken refuge upon an inaccessible mountain; or made his prosperity firm, and subject to no more alteration, than a mountain is liable to be removed out of its place; or, raised him to an eminent degree of honour and prosperity; a mountain, by its height, being a very natural representation of a very superior condition, remarkable for power, affluence, and dignity. He had taken the fortress of Mount Sion, which was properly *his mountain,* as he had fixed on it for his dwelling. It was strong by nature, and rendered almost impregnable by the fortifications he had added to it. This he regarded as the effect of God's favour to him, and promised himself that his peace and happiness for the future should be as undisturbed and unshaken as Mount Sion itself.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 6.—"*In my prosperity.*" Prosperity is more pleasant than profitable to us. Though in show it look like a fair summer, yet it is indeed a wasting winter, and spendeth all the fruit we have reaped in the harvest of sanctified affliction. We are never in greater danger than in the sunshine of prosperity. To be always indulged of God, and never to taste of trouble, is rather a token of God's neglect than of his tender love.—*William Struther.*

Verse 7.—It is rare to receive much of this world, and not as the prodigal to go afar off; 'tis hard to keep close to God in prosperity, when we have much of this world to live upon and content ourselves with; to live upon God, and make him our content and stay, as if we had no other life nor livelihood but in him; we are very apt in such a case to contract a carnal frame, let go our hold of God, discustom ourselves to the exercise of faith, abate and estrange our affections from God. See how it was with David: "*I said, I shall never be moved, thou hast made my mountain so strong.*" I solaced myself on these outward accommodations, as if I needed no other support, strength, or content, and there were no fear of a change; no care now to make God my constant joy and stay, and reckon upon God only for my portion, and that I must follow him with a cross, and be conformed to my Saviour, in being crucified to the world. What comes of this? "*Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled;*" namely, because he had too much indulged a life of sense. Children that are held up by their nurses' hand, and mind not to feel their feet and ground when the nurses let them go, they fall, as if they had no feet or ground to stand upon. Or thus: we are like children, who, playing in the golden sunshine, and following their sport, stray so far from their father's house, that night coming upon them ere they are aware, they are as it were lost, and full of fears, not knowing how to recover home. The world steals away our hearts from God, gives so few opportunities for the exercise of the life of faith, and such advantages to a life of sense, wears off the sense of our dependence on God, and need thereof, so that when we are put to it by affliction, we are ready to miscarry ere we can recover our weapon or hold. Faith is our cordial (Psalm xxvii. 13); now if it be not at hand (as in health, when we have no need of it, it use to be) we may faint ere we recover the use of it.—*Elias Pledger's Sermon in "The Morning Exercises,"* 1677.

Verse 7.—"*Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*" What soul can be deserted and not be afflicted? Certainly his absence cannot but be lamented

with greatest grief, whose presence the soul prizeth above all earthly joy; when the evidence of salvation is obscured, the light of God's countenance darkened, the comforts of the Spirit detained, then the heavens appear not so clear, the promises taste not so sweet, the ordinances prove not so lively, yea, the clouds which hang over the soul gather blackness, doubts arise, fears overflow, terrors increase, troubles enlarge, and the soul becomes languishingly afflicted, even with all variety of disquietments.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*" A believer puts on the sackcloth of contrition, for having put off the garment of perfection. As the sugar-loaf is dissolved, and weeps itself way, when dipped in wine; so do our hearts melt under a sense of divine love.—*William Secker.*

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—No verse can more plainly teach us that glorious and comforting truth on which the mediæval writers especially love to dwell, that it is the looking, or not looking, of God upon his creature, that forms the happiness or the misery of that creature; that those secret springs of joy which sometimes seem to rise up of themselves, and with which a stranger intermeddleth not, are nothing but God's direct and immediate looking on us; while the sorrow for which we cannot assign any especial cause—call it melancholy, or low spirits, or by whatever other name—is nothing but his turning away his face from us.—*John Mason Neale.*

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—Is spiritual desertion and the hiding of God's face matter of affliction, and casting down to believers? Yes, yes; it quails their hearts, nothing can comfort them. "*Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*" Outward afflictions do but break the skin, this touches the quick; they like rain fall only upon the tiles, this soaks into the house; but Christ brings to believers substantial matter of consolation against the troubles of desertion: he himself was deserted of God for a time, that they might not be deserted for ever.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—If God be thy portion, then there is no loss in all the world that lies so hard and so heavy upon thee as the loss of thy God. There is no loss under heaven that doth so affect and afflict a man that hath God for his portion, as the loss of his God. David met with many a loss, but no loss made so sad and so great a breach upon his spirit as the loss of the face of God, the loss of the favour of God: "*In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*" The Hebrew word בָּהַל *bahal* signifies to be greatly troubled, to be sorely terrified, as you may see in that 1 Sam. xxviii. 21, "And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled." Here is the same Hebrew word *bahal*. Saul was so terrified, affrighted, and disanimated with the dreadful news that the devil in Samuel's likeness told him, that his very vital spirits so failed him, that he fell into a deadly swoon. And it was even so with David upon God's hiding of his face. David was like a withered flower that had lost all its sap, life, and vigour, when God had wrapped himself up in a cloud. The life of some creatures lieth in the light and warmth of the sun; and so doth the life of the saints lie in the light and warmth of God's countenance. And, as in an eclipse of the sun, there is a drooping in the whole frame of nature, so when God hides his face, gracious souls cannot but droop and languish, and bow down themselves before him. Many insensible creatures, some by opening and shutting, as marigolds and tulips, others by bowing and inclining the head, as the solsequy* and mallow-flowers, are so sensible of the presence and absence of the sun, that there seems to be such a sympathy between the sun and them, that if the sun be gone or clouded, they wrap up themselves or hang down their heads, as being unwilling to be seen by any eye but his that fills them: and just thus it was with David when God had hid his face in a cloud.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 8.—"*I cried to thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication.*" Bernard, under a fiction, proposeth a fable well worthy our beholding: therein the kings of Babylon and Jerusalem, signifying the state of the world and the church, always warring together; in which encounter, at length it fell out, that one of the soldiers of Jerusalem was fled to the castle of Justice. Siege laid to the castle, and a multitude of enemies entrenched round about it, Fear gave over

* The early name of the "*sun*-flower." The *solsequium* of Linnæus.

all hope, but Prudence ministered her comfort. "Dost thou not know," saith she, "that our king is the King of glory; the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle? Let us therefore despatch a messenger that may inform him of our necessities." Fear replieth, "But who is able to break through? Darkness is upon the face of the earth, and our walls are begirt with a watchful troop of armed men, and we, utterly inexpert of the way into so far a country." Whereupon Justice is consulted. "Be of good cheer," saith Justice, "I have a messenger of especial trust, well known to the king and his court, Prayer by name, who knoweth to address herself by ways unknown in the stillest silence of the night, till she cometh to the secrets and chamber of the King himself." Forthwith she goeth, and findeth the gates shut, knocketh amain, "Open, ye gates of righteousness, and be ye opened, ye everlasting doors, that I may come in and tell the King of Jerusalem how our case standeth." Doubtless the trustiest and effectuallest messenger we have to send is Prayer. If we send up merits, the stars in heaven will disdain it, that we which dwell at the footstool of God dare to presume so far, when the purest creatures in heaven are impure in his sight. If we send up fear and distrustfulness, the length of the way will tire them out. They are as heavy and lumpish as gads of iron; they will sink to the ground before they come halfway to the throne of salvation. If we send up blasphemies and curses, all the creatures betwixt heaven and earth will band themselves against us. The sun and the moon will rain down blood; the fire, hot burning coals; the air, thunderbolts upon our heads. Prayer, I say again, is the surest ambassador; which neither the tediousness of the way, nor difficulties of the passage, can hinder from her purpose; quick of speed, faithful for trustiness, happy for success, able to mount above the eagles of the sky, into the heaven of heavens, and as a chariot of fire bearing us aloft into the presence of God to seek his assistance.—*John King.*

Verse 9.—"*What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?*" Implying that he would willingly die, if he could thereby do any real service to God, or his country. Phil. ii. 17. But he saw not what good could be done by his dying in the bed of sickness, as might be if he had died in the bed of honour. Lord, saith he, wilt thou sell one of "thine own people for nought, and not increase thy wealth by the price?" Psalm xliv. 12.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—"*What profit is there in my blood,*" etc. The little gain that the Lord would have by denying his people in the mercies they request, may also be used as a plea in prayer. David beggeth his own life of God, using this plea, "*What profit is there in my blood?*" So did the captive church plead (Psalm xliv. 12); "Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price." So then, poor saints of God when they come and tell the Lord in their prayers that indeed he may condemn, or confound, or cut or cast them off; he may continue to frown upon them; he may deny such-and-such requests of theirs, for such-and-such just causes in them; but what will he gain thereby? He may gain many praises, etc., by hearing them, and helping them; but what good will it do him to see them oppressed by the enemies of their souls? or what delight would it be to him to see them sighing and sinking, and fainting under sad pressures, etc.? this is an allowed and a very successful kind of pleading.—*Thomas Cobbet.*

Verse 9.—"*Shall the dust praise thee?*" Can any number be sufficient to praise thee? Can there ever be mouths enough to declare thy truth? And may not I make one—a sinful one I know—but yet one in the number, if thou be pleased to spare me from descending into the pit?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 9.—Prayer that is likely to prevail with God must be argumentative. God loves to have us plead with him and overcome him with arguments in prayer.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 11.—"*Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.*" This might be true of David, delivered from his calamity; it was true of Christ, arising from the tomb, to die no more; it is true of the penitent, exchanging his sackcloth for the garments of salvation; and it will be verified in us all, at the last day, when we shall put off the dishonours of the grave, to shine in glory everlasting.—*George Horne.*

Verse 11.—"*Thou hast turned.*" I do so like the ups and downs in the Psalms. —*Adelaide Newton.*

Verse 11.—"*Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.*"

I say with the apostle, " Overcome evil with good," sorrow with joy. Joy is the true remedy for sorrow. It never had, never could have any other. We must always give the soul that weeps reason to rejoice; all other consolation is utterly useless.—*Alexander Rodolph Vinet, D.D.*, 1797—1847.

Verse 11.—" *Thou hast girded me with gladness.*" My " sackcloth " was but a loose garment about me, which might easily be put off at pleasure, but my " *gladness* " is *girt* about me, to be fast and sure, and cannot leave me though it would; at least none shall be able to take it from me.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 12.—Even as the Chaldeans formerly measured their natural day differently from the Israelites; they put the day first and the night after; but the Israelites, on the contrary, according to the order that was observed in the creation; for in the beginning darkness was upon the face of the deep, and of every one of the six days it is said, " The evening and the morning were the first day," etc. So the times of the world and of the church are differently disposed; for the world begins hers by the day of temporal prosperity, and finishes it by a night of darkness and anguish that is eternal; but the church, on the contrary, begins hers by the night of adversity, which she suffers for awhile, and ends them by a day of consolation which she shall have for ever. The prophet in this Psalm begins with the *anger* of God, but ends with his *favour:* as of old, when they entered into the tabernacle they did at first see unpleasant things, as the knives of the sacrifices, the blood of victims, the fire that burned upon the altar, which consumed the offerings; but when they passed a little farther there was the holy place, the candlestick of gold, the shew-bread, and the altar of gold on which they offered perfumes; and in fine, there was the holy of holies, and the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat and the cherubims, which was called the face of God.—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verse 12.—" *I will give thanks.*" What is praise? The rent we owe to God; and the larger the farm the greater the rent should be.—*G. S. Bowes*, 1863.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Title.—House dedication, and how to arrange it.

Whole Psalm.—In this ode we may see the workings of David's mind before, and under, and after, the affliction. I. *Before* the affliction: 6. II. *Under* the affliction: 7—10. III. *After* the affliction: 11, 12.—*William Jay.*

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—God and his people exalting each other.

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—The happiness of being preserved so as not to be the scorn of our enemies.

Verse 1.—The disappointments of the devil.

Verse 2.—The sick man, the physician, the night-bell, the medicine, and the cure; or, a covenant God. a sick saint, a crying heart, a healing hand.

Verse 3.—*Upbringing ana preservation*, two choice mercies; made the more illustrious by two terrible evils, " *grave*," and " *pit* "; traced immediately to the Lord, " *thou hast.*"

Verse 4.—*Song*, a sacred service; " *saints* " especially called to it; *divine holiness*, a choice subject for it; *Memory*, an admirable aid in it.

Verse 5.—The anger of God in relation to his people.

Verse 5.—*The night of weeping, and the morning of joy.*

Verse 5.—" *Life* " in God's " *favour.*"

Verse 5.—The transient nature of the believer's trouble, and the permanence of his joy.

Verse 6.—The peculiar dangers of " *prosperity.*"

Verses 6—12.—David's prosperity had lulled him into a state of undue security: God sent him this affliction to rouse him from it. The successive frames of his mind are here clearly marked; and must successively be considered as they are here presented to our view. I. His carnal security. II. His spiritual dereliction.

III. His fervent prayers. IV. His speedy recovery. V. His grateful acknowledgments.—*Charles Simeon.*

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—Carnal security; its causes, dangers, and cures.

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—The gracious bemoanings of a soul in spiritual darkness.

Verse 8, in connection with verse 3, *prayer the universal remedy.*

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—Arguments with God for continued life and renewed favour.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—The resurrection, a time in which the "*dust*" shall "*praise*" God, and "*declare*" his "*truth.*"

Verse 10.—Two gems of prayer; short, but full and needful.

Verse 10.—"*Lord, be thou my helper.*" I see many fall; I shall fall too except thou hold me up. I am weak; I am exposed to temptation. My heart is deceitful. My enemies are strong. I cannot trust in man; I dare not trust in myself. The grace I have received will not keep me without thee. "*Lord, be thou my helper.*" In every duty; in every conflict; in every trial; in every effort to promote the Lord's cause; in every season of prosperity; in every hour we live, this short and inspired prayer is suitable. May it flow from our hearts, be often on our lips, and be answered in our experience. For if the Lord help us, there is no duty which we cannot perform; there is no foe which we cannot overcome; there is no difficulty which we cannot surmount.—*James Smith's Daily Remembrancer.*

Verse 11.—*Transformations.* Sudden; complete; divine, "*thou;*" personal, "*for me;*" gracious.

Verse 11.—*Holy dancing:* open up the metaphor.

Verse 11.—The believer's change of raiment: illustrate by life of Mordecai or Joseph; mention all the garbs the believer is made to wear, as a mourner, a beggar, a criminal, etc.

Verse 12.—Our "*glory,*" and its relation to God's glory.

Verse 12.—The end of gracious dispensations.

Verse 12.—Silence—when sinful.

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—The believer's vow, and the time for making it. See the whole Psalm.

PSALM XXXI.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician—a Psalm of David. *The dedication to the chief musician proves that this song of mingled measures and alternate strains of grief and woe was intended for public singing, and thus a deathblow is given to the notion that nothing but praise should be sung. Perhaps the Psalms, thus marked, might have been set aside as too mournful for temple worship, if special care had not been taken by the Holy Spirit to indicate them as being designed for the public edification of the Lord's people. May there not also be in Psalms thus designated a peculiarly distinct reference to the Lord Jesus? He certainly manifests himself very clearly in the twenty-second, which bears this title; and in the one before us we plainly hear his dying voice in the fifth verse. Jesus is chief everywhere, and in all the holy songs of his saints he is the chief musician. The surmises that Jeremiah penned this Psalm need no other answer than the fact that it is "a Psalm of David."*

SUBJECT.—*The Psalmist in dire affliction appeals to his God for help with much confidence and holy importunity, and ere long finds his mind so strengthened that he magnifies the Lord for his great goodness. Some have thought that the occasion in his troubled life which led to this Psalm, was the treachery of the men of Keilah, and we have felt much inclined to this conjecture; but after reflection it seems to us that its very mournful tone, and its allusion to his iniquity demand a later date, and it may be more satisfactory to illustrate it by the period when Absalom had rebelled, and his courtiers were fled from him, while lying lips spread a thousand malicious rumours against him. It is perhaps quite as well that we have no settled season mentioned, or we might have been so busy in applying it to David's case as to forget its suitability to our own.*

DIVISION.—*There are no great lines of demarcation; throughout the strain undulates, falling into valleys of mourning, and rising with hills of confidence. However, we may for convenience arrange it thus: David testifying his confidence in God pleads for help,* 1—6; *expresses gratitude for mercies received,* 7, 8; *particularly describes his case,* 9—13; *vehemently pleads for deliverance,* 14—18; *confidently and thankfully expects a blessing,* 19—22; *and closes by showing the bearing of his case upon all the people of God.*

EXPOSITION.

IN thee, O LORD do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily; be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.

3 For thou *art* my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou *art* my strength.

5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities; but I trust in the LORD.

1. *"In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust."* Nowhere else do I fly for shelter, let the tempest howl as it may. The Psalmist has one refuge, and that the best one. He casts out the great sheet anchor of his faith in the time of storm. Let other things be doubtful, yet the fact that he relies upon Jehovah, David lays down most positively; and he begins with it, lest by stress of trial he should afterwards forget it. This avowal of faith is the fulcrum by means of which he labours to uplift and remove his trouble; he dwells upon it as a comfort to himself and a plea with God. No mention is made of merit, but faith relies upon divine favour and faithfulness, and upon that alone. *"Let me never be ashamed."* How can the

Lord permit the man to be ultimately put to shame who depends alone upon him? This would not be dealing like a God of truth and grace. It would bring dishonour upon God himself if faith were not in the end rewarded. It will be an ill day indeed for religion when trust in God brings no consolation and no assistance. "*Deliver me in thy righteousness.*" Thou art not unjust to desert a trustful soul, or to break thy promises; thou wilt vindicate the righteousness of thy mysterious providence, and give me joyful deliverance. Faith dares to look even to the sword of justice for protection: while God is righteous, faith will not be left to be proved futile and fanatical. How sweetly the declaration of faith in this first verse sounds, if we read it at the foot of the cross, beholding the promise of the Father as yea and amen through the Son; viewing God with faith's eye as he stands revealed in Jesus crucified.

2. "*Bow down thine ear to me.*" Condescend to my low estate; listen to me attentively as one who would hear every word. Heaven with its transcendent glories of harmony might well engross the divine ear, but yet the Lord has an hourly regard to the weakest moanings of his poorest people. "*Deliver me speedily.*" We must not set times and seasons, yet in submission we may ask for swift as well as sure mercy. God's mercies are often enhanced in value by the timely haste which he uses in their bestowal; if they came late they might be too late—but he rides upon a cherub, and flies upon the wings of the wind when he intends the good of his beloved. "*Be thou my strong rock.*" Be my Engedi, my Adullam; my immutable, immovable, impregnable, sublime, resort. "*For an house of defence to save me,*" wherein I may *dwell* in safety, not merely running to thee for temporary shelter, but abiding in thee for eternal salvation. How very simply does the good man pray, and yet with what weight of meaning! he uses no ornamental flourishes, he is too deeply in earnest to be otherwise than plain: it were well if all who engage in public prayer would observe the same rule.

3. "*For thou art my rock and my fortress.*" Here the tried soul avows yet again its full confidence in God. Faith's repetitions are not vain. The avowal of our reliance upon God in times of adversity is a principal method of glorifying him. Active service is good, but the passive confidence of faith is not one jot less esteemed in the sight of God. The words before us appear to embrace and fasten upon the Lord with a fiducial grip which is not to be relaxed. The two personal pronouns, like sure nails, lay hold upon the faithfulness of the Lord. O for grace to have our heart fixed in firm unstaggering belief in God! The figure of a rock and a fortress may be illustrated to us in these times by the vast fortress of Gibraltar, often besieged by our enemies, but never wrested from us: ancient strongholds, though far from impregnable by our modes of warfare, were equally important in those remoter ages—when in the mountain fastnesses, feeble bands felt themselves to be secure. Note the singular fact that David asked the Lord to be his rock (verse 2) because he was his rock; and learn from it that we may pray to enjoy in experience what we grasp by faith. Faith is the foundation of prayer. "*Therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.*" The Psalmist argues like a logician with his fors and therefores. Since I do sincerely trust thee, saith he, O my God, be my director. To lead and to guide are two things very like each other, but patient thought will detect different shades of meaning, especially as the last may mean *provide for me.* The double word indicates an urgent need—we require double direction, for we are fools, and the way is rough. Lead me as a soldier, guide me as a traveller! lead me as a babe, guide me as a man; lead me when thou art with me, but guide me even if thou be absent; lead me by thy hand, guide me by thy word. The argument used is one which is fetched from the armoury of free grace: not for my own sake, but *for thy name's sake* guide me. Our appeal is not to any fancied virtue in our own names, but to the glorious goodness and graciousness which shine resplendent in the character of Israel's God. It is not possible that the Lord should suffer his own honour to be tarnished, but this would certainly be the case if those who trusted him should perish. This was Moses' plea, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

4. "*Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me.*" The enemies of David were cunning as well as mighty; if they could not conquer him by power, they would capture him by craft. Our own spiritual foes are of the same order—they are of the serpent's brood, and seek to ensnare us by their guile. The prayer before us supposes the possibility of the believer being caught like a bird; and, indeed, we are so foolish that this often happens. So deftly does the fowler do his

work that simple ones are soon surrounded by it. The text asks that even out of the meshes of the net the captive one may be delivered; and this is a proper petition, and one which can be granted; from between the jaws of the lion and out of the belly of hell can eternal love rescue the saint. It may need a sharp *pull* to save a soul from the net of temptation, and a mighty pull to extricate a man from the snares of malicious cunning, but the Lord is equal to every emergency, and the most skilfully placed nets of the hunter shall never be able to hold his chosen ones. Woe unto those who are so clever at net laying: they who tempt others shall be destroyed themselves. Villains who lay traps in secret shall be punished in public. "*For thou art my strength.*" What an inexpressible sweetness is to be found in these few words! How joyfully may we enter upon labours, and how cheerfully may we endure sufferings when we can lay hold upon celestial power. Divine power will rend asunder all the toils of the foe, confound their politics and frustrate their knavish tricks; he is a happy man who has such matchless might engaged upon his side. Our own strength would be of little service when embarrassed in the nets of base cunning, but the Lord's strength is ever available; we have but to invoke it, and we shall find it near at hand. If by faith we are depending alone upon the strength of the strong God of Israel, we may use our holy reliance as a plea in supplication.

5. "*Into thine hand I commit my spirit.*" These living words of David were our Lord's dying words, and have been frequently used by holy men in their hour of departure. Be assured that they are good, choice, wise, and solemn words; we may use them now and in the last tremendous hour. Observe, the object of the good man's solicitude in life and death is not his body or his estate, but his spirit; this is his jewel, his secret treasure; if this be safe, all is well. See what he does with his pearl! He commits it to the hand of his God: it came from him, it is his own, he has aforetime sustained it, he is able to keep it, and it is most fit that he should receive it. All things are safe in Jehovah's hands; what we entrust to the Lord will be secure, both now and in that day of days towards which we are hastening. Without reservation the good man yields himself to his heavenly Father's hand; it is enough for him to be there; it is peaceful living and glorious dying to repose in the care of heaven. At all times we should commit and continue to commit our all to Jesus' sacred care, then, though life may hang on a thread, and adversities may multiply as the sands of the sea, our soul shall dwell at ease, and delight itself in quiet resting places. "*Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.*" Redemption is a solid basis for confidence. David had not known Calvary as we have done, but temporal redemption cheered him; and shall not eternal redemption yet more sweetly console us? Past deliverances are strong pleas for present assistance. What the Lord has done he will do again, for he changes not. He is a God of veracity, faithful to his promises, and gracious to his saints; he will not turn away from his people.

6. "*I have hated them that regard lying vanities.*" Those who will not lean upon the true arm of strength, are sure to make to themselves vain confidences. Man must have a god, and if he will not adore the only living and true God, he makes a fool of himself, and pays superstitious regard to a lie, and waits with anxious hope upon a base delusion. Those who did this were none of David's friends; he had a constant dislike to them: the verb includes the present as well as the past tense. He hated them for hating God; he would not endure the presence of idolaters; his heart was set against them for their stupidity and wickedness. He had no patience with their superstitious observances, and calls their idols vanities of emptiness, nothings of nonentity. Small courtesy is more than Romanists and Puseyites deserve for their fooleries. Men who make gods of their riches, their persons, their wits, or anything else, are to be shunned by those whose faith rests upon God in Christ Jesus; and so far from being envied, they are to be pitied as depending upon utter vanities. "*But I trust in the Lord.*" This might be very unfashionable, but the Psalmist dared to be singular. Bad example should not make us less decided for the truth, but the rather in the midst of general defection we should grow the more bold. This adherence to his trust in Jehovah is the great plea employed all along: the troubled one flies into the arms of his God, and ventures everything upon the divine faithfulness.

7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;

8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

7. "*I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.*" For mercy past he is grateful, and for mercy future, which he believingly anticipates, he is joyful. In our most importunate intercessions, we must find breathing time to bless the Lord: praise is never a hindrance to prayer, but rather a lively refreshment therein. It is delightful at intervals to hear the notes of the high-sounding cymbals when the dolorous sackbut rules the hour. Those two words, *glad* and *rejoice*, are an instructive reduplication, we need not stint ourselves in our holy triumph; this wine we may drink in bowls without fear of excess. "*For thou hast considered my trouble.*" Thou hast seen it, weighed it, directed it, fixed a bound to it, and in all ways made it a matter of tender consideration. A man's consideration means the full exercise of his mind; what must God's consideration be? "*Thou hast known my soul in adversities.*" God owns his saints when others are ashamed to acknowledge them; he never refuses to know his friends. He thinks not the worse of them for their rags and tatters. He does not misjudge them and cast them off when their faces are lean with sickness, or their hearts heavy with despondency. Moreover, the Lord Jesus knows us in our pangs in a peculiar sense, by having a deep sympathy towards us in them all; when no others can enter into our griefs, from want of understanding them experimentally, Jesus dives into the lowest depths with us, comprehending the direst of our woes, because he has felt the same. Jesus is a physician who knows every case; nothing is new to him. When we are so bewildered as not to know our own state, he knows us altogether. He has known us and will know us: O for grace to know more of him! "Man, know thyself," is a good philosophic precept, but "Man, thou art known of God," is a superlative consolation. *Adversities* in the plural—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

8. "*And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy.*" To be shut up in one's hand is to be delivered over absolutely to his power; now, the believer is not in the hand of death or the devil, much less is he in the power of man. The enemy may get a temporary advantage over us, but we are like men in prison with the door open; God will not let us be shut up, he always provides a way of escape. "*Thou hast set my feet in a large room.*" Blessed be God for liberty: civil liberty is valuable, religious liberty is precious, spiritual liberty is priceless. In all troubles we may praise God if these are left. Many saints have had their greatest enlargements of soul when their affairs have been in the greatest straits. Their souls have been in a large room when their bodies have been lying in Bonner's coalhole, or in some other narrow dungeon. Grace has been equal to every emergency; and more than this, it has made the emergency an opportunity for displaying itself.

9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly.

10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.

12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

13 For I have heard the slander of many: fear *was* on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

9. "*Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble.*" Now, the man of God comes to a particular and minute description of his sorrowful case. He unbosoms his heart, lays bare his wounds, and expresses his inward desolation. This first sentence pithily comprehends all that follows, it is the text for his lamenting discourse. Misery moves mercy—no more reasoning is needed. "Have mercy" is the prayer; the argument is as prevalent as it is plain and personal, "I am in trouble." "*Mine eye is consumed with grief.*" Dim and sunken eyes are plain indicators of failing health. Tears draw their salt from our strength, and floods of them are very apt to consume the source from which they spring. God would have us tell him the symptoms of our disease, not for his information, but to show

our sense of need. "*Yea, my soul and my belly* [*or body*]." Soul and body are so intimately united, that one cannot decline without the other feeling it. We, in these days, are not strangers to the double sinking which David describes; we have been faint with physical suffering, and distracted with mental distress: when two such seas meet, it is well for us that the Pilot at the helm is at home in the midst of the waterfloods, and makes storms to become the triumph of his art.

10. "*For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing.*" It had become his daily occupation to mourn; he spent all his days in the dungeon of distress. The sap and essence of his existence was being consumed, as a candle is wasted while it burns. His adversities were shortening his days, and digging for him an early grave. Grief is a sad market to spend all our wealth of life in, but a far more profitable trade may be driven there than in Vanity Fair; it is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting. Black is good wear. The salt of tears is a healthy medicine. Better spend our years in sighing than in sinning. The two members of the sentence before us convey the same idea; but there are no idle words in Scripture, the reduplication is the fitting expression of fervency and importunity. "*My strength faileth because of mine iniquity.*" David sees to the bottom of his sorrow, and detects sin lurking there. It is profitable trouble which leads us to trouble ourselves about our iniquity. Was this the Psalmist's foulest crime which now gnawed at his heart, and devoured his strength? Very probably it was so. Sinful morsels, though sweet in the mouth, turn out to be poison in the bowels: if we wantonly give a portion of our strength to sin, it will by-and-by take the remainder from us. We lose both physical, mental, moral, and spiritual vigour by iniquity. "*And my bones are consumed.*" Weakness penetrated the innermost parts of his system, the firmest parts of his frame felt the general decrepitude. A man is in a piteous plight when he comes to this.

11. "*I was a reproach among all mine enemies.*" They were pleased to have something to throw at me: my mournful estate was music to them, because they maliciously interpreted it to be a judgment from heaven upon me. Reproach is little thought of by those who are not called to endure it, but he who passes under its lash knows how deep it wounds. The best of men may have the bitterest foes, and be subjected to the most cruel taunts. "*But especially among my neighbours.*" Those who are nearest can stab the sharpest. We feel most the slights of those who should have shown us sympathy. Perhaps David's friends feared to be identified with his declining fortunes, and therefore turned against him in order to win the mercy if not the favour of his opponents. Self interest rules the most of men: ties the most sacred are soon snapped by its influence, and actions of the utmost meanness are perpetrated without scruple. "*And a fear to mine acquaintance.*" The more intimate before, the more distant did they become. Our Lord was denied by Peter, betrayed by Judas, and forsaken by all in the hour of his utmost need. All the herd turn against a wounded deer. The milk of human kindness curdles when a despised believer is the victim of slanderous accusations. "*They that did see me without fled from me.*" Afraid to be seen in the company of a man so thoroughly despised, those who once courted his society hastened from him as though he had been infected with the plague. How villainous a thing is slander which can thus make an eminent saint, once the admiration of his people, to become the general butt, the universal aversion of mankind! To what extremities of dishonour may innocence be reduced!

12. "*I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.*" All David's youthful prowess was now gone from remembrance: he had been the saviour of his country, but his services were buried in oblivion. Men soon forget the deepest obligations; popularity is evanescent to the last degree: he who is in every one's mouth to-day may be forgotten by all to-morrow. A man had better be dead than be smothered in slander. Of the dead we say nothing but good, but in the Psalmist's case they said nothing but evil. We must not look for the reward of philanthropy this side of heaven, for men pay their best servants but sorry wages, and turn them out of doors when no more is to be got out of them. "*I am like a broken vessel,*" a thing useless, done for, worthless, cast aside, forgotten. Sad condition for a king! Let us see herein the portrait of the King of kings in his humiliation, when he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.

13. "*For I have heard the slander of many.*" One slanderous viper is death to all comfort—what must be the venom of a whole brood? What the ear does not hear the heart does not rue; but in David's case the accusing voices were loud

enough to break in upon his quiet—foul mouths had grown so bold, that they poured forth their falsehoods in the presence of their victim. Shimei was but one of a class, and his cry of "Go up, thou bloody man," was but the common speech of thousands of the sons of Belial. All Beelzebub's pack of hounds may be in full cry against a man, and yet he may be the Lord's anointed. "*Fear was on every side.*" He was encircled with fearful suggestions, threatenings, remembrances, and forebodings; no quarter was clear from incessant attack. "*While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.*" The ungodly act in concert in their onslaughts upon the excellent of the earth: it is to be wondered at that sinners should often be better agreed than saints, and generally set about their wicked work with much more care and foresight than the righteous exhibit in holy enterprises. Observe the cruelty of a good man's foes! they will be content with nothing less than his blood—for this they plot and scheme. Better fall into the power of a lion than under the will of malicious persecutors, for the beast may spare its prey if it be fed to the full, but malice is unrelenting and cruel as a wolf. Of all fiends the most cruel is envy. How sorely was the Psalmist bestead when the poisoned arrows of a thousand bows were all aimed at his life! Yet in all this his faith did not fail him, nor did his God forsake him. Here is encouragement for us.

14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God.

15 My times *are* in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, *and* let them be silent in the grave.

18 Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

In this section of the Psalm he renews his prayers, urging the same pleas as at first: earnest wrestlers attempt over and over again the same means of gaining their point.

14. "*But I trusted in thee, O Lord.*" Notwithstanding all afflicting circumstances, David's faith maintained its hold, and was not turned aside from its object. What a blessed saving clause is this! So long as our faith, which is our shield, is safe, the battle may go hard, but its ultimate result is no matter of question; if that could be torn from us, we should be as surely slain as were Saul and Jonathan upon the high places of the field. "*I said, Thou art my God.*" He proclaimed aloud his determined allegiance to Jehovah. He was no fair-weather believer, he could hold to his faith in a sharp frost, and wrap it about him as a garment fitted to keep out all the ills of time. He who can say what David did need not envy Cicero his eloquence: "Thou art my God," has more sweetness in it than any other utterance which human speech can frame. Note that this adhesive faith is here mentioned as an argument with God to honour his own promise by sending a speedy deliverance.

15. "*My times are in thy hand.*" The sovereign arbiter of destiny holds in his own power all the issues of our life; we are not waifs and strays upon the ocean of fate, but are steered by infinite wisdom towards our desired haven. Providence is a soft pillow for anxious heads, an anodyne for care, a grave for despair. "*Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.*" It is lawful to desire escape from persecution if it be the Lord's will; and when this may not be granted us in the form which we desire, sustaining grace will give us deliverance in another form, by enabling us to laugh to scorn all the fury of the foe.

16. "*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*" Give me the sunshine of heaven in my soul, and I will defy the tempests of earth. Permit me to enjoy a sense of thy favour, O Lord, and a consciousness that thou art pleased with my manner of life, and all men may frown and slander as they will. It is always enough for a servant if he pleases his master; others may be dissatisfied, but he is not their servant, they do not pay him his wages, and their opinions have no weight with him. "*Save me for thy mercies' sake.*" The good man knows no plea but mercy; whoever might urge legal pleas, David never dreamed of it.

17. "*Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee.*" Put not my

prayers to the blush! Do not fill profane mouths with jeers at my confidence in my God. "*Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.*" Cause them to their amazement to see my wrongs righted and their own pride horribly confounded. A milder spirit rules our prayers under the gentle reign of the Prince of Peace, and, therefore, we can only use such words as these in their prophetic sense, knowing as we do full well, that shame and the silence of death are the best portion that ungodly sinners can expect. That which they desired for despised believers shall come upon themselves by a decree of retributive justice, at which they cannot cavil "As he loved mischief, so let it come upon him."

18. "*Let the lying lips be put to silence.*" A right good and Christian prayer; who but a bad man would give liars more license than need be? May God silence them either by leading them to repentance, by putting them to thorough shame, or by placing them in positions where what they may say will stand for nothing. "*Which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.*" The sin of slanderers lies partly in the matter of their speech; "they speak grievous things;" things cutting deep into the feelings of good men, and wounding them sorely in that tender place—their reputations. The sin is further enhanced by the manner of their speech; they speak proudly and contemptuously; they talk as if they themselves were the cream of society, and the righteous the mere scum of vulgarity. Proud thoughts of self are generally attended by debasing estimates of others. The more room we take up ourselves, the less we can afford our neighbours. What wickedness it is that unworthy characters should always be the loudest in railing at good men! They have no power to appreciate moral worth of which they are utterly destitute, and yet they have the effrontery to mount the judgment seat, and judge the men compared with whom they are as so much draff. Holy indignation may well prompt us to desire anything which may rid the world of such unbearable impertinence and detestable arrogance.

19 *Oh* how great *is* thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

21 Blessed *be* the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.

22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

Being full of faith, the Psalmist gives glory to God for the mercy which he is assured will be his position.

19. "*Oh how great is thy goodness.*" Is it not singular to find such a joyful sentence in connection with so much sorrow? Truly the life of faith is a miracle. When faith led David to his God, she set him singing at once. He does not tell us how great was God's goodness, for he could not; there are no measures which can set forth the immeasurable goodness of Jehovah, who is goodness itself. Holy amazement uses interjections where adjectives utterly fail. Notes of exclamation suit us when words of explanation are of no avail. If we cannot measure we can marvel; and though we may not calculate with accuracy, we can adore with fervency. "*Which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.*" The Psalmist in contemplation divides goodness into two parts, that which is in store and that which is wrought out. The Lord has laid up in reserve for his people supplies beyond all count. In the treasury of the covenant, in the field of redemption, in the caskets of the promises, in the granaries of providence, the Lord has provided for all the needs which can possibly occur to his chosen. We ought often to consider the laid-up goodness of God which has not yet been distributed to the chosen, but is already provided for them: if we are much in such contemplations, we shall be led to feel devout gratitude, such as glowed in the heart of David. "*Which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men.*" Heavenly mercy is not all hidden in the storehouse; in a thousand ways it has already revealed itself on behalf of those who are bold to avow their confidence in God; before their fellow men this goodness of the Lord has been displayed, that a faithless generation might stand rebuked. Overwhelming are the proofs of the Lord's

favour to believers, history teems with amazing instances, and our own lives are full of prodigies of grace. We serve a good Master. Faith receives a large reward even now, but looks for her full inheritance in the future. Who would not desire to take his lot with the servants of a Master whose boundless love fills all holy minds with astonishment?

20. *"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man."* Pride is a barbed weapon: the proud man's contumely is iron which entereth into the soul; but those who trust in God, are safely housed in the Holy of holies, the innermost court, into which no man may dare intrude; here in the secret dwelling place of God the mind of the saint rests in peace, which the foot of pride cannot disturb. Dwellers at the foot of the cross of Christ grow callous to the sneers of the haughty. The wounds of Jesus distil a balsam which heals all the scars which the jagged weapons of contempt can inflict upon us; in fact, when armed with the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, the heart is invulnerable to all the darts of pride. *"Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."* Tongues are more to be dreaded than beasts of prey—and when they strive, it is as though a whole pack of wolves were let loose; but the believer is secure even in this peril, for the royal pavilion of the King of kings shall afford him quiet shelter and serene security. The secret tabernacle of sacrifice, and the royal pavilion of sovereignty afford a double security to the Lord's people in their worst distresses. Observe the immediate action of God, "*Thou* shalt hide," "*Thou* shalt keep," the Lord himself is personally present for the rescue of his afflicted.

21. *"Blessed be the Lord."* When the Lord blesses us we cannot do less than bless him in return. *"For he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city."* Was this in Mahanaim, where the Lord gave him victory over the hosts of Absalom? Or did he refer to Rabbath of Ammon, where he gained signal triumphs? Or, best of all, was Jerusalem the strong city where he most experienced the astonishing kindness of his God? Gratitude is never short of subjects: her Ebenezers stand so close together as to wall up her path to heaven on both sides. Whether in cities or in hamlets our blessed Lord has revealed himself to us, we shall never forget the hallowed spots: the lonely mount of Hermon, or the village of Emmaus, or the rock of Patmos, or the wilderness of Horeb, are all alike renowned when God manifests himself to us in robes of love.

22. Confession of faults is always proper; and when we reflect upon the goodness of God, we ought to be reminded of our own errors and offences. *"For I said in my haste."* We generally speak amiss when we are in a hurry. Hasty words are but for a moment on the tongue, but they often lie for years on the conscience. *"I am cut off from before thine eyes."* This was an unworthy speech; but unbelief will have a corner in the heart of the firmest believer, and out of that corner it will vent many spiteful things against the Lord if the course of providence be not quite so smooth as nature might desire. No saint ever was, or ever could be, cut off from before the eyes of God, and yet no doubt many have thought so, and more than one have said so. For ever be such dark suspicions banished from our minds. *"Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee."* What a mercy that if *we* believe not, yet God abideth faithful, hearing prayer even when we are labouring under doubts which dishonour his name. If we consider the hindrances in the way of our prayers, and the poor way in which we present them, it is a wonder of wonders that they ever prevail with heaven.

23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: *for* the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

23. *"O love the Lord, all ye his saints."* A most affecting exhortation, showing clearly the deep love of the writer to his God: there is the more beauty in the expression, because it reveals love towards a smiting God, love which many waters could not quench. To bless him who gives is easy, but to cling to him who takes away is a work of grace. All the saints are benefited by the sanctified miseries of one, if they are led by earnest exhortations to love their Lord the better. If saints do not love the Lord, who will? Love is the universal debt of all the saved family: who would wish to be exonerated from its payment? Reasons for love are given, for believing love is not blind. *"For the Lord preserveth the faithful."*

They have to bide their time, but the recompense comes at last, and meanwhile all the cruel malice of their enemies cannot destroy them. "*And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.*" This also is cause for gratitude: pride is so detestable in its acts that he who shall mete out to it its righteous due, deserves the love of all holy minds.

24. "*Be of good courage.*" Keep up your spirit, let no craven thoughts blanch your cheek. Fear weakens, courage strengthens. Victory waits upon the banners of the brave. "*And he shall strengthen your heart.*" Power from on high shall be given in the most effectual manner by administering force to the fountain of vitality. So far from leaving us, the Lord will draw very near to us in our adversity, and put his own power into us. "*All ye that hope in the Lord.*" Every one of you, lift up your heads and sing for joy of heart. God is faithful, and does not fail even his little children who do but *hope*, wherefore then should we be afraid?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.*" Let us therefore shun mistrust; doubt is death, trust alone is life. Let us make sure that we trust the Lord, and never take our trust on trust. "*Let me never be ashamed.*" If David prays against being ashamed, let us strive against it. Lovers of Jesus should be ashamed of being ashamed.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 1.—"*Deliver me in thy righteousness.*" For supporting thy faith, mark well whereon it may safely rest; even upon God's *righteousness*, as well as upon his mercy. On this ground did the apostle in faith expect the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8), because the Lord from whom he expected it is a righteous judge; and the Psalmist is bold to appeal to the righteousness of God. Ps. xxxv. 24. For we may be well assured that what God's goodness, grace, and mercy moved him to promise, his truth, his faithfulness, and righteousness will move him to perform.—*William Gouge.*

Verses 1, 2, 3:—

> Shadows are faithless, and the rocks are false;
> No trust in brass, no trust in marble walls;
> Poor cots are e'en as safe as princes' halls.
>
> Great God! there is no safety here below;
> Thou art my fortress, thou that seem'st my foe,
> 'Tis thou, that strik'st the stroke, must guard the blow.
>
> Thou art my God, by thee I fall or stand;
> Thy grace hath giv'n me courage to withstand
> All tortures, but my conscience and thy hand.
>
> I know thy justice is thyself; I know,
> Just God, thy very self is mercy too;
> If not to thee, where, whither shall I go?
>
> *Francis Quarles.*

Verse 2.—"*Bow down thine ear.*" Listen to my complaint. Put thy ear to my lips, that thou mayest hear all that my *feebleness* is capable of uttering. We generally put our ear near to the lips of the sick and dying that we may hear what they say. To this the text appears to allude.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*Deliver me speedily.*" In praying that he may be delivered *speedily* there is shown the greatness of his danger, as if he had said, All will soon be over with my life, unless God make haste to help me.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 2, 3.—"*Be thou my strong rock,*" etc. What the Lord is engaged to be unto us by covenant, we may pray and expect to find him in effect. "*Be thou my strong rock,*" saith he, "*for thou art my rock.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*For thy name's sake.*" If merely a creature's honour, the credit of ministers or the glory of angels were involved, man's salvation would indeed be

uncertain. But every step involves the honour of God. We plead for *his name's sake.* If God should begin and not continue, or if he should carry on but not complete the work, all would admit that it was for some reason that must bring reproach on the Almighty. This can never be. God was self-moved to undertake man's salvation. His glorious name makes it certain the top-stone shall be laid in glory.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*For thy name's sake.*" On account of the fame of thy power, thy goodness, thy truth, etc. "*Lead me.*" As a shepherd an erring sheep, as a leader military bands, or as one leads another ignorant of the way. See Gen. xxiv. 27; Neh. ix. 12, 13; Ps. xxiii. 3; lxxiii. 24. Govern my counsels, my affections, and my thoughts.—*Martin Geier,* 1614—1681.

Verse 4.—"*Pull me out of the net:*" that *noted net,* as the Hebrew hath it.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me.*" By these words, he intimateth that his enemies did not only by open force come against him, but by cunning and policy attempted to circumvent him, as when they put him on, as Saul instructed them, to be the king's son-in-law, and to this end set him on to get two hundred foreskins of the Philistines for a dowry, under a pretence of good-will, seeking his ruin; and when wait also was laid for him to kill him in his house. But he trusted in God, and prayed to be delivered, if there should be any the like enterprise against him hereafter.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 4.—"*For thou art my strength.*" Omnipotence cuts the net which policy weaves. When we poor puny things are in the net, God is not. In the old fable the mouse set free the lion, here the lion liberates the mouse.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—"*Into thine hand I commit my spirit.*" These were the last words of Polycarp, of Bernard, of Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of Luther, Melancthon, and many others. "Blessed are they," says Luther, "who die not only *for* the Lord, as martyrs, not only *in* the Lord, as all believers, but likewise *with* the Lord, as breathing forth their lives in these words, 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit.'" *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 5.—"*Into thine hand I commit my spirit.*" These words, as they stand in the *Vulgate,* were in the highest credit among our ancestors; by whom they were used in all dangers, difficulties, and in the article of death. *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum,* was used by the sick when about to expire, if they were sensible; and if not, the priest said it in their behalf. In *forms of prayer* for sick and dying persons, these words were frequently inserted in Latin, though all the rest of the prayer was English; for it was supposed there was something sovereign in the *language* itself. But let not the abuse of such words hinder their usefulness. For an ejaculation nothing can be better; and when the pious or the tempted with confidence use them, nothing can exceed their effect.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—"*Into thine hand I commit my spirit,*" etc. For what are the saints to commit their spirits into the hands of God by Jesus Christ?

1. That they may be safe; *i.e.,* preserved in their passage to heaven, from all the enemies and dangers that may stand in the way. When saints die, the powers of darkness would, doubtless, if possible, hinder the ascending of their souls to God. As they are cast out of heaven, they are filled with rage to see any out of our world going thither. One thing, therefore, which the saint means in committing his spirit into the hands of God, is, that the precious *depositum* may be kept from all that wish or would attempt its ruin. And they are sure that almighty power belongs to God: and if this is engaged for their preservation, none can pluck them out of his hand. The Redeemer hath spoiled principalities and powers, and proved it by his triumphant ascension to glory; and hath all his and the believer's enemies in a chain, so that they shall be more than conquerors in and through him. Angels, for order's sake, are sent forth to minister to them and be their guard, who will faithfully attend them their charge, till they are brought to the presence of the common Lord of both. "I know," saith the apostle, "whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

2. They commit their soul into the hands of God, that they may be admitted to dwell with him, even in that presence of his where there is fulness of joy, and

where there are pleasures for evermore: where all evil is excluded, and all good present, to fill their desires, and find them matter of praise to all eternity.

3. They commit their departing spirits into the hands of God, that their bodies may be at length raised and reunited to them, and that so they may enter at last into the blessedness prepared for them that love him. . . .

The grounds on which they may do this with comfort, *i.e.*, with lively hopes of being happy for ever, are many. To mention only two:—

1. God's interest in them, and upon the most endearing foundation, that of redemption. "*Into thine hand I commit my spirit: for thou hast redeemed me.*"

Redeemed me from hell and the wrath to come, by giving thy Son to die for me. Lord, I am not only thy creature, but thy redeemed creature, bought with a price, saith the saint.

Redeemed me from the power of my inward corruption, and from love to it, and delight in it; and with my consent hast drawn me to be thine, and thine for ever. *Lord, I am thine,* save me unchangeably.

2. His known faithfulness. "*Into thine hand I commit my spirit, O Lord God of truth.*" Into thine hand I commit my spirit, who hast been *a God of truth,* in performing thy promises to all thy people that are gone before me out of this world; and hast been so to me hitherto, and, I cannot doubt, wilt continue so to the end.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 5.—"*Into thine hand.*" When those hands fail me, then am I indeed abandoned and miserable! When they sustain and keep me, then am I safe, exalted, strong, and filled with good.

Receive me, then, O Eternal Father, for the sake of our Lord's merits and words; for he, by his obedience and his death, hath now merited from thee everything which I do not merit of myself. Into thy hands, my Father and my God, I commend my spirit, my soul, my body, my powers, my desires. I offer up to thy hands, all; to them I commit all that I have hitherto been, that thou mayest forgive and restore all; my wounds, that thou mayest heal them; my blindness, that thou mayest enlighten it; my coldness, that thou mayest inflame it; my wicked and erring ways, that thou mayest set me forth in the right path; and all my evils, that thou mayest uproot them all from my soul. I commend and offer up into thy most sacred hands, O my God, what I am, which thou knowest far better than I can know, weak, wretched, wounded, fickle, blind, deaf, dumb, poor, bare of every good, nothing, yea, less than nothing, on account of my many sins, and more miserable than I can either know or express. Do thou, Lord God, receive me and make me to become what he, the divine Lamb, would have me to be. I commend, I offer up, I deliver over into thy divine hands, all my affairs, my cares, my affections, my success, my comforts, my labours, and everything which thou knowest to be coming upon me. Direct all to thy honour and glory; teach me in all to do thy will, and in all to recognise the work of thy divine hands; to seek nothing else, and with this reflection alone to find rest and comfort in everything.

O hands of the Eternal God, who made and still preserve the heavens and earth for my sake, and who made me for yourselves, suffer me not ever to stray from you. In those hands I possess my Lamb, and all I love; in them therefore must I be also, together with him. Together with him, in these loving hands I shall sleep and rest in peace, since he in dying left me hope in them and in their infinite mercies, placed me within them, as my only and my special refuge. Since by these hands I live and am what I am, make me continually to live through them, and in them to die; in them to live in the love of our Lord, and from them only to desire and look for every good; that from them I may at last, together with the Lord, receive the crown.—*Fra Thomé de Jesu.*

Verse 5.—"*Into thine hand I commit my spirit.*" No shadowy form of a dark destiny stands before him at the end of his career, although he must die on the cross, the countenance of his Father shines before him. He does not behold his life melting away into the gloomy floods of mortality. He commends it into the hands of his Father. It is not alone in the general spirit of humanity, that he will continue to live. He will live on in the definite personality of his own spirit, embraced by the special protection and faithfulness of his Father. Thus he does not surrender his life despondingly to death for destruction, but with triumphant consciousness to the Father for resurrection. It was the very centre of his testament; assurance of life; surrender of his life into the hand of a living Father.

With loud voice he exclaimed it to the world, which will for ever and ever sink into the heathenish consciousness of death, of the fear of death, of despair of immortality and resurrection, because it for ever and ever allows the consciousness of the personality of God, and of personal union with him, to be obscured and shaken. With the heart of a lion, the dying Christ once more testified of life with an expression which was connected with the word of the Old Testament Psalm, and testified that the Spirit of eternal life was already operative, in prophetic anticipation, in the old covenant. Thus living as ever, he surrendered his life, through death, to the eternally living One. His death was the last and highest fact, the crown of his holy life.—*J. P. Lange, D.D., in "The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ,"* 1864.

Verse 5.—"*Into thine hand I commit my spirit.*" David committed his spirit to God that he might not die, but Christ and all Christians after him, commit their spirit to God, that they may live for ever by death, and after death. This Psalm is thus connected with the twenty-second Psalm. Both of these Psalms were used by Christ on the cross. From the twenty-second he derived those bitter words of anguish, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" From the present Psalm he derived those last words of love and trust which he uttered just before his death. The Psalter was the hymn-book and prayer-book of Christ.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 6.—"*I have hated.*" Holy men have strong passions, and are not so mincing and charitable towards evil doers as smooth-tongued latitudinarians would have them. He who does not hate evil does not love good. There is such a thing as a good hater.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"*They that regard lying vanities.*" The Romanists feign miracles of the saints to make them, as they suppose, the more glorious. They say that the house wherein the Virgin Mary was when the angel Gabriel came unto her was, many hundred years after, translated, first, out of Galilee into Dalmatia, above 2,000 miles, and thence over the sea into Italy, where also it removed from one place to another, till at length it found a place where to abide, and many most miraculous cures, they say, were wrought by it, and that the very trees when it came, did bow unto it. Infinite stories they have of this nature, especially in the Legend of Saints, which they call "The Golden Legend," a book so full of gross stuff that Ludovicus Vives, a Papist, but learned and ingenuous, with great indignation cried out, "What can be more abominable than that book?" and he wondered why they should call it "golden," when as he that wrote it was a man "of an iron mouth and of a leaden heart." And Melchior Canus, a Romish bishop, passed the same censure upon that book, and complains (as Vives also had done before him), that Laertius wrote the lives of philosophers, and Suetonius the lives of the Cæsars, more sincerely than some did the lives of the saints and martyrs.

They are most vain and superstitious in the honour which they give to the relics of the saints; as their dead bodies, or some parts of them; their bones, flesh, hair; yea, their clothes that they wore, or the like. "You may now, everywhere," saith Erasmus, "see held out for gain, Mary's milk, which they honour almost as much as Christ's consecrated body; prodigious oil; so many pieces of the cross, that if these were all gathered together a great ship would scarce carry them. Here Francis's hood set forth to view; there the innermost garment of the Virgin Mary; in one place, Anna's comb; in another place, Joseph's stocking; in another place, Thomas of Canterbury's shoe; in another place, Christ's foreskin, which, though it be a thing uncertain, they worship more religiously than Christ's whole person. Neither do they bring forth these things as things that may be tolerated, and to please the common people, but all religion almost is placed in them."*—*Christopher Cartwright.*

Verse 6.—The sense lies thus, that heathen men, when any danger or difficulty approacheth them, are solemnly wont to apply themselves to auguries and divinations, and so to false gods, to receive advice and direction from them: but doing so and observing their responses most superstitiously, they yet gain nothing at all by it. These David detests, and keeps close to God, hoping for no aid but from him.—*H. Hammond, D.D.*

Verse 7.—"*I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.*"—In the midst of trouble faith will furnish matter of joy, and promise to itself gladness, especially from

* Erasmus, on Matthew xxiii. 5.

the memory of by-past experiences of God's mercy; as here, "*I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.*" . . . The ground of our gladness, when we have found a proof of God's kindness to us should not be in the benefit so much as in the fountain of the benefit; for this giveth us hope to drink again of the like experience from the fountain which did send forth that benefit. Therefore David says, "*I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou hast considered my trouble:*"

Man's plea to man, is, that he never more
Will beg, and that he never begg'd before:
Man's plea to God, is, that he did obtain
A former suit, and, therefore sues again.
How good a God we serve; that when we sue,
Makes his old gifts the examples of his new!

Francis Quarles.

Verse 7.—"*Thou hast known my soul in adversities.*" One day a person who, by the calamities of war, sickness, and other affliction, had been reduced from a state of affluence to penury, came to Gotthold in great distress. He complained that he had just met one of his former acquaintances, who was even not distantly related to him, but that he had not condescended to bow, far less to speak to him, and had turned his eyes away, and passed him as if he had been a stranger. O sir, he exclaimed with a sigh, how it pained me! I felt as if a dagger had pierced my heart! Gotthold replied, Don't think it strange at all. It is the way of the world to look high, and to pass unnoticed that which is humble and lowly. I know, however, of *One* who, though he dwelleth on high, humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth (Ps. cxiii. 5, 6), and of whom the royal prophet testifies: "*Thou hast known my soul in adversities.*" Yes; though we have lost our rich attire, and come to him in rags; though our forms be wasted because of grief, and waxed old (Ps. vi. 7, Luth. Ver.); though sickness and sorrow have consumed our beauty like a moth (Ps. xxxix. 11); though blushes, and tears, and dust, overspread our face (Ps. lxix. 7), he still recognises, and is not ashamed to own us. Comfort yourself with this, for what harm will it do you at last, though men disown, if God the Lord have not forgotten you?—*Christian Scriver.*

Verse 8.—He openeth and no man shutteth. Let us bless the Lord for an open door which neither men nor devils can close. We are not in man's hands yet, because we are in the hands of God: else had our feet been in the stocks and not in the large room of liberty. Our enemies, if they were as able as they are willing, would long ago have treated us as fowlers do the little birds when they enclose them in their hand.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 9.—"*Mine eye is consumed with grief.*" This expression seems to suggest that the eye really suffers under the influence of grief. There was an old idea, which still prevails amongst the uninstructed, that the eye, under extreme grief, and with a constant profuse flow of tears, might sink away and perish under the ordeal. There is no solid foundation for this idea, but there is a very serious form of disease of the eyes, well known to oculists by the title of Glaucoma, which seems to be very much influenced by mental emotions of a depressing nature. I have known many striking instances of cases in which there has been a constitutional proneness to Glaucoma, and in which some sudden grief has brought on a violent access of the disease and induced blindness of an incurable nature. In such instances the explanation seems to be somewhat as follows. It is essential to the healthy performance of the functions of the eye, that it should possess a given amount of elasticity, which again results from an exact balance between the amount of fluid within the eye, and the external fibrous case or bag that contains or encloses it. If this is disturbed, if the fluid increases unduly in quantity, and the eye becomes too hard, pain and inflammation may be suddenly induced in the interior of the eye, and sight may become rapidly extinguished. There are a special set of nerves that preside over this peculiar physical condition, and keep the eye in a proper state of elasticity; and it is a remarkable fact, that through a long life, as a rule, we find that the eye preserves this elastic state. If, however, the function of these nerves is impaired, as it may readily be under the influence of extreme grief, or any depressing agent, the eye may become suddenly hard. Until a comparatively recent date, acute Glaucoma, or sudden hardening of the eye, attended with intense

pain and inflammation, caused complete and hopeless blindness; but in the present day it is capable of relief by means of an operation. The effect of grief in causing this form of blindness seems to be an explanation of the text, "*Mine eye is consumed with grief.*"*

Verses 9, 10:—

If thou wouldst learn, not knowing how to pray,
Add but a faith, and say as beggars say:
Master, I'm poor, and blind, in great distress,
Hungry, and lame, and cold, and comfortless;
O succour him that's gravell'd on the shelf
Of pain, and want, and cannot help himself;
Cast down thine eye upon a wretch, and take
Some pity on me, for sweet Jesus' sake:
But hold! take heed this clause be not put in,
I never begged before, nor will again.

Francis Quarles.

Verse 10.—"*Mine iniquity:*" Italian version, "*my pains;*" because that death and all miseries are come into the world by reason of sin, the Scripture doth often confound the names of the cause and of the effects.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 10.—I find that when the saints are under trial and well humbled, little sins raise great cries in the conscience; but in prosperity, conscience is a pope that gives dispensations and great latitude to our hearts. The cross is therefore as needful as the crown is glorious.—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 11.—"*I was a reproach among all mine enemies.*" If anyone strives after patience and humility, he is a hypocrite. If he allows himself in the pleasures of this world, he is a glutton. If he seeks justice, he is impatient; if he seeks it not, he is a fool. If he would be prudent, he is stingy; if he would make others happy, he is dissolute. If he gives himself up to prayer, he is vainglorious. And this is the great loss of the church, that by means like these many are held back from goodness! which the Psalmist lamenting says, "*I became a reproof among all mine enemies.*"—*Chrysostom, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 11.—"*They that did see me without fled from me.*" I once heard the following relation from an old man of the world, and it occurs to me, as illustrative of what we are now considering. He was at a public assembly, and saw there an individual withdrawing herself from the crowd, and going into a corner of the room. He went up to her, she was an old and intimate friend of his; he addressed himself to her—she, with a sigh, said, "Oh, I have seen many days of trouble since we last met." What does the man of the world do? Immediately he withdrew himself from his sorrow-stricken friend and hid himself in the crowd. Such is the sympathy of the world with Christ or his servants.—*Hamilton Verschoyle.*

Verse 12.—"*I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.*" A striking instance of how the greatest princes are forgotten in death is found in the deathbed of Louis XIV. "The Louis that was, lies forsaken, a mass of abhorred clay; abandoned 'to some poor persons, and priests of the *Chapelle Ardente*,' who make haste to put him 'in two lead coffins, pouring in abundant spirits of wine.' The new Louis with his court is rolling towards Choisy, through the summer afternoon: the royal tears still flow; but a word mispronounced by Monseigneur d'Artois sets them all laughing, and they weep no more."—*Thomas Carlyle in "The French Revolution."*

Verse 12.—"*I am forgotten,*" etc. As a dying man with curtains drawn, whom friends have no hope of, and therefore look off from; or rather like a dead man laid aside out of sight and out of mind altogether, and buried more in oblivion than in his grave; when the news is, "she is dead, trouble not the Master." Luke viii. 49. —*Anthony Tuckney, D.D.*, 1599—1670.

Verse 12.—"*I am like a broken vessel.*" As a vessel, how profitable soever it hath been to the owner, and how necessary for his turn, yet, when it is broken is thrown away, and regarded no longer: even so such is the state of a man forsaken

* On application for information to the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, as to the effect of grief upon the eye, we received the above, with much other valuable information, from GEORGE CRITCHETT, ESQ., the senior medical officer. The courtesy of this gentleman, and of the secretary of that noble institution, deserves especial mention.

of those whose friend he hath been so long as he was able to stand them in stead, to be of advantage to them.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verses 12—15 :—

Forgot as those who in the grave abide,
And as a broken vessel past repair,
Slandered by many, fear on every side,
Who counsel take and would my life ensnare

But, Lord, my hopes on thee are fixed : I said,
Thou art my God, my days are in thy hand ;
Against my furious foes oppose thy aid.
And those who persecute my soul withstand.

George Sandys.

Verse 13.—"*I have heard the slander of many.*" From my very childhood, when I was first sensible of the concernments of men's souls, I was possessed with some admiration to find that everywhere the religious, godly sort of people, who did but exercise a serious care of their own and other men's salvation, were made the wonder and obloquy of the world, especially of the most vicious and flagitious men ; so that they that professed the same articles of faith, the same commandments of God to be their law, and the same petitions of the Lord's prayer to be their desire, and so professed the same religion, did everywhere revile those that endeavoured to live in good earnest in what they said. I thought this was impudent hypocrisy in the ungodly, worldly sort of men—to take those for the most intolerable persons in the land who are but serious in their own religion, and do but endeavour to perform what all their enemies also vow and promise. If religion be bad, and our faith be not true, why do these men profess it ? If it be true and good, why do they hate and revile them that would live in the serious practice of it, if they will not practise it themselves ? But we must not expect reason when sin and sensuality have made men unreasonable.

But I must profess that since I observed the course of the world, and the concord of the word and providence of God, I took it for a notable proof of man's fall, and of the truth of the Scripture, and of the supernatural original of true sanctification, to find such a universal enmity between the holy and the serpentine seed, and to find Cain and Abel's case so ordinarily exemplified, and he that is born after the flesh persecuting him that is born after the Spirit. And methinks to this day it is a great and visible help for the confirmation of our Christian faith.—*Richard Baxter.*

Verse 13.—"*Slander.*" Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.—*William Shakespeare.*

Verse 13.—"*They took counsel together against me,*" etc. While they mangled his reputation, they did it in such a manner as that they covered their wickedness under the appearance of grave and considerate procedure, in consulting among themselves to destroy him as a man who no longer ought to be tolerated on the earth. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that his mind was wounded by so many and so sharp temptations.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*But I trusted in thee, O Lord.*" The rendering properly is, *And I have trusted in thee,* but the Hebrew copulative particle ו, *vau, and,* is used here instead of the adversitive particle *yet,* or *nevertheless.* David, setting the steadfastness of his faith in opposition to the assaults of the temptations of which he has made mention, denies that he had ever fainted, but rather maintains, on the contrary, that he stood firm in his hope of deliverance from God. Nor does this imply that he boasted of being so magnanimous and courageous that he could not be overthrown through the infirmity of the flesh. However contrary to one another they appear, yet these things are often joined together, as they ought to be, in the same person, namely, that while he pines away with grief, and is deprived of all strength, he is nevertheless supported by so strong a hope that he ceases not to call upon God. David, therefore, was not so overwhelmed in deep sorrow, and other direful sufferings, as that the hidden light of faith could not shine inwardly in his heart ; nor did he groan so much under the weighty load of his temptations, as to be prevented from arousing himself to call upon God. He struggled through many obstacles to be able to make the confession which he here makes. He next

defines the manner of his faith, namely, that he reflected with himself thus—that God would never fail him nor forsake him. Let us mark his manner of speech: *I have said, Thou art my God.* In these words he intimates that he was so entirely persuaded of this truth, that God was his God, that he would not admit even a suggestion to the contrary. And until this persuasion prevails so as to take possession of our minds, we shall always waver in uncertainty. It is, however, to be observed, that this declaration is not only inward and secret—made rather in the heart than with the tongue—but that it is directed to God himself, as to him who is the alone witness of it. Nothing is more difficult, when we see our faith derided by the whole world, than to direct our speech to God only, and to rest satisfied with this testimony which our conscience gives us, *that he is our God.* And certainly it is an undoubted proof of genuine faith, when, however fierce the waves are which beat against us, and however sore the assaults by which we are shaken, we hold fast this as a fixed principle, that we are constantly under the protection of God, and can say to him freely, *Thou art our God.—John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—*"Thou art my God."* How much it is more worth than ten thousand mines of gold, to be able to say, God is mine! God's servant is apprehensive of it, and he seeth no defect, but this may be complete happiness to him, and therefore he delights in it, and comforts himself with it. As he did sometime who was a great courtier in King Cyrus's court, and one in favour with him; he was to bestow his daughter in marriage to a very great man, and of himself he had no great means; and therefore one said to him, O Sir, where will you have means to bestow a dowry upon your daughter proportionable to her degree? Where are your riches? He answered, What need I care, ὅπου Κυρος μοι φίλος, Cyrus is my friend. But may not we say much more, ὅπου Κυριος μοι φιλος, where the Lord is our friend, that hath those excellent and glorious attributes that cannot come short in any wants, or to make us happy, especially we being capable of it, and made proportionable.—*John Stoughton's "Righteous Man's Plea to True Happinesse,"* 1640.

Verse 15.—*"My times are in thy hand."* It is observable that when, of late years, men grew weary of the long and tedious compass in their voyages to the East Indies, and would needs try a more compendious way by the North-West passage, it ever proved unsuccessful. Thus it is that we must not use any compendious way; we may not neglect our body, nor shipwreck our health, nor anything to hasten death, because we shall gain by it. He that maketh haste (even this way) to be rich shall not be innocent; for our times are in God's hands, and therefore to his holy providence we must leave them. We have a great deal of work to do, and must not, therefore, be so greedy of our Sabbath-day, our rest, as not to be contented with our working-day, our labour. Hence it is that a composed frame of heart, like that of the apostle's (Phil. i. 21), wherein either to stay and work, or to go and rest, is the best temper of all.—*Edward Reynolds, in J. Spencer's "Things New and Old."*

Verse 15.—*"My times."* He does not use the plural number, in my opinion, without reason; but rather to mark the variety of casualties by which the life of man is usually harassed.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 15.—*"In thy hand."* The watch hangs ticking against the wall, when every tick of the watch is a sigh, and a consciousness, alas! Poor watch! I called once to see a friend, the physician and the secretary of one of the most noble and admirable of the asylums for the insane in this country. A poor creature, with a clear, bright intelligence, only that some of its chords had become unstrung, who had usually occupied itself innocently by making or unmaking watches, had just before I called, exhibited some new, alarming symptoms, dashing one and then another upon the stone floor, and shivering them. Removed into a more safe room, I visited him with the secretary. "How came you to destroy your favourite watches, so much as you loved them, and so quiet as you are?" said my friend; and the poor patient replied, in a tone of piercing agony, "I could not bear the tick, tick, ticking, and so I dashed it on the pavement." But when the watch is able to surrender itself to the maker, to the hand holding the watch, and measuring out the moments, it becomes a sight affecting indeed, but very beautiful, very sublime. We transfer our thought from the watch to *the hand* that holds the watch. *"My times," "Thy hand;"* the watch and the hour have a purpose, and are not in vain. God gives man permission to behold two things. Man can see the whole work, the plan's completeness, also the minutest work, the first step

towards the plan's completeness. Nothing is more certain, nothing are men more indisposed to perceive than this. We have to

> " *Wait* for some transcendent life,
> Reserved by God to follow this." *

To this end God's real way is made up of all the ways of our life. His hand holds all our times. " *My times ;* " " *Thy hand.*" Some lives greatly differ from others. This we know ; but see, some lives fulfil life's course, gain life's crown—life in their degree. This, on the contrary, others quite miss. Yet, for even human strength there must be a love meted out to rule it. It is said, there is a moon to control the tides of every sea ; is there not a master power for souls ? It may not always be so, apparently, in the more earthly lives, but it is so in the heavenly : not more surely does the moon sway tides than God sways souls. It does seem sometimes as if man found no adequate external power, and stands forth ordained to be a law to his own sphere ; but even then his times are in the hands of God, as the pathway of a star is in the limitations of its system—as the movements of a satellite are in the forces of its planet. But while I would not pause on morbid words or views of life, so neither do I desire you to receive or charge me with giving only a moody, morbid view of the world, and an imperfect theology ; but far other. " *My times are in thy hand*"—*the hand of my Saviour.*

> " I report as a man may of God's work—all's love, but all's law.
> In the Godhead I seek and I find it, and so it shall be
> A face like my face that receives thee, a Man like to me
> Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever, a hand like this hand
> Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee : *See the Christ stand !* "*

And now he is " the restorer of paths to dwell in." The hand of Jesus is the hand which rules our times. He regulates our life-clock. Christ for and Christ in us. *My* times in *his* hand. My life can be no more in vain than was my Saviour's life in vain.—*E. Paxton Hood, in " Dark Sayings on a Harp,"* 1865.

Verse 15.—When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, *This is the time* in which God will deliver thee. 1 Sam. xxiv. 4. No, saith David, the time is not come for my deliverance till it can be wrought without sin, and I will wait for that time ; for it is God's time, and that is the best time.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 16.—" *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*" When the cloud of trouble hideth the Lord's favour, faith knoweth it may shine again, and therefore prayeth through the cloud for the dissolving of it. " *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 18.—" *Lying lips . . . . which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.*" The primitive persecutors slighted the Christians for a company of bad, illiterate fellows, and therefore they used to paint the God of the Christians with an ass's head and a book in his hand, saith Tertullian ; to signify, that though they pretended learning, yet they were silly and ignorant people. Bishop Jewel, in his sermon upon Luke xi. 15, cites this out of Tertullian and applies it to his times. Do not our adversaries the like, saith he, against all that profess the gospel ? Oh ! say they, who are those that favour this way ? None but shoemakers, tailors, weavers, and such as never were at the University. These are the bishop's own words. Bishop White said in open court, that the Puritans were all a company of blockheads.—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 18.—" *Lying lips . . . . which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.*" In that venerable and original monument of the Vaudois Church, entitled " The Golden Lesson," of the date 1100, we meet with a verse, which has been thus translated :—

> " If there be any one who loves and fears Jesus Christ,
> Who will not curse, nor swear, nor lie,
> Nor be unchaste, nor kill, nor take what is another's,
> Nor take vengeance on his enemies ;
> They say that he is a Vaudès, and worthy of punishment."
>
> *Antoine Monastier, in " A History of Vaudois Church,"* 1859.

---

* Robert Browning.

Verse 19.—*"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee."* As a provident man will regulate his liberality towards all men in such a manner as not to defraud his children or family, nor impoverish his own house, by spending his substance prodigally on others; so God, in like manner, in exercising his beneficence to aliens from his family, knows well how to reserve for his own children that which belongs to them, as it were by hereditary right; that is to say, because of their adoption.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 19.—*"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee."*—Mark the phrase, "Laid up for them;" his mercy and goodness it is intended for them, as a father that lays by such a sum of money, and writes on the bag, "This is a portion for such a child." But how comes the Christian to have this right to God, and all that vast and untold treasure of happiness which is in him? This indeed is greatly to be heeded; it is faith that gives him a good title to all this. That which maketh him a child, makes him an heir. Now, faith makes him a child of God. John i. 12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." As therefore, if you would not call your birthright into question, and bring your interest in Christ and those glorious privileges that come along with him, under a sad dispute in your soul, look to your faith.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 19.—*"How great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee."* When I reflect upon the words of thy prophet, it seems to me that he means to depict God as a father who, no doubt, keeps his children under discipline, and subjects them to the rod; but who, with all his labour and pains, still aims at nothing but to lay up for them a store which may contribute to their comfort when they have grown to maturity, and learned the prudent use of it. My Father, in this world thou hidest from thy children thy great goodness, as if it did not pertain to them. But being thy children, we may be well assured that the celestial treasure will be bestowed upon none else. For this reason, I will bear my lot with patience. But, oh! from time to time, waft to me a breath of air from the heavenly land, to refresh my sorrowful heart; I will then wait more calmly for its full fruition.—*Christian Scriver.*

Verse 19.—*"Oh how great is thy goodness."* Let me, to set the crown on the head of the *duty of meditation*, add one thing over and above—let meditation be *carried up to admiration:* not only should we be affected, but transported, rapt up and ravished with the beauties and transcendencies of heavenly things; act meditation to admiration, endeavour the highest pitch, coming the nearest to the highest patterns, the patterns of saints and angels in heaven, whose actings are the purest, highest ecstacies and admirations. Thus were these so excellent artists in meditation, David, an high actor of admiration in meditation, as often we see it in the Psalms; so in Psalm viii. 1, 9; Psalm xxxi. 19; *"Oh how great is thy goodness,"* etc.; Psalm civ. 24; "O Lord, how manifold are thy works," etc.; and in other places David's meditation and admiration were as his harp, well tuned, and excellently played on, in rarest airs and highest strains; as the precious gold, and the curious burnishing; or the richest stone, and the exquisitest polishing and setting of it. So blessed Paul, who was a great artist in musing, acted high in admiration, his soul was very warm and flaming up in it: it was as a bird with a strong and long wing that soars and towers up aloft, and gets out of sight.—*Nathaniel Ranew.*

Verse 19.—*"Before the sons of men,"* i.e., *openly.* The Psalmist here perhaps refers to temporal blessings conferred on the pious, and evident to all. Some, however, have supposed the reference to be to the reward of the righteous, bestowed with the utmost publicity on the day of judgment; which better agrees with our interpretation of the former part of the verse.—*Daniel Cresswell, D.D., F.R.S.* (1776–1844), *in loc.*

Verse 19.—Believe it, Sirs, you cannot conceive what a friend you shall have of God, would you but be persuaded to enter into covenant with him, to be his, wholly his. I tell you, many that sometimes thought and did as you do now, that is, set light by Christ and hate God, and see no loveliness in him, are now quite of another mind; they would not for ten thousand worlds quit their interest in him. Oh, who dare say that he is a hard Master? Who that knows him will say that he is an unkind friend? Oh, what do poor creatures all, that they do entertain such harsh, sour thoughts of God? What, do they think that there is nothing in that scripture, *"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them*

that fear thee!" Doth the Psalmist speak too largely? Doth he say more than he and others could prove? Ask him, and he will tell you in verse 21, that he blesseth God. These were things he could speak to, from his own personal experience; and many thousands as well as he, to whom the Lord had showed his marvellous kindness, and therefore he doth very passionately plead with the people of God to love him, and more highly to express their sense of his goodness, that the world might be encouraged also to have good thoughts of him.—*James Janeway.*

Verse 19.—Very observable is that expression of the Psalmist, *"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought before the sons of men for them that trust in thee."* In the former clause, God's goodness is said to be *laid up*; in the latter, to be *wrought.* Goodness is laid up in the promise, wrought in the performance; and that goodness which is laid up is wrought for them that trust in God; and thus, as God's faithfulness engageth us to believe, so our faith, as it were, engageth God's faithfulness to perform the promise.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 20.—*"Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."* This our beloved God does secretly, so that no human eyes may or can see, and the ungodly do not know that a believer is, in God, and in the presence of God, so well protected, that no reproach or contempt, and no quarrelsome tongues can do him harm.—*Arndt, quoted by W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 22.—*"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications."* Who would have thought those prayers should ever have had any prevalency in God's ears which were mixed with so much infidelity in the petitioner's heart!—*William Secker.*

Verse 22.—*"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes."*—No, no, Christian; a prayer sent up in faith, according to the will of God, cannot be lost, though it be delayed. We may say of it, as David said of Saul's sword and Jonathan's bow, that they never return empty. So David adds, *"Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee."*—*John Flavel.*

Verse 22.—*"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes,"* etc. Let us with whom it was once night, improve that morning joy that now shines upon us. Let us be continual admirers of God's grace and mercy to us. He has prevented us with his goodness, when he saw nothing in us but impatience and unbelief, when we were like Jonas in the belly of hell, his bowels yearned over us, and his power brought us safe to land. What did we to hasten his deliverance, or to obtain his mercy? If he had never come to our relief till he saw something in us to invite him, we had not yet been relieved. No more did we contribute to our restoration than we do to the rising of the sun, or the approach of day. We were like dry bones without motion, and without strength. Ezek. xxxvii. 1—11. And we also said, that 'we were cut off for our parts, and our hope was gone, and he caused breath to enter into us, and we live.' Who is a God like to our God that pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin? that retains not his anger for ever? that is slow to wrath and delights in mercy? that has been displeased with us for a moment, but gives us hope of his everlasting kindness? Oh! what love is due from us to Christ, that has pleaded for us when we ourselves had nothing to say! That has brought us out of a den of lions, and from the jaws of the roaring lion! To say, as Mrs. Sarah Wright did, "I have obtained mercy, that thought my time of mercy past for ever; I have hope of heaven, that thought I was already damned by unbelief; I said many a time, there is no hope in mine end, and I thought I saw it; I was so desperate, I cared not what became of me. Oft was I at the very brink of death and hell, even at the very gates of both, and then Christ shut them. I was as Daniel in the lion's den, and he stopped the mouth of those lions, and delivered me. The goodness of God is unsearchable; how great is the excellency of his majesty, that yet he would look upon such a one as I; that he has given me peace that was full of terror, and walked continually, as amidst fire and brimstone."—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verse 22.—*"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes:"*—*i.e.*, Thou has quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul, and so be cut off before thine eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). This he said in his

flight (so some read it), which notes the distress of his affairs: Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong; *in his haste* (so we read it), which notes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprising, so that it found him off his guard. Note, it is a common thing to speak amiss, when we speak in haste and without consideration; but what we speak amiss in haste, we must repent of at leisure, particularly that which we have spoken distrustfully of God.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 22.—"*I said in my haste.*"—Sometimes a sudden passion arises, and out it goes in angry and froward words, setting all in an uproar and combustion: by-and-by our hearts recur upon us, and then we wish, "O that I had bit my tongue, and not given it such an unbridled liberty." Sometimes we break out into rash censures of those that it may be are better than ourselves, whereupon when we reflect, we are ashamed that the fools' bolt was so soon shot, and wish we had been judging ourselves when we were censuring our brethren.—*Richard Alleine.*

Verse 22.—"*Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.*" As if he had said, when I prayed with so little faith, that I, as it were, unprayed my own prayer, by concluding my case in a manner desperate; yet God pardoned my hasty spirit, and gave me that mercy which I had hardly any faith to expect; and what use doth he make of this experience, but to raise every saint's hope in a time of need? "*Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.*"—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 22.—He confesseth the great distress he was in, and how weak his faith was under the temptation; this he doth to his own shame acknowledge also, that he may give the greater glory to God. Whence learn, 1.—The faith of the godly may be slackened, and the strongest faith may sometimes show its infirmity. "*I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes.*" 2.—Though faith be shaken, yet it is fixed in the root, as a tree beaten by the wind keeping strong grips of good ground. Though faith seem to yield, yet it faileth not, and even when it is at the weakest, it is uttering itself in some act, as a wrestler, for here the expression of David's infirmity in faith, is directed to God, and his earnest prayer joined with it, "*I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.*" 3.—Praying faith, how weak soever, shall not be misregarded of God; for "*nevertheless,*" saith he, "*thou heardest the voice of my supplications.*" 4.—There may be in a soul at one time, both grief oppressing, and hope upholding; both darkness of trouble, and the light of faith; both desperately doubting, and strong gripping of God's truth and goodness; both a fainting and a fighting; a seeming yielding in the fight, and yet a striving of faith against all opposition; both a foolish haste, and a settled stayedness of faith; as here, "*I said in my haste,*" etc.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 22.—David vents his astonishment at the Lord's condescension in hearing his prayer. How do we wonder at the goodness of a petty man in granting our desires! How much more should we at the humility and goodness of the most sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth!—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 23.—"*O love the Lord, all ye his saints.*" The holy Psalmist in the words does, with all the warmth of an affectionate zeal, incite us to the love of God, which is the incomparably noblest passion of a reasonable mind, its brightest glory and most exquisite felicity; and it is, as appears evident from the nature of the thing, and the whole train of divine revelation, the comprehensive sum of that duty which we owe to our Maker, and the very soul which animates a religious life, that we "love the Lord with all our heart, and strength, and mind."—*William Dunlop, A.M.*, 1692—1720.

Verse 23.—"*O love the Lord, all ye his saints,*" etc. Some few words are to be attended in the clearing of the sense. "*Saints*" here in the text is or may be read, *ye that feel mercies.* "*Faithful,*" the word is sometimes taken for *persons,* sometimes *things;* and so the Lord is said to preserve true men, and truths, faithful men, and faithfulnesses. "*He plenteously rewardeth the proud doer;*" or, the Lord rewardeth plenteously; *the Lord,* who doth wonderful things. *Plenteously* is either *in cumulum, abunde,* or *in nepotes,* as some would have it; but I would rather *commend,* than go about to *amend* translations: though I could wish some of my learned brethren's quarrelling hours were spent rather upon clearing the originals, and so conveying over pure Scripture to posterity, than in scratching others with their sharpened pens, and making cock-pits of pulpits.—*Hugh*

Peters' "Sermon preached before both Houses of Parliament, the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, and the Assembly of Divines, at the last Thanksgiving Day, April 2. *For the recovering of the West, and disbanding* 5,000 *of the King's Horse, etc.*, 1645."

23. "*And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.*" The next query is, *how God rewardeth the proud doer?* in which, though the Lord's proceedings be diverse, and many times his paths in the clouds, and his judgments in the deep, and the uttermost farthing shall be paid the proud doer at the great day; yet so much of his mind he hath left unto us, that even in this life he given out something to the proud which he calls "the day of recompense," which he commonly manifests in these particulars:—1. By way of *retaliation*—for *Adoni-bezek* that would be cutting off thumbs, had his thumbs cut off. Judges i. 7. So the poor Jews that cried so loud, "Crucify him, crucify him," were so many of them crucified, that if you believe Josephus, there was not wood enough to make crosses, nor in the usual place room enough to set up the crosses when they were made. Snares are made and pits are digged by the proud for *themselves* commonly, to which the Scripture throughout gives abundant testimony. 2. By shameful *disappointments*, seldom reaping what they sow, nor eating what they catch in hunting, which is most clear in the Jewish State when Christ was amongst them. *Judas* betrays him to get money, and hardly lived long enough to spend it. *Pilate*, to please Cæsar, withstands all counsels against it, and gives way to that murder, by which he ruined both himself and Cæsar. The Jewish priests, to maintain that domination and honour (which they thought the son of Joseph and Mary stole from them) cried aloud for his death, which proved a sepulchre to them and their glory. And the poor people that crucified him (through fear of the *Romans* taking their city) by his death had their gates opened to the *Romans*—yea, *Cæsar* himself, fearing a great change in his government by Christ living near him (which to-day sets all the kingcraft in the world to work) met such a change that shortly he had neither crown nor sceptre to boast of, if you read the story of Titus and Vespasian, all which dealings of God with the proud is most elegantly set forth unto us by the Psalmist. "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.—*Hugh Peters.*

24. "*Be of good courage.*" Christian courage may thus be described. It is the undaunted audacity of a sanctified heart in adventuring upon difficulties and undergoing hardships for a good cause upon the call of God. The *genus*, the common nature of it is an undaunted audacity. This animosity, as some phrase it, is common both unto men and to some brutes. The lion is said to be the strongest among beasts, that turneth not away from any. Prov. xxx. 30. And there is an elegant description of the war horse in regard of boldness. Job xxxix. 19, etc. And this boldness that is in brutes is spoken of as a piece of this same *courage* that God is pleased to give to men. Ezek. iii. 9. This is the Lord's promise—"As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead." The word "harder" is the same in the Hebrew that is here in my text—*fortiorem petra*—the rock that is not afraid of any weather, summer or winter, sun and showers, heat and cold, frost and snow; it blusheth not, shrinketh not, it changeth not its complexion, it is still the same. Such a like thing is *courage*, in the common nature of it. Secondly, consider the subject, it is *the heart*, the castle where courage commands and exerciseth military discipline; (shall I so say) it's within the bosom, it is the soul of a valiant soldier. Some conceive our English word *courage* to be derived from *cordis actio*, the very acting of the heart. A valiant man is described (2 Sam. xvii. 10) for to be a man whose heart is as the heart of a lion. And sometimes the original translated *courageous*, as Amos ii. 16, may most properly be rendered *a man of heart.* Beloved, valour doth not consist in a piercing eye, in a terrible look, in big words; but it consists in the mettle, the vigour that is within the bosom. Sometimes a coward may dwell at the sign of a roaring voice and of a stern countenance; whereas true fortitude may be found within his breast whose outward deportment promises little or nothing in that kind. Thirdly, note the qualification of this same subject; I said a sanctified heart; for I am not now speaking of fortitude as a moral virtue, whereof heathens that have not God are capable, and for which many among them that are not Christians, have been worthily commended. But I am now discoursing of courage as a virtue theological, as a gracious qualification, put upon the people of God by special covenant. And

there are three things that do characterise it, and which do distinguish it from the moral virtue of fortitude. (1) The *root*, whence it ariseth; (2) the *rule*, whereby it is directed; (3) the *end*, to which it is referred. The *root*, whence it ariseth, is *love to God:* all the saints of God that love the Lord be of good courage. The love of Christ constraineth me to make these bold and brave adventures, saith the apostle. 2 Cor. v. 14. The *rule*, whereby it is directed, is the *word of God*—what the Lord hath pleased to leave on record for a Christian's guidance in holy pages. 1 Chron. xxii. 12, 13. "Only the Lord give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the Lord thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage: dread not, nor be dismayed." Be a man of mettle, but let thy mettle be according to my mind, according to this rule. And the *end*, to which it refers, is *God*. For every sanctified man being a self-denying and a God-advancing man, his God is his centre, wherein his actings, his undertakings rest; and his soul is not, yea, it cannot be satisfied but in God.—*Simeon Ash's "Sermon preached before the Commanders of the Military Forces of the renowned Citie of London*, 1642."

Verse 24. "*Be of good courage.*"—Shall I hint some of the weighty services that are charged upon all our consciences? The work of mortification, to pick out our eyes, to chop off our hands, to cut off our feet; do you think that a milksop, a man that is not a man of a stout spirit, will do this? Now to massacre fleshly lusts, is (as it were) for a man to mangle and dismember his own body; it is a work painful and grievous, as for a man to cut off his own feet, to chop off his own hands, and to pick out his own eyes, as Christ and the apostle Paul do express it. Besides this, there are in Christians' bosoms strongholds to be battered, fortifications to be demolished; there are high hills and mountains that must be levelled with the ground; there are trenches to be made, valleys to be filled. O beloved, I may not mention the hills that lie before us in heaven way, which we must climb up, and craggy rocks that we must get over; and without courage certainly the work put upon our hands will not be discharged. There are also the walls of Jerusalem to be repaired, and the temple to be re-edified. If Nehemiah had not been a man of a brave spirit he would never have gone through stitch with that church work, those weighty services which he did undertake. How this is applicable to us for the present time, the time of our begun reformation, I speak not, but rather do refer it to your considerations. I beseech you to read Neh. iv. 17, 18, "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded, and he that sounded the trumpet was by me." While they were at work, they were all ready for war.—*Simeon Ash.*

Verse 24.—"*And he shall strengthen thy heart.*" Put thou thyself forth in a way of bold adventure for him, and his providence shall be sweetly exercised for thy good. A worthy commander, how careful is he of a brave blade, a man that will fight at a cannon's mouth! Doth he hear from him that a bone is broken? Send for the bone-setter. Is he like to bleed to death? Call for the surgeon; let him post away to prevent that peril. Doth he grow weaker and weaker? Is there anything in the camp that may restore his spirit? withhold nothing; nothing is too good, too costly; would he eat gold he should have it. Thus it is with God. Oh, what letters of commendation doth he give in manifestation of his own love to them in Pergamos upon this very ground. "Thou, saith the Lord, thou hast held forth my name, and not denied it, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth!" thou didst fight for Christ in the cave where the devil commanded; thou didst stand and appear for him when other men did lose heart and courage. Here is a man that God will own; such a one shall have God's heart and hand to do him honour, to yield him comfort. And therefore I appeal to your consciences, is not this courage worth the having? worth the seeking?—*Simeon Ash.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Faith expressed, confusion deprecated, deliverance sought.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—*Open avowal of faith.* 1. Duties which precede it, self-examination, etc. 2. Modes of making the confession. 3. Conduct incumbent on those who have made the profession.

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—How far the righteousness of God is involved in the salvation of a believer.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—God's hearing prayer a great condescension.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—How far we may be urgent with God as to time.

Verses 2, 3 (*last and first clauses*).—That which we have we may yet seek for.

Verse 3.—Work out the metaphor of God as a rocky fastness of the soul.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—1. A blessing needed, "*lead me.*" 2. A blessing obtainable. 3. An argument for its being granted, "*for thy name's sake.*"

Verse 4.—*The rescue of the ensnared.* 1. The fowlers. 2. The laying of the net. 3. The capture of the bird. 4. The cry of the captive. 5. The rescue.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—The weak one girt with omnipotence.

Verses 5.—I. Dying, in a saint's account, is a difficult work. II. The children of God, when considering themselves as dying, are chiefly concerned for their departing immortal spirits. III. Such having chosen God for their God, have abundant encouragement when dying, to commit their departing spirits into his hand, with hopes of their being safe and happy for ever with him.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 5.—The believer's requiem.

Redemption the foundation of our repose in God.

I. What we do—*commit ourselves to God.* II. What God has done—*redeemed us.*

Verse 6.—Holy detestation, as a virtue discriminated from bigotry: or, the good hater.

Verse 7.—I. An endearing attribute rejoiced in. II. An interesting experience related. III. A directly personal favour from God delighted in.

Verse 7 (*centre clause*).—*Consider* the measure, the effects, the time, the tempering, the ending, and the recompense.

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—The Lord's familiarity with his afflicted.

Verse 8.—Christian liberty, a theme for gladness.

Verse 9.—The mourner's lament.

Verse 9 (*last clauses*).—Excessive sorrow, its injurious effects on the body, the understanding, and the spiritual nature. Sin of it, cure of it.

Verses 9, 10.—The sick man's moan, a reminder to those who enjoy good health.

Verse 10.—*My strength faileth because of mine iniquity.* The weakening influence of sin.

Verse 11.—The good man evil spoken of.

Verse 12.—The world's treatment of its best friends.

Verse 14.—Faith peculiarly glorious in seasons of great trial.

The casting forth of the sheet anchor in the storm.

Verse 15.—The believer the peculiar care of providence.

Verse 15 (*first clause*).—I. The character of the earthly experience of the saints, "My times," that is, the changes I shall pass through, etc. II. The advantage of this variety. 1. Changes reveal the various aspects of the Christian character. 2. Changes strengthen the Christian character. 3. Changes lead us to admire an unchanging God. III. Comfort for all seasons. 1. This implies that changes of life are subject to the divine control. 2. That God will support his people under them. 3. And, consequently, they shall result in our being abundantly profited. IV. The deportment which should characterise us. Courageous devotion to God in times of persecution; resignation and contentment in times of poverty and suffering; zeal and hope in times of labour.—*From Stems and Twigs, or Sermon Framework.*

Verse 16.—A sense of divine favour. 1. Its value. 2. How to lose it. 3. How to obtain a renewal of it. 4. How to retain it.

The heavenly servant's best reward.

Verse 16 (*last clause*).—A prayer for saints in all stages. Note its object, "*save me;*" and its plea, "*thy mercies' sake.*" Suitable to the penitent, the sick, the doubting, the tried, the advanced believer, the dying saint.

Verse 17.—The shame and silence of the wicked in eternity.

The silence of the grave, its grave eloquence.

Verse 19.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 773. "David's Holy Wonder at the Lord's Great Goodness."

Verse 20.—The believer preserved from the sneers of arrogance by a sense of the divine presence, and kept from the bitterness of slander by the glory of the King whom he serves.

Verse 21.—*Marvellous kindness.* Marvellous that it should come to me in such a way, at such a time, in such a measure, for so long.

Verse 21.—Memorable events in life to be observed, recorded, meditated on, repeated, made the subject of gratitude, and the ground of confidence.

Verse 22.—Unbelief confessed and faithfulness adored.

The mischief of hasty speeches.

Verse 23.—An exhortation to love the Lord. 1. The matter of it, "*love the Lord.*" 2. To whom addressed, "*all ye his saints.*" 3. By whom spoken. 4. With what arguments supported, "*for the Lord preserveth,*" etc.

Verse 24.—Holy courage. Its excellences, difficulties, encouragements, and triumphs.

PSALM XXXII.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David, Maschil. *That David wrote this gloriously evangelic Psalm is proved not only by this heading, but by the words of the apostle Paul, in Romans* iv. 6, 7, 8. *"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," etc. Probably his deep repentance over his great sin was followed by such blissful peace, that he was led to pour out his spirit in the soft music of this choice song. In the order of history it seems to follow the fifty-first.* Maschil *is a new title to us, and indicates that this is an instructive or didactic Psalm. The experience of one believer affords rich instruction to others, it reveals the footsteps of the flock, and so comforts and directs the weak. Perhaps it was important in this case to prefix the word, that doubting saints might not imagine the Psalm to be the peculiar utterance of a singular individual, but might appropriate it to themselves as a lesson from the Spirit of God. David promised in the fifty-first Psalm to teach transgressors the Lord's ways, and here he does it most effectually. Grotius thinks that this Psalm was meant to be sung on the annual day of the Jewish expiation, when a general confession of their sins was made.*

DIVISION.—*In our reading we have found it convenient to note the benediction of the pardoned, verses* 1, 2; *David's personal confession,* 3, 4, 5; *and the application of the case to others,* 6, 7. *The voice of God is heard by the forgiven one in* 8, 9; *and the Psalm then concludes with a portion for each of the two great classes of men,* 10, 11.

EXPOSITION.

BLESSED *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *whose* sin *is* covered.
2 Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit *there is* no guile.

1. *"Blessed."* Like the sermon on the mount, this Psalm begins with beatitudes. This is the second Psalm of benediction. The first Psalm describes the result of holy blessedness, the thirty-second details the cause of it. The first pictures the tree in full growth, this depicts it in its first planting and watering. He who in the first Psalm is a reader of God's book, is here a suppliant at God's throne accepted and heard. *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."* He is now blessed, and ever shall be. Be he ever so poor, or sick, or sorrowful, he is blessed in very deed. Pardoning mercy is of all things in the world most to be prized, for it is the only and sure way to happiness. To hear from God's own Spirit the words, *"absolvo te"* is joy unspeakable. Blessedness is not in this case ascribed to the man who has been a diligent lawkeeper, for then it would never come to us, but rather to a lawbreaker, who by grace most rich and free has been forgiven. Self-righteous Pharisees have no portion in this blessedness. Over the returning prodigal, the word of welcome is here pronounced, and the music and dancing begin. A full, instantaneous, irreversible pardon of transgression turns the poor sinner's hell into heaven, and makes the heir of wrath a partaker in blessing. The word rendered forgiven is in the original *taken off*, or *taken away*, as a burden is lifted or a barrier removed. What a lift is here! It cost our Saviour a sweat of blood to bear our load, yea, it cost him his life to bear it quite away. Samson carried the gates of Gaza, but what was that to the weight which Jesus bore on our behalf? *"Whose sin is covered."* Covered by God, as the ark was covered by the mercy-seat, as Noah was covered from the flood, as the Egyptians were covered by the depths of the sea. What a cover must that be which hides away for ever from the sight of the all-seeing God all the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit! He who has once seen sin in its horrible deformity, will appreciate the happiness of seeing it no more for ever. Christ's atonement is the propitiation, the covering, the making an end of sin; where this is seen and trusted in, the soul knows itself to be now accepted in the Beloved, and therefore enjoys a conscious blessedness which is the antepast of heaven. It is clear from the text that a man may *know* that he is pardoned: where would be the blessedness of an unknown forgiveness? Clearly it is a matter of knowledge, for it is the ground of comfort.

2. *"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."* The word blessed is in the plural, *oh, the blessednesses!* the double joys, the bundles of happiness, the mountains of delight! Note the three words so often used to denote our disobedience: transgression, sin, and iniquity, are the three-headed dog at the gates of hell, but our glorious Lord has silenced its barkings for ever against his own believing ones. The trinity of sin is overcome by the Trinity of heaven. Non-imputation is of the very essence of pardon: the believer sins, but his sin is not reckoned, not accounted to him. Certain divines froth at the mouth with rage against imputed righteousness, be it ours to see our sin not imputed, and to us may there be as Paul words it, "Righteousness imputed without works." He is blessed indeed who has a substitute to stand for him to whose account all his debts may be set down. *"And in whose spirit there is no guile."* He who is pardoned, has in every case been taught to deal honestly with himself, his sin, and his God. Forgiveness is no sham, and the peace which it brings is not caused by playing tricks with conscience. Self-deception and hypocrisy bring no blessedness, they may drug the soul into hell with pleasant dreams, but into the heaven of true peace they cannot conduct their victim. Free from guilt, free from guile. Those who are justified from fault are sanctified from falsehood. A liar is not a forgiven soul. Treachery, double-dealing, chicanery, dissimulation, are lineaments of the devil's children, but he who is washed from sin is truthful, honest, simple, and childlike. There can be no blessedness to tricksters with their plans, and tricks, and shuffling, and pretending: they are too much afraid of discovery to be at ease; their house is built on the volcano's brink, and eternal destruction must be their portion. Observe the three words to describe sin, and the three words to represent pardon, weigh them well, and note their meanings. (See note at the end.)

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

5 I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

David now gives us his own experience: no instructor is so efficient as one who testifies to what he has personally known and felt. He writes well who like the spider spins his matter out of his own bowels.

3. *"When I kept silence."* When through neglect I failed to confess, or through despair dared not to do so, *"my bones,"* those solid pillars of my frame, the strongest portions of my bodily constitution, *"waxed old,"* began to decay with weakness, for my grief was so intense as to sap my health and destroy my vital energy. What a killing thing is sin! It is a pestilent disease! A fire in the bones! While we smother our sin it rages within, and like a gathering wound swells horribly and torments terribly. *"Through my roaring all the day long."* He was silent as to confession, but not as to sorrow. Horror at his great guilt, drove David to incessant laments, until his voice was no longer like the articulate speech of man, but so full of sighing and groaning, that it resembled the hoarse roaring of a wounded beast. None know the pangs of conviction but those who have endured them. The rack, the wheel, the flaming fagot are ease compared with the Tophet which a guilty conscience kindles within the breast: better suffer all the diseases which flesh is heir to, than lie under the crushing sense of the wrath of almighty God. The Spanish inquisition with all its tortures was nothing to the inquest which conscience holds within the heart.

4. *"For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me."* God's finger can crush us —what must his hand be, and that pressing heavily and continuously! Under terrors of conscience, men have little rest by night, for the grim thoughts of the day dog them to their chambers and haunt their dreams, or else they lie awake in a cold sweat of dread. God's hand is very helpful when it uplifts, but it is awful when it presses down: better a world on the shoulder, like Atlas, than God's hand on the heart, like David. *"My moisture is turned into the drought of summer."* The sap of his soul was dried, and the body through sympathy appeared to be bereft of its needful fluids. The oil was almost gone from the lamp of life, and

the flame flickered as though it would soon expire. Unconfessed transgression, like a fierce poison, dried up the fountain of the man's strength, and made him like a tree blasted by the lightning, or a plant withered by the scorching heat of a tropical sun. Alas! for a poor soul when it has learned its sin but forgets its Saviour, it goes hard with it indeed. "*Selah.*" It was time to change the tune, for the notes are very low in the scale, and with such hard usage, the strings of the harp are out of order: the next verse will surely be set to another key, or will rehearse a more joyful subject.

5. "*I acknowledged my sin unto thee.*" After long lingering, the broken heart bethought itself of what it ought to have done at the first, and laid bare its bosom before the Lord. The lancet must be let into the gathering ulcer before relief can be afforded. The least thing we can do, if we would be pardoned, is to acknowledge our fault; if we are too proud for this we doubly deserve punishment. "*And mine iniquity have I not hid.*" We must confess the guilt as well as the fact of sin. It is useless to conceal it, for it is well known to God; it is beneficial to us to own it, for a full confession softens and humbles the heart. We must as far as possible unveil the secrets of the soul, dig up the hidden treasure of Achan, and by weight and measure bring out our sins. "*I said.*" This was his fixed resolution. "*I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.*" Not to my fellow men or to the high priest, but unto Jehovah; even in those days of symbol the faithful looked to God alone for deliverance from sin's intolerable load, much more now, when types and shadows have vanished at the appearance of the dawn. When the soul determines to lay low and plead guilty, absolution is near at hand; hence we read, "*And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*" Not only was the sin itself pardoned, but the iniquity of it; the virus of its guilt was put away, and that at once, so soon as the acknowledgment was made. God's pardons are deep and thorough: the knife of mercy cuts at the roots of the ill weed of sin. "*Selah.*" Another pause is needed, for the matter is not such as may be hurried over.

> "Pause, my soul, adore and wonder,
> Ask, O why such love to me?
> Grace has put me in the number
> Of the Saviour's family.
> Hallelujah!
> Thanks, eternal thanks, to thee."

6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

7 Thou *art* my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

6. "*For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.*" If the Psalmist means that *on account of* God's mercy others would become hopeful, his witness is true. Remarkable answers to prayer very much quicken the prayerfulness of other godly persons. Where one man finds a golden nugget others feel inclined to dig. The benefit of our experience to others should reconcile us to it. No doubt the case of David has led thousands to seek the Lord with hopeful courage who, without such an instance to cheer them, might have died in despair. Perhaps the Psalmist meant *for* this favour or the like all godly souls would seek, and here, again, we can confirm his testimony, for all will draw near to God in the same manner as he did when godliness rules their heart. The mercy seat is the way to heaven for all who shall ever come there. There is, however, a set time for prayer, beyond which it will be unavailing; between the time of sin and the day of punishment mercy rules the hour, and God may be found, but when once the sentence has gone forth pleading will be useless, for the Lord will not be found by the condemned soul. O dear reader, slight not the accepted time, waste not the day of salvation. The godly pray while the Lord has promised to answer, the ungodly postpone their petitions till the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, and then their knocking is too late. What a blessing to be led to seek the Lord before the great devouring floods leap forth from their lairs, for then when they do appear we shall be safe. "*Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.*" The floods shall come, and the waves shall rage, and toss themselves like Atlantic billows; whirlpools and waterspouts

shall be on every hand, but the praying man shall be at a safe distance, most surely secured from every ill. David was probably most familiar with those great land-floods which fill up, with rushing torrents, the beds of rivers which at other times are almost dry: these overflowing waters often did great damage, and, as in the case of the Kishon, were sufficient to sweep away whole armies. From sudden and overwhelming disasters thus set forth in metaphor the true suppliant will certainly be held secure. He who is saved from sin has no need to fear anything else.

7. "*Thou art my hiding place.*" Terse, short sentences make up this verse, but they contain a world of meaning. Personal claims upon our God are the joy of spiritual life. To lay our hand upon the Lord with the clasp of a personal "my" is delight at its full. Observe that the same man who in the fourth verse was oppressed by the presence of God, here finds a shelter in him. See what honest confession and full forgiveness will do! The gospel of substitution makes him to be our refuge who otherwise would have been our judge. "*Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.*" Trouble shall do me no real harm when the Lord is with me, rather it shall bring me much benefit, like the file which clears away the rust, but does not destroy the metal. Observe the three tenses, we have noticed the sorrowful past, the last sentence was a joyful present, this is a cheerful future. "*Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.*" What a golden sentence! The man is encircled in song, surrounded by dancing mercies, all of them proclaiming the triumphs of grace. There is no breach in the circle, it completely rings him round; on all sides he hears music. Before him hope sounds the cymbals, and behind him gratitude beats the timbrel. Right and left, above and beneath, the air resounds with joy, and all this for the very man who, a few weeks ago, was roaring all the day long. How great a change! What wonders grace has done and still can do! "*Selah.*" There was need of a pause, for love so amazing needs to be pondered, and joy so great demands quiet contemplation, since language fails to express it.

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye.

9 Be ye not as the horse, *or* as the mule, *which* have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

8. "*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.*" Here the Lord is the speaker, and gives the Psalmist an answer to his prayer. Our Saviour is our instructor. The Lord himself deigns to teach his children to walk in the way of integrity, his holy word and the monitions of the Holy Spirit are the directors of the believer's daily conversation. We are not pardoned that we may henceforth live after our own lusts, but that we may be educated in holiness and trained for perfection. A heavenly training is one of the covenant blessings which adoption seals to us: "All thy children shall be taught by the Lord." Practical teaching is the very best of instruction, and they are thrice happy who, although they never sat at the feet of Gamaliel, and are ignorant of Aristotle, and the ethics of the schools, have nevertheless learned to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. "*I will guide thee with mine eye.*" As servants take their cue from the master's eye, and a nod or a wink is all that they require, so should we obey the slightest hints of our Master, not needing thunderbolts to startle our incorrigible sluggishness, but being controlled by whispers and love-touches. The Lord is the great overseer, whose eye in providence overlooks everything. It is well for us to be the sheep of his pasture, following the guidance of his wisdom.

9. "*Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.*" Understanding separates man from a brute—let us not act as if we were devoid of it. Men should take counsel and advice, and be ready to run where wisdom points them the way. Alas! we need to be cautioned against stupidity of heart, for we are very apt to fall into it. We who ought to be as the angels, readily become as the beasts. "*Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*" It is much to be deplored that we so often need to be severely chastened before we will obey. We ought to be as a feather in the wind, wafted readily in the breath of the Holy Spirit, but alas! we lie like motionless logs, and stir not with heaven itself in view. Those cutting bits of affliction show how hard-mouthed we are, those bridles of infirmity manifest our headstrong and wilful manners.

We should not be treated like mules if there were not so much of the ass about us. If we will be fractious, we must expect to be kept in with tight rein. Oh for grace to obey the Lord willingly, lest like the wilful servant, we are beaten with many stripes. Calvin renders the last words, "Lest they kick against thee," a version more probable and more natural, but the passage is confessedly obscure—not, however, in its general sense.

10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all *ye that are* upright in heart.

10. "*Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.*" Like refractory horses and mules, they have many cuts and bruises. Here and hereafter the portion of the wicked is undesirable. Their joys are evanescent, their sorrows are multiplying and ripening. He who sows sin will reap sorrow in heavy sheaves. Sorrows of conscience, of disappointment, of terror, are the sinner's sure heritage in time, and then for ever sorrows of remorse and despair. Let those who boast of present sinful joys, remember the *shall be* of the future, and take warning. "*But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.*" Faith is here placed as the opposite of wickedness, since it is the source of virtue. Faith in God is the great charmer of life's cares, and he who possesses it, dwells in an atmosphere of grace, surrounded with a body-guard of mercies. May it be given to us of the Lord at all times to believe in the mercy of God, even when we cannot see traces of its working, for to the believer, mercy is as all-surrounding as omniscience, and every thought and act of God is perfumed with it. The wicked have a hive of wasps around them, *many sorrows;* but we have a swarm of bees storing honey for us.

11. "*Be glad.*" Happiness is not only our privilege, but our duty. Truly we serve a generous God, since he makes it a part of our obedience to be joyful. How sinful are our rebellious murmurings! How natural does it seem that a man blest with forgiveness should be glad! We read of one who died at the foot of the scaffold of overjoy at the receipt of his monarch's pardon; and shall we receive the free pardon of the King of kings and yet pine in inexcusable sorrow? "*In the Lord.*" Here is the directory by which gladness is preserved from levity. We are not to be glad in sin, or to find comfort in corn, and wine, and oil, but in our God is to be the garden of our soul's delight. That there is a God and such a God, and that he is ours, ours for ever, our Father and our reconciled Lord, is matter enough for a never-ending Psalm of rapturous joy. "*And rejoice, ye righteous,*" redouble your rejoicing, peal upon peal. Since God has clothed his choristers in the white garments of holiness, let them not restrain their joyful voices, but sing aloud and shout as those who find great spoil. "*And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*" Our happiness should be demonstrative; chill penury of love often represses the noble flame of joy, and men whisper their praises decorously where a hearty outburst of song would be far more natural. It is to be feared that the church of the present day, through a craving for excessive propriety, is growing too artificial; so that enquirers' cries and believers' shouts would be silenced if they were heard in our assemblies. This may be better than boisterous fanaticism, but there is as much danger in the one direction as the other. For our part, we are touched to the heart by a little sacred excess, and when godly men in their joy overleap the narrow bounds of decorum, we do not, like Michal, Saul's daughter, eye them with a sneering heart. Note how the pardoned are represented as upright, righteous, and without guile; a man may have many faults and yet be saved, but a false heart is everywhere the damning mark. A man of twisting, shifty ways, of a crooked, crafty nature, is not saved, and in all probability never will be; for the ground which brings forth a harvest when grace is sown in it, may be weedy and waste, but our Lord tells us it is *honest* and good ground. Our observation has been that men of double tongues and tricky ways are the least likely of all men to be saved: certainly where grace comes it restores man's mind to its perpendicular, and delivers him from being doubled up with vice, twisted with craft, or bent with dishonesty.

Reader, what a delightful Psalm! Have you, in perusing it, been able to claim a lot in the goodly land? If so, publish to others the way of salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The term *Maschil* is prefixed to thirteen Psalms. Our translators have not ventured to do more, in the *text*, than simply print the word in English characters; in the *margin* however they render it, as the Geneva version had done before them, "to give instruction." It would be going too far to affirm that this interpretation is subject to no doubt. Some good Hebraists take exception to it; so that, perhaps, our venerable translators did well to leave it untranslated. Still, the interpretation they have set down in the margin, as it is the most ancient, so it is sustained by the great preponderance of authority. It agrees remarkably with the contents of the thirty-second Psalm, which affords the earliest instance of its use, for that Psalm is pre-eminently didactic. Its scope is to instruct the convicted soul how to obtain peace with God, and be compassed about with songs of deliverance.—*William Binnie, D.D., in "The Psalms: their History, Teachings, and Use,"* 1870.

Whole Psalm.—This is a Didascalic Psalm, wherein David teacheth sinners to repent by his doctrine, who taught them to sin by his example. This science is universal and pertaineth to all men, and which necessarily we must all learn; princes, priests, people, men, women, children, tradesmen; all, I say, must be put to this school, without which lesson all others are unprofitable. But to the point. This is a mark of a true penitent, when he hath been a stumbling block to others, to be as careful to raise them up by his repentance as he was hurtful to them by his sin; and I never think that man truly penitent who is ashamed to teach sinners repentance, by his own particular proof. The Samaritan woman, when she was converted, left her bucket at the well, entered the city, and said, "Come forth, yonder is a man who hath told me all that I have done." And our Saviour saith to St. Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." John iv. 29; Luke xxii. 32. St. Paul also, after his conversion is not ashamed to call himself chiefest of all sinners, and to teach others to repent of their sins by repenting for his own. Happy, and thrice happy, is the man who can build so much as he hath cast down.—*Archibald Symson.*

Whole Psalm.—It is told of Luther that one day being asked which of all the Psalms were the best, he made answer, "*Psalmi Paulini,*" and when his friends pressed to know which these might be, he said, "The 32nd, the 51st, the 130th, and 143rd. For they all teach that the forgiveness of our sins comes, without the law and without works, to the man who believes, and therefore I call them Pauline Psalms; and David sings, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,' this is just what Paul says, 'God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.' Rom. xi. 32. Thus no man may boast of his own righteousness. That word, 'That thou mayest be feared,' dusts away all merit, and teaches us to uncover our heads before God, and confess *gratia est, non meritum: remissio, non satisfactio;* it is mere forgiveness, not merit at all."—*Luther's Table Talk.*

Whole Psalm.—Some assert that this Psalm used to be sung on the day of expiation.—*Robert Leighton.*

The Penitential Psalms.—When Galileo was imprisoned by the Inquisition at Rome, for asserting the Copernican System, he was enjoined, as a penance, to repeat the Seven Penitential Psalms every week for three years. This must have been intended as extorting a sort of confession from him of his guilt, and acknowledgment of the justice of his sentence; and in which there certainly was some cleverness and, indeed, humour, however adding to the iniquity (or foolishness) of the proceeding. Otherwise it is not easy to understand what idea of painfulness or punishment the good fathers could attach to a devotional exercise such as this, which, in whatever way, could only have been agreeable and consoling to their prisoner.—*M. Montague, in The Seven Penitential Psalms in Verse . . . . with an Appendix and Notes,"* 1844.

Verse 1.—"*Blessed.*" Or, O blessed man; or, Oh, the felicities of that man! to denote the most supreme and perfect blessedness. As the elephant, to denote its vast bulk, is spoken of in the plural number, *Behemoth.—Robert Leighton.*

Verse 1.—Notice, this is the first Psalm, except the first of all, which begins with Blessedness. In the first Psalm we have the blessing of innocence, or rather, of him who only was innocent: here we have the blessing of repentance, as the next happiest state to that of sinlessness.—*Lorinus, in Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is the man,*" saith David, "*whose sins are pardoned,*" where he maketh remission of sins to be true felicity. Now there is no true felicity but that which is enjoyed, and felicity cannot be enjoyed unless it be felt; and it cannot be felt unless a man know himself to be in possession of it; and a man cannot know himself to be in possession of it, if he doubt whether he hath it or not; and therefore this doubting of the remission of sins is contrary to true felicity, and is nothing else but a torment of the conscience. For a man cannot doubt whether his sins be pardoned or not, but straightway, if his conscience be not seared with a hot iron, the very thought of his sin will strike a great fear into him; for the fear of eternal death, and the horror of God's judgment will come to his remembrance, the consideration of which is most terrible. —*William Perkins.*

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*" Get your sins hid. There is a covering of sin which proves *a curse.* Prov. xxviii. 13. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper;" there is a *covering* it, by not confessing it, or which is worse, by denying it—Gehazi's covering—a covering of sin by a lie; and there is also a covering of sin by justifying ourselves in it. I have not done this thing; or, I did no evil in it. All these are evil coverings: he that thus covereth his sin shall not prosper. But there is a *blessed* covering of sin: forgiveness of sin is the hiding it out of sight, and that is the blessedness.—*Richard Alleine.*

Verse 1.—"*Whose transgression is forgiven.*" We may lull the soul asleep with carnal delights, but the virtue of that opium will be soon spent. All those joys are but stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret—a poor sorry peace that dares not come to the light and endure the trial; a sorry peace that is soon disturbed by a few serious and sober thoughts of God and the world to come; but when once sin is pardoned, then you have true joy indeed. "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Matt. ix. 2.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 1.—"*Forgiven.*" Holy David, in the front of this Psalm shows us wherein true happiness consists; not in beauty, honour, riches (the world's trinity), but in the forgiveness of sin. The Hebrew word to *forgive*, signifies to carry out of sight; which well agrees with that Jer. l. 20, "In those days, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." This is an incomprehensible blessing, and such as lays a foundation for all other mercies. I shall but glance at it, and lay down these five assertions about it. 1. Forgiveness is an act of God's free grace. The Greek word *to forgive*, deciphers the original of pardon; it ariseth not from anything inherent in us, but is the pure result of free grace. Isa. xliii. 25: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." When a creditor forgives a debtor, he doeth it freely. Paul cries out, "I obtained mercy." 1 Tim. i. 13. The Greek signifies, "I was be-mercied;" he who is pardoned, is all bestrewed with mercy. When the Lord pardons a sinner, he doth not pay a debt, but give a legacy. 2. God in forgiving sin, remits the guilt and penalty. Guilt cries for justice: no sooner had Adam eaten the apple, but he saw the flaming sword, and heard the curse; but in remission God doth indulge the sinner; he seems to say thus to him: Though thou art fallen into the hands of my justice, and deservest to die, yet I will absolve thee, and whatever is charged upon thee shall be discharged. 3. Forgiveness of sin is through the blood of Christ. Free grace is the impulsive cause; Christ's blood is the meritorious. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Heb. ix. 22. Justice would be revenged either on the sinner or the surety. Every pardon is the price of blood. 4. Before sin is forgiven it must be repented of. Therefore repentance and remission are linked together. "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name." Luke xxiv. 47. Not that repentance doth in a Popish sense merit forgiveness; Christ's blood must wash our tears; but repentance is a qualification, though not a cause. He who is humbled for sin will the more value pardoning mercy. 5. God having forgiven sin, he will call it no more into remembrance. Jer. xxxi. 34. The Lord will make an act of indemnity, he will not upbraid us with former unkindnesses, or sue us with a cancelled bond. "He will cast all our sins into the depths of the

sea." Mic. vii. 19. Sin shall not be cast in as a cork which riseth up again, but as lead which sinks to the bottom. How should we all labour for this covenant blessing!—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 1.—"*Sin is covered.*" Every man that must be happy, must have something to hide and cover his sins from God's eyes; and nothing in the world can do it, but Christ and his righteousness, typified in the ark of the covenant, whose cover was of gold, and called a propitiatory, that as it covered the tables that were within the ark, so God covers our sins against those tables. So the cloud covering the Israelites in the wilderness, signified God's covering us from the danger of our sins. —*Thomas Taylor's "David's Learning: or the Way to True Happinesse,"* 1617.

Verse 1.—"*Sin covered.*" This *covering* hath relation to some nakedness and filthiness which should be covered, even sin, which defileth us and maketh us naked. Why, saith Moses to Aaron, hast thou made the people naked? Ex. xxxii. 25. The garments of our merits are too short and cannot cover us, we have need therefore to borrow of Christ Jesus his merits and the mantle of his righteousness, that it may be unto us as a garment, and as those breeches of leather which God made unto Adam and Eve after their fall. Garments are ordained to cover our nakedness, defend us from the injury of the weather, and to adorn us. So the mediation of our Saviour serveth to cover our nakedness, that the wrath of God seize not upon us—he is that "white raiment" wherewith we should be clothed, that our filthy nakedness may not appear—to defend us against Satan—he is "mighty to save," etc.—and to be an ornament to decorate us, for he is that "*wedding garment:*" "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Rev. iii. 18; Isa. lxiii. 1; Matt. xxii. 11; Rom. xiii. 14.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 1.—The object of pardon—about which it is conversant, is set forth under divers expressions—*iniquity, transgression,* and *sin.* As in law, many words of like import and signification are heaped up and put together, to make the deed and legal instrument more comprehensive and effectual. I observe it the rather, because when God proclaims his name the same words are used, Exod. xxxiv. 7, "Taking away iniquity, transgression, and sin." Well, we have seen the meaning of the expression. Why doth the holy man of God use such vigour and vehemency of inculcation, "*Blessed is the man!*" and again, "*Blessed is the man!*" Partly with respect to his own case. David knew how sweet it was to have sin pardoned; he had felt the bitterness of sin in his own soul, to the drying up of his blood, and therefore he doth express his sense of pardon in the most lively terms. And then, partly, too, with respect to those for whose use this instruction was written, that they might not look upon it as a light and trivial thing, but be thoroughly apprehensive of the worth of so great a privilege. Blessed, happy, thrice happy they who have obtained pardon of their sins, and justification by Jesus Christ.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 1, 2.—In these verses *four* evils are mentioned: 1. *Transgression,* פֶּשַׁע *pesha.* 2. *Sin,* חַטָּאָה *chataah.* 3. *Iniquity,* עָוֹן *avon.* 4. *Guile,* רְמִיָּה *remiyah.* The *first* signifies the *passing over a boundary, doing what is prohibited.* The *second* signifies the *missing of a mark,* not doing what was commanded; but it is often taken to express *sinfulness,* or sin in the nature, producing transgression in the life. The *third* signifies *what is turned out of its proper course or situation;* anything *morally distorted* or *perverted. Iniquity,* what is contrary to *equity* or *justice.* The *fourth* signifies *fraud, deceit, guile, etc.* To remove these evils, *three* acts are mentioned: *forgiving, covering,* and not *imputing.* 1. TRANSGRESSION, פֶּשַׁע *pesha,* must be *forgiven,* נָשׂוּי *nesui,* borne away, *i.e.,* by a vicarious sacrifice; for *bearing sin,* or *bearing away sin,* always implies this. 2. SIN, חַטָּאָה *chataah,* must be *covered,* כְּסוּי *kesui,* hidden from the sight. It is odious and abominable, and must be put out of sight. 3. INIQUITY, עָוֹן *avon,* what is *perverse* or *distorted,* must not be imputed, לֹא יֶחְשֹׁב *lo yachshobh,* must *not be reckoned to his account.* 4. GUILE, רְמִיָּה *remiyah,* must be annihilated from the soul. *In whose spirit there is no* GUILE. The man whose *transgression* is forgiven; whose *sin* is hidden, God having cast it as a millstone into the depths of the sea; whose iniquity and perversion is not reckoned to his account; and whose *guile,* the deceitful and desperately wicked heart, is annihilated, being emptied of sin, and filled with righteousness, is necessarily a happy man.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verses 1, 2.—*Transgression.* Prevarication. Some understand by it sins of omission and commission.

Sin. Some understand those inward inclinations, lusts, and motions, whereby

the soul swerves from the law of God, and which are the immediate cause of external sins.

Iniquity. Notes original sin, the root of all.

Levatus, forgiven, eased, signifies to take away, to bear, to carry away. Two words in Scripture are chiefly used to denote remission, to expiate, to bear or carry away: the one signifies the manner whereby it is done, namely, atonement, the other the effect of this expiation, carrying away; one notes the meritorious cause, the other the consequent.

Covered. Alluding to the covering of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Menochius thinks it alludes to the manner of writing among the Hebrews, which he thinks to be the same with that of the Romans; as writing with a pencil upon wax spread upon tables, which when they would blot out they made the wax plain, and drawing it over the writing, covered the former letters. And so it is equivalent with that expression of "blotting out sin," as in the other allusion it is with "casting sin into the depths of the sea."

Impute. Not charging upon account. As sin is a defection from the law, so it is forgiven; as it is offensive to God's holiness, so it is covered; as it is a debt involving man in a debt of punishment, so it is not imputed; they all note the certainty, and extent, and perfection of pardon; the three words expressing sin here, being the same that are used by God in the declaration of his name.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verses 1, 2, 6, 7.—Who is blessed? Not he who cloaks, conceals, confesses not his sin. As long as David was in this state he was miserable. There was guile in his spirit (2), misery in his heart, his very bones waxed old, his moisture was dried up as the drought in summer (3, 4). Who is blessed? He that is without sin, he who sins not, he who grieves no more by his sin the bosom on which he reclines. This is superlative blessedness, its highest element, the happiness of heaven. To be like God, to yield implicit, ready, full, perfect obedience, the obedience of the heart, of our entire being; this is to be blessed above all blessedness. But among those who live in a world of sin, who are surrounded by sin, who are themselves sinners, who is blessed? *"He whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity;"* and especially does he feel it to be so, who can, in some degree, enter into the previous state of David's soul (3, 4). Ah, in what a wretched state was the Psalmist previously to this blessedness! How must sin have darkened and deadened his spiritual faculties, to have guile in the spirit of one who could elsewhere exclaim, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me," any way of pain or grief, any way of sin which most surely leads to these. Ps. cxxxix. 23, 34. What a mournful condition of soul was his, who while he roared all the day long, yet kept silence before God, had no heart to open his heart unto God, was dumb before him, not in submission to his will, not in accepting the punishment of his iniquity (Lev. xxvi. 46), not in real confession, and honest, upright, and sincere acknowledgment of his iniquity to him against whom he had committed it. "*I kept silence,*" not merely I was silent, "I *kept* silence," resolutely, perseveringly; I kept it notwithstanding all the remembrance of my past mercies, notwithstanding my reproaches of conscience, and my anguish of heart. I kept it notwithstanding "*thy hand was heavy upon me day and night,*" notwithstanding "*my moisture,*" all that was spiritual in me, my vital spirit, all that was indicative of spiritual life in my soul, seemed dried up and gone. Yes, Lord, notwithstanding all this, I *kept* it. But Nathan came, thou didst send him. He was to me a messenger full of reproof, full of faithfulness, but full of love. He came with thy word, and with the word of a King there was power. I acknowledged my sin unto him, and my iniquity did I not hide, but this was little. Against thee, thee only, did I sin, and to thee was my confession made. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, O Lord. I solemnly said that I would do so, and I did it. I confessed my transgression unto the Lord, "*and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*"

"*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven.*" Behold the man who is blessed; blessed in the state of his mind, his guileless spirit, his contrite heart, the fruit of the spirit of grace; blessed in the forgiveness of a forgiving God; a forgiveness, perfect, entire, lacking nothing, signified by sin "covered," "iniquity not imputed" of the Lord; blessed in the blessings which followed it. "*Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.*" Beneath the hollow of that hand which was once

so heavy upon me, I can now repose. Thou art my hiding place, I dread thee no more; nay, I dwell in thee as my habitation, and my high tower, my covert, my safety, my house. Safe in thy love, whatever trouble may be my portion, and by the mouth of Nathan thy servant thou hast declared that trouble shall be my portion, I shall yet be preserved; yea, more, so fully wilt thou deliver me that I believe thou wilt encompass me so with the arms of thy mercy, as to call forth songs of grateful praise for thy gracious interposition.

Behold the blessedness of him whom God forgives! No wonder, then, that the Psalmist adds, "*for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.*" As much as if he said, Surely after this thy gracious conduct towards *me*, all that truly love and fear thee, "*every one that is godly*," when he hears of thy dealings with *me*, "*will pray unto thee.*" Encouraged by my example, he will not keep silence as I foolishly and sinfully did, but will confess and supplicate before thee, since thou art to be "*found*," and hast so wondrously shown that thou art, of all that truly seek thee, since there is *the place* of finding, as I lay my hand upon the victim, and look through that victim to him the promised Seed; since there is *the time* of finding, declared in thy word, and manifested by the secret drawing of my heart to thee by thy grace: since the unwillingness is not in thee, but in thy sinning creature to come to thee; "*for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee*," then, however deep the waterfloods may be, however fierce the torrent, and headlong the stream, they shall not even come nigh unto him, much less shall they overwhelm him.—*James Harrington Evans, M.A.*, 1785—1849.

Verse 2.—"*Unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.*" Aben-Ezra paraphrases it, *of whose sins God does not think*, does not regard them, so as to bring them into judgment, reckoning them as if they were not; οὐ μὴ λογίζεται *does not count or calculate them;* does not require for them the debt of punishment. To us the remission is entirely free, our Sponsor having taken upon him the whole business of paying the ransom. His suffering is our impunity, his bond our freedom, and his chastisement our peace; and therefore the prophet says, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed."—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 2.—"*In whose spirit there is no guile.*" In the saint's trouble, conscience is full of Scripture sometimes, on which it grounds its verdict, but very ill interpreted. Oh, saith the poor soul, this place is against me! "*Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*" Here, saith he, is a description of a sincere soul, to be one in whose spirit there is no guile; but I find much guile in me, therefore I am not the sincere one. Now this is a very weak yea, false inference. By a spirit without guile, is not meant a person that hath not the least deceitfulness and hypocrisy remaining in his heart. To be without sin, and to be without guile, in this strict sense are the same—a prerogative here on earth peculiar to the Lord Christ (1 Pet. ii. 22), "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." And therefore when we meet with the same phrase attributed to the saints, as to Levi, Mal. ii. 6: "Iniquity was not found in his lips;" and to Nathanael, John i. 47: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" we must sense it in an inferior way, that may suit with their imperfect state here below, and not put that which was only Christ's crown on earth, and is the glorified saint's robe in heaven, on the weak Christian while militant here on earth, not only with a devil without, but with a body of sin within him. Wipe thine eyes again, poor soul, and then if thou readest such places, wherein the Spirit of God speaks so highly and hyperbolically of his saints' grace, thou shalt find he doth not assert the perfection of their grace, free from all mixture of sin, but rather to comfort poor drooping souls, and cross their misgiving hearts, which, from the presence of hypocrisy, are ready to overlook their sincerity as none at all, he expresseth his high esteem of their little grace, by speaking of it as if it were perfect, and their hypocrisy none at all.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2. "*In whose spirit there is no guile.*" When once pardon is realised the believer has courage to be truthful before God: he can afford to have done with "*guile*" in the spirit. Who would not declare all his debts when they are certain to be discharged by another? Who would not declare his malady when he was sure of a cure? True faith knows not only that "*guile*" before God is impossible, but also that it is no longer necessary. The believer has nothing to conceal: he sees himself as before God, stripped, and laid open, and bare; and if he has learned

to see himself as he is, so also has he learned to see God as he reveals himself. There is no guile in the spirit of one who is justified by faith ; because in the act of justification truth has been established in his inward parts. There is no guile in the spirit of him who sees the truth of himself in the light of the truth of God. For the truth of God shows him at once that in Christ he is perfectly righteous before God, and in himself he is the chief of sinners. Such a one knows he is not his own, for he is bought with a price, and therefore he is to glorify God. There is no guile in the spirit of him whose real object is to glorify Christ and not himself. But when a man is not quite true to Christ, and has not quite ceased to magnify self, there may be guile, for he will be more occupied with thoughts about himself than with the honour of Christ. But if the truth, and honour, and glory of Christ be his supreme care, he may leave himself out of the question, and, like Christ, " commit himself to him that judgeth righteously."—*J. W. Reeve, M.A., in " Lectures on the Thirty-second Psalm,"* 1860.

Verse 2.—*"No guile."* Sincerity is that property to which pardoning mercy is annexed. True, indeed, it is that Christ covers all our sins and failings ; but it is only the sincere soul over which he will cast his skirt. *" Blessed is he whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."* None will doubt this ; but which is the man ? The next words tell us his name ; *" And in whose spirit there is no guile."* Christ's rightousness is the garment which covers the nakedness and shame of our unrighteousness ; faith the grace that puts this garment on ; but what faith ? None but the faith unfeigned, as Paul calls it. 2 Tim. i. 5. " Here is water," said the eunuch, " what doth hinder me to be baptized ? " Acts viii. 36. Now mark Philip's answer, ver. 37: " If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest ; " as if he had said, Nothing but an hypocritical heart can hinder thee. It is the false heart only that finds the door of mercy shut.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—*"Guile."* The guile of the spirit is an inward corruption in the soul of man, whereby he dealeth deceitfully with himself before God in the matter of salvation.—*Thomas Taylor.*

Verse 3.—*" My bones waxed old."* God sporteth not at the sins of his elect, but outwardly doth deal with them more hardly, and chastise them more rigorously than he doth the reprobate. David's troubles and pains were partly external, partly internal : external I call those that were cast on his body ; internal upon his conscience. And in the body there were torments and vexations, seizing sometimes on his flesh—which was less painful—sometimes on his bones, which was more grievous, yea, almost intolerable, as experience teacheth. And this is God's just recompence ; when we bestow our strength on sin, God abateth it, and so weakeneth us. Samson spent his strength on Delilah, but to what weakness was he brought! Let us, therefore, learn, that God hath given us bones and the strength thereof for another use, that is, to serve him, and not waste or be prodigal of them in the devil's service.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 3.—*" My bones waxed old."* By bones, the strength of the body, the inward strength and vigour of the soul is meant. The conscience of sin, and the terror of judgment doth break the heart of a true penitent, so long as he beholdeth his sin deserving death, his judge ready to pronounce the sentence of it, hell open to receive him for it, and the evil angels, God's executioners, at hand to hurry him to it.—*Samuel Page, in " David's Broken Heart,"* 1646.

Verse 3.—*" My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."* David here not only mourns for sin as a man, but he roars, as it were, like a pained beast. He seems fitter for a wilderness to cry out, than for a secret chamber to weep in ; at other times he can " water his couch " in the night, now he *" roars "* all the day long ; at other times " his *moisture* is dried," now his *" bones,"* the pillars of his house, shake and wax old.—*Alexander Carmichael,* 1677.

Verse 4.—*" Thy hand."* A *correcting* hand, whereby God scourgeth and buffeteth his own children. Now the sense of God's power punishing or correcting, is called God's hand, as 1 Sam. v. 11. The hand of God was sore at Ekron, because of the ark ; and a *heavy* hand in resemblance, because when men smite they lay their hand heavier than ordinary. Hence, we may note three points of doctrine : first, that all afflictions are God's hand ; secondly, that God lays his hand heavily often upon his dear children ; thirdly, that God often continues his heavy hand night and day on them.—*Thomas Taylor.*

Verse 4.—"*My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.*" Another meaning may be attributed to these words. We may suppose the Psalmist to be referring to *spiritual drought.—Charles H. Bingham, B.A., in "Lectures on the Thirty-second Psalm,"* 1836.

Verse 4.—"*My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.*" The summer is from the middle of August to the middle of November. The intensity of the heat is great, and almost intolerable. . . Up to the beginning or middle of September there are no showers, rain being as scarce in summer as snow. . . . The dry grass of the fields sometimes takes fire, and produces desolating conflagrations, and the parched earth is cleft and broken into chasms.—*John Eadie, D.D., LL.D., in Biblical Cyclopædia,* 1868.

Verse 4.—"*The drought of summer.*" Dr. Russell, in his account of the weather at Aleppo, which very much resembles that of Judæa, says that the verdure of the spring fades before the middle of May, and before the end of that month the whole country puts on so parched and barren an aspect that one would scarce think it capable of producing anything, there being but very few plants that have vigour enough to resist the extreme heat.—*Thomas Harmer's "Observations,"* 1775.

Verse 4.—"*The drought of summer.*" During the twelve years from 1846 to 1859 only two slight showers fell in Jerusalem between the months of May and October. One fell in July, 1858, another in June, 1859.—*Dr. Whitty's "Water Supply of Jerusalem," quoted in Kitto's Cyclopædia.*

Verse 4.—If God striketh those so sore whom he favoureth, how sharply and sore will he strike them whom he favoureth not.—*Gregory.*

Verses 4, 5.—If our offences have been not gnats, but camels, our sorrow must be not a drop, but an ocean. Scarlet sins call for bloody tears; and if Peter sin heinously he must weep bitterly. If, then, thy former life hath been a cord of iniquity, twisted with many threads, a writing full of great blots, a course spotted with various and grievous sins, multiply thy confessions and enlarge thy humiliation; double thy fastings and treble thy prayers; pour out thy tears, and fetch deep sighs; in a word, iterate and aggravate thy acknowledgments, though yet, as the apostle saith in another case, I say in this, "Grieve not as without hope," that upon thy sincere and suitable repentance divine goodness will forgive thee thy sins.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 5.—"*Selah.*" See Vol. I., pp. 22, 23, 25, 27, 29.

Verse 5.—"*I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.*" The godly man is ingenuous in laying open his sins. The hypocrite doth vail and smother his sin; he doth not *abscindere peccatum,* but *abscondere;* like a patient that hath some loathsome disease in his body, he will rather die than confess his disease; but a godly man's sincerity is seen in this—he will confess and shame himself for sin. "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly." 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. Nay a child of God will confess sin in particular; an unsound Christian will confess sin by wholesale; he will acknowledge he is a sinner in general, whereas David doth, as it were, point with his finger to the sore: "I have done this evil" (Psalm li. 4); he doth not say I have done evil, but this evil. He points at his blood-guiltiness.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—"*I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*" Be thine own accuser in the free confession of thy sins. *Peccavi pater* (as the prodigal child), "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight." For it fares not in the court of heaven as it doth in our earthly tribunals. With men a free confession makes way for a condemnation; but with God, the more a sinner bemoans his offence the more he extenuates the anger of his Judge. Sin cannot but call for justice, as it is an offence against God; yet, when once 'tis a wound to the soul it moveth him to mercy and clemency. Wherefore, as David having but resolved to confess his sins, was accosted eftsoon with an absolution: so, *Tu agnosce, et Dominus ignoscet.** Be thou unfeigned in confessing, and God will be faithful in forgiving. 1 John i. 9. Only let *confessio peccati* be *professio desinendi* †—the acknowledgment of thy sin an obligation to leave it; and then thou mayest build upon it. "He that confesseth and forsaketh shall have mercy." Prov. xxviii. 13.—*Isaac Craven's Sermon at Paul's Cross,* 1630.

Verse 5.—"*I said, I will confess,*" etc. Justified persons, who have their sins

* Augustine. † Hilary.

forgiven, are yet bound to confess sin to God. . . . . There are many queries to be despatched in the handling of this point. The first query, is, what are the reasons why persons justified and pardoned are yet bound to make confession of sin unto God in private? The reasons are six. First, they are to confess sin unto God because holy confession gives a great deal of ease and holy quiet unto the mind of a sinner: conceal edand indulged guilt constracts horror and dread on the conscience. Secondly, because God loves to hear the complaints and the confessions of his own people. Lying on the face is the best gesture, and the mourning weed the best garment that God is well pleased with. A third reason is, because confession of sin doth help to quicken the heart to strong and earnest supplication to God (see verse 6). Confession is to the soul as the whetstone is to the knife, that sharpens it and puts an edge on it; so doth confession of sin. Confessing thy evils to God doth sharpen and put an edge on thy supplication; that man will pray but faintly that doth confess sin but slightly. A fourth reason is, because confession of sin will work a holy contrition and a godly sorrow in the heart. (Psalm xxxviii. 18). Declaration doth work compunction. Confession of sin is but the causing of sin to recoil on the conscience, which causeth blushing and shame of face, and grief of heart. A fifth reason is, because secret confession of sin doth give a great deal of glory to God. It gives glory to God's justice. I do confess sin, and do confess God in justice may damn me for my sin. It gives glory to God's mercy. I confess sin, yet mercy may save me. It gives glory to God's omnisciency. In confessing sin I do acknowledge that God knoweth my sin. A sixth reason why justified persons must confess sin unto God is, because holy confession of sin will embitter sin, and endear Christ to them, when a man shall let sin recoil on his conscience by a confession.—*Condensed from Christopher Love's "Soul's Cordiall,"* 1683.

Verse 5.—"*I said I will confess . . . . and thou forgavest.*" It remaineth as a truth, remission is undoubtedly annexed to confession. *Tantum valent tres syllabæ* PEC-CA-VI, saith St. Austin, of so great force are those three syllables in the Latin, three words in the English, when uttered with a contrite heart, "*I have sinned.*"—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*" This sin seems very probably to have been his adultery with Bathsheba, and murder of Uriah. Now David to make the pardoning mercy of God more illustrious, saith he did not only forgive his *sin*, but the *iniquity* of his sin; and what was that? Surely the worst that can be said of that, his complicated sin, is that there was so much hypocrisy in it, he woefully juggled with God and man in it; this, I do not doubt to say, was *the iniquity* of his sin, and put a colour deeper on it than the blood which he shed. And the rather—I lay the accent there—because God himself, when he would set out the heinousness of this sin, seems to do it rather from the hypocrisy in the fact than the fact itself, as appears by the testimony given this holy man (1 Kings xv. 5): "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." Were there not other false steps which David took besides this? Doth the Spirit of God, by excepting this, declare his approbation of all that else he ever did? No, sure the Spirit of God records other sins that escaped this eminent servant of the Lord; but all those are drowned here, and this mentioned as the only stain of his life. But why? Surely because there appeared less sincerity, yea, more hypocrisy in this one sin than in all his others put together; though David in them was wrong as to the matter of his actions, yet his heart was more right in the manner of committing them. But here his sincerity was sadly wounded, though not to the total destruction of the habit, yet to lay it in a long swoon, as to any actings thereof. And truly the wound went very deep when that grace was stabbed in which did run the life blood of all the rest. We see, then, God hath reason, though his mercy prompted him, yea, his covenant obliged him, not to let his child die of this wound, yet so to heal it that a scar might remain upon the place, a mark upon the sin, whereby others might know how odious hypocrisy is to God.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*" We must observe the *matter forgiven*, and the *manner of forgiving*. The matter forgiven is the *iniquity of his sin*. It is disputed what is meant here by *iniquity*, whether *culpa* or *pœna*. Some understand *pœnam*, and think that an allusion is made in this word unto the message of Nathan, wherein God doth remit the heaviest stroke of his wrath, but yet retains some part in punishing the child, and permitting Absalom to rebel and abuse king

David's concubines: so Theodoret, *Deus non condigna pœna Davidem punivit.* Some understand *culpam*, and will have this phrase to be an amplification of that, as if *superbia defendens*, or *taciturnitas celans*, or *impietas contra Deum assurgens*, or some such great guilt were meant by this phrase. But as I do not censure these opinions, which may well stand, so I think the phrase looks back unto that word which was in the *confession.* The sin confessed was עָוֹן, and this is but an analysis of this word; for עָוֹן חַטָּאתִי, what is it, word for word, but the *perverseness of my aberration?* חַטָּאָה is an aberration from the scope or mark whereat we aim; all men aim at felicity, but most men stray from it, because they are not led by the law that guides unto it, the violating whereof is called חַטָּאָה. But some do stray out of mere ignorance, and they only break the law; some out of stubbornness, which will not submit themselves to the Lawgiver; these men's sin is called *perverseness*, which God is said here to forgive. So that David did not confess more against himself than God includes in his pardon. Well may God exceed our desire; he never doth come short thereof if it do concern our spiritual, our eternal good. As he doth exclude no sinner that doth confess, so doth he except against no sin that is confessed.—*Arthur Lake.*

Verse 6.—"*For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found,*" etc. Seeing he is such a God, who should refuse or delay his return! Surely every rational and pious mind will, without delay, invoke so gentle and mild a Lord; *will pray to him while he is exorable*, or, as the Hebrew expresses it, *in a time of finding.* For he who promises pardon, does not promise to-morrow. There are *tempora fandi*—certain times in which he may be spoken with, and a certain appointed day of pardon and of grace, which if a man by stupid perverseness despise, or by sloth neglect, surely he is justly overwhelmed with eternal might and misery, and must necessarily perish by the deluge of divine wrath; since he has contemned and derided that Ark of salvation which was prepared and in which whoever enters into it shall be safe, while the world is perishing.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 6.—"*For this shall every one that is godly pray to thee,*" said David. "*For this!*" What? Because of his sins. And who? Not the wickedest, but the "*godly,*" in this respect, have cause to pray. And for what should he pray? Surely, for renewed pardon, for increase of grace, and for the perfection of glory. We cannot say we have no sin. Oh then, let us pray with David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!" Where there is a double emphasis observable it is not *ab hoste*, but *a servo.* Though God's servant, yet he would not have God to enter into judgment with him. And again, *ne intres*, it is the very entrance into judgment that he dreads and prayeth against; not only do not *proceed*, but not so much as enter.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 6.—"*For this shall every one that is godly.*" We are here furnished with a fact which does not appear in the history of David. It is commonly supposed that after his grievous fall, till Nathan reproved him, he had been careless and stupefied; and this has often been adduced as a proof of the hardening nature of sin. But the thing was far otherwise. He was all the while tortured in his mind yet unwilling to humble himself before God, and condemn himself before men, as he ought to have done. He kept silence, and endeavoured to pass off the distress by time, palliation, and excuse. But the repression and concealment of his anguish preyed not only upon his peace, but his health, and endangered life itself. At length he was reduced to the deepest penitence, and threw himself, by an unqualified confession, on the compassion of God. "*For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee.*" Here we see not only that all the godly pray, but every one of them prays for pardon. This is the very thing which our Saviour teaches his disciples: "When ye pray, say, Forgive us our trespasses." And this praying does not only regard the manifestation of forgiving mercy, as some would have it but the exercise of it.—*William Jay.*

Verse 6.—"*Godly.*" A godly man is like God, he hath the same judgment with God! he thinks of things as God doth; he hath a God-like disposition; he partakes of the divine nature. 2. Peter i. 4. A godly man doth bear God's name and image: godliness is Godlikeness.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 6.—"*A time.*" There be seasons, which, if taken, sweeten actions, and open the door for their better entertainment: Prov. xxv. 11, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver;" the Hebrew is, A word spoken upon its wheels: fit times and seasons are wheels to carry words with great advantage.

And so for actions ; when things are done in due time they are beautiful, acceptable. When God gives rain to a land in season, how acceptable is it ! when a tree bears fruit in its season, it is grateful : so when angels or men do things seasonably, it is pleasing to the Lord Christ : there are fit times, which, if we miss, actions are unlovely, and miss of their aims. *" For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found."* There are times, if we have the wisdom to discern them, when prayer will be seasonable, acceptable, effectual.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 6.—*" Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him."* The effects of prayer heretofore have been wonderful. Prayer hath sent down hailstones from heaven to overcome five kings with their armies. Prayer hath shut up the windows of heaven that it should not rain, and again hath opened them that the earth might give her increase. Prayer hath stayed the swift course of the sun and caused it to go backward fifteen degrees. Prayer hath held God's hands that he could not strike when he was ready to plague his people. Prayer without any other help or means hath thrown down the strong walls of Jericho. Prayer hath divided the sea that the floods thereof could not come near the Israelites. In this place it delivereth the faithful man from all the dangers of this world. *" Surely in the floods of many waters they shall not come nigh unto him."* The sum is this, That no calamity of this world, no troubles of this life, no terrors of death, no guiltiness of sin, can be so great, but that a *" godly "* man by means of his faith and felicity in Christ shall wade out of them well enough. For howsoever other things go, still he shall have such a solace in his soul, such a comfort in his conscience, such a heaven in his heart, knowing himself reconciled to God and justified by faith, that *" Surely in the floods of many waters they shall not come nigh unto him."* Which, that it may better appear, I shall desire you to observe two things, the danger, the deliverance. The danger is in these words, *" In the floods of many waters ; "* where the tribulations that the godly man is subject to in this life are likened, first, to *waters ;* then, to *many* waters ; thirdly, to a *flood* of many waters. The deliverance is in these words, *" Surely they shall not come near him ; "* where the deliverance of the godly man hath three degrees also. First, " they shall not come *near ; "* secondly, *him,* " they shall not come near *him ; "* then, *surely*—*" surely* they shall not come near him."—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verse 6.—*" The floods of great waters."* The afflictions of the faithful are likened to *waters.* Fire and water have no mercy, we say. But of the two water is the worst. For any fire may be quenched with water ; but the force of water, if it begins to be violent, cannot by any power of man be resisted. But these our tribulations which are *" waters,"* are *" many* waters." Our common proverb is, " Seldom comes sorrow alone : " but as waters come rolling and waving many together, so the miseries of this life.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verse 6.—*" Floods of great waters."*—Unfamiliar with the sudden flooding of thirsty water-courses, we seldom comprehend the full force of some of the most striking images in the Old and New Testaments.—*W. J. Conybeare, and J. S. Howson, in " Life and Epistles of St. Paul."*

Verse 6.—*" In the floods,"* etc.—Washed he may be, as Paul was in the shipwreck, but not drowned with those floods of great waters : be they never so great they are bounded.—*Joseph Trapp.*

Verse 6.—*" Him."* This word must in no case be omitted ; it helpeth us to answer a very strong objection. For it may be said, Many holy men have lost their goods, have suffered great torments in their body, have been troubled also in mind ; how then did not the " floods of many waters " come near them ? The word *" him "* helps us to answer. The very philosophers themselves reckoned their goods pertained no more to them, than, be it spoken with reverence and regard, the parings of their nails. Zenon hearing news he had lost all he had by sea, said only thus, Thou hast done very well, Fortune, to leave me nothing but my cloak. Another, called Anaxarchus, when as Nicocreon the tyrant commanded he should be beaten to death in a mortar, spake thus to the executioner, Beat and bray as long as thou wilt Anaxarchus his bag or satchel (so he called his own body), but Anaxarchus thou canst not touch. Yet these, making so small reckoning of their goods and body, set their mind notwithstanding at a high rate. The mind of a man is himself, say they. Hence it is that Julius Cæsar, when Amyclas the pilot was greatly afraid of the tempest, spake to him thus : What meanest thou to fear, base fellow ? dost thou not know thou carriest Cæsar with thee ? As if he should say,

Cæsar's body may well be drowned, as any other man's may; but his mind, his magnanimity, his valour, his fortitude, can never be drowned. Thus far went philosophy; but divinity goeth a degree further. For philosophy defineth *him*, that is, a man, by his reason, and the moral virtues of the mind; but divinity defineth a Christian man by his faith, and his conjunction thereby with Christ. Excellently saith Saint Austin: Whence comes it that the soul dieth? Because faith is not in it. Whence that the body dieth? Because a soul is not in it. Therefore the soul of thy soul is faith. So that if we would know what is a faithful man, we must define him, not by his natural soul, as he is reasonable, but by the soul of his soul, which is his faith. And then we easily answer the objection, that a flood may come near a faithful man's goods, near his body, near his reasonable soul; but to his faith, that is, to HIM, it can never come near.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verse 6.—Few verses in the Psalms are harder to be understood than this: and none has given rise to more varied expositions among the commentators. "*For this.*" Some will have it: encouraged by this example, that after so foul a fall God so readily forgave. Others again: "*for this*," namely, warned by this example, they who are holy shall make their prayers that they may not be permitted to fall as David did. Whichever be the sense, they well argue from this passage, that the state of absolute and enduring perfection is impossible to a Christian in this life.—*Lorinus, and Cajetan* (1469—1534), *quoted by Neale.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou art my hiding place.*" David does not say, "Thou art a hiding-place" merely as one among many; or *the* "hiding-place," as the only one; but, "Thou art *my* hiding-place." *There* lies all the excellency of the text. "He is *mine;* I have embraced the offer of his salvation," says David; "I have applied to him in my own person: I have, as a sinner, taken shelter in his love and compassion; I have placed myself under his wings; I have covered myself with the robe of his righteousness; and now, therefore, I am safe." "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." This is having a part and a lot in the matter, having the personal and individual benefit of the Saviour's work of atonement. How different is an *appropriating* from a *speculative* faith! Men tell us that they believe the doctrine, that they acknowledge the truth, that they assent to our creed; and they say, that to declare to them the character of Christ, as the sinner's only help and safety, is merely putting before them what they already know. Now, follow up the idea suggested by the figure in our text, and see the folly and danger of acting thus. Suppose a traveller upon a bleak and exposed heath to be alarmed by the approach of a storm. He looks out for shelter. But if his eye discern a place to hide him from the storm, does he stand still and say, "I see there *is* a shelter, and therefore I may remain where I am"? Does he not betake himself to it? Does he not run, in order to escape the stormy wind and tempest? It was a "hiding-place" before; but it was *his* hiding-place only when he ran into it, and was safe. Had he not gone into it, though it might have been a protection to a thousand other travellers who resorted there, to him it would have been as if no such place existed. Who does not see at once, from this simple illustration, that the blessings of the gospel are such only in their being *appropriated to* the soul? The physician can cure only by being *applied to;* the medicine can heal them by being *taken;* money can enrich only by being *possessed;* and the merchantman in the parable would have been none the wealthier for discovering that there was a "pearl of great price," had he not made it *his*. So with the salvation of the gospel: if Christ is the "Balm in Gilead," *apply* the remedy; if he is the "Physician there," *go* to him; if he is the "pearl of great price," sell all that you have and buy it; and if he is the "hiding-place," *run into* it and be safe; there will be no solid joy and peace in the mind until he is *your* "hiding-place."—*Fountain Elwin*, 1842.

Verse 7.—"*Thou art my hiding-place.*"—An allusion, probably, to the *city of refuge.—Adam Clarke.*

Verse 7.—"*Hiding place.*" Kirke White has a beautiful hymn upon this word, beginning, "Awake, sweet harp of Judah, wake." We have no room to quote it, but it will be found in "Our Own Hymn Book," No. 381.

Verse 7.—"*Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.*" If we content ourselves with that word which our translators have chosen here, "*trouble*," we must rest in one of these two senses; either that God shall arm, and indue those that are his with such a constancy, as those things that trouble others shall not trouble them; but,

"As the sufferings of Christ abound in them, so their consolation also aboundeth by Christ:" "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. i. 5; vi. 9); for God uses both these ways in the behalf of his servants—sometimes to suspend the working of that that should work their torment, as he suspended the rage of the lions for Daniel, and the heat of the fire in the furnace for the others; sometimes by imprinting a holy stupefaction and insensibleness in the person that suffers; so St. Laurence was not only patient, but merry and facetious when he lay broiling upon the fire, and so we read of many other martyrs that have been less moved, less affected with their torments than their executioners or their persecutors have been. That which troubled others never troubled them; or else the phrase must have this sense, that though they be troubled with their troubles, though God submit them so far to the common condition of men, that they be sensible of them, yet he shall preserve them from that trouble so as that it shall never overthrow them, never sink them into a dejection of spirit, or diffidence in his mercy! they shall find storms, but a stout and strong ship under foot; they shall feel thunder and lightning, but garlands of triumphant bays shall preserve them; they shall be trodden into earth with scorns and contempts, but yet as seed is buried, to multiply to more. So far this word of our translators assists our devotion, "*Thou shalt preserve me from trouble,*" thou shalt make me insensible of it, or thou shalt make me victorious in it.—*John Donne.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.*" In these words the prophet David riseth up by a gradation, and goeth beyond that which he had formerly said concerning his confidence in God. First, he had said that God was his *hiding-place;* secondly, that he would *preserve him in trouble;* and now, thirdly, that the Lord would make him *joyful,* and to triumph over his troubles and enemies, by compassing him, instead of troubles, with mercies. . . . . Learn to acknowledge God's goodness to thyself with particular application, as David saith here, "Thou shalt compass *me* about with songs of deliverance." Not only confess his goodness to others, as to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; nor only his deliverance of Noah, Daniel, Lot; but also his mercies to and deliverance of thyself, as Paul did: "Christ gave himself for *me,* and died for *me.*" Gal. ii. 20. This will exceedingly whet up thankfulness; whereas only to acknowledge God good in himself, or to others, and not to thyself, will make thee murmur and repine.—*Thomas Taylor.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou shalt compass me about.*" This word importeth that as we are besieged on every side with troubles, so we are compassed with as many comforts and deliverances; as our crosses grow daily, so our consolations are augmented day by day. We are on every side offended and on every side defended; therefore we ought on every side to sound God's praise, as David saith, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me." Ps. ciii. 1.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 7.—"*Songs of deliverance.*" In that he will not be content only with thanks, but also will have them conjoined with "*songs,*" he letteth us see how high all the strings of his heart are bended that he cannot contain himself for the mercies of God to his church, and for his manifold deliverances for the same. Many sing praises to God with an half-open mouth; and, albeit, they can sing aloud any filthy ballad in their house, they make the mean, I warrant you, in the church, that scarce can they hear the sound of their own voice. I think they be ashamed to proclaim and show forth God's praises, or they fear to deafen God by their loud singing; but David bended all his forces within and without to praise his God. *Archibald Symson.*

Verse 8.—"*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.*" No other than God himself can undertake so much as is promised in the text. For here is faith, a rectifying of the understanding, "*I will instruct thee,*" and in the original there is somewhat more than our translation reaches to; it is there, *Intelligere faciam te, I will make thee understand.* Man can instruct, God only can make us understand. And then it is *Faciam te,* I will make thee, *thee,* understand; the work is the Lord's, the understanding is the man's: for God does not work in man as the devil did in idols and *in pythonissis,* and *in ventriloquis,* in possessed persons, who had no voluntary concurrence with the action of the devil, but were merely passive; God works so in man as that he makes man work too, *faciam te,* I will make thee understand; that that shall be done shall be done by me, but in thee; the power that rectifies the act is God's, the act is man's; *Faciam te,* says God, I

will make thee, *thee*, every particular person (for that arises out of this singular and distributive word, *thee*, which threatens no exception, no exclusion), I will make every person to whom I present instruction, capable of that instruction; and if he receive it not, it is only his, and not my fault. And so this first part is an instruction *de credendis*, of such things, as by God's rectifying of our understanding we are bound to believe. And then, in a second part, there follows a more particular instructing, *Docebo*, "*I will teach thee*," and that *in via*, "*in the way;*" it is not only *de via*, to teach thee which is the way, that thou mayst find it, but *in via*, how to keep the way when thou art in it; he will teach thee, not only *ut gradiaris*, that thou mayst walk in it and not sleep, but *quomodo gradieris*, that thou mayst walk in it and not stray; and so this second part is an institution *de agendis*, of those things which thine understanding being formerly rectified, and deduced into a belief, thou art bound to do. And then in the last words of the text, "*I will guide thee with mine eye*," there is a third part, an establishment, a confirmation, by an incessant watchfulness in God; he will consider, consult upon us (for so much the original word imports) he will not leave us to contingencies, to fortune; no, nor to his own general providence, by which all creatures are universally in his protection and administration, but he will ponder us, consider us, study us; and that with his eye, which is the sharpest and most sensible organ and instrument, soonest feels if anything be amiss, and so inclines him quickly to rectify us; and so this third part is an instruction *de sperandis*, it hath evermore a relation to the future, to the constancy and perseverance of God's goodness towards us; to the end, and in the end he will guide us with his eye: except the eye of God can be put out we cannot be put out of his sight and his care. So that, both our freight which we are to take in, that is, what we are to believe concerning God; and the voyage which we are to make, how we are to steer and govern our course, that is, our behaviour and conversation in the household of the faithful; and then the haven to which we must go, that is, our assurance of arriving at the heavenly Jerusalem, are expressed in this chart, in this map, in this instruction, in this text.—*John Donne.*

Verse 8.—This threefold repetition, "*I will instruct thee*," "*I will teach thee*," "*I will guide thee*," teaches us three properties of a good teacher. First, to make the people understand the way of salvation; secondly, to go before them; thirdly, to watch over them and their ways.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 8.—"*The way.*" If we compare this way with all other ways, it will whet our care to enter into and continue in it; for, first, this is the *King's highway*, in which we have promise of protection. Ps. xci. 11. Secondly, God's ways are the *cleanest* of all. 2 Sam. xxii. 31. Thirdly, God's ways are the *rightest* ways; and, being rightest, they be also the *shortest* ways. Hosea xiv. 9. Fourthly, God's ways are most *lightsome* and *cheerful*. Prov. iii. 17. Therefore, God's ways being the safest, cleanest, rightest, shortest, and lightsomest ways, we must be careful to walk in them.—*Condensed from Thomas Taylor.*

Verse 8.—"*I will guide thee with mine eye.*" We read in natural story* of some creatures, *Qui solo oculorum aspectu fovent ova*,† which hatch their eggs only by looking upon them. What cannot the eye of God produce and hatch in us? *Plus est quod probatur aspectu, quam quod sermone.*‡ A man may seem to commend in words, and yet his countenance shall dispraise. His word infuses good purposes into us; but if God continue his eye upon us it is a further approbation, for he is a God of pure eyes, and will not look upon the wicked. "This land doth the Lord thy God care for, and the eyes of the Lord are always upon it from the beginning of the year, even to the end thereof." Deut. xi. 12. What a cheerful spring, what a fruitful autumn hath that soul, that hath the eye of the Lord always upon her! The eye of the Lord upon me makes midnight noon; it makes Capricorn Cancer, and the winter's the summer's solstice; the eye of the Lord sanctifies, nay, more than sanctifies, glorifies all the eclipses of dishonour, makes melancholy cheerfulness, diffidence assurance, and turns the jealousy of the sad soul into infallibility. . . . This guiding us with his eye manifests itself in these two great effects; conversion to him, and union with him. First, his eye works upon ours; his eye turns ours to look upon him. Still it is so expressed with an *Ecce;* "Behold the eye of the Lord is

* A reviewer remarks upon the bad natural history which we quote. We reply that to alter it would be to spoil the allusions, and we are making a book for men, not for babes. No person in his senses is likely at this day to believe the fables which in former ages passed current for facts.

† Pliny. ‡ Ambrose.

upon all them that fear him ; " his eye calls ours to behold that ; and then our eye calls upon his, to observe our cheerful readiness. . . . When, as a well made picture doth always look upon him that looks upon it, this image of God in our soul is turned to him, by his turning to it, it is impossible we should do any foul, any uncomely thing in his presence. . . . The other great effect of his guiding us with his eye, is, that it unites us to himself ; when he fixes his eye upon us, and accepts the return of ours to him, then he " keeps " us as the " apple " of his " eye." Zech. ii. 8. . . . These are the two great effects of his guiding us by his eye, that first, his eye turns us to himself, and then turns us into himself ; first, his eye turns ours to him, and then, that makes us all one with himself, so as that our afflictions shall be put upon his patience, and our dishonours shall be injurious to him ; we cannot be safer than by being his ; but thus we are not only his, but he—to every persecutor, in every one of our behalf, he shall say, *Cur me ?* Why persecutest thou me ? And as he is all power, and can defend us, so here he makes himself all eye, which is the most tender part, and most sensible of our pressures.—*Condensed from John Donne.*

Verse 8.—" *I will guide thee with mine eye.*" Marg., *I will counsel* thee, *mine eye* shall be *upon thee.* The margin expresses the sense of the Hebrew. The literal *meaning* is, " I will counsel thee ; mine eye shall be upon thee." De Wette : " my eye shall be directed towards thee." The *idea* is that of one who is telling another what way he is to take in order that he may reach a certain place ; and he says he will watch him, or will keep an eye upon him ; he will not let him go wrong.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 8.—" *Mine eye.*" We may consider mercies as the beamings of the Almighty's eye when the light of his countenance is lifted up upon us ; and that man as guided by the eye, whom mercies attract and attach to his Maker. But oh ! let us refuse to be guided by the eye, and it will become needful that we be curbed with the hand. If we abuse our mercies, if we forget their Author, and yield him not gratefully the homage of our affections, we do but oblige him, by his love for our souls, to apportion us disaster and trouble. Complain not, then, that there is so much of sorrow in your lot ; but consider rather how much of it you may have wilfully brought upon yourselves. Listen to the voice of God. " *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye* "—mine eye, whose glance gilds all that is beautiful, whose light disperses all darkness prevents all danger, diffuses all happiness. And why, then, is it that ye are sorely disquieted ? why is it that " fear and the pit " are so often upon you ; that one blessing after another disappears from your circle ; and that God seems to deal with you as with the wayward and unruly, on whom any thing of gentleness would be altogether lost ? Ah ! if you would account for many mercies that have departed, if you would insure permanence to those that are yet left, examine how deficient you may hitherto have been, and strive to be more diligent for the future, in obeying an admonition which implies that we should be guided by the soft lustres of the eye, if our obduracy did not render indispensible the harsh constraints of the rein. *Henry Melvill.*

Verse 9.—" *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule,*" etc. How many run mad of this cause, inordinate and furious lusts ! The prophet Jeremiah, chap. ii. 24, compareth Israel to " a swift dromedary, traversing her ways," and to a " wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure." " *Be ye not,*" saith the Psalmographer, " as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding : whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Men have understanding, not beasts ; yet when the frenzy of lust overwhelmeth their senses, we may take up the word of the prophet and pour it on them : " Every man is a beast by his own knowledge." And therefore " man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like unto beasts that perish " (Ps. xlix. 20). Did not the bridle of God's overruling providence restrain their madness, they would cast off the saddle of reason, and kick nature itself in the face.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 9.—" *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule,*" etc. According to the several natures of these two beasts, the fathers and other expositors have made several interpretations ; at least, several allusions. They consider the horse and the mule to admit any rider, any burden, without discretion or difference, without debatement or consideration ; they never ask whether their rider be noble or base, nor whether their load be gold for the treasure, or roots for the market. And those expositors

find the same indifference in an habitual sinner to any kind of sin; whether he sin for pleasure, or sin for profit, or sin but for company, still he sins. They consider in the mule, that one of his parents being more ignoble than the other, he is likest the worst, he hath more of the ass than of the horse in him; and they find in us, that all our actions and thoughts taste more of the ignobler part of earth than of heaven. St. Hierome thinks fierceness and rashness to be presented in the horse, and sloth in the mule. And St. Augustine carries these two qualities far; he thinks that in this fierceness of the horse the Gentiles are represented, which ran far from the knowledge of Christianity; and by the laziness of the mule the Jews, who came nothing so fast, as they were invited by their former helps to the embracing thereof. They have gone far in these allusions and applications; and they might have gone as far further as it had pleased them; they have sea-room enough, that will compare a beast and a sinner together; and they shall find many times, in the way, the beast the better man.—*John Donne.*

Verse 9.—"*Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule,*" etc. Consider the causes why a broken leg is incurable in a horse, and easily curable in a man. The horse is incapable of counsel to submit himself to the farrier; and therefore in case his leg be set he flings, flounces, and flies out, unjointing it again by his misemployed mettle, counting all binding to be shackles and fetters unto him: whereas a man willingly resigns himself to be ordered by the *surgeon*, preferring rather to be a prisoner for some days, than a cripple all his life. "*Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding;*" but "let patience have its perfect work in thee." James i. 4.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 9.—"*Bit and bridle.*" חֶגֶם־וָרֶסֶן. The LXX render the first of these two words by χαλινῷ, the second by κημῷ. The word χαλινός signifies the iron of the common bridle, which is put into the horse's mouth, the bit, or curb. But κημός was something like a muzzle, which was put upon mischievous horses or mules to hinder them from biting. Xenophon says, that it allowed them to breathe, but kept the mouth shut, so that they could not bite. Not knowing the term of art for this contrivance, I call it a muzzle. The verb קָרַב is a military term, and signifies to advance, as an enemy, to attack. The "coming near," therefore, intended here, is a coming near to do mischief. The admonition given by the Psalmist to his companions, is to submit to the instruction and guidance graciously promised from heaven, and not to resemble, in a refractory disposition, those ill-conditioned colts which are not to be governed by a simple bridle; but, unless their jaws are confined by a muzzle, will attack the rider as he attempts to mount, or the groom as he leads them to the pasture and the stable.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 9.—"*Lest they come near unto thee.*" The common version of this clause would be suitable enough in speaking of a wild beast, but in reference to a mule or a horse the words can only mean, because they will not follow or obey thee of their own accord; they must be constantly coerced, in the way both of compulsion and restraint.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 9.—"Be ye not like a horse or mule, which have no understanding, and whose ornament is a bridle and bit, to hold them: they do not come unto thee *of themselves.*"—*Charles Carter, in "The Book of Psalms."* 1869. [*A new Translation.*]

Verse 10.—"*He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.*" Even as in the midst of the sphere is the centre, from which all lines being drawn do tend towards their circumference: so a good Christian man hath God for his circumference; for whatever he thinketh, speaketh, or doth, it tendeth to Christ, of whom he is compassed round about.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 10.—"*Mercy shall compass him about.*" He shall be *surrounded* with mercy—as one is surrounded by the air, or by the sunlight. He shall find mercy and favour everywhere—at home, abroad; by day, by night; in society, in solitude; in sickness, in health; in life, in death; in time, in eternity. He shall walk amidst mercies; he shall die amidst mercies; he shall live in a better world in the midst of eternal mercies.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 10.—"Mark that text," said Richard Adkins to his grandson Abel, who was reading to him the thirty-second Psalm. "Mark that text, 'He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.' I read it in my youth and believed it; and now I read it in my old age, thank God, I know it to be true. Oh! it is a blessed thing in the midst of the joys and sorrows of the world, Abel, to trust in the Lord."—*The Christian Treasury,* 1848.

Verse 11.—*" Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous : and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."* This exhortation containeth three parts. First, what he doth exhort unto, *to rejoice*. Secondly, whom, the *righteous*, and *upright men*. Thirdly, the limitation, *" in the Lord."* He exhorteth them three times—be glad, rejoice, and be joyful ; and as he made mention of a threefold blessing, so doth he of a threefold joy. Wherein we have two things necessary to be observed. First, the dulness of our natures, who as slow horses need many spurs and provocations to spiritual things, whereas we are naturally overmuch bent to carnal things, that we need no incitations thereunto. But by the contrary in spiritual things, we are cast into a deep sleep, who cannot be awakened at the first cry ; but as men after drink have need to be roused often, that they may behold the light ; so men drunken with the pleasures of sin, as Nazianzen saith, must be wakened by divers exhortations ; as this same prophet in the subsequent Psalm redoubleth his exhortations for the same effect. And the apostle to Philippians saith : " Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice " (chap. iv. 4). Next, perceive that this exhortation grows ; for the word *be glad*, properly in the original signifieth an inward and hearty joy, by the presence or hope at least of a thing desirable or good. The word *rejoice*, to express our joy by some outward gesture, sometimes used for dancing, as, " The hills skip for gladness." Ps. lxv. 12. The word *be joyful*, to cry for gladness, as the dumb man's tongue shall sing. This gradation teacheth us, that this is the nature of spiritual joy—that it still increaseth in us by certain degrees, until it come to the perfection of all joy, which is signified by the last word, importing, as it were, a triumph and shouting after victory. So that they are truly penitent who have overcome sin and Satan in their spiritual combat, and have triumphed over them as vanquished enemies.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 11.—*" Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous."* There is never a joyful man alive but a believer. Will you say that men take pleasure in their sins ? Why, that is the *Devil's* joy ; or that they rejoice in full barns and bags ? That is the *fool's* joy ; or that they rejoice in wine, that is, all dainties that gratify the palate ? That is a *Bedlam* joy. Read and believe Eccl. ii. 3 ; indeed, from the first verse to the eleventh, the whole book, but especially that chapter, is the divinest philosophy that ever was or will be.—*Christopher Fowler* (1610—1678), *in " Morning Exercises."*

Verse 11.—*" Shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."* When the poet Carpani enquired of his friend Haydn, how it happened that his church music was so cheerful, the great composer made a most beautiful reply. " I cannot," he said, " make it otherwise, I write according to the thoughts I feel : when I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen : and, since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve him with a cheerful spirit.—*John Whitecross's Anecdotes.*

Verse 11.—Here the sensual man, that haply would catch hold when it is said, *" Rejoice,"* by-and-by, when it is added, *" in the Lord,"* will let his hold go. But they that, by reason of the billows and waves of the troublesome sea of this world, cannot brook the speech when it is said, *" Rejoice,"* are to lay sure hold fast upon it when it is added, *" Rejoice in the Lord."—Henry Airay.*

Verse 11.

O sing unto this glittering, glorious King ;
O praise his name, let every living thing ;
Let heart and voice, like bells of silver ring
The comfort that this day doth bring.

Kinwellmersh, quoted by A. Moody Stuart.

Verse 11.—It is storied by the famous Tully concerning Syracuse, that there is no day throughout the whole year so stormy and tempestuous in which the inhabitants have not some glimpse and sight of the sun. The like observation may be truly made on all those Psalms of David in which his complaints are most multiplied, his fears and pressures most insisted on ; that there is not any of them so totally overcast with the black darkness of despair, but that we may easily discern them to be here and there intervened and streaked with some comfortable expressions of his faith and hope in God. If in the beginning of a Psalm we find him restless in his motions, like Noah's dove upon the overspreading waters ; yet in the close we shall see him like the same dove returning with an olive branch in its mouth, and fixing upon the ark. If we find him in another Psalm staggering in the midst

of his distresses, through the prevalency of carnal fears, we may also in it behold him recovering himself again, by fetching arguments from faith, whose topics are of a higher elevation than to be shaken by the timorous suggestions that arise from the flesh. If at another time we behold him like to a boat on drift, that is, tossed and beaten by the inconstant winds and fierce waves; yet we shall still find all his rollings and agitations to be such as carry him towards the standing shore, where he rides at last both in peace and safety.—*William Spurstowe.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Gospel benedictions. Take the first Psalm with thirty-second, show the doctrinal and practical harmoniously blended. Or, take the first, the thirty-second, and the forty-first, and show how we go from reading the word, to feeling its power, and thence to living charitably towards men.

Verse 1.—*Evangelical Blessedness.* I. The original condition of its possessor. II. The nature of the benefit received. III. The channel by which it came. IV. The means by which it may be obtained by us.

Verses 1, 2.—The nature of sin and the modes of pardon.

Verse 2.—Non-imputation, a remarkable doctrine. Prove, explain, and improve it.

Verse 2.—"*No guile.*" The honesty of heart of the pardoned man.

Verse 3.—*Retention of our griefs to ourselves.* Natural tendency of timidity and despair; danger of it; means of divulging grief; encouragements to do so; the blessed person who is ready to hear confession.

The silent mourner the greatest sufferer.

Verses 3, 4.—"Terrible Convictions and Gentle Drawings." See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 313.

Verse 4.—The sorrows of a convinced soul. Daily, nightly, from God, heavy, weakening, destroying.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Spiritual drought.

Verse 5.—The gracious results of a full confession; or, confession and absolution scripturally explained.

Verse 6.—The *godly* man's picture, drawn with a Scripture pencil.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 6.—The experience of one, the encouragement of all.

Verse 6 (*first clause*).—The day of grace, how to improve it.

Verse 6 (*whole verse*).—Pardon of sin the guarantee that other mercies shall be given.

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—Imminent troubles, eminent deliverances.

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—The felicity of the faithful.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verse 7.—Danger felt, refuge known, possession claimed, joy experienced.

Verse 7 (*first sentence*).—Christ, a hiding-place from sin, Satan, and sorrow, in death, and at judgment.

Verse 7 (*second sentence*).—Troubles from which saints shall be preserved.

Verse 7 (*last sentence*).—The circle of song—who draws the circle, what is the circumference, who is in the centre.

Verse 7.—"*Songs of deliverance.*" From guilt, hell, death, enemies, doubts, temptations, accidents, plots, etc.

The divine schoolmaster, his pupils, their lessons, their chastisements and their rewards.

Verse 8.—The power of the eye.—*Henry Melvill.* In which he vainly tries to prove infant baptism and episcopacy, which he admits are not expressly taught in Scripture, but declares them to be hinted at as with the divine eye.

Verse 9.—God's bits and bridles, the mules who need them, and reasons why we ought not to be of the number.

Verse 9.—How far in our actions we are better, and how far worse than horses and mules.

Verse 10.—The many sorrows which result from sin. The encompassing mercy of the believer's life even in his most troublous times.

The portion of the wicked, and the lot of the faithful.

Verse 11.—A believer's gladness. *Its spring,* "in the Lord;" *its vivacity,* "shout;" *its propriety,* it is commanded; *its beneficial results and its abundant reasons.*

Verse 11.—"*Upright in heart,*" an instructive description. Not norizontal or grovelling, nor bent, nor inclined, but vertical in heart.

PSALM XXXIII.

TITLE.—*This song of praise bears no title or indication of authorship; to teach us, says Dickson, "to look upon holy Scripture as altogether inspired of God, and not put price upon it for the writers thereof."*

SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.—*The praise of Jehovah is the subject of this sacred song. The righteous are exhorted to praise him, verses* 1—3; *because of the excellency of his character,* 4, 5; *and his majesty in creation,* 6, 7. *Men are bidden to fear before Jehovah becauses his purposes are accomplished in providence,* 8—11. *His people are proclaimed blessed,* 12. *The omniscience and omnipotence of God, and his care of his people are celebrated, in opposition to the weakness of an arm of flesh,* 13—19; *and the Psalm concludes with a fervent expression of confidence,* 20, 21, *and an earnest prayer,* 22.

EXPOSITION.

REJOICE in the LORD, O ye righteous: *for* praise is comely for the upright.
2 Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings.
3 Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

1. "*Rejoice in the Lord.*" Joy is the soul of praise. To delight ourselves in God is most truly to extol him, even if we let no notes of song proceed from our lips. That God is, and that he is such a God, and our God, ours for ever and ever, should wake within us an unceasing and overflowing joy. To rejoice in temporal comforts is dangerous, to rejoice in self is foolish, to rejoice in sin is fatal, but to rejoice in God is heavenly. He who would have a double heaven must begin below to rejoice like those above. "*O ye righteous.*" This is peculiarly your duty, your obligations are greater, and your spiritual nature more adapted to the work, be ye then first in the glad service. Even the righteous are not always glad, and have need to be stirred up to enjoy their privileges. "*For praise is comely for the upright.*" God has an eye to things which are becoming. When saints wear their choral robes, they look fair in the Lord's sight. A harp suits a blood-washed hand. No jewel more ornamental to a holy face than sacred praise. Praise is not comely from unpardoned professional singers; it is like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout. Crooked hearts make crooked music, but the upright are the Lord's delight. Praise is the dress of saints in heaven, it is meet that they should fit it on below.

2. "*Praise the Lord with harp.*" Men need all the help they can get to stir them up to praise. This is the lesson to be gathered from the use of musical instruments under the old dispensation. Israel was at school, and used childish things to help her to learn; but in these days, when Jesus gives us spiritual manhood, we can make melody without strings and pipes. We who do not believe these things to be expedient in worship, lest they should mar its simplicity, do not affirm them to be unlawful, and if any George Herbert or Martin Luther can worship God better by the aid of well-tuned instruments, who shall gainsay their right? *We* do not need them, they would hinder than help our praise, but if others are otherwise minded, are they not living in gospel liberty? "*Sing unto him.*" This is the sweetest and best of music. No instrument like the human voice. As a help to singing the instrument is alone to be tolerated, for keys and strings do not praise the Lord. "*With the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.*" The Lord must have a full octave, for all notes are his, and all music belongs to him. Where several pieces of music are mentioned, we are taught to praise God with all the powers which we possess.

3. "*Sing unto him a new song.*" All songs of praise should be "*unto him.*" Singing for singing's sake is nothing worth; we must carry our tribute to the King, and not cast it to the winds. Do most worshippers mind this? Our faculties should be exercised when we are magnifying the Lord, so as not to run in an old groove without thought; we ought to make every hymn of praise a new song. To keep up the freshness of worship is a great thing, and in private it is indispensable.

Let us not present old worn-out praise, but put life, and soul, and heart, into every song, since we have new mercies every day, and see new beauties in the work and word of our Lord. "*Play skilfully.*" It is wretched to hear God praised in a slovenly manner. He deserves the best that we have. Every Christian should endeavour to sing according to the rules of the art, so that he may keep time and tune with the congregation. The sweetest tunes and the sweetest voices, with the sweetest words, are all too little for the Lord our God; let us not offer him limping rhymes, set to harsh tunes, and growled out by discordant voices. "*With a loud noise.*" Heartiness should be conspicuous in divine worship. Well-bred whispers are disreputable here. It is not that the Lord cannot hear us, but that it is natural for great exultation to express itself in the loudest manner. Men shout at the sight of their kings: shall we offer no loud hosannahs to the Son of David?

4 For the word of the LORD *is* right; and all his works *are done* in truth.

5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

4. "*For the word of the Lord is right.*" His ordinances both natural, moral, and spiritual, are right, and especially his incarnate Word, who is the Lord our righteousness. Whatever God has ordained must be good, and just, and excellent. There are no anomalies in God's universe, except what sin has made; his word of command made all things good. When we look at his word of promise, and remember its faithfulness, what reasons have we for joy and thankfulness! "*And all his works are done in truth.*" His work is the outflow of his word, and it is true to it. He neither doth nor saith anything ill; in deed and speech he agrees with himself and the purest truth. There is no lie in God's word, and no sham in his works; in creation, providence, and revelation, unalloyed truth abounds. To act truth as well as to utter it is divine, let not children of God ever yield their principles in practice any more than in heart. What a God we serve! The more we know of him, the more our better natures approve his surpassing excellence; even his afflicting works are according to his truthful word.

> "Why should I complain of want or distress,
> Affliction or pain? he told me no less;
> The heirs of salvation, I know from his word,
> Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

God writes with a pen that never blots, speaks with a tongue that never slips, acts with a hand which never fails. Bless his name.

5. "*He loveth righteousness and judgment.*" The theory and the practice of right he intensely loves. He doth not only approve the true and the just, but his inmost soul delights therein. The character of God is a sea, every drop of which should become a wellhead of praise for his people. The righteousness of Jesus is peculiarly dear to the Father, and for its sake he takes pleasure in those to whom it is imputed. Sin, on the other hand, is infinitely abhorrent to the Lord, and woe unto those who die in it; if he sees no righteousness in them, he will deal righteously with them, and judgment stern and final will be the result. "*The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*" Come hither, astronomers, geologists, naturalists, botanists, chemists, miners, yea, all of you who study the works of God, for all your truthful stories confirm this declaration. From the midge in the sunbeam to leviathan in the ocean all creatures own the bounty of the Creator. Even the pathless desert blazes with some undiscovered mercy, and the caverns of ocean conceal the treasures of love. Earth might have been as full of terror as of grace, but instead thereof it teems and overflows with kindness. He who cannot see it, and yet lives in it as the fish lives in the water, deserves to die. If earth be full of mercy, what must heaven be where goodness concentrates its beams?

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

6. "*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.*" The angelic heavens, the sidereal heavens, and the firmament or terrestrial heavens, were all made to start

into existence by a word; what if we say by *the* Word, "For without him was not anything made that is made." It is interesting to note the mention of the Spirit in the next clause, "*and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth;*" the word "*breath*" is the same as is elsewhere rendered Spirit. Thus the three persons of the Godhead unite in creating all things. How easy for the Lord to make the most ponderous orbs, and the most glorious angels! A word, a breath could do it. It is as easy for God to create the universe as for a man to breathe, nay, far easier, for man breathes not independently, but borrows the breath in his nostrils from his Maker. It may be gathered from this verse that the constitution of all things is from the infinite wisdom, for his word may mean his appointment and determination. A wise and merciful Word has arranged, and a living Spirit sustains all the creation of Jehovah.

7. "*He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap.*" The waters were once scattered like corn strewn upon a threshing floor: they are now collected in one spot as an heap. Who else could have gathered them into one channel but their great Lord, at whose bidding the waters fled away? The miracle of the Red Sea is repeated in nature day by day, for the sea which now invades the shore under the impulse of sun and moon, would soon devour the land if bounds were not maintained by the divine decree. "*He layeth up the depth in storehouses.*" The depths of the main are God's great cellars and storerooms for the tempestuous element. Vast reservoirs of water are secreted in the bowels of the earth, from which issue our springs and wells of water. What a merciful provision for a pressing need? May not the text also refer to the clouds, and the magazines of hail, and snow, and rain, those treasuries of merciful wealth for the fields of earth? These aqueous masses are not piled away as in lumber rooms, but in storehouses for future beneficial use. Abundant tenderness is seen in the foresight of our heavenly Joseph, whose granaries are already filled against earth's time of need. These stores might have been, as once they were, the ammunition of vengeance, they are now a part of the commissariat of mercy.

8 Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

9 For he spake, and it was *done;* he commanded, and it stood fast.

10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

11. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

8. "*Let all the earth fear the Lord.*" Not only Jews, but Gentiles. The Psalmist was not a man blinded by national prejudice, he did not desire to restrict the worship of Jehovah to the seed of Abraham. He looks for homage even to far-off nations. If they are not well enough instructed to be able to praise at least let them fear. There is an inferior kind of worship in the trembling which involuntarily admits the boundless power of the thundering God. A defiant blasphemer is out of place in a world covered with tokens of the divine power and Godhead: the whole earth cannot afford a spot congenial for the erection of a synagogue of Atheism, nor a man in whom it is becoming to profane the name of God. "*Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.*" Let them forsake their idols, and reverently regard the only living God. What is here placed as a wish may also be read as a prophecy: the adoration of God will yet be universal.

9. "*For he spake, and it was done.*" Creation was the fruit of a word. Jehovah said, "Light be," and light was. The Lord's acts are sublime in their ease and instantaneousness. "What a word is this?" This was the wondering enquiry of old, and it may be ours to this day. "*He commanded, and it stood fast.*" Out of nothing creation stood forth, and was confirmed in existence. The same power which first uplifted, now makes the universe to abide; although we may not observe it, there is as great a display of sublime power in confirming as in creating. Happy is the man who has learned to lean his all upon the sure word of him who built the skies!

10. "*The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought.*" While his own will is done, he takes care to anticipate the wilfulness of his enemies. Before they come to action he vanquishes them in the council-chamber; and when, well armed

with craft, they march to the assault, he frustrates their knaveries, and makes their promising plots to end in nothing. Not only the folly of the heathen, but their wisdom too, shall yield to the power of the cross of Jesus: what a comfort is this to those who have to labour where sophistry, and philosophy, falsely so called, are set in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus. "*He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.*" Their persecutions, slanders, falsehoods, are like puff-balls flung against a granite wall—they produce no result at all; for the Lord overrules the evil, and brings good out of it. The cause of God is never in danger: infernal craft is outwitted by infinite wisdom, and Satanic malice held in check by boundless power.

11. "*The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever.*" He changes not his purpose, his decree is not frustrated, his designs are accomplished. God has a predestination according to the counsel of his will, and none of the devices of his foes can thwart his decree for a moment. Men's purposes are blown to and fro like the thread of the gossamer or the down of the thistle, but the eternal purposes are firmer than the earth. "*The thoughts of his heart to all generations.*" Men come and go, sons follow their sires to the grave, but the undisturbed mind of God moves on in unbroken serenity, producing ordained results with unerring certainty. No man can expect his will or plan to be carried out from age to age; the wisdom of one period is the folly of another, but the Lord's wisdom is always wise, and his designs run on from century to century. His power to fulfil his purposes is by no means diminished by the lapse of years. He who was absolute over Pharaoh in Egypt is not one whit the less to-day the King of kings and Lord of lords; still do his chariot wheels roll onward in imperial grandeur, none being for a moment able to resist his eternal will.

12 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

12. "*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.*" Israel was happy in the worship of the only true God. It was the blessedness of the chosen nation to have received a revelation from Jehovah. While others grovelled before their idols, the chosen people were elevated by a spiritual religion which introduced them to the invisible God, and led them to trust in him. All who confide in the Lord are blessed in the largest and deepest sense, and none can reverse the blessing. "*And the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*" Election is at the bottom of it all. The divine choice rules the day; none take Jehovah to be their God till he takes them to be his people. What an ennobling choice this is! We are selected to no mean estate, and for no ignoble purpose: we are made the peculiar domain and delight of the Lord our God. Being so blessed, let us rejoice in our portion, and show the world by our lives that we serve a glorious Master.

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.

14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

17 An horse *is* a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength.

18 Behold, the eye of the LORD *is* upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

13. "*The Lord looketh from heaven.*" The Lord is represented as dwelling above and looking down below; seeing all things, but peculiarly observing and caring for those who trust in him. It is one of our choicest privileges to be always under our Father's eye, to be never out of sight of our best Friend. "*He beholdeth all the sons of men.*" All Adam's sons are as well watched as was Adam himself, their lone progenitor in the garden. Ranging from the frozen pole to the scorching equator, dwelling in hills and valleys, in huts and palaces, alike doth the divine eye regard all the members of the family of man.

14. *"From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth."* Here the sentiment is repeated: it is worth repeating, and it needs repeating, for man is most prone to forget it. As great men sit at their windows and watch the crowd below, so doth the Lord; he gazeth intently upon his responsible creatures, and forgets nothing of what he sees.

15. *"He fashioneth their hearts alike."* By which is meant that all hearts are equally fashioned by the Lord, kings' hearts as well as the hearts of beggars. The text does not mean that all hearts are created originally alike by God, such a statement would scarcely be true, since there is the utmost variety in the constitutions and dispositions of men. All men equally owe the possession of life to the Creator, and have therefore no reason to boast themselves. What reason has the vessel to glorify itself in presence of the potter? *"He considereth al their works."* Not in vain doth God see men's acts: he ponders and judges them. He reads the secret design in the outward behaviour, and resolves the apparent good into its real elements. This consideration foretokens a judgment when the results of the divine thoughts will be meted out in measures of happiness or woe. Consider thy ways, O man, for God considers them!

16. *"There is no king saved by the multitude of an host."* Mortal power is a fiction, and those who trust in it are dupes. Serried ranks of armed men have failed to maintain an empire, or even to save their monarch's life when a decree from the court of heaven has gone forth for the empire's overthrow. The all-seeing God preserves the poorest of his people when they are alone and friendless, but ten thousand armed men cannot ensure safety to him whom God leaves to destruction. *"A mighty man is not delivered by much strength."* So far from guarding others, the valiant veteran is not able to deliver himself. When his time comes to die, neither the force of his arms nor the speed of his legs can save him. The weakest believer dwells safely under the shadow of Jehovah's throne, while the most mighty sinner is in peril every hour. Why do we talk so much of our armies and our heroes? the Lord alone has strength, and let him alone have praise.

17. *"An horse is a vain thing for safety."* Military strength among the Orientals lay much in horses and scythed chariots, but the Psalmist calls them a lie, a deceitful confidence. Surely the knight upon his gallant steed may be safe, either by valour or by flight? Not so, his horse shall bear him into danger or crush him with its fall. *"Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength."* Thus the strongest defences are less than nothing when most needed. God only is to be trusted and adored. Sennacherib with all his cavalry is not a match for one angel of the Lord, Pharaoh's horses and chariots found it vain to pursue the Lord's anointed, and so shall all the leaguered might of earth and hell find themselves utterly defeated when they rise against the Lord and his chosen.

18. *"Behold."* For this is a greater wonder than hosts and horses, a surer confidence than chariots or shields. *"The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him."* That eye of peculiar care is their glory and defence. None can take them at unawares, for the celestial watcher foresees the designs of their enemies, and provides against them. They who fear God need not fear anything else; let them fix their eye of faith on him, and his eye of love will always rest upon them. *"Upon them that hope in his mercy."* This one would think to be a small evidence of grace, and yet it is a valid one. Humble hope shall have its share as well as courageous faith. Say, my soul, is not this an encouragement to thee? Dost thou not hope in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus? Then the Father's eye is as much upon thee as upon the elder born of the family. These gentle words, like soft bread, are meant for babes in grace, who need infants' food.

19. *"To deliver their soul from death."* The Lord's hand goes with his eye; he sovereignly preserves those whom he graciously observes. Rescues and restorations hedge about the lives of the saints; death cannot touch them till the King signs his warrant and gives him leave, and even then his touch is not so much mortal as immortal; he doth not so much kill us as kill our mortality. *"And to keep them alive in famine."* Gaunt famine knows its master. God has meal and oil for his Elijahs somewhere. "Verily thou shalt be fed" is a divine provision for the man of faith. The Preserver of men will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish. Power in human hands is outmatched by famine, but God is good at a pinch, and proves his bounty under the most straitened circumstances. Believer, wait upon thy God in temporals. His eye is upon thee, and his hand will not long delay.

20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he *is* our help and our shield.
21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

20. *"Our soul waiteth for the Lord."* Here the godly avow their reliance upon him whom the Psalm extols. To wait is a great lesson. To be quiet in expectation, patient in hope, single in confidence, is one of the bright attainments of a Christian. Our soul, our life, must hang upon God; we are not to trust him with a few gewgaws, but with all we have and are. *"He is our help and our shield."* Our help in labour, our shield in danger. The Lord answereth all things to his people. He is their all in all. Note the three *"ours"* in the text. These holdfast words are precious. Personal possession makes the Christian man; all else is mere talk.

21. *"For our hearts shall rejoice in him."* The duty commended and commanded in the first verse is here presented to the Lord. We, who trust, cannot but be of a glad heart, our inmost nature must triumph in our faithful God. *"Because we have trusted in his holy name."* The root of faith in due time bears the flower of rejoicing. Doubts breed sorrow, confidence creates joy.

22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Here is a large and comprehensive prayer to close with. It is an appeal for *"mercy,"* which even joyful believers need; and it is sought for in a proportion which the Lord has sanctioned. "According to your faith be it unto you," is the Master's word, and he will not fall short of the scale which he has himself selected. Yet, Master, do more than this when hope is faint, and bless us far above what we ask or even think.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—A thanksgiving of the church triumphant in the latter ages, for her final deliverance, by the overthrow of Antichrist and his armies.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Whole Psalm.—Let us follow the holy man a moment in his meditation. His Psalm is not composed in scholastic form, in which the author confines himself to fixed rules; and, scrupulously following a philosophical method, lays down principles, and infers consequences. However, he establishes principles, the most proper to give us sublime ideas of the Creator; and he speaks with more precision of the works and attributes of God than the greatest philosophers have spoken of them.

How absurdly have the philosophers treated of *the origin of the world!* How few of them have reasoned conclusively on this important subject! Our prophet solves the important question by one single principle; and, what is more remarkable, this principle, which is nobly expressed, carries the clearest evidence with it. The principle is this: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth," verse 6. This is the most rational account that was ever given of the creation of the world. The world is the work of a self-efficient will, and it is this principle alone that can account for its creation. The most simple appearances in nature are sufficient to lead us to this principle. Either my will is self-efficient, or there is some other being whose will is self-efficient. What I say of myself, I say of my parents; and what I affirm of my parents I affirm of my more remote ancestors, and of all the finite creatures from whom they derived their existence. Most certainly, either finite beings have a self-efficient will, which it is impossible to suppose, for a finite creature with a self-efficient will is a contradiction: either, I say, a finite creature has a self-efficient will, or there is a First Cause who has a self-efficient will; and that there is such a Being is the principle of the Psalmist; "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."

If philosophers have reasoned inconclusively on the origin of the world, they have spoken of *its government* with equal uncertainty. The Psalmist determined this question with great facility, by a single principle, which results from the

former, and which, like the former, carries its evidence with it. "The Lord looketh from heaven; he considereth all the works of all the inhabitants of the earth," verses 13, 14. This is the doctrine of providence. And on what is the doctrine of providence founded? On this principle: God "fashioneth their hearts alike," verse 15. Attend a moment to the evidence of this reasoning, my brethren. The doctrine of providence expressed in these words, "God considereth the works of the inhabitants of the earth," is a necessary consequence of his principle, "God fashioneth their hearts alike;" and this principle is a necessary consequence of that which the Psalmist had before laid down to account for the origin of the world. Yes, from the doctrine of God the Creator of men, follows that of God the inspector, the director, rewarder, and the punisher of their actions. One of the most specious objections that has ever been opposed to the doctrine of providence, is a contrast between the grandeur of God and the meanness of men. How can such an insignificant creature as man be the object of the care and attention of such a magnificent being as God? No objection can be more specious, or, in appearance, more invincible. The distance between the meanest insect and the mightiest monarch, who treads and crushes reptiles to death without the least regard to them, is a very imperfect image of the distance between God and man. That which proves that it would be beneath the dignity of a monarch to observe the motions of ants, or worms, to interest himself in their actions, to punish, or to reward them, seems to demonstrate, that God would degrade himself were he to observe, to direct, to punish, to reward mankind, who are infinitely inferior to him. But one fact is sufficient to answer this specious objection: that is, that God has created mankind. Does God degrade himself more by governing than by creating mankind? Who can persuade himself that a wise Being has given to intelligent creatures faculties capable of obtaining knowledge and virtue, without willing that they should endeavour to acquire knowledge and virtue? Or who can imagine, that a wise Being, who wills that his intelligent creatures should acquire knowledge and virtue, will not punish them if they neglect those acquisitions; and will not show by the distribution of his benefits that he approves their endeavours to obtain them?

Unenlightened philosophers have treated of *the attributes of God* with as much abstruseness as they have written of his works. The moral attributes of God, as they are called in the schools, were mysteries which they could not unfold. These may be reduced to two classes; attributes of *goodness*, and attributes of *justice*. Philosophers, who have admitted these, have usually taken that for granted which they ought to have proved. They collected together in their minds all perfections; they reduced them all to one object which they denominated *a perfect being:* and supposing, without proving, that a perfect being existed, they attributed to him, without proof, everything that they considered as a perfection. The Psalmist shows by a surer way that there is a God supremely just and supremely good. It is necessary, in order to convince a rational being of the justice and goodness of God, to follow such a method as that which we follow to prove his existence. When we would prove the existence of God, we say, there are creatures, therefore there is a Creator. In like manner, when we would prove that a Creator is a just and a good being, we say, there are qualities of goodness and justice in creatures, therefore he, from whom these creatures derive their existence, is a being just and good. Now, this is the reasoning of the Psalmist in this Psalm: "The Lord loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (verse 5); that is to say, it is impossible to consider the works of the Creator, without receiving evidence of his goodness. And the works of nature which demonstrate the goodness of God, prove his justice also; for God has created us with such dispositions, that we cannot enjoy the gifts of his goodness without obeying the laws of his righteousness. The happiness of an individual who procures a pleasure by disobeying the laws of equity, is a violent happiness, which cannot be of long duration; and the prosperity of public bodies, when it is founded in iniquity, is an edifice which, with its basis, will be presently sunk and gone.

But what we would particularly remark is, that *the excellent principles of the Psalmist, concerning God, are not mere speculations;* but truths from which he derives practical inferences; and he aims to extend their influence beyond private persons, even to legislators and conquerors. One would think, considering the conduct of mankind, that the consequences, which are drawn from the doctrines of which we have been speaking, belong to none but to the dregs of the people; that lawgivers and conquerors have a plan of morality peculiar to themselves, and are

above the rules to which other men must submit. Our prophet had other notions. What are his maxims of policy? They are all included in these words: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance," verse 12. What are his military maxims? They are all included in these words: "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength," verses 16, 17. Who proposes these maxims? A hermit, who never appeared on the theatre of the world? or a man destitute of the talents necessary to shine there? No: one of the wisest of kings; one of the most bold and able generals: a man whom God has self-elected to govern his chosen people, and to command those armies which fought the most obstinate battles, and gained the most complete victories. Were I to proceed in explaining the system of the Psalmist, I might prove, that as he had a right to infer the doctrine of providence from the works of nature, and that of the moral attributes of God from the works of creation; so from the doctrines of the moral attributes of God, of providence, and of the works of creation, he had a right to conclude, that no conquerors or lawgivers could be truly happy but those who acted agreeably to the laws of the just and good Supreme.—*James Saurin.*

Verse 1.—"*Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.*" *Exult, ye righteous, in Jehovah!* The Hebrew verb, according to the etymologists, originally means to dance for joy, and is therefore a very strong expression for the liveliest exultation.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"*Rejoice, O ye righteous:*" not in yourselves, for that is not safe, but "*in the Lord.*"—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise is comely for the upright.*" Praise is not comely for any but the godly. A profane man stuck with God's praise is like a dunghill stuck with flowers. Praise in the mouth of a sinner is like an oracle in the mouth of a fool: how uncomely is it for him to praise God, whose whole life is a dishonouring of God? It is as indecent for a wicked man to praise God, who goes on in sinful practices, as it is for an usurer to talk of living by faith, or for the devil to quote Scripture. The godly are only fit to be choristers in God's praise; it is called, "the garment of praise." Isaiah lxi. 3. The garment sits handsome only on a saint's back.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 1.—This Psalm is coupled with the foregoing one by the *catchword* with which it opens, which is a repetition of the exhortation with which the preceding ends, "*Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous;*" "Shout for joy, all ye *upright.*"—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—He pleaseth God whom God pleaseth.—*Augustine.*

Verse 2.—"*Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.*" Here we have the first mention of musical instruments in the Psalms. It is to be observed that the early fathers almost with one accord protest against their use in churches; as they are forbidden in the Eastern church to this day, where yet, by the consent of all the singing is infinitely superior to anything that can be heard in the West.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 2.—"*Harp;*" "*Psaltery,*" etc. Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaise.—*Thomas Aquinas.* It was only permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols: but now instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him withal.—*Chrysostom.* The use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches as it was among the Jews in their infant state, but only the use of plain song.—*Justin Martyr.*

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—It is said that David praised God upon "*an instrument of ten strings;*" and he would never have told how many strings there were, but that without all doubt he made use of them all. God hath given all of us bodies, as it were, instruments of many strings; and can we think it music good enough to strike but one string, to call upon him with our tongues only? No, no; when the still sound of the heart by holy thoughts, and the shrill sound of the tongue by holy words, and the loud sound of the hands by pious works, do all join together, that is God's concert, and the only music wherewith he is affected.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*Sing unto him.*" I. Singing is the music of *nature.* The Scriptures tell us the mountains sing (Isa. lv. 12); the valleys sing (Ps. lxv. 13); the trees of the wood sing (1 Chron. xvi. 33); nay, the air is the bird's music room, they chant their musical notes. II. Singing is the music of *ordinances.* Augustine reports of himself, that when he came to Milan and heard the people sing, he wept for joy in the church to hear that pleasing melody. And Beza confesses that at his first entrance into the congregation, and hearing them sing the ninety-first Psalm, he felt himself exceedingly comforted, and did retain the sound of it afterwards upon his heart. The Rabbins tell us that the Jews, after the feast of the Passover was celebrated, sang the hundred-and-eleventh and five following Psalms; and our Saviour and his apostles sang a hymn immediately after the blessed Supper. Matt. xxvi. 30. III. Singing is the music of *saints.* 1. They have performed this duty in their greatest *numbers.* Ps. cxlix. 1, 2. 2. In their greatest *straits.* Isa. xxvi. 19. 3. In their greatest *flight.* Isa. xlii. 10, 11. 4. In their greatest *deliverances.* 5. In their greatest *plenties.* Isa. lxv. 14. In all these changes singing hath been their stated duty and delight. And indeed it is meet that the saints and servants of God should sing forth their joys and praises to the Lord Almighty: every attribute of him can set both their song and their tune. IV. Singing is the music of *angels.* Job tells us, "the morning stars sang together," chap. xxxviii. 7. Now these "morning stars," as Pineda tells us, are the angels; to which the Chaldee paraphrase accords, naming these morning stars, *aciem angelorum*, an host of angels. Nay, when this heavenly host was sent to proclaim the birth of our dearest Jesus, they deliver their message in this raised way of duty. Luke ii. 13. They were αἰνούντες, delivering their messages in a laudatory singing, the whole company of angels making a musical quire. Nay, in heaven there is the angels' joyous music; they there sing hallelujahs to the Most High, and to the Lamb who sits upon the throne. Rev. v. 11. V. Singing is the music of *heaven;* the glorious saints and angels accent their praises this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness; and this is the music of the bride-chamber. The saints who were tuning here their Psalms, are now singing their hallelujahs in a louder strain, and articulating their joys, which here they could not express to their perfect satisfaction; here they laboured with drowsy hearts, and faltering tongues; but in glory these impediments are removed, and nothing is left to jar their joyous celebration.—*John Wells, in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 3.—"*A new song.*" That is to say, a *new* and recent composition on account of recent benefits; or constantly new songs, song succeeding song as daily new material for divine praise offers itself to the attentive student of the works of God. Or *new*, that is, always fresh and full of life, and renewed as new occasions offer themselves: as Job says, "My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand." Or *new, i.e.*, not common but rare and exquisite; as the new name in Rev. ii. 17; the new commandment, John xiii. 34. Or this respects the gospel state, wherein is a new covenant (Heb. viii. 8), a new Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 2), a new man (Eph. ii. 15), and all things new. 2 Cor. v. 17. *New*, on account of its matter being unknown of men: as in Rev. xiv. 3, "They sung a new song, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. *New* may be used in opposition to old. The song of Moses is old, and of the Lamb is new.—*Martin Geier* (1614—1681), *in "Poli Synopsis Criticorum."*

Verse 3.—"*Sing unto him a new song.*" Put off oldness: ye know the new song. A new man, a New Testament, a new song. A new song belongeth not to men that are old; none learn that but new men, renewed through grace from oldness, and belonging now to the New Testament, which is the kingdom of heaven. —*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—"*A new song;*" namely, sung with such fervency of affections as novelties usually bring with them; or, always new, seeing God's graces never wax old; or, sung by the motion of this new spirit of grace, which doth not so much look after the old benefits of the creation as after the new benefit of the redemption in Christ, which reneweth all things. Ps. xl. 3, and xcvi. 1; Rev. v. 9, and xiv. 3.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 3.—"*Sing unto him a new song.*" It is a melancholy proof of the decline of the church, when the exhortation to sing a new song is no longer attended to: in such a case, there is need of the greatest care to prevent the old ones falling into oblivion.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 3.—"*Play skilfully.*" It is not an easy matter to praise God aright; it must be done *corde, ore, opere*, with the very best of the best.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*The word of the Lord is right.*" His word of promise given to the church. The divine revelation to all setting forth what is to be believed, hoped for, and done. The decrees of God and his penal judgments. The whole counsel and determination of God in the creation and government of the world. "*Is right,*" without defect or error. The word *right* is opposed to *tortuous;* it means true or certain.—*John de Pineda* (1577–1637); *D. H. Mollerus* (1639), *and others, in Synopsis.*

Verse 4.—"*All his works are done in truth.*"

Truth is in each flower
As well as in the solemnest things of God:
Truth is the voice of nature and of time—
Truth is the startling monitor within us—
Nought is without it, it comes from the stars,
The golden sun, and every breeze that blows—
Truth, it is God! and God is everywhere!

William Thomas Bacon.

Verse 5.—"*The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*" If we reflect on the prodigious number of human beings who constantly receive their food, raiment, and every pleasure they enjoy, from their mother earth, we shall be convinced of the great liberality with which nature dispenses her gifts; and not only human beings, but an innumerable quantity of living creatures besides—inhabitants of the air, the waters, and the earth—are daily indebted to nature for their support. Those animals which are under our care are still indebted to the earth for their subsistence; for the grass, which nature spontaneously produces, is their chief food. The whole race of fishes, except those which men feed for their amusement, subsist without any of their aid. The species of birds which is perhaps the most despised and most numerous, is the sparrow. What they require for their support is incredible, but nature takes care to feed them; they are however but the smallest part of her children. So great is the quantity of insects, that ages may pass before even their species and classes can be known. How many and how diversified the sorts of flies that play in the air! The blood taken from us by the gnat is very accidental food for them; and we may suppose that where there is one gnat that lives upon it, there are millions that have never tasted human blood, or that of any other animal. On what can all these creatures subsist? Perhaps every handful of earth contains living insects; they are discovered in every drop of water; their multiplying and means of support are incomprehensible. While nature is thus prolific in children, she is also fruitful in means for their subsistence; or, rather, it is the God of nature who has poured into her bosom this inexhaustible store of riches. He provides each creature with its food and dwelling. For them he causes the grass and other herbs to grow, leaving each to select its proper food. And, however mean many creatures may appear to us, he feeds and assists them all.

O Almighty God, how manifest is thy greatness! Thou dost what the united efforts of all mankind would fail to accomplish. Thou hast given life, and breath, and being to all creatures that live in the air, the waters, or the earth. Surely thou wilt do for thy believing people what thou dost for animals and insects! When we are filled with doubts and fears, let us consider the ravens whom the Lord feeds when they cry. Let them and all creatures beside, which man takes no care of, teach us the art of contentment. The great Author of nature knows all our wants. Let us cast our every care on him, for he careth for us; and may we come boldly to the throne of grace in faith and sincerity that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need.—*Christopher Christian Sturm.*

Verse 5.—"*The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*" To hear its worthless inhabitants complain, one would think that God dispensed *evil*, not *good*. To examine the operation of his hand, everything is marked with mercy, and there is no place where his goodness does not appear. The *overflowing kindness* of God fills the earth. Even the iniquities of men are rarely a bar to his goodness: he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends his rain upon the *just* and the *unjust.—Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—"*The goodness of the Lord.*" In discoursing on the glorious perfections of God, his *goodness* must by no means be omitted; for though all his perfections

are his glory, yet this is particularly so called, for when Moses, the man of God, earnestly desired to behold a grand display of the glory of Jehovah, the Lord said, in answer to his petition, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee;" thus intimating that he himself accounted his goodness to be his glory (Exod. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 7); and it includes that mercy, grace, longsuffering, and truth, which are afterwards mentioned. When it relieves the miserable, it is *mercy;* when it bestows favours on the worthless, it is *grace;* when it bears with provoking rebels, it is *longsuffering;* when it confers promised blessings, it is *truth;* when it supplies indigent beings, it is *bounty. The goodness of God* is a very comprehensive term; it includes all the forms of his kindness shown to men; whether considered as creatures, as sinners, or as believers.—*George Burder*, 1838.

Verse 5.—"*The goodness of the Lord.*" He might, if he had pleased, have made everything we tasted bitter, everything we saw loathsome, everything we touched a sting, every smell a stench, every sound a discord.—*William Paley, D.D.*, 1743—1805.

Verse 6.—"*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*" That the רוּחַ is not *spirit*, but *breath*, is evident from the words "*of his mouth*" (compare Isaiah xi. 4), and from the parallelism with "*word.*" Simple *word* is simple *breath;* both together, they stand in contrast to that exercise of strength, that labour, that use of means and instruments without which feeble man can bring nothing to perfection. Then there are the parallel passages, "All the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils." Job xxvii. 3. "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." Job. xxxiii. 4. "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust, thou sendest forth thy *breath*, they are created." Psalm civ. 29, 30. On the other hand, however, the exposition which would interpret רוּח קָדְשׁוֹ, without reference to the *Spirit of God*, cannot be a correct one. In the history of the creation, to which the verse before us, as well as verses seven and nine, generally refer, the creation is described as the work of the SPIRIT of God, and his WORD. First, the *Spirit of God* moved upon the face of waters, then God *said.* We may also suppose that the Spirit and the power of God are here represented by the *figure of* breath, because that in man is the first sign of life.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—"*By the word of the Lord.*" May be understood of the hypostatic Word, as John teaches us. John i. 1. (*John Cocceius*, 1603—1669). This is an illustration of the old saying, that while Grotius finds Christ nowhere, Cocceius finds Christ everywhere.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—Let any make a world, and he shall be a God, saith Augustine; hence is it that the church maketh it the very first article of her Creed to believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.—*John Weemse.*

Verses 6, 9.—It is all one with God to do as to say, to perform as to promise; it is as easy, he is as willing, as able, to do the one as the other. There is no such distance betwixt God's saying and doing, as amongst men. His saying is doing. "*He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.*" "*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.*" "The worlds were framed by the word of God." Heb. xi. 3. There is omnipotency in his word, both of command and promise; therefore called, "The word of his power." Heb. i. 3. One word of his can do more in an instant than the united powers of heaven and earth can do to eternity. This consideration removes at once the chief discouragements that hinder the lively actings of faith; for what is it that weakens our confidence of the promises' performance, but because we look upon the accomplishment as uncertain or difficult, or future and afar off! Now from hence faith may conclude the performance is certain, easy, and present.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 7.—"*He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap,*" etc. "God called the gathering together of the waters, seas." Gen. i. 10. This unstable element must, like all other elements, be put under law, and confined within bounds, that there might be a habitable earth for man and all the creatures around him. Thus the Psalmist sings, "*He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.*" The boundary was such as to cause his servants to wonder. They looked from the shore, as we do, and under the influence of a well-known law, the billows in their heaving swells, seemed as if they would,

as if they did, touch the sky itself; and as if they were so much higher than the shore, that they were in danger of leaving their basin and stretching over the land. Just such an impression, we, with all our science, popularly hold. The prophets thus looked as we do, and under the same kind of feeling. How wonderful, they thought, is all this! A low barrier of sand is made Jehovah's agent for bounding the deep. "The Lord hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it." Jer. v. 22. —*John Duns, D.D., in "Science and Christian Thought,"* 1868.

Verse 7.—"*The waters of the sea.*" Of all objects that I have ever seen, there is none which affects my imagination so much as the sea or ocean. I cannot see the heavings of this prodigious bulk of waters, even in a calm, without a very pleasing astonishment; but when it is worked up in a tempest, so that the horizon on every side is nothing but foaming billows and floating mountains, it is impossible to describe the agreeable horror that rises from such a prospect. A troubled ocean, to a man who sails upon it, is, I think, the biggest object that he can see in motion, and consequently gives his imagination one of the highest kinds of pleasure that can arise from greatness. I must confess it is impossible for me to survey this world of fluid matter without thinking on the hand that first poured it out, and made a proper channel for its reception. Such an object naturally raises in my thoughts the idea of an Almighty Being, and convinces me of his existence as much as a metaphysical demonstration. The imagination prompts the understanding, and by the greatness of the sensible object, produces in it the idea of a Being who is neither circumscribed by time nor space.—*Spectator.*

Verse 7.—"*As a heap.*" Dealing with fluids as if they were solids, with an obvious allusion to Ex. xv. 8. "*Depths,*" masses of water. The main point of the description is God's handling these vast liquid masses, as men handle solid substances of moderate dimensions, heaping the waves up, and storing them away, as men might do with stones or wheat.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 7.—The vast mass of waters which had hitherto covered the entire surface of the globe, was on the third day of creation brought within narrower compass, and large tracts of the submerged earth reclaimed and rendered habitable ground. . . . . The waters were, *for the most part,* congregated together in one vast body, instead of being universally diffused over the face of the earth. This is the state of things which we now contemplate; the various great seas and oceans constituting in fact but one body of water called in different regions by different names, as the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Southern, etc., oceans.—*George Bush,* on Gen. i. 9.

Verse 8.—"*Let all the earth.*" For who can doubt that God can do as he wills upon earth, since he so tamed the unconquerable nature of the sea?—*Hugo Grotius,* 1583—1645.

Verse 8.—"*Let all the earth fear the Lord,*" etc. Let them not fear another instead of him. Doth a wild beast rage? Fear God. Doth a serpent lie in wait? Fear God. Doth man hate thee? Fear God. Doth the devil fight against thee? Fear God. For the whole creation is under him whom thou art commanded to fear.—*Augustine.*

Verse 9.—"*He spake and it was done.*" As we say in Latin, *Dictum factum,* SAID DONE, no delay having interposed.—*Hugo Grotius.*

Verse 9.—"*He spake, and it was done;*" so that the creatures were not emanations from the divine nature, but effects of the divine will, the fruits of intelligence, and design, and counsel.—*William Binnie, D.D.*

Verse 10.—"*The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought,*" etc. The more the Pharisees of old, and their successors the prelates of late, opposed the truth, the more it prevailed. The Reformation in Germany was much furthered by the Papists' opposition; yea, when two kings (amongst many others), wrote against Luther, namely Henry VIII. of England, and Ludovicus of Hungary, this kingly title being entered into the controversy (making men more curious to examine the matter), stirred up a general inclination towards Luther's opinions.—*Richard Younge's Christian Library,* 1655.

Verse 11.—"*The counsel of the Lord.*" Note the contrast between the counsel of the heathen in the last verse, and the counsel of the Lord in this.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—"*The thoughts.*" The same word as *devices* in the preceding verse.—*William de Burgh, D.D., in loc.*

Verse 11.—The wheels in a watch or a clock move contrary one to another, some one way, some another, yet all serve the intent of the workman, to show the time, or to make the clock to strike. So in the world, the providence of God may seem to run cross to his promises; one man takes this way, another runs that way; good men go one way, wicked men another, yet all in conclusion accomplish the will, and centre in the purpose of God the great Creator of all things.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 11 (*last clause*).—Think not, brethren, because he said, "*The thoughts of his heart,*" that God as it were sitteth down and thinketh what he should do, and taketh counsel to do anything, or not to do anything. To thee, O man, belongs such tardiness.—*Augustine.*

Verse 12.—"*Blessed—whom he hath chosen.*" A man may have his name set down in the chronicles, yet lost; wrought in durable marble, yet perish; set upon a monument equal to a Colossus, yet be ignominious; inscribed on the hospital gates, yet go to hell; written in the front of his own house, yet another come to possess it; all these are but writings in the dust, or upon the waters, where the characters perish so soon as they are made; they no more prove a man happy than the fool could prove Pontius Pilate because his name was written in the Creed. But the true comfort is this, when a man by assurance can conclude with his own soul that his name is written in those eternal leaves of heaven, in the book of God's election, which shall never be wrapped up in the cloudy sheets of darkness, but remain legible to all eternity.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—"*The people whom he hath chosen.*" Some read it, The people which hath chosen him for their inheritance. It cometh all to one. See Deut. xxvi. 17—19.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 12.—It is an happiness to have an interest in one greater than ourselves; an interest in a beggar is of no worth, because he is of no power; but interest in a prince all men seek, therefore it is said, "*Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.*"—*Joseph Symonds.*

Verse 12.—Lest it should be thought that men obtain so great a good by their own efforts and industry, David teaches us expressly that it proceeds from the fountain of God's gracious, electing love that we are accounted the people of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 12.—I have sometimes compared the *great* men of the world, and the *good* men of the world to the *consonants* and *vowels* in the alphabet. The *consonants* are the most and the biggest letters; they take up most room, and carry the greatest bulk; but, believe it, the *vowels* though they are the fewest and least of all the letters, yet they are most useful; they give the greatest sound of all; there is no pronunciation without vowels. O beloved, though the *great* men of the world take up room, and make a show above others, yet they are but *consonants*, a company of mute and dumb *consonants* for the most part; the *good men* they are the *vowels* that are of the greatest use and most concernment at every turn: *a good man* to help with his prayers; *a good man* to advise with his counsels; *a good man* to interpose with his authority; this is the loss we lament, we have lost *a good man;* death has blotted out a *vowel;* and I fear me there will be much silence where he is lacking; silence in the bed, and silence in the house, and silence in the shop, and silence in the church, and silence in the parish; for he was everywhere a *vowel, a good man* in every respect.—*John Kitchin, M.A., in a Funeral Sermon,* 1660.

Verse 15.—"*He fashioneth their hearts alike.*" As an illustration of the passage as it stands in our version, we append the following:—"Every circumstance concurs in proving that mankind are not composed of species essentially different from each other; that, on the contrary, there was originally but one species, which, after multiplying and spreading over the whole surface of the earth, has undergone various changes from the influence of climate, food, mode of living, diseases, and mixture of dissimilar individuals; that at first these changes were not so conspicuous, and produced only individual varieties; that these varieties became afterwards more specific, because they were rendered more general, more strongly marked, and more permanent, by the continual action of the same causes; and that they are transmitted from generation to generation."—*G. L. Leclerc, Comte de Buffon,* 1707—1788.

Verse 15.—The Creator of all things "*fashioneth their hearts alike;*" the word יחד, which signifies together at once, intimating that the hearts of all men though separated from one another by never so vast a gulf of time or place, are as exactly alike in respect of their original inclinations, as if they had been all moulded at the same time. The worship of a God and then some kind of religion, is necessary to us, we cannot shift it off.—*William Pinke*, 1631.

Verse 15 (*last clause*).—Two men give to the poor, one seeketh his reward in heaven, the other the praise of men. Thou in two seest one thing, God understandeth two. For he understandeth what is within, and knoweth what is within; their ends he seeth, their base intentions he seeth. "*He understandeth all their works.*"—*Augustine.*

Verse 16.—"*There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.*" At the battle of Arbela, the Persian hosts numbered between five hundred thousand and a million men, but they were utterly put to the rout by Alexander's band of fifty thousand; and the once mighty Darius was soon vanquished. Napoleon led more than half-a-million of men into Russia—

> "Not such the numbers, nor the host so dread,
> By northern Bren, or Scythian Timour led."

But the terrible winter left the army a mere wreck, and their leader was soon a prisoner on the lone rock of St. Helena. All along the line of history this verse has been verified. The strongest battalions melt like snowflakes when God is against them.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 16.—"*A mighty man;*" or, *a giant;* Goliath for instance. As the most skilful swimmers are often drowned, so here.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 16, 17:—

> Not the chief his serried lances,
> Not his strength secures the brave:
> All in vain the war-horse prances,
> Weak his force his lord to save.
>
> *Richard Mant.*

Verses 16, 17.—The weakness and insufficiency of all human *power*, however great, as before of all human *intellect.*—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 16, 17.—As a passenger in a storm, that for shelter against the weather, steppeth out of the way, betaketh him to a fair spread oak, standeth under the boughs, with his back close to the body of it, and findeth good relief thereby for the space of some time; till at length cometh a sudden gust of wind, that teareth down a main arm of it, which falling upon the poor passenger, either maimeth or mischieveth him that resorted to it for succour. Thus falleth it out with not a few, meeting in the world with many troubles, and with manifold vexations, they step aside out of their own way, and too, too often out of God's, to get under the wing of some great one, and gain, it may be, some aid and shelter thereby for a season; but after awhile, that great one himself coming down headlong, and falling from his former height of favour, or honour, they are also called in question, and to fall together with him, that might otherwise have stood long enough on their own legs, if they had not trusted to such an arm of flesh, such a broken staff that deceived them.—*Thomas Gataker.*

Verse 17.—"*An horse.*" If the strength of horses be of God, or be his gift (Job xxxix. 19), then trust not in the strength of horses: use the strength of horses, but do not trust the strength of horses. If you trust that strength which God hath given to horses, you make them your god. How often doth God forbid trusting in the strength of horses, as knowing that we are apt to trust in anything that is strong, though but a beast. "*An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.*" As if God had said, you think a horse can save you, but know he is a vain thing. And when the Psalmist saith, "A horse is a vain thing," he doth not mean it of a weak horse, but of a horse of the greatest strength imaginable; such a horse is a vain thing to save a man, neither can he deliver any by his strength; and therefore the Lord, when he promised great deliverances to his people, lest they should expect it by the strength of horses, saith (Hos. i. 7), "I will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them

by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen;" as if he had told them, do not look after creature strength to be saved by; a horse will be a vain thing to save you, and I can save you effectually without horses, and I will. —*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 17—20.—Man is sensible of his want of earthly blessings, and will never cease, with excessive care, diligence, and vexation, to hunt after them, till he come to know that God will provide for him. When one hath great friends which they are known to lean upon, we say of them, such need take no care, they know such-and-such will see to them. On the contrary, come to one who knows no end of toiling and caring, ask him, Why will you thus tire yourself out? He will answer, I must needs do it, I have none but myself to trust to. So Christ followeth his disciples' carefulness to this door, their unbelief, which did not let them consider our heavenly Father cared for them. No present estate, though never so great, can free the heart from distraction, because it is subject to decay and vanishing: we shall never cast the burden of care off our own shoulders, till we learn by faith to cast it upon the Lord, whose eye is over us for good. He will never renounce carnal supports who makes not God the stay of his soul for outward things. He will trust in the abundance of his riches, wisdom, friends, or strength, that makes not God his strength. The heart of man, being aware of his inability to sustain himself if he be not underset, will seek out some prop, true or false, sound or rotten, to lean unto. They will go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, who look not to the Holy One of Israel, and seek not the Lord.—*John Ball.*

Verse 18.—"*Behold,*" etc. Hitherto he hath given a proof of God's providence towards *all men*, but now he descends to a particular proof of it, by his care over his *church*, which he wonderfully guides, defends, and protects in all dangers and assaults and that notice may be taken of it, he begins with, "*Behold!*"—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 18.—"*The eye of the Lord is upon.*" Look upon the sun, how it casts light and heat upon the whole world in its general course, how it shineth upon the good and the bad with an equal influence; but let its beams be but concentred in a burning-glass, then it sets fire on the object only, and passeth by all others: and thus God in the creation looketh upon all his works with a general love, *erant omnia valde bona*, they pleased him very well. Oh! but when he is pleased to cast the beams of his love, and cause them to shine upon his elect through Christ, then it is that their hearts burn within them, then it is that their affections are inflamed; whereas others are but as it were a little warmed, have a little shine of common graces cast upon them.—*Richard Holdsworth*, 1651.

Verse 18.—"*Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.*" This is a very encouraging character. They who cannot claim the higher distinctions of religion, may surely know that they "fear God, and hope in his mercy." Some may wonder at the combination; and suppose that the qualities are incompatible with each other. But the first Christians "walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost." They may think that the fear will injure the hope, or the hope the fear. But these are even mutually helpful; and they are, not only never so beautiful, but never so influential as when they are blended. The fear promotes hope by the evidence it affords; and by keeping us from loose and careless walking, which must always affect our peace and pleasure. And hope no less befriends this fear. For never is God seen so glorious, so worthy of all our devotedness to him as when we hope in his mercy; and even the more assured we are of his regard, the more we shall enquire, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? The more we shall tremble at the thought of offending and grieving him, the more we shall continue upon our knees, praying, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, *my* Strength and *my* Redeemer." It is called "a lively hope:" and Christians know, by experience, that upon all their principles and duties it has the same influence as Spring has upon the fields and the gardens.—*William Jay.*

Verse 18.—"*Who hope in his mercy.*" When thou canst not get assurance, make as much improvement of the grounds upon which thou mayst build *hopes* of salvation. The probable grounds thou hast, thou wouldst not part with for all the world. If thy heart is not full of joy through sense of God's love, yet thine eyes are full of tears, and thy soul full of sorrow, through the sense of thy sin:

wouldst thou change thy condition with any hypocrite whatsoever, with the richest man that hath no grace? I would not have thee rest satisfied with a probability, but yet bless God for a probability of salvation. Is it nothing that one that hath deserved hell most certainly, should have a probability that he should escape it? Would not this be a little ease to the torments of the damned, if they had but a strong probability that they should be saved? but *no hope* makes it heavy. When thou art sick, thou enquirest of the physician. Sir, what do you think of me? Shall I live, or shall I die? If he reply it is not certain, but there is *good hopes*, it is probable you will live and do well; this is some support unto thee in thy sickness. —*Thomas Doolittel, M.A.* (1630—1707), *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 18.—The weakest believer, the least of saints, hath ground to hope. The gospel is so ordered, the covenant so methodised, God hath made such ample provision, that every one may "have good hope through grace" (1 Thess. ii. 16); and all that bear this character are allowed, encouraged, nay, commanded to hope: their hoping is as mighty a pleasure to God, as it is a comfort to themselves.—*Samuel Doolittle's "Righteous Man's Hope in Death,"* 1693.

Verses 18, 19.—During the siege of Rochelle, which was endured with unexampled bravery for nearly fifteen months, the inhabitants were reduced by famine to the misery of being obliged to have recourse to the flesh of horses, asses, mules, dogs, cats, rats, and mice; and a single peck of corn is said to have been sold for a sum equivalent to about twenty-five pounds sterling of our money in the present day. There were numerous examples of great and liberal generosity among the inhabitants. Some dispensed their charity so secretly that their names were never discovered. Among the rest, the following example is narrated:—"The Sieur de la Goute, an honorary king's advocate, had a sister, the widow of a merchant named Prosni, who, being a very religious and benevolent woman, at the time when the famine became more severe than it had before been, freely assisted the poor with her present surplus. Her sister-in-law, the wife of her brother, De la Goute, being differently inclined, reproved her for her conduct, asking her in anger, 'What she would do when her all should be expended?' Her reply was, 'My sister, *the Lord will provide for me.*' The siege was continued, and the famine increased its fearful ravages; and poor widow Prosni, who had four children, found herself in a great strait—all her store of provisions being exhausted. She applied to her sister for relief, who, in the stead of comforting, reproached her for her improvidence; tauntingly adding that, as she had done mighty well to be so reduced under all her great faith and fine words, that '*the Lord would provide for her*,' so in good time he might provide for her.

"Wounded to the heart by these words, poor widow Prosni returned to her house in sad distress; resolving, nevertheless, to meet death patiently. On reaching her home, her children met her with gladdened hearts and joyous faces, and told her that a man, to them an entire stranger, had knocked at the door, it being late; and, on its being opened, he threw in a sack of about two bushels of wheat; and then, without saying a word, suddenly departed.

"The widow Prosni, scarcely able to believe her own eyes, with an overflowing, grateful heart towards her gracious benefactor, immediately ran to her sister-in-law as quickly as her famished condition would allow; and, upon seeing her, exclaimed aloud, '*My sister, the Lord* HATH *provided for me;*' and, saying no more, returned home again.

"By means of this unexpected relief, conveyed to her so opportunely, she was enabled to support herself and family until the end of the siege, and she never knew to whom she was instrumentally indebted for this timely and merciful assistance." —*The Biblical Treasury, Vol. IX.*

Verse 20.—"*Our soul waiteth for the Lord.*" There is an emphasis on the word *soul* which should be attended to; for although this is a common mode of speech among the Hebrews, yet it expresses earnest affections; as if believers should say, We sincerely rely upon God with our whole heart, accounting him our shield and help.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 20.—"*Our soul.*" Not our souls, but "*our soul*," as if they all had only one. And what is the language of God by the prophet? "I will give them one heart and one way." And thus the two disciples going to Emmaus exclaimed, upon their discovery and surprise, "Did not our heart burn within us?" And thus in the beginning of the gospel it was said, "The multitude of them that believed

were of one heart, and of one soul." We have seen several drops of water on the table, by being brought to touch, running into one. If Christians were better acquainted with each other, they would easily unite.—*William Jay.*

Verse 20.—"*He is our help.*" Antigonus, king of Syria, being ready to give battle near the Isle of Andreos, sent out a squadron to watch the motions of his enemies, and to descry their strength: return was made that they had more ships, and better manned than he was. "How?" says Antigonus, "that cannot be; *quam multis meipsum opponis* (for how many dost thou reckon me?)" intimating that the dignity of a general weighed down many others, especially when poised with valour and experience. And where is valour, where is experience to be found, if not in God? He is the Lord of Hosts; with him alone is strength and power to deliver Israel out of all her troubles. He may do it, he can do it, he will do it; he is wise in heart and mighty in strength; besides him there is no Saviour, no deliverer; he is a shield to the righteous, strength to the weak, a refuge to the oppressed. He is *instar omnium* (all in all), and who is like unto him in all the world?—*John Spencer.*

Verse 20.—There is an excellent story of a young man, that was at sea in a mighty raging tempest; and when all the passengers were at their wits' end for fear, he only was merry; and when he was asked the reason of his mirth, he answered, "That the pilot of the ship was his father, and he knew his father would have a care of him." The great and wise God, who is our Father, hath from all eternity decreed what shall be the issue of all wars, what the event of all troubles; he is our pilot, he sits at the stern; and though the ship of the church or state be in a sinking condition, yet be of good comfort, our Pilot will have a care of us. There is nothing done in the lower house of Parliament on earth, but what is first decreed in the higher house in heaven. All the lesser wheels are ordered and overruled by the upper. Are not five sparrows, saith Christ, sold for a farthing? One sparrow is not worth half a farthing. And there's no man shall have half a farthing's worth of harm more than God hath decreed from all eternity.—*Edmund Calamy.*

Verse 22.—"*According as we hope in thee;*" not according to any merits of theirs, but according to the measure of grace, of the grace of hope which God had bestowed on them, and encouraged them to exercise on him, in expectation of finding grace and mercy with him.—*John Gill.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is *eucharistic:* the contents are:—I. *An exhortation to praise God* (1, 2, 3). II. The *arguments* to enforce the duty (4—19). III. The *confidence* of God's people in his name, their happiness, and petition. (20—22).—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—Rejoicing—the soul of praise; the Lord—a well-spring of joy. Character—indispensable to true enjoyment.

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—*Praise comely. What?* Vocal, meditative, habitual praise. *Why?* It is comely as wings to an angel, we mount with it; as flowers to a tree, it is our fruit; as a robe to a priest, it is our office; as long hair to a woman, it our beauty; as a crown to a king, it is our highest honour. *When?* Evermore, but chiefly amid blasphemy, persecution, sickness, poverty, death. *Whom?* Not from the ungodly, hypocritical, or thoughtless. To be without praise is to miss our comeliest adornment.

Verse 2.—Instrumental music. Is it lawful? Is it expedient? If so, its uses, limits, and laws. A sermon to improve congregational music.

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—The duty of maintaining the freshness of our devotions. Freshness, skill, and heartiness, to be combined in our congregational psalmody.

Verse 4.—God's word and works, their rightness, and agreement, and our view of both.

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—The word doctrinal, preceptive, historical, prophetic, promissory, and experimental, always right, *i.e.*, free from error or evil.

Verse 4 (*second clause*).—God's work of creation, providence, and grace, always in conformity with truth. His hatred of everything like a sham.

Verses 4, 5.—A fourfold argument for praise, from the *truth*, the *faithfulness*, the *justice*, and *goodness* of God: I. "*For the word of the Lord is right.*" II. "*All his works are done in truth.*" III. "*He loveth righteousness and judgment.*" IV. "*The earth is full of his goodness.*"—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—Justice and goodness equally conspicuous in the divine action.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—A matchless theme for an observant eye and an eloquent tongue.

Verse 6.—The power of the Word and the Spirit in the old and new creations.

Verse 7.—God's control of destructive and re-constructive agencies.

Verse 7.—The storehouses of the Great Husbandman.

Verse 8.—Reasons for universal worship, obstacles to it, future prospects of it, our duty in relation to it.

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—Awe—the soul of worship.

Verse 9.—*The irresistible word of Jehovah* in creation, in calling his people, in their comfort and deliverance, in their entrance to glory.

Verse 10.—Educated and philosophical heathen within the reach of missions.

Verses 10, 11.—The opposing counsels.

Verse 11.—The eternity, immutability, efficiency, and wisdom of the divine decrees. God's purposes, "the thoughts of his heart," hence their wisdom, and yet more their love.

Verse 12.—Two elections made by a blessed people and a gracious God, and their happy result.

The happiness of the church of God.

God's delight in his people, and their delight in him.

Verse 13.—Omniscience and its lessons.

Verses 13, 14, 15.—The doctrine of providence.

Verse 15.—God's acquaintance with men's hearts, and his estimate of their actions.

The similarity of human nature.

Verse 16, 17, 18.—The fallacy of human trust, and the security of faith in God.

Verse 18.—Hoping in the mercy of God—false and true forms distinguished.

Verses 18.—I. The eyes of God's *knowledge* are upon them. II. The eyes of his *affection* are upon them. III. The eyes of his *providence* are upon them.—*William Jay.*

Verse 19.—Life in famine, natural and spiritual, specially a famine of inward hope and legal satisfaction.

Verse 20.—"*Waiting for the Lord,*" includes: I. *Conviction*—a persuasion that the Lord is the supreme good. II. *Desire*—it is expressed by hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc. III. *Hope.* IV. *Patience.*—God is never slack concerning his promise.—*William Jay.*

Verse 20 (*first clause*).—The believer's hourly position.

Verse 21.—Joy, the outflow of faith.

Verse 22.—A prayer for believers only.

Verse 22.—Measure for measure, or mercy proportioned to faith.

PSALM XXXIV.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. *Of this transaction, which reflects no credit upon David's memory, we have a brief account in* 1 Samuel xxi. *Although the gratitude of the Psalmist prompted him thankfully to record the goodness of the Lord in vouchsafing an undeserved deliverance, yet he weaves none of the incidents of the escape into the narrative, but dwells only on the grand fact of his being heard in the hour of peril. We may learn from his example not to parade our sins before others, as certain vainglorious professors are wont to do who seem as proud of their sins as old Greenwich pensioners of their battles and their wounds. David played the fool with singular dexterity, but he was not so real a fool as to sing of his own exploits of folly. In the original, the title does not teach us that the Psalmist composed this poem at the time of his escape from Achish, the king or Abimelech of Gath, but that it is intended to commemorate that event, and was suggested by it. It is well to mark our mercies with well carved memorials. God deserves our best handiwork. David in view of the special peril from which he was rescued, was at great pains with this Psalm, and wrote it with considerable regularity, in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the second alphabetical Psalm, the twenty-fifth being the first.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalm is split into two great divisions at the close of verse* 10, *when the Psalmist having expressed his praise to God turns in direct address to men. The first ten verses are* A HYMN, *and the last twelve* A SERMON. *For further assistance to the reader we may subdivide thus: In verses* 1 *to* 3, *David vows to bless the Lord, and invites the praise of others; from* 4 *to* 7 *he relates his experience, and in* 8, 9, 10, *exhorts the godly to constancy of faith. In verses* 11—14, *he gives direct exhortation, and follows it up by didactic teaching from verses* 15 *to the close.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL bless the LORD at all times: his praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.

2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad.

3 O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

1. *"I will bless the Lord at all times."*—He is resolved and fixed, *"I will;"* he is personally and for himself determined, let others do as they may; he is intelligent in head and inflamed in heart—he knows to whom the praise is due, and what is due, and for what and when. To Jehovah, and not to second causes our gratitude is to be rendered. The Lord hath by right a monopoly in his creatures' praise. Even when a mercy may remind us of our sin with regard to it, as in this case David's deliverance from the Philistine monarch was sure to do, we are not to rob God of his meed of honour because our conscience justly awards a censure to our share in the transaction. Though the hook was rusty, yet God sent the fish, and we thank him for it. *"At all times,"* in every situation, under every circumstance, before, in and after trials, in bright days of glee, and dark nights of fear. He would never have done praising, because never satisfied that he had done enough; always feeling that he fell short of the Lord's deservings. Happy is he whose fingers are wedded to his harp. He who praises God for mercies shall never want a mercy for which to praise. To bless the Lord is never unseasonable. *"His praise shall continually be in my mouth,"* not in my heart merely, but in my mouth too. Our thankfulness is not to be a dumb thing; it should be one of the daughters of music. Our tongue is our glory, and it ought to reveal the glory of God. What a blessed mouthful is God's praise! How sweet, how purifying, how perfuming! If men's mouths were always thus filled, there would be no repining against God, or slander of neighbours. If we continually rolled this dainty morsel under our tongue, the bitterness of daily affliction would be

swallowed up in joy. God deserves blessing with the heart, and extolling with the mouth—good thoughts in the closet, and good words in the world.

2. *"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord."* Boasting is a very natural propensity, and if it were used as in this case, the more it were indulged the better. The exultation of this verse is no mere tongue bragging, *"the soul"* is in it, the boasting is meant and felt before it is expressed. What scope there is for holy boasting in Jehovah! His person, attributes, covenant, promises, works, and a thousand things besides, are all incomparable, unparalleled, matchless; we may cry them up as we please, but we shall never be convicted of vain and empty speech in so doing. Truly he who writes these words of comment has nothing of his own to boast of, but much to lament over, and yet none shall stop him of his boast in God so long as he lives. *"The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad."* They are usually grieved to hear boastings; they turn aside from vauntings and lofty speeches, but boasting in the Lord is quite another matter; by this the most lowly are consoled and encouraged. The confident expressions of tried believers are a rich solace to their brethren of less experience. We ought to talk of the Lord's goodness on purpose that others may be confirmed in their trust in a faithful God.

3. *"O magnify the Lord with me."* Is this request addressed to the humble? If so it is most fitting. Who can make God great but those who feel themselves to be little? He bids them help him to make the Lord's fame greater among the sons of men. Jehovah is infinite, and therefore cannot really be made greater, but his name grows in manifested glory as he is made known to his creatures, and thus he is said to be magnified. It is well when the soul feels its own inability adequately to glorify the Lord, and therefore stirs up others to the gracious work; this is good both for the man himself and for his companions. No praise can excel that which lays us prostrate under a sense of our own nothingness, while divine grace like some topless Alp rises before our eyes, and sinks us lower and lower in holy awe. *"Let us exalt his name together."* Social, congregated worship is the outgrowth of one of the natural instincts of the new life. In heaven it is enjoyed to the full, and earth is likest heaven where it abounds.

4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him,* and saved him out of all his troubles.

7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

4. *"I sought the Lord, and he heard me."* It must have been in a very confused manner that David prayed, and there must have been much of self-sufficiency in his prayer, or he would not have resorted to methods of such dubious morality as pretending to be mad and behaving as a lunatic; yet his poor limping prayer had an acceptance and brought him succour: the more reason for them celebrating the abounding mercy of the Lord. We may seek God even when we have sinned. If sin could blockade the mercy-seat it would be all over with us, but the mercy is that there are gifts even for the rebellious, and an advocate for men who sin. *"And delivered me from all my fears."* God makes a perfect work of it. He clears away both our fears and their causes, all of them without exception. Glory be to his name, prayer sweeps the field, slays all the enemies and even buries their bones. Note the egoism of this verse and of those preceding it; we need not blush to speak of ourselves when in so doing we honestly aim at glorifying God, and not at exalting ourselves. Some are foolishly squeamish upon this point, but they should remember that when modesty robs God it is most immodest.

5. *"They looked unto him, and were lightened."* The Psalmist avows that his case was not at all peculiar, it was matched in the lives of all the faithful; they too, each one of them on looking to their Lord were brightened up, their faces began to shine, their spirits were uplifted. What a means of blessing one look at the Lord may be! There is life, light, liberty, love, everything in fact, in a look at the crucified One. Never did a sore heart look in vain to the good Physician; never a dying soul turned its darkening eye to the brazen serpent to find its virtue

gone. "*And their faces were not ashamed.*" Their faces were covered with joy but not with blushes. He who trusts in God has no need to be ashamed of his confidence, time and eternity will both justify his reliance.

6. "*This poor man cried.*" Here he returns to his own case. He was poor indeed, and so utterly friendless that his life was in great jeopardy; but he cried in his heart to the protector of his people and found relief. His prayer was a cry, for brevity and bitterness, for earnestness and simplicity, for artlessness and grief; it was a poor man's cry, but it was none the less powerful with heaven, for "*the Lord heard him,*" and to be heard of God is to be delivered; and so it is added the Lord "*saved him out of all his troubles.*" At once and altogether David was clean rid of all his woes. The Lord sweeps our griefs away as men destroy a hive of hornets, or as the winds clear away the mists. Prayer can clear us of troubles as easily as the Lord made a riddance of the frogs and flies of Egypt when Moses entreated him. This verse is the Psalmist's own personal testimony: he being dead yet speaketh. Let the afflicted reader take heart and be of good courage.

7. "*The angel of the Lord.*" The covenant angel, the Lord Jesus, at the head of all the bands of heaven, surrounds with his army the dwellings of the saints. Like hosts entrenched so are the ministering spirits encamped around the Lord's chosen, to serve and succour, to defend and console them. "*Encampeth round about them that fear him.*" On every side the watch is kept by warriors of sleepless eyes, and the Captain of the host is one whose prowess none can resist. "*And delivereth them.*" We little know how many providential deliverances we owe to those unseen hands which are charged to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone.

8 O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.

9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear him.

10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

8. "*O taste and see.*" Make a trial, an inward, experimental trial of the goodness of God. You cannot see except by tasting for yourself; but if you taste you shall see, for this, like Jonathan's honey, enlightens the eyes. "*That the Lord is good.*" You can only know this really and personally by experience. There is the banquet with its oxen and fatlings; its fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined; but their sweetness will be all unknown to you except you make the blessings of grace your own, by a living, inward, vital participation in them. "*Blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*" Faith is the soul's taste; they who test the Lord by their confidence always find him good, and they become themselves blessed. The second clause of the verse, is the argument in support of the exhortation contained in the first sentence.

9. "*O fear the Lord, ye his saints.*" Pay to him humble childlike reverence, walk in his laws, have respect to his will, tremble to offend him, hasten to serve him. Fear not the wrath of men, neither be tempted to sin through the virulence of their threats; fear God and fear nothing else. "*For there is no want to them that fear him.*" Jehovah will not allow his faithful servants to starve. He may not give luxuries, but the promise binds him to supply necessaries, and he will not run back from his word. Many whims and wishes may remain ungratified, but real wants the Lord will supply. The fear of the Lord or true piety is not only the duty of those who avow themselves to be saints, that is, persons set apart and consecrated for holy duties, but it is also their path of safety and comfort. Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is. If we were to die like dogs, and there were no hereafter, yet were it well for our own happiness' sake to fear the Lord. Men seek a patron and hope to prosper; he prospers surely who hath the Lord of Hosts to be his friend and defender.

10. "*The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger.*" They are fierce, cunning, strong, in all the vigour of youth, and yet they sometimes howl in their ravenous hunger, and even so crafty, designing, and oppressing men, with all their sagacity and unscrupulousness, often come to want; yet simple-minded believers, who dare not act as the greedy lions of earth, are fed with food convenient for them. To trust God is better policy than the craftiest politicians can teach or practise.

" But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." No really good thing shall be denied to those whose first and main end in life is to seek the Lord. Men may call them fools, but the Lord will prove them wise. They shall win where the world's wiseacres lose their all, and God shall have the glory of it.

11 Come ye children, hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

12 What man *is he that* desireth life, *and* loveth *many* days, that he may see good ?

13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

14 Depart from evil, and do good ; seek peace, and pursue it.

11. *" Come, ye children."* Though a warrior and a king, the Psalmist was not ashamed to teach children. Teachers of youth belong to the true peerage ; their work is honourable, and their reward shall be glorious. Perhaps the boys and girls of Gath had made sport of David in his seeming madness, and if so, he here aims by teaching the rising race to undo the mischief which he had done aforetime. Children are the most hopeful persons to teach—wise men who wish to propagate their principles take care to win the ear of the young. *" Hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the Lord."* So far as they can be taught by word of mouth, or learned by the hearing of the ear, we are to communicate the faith and fear of God, inculcating upon the rising generation the principles and practices of piety. This verse may be the address of every Sabbath School teacher to his class, of every parent to his children. It is not without instruction in the art of teaching. We should be winning and attractive to the youngsters, bidding them " come," and not repelling them with harsh terms. We must get them away, apart from toys and sports, and try to occupy their minds with better pursuits ; for we cannot well teach them while their minds are full of other things. We must drive at the main point always, and keep the fear of the Lord ever uppermost in our teachings, and in so doing we may discreetly cast our own personality into the scale by narrating our own experiences and convictions.

12. Life spent in happiness is the desire of all, and he who can give the young a receipt for leading a happy life deserves to be popular among them. Mere existence is not life ; the art of living, truly, really, and joyfully living, it is not given to all men to know. To teach men how to live and how to die, is the aim of all useful religious instruction. The rewards of virtue are the baits with which the young are to be drawn to morality. While we teach piety to God we should also dwell much upon morality towards man.

13. *" Keep thy tongue from evil."* Guard with careful diligence that dangerous member, the tongue, lest it utter evil, for that evil will recoil upon thee, and mar the enjoyment of thy life. Men cannot spit forth poison without feeling some of the venom burning their own flesh. *" And thy lips from speaking guile."* Deceit must be very earnestly avoided by the man who desires happiness. A crafty schemer lives like a spy in the enemy's camp, in constant fear of exposure and execution. Clean and honest conversation, by keeping the conscience at ease, promotes happiness, but lying and wicked talk stuffs our pillow with thorns, and makes life a constant whirl of fear and shame. David had tried the tortuous policy, but he here denounces it, and begs others as they would live long and well to avoid with care the doubtful devices of guile.

14. *" Depart from evil."* Go away from it. Not merely take your hands off, but yourself off. Live not near the pest-house. Avoid the lion's lair, leave the viper's nest. Set a distance between yourself and temptation. *" And do good."* Be practical, active, energetic, persevering in good. Positive virtue promotes negative virtue ; he who does good is sure to avoid evil. *" Seek peace."* Not merely prefer it, but with zeal and care endeavour to promote it. Peace with God, with thine own heart, with thy fellow man, search after this as the merchantman after a precious pearl. Nothing can more effectually promote our own happiness than peace ; strife awakens passions which eat into the heart with corroding power. Anger is murder to one's own self, as well as to its objects. *" And pursue it."* Hunt after it, chase it with eager desire. It may soon be lost, indeed, nothing is harder to retain, but do your best, and if enmity should arise let it be no fault of yours. Follow after peace when it shuns you ; be resolved not to be of a contentious spirit.

The peace which you thus promote will be returned into your own bosom, and be a perennial spring of comfort to you.

15 The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry.

16 The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

17 *The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles,

18 The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

22 The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

15. "*The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.*" He observes them with approval and tender consideration; they are so dear to him that he cannot take his eyes off them; he watches each one of them as carefully and intently as if there were only that one creature in the universe. "*His ears are open unto their cry.*" His eyes and ears are thus both turned by the Lord towards his saints; his whole mind is occupied about them: if slighted by all others they are not neglected by him. Their cry he hears at once, even as a mother is sure to hear her sick babe; the cry may be broken, plaintive, unhappy, feeble, unbelieving, yet the Father's quick ear catches each note of lament or appeal, and he is not slow to answer his children's voice.

16. "*The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*" God is not indifferent to the deeds of sinners, but he sets his face against them, as we say, being determined that they shall have no countenance and support, but shall be thwarted and defeated. He is determinately resolved that the ungodly shall not prosper; he sets himself with all his might to overthrow them. "*To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*" He will stamp out their fires, their honour shall be turned into shame, their names forgotten or accursed. Utter destruction shall be the lot of all the ungodly.

17. "*The righteous cry.*" Like Israel in Egypt, they cry out under the heavy yoke of oppression, both of sin, temptation, care and grief. "*And the Lord heareth;*" he is like the night-watchman, who no sooner hears the alarm-bell than he flies to relieve those who need him. "*And delivereth them out of all their troubles.*" No net of trouble can so hold us that the Lord cannot free us. Our afflictions may be numerous and complicated, but prayer can set us free from them all, for the Lord will show himself strong on our behalf.

18. "*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.*" Near in friendship to accept and console. Broken hearts think God far away, when he is really most near to them; their eyes are holden so that they see not their best friend. Indeed, he is with them, and in them, but they know it not. They run hither and thither, seeking peace in their own works, or in experiences, or in proposals and resolutions, whereas the Lord is nigh them, and the simple act of faith will reveal him. "*And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*" What a blessed token for good is a repentant, mourning heart! Just when the sinner condemns himself, the Lord graciously absolves him. If we chasten our own spirits the Lord will spare us. He never breaks with the rod of judgment those who are already sore with the rod of conviction. Salvation is linked with contrition.

19. "*Many are the afflictions of the righteous.*" Thus are they made like Jesus their covenant Head. Scripture does not flatter us like the story books with the idea that goodness will secure us from trouble; on the contrary, we are again and again warned to expect tribulaion while we are in this body. Our afflictions come from all points of the compass, and are as many and as tormenting as the mosquitoes

of the tropics. It is the earthly portion of the elect to find thorns and briers growing in their pathway, yea, to lie down among them, finding their rest broken and disturbed by sorrow. But, blessed *but*, how it takes the sting out of the previous sentence! *"But the Lord delivereth him out of them all."* Through troops of ills Jehovah shall lead his redeemed scatheless and triumphant. There is an end to the believer's affliction, and a joyful end too. None of his trials can hurt so much as a hair of his head, neither can the furnace hold him for a moment after the Lord bids him come forth of it. Hard would be the lot of the righteous if this promise, like a bundle of camphire, were not bound up in it, but this sweetens all. The same Lord who sends the afflictions will also recall them when his design is accomplished, but he will never allow the fiercest of them to rend and devour his beloved.

20. *"He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."* David had come off with kicks and cuffs, but no broken bones. No substantial injury occurs to the saints. Eternity will heal all their wounds. Their real self is safe; they may have flesh-wounds, but no part of the essential fabric of their being shall be broken. This verse may refer to frequent providential protections vouchsafed to the saints; but as good men have had broken limbs as well as others, it cannot absolutely be applied to bodily preservations; but must, it seems to me, be spiritually applied to great injuries of soul, which are for ever prevented by divine love. Not a bone of the mystical body of Christ shall be broken, even as his corporeal frame was preserved intact. Divine love watches over every believer as it did over Jesus; no fatal injury shall happen to us, we shall neither be halt nor maimed in the kingdom, but shall be presented after life's trials are over without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, being preserved in Christ Jesus, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

21. *"Evil shall slay the wicked."* Their adversities shall be killing; they are not medicine, but poison. Ungodly men only need rope enough and they will hang themselves; their own iniquities shall be their punishment. Hell itself is but evil fully developed, torturing those in whom it dwells. Oh! happy they who have fled to Jesus to find refuge from their former sins, such, and such only will escape. *"And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate."* They hated the best of company, and they shall have none; they shall be forsaken, despoiled, wretched, despairing. God makes the viper poison itself. What desolation of heart do the damned feel, and how richly have they deserved it!

22. *"The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants."*—with price and with power, with blood and with water. All providential helps are a part of the redemption by power, hence the Lord is said still to redeem. All thus ransomed belong to him who bought them—this is the law of justice and the verdict of gratitude. Joyfully will we serve him who so graciously purchases us with his blood, and delivers us by his power. *"And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."* Faith is the mark of the ransomed, and wherever it is seen, though in the least and meanest of the saints, it ensures eternal salvation. Believer, thou shalt never be deserted, forsaken, given up to ruin. God, even thy God is thy guardian and friend, and bliss is thine.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—*Abimelech* was king of Gath, the same with Achish, 1 Sam. xxi. 20: who either had two names, or this of Abimelech, as it should seem, was a common name to all the kings of the Philistines (see Gen. xx. 2; xxvi. 8); as Pharaoh was to the Egyptian kings and Cæsar to the Roman emperors: the name signifies a *father-king*, or *my father-king*, or a *royal father;* as kings should be the fathers of their country: before him *David changed his behaviour*, his taste, sense, or reason: he imitated a madman.—*John Gill.*

Whole Psalm.—(This Psalm is alphabetical). The Alphabetical Psalms, the *psalmi abcedarii*, as the Latin fathers called them, are nine in number; and I cannot help thinking it is a pity that, except in the single instance of the hundred and nineteenth, no hint of their existence should have been suffered to appear in our

authorised version. I will not take it upon me to affirm, with Ewald, that no version is faithful in which the acrostic is suppressed; but I do think that the existence of such a remarkable style of composition ought to be indicated in one way or another, and that some useful purposes are served by its being actually reproduced in the translation. No doubt there are difficulties in the way. The Hebrew Alphabet differs widely from any of those now employed in Europe. Besides differences of a more fundamental kind, the Hebrew has only twenty-two letters for our twenty-six; and of the twenty-two a considerable number have no fellows in ours. An exact reproduction of a Hebrew acrostic in an English version is therefore impossible.—*William Binnie, D.D.*

Whole Psalm.—Mr. Hapstone has endeavoured to imitate the alphabetical character of this Psalm in his metrical version. The letter answering to F is wanting, and the last stanza begins with the letter answering to R. One verse of his translation may suffice—

> "At all times bless Jehovah's name will I;
> His praise shall in my mouth be constantly:
> Boast in Jehovah shall my soul henceforth;
> Hear it, ye meek ones, and exult with mirth."

Verse 1.—"*I will bless the Lord at all times.*" Mr. Bradford, martyr, speaking of Queen Mary, at whose cruel mercy he then lay, said, If the queen be pleased to release me, I will thank her; if she will imprison me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her, etc. So saith a believing soul: Let God do with me what he will, I will be thankful.—*Samuel Clarke's "Mirrour."*

Verse 1.—Should the whole frame of nature be unhinged, and all outward friends and supporters prove false and deceitful, our worldly hopes and schemes be disappointed, and possessions torn from us, and the floods of sickness, poverty and disgrace overwhelm our soul with an impetuous tide of trouble; the sincere lover of God, finding that none of these affects his portion and the object of his panting desires, retires from them all to God his refuge and hiding place, and there feels his Saviour incomparably better, and more than equivalent to what the whole of the universe can ever offer, or rob him of; and his tender mercies, unexhausted fulness, and great faithfulness, yield him consolation and rest; and enable him, what time he is afraid, to put his trust in him. Thus we find the holy Psalmist expressing himself: "*I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*"—*William Dunlop.*

Verse 1.—S. Basil tells us that the praise of God, once rightly impressed as a seal on the mind, though it may not always be carried out into action, yet in real truth causes us perpetually to praise God.—*J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 2.—"*My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.*" Not like the boasting of the Pharisee, so hateful in the eyes of God, so offensive in the ears of the humble; for *the humble can hear this boasting and be glad,* which they would never do if it were not conformable to the rules of humility. Can any boasting be greater than to say, "I can do all things"? Yet in this boasting there is humility when I add, "In him that strengtheneth me." For though God likes not of boasting, yet he likes of this boasting, which arrogates nothing to ourselves, but ascribes all to him.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verses 2—6.—There is somewhat very striking and pleasing in the sudden transitions, and the change of persons, that is observable in these few verses. "*My soul shall boast;*" "*The humble shall hear;*" "*I sought the Lord;*" "*They looked to him;*" "*This poor man cried.*" There is a force and elegance in the very unconnection of the expressions, which, had they been more closely tied by the proper particles, would have been in a great measure lost. Things thus separated from each other, and yet accelerated, discover, as Longinus observes, the earnestness and the vehemency of the inward working of the mind; and though it may seem to interrupt, or disturb the sentence, yet quickens and enforces it.—*Samuel Chandler, D.D.*

Verse 3.—Venema remarks that after the affair with Achish, we are told in 1 Samuel xxii. 1, "His brethren, and all his father's house went down to the cave Adullam unto him," and these, together with those who were in debt, and discontented with Saul's government, formed a band of four hundred men. To

these his friends and comrades, he relates the story of his escape, and bids them with united hearts and voices extol the Lord.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—"*I sought the Lord, and he heard me.*" God expects to hear from you before you can expect to hear from him. If you restrain prayer, it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation is like the lawyer's studying the case in order to his pleading at the bar: when, therefore, thou hast viewed the promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then fly thee to the throne of grace, and spread it before the Lord.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—"*He delivered me from all my fears.*" To have delivered me from all my troubles had been a great favour, but a far greater to deliver me from all my fears; for where that would but have freed me from present evil, this secures me from evil to come; that now I enjoy not only tranquility, but security, a privilege only of the godly. The wicked may be free from trouble, but can they be free from fear? No; God knows, though they be not in trouble like other men, yet they live in more fear than other men. Guiltiness of mind, or mind of the world, never suffers them to be secure: though they be free sometimes from the fit of an ague, yet they are never without a grudging; and (if I may use the expression of poets) though they feel not always the whip of Tysiphone, yet they feel always her terrors; and, seeing the Lord hath done this for me, hath delivered me from all my fears, have I not cause, just cause, to magnify him, and exalt his name?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—"*They looked unto him.*" The more we can think upon our Lord, and the less upon ourselves, the better. Looking to him, as he is seated upon the right hand of the throne of God, will keep our heads, and especially our hearts, steady when going through the deep waters of affliction. Often have I thought of this when crossing the water opposite the old place of Langholm. I found, when I looked down on the water, I got dizzy; I therefore fixed my eyes upon a steady object on the other side, and got comfortably through.—*David Smith*, 1792—1867.

Verse 6.—"*This poor man cried.*" The reasons of *crying* are, 1. Want cannot blush. The pinching necessity of the saints is not tied to the law of modesty. Hunger cannot be ashamed. "I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise," saith David (Ps. lv. 2); and Hezekiah, "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter. I did mourn as a dove" (Isa. xxxviii. 14). "I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation" (Job. xxx. 28). 2. Though God hear prayer, only as prayer offered in Christ, not because very fervent; yet fervour is a heavenly ingredient in prayer. An arrow drawn with full strength hath a speedier issue; therefore, the prayers of the saints are expressed by *crying* in Scripture. "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not" (Ps. xxii. 2). "At noon, will I pray, and cry aloud" (Ps. lv. 17). "In my distress I cried to the Lord" (Ps. xviii. 6). "Unto thee have I cried, O Lord" (Ps. lxxxviii. 13). "Out of the depths have I cried" (Ps. cxxx. 1). "Out of the belly of hell cried I" (Jonah ii. 2). "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock" (Ps. xxviii. 1). Yea, it goeth to somewhat more than *crying:* "I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard" (Job xix. 7). "Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer" (Lam. iii. 8). He who may teach us all to pray, sweet Jesus, "In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" (Heb. v. 7); he prayed with war shouts. 3. And these prayers are so prevalent, that God answereth them: "*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his fears*" (Ps. xxxiv. 6). "My cry came before him, even into his ears" (Ps. xviii. 6). The *cry* addeth wings to the prayer, as a speedy post sent to court upon life and death: "Our fathers cried unto thee, and were delivered" (Ps. xxii. 5). "*The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth*" (Ps. xxxiv. 17).—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 7.—"*The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*" I will not rub the questions, whether these angels can contract themselves, and whether they can subsist in a point, and so stand together the better in so great a number, neither will I trouble myself to examine whether they are in such-and-such a place in their *substance*, or only in their *virtue* and *operation*. But this the godly man may assure himself of, that whensoever he shall want their

help, in spite of doors, and locks, and bars, he may have it in a moment's warning. For there is no impediment, either for want of power because they are spirits, or from want of good will, both because it is their duty, and because they bear an affection in him ; not only rejoicing at his first conversion (Luke xv. 10), but, I dare confidently affirm, always disposed with abundance of cheerfulness to do anything for him. I cannot let pass some words I remember of Origen's to this purpose, as I have them from his interpreter. He brings in the angels speaking after this manner :—" If he (meaning the Son of God) went down, and went down into a body, and was clothed with flesh, and endured its infirmities and died for men, what do we stand still for ? Come, let's all down from heaven together."—*Zachary Bogan.*

Verse 7.—" *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him.*" This is the first time that, in the Psalter, we read of the ministrations of angels. But many fathers rather take this passage of the " Angel of the Great Counsel," and gloriously to him it applies.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 7.—" *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him,*" etc. By whom may be meant, either the uncreated Angel, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Angel of God's presence, and of the covenant, the Captain of salvation, the Leader and Commander of the people ; and whose salvation is as walls and bulwarks about them, or as an army surrounding them ; or a created angel may be intended even a single one, which is sufficient to guard a multitude of saints, since one could destroy at once such a vast number of enemies, as in 2 Kings xix. 35 ; or one may be put for more, since they are an innumerable company that are on the side of the Lord's people, and to whom they are joined ; and these may be said to encamp about them, because they are an host or army (see Gen. xxxii. 1, 2 ; Luke ii. 13) ; and are the guardians of the saints, that stand up for them and protect them, as well as minister to them.—*John Gill.*

Verse 7.—" *The angel of the Lord* " is represented in his twofold character in this pair of Psalms, as an angel of mercy, and also as an angel of judgment. Psalm xxxv. 6. This pair of Psalms (the thirty fourth and thirty-fifth), may in this respect be compared with the twelth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where the angel of the Lord is displayed as encamping about St. Peter, and delivering him, and also as smiting the persecutor, Herod Agrippa.—*Christopher Wordsworth, D.D.*

Verse 7.—" *Round about.*" In illustration of this it may be observed, that according to D'Arvieux, it is the practice of the Arabs to pitch their tents in a circular form ; the prince being in the middle, and the Arabs about him, but so as to leave a respectful distance between them. And Thevenot, describing a Turkish encampment near Cairo, having particularly noticed the spaciousness, decorations, and conveniences of the Bashaw's tent, or pavilion, adds, " Round the pale of his tent, within a pistol shot, were above two hundred tents, pitched in such a manner that the doors of them all looked towards the Bashaw's tent ; and it ever is so, that they may have their eye always upon their master's lodging, and be in readiness to assist him if he be attacked."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—" *O taste and see that the Lord is good.*" Our senses help our understandings ; we cannot by the most rational discourse perceive what the sweetness of honey is ; *taste* it and you shall perceive it. " His fruit was sweet to my *taste.*" Dwell in the light of the Lord, and let thy soul be always ravished with his love. Get out the marrow and the fatness that thy portion yields thee. Let fools learn by beholding thy face how dim their blazes are to the brightness of thy day.—*Richard Alleine, in " Heaven Opened,"* 1665.

Verse 8.—" *O taste and see,*" etc. It is not enough for thee to see it afar off, and not have it, as Dives did ; or to have it in thee, and not to taste it, as Samson's lion had great store of honey in him, but tasted no sweetness of it ; but thou must as well have it as see it, and as well taste it as have it. " *O taste and see,*" says he, " *how sweet the Lord is ;* " for so indeed Christ giveth his church not only *a sight* but also " *a taste* " of his sweetness. *A sight* is where he saith thus : " We will rise up early, and go into the vineyard, and see whether the vine have budded forth the small grapes, and whether the pomegranates flourish ; " there is *a sight* of the vine. *A taste* is where he says thus, " I will bring thee into the wine cellar, and cause thee to drink spiced wine, and new wine of the pomegranates ; " there is *a taste* of the wine. The church not only goes into the vineyard and *sees* the wine, but also goes into the wine cellar, and *tastes* the wine.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verse 8.—"*Taste and see.*" There are some things, especially in the depths of the religious life, which can only be understood by being experienced, and which even then are incapable of bing adequately embodied in words. "*O taste and see that the Lord is good.*" The enjoyment must come before the illumination; or rather the enjoyment is the illumination. There are things that must be loved before we can know them to be worthy of our love; things to be believed before we can understand them to be worthy of belief. And even after this—after we are conscious of a distinct apprehension of some spiritual truth, we can only, perhaps, answer, if required to explain it, in the words of the philosopher to whom the question was put, "What is God?" "I know, *if I am not asked.*"—*Thomas Binney's "Sermons,"* 1869.

Verse 8.—"*Taste and see.*" Be unwilling that all the good gifts of God should be swallowed without taste or maliciously forgotten, but use your palate, know them, and consider them.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verse 8.—Heaven and earth are replete with the goodness of God. We omit to open our mouths and eyes, on which account the Psalmist desires us to "*taste*" and "*see.*"—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 8.—The "*taste and see*" invite, as it were, to a sumptuous feast, which has long been ready; to a rich sight openly exposed to view. The imperatives are in reality not hortatory but persuasive.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 8.—All that the believer can attain of spiritual consolation in this life is but a taste.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 8:—

> O taste the Lord, and see how sweet He is,
> The man that trusts in him lives still in bliss.
>
> *Sir John Davies*, 1569—1626.

Verses 8, 9, 10.—All these verses are beautiful representations of the fulness, suitableness, completeness, and all-sufficiency of God in Christ to answer all the wants of his people. And is there not a vast elegance in the comparison taken from the hunger and rapacity of the lion, even the impetuousness of the young lion, to that of the patience and silent waiting of the faithful believer? A life of faith will find food in everything, because it is all founded in Christ. The young lions may, and will lack, because nothing will supply their voracious appetites but that which is carnal.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 10.—"*The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger.*" The old lions will have it for them, if it be to be had. "*But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.*" As they would feel no evil thing within, so they shall want no good thing without. He that freely opens the upper, will never wholly close the nether springs. There shall be no silver lacking in Benjamin's sack, while Joseph has it to throw in. Grace is not such a beggarly visitant, as will not pay its own way. When the best of beings is adored, the best of blessings are enjoyed.—*William Secker.*

Verse 10.—People are apt to fancy that a wild beast's life must be happy—in a brute's sense—and that the carnivorous and graminivorous creatures which have never come under the dominion of mankind are better off than the domesticated quadrupeds which buy their quieter and safer lives at the price of ministering to the luxuries or necessities of their human lords. But the contrary is the case: the career of a flesh-eating animal must be wretched, even from the tiger's or leopard's point of view. They must often suffer pangs of long-continued hunger, and when they find and kill food they frequently have to wage desperate war for the enjoyment of their victim. The cry of almost every wild beast is so melancholy and forlorn, that it impresses the traveller with sadness more even than with fear. If the opportunity occurs for watching them in the chase, they are seen to sneak and sniff about, far less like "kings of the forest," than poor, dejected, starving wretches, desperate upon the subject of their next meal. They suffer horribly from diseases induced by foul diet and long abstinence; and very few are found without scars in their hide—the tokens of terrible combats. If they live to old age their lot is piteous: their teeth are worn down, their claws are blunt, and in this state numbers of them perish by starvation. Not one half of the wild animals die a natural death; and their life, so far as it can be observed, is a series of stern privations, with desperate and bloody fights among themselves.—*Clipping from "Daily Telegraph."*

Verse 10.—"*They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.*" There shall be no want to such, and such shall want no good thing: so that he must be such an one to whom the promise is made; and he must also be sure that it is *good* for him which is promised. But oftentimes it is not good for a man to abound with earthly blessings; as strong drink is not good for weak brains. Yea, if anything be wanting to a good man, he may be sure it is not good for him; and then better that he doth want it, than that he did enjoy it; and what wise man will complain of the want of that, which if he had, would prove more hurtful than gainful to him? As a sword to a madman, a knife to a child, drink to them that have a fever or the dropsy. "No good thing will God withhold," etc, and therefore, not wants themselves, which to many are also good, yea, very good things, as I could reckon up many. Want sanctified is a notable means to bring to repentance, to work in us amendment of life, it stirs up prayer, it weans from the love of the world, it keeps us always prepared for the spiritual combat, discovers whether we be true believers or hypocrites, prevents greater evils of sin and punishment to come; it makes us humble, conformable to Christ our Head, increaseth our faith, our joy, and thankfulness, our spiritual wisdom, and likewise our patience, as I have largely shown in another treatise.—*Richard Young, in the "Poor's Advocate,"* 1653.

Verse 10.—I remember as I came through the country, that there was a poor widow woman, whose husband fell at Bothwell: the bloody soldiers came to plunder her house, telling her they would take all she had. "We will leave thee nothing," said they, "either to put in thee, or on thee." "I care not," said she, "I will not want as long as God is in the heavens." That was a believer indeed.—*Alexander Peden's Sermon,* 1682.

Verse 10.—Take a survey of heaven and earth and all things therein, and whatsoever upon sure ground appears good, ask it confidently of Christ; his love will not deny it. If it were good for you that there were no sin, no devil, no affliction, no destruction, the love of Christ would instantly abolish these. Nay, if the possession of all the kingdoms of the world were absolutely good for any saint, the love of Christ would instantly crown him monarch of them.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—Part of his last afternoon was spent by Columba in transcribing the Psalms of David. Having come to that passage in the thirty-fourth Psalm, where it is said, "*They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,*" he said, "I have come to the end of a page, and I will stop here, for the following verse, "*Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord,*" will better suit my successor to transcribe than me. I will leave it, therefore, to Baithen." As usual, the bell was rung at midnight for prayers. Columba was the first to hasten to church. On entering it soon after, Dermid found him on his knees in prayer, but evidently dying. Raising him up in his arms, he supported his head on his bosom. The brethren now entered. When they saw Columba in this dying condition they wept aloud. Columba heard them. He opened his eyes and attempted to speak, but his voice failed. He lifted up his hands as if to bless them, immediately after which he breathed out his spirit. His countenance retained in death the expression it wore in life, so that it seemed as if he had only fallen asleep.—"*Story of Columba and his Successors,*" *in the Christian Treasury for* 1848.

Verse 11.—"*Come, ye children.*" Venema in substance remarks that David in addressing his friends in the cave, called them his sons or children, because he was about to be their teacher, and they his disciples; and again, because they were young men in the flower of their age, and as sons, would be the builders up of his house; and still more, because as their leader to whose discipline and command they were subject, he had a right to address them as his children.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—"*Come ye children,*" etc. You know your earthly parents, ay, but labour to know your heavenly. You know the fathers of your flesh, ay, but strive to know the Father of your spirits. You are expert in may be in Horace's Odes, Virgil's Eclogues, Cicero's Orations; oh! but strive to get understanding in David's Psalms, Solomon's Proverbs, and the other plain books of Holy Writ. Manna was to be gathered in the morning. The orient pearl is generated of the morning dew; *aurora musis amica*, the morning is a friend to the muses. O "*remember thy Creator,*" know him in the morning of thy childhood. When God had created the heavens and the earth, the first thing he did was to adorn the world with light, and separate it from the darkness. Happy is that child on whom the light of saving knowledge begins to dawn early. God, in the law, required the first-born, and the

first-fruits, so he doth still our first days, to be offered to him. They are wisdom's words, "They that seek me early shall find me." Prov. viii. 17. Where a rabbin observeth a ב is added to the verb more than usual, which in numbering goeth for fifty. With this note, that early seeking hath not only twenty. or thirty, but fifty, nay, indeed, an hundred fold recompense attending on it.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 11.—"*Come, ye children.*" David in this latter part of the Psalm undertakes to teach children; though a man of war and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him: though now he had his head so full of cares, and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people from his own experience.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 11.—Observe I. What he expects from them, "*Hearken unto me,*" leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me. II. What he undertakes to teach them, "*The fear of the Lord,*" inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier, but he doth not say to his children, I will teach you to play upon the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state policy, but I will teach you *the fear of the Lord*, which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves, and to teach our children.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 11.—"*I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*" I shall introduce the *translation* and *paraphrase* from my old Psalter; and the rather because I believe there is a reference to that very improper and unholy method of teaching youth the system of heathen mythology before they are taught one sound lesson of true divinity, till at last their *minds* are *imbued* with *heathenism*,and the vicious conduct of gods, goddesses, and heroes (here very properly called tyrants), becomes the model of their own; and they are as heathenish *without* as they are heathenish *within.*

Trans. "Cummes sones lere me: dred of Lard I sal you lere.

Par. "Cummes, with trauth and luf: sones, qwam I gette in haly lere: heres me. With eres of hert. I sal lere you, noght the fabyls of poetes; na the storys of tyrauntz; bot the dred of oure Larde, that wyl bring you til the felaghschippe of aungels; and thar in is lyfe." I need not paraphrase this paraphrase, as it is plain enough.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 11.—"*The fear of the Lord.*" The Master of Sentences dwells, from this verse, on the four kinds of fear: mundane, servile, initial, filial. *Mundane*, when we fear to commit sin, simply lest we should lose some worldly advantage or incur some worldly inconvenience. *Servile*, when we fear to commit sin, simply because of hell torments due to it. *Initial*, when we fear to commit it lest we should lose the happiness of heaven. *Filial*, when we fear, only and entirely because we dread to offend that God whom we love with all our hearts. "*I will teach.*" Whence notice, that this fear is not a thing to be learnt all at once; it needs careful study and a good master. S. Chrysostom compares the Psalmist's school here with the resort of heathen students to the academy; and S. Ephraem, referring to this passage, calls the fear of God itself the school of the mind. "As if he proclaimed," says S. Lawrence Justiniani, "I will teach you, not the courses of the stars, not the nature of things, not the secrets of the heavens, but *the fear of the Lord.* The knowledge of such matters, without fear, puffs up; but *the fear of the Lord, without any such knowledge*, can save." "Here," says Cassiodorus, "is not fear to be feared, but to be loved. Human fear is full of bitterness; divine fear of sweetness: the one drives to slavery, the other allures to liberty; the one dreads the prison of Gehenna, the other opens the kingdom of heaven."—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 11.—"*The fear of the Lord.*" Let this, therefore, good children, be your principal care and study; for what shall it avail you to be cunning in Tully, Virgil, Homer, and other profane writers, if you be unskilful in God's book? to have learned Greek and Latin, if you learn not withal the language of Canaan? to have your speech agreeable to the rules of Priscian, of Lily, if your lives and courses be not consonant to the rules and laws of Christianity? to have knowledge of the creatures when you are ignorant of the Creator? to have learned that whereby you may live a while here, and neglect that whereby you may live eternally hereafter? Learn to fear God, to serve God, and then God will bless you; for "He will bless them that fear him, both small and great." Ps. cxv. 13.—*Thomas Gataker's "David's Instructor,"* 1637.

Verse 12.—It is no great matter to live long, or always, but to live happily. That loyal prayer, "Let the king live" (in every language) imports a prosperous state. When the Psalmist saith, "Who is the man that would see life?" he explaineth himself presently after by "good days." *Vivere* among the Latins is sometimes as much as *valere*, to live is as much as to be well; and upon this account it is that as, on the one hand, the Scripture calls the state of the damned an eternal death, because their life is only a continuance in misery; so on the other hand the state of the blessed is an eternal life, because it is a perpetual abode in felicity.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 12.—The benefit of life is not in the length, but in the use of it. He sometimes lives the least that lives the longest.—*Seneca.*

Verse 13.—"*Keep thy tongue from evil,*" etc. Ficinus, after his tracts, *De sanitate tuenda, of keeping good health;* and another, *of recovering* health; and a third, *of prolonging life;* because all will not do, wisely addeth a fourth, of *laying hold on eternal life;* which cannot be done but by mortifying this earthly member, a loose and lewd tongue. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," saith the Judge himself. Matt. xii. 37. Compare Gen. xlix. 21 with Deut. xxxiii. 23, and it will appear that good words ingratiate with God and man.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 13.—"*And thy lips from speaking guile.*" Perhaps David, in warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin in changing his behaviour. They that truly repent of what they have done amiss, will warn others to take heed of doing likewise.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—"*Depart from evil,*" etc. This denotes that evil is near to men; it keeps close to them, and should be declined and shunned: and it regards all sorts of evil; evil men and their evil company; evil things, evil words and works, and all appearance of evil; and the fear of the Lord shows itself in a hatred of it, and a departure from it. Prov. viii. 13; xvi. 6.—*John Gill.*

Verse 14.—"*Depart from evil.*" The other precepts are the duty of works, and they are four, where the precepts of words were but two; because we must be more in works than in words; and they are all affirmative, for it is against the nature of a work to be in the negative; for so working should be no better than idleness: the two former are general, as general as good and evil; that if we meet with anything that is evil, our part is to *depart*, for there is no demuring upon evil.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 14.—"*Do good.*" Negative goodness is not sufficient to entitle us to heaven. There are some in the world whose religion runs all upon negatives; they are not drunkards, they are not swearers, and for this they do bless themselves. See how the Pharisee vapours (Luke xviii. 11), "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," etc. Alas! the not being scandalous will no more make a Christian than a cypher will make a sum. We are bid, not only to *cease from evil*, but to *do good.* It will be a poor plea at last—Lord, I kept myself from being spotted with gross sin: I did no hurt. But what good is there in thee? It is not enough for the servant of the vineyard that he doth no hurt there, he doth not break the trees, or destroy the hedges; if he doth not work in the vineyard he loseth his pay. It is not enough for us to say at the last day, we have done no hurt, we have lived in no gross sin; but what good have we done in the vineyard? Where is the grace we have gotten? If we cannot show this, we shall lose our pay, and miss of salvation.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 14.—"*Seek peace, and pursue it.*" Yea, do well, and thou shalt not need to pursue it; peace will find thee without seeking. Augustine says, *Fiat justitia, et habebis pacem*—Live righteously, and live peaceably. Quietness shall find out righteousness wheresoever he lodgeth. But she abhorreth the house of evil. Peace will not dine where grace hath not first broken her fast. Let us embrace godliness, and "the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall preserve our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ." Phil. iv. 7.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 14.—"*Seek peace and pursue it.*" The most desirable things are not the easiest to be obtained. What is more lovely to the imagination than the tranquillity of peace? But this great blessing does not voluntarily present itself: it must be *sought.* Even when sought it often eludes the grasp: it flies away, and must be *pursued.* 1. The man of a peaceable carriage must be cautious not to

give offence when needless, or, when it may innocently be spared. 2. Another part of the peaceable man's character is, not to take offence ; especially in small matters, which are hardly worth a wise man's notice. 3. If any needless offence has been either given or taken, we must endeavour to put a stop to it as soon as may be. If a difference is already begun, stifle it in the birth, and suffer it not to proceed farther.—*Condensed from Dr. Waterland's Sermon, in J. R. Pitman's Course of Sermons on the Psalms*, 1846.

Verse 15.—"*His ears are open unto their cry.*" The word "open" is not in the original, but the meaning is that the ear of God is propense, and in a leaning kind of posture, towards the cries of the righteous ; the word may here be taken emphatically, as many times in Scripture it is, for some worthy, choice, and excellent strain of righteousness. Those who are worthy and righteous indeed, the ear of God, I say, is propense, and leans and hangs towards them and their prayers, according to that of Cant. ii. 14, "Let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice." There is a kind of naturalness and pleasantness between the ear of God and the prayers and petitions, and cries of such a righteous man. John xv. 7.—*John Goodwin.*

Verse 15.—"*His ears are open unto their cry.*" Hebrew, "*Are to their cry,*" or as St. Peter hath it, "*His ears are into their prayers*" (1 Peter iii. 12) ; to show that though their prayers are so faint and feeble that they cannot enter into the ears of the Lord of Hosts, yet that he will bow down and incline his ears *unto*, nay, *into* their prayers, their breathings. Lam. iii. 56.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 15—17.—"*The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.*" Strangers may howl, and we take little notice what they ail—it is a venture whether we relieve them or no ; but if our children cry, being in great distress, we hasten to their help. Our relation to God may well strengthen our hope that our desires shall be heard. He that can cry, *Abba*, Father, may be confident of the success of his suit, and that God wilt deal with him as a son.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 18.—"*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.*" God is *nigh unto them* (with reverence be it spoken), God takes so much complacency in the company of such, that he cannot endure to have them far from him ; he must have them always nigh to him, always under his eyes ; as for these "*broken*" ones, he will be sure not to leave them long, nor to go far from them, but will be ready at hand to set their bones, to bind up their wounds to keep them from festering. It may be he may put them to much pain before he brings the cure to perfection, but it is to prevent future aches. He is a foolish cruel chirurgeon, who, for fear of putting his patient to some pain, never searcheth the wound, but skins it over presently ; and a wise man will not think him unmerciful that puts him to exquisite pain, so he make a thorough cure of it. Thus God doth by his patients sometimes, when the nature of their distemper calls for it. But, however, he will be sure not to be out of the way when they want him most. It is possible they may look upon themselves as forgotten by God, they may not know their Physician when he is by them, and they may take their Friend for an enemy ; they may think God far off when he is near ; but when their eyes are opened and their distemper is pretty well worn off, they will, with shame and thankfulness, acknowledge their error ; nay, they do from their souls confess, that they do not deserve the least look of kindness from God, but to be counted strangers and enemies ; but God will let them know that he loves to act like himself, that is, like a God of love, mercy, and goodness ; and that they are the persons that he hath set his heart upon ; he will have them in his bosom, never leave them nor forsake them ; and though these contrite ones many times look upon themselves as lost, yet God will save them, and they shall sing a song of thankfulness amongst his delivered ones.—*James Janeway.*

Verse 18.—"*The Lord is nigh unto them,*" etc. Consider the ADVANTAGES of this broken heart ; as I. A broken heart is acceptable and well pleasing to God, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm li. 17. II. It makes up many defects in your service and duties, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Psalm li. 17. III. It makes the soul a fit receptacle for God to dwell in, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah lvii. 15. IV. It brings God near to men, "*The Lord is nigh unto*

them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalm xxxiv. 18. And V. It lays you open to Christ's sweet healing, "I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Ezek. xxxiv. 16. And, oh, who would not be broken that they may find Christ's soft hand healing them, and find the proof of that sweet word, "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord." Jer. xxx. 17. Yea, VI. It puts you in the right road to heaven, where all your wounds and bruises will be cured; for there is a tree (Rev. xxii. 2) the leaves whereof are for the healing of the nations; there is no complaining there of wounds or bruises, but all are perfectly healed.—*John Spalding, in "Synaxis, Sac a, or a Collection of Sermons,* etc., 1703.

Verse 18.—"*The Lord is nigh unto them,*" etc. We are apt to overlook men, in proportion as they are humbled beneath us; God regards them in that proportion. Vessels of honour are made of that clay which is "*broken*" into the smallest parts. *George Horne.*

Verse 18.—"*Broken heart . . . . . contrite spirit.*" Oh, this is the misery of all miseries which ministers have most cause to complain of, that men are not fitted enough for Jesus Christ, they are not lost enough in themselves for a Saviour. "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Hosea xiv. 3. Were we more hopeless, helpless, and fatherless, we should find more mercy from the hand of Jesus Christ. O that God would awaken and shake some sin-sleeping soul this day! O that this doctrine thus opened might be as a thunderbolt to let some of you see the inside of yourselves! O poor sinner, thou hast an unsupportable burden of sin and guilt lying on thy soul, ready to press thee down to hell, and yet thou feelest it not; thou hast the wrath of God hanging over thy head by the twined thread of a short life, which it may be thou mayest not be free from one year, nay, perhaps not one month, but thou seest it not; it thou didst but see it, then thou wouldest cry out as he did in Bosworth field, "A horse! a horse! a kingdom for a horse!" So thou wouldest cry out, None but Christ! nothing but Christ! ten thousand worlds for Christ! *James Nalton,* 1664.

Verse 18.—"*A contrite spirit.*" דַּכְּאֵי־רוּחַ, *dakkeey ruach,* "the beaten-out spirit." In both words the *hammer* is necessarily implied; in breaking to pieces the ore first, and then plating out the metal when it has been separated from the ore. This will call to the reader's remembrance Jer. xxiii. 29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord: and like a *hammer* that breaketh the *rock* in pieces?" The *breaking to shivers,* and *beating out* are metaphorical expressions: so are the *hammer* and the *rock.* What the large *hammer* struck on a rock by a powerful hand would do, so does the word of the Lord when struck on the sinner's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. The *broken heart,* and the *contrite spirit,* are two essential characteristics of true repentance.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 19.—"*Many are the afflictions of the righteous,*" etc. Be our troubles many in number, strange in nature, heavy in measure; yet God's mercies are more numerous, his wisdom more wondrous, his power more miraculous; he will deliver us out of all.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 19.—"*Many are the afflictions of the righteous,*" etc. When David did behold his trouble, like the host of the Aramites (2 Kings vi. 16), he looked back unto God like Elisha, and spied one with him stronger than all against him. Therefore, respecting his afflictions he crieth, "*Many are the troubles of the righteous;*" respecting the promise he sayeth, "*The Lord delivereth him out of all.*" Thus, by his own foot, David measureth the condition of the righteous, and saith, "*Many are the troubles of the righteous;*" and then, by his own cure, he showeth how they should be healed by saying, "*The Lord will deliver him out of them all.*" . . . . . The lawyer can deliver his client but from strife, the physician can deliver his patient but from sickness, the master can deliver his servant but from bondage, but the Lord delivereth us from *all.* As when Moses came to deliver the Israelites, the would not leave a hoof behind him, so when the Lord cometh to deliver the righteous he will not leave a trouble behind him. He who saith, "I put away all thine iniquities," will also say, "I put away all thine infirmities."—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 20.—"*He keepeth all his bones,*" which were very many. Perhaps (saith Abenezra here), David had been scourged by the Philistines, but his bones were not broken, nor were our Saviour's. John xix. 36.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 20.—"*All his bones.*" Muis observes, "It says not his *body,* for this he

permits to be afflicted; but it signifies that the evils of the godly are light, and scarcely penetrate to the bone;" but Geier observes, "This is too subtle, rather the bone reminds us of the essential parts of the body, by whose injury the whole frame is endangered. It is a proverbial form of speech like that in Matt. x. 30, 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered,' expressing the remarkable defence afforded to the righteous." Genebrard, says, "The bones are put by synecdoche for all the members."—*From Poli Synopsis.*

Verse 20.—The passover lamb, of which not a bone was broken, prefigured Jesus as one, "not a bone of whose body should be broken;" and yet, at the same time it prefigured the complete keeping and safety of Christ's body, the church; as it is written, "*He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.*"—*Andrew A. Bonar's Commentary on Leviticus.*

Verse 20.—Christ's bones were in themselves breakable, but could not actually be broken by all the violence in the world, because God had fore-decreed, *a bone of him shall not be broken.* So we confess God's children mortal; but all the power of devil or man may not, must not, cannot, kill them before their conversion, according to God's election of them to life, which must be fully accomplished.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 20.—Observe as a point of resemblance between this and the following Psalm, the mention of the bones here and in Psalm xxxv. 10.—*C. Wordsworth.*

Verse 21.—"*Evil.*" Afflictions though in the plural, prove not ruinous to the righteous, for the Lord delivers him out of them all, whereas *evil* in *the singular* slays the wicked, to signify the difference of God's economy towards righteous and wicked men. The former is permitted to fall into many pressures, the latter is not so frequently exercised with them, yet the many that befall the one do no hurt, but work good for him, whereas the fewer that befall the wicked, or perhaps the *one singular affliction* of his life is the utter ruin of him.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 21:—

> Conscience' self the culprit tortures, gnawing him with pangs unknown;
> For that now amendment's season is for ever past and gone,
> And that late repentance findeth pardon none for all her moan.
>
> *S. Peter Damiano*, 988—1072.

Verse 21.—"*Shall be desolate.*" In the margin it is, *shall be guilty.* And this is the proper meaning of the original word, אָשַׁם. They are guilty, and liable to punishment. Thus the word is frequently rendered in our version (see Levit. iv. 13, 22); and generally includes in it the idea of guilt, and the punishment incurred by it.—*Samuel Chandler. D.D.*

Verse 22.—The promises of God to his church, and his threatenings of sin recorded in the living book of his word, are not antiquate; no age shall ever superannuate them, or put them out of full force and virtue. What if good persons and good causes do suffer oppression? The poet is a divine in that case—

> *Informes hiemes reducit*
> *Jupiter; idem*
> *Summovet. Non si male nunc, et olim*
> *Sic erit.*

After foul weather comes fair; though it be ill with us now, it will not be always. What if enemies of religion and moths of commonwealth do flourish and prosper, and have all things at will, let it not trouble David and Job; both of them saw as fair a sunshine shut up in a dark cloud, and a world of foul weather following.—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 22.—Satan cannot tempt longer than God shall give him leave; and he will never suffer thee to be tempted above measure, but will give a good issue unto the temptation. Thou art called to fight under the banner of Christ Jesus, and in the name of the Lord thou shalt be enabled to do valiantly and overcome. If Satan continue his assaults, "God's grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. xii. 9. If thy strength be clean gone, God's power shall be magnified the more in thee, and he hath brought thee low that thou mayest not trust in thyself, but in the living Lord, and that the whole praise of the victory might be ascribed unto him. If thy strength did remain, it was not to be leaned unto; and now it is decayed and gone, there is no cause of fear for the Lord will be thy stay. In the most difficult assaults

and tedious encounters, we are exhorted to " be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Be of good courage, and God will grant thee an easy, a joyful victory. Satan's drift in tempting is to turmoil, dishearten, and perplex with fears, and drive into despair; and if thou take heart to rest quietly upon God's grace, and fly unto his name, thou shalt put him to flight, thou hast already got the day. Wait but awhile, and these dark mists and terrible storms shall be dispersed. By these temptations the Lord hath taught thee to see thy weakness, and the malice of Satan; to deny thine own wisdom and prize his favour, lightly to esteem all things here below, and highly to value mercy reaching to the pardon of sin, and heavenly communion, and fellowship with God. And if this bitter potion hath wrought so kindly for thy spiritual good, why shouldst thou be dismayed? Trust in the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thee. *" The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."—John Ball.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Firm resolution, serious difficulties in carrying it out, helps for its performance, excellent consequences of so doing.

Six questions.—*Who?* " I." *What?* " Will bless." *Whom?* " The Lord." *When?* " At all times." *How? Why?*

Verse 1.—Direction for making a heaven below.

Verse 2.—The commendable boaster and his gratified audience.

We may boast of the Lord, in himself, his manifestations of himself, his relationship to us, our interest in him, our expectations from him, etc.

The duty of believers to relate their experience for the benefit of others.

Verse 3.—Invitation to united praise.

Verse 3.—*Magnifying*—or making great the work of God, a noble exercise.

Verse 4.—*Confessions of a ransomed soul.* Simple, honouring to God, exclude merit, and encourage others to seek also.

Verse 4.—*Four stages*, " fears," " sought," " heard," " delivered."

Verse 5.—The power of a faith-look.

Verse 6.—I. The poor man's heritage, " troubles." II. The poor man s friend. III. The poor man's cry. IV. The poor man's salvation.

Verse 6.—The poor man's wealth.

The position of prayer in the economy of grace, or the natural history of mercy in the soul.

Verse 7.—*Castra angelorum, salvatio bonorum.*

Verse 7.—The ministry of angels.

In what sense Jesus is " The angel of the Lord."

Verse 8.—Experience the only true test of religious truth.

Verse 8.—*Taste.* The sanctified palate, the *recherché* provision, the gratified verdict, the celestial host.

Verse 9.—The blest estate of a God-fearing man.

Verse 9.—Fear expelling fear. *Similia similibus curantur.*

Verse 10.—Lions lacking, but the children satisfied. See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 65. I. Description of a true Christian, " seek the Lord." II. The promise set forth by a contrast. III. The promise fulfilled.

Verse 10.—What is a good thing?

Verse 11.—A royal teacher, his youthful disciples, his mode of instruction, " Come;" his choice subject.

Verse 11.—Sunday-school work.

Verses 12, 13, 14.—How to make the best of both worlds.

Verse 13.—Sins of the tongue—their mischief, their cause, and their cure.

Verse 14 (*first clause*).—The relation between the negative and positive virtues.

Verse 14 (*second clause*).—*The royal hunt.* The game, the difficulties of the chase, the hunters, their methods, and their rewards.

Verse 15.—Our observant God. Eyes and ears both set on us.

Verse 16.—The evil man checkmated in life, and forgotten in death.

Verse 17.—*Afflictions and their threefold blessing.* I. They make us pray.

II. They bring us the Lord's hearing ear. III. They afford room for joyful experience of deliverance.

Verse 18.—The nearness of God to broken hearts, and the certainty of their salvation.

Verse 19.—Black and white, or bane and antidote.

Special people, special trials, special deliverances, special faith as a duty.

Verse 20.—The real safety of a believer when in great perils. His soul, his spiritual life, his faith, hope, love, etc.; his interest in Jesus, his adoption, justification, these all kept.

Verse 21.—Wickedness, its own executioner, illustrated by scriptural cases, by history, by the lost in hell. Lessons from the solemn fact.

The forlorn condition of a man of malicious spirit.

Verses 21, 22.—Who shall and who shall not be desolate.

Verse 22.—*Redemption* in its various meanings; *faith* in its universal preservation; *the Lord* in his unrivalled glory in the work of grace.

PSALM XXXV.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David.—*Here is all we know concerning this Psalm, but internal evidence seems to fix the date of its composition in those troublous times when Saul hunted David over hill and dale, and when those who fawned upon the cruel king, slandered the innocent object of his wrath, or it may be referred to the unquiet days of frequent insurrections in David's old age. The whole Psalm is the appeal to heaven of a bold heart and a clear conscience, irritated beyond measure by oppression and malice. Beyond a doubt David's Lord may be seen here by the spiritual eye.*

DIVISIONS.—*The most natural mode of dividing this Psalm is to note its triple character. Its complaint, prayer, and promise of praise are repeated with remarkable parallelism three times, even as our Lord in the Garden prayed three times using the same words. The first portion occupies from verse* 1 *to* 10, *the second from* 11 *to* 18, *and the last from* 19 *to the close: each section ending with a note of grateful song.*

EXPOSITION.

PLEAD *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.

3 Draw out also the spear, and stop *the way* against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.

4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase *them*.

6 Let their way be dark and slippery; and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

7 For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit, *which* without cause they have digged for my soul.

8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.

10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who *is* like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

1. *"Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me."* Plead against those who plead against me; strive with my strivers; contend with my contenders. If they urge their suit in the law-court, Lord, meet them there, and beat them at their own weapons. Every saint of God shall have this privilege: the accuser of the brethren shall be met by the Advocate of the saints. *"Fight against them that fight against me."* If my adversaries try force as well as fraud, be a match for them; oppose thy strength to their strength. Jesus does this for all his beloved—for them he is both intercessor and champion; whatever aid they need they shall receive from him, and in whatever manner they are assaulted they shall be effectually defended. Let us not fail to leave our case into the Lord's hand. Vain is the help of man, but ever effectual is the interposition of heaven. What is here asked for as a boon, may be regarded as a promise, to all the saints; in judgment they shall have a divine advocate, in warfare a divine protection.

2 *"Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help."* In vivid metaphor the Lord is pictured as coming forth armed for battle, and interposing himself between his servant and his enemies. The greater and lesser protections of providence may be here intended by the two defensive weapons, and by the

Lord's standing up is meant his active and zealous preservation of his servant in the perilous hour. This poetic imagery shows how the Psalmist realised the existence and power of God; and thought of him as a real and actual personage, truly working for his afflicted.

3. "*Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me.*" Before the enemy comes to close quarters the Lord can push them off as with a long spear. To stave off trouble is no mean act of lovingkindness. As when some valiant warrior with his lance blocks up a defile, and keeps back a host until his weaker brethren have made good their escape, so does the Lord often hold the believer's foes at bay until the good man has taken breath, or clean fled from his foes. He often gives the foes of Zion some other work to do, and so gives rest to his church. What a glorious idea is this of Jehovah blocking the way of persecutors, holding them at the pike's end, and giving time for the hunted saint to elude their pursuit! "*Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*" Besides holding off the enemy the Lord can also calm the mind of his servant by express assurance from his own mouth, that he is, and shall be, safe under the Almighty wing. An inward persuasion of security in God is of all things the most precious in the furnace of persecution. One word from the Lord quiets all our fears.

4. "*Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul.*" There is nothing malicious here, the slandered man simply craves for justice, and the petition is natural and justifiable. Guided by God's good spirit the Psalmist foretells the everlasting confusion of all the haters of the righteous. Shameful disappointment shall be the portion of the enemies of the gospel, nor would the most tender-hearted Christian have it otherwise: viewing sinners as men, we love them and seek their good, but regarding them as enemies of God, we cannot think of them with anything but detestation, and a loyal desire for the confusion of their devices. No loyal subject can wish well to rebels. Squeamish sentimentality may object to the strong language here used, but in their hearts all good men wish confusion to mischief-makers.

5 "*Let them be as chaff before the wind.*" They were swift enough to attack, let them be as swift to flee. Let their own fears and the alarms of their consciences unman them so that the least breeze of trouble shall carry them hither and thither. Ungodly men are worthless in character, and light in their behaviour, being destitute of solidity and fixedness; it is but just that those who make themselves chaff should be treated as such. When this imprecation is fulfilled in graceless men, they will find it an awful thing to be for ever without rest, without peace of mind, or stay of soul, hurried from fear to fear, and from misery to misery. "*And let the angel of the Lord chase them.*" Fallen angels shall haunt them, good angels shall afflict them. To be pursued by avenging spirits will be the lot of those who delight in persecution. Observe the whole scene as the Psalmist sketches it: the furious foe is first held at bay, then turned back, then driven to headlong flight, and chased by fiery messengers from whom there is no escape, while his pathway becomes dark and dangerous, and his destruction overwhelming.

6. "*Let their way be dark and slippery.*" What terrors are gathered here! No light, no foothold, and a fierce avenger at their heels! What a doom is appointed for the enemies of God! They may rage and rave to-day, but how altered will be their plight ere long! "*And let the angel of the Lord persecute them.*" He will follow them hot-foot, as we say, never turning aside, but like a trusty pursuivant serving the writ of vengeance upon them, and arresting them in the name of unflinching justice. Woe, woe, woe, unto those who touch the people of God; their destruction is both swift and sure.

7. In this verse the Psalmist brings forward the gravamen of his charge against the servants of the devil. "*For without cause*"—without my having injured, assailed, or provoked them; out of their own spontaneous malice "*have they hid for me their net in a pit,*" even as men hunt for their game with cunning and deception. Innocent persons have often been ruined by traps set for them, into which they have fallen as guilelessly as beasts which stumble into concealed pits, and are taken as in a net. It is no little thing to be able to feel that the enmity which assails us is undeserved—uncaused by any wilful offence on our part. Twice does David assert in one verse that his adversaries plotted against him "*without cause.*" Net-making and pit-digging require time and labour, and both of these the wicked will expend cheerfully if they may but overthrow the people of God. Fair warfare belongs to honourable men, but the assailants of God's church prefer

mean, ungenerous schemes, and so prove their nature and their origin. We must all of us be on our guard, for gins and pitfalls are still the favourite weapons of the powers of evil.

8. "*Let destruction come upon him at unawares.*" This tremendous imprecation is frequently fulfilled. God's judgments are often sudden and signal. Death enters the persecutor's house without pausing to knock at the door. The thunderbolt of judgment leaps from its hiding-place, and in one crash the wicked are broken for ever. "*And let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.*" There is a *lex talionis* with God which often works most wonderfully. Men set traps and catch their own fingers. They throw up stones, and they fall upon their own heads. How often Satan outwits himself, and burns his fingers with his own coals! This will doubtless be one of the aggravations of hell, that men will torment themselves with what were once the fond devices of their rebellious minds. They curse and are cursed; they kick the pricks and tear themselves; they pour forth floods of fire, and it burns them within and without.

9. "*And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord.*" Thus rescued, David ascribes all the honour to the Judge of the right; to his own valorous arm he offers no sacrifice of boasting. He turns away from his adversaries to his God, and finds a deep unbroken joy in Jehovah, and in that joy his spirit revels. "*It shall rejoice in his salvation.*" We do not triumph in the destruction of others, but in the salvation given to us of God. Prayer heard should always suggest praise. It were well if we were more demonstrative in our holy rejoicings. We rob God by suppressing grateful emotions.

10. As if the tongue were not enough to bless God with, David makes every limb vocal—"*All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?*" His whole anatomy he would make resonant with gratitude. Those bones which were to have been broken by my enemies shall now praise God; every one of them shall bring its tribute, ascribing unrivalled excellence to Jehovah the Saviour of his people. Even if worn to skin and bone, yet my very skeleton shall magnify the Lord, "*which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from dim that spoileth him.*" God is the champion, the true knight-errant of all oppressed ones. Where there is so much condescension, justice, kindness, power, and compassion, the loftiest songs should be rendered. Come, dear reader, have you not been delivered from sin, Satan, and death, and will not you bless the Redeemer? You were poor and weak, but in due time Christ sought you, and set you free. O magnify the Lord to-day, and speak well of his name.

11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not.

12 They rewarded me evil for good *to* the spoiling of my soul.

13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend *or* brother: I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth *for his* mother.

15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: *yea,* the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew *it* not; they did tear *me,* and ceased not:

16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.

18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.

11. "*False witnesses did rise up.*" This is the old device of the ungodly, and we must not wonder if it be used against us as against our Master. To please Saul, there were always men to be found mean enough to impeach David. "*They laid to my charge things that I knew not.*" He had not even a thought of sedition; he was loyal even to excess; yet they accused him of conspiring against the Lord's

anointed. He was not only innocent, but ignorant of the fault alleged. It is well when our hands are so clean that no trace of dirt is upon them.

12. *"They rewarded me evil for good."* This is devilish; but men have learned the lesson well of the old Destroyer, and practise it most perfectly. *"To the spoiling of my soul."* They robbed him of comfort, and even would have taken his life had it not been for special rescues from the hand of God. The wicked would strip the righteous naked to their very soul: they know no pity. There are only such limits to human malice as God himself may see fit to place.

13 *"But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth."* David had been a man of sympathy; he had mourned when Saul was in ill health, putting on the weeds of sorrow for him as though he were a near and dear friend. His heart went into mourning for his sick master. *"I humbled my soul with fasting."* He prayed for his enemy, and made the sick man's case his own, pleading and confessing as if his own personal sin had brought on the evil. This showed a noble spirit in David, and greatly aggravated the baseness of those who now so cruelly persecuted him. *"And my prayer returned into mine own bosom."* Prayer is never lost: if it bless not those for whom intercession is made, it shall bless the intercessors. Clouds do not always descend in showers upon the same spot from which the vapours ascended, but they come down somewhere; and even so do supplications in some place or other yield their showers of mercy. If our dove find no rest for the sole of her foot among our enemies, it shall fly into our bosoms and bring an olive branch of peace in its mouth. How sharp is the contrast all through this Psalm between the righteous and his enemies! We must be earnest to keep the line of demarcation broad and clear.

14. *"I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother:"* I waited on him assiduously, comforted him affectionately, and sympathised with him deeply. This may refer to those days when David played on the harp, and chased away the evil spirit from Saul. *"I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.* He bowed his head as mourners do. The strongest natural grief was such as he felt when they were in trouble. The mother usually wins the deepest love, and her loss is most keenly felt: such was David's grief. How few professors in these days have such bowels of compassion; and yet under the gospel there should be far more tender love than under the law. Had we more hearty love to manhood, and care for its innumerable ills, we might be far more useful; certainly we should be infinitely more Christ-like. "He prayeth best that loveth best."

15. *"But in mine adversity they rejoiced."* In my halting they were delighted. My lameness was sport to them. Danger was near, and they sang songs over my expected defeat. How glad are the wicked to see a good man limp! "Now," say they, "he will meet with his downfall." *"And gathered themselves together,"* like kites and vultures around a dying sheep. They found a common joy in my ruin, and a recreation in my sorrow, and therefore met together to keep the feast. They laid their heads together to devise, and their tongues to deceive. *"Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me."* Those who deserved horsewhipping, fellows the soles of whose feet were needing the bastinado, came together to plot, and held hole and-corner meetings. Like curs around a sick lion, the mean wretches taunted and insulted one whose name had been their terror. The very cripples hobbled out to join the malicious crew. How unanimous are the powers of evil; how heartily do men serve the devil; and none decline his service because they are not endowed with great abilities! *"I knew it not."* It was all done behind my back. What a fluster the world may be in, and the cause of it all may not even know that he has given offence. *"They did tear me, and ceased not."* It is such dainty work to tear to pieces a good man's character, that when slanderers have their hand in they are loath to leave off. A pack of dogs tearing their prey is nothing compared with a set of malicious gossips mauling the reputation of a worthy man. That lovers of the gospel are not at this time rent and torn as in the old days of Mary, is to be attributed to the providence of God rather than to the gentleness of men.

16. *"With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth."* Like professional buffoons who grin around the banquet to make sport, so they made a business of jeering at the good man; not, however, out of mirth, but from violent, insatiable hatred. Like cake-scoffers, or men who will jeer for a bit of bread, these hireling miscreants persecuted David in order to get a bellyful for themselves from Saul's table: having moreover an inward grudge against the son of Jesse because he was a better man than themselves.

Very forcibly might our Lord have used the words of these verses! Let us not forget to see the Despised and Rejected of men here painted to the life. Calvary and the ribald crew around the cross seem brought before our eyes.

17. "*Lord, how long wilt thou look on?*" Why be a mere spectator? Why so neglectful of thy servant? Art thou indifferent? Carest thou not that we perish? We may thus reason with the Lord. He permits us this familiarity. There is a time for our salvation, but to our impatience it often seems to be very slow in coming; yet wisdom has ordained the hour, and nothing shall delay it. "*Rescue my soul from their destructions.*" From their many devices; their multiplied assaults, be pleased to set me free. "*My darling,*" my lovely, only, precious soul, do thou rescue "*from the lions.*" His enemies were fierce, cunning, and strong as young lions; God only could deliver him from their jaws, to God he therefore addresses himself.

18. "*I will give thee thanks in the great congregation.*" Notable deliverances must be recorded, and their fame emblazoned. All the saints should be informed of the Lord's goodness. The theme is worthy of the largest assembly; the experience of a believer is a subject fit for an assembled universe to hear of. Most men publish their griefs, good men should proclaim their mercies. "*I will praise thee among much people.*" Among friends and foes will I glorify the God of my salvation. Praise—personal praise, public praise, perpetual praise—should be the daily revenue of the King of heaven. Thus, for the second time, David's prayer ends in praise, as indeed all prayer should.

19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: *neither* let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.

20 For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land.

21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, *and* said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.

22 *This* thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O LORD, be not far from me.

23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

24 Judge me, O LORD, my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.

25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify *themselves* against me.

27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness *and* of thy praise all the day long.

19. He earnestly prays that as they have no cause for their enmity, they may have no cause for triumph either in his folly, sin, or overthrow. "*Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.*" The winking of the eye was the low-bred sign of congratulation at the ruin of their victim, and it may also have been one of their scornful gestures as they gazed upon him whom they despised. To cause hatred is the mark of the wicked, to suffer it causelessly is the lot of the righteous. God is the natural Protector of all who are wronged, and he is the enemy of all oppressors.

20. "*For they speak not peace.*" They love it not; how can they speak it? They are such troublers themselves that they cannot judge others to be peaceable. Out of the mouth comes what is in the heart. Riotous men charge others with sedition. "*They devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.*" David would fain have been an orderly citizen, but they laboured to make him a

rebel. He could do nothing aright, all his dealings were misrepresented. This is an old trick of the enemy to brand good men with S.S. on their cheeks, as sowers of sedition, though they have ever been a harmless race, like sheep among wolves. When mischief is meant, mischief is soon made. Unscrupulous partisans could even charge Jesus with seeking to overturn Cæsar, much more will they thus accuse his household. At this very hour, those who stand up for the crown rights of King Jesus are called enemies of the church, favourers of Popery, friends of Atheists, levellers, red republicans, and it were hard to say what besides. Billingsgate and Babylon are in league.

21. "*Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me.*" As if they would swallow him. Uttering great lies which needed wide mouths. They set no bounds to their infamous charges, but poured out wholesale abuse, trusting that if all did not stick, some of it would. "*And said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.*" Glad to find out a fault or a misfortune, or to swear they had seen evil where there was none. Malice has but one eye; it is blind to all virtue in its enemy. Eyes can generally see what hearts wish. A man with a mote in his eye sees a spot in the sun. How like a man is to an ass when he brays over another's misfortunes! how like to a devil when he laughs a hyæna-laugh over a good man's slips! Malice is folly, and when it holds a festival its tones and gestures far exceed all the freaks and mummeries of the Lord of misrule.

22. "*This thou hast seen, O Lord.*" Here is comfort. Our heavenly Father knows all our sorrow. Omniscience is the saint's candle which never goes out. A father will not long endure to see his child abused. Shall not God avenge his own elect? "*Keep not silence.*" Rebuke thine enemies and mine, O Lord. A word will do it. Clear my character, comfort my heart. "*O Lord, be not far from me.*" Walk the furnace with me. Stand in the pillory at my side. The sweet presence of God is the divine cordial of the persecuted; his painful absence would be their deepest misery.

23. "*Stir up thyself.*" Be upon thy mettle. Prove that thou art no indifferent witness to all this infamy. "*Awake to my judgment.*" Take the sceptre and summon the great assize; vindicate justice, avenge oppression. Do not tarry as men do who sleep. "*Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.*" He claims a nearness to his God, he holds him with both hands; he leaves his case with the righteous Judge. He begs that the suit may be brought on, heard, tried, and verdict given. Well is it for a man when his conscience is so clear that he dares to make such an appeal.

24. The appeal is here repeated; the plaintiff feels that the joy of his accusers will be shortlived as soon as impartial justice rules. The oppressors' wrong, the proud man's contumely, the fool's grimace—all, all will cease when the righteous Lord sits down upon the judgment seat.

25. "*Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.*" Disappoint them of their prey when their mouths are ready to swallow it. Saints are too dear a morsel for the powers of evil; God will not give his sheep over to the wolfish jaws of the persecutors. Just when they are tuning their pipes to celebrate their victory, they shall be made to laugh on the other side of their mouths. They are all too sure, and too boastful; they reckon without their host: little do they dream of the end which will be put to their scheming. Their bird shall be flown, and they themselves shall be in the trap. The prayer of this text is a promise. Even before the lips of the wicked can frame a speech of exultation, they shall be disappointed; their heart-speech shall be forestalled, their wishes frustrated, their knavish tricks exposed.

26. Here is the eternal result of all the laborious and crafty devices of the Lord's enemies. God will make little of them, though they "*magnified themselves;*" he will shame them for shaming his people, bring them to confusion for making confusion, pull off their fine apparel and give them a beggarly suit of dishonour, and turn all their rejoicing into weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Truly, the saints can afford to wait.

27. "*Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause.*" Even those who could not render him active aid, but in their hearts favoured him, David would have the Lord reward most abundantly. Men of tender heart set great store by the good wishes and prayers of the Lord's people. Jesus also prizes those whose hearts are with his cause. The day is coming when shouts of victory shall be raised by all who are on Christ's side, for the battle will turn, and the foes of

truth shall be routed. *" Yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified."* He would have their gladness contributory to the divine glory; they are not to shout to David's praise, but for the honour of Jehovah. Such acclamations may fitly be continued throughout time and eternity. *" Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."* They recognised David as the Lord's servant, and saw with pleasure the Lord's favour to him. We can have no nobler title than " servant of God," and no greater reward than for our Master to delight in our prosperity. What true prosperity may be we are not always best able to judge. We must leave that in Jesus' hand; he will not fail to rule all things for our highest good.

" For by his saints it stands confessed.
That what he does is always best."

28. Unceasing praise is here vowed to the just and gracious God. From morning till evening the grateful tongue would talk and sing, and glorify the Lord. O for such a resolve carried out by us all!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Bonar entitles this Psalm, " *The awful utterance of the Righteous One regarding those that hate him without cause;* " and he makes the following remarks thereupon :—" Throughout the endless day of eternity the Lord Jesus shall himself speak the Father's ' praise,' and shall put marked emphasis on his ' *righteousness* '—that righteousness which shall have been exhibited, both in the doom of those who hated the offered Redeemer, and in the salvation of those who received him. There is nothing in all this wherein his own may not fully join, especially on that day when their views of justice shall be far clearer and fuller than now. On that day we shall be able to understand how Samuel could hew Agag in pieces, and the godly hosts of Israel slay utterly in Canaan man and woman and child, at God's command. We shall be able, not only fully to agree in the doom, ' Let them be confounded,' etc., but even to sing, ' Amen, Hallelujah,' over the smoke of torment. Rev. xix. 1, 2. We should in some measure now be able to use every verse of this Psalm in the spirit in which *the Judge* speaks it, we feeling ourselves his assessors in judging the world. 1 Cor. vi. 2. We shall, at all events, be able to use it on that day when what is written here shall be all accomplished."—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—*" Plead my cause, O God, with them that strive with me."* 1. Doth the world condemn thee for thy zeal in the service of God? Reproachfully scorn thee for thy care to maintain good works? not blush to traduce thee with imputations of preciseness, conceited singularity, pharisaical hypocrisy? Oh but if thy conscience condemn thee not all this while, if that be rectified by the sacred word of God, if thou aim at his glory in pursuing thine own salvation, and side not with the disturbers of the church, go on, good Christian, in the practice of piety, discourage not thyself in thy laudable endeavours, but recount with comfort that the Lord is thy judge (1 Cor. iv. 4), with a *scio cui crediderim*, " I know whom I have believed." 2 Tim. i. 12. 2. Art thou wrongfully adjudged in the erroneous courts of men? are truth and righteousness gone aside from their proper places? Is equity neglected, and poverty overlaid? Well, have patience awhile, cheer up thy fainting spirits, there is a God that beholdeth the innocency of thy cause, unto whom thou hast liberty to make thy last appeal: *" Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me."* Or, 3. Art thou otherwise injured by the hands of malicious men? and doth a penurious estate disable thee to sue for amends? Doth a *Nimrod* oppress thee? A *Laban* defraud thee? A covetous landlord gripe thee? Well, yet take not the matter into thine own hands by attempting unlawful courses; presume not to be judge in thine own cause, for default of a present redress; but often remember what the apostle taught his Thessalonians: " It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you."—*Isaac Craven's Sermon at Paul's Cross*, 1630.

Verse 1.—*" Plead,"* etc. More literally, *litigate, O Lord, with them* that litigate

against me, contend against them that contend with me; *i.e.*, avenge me of mine adversaries.—*Daniel Cresswell, D.D., F.R.S., in "The Psalms of David according to the Book of Common Prayer: with Critical and Explanatory Notes,"* 1843.

Verse 2.—"*Shield and buckler.*" The word rendered "*shield*" is in the Hebrew text מָגֵן, *magen*, which was a short buckler intended merely for defence. The word rendered "*buckler*" is צִנָּה *tsinnah;* it was double the weight of the magen, and was carried by the infantry; the magen, being lighter and more manageable, was used by the cavalry. The *tsinnah* answered to the *scutum*, and the magento the *clypeus*, among the Romans. The word *tsinnah*, means that kind of shield from the middle of which there arose a large boss, surmounted by a dagger, and which was highly useful both as a defensive and an offensive weapon in ancient warfare.—*James Anderson, note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 3.—"*Draw out the spear, and stop the way.*" The spear in the days of Saul and David was a favourite weapon. (See 1 Chron. xi.). A valiant man bravely defending a narrow pass might simply with his lance keep back a pursuing host, and give time for his friends to escape. Very remarkable were the feats of valour of this sort performed in Oriental warfare. David would have his God become his heroic defender, making his enemies pause.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 3.—"*Draw out;*" or, as the Hebrew phrase is, *empty*, that is *unsheath* the like is of the *sword*. Exod. xv. 9; Levit. xxvi. 33.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 3.—"*Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*" Observe, 1. That salvation may be made sure to a man. David would never pray for that which could not be. Nor would Peter charge us with a duty which stood not in possibility to be performed. 2 Peter 1. 10. "Make your election sure." And to stop the bawling throats of all cavilling adversaries, Paul directly proves it: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5. We may then know that Christ is in us. If Christ be in us, we are in Christ; if we be in Christ, we cannot be condemned, for (Rom. viii. 1) "There is no damnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But I leave this point that it may be sure, as granted; and come to ourselves that we may make it sure. The Papists deny this, and teach the contrary, that salvation cannot be made sure; much good do it them, with their sorry and heartless doctrine! If they make that impossible to any which God hath made easy for many, "into their secret let not my soul come." Gen. xlix. 6. Observe, 2. That the best saints have desired to make their salvation sure. David that knew it, yet entreats to know it more. "I know thou favourest me" (Psalm xli. 11); yet here still, *dic animæ*, "Say *unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*" A man can never be too sure of his going to heaven.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 3.—"*Say unto my soul.*" God may speak with *his own voice;* and thus he gave assurance to Abraham, "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Gen. xv. 1. If God speak comfort, let hell roar horror. 2. He may speak by *his works:* actual mercies to us demonstrate that we are in his favour, and shall not be condemned. "By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me." 3. He may speak by *his Son.* "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28. 4. He may speak by *his Scripture;* this is God's epistle to us, and his letters patent, wherein are granted to us all the privileges of salvation. A universal *si quis;* "Whosoever believes, and is baptised, shall be saved." 5. He may speak by *his ministers*, to whom he hath given "the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Cor. v. 19. 6. He doth speak this by *his Spirit:* he "sendeth forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Gal. iv. 6. By all these voices God says to his elect, "*I am your salvation.*" . . . . . "*My.*" There is no vexation to the vexation of the soul; so no consolation to the consolation of the soul. . . . . Let this teach us to make much of this "*My.*" Luther says there is great divinity in pronouns. The assurance that God will save some is a faith incident to devils. The very reprobates may believe that there is a book of election; but God never told them that their names were written there. The hungry beggar at the feast-house gate smells good cheer, but the master doth not say, "This is provided for thee." It is small comfort to the harbourless wretch to pass through a goodly city, and see many glorious buildings, when he cannot say, *Hæc mea domus*, I have a place here. The beauty of that excellent city

Jerusalem, built with sapphires, emeralds, chrysolites, and such precious stones, the foundation and walls whereof are perfect gold (Rev. xxi.), affords a soul no comfort, unless he can say, *Mea civitas*, I have a mansion in it. The all-sufficient merits of Christ do thee no good, unless, *tua pars et portio*, he be thy Saviour. Happy soul that can say with the Psalmist, "O Lord, thou art my portion!" Let us all have oil in our lamps, lest if we be then to buy, beg, or borrow, we be shut out of doors like the fools, not worthy of entrance. Pray, "*Lord, say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*" . . . . . Who? What? To whom? When? WHO? *The Lord!* To the Lord David prays. He hath made a good choice, for there is salvation in none other. "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." Hosea xiii. 9. The world fails, the flesh fails, the devil kills. Only the Lord saves. WHAT? Salvation. A special good thing; every man's desire. I will give thee a lordship, saith God to Esau. I will give thee a kingdom, saith God to Saul. I will give thee an apostleship, saith God to Judas. But, I will be thy salvation, he says to David, and to none but saints. To WHOM? "*My salvation.*" Not others only, but "*thine.*" A man and a Christian are two creatures. He may be a man that hath reason and outward blessings; he is only a Christian that hath faith, and part in the salvation of Christ. God is plentiful salvation, but it is not ordinary to find a *cui*—to whom. Much of heaven is lost for lack of a hand to apprehend it. WHEN? In the present, "*I am.*" *Sum, non sufficit quod ero.* It is comfort to Israel in captivity that God says, *Ero tua redemptio*, I will redeem thee; but the assurance that quiets the conscience is this, "*I am thy salvation.*" As God said to Abraham, "Fear not, I am with thee." Deferred hope faints the heart. Whatsoever God forbears to assure us of, oh, pray we him not to delay this, "Lord, say to our souls, *I am your salvation.*"—*Condensed from Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4.—"*Let them be confounded and put to shame.*" Here David beginneth his imprecations, which yet, saith Theodoret, he doth not utter as cursing, but as prophesying rather. If we shall at any time take upon us thus to imprecate (as we may in some cases), we must see to it, first, that our cause be good; secondly, that we do it not out of private revenge, but merely for the glory of God; thirdly, that we utter not a syllable this way, but by the guidance of God's good Spirit.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 4—8, 26.—How are we to account for such prayers for vengeance? We find them chiefly in four Psalms, the seventh, thirty-fifth, sixty-ninth, and one-hundred and ninth, and the imprecations in these form a terrible climax. In the last no less than thirty anathemas have been counted. Are these the mere outbursts of passionate and unsanctified feeling, or are they the legitimate expression of a righteous indignation? Are they to be excused as being animated by the "spirit of Elias?" a spirit not unholy indeed, but far removed from the meekness and gentleness of Christ; or are they the stereotyped forms in which the spirit of devotion may utter itself? Are they Jewish only, or may they be Christian also? An uninstructed fastidiousness, it is well known, has made many persons recoil from reading these Psalms at all. Many have found their lips falter when they have been called to join in using them in the congregation, and have either uttered them with bated breath and doubting heart, or have interpreted them in a sense widely at variance with the letter. Some have tried to reconcile them with a more enlightened conscience, by regarding such words not as the expression of a wish, but as the utterance of a prediction; the Hebrew optative, which is distinct enough from the simple future, absolutely forbids this expedient. Others again would see in them expressions which may lawfully be used in the soul's wrestling against spiritual enemies. And finally, some would defend them as utterances of righteous zeal for God's honour, and remind us that if we do not sympathise with such zeal, it may be not because our religion is more pure, but because our hearts are colder.

Now the real source of the difficulty lies in our not observing and bearing in mind the essential difference between the Old Testament and the New. The older dispensation was in every sense a sterner one than the new. The spirit of Elias, though not an evil spirit, was not the spirit of Christ. "The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke ix. 56. And through him his disciples are made partakers of the same spirit. But this was not the spirit of the older economy. The Jewish nation had been trained in a sterner school. It had been steeled and hardened by the discipline which had pledged it to a war of exter-

mination with idolaters; and however necessary such a discipline might be, it would not tend to foster the gentler virtues; it is conceivable how even a righteous man, under it, feeling it to be his bounden duty to root out evil wherever he saw it, and identifying, as he did, his own enemies with the enemies of Jehovah, might use language which to us appears unnecessarily vindictive. To men so trained and taught, what we call "religious toleration," was a thing not only wrong, but absolutely inconceivable.

It may be quite true that we find revenge forbidden as directly in the Old Testament as in the New, as, for instance, in Lev. xix. 18, "Thou shalt not avenge," etc., though even there there is a limitation, "against the children of thy people." And it may be no less true that we find instances of imprecation in the New; as when St. Paul says (2 Tim. iv. 14), "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works," or when he exclaims (Acts xxiii. 3), "God will smite thee, thou whited wall;" or, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." But even these expressions are very different from the varied, deliberate, carefully-constructed, detailed anathemas of the Psalms. And our Lord's denunciations, to which Hengstenberg refers, are in no way parallel. They are not curses upon individuals, but in fact solemn utterances of the great truth, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." But after all, whatever may be said of particular passages, the general tone which runs through the two covenants, is unquestionably different. To deny this is not to honour Moses, but to dishonour Christ. Matt. v. 43; xix. 8. On the other hand, we must not forget that these imprecations are not the passionate longing for personal revenge. The singer undoubtedly sees in his enemies the enemies of God and his church. They that are not with him are against God. And because the zeal of God's house even consumes him, he prays that all the doers of iniquity may be rooted out. The indignation therefore is righteous, though it may appear to us wrongly directed, or excessive in its utterance.

Once more, the very fact that a dark cloud hid God's judgment in the world to come from the view of the Old Testament saints, may be alleged in excuse of this their desire to see him take vengeance on his enemies here. How deeply the problem of God's righteousness exercised their minds, is abundantly evident from numerous places in the Psalms. They longed to see that righteousness manifested. It could be manifested, they thought, only in the evident exaltation of the righteous, and the evident destruction of the wicked here. Hence, with their eye always fixed on temporal recompense, they could even wish and pray for the destruction of the ungodly. The awful things of the world to come were to a great extent hid from their eyes. Could they have seen these, then surely their prayer would have been not, "Let the angel of the Lord persecute them," "Blot them out of thy book;" but rather with him who hung upon the cross; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 4, 8, 26.—David was about as devoid of vindictiveness as any public character who can well be named. His conduct in relation to Saul, from first to last displayed a singularly noble spirit, far removed from anything like the lust of vengeance; and the meekness with which he endured the bitter reproaches of Shimei, bore witness to the same spirit after his accession to the throne.

When David's whole career is intelligently and fairly reviewed, it leaves on the mind the impression of a man possessed of as meek and placable a temper as was ever associated with so great strength of will, and such strong passions. Even in the heats of sudden resentment, he was not apt to be hurried into deeds of revenge. Such being the case, it would certainly have been a strange and unaccountable thing if he had shown himself less the master of his own spirit in poems composed in seasons of retirement and communion with God, especially since these very poems express a keen sense of the heinousness of the sin that has been laid to his charge. He can affirm regarding his implacable enemies, "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." Psalm xxxv. 13, 14. "O Lord, my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy): let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth." Psalm vii. 3—5. Surely one ought to think twice before

putting on the imprecations an interpretation which would make them utterly incongruous with these appeals, uttered almost in the same breath.—*William Binnie, D.D.*

Verse 5.—"*As chaff.*" Literally, "As the thistledown."—*John Morison.*

Verse 6.—"*Let their way be dark and slippery.*" A horrible way! Darkness alone who feareth not? A slippery way alone who avoids not? In a dark and slippery way, how shalt thou go? where set foot? These two ills are the great punishments of men: darkness, ignorance; a slippery way, luxury. "*Let their way be darkness and slipping; and let the angel of the Lord persecute them,*" that they be not able to stand. For anyone in a dark and slippery way, when he seeth that if he move his foot he will fall, and there is no light before his feet, haply resolving to wait until light come; but here is the angel of the Lord persecuting them.—*Augustine.*

Verse 6.—"*Slippery.*" Margin, as in Heb., *slipperiness.* This is a circumstance which adds increased terror to the image. It is not only a *dark* road, but a road made slippery by rains; a road where they are in danger every moment of sliding down a precipice where they will be destroyed.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 7.—"*They hid for me their net in a pit.*" As if David had said that they had dug a pit, and covered and hid its mouth with a net, that I might pass upon it and fall into it.—*Kimchi.*

Verse 8.—"*Let destruction come upon him at unawares.*" Or *a storm,* such as is caused in the Eastern countries by a south wind, very sudden, violent, and destructive.—*John Gill.*

Verse 8.—"*Let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.*" By giving Ahithophel rope enough, the Lord preserved David from perishing. Who will not admire that Goliath should be slain with his own sword, and that proud Haman should hold Mordecai's stirrup, and be the herald of his honour? The wicked shall be undone by their own doings; all the arrows that they shoot at the righteous shall fall upon their own pates. Maxentius built a false bridge to drown Constantine, but was drowned himself. Henry the Third of France was stabbed in the very same chamber where he had helped to contrive the cruel massacre of the French Protestants. And his brother, Charles the Ninth, who delighted in the blood of the saints, had blood given him to drink, for he was worthy. It is usual with God to take persecutors in the snares and pits that they have laid for his people, as many thousands in this nation have experienced; and though Rome and her confederates are this day a-laying of snares and traps and a-digging of pits for the righteous, who will rather burn than bow to their Baal, yet do but wait and weep, and weep and wait a little, and you shall see that the Lord will take them in the very snares and pits that they have laid and digged for his people.—*Condensed from Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 8.—"*Let his net that he hath hid catch himself.*" Thou fool, who opposest thy counsels to those of the Most High. He who devises evil for another, falls at last into his own pit, and the most cunning finds himself caught by what he had prepared for another. But virtue without guile, erect like the lofty palm, rises with greater vigour when it is oppressed.—*Pietro Metastasio,* 1698—1782.

Verse 9.—"*And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord,*" etc. While some ascribe to fortune, and others to their own skill, the praise of their deliverance from danger, and few, if any, yield the whole praise of it to God, David here declares that he will not forget the favour which God had bestowed upon him. My soul, says he, shall rejoice, not in a deliverance of the author of which it is ignorant, but in the salvation of God. To place the matter in a still stronger light, he assigns to his very bones the office of declaring the divine glory. As if not content that his tongue should be employed in this, he applies all the members of his body to the work of setting forth the praises of God. The style of speaking which he employs is hyperbolical, but in this way he shows unfeignedly that his love to God was so strong that he desired to spend his sinews and bones in declaring the reality and truth of his devotion.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 10.—" *All my bones,*" etc. These words contain the most vivid description of the highest delight which by the whole soul and body should be experienced and openly manifested. He mentions his soul (verse 9) and all his bones as about to take part in the joy, to indicate that he most heartily and with his whole body was about to rejoice, and that the joy which he would manifest would not be of an ordinary character, but of the highest order, so that each several bone should sing forth the praises of God.—*Hermon Venema*, 1697—1787.

Verse 10.—" *All my bones.*" In the Scriptures emotions are generally ascribed to the viscera, the bones are usually regarded as passive; in this place and Psalm li. 8, and in these two places only, exulting joy is attributed to the bones. Ordinary experience shows us that the intestines have sympathy with our passionate excitements, but we have no consciousness of the bones becoming sympathetically sensitive. The expression therefore is highly poetical, and indicates that the joy intended would be far beyond ordinary and common delight; it would be so profound that even the most callous part of the human frame would partake of it. Doubtless the poetry has a basis of truth in it, for though we may not perceive it, there is most assuredly a true and real sympathy with our mental states in every particle of bone and muscle, as well as in those tender organs which are more apparently affected.—*C. H. S. Thoughts suggested by a passage in " Biblical Psychology," by Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 10.—" *All my bones.*" That is, whatsoever strength and vigour is in me it shall be spent in celebrating thy praises. Or, although I have nothing left me but skin and bones, so poor am I grown, yet I will not be wanting to the work.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—My bones are riving through my skin, and yet all my bones are praising him. " I said, I am cast out of thy sight, but I will look again towards thy holy temple."—*Thomas Halyburton*, 1674—1711.

Verse 11.—" *They laid to my charge things that I knew not.*" You will say, Why does God permit wicked people to lay to the charge of the godly such things as they are clear of: God if he pleased could prevent it, and stop the mouths of the wicked, that they should not be able to speak against his children? Answer—As all things work for the best to them that love God, so this works for the good of God's people. God doth permit it for the good of his people, and thus he frustrates the hopes of the wicked: they intend evil against the godly, and God disposes of it for good. As Joseph said to his brethren, " You intended evil against me, and God disposed of it for good;" so we may say to such as falsely slander God's people, You intended evil against the people of God, but God disposes of it for good. There is a fivefold good that God brings out of it to his people. *First,* God doth by this means humble them, and brings them to examine what is amiss: so that though they be clear of that crime laid to their charge, yet they will then examine whether there be nothing else amiss betwixt God and them; they will search their hearts, and walk more humbly, and cleave more close to the Lord. *Secondly,* God doth by this means bring them oftener upon their knees, to seek unto him, to plead their cause, and to clear their innocency. How oft did the prophet speak unto God when the wicked did falsely accuse him; how did he make his moan at the throne of grace unto God, beseeching him to plead his cause, and to keep him close in his way, that the wicked might not rejoice at his downfall! So when God's people see that it is that which the wicked would have, that which is their joy, to see the godly fall into such and such a sin; then the godly will pray more earnestly with David, Lord, lead me in a right path because of my observers; then they will be earnest with God to keep them from falling into that sin that the wicked desire they might fall into; and this is a second good that comes of it. *Thirdly,* God doth use the reproach of the wicked as a preventing medicine against that crime which the wicked lay to their charge. The godly have unrenewed nature as well as renewed, and if God should leave them never so little to themselves, they are not their own keepers, they might fall into that sin which the wicked lay to their charge: and every godly man and woman may say when they are falsely accused, It is God's mercy that I did not fall into that sin that lay to my charge. God doth use wicked people's tongues as a warning against such a sin, that when they see how the wicked joy at a brat of their own hatching, then they consider, if the wicked thus joy without a cause, what would they do if they had just cause? Well, by the help of God this shall be a warning to me for ever to watch against

that sin: for the time to come I will pray more against that particular sin than I have done, and watch more against that sin than I have done; through God's help they shall never have occasion to rejoice over me in that kind. Truly, I verily believe many a child of God can say by experience, I never should have prayed and watched against such a sin so much, had not God used the tongues of the wicked as preventing physic: I knew not my own heart, but that I might have fallen into such and such a sin had not God by this means hedged up my way with thorns; and this is the third good comes of it. *Fourthly*, God doth by this means exercise the graces of his people by letting them undergo bad report as well as good report: he tries whether they will cleave close to him in all conditions, as Psalm xliv. 15—17. *Fifthly*, God doth by this means teach them how to judge of others when they are falsely accused. For the time to come they will not receive a false report against their neighbour; they will know the truth of a thing before they believe it, and they know how to comfort others in the like condition; and thus God disposes of it for good, and thus God makes the wicked the servant of his people in that very thing which the wicked think to wrong them most in; for he uses the wicked as the rod and wisp, to scour off the rust of their graces and to correct their security; and when the rod hath done its office then it is thrown into the fire: and thus you see how God disposes of the wicked's false accusations of his people for good.—*Zephaniah Smyth's Sermon, "The Malignant's Plot,"* 1647.

Verse 12.—"*They rewarded me evil for good.*" For the good David did in killing Goliath, and slaying his ten thousands of the Philistines, and thereby saving his king and country, Saul and his courtiers envied him, and sought to slay him: so our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the good he did to the Jews, by healing their bodies of diseases, and preaching the gospel to them for the benefit of their souls, was rewarded with reproaches and persecutions, and at last with the shameful death of the cross; and in like manner are his people used, but this is an evil that shall not go unpunished; see Prov. xvii. 13.—*John Gill.*

Verse 12.—"*To the spoiling of my soul.*" They robbed not his body of goods but his soul of consolation. They bereaved his soul (that is the word), like a widow who loses her children in whom she delighted and found succour. They were not content with injuring his estate, but they were for ruining the man himself by their undeserved malice, they attacked him in name and reputation, which were as dear to him as his sons and daughters, or even as his soul. It is evermore an injury to the soul to be attacked with slander, it puts a man into a warring attitude, endangers his peace of mind, imperils his enjoyment of quiet contemplation, and tends to interrupt his communion with God. Thus the spiritual nature is despoiled and suffers bereavement.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 13.—"*My prayer returned into, or was directed to, my bosom.*" Of the many interpretations that are given of this passage, that appears to me the most probable which derives it from the posture of the worshipper; who standing with his head inclined downward toward his bosom, turned away his attention from all external objects, and uttered his mournful and earnest requests, as if they were directed to his own bosom. Such a posture of devotion is in use both among Jews and Mohammedans.—*Koehler in Repertor. Lit. Orient.; and Reland de Relig. Mohammedica, quoted by Walford in loc.*

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—We may read it thus: *Let my prayer return into my bosom;* that is, I wished no worse to them than to myself: let me receive of God such good as I prayed for them. See Psalm lxxix. 12.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 14.—"*For his mother.*" On account of the plurality of wives in an Eastern household, the sons are usually far more attached to their mother than their father. Their father they share with a numerous band of half-brothers, who are envious of them, or of whom they are jealous, but their mother is all their own, with her they are brought up in childhood; she takes their part in youth, in the numerous battles of the harem; and on their part when they are grown up, they love her intensely, and hence their mourning at her decease is of the bitterest kind. —*C. H. S.*

Verse 14.—"*His mother.*" Mahomet was once asked what relation had the strongest claim upon our affection and respect; when he instantly replied, "The mother, the mother, the mother."

Verse 14 (*last clause*).—*Bewaileth his mother: mourneth at her funeral.* In this case the affections are most strong. Therefore the priests were permitted to mourn for such. Levit. xxi. 1, 2, 3.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 15.—"*But in mine adversity they rejoiced,*" etc.—Do not glory in your neighbour's ruins. The fire-fly leaps and dances in the fire, and so do many wicked men rejoice in the sufferings of others. Such as rejoice in the sufferings of others are sick of the devil's disease; but from that disease the Lord deliver all your souls. 'Tis sad to insult over those whom God hath humbled; 'tis high wickedness to triumph over those to whom God hath given a cup of astonishment to drink. Such as make the desolations of their neighbours to be the matter either of their secret repast, or open exultation, such may fear that the very dregs of divine wrath are reserved for them. 'Tis bad playing upon the harp because others have been put to hang their harps upon the willows. We must not pray with him in the tragedy, but it may rain calamities; nor with Clemens' Gnostic, Give me calamities that I may glory in them. There cannot be a greater evidence of a wicked heart, than for a man to be merry because others are in misery. "He that is glad at calamities (that is, at the calamities of others) shall not be unpunished." Prov. xvii. 5. If God be God, such as congratulate our miseries instead of condoling them, shall be sure to be punished with the worst of punishments; for such do not only sin against the law of grace, but also against the very law of nature; the law of nature teaching men to sympathise with those that are in misery, and not to rejoice over them because of their miseries. O, sirs, do not make others' mourning your music, do not make others' tears your wine; as you would not be made drunk at last with the wine of astonishment.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 15.—"*But in mine adversity they rejoiced,*" etc. Marvellous prophecy of the cross! second only, if indeed second, to that in the twenty-second Psalm. Still closer to the history if we take the Vulgate: *the scourges* were gathered *together upon me.* Even so, O Lord Jesus, the ploughers ploughed upon thy back, and made long furrows: precious furrows for us, where are sown patience for the present life, and glory in the next; where are sown hope that maketh not ashamed, and love that many waters cannot quench. "*The very abjects.*" Even those worst of abjects, who said, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are;" who had set the poor sinner before the Lord, with their "Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned." "*Making mouths at me.*" And is it not wonderful that, well knowing the prophecy, yet the chief priests and scribes should have so fulfilled it, as that it should be written concerning them. "They that passed by mocked him, wagging their heads"?—*Lewis de Grenada,* 1504—1588.

Verse 15.—"*In mine adversity they rejoiced.*" Now, as men often relent at seeing the misfortunes of their enemies, so that they cease to hate or persecute those who are already miserably wretched, it was an evidence of the very cruel and fierce spirit by which David's former friends were actuated against him, when, upon seeing him cast down and afflicted, they were rather by this incited furiously and insolently to assail him.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 15.—"*The abjects.*" *The very abjects* (Prayer Book Version). The Hebrew word *Nechim,* thus translated, comes from a verb signifying *to be smitten.* Hence, in the Septuagint it is rendered *scourges.* But it may also be rendered, with Jerome, *smiters,* and may mean *smitten with the tongue.* Com. Jer. xviii. 18. Another of its meanings is, according to Buxtorf, the *wry-legged, the lame;* and so it is used in 2 Sam. iv. 4; ix. 3; whence the epithet of *Necho* was given to one of the Pharaohs who halted in his gait. Our translators seem to have understood the word in this last sense, as a term of contempt.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 15.—David, having showed how compassionate he was to his enemies in their affliction (verse 14), he presently shows (verse 15), how incompassionate, or barbarously cruel rather, his enemies were to him in his. "*Abjects*" are vile persons, men smitten in their estates and credits; yea, often as slaves or ill servants smitten with cudgels or whips. So a learned translator renders the Psalm, *The smitten gathered against me;* that is, vile men who deserve to be beaten and cudgelled.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16.—"*With hypocritical mockers in feasts.*" Some cannot be merry, but it must be with Scripture; if they want a little diversion, the saints must be the subject of their discourse! they can vent their profane jests upon the word

of God; this is their pastime over their cups upon the ale-bench. How ready they are with their contumelious reflections; they have learnt their father's dialect, they are accusers of the brethren, their speech bewrays them to be Hellians. You know that in ordinary, we can tell what countryman a person is by his speech, every country having almost a peculiar idiom; so it is here, these scoffers at religion by speaking the language of hell, let us understand whence they are. They have, it may be, a little wit, which they set off with a sort of an air in rhetorical raillery, and oh, how quick and sharp when they are upon this subject! These scoffing Ishmaelites are seated in the devil's chair, somewhat above their brethren in iniquity, as most deserving the place; and there is less ground to hope that such persons will be savingly wrought upon who arrive to such a height in sin as to make a mock of it, and to sport with holiness, than of others. Persons are got a great way towards hell when they mock at what is serious, and that with delight. This the Lord will visit for in his due time; for he knows who they are that so dishonour him by reproaching them that are his.—*Oliver Heywood.*

Verse 16.—"*Hypocritical mockers in feasts.*" בְּהַנְפֵּי לֹ׳ מ׳. Very difficult. The word מָעוֹג, in Kings xvii. 12, the only other passage where it occurs, means "a cake." Hence לֹ׳ מ׳ is interpreted by Gesenius and other to mean, hangers-on at the tables of the rich (lit. "cake-mockers") whose business it was, by witticisms and buffoonery to make entertainment for the guests, and who got their dinner in return, like the Gr. ψωμοκόλακες, κνισοκόλακες, and the Mediæv. *Lat. buccellarii.* Then the words would mean, "Amongst the profanest."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.* [Would not our word *loafers* be somewhat analogous to these cake-eaters of antiquity!]—*C. H. S.*

Verse 16.—"*Hypocritical mockers.*" David aggravates the sin of those jeering companions who made him their table-talk, and could not taste their cheer except seasoned with some salt jest quibbled out at him, with this, that they were "*hypocritical mockers;*" they did it slily, and wrapped up their scoffs, it is like in such language as might make some think, who did not well observe them, that they applauded him. There is a way of commending which some have learned to use when they mean to cast the greatest scorn upon those they hate bitterly, and these hypocritical mockers deserve the chair to be given them from all other scorners.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 16.—"*Mockers in feasts.*" If it were known at a feast that there was any one present or absent, whom the host disliked, it was customary for the guests to "make fun of them," and use sarcastic language respecting them. These are the "*hypocritical mockers in feasts.*"—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 17.—Satan no sooner spies our wanderings, but he presently runs with a complaint to God, filing bills against us in the star-chamber of heaven, where the matter would go hard with us, but for the Great Lord Chancellor of peace, our Advocate Jesus Christ. As God keeps all our tears in a bottle, and registereth the very groans of our holy passion in a book, so Satan keeps a record of our sins, and solicits justice against us. Were God like man, subject to passions, or incensible by the suggestions of the common barrator, woe were us. But he will hear one son of truth before ten thousand fathers of lying. No matter what the plaintiff libelleth, when the judge acquitteth. We have forfeited our estates by treason, and the busy devil begs us; but there is one that steps in, and pleads a former grant, and that both by promise and purchase. "*Lord, rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.*" Lord Jesus, challenge thine own; let not Satan enter upon by force or fraud, what thou hast bought with thine own blood.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 17.—"*My darling.*" In Poole's Synopsis the critics explain this name for the soul, as my only one, my solitary one, desolate, deserted, and destitute of human hope. Such is the soul under sore affliction. See Ps. xxii. 21. "*From the lions.*" Daniel in the den was literally where David was spiritually. Shut in among fierce, cruel, and angry creatures, and himself defenceless, having no weapon but prayer, no helper but the Lord. The people of God may be exposed to the lions of hell, and their roarings may grievously affright them; but the soul which is their "darling" is also God's dear one, and therefore they shall be rescued. —*C. H. S.*

Verse 19.—"*Wink with the eye.*" Showing pleasure in their eyes because of my evil.—*Francis Vatablus*, 1545.

Verse 19.—"*Wink the eye.*" This was a sign which malicious persons made to each other when the object of their malice was gained, scornfully twisting their eyes together. The Hebrew word here has no sufficiently expressive substitute in English.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 21.—"*Our eye hath seen.*" *Eye* for *eyes*, unless we would say that all the wicked are so conjoined, that they may seem to have but one eye, heart, head. —*John Trapp.*

Verse 21.—Yet, O ye saints, divulge not these things to wicked men; whisper them softly one to another, with fear and trembling, lest some profane wretch or other overhear you, and take that for encouragement that was only meant for caution. What is more common than for the vilest sinners to plead for their excuse, or warrant rather, the foul miscarriages of God's dearest saints? Thus the drunkard looks upon holy Noah as a pot-companion, whereby he discovers his nakedness in a worse sense than ever Cham did; and thus the unclean sensualist quotes David, and calls him in to be the patron of his debauchery. Certainly, if there be any grief that can overcast the perfect joys of the saints in heaven, it is that their names and examples should, to the great dishonour of God, be produced by wicked and sinful men, to countenance their grossest sins and wickednesses. But let such know, that God hath set up these in his church to be monuments of his mercy, to declare to humble and penitent sinners how great sins he can pardon; yet if any hereupon imbolden themselves in sin, instead of being set up as monuments of mercy, God will set them up as pillars of salt.—*Ezekiel Hopkins* (*Bishop*).

Verse 21.—He who rejoices in another's fall rejoices in the devil's victory.—*Ambrose, quoted in Nichol's Proverbs.*

Verses 21, 22:—

> They gape and drawe their mouthes in scorneful wise,
> And crie, fie, fie, wee sawe it with our eyes.
> But thou their deed, (O Lord!) dost also see;
> Then bee not silent soe, nor farr from mee.
>
> *Sir John Davies.*

Verse 23.—"*My God and my Lord.*" The cry of Thomas when he saw the wounds of Jesus. If he did not count our Lord to be divine, neither does David here ascribe Deity to Jehovah, for there is no difference except in the order of the words and the tongue in which they were spoken, the meaning is identical. What words they are, with their two eyes seeing Jehovah in two aspects yet as one, grasping him with two hands in the double "my" to one heart, for the word is but one, bowing before him on both knees to worship him in lowliest reverence. Well might Nouet, in his exposition of the words as used by Thomas, exclaim, "Oh, sweet word, I will say it all my life long; I will say it in the hour of death; I will say it in eternity."—*C. H. S.*

Verse 24.—"*O Lord my God.*" O Jehovah my God; here is another precious word. He takes Jehovah to be his God, in opposition to those who make idols, or riches, or their own lusts their god. He claims a full possession of all that is in the great I AM. Even though he views him as a judge he lays the hand of faith upon his God, and flinches not even before the blaze of his righteousness. It is a noble word, a grand utterance of faith; he who can pronounce that word "my" from his inmost soul in such a connection may well laugh to scorn all his enemies. —*C. H. S.*

Verse 25.—"*Let them not say we have swallowed him up.*" And even if they could, like Jonah's whale, they would soon be sickened of their feast. A living child of God were more easily swallowed than digested by the malice of hell.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 27.—See how the hearts of the saints have been drawn out against their persecutors. Prayers are the arms that in times of persecution the saints have still had recourse to. The Romans being in great distress were put so hard to it, that they were fain to take the weapons out of the temples of their gods to fight with their enemies, and so they overcame them: so when the people of God have been hard put to it by reason of afflictions and persecutions, the weapons that they

have fled to have been prayers and tears, and with these they have overcome their persecutors.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 28.—"*My tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.*" See now I have made a discourse something longer; ye are wearied. Who endureth to praise God all the day long? I will suggest a remedy whereby thou mayest praise God all the day long if thou wilt. Whatever thou dost, do well, and thou hast praised God. When thou singest a hymn, thou praisest God, but what doth thy tongue, unless thy heart also praise him? Hast thou ceased from singing hymns, and departed that thou mayest refresh thyself? Be not drunken, and thou hast praised God. Dost thou go away to sleep? Rise not to do evil, and thou hast praised God. Dost thou transact business? Do no wrong, and thou hast praised God. Dost thou till thy field? Raise not strife, and thou hast praised God. In the innocency of thy works prepare thyself to praise God all the day long.—*Augustine.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Jesus our Advocate and Champion; our friend in the courts of heaven and the battles of earth.

Verse 2.—Jesus armed as the defender of the faithful.

Verse 3.—Enemies kept at arm's length. How the Lord does this, and the blessedness of it to us

Verse 3 (*last clause*)—Full assurance. An assurance positive, personal, spiritual, present, divine, complete, coming by a word from God.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—Heaven made sure.—*Thomas Adams' Sermon.*

Verse 4.—The everlasting confusion of the devil.

Verse 6.—The horrible pilgrimage of the ungodly.

Verse 6.—The trinity of dangers in the pathway of the wicked, their way dark with ignorance, and slippery with temptation, while behind them is the avenger.

Verse 8.—Destruction at unawares, an awful topic.

Verse 9.—Joy in God and in his salvation.

Verse 10.—A matchless God, and his matchless grace—these are the themes. An experienced heart, thoroughly quickened—this is the songster; and from this cometh matchless music.

The music of a shattered harp.

Verse 11.—The meanness, cruelty, sinfulness, and commonness of slander.

Verse 12.—How a soul may be robbed.

Verse 13.—Christian sympathy even for the froward.

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—Personal benefit of intercessory prayer.

Verses 13, 14.—Compassion to the sick.—*C. Simeon.*

Verse 15.—The shameful conspiracy of men against our Lord Jesus at his passion.

Verse 17.—The limit of divine endurance.

Verse 18.—The duty, blessedness, and seasonableness of public praise.

Verse 22.—Omniscience pleaded, a word sought for, presence requested, action entreated, affiance urged as a claim.

Verse 25.—The ungodly man's delight, and the righteous man's refuge.

Verse 26.—The convict dress of the wicked—"*clothed with shame,*" etc.

Verse 27 (*last clause*).—What is that prosperity in which the Lord hath pleasure?

Verse 28.—A blessed theme, a fitting tongue, an endless speech.

PSALM XXXVI.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician.—*He who had the leadership of the Temple services was charged with the use of this song in public worship. What is everybody's business is never done. It was well to have one person specially to attend to the service of song in the house of the Lord.* Of David the servant of the Lord. *This would seem to indicate that the Psalm peculiarly befits one who esteems it an honour to be called Jehovah's servant. It is* THE SONG OF HAPPY SERVICE; *such a one as all may join in who bear the easy yoke of Jesus. The wicked are contrasted with the righteous, and the great Lord of devout men is heartily extolled; thus obedience to so good a Master is indirectly insisted on, and rebellion against him is plainly condemned.*

DIVISIONS.—*From* 1 *to* 4 *David describes the rebellious: in* 5 *to* 9 *he extols the various attributes of the Lord; in* 10 *and* 11 *he addresses the Lord in prayer, and in the last verse his faith sees in vision the overthrow of all the workers of iniquity.*

EXPOSITION.

THE transgressions of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is* no fear of God before his eyes.

2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

3 The words of his mouth *are* iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, *and* to do good.

4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way *that is* not good; he abhorreth not evil.

1. "*The transgression of the wicked.*" His daring and wanton sin; his breaking the bounds of law and justice. "*Saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.*" Men's sins have a voice to godly ears. They are the outer index of an inner evil. It is clear that men who dare to sin constantly and presumptuously cannot respect the great Judge of all. Despite the professions of unrighteous men, when we see their unhallowed actions our heart is driven to the conclusion that they have no religion whatever. Unholiness is clear evidence of ungodliness. Wickedness is the fruit of an atheistic root. This may be made clear to the candid head by cogent reasoning, but it is clear already and intuitively to the pious heart. If God be everywhere, and I fear him, how can I dare to break his laws in his very presence? He must be a desperate traitor who will rebel in the monarch's own halls. Whatever theoretical opinions bad men may avow, they can only be classed with atheists, since they are such practically. Those eyes which have no fear of God before them now, shall have the terrors of hell before them for ever.

2. "*For.*" Here is the argument to prove the proposition laid down in the former verse. David here runs over the process of reasoning by which he had become convinced that wicked men have no proper idea of God or respect for him. God-fearing men see their sins and bewail them, where the reverse is the case we may be sure there is no fear of God. "*He flattereth himself in his own eyes.*" He counts himself a fine fellow, worthy of great respect. He quiets his conscience, and so deceives his own judgment as to reckon himself a pattern of excellence; if not for morality, yet for having sense enough not to be enslaved by rules which are bonds to others. He is the free-thinker, the man of strong mind, the hater of cant, the philosopher; and the servants of God are, in his esteem, mean-spirited and narrow-minded. Of all flatteries this is the most absurd and dangerous. Even the silliest bird will not set traps for itself; the most pettifogging attorney will not cheat himself. To smoothe over one's own conduct to one's conscience (which is the meaning of the Hebrew) is to smooth one's own path to hell. The descent to eternal ruin is easy enough, without making a glissade of it, as self-flatterers do. "*Until his iniquity be found to be hateful.*" At length he is found out and detested, despite his self-conceit. Rottenness smells sooner or later too strong to be concealed. There is a time when the leprosy cannot be hidden. At last the old house can no

longer be propped up, and falls about the tenant's ears: so there is a limit to a man's self-gratulation; he is found out amid general scorn, and can no longer keep up the farce which he played so well. If this happen not in this life, the hand of death will let light in upon the covered character, and expose the sinner to shame and contempt.

The self-flattering process plainly proves the atheism of sinners, since the bare reflection that God sees them would render such self-flatteries extremely difficult, if not impossible. Belief in God, like light reveals, and then our sin and evil are perceived; but wicked men are in the dark, for they cannot see what is so clearly within them and around them that it stares them in the face.

3. "*The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit.*" This pair of hell dogs generally hunt together, and what one does not catch the other will; if iniquity cannot win by oppression, deceit will gain by chicanery. When the heart is so corrupt as to flatter itself, the tongue follows suit. The open sepulchre of the throat reveals the foulness of the inner nature. God-fearing men make a conscience of their words, and if they sin through infirmity they do not invent excuses, or go about to boast of their wickedness: but because wicked men think little of evil and artful speeches, we may be clear that God rules not in their souls. The original by declaring that the words of the wicked are falsehood and deceit is peculiarly strong; as if they were not only false in quality, but actual falseness itself. "*He hath left off to be wise, and to do good.*" From the good way he has altogether gone aside. Men who fear God proceed from strength to strength in the right path, but godless men soon forsake what little good they once knew. How could men apostatise if they had respect unto the supreme Judge? Is it not because they grow more and more forgetful of God, that in due season they relinquish even that hypocritical reverence of him which in former days they maintained in order to flatter their souls?

4. "*He deviseth mischief upon his bed.*" His place of rest becomes the place for plotting. His bed is a hot-bed for poisonous weeds. God-fearing men meditate upon God and his service; but when men turn all their thoughts and inventive faculties towards evil, their godlessness is proved to a demonstration. He hath the devil for his bed-fellow who lies abed and schemes how to sin. God is far from him. "*He setteth himself in a way that is not good.*" When he gets up he resolutely and persistently pursues the mischief which he planned. The worst of ways he prefers for his walking, for he has taught his heart to love filthiness, having accustomed himself to revel in it in imagination. "*He abhorreth not evil.*" So far from having a contempt and abhorrence for evil, he even rejoices in it, and patronises it. He never hates a wrong thing because it is wrong, but he meditates on it, defends it, and practises it.

What a portrait of a graceless man these few verses afford us! His jauntiness of conscience, his licentiousness of speech, his intentness upon wrong-doing, his deliberate and continued preference of iniquity, and withal his atheistical heart, are all photographed to the life. Lord, save us from being such.

5 Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens; *and* thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds.

6 Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains; thy judgments *are* a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

7 How excellent *is* thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

9 For with thee *is* the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

From the baseness of the wicked the Psalmist turns his contemplation to the glory of God. Contrasts are impressive.

5. "*Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.*" Like the ethereal blue, it encompasses the whole earth, smiling upon universal nature, acting as a canopy for all the creatures of earth, surmounting the loftiest peaks of human provocations, and rising high above the mists of mortal transgression. Clear sky is evermore above, and mercy calmly smiles above the din and smoke of this poor world. Darkness and clouds are but of earth's lower atmosphere: the heavens are evermore serene,

and bright with innumerable stars. Divine mercy abides in its vastness of expanse, and matchless patience, all unaltered by the rebellions of man. When we can measure the heavens, then shall we bound the mercy of the Lord. Towards his own servants especially, in the salvation of the Lord Jesus, he has displayed grace higher than the heaven of heavens, and wider than the universe. O that the atheist could but see this, how earnestly would he long to become a servant of Jehovah! "*Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.*" Far, far above all comprehension is the truth and faithfulness of God. He never fails, nor forgets, nor falters, nor forfeits his word. Afflictions are like clouds, but the divine truthfulness is all around them. While we are under the cloud we are in the region of God's faithfulness; when we mount above it we shall not need such an assurance. To every word of threat, or promise, prophecy or covenant, the Lord has exactly adhered, for he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.

6. "*Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.*" Firm and unmoved, lofty and sublime. As winds and hurricanes shake not an Alp, so the righteousness of God is never in any degree affected by circumstances; he is always just. Who can bribe the Judge of all the earth, or who can, by threatening, compel him to pervert judgment? Not even to save his elect would the Lord suffer his righteousness to be set aside. No awe inspired by mountain scenery can equal that which fills the soul when it beholds the Son of God slain as a victim to vindicate the justice of the Inflexible Lawgiver. Right across the path of every unholy man who dreams of heaven stand the towering Andes of divine righteousness, which no unregenerate sinner can ever climb. Among great mountains lie slumbering avalanches, and there the young lightnings try their callow wings until the storm rushes down amain from the awful peaks; so against the great day of the Lord's wrath the Lord has laid up in the mountains of his righteousness dreadful ammunition of war with which to overwhelm his adversaries. "*Thy judgments are a great deep.*" God's dealings with men are not to be fathomed by every boaster who demands to see a why for every wherefore. The Lord is not to be questioned by us as to why this and why that. He has reasons, but he does not choose to submit them to our foolish consideration. Far and wide, terrible and irresistible like the ocean are the providential dispensations of God: at one time they appear as peaceful as the unrippled sea of glass; at another tossed with tempest and whirlwind, but evermore most glorious and full of mystery. Who shall discover the springs of the sea? He who shall do this may hope to comprehend the providence of the Eternal.

> "Undiscovered sea!
> Into thy dark, unknown, mysterious caves,
> And secret haunts unfathomably deep,
> Beneath all visible retired, none went
> And came again to tell the wonders there."

Yet as the deep mirrors the sky, so the mercy of the Lord is to be seen reflected in all the arrangements of his government on earth, and over the profound depth the covenant rainbow casts its arch of comfort, for the Lord is faithful in all that he doeth.

"*O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.*" All the myriads of creatures, rational and irrational, are fed by Jehovah's hand. The countless beasts, the innumerable birds, the inconceivable abundance of fishes, the all but infinite armies of insects, all owe their continuance in life to the unceasing outgoings of the divine power. What a view of God this presents to us! What a debased creature must he be who sees no trace of such a God, and feels no awe of him!

7. "*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God.*" Here we enter into the Holy of Holies. Benevolence, and mercy, and justice, are everywhere, but the excellence of that mercy only those have known whose faith has lifted the veil and passed into the brighter presence of the Lord; these behold the excellency of the Lord's mercy. The word translated *excellent* may be rendered "precious;" no gem or pearl can ever equal in value a sense of the Lord's love. This is such a brilliant as angels wear. Kings' regalia are a beggarly collection of worthless pebbles when compared with the tender mercy of Jehovah. David could not estimate it, and therefore, after putting a note of admiration, he left our hearts and imagination, and, better still, our experience, to fill up the rest. He writes *how excellent!* because he cannot tell us the half of it. "*Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*" The best of reasons for the best of courses. The figure

is very beautiful. The Lord overshadows his people as a hen protects her brood, or as an eagle covers its young; and we as the little ones run under the blessed shelter and feel at rest. To cower down under the wings of God is so sweet. Although the enemy be far too strong for us, we have no fear, for we nestle under the Lord's wing. O that more of Adam's race knew the excellency of the heavenly shelter! It made Jesus weep to see how they refused it: our tears may well lament the same evil.

8. "*They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.*" Those who learn to put their trust in God shall be received into his house, and shall share in the provision laid up therein. The dwelling-place of the Lord is not confined to any place, and hence reside where we may, we may regard our dwelling, if we be believers, as one room in the Lord's great house; and we shall, both in providence and grace, find a soul-contenting store supplied to us as the result of living by faith in nearness to the Lord. If we regard the assembly of the saints as being peculiarly the house of God, believers shall, indeed, find in sacred worship the richest spiritual food. Happy is the soul that can drink in the sumptuous dainties of the gospel —nothing can so completely fill the soul. "*And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*" As they have the fruits of Eden to feed on, so shall they have the river of Paradise to drink from. God's everlasting love bears to us a constant and ample comfort, of which grace makes us to drink by faith, and then our pleasure is of the richest kind. The Lord not only brings us to this river, but makes us drink: herein we see the condescension of divine love. Heaven will, in the fullest sense, fulfil these words; but they who trust in the Lord enjoy the antepast even here. The happiness given to the faithful is that of God himself; purified spirits joy with the same joy as the Lord himself. "That my joy may be in you, that your joy may be full."

9. "*For with thee is the fountain of life.*" This verse is made of simple words, but like the first chapter of John's Gospel, it is very deep. From the Lord, as from an independent self-sufficient spring, all creature life proceeds, by him it is sustained, through him alone can it be perfected. Life is in the creature, but the fountain of it is only in the Creator. Of spiritual life, this is true in the most emphatic sense; "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," "and we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." "*In thy light shall we see light.*" Light is the glory of life. Life in the dark is misery, and rather death than life. The Lord alone can give natural, intellectual, and spiritual life; he alone can make life bright and lustrous. In spiritual things the knowledge of God sheds a light on all other subjects. We need no candle to see the sun, we see it by its own radiance, and then see everything else by the same lustre. We never see Jesus by the light of self, but self in the light of Jesus. No inward intelligence of ours leads us to receive the Spirit's light, but the rather, it often helps to quench the sacred beam; purely and only by his own illumination, the Holy Ghost lights up the dark recesses of our heart's ungodliness. Vain are they who look to learning and human wit, one ray from the throne of God is better than the noonday splendour of created wisdom. Lord, give me the sun, and let those who will delight in the wax candles of superstition and the phosphorescence of corrupt philosophy. Faith derives both light and life from God, and hence she neither dies nor darkens.

10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

10. "*O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee.*" We ask no more than a continuance of the past mercy. Lord, extend this grace of thine to all the days of all who have been taught to know thy faithful love, thy tenderness, thine immutability and omnipotence. As they have been taught of the Lord to know the Lord, so go on to instruct them and perfect them. This prayer is the heart of the believer asking precisely that which the heart of his God is prepared to grant. It is well when the petition is but the reflection of the promise. "*And thy righteousness to the upright in heart.*" As thou hast never failed the righteous, so abide thou in the same manner their defender and avenger. The worst thing to be feared by the man of God is to be forsaken of heaven, hence this prayer; but the fear is groundless, hence the peace which faith brings to us. Learn from

this verse, that although a continuance of mercy is guaranteed in the covenant, we are yet to make it a matter of prayer. For this good thing will the Lord be enquired of.

11. "*Let not the foot of pride come against me.*" The general prayer is here turned into a particular and personal one for himself. Pride is the devil's sin. Good men may well be afraid of proud men, for the serpent's seed will never cease to bite the heel of the godly. Fain would proud scoffers spurn the saints or trample them under foot: against their malice prayer lifts up her voice. No foot shall come upon us, no hand shall prevail against us, while Jehovah is on our side. "*Let not the hand of the wicked remove me.*" Suffer me not to be driven about as a fugitive, nor torn from my place like an uprooted tree. Violence with both hand and foot, with means fair and means foul, strove to overthrow the Psalmist, but he resorts to his great Patron, and sings a song of triumph in anticipation of the defeat of his foes.

12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

12. "*There are the workers of iniquity fallen.*" Faith sees them scattered on the plain. There! before our very eyes sin, death, and hell, lie prostrate. Behold the vanquished foes! "*They are cast down.*" Providence and grace have dashed them from their vantage ground. Jesus has already thrown all the foes of his people upon their faces, and in due time all sinners shall find it so. "*And shall not be able to rise.*" The defeat of the ungodly and of the powers of evil is final, total, irretrievable. Glory be to God, however high the powers of darkness may carry it at this present, the time hastens on when God shall defend the right, and give to evil such a fall as shall for ever crush the hopes of hell; while those who trust in the Lord shall eternally praise him and rejoice in his holy name.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*To the Chief Musician,*" has given rise to many conjectures. In the Septuagint the Hebrew word is translated, εἰς τὸ τέλος, *to the end;* a meaning so utterly vague as to defy all reasonable conjecture. . . . . The meaning of the term appears to be this: the Psalms in which it occurs were given in charge by their inspired authors to the Chief Musician overseeing some specific band of music, whether harps, psalteries, or wind instruments.—*John Jebb, A.M., in "A Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms,"* 1846.

Title.—"*The servant of the Lord.*" David only uses this title here and in Psalm eighteen. In both he describes the dealings of God both with the righteous and the wicked, and it is most fit that at the very outset he should take his place with the servants of the Lord.—*C. H. S.*

Whole Psalm.—First part.—A character of a wicked man (verse 1). 1. He calls evil good (verse 2). 2. He continues in it. 3. He is an hypocrite (verse 3). 4. He is obstinate. 5. He is studious in wickedness (verse 4). *Second part.*—God's patience and mercy (verses 5, 6). 1. To all, even all creatures. 2. But particularly to his people, which he admires. Upon which the faithful (1) trust, (2) are satisfied (verses 7, 8). The *Third part.*—He prays that this effect may light, 1. On God's people (verse 10). 2. On himself (verse 11). 3. His acclamation upon it (verse 12). —*William Nicholson (Bishop)*, 1662.

Verse 1.—In this Psalm we have a description of sin, especially as it appears in those who have openly broken God's bands. The introduction is very striking; "*The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.*" How could the "*transgression of the wicked*" speak within the *heart* of him who in the inscription of the Psalm declares himself to be *the servant of* JEHOVAH? These words are generally understood as signifying that the outward conduct of the sinner, as often as he thought of it, naturally suggested this conclusion

to his mind, that he was destitute of all fear of God. But they may perhaps admit of another meaning, equally agreeable to the literal reading; *wickedness, saith of the wicked, within my heart,* etc. According to this view, the Psalmist meant that notwithstanding the external pretences of the wicked, and all their attempts to cover their iniquity, he was certain that they had no real sense of the presence of God, that they secretly renounced his authority. How was he assured of this? By a comparison of their conduct with the dictates of the heart. He could not indeed look into their hearts, but he could look into his own, and *there* he found corruption, so strong, that were it not for the fear of God that was implanted within him, he would be as bad as they.—*John Jamieson.*

Verse 1.—It is not the imperfection or shortcoming in the fear of God, but the being destitute of it altogether, that proveth a wicked man: "*There is no fear of God before his eyes.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—"*Not having the fear of God before his eyes,*" has become inwoven into proceedings in criminal courts. When a man has no fear of God, he is prepared for any crime.

Total depravity is not too strong a term to describe human wickedness. The sinner has "*no fear of God.*" Where that is wanting, how can there be any piety? And if there is no piety, there must be total want of right affections, and that is the very essence of depravity.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—Durst any mock God with flourishes and formalities in religion, if they feared him? Durst any provoke God to his face by real and open wickednesses, if they feared him? Durst any sin with the judgments of God fresh bleeding before their eyes, if they feared the Lord and his wrath? Durst they sin with heaps of precious mercy before their eyes, if they feared the Lord and his goodness? Durst any flatter either others or themselves with hopes of impunity in their sin, if they feared the Lord and his truth? Durst any slight their own promises, professions, protestations, oaths, or design the entangling of others by them, rather than the binding of themselves, did they fear the Lord and his faithfulness, even the Lord who keepeth covenant and promise for ever? All these and many more transgressions of the wicked (all these ways of transgression are found among the wicked, it were well if none of them were found among those who have a name of godliness; I say, all these transgressions of the wicked) say, "*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1.—The *wicked* man has no regard to the oracles of God: he has one in his own heart, which dictates nothing but rebellion.—*Zachary Mudge.*

Verse 2.—"*For he flattereth himself in his own eyes.*" The matter which this self-flattery especially concerns is sin, as appears from the following clause. He deceives himself as to its nature and consequences, its evil and aggravations, and he continues to do so "*until his iniquity be found to be hateful;*" till it be fully discovered, and appear in its magnitude and atrocious circumstances both to himself and others, by some awful divine judgment, such as that mentioned in the last verse of the Psalm: "*There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.*" He adduces this self-deceit and continuance in it, as illustrating the truth of that judgment he had formed of the state of such a person: "*There is no fear of God before his eyes: for he flattereth himself in his own eyes.*" And surely the proof is incontrovertible. For a man under the bondage of sin would never *flatter himself in his own eyes,* were it not that God is not before them. The reason why he thinks so well of himself is, that *God is not in all his thoughts.* He hath cast off all fear about himself because he hath no fear of God.—*John Jamieson.*

Verse 2.—"*He flattereth himself.*" 1. Some flatter themselves with a secret hope, that there is no such thing as *another world.* 2. Some flatter themselves that *death* is a great way off, and that they shall hereafter have much opportunity to seek salvation. 3. Some flatter themselves that they lead *moral* and orderly lives and therefore think that they shall not be damned. 4. Some make the *advantages* under which they live an occasion of self-flattery. They flatter themselves that they live in a place where the gospel is powerfully preached, and among a religious people, where many have been converted; and they think it will be much easier for them to be saved on that account. 5. Some flatter themselves with their own *intentions.* They intend to give themselves liberty for a while longer, and *then* to reform. 6. There are some who flatter themselves that they *do,* and

have *done*, a great deal for their salvation, and therefore hope they shall obtain it; when indeed they neither do what they ought to do, nor what they might do even in their present state of unregeneracy; nor are they in any likely way to be converted. 7. Some hope by their strivings to obtain salvation of *themselves*. They have a secret imagination that they shall, by degrees, work in themselves sorrow and repentance of sin, and love towards God and Jesus Christ. Their striving is not so much an earnest seeking to God, as a striving to do themselves that which is the work of God. 8. Some sinners flatter themselves that they are *already* converted. They sit down and rest in a false hope, persuading themselves that all their sins are pardoned; that God loves them; that they shall go to heaven when they die; and that they need trouble themselves no more. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Rev. iii. 17.—*Condensed from Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 2.—"*In his own eyes.*" He had not God before his eyes in holy awe, therefore he puts himself there in unholy admiration. He who makes little of God makes much of himself. They who forget adoration fall into adulation. The eyes must see something, and if they admire not God they will flatter self.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—"*Until his iniquity be found to be hateful;*" that is, until he finds by experience that it is a more dreadful thing to sin against God, and break his holy commands, than he imagined.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 2.—"*Hateful.*" Odious to himself, to others, and to God.—*Gilbert Genebrard*, 1537—1597.

Verse 3.—"*He hath left off.*" That little light he once had, he hath lost, and cast off such good practices as once in hypocrisy he performed; neither will he learn to do better.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—Apostacy from God is really an undoing of all the good which we have done. 'Tis a wicked repentance quite contrary to the grace of repentance; as that is a repentance from dead works, so this is a repentance from works of a better sort: "*He hath left off to be wise, and to do good.*" 'Tis a perversion to evil after a seeming conversion from it.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verses 3, 4:—

> Yet did he spare his sleep, and hear the clock
> Number the midnight watches, on his bed
> Devising mischief more; and early rose.
> And made most hellish meals of good men's names.
> From door to door you might have seen him speed,
> Or placed amid a group of gaping fools.
> Peace fled the neighbourhood in which he made
> His haunts; and, like a moral pestilence,
> Before his breath the healthy shoots and blooms
> Of social joy and happiness decayed.
> Fools only in his company were seen,
> And those forsaken of God, and to themselves
> Given up. The prudent shunned him and his house
> As one who had a deadly moral plague.
>
> *Robert Pollock*, 1799—1827.

Verse 4.—"*He deviseth mischief upon his bed.*" As the man that feareth God communeth with his heart upon his bed, that he may not sin, no, not in his heart; so the man that feareth not God, deviseth how he may plot and perform sin willingly.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*Upon his bed.*" Most diligently does Ayguan follow up the scriptural expressions concerning a bed and tell us that there are six different beds of wickedness—that of luxury, that of avarice, of ambition, of greediness, of torpor, and of cruelty, and he illustrates them all by examples from Scripture.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 4.—"*He setteth himself in a way that is not good.*" To wait to sin is to sin deliberately, yea, to wait to sin resolvedly. That sin is exceedingly sinfully committed which we set and prepare ourselves to commit. David, describing a wicked man, saith, "*He setteth himself in a way that is not good;*" that is, in an evil way: he doth not only fall into sin (that may be the case of a good man), but he takes or chooseth an evil way, and then sets or settles himself in it, resolving

not to leave it, no, nor to be beaten out of it. Sin may be said to wait for a godly man, that is, Satan waits and watches his season to tempt him unto sin; but a godly man doth not wait nor watch to sin. It is bad enough to be overtaken with sin, or with a fault (as the apostle speaks, Gal. vi. 1); but to be taken with sin, and so to wait for a season to take our fill of it, is as bad as bad can be.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—"*He setteth himself in a way that is not good.*" Proud sinners have strongest conceit that they go right, at least in the way of their choice. Satan blindeth them so, that they mistake both the end and the way: in their count they are running to heaven, when they are posting to hell: he serveth them kindly with fresh post-horses. Sometimes he mounteth them on drunkenness, and when they have run a stage on that beastliness, he can mount them on lechery. Again, he can refresh them with avarice; and if they be weary of that slow jade, he setteth them on lofty ambition, and to make them more spirity he can horse them on restless contention. Every one seeth not Satan's enquiry: there is no complexion or disposition, but he hath a fit horse for it, and that of itself. Every man's predominant is a beast of Satan's saddling and providing to carry men to hell. The way is one, the post-master is one, he is to be found at every stage, mounting his gallants, their horses are all of one kind though not of one colour. Happy is the man whom God dismounteth in that evil way, and more happy is he who taketh with that stay, and turneth his course to heaven.—*William Struther.*

Verse 4.—"*He abhorreth not,*" *i.e.*, is far enough from rejecting any instrument, however sinful, for attaining his purposes.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.*" David considering the thoughts and deeds of impious men, and the mercy of God towards them, utters this exclamation. When men sin so impudently, who does not admire the divine longsuffering!—*Sebastian Munster,* 1489—1552.

Verses 5—7.—This Psalm doth fitly set forth unto us the estate and condition of these times, wherein wickedness increaseth: and so in the former part of the Psalm is a discovery of wickedness, verse 3. And what should we do when there is such wickedness in the earth? In the fifth verse, "*Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.*" God is gathering up all goodness, mercy, and peace from man to himself; and though there is cruelty, mischief, and wickedness in the world, in the earth, yet there is mercy, truth, and faithfulness in the clouds; and it's good that wisdom, goodness, truth, and righteousness leave the world, and cleave to God, that so we may follow it; and that what goodness, mercy, truth, and faithfulness we formerly enjoyed in man, we may enjoy in God. And when wickedness increaseth, righteousness increaseth likewise: "*Thy righteousness is like the great mountains:*" when the world tears and breaks itself in pieces, then is the righteousness of God a great mountain. "*Thy judgments are a great deep;*" when the whole world is become one sea of confusion, then are the judgments of the Lord a great deep, where not only man, but beasts may rest safely. "*Thou preservest man and beast.*" And though this time is a time of growing and spreading wickedness in man, yet it is a time of sweetest admiration and love in God; and when men that sin do cry out, O woful man! they that enjoy God, cry out, O happy man! And though men that live in the earth cry out, O miserable! what times are here? men that live in heaven cry out, "*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!*" The Lord makes all things naked and bare, that we only may have him to be our safety.—*William Sedgwick* (1609—1668), *in "The Excellency of the love of God," a sermon in a vol., entitled "Some flashes of Lightnings of the Son of Man,"* 1648.

Verses 5—9:—

Thy mercie Lord doth to the HEAUENS extend,
Thy faithfullnes doth to the CLOUDES assend;
Thy justice stedfast as a MOUNTAINE is,
Thy JUDGEMENTS deepe as is the great Abisse;
Thy noble mercies saue all liueinge thinges,
The sonnes of men creepe underneath thy winges:
With thy great plenty they are fedd at will,
And of thy pleasure's streame they drinke their fill;
For euen the well of life remaines with thee,
And in thy glorious light wee light shall see.

Sir John Davies.

Verse 6.—"*Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.*" Lit. *mountains of God*, which men have not planted, and which men cannot move.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 6.—"*Thy judgments are a great deep.*" Men's sins are a great deep, and Satan's ways are called a depth; but God's judgments, his ways in the wheels, are the greatest deep of all, they are unsearchable.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 7.—"*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!*" etc. The expressions here which denote the abundance of divine blessings upon the righteous man seem to be taken from the temple, from whence they were to issue. Under the covert of the temple, the wings of the cherubim, they were to be sheltered. The richness of the sacrifices, the streams of oil, wine, odours, etc., and the light of the golden candlestick, are all plainly referred to.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 7.—"*Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*" The word signifies to fly, to betake one's self to a place of safety: as the chickens in danger to be seized on, fly under the wings of the hen. "Under whose wings thou art come to trust." Ruth ii. 12. The helpless bird pursued by the kite, in danger to be devoured, runs under the shadow of the dam. Thus it is with a sinner at the first working of faith, he apprehends himself pursued by wrath and judgment; he knows if they seize on him he must perish without remedy. Oh, the sad condition of such a soul! Oh, but he sees Christ spreading his wings ready to secure perishing sinners; he hears him inviting in the gospel to come under his shadow! Oh, how sweet is that voice to him (however, while senseless he rejected it)! He hears, obeys, and runs to Christ for shelter, and so he is safe. "*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*"—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 7.—"*Thy wings*" A common figure in the Psalms, taken more immediately, in my opinion, from the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat which covered the ark; but more remotely from birds, which defend their young from the solar rays by overshadowing them with their wings.—*Francis Hare* (*Bishop*), 1740.

Verse 7:—

> In lonesome cell, guarded and strong I lie,
> Bound by Christ's love, his truth to testify,
> Though walls be thick, the door no hand unclose,
> God is my strength, my solace, and repose.

In a letter of Jeroninus Segerson, written in the prison at Antwerp to his wife, named Lysken, who likewise lay a prisoner there, 1551.

Verse 8.—"*They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*" Mark, first, the excellency of the provision, "*fatness of thy house*," the "*river of thy pleasures.*" The fattest is esteemed the fairest and the most excellent food; therefore the saint was enjoined to offer the fat in sacrifice under the law. As God expects the best from us, so he gives the best to us. This made David, when he had feasted so curiously, to sing so cheerfully. Fatness here is the top, the cream of all spiritual delicacies. "My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." Psalm lxiii. 5. But, though God keeps so noble a house to satisfy his people's hunger, what special care doth he take to quench their thirst! "*Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.*" Oh, he drinks to them, and they pledge him in his own cup! Hath the child, then, any cause, when his Father keeps so rare and costly a table, to leave such dainties and go a-begging up and down the country for scraps and fragments? Oh, how much do these disgrace their Parent's provision, and their own discretion! But mark, reader, secondly, the plenty as well as the excellency of this provision. Here is fatness in the abstract, a "*river of pleasure;*" and so much as that they who enjoy it shall be *satisfied*, and *abundantly* satisfied. A river is overflowing and ever flowing; it communicates its water and yet is never empty. It is fed with springs and fountains, and therefore it is no wonder if it always be full. They that are at such a well need not complain of want; but here are not only rivers and fatness, but of God's people it is said, "*they shall be abundantly satisfied.*" In the original it is *inebriated.* They shall have not only a sufficiency, but a redundancy of spiritual delights. The vessels of their souls shall be filled to the brim out of that river whose streams make

glad the city of God. Surely, then, they who may have bread in such abundance, enough and to spare, in their Father's house, made of the kidneys of the wheat, of the finest flour, need not hanker after the world's homely fare. Our heavenly Father doth not keep so starveling a house that the world's scraps should go down with us.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 8.—"*They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.*" I once heard a father tell, that when he removed his family to a new residence where the accommodation was much more ample, the substance much more rich and varied than that to which they had previously been accustomed, his youngest son, yet a lisping infant, ran round every room and scanned every article with ecstacy, calling out in childish wonder at every new sight, "Is this ours, father? and is this ours?" The child did not say "yours;" and I observed that the father while he told the story was not offended with the freedom. You could read in his glistening eye that the infant's confidence in appropriating as his own all that his father had, was an important element in his satisfaction.

Such, I suppose, will be the surprise, and joy, and appropriating confidence with which the child of our Father's family will count all his own when he is removed from the comparatively mean condition of things present, and enters the infinite of things to come. When the glories of heaven burst upon his view, he does not stand at a distance like a stranger saying, O God, these are thine. He bounds forward to touch and taste every provision which those blessed mansions contain, exclaiming as he looks in the Father's face, Father, this and this is ours! The dear child is glad of all the Father's riches, and the Father is gladder of his dear child.—*William Arnot.*

Verse 8.—"*The fatness of thy house.*" If there is an allusion to the temple, as Hupfield thinks, "*fatness*" would = "fat sacrifices," and men would be regarded as the priests in the house, after the analogy of Jer. xxxi. 14.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 8.—"*The fatness of thy house.*" Fat was regarded among the Jews, as among all other nations of antiquity, as the richest part of animals, and therefore became synonymous with *the first, the best, the prime of anything.—Christian D. Ginsburg, LL.D., in Kitto's Cyclopedia.*

Verse 8.—"*Of thy house.*" This is emphatic, and means that which thou hast prepared for thine own household, thine own faithful domestics. Here is intended not the good things prepared for all men, but for the household retainers of God.—*John Piscator,* 1546—1626, *and D. H. Mollerus.*

Verse 8.—"*Pleasures.*" *Delights,* the same word as is translated "Eden" in Genesis, only it is here in the plural number.—*Dalman Hapstone, M.A.*

Verse 8.—And, saith one of the fathers, do you ask me what heaven is? Saith one, When I meet you there I will tell you. The world to come, say the Rabbins, is the world where all is well. I have read of one that would willingly swim through a sea of brimstone to get to heaven, for there, and only there, is perfection of happiness. What are the silks of Persia, the spices of Egypt, the gold of Ophir and the treasures of both Indies, to the glory of another world? Augustine tells us that one day, when he was about to write something upon the eighth verse of the thirty-sixth Psalm, "*Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,*" and being almost swallowed up with the contemplation of heavenly joys, one called unto him very loud by his name; and, enquiring who it was, he answered, I am Jerome, with whom in my lifetime thou hadst so much conference concerning doubts in Scripture, and am now best experienced to resolve thee of any doubts concerning the joys of heaven; but only let me first ask thee this question—Art thou able to put the whole earth, and all the waters of the sea, into a little pot? Canst thou measure the waters in thy fist, and mete out heaven with thy span, or weigh the mountains in scales, or the hills in a balance? If not, no more is it possible that thy understanding should comprehend the least of the joys of heaven; and certainly the least of the joys of heaven are inconceivable and unexpressible.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 9.—"*For with thee is the fountain of life.*"—These are some of the most wonderful words in the Old Testament. Their fulness of meaning no commentary can ever exhaust. They are, in fact, the kernel and the anticipation of much of the profoundest teaching of S. John.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 9.—"*In thy light shall we see light.*" The object and matter of our eternal happiness is called "*light.*" It will not be a dazzling and confounding light as

was the brightness of Moses' face at his coming down from the mount; the people could not behold him: it will not be an astonishing light, as that in the mount at our Lord's transfiguration; the disciples fell to the ground, their weak eyes could not behold those glimpses of glory that shined through the vail of flesh. But the light in our heaven of happiness will be *a strengthening and comforting light;* it will strengthen and confirm the eyes of our understanding to behold it. Then shall we be enabled as the young eagles, to behold the Sun of Righteousness in his brightness and glory. It was said by the Lord to Moses, "None can see my face and live." Exodus xxxiii. 20. That glorious sight which Daniel saw took strength from him. Dan. x. 8. The object being without him, drew out all his spirits to behold and admire it and so weakened him; but in heaven our God, whom we shall see and know, will be within us to strengthen us; then shall we live because we see his face. It will be also a *comforting* light, like the light of the morning to the wearied watchman, who longed after it in the night-time.—*William Colvill.*

Verse 9.—"*In thy light shall we see light.*" 'Tis but a kind of dim twilight comparatively, which we enjoy here in this world. While we are hid in this prison-house we can see but little; but our Father's house above is full of light: "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun,*" etc. Matt. xiii. 43. If the Day-star be risen in your hearts, live in the pleasant and cheerful expectation of perfect day. For we can ascend but a little way into the mysteries of the kingdom, as long as we are upon the footstool; and we shall know vastly and inconceivably more in the first moment after we come to heaven, than we are capable of attaining here throughout all our days.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 9.—"*In thy light shall we see light.*" The light of nature is like a spark, the light of the gospel a lamp, the light of grace a star, but the light of glory the sun itself. The higher our ascent the greater our light; God dwelleth "in the light which no man can approach unto." 1 Tim. vi. 16—no man, while he carries mortality and sin about him; but when those two corrupt and uncapable qualities shall be put off, then shall we be brought to that light. We are now glad of the sun and stars over our heads, to give us light: what light and delight shall that be when these are under our feet! That light must needs go as far beyond their light as they now go beyond us. But alas! they are only able to discourse of that light, that do enjoy it, to whom that eternal day is risen; not we that live in the humble shade of mortality and natural dimness. I leave it therefore to your meditations: it is a glorious light which we do well often to consider, considering to admire, admiring to love, loving to desire, desiring to seek, and finding to enjoy for ever.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 9.—"*In thy light shall we see light.*" There is a great boast of light in the world, and there is some ground for it in natural things; but, as of old the world by wisdom knew not God, so of late. If ever we know God, it must be through the medium of his word. This I take to be the meaning of the passage. The term *light* in the last clause means the true knowledge of God; and, in the first, the true medium of attaining it, namely, divine revelation. The sum seems to amount to this: the word of God is the grand medium by which we can attain a true and saving knowledge of God. What the sun and stars are to the regions of matter, that revelation is to the mental region. Gen. i. 13, 17. . . .

There are many things of which you may entertain no doubt, concerning which there may be no manner of dispute; yet, make a point of seeing them in God's light. Many content themselves with seeing them in the light in which great and good men have placed them; but, although angels, they are not the true light: they all view things partially. If what they say be true, yet, if we receive it merely on their representation, our faith will stand in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God. 1 Cor. ii. 5. That knowledge or faith which has not God's word for its ground will not stand the day of trial.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 9.—In this communion of God what can we want? Why, God shall be all and in all unto us; he shall be beauty for the eye, music for the ear, honey for the taste, the full content and satisfaction of our desires, and that immediately from himself. True it is God is all in all in this world, "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" but here he works by means of secondary causes; here he gives wine to make the heart glad, and oil, etc.; but there all intervening means between God and us is removed: "*with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light;*" not in the light of the sun, or the light of a candle; there is no

need of them (Rev. xxii. 5); but "in *thy* light," the light of God himself; yea, the whole life of glory, together with all the concomitants of it, flows from him as the sole and original fountain of it. Oh, how sweet must that happiness be that is so derived!—*Edmund Pinchbeck, B.D., in "The Fountain of Life:" a Funeral Sermon,* 1652.

Verse 9.—Whatsoever can be found in the creature, even when God blesseth the use thereof to his own children, is but a drop from the ocean, is but a little water out of the well, in comparison of what a believer will see and feel to be in God reconciled through Christ, for, "*with thee is the fountain of life.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10—"*Continue thy lovingkindness.*" When God beginneth once to let out mercy to his servants, he stints not presently, but proceeds. . . . . When Rachel had her first son, she called his name Joseph, which signifieth adding, or increase; for she said, "The Lord shall add to me another son." Gen. xxx. 24. Now God hath begun to show kindness, he shall not only give me this, but he shall give me another son also. When the Lord hath bestowed one mercy on you, you may name it Joseph, increase, addition, for God will bestow another upon you. Abraham had many mercies from God, one after another; and Moses, a multitude of mercies; he converseth with God face to face; he heareth God speak; he hath God's presence to go along with him; yea, he seeth all God's goodness and glory to pass before him. When mercies come forth, God will not presently shut the door of mercy again. "*Continue thy lovingkindness.*" The Hebrew is, draw forth, or draw out thy lovingkindness: a metaphor either taken from vessels of wine, which being set abroach once, yield not only one cup, but many cups; so when God setteth abroach the wine of his mercy, he will not fill your cup once, but twice and seven times; or, taken from a mother, who hath her breasts full of milk, draws them out for her child, not once, but often; the child shall have the breast many times in the day, and many times in the night, so when God beginneth to show mercy to you, he will draw out his breasts of consolation, and will bestow mercy after mercy upon you; or, from a line which is extended, for so God being in a way of mercy, will extend the line of mercy, and measure out mercy after mercy for you. —*William Greenhill.*

Verse 10.—The true mark of a godly man standeth in the conjunction of faith in God with sincere study of obedience to him, for, *He is the man that knoweth God,* and is upright in heart.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 11.—"*Foot*" . . . . . "*Hand.*" Both foot and hand are named because both used in waging war.—*Simeon de Muis.*

Verse 12.—"*There are the workers of iniquity fallen.*" This is said as if the Psalmist pointed, when he said it, to a particular place with his finger; and the same mode of expression occurs in Psalm xiv. 5; or, it may be rendered, *then* (*i.e.,* when the just are satisfied with the plenteousness of thy house, being rewarded for sincerely worshipping thee in it), *shall they fall, all that work wickedness; they shall be cast down, and shall not be able to rise,* as is the case with persons who have been thrown with violence upon the hard ground.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—What is the fear of God? How does it operate? What is the effect of its absence? What should we learn from seeing such evil results?

Or the atheism underlying transgression.

Verse 2.—The arts, motives, assistances, results, and punishments of self-flattery, and the discovery which concludes it.

Verse 2.—Self-flatteries.—*Jonathan Edward's Sermon.*

Verse 2.—On the deceitfulness of the heart, with regard to the commission of sin.—*Two Sermons, in Jamieson's "Sermons on the Heart."*

Verse 3.—Bad words. Two out of many kinds.

Verse 3 (*second clause*).—The relation between true wisdom and practical goodness.

Verse 4.—Diligence in doing evil, a mark of deep depravity.—*W. S. Plumer.*

Verse 4.—The abuse of retirement to wicked purposes, a sure characteristic of an habitual sinner.—*N. Marshall.*

Verse 4.—The sinner on his bed, in his conduct, in his heart; add to this, in his death, and in his doom.

Verse 4 (*second clause*).—Ways which are not good.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Neutrality condemned.

Verses 5, 6.—Four glorious similes of the mercy, faithfulness, and providence of God. The preacher has here a wealth of poetic imagery never surpassed.

Verse 6.—God's word and works mysterious.—*C. Simeon.*

Verse 6 (*second clause*).—God's judgments are—1. Often unfathomable—we cannot discover the foundation or cause, and spring of them. II. They are safe sailing. Ships never strike on rocks out in the great deeps. III. They conceal great treasure. IV. They work much good—the great deep, though ignorance thinks it to be all waste, a salt and barren wilderness, is one of the greatest blessings to this round world. V. They become a highway of communion with God. The sea is to-day the great highway of the world.

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—Kindness of God to the lower animals, as well as man.

Verses 7, 8.—Admiration! Confidence! Expectation! Realisation!

Verse 7.—The object, reasons, nature, and experience of faith.

Verse 8 (*first clause*).—*The provisions of the Lord's house.* What they are, their excellence and abundance, and for whom provided.

Verse 8 (*second clause*).—*The heavenly Hiddekel*—Its source, its flood, the happy drinkers, how they came to drink.

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—LIFE, natural, mental, spiritual, proceeds from God, is sustained, restored, purified, and perfected by him. In him it dwells with permanency, from him it flows freely, with freshness, abundance, and purity; to him it should be consecrated.

Verse 9 (*second clause*).—LIGHT, what it is to see it. *Divine* light, what it is; how it is the medium by which we see other light. The experience here described, and the duty here hinted at.

Verse 10.—I. *The character of the righteous*—he knows God, and is upright in heart. II. *His privilege*—lovingkindness and righteousness. III. *His prayer*, continue, etc.

Verse 10.—The need of daily supplies of grace.

Verse 12.—A view of the overthrow of evil powers, principles, and men.

PSALM XXXVII.

TITLE.—Of David.—*There is but this word to denote the authorship; whether it was a song or a meditation we are not told. It was written by David in his old age (verse 25), and is the more valuable as the record of so varied an experience.*

SUBJECT.—*The great riddle of the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous, which has perplexed so many, is here dealt with in the light of the future; and fretfulness and repining are most impressively forbidden. It is a Psalm in which the Lord hushes most sweetly the too common repinings of his people, and calms their minds as to his present dealings with his own chosen flock, and the wolves by whom they are surrounded. It contains eight great precepts, is twice illustrated by autobiographical statements, and abounds in remarkable contrasts.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalm can scarcely be divided into considerable sections. It resembles a chapter of the book of Proverbs, most of the verses being complete in themselves. It is an alphabetical Psalm: in somewhat broken order, the first letters of the verses follow the Hebrew alphabet. This may have been not only a poetical invention, but a help to memory. The reader is requested to read the Psalm through without comment before he turns to our exposition.*

EXPOSITION.

FRET not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

1. The Psalm opens with the first precept. It is alas! too common for believers in their hours of adversity to think themselves harshly dealt with when they see persons utterly destitute of religion and honesty, rejoicing in abundant prosperity. Much needed is the command, "*Fret not thyself because of evildoers.*" To fret is to worry, to have the heart-burn, to fume, to become vexed. Nature is very apt to kindle a fire of jealousy when it sees law-breakers riding on horses, and obedient subjects walking in the mire: it is a lesson learned only in the school of grace, when one comes to view the most paradoxical providences with the devout complacency of one who is sure that the Lord is righteous in all his acts. It seems hard to carnal judgments that the best meat should go to the dogs, while loving children pine for want of it. "*Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.*" The same advice under another shape. When one is poor, despised, and in deep trial, our old Adam naturally becomes envious of the rich and great; and when we are conscious that we have been more righteous than they, the devil is sure to be at hand with blasphemous reasonings. Stormy weather may curdle even the cream of humanity. Evil men instead of being envied, are to be viewed with horror and aversion; yet their loaded tables, and gilded trappings, are too apt to fascinate our poor half-opened eyes. Who envies the fat bullock the ribbons and garlands which decorate him as he is led to the shambles? Yet the case is a parallel one; for ungodly rich men are but as beasts fattened for the slaughter.

2. "*For they shall soon be cut down like the grass.*" The scythe of death is sharpening. Green grows the grass, but quick comes the scythe. The destruction of the ungodly will be speedy, sudden, sure, overwhelming, irretrievable. The grass cannot resist or escape the mower. "*And wither as the green herb.*" The beauty of the herb dries up at once in the heat of the sun, and so all the glory of the wicked shall disappear at the hour of death. Death kills the ungodly man like grass, and wrath withers him like hay; he dies, and his name rots. How complete an end is made of the man whose boasts had no end! Is it worth while to waste ourselves in fretting about the insect of an hour, an ephemera which in the same day is born and dies? Within believers there is a living and incorruptible

seed which liveth and abideth for ever; why should they envy mere flesh, and the glory of it, which are but as grass, and the flower thereof?

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; *so* shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily shalt be fed.

3. "*Trust in the Lord.*" Here is the second precept, and one appropriate to the occasion. Faith cures fretting. Sight is cross-eyed, and views things only as they seem, hence her envy; faith has clearer optics to behold things as they really are, hence her peace. "*And do good.*" True faith is actively obedient. Doing good is a fine remedy for fretting. There is a joy in holy activity which drives away the rust of discontent. "*So shalt thou dwell in the land.*" In "the land" which floweth with milk and honey; the Canaan of the covenant. Thou shalt not wander in the wilderness of murmuring, but abide in the promised land of content and rest. "We which have believed do enter into rest." Very much of our outward depends upon the inward; where there is heaven in the heart there will be heaven in the house. "*And verily thou shalt be fed,*" *or shepherded.* To integrity and faith necessaries are guaranteed. The good shepherd will exercise his pastoral care over all believers. In truth they shall be fed, and fed on truth. The promise of God shall be their perpetual banquet; they shall neither lack in spirituals nor in temporals. Some read this as an exhortation, "*Feed on truth;*" certainly this is good cheer, and banishes for ever the hungry heart-burnings of envy.

4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

4. There is an ascent in this third precept. He who was first bidden not to fret, was then commanded actively to trust, and now is told with holy desire to delight in God. "*Delight thyself also in the Lord.*" Make Jehovah the joy and rejoicing of thy spirit. Bad men delight in carnal objects; do not envy them if they are allowed to take their fill in such vain idols; look thou to thy better delight, and fill thyself to the full with thy sublimer portion. In a certain sense imitate the wicked; they delight in their portion—take care to delight in yours, and so far from envying you will pity them. There is no room for fretting if we remember that God is ours, but there is every incentive to sacred enjoyment of the most elevated and ecstatic kind. Every name, attribute, word, or deed of Jehovah, should be delightful to us, and in meditating thereon our soul should be as glad as is the epicure who feeds delicately with a profound relish for his dainties. "*And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*" A pleasant duty is here rewarded with another pleasure. Men who delight in God desire or ask for nothing but what will please God; hence it is safe to give them *carte blanche.* Their will is subdued to God's will, and now they may have what they will. Our innermost desires are here meant, not our casual wishes; there are many things which nature might desire which grace would never permit us to ask for; these deep, prayerful, *asking* desires are those to which the promise is made.

5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass.

6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

5. "*Commit thy way unto the Lord.*" Roll the whole burden of life upon the Lord. Leave with Jehovah not thy present fretfulness merely, but all thy cares; in fact, submit the whole tenor of thy way to him. Cast away anxiety, resign thy will, submit thy judgment, leave all with the God of all. What a medicine is this for expelling envy! What a high attainment does this fourth precept indicate! How blessed must he be who lives every day in obedience to it! "*Trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*" Our destiny shall be joyfully accomplished if we confidently entrust all to our Lord. We may serenely sing—

> "Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
> However dark it be;
> O lead me by thine own right hand.
> Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it matters not,
It leads me to thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might;
But choose Thou for me, O my God.
So shall I walk aright.

Take thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill;
As ever best to thee may seem,
Choose thou my good and ill."

The ploughman sows and harrows, and then leaves the harvest to God. What can he do else? He cannot cover the heavens with clouds, or command the rain, or bring forth the sun or create the dew. He does well to leave the whole matter with God; and so to all of us it is truest wisdom, having obediently trusted in God, to leave results in his hands, and expect a blessed issue.

6. "*And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light.*" In the matter of personal reputation we may especially be content to be quiet, and leave our vindication with the Judge of all the earth. The more we fret in this case, the worse for us. Our strength is to sit still. The Lord will clear the slandered. If we look to his honour, he will see to ours. It is wonderful how, when faith learns to endure calumny with composure, the filth does not defile her, but falls off like snow-balls from a wall of granite. Even in the worst cases, where a good name is for awhile darkened, Providence will send a clearing like the dawning light, which shall increase until the man once censured shall be universally admired. "*And thy judgment as the noonday.*" No shade of reproach shall remain. The man shall be in his meridian of splendour. The darkness of his sorrow and his ill-repute shall both flee away.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

7. "*Rest in the Lord.*" This fifth is a most divine precept, and requires much grace to carry it out. To hush the spirit, to be silent before the Lord, to wait in holy patience the time for clearing up the difficulties of Providence—this is what every gracious heart should aim at. "Aaron held his peace:" "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." A silent tongue in many cases not only shows a wise head, but a holy heart. "*And wait patiently for him.*" Time is nothing to him; let it be nothing to thee. God is worth waiting for. "He never is before his time, he never is too late." In a story we wait for the end to clear up the plot; we ought not to prejudge the great drama of life, but stay till the closing scene, and see to what a finis the whole arrives. "*Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*" There is no good, but much evil, in worrying your heart about the present success of graceless plotters: be not enticed into premature judgments—they dishonour God, they weary yourself. Determine, let the wicked succeed as they may, that you will treat the matter with indifference, and never allow a question to be raised as to the righteousness and goodness of the Lord. What if wicked devices succeed and your own plans are defeated! there is more of the love of God in your defeats than in the successes of the wicked.

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

9 For evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

10 For yet a little while, and the wicked *shall* not *be*: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it *shall* not *be*.

11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

8. *" Cease from anger and forsake wrath."* Especially anger against the arrangements of Providence, and jealousies of the temporary pleasures of those who are so soon to be banished from all comfort. Anger anywhere is madness, here it is aggravated insanity. Yet since anger will try to keep us company, we must resolvedly forsake it. *" Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."* By no reasonings and under no circumstances be led into such a course. Fretfulness lies upon the verge of great sin. Many who have indulged a murmuring disposition have at last come to sin, in order to gain their fancied rights. Beware of carping at others, study to be yourself found in the right way ; and as you would dread outward sin, tremble at inward repining.

9. *" For evil doers shall be cut off."* Their death shall be a penal judgment ; not a gentle removal to a better state, but an execution in which the axe of justice shall be used. *" But those that wait upon the Lord "*—those who in patient faith expect their portion in another life—*" they shall inherit the earth."* Even in this life they have the most of real enjoyment, and in the ages to come theirs shall be the glory and the triumph. Passion, according to Bunyan's parable, has his good things first, and they are soon over ; Patience has his good things last, and they last for ever.

10. *" For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be."* When bad men reach to greatness, the judgments of God frequently sweep them away ; their riches melt, their powers decay, their happiness turns to wretchedness ; they themselves cease any longer to be numbered with the living. The shortness of life makes us see that the glitter of the wicked great is not true gold. O wherefore, tried believer, dost thou envy one who in a little while will lie lower than the dust ? *" Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be."* His house shall be empty, his chair of office vacant, his estate without an owner ; he shall be utterly blotted out, perhaps cut off by his own debauchery, or brought to a deathbed of penury by his own extravagance. Gone like a passing cloud—forgotten as a dream—where are his boastings and hectorings, and where the pomp which made poor mortals think the sinner blest ?

11. *" But the meek shall inherit the earth."* Above all others they shall enjoy life. Even if they suffer, their consolations shall overtop their tribulations. By inheriting the land is meant obtaining covenant privileges and the salvation of God. Such as are truly humble shall take their lot with the rest of the heirs of grace, to whom all good things come by a sacred birthright. *" And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."* Peace they love and peace they shall have. If they find not abundance of gold, abundance of peace will serve their turn far better. Others find joy in strife, and thence arises their misery in due time, but peace leads on to peace, and the more a man loves it the more shall it come to him. In the halcyon period of the latter days, when universal peace shall make glad the earth, the full prophetic meaning of words like these will be made plain.

12 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

13 The Lord shall laugh at him : for he seeth that his day is coming.

14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, *and* to slay such as be of upright conversation.

15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

Here is the portrait of a proud oppressor armed to the teeth.

12. *" The wicked plotteth against the just."* Why can he not let the good man alone ? Because there is enmity between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman. Why not attack him fairly ? Why plot and scheme ? Because it is according to the serpent's nature to be very subtle. Plain sailing does not suit those who are on board of " The Apollyon." *" And gnasheth upon him with his teeth."* The wicked show by their gestures what they would do if they could ; if they cannot gnaw they will gnash : if they may not bite they will at least bark. This is precisely what the graceless world did with " that just One," the Prince of Peace. Yet he took no vengeance upon them, but like a silent lamb received injuries in patience.

13. *" The Lord shall laugh at him."* The godly man needs not trouble himself,

but leave well-deserved vengeance to be dealt out by the Lord, who will utterly deride the malice of the good man's enemies. Let the proud scorner gnash his teeth and foam at the mouth; he has one to deal with who will look down upon him and his ravings with serene contempt. "*For he seeth that his day is coming.*" The evil man does not see how close his destruction is upon his heels; he boasts of crushing others when the foot of justice is already uplifted to trample him as the mire of the streets. Sinners, in the hand of an angry God, and yet plotting against his children! Poor souls, thus to run upon the point of Jehovah's spear.

14. "*The wicked have drawn out the sword.*" They hold their weapon out of its sheath, and watch for a time to use it. "*And have bent their bow.*" One weapon is not enough, they carry another ready for action. They carry so strong a bow that they have trodden upon it to bend it—they will lose nothing for want of force or readiness. "*To cast down the poor and needy.*" These are their game, the objects of their accursed malice. These cowards attack not their equals, but seek out those excellent ones who, from the gentleness of their spirits and the poverty of their estates, are not able to defend themselves. Note how our meek and lowly Lord was beset by cruel foes, armed with all manner of weapons to slay him. "*And to slay such as be of upright conversation.*" Nothing short of the overthrow and death of the just will content the wicked. The sincere and straightforward are hated by the crafty schemers who delight in unrighteousness. See, then, the enemies of the godly doubly armed, and learn how true were our Lord's words, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

15. "*Their sword shall enter into their own heart.*" Like Haman they shall be hanged upon the gallows built by themselves for Mordecai. Hundreds of times has this been the case. Saul, who sought to slay David, fell on his own sword; and the bow, his favourite weapon, the use of which he taught the children of Israel, was not able to deliver him on Gilboa. "*And their bows shall be broken.*" Their inventions of evil shall be rendered useless. Malice outwits itself. It drinks the poisoned cup which it mixed for another, and burns itself in the fire which it kindled for its neighbour. Why need we fret at the prosperity of the wicked when they are so industriously ruining themselves while they fancy they are injuring the saints?

The next nine verses mainly describe the character and blessedness of the godly, and the light is brought out with a few black touches descriptive of the wicked and their doom.

16 A little that a righteous man hath *is* better than the riches of many wicked.

17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.

19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD *shall be* as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.

22 For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.

23 The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.

16. "*A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.*" This is a fine proverb. The little of one good man is contrasted with the riches of many wicked, and so the expression is rendered the more forcible. There is more happiness in the godly dinner of herbs than in the stalled ox of profane rioters.

In the original there is an allusion to the noise of a multitude, as if to hint at the turmoil and hurly-burly of riotous wealth, and to contrast it with the quiet of the humbler portion of the godly. We would sooner hunger with John than feast with Herod; better feed on scant fare with the prophets in Obadiah's cave than riot with the priests of Baal. A man's happiness consists not in the heaps of gold which he has in store. Content finds *multum in parvo*, while for a wicked heart the whole world is too little.

17. "*For the arms of the wicked shall be broken.*" Their power to do mischief shall be effectually taken away, for the arms which they lifted up against God shall be crushed even to the bone. God often makes implacable men incapable men. What is a more contemptible sight than toothless malice, armless malevolence! "*But the Lord upholdeth the righteous.*" Their cause and course shall be safe, for they are in good keeping. The sword of two edges smites the wicked and defends the just.

18. "*The Lord knoweth the days of the upright.*" His foreknowledge made him laugh at the proud, but in the case of the upright he sees a brighter future, and treats them as heirs of salvation. Ever is this our comfort, that all events are known to our God, and that nothing in our future can take him at unawares. No arrow can pierce us by accident, no dagger smite us by stealth; neither in time nor in eternity can any unforeseen ill occur to us. Futurity shall be but a continual development of the good things which the Lord has laid up in store for us. "*And their inheritance shall be for ever.*" Their inheritance fades not away. It is entailed, so that none can deprive them of it, and preserved, so that none shall destroy it. Eternity is the peculiar attribute of the believer's portion: what they have on earth is safe enough, but what they shall have in heaven is theirs without end.

19. "*They shall not be ashamed in the evil time.*" Calamities will come, but deliverances will come also. As the righteous never reckoned upon immunity from trouble, they will not be disappointed when they are called to take their share of it, but the rather they will cast themselves anew upon their God, and prove again his faithfulness and love. God is not a friend in the sunshine only, he is a friend indeed and a friend in need. "*And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*" Their barrel of meal and cruse of oil shall last out the day of distress, and if ravens do not bring them bread and meat, the supply of their needs shall come in some other way, for their bread shall be given them. Our Lord stayed himself upon this when he hungered in the wilderness, and by faith he repelled the tempter; we too may be enabled not to fret ourselves in any wise to do evil by the same consideration. If God's providence is our inheritance, we need not worry about the price of wheat. Mildew, and smut, and bent, are all in the Lord's hands. Unbelief cannot save a single ear from being blasted, but faith, if it do not preserve the crop, can do what is better, namely, preserve our joy in the Lord.

20. "*But the wicked shall perish.*" Whatever phantom light may mock their present their future is black with dark, substantial night. Judgment has been given against them, they are but reserved for execution. Let them flaunt their scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; the sword of Damocles is above their heads, and if their wits were a little more awake, their mirth would turn to misery. "*The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs.*" As the sacrificial fat was all consumed upon the altar, so shall the ungodly utterly vanish from the place of their honour and pride. How can it be otherwise? If the stubble dares to contend with the flame, to what end can it hope to come? "*They shall consume.*" As dry wood, as heaps of leaves, as burning coals, they shall soon be gone, and gone altogether, for "*into smoke shall they consume away.*" *Sic transit gloria mundi.* A puff is the end of all their puffing. There fuming ends in smoke. They made themselves fat, and perished in their own grease. Consumers of the good they tried to be, and consumed they shall be.

21. "*The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again.*" Partly because he will not, but mainly because he cannot. Want follows upon waste, and debt remains undischarged. Often are the wicked thus impoverished in this life. Their wanton extravagance brings them down to the usurer's door and to the bankrupt's suit. "*But the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.*" Mercy has given to him, and therefore he gives in mercy. He is generous and prosperous. He is not a borrower, but a giver. So far as the good man can do it, he lends an ear to the requests of need, and instead of being impoverished by what he imparts, he grows richer, and is able to do more. He does not give to encourage idleness, but in real mercy, which

supposes real need. The text suggests to us how much better it generally is to give than to lend. Generally, lending comes to giving in the end, and it is as well to anticipate the fact, and by a little liberality forestall the inevitable. If these two sentences describe the wicked and the righteous, the writer of these lines has reason to know that in and about the ciy of London the wicked are very numerous.

22. "*For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth.* God's benediction is true wealth after all. True happiness, such as the covenant secures to all the chosen of heaven, lies wrapped up in the divine favour. "*And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.*" His frown is death; nay, more, 'tis hell.

23. "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*" All his course of life is graciously ordained, and in lovingkindness all is fixed, settled, and maintained. No reckless fate, no fickle chance rules us; our every step is the subject of divine decree. "*He delighteth in his way.*" As parents are pleased with the tottering footsteps of their babes. All that concerns a saint is interesting to his heavenly Father. God loves to view the holy strivings of a soul pressing forward to the skies. In the trials and the joys of the faithful, Jesus has fellowship with them, and delights to be their sympathising companion.

24. "*Though he fall.*" Disasters and reverses may lay him low; he may, like Job, be stripped of everything; like Joseph, be put in prison; like Jonah, be cast into the deep. "*He shall not be utterly cast down.*" He shall not be altogether prostrate. He shall be brought on his knees, but not on his face; or, if laid prone for a moment he shall be up again ere long. No saint shall fall finally or fatally. Sorrow may bring us to the earth, and death may bring us to the grave, but lower we cannot sink, and out of the lowest of all we shall arise to the highest of all. "*For the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.*" Condescendingly, with his own hand, God upholds his saints; he does not leave them to mere delegated agency, he affords personal assistance. Even in our falls the Lord gives a measure of sustaining. Where grace does not keep from going down, it shall save from keeping down. Job had double wealth at last, Joseph reigned over Egypt, Jonah was safely landed. It is not that the saints are strong, or wise, or meritorious, that therefore they rise after every fall, but because God is their helper, and therefore none can prevail against them.

25 I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

26 *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed *is* blessed.

25. This was David's observation, "*I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*" It is not *my* observation just as it stands, for I have relieved the children of undoubtedly good men, who have appealed to me as common mendicants. But this does not cast a doubt upon the observation of David. He lived under a dispensation more outward, and more of this world than the present rule of personal faith. Never are the righteous forsaken; that is a rule without exception. Seldom indeed do their seed beg bread; and although it does occasionally occur, through dissipation, idleness, or some such causes on the part of their sons, yet doubtless it is so rare a thing that there are many alive who never saw it. Go into the union house and see how few are the children of godly parents; enter the gaol and see how much rarer still is the case. Poor ministers' sons often become rich. I am not old, but I have seen the families of the poor godly become rich, and have seen the Lord reward the faithfulness of the father in the success of the son, so that I have often thought that the best way to endow one's seed with wealth is to become poor for Christ's sake. In the Indian mission of the "Baptist Missionary Society," this is abundantly illustrated.

26. "*He is ever merciful, and lendeth.*" The righteous are constantly under generous impulses; they do not prosper through parsimony, but through bounty. Like the bounteous giver of all good, of whom they are the beloved sons, they delight in doing good. How stingy, covetous professors can hope for salvation is a marvel to those who read such verses as this in the Bible. "*And his seed is blessed.*" God pays back with interest in the next generation. Where the children of the righteous are not godly, there must be some reason for it in parental neglect, or *some* other guilty cause. The friend of the father is the friend of the family. The God of Abraham is the God of Isaac and of Jacob.

27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.
28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.
29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

Here we have the seventh precept, which takes a negative and positive form, and is the quintessence of the entire Psalm.

27. *"Depart from evil, and do good."* We must not envy the doers of evil, but depart altogether from their spirit and example. As Lot left Sodom without casting a look behind, so must we leave sin. No truce or parley is to he held with sin, we must turn away from it without hesitation, and set ourselves practically to work in the oposite direction. He who neglects to do good will soon fall into evil. *"And dwell for evermore."* Obtain an abiding and quiet inheritance. Shortlived are the gains and pleasures of evil, but eternal are the rewards of grace.

28. *"For the Lord loveth judgment."* The awarding of honour to whom honour is due is God's delight, especially when the upright man has been traduced by his fellow men. It must be a divine pleasure to right wrongs, and to defeat the machinations, of the unjust. The great Arbiter of human destinies is sure to deal out righteous measure both to rich and poor, to good and evil, for such judgment is his delight. *"And forsaketh not his saints."* This would not be right, and, therefore, shall never be done. God is as faithful to the objects of his love as he is just towards all mankind. *"They are preserved for ever."* By covenant engagements their security is fixed, and by suretyship fulfilments that safety is accomplished; come what may, the saints are preserved in Christ Jesus, and because he lives, they shall live also. A king will not lose his jewels, nor will Jehovah lose his people. As the manna in the golden pot, which else had melted, was preserved in the ark of the covenant beneath the mercy-seat, so shall the faithful be preserved in the covenant by the power of Jesus their propitiation. *"But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off."* Like the house of Jeroboam and Ahab, of which not a dog was left. Honour and wealth ill-gotten seldom reach the third generation; the curse grows ripe before many years have passed, and falls upon the evil house. Among the legacies of wicked men the surest entail is a judgment on their family.

29. *"The righteous shall inherit the land."* As heirs with Jesus Christ, the Canaan above, which is the antitype of "the land," shall be theirs with all covenant blessing. *"And dwell therein for ever."* Tenures differ, but none can match the holding which believers have of heaven. Paradise is theirs for ever by inheritance, and they shall live for ever to enjoy it. Who would not be a saint on such terms? Who would fret concerning the fleeting treasures of the godless?

30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.
31 The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.
32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.
33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

30. *"The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom."* Where the whole Psalm is dedicated to a description of the different fates of the just and the wicked, it was meet to give a test by which they could be known. A man's tongue is no ill index of his character. The mouth betrays the heart. Good men, as a rule, speak that which is to edifying, sound speech, religious conversation, consistent with the divine illumination which they have received. Righteousness is wisdom in action, hence all good men are practically wise men, and well may the speech be wise. *"His tongue talketh of judgment."* He advocates justice, gives an honest verdict on things and men, and he foretells that God's judgments will come upon the wicked, as in the former days. His talk is neither foolish nor ribald, neither vapid nor profane. Our conversation is of far more consequence than some men imagine.

31. *"The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide."* The best thing in the best place, producing the best results. Well might the man's talk be so admirable when his heart was so well stored. To love holiness, to have the motives and desires sanctified, to be in one's inmost nature obedient to the Lord—this is the surest method of making the whole run of our life efficient for its great

ends, and even for securing the details of it, our *steps* from any serious mistake. To keep the even tenor of one's way, in such times as these, is given only to those whose hearts are sound towards God, who can, as in the text, call God their God. Policy slips and trips, it twists and tacks, and after all is worsted in the long run, but sincerity plods on its plain pathway and reaches the goal.

32. "*The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.*" If it were not for the laws of the land, we should soon see a massacre of the righteous. Jesus was watched by his enemies, who were thirsting for his blood: his disciples must not look for favour where there Master found hatred and death.

33. "*The Lord will not leave him in his hand.*" God often appears to deliver his servants, and when he does not do so in this life as to their bodies, he gives their souls such joy and peace that they triumphantly rise beyond their tormentor's power. We may be in the enemy's hand for awhile, as Job was, but we cannot be left there. "*Nor condemn him when he is judged.*" Time shall reverse the verdict of haste, or else eternity shall clear away the condemnation of time. In due season just men will be justified. Temporary injustices are tolerated, in the order of Providence, for purposes most wise; but the bitter shall not always be called sweet, not light for ever be traduced as darkness; the right shall appear in due season; the fictitious and pretentious shall be unmasked, and the real and true shall be revealed. If we have done faithfully, we may appeal from the petty sessions of society to the solemn assize of the great day.

34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.

35 I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he *was* not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

37 Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright: for the end of *that* man *is* peace.

38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off.

39 But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD; *he is* their strength in the time of trouble.

40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

34. "*Wait on the Lord.*" We have here the eighth precept, and it is a lofty eminence to attain to. Tarry the Lord's leisure. Wait in obedience as a servant, in hope as an heir, in expectation as a believer. This little word "wait" is easy to say, but hard to carry out, yet faith must do it. "*And keep his way.*" Continue in the narrow path; let no haste for riches or ease cause unholy action. Let your motto be, "On, on, on," Never flag, or dream of turning aside. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." "*And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land.*" Thou shalt have all of earthly good which is really good, and of heavenly good there shall be no stint. Exaltation shall be the lot of the excellent. "*When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.*" A sight how terrible and how instructive! What a rebuke for fretfulness! what an incentive to gratitude! My soul, be still, as thou foreseest the end, the awful end of the Lord's enemies.

35. A second time David turns to his diary, and this time in poetic imagery tells us of what he had observed. It were well if we too took notes of divine providences. "*I have seen the wicked in great power.*" The man was terrible to others, ruling with much authority, and carrying things with a high hand, a Cæsar in might, a Crœsus in wealth. "*And spreading himself like a green bay tree.*" Adding house to house and field to field, rising higher and higher in the state. He seemed to be ever verdant like a laurel, he grew as a tree in its own native soil, from which it had never been transplanted. No particular tree is here meant, a spreading beech or a wide expanding oak may serve us to realise the picture; it is a thing of earth, whose roots are in the clay; its honours are fading leaves; and though its shadow dwarfs the plants which are condemned to pine beneath it, yet it is itself a dying thing, as the feller's axe shall prove. In the noble tree,

which claims to be king of the forest, behold the grandeur of the ungodly to-day; wait awhile and wonder at the change, as the timber is carried away, and the very root torn from the ground.

36. "*Yet he passed away.*" Tree and man both gone, the son of man as surely as the child of the forest. What clean sweeps death makes! "*And lo, he was not.*" To the surprise of all men the great man was gone, his estates sold, his business bankrupt, his house alienated, his name forgotten, and all in a few months! "*Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.*" Moved by curiosity, if we enquire for the ungodly, they have left no trace; like birds of ill omen none desire to remember them. Some of the humblest of the godly are immortalised, their names are imperishably fragrant in the church, while of the ablest of infidels and blasphemers hardly their names are remembered beyond a few years. Men who were in everybody's mouths but yesterday are forgotten to-morrow, for only virtue is immortal.

37. "*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright.*" After having watched with surprise the downfall of the wicked, give your attention to the sincerely godly man, and observe the blessed contrast. Good men are men of mark, and are worth our study. Upright men are marvels of grace, and worth beholding. "*For the end of that man is peace.*" The man of peace has an end of peace. Peace without end comes in the end to the man of God. His way may be rough, but it leads home. With believers it may rain in the morning, thunder at midday, and pour in torrents in the afternoon, but it must clear up ere the sun goes down. War may last till our last hour, but them we shall hear the last of it.

38. "*But the transgressors shall be destroyed together.*" A common ruin awaits those who joined in common rebellion. "*The end of the wicked shall be cut off.*" Their time shall be shortened, their happiness shall be ended, their hopes for ever blasted, their execution hastened on. Their present is shortened by their sins; they shall not live out half their days. They have no future worth having, while the righteous count their future as their true heritage.

39. "*But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.*" Sound doctrine this. The very marrow of the gtospel of free grace. By salvation is meant deliverance of every kind; not only ;*he* salvation which finally lands us in glory, but all the minor rescues of the way these are all to be ascribed unto the Lord, and to him alone. Let him have glory from those to whom he grants salvation. "*He is their strength in the time of trouble.*" While trouble overthrows the wicked, it only drives the righteous to their strong Helper, who rejoices to uphold them.

40. "*And the Lord shall help them.*" In all future time Jehovah will stand up for his chosen. Our Great Ally will bring up his forces in the heat of the battle. "*He shall deliver them from the wicked.*" As he rescued Daniel from the lions, so will he preserve his beloved from their enemies; they need not therefore fret, nor be discouraged. "*And save them, because they trust in him.*" Faith shall ensure the safety of the elect. It is the mark of the sheep by which they shall be separated from the goats. Not their merit, but their believing, shall distinguish them. Who would not try the walk of faith? Whoever truly believes in God will be no longer fretful against the apparent irregularities of this present life, but will rest assured that what is mysterious is nevertheless just, and what seems hard, is, beyond a doubt ordered in mercy. So the Psalm ends with a note which is the death-knell of the unhallowed disquietude with which the Psalm commenced. Happy they who can thus sing themselves out of ill frames into gracious conditions.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The righteous are preserved in Christ with a special preservation and in a peculiar safety. In the thirty-seventh Psalm this point is excellently and at large handled, both by direct proof, and by answer to all the usual objections against their safety. That they shall be preserved is affirmed, verses 3, 17, 23, 25, 32. The objections answered are many.

Objection 1.—Wicked men flourish.

Solution.—A righteous man should never grieve at that, for "they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." Verse 2.

Object. 2.—Righteous men are in distress.

Sol.—Verse 6.—The night of their adversity will be turned into the light of prosperity; and as surely as they can believe when it is night that it shall be day, so surely may they be persuaded when crosses are upon them, that comfort and deliverance shall come.

Object. 3.—But there are great plots laid against the righteous, and they are pursued with great malice, and their intended ruin is come almost to the very issue.

Sol.—Verses 12—15.—The Lord sees all the plots of wicked men, and laughs at their spiteful and foolish malice; while they are busy to destroy the righteous, and hope to have a day against them, "The Lord seeth that their own day is coming upon them, even a day of destruction, a day of great judgment and eternal misery;" their bow shall be broken, and the sword that they have drawn shall enter into their own heart.

Object. 4.—But the just have but small means.

Sol.—Verses 16, 17.—"A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the Lord upholdeth the righteous."

Object. 5.—Heavy times are like to befall them.

Sol.—Verse 19.—"They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall have enough."

Object. 6.—But the wicked wax fatter and fatter, and they prevail in vexing the righteous.

Sol.—Verse 20.—Indeed the wicked are fat, but it is but "the fat of lambs," their prosperity shall soon melt; and as they be like smoke in vexing the godly, so shall they be like smoke in vanishing away.

Object. 7.—But the righteous do fall.

Sol.—Verse 24.—Though he do fall, yet he falls not finally, nor totally, for he "is not utterly cast down;" and besides, there is an upholding providence of God in all the falls of the righteous.

Object. 8.—We see some wicked men that do not so fall into adversity, but rather are in prosperity to their dying days.

Sol.—Verse 28.—Though they do, yet "their seed shall be cut off."

Object. 9.—But some wicked men are strong yet, and in their seed spread also.

Sol.—Verses 35, 36.—Note also that these "spreading bay-trees" many times "soon pass away;" and they and their houses are sometimes "utterly cut off."

Object. 10.—But upright men are under many and long crosses.

Sol.—Verse 37.—Yet, "his end is peace."

Object. 11.—But nobody stands for the godly when they come into question.

Sol.—Verses 39, 40.—"Their salvation is of the Lord;" he is their strength, he will help them and deliver them, etc.

But if we would be thus delivered, observe: 1. That we must not unthankfully fret at God's providence (verse 1). 2. We must "trust in the Lord and do good" (verse 3). 3. We must "delight ourselves in the Lord," and not place our contentment on earthly things (verse 4). 4. We must "commit our ways to God" (verse 5). 5. We must get patience and humble affections (verses 7—11). 6. We must be of upright conversation (verse 14). 7. We must be merciful (verses 25, 26). 8. We must "speak righteous things," and get "the law into our hearts" (verses 30, 31). 9. We must "keep our way," and "wait on God," and not use ill means.—*Nicholas Byfield.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm may well be styled, The good man's cordial in bad times: a sovereign plaister for the plague of discontent: or, a choice antidote against the poison of impatience —*Nathanael Hardy, in a Funeral Sermon*, 1649.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm very much reminds one in its construction of the sententious and pithy conciseness of the Book of Proverbs. It does not contain any prayer, nor any direct allusion to David's own circumstances of persecution or distress It is rather the utterance of sound practical wisdom and godliness from the lips of experience and age, such as we might suppose an elder of the church, or a father of a family, to let fall as he sat with his household gathered around him, and listening to his earnest and affectionate admonition.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Whole Psalm.—The present Psalm is one of the alphabetical Psalms, it is called "*Providentiæ speculum*," by Tertullian; "*Potio contra murmur*," by Isidore; "*Vestis piorum*," by Luther.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*Fret*," or, inflame not, burn not thyself with anger or grief.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 1.—"*Neither be thou envious,*" etc. Queen Elizabeth envied the milk-maid when she was in prison ; but if she had known what a glorious reign she should have had afterwards for fourty-four years, she would not have envied her. And as little needeth a godly man, though in misery, to envy a wicked man in the ruff of all his prosperity and jollity, considering what he hath in hand, much more what he hath in hope.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—Would it not be accounted folly in a man that is heir to many thousands per annum that he should envy a stage-player, clothed in the habit of a king, and yet not heir to one foot of land? who, though he have the form, respect, and apparel of a king or nobleman, yet he is, at the same time, a very beggar, and worth nothing ? Thus, wicked men, though they are arrayed gorgeously, and fare deliciously, wanting nothing, and having more than heart can wish, yet they are but only possessors : the godly Christian is the heir. What good doth all their prosperity do them ? It does but hasten their ruin, not their reward. The ox that is the labouring ox is the longer lived than the ox that is put into the pasture ; the very putting of him there doth but hasten his slaughter ; and when God puts the wicked men into fat pastures, into places of honour and power, it is but to hasten their ruin. Let no man, therefore, fret himself because of evil doers, nor be envious at the prosperity of the wicked ; for the candle of the wicked shall be put into everlasting darkness ; they shall soon be cut off, and wither as a green herb.—*Ludovic de Carbone, quoted by John Spencer.*

Verse 2.—"*Cut down like the grass,*" with a scythe, and even at one blow.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 2.—"*Wither.*" O bitter word, which will make the ears of them that hear it to tingle ! O sentence intolerable, which depriveth sinners of all good things, and bringeth them to all woe ! The Lord sometime accursed the fig tree, and immediately, not only the leaves, but also the body and root were wholly withered : even so, that fearful curse of the last day shall be no less effectual ; for on whom-soever it falleth it shall so scorch them, and shall so make them destitute of God's grace, that they shall never more be able to do, to speak, think, or to hope for any good thing.—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 2.—"*Green herb.*" We cannot gather riper fruit of patience from any tree than is found upon the low shrubs of man's short life ; for if that fretting canker of *envy at the prosperity of the wicked* have overrun thy mind, a malady from which the saints have no shelter to be freed, out of this apothecary's shop take antidote ; either thy time is short to behold it, or theirs shorter to enjoy it : " they are set in slippery places, and are suddenly destroyed," Psalm lxxiii. 18 ; " They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave," Job xxi. 13 ; "*They shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*"—*Edmund Layfield's Sermon, entitled " The Mappe of Man's Mortality and Vanity,"* 1630.

Verse 2.—Sometimes the wicked, like the green herb, wither in their spring, they fall in their rise, they perish in the beginnings of their mischievous designs ; but if they do come to a full growth, they grow but to harvest, the fit season of their cutting off.—*Robert Mossom.*

Verse 3.—Note well the double precept "*trust*" and "*do.*" This is the true order, the two must go together, the one produces, the other proves ; the promise is to both.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 3.—"*So shalt thou dwell in the land,*" etc. Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance : "*Verily thou shalt be fed ;*" some read it, Thou shalt be fed by faith, as the just are said to live by faith, and it is good living, good feeding upon the promises. "*Verily thou shalt be fed,*" as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee. God himself is a shepherd, a feeder to all those that trust in him, Psalm xxiii. 1.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3.—"*So shalt thou dwell in the land,*" etc. The land of Canaan was considered as the sum of earthly, and the type of heavenly felicity : to be provided for in the Lord's land, and there to dwell under his protection, near his ordinances, and among his people, was all that the genuine Israelite could desire.—*Thomas Scott* (1747—1821) *in loc.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou shalt be fed.*" A manner of speech taken from cattle feeding securely, under the conduct and keeping of a good shepherd.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou shalt be fed.*" Fed in plenty.—*Thomas Secker* (*Archbishop*), 1768.

Verse 3.—Fed in security.—*John Parkhurst.*

Verse 4.—Note thy part and God's part. Do thou "*delight*," and he will "*give*." *C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—How much grace and love breathes in these words, "*Delight thyself also in the Lord!*" *Trust* in him was recommended before, and now, this being added also, how plain is it that your ease and rest is the thing designed! Is it fit to receive so much kindness with neglect? Again, *he delights in you:* I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said, "His delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31. Think what he is, and what you are; and at once, both wonder and yield. And what else have you to delight in? what thing will you name that shall supply the place of GOD, or be to you in the stead of him? Moreover, who should delight in him but you—his friends, his sons, those of his own house? Think what life and vigour it will infuse into you, and that "the joy of the Lord will be your strength," Nehem. viii. 10. How pleasantly will you hold on your course, and discharge all other duties of this your present state! You must serve him. Dare you think of throwing off his yoke? How desirable is it then to take delight in him whom I must serve; which only makes that service acceptable to him, and easy to myself! Further, this is a pleasure none can rob you of; a joy that cannot be taken from you. Other objects of your delight are vanishing daily. Neither men nor devils can ever hinder you delighting in God, if your hearts be so inclined. And were you never brought to take pleasure in any person or thing to which you had a former aversion? One that had wronged you might yet possibly win you by after kindness. Give a reason why you should be more difficult towards the blessed God that never wronged you, and whose way towards you hath constantly imported so much good will!

And consider that your condition on earth is such as exposes you to many sufferings and hardships, which, by your not delighting in him, you can never be sure to avoid (for they are things common to men), but which, by your delighting in him, you may be easily able to endure. Besides all this, seriously consider that you must die. You can make no shift to avoid that. How easily tolerable and pleasant will it be to think, then, of going to him with whom you have lived in a delightful communion before! And how dreadful to appear before him to whom your own heart shall accuse you to have been (against all his importunities and allurements) a disaffected stranger!—*John Howe's "Treatise of Delight in God."*

Verse 4.—We have in the former part extended the meaning of the words "*Delight thyself in the Lord*," beyond what they seem at first sight literally to signify; so as not to understand them merely as requiring that very single act of *delight* to be immediately and directly terminated on God himself; but to take them as comprehending all *the sum of all holy and religious converse with God, i.e.*, as it is delightful or as it is seasoned (intermingled, and as it were besprinkled) with delight; and upon the same account, of all our other converse, so far as it is influenced by religion. And I doubt not, to such as shall attentively have considered what hath been said, it will be thought very reasonable to take them in that latitude; whereof the very letter of the text (as may be alleged for futher justification hereof) is most fitly capable. For the particle which we read *in* the Lord, hath not that signification alone, but signifies also *with* or *by*, or *besides*, or *before*, or *in presence of*, as if it had been said, "Come and sit down with God, retire thyself to him, and solace thyself in the delights which are to be found in his presence and converse, in walking with him, and transacting thy course as before him, and in his sight." As a man may be said to delight himself with a friend that puts himself under his roof, and, besides personal converse with himself, freely enjoys the pleasure of all the entertainments, accomodations, and provisions which he is freely willing to communicate with him, and hath the satisfaction which a sober person would take in observing the rules and order of a well-governed house.—*John Howe.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*" It shall be unto thee even as thou wilt. It is said of Luther that he could have what he would of Almighty God. What may not a favourite, who hath the royalty of his prince's care, obtain of him?—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*The desires of thine heart.*" All the desires of this spiritual seed are of the nature of this seed, namely, substantial, and shall meet with substance. All the desires of natural man, even after God, after Christ, after righteousness, shall burn and perish with him (for they are not the truth, nor do they come from the truth, nor can they reach to the truth;) but all the desires of this spirit shall live with the Spirit of God, in rest and satisfaction for ever.—*John Pennington*, 1656.

Verse 4.—The *desires* of God and the *desires* of the righteous, agree in one; they are of one mind in their desires.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 5.—"*Commit thy way unto the Lord,*" etc. When we bear the burden of our own affairs ourselves, and are chastised with anxiety and want of success, and with envying the ungodly who prosper better than we do, the best remedy is first to do our duty, as we are enabled in the use of the means, then cast the care of the success over on God, as the ploughman doth when he hath harrowed his land; and let the burden of it rest on God, and let us not take it off him again, but put our mind to rest, resolved to take the harvest in good part, as he shall send it.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Commit thy way unto the Lord,*" is rendered by the Vulgate, *Revela viam Domino,* reveal thy way; and by St. Ambrose, understood of revealing our sins to God. Indeed, since is it impossible to cover, why should we not discover, our sins? Conceal not that which God knoweth already, and would have thee to make known. It is a very ill office to be the devil's secretary. Oh, break thy league with Satan by revealing his secrets, thy sins, to God.—*Nathaniel Hardy.*

Verse 5.—"*Commit thy way unto.*" Marg. and Heb., *Roll thy way upon*—as one who lays upon the shoulder of one stronger than himself a burden which he is not able to bear.—*William De Burgh, D.D., in "A Commentary on the Book of Psalms. Dublin:* 1860."

Verse 5.—Note the double again, "*Commit*" and "*trust.*"—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—"*He shall bring it to pass.*" When a hard piece of work is put into the hand of an apprentice for the first assay of his skill, the beholders are justly afraid of a miscarriage in his young and unexperienced hand; but when the worker is an old master of craft, none are afraid but his cunning hand can act again what so oft it hath wrought to the contentment of all the beholders. Were our God a novice in the great art of governing the world, and of the church in the bosom thereof; had he to this day never given any proof of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, in turning about the most terrible accidents to the welfare and joy of his saints; we might indeed be amazed whenever we feel ourselves sinking in the dangers wherein the practices of our enemies oft do plunge us over head and ears; but the Lord having given in times past so many documents of his uncontroverted skill and most certain will to bring about all human affairs, as to his own glory, so to the real good of all that love him, it would be in us an impious and unexcusable uncharitableness to suspect the end of any work which he hath begun.—*Robert Baylie's Sermon before the House of Commons,* 1643.

Verses 5, 7:—

To God thy way commending,
Trust him whose arm of might,
The heavenly circles bending,
Guides every star aright:
The winds, and clouds, and lightning,
By his sure hand are led;
And he will, dark shades brightening,
Show thee what path to tread.

* * * * *

Although to make God falter,
The powers of hell combine,
One jot they cannot alter
Of his all-wise design:
All projects and volition
Of his eternal mind,
Despite all opposition,
Their due fulfilment find.

No more, then, droop and languish,
Thou sorrow-stricken soul;
E'en from the depths of anguish,
Whose billows o'er thee roll,
Thy Father's hand shall draw thee;
In hope and patience stay,
And joy will soon shed o'er thee
An ever brightening ray.

All faithless murmurs leaving,
  Bid them a last good night,
No more thy vexed soul grieving,
  Because things seem not right:
Wisely his sceptre wielding,
  God sits in regal state,
No power to mortals yielding,
  Events to regulate.

Trust with a faith untiring
  In thine Omniscient King,
And thou shalt see admiring
  What he to light will bring.
Of all thy griefs, the reason
  Shall at the last appear;
Why now denied a season,
  Will shine in letters clear.

* * * * *

Then raise thine eyes to heaven,
  Thou who canst trust his frown;
Thence shall thy meed be given,
  The chaplet and the crown:
Thy God the palm victorious
  In thy right hand shall plant.
Whilst thou, in accents glorious,
  Melodious hymns shall chant.

* * * * *

Paul Gerhard (1606—1676), *translated by Frances Elizabeth Cox, in "Hymns from the German,"* 1864.

Verse 6.—"*He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light,*" etc. If thou shouldst be accused as a man of evil designs, let not that trouble thee neither: for though thy fame may be obscured for a time by calumnies and slanders, as the sun is by mists and clouds, yet as that scatters them all at last, so shall thy integrity appear, and shine as bright as the sun at noonday.—*Symon Patrick.*

Verse 7.—"*Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.*" There are two words in the original, which express the privilege and the duty of resting on Christ: one implies such a state of acquiescence, as silences and clamours of conscience, and composes the perturbation of the spirit; the other signifies the refreshment and repose of a weary pilgrim, when he arrives at the end of his journey, and is settled for life in a secure, commodious, plentiful habitation.—*James Hervey.*

Verse 7.—"*Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.*" Take the case of one who, with a load above his strength, has been toiling some steep and broken path, when suddenly he finds it lifted off and transferred to another whose strength he knows to be more than equal to the task, and in whose sympathy he can securely trust. What would his feeling be but one of perfect rest, and calm reliance, and joyous freedom, as they went on their way together? And such is the blessedness of rolling our care upon the Lord—in weakness we are resting on superior strength, in perplexity and doubt we are resting on superior wisdom, in all times of trial and hard service we can stay ourselves on the assurance of his perfect sympathy. The literal meaning of the word "*rest,*" is "*be silent*" towards the Lord. With the eye fixed on him let all unbelieving thoughts be stilled, such thoughts as rise and rankle in the querulous spirit when it sees only its troubles, and not God in them, when the mists of earth hide from its sight the eternal stars of heaven. Then like Jacob, it may say morosely, "All these things are against me;" or, like Elijah, despondently, "It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life;" or, like Jonah, fretfully, "I do well to be angry." In regard to all such dark and unbelieving suggestions, the heart is to keep silence, to be still and know that he is God; silent as to murmuring, but not silent as to prayer, for in that holy meditative stillness the heart turns to commune with him. What is "resting in God," but the instinctive movement and upward glance of the spirit to him; the confiding all one's griefs and fears to him, and feeling strengthened, patient, hopeful in the act of doing so! It implies a willingness that he should choose for us, a conviction that the ordering of all that concerns us is safer in his hands than in our own.

A few practical remarks:—1. Our "*resting patiently*" in the Lord applies only

to the trials which he sends, not to the troubles which even Christians often make for themselves. There is a difference in the burdens that come in the way of duty, and those that come through our wandering into other ways. We can roll the one upon the Lord, but with the other our punishment may be to be left to bear them long, and to be bruised in bearing them. 2. The duty here enjoined is to be carried through all our life. We all admit that *patient* waiting is needed for the great trials of life, but may not acknowledge so readily that it is needed as much for little, daily, commonplace vexations. But these are as much a test of Christian principle as the other. 3. This resting in God is a criterion of a man's spiritual state. It needs a special faculty of discernment, a new sense to be opened in the soul, before our fallen nature can understand or desire it.—*James D. Burns, M.A.*

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—"*Hold thee still*" (so it may be translated). And this is the hardest precept that is given to man; insomuch that the most difficult precept of action sinks into nothing when compared with this command to inaction.—*Jerome.*

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—The Hebrew word rendered *silent* is דּם, *dom*, from which the English word *dumb* appears to be derived. The silence here enjoined is opposed to murmuring or complaining.—*James Anderson, in Calvin's Commentary.*

Verse 7.—Note again the twin duties, "*rest*" and "*wait.*"

Verse 7.—"*Bringeth wicked devices to pass.*" Observe the opposition between this and *God's* bringing to pass, in verse five. The ground for grief is that the ungodly appear to achieve their end, the reason for comfort is that our end shall be achieved also, and that in the best manner by God himself.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 8.—"*Forsake wrath;*" which is anger wrought up to a greater degree; and the rather to be shunned and avoided, as being very disageeable to the character of a good man. "*Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil;*" evil may be done by fretting at the prosperity of wicked men, or by imitating them, doing as they do, in hope of being prosperous as they are.—*John Gill.*

Verse 9.—"*They shall inherit the earth.*" He means that they shall live in such a manner as that the blessing of God shall follow them, even to the grave.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 10.—"*Thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.*" To wit because he shall be grubbed up by the roots.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 10.—"*His place . . shall not be.*" The very land he occupied as a home, and the title to which was unimpeachable, is no longer "*his place.*" It has passed into other hands. Nothing of all he had on earth is his. He is as poor as the most miserable object that subsisted on alms.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 10.—The peacock, a glorious fowl, when he beholds that comely fan and circle which he maketh of the beautiful feathers of his tail, he rejoiceth, he setteth, and beholdeth every part thereof: but when he looketh on his feet which he perceiveth to be black and foul, he by-and-by, with great misliking, vaileth his top-gallant, and seemeth to sorrow. In like manner, a great many know by experience, that when they see themselves to abound in riches and honours, they glory and are deeply conceited of themselves; they praise their fortune, and admire themselves; they make plots, and appoint much for themselves to perform in many years to come. This year, they say, we will bear this office, and the next year that: afterward we shall have the rule of such a province; then we will build a palace in such a city, whereunto we will adjoin such gardens of pleasure, and such vineyards: and thus they make a very large reckoning aforehand, who if they did but once behold their feet, if they did but think upon the shortness of their life, so transitory and unconstant; how soon would they let fall their proud feathers, forsake their arrogancy, and change their purpose, their minds, their lives, and their manners.—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 11.—"*The meek shall inherit the earth.*" In the meantime, they, and they only, possess the present earth, as they go toward the kingdom of heaven, by being humble, and cheerful, and content with what their good God has allotted them. They have no turbulent, repining, vexatious thoughts that they deserve better; nor are vexed when they see others possessed of more honour, or more

riches, than their wise God has allotted for their share. But they possess what they have with a meek and contented quietness; such a quietness as makes their very dreams pleasing, both to God and themselves.—*Izaak Walton* (1593—1683), *in "The Complete Angler."*

Verse 11.—*"The meek."* What is thy Beloved more than any other beloved? It is spoken to the spouse. So what is meekness more than any other virtues? We may say, here is *synecdoche speciei*, one particular taken for the general, one virtue for all the rest. Or the effect is put for the cause; because meekness is one of the principal and chiefest parts of holiness. But if you will give me leave to conjecture, the Holy Ghost may seem in this promise at once to show the condition of the church, and to comfort her; and because being laid hard at on every side, she stands in need of this virtue more than any other, to fit and fashion the reward to the virtue, to cherish and exalt it in us with the promise of something beyond our expectation, even the *inheritance of the earth.* And indeed what fitter reward can there be of meekness? What more fit and just than that they who have been made the anvil for injuries to beat on, who have been *viri perpessitii*, as Seneca speaks of Socrates, men of great sufferance, who have suffered not only their goods to be torn from them by oppression and wrong, but their reputations to be wounded with the sharp razor of detraction, and have withstood the shock of all *spectantibus similes*, with the patience of a looker on, should be raised and comforted with a promise of that which their meekness gave up to the spoil; and that by the providence of God which loves to thwart the practice of the world, they should be made heirs even of those possessions which the hand of violence hath snatched from them.—*Anthony Farindon, B.D.*, 1596—1658.

Verse 11.—Not the hot stirring spirits who bustle for the world shall have it, but the meek, who are thrust up and down from corner to corner, and hardly suffered to remain anywhere quietly in it. This earth, which they seem most deprived of, they only shall have and enjoy. When the Lord hath made it worth the having, then none shall have it but they. *"They shall inherit the earth."* The earth is the Lord's; these are the children of the Lord, and they shall inherit his earth. When the Lord taketh it into his own possession and enjoyment, they shall succeed him in the possession and enjoyment of it. It is their right, and shall descend unto them by right, by inheritance. It is the Lord's right, and by the Lord shall descend to them as their right. They cannot yet have it, for the Lord hath it not yet; but when the Lord hath it, it shall fairly descend to them. This accursed earth they shall never have, but when it is taken into the hands of the Lord, and blessed by the Lord, then it shall be theirs, then it shall be inherited by the children of blessing.—*John Pennington.*

Verse 11.—*"And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."* Surely when the glory of the Lord covers the earth, and all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Prince of Peace, and the wicked one is rooted out, we may well expect peace in rich abundance.—*W. Wilson.*

Verses 12, 13.—Note how the gesture of the wicked in *gnashing their teeth* is returned to them in the Lord's scornful *laughter* at their devices. Their plotting, too, is countermined by that winding up of all plots, which the Lord knoweth, though they are wilfully ignorant of it.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 13.—*"The Lord shall laugh at him,"* etc. He seems to provide very coldly for our consolation under sorrow, for he represents God as merely *laughing.* But if God values highly our salvation, why does he not set himself to resist the fury of our enemies, and vigorously oppose them? We know that this, as has been said in Psalm ii. 4, is a proper trial of our patience when God does not come forth at once, armed for the discomfiture of the ungodly, but connives for a time, and withholds his hand. Lest the flesh should still murmur and complain, demanding why God should only laugh at the wicked, and not rather take vengeance upon them, the reason is added, that he sees the day of their destruction at hand. *"For he seeth that his day is coming."—John Calvin.*

Verse 13.—*"For he seeth that his day is coming:"* He laughs at such poor worms, who make themselves so great upon the earth, and act so loftily in their impotence seeing it must so soon be over with them.—*Berleb. Bible, quoted by E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 13.—*"For he seeth that his day is coming."* His dismal day, his death's day, which will also be his doom's day.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 14, 15.—The tongue is a "*sword*" and a "*bow*," which shooteth its arrows, even bitter words, against the humble and upright, Jesus and his disciples. But these are not the only weapons that have been drawn against them. How the malice of the Jews returned upon their own heads no one is ignorant, though few lay it to heart, and consider them as set forth for an example.—*George Horne.*

Verses 14, 15.—When the wicked are most near to do a mischief to the Lord's people, then is a mischief most near unto them.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 16.—"*A little that a righteous man hath*," etc. To wit, 1. Because the wicked do often enrich themselves by unjust means, and so have much vexation and trouble with them, and likewise thereby do treasure up wrath against the day of wrath; whereas the righteous with a little, well gotten, have much peace of conscience, with hope of heaven hereafter. 2. Because the righteous use theirs well, and are the better for them; whereas the wicked abuse their many ways, and are in many respects the worse for them. 3. Because the righteous enjoy what they have from hand to mouth as the gifts of God, and the pledges of his fatherly love and care over them, and so it is to them as manna from heaven, and hereby they enjoy much sweet comfort, and are fully satisfied with what they have; whereas the wicked have none of this joy nor satisfaction by their wealth. 4. Because God by his blessing doth usually make that the righteous enjoy to be more effectual for their good than is the abundance of the wicked. A little coarse fare makes them more healthful and strong than the wicked are with all their plenty. And, 5. Because the wicked enjoyeth not his wealth long, as the righteous man doth; and this indeed agrees best with the following words.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 16.—Strangers to Christ have the use of outward mercies, but cannot be properly said to have the enjoyment; they seem to be masters of them, but indeed they are servants to them; possessors as to outward use, but slaves as to their inward affections; they serve them while they seem to dispose of them; they do not *dominari*, but *servire*—have not the command of, but are enslaved. Nor is their use truly comfortable; they may fancy comfort, but their comfort is but a fancy; it flows from another fountain than can be digged in earth; true, solid comfort is the portion of those only who have the righteousness of Christ for their portion. These may look upon every temporal enjoyment as a token of everlasting love, as a pledge and earnest of eternal glory; and both these, because they may receive them as the purchase of the blood and righteousness of Christ; ay, here is the well-spring of comfort, the fountain of that comfort which is better than life. Oh, what comfort is it to taste the sweetness of Christ's love in every enjoyment! When we can say, "Christ loved me, and gave himself for me, that I might enjoy these blessings," oh, how will this raise the value of every common mercy! Christ's righteousness which was performed, the highest expression of his love, purchased this for me! Upon this account is that of the Psalmist true, "*A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.*" He that hath but food and raiment hath in this respect more than he that hath the Turkish empire, or the gold of the Indies. He hath more ground of comfort in his little than they in all.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 16.—If thine estate were but little, yet it would be perfumed with love and that lump of sugar in thy cup would make the liquor sweet, be it never so small. As the waters which flow from the hills of some of the islands of Molucca taste of the cinnamon and cloves which grow there, so should thy gift, though it were but water, taste of the goodwill and special grace of the Giver. Thy "*little*," with the fear of the Lord, would be "*better than the riches of many wicked men.*" As a little ring with a very costly diamond in it is far more worth than many great ones without it, so thy estate, though it were but a penny, should be joined with the precious jewel of that love which is better than life, and enjoyed by special promise, and thereby be infinitely more worth than the thousands and millions of others bestowed merely from common bounty, and enjoyed only by a general providence.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 16.—'Tis as possible for a wicked man to fill his body with air and his chest with grace, as his mind with wealth. 'Tis with them as with a ship; it may be overladen with silver and gold, even unto sinking, and yet have compass and sides to hold ten times more. So here, a covetous wretch, though he have enough to sink him, yet he shall never have enough to satisfy him. So that the conclusion which the Psalmist delivers is most worthy to be observed: "*A little that a righteous*

man hath is better than the riches of many wicked;" he doth not say of how many, because let us think of never so many, yea, of all of them, the righteous man's little is better in very many respects than all their greatest treasures heaped together. The King of Spain although the greatest prince in Christendom by far, having his empire so far extended, that he may truly say, that the sun ever shines upon his dominions, yet gives this for his motto, *Totus non sufficit orbis*, The whole world is not sufficient. God by Solomon tells us that "In the house of the righteous is much treasure" (Prov. xv. 6), although many times there is scarce a good bed to lie, or a seat to sit on. The time will certainly come, when the richest wicked men that ever lived will see clearly that their account would have been much narrower, and consequently their condition to all eternity less miserable, if they had been so poor as to have begged their bread from door to door all their lives long. 'Tis with the blessings of this life as 'tis with perfumed gloves; when they are richly perfumed their perfume is much more valuable than the leather of which they are made: so, not so much earthly blessings considered in themselves, as their being perfumed with the sweet love of God in Christ, is that which maketh them blessings indeed, truly deserving the name they bear. Now all the blessings of those who have made Mary's choice are all thus perfumed; all the barley bread they eat, be it never so coarse; all the clothes they wear, be they never so mean; with all their other temporal blessings, they proceed from the same sweet love of God, wherewith he was moved to bestow Jesus Christ upon them for salvation. Rom. viii. 32.—*John Glascock's Sermon, entitled "Mary's Choice,"* 1659.

Verses 16, 17.—A little blest is better than a great deal curst; a little blest is better than a world enjoyed; a pound blest is better than a thousand curst; a black crust blest is better than a feast curst; the gleanings blest are better than the whole harvest curst; a drop of mercy blest is better than a sea of mercy curst; Lazarus' crumbs blest was better than Dives' delicates curst; Jacob's little blest unto him was better than Esau's great estate that was curst unto him. 'Tis always better to have scraps with a blessing, than to have manna and quails with a curse; a thin table with a blessing is always better than a full table with a snare; a thread-bare coat with a blessing is better than a purple robe curst; a hole, a cave, a den, a barn, a chimney-corner with a blessing, is better than stately palaces with a curse; a woollen cap blest is better than a golden crown curst; and it may be that emperor understood as much, that said of his crown, when he looked on it with tears: "If you knew the cares that are under this crown you would never stoop to take it up." And therefore, why should not a Christian be contented with a little, seeing his little shall be blest unto him? Isaac tills the ground and sows his seed, and God blesses him with an hundredfold; and Cain tills the ground and sows his seed, but the earth is cursed to him and commanded not to yield to him his strength. Oh, therefore never let a Christian murmur because he hath but little, but rather let him be still a-blessing of that God that hath blest his little, and doth bless his little, and that will bless his little to him.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 17.—"*For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but he upholdeth* (or underprops) *the righteous.*" By "*the arms of the wicked,*" you are to understand their strength, their valour, their power, their wit, their wealth, their abundance, which is all the arms they have to support and bear up themselves in the world with. Now, these arms shall be broken, and when they are broken, then, even then, will God uphold the righteous, that is, God will be a continual overflowing fountain of good to his righteous ones; so that they shall never want, though all the springs of the wicked are dried up round about them.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 18.—"*The Lord knoweth the days of the upright.*" Depositeth their days, lays them up in safety for them: for such is the original idea of יָדַע.—*John Fry.*

Verse 18.—"*The Lord knoweth the days of the upright,*" and they cannot be cut short by the malice of man.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 20.—"*As the fat of lambs.*" As the glory of fat sheep, which are at length slain.—*Targum.*

Verse 20.—"*Fat of lambs.*" As the fat of the sacrifices was consumed on the altar by the fire (which was a type of God's righteous vengeance upon sinners), till it vanished into smoke; so the wicked will be the sacrifices to God's justice, and be destroyed by the fire of his indignation.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 20.—" *Into smoke shall they consume.*" " What hath pride profited us ? or what hath our boasting of riches given us ? " Such are the things, they shall speak who are in hell, and who have sinned. For the hope of the ungodly is like a dry thistle-down, by the wind carried away, or the thin foam spread upon the billows or as a smoke floated hither and thither by the wind, or as the remembrance of a wayfaring man for a day.—*Wouter of Stoelwijk*, 1541.

Verse 21.—" *Payeth not again ;* " *i.e.*, has it not in his power, from his straitened circumstances, to repay what he has borrowed : comp. Deut. xxviii. 12. A Jew thus circumstanced became the bond-slave of his creditors : comp. 2 Kings iv. 1.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 22.—God promiseth that the seed of his people shall inherit the earth The child of such a tenant as paid his rent well, shall not be put out of his farm.—*John Glascock.*

Verse 23.—" *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*" When this Pilot undertakes to steer their course, their vessel shall never split upon the rock, run upon the sands, or spring a leak, so as to sink in the seas. To be sure he will see them safe in their harbour. He was no Christian, yet I suppose none will deny but he spake good divinity, who said, " If a man will choose God for his Friend, he shall travel securely through a wilderness that hath many beasts of prey in it ; he shall pass safely through this world ; for he only is safe that hath God for his guide." (Ar. Epist. xxvii.) Doth he not speak a little like David himself (Psalm xxxvii. 23). who never expected to come to glory except he were guided by his counsel ? Now, if a poor heathen could say thus, and see good reason to trust God, and admire his faithfulness as he doth frequently (and so doth Seneca, justifying God's faithfulness in all his dealings with the best men in all their sufferings, and the prosperity of the wicked) ; what then shall the heavenly Christian say, who hath experienced so much of God's faithfulness in answering his prayers, in fulfilling his promises, and supplying all his exigencies ?—*James Janeway.*

Verse 23.—" *He delighteth in his way.*" Note that in verse four, we are bidden to delight in the Lord, and here he delights in us, and as here our way is his delight, so in verse thirty-four we are to " keep *his* way." These antitheses are instructive.—*C. H. S.*

Verses 23, 24.—Strange words to us ! the very " *steps* " all " *ordered*," and that by an Almighty One, who " delights " in the goodness of the good man's way. And yet the inference so distinctly to be drawn is that the good man *may* fall, and that his God and Guide may stand by and behold and permit !

Let us add to the suggestion of these verses, one or two references which may help us to establish the principle in our hearts, that the child of God may fall and still remain the child of God ; and also to explain somewhat of the reason why this is part of their lot, whether ordered, or only permitted, at all events, a step of the " right way," by which God leads them to a city of habitation." Psalm cvii. 7.

It is observed near the close of Hezekiah's good and prosperous life that, " in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon. . . . God left him *to try him*, that he might know all that was in his heart." 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. And again, in Daniel's prophecy regarding the latter days, we find (Daniel xi. 35), " And some of them of understanding shall fall, *to try them*, and *to purge*, and *to make them white.*" In the two preceding verses, we have also some valuable details regarding such falls, such as the help with which God will uphold them, the flatteries with which the world will still beset, and hinder them from rising again ; the outward troubles into which their fall shall lead them, as through a furnace ; the high position (instructors of many) which yet shall not save them from their needed ordeal—the time appointed—and the end in view. So here. The acknowledgment of the possibility of the good man's fall is accompanied with the precious assurance that " *he shall not be utterly cast down.*"—*Mary B. M. Duncan, in "Under the Shadow*, 1867."

Verse 24.—" *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down,*" etc. Thus the Spirit comforts and answers the secret thoughts which everyone might have, saying with himself, I have, however, seen it happen, that the righteous is oppressed, and his cause is trodden in the dust by the wicked. Nay, he replies, dear child,

let it be so, that he falls; he still cannot remain lying thus and be cast away; he must be up again, although all the world doubts of it. For God catches him by the hand, and raises him again.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 24.—"*Though he fall,*" namely, as one that were faint-hearted, "*he shall not be cast off,*" namely, utterly, or for ever from God (2 Cor. iv. 9); "*for the Lord putteth under his hand,*" *i.e.*, his power and might, namely, to uphold him from utter falling away, which we should quickly do if God were not with us.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 24.—A man pardoned, and justified by faith in Christ, though he may, and sometimes doth, fall into foul sins, yet they never prevail so far as to reverse pardon, and reduce to a state of non-justification. "*Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand!*" He speaks of a good man pardoned, justified; he may fall; but how far? from pardon, from justification? No, then he should utterly fall, be cast down beneath God's hand; but the text saith, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand; or, as Montanus renders the words, the Lord upholdeth his hands, and he will not let him sink into such a condition. If it were so, then sin should have dominion over him, but, Rom. vi. 14. "Sin shall not have dominion over you;" and chap. viii. 2, justified ones are freed from the law of sin and death; and verse 30, the predestinated, called, justified, and glorified ones, are so linked together, that there is no breaking their chain; if they do sin, they have an "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." 1 John ii. 1, 2.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 25.—"*I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken*" (he doth not say, In my experience I never saw the righteous afflicted, but, I never saw him left or forsaken in his affliction), "*and I never saw his seed begging their bread:*" he puts in that, because begging of bread, especially in the commonwealth of Israel, and in the state of the Jews, was a note of utter dereliction! for though God had told them that they should have the poor always with them, yet he had given an express law that there should be no beggar among them; therefore, saith he, I have not seen the righteous so forsaken, that they should be forced to live by begging. If any say, that David himself begged, he asked bread of Abimelech and of Nabal; I answer, it is a good rule, and it resolves the case; transitory cases, and sudden accidents, make no beggars: we must not say, David was a beggar, or begged his bread, because once he was in a strait and asked bread of Abimelech; and in a second strait sent to Nabal: in such sudden cases, the richest man in the world may be put to ask a piece of bread. A good man may fall into such wants, but good men are rarely, if ever or at all, left in them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 25.—"*Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*" Perhaps it will be objected that there have been many righteous men poor: but the place speaketh of a righteous charitable man, for so the following verse showeth, which saith, "He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed." And who hath seen such a one or his seed to be brought to such poverty as to beg his bread? When our Saviour Christ had fed four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes, all being filled, seven baskets full of fragments were gathered up; and it is Saint Austin's note upon it, *crescit dum impenditur victus, sic eleemosyna si indigentibus erogetur*, the victuals in expending were augmented, and so is the alms which is given to the poor.—*Michael Jermin.*

Verse 25.—"*Yet have I not seen,*" etc. I believe this to be literally true in all cases. I am now grey-headed myself; I have travelled in different countries, and have had many opportunities of seeing and conversing with religious people in all situations in life; and I have not, to my knowledge, seen one instance to the contrary. I have seen no *righteous man forsaken*, nor any *children* of the righteous *begging their bread.* God puts honour upon all that fear him; and thus careful is he of *them*, and of their *posterity.—Adam Clarke.*

Verse 25.—"*Begging bread.*" This is not meant of an occasional seeking relief in want (for so David himself desired bread of Abimelech, 1 Samuel xxi. 3, and he and his soldiers desired some supply of victuals from Nabal, ch. xxv. 8); but of living in a continual way of begging from door to door, which is denounced as a curse against the wicked (Psalm cix. 10), "Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg." Nor doth it hence follow, that neither the righteous man,

nor his seed, are ever brought to this sad degree of misery; but only that it doth so rarely happen, that David in all his time had never seen it.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 25.—This observation of the Psalmist will be found generally verified. We find indeed exceptions, as in the case of Eli's family. But this was the result of his defect of character as a righteous man. And we know that the promises must fail, if they neglect the means necessary to their accomplishment (see Genesis xviii. 19). But some think that this verse admits of an explanatory supplement; and render the last clause thus, "Nor his seed (forsaken, though) begging bread."—*David Davidson, in "The Pocket Commentary,* 1836."

Verse 25.—These words must be taken as a general observation, not absolutely verified in every case; yet the strict fact is, I apprehend, that the immediate descendants of truly pious persons are very seldom, if ever reduced to such extremities, unless by their own great imprudence, or their abandoned practices.—*William Walford.*

Verse 25.—Here he recordeth an experiment of his (such as whereof Psalm cxix. is mostly made up), and if other men's experiences agree not altogether with his, it is no wonder: kings use not to mind beggars.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 25, 26.—Many persons are solicitously perplexed how their children shall do when they are dead; yet they consider not, how God provided for them when they were children. Is the Lord's arm shortened? Did he take thee from thy mother's breasts; and when thy parents forsook thee (as the Psalmist saith), became thy Father? And cannot this experienced mercy to thee, persuade thee that he will not forsake thine? Is not "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever?" "I have been young," saith David, "and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken," that is granted, nay, "nor his seed begging bread."

Many distrustful fathers are so carking for their posterity, that while they live they starve their bodies, and hazard their souls, to leave them rich. To such a father it is said justly, *Dives es hœredi, pauper inopsque tibi.* Like an over-kind hen he feeds his chickens, and famisheth himself. If usury, circumvention, oppression, extortion, can make them rich, they shall not be poor. Their folly is ridiculous; they fear lest their children should be miserable, yet take the only course to make them miserable; for they leave them not so much heirs to their goods as to their evils They do as certainly inherit their fathers' sins as their lands: "God layeth up his iniquity for his children: and his offspring shall want a morsel of bread." Job xxi. 19.

On the contrary, the good man "*is merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.*" What the worldling thinks shall make his posterity poor, God saith shall make the good man's rich. The precept gives a promise of mercy to obedience, not confined to the obedient man's self, but extended to his seed, and that even to a thousand generations, Exodus xx. 6. Trust, then, Christ with thy children; when thy friends shall fail, usury bear no date, oppression be condemned to hell, thyself rotten to the dust, the world itself turned and burned into cinders, still "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 26.—"*He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.*" He, the good man, is "*merciful*" to *himself*, for mercy, like charity, begins at home; he is not afraid to eat a good meal because he hath children. And he is merciful to *others* too; for he will lend and do good to whom he can, and then his seed fares the better for it. Mark, that the more he gives and lends in doing works of mercy, the better it is for his children; for those children are ever best provided for whose parents bear this mind—they had rather trust God with their children, than their children with riches; and have made this their hope, that though they die, yet God lives. Did but one of those rich and wretched parents (who pinched and pined himself to make his son a gentleman, forsooth), rise from the dead, and see that proverb of Solomon fulfilled in himself, "He begetteth a son, and in his hand is nothing;" I persuade myself, the rumination of this world afflict him in his soul as much as any one pain of sense, even in hell itself, O consider this, you that now live and see it in others; and remember withal, that if your goods be either ill-gotten, or worse kept, it may be your children's case when you are departed, and feel it, though you see it not.—*Matthew Griffith.*

Verse 28.—"*For the Lord . . . . forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.*" How? since they die as others do. Mark the *antithesis*, and that will

explain it." *"They are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off."* They are preserved in their posterity: children are but the parents multiplied, and the parents continued; 'tis *nodosa æternitas;* when the father's life is run out to the last, there is a knot tied, and the line is still continued by the child. I confess temporal blessings, such as long life, and the promise of an happy posterity, are more visible in the eye of that dispensation of the covenant; but yet God still taketh care for the children of his people, and many promises run that way that belong to the gospel administration, and still God's service is the surest way to establish a family, as sin is the ready way to root it out. And if it doth not always fall out accordingly, yet for the most part it doth; and we are no competent judges of God's dispensations in this kind, because we see providence by pieces, and have not the skill to set them together; but at the day of judgment, when the whole contexture of God's dealings is laid before us, we shall clearly understand how *the children of his servants continue, and their seed is established.* Psalm cii. 28.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 29.—*"The righteous shall inherit the land,"* or the earth. There is clearly an emphasis in the repetition of the same promise in the same terms which ought to have been uniformly rendered throughout verses 9, 11, 22, 29, 34. And it cannot be doubted, that there is a reference to the new heavens and the new earth of Isaiah lxvi. 17; 2 Peter iii. 13.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 29.—*"The righteous shall inherit the land,"* etc. Comp. Matt. v. 5. Consider well this Bible truth, of the future exclusive possession of the earth by the righteous. The millennial kingdom furnishes a fuller explanation.—*T. C. Barth.*

Verse 31.—*"The law of his God is in his heart,"* etc. The flock of sheep that's indisposed and unwilling to drive, start out of the way into every lane's end, one this way and another that; and just so is it with an unwilling heart; one thought starts this way, and another that, and it's a piece of skill to drive them through. But a willing heart, a heart prepared and ready to every good work, it flies quite up an end, and delights itself in the Lord.—*Richard Steele.*

Verse 31 (*first clause*).—He hath a Bible in his head, and another in his heart; he hath a good treasure within, and there hence bringeth good things.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 32, 33.—The Jews *"watched"* that Just One daily and hourly; they *"sought to slay him,"* and did so; but *Jehovah left him not in their hands,* but vindicated his innocence by raising him from the dead.—*George Horne.*

Verse 34.—*"Wait on the Lord,"* etc. He that truly trusts in God will stay God's time, and use God's means, and walk in God's way, though it seem round about; they will not neglect their souls for haste; they know this would be to make more haste than good speed. Nor would they step out of the way, the way that is holy and righteous, though they may escape a loss, an affliction by it, though they might gain some desirable advantage by it. True faith goes leaning upon God, and therefore will *"keep his way."* He that will not be liberal for the promoting and honouring of the gospel; he that fears poverty or affliction more than he fears sin; he that is more careful for the things of the world than for his soul; he that takes indirect or suspected courses, to get, or increase, or secure his estate; he that is not jealous or watchful, lest his cares for the world (when he is much engaged therein) should be immoderate—it is plain he doth not trust God with his estate; and he that does not trust God for his estate, whatever he think or pretend, he does not trust God for his soul, for his salvation; his hopes of heaven and salvation are but presumption.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 34.—*"Wait on the Lord."* Bind him not to a day, wake not the Beloved till he please.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 34.—*"Wait . . . . keep."* While we are waiting let us take heed of wavering. Go not a step out of God's way, though a lion be in the way; avoid not duty to meet with safety; keep God's highway, the good old way (Jer. vi. 16), the way which is paved with holiness. "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness." Isaiah xxxv. 8. Avoid crooked paths, take heed of turning to the left hand, lest you be set on the left hand. Sin doth cross our hopes, it barricades up our way; a man may as well expect to find heaven in hell, as in a sinful way.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 35.—"*Green bay tree.*" The LXX translates כְּאֶזְרָח רַעֲנָן as if it were כְּאֶרֶז לְבָנוֹן, "Like the cedar of Lebanon;" but אֶזְרָח רַעֲנָן according to Delitzsch, means a noble timber-tree, one that in the course of centuries of growth has acquired a gigantic trunk, and an umbrageous, dome-like crown.

Verse 35.—"*Green bay tree.*" The marginal rendering—"a tree that groweth in his own soil"—is, no doubt, the true one. The idea generally formed of this passage by the reader of the English Bible is that the tree referred to was the bay laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), or cherry laurel of our gardens. But this plant belongs to an entirely different family. The bay and the Portugal laurels, whose forms of growth and evergreen leaves make them highly ornamental in shrubberies, belong to a sub-family (*Drupaceæ*, Lind.) of the rose tribe (*Rosaceæ*), but the bay tree proper, which flourisheth luxuriantly in Southern Europe, is the type of the laurel family (*Lauraceæ*). Several circumstances make it unlikely that the true bay tree represents the Hebrew *esrāch*. There is no evidence that it was ever so plentiful in Palestine as to be chosen by the Psalmist in an illustration in a poem for popular use. It is indeed to be met with, but that chiefly in localities on the borders of the eastern shore of the Great Sea. The chief objection to the supposition that the bay tree was referred to by the royal poet is to be found in the Psalm itself. Having mentioned it in the lines quoted above, he adds, "Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." The idea here is not one which could be represented and illustrated by an evergreen plant, slow of growth, and yet reaching in maturity a height of above thirty feet. The words demand a quick growing tree, in a soil more than usually favourable to its growth. Thus planted, and shooting up in calm and sunshine, it would attract every eye; but when the storm broke over it, when the strong wind swept impetuously through its branches, it would not stand. Torn up by the root, and its timber comparatively useless, like Abraham's dead, it would be buried out of sight. And thus with the wicked. He was sought and could not be found.—*John Duns, D.D., F.R.S.E., in "Biblical Natural Science."*

Verse 35.—We see no force in the observation of Dr. Duns; in fact, if there were not other reasons for preferring the translation given in the following note by Wilson, we should see all the more reason to keep to the bay tree. It was a tree of permanence and of long-continued verdure, and so the prosperous wicked seem to be. They look as if their happiness would be eternal; yet, for all that, those who carefully note the dealings of providence observe with holy wonder that divine justice cuts short their glory, and they perish utterly.—*C. H. S.*

"*I have seen the wicked in great power* (terrible, fierce, violent), *and spreading himself like a green bay tree*" (a tree in its native soil, vigorous, and luxuriant, that had never been transplanted). A striking figure of the ungodly man of the world, firmly rooted in earthly things—his native soil, grown proud and wanton in his prosperity, without fear or apprehension of any reverse.—*William Wilson.*

Verse 35.—"*Like a green bay tree,*" which produceth all leaves and no fruit.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 35.—"*I have seen the wicked,*" saith David, "*in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree.*" And why like a green bay-tree? Because in the winter, when all other trees—as the vine-tree, fig-tree, apple-tree, &c., which are more profitable trees—are withered and naked, yet the bay-tree continueth as green in the winter as the summer. So fareth it with wicked men: when the children of God, in the storms of persecutions, and afflictions, and miseries, seem withered, and, as it were, dead, yet the wicked all that time flourish, and do appear green in the eyes of the world: they wallow in worldly wealth, but it is for their destruction; they wax fat, but it is for the day of slaughter. It was the case of Hophni and Phinehas: the Lord gave them enough and suffered them to go on and prosper in their wickedness; but what was the reason? Because he would destroy them.—*J. Gore's Sermon at St. Paul's*, 1633.

Verses 35, 36.—

> ————"To-day he puts forth
> The tender leaves of hopes, to-morrow blossoms,
> And bears his blushing honours thick upon him:
> The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
> And—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
> His greatness is a ripening—nips his root,
> And then he falls, as I do."
>
> *William Shakspeare, in Henry VIII.*

Verses 36, 37.—The hawk flies high, and is as highly prized, being set upon a perch, vervelled with the gingling bells of encouragement, and carried on his master's fist; but being once dead and picked over the perch, is cast upon the dunghill as good for nothing. The hen scrapes in the dust, not anything rewarded when she is alive, but being dead, is brought as a choice dish to her master's table. Thus wicked men are commonly set in high places, and prosper in this life; and good men lie grovelling with their mouths in the dust, as the very underlings of the world; but being once dead, the one is cast into the dungeon of hell, the other advanced to the kingdom of heaven: the one is into Abraham's bosom, whilst the other is tormented with the devil and his angels.—*Thomas Westfield, D.D.*, 1644.

Verse 37.—"*Mark . . . . . and behold.*" Herodotus maketh mention of a custom among the Ethiopians to set the dead bodies of their friends in glazed sepulchres, that their proportions might be obvious to the passengers. How needless soever that custom was, 'tis doubtless no more than just that the pious lineaments of their minds who die in the Lord should be presented to the living in the mirrour of art. Indeed, commendation after death is the tribute of a religious life. Good works are jewels not to be locked up in a cabinet, but to be set forth to public view. If Christ would have Mary's name remembered in the gospel until the world's end for one box of ointment poured on his head, we cannot imagine that he would have the many pious and charitable deeds of his servants to be buried in oblivion. Consult the Scriptures, and you shall scarce find any godly man laid in his grave without an epitaph of honour. View the fathers, and you shall observe it their practice to honour the death of the good by giving them their deserved praises.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 37.—"*The perfect man,*" etc.—Divines well distinguish of a double perfection, it is *absoluta* or *comparata*. That is absolutely *perfect*, to which nothing (that may be accounted truly good) is wanting; and thus He only is *perfectus* who is *infactus;* God, who made all things, and himself is not made, only enjoying an all-sufficient perfection, in and of himself. That is comparatively *perfect*, in which, notwithstanding some wants, there is a fulness compared with others. Thus every saint is *perfect* in comparison of the wicked among whom he liveth. In this respect it is said of Noah, "*That he was a perfect man in his generations;*" his grace compared with the wickedness of the old world well deserving the name of perfection; indeed every upright man is *perfect* in comparison of them who are openly bad, or but openly good; stained with wickedness, or but painted with holiness. Thus one saint may be *perfect* if compared with another, the strong Christian in respect of the weak, whom he outstrips in grace and piety: such saints Paul means when he saith, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect;" that is, such as have attained to greater measures of grace than others. It was said of Benaiah, "He was more honourable than thirty, but he attained not to the first three;" and though no saint can ever attain to the perfections of the *first three*, the blessed Trinity, yet many saints may be honourable amongst *thirty perfect* in comparison of those among whom they live.

We must further distinguish of a double perfection, it is *extrinseca* and *intrinseca*. Extrinsical perfection so called, because by imputation, is that which every believer is partaker of through the perfect righteousness of Christ, whereby all his imperfections are covered; in this respect the author to the Hebrews tells us, "That by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" and S. Paul tells the Colossians that they were "complete in him," meaning Christ. Indeed *omnia Dei mandata tunc facta deputantur, quando id quod non fit ignoscitur:* divine commands are then in God's account fulfilled when our defects for Christ's sake are pardoned; and the evangelical perfection of a Christian consists not *in perfectione virtutum, sed remissione vitiorum*, in the completion of our graces, but remission of our sins.

Intrinsical perfection, so called because by inhæsion, is no less rationally than usually thus distinguished, there is *perfectio partium et graduum*. He is said to be *perfect, cui nihil deest eorum quæ ad statum salutis necessaria*, who wants no graces that accompany salvation; or he is perfect, *cui nihil deest in gradibus gratiarum et virtutum;* who is not defective in the measures of those graces; both these are frequently and fitly illustrated by the resemblance of a child, and a grown man; the one whereof hath all the essential and integral parts of a man, the other a complete use and measure of those parts.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 37.—"*The end.*" All wise men affect the conclusion to be best: to ride two or three miles of fair way, and to have a hundred deep and foul ones to pass afterward is uncomfortable; especially when the end is worse than the way. But let the beginning be troublesome, the progress somewhat more easy, and the journey's end happy, and there is fair amends. "*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*" Mark him in the setting out, he hath many oppositions; mark him in the journey, he is full of tribulations; but mark in the conclusion, and the end of that man is peace.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 37.—"*The end of that man is peace.*" Give me leave to determine what it is to end or die in peace. To end in peace with *Euthymius*, is to end in *pace cogitationis*, in peace of mind as it is opposed to doubting. To end in peace with *Cyprian*, is to end in *pace securitatis*, in peace of security, as it is opposed to final falling. To end in peace with *Origen*, is to end in *pace conscientiæ*, in peace of conscience as it is opposed to despairing. To end in peace with old *Irenæus*, is to end in *pace mortis*, in the peace of death as it is opposed to labouring. Again, to end in peace, is to end in *pace Dei*, in the peace of God which passeth all understanding, *i.e.*, far beyond men's apprehensions. To end in peace, is to end in *pace proximi*, in peace with our neighbours, *i.e.*, when no outcries or exclamations follow us. And lastly, to end in peace, is to end in *pace sui*, in peace with ourselves, *i.e.*, when no distractions or perturbations of mind molest us.—*Richard Parre.*

Verse 37.—The text may be divided into these two parts. Here is, 1. The godly man's *property;* and 2. The godly man's *privilege.* His property is perfection; his privilege is peace. Here is the saint's *character* and the saint's *crown:* he is characterised by uprightness or sincerity, and crowned with peace. Here is the Christian's *way* and his *end*, his *motion*, and his *rest.* His way is holiness, his end happiness; his motion is towards perfection and in uprightness; his rest is peace at his journey's end.—*John Whitlock, in a Funeral Sermon entitled, "The Upright Man and his Happy End,"* 1658.

Verse 37.—Time would fail me to tell how Christians die, nor can anything save the pen of the recording angel who has stood by their bed of death and borne them to Abraham's bosom, narrate the unnumbered instances of their delightful departure from the present world, which verify the truth of the Bible. "I could never have believed," said a dying saint, "that it was so delightful a thing to die, or that it was possible to have such views of the heavenly world as I now enjoy." The memorable Melancthon, just before he died, chanted in his sleep the words, "I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." He seemed restless, and on being asked by one near him, "Whether there were anything more that he desired?" replied, *Aliud nihil nisi cœlum*—nothing more, unless it be heaven.—*Gardiner Spring.*

Verse 37.—To die well be sure to live well; we must not think to have Lazarus's death, and Dives's life; like him in Plutarch that would live with Crœsus, as he said, but he would die with Socrates. No, Balaam's wishes are foolish and fruitless: if you would die well, Christians, you must have a care to live well: *qualis vita, finis ita*, if you would die quietly, you must live strictly; if you would die comfortably, you must live comformably; if you would die happily, you must live holily. "*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*"—*John Kitchin, M.A.*, 1660.

Verse 38.—"*The end of the wicked shall be cut off.*" The wicked in this world do easily run up without rub or interruption, many times with acclamations and applause, all the golden steps of honours and preferments; but upon the highest stair they find the most slippery standing, and the top of their earthly felicity is the most immediate and certain descent unto the greatest downfall. They are royally mounted here upon earth, and gallop swiftly over the fair and green plains of plenty and pleasures; but at the end of their race they are overturned horse and man, and tumbled headlong into the pit of destruction. They fairly glide over the sea of this world with full sail, with much calmness and serenity, and richly laden; but in the brightest sunshine, and when they least suspect it, they suddenly and without recovery, sink into the gulf of darkness and desolation.—*Robert Bolton.*

Verse 40.—"*And the Lord shall help them.*" He *shall*, he *shall*, he *shall.* Oh, the rhetoric of God! the safety of the saints! the certainty of the promises!—*John Trapp.*

Luther closes his Exposition of the Psalm with the words, Oh, shame on our faithlessness, mistrust, and vile unbelief, that we do not believe such rich, powerful, consolatory, declarations of God, and take up so readily with little grounds of offence, whenever we but hear the wicked speeches of the ungodly. Help, O God, that we may once attain to right faith. Amen.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The art of tranquillity.—*W. Jones.*

Verses 1, 2.—A frequent temptation, and a double corrective—a sight of sinners in death and in hell.

Verse 2.—How and when the wicked perish.

Verse 3.—I. A combination descriptive of holy living. II. A combination descriptive of happy living.

Verse 3.—The believer portrayed. I. His object of trust. II. His mode of life. III. His place of abode. IV. His certainty of provision.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—Read it in four ways. I. "Certainly fed," or the certainty of supply. II. "Fed in verity," or the sufficiency of the provision for soul and body. III. "Fed on truth," or the spirituality of the provision. IV. "Feed on truth," or the duty of choosing such provision.

Verse 4.—Explain the delight and the desire of the believer, and show the connection between them.

Verses 5, 6.—The higher life. I. Based on hearty resignation. II. Sustained by faith. III. Constantly unfolded by the Lord. IV. Consummated in meridian splendour.

Verse 6.—Sweet comfort for slandered saints. Where their character now is. Who shall reveal it. The gradual yet sure manner of the revelation, and the glorious conclusion.

Verse 7.—"*Rest in the Lord.*" What? Where? When? Why? How?

Verse 7.—Peace, patience, self-possession.

Verse 7.—Stillness in God.—*Bishop Wilberforce.*

Verse 7.—"*Rest in the Lord.*" I. Rest in the *will* of God, for whatever he wills is for your good, your highest good. II. Rest in the *love* of God, and often meditate on the words of Jesus on this point, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." III. Rest in the *mercy* of God. IV. Rest in the *word* of God. V. Rest in the *relation* thy God fills to thee; he is the Father. VI. Rest in the Lord as he is manifested in Jesus, thy God *in covenant.*—*James Smith.*

Verse 8.—A SERMON FOR THE FRETFUL. I. *Cease* from present anger. It is madness, it is sin; it shuts out our prayers; it will grow into malice; it may lead to worse. II. *Forsake it* for the future. Repent of it, watch temper, discipline thy passion, etc. III. *Avoid* all kindred feelings of fretfulness, impatience, envy, etc., for they lead to evil.

Verse 9.—How the humble are the true lords of the land.

Verse 10.—I. Consider what the departed sinner has left. Possessions, joys, honours, aims, hopes, etc. II. Consider where he has gone. III. Consider whether you will share the same lot.

Verses 10, 11.—Terror to the wicked: comfort to believers.—*A Farindon.*

Verse 11.—The meek man's delight, or "the harvest of a quiet eye."

Verse 14.—*Upright conversation.*—I. What it excludes. The horizontal or earthly, the crooked or crafty, the slanting or sinister. II. What it includes. Motive, object, language, action. III. What it achieves. It stands like a pillar; it supports like a column; it ascends like a tower; it adorns like a monument; it illuminates like a Pharos.

Verse 15.—The self-destructive nature of evil.

Verse 16.—How to make much of a little.

Verses 16, 17.—I. The owners contrasted. II. The possessions compared. III. The preference given. IV. The reasons declared.

Verse 17 (*last clause*).—I. The favoured persons. II. Their evident need,

"upholding." III. Their singular blessedness, "upheld," above trial, under trial, after trial. IV. Their august Patron.

Verse 18.—The comforts derivable from a consideration of the divine knowledge. The eternity of the righteous man's possessions.

Verse 18.—I. The *persons*, "the upright." II. The *period*, "their days." These are known to God—(1) He knows them *kindly* and *graciously*; (2) He knows their *number*; (3) He knows the *nature* of them. III. The *portion*, "their inheritance shall be for ever."—*William Jay.*

Verse 18 (*last clause*).—What it is. How they come by it. How long they hold it.

Verse 19.—Good words for hard times.

Verse 21.—Monetary transactions tests of character.

Verse 22.—The divine blessing the secret of happiness. The divine displeasure the essence of misery.

Verses 23, 24.—I. The divine predestination. II. The divine delight. III. The divine support.

Verse 24.—Temporary trials. I. To be expected. II. Have their limit. III. Have their results. IV. Our secret comfort under them.

What may be. What cannot be. What shall be.

Verse 25.—Memorandum of an aged observer.

Verse 26.—The righteous man's merciful disposition, generous action, and rich reward.

Verse 26.—The benediction of the good man's family: what it is, and what it is not.

Verse 27.—Negative, positive, remunerative.

Verse 28.—I. The Lord's love of right. II. His faithfulness to the righteous. III. Their sure preservation thus doubly guaranteed. IV. The doom of the wicked thus certified.

Verse 29.—Canaan as a type of the righteous man's inheritance.

Verse 30.—*Our speech* as a test of godliness.

Verse 31.—I. The best thing. II. In the best place. III. With the best of results.

Verses 32, 33.—Our enemies; their inveterate malice; our safeguard and justification.

Verse 34.—I. A twofold admonition: 1. "*Wait on the Lord.*" 2. "*And keep his way;*" wait and work, wait and walk, get grace and exercise it. II. A two-fold promise: 1. "*He shall exalt thee to inherit the land;*" God is the source of all elevation and honour. 2. "*When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it;*" and they will be cut off.—*William Jay.*

Verse 34.—Patient faith, persevering holiness, and promised exaltation.

Verse 34 (*last clause*).—Emotions caused in the godly by a sight of the sinner's doom.

Verse 34 (*last clause*).—The wicked are often cut off—1. Even *in life*, from their places, and riches, and prospects. 2. At *death* they are cut off from all their possessions and comforts. 3. In *the last day* they will be cut off from "the resurrection of life."—*William Jay.*

Verses 35, 36, 37.—Three memorable scenes. I. The imposing spectacle. II. The astounding disappearance. III. The delightful exit.

Verses 39, 40.—I. The doctrines of grace condensed. II. The experience of the gracious epitomised. III. The promises of grace summarised. IV. The grandest evidence of grace declared: "*because they trust in him.*"

PSALM XXXVIII.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance. *David felt as if he had been forgotten of his God, and, therefore, he recounted his sorrows and cried mightily for help under them. The same title is given to Psalm* lxx., *where in like manner the Psalmist pours out his complaint before the Lord. It would be foolish to make a guess as to the point in David's history when this was written; it may be a commemoration of his own sickness and endurance of cruelty; it may, on the other hand, have been composed by him for the use of sick and slandered saints, without special reference to himself.*

DIVISIONS.—*The Psalm opens with a prayer,* 1; *continues in a long complaint,* 2—8; *pauses to dart an eye to heaven,* 9; *proceeds with a second tale of sorrow,* 10—14; *interjects another word of hopeful address to God,* 15; *a third time pours out a flood of griefs,* 16—20; *and then closes as it opened, with renewed petitioning,* 21 *and* 22.

EXPOSITION.

O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

1. "*O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath.*" Rebuked I must be, for I am an erring child and thou a careful Father, but throw not too much anger into the tones of thy voice; deal gently although I have sinned grievously. The anger of others I can bear, but not thine. As thy love is most sweet to my heart, so thy displeasure is most cutting to my conscience. "*Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*" Chasten me if thou wilt, it is a Father's prerogative, and to endure it obediently is a child's duty; but, O turn not the rod into a sword, smite not so as to kill. True, my sins might well inflame thee, but let thy mercy and longsuffering quench the glowing coals of thy wrath. O let me not be treated as an enemy or dealt with as a rebel. Bring to remembrance thy covenant, thy fatherhood, and my feebleness, and spare thy servant.

2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

3 *There is* no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither *is there any* rest in my bones because of my sin.

4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

5 My wounds stink *and* are corrupt because of my foolishness.

6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease:* and *there is* no soundness in my flesh.

8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

2. "*For thine arrows stick fast in me.*" By this he means both bodily and spiritual griefs, but we may suppose, especially the latter, for these are most piercing and stick the fastest. God's law applied by the Spirit to the conviction of the soul of sin, wounds deeply and rankles long; it is an arrow not lightly to be brushed out by careless mirthfulness, or to be extracted by the flattering hand of self-righteousness. The Lord knows how to shoot so that his bolts not only strike but stick. He can make convictions sink into the innermost spirit like arrows driven in up to the head. It seems strange that the Lord should shoot at his own beloved ones, but in truth he shoots at their sins rather than them, and those who feel his sin-killing shafts in this life, shall not be slain with his hot thunderbolts in the next world. "*And thy hand presseth me sore.*" The Lord had come to close dealings with him, and pressed him down with the weight of his hand, so that he

had no rest or strength left. By these two expressions we are taught that conviction of sin is a piercing and a pressing thing, sharp and sore, smarting and crushing. Those who know by experience "the terrors of the Lord," will be best able to vouch for the accuracy of such descriptions; they are true to the life.

3. "*There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger.*" Mental depression tells upon the bodily frame; it is enough to create and foster every disease, and is in itself the most painful of all diseases. Soul sickness tells upon the entire frame; it weakens the body, and then bodily weakness reacts upon the mind. One drop of divine anger sets the whole of our blood boiling with misery. "*Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.*" Deeper still the malady penetrates, ill the bones, the more solid parts of the system, are affected. No soundness and no rest are two sad deficiencies; yet these are both consciously gone from every awakened conscience until Jesus gives relief. God's anger is a fire that dries up the very marrow; it searches the secret parts of the belly. A man who has pain in his bones tosses to and fro in search of rest, but he finds none; he becomes worn out with agony, and so in many cases a sense of sin creates in the conscience a horrible unrest which cannot be exceeded in anguish except by hell itself.

4. "*For mine iniquities are gone over mine head.*" Like waves of the deep sea; like black mire in which a man utterly sinks. Above my hopes, my strength, and my life itself, my sin rises in its terror. Unawakened sinners think their sins to be mere shallows, but when conscience is aroused they find out the depth of iniquity. "*As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*" It is well when sin is an intolerable load, and when the remembrance of our sins burdens us beyond endurance. This verse is the genuine cry of one who feels himself undone by his transgressions and as yet sees not the great sacrifice.

5. "*My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.*" Apply this to the body, and it pictures a sad condition of disease; but read it of the soul, and it is to the life. Conscience lays on stripe after stripe till the swelling becomes a wound and suppurates, and the corruption within grows offensive. What a horrible creature man appears to be to his own consciousness when his depravity and vileness are fully opened up by the law of God, applied by the Holy Spirit! It is true there are diseases which are correctly described in this verse, when in the worst stage; but we prefer to receive the expressions as instructively figurative, since the words "because of my foolishness" point rather at a moral than a physical malady. Some of us know what it is to stink in our own nostrils so as to loathe ourselves. Even the most filthy diseases cannot be so foul as sin. No ulcers, cancers, or putrifying sores, can match the unutterable vileness and pollution of iniquity. Our own perceptions have made us feel this. We write what we do know, and testify what we have seen; and even now we shudder to think that so much of evil should lie festering deep within our nature.

6. "*I am troubled.*" I am wearied with distress, writhing with pain, in sore travail on account of sin revealed within me. "*I am bowed down greatly.*" I am brought very low, grievously weakened and frightfully depressed. Nothing so pulls a man down from all loftiness as a sense of sin and of divine wrath concerning it. "*I go mourning all the day long.*" The mourner's soul-sorrow knew no intermission, even when he went about such business as he was able to attend, he went forth like a mourner who goes to the tomb, and his words and manners were like the lamentations of those who follow the corpse. The whole verse may be the more clearly understood if we picture the Oriental mourner, covered with sackcloth and ashes, bowed as in a heap, sitting amid squalor and dirt, performing contortions and writhings expressive of his grief; such is the awakened sinner, not in outward guise, but in very deed.

7. "*For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease*"—a hot, dry, parching disorder, probably accompanied by loathsome ulcers. Spiritually, the fire burns within when the evil of the heart is laid bare. Note the emphatic words, the evil is *loathsome*, it is in the *loins*, its seat is deep and vital—the man is *filled* with it. Those who have passed through the time of conviction understand all this. "*And there is no soundness in my flesh.*" This he had said before, and thus the Holy Spirit brings humiliating truth again and again to our memories, tears away every ground of glorying, and makes us know that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.

8. "*I am feeble.*" The original is "benumbed," or frozen, such strange incongruities and contradictions meet in a distracted mind and a sick body—it appears

to itself to be alternately parched with heat and pinched with cold. Like souls in the Popish fabled Purgatory, tossed from burning furnaces into thick ice, so tormented hearts rush from one extreme to the other, with equal torture in each. A heat of fear, a chill of horror, a flaming desire, a horrible insensibility—by these successive miseries a convinced sinner is brought to death's door. "*And sore broken.*" Crushed as in a mill, pounded as in a mortar. The body of the sick man appears to be all out of joint and smashed into a palpitating pulp, and the soul of the desponding is in an equally wretched case; as a victim crushed under the car of Juggernaut, such is a soul over whose conscience the wheels of divine wrath have forced their awful way. "*I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.*" Deep and hoarse is the voice of sorrow, and often inarticulate and terrible. The heart learns groanings which cannot be uttered, and the voice fails to tone and tune itself to human speech. When our prayers appear to be rather animal than spiritual, they are none the less prevalent with the pitiful Father of mercy. He hears the murmur of the heart and the roaring of the soul because of sin, and in due time he comes to relieve his afflicted.

The more closely the preceding portrait of an awakened soul is studied in the light of experience, the more will its striking accuracy appear. It cannot be a description of merely outward disorder, graphic as it might then be; it has a depth and pathos in it which only the soul's mysterious and awful agony can fully match.

9 Lord, all my desire *is* before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

9. "*Lord, all my desire is before thee.*" If unuttered, yet perceived. Blessed be God, he reads the longings of our hearts; nothing can be hidden from him; what we cannot tell to him he perfectly understands. The Psalmist is conscious that he has not exaggerated, and therefore appeals to heaven for a confirmation of his words. The good Physician understands the symptoms of our disease and sees the hidden evil which they reveal, hence our case is safe in his hands. "*And my groaning is not hid from thee.*"

> "He takes the meaning of our tears,
> The language of our groans."

Sorrow and anguish hide themselves from the observation of man, but God spieth them out. None more lonely than the broken-hearted sinner, yet hath he the Lord for his companion.

10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.

11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

12 They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me:* and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

13 But I, as a deaf *man,* heard not; and *I was* as a dumb man *that* openeth not his mouth.

14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth *are* no reproofs.

10. "*My heart panteth.*" Here begins another tale of woe. He was so dreadfully pained by the unkindness of friends, that his heart was in a state of perpetual palpitation. Sharp and quick were the beatings of his heart; he was like a hunted roe, filled with distressing alarms, and ready to fly out of itself with fear. The soul seeks sympathy in sorrow, and if it finds none, its sorrowful heart-throbs are incessant. "*My strength faileth me.*" What with disease and distraction, he was weakened and ready to expire. A sense of sin, and a clear perception that none can help us in our distress, are enough to bring a man to death's door, especially if there be none to speak a gentle word, and point the broken spirit to the beloved Physician. "*As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.*" Sweet light departed from his bodily eye, and consolation vanished from his soul. Those who were the very light of his eyes forsook him. Hope, the last lamp of night,

was ready to go out. What a plight was the poor convict in! Yet here we have some of us been; and here should we have perished had not infinite mercy interposed. Now, as we remember the lovingkindness of the Lord, we see how good it was for us to find our own strength fail us, since it drove us to the strong for strength; and how right it was that our light should all be quenched, that the Lord's light should be all in all to us.

11. "*My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore.*" Whatever affection they might pretend to, they kept out of his company, lest as a sinking vessel often draws down boats with it, they might be made to suffer through his calamities. It is very hard when those who should be the first to come to the rescue, are the first to desert us. In times of deep soul trouble even the most affectionate friends cannot enter into the sufferer's case; let them be as anxious as they may, the sores of a tender conscience they cannot bind up. Oh, the loneliness of a soul passing under the convincing power of the Holy Ghost! "*And my kinsmen stand afar off.*" As the women and others of our Lord's acquaintances from afar gazed on his cross, so a soul wounded for sin sees all mankind as distant spectators, and in the whole crowd finds none to aid. Often relatives hinder seekers after Jesus, oftener still they look on with unconcern, seldom enough to do they endeavour to lead the penitent to Jesus.

12. "*They also that seek after my life lay snares for me.*" Alas! for us when in addition to inward griefs, we are beset by outward temptations. David's foes endeavoured basely to ensnare him. If fair means would not overthrow him, foul should be tried. This snaring business is a vile one, the devil's own poachers alone condescend to it; but prayer to God will deliver us, for the craft of the entire college of tempters can be met and overcome by those who are led of the Spirit. "*They that seek my hurt speak mischievous things.*" Lies and slanders poured from them like water from the town-pump. Their tongue was for ever going, and their heart for ever inventing lies. "*And imagine deceits all the day long.*" They were never done, their forge was going from morning to night. When they could not act they talked, and when they could not talk they imagined, and schemed, and plotted. Restless is the activity of malice. Bad men never have enough of evil. They compass sea and land to injure a saint; no labour is too severe, no cost too great if they may utterly destroy the innocent. Our comfort is, that our glorious Head knows the pertinacious malignity of our foes, and will in due season put an end to it, as he even now sets a bound about it.

13. "*But I, as a deaf man, heard not.*" Well and bravely was this done. A sacred indifference to the slanders of malevolence is true courage and wise policy. It is well to be as if we could not hear or see. Perhaps the Psalmist means that this deafness on his part was unavoidable because he had no power to answer the taunts of the cruel, but felt much of the truth of their ungenerous accusations. "*And I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.*" David was bravely silent, and herein was eminently typical of our Lord Jesus, whose marvellous silence before Pilate was far more eloquent than words. To abstain from self-defence is often most difficult, and frequently most wise.

14. "*Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.*" He repeats the fact of his silence that we may note it, admire it, and imitate it. We have an advocate, and need not therefore plead our own cause. The Lord will rebuke our foes, for vengeance belongs to him; we may therefore wait patiently and find it our strength to sit still.

15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

15. David committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, and so in patience was able to possess his soul. Hope in God's intervention, and belief in the power of prayer, are two most blessed stays to the soul in time of adversity. Turning right away from the creature to the sovereign Lord of all, and to him as our own covenant God, we shall find the richest solace in waiting upon him. Reputation like a fair pearl may be cast into the mire, but in due time when the Lord makes up his jewels, the godly character shall shine with unclouded splendour. Rest then, O slandered one, and let not thy soul be tossed to and fro with anxiety.

16 For I said, *Hear me,* lest *otherwise* they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify *themselves* against me.

17 For I *am* ready to halt, and my sorrow *is* continually before me.

18 For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.

19 But mine enemies *are* lively, *and* they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.

20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow *the thing that* good *is*.

16. *"For I said, hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me."* The good man was not insensible, he dreaded th e sharp stings of taunting malice; he feared lest either by his conduct or his condition, he should give occasion to the wicked to triumph. This fear his earnest desires used as an argument in prayer as well as an incentive to prayer. *"When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me."* The least flaw in a saint is sure to be noticed; long before it comes to a fall the enemy begins to rail, the merest trip of the foot sets all the dogs of hell barking. How careful ought we to be, and how importunate in prayer for upholding grace! We do not wish, like blind Samson, to make sport for our enemies; let us then beware of the treacherous Delilah of sin, by whose means our eyes may soon be put out.

17. *"For I am ready to halt."* Like one who limps, or a person with tottering footsteps, in danger of falling. How well this befits us all. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." How small a thing will lame a Christian, how insignificant a stumbling-block may cause him to fall! This passage refers to weakness caused by pain and sorrow; the sufferer was ready to give up in despair; he was so depressed in spirit that he stumbled at a straw. Some of us painfully know what it is to be like dry tinder for the sparks of sorrow; ready to halt, ready to mourn, and sigh and cry upon any occasion, and for any cause. *"And my sorrow is continually before me."* He did not need to look out of window to find sorrow, he felt it within, and groaned under a body of sin which was an increasing plague to him. Deep conviction continues to irritate the conscience; it will not endure a patched-up peace; but cries war to the knife till the enmity is slain. Until the Holy Ghost applies the precious blood of Jesus, a truly awakened sinner is covered with raw wounds which cannot be healed nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment.

18. *"For I will declare mine iniquity."* The slander of his enemies he repudiates, but the accusations of his conscience he admits. Open confession is good for the soul. When sorrow leads to hearty and penitent acknowledgment of sin it is blessed sorrow, a thing to thank God for most devoutly. *"I will be sorry for my sin."* My confession shall be salted with briny tears. It is well not so much to bewail our sorrows as to denounce the sins which lie at the root of them. To be sorry for sin is no atonement for it, but it is the right spirit in which to repair to Jesus, who is the reconciliation and the Saviour. A man is near to the end of his trouble when he comes to an end with his sins.

19. *"But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong."* However weak and dying the righteous man may be, the evils which oppose him are sure to be lively enough. Neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil, are ever afflicted with debility or inertness; this trinity of evils labours with mighty unremitting energy to overthrow us. If the devil were sick, or our lusts feeble, or Madame Bubble infirm, we might slacken prayer; but with such lively and vigorous enemies we must not cease to cry mightily unto our God. *"And they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied."* Here is another misery, that as we are no match for our enemies in strength, so also they outnumber us as a hundred to one. Wrong as the cause of evil is, it is a popular one. More and more the kingdom of darkness grows. Oh, misery of miseries, that we see the professed friends of Jesus forsaking him, and the enemies of his cross and his cause mustering in increasing bands!

20. *"They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries."* Such would a wise man wish his enemies to be. Why should we seek to be beloved of such graceless souls? It is a fine plea against our enemies when we can without injustice declare them to be like the devil, whose nature it is to render evil for good. *"Because I follow the thing that good is."* If men hate us for this reason we may rejoice to bear it: their wrath is the unconscious homage which vice renders to virtue. This verse is not inconsistent with the writer's previous confession; we may feel deeply guilty before God, and yet be entirely innocent of any wrong to

our fellow men. It is one thing to acknowledge the truth, quite another thing to submit to be belied. The Lord may smite me justly, and yet I may be able to say to my fellow man, " Why smitest thou me ? "

21 Forsake me not, O LORD : O my God, be not far from me.
22 Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.

21. " *Forsake me not, O Lord.*" Now is the time I need thee most. When sickness, slander, and sin, all beset a saint, he requires the especial aid of heaven, and he shall have it too. He is afraid of nothing while God is with him, and God is with him evermore. " *Be not far from me.*" Withhold not the light of thy near and dear love. Reveal thyelf to me. Stand at my side. Let me feel that though friendless besides, I have a most gracious and all-sufficient friend in thee.

22. " *Make haste to help me.*" Delay would prove destruction. The poor pleader was far gone and ready to expire, only speedy help would serve his turn. See how sorrow quickens the importunity of prayer ! Here is one of the sweet results of affliction, it gives new life to our pleading, and drives us with eagerness to our God. " *O Lord my salvation.*" Not my Saviour only, but my salvation. He who has the Lord on his side has salvation in present possession. Faith foresees the blessed issue of all her pleas, and in this verse begins to ascribe to God the glory of the expected mercy. We shall not be left of the Lord. His grace will succour us most opportunely, and in heaven we shall see that we had not one trial too many, or one pang too severe. A sense of sin shall melt into the joy of salvation ; grief shall lead on to gratitude, and gratitude to joy unspeakable and full of glory.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The first word, MIZMOR, or Psalm, is the designation of forty-four sacred poems, thirty-two of which are ascribed to David. The English reader must observe, that this word is not the same in the original Hebrew as that which forms the general title of the book of Psalms ; the latter expressing a Hymn of Praise. The word *Psalm*, however, as used both in the context and in the titles of the individual compositions, is uniformly *Mizmor* in the original ; a term which accurately defines their poetical character. To explain its proper meaning I must have recourse to the beautiful and accurate definition of Bishop Lowth. " The word *Mizmor* signifies a composition, which in a peculiar manner is cut up into sentences, short, frequent, and measured by regular intervals." . . . . He adds that *Zamar* means to cut or prune, as applied to the removing superfluous branches from trees ; and, after mentioning the secondary sense of the word, " to sing with a voice or instrument," gives it as his opinion, that *Mizmor* may be more properly referred to the primary sense of the root, so as to mean a poem cut up into short sentences, and pruned from all superfluity of words, which is the peculiar characteristic of the Hebrew poetry.—*John Jebb.*

Title.—The title that David gives this Psalm is worth your notice, *A Psalm of David to bring to remembrance.* David was on his death-bed as he thought, and he said it shall be a Psalm of remembrance, to bring sin to remembrance, to confess to God my uncleanness with Bathsheba, to bring to my remembrance the evils of my life. Whenever God brings thee under affliction, thou art then in a fit plight to confess sin to God, and call to remembrance thy sin.—*Christopher Love.*

Title.—The Psalm is " *to bring to remembrance.*" This seems to teach us that good things need to be kept alive in our memories, that we should often sit down, look back, retrace, and turn over in our meditation things that are past, lest at any time we should let any good thing sink into oblivion. Among the things which David brought to his own remembrance, the first and foremost were, (1), *his past trials and his past deliverances.* The great point, however, in David's Psalm is to bring to remembrance, (2), *the depravity of our nature.* There is, perhaps, no Psalm which more fully than this describes human nature as seen in the light which God the Holy Ghost casts upon it in the time when he convinces us of sin. I am persuaded that the description here does not tally with any known disease of the body.

It is very like leprosy, but it has about it certain features which cannot be found to meet in any leprosy described either by ancient or modern writers. The fact is, it is a spiritual leprosy, it is an inward disease which is here described, and David paints it to the very life, and he would have us to recollect this. A third thing the Psalm brings to our remembrance is, (3), *our many enemies.* David says, that his enemies laid snares for him, and sought his hurt, and spoke mischievous things, and devised and imagined deceits all the day long. "Well," says one, "how was it that David had so many enemies? How could he make so many? Must he not have been imprudent and rash, or perhaps morose?" It does not appear so in his life. He rather made enemies by his being scrupulously holy. His enemies attacked him, not because he was wicked, but as he says, in this very Psalm, they were his enemies because he loved the thing which is good. The ultimate result of the religion of Christ is to make peace everywhere, but the first result is to cause strife. Further, the Psalm reminds us of, (4), *our gracious God.* Anything which drives us to God is a blessing, and anything which weans us from leaning on an arm of flesh, and especially that weans us from trying to stand alone, is a boon to us.—*C. H. S.*

Whole Psalm.—The most wonderful features in this Psalm, are the depth of misery into which the Psalmist gradually plunges in his complaints in the first part of it, the sudden grasp at the arm of mercy and omnipotence that is made in verse 8, and the extreme height of comfort and consolation that it reaches in the end.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 1.—"*O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath.*" But is it not an absurd request, to require God not to rebuke me in his anger; as though I thought he would rebuke me if he were not angry? Is it not a senseless suit to pray to God not to chasten me in his displeasure, as though he would chasten me if he were not displeased? The frowardest natures that are, will yet be quiet as long as they be pleased: and shall I have such a thought of the great yet gracious God, that he should be pleased and yet not be quiet? But, O my soul, is it all one, to rebuke in his anger and to rebuke when he is angry? He may rebuke when he is angry, and yet restrain and bridle in his anger; but to rebuke in his anger is to let loose the reins to his anger; and what is it to give the reins to his anger, but to make it outrun his mercy? And then what a miserable case should I be in, to have his anger to assault me, and not his mercy ready to relieve me? To have his indignation fall upon me when his lovingkindness were not by to take it off! Oh, therefore, *rebuke me not in thine anger, O God,* but let thy rebuking stay for thy mercy; chasten me not in thy displeasure, but let thy lovingkindness have the keeping of thy rod.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 1.—"*Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure,*" etc. Both these words, which we translate to *chasten,* and *hot displeasure,* are words of a heavy and of a vehement signification. They extend both to express the eternity of God's indignation, even to the binding of the soul and body in eternal chains of darkness. For the first *jasar,* signifies in the Scriptures, *vincire,* to bind, often with ropes, often with chains; to fetter, or manacle, or pinion men that are to be executed; so that it imports a slavery, a bondage all the way, and a destruction at last. And so the word is used by Rehoboam, "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." 1 Kings xii. 11. And then, the other word, *chamath,* doth not only signify "*hot displeasure,*" but that effect of *God's hot displeasure* which is intended by the prophet Esay: "Therefore hath he poured forth his fierce wrath, and the strength of battle, and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew it not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." These be the fearful conditions of God's hot displeasure, to be in a furnace, and not to feel it; to be in a habit of sin, and not know what leads us into temptation; to be burnt to ashes, and so not only without all moisture, all holy tears, but, as ashes, without any possibility that any good thing can grow in us. And yet this word, *chamath,* hath a heavier signification than this; for it signifies poison itself, destruction itself, for so it is twice taken in one verse: "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent" (Psalm lviii. 4); so that this *hot displeasure* is that poison of the soul, obduration here, and that extension of that obduration, a final impenitence in this life, and an infinite impenitableness in the next, to die without any actual penitence here, and live without all possibility of future penitence for ever hereafter. David there-

fore foresees, that if God *rebuke in anger*, it will come to a *chastening in hot displeasure*. For what should stop him? For, "if a man sin against the Lord, who will plead for him?" says Eli. "Plead thou my cause," says David; it is only the Lord that can be of counsel with him, and plead for him; and that Lord is both the judge and angry too.—*John Donne.*

Verse 2.—"*For thine arrows stick fast in me.*" First, we shall see in what respect he calls them "*arrows:*" and therein, first, that they are *alienæ*, they are shot from others, they are not in his own power; a man shoots not an arrow at himself; and then that they are *veloces*, swift in coming, he cannot give them their time; and again, they are *vix visibiles*, though they be not altogether invisible in their coming, yet there is required a quick eye, and an express diligence and watchfulness to avoid them; so they are arrows in the hand of another, not his own; and swift as they come, and invisible before they come. And secondly, they are many arrows: the victory lies not in escaping one or two. And thirdly, they "*stick*" in him: they find not David so good proof as to rebound back again, and imprint no sense: and they stick "*fast:*" though the blow be felt and the wound discerned, yet there is not a present cure, he cannot shake them off; *infixæ sunt;* and then, with all this, they stick fast *in him;* that is, in all him; in his body and soul; in him, in his thoughts and actions; in him, in his sins and in his good works too; *infixæ mihi*, there is no part of him, no faculty in him, in which they stick not; for (which may well be another consideration), that "*hand*," which shot them, *presses him*, follows the blow, and presses him "*sore*," that is, vehemently. But yet (which will be our conclusion), *sagittæ tuæ, thy arrows*, and *manus tua, thy hand*, these arrows that are shot, and this hand that presses him so sore, are the arrows, and the hand *of God;* and therefore, first, they must have their effect, they cannot be disappointed: but yet they bring their comfort with them, because they are his, because no arrows from him, no pressing with his hand, comes without that *balsamum* of mercy to heal as fast as he wounds.—*John Donne.*

Verse 2.—"*Thine arrows stick fast.*" Though importunity be to God most pleasing always, yet to us it is then most necessary when the cheerful face of God is turned into frowns, and when there is a justly conceived fear of the continuance of his anger: and have I not just cause to fear it, having the arrows of his anger sticking so fast in me? If he had meant to make me but a butt, at which to shoot his arrows, he would quickly, I suppose, have taken them up again; but now that he leaves them sticking in me, what can I think, but that he means to make me his quiver; and then I may look long enough before he come to pluck them out. They are arrows, indeed, that are feathered with swiftness, and headed with sharpness; and to give them a force in flying, they are shot, I may say, out of his cross-bow, I am sure his bow of cross; for no arrows can fly so fast, none pierce so deep, as the crosses and afflictions with which he hath surprised me: I may truly say surprised me, seeing when I thought myself most safe, and said, "I shall never be moved," even then, these arrows of his anger lighted upon me, and stick so fast in my flesh, that no arm but his that shot them is ever able to draw them forth. Oh, then, as thou hast stretched forth thine arm of anger, O God, to shoot these arrows at me, so stretch forth thine arm of mercy to draw them forth, that I may rather sing hymns than dirges unto thee; and that thou mayest show thy power, as well in pardoning as thou hast done in condemning.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"*Thine arrows.*" Arrows are (1) swift, (2) secret, (3) sharp, (4) killing, instruments. They are instruments drawing blood and drinking blood, even unto drunkenness (Deut. xxxii. 42); afflictions are like arrows in all these properties. 1. Afflictions often come very speedily, with a glance as an arrow, quick as a thought. 2. Afflictions come suddenly, unexpectedly; an arrow is upon a man afore he is aware, so are afflictions. Though Job saith, the thing he feared came upon him, he looked for this arrow before it came; yet usually afflictions are unlooked-for guests, they thrust in upon us when we dream not of them. 3. They come with little noise; an arrow is felt before, or, as soon as it is heard; an arrow flies silently and secretly, stealing upon and wounding a man, unobserved and unseen. Lastly, all afflictions are sharp, and in their own nature killing and deadly. That any have good from them, is from the grace of God, not from their nature.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 2.—Let no one think these expressions of penitence (verses 1—4) over-strained or excessive. They are the words of the Holy Spirit of God, speaking

by the mouth of the man after God's own heart. If we were as repentant as David, we should bring home to ourselves his language; as it is, our affections are chilled, and therefore we do not enter into his words. . . . And let us observe how all the miseries are referred to their proper end. The sin is not bewailed merely on account of its ill effect on the guilty one, but on account of the despite done to God. The Psalmist's first thought is the "*anger*" of the Lord, and his "*hot displeasure.*" It is not the "arrows" that afflict him so much as that they are God's. "*Thine* arrows stick fast in me, and *thy* hand presseth me." The reason why there is no health in his flesh is because of God's displeasure. Such is true contrition, "not the sorrow of the world which worketh death, but the sorrow that worketh repentance not to be repented of."—*A Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms. Chiefly from Ancient Sources* [*by A. P. F.*], 1847.

Verse 2.—"*Thy hand presseth me sore.*" Not the hand of Egypt or Ashur; then were it hand for hand, a duel of some equality: hand to hand; here forces and stratagems might achieve the victory: but "*Thy hand.*" The weight of a man's blow is but weak, according to the force and pulse of his arm; as the princes of Midian answered Gideon, when he bade his son try the dint of his sword upon them; "Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength." Judges viii. 21. But "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. x. 31. As Homer called the hands of Jupiter χείρες δεπτοι, hands whose praise could not be sufficiently spoken; which some read χείρες δαπτοι, hands inaccessible, irresistible for strength: all the gods in heaven could not ward a blow of Jupiter's hand. This hand never strikes but for sin; and where sin is mighty his blow is heavy.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 3.—"*Thine anger . . . . my sin.*" I, alas! am as an anvil under two hammers; one of thine anger, another of my sin; both of them beating incessantly upon me; the hammer of thine anger beating upon my flesh and making that unsound; the hammer of my sin beating upon my bones and making them unquiet; although indeed both beat upon both: but thine anger more upon my flesh, as being more sensible; my sin more upon my bones, as being more obdurate. God's anger and sin are the two efficient causes of all misery; but the procatartic * cause indeed is sin: God's anger, like the house that Samson pulled upon his own head, falls not upon us but when we pull it upon ourselves by sin.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*My flesh . . . . my bones.*" I know by the unsoundness of my flesh that God is angry with me; for if it were not for his anger my flesh would be sound: but what soundness can there be in it now, when God's angry hand lies beating upon it continually, and never ceaseth? I know by the unquietness of my bones that I have sin in my bosom; for if it were not for sin my bones would be quiet. But what quietness can be in them now, when sin lies gnawing upon them incessantly with the worm of remorse? One would think my bones were far enough removed and closely enough hidden from sins doing them any hurt: yet see the searching nature, the venomous poison of sin, which pierceth through my flesh, and makes unquietness in my very bones. I know my flesh is guilty of many faults, by which it justly deserves unsoundness; but what have my bones done? for they minister no fuel to the flames of my flesh's sensuality; and why then should they be troubled? But are not my bones supporters of my flesh, and are they not by this at least accessory to my flesh's faults? As accessories, then, they are subject to the same punishment the flesh itself is, which is the principal.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.*" A Christian in this life is like quicksilver, which hath a principle of motion in itself, but not of rest: we are never quiet, but as the ball upon the racket, or the ship upon the waves. As long as we have sin, this is like quicksilver: a child of God is full of motion and disquiet. . . . We are here in a perpetual hurry, in a constant fluctuation; our life is like the tide; sometimes ebbing, sometimes flowing; here is no rest; and the reason is because we are out of centre. Everything is in motion till it comes at the centre; Christ is the centre of the soul; the needle of the compass trembles till it comes to the North Pole.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—Learn here of beggars how to procure succour and relief. Lay open thy sores, make known thy need, discover all thy misery, make not thy case better

* As applied to diseases, signifies the exciting cause.

than it is. Beggars by experience find that the more miserable they appear to be, the more they are pitied, the more succoured; and yet the mercies of the most merciful men are but as drops in comparison of the oceans of God's mercies; and among men there are many like the priest and Levite in the parable (Luke x. 30—32). that can pass by a naked, wounded man, left half dead, and not pity him nor succour him. But God, like the merciful Samaritan, hath always compassion on such as with sense of their misery are forced to cry out and crave help. Read how Job, chap. vi. and vii; David, Ps. xxxviii, 3, etc., Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 10, etc., and other like saints, poured out their complaints before the Lord, and withal observe what mercy was showed them of the Lord, and you may have in them both good patterns how to behave yourselves in like cases, and good encouragement so to do. This is it which God expecteth of us, and whereunto he desireth to bring us, that seeing our own emptiness and insufficiency, and the impotency and disability of others to help us, we should in all humility fly to his mercy.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 4.—"*For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*" David proceeds to a reason why his prayer must be vehement, why these miseries of his are so violent, and why God's anger is permanent, and he finds all this to be, because in his sins, all these venomous qualities, vehemence, violence, and continuance, were complicated, and enwrapped: for he had sinned vehemently, in the rage of lust, and violently, in the effusion of blood, and permanently, in a long and senseless security. They are all contracted in this text into two kinds, which will be our two parts in handling these words: first, the *Supergressæ super*, "*Mine iniquities are gone over my head,*" there is the multiplicity, the number, the succession, and so the continuation of his sin; and then, the *Gravatæ super*, "*My sins are as a heavy burden, too heavy for me,*" there is the greatness, the weight, the unsupportableness of his sin. St. Augustine calls these two distinctions or considerations of sin, *ignorantiam, et difficultatem;* first that David was ignorant, that he saw not the tide, as it swelled up upon him, *abyssus abyssum*, depth called upon depth; and all thy waters, and all thy billows are gone over me (says he in another place); he perceived them not coming till they were over him, he discerned not his particular sins then when he committed them, till they came to the *supergressæ super*, to that height that he was overflowed, surrounded, his iniquities were gone over his head; and in that St. Augustine notes *ignorantiam*, his unobservance, his inconsiderations of his own case; and then he notes *difficultatem*, the hardness of recovering, because he that is under water hath no air to see by, no air to hear by, he hath nothing to reach to, he touches not ground, to push him up, he feels no bough to pull him up, and therein that further notes *difficultatem*, the hardness of recovering. Now Moses expresses these two miseries together, in the destruction of the Egyptians, in his song, after Israel's deliverance and the Egyptians' submersion, "The depths have covered them" (there is the *supergressæ super*, their iniquities, in that punishment of their iniquities were gone over their heads), and then, they sank into the bottom like a stone (says Moses), there is the *gravatæ super*, they depressed them, suppressed them, oppressed them, they were under them, and there they must lie. The Egyptians had, David had, we have, too many sins to swim above water, and too great sins to get above water again when we are sunk.—*John Donne.*

Verse 4.—"*As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*" No strength is so great but it may be overburdened: though Samson went light away with the gates of Gaza, yet when a whole house fell upon him it crushed him to death. And such, alas! am I; I have had sin as a burden upon me ever since I was born, but bore it a long time as light as Samson did the gates of Gaza; but now that I have pulled a whole house of sin upon me, how can I choose but be crushed to death with so great a weight? And crushed, O my soul, thou shouldst be indeed, if God for all his anger did not take some pity on thee, and for all his displeasure did not stay his hand from further chastening thee.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—It is of singular use to us, that the backslidings of the holy men of God are recorded in Holy Writ. Spots appear nowhere more disagreeable than when seen in a most beautiful face, or on the cleanest garment. And it is expedient to have a perfect knowledge of the filthiness of sin. We also learn from them to think humbly of ourselves, to depend on the grace of God, to keep a stricter eye upon ourselves, lest perhaps we fall into the same or more grievous sins. Gal. vi. 1.—*Herman Witsius, D.D.*, 1636—1708.

Verses 4, 5.—It is only when we can enter into *all* that is implied here that we begin to see our exceeding sinfulness. There is a certain feeling of sin which does not interfere with our pride and self-respect. We can have that sort of feeling, and say pretty earnestly, "*Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*" But it is otherwise with us when we get to know ourselves better and to feel ourselves *loathsome* in our wickedness, when our folly and meanness and ingratitude oppress us, and we begin to loathe ourselves, and can enter into verse five. Our wounds, once an object of self-pity, and something in which we could claim sympathy and healing from our friends, have become "*corrupt*," because of the meanness and folly we feel to be in us. We hide them now, for if they were seen, would not "lovers and friends stand aloof from our sore?" Then we are silent except to God, "For in *thee*, O Lord, do I hope: *thou* wilt hear, O Lord my God," verse 15. O love of God that turns not away! O blessed Jesus, that turned not away from the leprous man that fell upon his face and said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," but put forth thine hand and *touched* him, saying, 'I will: be thou clean,' to whom *can* we go but unto thee!"—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 5.—"*My wounds stink and are corrupt*," etc. These expressions seem to be in a great measure figurative, and significant rather of the diseased state of his mind than of his body.—*William Walford.*

Verse 5.—"*My wounds stink and are corrupt.*"—I know, O Lord, I have done most foolishly, to let my sores run so long without seeking for help; for now, "*My wounds stink and are corrupt*," in as ill a case as Lazarus' body was when it had been four days buried; enough to make any man despair that did not know thee as I do. For, do not I know, that *nullum tempus occurrit tibi;* do not I know thou hast as well wisdom to remedy my foolishness as power to cure my wounds? Could the grave hold Lazarus when thou didst but open thy mouth to call him forth? No more can the corruption of my sores be any hindrance to their healing when thy pleasure is to have them be cured. Although, therefore, I have done my own discretion wrong to defer my care, yet I will not do thy power wrong to despair of thy cure: for, how should I despair, who know thee to be as powerful as thou art merciful; if I may not rather say, to be as merciful as thou art powerful!—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—"*My wounds stink and are corrupt.*" Either they must be understood literally of the sores that were in his body (as the words in the following verse may also seem to import) which he calls *wounds*, to intimate that he looked upon them as the wheals or swelling tumours (for so the original word may signify) which the rod of God had made in his flesh, or the wounds of those arrows of which he had spoken (verse 2), "Thine arrows stick fast in me;" or else figuratively, of any other miseries that God had brought upon him, comparing them to stinking and festering sores; either to imply the long continuance of them, or the sharp pains and sorrows which he felt in himself by reason thereof. Yet some, I know, would have it meant of the shame which his sins had brought upon him.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verses 5, 6.—The spiritual feeling of sin is indispensable to the feeling of salvation. A sense of the malady must ever precede, and prepare the soul for a believing reception and due apprehension of the remedy. Wherever God intends to reveal his Son with power, wherever he intends to make the gospel to be "a joyful sound," he makes the conscience feel and groan under the burden of sin. And sure am I that when a man is labouring under the burden of sin, he will be full of complaint. The Bible records hundreds of the complaints of God's people under the burden of sin. "*My wounds stink and are corrupt,*" cries one, "*because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.*" "My soul," cries another, "is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave." Psalm lxxxviii. 3. "He hath led me," groans out a third, "and brought me into darkness, but not into light." Lam. iii. 2. A living man must need cry under such circumstances. He cannot carry the burden without complaining of its weight. He cannot feel the arrow sticking in his conscience without groaning under the pain. He cannot have the worm gnawing his vitals, without complaining of its venomous tooth. He cannot feel that God is incensed against him without bitterly complaining that the Lord is his enemy. Spiritual complaint then is a mark of spiritual life, and is one which God recognises as such. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." Jer. xxxi. 18. It shows that he has something to mourn over; something to make him groan being burdened; that sin has been

opened up to him in its hateful malignancy; that it is a trouble and distress to his soul; that he cannot roll it like a sweet morsel under his tongue; but that it is found out by the penetrating eye, and punished by the chastening hand of God.—*J. C. Philpot*, 1842.

Verse 6.—"*I am troubled.*" *I writhe with pain.* This is the proper sense of the original, which means to "turn out of its proper situation, or course;" thence to be "distorted, writhed," as a person in pain. Our Bible translation, which says in the text, "*I am troubled*," adds in the margin, "wried," an obsolete word, correctly expressing the Hebrew.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 6.—"*I go mourning all the day long.*" And now was I both a burden and a terror to myself, nor did I ever so know, as now, what it was to be weary of my life, and yet afraid to die. Oh, how gladly now would I have been anybody but myself! Anything but a man! and in any condition but mine own! for there was nothing did pass more frequently over my mind than that it was impossible for me to be forgiven my transgression, and to be saved from wrath to come.—*John Bunyan, in "Grace Abounding."*

Verse 6.—Let a man see and feel himself under the bonds of guilt, in danger of hell, under the power of his lusts, enmity against God, and God a stranger to him; let but the sense of this condition lie upon his heart, and let him go on in his jollity if he can. What a woful creature doth a man see himself now to be! He envies the happiness of the beasts that are filled, and play in their pastures. We have heard of him who when he saw a toad, stood weeping, because God had made him a *man*, so excellent a creature, and not a toad, so abominable: the goodness of God, then, it seems, as he apprehended it, made him weep; but this man meets a toad, and he weeps also, but why? because he is a *man*, who thinks his estate infinitely worse than the condition of a toad, and if it were possible to attain it, would change states with the toad, that hath no guilt of sin, fears no wrath of God, is not under power of lusts or creatures; God is no enemy to it, which is his miserable state.—*Giles Firmin*, 1617—1697.

Verse 7.—"*For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease.*" The word here used, according to Gesenius (*Lex.*), properly denotes the internal muscles of the loins near the kidneys, to which the fat adheres The word rendered "*loathsome*"—the word "*disease*" being supplied by our translators—is derived from קָלָה, *kalah*, a word which means to roast, to parch, as fruit, grain, etc.; and then, in the form used here, it means scorched, burned; hence, a burning or inflammation; and the whole phrase would be synonymous with *an inflammation of the kidneys.* The *word* here used does not imply that there was any eruption, or ulcer, though it would seem from verse five that this was the fact, and that the inflammation had produced this effect.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 7.—"*A loathsome disease.*" In many things our estimates are extravagant; but we never over-estimate the evil of sin. It is as corrupting as it is damning. It covers the soul with plague-spots, with the leprosy. Isaiah i. 5, 6.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 8.—"*I am feeble.*" literally, *I am benumbed*, I have become deadly cold, cold as a corpse; possibly with reference to the burning inflammation in the previous verse, as marking the alternations in the fever fit.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 8.—"*I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.*" Where sin is, there will never be but unquietness of heart; and an unquiet heart will always produce these miserable effects—feebleness of body, dejectedness of mind, and roaring of voice. But how can roaring stand with feebleness, which seems to require a strength of spirits? Is it not, therefore, a roaring, perhaps not so much in loudness as in an inarticulate expressing? that having done actions more like a beast than a man, I am forced to use a voice not so much of a man as of a beast? Or is it perhaps a roaring in spirit, which the heart may send forth though the body be feeble; or rather then, most, when it is most feeble; not unlike the blaze of a candle, then greatest when going out? Howsoever it be, this is certain: the heart is that unhappy plot of ground, which, receiving into it the accursed seed of sin, brings forth in the body and soul of man these miserable fruits: and how, then, can I be free from these weeds of the fruits, since I have received into me so great a measure of the seed? Oh, vile sin, that I could as well avoid

thee as I can see thee, or could as easily resist thee as I deadly hate thee, I should not then complain of either feebleness of body, or dejectedness of mind, or roaring of voice; but I should perfectly enjoy that happy quietness in all my parts, which thou, O God, didst graciously bestow as a blessed dowry on our first parents at their creation.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 8.—"*I have roared,*" etc. It is difficult for a true penitent, in the bitterness of his soul, to go over the life which he has dragged on in sinfulness, without groaning and sighing from the bottom of his heart. But happy are these groans, happy these sighs, happy these sobs, since they flow from the influence of grace, and from the breath of the Holy Spirit, who himself in an ineffable manner groans in us and with us, and who forms these groans in our hearts by penitence and love! but as the violence of both, that is, of penitence and of love, cannot but burst the narrow limits of a penitent heart, it must make a vent for itself by the eyes and mouth. The eyes shed tears, and the mouth sends forth sighs and groans, which it can no longer restrain; because they are driven on by the fire of divine love, and so these lamentations frame themslves into words and intelligible sentences.—*Jean Baptiste Elias Avrillon,* 1652—1729.

Verse 8.—"*The disquietness of my heart.*" David felt pains gather about his heart, and then he cried out. The heart is the mark that God principally aims at when a Christian hath turned aside from his upright course; other outward parts he may hit and deeply wound, but this is but to make holes in the heart, where the seat of unsoundness that principally offends him is. The fire which conscience kindles, it may flash forth into the eyes, and tongue, and hands, and make a man look fearfully, speak desperately, and do bloodily, against the body; but the heat of the fire is principally within, in the furnace, in the spirit; 'tis but some sparkles and flashes only that you see come forth at the lower holes of the furnace, which you behold in the eyes, words, and deeds of such men.—*Nicholas Lockyer.*

Verse 9.—There are usually, if not always, pains with desires, especially in desires after the creature, because that oftentimes there is a frustration of our desires, or an elongation of the things, the things are far off, hard to come by; our desires oftentimes are mute, they speak not; or the things that we desire, know not our minds: but our desires after God always speak, they are open unto God, he heareth their voice. "*Lord, all my desire is before thee,*" saith David, "*and my groaning is not hid from thee.*" Therefore it must needs be sweet, when the soul lies thus open unto God. Other desires do not assure and secure a man in the things he desires; a man may wish this and wish that and go without both; but the soul that thus longs after God is instated in his wish, hath a present enjoyment, and certainly shall have a full enjoyment of him. "He will fulfil the desire of those that fear him: he also will hear their cry." Ps. cxlv. 19.—*Joseph Symonds.*

Verse 9.—"*My groaning is not hid from thee.*" Secret tears for secret sins are an excellent sign of a holy heart, and a healing balsam for broken spirits. God well understands the language of half words interrupted with sighs, and interprets them as the streams and breathings of a broken heart. As all our foolishness is before him to cover it, so is all our heaviness to ease it; and therefore shall our souls praise and please him more than a bullock with young horns and hoofs upon his altar. Holy mourning keeps out carnal sorrow and produces spirit joy. It stirs up the heart of a saint to beg preventing grace which no false heart can perform without secret reserves. This inward sorrow prevents open shame. God will never give up *such* souls to be trampled on by spiritual enemies, who are already humbled by themselves. In saints' humiliation there's a door opened for secret hope, because of the precious promises that are plighted to it, and especially of preventing future sin by strengthening grace. For as the love of God is the fountain of all true repentance, so it is the attractive of more incomes of divine love to the soul.—*Samuel Lee.*

Verse 10.—"*My heart panteth.*" The verb which David here uses signifies *to travel* or *wander hither and thither,* but here it is taken for the agitation or disquietude which distress of heart engenders when we know not what to do. According as men are disquieted in mind, so do they turn themselves on all sides; and so their heart may be said to turn round, or to run to and fro.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 11.—"*My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.*" So miserable am I, that I am left alone as one utterly forsaken;

they are all pieces that recoil and fly back at the first voice of the powder. Yet it is not so much me they stand aloof from as my sore; for if it were not for my sore, I should have enough of their company easily enough; but they cannot abide sores, their eyes are too tender to endure to see them, and yet hard enough not to relieve them. Or is it they stand aloof, that is, so near as to show they are willing enough to see them; but yet so far off as to show they have no meaning to come and help them! . . . . .

"*My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore,*" as fearing more my sore than me; but "*my kinsmen stand afar off,*" as fearing me no less than my sore; and where my lovers and friends by standing aloof do but violate the law of a contracted friendship, my kinsmen by standing afar off violate even the law of natural affection; and is not this a grievous thing, that the law of reason, the law of friendship, the law of nature, shall all be broken rather than I shall be relieved or find assistance?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 11.—"*My lovers and my friends stand afar off.*" Deserted by false friends, but conqueror through thee, to thee I speed, who though seeming to act the part of an enemy, yet never changest thy love; but lovest for ever him whom thou once hast loved. When thou seemest afar off, thou art near. I conceive this sorrow on account of the treachery of false friends, and the cowardliness of my kinsfolk, who are to me as piercing thorns rather than sweet-smelling roses. The proof of affection is seen by deeds. I hear the *name* of kinsman and friend; I see no deed. To thee, therefore, I flee, whose word is deed; for I need thy help.—*From the Latin of A. Rivetus.*

Verse 13.—"*But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.*" For why should I hear when I meant not to speak? and why should I speak when I knew beforehand I should not be heard? I knew by contesting I should but provoke them, and make them more guilty that were guilty too much before. I therefore thought it better myself to be silent than to set them a roaring and make them grow outrageous. No doubt a great wisdom in David, to know that to be deaf and dumb was in this case his best course, but yet a far greater virtue that knowing it, he was able to do it. Oh, how happy should we be, if we could always do that which we know is best to be done, and if our wills were as ready to act, as our reason is able to enact; we should then decline many rocks we now run upon, we should then avoid many errors we now run into. To be deaf and dumb are indeed great inabilities and defects, when they be natural; but when they be voluntary, and I may say artificial, they are then great abilities, or rather perfections.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 13.—"*But I, as a deaf man, heard not.*" The inspired writer here compares himself to a dumb and deaf man for two reasons. In the first place, he intimates that he was so overwhelmed with the false and wicked judgments of his enemies, that he was not even permitted to open his mouth in his own defence. In the second place, he alleges before God his own patience, as a plea to induce God the more readily to have pity upon him; for such meekness and gentleness, not only with good reason, secures favour to the afflicted and the innocent, but it is also a sign of true piety.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.*" You, who truly know yourselves; by whom silent suffering, secret grief, and hidden joy are understood; by the knowledge of your own unspoken sorrow, unexpressed, because inexpressible feelings, by the consciousness of the unrevealed depths of your own nature, the earnest, but ever unsatisfied yearnings of your spirit, learn to reverence and love those by whom you are surrounded, whose inner life can never be completely read, but whom you are sure must need sacred sympathy and tender consideration. If a secret grief is constantly gnawing my heart, making my voice falter in the song of praise, may not my brother's downcast eye and heavy heart be occasioned by a similar cause; shall I condemn him for his want of gladness? No: but remember, "the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." The silent breathings of the spirit are not for our ears; the hot tears which in secret fall, are not for our eyes; in mercy has the veil been drawn round each heart; but by the sacred memory of our own sadness, let our voice be gentle, our look tender, our tread quiet, as we pass amongst the mourners.—*Jessie Coombs, in "Thoughts for the Inner Life,"* 1867.

Verse 15.—A man that is to go down into a deep pit, he does not throw himself headlong into it, or leap down at all adventures, but fastens a rope at top upon a cross beam or some sure place, and so lets himself down by degrees: so let thyself down into the consideration of thy sin, hanging upon Christ; and when thou art gone so low that thou canst endure no longer, but art ready to be overcome with the horror and darkness of thy miserable estate, dwell not too long at the gates of hell, lest the devil pull thee in, but wind thyself up again by renewed acts of faith, and "fly for refuge unto the hope that is set before thee." Heb. vi. 18.—*Thomas Cole* (1627—1697), *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 17.—"*For I am ready to halt:*" to show my infirmity in my trials and afflictions; as Jacob halted after his wrestling with God. Gen. xxxii. 31. In the Greek, *I am ready for scourges*, that is, to suffer correction and punishment for my sins: so the Chaldee saith, *for calamity.—Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 18.—Pliny writeth of some families that had private marks on their bodies peculiar to those of that line, and every man hath, as it were, a private sin, which is most justly called his; but if we will confess our sins aright, we must not leave out that sin; nay, our chiefest spite must be against it, according to David's resolve: "*I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.*" . . . . David doth not only say, "*I will declare,*" but, "*I will be sorry for my sin.*" The people of God (1 Sam. vii. 6) in the day of their confession not only say, "We have sinned," but draw water, and pour it out before the Lord in token of contrition. We should, in confessing sin, have our hearts so affected, that our eyes, with Job, may "pour tears before God" (Job xvi. 20); that, with David, "rivers of tears, may run down our eyes" (Psalm cxix. 136); yea, we should wish with Jeremiah, that "our head were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears." Jer. ix. 1. But, however, *nonne stillabit oculus noster?* if we cannot pour out, shall we not drop a tear? or at least, if we cannot shed a tear, let us breathe forth a sigh for our sins. It is only the heart broken with godly sorrow that sends forth a true confession.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 20.—"*They are mine enemies because I follow the thing that good is.*" It is a bold attempt to ding Satan out of his nest. If we conform us to the men of this world we find peace with them; they will not discord with us so long as we go their way; but to shame them by a godly life is an affront they cannot digest; and to rebuke their sin, findeth at their hand all that Satan disappointed or corruption provoked can devise. A sleeping dog is quiet, but being stirred, turneth all in barking and biting. Not to do as they do is matter enough of anger, but a reproof is the highest degree of disgrace in their account. All that hatred which they ought to bear to Satan and his instruments, is turned upon God in his rebuking and reclaiming servants. That anger that in remorse should burn against their own sin is set against their reprovers.—*William Struther.*

Verse 22.—"*O Lord my salvation.*" Faith the suppliant is now made faith triumphant.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Title.—The art of memory. Holy memorabilia. The usefulness of sacred remembrances.

Verse 1.—The rebuke of God's wrath. I. Richly deserved. II. Reasonably dreaded. III. Earnestly deprecated.—*B. Davies.*

Verse 1.—The evil consequences of sin in this world.—*J. J. Blunt.*

Verse 1.—The bitterest of bitters, "*thy wrath;*" why deprecated; and how escaped.

Verse 2.—God sharply chasteneth many of his children, and yet for all that he loves them never a whit the less, nor withholdeth in good time his mercy from them.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—Sin causes *unrest.* He who cures it alone gives rest. Dwell on both facts.

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—Sin in its relations to us. To the *eye* pleasing. To the *heart* disappointing. In the *bones* vexing. Over the *head* overwhelming.

Verse 4.—The confession of an awakened sinner.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Sin. I. Heavy—"*a burden.*" II. Very heavy—"*a heavy burden.*" III. Superlatively heavy—"*too heavy for me.*" IV. Not immovable, for though too heavy *for me*, yet Jesus bore it.

Verse 5.—"*Foolishness.*" The folly of sin. Everything that a man has to do with sin shows his folly. I. Dallying with sin. II. Committing it. III. Continuing in it. IV. Hiding it. V. Palliating it.—*B. Davies.*

Verse 6.—Conviction of sin. Its grief, its depth, its continuance.

Verse 6.—"*I go mourning.*" I. Unlawful reasons for mourning. II. Legitimate themes for sorrow. III. Valuable alleviations of grief.

Verse 9.—The many desires of God's children: the fact that God understands them even when unexpressed; and the certainty that he will grant them.

Verse 9.—Omniscience, a source of consolation to the desponding.

Verse 13.—The wisdom, dignity, power and difficulty of silence.

Verse 15.—Prayer, the offspring of hope.

Hope strengthened by confidence in God's answering prayer.

Verse 17.—Mr. Ready-to-Halt. His pedigree, and infirmity; his crutches, and his cure; his history, and safe departure.

Verse 18.—The excellence of penitent confession.

Verse 18.—The twin children of grace—confession and contrition: their mutual revelation and reaction.

Verse 18 (*last clause*).—There is good reason for such sorrow, God is well pleased with it. It benefits the mourner.

Verse 19.—The terrible energy and industry of the powers of evil.

Verse 22.—Faith tried, faith trembling, faith crying, faith grasping, faith conquering.

PSALM XXXIX.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, even to Jeduthun. *Jeduthun's name, which signifies praising or celebrating, was a most appropriate one for a leader in sacred psalmody. He was one of those ordained by the King's order "for song in the house of the Lord with cymbals, psalteries, and harps"* (1 Chron. xv. 6), *and his children after him appear to have remained in the same hallowed service, even so late as the days of Nehemiah. To have a name and a place in Zion is no small honour, and to hold this place by a long entail of grace is an unspeakable blessing. O that our households may never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to do him service. David left this somewhat sorrowful ode in Jeduthun's hands because he thought him most fit to set it to music, or because he would distribute the sacred honour of song among all the musicians who in their turn presided in the choir.* A Psalm of David. *Such as his chequered life would be sure to produce; fit effusion for a man so tempted, so strong in his passions, and yet so firm in faith.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalmist, bowed down with sickness and sorrow, is burdened with unbelieving thoughts, which he resolves to stifle, lest any evil should come from their expression,* 1, 2. *But silence creates an insupportable grief, which at last demands utterance, and obtains it in the prayer of verses* 3 *to* 6, *which is almost a complaint and a sigh for death, or at best, a very desponding picture of human life. From verses* 7 *to* 13 *the tone is more submissive, and the recognition of the divine hand more distinct: the cloud has evidently passed, and the mourner's heart is relieved.*

EXPOSITION.

I SAID, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, *even* from good; and my sorrow was stirred.

1. *"I said."* I steadily resolved and registered a determination. In his great perplexity his greatest fear was lest he should sin; and, therefore, he cast about for the most likely method for avoiding it, and he determined to be silent. It is right excellent when a man can strengthen himself in a good course by the remembrance of a well and wisely-formed resolve. "What I have written I have written," or what I have spoken I will perform, may prove a good strengthener to a man in a fixed course of right. *"I will take heed to my ways."* To avoid sin one had need be very circumspect, and keep one's actions as with a guard or garrison. Unguarded ways are generally unholy ones. Heedless is another word for graceless. In times of sickness or other trouble we must watch against the sins peculiar to such trials, especially against murmuring and repining. *"That I sin not with my tongue."* Tongue sins are great sins: like sparks of fire ill-words spread, and do great damage. If believers utter hard words of God in times of depression, the ungodly will take them up and use them as a justification for their sinful courses. If a man's own children rail at him, no wonder if his enemies' mouths are full of abuse. Our tongue always wants watching, for it is restive as an ill-broken horse; but especially must we hold it in when the sharp cuts of the Lord's rod excite it to rebel. *"I will keep my mouth with a bridle,"* or more accurately, with a muzzle. The original does not so much mean a bridle to check the tongue as a muzzle to stop it altogether. David was not quite so wise as our translation would make him; if he had resolved to be very guarded in his speech, it would have been altogether commendable, but when he went so far as to condemn himself to entire silence, "even from good," there must have been at least a little sullenness in his soul. In trying to avoid one fault, he fell into another. To use the tongue against God is a sin of commission, but not to use it at all involves an evident sin of omission. Commendable virtues may be followed so eagerly that we may fall into vices; to avoid Scylla we run into Charybdis. *"While the wicked is before me."* This qualifies the silence, and almost screens it from criticism, for bad men are so sure

to misuse even our holiest speech, that it is as well not to cast any of our pearls before such swine; but what if the Psalmist meant, "I was silent while I had the prosperity of the wicked in my thoughts," then we see the discontent and questioning of his mind, and the muzzled mouth indicates much that is not to be commended. Yet, if we blame we must also praise, for the highest wisdom suggests that when good men are bewildered with sceptical thoughts, they should not hasten to repeat them, but should fight out their inward battle upon its own battlefield. The firmest believers are exercised with unbelief, and it would be doing the devil's work with a vengeance if they were to publish abroad all their questionings and suspicions. If I have the fever myself, there is no reason why I should communicate it to my neighbours. If any on board the vessel of my soul are diseased, I will put my heart in quarantine, and allow none to go on shore in the boat of speech till I have a clean bill of health.

2. "*I was dumb with silence.*" He was as strictly speechless as if he had been tongueless—not a word escaped him. He was as silent as the dumb. "*I held my peace, even from good.*" Neither bad nor good escaped his lips. Perhaps he feared that if he began to talk at all, he would be sure to speak amiss, and, therefore, he totally abstained. It was an easy, safe, and effectual way of avoiding sin, if it did not involve a neglect of the duty which he owed to God to speak well of his name. Our divine Lord was silent before the wicked, but not altogether so, for before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession, and asserted his kingdom. A sound course of action may be pushed to the extreme, and become a fault. "*And my sorrow was stirred.*" Inward grief was made to work and ferment by want of vent. The pent-up floods were swollen and agitated. Utterance is the natural outlet for the heart's anguish, and silence is, therefore, both an aggravation of the evil and a barrier against its cure. In such a case the resolve to hold one's peace needs powerful backing, and even this is most likely to give way when grief rushes upon the soul. Before a flood gathering in force and foaming for outlet the strongest banks are likely to be swept away. Nature may do her best to silence the expression of discontent, but unless grace comes to her rescue, she will be sure to succumb.

3 My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue,

4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it *is*; *that* I may know how frail I *am*.

5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth; and mine age *is* as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity. Selah.

6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

3. "*My heart was hot within me.*" The friction of inward thoughts produced an intense mental heat. The door of his heart was shut, and with the fire of sorrow burning within, the chamber of his soul soon grew unbearable with heat. Silence is an awful thing for a sufferer, it is the surest method to produce madness. Mourner, tell your sorrow; do it first and most fully to God, but even to pour it out before some wise and godly friend is far from being wasted breath. "*While I was musing the fire burned.*" As he thought upon the ease of the wicked and his own daily affliction, he could not unravel the mystery of providence, and therefore he became greatly agitated. While his heart was musing it was fusing, for the subject was confusing. It became harder every moment to be quiet; his volcanic soul was tossed with an inward ocean of fire, and heaved to and fro with a mental earthquake; an eruption was imminent, the burning lava must pour forth in a fiery stream. "*Then spake I with my tongue.*" The original is grandly laconic. "*I spake.*" The muzzled tongue burst all its bonds. The gag was hurled away. Misery, like murder, will out. You can silence praise, but anguish is clamorous. Resolve or no resolve, heed or no heed, sin or no sin, the impetuous torrent forced for itself a channel and swept away every restraint.

4. "*Lord.*" It is well that the vent of his soul was Godward and not towards man. Oh! if my swelling heart must speak, Lord let it speak with thee; even if there be too much of natural heat in what I say, thou wilt be more patient with

me than man, and upon thy purity it can cast no stain; whereas if I speak to my fellows, they may harshly rebuke me or else learn evil from my petulance. "*Make me to know my end.*" Did he mean the same as Elias in his agony, "Let me die, I am no better than my fathers?" Perhaps so. At any rate, he rashly and petulantly desired to know the end of his wretched life, that he might begin to reckon the days till death should put a finis to his woe. Impatience would pry between the folded leaves. As if there were no other comfort to be had, unbelief would fain hide itself in the grave and sleep itself into oblivion. David was neither the first nor the last who had spoken unadvisedly in prayer. Yet, there is a better meaning: the Psalmist would know more of the shortness of life, that he might better bear its transient ills, and herein we may safely kneel with him, uttering the same petition. That there is no end to its misery is the hell of hell; that there is an end to life's sorrow is the hope of all who have a hope beyond the grave. God is the best teacher of the divine philosophy which looks for an expected end. They who see death through the Lord's glass, see a fair sight, which makes them forget the evil of life in foreseeing the end of life. "*And the measure of my days.*" David would fain be assured that his days would be soon over and his trials with them; he would be taught anew that life is measured out to us by wisdom, and is not a matter of chance. As the trader measures his cloth by inches, and ells, and yards, so with scrupulous accuracy is life measured out to man. "*That I may know how frail I am,*" or when I shall cease to be. Alas! poor human nature, dear as life is, man quarrels with God at such a rate that he would sooner cease to be than bear the Lord's appointment. Such pettishness in a saint! Let us wait till we are in a like position, and we shall do no better. The ship on the stocks wonders that the barque springs a leak, but when it has tried the high seas, it marvels that its timbers hold together in such storms. David's case is not recorded for our imitation, but for our learning.

5. "*Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.*" Upon consideration, the Psalmist finds little room to bewail the length of life, but rather to bemoan its shortness. What changeful creatures we are! One moment we cry to be rid of existence, and the next instant beg to have it prolonged! A handbreadth is one of the shortest natural measures, being the breadth of four fingers; such is the brevity of life, by divine appointment; God has made it so, fixing the period in wisdom. The "*behold*" calls us to attention; to some the thought of life's hastiness will bring the acutest pain, to others the most solemn earnestness. How well should those live who are to live so little! Is my earthly pilgrimage so brief? then let me watch every step of it, that in the little of time there may be much of grace. "*And mine age is as nothing before thee.*" So short as not to amount to an entity. Think of eternity, and an angel is as a new-born babe, the world a fresh blown bubble, the sun a spark just fallen from the fire, and man a nullity. Before the Eeternal, all the age of frail man is less than one ticking of a clock. "*Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity.*" This is the surest truth, that nothing about man is either sure or true. Take man at his best, he is but a man, and man is a mere breath, unsubstantial as the wind. Man is *settled*, as the margin has it, and by divine decree it is settled that he shall not be settled. He is constant only in inconstancy. His vanity is his only verity; his best, of which he is vain, is but vain; and this is verily true of every man, that everything about him is every way fleeting. This is sad news for those whose treasures are beneath the moon; those whose glorying is in themselves may well hang the flag half-mast; but those whose best estate is settled upon them in Christ Jesus in the land of unfading flowers, may rejoice that it is no vain thing in which they trust.

6. "*Surely every man walketh in a vain shew.*" Life is but a passing pageant. This alone is sure, that nothing is sure. All around us shadows mock us; we walk among them, and too many live for them as if the mocking images were substantial; acting their borrowed parts with zeal fit only to be spent on realities, and lost upon the phantoms of this passing scene. Worldly men walk like travellers in a mirage, deluded, duped, deceived, soon to be filled with disappointment and despair. "*Surely they are disquieted in vain.*" Men fret, and fume, and worry, and all for mere nothing. They are shadows pursuing shadows, while death pursues them. He who toils and contrives, and wearies himself for gold, for fame, for rank, even if he wins his desire, finds at the end his labour lost; for like the treasure of the miser's dream, it all vanishes when the man awakes in the world of reality. Read well this text, and then listen to the clamour of the market, the hum of the ex-

change, the din of the city streets, and remember that all this *noise* (for so the word means), this breach of quiet, is made about unsubstantial, fleeting vanities. Broken rest, anxious fear, over-worked brain, failing mind, lunacy, these are steps in the process of disquieting with many, and all to be rich, or, in other words, to load one's self with the thick clay; clay, too, which a man must leave so soon. "*He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*" He misses often the result of his ventures, for there are many slips between the cup and the lips. His wheat is sheaved, but an interloping robber bears it away—as often happens with the poor Eastern husbandman; or, the wheat is even stored, but the invader feasts thereon. Many work for others all unknown to them. Especially does this verse refer to those all-gathering muckrakes, who in due time are succeeded by all-scattering forks, which scatter riches as profusely as their sires gathered them parsimoniously. We know not our heirs, for our children die, and strangers fill the old ancestral halls; estates change hands, and entail, though riveted with a thousand bonds, yields to the corroding power of time. Men rise up early and sit up late to build a house, and then the stranger tramps along its passages, laughs in its chambers, and forgetful of its first builder, calls it all his own. Here is one of the evils under the sun for which no remedy can be prescribed.

7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope *is* in thee.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst *it*.

10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.

11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man *is* vanity. Selah.

12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I *am* a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.

13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

7. "*And now, Lord, what wait I for?*" What is there in these phantoms to enchant me? Why should I linger where the prospect is so uninviting, and the present so trying? It were worse than vanity to linger in the abodes of sorrow to gain a heritage of emptiness. The Psalmist, therefore, turns to his God, in disgust of all things else; he has thought on the world and all things in it, and is relieved by knowing that such vain things are all passing away; he has cut all cords which bound him to earth, and is ready to sound "Boot and saddle, up and away." "*My hope is in thee.*" The Lord is self-existent and true, and therefore worthy of the confidence of men; he will live when all the creatures die, and his fulness will abide when all second causes are exhausted; to him, therefore, let us direct our expectation, and on him let us rest our confidence. Away from sand to rock let all wise builders turn themselves, for if not to-day, yet surely ere long, a storm will rise before which nothing will be able to stand but that which has the lasting element of faith in God to cement it. David had but one hope, and that hope entered within the veil, hence he brought his vessel to safe anchorage, and after a little drifting all was peace.

8. "*Deliver me from all my transgressions.*" How fair a sign it is when the Psalmist no longer harps upon his sorrows, but begs freedom from his sins! What is sorrow when compared with sin! Let but the poison of sin be gone from the cup, and we need not fear its gall, for the bitter will act medicinally. None can deliver a man from his transgressions but the blessed One who is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins; and when he once works this great deliverance for a man from the cause, the consequences are sure to disappear too. The thorough cleansing desired is well worthy of note: to be saved from some transgressions would be of small benefit; total and perfect deliverance is needed. "*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*" The wicked are the foolish here meant: such are always on the watch for the faults of saints, and at once make them the theme of ridicule. It is a wretched thing for a man to be suffered to make himself the butt

of unholy scorn by apostasy from the right way. Alas, how many have thus exposed themselves to well-deserved reproach! Sin and shame go together and from both David would fain be preserved.

9. "*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*" This had been far clearer if it had been rendered, "I am silenced, I will not open my mouth." Here we have a nobler silence, purged of all sullenness, and sweetened with submission. Nature failed to muzzle the mouth, but grace achieved the work in the worthiest manner. How like in appearance may two very different things appear! silence is ever silence, but it may be sinful in one case and saintly in another. What a reason for hushing every murmuring thought is the reflection, "because thou didst it"! It is his right to do as he wills, and he always wills to do that which is wisest and kindest; why should I then arraign his dealings? Nay, if it be indeed the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.

10 "*Remove thy stroke away from me.*" Silence from all repining did not prevent the voice of prayer, which must never cease. In all probability the Lord would grant the Psalmist's petition, for he usually removes affliction when we are resigned to it; if we kiss the rod, our Father always burns it. When we are still, the rod is soon still. It is quite consistent with resignation to pray for the removal of a trial. David was fully acquiescent in the divine will, and yet found it in his heart to pray for deliverance; indeed, it was while he was rebellious that he was prayerless about his trial, and only when he became submissive did he plead for mercy. "*I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.*" Good pleas may be found in our weakness and distress. It is well to show our Father the bruises which his scourge has made, for peradventure his fatherly pity will bind his hands, and move him to comfort us in his bosom. It is not to consume us, but to consume our sins, that the Lord aims at in his chastisements.

11. "*When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity.*" God does not trifle with his rod; he uses it because of sin, and with a view to whip us from it; hence he means his strokes to be felt, and felt they are. "*Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.*" As the moth frets the substance of the fabric, mars all its beauty, and leaves it worn out and worthless, so do the chastisements of God discover to us our folly, weakness, and nothingness, and make us feel ourselves to be as worn-out vestures, worthless and useless. Beauty must be a poor thing when a moth can consume it and a rebuke can mar it. All our desires and delights are wretched moth-eaten things when the Lord visits us in his anger. "*Surely every man is vanity.*" He is as Trapp wittily says "a curious picture of nothing." He is unsubstantial as his own breath, a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. *Selah.* Well may this truth bring us to a pause, like the dead body of Amasa, which, lying in the way, stopped the hosts of Joab.

12. "*Hear my prayer, O Lord.*" Drown not my pleadings with the sound of thy strokes. Thou hast heard the clamour of my sins, Lord, hear the laments of my prayers. "*And give ear unto my cry.*" Here is an advance in intensity: a cry is more vehement, pathetic, and impassioned, than a prayer. The main thing was to have the Lord's ear and heart. "*Hold not thy peace at my tears.*" This is a yet higher degree of importunate pleading. Who can withstand tears, which are the irresistible weapons of weakness? How often women, children, beggars, and sinners, have betaken themselves to tears as their last resort, and therewith have won the desire of their hearts!—"This shower, blown up by tempest of the soul," falls not in vain. Tears speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues; they act as keys upon the wards of tender hearts, and mercy denies them nothing, if through them the weeper looks to richer drops, even to the blood of Jesus. When our sorrows pull up the sluices of our eyes, God will ere long interpose and turn our mourning into joy. Long may he be quiet as though he regarded not, but the hour of deliverance will come, and come like the morning when the dewdrops are plentiful. "*For I am a stranger with thee.*" Not *to* thee, but *with* thee. Like thee, my Lord, a stranger among the sons of men, an alien from my mother's children. God made the world, sustains it, and owns it, and yet men treat him as though he were a foreign intruder; and as they treat the Master, so do they deal with the servants. "'Tis no surprising thing that we should be unknown." These words may also mean, "I share the hospitality of God," like a stranger entertained by a generous host. Israel was bidden to deal tenderly with the stranger, and the God of Israel has in much compassion treated us poor aliens with unbounded liberality. "*And a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*" They knew

that this was not their rest; they passed through life in pilgrim guise, they used the world as travellers use an inn, and even so do I. Why should we dream of rest on earth when our fathers' sepulchres are before our eyes? If they had been immortal, their sons would have had an abiding city this side the tomb; but as the sires were mortal, so must their offspring pass away. All of our lineage, without exception, were passing pilgrims, and such are we. David uses the fleeting nature of our life as an argument for the Lord's mercy, and it is such a one as God will regard. We show pity to poor pilgrims, and so will the Lord.

13. "*O spare me.*" Put by thy rod. Turn away thine angry face. Give me breathing time. Do not kill me. "*That I may recover strength.*" Let me have sufficient cessation from pain, to be able to take repose and nourishment, and so recruit my wasted frame. He expects to die soon, but begs a little respite from sorrow, so as to be able to rally and once more enjoy life before its close. "*Before I go hence, and be no more.*" So far as this world is concerned, death is a being no more; such a state awaits us, we are hurrying onward towards it. May the short interval which divides us from it be gilded with the sunlight of our heavenly Father's love. It is sad to be an invalid from the cradle to the grave, far worse to be under the Lord's chastisements by the month together, but what are these compared with the endurance of the endless punishment threatened to those who die in their sins!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*To Jeduthun.*" A Levite of the family of Merari, and one of the great masters of the temple of music. The department superintended by Jeduthun and his colleagues in the temple service was that of the "instruments of the song of God," by which are intended the nebel or psaltery, the kinnor or harp, and the metsiltaim or cymbals. In 2 Chron, xxxv. 15, Jeduthun is called "the king's seer," which would seem to indicate that he was the medium of divine guidance to David. The name occurs in the title of Psalms xxxix., lxii., lxxvii.; where some have thought that it indicates some special kind of composition, and others some instrument of music, but without reason.—*William Lindsay Alexander, in Kitto's Cyclopædia.*

Whole Psalm.—The most beautiful of all the elegies in the Psalter.—*H. Ewald.*

Verse 1.—"*I said.*" It was to himself that he said it; and it is impossible for any other to prove a good or a wise man, without much of this kind of speech to himself. It is one of the most excellent and distinguishing faculties of a reasonable creature; much beyond vocal speech, for in that, some birds may imitate us; but neither bird nor beast has anything of this kind of language, of reflecting or discoursing with itself. It is a wonderful brutality in the greatest part of men, who are so little conversant in this kind of speech, being framed and disposed for it, and which is not only of itself excellent, but of continual use and advantage; but it is a common evil among men to go abroad, and out of themselves, which is a madness, and a true distraction. It is true, a man hath need of a well set mind, when he speaks to himself; for otherwise, he may be worse company to himself than if he were with others. But he ought to endeavour to have a better with him, to call in God to his heart to dwell with him. If thus we did, we should find how sweet this were to speak to ourselves, by now and then intermixing our speech with discourses unto God. For want of this, the most part not only lose their time in vanity, in their converse abroad with others, but do carry in heaps of that vanity to the stock which is in their own hearts, and do converse with that in secret, which is the greatest and deepest folly in the world.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 1.—No lesson so hard to be learned of us here, as the wise and discreet government of the tongue. David promised a singular care of this, "*I said, I will take heed,*" etc. Socrates reports of one Pambo, an honest, well meaning man, who came to his friend, desiring him to teach him one of David's Psalms, he read

to him this verse. He answered: this one verse is enough, if I learn it well. Nineteen years after, he said, in all that time he had hardly learned that one verse. —*Samuel Page.*

Verse 1.—"*That I sin not with my tongue.*" Man's mouth, though it be but a little hole, will hold a world full of sin. For there is not any sin forbidden in the law or gospel which is not spoken by the tongue, as well as thought in the heart, or done in the life. Is it not then almost as difficult to rule the tongue as to rule the world?—*Edward Reynor.*

Verse 1.—"*I will keep a muzzle on my mouth, whilst a wicked man is before me.*" —*New Translation, by Charles Carter.*

Verse 1.—"*While the wicked is before me.*" It is a vexation to be tied to hear so much impertinent babbling in the world, but profitable to discern and abhor it. A wonder that men can cast out so much wind, and the more they have to utter, the more they are prodigal of their own breath and of the patience of others, and careless of their own reckoning. If they believed to give account of every idle word, they would be more sparing of foolish speaking. I like either to be silent, or to speak that that may edify. At tables or meetings I cannot stop the mouths of others, yet may I close mine own ears, and by a heavenly soul-speech with God divert my mind from fruitless talking. Though I be among them I shall as little partake their prattling as they do my meditation.—*William Struther.*

Verse 2.—"*I was dumb with silence,*" etc. That is, for a while I did what I resolved; I was so long wholly silent, that I seemed in a manner to be dumb, and not able to speak. "*I held my peace, even from good;*" that is, I forbore to speak what I might well and lawfully enough have spoken, as from alleging anything that I might have said in mine own defence, from making my complaint to God, and desiring justice at his hands, and such like; to wit, lest by degrees I should have been brought to utter anything that was evil, and whilst I intended only to speak that which was good, some unseemly word might suddenly slip from me; or lest mine enemies should misconstrue anything I spake.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 2.—"*I was dumb with silence.*"—We shall enquire what kind of *dumbness* or *silence* this of the Psalmist was, which he is commended for, and which would so well beseem us when we smart under the rod of God, and then the doctrine will be, in a great measure, evident by its own light. We shall proceed in our enquiry, 1. Negatively, to prevent mistakes. 2. Positively, and show you what it doth import.

First, negatively. 1. This dumbness doth not import any such thing, as if the prophet had been brought to that pass that he had nothing to say to God by way of prayer and supplication. He was not so dumb, but that he could *pray and cry too.* Verses 8, 10, 11. 2. Nor was he so dumb, as that he could not frame to the confession and bewailing of his sins. 3. Nor was it a dumbness of stupidity and senselessness. It doth not imply any such thing, as if by degrees he grew to that pass, he cared not for, or made no matter of his affliction, but set, as the proverb is, an hard heart against his hard hap. No, he did make his moan to God, and as he smarted, so he did lament under the sense of his afflicting hand. 4. Neither was he so dumb as not to answer God's voice in the rod that was upon him. 5. Much less was he dumb, and kept silence in any such sort as they did of whom Amos speaks (vi. 10), that in their misery they took up a resolution *to mention the name of God no more,* in whom they had gloried formerly.

Secondly, affirmatively. 1. He was dumb so as neither to complain of, nor quarrel with God's providence, nor to entertain any hard thoughts against him. Complain *to* God he did; but *against* him he durst not. 2. He neither did nor durst quarrel, or fall out with the ways of holiness for all his sufferings, a thing we are naturally prone unto. 3. He was dumb, so as not to defend himself, or justify his own ways before God, as if they were righteous, and he had not deserved what he suffered. 4. He was dumb, so as to hearken to the voice of the rod. "I will (saith he in another place) hear what God the Lord will speak." Psalm lxxxv. 8. Now a man cannot listen to another while he will have all the talk and discourse to himself. 5. Lastly, the prophet was dumb, that is, he did acquiesce, and rest satisfied with God's dispensation; and that not only as good, but as best.—*Condensed from a Funeral Sermon by Thomas Burroughes, B.D., entitled, "A Soveraign Remedy for all kindes of Grief,"* 1657.

Verse 2.—"*I held my peace.*" A Christian being asked what fruit he had by

Christ: Is not this fruit, said he, not to be moved at your reproaches? In cases of this nature, we must refer all to God; *si tu tacueris, Deus loquitur;* if thou hold thy peace, God speaks for thee; and if God speaks for us, it is better than we can speak for ourselves. David saith, *Obmutui, quia tu fecisti.* "*I held my peace, for it was thy doing.*"—*Christopher Sutton, B.D.*, 1629, *in Disce Vivere.*

Verses 2—9.—An invalid who had been ordered a couple of pills, took them very absurdly, for, in place of swallowing them at once, he rolled them about in his mouth, ground them to pieces, and so tasted their full bitterness. Gotthold was present, and thus mused: The insults and calumnies of a slanderer and adversary are bitter pills, and all do not understand the art of swallowing without chewing them. To the Christian, however, they are wholesome in many ways. They remind him of his guilt, they try his meekness and patience, they show him what he needs to guard against, and at last they redound to his honour and glory in the sight of him for whose sake they were endured. In respect of the pills of slander, however, as well as the others, it is advisable not to roll them about continually in our minds, or judge of them according to the flesh, and the world's opinion. This will only increase their bitterness, spread the savour of it to the tongue, and fill the heart with proportional enmity. The true way is to *swallow, keep silence and forget.* We must inwardly devour our grief, and say, "*I will be dumb, and not open my mouth, because thou didst it.*" The best antidotes to the bitterness of slander, are the sweet promises and consolations of Scripture, of which not the least is this, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Matt. v. 11, 12. Alas, my God! how hard it is to swallow the pills of obloquy, to bless them that curse me, to do good to them that hate me, and to pray for them that despitefully use me! *But, Lord, as thou wilt have it so, give it as thou wilt have it,* for it is a matter in which, without thy grace, I can do nothing!—*Christian Scriver.*

Verse 3.—"*My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned.*" They say of the loadstone (that wonder in nature), when either by carelessness in keeping it, or by some accident it loses its virtue, yet by laying it some good space of time in the filings of steel, it will again recover its virtues: when the spirit of a Christian by not looking well to it, loses of its heavenly heat and liveliness, the way of recovery is by laying it asteep in this so warming and quickening meditation. Oh, how burning and flaming may we often observe the spirit of the holy Psalmist David, in his acting of meditation! Musing made him hot, yea, burning hot at the heart. Thus oft in the beginning of a Psalm we find his heart low and discouraged but as this musing was acted and heightened, his spirit grew hotter, and at last flies all on a flame, flies up to a very high pitch of heavenly heat. Oh, how do all the conscientious practisers of meditation, ever and anon experience these happy, heavenly heats, and heart-enlargements! Ah, if all the saints' so glorious heart-quickenings were gathered together, what a rich chain of pearls, pearls of rare experiences, would they make up of the heart-warming efficacies of meditation.—*Nathanael Ranew.*

Verse 3.—"*I was musing.*" What a blessed (shall I say duty or) privilege is prayer! Now meditation is a help to prayer. Gerson calls it the nurse of prayer. Meditation is like oil to the lamp; the lamp of prayer will soon go out unless meditation cherish and support it. Meditation and prayer are like two turtles, if you separate one the other dies; a cunning angler observes the time and season when the fish bite best, and then he throws in the angle; when the heart is warmed by meditation, now is the best season to throw in the angle of prayer, and fish for mercy. After Isaac had been in the field meditating he was fit for prayer when he came home. When the gun is full of powder it is fittest to discharge. So when the mind is full of good thoughts, a Christian is fittest by prayer to discharge; now he sends up whole volleys of sighs and groans to heaven. Meditation hath a double benefit in it, it pours in and pours out; first it pours good thoughts into the mind, and then it pours out those thoughts again into prayer; meditation first furnisheth with matter to pray and then it furnisheth with a heart to pray. "*I was musing,*" saith David, and the very next words are a prayer, "*Lord, make me to know mine end.*" I muse on the works of thy hands, I stretch forth my hands to thee. The musing of his head made way for the stretching forth of his hands in prayer. When Christ was upon the Mount, then he prayed: so when the soul is upon the mount of

meditation, now it is in tune for prayer. Prayer is the child of meditation: meditation leads the van, and prayer brings up the rear.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—"*Musing.*" Meditation is prayer in bullion, prayer in the ore, soon melted and run into holy desires. The laden cloud soon drops into rain, the piece charged soon goes off when fire is put to it. A meditating soul is *in proxima potentia* to prayer. This was an ejaculatory prayer shot from his soul when in the company of the wicked.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 3.—"*The fire burned.*" My thoughts kindled my passions.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 3.—"*The fire burned.*" Meditate so long till thou findest thy heart grow warm in this duty. If, when a man is cold you ask how long he should stand by the fire? sure, till he be thoroughly warm, and made fit for his work. So, Christian, thy heart is cold; never a day, no, not the hottest day in summer, but it freezeth there; now stand at the fire of meditation till thou findest thy affections warmed, and thou art made fit for spiritual service. David mused till his heart waxed hot within him. I will conclude this with that excellent saying of Bernard: "Lord, I will never come away from thee without thee." Let this be a Christian's resolution, not to leave off his meditations of God till he find something of God in him; some moving of the bowels after God; some flamings of love, Cant. v. 4.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—His company was bad, but his thoughts were good; even *while the wicked was before him his heart was hot within him, while he was musing the fire burned.* His thoughts inflame his affections with holy zeal, and this *holy fire*, as by an anteperistasis, burnt so much the hotter for the *frost* of cursed contrariety that was about it. When the careful magistrates or officers of a city break into a suspected house in the night-time, the great question is, What company have you here? So when God breaks in upon our dark hearts, the enquiry is, What thoughts have you here? Why do thoughts arise in your minds? Are ye not become judges of evil thoughts? Luke xxiv. 38; James ii. 4.—*Faithful Teat.*

Verse 3.—"*Then spake I with my tongue, Lord,*" etc. It is, indeed, a happy circumstance when that silence which has long been perserved is first broken before the Lord.—*John Morison.*

Verse 4.—"*Lord, make me to know mine end,*" etc. But did not David know this? Yes, he knew it, and yet he desires to know it. It is very fit we should ask of God that he would make us to know the things that we do know; I mean, that what we know emptily and barely, we may know spiritually and fruitfully, and if there be any measure of this knowledge, that it may increase and grow more. . . . We know we must die, and that it is no long course to the utmost period of life; yet our hearts are little instructed by this knowledge.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 4.—"*Lord, make me to know mine end.*" David would know his *end*, not so much his death—the end consuming, as Christ the Lord of life—the end and perfection of all our desires; or know it, not for vain science, but in his experience feel the reward of his patience. Though thy chastisement be sharp, it will be but short, and therein sweet; thou shalt lie still and be quiet, thou shalt sleep and be at rest, Job iii. 13, 17, 18, 19. How few and evil soever thy days be in the world, by patience and rolling thyself upon God they will prove unto thee both long enough and good.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 4.—"*Lord, make me to know mine end,*" etc. Seeing that both sorrow and joy are both able to kill you, and your life hangeth upon so small a thread, that the least gnat in the air can choke you, as it choked a pope of Rome; a little hair in your milk strangle you, as it did a councillor in Rome; a stone of a raisin stop your breath, as it did the breath of Anacreon: put not the evil day far from you, which the ordinance of God hath put so near; "Remember your Creator in time, before the days comes wherein you shall say, We have no pleasure in them;" walk not always with your faces to the east, sometimes have an eye to the west, where the sun goeth down; sit not ever in the prow of the ship, sometimes go to the stern; "stand in your watch-towers," as the creature doth (Rom. viii. 19), and wait for the hour of your deliverance; provide your armies before that dreadful king cometh to fight against you with his greater forces; order your houses before you die, that is, dispose of your bodies and souls, and all the implements of them both; let not your eyes be gadding after pleasure, nor your ear itching after rumours, nor your minds wandering in the fields, when death is in your houses; your bodies are not brass, nor your strength the strength of stones, your life none inheritance, your breath no more than as the vapour and smoke of the chimney within your

nostrils, or as a stranger within your gates, coming and going again, not to return any more till the day of final redemption.—*John King.*

Verse 4.—"*Lord, make me to know mine end,*" etc. 'Tis worthy your notice, that passage you read of in Scripture, 1 Sam. x. 2. Samuel, when he had anointed Saul king, and the people had chosen him, what signal doth he give him, to confirm him anointed? It was to go to Rachel's sepulchre. Now the reason is this, that he might not be glutted with the preferments and honours he was entering upon. The emperors of Constantinople, in their inaugurations, on their coronation days, had a mason come and show them several marble stones, and ask them to choose which of those should be made ready for their grave-stones. And so we read of Joseph of Arimathea, that he had his tomb in his garden, to check the pleasures of the place.—*Christopher Love.*

Verse 4.—"*How frail I am.*" Between Walsall and Iretsy, in Cheshire, is a house built in 1636, of thick oak framework, filled in with brick. Over the window of the tap-room is still legible, cut in the oak, the following Latin inscription:—*Fleres si scires unum tua tempora mensem; rides cum non scis si sit forsitan una dies.* The sense of which is "You would weep if you knew that your life was limited to one month, yet you laugh while you know not but it may be restricted to a day." How sad the thought, that with this silent monitor, this truthful sermon before their very eyes, numbers have revelled in soul-destructive inebriation! And yet this is but a likeness of what we see constantly about us.—*Quoted in a Monthly Periodical.*

Verse 5.—"*My days.*" Man's life is styled *days* because it is not conferred upon us by wholesale, by months and years, but by retail of days, hours, minutes, moments, as to check our curiosity in making enquiry how long we have to live (verse 4); so acquainting us with the brevity thereof, we may learn to depend upon God's bounty for the *loan* of our life, employ it for his glory, and every day prepare for the Bridegroom, Christ.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 5.—"*My days an handbreath.*" That is one of the shortest measures. We need not long lines to measure our lives by: each one carries a measure about with him, his own hand; that is the longest and fullest measure. It is not so much as a span: that might possibly have been the measure of old age in the infancy of the world, but now it is contracted to a handbreath, and that is the longest. But how many fall short of that! Many attain not to a finger-breadth: multitudes pass from the womb to the grave; and how many end their course within the compass of childhood!—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 5.—"*Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreath.*" The line wherewith our lives are measured, is made both of coarse and fine thread. 1. It is measured by itself, and considerable in its own frailty; so the just length of it is "*an handbreadth.*" 2. Secondly, with eternity, so it is found to be as nothing: "*Mine age is as nothing before thee.*" . . . . "*An handbreath,*" and is that all? So he saith, that exactly measureth them all, and whatsoever else was created with his own hand. A handbreath is one of the shortest kind of measures. There is an ell, a cubit, and a palm or handbreath, whereof there be two kinds, the greater and the less. The greater handbreath is the whole space betwixt the top of the thumb and the little finger, when the hand is extended, called a span, in account near twelve inches. The lesser handbreadth, in a more proper and strict signification, is the just breadth of the four fingers of the hand closed together, here chiefly intended, this interpretation best agreeing with the original, and complying most with the prophet's mind, by the unanimous consent of the choice interpreters.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 5.—"*Mine age is as nothing before thee.*" 1. David might truly have said, Mine age is short *in respect of Methuselah's;* the days of Methuselah are said to be nine hundred sixty and nine years; the days of David, by computation of the time when he began and how long he reigned were not much above three score and ten, so that he lived not so many tens as Methuselah did hundreds. 2. David might have said, Mine age is very short in comparison of *the age of the world.* St. Paul saith of the fashion of this Macrocosm, it passeth away (1 Cor. vii. 31); but the age of the microcosm, man, passeth away far swifter. 3. David might have said, Mine age in this world is exceeding little in comparison of *the duration of the other world.* 4. Finally, David might have said, Mine age is scarcely anything *before the angels,* whose duration began with this world and shall continue in the world to come, and so is coætaneous with both the worlds. But all these are far

short of this comparison which he here maketh of his age *with God* which is eternal, both *a parte ante*, and *a parte post*, from everlasting to everlasting.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 5.—"*As nothing.*" If a man be so diminutive a creature, compared with the fabric of that great world, and the world itself so little that it cannot contain the Lord, so little and light that he feels not the weight thereof upon the tip of his finger, man will well merit the name "*nothing*," when he is placed before the Lord. The keel of man's life is laden with more vanity than verity and substance, if the searcher of the reins and heart come aboard to view it. Ten thousand of our days will not make God one year, and a thousand of our years in his sight are but "as a day when it is past, and as a watch in the night." As drops of rain are unto the sea, and as a gravel stone is in comparison of the sand, so are a thousand years to the days everlasting.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 5.—"*Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.*" The Holy Spirit is pleased elsewhere to speak more sparingly, as it were, in favour of man; he discovers the nakedness, but yet comes backward to cast a garment of lenity over it, that somewhat shadows the shame of it. "Man is like to vanity (Ps. cxliv. 4); their days consume in vanity (Ps lxxviii. 33); Man is vanity" (Ps. xxxix. 11); but here with open mouth and unveiled terms full of emphasis, he proclaims every man to be *abstracted vanity;* and as if that were short he adds, *he is all vanity; mere vanity, all manner of vanity, altogether vanity:* nothing else, nothing less; yea, somewhat more than vanity, "*lighter than vanity*" (Ps. lxii. 9); and "vanity of vanities." Eccl. i. 2. And that no place of dubitation may be left, he ushers the doctrine unto our hearts with a strong asseveration; *assuredly, in truth*, without all controversy, "*man is altogether vanity.*"—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 5.—"*Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.*" Bythner expounds it thus. "*Every man at his best state is altogether vanity;*" *hoc est omni ex parte, ita ut vanitas et miseria quæ per creaturas frustratim spargitur in uno homine aggregata videatur: sic homo evadit compendium omnium vanitatum quæ in creaturis extant:* that is, he is the sink and centre of all the vanities in the world; he is as it were the universe of vanity.—*Quoted in William Reynold's Funeral Sermon for the Honourable Francis Pierrepont*, 1657.

Verse 5.—"Every Adam standing is all Abel."—*See Hebrew Text.*

Verse 5.—"*Selah.*" A little word, yet of no small difficulty to explain. Left out of the *Bible* by the *vulgar translators*, as though it were *impertinent*, where, let them consider, whether they come not within the verge of that malediction in *Revelation* xxii. 19. The *ancient* interpreters did not much *meddle* with it, and our editions leave it *uninterpreted.* But seeing "*whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*" (Romans xv. 4), and till "*heaven and earth pass, one jot or one title shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*" (Matt. v. 18), we have sufficient warrant after the example of the learned, and encouragement to make enquiry after the mind of the Holy Spirit, in that which he hath both *commanded* to be written, and hath *commended* unto us. Wherein, like the crystal glass, I will rather present you with the true visage of antiquity, than use any new-framed feature or painting of my own.

Selah is mentioned *seventy-four times* in the Scripture, whereof seventy-one in the book of Psalms, and thrice in the prophet Habakkuk, which is written Psalm-wise; and it is ever placed in the end of a Psalm or verse, four places only excepted, where, like the sun in the midst of the planets, it is seated to con-join the precedent words with the subsequent, and communicate splendour unto both. There was a threefold use of it in ancient times, whereof the first concerned the music; the second, the matter handled unto which it was affixed; and the third, the men or congregation assembled in the temple of the Lord, which two last may still have place among us Christians, who are ingrafted into the stock Christ, from whence the Jews were cut off, but from the first we cannot properly suck such nourishment as once they did.

First of the music. The king's choir (1 Chron. xxv. 1—6; Psalm lxii., Επιγραφή; 1 Chron. xvi. 41) learned five things by it:

1st. To make a little pause, stop, or stay, when they came to *Selah*, and to meditate awhile upon the matter foregoing.

2nd. They knew by that cessation and interval that King David, as he was prophesying unto the people, and praising God upon the loud sounding cymbals, was at that instant inspired and taught some new lesson. Wherefore, as men

being in serious discourse, when they hear a sudden noise hold their peace to listen, saying, hark! see, lo! so David's heart being smitten by the voice of God's Spirit, the music ceased, stopped, and he checked himself as it were thus: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

3rd. It signifieth the change and variation of the music in some strains, or of the metre, or sense, or disjunction of the rhyme, or ceasing of some one sort of music, which howsoever St. Hierome makes some scruple of. The Septuagint, as often as they meet with Selah in the Hebrew text, in their Greek version translated it, *the change of the song.*

4th. It directed them to sing the same verse over again whereunto Selah was annexed. Lastly, it was their instruction to elevate and lift up their voices, praising God with louder voices and loud sounding cymbals. "*Selah*" called upon them for louder strains of music and shrillness of voice. But seeing the Jewish harmony and sweet melody is overwhelmed in the ruins of their glorious temple, we remain unskilled in their notes, which doth obscure our annotations upon it. Let this suffice for the "music."

II. "*Selah*" concerns the *text* of Scripture itself, or the matter handled, in five branches. 1st. Some think it to be only an ornament of speech, to grace the language with a sweet emphasis; or a non-significant word to complete the harmony, lest the verse should halt for want of a foot, but this conjecture is infirm, and many feet wide from the truth.

2nd. It is not only an adoration of speech, but signifies *an end* of that verse, matter, or Psalm, where it is found, and it is ever in the end of Psalm and verse, these four places only exempted from this rule: Psalm lv. 19; lvii. 3; Habakkuk iii. 3, 9. For as we write "finis" at the end of a book, song, or poem, so the Jews underwrite "Selah," "Salome," or "Amen," at the end or finishing of any canticle or work. And the modern Jews at this day, following the opinion of Aben-Ezra, take "Selah" to be the same with "Amen," using it at the end of their epitaphs and prayers twice or thrice indifferently; thus: "Amen, Selah, Amen, Selah," which receives some credit from this that the particular Psalms end with "Selah" (Psalm iii. 8), and the books of Psalms with "Amen." For whereas the Psalter is divided into five books, four of them end with "Amen"—*so be it.* As you shall find: Psalm xli. 13, the end of the first book; Psalm lxxii. 19, the end of the second book; Psalm lxxxix. 52, the end of the third; and Psalm cvi. 48, the conclusion of the fourth.

3rd. *Selah* is an hyperbole or illustration of the truth by way of excess in advancing and enlarging it, to make the truth and sense more clear and evident, as if we should say, "*that is wonderful!*" or, "*that is excellent!*" and sometimes by way of *aggravation* that is "*monstrous,*" "*intolerable,*" "*horrible!*" "*The Lord came from Teman and the holy One from Mount Paran. Selah.*" Habak. iii. 3. *Selah.* 1. God came with *great dignity, excellency,* and *ample majesty.* "Many there be that say of my soul there is no help for him in God. *Selah.*" Psalm iii. 2. *Selah,* as if he had said, *Oh, monstrous,* and *horrible blasphemy,* to excommunicate a child out of the favour of his heavenly Father; and limit his mercy whose hand is *omnipotent* to relieve all that rely upon him.

4th. It serves to declare *the eternity of the truth* revealed in that Psalm or verse, though perhaps it only began then to be manifested to the church, or more fully at that time than in former ages. Howsoever, the people unto whom it was published, or the persons unto whom it was sent, were otherwise persuaded at the first publication of it. That it was a veritie from everlasting and shall continue for ever: instance Psalm iii. 8, "Salvation belongs unto the Lord, thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah." As if he had said, "This is a thing beyond all controversy true, that God hath ever delivered, and will for ever bless his people." This doctrine is sempeternal and durable, that the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever. Psalm cxxxvi.

5th. It did instruct them to meditate seriously upon those themes where "Selah" was engraven, as containing matter worthy of singular observation, meditation, and remembrance, as either concerning Christ, "Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah." Psalm xxiv. 10. The mysteries of grace. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah." Psalm xlvi. 7. Man's duty (Psalm iv. 4; Psalm xxxii. 5), or frailty (Psalm ix. 20; xxxii. 4). That as the diamond is of greater value than other precious stones, and the sun is more glorious than the planets, so those sentences are more resplendent,

than other parcels of Scripture. Which though at the first bare view, it doth not always so appear, there being other texts of Holy Writ more excellent (if it were meet to make any comparison) where Selah is not found, yet if we dive into the *occasion*, *scope*, and *nature* of the sentence, we shall more willingly accept, when we consider, that it is an usual custom of the Holy Spirit, for our singular instruction and benefit, to propound things of a low and inferior nature to our deepest meditation. Instance Psalm ix. 16. " The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth : the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands," which is shut up with " Higgaion Selah," meditation Selah, as if he had said, here is a matter worthy of observation and eternal meditation ; the righteous should never forget this, that the wicked perish in their own counsels, and are taken in their own net. An observation worthy to be engraven in every religious person's bosom, that God will one time or other be known among the wicked by his most severe judgments executed upon them, though they would never learn by his patience and mercies to acknowledge him for their Lord. Thus far of the matter. Now it remains for a conclusion to unfold the several instructions which " Selah " afforded unto the congregation, which are these six.

1st. It served as a *note of attention and inattention of the mind* to what was sung or said, Ps. iii. v. 2—8, that wheresoever they cast an eye upon " Selah," they might conceive they heard the Lord's voice from heaven speaking. " Hear this, all ye people, give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world. Both high and low, rich and poor together." Ps. xlix. 1, 2. That as their voices were lift up in singing, so much more their hearts and affections might be elevated, that their voice and hearts being both in tune, the joint harmony might be sweet in the ears of the Lord.

2ndly. It was a note of affirmation, whereby they declared their consent and assent unto the truth delivered, as we say when we approve of another's speech ; right, just, you say truly, it is most certain. So their " Selah " was as much as true, certain, excellent. Instance, Ps. iii. 4, " I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. *Selah," i.e.*, It is most certain that the Lord knows the secrets of our hearts, and is the judge of the quick and dead, and will pass most righteous sentence upon us, giving to every man according to his deeds in the flesh, whether good or evil. Ps. lii. 3. " Thou lovest evil more than good ; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. *Selah.*"—that is to say, undeniable, we all confess it, our own experience and sorrows have made us know this, that those who have not the fear of God before their eyes love to speak and do all the mischief they are able against God's people, to *hurt* them rather than *help* them, to wound their innocent reputation rather than preserve it.

3rdly. It was a devout *ejaculation* of the heart and soul unto God, wishing and desiring the *accomplishment* of what was spoken or promised. Instance, Habak. iii. 13.—" Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people. *Selah.*" As if he had said, Lord, I beseech thee, evermore go out so to deliver thine anointed. Ps. lv. 17—19. " Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud : and he shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me ; for there were many with me. God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. *Selah," i.e., O Lord, I entreat thee*, ever bow down an ear unto my humble suit, and rise up against them that rise up against me.

4thly. It denoted their *admiration* at some strange, unusual effect, whether the work of God, or wickedness of man. Ps. lvii. 3. " He shall send from heaven and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. *Selah," i.e.*, Oh, wonderful and admirable goodness of God, that is pleased to send sometimes his angel from heaven, always his mercy and truth, to deliver his poor perplexed servants from them that are too strong and mighty for them, Ps. liv. 3. " Strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul : they have not set God before them. *Selah," i.e., Oh, horrible impiety* and cruelty to hunt after the life of the saints, and cast the God of life and his remembrance behind their backs.

5thly. *Of humiliation and consternation of their mind*, by the consideration of God's incomprehensible majesty, and their own great frailty and misery. Instance, Ps. lxvi. 7. " He ruleth by his power for ever ; his eyes behold the nations : let not the rebellious exalt themselves. *Selah," i.e.*, here is matter of humiliation before the King of all the world, Ps. lxviii. 7, 8. " O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness. *Selah," i.e.*, my very heart trembled to consider ; I am moved out of my place, to reflect upon that majesty before whom " the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence

of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." Ps. xxxix. 11. "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. *Selah.*" As if he should say, this may humble the proudest heart in the world, and cast him down to the ground.

6thly. *It was a note of Doxology and praising of God* in a special manner, not much unlike, or the very same with this, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever." As for example, "All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee, they shall sing to thy name. *Selah,*" Ps. lxvi. 4. "Yea, Lord, in thee will we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. *Selah,*" Ps. xliv. 8. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; so be it, even so be it." Ps. lxxii. 18, 19.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 6.—"*Man walketh in a vain shew.*" I see that we who live are nothing else but images, and a vain shadow.—*Sophocles.*

Verse 6 (*first clause*).—When in the Bristol election, his competitor died, Burke said, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue."—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 6.—Every carnal man walks *in a vain shew,* and yet how vain is he of his shew of vanity! He is "*disquieted in vain,*" and it is only vanity which disquiets him. He labours all his life for the profit of riches, and yet in death his riches will not profit him. He that views an ox grazing in a fat pasture, concludes that he is but preparing for the day of slaughter.—*William Secker.*

Verse 6.—"*He heapeth up riches.*" This is the great foolishness and disease, especially of old age, that the less way a man has to go, he makes the greater provision for it. When the hands are stiff, and fit for no other labour, they are fitted and composed for scraping together.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 6.—"*He heapeth up riches.*" The Hebrew word rendered, "*He heapeth up,*" signifies *to rake together;* in which there is an allusion to the husbandman's collecting his corn together before he carries it to the barn. The metaphor is elegant, intimating the precariousness of human life, and the vanity of human acquisitions; which though heaped up together like corn, by one person, may soon become the possession of another.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 6.—

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day.
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

William Shakspeare.

Verse 6.—The plentiful showers of tears which stand in our eyes when we come from the womb, and when we draw to the tomb, are faithful witnesses of man's vanity. We bid the world "good morrow" with grief, and "good night" with a groan.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 7.—"*Lord, what wait I for?*"

At first her mother earth she holdeth deare,
And doth embrace the world and worldly things:
She flies close by the ground and houers here
And mounts not up with her celestiall wings.

Yet vnder heauen she cannot light on ought
That with her heauenly nature doth agree;
She cannot rest, she cannot fix her thought,
She cannot in this world contented bee.

Then as a bee which among weeds doth fall,
Which seeme sweet flowers with lustre fresh and gay
She lights on that, and this, and tasteth all,
But pleased with none, doth rise, and soare away.

So, when the soule finds here no true content,
And like Noah's doue, can no sure footing take,
She doth returne from whence she first was sent,
And flies to Him, that first her wings did make.

Sir John Davies.

Verse 7.—

O loose this frame, this knot of man untie,
That my free soul may use her wing,
Which is now pinioned with mortality,
As an entangled, hamper'd thing.
What have I left that I should stay and groan?
The most of me to heaven is fled;
My thoughts and joys are all pack'd up and gone,
And for their old acquaintance plead.

George Herbert.

Verse 7.—"*My hope is in thee.*" Sweet is it that our hope should rest in him who is never shaken; should abide in him who never changeth; should bind us to him who can hold us fast to himself, who alone is the full contentment of the soul; should, as it were, enter into him; since "*in* him is our being," who is love. —*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*, 1853.

Verse 8.—*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*" Let not their prosperity and my misery give them occasion to deride and reproach me for my serving of thee and trusting in thee to so little purpose.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 8.—"*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*" Doubt not this; that of all the bitter agony which will be the portion of the lost soul at that, "Depart, ye cursed," not the least will be the bitter reproaches and derision of those evil spirits who have seduced him to his ruin. "For this morsel of meat to have sold thy birthright! For the fleshly pleasures of a few days to have bartered thine eternal jewel! For a few grains of yellow earth to have missed the city with streets of gold, and gates of several pearls! O fool, beyond all folly! O madman, beyond all insanity! Truly we have need to pray with all earnestness, '*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*' "—*Origen, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 9.—"*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*" See David's carriage here; it was a patience not constrained, but from satisfaction of spirit: he saw love in his affliction, and that sweetened his soul.—*Joseph Symonds.*

Verse 9.—"*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*" God is training up his children here. This is the true character of his dealings with them. The education of his saints is the object he has in view. It is training for the kingdom; it is education for eternity. . . . It is the discipline of love. Every step of it is kindness. There is no wrath nor vengeance in any part of the process. The discipline of the school may be harsh and stern; but that of the family is love, We are sure of this; and the consolation which it affords is unutterable. Love will not wrong us. There will be no needless suffering. Were this but kept in mind there would be fewer hard thoughts of God amongst men, even when his strokes are most severe. I know not a better illustration of what the feelings of a saint should be, in the hour of bitterness, than the case of Richard Cameron's father. The aged saint was in prison "for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." The bleeding head of his martyred son was brought to him by his unfeeling persecutors, and he was asked derisively if he knew it. "I know it, I know it,"—said the father, as he kissed the mangled forehead of his fair-haired son—"it is my son's, my own dear son's! It is the Lord! good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me or mine, but who hath made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days."—*Horatius Bonar, in "The Night of Weeping,"* 1847.

Verse 9.—"*Because thou didst it.*" This holy man had a breach made both at his body and spirit at this time; he was sick and sad; yet he remembers from whose hand the blow came. Thou, Lord, didst it; thou, whom I love dearly, and so can take it kindly; thou whom I have offended, and so take it patiently; yea, thou, who mightest have cast me into a bed of flames, instead of my bed of sickness, and therefore I accept thy correction thankfully. Thus he catches at the blow without retorting it back upon God by any quarrelling discontented language. —*William Gurnall.*

Verse 9.—*"Because thou didst it."* We digest not a blow from our equals, but a blow from our king we can well digest. If the King of kings lays his hand on our backs, let us, beloved, lay our hands on our mouths. I am sure this stopped David's mouth from venting fretful speeches. "I held my tongue and said nothing." Why didst thou so, David? *"Because thou, Lord, didst it;"* and God gives this testimony of such an one; that he is a prudent man that keeps silence at an evil time. Amos v. 13.—*Nicholas Estwick, B.D.*, 1644.

Verse 9.—Perkins, in his *"Salve for a Sick Man,"* gives the "last words" of many holy men, among others of Calvin:—"I held my tongue, because thou, Lord, hast done it—I mourned as a dove—Lord, thou grindest me to powder, but it sufficeth me because it is thy hand."

Verse 9.—I wondered once at providence, and called white providence black and unjust, that I should be smothered in a town where no soul will take Christ off my hand. But providence hath another lustre* with God than with my bleared eyes. I proclaim myself a blind body, who knoweth not black and white, in the unco† course of God's providence. Suppose that Christ should set hell where heaven is and devils up in glory beside the elect angels (which yet cannot be), I would I had a heart to acquiesce in his way, without further dispute. I see that infinite wisdom is the mother of his judgments, and that his ways pass finding out. I cannot learn, but I desire to learn, to bring my thoughts, will, and lusts in under‡ Christ's feet, that he may trample upon them. But, alas! I am still upon Christ's wrong side.—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 9.—A little girl, in the providence of God, was born deaf and dumb. She was received, and instructed, at an institution established for these afflicted ones. A visitor was one day requested to examine the children thus sadly laid aside from childhood's common joys. Several questions were asked, and quickly answered by means of a slate and pencil. At length the gentleman wrote, *"Why were you born deaf and dumb?"* A look of anguish clouded for the moment the expressive face of the little girl; but it quickly passed, as she took her slate, and wrote, *"Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight."—Mrs. Rogers, in "The Shepherd King."*

Verse 10.—*"Remove thy plague away from me:"* thy plague and mine; thine by affliction, mine by passion; thine because thou didst send it, mine because I endure it; thine because it comes from thy justice, mine because it answers my injustice; remit what I have done, and remove what thou hast done. But whosoever laid it on, the Lord will take off.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 10.—*"Remove,"* etc. Having first prayed off his sin, he would now pray off his pain, though it less troubled him; and for ease he repaireth to *Jehovah that healeth*, as well as woundeth. Hosea vi. 1.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11.—*"Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth."* The meaning may be, As the moth crumbles into dust under the slightest pressure, or the gentlest touch, so man dissolves with equal ease, and vanishes into darkness, under the finger of the Almighty.—*Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

Verse 11.—*"Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth."* Moths I must not omit naming. I once saw some knives, the back bone hafts of which were said to have been half-consumed by them. I also saw the remains of a hair-seated sofa which had been devoured. It is no uncommon thing to find dresses consumed in a single night. In Isaiah li. 6, "wax old" probably refers to a garment that is moth-eaten. So in Psalm vi. 7, and xxxi. 9, "*consumed*" means moth-eaten; and again in Psalm xxxix. 11.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 11.—*"Like a moth."* The moths of the East are very large and beautiful, but short lived. After a few showers these splendid insects may be seen fluttering in every breeze, but the dry weather, and their numerous enemies, soon consign them to the common lot. Thus the beauty of man consumes away like that of this gay rover, dressed in his robes of purple, and scarlet, and green.—*John Kitto.*

Verse 11.—The body of man is as a "garment" to the soul: in this garment sin hath lodged a "moth," which, by degrees, fretteth and weareth away, first, the beauty, then the strength, and, finally, the contexture of its parts. Whoever has watched the progress of a consumption, or any other lingering distemper, nay, the

---

* Shining; appearance. † Strange. ‡ Close under.

slow and silent devastations of time alone, in the human frame, will need no farther illustration of this just and affecting similitude; but will discern at once the propriety of the reflection which follows upon it.—*" Surely every man is vanity."* *George Horne.*

Verse 11.—*" Surely every man is vanity."* What is greatness? Can we predicate it of man, independently of his qualities as an immortal being? or of his actions, independently of principles and motives? Then the glitter of nobility is not superior to the plumage of the peacock; nor the valour of Alexander to the fury of a tiger; nor the sensual delights of Epicurus to those of any animal that roams the forest.—*Ebenezer Porter, D.D., in Lectures on Homiletics,* 1834.

Verse 12.—*" Hear my prayer, O Lord,"* etc. Now, in this prayer of David, we find three things, which are the chief qualifications of all acceptable prayers. The first is *humility.* He humbly confesses his sins, and his own weakness and worthlessness. We are not to put on a stoical, flinty kind of spirit under our affliction, that so we may seem to shun womanish repinings and complaints, lest we run into the other evil, of *despising the hand of God,* but we are to humble our proud hearts, and break our unruly passions. . . . The second qualification of this prayer is, *fervency* and *importunity,* which appears in the elegant gradation of the words, *" Hear my prayer,"* my words; if not that, yet *" Give ear to my cry,"* which is louder; and if that prevail not, yet, *" Hold not thy peace at my tears,"* which is the loudest of all; so David, elsewhere, calls it *" the voice of my weeping."* . . . The third qualification is *faith,* " He who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6. And, certainly, as he that comes to God must believe this, so he that believes this, cannot but come to God; and if he be not presently answered, " he that believes makes no haste," he resolves patiently to wait for the Lord, and to go to no other.—*Condensed from Robert Leighton.*

Verse 12.—*" Hold not thy peace at my tears."* We may, in all humility, plead our heart-breakings and weepings in sense of want of mercies which we crave, and our pantings and faintings after the same.—*Thomas Cobbett.*

Verse 12.—*" For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."* Both in thy judgment expressed (Levit. xxv. 23), and in their own opinion (Heb. xi. 13), Upon which account thou didst take a special care of them, and therefore do so to me also.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 12.—*" I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner."* How settled soever their condition be, yet this is the temper of the saints upon earth—to count themselves but strangers. All men indeed are strangers and sojourners, but the saints do best discern it, and most freely acknowledge it. Wicked men have no firm dwelling upon earth, but that is against their intentions; their inward thought and desire is that they may abide for ever; they are strangers against their wills, their abode is uncertain in the world, and they cannot help it. And pray mark, there are two distinct words used in this case, *strangers* and *sojourners.* A stranger is one that hath his abode in a foreign country, that is not a native and a denizen of the place, though he liveth there, and in opposition to the natives he is called a stranger: as if a Frenchman should live in England, he is a stranger. But a *sojourner* is one that intendeth not to settle, but only passeth through a place, and is in motion travelling homeward. So the children of God in relation to a country of their own in another place, namely, heaven, they are denizens there, but strangers in the world; and they are sojourners and pilgrims in regard of their motion and journey towards their country.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 12.—*" A stranger."* 1. A stranger is one that is absent from his country, and from his father's house: so are we, heaven is our country, God is there, and Christ is there. 2. A stranger in a foreign country is not known, nor valued according to his birth and breeding; so the saints walk up and down in the world like princes in disguise. 3. Strangers are liable to inconveniences, so are godly men in the world. Religion, saith Tertullian, is like a strange plant brought from a foreign country, and doth not agree with the nature of the soil, it thriveth not in the world. 4. A stranger is patient, standeth not for ill usage, and is contented with pilgrims' fare and lodging. We are now abroad, and must expect hardship. 5. A stranger is wary, that he may not give offence, and incur the hatred and displeasure of the natives. 6. A stranger is thankful for the least favour; so we must be thankfully contented with the things God hath bestowed upon us: anything in a strange country is much. 7. A stranger, that hath a journey to go, would pass over it as soon as

he can, and so we, who have a journey to heaven desire to be dissolved. 8. A stranger buyeth not such things as he cannot carry with him ; he doth not buy trees, house, household stuff, but jewels and pearls, and such things as are portable. Our great care should be to get the jewels of the covenant, the graces of God's Spirit, those things that will abide with us. 9. A stranger's heart is in his country ; so is a saint's. 10. A stranger is inquisitive after the way, fearing lest he should go amiss, so is a Christian. 11. A stranger provides for his return, as a merchant, that he may return richly laden. So we must appear before God in Sion. What manner of persons ought we to be ? Let us return from our travel well provided.—*Condensed from Thomas Manton.*

Verse 13.—"*O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*" Man in his corrupt state is like Nebuchadnezzar, he hath a beast's heart, that craves no more than the satisfaction of his sensual appetite ; but when renewed by grace, then his understanding returns to him, by which he is enabled in praying for temporals to elevate his desires to a nobler end. Doth David pray that some farther time may be added to his temporal life ? It is not out of a fond love for this world, but to prepare himself the better for another. Is he comforted with hopes of a longer stay here ? It is not this world's carnal pleasures that kindle this joy in his holy breast, but the advantage that thereby he shall have for praising God in the land of the living. . . . . "*O spare me, that I may recover strength.*" David was not yet recovered out of that sin which had brought him exceeding low as you may perceive, ver. 10, 11. And the good man cannot think of dying with any willingness till his heart be in a holier frame : and for the peace of the gospel, serenity of conscience, and inward joy ; alas ! all unholiness is to it as poison is to the spirits which drink them up.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 13.—"*O spare me,*" etc. Attachment to life, the feeling cherished by the Psalmist, when he thus appealed to the Sovereign of the universe, varies in its character with the occasions and the sentiments by which it is elicited and confirmed. Take one view of it, and you pronounce it *criminal ;* take another, and you pronounce it *innocent ;* take a third, and you pronounce it *laudable.* I. Life may inspire a *criminal* attachment, warranting our censure. The most obvious and aggravated case is that in which the attachment has its foundations in the opportunities which life affords, of procuring " the wages of unrighteousness," and " the pleasures of sin." II. Life may inspire an *innocent* attachment, awakening our sympathy . . . . . Life is a scene in which we often descry a verdant and luxuriant spot, teeming with health, and ease, and harmony, and joy. We have beheld the husbands and the wives whose interwoven regards have, from year to year, alleviated all their afflictions, and heightened all their privileges. We have beheld the parents and the children whose fellowship has yielded them, through the shifting seasons, a daily feast. There are indulgent masters, and faithful servants ; some neighbourhoods are undisturbed ; some Christian societies are exquisitely attractive ; here and there we have intercourse with those individuals in whom are seen the beauties of high character irradiated by the beams of general prosperity. You would pronounce no censure on a man thus happily connected, were he, when beginning to languish, as one " going the way of all the earth, to cry," "*O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*" III. The last view which is has been proposed to take of human life, shows that it may inspire a *laudable* attachment, at once challenging our approbation, and urging us to bring our minds under its influence. The language before us admits of being illustrated as the prayer of a *penitent,* a *saint,* and a *philanthropist.* 1. Commend him who pleads for life as a *penitent,* Was it recently that the Holy Spirit first wounded him with the arrows of conviction ? Perhaps, he doubts the source, the quality, and the result, of his powerful feelings. He knows that we may be solemnly impressed, without being converted. There are many considerations which entitle to favourable opinion those who, not having arrived at a view of their moral state, at once evident and encouraging, wish earnestly to live, till grace shall have carried them from victory to victory, and enabled them " to make " their " calling and election sure." Even they may fall from their steadfastness ; and these words, " O spare me, that I may recover my strength," may proceed from the lips of a backslider, once more blushing, trembling, and petitioning to be restored. 2. Commend him, in the next place, who pleads for life, as a *saint.* . . . The distinguished office of pleading, acting, and suffering, for the advancement of the divine honour among the profane, the

sensual, the formal, and the worldly is delegated, exclusively, to "the saints which are upon the earth." Yet, surely he whose attachment to life is strongly enhanced by a commission which dooms him to the contradiction of sinners, and defers "the fulness of joy," a saint so magnanimous and devoted, puts forth the expressions of a piety which the very angels are compelled to revere. 3. Commend him, finally, who pleads for life as a *philanthropist.* I refer to the generous *patron,* a man intent on doing good. I would also refer to a fond *parent.* I would now refer to "*a preacher of righteousness,*" "a good minister of Jesus Christ."—*Outline of a sermon entitled "Attachment to Life," preached by Joseph Hughes, M.A., as a Funeral Sermon for Rev. John Owen, M.A.,* 1822.

Verse 13.—May not the very elect and faithful themselves fear the day of judgment, and be far from fetching comfort at it? I answer, he may. First, at his first conversion and soon after, before he have gotten a full persuasion of the remission of his sins. And again, in some spiritual desertion, when the Lord seems to leave a man to himself, as he did David and others, he may fear to think of the same. And lastly, when he hath fallen into some great sin after he is a strong man in Christ, he may fear death and judgment, and be constrained to pray with Job and David, "*O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*"—*John Barlow's Sermon,* 1618.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1, 2.—"*I was dumb,* etc." I. There is a time to be silent. He had been enabled to do this when reproached and unjustly accused by others. He did it for good; others might attribute it to sullenness, or pride, or timidity, or conscious guilt; but he did it for good. Breathe upon a polished mirror and it will evaporate and leave it brighter than before; endeavour to wipe it off, and the mark will remain. II. There is a time to meditate in silence. The greater the silence without, often the greater commotion within. "*His heart was hot.*" The more he thought, the warmer he grew. The fire of pity and compassion, the fire of love, the fire of holy zeal burned within him. III. There is a time to speak. "*Then spake I.*" The time to speak is when the truth is clear and strong in the mind, and the feeling of the truth is burning in the heart. The emotions burst forth as from a volcano. Jer. xx. 8, 9. The language should always be a faithful representation of the mind and the heart.—*G. Rogers, Tutor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle College.*

Verse 2.—There is a sevenfold silence. 1. A *stoical* silence. 2. A *politic* silence. 3. A *foolish* silence. 4. A *sullen* silence. 5. A *forced* silence. 6. A *despairing* silence. 7. A *prudent,* a *holy,* a *gracious* silence.—*Thomas Brooks' "Mute Christian."*

Verse 4.—"*Make me to know mine end.*" I. *What we may desire to know about our end. Not* its *date, place, circumstances,* but 1. *Its nature.* Will it be the end of saint or sinner? 2. *Its certainty.* 3. *Its nearness.* 4. *Its issues.* 5. *Its requirements.* In the shape of attention, preparation, passport. II. *Why ask God to make us know it?* Because *the knowledge is important, difficult to acquire, and can be effectually imparted by the Lord only.—W. Jackson.*

Verse 4.—David prays, I. That he may be enabled continually to keep in view the end of life: all things should be judged by their *end.* "Then understood I their end." Life may be honourable, and cheerful, and virtuous here; but the *end!* What will it be? II. That he may be diligent in the performance of all the duties of this life. The measure of his days, how short, how much to be done, how little time to do it in! III. He prays that he may gain much instruction and benefit from the frailties of life. "*That I may know,*" etc. My frailties may make me more humble, more diligent, while I am able for active service; more dependent upon divine strength, more patient and submissive to the divine will, more ripe for heaven.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—Man is vanity, *i.e.,* he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe how emphatically this truth is expressed here. I. *Every* man is vanity, without

exception, high and low, rich and poor. II. He is so at his *best estate;* when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, etc. III. He is *altogether* vanity, as vain as you can imagine. IV. *Verily* he is so. V. *Selah* is annexed, as a note commanding observation.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 6.—The vanity of man, as mortal, is here instanced in three things, and the vanity of each shown. I. The vanity of our joys and honours: "*Surely every man walketh in a vain show.*" II. The vanity of our griefs and fears: "*Surely they are disquieted in vain.*" III. The vanity of our cares and toils: "*He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 6.—The world's trinity consists, 1. In fruitless honours: what appears to them to be substantial honours are but "*a vain show.*" 2. In needless cares. "*They are disquieted in vain.*" Imaginary cares are substituted for real ones. 3. In useless riches; such as yield no lasting satisfaction to themselves, or in their descent to others.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 7.—"*What wait I for?*" 1. *For what salvation as a sinner?* Of works or grace—from Sinai or Calvary. 2. *For what consolation as a sufferer?* Earthly or heavenly? 3. *For what supply as a suppliant?* Meagre or bountiful? Present or future? 4. *For what communication as a servant?* Miraculous or ordinary? Pleasing or unacceptable? 5. *For what instruction as a pupil?* Mental or spiritual? Elating or humbling? Ornamental or useful? 6. *For what inheritance as a heir?* Sublunary or celestial?—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 7.—I. An urgent occasion. "*And now Lord,*" etc. There are seasons that should lead us specially to look up to God, and say, "*Now, Lord.*" "Father, the hour is come." II. A devout exclamation, "*Now, Lord, what wait I for?*" Where is my expectation? Where my confidence? To whom shall I look? I am nothing, the world is nothing, all earthly sources of confidence and consolation fail: "*What wait I for?*" In life, in death, in a dying world, in a coming judgment, in an eternity at hand; what is it that I need?—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 8.—I. Prayer should be *general:* "*Deliver me from all my transgressions.*" We often need anew to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Afflictions should remind us of our sins. If we pray to be delivered from all transgressions, we are sure to be delivered from the one for which affliction was sent. II. Prayer should be *particular:* "*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*" Suffer me not so to speak or show impatience in affliction as to give occasion even to the foolish to blaspheme. The thought that many watch for our halting should be a preservative from sin.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 9.—I. The *occasion* referred to. "*I was dumb,*" etc. We are not told what the particular trial was, that each one may apply it to his own affliction, and because all are to be viewed in the same light. II. The *conduct* of the Psalmist upon that particular occasion: "*I opened not my mouth.*" 1. Not in anger and rebellion against God in murmurs or complaints. 2. Not in impatience, or complaining, or angry feelings against men. III. The *reason* he assigns for this conduct: "*Because thou didst it.*"—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 10.—I. *Afflictions are sent by God.* "*Thy strokes.*" They are strokes of *his* hand, not of the rod of the law, but of the shepherd's rod. Every affliction is *his* stroke. II. *Afflictions are removed by God.* "*Remove.*" He asks not for miracles, but that God in his own way, in the use of natural means, would interpose for his deliverance. We should seek his blessing upon the means employed for our deliverance both by ourselves and others. "*Cause to remove,*" etc. III. *Afflictions have their end from God.* "*I am consumed by the conflict,*" etc. God has a controversy with his people. It is a conflict between his will and their wills. The Psalmist owns himself conquered and subdued in the struggle. We should be more anxious that this end should be accomplished than that the affliction should be removed, and when this is accomplished the affliction will be removed.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 10.—I. The *cause* of our trials: "*for iniquity.*" Oh, this trial is come to take away my comforts, my peace of mind, and the divine smile! No, this is all the fruit to take away their sin—the dross, none of the gold—sin, nothing but sin. II. The *effect* of our trials. All that he counted desirable in this life, but is not for his real good, is "*consumed.*" His robes which are beautiful in men's esteem are moth-eaten, but the robe of righteousness upon his soul cannot decay. III. The *design* of our trials. They are not penal inflictions, but friendly *rebukes* and fatherly *corrections.* On Christ our Surety the penal consequences were laid, upon us their paternal chastisements only. IV. The *reasonableness* of our trials. "*Surely every*

man is vanity." How in a world like this could any expect to be exempt from trials! The world is the same to the Christian as before, and his body is the same. He has a converted soul in an unconverted body, and how can he escape the external ills of life?—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 12.—David pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction. I. It had set him a weeping. II. It had set him a praying. III. It had helped to wean him from the world.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—Am I a stranger and a sojourner with God? Let me realise, let me exemplify the condition. I. Let me look for *the treatment* such characters commonly meet with. II. And surely if any of my own nation be near me, I shall *be intimate with them.* III. Let me *not be entangled* in the affairs of this life. IV. Let my affection be *set on things that are above*, and my conversation be always *in heaven.* V. Let me be *not impatient for home;* but *prizing it.*—*W. Jay.*

Verse 13.—I. The *subject* of his petition—not that he may escape death and live always in this life, because he knows that he must go hence; but 1. That he may be recovered from his afflictions; and, 2. That he may continue longer in this life. Such a prayer is lawful when offered in submission to the will of God. II. The *reasons* for this petition. 1. That he may remove by his future life the calumnies that had been heaped upon him. 2. That he may have brighter evidences of his interest in the divine favour. 3. That he may become a blessing to others, his family and nation. 4. That he might have greater peace and comfort in death; and, 5. That he might "have an entrance ministered more abundantly," etc.—*G. Rogers.*

PSALM XL.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician. *Well might so exceedingly precious a Psalm be specially committed to the most skilled of the sacred musicians. The noblest music should be made tributary to a subject so incomparable. The dedication shows that the song was intended for public worship, and was not a merely personal hymn, as its being in the first person singular might lead us to suppose.* A Psalm of David. *This is conclusive as to the authorship: lifted by the Holy Spirit into the region of prophecy, David was honoured thus to write concerning a far greater than himself.*

SUBJECT.—*Jesus is evidently here, and although it might not be a violent wresting of language to see both David and his Lord, both Christ and the church, the double comment might involve itself in obscurity, and therefore we shall let the sun shine even though this should conceal the stars. Even if the New Testament were not so express upon it, we should have concluded that David spoke of our Lord in verses* 6—9, *but the apostle in* Heb. x. 5—9, *puts all conjecture out of court, and confines the meaning to Him who came into the world to do the Father's will.*

DIVISION.—*From verses* 1—3, *is a personal thanksgiving, followed by a general declaration of Jehovah's goodness to his saints,* 4, 5. *In verses* 6—10, *we have an avowal of dedication to the Lord's will; verses* 11—17, *contain a prayer for deliverance from pressing trouble, and for the overthrow of enemies.*

EXPOSITION.

I WAITED patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my goings.

3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see *it,* and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

1. "*I waited patiently for the Lord.*" Patient waiting upon God was a special characteristic of our Lord Jesus. Impatience never lingered in his heart, much less escaped his lips. All through his agony in the garden, his trial of cruel mockings before Herod and Pilate, and his passion on the tree, he waited in omnipotence of patience. No glance of wrath, no word of murmuring, no deed of vengeance came from God's patient Lamb; he waited and waited on; was patient, and patient to perfection, far excelling all others who have according to their measure glorified God in the fires. Job on the dunghill does not equal Jesus on the cross. The Christ of God wears the imperial crown among the patient. Did the Only Begotten wait, and shall we be petulant and rebellious? "*And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.*" Neither Jesus the head, nor any one of the members of his body, shall ever wait upon the Lord in vain. Mark the figure of inclining, as though the suppliant cried out of the lowest depression, and condescending love stooped to hear his feeble moans. What a marvel is it that our Lord should have to cry as we do, and wait as we do, and should receive the Father's help after the same process of faith and pleading as must be gone through by ourselves! The Saviour's prayers among the midnight mountains and in Gethsemane expound this verse. The Son of David was brought very low, but he rose to victory; and here he teaches us how to conduct our conflicts so as to succeed after the same glorious pattern of triumph. Let us arm ourselves with the same mind; and panoplied in patience, armed with prayer, and girt with faith, let us maintain the Holy War.

2. "*He brought me up also out of an horrible pit.*" When our Lord bore in his own person the terrible curse which was due to sin, he was so cast down as to be like a prisoner in a deep, dark, fearful dungeon, amid whose horrible glooms the captive heard a noise as of rushing torrents, while overhead resounded the tramp of furious foes. Our Lord in his anguish was like a captive in the *oubliettes,* forgotten of all mankind, immured amid horror, darkness, and desolation. Yet the Lord Jehovah made him to ascend from all his abasement; he retraced his steps from that deep hell of anguish into which he had been cast as our substitute. He who thus delivered our surety *in extremis,* will not fail to liberate us from our far

lighter griefs. "*Out of the miry clay.*" The sufferer was as one who cannot find a foothold, but slips and sinks. The figure indicates not only positive misery as in the former figure, but the absence of solid comfort by which sorrow might have been rendered supportable. Once give a man good foothold, and a burden is greatly lightened, but to be loaded and to be placed on slimy, slippery clay, is to be tried doubly. Reader, with humble gratitude, adore the dear Redeemer who, for thy sake, was deprived of all consolation while surrounded with every form of misery; remark his gratitude at being upborne amid his arduous labours and sufferings, and if thou too hast experienced the divine help, be sure to join thy Lord in this song. "*And set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*" The Redeemer's work is done. He reposes on the firm ground of his accomplished engagements; he can never suffer again; for ever does he reign in glory. What a comfort to know that Jesus our Lord and Saviour stands on a sure foundation in all that he is and does for us, and his goings forth in love are not liable to be cut short by failure in years to come, for God has fixed him firmly. He is for ever and eternally able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing that in the highest heavens he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Jesus is the true Joseph taken from the pit to be Lord of all. It is something more than a "sip of sweetness" to remember that if we are cast like our Lord into the lowest pit of shame and sorrow, we shall by faith rise to stand on the same elevated, sure, and everlasting rock of divine favour and faithfulness.

3. "*And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.*" At the passover, before his passion, our Lord sang one of the grand old Psalms of praise; but what is the music of his heart now, in the midst of his redeemed! What a song is that in which his glad heart for ever leads the chorus of the elect! Not Miriam's tabour nor Moses' triumphant hymn o'er Mizraim's chivalry can for a moment rival that ever new and exulting song. Justice magnified and grace victorious; hell subdued and heaven glorified; death destroyed and immortality established; sin o'erthrown and righteousness resplendent; what a theme for a hymn in that day when our Lord drinketh the red wine new with us all in our heavenly Father's kingdom! Even on earth, and before his great passion, he foresaw the joy which was set before him, and was sustained by the prospect. "*Our God.*" The God of Jesus, the God of Israel, "my God and your God." How will *we* praise him, but, ah! Jesus will be the chief player on our stringed instruments; he will lead the solemn hallelujah which shall go up from the sacramental host redeemed by blood. "*Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.*" A multitude that no man can number shall see the griefs and triumphs of Jesus, shall tremble because of their sinful rejection of him, and then through grace shall receive faith and become trusters in Jehovah. Here is our Lord's reward. Here is the assurance which makes preachers bold and workers persevering. Reader, are you one among the many? Note the way of salvation, a sight, a fear, a trust! Do you know what these mean by possessing and practising them in your own soul? Trusting in the Lord is the evidence, nay, the essence of salvation. He who is a true believer is evidently redeemed from the dominion of sin and Satan.

4 Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

5 Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done, and thy thoughts *which* are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: *if* I would declare and speak *of them*, they are more than can be numbered.

4. "*Blessed.*" This is an exclamation similar to that of the first Psalm, "Oh, the happiness of the man." God's blessings are emphatic, "I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed," indeed and in very truth. "*Is that man that maketh the Lord his trust.*" Faith obtaineth promises. A simple, single-eyed confidence in God is the sure mark of blessedness. A man may be as poor as Lazarus, as hated as Mordecai, as sick as Hezekiah, as lonely as Elijah, but while his hand of faith can keep its hold on God, none of his outward afflictions can prevent his being numbered among the blessed: but the wealthiest and most prosperous man who has no faith is accursed, be he who he may. "*And respecteth not the proud.*" The proud expect all men to bow down and do them reverence, as if the worship of the golden calves were again set up in Israel; but believing men are too noble to honour

mere money-bags, or cringe before bombastic dignity. The righteous pay their respect to humble goodness, rather than to inflated self-consequence. Our Lord Jesus was in this our bright example. No flattery of kings and great ones ever fell from his lips; he gave no honour to dishonourable men. The haughty were never his favourites. "*Nor such as turn aside to lies.*" Heresies and idolatries are lies, and so are avarice, worldliness, and pleasure-seeking. Woe to those who follow such deceptions. Our Lord was ever both the truth and the lover of truth, and the father of lies had no part in him. We must never pay deference to apostates, time-servers, and false teachers; they are an ill leaven, and the more we purge ourselves of them the better; they are blessed whom God preserves from all error in creed and practice. Judged by this verse, many apparently happy persons must be the reverse of blessed, for anything in the shape of a purse, a fine equipage, or a wealthy establishment, commands their reverence, whether the owner be a rake or a saint, an idiot or a philosopher. Verily, were the arch-fiend of hell to start a carriage and pair, and live like a lord, he would have thousands who would court his acquaintance.

5. "*Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done.*" Creation, providence, and redemption, teem with wonders as the sea with life. Our special attention is called by this passage to the marvels which cluster around the cross and flash from it. The accomplished redemption achieves many ends, and compasses a variety of designs; the outgoings of the atonement are not to be reckoned up, the influences of the cross reach further than the beams of the sun. Wonders of grace beyond all enumeration take their rise from the cross; adoption, pardon, justification, and a long chain of godlike miracles of love proceed from it. Note that our Lord here speaks of the Lord as "my God." The man Christ Jesus claimed for himself and us a covenant relationship with Jehovah. Let our interest in our God be ever to us our peculiar treasure. "*And thy thoughts which are to us-ward.*" The divine thoughts march with the divine acts, for it is not according to God's wisdom to act without deliberation and counsel. All the divine thoughts are good and gracious towards his elect. God's thoughts of love are very many, very wonderful very practical! Muse on them, dear reader; no sweeter subject ever occupied your mind. God's thoughts of you are many, let not yours be few in return. "*They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee.*" Their sum is so great as to forbid alike analysis and numeration. Human minds fail to measure, or to arrange in order, the Lord's ways and thoughts; and it must always be so, for he hath said, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." No maze to lose oneself in like the labyrinth of love. How sweet to be outdone, overcome and overwhelmed by the astonishing grace of the Lord our God! "*If I would declare and speak of them,*" and surely this should be the occupation of my tongue at all seasonable opportunities, "*they are more than can be numbered;*" far beyond all human arithmetic they are multiplied; thoughts from all eternity, thoughts of my fall, my restoration, my redemption, my conversion, my pardon, my upholding, my perfecting, my eternal reward; the list is too long for writing, and the value of the mercies too great for estimation. Yet, if we cannot show forth all the works of the Lord, let us not make this an excuse for silence; for our Lord, who is in this our best example, often spake of the tender thoughts of the great Father.

6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book *it is* written of me.

8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

6. Here we enter upon one of the most wonderful passages in the whole of the Old Testament, a passage in which the incarnate Son of God is seen not through a glass darkly, but as it were face to face. "*Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire.*" In themselves considered, and for their own sakes, the Lord saw nothing

satisfactory in the various offerings of the ceremonial law. Neither the victim pouring forth its blood, nor the fine flour rising in smoke from the altar, could yield content to Jehovah's mind; he cared not for the flesh of bulls or of goats, neither had he pleasure in corn and wine, and oil. Typically these offerings had their worth, but when Jesus, the Antitype, came into the world, they ceased to be of value, as candles are of no estimation when the sun has arisen. "*Mine ears hast thou opened.*" Our Lord was quick to hear and perform his Father's will; his ears were as if excavated down to his soul; they were not closed up like Isaac's wells, which the Philistines filled up, but clear passages down to the fountains of his soul. The prompt obedience of our Lord is here the first idea. There is, however, no reason whatever to reject the notion that the digging of the ear here intended may refer to the boring of the ear of the servant, who refused out of love to his master to take his liberty at the year of jubilee; his perforated ear, the token of perpetual service, is a true picture of our blessed Lord's fidelity to his Father's business, and his love to his Father's children. Jesus irrevocably gave himself up to be the servant of servants for our sake and God's glory. The Septuagint, from which Paul quoted, has translated this passage, "A body hast thou prepared me:" how this reading arose it is not easy to imagine, but since apostolical authority has sanctioned the variation, we accept it as no mistake, but as an instance of various readings equally inspired. In any case, the passage represents the Only Begotten as coming into the world equipped for service; and in a real and material body, by actual life and death, putting aside all the shadows of the Mosaic law. "*Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.*" Two other forms of offering are here mentioned; tokens of gratitude and sacrifices for sin as typically presented are set aside; neither the general nor the private offerings are any longer demanded. What need of mere emblems when the substance itself is present? We learn from this verse that Jehovah values far more the obedience of the heart than all the imposing performances of ritualistic worship; and that our expiation from sin comes not to us as the result of an elaborate ceremonial, but as the effect of our great Substitute's obedience to the will of Jehovah.

7. "*Then said I.*" That is to say, when it was clearly seen that man's misery could not be remedied by sacrifices and offerings. It being certain that the mere images of atonement, and the bare symbols of propitiation were of no avail, the Lord Jesus, *in propriâ persona*, intervened. O blessed "then said I." Lord, ever give us to hear and feed on such living words as these, so peculiarly and personally thine own. "*Lo, I come.*" Behold, O heavens, and thou earth, and ye places under the earth! Here is something worthy of your intensest gaze. Sit ye down and watch with earnestness, for the invisible God comes in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an infant the Infinite hangs at a virgin's breast! Immanuel did not send but *come;* he came in his own personality, in all that constituted his essential self he came forth from the ivory palaces to the abodes of misery; he came promptly at the destined hour; he came with sacred alacrity as one freely offering himself. "*In the volume of the book it is written of me.*" In the eternal decree it is thus recorded. The mystic roll of predestination which providence gradually unfolds, contained within it, to the Saviour's knowledge, a written covenant, that in the fulness of time the divine I should descend to earth to accomplish a purpose which hecatombs of bullocks and rams could not achieve. What a privilege to find our names written in the book of life, and what an honour, since the name of Jesus heads the page! Our Lord had respect to his ancient covenant engagements, and herein he teaches us to be scrupulously just in keeping our word; have we so promised, is it so written in the book of remembrance? then let us never be defaulters.

8. "*I delight to do thy will, O my God.*" Our blessed Lord alone could completely do the will of God. The law is too broad for such poor creatures as we are to hope to fulfil it to the uttermost: but Jesus not only did the Father's will, but found a delight therein; from old eternity he had desired the work set before him; in his human life he was straitened till he reached the baptism of agony in which he magnified the law, and even in Gethsemane itself he chose the Father's will, and set aside his own. Herein is the essence of obedience, namely, in the soul's cheerful devotion to God: and our Lord's obedience, which is our righteousness, is in no measure lacking in this eminent quality. Notwithstanding his measureless griefs, our Lord found delight in his work, and for "the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." "*Yea, thy law is within my heart.*"

No outward, formal devotion was rendered by Christ; his heart was in his work, holiness was his element, the Father's will his meat and drink. We must each of us be like our Lord in this, or we shall lack the evidence of being his disciples. Where there is no heart work, no pleasure, no delight in God's law, there can be no acceptance. Let the devout reader adore the Saviour for the spontaneous and hearty manner in which he undertook the great work of our salvation.

9. "*I have preached righteousness in the great congregation.*" The purest morality and the highest holiness were preached by Jesus. Righteousness divine was his theme. Our Lord's whole life was a sermon, eloquent beyond compare, and it is heard each day by myriads. Moreover, he never shunned in his ministry to declare the whole counsel of God; God's great plan of righteousness he plainly set forth. He taught openly in the temple, and was not ashamed to be a faithful and a true witness. He was the great evangelist; the master of itinerant preachers; the head of the clan of open-air missionaries. O servants of the Lord, hide not your lights, but reveal to others what your God has revealed to you; and especially by your lives testify for holiness, be champions for the right, both in word and deed. "*Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest.*" Never either from love of ease, or fear of men, did the Great Teacher's lips become closed. He was instant in season and out of season. The poor listened to him, and princes heard his rebuke; Publicans rejoiced at him, and Pharisees raged, but to them both he proclaimed the truth from heaven. It is well for a tried believer when he can appeal to God and call him to witness that he has not been ashamed to bear witness for him; for rest assured if we are not ashamed to confess our God he will never be ashamed to own us. Yet what a wonder is here, that the Son of God should plead just as we plead, and urge just such arguments as would befit the mouths of his diligent ministers! How truly is he "made like unto his brethren."

10. "*I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart.*" On the contrary, "Never man spake like this man." God's divine plan of making men righteous was well known to him, and he plainly taught it. What was in our great Master's heart he poured forth in holy eloquence from his lips. The doctrine of righteousness by faith he spake with great simplicity of speech. Law and gospel equally found in him a clear expositor. "*I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation.*" Jehovah's fidelity to his promises and his grace in saving believers were declared by the Lord Jesus on many occasions, and are blessedly blended in the gospel which he came to preach. God, faithful to his own character, law and threatenings, and yet saving sinners, is a peculiar revelation of the gospel. God faithful to the saved ones evermore is the joy of the followers of Christ Jesus. "*I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.*" The tender as well as the stern attributes of God, our Lord Jesus fully unveiled. Concealment was far from the Great Apostle of our profession. Cowardice he never exhibited, hesitancy never weakened his language. He who as a child of twelve years spake in the temple among the doctors, and afterwards preached to five thousand at Gennesaret, and to the vast crowds at Jerusalem on that great day, the last day of the feast, was always ready to proclaim the name of the Lord, and could never be charged with unholy silence. He could be dumb when so the prophecy demanded and patience suggested, but otherwise, preaching was his meat and his drink, and he kept back nothing which would be profitable to his disciples. This in the day of his trouble, according to this Psalm, he used as a plea for divine aid. He had been faithful to his God, and now begs the Lord to be faithful to him. Let every dumb professor, tongue-tied by sinful shame, bethink himself how little he will be able to plead after this fashion in the day of his distress.

11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.

14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.

17 But I *am* poor and needy; *yet* the Lord thinketh upon me: thou *art* my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

11. "*Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord.*" Alas! these were to be for awhile withheld from our Lord while on the accursed tree, but meanwhile in his great agony he seeks for gentle dealing; and the coming of the angel to strengthen him was a clear answer to his prayer. He had been blessed aforetime in the desert, and now at the entrance of the valley of the shadow of death, like a true, trustful, and experienced man, he utters a holy, plaintive desire for the tenderness of heaven. He had not withheld his testimony to God's truth, now in return he begs his Father not to withhold his compassion. This verse might more correctly be read as a declaration of his confidence that help would not be refused; but whether we view this utterance as the cry of prayer, or the avowal of faith, in either case it is instructive to us who take our suffering Lord for an example, and it proves to us how thoroughly he was made like unto his brethren. "*Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.*" He had preached both of these, and now he asks for an experience of them, that he might be kept in the evil day and rescued from his enemies and his afflictions. Nothing endears our Lord to us more than to hear him thus pleading with strong crying and tears to him who was able to save. O Lord Jesus, in our nights of wrestling we will remember thee.

12. "*For innumerable evils have compassed me about.*" On every side he was beset with evils; countless woes environed the great Substitute for our sins. Our sins were innumerable, and so were his griefs. There was no escape for us from our iniquities, and there was no escape for him from the woes which we deserved. From every quarter evils accumulated about the blessed One, although in his heart evil found no place. "*Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up.*" He had no sin, but sins were laid on him, and he took them as if they were his. "He was made sin for us." The transfer of sin to the Saviour was real, and produced in him as man the horror which forbade him to look into the face of God, bowing him down with crushing anguish and woe intolerable. O my soul, what would thy sins have done for thee eternally if the Friend of sinners had not condescended to take them all upon himself? Oh, blessed Scripture! "The Lord hath made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all." Oh, marvellous depth of love, which could lead the perfectly immaculate to stand in the sinner's place, and bear the horror of great trembling which sin must bring upon those conscious of it. "*They are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.*" The pains of the divine penalty were beyond compute, and the Saviour's soul was so burdened with them, that he was sore amazed, and very heavy even unto a sweat of blood. His strength was gone, his spirits sank, he was in an agony.

"Came at length the dreadful night;
Vengeance with its iron rod
Stood, and with collected might
Bruised the harmless Lamb of God.
See, my soul, thy Saviour see
Prostrate in Gethsemane!

There my God bore all my guilt,
This through grace can be believed;
But the horrors which he felt
Are too vast to be conceived.
None can penetrate through thee,
Doleful, dark Gethsemane!

Sins against a holy God;
Sins against his righteous laws;
Sins against his love, his blood;
Sins against his name and cause;
Sins immense as is the sea—
Hide me, O Gethsemane!"

13. *"Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me."* How touching! How humble! How plaintive! The words thrill us as we think that after this sort our Lord and Master prayed. His petition is not so much that the cup should pass away undrained, but that he should be sustained while drinking it, and set free from its power at the first fitting moment. He seeks deliverance and help; and he entreats that the help may not be slow in coming; this is after the manner of our pleadings. Is it not? Note, reader, how our Lord was heard in that he feared, for there was after Gethsemane a calm endurance which made the fight as glorious as the victory.

14. *"Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it."* Whether we read this as a prayer or a prophecy it matters not, for the powers of sin, and death, and hell, may well be ashamed as they see the result of their malice for ever turned against themselves. It is to the infinite confusion of Satan that his attempt to destroy the Saviour destroyed himself; the diabolical conclave who plotted in council are now all alike put to shame, for the Lord Jesus has met them at all points, and turned all their wisdom into foolishness. *"Let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil."* It is even so; the hosts of darkness are utterly put to the rout, and made a theme for holy derision for ever and ever. How did they gloat over the thought of crushing the seed of the woman! but the Crucified has conquered, the Nazarene has laughed them to scorn, the dying Son of Man has become the death of death and hell's destruction. For ever blessed be his name.

15. *"Let them be desolate,"* or amazed; even as Jesus was desolate in his agony, so let his enemies be in their despair when he defeats them. The desolation caused in the hearts of evil spirits and evil men by envy, malice, chagrin, disappointment, and despair, shall be a fit recompense for their cruelty to the Lord when he was in their hands. *"For a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha."* Did the foul fiend insult over our Lord? Behold how shame is now his reward! Do wicked men to-day pour shame upon the name of the Redeemer? Their desolation shall avenge him of his adversaries! Jesus is the gentle Lamb to all who seek mercy through his blood; but let despisers beware, for he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and "who shall rouse him up?" The Jewish rulers exulted and scornfully said, "Aha, aha;" but when the streets of Jerusalem ran like rivers deep with gore, "and the temple was utterly consumed," then their house was left unto them desolate, and the blood of the last of the prophets, according to their own desire, came upon themselves and upon their children. O ungodly reader, if such a person glance over this page, beware of persecuting Christ and his people, for God will surely avenge his own elect. Your "ahas" will cost you dear. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.

16. *"Let all those that seek thee, rejoice and be glad in thee."* We have done with Ebal and turn to Gerizim. Here our Lord pronounces benedictions on his people. Note who the blessed objects of his petitions are: not all men, but some men, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world." He pleads for seekers: the lowest in the kingdom, the babes of the family; those who have true desires, longing prayers, and consistent endeavours after God. Let seeking souls pluck up heart when they hear of this. What riches of grace, that in his bitterest hour Jesus should remember the lambs of the flock! And what does he entreat for them? it is that they may be doubly glad, intensely happy, emphatically joyful, for such the repetition of terms implies. Jesus would have all seekers made happy by finding what they seek after, and by winning peace through his grief. As deep as were his sorrows, so high would he have their joys. He groaned that we might sing, and was covered with a bloody sweat that we might be anointed with the oil of gladness. *"Let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified."* Another result of the Redeemer's passion is the promotion of the glory of God by those who gratefully delight in his salvation. Our Lord's desire should be our directory; we love with all our hearts his great salvation, let us then, with all our tongues proclaim the glory of God which is resplendent therein. Never let his praises cease. As the heart is warm with gladness let it incite the tongue to perpetual praise. If we cannot do what we would for the spread of the kingdom, at least let us desire and pray for it. Be it ours to make God's glory the chief end of every breath and pulse. The suffering Redeemer regarded the consecration of his people to the service of heaven as a grand result of his atoning death; it is the joy which was set before him; that God is glorified is the reward of the Saviour's travail.

17. *" But I am poor and needy."*—The man of sorrows closes with another appeal, based upon his affliction and poverty. *" Yet the Lord thinketh upon me."* Sweet was this solace to the holy heart of the great sufferer. The Lord's thoughts of us are a cheering subject of meditation, for they are ever kind and never cease. His disciples forsook him, and his friends forgat him, but Jesus knew that Jehovah never turned away his heart from him, and this upheld him in the hour of need. *" Thou art my help and my deliverer."* His unmoved confidence stayed itself alone on God. O that all believers would imitate more fully their great Apostle and High Priest in his firm reliance upon God, even when afflictions abounded and the light was veiled. *" Make no tarrying, O my God."* The peril was imminent, the need urgent, the suppliant could not endure delay, nor was he made to wait, for the angel came to strengthen, and the brave heart of Jesus rose up to meet the foe.

Lord Jesus, grant that in all our adversities we may possess like precious faith, and be found like thee, more than conquerors.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—David's Psalm, or, *a Psalm of David;* but David's name is here set first, which elsewhere commonly is last: or, *A Psalm concerning David,* that is, *Christ,* who is called *David* in the prophets: Hos. iii. 5; Jer. xxx. 9; Ezek. xxxiv. 23, and xxxii. 24. Of him this Psalm entreateth as the apostle teacheth, Heb. x. 5, 6, etc.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—It is plain, from verses 6—8 of this Psalm, compared with Heb. x. 5, that the prophet is speaking in the person of Christ, who, 1—5, celebrateth the deliverance wrought for his mystical body, the church, by his resurrection from the grave, effecting that of his members from the guilt and dominion of sin; for the abolition of which he declareth, 6—8, the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices, and mentioneth his own inclination to do the will of his Father, and 9, 10, to preach righteousness to the world. 11—13. He representeth himself as praying, while under his sufferings, for his own, and his people's salvation; he foretelleth, 14, 15, the confusion and desolation of his enemies, and, 16, the joy and thankfulness of his disciples and servants; for the speedy accomplishment of which, 17, he preferreth a petition.—*George Horne.*

Verse 1.—*" I waited patiently for the Lord: and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry."* I see that the Lord, suppose he drifteth and delayeth the effect of his servant's prayer, and granteth not his desire at the first, yet he heareth him. I shall give a certain argument, whereby thou may know that the Lord heareth thee, suppose he delay the effect of thy prayers. Continuest thou in prayer? Hast thou this strength given thee to persevere in suiting * anything? Thou may be assured he heareth; for this is one sure argument that he heareth thee, for naturallie our impatience carrieth us to desperation; our suddenness is so great, speciallie in spiritual troubles, that we cannot continue in suiting. When thou, therefore, continues in suiting, thou may be sure that this strength is furnished of God, and cometh from heaven, and if thou have strength he letteth thee see that he heareth thy prayer; and suppose he delay the effect and force thereof, yet pray continuallie. This doctrine is so necessary for the troubled conscience, that I think it is the meetest bridle in the Scripture to refrain our impatience; it is the meetest bit to hold us in continual exercise of patience; for if the heart understand that the Lord hath rejected our prayer altogether, it is not possible to continue in prayer; so when we know that the Lord heareth us, suppose he delay, let us crave patience to abide his good will.—*Robert Bruce,* 1559—1631.

Verse 1.—*" I waited for the Lord."* The infinite קוה being placed first brings the action strongly out: *I waited.* This strong emphasis on the waiting, has the force of an *admonition;* it suggests to the sufferer that everything depends on *waiting.—E. W. Hengstenberg.*

---

* Petitioning for or praying for.

Verse 1.—"*I waited patiently:*" rather *anxiously;* the original has it, *waiting I waited;* a Hebraism, which signifies vehement solicitude.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 1.—"*I waited.*" The Saviour endured his sufferings *waitingly,* as well as patiently and prayerfully. He "waited for the Lord." He expected help from Jehovah; and he waited for it until it came.—*James Frame, in "Christ and his Work: an Exposition of Psalm XL."* 1869.

Verse 1.—"*Patiently.*" Our Lord's patience under suffering was an element of perfection in his work. Had he become impatient as we often do, and lost heart, his atonement would have been vitiated. Well may we rejoice that in the midst of all his temptations, and in the thickest of the battle against sin and Satan, he remained patient and willing to finish the work which his Father had given him to do. —*James Frame.*

Verse 1.—"*Heard my cry.*" Our Saviour endured his sufferings *prayerfully* as well as *patiently.*—*James Frame.*

Verse 2.—"*An horrible pit.*" Some of the pits referred to in the Bible were prisons, one such I saw at Athens, and another at Rome. To these there were no openings, except a hole at the top, which served for both door and window The bottoms of these pits were necessarily in a filthy and revolting state, and sometimes deep in mud. "*He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay;*" one of these filthy prisons being in the Psalmist's view, in Isaiah xxxviii. 17, called "the pit of corruption," or putrefaction and filth.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 2.—"*An horrible pit;*" or, as it is in the Hebrew, *a pit of noise;* so called because of waters that falling into it, with great violence, make a roaring dreadful noise; or because of the strugglings and outcries they make that are in it; or because when anything is cast into deep pits, it will always make a great noise; and where he stuck fast in "*miry clay,*" without a seeming possibility of getting out. And some refer this to the greatness of Christ's terrors and sufferings, and his deliverance from them both.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 2.—Three things are stated in verse two. First, resurrection as the act of God, "*He brought me up,*" etc. Secondly, the justification of the name and title of the Sufferer, "*and set my feet upon a rock.*" Jesus is set up, as alive from the dead, upon the basis of accomplished truth. Thirdly, there is his ascension, "*He establisheth my goings.*" The Son of God having trodden, in gracious and self-renouncing obedience the passage to the grave, now enters finally as Man the path of life. "He is gone into heaven," says the Spirit. And again, "He ascended on high, and led captivity captive."—*Arthur Pridham in "Notes and Reflections on the Psalms,"* 1869.

Verse 3.—"*A new song.*" See Notes on Psalm xxxiii. verse 3.

Verse 3.—"*Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.*" The terms *fear,* and *hope,* or *trust,* do not seem at first view to harmonise; but David has not improperly joined them together, for no man will ever entertain the *hope* of the favour of God but he whose mind is first imbued with the *fear* of God. I understand *fear,* in general, to mean the feeling of piety which is produced in us by the knowledge of the power, equity, and mercy of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—"*Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.*" First of all they "*see.*" Their eyes are opened; and their opened eyes see and survey *what* they are, *where* they are, *whence* they came, and *whither* they are going. . . . . When the attention of sinners is really and decisively arrested by the propitiation of Jesus, not only are their eyes opened to their various moral relations, not only do they "see" but they "*fear*" too. They "see" and "fear." . . . . . Conviction follows illumination. . . . . But while the sinner only sees and fears, he is but in the initial stage of conversion, only in a state of readiness to flee from the city of destruction. He may have set out on his pilgrimage, but he has not yet reached his Father to receive the kiss of welcome and forgiveness. The consummating step has not yet been taken. He has seen indeed; he has feared too: but he still requires to *trust,* to trust in the Lord, and banish all his fears. This is the culminating point in the great change; and, unless this be reached, the other experiences will either die away, like an untimely blossom, or they will only be fuel to the unquenchable fire.—*James Frame.*

Verse 5.—"*Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done,*" etc. Behold God in the magnificence and wisdom of the works which his hands

have made, even this immense universe, which is full of his glory. What art and contrivance! What regularity, harmony, and proportion, are to be seen in all his productions, in the frame of our own bodies, or those that are about us! And with what beams of majestic glory do the sun, moon, and stars proclaim how august and wonderful in knowledge their Maker is! And ought not all these numberless beauties wherewith the world is stored, which the minds of inquisitive men are ready to admire, lead up our thoughts to the great Parent of all things, and inflame our amorous souls with love to him, who is infinitely brighter and fairer than them all?

Cast abroad your eyes through the nations, and meditate on the mighty acts which he hath done, and the wisdom and power of his providence, which should charm all thy affections. Behold his admirable patience, with what pity he looks down on obstinate rebels; and how he is moved with compassion when he sees his creatures polluted in their blood, and bent upon their own destruction; how long he waits to be gracious; how unwillingly he appears to give up with sinners, and execute deserved vengeance on his enemies; and then with what joy he pardons for "with him is plenteous redemption." And what can have more force than these to win thy esteem, and make a willing conquest of thy heart? so that every object about thee is an argument of love, and furnishes fuel for this sacred fire. And whether you behold God in the firmament of his power, or the sanctuary of his grace, you cannot miss to pronounce him "altogether lovely."—*William Dunlop.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy thoughts which are to us-ward, they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:*" *i.e.*, there is no one can digest them in order; for although that may be attempted according to the comprehension and meaning of men, yet *not before thee*, every attempt of that nature being infinitely beneath thy immeasurable glory.—*Victorinus Bythner's "Lyre of David;" translated by T. Dee: new edition, by N. L. Benmohel*, 1847.

Verse 5.—"*Us-ward.*" It is worthy of notice that while addressing his Father, as Jehovah and his God, our Saviour speaks of the members of the human family as his fellows. This is implied in the expressions "to us-ward." He regarded himself as most intimately associated with the children of men.—*James Frame.*

Verse 5.—"*They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee.*" They are "in order" in themselves, and if they could be "reckoned up" as they are, they would be "reckoned in order." Created mind may not be able to grasp the principle of order that pervades them, but such a principle there is. And the more we study the whole series in its interrelations, the more shall we be convinced that as to time and place all the preparations for the mediatorial work of Christ, all the parts of its accomplishment, and all the divinely appointed consequents of its acceptation throughout all time into eternity, are faultlessly in order; they are precisely what and where and when they should be.—*James Frame.*

Verse 5.—"*They are more than can be numbered.*" The pulses of Providence are quicker than those of our wrists or temples. The soul of David knew right well their multiplicity, but could not multiply them aright by any skill in arithmetic; nay, the very sum or chief heads of divine kindnesses were innumerable. His "wonderful works" and "thoughts" towards him could not be reckoned up in order by him, they were *more than could be numbered.*—*Samuel Lee* (1625—1691), *in "The Triumph of Mercy in the Chariot of Praise."*

Verse 5.—It is Christ's speech, of whom the Psalm is made, and that relating unto his Father's resolved purposes and contrivements from eternity, and those continued unto his sending Christ into the world to die for us, as verses 6, 7. It follows so, as although his thoughts and purposes were but one individual act at first, and never to be altered; yet they became many, through a perpetuated reiteration of them, wherein his constancy to himself is seen. . . . . My brethren, if God have been thinking thoughts of mercy from everlasting to those that are his, what a stock and treasury do these thoughts arise to, besides those that are in his nature and disposition! This is in his actual purposes and intentions, which he hath thought, and doth think over, again and again, every moment. "*Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward,*" saith Jesus Christ; for Psalm xl. is a Psalm of Christ, and quoted by the apostle, and applied unto Christ in Heb. x., "*How many are thy thoughts* to us-ward!"—he speaks it in the name of the human nature—that is, to me and mine. "*If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.*" And what is the reason? Because God hath studied mercies, mercies for his

children, even from everlasting. And then, "He reneweth his mercies every morning;" not that any mercies are new, but he actually thinketh over mercies again and again, and so he brings out of his treasury, mercies both new and old, and the old are always new. What a stock, my brethren, must this needs amount unto!—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"*Sacrifice and offering . . . . . burnt-offering and sin-offering.*" Four kinds are here specified, both by the Psalmist and apostle: namely, *sacrifice,* זֶבַח *zebhach,* θυσία; *offering,* מִנְחָה *minchah,* προσφορὰ; *burnt-offering,* עוֹלָה *olah,* ὁλοκαύτωμα; *sin-offering,* חַטָּאָה *chataah,* περὶ ἁμαρτίας. Of all these we may say with the apostle, it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats, etc., should take away sin.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"*Mine ears hast thou opened.*" The literal translation is, *mine ears hast thou digged* (or *pierced*) *through;* which may well be interpreted as meaning, "Thou hast accepted me as thy slave," in allusion to the custom (Exod. xxi. 6) of masters boring the ear of a slave, who had refused his offered freedom, in token of retaining him.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Vere 6.—John Calvin, in treating upon the interpretation, "mine ears hast thou bored," says, "this mode of interpretation appears to be too forced and refined."

Verse 6.—"*Mine ears hast thou opened.*" If it be said that the apostle to the Hebrews read this differently, I answer, this does not appear to me. It is true, he found a different, but corrupted translation (ὠτία, *ears,* as the learned have observed, having been changed into σῶμα, *body*) in the LXX, which was the version then in use; and he was obliged to quote it as he found it, under the penalty, if he altered it, of being deemed a false quoter. He therefore took the translation as he found it, especially as it served to illustrate his argument equally well. Upon this quotation from the LXX the apostle argues, verse 9, "He (Christ) taketh away the first (namely, legal sacrifices), that he may establish the second" (namely, obedience to God's will), in offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of mankind; and thus he must have argued upon a quotation from the Hebrew text as it stands at present.—*Green, quoted in S. Burder's "Scripture Expositor."*

Verse 6.—The apostle's reading (Heb. x. 5), though it be far distant from the letter of the Hebrew, and in part from the LXX (as I suppose it to have been originally), yet is the most perspicuous interpretation of the meaning of it: *Christ's body* comprehended the *ears,* and that assumed on purpose to perform in it the utmost degree of obedience to the will of God, to be obedient even to death, and thereby to be as the priest.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 6.—

Nor sacrifice thy love can win,
Nor offerings from the stain of sin
  Obnoxious man shall clear:
Thy hand my mortal frame prepares,
(Thy hand, whose signature it bears,)
  And opes my willing ear.

James Merrick, M.A., 1720—1769.

Verses 6, 7.—In these words an allusion is made to a custom of the Jews *to bore the ears* of such as were to be their perpetual servants, and *to enrol their names in a book,* or make some instrument of the covenant. "Sacrifice and burnt-offering thou wouldst not have;" but because I am thy vowed servant, bored with an awl, and enrolled in thy book, "*I said, Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God.*" These words of the Psalm are alleged by S. Paul, Heb. x. But the first of them with a most strange difference. For whereas the Psalmist hath, according to the Hebrew verity, "*Sacrifice and burnt-offering thou wouldst not: mine ears thou hast bored or digged,*" כָּרִיתָ; S. Paul reads with the LXX, σῶμα κατηρτίσω μοι, "*A body thou hast prepared or fitted me.*" What equipollency can be in sense between these two? This difficulty is so much the more augmented because most interpreters make the life of the quotation to lie in those very words where the difference is, namely, That the words, "*A body thou hast prepared* me," are brought by the apostle to prove our Saviour's incarnation; whereunto the words in the Psalm itself ("*Mine ears hast thou bored,* or *digged,* or *opened*"), take them how you will, will in no wise suit. I answer, therefore, That the life of the quotation lies not in the words of difference, nor can do, because this epistle was written to

the Hebrews, and so first in the Hebrew tongue, where this translation of the LXX could have no place. And if the life of the quotation lay here, I cannot see how it can possibly be reconciled. It lies therefore in the words where there is no difference, namely, That Christ was such a High Priest as came to sanctify us, not with legal offerings and sacrifices, but by his obedience in doing like a devoted servant the will of his Father. Thus, the allegation will not depend at all upon the words of difference, and so they give us liberty to reconcile them: "*Mine ears hast thou bored*," saith the Psalmist, *i.e.*, Thou hast accepted me for a perpetual servant, as masters are wont, according to the law, to *bore* such servants' *ears* as refuse to part from them. Now the LXX, according to whom the apostle's epistle readeth, thinking perhaps the meaning of this speech would be obscure to such as knew not that custom, chose rather to translate it generally σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι, "*Thou hast fitted my body*," namely, to be thy servant in such a manner as servants' bodies are wont to be. And so the sense is all one, though not specified to the Jewish custom of boring the ear with an awl, but left indifferently appliable to the custom of any nation in marking and stigmatising their servants' bodies.—*Joseph Mede, B.D.*, 1586—1638.

Verses 6—10.—Here we have in Christ for our instruction, and in David also (his type) for our example; 1. A firm purpose of obedience, in a *bored ear*, and a yielding heart. 2. A ready performance thereof: "*Lo, I come.*" 3. A careful observance of the word written: "*In the volume of the book it is written of me*," verse 7. 4. A hearty delight in that observance, verse 8. 5. A public profession and communication of God's goodness to others, verses 9, 10. Now, we should labour to express Christ to the world, to walk as he walked (1 John ii. 6): our lives should be in some sense parallel with his life, as the transcript with the original: he left us a copy to write by, saith Saint Peter, 1st Epistle ii. 21.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—"*Then said I, Lo, I come.*" As his name is above every name, so this coming of his is above every coming. We sometimes call our own births, I confess, a coming into the world; but properly, none ever came into the world but he. For, 1. He only truly can be said to come, who is before he comes; so were not we, only he so. 2. He only strictly comes who comes willingly; our crying and struggling at our entrance into the world, shows how unwillingly we come into it. He alone it is that sings out, "*Lo, I come.*" 3. He only properly comes who comes from some place or other. Alas! we had none to come from but the womb of nothing. *He* only had a place to be in before he came.—*Mark Frank.*

Verse 7.—"*Then said I, Lo, I come*," to wit, as surety, to pay the ransom, and to do thy will, O God. Every word carrieth a special emphasis as, 1. The time, "*then*," even so soon as he perceived that his Father had prepared his body for such an end, then, without delay. This speed implieth forwardness and readiness; he would lose no opportunity. 2. His profession in this word, "*said I;*" he did not closely, secretly, timorously, as being ashamed thereof, but he maketh profession beforehand. 3. This note of observation, "*Lo*," this is a kind of calling angels and men to witness, and a desire that all might know his inward intention, and the dispositon of his heart; wherein was as great a willingness as any could have to anything. 4. An offering of himself without any enforcement or compulsion; this he manifesteth in this word, "*I come.*" 5. That very instant set out in the present tense, "*I come;*" he puts it not off to a future and uncertain time, but even in that moment, he saith, "*I come.*" 6. The first person twice expressed, thus, "*I said*," "*I come.*" He sendeth not another person, nor substituteth any in his room; but he, even he himself in his own person, cometh. All which do abundantly evidence Christ's singular readiness and willingness, as our surety, to do his Father's will, though it were by suffering, and by being made a sacrifice for our sins.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 7.—"*Lo, I come*," *i.e.*, to appear before thee; a phrase used to indicate the coming of an inferior into the presence of a superior, or of a slave before his master, Num. xxii. 38; 2 Sam. xix. 20: as in the similar expression, "Behold, here I am," generally expressive of willingness.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 7.—"*Lo, I come.*" Christ's coming in the spirit is a *joyful* coming. I think this, "*Lo, I come*," expresses, 1. *Present* joy. 2. It expresses *certain* joy: the "*Lo*," is a note of certainty; the thing is certain and true; and his joy is certain; certain, true, solid joy. 3. It expresses *communicative* joy; designing his people shall share of his joy, "*Lo, I come!*" The joy that Christ has as Mediator

is a fulness of joy, designed for his people's use, that *out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace*, and joy for joy; grace answering grace in Jesus, and joy answering joy in him. 4. It expresses *solemn* joy. He comes with a solemnity; "*Lo, I come!*" according to the council of a glorious Trinity. Now, when the purpose of heaven is come to the birth, and the decree breaks forth, and the fulness of time is come, he makes heaven and earth witness, as it were, to his solemn march on the errand: he says it with a loud, "*Lo!*" that all the world of men and angels may notice, "*Lo, I come!*" And, indeed, all the elect angels brake forth into joyful songs of praise at this solemnity; when he came in the flesh, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill towards man."—*Ralph Erskine*, 1685—1752.

Verse 7.—"*Lo, I come*," or, *am come*, to wit, *into the world* (Heb. x. 5), and particularly *to Jerusalem*, to give myself a sacrifice for sin.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 7.—"*The volume of the book.*" What book is meant, whether the Scripture, or the book of life, is not certain, probably the latter.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 7.—"*The volume of the book.*" But what volume of manuscript roll is here meant? Plainly, the one which was already extant when the Psalmist was writing. If the Psalmist was David himself (as the title of the Psalm seems to affirm), the only parts of the Hebrew Scriptures then extant, and of course, the only part to which he could refer, must have been the Pentateuch, and perhaps the book of Joshua. Beyond any reasonable doubt, then, the κεφαλὶς βιβλίου (מְגִלַּת סֵפֶר) was the Pentateuch. . . . But I apprehend the meaning of the writer to be, that the *book of the law*, which prescribes sacrifices that were merely σκιαὶ or παραβολαὶ of the great atoning sacrifice by Christ, did itself teach, by the use of these, that something of a higher and better nature was to be looked for than Levitical rites. In a word, it pointed to the Messiah; or, some of the contents of the *written* law had respect to him.—*Moses Stuart, M.A., in "A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews,"* 1851.

Verse 7.—"*The volume of the book*," etc. When I first considered Rom. v. 14 and other Scriptures in the New Testament which make the first Adam, and the whole story of him both before and after, and in his sinning or falling, to be the type and lively shadow of Christ, the second Adam; likewise observing that the apostle Paul stands admiring at the greatness of this mystery or mystical type, the Christ, the second Adam should so wonderfully be shadowed forth therein, as Eph. v. 32, he cries out, "This is a great mystery," which he speaks applying and fitting some passages about Adam and Eve unto Christ and his church; it made me more to consider an interpretation of a passage in Heb. x. 7, out of Psalm xl. 7, which I before had not only not regarded, but wholly rejected, as being too like a postil* gloss. The passage is, that "when Christ came into the world," to take our nature on him, he alleged the reason of it to be the fulfilling of a Scripture written in "the beginning of God's book," ἐν κεφαλίδι Βιβλίου, so out of the original the words may be, and are by many interpreters, translated, though our translation reads them only thus, "*In the volume of the book it is written of me.*" It is true, indeed, that in the fortieth Psalm, whence they are quoted, the words in the Hebrew may signify no more than that in God's book (the manner of writing which was anciently in rolls of parchment, folded up in a volume) Christ was everywhere written and spoken of. Yet the word κεφαλὶς, which out of the Septuagint's translation the apostle took, signifying, as all know, the beginning of a book; and we finding such an emphasis set by the apostle in the fifth chapter of the Ephesians, upon the history of Adam in the beginning of Genesis, as containing the mystery, yea, the great mystery about Christ, it did somewhat induce, though not so fully persuade, me to think, that the Holy Ghost in those words might have some glance at the story of Adam in the first of the first book of Moses. And withal the rather because so, the words so understood do intimate a higher and further inducement to Christ to assume our nature, the scope of the speech, Heb. x., being to render the reason why he so willingly took man's nature: not only because God liked not sacrifice and burnt-offering, which came in but upon occasion of sin, and after the fall, and could not take sins away, but further, that he was prophesied of, and his assuming a body prophetically foresignified as in the fortieth Psalm, so even by Adam's story before the fall, recorded in the very beginning of Genesis, which many other Scriptures do expressly apply it unto.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

---

* A marginal note.

Verse 8.—"*I delight to do thy will, O my God.*" The will of God to redeem sinners by the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ, was most grateful and pleasing to the very heart of Christ. It is said, Prov. viii. 31, when he was solacing himself in the sweetest enjoyment of his Father, whilst he lay in that blessed bosom of delights, yet the very prospect of this work gave him pleasure, then his "delights were with the sons of men." And when he was come into the world, and had endured many abuses and injuries, and was even now come to the most difficult part of the work; yet, "how am I straitened, or pained (saith he), till it be accomplished!" Luke xii. 50. Two things call our thoughts to stay upon them in this point. First.—The *decency* of it— why it ought to be so. 1.—It became Christ to go about this work with cheerfulness and delight, that thereby he might give his death the nature and formality of a sacrifice. In all sacrifices you shall find that God had still a regard, a special respect to the will of the offerer. See Exod. xxxv. 5, 21, and Levit. i. 3. 2.—It ought to be so in view of the unity of Christ's will with the Father's. 3.—This was necessary to commend the love of Jesus Christ to us for whom he gave himself. That he came into the world to die for us is a mercy of the first magnitude; but that he came in love to our souls, and underwent all his sufferings with such willingness for our sakes, this heightens it above all apprehension. 4.—It was necessary to be so for the regulating of all our obedience to God, according to this pattern; that seeing and setting this great example of obedience before us, we might never grudge nor grumble at any duty or suffering that God should call us to. *Secondly.*—Let us consider and examine whence it came to be so pleasant and acceptable to Jesus Christ, to come into the world and die for poor sinners. 1.—That in his sufferings there would be made a glorious display and manifestation of the divine attributes. 2.—Another delightful prospect Christ had of the fruit of his sufferings, was the recovery and salvation of all the elect by his death; and though his sufferings were exceedingly bitter, yet such fruit of them as this was exceedingly sweet. 3.—Add to this, the glory which would redound to him from his redeemed ones to all eternity, for it will be the everlasting employment of the saints in heaven to be ascribing glory, praise, and honour to the Redeemer. Did Christ find pleasure in abasement and torment, in suffering and dying for me, and can I find no pleasure in praying, hearing, meditating, and enjoying the sweet duties of communion with him? Did he come so cheerfully to die for me, and do I go so deadheartedly to prayers and sacraments to enjoy fellowship with him? Was it a pleasure to him to shed his blood, and is it none to me to apply it, and reap the benefits of it? O let there be no more grumblings, lazy excuses, shiftings of duty, or dead-hearted and listless performances of them, after such an example as this. Be ready to do the will of God, be ye also ready to suffer it. And as to sufferings for Christ, they should not be grievous to Christians that know how cheerfully Christ came from the bosom of the Father to die for them. What have we to leave or lose, in comparison with him? What are our sufferings to Christ's. Alas! there is no compare; there was more bitterness in one drop of his sufferings than in a sea of ours. To conclude: your delight and readiness in the paths of obedience is the very measure of your sanctification.—*Condensed from John Flavel.*

Verse 8.—Now, saith Christ, "*I delight to do thy will, O my God;*" it is the joy and rejoicing of my heart to be a-seeking and a-saving lost sinners. When Christ was an hungry, he went not into a victualling house but into the temple, and taught the people most part of the day, to show how much he delighted in the salvation of sinners, etc. Christ did so much delight, and his heart was so much set upon the conversion and salvation of the Samaritans, that he neglected his own body to save their souls, as you may clearly see in John iv.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 8.—"*To do.*" It was Jesus who was the doer of the work. The Father willed it; but he did not do it. It was Jesus who did it, who wrought it out; who brought it in; who carried it within the veil, and laid it as an acceptable and meritorious offering at the feet of his well-pleased Father. The work then is done; it is finished. We need not attempt to do it. We cannot do it. We cannot do that which is already done; and we could not do it, though it were yet undone. There is much that man can do, but he cannot make a propitiation.—*James Frame.*

Verse 8.—"*Thy will.*" The covenant between the Father and the Son, as elsewhere, so it is most clearly expressed (Heb. x. 7, from Ps. xl. 7, 8), "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." And what will? Verse 10, "The will by which we are sanctified through the offering

of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The will of God was, that Jesus should be offered; and to this end, that we might be sanctified and saved. It is called "The offering of the body of Jesus Christ," in answer to what was said before, "A body hast thou prepared me," or a human nature, by a synecdoche. "My will," says God the Father, "is that thou have a body, and that thy body be offered up; and all to this end, that the children, the elect, might be sanctified." Says the Son to this, "Lo, I come to do thy will;"—"I accept of the condition, and give up myself to the performance of thy will."—*John Owen.*

Verse 8.—"*Thy law is within my heart.*" The law of God is not to be kept in books, but in the midst of our hearts, that we may rightly understand the same, admire it, and observe it.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 8.—"*Thy law is within my heart.*" The will of God in which Christ delighted, was (as appears by the coherence, and the quotation of Heb. x. 5) that Christ should make his soul an offering for sin, as more acceptable to God than all other burnt-offerings and sin-offerings. This law was *in his heart,* בְּתוֹךְ מֵעָי, in the midst of his bowels. He did as much delight in it as we do in following those inclinations which nature has implanted in our hearts, as we do in eating and drinking. So he expresses it (John iv. 34), "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He was as willing to bleed and die for thee as thou art to eat when hungry. He was delighted as much to be scourged, wounded, crucified, as thou delightest in meat when most delicious.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 8.—"*Within my heart,*" margin, *my bowels.* The intestines or viscera are here mentioned as the place of the most profound spiritual occupation.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 9.—"*I have preached righteousness,*" etc. It is Jesus who speaks, and he speaks of himself as a PREACHER. He was a preacher, and a great preacher too. He was great—1. In *genuine eloquence.* All the handmaids of the choicest rhetoric ministered to him as he spake. His mind touched the minds of his auditors on all sides. 2. He was great in *knowledge.* Many who have an astonishing command of words, and who can use their words with astonishing rhetorical adroitness, spoil their influence by their "lack of knowledge." They go blunderingly onward when they attempt to think for themselves, or to guide their hearers into fields of thought which have not been tracked by minds of the pioneer order. 3. He was great also in *goodness.* There is a greatness in goodness, and the greatness of goodness is an important element in the greatness of a preacher. 4. Jesus was great, too, in *official status.* Official status, whether in things civil, literary, or sacred, when conferred on worthy individuals, confers, in its turn, undoubted weight and moral authority. Now Jesus was the highest official in the universe. His authority extended to all other office-bearers, his office exceeded all other offices. He came from above, and was "above all." He was Lord of lords, and King of kings. 5. Another element still in the greatness of Jesus, as a preacher, consisted in the greatness of his *essential dignity.* He was God as well as man. Such was Christ as a preacher. True he was more than a preacher; he was likewise a pattern, and a priest, and a propitiator; and as pattern, priest, and propitiator, he stands without a peer. But he was a preacher, too, and as a preacher, he has never had, and never will have an equal.—*Condensed from James Frame.*

Verse 9.—"*The great congregation.*" The "*congregation*" here referred to was "*great*" not only in *numbers,* but "*great*" also in the necessities of its individual members, and great in *pollution.*—*James Frame.*

Verses 9, 10.—"*I have published . . . . I would not refrain . . . . I have not covered . . . I have uttered . . . I have not hid:*" words are heaped upon words to express the eager forwardness of a heart burning to show forth its gratitude. No elaborate description could so well have given us the likeness of one whose "life was a thanksgiving."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 9, 10.—The true way of justification of sinners by faith is a jewel so precious and necessary for poor souls, that it should not be concealed: "*I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart.*" One sermon on this subject is not sufficient; it is necessary to make this mystery plain, how by faith in Christ the man that flieth to him is justified from his sins, and saved according to the covenant passed between the suffering Mediator and God the faithful promiser, to justify and save by his own way. "*I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verses 9, 10.—"*Thy.*" The adding *thy* to every one of them is emphatical; it was *thy* righteousness I had commission to declare, *thy* faithfulness I had order to proclaim, *thy* mercy I had charge to publish; *thou* wert as much interested in all that I did as I myself was. I shall be counted false and a liar, thou wilt be counted unjust and cruel, if all be not fulfilled as I have spoken. Since it was thy rule I observed, and thy glory I aimed at in declaring it, disgrace not thyself and me in refusing the petition of such a suppliant, who believes in my word which I gave out by thy authority.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 10.—"*I have not hid.*" This intimates, that whoever undertook to preach the gospel of Christ would be in great temptation to hide it, and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention, and in the face of great opposition.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—"*I have not hid,*" etc. What God has done for us, or for the church, we should lay *to* heart; but not lock up *in* our heart.—*Carl Bernhard Moll in Lange's "Bibelwerk,"* 1869.

Verse 11.—"*Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me.*" Do not hinder them from coming showering down upon me. "*Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me;*" or, do thou employ them in preserving me.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 12.—"*For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head.*" We lose ourselves when we speak of the sins of our lives. It may astonish any considering man to take notice how many sins he is guilty of any one day; how many sins accompany any one single act; nay, how many bewray themselves in any one religious duty. Whensoever ye do anything forbidden, you omit the duty at that time commanded; and whenever you neglect that which is enjoined, the omission is joined with the acting of something forbidden; so that the sin, whether omission or commission, is always double; nay, the apostle makes every sin tenfold. James ii. 10. That which seems one to us, according to the sense of the law, and the account of God, is multiplied by ten. He breaks every command by sinning directly against one, and so sins ten times at once; besides that swarm of sinful circumstances and aggravations which surround every act in such numbers, as atoms use to surround your body in a dusty room; you may more easily number these than those. And though some count these but fractions, incomplete sins, yet even from hence it is more difficult to take an account of their number. And, which is more for astonishment, pick out the best religious duty that ever you performed, and even in that performance you may find such a swarm of sins as cannot be numbered. In the best prayer that ever you put up to God, irreverence, lukewarmness, unbelief, spiritual pride, self-seeking, hypocrisy, distractions, etc., and many more, that an enlightened soul grieves and bewails; and yet there are many more that the pure eye of God discerns, than any man does take notice of.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 12.—"*Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me.*" They seized him as the sinner's substitute, to deal with him as regards their own penalty, according to the sinner's desert.—*James Frame.*

Verse 13.—The remaining verses of this Psalm are almost exactly identical with Psalm LXX.

Verse 14.—"*Let them be ashamed and confounded,*" etc. Even this prayer carried benevolence in its bosom. It sought from the divine Father, such a manifestation of what was glorious and God-like as might unnerve each rebel arm, and overawe each rebel heart in the traitor's company. If each arm were for a little unnerved, if each heart were for a little unmanned, there might be time for the better principles of their nature to rise and put an arrest upon the prosecution of their wicked design. Such being the benevolent aim of the prayer, we need not wonder that it issued from the same heart that by-and-by exclaimed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" neither need we marvel that it was answered to the very letter, and that as soon as he said to the traitor band, "I am he," they went backward and fell to the ground.—*James Frame.*

Verse 15.—"*Aha, aha.*" An exclamation which occurs three times in the Psalms; and in each case there seems to be reference to the mockery at the Passion. See xxxv. 21; and lxx. 3, which appear to belong to the same time as the present Psalm.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 16.—"*Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee.*" As every mercy to every believer giveth a proof of God's readiness to show the like mercy to all believers, when they stand in need; so should every mercy shown to any of the number, being known to the rest, be made the matter and occasion of magnifying the Lord.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 16.—"*Such as love thy salvation.*" To love God's salvation is to love God himself, the Saviour, or Jesus.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 16.—"*Such as love thy salvation.*" One would think that self-love alone should make us love salvation. Ay, but they love it because it is his, "that love *thy* salvation." It is the character of a holy saint to love salvation itself; not as his own only, but as God's, as God's that saves him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 16.—"*Let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified.*" Jesus who gave us our capacity of happiness and our capacity of speaking, realised the relation which he had established between them; and hence in praying for his friends, he prayed that in the joy and gladness of their souls they might *say*, "The Lord be magnified." He desired them to speak of their holy happiness; and it was his wish that when they did speak of it they should speak in terms of laudation of Jehovah, for he was the source of it. He desired them to say continually, "*The Lord be magnified.*"—*James Frame.*

Verse 17.—In Dr. Malan's memoir, the editor, one of his sons, thus writes of his brother Jocelyn, who was for some years prior to his death, the subject of intense bodily sufferings:—"One striking feature in his character was his holy fear of God, and reverence for his will. One day I was repeating a verse from the Psalms, '*As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord careth for me: thou art my helper and deliverer; O Lord, make no long tarrying.*' He said, "Mamma, I love that verse, all but the last bit, it looks like a murmur against God. He never 'tarries' in my case."—*From "The Life, Labours, and Writings of Cæsar Malan* (1787—1864): *By one of his sons,*" 1689.

Verse 17.—"*Yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*" Sacred story derives from heaven the kindness of Abimelech to Abraham, of Laban and Esau to Jacob, of Ruth to Naomi, of Boaz to Ruth, and Jonathan to David. When others think of kindness to us, let us imitate David, 'tis the Lord that thinketh upon me, and forms those thoughts within their hearts. This should calm our spirits when a former friend's heart is alienated by rash admissions of false suggestions, or when any faithful Jonathan expires his spirit into the bosom of God. It should not be lost what Hobson, the late noted carrier of Cambridge, said to a young student receiving a letter of the sad tidings of his uncle's decease (who maintained him at the University), and weeping bitterly, and reciting the cause of his grief, he replied, *Who gave you that friend?* Which saying did greatly comfort him, and was a sweet support to him afterwards in his ministry. The Everliving God is the portion of a living faith, and *he* can never want that hath *such* an ocean. He that turns the hearts of kings like rivers at his pleasure, turns all the little brooks in the world into what scorched and parched ground he pleases.—*Samuel Lee.*

Verse 17.—"*The Lord thinketh upon me.*" There are three things in *God's thinking upon us*, that are solacing and delightful. Observe the *frequency* of his thoughts. Indeed, they are incessant. You have a friend, whom you esteem and love. You wish to live in his mind. You say when you part, and when you write, "Think of me." You give him, perhaps, a token to revive his remembrance. How naturally is Selkirk, in his solitary island, made to say:

"My friends, do they now and then send
A wish or a *thought* after me?
O tell me, I yet have a friend,
Though a friend I am never to see.

Ye winds, that have made me your sport,
Convey to this desolate shore
Some cordial, endearing report.
Of a land I shall visit no more."

But the dearest connexion in the world cannot be always thinking upon you. Half his time he is in a state of unconsciousness; and how much during the other half, is he engrossed! But there is no remission in the Lord's thoughts. . . . Observe in the next place, the *wisdom* of his thoughts. You have a dear child, absent from you, and you follow him in your mind. But you know not his present circumstances. You left him in such a place; but where is he now? You left him in such a condition. But what is he now? Perhaps, while you are thinking upon his health, he is groaning under a bruised limb, or a painful disorder. Perhaps, while you are thinking of his safety, some enemy is taking advantage of his innocency. Perhaps, while you are rejoicing in his prudence, he is going to take a step that will involve him for life. But when God thinketh upon you, he is perfectly acquainted with your situation, your dangers, your wants. He knows all your walking through this great wilderness, and can afford you the seasonable succour you need. For again, observe the *efficiency* of his thoughts. You think upon another, and you are anxious to guide, or defend, or relieve him. But in how many cases can you think only? Solicitude cannot control the disease of the body, cannot dissipate the melancholy of the mind. But with God all things are possible. He who thinks upon you is a God at hand and not afar off; he has all events under his control; he is the God of all grace. If, therefore, he does not immediately deliver, it is not because he is unable to redress, but because he is waiting to be gracious.—*William Jay.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse—I. *My part*—praying and waiting. II. *God's part*—condescension and reply.

Verse 2.—I. The *depth* of God's goodness to his people. It finds them often in a horrible pit and miry clay. There is a certain spider which forms a pit in sand, and lies concealed at the bottom, in order to seize upon other insects that fall into it. Thus David's enemies tried to bring him into a pit. II. The *height* of his goodness. He brought me out, and set my feet upon a rock. That rock is Christ. Those feet are faith and hope. III. The *breadth* of his goodness established my *goings*, restored me to my former place in his love, showing me still to have been his during my low estate. He was the same to me, though I felt not the same to him. My goings refer both to the past and the future. IV. The *strength* of his goodness *esta. tished* my goings, making me stand firmer after every fall.—*George Rogers.*

Verses 2, 3.—The sinner's position by nature, and his rescue by grace.

Verses 2, 3.—By one and the same act the Lord works our salvation, our enemies' confusion, and the church's edification.—*J. P. Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 3.—The new song, the singer, the teacher.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—I. Find out who turn aside to lies—Atheists, Papists, self-righteous, lovers of sin. II. Show their folly in turning aside from God and truth, and in turning to fallacies which lead to death. III. Show how to be preserved from the like folly, by choosing truth, truthful persons, and above all the service of God.

Verse 5.—1. *There are works of God in his people and for his people.* There are his works of creation, of providence, and of redemption, and also his works of grace, wrought in them by his Spirit, and around them by his providence, as well as for them by his Son. II. *These are wonderful works;* wonderful in their variety, their tenderness, their adaptation to their need, their co-operation with outward means and their power. III. *They are the result of the divine thoughts respecting us.* They come not by chance, not by men, but by the hand of God, and that hand is moved by his will, and that will by his thought respecting us. Every mercy, even the least, represents some kind thought in the mind of God respecting us. God thinks of each one of his people, and every moment. IV. They are innumerable. "*They cannot be reckoned up.*" Could we see all the mercies of God to us and his wonderful works wrought for us individually, they would be countless

as the sands, and all these countless mercies represent countless thoughts in the mind and heart of God to each one of his people.—*George Rogers.*

Verse 5.—The multitude of God's thoughts, and deeds of grace, beginning in eternity, continuing for ever; and dealing with this life, heaven, hell, sin, angels, devils, and indeed all things.

Verse 6.—Here David goes beyond himself, and speaks the language of David's Son. This was naturally suggested by God's wonderful works, and innumerable thoughts of love to man. I. *The sacrifices that were not required.* These were the sacrifices and burnt-offerings under the law. 1. When required? From Adam to the coming of Christ. 2. When not required? 3. Why required before? As types of the one method of redemption. 4. Why not now required? Because the great Antetype had come. II. *The sacrifice that was required.* This was the sacrifice offered on Calvary. 1. It was required by God by his justice, his wisdom, his faithfulness, his love, his honour, his glory. 2. It was required by man to give him salvation and confidence in that salvation. 3. It was required for the honour of the moral government of God throughout the universe. III. *The person by whom this sacrifice was offered.* "*Mine ears hast thou opened.*" This is the language of Christ, prospectively denoting—1. Knowledge of the sacrifice required. 2. Consecration of himself as a servant for that end.—*George Rogers.*

Verse 6.—"*Mine ears hast thou opened.*" Readiness to hear, fixity of purpose, perfection of obedience, entireness of consecration.

Verses 6—8.—The Lord gives an ear to hear his word, a mouth to confess it, a heart to love it, and power to keep it.

Verse 7.—I. The time of Christ's coming. "*Then said I.*" When types were exhausted, when prophecies looked for their fulfilment, when worldly wisdom had done its utmost, when the world was almost entirely united under one empire, when the time appointed by the Father had come. II. The design of his coming. "*In the volume*" was written—1. The constitution of his person. 2. His teaching. 3. The manner of his life. 4. The design of his death. 5. His resurrection and ascension. 6. The kingdom he would establish. III. The voluntariness of his coming, "*Lo, I come.*" Though sent by the Father, he came of his own accord. "Christ Jesus came into the world." Men do not come into the world, they are sent into it. "*Lo, I come,*" denotes pre-existence, pre-determination, pre-operation. —*George Rogers.*

Verse 8.—"*To do thy will, O God.*" I. The will of God is seen in the fact of salvation. It has its origin in the will of God. II. The will of God is seen in the plan of salvation. All things have proceeded, are proceeding, and will proceed according to that plan. III. It is seen in the provision of salvation, in the appointment of his own Son to become the mediator, the atoning sacrifice, the law-fulfiller, the head of the church, that his plan required. IV. It is seen in the accomplishment of salvation.

Verse 9.—Referring to our Lord; a great preacher, a great subject, a great congregation, and his great faithfulness in the work.

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—1. The righteousness *possessed* by God. II. The righteousness *prescribed* by God. III. The righteousness *provided* by God.—*James Frame.*

Verse 10.—I. The preacher must reveal his whole message. II. He must not conceal any part. 1. Not of the righteousness of the law or the gospel. 2. Not of the lovingkindness of grace. 3. Not of any portion of the truth. 1. To omit is to conceal. 2. To entangle with human reasonings. 3. To cover with flowers of rhetoric. 4. To give a partial representation. 5. To put one truth in the place of another. 6. To give the letter without the spirit.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—The great sin of concealing what we know of God.

Verse 11.—Enrichment and preservation sought. The true riches are from God, gifts of his sovereignty, fruits of his mercy, marked with his tenderness. The best preservations are divine love and faithfulness.

Verse 12.—Compare this with verse 5. The number of our sins, and the number of his thoughts of love.

Verse 12 (*second clause*).—I. The soul arrested—"taken hold." II. The soul bewildered—"cannot look up." III. The soul's only refuge—prayer, ver. 13.

Verse 13.—I. The language of believing prayer—deliver me, help me; looking for deliverance and help to God only. II. Of earnest prayer—make haste to help me. III. Of submissive prayer—be pleased, O Lord, if according to thy good

pleasure. IV. Of consistent prayer. Help me, which implies efforts for his own deliverance, putting his own shoulder to the wheel.

Verses 11—13.—As an instance of clerical ingenuity, it may be well to mention that Canon Wordsworth has a sermon from these verses upon "The duty of making responses in public prayer."

Verse 14.—*Honi soit qui mal y pense;* or, the reward of malignity.

Verse 16 (*last clause*).—An every-day saying. Who can use it? What does it mean? Why should *they* say it? Why say it continually?

Verse 17.—The humble "*But,*" and the believing "*Yet.*" The little "*I am,*" and the great "*Thou art.*" The fitting prayer.

Verse 17.—"*The Lord thinketh upon me.*" Admire the condescension, and then consider that this is—I. A promised blessing. II. A practical blessing—he thinks upon us to supply, protect, direct, sanctify, etc. III. A precious blessing—kind thoughts, continual, greatly good. He thinks of us as his creatures with pity, as his children with love, as his friends with pleasure. IV. A present blessing—promises, providences, visitations of grace.

Verse 17.—I. The less we think of ourselves the more God will think upon us. II. The less we put trust in ourselves the more we may trust in God for help and deliverance. III. The less delay in prayer and active efforts the sooner God will appear for us.

PSALM XLI.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. *This title has frequently occurred before and serves to remind us of the value of the Psalm, seeing that it was committed to no mean songster; and also to inform us as to the author who has made his own experience the basis of a prophetic song, in which a far greater than David is set forth. How wide a range of experience David had! What power it gave him to edify future ages! And how full a type of our Lord did he become! What was bitterness to him has proved to be a fountain of unfailing sweetness to many generations of the faithful.*

Jesus Christ betrayed of Judas Iscariot is evidently the great theme of this Psalm, but we think not exclusively. He is the antitype of David, and all his people are in their measure like him; hence words suitable to the Great Representative are most applicable to those who are in him. Such as receive a vile return for long kindness to others, may read this song with much comfort, for they will see that it is alas! too common for the best of men to be rewarded for their holy charity with cruelty and scorn; and when they have been humbled by falling into sin, advantage has been taken of their low estate, their good deeds have been forgotten, and the vilest spite has been vented upon them.

DIVISION.—*The Psalmist in verses* 1—3, *describes the mercies which are promised to such as consider the poor, and this he uses as a preface to his own personal plea for succour: from verses* 4—9 *he states his own case, proceeds to prayer in verse* 10, *and closes with thanksgiving, verses* 11—13.

EXPOSITION.

BLESSED *is* he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.

2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; *and* he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.

1. "*Blessed is he that considereth the poor.*" This is the third Psalm opening with a benediction, and there is a growth in it beyond the first two. To search the word of God comes first, pardoned sin is second, and now the forgiven sinner brings forth fruit unto God available for the good of others. The word used is as emphatic as in the former cases, and so is the blessing which follows it. The poor intended, are such as are poor in substance, weak in bodily strength, despised in repute, and desponding in spirit. These are mostly avoided and frequently scorned. The worldly proverb bequeathes the hindmost to one who has no mercy. The sick and the sorry are poor company, and the world deserts them as the Amalekite left his dying servant. Such as have been made partakers of divine grace receive a tenderer nature, and are not hardened against their own flesh and blood; they undertake the cause of the down trodden, and turn their minds seriously to the promotion of their welfare. They do not toss them a penny and go on their way, but enquire into their sorrows, sift out their cause, study the best ways for their relief, and practically come to their rescue; such as these have the mark of the divine favour plainly upon them, and are as surely the sheep of the Lord's pasture as if they wore a brand upon their foreheads. They are not said to have considered the poor years ago, but they still do so. Stale benevolence, when boasted of, argues present churlishness. First and foremost, yea, far above all others put together in tender compassion for the needy is our Lord Jesus, who so remembered our low estate, that though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor. All his attributes were charged with the task of our uplifting. He weighed our case and came in the fulness of wisdom to execute the wonderful work of mercy by which we are

redeemed from our destructions. Wretchedness excited his pity, misery moved his mercy, and thrice blessed is he both by his God and his saints for his attentive care and wise action towards us. He still considereth us; his mercy is always in the present tense, and so let our praises be.

"*The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.*" The compassionate lover of the poor thought of others and therefore God will think of him. God measures to us with our own bushel. Days of trouble come even to the most generous, and they have made the wisest provision for rainy days who have lent shelter to others when times were better with them. The promise is not that the generous saint shall have no trouble, but that he shall be preserved in it, and in due time brought out of it. How true was this of our Lord! never trouble deeper nor triumph brighter than his, and glory be to his name, he secures the ultimate victory of all his blood-bought ones. Would that they all were more like him in putting on bowels of compassion to the poor. Much blessedness they miss who stint their alms. The joy of doing good, the sweet reaction of another's happiness, the approving smile of heaven upon the heart, if not upon the estate; all these the niggardly soul knows nothing of. Selfishness bears in itself a curse, it is a cancer in the heart; while liberality is happiness, and maketh fat the bones. In dark days we cannot rest upon the supposed merit of almsgiving, but still the music of memory brings with it no mean solace when it tells of widows and orphans whom we have succoured, and prisoners and sick folk to whom we have ministered.

2. "*The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive.*" His noblest life shall be immortal, and even his mortal life shall be sacredly guarded by the power of Jehovah. Jesus lived on till his hour came, nor could the devices of crafty Herod take away his life till the destined hour had struck; and even then no man took his life from him, but he laid it down of himself, to take it again. Here is the portion of all those who are made like their Lord, they bless and they shall be blessed, they preserve and shall be preserved, they watch over the lives of others and they themselves shall be precious in the sight of the Lord. The miser like the hog is of no use till he is dead—then let him die; the righteous like the ox is of service during life—then let him live. "*And he shall be blessed upon the earth.*" Prosperity shall attend him. His cruse of oil shall not be dried up because he fed the poor prophet. He shall cut from his roll of cloth and find it longer at both ends.

> "There was a man, and some did count him mad,
> The more he gave away the more he had."

If temporal gains be not given him, spirituals shall be doubled to him. His little shall be blessed, bread and water shall be a feast to him. The liberal are and must be blessed even here; they have a present as well as future portion. Our Lord's real blessedness of heart in the joy that was set before him is a subject worthy of earnest thought, especially as it is the picture of the blessing which all liberal saints may look for. "*And thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.*" He helped the distressed, and now he shall find a champion in his God. What would not the good man's enemies do to him if they had him at their disposal? Better be in a pit with vipers than be at the mercy of persecutors. This sentence sets before us a sweet negative, and yet it were not easy to have seen how it could be true of our Lord Jesus, did we not know that although he was exempted from much of blessing, being made a curse for us, yet even he was not altogether nor for ever left of God, but in due time was exalted above all his enemies.

3. "*The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing.*" The everlasting arms shall stay up his soul as friendly hands and downy pillows stay up the body of the sick. How tender and sympathising is this image; how near it brings our God to our infirmities and sicknesses! Whoever heard this of the old heathen Jove, or of the gods of India or China? This is language peculiar to the God of Israel; he it is who deigns to become nurse and attendant upon good men. If he smites with one hand he sustains with the other. Oh, it is blessed fainting when one falls upon the Lord's own bosom, and is upborne thereby! Grace is the best of restoratives; divine love is the noblest stimulant for a languishing patient; it makes the soul strong as a giant, even when the aching bones are breaking through the skin. No physician like the Lord, no tonic like his promise, no wine like his love. "*Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*" What, doth the Lord turn bedmaker to his sick children? Herein is love indeed. Who would not consider the poor if such be the promised reward? A bed soon grows hard when the body

is weary with tossing to and fro upon it, but grace gives patience, and God's smile gives peace, and the bed is made soft because the man's heart is content; the pillows are downy because the head is peaceful. Note that the Lord will make *all* his bed, from head to foot. What considerate and indefatigable kindness! Our dear and ever blessed Lord Jesus, though in all respects an inheritor of this promise, for our sakes condescended to forego the blessing, and died on a cross and not upon a bed; yet, even there, he was after awhile upheld and cheered by the Lord his God, so that he died in triumph.

We must not imagine that the benediction pronounced in these three verses belongs to all who casually give money to the poor, or leave it in their wills, or contribute to societies. Such do well, or act from mere custom, as the case may be, but they are not here alluded to. The blessing is for those whose habit it is to love their neighbour as themselves, and who for Christ's sake feed the hungry and clothe the naked. To imagine a man to be a saint who does not consider the poor as he has ability, is to conceive the fruitless fig tree to be acceptable; there will be sharp dealing with many professors on this point in the day when the King cometh in his glory.

4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

5 Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?

6 And if he come to see *me*, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; *when* he goeth abroad, he telleth *it*.

7 All that hate me whisper together against me; against me do they devise my hurt.

8 An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him: and *now* that he lieth he shall rise up no more.

9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me.

Here we have a controversy between the pleader and his God. He had been a tender friend to the poor, and yet in the hour of his need the promised assistance was not forthcoming. In our Lord's case there was a dark and dreary night in which such arguments were well befitting himself and his condition.

4. "*I said*"—said it in earnest prayer—"*Lord, be merciful unto me.*" Prove now thy gracious dealings with my soul in adversity, since thou didst aforetime give me grace to act liberally in my prosperity. No appeal is made to justice; the petitioner but hints at the promised reward, but goes straightforward to lay his plea at the feet of mercy. How low was our Redeemer brought when such petitions could come from his reverend mouth, when his lips like lilies dropped such sweet smelling but bitter myrrh! "*Heal my soul.*" My time of languishing is come, now do as thou hast said, and strengthen me, especially in my soul. We ought to be far more earnest for the soul's healing than for the body's ease. We hear much of the cure of souls, but we often forget to care about it. "*For I have sinned against thee.*" Here was the root of sorrow. Sin and suffering are inevitable companions. Observe that by the Psalmist sin was felt to be mainly evil because directed against God. This is of the essence of true repentance. The immaculate Saviour could never have used such language as this unless there be here a reference to the sin which he took upon himself by imputation; and for our part we tremble to apply words so manifestly indicating personal rather than imputed sin. Applying the petition to David and other sinful believers, how strangely evangelical is the argument: heal me, not for I am innocent, but "*I have sinned.*" How contrary is this to all self-righteous pleading! How consonant with grace! How inconsistent with merit! Even the fact that the confessing penitent had remembered the poor, is but obliquely urged, but a direct appeal is made to mercy on the ground of great sin. O trembling reader, here is a divinely revealed precedent for thee, be not slow to follow it.

5. "*Mine enemies speak evil of me.*" It was their nature to do and speak evil; it was not possible that the child of God could escape them. The viper fastened on Paul's hand: the better the man the more likely, and the more venomous the slander. Evil tongues are busy tongues, and never deal in truth. Jesus was

traduced to the utmost, although no offence was in him. "*When shall he die, and his name perish?*" They could not be content till he was away. The world is not wide enough for evil men to live in while the righteous remain, yea, the bodily presence of the saints may be gone, but their memory is an offence to their foes. It was never merry England, say they, since men took to Psalm-singing. In the Master's case, they cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live." If persecutors could have their way, the church should have but one neck, and that should be on the block. Thieves would fain blow out all candles. The lights of the world are not the delights of the world. Poor blind bats, they fly at the lamp, and try to dash it down; but the Lord liveth, and preserveth both the saints and their names.

6. "*And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity.*" His visits of sympathy are visitations of mockery. When the fox calls on the sick lamb his words are soft, but he licks his lips in hope of the carcass. It is wretched work to have spies haunting one's bedchamber, calling in pretence of kindness, but with malice in their hearts. Hypocritical talk is always fulsome and sickening to honest men, but especially to the suffering saint. Our divine Lord had much of this from the false hearts that watched his words. "*His heart gathereth iniquity to itself.*" Like will to like. The bird makes its nest of feathers. Out of the sweetest flowers chemists can distil poison, and from the purest words and deeds malice can gather groundwork for calumnious report. It is perfectly marvellous how spite spins webs out of no materials whatever. Its is no small trial to have base persons around you lying in wait for every word which they may pervert into evil. The Master whom we serve was constantly subject to this affliction. "*When he goeth abroad, he telleth it.*" He makes his lies, and then vends them in open market. He is no sooner out of the house than he outs with his lie, and this against a sick man whom he called to see as a friend—a sick man to whose incoherent and random speeches pity should be showed. Ah, black-hearted wretch! A devil's cub indeed. How far abroad men will go to publish their slanders! They would fain placard the sky with their falsehoods. A little fault is made much of; a slip of the tongue is a libel, a mistake a crime, and if a word can bear two meanings the worse is always fathered upon it. Tell it in Gath, publish it in Askelon, that the daughters of the uncircumcised may triumph. It is base to strike a man when he is down, yet such is the meanness of mankind towards a Christian hero should he for awhile chance to be under a cloud.

7. "*All that hate me whisper together against me.*" The spy meets his comrades in conclave and sets them all a whispering. Why could they not speak out? Were they afraid of the sick warrior? Or were their designs so treacherous that they must needs be hatched in secresy? Mark the unanimity of the wicked—"*all.*" How heartily the dogs unite to hunt the stag! Would God we were half as united in holy labour as persecutors in their malicious projects, and were half as wise as they are crafty, for their whispering was craft as well as cowardice, the conspiracy must not be known till all is ready. "*Against me do they devise my hurt.*" They lay their heads together, and scheme and plot. So did Ahithophel and the rest of Absalom's counsellors, so also did the chief priests and Pharisees. Evil men are good at devising; they are given to meditation, they are deep thinkers, but the mark they aim at is evermore the hurt of the faithful. Snakes in the grass are never there for a good end.

8. "*An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him.*" They whisper that some curse has fallen upon him, and is riveted to him. They insinuate that a foul secret stains his character, the ghost whereof haunts his house, and never can be laid. An air of mystery is cast around this doubly dark saying, as if to show how indistinct are the mutterings of malice. Even thus was our Lord accounted "smitten of God and afflicted." His enemies conceived that God had forsaken him, and delivered him for ever into their hands. "*And now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.*" His sickness they hoped was mortal, and this was fine news for them. No more would the good man's holiness chide their sin, they would now be free from the check of his godliness. Like the friars around Wickliffe's bed, their prophesyings were more jubilant than accurate, but they were a sore scourge to the sick man. When the Lord smites his people with his rod of affliction for a small moment, their enemies expect to see them capitally executed, and prepare their *jubilates* to celebrate their funerals, but they are in too great a hurry, and have to alter their ditties and sing to another tune. Our Redeemer eminently fore-

tokened this, for out of his lying in the grave he has gloriously risen. Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! Rising he pours confusion on his enemies.

9. "*Yea.*" Here is the climax of the sufferer's woe, and he places before it the emphatic affirmation, as if he thought that such villany would scarcely be believed. "*Mine own familiar friend.*" "The man of my peace," so runs the original, with whom I had no differences, with whom I was in league, who had aforetime ministered to my peace and comfort. This was Ahithophel to David, and Iscariot with our Lord. Judas was an apostle, admitted to the privacy of the Great Teacher, hearing his secret thoughts, and, as it were, allowed to read his very heart. "*Et tu Brute?*" said the expiring Cæsar. The kiss of the traitor wounded our Lord's heart as much as the nail wounded his hand. "*In whom I trusted.*" Judas was the treasurer of the apostolic college. Where we place great confidence an unkind act is the more severely felt. "*Which did eat of my bread.*" Not only as a guest but as a dependant, a pensioner at my board. Judas dipped in the same dish with his Lord, and hence the more accursed was his treachery in his selling his Master for a slave's price. "*Hath lifted up his heel against me.*" Not merely turned his back on me, but left me with a heavy kick such as a vicious horse might give. Hard is it to be spurned in our need by those who formerly fed at our table. It is noteworthy that the Redeemer applied only the last words of this verse to Judas, perhaps because, knowing his duplicity, he had never made a familiar friend of him in the fullest sense, and had not placed implicit trust in him. Infernal malice so planned it that every circumstance in Jesus' death should add wormwood to it; and the betrayal was one of the bitterest drops of gall. We are indeed, wretched when our *quondam* friend becomes our relentless foe, when confidence is betrayed, when all the rites of hospitality are perverted, and ingratitude is the only return for kindness; yet in so deplorable a case we may cast ourselves upon the faithfulness of God, who, having delivered our Covenant Head, is in verity engaged to be the very present help of all for whom that covenant was made.

10 But thou O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.

10. "*But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me.*" How the hunted and affrighted soul turns to her God! How she seems to take breath with a "but, thou!" How she clings to the hope of mercy from God when every chance of pity from man is gone! "*And raise me up.*" Recover me from my sickness, give me to regain my position. Jesus was raised up from the grave; his descent was ended by an ascent. "*That I may requite them.*" This as it reads is a truly Old Testament sentence, and quite aside from the spirit of Christianity, yet we must remember that David was a person in magisterial office, and might without any personal revenge, desire to punish those who had insulted his authority and libelled his public character. Our great Apostle and High Priest had no personal animosities, but even he by his resurrection has requited the powers of evil, and avenged on death and hell all their base attacks upon his cause and person. Still the strained application of every sentence of this Psalm to Christ is not to our liking, and we prefer to call attention to the better spirit of the gospel beyond that of the old dispensation.

11 By this I know thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.

13 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen and Amen.

11. We all are cheered by tokens for good, and the Psalmist felt it to be an auspicious omen, that after all his deep depression he was not utterly given over to his foe. "*By this I know that thou favourest me.*" Thou hast a special regard to me, I have the secret assurance of this in my heart, and, therefore, thine outward dealings do not dismay me, for I know that thou lovest me in them all. "*Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.*" What if the believer has no triumph over his foes, he must be glad that they do not triumph over him. If we have not all

we would we should praise God for all we have. Much there is in us over which the ungodly might exult, and if God's mercy keeps the dogs' mouths closed when they might be opened, we must give him our heartiest gratitude. What a wonder it is that when the devil enters the lists with a poor, erring, bedridden, deserted, slandered saint, and has a thousand evil tongues to aid him, yet he cannot win the day, but in the end slinks off without renown.

> "The feeblest saint shall win the day
> Though death and hell obstruct his way."

12. "*And as for me,*" despite them all and in the sight of them all, "*thou upholdest me in mine integrity;*" thy power enables me to rise above the reach of slander by living in purity and righteousness. Our innocence and consistency are the result of the divine upholding. We are like those glasses without feet, which can only be upright while they are held in the hand; we fall, and spill, and spoil all, if left to ourselves. The Lord should be praised every day if we are preserved from gross sin. When others sin they show us what we should do but for grace. "He to-day and I to-morrow," was the exclamation of a holy man, whenever he saw another falling into sin. Our integrity is comparative as well as dependant, we must therefore be humbled while we are grateful. If we are clear of the faults alleged against us by our calumniators, we have nevertheless quite enough of actual blameworthiness to render it shameful for us to boast. "*And settest me before thy face for ever.*" He rejoiced that he lived under the divine surveillance; tended, cared for, and smiled upon by his Lord; and yet more, that it would be so world without end. To stand before an earthly monarch is considered to be a singular honour, but what must it be to be a perpetual courtier in the palace of the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible?

13. The Psalm ends with a doxology. "*Blessed be the Lord,*" *i.e.*, let him be glorified. The blessing at the beginning from the mouth of God is returned from the mouth of his servant. We cannot add to the Lord's blessedness, but we can pour out our grateful wishes, and these he accepts, as we receive little presents of flowers from children who love us. Jehovah is the personal name of our God. "*God of Israel*" is his covenant title, and shows his special relation to his elect people. "*From everlasting and to everlasting.*" The strongest way of expressing endless duration. *We* die, but the glory of God goes on and on without pause. "*Amen and amen.*" So let it surely, firmly, and eternally be. Thus the people joined in the Psalm by a double shout of holy affirmation; let us unite in it with all our hearts. This last verse may serve for the prayer of the universal church in all ages, but none can sing it so sweetly as those who have experienced as David did the faithfulness of God in times of extremity.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The *Syriac* says, "It was a Psalm of David, when he appointed overseers to take care of the poor."—*Adam Clarke.*

Whole Psalm.—A prophecy of Christ and the traitor Judas.—*Eusebius of Cæsarea, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is he that considereth the poor.*" Interpreters are generally of opinion that the exercise of kindness and compassion, manifested in taking care of the miserable, and helping them, is here commended. Those, however, who maintain that the Psalmist here commends the considerate candour of those who judge wisely and charitably of men in adversity, form a better judgment of his meaning. Indeed, the participle, משכיל *maskil*, cannot be explained in any other way. At the same time it ought to be observed on what account it is that David declares those to be blessed who form a wise and prudent judgment concerning the afflictions by which God chastises his servants. . . . Doubtless it happened to him as it did to the holy patriarch Job, whom his friends reckoned to be one

of the most wicked of men, when they saw God treating him with great severity. And certainly it is an error which is by far too common among men, to look upon those who are oppressed with afflictions as condemned and reprobate. . . . For the most part, indeed, we often speak rashly and indiscriminately concerning others, and, so to speak, plunge even into the lowest abyss those who labour under affliction. To restrain such a rash and unbridled spirit, David says, that they are blessed who do not suffer themselves, by speaking at random, to judge harshly of their neighbours; but discerning aright the afflictions by which they are visited, mitigate by the wisdom of the spirit, the severe and unjust judgments to which we naturally are so prone.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is he that considereth the poor.*" As Christ considered us in our state of poverty, so ought we most attentively to consider him in his; to consider what he suffered in his own person; to discern him suffering in his poor afflicted members; and to extend to them the mercy which he extended to us. He, who was "blessed" of Jehovah, and "delivered in the evil day" by a glorious resurrection, will "bless" and "deliver" in like manner, such as for his sake, love and relieve their brethren.—*George Horne.*

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is he that considereth the poor.*" Not the poor of the world in common, nor poor saints in particular but some single poor man; for the word is in the singular number, and designs our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the last verse of the preceding Psalm, is said to be *poor and needy.—John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is he that considereth the poor.*" I call your attention to the way in which the Bible enjoins us to take up the care of the poor. It does not say in the text before us, Commiserate the poor; for, if it said no more than this, it would leave their necessities to be provided for by the random ebullitions of an impetuous and unreflecting sympathy. It provides them with a better security than the mere feeling of compassion—a feeling which, however useful to the purpose of excitement, must be controlled and regulated. Feeling is but a faint and fluctuating security. Fancy may mislead it. The sober realities of life may disgust it. Disappointment may extinguish it. Ingratitude may embitter it. Deceit, with its counterfeit representations, may allure it to the wrong object. At all events, Time is the little circle in which it in general expatiates. It needs the impression of sensible objects to sustain it; nor can it enter with zeal or with vivacity into the wants of the abstract and invisible soul. The Bible, then, instead of leaving the relief of the poor to the mere instinct of sympathy, makes it a subject for *consideration*—"Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor," a grave and prosaic exercise, I do allow, and which makes no figure in those high-wrought descriptions, where the exquisite tale of benevolence is made up of all the sensibilities of tenderness on the one hand, and of all the ecstacies of gratitude on the other. The Bible rescues the cause from the mischief to which a heedless or unthinking sensibility would expose it. It brings it under the cognisance of a higher faculty—a faculty of steadier operation than to be weary in well-doing, and of sturdier endurance than to give it up in disgust. It calls you to *consider* the poor. It makes the virtue of relieving them a matter of computation, as well as of sentiment, and in so doing puts you beyond the reach of the various delusions, by which you are at one time led to prefer the indulgence of pity to the substantial interest of its object; at another, are led to retire chagrined and disappointed from the scene of duty, because you have not met with the gratitude or the honesty that you laid your account with; at another, are led to expend all your anxieties upon the accommodation of time, and to overlook eternity. It is the office of *consideration* to save you from all these fallacies. Under its tutorage attention to the wants of the poor ripens into principle. . . . .

It must be obvious to all of you, that it is not enough that you give money, and add your name to the contributions of charity. You must give it with judgment, You must give your time and your attention. You must descend to the trouble of examination. You must rise from the repose of contemplation, and make yourself acquainted with the object of your benevolent exercises. . . . To give money is not to do all the work and labour of benevolence. You must go to the poor man's sick-bed. You must lend your hand to the work of assistance. This is true and unsophisticated goodness. It may be recorded in no earthly documents; but, if done under the influence of Christian principle, in a word, if done unto Jesus, it is written in the book of heaven, and will give a new lustre to that crown to which his disciples look forward in time, and will wear through eternity.—*From a Sermon*

preached before the Society for Relief of the Destitute Sick, in St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, by Thomas Chalmers, D.D. and LL.D. (1780—1847).

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is he that considereth the poor.*" A Piedmontese nobleman into whose company I fell, at Turin, told me the following story: "I was weary of life, and after a day such as few have known, and none would wish to remember, was hurrying along the street to the river, when I felt a sudden check, I turned and beheld a little boy, who had caught the skirt of my cloak in his anxiety to solicit my notice. His look and manner were irresistible. No less so was the lesson he had learnt—'There are six of us, and we are dying for want of food.' 'Why should I not,' said I to myself, 'relieve this wretched family? I have the means, and it will not delay me many minutes. But what if it does?' The scene of misery he conducted me to I cannot describe. I threw them my purse, and their burst of gratitude overcame me It filled my eyes, it went as a cordial to my heart. 'I will call again to-morrow,' I cried. 'Fool that I was to think of leaving a world where such pleasure was to be had, and so cheaply!'"—*Samuel Rogers* (1763—1855) *in "Italy."*

Verse 1.—"*He that considereth the poor:*"—

An ardent spirit dwells with Christian love,
The eagle's vigour in the pitying dove.
'Tis not enough that we with sorrow sigh,
That we the wants of pleading man supply,
That we in sympathy with sufferers feel,
Nor hear a grief without a wish to heal:
Not these suffice—to sickness, pain, and woe,
The Christian spirit loves with aid to go:
Will not be sought, waits not for want to plead,
But seeks the duty—nay, prevents the need;
Her utmost aid to every ill applies,
And plants relief for coming miseries.

George Crabbe, 1754—1832.

Verse 1.—How foolish are they that fear to lose their wealth by giving it, and fear not to lose themselves by keeping it! He that lays up his gold may be a good *jailer*, but he that lays it out is a good *steward*. Merchants traffic thither with a commodity where 'tis precious in regard of scarcity. We do not buy wines in England to carry them to France, spices in France to carry them to the Indies; so for labour and work, repentance and mortification, there is none of them in heaven, there is peace and glory, and the favour of God indeed. A merchant without his commodity hath but a sorry welcome. God will ask men that arrive at heaven's gates, *ubi opera?* Rev. xxii. 12. His reward shall be according to our works. Thou hast riches here, and here be objects that need thy riches—the poor; in heaven there are riches enough but no poor, therefore, by faith in Christ make over to them thy moneys in this world, that by bill of exchange thou mayest receive it in the world to come; that only you carry with you which you send before you. Do good while it is in your power; relieve the oppressed, succour the fatherless, while your estates are your own; when you are dead your riches belong to others. One light carried before a man is more serviceable than twenty carried after him. In your compassion to the distressed, or for pious uses, let your hands be your executors, and your eyes your overseers.—*Francis Raworth, Teacher to the Church at Shoreditch, in a Funeral Sermon*, 1656.

Verses 1, 3.—It is a blessed thing to receive when a man hath need; but 'tis a more blessed thing to give than to receive. "*Blessed* (saith the prophet David) *is he that considereth the poor.*" What? to say, alas, poor man! the world is hard with him, I would there were a course taken to do him good? No, no; but so to consider him as to give; to give till the poor man be satisfied, to draw out one's sheaf, ay, one's very soul to the hungry. But what if troubles should come? were it not better to keep money by one? Money will not deliver one. It may be an occasion to endanger one, to bring one into, rather than help one out of trouble; but if a man be a merciful man, *God will deliver him*, either by himself, or by some other man or matter. Ay, but what if *sickness* come? Why, "*the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing;*" and, which is a great ease and kindness; God, as it were, himself "*will make all his bed in his sickness.*" Here poor people have the advantage: such must not say, Alas, I am a poor woman, what works of mercy can I do? for they are they who can best make the beds of sick folk, which we see

is a great act of mercy in that it is said, that *the Lord himself will make their bed in their sickness.* And there are none so poor, but they may *make the beds* of the sick.—*Richard Capel.*

Verses 1, 5.—" *He that considereth.*" " *Mine enemies.*" Strigelius has observed, there is a perpetual antithesis in this Psalm between the few who have a due regard to the poor in spirit, and the many who afflict or desert them.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 2.—" *The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive.*" It is worthy of remark, that *benevolent persons*, who " *consider the poor*," and especially the ***sick poor;*** who search cellars, garrets, back lanes, and such abodes of misery, to find them out (even in the places where contagion keeps its seat), very seldom fall a prey to their own benevolence. The Lord, in an especial manner, keeps them *alive*, and preserves them; while many, who endeavour to keep far from the contagion, are assailed by it, and fall victims to it. God loves the merciful man.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—" *He shall be blessed upon the earth.*" None of the godly man's afflictions shall hinder or take away his begun blessedness, even in this world.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—" *Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*" Into what minuteness of exquisite and touching tenderness does the Lord condescend to enter! One feels almost as we may suppose Peter felt when the Saviour came to him, and would have washed his feet, " Lord! thou shalt never wash my feet;" thou shalt never make my bed. And yet, " If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;" if the Lord make not our bed in our sickness, there is no peace nor comfort there. We have had David calling on God to bow down his ear, like a loving mother listening to catch the feeblest whisper of her child; and the image is full of the sweetest sympathy and condescension; but here the Lord, the great God of heaven, he that said when on earth, " I am among you as one that serveth," does indeed take upon him the form, and is found in fashion as a servant, fulfilling all the loving and tender offices of an assiduous nurse.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 3.—" *Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*" The meaning rather is, " it is no longer a sick bed, for thou hast healed him of his disease."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—When a good man is ill at ease, God promiseth to make all his bed in his sickness. Pillow, bolster, head, feet, sides, all his bed. Surely that God who made him knows so well his measure and temper as to make his bed to please him. Herein his art is excellent, not fitting the bed to the person, but the person to the bed; infusing patience into him. But, oh! how shall God make my bed, who have no bed of mine own to make. Thou fool, he can make thy not having a bed to be a bed unto thee. When Jacob slept on the ground, who would not have had his hard lodging, therewithal to have his heavenly dream?—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 3.—Sure that bed must need be soft which God will make.—*T. Watson.*

Verse 3.—We must not forget that Oriental beds needed not to be made in the same sense as our own. They were never more than mattresses or quilts thickly padded, and were turned when they became uncomfortable, and that is just the word here used.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 3.—When I visited one day, as he was dying, my beloved friend Benjamin Parsons, I said, " How are you to-day, Sir?" He said, " My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows—infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom." Preaching in the Canterbury Hall, in Brighton, I mentioned this some time since; and many months after I was requested to call upon a poor but holy young woman, apparently dying. She said, " I felt I must see you before I died. I heard you tell the story of Benjamin Parsons and his three pillows; and when I went through a surgical operation, and it was very cruel, I was leaning my head on pillows, and as they were taking them away I said, ' Mayn't I keep them?' The surgeon said, ' No, my dear, we must take them away.' ' But,' said I, ' you can't take away Benjamin Parsons' three pillows. I can lay my head on infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom.' "—*Paxton Hood, in " Dark Sayings on a Harp,"* 1865.

Verses 3, 4.—What saith David from the very bottom of his heart, in his sickness? Not, take away this death only. No; but David being sick, first comforts himself with this promise, " *The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness;*" and then adds, " *I said, Lord, be merciful*

unto me, and heal my soul;" that is, destroy my lusts, which are the diseases of my soul, Lord; and heal my soul, and renew life and communion with thee, which is the health and strength of my soul. Do not take this sickness and death only away; but this sin away, that hath dishonoured thee, hath separated between me and thee: *"Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee."—Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 4.—*"I said, Lord, be merciful."* Mercy, not justice! The extreme of mercy for the extreme of misery. Righteousness as filthy rags; a flesh in which dwelleth no good thing, on the one side; on the other, it is "neither herb nor mollifying plaster that restored" to health; "but thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things." Wisd. xvi. 12.—*Thomas Aquinas, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 4.—God is the strength of a Christian's heart, by healing and restoring him when the infused habits of grace fail, and sin grows strong and vigorous. A Christian never fails in the exercise of grace, but sin gives him a wound; and therefore David prayed, *"Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned.* And what David prayed for, God promiseth to his people: "I will heal their backsliding." Hosea xiv. 4. The weakness and decay of grace, brings a Christian presently to the falling sickness; and so it did David and Ephraim; ay, but God will be a physician to the soul in this case, and will heal their diseases; and so he did David's falling sickness, for which he returned the tribute of praise. Psalm ciii. 3.—*Samuel Blackerby.*

Verse 4. (*last clause*).—Saul and Judas each said, "I have sinned;" but David says, "I have sinned *against thee."—William S. Plumer.*

Verse 5.—*"Mine enemies speak evil of me."* *To speak* is here used in the sense of *to imprecate.—John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—*"His name."* It is the *name*, the character, and privileges of a true servant of God, that calls out the hatred of ungodly men, and they would gladly extirpate him from their sight.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 6.—*"If he come to see me, he speaketh vanity:"* many fair words, but none of them true.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 6.—I remember a pretty apologue that Bromiard tells:—A fowler, in a sharp frosty morning, having taken many little birds for which he had long watched, began to take up his nets, and nipping the birds on the head laid them down. A young thrush, espying the tears trickling down his cheeks by reason of the extreme cold, said to her mother, that certainly the man was very merciful and compassionate, who wept so bitterly over the calamity of the poor birds. But her mother told her more wisely, that she might better judge of the man's disposition by his hand than by his eye; and if the hands do strike treacherously, he can never be admitted to friendship, who speaks fairly and weeps pitifully.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Verse 6.—*"His heart gathereth iniquity to itself."* 1. By adding sin to sin, in that he covers over his malice with such horrid hypocrisy. 2. By inventing or contriving all the several ways he can to ensnare me, or do me some mischief, thereby seeking to satisfy and please his corrupt lusts and affections; 3. (which I like best), by observing all he can in me, and drawing what he can from me, and so laying all up together in his mind, as the ground of his unjust surmises and censures concerning me.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 8.—*"An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him."* *An evil* deed of Belial cleaveth fast to him. Grammarians maintain that the word *Belial* is compounded of בְּלִי, *beli*, and יָעַל, *yaal*, which signify *"not to rise;"* the expression, *"thing of Belial"* (for so it is literally in the Hebrew), I understand in this place as meaning an extraordinary and hateful crime which as we commonly say can never be expiated, and from which there is no possibility of escape; unless perhaps some would rather refer it to the affliction itself under which he laboured, as if his enemies had said that he was seized by some incurable malady.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—*"An evil disease,"* etc. What is here meant by דְּבַר־בְּלִיַּעַל is matter of some difficulty. The ancient interpreters generally render it a *perverse*, or *mischievous*, or *wicked word;* the Chaldee, a *perverse word;* the Syriac, a *word of iniquity;* the LXX. λόγον παράνομον; the Latin, *iniquum verbum*, a *wicked word;* the Arabic, *words contrary to the law.* And so in all probability it is set to signify a *great slander*, or *calumny*—that as "men of Belial" are *slanderous* persons, so the

speech of Belial shall signify a *slanderous* speech. And this is said to "*cleave*" to him on whom it is fastened, it being the nature of calumnies, when strongly affixed on any, to *cleave* fast, and leave some *evil mark* behind them.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 9.—"*Yea, mine own familiar friend,*" etc. The sufferings of the church, like those of her Redeemer, generally begin at home: her open enemies can do her no harm, until her pretended friends have delivered her into their hands; and, unnatural as it may seem, they who have waxed fat upon her bounty, are sometimes the first to "*lift the heel*" against her.—*George Horne.*

Verse 9.—"*Mine own familiar friend.*" He who, on visiting me, continually saluted me with the kiss of love and veneration, and the usual address; peace be to thee.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 9.—"*Which did eat of my bread.*" If the same sentiment prevailed among the Hebrews, which prevails at the present day among the Bedouin Arabs, of sacred regard to the person and property of one with whom they have eaten bread and salt, the language is very forcible. "*Hath lifted up his heel:*" a metaphor drawn from the horse, which attacks with its heel. This language may well have been used by our Saviour in John xiii. 18, in the way of rhetorical illustration or emphasis. —*George R. Noyes, D.D.*

Verse 9.—"*Hath lifted up his heel against me.*" In this phrase he seems to allude to a beast's kicking at his master by whom he is fed, or the custom of men's spurning at or trampling upon those that are cast down on the ground, in a way of despite and contempt.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 9.—"*Hath lifted up his heel against me;*" *i.e.*, hath spurned me, hath kicked at me, as a vicious beast of burden does; hath insulted me in my misery.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 10.—"*That I may requite them.*" Either (1), kindness for injuries (as in Psalm xxxv. 13): it is the mark of a good and brave man to do good to all in his power, to hurt no one, even though provoked by wrong: or, (2), punishment for wrong-doing—*that I may punish them;* for am I not their magistrate, and the executioner of God's justice!—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 10.—"*That I may requite them.*" David was not as one of the common people, but a king appointed by God and invested with authority, and it is not from an impulse of the flesh, but in virtue of the nature of his office, that he is led to denounce against his enemies the punishment which they had merited.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 11.—"*By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me:*" not because I have no enemies, or because I have no trouble which would overcome me. Therefore when he wrote down *many troubles,* he blotted it (as it were) with his pen again, as a merchant razeth his book when the debt is discharged; and instead of *many troubles,* he putteth in, *the Lord delivereth.* Because he forgiveth all sins, he is said to deliver from all troubles, to show that we have need of no Saviour, no helper, no comforter, but him.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 11.—"*By this I know that thou favourest me.*" In this text we see two things. 1. How David assureth himself of God's love towards him. 2. How thankful he is to God for assuring him of his love. The first he doth by two arguments; one is taken from his enemies, they were prevented of their expectation "Therefore thou lovest me." The other is taken from his own estate, which was not one whit hurt, or impaired, but bettered by them. . . . Here the prophet speaketh of his knowledge, and telleth us that though he knew not all things, yet he knew that God loved him, and so long as he knoweth that, he careth not greatly for other matters, how the world goeth with him, etc. And, to say the truth, he need not, for he that is sure of that, is sure of all. God loveth all his creatures as a good God, and hateth nothing that he made, but he loveth his elect children with a more especial love than the rest, as a Father in Christ Jesus, and he that is sure that God doth so favour him, is sure, I say, of all. For to him whom God loveth, he will deny no good thing, no, not his own Son; and if he gave us his Son, because he loved us, how shall he not with him give us all things else?

When the child is persuaded that his father loveth him, he is bold to ask this and that of his father: so may we be bold to ask anything of God our heavenly

Father that is good for us, when we be sure that he loveth us. As Mary and Martha put Christ in mind but of two things; the first was, that Christ loved their brother Lazarus; the second was, that Lazarus was sick; "He whom thou lovest is sick:" it was no need to tell him what he should do, for they knew he would do what might be done for him, because he loved him. So we may say to the Lord, when we are sure that he loveth us: Lord, he whom thou lovest wanteth this or that for his body or his soul. We need not then appoint him what to do, or when, or how; for look what he seeth most convenient for us, and for his own glory, he will surely do it. Therefore whatsoever David knoweth, he will be sure to know this; and whatsoever he is ignorant of, yet of this he will not be ignorant; to teach us that whatsoever we seek to make sure, this must first be made sure, or else nothing is sure. Peter bids us make our election sure; Job, when he saith, "I am sure that my Redeemer liveth," teacheth us to make our redemption sure. And here David teacheth us to make *God's favour* sure: now if we make that sure, then our election is sure, our redemption is sure, our vocation is sure, and our salvation is sure.—*William Burton*, 1602.

Verse 11.—"*Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.*" When God doth deliver us from the hands of our enemies, or any trouble else, we may persuade ourselves thereby, he hath a favour unto us, as David did. But then it may be demanded, If God doth love his church, why doth he suffer his church to be troubled and molested with enemies? The reason is this, because by this means his love may be made more manifest in saving and delivering them. For as a sure friend is not known but in time of need, so God's goodness and love is never so well perceived as it is in helping of us when we cannot help ourselves. As Adam's fall did serve to manifest God's justice and mercy, the one in punishing, the other in pardoning of sin, which otherwise we had never known: so the troubles of the church serve to manifest, first, our deserts by reason of our sins; secondly, our weakness and inability to help ourselves; and, thirdly, the lovingkindness of the Lord our God, in saving and defending, that so we might be truly thankful, and return all the praise and glory to God, and none to ourselves. So that the church of God may have enemies, and yet be still the beloved of God, as Lazarus was beloved of Christ, although he was sick; for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, and therefore he correcteth them because he loveth them.—*William Burton.*

Verse 11.—God preserves his own, and bringeth their foes to nought: after Passion week comes Easter.—*J. P. Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 12.—"*Integrity.*" This same integrity is like Noah's ark, wherein he was preserved, when others perished, being without it. It is like the red thread, which the spies of Joshua gave to Rahab, it was a charter whereby she claimed her life when the rest were destroyed, which had not the like. So is this integrity of small reckoning, I confess, with the men of this world, which think that there is no other heaven but earth; but as Rahab's thread was better to her than all her goods and substance when the sword came, so this is better to God's children than all the world when death comes. If they have this within they care not, nay, they need not care what can come without. If Satan's buffeting come, this is a helmet of proof; if Satan's darts fly out, this is a shield to quench them; if floods of crosses come to carry us away, this is a boat to bear us up; if all the world cast mire and filth in our faces. we are never a whit the more deformed, but still beautiful for all that, for "the king's daughter," (saith Solomon, Psalm xlv. 13), that is, the church of Christ, "is all glorious within."—*William Burton.*

Verse 12.—"*Settest me before thy face for ever;*" *or hast confirmed or established me in thy presence; i.e.,* either under thine eye and special care, or to minister unto thee, not only in thy temple, but as a king over thy people, or in that land where thou art peculiarly present.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 13.—"*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.*" We are here taught, 1. To give glory to God, as "*the Lord God of Israel,*" a God in covenant with his people; that has done great and kind things for them, and has more and better in reserve. 2. To give him glory as an eternal God, that has both his being and his blessedness "*from everlasting and to everlasting.*" 3. To do this with great affection and fervour of spirit, intimated in a double seal set to it, "*Amen, and Amen.*" We say Amen to it, and let all others say Amen too.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 13.—"*Amen and Amen.*" As the Psalms were not written by one man, so neither do they form one book. The Psalter is, in fact, a Pentateuch, and the lines of demarcation, which divide the five books one from another, are clear and distinct enough. At the end of the 41st Psalm, of the 72nd, of the 89th, and of the 106th, we meet with the solemn *Amen*, single or redoubled, following on a doxology, which indicates that one book ends and that another is about to begin. A closer study of the Psalms shows that each book possesses characteristics of its own. Jehovah, ("the Lord") for example, is prominent as the divine name in the first book, Elohim ("God") in the second.—*E. H. Plumptre, M.A., in "Biblical Studies,"* 1870.

There is also another observable difference between the two books. In the first, all those Psalms which have any inscription at all are expressly assigned to David as their author, whereas in the second we find a whole series attributed to some of the Levitical singers.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

How ancient this division is cannot now be clearly ascertained. Jerome, in his epistle to Marcella, and Epiphanius speak of the Psalms as having been divided by the Hebrews into five books, but when this division was made they do not inform us. The forms of ascriptions of praise, added at the end of each of the five books, are in the Septuagint version, from which we may conclude that this distribution had been made before that version was executed. It was probably made by Ezra, after the return of the Jews from Babylon to their own country, and the establishment of the worship of God in the new temple, and it was perhaps made in imitation of a similar distribution of the books of Moses. In making this division of the Hebrew Psalter, regard appears to have been paid to the subject matter of the Psalms.—*John Calvin.*

These forty-one Psalms, it has been observed, forming the first book, relate chiefly to the ministry of Christ upon earth, preparing those who were looking for the consolation of Israel, for his appearing amongst them. Accordingly, the second book, commencing with Psalm xlii., may refer chiefly to the infant church of Christ.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

May not the growth of the Book of Psalms be illustrated by the case of our Modern Hymn Books which in the course of years require first one appendix and then another, so as to incorporate the growing psalmody of the church? In this case the purely Davidic Psalms of the first division formed the nucleus to which other sacred songs were speedily added.—*C. H. S.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—The incidental blessings resulting from considering the pious poor. 1. We learn gratitude. 2. We see patience. 3. We often remark the triumphs of great grace. 4. We obtain light on Christian experience. 5. We have their prayers. 6. We feel the pleasure of beneficence. 7. We enter into communion with the lowly Saviour.

Verse 1.—The support of the Small-pox Hospitals recommended.—*Bishop Squire,* 1760. Scores of sermons of this kind have been preached from this text.

Verse 2.—"*Blessed upon the earth.*" What blessings of an earthly character godly character secures, and in general what it is to be blessed with regard to this life.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—What it is to be delivered *in* trouble. From impatience, from despair, from sinful expedients, from violent attacks, from losing fellowship with God.

Verse 3.—Strength in weakness. Inward strength, divinely given, continuously sustained, enduring to the end, triumphant in death, glorifying to God, proving the reality of grace, winning others to the faith.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—The heavenly bed-making.

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—A saying worth repeating: "*I said.*" It expresses penitence, humility, earnestness, faith, importunity, fear of God, etc.

Verse 4.—"*Heal my soul.*" 1. The hereditary disease, breaking out in many

disorders—open sin, unbelief, decline of grace, etc. II. Spiritual health struggling with it; shown in spiritual pain, desire, prayer, effort. III. The well-proved Physician. Has healed, and will, by his word, his blood, his Spirit, etc.

Verse 4.—*"I have sinned against thee."* This confession is personal, plain, without pretence of excuse, comprehensive and intelligent, for it reveals the very heart of sin—"against thee."

Verse 5.—What we may expect. What our enemies desire. What we may, therefore prize, *i.e.*, the power of Christian life and name. What we should do—tell the Lord all in prayer. What good will then come of the evil.

Verse 6 (*first clause*).—The folly and sin of frivolous visits.

Verse 6 (*second and third clauses*).—Like to like, or the way in which character draws its like to itself. The same subject might be treated under the title of *The Chiffonnier*, or the rag-collector. What he gathers; where he puts it—in his "*heart;*" what he does with it; what he gets for it; and what will become of him.

Verses 7—12.—On a sick bed a man discovers not only his enemies and his friends, but himself and his God, more intimately.

Verse 9.—The treachery of Judas.

Verse 11.—Deliverance from temptation a token of divine favour.

Verse 12.—This text reveals the insignia of those whom grace has distinguished. 1. Their integrity is manifest. 2. Their character is divinely sustained. 3. They dwell in the favour of God. 4. Their position is stable and continuous. 5. Their eternal future is secure.

Verse 13.—I. The object of praise—Jehovah, the covenant God. II. The nature of the praise—without beginning or end. III. Our participation in the praise—"Amen and Amen."

THE ancient rabbins saw in the Five Books of the Psalter the image of the Five Books of the Law. This way of looking on the Psalms as a second Pentateuch, the echo of the first, passed over into the Christian church, and found favour with some early fathers. It has commended itself to the acceptance of good recent expositors, like Dr. Delitzsch, who calls the Psalter "the Congregation's five-fold word to the Lord, even as the *Thora* (the Law) is the Lord's five-fold word to the Congregation." This may be mere fancy, but its existence from ancient times shows that the five-fold division attracted early notice.—*William Binnie, D.D.*

God presented Israel with the Law, a Pentateuch, and grateful Israel responded with a Psalter, a Pentateuch of praise, in acknowledgment of the divine gift.—*J. L. K.*

HERE ENDETH THE FIRST BOOK OF
THE PSALMS.

PSALM XLII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.—*Dedicated to the Master of Music, this Psalm is worthy of his office; he who can sing best can have nothing better to sing. It is called* Maschil, *or an instructive ode; and full as it is of deep experimental expressions, it is eminently calculated to instruct those pilgrims whose road to heaven is of the same trying kind as David's was. It is always edifying to listen to the experience of a thoroughly gracious and much afflicted saint.*

That choice band of singers, the sons of Korah, *are bidden to make this delightful Psalm one of their peculiars. They had been spared when their father and all his company, and all the children of his associates were swallowed up alive in their sin.* (*Num.* xxvii. 11). *They were the spared ones of sovereign grace. Preserved, we know not why, by the distinguishing favour of God, it may be surmised that after their remarkable election to mercy, they became so filled with gratitude that they addicted themselves to sacred music in order that their spared lives might be consecrated to the glory of God. At any rate, we who have been rescued as they were from going down into the pit, out of the mere good pleasure of Jehovah, can heartily join in this Psalm, and indeed all the songs which show forth the praises of our God and the pantings of our hearts after him. Although David is not mentioned as the author, this Psalm must be the offspring of his pen; it is so Davidic, it smells of the son of Jesse, it bears the marks of his style and experience in every letter. We could sooner doubt the authorship of the second part of Pilgrim's Progress than question David's title to be the composer of this Psalm.*

SUBJECT.—*It is the cry of a man far removed from the outward ordinances and worship of God, sighing for the long-loved house of his God; and at the same time it is the voice of a spiritual believer, under depressions, longing for the renewal of the divine presence, struggling with doubts and fears, but yet holding his ground by faith in the living God. Most of the Lord's family have sailed on the sea which is here so graphically described. It is probable that David's flight from Absolom may have been the occasion for composing this Maschil.*

DIVISION.—*The structure of the song directs us to consider it in two parts which end with the same refrain;* 1—5 *and then* 6—11.

EXPOSITION.

AS the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?

4 When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him *for* the help of his countenance.

1. *"As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."* As after a long drought the poor fainting hind longs for the streams, or rather as the hunted hart instinctively seeks after the river to lave its smoking flanks and to escape the dogs, even so my weary, persecuted soul pants after the Lord my God. Debarred from public worship, David was heartsick. Ease he did not seek, honour he did not covet, but the enjoyment of communion with God was an urgent need of his soul; he viewed it not merely as the sweetest of all luxuries, but as an absolute necessity, like water to a stag. Like the parched traveller in

the wilderness, whose skin bottle is empty, and who finds the wells dry, he must drink or die—he must have his God or faint. His *soul*, his very self, his deepest life, was insatiable for a sense of the divine presence. As the hart brays so his soul prays. Give him his God and he is as content as the poor deer which at length slakes its thirst and is perfectly happy; but deny him his Lord, and his heart heaves, his bosom palpitates, his whole frame is convulsed, like one who gasps for breath, or pants with long running. Dear reader, dost thou know what this is, by personally having felt the same? It is a sweet bitterness. The next best thing to living in the light of the Lord's love is to be unhappy till we have it, and to pant hourly after it—hourly, did I say? thirst is a perpetual appetite, and not to be forgotten, and even thus continual is the heart's longing after God. When it is as natural for us to long for God as for an animal to thirst, it is well with our souls, however painful our feelings. We may learn from this verse that the eagerness of our desires may be pleaded with God, and the more so, because there are special promises for the importunate and fervent.

2. "*My soul.*" All my nature, my inmost self. "*Thirsteth.*" Which is more than hungering; hunger you can palliate, but thirst is awful, insatiable, clamorous, deadly. O to have the most intense craving after the highest good! this is no questionable mark of grace. "*For God.*" Not merely for the temple and the ordinances, but for fellowship with God himself. None but spiritual men can sympathise with this thirst. "*For the living God.*" Because he lives, and gives to men the living water; therefore we, with greater eagerness, desire him. A dead God is a mere mockery; we loathe such a monstrous deity; but the ever-living God, the perennial fountain of life and light and love, is our soul's desire. What are gold, honour, pleasure, but dead idols? May we never pant for these. "*When shall I come and appear before God?*" He who loves the Lord loves also the assemblies wherein his name is adored. Vain are all pretences to religion where the outward means of grace have no attraction. David was never so much at home as in the house of the Lord; he was not content with private worship; he did not forsake the place where saints assemble, as the manner of some is. See how pathetically he questions as to the prospect of his again uniting in the joyous gathering! How he repeats and reiterates his desire! After his God, his Elohim (his God to be worshipped, who had entered into covenant with him), he pined even as the drooping flowers for the dew, or the moaning turtle for her mate. It were well if all our resortings to public worship were viewed as appearances before God, it would then be a sure mark of grace to delight in them. Alas, how many appear before the minister, or their fellow men, and think that enough! "To see the face of God" is the nearer translation of the Hebrew; but the two ideas may be combined—he would see his God and be seen of him; this is worth thirsting after!

3.—"*My tears have been my meat day and night.*" Salt meats, but healthful to the soul. When a man comes to tears, constant tears, plenteous tears, tears that fill his cup and trencher, he is in earnest indeed. As the big tears stand in the stag's eyes in her distress, so did the salt drops glitter in the eyes of David. His appetite was gone, his tears not only seasoned his meat, but became his only meat, he had no mind for other diet. Perhaps it was well for him that the heart could open the safety valves; there is a dry grief far more terrible than showery sorrows. His tears since they were shed because God was blasphemed, were "honourable dew," drops of holy water, such as Jehovah putteth into his bottle. "*While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?*" Cruel taunts come naturally from coward minds. Surely they might have left the mourner alone; he could weep no more than he did—it was a supererogation of malice to pump more tears from a heart which already overflowed. Note how incessant was their jeer, and how artfully they framed it! It cut the good man to the bone to have the faithfulness of his God impugned. They had better have thrust needles into his eyes than have darted insinuations against his God. Shimei may here be alluded to who after this fashion mocked David as he fled from Absalom. He roundly asserted that David was a bloody man, and that God was punishing him for supplanting Saul and his house; his wish was father to his thought. The wicked know that our worst misfortune would be to lose God's favour, hence their diabolical malice leads them to declare that such is the case. Glory be to God, they lie in their throats, for our God is in the heavens, ay, and in the furnace too, succouring his people.

Verse 4.—"*When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me.*" When

he harped upon his woes his heart melted into water and was poured out upon itself. God hidden, and foes raging, a pair of evils enough to bring down the stoutest heart! Yet why let reflections so gloomy engross us, since the result is of no value: merely to turn the soul on itself, to empty it from itself into itself is useless, how much better to pour out the heart before the Lord! The prisoner's treadwheel might sooner land him in the skies than mere inward questioning raise us nearer to consolation. "*For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God.*" Painful reflections were awakened by the memory of past joys; he had mingled in the pious throng, their numbers had helped to give him exhilaration and to awaken holy delight, their company had been a charm to him as with them he ascended the hill of Zion. Gently proceeding with holy ease, in comely procession, with frequent strains of song, he and the people of Jehovah had marched in reverent ranks up to the shrine of sacrifice, the dear abode of peace and holiness. Far away from such goodly company the holy man pictures the sacred scene and dwells upon the details of the pious march. "*With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.*" The festive noise is in his ears, and the solemn dance before his eyes. Perhaps he alludes to the removal of the ark and to the glorious gatherings of the tribes on that grand national holy day and holiday. How changed his present place! For Zion, a wilderness; for the priests in white linen, soldiers in garments of war; for the song, the sneer of blasphemy; for the festivity, lamentation; for joy in the Lord, a mournful dirge over his absence.

> "I sigh to think of happier days
> When thou, O God, wast nigh,
> When every heart was tuned to praise;
> And none more blest than I."

When in a foreign land, amid the idolatries of Popery, we have felt just the same home-sickness for the house of the Lord which is here described; we have said "Ziona, Ziona, our holy and beautiful house, when shall I see thee again? Thou church of the living God, my mother, my home, when shall I hear thy Psalms and holy prayers, and once again behold the Lord in the midst of his people?" David appears to have had a peculiarly tender remembrance of *the singing* of the pilgrims, and assuredly it is the most delightful part of worship and that which comes nearest to the adoration of heaven. What a degradation to supplant the intelligent song of the whole congregation by the theatrical prettinesses of a quartette, the refined niceties of a choir, or the blowing off of wind from inanimate bellows and pipes! We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it.

5. "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*" As though he were two men, the Psalmist talks to himself. His faith reasons with his fears, his hope argues with his sorrows. These present troubles, are they to last for ever? The rejoicings of my foes, are they more than empty talk? My absence, from the solemn feasts, is that a perpetual exile? Why this deep depression, this faithless fainting, this chicken-hearted melancholy? As Trapp says, "David chideth David out of the dumps;" and herein he is an example for all desponding ones. To search out the cause of our sorrow is often the best surgery for grief. Self-ignorance is not bliss; in this case it is misery. The mist of ignorance magnifies the causes of our alarm; a clearer view will make monsters dwindle into trifles. "*Why art thou disquieted within me?*" Why is my quiet gone? If I cannot keep a public Sabbath, yet wherefore do I deny my soul her indoor Sabbath? Why am I agitated like a troubled sea, and why do my thoughts make a noise like a tumultuous multitude? The causes are not enough to justify such utter yielding to despondency. Up, my heart! What aileth thee? Play the man, and thy castings down shall turn to liftings up, and thy disquietudes to calm. "*Hope thou in God.*" If every evil be let loose from Pandora's box, yet is there hope at the bottom. This is the grace that swims, though the waves roar and be troubled. God is unchangeable, and therefore his grace is the ground for unshaken hope. If everything be dark, yet the day will come, and meanwhile hope carries stars in her eyes; her lamps are not dependent upon oil from without, her light is fed by secret visitations of God, which sustain the spirit. "*For I shall yet praise him.*" Yet will my sighs give place to songs, my mournful ditties shall be exchanged for triumphal pæans. A loss of the present sense of God's love is not a loss of that love itself; the jewel is there, though it gleams not on our breast; hope knows her title good when she cannot read it clear; she expects the promised boon though present providence stands before

her with empty hands. "*For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*" Salvations come from the propitious face of God, and he will yet lift up his countenance upon us. Note well that the main hope and chief desire of David rest in the smile of God. His face is what he seeks and hopes to see, and this will recover his low spirits, this will put to scorn his laughing enemies, this will restore to him all the joys of those holy and happy days around which memory lingers. This is grand cheer. This verse, like the singing of Paul and Silas, looses chains and shakes prison walls. He who can use such heroic language in his gloomy hours will surely conquer. In the garden of hope grow the laurels for future victories, the roses of coming joy, the lilies of approaching peace.

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

8 *Yet* the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song *shall be* with me, *and* my prayer unto the God of my life.

9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

10 *As* with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where *is* thy God?

11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.

6. "*O my God, my soul is cast down within me.*" Here the song begins again upon the brass. So sweet an ending deserves that for the sake of a second hopeful close the Psalm should even begin again. Perhaps the Psalmist's dejection continued, the spasm of despondency returned; well, then, he will down with his harp again, and try again its power upon himself, as in his younger days, he saw its influence upon Saul when the evil spirit came upon him. With God the song begins the second time more nearly than at first. The singer was also a little more tranquil. Outward expression of desire was gone; there was no visible panting; the sorrow was now all restrained within doors. Within or upon himself he was cast down; and, verily, it may well be so, while our thoughts look more within than upward. If self were to furnish comfort, we should have but poor provender. There is no solid foundation for comfort in such fickle frames as our heart is subject to. It is well to tell the Lord how we feel, and the more plain the confession the better: David talks like a sick child to its mother, and we should learn to imitate him. "*Therefore will I remember thee.*" 'Tis well to fly to our God. Here is *terra firma*. Blessed downcasting which drives us to so sure a rock of refuge as thee, O Lord! "*From the hill Mizar.*" He recalls his seasons of choice communion by the river and among the hills, and especially that dearest hour upon the little hill, where love spake her sweetest language and revealed her nearest fellowship. It is great wisdom to store up in memory our choice occasions of converse with heaven; we may want them another day, when the Lord is slow in bringing back his banished ones, and our soul is aching with fear. "His love in times past" has been a precious cordial to many a fainting one; like soft breath it has fanned the smoking flax into a flame, and bound up the bruised reed. Oh, never-to-be-forgotten valley of Achor, thou art a door of hope! Fair days, now gone, ye have left a light behind you which cheers our present gloom. Or does David mean that even where he was he would bethink him of his God; does he declare that, forgetful of time and place, he would count Jordan as sacred as Siloa, Hermon as holy as Zion, and even Mizar, that insignificant rising ground, as glorious as the mountains which are round about Jerusalem! Oh! it is a heavenly heart which can sing—

> "To me remains nor place nor time;
> My country is in every clime;
> I can be calm and free from care
> On any shore, since God is there.

"Could I be cast where thou art not,
That were indeed a dreadful lot,
But regions none remote I call,
Secure of finding God in all."

7. "*Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts.*" Thy severe dealings with me seem to excite all creation to attack me; heaven, and earth, and hell, call to each other, stirring each other up in dreadful conspiracy against my peace. As in a waterspout, the deeps above and below clasp hands, so it seemed to David that heaven and earth united to create a tempest around him. His woes were incessant and overwhelming. Billow followed billow, one sea echoed the roaring of another; bodily pain aroused mental fear, Satanic suggestions chimed in with mistrustful forebodings, outward tribulation thundered in awful harmony with inward anguish: his soul seemed drowned as in a universal deluge of trouble, over whose waves the providence of the Lord moved as a watery pillar, in dreadful majesty inspiring the utmost terror. As for the afflicted one he was like a lonely bark around which the fury of a storm is bursting, or a mariner floating on a mast, almost every moment submerged. "*All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*" David thought that every trouble in the world had met in him, but he exaggerated, for *all* the breaking waves of Jehovah have passed over none but the Lord Jesus; there are griefs to which he makes his children strangers for his love's sake. Sorrow naturally states its case forcibly; the mercy is that the Lord after all hath not dealt with us according to our fears. Yet what a plight to be in! Atlantic rollers sweeping in ceaseless succession over one's head, waterspouts coming nearer and nearer, and all the ocean in uproar around the weary swimmer; most of the heirs of heaven can realise the description, for they have experienced the like. This is a deep experience unknown to babes in grace, but common enough to such as do business on great waters of affliction: to such it is some comfort to remember that the waves and billows are the Lords, "*thy* waves and *thy* billows," says David, they are all sent, and directed by him, and achieve his designs, and the child of God knowing this, is the more resigned.

8. "*Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime.*" Come what may there shall be "a certain secret something" to sweeten all. Lovingkindness is a noble life-belt in a rough sea. The day may darken into a strange and untimely midnight, but the love of God ordained of old to be the portion of the elect, shall be by sovereign decree meted out to them. No day shall ever dawn on an heir of grace and find him altogether forsaken of his Lord: the Lord reigneth, and as a sovereign he will with authority command mercy to be reserved for his chosen. "*And in the night.*" Both divisions of the day shall be illuminated with special love, and no stress of trial shall prevent it. Our God is God of the nights as well as the days; none shall find his Israel unprotected, be the hour what it may. "*His song shall be with me.*" Songs of praise for blessings received shall cheer the gloom of night. No music sweeter than this. The belief that we shall yet glorify the Lord for mercy given in extremity is a delightful stay to the soul. Affliction may put out our candle, but if it cannot silence our song we will soon light the candle again. "*And my prayer unto the God of my life.*" Prayer is yoked with praise. He who is the living God, is the God of our life, from him we derive it, with him in prayer and praise we spend it, to him we devote it, in him we shall perfect it. To be assured that our sighs and songs shall both have free access to our glorious Lord is to have reason for hope in the most deplorable condition.

9. "*I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me.*" Faith is allowed to enquire of her God the causes of his displeasure, and she is even permitted to expostulate with him and put him in mind of his promises, and ask why apparently they are not fulfilled. If the Lord be indeed our refuge, when we find no refuge, it is time to be raising the question, "Why is this?" Yet we must not let go our hold, the Lord must be "*my*" rock still; we must keep to him as our alone confidence, and never forego our interest in him. "*Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*" He who condescends to be pleaded with by Abraham, his friend, allows us to put to him the question that we may search out the causes of his severity towards us. Surely he can have no pleasure in seeing the faces of his servants stained and squalid with their tears; he can find no content in the harshness with which their foes assail them. He can never take pleasure in the tyranny with which Satan vexes them. Why then does he leave them to be mocked by his enemies and theirs? How can the strong God, who is as firm and abiding

as a rock, be also as hard and unmoved as a rock towards those who trust in him? Such enquiries humbly pressed often afford relief to the soul. To know the reason for sorrow is in part to know how to escape it, or at least to endure it. Want of attentive consideration often makes adversity appear to be more mysterious and hopeless than it really is. It is a pitiable thing for any man to have a limb amputated, but when we know that the operation was needful to save life, we are glad to hear that it has been successfully performed; even thus as trial unfolds, the design of the Lord in sending it becomes far more easy to bear.

10. "*As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me.*" Cruel mockeries cut deeper than the flesh, they reach the soul as though a rapier were introduced between the ribs to prick the heart. If reproaches kill not, yet they are killing, the pain caused is excruciating. The tongue cuts to the bone, and its wounds are hard to cure. "*While they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*" This is the unkindest cut of all, reflecting as it does both upon the Lord's faithfulness and his servant's character. Such was the malice of David's foes, that having thought of the cruel question, they *said* it, said it *daily*, repeated *it to him*, and that for a length of time; surely the continual yapping of these curs at his heel was enough to madden him, and perhaps would have done so had he not resorted to prayer and made the persecutions of his enemies a plea with his Lord.

11. "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?*" In the rehearsal of his sorrow, he finds after all no sufficient ground for being disquieted. Looked in the face, his fears were not so overwhelming as they seemed when shrouded in obscurity. "*Hope thou in God.*" Let the anchor still keep its hold. God is faithful, God is love, therefore there is room and reason for hope. "*Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*" This is the same hopeful expression as that contained in verse five, but the addition of "*and my God*" shows that the writer was growing in confidence, and was able defiantly to reply to the question, "Where is thy God?" Here, even here, he is, ready to deliver me. I am not ashamed to own him amid your sneers and taunts, for he will rescue me out of your hands. Thus faith closes the struggle, a victor in fact by anticipation, and in heart by firm reliance. The saddest countenance shall yet be made to shine, if there be a taking of God at his word and an expectation of his salvation.

"For yet I know I shall him praise
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yea, mine own God is he."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*Sons of Korah.*" Who were *the sons of Korah?* These opinions have more or less prevailed. One is that they sprang from some one of that name in the days of David. Mudge and others think that the sons of Korah were a society of musicians, founded or presided over by Korah. Others think that the sons of Korah were the surviving descendants of that miserable man who, together with two hundred and fifty of his adherents, who were princes, perished when "the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, together with Korah." In Numbers xxvi. 11, we read: "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not." They had taken the warning given, and had departed from the tents of these wicked men. Numbers xvi. 24, 26. It must be admitted that the name *Korah* and the patronymic *Korahite* are found in the Scriptures in a way that creates considerable doubt respecting the particular man from whom the Korahites are named. See 1 Chron. i. 35; ii. 43; vi. 22, 54; ix. 19: xxvi. 1; 2 Chron. xx. 19. Yet the more common belief is that they descended from him who perished for his gainsaying. This view is taken by Ainsworth with entire confidence, by Gill, and others. Korah, who perished, was a Levite. Whatever may have been their origin, it is clear *the sons of Korah* were a Levitical family of singers. Nothing, then, could be more appropriate than the dedication of a sacred song to these very people.—*William S. Plumer.*

Title.—"*Sons of Korah.*" The "*Korah*" whose "*sons*" are here spoken of, is the Levite who headed the insurrection against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. Numbers xvi. We find his descendants existing as a powerful Levitical family in the time of David, at least, if they are to be identified, as is probable, with the Korahites mentioned in 1 Chron. xii. 6, who, like our own warlike bishops of former times, seem to have known how to doff the priestly vestment for the soldier's armour, and whose hand could wield the sword as well as strike the harp. The Korahites were a part of the band who acknowledged David as their chief, at Ziklag; warriors "whose faces," it is said, "were like the faces of lions, and who were (for speed) like gazelles upon the mountains." According to 1 Chron. ix. 17—19, the Korahites were in David's time, keepers of the threshold of the tabernacle; and still earlier, in the time of Moses, watchmen at the entrance of the camp of the Levites. In 1 Chron. xxvi. 1—19, we find two branches of this family associated with that of Merari, as guardians of the doors of the Temple. There is probably an allusion to this their office, in Psalm lxxxiv. 10. But the Korahites were also celebrated musicians and singers; see 1 Chron. vi. 16—33, where Heman, one of the three famous musicians of the time, is said to be a Korahite (comp. 1 Chron. xxv). The musical reputation of the family continued in the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 19), where we have the peculiar doubly plural form בְּנֵי הַקְהָתִים, "*Sons of the Korahites.*"—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Title.—"*Sons of Korah.*" Mediæval writers remark how here, as so often, it was the will of God to raise up saints where they could have been least looked for. Who should imagine that from the posterity of him who said, "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Aaron," should have risen those whose sweet Psalms would be the heritage of the church of God to the end of time?—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 1.—"*The hart panteth after the water brooks.*" And here we have started up, and sent leaping over the plain another of Solomon's favourites. What elegant creatures those gazelles are, and how gracefully they bound! . . . The sacred writers frequently mention gazelles under the various names of harts, roes, and hinds. . . . I have seen large flocks of these panting harts gather round the water-brooks in the great deserts of Central Syria, so subdued by thirst that you could approach quite near them before they fled.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 1.—Little do the drunkards think that take so much pleasure in frequenting the houses of Bacchus that the godly take a great deal more, and have a great deal more joy in frequenting the houses of God. But 'tis a thing that God promised long ago by the prophet: "Them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." Isaiah lvi. 7. And methinks, I hear the willing people of God's power, merrily calling one to another in the words of Micah iv. 2, "come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." How is a godly man ravished with "the beauty of holiness," when he is at such meetings! How was holy Davd taken with being in the house of God at Jerusalem! insomuch, that if he were kept from it but a little while, his soul panted for it, and longed after it, and fainted for lack of it, as a thirsty hart would do for lack of water! "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*" The poor disconsolate captives preferred it to the best place in their memory. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning" (Psalm cxxxvii. 5); nay, they preferred it to their chiefest joy: "If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy," verse 6. There was no place in the world that David regarded or cared to be in in comparison of it. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm lxxxiv. 10), insomuch, that he could find it in his heart, nay, and would choose, if he might have his desire, to spend all his days in that house. Psalm xxvii. 4.—*Zachary Bogan.*

Verse 1.—The soul strongly desires acquaintance with God here in his ordinances. Chrysostom's very rhetorical upon the text, and tells us how that David, like a lover in absence, must express his affections as they have their dainty sighs,

and passionate complaints, their loving exclamations, and sundry discoveries of affection; they can meet with never a tree, but in the bark of it they must engrave the name of their darling, Δεινὸς δ' ὁ ἔρως ὥσπες ὁ κιττὸς ἀυτὸν ἐκ πάσης ἀναδῦσαι προφάσεως; 'twill twine upon every opportunity, as the Moralist speaks. And the true lovers of God, they are always thinking upon him, sighing for him, panting after him, talking of him, and (if 'twere possible) would engrave the name of the Lord Jesus upon the breasts of all the men in the world. Look upon David, now a banished man, and fled from the presence of Saul, and see how he behaves himself: not like Themistocles or Camillus, or some of those brave banished worthies. He does not complain of the ungratefulness of his country, the malice of his adversaries, and his own unhappy success. No, instead of murmuring, he falls a panting, and that only after his God. He is banished from the sanctuary, the palace of God's nearest presence, and chiefest residence; he can't enjoy the beauty of holiness, and all other places seem to him but as the tents of Kedar. He is banished from the temple, and he thinks himself banished from his God, as it is in the following words, "*When shall I come and appear before God?*" The whole stream of expositors run this way, that it is meant of his strong longing to visit the Temple, and those amiable courts of his God, with which his soul was so much taken.—*Nathanael Culverwel's "Panting Soul,"* 1652.

Verse 1, 2, 3, are an illustration of the frequent use of the word Elohim in the second book of Psalms. We give Fry's translation of the first three verses—

> As the hart looketh for the springs of water,
> So my soul looketh for thee, O Elohim.
>
> My soul is athirst for Elohim, for the living El:
> When shall I go and see the face of Elohim?
>
> My tears have been my meat day and night,
> While they say to me continually, Where is thy Elohim?

Verse 2.—"*My soul thirsteth for God,*" etc. See that your heart rest not short of Christ in any duty. Let go your hold of no duty until you find something of Christ in it; and until you get not only an *handful*, but an *armful* (with old Simeon, Luke ii. 28); yea, a *heartful* of the blessed and beautiful babe of Bethlehem therein. Indeed you should have commerce with heaven, and communion with Christ in duty, which is therefore called *the presence of God*, or your appearing before him. Exodus xxiii. 17, and Psalm xlii. 2. Your duties then must be as a bridge to give you passage, or as a boat to carry you over into the bosom of Christ. Holy Mr. Bradford, Martyr, said he could not leave *confession* till he found his heart touched and broken for sin; nor *supplication*, till his heart was affected with the beauty of the blessings desired; nor *thanksgiving*, till his soul was quickened in return of praises; nor *any duty*, until his heart was brought into a duty frame, and something of Christ was found therein. Accordingly Bernard speaks, *Nunquam abs te absque te recedam Domine:* I will never depart (in duty) from thee without thee, Lord. Augustine said he loved not Tully's elegant orations (as formerly) because he could not find *Christ* in them: nor doth a gracious soul love empty duties. Rhetorical flowers and flourishes, expressions without impressions in praying or preaching, are not true bread, but a tinkling cymbal to it, and it cannot be put off with the empty spoon of aëry notions, or lovely (that are not also lively) songs: if Christ talk with you in the way (of duty) your heart will burn within you. Luke xxiv. 16, 32.—*Christopher Ness's "Chrystal Mirrour,"* 1679.

Verses 2.—"*The living God.*" There are three respects especially in which our God is said to be the "*living God.*" First, *originally*, because he only hath life in himself, and of himself, and all creatures have it from him. Secondly, *operatively*, because he is the only giver of life unto man. Our life, in the threefold extent and capacity of it, whether we take it for natural, or spiritual, or eternal, flows to us from God. Thirdly, God is said to be the "*living God*" by way of *distinction*, and in opposition to all false gods.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—A wicked man can never say in good earnest, "*When shall I come and appear before God?*" because he shall do so too soon, and before he would, as the devils that said Christ came "to torment them before their time." Ask a thief and a malefactor whether he would willingly appear before the judge. No, I warrant you, not he; he had rather there were no judge at all to appear

before. And so is it with worldly men in regard of God they desire rather to be hidden from him.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 2.—*" Come and appear before God."* When any of us have been at church, and waited in the sanctuary, let us examine what did we go thither to see ; a shadow of religion ? An outside of Christian forms ? A graceful orator ? The figures and shapes of devotion ? Surely then we might with as much wisdom, and more innocence, have gone to the wilderness " to see a reed shaken with the wind." Can we say as the Greeks at the feast (John xii. 21), " We would see Jesus ? " Or as Absalom (2 Sam. xiv. 32), " It is to little purpose I am come to Jerusalem if I may not see the King's face." To little purpose we go to church, or attend on ordinances, if we seek not, if we see not God there.—*Isaac Watts, D.D.*, 1674—1748.

Verse 2.—If you attempt to put a little child off with toys and fine things, it will not be pleased long, it will cry for its mother's breast ; so, let a man come into the pulpit with pretty Latin and Greek sentences, and fine stories, these will not content a hungry soul, he must have the sincere milk of the word to feed upon. *Oliver Heywood.*

Verse 2.—*" When shall I come and appear before God ? "*—

While I am banish'd from thy house
I mourn in secret, Lord ;
" When shall I come and pay my vows,
And hear thy holy word ? "

So while I dwell in bonds of clay,
Methinks my soul shall groan.
" When shall I wing my heavenly way
And stand before thy throne ? "

I love to see my Lord below,
His church displays his grace ;
But upper worlds his glory know
And view him face to face.

I love to worship at his feet,
Though sin attack me there,
But saints exalted near his seat
Have no assaults to fear.

I'm pleased to meet him in his court,
And taste his heavenly love,
But still I think his visits short,
Or I too soon remove.

He shines, and I am all delight,
He hides and all is pain ;
When will he fix me in his sight,
And ne'er depart again ?

Isaac Watts, from his Sermons.

Verse 3.—*" My tears have been my meat day and night."* The Psalmist could eat nothing because of his extreme grief.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 3.—*" They say unto me."* It is not only of me, but to me ; they spake it to his very face, as those who were ready to justify it and make it good, that God had forsaken him. Backbiting argues more baseness, but open reproach carries more boldness, and shamelessness, and impudence in it ; and this is that which David's enemies were guilty of here in this place.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 3.—*" Where is thy God ? "* God's children are impatient, as far as they are men, of reproaches ; but so far as they are Christian men, they are impatient of reproaches in religion ; *" Where is now thy God ? "* They were not such desperate Atheists as to think there was no God, to call in question whether there was a God or no, though, indeed, they were little better ; but they rather reproach and upbraid him with his singularity, *where* is *thy* God ? You are one of God's darlings ; you are one that thought nobody served God but you ; you are one that will go alone—*your* God ! So this is an ordinary reproach, an ordinary part for wicked men to cast at the best people, especially when they are in misery. What is become of your profession now ? What is become of your forwardness and strictness now ?

What is become of your God that you bragged so of, and thought yourselves so happy in, as if he had been nobody's God but yours? We may learn hence the disposition of wicked men. It is a character of a poisonful, cursed disposition to upbraid a man with his religion.

But what is the scope? The scope is worse than the words "*where is thy God?*" The scope is to shake his faith and his confidence in God, and this *that* is which touched him so nearly while they upbraided him. For the devil knows well enough that as long as God and the soul join together, it is in vain to trouble any man, therefore he labours to put jealousies, to accuse God to man, and man to God. He knows there is nothing in the world can stand against God. As long as we make God our confidence, all his enterprises are in vain. His scope is, therefore, to shake our affiance in God. "*Where is thy God?*" So he dealt with the head of the church, our blessed Saviour himself, when he came to tempt him. "If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread." Matt. iv. 3. He comes with an "*if*," he laboured to shake him in his Sonship. The devil, since he was divided from God himself eternally, is become a spirit of division; he labours to divide even God the Father from his own Son; "*If thou be the Son of God?*" So he labours to sever Christians from their head Christ. "*Where is thy God?*" There was his scope, to breed division if he could, between his heart and God, that he might call God into jealousy, as if he had not regarded him: thou hast taken a great deal of pains in serving thy God; thou seest how he regards thee now; "*Where is thy God?*"—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 3.—How powerfully do the scoffs and reproaches of the ungodly tend to shake the faith of a mind already dejected! How peculiarly afflictive to the soul that loves God, is the dishonour cast upon him by his enemies!—*Henry March, in "Sabbaths at Home,"* 1823.

Verse 3.—"*Where is thy God?*"

"Where is now thy God!" Oh, sorrow!
Hourly thus to hear him say,
Finding thus the longed-for morrow,
Mournful as the dark to-day.
Yet not thus my soul would languish,
Would not thus be grieved and shamed,
But for that severer anguish,
When I hear the Lord defamed.

"Where is now thy God!" Oh, aid me,
Lord of mercy, to reply—
"He is HERE—though foes invade me,
Know his outstretched arm is nigh."
Help me thus to be victorious,
While the shield of faith I take;
Lord, appear, and make thee glorious:
Help me for thy honour's sake.

Henry March.

Verse 4.—"*When I remember these things*," etc. To a person in misery it is a great increase of misery to have been once happy; it was to David an occasion of new tears when he remembered his former joys. Time was, says the poor soul, when I thought of God with comfort, and when I thought of him as my own God; and to lose a God that I once enjoyed is the loss of all my losses, and of all my terrors the most terrible. Time was when I could go and pray to him, and ease myself in prayer; but now I have no boldness, no hope, no success in prayer. I cannot call him *my Father* any more. Time was when I could read the Bible and treasure up the promises, and survey the land of Canaan as my own inheritance; but now I dare not look into the Word lest I read my own condemnation there. The Sabbath was formerly to me as one of the days of heaven, but now it is also, as well as the rest, a sad and a mournful day. I formerly rejoiced in the name of Christ, "I sat under his shadow." Cant. ii. 3. I was in his eyes as one that found favour; but now my soul is like the deserts of Arabia, I am scorched with burning heat. From how great a height have I fallen! How fair was I once for heaven and for salvation, and now am like to come short of it! I once was flourishing in the courts of the Lord, and now all my fruit is blasted and withered away: "his dew lay all night upon my branches," but now I am like the mountains of Gilboa,

no rain falls upon me. Had I never heard of heaven I could not have been so miserable as I now am: had I never known God, the loss of him had not been so terrible as now it is like to be. Job xxix. 2, 3.—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—The blessedness of even the remembrance of divine worship is so great, that it can save the soul from despair.—*J. P. Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 4.—"*I pour out my soul.*" The very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of the soul before God.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 4.—"*I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.*" The gracious God is pleased to esteem it his glory to have many beggars thronging at the beautiful gate of his temple, for spiritual and corporal alms. What an honour is it to our great Landlord that multitudes of tenants flock together to his house to pay their rent of thanks and worship for their all which they hold of him! How loud and lovely is the noise of many golden trumpets! Good Lord, what an echo do they make in heaven's ears! When many skilful musicians play in concert with well tuned and prepared instruments the music cannot but be ravishing to God himself. —*George Swinnock.*

Verse 4.—Do but consider David's tears and grief for want of, and his fervent prayers for the fruition of, public ordinances even then, when he had opportunities for private performances; and surely thou wilt esteem the ministry of the Word no mean mercy. See his sorrow when he was driven from God's sanctuary. "*When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God.*" "*My soul is poured out;*" that is, I am overwhelmed with grief, and ever ready to die when I compare my present condition with my former happiness in the fruition of religious assemblies. There is an elegancy in the phrase "*poured out;*" the word is applied to water, or any liquid thing, and in Scripture signifieth abundance. Joel ii. 28. My life is ready to be poured out as water upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, when I remember my former mercies, and consider my present misery. . . . The loss of his father, mother, wives, children, lands, liberty—nay, of his very life, would not have gone so near his heart as the loss of public ordinances. As his sorrow was great for the want, so was his suit most earnest for the enjoyment of them. How many a prayer doth he put up for the liberty of the tabernacle! Psalm xliii. 3, 4, and xxvii. 4, 8. It is the one thing, the principal thing which he begs of God.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 4.—The bias of the soul is remarkably shown by the objects of regretful recollection.—*Henry March.*

Verse 4.—"*With a multitude that kept holy day.*"

> Though private prayer be a brave design
> Yet public hath more promises, more love:
> And love's a weight to hearts, to eyes a sign.
> We all are but cold suitors; let us move
> Where it is warmest. Leave thy six and seven;
> Pray with the most: for where most pray, is heaven.
>
> *George Herbert, in "The Temple."*

Verse 5.—See also on verse 11, and Psalm xliii. verse 5.

Verse 5.—"Why *art thou cast down, O my soul?*" Athanasius counselled his friend, that when any trouble should fall upon him, he should fall presently to the reading of this Psalm; for there was a way, he thought, of curing by the like, as well as by the *contrary:* for 'tis observed indeed that when two instruments are tuned to the same unison, if you touch the strings of the one, the strings of the other will move too, though untouched, if placed at a convenient distance. That therefore you may try the same experiments upon yourselves, do but set your affections for a tune in the same key in which these words were spoken; if really you *feel* none, imagine some affliction laid upon you; when you have done so, that you may be the more fully moved, place your attention at a convenient distance, look narrowly on this holy prophet, observe how he retires himself, shuts out the world, calls his sad soul to as sad a reckoning: *Quare tam tristis?* O my soul! thou that wert infused to give me life; nay, says Philo the Jew, a spark, a beam of the divinity, thou, which shouldst be to this dark body of mine as the sun is to the earth, enlightening, quickening, cheering up my spirits; tell me, why art *thou* clouded? why art *thou* cast down? . . . .

Think of this, ye that feel the heaviness of your soul; think of it, ye that do not, for ye may feel it. Know there is a sorrow "that worketh repentance not to be repented of." Know again there is a sorrow "that worketh death." Remember there were tears that got sinful Mary heaven; remember again, there were tears that got sinful Esau *nothing*. For as in martyrdom, it is not the sword, the boiling lead, or fire, not *what* we suffer, but *why*, that makes us martyrs; so in our sorrows, it is not how deep they wound, but *why*, that justifies them. Let every one, therefore, that hath a troubled heart, ask his soul the "*Why:*" "*Why art thou cast down?*" Is it not for thine own sins, or the sins of others? Take either of them, thine eyes will have a large field to water. Is it for that thou hast been a child of wrath, a servant of the devil? Is it for that thou art a candle set in the wind, blown at by several temptations? or is it for that thou wouldst be freed from them? "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" Psalm cxx. 5. Art thou troubled as St. Augustine was, when he read that the way to heaven was narrow, the number small that travelled thither? Or hast thou put on St. Bernard's resolution, who had made a compact with his soul, never to joy till he had heard his Saviour call him, "Come, ye blessed," nor never to leave sorrowing till he had escaped the bitter sentence, "Go, ye cursed"? If any of these be the "*Why*," the ground of thy sorrows, if such thoughts have *cast thee down;* know, that thy Saviour hath already blessed thee, for, "Blessed are they that mourn." The angels are thy servants, they gather thy tears; God is thy treasurer, he lays them up in his bottle; the Holy Ghost is thy comforter, he will not leave thee. Fear not, then, to be thus "*cast down*," fear not to be thus *disquieted within thee.—Brian Duppa* (*Bishop*), 1588—1662, *in a Sermon entitled "The Soule's Soliloquie."*

Verse 5.—"*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*" Why, or what may be the reason, that this text is three times used in this Psalm and in the next? whereas you do not find two verses of the same length used in all the Book of Psalms besides, except in Psalm cvii., where is often repeated, "O that men would praise the Lord," etc. Now, surely, the frequent mention of this text and words doth argue and note unto us the weightiness of the matter. . . . . .

Wicked men oppressed David, and the devil tempted him; yet he chides his own heart and nothing else. David did not chide at Saul, nor chide at Absalom; but he chides and checks his own heart. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Though the devil and wicked men, the one do tempt, the other do oppress as instruments of punishment for sin; yet we with David are to chide our own hearts.

Consider, what though in our translations the words are translated and rendered passively, "*Why art thou cast down?*" yet, in the original, they are rendered actively; we read it, "*Why art thou cast down?*" etc.; but in the original it is read, יֹמַה־תֶּהֱמִי עָלַי מַה־תִּשְׁתּוֹחֲחִי נַפְשִׁי "*Why bowest* (or pressest) *thou down thyself, my soul? and why tumultest thou against me?*" As Arias Montanus, *Cur humiliasti te? Cur deprimes te anima mea?* So Lorinus, Prov. xii. 25. And the words so read, they do intimate thus much, that God's own people may be cast down too much for the sense of sin, and they are most active in their own down-casting. It is not God nor the devil that cast thee down; but *Why dost thou cast thyself down?* to create more trouble on thy self than either God doth inflict or the devil tempt thee to.—*Christopher Love, in "The Dejected Soul's Cure,"* 1657.

Verse 5.—"*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*" Consider but this, how much there is of God in the affliction. 1. Came it not without *God's privity?* Why art thou troubled, then? Thy Father knowing of it would have stopped its course if it had been best for thee. 2. Came it not *without his command?* Why art thou troubled? It is the cup that thy Father hath given thee, and wilt thou not drink it? 3. Is it thy Father's will that thou shouldest suffer, and shall it be thy humour to rebel? 4. Hath God done *no more than he might do?* Why dost thou murmur, as if he had done thee wrong? 5. Is it a piece of his *wise acting?* Why dost thou exalt thy foolish will above his infinite wisdom? 6. Is his way *a way of mercy?* Why does thy mutinous spirit stumble at it, as a rough way? 7. Is the thing *good* that is befallen thee? Why dost thou quarrel as if it were evil? 8. Is it *less than men suffer*, than his own people, yea, than his own Son hath suffered, and hast thou cause to complain? 9. Is it but *thy merit?* and less than that, too; and shall the living man complain for the punishment of his sin? 10. Is it *in measure*, ordered with care? (1) by the physician's hand; and (2) a little draught, and (3)

proportioned to thy strength; (4) measured out according to the proportion of strength and comfort he intends to measure thee out, to bear it withal? Why art thou cast down? Why art thou disquieted? Is the end and fruit of it but to make thee white, and purify thee? to purge thy sin past, and to prevent it for the time to come? and dost thou find a present fruit in it? Dost thou find that now thou art turned into a chalk-stone; thy groves and images—those corruptions which did attend thee while thou wert in prosperity, and which would attend thee if thou hadst these good things which thou wantest, and art disquieted for; and if those evils which thou feelest or fearest were far from thy sense and fear, would still attend thee—that those do not now stand up? Lift up thy head, Christian! say to thy soul, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?*" Meditate what there is of God in the cause of thy disquietments.—*John Collinge* (1623—1690) *in "A Cordial for a Fainting Soule,"* 1652.

Verse 5.—"*Why art thou disquieted?*" more literally, *tumultuated*, a word frequently applied to the roaring and tumult and tossing of the sea. See Isaiah xvii. 12; Jer. v. 22; vi. 23; li. 55.—*Henry March.*

Verse 5.—"*Hope thou in God.*" I shall show what powerful influence *hope* hath on the Christian in affliction, and how. First, it stills and silenceth him under affliction. It keeps the king's peace in the heart, which else would soon be in an uproar. A hopeless soul is clamorous: one while it chargeth God, another while it reviles his instruments. It cannot long rest, and no wonder, when hope is not there. Hope hath a rare art in stilling a froward spirit, when nothing else can; as the mother can make the crying child quiet by laying it to the breast, when the rod makes it cry worse. This way David took, and found it effectual; when his soul was unquiet by reason of his present affliction, he lays it to the breast of the promise: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God." And here his soul sweetly sleeps, as the child with the breast in his mouth; and that this was his usual way, we may think by the frequent instances we find; thrice we find him taking this course in two Psalms, xlii. and xliii. . . . . Secondly, this hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye, sigh and sing all in a breath; it is called "the rejoicing of hope," Heb. iii. 6. And hope never affords more joy than in affliction. It is on a watery cloud that the sun paints those curious colours in the rainbow. . . . . There are two graces, which Christ useth above any other, to fill the soul with joy—faith and hope, because these two fetch all their wine of joy without door. Faith tells the soul what Christ hath done for it, and so comforts it; hope revives the soul with the news of what Christ will do: both draw at one tap—Christ and his promise.—*Condensed from William Gurnall.*

Verse 5.—"*Hope thou in God.*" The word which is here rendered "*hope*" denotes that *expectation* which is founded on faith in God, and which leads the soul to *wait* upon him. The idea is beautifully expressed in Psalm xxxix. 7. "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee."—*Henry March.*

Verse 5.—"*I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*" When it may be said, "He whom God loveth is sick," then it may be said, "This sickness is not unto death;" and though it be to the first death, yet not to the second. Who would think when Jonah was in the sea (Jonah iii.), that he would preach at Ninevah? Who would think when Nebuchadnezzar was in the forest (Dan. iv.), that he should reign again in Babel? Who would think when Joseph was banished of his brethren, that his brethren should seek unto him like his servants? Who would think when Job scraped his sores upon the dunghill, all his houses were burned, all his cattle stolen, and all his children dead, that he should be richer than ever he was? These are the acts of mercy which make the righteous sing, "The Lord hath triumphed valiantly." Exodus 15—21.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 5.—"*I shall yet praise him.*" David's mind is upon the *duty* more than upon the *mercy;* upon the *duty*, as it is a matter of *grace*, more than upon the *mercy*, as it is a matter of *sense*. And, therefore, by a happy mistake, his tongue slips, as men are wont to do in such cases, and he puts one for the other; when he should say, *I shall receive mercy from God*, he says, "*I shall give praise to him.*"—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 5.—He is the skilful physician, who at the same time that he evacuates the disease, doth also comfort and strengthen nature; and he the true Christian, that doth not content himself with a bare laying aside evil customs and practices, but labours to walk in the exercise of the contrary graces. Art thou discomposed

with impatience, haunted with a discontented spirit under any affliction? Think it not enough to silence thy heart from quarrelling with God, but leave not till thou canst bring it sweetly to rely on God. Holy David drove it thus far; he did not only chide his soul for being disquieted, but he charges it to trust in God.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 5.—There was one Alice Benden, who, among others, was imprisoned for religion in Canterbury Castle; but after awhile, by the bishop's order, she was let down into a deep dungeon, where none of her friends could come at her. There she was fed with an halfpenny bread, and a farthing beer a day, neither would they allow her any more for her money. Her lodging was upon a little straw, between a pair of stocks and a stone wall. This made her grievously to bewail and lament her estate, reasoning with herself, why her Lord God did in so heavy a wise afflict her, and suffered her thus to be sequestered from the sweet society of her loving prison-fellows. In this extremity of misery, and in the midst of these dolorous mournings she continued, till on a night, repeating that of the Psalmist: "*Why art thou so heavy, O my soul? and why art thou so cast down within me? Still trust in God,*" etc.; and, *God's right hand can change all this,* etc.; she received comfort in the midst of her sorrows, and so continued joyful to the time of her release.—*Samuel Clarke's "Mirrour."*

Verses 5, 11.—In case thou art at any time oppressed with sorrows, ask thy heart and soul that question which David did in the like case twice in one Psalm: "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?*" and certainly the soul would return answer, My distress of sadness springs from my unbelief. You may know the disease by the cure, in the very next words, "*O put thy trust in God; hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*" All sorrow of heart springs principally from our unbelief, not from the greatness of other evils; I mean, *destructive* sorrow, for godly sorrow is a friend to godly joy. It is not so much the weight of the burthen, as the soreness of the back, that troubles the poor beast: so it is not so much the weight of outward evils, as the inward soreness of a galled conscience, not purified nor healed by faith, that vexeth and troubleth the poor creature.—*Matthew Lawrence, in "The Use and Practice of Faith,"* 1657.

Verses 5, 11.—As afflictions do proceed from ourselves, they may be called troubles, or perturbations; for the best man doth sometimes cause this bad liquor to boil out of his own bowels. David, not once, but often, hath cried out, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?*" And show me the man that annoyeth and troubleth not himself in vain, because with patience he doth not tarry the Lord's leisure? The foolish bird, who, being in a room whose door is locked, and the casements shut, beateth herself against the wall and windows, breaking her feathers and bruising her body, whereas, would she stay till the passages were by the keeper opened, she might depart, being not at all wounded; even so falleth it out with us: for when the Lord doth shut us up, and straiten our liberty for a time, we would fain make way for ourselves, having many devices in our hearts to break through the walls of his providence; whereas, if we would stay his leisure, depend on his promise, and submit ourselves to be disposed of by his hand, we might with more ease endure this prison, and with less hurt at the last be set at liberty. For God is in one mind, and who can change him? He will bring to pass that thing that he hath decreed upon us.—*John Barlow's Sermon,* 1618.

Verses 5, 11.—If you would get assurance, spend more time in strengthening your evidences for heaven, than in questioning of them. It is the great fault of many Christians they will spend much time in questioning, and not in strengthening their comforts. They will reason themselves into unbelief, and say, Lord, why should I believe? Why should I take hold of a promise that am so unholy and so unmortified a creature? And so by this they reason themselves to such a pass that they dare not lay hold upon Christ, whereas it should be your work to reason yourselves into Christ as much as you can. Labour to strengthen your comforts, and reason thus, Why should I not believe in Christ? Thus David did. Psalm xlii. "*Why art thou troubled, O my soul, and why art thou cast down within me?*" Is not the mercy of God more than sin in the creature? Is not there free grace where there is guilt? Are not there pardoning mercies where condemnation is deserved? You should reason up your comforts rather than reason them down, and spend more time in strengthening than in questioning of them. You would count him a very unwise man that hath a lease of so much land, and he himself shall create scruples and doubts, and shall

use no means to make his title good. And truly many Christians are as unwise for heaven. They have, as I may say, good bond and seal that God will bring them to heaven, and yet they will question and cavil themselves into unbelief. Beloved, this should not be, but you ought rather to strengthen your comforts than question them.—*Christopher Love.*

Verse 6.—"*O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee.*" "Because I am very low in spirit, am deeply sorrowful, *therefore* will I remember thee. I will remember how condescending thou art to thy 'poor and afflicted people;' how ready to receive them when deserted or cast out by men; how kind and patient to hear their complaint when they pour out the soul before thee. I will remember thy lovingkindness to *me* in seasons past; how thou hast looked on my distress, hast heard the voice of my supplications, hast delivered me from my trials, or helped me to bear their burden, strengthening me with strength in my soul. I will remember all that I have enjoyed of thy presence when waiting on thee in thy house, or when celebrating thy praises there in company with thy 'saints, the excellent of the earth.' I will remember what thou ART; how meet an object for the trust of a desolate being like myself! For though I am poor, thou art rich; though I am weak, thou art mighty; though I am miserable, thou art happy. I will remember that thou art *my* God. That thou hast manifested thyself to my soul, that thou hast enabled me to choose thee for my portion, that I have trusted in thee, and have never been confounded. I will remember that word of promise on which thou hast caused me to hope, to which thou hast ever been faithful throughout all the past, and *will* be, as I truly believe, even unto the end." Oh, how happy, even in the midst of their unhappiness, are they, who in their trials, can thus take shelter in God!—*Henry March.*

Verse 6.—"MY *God.*" Astonishing expression! Who shall dare to say to the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Majesty in the heavens, "*My God*"? An exile, a wanderer, an outcast; a man forsaken, despised, reviled; a soul cast down and disquieted: *he* shall dare. By what right? Of covenant.—*Henry March.*

Verse 6.—"*Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.*" It is remarkable what course the Psalmist took to regain comfort; he would remember three experiments of his goodness—"the land of *Jordan,*" the land "of the *Hermonites,*" and "the hill *Mizar.*" First will I remember the land *Jordan;* that is, I will remember the great goodness of God in drying up the river Jordan, that so the tribes of Israel might pass over to the promised land: why, God that hath been good, will be good. Then, I will remember the land of the *Hermonites;* in that land were Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, were defeated; that you read of in Joshua xii. 1, 2. "Now these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the river Arnon unto Mount Hermon." *Mizar,* some think to be a little hill near Mount Sinai, where the law was given. I will remember God's goodness, in giving a law to his people. Here David would call to remembrance the goodness of God of old, to regain to him comfort and quietness in his mind.—*Christopher Love.*

Verse 6.—"*The Hermons,*" or the peaks or ridges of Hermon, the plural being used either because of the *two* peaks of the mountain (Wilson, "*Land of the Bible*"), or as I think probably, of the whole range of its snowy hights.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 6.—"*The Hermons,*" *i.e.*, as some suppose, Mount Hermon, and the other mountains upon that side of the river, just as Baalim means Baal, and other idols worshipped with him; or more probably Mount Hermon considered not as a single eminence, but a chain or range, like the Alps, the Alleghanies, etc.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 6.—"*From the hill.*" He that has a rich life of past experience is thereby placed upon an eminence from which he may take a happy view of the path lying before him.—*J. P. Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 7.—"*Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts.*" Here he has conjoined two awful and terrific phenomena of nature. It is a fact well ascertained by the evidence of travellers, that the falling of waterspouts is not uncommon on the coast of Judea. It should seem that they are occasioned by the congregating of great masses of cloud, whose waters concentrating to a point, pour themselves down in a tremendous column, accompanied with a roaring noise. Now, the image

conceived in the mind of the Psalmist seems to be that of the rushing of this vast water-spout down into the sea, already agitated, and increasing the turbulence and disorder of its waves. An awful picture! Especially if there be added to it the ideas of a black tempestuous sky, and the deafening roar occasioned by the tumult. What would be the situation of a vessel in the midst of such a tempest, the deluge pouring down from above, and all around her the furious ocean heaving its tremendous surges—how ungovernable, how helpless, how next to impossible that she should escape foundering except by some almost miraculous interference. Yet to such a situation does David here compare the state of his soul when submersed, as it were, under a sea of afflictions; "all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." How pungent must his sense of grief have been to occasion him to make use of such a comparison, so strongly expressive of the utmost danger and terror! —*Henry March.*

Verse 7.—"*Deep calleth unto deep,*" etc. The abyss above calls on the abyss below, in the voice of the droppings of thy waterspouts.—*Targum.*

Verse 7.—"*Deep calleth unto deep.*" So let prayer unto prayer, and faith unto faith, and one grace to the exercise of another. If we cannot prevail with God it may be the first time, yet we may the second; or if not then, the third.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 7.—"*Deep calleth unto deep.*" What's that? Why, it is expressed in the verse before: "*O God,*" says he, "*my soul is cast down within me.*" "*Down,*" that is *deep* into the jaws of distrust and fear. And, Lord, my soul in this *depth* of sorrow, calls for help to thy *depth* of mercy. For though I am sinking and am going down, yet not so low but that thy mercy is yet underneath me. Do, of thy compassions, open those everlasting arms, and catch him that has no help or stay in himself. For so it is with one that is falling into a *well* or a *dungeon.*—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 7.—Here the Psalmist feels the spirit of bondage, which is wrath and fear; and he prays for the joy of God's salvation, and to be upheld by God's free spirit, which is the Holy Spirit, the spirit of love and power. He complains of "*deep calling unto deep.*" A soul in the horrible pit hears little else but the calls of law and justice for vengeance, which are always answered again by the accusations of Satan and conscience. The storms of Sinai, like a *water-spout* at sea, threaten the earthen vessel with a deluge of wrath, which would soon drown it in destruction and perdition. These waves of real, and some imaginary, displeasure (no less terrible than real), rolling over the poor creature, are ready to send the bark to the bottom. This is the terrible way in which some fallen and backsliding souls are purged and reclaimed, and especially such as have brought public scandal upon the gospel, and church of Christ.—*William Huntington* (1744—1813) *in* "*Contemplations of the God of Israel.*"

Verse 7.—"*Thy waterspouts,*" Dr. Boothroyd translates צִנּוֹרֶיךָ, "*thy cataracts.*" In justification of which translation, he observes that the situation of David suggested this forcible image. He saw the torrents falling from the precipices, and heard them resounding, and as if calling to one another for assistance; so, says he, all thy waves, that is, afflictions and troubles, come upon me and overwhelm me.—*John Morison.*

Verse 7.—"*Waterspouts.*" Look at those clouds which hang like a heavy pall of sackcloth over the sea, along the western horizon. From them, on such windy days as these, are formed *waterspouts*, and I have already noticed several incipient "spouts" lengthening downward from their lower edge. These remarkable phenomena occur most frequently in spring, but I have also seen them in autumn. They are not accompanied with much rain; and between the dark stratum above and the sea, the sky is clear and bright. Here and there fragments of black vapour, shaped like long funnels, are drawn down from the clouds towards the sea, and are seen to be in violent agitation, whirling round on themselves as they are driven along by the wind. Directly beneath them the surface of the sea is also in commotion by a whirlwind, which travels on in concert with the spout above. I have often seen the two actually unite in mid air, and rush toward the mountains, writhing, and twisting, and bending, like a huge serpent, with its head in the clouds and its tail on the deep.

They make a loud noise, of course, and appear very frightful. "*Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me,*" said David, when his soul was cast down within him. But, though formidable

in appearance, they do very little injury. I have never heard of more than one instance in which they proved destructive even to boats, though the sailors are extremely afraid of them. As soon as they approach the shore, they dissolve and disappear. That kind of waterspout which bursts on the mountains, generally in the dry months of summer, does immense mischief. In a few minutes the wadies along its track are swollen into furious rivers, which sweep away grain, olives, raisins, and every other produce of the farmer. I have frequently known them to carry off and drown flocks of sheep and goats, and even cows, horses, and their owners also.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 7.—"*All thy waves and thy billows.*"

Deep to deep incessant calling,
Tossed by furious tempests' roll,
Endless waves and billows falling,
Overwhelm my fainting soul.
Yet I see a Power presiding
Mid the tumult of the storm,
Ever ruling, ever guiding,
Love's intentions to perform.
Yes, mid sorrows most distressing,
Faith contemplates thy design,
Humbly bowing, and confessing
All the waves and billows THINE.

Henry March.

Verse 7.—"*All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*"

Wide o'er misfortune's surging tide
Billows succeeding billows spread;
Should one, its fury spent, subside,
Another lifts its boisterous head.

Æschylus in "The Seven Chiefs against Thebes."

Verse 8.—"*Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness.*" His expression is remarkable; he does not say simply that the Lord will bestow, but, "*command his lovingkindness.*" As the gift bestowed is grace—free favour to the unworthy; so the manner of bestowing it is sovereign. It is given by decree; it is a royal donative. And if *he* commands the blessing, who shall hinder its reception?—*Henry March.*

Verse 8.—'Tis all one to a godly man, *night* or *day*. For what *night* can there be to him who hath God always with him, who is a *sun* to comfort him, as well as a shield to protect him (Ps. lxxxiv. 11); and *the light of whose countenance*, if it be but very little, is more comfortable than all things else whatsoever that the *day* can bring with it. He can say, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Mic. vii. 8); and "the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." Ps. xviii. 28. To tell you the truth, I think the *night* is the merriest time that the godly man hath, and the saddest for the wicked man (who, though he make use of *darkness* to hide his sin, yet is he afraid, because of that very thing in which his safety consists). For if a man be merry in good company, he must needs be more merry when he enjoys it better, and there is less to disturb his mirth. So as it is with a godly man in the *night*, when the greatest part of his hindrances are removed, and he can "delight himself in the Almighty" without disturbance. Job. xxvii. 10. David says that the Lord would indeed "*command his lovingkindness in the daytime*," but "*in the night* (says he) *his song shall be with me*"—"his song," as I think, not of *thanksgiving*, but of *joy and exultation*, such as God uses to give at that time. Job. xxxv. 10. In the *daytime* the soul is so taken up with base employments, so distracted with variety of sensible objects, and so busied with work for the body, that either she hath no leisure at all to do her own work (such as this joy is as much as anything), or she cannot do it so well as she would, or so well as she could *in the night*, when she hath less to do. I doubt not but the worldly and carnal man, now that I am talking so much of *night* and sleep, will be ready to say that I do but *dream*, and to answer me as the fellow did the hunter, when he bade him hear "what heavenly music his dogs made." For I know he counts the music and songs that we speak of, nothing but a frenzy, or a fancy at the least, such as mad and diseased people have in their brain, while they imagine it to be in the air. But, as Peter said of those upon whom the Holy Ghost fell, "These men are not drunk, as ye suppose;" so may I reply to such men, No

such matter, the godly are not mad, as ye suppose, for their songs are not works of their own fancy, not made of their own head, but set for them by God himself, "who giveth songs in the night." Job. xxxv. 10.—*Zachary Bogan.*

Verse 8.—"*And my prayer unto the God of my life.*" Here may be seen that David's religion was a religion of prayer *after* deliverance, as well as before. The selfish who cry out in trouble will have done with their prayers, when the trouble is over. With David it was the very reverse. Deliverance from trouble would strengthen his confidence in God, embolden his addresses to him, and furnish him with new arguments. . . . . There is great *need* of prayer after deliverance; for the time of deliverance is often a time of temptation, the soul being elated, and thrown off its guard. At such seasons much of the joy that is felt may be merely natural, as David's would probably be when rescued from that corroding care which injures the body as well as distresses the soul. There is danger of mistaking; of supposing it to be all spiritual, and hence of imagining the soul to be in a higher state of grace than it really is, and so, of being imperceptibly drawn into a state of false security. There is then especial need of that prayer. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." And with some peculiarly, who being of a sanguine constitution of mind, are in times of enjoyment, soon puffed up and brought into danger.—*Henry March.*

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—Your song and your prayer must be directed to God as "*the God of your life.*" You do not own him as God, except you own and adore him as your all sufficient good, and that "fulness which filleth all in all." You detract from the glory of his Godhead, if you attribute not this to him; and if, accordingly, as one that cannot live without him, you do not seek union with him, and join yourself to him, and then rejoice and solace yourself in that blessed conjunction.—*John Howe.*

Verse 9.—"*God my rock.*" David was a fugitive, with little means of defence, and continually pursued by enemies who were powerful and numerous. The country in which he wandered was mountainous, and he often sought and found shelter on the tops of precipitous rocks, or in their natural hollows or excavated caves. Thus the idea of shelter and defence being associated in his mind with that of a rock, how natural that he should apply the term to God, and when seeking him as his refuge and helper, should address him by that appellation. . . . . "*Why hast thou forgotten me?*" Not that he supposed he was literally forgotten of God, so as to be given up and abandoned by him; because he had still sufficient trust in his faithfulness to seek him for a refuge, and to hope in his mercy. His expression is to be regarded as the language of feeling, not of judgment. He felt, he seemed, as one forgotten by God. Those visits of love, those manifestations of favour with which he had formerly been indulged, and which then seemed to him to be so many tokens of the divine remembrance, were now withheld, now when, on account of his distress, they appeared so unspeakably more needful and desirable; whence it was that he felt as one forgotten.—*Henry March.*

Verse 10.—"*Mine enemies.*" It is strange that *he* should have enemies, that was so harmless a man that when they were sick and distressed, he prayed for them, and put on sackcloth for them, as it is, Psalm xxxv. This compassionate, sweet-natured man, yet, notwithstanding, you see he had enemies, and enemies that would discover themselves to reproach him, and that bitterly; in the bitterest manner, they reproach him in his religion. We may be armed by this observation against the scandal of opposition—that if we meet with enemies in the world, we should not be much offended at it; grieve we may, but wonder ne need not. Was there ever any that did more good than our Saviour Christ? "He went about doing good." Acts x. 38. He did never a miracle that was harmful (but only of the swine that were drowned in the sea, and that was their own fault), but he went about doing all the good he could; yet, notwithstanding, we see what malicious opposites he had. That that is true of the head must be true in the members. Therefore we should rejoice in our conformity to Christ, if it be in a good cause, that we find enemies and opposition. The devil is not made a Christian yet, and he will never be made good, for he is *in termino*, as we say, he is in his bounds, his nature is immovable; he is in hell in regard of his estate, though he be loose to do mischief. Now, until the devil be good, God's children shall never want enemies; and he will never be good; therefore, though there were good kings and good governors over all the

world, yet good men shall never want enemies as long as the devil is alive, as long as he hath anything to do in the world. Enemies, therefore, we must look for, and such enemies as will not conceal their malice neither; for that were something, if they would suffer their malice to boil and concoct in their own hearts, but that will not be, but "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak."—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 10.—"*They say daily unto me.*" Here's their constancy and perseverance in this their carriage and language, it is *daily*, or *all the day*, כָּל-הַיּוֹם. It is not only for a fit and away, but it is their frequent and continual practice; it's every, and it's all the day; they begin in the morning, and they hold out still till night as unquiet persons use to do; and they begin the week with it, and so they continue till the end; he could never come into their company or near them, but he had such language from them.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 10.—"*Where is thy God?*" David might rather have said to them, Where are your eyes? where is your sight? for God is not only in heaven, but in me. Though David was shut out from the sanctuary, yet David's soul was a sanctuary for God; for God is not tied to a sanctuary made with hands. God hath two sanctuaries, he hath two heavens—the heaven of heavens and a broken spirit. God dwelt in David as in his temple. God was with David and in him; and he was never more with him, nor never more in him than in his greatest afflictions. They wanted eyes, he wanted not God. Though sometimes God hide himself, not only from the world but from his own children, yet he is there; howsoever their sorrow is such that it dims their sight (as we see in Hagar), so that they cannot see him for the present, he sometimes looks in their face, as we see in Mary's case. She could not see Christ distinctly, but thought him to be the gardener. There is a kind of concealment awhile in heavenly wisdom, yet notwithstanding, God is with his children always, and they know it by faith though not by feeling always. . . . . Therefore, it was an ignorant question of them to ask, *Where is thy God?* It showed that they were ignorant of the passages of God's dealing with his children, as indeed none are greater atheists than your scoffers. *Where is thy God?* as if God had been only a God of observation, to be observed outwardly in all his passages towards his children; whereas, as I said, he is a God hiding himself ofttimes; and he shows himself in contrary conditions most of all, most comfortably. His work is by contraries. But these carnal men were ignorant of the mysteries of religion, and the mysteries of divine providence towards God's children. Therefore, their question savours of their disposition, *Where is now thy God?*—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 10.—"*Where is thy God?*" It is the deriding question which persecutors put to the saints in the time of their trials and troubles, *Ubi Deus?* "Where is now your God?" But they may return a bold and confident answer, *Hic Deus*, "Our God is here," our God is nigh unto us, our God is round about us, our God is in the midst of us, our God has given us his promise "that he will never leave us nor forsake us." Heb. xiii. 5. In every trouble, in every danger, in every death, the Lord will be sure to keep us company. God will bear his children company, not only whilst they are in a delightful paradise, but also when they are in a howling wilderness. Hosea ii. 14. When a company of poor Christians were going into banishment, one standing by to see them pass along said, that it was a very sad condition that those poor people were in, to be thus hurried from the society of men, and to be made companions of the beasts of the fields. True, said another, it were a sad condition indeed, if they were carried to a place where they should not find their God; but let them be of good cheer, for God goes along with them, and will exhibit the comforts of his presence whithersoever they go, his presence is infinite, and filleth all places. The Rabbins put *Makom*, which signifies *place*, among the names of God; Bythner brings them in expounding that text (Esther iv. 14), thus: "Deliverance shall arise from another place," that is, from God. Now, they called God *place*, because he is in every place, filling heaven and earth with his presence.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 10.—Forest-flies, small as they are, drive the noble war-horse mad; therefore David says, "*As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*"—*Frederick William Robertson*, 1851.

Verse 11.—Imitate here the example of David, instead of yielding to a vague grief; cite your soul; *enquire* of it the particular cause of your sorrow: different

remedies will be requisite according to the different sources of your distress; and be careful that you trifle not with God, and your comfort, and your salvation, while you enquire of your soul, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*" Be impartial, there is another and more solemn judgment to succeed: be persevering, like the Psalmist, return, again and again to the investigation: be prayerful; self-love, or the delusions of your heart, may otherwise deceive you. Pray then to God, to "search you, and see if there be any wicked way in you."—*Henry Kollock, D.D., in "Sermons,"* etc. 1822.

Verse 11.—"*Hope.*" Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey towards it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us.—*Samuel Smiles, LL.D.*

Verse 11.—"*God . . . . is the health of my countenance.*" The health of David's countenance was not in his countenance, but *in his God*, and this makes his faith silence his fears, and so peremptorily resolve upon it, that there is a time coming (how near soever he now lies to the grave's mouth) when he "*shall yet praise him.*" The health and life of thy grace lie both of them, not in thy grace, saith faith, but *in God*, who is *thy* God, therefore I shall yet live and praise him. I do not wonder that the weak Christian is melancholy and sad, when he sees his sickly face in any other glass than this.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 11.—"*The health of my countenance.*" The countenance is often a true index to the mind. In the present awakening in religion, nothing is more remarkable than the sad or joyous looks of those whom God has spiritually exercised. It is easy to see who are sad, and who happy. There is nothing new in this; the Psalmist says, "My soul is cast down within me." Therefore had he a dejected countenance; but said he, "Send thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; then will I go unto God, my exceeding joy. . . . And he shall be *the health of my countenance.*" In his sorrow, the face of Jesus was marred more than any man's, and his visage more than the sons of men. The martyr Stephen was so filled with the sight of Jesus, that in the midst of his persecutors, with death in prospect, he had a face which "shone as the face of an angel." My friend, how is it with thee? Is thy countenance sad? or doth it shine with the joy of the Lord, telling the true tale of thy life and lot?—*J. Denham Smith.* 1860.

Verse 11.—Hast thou seen the sun shine forth in February, and the sky blue, and the hedgerows bursting into bud, and the primrose peeping beneath the bank, and the birds singing in the bushes? Thou hast thought that spring was already come in its beauty and sweet odours. But a few days, and the clouds returned, and the atmosphere was chilled, and the birds were mute, and snow was on the ground, and thou hast said that spring would never come. And thus sometimes the young convert finds his fears removed and the comforts of the gospel shed abroad in his heart, and praise and thanksgiving, and a new song put in his mouth. And he deems unadvisedly that his troubles are past for ever. But awhile, and his doubts return, and his comforts die away, and his light is taken from him, and his spirit is overwhelmed, and he is fain to conclude that salvation and all its blessings are not for him. But the spring, though late, shall break at last. "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?*"—*H. G. Salter's "Book of Illustrations,"* 1840.

Verse 11.—His arguments and motives hereunto are impregnated with very great sense and strength; and urged upon himself as the just rate thereof. "*Hope thou in God.*" For he is 1. "*God.*" 2. "*Thy God.*" 3. "*The health of thy countenance,*" and 4. *One whom thou shalt* (certainly and for ever) *praise as such.* And 5. Do it *yet*, as lamentable and hopeless as thy case appears at present through seeming difficulties or unlikelihoods. God and ourselves well understood, deeply considered, and skilfully urged and improved, give gracious hearts the best encouragements and supports under the severest accidents of time. And they will very strangely animate our hopes in God under our sorest troubles and dejections. David had (1) confidence in God; and (2) reasons for it; and (3) skill and a heart to urge them. When he reviewed himself, he saw that his soul was gracious; and so he knew God valued it. It was bent for praising God; and so he knew that he should have an opportunity and cause to do it, through some signal favours from him. He had an interest in God; and he would neither lose it nor neglect it, and he had great experience of God's former mercies, and he would not forget them. And when he thinks on God, then praises must be thought on too, and everything relating to it, and all the divine perfections, within the circumference of his knowledge, must

have their fresh remembrances and powerful sense revived upon his own heart.—*Matthew Sylvester* (1636—1708), *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 11.—The soul, when once greatly disturbed, is often not soon calmed, on account of infirmities and remaining corruptions.—*Henry March.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The longing heart and the panting hart compared.

Verses 1, 2.—Those who have enjoyed the presence of God in the public ordinances of religion will greatly desire, if deprived of them, to be favoured with them again. . . . Prevention from attending the public ordinances of God's house may be made the means of great benefit to the soul. I. By renewing our relish for the provisions of the Lord's house, which so soon and so often palls. II. By making us to prize the means of grace more highly. There is, through human degeneracy, a proneness to value things less, however excellent in themselves, because of their being common, or plentiful, or of easy attainment. III. By driving us more directly from God. —*H. March.*

Verses 1—3.—The home-sickness of the soul. What awakens it in the soul? To what is it directed, or does it point or tend? Wherewith can it be satisfied? By the bitter, but ofttimes wholesome food of tears.—*J. P. Lange.*

Verse 2.—I. What thirsts? "my soul." II. For what? "for God." III. In what way? "when shall I come." Or, the cause, incentives, excellences, and privileges of spiritual thirst.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The true view of public worship.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—Appearance before God here and hereafter.—*Isaac Watts, D.D., Two Sermons.*

Verse 3.—The believer's Lent, and its salt meats. I. What causes the sorrow? II. What will remove it? III. What benefit will come of it?

Verses 3, 10.—The carriage of David's enemies. I. The *nature* of it, and that was "*reproach.*" II. The *expression* of it, "*They say unto me.*" III. The *constancy* of it: "*daily,*" or, *all the day long.* IV. The *specification* of it, in a scornful and opprobrious queston: "*Where is (now) thy God?*"—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 4.—I. It is common for the mind, in seasons of sorrow, to seek relief from the present in recollections of the past. II. In recollections of past enjoyments, those that relate to social worship will be peculiarly dear to the servant of God. III. Man is a social being, hence he derives help from united worship.—*H. March.*

Verse 4.—"*I pour out my soul in me.*" The uselessness of mistrustful introspection.

Verse 4.—"*I had gone with the multitude,*" etc. Company, if it be that which is good, is a very blessed and comfortable accommodation in sundry respects. I. It is an exercise of men's faculties, and the powers and abilities of the mind. II. It is a fence against danger, and a preservative against sadness and various temptations. III. An opportunity of doing more good.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 4.—"*I had gone,*" etc. Sunny memories, their lessons of gratitude and hope.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Not Chaucer's tales of the Canterbury pilgrims, but David's tales of the Jerusalem pilgrims.

Verse 4.—"*With the voice,*" etc. Congregational singing defended, extolled, discriminated, and urged.

Verse 5.—Sorrow put to the question, or the Consolatory Catechism.

Verse 5.—The sweetness, safety, and rightness of hope *in* God. Good grip for the anchor.

Verse 5.—The music of the future, "*I shall yet praise him.*"

Verse 5.—"*The help of his countenance,*" or the sustaining power of God's presence.

Verse 5.—"*Why art thou cast down?*" 1. The mind, even of a holy man may be unduly cast down and disquieted. II. In cases of undue dejection and disquietude the proper remedy is to expostulate with the soul, and to direct it to the *only true source* of relief. III. Expostulation with the soul in times of distress, is then

productive of its proper end, when it leads to an immediate application to God. —*H. March.*

Verse 5.—An emphasis of *enquiry or examination ;* David calls himself to account for his present passion and trouble of mind. An emphasis of *reproof or objurgation ;* David chides and rebukes himself for his present distemper. *" Why art thou thus ? "* —*Thomas Horton.*

Verses 5 with 11, or *help* and *health.*

Verse 6.—*" Remember thee."* The consolation derivable from thoughts of God.

Verse 6.—*" Therefore will I remember thee."* There are two ways of understanding this ; each of them instructive and profitable. . . . I. It may be considered as an expression of *determined remembrance of God* should he ever be found in such places and conditions. Believers can suppose the worst, and yet hope for the best. II. The language may be considered as an expression of *encouragement derived from reflection.* He had been in these situations and circumstances, and had experienced in them displays of divine providence and grace.—*W. Jay.*

Verse 6.—Ebenezers many, varied, remembered, helpful.

Verse 7.—*" Deep calleth unto deep."* See Spurgeon's Sermons, No. 865.

Verse 7.—*" Deep calleth unto deep."* One evil inviting another. I. The *variety* of evils—one evil to another. II. The *conjunction* of evils—one evil with another. III. The *connexion* of evils, or dependence and mutual reference—one evil upon another.—*T. Horton.*

Verse 7.—The threefold depth which the saints and servants of God are subject to here in this life. I. The depth of *temptation.* II. The depth of *desertion.* III. The depth of *affliction and human calamities.—T. Horton.*

Verses 7, 8.—In seasons of affliction the servants of God will be distinguished from others by their ready perception and acknowledgment of the hand of God in their trials.—*H. March.*

Verse 8.—Daily mercy and nightly song ; the mercies of sunshine and shade.

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—The blessed alternation between praise and prayer.

Verse 8.—*" God of my life."* Author, sustainer, comforter, object, crown, consummation.

Verse 8.—*" The God of my life."* There is a threefold life whereof we partake, and God is the God of each unto us. First, the life of *nature ;* secondly, the life of *grace ;* thirdly, the life of *glory.—T. Horton.*

Verse 9.—*" God my rock."* Appellations of God, suited to circumstances.—*H. March.*

Verse 9.—*" My rock."* See Keach in his metaphors.

Verse 9.—I. *Why thou ?* II. Why *I ?* III. Why *he ?* It is a *why* to all three, To *God, " Why hast thou forgotten me ? "* To *David* himself, *"Why do I go mourning ? "* To David's *adversary,* whoever he was, *" Why does the enemy oppress me ? "—T. Horton.*

Verse 10.—The most grievous of taunts.

Verse 11.—*" My God."* I. It's a word of *interest—" My God,"* as in covenant with him. II. A word of *compliance—" My God,"* as submitting to him. III. A word of affection—*" My God,"* as taking delight and rejoicing in him.—*T. Horton.*

Verse 11.—A catechism, a consolation, a commendation.

Verse 11.—I. David's *experience* of God. *" He is the health,* or *help of my countenance."* II. His *relation* to God, and *interest* in him—*" And my God."— T. Horton.*

PSALM XLIII.

SUBJECT.—*On account of the similarity of the structure of this Psalm to that of Psalm forty-two, it has been supposed to be a fragment wrongly separated from the preceding song; but it is always dangerous to allow these theories of error in Holy Scripture, and in this instance it would be very difficult to show just cause for such an admission. Why should the Psalm have been broken? Its similarity would have secured its unity had it ever been part and parcel of the forty-second. Is it not far more likely that some in their fancied wisdom united them wrongly in the few MSS. in which they are found as one? We believe the fact is that the style of the poetry was pleasant to the writer, and therefore in after life he wrote this supplemental hymn after the same manner. As an appendix it needed no title. David complains of his enemies, and asks the privilege of communion with God as his surest deliverance from them.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalmist cries to God in prayer, verses* 1—3. *Promises praise in the anticipation of an answer, verse* 4, *and chides himself for his despondency, verse* 5.

EXPOSITION.

JUDGE me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

2 For thou *art* the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.

1. "*Judge me, O God.*" Others are unable to understand my motives, and unwilling to give me a just verdict. My heart is clear as to its intent, and therefore I bring my case before thee, content that thou wilt impartially weigh my character, and right my wrongs. If thou wilt judge, thy acceptance of my conduct will be enough for me; I can laugh at human misrepresentation if my conscience knows that thou art on my side; thou art the only one I care for; and besides, thy verdict will not sleep, but thou wilt see practical justice done to thy slandered servant. "*And plead my cause against an ungodly nation.*" One such advocate as the Lord will more than suffice to answer a nation of brawling accusers. When people are ungodly no wonder that they are unjust: those who are not true to God himself cannot be expected to deal rightly with his people. Hating the King they will not love his subjects. Popular opinion weighs with many, but divine opinion is far more weighty with the gracious few. One good word from God outweighs ten thousand railing speeches of men. He bears a brazen shield before him whose reliance in all things is upon his God; the arrows of calumny fall harmlessly from such a buckler. "*O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.*" Deceit and injustice are boon companions: he who fawns will not fear to slander. From two such devils none can deliver us but God. His wisdom can outwit the craft of the vilest serpent, and his power can overmatch the most raging lion. Whether this was Doeg or Ahithophel is small matter, such double distilled villains are plentiful, and the only way of dealing with them is to refer the matter to the righteous Judge of all; if we try to fight them with their own weapons, we shall suffer more serious injury from ourselves than from them. O child of God, leave these thine enemies in better hands, remembering that vengeance belongeth not to thee, but to the Lord. Turn to him in prayer, crying, "O deliver me," and ere long you shall publish abroad the remembrance of his salvation.

2. "*For.*"—Here is argument, which is the very sinew of prayer. If we reasoned more with the Lord we should have more victories in supplication. "*Thou art the God of my strength.*" All my strength belongs to thee—I will not, therefore, use it on my own behalf against my personal foes. All my strength comes from thee, I therefore seek help from thee, who art able to bestow it. All my strength is in thee, I leave therefore this task of combating my foes entirely in thy hands. Faith

which leaves such things alone is wise faith. Note the assurance of David, "*thou art*," not I hope and trust so, but I know it is so; we shall find confidence to be our consolation. "*Why dost thou cast me off?*" Why am I treated as if thou didst loathe me? Am I become an offence unto thee? There are many reasons why the Lord might cast us off, but no reason shall prevail to make him do so. He hath not cast off his people, though he for awhile treats them as cast-offs. Learn from this question that it is well to enquire into dark providences, but we must enquire of God, not of our own fears. He who is the author of a mysterious trial can best expound it to us.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."

"*Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*" Why do I wander hither and thither like a restless spirit? Why wear I the weeds of sorrow on my body, and the lines of grief on my face? Oppression makes a wise man mad; why, Lord, am I called to endure so much of it for so long a time? Here again is a useful question, addressed to the right quarter. The answer will often be because we are saints, and must be made like our Head, and because such sorrow is chastening to the spirit, and yieldeth comfortable fruit. We are not to cross-question the Lord in peevishness, but we may ask of him in humility; God help us to observe the distinction so as not to sin through stress of sorrow.

3. "*O send out thy light and thy truth.*" The joy of thy presence and the faithfulness of thy heart; let both of these be manifest to me. Reveal my true character by thy light, and reward me according to thy truthful promise. As the sun darts forth his beams, so does the Lord send forth his favour and his faithfulness towards all his people; and as all nature rejoices in the sunshine, even so the saints triumph in the manifestation of the love and fidelity of their God, which, like the golden sunbeam, lights up even the darkest surroundings with delightful splendour. "*Let them lead me.*" Be these my star to guide me to my rest. Be these my Alpine guides to conduct me over mountains and precipices to the abodes of grace. "*Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.*" First in thy mercy bring me to thine earthly courts, and end my weary exile, and then in due time admit me to thy celestial palace above. We seek not light to sin by, nor truth to be exalted by it, but that they may become our practical guides to the nearest communion with God: only such light and truth as are sent us from God will do this, common light is not strong enough to show the road to heaven, nor will mere moral or physical truths assist to the holy hill; but the light of the Holy Spirit, and the truth as it is in Jesus, these are elevating, sanctifying, perfecting; and hence their virtue in leading us to the glorious presence of God. It is beautiful to observe how David's longing to be away from the oppression of man always leads him to sigh more intensely for communion with God.

4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who* is the health of my countenance, and my God.

4. "*Then will I go unto the altar of God.*" If David might but be favoured with such a deliverance as would permit his return, it would not be his own house of heritage which would be his first resort, but to the altar of God his willing feet should conduct him. His whole heart would go as a sacrifice to the altar, he himself counting it his greatest happiness to be permitted to lie as a burnt offering wholly dedicated to the Lord. With what exultation should believers draw near unto Christ, who is the antitype of the altar! clearer light should give greater intensity of desire. "*Unto God my exceeding joy.*" It was not the altar as such that the Psalmist cared for, he was no believer in the heathenism of ritualism: his soul desired spiritual fellowship, fellowship with God himself in very deed. What are all the rites of worship unless the Lord be in them; what, indeed, but empty shells and dry husks? Note the holy rapture with which David regards his Lord! He is not his *joy* alone, but his *exceeding* joy; not the fountain of joy, the giver of joy, or the maintainer of joy, but that joy itself. The margin hath it, "The gladness

of my joy," *i.e.*, the soul, the essence, the very bowels of my joy. To draw near to God, who is such a joy to us, may well be the object of our hungering and thirsting. "*Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee.*" His best music for his best love. When God fills us with joy we ought ever to pour it out at his feet in praise, and all the skill and talent we have should be laid under contribution to increase the divine revenue of glory. "*O God, my God.*" How he dwells upon the name which he loves so well! He already harps on it as though his harp music had begun. What sweeter sounds can music know than these four words? To have God in possession, and to know it by faith, is the heart's heaven—a fulness of bliss lies therein.

5. "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*" If God be thine, why this dejection? If he uplifts thee, why art thou so near the ground? The dew of love is falling, O withering heart, revive. "*And why art thou disquieted within me?*" What cause is there to break the repose of thy heart? Wherefore indulge unreasonable sorrows, which benefit no one, fret thyself, and dishonour thy God? Why overburden thyself with foregodings? "*Hope in God,*" or "*wait for God.*" There is need of patience, but there is ground for hope. The Lord cannot but avenge his own elect. The heavenly Father will not stand by and see his children trampled on for ever; as surely as the sun is in the heavens, light must arise for the people of God, though for awhile they may walk in darkness. Why, then, should we not be encouraged, and lift up our head with comfortable hope? "*For I shall yet praise him.*" Times of complaint will soon end, and seasons of praise will begin. Come, my heart, look out of the window, borrow the telescopic glass, forecast a little, and sweeten thy chamber with sprigs of the sweet herb of hope. "*Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*" My God will clear the furrows from my brow, and the tear marks from my cheek; therefore will I lift up my head and smile in the face of the storm. The Psalm has a blessed ending, such as we would fain imitate when death puts an end to our mortal existence.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is evidently a continuation or supplement to the preceding. In some MSS. of Kennicott and de Rossi's, they are united, and make one Psalm.—*George Phillips, B.D.*

Verse 1.—"*Judge me, O God, and plead my cause,*" etc.—Believers may appeal to God's justice, and plead God's righteousness. I. Touching suffering wrongs of men. II. Touching sin in relation to God's wrath. I. Touching suffering wrongs of men, believers may appeal upon these three grounds: 1. The injustice that men do to believers, is as well against *God's just nature*, as against the believers' ease. So their appeals to God are agreeable to God's enmity against injustice; therefore, his enmity concurs with their appeals. Romans i. 18. 2. Justice in men is according to God's nature, as well as for the believer's welfare, and, therefore, the disposition and inclination of God's nature concurs with their prayers for deliverance. Psalm xi. 7; Luke xxiii. 6, 7. 3. Such wrong God who do wrong his people (2 Chron. xiv. 11; Zech. ii. 8; Acts ix. 4, 5); so that in deliverance God vindicates himself as well as the believers. II. Touching sin in relation to God's wrath, a true believer may plead God's justice or righteousness on these three grounds: 1. Christ our Advocate or Attorney so pleads. John xvii. 24, etc. Now, the client may plead the same as the advocate, seeing it is in relation to the same party and the same issue. 2. Christ hath satisfied God's justice, so that on Christ was laid all the sins of all believers. He was "wounded" for them. Now, God cannot in justice punish twice; therefore, seeing Christ was wounded, believers must be healed. Isaiah liii. 3. Believers have God's righteousness imputed to them (2 Cor. v.); therefore, God must deal with believers as he will deal with his own righteousness.

Useful is this doctrine two ways. I. For terror to the enemies of believers. How many prevailing cries to the justice of God are against such enemies? 1. Their

own sins cry. 2. Believers' injuries cry. 3. Believers' prayers cry. 4. Christ's intercession cries over again their prayers and desires (Rev. vi. 9 compared with Rev. viii. 3). II. The second use is for comfort to believers, that as God's mercy is for them, so is his justice to deliver them, not only from *men*, but from *sin;* and in and through Christ they may humbly plead justice as against sinners, so against sin; not only against the guilt but against the power, that seeing Christ died, sin should not live.—*Condensed from Nathanael Homes*, 1652.

Verse 1.—"*Ungodly . . . . deceitful . . . . unjust.*" There are *ungodly* men who, being destitute of religious principle, will not scruple to injure us, when they can thereby gratify their passions or advance their worldly interests. There are *deceitful* men who will put on the garb of friendship, and acquire our confidence and esteem, and then treacherously cheat us out of our property, or our reputation, or our peace. There are *unjust* men, who by fraud or by violence, would rob us of our dearest rights and most valuable possessions, and not only reduce our powers and opportunities of doing good, but even diminish our means of comfortable subsistence. And there are *oppressors*, who taking advantage of our weakness or dependence, and trampling alike on the maxims of equity and humanity, may exact from us unreasonable services, impose upon us heavy burdens and cruel restraints, and ply us with insults, and harrassments, and deprivations, from which we can make no escape, and for which we can find no redress.—*Andrew Thomson, D.D., in "Lectures on Portions of the Psalms,"* 1826.

Verse 2.—"*Thou art the God of my strength.*" The godly man hath from God a threefold strength, namely: natural, providential, and spiritual. I. *Natural*, Acts xvii. 28. This is twofold: of body, of mind. Of robustness, hardness, and agility of body; of wit, invention, and valour of mind. Now, these donations of corporal and mental natural endowments are God's gifts. Psalm xviii. 43, 39. . . . II. *Providential* strength, which is threefold: 1. God's donation of strengthening mercies. (1) Corporal: wine to make glad, and bread to strengthen. Psalm civ. 15. (2) Mental, common gifts; as Paul had a singular gift of language and single life; Apollos of elocution, argument, power of convincing. 2. Providential strength is God's making way for his people to act and put forth their strength. Psalm lxxviii. 50. 3. Providential strength is God's concurrence with our lawful human acting. Psalm xviii. 29.

III. The third sort of power is *spiritual:* God is the godly man's spiritual power. I John ii. 14: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong," namely, with spiritual strength, for it follows, "The word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." This is the main strength of a godly man; as that text hints, namely, young men are naturally strong, but St. John takes no notice of that, but commends them for their spiritual strength. This spiritual strength is from the word of the Spirit, and from the Spirit of the word, that is, from the Spirit accompanying the word. 1. From *the word of the Spirit*, the word of God. Psalm cxix. 50: "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." To be "*quickened*," *i.e.*, enlivened, is to be full of vigour and spirit and to act mightily, and to "*comfort*" is, as the word signifies, to make strong; for when a man is most cheerful with sobriety, he is most strong. St. John in that place fore-quoted, saith the young men to whom he wrote were strong because the word of God abode in them. For (Prov. xii. 25) "whereas sorrow in the heart of man maketh it stoop"—makes it sickly, weak, drooping—"a good word maketh it glad," cheerful, strong, vigorous. And so if the word of a wise friend, how much more the word of God, with its many strengthening promises? Psalm xx. 2; cxix. 28. The word of God is the very mind and will of God, and power of God, and with the word God created the world, therefore, he that receives this word must needs receive a great deal of strength. Romans i. 16.

2. *The Spirit of the word*, the Holy Spirit that useth to accompany the word to them that receive it. By his Spirit God is in a believer (1 Cor, vi. 9; Eph. ii.); and this is the spirit of strength and power. Eph. iii. 16; 2 Tim. i. 7. As a powerful, active soul makes a vigorous body, so the Spirit in the soul makes the soul powerful and strong, being the soul of the soul of a believer. We read more than once or twice in the Scriptures, that when believers did any eminent act, it is said, *the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they did* so and so, *i.e.*, the Spirit of God in them did then put forth its power to make them act powerfully.—*Condensed from Nathanael Homes.*

Verse 3.—"*O send out thy light and thy truth.*" Possibly there may be an allusion to the Urim and Thummim, as the symbol of light and truth.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"*Light and Truth.*" Delightful and all-comprehensive words. They contain all the salvation and all the desire of a believing, confiding soul. But it is only when thus combined—separated they are no longer a ground of trust and joy. For what would favour avail without faithfulness? It would be no more than the uncertain friendship of men, who smile to-day and reproach to-morrow; who make large promises, but do not perform them. Even the "*light*" which angels and glorified spirits enjoy in heaven would be insufficient to banish all fear and to fill them with satisfaction, were it not for their confidence in the "*truth*" of God. How much more, then, must this be the case with erring, sinful mortals on earth? When the humble spirit is bowed down under a sense of its utter unworthiness and innumerable weaknesses and defilements, its negligences, follies, and wanderings, what should save from despair but the confidence that he who has been merciful will also be faithful; that God is truth as well as light; that he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" that he "*cannot* lie," and that, therefore, "his mercy endureth for ever"? On the other hand, *truth* without *light*, faithfulness without grace, would be only the dreadful execution of terrible but just denunciations on the transgressors of the holy law. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam ate, and in that day became the subject of sin and death. This was *truth* executing judgment. But *light* arose around the darkness; beams of mercy tempered the heavy cloud. The promise of the Great Deliverer was given; then faithfulness was enlisted on the side of grace, and became engaged for its bestowment; "mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other." Since then, all humble and trusting souls have beheld them united, and have made their union the ground of their confidence and joy.—*Henry March.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy tabernacles.*" There were two tabernacles, one at Zion, where the ark stood, and another at Gibeon. 1 Chron. xvi. 37, 39. It is not to this fact that the Psalmist alludes, however, but to the circumstance, in all probability of the different parts of the tabernacle. There was, first the holiest of all, then the sanctuary, and then the tabernacle of the convocation. Heb. ix. 1—8.—*John Morison.*

Verse 4.—"*Then will I go unto the altar of God.*" Let us remember that the approach to God in the holy place is by means of the altar, whence eternally ascendeth the fragrance and the preciousness of the one whole, perfect burnt-offering, and where for ever and ever the divine holiness resteth and feedeth with its pure fire with infinite satisfaction, with inconceivable delight. Oh, what a holy, a divine, a wondrous place is this "*altar of God!*" That altar now means all the value and everlasting efficacy of the one offering of Christ unto God for us; and it is in the full power and blessedness thereof that we draw nigh to God. To this point, to this unspeakably blessed position, the light and the truth of God will attract the child of God. Toward this altar all the rays of the light of divine favour and grace, and of divine truth, and holiness, have from eternity converged; and from this point they shine forth toward and upon the soul and heart of the poor, far-off penitent, attracting him to that altar where he may meet his God. Let us then come to the altar of God; let us enter the cloud of holy incense that filleth the tabernacle of the Most High; let us realise how perfectly God is satisfied with that which Christ has done, with his obedience in dying to meet the claims of divine justice on the sinner, and to complete the perfect surrender of himself as our "*exceeding joy*," even the gladness of our joy, the heart, essence, substance, and reality of our joy.—*John Offord*, 1868.

Verse 4.—"*Then will I go unto the altar of God.*" He would with cheerfulness run and offer up the sacrifices of thanksgiving to his gracious deliverer; he would take his own soul as the burnt-offering, and kindle and burn it up with the fire of a vigorous love and raised affections terminating upon God, the flames whereof should ascend to him alone. . . . . "*Unto God my exceeding joy*," or, as the Hebrew is more exactly translated, *unto God the gladness of his joy*—that which gave a relish to every other comfort, which was the soul and life of his pleasures, and could only make them real and lasting; it was God who raised his joy to fulness of satisfaction and contentment.—*William Dunlop.*

Verse 4.—"*Then will I go . . . . . unto God.*" The expression of *going*

to God implies SUBMISSION and FRIENDSHIP. I. *Submission.* I will go and pay my homage to him, as my Sovereign; I will go and hear what he says; I will go and receive his orders. II. *Friendship.* I will go and consult him, and converse with him as a friend; and be thankful that, in such a troublesome and ensnaring world, I have such a friend to advise with. 1. I will go and tell him my *griefs;* how greatly I am distressed with some particular disorder in my body, or with some disturbance in my family, or with some disappointment in my worldly circumstances, or (which is worse than all of them together) with a sad darkness in my soul. 2. I will go and tell him my *joys,* for even in this vale of tears "my heart is" sometimes "glad, and my glory rejoiceth." 3. I will go and tell him of my *sins.* He knows them, indeed, already, but he shall hear them from *me.* 4. I will go and tell him my *fears;* how greatly I am distressed at times, when I perceive this or the other corruption so strong, which I thought had received its death wound. . . . . how I tremble when I have by my folly provoked the Lord to leave me, for fear he will never return again, etc. 5. I will go and tell him my *hopes,* for some hope I have amidst all my discouragements. . . . . I will go and tell him all this; I will unbosom and unburthen my whole heart to him; and if my *necessities* did not *drive* me to him, I should go to him from inclination.—*Condensed from Samuel Lavington.*

Verse 4.—"*Unto God.*" Believers are not satisfied in the use of religious duties, unless they arrive at God himself in those duties. We speak not here of that arrival at God himself which is by and after all duties, to a beatifical vision of God in glory, but we speak of that arrival at God himself which is to be had *in* duties, while we are in the exercise of duties; namely, to attain to God's special presence in them, in an actual communion, communication and conversing with God, so that we are spiritually sensible he is with us therein. I say God's *special* presence and actual communion, to distinguish it from that ordinary habitual presence and communion of God's being with a believer at all times. John xiv. 16.—*Nathanael Homes.*

Verse 4.—"*My exceeding joy.*" The Psalmist might well call God his *exceeding* joy, for it infinitely exceeds all other joy in its nature, degree, and duration.—*Samuel Lavington.*

Verse 4.—"*My exceeding joy.*" As faith acquires more strength we come to think of God and address him in more endearing terms.—*J. P. Lange.*

Verse 4.—"*Exceeding joy.*" This can be said of no other joy. All other beauties have their boundaries, all other glories have their glooms. This is that illimitable sea, *God.*—*E. Paxton Hood.*

Verse 5.—"*Why art thou cast down O my soul.*" He comes to his former remedy; he had stilled his grief once before with the same meditation and upbraiding of his own soul, and chiding himself; but he comes to it here as a *probatum est,* as a tried remedy; he takes up his soul very short, "*Why art thou so cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?*" You see how David's passions here are interlaced with comforts, and his comforts with passions, till at last he gets the victory of his own heart. Beloved, neither sin nor grief for sin, are stilled and quieted at the first. You have some short-spirited Christians, if all be not quiet at the first, all is lost with them; but it is not so with a true Christian soul, with the best soul living. It was not so with David when he was in distemper; he checks himself, the distemper was not yet stilled; he checks himself again, then the distemper breaks out again; he checks himself again, and all little enough to bring his soul to a holy, blessed, quiet, temper, to that blessed tranquillity and rest that the soul should be in before it can enjoy its own happiness, and enjoy sweet communion with God. As you see in physic, perhaps one purge will not carry away the peccant humour, then a second must be added; perhaps that will not do it, then there must be a third; so when the soul hath been once checked, perhaps it will not do, we must fall to it again, go to God again. And then it may be there will be breaking out of the grief and malady again; we must to it again, and never give over, that is the right temper of a Christian.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 5.—"*Hope in God.*" The more terrible the storm, the more necesary is the anchor. Heb. vi. 19.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 5.—"*Hope in God.*" The complete and perfect state of God's children here is not in *re,* but in *spe:* as Christ's kingdom is not of this world, so is not our hope. The worldling's motto is, "a bird in the hand." Give me to-day, say they,

and take to-morrow whoso will. But the word of believers is, *spero meliora*—my hopes are better than my present possessions.—*Elnathan Parr.*

Verse 5.—The varied conflicts of the soul afford occasion for the exercise of the graces, and thus, through the divine wisdom and goodness, are made the means of eventual good.—*Henry March.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—We apply to God—I. As our *Judge: "Judge me."* II. As our *Advocate: "Plead my cause."* III. As our *Deliverer: "O deliver me."*

Verse 1.—Popular opinion outweighed by divine approbation.

Verse 1.—How the Lord pleads the cause of his people.

Verse 1.—Deceit and injustice twin vipers; their origin, their character, their folly, their end.

Verses 1, 2, 4, 5.—*Five mys:* 1. My cause—*"plead it."* 2. My strength—*"thou art."* 3. My joy—God is. 4. My soul—*"why disquieted."* 5. My God.

Verse 2.—*"The God of my strength."* From whom it is derived, to whom it is dedicated, in whom it resides, by whom it shall be perfected.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—1. From thee it comes. 2. By thee it is sustained. 3. To thee it is dedicated. 4. By thee it will be perfected. 5. By thee it will be rewarded.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—I. *The nature of apparent forsaking.* Painful, protracted, perplexing. II. *The cause of it.* Secret sin to be laid bare, past sin chastised, graces tried, faith ultimately strengthened, etc. II. *The best conduct under it.* Appeal to God, confess, submit, pray, trust, etc.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The two "whys." The questions themselves; the spirit in which they may be asked. The answers which may be given.

Verse 3.—*"O send out thy light and thy truth."* I. What is truth? II. How truth is to be diffused. III. Why it should be diffused. IV. Who must be the main agent of it.—*Varied from Dr. Bogue.* 1800.

Verse 3.—The blessings desired; the guidance sought; the end longed for.

Verse 3.—Under what influence we should resort to divine worship.

Verse 4.—I. The good man's duty—expressed by *going to God.* II. His *blessedness*—expressed by *rejoicing in God.—Samuel Lavington.*

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—When? *"Then."* Where? *"Altar of God."* Who? *"I."* Why? *"My exceeding joy."*

Verse 4 (*second clause*).—It is God alone who can be an exceeding joy to his creatures.—*W. Dunlop's Sermons.*

Verse 4.—The joy of joy. The soul of soul joy.

Verse 4.—The great object of public worship, its bliss, and the praise resulting from attaining it.

Verse 4.—I. *The medium of joy,* the altar of God, or God in Christ Jesus. II. *The springs of joy,* or the attributes of God—mercy, justice, power, holiness, as seen in the atonement. III. *The value of joy,* as comfort, strength, etc.

Verse 4.—*"God my exceeding joy."* A most rich and precious title.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Possession, praise, resolution.

Verse 5.—Discouragement's recovery.—*R. Sibbes's Sermons.*

Verse 5.—*"I shall yet praise him."* *I,* even *I; shall* sooner or later, most assuredly; *"yet,"* despite troubles, foes, devils; *"praise"* with gratitude, confidence, exultation; *"him"* above all other helpers, though now afflicting me.

Verse 5.—*"Health of my countenance,"* removing that which mars it—sin, shame, fear, care, sorrow, weakness, etc.

PSALM XLIV.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.—*The title is similar to the forty-second, and although this is no proof that it is by the same author it makes it highly probable. No other writer should be sought for to father any of the Psalms when David will suffice, and therefore we are loth to ascribe this sacred song to any but the great Psalmist, yet as we hardly know any period of his life which it would fairly describe, we feel compelled to look elsewhere. Some Israelitish patriot fallen on evil times, sings in mingled faith and sorrow, his country's ancient glory and her present griefs, her traditions of former favour and her experience of pressing ills. By Christians it can best be understood if put into the mouth of the church when persecution is peculiarly severe. The last verses remind us of Milton's famous lines on the Massacre of the Protestants among the mountains of Piedmont.*

The song before us is fitted for the voices of the saved by grace, the sons of Korah, *and is to them and to all others full of teaching, hence the title* Maschil.

DIVISION.—*From* 1—3, *the Lord's mighty works for Israel are rehearsed, and in remembrance of them faith in the Lord is expressed* 4—8. *Then the notes of complaint are heard* 9—16, *the fidelity of the people to their God is avowed,* 17—22, *and the Lord is entreated to interpose,* 23—26.

EXPOSITION.

WE have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, *what* work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

2 *How* thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them, *how* thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

3 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.

1. "*We have heard with our ears, O God.*" Thy mighty acts have been the subjects of common conversation; not alone in books have we read thy famous deeds, but in the ordinary talk of the people we have heard of them. Among the godly Israelites the biography of their nation was preserved by oral tradition, with great diligence and accuracy. This mode of preserving and transmitting history has its disadvantages, but it certainly produces a more vivid impression on the mind than any other; to hear with the ears affects us more sensitively than to read with the eyes; we ought to note this, and seize every possible opportunity of telling abroad the gospel of our Lord Jesus *viva voce*, since this is the most telling mode of communication. The expression, "heard with our ears," may denote the pleasure with which they listened, the intensity of their interest, the personality of their hearing, and the lively remembrance they had of the romantic and soul-stirring narrative. Too many have ears but hear not; happy are they who, having ears, have learned to hear.

"*Our fathers have told us.*" They could not have had better informants. Schoolmasters are well enough, but godly fathers are, both by the order of nature and grace, the best instructors of their sons, nor can they delegate the sacred duty. It is to be feared that many children of professors could plead very little before God of what their fathers have told them. When fathers are tongue-tied religiously with their offspring, need they wonder if their children's hearts remain sin-tied? Just as in all free nations men delight to gather around the hearth, and tell the deeds of valour of their sires "in the brave days of old," so the people of God under the old dispensation made their families cheerful around the table, by rehearsing the wondrous doings of the Lord their God. Religious conversation need not be dull, and indeed it could not be if, as in this case, it dealt more with facts and less with opinions. "*What work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.*" They began with what their own eyes had witnessed, and then passed on to what were the traditions of their youth. Note that the main point of the history transmitted

from father to son was the work of God; this is the core of history, and therefore no man can write history aright who is a stranger to the Lord's work. It is delightful to see the footprints of the Lord on the sea of changing events, to behold him riding on the whirlwind of war, pestilence, and famine, and above all to see his unchanging care for his chosen people. Those who are taught to see God in history have learned a good lesson from their fathers, and no son of believing parents should be left in ignorance of so holy an art. A nation tutored as Israel was in a history so marvellous as their own, always had an available argument in pleading with God for aid in trouble, since he who never changes gives in every deed of grace a pledge of mercy yet to come. The traditions of our past experience are powerful pleas for present help.

2. "*How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand.*" The destruction of the Canaanites from the promised land is the work here brought to remembrance. A people numerous, warlike, gigantic and courageous, firmly established and strongly fortified, were driven out by a far feebler nation because the Lord was against them in the fight. It is clear from Scripture that God sent a plague (so that the land ate up the inhabitants thereof) and also a visitation of hornets against the Canaanites, and by other means dispirited them, so that the easy victories of Joshua were but the results of God's having worked beforehand against the idolatrous nation. "*And plantedst them.*" The tribes of Israel were planted in the places formerly occupied by the heathen. Hivites and Jebusites were chased from their cities to make room for Ephraim and Judah. The Great Wonderworker tore up by the roots the oaks of Bashan, that he might plant instead thereof his own chosen "vineyard of red wine." "*How thou didst afflict the people.*" With judgments and plagues the condemned nations were harassed, by fire and sword they were hunted to the death, till they were all expelled, and the enemies of Israel were banished far away. "*And cast them out.*" This most probably refers to Israel and should be read, "caused them to increase." He who troubled his enemies smiled on his friends; he meted out vengeance to the ungodly nations, but he reserved of his mercy for the chosen tribes. How fair is mercy when she stands by the side of justice! Bright beams the star of grace amid the night of wrath! It is a solemn thought that the greatness of divine love has its counterpart in the greatness of his indignation. The weight of mercy bestowed on Israel is balanced by the tremendous vengeance which swept the thousands of Amorites and Hittites down to hell with the edge of the sword. Hell is as deep as heaven is high, and the flame of Tophet is as everlasting as the blaze of the celestial glory. God's might, as shown in deeds both of mercy and justice, should be called to mind in troublous times as a stay to our fainting faith.

3 "*For they got not the land in possession by their own sword.*" Behold how the Lord alone was exalted in bringing his people to the land which floweth with milk and honey! He, in his distinguishing grace, had put a difference between Canaan and Israel, and therefore, by his own effectual power, he wrought *for* his chosen and *against* their adversaries. The tribes fought for their allotments, but their success was wholly due to the Lord who wrought with them. The warriors of Israel were not inactive, but their valour was secondary to that mysterious, divine working by which Jericho's walls fell down, and the hearts of the heathen failed them for fear. The efforts of all the men-at-arms were employed, but as these would have been futile without divine succour, all the honour is ascribed unto the Lord. The passage may be viewed as a beautiful parable of the work of salvation; men are not saved without prayer, repentance, etc., but none of these save a man, salvation is altogether of the Lord. Canaan was not conquered without the armies of Israel, but equally true is it that it was not conquered by them; the Lord was the conqueror, and the people were but instruments in his hands. "*Neither did their own arm save them.*" They could not ascribe their memorable victories to themselves; he who made sun and moon stand still for them was worthy of all their praise. A negative is put both upon their weapons and themselves as if to show us how ready men are to ascribe success to second causes. "*But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance.*" The divine *hand* actively fought for them, the divine *arm* powerfully sustained them with more than human energy, and the divine *smile* inspired them with dauntless courage. Who could not win with such triple help, though earth, death, and hell should rise in war against him? What mattered the tallness of the sons of Anak, or the terror of their chariots of iron, they were as nothing when Jehovah arose for the avenging of Israel.

"Because thou hadst a favour unto them." Here is the fountain from whence every stream of mercy flows. The Lord's delight in his people, his peculiar affection, his distinguishing regard—this is the mainspring which moves every wheel of a gracious providence. Israel was a chosen nation, hence their victories and the scattering of their foes; believers are an elect people, hence their spiritual blessings and conquests. There was nothing in the people themselves to secure them success, the Lord's favour alone did it, and it is ever so in our case, our hope of final glory must not rest on anything in ourselves, but on the free and sovereign favour of the Lord of Hosts.

4 Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.
5 Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.
6 For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.
7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us.
8 In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

4. *"Thou art my King, O God."* Knowing right well thy power and grace my heart is glad to own thee for her sovereign prince. Who among the mighty are so illustrious as thou art? To whom, then, should I yield my homage or turn for aid? God of my fathers in the olden time, thou art my soul's monarch and liege Lord. *"Command deliverances for Jacob."* To whom should a people look but to their king? he it is who, by virtue of his office, fights their battles for them. In the case of our King, how easy it is for him to scatter all our foes! O Lord, the King of kings, with what ease canst thou rescue thy people; a word of thine can do it, give but the command and thy persecuted people shall be free. Jacob's long life was crowded with trials and deliverances, and his descendants are here called by his name, as if to typify the similarity of their experience to that of their great forefather. He who would win the blessings of Israel must share the sorrows of Jacob. This verse contains a personal declaration and an intercessory prayer; those can pray best who make most sure of their personal interest in God, and those who have the fullest assurance that the Lord is their God should be the foremost to plead for the rest of the tried family of the faithful.

5. *"Through thee will we push down our enemies."* The fight was very close, bows were of no avail, and swords failed to be of service, it came to daggers drawing, and hand to hand wrestling, pushing and tugging. Jacob's God was renewing in the seed of Jacob their father's wrestling. And how fared it with faith then? Could she stand foot to foot with her foe and hold her own? Yea, verily, she came forth victorious from the encounter, for she is great at a close push, and overthrows all her adversaries, the Lord being her helper.

"Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us." The Lord's name served instead of weapons, and enabled those who used it to leap on their foes and crush them with jubilant valour. In union and communion with God, saints work wonders; if God be for us, who can be against us? Mark well that all the conquests of these believers are said to be "through thee," "through thy name:" never let us forget this, lest going a warfare at our own charges, we fail most ignominiously. Let us not, however, fall into the equally dangerous sin of distrust, for the Lord can make the weakest of us equal to any emergency. Though to-day we are timid and defenceless as sheep, he can by his power make us strong as the firstling of his bullock, and cause us to push as with the horns of unicorns, until those who rose up against us shall be so crushed and battered as never to rise again. Those who of themselves can scarcely keep their feet, but like little babes totter and fall, are by divine assistance made to overthrow their foes, and set their feet upon their necks. Read Christian's fight with Apollyon, and see how

> "The man so bravely played the man
> He made the fiend to fly."

6. *"For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me."* Thy people Israel, under thy guidance, shouldered out the heathen, and gained their land, not by skill of weapons or prowess of arms, but by thy power alone; therefore will we renounce for ever all reliance upon outward confidences, of which other

men make such boast, and we will cast ourselves upon the omnipotence of our God. Bows having been newly introduced by king Saul, were regarded as very formidable weapons in the early history of Israel, but they are here laid aside together with he all-conquering sword, in order that there may be room for faith in the living God. This verse, in the first person singular, may serve as the confession of faith of every believer renouncing his own righteousness and strength, and looking alone to the Lord Jesus. O for grace to stand to this self-renunciation, for, alas! our proud nature is all too apt to fix its trust on the puffed-up and supposititious power of the creature. Arm of flesh, how dare I trust thee? How dare I bring upon myself the curse of those who rely upon a man?

7. "*But thou hast saved us from our enemies.*" In ages past all our rescues have been due to thee, O God. Never hast thou failed us. Out of every danger thou hast brought us. "*And hast put them to shame that hated us.*" With the back of thy saving hand thou hast given them a cuff which has made them hide their faces; thou hast defeated them in such a manner as to make them ashamed of themselves to be overthrown by such puny adversaries as they thought the Israelites to be. The double action of God in blessing his people and confounding his enemies is evermore to be observed; Pharaoh is drowned, while Israel passes through the sea; Amalek is smitten, while the tribes rejoice; the heathen are chased from their abodes while the sons of Jacob rest beneath their vine and fig-tree.

8. "*In God we boast all the day long.*" We have abundant reason for doing so while we recount his mighty acts. What blessed boasting is this! it is the only sort of boasting that is bearable. All other manna bred worms and stank except that which was laid up before the Lord, and all other boasting is loathsome save this glorying in the Lord, which is laudable and pleasing. "*And praise thy name for ever.*" Praise should be perpetual. If there were no new acts of love, yet ought the Lord to be praised for what he has done for his people. High let the song be lifted up as we bring to remembrance the eternal love which chose us, predestinated us to be sons, redeemed us with a price, and then enriched us with all the fulness of God.

"*Selah.*"—A pause comes in fitly here, when we are about to descend from the highest to the lowest key. No longer are we to hear Miriam's timbrel, but rather Rachel's weeping.

9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.

10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves.

11 Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat; and has scattered us among the heathen.

12 Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.

13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.

14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.

15 My confusion *is* continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me,

16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

9. "*But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame.*" Here the patriot bard begins to contrast the past glories of the nation's history with its present sadness and distress; which he does not ascribe to the death of some human champion, or to the accidents of war, but solely and alone to the withdrawal of Israel's God. It seemed to the mourner that Jehovah had grown weary of his people and put them away in abhorrence, as men lay aside leprous garments, loathing the sight of them. To show his displeasures he had made his people to be ridiculed by the heathen, whose easy victories over their largest armies covered Israel with disgrace. Alas! for a church and people when the Lord in the active energy of his Spirit withdraws

from them, they want no greater shame or sorrow. He will not cast away his people finally and totally, but many a church has been left to defeat and disgrace on account of sin, and therefore all churches should be exceedingly watchful lest the like should happen to themselves. Poverty and distress bring no shame on a people, but the Lord's absence takes from a church everything which can exalt and ennoble. "*And goest not forth with our armies.*" If the Lord be not the leader, of what avail are strong battalions? Vain are the combined efforts of the most zealous workers if God's arm be not revealed. May none of us in our churches have to mourn over the ministry, the Sabbath school, the missionary work, the visiting, the street preaching, left to be carried out without the divine aid. If our great ally will not go with us our defeat is inevitable.

10. "*Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy.*" The humiliating consciousness that the Lord has left them soon makes men cowards. Flight closes the fight of those who have not the Lord in the van. "*And they which hate us spoil for themselves.*" After defeat and retreat, comes spoliation. The poor, vanquished nation paid a terrible penalty for being overcome; plunder and murder desolated the conquered land, and the invaders loaded themselves with every precious thing which they could carry away. In spiritual experience we know what it is to be despoiled by our enemies; doubts and fears rob us of our comforts, and terrible forebodings spoil us of our hopes; and all because the Lord, for wise purposes, sees fit to leave us to ourselves. Alas! for the deserted soul; no calamity can equal the sorrow of being left of God, though it be but for a small moment.

11. "*Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat.*" As sheep are slaughtered for food, so were the people slain in flocks, with ease, and frequency. Not with the dignity of sacrifice, but with the cruelty of the shambles, were they put to death. God appeared to give them up like sheep allotted to the butcher, to abandon them as the hireling abandons the flock to wolves. The plaint is bitterly eloquent. "*And hast scattered us among the heathen.*" Many were carried into captivity, far off from the public worship of the temple of God, to pine as exiles among idolaters. All this is ascribed to the Lord as being allowed by him, and even appointed by his decree. It is well to trace the hand of God in our sorrows, for it is surely there.

12. "*Thou sellest thy people for nought.*" As men sell merchandise to any one who cares to have it, so the Lord seemed to hand over his people to any nation who might choose to make war upon them. Meanwhile no good result was perceptible from all the miseries of Israel; so far as the Psalmist could discover, the Lord's name received no honour from the sorrows of his people; they were given away to their foes as if they were so little valued as not to be worth the ordinary price of slaves, and the Lord did not care to gain by them so long as they did but suffer. The woe expressed in this line is as vinegar mingled with gall: the expression is worthy of the weeping prophet. "*And dost not increase thy wealth by their price.*" If Jehovah had been glorified by all this wretchedness it could have been borne patiently, but it was the reverse; the Lord's name had, through the nation's calamities, been despised by the insulting heathen, who counted the overthrow of Israel to be the defeat of Jehovah himself It always lightens a believer's trouble when he can see that God's great name will be honoured thereby, but it is a grievous aggravation of misery when we appear to be tortured in vain. For our comfort let us rest satisfied that in reality the Lord is glorified, and when no revenue of glory is manifestly rendered to him, he none the less accomplishes his own secret purposes, of which the grand result will be revealed in due time. We do not suffer for nought, nor are our griefs without result.

13. "*Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours.*" Scorn is always an intensely bitter ingredient in the cup of the oppressed. The taunts and jeers of the victors pain the vanquished almost as much as their swords and spears. It was a mystery indeed that God should suffer his royal nation, his peculiar people, to be taunted by all who dwelt near them. "*A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us*" The down-trodden people had become a common jest; "as base as Israel," cried the cruel tongue of the tyrant: so ordinary had the scorn become that the neighbouring nations, though perhaps equally oppressed, borrowed the language of the conquerors, and joined in the common mockery. To be a derision to both strong and weak, superiors, equals, and inferiors, is hard to bear. The tooth of scoffing bites to the bone. The Psalmist sets forth the brutality of the enemy in many words, in order to move the pity of the Lord, to whose just anger he traced all the sorrows of his people; he used the very best of arguments, for the sufferings of

his chosen touch the heart of God far more readily than any other reasonings. Blessed be his name, our great Advocate above knows how to avail himself of this powerful plea, and if we are at this hour enduring reproach for truth's sake, he will urge it before the eternal throne; and shall not God avenge his own elect? A father will not long endure to see his children despitefully entreated; he may put up with it for a little, but his love will speedily arouse his anger, and then it will fare ill with the persecutor and reviler.

14 *"Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people."* The lamentation is here repeated. They had sunk so low that none did them reverence, but universally and publicly they were treated as infamous and despicable. Those who reviled others dragged in Israel's name by the way as a garnish to their insults, and if perchance they saw one of the seed of Jacob in the street they used lewd gestures to annoy him. Those whose heads were emptiest wagged them at the separated people. They were the common butts of every fool's arrow. Such has been the lot of the righteous in ages past, such is their portion in a measure now, such may be yet again their heritage in the worst sense. The world knows not its nobility, it has no eye for true excellence: it found a cross for the Master, and cannot be expected to award crowns to his disciples.

15. *"My confusion is continually before me."* The poet makes himself the representative of his nation, and declares his own constant distress of soul. He is a man of ill-blood who is unconcerned for the sorrows of the church of which he is a member, or the nation of which he is a citizen; the better the heart the greater its sympathy. *"And the shame of my face hath covered me."* One constant blush, like a crimson mantle, covered him both before God and man, he felt before God that the divine desertion was well deserved, and before man, that he and his people were despicable indeed now that heavenly help was gone. It is well for a nation when there still exists in it men who lay to heart its sin and shame. God will have pity on his chastened ones, and it is a pledge thereof when he sends us choice ministers, men of tenderness, who make the people's case their own.

16. *"For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth."* It seems that from mocking the people of God, the adversaries advanced to reviling God himself, they proceeded from persecution to the sin which is next of kin, namely blasphemy. *"By reason of the enemy and avenger."* The enemy boasted of avenging the defeats of their forefathers; they took revenge for the ancient victories of Israel, by insulting over the now fallen people. Here was a sad plight for a nation to be placed in, but it was by no means a hopeless case, for the Lord who brought all this evil upon them could with equal ease release them from it. So long as Israel looked alone to her God, and not to her own arm, no foe could retain her beneath his foot; she *must* arise, for God was on her side.

17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.

18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;

19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.

20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god;

21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

17. *"All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee."* Here the Psalmist urges that Israel had not turned away from her allegiance to Jehovah. When in the midst of many griefs we can still cling to God in loving obedience, it must be well with us. True fidelity can endure rough usage. Those who follow God for what they get, will leave him when persecution is stirred up, but not so the sincere believer; he will not forget his God, even though the worst come to the worst. *"Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant."* No idol was set up, the ordained worship was not relinquished, God was still nationally acknowledged,

and therefore the Psalmist is more earnest that the Lord should interpose. This and the succeeding verses are suitable for the lips of martyrs, indeed the entire Psalm might be called the martyr's complaint. Not for sin but for righteousness did the saints suffer, not for falsehood but for truth, not for forsaking the Lord but for following hard after him. Sufferings of such a sort may be very terrible, but they are exceedingly honourable, and the comforts of the Lord shall sustain those who are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake.

18. "*Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way.*" Heart and life were agreed, and both were true to the Lord's way. Neither within nor without had the godly sufferers offended; they were not absolutely perfect, but they were sincerely free from all wilful transgression. It was a healthy sign for the nation that her prophet-poet could testify to her uprightness before God, both in heart and act; far oftener the case would have worn quite another colour, for the tribes were all too apt to set up other gods and forsake the rock of their salvation.

19. "*Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons.*" Though utterly crushed and rendered desolate and driven as it were to associate with creatures such as jackals, owls, serpents, which haunt deserted ruins, yet Israel remained faithful. To be true to a smiting God, even when the blows lay our joys in ruinous heaps, is to be such as the Lord delighteth in. Better to be broken by God than from God. Better to be in the place of dragons than of deceivers. "*And covered us with the shadow of death.*" The language is very strong. The nation is described as completely enveloped in the dense darkness of despair and death, covered up as though coffined in hopelessness. Yet the claim is made that they still remained mindful of their God, and a glorious plea it is. Better death than false of faith. Those who are true to God shall never find him false to them.

20. An appeal is now made to the omniscience of God; he is himself called in to bear witness that Israel had not set up another god. "*If we have forgotten the name of our God.*" This would be the first step in apostasy; men first forget the true, and then adore the false. "*Or stretched out our hands to a strange god.*" Stretching out the hands was the symbol of adoration or of entreaty in prayer; this they had not offered to any of the idols of the heathen.

21. "*Shall not God search this out?*" Could such idolatry be concealed from him? Would he not with holy indignation have detected unfaithfulness to itself, even had it been hidden in the heart and unrevealed in the life? "*For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*" He is acquainted with the inner workings of the mind, and therefore this could not have escaped him. Not the heart only which is secret, but the secrets of the heart, which are secrets of the most secret thing, are as open to God as a book to a reader. The reasoning is that the Lord himself knew the people to be sincerely his followers, and therefore was not visiting them for sin; hence, then, affliction evidently came from quite another cause.

22. "*Yea,*" *i.e.*, assuredly, certainly, "*for thy sake,*" not for our offences, but for obeying thee; the trials of these suppliants came upon them because they were loyal to their God. "*Are we killed all the day long.*" Persecution never ceased to hound them to the death, they had no respite and found no door of escape; and all in God's behalf, because they would not forsake their covenant God and King. "*We are counted as sheep for the slaughter;*" as if we were only meant to be killed, and made on purpose to be victims; as if it were as easy and as innocent a thing to slay us as to slaughter sheep. In this and following verses we clearly hear the martyr's cry. From Piedmont and Smithfield, from St. Bartholomew's massacre and the dragoonades of Claverhouse, this appeal goes up to heaven, while the souls under the altar continue their solemn cry for vengeance. Not long shall the church plead in this fashion, her shame shall be recompensed, her triumph shall dawn.

23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast *us* not off for ever.

24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, *and* forgettest our affliction and our oppression?

25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth.

26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

23. *"Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?"* God sleepeth not, but the Psalmist puts it so, as if on no other theory he could explain the divine inaction. He would fain see the great Judge ending oppression and giving peace to the holy, therefore does he cry "Awake;" he cannot understand why the reign of tyranny and the oppression of virtue are permitted, and therefore he enquires, "Why sleepest thou?" *Arise.* This is all thou needest to do, one move of thine will save us. *"Cast us not off for ever."* Long enough hast thou deserted us; the terrible effects of thine absence are destroying us; end thou our calamities, and let thine anger be appeased. In persecuting times men are apt to cry, Where is the God of Israel? At the thought of what the saints have endured from their haughty enemies, we join our voices in the great martyr cry, and sing with the bard of Paradise:—

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even those who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones.
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep."

24. *"Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our afflictions and our oppression?"* Not petulantly, but piteously and enquiringly, we may question the Lord when his dealings are mysterious. We are permitted to order our case with arguments, and plead the right before the face of the august Majesty. Why, Lord, dost thou become oblivious of thy children's woes? This question is far more easily asked than answered; it is hard, indeed, in the midst of persecution to see the reason why we are left to suffer so severely.

25. *"For our soul is bowed down to the dust."* Our heart is low as low can be, as low as the dust beneath the soles of men's feet. When the heart sinks, the man is down indeed. Heart-sorrow is the very heart of sorrow. *"Our belly cleaveth unto the earth."* The man is prone upon the earth, and he is not only down, but fastened down on the earth and glued to it. It is misery, indeed, when the heart cannot escape from itself, is shut up in its own dejection, and bound with the cords of despondency. God's saints may be thus abject, they may be not only in the dust, but on the dunghill with Job and Lazarus, but their day cometh, and their tide will turn, and they shall have a brave summer after their bitter winter.

26. *"Arise for our help."* A short, but sweet and comprehensive prayer, much to the point, clear, simple, urgent, as all prayers should be. *"And redeem us for thy mercies' sake."* Here is the final plea. The favour is redemption, the plea is mercy; and this, too, in the case of faithful sufferers who had not forgotten their God. Mercy is always a safe plea, and never will any man find a better.

"Were I a martyr at the stake,
I'd plead my Saviour's name,
Intreat a pardon for his sake,
And urge no other claim."

Here ends this memorable Psalm, but in heaven its power ends not, but brings down deliverance for the tried people of God.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—On a survey of this Psalm, it would seem not to admit of a doubt that the speakers are of the race of Israel; and yet expositors for the most part have found much difficulty in so understanding it, in this—the natural sense—so as even to be compelled to abandon it, owing to the impossibility of fixing on any period in the history of that people which would furnish an occasion for it, and verify its language. Thus, it cannot be referred to the times of the Babylonish captivity; for to this it is objected, and with reason, first, that verses 11 and 14 represent the speakers as "scattered among the nations," and "a byword among the peoples," whereas their exile was then confined to one country; and, secondly, that in verses 17—21 there is an assertion of faithful adherence to the worship of

the true God, which he is called to witness as acquitting the sufferers of having brought the evil on themselves, while that captivity was a punishment of the nation for their apostasy, and especially for the grievous sin of idolatry. And the same objections lie to interpreting it with reference to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees; beside that, the history of the canon of Scripture is decisive against assigning so late a date to any of the Psalms. Still less can the times of David be looked to for the occasion, since, though religion was then pure, there was, on the other hand, no dispersion of the nation nor any calamity such as to warrant the lamentation, "Thou hast cast us off, and put us to shame. . . . Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat," etc. Whence it appeared that there was no alternative but to consider the Psalm as exclusively the language of the Christian church, and, in her primitive days, as the period at once of her greatest purity and suffering.—*William de Burgh.*

Whole Psalm.—S. Ambrose observes, that in former Psalms we have seen a prophecy of Christ's passion, resurrection, and ascension, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and that here we are taught that we ourselves must be ready to struggle and suffer, in order that these things may profit us. Human will must work together with divine grace.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*We have heard with our ears,*" *i.e.*, we have both heard and heeded it, with utmost attention and affection. It is not a *pleonasmus*, but an *emphasis* that is here used.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*Our fathers have told us.*" Hear this, saith Basil, ye fathers that neglect to teach your children such things as may work his fear and love in them, and faith to rely upon and seek to him in all times of danger. They made their mouths, as it were, books, wherein the mighty deeds of the Lord might be read to his praise, and to the drawing of their children's hearts unto him.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 1.—"*What work thou didst.*" Why only "*work*" in the singular, when such innumerable deliverances had been wrought by him, from the passage of the Red Sea to the destruction of the hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians? Because all these were but types of that one great work, that one stretching forth of the Lord's hand, when Satan was vanquished, death destroyed, and the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers.—*Ambrose.*

Verse 1.—"*What work thou didst.*" While the songs of other nations sing of the heroism of their ancestors, the songs of Israel celebrate the works of *God.*—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 1.—Three necessary requirements for learning well: 1. Intention and attention in him who learns, "*we have heard with our ears.*" 2. Authority in him that teaches, "our *fathers* have told us." 3. Love between the teacher and the taught, "*our* fathers."—*Hugo* (*Cardinal*), *quoted in Neale's Commentary.*

Verses 1, 2, 4, 8.—Children are their parents' heirs; it were unnatural for a father before he dies to bury up his treasure in the earth, where his children should not find or enjoy it; now the mercies of God are not the least part of his treasure, nor the least of his children's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience. "*Our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, how thou didst drive out the heathen,*" etc. (ver. 1, 2); from this they ground their confidence; verse 4: "*Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob;*" and excite their thankfulness, verse 8: "*In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever.*" Indeed, as children are their parents' heirs, so they become in justice liable to pay their parents' debts; now the great debt which the saint at death stands charged with, is that which he owes to God for his mercies, and, therefore it is but reason he should tie his posterity to the payment thereof. Thus mayest thou be praising God in heaven and earth at the same time.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—

> 'Thou with thine hand, hast driven out heathen,
> And hast planted them;
> The nations thou hast broken down,
> But them thou hast engraffed."

The two clauses of this verse stand in regular contrast. The first has the figure of rooting out one kind of tree, and planting another, as the Canaanites were rooted out of Palestine, and Israel was planted in their stead. (Compare Psalm lxxx. 8).

The second figure is that of cutting off bad branches, and engrafting others in their place, in the same root, which is Palestine again.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 3.—"*They got not the land in possession by their own sword.*" The Lord's part in a work is best seen when man's part, and all that he as an instrument hath done, or could have done in it, is declared null; being considered as separate from God who moved the instruments, and did work by them what he pleased.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*Because thou hadst a favour unto them.*" Free grace was the fundamental cause of all their felicity. God loved them because he loved them. Deut. vii. 7. He chose them of his love, and then loved them for his choice.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—God's love to Israel was free, unmerited, and amazing, and he gave them a land for which they did not labour, and cities which they built not, and vineyards and oliveyards which they planted not. Josh. xxiv. 13. In some cases neither sword nor bow were used, but hornets were the instruments of conquest. Josh. xxiv. 12. Since the fall of Adam all good things in the lot of any mere man are undeserved kindnesses.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—The prophet does not suppose any worthiness in the person of Abraham, nor imagine any desert in his posterity, on account of which God dealt so bountifully with them; but ascribes the whole to the good pleasure of God. . . . . Nor does the Psalmist here treat of the general benevolence of God, which extends to the whole human race: but he discourses of the difference which exists between the elect and the rest of the world, and the cause of this difference is here referred to the mere good pleasure of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—"*My king;*" apparently with a personal application to himself, the poet individually claiming his own place in the covenant between God and his people.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou art my king, O God; command deliverances for Jacob.* If there were no creature, no instrument in the world to help, yet would you not be at a loss in time of need, for he that is on the throne could do it alone. He can do all that ever you need, without any means or instruments. His bare word is sufficient, all-sufficient, for it, whatever it be, how great, how difficult, how impossible soever it seems. Such a power there is even in the word of the great King. There needs no more to deliver you, to deliver his people anywhere, how deep soever plunged, but only the *command* of him that sits on the throne. If the gospel, the interests of Christ, in these parts of the world, and the dear concerns of our souls, and the souls of posterity, were all as dry bones, in a more forlorn, and hopeless condition than they are, he could make all live with a word. He that is our King, that sits upon the throne, can command life into that which seems as far from living as a dry bone. While he keeps the throne, it is a senseless heart that fails through distrust of his power, even when all visible power and help fail.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 5.—"*Through thee will we push down our enemies*": literally, "We will toss them in the air with our horn;" a metaphor taken from an ox or bull tossing the dogs into the air which attack him.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"*I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.*" By "*bow*" and "*sword*," he meaneth all manner of weapons and warlike instruments whatsoever; and by "*saving*," he meaneth delivering from dangers, speaking under the person of one (because all the faithful are but one body), in the name of all the rest.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 6.—"*I will not trust in my bow*," etc. I will not trust in *my own* sword or bow, but in the *sword* of the Divine Warrior, and in the *bow* of the Divine Archer, whose arrows are sharp in the heart of his enemies, as described in the next (Psalm xlv. 3—5), which is connected by that imagery with this Psalm, as well as by its inner meaning.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 6.—The less confidence we have in ourselves or in anything beside God, the more evidence have we of the sincerity of our faith in God.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 6, 7.—The two verses correspond exactly to verse 3. As there, in reference to the past, the salvation was ascribed wholly to God, so here in reference to the future.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 11.—"*Like sheep appointed for meat.*" This very strongly and strikingly intimates the extent of the persecution and slaughter to which they were exposed; there being no creature in the world of which such vast numbers are constantly slaughtered as of sheep for the subsistence of man. The constancy of such slaughter is also mentioned in verse 22 as illustrating the continual oppression to which the Hebrews were subject.—*Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 11.—"*Like sheep appointed for meat,*" and not reserved for breeding or for wool.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 12.—"*Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price.*" The sense is: Thou hast given thy people unto the power of their enemies without trouble, without causing the victory even to be dearly bought, as one who parts with a good for any price, which he despises and hates, desiring merely to get rid of it.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 12.—"*Thou sellest thy people for nought,*" etc. Referring to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, Eusebius says: "Many were sold for a small price; there were many to be sold, but few to buy."

Verse 12.—"*And dost not increase thy wealth by their price.*" Thou hast not advanced thy honour and service thereby; for thy enemies do not serve thee more and better than thy people, nor yet so much.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 12 (*last clause*). *Takest no money for them;* literally, *enhancest not the price of them,* as a seller usually does to the buyer.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 14. "*Thou makest us a byword;*" literally, *for a similitude,* לְמָשָׁל stands here, as in the original passage (Deut. xxviii. 37), in the common signification, *similitude.* The misery of Israel is so great, that people would figuratively call a miserable man a Jew, just as liars were called Cretans; wretched slaves, Sardians. So far are the people from being now "blessed of the Lord" in whom according to the promise, all the heathen are to be blessed.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 15.—"*My confusion is continually before me.*" When the visible church is visited with sad calamities, the true members thereof are partakers of the trouble, and sorrow, and shame of that condition.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 17.—Eusebius, narrating the cruelties inflicted upon the *Christians* by the Eastern tyrant, Maximinus, says: "He prevailed against all sorts of people, the Christians only excepted, who contemned death and despised his tyranny. The men endured burning, beheading, crucifying, ravenous devouring of beasts, drowning in the sea, maiming and broiling of the members, goring and digging out of the eyes, mangling of the whole body; moreover, famine and imprisonment; to be short, they suffered every kind of torment for the service of God rather than they would leave the worship of God, and embrace the adoration of idols. Women also, not inferior to men through the power of the word of God, put on a manly courage, whereof some suffered the torments with men, some attained unto the like masteries of virtue."—*From "The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus."*

Verse 17.—"*Yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.*" Although we cannot excuse ourselves from many other sins for which thou hast justly punished us, yet this we must say for ourselves, that through thy grace we have kept ourselves from apostasy and idolatry, notwithstanding all the examples and provocations, rewards proposed and promised, or punishments threatened to induce us thereunto; which we hope thou wilt graciously consider, and not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 17.—If any of you would abide by Jesus Christ in this storm, try how ye have covenanted with him, and how ye have closed the bargain with him, and upon what terms. But I trow there are many of you in this age that are like young wanton folk, that run fast together and marry, but never take any account how they will keep house, but presently go to poverty and beggary. I trow it falls out so with many of you that are professors in this generation. Ye take up your religion, and ye wot not how, and ye cannot give an account how ye came by it. I will tell you, sirs; ye will abide no longer by Christ than till a storm blow, and then ye will quit him and deny his cause. Ye have need to take heed to this, for it will ruin your souls in the end of the day. But I shall tell you, sirs, the right way of covenanting with God. It is when Christ and the believer meet. Our Lord gives

him his laws, statutes, and commands, and he charges him not to quit a hoof of them. No; though he should be torn into a thousand pieces; and the right covenanter says, Amen.—*Alexander Peden's Sermon*, 1682.

Verses 17—19.—Neither the persecuting hand of men, nor the chastising hand of God, relaxed ancient singular saints. Believers resemble the *moon*, which emerges from her eclipse by keeping her motion, and ceases not to shine because the dogs bark at her. Shall we cease to be professors because others will not cease to be persecutors?—*William Secker.*

Verses 17—19.—The church having reported her great troubles, speaks it as an argument of much sincerity towards God, and strength of grace received from him: "*All this has come upon us*" (that is, all these common calamities and afflictions), "*yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;*" as if she had said, These afflictions have been strong temptations upon us to cause us to decline from thy ways, but through grace we have kept our ground and remained constant in thy covenant, yea, "*though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.*" As many, yea, most of the saints have improved under the cross, so there have been some, who either through their present unbelief, or forgetfulness of "the exhortation which" (as the apostle saith, Heb. xii. 5), "speaketh unto them as unto children," have had their faintings or declinings under it.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 18.—"*Our heart is not turned back.*" Serious piety has become a ludicrous subject with which the wanton wits of this atheistical world sport themselves; but behold the wisdom and goodness of God, exhibiting to the world undeniable testimonies of the truth of religion as often as the sincere professors thereof are brought to the test by afflictions from the hand of God, or persecutions from the hands of men. Lo! "here is the faith and patience of the saints;" here is their courage, meekness, and self-denial, shining as gold in the fire. They have the real proofs of it before their eyes. Instead of casting them into hell, and convincing them by eternal fire, he is pleased to cast his own people into the fire of affliction, that they who scoff at them may be convinced at an easier and cheaper rate. It is no new thing to see the enemies of religion brought over to embrace it by the constancy and faithfulness of the saints in their trials and sufferings for it. God grant that the atheism of this present generation do not occasion a more fiery trial to the people of God in it than they have yet suffered.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 18.—"*Our heart.*" The word לֵבָב or Greek καρδία, that is rendered "*heart,*" both in the Old and New Testament, doth signify the understanding, the mind, will, affections, conscience, the whole soul. "*Our heart is not turned back.*" Our understandings and minds are the same as they were in a summer's day, though now we be in a winter's storm; though now we be afflicted, tossed, broken, and persecuted, yet notwithstanding, "*our heart is not turned back,*" our mind, will, affections, and conscience, our whole soul, is the same now as before.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 19.—"*Though thou hast sore broken us in place of dragons,*" etc. Where men, comparable to dragons for their poison and cruelty, dwell particularly in Rome, and the Roman jurisdiction, both Pagan and Papal, the seat of Satan, the great red dragon, and of his wretched brood and offspring, the beast, to whom he has given his power; where the saints and followers of Christ have been sorely afflicted and persecuted, and yet have held fast the name of Christ, and not denied his faith. See Rev. ii. 13, and xii. 3. The wilderness is the habitation of dragons; and this is the name of the place where the church is said to be in the times of the Papacy, and where she is fed and preserved for a time, and times, and half-a-time. Rev. xii. 6, 14. "*And covered us with the shadow of death.*" As the former phrase denotes the cruelty of the enemies of Christ's church and people, this their dismal afflictions and forlorn state and condition; and may have some respect to the darkness of Popery, when it was at the height, and the church of Christ was covered with it, there being very little appearances and breakings forth of gospel light anywhere.—*John Gill.*

Verse 19.—"*Dragons.*" The word rendered *dragons*—תַּנִּים, *tannim*—means either a great fish, a sea monster, a serpent, a dragon, or a crocodile. It may also mean a jackal, a fox, or a wolf. De Wette renders it here *jackals.* The *idea* in the

passage is essentially the same, whichever interpretation of the word is adopted. The "*place* of dragons" would denote the place where such monsters are found, or where they had their abode: that is to say, in desolate places, wastes, deserts, old ruins, depopulated towns.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 20.—"*Stretched out our hands to a strange god.*" *The stretching out the hand* towards an object of devotion, or an holy place, was an ancient usage among the Jews and heathens both, and it *continues* in the East to this time, which continuance I do not remember to have seen remarked. That this attitude in prayer has *continued* among the Eastern people, appears by the following passage from Pitts, in his account of the religion and manners of the Mohammedans. Speaking of the Algerines throwing wax candles and pots of oil overboard, as a present to some marabbot (or Mohammedan saint), Pitts goes on, and says, "When this is done, they all together *hold up their hands*, begging the marabbot's blessing, and a prosperous voyage." In the same page he tells us, "the marabbots have generally a little neat room built over their graves, resembling in figure their mosques or churches, which is very nicely cleaned, and well looked after." And in the succeeding page he tells us, "Many people there are who will scarce pass by any of them without *lifting up* their hand, and saying some short prayer." In like manner, he tells us, that at quitting the *Beat*, or holy house at Mecca, to which they make devout pilgrimages, "*they hold up their hands towards the Beat*, making earnest petitions."—*Harmer's "Observations."*

Verse 21.—"*Shall not God search this out?*" etc. Are there such variety of trials appointed to examine the sincerity of men's graces? How great a vanity, then, is hypocrisy! and to how little purpose do men endeavour to conceal and hide it! We say, murder will out; and we may as confidently affirm, hypocrisy will out. When Rebekah had laid the plot to disguise her son Jacob, and by personating his brother, to get the blessing, Jacob thus objects against it: "My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing." And if he should say, But what if my father detect the cheat? How, then, shall I look him in the face? How shall I escape a curse? After the same manner every upright soul scares itself from the way of hypocrisy. If I dissemble, and pretend to be what I am not, my Father will find me out. There is no darkness nor shadow of death that can conceal the hypocrite; but out it will come at last, let him use all the art he can to hide it. . . . . If men's works be not good, it is impossible they should be hid long. A gilded piece of brass may pass from hand to hand a little while, but the touchstone will discover the base metal; and if that does not, the fire will.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 21.—A godly man dares not sin secretly. He knows that God sees in secret. As God cannot be deceived by our subtlety, so he cannot be excluded by our secrecy.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 21.—In time of persecution for religion, nothing can counterbalance the terrors and allurements of the persecutors, and make a man steadfast in the cause of God, save the fear of God, and love to God settled in the heart; for the reason of the saints' steadfastness in this Psalm, is because God would have searched out their sin if they had done otherwise, "*for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 22.—"*Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long,*" etc. Leonard Schoener left, amongst other papers, the following admonition, to comfort all who were suffering for Christ's name:—

"We pray thee, O eternal God, to bow down thy gracious ear. Lord of Sabaoth, thou Lord of hosts, hear our complaint, for great affliction and persecution have prevailed. Pride has entered thine inheritance, and many supposed to be Christians, have united themselves therewith, and have thus brought in the abomination of desolation. They waste and destroy the Christian sanctuary. They have trodden the same under foot, and the abomination of desolation is worshipped as God. They have troubled thy holy city, thrown down thy holy altar, and slain her servants when they could lay their hands upon them. And now that we as a little flock are left, they have driven us into all thy lands with contempt and reproach. We are scattered as sheep having no shepherd. We have been compelled to forsake house and home. We are as night ravens which abide in the rocks; our chambers

are in holes and crags. They watch for us as fowls that fly in the air. We wander in the woods, they hunt us with dogs. They lead us away, seized and bound, as lambs that open not their mouths. They cry out against us as seditious persons and heretics. We are brought like sheep to the slaughter. Many sit oppressed, and in bonds which even decay their bodies. Some have sunk under their sufferings, and died without fault. Here is the patience of the saints in the earth. We must be tried by suffering here. The faithful have they hanged on trees, strangled, hewn in pieces, secretly and openly drowned. Not only men, but likewise women and maidens have borne witness to the truth, that Jesus Christ is the truth, the only way to eternal life. The world still rages, and rests not; it raves as if mad. They invent lies against us. They cease not their fires and murders. They make the world too narrow for us. O Lord, how long wilt thou be silent? How long wilt thou not judge the blood of thy saints? Let it come up before thy throne. How precious in thine eye is the blood of thy holy ones! Therefore have we comfort in all our need, a refuge in thee alone, and in none besides; but neither comfort, nor rest, nor peace on this earth. But he who hopeth in thee shall never be confounded. O Lord, there is no sorrow so great that can separate us from thee; therefore, without ceasing we call upon thee, through Christ thy Son our Lord, whom thou of thy free grace hast given us for our comfort. He hath prepared and made known to us the straight path, and the way to eternal life. Everlasting glory and triumph, honour and praise, be given unto thee, both now and to eternity, and let thy righteousness remain for ever. Let all the people bless thy holy name, through Christ the righteous Judge, who cometh to judge the whole world. Amen."—*From "A Martyrology of the Churches of Christ, commonly called Baptists. Edited by E. B. Underhill."* 1850.

Verse 22.—"*For thy sake are we killed.*" It is mercy to us, that when God might punish us for our sins, he doth make our correction honourable, and our troubles to be for a good cause—"*For thy sake*," etc.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 22.—"*For thy sake.*" This passage is cited by St. Paul, Rom. viii. 36, apparently from the LXX, an illustration of the fact that the church of God has in all ages been a persecuted church. But there is this remarkable difference between the tone of the Psalmist and the tone of the apostle: the former cannot understand the chastening, and complains that God's heavy hand has been laid without cause upon his people; the latter can rejoice in persecutions also, and exclaim, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 22.—"*Killed.*" The word here used is not from הָרַג, but from טָבַח, which means *to strangle:* this is the rendering given in "Lange's Biblewerk."

Verse 23.—"*Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?*" and Psalm cxxi. 4, "*Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" If God at no time sleep, why doth the church call on him so often to awake? If he must be awakened from sleep, why doth the Psalmist say he never sleeps? Are not these places contradictory?

ANSWER: It is one thing what the afflicted church cries in the heat of her sufferings, another thing what the Spirit of truth speaks for the comfort of the saints. It is ordinary for the best of saints and martyrs, during the storm, to go to God as Peter did to Christ at sea (sleeping in the stern of the ship), with such importunity in prayer as if the Lord were no more sensible of their agony than Jonah was of the mariners' misery, ready to perish in the turbulent ocean, and they cried out, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise! Saints are so familiar with God in prayer, as if they were at his bedside.

THE SOUL'S APPLICATION.—O thou never-slumbering Watchman of the house of Israel, carest not thou that we perish? Awake, awake! put on strength, gird thyself, O thou arm of God! I know thou art up, but what am I the better except thou help me up? I know thou sleepest not as man doth, but what advantage hath my soul by that, except thou show thyself, that I way know thou art waking? Oh, it is I that am asleep! Thou seemest to sleep only to awaken me. O that I could watch with thee one hour, as thou bidd'st me; I should soon perceive then thy vigilancy over me for ever.—*William Streat in "The Dividing of the Hoof."* 1654.

Verse 23.—"*Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?*" etc. The weakness of our faith is open to the temptation of supposing that God regards not the situation

of his people in the world; and the Spirit, who knows our infirmities, provides a petition suited to this trial, which expresses at the same time an expectation that God will arise to claim his people as his own.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 25.—"*For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth.*" We are as to body and soul, smitten and thrown down, glued as it were to the ground, so that we cannot raise ourselves up.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 25.—"*For our soul is bowed down to the dust,*" etc. The speech is metaphorical, expressing the depth of their misery, or the greatness of their sorrow and humiliation. 1. The depth of their misery, with the allusion to the case of a man overcome in battle, or mortally wounded, and tumbling in the dust, or to a man dead and laid in the earth; as, "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Psa. xxii. 15. Sure we are, the expression importeth the extremity of distress and danger, either as a man dead or near death. 2. The greatness of their sorrow and humiliation; and so the allusion is taken from a man prostrate and grovelling on the ground, which was their posture of humbling themselves before the Lord, or when any great calamity befell them. As when Herod Agrippa died, they put on sackcloth and lay upon the earth weeping.—*Thomas Manton.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The encouraging traditions of church history. The days of yore.

Verse 1.—The parents' duty, and the children's privilege.

Verse 1.—Family conversation, the most profitable subject for it.

Verse 1.—The true glory of the good old times.

Verse 2.—The contrast; or, the dealings of God with saints and sinners.

Verse 3.—Free grace exalted. I. In putting a negative upon human power. II. In manifestations of divine energy. III. In its secret source, "*Because thou hadst a favour unto them.*"

Verse 3.—I. The creature laid low. II. The Lord exalted. III. Discriminating grace revealed.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—The eternal well-spring of all mercy.

Verse 4.—I. Divine royalty acknowledged. II. Royal interposition entreated. III. Divine covenant hinted at, "*Jacob;*" or, the loyal subject seeking royal aid for the royal seed.

Verse 4.—Personal allegiance, and pleading intercession.

Verse 4.—"*My King.*" This intends—I. My Ruler. II. My Honour. III. My Leader. IV. My Defender.

Verse 4.—The deliverances of Jacob, illustrated by his eventful life.

Verse 5.—Our enemies, in what ways we push them down, by what strength, and in what spirit.

Verse 5.—Our enemies, their activity, the closeness of their approach, the certainty of their overthrow, the secret of our strength.

Verse 6.—Relinquishment of outward trusts. "*My bow*" may miss its aim, may be broken, may be snatched away. "*My sword*" may snap, or grow blunt, or slip from my hold. We may not trust in our abilities, our experience, our shrewdness, our wealth, etc.

Verse 6.—Self-renunciation—the duty of saint and sinner.

Verse 7.—Accomplished salvation. How never achieved, "*But.*" By whom wrought, "*thou.*" When performed, "*hast.*" For whom, "*us.*" To what extent, "*from our enemies.*"

Verse 7.—Salvation completed, hell confounded, Christ exalted.

Verse 8.—Praise, its continuance—how to make it continual, how to manifest it perpetually, influence of its continuance, and reasons to compel us to abide in it.

Verse 9.—A lament for the declension of the church.

Verse 9.—In what sense God casts off his people, and why.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—The greatest of all calamities for our churches.

Verse 12.—The human and divine estimate of the results of persecution.

Verse 12.—In answer to this complaint. I. God's people lose nothing eventually by their privations. II. The wicked gain nothing by their triumphs. III. God loses none of his glory in his dealings with either.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 13.—Trial of cruel mockings; our conduct under them, comfort in them, and crown from them.

Verse 14.—Unholy proverbs or godless bywords.

Verse 15.—Confessions of a penitent.

Verse 17.—The trial, truth, and triumph of the godly.

Verse 17.—The faithful soul holding fast his integrity.

Verse 17.—What it is to be false to our covenant with God.

Verse 18 (*first clause*).—When we may be sure that our heart has not apostatised.

Verse 18.—I. The position of the heart in religion—it comes first. II. The position of the outer moral life in religion—it follows the heart. III. Necessity of the agreement of the two. IV. The need that both should be faithful to God.

Verse 18.—Connection between the heart and the life, both in constancy and apostasy.

Verse 18.—God's delight in the progress of the upright.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Upright hearts will hold on in the ways of God, and in the ways of well-doing, notwithstanding all afflictions, troubles, and discouragements, they meet withal.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 18.—"*Thy ways.*" The ways of God are—1, *righteous* ways; 2, *blessed* ways; 3, *soul-refreshing* ways; 4, *transcendent* ways—ways that transcend all other ways; 5, *soul-strengthening* ways; and 6, sometimes *afflicted*, *perplexed*, and *persecuted* ways.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 21.—Can he not? Will he not?

Verse 21.—A question and an assertion.

Verse 22.—I. Innocence in the midst of suffering, "*sheep.*" II. Honour in the midst of shame, "*for thy sake.*"—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 23.—The cry of a church in sad circumstances. The plaint of a deserted soul.

Verse 24.—Reasons for the withdrawal of divine comfort.

Verse 25.—The great need, the great prayer, the great plea.

Verse 26.—A fit prayer for souls under conviction, for saints under trial or persecution, and for the church under oppression or decay.

PSALM XLV.

TITLE.—*The many titles of this Psalm mark its royalty, its deep and solemn import, and the delight which the writer had in it.* To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim. *The most probable translation of this word is* upon the lilies, *and it is either a poetical title given to this noblest of songs after the Oriental manner, or it may relate to the tune to which it was set, or to the instrument which was meant to accompany it. We incline to the first theory, and if it be the true one, it is easy to see the fitness of borrowing a name for so beautiful, so pure, so choice, so matchless a poem from the golden lilies, whose bright array outshone the glory of Solomon.* For the sons of Korah. *Special singers are appointed for so divine a hymn. King Jesus deserves to be praised not with random, ranting ravings, but with the sweetest and most skilful music of the best trained choristers. The purest hearts in the spiritual temple are the most harmonious songsters in the ears of God; acceptable song is not a matter so much of tuneful voices as of sanctified affections, but in no case should we sing of Jesus with unprepared hearts.* Maschil, *an instructive ode, not an idle lay, or a romancing ballad, but a Psalm of holy teaching, didactic and doctrinal. This proves it is to be spiritually understood. Blessed are the people who know the meaning of its joyful sound.* A Song of loves. *Not a carnal, sentimental love song, but a celestial canticle of everlasting love fit for the tongues and ears of angels.*

SUBJECT.—*Some here see Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter only—they are short-sighted; others see both Solomon and Christ—they are cross-eyed; well-focussed spiritual eyes see here Jesus only, or if Solomon be present at all, it must be like those hazy shadows of passers-by which cross the face of the camera, and therefore are dimly traceable upon a photographic landscape. "The King," the God whose throne is for ever and ever, is no mere mortal and his everlasting dominion is not bounded by Lebanon and Egypt's river. This is no wedding song of earthly nuptials, but an Epithalamium for the Heavenly Bridegroom and his elect spouse.*

DIVISION.—*Verse* 1 *is an announcement of intention, a preface to the song; verse* 3 *adores the matchless beauty of Messiah; and from* 3—9, *he is addressed in admiring ascriptions of praise. Verses* 10, 11, 12, *are spoken to the bride. The church is further spoken of in verses* 13—15, *and the Psalm closes with another address to the King, foretelling his eternal fame,* 16—17.

EXPOSITION.

MY heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.

1. "*My heart.*" There is no writing like that dictated by the heart. Heartless hymns are insults to heaven. "*Is inditing a good matter.*" A good heart will only be content with good thoughts. Where the fountain is good good streams will flow forth. The learned tell us that the word may be read overfloweth, or as others, boileth or bubbleth up, denoting the warmth of the writer's love, the fulness of his heart, and the consequent richness and glow of his utterance, as though it were the ebullition of his inmost soul, when most full of affection. We have here no single cold expression; the writer is not one who frigidly studies the elegancies and proprieties of poetry, his stanzas are the natrual outburst of his soul, comparable to the boiling jets of the geysers of Hecla. As the corn offered in sacrifice was parched in the pan, so is this tribute of love hot with sincere devotion. It is a sad thing when the heart is cold with a good matter, and worse when it is warm with a bad matter, but incomparably well when a warm heart and a good matter meet together. O that we may often offer to God an acceptable *minchah*, a sweet oblation fresh from the pan of hearts warmed with gratitude and admiration. "*I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.*" This song has "the King" for its only subject, and for the King's honour alone was it composed, well might its writer call it a good matter. The Psalmist did not write carelessly; he calls his poem his works, or things which he had made. We are not to offer to the Lord that which cost us nothing. Good material deserves good workmanship. We

should well digest in our heart's affections and our mind's meditations any dscourse or poem in which we speak of one so great and glorious as our Royal Lord. As our version reads it, the Psalmist wrote experimentally things which he had made his own, and personally tasted and handled concerning the King. "*My tongue is the pen of a ready writer*," not so much for rapidity, for there the tongue always has the preference, but for exactness, elaboration, deliberation, and skilfulness of expression. Seldom are the excited utterances of the mouth equal in real weight and accuracy to the *verba scripta* of a thoughtful accomplished penman; but here the writer, though filled with enthusiasm, speaks as correctly as a practised writer; his utterances therefore are no ephemeral sentences, but such as fall from men who sit down calmly to write for eternity. It is not always that the best of men are in such a key, and when they are they should not restrain the gush of their hallowed feelings. Such a condition of heart in a gifted mind creates that auspicious hour in which poetry pours forth her tuneful numbers to enrich the service of song in the house of the Lord.

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

2. "*Thou.*" As though the King himself had suddenly appeared before him, the Psalmist lost in admiration of his person, turns from his preface to address his Lord. A loving heart has the power to realise its object. The eyes of a true heart see more than the eyes of the head. Moreover, Jesus reveals himself when we are pouring forth our affections towards him. It is usually the case that when we are ready Christ appears. If our heart is warm it is an index that the sun is shining, and when we enjoy his heat we shall soon behold his light. "*Thou art fairer than the children of men.*" In person, but especially in mind and character, the King of saints is peerless in beauty. The Hebrew word is doubled, "Beautiful, beautiful art thou," Jesus is so emphatically lovely that words must be doubled, strained, yea, exhausted before he can be described. Among the children of men many have through grace been lovely in character, yet they have each had a flaw; but in Jesus we behold every feature of a perfect character in harmonious proportion. He is lovely everywhere, and from every point of view, but never more so than when we view him in conjugal union with his church; then love gives a ravishing flush of glory to his loveliness. "*Grace is poured into thy lips.*" Beauty and eloquence make a man majestic when they are united; they both dwell in perfection in the all fair, all eloquent Lord Jesus. Grace of person and grace of speech reach their highest point in him. Grace has in the most copious manner been poured upon Christ, for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and now grace is in superabundance, poured forth from his lips to cheer and enrich his people. The testimony, the promises, the invitations, the consolations of our King pour forth from him in such volumes of meaning that we cannot but contrast those cataracts of grace with the speech of Moses which did but drop as the rain, and distil as the dew. Whoever in personal communion with the Wellbeloved has listened to his voice will feel that "never man spake like this man." Well did the bride say of him, "his lips are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." One word from himself dissolved the heart of Saul of Tarsus, and turned him into an apostle, another word raised up John the Divine when fainting in the Isle of Patmos. Oftentimes a sentence from his lips has turned our own midnight into morning, our winter into spring. "*Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.*" Calvin reads it, "*Because God hath blessed thee for ever.*" Christ is blessed, blessed of God, blessed for ever, and this is to us one great reason for his beauty, and the source of the gracious words which proceed out of his lips. The rare endowments of the man Christ Jesus are given him of the Father, that by them his people may be blessed with all spiritual blessings in union with himself. But if we take our own translation, we read that the Father has blessed the Mediator as a reward for all his gracious labours; and right well does he deserve the recompense. Whom God blesses we should bless, and the more so because all his blessedness is communicated to us.

3 Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

5 Thine arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; *whereby* the people fall under thee.

6 Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre.

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

8 All thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

9 King's daughters *were* among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

3. "*Gird thy sword upon thy thigh.*" Loving spirits jealous of the Redeemer's glory long to see him putting forth his power to vindicate his own most holy cause. Why should the sword of the Spirit lie still, like a weapon hung up in an armoury; it is sharp and strong, both for cutting and piercing: O that the divine power of Jesus were put forth to use it against error. The words before us represent our great King as urged to arm himself for battle, by placing his sword where it is ready for use. Christ is the true champion of the church, others are but underlings who must borrow strength from him; the single arm of Immanuel is the sole hope of the faithful. Our prayer should be that of this verse. There is at this moment an apparent suspension of our Lord's former power, we must by importunate prayer call him to the conflict, for like the Greeks without Achilles we are soon overcome by our enemies, and we are but dead men if Jesus be not in our midst. "*O most mighty.*" A title well deserved, and not given from empty courtesy like the serenities, excellencies, and highnesses of our fellow mortals—titles, which are but sops for vain glory. Jesus is the truest of heroes. Hero worship in his case alone is commendable. He is mighty to save, mighty in love. "*With thy glory and thy majesty.*" Let thy sword both win thee renown and dominion, or as it may mean, gird on with thy sword thy robes which indicate thy royal splendour. Love delights to see the Beloved arrayed as beseemeth his excellency; she weeps as she sees him in the garments of humiliation, she rejoices to behold him in the vestments of his exaltation. Our precious Christ can never be made too much of. Heaven itself is but just good enough for him. All the pomp that angels and archangels, and thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers can pour at his feet is too little for him. Only his own essential glory is such as fully answers to the desire of his people, who can never enough extol him.

4. "*And in thy majesty ride prosperously.*" The hero-monarch armed and apparelled is now entreated to ascend his triumphal car. Would to God that our Immanuel would come forth in the chariot of love to conquer our spiritual foes and seize by power the souls whom he has bought with blood. "*Because of truth and meekness and righteousness.*" These words may be rendered, "*ride forth upon truth and meekness and righteousness*"—three noble chargers to draw the war-chariot of the gospel. In the sense of our translation it is a most potent argument to urge with our Lord that the cause of the true, the humble and the good, calls for his advocacy. Truth will be ridiculed, meekness will be oppressed, and righteousness slain, unless the God, the Man in whom these precious things are incarnated, shall arise for their vindication. Our earnest petition ought ever to be that Jesus would lay his almighty arm to the work of grace lest the good cause languish and wickedness prevail. "*And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.*" Foreseeing the result of divine working, the Psalmist prophesies that the uplifted arm of Messiah will reveal to the King's own eyes the terrible overthrow of his foes. Jesus needs no guide but his own right hand, no teacher but his own might; may he instruct us all in what he can perform, by achieving it speedily before our gladdened eyes.

5. "*Thine arrows.*" Our King is master of all weapons: he can strike those who are near and those afar off with equal force. "*Are sharp.*" Nothing that Jesus does is ill done, he uses no blunted shafts, no pointless darts. "*In the heart of the King's enemies.*" Our Captain aims at men's hearts rather than their heads, and he hits them too; point-blank are his shots, and they enter deep into the vital part of man's nature. Whether for love or vengeance, Christ never misses aim, and when his arrows stick, they cause a smart not soon forgotten, a wound which

only he can heal. Jesus' arrows of conviction are sharp in the quiver of his word, and sharp when on the bow of his ministers, but they are most known to be so when they find a way into careless hearts. They are *his* arrows, he made them, he shoots them. He makes them sharp, and he makes them enter the heart. May none of us ever fall under the darts of his judgment, for none kill so surely as they. "*Whereby the people fall under thee.*" On either side the slain of the Lord are many when Jesus leads on the war. Nations tremble and turn to him when he shoots abroad his truth. Under his power and presence, men are stricken down as though pricked in the heart. There is no standing against the Son of God when his bow of might is in his hands. Terrible will be that hour when his bow shall be made quite naked, and bolts of devouring fire shall be hurled upon his adversaries: then shall princes fall and nations perish.

6. "*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.*" To whom can this be spoken but our Lord? The Psalmist cannot restrain his adoration. His enlightened eye sees in the royal Husband of the church, God, God to be adored, God reigning, God reigning everlastingly. Blessed sight! Blind are the eyes that cannot see God in Christ Jesus! We never appreciate the tender condescension of our King in becoming one flesh with his church, and placing her at his right hand, until we have fully rejoiced in his essential glory and deity. What a mercy for us that our Saviour is God, for who but a God could execute the work of salvation? What a glad thing it is that he reigns on a throne which will never pass away, for we need both sovereign grace and eternal love to secure our happiness. Could Jesus cease to reign we should cease to be blessed, and were he not God, and therefore eternal, this must be the case. No throne can endure for ever, but that on which God himself sitteth. "*The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.*" He is the lawful monarch of all things that be. His rule is founded in right, its law is right, its result is right. Our King is no usurper and no oppressor. Even when he shall break his enemies with a rod of iron, he will do no man wrong; his vengeance and his grace are both in conformity with justice. Hence we trust him without suspicion; he cannot err; no affliction is too severe, for he sends it; no judgment too harsh, for he ordains it. O blessed hands of Jesus! the reigning power is safe with you. All the just rejoice in the government of the King who reigns in righteousness.

7. "*Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness.*" Christ Jesus is not neutral in the great contest between right and wrong: as warmly as he loves the one he abhors the other. What qualifications for a sovereign! what grounds of confidence for a people! The whole of our Lord's life on earth proved the truth of these words; his death to put away sin and bring in the reign of righteousness, sealed the fact beyond all question; his providence by which he rules from his mediatorial throne, when rightly understood, reveals the same; and his final assize will proclaim it before all worlds. We should imitate him both in his love and hate; they are both needful to complete a righteous character. "*Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*" Jesus as Mediator owned God as his God, to whom, being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient. On account of our Lord's perfect life he is now rewarded with superior joy. Others there are to whom grace has given a sacred fellowship with him, but by their universal consent and his own merit, he is prince among them, the gladdest of all because the cause of all their gladness. At Oriental feasts oil was poured on the heads of distinguished and very welcome guests; God himself anoints the man Christ Jesus, as he sits at the heavenly feasts, anoints him as a reward for his work, with higher and fuller joy than any else can know; thus is the Son of man honoured and rewarded for all his pains. Observe the indisputable testimony to Messiah's Deity in verse six, and to his manhood in the present verse. Of whom could this be written but of Jesus of Nazareth? Our Christ is our Elohim. Jesus is God with us.

8. "*All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia.*" The divine anointing causes fragrance to distil from the robes of the Mighty Hero. He is delightful to every sense, to the eye most fair, to the ear most gracious, to the spiritual nostril most sweet. The excellences of Jesus are all most precious, comparable to the rarest spices; they are most varied, and to be likened not to myrrh alone, but to all the perfumes blended in due proportion. The Father always finds a pleasure in him, in him he is well pleased; and all regenerated spirits rejoice in him, for he is made of God unto us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Note that not only is Jesus most sweet, but even his garments are so; everything

that he has to do with is perfumed by his person. "*All*" his garments are thus fragrant; not some of them, but all; we delight as much in his purple of dominion as in the white linen of his priesthood, his mantle as our prophet is as dear to us as his seamless coat as our friend. All his dress is fragrant with all sweetness. To attempt to spiritualise each spice here mentioned would be unprofitable, the evident sense is that all sweetnesses meet in Jesus, and are poured forth wherever he is present. "*Out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*" The abode of Jesus now is imperial in splendour, ivory and gold but faintly image his royal seat; there is he made glad in the presence of the Father, and in the company of his saints. Oh, to behold him with his perfumed garments on! The very smell of him from afar ravishes our spirit, what must it be to be on the other side of the pearl gate, within the palace of ivory, amid those halls of Zion, "conjubilant with song," where is the throne of David, and the abiding presence of the Prince! To think of his gladness, to know that *he* is full of joy, gives gladness at this moment to our souls. We poor exiles can sing in our banishment since our King, our Well-beloved, has come to his throne.

9. "*Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women.*" Our Lord's courts lack not for courtiers, and those the fairest and noblest. Virgin souls are maids of honour to the court, the true lilies of heaven. The lowly and pure in heart are esteemed by the Lord Jesus as his most familiar friends, their place in his palace is not among the menials but near the throne. The day will come when those who are "kings' daughters" literally will count it their greatest honour to serve the church, and, meanwhile every believing sister is spiritually a King's daughter, a member of the royal family of heaven. "*Upon thy right hand,*" in the place of love, honour, and power, "*did stand the queen in gold of Ophir:*" the church shares her Lord's honour and happiness, he sets her in the place of dignity, he clothes her with the best of the best. Gold is the richest of metals, and Ophir gold the purest known. Jesus bestows nothing inferior or of secondary value upon his beloved church. In imparted and imputed righteousness the church is divinely arrayed. Happy those who are members of a church so honoured, so beloved; unhappy those who persecute the beloved people, for as a husband will not endure that his wife should be insulted or maltreated, so neither will the heavenly Husband; he will speedily avenge his own elect. Mark, then, the solemn pomp of the verses we have read. The King is seen with rapture, he girds himself as a warrior, robes himself as a monarch, mounts his chariot, darts his arrows, and conquers his foes. Then he ascends his throne with his sceptre in his hand, fills the palace hall with perfume brought from his secret chambers, his retinue stand around him, and, fairest of all, his bride is at his right hand, with daughters of subject princes as her attendants. Faith is no stranger to this sight, and every time she looks she adores, she loves, she rejoices, she expects.

10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he *is* thy Lord; and worship thou him.

12 And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift; *even* the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.

10. "*Hearken, O daughter, and consider.*" Ever is this the great duty of the church. Faith cometh by hearing, and confirmation by consideration. No precept can be more worthy of the attention of those who are honoured to be espoused unto Christ than that which follows. "*And incline thine ear.*" Lean forward that no syllable may be unheard. The whole faculties of the mind should be bent upon receiving holy teaching. "*Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.*" To renounce the world is not easy, but it must be done by all who are affianced to the Great King, for a divided heart he cannot endure; it would be misery to the beloved one as well as dishonour to her Lord. Evil acquaintances, and even those who are but neutral, must be forsaken, they can confer no benefit, they must inflict injury. The house of our nativity is the house of sin—we were shapen in iniquity; the carnal mind is enmity against God, we must come forth of the house of fallen nature, for it is built in the City of Destruction. Not that natural ties are broken by grace, but ties of the sinful nature, bonds of graceless affinity. We have much to forget as well as to learn, and the unlearning is so difficult that only diligent

hearing, and considering, and bending of the whole soul to it, can accomplish the work; and even these would be too feeble did not divine grace assist. Yet why should we remember the Egypt from which we came out? Are the leeks and the garlic, and the onions anything, when the iron bondage, and the slavish tasks, and the death-dealing Pharaoh of hell are remembered? We part with folly for wisdom; with bubbles for eternal joys; with deceit for truth; with misery for bliss; with idols for the living God. O that Christians were more mindful of the divine precept here recorded; but, alas! wordliness abounds; the church is defiled; and the glory of the Great King is veiled. Only when the whole church leads the separated life will the full splendour and power of Christianity shine forth upon the world.

11. "*So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.*" Whole-hearted love is the duty and bliss of the marriage state in every case, but especially so in this lofty, mystic marriage. The church must forsake all others and cleave to Jesus only, or she will not please him nor enjoy the full manifestation of his love. What less can he ask, what less may she dare propose than to be wholly his? Jesus sees a beauty in his church, a beauty which he delights in most when it is not marred by worldliness. He has always been most near and precious to his saints when they have cheerfully taken up his cross and followed him without the camp. His Spirit is grieved when they mingle themselves among the people and learn their ways. No great and lasting revival of religion can be granted us till the professed lovers of Jesus prove their affection by coming out from an ungodly world, being separated, and touching not the unclean thing. "*For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.*" He has royal rights still; his condescending grace does not lessen but rather enforce his authority. Our Saviour is also our Ruler. The husband is the head of the wife; the love he bears her does not lessen but strengthen her obligation to obey. The church must reverence Jesus, and bow before him in prostrate adoration; his tender union with her gives her liberty, but not license; it frees her from all other burdens, but places his easy yoke upon her neck. Who would wish it to be otherwise? The service of God is heaven in heaven, and perfectly carried out it is heaven upon earth. Jesus, thou art he whom thy church praises in her unceasing songs, and adores in her perpetual service. Teach us to be wholly thine. Bear with us, and work by thy Spirit in us till thy will is done by us on earth as it is in heaven.

12. "*And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift.*" When the church abounds in holiness, she shall know no lack of homage from the surrounding people. Her glory shall then impress and attract the heathen around, till they also unite in doing honour to the Lord. The power of missions abroad lies at home: a holy church will be a powerful church. Nor shall there be lack of treasure in her coffers when grace is in her heart; the free gifts of a willing people shall enable the workers for God to carry on their sacred enterprises without stint. Commerce shall send in its revenue to endow, not with forced levies and imperial taxes, but with willing gifts the church of the Great King. "*Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.*" Not by pandering to their follies, but by testifying against their sins, shall the wealthy be won to the faith of Jesus. They shall come not to favour the church but to beg for her favour. She shall not be the hireling of the great, but as a queen shall she dispense her favours to the suppliant throng of the rich among the people. We go about to beg for Christ like beggars for alms, and many who should know better will make compromises and become reticent of unpopular truth to please the great ones of the earth; not so will the true bride of Christ degrade herself, when her sanctification is more deep and more visible; then will the hearts of men grow liberal, and offerings from afar, abundant and continual, shall be presented at the throne of the Pacific Prince.

13 The king's daughter *is* all glorious within: her clothing *is* of wrought gold.

14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace.

13. "*The king's daughter is all glorious within.*" Within her secret chambers her glory is great. Though unseen of men her Lord sees her, and commends her.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Or the passage may be understood as meaning within herself—her beauty is not outward only or mainly; the choicest of her charms are to be found in her heart, her secret character, her inward desires. Truth and wisdom in the hidden parts are what the Lord regards; mere skin-deep beauty is nothing in his eyes. The church is of royal extraction, of imperial dignity, for she is a king's daughter; and she has been purified and renewed in nature, for she is glorious within. Note the word *all*. The Bridegroom was said to have all his garments perfumed, and now the bride is *all* glorious within—entireness and completeness are great points. There is no mixture of ill savour in Jesus, nor shall there be alloy of unholiness in his people, his church shall be presented without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. "*Her clothing is of wrought gold.*" Best material and best workmanship. How laboriously did our Lord work out the precious material of his righteousness into a vesture for his people! no embroidery of golden threads can equal that master-piece of holy art. Such clothing becomes one so honoured by relationship to the Great King. The Lord looks to it that nothing shall be wanting to the glory and beauty of his bride.

14. "*She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.*" The day comes when the celestial marriage shall be openly celebrated, and these words describe the nuptial procession, wherein the queen is brought to her royal Husband attended by her handmaidens. In the latter-day glory, and in the consummation of all things, the glory of the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be seen by all the universe with admiration. While she was within doors, and her saints hidden ones, the church was glorious; what will be her splendour when she shall appear in the likeness of her Lord in the day of his manifestation? The finest embroidery is but a faint image of the perfection of the church when sanctified by the Spirit. This verse tells us of the ultimate rest of the church—the King's own bosom; of the way she comes to it, she is *brought* by the power of sovereign grace; of the time when this is done—in the future, "*she shall be*," it does not yet appear; of the state in which she shall come—clad in richest array, and attended by brightest spirits. "*The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.*" Those who love and serve the church for her Lord's sake shall share in her bliss "in that day." In one sense they are a part of the church, but for the sake of the imagery they are represented as maids of honour; and, though the figure may seem incongruous, they are represented as brought to the King with the same loving familiarity as the bride, because the true servants of the church are of the church, and partake in all her happiness. Note that those who are admitted to everlasting communion with Christ, are pure in heart—*virgins*, pure in company—"*her companions*," pure in walk—"*that follow her.*" Let none hope to be brought into heaven at last who are not purified now.

15. "*With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought.*" Joy becomes a marriage feast. What joy will that be which will be seen at the feasts of paradise when all the redeemed shall be brought home! Gladness in the saints themselves, and rejoicing from the angels shall make the halls of the New Jerusalem ring again with shoutings. "*They shall enter into the King's palace.*" Their peaceful abodes shall be where Jesus the King reigns in state for ever. They shall not be shut out but shut in. Rights of free entrance into the holiest of all shall be accorded them. Brought by grace, they shall enter into glory. If there was joy in the bringing, what in the entering? What in the abiding? The glorified are not field labourers in the plains of heaven, but sons who dwell at home, princes of the blood, resident in the royal palace. Happy hour when we shall enjoy all this and forget the sorrows of time in the triumphs of eternity.

16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

16. "*Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.*" The ancient saints who stood as fathers in the service of the Great King have all passed away; but a spiritual seed is found to fill their places. The veterans depart, but volunteers fill up the vacant places. The line of grace never becomes extinct. As long as time shall last, the true apostolical succession will be maintained. "*Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.*" Servants of Christ are kings. Where a man has preached

successfully, and evangelised a tribe or nation, he gets to himself more than regal honours, and his name is like the name of the great men that be upon the earth. Jesus is the king-maker. Ambition of the noblest kind shall win her desire in the army of Christ; immortal crowns are distributed to his faithful soldiers. The whole earth shall yet be subdued for Christ, and honoured are they, who shall, through grace, have a share in the conquest—these shall reign with Christ at his coming.

17.—"*I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations.*" Jehovah by the prophet's mouth promises to the Prince of Peace eternal fame as well as a continuous progeny. His name is his fame, his character, his person; these are dear to his people now—they never can forget them; and it shall be so as long as men exist. Names renowned in one generation have been unknown to the next era, but the laurels of Jesus shall ever be fresh, his renown ever new. God will see to this; his providence and his grace shall make it so. The fame of Messiah is not left to human guardianship; the Eternal guarantees it, and his promise never fails. All down the ages the memories of Gethsemane and Calvary shall glow with unextinguishable light; nor shall the lapse of time, the smoke of error, or the malice of hell be able to dim the glory of the Redeemer's fame. "*Therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.*" They shall confess thee to be what thou art, and shall render to thee in perpetuity the homage due. Praise is due from every heart to him who loved us, and redeemed us by his blood; this praise will never be fully paid, but will be ever a standing and growing debt. His daily benefits enlarge our obligations, let them increase the number of our songs. Age to age reveals more of his love, let every year swell the volume of the music of earth and heaven, and let thunders of song roll up in full diapason to the throne of him that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death.

"Let him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed his head to death,
And be his honours sounded high
By all things that have breath."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*Upon Shoshannim,*" or upon *lilies.* It will be remembered that lilies were an emblem of purity and loveliness, and were introduced as such in the building of Solomon's temple (see 1 Kings vii. 19, 22, 26; 2 Chron. iv. 5); and the church is compared in the Canticles to a "lily among thorns." Cant. ii. 2. The Psalms which bear this title, "upon lilies," are the present, the sixty-ninth and the eightieth (cp. Ps. lx.); and all these contain prophecies of Christ and his church. The sixtieth is a parallel to the forty-fourth, and represents her supplicating appeal to God, and Christ's victories. The sixty-ninth displays the victories gained by Christ through suffering. The eightieth is also parallel to the forty-fourth and sixtieth, a plaintive lament of the church in distress and a supplicating cry for deliverance. All these three Psalms are (if we may venture to use this expression) like the voice of the "lily among thorns." That there is, therefore, some reference here to the spiritual meaning of the word שׁשׁנים, or *lilies*, in this title, seems at least to be probable.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Title.—We think that *Shoshannim* signifies an instrument of six strings, or a song of rejoicing.—*Augustin Calmet*, 1672–1757.

Kitto, on the other hand, says that the word is so clearly *lilies*, that he is disinclined to go out of the way to bring in the Hebrew word for six.

Title.—"*To the chief musician upon Shoshannim.*" Some would have it that instruments whereon were many engravings of lilies, which are six-leaved flowers, are here meant. And, indeed, some interpreters, because of that derivation of the word, do thus translate it, *upon Shoshannim*, that is, *upon lilies;* and that either in reference to their wedding garlands, that were made much of lilies, or as intending by these lilies Christ and his church.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Title.—"*A song.*" The word שׁיר, *shir*, the meaning of which (*song*), is

unquestioned, is prefixed to many of the Psalms, three times simply and thirteen times in connection with *Mizmor*. There is no mark of peculiarity in their composition. The meaning of the word seems to be discriminated from *Mizmor*, as signifying a thing to be sung, with reference to its poetical structure.—*John Jebb.*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalter, which sets forth so much truth respecting the person and work of Christ—truth more precious than gold and sweeter than the honeycomb—is not silent respecting the bond subsisting between him and his people, THE MYSTICAL UNION BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. When a prince sets his affections on a woman of lowly rank, and takes her home to be his wife, the two are so united that her debts become his, his wealth and honours become hers. Now, that there is formed between Christ and the church, between Christ and every soul that will consent to receive him, a connection, of which the most intimate of all natural relations is the analogue and type, we have already found to be not only taught in the Psalms, but to be implied in the very structure of many of them. He takes his people's sins upon him, and they receive the right to become the sons of God; the One Spirit of God wherewith he was baptised without measure, dwells in them according to the measure of the grace that is given them. I will only add further, that this union, besides being implied in so many places, is expressly set forth in one most glorious Psalm—the Nuptial Song of Christ and the Church—which has for its peculiar theme the home-bringing of Christ's elect, that they may be joined to him in a union that shall survive the everlasting hills.—*William Binnie, D.D.*

Verse 1.—"*My heart is inditing a good matter,*" and then, "*My tongue shall be like the pen of a ready writer.*" Oh, then I shall go merrily on in his service, when I have matter prepared in my heart. And, indeed, as the mariner sees further new stars the further he sails, he loseth sight of the old ones and discovers new; so the growing Christian, the further he sails in religion he discovers new wants, new Scriptures affect him, new trials afflict him, new business he finds with God, and forgetting those things that are behind, he reacheth after those things that are before, and so finds every day new business with the Lord his God; and he that is busy trifles not; the more business the less distraction.—*Richard Steele.*

Verse 1.—"*My heart is inditing a good matter.*" רָחַשׁ (*rakhash*), *boileth* or *bubbleth up;* denotes the language of the heart full and ready for utterance.—*Victorinus Bythner.*

Verse 1.—"*My heart is inditing a good matter.*" Here you have the work of the Spirit of prophecy. By his operation the good "matter" is engendered in the Psalmist's bosom, and now his heart is heaving and labouring under the load. It is just beginning to throw it up, like water from a fountain, that it may flow off in the channel of the tongue. Here, therefore, you have some insight given you of the manner of the operation of the Spirit in the heart of man. The Psalmist says his heart is doing what the Spirit is doing in his heart. The heart does it, indeed, but it is the Spirit's working. The Psalmist took all the interest and pleasure in his subject that he could have done, if the Spirit had had nothing to do with it; for when the Spirit works, he works not only by the heart, but in the heart; he seizes upon all its affections, every fibre of it is bent to his will.—*George Harpur, in "Christ in the Psalms,"* 1862.

Verse 1.—"*Good matter,*" the goodspell, or *gospel.*—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—A similitude taken from the *mincah*, or *meat-offering* in the law, which was dressed in the frying-pan (Lev. vii. 9), and there boiled in oil, being made of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil (Lev. ii. 5), and afterwards was presented to the Lord by the priest, ver. 8. Here the matter of this Psalm is as the *mincah* or oblation, which with the oil, the grace of the Spirit, was boiled and prepared in the prophet's heart, and now presented.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 1.—It is reported of Origen, saith Erasmus, that he was ever earnest, but most of all when he discoursed of Christ. Of Johannes Mollias, a Bononian, it is said, that whenever he spake of Jesus Christ, his eyes dropped, for he was fraught with a mighty fervency of God's Holy Spirit; and like the Baptist, he was first a burning (boiling or bubbling), and then a shining light.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*Touching the king.*" It does not all concern the king immediately, for much of it concerns the queen, and about one-half of it is directly addressed to her. But it relates to him inasmuch as it relates to his family. Christ ever

identifies himself with his people; so that, whatever is done to them, is done to himself. Their interests are his.—*George Harpur.*

Verse 1.—"*My tongue*" shall be like the pen of one that takes minutes or writes shorthand: for I shall speak very briefly, and not in words at length, or so as to be understood in a literal sense, but in figures and emblems.—*From "Holy David and his old English Translators cleared,"* 1706. [*Anon.*]

Verse 1.—"*The pen.*" We call the prophets the *penmen* of Scripture, whereas they were but the *pen.*—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips.*" Thus he begins to set forth his beauty, wherein is the delightfulness of any person; so is it with the soul when God hath made known to man his own filthiness and uncomeliness through sin, and that only by Jesus sin is taken away; oh, how beautiful is this face, the first sight of him! Secondly, "*Full of grace are thy lips:*" here is the second commendation; which is, when Jesus hath opened his lips to us, from them he pours out grace into our soul, when he makes known the Father to us, and speaks peace to all that are far off and near; when he calls, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you:" and all this is because God hath blessed him for ever; we are assured he comes from God, and that he and his works are eternal, and therefore all his grace poured out upon us shall remain with us, and make us blessed for ever; for he is the Word of God, and he speaks the mind of God, for he speaks nothing but what he hath heard from the Father; and when he speaks to our souls with his Word, the Spirit is given, a certain testimony to our soul that we are the sons of God, and a pledge of our inheritance; for the Spirit and the Word cannot be separated.—*Richard Coore, in "Christ set forth."*

Verse 2.—"*Thou art fairer than the children of men,*" etc. Nothing can be more beautiful than this abrupt way of discourse. The prophet sets out with a professed design to speak of the king. But as if in the moment he had so intended, the glorious *Person* of whom he was going to speak appeared to his view, he instantly leaves every other consideration to speak to him himself. And what a rapturous address he makes! He first describes the glories, the beauties, the astonishing loveliness, of his *person.* Though to a carnal eye there was no beauty to desire him, his visage was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men, yet to an eye truly enlightened, he is the king in his beauty, fairer, as the glorious *Mediator,* the Head, the Bridegroom of his Church and people, than all the children of men. And, in the Father's view, so greatly beloved, so truly glorious, that *grace was poured into his lips.* Reader, observe the expression; not simply grace put into his heart, for the holiness and purity of his person, but poured into his lips, that, like the honey, it might drop upon his people, and be for ever communicated to all his redeemed, in an endless perpetuity of all suited blessings here, and glory hereafter.—*Robert Hawker, D.D.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou art fairer than the children of men.*" Are you for *beauty?* That takes with most: for this none like Christ. For beauty and comeliness he infinitely surpasses both men and angels. We read of Moses, that he was exceeding fair; and of David, that he was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance; and Josephus reports of the one of them, that all that saw him were amazed at and enamoured of his beauty. Oh, but what was their beauty to Christ's? Were their beauty, and with theirs the beauty of men and angels put together, it would all be nothing to the beauty of Christ; not so much as the light of a farthing candle is to the light of the sun at noon-day.—*Edward Pearse in "The Best Match,"* 1673.

Verse 2.—"*Thou art fairer,*" etc. Fair he was (1) in his *conception,* conceived in purity, and a fair angel brought the news. Fair (2) in his *nativity:* ὡραῖος is the word in the Septuagint, *tempustivus, in time,* that is, all things are beautiful in their time, Eccl. iii. 11. And *in the fulness of time* it was that he was born, and a fair star pointed to him. Fair (3) in his *childhood;* he grew up in grace and favour, Luke ii. 52. The doctors were much taken with him. Fair (4) in his *manhood;* had he not been so, says S. Jerome, had there not been something admirable in his countenance and presence, some heavenly beauty, the apostles and the whole world (as the Pharisees themselves confess) would not so suddenly have gone after him. Fair (5) in his *transfiguration,* white as the light, or as the snow, his face glittering as the sun (Matt. xvii. 2), even to the ravishing the very soul of S. Peter, that "he knew not what he said," could let his eyes dwell upon that face for ever,

and never come down the mount again. Fair (6) in his *passion. Nihil indecorum*, no uncomeliness, in his nakedness; his very wounds, and the bloody prints of the whips and scourges drew an *ecce* from the mouth of Pilate: "Behold the man!" the sweetness of his countenance and carriage in the midst of filth and spittle, whips and buffets. His very comeliness upon the cross, and his giving up the ghost, made the centurion cry out, he "*was the Son of God:*" there appeared so sweet a majesty, so heavenly a lustre in him through that very darkness that encompassed him. Fair (7) in his *resurrection;* so subtle a beauty, that mortal eyes, even the eyes of his own disciples, were not able to see or apprehend it, but when he veiled it from them. Fair (8) in his *ascension;* made his disciples stand gazing after him so long (as if they never could look long enough upon him), till an angel is sent from heaven to rebuke them, to look home, Acts i. 2.—*Mark Frank.*

Verse 2.—O fair sun, and fair moon, and fair stars, and fair flowers, and fair roses, and fair lilies; but O ten thousand thousand times fairer Lord Jesus! Alas! I have wronged him in making the comparison this way. O black sun and moon! but O fair Lord Jesus! O black flowers, and black lilies, and roses! but O fair, fair, ever fair, Lord Jesus! O black heaven! but O fair Christ! O black angels! but O surpassingly fair Lord Jesus!—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 2.—In one Christ we may contemplate and must confess all the beauty and loveliness both of heaven and earth; the beauty of heaven is God, the beauty of earth is man; the beauty of heaven and earth together is this God-man.—*Edward Hyde, D.D.*, 1658.

Verse 2.—"*Thou.*" "I have a passion," observed Count Zinzendorf in one of his discourses to the congregation at Herrnhut, "and it is He—He only."

Verse 2.—"*Thou art fairer.*" Hebrew, Thou art *double fairer;* the Hebrew word is doubled, *ad corroborandum*, saith Kimchi.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*Grace is poured into thy lips.*" This is said as if this grace were a gift, and not something inherent in our Lord himself. And is not this exactly what we learn from the histories of the evangelists? Before Jesus went forth to the work of his public mission, the Holy Ghost descended from heaven like a dove and lit upon him. The Spirit who imparts all its graces to the church of Christ imparted his graces to Christ himself. Not that the Son of God needed the anointing of the Spirit of God, but he suffered it to be so that he might be in all things like his brethren. If he was to be their example, he must show them wherein their great strength lay. They see in him the fruits of the Holy Ghost who is promised to themselves. All that Christ ever did as the Head and Representative of his people, he did by that very Spirit which is still resident in his church.—*George Harpur.*

Verse 2.—"*Grace is poured into thy lips.*" "*Full of grace are thy lips.*" Full of grace for the *matter*, and full of grace for the *manner*. I. For the *matter*, he delivered acceptable doctrine: "The law was given by Moses, but grace came by Jesus Christ." John i. 17. Moses had harsh and hard words in his law; "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" but Christ on the contrary speaks better things, the first words in his first sermon are, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 3. He cometh unto his people, *cum verbo gratiæ, cum osculo gratiæ*, saith Augustine: his lips are *full of grace*, that is, pouring out gracious words abundantly. Matt. xi. 28; John iii. 16; Luke iv. 18. "His lips are like lilies dropping down myrrh" (Cant. v. 13); all that heard him wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, Luke iv. 22. II. For the *manner*, he taught not as the scribes; he spake so sweetly that the very catch-poll officers, astonished at his words, gave this testimony, "Never man spake like this man," John vii. 46. He spake so graciously that the apostles forsook all things and followed him; at his call Andrew left his nets straightway, James and John their father without tarrying, Matthew from the receipt of custom, Zaccheus from the like worldly course, came hastily to receive him joyfully. Mark x. 28; Matt. iv. 20, 21; ix. 9; Luke xix. 6. Nay, beloved, he was so powerful an orator, that the very winds and waves obeyed his word. Mark iv. 39. It is reported in Holy Writ that all princes and people were desirous of hearing Solomon's eloquence; the Queen of Sheba wondering at the same, cried out, "Happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom," 1 Kings x. 8. Solomon is a type here, but Christ is the truth; and this showeth evidently that Christ is not a tyrant, but a mild prince, persuading obedience plausibly, not

compelling his people violently; his sayings are his *sceptre* and his sword: his piercing exhortations are, as it were, his *sharp arrows* by which his followers are subdued unto him.

To conclude this argument, his fair words (as the Scripture speaks) "are as an honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (Prov. xvi. 24): "an honeycomb," and what more toothsome? "sweetness to the soul and health to the bones;" and what, I pray, more wholesome? The good man's soul is Christ's own spouse, to which he speaks a great many ways graciously; sometimes correcting, and what stronger argument of love? for "whom he loveth he chasteneth" (Heb. xii. 6); sometimes instructing, and his gospel is able to make "the man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii. 17); sometimes wooing in amorous terms, as in his love-song everywhere: "my beloved," "my sister," "my spouse," "the fairest among women," "my love," "my dove," etc.; sometimes promising, and that both the blessings of this life present (Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: etc., Isaiah xli. 10), and of that life which is to come. John xvii. 21, 24. But Christ's excellent intercession every day to God the Father, appearing in the court of heaven, and as an advocate pleading for us, is yet fuller of grace; for if Caleb easily granted his daughter's request, and bestowed on her "the springs above and the springs beneath" (Judges i. 15), how shall Almighty God (whose mercies are above all his works) deny the suits of such a Son in whom he is well pleased?—*John Boys.*

Verse 2.—"*Grace is poured into thy lips.*" The former clause noted his inward perfections; and this signifies his ability and readiness to communicate them to others.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—Never were there such words of love and sweetness spoken by any man as by him: never was there such a loving and tender heart as the heart of Jesus Christ: "*Grace was poured into his lips.*" Certainly never were there such words of love, sweetness, and tenderness spoken here upon this earth as those last words of his which were uttered a little before his sufferings, and are recorded in the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th chapters of John. Read over all the books of love and friendship that were ever written by any of the sons of men, they do all come far short of those melting strains of love that are there expressed. So sweet and amiable was the conversation of Jesus Christ, that it is reported of the apostle Peter in the Ecclesiastical History, that after Christ's ascension he wept so abundantly, that he was always seen wiping his face from the tears; and being asked why he wept so, he answered, He could not choose but weep as often as he thought of that most sweet conversation of Jesus Christ.—*John Row.*

Verse 3.—"*Gird thy sword upon thy thigh.*" The sword, according to ancient custom was hung in a belt put round the shoulders, and reaching down to the thigh. It was suspended on the back part of the thigh, almost to the ground, but was not girded upon it; the horseman's sword was fixed on the saddle by a girth. When David, in spirit invites the Redeemer of the church to gird his sword upon his thigh, and the spouse says of the valiant of Israel, "every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night" (Cant. iii. 8), they do not mean that the weapon was literally bound upon their thigh, but hung in the girdle on the back part of it; for this was the mode in which, by the universal testimony of ancient writers, the infantry wore their swords. It is still the practice in the East to wear swords in this manner, for Chardin informs us, that "the Eastern people wear their swords hanging down at length; and the Turks wear their swords on horseback, and on their thigh." But in his poetical invitation to the Redeemer, to gird his sword upon his thigh, David manifestly points to some special occasion of solemn and official character; and a clear light is thrown upon his meaning by a custom to this day observed in the East. "When a Persian or an Ottoman prince *ascends the throne*," says Mr. Morier, "he girds on his sabre. Mohammed Jaffer, for example, was proclaimed by the Khan, governor *pro tempore*, till the arrival of his brother, and was invested in this dignity by the *girding of a sword upon his thigh*, an honour which he accepted with a reluctance perhaps not wholly feigned."—"This ceremony," says Dr. Davey, giving an account of an Eastern coronation, "remained to be performed before the prince could be considered completely king—it was that of choosing a new name, and putting on the regal sword. The prince went in great state to the temple, where he presented offerings, and then, the sword having

been girded on his thigh, the priest presented a pot of sandal-powder, in which the prince, who *may now be called* king, dipped his fingers."

From these anecdotes, it is evident girding a sword on the thigh is part of the ceremony of royal inauguration ; and that when the Psalmist addresses the Messiah, he refers to his receiving the honours and powers of the Lord of all.—*G. Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

Verse 3.—" *Thy sword.*" The word of God is compared to such a weapon, for the apostle informs us that it is quick, or living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and laying open the thoughts and intents of the heart. It must be observed, however, that this description of the word of God is applicable to it only when Christ girds it on, and employs it as his sword. Of what use is a sword, even though it be the sword of Goliath, while it lies still in its scabbard, or is grasped by the powerless hand of an infant ? In those circumstances it can neither conquer nor defend, however well suited it might be to do both in the hand of a warrior. It is the same with the sword of the Spirit. While it lies still in its scabbard, or is wielded only by the infantile hand of Christ's ministers, it is a powerless and useless weapon ; a weapon at which the weakest sinner can laugh, and against which he can defend himself with the utmost ease. But not so when he who is the Most Mighty girds it on. Then it becomes a weapon of tremendous power, a weapon resistless as the bolt of heaven. " Is not my word like a fire, and a hammer, saith the Lord, which breaketh the rock in pieces ? " It is indeed, for what can be more efficacious and irresistible than a weapon sharper than a two-edged sword, wielded by the arm of omnipotence ? What must his sword be whose glance is lightning ? Armed with this weapon, the Captain of our salvation cuts his way to the sinner with infinite ease, though surrounded by rocks and mountains, scatters his strongholds and refuges of lies, and with a mighty blow cleaves asunder his heart of adamant, and lays him prostrate and trembling at his feet. Since such are the effects of this weapon in the hand of Christ, it is with the utmost propriety that the Psalmist begins by requesting him *to gird it on*, and not suffer it to be inactive in its scabbard, or powerless in the feeble grasp of his ministers.—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 3.—" *O most mighty.*" Christ is almighty, and so able to make good all that he speaketh, and to make his word of precept, promise, and threatening effectual unto the errand for which it is sent.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 3, 4.—We may reflect with pleasure on the glorious cause in which Christ is engaged, and the holy war which he carries on, and in which he shall prosper. It is the cause of truth, of meekness, and righteousness. His gospel, his sword, which is the word of God, tends to rectify our errors by truth ; to control our passions by that meekness which it promotes, and to regulate our lives by the laws of righteousness which it inculcates. Let us rejoice that this sacred cause has hitherto prospered, and shall prosper.—*Job Orton*, 1717–1783.

Verse 4.—" *And in thy majesty ride prosperously,*" etc. The wheels of Christ's chariot, whereupon he rideth when he goeth to conquer and subdue new converts to his kingdom, are *majesty, truth, meekness, righteousness*, manifested in the preaching of his gospel ; *majesty*, when the stately magnificence of his person and offices is declared ; *truth*, when the certainty of all that he teacheth in Scripture is known ; *meekness*, when his grace and mercy is offered to rebels ; and *righteousness*, when justification by faith in his name is clearly set forth. Christ goeth no voyage in vain, he cometh not short of his intent and purpose, but doth the work for which he cometh, preaching the gospel ; *in his majesty, truth, meekness, and righteousness, he rideth prosperously.—David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—" *Ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness.*" The literal translation would be, " Ride on the word of truth, and the meekness of righteousness," and so the Syriac has it. If this rendering be adopted, the meaning will then be, that the great object of Christ's gospel was to vindicate the cause of truth and righteousness in the world. Christ is said to ride on the word of truth, because the knowledge of the truth depends on the word—it is by the word that truth is made known. He is said to ride on the meekness or humility of righteousness, because meekness or humility is its distinguishing characteristic. The former relates to what man is to believe, the latter to how he is to live.—*George Harpur.*

Verse 4.—"*Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.*" This expression seems only used to imply, either that by his power he should be enabled to do terrible things, because teaching enables men to do what they are taught, or that by his almighty power he should experimentally see what great and terrible things should be done by him.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 5.—"*Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies.*" In a still bolder metaphor the arrows which are discharged from the bow of Christ are the preachers of the gospel, especially the apostles and evangelists. "*His sagittis,*" says S. Jerome, "*totus orbis vulneratus et captus est.*" Paul, the apostle, was an arrow of the Lord, discharged from his bow from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and from Illyricum to Spain, flying from east to west, and subduing Christ's enemies beneath his feet.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—While beseeching the Redeemer to ride forth prosperously, and predicting his success, he seems suddenly to have seen his prayers answered and his predictions fulfilled. He saw his all-conquering Prince gird on his resistless sword, array himself in glory and majesty, ascend the chariot of his gospel, display the banner of his cross, and ride forth, as on the wings of the wind, while the tremendous voice of a herald proclaimed before him : " Prepare ye the way of the Lord," exalt the valleys, and level the hills ; make the crooked ways straight, and the rough places plain ; for, behold, the Lord God comes ; he comes with a strong hand, his reward is with him, and his work before him. From the bright and fiery cloud which enveloped his chariot, and concealed it from mortal eyes, he saw sharp arrows of conviction shot forth on every side, deeply wounding the obdurate hearts of sinners, and prostrating them in crowds around his path, while his right hand extended raised them again, and healed the wounds which his arrows had made ; and his omnipotent voice spoke peace to their despairing souls, and bade them follow in his train, and witness and share in his triumph. From the same bright cloud he saw the vengeful lightnings flashing thick and dreadful, to blast and consume everything that opposed his progress ; he saw sin, and death, and hell, with all its legions, baffled, defeated, and flying in trembling consternation before him ; he saw them overtaken, bound, and chained to his triumphant chariot wheels ; while enraptured voices were heard from heaven exclaiming, " Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ." Such was the scene which seems to have burst upon the ravished sight of the entranced prophet. Transported with the view, he exclaims, "*Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies ; whereby the people fall under thee.*"—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 5.—"*The king's enemies,*" is not simply an expression for " Thy enemies," as some think, but rather implies that Christ's kingship is the ground of their enmity ; just as in the second Psalm their cry was, " Let us break their *bands* asunder."—*George Harpur.*

Verse 6.—"*Thy throne, O God.*" The original word, is probably vocative, both in the Greek and in the Hebrew ; and is so taken by modern Unitarians, who seek their refuge by explaining away θεός.—*Henry Alford, D.D.*, on Heb. i. 8.

Verse 7.—"*Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness.*" Many a one loves righteousness, but would not be its champion ; such a love is not Christ's love. Many a one hates iniquity, not for its own sake, but for the sake of its consequences ; such a hate is not Christ's hate. To be like Christ we must love righteousness as he loved, and hate wickedness as he hated. To love and hate as he loves and hates is to be perfect as he is perfect. The perfection of this love and hate is moral perfection.—*George Harpur.*

Verse 7.—"*Therefore.*" Observe how usual it is to impute Christ's exaltation to his merits. God blessed him for ever, as in the second verse of this Psalm (if such be the sense of that verse), *because* he was fairer than the children of men, and grace was poured into his lips. And so the apostle. God highly exalted him and gave him a name above every name, *because* he had humbled himself, and become obedient unto death. And here God anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, *because* he loved righteousness and hated iniquity.—*George Harpur.*

Verse 7.—"*Therefore.*" He says not, " Wherefore he anointed thee in order to thy being God, or King, or Son, or Word ; " for so he was before, and is for ever, as has been shown ; but rather, " Since thou art God and King, therefore thou wast anointed, since none but thou couldst unite man to the Holy Ghost, thou the

image of the Father, in which we were made in the beginning: for thine is even the Spirit."—*Athanasius.*

Verse 7.—"*Therefore God, thy God.*" God was the God of Christ in covenant, that he might be our God in covenant; for in his transactions, whole Christ, Head and members, are to be considered (Gal. iii. 16; 1 Cor. xii. 12), the covenant being first transacted with the Head (who is given for a covenant to us, Isa. xlii. 6), and then with the members, with him in reference to us and for us. As God did not fail our surety, but supported him in his great conflict, when out of the depths he called unto him; so neither will he fail us in time of need. Heb. iv. 16; xiii. 5, 6. —*William Troughton.*

Verse 7.—"*Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows;*" *i.e.*, enriched and filled thee in a singular and peculiar manner with the fulness of the Spirit, whereby thou art consecrated to thy office; and by reason whereof thou out-shinest and excellest all the saints who are thy "*fellows*,' or co-partners in these graces. So that in these words you have two parts, namely first, *the saints' dignity;* and, secondly, *Christ's pre-eminency.* First. *The saints' dignity*, which consists in this, that they are Christ's "*fellows.*" The Hebrew word חֲבֵרֶיךָ, is very full and copious, and is translated consorts, companions, co-partners, partakers; or, as ours reads it, "*fellows;*" *i.e.*, such as are partakers with him in the anointing of the Spirit, who do in their measure receive the same Spirit, every Christian being anointed, *modo sibi proportionato*, with the same grace and dignified with the same titles. 1 John ii. 27; Rev. i. 6. Christ and the saints are in common one with another. Doth the Spirit of holiness dwell in him? So he doth in them too. Is Christ King and Priest? Why, so are they, too, by the grace of union with him. He hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father. This is the saints' dignity, to be Christ's fellows, consorts, or co-partners; so that look whatever grace or excellency is in Christ, it is not impropriated to himself, but they do share with him; for indeed he was filled with the fulness of the Spirit for their sakes and use. As the sun is filled with light not to shine to itself, but to others, so is Christ with grace; and therefore some translate the text not *præ consortibus*, above thy fellows, but *propter consortes*, for thy fellows;* making Christ the first receptacle of all grace, who first and immediately is filled from the fountain of the Godhead, but it is for his people who receive and derive from him according to their proportion. This is a great truth; and the dignity of the saints lies chiefly in the partnership with Christ, though our translation, "*above thy fellows,*" suits best both with the importance of the word and scope of the place. Secondly. But then, whatever *dignity* is ascribed herein to the saints, there is, and still must be, a *pre-eminency* acknowledged and ascribed to Christ: if they are anointed with the spirit of grace, much more abundantly is Christ: "*God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*"—*John Flavel.*

Verse 7.—"*Oil of gladness.*" For sweet-smelling oils were also used to beautify the face upon occasions of feasting and mirth. Ps. xxiii. 5; civ. 15; Isa. lxi. 3. And likewise this oil of consecration and infusion of the gifts of the Holy Ghost hath been the cause and foundation of Christ's human nature's obtaining of the everlasting joys and glory. Phil. ii. 9; Heb. xii. 2.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 7.—Behold, O ye Arians, and acknowledge even hence the truth. The Psalmist speaks of us all as *fellows* or *partakers* of the Lord, but were he one of things which come out of nothing, and of things generate, he himself had been one of those who partake. But since he hymned him as the eternal God, saying, "*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,*" and has declared that all other things partake of him, what conclusion must we draw, but that he is distinct from generated things, and he only the Father's veritable Word, Radiance, and Wisdom, which all things generate partake, being sanctified by him in Spirit? And, therefore, he is here "*anointed,*" not that he may become God, for he was so even before; nor that he may become king, for he had the kingdom eternally, existing as God's image, as the sacred oracle shows; but in our behalf is this written, as before. For the Israelitish kings, upon their being anointed, then became kings, not being so before, as David, as Ezekias, as Josias, and the rest; but the Saviour, on the contrary, being God, and ever ruling in the Father's kingdom, and being himself the dispenser of the Holy Ghost, nevertheless is here said to be anointed, that, as before, being said as man to be anointed with the Spirit, he might provide for us more, not only

* Rivetus.

exaltation and resurrection, but the indwelling and intimacy of the Spirit. . . . . And when he received the Spirit, we it was who, by him were made recipients of it. And, moreover, for this reason, not as Aaron, or David, or the rest, was he anointed with oil, but in another way, above all his fellows, "*with the oil of gladness*," which he himself interprets to be the Spirit, saying by the prophet, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me;" as also the apostle has said, "How God anointed him with the Holy Ghost."—*Athanasius.*

Verse 8.—"*All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*" Although there is considerable obscurity overhanging these words, still the general idea of *a supereminent fulness of anointing* is quite apparent, combined, however, with the other idea that the anointing oil or ointment is of *the most exquisite quality.* Myrrh, and aloes, and cassia were celebrated for their peculiar fragrance, on which account they were used in compounding the choicest unguents. Myrrh and cassia are mentioned in Ex. xxx. 23, 24, as two of the spices of which the holy anointing oil was made up. All its ingredients were considered sacred. The Israelites were forbidden to pour it upon man's flesh, or to attempt any imitation of it in their own perfumes. Ivory was in early times, as it still is, rare and costly, and it was highly esteemed as a material for household decoration, on which the finest workmanship and the most princely expenditure were displayed. In palaces of ivory, therefore, it was to be expected that, in correspondence with the magnificence of their structure that the costliness of their furniture, the ointment employed for anointing would be of the richest perfume, and in the greatest profusion. According to our version of the Psalm, the divine Saviour is thus represented as being anointed with oil of the very best kind, even oil taken from the ivory palaces; and also as receiving it in no ordinary measure. His anointing was not confined to a few ceremonial drops poured upon the head, but so abundant is it said to have been, that *all* his garments *smelled* of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia.

Bishop Horsley has proposed a change in the translation, by which means the idea of abundance is connected, not with the fragrance arising from the anointing, but with the anointing itself, which is a different and far more important thing. "Thy garments are all myrrh, aloes, and cassia, excelling the palaces of ivory, excelling those which delight thee." This translation, which is strictly literal as well as poetical, is at the same time comparatively free from obscurity, and it visibly sets forth, under the most expressive imagery, the surpassing measure of that anointing which was conferred on our Lord above all his fellows. His garments are supposed not merely to have been all richly perfumed, or even thoroughly saturated with the oil of gladness, but to have consisted of the very articles which entered into the composition of the most precious and odoriferous unguent. "*Thy garments are all myrrh, aloes, and cassia.*" This is figurative language, but nothing could more emphatically exhibit how truly "the Spirit rested on Jesus, and abode with him" in all the plenitude of his heavenly gifts. That heavenly anointing constituted, as it were, his very dress, "excelling" in the quantity or measure of the anointing "the palaces of ivory;" because their furnitures, however highly scented, were not made of aromatic materials. The strength of the perfumes would evaporate, the fragrance would soon diminish; but permanent as well as plentiful fragrance is secured to him whose "garments are all myrrh, aloes, and cassia." It is added, in the way of parallelism, "excelling those which delight in thee," or those which make thee glad. To say that the persons here alluded to are the occupiers of the ivory palaces, might perhaps be objected to as fanciful; but palaces are the abodes of kings; and anointed kings, either literally, or typically, or spiritually, are the fellows of the Lord's anointed One; and it does seem manifest that, as his anointing causes joy and gladness to all the parties concerned in it, so likewise there is an anointing of those who are honoured to be his fellows which causes joy and gladness to him. The persons who are in the one verse spoken of as giving delight to Christ, there is no reason to regard as any other than the persons spoken of in the former verse as his "*fellows.*" And if this is the case, then we have a comparison drawn betwixt the one and the other in the matter of their anointing, and to that of Christ a decided superiority is ascribed.—*David Pitcairn, in "The Anointed Saviour,"* 1846.

Verse 8.—"*All thy garments smell of myrrh,*" etc. These things are true in Jesus; by his garments is meant his righteousness; for it is written, He clothed

himself with righteousness and zeal. And here the translator hath put in "*smell*," which rather should have been *are*, for "*his garments are* of myrrh, and aloes and cassia," that is, truly purging, cleansing, and making sound; for his righteousness, which is the righteousness of faith, maketh sound-hearted Christians; whereas, man's righteousness, which is the righteousness of works, maketh filthy hypocrites. And by "*ivory palaces*," is meant the true faith and fear of God; for ivory is solid and white, and palaces are king's houses; and by Christ we are made kings, and our dwelling is in faith and fear of God; and this is the gladness and joy of our Lord Jesus, that he brings many sons and daughters unto God.—*Richard Coore*, 1683.

Verse 8.—"*Out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*" Commentators have been more perplexed in explaining these words than any other part of the Psalm. Not to detain you with the various expositions that have been proposed, I will give you what I conceive to be the meaning of the passage. The word rendered "*whereby*," is also the name of a region in Arabia Felix, namely, Minnæa, which, according to the geographer Strabo, "abounded in myrrh and frankincense." Now, it is singular that, according to the historian, Diodorus Siculus, "the inhabitants of Arabia Felix had sumptuous houses, adorned with *ivory* and precious stones." Putting these two things together, therefore, namely, that this region abounded in myrrh and frankincense, and that its inhabitants adorned their houses with ivory, we may, I conceive, find a clue to the Psalmist's meaning. If we substitute "Minnæa" for "whereby," the passage will run thus—

> "Myrrh, aloes, and cassia, are all thy garments,
> From ivory palaces of Minnæa they have made thee glad."

You recollect in the verse just going before, the oil with which Christ was said to be anointed, is called the oil of "*gladness*." Accordingly, he is here said to be made *glad* (it is the same word in both places in the Hebrew), by the spices of which that oil is composed. Those spices are said to have been brought out of the most spicy region of the land of spices, and it is implied that they are the best spices of that spicy region. "*Out of the ivory palaces*," says the Psalmist; not only houses, but palaces—the mansions of the great, where the best spices would naturally be kept—out of these have come the myrrh, aloes, and cassia, that have composed the oil of gladness whereby thou art made glad. God anointed Christ, when he set him on his everlasting throne, with the oil of gladness; and this anointing was so profuse, his garments were so overspread with it, that they seemed to be nothing but myrrh, aloes, and cassia. The spices, moreover, of which the anointing oil was composed were the best of their kind, brought, as they were, from the ivory palaces of Minnæa. Such appears to be the Psalmist's meaning; and when thus understood, the passage becomes most beautifully expressive of the *excellency* and *unmeasured supply* of the gifts and graces of that Spirit with which Christ was anointed by his Father.—*George Harpur.*

Verse 8.—"*The ivory palaces.*" "*The ivory courts.*" Probably so called from the great quantity of ivory used in ornamenting and inlaying them; as the emperor Nero's palace, mentioned by Suetonius, was named "aurea," or "golden," because "*lita auro*," "overlaid with gold." This method of ornamenting or inlaying rooms was very ancient among the Greeks. Homer, in the fourth book of the Odyssey, seems to mention it, as employed in Menelaus's palace at Lacedæmon; and that the Romans sometimes ornamented their apartments in like manner, seems evident from Horace and Ovid. So in modern times, the winter apartment of the fair Fatima at Constantinople, has been described by an eye-witness as "wainscotted with inlaid work of mother-of-pearl, *ivory of different colours*, and olive wood." Ivory is likewise employed at Aleppo, as Dr. Russell informs us, in the decoration of some of the more expensive apartments.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—"*Ivory palaces.*" Either edifices (1 Kings xxii. 39; Cant. vii. 14), or ivory coffers, and wardrobes, whence those garments were taken, and are kept.—*Westminster Assembly's Annotations.*

Verse 8.—"*Whereby they have made thee glad.*" The best sense of the phrase—*from which they rejoice thee*—is had by making *they* refer to the *king's daughters* mentioned in the next verse.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 8.—Gesenius and Delitzsch consider מִנִּי an abbreviated form of the plural מְנִנִּים (Ps. cv. 4), "strings," or "stringed instruments," and would render thus:—"*Thee glad out of the ivory palaces stringed instruments have made.*"—*Dalman Hapstone.* [With this rendering Ewald and Lange agree.—*J. L. K.*]

Verse 9.—"*Kings' daughters.*" Albeit the Catholic church consisting of true converts or real saints be but the one and only true spouse of Christ, yet particular visible churches consisting of saints by calling, by obligation, by profession, and common estimation, their own or others, are many. The true church consisting of true converts (whose praise is of God, to whom only they are certainly known, and not of men), being but one, is compared to the *queen;* but the particular, whose collections and consociations are known to men, being many, are compared to *ladies of honour* who serve the queen.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 9.—"*The queen.*" It is written of Matilda, the empress, that she was the daughter of a king, the mother of a king, and the wife of a king.

Ortu magna, viro major, sed maxima prole,
Hic jacet Henrici filia, nupta, parens.

So David intimates in this hymn, that the church is the daughter of a King, at the 13th verse, "The king's daughter is all glorious within;" and the mother of a king, at the 16th verse, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth;" and the wife of a king, in this verse, "*Upon thy right hand did stand the queen,*" as being (I speak in the language of Canaan), spiritually the wedded and bedded wife to the king of glory.—*John Boys.*

Verse 10.—"*Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.*" Three *alls* I expect you to part with, saith Christ. 1. All your sinful lusts, all the ways of the old Adam, our father's house. Ever since Adam's apostacy, God and man have parted houses. Ever since, our father's house is a house of ill manners, a house of sin and wickedness. 2. All your worldly advantages. "If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." He that hath all these must be ready to part with all; they are joined not disjunctively but copulatively. 3. All self, self-will, self-righteousness, self-sufficiencies, self-confidences, and self-seekings.—*Lewis Stuckley.*

Verse 10.—"*Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.*" If you see a bee leave a fair flower and stick upon another, you may conclude that she finds most honey-dew in that flower she most sticks upon: so here God's people would never leave so many fair flowers in the world's garden, had they not some other in which they find most sweetness. Christ hath his garden, into which he brings his beloved, and there she finds other manner of flowers than any the world hath, in which there is sweetness of a higher nature, even the honey-dew of the choice mercy and goodness and blessing of God himself: if God's people do leave the full breasts of the world, it is because they have found the breasts of consolation from which they have sucked other manner of sweetness than the breasts of the world can afford.—*Jeremiah Burroughs, in "Moses, his self-denyall."* 1649.

Verse 10.—"*Forget.*" If thou be on the mountain, have no love to look back to Sodom. If thou be in the ark, fly not back to the world, as the raven did. If thou be set on Canaan, forget the flesh-pots of Egypt. If marching against Midian, forget stooping to the waters of Harod. Judg. vii. If on the house-top, forget that is below thee. Mark xiii. 15. If thy hand be put to the plough, forget that is behind thee. Luke ix. 62. Themistocles desired rather to learn the art of forgetfulness than of memory. Philosophy is an art of remembering, divinity includes in it an art of forgetting. The first lesson that Socrates taught his scholars was, Remember; for he thought that knowledge was nothing else but a calling to remembrance of those things the mind knew ere it knew the body. But the first lesson that Christ teacheth his scholars is, *Forget:* "*Forget thine own people;*" "Repent" (Matt. iv. 17); first, "eschew evil," 1 Peter iii. 11.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 11.—"*So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.*" This is a most sweet promise. For the Holy Spirit knoweth that this monster, Monk, sticks fast in our heart—that we want to be pure and without spot before God. Thus, under Popery, all my temptation was this. I used to say, "that I would willingly go to the sacrament if I were but worthy." Thus we seek, naturally, a purity in ourselves; and we examine our whole life and want to find a purity in ourselves, that we might have no need of grace, but might be pronounced righteous upon the grounds of our own merit. . . . Thou wilt certainly never become righteous by thyself and thine own works. . . . The Holy Spirit saith, therefore, I will give thee wholesome

counsel; and if thou wilt hear me, thou shalt become a virgin all fair. For, if thou wouldst be beautiful in the sight of God, so that all thy works should please him, and he should say, "Thy prayer pleaseth me; all that thou sayest, doest, and thinkest, pleaseth me!" proceed thou thus: "hear, see, and incline thine ear;" and thou shalt thus become all fair When thou hast heard, hast seen, hast forgotten all thine own righteousness, all the law, all traditions, and all that monkery, and hast believed, then art thou fair; not in thine own beauty, but in the beauty of the King who has adorned thee with his Word; because he has brought unto thee thereby his righteousness, his holiness, truth, and fortitude, and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. . . The Holy Spirit uses the most exalted language. "*So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty:*" that is, thou wilt by this faith prevail upon him to do whatever thou desirest: so that, as one urged by the power of love, he will spontaneously follow thee, abide with thee, and take up his abode with thee. For wherever God has given his Word, there he does not leave his work which he has begun in thee; but he brings upon thee first the temptations of the world, the devil, and the flesh; that by them he may work upon thee. These are his embraces whereby he embraceth his spouse through impatiency of love. . . . The sum of the whole, therefore, is this: That our beauty does not consist in our own virtues, nor even in the gifts which we have received from God, by which we put forth virtues and do all those things which pertain unto the life of the law; but in this—our apprehending Christ and believing in him. Then it is that we are truly beautiful: and it is this beauty alone that Christ looks upon, and upon no other.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 11.—In this Psalm Christ is set forth in all his royalty and majesty; yet he is said "*greatly to desire or delight in the beauty*" of his queen, that is, the graces of the saints; and that not with an ordinary delight, but he "*greatly* desires;" his desire is increased as her beauty is. For that is there brought in as a motive unto her to be more holy and conformed unto him, "to incline her ear, and forsake her father's house." "*So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.*" Christ hath a beauty that pleaseth him as well as we have, though of another kind: and, therefore, ceaseth not till he hath got out every spot and wrinkle out of his spouse's face, as the apostle speaks (Eph. v. 27), "so as to present her glorious unto himself," that is, delightful and pleasing in his eye.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12.—"*And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift.*" The daughters of Tyre are the daughters of the Gentiles, the part standing for the whole. Tyre, a city bordering on this country where the prophecy was delivered, typified the nations that were to believe in Christ. Thence came that Canaanitish woman, who was at first called *a dog;* for that ye may know that she was from thence, the gospel speaks thus (Matt. xv. 21—28), "Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts," with all the rest that is related there. She who at first, at the house of her "father," and among her "own people," was but *a dog,* who by coming to, and crying after that "King," was made beautiful by believing in him, what did she obtain to hear? "*O woman, great is thy faith.*" *The King has greatly desired thy beauty.—Augustine.*

Verse 12.—"*With a gift.*" Those who sold their property, came with presents to entreat the face of this "queen," and "laid what they brought at the apostles' feet." Warm then was love in the church.—*Augustine.*

Verse 12.—"*The rich.*" They are, indeed, rich in grace, whose graces are not hindered by riches, whose souls prosper when their bodies prosper, as the apostle John speaks in his third Epistle; or, who, as 'tis prophesied in this verse, being full of worldly blessings, are yet hungry and eager in their pursuit after Christ. "*The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour,*" saith the Psalmist; that is, either the favour of Christ himself, or the favour of the church, by reason of that spiritual excellence and inward glory which she hath received from Christ. Now, to see the rich bring their gifts, and, which is the thing chiefly aimed at here, giving up themselves to Christ, this is a rare sight, and a remarkable work of grace.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13.—"*The king's daughter is all glorious within,*" etc. When the children of God recollect their glorious and heavenly pedigree, they endeavour to excel others, both in the beautiful disposition of soul, and manner of life. "*The king's daughter,*" that is, the daughter of the heavenly Father, who is also the bride of

the king's Son; every believing soul "*is all glorious*," adorned with a holiness not only glorious to herself, but also to the Father and the Bridegroom, and is the beginning of a heavenly glory; and that chiefly "*within*," not only when she appears abroad, and presents herself to the view of men, but also when she sits in the inner bed-chamber in the secret exercises of religion, in which she in private pleases the Father and the Bridegroom, who having a regard to the inward man, she above all endeavours to keep that pure and chaste. Her clothing is of "*gold;*" in comparison of which whatever excellency natural men were even possessed of, is but a shining vanity; nay, it was "*wrought*" gold, curiously beautified with various resemblances, which represents the perfections of God himself; and of different colours, on account of the different yet harmoniously corresponding graces of the Holy Spirit; or of needlework of the Phrygian embroiderers, or rather the work of the cunning workman, mentioned in Cant. vii. 1. Nor is the spouse only beautiful within, but also without; "holding forth the word of life," Phil. ii. 16, she practises charity, glorifies Christ, edifies her neighbour, and in this manner she is brought unto the king, worthy to be presented to him. This is the only way by which we are to endeavour to obtain familiarity with him, and the sweetest intercourse of the chastest love, both on earth and in heaven.—*Hermann Witsius.* 1636—1708.

Verse 13.—"*The king's daughter is all glorious within.*" The meaning is, either, (1.) that her chief glory consisted in this, that she was admitted to such a familiar privacy with the king; or, (2.) that when she sat in the inmost rooms of the king's palace, she was there in her greatest glory, because those rooms were most gorgeously set forth with all kinds of bravery and glorious furniture; or, (3.) that she used to be gloriously attired, not only when she went abroad in public, but also when she stayed within, as being indeed adorned (which may be implied) only for the delight of the king, and not that others might gaze upon her; or, (4.)—which I like best—that the inward virtues and endowments of her mind were her greatest ornament and glory.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 13.—"*All glorious within.*" Saints must shine by the comeliness of Christ, as a gracious husband labours to change his spouse into his own image and likeness by kindnesses, precepts, and example, that he may take the more delight in her person; so does our spiritual Solomon change the hue of his Egyptian queen to deem of things and persons as her Lord and husband judges, and frames her spirit to delight in doing his will and pleasure, and take the highest solace in obedience, to enjoy a heavenly freedom, mixed with amiable and joyful reverence. He roots out of her heart all changeable affections and worldly fancies, and hankering longings after the fond fashions of Shechem, and all carnal inclinations to the daughters of Canaan's lineage, and all the beggarly humours of the besotted world, and to pass by with a holy scorn all the pitiful pageantry of this perishing and fading life, and rise to a mean estimate of the baubles and trifles that enchant a carnal heart. At length she arrives to a noble and generous judgment, counting all but dung and dross that she may win Christ. As her prince of life was crucified by the world for her redemption, so she begins to be crucified to it in token of conformity to him, and at length becomes "*all glorious within.*"—*Samuel Lee, in "The Triumph of Mercy,"* 1676.

Verse 13.—"*Within.*" The ark was pitched within with the same pitch with which it was pitched without withal; such is the sincere man, within and without alike, inside and outside, all one. Yea, he is rather better than he shows, as the "*king's daughter,*" whose *outside* might sometimes be *sackcloth*, yet was "*all glorious within, and her inward garments of wrought gold.*" Or as the temple, outwardly nothing but wood and stone to be seen, inwardly all rich and beautiful, especially the *sanctum sanctorum* (when the veil was drawn) was all gold. The very floor, as well as the roof, was overlaid with gold. 1 Kings vi. 30.—*John Sheffield.*

Verse 13.—"*Her clothing is of wrought gold.*" Some read it *purled* works, or closures of *gold*, *enamelled* gold, such as precious *stones* were set in, which were exceeding *splendid* and glorious; such were the *clothes* of service in the tabernacle, and the garments and robes of the *high priest*, which shadowed forth Christ's *righteousness.* Exod. xxviii. 11—14; Exod. xxxix. 1—6.—*William Troughton.*

Verse 13.—About this time, Father La Combe was called to preach on some public occasion. The new doctrine, as it was termed, was not altogether a secret. Public curiosity had become excited. He chose for his text the passage in Psalm xlv. 13, "*The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.*" By the king he understood *Christ;* by the king's daughter, *the church.* His doctrine

was, whatever might be true in regard to men's original depravity, that those who are truly given to Christ, and are in full harmony with him, are delivered from it: that is to say, are "*all glorious within.*" Like Christ, they love God with a love free from selfishness, with *pure* love. Like Christ, they are come to do the will of the Father. Christ is formed in them. They not only have faith in Christ, and faith in God through Christ, but, as the result of this faith, they have Christ's disposition. They are now in a situation to say of themselves individually, in the language of the apostle Paul, "I live, and yet not I, *but Christ liveth in me.*" He did not maintain that all Christians are necessarily the subjects of this advanced state of Christian experience, but endeavoured to show that this is a *possible* state; that, however intense human depravity may be, the grace of God has power to overcome it; that the example of Christ, the full and rich promises, and even the commands, give encouragement to effort, and confidence in ultimate victory.—*From the "Life, Religious Opinions and Experiences of Madame de la Mothe Guyon."*

Verse 14.—"*The virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto thee.*" The highest and most excellent Christian cannot say, *I* have no *need* of thee: the queen will not be without any of her true *companions.* As it is in the body *natural,* so it is in the church of Christ, or body *mystical;* all the members being fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh *increase* of the body to the edifying of itself in *love.* Eph. iv. 16; Col. ii. 19.—*William Troughton.*

Verse 14.—"*The virgins her companions that follow her.*" These are members of the church, but the figure of a bridal train is employed to sustain the allegory. What a bright train the Royal Bride will have as she goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. Kings' daughters will be there, for every crowned head on earth shall one day bow at the foot of the cross. The daughter of Tyre shall be there—Tyre, the ancient emporium of the nations—to show that the merchandise of the world shall be holiness to the Lord. The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Jews and Gentiles will be there—representatives from all peoples, and tongues, and nations. They are "*virgins.*" They keep themselves unspotted from the world. They are weaned from its idols; they dread its contaminations. Their first care is to preserve the whiteness of their souls by daily washing in the blood of the Lamb. . . . . They "*follow*" the royal Bride. They keep by her side in storm and sunshine. They follow her in the regeneration. They follow her in the search after her Beloved. Song iii. 2, 3. They follow her to the green pastures and the still waters. They follow her without the camp bearing his reproach. Like Ruth, they leave father and mother to follow her. Ruth i. 16. Like Caleb, they follow the Lord fully. When a crisis comes, and the question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" involves heavy issues, and hollow-hearted professors fly away like swallows before the storm, they follow her. When persecution comes, and Christ's faithful witnesses have to prophesy clothed in sackcloth, and perhaps to pass through a baptism of blood to the crown, they follow her: like Peden, when—the bloodhounds of persecution in full chase after him, and the lone moor his home—he thought of Richard Cameron gone to glory, and sighed, "Oh, to be with Richie!"—*Duncan Macgregor, M.A., in "The Shepherd of Israel; or, Illustrations of the Inner Life,"* 1869.

Verse 15.—"*With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought.*" No marriage was ever consummated with that triumphal solemnity as the marriage of Christ and believers shall be in heaven. Among the Jews the marriage house was called *bethillulah*—the house of praise; there was joy on all hands, but not like the joy that will be in heaven when believers, the spouse of Christ, shall be brought thither. *God the Father* will rejoice to behold the blessed accomplishment and consummation of that glorious design and project of his love. *Jesus Christ the Bridegroom* will rejoice to see the travail of his soul, the blessed birth and issue of all his bitter pangs and agonies. Isaiah liii. 11. *The Holy Spirit* will rejoice to see the complement and perfection of that sanctifying design which was committed to his hand (2 Cor. v. 5); to see those souls, whom he once found as rough stones, now to shine as the bright polished stones of the spiritual temple. *Angels* will rejoice; great was the joy when the foundation of this design was laid, in the incarnation of Christ (Luke ii. 13); great, therefore, must their joy be when the topstone is set up with shouting, crying, Grace, grace. *The saints* themselves shall rejoice unspeakably, when they

shall enter into the king's palace, and be for ever with the Lord. 1 Thess. iv. 17. Indeed, there will be joy on all hands, except among the devils and damned, who shall gnash their teeth with envy, at the everlasting advancement and glory of believers.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 15.—"*They shall be brought.*" Reader! do not fail to observe the manner of expression, the church is *brought*, she doth not *come* of herself. No, she must be convinced, converted, made willing. No one can come to Christ, except the Father, who hath sent Christ, draw him. John vi. 44.—*Robert Hawker, D.D.*

Verse 15.—"*They shall enter into the king's palace.*" There are two rich palaces mentioned in this Psalm: the one an ivory palace (verse 8), whereby is signified the assemblies of the saints, and ordinances of divine worship, in which the Lord manifests himself graciously. Here the presence of the Lord is sweet and amiable. Cant. i. 8; Psalm lxxxiv. 2. The other "palace" is mentioned in this fifteenth verse, and it is a palace of glory, a palace more bright and splendid than the finest gold, glorious mansions. John xiv. 2.—*William Troughton.*

Verse 16.—"*Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.*" O church of God, think not thyself abandoned then, because thou seest not Peter, nor seest Paul—seest not those through whom thou wast born. Out of thine own offspring has a body of "fathers" been raised up to thee.—*Augustine.*

Verse 16.—"*Thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.*" The new connexion is glorious to the King. Many were his glorious and royal ancestors down to Jesse, but now there are born to him, the Eternal King, sons as the dew from the womb of the morning (Ps. cx. 3), who shall, as princes, occupy the thrones of the world. So our Lord promised to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matt. xix. 28. And Paul says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" 1 Cor. vi. 2.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 16.—"*Princes in all the earth.*" Others are but princes in their own dominion, but he will make you princes in all lands. . . . Such a kingdom you shall have, if you will come in to Christ, you shall have the liberty of kings, the abundance and plenty of kings, the power of kings, the victory of kings, and the glory of kings.—*John Preston.*

Verse 17.—"*Therefore shall the people praise thee.*" Christ's espousing unto himself a church, and gathering more and more from age to age by his word and Spirit unto it, his converting souls and bringing them into the fellowship of his family, and giving unto them princely minds and affections, wherever they live, is a large matter of growing and everlasting glory unto his majesty; for in regard of this point, and what is said before in this Psalm, he addeth as the close of all, "*Therefore shall the people praise thee.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 17.—In the Hebrew text, which is here quoted, there is a particle added to the word *ever*, which in that case intendeth a proper everlastingness, without any period or end at all, and thereupon translated "*for ever and ever.*"—*William Gouge, D.D.* on Hebrews i. 8.

Verse 17 (*last clause*):—

"When morning gilds the skies,
My heart awaking cries;
May Jesus Christ be praised.

* * * *

When sleep her balm denies,
My silent spirit sighs;
May Jesus Christ be praised.

* * * *

In heaven's eternal bliss,
The loveliest strain is this;
May Jesus Christ be praised.

* * * *

To God the Word on high,
The hosts of angels cry;
May Jesus Christ be praised.

Let mortals, too, upraise
Their voice in hymns of praise;
May Jesus Christ be praised.

Let earth's wide circle round,
In joyful notes resound;
May Jesus Christ be praised.

Let air, and sea, and sky,
From depth to height reply;
May Jesus Christ be praised.

Be this while life is mine,
My canticle divine;
May Jesus Christ be praised.

Be this the eternal song
Through all the ages on;
May Jesus Christ be praised."

Translated by Edward Caswall, in "Poems," 1861.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—In the preface, the prophet commends the subject he is to treat of, signifying, 1. That it is *a good matter—good*, as speaking of the Son of God, who is the *chief good*. 2. *Good for us;* for upon the marriage of Christ to his church depends our good.—*Bishop Nicholson.*

Verse 1.—Character read by heart-writing. I. The true lover of Christ is sincere —"*my heart*"? II. He is a man of emotion. III. A man of holy meditation. IV. A man of experience—"*things I have made.*" V. A man who bears witness for the Lord.

Verse 1.—Three things requisite for Christian teaching: I. That the matter be good; and concerning the best of all subjects, "*touching the King.*" II. That the language be fluent like the pen, etc. 1. Partly from nature. 2. Partly from cultivation. 3. Partly from the Spirit of God. III. That the heart be absorbed in it—"*My heart is inditing.*"—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—In what respects Jesus is fairer than the best of men.

Verse 2.—Jesus—his person, his gospel, his fulness of blessing.

Verse 2.—I. We may and ought to praise Christ. Angels do, God does, Scripture does, Old Testament saints and New, so should we. It is the work of heaven begun on earth. II. For what should we praise him? 1. For his beauty. Is wisdom beauty? Is righteousness? Is love? Is meekness? All are found in him supremely—

"All human beauties, all divine,
In our Redeemer meet and shine."

2. For his grace. Grace of God treasured up in him. 3. For his blessedness—of God and for ever.—*G. R.*

Verses 2—5.—In these verses the Lord Jesus is presented, I. As most amiable in himself. II. As the great favourite of heaven. III. As victorious over his enemies.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3.—The captain's presence desired by the soldier. It is our honour, our delight, our safety, our strength, our victory, our reward.

Verses 3—5.—Messiah's victory predicted and desired.—*E. Payson's Sermon.*

Verse 5.—I. Arrows of judicial wrath are sharp. II. Arrows of providential goodness are sharper still. III. Arrows of subduing grace are sharpest of all. The quiver of the Almighty is full of these arrows.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—Arrows—what they are; whose they are; whom they strike; where they strike; what they do, and what follows.

Verse 6.—The God, the king, his throne, its duration, his sceptre. Let us worship, obey, trust, acquiesce, rejoice.

Verses 6, 7.—Empire, Eternity, Equity, Establishment, Exultation.

Verse 7.—"*Thou hatest wickedness.*" He hated it when it assailed him in his temptation, hated it in others, denounced it, died to slay it, will come to condemn it.

Verse 7.—Christ's love and hate.

Verse 8.—Christ's garments—his offices, his two natures, his ordinances, his honours, all are full of fragrance.

Verse 8.—"*Whereby they have made thee glad.*" We make Jesus glad by our love, our praise, our service, our gifts, our holiness, our fellowship with him.

Verse 8.—I. The odour of his garments, not of blood and battle, but of sweet perfume. II. The splendour of his palaces—ivory for rareness, purity, durability, etc. III. The source of his delight. 1. Himself, the sweet odour of his own graces. 2. His people, the savour of those who are saved. 3. His enemies, "even in them that perish." 4. All holy happy creatures who unite to make him glad.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—"Christ the best husband: or, an earnest invitation to young women to come and see Christ."—*George Whitefield's "Sermon, Preached to a Society of Young Women, in Fetter Lane."*

Verses 9, 10.—I. The connections of the Bridegroom are to be remembered, those of the Bride to be forgotten.

Verse 11.—"*So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.*" Christ delighting in the Beauty of the Righteous.—*Martin Luther.* [*Select Works, by H. Cole.* I. 281.]

Verses 13—15.—I. The Bride's *new name*—"The king's daughter." She is the king's daughter for two reasons. 1. She is *born* of God; and 2. She is *espoused* to the Son of God. II. The Bride's *character*—"All glorious within." 1. Because *Christ reigns on the throne of her heart.* 2. Because *she is the temple of the Holy Ghost.* III. The Bride's *raiment*—"wrought gold," "needlework:" this is the *righteousness of Christ;* in other words, 1. His *perfect obedience.* 2. His *atoning death.* IV. The Bride's *companions*—"Virgins that follow her." V. The Bride's *home-going*—"She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework. . . . . With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace." 1. *She shall see the king in his beauty.* 2. *There will be an open declaration of his love to her before all worlds.*—*Duncan Macgregor, M.A.*

Verse 14.—I. The presentation of the church to Christ. 1. When souls are first brought to him—"I have espoused you as," etc. 2. When they come before him at death. 3. When the perfected church is presented to him—"That he might present it," etc. II. The manner of presentation—1. "in raiment," etc., such as he himself wrought out. 2. With all her followers. (1.) Their purity—"virgins." (2.) Their fellowship—"companions." (3.) Their succession—"that follow thee," from one age to another until they are complete.—*G. R.*

Verse 17.—I. Christ is the Father's delight. "*I* will make," etc. II. He is the church's theme—his name shall be remembered; and III. He is heaven's glory, "Shall praise thee," etc.—*G. R.*

PSALM XLVI.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician.—*He who could sing other Psalms so well was fitly entrusted with this noble ode. Trifles may be left to commoner songsters, but the most skilful musician in Israel must be charged with the due performance of this song, with the most harmonious voices and choicest music.* For the Sons of Korah. *One alone cannot fulfil the praise, there must be picked choristers under him, whose joyful privilege it shall be to celebrate the service of song in the house of the Lord. As to why the Sons of Korah were selected, see our remarks at the head of Psalm XLII. It may be well to add that they were a division of the Levites who took their turn in serving at the temple. All the works of holy service ought not to be monopolised by one order of talent, each company of believers should in due course enjoy the privilege. None ought to be without a share in the service of God.*

A Song upon Alamoth. *Which may denote that the music was to be pitched high for the treble or soprano voices of the Hebrew virgins. They went forth in their dances to sing the praises of David when he smote the Philistine, it was meet that they should make merry and be glad when the victories of Jehovah became their theme. We need to praise God upon virgin hearts, with souls chaste towards his fear, with lively and exalted expressions, and gladsome strains. Or the word Alamoth may refer to shrill-sounding instruments, as in* 1 Chron. xv. 20, *where we read that Zechariah, and Eliab, and Benaiah were to praise the Lord "with psalteries on Alamoth." We are not always, in a slovenly manner, to fall into one key, but with intelligence are to modulate our praises and make them fittingly expressive of the occasion and the joy it creates in our souls. These old musical terms cannot be interpreted with certainty, but they are still useful because they show that care and skill should be used in our sacred music.*

SUBJECT.—*Happen what may, the Lord's people are happy and secure, this is the doctrine of the Psalm, and it might, to help our memories, be called* THE SONG OF HOLY CONFIDENCE, *were it not that from the great reformer's love to this soul-stirring hymn it will probably be best remembered as* LUTHER'S PSALM.

DIVISION.—*It is divided by inspired authority into three parts, each of which ends with Selah.*

EXPOSITION.

GOD *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and
though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

3 *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains
shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

1. *"God is our refuge and strength."* Not our armies, or our fortresses. Israel's boast is in Jehovah, the only living and true God. Others vaunt their impregnable castles, placed on inaccessible rocks and secured with gates of iron, but God is a far better refuge from distress than all these: and when the time comes to carry the war into the enemy's territories, the Lord stands his people in better stead than all the valour of legions or the boasted strength of chariot and horse. Soldiers of the cross, remember this, and count yourselves safe, and make yourselves strong in God. Forget not the personal possessive word *"our;"* make sure each one of your portion in God, that you may say, "He is *my* refuge and strength." Neither forget the fact that God is our refuge just now, in the immediate present, as truly as when David penned the word. God alone is our all in all. All other refuges are refuges of lies, all other strength is weakness, for power belongeth unto God: but as God is all-sufficient, our defence and might are equal to all emergencies. *"A very present help in trouble,"* or *in distresses he has so been found*, he has been tried and proved by his people. He never withdraws himself from his afflicted. He is their help, truly, effectually, constantly; he is present or near them, close at their side and ready for their succour, and this is emphasised by the word *"very"* in our version, he is more present than friend or relative can be, yea, more nearly

present than even the trouble itself. To all this comfortable truth is added the consideration that his assistance comes at the needed time. He is not as the swallows that leave us in the winter; he is a friend in need and a friend indeed. When it is very dark with us, let brave spirits say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm."

"A fortress firm, and steadfast rock,
Is God in time of danger;
A shield and sword in every shock,
From foe well-known or stranger."

2. "*Therefore.*" How fond the Psalmist is of therefores! his poetry is no poetic rapture without reason, it is as logical as a mathematical demonstration. The next words are a necessary inference from these. "*Will not we fear.*" With God on our side, how irrational would fear be! Where he is all power is, and all love, why therefore should we quail? "*Though the earth be removed,*" though the basis of all visible things should be so convulsed as to be entirely changed. "*And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;*" though the firmest of created objects should fall to headlong ruin, and be submerged in utter destruction. The two phrases set forth the most terrible commotions within the range of imagination, and include the overthrow of dynasties, the destruction of nations, the ruin of families, the persecutions of the church, the reign of heresy, and whatever else may at any time try the faith of believers. Let the worst come to the worst, the child of God should never give way to mistrust; since God remaineth faithful there can be no danger to his cause or people. When the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the heavens and the earth shall pass away in the last general conflagration, we shall serenely behold "the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds," for even then our refuge shall preserve us from all evil, our strength shall prepare us for all good.

3. "*Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled.*" When all things are excited to fury, and reveal their utmost power to disturb, faith smiles serenely. She is not afraid of noise, nor even of real force, she knows that the Lord stilleth the raging of the sea, and holdeth the waves in the hollow of his hand. "*Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.*" Alps and Andes may tremble, but faith rests on a firmer basis, and is not to be moved by swelling seas. Evil may ferment, wrath may boil, and pride may foam, but the brave heart of holy confidence trembles not. Great men who are like mountains may quake for fear in times of great calamity, but the man whose trust is in God needs never be dismayed.

"*Selah.*" In the midst of such a hurly-burly the music may well come to a pause, both to give the singers breath, and ourselves time for meditation. We are in no hurry, but can sit us down and wait while earth dissolves, and mountains rock, and oceans roar. Ours is not the headlong rashness which passes for courage, we can calmly confront the danger, and meditate upon terror, dwelling on its separate items and united forces. The pause is not an exclamation of dismay, but merely a rest in music: we do not suspend our song in alarm, but retune our harps with deliberation amidst the tumult of the storm. It were well if all of us could say, "*Selah,*" under tempestuous trials, but alas! too often we speak in our haste, lay our trembling hands bewildered among the strings, strike the lyre with a rude crash, and mar the melody of our life-song.

4 *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the Most High.

5 God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, *and that* right early.

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

4. "*There is a river.*" Divine grace like a smoothly flowing, fertilising, full, and never-failing river, yields refreshment and consolation to believers. This is the river of the water of life, of which the church above as well as the church below partakes evermore. It is no boisterous ocean, but a placid stream, it is not stayed in its course by earthquakes or crumbling mountains, it follows its serene course without disturbance. Happy are they who know from their own experience that

there is such a river of God. "*The streams whereof*" in their various influences, for they are many, "*shall make glad the city of God,*" by assuring the citizens that Zion's Lord will unfailingly supply all their needs. The streams are not transient like Cherith, nor muddy like the Nile, nor furious like Kishon, nor treacherous like Job's deceitful brooks, neither are their waters "naught" like those of Jericho, they are clear, cool, fresh, abundant, and gladdening. The great fear of an Eastern city in time of war was lest the water supply should be cut off during a siege; if that were secured the city could hold out against attacks for an indefinite period. In this verse, Jerusalem, which represents the church of God, is described as well supplied with water, to set forth the fact, that in seasons of trial all-sufficient grace will be given to enable us to endure unto the end. The church is like a well-ordered city, surrounded with mighty walls of truth and justice, garrisoned by omnipotence, fairly built and adorned by infinite wisdom: its burgesses the saints enjoy high privileges; they trade with far-off lands, they live in the smile of the King; and as a great river is the very making and mainstay of a town, so is the broad river of everlasting love and grace their joy and bliss. The church is peculiarly the "*City of God,*" of his designing, building, election, purchasing and indwelling. It is dedicated to his praise, and glorified by his presence. "*The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.*" This was the peculiar glory of Jerusalem, that the Lord within her walls had a place where he peculiarly revealed himself, and this is the choice privilege of the saints, concerning which we may cry with wonder, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" To be a temple for the Holy Ghost is the delightful portion of each saint, to be the living temple for the Lord our God is also the high honour of the church in her corporate capacity. Our God is here called by a worthy title, indicating his power, majesty, sublimity, and excellency; and it is worthy of note that under this character he dwells in the church. We have not a great God in nature, and a little God in grace; no, the church contains as clear and convincing a revelation of God as the works of nature, and even more amazing is the excellent glory which shines between the cherubim overshadowing that mercy-seat which is the centre and gathering place of the people of the living God. To have the Most High dwelling within her members, is to make the church on earth like the church in heaven.

5. "*God is in the midst of her.*" His help is therefore sure and near. Is she besieged, then he is himself besieged within her, and we may be certain that he will break forth upon his adversaries. How near is the Lord to the distresses of his saints, since he sojourns in their midst! Let us take heed that we do not grieve him; let us have such respect to him as Moses had when he felt the sand of Horeb's desert to be holy, and put off his shoes from off his feet when the Lord spake from the burning bush. "*She shall not be moved.*" How can she be moved unless her enemies move her Lord also? His presence renders all hope of capturing and demolishing the city utterly ridiculous. The Lord is in the vessel, and she cannot, therefore, be wrecked. "*God shall help her.*" Within her he will furnish rich supplies, and outside her walls he will lay her foes in heaps like the armies of Sennacherib, when the angel went forth and smote them. "*And that right early.*" As soon as the first ray of light proclaims the coming day, at the turning of the morning God's right arm shall be outstretched for his people. The Lord is up betimes. We are slow to meet him, but he is never tardy in helping us Impatience complains of divine delays, but in very deed the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. Man's haste is often folly, but God's apparent delays are ever wise; and, when rightly viewed, are no delays at all. To-day the bands of evil may environ the church of God, and threaten her with destruction; but ere long they shall pass away like the foam on the waters, and the noise of their tumult shall be silent in the grave. The darkest hour of the night is just before the turning of the morning; and then, even then, shall the Lord appear as the great ally of his church.

6. "*The heathen raged.*" The nations were in a furious uproar, they gathered against the city of the Lord like wolves ravenous for their prey; they foamed, and roared, and swelled like a tempestuous sea. "*The kingdoms were moved.*" A general confusion seized upon society; the fierce invaders convulsed their own dominions by draining the population to urge on the war, and they desolated other territories by their devastating march to Jerusalem. Crowns fell from royal heads, ancient thrones rocked like trees driven of the tempest, powerful empires fell like pines uprooted by the blast: everything was in disorder, and dismay seized on all who knew not the Lord. "*He uttered his voice, the earth melted.*" With no other

instrumentality than a word the Lord ruled the storm. He gave forth a voice and stout hearts were dissolved, proud armies were annihilated, conquering powers were enfeebled. At first the confusion appeared to be worse confounded, when the element of divine power came into view; the very earth seemed turned to wax, the most solid and substantial of human things melted like the fat of rams upon the altar; but anon peace followed, the rage of man subsided, hearts capable of repentance relented, and the implacable were silenced. How mighty is a word from God! How mighty the Incarnate Word. O that such a word would come from the excellent glory even now to melt all hearts in love to Jesus, and to end for ever all the persecutions, wars, and rebellions of men!

7. "*The Lord of hosts is with us.*" This is the reason for all Zion's security, and for the overthrow of her foes. The Lord rules the angels, the stars, the elements, and all the hosts of heaven; and the heaven of heavens are under his sway. The armies of men though they know it not are made to subserve his will. This Generalissimo of the forces of the land, and the Lord High Admiral of the seas, is on our side—our august ally; woe unto those who fight against him, for they shall fly like smoke before the wind when he gives the word to scatter them. "*The God of Jacob is our refuge.*" Immanuel is Jehovah of Hosts, and Jacob's God is our high place of defence. When this glad verse is sung to music worthy of such a jubilate, well may the singers pause and the players wait awhile to retune their instruments; here, therefore, fitly stands that solemn, stately, peaceful note of rest, SELAH.

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

10 Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

11 The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

8. "*Come, behold the works of the Lord.*" The joyful citizens of Jerusalem are invited to go forth and view the remains of their enemies, that they may mark the prowess of Jehovah and the spoil which his right hand hath won for his people. It were well if we also carefully noted the providential dealings of our covenant God, and were quick to perceive his hand in the battles of his church. Whenever we read history it should be with this verse sounding in our ears. We should read the newspaper in the same spirit, to see how the Head of the Church rules the nations for his people's good, as Joseph governed Egypt for the sake of Israel. "*What desolations he hath made in the earth.*" The destroyers he destroys, the desolators he desolates. How forcible is the verse at this date! The ruined cities of Assyria, Babylon, Petra, Bashan, Canaan, are our instructors, and in tables of stone record the doings of the Lord. In every place where his cause and crown have been disregarded ruin has surely followed; sin has been a blight on nations, and left their palaces to lie in heaps. In the days of the writer of this Psalm, there had probably occurred some memorable interposition of God against his Israel's foes; and as he saw their overthrow, he called on his fellow citizens to come forth and attentively consider the terrible things in righteousness which had been wrought on their behalf. Dismantled castles and ruined abbeys in our own land stand as memorials of the Lord's victories over oppression and superstition. May there soon be more of such desolations.

> "Ye gloomy piles, ye tombs of living men,
> Ye sepulchres of womanhood, or worse;
> Ye refuges of lies, soon may ye fall,
> And 'mid your ruins may the owl, and bat,
> And dragon find congenial resting place."

9. "*He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.*" His voice quiets the tumult of war, and calls for the silence of peace. However remote and barbarous the tribe, he awes the people into rest. He crushes the great powers till they cannot provoke strife again; he gives his people profound repose. "*He breaketh the bow,*" the sender of swift-winged death he renders useless. "*And cutteth the spear in sunder*"—the lance of the mighty man he shivers. "*He burneth the chariot in the*

fire"—the proud war-chariot with its death-dealing scythes he commits to the flames. All sorts of weapons he piles heaps on heaps, and utterly destroys them. So was it in Judea in the days of yore, so shall it be in all lands in eras yet to come. Blessed deed of the Prince of Peace! when shall it be literally performed? Already the spiritual foes of his people are despoiled of their power to destroy; but when shall the universal victory of peace be celebrated, and instruments of wholesale murder be consigned to ignominious destruction? How glorious will the ultimate victory of Jesus be in the day of his appearing, when every enemy shall lick the dust!

10. "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" Hold off your hands, ye enemies! Sit down and wait in patience, ye believers! Acknowledge that Jehovah is God, ye who feel the terrors of his wrath! Adore him, and him only, ye who partake in the protections of his grace. Since none can worthily proclaim his nature, let "expressive silence muse his praise." The boasts of the ungodly and the timorous forebodings of the saints should certainly be hushed by a sight of what the Lord has done in past ages. "*I will be exalted among the heathen.*" They forget God, they worship idols, but Jehovah will yet be honoured by them. Reader, the prospects of missions are bright, bright as the promises of God. Let no man's heart fail him; the solemn declarations of this verse must be fulfilled. "*I will be exalted in the earth,*" among all people, whatever may have been their wickedness or their degradation. Either by terror or love God will subdue all hearts to himself. The whole round earth shall yet reflect the light of his majesty. All the more because of the sin, and obstinacy, and pride of man shall God be glorified when grace reigns unto eternal life in all corners of the world.

11. "*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*" It was meet to sing this twice over. It is a truth of which no believer wearies, it is a fact too often forgotten, it is a precious privilege which cannot be too often considered. Reader, is the Lord on thy side? Is Emmanuel, God with us, thy Redeemer? Is there a covenant between thee and God as between God and Jacob? If so, thrice happy art thou. Show thy joy in holy song, and in times of trouble play the man by still making music for thy God.

SELAH. Here as before, lift up the heart. Rest in contemplation after praise. Still keep the soul in tune. It is easier to sing a hymn of praise than to continue in the spirit of praise, but let it be our aim to maintain the uprising devotion of our grateful hearts, and so end our song as if we intended it to be continued.

SELAH bids the music rest,
Pause in silence soft and blest;
SELAH bids uplift the strain,
Harps and voices tune again;
SELAH ends the vocal praise,
Still your hearts to God upraise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The LXX referring to the notion of the theme עלם, *occultavit*, render it ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων, *for the hidden;* and the Latin, *pro arcanis;* and the rest of the ancient interpreters take the same course; the Chaldee referring it to *Coreh*, and those that were *hidden, i.e., swallowed up*, by the earth with him, whilst these *sons of Coreh* escaped; as if the mention of the *sons of Coreh* in the title, by whom this song was to be sung, referred the whole Psalm to that story. Accordngly, verse 2, when the Hebrew reads, "*Though the earth be removed,*" the paraphrase is, "*When our fathers were changed from the earth.*"—*Henry Hammond.*

Title.—The title is peculiar, "*Upon Alamoth,*" suggesting "*a choir of virgins,*" as if this virgin-choir were selected to sing a Psalm that tells of perils and fears and alarms abounding, in order to show that even the feeble virgins may in that day sing without dread, because of "*The Mighty One*" on their side.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Title.—"*Upon Alamoth.*" [To be sung] *en soprano.—Armand de Mestral, quoted by Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends his church and his word, against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin.—*Martin Luther.*

Whole Psalm.—Luther and his companions, with all their bold readiness for danger and death in the cause of truth, had times when their feelings were akin to those of a divine singer, who said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" But in such hours the unflinching Reformer would cheerily say to his friend Melancthon, "Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm;" and they could sing it in Luther's own characteristic version:—

A sure stronghold our God is He,
A timely shield and weapon;
Our help he'll be, and set us free
From every ill can happen.

* * * * *

And were the world with devils filled,
All eager to devour us,
Our souls to fear shall little yield,
They cannot overpower us.

S. W. Christopher, in "Hymn Writers and their Hymns."

Verse 1.—"*God is our refuge and strength,*" etc. It begins abruptly, but nobly; ye may trust in whom and in what ye please; but God (Elohim) *is our refuge and strength.* "*A very present help.*" A help found to be very powerful and effectual in straits and difficulties. The words are very emphatic: עֶזְרָה בָצָרוֹת נִמְצָא מְאֹד, *ezrah betsaroth nimtsa meod,* "He is found an exceeding, or superlative, help in difficulties." Such we have found him, and therefore celebrate his praise.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*Though the earth be removed.*" John Wesley preached in Hyde-park, on the occasion of the earthquake felt in London, March 8, 1750, and repeated these words. Charles Wesley composed Hymn 67, Wesley's Collection, the following lines of which illustrate this verse:—

How happy then are we,
Who build, O Lord, on thee!
What can our foundation shock?
Though the shatter'd earth remove,
Stands our city on a rock,
On the rock of heavenly love.

Verses 2, 3.—The earth thrown into a state of wild confusion, the mountains hurled into the mighty deep, the sea tossed into a tempest, and the everlasting hills drifting on its foaming billows, are the vivid images by which the divine judgments on wicked and persecuting nations are described in the language of the prophets.—*John Morison.*

Verses 2, 3, 5.—Palestine was frequently subject to earthquakes, as might have been expected from its physical character and situation; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that although all other parts of the land seem to have been occasionally the scene of those terrible convulsions, the capital was almost wholly free from them. Mount Moriah, or the hill of vision, was so called from its towering height, which made it a conspicuous object in the distance. It stands in the centre of a group of hills, which surround it in the form of an amphitheatre, and it was chiefly to this position, under the special blessing of God, that it stood firm and immovable amid the frequent earthquakes that agitated and ravaged the Holy Land.—*Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

Verse 3.—"*Selah.*" See "Treasury of David," Vol. I., pp. 23, 26, 27; and Vol. II., pp. 224—227.

Verse 4.—"*There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.*" What is the *river* that makes glad the city of God? I answer, God himself is the river, as in the following verse, "*God is in the midst of her.*" 1. God the *Father*

is the river: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer. ii. 13. 2. God the *Son* is the river, the fountain of salvation: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Zech. xiii. 1. 3. God the *Spirit* is the river: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John vii. 38; iv. 14. What are the *streams* of this river? Answer—the *perfections* of God, the *fulness* of Christ, the *operations* of the Spirit, and these running in the *channel* of the *covenant of promise.—Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 4.—"*There is a river,*" etc. This is that flood which Ezekiel beheld in vision, the waters that came down from the right side of the house, and rising first to the ancles—then as the prophet passed onward, to the knees—then to the loins—became afterwards a river that he could not pass over; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. Shall we see in this, with the angelic doctor, the river of grace which burst forth from Mount Calvary? streams branching off hither and thither, the *pelagim* of the Hebrew—"to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth." Job xxxviii. O "fountain of gardens," "well of living waters," "streams from Lebanon," how do you, the "nether springs" of this world, bring to us something of the everlasting loveliness and peace of those "upper springs," by which the beautiful flock now feed and lie down, none making them afraid! Or with S. Ambrose and S. Bernard, understand the verse of the "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." And then the rivers of that flood shall indeed "*make glad the city of God,*" the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where is the tree of life, that beareth twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month; that country and that river of which the old liturgies say, "They who rest in the bosom of Abraham are in the tabernacles of joy and rest, in the dwellings of light, in the world of pleasure, in the church of the true Jerusalem, where there is no place for affliction, nor way of sadness, where there are no wars with the flesh, and no resistance to temptation, where sin is forgotten, and past danger is only remembered as a present pleasure."—*Thomas Aquinas, Ambrose, and Bernard, in Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 4.—"*There is a river.*" The river of God that flows from his throne. No enemy can cut off this stream from the church of Christ. Observe the reference to Isaiah xxxvi. 2; xxxvii. 25, compared with 2 Chron. xxxii. 2—4. These gently flowing, but full streams, are contrasted with the roaring waves of the sea.—*T. C. Barth.*

Verse 4.—"*There is a river,*" etc. The allusion is either to the river Kidron, which ran by Jerusalem, or to the waters of Shiloah, which by different courses and branches ran through the city of Jerusalem, and supplied the several parts of it with water, to the joy and comfort of its inhabitants. But the words are to be understood in a figurative sense, as applicable to gospel times; and this river either designs the gospel, the streams of which are its doctrines, which are living waters, that went out from Jerusalem, and which publish glad tidings of great joy to all sensible sinners; or the Spirit and his graces, which are compared to a well and rivers of living water, in the exercises of which the saints have much joy and peace; or else the Lord himself, who is the place of broad rivers and streams to his people, and is both their refreshment and protection; or rather his everlasting love to them is here intended.—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—Compared with the waterless deserts around, Judæa and Jerusalem were well watered, and drought pressed more severely on the besiegers than the besieged. The allusion here is to the well-known rill and pool of Siloam. So in Isaiah viii. 6, the blessing of God's protection is represented by the waters of Siloah, which go softly.—*From "The Psalms Chronologically arranged. By Four Friends,"* 1867.

Verse 4.—"*The city.*" The church of God is like a city, 1. Because a city is a place of *security.* 2. A place of *society:* what one wants another supplies; they have mutual fellowship. 3. A place of *unity,* that people may therein live in peace and concord. 4. A place of *trade* and *traffic.* Here is the market of free grace: "Ho, every one that thirsteth," etc. Here is the *pearl of great price* exposed for

sale. 5. A place of *freedom*, and *liberty*, freedom from the guilt of sin, wrath of God, curse of the law, present evil world, bondage to Satan, etc., etc. 6. A place of *order* and *regularity;* it hath its constitutions and ordinances. 7. A place of *rest*, and commodious to live in, and thus it is opposed to the wilderness. 8. A place of *privileges*. 9. A place of *pomp* and *splendour;* there is the king, the court, the throne. 10. A place of *pleasure* and *beauty*, Psalm xlviii. 2.—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 5.—"*God is in the midst of her.*" It is the real presence of Christ, and the supernatural power of his Spirit, which makes the church mighty to the conquest of souls. The church spreads because her "*God is in the midst of her.*" When at any time she has forgotten her dependence on the invisible intercession of her Head, and the gracious energy of his Spirit, she has found herself shorn of the locks of her great strength, and has become the laughing-stock of the Philistines. —*William Binnie, D.D.*

Verse 5.—"*God is in the midst of her.*" etc. The enemies of the church may toss her as waves but they shall not split her as rocks. She may be dipped in water as a *feather*, but shall not sink therein as *lead*. He that is a well of water within her to keep her from fainting, will also prove a wall of fire about her to preserve her from falling. *Tried* she may be, but *destroyed* she cannot be. Her foundation is the Rock of Ages, and her defence the everlasting Arms. It is only such fabrics as are bottomed upon the *sand*, that are overthrown by the *wind*. The adversaries of God's people will push at them as far as their horns will go, but when they have scoured them by persecution, as tarnished vessels, then God will throw such wisps into the fire.—*William Secker.*

Verse 5.—When the Papists were in their ruff, and Melancthon began sometimes to fear lest the infant Reformation should be stifled in the birth, Luther was wont to comfort him with these words: "*Si nos ruemus, ruet Christus una, scilicet ille regnator mundi, esto ruat, malo ego cum Christo ruere, quam cum Cæsare stare;* that is, If we perish, Christ must fall too (he is in the midst of us), and if it must be so, be it so; I had rather perish with Christ, that great Ruler of the world, than prosper with Cæsar.—*John Collings.*

Verse 5.—"*And that right early.*" Therefore, notice that all the great deliverances wrought in Holy Scriptures, were wrought *so early*, as to have been brought to pass in the middle of the night. So Gideon, with his pitchers and lamps against the Midianites; so Saul, when he went forth against Nahash, the Ammonite; so Joshua, when he went up to succour Gibeon; so Samson, when he carried off in triumph the gates of Gaza; so also the associate kings, under the guidance of Elisha, in their expedition against the Moabites, when they, according to God's command, filled the wilderness with ditches, and then beheld their enemies drawn to their destruction, by the reflection of the rising sun upon the water.—*Michael Ayguan.*

Verse 5.—"*Right early.*" Rather, with the margin, *when the morning appeareth.* The restoration of the Jews will be one of the first things at the season of the second advent. It will be accomplished in the very dawning of that day, "when the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing on his wings."—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 7.—"*The Lord of hosts is with us.*" There be three sorts of God's special presence, all which may be justly accounted the church's privilege. First, his *glorious* presence, or his presence testified by eminent glory, and the residence thereof. Thus God is said to be in heaven differentially, so as he is not anywhere else; and heaven is therefore called his throne or dwelling place (1 Kings viii. 39); as a king is nowhere so majestically as upon his throne, or in his chair of state; and this is so great a privilege of the church as that she comes not to enjoy it, until she be triumphant in heaven, and therefore is not the presence here intended. Secondly, his *gracious* presence or his presence testified by tokens of his grace and favour toward a people, whether visible, as in the temple where he chose to place his name, and wherein above all places he would be worshipped, in which respect he is said to dwell between the cherubim (2 Sam. vi. 2); or spiritual tokens of his grace, as assistance and acceptance in the duties of his worship, together with enjoyment and benefit of his ordinances. Thus he is present with his church and people in times of the gospel: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 20. This kind of presence is a privilege of the church militant, that he will be with her in holy and spiritual administrations

and ordinances; yet this is not the presence principally intended here. Thirdly, the *providential* presence, or his presence testified by acts of special providence, wherein the power, wisdom, or any other of God's attributes are eminently put forth, either by way of assistance or defence for a people. Thus the Lord was present with Israel in the wilderness by the pillar of fire and of a cloud (Exod. xiii. 21): "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light." And as this presence was intended for a guide, so was it also for a defence to his people against their enemies, and at which their enemies the Egyptians were troubled. Exodus xiv. 20. By this kind of presence the Lord is with his church militant, in reference to her external regiment, and more especially in her warfare, standing up for her and with her against her enemies; and this is the church's privilege in these words, "*The Lord of hosts is with us.*"—*John Strickland, B.D.* (1601—1670), *in a Sermon, entitled,* "*Immanuel,*" 1644.

Verse 7.—"*The God of Jacob.*" If any shall ask me, Why then the God of Jacob more than the God of Isaac? Though it might suffice that the Spirit of God is pleased so to speak, yet Mr. Calvin gives this reason, the covenant of grace was more solemnly made and publicly ratified with Abraham and Jacob, than it was with Isaac, and therefore when he will be looked upon as a God in covenant with his people, he holds forth himself more frequently by the name of the God of Abraham, and the God of Jacob, than of the God of Isaac; albeit sometimes he is pleased to take upon him that style also.—*John Strickland.*

Verse 7.—"*Our refuge.*" Our refuge, or stronghold, where the church, as a ship in quiet haven, may anchor and ride safe; or it may be a metaphor from the dens or burrows, where weaponless creatures find shelter, when they are hunted and pursued by their enemies, as Prov. xxx. 26, "*The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.*" They are safe in the rock if they can get thither, though never so weak in themselves. So the church, though pursued by bloody enemies, and though weak in herself, if yet she get under the wing of the God of Jacob, she may be fearless, for she is safe there. *He is our refuge.* It were to undervalue God, if we should fear the creatures, when he is with us. Antigonus, when he overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, he steps in unto them suddenly, demanding, "And how many do you reckon me for?"—*John Strickland.*

Verse 8.—"*Come, behold the works of the Lord.*" *Venite, videte.* God looks that his works should be well observed, and especially when he hath wrought any great deliverance for his people. Of all things, he cannot abide to be forgotten. —*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—"*What desolations he hath made in the earth.*" We are here first invited to a tragical sight. We are carried into the *camera di morte,* to see the ghastly visage of deaths and desolations all the world over; than which nothing can be more horrible and dreadful. You are called out to see piles of dead carcasses; to see whole basketfuls of heads, as was presented to Jehu: a woeful spectacle, but a necessary one. *See,* therefore *what desolations the Lord hath wrought in all the earth.* Desolations by wars: how many fields have been drenched with blood, and composted with carcasses; how many millions of men have been cut off in all ages by the edge of the sword! Desolations by famine; wherein men have been forced to make their bodies one another's sepulchres, and mothers to devour their children of a span long. Desolations by plague and pestilence; which have swept away, as our story tells us, eight hundred thousand in one city. Desolations by inundations of waters; which have covered the faces of many regions, and rinsed the earth of her unclean inhabitants. Desolations by earthquakes, which have swallowed up whole cities, and those great and populous. Desolations wrought by the hand of his angels; as in Egypt; in the tents of the Assyrians, one hundred and eighty-five thousand in one night; in the camp of Israel, in David's pestilence. Desolations wrought by the hand of men, in battles and massacres. Desolations by wild beasts; as in the colonies of Ashur planted in Samaria. Desolations by the swarms of obnoxious and noisome creatures; as in Egypt, and since in Africa: "He spoke the word, and the grasshoppers came, and caterpillars innumerable," Ps. cv. 34. Insomuch as, in the consulship of M. Fulvius Flaccus, after the bloody wars of Africa, followed infinite numbers of locusts; which, after devouring of all herbs and fruit, were, by a sudden wind, hoised into the African Sea: infection followed upon their

putrefaction, and thereupon a general mortality: in number, four-score thousand died: upon the sea-coast betwixt Carthage and Utica, above two-hundred thousand. Desolations every way, and by what variety of means soever; yet all wrought by the divine hand: "*What desolations he hath wrought.*" Whoever be the instrument, he is the Author.—*Joseph Hall* (*Bishop*).

Verse 8.—Doth not God make great desolations, when he makes that man that counted himself a most religious man, to confess himself not sufficient for one good thought? As it was with Paul, does he not make wars to cease when he turns the heart of a persecutor, earnestly to seek peace with God and man, yea, with his very enemies? Doth he not break the bow and all weapons of war asunder, and that in all the earth, when he proclaims peace to all that are far off and near, professor and profane, Jews and Gentiles?—*Richard Coore.*

Verse 8—10.—"*Come, behold the works of the Lord.*" What works? ruining works. "*What desolations he hath made in the earth.*" God made strange work in the world at that time. Those countries which before were as the garden of God, became like a desolate wilderness: who was able to bear this with patience? Yet the Spirit of God saith in the next words, it must be patiently borne. When God lets men strive and war with one another to a common confusion, yet no man may strive with God about it; and the reason given why no man may, is only this (which is indeed all the reason in the world), *He is God.* So it follows in the Psalm; "*Be still, and know that I am God;*" as if the Lord had said, Not a word, do not strive nor reply; whatever you see, hold your peace; know that I, being God, give no account of any of my matters.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—He that destroyeth all the instruments of war doth surely make peace; and he that *maketh war to cease*, doth certainly make peace begin. Peace is made two ways; first, by taking up the differences and reconciling the spirits of men; secondly, by breaking the power and taking away all provisions of war from men. The Lord maketh peace by both these ways, or by either of them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.*" When the Romans had, in their way of speaking, given peace to a nation, by extirpating the greatest part of the miserable inhabitants, they collected the arms of the vanquished, and setting them on fire, reduced them to ashes. A medal, struck by Vespasian, the Roman emperor, on finishing his wars in Italy, and other parts of the world, represents the goddess of peace holding an olive branch in one hand, and with a lighted torch in the other, setting fire to a heap of armour. The custom is thus alluded to by Virgil:—

> "*O mihi præteritos referat si Jupiter annos!*
> *Qualis eram cum primam aciem Præneste sub ipsa*
> *Stravi, scutorumque incendi victor acervos.*"
>
> *Æn.* lib. iii. v. 1. 560.

"O that Jupiter would restore to me the years that are past! Such as I was, when under Præneste itself, I routed the foremost rank of the enemy, and victorious set fire to heaps of armour."

The same practice, by the command of Jehovah, prevailed among the Jews; the first instance of it occurs in the book of Joshua, xi. 6. It is also celebrated in the songs of Zion, as the attendant of peace, and the proof of its continuance: "He maketh wars to cease," etc.—*Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

Verse 9.—"*He burneth the chariot in the fire.*" By degrees the chariot came to be one of the recognised forces in war, and we find it mentioned throughout the books of Scriptures, not only in its literal sense, but as a metaphor which every one could understand. In the Psalms, for example, are several allusions to the war-chariot. "*He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.*" Ps. xlvi. 9. Again: "At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a deep sleep." Ps. lxxvi. 6. And: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Ps. xx. 7. Now; the force of these passages cannot be properly appreciated unless we realise to ourselves the dread in which the war-chariot was held by the foot soldiers. Even cavalry were much feared; but the chariots were objects of almost superstitious fear, and the rushing sound of their wheels, the noise of the horses' hoofs, and the shaking

of the ground as the " prancing horses and jumping chariots " (Nah. iii. 2), thundered along, are repeatedly mentioned.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 10.—" *Be still, and know that I am God.*" The great works of God, wherein his sovereignty appeared, had been described in the foregoing verses. In the awful desolations that he made, and by delivering his people by terrible things, he showed his greatness and dominion. Herein he manifested his power and sovereignty, and so commands all *to be still, and know that he is God.* For, says he, " *I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*"

In the words may be observed, 1. A duty described, to be still before God, and under the dispensations of his providence; which implies that we must be still as to *words;* not speaking against the sovereign dispensations of providence, or complaining of them; not darkening counsel by words without knowledge, or justifying ourselves and speaking great swelling words of vanity. We must be still as to *actions* and outward behaviour, so as not to oppose God in his dispensations; and as *to the inward frame of our hearts,* cultivating a calm and quiet submission of soul to the sovereign pleasure of God, whatever it may be.

2. We may observe the ground of this duty, namely *the divinity of God.* His being God is a sufficient reason why we should be *still* before him, in no wise murmuring, or objecting, or opposing, but calmly and humbly submitting to him.

3. How we must fulfill this duty of being still before God, namely, with a sense of his divinity, as seeing the ground of this duty, in that we " *know* " him to be God. Our submission is to be such as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to submit contrary to reason, but to submit as seeing the reason and ground of submission. Hence, the bare consideration *that God is God* may well be sufficient to still all objections and oppositions against the divine sovereign dispensations.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 10.—" *Be still, and know that I am God.*" This text of Scripture forbids quarrelling and murmuring against God. Now let me apply as I go along. There are very few, and these very well circumstanced, that find themselves in no hazard of quarrelling with God. I think almost that if angels were on earth, they would be in hazard of it. I will assure you, there are none that have corruption, but they have need to be afraid of this. But many give way to this quarrelling, and consider not the hazard thereof. Beware of it, for it is a dreadful thing to quarrel with God: who may say unto him, " What doest thou? " It is a good account of Aaron, that when God made fire to destroy his sons, he held his peace. Let us then, while we bear the yoke, " sit alone and keep silence, and put our mouths in the dust, if so be there may be hope." Lam. iii. 28, 29. Ye know, the murmuring of the children of Israel cost them very dear. " *Be still,*" that is, beware of murmuring against me, saith the Lord. God gives not an account of his matters to any; because there may be many things ye cannot see through; and therefore ye may think it better to have wanted them, and much more, for the credit of God and the church. I say, God gives not an account of his matters to any. Beware, then, of drawing rash conclusions.—*Richard Cameron's Sermon preached July 18th,* 1680, *three days before he was killed at Airsmoss.*

Verse 10.—" *Be still and know that I am God.*" Faith gives the soul a view of the great God. It teacheth the soul to set his almightiness against sin's magnitude, and his infinitude against sin's multitude; and so quencheth the temptation. The reason why the presumptuous sinner fears so little, and the despairing soul so much, is for want of knowing God as great; therefore, to cure them both, the serious consideration of God, under this notion, is propounded: " *Be still, and know that I am God;* " as if he had said, Know, O ye wicked, that I am God, who can avenge myself when I please upon you, and cease to provoke me by your sins to your own confusion; and again, know, ye trembling souls, that I am God; and therefore able to pardon the greatest sins, and cease to dishonour me by your unbelieving thoughts of me.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 10.—" *Be still, and know that I am the Lord.*" Not everyone is a fit scholar for God's school, but such as are purified according to the purification of the sanctuary. Carnal men are drowned in fleshly and worldly cares, and neither purged nor lifted up to receive the light of God, or else indisposed by prejudice or passion, that they cannot learn at all. We will never savingly know him, till our souls be free of these indispositions. Among all the elements the earth is fitted to receive seed of the sower; if he cast it into the fire, it burneth; if in the air, it withereth;

if in the waters, it rotteth, the instability of that body is for producing monsters, because it closeth not straitly the seeds of fishes. Spirits of a fiery temper, or light in inconstancy, or moving as waters, are not for God's lessons, but such as in *stayed humility* do rest under his hand. If waters be mixed with clay in their substance, or their surface be troubled with wind, they can neither receive nor render any image; such unstable spirits in the school of God, lose their time and endanger themselves.—*William Struther.*

Verse 10.—"*Be still, and know,*" etc. As you must come and *see* (verse 8), so come and *hear* what the Lord saith to those enemies of yours.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord of hosts is with us.*" On Tuesday Mr. Wesley could with difficulty be understood, though he often attempted to speak. At last, with all the strength he had, he cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us." Again, raising his hand, and waving it in triumph, he exclaimed with thrilling effect, "The best of all is, God is with us." These words seem to express the leading feature of his whole life. God had been with him from early childhood; his providence had guided him through all the devious wanderings of human life; and now, when he was entering the "valley of the shadow of death," the same hand sustained him.—*From "Wesley and his Coadjutors." By Rev W. C. Larrabee, A.M. Edited by Rev. B. F. Tefft, D.D. Cincinnati.* 1851."

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The song of faith in troublous times. I. *Our refuge.* Our only, impregnable, accessible, delightful place of retreat is our God. II. *Our strength.* Our all-sufficient, unconquerable, honourable, and emboldening strength is our God. III. *Our help.* Ever near, sympathising, faithful, real, and potent is our God.

Verse 1.—"*A very present help in trouble.*" Religion never so valuable as in seasons of trouble, sickness, and death. God is present helping us to bear trouble, to improve it, and to survive it. Present by gracious communications and sweet manifestations; present most when he seems absent, restraining, overruling, and sanctifying trouble. Trust and wait.—*James Smith.*

Verse 2.—The reasons, advantages, and glory of holy courage.

Verses 2, 3.—I. The great and many causes for fear. 1. What might come—mountains, waters, etc., persecution, pestilence, etc. 2. What must come—afflictions, death, judgment. II. The great and one cause for not fearing. Fearlessness under such circumstances should be well grounded. God himself is our refuge, and we confiding in him are fearless.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 4.—Glad tidings in sad times; or, the city of God in the times of trouble and confusion, watered with the river of consolation.—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 4.—What can this "*river*" be, but that blessed covenant to which David himself repaired in the time of trouble? . . . . And what are "*the streams*" of this river, but the outgoings and effects of this divine constitution? I. The blood of Jesus. II. The influences of the Holy Spirit. III. The doctrines and promises of the gospel. IV. The ordinances of religion. V. All the means of grace.—*W. Jay.*

Verse 4.—"*Make glad the city of God.*" There are four ways in which the streams of a river would gladden the citizens. I. The first regards *prospect.* II. The second regards *traffic.* III. The third regards *fertility.* IV. The fourth regards *supply.*—*W. Jay.*

Verse 4.—"*City of God.*" The church may be called "the city of God," because, 1. He dwells in it (see verse 5). 2. He *founded* it and *built* it. 3. It derives all *privileges* and *immunities* from him. 4. He is the chief Ruler or Governor there. 5. It is his property. 6. He draws the *rent* of it.—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verses 4, 5.—To the church, Joy, Establishment, Deliverance.

Verse 6.—What man did and what God did.

Verse 8.—"*Behold the works of the Lord.*" I. *They are worth beholding,* for they are all like himself; well becoming his infinite power, wisdom, justice. II. *Our eyes were given us for this very purpose*—not for the beholding of vanity, not for the ensnaring or wounding of the soul; but for the use and honour of the Creator. III. *The Lord delights to have his works beheld;* he knows their excellency and perfection, and that the more they are seen and noted the more honour will accrue to the Maker of them. IV. *None but we can do it;* there is great reason then that we should carefully "*behold,*" etc. V. *This shall be of great benefit to ourselves.* —*Bishop Hall.*

Verse 8.—The desolations of the Lord, the consolation of his saints. I. A declaration of what has happened. II. A promise of what shall be achieved.—*Spurgeon's Sermons, No.* 190.

Verse 9.—The Great Peacemaker, or the principles of the gospel our only hope, for the total abolition of war.

Verse 10.—"*Be still, and know that I am God.*" The sole consideration that God is God, sufficient to still all objections to his sovereignty.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 10.—"*I am God.*" 1. In that he is God, he is an absolutely and infinitely *perfect* being. 2. As he is God he is so *great,* that he is infinitely above all comprehension. 3. As he is God, all things are his *own.* 4. In that he is God, he is *worthy* to be sovereign over all things. 5. In that he is God, he *will* be sovereign, and *will* act as such. 6. In that he is God, he is able to *avenge* himself on those who oppose his sovereignty.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

PSALM XLVII.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician.—*Many songs were dedicated to this leader of the chorus, but he was not overloaded thereby. God's service is such delight that it cannot weary us; and that choicest part of it, the singing of his praises, is so pleasurable that we cannot have too much of it. Doubtless, the chief musician, as he was commissioned with so many sacred songs, felt that the more the merrier.* A Psalm for the Sons of Korah. *We cannot agree with those who think that the sons of Korah were the authors of these Psalms: they have all the indication of David's authorship that one could expect to see. Our ear has grown accustomed to the ring of David's compositions, and we are morally certain that we hear it in this Psalm. Every expert would detect here the autography of the Son of Jesse, or we are greatly mistaken. The sons of Korah sang these Psalms, but we believe they did not write them. Fit singers were they whose origin reminded them of sin, whose existence was a proof of sovereign grace, and whose name has a close connection with the name of Calvary.*

SUBJECT.—*Whether the immediate subject of this Psalm be the carrying up of the ark from the house of Obededom to Mount Zion, or the celebration of some memorable victory, it wou'd be hard to decide. As even the doctors differ, who shall dogmatise? But it is very clear that both the present sovereignty of Jehovah, and the final victories of our Lord, are here fitly hymned, while his ascension, as the prophecy of them, is sweetly gloried in.*

DIVISION.—*In so short a Psalm, there is no need of any other division than that indicated by the musical pause at the end of verse* 4.

EXPOSITION.

CLAP your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

1. "*O clap your hands.*" The most natural and most enthusiastic tokens of exultation are to be used in view of the victories of the Lord, and his universal reign. Our joy in God may be demonstrative, and yet he will not censure it. "*All ye people.*" The joy is to extend to all nations; Israel may lead the van, but all the Gentiles are to follow in the march of triumph, for they have an equal share in that Kingdom where there is neither Greek nor Jew, but Christ is all and in all. Even now if they did but know it, it is the best hope of all nations that Jehovah ruleth over them. If they cannot all speak the same tongue, the symbolic language of the hands they can all use. All people will be ruled by the Lord in the latter days, and will exult in that rule; were they wise they would submit to it now, and rejoice to do so; yea, they would clap their hands in rapture at the thought. "*Shout,*" let your voices keep tune with your hands. "*Unto God,*" let him have all the honours of the day, and let them be loud, joyous, universal, and undivided. "*With the voice of triumph,*" with gladsome sounds, consonant with such splendid victories, so great a King, so excellent a rule, and such gladsome subjects. Many are human languages, and yet the nations may triumph as with one voice. Faith's view of God's government is full of transport. The prospect of the universal reign of the Prince of Peace is enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing; what will the reality be? Well might the poet of the seasons bid mountains and valleys raise their joyous hymn—

> "For the GREAT SHEPHERD reigns,
> And his *unsuffering* kingdom yet will come."

2 For the LORD most high *is* terrible; *he is* a great King over all the earth.

2. "*For the Lord,*" or JEHOVAH, the self-existent and only God; "*Most high,*" most great in power, lofty in dominion, eminent in wisdom, elevated in glory. "*Is terrible,*" none can resist his power or stand before his vengeance; yet as these

terrors are wielded on the behalf of his subjects, they are fit reasons for rejoicing. Omnipotence, which is terrible to crush, is almighty to protect. At a grand review of the troops of a great prince, all his loyal subjects are filled with triumph, because their liege lord is so able to defend his own, and so much dreaded by his foes. "*He is a great King over all the earth.*" Not over Judea only, but even to the utmost isles his reign extends. Our God is no local deity, no petty ruler of a tribe; in infinite majesty he rules the mightiest realms as absolute arbiter of destiny, sole monarch of all lands, King of kings and Lord of lords. Not a hamlet or an islet is excluded from his dominion. How glorious will that era be when this is seen and known of all; when in the person of Jesus all flesh shall behold the glory of the Lord!

3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

3. "*He,*" with whom is infinite power, "*shall subdue the people under us.*" The battle is not ours but the Lord's. He will take his own time, but he will certainly achieve victory for his church. Truth and righteousness shall through grace climb to the ascendant. We wage no doubtful warfare. Hearts the most rebellious, and wills the most stubborn, shall submit to all-conquering grace. All the Lord's people, whether Jews or Gentiles, may clap their hands at this, for God's victory will be theirs; but surely apostles, prophets, ministers, and those who suffer and labour most, may take the largest share in the joy. Idolatry, infidelity, superstition we shall yet tread upon, as men tread down the stones of the street. "*And the nations under our feet.*" The church of God shall be the greatest of monarchies, her victory shall be signal and decisive. Christ shall take to himself his great power and reign, and all the tribes of men shall own at once his glory and the glory of his people in him. How changed will be the position of affairs in coming ages! The people of God have been under the feet of men in long and cruel persecutions, and in daily contempt; but God will reverse the position, and the best in character shall be first in honour.

4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

While as yet we see not all things put under him, we are glad to put ourselves and our fortunes at his disposal. "*He shall choose our inheritance for us.*" We feel his reign to be so gracious that we even now ask to be in the fullest degree the subjects of it. We submit our will, our choice, our desire, wholly to him. Our heritage here and hereafter we leave to him, let him do with us as seemeth him good. "*The excellency of Jacob whom he loved.*" He gave his ancient people their portion, he will give us ours, and we ask nothing better; this is the most spiritual and real manner of clapping our hands because of his sovereignty, namely, to leave all our affairs in his hands, for then our hands are empty of all care for self, and free to be used in his honour. He was the boast and glory of Israel, he is and shall be ours. He loved his people and became their greatest glory; he loves us, and he shall be our exceeding joy. As for the latter days, we ask nothing better than to stand in our appointed lot, for if we have but a portion in our Lord Jesus, it is enough for our largest desires. Our beauty, our boast, our best treasure, lies in having such a God to trust in, such a God to love us.

Selah. Yes, pause, ye faithful songsters. Here is abundant room for holy meditation—

"Muse awhile, obedient thought,
Lo, the theme's with rapture fraught;
See thy King, whose realm extends
E'en to earth's remotest ends!
Gladly shall the nations own
Him their Lord and God alone;
Clap their hands with holy mirth,
Hail him MONARCH OF THE EARTH.
Come, my soul, before him bow,
Gladdest of his subjects thou;
Leave thy portion to his choice,
In his sovereign will rejoice,
This thy purest, deepest bliss,
He is thine and thou art his."

5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

5. *"God is gone up with a shout."* Faith hears the people already shouting. The command of the first verse is here regarded as a fact. The fight is over, the conqueror ascends to his triumphal chariot, and rides up to the gates of the city which is made resplendent with the joy of his return. The words are fully applicable to the ascension of the Redeemer. We doubt not that angels and glorified spirits welcomed him with acclamations. He came not without song, shall we imagine that he returned in silence? *"The Lord with the sound of a trumpet."* Jesus is Jehovah. The joyful strain of the trumpet betokens the splendour of his triumph. It was meet to welcome one returning from the wars with martial music. Fresh from Bozrah, with his garments all red from the winepress, he ascended, leading capitvity captive, and well might the clarion ring out the tidings of Immanuel's victorious return.

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

"Sing praises." What jubilation is here, when five times over the whole earth is called upon to sing *to God!* He is worthy, he is Creator, he is goodness itself *Sing praises*, keep on with the glad work. Never let the music pause. He never ceases to be good, let us never cease to be grateful. Strange that we should need so much urging to attend to so heavenly an exercise. *"Sing praises unto our King."* Let him have all our praise; no one ought to have even a particle of it. Jesus shall have it all. Let his sovereignty be the fount of gladness. It is a sublime attribute, but full of bliss to the faithful. Let our homage be paid not in groans but in songs. He asks not slaves to grace his throne; he is no despot; singing is fit homage for a monarch so blessed and gracious. Let all hearts that own his sceptre sing and sing on for ever, for there is everlasting reason for thanksgiving while we dwell under the shadow of such a throne.

7 For God *is* the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.

7. *"For God is the King of all the earth."* The Jews of our Saviour's time resented this truth, but had their hearts been right they would have rejoiced in it. They would have kept their God to themselves, and not even have allowed the Gentile dogs to eat the crumbs from under his table. Alas! how selfishness turns honey into wormwood. Jehovah is not the God of the Jews only, all the nations of the earth are, through the Messiah, yet to own him Lord. Meanwhile his providential throne governs all events beneath the sky. *"Sing ye praises with understanding."* Sing a didactic Psalm. Sound doctrine praises God. Even under the economy of types and ceremonies, it is clear that the Lord had regard to the spirituality of worship, and would be praised thoughtfully, intelligently, and with deep appreciation of the reason for song. It is to be feared from the slovenly way in which some make a noise in singing, that they fancy any sound will do. On the other hand, from the great attention paid by some to the mere music, we feel sadly sure that the sense has no effect upon them. Is it not a sin to be tickling men's ears with sounds when we profess to be adoring the Lord? What has a sensuous delight in organs, anthems, etc., to do with devotion? Do not men mistake physical effects for spiritual impulses? Do they not often offer to God strains far more calculated for human amusement than for divine acceptance? An understanding enlightened of the Holy Spirit is then and then only fully capable of offering worthy praise.

8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

Now at this moment, over the most debased idolaters, God holds a secret rule; here is work for faith. How we ought to long for the day when this truth shall be changed in its aspect, and the rule now unrecognised shall be delighted in! The great truth that *God reigneth* in providence is the guarantee that in a gracious gospel sense his promise shall be fulfilled, and his kingdom shall come. *"He sitteth upon the throne of his holiness."* Unmoved he occupies an undisputed throne, whose decrees, acts, and commands are holiness itself. What other throne is like this? Never was it stained with injustice, or defiled with sin. Neither is he who sits

upon it dismayed, or in a dilemma. He sits in serenity, for he knows his own power, and sees that his purposes will not miscarry. Here is reason enough for holy song.

9 The princes of the people are gathered together, *even* the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth *belong* unto God: he is greatly exalted.

9. "*The princes of the people are gathered together.*" The prophetic eye of the Psalmist sees the willing subjects of the great King assembled to celebrate his glory. Not only the poor and the men of low estate are there, but nobles bow their willing necks to his sway. "All kings shall bow down before him." No people shall be unrepresented; their great men shall be good men, their royal ones regenerate ones. How august will be the parliament where the Lord Jesus shall open the court, and princes shall rise up to do him honour! "*Even the people of the God of Abraham.*" That same God, who was known only to here and there a patriarch like the father of the faithful, shall be adored by a seed as many as the stars of heaven. The covenant promise shall be fulfilled, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Shiloh shall come, and "to him shall the gathering of the people be." Babel's dispersion shall be obliterated by the gathering arm of the Great Shepherd King.

"*For the shields of the earth belong unto God.*" The insignia of pomp, the emblems of rank, the weapons of war, all must pay loyal homage to the King of all. Right honourables must honour Jesus, and majesties must own him to be far more majestic. Those who are earth's protectors, the shields of the commonwealth, derive their might from him, and are his. All principalities and powers must be subject unto Jehovah and his Christ, for "*He is greatly exalted.*" In nature, in power, in character, in glory, there is none to compare with him. Oh, glorious vision of a coming era! Make haste, ye wheels of time! Meanwhile, ye saints, "Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Some have applied this Psalm to Christ's ascension; but it speaks of his Second Coming. The Mighty One is seated peacefully on his throne. We are referred back to Psalm xlv.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—"*O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*" This should be done, 1. Cheerfully: "*Clap your hands,*" for this is a sign of inward joy, Nah. iii. 19. 2. Universally: "O clap your hands, *all ye people.*" 3. Vocally: "*Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*" 4. Frequently: "*Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises,*" verse 6; and again "*sing praises,*" verse 7. It cannot be done too frequently. 5. Knowingly and discreetly: "Sing ye praises *with understanding;*" know the reason why ye are to praise him.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—"*O clap your hands,*" etc. Such expressions of pious and devout affection as to some may seem indecent and imprudent, yet ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed; because if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection, and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*O clap your hands.*" The *voice of melody* is not so much to be uttered with the tongue or with the hands; that is, it is our deeds not our words, by which God is here to be praised. Even as it was in him whose pattern we are to follow: "Jesus began both to do and to teach."—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 1.—"*All ye people.*" *Peoples*, in the plural. Here it is used to call both Jews and Gentiles—all nations.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—"*Shout unto God.*" *Jubilate Deo: in* God, and *concerning* God, and *in honour of* God. He does not excite them to carnal joy.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth.*" The church celebrates the ascension of Christ, because then he was "highly exalted;" then he became "*terrible*" to his enemies, all power in heaven and in earth being committed to him; and then he began to display the excellent majesty of his universal kingdom, to which he was then inaugurated, being crowned "King of kings, and Lord of lords."—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord most high is terrible.*" Christ is "*terrible,*" that is, fearful, or meet to be feared, not of his children only for their good, but of the wicked also for their punishment; "*terrible*" to the devil, as being stronger than he, casting out the prince of darkness by the finger of God. Luke xi. 22; John xii. 31. And therefore so soon as an unclean spirit saw Jesus, he cried out, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us?" Mark i. 24; or as other devils, Matt. viii. 29, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" for the devils in believing tremble. "*Terrible*" to hypocrites, and other impious agents of the devil, as having his fan in his hand to make clean his floor, and to gather his wheat into his garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Matt. iii. 12. Or Christ is *excelsus in potentia, terribilis in justitia;* high in power, and fearful in justice: high in exalting the good, and terrible in humbling the bad.—*John Boys.*

Verse 3.—"*He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.*" The consequence of our Lord's ascension was the going forth of the all-subduing Word, under the influence and direction of which the convinced and converted nations renounced their idols and their lusts, and bowed their willing necks to the yoke of Jesus. This is that great conquest, foreshowed by the victories of Joshua, David, and all the faithful heroes of old time, and foretold in language borrowed from their history.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—"*He shall subdue the people under us,*" etc., or *he shall lead* like *sheep;* or *bring unto the fold;* as divers render the word, by comparing Isa. v. 17; Micah ii. 12. He seems to speak of such a subjugation of them, as was for the good of the people subdued, because this is matter of rejoicing to them, verse 1; which is true both of these people whom David subdued, who thereby had opportunities, obligations, and encouragements to own and worship the true God, which was the only way to their true and lasting happiness; and especially of those Gentiles who were subdued to Christ by the preaching of the gospel. The Gentile converts were in some sort brought under the Jews, because they were subjected to Christ and to his apostles, and to the primitive church, which were Jews.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 3.—"*And the nations under our feet.*" By this manner of speech is meant, that the Gentiles should be *scholars,* and the Jews *schoolmasters,* as it were to them; for *to sit under the feet,* or *at the feet,* is used in Scripture for being a scholar, or learning, as Acts xxii. 3.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall choose.*" Futures are variously rendered; and accordingly the vulgar Latin, Syriac, and Arabic, render this word, *He hath chosen.*—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall choose our inheritance for us.*" It is reported of a woman who, being sick, was asked whether she was willing to live or die; she answered, "Which God pleases." But, said one, if God should refer it to you, which would you choose? "Truly," replied she, "I would refer it to him again." Thus that man obtains his will of God, whose will is subjected to God. We are not to be troubled that we have no more *from* God, but we are to be troubled that we do no more *for* God. Christians, if the Lord be well pleased with your persons, should not you be well pleased with your conditions? There is more reason that you should be pleased with them, than that he should be pleased with you. Believers should be like sheep, which change their pastures at the will of the shepherd; or like vessels in a house, which stand to be filled or emptied at the pleasure of their owner. He that sails upon the sea of this world in his own bottom, will sink at last into a bottomless ocean. Never were any their own carvers, but they were sure to cut their own fingers.—*William Secker.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall choose our inheritance for us,*" means that he who knows what is better for us than ourselves, *hath chosen*, that is, hath appointed, and that of his own good will and mercy towards us, *our inheritance;* not only things meet for this life as lands, and houses, and possessions, etc., but even all other things concerning the hope of a better life, to wit, a kingdom that cannot be shaken, an everlasting habitation, an inheritance which is immortal and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven.—*John Boys.*

Verse 4.—"*The excellency* (*or glory*) *of Jacob whom he loved;*" that is, even all those excellent things that he gave and promised to Jacob, wherein he might glory and rejoice. The faithful mean, that they had as great, both abundance and assurance of God's grace and goodness, as ever Jacob had.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 4.—It may be thou art godly and poor. 'Tis well; but canst thou tell whether, if thou wert not poor, thou wouldst be godly? Surely God knows us better than we ourselves do, and therefore can best fit the estate to the person. —*Giles Fletcher.*

Verse 5.—"*God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.*" It is worthy (as Origen suggests) that this mention of the "*shout,*" and the *voice* of the "*trumpet,*" serves to connect together past and future events in the history of the church and of the world, and carry our thoughts forward to Christ's coming to judgment.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—Thou hast great cause, O my soul, to praise him, and to rejoice before him, especially if thou considerest that Christ ascended not for himself, but also for thee: it is God in our nature that is gone up to heaven: whatever God acted on the person of Christ, that he did as in thy behalf, and he means to act the very same on thee. Christ as a public person ascended up to heaven; thy interest is in this very ascension of Jesus Christ; and therefore dost thou consider thy Head as soaring up? O let every member praise his name; let thy tongue (called thy *glory*), glory in this, and trumpet out his praise, that in respect of thy duty it may be verified: "Christ is *gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.*"—*Isaac Ambrose.*

Verse 7.—"*For God is the King of all the earth:*" as if he had said, "Our King, said I? it is too little; he is King *of all the earth.*"—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—"*Sing ye praises with understanding.*" How may we make melody in our hearts to God in singing of Psalms? We must sing "*with understanding.*" We must not be guided by the *time*, but the *words* of the Psalm; we must mind the matter more than the music, and consider what we sing, as well as how we sing; the tune may affect the fancy, but it is the matter affects the heart, and that God principally eyes. The Psalmist adviseth us in this particular, and so doth the apostle (1 Cor. xiv. 15). Otherwise this sweet duty would be more the work of a chorister than of a Christian, and we should be more delighted in an anthem of the musician's making, than in a Psalm of the Spirit's making. A Lapide observes that in the text, 1 Cor. xiv. 15, the word *understanding* is *maschil*, משכיל, profound judgment: we must sing *wisely*, if we will sing gratefully; we must relish what we sing. In a word, we must sing as we must pray; now the most rude petitioner will *understand* what he prays. 1 Cor. xiv. 15. If we do not understand what we sing, it argues carelessness of spirit, or hardness of heart; and this makes the service impertinent. Upon this the worthy Davenant cries out, "Adieu to the bellowing of the Papists, who sing in an unknown tongue." God will not understand us in that service which we understand not ourselves. One of the first pieces of the creation was *light*, and this must break out in every duty.—*John Wells* (—1676), *in* "*Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 7.—"*Sing ye praises with understanding,*" *sing an instructive song.* Let *sense* and *sound* go together. Let your *hearts* and *heads* go with your *voices. Understand* what you *sing*, and *feel* what you *understand.*—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 7.—"*Sing ye praises with understanding;*" because in the full light of the new dispensation, the darkness of the patriarchal ages, the seeing as through a glass of the Levitical law, are turned into the vision of full and very reality.—*Hugo Victorinus.*

Verse 7.—"*Sing ye praises with understanding.*" Mark this, thou who daily readest the Psalms, and yet dost not understand them.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 7.—"*With understanding.*" If they had sung "*with understanding,*" they had not adored stones. When a man sensible sang to a stone insensible, did he sing

" with understanding " ? But now, brethren, we see not with our eyes whom we adore, and yet correctly we adore. Much more is God commended to us, that with our eyes we see him not.—*Augustine.*

Verse 9.—*" The princes of the people are gathered together."* I note from hence, 1. That it is not impossible for great men to be good men; for the heads of a country to be members of Christ; and for princes as well as the people to serve the God of Abraham. It is said by the prophet, " upon my peace came great bitterness; " a thousand fall on the left hand, but ten thousand at the right hand " (Psalm xci. 7): ten perish in their prosperity, for one that falleth in adversity. *Homo victus in paradiso, victor in stercore:* Adam in the garden of pleasure was overcome by the subtil serpent, whereas Job on the dunghill of misery was more than a conqueror. Woodmen say that deer are more circumspect in fat pastures; so the godly fear most in a rich estate: *nihil timendum video* (saith one), *timeo tamen.** It is a sweet prayer of our church in the Litany. " Good Lord, deliver us in all time of our wealth," insinuating that our minds are not so wanton in want as in abundance: yet, as you see, such is Christ's unspeakable goodness towards all sorts of men, in preventing them even with the riches of his mercy, that not only the mean people, but also the mighty princes among the heathen are joined unto the church of the God of Abraham.—*John Boys.*

Verse 9.—*" Gathered together."* Christ's gathering of the saints together unto him will be at his second coming, his coming to judgment, the general and final judgment. " Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." 2. Thess. ii. 1.—*James Scot* (—1773), *in " A Collection of Sermons,"* 1774.

Verse 9.—*" The people of the God of Abraham."* First, touching *the God of Abraham,* it is Christ, whose day Abraham desired to see, and in seeing whereof he did so much rejoice (John viii.); that is, not only the day of his birth, which he saw, as we learn by the oath which he caused his servant to take (Gen. xxiv.), but also the day of his passion, which he saw long ago, and rejoiced in seeing it, when he said to his son Isaac in the mount, " The Lord will provide a sacrifice." Gen. xxii. 8. Secondly, *" The people of the God of Abraham,"* are his children and posterity: not only they that are the seed of Abraham, coming out of his loins, and are *" the children of the flesh "* (Rom. ix. 9); but *" the children of the promise; "* for if they that come out of Abraham's loins were only his children, then the Hagarins, the Turks, and Ishmaelites should be the people of God; *" But in Isaac shall thy seed be called."* They that lay hold of the promise by faith, " They that are of the faith, are the children of Abraham " (Gal. iii. 7), that have the same spirit of faith that Abraham had. As the apostle saith (Rom. ii. 28), " He is not a Jew that is one outwardly, but a Jew inwardly is the true Jew." They that worship the Messias by believing in him with the faith of Abraham, they are Abraham's children, and *the people of Abraham's God,* which thing John Baptist affirmeth (Matt. iii.), " God can of stones raise up children to Abraham." So the Gentiles, which worshipped stones, and therefore were *" like unto them "* (Psalm cxv.), were notwithstanding raised up to be children to Abraham.—*Lancelot Andrews.*

Verse 9.—*" The shields of the earth belong unto God."* There we have the *rulers* of the earth set forth by a double relation; the one *upward,* they are *scuta Deo,* they belong to God; the other *downward,* they are *scuta terræ, " the shields of the earth; "* and both these noting two things, their *dignity* and their *duty.* They belong to God, it is their honour that he hath sealed them: they belong to God, it is their duty to be subject to him. They are *" shields of the earth,"* it is their honour that they are above others: they are *" the shields of the earth,"* it is their duty to protect others.—*Edward Reynolds (Bishop).*

Verse 9.—*" The shields of the earth are God's,"* is understood by many as spoken of princes. I admit that this metaphor is of frequent occurrence in Scripture, nor does this sense seem to be unsuitable to the scope of the passage. . . . . Yet the sense will be more simple if we explain the words thus: That, as it is God alone who defends and preserves the world, the high and supreme majesty which is sufficient for so exalted and difficult a work as the preservation of the world, is justly looked upon with admiration. The sacred writer expressly uses the word *shields* in the plural number, for, considering the various and almost innumerable dangers which

* Seneca.

unceasingly threaten every part of the world, the providence of God must necessarily interpose in many ways, and make use as it were, of many bucklers.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9.—"*The shields of the earth.*" Magistrates are said to *bear the sword*, not to be swords; and they are said *to be shields*, not to bear shields, and all this to show that protection and perservation are more essential and intrinsical to their office than destruction and punishment are.—*Joseph Caryl.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Unusual and enthusiastic expressions of joy when justifiable and even desirable.

Verses 1—4.—Joy the true spirit of worship. 1. Joy in God's character. 2. In his reign. 3. In the triumphs of his gospel. 4. In his favour to his saints.

Verse 2.—The terrors of the Lord viewed by faith as a subject of joy.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—The universal reign of Christ as it is and is to be.

Verse 3.—The hope of victory to the church. What shall be subdued? By whose instrumentality? "*Us.*" By whose power? "*He.*" When it shall be accomplished? What is the token of it? The ascension, verse 5.

Verse 3.—I. The final triumph of the saints. All enemies subdued under them in earth and hell, within and without. 1. Gradually. 2. Completely. II. The power by which it is accomplished.—"*He shall,*" etc. 1. Not without means. 2. Not by means only. 3. But by appointed means made potent by divine energy. —*G. R.*

Verse 4.—This comprehends time and eternity. It is a matter of fact, of holy acquiescence, of desire, of thankfulness.

Verse 4.—I. God is willing to choose our inheritance for us in time and eternity. II. His choice is better than ours—"*the excellency of Jacob.*" III. He will leave us to the consequences of our own choice. IV. He will help us in obtaining that which he chooses for us.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—The ascension. Its publicity, solemnity, triumph, joy. Who went up. Where he went up. To what he went up. For what purpose. With what result.

Verse 6.—The importance of holy song. The repetition rebukes our slackness, and implies that earnestness, frequency, delight, and universality should characterise the praises offered.

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—The Psalmody of the instructed, and instruction by Psalmody; praise should be both the fruit and the vehicle of teaching.

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—Divine sovereignty always connected with holiness.

Verse 8.—I. God has a throne of holiness, for which he is to be feared by all men. II. A throne of grace, for which he is to be loved by his redeemed. III. A throne of glory, for which he is to be praised by his whole creation.

Verse 9.—I. A shield is a *merciful* weapon, none more so. II. A shield is a *venturous* weapon, a kind of surety, which bears the blows and receives the injuries which were intended for another. III. A shield is a *strong* weapon, to repel the darts of wickedness and break them in pieces. IV. A shield is an honourable weapon, none more: taking away of shields was a sign of victory; preserving them a sign of glory. V. Remember, a shield must ever *have an eye to guide it*—you the shields, the law the eye.—*Bishop Reynolds.*

PSALM XLVIII.

TITLE.—A Song and Psalm for the Sons of Korah.—*A song for joyfulness and a Psalm for reverence. Alas! every song is not a Psalm, for poets are not all heaven-born, and every Psalm is not a song, for in coming before God we have to utter mournful confessions as well as exulting praises. The Sons of Korah were happy in having so large a selection of song; the worship where such a variety of music was used could not become monotonous, but must have given scope for all the sacred passions of gracious souls.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.—*It would be idle dogmatically to attribute this song to any one event of Jewish history. Its author and date are unknown. It records the withdrawal of certain confederate kings from Jerusalem, their courage failing them before striking a blow. The mention of the ships of Tarshish may allow us to conjecture that the Psalm was written in connection with the overthrow of Ammon, Moab, and Edom in the reign of Jehoshaphat; and if the reader will turn to* 2 Chron. xx., *and note especially verses* 19, 25, *and* 36, *he will probably accept the suggestion. Verses* 1, 2, 3, *are in honour of the Lord and the city dedicated to his worship. From* 4—8 *the song records the confusion of Zion's foes, ascribing all the praise to God;* 9, 10, 11 *extolling Zion, and avowing Jehovah to be her God for evermore.*

EXPOSITION.

GREAT *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness.

2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, *is* mount Zion, *on* the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

1. "*Great is the Lord.*" How great Jehovah is essentially none can conceive; but we can all see that he is great in the deliverance of his people, great in their esteem who are delivered, and great in the hearts of those enemies whom he scatters by their own fears. Instead of the mad cry of Ephesus, "Great is Diana," we bear the reasonable, demonstrable, self-evident testimony, "Great is Jehovah." There is none great in the church but the Lord. Jesus is "the *great* Shepherd," he is "a Saviour, and a great one," our great God and Saviour, our great High Priest; his Father has divided him a portion with the great, and his name shall be great unto the ends of the earth. "*And greatly to be praised.*" According to his nature should his worship be; it cannot be too constant, too laudatory, too earnest, too reverential, too sublime. There is none like the Lord, and there should be no praises like his praises. "*In the city of our God.*" He is great there, and should be greatly praised there. If all the world beside renounced Jehovah's worship, the chosen people in his favoured city should continue to adore him, for in their midst and on their behalf his glorious power has been so manifestly revealed. In the church the Lord is to be extolled though all the nations rage against him. Jerusalem was the peculiar abode of the God of Israel, the seat of the theocratic government, and the centre of prescribed worship, and even thus is the church the place of divine manifestation. "*In the mountain of his holiness.*" Where his holy temple, his holy priests, and his holy sacrifices might continually be seen. Zion was a mount, and as it was the most renowned part of the city, it is mentioned as a synonym for the city itself. The church of God is a mount for elevation and for conspicuousness, and it should be adorned with holiness, her sons being partakers of the holiness of God. Only by holy men can the Lord be fittingly praised, and they should be incessantly occupied with his worship.

2. "*Beautiful for situation.*" Jerusalem was so naturally, she was styled the Queen of the East; the church is so spiritually, being placed near God's heart, within the mountains of his power, upon the hills of his faithfulness, in the centre of providential operations. The elevation of the church is her beauty. The more she is above the world the fairer she is. "*The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion.*" Jerusalem was the world's star; whatever light lingered on earth was borrowed from the oracles preserved by Israel. An ardent Israelite would esteem the holy

city as the eye of the nations, the most precious pearl of all lands. Certainly the church of God, though despised of men, is the true joy and hope of the world. "*On the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*" Either meaning that Jerusalem was in the northern extremity of Judah, or it may denote that part of the city which lay to the north of Mount Zion. It was the glory of Jerusalem to be God's city, the place of his regal dwelling, and it is the joy of the church that God is in her midst. The great God is the great King of the church, and for her sake he rules all the nations. The people among whom the Lord deigns to dwell are privileged above all others; the lines have fallen unto them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage. We who dwell in Great Britain in the sides of the north, have this for our chief glory, that the Lord is known in our land, and the abode of his love is among us.

3. "*God is known in her palaces for a refuge.*" We worship no unknown god. We know him as our refuge in distress, we delight in him as such, and run to him in every time of need. We know nothing else as our refuge. Though we are made kings, and our houses are palaces, yet we have no confidence in ourselves, but trust in the Lord Protector, whose well-known power is our bulwark.

4 For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.

5 They saw it, *and* so they marvelled; they were troubled, *and* hasted away.

6 Fear took hold upon them there, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail.

7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

4. "*The kings were assembled, they passed by together.*" They came and they went. No sooner together than scattered. They came one way and fled twenty ways. Boastful the gathering hosts with their royal leaders, despairing the fugitive bands, with their astonished captains. They came like foam on the angry sea, like foam they melted away. This was so remarkable that the Psalmist puts in a note of exclamation, "*Lo!*" What! have they so suddenly fled! Even thus shall the haters of the church vanish from the field, Papists, Ritualists, Arians, Sceptics, they shall each have their day, and shall pass on to the limbo of forgetfulness.

5. "*They saw it, and so they marvelled.*" They came, they saw, but they did not conquer. There was no *veni, vidi, vici* for them. No sooner did they perceive that the Lord was in the Holy City, than they took to their heels. Before the Lord came to blows with them, they were faint-hearted, and beat a retreat. "*They were troubled and hasted away.*" The troublers were troubled. Their haste in coming was nothing to their hurry in going. Panic seized them, horses were not fleet enough; they would have borrowed the wings of the wind. They fled ignominiously, like children in a fright. Glory be to God, it shall be even thus with the foes of his church; when the Lord cometh to our help, our enemies shall be as nothing. Could they foresee their ignominious defeat, they would not advance to the attack.

6. "*Fear took hold upon them there.*" They were in Giant Despair's grip. Where they hoped to triumph, there they quivered with dismay. They did not take the city, but fear took hold on them. "*And pain, as of a woman in travail.*" They were as much overcome as a woman whose fright causes premature delivery; or as full of pain as a poor mother in her pangs— a strong expression, commonly employed by Orientals to set forth the extremity of anguish. When the Lord arises for the help of his church, the proudest of his foes shall be as trembling women, and their dismay shall be but the beginning of eternal defeat.

7. "*Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.*" As easily as vessels are driven to shipwreck, dost thou overturn the most powerful adversaries; or it may mean the strength of some nations lies in their ships, whose wooden walls are soon broken; but our strength is in our God, and therefore, it fails not; or there may be another meaning, though thou art our defence, yet thou takest vengeance on our inventions, and while thou dost preserve us, yet our ships, our comforts, our earthly ambitions, are taken from us that we may look alone to thee. God is seen at sea, but he is equally present on land. Speculative heresies, pretending to bring us wealth from afar, are constantly assailing the church, but the

breath of the Lord soon drives them to destruction. The church too often relies on the wisdom of men, and these human helps are soon shipwrecked; yet the church itself is safe beneath the care of her God and King.

8. "*As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.*" Our fathers' stories are reproduced before our very eyes. We heard the promise, and we have seen the fulfilment. The records of Zion, wonderful as they are, are proved to be truthful, because present facts are in perfect harmony therewith. Note how the Lord is first spoken of as *Lord of hosts*, a name of power and sovereignty, and then as *our God*, a name of covenant relation and condescension. No wonder that since the Lord bears both titles, we find him dealing with us after the precedents of his lovingkindness, and the faithfulness of his promises. "*God will establish it for ever.*" The true church can never be disestablished. That which kings establish can last for time only, that which God establishes endures to all eternity. "*Selah.*" Here is a fit place to pause, viewing the past with admiration, and the future with confidence.

9 We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

10 According to thy name, O God, so *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.

11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.

9. "*We have thought.*" Holy men are thoughtful men; they do not suffer God's wonders to pass before their eyes and melt into forgetfulness, but they meditate deeply upon them. "*Of thy lovingkindness, O God.*" What a delightful subject! Devout minds never tire of so divine a theme. It is well to think of past lovingkindness in times of trial,and equally profitable to remember it in seasons of prosperity. Grateful memories sweeten sorrows and sober joys. "*In the midst of thy temple.*" Fit place for so devout a meditation. Where God is most seen he is best loved. The assembled saints constitute a living temple, and our deepest musings when so gathered together should have regard to the lovingkindness of the Lord, exhibited in the varied experiences of each of the living stones. Memories of mercy should be associated with continuance of praise. Hard by the table of shew-bread commemorating his bounty, should stand the altar of incense denoting our praise.

10. "*According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth.*" Great fame is due to his great name. The glory of Jehovah's exploits overleaps the boundaries of earth; angels behold with wonder, and from every star delighted intelligences proclaim his fame beyond the ends of the earth. What if men are silent, yet the woods, and seas, and mountains, with all their countless tribes, and all the unseen spirits that walk them, are full of the divine praise. As in a shell we listen to the murmurs of the sea, so in the convolutions of creation we hear the praises of God. "*Thy right hand is full of righteousness.*" Thy sceptre and thy sword, thy government and thy vengeance, are altogether just. Thy hand is never empty, but full of energy, of bounty, and of equity. Neither saint nor sinner shall find the Lord to be an empty-handed God; he will in both cases deal out righteousness to the full: to the one, through Jesus, he will be just to forgive, to the other just to condemn.

11. "*Let mount Zion rejoice.*" As the first of the cities of Judah, and the main object of the enemies' attack, let her lead the song. "*Let the daughters of Judah be glad,*" let the smaller towns join the chorus, for they join in the common victory. Let the women, who fare worst in the havoc of war, be among the gladdest of the glad, now that the spoilers have fled. All the church, and each individual member, should rejoice in the Lord, and magnify his name. "*Because of thy judgments.*" The righteous acts of the Lord are legitimate subjects for joyful praise. However it may appear on earth, yet in heaven the eternal ruin of the wicked will be the theme of adoring song. Rev. xix. 1, 3: "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia, and her smoke rose up for ever and ever." Justice which to our poor optics now seems severe, will then be perceived to be perfectly consistent with God's name of love, and to be one of the brightest jewels of his crown.

12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.
13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.
14 For this God *is* our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide *even* unto death.

12. "*Walk about Zion;*" often beat her bounds, even as Israel marched around Jericho. With leisurely and careful inspection survey her. "*And go round about her.*" Encircle her again and again with loving perambulations. We cannot too frequently or too deeply consider the origin, privileges, history, security, and glory of the church. Some subjects deserve but a passing thought; this is worthy of the most patient consideration. "*Tell the towers thereof.*" See if any of them have crumbled, or have been demolished. Is the church of God what she was in doctrine, in strength and in beauty? Her foes counted her towers in envy first, and then in terror, let us count them with sacred exultation. The city of Lucerne, encircled by its ancient walls, adorned with a succession of towers, is a visible illustration of this figure; and as we have gone around it, and paused at each picturesque tower, we have realised the loving, lingering inspection which the metaphor implies.

13. "*Mark ye well her bulwarks.*" Consider most attentively how strong are her ramparts, how safely her inhabitants are entrenched behind successive lines of defence. The security of the people of God is not a doctrine to be kept in the background, it may be safely taught, and frequently pondered; only to base hearts will that glorious truth prove harmful; the sons of perdition make a stumbling stone even of the Lord Jesus himself, it is little wonder, that they pervert the truth of God concerning the final perseverance of the saints. We are not to turn away from inspecting Zion's ramparts, because idlers skulk behind them. "*Consider her palaces.*" Examine with care the fair dwellings of the city. Let the royal promises which afford quiet resting places for believers be attentively inspected. See how sound are the defences, and how fair are the pleasaunces of "that ancient citie," of which you are citizens. A man should be best acquainted with his own home; and the church is our dear and blest abode. Would to God professors were more considerate of the condition of the church; so far from telling the towers, some of them scarcely know what or where they are; they are too busy counting their money, and considering their ledgers. Freehold and copyhold, and leasehold, men measure to an inch, but heavenhold and gracehold are too often taken at peradventure, and neglected in sheer heedlessness. "*That ye may tell it to the generation following.*" An excellent reason for studious observation. We have received and we must transmit. We must be students that we may be teachers. The debt we owe to the past we must endeavour to repay by handing down the truth to the future.

14. "*For this God is our God for ever and ever.*" A good reason for preserving a record of all that he has wrought. Israel will not change her God so as to wish to forget, nor will the Lord change so as to make the past mere history. He will be the covenant God of his people world without end. There is no other God, we wish for no other, we would have no other even if other there were. There are some who are so ready to comfort the wicked, that for the sake of ending their punishment they weaken the force of language, and make "*for ever and ever,*" mean but a time; nevertheless, despite their interpretations we exult in the hope of an eternity of bliss, and to us "everlasting," and "for ever and ever" mean what they say. "*He will be our guide even unto death.*" Throughout life, and to our dying couch, he will graciously conduct us, and even after death he will lead us to the living fountains of waters. We look to him for resurrection and eternal life. This consolation is clearly derivable from what has gone before; hitherto our foes have been scattered, and our bulwarks have defied attack, for God has been in our midst, therefore all possible assaults in the future shall be equally futile.

"The church has all her foes defied
And laughed to scorn their rage;
E'en thus for aye she shall abide
Secure from age to age."

Farewell, fear. Come hither, gratitude and faith, and sing right joyously.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*A Song and Psalm.*" Wherein both voice and instrument were used; the voice began first and the instrument after: and where the inscription is a Psalm and Song, there likely the instrument began and the voice followed.—*John Richardson.*

Whole Psalm.—According to Dr. Lightfoot, the constant and ordinary Psalm for the second day of the week was the forty-eighth.

Verse 1.—"*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God,*" etc. The prophet, being about to praise a certain edifice, commences by praising the architect, and says that in the holy city the wonderful skill and wisdom of God, who built it, is truly displayed. "*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;*" and so he is, whether we look at his essence, his power, his wisdom, his justice, or his mercy, for all are infinite, everlasting, and incomprehensible; and thus, so much is God *greatly to be praised*, that all the angels, all men, even all his own works would not suffice thereto; but of all things revealed, there is no one thing can give us a greater idea of his greatness, or for which we should praise and thank him more, than the establishment of his church; and, therefore, the prophet adds, "*in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness;*" that is to say, the greatness of God, and for which he deserves so much praise, is conspicuous in the foundation and construction of his church."—*Robert Bellarmine* (*Cardinal*).

Verse 1.—"*Great is the Lord.*" Greater, Job xxxiii. 12. Greatest of all, Psalm xcv. 3. Greatness itself, Psalm cxlv. 3. A degree he is above the superlative.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*Mountain of his holiness.*" The religion in it holy, the people in it a holy people.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 2.—"*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*" What is there, or was there, about Zion to justify the high eulogium of David? The situation is indeed eminently adapted to be the platform of a magnificent citadel. Rising high above the deep valley of Gihon and Hinnom, on the west and south, and the scarcely less deep one of the Cheesemongers on the east, it could only be assailed from the north-west; and then "*on the sides of the north*" it was magnificently beautiful, and fortified by walls, towers, and bulwarks, the wonder and terror of the nations: "*For the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away.*" At the thought of it the royal Psalmist again bursts forth in triumph: "*Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.*" Alas! her towers have long since fallen to the ground, her bulwarks have been overthrown, her palaces have crumbled to dust, and we who now walk about Zion can tell no other story than this to the generation following.

There is another Zion, however, whose towers are still more glorious, and shall never be overthrown. "*God is known in her palaces for a refuge.*" And "*this God is our God for ever and ever.*" How often is this name synonymous with the church of the living God! and no other spot but one can divide with it the affection of his people—no other name but one can awaken such joyful hopes in the Christian's heart. The temporal Zion is now in the dust, but the true Zion is rising and shaking herself from it, and putting on her beautiful garments to welcome her King when he comes to reign over the whole earth.—*W. M. Thomson, D.D.*

Verse 2.—When I stood that morning on the brow of Olivet, and looked down on the city crowning those battlemented heights, encircled by those deep and dark ravines, I involuntarily exclaimed, "*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*" And as I gazed, the red rays of the rising sun shed a halo round the top of the castle of David; then they tipped with gold each tapering minaret, and gilded each dome of mosque and church, and at length, bathed in one flood of ruddy light the terraced roofs of the city, and the grass and foliage, the cupolas, pavements, and colossal walls of the Haram. No human being could be disappointed who first saw Jerusalem from Olivet.—*J. L. Porter.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—*Beautiful in climate*, that is, Mount Zion is situated in a fair and lovely climate. This is the view taken by Montanus and Ainsworth. Bate and Parkhurst read, "*Beautiful in extension, i.e.*, in the prospect which it extends to the eye."—*Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 2.—"*Beautiful for situation.*" This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground, which was thus beautified with holiness, be called "*the joy of the whole earth*," *i.e.*, what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, because God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*Beautiful for situation.*"

> ———— Fair Jerusalem
> The holy city, lifted high her towers,
> And higher yet the glorious temple rear'd
> Her pile, far off appearing like a mount
> Of alabaster, topt with golden spires.
>
> *John Milton in "Paradise Regained."*

Verse 2.—"*On the sides of the north.*" Jerusalem, that is the upper and best part of it, was built on the north side of Mount Zion.—*Hadrian Reland*, 1676—1718.

Verse 2.—Jerusalem lay to the north of Sion, and this circumstance is mentioned as a proof of Mount Zion's greater security, for it was almost inaccessible on any other side except the north, and there it was defended by Jerusalem, which was very strong.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 2.—"*The great King.*" God is named the *great King* in opposition to the kings in verse 4.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 4.—They were many and powerful: kings and a plurality of them. They were confederate kings. "*The kings were assembled.*" Forces united are the most powerful. But all the endeavours of these confederate kings came to nothing. "*They passed by together*"—together they came, and together they vanished.—*William Nicholson.*

Verses 5, 6.—The potentates of the world saw the miracles of the apostles, the courage and constancy of the martyrs, and the daily increase of the church, notwithstanding all their persecutions; they beheld with astonishment the rapid progress of the faith through the Roman empire; they called upon their gods, but their gods could not help themselves; idolatry expired at the foot of the victorious cross.—*George Horne.*

Verse 6.—"*Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.*" Nothing is more unaccountable than panic. No man, no body of men can adequately guard against such terror. He who made the ears can easily make them to tingle. He who holds the winds in his fist, can easily make them whisper alarm, or roar dismay. This is especially to be expected when men so act as to have their own conscience against them. Job xv. 21. But God can at any time so forsake men as that they shall be unmanned, and play the fool exceedingly. Lev. xxvi. 36. Men have fought bravely several battles, and then played the coward.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.*" It is only by her Lord that the church gains "the true riches;" when she enters into traffick with the world, she takes the means of the world for her resources; and when she trusts in her wealth, in her political power, in earthly cunning, to make merchandise, the instruments she adopts come to nothing in her hands, and leave her helpless and poor.—*From "A Plain Commentary on the Book of Psalms (The Prayer Book Version), chiefly founded on the Fathers,"* 1859.

Verse 7.—"*With an east wind,*" which, in Judea, is a very violent and destructive wind. Kennicot renders the verse thus, "*As the east wind dasheth in pieces the ships of Tharshish;*" founding his conjecture upon the similarity in form of two Hebrew letters, signifying the one *in*, the other *as*.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 9.—"*We have thought.*" The Hebrew דָּמָה and דָּמַם and דָּמַם belong all to the same signification, of *quiet, rest, silence, patient expecting, thinking, considering,*

and must be determined to any of these senses by the context. And here that of *expecting* or *patient waiting*, with *affiance* in him, and without all *distrust* or *repining* at his *delays*, seems to be most proper for it. For coming to the sanctuary to pray for mercy, 'tis most agreeable to say *we wait for it there*, as in the place where he hath promised to afford it, in return to *prayers*.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verses 12, 13.—In a spiritual sense *the towers* and *bulwarks* of Sion are those doctrines of the true faith, which are the strength and glory of the church, which are to be maintained in their soundness and stability against the assaults of heretical teachers, so that they may be transmitted unimpaired to following generations.—*Origen and Theodoret, quoted by Wordsworth.*

Verse 13.—"*Mark ye well her bulwarks.*" Margin as in the Hebrew, "*Set your heart to her bulwarks.*" That is, pay close attention to them; make the investigation with care, not as one does whose heart is not in the thing, and who does it negligently. The word rendered "*bulwarks*," חֵיל, *khail*—means properly, a host or army, and then a fortification or entrenchment, especially the *ditch* or *trench*, with the low wall or breastwork which surrounds it. 2 Sam. xx. 15; Isaiah xxvi. 1. (Gesenius, *Lex.*)—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 13.—"*Mark ye well:*" *set your heart*, mind earnestly, set your affections on.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 13.—"*Her bulwarks.*" I. The designation and constitution of Jesus Christ to be King of the church, King of Zion, is the great bulwark of Zion. II. The second bulwark of Zion is the promises of God, which are innumerable. III. The watchful providence of God over the church. IV. Another bulwark is God's special presence. God is in an especial manner present in his church. V. The last bulwark unto which all others may be reduced, is the covenant of God: "For this God is our God."—*John Owen.*

Verse 14.—"*This God is our God for ever and ever.*" What a portion then is that of the believer! The landlord cannot say of his fields, these are mine, for ever and ever. The king cannot say of his crown, this is mine for ever and ever. These possessions shall soon change masters; these possessors shall soon mingle with the dust, and even the graves they shall occupy may not long be theirs; but it is the singular, the supreme happiness of every Christian to say, or to have a right to say, "This glorious God with all his divine perfections is my God, for ever and ever, and even death itself shall not separate me from his love."—*George Burder.*

Verse 14.—"*This God is our God.*" The people of God are sometime represented as so taken with this apprehenson of their peculiar relation to God, that they cannot be content to know, but they proclaim it; nor was it enough the present age should know, but they must have it told the following generation: "Let Mount Zion rejoice," etc. Mark, "That ye may tell the generation following," "*For this is our God.*" See their ostentation of him! This God; *q.d.*, Behold what a God have we! view him well, and take notice how glorious a God he is. And as they glory in the greatness of the God to whom they were related, so they do in the eternity of the relation. "This God is our God *for ever and ever.*"—*John Howe.*

Verse 14.—God is not only a satisfying portion, filling every crevice of thy soul with the light of joy and comfort; and a sanctifying portion, elevating thy soul to its primitive and original perfection; and a universal portion; not health, or wealth, or friends, or honours, or liberty, or life, or house, or wife, or child, or pardon, or peace, or grace, or glory, or earth, or heaven, but all these, and infinitely more, but also he is an eternal portion. This God would be thy God "*for ever and ever.*" Oh, sweet word *ever!* thou art the crown of the saints' crown, and the glory of their glory. Their portion is so full that they desire no more; they enjoy variety and plenty of delights above what they are able to ask or think, and want nothing but to have it fixed. May they but possess it in peace without interruption or cessation they will trample all kingdoms of the earth as dirt under their feet; and lo! thou art the welcome dove to bring this olive branch in thy mouth. "*This God is our God for ever and ever.*" All the arithmetical figures of days, and months, and years, and ages, are nothing to this infinite cipher *ever*, which, though it stand for nothing in the vulgar account, yet contains all our millions; yea, our millions and millions of millions are less than drops to this ocean *ever*.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 14.—Some expositors have strangely found a difficulty in the last verse,

deeming such a profession of personal faith an inappropriate termination for a national song. Even Dr. Delitzsch, a wise and devout interpreter, shares in this notion; going, indeed, so far as to throw out the surmise, that some word must have been lost from the Hebrew text. To me it seems that the verse, as it stands, is admirably in harmony with the song, and is its crowning beauty. When the Lord does great things for church or nation, he means that all the faithful, however humble their station, should take courage from it, should repose in him fresh confidence, and cling to him with a firmer hope, and say, "*This God shall be our God for ever; he will guide us even unto death.*"—*William Binnie.*

Verse 14.—"*Unto death,*" or as some explain it, *at death, i.e.*, he will save us from it; others, *over death,* beyond it. But the most obvious explanation, and the one most agreeable to usage, is that which makes the phrase mean even to the end of life, or as long as we live. The idea of a future state, though not expressed, is not excluded.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 14 (*last clause*).—The last clause is much misunderstood. It is not, "Our guide *unto* death," for the words are עַל־מוּת יְנַהֲגֵנוּ, "shall lead us *over* death." Surely it means, "It is he who leads over *death* to *resurrection*"—over Jordan to Canaan. The עַל is used in Levit. xv. 25, for "*beyond,*" in regard to time, and is not this the sense here? "*Beyond* the time of death"? Till death is to us over? Till we have *stood upon the grave of death?* Yes; he it is who leads us on to this last victory; he swallows up death in victory, and leads us to *trample on death.* And so viewed, we easily discern the beautiful link of thought that joins this Psalm to that which follows. Such is the celebration of *The Mighty One become the glory of Jerusalem.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

[*All the suggestions under this Psalm, except those otherwise designated, are by our beloved friend, Rev. George Rogers, Tutor of The Pastor's College.*]

Verse 1.—I. *What the church is to God.* 1. His "*city:*" not a lawless rabble, but a well organised community. 2. A mountain of holiness, for the display of justifying righteousness, of sanctifying grace. II. *What God is to the church.* 1. Its inhabitant. It is *his* city, his mountain. There he is great. There was no room for the whole of God in Paradise, there is no room for him in his law, no room for him in the heaven of angels: in the church only is there room for all his perfections, for a triune Jehovah. Great everywhere, he is peculiarly great here. 2. The object of its praises. As he is greatest here, so are his praises, and through the universe on this account.

Verse 2.—I. *Was the ancient Zion beautiful for situation?* So is the New Testament church founded upon a rock, upon eternal purpose and grace. II. *Was it the joy of the whole earth?* So the New Testament church will become. III. *Was it the special joy of the tribes of Israel* that were almost entirely to the north of Jerusalem? So the church is to the saints. IV. *Was it a royal as well as holy city?* So is the church. "Yet have I set," etc.

Verse 3.—I. God is a refuge in his church. The church is a city of refuge, but the refuge is not in its church, but its God. 1. For sinners from wrath. 2. For saints from trials and fears. II. God is there known as such, known to thousands, not known as such elsewhere. "They that know thy name," etc.

Verses 4—7.—I. The opposition of worldly powers to the church. "The kings," etc. II. The manner in which they are subdued—by their own fears; conscience has persecuted those who have persecuted the church of God. They who have seized the ark of God have been glad to return it with an offering. III. The completeness of their overthrow. As a fleet of ships of Tarshish, dispersed, broken and engulfed by the east wind.

Verse 8.—I. God has ever been to his people what he now is; the same "*heard*" as "*seen.*" II. He is now what he ever has been: the same "*seen*" as "*heard.*" III. He will ever be what he now is. "Will establish it for ever."

Verse 9.—I. What are the lovingkindnesses of God? Pity to the wretched

pardon to the penitent, help to the prayerful, comfort to the afflicted, etc. II. Where are they to be found? "In the midst of," etc. 1. Here they are revealed. 2. Here they are dispensed. 3. Here they are sought. 4. Here they are enjoyed.

Verse 10.—As the name of God, so his praises are—I. Supreme. II. Unqualified. III. Universal. IV. Everlasting.

Verse 10. -"*Thy right hand*," etc. I. The justice of omnipotence. II. Omnipotence controlled by justice. III. The omnipotence of justice.

Verse 11.—I. The subjects of his peoples' joy. Not mercies merely, but judgments. II. Reasons: 1. Because they are holy—needful to the purity of moral government. 2. Just—needful to vindicate law. 3. Good—needful for the greatest amount of good.

Verse 12.—I. What is to be understood by the preservation and protection of the church? II. What is meant by searching into, and considering of, these causes and means of the church's preservation? III. What are those causes and means of the church's preservation, those towers and bulwarks which will not fail? IV. What reason is there why we should thus search into and consider these causes of the church's preservation and protection? V. What is the testimony which we have to give concerning this matter to the ensuing generation?—*John Owen's Sermon.*

Verse 14 (*first clause*).—This is the language of a *proprietary* in God: 1. Of an *assured* proprietary—"This God is *our* God." 2. Of a *permanent* proprietary—"*for ever and ever.*" 3. Of an *exulting* proprietary.—*W. Jay.*

Verse 14.—I. The language of discrimination. *This* God. *This* God in Christ, in the church. II. The language of Faith—*our* God. III. Of Hope—"*For ever and ever.*" IV. Of Resignation—"*He will be our guide*," etc.

PSALM XLIX.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician, a Psalm for the sons of Korah. *This is precisely the same as on former occasions, and no remark is needed.*

DIVISION.—*The poet musician sings, to the accompaniment of his harp, the despicable character of those who trust in their wealth, and so he consoles the oppressed believer. The first four verses are a preface; from* 5 *to* 12 *all fear of great oppressors is removed by the remembrance of their end and their folly;* 13 *contains an expression of wonder at the perpetuity of folly;* 14 *and* 15 *contrast the ungodly and the righteous in their future; and from* 16 *to* 20 *the lesson from the whole is given in an admonitory form. Note the chorus in verses* 12 *and* 20, *and also the two Selahs.*

EXPOSITION.

HEAR this, all *ye* people; give ear, all *ye* inhabitants of the world:
2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together.

3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart *shall be* of understanding.

4 I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

In these four verses the poet-prophet calls universal humanity to listen to his didactic hymn.

1. "*Hear this, all ye people.*" All men are concerned in the subject, it is *of* them, and therefore *to* them that the Psalmist would speak. It is not a topic which men delight to consider, and therefore he who would instruct them must press them to give ear. Where, as in this case, the theme claims to be wisdom and understanding, attention is very properly demanded; and when the style combines the sententiousness of the proverb with the sweetness of poesy, interest is readily excited. "*Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world.*" "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." Men dwelling in all climes are equally concerned in the subject, for the laws of providence are the same in all lands. It is wise for each one to feel I am a man, and therefore everything which concerns mortals has a personal interest to me. We must all appear before the judgment-seat, and therefore we all should give earnest heed to holy admonition which may help us to prepare for that dread event. He who refuses to receive instruction by the ear, will not be able to escape receiving destruction by it when the Judge shall say, "Depart, ye cursed."

2. "*Both low and high, rich and poor, together.*" Sons of great men, and children of mean men, men of large estate, and ye who pine in poverty, ye are all bidden to hear the inspired minstrel as he touches his harp to a mournful but instructive lay. The low will be encouraged, the high will be warned, the rich will be sobered, the poor consoled, there will be a useful lesson for each if they are willing to learn it. Our preaching ought to have a voice for all classes, and all should have an ear for it. To suit our word to the rich alone is wicked sycophancy, and to aim only at pleasing the poor is to act the part of a demagogue. Truth may be so spoken as to command the ear of all, and wise men seek to learn that acceptable style. Rich and poor must soon meet together in the grave, they may well be content to meet together now. In the congregation of the dead all differences of rank will be obliterated, they ought not now to be obstructions to united instructions.

3. "My *mouth shall speak of wisdom.*" Inspired and therefore lifted beyond himself, the prophet is not praising his own attainments, but extolling the divine Spirit which spoke in him. He knew that the Spirit of truth and wisdom spoke through him. He who is not sure that his matter is good has no right to ask a hearing. "*And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.*" The same Spirit who made the ancient seers eloquent, also made them thoughtful. The help of the Holy Ghost was never meant to supersede the use of our own mental powers.

The Holy Spirit does not make us speak as Balaam's ass, which merely uttered sounds, but never meditated; but he first leads us to consider and reflect, and then he gives us the tongue of fire to speak with power.

4. "*I will incline mine ear to a parable.*" He who would have others hear, begins by hearing himself. As the minstrel leans his ear to his harp, so must the preacher give his whole soul to his ministry. The truth came to the Psalmist as a parable, and he endeavoured to unriddle it for popular use; he would not leave the truth in obscurity, but he listened to its voice till he so well understood it as to be able to interpret and translate it into the common language of the multitude. Still of necessity it would remain a problem, and a dark saying to the unenlightened many, but this would not be the songster's fault, for, saith he, "*I will open my dark saying upon the harp.*" The writer was no mystic, delighting in deep and cloudy things, yet he was not afraid of the most profound topics; he tried to open the treasures of darkness, and to uplift pearls from the deep. To win attention he cast his proverbial philosophy into the form of song, and tuned his harp to the solemn tone of his subject. Let us gather round the minstrel of the King of kings, and hear the Psalm which erst was led by the chief musician, as the chorus of the sons of Korah lifted up their voices in the temple.

5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, *when* the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

6 They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

7 None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:

8 (For the redemption of their soul *is* precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)

9 That he should still live for ever, *and* not see corruption.

10 For he seeth *that* wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

11 Their inward thought *is*, *that* their houses *shall continue* for ever, *and* their dwelling places to all generations; they call *their* lands after their own names.

12 Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts *that* perish.

5. "*Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?*" The man of God looks calmly forward to dark times when those evils which have dogged his heels shall gain a temporary advantage over him. Iniquitous men, here called in the abstract *iniquity*, lie in wait for the righteous, as serpents that aim at the heels of travellers: the iniquity of our heels is that evil which aims to trip us up or impede us. It was an old prophecy that the serpent should wound the heel of the woman's seed, and the enemy of our souls is diligent to fulfil that premonition. In some dreary part of our road it may be that evil will wax stronger and bolder, and gaining upon us will openly assail us; those who followed at our heels like a pack of wolves, may perhaps overtake us, and compass us about. What then? Shall we yield to cowardice? Shall we be a prey to their teeth? God forbid. Nay, we will not even fear, for what are these foes? What indeed, but mortal men who shall perish and pass away? There can be no real ground of alarm to the faithful. Their enemies are too insignificant to be worthy of one thrill of fear. Doth not the Lord say to us, "I, even I, am he that comforteth thee: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?"

Scholars have given other renderings of this verse, but we prefer to keep to the authorised version when we can, and in this case we find in it precisely the same meaning which those would give to it who translate "*my heels*," by the words, "*my supplanters.*"

6. What if the good man's foes be among the great ones of the earth! yet he need not fear them. "*They that trust in their wealth.*" Poor fools, to be content with such a rotten confidence. When we set our rock in contrast with theirs, it would be folly to be afraid of them. Even though they are loud in their brags,

we can afford to smile. What if they glory *" and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches "* ? yet while we glory in our God we are not dismayed by their proud threatenings. Great strength, position, and estate, make wicked men very lofty in their own esteem, and tyrannical towards others ; but the heir of heaven is not overawed by their dignity, nor cowed by their haughtiness. He sees the small value of riches, and the helplessness of their owners in the hour of death, and therefore he is not so mean as to be afraid of an ephemera, a moth, a bubble.

7. *" None of them can by any means redeem his brother."* With all their riches, the whole of them put together could not rescue a comrade from the chill grasp of death. They boast of what they will do with us, let them see to themselves. Let them weigh their gold in the scales of death, and see how much they can buy therewith from the worm and the grave. The poor are their equals in this respect ; let them love their friend ever so dearly, they cannot *" give to God a reason for him.* A king's ransom would be of no avail, a Monte Rosa of rubies, an America of silver, a world of gold, a sun of diamonds, would all be utterly contemned. O ye boasters, think not to terrify us with your worthless wealth, go ye and intimidate death before ye threaten men in whom is immortality and life.

8. *" For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever."* Too great is the price, the purchase is hopeless. For ever must the attempt to redeem a soul with money remain a failure. Death comes and wealth cannot bribe him ; hell follows, and no golden key can unlock its dungeons. Vain, then, are your threatenings, ye possessors of the yellow clay ; your childish toys are despised by men who estimate the value of possessions by the shekel of the sanctuary.

9. No price could secure for any man *" That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption."* Mad are men now after gold, what would they be if it could buy the elixir of immortality ? Gold is lavished out of the bag to cheat the worm of the poor body by embalming it, or enshrining it in a coffin of lead, but it is a miserable business, a very burlesque and comedy. As for the soul, it is too subtle a thing to be detained when it hears the divine command to soar through tracks unknown. Never, therefore, will we fear, those base nibblers at our heels, whose boasted treasure proves to be so powerless to save.

10. *"For he seeth that wise men die."* Every one sees this. The proud, persecuting rich man cannot help seeing it. He cannot shut his eyes to the fact that wiser men than he are dying, and that he also, with all his craft, must die. *" Likewise the fool and the brutish person perish."* Folly has no immunity from death. Off goes the jester's cap, as well as the student's gown. Jollity cannot laugh off the dying hour ; death who visits the university, does not spare the tavern. Thoughtlessness and brutishness meet their end as surely as much care and wasting study. In fact, while the truly wise, so far as this world is concerned, *die*, the fool has a worse lot, for he *perishes*, is blotted out of remembrance, bewailed by none, remembered no more. *" And leave their wealth to others."* Not a farthing can they carry with them. Whether heirs male of their own body, lawfully begotten, inherit their estates, or they remain unclaimed, it matters not, their hoardings are no longer theirs ; friends may quarrel over their property, or strangers divide it as spoil, they cannot interfere. Ye boasters, hold ye your own, before ye dream of despoiling the sons of the living God. Keep shoes to your own feet in death's dark pilgrimage, ere ye seek to bite our heels.

11. *" Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations."* He is very foolish who is more a fool in his inmost thought than he dare be in his speech. Such rotten fruit, rotten at the core, are worldlings. Down deep in their hearts, though they dare not say so, they fancy that earthly goods are real and enduring. Foolish dreamers ! The frequent dilapidations of their castles and manor-houses should teach them better, but still they cherish the delusion. They cannot tell the mirage from the true streams of water ; they fancy rainbows to be stable, and clouds to be the everlasting hills. *" They call their lands after their own names."* Common enough is this practice. His grounds are made to bear the groundling's name, he might as well write it on the water. Men have even called countries by their own names, but what are they better for the idle compliment, even if men perpetuate their nomenclature ?

12. *" Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not."* He is but a lodger for the hour, and does not stay a night : even when he dwells in marble halls his notice to quit is written out. Eminence is evermore in imminence of peril. The hero of the hour lasts but for an hour. Sceptres fall from the paralysed hands which

once grasped them, and coronets slip away from skulls when the life is departed. "*He is like the beasts that perish.*" He is not like the sheep which are preserved of the Great Shepherd, but like the hunted beast which is doomed to die. He lives a brutish life and dies a brutish death. Wallowing in riches, surfeited with pleasure, he is fatted for the slaughter, and dies like the ox in the shambles. Alas! that so noble a creature should use his life so unworthily, and end it so disgracefully. So far as this world is concerned, wherein does the death of many men differ from the death of a dog? They go down—

> "To the vile dust from whence they sprung,
> Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung."

What room is there, then, for fear to the godly when such natural brute beasts assail them? Should they not in patience possess their souls?

We make a break here, because this stanza appears to be the refrain of the song, and as such is repeated in the twentieth verse.

13 This their way *is* their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.

13. Their vain confidences are not casual aberrations from the path of wisdom but *their way*, their usual and regular course; their whole life is regulated by such principles. Their life-path is essential *folly*. They are fools ingrain. From first to last brutishness is their characteristic, grovelling stupidity the leading trait of their conduct. "*Yet their posterity approve their sayings.*" Those who follow them in descent follow them in folly, quote their worldly maxims, and accept their mad career as the most prudent mode of life. Why do they not see by their fathers' failure their fathers' folly? No, the race transmits its weakness. Grace is not hereditary, but sordid worldliness goes from generation to generation. The race of fools never dies out. No need of missionaries to teach men to be earthworms, they crawl naturally to the dust. "*Selah.*" Well may the minstrel pause, and bid us muse upon the deep-seated madness of the sons of Adam. Take occasion, reader, to reflect upon thine own.

14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me. Selah.

14. "*Like sheep they are laid in the grave.*" As dumb, driven cattle, they are hurried to their doom, and are penned in within the gates of destruction. As sheep that go whither they are driven, and follow their leader without thought, so these men who have chosen to make this world their all, are urged on by their passions, till they find themselves at their journey's end, that end the depths of Hades. Or if we keep to our own translation, we have the idea of their dying peaceably, and being buried in quiet, only that they may wake up to be ashamed at the last great day. "*Death shall feed on them.*" Death like a grim shepherd leads them on, and conducts them to the place of their eternal pasturage, where all is barrenness and misery. The righteous are led by the Good Shepherd, but the ungodly have death for their shepherd, and he drives them onward to hell. As the power of death rules them in this world, for they have not passed from death unto life, so the terrors of death shall devour them in the world to come. As grim giants, in old stories, are said to feed on men whom they entice to their caves, so death, the monster, feeds on the flesh and blood of the mighty. "*The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.*" The poor saints were once the tail, but at the day-break they shall be the head. Sinners rule till night-fall; their honours wither in the evening, and in the morning they find their position utterly reversed. The sweetest reflection to the upright is that "the morning" here intended begins an endless, changeless, day. What a vexation of spirit to the proud worldling, when the Judge of all the earth holds his morning session, to see the man whom he despised, exalted high in heaven, while he himself is cast away! "*And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.*" Whatever of glory the ungodly had shall disappear in the tomb. Form and comeliness shall vanish from them, the worm shall make

sad havoc of all their beauty. Even their last dwelling place, the grave, shall not be able to protect the relics committed to it; their bodies shall dissolve, no trace shall remain of all their strong limbs and lofty heads, no vestige of remaining beauty shall be discoverable. The beauty of the righteous is not yet revealed, it waits its manifestations; but all the beauty the wicked will ever have is in full bloom in this life; it will wither, fade, decay, rot, and utterly pass away. Who, then, would envy or fear the proud sinner?

15. "*But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.*" Forth from that temporary resting-place we shall come in due time, quickened by divine energy. Like our risen Head we cannot be holden by the bands of the grave; redemption has emancipated us from the slavery of death. No redemption could man find in riches, but God has found it in the blood of his dear Son. Our Elder Brother has given to God a ransom, and we are the redeemed of the Lord: because of this redemption by price we shall assuredly be redeemed by power out of the hand of the last enemy. "*For he shall receive me.*" He shall take me out of the tomb, take me up to heaven. If it is not said of me as of Enoch, "He was not, for God took him," yet shall I reach the same glorious state. My spirit God will receive, and my body shall sleep in Jesus till, being raised in his image, it shall also be received into glory. How infinitely superior is such a hope to anything which our oppressors can boast! Here is something which will bear meditation, and therefore again let us pause, at the bidding of the musician, who inserts a "*Selah.*"

16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased;

17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.

18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.

19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

20 Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts *that* perish.

16. In these last verses the Psalmist becomes a preacher, and gives admonitory lessons which he has himself gathered from experience. "*Be not thou afraid when one is made rich.*" Let it not give thee any concern to see the godless prosper. Raise no questions as to divine justice; suffer no foreboding to cloud thy mind. Temporal prosperity is too small a matter to be worth fretting about; let the dogs have their bones, and the swine their draff. "*When the glory of his house is increased.*" Though the sinner and his family are in great esteem, and stand exceedingly high, never mind; all things will be righted in due time. Only those whose judgment is worthless will esteem men the more because their lands are broader; those who are highly estimated for such unreasonable reasons will find their level ere long, when truth and righteousness come to the fore.

17. "*For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away.*" He has but a leasehold of his acres, and death ends his tenure. Through the river of death man must pass naked. Not a rag of all his raiment, not a coin of all his treasure, not a jot of all his honour, can the dying worldling carry with him. Why then fret ourselves about so fleeting a prosperity? "*His glory shall not descend after him.*" As he goes down, down, down for ever, none of his honours or possessions will follow him. Patents of nobility are invalid in the sepulchre. His worship, his honour, his lordship, and his grace, will alike find their titles ridiculous in the tomb. Hell knows no aristocracy. Your dainty and delicate sinners shall find that eternal burnings have no respect for their affectations and refinements.

18. "*Though while he lived he blessed his soul.*" He pronounced himself happy. He had his good things in this life. His chief end and aim were to bless himself. He was charmed with the adulations of flatterers. "*Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.*" The generality of men worship success, however it may be gained. The colour of the winning horse is no matter; it is the winner, and that is enough. "Take care of Number One," is the world's proverbial philosophy, and he who gives good heed to it is "a clever fellow," "a fine man of business," "a shrewd common-sense tradesman," "a man with his head put on the right way," Get money, and you will be "respectable," "a substantial man," and your

house will be " an eminent firm in the city," or " one of our best county families." To do good wins fame in heaven, but to do good *to yourself* is the prudent thing among men of the world. Yet not a whisper of worldly congratulation can follow the departing millionaire ; they say he died worth a mint of money, but what charm has that fact to the dull cold ear of death ? The banker rots as fast as the shoeblack, and the peer becomes as putrid as the pauper. Alas ! poor wealth, thou art but the rainbow colouring of the bubble, the tint which yellows the morning mist, but adds no substance to it.

19. " *He shall go to the generation of his fathers.*" Where the former generations lie, the present shall also slumber. The sires beckon to their sons to come to the land of forgetfulness. Mortal fathers beget not immortal children. As our ancestors have departed, so also must we. " *They shall never see light.*" To this upper region the dead worldling shall never return again to possess his estates, and enjoy his dignities. Among the dead he must lie in the thick darkness, where no joy or hope can come to him. Of all his treasures their remains not enough to furnish him one poor candle ; the blaze of his glory is out for ever, and not a spark remains to cheer him. How then can we look with fear or envy upon a wretch doomed to such unhappiness ?

20. The song ends with the refrain, " *Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.*" Understanding differences men from animals, but if they will not follow the highest wisdom, and like beasts find their all in this life, then their end shall be as mean and dishonourable as that of beasts slain in the chase, or killed in the shambles. From the loftiest elevation of worldly honour to the uttermost depth of death is but a step. Saddest of all is the reflection, that though men are like beasts in all the degradation of perishing, yet not in the rest which animal perishing secures, for, alas ! it is written, " These shall go away into everlasting punishment."

So ends the minstrel's lay. Comforting as the theme is to the righteous, it is full of warning to the worldly. Hear ye it, O ye rich and poor. Give ear to it, ye nations of the earth.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Strange it is that two Psalms so near together, as this and the forty-fifth should, and should alone imitate, or be the forerunners of, two works of David's son ; this Ecclesiastes, the former—the Canticles.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 2.—In this Psalm David, as it were, summons and divides mankind. In the first verse he summons : " *Hear this, all ye people ; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world.*" In the second verse he divides : " *Both low and high, rich and poor, together.*" The word in the Hebrew for " *high* " is בְּנֵי אִישׁ, *bene ish, sons of Ish,* and the word for " *low* " is בְּנֵי אָדָם *bene Adam, sons of Adam.* If we should translate the text directly, according to the letter, the words must run, *sons of men and sons of men ;* for, sons of *Adam* and sons of *Ish* are both translated *sons of men.* Yet when they are set together in a way of opposition, the one signifieth " *low* " and the other " *high ;* " and so our translators render it according to the sense, not sons of men and sons of men, but " *low* " and " *high.*" Junius translates to this sense, though in more words, as well they who are born of mean men, as they who are born of honourable.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—" *I will incline mine ear to a parable,*" *i.e.,* I will diligently attend, that I may not sing anything ungracefully ; a metaphor taken from musicians who bring their ear close to the harp, that they may ascertain the harmony of the sound.—*Victorinus Bythner.*

Verse 5.—" *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about ?* " Those that are full of years are approaching the nearer to their happiness. They have finished their voyage, and now are in sight of the haven. Nature's provision is spent, her stock is exhausted, and now the

good man doth not so much descend as fall into the grave, and from thence he rises to heaven and eternal bliss. And shall he be disturbed at this? shall he be afraid to be made happy? If I mistake not, this is the meaning of the Psalmist's words. They are generally interpreted concerning *his ways* in general, but they seem to me to refer particularly to the calamity which his old age was incident to: for "*the days of evil*" are old age, and are so called by the wise man (Eccl. xii. 1); and as the "*heel*" is the extreme part of the body, so it is here applied to the last part of man's life, his declining age; and "*iniquity*" (as the word is sometimes used among the Hebrews) signifies here penal evil, and denotes the infirmities and decays of the concluding part of a man's life. So that the true meaning of the Psalmist's words, is this, I will not now in my last days be dejected with fear and trouble of mind, for I am coming towards my happiness, my declining years shall deliver me up to earth, and that shall consign me to everlasting life. This certainly is matter of joy rather than of fear. For this reason I account my last days to be the most eligible part of my whole life.—*John Edwards, D.D.* (1637—1716), *in "Theologia Reformata."*

Verse 5.—"*Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?*" That is, when my sins or failings in what I have done, come to my remembrance, or are chastened upon me. Every man's heel hath some iniquity: as we shall have some dirt cleaving to our heels while we walk in a dirty world, so there is some dirt, some defilement, upon all our actions, which we may call, *the iniquity of our heel.—Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?*" With Bishop Lowth, the celebrated Michaelis, Bishop Hare, and a host of other critics, I decidedly incline to the idea, that עֲקַי, rendered "*my heels*" is to be regarded as the present participle of the verb עָקַב, *to supplant, to act deceitfully, to deceive, to hold one by the heel*, etc., etc. If this be correct then the proper translation will be:—

> Wherefore should I fear in the days ot adversity,
> The iniquity of my supplanters who surround me?

The Syriac and Arabic read, as does also Dr. Kennicott:—

> Why should I fear in the evil day,
> When the iniquity of my enemies compasses me about?
>
> *John Morison.*

Verses 5—9.

> Why should I fear the evil hour,
> When ruthless foes in ambush lie,
> Who revel in their pride of power,
> And on their hoarded wealth rely?
>
> A brother's ransom who can pay,
> Or alter God's eternal doom?
> What hand can wrest from death his prey,
> Its banquet from the rotting tomb?

From "The Psalter, or Psalms of David, in English verse. By a Member of the University of Cambridge." [*Benjamin Hall Kennedy, D.D.*] 1860.

Verse 6.—"*They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches.*" Here we have the rich man trusting and boasting; surely that is very confident trusting which issues itself into boasting! That man is ascended to the highest step of faith in God, who makes his boast of God; such faith have they in fine gold who boast in it.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*They that trust in their wealth.*" "THE COVETOUS MAN'S SOLILOQUY." Believe me, the times are hard and dangerous; charity is grown cold, and friends uncomfortable; an empty purse is full of sorrow, and hollow bags make a heavy heart. Poverty is a civil pestilence, which frights away both friends and kindred and leaves us to a "Lord have mercy upon us." It is a sickness very catching and infectious, and more commonly abhorred than cured. The best antidote against it is Angelica and providence, and the best cordial is *aurum potabile.* Gold-taking fasting is an approved sovereign. Debts are ill humours, and turn at last to dangerous obstructions. Lending is a mere consumption of the radical humour, which, if consumed, brings a patient to nothing. Let others trust to courtiers' promises, to friends' performances, to princes' favours; give me a toy

called gold, give me a thing called money. O blessed Mammon, how extremely sweet is thy all-commanding presence to my thriving soul! In banishment thou art my dear companion; in captivity thou art my precious ransom; in trouble and vexation thou art my dainty rest; in sickness thou art my health; in grief my only joy; in all extremity my only trust. Virtue must veil to thee; nay, grace itself, not relished with thy sweetness, would even displease the righteous palates of the sons of men. Come, then, my soul, advise, contrive, project; go, compass sea and land; leave no exploit untried, no path untrod, no time unspent; afford thine eyes no sleep, thy head no rest; neglect thy ravenous belly, unclothe thy back; deceive, betray, swear, and forswear, to compass such a friend. If thou be base in birth, it will make thee honourable; if weak in power, it will make thee formidable. Are thy friends few? It will make them numerous. Is thy cause bad? It will gain thee advocates. True, wisdom is an excellent help, in case it bend this way; and learning is a genteel ornament, if not too chargeable: yet, by your leave, they are but estates for the term of life: but everlasting gold, if well advantaged, will not only bless thy days, but thy surviving children from generation to generation. Come, come, let others fill their brains with dear-bought wit, turn their pence into expenseful charity, and store their bosoms with unprofitable piety; let them lose all to save their imaginary consciences, and beggar themselves at home to be thought honest abroad: fill thou thy bags and barns, and lay up for many years, and take thy rest.—*Francis Quarles, in "The Covetous Man's Care."*

Verse 6.—The form of money agreeth well with the condition of it; for it is stamped round, because it is so apt to run from a man. Fire, thieves, waters, and infinite causes there are of consuming riches, and impoverishing their possessors, though they have even millions and mountains of gold; but suppose that contrary to their nature they stay by a man, yet cannot *he* stay by them, but must leave them in spite of his teeth, as the Psalmist saith (xlix. 17), "The rich man shall take away nothing when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow after him." Thus death makes a violent divorce between the rich man and his goods, when it is said unto him, "Thou fool, this night shall they take away thy soul." The rich man sleeps (saith Job very elegantly), and when he openeth his eyes there is nothing. It fares with a rich man at his death, as it doth with a sleeping man when he wakes out of his dream. A man that dreams of the finding or fruition of some rich booty is wonderful glad, yet when he awaketh he findeth nothing, but seeth it was only a dream, and he is sorry; so the rich man seemed in the time of his life to have somewhat, but at the day of his death all vanisheth like the idea of a dream, and it vexeth him.—*J. D., in "The Threefold Resolutions,"* 1608.

Verse 6.—Who knocks more boldly at heaven-gate to be let in than they whom Christ will reject as workers of iniquity? Oh, what delusion is this! Caligula never made himself more ridiculous than when he would be honoured as a god, while he lived more like a devil. Before you would have others take you for Christians, for God's sake prove yourselves men and not beasts, as you do by your brutish lives. Talk not of your hopes of salvation so long as the marks of damnation are seen upon your flagitious lives. If the way to heaven were thus easy, I promise you the saints in all ages have been much overseen, to take so great pains in mortifying their lusts, in denying to satisfy their sensual appetite. To what purpose did they make so much waste of their sweat in their zealous serving God? and of their tears that they could serve him no better, if they might have gone to heaven as these men hope to do? That friar was far more sound in his judgment in this point, who, preaching at Rome one Lent, when some cardinals and many other great ones were present, began his sermon thus abruptly and ironically. Saint Peter was a fool, Saint Paul was a fool, and all the primitive Christians were fools; for they thought the way to heaven was by prayers and tears, watchings and fastings, severities of mortification, and denying the pomp and glory of this world; whereas you here in Rome spend your time in balls and masks, live in pomp, and pride, lust and luxury, and yet count yourselves good Christians, and hope to be saved; but at last you will prove the fools, and they will be found to have been the wise men.—*William Gurnall's Funeral Sermon for Lady Mary Vere,* 1671.

Verses 6—10.—David speaks of some "*that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches.*" Rich men can do great things, but here is a thing that they cannot do: "*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.*" From what cannot a rich man redeem his brother? It is true of spiritual redemption; yea, that is furthest out of the rich man's reach

money will not do it: "We are not redeemed with corrupt things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God." 1 Peter i. 18, 19. But the Psalmist speaks of a lower redemption, to which all the riches of man cannot reach: "*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:*" "*for the redemption of their soul* (that is, of their person from the grave), *is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.*" And that he speaks of their redmption from the grave is more clearly expressed at the ninth verse: "*That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.*" Jesus Christ did not so redeem us that we should live for ever, and not see corruption. It was the privilege of Jesus Christ the Redeemer not to see corruption; but Jesus Christ hath not redeemed us that we should not see corruption. He hath redeemed us that we should live for ever in heaven, but he hath not redeemed us from corruption, that we should live for ever on earth, or not see corruption in the grave; for, as it is said in the tenth verse of the Psalm, we see "*that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish and leave their wealth to others;*" as if he had said, Neither the one nor the other sort of men could make this use or improvement of their wealth, to deliver themselves from going to the grave, for if they could they would have laid all out on that purchase; but they could not do it, therefore, "*they leave their wealth to others.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—"*None of them can by any means redeem his brother,*" etc. Some animals devoted to God could be redeemed at a price, but no price could be assigned to the ransom of a soul. That such a ransom was to be provided, the faith of the church had always anticipated: "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." Psalm cxxx. 8.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 8.—"*For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.*" In this judgment tears will not prevail, prayers will not be heard, promises will not be admitted, repentance will be too late, and as for riches, honourable titles, sceptres and diadems, these will profit much less, and the inquisition shall be so curious and diligent, that not one light thought, not one idle word (not repented of in thy life past) shall be forgotten, for truth itself hath said, not in jest, but in earnest, of every idle word which men have spoken, they shall give an account in the day of judgment. Oh, how many which now sin with great delight, yea, even with greediness (as if we served a god of wood or of stone which seeth nothing nor can do nothing) will be then astonished, ashamed, and silent. Then shall the days of thy mirth be ended, and thou shalt be overwhelmed with everlasting darkness, and in stead of thy pleasures thou shalt have everlasting torments.—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 8.—"*For it cost more to redeem their souls: so that he must let that alone for ever.*"—*Prayer-book Version.*

Verse 8.—"*It ceaseth for ever.*" That is, wealth for ever comes short of the power necessary to accomplish this. It has always been insufficient; it always *will* be. There is no hope that it *ever* will be sufficient, that by any increase in the amount, or by any change in the conditions of the bargain, property or riches can avail for this. The whole matter is perfectly *hopeless* as to the power of wealth in saving one human being from the grave. It must always *fail* in saving a man from death. The word rendered *ceaseth*—חָדַל, *khadal*, means *to leave off, to desist, to fail.* Gen. xi. 8; Ex. ix. 34; Isa. ii. 22.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 11.—"*Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever.*" This is the interpretation of our actions, when we do not make God our portion, but trust in the abundance of our riches; this is our "*inward thought,*" the saying of our heart, Ye are my god. We do in effect say, Thou art my confidence, my hope, and my joy, and will stand by me when all things cease and fail, and wilt not suffer me to want, or to be wrong, as long as thou lastest: these are the secret speeches of our hearts. Christians! many may (orator like), declaim against the vanity of the creature, and speak as basely of money as others do, and say, We know it is but a little refined earth; but their hearts close with it, they are loth to part with it for God's sake, or upon God's declared will. As he that speaketh good words of God, is not said to trust in God; so speaking bad words of worldly riches doth not exempt us from trusting them. There is a difference between declaiming as an orator, and acting like a Christian.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 11.—"*Their inward thought.*" If *good* thoughts be thy *deep* thoughts,

if, as we say, the best at the bottom, thy thoughts are then right, and thou art righteous; for as the deep thoughts of worldlings are worldly thoughts, and the deep thoughts of wicked men are wicked thoughts, so the deep thoughts of good men are good thoughts. 'Tis a notable observation of the Holy Ghost's concerning worldly men, that "*their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever*," etc. Why? is there any thought that is not an *inward* thought? No, but the meaning is, though they have some floating thoughts of their mortality, and the vanity and transitoriness of all worldly things, swimming, as it were, on the top; yet they do not suffer such thoughts *to sink into their hearts*, or to go to the bottom; but the thoughts that lodge there are such as his, who is said by our Saviour to have thought within himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Luke xii. 19. Note the phrase, "he thought within himself." There are other kinds of thoughts that sometimes knock at the door of the worldling's heart, nay, sometimes look in at his windows, as Paul's sermon began to press in upon Felix his heart, and to set him a-trembling; but there are other *thoughts within*, which if they cannot keep good thoughts quite out, they will keep them off from making any due or deep impression upon the heart. Now, these thoughts that nestle themselves as it were at the very heart-roots, to keep others out from reaching thither, these *deep thoughts* are they which the Scriptures call the "*inward thoughts*," according to that of the Psalmist (Psalm lxiv. 6), "The inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep." —*Faithful Teat in "Right Thoughts the Righteous man's Evidence,"* 1666.

Verse 11.—"*They call their lands after their own names.*" God makes fools of them, for how few have you that go beyond the third generation? How few houses have you that the child or the grandchild can say, "This was my grandfather's, and my great grandfather's"? How few houses have you that those that are now in them can say, "My ancestor dwelt here, and these were his lands"? Go over a whole country, few can say so. Men when they build, together with building in the earth, they build castles in the air; they have conceits. Now I build for my child, and for my child's child. God crosses them. Either they have no posterity, or by a thousand things that fall out in the world, it falls out otherwise. The time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away; that is, the buildings pass away, the owning passeth away, all things here pass away; and, therefore, buy as if you possessed not, buy, so as we neglect not the best possession in heaven, and so possess these things, as being not possessed and commanded of them.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 11.—Mr. A. was a wealthy farmer in Massachusetts, about sixty years of age, and it had been his ruling, and almost only passion in life to acquire property. His neighbour B. owned a small farm, which came too near the centre of A.'s extended domain, was quite a blot in his prospect, destroyed the regularity of his lands, and on the whole it was really necessary, in his opinion, that he should add it to his other property. B. became embarassed, and was sued; judgments were obtained, and executions issued. A. now thought he should obtain the land, but one execution after another was arranged, and finally the debt was paid off without selling the land. When A. heard of the payment of the last execution, which put an end to his hopes of obtaining the land, he exclaimed, "Well, B. is an old man, and cannot live long, and when he dies I can buy the lot." B. was fifty-eight, A. was sixty! Reader, do you ever expect to die?—*K. Arvine's Cyclopædia of Moral and Religious Anecdotes.*

Verse 11.—I have purchased, saith one, such lands, and I have got so good a title to them, that certainly they will remain mine and my heirs for ever; never considering how all things here below are subject to ebbings and flowings, to turns and vicissitudes every day.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—The fleeting nature of all earthly possessions is well illustrated in the life of William Beckford, and the unenduring character of gorgeous fabrics in the ruin of his famous Babel, Fonthill Abbey. Byron sang of Beckford's palace in Spain, in language most applicable to Fonthill:—

> "There, too, thou Vathek! England's wealthiest son—
> Once formed thy Paradise, as not aware
> When wanton wealth her mightiest deeds hath done,
> Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to shun.
> Here didst thou dwell; here schemes of pleasure plan,
> Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow.

But now, as if a thing unblest by man,
Thy fairy dwelling is as lone as thou!
Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow,
To halls deserted, portals gaping wide;
Fresh lessons to the thinking bosom, how
Vain are the pleasaunces on earth supplied,
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle tide!" *C. H. S.*

Verses 11, 12.—"*They call their* GROUNDS *after their names. But the* GROUNDLING, *in the midst of splendour, endureth not.*" In verse 11, we have אַדְמוֹת, "*grounds.*" In verse 12, it is אָדָם, "*groundling,*" with a designed iteration and play upon the word; for want of an attention to which the passage has not been fully understood.—*John Mason Good.*

Verse 12.—"*Man being in honour abideth not.*" The rabbins read it thus: "Adam being in honour, *lodged not one night.*" The Hebrew word for *abide* signifies "to stay or lodge all night." Adam, then, it seems, did not take up one night's lodging in Paradise.—*Thomas Watson's Body of Divinity.*

Verse 13.—"*This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings.*" Master Baxter speaks very well of this in his "Saints' Everlasting Rest," which is a very choice book. The gentry teach their children to follow pleasure, and the commonalty their children to follow profit, and young ones are ready to follow old ones. "*This their way is their folly.*" The very heathen condemn this, and yet Christians mind it not. Crates the philosopher said, that if possibly he might, he would willingly mount to the highest place of the city, and there cry aloud in this manner, "What mean you, my masters, and whither run you headlong? carking and caring all that ever you can, to gather goods and make riches as you do, whiles in the meantime you make little or no reckoning at all of your children, unto whom you are to leave all your riches? Do not most care more for the wealth of their children's outward man, than for the health of their inward man?"—*J. Votier's Survey of Effectual Calling,* 1652.

Verse 13.—"*This their way is their folly.*" The folly of man seldom appears more than in being very busy about nothing, in making a great cry where there is little wool; like that empty fellow that showed himself to Alexander—having spent much time, and taken much pains at it beforehand—and boasted that he could throw a pea through a little hole, expecting a great reward; but the king gave him only a bushel of peas, for a recompense suitable to his diligent negligence, or his busy idleness. Things that are vain and empty are unworthy of our care and industry. The man that by hard labour and hazard of his life did climb up to the top of the steeple to set an egg on end, was deservedly the object of pity and laughter. We shall think him little better than mad that should make as great a fire for the roasting of an egg as for the roasting of an ox.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 13.—"*Their folly: yet their posterity approve.*" Dr. Leifchild, in his '*Remarkable Facts,*" records the following incident, of a person of property, who had been accustomed regularly to attend his ministry, but who had always manifested a covetous disposition: "I was sent for to offer to him the consolation of religion as he lay upon his dying bed. What was my surprise, after having conversed and prayed with him, to find that he was unwilling to take my hand, muttering that he knew that he had not done what was right in reference to the support and furtherance of religion, but intended to amend in that respect. He then requested me to say what I thought would become of him. How could I reply, but by exhorting him to repent, and relinquishing all further thoughts of a worldly nature, to betake himself to the sacrifice and mediation of the Son of God for pardon, safety, and salvation in that world which he was to all appearance soon about to enter? He gazed at me with a look of disappointment. Upon a hint being given me to inquire into his thoughts at that moment, I questioned him very pointedly, and to my astonishment and horror, he reluctantly disclosed to me the fact that, while thus seemingly about to breathe his last, his hands were under the bed clothes grasping the keys of his cabinet and treasures, lest they should be taken from him! Soon after, he departed this life, and there was, alas! reason to fear that, together with his property, he had transmitted somewhat of his fatal passion to those who survived him. It was distressing to me to reflect that a hearer of mine should quit this world with his fingers stiffened in death around the keys of his treasures. How strong, how terrible, was the ruling passion in the death of this man!"

Verse 13.—"*Selah.*" See "Treasury of David," Vol. I., pp. 23, 26, 27; and Vol. II., pp. 224—227.

Verse 14.—"*Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling,*" or as we put in the margin, "*The grave being an habitation to every one of them, shall consume their beauty.*" Some may object, Is not this true of godly men too? are not they thus handled by death and the grave? doth not death feed on them? and doth not the grave consume their beauty? I answer, Though it doth, yet it hath not to feed upon, nor consume them, as it feeds upon and consumes wicked men. For the Psalmist speaks here of death as it were triumphing over the wicked, whereas the godly triumph over death. For, first, he saith, The wicked are *laid in the grave like sheep:* they lived like *wolves* or *lions*, but they are laid in the grave like *sheep.* If it be asked, Why *like sheep?* I answer, not for the innocency of their lives, but for their impotency in death; as if it had been said, when once death took them in hand to lay them in the grave, they could make no more resistance than a sheep can against a lion or a wolf. And when death hath thus laid them in the grave, then secondly, saith the Psalmist, "*Death shall feed on them,*" as a lion doth upon a sheep, or any wild beast upon his prey, which is a further degree of death's triumph over the wicked. And, thirdly, "*Their beauty shall consume in the grave,*" that is, all their bodily and natural beauty (and this is all the beauty which they have) shall consume in the grave, whereas the godly have a beauty (and they count it their only beauty) which the grave cannot consume, and that is the beauty of their graces, the beauty of holiness, the spiritual beauty of the inner man, yea, and the spiritual beauty of their outward holy actings shall not consume in the grave; for, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Rev. xiv. 13.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—"*Death shall feed on them:*" rather, "*Death shall be their shepherd.*" (*Sept.*) At the end of the foregoing Psalm, the Psalmist had said in the name of his people, that "God is our God, for ever and ever; he will lead us as a shepherd over death," and here he takes up the same pastoral figure, and contrasts with their case the case of the proud and prosperous worldly men, who trust in their earthly riches and power. *They* will *not* be led in safety, under the pastoral care of God, *over death.* No; *death* itself will be *their* Shepherd, and the grave will be their sheep-fold; where they will be laid together like asheep in a pen. As Augustine says, "Death is the shepherd of the infidel. Life (*i.e.*, Christ) is the Shepherd of the faithful." "*In inferno sunt oves quibus pastor Mors est; in cælo sunt oves quibus pastor Vita est.*" And so Keble—

> Even as a flock arrayed are they
> For the dark grave; Death guides their way,
> Death is their Shepherd now.
>
> *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 14.—"*In the morning,*" that is, saith Dathe, in the *time of judgment.* He thinks there is here an allusion to the usual time of holding courts of justice, which was in the morning. See Psalms lxxiii. 14, and ci. 8; and Jer. xxi. 12.—*Editorial note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 14.—"*Their beauty shall consume in the grave.*" And now if we do but consider a little of the tombs and sepulchres of princes and noblemen, whose glory and majesty we have seen when they lived here on earth, and do behold the horrible forms and shapes which they now have, shall we not cry out as men amazed, Is this that glory? Is this that highness and excellency? Whither now are the degrees of their waiting servants gone? Where are their ornaments and jewels? Where is their pomp, their delicacy and niceness? All these things are vanished away like the smoke, and there is now nothing left but dust, horror, and stink. The soul being dissolved, there lieth upon the ground not a human body, but a dead carcase without life, without sense, without strength, and so fearful to look upon, that the sight thereof may hardly be endured. To be sure, it is a little better (as touching the substance) than the body of a horse, or a dog, which lieth dead in the fields, and all that pass by stop their noses and make haste away, that they be not annoyed with the sight and stink thereof. Such is man's body now become; yea, and though it were the body of a monarch, emperor, or a king. Where is

that majesty, that excellency, that authority which he had aforetime when all men trembled to behold it, and might not come in presence thereof without all reverence and obeisance? what are all those things become? were they a dream or shadow? After those things the funeral is prepared, the which is all that men can carry with them, of all their riches and kingdom, and this also they should not have, if in their lifetime they did not appoint it for their dignity and honour. For the prophet David saith truly (verse 16), "*Be not thou afraid though one be made rich,* or, *if the glory of his house be increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away with him, neither shall his pomp follow him.*"—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 14.—When we look to a charnel-house, and take a view of the grave, what amazing and dismal scenes present themselves! How many great and important images appear! Distracting horrors strike our imagination, and hideous sounds of diseases, destruction, and death, with all their woful and black train, terrify us. Ah! the melancholy confused heap of the ruins of mankind, what a terrible carnage is made of the human race! and what a solemn and awful theatre of mortality, covered with the disordered remains of our fellow creatures, presents itself to our minds! There lie the bones of a proud monarch, who fancied himself a little god, mingled with the ashes of his poorest subjects! Death seized him in the height of his vanity, he was just returning from a conquest, and his haughty mind was swelled with his power and greatness, when one of these fatal arrows pierced his heart, and at once finished all his perishing thoughts and contrivances, then the dream of glory vanished, and all his empire was confined to the grave. Look how pale that victorious general appears, how dead, and cold, and lifeless these arms that were once accustomed to war; see if you can discern any difference betwixt his dust and that of the most despicable slave. Yonder, a numerous army, once fierce and resolute, whose conquests were rapid as lightning, and made all the nations to shake for fear of them, are now so weak that they lie a prey, exposed to the meanest animals, the loathsome worms, who crawl in triumph over them, and insult their decayed ruins. There a body that was so much doted on, and solicitously cared for, and the beauty and shape whereof were so foolishly admired, now noisome and rotten, nothing but vermin are now fond of it, so affecting a change hath death made upon it. Look, next to this, upon the inglorious ashes of a rich, covetous wretch, whose soul was glued to this world, and hugged itself in its treasures; with what mighty throes and convulsions did death tear him from this earth? How did his hands cling to his gold! with what vehement desires did he fasten on his silver, all of them weak and fruitless! Look now if riches saved him in that day, if you can perceive any of his useless treasures lying beside him in the grave, or if the glory of his house have descended after him! Yonder, an ambitious statesman, his rotten bones are scarce to be discerned: how did he applaud his artful schemes! how securely did he think them laid, and flattered himself with the hopes of an established greatness! but death stepped in, blew them all up at once; this grave is the whole result of his counsels. And lo, there, what horrid and suffocating stink ascends from these many hellish sacrifices of lust and impurity, who wasted their strength in debauch, and carried down with them nothing but the shame of beastly pleasures to the grave. But there is no end to the corpses, nor can we survey this terrible field of death's conquests.—*William Dunlop.*

Verse 15 (*last clause*).—"*For he shall take me.*" This short half-verse is, as Böttcher remarks, the more weighty, from its very shortness. The same expression occurs again, lxxiii. 24, "Thou shalt take me," the original of both being Gen. v. 24, where it is used of the translation of Enoch, "He was not, for God *took* him."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 17.—"*For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away.*" The form of money agrees well with the condition of it; it is stamped round, because it is so apt to run away. Could we be rich so long as we live, yet that were uncertain enough, for life itself is but a dream, a shadow, but a dream of a shadow. (Augustine.) Rich men are but like hailstones; they make a noise in the world, as the other rattle on the tiles of a house; down they fall, lie still, and melt away. So that if riches could stay by a man, yet he cannot stay by them. Spite of his teeth, *he shall carry away nothing when he dies.* Life and goods are both in a vessel, both cast away at once; yea, of the two, life hath the more likelihood of continuance. Let it fly never so fast away, riches have eagles' wings, and will outfly it. There

be thieves in the highways, that will take our moneys and spare our lives. In our penal laws, there be not so many ways to forfeit our lives as our goods. Rich Job lived to see himself poor to a proverb. How many in this city reputed rich, yet have broken for thousands! There are innumerable ways to be poor; a fire, a thief, a false servant, suretyship, trusting of bad customers, an unfaithful factor, a pirate, an unskilful pilot, hath brought rich men to poverty. One gale of wind is able to make merchants rich or beggars. Man's life is like the banks of a river, his temporal estate is the stream: time will moulder away the banks, but the stream stays not for that, it glides away continually. Life is the tree, riches are the fruit, or rather the leaves; the leaves will fall, the fruit is plucked, and yet the tree stands. Some write of the pine tree, that if the bark be pulled off, it lasts long; being on, it rots. If the worldling's bark were stripped off, he might perhaps live the longer, there is great hope he would live the better,—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 17.—"*He shall carry nothing away.*" It is with us in this world, as it was in the Jewish fields and vineyards: *pluck and eat* they might what they would while they were there; but they might not pocket or put up ought to carry with them. Deut. xxiii. 24.—*Thomas Gataker.*

Verse 17.—"*He shall carry nothing away.*" "He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly." Job xx. 15.

Verse 17.—"*Descends.*" Death takes the sinner by the throat, and "hauls him down stairs to the grave." The indulgence in any sinful propensity has this downward, deathly tendency. Every lust, whether for riches or honours, for gambling, wine, or women, leads the deluded, wretched votary step by step to the chambers of death. There is no hope in the dread prospect; trouble and anguish possess the spirit. Hast thou escaped, O my soul, from the net of the infernal fowler? Never forget that it is as a brand *snatched* from the burning. Oh to grace how great a debtor!—*George Offor's note in "The Works of John Bunyan."*

Verse 17.—

> You will carry none of your riches, fool, to the waters of Acheron.
> You will be ferried over quite naked in the infernal boat.
>
> *Propertius.*

Verse 18.—How foolish is it to account thyself a better man than another, only because thy dunghill is a little bigger than his! These things are not at all to be reckoned into the value and worth of a man: they are all without thee, and concern thee no more than fine clothes do the health or strength of the body. It is wealth indeed, that makes all the noise and bustle in the world, and challengeth all the respect and honour to itself; and the ignorant vulgar, whose eyes are dazzled with pomp and bravery, pay it with a stupid and astonished reverence. Yet know, that it is but thy silks and velvet, thy lands, or thy retinue and servants, they venerate, not thee: and if thou thinkest otherwise, thou art as justly ridiculous as that ass in the apologue that grew very gravely proud, and took state, when the people fell prostrate before him, adoring, not him, but the idol he carried.—*Ezekiel Hopkins.*

Verse 20.—"*Like the beasts that perish.*" My lords, it is no wonder at all, if men that affect beastly pleasures, and dote upon perishing honours, become "*like the beasts that perish.*" It is no miracle if he that lives like a beast dies like a beast. Take a man that hath lived like the fool in the gospel, and tell me, what hath this man done for his immortal soul more than a beast doth for its perishing soul? Soul, soul, cease from care, eat, drink, and take thine ease: this is the constant ditty of most men in honour: they have studied clothes and victuals, titles and offices, ways of gain and pleasure. Am I not yet at highest? They have, it may be, studied the black art of flattery and treachery; they understand the humour of the times, the compliances and dependences of this and the other statesman, the projects of divers princes abroad, and the main design here at home. Is this all? Why then, be it known unto you, that the men of this strain have made no better provision for their precious souls, than if they had the soul, the vanishing soul of a beast within them; and certainly, if we were to judge of the substance of men's souls by their unworthy and sensual conversation, we might easily fall into that heresy, that dangerous dream of some who conceive that their souls are mortal. —*Francis Cheynell, in a Sermon entitled, "The Man of Honour," . . . . preached before the Lords of Parliament,* 1645.

Verse 20.—"*Like the beasts that perish.*" Sin is both *formaliter* and *effective* vile. As it is so in itself, so it has made man vile. No creature so debased as man, being in this respect become viler than any creature. There is no such depravation in the nature of any creature, except in the diabolical nature. No creature ever razed God's image out of its nature, but only man. There is no aversions to the will of God, no inclination to what offends him, in any creature on earth but man. Man, then, who was once the glory of the creation, is become the vilest of all creatures, for that is vilest which is most contrary to the infinite glory, but so is our nature, "Man being in honour, abideth not," is now "*like the beasts that perish;*" nay, worse than they, if the greatest evil can make him worse. Man was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory, advanced to be lord and governor of all the works of his hands; and all creatures in this world were put under his feet. Psalm viii. 5, 6. But by this natural corruption he that was but a little lower than angels is now something below the beasts. He was to have dominion, but is made baser than those over whom he rules. They were put under his feet, but now he is as low as they. This is the sad issue of natural corruption.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 20.—"*Like the beasts.*" Man is so much a beast, that he cannot know himself to be one till God teach him. And we never learn to be men till we have learned that we were beasts. . . . . It is not said he is like this or that beast, but "*he is like the beasts that perish.*" Take any beast, or all beasts, the worst of beasts, he is the picture of them all, and he daily exemplifies the vilest of their qualities in his own.—*Joseph Caryl.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 2.—I. The common needs of rich and poor men. II. The common privileges of rich and poor saints. III. Their common service. IV. Their common heaven.

Verse 3.—The deep things of God are intended, I. To exercise our minds to understand them. II. To try our faith by believing them—"incline" implies a submissive mind. III. To excite our joy as we grasp them—"upon the harp." IV. To employ our faculties in explaining them to others.

Verse 5.—I. The effects of our sin remain, 1. In ourselves. 2. In others. II. In a time of conviction they "*compass us about:*" better to do so in this life, than to haunt us as ghosts for ever. III. When they are pardoned we have nothing to fear.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—1. *Implied.* The soul needs redeeming. 2. *Denied.* Wealth, power, learning, none can redeem. 3. *Supplied*—a ransom by Jesus. 4. *Applied*—by the Spirit to our actual deliverance.

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—Wherein the ungodly are like beasts, and wherein different.

Verse 12.—Here is a twofold thwarting or crossing of the purposes of the ungodly worldling. I. The first is, *he shall not be that which he ever wished to be:* he shall not continue in honour. II. The other is this, *he shall be that which he never desired to be:* he shall be like the beasts that die. He shall miss of that which he sought for, and he shall have that which he looked not for.—*S. Hieron.*

Verse 14.—In proportion to the prosperity of the ungodly here, will be their misery hereafter: as sheep from the fat pasture led to the slaughter-house. II. In proportion to their luxury here, will be their corruption hereafter—"*Death shall feed on them:*" they have become well fed for death to feed on them. III. In proportion to their dignity here, will be their degradation hereafter—"*The upright shall have,*" etc. Oh, what a contrast between the rich man and Lazarus then! IV. In proportion to their beauty here, will be their deformity hereafter. "Art, thou become like one of us?"—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—Sheep, how far they image the wicked.

Verse 14.—"*In the morning.*" See the various Biblical prophecies of what will happen "in the morning."

Verse 15.—1. *Return* to the dust I shall. 2. *Redeem* from the dust he will. 3. *Receive* into heaven he will. 4. *Rejoice* for ever I shall.

Verse 17.—The loaded and unloaded sinner.

Verse 20.—I. Men of spiritual understanding without worldly honour are higher than the angels of God in heaven. II. Men in worldly honour without the true wisdom are worse than the beasts that perish.—*G. R.*

PSALM L.

TITLE.—A Psalm of Asaph.—*This is the first of the Psalms of Asaph, but whether it was the production of that eminent musician, or merely dedicated to him, we cannot tell. The titles of twelve Psalms bear his name, but it could not in all of them be meant to ascribe their authorship to him, for several of these Psalms are of too late a date to have been composed by the same writer as the others. There was an Asaph in David's time, who was one of David's chief musicians, and his family appear to have continued long after in their hereditary office of temple musicians. An Asaph is mentioned as a recorder or secretary in the days of Hezekiah* (2 Kings xviii. 18), *and another was keeper of the royal forests under Artaxerxes. That Asaph did most certainly write some of the Psalms is clear from* 2 Chron. xxix. 30, *where it is recorded that the Levites were commanded to "sing praises unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer," but that other Asaphic Psalms were not of his composition, but were only committed to his care as a musician, is equally certain from* 1 Chron. xvi. 7, *where David is said to have delivered a Psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. It matters little to us whether he wrote or sang, for poet and musician are near akin, and if one composes words and another sets them to music, they rejoice together before the Lord.*

DIVISIONS.—*The Lord is represented as summoning the whole earth to hear his declaration,* 1—6; *he then declares the nature of the worship which he accepts,* 7—15, *accuses the ungodly of breaches of the precepts of the second table,* 16—21, *and closes the court with a word of threatening,* 22, *and a direction of grace,* 23.

EXPOSITION.

THE mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God *is* judge himself. Selah.

1. "*The mighty God, even the Lord*"—El, Elohim, Jehovah, three glorious names for the God of Israel. To render the address the more impressive, these august titles are mentioned, just as in royal decrees the names and dignities of monarchs are placed in the forefront. Here the true God is described as Almighty, as the only and perfect object of adoration and as the self-existent One, "*Hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof.*" The dominion of Jehovah extends over the whole earth, and therefore to all mankind is his decree directed. The east and the west are bidden to hear the God who makes his sun to rise on every quarter of the globe. Shall the summons of the great King be despised? Will we dare provoke him to anger by slighting his call?

2. "*Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.*" The Lord is represented not only as speaking to the earth, but as coming forth to reveal the glory of his presence to an assembled universe. God of old dwelt in Zion among his chosen people, but here the beams of his splendour are described as shining forth upon all nations. The sun was spoken of in the first verse, but here is a far brighter sun. The majesty of God is most conspicuous among his own elect, but it is not confined to them; the church is not a dark lantern, but a candlestick. God shines

not only in Zion, but out of her. She is made perfect in beauty by his indwelling and that beauty is seen by all observers when the Lord shines forth from her.

Observe how with trumpet voice and flaming ensign the infinite Jehovah summons the heavens and the earth to hearken to his word.

3. "*Our God shall come.*" The Psalmist speaks of himself and his brethren as standing in immediate anticipation of the appearing of the Lord upon the scene. "He comes," they say, "our covenant God is coming;" they can hear his voice from afar, and perceive the splendour of his attending train. Even thus should we wait the long-promised appearing of the Lord from heaven. "*And shall not keep silence.*" He comes to speak, to plead with his people, to accuse and judge the ungodly. He has been silent long in patience, but soon he will speak with power. What a moment of awe when the Omnipotent is expected to reveal himself! What will be the reverent joy and solemn expectation when the poetic scene of this Psalm becomes in the last great day an actual reality! "*A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.*" Flame and hurricane are frequently described as the attendants of the divine appearance. "Our God is a consuming fire." "At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire." Psalm xviii. 12. "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." 2 Thes. i. 7, 8. Fire is the emblem of justice in action, and the tempest is a token of his overwhelming power. Who will not listen in solemn silence when such is the tribunal from which the judge pleads with heaven and earth?

4. "*He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth.*" Angels and men, the upper and the lower worlds, are called to witness the solemn scene. The whole creation shall stand in court to testify to the solmnity and the truth of the divine pleading. Both earth beneath and heaven above shall unite in condemning sin; the guilty shall have no appeal, though all are summoned that they may appeal if they dare. Both angels and men have seen the guilt of mankind and the goodness of the Lord, they shall therefore confess the justice of the divine utterance, and say "Amen" to the sentence of the supreme Judge. Alas, ye despisers! What will ye do and to whom will ye fly? "*That he may judge his people.*" Judgment begins at the house of God. The trial of the visible people of God will be a most awful ceremonial. He will throughly purge his floor. He will discern between his nominal and his real people, and that in open court, the whole universe looking on. My soul, when this actually takes place, how will it fare with thee? Canst thou endure the day of his coming?

5. "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" Go, ye swift-winged messengers, and separate the precious from the vile. Gather out the wheat of the heavenly garner. Let the long-scattered, but elect people known by my separating grace to be my sanctified ones, be now assembled in one place. All are not saints who seem to be so—a severance must be made; therefore let all who profess to be saints be gathered before my throne of judgment, and let them hear the word which will search and try the whole, that the false may be convicted and the true revealed. "*Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice;*" this is the grand test, and yet some have dared to imitate it. The covenant was ratified by the slaying of victims, the cutting and dividing of offerings; this the righteous have done by accepting with true faith the great propitiatory sacrifice, and this the pretenders have done in merely outward form. Let them be gathered before the throne for trial, and testing, and as many as have really ratified the covenant by faith in the Lord Jesus shall be attested before all worlds as the objects of distinguishing grace while formalists shall learn that outward sacrifices are all in vain. Oh, solemn assize, how does my soul bow in awe at the prospect thereof!

6. "*And the heavens shall declare his righteousness.*" Celestial intelligences and the spirits of just men made perfect, shall magnify the infalliable judgment of the divine tribunal. Now they doubtless wonder at the hypocrisy of men; then they shall equally marvel at the exactness of the severance between the true and the false. "*For God is judge himself.*" This is the reason for the correctness of the judgment. Priests of old, and churches of later times, were readily deceived, but not so the all-discerning Lord. No deputy-judge sits on the great white throne; the injured Lord of all himself weighs the evidence and allots the vengeance or reward. The scene in the Psalm is a grand poetical conception, but it is also an inspired prophecy of that day which shall burn as an oven, when the Lord shall discern

between him that feareth him and him that feareth him not. "*Selah.*" Here we may well pause in reverent prostration, in deep searching of heart, in humble prayer and in awe-struck expectation.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I *am* God, *even* thy God.

8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me.

9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, *nor* he goats out of thy folds.

10 For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.

12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.

13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

The address which follows is directed to the professed people of God. It is clearly, in the first place, meant for Israel; but is equally applicable to the visible church of God in every age. It declares the futility of external worship when spiritual faith is absent and the mere outward ceremonial is rested in.

7. "*Hear, O my people, and I will speak.*" Because Jehovah speaks, and they are avowedly his own people, they are bound to give earnest heed. "Let me speak," saith the great I AM. The heavens and earth are but listeners, the Lord is about both to testify and to judge. "*O Israel, and I will testify against thee.*" Their covenant name is mentioned to give point to the address; it was a double evil that the chosen nation should become so carnal, so unspiritual, so false, so heartless to their God. God himself, whose eyes sleep not, who is not misled by rumour, but sees for himself, enters on the scene as witness against his favoured nation. Alas! for us when God, even our fathers' God, testifies to the hypocrisy of the visible church. "*I am God, even thy God.*" He had taken them to be his peculiar people above all other nations, and they had in the most solemn manner avowed that he was their God. Hence the special reason for calling them to account. The law began with, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," and now the session of their judgment opens with the same reminder of their singular position, privilege, and responsibility. It is not only that Jehovah is God, but *thy* God, O Israel; this it is that makes thee so amenable to his searching reproofs.

8. "*I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifice or thy burnt offerings, to have been ever before me.*" Though they had not failed in maintaining his outward worship, or even if they had, he was not about to call them to account for this: a more weighty matter was now under consideration. They thought the daily sacrifices and the abounding burnt offerings to be everything: he counted them nothing if the inner sacrifice of heart devotion had been neglected. What was greatest with them was least with God. It is even so to-day. Sacraments (so called) and sacred rites are the main concern with unconverted but religious men, but with the Most High the spiritual worship which they forget is the sole matter. Let the external be maintained by all means according to the divine command, but if the secret and spiritual be not in them, they are a vain oblation, a dead ritual, and even an abomination before the Lord.

9. "*I will take no bullock out of thy house.*" Foolishly they dreamed that bullocks with horns and hoofs could please the Lord, when indeed he sought for hearts and souls. Impiously they fancied that Jehovah needed these supplies, and that if they fed his altar with their fat beasts, he would be content. What he intended for their instruction, they made their confidence. They remembered not that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "*Nor*

he goats out of thy folds." He mentions these lesser victims as if to rouse their common sense to see that the great Creator could find no satisfaction in mere animal offerings. If he needed these, he would not appeal to their scanty stalls and folds ; in fact, he here refuses to take so much as one, if they brought them under the false and dishonouring view, that they were in themselves pleasing to him. This shows that the sacrifices of the law were symbolical of higher and spiritual things, and were not pleasing to God except under their typical aspect. The believing worshipper looking beyond the outward was accepted, the unspiritual who had no respect to their meaning was wasting his substance, and blaspheming the God of heaven.

10. "*For every beast of the forest is mine.*" How could they imagine that the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, had need of beasts, when all the countless hordes that find shelter in a thousand forests and wildernesses belong to him ? "*And the cattle upon a thousand hills.*" Not alone the wild beasts, but also the tamer creatures are all his own. Even if God cared for these things, he could supply himself. Their cattle were not, after all, their own, but were still the great Creator's property, why then should he be beholden to them. From Dan to Beersheba, from Nebaioth to Lebanon, there fed not a beast which was not marked with the name of the great Shepherd ; why, then, should he crave oblations of Israel ? What a slight is here put even upon sacrifices of divine appointment when wrongly viewed as in themselves pleasing to God ! And all this to be so expressly stated under the law ! How much more is this clear under the gospel, when it is so much more plainly revealed, that " God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth " ? Ye Ritualists, ye Sacramentarians, ye modern Pharisees, what say ye to this ?

11. "*I know all the fowls of the mountains.*" All the winged creatures are under my inspection and near my hand ; what then can be the value of your pairs of turtledoves and your two young pigeons ? The great Lord not only feeds all his creatures, but is well acquainted with each one ; how wondrous is this knowledge ! "*And the wild beasts of the field are mine.*" The whole population moving over the plain belongs to me ; why then should I seek your beeves and rams ? In me all things live and move ; how mad are you to suppose that I desire your living things ! A spiritual God demands other life than that which is seen in animals ; he looks for spiritual sacrifice, for the love, the trust, the praise, the life of your hearts.

12. "*If I were hungry, I would not tell thee.*" Strange conception, a hungry God ! Yet if such an absurd ideal could be truth, and if the Lord hungered for meat he would not ask it of men. He could provide for himself out of his own possessions ; he would not turn suppliant to his own creatures. Even under the grossest idea of God, faith in outward ceremonies is ridiculous. Do men fancy that the Lord needs banners, and music, and incense, and fine linen ? If he did, the stars would emblazon his standard, the winds and the waves become his orchestra, ten thousand times ten thousand flowers would breathe forth perfume, the snow should be his alb, the rainbow his girdle, the clouds of light his mantle. O fools and slow of heart, ye worship ye know not what ! "*For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.*" What can he need who is owner of all things and able to create as he wills ? Thus overwhelmingly does the Lord pour forth his arguments upon formalists.

13. "*Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ?*" Are you so infatuated as to think this ? Is the great I AM subject to corporeal wants, and are they to be thus grossly satisfied ? Heathens thought thus of their idols, but dare ye think thus of the God who made the heavens and the earth ? Can ye have fallen so low as to think thus of me, O Israel ? What vivid reasoning is here ! How the fire-flashes dart into the idiot faces of trusters in outward forms ! Ye dupes of Rome, can ye read this and be unmoved ? The expostulation is indignant ; the questions utterly confound ; the conclusion is inevitable ; heart worship only can be acceptable with the true God. It is inconceivable that outward things can gratify him, except so far as through them our faith and love express themselves.

14. "*Offer unto God thanksgiving.*" No longer look at your sacrifices as in themselves gifts pleasing to me, but present them as the tributes of your gratitude ; it is then that I will accept them, but not while your souls have no love and no thankfulness to offer me. The sacrifices, as considered in themselves, are contemned, but the internal emotions of love consequent upon a remembrance of divine goodness, are commended as the substance, meaning, and soul of sacrifice. Even when the legal ceremonials were not abolished, this was true, and when they came to an end, this truth was more than ever made manifest. Not for want of bullocks on

the altar was Israel blamed, but for want of thankful adoration before the Lord. She excelled in the visible, but in the inward grace, which is the one thing needful, she sadly failed. Too many in these days are in the same condemnation. "*And pay thy vows unto the most High.*" Let the sacrifice be really presented to the God who seeth the heart, pay to him the love you promised, the service you covenanted to render, the loyalty of heart you have vowed to maintain. O for grace to do this! O that we may be graciously enabled to love God, and live up to our profession! To be, indeed, the servants of the Lord, the lovers of Jesus, this is our main concern. What avails our baptism, to what end our gatherings at the Lord's table, to what purpose our solemn assemblies, if we have not the fear of the Lord, and vital godliness reigning within our bosoms?

15. "*And call upon me in the day of trouble.*" Oh, blessed verse! Is this then true sacrifice? Is it an offering to ask an alms of heaven? It is even so. The King himself so regards it. For herein is faith manifested, herein is love proved, for in the hour of peril we fly to those we love. It seems a small thing to pray to God when we are distressed, yet is it a more acceptable worship than the mere heartless presentation of bullocks and he-goats. This is a voice from the throne, and how full of mercy it is! It is very tempestuous round about Jehovah, and yet what soft drops of mercy's rain fall from the bosom of the storm! Who would not suffer such sacrifice? Troubled one, haste to present it now! Who shall say that Old Testament saints did not know the gospel? Its very spirit and essence breathe like frankincense all around this holy Psalm. "*I will deliver thee.*" The reality of thy sacrifice of prayer shall be seen in its answer. Whether the smoke of burning bulls be sweet to me or no, certainly thy humble prayer shall be, and I will prove it so by my gracious reply to thy supplication. This promise is very large, and may refer both to temporal and eternal deliverances; faith can turn it every way, like the sword of the cherubim. "*And thou shalt glorify me.*" Thy prayer will honour me, and thy grateful perception of my answering mercy will also glorify me. The goats and bullocks would prove a failure, but the true sacrifice never could. The calves of the stall might be a vain oblation, but not the calves of sincere lips.

Thus we see what is true ritual. Here we read inspired rubrics. Spiritual worship is the great, the essential matter; all else without it is rather provoking than pleasing to God. As helps to the soul, outward offerings were precious, but when men went not beyond them, even their hallowed things were profaned in the view of heaven.

16 But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?

17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.

18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.

19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

20 Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.

21 These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.

Here the Lord turns to the manifestly wicked among his people; and such there were even in the highest places of his sanctuary. If moral formalists had been rebuked, how much more these immoral pretenders to fellowship with heaven? If the lack of heart spoiled the worship of the more decent and virtuous, how much more would violations of the law, committed with a high hand, corrupt the sacrifices of the wicked?

16. "*But unto the wicked God saith.*" To the breakers of the second table he now addresses himself; he had previously spoken to the neglecters of the first. "*What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?*" You violate openly my moral law, and yet are great sticklers for my ceremonial commands! What have you to do with them? What interest can you have in them? Do you dare to teach my law to others, and profane it yourselves? What impudence, what blasphemy is

this! Even if you claim to be sons of Levi, what of that? Your wickedness disqualifies you, disinherits you, puts you out of the succession. It should silence you, and would if my people were as spiritual as I would have them, for they would refuse to hear you, and to pay you the portion of temporal things which is due to my true servants. You count up your holy days, you contend for rituals, you fight for externals, and yet the weightier matters of the law ye despise! Ye blind guides, ye strain out gnats and swallow camels; your hypocrisy is written on your foreheads and manifest to all. *"Or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth."* Ye talk of being in covenant with me, and yet trample my holiness beneath your feet as swine trample upon pearls; think ye that I can brook this? Your mouths are full of lying and slander, and yet ye mouth my words as if they were fit morsels for such as you! How horrible an evil it is, that to this day we see men explaining doctrines who despise precepts! They make grace a coverlet for sin, and even judge themselves to be sound in the faith, while they are rotten in life. We need the grace of the doctrines as much as the doctrines of grace, and without it an apostle is but a Judas, and a fair-spoken professor is an arrant enemy of the cross of Christ.

17. *"Seeing thou hatest instruction."* Profane professors are often too wise to learn, too besotted with conceit to be taught of God. What a monstrosity that men should declare those statutes which with their hearts they do not know, and which in their lives they openly disavow! Woe unto the men who hate the instruction which they take upon themselves to give. *"And castest my words behind thee."* Despising them, throwing them away as worthless, putting them out of sight as obnoxious. Many boasters of the law did this practically; and in these last days there are pickers and choosers of God's words who cannot endure the practical part of Scripture; they are disgusted at duty, they abhor responsibility, they disembowel texts of their plain meanings, they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. It is an ill sign when a man dares not look a Scripture in the face, and an evidence of brazen impudence when he tries to make it mean something less condemnatory of his sins, and endeavours to prove it to be less sweeping in its demands. How powerful is the argument that such men have no right to take the covenant of God into their mouths, seeing that its spirit does not regulate their lives!

18. *"When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him."* Moral honesty cannot be absent where true grace is present. Those who excuse others in trickery are guilty themselves; those who use others to do unjust actions for them are doubly so. If a man be ever so religious, if his own actions do not rebuke dishonesty, he is an accomplice with thieves. If we can acquiesce in anything which is not upright, we are not upright ourselves, and our religion is a lie. *"And hast been partaker with adulterers."* One by one the moral precepts are thus broken by the sinners in Zion. Under the cloak of piety, unclean livers conceal themselves. We may do this by smiling at unchaste jests, listening to indelicate expressions, and conniving at licentious behaviour in our presence; and if we thus act, how dare we preach, or lead public prayer, or wear the Christian name? See how the Lord lays righteousness to the plummet! How plainly all this declares that without holiness no man shall see the Lord! No amount of ceremonial or theological accuracy can cover dishonesty and fornication; these filthy things must be either purged from us by the blood of Jesus, or they will kindle a fire in God's anger which will burn even to the lowest hell.

19. *"Thou givest thy mouth to evil."* Sins against the ninth commandment are here mentioned. The man who surrenders himself to the habit of slander is a vile hypocrite if he associates himself with the people of God. A man's health is readily judged by his tongue. A foul mouth, a foul heart. Some slander almost as often as they breathe, and yet are great upholders of the church, and great sticklers for holiness. To what depths will not they go in evil, who delight in spreading it with their tongues? *"And thy tongue frameth deceit."* This is a more deliberate sort of slander, where the man dexterously elaborates false witness, and concocts methods of defamation. There is an ingenuity of calumny in some men, and, alas! even in some who are thought to be followers of the Lord Jesus. They manufacture falsehoods, weave them in their loom, hammer them on their anvil, and then retail their wares in every company. Are these accepted with God? Though they bring their wealth to the altar, and speak eloquently of truth and of salvation, have they any favour with God? We should blaspheme the holy God if we were to think so.

They are corrupt in his sight, a stench in his nostrils. He will cast all liars into hell. Let them preach, and pray, and sacrifice as they will; till they become truthful, the God of truth loathes them utterly.

20. "*Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother.*" He sits down to it, makes it his meat, studies it, resolves upon it, becomes a master of defamation, occupies the chair of calumny. His nearest friend is not safe, his dearest relative escapes not. "*Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.*" He ought to love him best, but he has an ill word for him. The son of one's own mother was to the Oriental a very tender relation; but the wretched slanderer knows no claims of kindred. He stabs his brother in the dark, and aims a blow at him who came forth of the same womb: yet he wraps himself in the robe of hypocrisy, and dreams that he is a favourite of heaven, an accepted worshipper of the Lord. Are such monsters to be met with nowadays? Alas! they pollute our churches still, and are roots of bitterness, spots in our solemn feasts, wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Perhaps some such may read these lines, but they will probably read them in vain; their eyes are too dim to see their own condition, their hearts are waxen gross, their ears are dull of hearing; they are given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie, that they may be damned.

21. "*These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.*" No swift judgment overthrew the sinner—longsuffering reigned; no thunder was heard in threatening, and no bolt of fire was hurled in execution. "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*" The inference drawn from the Lord's patience was infamous: the respited culprit thought his judge to be one of the same order as himself. He offered sacrifice, and deemed it accepted; he continued in sin, and remained unpunished, and therefore he rudely said, "Why need believe these crazy prophets? God cares not how we live so long as we pay our tithes. Little does he consider how we get the plunder, so long as we bring a bullock to his altar." What will not men imagine of the Lord? At one time they liken the glory of Israel to a calf and anon their brutish selves. "*But I will reprove thee.*" At last I will break silence and let thee know my mind. "*And set them in order before thine eyes.*" I will marshal thy sins in battle array. I will make thee see them, I will put them down item by item, classified, and arranged. Thou shalt know that if silent awhile, I was never blind or deaf. I will make thee perceive what thou hast tried to deny. I will leave the seat of mercy for the throne of judgment, and there will I let thee see how great the difference between thee and me.

22 Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.

22. "*Now*" or *oh!* it is a word of entreaty, for the Lord is loth even to let the most ungodly run on to destruction. "*Consider this;*" take these truths to heart, ye who trust in ceremonies and ye who live in vice, for both of you sin in that "*ye forget God.*" Bethink you how unaccepted you are, and turn unto the Lord. See how you have mocked the eternal, and repent of your iniquities. "*Lest I tear you in pieces,*" as a lion rends his prey, "*and there be none to deliver,*" no Saviour, no refuge, no hope. Ye reject the Mediator: beware, for ye will sorely need one in the day of wrath, and none will be near to plead for you. How terrible, how complete, how painful, how humiliating, will be the destruction of the wicked! God uses no soft words, or velvet metaphors, nor may his servants do so when they speak of the wrath to come. O reader, consider this.

23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright* will I shew the salvation of God.

23. "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.*" Praise is the best sacrifice; true, hearty, gracious thanksgiving from a renewed mind. Not the lowing of bullocks bound to the altar, but the songs of redeemed men are the music which the ear of Jehovah delights in. Sacrifice your loving gratitude, and God is honoured thereby. "*And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.*" Holy living is a choice evidence of salvation. He who submits his whole way to divine guidance, and is careful to honour God in his life, brings an offering which the Lord accepts through his dear Son; and such a one shall be more and more instructed, and made experimentally to know the Lord's salvation. He

needs salvation, for the best ordering of the life cannot save us, but *that salvation* he shall have. Not to ceremonies, not to unpurified lips, is the blessing promised, but to grateful hearts and holy lives.

O Lord, give us to stand in the judgment with those who have worshipped thee aright and have seen thy salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The exordium or beginning of this Psalm is the most grand and striking that can possibly be imagined—the speaker GOD, the audience an assembled world! We cannot compare or assimilate the scene here presented to us with any human resemblance; nor do I imagine that earth will ever behold such a day till that hour when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, and shall gather all the nations of the earth from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other; when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—"*El, Elohim, Jehovah has spoken!*" So reads the Hebrew.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—Some have observed that these three names, *El, Elohim, Jehovah*, here mentioned, have three very distinct accents set to them, and which being joined to a verb singular דִּבֶּר, *hath spoken*, contains the mystery of the trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine Essence.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*And called the earth,*" etc., *i.e., all the inhabitants of the earth* he has commanded to come as witnesses and spectators of the judgment.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verses 1—5.—

No more shall atheists mock his long delay;
His vengeance sleeps no more; behold the day!
Behold!—the Judge descends; his guards are nigh,
Tempests and fire attend him down the sky.
When God appears, all nature shall adore him.
While sinners tremble, saints rejoice before him.
Heaven, earth, and hell, draw near; let all things come,
To hear my justice, and the sinner's doom;
But gather first my saints (the Judge commands),
Bring them, ye angels, from their distant lands.
When Christ returns, wake every cheerful passion,
And shout, ye saints; he comes for your salvation.

Isaac Watts.

Verse 2.—*Out of Zion, the perfection of God's beauty hath shined; or, God has caused the perfection of beauty to shine out of Zion.—Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*God hath shined.*" Like the sun in his strength, sometimes for the comfort of his people, as Psalm lxxx. 1; sometimes for the terror of evil-doers, as Psalm xciv. 1, and here. But evermore God is terrible out of his holy places. Psalm lxviii. 35, and lxxxix. 7.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*God hath shined.*" The proper meaning of יָפַע is to scatter rays from afar, and from a lofty place, and to glitter. *It is a word of a grand sound*, says Ch. Schultens, *which is always used of a magnificent and flashing light. . . . .* It is apparently used of the splendid symbol of God's presence, as in Deut. xxxiv. 2, where he is said to *scatter beams* from Mount Paran. From which it is manifest that it may refer to the pillar of cloud and fire, the seat of the Divine Majesty conspicuous on Mount Sinai, or on the tabernacle, or the loftiest part of the temple. —*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 3.—"*Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence.*" He kept silence that he might be judged, he will not keep silence when he begins to judge. It

would not have been said, "*He shall come manifestly,*" unless at first he had come concealed; nor, "*He shall not keep silence,*" had he not at first kept silence. How did he keep silence? Ask Isaiah: "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Isa. liii. 7. But he shall come manifestly, and shall not keep silence. How manifestly? "*A fire shall go before him, and round about him a mighty tempest.*" That tempest is to carry wholly away the chaff from the floor which is now in threshing; that fire, to consume what the tempest carries off. Now, however, he is silent; silent in judgment, but not in precept. For if Christ is silent, what mean these gospels? What the voices of the apostles? the canticles of the Psalms? the lofty utterances of the prophets? Truly in all these Christ is not silent. Howbeit he is silent for the present in not taking vengeance, not in not warning. But he will come in surpassing brightness to take vengeance, and will be seen of all, even of those who believe not on him; but now, forasmuch as although present he was not concealed, it behoved him to be despised: for unless he had been despised he would not have been crucified; if not crucified he would not have shed his blood, the price with which he redeemed us. But in order that he might give a price for us, he was crucified; that he might be crucified, he was despised; that he might be despised, he appeared in humble guise.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—The future in the first clause may be rendered *he is coming*, as if the sound of his voice and the light of his glory had preceded his actual appearance. The imagery is borrowed from the giving of the law at Sinai.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—*May our God come!* * A prayer for the hastening of his advent, as in the Apocalypse, xxii. 20.—*Pool's Synopsis.*

Verse 3.—"*A fire shall devour before him.*" As he gave his law in fire, so in fire shall he require it.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth.*" That these dumb creatures may be as so many speaking evidences against an unworthy people, and witnesses of God's righteous dealings against them. See Deut. xxxii. 1; Isaiah i. 2; Mic. vi. 2. The Chaldee thus paraphraseth: *He will call the high angels from above; and the just of the earth from beneath.—John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—"*Gather,*" etc. To whom are these words addressed? Many suppose to the angels, as the ministers of God's will; but it is unnecessary to make the expression more definite than it is in the Psalm.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 5.—"*My saints,*" the objects of my mercy, those whom I have called and specially distinguished. The term is here descriptive of a relation, not of an intrinsic quality.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*Gather my saints together unto me.*" There is a double or two-fold gathering to Christ. There is a gathering unto Christ by faith, a gathering within the bond of the covenant, a gathering into the family of God, a gathering unto the root of Jesse, standing up for an ensign of the people. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." Isa. xi. 10. This is the main end of the gospel, the great work of ministers, the gathering of sinners unto Christ. But then there is a gathering unto Christ at the general judgment; and this is the gathering that is here spoken of. This gathering is consequential to the other. Christ will gather none to him at the last day but those that are gathered to him by faith here; he will give orders to gather together unto him all these, and none but these, that have taken hold of his covenant. . . . . .

I would speak of Christ's owning and acknowledging the saints at his second coming. His owning and acknowledging them is imported in his giving these orders, "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" . . . . . Now upon this head I mention the things following:—1. Saintship will be the only mark of distinction in that day. There are many marks of distinction now; but these will all cease, and this only will remain. 2. Saintship will then be Christ's badge of honour. Beware of mocking at saintship, or sanctity, holiness, and purity; for it is Christ's badge of honour, the garment with which his followers are clothed, and will be the only badge of honour at the great day. 3. Christ will forget and misken none of the

* Version of Junius & Tremellius.

saints. Many of the saints are forgotten here, it is forgotten that such persons were in the world, but Christ will forget and misken none of them at the great day; he will give forth a list of all his saints, and give orders to gather them all unto him. 4. He will confess, own, and acknowledge them before his Father, and his holy angels. Matt. x. 32; Luke xii. 8; Rev. iii. 5; They are to go to my Father's house, and they are to go thither in my name, in my right, and at my back; and so it is necessary I should own and acknowledge them before my Father. But what need is there for his owning them before the angels? *Ans.* They are to be the angels' companions, and so it is necessary he should own them before the angels. This will be like a testimonial for them unto the angels. Lastly. The evidences of his right to, and propriety in them, will then be made to appear. Mal. iii. 17: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." It is too late for persons to become his then; so the meaning is, they shall evidently appear to be mine.—*James Scot*, 1773.

Verse 5.—"*Gather my saints together unto me.*" Our text may be considered as the commission given by the great Judge to his angels—those ministering spirits who do his will, hearkening to the voice of his power. The language of the text is in accordance with that which was uttered by our Lord when, alluding to the coming of the Son of Man, he says, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." But previous to this final, this *general* gathering together of his saints to judgment, Jehovah gathers them together in various ways, in various places, and by various means, both of providence and of grace. Previous to his being seated on a throne of judgment, we behold him sitting on a throne of mercy, and we hear him saying, "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" These words lead us to notice—I. The characters described, "*My saints.*" II. The command issued, "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" I. THE CHARACTERS HERE DESCRIBED—"*My saints.*" By the term "*my saints,*" we are to understand *my holy ones*—those who have been sanctified and set apart by God. None of us possess this character by *nature.* We are born sinners, and there is no difference; but by divine *grace* we experience a change of nature, and consequently a change of name. The title of saint is frequently given to the people of God in derision. "Such an one," says a man of the world, "is one of your saints." But, my brethren, no higher honour can be conferred upon us than to be denominated saints, if we truly deserve that character; but in what way do we become saints? We become saints—1. *By divine choice.* The saints are the objects of everlasting love; their names are written in the Lamb's book of life; and it is worthy of remark that wherever the people of God are spoken of in sacred Scripture, as the objects of that everlasting love, it is in connection with their *personal sanctification.* Observe, they are not chosen because they *are* saints, nor because it is foreseen that they *will* be so, but they are chosen *to be* saints; sanctification is the effect and the only evidence of election. We become saints—2. *By a divine change which is the necessary consequence of this election.* An inward, spiritual, supernatural, universal change is effected in the saints by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and made partakers of a divine nature. . . . . Remember, then, this important truth, that Christians are called by the gospel to be saints; that you are Christians, not so much by your *orthodoxy* as by your *holiness;* that you are saints no further than as you are holy in all manner of conversation. 3. *The people of God furnish an evidence of being saints by their godly conduct.* "By their fruits," not by their feelings; not by their lips, not by their general profession, but, "by their fruits shall ye know them." 4. The character of the saints is evidenced *by divine consecration.* The people of God are called holy inasmuch as they are dedicated to God. It is the duty and the privilege of saints to consecrate themselves to the service of God. Even a heathen philosopher could say, "I *lend* myself to the *world,* but I *give* myself to the *gods.*" But we possess more light and knowledge, and are therefore laid under greater obligations than was Seneca.

II. THE COMMAND ISSUED—"*Gather my saints together unto me.*" Jehovah gathers his saints to himself in various ways. 1. *He gathers them to himself in their conversion.* The commission given by Christ to his ministers is, "Go ye forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," or in other words, "*Gather my saints together unto me.*" The gospel is to be preached to *sinners* in order that they may become *saints.* 2. *Saints are gathered together by God in public worship.* . . .

3. *He gathers his saints together to himself in times of danger.* When storms appear to be gathering around them, he is desirous to screen them from the blast. He says to them, in the language of Isaiah, " Come, my people, and enter into thy chamber—the chamber of my perfections and my promises—enter into thy chamber and shut the doors about thee, and hide thyself until the calamity is overpast." 4. *God gathers his saints together in the service of his church.* Thus Christ collected his apostles together to give them their apostolic commission to go and teach all nations. At the period of the Reformation, the great Head of the church raised up Luther and Calvin, together with other eminent reformers, in order that they might light up a flame in Europe, yea, throughout the world, that the breath of popery should never be able to blow out. 5. *God gathers his saints together in death, and at the resurrection.* " Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." This is the commission which death is habitually receiving—" Go, death, and gather such-and-such of my saints unto me." As the gardener enters the garden, and plucks the full-blown flower and the ripened fruit, so Jesus Christ enters the garden of his church and gathers his saints to himself; for he says, " Father, I will that all they whom thou hast given me may be with me, where I am, and behold my glory."—*Condensed from J. Sibree's " Sermon preached at the re-opening of Surrey Chapel, August 29th,* 1830."

Verse 5 (*second clause*).—" *Made,*" or *ratifying a covenant;* literally, *cutting,* striking, perhaps in allusion to the practice of slaying and dividing victims as a religious rite, accompanying solemn compacts. (See Genesis xv. 10—18). The same usage may be referred to in the following words, *over sacrifice, i.e.,* standing over it; or, *on sacrifice, i.e.,* founding the engagement on a previous appeal to God. There is probably allusion to the great covenant transaction recorded in Ex. xxiv. 4—8. This reference to sacrifice shows clearly that what follows was not intended to discredit or repudiate that essential symbol of the typical or ceremonial system.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 5.—" *Made a covenant with me.*" Formerly soldiers used to take an oath not to flinch from their colours, but faithfully to cleave to their leaders; this they called *sacramentum militare,* a military oath; such an oath lies upon every Christian. It is so essential to the being of a saint, that they are described by this, " *Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me.*" We are not Christians till we have subscribed this covenant, and that without any reservation. When we take upon us the profession of Christ's name, we enlist ourselves in his muster-roll, and by it do promise that we will live and die with him in opposition to all his enemies. . . . He will not entertain us till we resign up ourselves freely to his disposal, that there may be no disputing with his commands afterwards, but, as one under his authority, go and come at his word.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 6.—" *The heavens shall declare his righteousness.*" It is the manner of Scripture to commit the teaching of that which it desires should be most noticeable, and important to *the heavens and the earth:* for *the heavens* are seen by all, and their light discovers all things. Here it speaks of *the heavens,* not *the earth,* because these are everlasting, but not the earth.—*Geier and Muis in Pool's Synopsis.*

Verse 8.—" *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;*" *i.e.,* for thy neglect of them, but for thy resting in them, sticking in the bark, bringing me the bare shell without the kernel, not referring to the right end and use, but satisfying thyself in the work done.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—" *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings continually before me.*" Those words " *to have been,*" which our translators supply, may be left out, and the sense remain perfect: or if those words be continued, then the negative particle *not,* is to be reassumed out of the first part of the verse, and the whole read thus, " *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings not to have been continually before me.*" That is, I will not charge thee with a neglect of outward duty or worship, the inward or spiritual (of which he speaks, ver. 14), being that which is most pleasing unto me.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 8, 9.—It is the very remonstrance which our Lord himself makes against the Pharisees of his days, for laying so much stress on the outward observance of their own traditions, the washing of pots and cups and other such like things; the paying of tithes of anise and mint and cummin; the ostentatious fulfilment of all ceremonious observances in the eyes of men, the exalting the shadow to the exclusion of the substance. And have we not seen the like in our own days, even

to the very vestment of the minister, the obeisance of the knee, and the posture of the body? as if the material church were all in all, and God were no Spirit, that demanded of those that worshipped him that they should worship him in spirit and in truth; as if the gold and ornaments of the temple were far beyond the hidden man of the heart in that which is incorruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 10.—"*For to me* [belongs] *every beast of the forest, the cattle in hills of a thousand.*" This last idiomatic phrase may either mean a thousand hills, or hills where the cattle rove by thousands, with probable allusion to the hilly grounds of Bashan beyond Jordan. According to etymology, the noun in the first clause means an *animal*, and that in the second *beasts* or *brutes* in general. But when placed in antithesis, the first denotes a wild beast, and the second domesticated animals or cattle. Both words were necessary to express God's sovereign propriety in the whole animal creation. Thus understood, the verse assigns a reason for the negative assertion in the one before it. Even if God could stand in need of animal oblations, for his own sake, or for their sake, he would not be under the necessity of coming to man for them, since the whole animal creation is his property and perfectly at his disposal.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verses 11, 12.—We show our scorn of God's sufficiency, by secret thoughts of meriting from him by any religious act, as though God could be indebted to us, and obliged by us. As though our devotions could bring a blessedness to God more than he essentially hath; when indeed "our goodness extends not to him." Ps. xvi. 2. Our services to God are rather services to ourselves, and bring a happiness to us, not to God. This secret opinion of merit (though disputed among the Papists, yet) is natural to man; and this secret self-pleasing, when we have performed any duty, and upon that account expect some fair compensation from God, as having been profitable to him; God intimates this: "The wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." He implies, that they wronged his infinite fulness, by thinking that he stood in need of their sacrifices and services, and that he was beholden to them for their adoration of him. All merit implies a moral or natural insufficiency in the person of whom we merit, and our doing something for him, which he could not, or at least so well do for himself. It is implied in our murmuring at God's dealing with us as a course of cross providences, wherein men think they have deserved better at the hands of God by their service, than to be cast aside and degraded by him. In our prosperity we are apt to have secret thoughts that our enjoyments were the debts God owed us, rather than gifts freely bestowed upon us. Hence it is that men are more unwilling to part with their righteousness than with their sins, and are apt to challenge salvation as a due, rather than beg it as an act of grace.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 12.—"*If I were hungry,*" etc. Pagan sacrifices were considered as feasts of the gods.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 13.—"*Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?*" That is, did I want anything I would not tell thee; but hast thou indeed such gross notions of men, as to imagine that I have appointed and required the blood and flesh of animals for their own sake and not with some design? Dost thou think I am pleased with these, when they are offered without faith, love, and gratitude? Nay, offer the sacrifice of praise, etc. Render to me a spiritual and reasonable service, performing thy engagements, and then thou wilt find me a very present help in trouble.—*B. Boothroyd.*

Verse 15.—"*Call upon me,*" etc. Prayer is like the ring which Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex, bidding him if he were in any distress send that ring to her, and she would help him. God commandeth his people if they be in any perplexity to send this ring to him: "*Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee,*" *and thou shalt glorify me.*"—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 15.—"*Call upon me in the day of trouble,*" etc. Who will scrape to a keeper for a piece of venison who may have free access to the master of the game to ask and have? Hanker not after other helpers, rely on him only, fully trusting him in the use of such means as he prescribeth and affordeth. God is jealous, will have

no co-rival, nor allow thee (in this case) two strings to thy bow. He who worketh all in all must be unto thee all in all: of, through, and to whom are all things, to him be all praise for ever. Rom. xi. 36.—*George Gipps, in "A Sermon preached (before God, and from him) to the Honourable House of Commons*, 1645."

Verse 15.—"*Call upon me in the day of trouble*," etc. The Lord hath promised his children supply of all good things, yet they must see the means of impetration; by prayer. He feeds the young ravens when they call upon him. Ps. cxlvii. 9. He feeds the young ravens, but first they call upon him. God withholds from them that ask not, lest he should give to them that desire not. (Augustine.) David was confident that by God's power he should spring over a wall; yet not without putting his own strength and agility to it. Those things we pray for, we must work for. (Augustine.) The carter in Isidore, when his cart was overthrown, would needs have his god Hercules come down from heaven, to help him up with it; but whilst he forbore to set his own shoulder to it, his cart lay still. Abraham was as rich as any of our aldermen, David as valiant as any of our gentlemen, Solomon as wise as any of our deepest naturians, Susanna as fair as any of our painted pieces. Yet none of them thought that their riches, valour, policy, beauty, or excellent parts could save them; but they stirred the sparks of grace, and bestirred themselves in pious work. And this is our means, if our meaning be to be saved.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 15.—"*I will deliver thee:*" properly, *I will draw thee forth with my own mighty hand*," and plant thee in liberty and prosperity.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 16.—"*Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?*" etc. "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool." Is it not? No wonder then that divine wisdom requires us ourselves to put off the old man (as snakes put off their skins) before we take on us the most honourable office of reproving sin; a duty which above any other brings praise to God, and profit to men; insomuch that God hath not a more honourable work that I know of to set us about. And what think you? Are greasy scullions fit to stand before kings? Are dirty kennel-rakers fit to be plenipotentiaries or ambassadors? Are unclean beasts fit to be made lord-almoners, and sent to bestow the king's favours? Are swine fit to cast pearl, and the very richest pearl of God's royal word? No man dreams it; consequently none can believe himself qualified or commissioned to be a reprover of sin "till he is washed, till he is sanctified, till he is justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God." A lunatick beggar in Athens would not believe but that all the ships in the harbour were his. His mistake exceeded not theirs, who persuade themselves that this richer office is theirs, before they are "alive from the dead," and "born of the Spirit," before they are returned to God or to themselves. The Duke of Alva is said to have complained that, "his king sent him in fetters to fight for him;" because without his pardon given him, and while he was a prisoner, he employed him in war. But the supreme King is a more merciful one, and orders our charity to begin at home; making it our first duty to break off our sins; and then when we have put off these our shackles, go to fight his battles.—*Daniel Burgess* (1645—1712–13) *in "The Golden Snuffers."*

Verse 16.—"*The wicked.*" By whom are meant, not openly profane sinners; but men under a profession of religion, and indeed who were teachers of others, as appears from the following expostulations with them: the Scribes, Pharisees, and doctors among the Jews, are designed, and so Kimchi interprets it of their wise men, who learnt and taught the law, but did not act according to it.—*John Gill.*

Verse 16.—"*What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?*" etc. All the mediæval writers teach us, even from the Mosaic law concerning the leper, how the writer of this Psalm only put into words what those statutes expressed in fact. For so it is written: "The leper in whom the plague is, . . . he shall put a covering upon his upper lip." As they all, following Origen, say: Let them who are themselves of polluted lips, take good heed not to teach others. Or, to take it in the opposite way, see how Isaiah would not speak to his people, because he was a man of polluted lips, and he dwelt among a people of polluted lips, till they had been touched with the living coal from the altar; and by that, as by a sacrament of the Old Testament, a sentence of absolution had been pronounced upon them.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 16 (*second clause*).—Emphasis is laid on the phrase, *to declare God's statutes*, which both denotes such an accurate knowledge of them as one may obtain by *numbering* them, and a diligent and public review of them. Properly speaking the word is derived from the Arabic, and signifies *to reckon in dust*, for the ancients were accustomed to calculate in *dust* finely sprinkled over tablets or the Abacus.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 16.—"*But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do . . . to take my covenant into thy mouth?*" For whom is the covenant made but for the wicked? If men were not wicked or sinful, what needed there a covenant of grace? The covenant is for the wicked, and the covenant brings grace enough to pardon those who are most wicked; why, then, doth the Lord say to the wicked, "*What hast thou to do to take my covenant into thy mouth?*" Observe what follows, and his meaning is expounded: "*Seeing thou hatest to be reformed.*" As if God had said, Thou wicked man, who protectest thy sin, and holdest it close, refusing to return and hating to reform; what hast thou to do to meddle with my covenant? Lay off thy defiled hands. He that is resolved to hold his sin takes hold of the covenant in vain, or rather he lets it go, while he seems to hold it. Woe unto those who sue for mercy while they neglect duty.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16.—When a minister does not do what he teaches, this makes him a vile person; nay, this makes him ridiculous, like Lucian's apothecary, who had medicines in his shop to cure the cough, and told others that he had them, and yet was troubled with it himself. With what a forehead canst thou stand in a pulpit and publish the laws of God, and undertake the charge of souls, that when thine own nakedness appears, when thy tongue is of a larger size than thy hands, thy ministry is divided against itself, thy courses give thy doctrine the lie; thou sayest that men must be holy, and thy deeds do declare thy mouth's hypocrisy; thou doest more mischief than a hundred others.—*William Fenner.*

Verse 17.—"*And castest my words behind thee.*" *Thou castest away contemptuously.* with disgust and detestation, as idols are cast out of a city; or as Moses indignantly dashed to the earth the tables of the law.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 17.—"*My words:*" apparently the ten commandments, accustomed to be called the *ten words*, by which God is often said to have made his covenant with Israel.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 18.—"*When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him;*" or *didst run with him.* This was literally true of the Scribes and Pharisees; they devoured widows' houses, and robbed them of their substance, under a pretext of long prayers; they consented to the deeds of Barabbas, a robber, when they preferred him to Jesus Christ; and they joined with the thieves on the cross in reviling him; and, in a spiritual sense, they stole away the word of the Lord, every man from his neighbour; took away the key of knowledge from the people, and put false glosses upon the sacred writings.—*John Gill.*

Verse 18.—"*Thou consentedst with him;*" *became his accomplice.* Συνέτρεχες αὐτῷ, LXX, *i.e.*, you helped him to carry off his booty and to make his escape.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 18.—"*Thou consentedst with him.*" Or, thou runnest along with him. "*Hast been partaker with;*" namely, thou art his companion; a term taken from commerce of merchants, or from banquets made after the ancient manner, to which divers did contribute, and had their shares therein.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 18 (*last clause*).—To give entertainment to them we know to be dissolute, is to communicate with their sins.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 19.—"*Thou givest thy mouth to evil,*" etc. "*Thou givest.*" Heb., *thou sendest forth;* to wit, free; for the word is used of men's dismissing their wives or their servants, whom they left to their freedom. Thou hast an unbridled tongue, and castest off all restraints of God's law, and of thine own conscience, and givest thy tongue liberty to speak what thou pleasest, though it be offensive and dishonourable to God, and injurious to thy neighbour, or to thy own soul; which is justly produced as an evidence of their hypocrisy. "*To evil,*" either to sinful or mischievous speeches. "*Frameth deceit,*" *i.e.*, uttereth lies or fair words, wherewith to circumvent those who deal with them.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 19.—The ninth commandment is now added to the other two, as being habitually violated by the person here addressed.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 20.—"*Thou sittest and speakest,*" etc. A man may both speak and do evil while he sits still and doth nothing; an idle posture may serve the turn for such work as that.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 20.—"*Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother,*" etc. When you are sitting still, and have nothing else to do, you are ever injuring your neighbour with your slanderous speech. Your table-talk is abuse of your nearest friends.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 20.—"*Thine own mother's son.*" To understand the force of this expression, it is necessary to bear in mind that polygamy was allowed amongst the Israelites. Those who were born to the same father were all brethren, but a yet more intimate relationship subsisted between those who had the same mother as well as the same father.—*French and Skinner.*

Verse 21.—"*These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.*" Neither sleep nor slumber, nor connivance, nor neglect of anything can be incident to God. Because he doth not execute present judgment and visible destruction upon sinners, therefore blasphemy presumptuously inferreth—will God trouble himself about such petty matters? So they imagined of their imaginary Jupiter. *Non vacat exiguis rebus adesse Jovem.* What a narrow and finite apprehension this is of God! He that causeth and produceth every action—shall he not be present at every action? What can we do without him, that cannot move but in him? He that takes notice of sparrows, and numbers the seeds which the very ploughman thrusts in the ground, can any action of man escape his knowledge, or slip from his contemplation? He may seem to wink at things, but never shuts his eyes. He doth not always manifest a reprehensive knowledge, yet he always retains an apprehensive knowledge. Though David smote not Shimei cursing, yet he heard Shimei cursing. As judges often determine to hear, but do not hear to determine; so though God does not see to like, yet he likes to see.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 21.—"*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*" Such is the blindness and corruption of our nature, that we have very deformed and misshapen thoughts of him, till with the eye of faith we see his face in the glass of the word; and therefore Mr. Perkins affirms, that all men who ever came of Adam (Christ alone excepted) are by nature atheists; because at the same time that they acknowledge God, they deny his power, presence, and justice, and allow him to be only what pleaseth themselves. Indeed, it is natural for every man to desire to accommodate his lusts with such conception of God as may be most favourable to and suit best with them. God charges some for this: "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*" Sinners do with God as the Ethiopians do with angels, whom they picture with black faces that they may be like themselves.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 21.—"*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*" This men do when they plead for sins as little, as venial, as that which is below God to take notice of; because they themselves think it so, therefore God must think it so too. Men, with a giant-like pride, would climb into the throne of the Almighty, and establish a contradiction to the will of God by making his own will, and not God's, the square and rule of his actions. This principle commenced, and took date in Paradise, when Adam would not depend upon the will of God revealed to him, but upon himself and his own will, and thereby makes himself as God.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 21.—"*I will set them in order before thine eyes.*" This is to be understood *more militari*, when sins shall be set in rank and file, in bloody array against thy soul; or *more forensi*, when they shall be set in order as so many indictments for thy rebellion and treason.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 21.—"*And set them in order before thine eyes:*" as if he should say, Thou thoughtest all thy sins were scattered and dispersed; that there was not a sin to be found; that they should never be rallied and brought together; but I assure thee I will make an army of those sins, a complete army of them, I will set them in rank and file before thine eyes; and see how thou canst behold, much less contend with, such an host as they. Take heed therefore you do not levy war against your own souls; that's the worst of all civil or intestine wars. If any army of divine terrors be so fearful, what will an army of black, hellish sins be? when God shall bring whole regiments of sins against you—here a regiment of oaths, there a regiment of lies, there a third of false dealings, here a troop of filthy actions, and there a legion

of unclean or profane thoughts, all at once fighting against thy life and everlasting peace.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 21.—Atheists do mock at those Scriptures which tell us that we shall give account of all our deeds; but God shall make them find the truth of it in that day of their reckoning. It is as easy for him to make their forgetful minds remember as to create the minds in them. When he applieth his register to their forgetful spirits they shall see all their forgotten sins. When the printer presseth clean paper upon his oiled irons, it receiveth the print of every letter: so when God shall stamp their minds with his register, they shall see all their former sins in a view. The hand was ever writing against Belshazzar, as he was ever sinning, though he saw it not till the cup was filled: so is it to the wicked; their sins are numbered, and themselves weighed, and see not till they be divided by a fearful wakening.—*William Struther.*

Verse 21 (*last clause*).—"*God setteth his sins in order before his eyes.*" *Imprimis*, the sin of his conception. *Item*, the sins of his childhood. *Item*, of his youth. *Item*, of his man's estate, etc. Or, *Imprimis*, sins against the first table. *Item*, sins against the second; so many of ignorance, so many of knowledge, so many of presumption, severally sorted by themselves. He committed sins confusedly, huddling them up in heaps; but God *sets them in order*, and methodizes them to his hands.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 22.—"*Now consider this, ye that forget God,*" etc. What is less than a grain of sand? Yet when it comes to be multiplied, what is heavier than the sands of the sea? A little sum multiplied rises high; so a little sin unrepented of will damn us, as one leak in the ship, if it be not well looked to, will drown us. "Little sins," as the world calls them, but great sins against the majesty of God Almighty, whose majesty, against which they are committed, doth accent and enhance them, if not repented of, will damn. One would think it no great matter *to forget God*, yet it has *a heavy doom* attending on it. The non-improvement of talents, the non-exercise of grace, the world looks upon as a small thing; yet we read of him who *hid* his talent in the earth—he had not spent it, only not trading it is sentenced.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 22.—"*Lest I tear you in pieces.*" This is a metaphorical expression, taken from the strength and irresistible fury of a lion, from which the interference of the shepherd can supply no protection, or defence, for his flock.—*William Walford.*

Verse 23.—"*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.*" Thanksgiving is a God-exalting work. Though nothing can add the least cubit to God's essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes of others. Praise is a setting forth of God's honour, a lifting up of his name, a displaying the trophy of his goodness, a proclaiming his excellency, a spreading his renown, a breaking open the box of ointment, whereby the sweet savour and perfume of God's name is sent abroad into the world. "*To him that ordereth his conversation aright.*" Though the main work of religion lies within, yet "our light must so shine," that others may behold it: the foundation of sincerity is in the heart, yet its beautiful frontispiece appears in the conversation. The saints are called "jewels," because they cast a sparkling lustre in the eyes of others. An upright Christian is like Solomon's temple, gold within and without: sincerity is a holy leaven, which if it be in the *heart* will work itself into the life, and make it swell and rise as high as heaven. Phil. iii. 20.—*Thomas Watson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—It unspeakably concerns *all* men to know what God has spoken.—*W. S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—I. Who has spoken? The mighty, not men or angels, but God himself. II. To whom has he spoken? To all nations—all ranks—all characters. This calls for, 1. Reverence—it is the voice of God. 2. Hope—because he condescends to speak to rebels. III. Where has he spoken? 1. In creation. 2. In providence. 3. In his word.—*G. R.*

Verses 1—6.—I. The court called in the name of the King of kings. II. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat; v. 2, 3. III. The parties summoned; v. 8. IV. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; v. 6.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 1—15.—I. God's call to man. II. Man's call to God.

Verse 2.—I. The internal beauty of Zion. 1. *Positive* beauty of wisdom—holiness—love. 2. *Comparative* with the beauty of Paradise and the heaven of angels. 3. *Superlative*—all the perfections of God combined. II. Its external glory. Out of it God hath shined. 1. On this world. 2. On gracious souls. 3. On angels who desire to look, etc. 4. On the universe. "All the creatures heard I," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—1. What God will do for his people. He will judge them. 1. Deliver. 2. Defend. 3. Uphold. II. The means at his disposal for this purpose. "He shall call," etc—heaven and earth are subservient to him for the good of his church.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—The judgment of the visible church. It will be by God himself, public, searching—with fire and wind, exact, final.

Verse 5.—The great family gathering. I. Who are gathered. II. How they are gathered. III. To whom. IV. When they are gathered.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—I. The covenant. II. The sacrifice which ratifies it. III. How we may be said to make it.

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—Then slander will not pervert the sentence, undue severity will not embitter it, partiality will not excuse, falsehood will not deceive, justice will surely be done.

Verse 7.—Sins of God's people specially against God, and only known to God. A searching subject.

Verses 13—15.—What sacrifices are not, and what are acceptable with God.

Verse 15.—I. The occasion—"trouble." II. The command—"call upon me." III. The promise—"I will deliver thee." IV. The design—"thou shalt," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—"*Thou shalt glorify me.*" This we do by praying, and by praising when prayer is heard; as also by confidence in his promises, submission to his chastisements, concern for his honour, attachment to his cause, affection to his people, and by continual obedience to his commands.

Verse 15.—I. A special invitation as to person and time. II. Special promise to those accepting it. III. Special duty involved when the promise is fulfilled.

Verses 16, 17.—I. The prohibition given. 1. The prohibited *things*—"declare my statutes." "Take my covenant," etc. (1.) Preaching. (2.) Teaching, as in Sunday-schools. (3.) Praying. (4.) Attending ordinances. 2. Prohibited *persons*. Wicked preachers, etc., while they continue in wickedness. II. The reason assigned; v. 17. 1. No self-application of the truth. 2. Inward hatred of it. 3. Outward rejection.—*G. R.*

Verse 17.—I. *The fatal sign.* 1. Hating to be taught. 2. Hating what is taught. II. *What it indicates.* 1. Pride. 2. Contempt of God. 3. Indifference to truth. 4. Atheism at heart. 5. Deadness of conscience. II. *What it leads to.* See verse 22.

Verses 17, 18.—Rejection of salutary instruction leads sooner or later to open transgression. Instances, reasons, inferential warnings.

Verses 20, 21.—I. Man speaking and God silent. II. God speaking and man silent.

Verse 21.—I. God leaves men for a time to themselves. II. They judge of God on this account by themselves. III. He will in due time reveal their whole selves to themselves. "I will reprove," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 21, 23.—Note the alternative; a life rightly ordered now, or sins set in order hereafter.

Verse 22.—I. The accusation—"Ye that forget God," his omniscience, his power, his justice, his goodness, his mercy, his word, his great salvation. II. The admonition—"Consider this," rouse yourselves from your forgetfulness into serious reflection. III. The condemnation—"Lest," etc. 1. The awfulness. "Tear," as a lion or eagle its prey—tear body and soul. 2. Its irresistibleness—"None to deliver."—*G. R.*

Verse 23.—I. Salvation is the work of God. II. The evidence of salvation is holiness of heart and life. III. The effect of that evidence is praise. IV. The tendency of that praise is to glorify God. God is not glorified by the doubts, and fears, and murmurings of his people, but by their praise.—*G. R.*

Verse 23 (*last clause*).—The true order of life. I. That first which is first. II. That most which is most. III. That ever which is ever. IV. That all which is all.

PSALM LI.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician.—*Therefore not written for private meditation only, but for the public service of song. Suitable for the loneliness of individual penitence, this matchless Psalm is equally well adapted for an assembly of the poor in spirit.* A Psalm of David. *It is a marvel, but nevertheless a fact, that writers have been found to deny David's authorship of this Psalm, but their objections are frivolous, the Psalm is David-like all over. It would be far easier to imitate Milton, Shakespeare, or Tennyson, than David. His style is altogether* sui generis, *and it is as easily distinguishable as the touch of Rafaelle or the colouring of Rubens.* "When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." *When the divine message had aroused his dormant conscience and made him see the greatness of his guilt he wrote this Psalm. He had forgotten his Psalmody while he was indulging his flesh, but he returned to his harp when his spiritual nature was awakened, and he poured out his song to the accompaniment of sighs and tears. The great sin of David is not to be excused, but it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialities in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power; no other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did, and hence there were not around him those restraints of custom and association which, when broken through, render the offence the more monstrous. He never hints at any form of extenuation, nor do we mention these facts in order to apologise for his sin, which was detestable to the last degree; but for the warning of others, that they may reflect that the like licentiousness in themselves at this day might have even a graver guilt in it than in the erring King of Israel. When we remember his sin, let us dwell most upon his penitence, and upon the long series of chastisements which rendered the after part of his life such a mournful history.*

DIVISIONS.—*It will be simplest to note in the first twelve verses the penitent's confessions and plea for pardon, and then in the last seven his anticipatory gratitude and the way in which he resolves to display it.*

EXPOSITION.

HAVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness, *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.

9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.

1. "*Have mercy upon me, O God.*" He appeals at once to the mercy of God, even before he mentions his sin. The sight of mercy is good for eyes that are sore with penitential weeping. Pardon of sin must ever be an act of pure mercy, and therefore to that attribute the awakened sinner flies. "*According to thy loving-kindness.*" Act, O Lord, like thyself; give mercy like thy mercy. Show mercy such as is congruous with thy grace.

> "Great God, thy nature hath no bound:
> So let thy pardoning love be found."

What a choice word is that of our English version, a rare compound of precious things: love and kindness sweetly blended in one—"lovingkindness." "*According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies.*" Let thy most loving compassions come to me, and make thou thy pardons such as these would suggest. Reveal all thy gentlest attributes in my case, not only in their essence but in their abundance. Numberless have been thine acts of goodness, and vast is thy grace; let me be the object of thine infinite mercy, and repeat it all in me. Make my one case an epitome of all thy tender mercies. By every deed of grace to others I feel encouraged, and I pray thee let me add another and a yet greater one, in my own person, to the long list of thy compassions. "*Blot out my transgressions.*" My revolts, my excesses, are all recorded against me; but, Lord, erase the lines. Draw thy pen through the register. Obliterate the record, though now it seems engraven in the rock for ever: many strokes of thy mercy may be needed, to cut out the deep inscription, but then thou hast a multitude of mercies, and therefore, I beseech thee, erase my sins.

2. "*Wash me throughly.*" It is not enough to blot out the sin; his person is defiled, and he fain would be purified. He would have God himself cleanse him, for none but he could do it effectually. The washing must be thorough, it must be repeated, therefore he cries, "Multiply to wash me." The dye is in itself immovable, and I, the sinner, have lain long in it, till the crimson is ingrained: but, Lord, wash, and wash, and wash again, till the last stain is gone, and not a trace of my defilement is left. The hypocrite is content if his garments be washed; but the true suppliant cries, "wash *me*." The careless soul is content with a nominal cleansing, but the truly-awakened conscience desires a real and practical washing, and that of a most complete and efficient kind. "*Wash me throughly from mine iniquity.*" It is viewed as one great pollution, polluting the entire nature, and as all his own; as if nothing were so much his own as his sin. The one sin against Bathsheba, served to show the Psalmist the whole mountain of his iniquity, of which that foul deed was but one falling stone. He desires to be rid of the whole mass of his filthiness, which though once so little observed, had then become a hideous and haunting terror to his mind. "*And cleanse me from my sin.*" This is a more general expression; as if the Psalmist said, "Lord, if washing will not do, try some other process; if water avails not, let fire, let anything be tried, so that I may but be purified. Rid me of my sin by some means, by any means, by every means, only do purify me completely, and leave no guilt upon my soul." It is not the punishment he cries out against, but the sin. Many a murderer is more alarmed at the gallows than at the murder which brought him to it. The thief loves the plunder, though he fears the prison. Not so David: he is sick of sin as sin; his loudest outcries are against the evil of his transgression, and not against the painful consequences of it. When we deal seriously with our sin, God will deal gently with us. When we hate what the Lord hates, he will soon make an end of it, to our joy and peace.

3. "*For I acknowledge my transgressions.*" Here he sees the plurality and immense number of his sins, and makes open declaration of them. He seems to say, I make a full confession of them. Not that this is my plea in seeking forgiveness, but it is a clear evidence that I need mercy, and am utterly unable to look to any other quarter for help. My pleading guilty has barred me from any appeal against the sentence of justice: O Lord, I must cast myself on thy mercy, refuse me not, I pray thee. Thou hast made me willing to confess. O follow up this work of grace with a full and free remission! "*And my sin is ever before me.*" My sin as a whole is never out of my mind; it continually oppresses my spirit. I lay it before thee because it is ever before me: Lord, put it away both from thee and me. To an awakened conscience, pain on account of sin is not transient and

occasional, but intense and permanent, and this is no sign of divine wrath, but rather a sure preface of abounding favour.

4. "*Against thee, thee only have I sinned.*" The virus of sin lies in its opposition to God: the Psalmist's sense of sin towards others rather tended to increase the force of his feeling of sin against God. All his wrong-doing centred, culminated, and came to a climax, at the foot of the divine throne. To injure our fellow men is sin, mainly because in so doing we violate the law of God. The penitent's heart was so filled with a sense of the wrong done to the Lord himself, that all other confession was swallowed up in a broken-hearted acknowledgment of offence against him. "*And done this evil in thy sight.*" To commit treason in the very court of the king and before his eye is impudence indeed: David felt that his sin was committed in all its filthiness while Jehovah himself looked on. None but a child of God cares for the eye of God, but where there is grace in the soul it reflects a fearful guilt upon every evil act, when we remember that the God whom we offend was present when the trespass was committed. "*That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*" He could not present any argument against divine justice, if it proceeded at once to condemn him and punish him for his crime. His own confession, and the judge's own witness of the whole transaction, placed the transgression beyond all question or debate; the iniquity was indisputably committed, and was unquestionably a foul wrong, and therefore the course of justice was clear and beyond all controversy.

5. "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.*" He is thunderstruck at the discovery of his inbred sin, and proceeds to set it forth. This was not intended to justify himself, but it rather meant to complete the confession. It is as if he said, not only have I sinned this once, but I am in my very nature a sinner. The fountain of my life is polluted as well as its streams. My birth-tendencies are out of the square of equity; I naturally lean to forbidden things. Mine is a constitutional disease, rendering my very person obnoxious to thy wrath. "*And in sin did my mother conceive me.*" He goes back to the earliest moment of his being, not to traduce his mother, but to acknowledge the deep tap-roots of his sin. It is a wicked wresting of Scripture to deny that original sin and natural depravity are here taught. Surely men who cavil at this doctrine have need to be taught of the Holy Spirit what be the first principles of the faith. David's mother was the Lord's handmaid, he was born in chaste wedlock, of a good father, and he was himself "the man after God's own heart;" and yet his nature was as fallen as that of any other son of Adam, and there only needed the occasion for the manifesting of that sad fact. In our shaping we were put out of shape, and when we were conceived our nature conceived sin. Alas, for poor humanity! Those who will may cry it up, but he is most blessed who in his own soul has learned to lament its lost estate.

6. "*Behold.*" Here is the great matter of consideration. God desires not merely outward virtue, but inward purity, and the penitent's sense of sin is greatly deepened as with astonishment he discovers this truth, and how far he is from satisfying the divine demand. The second "Behold" is fitly set over against the first; how great the gulf which yawns between them! "*Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.*" Reality, sincerity, true holiness, heart-fidelity, these are the demands of God. He cares not for the pretence of purity, he looks to the mind, heart, and soul. Always has the Holy One of Israel estimated men by their inner nature, and not by their outward professions; to him the inward is as visible as the outward, and he rightly judges that the essential character of an action lies in the motive of him who works it. "*And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*" The penitent feels that God is teaching him truth concerning his nature, which he had not before perceived. The love of the heart, the mystery of its fall, and the way of its purification—this hidden wisdom we must all attain; and it is a great blessing to be able to believe that the Lord will "make us to know it." No one can teach our innermost nature but the Lord, but he can instruct us to profit. The Holy Spirit can write the law on our heart, and that is the sum of practical wisdom. He can put the fear of the Lord within, and that is the beginning of wisdom. He can reveal Christ in us, and he is essential wisdom. Such poor, foolish, disarranged souls as ours, shall yet be ordered aright, and truth and wisdom shall reign within us.

7. "*Purge me with hyssop.*" Sprinkle the atoning blood upon me with the appointed means. Give me the reality which legal ceremonies symbolise. Nothing but blood can take away my blood-stains, nothing but the strongest purification

can avail to cleanse me. Let the sin-offering purge my sin. Let him who was appointed to atone, execute his sacred office on me; for none can need it more than I. The passage may be read as the voice of faith as well as a prayer, and so it runs—"Thou wilt purge me with hyssop, *and I shall be clean.*" Foul as I am, there is such power in the divine propitiation, that my sin shall vanish quite away. Like the leper upon whom the priest has performed the cleansing rites, I shall be again admitted into the assembly of thy people and allowed to share in the privileges of the true Israel; while in thy sight also, through Jesus my Lord, I shall be accepted. "*Wash me.*" Let it not merely be in type that I am clean, but by real spiritual purification, which shall remove the pollution of my nature. Let the sanctifying as well as the pardoning process be perfected in me. Save me from the evils which my sin has created and nourished in me. "*And I shall be whiter than snow.*" None but thyself can whiten me, but thou canst in grace outdo nature itself in its purest state. Snow soon gathers smoke and dust, it melts and disappears; thou canst give me an enduring purity. Though snow is white below as well as on the surface, thou canst work the like inward purity in me, and make me so clean that only an hyperbole can set forth my immaculate condition. Lord, do this; my faith believes thou wilt, and well she knows thou canst.

Scarcely does Holy Scripture contain a verse more full of faith than this. Considering the nature of the sin, and the deep sense the Psalmist had of it, it is a glorious faith to be able to see in the blood sufficient, nay, all-sufficient merit entirely to purge it away. Considering also the deep, natural inbred corruption which David saw and experienced within, it is a miracle of faith that he could rejoice in the hope of perfect purity in his inward parts. Yet, be it added, the faith is no more than the word warrants, than the blood of atonement encourages, than the promise of God deserves. O that some reader may take heart, even now while smarting under sin, to do the Lord the honour to rely thus confidently on the finished sacrifice of Calvary and the infinite mercy there revealed.

8. "*Make me to hear joy and gladness.*" He prays about his sorrow late in the Psalm; he began at once with his sin; he asks to hear pardon, and then to hear joy. He seeks comfort at the right time and from the right source. His ear has become heavy with sinning, and so he prays, "Make me to hear." No voice could revive his dead joys but that which quickeneth the dead. Pardon from God would give him double joy—"joy and gladness." No stinted bliss awaits the forgiven one; he shall not only *have* a double-blooming joy, but he shall *hear* it; it shall sing with exultation. Some joy is felt but not heard, for it contends with fears; but the joy of pardon has a voice louder than the voice of sin. God's voice speaking peace is the sweetest music an ear can hear. "*That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*" He was like a poor wretch whose bones are crushed, crushed by no ordinary means, but by omnipotence itself. He groaned under no mere flesh wounds; his firmest and yet tenderest powers were "broken in pieces all asunder;" his manhood had become a dislocated, mangled, quivering sensibility. Yet if he who crushed would cure, every wound would become a new mouth for song, every bone quivering before with agony would become equally sensible of intense delight. The figure is bold, and so is the supplicant. He is requesting a great thing; he seeks joy for a sinful heart, music for crushed bones. Preposterous prayer anywhere but at the throne of God! Preposterous there most of all but for the cross where Jehovah Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree. A penitent need not ask to be an hired servant, or settle down in desparing content with perpetual mourning; he may ask for gladness and he shall have it; for if when prodigals return the father is glad, and the neighbours and friends rejoice and are merry with music and dancing, what need can there be that the restored one himself should be wretched?

9. "*Hide thy face from my sins.*" Do not look at them; be at pains not to see them. They thrust themselves in thy way; but, Lord, refuse to behold them, lest if thou consider them, thine anger burn, and I die. "*Blot out all mine iniquities.*" He repeats the prayer of the first verse with the enlargement of it by the word "all." All repetitions are not "vain repetitions." Souls in agony have no space to find variety of language: pain has to content itself with monotones. David's face was ashamed with looking on his sin, and no diverting thoughts could remove it from his memory; but he prays the Lord to do with his sin what he himself cannot. If God hide not his face from our sin, he must hide it for ever from us; and if he blot not out our sins, he must blot our names out of his book of life.

10. *"Create."* What! has sin so destroyed us, that the Creator must be called in again? What ruin then doth evil work among mankind! *"Create in me."* I, in outward fabric, still exist; but I am empty, desert, void. Come, then, and let thy power be seen in a new creation within my old fallen self. Thou didst make a man in the world at first; Lord, make a new man in me! *"A clean heart."* In the seventh verse he asked to be clean; now he seeks a heart suitable to that cleanliness; but he does not say, "Make my old heart clean;" he is too experienced in the hopelessness of the old nature. He would have the old man buried as a dead thing, and a new creation brought in to fill its place. None but God can create either a new heart or a new earth. Salvation is a marvellous display of supreme power; the work *in* us as much as that *for* us is wholly of Omnipotence. The affections must be rectified first, or all our nature will go amiss. The heart is the rudder of the soul, and till the Lord take it in hand we steer in a false and foul way. O Lord, thou who didst once make me, be pleased to new make me, and in my most secret parts renew me. *"Renew a right spirit within me."* It was there once, Lord, put it there again. The law on my heart has become like an inscription hard to read: new write it, gracious Maker. Remove the evil as I have entreated thee; but, O replace it with good, lest into my swept, empty, and garnished heart, from which the devil has gone out for awhile, seven other spirits more wicked than the first should enter and dwell. The two sentences make a complete prayer. *"Create"* what is not there at all; *"renew"* that which is there, but in a sadly feeble state.

11. *"Cast me not away from thy presence."* Throw me not away as worthless; banish me not, like Cain, from thy face and favour. Permit me to sit among those who share thy love, though I only be suffered to keep the door. I deserve to be for ever denied admission to thy courts; but, O good Lord, permit me still the privilege which is dear as life itself to me. *"Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."* Withdraw not his comforts, counsels, assistances, quickenings, else I am indeed as a dead man. Do not leave me as thou didst Saul, when neither by Urim, nor by prophet, nor by dream, thou wouldst answer him. Thy Spirit is my wisdom, leave me not to my folly; he is my strength, O desert me not to my own weakness. Drive me not away from thee, neither do thou go away from me. Keep up the union between us, which is my only hope of salvation. It will be a great wonder if so pure a Spirit deigns to stay in so base a heart as mine; but then, Lord, it is all wonder together, therefore do this, for thy mercy's sake, I earnestly entreat thee.

12. *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."* Salvation he had known, and had known it as the Lord's own; he had also felt the joy which arises from being saved in the Lord, but he had lost it for awhile, and therefore he longed for its restoration. None but God can give back this joy; he can do it; we may ask it; he will do it for his own glory and our benefit. This joy comes not first, but follows pardon and purity: in such order it is safe, in any other it is vain presumption or idiotic delirium. *"And uphold me with thy free Spirit."* Conscious of weakness, mindful of having so lately fallen, he seeks to be kept on his feet by power superior to his own. That royal Spirit, whose holiness is true dignity, is able to make us walk as kings and priests, in all the uprightness of holiness; and he will do so if we seek his gracious upholding. Such influences will not enslave but emancipate us; for holiness is liberty, and the Holy Spirit is a free Spirit. In the roughest and most treacherous ways we are safe with such a keeper; in the best paths we stumble if left to ourselves. The praying for joy and upholding go well together; it is all over with joy if the foot is not kept; and, on the other hand, joy is a very upholding thing, and greatly aids holiness; meanwhile, the free, noble, loyal Spirit is at the bottom of both.

13 *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it:* thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

13. "*Then will I teach transgressors thy ways.*" It was his fixed resolve to be a teacher of others; and assuredly none instruct others so well as those who have been experimentally taught of God themselves. Reclaimed poachers make the best gamekeepers. Huntingdon's degree of S.S., or Sinner Saved, is more needful for a soul-winning evangelist than either M.A. or D.D. The pardoned sinner's matter will be good, for he has been taught in the school of experience, and his manner will be telling, for he will speak sympathetically, as one who has felt what he declares. The audience the Psalmist would choose is memorable—he would instruct transgressors like himself; others might despise them, but, "a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." If unworthy to edify saints, he would creep in along with the sinners, and humbly tell them of divine love. The mercy of God to one is an illustration of his usual procedure, so that our own case helps us to understand his "ways." or his general modes of action: perhaps, too, David under that term refers to the preceptive part of the word of God, which, having broken, and having suffered thereby, he felt that he could vindicate and urge upon the reverence of other offenders. "*And sinners shall be converted unto thee.*" My fall shall be the restoration of others. Thou wilt bless my pathetic testimony to the recovery of many who, like myself, have turned aside unto crooked ways. Doubtless this Psalm and the whole story of David, have produced for many ages the most salutary results in the conversion of transgressors, and so evil has been overruled for good.

14. "*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness.*" He had been the means of the death of Uriah, the Hittite, a faithful and attached follower, and he now confesses that fact. Besides, his sin of adultery was a capital offence, and he puts himself down as one worthy to die the death. Honest penitents do not fetch a compass and confess their sins in an elegant periphrasis, but they come to the point, call a spade a spade, and make a clean breast of all. What other course is rational in dealing with the Omniscient? "*O God, thou God of my salvation.*" He had not ventured to come so near before. It had been, "*O God,*" up till now, but here he cries, "*Thou God of my salvation.*" Faith grows by the exercise of prayer. He confesses sin more plainly in this verse than before, and yet he deals with God more confidently: growing upward and downward at the same time are perfectly consistent. None but the King can remit the death penalty, it is therefore a joy to faith that God is King, and that he is the author and finisher of our salvation. "*And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*" One would rather have expected him to say, I will sing of thy mercy; but David can see the divine way of justification, that righteousness of God which Paul afterwards spoke of by which the ungodly are justified, and he vows to sing, yea, and to sing lustily of that righteous way of mercy. After all, it is the righteousness of divine mercy which is its greatest wonder. Note how David would preach in the last verse, and now here he would sing. We can never do too much for the Lord to whom we owe more than all. If we could be preacher, precentor, doorkeeper, pewopener, footwasher, and all in one, all would be too little to show forth all our gratitude. A great sinner pardoned makes a great singer. Sin has a loud voice, and so should our thankfulness have. We shall not sing our own praises if we be saved, but our theme will be the Lord our righteousness, in whose merits we stand righteously accepted.

15. "*O Lord, open thou my lips.*" He is so afraid of himself that he commits his whole being to the divine care, and fears to speak till the Lord unstops his shame-silenced mouth. How marvellously the Lord can open our lips, and what divine things we poor simpletons pour forth under his inspiration! This prayer of a penitent is a golden petition for a preacher. Lord, I offer it for myself and my brethren. But it may stand in good stead any one whose shame for sin makes him stammer in his prayers, and when it is fully answered, the tongue of the dumb begins to sing. "*And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*" If God opens the mouth he is sure to have the fruit of it. According to the porter at the gate is the nature of that which comes out of man's lips; when vanity, anger, falsehood, or

lust unbar the door, the foulest villanies troop out; but if the Holy Spirit opens the wicket, then grace, mercy, peace, and all the graces come forth in tuneful dances, like the daughters of Israel when they met David returning with the Philistine's head.

16. "*For thou desirest not sacrifice.*" This was the subject of the last Psalm. The Psalmist was so illuminated as to see far beyond the symbolic ritual; his eye of faith gazed with delight upon the actual atonement. "*Else would I give it.*" He would have been glad enough to present tens of thousands of victims if these would have met the case. Indeed, anything which the Lord prescribed he would cheerfully have rendered. We are ready to give up all we have if we may but be cleared of our sins; and when sin is pardoned our joyful gratitude is prepared for any sacrifice. "*Thou delightest not in burnt offering.*" He knew that no form of burnt sacrifice was a satisfactory propitiation. His deep soul-need made him look from the type to the antitype, from the external rite to the inward grace.

17. "*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.*" All sacrifices are presented to thee in one, by the man whose broken heart presents the Saviour's merit to thee. When the heart mourns for sin, thou art better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe. "A broken heart" is an expression implying deep sorrow, embittering the very life; it carries in it the idea of all but killing anguish in that region which is so vital as to be the very source of life. So excellent is a spirit humbled and mourning for sin, that it is not only a sacrifice, but it has a plurality of excellencies, and is pre-eminently God's "*sacrifices.*" "*A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*" A heart crushed is a fragrant heart. Men contemn those who are contemptible in their own eyes, but the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He despises what men esteem, and values that which they despise. Never yet has God spurned a lowly, weeping penitent, and never will he while God is love, and while Jesus is called the man who receiveth sinners. Bullocks and rams he desires not, but contrite hearts he seeks after; yea, but one of them is better to him than all the varied offerings of the old Jewish sanctuary.

18. "*Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion.*" Let blessings according to thy wont be poured upon thy holy hill and chosen city. Zion was David's favourite spot, whereon he had hoped to erect a temple. The ruling passion is so strong on him, that when he has discharged his conscience he must have a word for Zion. He felt he had hindered the project of honouring the Lord there as he desired, but he prayed God still to let the place of his ark be glorious, and to establish his worship and his worshipping people. "*Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.*" This had been one of David's schemes, to wall in the holy city, and he desires to see it completed; but we believe he had a more spiritual meaning, and prayed for the prosperity of the Lord's cause and people. He had done mischief by his sin, and had, as it were, pulled down her walls; he, therefore, implores the Lord to undo the evil, and establish his church. God can make his cause to prosper, and in answer to prayer he will do so. Without his building we labour in vain; therefore are we the more instant and constant in prayer. There is surely no grace in us if we do not feel for the church of God, and take a lasting interest in its welfare.

19. In those days of joyful prosperity thy saints shall present in great abundance the richest and holiest thank offerings to thee, and thou shalt be pleased to accept them. A saved soul expects to see its prayers answered in a revived church, and then is assured that God will be greatly glorified. Though we bring no more sacrifices for sin, yet as priests unto God our solemn praises and votive gifts are thank offerings acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. We bring not the Lord our least things—our doves and pigeons; but we present him with our best possessions—our bullocks. We are glad that in this present time we are able to fulfil in person the declaration of this verse: we also, forecasting the future, wait for days of the divine presence, when the church of God, with unspeakable joy, shall offer gifts upon the altar of God, which will far eclipse anything beheld, in these less enthusiastic days. Hasten it, O Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*After he had gone in to Bathsheba.*" This was the devil's nest-egg that caused many sins to be laid, one to, and upon another. See the woful chain of David's lust, 2 Sam. xi. and xii.—*John Trapp.*

Title.—"*When Nathan the prophet came unto him as he* (*i.e.*, David) *had come unto Bathsheba.*" The significant repetition of the phrase *came unto*, is lost in the English and most other versions. "*As*" is not a mere particle of time, simply equivalent to *when*, but suggests the ideas of analogy, proportion, and retaliation.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is the brightest gem in the whole book, and contains instruction so large, and doctrine so precious, that the tongue of angels could not do justice to the full development.—*Victorinus Strigelius*, 1524—1569.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is often and fitly called THE SINNER'S GUIDE. In some of its versions it often helps the returning sinner. Athanasius recommends to some Christians, to whom he was writing, to repeat it when they awake at night. All evangelical churches are familiar with it. Luther says, "There is no other Psalm which is oftener sung or prayed in the church." This is the first Psalm in which we have the word *Spirit* used in application to the Holy Ghost.—*William S. Plumer.*

Whole Psalm.—I cannot doubt the prophetic bearing of this Psalm upon the nation of Israel. In the latter day they shall consider their ways: repentance and self-loathing will be the result. Blood-guiltiness heavier than that of David has to be removed from that nation. They will become the teachers of the Gentiles. when first the iniquity of their own transgression has been purged away.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Whole Psalm.—This is the most deeply affecting of all the Paslms, and I am sure the one most applicable to me. It seems to have been the effusion of a soul smarting under the sense of a recent and great transgression. My God, whether recent or not, give me to feel the enormity of my manifold offences, and remember not against me the sins of my youth. What a mine of rich matter and expression for prayer! Wash, cleanse me, O Lord, and let my sin and my sinfulness be ever before me. Let me feel it chiefly as sin against thee, that my sorrow may be of the godly sort. Give me to feel the virulence of my native corruption, purge me from it thoroughly, and put truth into my inward parts, that mine may be a real turning from sin unto the Saviour. Create me anew, O God. Withdraw not thy Spirit. Cause me to rejoice in a present salvation. Deliver me, O God, from the blood-guiltiness of having offended any of thy little ones; and so open my lips that I may speak of the wondrous things thou hast done for my soul! May I offer up spiritual sacrifices; and oh! let not any delinquencies of mine bring a scandal upon thy church; but do thou so purify and build her up, that even her external services, freed from all taint of corruption or hypocrisy, may be well-pleasing in thy sight.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 1.—"*Have mercy upon me, O God.*" I tremble and blush to mention my name, for my former familiarities with thee only make me more confounded at being recognised by thee after my guilt. I therefore say not, "Lord, remember David," as on a happier occasion; nor as propitiating thee, I used to say, to thy "servant," or, "to the son of thy handmaid." I suggest nothing that should recall my former relation to thee, and so enhance my wickedness. Ask not, then, Lord, who I am, but only forgive me who confess my sin, condemn my fault, and beseech thy pity. "*Have mercy upon me, O God.*" I dare not say *my* God, for that were presumption. I have lost thee by sin, I have alienated myself from thee by following the enemy, and therefore am unclean. I dare not approach thee, but standing afar off and lifting up my voice with great devotion and contrition of heart, I cry and say, "*Have mercy upon me, O God.*"—*From "A Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms, chiefly from ancient sources." By the Right Rev. A. P. Forbes, Bishop of Brechin*, 1857.

Verse 1.—"*Have mercy.*" The Hebrew word here translated *have mercy*, signifieth without cause or desert; Psalm xxxv. 19; lxix. 4; Ezekiel xiv. 23; and freely, without paying any price, Exodus xxi. 11. And it is made use of in

Lev. vi. 8, where Noah is said to have found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord, that is special favour, such as the Lord beareth to his chosen in Christ Jesus.—*Charles de Coetlogon, A.M., in "The Portraiture of the Christian Penitent,"* 1775.

Verse 1.—"*Mercy,*" "*lovingkindness,*" "*tender mercies.*" I cannot but observe here, the gradation in the sense of the three words made use of, to express the divine compassion, and the propriety of the order in which they are placed, which would be regarded as a real excellence and beauty in any classical writer. The first, רַחֲמֶיךָ, denotes that kind of affection which is expressed by moaning over any object that we love and pity that στοργὴ, natural affection and tenderness, which even brute creatures discover to their young ones, by the several noises which they respectively make over them; and particularly the shrill noise of the camel, by which it testifies its love to its foal. The second, חַסְדֶּךָ, denotes a strong proneness, a ready, large, and liberal disposition to goodness and compassion powerfully prompting to all instances of kindness and bounty; flowing as freely and plentifully as milk into the breasts, or as waters from a perpetual fountain. This denotes a higher degree of goodness than the former. The third, רַחֲמֶיךָ, denotes what the Greeks express by σπλαγχνίζεσθαι; that most tender pity which we signify by the moving of the heart and bowels, which argues the highest degree of compassion of which human nature is susceptible. And how reviving is the belief and consideration of these abundant and tender compassions of God to one in David's circumstances, whose mind laboured under the burthen of the most heinous complicated guilt, and the fear of the divine displeasure and vengeance!—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 1.—"*According to the multitude.*" Men are greatly terrified at the multitude of their sins, but here is a comfort—our God hath multitude of mercies. If our sins be in number as the hairs of our head, God's mercies are as the stars of heaven; and as he is an infinite God, so his mercies are infinite; yea, so far are his mercies above our sins, as he himself is above us poor sinners. By this that the Psalmist seeketh for multitude of mercies, he would show how deeply he was wounded with his manifold sins, that one seemed a hundred. Thus it is with us, so long as we are under Satan's guiding, a thousand seem but one; but if we betake ourselves to God's service, one will seem a thousand.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 1.—"*Tender mercies,*" or, according to Zanchy in his treatise upon the attributes of God, such a kind of affection as parents feel when they see their children in any extremity. 1 Kings iii. 26.—*Charles de Coetlogon.*

Verse 1.—"*Blot out my transgressions.*" מְחֵה, *mecheh, wipe out.* There is reference here to an *indictment:* the Psalmist knows what it contains; he pleads guilty, but begs that the writing may be *defaced;* that a proper fluid may be applied to the parchment, *to discharge the ink,* that no record of it may ever appear against him: and this only the *mercy, lovingkindness, and tender compassions* of the Lord can do.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—"*Blot out my transgressions.*" What the Psalmist alludes to is not, as Mr. LeClerc imagines, *debts entered into a book,* and so blotted out of it when forgiven; but the wiping or cleansing of a dish, so as nothing afterwards remains in it. The meaning of the petition is, that God would entirely and absolutely forgive him, so as that no part of the guilt he had contracted might remain, and the punishment of it might be wholly removed.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 1.—"*Blot out,*" or, as it is used in Exod. xvii. 14, *utterly extirpate,* so as that there shall not be any remembrance of them for ever. Isaiah xliii. 25; xliv. 22. —*Charles de Coetlogon.*

Verse 1.—"My *transgressions.*" Conscience, when it is healthy, ever speaks thus: "My *transgressions.*" It was not the guilt of them that tempted you: they have theirs; but each as a separate agent, has his own degree of guilt. Yours is your own: the violation of your own and not another's sense of duty; solitary, awful, unshared, adhering to you alone of all the spirits of the universe.—*Frederick William Robertson.*

Verses 1, 2.—"*Transgressions*" . . . "*iniquity*" . . . "*sin.*" 1. It is *transgression,* פֶּשַׁע, *pesha,* rebellion. 2. It is *iniquity,* עָוֹן, *avon,* crooked dealing. 3. It is *sin,* חַטָּאתִי, *chattath,* error and wandering.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*Wash me.*" David prays that the Lord would *wash* him; therefore sin defiles, and he was made foul and filthy by his sin; and to wash him much, and to rinse and bathe him, to show that sin had exceedingly defiled him and stained him both in soul and body, and made him loathsome, and therefore he desireth

to be washed, and cleansed, and purged from the pollution of sin. Hence we may learn what a vile, filthy, and miserable thing sin is in the sight of God: it staineth a man's body, it staineth a man's soul, it maketh him more vile than the vilest creature that lives: no toad is so vile and loathsome in the sight of man, as a sinner, stained and defiled with sin, is in the sight of God, till he be cleansed and washed from it in the blood of Christ.—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 2.—"*Wash me,*" etc. כבס is peculiarly applied to the washing and cleansing of garments as fullers wash and cleanse their cloths. 2 Kings xviii. 7; Exod. xix. 10; Levit. xvii. 15.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 2.—"*Wash me throughly from mine iniquity.*" No other washing will do it but *lava tu*, wash thou; so foul, as it will need his washing *throughly.*—*Samuel Page, in "David's Broken Heart,"* 1646.

Verse 2.—"*Wash me throughly.*" Heb. *multiply to wash me;* by which phrase he implies the greatness of his guilt, and the insufficiency of all legal washings, and the absolute necessity of some other and better thing to wash him, even of God's grace, and the blood of Christ.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 2.—"*Wash me . . . cleanse me.*" But why should David speak so superfluously? use two words when one would serve? For if we be cleansed, what matter is it whether it be by washing or no? Yet David had great reason for using both words; for he requires not that God would cleanse him by miracle, but by the ordinary way of cleansing, and this was washing; he names therefore washing as the means, and cleansing as the end: he names washing as the work a-doing, and cleansing as the work done; he names washing as considering the agent, and cleansing as applying it to the patient; and indeed, as in the figure of the law there was not, so in the verity of the gospel there is not any ordinary means of cleansing, but only by washing; and therefore out of Christ our Saviour's side there flowed water and blood.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"*Cleanse me from my sin.*" Observe, it is from the guilt, and not from the punishment, that he thus asks deliverance. That the sword should never depart from his house; that the sin, begun, not only secretly even in its full accomplishment, but far more secretly in the recesses of David's heart, should be punished before all Israel and before the sun; that the child so dear to David should be made one great punishment of his offence; these things, so far as this Psalm is concerned, might, or might not be. It is of the offence against God; of the defiling, although it were not then so expressly declared, God's temple by impurity, that David speaks.—*Ambrose, in J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 2.—"*Sin.*" The original word signifies to miss an aim, as an archer does who shoots short of his mark, beyond, or beside it. It is also used for treading aside, or tripping, in the act of walking. In a spiritual sense it denotes deviation from a rule, whether by omission or commission.—*Thomas T. Biddulph, A.M., in Lectures on the Fifty-first Psalm,* 1835.

Verse 2.—Sin is filthy to think of, filthy to speak of, filthy to hear of, filthy to do; in a word, there is nothing in it but vileness.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 3.—"*For I acknowledge my transgressions,*" etc. To *acknowledge our transgressions*, there is confession; and *to have our sin ever before us*, there is conviction and contrition. To acknowledge our transgressions, I say, is to confess our sins; to call them to mind, to bring them back to our remembrance what we can; to own them with shame, and to declare them with sorrow; to reckon them up one by one, to give in a particular account of them, as far as our memory will serve, and to spread them before the Lord, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter, and in an humble sense of our own vileness to implore his goodness, that he would multiply his mercies over us, as we have multiplied our transgressions against him, in the free and full forgiveness of them all. *To have our sin ever before us*, is throughly to be convinced of it, to be continually troubled in mind about it, to be truly humbled under the sense of it, and to be possest of those dreads and terrors of conscience which may never let us rest or enjoy any quiet within our own breast till we have reconciled ourselves to a gracious God for it.—*Adam Littleton.*

Verse 3.—"*I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*" There cannot be *agnitio* if there be not *cognitio peccati*, an acknowledging, unless there precede a knowledge of sin. David puts them together. If our sins be not before us, how can we set them before God? And therefore, to the right exercise of this duty, there is required a previous examination of our hearts, inspection

into our lives, that we may be enabled to see our sins. He that hath not yet asked himself that question, *Quid feci?* What have I done? can never make the confession, *sic feci*, thus and thus have I done; and in this respect I would, though not require, yet advise it as a pious and prudent practice, and that which I doubt not but many Christians have found benefit by, to keep a constant daily catalogue, as of mercies received, so of sins committed.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 3.—"*I*," "*my*," "*my*." David did not think it sufficient to acknowledge that the whole human race were sinners; but as if he stood alone in the world, and was the only offender in it, he says, "I acknowledge *my* transgressions; and *my* sin is ever before me."—*Charles de Coetlogon.*

Verse 3.—"My *sin*." David owneth his sin, and confesseth it his own. Here is our natural wealth: what can we call our own but sin? Our food and raiment, the necessaries of life, are borrowings. We came hungry and naked into the world, we brought none of these with us, and we deserved none of them here. Our sin came with us, as David after confesseth. We have right of inheritance in sin, taking it by traduction and transmission from our parents; we have right of possession. So Job: "Thou makest me to possess the sins of my youth."—*Samuel Page.*

Verse 3.—"*My* SIN." It is sin, as sin, not its punishment here, nor hereafter, not simply any of its evil consequences; but sin, the sin against God, the daring impiety of my breaking the good and holy law of this living, loving God.—*Thomas Alexander, D.D., in "The Penitent's Prayer,"* 1861.

Verse 3.—"*Ever before me*." Sorrow for sin exceeds sorrow for suffering, in the continuance and durableness thereof: the other, like a landflood, quickly come, quickly gone; this is a continual dropping or running river, keeping a constant stream. "*My sins*," saith David, "*are ever before me;*" so also is the sorrow for sin in the soul of a child of God, morning, evening, day, night, when sick, when sound, feasting, fasting, at home, abroad, ever within him. This grief begins at his conversion, continues all his life, ends only at his death.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 3.—"*Before me*." *Coram populo*, before the people; shame to him: *coram ecclesia*, before the church; grief to them: *coram inimicis*, before the enemies; joy to them: *coram Deo*, before God; anger against him: *coram Nathane*, before Nathan; a chiding. But if any hope of repentance and amendment, it is in *peccatum meum coram me, my sin before me.* Here is the distress of a sinner, he never discerneth how unhappy he is, till his sin is before him.—*Samuel Page.*

Verse 4.—"*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.*" This verse is differently expounded by different persons, and it has ever been considered, that this one little point is the greatest difficulty that is met with in the whole Psalm. Although, therefore, I leave it to others to go according to their own interpretations, yet I have a good hope that I shall be enabled to give thee true and genuine meaning of the text. This, then, I would first of all advise the reader to do—to bear in mind that which I observed at the beginning of the Psalm, that David is here speaking in the person of all the saints, and not in his own person only, nor in his own person as an adulterer. Although I do not say it might not be, that it was this fall which, as a medium, brought him under the knowledge of himself and of his whole human nature, and made him think thus: "Behold! I, so holy a king, who have with so much pious devotedness observed the law and the worship of God, have been so tempted and overcome by the inbred evil and sin of my flesh, that I have murdered an innocent man, and have for adulterous purposes taken away his wife! And is not this an evident proof that my nature is more deeply infected and corrupted by sin than ever I thought it was? I who was yesterday chaste am to-day an adulterer! I who yesterday had hands innocent of blood, am to-day a man of blood-guiltiness!" And it might be that in this way he derived the feeling sense of his entire sinfulness, from his fall into adultery and murder, and from thence drew this conclusion—that neither the tree nor the fruits of human nature were good, but that the whole was so deformed and lost by sin, that there was nothing sound left in the whole of nature. This I would have the reader bear in mind first of all, if he desire to have the pure meaning of this passage. In the next place, the grammatical construction is to be explained, which seems to be somewhat obscure. For what the translator has rendered by the *preterperfect*, ought to be the *present*: "*Against thee only do I sin;*" that is, I know that before thee I am nothing but a sinner; or, before thee I do nothing but evil continually; that is, my whole life is evil and depraved on account of sin. I cannot boast before thee

of merit or of righteousness, but am evil altogether, and in thy sight this is my character—I do evil. I have sinned, I do sin, and shall sin to the end of the chapter. —*Martin Luther.*

Verse 4.—"*Against thee, thee only have I sinned.*" Is there not matter here to make us at a stand? For, to say, "Against thee have I sinned," is most just and fit; but to say, "*Against* THEE ONLY *I have sinned,*" seems something hard. It had perhaps been a fit speech in the mouth of our first parent Adam; he might justly have said to God, "*Against thee only have I sinned,*" who never sinned against any other; but for us to say it, who commit sins daily against our neighbours, and especially for David to say it, who had committed two notorious sins against his neighbour and faithful friend Uriah, what unfitter speech could possibly be devised? But is it not that these actions of David were great wrongs indeed, and enormous iniquities against Uriah; but can we properly say they were *sins* against Uriah? For what is sin, but a transgression of God's law? And how then can sin be committed against any but against him only whose law we transgress? Or is it, that it may justly be said, "*Against thee only have I sinned,*" because against others perhaps in a base *tenure*, yet only against God in *capite?* Or is it, that David might justly say to God, "*Against thee only* have I sinned;" because from others he might appeal, as being a king and having no superior; but no appealing from God, as being King of kings and supreme Lord over all? Or is it that we may justly say, "*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,*" seeing that Christ hath taken and still takes all our sins upon him; and every sin we commit is as a new burthen laid upon his back, and upon his back only? Or is it, lastly, that I may justly say, "*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,*" because in thy sight only I have done it? For from others, I could hide it, and did conceal it? But what can be hidden from thy All-seeing eye? And yet if this had been the worst, that I had sinned only against thee, though this had been bad enough, and infinitely too much, yet it might perhaps have admitted reconcilement; but to do this evil, "*in thy sight,*" as if I should say, I would do it though thou stand thyself and look on, and as if in defiance; what sin so formidable? what sin can be thought of so unpardonable? A sin of infirmity may admit apology; a sin of ignorance may find out excuse; but a sin of defiance can find no defence.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—"*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.*" There is a godly sorrow which leads a man to life; and this sorrow is wrought in a man by the Spirit of God, and in the heart of the godly; that he mourns for sin because it has displeased God, who is so dear and so sweet a Father to him. And suppose he had neither a heaven to lose, nor a hell to gain, yet he is sad and sorrowful in heart because he has grieved God.—*John Welch,* 1576—1622.

Verse 4.—"*Have* I *sinned.*" *Me, me, adsum, qui feci:* Here, here am I that did it. I whom thou tookest from following the ewes great with lambs, whose sheep-hook thou hast changed for a sceptre, whose sheep for thine own people Israel, upon whose head thou hast set a crown of pure gold. I whom thou didst lately invest in the full monarchy of thy people; to whom thou gavest the possession of Jerusalem from the Jebusites; I who settled peace, religion, and courts of justice in Jerusalem, that thou mightest be served and honoured, and I would fain have built thee an house there; *Ego,* I, to whom God committed the trust of government to rule others, the trust of judgment to punish others, as king over his inheritance. I, to whom God committed the care of others' souls to guide them by his word, to direct them by good counsel, to allure them by his gracious promises, to terrify them by his threatenings, as the Lord's holy prophet. I, who both ways as king and prophet should have been an example of holiness and righteousness to all Israel. Nathan said, *Tu es homo,* thou art the man, in just accusation, and now David saith, *Ego sum homo,* I am the man, in humble confession.—*Samuel Page.*

Verse 4.—"*I have done this evil.*" We may find this in experience, that there be many who will not stick at a general speech that they be sinners, and yet will scarcely be known of one special evil to account for. If you fall with them into the several commandments, they will be ready to discover a conceit that there is scarce one that they are faulty in. In the first commandment they acknowledge no God but one; in the second, they do not worship images; in the third, they swear as little as any, and never but for the truth; in the fourth they keep their church on Sundays as well as most; in the second table, there is neither treason, nor murder, nor theft, nor whoredom, nor the like gross sin, but concerning it they are ready to protest their innocency. He that shall hear them in particular, I

do not see how he shall believe them in the general, when they say they be sinners; for when you arraign them at the several commandments they are ready to plead *not guilty* to them all. So long as men are thus without sense and apprehension of particulars, there is no hope of bringing them ever unto good. Happy is he that is pricked to the heart with the feeling of "*this evil.*" The truth of repentance for that one, will bring him to a thorough repentance for his whole estate. *This one evil* throughly understood, brought David on his knees, brake his heart, melted his soul, made him cry for pardon, beg for purging, and importune the Lord for a free spirit to establish him.—*Samuel Hieron, in "David's Penitentiall Psalme opened,"* 1617.

Verse 4.—"*In thy sight.*" David was so bent upon his sin, as that the majesty and presence of God did not awe him at all: this is a great aggravation of sin, and which makes it to be so much the more heinous. For a thief to steal in the very sight of the judge, is the highest piece of impudence that may be; and thus it is for any man to offend in the sight of God and not to be moved with it.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 4.—"*That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*" But hath not David a defence for it here, and that a very just one? For, in saying, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, *that thou mightest be justified in thy saying,*" doth he not speak as though he had sinned to do God a pleasure? therefore sinned that God might be justified? And what can be more said for justifying of God? But far is it from David to have any such meaning; his words import not a lessening but an aggravating of his sin, as spoken rather thus: Because a judge may justly be taxed of injustice if he lay a greater punishment upon an offender than the offence deserves; therefore to clear thee, O God, from all possibility of erring in this kind, I acknowledge my sins to be so heinous, my offences so grievous, that thou canst never be unmerciful in punishing though thy punishing should be never so unmerciful. For how can a judge pass the bounds of equity where the delinquent hath passed all bounds of iniquity? and what error can there be in thy being severe when the greatness of my fault is a justification of severity? That thou canst not lay so heavy a doom upon me, which I have not deserved? Thou canst not pronounce so hard a sentence against me, which I am not worthy of. If thou judge me to torture, it is but mildness; if to die the death, it is but my due; if to die everlastingly, I cannot say it were unjust.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—"*Behold I was shapen in iniquity,*" etc. He said not, "Behold, this evil have I done," but "*Behold I was conceived in sin,*" etc. He says not, "Behold, *I*, David," a king, that have received such-and-such mercies from God, who would have given me more (as God told him), who had that entire communion with him, and graces from him, I, even I, have done this evil. No; he keeps it in till he came to this, and then his heart could hold no longer: "*Oh, behold I was conceived in sin.*" His debasement was at his *auge* here. And to whom is it he uttered this *behold?* What, to man? No; his meaning is not to call on men, *q.d.*, O ye sons of men, behold! That is but his secondary aim, arising out of his having penned it, and delivered it unto the church; but when he uttered it, it was to God, or rather afore God, and yet not as calling on God to behold, for that needed not. David had elsewhere said, "God looked down," etc., "and beheld the sons of men," when speaking of this very corruption. He therefore knew God beheld it sufficiently; but he utters it afore God, or, as spoken of himself between God and himself, thereby to express his own astonishment and amazement at the sight and conviction of this corruption, and at the sight of what a monster he saw himself to be in the sight of God in respect of this sin. It was a *behold* of astonishment at himself, as before the great and holy God; and therefore it was he seconds and follows it with another *behold* made unto God: "*Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.*" And it is as if he had said in both, Oh, how am I in every way overwhelmed, whilst with one eye cast on myself I see how infinitely corrupt I am in the very constitution of my nature; and with the other eye I behold and consider what an infinite holy God thou art in thy nature and being, and what an holiness it is which thou requirest. I am utterly overwhelmed in the intuition of both these, and able to behold no more, nor look up unto thee, O holy God!—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 5.—"*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity,*" etc. We are not to suppose that David here reflects upon his parents as the medium of transmitting to him the elements of moral evil; and that by the introduction of the doctrine of original

sin he intended to extenuate the enormity of his own crimes. On the contrary, we are to regard him as afflicting himself by the humbling consideration that his very nature was fallen, that his transgressions flowed from a heart naturally at enmity with God; that he was not a sinner by accident, but by a depravity of purpose extending to the inmost desires and purposes of the soul; that there was "a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death" (Rom. vii. 23); and that he was one of a race of guilty beings, none of whom could plead an exemption from an evil heart of unbelief, ready at all times to depart from the living God. Till we see sin in the fountain of the heart, we shall never truly mourn over it in the life and conversation.—*John Morison.*

Verse 5.—"*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.*" He is not low enough down yet, he must come lower. It is not enough for him to confess that the water is filthy at the pool; he goes back to the source, and confesses that the whole river is polluted up to its head. The source is unclean; the very spring wells forth foul waters.—*Thomas Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*I was shapen in iniquity.*" I shall not easily be persuaded to think that parents, who are sinners themselves and too much under the influence of bad affections and passions, will be very likely to produce children without transmitting to them some of those disorders and corruptions of nature with which they themselves are infected. And if this be a difficulty, I would beg leave to observe that it is a difficulty which affects natural as well as revealed religion. Since we must take human nature as it is, and if it be really in a state of disorder and corruption, and cannot be otherwise, considering the common law of its production, the difficulty must have been as ancient as the first man that was born; and therefore can be no objection against the truth of revelation, but it must be equally so against natural religion, which must equally allow the thing, if it be in reality a fact, with revelation itself.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 5.—Infants are no innocents, being born with original sin; the first sheet wherein they are wrapped is woven of sin, shame, blood, and filth. Ezek. xvi. 4, etc. They are said to sin as they were in the loins of Adam, just as Levi is said to pay tithes to Melchisedek, even in the loins of his forefather Abraham (Heb. vii. 9, 10); otherwise infants would not die, for death is the wages of sin (Rom. vi. 23); and the reign of death is procured by the reign of sin, which hath reigned over all mankind except Christ. All are sinners, infected with the guilt and filth of sin; the rot (according to the vulgar saying) overrunneth the whole flock. Hence David reflects upon original sin as the cause of all his actuals, saying, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" Thus man's malady begins betimes, even in our conception: this subtle serpent sowed his tares very early, so that we are all "born in sin." John ix. 34.—*Christopher Ness's "Divine Legacy,"* 1700.

Verse 5.—Notwithstanding all that Grotius and others have said to the contrary, I believe David to speak here of what is commonly called *original sin;* the propensity to evil which every man brings into the world with him, and which is the fruitful source whence all transgression proceeds.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"*Behold.*" Before he entereth on any of the parts of the verse he useth the particle of admiration, "*Behold;*" which he never useth but in some remarkable manner, thereby the more to raise us up to the contemplation of such great matters to be told.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 6.—"*Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.*" Thou lovest *truth,* not shadows or images, but realities; thou lovest truth *in the inward parts,* inside truth, a true heart, a pure conscience: he is a Christian who is one inwardly. Rom. ii. 29.—*John Ball.*

Verse 6.—"*Truth in the inward parts.*" A great French pear is called *le bon Chretien,* the good Christian, because they say it is never rotten at the core.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 6.—"*In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*" Piscator, in his annotations on this Psalm, puts this sense upon it, that David should bless God for having made him to know this special wisdom in this hidden thing or matter, and had brought the knowledge thereof home, as a point of saving wisdom, to the hidden man of his heart, so as to see fully and clearly this native corruption as the cause of all sin, and on that account to cause him to lay it to heart.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"*In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*" It is one thing to be wise headed and wise tongued, and another to be wise hearted, and therefore in Scripture nothing more ordinary than to set forth wisdom that is true indeed by the heart. God himself is said *to be wise of heart.* Foolish creatures are like Ephraim, "a silly dove without heart." They may have *head* enough, notion enough, *flashing light,* appearing to others enough, but they are without a heart; they have not the great work there, a *new head* and an *old heart,* a *full head* and an *empty heart,* a *light and burning profession,* and a dark, dead, and cold heart; he that takes up in such a condition is a fool and an errant fool.—*John Murcot,* 1657.

Verse 6.—"*And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*" Some read it, "In the hidden part thou *hadst* made me to know wisdom;" *that* thou hadst done, but I have fallen from my high state, marred thy handiwork. "By one plunge into lust I have fallen and fouled myself."—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 6.—The copulative particle which connects the two clauses, implies the correspondence between the revelation of the divine will on the one part and the desire and prayer of the penitent heart on the other. "*Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*" "What I want thou hast promised to give." Repentance and faith are the gifts of God, and the awakened mind is conscious that they are so.—*Thomas T. Biddulph.*

Verses 6—8.—The right conviction of sin comprehends its being acknowledged not only in our *works,* but also in our entire *being.*—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 7.—"*Purge me with hyssop.*" Do I well to prescribe to God with that he shall purge me, as though I knew all God's medicines as well as himself? and which is worse, I to prescribe and he to administer? But excuse me, O my soul, it is not I that prescribe it to God, it is God that prescribes it to me; for hyssop is his own receipt, and one of the ingredients prescribed by himself to make the water of separation for curing the leprosy. . . . . I must confess I was glad at heart when I first heard hyssop spoken of; to think I should be purged so gently, and with a thing that may so easily be had, for hyssop grows in every garden; and then I thought I might go fetch it thence and purge myself, but now I perceive this is not the hyssop of which Solomon writ when he writ from the cedar to the hyssop; but this hyssop is rather the herb grace, which never grew in garden but in that of Paradise, and which none can fetch thence unless God himself deliver it. The truth is, this hyssop was sometimes a cedar; the highest of all trees became the lowest of all shrubs, only to be made this hyssop for us: for Christ indeed is the true hyssop, and his blood the juice of hyssop that only can purge away my sins.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 7.—"*Purge me with hyssop.*" חַטְּאֵנִי. Properly, *expiate my sin* with hyssop. The Psalmist alludes to the purification from the leprosy (Levit. xiv. 52), or from the touch of a dead body (Num. xix. 19), both of which were to be done by the sprinkling of water and other things with hyssop.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 7.—"*Hyssop.*" The *lasaf* or *asaf,* the caper plant, the bright green creeper which climbs out of the fissures of the rocks in the Sinaitic valleys, has been identified on grounds of great probability with the "hyssop" or *ezob* of Scripture; and thus explains whence came the green branches used, even in the desert, for sprinkling the water over the tents of the Israelites.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in "Sinai and Palestine."* 1864.

Verse 7.—"*Hyssop.*" Between twenty and thirty different plants have been proposed, but no one of them comes so near the above requirements as the caper plant (*Capparis spinosa*). It grows "out of the wall;" its stalks supply both bunch and rod admirably fitted for the ends indicated; and it has ever been esteemed in the East as possessing cleansing properties.—*John Duns, D.D., in "Biblical Natural Science."*

Verse 7.—"*Hyssop.*" What a pity that Solomon's botany is lost, in which he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall! The cedar we know, but what is the "*hyssop*" of the royal botanist? Mr. B——, French consul of this city [Sidon], and an enthusiastic botanist, exhibited to me two varieties of hyssop; one, called *zatar* by the Arabs, having the fragrance of thyme, with a hot pungent taste, and long, slender stems. A bunch of these would answer very well for sprinkling the paschal and sacrificial blood on the lintel and posts of the doors, and over the persons and houses cleansed

from the leprosy. Mr. B——, however, thinks that a very small green plant, like a moss which covers old walls in damp places, is the "*hyssop*" of Solomon. This I doubt. The other kind also springs out of walls, those of the gardens especially, and was much more likely to attract the attention of the royal student.—*W. M. Thomson, D.D., in "The Land and the Book."*

Verse 7.—The paraphrase of this verse in the *Chaldee* is: "Thou wilt sprinkle me like the priest, which sprinkleth the unclean with the purifying waters, with hyssop, with the ashes of an heifer, and I shall be clean."—*John Morison.*

Verse 7.—"*I shall be whiter than snow.*" But how is this possible? All the dyers upon earth cannot dye a red into white; and how, then, is it possible that my sins which are as red as scarlet should ever be made as white as snow? Indeed such retrogradation is no work of human art; it must be only his doing who brought the sun ten degrees back in the dial of Ahaz: for God hath a nitre of grace that can bring not only the redness of scarlet sins, but even the blackness of deadly sins, into its native purity and whiteness again. But say it be possible, yet what need is there of so great a whiteness, as to be "*whiter than* snow"? seeing snow is not as *paries dealbatus*, a painted wall, white without and foul within; but it is white, *intus et in cute*, within and without, throughout and all over; and what eye so curious but such a whiteness may content? Yet such a whiteness will not serve, for I may be as white as snow and yet a leper still; as it is said of Gehazi that "he went from Elisha a leper as white as snow;" it must be therefore *whiter than snow.* And such a whiteness it is that God's washing works upon us, makes within us; for no snow is so white in the eyes of men as a soul cleansed from sin is in the sight of God. And yet, a whiter whiteness than this too; for being purged from sin we shall, *induere stolam album*, put on the white robe; and this is a whiteness as much whiter than snow as angelical whiteness is more than elemental. —*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 7.—In the Hebrew language there are two words to express the different kinds of washing, and they are always used with the strictest propriety; the one, to signify that kind of washing which *pervades the substance* of the thing washed, and cleanses it thoroughly; and the other to express that kind of washing which only *cleanses the surface* of a substance which the water cannot penetrate. The former is applied to the washing of clothes; the latter is used for washing some part of the body. By a beautiful and strong metaphor, David uses the former word in this and the second verse: "*Wash me throughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin;*" "*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*" So in Jer. iv. 14, the same word is applied to the heart.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—"*Make me to hear joy and gladness.*" This is the exceeding great love of the Lord toward his children, that he hath not only provided a sure salvation for them through the remission of their sins in Christ Jesus, but also seals up in their heart the testimony thereof by his Holy Spirit of adoption, and that for their present consolation, lest they should be swallowed up of heaviness through continual temptations. Though he speak not to all his children as he did to Daniel, by an angel, "O man, greatly beloved of God," nor as he did to the blessed Virgin Mary, "Hail, Mary, freely beloved," yet doth he witness the same to the hearts of his children by an inward testimony: when they hear it they are alive; when they want it they are but dead; their souls refuse all other comfort whatsoever.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 8.—"*Make me to hear joy and gladness.*" As a Christian is the most sorrowful man in the world, so there is none more glad than he. For the cause of his joy is greatest. In respect his misery was greatest, his delivery greatest, therefore his joy greatest. From hell and death is he freed, to life in heaven is he brought. . . . . The person from whom he seeketh this joy is God: "*Make me to hear,*" saith he; whereby he would teach us that this joy cometh only from God; it is he who is the fountain of joy and all pleasure, for "all good things come from above." Natural joys proceed from a natural and fleshly fountain; spiritual joys spring only from God: so he who seeketh those joys beneath seeketh hot water under cold ice.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 8.—"*Make me to hear joy and gladness.*" Another reference to the expiation of the leper, whose ear was to be touched with the blood of the trespass-offering and the oil, as well as thumb and toe, to show that his faculties were now prepared for the service of God; so David prays that his ears may be sanctified

to the hearing of joy and gladness ; this an unsanctified heart can never receive. —*W. Wilson.*

Verse 8.—"*The bones which thou hast broken.*" God, in favour to his children, doth afflict them for sin ; and the very phrase of breaking his bones, though it express extremity of misery and pain, yet it hath hope in it, for broken bones by a cunning hand may be set again and return to their former use and strength ; so that a conscience distressed for sins is not out of hope ; yet upon that hope no wise man will adventure upon sin, saying, though I am wounded, yet I may be healed again ; though I am broken, I may be repaired ; for let him consider—1. Who breaks his bones—*Thou ;* he that made us our bones and put them in their several places, and tied them together with ligaments, and covered them with flesh ; he that keepeth all our bones from breaking ; it must be a great matter that must move him to break the bones of any of us. The God of all consolation, that comforteth us in all our distresses, when he cometh to distress us, this makes affliction weigh heavy. . . . . 2. The pain of the affliction exprest so feelingly in the breaking of bones, which, as is said, is the anguish of the soul for sin, and fear of the consuming fire of God's wrath, and the tempest, as Job calls it, of anger. 3. The pain of setting these bones again : for, though bones dislocated may be put in joint, and though bones broken may be set again, yet this is not done without pain and great extremity to the patient.

Repentance setteth all our broken, pained bones ; it recovereth the soul from the anguish thereof ; but he that once feeleth the smart of a true repentance, will say, the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, are as hard a bargain as ever he made, and as dear bought ; they cost tears, which are *sanguis vulnerati cordis*, the blood of a wounded heart ; they cost sighs and groans which cannot be expressed ; they cost watching, fasting, taming of the body to bring it in subjection, even to the crucifying of the flesh with the lusts thereof. Therefore, let no man adventure his bones in hope of setting them again.—*Samuel Page.*

Verse 8.—"*That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*" The displeasure which God expressed against the sins he had been guilty of, and the deep sense he had of the aggravated nature of them, filled him with those pains and agonies of mind, as that he compares them to that exquisite torture he must have felt had all his bones been crushed, for the original word דִּכְּיתָ, signifies more than broken, namely, being entirely mashed ; and he compares the joy that God's declaring himself fully reconciled to him would produce in his mind, to that inconceivable pleasure, which would arise from the instantaneous restoring and healing those bones, after they had been thus broken and crushed to pieces.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 9.—"*Hide thy face from my sins.*" The verb סתר properly signifies *to veil*, or hide with a veil.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 9.—"*Hide thy face from my sins.*" He said in the third verse, that his sin was always in his sight ; and now he prays that God would put it out of his sight. This is a very good order. If we hold our sins in our eyes to pursue them, God will cast them behind his back to pardon them : if we remember them and repent, he will forget them and forgive : otherwise, *peccatum unde homo non avertit, advertit Deus : et si advertit, animadvertit*—the sin from which man turns not, God looks to it ; and if he look to it, sure he will punish it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 9.—"*All mine iniquities.*" See how one sin calleth to mind many thousands, which though they lie asleep a long time, like a sleeping debt, yet we know not how soon they may be reckoned for. Make sure of a general pardon, and take heed of adding new sins to the old.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—"*Create in me a clean heart, O God.*" O thou that createdst the first heaven and the first earth of nothing ! O thou that createst the *new heaven* and the *new earth* (wherein dwells righteousness), when sin had made the creature worse than nothing ! O thou that createst the *new creature*, the new man, fit to be an inhabitant of the new world, of the new Jerusalem ! O thou that hast said, " Behold, I make all things new : " *create* thou in me, even in me, " *a clean heart ; and renew a right spirit within me.*"—*Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 10.—"*Create in me a clean heart, O God,*" etc. David prayeth the Lord *to create in him a new heart*, not to correct his old heart, but to create him a new heart ; showing that his heart was like an old garment, so rotten and tattered that he could make no good of it by patching or piecing, but even must cut it off, and

take a new. Therefore Paul saith, "Cast off the old man;" not pick him and wash him till he be clean, but cast him off and begin anew, as David did. Will ye know what this renewing is? It is the repairing of the image of God, until we be like Adam when he dwelt in Paradise. As there is a whole old man, so there must be a whole new man. The old man must change with the new man, wisdom for wisdom, love for love, fear for fear; his worldly wisdom for heavenly wisdom, his carnal love for spiritual love, his servile fear for Christian fear, his idle thoughts for holy thoughts, his vain words for wholesome words, his fleshly works for sanctified works. —*Henry Smith.*

Verse 10.—"*Create in me a clean heart.*" *Creating*, to speak properly, is to make of nought, and is here used improperly. The prophet speaketh according to his own feeling and present judgment of himself, as though he had lost all, and had no goodness in himself. No doubt the prophet's heart was in part clean, though not so much as he desired. These things thus opened, here cometh a question first to be answered. *Quest.* Whether David could have lost the cleanness of heart, having once had it? *Ans.* No. The gifts and calling of God, that is (as I take it), the gifts of effectual calling, are such as God never repenteth of or taketh away. Faith, hope, and charity are abiding gifts, as sure as the election of God, which is unchangeable. Indeed, the children of God, if we only considered them in themselves with their enemies, might fall away, but being founded upon the unchangeable nature of God, and immutability of his counsel, they cannot, the gates of hell shall not prevail against them, the elect cannot be deceived or plucked out of Christ's hands. Nay, certain it is that David did not actually leave his former cleanness. For sure it is, his heart smiting him (as here it did), so doing before in less matters, it was not wholly void of cleanness. And again, it could not pray for cleanness if it were not somewhat clean. This is most sure, that by grievous sins much filthiness cometh to the soul, as by a boisterous wind a tree may lose his leaves and some branches, so as that the party sinning may be brought into as great passions almost as if he had lost all, but the desire of grace is an infallible certainty of some grace of that kind. The prophet therefore desireth not a clean heart because he had it not in any sort, but because he could not so well perceive it in himself, and take such comfort in it as he had done before, and for that he desired it a great deal more than now he had it. So learned, so rich men, think themselves not learned, not rich, in respect of that which they do desire, and when the sun is up, the moon seemeth to have no light.—*George Estey, in "Certaine Godly and Learned Expositions,"* 1603.

Verse 10.—"*Create in me a clean heart, O God,*" etc. This "creation" is from nothing. David uses the same word of our creation which Moses uses of "the creation of the heaven and the earth." Our creation "in Jesus Christ" is no mere strengthening of our powers, no mere aiding of our natural weakness by the might of the grace of God, it is not a mere amendment, improvement of our moral habits; it is a creation out of nothing, of that which we had not before. There was nothing in us whereof to make it. We were decayed, corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins. What is dead becometh not alive, except by the infusion of what it had not. What is corrupt receiveth not soundness, save by passing away itself and being replaced by a new production. "The old man" passeth not into the new man, but is "put off." It is not the basis of the new life, but a hindrance to it. It must be "put off" and the new man "put on," "created in Christ Jesus."—*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*, 1853.

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—He used the word *create* (Heb. *bara*), a word only used of the work of God, and showing that the change in him could be wrought only by God.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 10.—"*A clean heart.*" The priest was required to make a strict examination of the skin of the leper before he could pronounce him clean; David prays God to make his heart clean.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 10.—"*A right spirit.*" *A steadfast spirit, i.e.*, a mind steady in following the path of duty.—*French and Skinner.*

Verses 10—12.—Who was to do this work? Not *himself;* God alone. Therefore, he prays: "O God, create—O Lord, renew; uphold by thy Spirit."—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 11.—"*Cast me not away from thy presence.*" David lamented before that sin had slain him, and made him like a dead man, wanting a heart or

quickening spirit; and now he fears lest, as the dead are abhorred by the living, so the Lord should cast him as a dead and abominable thing out of his presence. Whereof we learn this is one of the just punishments of sin; it procures the casting out of a man from the face of God; and it may let us see how dear bought are the pleasures of sin when a man to enjoy the face of the creature deprives himself of the comfortable face of the Creator; as David here, for the carnal love of the face of Bathsheba, puts himself in danger to be cast out for ever from the presence of the Lord his God. If a man could remember this in all Satan's temptations, what it is that the deceiver offers, and what it is again that he seeks, he would be loth to buy the perishing pleasures of sin upon such a price as Satan selleth them, but would answer him as the apostle did Simon Magus. "Thy money, with thyself, go into perdition;" thy gain, thy glory, thy pleasure, and whatever thou wouldst give me to offend the Lord my God, go with thyself into perdition, for what canst thou offer unto me comparable to that which thou wouldst steal from me?

But how is it that he prays, "*Cast me not out from thy presence*"? May a man be cast any way from it? Saith he not himself, "What way can I flee from thy presence?" This is soon answered by distinguishing his twofold presence—one in mercy, wherewith he refresheth and comforteth his own, and this without intermission they enjoy who are in heaven; another, in wrath, whereby he terrifies and torments without intermission the damned in hell. As to them who are upon earth, certain it is he is displeased with many, who, because they see not his angry face, regard it not, borne out with temporal recreations of the creature, which will fail them; and there are many, again, to whom he looks as a loving Father in Christ, and yet they see not his merciful face by reason of many interjected veils; but to them who once have felt the sweetness of his favourable face it is death to want it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 11.—"*Cast me not away from thy presence.*" Like the leper who is banished from society till cleansed, or as Saul was rejected from being king, because he obeyed not the word of the Lord. 1 Sam. xv. 23. David could not but feel that his transgressions would have deserved a similar rejection.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 11.—"*Cast me not away.*" Lord, though I, alas! have cast thee from me, yet cast me not away: hide not thy face from me, although I so often have refused to look at thee; leave me not without help, to perish in my sins, though I have aforetime left thee.—*Fra Thomé de Jesu.*

Verse 11.—"*Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.*" The words of this verse imply that the Spirit had not altogether been taken away from him, however much his gifts had been temporarily obscured. . . . . Upon one point he had fallen into a deadly lethargy, but he was not "given over to a reprobate mind;" and it is scarcely conceivable that the rebuke of Nathan the prophet should have operated so easily and so suddenly in arousing him had there been no latent spark of godliness still remaining. . . . . The truth on which we are now insisting is an important one, as many learned men have been inconsiderately drawn into the opinion that the elect, by falling into mortal sin, may lose the Spirit altogether, and be alienated from God. The contrary is clearly declared by Peter, who tells us that the word by which we are born again is an incorruptible seed (1 Peter i. 23); and John is equally explicit in informing us that the elect are preserved from falling away altogether. 1 John iii. 9. However much they may appear for a time to have been cast off by God, it is afterwards seen that grace must have been alive in their breast even during that interval when it seemed to be extinct. Nor is there any force in the objection that David speaks as if he feared that he might be deprived of the Spirit. It is natural that the saints, when they have fallen into sin, and have thus done what they could to expel the grace of God, should feel an anxiety upon this point; but it is their duty to hold fast the truth, that grace is the incorruptible seed of God, which never can perish in any heart where it has been deposited. This is the spirit displayed by David. Reflecting upon his offence, he is agitated with fears, and yet rests in the persuasion that, being a child of God, he would not be deprived of what, indeed, he had justly forfeited.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 12.—"*Restore.*" It is no small comfort to a man that hath lost his receipt for a debt paid when he remembers that the man he deals with is a good and just man, though his discharge is not presently to be found. That God whom thou hast to deal with is very gracious; what thou hast lost he is ready to restore (the evidence of thy grace I mean). David begged this, and obtained it. Yea, saith

faith, if it were true what thou fearest, that thy grace was never true, there is mercy enough in God's heart to pardon all thy former hypocrisy if thou comest in the sincerity of thy heart; and so faith persuades the soul by an act of adventure to cast itself upon God in Christ. Wilt not thou, saith faith, expect to find as much mercy at God's hands as thou canst look for at a man's? It is not beyond the line of created mercy to forgive many unkindnesses, much falseness and unfaithfulness, upon an humble, sincere acknowledgment of the same. The world is not so bad but it abounds with parents who can do thus much for their children, and masters for their servants; and is that hard for God to do which is so easy in his creature? Thus faith vindicates God's name. And so long as we have not lost sight of God's merciful heart, our head will be kept above water, though we want the evidence of our own grace.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 12.—"*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,*" etc. How can God restore that which he took not away? For, can I charge God with the taking away the joy of his salvation from me? O gracious God, I charge not thee with taking it, but myself with losing it; and such is the miserable condition of us poor wretches, that if thou shouldst restore no more to us than what thou takest from us, we should quickly be at a fault in our estates, and our ruin would be as sudden as inevitable. But why am I so earnest for restoring? for what good will restoring do me? and how shall I more keep it being restored, than I kept it before being enjoyed? and if I so enjoy it, as still to fear to lose it, what joy can there be in such enjoying? O therefore, not restore it only, but "*establish me with thy free spirit;*" that as by thy restoring I may enjoy it entirely, so by thy establishing I may enjoy it securely.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 12.—"*Uphold me.*" I am tempted to think that I am now an established Christian, that I have overcome this or that lust so long that I have got into the habit of the opposite grace, so that there is no fear; I may venture very near the temptation, nearer than other men. This is a lie of Satan. I might as well speak of gunpowder getting by habit a power of resisting fire, so as not to catch the spark. As long as powder is wet it resists the spark, but when it becomes dry it is ready to explode at the first touch. As long as the Spirit dwells in my heart, he deadens me to sin, so that if lawfully called through temptation I may reckon upon God carrying me through. But when the Spirit leaves me, I am like dry gunpowder. Oh, for a sense of this!—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne.*

Verse 12.—"*Uphold me with thy free spirit.*" A loving mother chooses a fitting place, and a fitting time, to let her little child fall; it is learning to walk, it is getting over confident, it may come to a dangerous place, and if possessed of all this confidence, may fall and destroy itself. So she permits it to fall at such a place, and in such a way as that it may be hurt, wholesomely hurt, but not dangerously so. It has now lost its confidence, and clings all the more fondly and trustingly to the strong hand that is able to hold up all its goings. So this David, this little child of the great God, has fallen; it is a sore fall, all his bones are broken, but it has been a precious and a profitable lesson to him; he has no confidence any longer in himself, his trust is not now in an arm of flesh. "Uphold me with thy free spirit."—*Thomas Alexander.*

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—"*Let a free spirit sustain me;*" that is, let me not be enslaved, as I have been, by my sinful passions.—*Henry Dimock, M.A.*, 1791.

Verse 13.—"*Then will I teach transgressors thy ways,*" etc. We see our duty craves that when we have received mercy from God for ourselves, we should make vantage of it for the edification of others. Every talent received from God should be put to profit, but specially the talent of mercy; as it is greatest, so the Lord requires greater fruit of it, both for his own glory and for the edification of our brethren. Seeing we are vessels of mercy, should not the scent and sweet odour of mercy go from us to others? This duty Christ craved from Peter: "And thou, when thou art converted, confirm thy brethren." And this duty, as David here promiseth, so we may read how he did perform it: "Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." The property of a Christian is, *fides per delectionem efficax*, faith worketh by love. What availeth it to pretend faith toward God, where there is no love toward thy neighbour? and wherein can thy love be declared more than in this, to draw thy neighbour to the participation of that same merit whereunto God hath called thee? By the law a man was bound to bring home his neighbour's wandering beast if he had met with it before; how

much more, then, to turn again his neighbour himself when he wanders from the Lord his God? If two men walking on the way should both fall into one pit, and the one being relieved out of it should go his way and forget his neighbour, might it not justly be called a barbarous and inhuman cruelty? We have all fallen into one and the same mire of iniquity; since the Lord hath put out his merciful hand to draw us out of this prison of sin, shall we refuse to put out our hand to see if possibly we may draw up our brethren with us?—*William Cowper* (*Bishop*).

Verse 14 (*first clause*).—"*Deliver me from bloods.*" The term *bloods* in Hebrew may denote any capital crime; and in my opinion he is here to be considered as alluding to the sentence of death, to which he felt himself to be obnoxious, and from which he requests deliverance.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14 (*first clause*).—The Chaldee reads, "*Deliver me from the judgment of murder.*"

Verse 14.—"*O God, thou God of my salvation.*" "*O God,*" is a good invocation, for he heareth prayers. Yet to distinguish him from all false gods he is so particular as to single him from all other: "*Thou God.*" And to magnify him, and to re-enforce his petition, he calleth him *Deum salutis*, "*the God of salvation,*" which expresseth him able to deliver him; for it is his nature, and his love, and his glory, to be a preserver of men. And to bring home this joy and comfort into his own heart, he addeth, *salutis meæ*, "*of my salvation.*" So it is *oratio fervens*, and the apostle telleth us that such a prayer prevaileth much with God. For God may be a Saviour and a deliverer, and yet we may escape his saving hand, his right hand may skip us. We can have no comfort in the favours of God, except we can apply them at home; rather we may "think on God and be troubled."—*Samuel Page.*

Verse 14.—"*And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*" Hierom, Basil, Euthymius, and other ancient doctors observe that natural corruptions and actual sins are the very rampiers which stop the free passage of song (verse 15). So David himself doth expound himself: "*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*" His unthankfulness did cry, his adultery cry, his murder cry unto the Lord for revenge; but alas! himself was mute, till God in exceeding great mercy did stop the mouths of his clamorous adversaries, and gave him leave to speak.—*John Boys.*

Verse 14.—"*Aloud.*" This for God, for himself, for the church. 1. *For God*, that his honour may be proclaimed, therefore they borrowed the voice of still and loud instruments. . . . . 2. *For himself.* Having received such a benefit, he cannot contain himself, this new wine of spiritual joy which filleth his vessel must have a vent. All passions are loud. Anger chides loud, sorrow cries loud, fear shrieks loud, and joy sings loud. So he expresseth the vehemency of his affection; for to whom much is forgiven, they love much. 3. *For others.* Iron whetteth iron—examples of zeal and devotion affect much, and therefore solemn and public assemblies do generally tender the best service to God, because one provoketh another. —*Samuel Page.*

Verse 15.—"*O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*" As man is a little world in the great, so the tongue is a great world in the little. *Nihil habet medium; aut grande malum est, aut grande bonum.** It has no mean; it is either a great evil, or a great good. If good (as Eunapius said of that famous rhetorician), *a walking library*, a whole university of edifying knowledge; but if bad (as St. James doth tell us, ch. iii. 6), "*a world of wickedness.*" No better dish for God's public service, when it is well seasoned; again, none worse, when ill handled. So that if we desire to be doorkeepers in God's house, let us entreat God first to be a doorkeeper in our house, that he would shut the wicket of our mouth against unsavoury speeches, and open the door of our lips, "*that our mouth may shew forth his praise.*" This was David's prayer, and ought to be thy practice, wherein observe three points especially; who, *the Lord;* what, *open my lips;* why, *that my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* For the first—man of himself cannot untie the strings of his own stammering tongue, but it is God only which openeth "a door of utterance." Col. iv. 3. When we have a good thought, it is (as the school doth speak) *gratia infusa;* when a good word, *gratia effusa;* when a good work, *gratia diffusa.* Man is a lock, the Spirit of God has a key, "which

* Jerome.

openeth, and no man shutteth ;" again, "shutteth, and no man openeth." Rev. iii. 7. He did open the heart of Lydia to conceive well, the ears of the prophet to hear well, the eyes of Elisha's servant to see well, and here the lips of David to speak well. Acts xvi. ; Isai. l. ; 2 Kings vi. And therefore, whereas in the former verse he might seem too peremptory, saying, "*My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness ;*" he doth, as it were, correct himself by this latter edition and second speech : O Lord, I find myself most unable to sing or say, but "*open thou my lips,*" and touch thou my tongue, and then I am sure "*my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*"—*John Boys.*

Verse 15.—"*O Lord, open thou my lips,*" etc. Again he seems to have the case of the leper before his mind, with the upper lip covered, and only crying unclean, unclean ; and he prays as a spiritual leper to be enabled, with freedom and fulness, to publish abroad the praise of his God.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 15 (*first clause*).—He prays that *his lips may be opened ;* in other words, that God would afford him matter of praise. The meaning usually attached to the expression is, that God would so direct his tongue by the Spirit as to fit him for singing his praises. But though it is true that God must supply us with words, and that if he do not, we cannot fail to be silent in his praise, David seems rather to intimate that his mouth must be shut until God called him to the exercise of thanksgiving by extending pardon.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 16.—"*For thou desirest not sacrifice ;*" etc. There may be another reason why David here affirms that God would not accept of a sacrifice, nor be pleased with a burnt-offering. No particular sacrifices were appointed by the law of Moses to expiate the guilt of murder and adultery. The person who had perpetrated these crimes was, according to the divine law, to be punished with death. David therefore may be understood as declaring, that it was utterly vain for him to think of resorting to sacrifices and burnt-offerings with a view to the expiation of his guilt ; that his criminality was of such a character, that the ceremonial law made no provision for his deliverance from the doom which his deeds of horror deserved ; and that the only sacrifices which would avail were those mentioned in the succeeding verse, "*The sacrifices of a broken heart.*"—*John Calvin.*

Verse 16.—"*Else would I give it thee.*" And good reason it is, that we who lie daily at the beautiful gate of the temple begging alms of him, and receiving from his open hand, who openeth his hand, and filleth with his plenty every living thing, should not think much to return to him such offerings of our goods as his law requireth.—*Samuel Page.*

Verses 16, 17.—And now I was thinking what were fit *to offer to God* for all his lovingkindness he has showed me ; and I thought upon *sacrifices*, for they have sometimes been pleasing to him, and he hath oftentimes smelt a sweet odour from them ; but I considered that sacrifices were but shadows of things to come, and are not now in that grace they have been ; for *old things are past, and new are now come ;* the shadows are gone, the substances are come in place. The bullocks that are to be sacrificed now are our hearts ; it were easier for me to give him bullocks for sacrifice, than to give him my heart. But why should I offer him that he cares not for ? my heart, I know, he cares for ; and if it be broken, and offered up by penitence and contrition, it is the only sacrifice that now he delights in. But can we think God to be so indifferent that he will accept of a broken heart ? Is a thing that is broken good for anything ? Can we drink in a broken glass ? Or can we lean upon a broken staff ? But though other things may be the worse for breaking, yet a heart is never at the best till it be broken ; for till it be broken we cannot see what is in it ; till it be broken, it cannot send forth its sweetest odour ; and therefore, though God loves a whole heart in affection, yet he loves a broken heart in sacrifice. And no marvel, indeed, seeing it is he himself that breaks it ; for as nothing but goat's blood can break the adamant, so nothing but the blood of our scape-goat, Jesus Christ, is able to break our adamantine hearts. Therefore, accept, O God, my broken heart, which I offer thee with a whole heart ; seeing thou canst neither except against it for being whole, which is broken in sacrifice, nor except against it for being broken, which is whole in affection.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 17.—"*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart,*" etc. When speaking of *thankfulness*, we might have expected him to say, "a *joyful* heart, or a thankful heart," but instead of that he says, "a contrite heart."

For the joy of forgiveness does not banish sorrow and contrition for sin: this will still continue. And the deeper the sense of sin, and the truer the sorrow for it, the more heartfelt also will be the thankfulness for pardon and reconciliation. The tender, humble, broken heart, is therefore the best thank-offering.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 17.—It may be observed that the second word, נִדְכֶּה, which we render *contrite*, denotes the being bruised and broken to pieces, as a thing is bruised in a mortar (See Numbers xi. 8), and therefore, in a moral sense, signifies such a weight of sorrow as must wholly crush the mind without some powerful and seasonable relief.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 18.—"*In thy good pleasure.*" Whatever we seek must ever be sought under this restriction, "*Thy good pleasure.*" Build thou, but do it in thine own wise time, in thine own good way. Build thou the walls of separation that divide the church from the world; let them be *in* it, not *of* it; keep them from its evil. Build thou the walls that bind, that unite thy people into one city, under one polity, that they all may be one. Build thou, and raze thou; raze all the inner walls that divide thy people from thy people; hasten that day when, as there is but one Shepherd, so shall there be but one sheep-fold.—*Thomas Alexander.*

Verses 18, 19.—Some learned Jewish interpreters, while they assign the Psalm to the occasion mentioned in the title, conjecture that the 18th and 19th verses were added by some Jewish bard, in the time of the Babylonish captivity. This opinion is also held by Venema, Green, Street, French and Skinner. There does not, however, seem to be any sufficient ground for referring the poem, either in whole or in part, to that period. Neither the walls of Jerusalem, nor the buildings of Zion, as the royal palace and the magnificent structure of the temple, which we know David had already contemplated for the worship of God (2 Samuel vii. 1, etc.), were completed during his reign. This was only effected under the reign of his son Solomon. 1 Kings iii. 1.

The prayer, then, in the 18th verse might have a particular reference to the completion of these buildings, and especially to the rearing of the temple, in which sacrifices of unprecedented magnitude were to be offered. David's fears might easily suggest to him that his crimes might prevent the building of the temple, which God had promised should be erected. 2 Samuel vii. 13. "The king forgets not," observes Bishop Horne, "to ask mercy for his people as well as for himself; that so neither his own nor their sins might prevent either the building and flourishing of the earthly Jerusalem, or, what was of infinitely greater importance, the promised blessing of Messiah, who was to descend from him, and to rear the walls of the New Jerusalem."—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin, in loc.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

[*The Psalm is upon its surface so full of suggestions for sermons that I have not attempted to offer any of my own, but have merely inserted a selection from Mr. G. Rogers and others.*]

Verse 1.—1. The Prayer. 1. For mercy, not justice, Mercy is the sinner's attribute—as much a part of the divine nature as justice. The possibility of sin is implied in its existence. The actual commission of sin is implied in its display. 2. For pardon, not pity merely, but forgiveness. II. The plea. 1. For the pardon of great sins on account of great mercies, and lovingkindness. 2. Many sins on account of multitude of mercies. 3. Hell-deserving sins on account of tender mercies. We who have sinned are human, he who pardons is divine.

> "Great God, thy *nature* hath no bound,
> So let thy pardoning love be found."

Verse 3.—I. Confession. "I acknowledge," etc. II. Humiliation, not a mere confession with the lips, but ever before me—in its guilt—defilement—consequences in this life and hereafter.

Verses 3, 4, 11, 12, 17.—I. Scripture estimate of sin. 1. Personal accountability—"*My sin.*" 2. Estimated as hateful to God—"*Against thee,*" etc. 3. Sin estimated as separation from God. II. Spiritual restoration. First step—Sacrifice of a broken spirit. Last step—Spirit of liberty. "*Thy free spirit.*"—*F. W. Robertson.*

Verse 4.—1. The person—"*I.*" 2. The commission—"*done.*" 3. The trespass—"*evil.*" 4. The particularity—"*this.*" 5. The daring of it—"*in thy sight.*"—*Samuel Page.*

Verse 4.—"*Against thee.*" 1. Thee, an *holy* God—a God of pure eyes, and that cannot endure to behold iniquity. 2. Thee, a *just* God—who will *punish* sin. 3. Thee, an *Almighty* God. 4. Thee, a *gracious* God.—*T. Horton.*

Verse 4.—I. Self-condemnation. 1. For the greatness of sin. Not against self merely, or fellow men, but God. This includes all guilt, for all is against him. 2. Its effrontery, "in thy sight." II. Divine justification. 1. In the permission of sin. 2. In its punishment. 3. In its forgiveness. God must be justified when he justifies the ungodly.

Verse 6.—See T. Goodwin's Treatise, entitled, "An Unregenerate Man's Guiltiness before God, in respect of Sin and Punishment." Bk. ix. cap. i. ii. [Nichol's edition, Vol. X., p. 324 *et seq.*]

Verse 7.—Here is, I. Faith in the fact of an atonement for sin. "I shall be clean." II. Faith in the method of its application. "Purge me," etc. Sprinkled as the blood of sacrifices. III. Faith in its efficacy. "I shall be whiter," etc.

Verse 10.—I. The change to be effected. 1. A clean heart. 2. A right spirit. II. The power by which it is accomplished. 1. A creative power, such as created the world at first. 2. A renewing power, such as continually renews the face of the earth. III. The acquirement of these blessings. The prayer, "Create," etc.

Verse 11 (*first clause*).—I am not cast away, and would be thankful. I deserve to be cast away, and ought to be penitential. I am afraid of being cast away, and must be prayerful. "Cast me not away." 1. From thy *protecting* presence into *danger.* 2. From thy *loving* presence into *wrath.* 3. From thy *joyous* presence into *distress.* 4. From thy *affluent* presence into *destitution.* 5. From thy *gracious* presence into *despair.* Sin hurries us away from God; grace hastens us into his embrace: the former severs, and the latter unites, God and the soul.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 11.—I. There is often much comfort in much grief. "Cast me not," etc. A consciousness of still having the divine presence and a dread of losing it, prompts the prayer. II. There is often much faith in much fear. "Take not," etc. Faith in the spirit works within him while he fears.

Verses 12—13.—A threefold desire: 1. To be *happy*—"Restore," etc. 2. To be *consistent*—"Uphold," etc. 3. To be *useful*—"Then will I teach," etc.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 13.—I. It is not our duty to seek the conversion of others until we are converted ourselves. II. The greater enjoyment we have in the ways of God, the more faithfully and earnestly we shall make them known to others. III. The more faithfully and earnestly we make them known to others the more they will be influenced by them.

Verse 15.—I. Confession. His lips are sealed on account—1. Of his fall—and well they might be. 2. Of natural timidity. 3. Of want of zeal. II. Petition. "Open thou," etc. Not my understanding merely and heart, but "lips." III. Resolution. Then he would speak freely in God's praise.

Verse 15.—I. When God does not open our lips we had better keep them closed. II. When he does open them we ought not to close them. III. When he opens them it is not to speak in our own praise, and seldom in praise of others, but always in his own praise. IV. We should use this prayer whenever we are about to speak in his name. "O Lord, open," etc.

Verses 16—17.—I. Men would gladly do something towards their own salvation if they could. "Thou desirest not," etc., else would I give it. II. All that they can do is not of the least avail. All the ceremonial observances of Jewish or Gentile churches could not procure pardon for the least transgression of the moral law. III. The only offering of man which God will not despise is a broken and a contrite heart. IV. All other requirement for his salvation God himself will provide.

Verse 18.—I. For whom is the prayer offered—for the church or Zion? 1. Next to our own welfare we should seek the welfare of Zion. 2. All should seek it by prayer. II. For what is the prayer offered? 1. The kind of good, not worldly

or ecclesiastical, but spiritual. 2. The measure of good. "In thy good pleasure. Thine own love to it, and what thou hast already done for it. 3. The continuance of good. "Build," etc. Its doctrines, graces, zeal.

Verse 19.—I. When we are accepted of God our offerings are accepted. "Then," etc. II. We should then make the richest offerings in our power, our time, talents, influence, etc. 1. Holy obedience. 2. Self-sacrifices, not half offerings, but whole "burnt-offerings;" not lambs merely, but "bullocks." 3. Zeal for divine ordinances. "Upon thine altar." III. God will take pleasure in such services. "Then shalt thou be pleased." 1. Because from his own redeemed. 2. Because given in the name of the Redeemer. With such sacrifices God is well pleased.

PSALM LII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician.—*Even short Psalms, if they record but one instance of the goodness of the Lord, and rebuke but briefly the pride of man, are worthy of our best minstrelsy. When we see that each Psalm is dedicated to "the chief musician," it should make us value our Psalmody, and forbid us to praise the Lord carelessly.* Maschil. *An Instructive. Even the malice of a Doeg may furnish instruction to a David.* A Psalm of David. *He was the prime object of Doeg's doggish hatred, and therefore the most fitting person to draw from the incident the lessons concealed within it.* When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and saith unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech. *By this deceitful tale-bearing, he procured the death of all the priests at Nob: though it had been a crime to have succoured David as a rebel, they were not in their intent and knowledge guilty of the fault. David felt much the villany of this arch-enemy, and here he denounces him in vigorous terms; it may be also that he has Saul in his eye.*

DIVISION.—*We shall follow the sacred pauses marked by the Selahs of the poet.*

EXPOSITION.

WHY boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God *endureth* continually.

2 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

3 Thou lovest evil more than good; *and* lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.

1. *"Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?"* Doeg had small matter for boasting in having procured the slaughter of a band of defenceless priests. A mighty man indeed to kill men who never touched a sword! He ought to have been ashamed of his cowardice. He had no room for exultation! Honourable titles are but irony where the wearer is mean and cruel. If David alluded to Saul, he meant by these words pityingly to say, "How can one by nature fitted for nobler deeds, descend to so low a level as to find a theme for boasting in a slaughter so heartless and mischievous?" *"The goodness of God endureth continually."* A beautiful contrast. The tyrant's fury cannot dry up the perennial stream of divine mercy. If priests be slain their Master lives. If Doeg for awhile triumphs the Lord will outlive him, and right the wrongs which he has done. This ought to modify the proud exultations of the wicked, for after all, while the Lord liveth, iniquity has little cause to exalt itself.

2. *"Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs."* Thou speakest with an ulterior design. The information given was for Saul's assistance apparently, but in very deed in his heart the Edomite hated the priests of the God of Jacob. It is a mark of deep depravity, when the evil spoken is craftily intended to promote a yet greater evil. *"Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully."* David represents the false tongue as being effectual for mischief, like a razor which, unawares to the person operated on, is making him bald; so softly and deftly do Oriental barbers perform their work. Or he may mean that as with a razor a man's throat may be cut very speedily, under the pretence of shaving him, even thus keenly, basely, but effectually Doeg destroyed the band of the priests. Whetted by malice, and guided by craft, he did his cruel work with accursed thoroughness.

3. *"Thou lovest evil more than good."* He loved not good at all. If both had been equally profitable and pleasant, he would have preferred evil. *"And lying rather than to speak righteousness."* He was more at home at lying than at truth. He spake not the truth except by accident, but he delighted heartily in falsehood. "SELAH." Let us pause and look at the proud, blustering liar. Doeg is gone, but other dogs bark at the Lord's people. Saul's cattle-master is buried, but the devil still has his drovers, who fain would hurry the saints like sheep to the slaughter.

4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O *thou* deceitful tongue.

5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and

pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

4. "*Thou lovest.*" Thou hast a taste, a gusto for evil language. "*All devouring words.*" There are words that, like boa-constrictors, swallow men whole, or like lions, rend men to pieces; these words evil minds are fond of. Their oratory is evermore furious and bloody. That which will most readily provoke the lowest passions they are sure to employ, and they think such pandering to the madness of the wicked to be eloquence of a high order. "*O thou deceitful tongue.*" Men can manage to say a great many furious things, and yet cover all over with the pretext of justice. They claim that they are jealous for the right, but the truth is they are determined to put down truth and holiness, and craftily go about it under this transparent pretence.

5. "*God shall likewise destroy thee for ever.*" Fain would the persecutor destroy the church, and therefore God shall destroy him, pull down his house, pluck up his roots, and make an end of him. "*He shall take thee away.*" God shall extinguish his coal and sweep him away like the ashes of the hearth; he would have quenched the truth, and God shall quench him. "*And pluck thee out of thy dwelling place,*" like a plant torn from the place where it grew, or a captive dragged from his home. Ahimelech and his brother priests were cut off from their abode, and so should those be who compassed and contrived their murder. "*And root thee out of the land of the living.*" The persecutor shall be eradicated, stubbed up by the root, cut up root and branch. He sought the death of others and death shall fall upon him. He troubled the land of the living, and he shall be banished to that land where the wicked cease from troubling. Those who will not "let live" have no right to "live." God will turn the tables on malicious men, and mete to them a portion with their own measure. "SELAH." Pause again, and behold the divine justice proving itself more than a match for human sin.

6 The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:

7 Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, *and* strengthened himself in his wickedness.

8 But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

9 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it:* and I will wait on thy name; for *it is* good before thy saints.

6. "*The righteous*"—the object of the tyrant's hatred—shall outlive his enmity, and "*also shall see,*" before his own face, the end of the ungodly oppressor. God permits Mordecai to see Haman hanging on the gallows. David had brought to him the tokens of Saul's death on Gilboa. "*And fear.*" Holy awe shall sober the mind of the good man; he shall reverently adore the God of providence. "*And shall laugh at him.*" If not with righteous joy, yet with solemn contempt. Schemes so far-reaching all baffled, plans so deep, so politic, all thwarted. Mephistopheles outwitted, the old serpent taken in his own subtlety. This is a goodly theme for that deep-seated laughter which is more akin to solemnity than merriment.

7. "*Lo.*" Look ye here, and read the epitaph of a mighty man, who lorded it proudly during his little hour, and set his heel upon the necks of the Lord's chosen. "*This is the man that made not God his strength.*" Behold the man! The great vainglorious man. He found a fortress, but not in God; he gloried in his might, but not in the Almighty. Where is he now? How has it fared with him in the hour of his need? Behold his ruin, and be instructed. "*But trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.*" The substance he had gathered, and the mischiefs he had wrought, were his boast and glory. Wealth and wickedness are dreadful companions; when combined they make a monster. When the devil is master of money bags, he is a devil indeed. Beelzebub and Mammon together heat the furnace seven times hotter for the child of God, but in the end they shall work out their own destruction. Wherever we see to-day a man great in sin and substance, we shall do well to anticipate his end. and view this verse as the divine *in memoriam.*

8. "*But I,*" hunted and persecuted though I am, "*am like a green olive tree.*" I am not plucked up or destroyed, but am like a flourishing olive, which out of

the rock draws oil, and amid the drought still lives and grows. *"In the house of God."* He was one of the divine family, and could not be expelled from it; his place was near his God, and there was he safe and happy, despite all the machinations of his foes. He was bearing fruit, and would continue to do so when all his proud enemies were withered like branches lopped from the tree. *"I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever."* Eternal mercy is my present confidence. David knew God's mercy to be eternal and perpetual, and in that he trusted. What a rock to build on! What a fortress to fly to!

9. *"I will praise thee for ever."* Like thy mercy shall my thankfulness be. While others boast in their riches I will boast in my God; and when their glorying is silenced for ever in the tomb, my song shall continue to proclaim the loving-kindness of Jehovah. *"Because thou hast done it."* Thou hast vindicated the righteous, and punished the wicked. God's memorable acts of providence, both to saints and sinners, deserve and must have our gratitude. David views his prayers as already answered, the promises of God as already fulfilled, and therefore at once lifts up the sacred Psalm. *"And I will wait on thy name."* God shall still be the Psalmist's hope; he will not in future look elsewhere. He whose name has been so gloriously made known in truth and righteousness, is justly chosen as our expectation for years to come. *"For it is good before thy saints."* Before or among the saints David intended to wait, feeling it to be good both for him and them to look to the Lord alone, and wait for the manifestation of his character in due season. Men must not too much fluster us; our strength is to sit still. Let the mighty ones boast, we will wait on the Lord; and if their haste brings them present honour, our patience will have its turn by-and-by, and bring us the honour which excelleth.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—That *Maschil* means a sacred composition, is evident from the seventh verse of the 47th Psalm, where the passage which we render, "Sing ye praises with understanding," is literally, "Sing ye a *Maschil*," or song of instruction. This word occurs as a title in thirteen places; and six times is prefixed to compositions of David's. In several instances it occurs in consecutive Psalms; *i,e.*, in the 42nd (of which the 43rd is the sequel), the 44th and 45th, the 52nd, 53rd, 54th, and 55th, the 88th and 89th. A circumstance which favours the notion that the term was one peculiarly used by some particular editor or collector of a certain portion of the Psalter.—*John Jebb.*

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—*Why doth he glory in malice that is mighty?* that is, he, that in malice is mighty, why doth he glory? There is need that a man be mighty but in goodness, not in malice. Is it any great thing to glory in malice? To build a house doth belong to few men, any ignorant man you please can pull down. To sow wheat, to dress the crop, to wait until it ripen, and in that fruit on which one has laboured to rejoice, doth belong to few men: with one spark any man you please can burn all the crop. . . . . What art thou about to do, O mighty man, what art thou about to do, boasting thyself much? Thou art about to kill a man: this thing also a scorpion, this also a fever, this also a poisonous fungus can do. To this is thy mightiness reduced, that it be made equal to a poisonous fungus!—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—By *"mischief"* is understood not simply what evil he had done, but the prosperity which he now enjoyed, obtained through mischief; as is clear both from the word *boasting* and from the seventh verse. . . . . Formerly he was the chief of Saul's shepherds (1 Sam. xxi. 8), but by that wicked destruction of the priests of God by Saul, and the execution of the cruel sentence, he obtained the chief place near to the king (*ibid.* xxii. 9).—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1.—*"O mighty man."* These words may be added either by way of irony, as if he had said, A great deal of valour and prowess you have shown in slaying a company of unarmed men, the priests of the Lord, yea, women and children, no way able to resist you; or else to imply the ground of his vain boasting, to wit,

either his present greatness, as being a man in great place, and of great power with Saul; or the great preferments he expected from Saul.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 1.—"*The goodness of God endureth continually.*" He contrasts the *goodness* of God with the wealth and might of Doeg, and the foundation of his own confidence as widely different from that of Doeg, his own placed upon the goodness of God, enduring for ever and showing itself effectual. It is as if he had said, The *goodness* of God to which I trust, is most powerful and the same throughout all time, and in it I shall at all times most surely rejoice that *goodness* of God, since now it sustains me, so it will exalt me in its own good time; it therefore *is*, and *will be above me.* . . . Not without emphasis does he say the goodness אֵל *of the strong God*, a contrast to Doeg the *hero*, and the ruinous foundation of his fortune.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.*" Thus our version. But I do not very well understand the propriety of *the tongue's devising mischief*, and devising it *like a sharp razor.* But we may easily avoid this harsh comparison by rendering the words: *Thou contrivest mischiefs with thy tongue, as with a sharp razor, O thou dealer in deceit: i.e.*, Thou contrivest with thy smooth and flattering tongue to wound the reputation and character of others, as though thou wast cutting their throats with a smooth razor.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 2.—"*Like a sharp razor,*" that instead of shaving the hair lanceth the flesh; or missing the beard cutteth the throat.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—The smooth, adroit manner of executing a wicked device neither hides nor abates its wickedness. Murder with "*a sharp razor*" is as wicked as murder with a meat-axe or a bludgeon. A lie very ingeniously framed and rehearsed in an oily manner, is as great a sin, and in the end will be seen to be as great a folly as the most bungling attempt at deception.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou lovest evil more than good.*"—"*Thou hast loved evil,*" he says, "*more than good,*" not by simply preferring it, but by substituting it; so that in the stead of good he hath done evil, and that from the inmost love of his soul, bent upon evil; wherefore he does not say that he *admitted*, but *loved evil*, not *moral* only, but *physical*, for the destruction of his neighbours; so *to have loved* it, that he willed nothing but *evil*, being averse to all good.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.*"—He was all *tongue;* a *man of words:* and these the most deceitful and injurious.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—"*God shall destroy thee for ever,*" etc. There are four words the Psalmist makes use of to denote the utter vengeance that awaited this deceitful and bloody wretch, all of them having a very strong meaning. The first, תִּצֹּךְ from נָתַץ, signifies *to pull down*, and break utterly into pieces; as when an altar is demolished. (Judges vi. 30; viii. 9.) The second, יַחְתְּךָ from the root חָתָה, which signifies *to twist* anything, or *pluck it up by twisting it round*, as trees are sometimes twisted up. The third, יִסָּחֲךָ from נָסַח, which properly signifies *utterly to sweep away anything like dust or chaff;* and the expression יִסָּחֲךָ מֵאֹהֶל means not *sweep thee away from thy tent*, but, *sweep thee away, that thou mayest be no longer a tent;* thyself, thy family, thy fortune, shall be wholly and entirely swept away, and dissipated for ever; to which the fourth word, שֶׁרֶשׁ, answers, *eradicabit te*, he shall root thee out *from the land of the living.* 'Tis impossible words can express a more entire and absolute destruction.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 5.—"*God shall likewise destroy thee for ever.*" Here are *quot verba tot tonotrua*, so many words, so many thunderclaps. As thou hast destroyed the Lord's priests, and their whole city, razing and harassing it; so God will demolish and destroy thee utterly as an house pulled down to the ground, so that one stone is not left upon another (Lev. xiv. 45); so shall God pull down Doeg from that high preferment, which he by sycophancy hath got at court.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—Wonderful is the force of the verbs in the original, which convey to us the four ideas of *laying prostrate, dissolving as by fire, sweeping away as with a besom, and totally extirpating root and branch*, as a tree is eradicated from the spot on which it grew. If a farther comment be wanted, it may be found in the history of David's enemies, and the crucifiers of the Son of David; but the passage will

be fully and finally explained by the destruction of the world of the ungodly at the last day.—*George Horne.*

Verse 5.—The poet accumulates dire and heavy words, and mingles various metaphors that he might paint the picture of this man's destruction in more lively colours. Three metaphors appear to be joined together, the first taken from a *building*, the second from a *tent*, the third from a *tree*, if attention is given to the force and common acceptation of the words.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 5.—"*He shall take thee away;*" or, *seize thee*, as coals are taken with the tongs.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 6.—"*The righteous also shall see,*" etc. That is, to use the apt words of Gejerus, "*This shall not be a secret judgment, or known only to a few, but common fame shall spread abroad throughout the kingdom, or city, the notable punishment of the ungodly. The righteous also shall not pass by such an event with indifference but with earnest eyes shall contemplate it,*" etc. I add, and hence shall they take joy, and turn it to their own use, to the greater fearing of God. . . . *The righteous*, upon whose destruction the ungodly man was intent, shall survive and spend their lives safe in the favour of God; *they shall see* with attentive mind, they shall consider; nor, as worldlings are accustomed, shall they pass it by without reflection or improvement, they shall see and *fear*, namely, God the just judge; and instructed in his judgment by this instance, they shall be the more careful to abstain from all designs and crimes of the kind.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 6.—"*And shall laugh at him;*" or *over him*—over the wicked man thus cast down—*they shall laugh.* Such exultation, to our modern sensibilities, seems shocking, because we can hardly conceive of it, apart from the gratification of personal vindictiveness. But there is such a thing as a righteous hatred, as a righteous scorn. There is such a thing as a shout of righteous joy at the downfall of the tyrant and the oppressor, at the triumph of righteousness and truth over wrong and falsehood.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 7.—"*Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength.*" David having showed (in verses 5, 6) the wicked man, by the righteous judgment of God rooted out of the land of the living, shows us in the next verse, the righteous man at once fearing and laughing at this sight, as also pointing at him saying, "*Lo this is the man that made not God his strength.*" The words are a divine but cutting sarcasm. The original is *geber*, which signifieth a strong, valiant man: as we say in English, Lo, this is the brave and gallant man you wot of! But who was this for a man? He was one, saith he, that "*trusted in the abundance of his riches.*" Oh! 'tis hard to abound in riches and not to trust in them. Hence that caution (Psalm lxii. 10): "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Now, what is the setting the heart upon riches but our rejoicing and trusting in them? And because the heart of man is so easily persuaded into this sinful trust upon riches, therefore the apostle is urgent with Timothy to persuade all rich men—not only mere worldly rich men, but godly rich men—against it; yea, he urgeth Timothy to persuade rich men against two sins, which are worse than all the poverty in the world, yet the usual attendants of riches—pride and confidence: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded." 1 Tim. vi. 17.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 7, 8.—Perhaps some of you have been long professors, and yet come to little growth in love to God, humility, heavenly-mindedness, mortification; and it is worth the digging to see what lies at the root of your profession, whether there be not a legal principle that hath too much influenced you. Have you not thought to carry all with God from your duties and services, and too much laid up your hopes in your own actings? Alas! this is as so much dead earth, which must be thrown out, and gospel principles laid in the room thereof. Try but this course, and try whether the spring of thy grace will not come on apace. David gives an account how he came to stand and flourish when some that were rich and mighty, on a sudden withered and came to nothing. "*Lo,*" saith he, "*this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches.*" "*But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.*" While others trust in the riches of their own righteousness and services, and make not Christ their strength, do thou renounce all, and trust in the mercy of God in Christ, and thou shalt be like a green olive when they fade and wither.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 8 (*first clause*) :—

" But I an olive charged with fruit
In fertile soil that grows."

This appears to express the meaning of the Hebrew words, which our translators render, " *like a green olive tree,*" but which in reality have no reference to the colour, but to the flourishing, vigorous, and thriving state of the plant; just as Homer gives it the epithet of " luxuriant," and " flourishing ; " and Ovid that of " ever-flourishing." The fact is, the colour of the leaves of this tree is not a bright, lively green ; but a dark, disagreeable, or yellowish one. Scheuchzen describes the leaves, as " *superne coloris atrovirentis, vel in virdi flavescentis.*" An English traveller, writing from Italy, thus expresses his disappointment about the olive tree :—" The fields, and indeed the whole face of Tuscany, are in a manner covered with olive trees ; but the olive tree does not answer the character I had conceived of it. The royal Psalmist and some of the sacred writers, speak with rapture of the ' green olive tree,' so that I expected a beautiful green ; and I confess to you, I was wretchedly disappointed to find its hue resembling that of our hedges when they are covered with dust." I have heard other travellers express the same feeling of disappointment. " The true way of solving the difficulty," as Harmer properly remarks, " is to consider the word translated ' green,' not as descriptive of colour, but of some other property ; youthfulness, vigour, prosperity, or the like."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—" *Green olive tree in the house of God.*"—Several expositors fancifully imagine that olive trees grew in certain of the courts of the Tabernacle ; but the notion must not be endured, it would have been too near an approach to the groves of the heathen to have been tolerated, at least in David's time. The text should surely be read with some discretion ; the poet does not refer to olive trees in God's house, but compares *himself in the house of God* to an olive tree. This reminds us of the passage, " Thy children like olive plants around thy table," where some whose imaginations have been more lively than their judgments, have seen a table surrounded, not with children, but with olive plants. Whoever, in the realms of common sense ever heard of olive plants round a table ? If, as Thrupp supposes, Nob was situated upon the Mount of Olives, we can, without any conjecture, see a reaon for the present reference to a flourishing olive tree.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 9.—He compares himself (1) With an *olive tree*, a tree always green, lasting long and fruitful, whose fruit is most useful and grateful : so he paints his future state as joyful, glorious, lasting, and useful and pleasing to men : plainly a reference is made to the *royal* and *prophetic* office, in both of which he represents himself as an *olive tree*, by supplying others with *oil* through his rule and instruction : (2) With *the olive* growing luxuriantly, and abounding in spreading boughs, and so spacious and large. . . . . (3) But why does he add *in the house of God ?* That he might indicate, unless I am deceived : (*a*) That he should possess a dwelling in that place where the *house of God* was, whence he was now exiled through the calumnies of Doeg and the attacks of Saul stirred up thereby : (*b*) That he should perform distinguished service to the house of God, by adorning it, and by restoring religion, now neglected, and practising it with zeal : (*c*) That he should derive from God and his favour, whose that house was, all his prosperity : (*d*) That he, like a son of God, should rejoice in familiarity with him, and should become heir to his possessions and promises.—*Hermann Venema.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The confidence of faith. I. *The circumstances were distressing.* 1. David was misjudged. 2. David exiled. 3. A bad man in power. 4. God's priests slain. II. *The consolation was abiding.* 1. There is a God. 2. He is good. 3. His goodness continues. 4. Good will, therefore, overcome. III. *The rejoinder was triumphant,* "Why boastest thou?" 1. The mischief did not touch the main point. 2. It would be overruled. 3. It would recoil. 4. It would expose the perpetrators to scorn.

Verse 3.—In what cases men clearly love evil more than good.

Verses 7, 8.—The worldling like an uprooted tree, the believer a vigorous, well-planted olive.

Verse 8.—The believer's character, position, confidence, and continuance.

Verse 9.—The double duty, and the double reason: the single heart and its single object.

Verse 9.—What God has done, what we will do, and why.

PSALM LIII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician.—*If the leader of the choir is privileged to sing the jubilates of divine grace, he must not disdain to chant the misereres of human depravity. This is the second time he has had the same Psalm entrusted to him* (see Psalm xiv.), *and he must, therefore, be the more careful in singing it.* Upon Mahalath. *Here the tune is chosen for the musician, probably some mournfully solemn air; or perhaps a musical instrument is here indicated, and the master of the choir is requested to make it the prominent instrument in the orchestra; at any rate, this is a direction not found in the former copy of the Psalm, and seems to call for greater care. The word* "Mahalath" *appears to signify, in some forms of it,* "*disease,*" *and truly this Psalm is* THE SONG OF MAN'S DISEASE—*the mortal, hereditary taint of sin.* Maschil. *This is a second additional note not found in Psalm* xiv., *indicating that double attention is to be given to this most instructive song.* A Psalm of David. *It is not a copy of the fourteenth Psalm, emended and revised by a foreign hand; it is another edition by the same author, emphasised in certain parts, and re-written for another purpose.*

SUBJECT.—*The evil nature of man is here brought before our view a second time, in almost the same inspired words. All repetitions are not vain repetitions. We are slow to learn, and need line upon line. David after a long life, found men no better than they were in his youth. Holy Writ never repeats itself needlessly, there is good cause for the second copy of this Psalm; let us read it with more profound attention than before. If our age has advanced from fourteen to fifty-three, we shall find the doctrine of this Psalm more evident than in our youth.*

[*The reader is requested to peruse Psalm XIV.,* "*Treasury of David,*" *Vol. I.*]

EXPOSITION.

THE fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is* none that doeth good.

2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God.

3 Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.

4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread: they have not called upon God.

5 There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee: thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them.

6 Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

1. "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" And this he does because he is a fool. Being a fool he speaks according to his nature; being a great fool he meddles with a great subject, and comes to a wild conclusion. The atheist is, morally, as well as mentally, a fool, a fool in the heart as well as in the head; a fool in morals as well as in philosophy. With the denial of God as a starting point, we may well conclude that the fool's progress is a rapid, riotous, raving, ruinous one. He who begins at impiety is ready for anything. "*No God,*" being interpreted, means no law, no order, no restraint to lust, no limit to passion. Who but a fool would be of this mind? What a Bedlam, or rather what an Aceldama, would the world become if such lawless principles came to be universal! He who heartily

entertains an irreligious spirit, and follows it out to its legitimate issues is a son of Belial, dangerous to the commonwealth, irrational and despicable. Every natural man, is, more or less a denier of God. Practical atheism is the religion of the race. "*Corrupt are they.*" They are rotten. It is idle to compliment them as sincere doubters, and amiable thinkers—they are putrid. There is too much dainty dealing nowadays with atheism; it is not a harmless error, it is an offensive, putrid sin, and righteous men should look upon it in that light. All men being more or less atheistic in spirit, are also in that degree corrupt; their heart is foul, their moral nature is decayed. "*And have done abominable iniquity.*" Bad principles soon lead to bad lives. One does not find virtue promoted by the example of your Voltaires and Tom Paines. Those who talk so abominably as to deny their Maker will act abominably when it serves their turn. It is the abounding denial and forgetfulness of God among men which is the source of the unrighteousness and crime which we see around us. If all men are not outwardly vicious it is to be accounted for by the power of other and better principles, but left to itself the "No God" spirit so universal in mankind would produce nothing but the most loathsome actions. "*There is none that doeth good.*" The one typical fool is reproduced in the whole race; without a single exception men have forgotten the right way. This accusation twice made in the Psalm, and repeated a third time by the inspired apostle Paul, is an indictment most solemn and sweeping, but he who makes it cannot err, he knows what is in man; neither will he lay more to man's charge than he can prove.

2. "*God looked down from heaven upon the children of men.*" He did so in ages past, and he has continued his steadfast gaze from his all-surveying observatory. "*To see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.*" Had there been one understanding man, one true lover of his God, the divine eye would have discovered him. Those pure heathens and admirable savages that men talk so much of, do not appear to have been visible to the eye of Omniscience, the fact being that they live nowhere but in the realm of fiction. The Lord did not look for great grace, but only for sincerity and right desire, but these he found not. He saw all nations, and all men in all nations, and all hearts in all men, and all motions of all hearts, but he saw neither a clear head nor a clean heart among them all. Where God's eyes see no favourable sign we may rest assured there is none.

3. "*Every one of them is gone back.*" The whole mass of manhood, all of it, is gone back. In the fourteenth Psalm it was said to turn aside, which was bad enough, but here it is described as running in a diametrically opposite direction. The life of unregenerate manhood is in direct defiance of the law of God, not merely apart from it but opposed to it. "*They are altogether become filthy.*" The whole lump is soured with an evil leaven, fouled with an all-pervading pollution, made rank with general putrefaction. Thus, in God's sight, our atheistic nature is not the pardonable thing that we think it to be. Errors as to God are not the mild diseases which some account them, they are abominable evils. Fair is the world to blind eyes, but to the all-seeing Jehovah it is otherwise. "*There is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" How could there be, when the whole mass was leavened with so evil a leaven? This puts an end to the fictions of the innocent savage, the lone patriarch, "the Indian whose untutored mind," etc. Pope's verse—

> "Father of all, in every age,
> In every clime adored,
> By saint, by savage, or by sage,
> Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,"

evaporates in smoke. The fallen race of man, left to its own energy, has not produced a single lover of God or doer of holiness, nor will it ever do so. Grace must interpose or not one specimen of humanity will be found to follow after the good and true. This is God's verdict after looking down upon the race. Who shall gainsay it?

4. "*Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?*" They have no wisdom, certainly, but even so common a thing as knowledge might have restrained them. Can they not see that there is a God? that sin is an evil thing? that persecution recoils upon a man's own head? Are they such utter fools as not to know that they are their own enemies, and are ruining themselves? "*Who eat up my people as they eat bread.*" Do they not see that such food will be hard to digest, and will bring on them a horrible vomit when God deals with them in justice? Can they imagine that the Lord will allow them to devour his people with impunity? They

must be insane indeed. *"They have not called upon God."* They carry on their cruel enterprises against the saints, and use every means but that which is essential to success in every case, namely, the invocation of God. In this respect persecutors are rather more consistent than Pharisees who devoured widows' houses, and prayed too. The natural man, like Ishmael, loves not the spiritual seed, is very jealous of it, and would fain destroy it, because it is beloved of God; yet the natural man does not seek after the like favour from God. The carnal mind envies those who obtain mercy, and yet it will not seek mercy itself. It plays the dog in the manger. Sinners will out of a malicious jealousy devour those who pray, but yet they will not pray themselves.

5. *"There were they in great fear, where no fear was."* David sees the end of the ungodly and the ultimate triumph of the spiritual seed. The rebellious march in fury against the gracious, but suddenly they are seized with a causeless panic. The once fearless boasters tremble like the leaves of the aspen, frightened at their own shadows. In this sentence and this verse, this Psalm differs much from the fourteenth. It is evidently expressive of a higher state of realisation in the poet, he emphasises the truth by stronger expressions. Without cause the wicked are alarmed. He who denies God is at bottom a coward, and in his infidelity he is like the boy in the churchyard who "whistles to keep his courage up." *"For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee."* When the wicked see the destruction of their fellows they may well quail. Mighty were the hosts which besieged Zion, but they were defeated, and their unburied carcasses proved the prowess of the God whose being they dared to deny. *"Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them."* God's people may well look with derision upon their enemies since they are the objects of divine contempt. They scoff at us, but we may with far greater reason laugh them to scorn, because the Lord our God considers them as less than nothing and vanity.

6. *"Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion."* Would God the final battle were well over. When will the Lord avenge his own elect? When will the long oppression of the saints come to its close, and glory crown their heads? The word *"salvation"* is in the plural, to show its greatness. *"When God bringeth back the capitivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."* Inasmuch as the yoke has been heavy, and the bondage cruel, the liberty will be gladsome, and the triumph joyous. The second advent and the restoration of Israel are our hope and expectation.

We have attempted to throw into rhyme the last two verses of this Psalm :—

The foes of Zion quake for fright,
  Where no fear was they quail;
For well they know that sword of might
  Which cuts through coats of mail.

The Lord of old defiled their shields,
  And all their spears he scorn'd;
Their bones lay scatter'd o'er the fields.
  Unburied and unmourn'd.

Let Zion's foes be filled with shame;
  Her sons are bless'd of God;
Though scoffers now despise their name,
  The Lord shall break the rod.

Oh! would our God to Zion turn,
  God with salvation clad;
Then Judah's harps should music learn.
  And Israel be glad.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Probably the two Psalms *refer to different periods;* the fourteenth to the earlier portion of the world, or of Jewish history; the fifty-third to a later, perhaps a still future time. Jehovah, through Christ, is frequently said to turn to the world to see what its condition is, and always with the same result. "All flesh had corrupted its way" in the days of Noah, and, "when the Son of Man cometh" again, it is intimated that he will scarcely "find faith on the earth." The two Psalms also *apply to different persons.* The former refers to the enemies of God, who tremble when his presence is made known; "*they are in great fear,*" because vengeance is about to be inflicted on them for their sins. Here the Supreme Being is called Jehovah. In the fifty-third Psalm the interests of God's people are principally kept in view. The ungodly are regarded as plotting against the righteous, and it is in this relation their case is considered. The fear that was just and reasonable, in the fourteenth Psalm, because it concerned the unrighteous under a sense of impending judgment, is said to be unfounded in the fifty-third, because God was in the midst of his people, "scattering the bones of their enemies," and showing himself, not as Jehovah, but as the Elohim of his redeemed children. The fourteenth Psalm contemplates judgment; the fifty-third deliverance; and thus, though seemingly alike, a different lesson is conveyed in each.

The Psalm, then, descriptive of the universal and continuous corruption of man's nature, very properly occupies an introductory place in a series intended to represent the enemies of Messiah, who oppose his church during his absence, and who are to attempt to resist his power when he comes again. Before entering upon an examination of the character of these opponents, this Psalm teaches that, until changed by grace, all are gone astray; "there is none righteous, no, not one," and that for all there is but one remedy, "the Deliverer coming out of Zion, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."—*R. H. Ryland, M.A., in "The Psalms restored to Messiah,"* 1853.

Whole Psalm.—The state of earth ought to be deeply felt by us. The world lying in wickedness should occupy much of our thoughts. The enormous guilt, the inconceivable pollution, the ineffably provoking Atheism of this fallen province of God's dominion, might be a theme for our ceaseless meditation and mourning. To impress it the more on us, therefore, the Psalm repeats what has been already sung in Psalm xiv. It is the same Psalm, with only a few words varied; it is "line upon line, precept upon precept;" the harp's most melancholy, most dismal notes again sounded in our ear. Not that the Lord would detain us always, or disproportionately long, amid scenes of sadness; for elsewhere he repeats in like manner that most triumphant melody, Psalm lx. 6—12; cviii. 6—13; but it is good to return now and then to the open field on which we all were found, cast out in loathsome degradation.—*Andrew A. Bonar, in "Christ and his Church in the Book of Psalms,"* 1859.

Whole Psalm.—A second edition of the fourteenth Psalm, with variations more or less important, in each verse. That either of these compositions is an incorrect copy of the other is highly improbable, because two such copies of the same Psalm would not have been retained in the collection, and because the variations are too uniform, consistent, and significant, to be the work of chance or mere traditional corruption. That the changes were deliberately made by a later writer is improbable, because such a liberty would hardly have been taken with a Psalm of David, and because the later form, in that case, would either have been excluded from the Psalter or substituted for the first form, or immediately connected with it.

The only satisfactory hypothesis is, that the original author afterwards re-wrote it, with such modifications as were necessary to bring out certain points distinctly, but without any intention to supersede the use of the original composition, which therefore still retains its place in the collection. This supposition is confirmed by the titles, which ascribe both Psalms to David. . . . As a general fact, it may be stated, that the variations in the Psalm before us are such as render the expression stronger, bolder, and in one or two cases more obscure and difficult.—*J. A. Alexander* 1850,

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is a variation of Psalm xiv. In each of these two Psalms the *name* of God occurs seven times. In Psalm xiv. it is three times *Elohim,*

and four times *Jehovah ;* in the present Psalm it is seven times *Elohim.—Christopher Wordsworth,* 1868.

Whole Psalm.—God, in this Psalm, " speaketh twice," for this is the same almost verbatim with the fourteenth Psalm. The scope of it is to convince us of our sins, to set us a-blushing, and to set us a-trembling because of them ; there is need of " line upon line " to this purpose. God, by the Psalmist, here shows—

I. The *fact* of sin. God is a witness to it. He looks down from heaven and sees all the sinfulness of men's hearts and lives. All this is open and naked before him.

II. The *fault* of sin. It is iniquity (verses 1, 4) ; it is an unrighteous thing ; it is that in which there is no good (verses 1, 3) ; it is going back from God (verse 3).

III. The *fountain* of sin. How comes it that men are so bad ? Surely, it is because there is no fear of God before their eyes ; they say in their hearts, *there is no God* at all to call us to account, none that we need to stand in awe of. Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles.

IV. The *folly* of sin. He is a *fool* (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) who harbours such corrupt thoughts. The " workers of iniquity," whatever they pretend to, " have no knowledge ; " they may truly be said to know nothing that do not know God. Verse 4.

V. The *filthiness* of sin. Sinners are " corrupt " (verse 1) ; their nature is vitiated and spoiled ; their iniquity is " abominable ; " it is odious to the holy God, and renders them so ; whereas, otherwise he " hates nothing that he has made." What neatness soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest nastiness in the world.

VI. The *fruit* of sin. See to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last ! See their cruelty to their brethren ! They " eat them up as they eat bread." As if they had not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. See their contempt of God at the same time—they have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.

VII. The *fear and shame* that attends sin (verse 5). " There were they in great fear " who had made God their enemy ; their own guilty consciences frightened them and filled them with horror. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to put them to shame and expose them, " because God hath despised them."

VIII. The *faith* of the saints, and their hope and power touching this great evil (verse 6). There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. O that it might be hastened ! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited for this redemption. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church.—*Condensed from Matthew Henry,* 1662—1714.

Verse 1.—*" The fool hath said is his heart,"* etc. It is in his heart he says this ; this is the secret desire of every unconverted bosom. If the breast of God were within reach of men, it would be stabbed a million of times in one moment. When God was manifest in the flesh, he was altogether lovely ; he did no sin ; he went about continually doing good : and yet they took him and hung him on a tree ; they mocked him and spat upon him. And this is the way men would do with God again. Learn—1st. The fearful depravity of your heart. I venture to say there is not an unconverted man present, who has the most distant idea of the monstrous wickedness that is now within his breast. Stop till you are in hell, and it will break out unrestrained. But still let me tell you what it is—you have a heart that would kill God if you could. If the bosom of God were now within your reach, and one blow would rid the universe of God, you have a heart fit to do the deed. 2nd. The amazing love of Christ—" While we were enemies, Christ died for us."—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne,* 1813—1843.

Verse 1.—*" There is no God."* אין is properly a noun, and means nonentity, or non-existence : " nothing of God," or " no such thing as God." It cannot be explained as a wish—" No God ! " *i.e.,* O that there were no God !—because אין in usage always includes the substantive verb, and denies the existence, or at least the presence of the person or thing to which it is prefixed. This is also clear from the use of the same word in the last clause, where its sense is unambiguous.—*J. A. Alexander on Psalm XIV.*

Verse 1.—*"There is no God."* Thus denying the agency of Providence, for the

word *Elohim*, here translated *God*, means *judge* (compare Exodus xxii. 28), and has reference not to the *essence*, but to the *providence* of the Deity.—*Daniel Cresswell*, 1776—1844.

Verse 1.—It is to be noted that Scripture saith, "The fool hath *said* in his heart," and not "*thought* in his heart;" that is to say, he doth not so fully think it in judgment, as he hath a good will to be of that belief. for seeing that it makes not for him that there should be a God, he doth seek by all means accordingly to persuade and resolve himself, and studies to affirm, prove, and verify it to himself as some theme or position, all which labour, notwithstanding that sparkle of our creation light, whereby men acknowledge a Deity, burneth still within; and in vain doth he strive utterly to alienate it or put it out, so that it is out of the corruption of his heart and will, and not out of the natural apprehension of his brain and conceit, that he doth set down his opinion, as the comical poet saith, "Then came my mind to be of my opinion," as if himself and his mind had been two diverse things; therefore, the atheist hath rather said, and held it in his heart, than thought or believed in his heart that there is no God.—*Francis Bacon* (1560—1626), *in "Thoughts on Holy Scripture."*

Verse 2.—"*That did seek God.*" Although all things are full of God, yet is he to be *sought for* of godly men, by reason of the darkness which compasseth our minds through original sin. For both the flesh, and the senses, and earthly affections do hinder us from knowing of him, yea, though be be present—*Peter Martyr*, 1500—1562.

Verses 2, 3.—Their sin is described in gradation. They do *not understand*, because a true knowledge of things divine forms the basis of proper conduct towards God; they do *not ask for God*, because they only care for him whose clear and sure insight apprehends him as their highest possession; they are *gone aside*, because he who cares not for him is sure to get estranged from him, and to deviate from his paths; and they are *altogether become filthy* (*i.e.*, worthless), because man's proper strength and fitness for virtue must well from the fountain of communion with God.—*Augustus F. Tholuck*, 1856.

Verse 3.—"*They are altogether become filthy.*" נְאֲלָחוּ *neelachu.* They are become *sour and rancid;* a metaphor taken from milk that has fermented and turned sour, rancid and worthless.—*Adam Clarke*, 1760—1832.

Verse 3 (*second clause*).—The word נְאֲלָחוּ, rendered "*they are become filthy,*" might be read, *they have become rotten or putrid.*—*John Morison*, 1829.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—Evil men are not only guilty of sins of commission, having done abominable iniquity, but they are guilty of many sins of omission. In fact, they have never done one holy act. They may be moral, decent, amiable, they may belong to the church; but "*there is none that doeth good, no not one.*"—*William S Plumer*, 1867.

Verse 4.—"*Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?*" Conscience is a means to curb and restrain, control and rebuke corrupt nature, and the swelling forms of it. It is not there as a native inhabitant, but as a garrison planted in a rebellious town by the great Governor of the world, to keep the rebellion of the inhabitants within compass, who else would break forth into present confusion. David, speaking of the corruption of man by nature after this question, Whether there be not some knowledge to discover their evil doings to them? yes, says he, "*Have they no knowledge, who eat up my people as bread?*" Yes; and therefore (verse 5) "*They are often in fear,*" God having placed this there to overcome them with fear; and by that to restrain them from many outrages against God's people, whom in their desires, and sometimes practice, they eat up as bread. Therefore this knowledge is put in as a bridle to corrupt nature, as a hook was put into Sennacherib's nostrils (Isa. xxxvii. 29) to rule and tame men, and overcome them with fear. If they had no knowledge they would eat up one another, and the church, as bread; but there is their fear, says he, that is, thence it comes to pass they are kept in awe.—*Thomas Goodwin*, 1600—1679.

Verse 4.—"*Who eat up my people as they eat bread.*" *C'est, n'en font non plus de conscience, que de manger un morceau de pain.* [That is, they have no more scruple in doing this than in eating a morsel of bread.]—*French Margin.*

Verse 4.—"*My people.*" David may call the serious *his people*, because of his

regard for them, and because they were his supporters and friends. They adhered to him in all his afflictions. [" Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Ruth i. 16.]—*Benjamin Boothroyd*, 1836.

Verse 5.—" *There were they in great fear, where no fear was.*" There is a fond and superstitious fear, when men are afraid of their shadows, as Pisander was afraid of meeting his own soul; and Antenor would never go forth of the doors, but either in a coach closed upon all sides, or with a target borne over his head, fearing, I guess, lest the sky should fall down upon it, according to that in the Psalm, " *They fear where no fear is.*"—*John King*, 1559—1621.

Verse 5.—" *There were they in great fear, where no fear was.*" Behold how fearful a hell a wounded conscience is! For why is Cain afraid to be killed, seeing there is none living to perform it, but his father and mother, and perhaps some women children which the Scripture nameth not? It is God's just judgment, that they that will not fear the Lord who is only to be feared, should stand in fear of them who are justly no cause of fear. He that lately feared not to kill his brother, is now made a terror to himself. Hereby also we may consider what is the repentance of the wicked; they see perhaps the fault together with the punishment, but they admit the fault and lament the punishment.—*Nicholas Gibbens*, 1602.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

[See the Hints of Psalm XIV.]

Verse 1.—The fool's inside and outside.

Verse 1.—I. The folly of atheism. He who says there is no God is a fool. 1. No reason for the assertion. 2. All reason against it. II. The seat of atheism is the heart; it is a moral unbelief not an intellectual, the language of the will not of the understanding. III. Cause of atheism. 1. Loving evil. 2. Hating good.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—I. God has not left the world to itself. II. He takes particular notice of all that is in it. III. The only thing he values in it is the knowledge of himself.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—How far knowledge is and is not a restraint upon ungodliness.

Verse 4.—It is a sin not to call upon God. I. What is it to call upon God? Three things required in it. 1. A drawing near to him. 2. A speaking to him. 1 Sam. i. 12, 13. 3. A praying to him. II. How should we call upon God? 1. Reverently, considering (1) God's holiness and greatness; (2) our own sin and weakness. Gen. xviii. 27. 2. Understandingly. 1 Cor. xiv. 15. (1) Of what we ask. (2) Of whom we ask it. 3. Submissively. 4. Believingly. Mark xi. 24; James i. 6. 5. Sincerely. James iv. 3. 6. Constantly. (1) So as to be always in a praying frame. (2) So as to take all occasions of pouring forth our souls in prayer to God. (3) So as to let no day slip without prayer. III. How it appears to be a sin not to call upon God. 1. He hath commanded it. Isa. lv. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 8. 2. Because praying is one of the principal parts of worship we owe to God. IV. Who are guilty of this sin? 1. All who pray to any one else but God. 2. All who neglect either public, private, or family prayer. 3. All who pray, but not aright.—*William Beveridge* (1636—1708), *in* " *Thesaurus Theoligicus.*"

Verse 5.—I. What persecutors are to themselves—their own tormentors, full even of groundless fears. II. What they are to one another—though in concert here, their bones are scattered hereafter. III. What they are to those whom they persecute—made ashamed before them. IV. What they are to God—a contempt and derision.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—I. There is salvation for Israel. II. That salvation is in Zion. III. Their salvation remains there when they are banished from it. IV. Their joy becomes greater when they return.—*G. R.*

PSALM LIV.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician on Neginoth. *The music was to be that of stringed instruments. Variety is to be studied in our tunes, and in all other matters relating to sacred song. Monotony is often the death of congregational praise. Providence is varied, and so should our recording songs be.* Maschil. *We are to learn and to teach by what we sing. Edification must not be divorced from Psalmody.* A Psalm of David. *David's productions were as plentiful as they are profitable. His varied life was for our benefit, for from it we derive these hymns, which at this hour are as fresh and as precious as when he wrote them.* When the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us? *To curry favour with Saul they were guilty of gross inhospitality. What cared they what innocent blood was shed so that they earned the graceless monarch's smile! David came quietly among them, hoping for a little rest in his many flights, but they descried him in his solitary abode, and betrayed him. He turns to God in prayer, and so strong was his faith that he soon sang himself into delightful serenity.*

DIVISIONS.—*From verse* 1 *to* 3, *where the Selah makes a pause for us, the Psalmist pleads with God, and then in the rest of the song, laying aside all doubt, he chants a hymn of joyful triumph. The vigour of faith is the death of anxiety, and the birth of security.*

EXPOSITION.

SAVE me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.

2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.

3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.

1. "*Save me, O God.*" Thou art my Saviour; all around me are my foes and their eager helpers. No shelter is permitted me. Every land rejects me and denies me rest. But thou, O God, wilt give me refuge, and deliver me from all my enemies. "*By thy name,*" by thy great and glorious nature. Employ all thine attributes for me. Let every one of the perfections which are blended in thy divine name work for me. Is not thine honour pledged for my defence? "*And judge me by thy strength.*" Render justice to me, for none else will or can. Thou canst give me efficient justice, and right my wrongs by thine omnipotence. We dare not appeal to God in a bad cause, but when we know that we can fearlessly carry our cause before his justice we may well commit it to his power.

2. "*Hear my prayer, O God.*" This has ever been the defence of saints. As long as God hath an open ear we cannot be shut up in trouble. All other weapons may be useless, but all-prayer is evermore available. No enemy can spike this gun. "*Give ear to the words of my mouth.*" Vocal prayer helps the supplicant, and we keep our minds more fully awake when we can use our tongues as well as our hearts. But what is prayer if God hear not? It is all one whether we babble nonsense or plead arguments if our God grant us not a hearing. When his case had become dangerous, David could not afford to pray out of mere custom, he must succeed in his pleadings, or become the prey of his adversary.

3. "*For strangers are risen up against me.*" Those who had no cause for ill-will had gone against him; persons to whom he could have given no offence, for they were strangers to him. They were aliens to his God also, and should these be allowed to worry and destroy him. A child may well complain to his father when strangers come in to molest him? What right have they to interfere? Let them leave off meddling and mind their own concerns. "*And oppressors seek after my soul.*" Saul, that persecuting tyrant, had stamped his own image on many more. Kings generally coin their own likeness. He led the way, and others followed seeking David's soul, his blood, his life, his very existence. Cruel and intense were they in their malice, they would utterly crush the good man; no half measures

would content them. "*They have not set God before them.*" They had no more regard for right and justice than if they knew no God, or cared for none. Had they regarded God they would not have betrayed the innocent to be hunted down like a poor harmless stag. David felt that atheism lay at the bottom of the enmity which pursued him. Good men are hated for God's sake, and this is a good plea for them to urge in prayer. "*Selah.*" As if he said, "Enough of this, let us pause." He is out of breath with indignation. A sense of wrong bids him suspend the music awhile. It may also be observed, that more pauses would, as a rule, improve our devotions: we are usually too much in a hurry: a little more holy meditation would make our words more suitable and our emotions more fervent.

4 Behold, God *is* mine helper: the Lord *is* with them that uphold my soul.

5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.

6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for *it is* good.

7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

4. "*Behold, God is mine helper.*" He saw enemies everywhere, and now to his joy as he looks upon the band of his defenders he sees one whose aid is better than all the help of men; he is overwhelmed with joy at recognising his divine champion, and cries, "*Behold.*" And is not this a theme for pious exultation in all time, that the great God protects us, his own people: what matters the number or violence of our foes when HE uplifts the shield of his omnipotence to guard us, and the sword of his power to aid us? Little care we for the defiance of the foe while we have the defence of God. "*The Lord is with them that uphold my soul.*" The reigning Lord, the great Adonai is in the camp of my defenders. Here was a greater champion than any of the three mighties, or than all the valiant men who chose David for their captain. The Psalmist was very confident, he felt so thoroughly that his heart was on the Lord's side that he was sure God was on *his* side. He asked in the first verse for deliverance, and here he returns thanks for upholding: while we are seeking one mercy which we have not, we must not be unmindful of another which we have. It is a great mercy to have some friends left us, but a greater mercy still to see the Lord among them, for like so many cyphers our friends stand for nothing till the Lord sets himself as a great unit in the front of them.

5. "*He shall reward evil unto mine enemies.*" They worked for evil, and they shall have their wages. It cannot be that malice should go unavenged. It were cruelty to the good to be lenient to their persecutors. It is appointed, and so it must ever be, that those who shoot upward the arrows of malice shall find them fall upon themselves. The recoil of their own gun has often killed oppressors. "*Cut them off in thy truth.*" Not in ferocious revenge is this spoken, but as an Amen to the sure sentence of the just Judge. Let the veracity of thy threatenings be placed beyond dispute, the decree is right and just, let it be fulfilled. It is not a private desire, but the solemn utterance of a military man, a grossly injured man, a public leader destined to be a monarch, and a man well trained in the school of Moses, whose law ordains eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.

6. "*I will freely sacrifice unto thee.*" Spontaneously will I bring my free-will offerings. So certain is he of deliverance that he offers a vow by anticipation. His overflowing gratitude would load the altars of God with victims cheerfully presented. The more we receive, the more we ought to render. The spontaneousness of our gift is a great element in their acceptance; the Lord loveth a cheerful giver. "*I will praise thy name, O Lord.*" As if no amount of sacrifice could express his joyful feelings, he resolves to be much in vocal thanksgiving. The name which he invoked in prayer (verse 1), he will now magnify in praise. Note how roundly he brings it out: "*O Jehovah.*" This is ever the grand name of the revealed God of Israel, a name which awakens the sublimest sentiments, and so nourishes the most acceptable praise. None can praise the Lord so well as those who have tried and proved the preciousness of his name in seasons of adversity. The Psalmist adds, "*for it is good,*" and surely we may read this with a double nominative, God's name is good, and so is his praise. It is of great use to our souls to be much in praise;

we are never so holy or so happy as when our adoration of God abounds. Praise is good in itself, good to us, and good to all around us. If David's enemies are described in the third verse as not setting God before them, he here declares that he is of a different mind from them, for he resolves to have the Lord in perpetual remembrance in his sacrifices and praises.

7. *" For he hath delivered me out of all trouble."* Up to that time deliverance had come, and for that danger also he felt that rescue was near. David lived a life of dangers and hair-breadth 'scapes, yet was he always safe. In the retrospect of his very many deliverances he feels that he must praise God, and looking upon the mercy which he had sought as though it were already received, he sang this song over it—

" And a new song is in my mouth,
To long loved music set,
Glory to thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."

Out of all trouble our covenant God is pledged to bring us, and therefore even now let us uplift the note of triumph unto Jehovah, the faithful preserver of them that put their trust in him. Thus far we have proved his promise good ; he changes not, and therefore in all the unknown future he will be equally our guardian and defence, " showing himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." *" And mine eyes hath seen his desire upon mine enemies."* He knew that yet he should look on his haughty foes, gazing down on them in triumph as now they looked on him in contempt. He desired this as a matter of justice, and not of personal pique. His righteous soul exulted because he knew that unprovoked and gratuitous malice would meet with a righteous punishment. Could we keep out of our hearts all personal enmity as fully as the Psalmist did in this Psalm, we might yet equally feel with him a sacred acquiescence and delight in that divine justice which will save the righteous and overthrow the malicious.

In closing, let us trust that if we are are friendless as this man of God, we may resort to prayer as he did, exercise the like faith, and find ourselves ere long singing the same joyous hymn of praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—From the inscription, learn, 1. Particular straits and particular deliveries should be particularly remarked : as David here remembereth the danger he wa in by the treachery of the *Ziphims*. 2. Mighty men will find readily more friends in an evil cause, than the godly do find in a good cause : as Saul has the Ziphims to offer their service to his cruelty, when David was in straits. 3. The wicked are very hearty to do an ill turn, and glad to find occasion of it. *" Doth not David,"* say they, *" hide himself with us ?"* as if this had been good and blessed news.—*David Dickson* (1583—1662), *in " A Brief Explication upon the Psalms."*

Whole Psalm.—The church has taken a clear view in appointing this as one of the Psalms in commemoration of the passion of Jesus. It is seen with greatest effect as a simple prophecy of Christ. Read thus, it is very plain and intelligible; requiring little more than the first idea to exhibit a perfect correspondence with the life and feelings of the Messiah.—*William Hill Tucker, in " The Psalms . . . . with Notes,"* 1840.

Whole Psalm.—In the first three verses, David being sought for by his enemies, prays against them. That was his course, he always began his conflict with God, contending and wrestling with him for a blessing and assistance. He durst not lift up his hand even against the enemies of God (yet what durst not David do ?) till he had first lifted them up in humble supplication to the Lord his strength, " Who taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight." Psalm cxliv. 1. This being done, his courage breaks out like lightning, he doubts not of slaying his thousands and ten thousands. So in the fourth and fifth verses, he becomes his own prophet, promising himself victory. For who can resist him who hath omnipotence for his second ? Or how can any enemy maintain a fight against that captain who hath beforehand defeated and broken their forces by his prayers ? assured his conquest before he put on his armour ? Then in the last verses, David concludes

where he began, thankfully acknowledgeth God's goodness in his deliverance, and the dissipation of his enemies, obliging himself to a return of dutiful, affectionate service, in consideration of so great mercies recived.—*J. Dolben, in a Thanksgiving Sermon*, 1665.

Whole Psalm.—Blessed Redeemer! give me grace to eye thee, and to call to my recollection thine exercises amidst the false friends and open foes, which in the days of thy flesh surrounded thee. Lord! help me so to consider thee, who didst endure such a contradiction of sinners against thyself, that I may not be weary and faint in mind. And while the Ziphims of the present hour harass and distress me, and would deliver my soul up into the hand of the enemy: oh! for grace to be looking unto thee, and deriving strength from thee, that I may discover thy gracious hand delivering me out of all my troubles, and making me more than conqueror in thy strength, and in the power of thy might.—*Robert Hawker, D.D.*, 1753—1827.

Verse 1.—"*Save me, O God!*" As David was at this time placed beyond the reach of human assistance, he must be understood as praying to be saved by the *name and the power of God*, in an emphatical sense, or by these in contradistinction to the usual means of deliverance. Though all help must ultimately come from God, there are ordinary methods by which he generally extends it. When these fail, and every earthly stay is removed, he must then take the work into his own hands. It was in such a situation that David here fled to the saints' last asylum, and sought to be saved by a miracle of divine power.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"*Judge me by thy strength*," or power, *i.e.*, determine, decide my cause by thy mighty power. Saul, in the cause between him and David, was resolved to end it by force only, and to arbitrate in no other way than by a javelin, a sword, or his forces. The Psalmist well knew that Saul, in this respect, would be too hard for him; and therefore applies for protection and justice to one whose power he knew was infinitely superior to his adversaries, and who, he was assured, could and would defend him.—*Samuel Chandler* (1693—1766), *in "A Critical History of the Life of David."*

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—Let "*the words of my mouth*" with which I have defended my cause, be pleasing and acceptable to thee. For in this way can *prayers* and words *of the mouth* be correctly distinguished, unless any one should wish simply to understand by them *prayers uttered by the mouth;* but, as I have said, the phrase is more emphatic.—*Hermann Venema*, 1697—1787.

Verse 3.—"*Strangers:*" aliens to his truth, men who from unbelief have estranged themselves from all lot and portion in his covenant—oppress and persecute.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—The Chaldee interpreter reads, *proud men*, instead of "*strangers*," a reading which also is found in eight of Kennicott's Codices. So also Psalm lxxxvi. 14.—*William Walford, in "The Book of Psalms. A New Translation,"* etc., 1837.

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—There is a great mistake made by rendering the word זָרִים (*zarim*) "*strangers.*" The Ziphites surely were Israelites, and not strangers. The fact is this, that word is taken from זָרָה (*zarah*) the primary meaning of which is "to scatter," "to disperse," also "to sift," as grain. Hence it signifies, likewise figuratively, to sift a matter, to investigate, to search out, to trace out. So here David complains of the new and dangerous enemies he had got in the Ziphites, who became Saul's spies. When he pleads, therefore, for deliverance, saying, "Save me, O God," etc., he describes the danger he was in: "*For spies have risen against me.*"—*Benjamin Weiss, in "New Translation, Exposition and Chronological Arrangement of the Psalms,"* 1858.

Verse 3.—"*Oppressors seek after my soul;*" *i.e.*, my life at least; my soul also they would destroy, if it lay in their power, as the Papists delivered up John Huss to the devil.—*John Trapp*, 1611—1662.

Verse 3.—"*Selah.*" See "Treasury of David," Vol. I., pp. 23, 26, 27; and Vol. II., pp. 224—227.

Verse 4.—"*Behold*," says he, I produce a certain fact, well-known, demonstrated by a new proof, and worthy of all attention; for the particle *behold*, contains this breadth of meaning.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—Christ sees with the utmost clearness, that God will be his *own*

"*helper*," and of them—the disciples and believers—"*that uphold his soul.*" In the same moment, does he foresee the destruction of his enemies. He views, in thought, the armies of Titus, the fall of the Jewish nation, and the dispersion of the remnant. He beholds the avenging hand of God, stretched in fury over the destroyers.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 4 (*second clause*).—Such as take part with the persecuted saints, God will take part with them: "*The Lord is with them that uphold my soul.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verses 4, 5.—He is assured of help to himself and to his friends, and of vengeance to his enemies. Whence learn, 1. Fervent prayer hath readily a swift answer, and sometimes wonderfully swift, even before a man have ended speech, as here David findeth in experience. "*Behold*," saith he, "*God is my helper.*" 2. The sight of faith is very clear, and piercing through all clouds, when God holds forth the light of his Spirit unto it, it can demonstrate God present in an instant; ready to help in greatest straits: "*Behold, God is my helper.*" 3. There is more joy in God's felt presence than grief in felt trouble; for, "*Behold, God is mine helper*," was more comfortable to David than his friends' unkindness, and strangers' malice was grievous.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Cut them off.*" He desires that God would destroy them with a *death-dealing blow*, which is the force the word צמת contains; its primitive sense is *to be silent, to keep silence*, whence it is transferred to a stroke penetrating deeply and striking fatally, such as is called a *silent* blow, opposed to a *sounding* one, which is wont to rebound and not pierce deeply.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 6.—"*I will freely sacrifice unto thee.*" He would *sacrifice freely:* by which he does not allude to the circumstance, that sacrifices of thanksgiving were at the option of worshippers, but to the alacrity and cheerfulness with which he would pay his vow when he had escaped his present dangers.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—"*Mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.*" Or, *mine eye hath looked upon mine enemies;* that is, he was able to meet them without terror.—*Samuel Davidson, D.D.*, 1852.

Verse 7.—The reader will note that the words *his desire* are supplied by our translators, and are not in the original text.—*C. H. S.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—In the deliverance of the saints the honour and power of God are concerned. I. Their failure would dishonour both. II. Their salvation glorifies both. III. Both are immutable, therefore we have a sure plea at all times.

Verse 2.—Our main concern in prayer. I. What is meant by God's hearing prayer. II. How we may know that he has done so. III. What is to be done when this is doubtful. IV. What is due to him when the hearing is given.

Verse 3.—Strange trials. I. They are not altogether strange. 1. Not so to God. 2. Not so in the history of the church. 3. Not so to the provisions of grace wherein they are anticipated. II. Wherein they are strange. 1. They reveal God anew. 2. Endear forgotten promises. 3. Train unused graces. 4. Bring new praises, etc.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—The root of sin: if they remembered his authority they dared not, if they tasted his love they would not, if they were conformed to his nature they could not.

Verse 4.—A theme for wonder. 1. At his unmerited grace, that he should side with *me*. 2. At his gracious power, for who can resist him? 3. At his practical help, for he has upheld my soul.

Verse 6.—We should sacrifice voluntarily, liberally, joyfully, continuously, with pure motive.

Verse 6.—The goodness of praising the good name.

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—The exclamation of the newly-pardoned penitent, the cry of the delivered saint, the song of the ripe Christian, the shout of the glorified believer.

PSALM LV.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician on Neginoth.—*Another song to be accompanied by stringed instruments. The strain is at one time mournful, and at another softly sweet. It needed the chief musician's best care to see that the music was expressive of the sentiment.* Maschil. *It is not a mere personal hymn, there is teaching in it for us all, and where our Lord shines through David, his personal type, there is a great deep of meaning.* Of David. *The man of many conditions, much tried and much favoured, persecuted but delivered and exalted, was from experience enabled to write such precious verses in which he sets forth not only the sorrows of common pilgrims, but of the Lord of the way himself.*

SUBJECT.—*It would be idle to fix a time, and find an occasion for this Psalm with any dogmatism. It reads like a song of the time of Absalom and Ahithophel. It was after David had enjoyed peaceful worship (verse 14), when he was or had just been a dweller in a city (verses 9, 10, 11), and when he remembered his former roamings in the wilderness. Altogether it seems to us to relate to that mournful era when the King was betrayed by his trusted counsellor. The spiritual eye ever and anon sees the Son of David and Judas, and the chief priests appearing and disappearing upon the glowing canvas of the Psalm.*

DIVISIONS.—*From verses 1 to 8 the suppliant spreads his case in general before his God; in verses 9, 10, 11, he portrays his enemies; in verses 12—14, he mentions one special traitor, and cries for vengeance, or foretells it in verse 15. From verses 16 to 19 he consoles himself by prayer and faith; in verses 20 and 21 he again mentions the deceitful covenant-breaker, and closes with a cheering exhortation to the saints (verse 22), and a denunciation of destruction upon the wicked and deceitful (verse 23).*

EXPOSITION.

GIVE ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.

2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;

3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.

4 My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.

5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.

6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! *for then* would I fly away, and be at rest.

7 Lo, *then* would I wander far off, *and* remain in the wilderness. Selah.

8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm *and* tempest.

1. "*Give ear to my prayer, O God.*" The fact is so commonly before us, otherwise we should be surprised to observe how universally and constantly the saints resort to prayer in seasons of distress. From the Great Elder Brother down to the very least of the divine family, all of them delight in prayer. They run as naturally to the mercy-seat in time of trouble as the little chickens to the hen in the hour of danger. But note well that it is never the bare act of prayer which satisfies the godly, they crave an audience with heaven, and an answer from the throne, and nothing less will content them. "*Hide not thyself from my supplication.*" Do not stop thine ear, or restrain thy hand. When a man saw his neighbour in distress, and deliberately passed him by, he was said to hide himself from him; and the Psalmist begs that the Lord would not so treat him. In that dread hour when Jesus bore our sins upon the tree, his Father did hide himself, and this was the

most dreadful part of all the Son of David's agony. Well may each of us deprecate such a calamity as that God should refuse to hear our cries.

2. "*Attend unto me, and hear me.*" This is the third time he prays the same prayer. He is in earnest, in deep and bitter earnest. If his God do not hear, he feels that all is over with him. He begs for his God to be a listener and an answerer. "*I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise.*" He gives a loose to his sorrows, permits his mind to rehearse her griefs, and to pour them out in such language as suggests itself at the time, whether it be coherent or not. What a comfort that we may be thus familiar with our God! We may not complain *of* him, but we may complain *to* him. Our rambling thoughts when we are distracted with grief we may bring before him, and that too in utterances rather to be called "*a noise*" than language. He will attend so carefully that he will understand us, and he will often fulfil desires which we ourselves could not have expressed in intelligible words. "Groanings that cannot be uttered," are often prayers which cannot be refused. Our Lord himself used strong cryings and tears, and was heard in that he feared.

3. "*Because of the voice of the enemy.*" The enemy was vocal and voluble enough, and found a voice where his godly victim had nothing better than a "noise." Slander is seldom short of expression, it prates and prattles evermore. Neither David, nor our Lord, nor any of the saints were allowed to escape the attacks of venomous tongues, and this evil was in every case the cause of acute anguish. "*Because of the oppression of the wicked:*" the unjust pressed and oppresse! the righteous; like an intolerable burden they crushed them down, and brought them to their knees before the Lord. This is a thrice-told story, and to the end of time it will be true; he that is born after the flesh will persecute him that is born after the Spirit. The great seed of the woman suffered from a bruised heel. "*For they cast iniquity upon me,*" they black me with their sootbags, throw the dust of their lying over me, cast the vitriol of their calumny over me. They endeavour to trip me up, and if I do not fall they say I do. "*And in wrath they hate me.*" With a hearty ill will they detested the holy man. It was no sleeping animosity, but a mortal rancour which reigned in their bosoms. The reader needs not that we show how applicable this is to our Lord.

4. "*My heart is sore pained within me.*" His spirit writhed in agony, like a poor worm; he was mentally as much in pain as a woman in travail physically. His inmost soul was touched; and a wounded spirit who can bear? If this were written when David was attacked by his own favourite son, and ignominiously driven from his capital, he had reason enough for using these expressions. "*And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.*" Mortal fears seized him, he felt like one suddenly surrounded with the glooms of the shadow of death, upon whom the eternal night suddenly descends. Within and without he was afflicted, and his chief terror seemed to come from above, for he uses the expression, "Fallen upon me." He gave himself up for lost. He felt that he was as good as dead. The inmost centre of his nature was moved with dismay. Think of our Lord in the garden, with his "soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death," and you have a parallel to the griefs of the Psalmist. Perchance, dear reader, if as yet thou hast not trodden this gloomy way, thou wilt do soon; then be sure to mark the foot prints of thy Lord in this miry part of the road.

5. "*Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me.*" Like housebreakers these robbers were entering his soul. Like one who feels a fainting fit coming over him, so the oppressed suppliant was falling into a state of terror. His fear was so great as to make him tremble. He did not know what would happen next, or how soon the worst would come. The sly, mysterious whisperings of slander often cause a noble mind more fear than open antagonism; we can be brave against an open foe, but cowardly, plotting conspiracies bewilder and distract us. "*And horror hath overwhelmed me.*" He was as one enveloped in a darkness that might be felt. As Jonah went down into the sea, so did David appear to go down into deeps of horror. He was unmanned, confounded, brought into a hideous state of suspense and mortal apprehension.

6. "*And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*" If he could not resist as an eagle, he would escape as a dove. Swiftly and unobserved, on strong, untiring pinions would he hie away from the abodes of slander and wickedness. His love of peace made him sigh for an escape from the scene of strife.

"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit
Might never reach me more."

We are all too apt to utter this vain desire, for vain it is; no wings of doves or eagles could bear us away from the sorrows of a trembling heart. Inward grief knows nothing of place. Moreover, it is cowardly to shun the battle which God would have us fight. We had better face the danger, for we have no armour for our backs. He had need of a swifter conveyance than doves' pinions who would outfly slander; he may be at rest who does not fly, but commends his case to his God. Even the dove of old found no rest till she returned to her ark, and we amid all our sorrow may find rest in Jesus. We need not depart; all will be well if we trust in him.

7. "*Lo, then would I wander far off.*" Yet when David was far off, he sighed to be once more near Jerusalem; thus, in our ill estate we ever think the past to be better than the present. We shall be called to fly far enough away, and perchance we shall be loth to go; we need not indulge vain notions of premature escape from earth. "*And remain in the wilderness.*" He found it none such a dear abode when there, yet resolves now to make it his permanent abode. Had he been condemned to receive his wish he would ere long have felt like Selkirk, in the poet's verse—

"O solitude, where are the charms
That sages have found in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms
Than reign in this horrible place."

Our Lord, while free from all idle wishes, found much strength in solitude, and loved the mountain's brow at midnight, and the quiet shade of the olives of Gethsemane. It is better practically to use retirement than pathetically to sigh for it. Yet it is natural, when all men do us wrong, to wish to separate ourselves from their society; nature, however, must yield to grace, and we must endure the contradiction of sinners against ourselves, and not be weary and faint in our minds. "*Selah.*" After such a flight well may the mind rest. When we are going too fast, and giving way too freely to regrets, it is well to cry, "halt," and pause awhile till more sober thoughts return.

8. "*I would hasten my escape.*" He tried to pause but could not, like a horse which when pulled up slips on a little because of the speed at which he was going. David declares that he would not waste a moment, or stay to bid adieu to his friends, but up and away at once, for fear he should be too late, and because he could bear the clamour of his foes no longer. "*From the windy storm and tempest.*" A storm was brewing, and, like a dove, he would outfly it and reach a calmer region. Swifter than the storm-cloud would he fly, to avoid the deluge of rain, and the flash of the lightning. Alas! poor soul, no such wings are thine, as yet thou must tarry here and feel the tempest; but be of good cheer, thou shalt stretch thy wings ere long for a bolder flight, heaven shall receive thee, and there thy sorrows shall have a finis of felicity among the birds of paradise.

9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.

11 Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

9. "*Destroy, O Lord.*" Put mine enemies to the rout. Let them be devoured by the sword, since they have unsheathed it against me. How could we expect the exiled monarch to offer any other prayer than this against the rebellious bands of Absalom, and the crafty devices of Ahithophel? "*Divide their tongues.*" Make another Babel in their debates and councils of war. Set them at cross purposes. Divide the pack that the hunted one may escape. The divisions of error are the hope of truth. "*For I have seen violence and strife in the city.*" The rabble and their leaders were plotting and planning, raging and contending against their king, running wild with a thousand mad projects: anarchy had fermented among them,

and the king hoped that now it might come to pass that the very lawlessness which had exiled him would create weakness among his foes. Revolution devours its own children. They who are strong through violence, will sooner or later find that their strength is their death. Absalom and Ahithophel may raise the mob, but they cannot so easily rule it, nor so readily settle their own policy as to remain firm friends. The prayer of David was heard, the rebels were soon divided in their councils; Ahithophel went his way to be hanged with a rope, and Absalom to be hanged without one.

10. "*Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof.*" The city, the holy city had become a den of wickedness: conspirators met in the dark and talked in little knots in the streets even in broad daylight. Meanwhile the country was being roused to revolt, and the traitors without threatened to environ the city, and act in concert with the rebels within. No doubt there was a smothered fire of insurrection which Absalom kindled and fanned, which David perceived with alarm some time before he left Jerusalem; and when he quitted the city it broke out into an open flame. "*Mischief also and sorraw are in the midst of it.*" Unhappy capital to be thus beset by foes, left by her monarch, and filled with all those elements of turbulence which breed evil and trouble. Unhappy king to be thus compelled to see the mischief which he could not avert laying waste the city which he loved so well. There was another King whose many tears watered the rebellious city, and who said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

11. "*Wickedness is in the midst thereof.*" The very heart of the city was base. In her places of authority crime went hand in hand with calamity. All the wilder and more wicked elements were uppermost; the *canaille* were commanders; the scum floated uppermost; justice was at a discount; the population was utterly demoralised; prosperity had vanished and order with it. "*Deceit and guile depart not from her streets.*" In all the places of concourse crafty tongues were busy persuading the people with cozening phrases. Crafty demagogues led the people by the nose. Their good king was defamed in all ways, and when they saw *him* go away, they fell to reviling the governors of their own choosing. The forum was the fortress of fraud, the congress was the convention of cunning. Alas, poor Jerusalem, to be thus the victim of sin and shame! Virtue reviled and vice regnant! Her solemn assemblies broken up, her priests fled, her king banished, and troops of reckless villains parading her streets, sunning themselves on her walls, and vomiting their blasphemies in her sacred shrines. Here was cause enough for the sorrow which so plaintively utters itself in these verses.

12 For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me; then I could have borne *it:* neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself* against me; then I would have hid myself from him:

13 But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

14 We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked unto the house of God in company.

12. The reader will do well to observe how accurately the Psalmist described his own Psalm when he said, "I mourn in my complaint," or rather "give loose to my thoughts," for he proceeds from one point of his sorrow to another, wandering on like one in a maze, making few pauses, and giving no distinct intimations that he is changing the subject. Now from the turbulent city his mind turns to the falsehearted councillor. "*For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it.*" It was not an open foe, but a pretended friend; he went over to the other camp and tried to prove the reality of his treachery by calumniating his old friend. None are such real enemies as false friends. Reproaches from those who have been intimate with us, and trusted by us, cut us to the quick; and they are usually so well acquainted with our peculiar weaknesses that they know how to touch us where we are most sensitive, and to speak so as to do us most damage. The slanders of an avowed antagonist are seldom so mean and dastardly as those of a traitor, and the absence of the elements of ingratitude and treachery renders them less hard to bear. We can bear from Shimei what we cannot endure from Ahithophel. "*Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me;*

then I would have hid myself from him." We can find a hiding-place from open foes, but who can escape from treachery? If our enemies proudly boast over us we nerve our souls for resistance, but when those who pretended to love us leer at us with contempt, whither shall we go? Our blessed Lord had to endure at its worst the deceit and faithlessness of a favoured disciple; let us not marvel when we are called to tread the road which is marked by his pierced feet.

13. "*But it was thou.*" He sees him. The poetic fury is on him, he sees the traitor as though he stood before him in flesh and blood. He singles him out, he points his finger at him, he challenges him to his face. "*But thou.*" *Et tu, Brute?* And thou, Ahithophel, art thou here? Judas, betrayest *thou* the Son of Man? "*A man mine equal.*" Treated by me as one of my own rank, never looked upon as an inferior, but as a trusted friend. "*My guide,*" a counsellor so sage that I trusted thine advice and found it prudent to do so. "*And mine acquaintance,*" with whom I was on most intimate terms, who knew me even as I knew him by mutual disclosures of heart. No stranger occasionally conversed with, but a near and dear friend admitted to my secret fellowship. It was fiendish treason for such a one to prove falsehearted. There was no excuse for such villainy. Judas stood very much in this relation to our Lord, he was treated as an equal, trusted as treasurer, and in that capacity often consulted with. He knew the place where the Master was wont to spend his solitude, in fact, he knew all the Master's movements, and yet he betrayed him to his remorseless adversaries. How justly might the Lord have pointed at him and said, "*But thou;*" but his gentler spirit warned the son of perdition in the mildest manner, and had not Iscariot been tenfold a child of hell he would have relinquished his detestable purpose.

14. "*We took sweet counsel together.*" It was not merely the counsel which men take together in public or upon common themes, their fellowship had been tender and confidential. The traitor had been treated lovingly and trusted much. Solace, mutual and cheering, had grown out of their intimate communings. There were secrets between them of no common kind. Soul had been in converse with soul, at least on David's part. However feigned might have been the affection of the treacherous one, the betrayed friend had not dealt with him coldly, or guarded his utterance before him. Shame on the wretch who could belie such fellowship and betray such confidence! "*And walked unto the house of God in company.*" Religion had rendered their intercourse sacred, they had mingled their worship, and communed on heavenly themes. If ever any bonds ought to be held inviolable, religious connection should be. There is a measure of impiety, of a detestable sort, in the deceit which debases the union of men who make professions of godliness. Shall the very altar of God be defiled with hypocrisy? Shall the gatherings of the temple be polluted by the presence of treachery? All this was true of Ahithophel, and in a measure of Judas. His union with the Lord was on the score of faith, they were joined in the holiest of enterprises, he had been sent on the most gracious of errands. His co-operation with Jesus to serve his own abominable ends stamped him as the firstborn of hell. Better had it been for him had he never been born. Let all deceitful professors be warned by his doom, for like Ahithophel he went to his own place by his own hand, and retains a horrible pre-eminence in the calendar of notorious crime. Here was one source of heart-break for the Redeemer, and it is shared in by his followers. Of the serpent's brood some vipers still remain, who will sting the hand that cherished them, and sell for silver those who raised them to the position which rendered it possible for them to be so abominably treacherous.

15 Let death seize upon them, *and* let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them.

15. Not thus would Jesus pray, but the rough soldier David so poured out the anguish of his spirit, under treachery and malice seldom equalled and altogether unprovoked. The soldier, as such, desires the overthrow of his foes, for this very end he fights; and viewed as a matter of law and justice, David was right in his wish; he was waging a just, defensive war against men utterly regardless of truth and justice. Read the words as a warrior's imprecation. "*Let death seize upon them.*" Traitors such as these deserve to die, there is no living with them, earth is polluted by their tread; if spies are shot, much more these sneaking villains. "*Let them go down quick into hell.*" While in the vigour of life into *sheol* let them sink, let them suddenly exchange the enjoyment of the quick or living for the sepulchres

of the dead. There is, however, no need to read this verse as an imprecation, it is rather a confident expectation or prophecy: God would, he was sure, desolate them, and cast them out of the land of the living into the regions of the dead. "*For wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.*" They are too bad to be spared, for their houses are dens of infamy, and their hearts fountains of mischief. They are a pest to the commonwealth, a moral plague, a spiritual pestilence, to be stamped out by the laws of men and the providence of God. Both Ahithophel and Judas soon ended their own lives; Absalom was hanged in the oak, and the rebels perished in the wood in great numbers. There is justice in the universe, love itself demands it; pity to rebels against God, as such, is no virtue—we pray for them as creatures, we abhor them as enemies of God. We need in these days far more to guard against the disguised iniquity which sympathises with evil, and counts punishment to be cruelty, than against the harshness of a former age. We have steered so far from Scylla that Charybdis is absorbing us.

16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me.

17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me: for there were many with me.

19 God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.

16. "*As for me, I will call upon God.*" The Psalmist would not endeavour to meet the plots of his adversaries by counterplots, nor imitate their incessant violence, but in direct opposition to their godless behaviour would continually resort to his God. Thus Jesus did, and it has been the wisdom of all believers to do the same. As this exemplifies the contrast of their character, so it will foretell the contrast of their end—the righteous shall ascend to their God, the wicked shall sink to ruin. "*And the Lord shall save me.*" Jehovah will fulfil my desire, and glorify himself in my deliverance. The Psalmist is quite sure. He knows that he will pray, and is equally clear that he will be heard. The covenant name is the pledge of the covenant promise.

17. "*Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray.*" Often, but none too often. Seasons of great need call for frequent seasons of devotion. The three periods chosen are most fitting; to begin, continue, and end the day with God is supreme wisdom. Where time has naturally set up a boundary, there let us set up an altar-stone. The Psalmist means that he will always pray; he will run a line of prayer right along the day and track the sun with his petitions. Day and night he saw his enemies busy (verse 10), and therefore he would meet their activity by continuous prayer. "*And cry aloud.*" He would give a tongue to his complaint; he would be very earnest in his pleas with heaven. Some cry aloud who never say a word. It is the bell of the heart that rings loudest in heaven. Some read it, "I will muse and murmur;" deep heart-thoughts should be attended with inarticulate but vehement utterances of grief. Blessed be God, moaning is translatable in heaven. A father's heart reads a child's heart. "*And he shall hear my voice.*" He is confident that he will prevail; he makes no question that he would be heard, he speaks as if already he were answered. When our window is opened towards heaven, the windows of heaven are open to us. Have but a pleading heart and God will have a plenteous hand.

18. "*He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me.*" The deliverance has come. Joab has routed the rebels. The Lord has justified the cause of his anointed. Faith sees as well as foresees; to her foresight is sight. He is not only safe but serene, "*delivered in peace*"—peace in his inmost soul. "*For there were many with me;*" many contending against me. Or it may be that he thankfully acknowledges that the Lord raised him up unexpected allies, fetched him succour when he most needed it, and made the friendless monarch once more the head of a great army. The Lord can soon change our condition, and he often does so when our prayers become fervent. The crisis of life is usually the secret place of wrestling. Jabbok makes Jacob a prevailing prince. He who stripped us of all friends to make us see himself in their absence, can give them back again in greater numbers that we may see him more joyfully in the fact of their presence.

19. *" God shall hear, and afflict them."* They make a noise as well as I, and God will hear them. The voice of slander, malice, and pride, is not alone heard by those whom it grieves, it reaches to heaven, it penetrates the divine ear, it demands vengeance, and shall have it. God hears and delivers his people, he hears and destroys the wicked. Their cruel jests, their base falsehoods, their cowardly insults, their daring blasphemies are heard, and shall be repaid to them by the eternal Judge. *" Even he that abideth of old."* He sits in eternity, enthroned judge for evermore; all the prayers of saints and profanities of sinners are before his judgment-seat, and he will see that justice is done. *" Selah."* The singer pauses, overwhelmed with awe in the presence of the everlasting God. *" Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God."* His own reverential feeling causes him to remember the daring godlessness of the wicked; he feels that his trials have driven him to his God, and he declares that their uninterrupted prosperity was the cause of their living in such neglect of the Most High. It is a very manifest fact that long-continued ease and pleasure are sure to produce the worst influences upon graceless men: though troubles do not convert them, yet the absence of them makes their corrupt nature more readily develop itself. Stagnant water becomes putrid. Summer heat breeds noxious insects. He who is without trouble is often without God. It is a forcible proof of human depravity that man turns the mercy of God into nutriment for sin: the Lord save us from this.

20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant.

21 *The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war *was* in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords.

20. The Psalmist cannot forget the traitor's conduct, and returns again to consider it. *" He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him."* He smites those to whom he had given the hand of friendship, he breaks the bonds of alliance, he is perfidious to those who dwell at ease because of his friendly professions. *" He hath broken his covenant."* The most solemn league he has profaned, he is regardless of oaths and promises.

21. *" The words of his mouth were smoother than butter."* He lauded and larded the man he hoped to devour. He buttered him with flattery and then battered him with malice. Beware of a man who has too much honey on his tongue; a trap is to be suspected where the bait is so tempting. Soft, smooth, oily words are most plentiful where truth and sincerity are most scarce. *" But war was in his heart."* He brought forth butter in a lordly dish, but he had a tent-pin ready for the temples of his guest. When heart and lip so widely differ, the man is a monster, and those whom he assails are afflicted indeed. *" His words were softer than oil."* Nothing could be more unctuous and fluent, there were no objectionable syllables, no jars or discords, his words were as yielding as the best juice of the olive; *" yet were they drawn swords,"* rapiers unsheathed, weapons brandished for the fray. Ah! base wretch, to be cajoling your victim while intending to devour him! entrapping him as if he were but a beast of prey; surely, such art thou thyself!

22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

22. *" Thy burden,"* or what thy God lays upon thee, lay thou it *" upon the Lord."* His wisdom casts it on thee, it is thy wisdom to cast it on him. He cast thy lot for thee, cast thy lot on him. He gives thee thy portion of suffering, accept it with cheerful resignation, and then take it back to him by thine assured confidence. *" He shall sustain thee."* Thy bread shall be given thee, thy waters shall be sure. Abundant nourishment shall fit thee to bear all thy labours and trials. As thy days so shall thy strength be. *" He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."* He may move like the boughs of a tree in the tempest, but he shall never be moved like a tree torn up by the roots. He stands firm who stands in God. Many would destroy the saints, but God has not suffered it, and never will. Like pillars, the godly stand immovable, to the glory of the Great Architect.

23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction; bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days: but I will trust in thee.

23. For the ungodly a sure, terrible, and fatal overthrow is appointed. Climb as they may, *the pit* yawns for them, God himself will cause them to descend into it, and *destruction* there shall be their portion. "*Bloody and deceitful men,*" with double iniquity of cruelty and craft upon them, "*shall not live out half their days;*" they shall be cut off in their quarrels, or being disappointed in their artifices, vexation shall end them. They were in heart murderers of others, and they became in reality self-murderers. Doubt not that virtue lengthens life, and that vice tends to shorten it. "*But I will trust in thee.*" A very wise, practical conclusion. We can have no better ground of confidence. The Lord is all, and more than all that faith can need as the foundation of peaceful dependence. Lord, increase our faith evermore.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—Maschil. This is often prefixed to those Psalms in which David speaks of himself as being chastened by God, inasmuch as the end of chastisement is instruction.—*Simon de Muis,* 1587—1644.

Whole Psalm.—A prayer of the Man Christ in his humiliation, despised and rejected of men, when he was made sin for his people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him, when he was about to suffer their punishment, pay their debt, and discharge their ransom.

Utter depravity of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; betrayment of Messiah by one of the twelve whom he had ordained to the apostolical office, and who was Messiah's constant attendant in all his ministerial circuits.

Premature and punitive death of the traitor Judas, and of others banded together to crucify the Lord of glory.—*John Noble Coleman, M.A., in "A Revision of the authorised English Versions of the Book of Psalms,"* 1863.

Verse 1.—In the first clause he uses the word תַּחֲנוּנַי, that he might indicate that he merely sought justice from God as a Judge; but in the second he implores the *favour of God,* that if perchance the prayer for *justice* be less becoming to himself as a sinner, God may not deny his grace.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1.—"*Hide not thyself from my supplication.*" A figure taken from the conduct of a king who debars an offender from seeing his face (2 Sam. xiv. 24), or from an enemy, who conceals himself from the ox, etc.; that is, pretends not to see it, and goes away, leaving it (see Deut. xxii. 1, 3, 4; and Isa. lviii. 7); or, from a false friend, or an unkind person, who, foreseeing that he may be entreated by a miserable and needy man, will not let himself be seen, but seeks to make escape.—*Martin Geier,* 1614—1681.

Verse 2.—"*I mourn.*" As one cast down with sorrow, making a doleful noise.—*Henry Ainsworth,* 1622.

Verse 2.—"*I mourn,*" etc. A mourning suppliant shall neither lose his prayers nor his tears; for, "*I mourn,*" is brought for a reason of his hope that God shall attend and hear him.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"*I mourn in my complaint.*" The literal translation of these words is, *I will suffer to wander in my thinking; i.e.,* I will let my mind wander, or my thoughts rove as they will.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 2.—"*In my complaint.*" Saints have their complaints on account of their sins and corruptions, their barrenness and unfruitfulness, and the decay of vital religion in them, and because of the low estate of Zion, the declining state of the interest of Christ, and the little success of his gospel; and they mourn, in these complaints, over their own sins, and the sins of others, professors and profane, and under afflictions temporal and spiritual, both their own and the church's. Christ also in the days of his flesh, had his complaints of the perverseness and faithlessness of the generation of men among whom he lived; of the frowardness, pride, and contentions, of his disciples; of the reproaches, insult, and injuries of his enemies; and of the dereliction of his God and Father; and he often mourned on account

of one or other of these things, being a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs.—*John Gill.*

Verse 2.—"*In my complaint.*" The word here employed commonly means discourse, meditation. It here occurs in the sense of *complaint*, as in Job vii. 13; ix. 27; xxi. 4; xxiii. 2; Ps. cxlii. 2; 1 Sam. i. 16. It is not used, however, to denote complaint in the sense of fault-finding, complaining, accusing, or the idea that we have been dealt with unjustly. This is not the meaning in this place or in the Scriptures generally. It is the language of a *troubled*, not of an *injured* spirit.—*Albert Barnes*, 1868.

Verse 2.—In confession, when the soul melts into a holy shame and sorrow for the sins he spreads before the Lord, he feels a holy smart and pain within, and doth not act a tragical part with a comical heart. Chrysostom saith, "To paint tears is worse than to paint the face." Here is true fervency, "*I mourn in my complaint and make a noise.*" There may be fire in the pan when there is none in the piece; a loud wind but no rain with it. David made a noise with his voice, and mourned in his spirit.—*William Gurnall*, 1617—1679.

Verse 3.—"*Because of the voice of the enemy,*" there is their railing; "*because of the oppression of the wicked,*" there is their violent robbing him of his estate; "*they cast iniquity upon me,*" there are their slanderous traducings of him, and charging him with faults falsely; "*in wrath they hate me,*" there is their cruel seeking to kill.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*For they cast iniquity upon me.*" They tumble it on me, as men do stones or anything else upon their besiegers, to endamage them; so did these sin, shame, anything, upon innocent David, to make him odious.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Is sore pained,*" or, *trembleth with pain.* The word usually meaneth such *pains as a woman feeleth in her travail.—Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 4.—"*The terrors of death are fallen upon me.*" "*My heart,*" said the afflicted Psalmist, "*is sore pained within me;*" and though I am repeatedly assured of my interest in the divine love and favour, yet now "*the terrors of death are fallen upon me.*" The case of David is so far from being peculiar to himself, that it portrays in the most striking colours, a state of mind to which many of the most exemplary Christians are frequently, if not constantly, subject. Many, whose hopes are placed on the right foundation, even Christ Jesus, and whose conduct is uniform and consistent, are yet harassed almost continually by the tormenting fears of death. . . . It will be an interesting and useful enquiry to examine into the real causes of a fear, which cultivates melancholy and despondency on the one hand and destroys our happiness on the other. To effect this design I shall consider, I. The various causes of the fear of death. II. The arguments calculated to remove it. There are few, indeed, so hardened in the slavery of vice, or so utterly regardless of every admonition, as to consider the awful period of dissolution without some emotions of terror and dismay. There is something so peculiarly awful in the idea of a change hitherto unknown, and of a state hitherto untried, that the most hardy veterans have owned its tremendous aspects. . . . One of the first causes of the fear of death is *conscious guilt.* The most hardened are conscious of many things which they may not readily confess; and the most self-righteous is conscious of many crimes which he artfully studies to conceal. Whilst the Christian is looking only to his own habits and temper, he may and will be always wretched; but if he looks to the great Surety, Christ Jesus, his gloomy prospect will soon be turned to joy. An *attachment to this world* is also a (second) cause of the fear of death. A principle of self-preservation is also a (third) cause of the fear of death. That our bodies, which are pampered by pride and nourished by indulgence, should be consigned to the silent grave, and become even the food of worms, is a humbling reflection to the boasted dignity of man. Besides, nature revolts at the idea of its own dissolution; hence a desire of preserving life, evidently implanted in us. The devil is also (fourthly) often permitted to terrify the consciences of men, and thereby increase at least the fear of death. Unbelief is also a (fifth) cause of the fear of death. Were our faith more frequently in exercise, we should be enabled to look beyond the dreary mansions of the grave with a hope full of immortality. Our fears of death may be often caused by looking for that perfection in ourselves, which we shall never easily discover. II. Consider the arguments calculated to remove the fear of death. It may be necessary to premise that the consolations of religion

belong only to real Christians ; for the wicked have just reason to dread the approach of death. But to such as are humbled under a sense of their own unworthiness, and who have fled to Christ for pardon and salvation, they have no cause to apprehend either the pain or the consequences of death ; because first, the sting of death is taken away. Secondly, because death is no longer an enemy but a friend. Instead of threatening us with misery, it invites us to happiness. Thirdly, the safety of our state is founded on the oath, the purpose, and promise of God. A fourth argument calculated to remove the fear of death, is the consideration of the benefits resulting from it. The benefits which believers receive from Christ at the resurrection also, is a fifth argument calculated to remove the fear of death.—*Condensed from a Sermon by John Grove, M.A., F.A.S.*, 1802.

Verses 4, 5.—In the version of the Psalter used in the Prayer-book, this verse stands with a more homely and expressive simplicity, " My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me." The fear of death is upon all flesh. It is no sign of manhood to be without it. To overcome it in the way of duty is courage ; to meet death with patience is faith ; but not to fear it is either a gift of special grace, or a dangerous insensibility. No doubt great saints have been able to say, " I have a desire to depart." And many have rushed to martyrdom, as to the love and bosom of their Lord ; but for the rest, the multitude of his flock, who are neither wilful sinners, nor to be numbered among the saints, the thought of death is a thought of fear. We see that, on the first feeling of their having so much as set foot in the path leading to the grave, even good men feel the " terror of death," " a horrible dread," which makes every pulse to beat with a hurried and vehement speed. Their whole nature, both in body and in soul, trembles to its very centre ; and their heart is " disquieted," " sore pained," within them. . . . .

Let us see what are the causes or reasons of this " fear of death." The fact must needs be a consciousness of personal sinfulness. A sense of unfitness to meet God, our unreadiness to die, a multitude of personal faults, evil tempers, thoughts, and inclinations ; the recollection of innumerable sins, of great omissions and lukewarmness in all religious duties, the little love or gratitude we have to God, and the great imperfection of our repentance ; all these make us tremble at the thought of going to give up our account. We feel as if it were impossible we could be saved. Shame, fear, and a " horrible dread " fall upon us.—*Henry Edward Manning, M.A.*, 1850.

Verse 5.—" *Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me.*" In this pitiful condition of mind, learn, that it is not a thing inconsistent with godliness to be much moved with fear in time of danger ; natural affections are not taken away in conversion, but sanctified and moderated.—*Daniel Dickson.*

Verse 5.—" *Fearfulness.*" How natural is this description ! He is *in distress*, he *mourns*, *makes a noise*, *sobs* and *sighs*, his *heart is wounded*, he expects nothing but *death ;* this produces *fear*, this produces *tremor*, which terminates in that *deep apprehension* of *approaching* and *inevitable ruin* that *overwhelms* him with *horror.* No man ever described a wounded heart like David.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—" *And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*" Wherever the Psalmist cast his eye, the inscription was vanity and vexation. A deluge of sin and misery covered the world, so that like Noah's dove he could find no rest for the sole of his foot below, therefore does he direct his course toward heaven, and say, " *Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away and be at rest ;* " but rest is not a denizen of this world, nothing but the heaven of heavens is at rest, and here does he fix only.—*Thomas Sharp* (1630—1693), *in " Divine Comforts."*

Verse 6.—" *Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*" King David, though for innocency not only a *dove*, but the phœnix of doves, and so a notable type of Christ, upon whom the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove, yet was his whole life nothing else but *bellum sine induciis*, a perpetual persecution without intermission. Such was also the portion of Christ the Lord of David ; and such to the world's end will ever be the lot of those that are the heritage of Christ. My text imports no less ; which, taken *historically*, is the voice of David pursued by his enemies ; *prophetically*, the voice of Christ at

his passion ; *mystically*, the voice of that mystical dove, the innocent soul, surrounded and environed with the snares of death ; even *generalis quædam querela* (saith Pellican), a general complaint of the malice of the wicked persecuting the righteous. For (alas that it should be ! yet so it is)—

> *" Non rete accipitri tenditur, neque milvio,*
> *Qui malè faciunt, nobis ; illis qui nil faciunt, tenditur."**

" The net is not pitched for ravenous birds, as are the hawk and the kite ; but for poor harmless birds, that never meditate mischief.' And

> *" Dat veniam corvis, vexat, censura columbas."*

" The dove shall surely be shot at, when the carrion-crow shall go shot-free."†

It will then be no news unto you, that here the faithful soul, the spouse, the dove of Christ, when trouble and heaviness take hold upon her, and the floods of Belial compass her about *Tanquam avis e cave liberari cupit* (as St. Austin speaks of the cloistered monks in his time), " Desireth like a bird to be loosed out of her cage." Or, that as Jonas (by interpretation *a dove*), after three days' and three nights' imprisonment in the whale's belly, could not but long after his enlargement. So the dove-like soul of man, when not three, but many days, and months, and years, she hath been imprisoned in the body, hath a longing desire to be enlarged, and to fly unto God that made her ; and so *mourning* like a dove in devout *supplication* and *mounting* like a dove in divine *speculation*, breaks forth into these sad elegies : " Oh that I had wings ! " and " Alas, that I have not wings ! Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have mine habitation among the tents of Kedar. Like as the hart desires the water-brook, so longeth my soul to be with thee, O God. I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Who will give me wings ? " etc. Which is as if the poor distressed soul, pathetically bemoaning her forlorn estate of pilgrimage, should thus more plentifully enlarge herself. " My spouse is already ascended higher than the winds, than the clouds, than the highest heavens, and I, poor soul, as a husbandless widow, as a tutorless orphan, as a comfortless exile, am left desolate and disconsolate in this valley of tears ; none to care for me, none to comfort me, till I have regained him whom I love, and in whom I live. Nay (which worse is), this mine own familiar friend, this nearest and dearest companion of mine, *my body*, is even a burden unto me. The weight of it, and oft the sins that hang so fast on it, doth so clog and shackle me, so glue and nail me to the earth, that I cannot raise or rear up myself towards heaven. Or let him therefore descend to relieve me, being *filia, sponsa, soror*, his daughter, and spouse, and sister ; or let him give me wings wherewith I may ascend to him, under the shadow of whose wings I shall surely rest in safety." Ps. xci. 4.

" I must confess it was the very bitterness of extremity that first compelled me to love him, though of himself no less lovely than love itself. It was the sharp sauce of affliction that gave edge to mine affections, and sharpened mine appetite to that ' sweet meat that endureth to everlasting life.' But now, having had some little foretaste of him, I am even in an holy ecstacy, so ravished, so transported with a fervent desire of him and of his presence, that *ubi sum, ibi non sum ; ubi non sum, ibi animus est :* " where I am, there I am not ; and where I am not, there am I." For, *anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat :*‡ " The soul is where it loveth, not where it liveth." Now sigh I not so much for the present dangers I would decline, as because of my absent love, whom I most desire. " *Who will give me wings ?* " etc.

In the scanning of which verse, ye will observe with me,

I. The *efficient* or *author* of these wings—God. " Who will give me ? " Who ? that is, who but *God ?*

II. The *matter* of the wish—" *wings.*" " Who will give me wings ? "

III. The *form* of those wings—*dove-like.* " Who will give me wings like unto a dove ? "

IV. The *end mediate—flying.* " Then would I fly away."

V. The *end ultimate—resting.* " And be at rest."

I. " Who will give me ? " There's *Christian humility.* II. " Who will give

---

* Terence. † Juvenal. ‡ Erasmus.

me wings?" There's *prudent celerity.* III. "Wings like unto a dove." There's *innocent simplicity.* IV. "Then would I fly away." There's *devout sublimity.* V. "And be at rest." There's *permanent security.—John Rawlinson, in "The Dove-like Sovle. A Sermon preached before the Prince's Highnes at Whitehall," Feb.* 19, 1618.

Verse 6.—"*Oh that I had wings,*" etc. Some of the most astounding sermons ever delivered have been preached on this text, which was a very favourite one with the old divines. They ransacked Pliny and Aldrovandus for the most outrageous fables about doves, their eyes, their livers, their crops, and even their dung, and then went on to find emblems of Christians in every fact and fable. Griffith Williams, at considerable length, enlarges upon the fact that David did not desire wings like a grasshopper to hop from flower to flower, as those hasty souls who leap in religion but do not run with perseverance; nor like an ostrich which keeps to the earth, though it be a bird, as hypocrites do who never mount towards heavenly things; nor like an eagle, or a peacock, or a beetle, or a crow, or a kite, or a bat; and after he has shown in many ways the similarity between the godly and doves, he refers us to Hugo Cardinalis, and others, for more. We do not think it would be to edification to load these pages with such eccentricities and conceits. This one single sentence from Bishop Patrick is worth them all, "He rather wished than hoped to escape." He saw no way of escape except by some improbable or impossible means.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—When the Gauls had tasted the wine of Italy, they asked where the grapes grew, and would never be quiet till they came there. Thus may you cry, "*Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*" A believer is willing to lose the world for the enjoyment of grace; and he is willing to leave the world for the fruition of glory.—*William Secker.*

Verse 6.—"*Wings like a dove.*" The pigeon, or dove, is one of the swiftest of birds.—*The Religious Tract Society's "Book of Psalms, with Preface and Explanatory Notes."*

Verse 6.—An old writer tells us it would have been more honourable for him to have asked for the strength of an ox to bear his trials, than for the wings of a dove to flee from them.—*William Jay,* 1769—1853.

Verse 6.—"*Dove.*" The reference is to the turtle-dove, I suppose. Their low, sad plaint may be heard all day long at certain seasons in the olive-groves, and in the solitary and shady valleys among these mountains; I have, however, been more affected by it in the vast orchards round Damascus than anywhere else—so subdued, so very sorrowful among the trees, where the air sighs softly, and little rills roll their melting murmurs down the flowery aisles. These birds can never be tamed. Confined in a cage they droop, and like Cowper, sigh for

> "A lodge in some vast wilderness—some boundless contiguity of shade;"

and no sooner are they set at liberty than they flee, as a bird, to their mountain Ps. xi. 1. David refers to their habits in this respect when his heart was sore pained within him: "*Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.*" And there you will meet these timid birds far away from the haunts of cruel hunters, of whose society they are peculiarly suspicious.—*W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book,"* 1859.

Verse 6.—"*Oh that I had wings,*" etc.—

> At first her mother-earth she holdeth deare,
> And doth embrace the world and worldly things;
> She flies close by the ground, and hovers here,
> And mounts not up with her celestiall wings.
>
> Yet under heaven she cannot light on ought
> That with her heavenly nature doth agree;
> She cannot rest, she cannot fix her thought,
> She cannot in this world contented be:
>
> * * * * * *
>
> Then as a bee which among weeds doth fall,
> Which seeme sweet flowers, with lustre fresh and gay;
> She lights on that, and this, and tasteth all,
> But pleas'd with none, doth rise and soare away.

So when the Soule finds here no true content;
And, like Noah's dove, can no sure footing take,
She doth returne from whence she first was sent,
And flies to him that first her wings did make.

Sir John Davies, 1569—1626.

Verse 7.—"*Lo, then would I wander far off,*" etc. A passage in the "Octavia" of Seneca has been referred to as being parallel to this of David. It is in the answer of Octavia to the Chorus, act v., ver. 914—923.

My woes who enough can bewail?
O what notes can my sorrows express?
Sweet Philomel's self e'en would fail
To respond with her plaintive distress.
O had I her wings, I would fly
To where sorrows I ne'er should feel more,
Upborne on her plumes through the sky,
Regions far from mankind would explore.
In a grove where sad silence should reign,
On a spray would I seat me alone;
In shrill lamentations complain,
And in wailings would pour forth my moan.

J. B. Clarke [*From Adam Clarke, in loc.*]

Verse 8.—"*I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.*" There was a windy storm and tempest without, and which is worse, a tumult and combustion within in his thoughts. A man may escape from external confusions, but how shall he fly from himself? If he be out of the reach of all the blood-suckers on earth, and all the furies in hell, yet be dogged and haunted with his own turbulent, ungovernable cogitations, he needs no other tormentors. This holy man was thus doubly distressed, a storm abroad and an earthquake at home rendered his condition most dolorous; but for both he hath εν μεγα; he goes not about with the foxes of this world to relieve himself with subtle stratagems and wiles, by carnal shifts and policies, a vanity tossed to and fro by them that seek death. No, his one great refuge is to get aloft, to ascend to God.—*Thomas Sharp.*

Verse 9.—"*Destroy, Lord, and divide their tongues.*" In the first place, their tongues were truly destroyed and they themselves divided, when the testimony of the two false witnesses agreed not so together. Then, secondly, by the contradictory account of the soldiers that kept watch at the sepulchre.—*Michael Ayguan* (1416), *in J. M. Neale's Commentary*, 1860.

Verse 9.—"*Divide their tongues:*" *i.e.*, cause them to give conflicting opinions.—*French and Skinner*, 1842.

Verse 10.—"*Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.*" The city, as Abenezra observes, was like a circle; violence and strife were as a line round about it, and mischief and sorrow the centre of it; and these two commonly go together: where mischief is, sorrow follows.—*John Gill.*

Verse 12.—"*Then I could have borne it.*" It is remarkable that the Lord, who endured the other unspeakable sorrows and agonies of his passion in perfect and marvellous silence, allowed his grief at this one alone to escape him, bewailing himself to his disciples that one of them should betray him, and addressing that one, when he was taken, in these words of reproach—"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"—*Fra Thomè de Jesu*, 1582.

Verse 12.—"*Then I would have hid myself from him.*" It is generally easy to get out of the way of an avowed enemy, but how can one be on his guard against a treacherous friend?—*A. R. Fausset, in "A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical,"* 1866.

Verse 13.—"*A man mine equal.*" The LXX here not badly, ισόψυχε (of equal soul), Jerome, *unanimus mens* (of one mind).—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 14.—"*We took sweet counsel.*" From סָמַק, *to be sweet*, and the ordinary notion of סוֹד for *secret*, the phrase נִמְתַּק סוֹד will literally be read, *we made our secret*

sweet. And so it may be an elegance, to signify the pleasure of his friendship, or of communicating secrets to him.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 14.—The first clause speaks of private intimacy, the next of association in public acts, and especially in the great festivals and processions of the temple.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne,* 1864.

Verse 14.—"*In company.*" In the end of the verse בְּרִגְשׁ may be rendered *with a noise:* and so the Chaldee seems to have taken it, which reads *with haste;* and to that agree the Jewish doctors, who tell us men are to go in *haste* and with *speed* to the *synagogue,* but return thence very *leisurely.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 15.—"*Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell.*" The last part and end of sinners' lives is worst with them. They have in their lives been busily trading in the world, buying and selling, and getting gain and ruffling it in the world, but meanwhile by their sins they run deep in debt with God, and for want of interest in Christ to be their surety at death (it may be on the sudden) it comes to that of the Psalmist, "*Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell.*" Death seizeth on them unawares, as a sergeant or pursevant, casts them into prison, which is expressed by their going down quick into hell (as it is said, Num. xvi. 32, 33), that Korah and his company did.—*Anthony Tuckney,* 1599—1670.

Verse 15.—"*Let death seize upon them*" by divine warrant, and let them go quick into hell; let them be dead and buried, and damned in a moment; for wickedness is wherever they are, it is in the midst of them. The souls of impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell; for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall therefore live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 15.—"*Quick,*" that is, *alive,* like Korah, Dathan and Abiram.—*From "The Psalms chronologically arranged. By Four Friends,"* 1867.

Verse 15.—Throughout this series of Psalms, there appears to be a peculiar penalty attached to each class of transgressions, or, each variety of opposition against God meets a suitable end. The ungodly, that is, the irreligious and indifferent lay up for themselves an evil recompence when the wrath of God shall be revealed (Psalm liv. 5): but an instant punishment falls upon false and treacherous professors; as Paul denounced "anathema" against any who perverted the gospel of Christ in the churches of Galatia; so in this Psalm, "*Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell,*" announces the awful judgment of Jehovah, as once it was shown upon Dathan and Abiram; a punishment that will by its suddenness and notoriety at the same time expose the guilt, and make manifest the displeasure of the Almighty against it.—*R. H. Ryland, in "The Psalms restored to Messiah,"* 1853.

Verse 17.—"*Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray.*" This was the custom of the pious Hebrews. See Dan. vi. 10. The Hebrews began their day in the *evening,* and hence David mentions the *evening first.* The rabbins say, men should pray three times each day, because the day changes three times. This was observed in the primitive church; but the times in different places were various. The old Psalter gives this a curious turn: "At *even* I sall tel his louing (*praise*) what tim Crist was on the Crosse; and at *morn* I sall schew his louing, what tim he ros fra dede. And sua he sall here my voice at *midday,* that is sitand at the right hand of his fader, wheder he stegh (ascended) at midday."—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 17.—"*Evening and morning,*" etc. The three principal parts of the day are mentioned, not as marking special times set apart for prayer, but as a poetical expression for "the whole day," "at all times," "without ceasing."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 17.—If our poor, frail bodies need refreshment from food three times a day, who, that knows his own weakness, will say that we need not as frequent refreshment for our poor frail spirits?—*William S. Plumer,* 1867.

Verse 17.—I can no more believe him to be frequent and spiritual in ejaculatory prayer, who neglects the season of solemn prayer, than I can believe that he keeps every day in the week a Sabbath, who neglects to keep that one which God hath appointed.—*William Gurnall,* 1617—1679.

Verse 17.—There is no limited time in the court of heaven for hearing petitions.

It is not like the court of earthly princes, for there is a free access any day of the week, any hour of the day, or the night, any minute of the hour. As the lawyer saith of the king, for having his due, *Nullum tempus occurrit regi:* so may I say of the godly, for making his prayers and granting his requests, *Nullum tempus occurrit fidelibus*, no time unseasonable, so the heart be seasoned with faith; no *non term* in God's court of requests. He keeps continually open house for all comers and goers; and indeed, most for comers, then goers. His eyes are always open to behold our tears; his ears are always open to hear our groans; his heart also and his bowels are always open, and never shut up so fast, but they will yearn and turn within him, if our misery be never so little. For as we have not an High Priest to pray by "that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" so neither have we a God to pray to, that shall see us in distress, and hear us call and cry, and never be moved.—*Zachary Bogan* (1625—1659), *in "Meditations of the Mirth of a Christian Life."*

Verse 17.—"*And cry aloud.*" The word here employed properly means to murmur; to make a humming sound; to sigh; to growl; to groan. Here the language means that he would give utterance to his deep feelings in appropriate tones—whether words, sighs, or groans.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 17.—"*And he shall hear.*" And what will this loud cry obtain? A hearing without doubt, so he assures himself, "*He shall hear me.*" Not that God hears any prayers whether he will or no (as men sometimes do that upon importunity which they have no mind to); but he hath no will, no mind not to hear such prayers, the prayers of those who cry aloud to him.—*Joseph Caryl*, 1602—1673.

Verse 18.—"*He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle.*" In the midst of war the Lord can keep a man as safe as in the time of peace, and in extreme perils preserve him from danger. He that depends upon God in the time of trouble, albeit he had an host against him, yet hath he more with him when God is with him, than can be against him.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 18.—"*For.*" The "*for*" implies the reason why God interposed to deliver him; namely, because of the general principle that God ministers relief when his people are come to an extremity.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 18.—"*There were many with me.*" This is doubtful whether it be meant of *foes* or *friends*. If of *foes*, it may be resolved thus: *for with many* (with a great multitude) *they were fighters with me*. If of *friends*, it may be understood of God's *angels*, that *in a great number were with him*, pitching camp for his aid (Psalm xxxiv. 7); as Elisha said, "Many more are with us than with them." 2 Kings vi. 16, 17. The Chaldee explaineth it, "For in many afflictions his word was for my help."—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 19.—"*Even he that abideth of old.*" The deeds by which God had already showed himself from of old as the righteous King and Judge, the judgments, for example, upon the wicked in the land of Shinar (ver. 9), the company of Korah (ver. 9 and 18), the cities of the plain (ver. 15), pledge his still ready interposition. He who had already so long held the throne, must now also show himself as King and Judge; he cannot now, at so late a period, be another.—*E. W. Hengstenberg*, 1845.

Verse 19.—"*Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.*" That is, there is no new thing among them, no extraordinary providential turns, no judiciary changes, their prosperity keeps a settled course, and because they find all things going on in the old course of providence, therefore they go on in their old course of sinfulness, "*they fear not God;*" intimating, that as such *changes* always should, so usually they do, awaken fear; and that, if the Lord would but change, and toss, and tumble them about, by various troublesome dispensations, surely they would fear him.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 19.—"*Because they have no changes,*" etc. Or, "*with whom* also there be *no changes, yet they fear not God.*" If *changes* be referred to their temporal estates and welfare, as Job x. 17 (it is the same word there as here, חֲלִיפוֹת), "changes and war are against me;" then, according to the first translation, "*because,*" etc., a reason is given of their perseverance in wickedness, and contempt of God; to wit, their constant and uninterrupted world prosperity. Or, according to the second, "*With whom there are no changes, yet,*" etc.; it is a great aggravation of their impenitency, that notwithstanding so much goodness vouchsafed

unto them, they should continue so unthankful as to requite so ill, or so stupid and insensible as not to acknowledge the author. But if changes be referred, as by many, to the soul, then the meaning is—that through long use and continuance of sinning, they are, through God's just judgment, become altogether obdurate and inflexible; and therefore, no wonder if nothing work upon them to their conversion. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" etc. Jer. xiii. 23. But this "*changes*" might also have another meaning. The Grecians used to say, στρέπται φρένες ἐσθλων, that the minds or hearts of good men are changeable; their meaning is, that good men are merciful. *Quos quisque est major, magis est placabilis ira: et faciles motus mens generosa capit,* as the Latin proverb expresses it. He may therefore say, that they show by their cruel unmercifulness, that they have no fear or sense of God at all; else they would fear him, of whose mercy themselves stood in so much need, and consider that they whom they so fiercely persecute are his creatures as well as they.—*Westminster Assembly's Annotations.*

Verse 19.—"*They have no changes,*" etc. Who are they who have no changes? Apparently those whom God is said to humble or chastise. And what is the meaning of the word "*changes*" as here used? Many understand it of a moral change; "who are without change of heart or reformation." But the word never occurs in this sense. It means, properly, "*a change,*" in the sense of *succession;* as of garments, of troops relieving guard, servants leaving work, and the like. Hence it would rather mean in a moral sense: "They who have no cessation in their course (by being relieved guard, for instance), who always continue, and persevere in their evil life." Calvin and others understand it of *change of fortune, i.e.,* "who are always prosperous;" but this again is not supported by usage.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 19.—"*They fear not God.*" The fear required here, is to fear him as God, and as God presented in this name, *Elohim;* which, though it be a name primarily rooted in power and strength (for *El* is *Deus fortis,* The powerful God; and as there is no love without fear, so there is no fear without power), yet properly it signifies his judgment, and order, and providence, and dispensations and government of his creatures. It is that name which goes through all God's whole work of the creation, and disposition of all creatures in the first of Genesis: in all that he is called by no other name than this, the name God; not by Jehovah, to present an infinite majesty; nor by Adonai, to present an absolute power; nor by Tzebaoth, to present a force, or conquest: but only the name of God, his name of government. All ends in this; to fear God is to adhere to him, in his way, as he hath dispensed and notified himself to us; that is, as God is manifested in Christ, in the Scriptures, and applied to us out of those Scriptures, by the church: not to rest in nature without God, nor in God without Christ.—*John Donne,* 1573— 1631.

Verse 21.—"*The words of his mouth were smoother than butter,*" etc. Of this complexion are the cant of hypocrites, the charity of bigots and fanatics, the benevolence of atheists, the professions of the world, the allurements of the flesh, and the temptations of Satan, when he thinks proper to appear in the character of an angel of light.—*George Horne,* 1730—1792.

Verse 21.—"*Butter.*" The Eastern butter is by no means like the solid substance, which is known by that name in these colder climates; but is liquid and flowing, as appears from different passages in Scripture, particularly Job xxix. 6; xx. 17; and as is confirmed by the accounts of modern travellers; so that in fact it more resembles "cream," which Vitringa says is the genuine sense of the word here used.—*Richard Mant,* 1776—1849.

Verse 21.—To avoid all difficulties, the readiest expedient is to receive the Septuagint rendering of חָלְקוּ, διεμερίσθησαν, *they were,* or *are divided,* viz., the *members* of the wicked man there spoken of, they are at great distance one from the other; חֶמְאַת פִּיו, *butter their mouth,* or, *their mouth is butter,* וקרב־לבו and *war their heart,* or, *their heart is war;* and this seems to be the fairest rendering of it.—*Henry Hammond,* 1605—1660.

Verse 21.—A feigned friend is much like a crocodile who, when he smileth, poisoneth; and when he weepeth, devoureth; or the hyæna, having the voice of a man and the mind of a wolf, speaking like a friend and devouring like a fiend; or the flattering sirens that sweetly sing the sailor's wreck; or the fowler's pipe that pleasantly playeth the bird's death; or the bee, who carrieth honey in her mouth and a sting in her tail; or the box-tree, whose leaves are always green, but

the seeds poison. So his countenance is friendly and his words pleasant, but his intent dangerous, and his deeds unwholesome.

His fetch is to flatter, to catch what he can;
His purpose obtained, a fig for his man.

L. Wright, 1616.

Verse **21.**—"*The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.*" Well, when I came to the justice again, there was Mr. Foster, of Bedford, who coming out of another room, and seeing me by the light of the candle, for it was dark night when I came thither, he said unto me, "Who is there? John Bunyan?" with much seeming affection, as if he would have leaped in my neck and kissed me,* which made me somewhat wonder that such a man as he, with whom I had so little acquaintance, and, besides, that had ever been a close opposer of the ways of God, should carry himself so full of love to me, but afterwards when I saw what he did, it caused me to remember those sayings, "*Their tongues were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords*," and again, "Beware of men," etc. When I had answered him that, blessed be God, I was well, he said, "What is the occasion of your being here?" or to that purpose. To whom I answered that I was at a meeting of people a little way off, intending to speak a word of exhortation to them; but the justice hearing thereof (said I) was pleased to send his warrant to fetch me before him, etc.—*John Bunyan. In relation to J. B.'s imprisonment: written by himself. Offor's edit., Vol. I. p.* 52.

Verse 21 (*first clause*).—

Smooth are his words, his voice as honey sweet,
Yet war is in his heart, and dark deceit.

Mosschus (*B.C.* 250).

Verse 22.—"*Cast thy burden upon the Lord*," etc. The remedy which the Psalm suggests, and, perhaps, the only resource in a difficulty of the kind, where the enemies of true religion are fighting under the semblance of friendship, is announced in an oracular voice from God: "Cast thy care upon Jehovah, for he will sustain thee; he will not suffer the just one to be tossed about for ever."—*R. H. Ryland.*

Verse 22.—"*Cast thy burden upon the Lord*," etc. The best way to ease thyself is to lay thy load upon God; he will take it up and also carry thee. There is many a man would be willing to go of himself, if another would but carry his burden for him; but if thou throwest thy burden upon God he will not only carry that, but will also carry thee. He cares not how much weight a Christian layeth on his back; a true Israelite may ease himself, and best please his God at once. God delights not to see tears in thine eyes, or paleness in thy countenance; thy groans and sighs make no music in his ears. He had rather that thou wouldst free thyself of thy burden by casting it upon him, that he might rejoice in thy joy and comfort. Now, true confidence in God, and resting upon God, will both free thee of thy burden and also bring in the strength of God to sustain and bear thee up from falling. Wouldst thou, therefore, own God as thy strength, and fetch strength from God to thy soul? rest upon God, roll thyself upon him, and that, (1) In time of greatest weakness. (2) In time of greatest service. (3) In times of greatest trials.—*Samuel Blackerby*, 1674.

Verse 22.—"*Cast thy burden*" on him in the same way that the ship in a storm casts her burden on the anchor, which anchor holds on to its sure fixing place. And to my mind, that is the more beautiful sense of the two—a sense which once entered into, may be followed out in these glorious verses:—

And I see the good ship riding, all in a perilous road;
The low reef booming on her lee; the swell of ocean poured
Sea after sea, from stem to stern; the mainmast by the broad;
The bulwarks down; the rudder gone; the boats stove by the chains.
But courage still, brave mariners, the ANCHOR yet remains:
And he will flinch—no, never an inch—until ye pitch sky high;
Then he moves his head as if he said, "Fear nought; for here am I!"

J. M. Neale's Commentary.

Verse 23.—"*Shalt bring them down.*" Indicating a violent death, like that of the slain ox, which is said to *descend*, when it falls under the stroke. The *pit* of

* A right Judas.

putrefaction is meant, in which the corpse decays, nor does it here merely denote the sepulchre, but the ignominious condition of a corpse cast forth, as when it is thrown into a pit.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 23.—"*Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.*" A wicked man never lives out half his days; for either he is cut off before he hath lived half the course of nature, or he is cut off before he hath lived a quarter of the course of his desires; either he lives not half so long as he might, or not a tenth, not a hundredth part so long as he would; and therefore let him die when he will, his death is full of terror, trouble, and confusion, because he dies out of season. He never kept time or season with God, and surely God will not keep or regard his time or season.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 23.—"*Half their days.*" In the Jewish account threescore years was the age of a man, and death at any time before that was looked upon as untimely, and deemed and styled כרת excision, of which they made thirty-six degrees; so that *not to live out half one's days*, is in their style *to die before thirty years old.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 23 (*second clause*).—The more sins we do commit, the more we hasten our own death; because as the wise man saith, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Prov. x. 27); and the prophet David saith, "*Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;*" for sin is an epitomiser or shortener of everything: it consumes our wealth, it confines our liberty, it impeacheth our health, and it abbreviateth our life, and brings us speedily into our graves.—*Griffith Williams*, 1636.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—I. An evil to be dreaded: "*Hide not thyself,*" etc. 1. By long delay in an urgent case. 2. In the sinner's case by refusing to hear altogether. II. Causes which may produce it. 1. In the man. 2. In the prayer itself. 3. In the manner of the prayer. III. Evils which will follow—a list which the preacher can readily think of. IV. Remedies for the evil. There is none if it should continue; but heart-searching, repentance, importunity, pleading the name of Jesus, etc., will lead to its removal.

Verse 2.—The Great Hearer. I. What address shall we present to him? II. What sort of attention do we desire? III. How shall we secure it? IV. What is the reflex duty on our part?—To attend and hear him.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—Allowable complaining. I. Not *of* God but *to* God. II. Mainly of ourselves. III. Of the world as against God and right. IV. Ever with holy grief, and not selfish vexation.

Verse 4.—The terrors of death. See Sermon by *Grove* in the Notes.

Verse 7.—Solitude. I. Its fancied benefits. II. Its sore temptations. III. Its occasional benefits. IV. Its sweet solaces.

Verse 8.—Too hasty a flight from trial. 1. Would show rebellion against God. 2. Would manifest cowardly want of faith. 3. Would involve loss of useful experience. 4. Would land us in other and worse trials. 5. Would prevent our glorifying God. 6. Would mar our conformity to Christ and fellowship with his people. 7. Would lessen the value of heaven.

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—The Babel of heresies. *Essential*, for truth is one. *Inevitable*, for the motives of heretics clash. *Providential*, for so they weaken each other. *Judicial*, for so they torment each other.

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—The activity of evil.

Verse 10 (*second clause*).—The diabolical twins, or cause and effect.

Verse 14.—The social companionships which grow out of religion. 1. They are on a good foundation. 2. They yield profit—"counsel." 3. They yield pleasure—"sweet." 4. They lead to enthusiasm—"walked in company." 5. They ought to be sacredly maintained. 6. But they need to be carefully watched.

Verse 16.—The contrast. I. A child of God will not wrong others as they do

him. II. He will call upon God as they do not. III. God will hear him as he does not the wicked. IV. God will deal with him at last otherwise than with them.

Verse 17. 1.—David will pray fervently; *"I will pray and cry aloud."* 2. He will pray frequently; every day, and three times a day, evening and morning, and at noon.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 18.—Our battles, our almost rout, our helper, our deliverances, our praise.

Verse 19.—The eternal government of God a threat to the ungodly.

Verse 19 (*second part*).—Prosperity creating atheism. This involves—1. Ingratitude—they ought to be the more devout. 2. Impudence—they think themselves as God. 3. Forgetfulness—they forget that changes will come. 4. Ignorance—they know not that unbroken prosperity is often for awhile the portion of the accursed. 5. Insanity—for there is no reason in their conduct. 6. Rottenness—preparing them to be cast away for ever.

Verse 21.—The hypocrite's mouth. 1. It has many words. 2. They are only from his mouth. 3. They are very smooth. 4. They conceal rather than reveal his purpose. 5. They are cutting and killing. 6. They will kill himself.

Verse 22 (*first clause*).—Here we see the believer has—1. A *burden* to try him. 2. A *duty* to engage him, "Cast thy burden," etc. 3. A *promise* to encourage him, "He shall sustain," etc.—*Ebenezer Temple*, 1850.

Verse 22 (*last clause*).—Who are the righteous? What is meant by their being moved? Whose permission is needful to accomplish it? Will he give it? "Never." Why not?

Verse 23 (*last clause*).—The grand "I WILL." Sum up the Psalm.—When I pray, 1—3. II. When I faint, 4—7. III. When I am sore beset, 9—11. IV. When I am betrayed, 12—14, 20, 21. V. When others perish, 15. VI. After I am delivered, 18. VII. In every condition, 22.

PSALM LVI.

TITLE.—**To the Chief Musician.** *That mighty minstrel by degrees acquired a noble repertoire of hallowed songs, and set them all to music.* Upon Jonath-elem-rechokim—*this was probably the title of the tune, as we should say Old Hundred, or Sicilian Mariners. Perhaps the title may however belong to the Psalm, and if so it is instructive, for it has been translated "the silent dove in distant places." We have here the songs of God's servant, who rejoices once more to return from banishment, and to leave those dangerous places where he was compelled to hold his peace even from good. There is such deep spiritual knowledge in this Psalm that we might say of it, "Blessed art thou David Bar-jonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." When David plays the Jonah he is not like the prophet of that name; in David the love of the dove predominates, but in Jonah its moaning and complaining are most notable.* Michtam of David. *This is the second golden Psalm; we had the first in Psalm xvi., to which this Psalm has a great likeness, especially in its close, for it ends in the joyful presence. A golden mystery, the gracious secret of the life of faith is in both these Psalms most sweetly unveiled, and a pillar is set up because of God's truth.* When the Philistines took him in Gath. *He was then like a dove in strangers' hands, and on his escape he records his gratitude.*

DIVISIONS.—*In verses* 1 *and* 2, *he pours out his complaint; in verses* 3 *and* 4 *he declares his confidence in God; in verses* 5 *and* 6 *he returns to his complaining, but pleads with earnest hope in verses* 7—9, *and sings a grateful song from verse* 10 *to the close.*

EXPOSITION.

BE merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.

2 Mine enemies would daily swallow *me* up: for *they be* many that fight against me, O thou most High.

"Be merciful unto me, O God." In my deep distress my soul turns to thee, my God. Man has no mercy on me, therefore double thy mercy to me. If thy justice has let loose my enemies, let thy mercy shorten their chain. It is sweet to see how the tender dove-like spirit of the Psalmist flies to the tenderest attribute for succour in the hour of peril. *"For man would swallow me up."* He is but thy creature, a mere man, yet like a monster he is eager for blood, he pants, he gapes for me; he would not merely wound me, or feed on my substance, but he would fain swallow me altogether, and so make an end of me. The open mouths of sinners when they rage against us should open our mouths in prayer. We may plead the cruelty of men as a reason for the divine interposition—a father is soon aroused when his children are shamefully entreated. *"He fighting daily oppresseth me."* He gives me no interval—he fights daily. He is successful in his unrighteous war—he oppresses me, he crushes me, he presses me sore. David has his eye on the leader of his foes, and lays his plaint against him in the right place. If we may thus plead against man, much more against that great enemy of souls, the devil. We ask the Lord to forgive us our trespasses, which is another way of saying, "Be merciful unto me, O God," and then we say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." The more violent the attack of Satan the stronger our plea for deliverance.

2. *"Mine enemies would daily swallow me up."* Their appetite for blood never fails them. With them there is no truce or armistice. They are many, but one mind animates them. Nothing I can do can make them relent. Unless they can quite devour me they will never be content. The ogres of nursery tales exist in reality in the enemies of the church, who would crush the bones of the godly, and make a mouthful of them if they could. *"For they be many that fight against me."* Sinners are gregarious creatures. Persecutors hunt in packs. These wolves of the

church seldom come down upon us singly. The number of our foes is a powerful plea for the interposition of the one Defender of the faithful, who is mightier than all their bands. These foes of the gracious are also keen-eyed, and ever on the watch, hence the margin calls them "observers." "*O thou most High.*" Thus he invokes against the lofty ones of the earth the aid of one who is higher than the highest. Some translate the words differently, and think that the writer means that his foes assailed him from the high places in which pride and power had placed them. Saul, his great foe, attacked him from his throne with all the force which his high position placed at his disposal: our comfort in such a case is near to hand, for God will help us from a higher place than our proudest foes can occupy. The greatness of God as the Most High is a fertile source of consolation to weak saints oppressed by mighty enemies.

3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

4 In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

"*What time I am afraid.*" David was no braggart, he does not claim never to be afraid, and he was no brutish Stoic free from fear because of the lack of tenderness. David's intelligence deprived him of the stupid heedlessness of ignorance, he saw the imminence of his peril, and was afraid. We are men, and therefore liable to overthrow; we are feeble, and therefore unable to prevent it; we are sinful men, and therefore deserving it, and for all these reasons we are afraid. But the condition of the Psalmist's mind was complex—he feared, but that fear did not fill the whole area of his mind, for he adds, "*I will trust in thee.*" It is possible, then, for fear and faith to occupy the mind at the same moment. We are strange beings, and our experience in the divine life is stranger still. We are often in a twilight, where light and darkness are both present, and it is hard to tell which predominates. It is a blessed fear which drives us to trust. Unregenerate fear drives from God, gracious fear drives to him. If I fear man I have only to trust God, and I have the best antidote. To trust when there is no cause for fear, is but the name of faith, but to be reliant upon God when occasions for alarm are abundant and pressing, is the conquering faith of God's elect. Though the verse is in the form of a resolve, it became a fact in David's life, let us make it so in ours. Whether the fear arise from without or within, from past, present, or future, from temporals, or spirituals, from men or devils, let us maintain faith, and we shall soon recover courage.

4. "*In God I will praise his word.*" Faith brings forth praise. He who can trust will soon sing. God's promise, when fulfilled, is a noble subject for praise, and even before fulfilment it should be the theme of song. It is in or through God that we are able to praise. We praise as well as pray in the Spirit. Or we may read it—in extolling the Lord one of the main points for thanksgiving is his revealed will in the Scriptures, and the fidelity with which he keeps his word of promise. "*In God I have put my trust.*" Altogether and alone should we stay ourselves on God. What was a gracious resolve in the former verse, is here asserted as already done. "*I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.*" Faith exercised, fear is banished, and holy triumph ensues, so that the soul asks, "What can flesh do unto me?" What indeed? He can do me no real injury; all his malice shall be overruled for my good. Man is flesh, flesh is grass—Lord, in thy name I defy its utmost wrath. There were two verses of complaint, and here are two of confidence; it is well to weigh out a sufficient quantity of the sweet to counteract the sour.

5 Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts *are* against me for evil.

6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.

5. "*Every day they wrest my words.*" This is a common mode of warfare among the ungodly. They put our language on the rack, they extort meanings from it which it cannot be made fairly to contain. Thus our Saviour's prophecy concerning the temple of his body, and countless accusations against his servants, were founded on wilful perversions. They who do this every day become great adepts in the art. A wolf can always find in a lamb's discourse a reason for eating him. Prayers

are blasphemies if you choose to read them the wrong way upwards. "*All their thoughts are against me for evil.*" No mixture of good will tone down their malice. Whether they viewed him as a king, a Psalmist, a man, a father, a warrior, a sufferer, it was all the same, they saw through coloured glass, and could not think a generous thought towards him. Even those actions of his which were an undoubted blessing to the commonwealth, they endeavoured to undervalue. Oh, foul spring, from which never a drop of pure water can come!

6. "*They gather themselves together.*" Firebrands burn the fiercer for being pushed together. They are afraid to meet the good man till their numbers place terrible odds against him. Come out, ye cowards, man by man, and fight the old hero! No, ye wait till ye are assembled like thieves in bands, and even then ye waylay the man. There is nothing brave about you. "*They hide themselves.*" In ambuscade they wait their opportunity. Men of malice are men of cowardice. He who dares not meet his man on the king's highway, writes himself down a villain. Constantly are the reputations of good men assailed with deep-laid schemes, and diabolical plots, in which the anonymous enemies stab in the dark. "*They mark my steps,*" as hunters mark the trail of their game, and so track them. Malicious men are frequently very sharp-sighted to detect the failings, or supposed failings, of the righteous. Spies and *mouchards* are not all in the pay of earthly governments, some of them will have wages to take in red-hot coin from one who himself is more subtle than all the beasts of the field. "*When they wait for my soul.*" Nothing less than his life would content them, only his present and eternal ruin could altogether glut them. The good man is no fool, he sees that he has enemies, and that they are many and crafty; he sees also his own danger, and then he shows his wisdom by spreading the whole case before the Lord, and putting himself under divine protection.

7 Shall they escape by iniquity? in *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.

8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they* not in thy book?

9 When I cry *unto thee,* then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God *is* for me.

7. "*Shall they escape by iniquity?*" Will such wickedness as this stand them in good stead? Can it be that this conduct shall enable them to avoid the sentence of earthly punishment? They slander the good man to screen themselves—will this avail them? They have cunningly managed hitherto, but will there not be an end to their games? "*In thine anger cast down the people, O God.*" Trip them up in their tricks. Hurl them from the Tarpeian rock. A persecuted man finds a friend even in an angry God, how much more in the God of love! When men seek to cast us down, it is but natural and not at all unlawful to pray that they may be disabled from the accomplishment of their infamous designs. What God often does we may safely ask him to do.

8. "*Thou tellest my wanderings.*" Every step which the fugitive had taken when pursued by his enemies, was not only observed but thought worthy of counting and recording. We perhaps are so confused after a long course of trouble, that we hardly know where we have or where we have not been; but the omniscient and considerate Father of our spirits remembers all in detail, for he has counted them over as men count their gold, for even the trial of our faith is precious in his sight. "*Put thou my tears into thy bottle.*" His sorrows were so many that there would need a great wine-skin to hold them all. There is no allusion to the little complimentary lachrymatories of fashionable and fanciful Romans, it is a robuster metaphor by far; such floods of tears had David wept that a leathern bottle would scarce hold them. He trusts that the Lord will be so considerate of his tears as to store them up as men do the juice of the vine, and he hopes that the place of storage will be a special one—"*thy* bottle," not *a* bottle. "*Are they not in thy book?*" Yes, they are recorded there, but let not only the record but the grief itself be present to thee. Look on my griefs as real things, for these move the heart more than a mere account, however exact. How condescending is the Lord! How exact his knowledge of us! How generous his estimations! How tender his regard!

9. *"When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back."* So soon as I pray they shall fly. So surely as I cry they shall be put to the rout.

"So swift is prayer to reach the sky,
So kind is God to me."

The machinery of prayer is not always visible, but it is most efficient. God inclines us to pray, we cry in anguish of heart, he hears, he acts, the enemy is turned back. What irresistible artillery is this which wins the battle as soon as its report is heard! What a God is this who hearkens to the cry of his children, and in a moment delivers them from the mightiest adversaries! *"This I know."* This is one of the believer's certainties, his axioms, his infallible, indisputable verities. *"For God is for me."* This we know, and we know, therefore, that none can be against us who are worth a moment's fear. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Who will restrain prayer when it is so potent? Who will seek any other ally than God, who is instantly present so soon as we give the ordained signal, by which we testify both our need and our confidence?

10 In God will I praise *his* word: in the LORD will I praise *his* word.
11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.
12 Thy vows *are* upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.
13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt* not *thou deliver* my feet from falling, that I way walk before God in the light of the living?

10. *"In God will I praise his word."* Now comes the thanksgiving. He is a wretch who, having obtained help, forgets to return a grateful acknowledgment. The least we can do is to praise him from whom we receive such distinguished favours. Does David here mean "by God's grace I will praise him?" If so, he shows us that all our emotions towards God must be in God, produced by him and presented as such. Or does he mean, "that which in God is most the object of my praise is his word, and the faithfulness with which he keeps it?" If so, we see how attached our hearts should be to the sure word of promise, and especially to *him* who is the WORD incarnate. The Lord is to be praised under every aspect, and in all his attributes and acts, but certain mercies more peculiarly draw out our admiration towards special portions of the great whole. That praise which is never special in its direction cannot be very thoughtful, and it is to be feared cannot be very acceptable. *"In the Lord will I praise his word."* He delights to dwell on his praise, he therefore repeats his song. The change by which he brings in the glorious name of Jehovah is doubtless meant to indicate that under every aspect he delights in his God and in his word.

11. *"In God have I put my trust."* This and the former verse are evidently the chorus of the Psalm. We cannot be too careful of our faith, or see too sedulously that it is grounded on the Lord alone. *"I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."* Faith has banished fear. He views his foes in their most forcible character, calling them not *flesh*, but indicating them as *man*, yet he dreads them not; though the whole race were his enemies he would not be afraid now that his trust is stayed on God. He is not afraid of what they threaten to do, for much of that they cannot do; and even what is in their power, what they *can do*, he defies with holy daring. He speaks for the future, "I will not," for he is sure that the security of the present will suffice for days to come.

12. *"Thy vows are upon me, O God."* Vows made in his trouble he does not lightly forget, nor should we. We voluntarily made them, let us cheerfully keep them. All professed Christians are men under vows, but especially those who in hours of dire distress have re-dedicated themselves unto the Lord. *"I will render praises unto thee."* With heart, and voice, and gift, we should cheerfully extol the God of our salvation. The practice of making solemn vows in times of trouble is to be commended, when it is followed by the far less common custom of fulfilling them when the trouble is over.

13. *"For thou hast delivered my soul from death."* His enemies were defeated in their attempts upon his life, and therefore he vowed to devote his life to God. *"Wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling?"* One mercy is a plea for another, for indeed it may happen that the second is the necessary complement of the first.

It little boots that we live, if we are made to fall in character by the thrusts of our enemies. As lief not be, as live to be bereft of honour, and fallen prostrate before my enemies. "*That I may walk before God in the light of the living,*" enjoying the favour and presence of God, and finding the joy and brightness of life therein. Walking at liberty, in holy service, in sacred communion, in constant progress in holiness, enjoying the smile of heaven—this I seek after. Here is the loftiest reach of a good man's ambition, to dwell with God, to walk in righteousness before him, to rejoice in his presence, and in the light and glory which it yields. Thus in this short Psalm, we have climbed from the ravenous jaws of the enemy into the light of Jehovah's presence, a path which only faith can tread.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The words "*Jonath-elem-rechokim*" may be rendered, *concerning the mute dove among them that are afar off*, or *in far places.—John Gill.*

Title.—"*Michtam.*" See also Explanatory Notes on Psalm xvi., in the "Treasury of David," Vol. I., pp. 197, 198.

Verse 1.—"*Be merciful.*" This is the second of the Psalms beginning with the miserere; the fifty-first being the first of them.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 1.—"*Be merciful unto me, O God.*" This is to me the one source of all my expectations, the one fountain of all promises: *Miserere mei, Deus, miserere mei.—Bernard,* 1091—1157.

Verse 1.—"*Be merciful.*" His first wrestling in prayer is with the check of his conscience, whether for his daily sins, or in particular for casting himself in such apparent danger, as to have ventured without probable security, to seek shelter among the enemies of the people of God, whose blood he himself had shed abundantly; for this rashness or other sins he beggeth mercy.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*Man.*" He uses the indefinite term *man* in this verse, though in the next he speaks of having many enemies, the more forcibly to express the truth, that the whole world was combined against him, that he experienced no humanity amongst men, and stood in the last necessity of divine help.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"*Would swallow me up.*" *Soop me up* (as the Hebrew word soundeth); make but one draught of me or suck me in as a whirlpool, swallow me up as a ravenous wild beast.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*He fighting daily.*" There is no morning on which we can arise and go forth into the world, and say, "No enemy will come out against me to-day." There is no night in which we can retire from that world, and think to find safety in the solitude of our own chambers, and say, "No evil can enter here."—*Barton Bouchier, in "Manna in the Heart,"* 1855.

Verses 1, 2.—The same words are applicable to the situation and circumstances of David, pursued by his enemies; of Christ, persecuted by the Jews; of the church, afflicted in the world; and of the soul, encompassed by enemies, against whom she is forced to wage perpetual war.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*O thou most High.*" The Hebrew is not that rendered "*Most High*" in Ps. vii. 17; nor in our version is it ever rendered "*Most High*" in any other place, although found in the Hebrew Bible more than *fifty* times. There are but two other places where it is applied, as an epithet, to God; Ps. xcii. 8; Mic. vi. 6. It is commonly rendered *from above, on high, high places, high;* once *loftily,* Ps. lxxiii. 8. . . . The probable meaning is, they "fight against me from the high places of authority, both in Jerusalem and in Gath," *q.d.,* mine enemies are in power.—*William S. Plumer's "Studies in the Book of Psalms,"* 1867.

Verse 3.—"*What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*" There is nothing like faith to help at a pinch; faith dissolves doubts as the sun drives away the mists. And that you may not be put out, know that your time for believing always is.

There are times when some graces may be out of use, but there is no time wherein faith can be said to be so. Wherefore faith must be always in exercise. Faith is the eye, is the mouth, is the hand, and one of these is of use all the day long. Faith is to see, to receive, to work, or to eat; and a Christian should be seeing or receiving, or working, or feeding all day long. Let it rain, let it blow, let it thunder, let it lighten, a Christian must still believe. "At what time," said the good man, "I am afraid, I will trust in thee."—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 3.—"*What time I am afraid,*" etc. A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubts without a speedy rising into a flame. When grace is at the bottom of doubting, there will be reliance on Christ and lively petitions to him. Peter's faith staggers when he began to sink, but he casts a look and sends forth a cry to his Saviour, acknowledging his sufficiency; Matt. xiv. 30, "Lord, save me." Sometimes those doubtings strengthen our trust and make us take hold faster on God. Ps. lvi. 3, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." This was a fear of himself or others, rather than a jealousy of God. Had he had unworthy suspicions of him, he would not have trusted him; he would not have run for remedy to the object of his fear. The waverings where faith is, are like the tossings of a ship fast at anchor (still there is a relying upon God), not like a boat carried by the waves of the sea to be dashed against a rock. If the heart stay on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, it is not an evil heart of unbelief. Such doubtings consist with the indwelling of the Spirit, who is in the heart, to perform the office of a Comforter against such fears and to expel those thick fumes of nature.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 3.—"*What time I am afraid,*" etc. I know not what to do, but I'll try my old way, 'tis good for me to draw near still; I'll do so still as I use to do; I'll cast myself down upon the free grace of Christ in the promises; I'll lay the weight of my sinking spirit there, I'll renew my hold, life, expectation there; this is my old path, I'll never be turned or beaten out here. This Christian in his strength may challenge all the gates of hell. This was David's course (Ps. lxxi. 5), "Thou art my trust from my youth," etc. Thence was it that he could say, "*What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee:*" his shield and sword was always in his hand, therefore he could make use of it when fear and inward trouble offered themselves. "*Afraid!*" alas, who is not? but what course will you take then? Even what course you used to take, *i.e.*, believe; use faith always; and have it now.—*Elias Pledger* (—1676), *in* "*Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 3.—"*What time,*" etc. Literally, "*What day.*" As "Man *daily* oppresseth me" (ver. 1), so "Every *day*, when I am afraid, I trust in thee."—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 3.—It is a good maxim with which to go into a world of danger; a good maxim to go to sea with; a good maxim in a storm; a good maxim when in danger on the land; a good maxim when we are sick; a good maxim when we think of death and the judgment—"*What time I am afraid,* I WILL TRUST IN THEE."—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 3.—"*I will trust in thee.*" Faith and fear stand together; and so fear and love.—*John Richardson,* 1654.

Verses 3, 4.—Sometimes faith comes from prayer in triumph, and cries, *Victoria.* It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian's soul, before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. So Hannah prayed, "and was no more sad." 1 Samuel i. 18. Yea, it will make the Christian disburse his praises for the mercy long before it is received. Thus high faith wrought in David. "*At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee,*" and in the next words, "*In God I will praise his word;*" that is, he would praise God for his promise before there was any performance of it to him, when it had no existence but in God's faithfulness and David's faith. This holy man had such a piercing eye of faith, that he could see the promise when he was at the lowest ebb of misery, so certain and unquestionable in the power and truth of God, that he could then praise God as if the promised mercy had been actually fulfilled to him.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—"*In God I will praise his word.*" Or, praise him for his word; for the whole Scripture that was then in being.—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—The best hold that faith can have of God, is to take him by "*his word,*" however his dispensation seems to be; this will give satisfaction at length; for "*In God I will praise his word,*" is as much as to say, albeit he withhold comfort

and deliverance from me, so that I cannot find what I would, yet let me have "*his word*," and I will give him the glory of all his attributes.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.*" Fear not man, he is but flesh. Thou needest not, thou oughtest not to fear. Thou needest not. What, not such a great man; not such a number of men, who have the keys of all the prisons at their girdle; who can kill or save alive? No, not these; only look they be thy enemies for righteousness' sake. Take heed thou makest not the least child thine enemy, by offering wrong to him; God will right the wicked even upon the saint. If he offends he shall find no shelter under God's wing for his sin. This made Jerome complain that the Christians' sin made the arms of those barbarous nations which invaded Christendom victorious: *Nostris peccatis fortes sunt barbari.* But if man's wrath find thee in God's way, and his fury take fire at thy holiness, thou needest not fear though thy life be the prey he hunts for. Flesh can only wound flesh; he may kill thee, but not hurt thee. Why shouldest thou fear to be stripped of that which thou hast resigned already to Christ? It is the first lesson thou learnest, if a Christian, to deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow thy master; so that the enemy comes too late; thou hast no life to lose, because thou hast given it already to Christ; nor can man take away that without God's leave; all thou hast is insured; and though God hath not promised thee immunity from suffering in this kind, yet he hath undertaken to bear the loss, yea, to pay thee a hundredfold, and thou shalt not stay for it till another world. Again, thou oughtest not to fear flesh. Our Saviour (Matt. x.) thrice, in the compass of six verses, commands us not to fear man: if thy heart quail at him, how wilt thou behave thyself in the list against Satan, whose little finger is heavier than man's loins? The Romans had *arma prælusoria*, weapons rebated, or cudgels, which they were tried at before they came to the sharp. If thou canst not bear a bruise in thy flesh from man's cudgels and blunt weapons, what wilt thou do when thou shalt have Satan's sword in thy side? God counts himself reproached when his children fear a sorry man; therefore we are bid sanctify the Lord, not to fear their fear.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—"*I will not fear,*" etc. Eusebius tells us of a notable speech that Ignatius used when he was in his enemies' hands, not long before he was to suffer, which argued a raised spirit to a wonderful height above the world, and above himself. "I care," says he, "for nothing visible or invisible, that I might get Christ. Let fire, the cross, the letting out of beasts upon me, breaking of my bones, the tearing of my members, the grinding of my whole body, and the torments of the devils come upon me, so be it I may get Christ.—*From Jeremiah Burroughs' "Moses his Self-denyall,"* 1649.

Verse 4.—"*What flesh can do,*" etc. It is according to the phrase of Scripture, when it would speak contemptibly of man and show him to be the lowest creature, to call him "flesh," to set forth the weakness that man is subject to.—*John Arrowsmith,* 1600—1660.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—*Fear of man*—grim idol, bloody mouthed; many souls has he devoured and trampled down into hell! His eyes are full of hatred to Christ's disciples. Scoffs and jeers lurk in his eye. The laugh of the scorner growls in his throat. Cast down this idol. This keeps some of you from secret prayer, from worshipping God in your family, from going to lay your case before ministers, from openly confessing Christ. You that have felt God's love and Spirit, dash this idol to pieces. "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die?" "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." "What have I to do any more with idols?"—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne,* 1813—1843.

Verse 4.—Faith groweth valiant in fight; albeit it began like a coward, and staggered in the first conflict, yet it groweth stout, incontinent, and pulls its adversaries under foot: "*In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Every day they wrest my words;*" or, they put my words to pain and grief, or, they painfully and grievously wrest my words. David's enemies took up what he spake, and put a new shape upon it; and this they did so vexingly, that they are said to "*wrest*" his words: a thing is vexed when it is wrested or wrought quite out of the form it before had. The same metaphor the apostle Peter useth in reference to doctrine, speaking of the Epistles of Paul, in which "are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable *wrest.*" or put

upon the rack ; they painfully form his words, and represent them in a meaning which he never intended. 2 Pet. iii. 16. What is spoken may be right both in the matter and intendment of the speaker, yet another wrests, forms and fashions it in his own mould, and makes it bear a sense which the speaker never dreamed of.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—*"Every day they wrest my words,"* etc. Mr. Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury, who, according to his life, died most godly and patiently, at the point of death used the versicle of the Hymn, "Te Deum," "O Lord, in thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded," whereupon, suppressing the rest, they published, that the principal champion of the heretics, in his very last words, cried he was confounded.—*Lord Bacon's "Bible Thoughts."*

Verse 5.—*"They wrest my words."* Whatever Christ said in justification of himself was twisted to a meaning injurious to him. So it is still in the world, self-justification by words answers but little purpose with ungodly men.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*, 1860.

Verse 6.—*"They mark my steps."* Go whither I will, they are at my heels.—*William Nicholson* (1671), *in "David's Harp Strung and Tuned."*

Verse 8.—*"Put thou my tears in thy bottle."* Among other things in the collection of Mr. Abbott, of Cairo, he had a lachrymatory, or tear bottle, which had been found in a tomb at Thebes. This interested me very much. The custom in old times was, when a person was ill, or in great distress, for his friends to go to see him, and take with them a tear bottle. Then, as the tears rolled down the cheeks of the sufferer, they were caught in these bottles, sealed up, and preserved as a memorial of the event. This is what David referred to in Psalm lvi. 8. *"Put thou my tears into thy bottle."* But it implies much more than at first suggests itself, and much more than I can attempt to write. For instance, it is as if David had said, "Visit me, and behold my tears ;" ("O visit me with thy salvation !") for without such *visit* there could be no bottling of his tears. "Thou tellest my wanderings ; O visit me, and behold my anguish ; put my tears into thy bottle," for "they have been my meat day and night." Psalm xliii. 3. "Keep them before thee, by way of remembrance, and when thou seest the bottle, O think of him whose tears it contains. Are they not in thy book ?" That is, God's book of remembrance, that was written for those "who thought upon his name" (Mal. iii. 16), just as the kings of old used to keep a book of chronicles of important events. See Esther vi. 1—11.—*John Gadsby*, 1860.

[We insert this to show what has been said by others ; but we do not think there is the slightest allusion to this piece of *Roman* etiquette in this text.—*C. H. S.*]

Verse 8.—*"My tear :"* the singular used collectively. *"In thy bottle :"* as if one should say, take care of my tears, as of a kind of wine that is very costly, and very pleasant to thee ; or, that hereafter you may measure out to me just that quantity of joys : a metaphor from the keeper of a vineyard, who receives into his vessel the drops of the grapes pressed out by the wine-press of affliction. The word נאד (*uter**) denotes the manner in which they preserved their wine. (1 Samuel xvi. 20 ; Joshua ix. 4, 13), and milk also (Judges iv. 19).—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 8.—*"Put thou my tears into thy bottle."* What a sweet thought is suggested here of God's remembrance of his peoples' affliction ! It is an interesting figure of speech, of *bottling their tears.* But the sense is, they are remembered. And woe will be to the man that offends one of God's little ones on his account. What are now bottles of tears, will be poured out in the end as so many vials of wrath. But reader ! think how the tears of Jesus have been treasured up when shedding for the sins of his people.—*Robert Hawker*, 1753—1827.

Verse 8.—*"Put thou my tears into thy bottle."* It is the witty observation of one, that God is said in Scripture to have a bag and a bottle, a *bag* for our sins, and a *bottle* for our tears ; and that we should help to fill this, as we have that. There is an allusion here in the original that cannot be Englished.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—*"Are they not in thy book ?"* While we remain in this vale of misery, God keeps all our tears in a bottle ; so precious is the water that is distilled from penitent eyes : and because he will be sure not to fail, he notes how many drops there be in his register. It was a precious ointment wherewith the woman in the

* Leather or skin bottle.

Pharisee's house (it is thought Mary Magdalene) anointed the feet of Christ; but her *tears*, wherewith she washed them, were more worth than her spikenard.—*Abraham Wright, in "A Practical Commentary or Exposition upon the Book of Psalms,"* 1661.

Verse 9.—"*When I cry.*" The cry of faith and prayer to God is more dreadful to our spiritual foes than the war-whoop of the Indian is to his surprised brother savages.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—It was somewhat that when David prayed he was saved from his enemies. "I will call on the Lord: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." (2 Sam. xxii. 4); there is the *defensive* power of prayer; but it is more that it puts enemies to the foil. "*When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back*" and be put to flight: there is the *offensive* power of prayer. In David's tower there was an armoury, *thalpijoth*, a place to hang swords with two edges, swords with two mouths (Cant. iv. 4); a defensive and an offensive edge. Both edges must be used by such as seek safety. Prayer is a sword with two edges. "Put up thy sword into his place," says Christ to Peter; "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Matt. xxii. 52. But he that takes not this sword may happen to perish by the sword; and the drawing of this sword may save a man from perishing by the sword. Mark that last reason that our Saviour adds why Peter should put up his sword: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (ver. 53.) As if he had said, If it were my mind to confound these mine enemies that now set upon me, I should not need thy sword to do it. I could pray to my Father, and could presently by prayer bring such forces into the field as should rout and scatter all mine enemies; hereby implying, that if he would, he could do his enemies more damage and mischief by his prayers against them than by the sword and all instruments of war. Prayer is *twelve legions* strong, yea, twelve legions of angels strong against enemies.—*Jeremiah Dyke* (1620), *in the Righteous Man's Tower.*

Verse 9.—"*This I know.*" Faith goeth upon solid grounds, and is not a fallible conjecture, but a sure knowledge.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—"*In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word.*"—The first word, *Elohim*, is a name belonging to God as a judge, the second word, *Jehovah*, is a name of mercy. I will praise God whether he deal with me in a way of justice or in a way of mercy, when he hath thunder in his voice, as well as when he hath honey under his tongue. Oh, how should we praise God, and pleasure ourselves by such a frame!—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—By the assistance of God I shall be enabled to praise him for the performance of his promises.—*Symon Patrick*, 1626—1707.

Verse 12.—"*Thy vows are upon me, O God.*" Whoever is conversant with the Psalms of David, will find him frequently making *vows*, and careful in paying them. When these words dropt from him he was just delivered out of a pressing danger among the Philistines, with whom he took shelter from the rage of King Saul, who unweariedly pursued him; but he soon found that the remembrance of his past achievements to their damage was still so fresh amongst them, and they so exasperated thereupon, that his life was in constant danger. In his distress he flies to God, his wonted refuge, and sends up earnest addresses to him, *vowing* if he would open a way for his deliverance out of these new straits, he would show his grateful sense of so signal a mercy, by the exactness and accuracy of his future obedience. God hears and succours him; and he thereupon gratefully looks back, endeavours to renew the sense of his former obligation to his great Deliverer, and to stir up himself by suitable returns, and so cries out, "*Thy vows are upon me, O God;*" as if he should say, I resolve, O Lord, not to forget what was transacted while I was under my fears. Thou hast heard my cries, and I own myself firmly bound by my *vows*. I was serious and in earnest when I made them, and I will endeavour to show that I was so by my care to perform them. "*Thy vows*," O God, made indeed on my part, but justly to be exacted on thine, "*are upon me*," they do in reality hold me fast, and I desire not to be released. I am sensible I deserve to be stigmatised for a perfidious wretch if I ever forget them. This temper of holy David with reference to the *vows* he made on this occasion, should be ours

with reference to all the sacred *vows* we any way come under. All Christians, as such, are necessarily under *vows* to the blessed God; and particular circumstances may make it expedient for us to come under special engagements to him. But wherever they are such as that they may justly be denominated *vows of God, i.e.*, are such as his word will warrant; we should make holy David, as speaking in this text, our pattern, and set ourselves to imitate him, in seriously owning their binding force, and endeavouring to answer and pay them.—*Edmund Calamy, in "A Practical Discourse Concerning Vows,"* 1704.

Verse 12.—"*Thy vows are upon me, O God.*" A well-composed *vow* will make thee more circumspect and wary in the general course of thy life. Such an influence it hath, as doth more directly work on one particular part, yet is not terminated to that particular only. Thus it was with David. These "*vows*" were made when he was in danger of his life, as it seemeth from verse 13: for when God heard him, he delivered his soul from death: for this he vowed praises in particular, and he will render them. But, withal, he takes himself to be hereby engaged to a more exact and circumspect walk before God in all duties; so he expresseth himself in the latter part of verse 13.—*Henry Hurst* (1629—1696), *in "The Morning Exercise at Cripplegate,"* 1661.

Verses 12, 13.—"*Thy vows are upon me, O God.*" Passively, vows made to God, not by God; or the obligations of those vows and prayers which I have made and upon which I have received answers. Sacrifices of thanksgiving were called vows, as having been vowed to God upon the want, and to be paid upon the receipt, of mercy. Lev. i. 1, "If the sacrifice that is offered be a vow." Thy vows are upon me; the fruit of my vows, so that I stand indebted to God for the return of praise. "*Thou hast delivered.*" He understands some great danger wherein he had sunk had not God stood by him, and from a greater mercy, the deliverance of his soul from death, argues for a less, the keeping his feet from falling. "*That I may walk before God in the light of the living.*" By light of the living is meant life, which is called being enlightened with the "light of the living." Job. xxxiii. 30. Sometimes eternal life in heaven. John viii. 12, "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "To walk before God." To walk obediently in the sight of God; with a respect to his presence; a walking unto all well pleasing. This is the last argument in the Psalm whereon he builds his strongest plea, as if he knew not what to urge if this should fail him; as if he should have said, Lord, I have had experience of thy wisdom in contriving, thy power in effecting, thy mercy in bestowing deliverance upon me, thy goodness in answering my vows and prayers. "Thou hast delivered from death," a danger as great and unavoidable as death itself; O Lord, art not thou the same as thou wert? Art not thou still as wise to design, and as gracious to confer further mercy? Wilt thou not as certainly also deliver my feet from falling? The one contains his experience, the other the inference or conclusion he draws from it. Mercies received are in a special manner to be remembered. Mercies received are encouragements to ask, and strong grounds to hope for the mercies we want.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 13.—"*From falling,*" or, as more literally translated, from a *thrust*, or a *push*, by which one is caused to fall.—*O. Prescott Hiller.*

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—*To walk in the presence of God* is partly under his eyes, his guidance and care, partly in particular, where God is wont to be *present*, where he is *worshipped* by his people, and scatters his blessings, opposed to his present state by which he was removed from the place of his worship and presence. Conf. 1 Sam. xxvi. 19, etc. Lastly, *to walk in the light of the living* denotes in general to live amongst *those who live in the light*, or who enjoy the *light*, as it is said elsewhere, *in the land of the living*—Psalm xxvii. 13; Isaiah xxxviii. 11; liii. 8; Ezekiel xxxii. 32; Psalm cxlii. 6—opposed to the *dead* or *the region of the dead*, who dwell *in darkness*. But in particular it signifies to live in a *safe* and *prosperous* state, whose well-known emblem is *light.*—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—We cannot restrict this phrase to the light of mortal life; David's vows bound him to walk in the *light of spiritual life*, and also in the *light of eternal life*, of which by faith he was a partaker. And most commentators have applied this verse to the *light of glory* in the world to come, as the real and final object of the believer's conversation here on earth.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS

Verses 2, 3.—I. *Fears are common to all men,* at one time or another. II. *Improper and inefficacious means* of removing fear are often resorted to. III. There is here suggested *a true and effectual method* of removing fear.—*Robert Morrison* (1782—1834), *in "A Parting Memorial."*

Verse 3.—"*What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*" Whensoever we are afraid of any evil, we are still to put our trust in God. I. What is it to put our trust in God? 1. To keep our hearts from desponding or sinking down under any fears. 2. To comfort ourselves in God. 3. To expect deliverance from him. II. What is there in God we ought to put our trust in? 1. In his promises. 2. In his properties. His power, wisdom, justice, mercy, all-sufficiency. III. Why should we in all our fears put our trust in God? 1. Because there is none else can secure us from our fears. Whereas, 2. There are no fears but God can secure us from them, either by removing the thing feared, or by subduing the fear of the thing.—*Bishop Beveridge.*

Verse 3.—I. There is fear without trust. II. There is trust without fear. III. There is fear and trust united.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—1. From iniquity there is an escape. II. By iniquity there is no escape. The mercy of God secures the one. The justice of God prevents the other.—*G. R.*

Verse 8.—Here are—I. Manifold mercies, to reclaim from wanderings. II. Tender mercies, putting tears in a bottle. III. Covenant mercies, "Are they not," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 9.—I. God is on the side of his people. II. He is known to be on their side. III. In answer to prayer he appears on their side. IV. When he appears enemies flee. Or—1. The fact, God is for me. II. The knowledge of that fact—"This I know." III. The use of that knowledge—"When I cry," etc. IV. The consequence of that use—"Mine enemies turn back."—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—"I will praise God *for* his word." II. *In* his word, as he is there revealed. III. *By* his word. "Thou hast put a song," etc.

Verse 12.—Here is—I. Past dedication. II. Present consecration. III. Future glorification.—*G. R.*

Verses 12, 13.—You have here—1. The commemoration of former mercies: "Thou hast delivered." 2. The confidence of future: "Wilt not thou." 3. The end of all: "To walk before God in the light of the living."—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 13.—I. The language of Gratitude—"Thou hast," etc. II. Of Faith—"Wilt not thou," etc. III. Of Hope—"That I may walk," etc.—*G. R.*

PSALM LVII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician.—*So glad a song as this becomes ere it closes, should be in the keeping of the most skilled of all the temple minstrels.* Al-taschith, *i.e.*, DESTROY NOT. *This petition is a very sententious prayer, as full as it is brief, and well worthy to be the motto for a sacred song. David had said, "destroy not," in reference to Saul, when he had him in his power and now he takes pleasure in employing the same words in supplication to God. We may infer from the spirit of the Lord's prayer, that the Lord will spare us as we spare our foes. There are four of these "*Destroy not*" Psalms, namely, the 57th, 58th, 59th, and 75th. In all of them there is a distinct declaration of the destruction of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous, and they all have probably a reference to the overthrow of the Jews, on account of their persecution of the great Son of David : they will endure heavy chastisement, but concerning them it is written in the divine decree, "Destroy them not."* Michtam of David. *For quality this Psalm is called golden, or a secret, and it well deserves the name. We may read the words and yet not know the secret joy of David, which he has locked up in this golden casket.* When he fled from Saul in the cave. *This is a song from the bowels of the earth, and, like Jonah's prayer from the bottom of the sea, it has a taste of the place. The poet is in the shadow of the cave at first, but he comes to the cavern's mouth at last, and sings in the sweet fresh air, with his eye on the heavens, watching joyously the clouds floating therein.*

DIVISIONS.—*We have here prayer,* 1—6, *and praise,* 7—11. *The hunted one takes a long breath of prayer, and when he is fully inspired, he breathes out his soul in jubilant song.*

EXPOSITION.

BE merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me : for my soul trusteth in thee : yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast.

2 I will cry unto God most high ; unto God that performeth *all things* for me.

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me *from* the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

4 My soul *is* among lions : *and* I lie *even among* them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ; *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.

6 They have prepared a net for my steps ; my soul is bowed down : they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves*. Selah.

1. *"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me."* Urgent need suggests the repetition of the cry, for thus intense urgency of desire is expressed. If "he gives twice who gives quickly," so he who would receive quickly must ask twice. For mercy the Psalmist pleads at first, and he feels he cannot improve upon his plea, and therefore returns to it. God is the God of mercy, and the Father of mercies, it is most fit therefore that in distress we should seek mercy from him in whom it dwells. *"For my soul trusteth in thee."* Faith urges her suit right well. How can the Lord be unmerciful to a trustful soul ? Our faith does not deserve mercy, but it always wins it from the sovereign grace of God when it is sincere, as in this case where *the soul* of the man believed. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." *"Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge."* Not in the cave alone would he hide, but in the cleft of the Rock of ages. As the little birds find ample shelter beneath the parental wing, even so would the fugitive place

himself beneath the secure protection of the divine power. The emblem is delightfully familiar and suggestive. May we all experimentally know its meaning. When we cannot see the sunshine of God's face, it is blessed to cower down beneath the shadow of his wings. "*Until these calamities be overpast.*" Evil will pass away, and the eternal wings will abide over us till then. Blessed be God, our calamities are matters of time, but our safety is a matter of eternity. When we are under the divine shadow, the passing over of trouble cannot harm us; the hawk flies across the sky, but this is no evil to the chicks when they are safely nestling beneath the hen.

2. "*I will cry.*" He is quite safe, but yet he prays, for faith is never dumb. We pray because we believe. We exercise by faith the spirit of adoption whereby we cry. He says not, I do cry, or I have cried, but I will cry, and indeed, this resolution may stand with all of us until we pass through the gates of pearl; for while we are here below we shall still have need to cry. "*Unto God most high*"—Prayers are for God only; the greatness and sublimity of his person and character suggest and encourage prayer: however high our enemies, our heavenly Friend is higher, for he is "*Most high,*" and he can readily send from the height of his power the succour which we need. "*Unto God that performeth all things for me.*" He has cogent reason for praying, for he sees God performing The believer waits and God works. The Lord has undertaken for us, and he will not draw back, he will go through with his covenant engagements. Our translators have very properly inserted the words, "all things," for there is a blank in the Hebrew, as if it were a *carte blanche*, and you might write therein that the Lord would finish anything and everything which he has begun. Whatsoever the Lord takes in hand he will accomplish; hence past mercies are guarantees for the future, and admirable reasons for continuing to cry unto him.

3. "*He shall send from heaven.*" If there be no fit instruments on earth, heaven shall yield up its legions of angels for the succour of the saints. We may in times of great straits expect mercies of a remarkable kind; like the Israelites in the wilderness, we shall have our bread hot from heaven, new every morning; and for the overthrow of our enemies God shall open his celestial batteries, and put them to utter confusion. Wherever the battle is more fierce than ordinary, there shall come succours from headquarters, for the Commander-in-chief sees all. "*And save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.*" He will be in time, not only to rescue his servants from being swallowed up, but even from being reproached. Not only shall they escape the flames, but not even the smell of fire shall pass upon them. O dog of hell, I am not only delivered from thy bite, but even from thy bark. Our foes shall not have the power to sneer at us, their cruel jests and taunting gibes shall be ended by the message from heaven, which shall for ever save us. "*Selah.*" Such mercy may well make us pause to meditate and give thanks. Rest, singer, for God has given thee rest! "*God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.*" He asked for mercy, and truth came with it. Thus evermore doth God give us more than we ask or think. His attributes, like angels on the wing, are ever ready to come to the rescue of his chosen.

4. "*My soul is among lions.*" He was a very Daniel. Howled at, hunted, wounded, but not slain. His place was in itself one of extreme peril, and yet faith made him feel himself secure, so that he could lie down. The cave may have reminded him of a lion's den, and Saul and his band shouting and yelling in their disappointment at missing him, were the lions; yet beneath the divine shelter he felt himself safe. "*And I lie even among them that are set on fire.*" Perhaps Saul and his band kindled a fire in the cavern while they halted in it, and David was thus reminded of the fiercer fire of their hate which burned within their hearts. Like the bush in Horeb, the believer is often in the midst of flames, but never consumed. It is a mighty triumph of faith when we can lie down even among firebrands and find rest, because God is our defence. "*Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.*" Malicious men carry a whole armoury in their mouths; they have not harmless mouths, whose teeth grind their own food as in a mill, but their jaws are as mischievous as if every tooth were a javelin or an arrow. They have no molars, all their teeth are canine, and their nature is canine, leonine, wolfish, devilish. As for that busy member the tongue, in the case of the malicious, it is a two-edged, keen, cutting, killing sword. The tongue, which is here compared to a sword, has the adjective *sharp* added to it, which is not used in reference to the teeth, which are compared to spears, as if to show

that if men were actually to tear us with their teeth, like wild beasts, they could not thereby wound us so severely as they can do with their tongues. No weapon is so terrible as a tongue sharpened on the devil's grindstone; yet even this we need not fear, for "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

5. "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.*" This is the chorus of the Psalm. Before he has quite concluded his prayer the good man interjects a verse of praise; and glorious praise too, seeing it comes up from the lion's den and from amid the coals of fire. Higher than the heavens is the Most High, and so high ought our praises to rise. Above even the power of cherubim and seraphim to express it, the glory of God is revealed and is to be acknowledged by us. "*Let thy glory be above all the earth.*" As above, so below, let thy praises, O thou great Jehovah, be universally proclaimed. As the air surrounds all nature, so let thy praises gird the earth with a zone of song.

6. "*They have prepared a net for my steps.*" The enemies of the godly spare no pains, but go about their wicked work with the coolest deliberation. As for each sort of fish, or bird, or beast, a fitting net is needed, so do the ungodly suit their net to their victim's circumstances and character with a careful craftiness of malice. Whatever David might do, and whichever way he might turn, his enemies were ready to entrap him in some way or other. "*My soul is bowed down.*" He was held down like a bird in a trap; his enemies took care to leave him no chance of comfort. "*They have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.*" He likens the designs of his persecutors to pits, which were commonly dug by hunters to entrap their prey; these were made in the usual path of the victim, and in this case David says, "*before me,*" *i.e.*, in my ordinary way. He rejoices because these devices had recoiled upon themselves. Saul hunted David, but David caught him more than once and might have slain him on the spot. Evil is a stream which one day flows back to its source. "*Selah.*" We may sit down at the pit's mouth and view with wonder the just retaliations of providence.

7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.
8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I *myself* will awake early.
9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.
10 For thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.
11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.

7. "*My heart is fixed.*" One would have thought he would have said, "My heart is fluttered;" but no, he is calm, firm, happy, resolute, established. When the central axle is secure, the whole wheel is right. If our great bower anchor holds, the ship cannot drive. "*O God, my heart is fixed.*" I am resolved to trust thee, to serve thee, and to praise thee. Twice does he declare this to the glory of God who thus comforts the souls of his servants. Reader, it is surely well with thee, if thy once roving heart is now firmly fixed upon God and the proclamation of his glory. "*I will sing and give praise.*" Vocally and instrumentally will I celebrate thy worship. With lip and with heart will I ascribe honour to thee. Satan shall not stop me, nor Saul, nor the Philistines. I will make Adullam ring with music, and all the caverns thereof echo with joyous song. Believer, make a firm decree that your soul in all seasons shall magnify the Lord.

"Sing, though sense and carnal reason
Fain would stop the joyful song:
Sing, and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue."

8. "*Awake up, my glory.*" Let the noblest powers of my nature bestir themselves: the intellect which conceives thought, the tongue which expresses it, and the inspired imagination which beautifies it—let all be on the alert now that the hour for praise has come. "*Awake, Psaltery and harp.*" Let all the music with which I am familiar be well attuned for the hallowed service of praise. "*I myself will awake early.*" I will awake the dawn with my joyous notes. No sleepy verses and weary notes shall be heard from me; I will thoroughly arouse myself for this

high employ. When we are at our best we fall far short of the Lord's deserts, let us, therefore, make sure that what we bring him is our best, and, if marred with infirmity, at least let it not be deteriorated by indolence. Three times the Psalmist calls upon himself to awake. Do we need so much arousing, and for such work? Then let us not spare it, for the engagement is too honourable, too needful to be left undone or ill done for want of arousing ourselves.

9. "*I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.*" Gentiles shall hear my praise. Here is an instance of the way in which the truly devout evangelic spirit o'erleaps the boundaries which bigotry sets up. The ordinary Jew would never wish the Gentile dogs to hear Jehovah's name, except to tremble at it; but this grace-taught Psalmist has a missionary spirit, and would spread the praise and fame of his God. "*I will sing unto thee among the nations.*" However far off they may be, I would make them hear of thee through my glad Psalmody.

10. "*For thy mercy is great unto the heavens.*" Right up from man's lowliness to heaven's loftiness mercy reaches. Imagination fails to guess the height of heaven, and even thus the riches of mercy exceed our highest thoughts. The Psalmist, as he sits at the cave's mouth and looks up to the firmament, rejoices that God's goodness is vaster and sublimer than even the vaulted skies. "*And thy truth unto the clouds.*" Upon the cloud he sets the seal of his truth, the rainbow, which ratifies his covenant; in the cloud he hides his rain and snow, which prove his truth by bringing to us seedtime and harvest, cold and heat. Creation is great, but the Creator greater far. Heaven cannot contain him; above clouds and stars his goodness far exceeds.

11. "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.*" A grand chorus. Take it up, ye angels and ye spirits made perfect, and join in it, ye sons of men below, as ye say, "*Let thy glory be above all the earth.*" The prophet in the previous verse spoke of mercy "unto the heavens," but here his song flies "above the heavens;" praise rises higher and higher, and knows no bound.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—This Psalm was composed, as the title notes, by David prayer-wise, when he hid himself from Saul in the cave, and is inscribed with a double title, *Al-taschith, Michtam of David. Al-taschith* refers to the scope, and *Michtam* to the dignity of the subject-matter. The former signifies *destroy not*, or, let there be no slaughter; and may either refer to Saul, concerning whom he gave charge to his servants not to destroy him; or rather it hath reference to God, to whom in this great exigence he poured out his soul in this pathetical ejaculation; *Al-taschith*, destroy not. The latter title, *Michtam*, signifies a golden ornament, and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the Psalm, which much more deserves such a title than Pythagoras' golden verses did.—*John Flavel* (1627—1691), *in "Divine Conduct, or the Mystery of Providence."*

Title.—A Psalm composed *when David fled from Saul in the cave*, which is referred to in Ps. cxlii., and which, because it is without any other distinction called "the cave," is probably that celebrated cave where David with his six hundred followers lay concealed when Saul entered and David cut off the skirt of his robe. The king, accompanied by three thousand followers, chased him to the loftiest alpine heights—"to the sheep-cotes," where the cattle where driven in the hottest summer months only—to hunt him in every hiding-place. There was a cave, in the darkened cool of which David and his men were hid. Such caves in Palestine and the East are frequently enlarged by human hands, and so capacious that they accommodate thousands of people. This song of complaint was written during the hours of suspense which David spent there, to wait until the calamity was overpast (ver. 2); in which he only gradually gains a stout heart (ver. 8). His life was really suspended by a hair if Saul or any of his attendants had espied him!—*Augustus F. Tholuck*, 1856.

Title.—"*The cave.*" There appear good grounds for the local tradition which fixes the cave on the borders of the Dead Sea, although there is no certainty with

regard to the particular cave pointed out. The cave so designated is at a point to which David was far more likely to summon his parents, whom he intended to take from Bethlehem into Moab, than to any place in the western plains. . . . . It is an immense natural cavern, the mouth of which can be approached only on foot along the side of the cliff. Irby and Mangles, who visited it without being aware that is was the reputed Cave of Adullam, state that it " runs in by a long winding, narrow passage, with small chambers or cavities on either side. We soon came to a large chamber with natural arches of great height ; from this last there were numerous passages, leading in all directions, occasionally joined by others at right angles, and forming a perfect labyrinth, which our guides assured us had never been perfectly explored—the people being afraid of losing themselves. The passages are generally four feet high by three feet wide, and were all on a level with each other." . . . . It seems probable that David as a native of Bethlehem, must have been well acquainted with this remarkable spot, and had probably often availed himself of its shelter, when out with his father's flocks. It would, therefore, naturally occur to him as a place of refuge when he fled from Gath.—*John Kitto* (1804—1854), *in " A Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature."*

Whole Psalm.—Mystically this hymn may be construed of Christ, who was in the days of his flesh assaulted by the tyranny both of spiritual and temporal enemies. His temporal enemies, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, furiously raged and took counsel together against him. The chief priests and princes were, saith Hierome, like *lions*, and the people like the *whelps of lions*, all of them in a readiness to devour his soul. The rulers *laid a net for his feet* in their captious interrogatories, asking (Matt. xxii. 17), " Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not ? " and (John viii. 5) whether the woman taken in the very act of adultery should be stoned to death or no. The people were " *set on fire,*" when as they raged against him, and *their teeth and tongues were spears and swords*, in crying, " Crucify him, crucify him." His spiritual enemies also sought *to swallow him up ;* his *soul* was *among lions* all the days of his life, at the hour of his death especially. The devil in tempting and troubling him, had *laid a snare for his feet ;* and death, in *digging a pit* for him, had thought *to devour* him. As David was in the *cave*, so Christ the Son of David was in the *grave.—John Boys*, 1571—1625.

Verse 1.—" *Be merciful unto me, O God,*" etc. This excellent Psalm was composed by David when there was enough to discompose the best man in the world. The repetition notes both the extremity of the danger, and the ardency of the supplicant. *Mercy ! Mercy ! Nothing but mercy*, and that exerting itself in an extraordenary way, can now save him from ruin. The arguments he pleads for obtaining mercy in this distress are very considerable. 1. He pleads his reliance upon God as an argument to move mercy. " *My soul trusteth in thee,*" etc. This his trust and dependence upon God, though it be not argumentative in respect of the dignity of the *act ;* yet it is so in respect both of the nature of the *object*, a compassionate God, who will not expose any that take shelter under his wings, and in respect of the *promise*, whereby protection is assured to them that fly to him for sanctuary. Isa. xxvi. 3. 2. He pleads former experiences of his help in past distresses, as an argument encouraging hope under the present strait (ver. 2). —*John Flavel.*

Verse 1.—" *Be merciful unto me.*" According to the weight of the burden that grieveth us, is the cry that comes from us. How do poor condemned prisoners cry to their judges, " Have pity upon us, have pity upon us ! " David, in the day of his calamities doubles his prayer for mercy : " *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me : for my soul trusteth in thee,*" etc. " *Until these calamities be overpast.*" It was not a single calamity, but a multitude of calamities which compassed David, and therefore he compasseth the Lord about with petitions. His spirit being up in prayer, like a bell that rings out, he strikes on both sides, " *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1.—" *Be merciful unto me.*" The first clause contains the prayer itself in a very forcible word חנני, properly, " Show thy most tender affection to me," such as animals, with a humming sound, show to their young.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1.—" *For my soul trusteth in thee.*" The best reason with God, who " taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy." Ps. cxlvii. 11.—*Pool's Synopsis.*

Verse 1.—" *Soul.*" His *soul* trusted in God ; and this is a form of expression

the force of which is not to be overlooked; for it implies that the trust which he exercised proceeded from his very innermost affections—that it was of no volatile character, but deeply and strongly rooted. He declares the same truth in figurative terms, when he adds his persuasion that God would cover him with the shadow of his wings.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"*In the shadow of thy wings I will trust;*" properly, I will seek for protection. The very delightful figure here employed, is taken from the chicken lying safely hid under the mother's wings: at the same time it seems to have reference to the wings of the cherubim, by which the mercy-seat was covered.—*Simon de Muis,* 1587—1644.

Verse 1.—"*The shadow of thy wings.*" Compare Psalm xvii. 8; lxi. 4; and Matthew xxiii. 37; and the Apocalyptic imagery, describing the church fleeing from the dragon in the wilderness; and "to her are given the two wings of the great eagle," and she is delivered from the dragon, who desires to *swallow her up.* See Rev. xii. 6, 15, 16.—*Christopher Wordsworth,* 1868.

Verse 1.—"*Until these calamities be overpast.*" He compareth his affliction and calamity to a storm that cometh and goeth: as it is not always fair weather with us in this life, so not always foul. Athanasius said of Julian furiously raging against the Lord's Anointed, "*Nubecula est, cito transibit,*" he is a little cloud; he will soon pass away. Man is born to labour and dolor, to travail and trouble; to labour in his actions, to dolor in his passions; and so, "Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all." If we put our trust in him and cast all our care upon him, he will in his good time bring it to pass, that all our afflictions shall overpass. He will either take them from us or us from them, and then we shall assuredly know that the troubles of this life present are not worthy of the glory which in the life to come shall be showed unto us. For as the globe of the earth, which improperly for his show of bigness we term the world, and is, after the mathematician's account, many thousand miles in compass; yet, being compared unto the greatness of the starry sky's circumference, is but a centre or little prick: so the travail and affliction in this life temporal, in respect of the joys eternal in the world to come, bear not any proportion, but are to be reputed in comparison a very nothing, as a dark cloud that cometh and goeth in a moment.—*John Boys.*

Verses 1, 2, 3.—"*In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast,*" etc. As if he said, Lord, I am already in the cave and in the hold, and in the shadow of it, but yet for all that I think not myself safe indeed, till I have made my refuge in the shadow of thy wings: that is therefore the course I resolve and build upon. It was wisely done of him: and mark what course he takes to do it, verse 2, "I will cry unto God most high," I wi l by prayer put myself under the shadow of God's wings; and mark what success should follow, verse 3, "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth." When we send prayers up to heaven, God will send help down from heaven. But yet David *prays* to God, as well as *trusts* in God. And unless we pray as well as trust, our trust will fail us, for we must trust to God for that we pray for.—*Jeremiah Dyke,* 1620.

Verse 2.—"*Unto God that performeth all things for me.*" God's favours already received are a pledge that he will complete his work of love "*upon* (עַל) *me.*" The beginning is the earnest of the completion. His *word* is a gurantee for the *performance* of "all things" that I need. (Compare verse 3; Psalm lvi. 4; 1 Samuel ii. 9; iii. 12; xxiii. 17; xxiv. 21; Psalm cxxviii. 8; Job x. 3, 8; xiv, 15; Philippians i. 6; Isaiah xxvi. 12).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 2.—"*God that performeth all things for me.*" Heb. *that performeth* (or *perfecteth,* or *finisheth,* as this word is rendered, Psalm cxxxviii. 8; *i.e.,* will certainly perform or finish), *for,* or *towards,* or *concerning me.* He doth not express what he performeth, or perfecteth, or fulfilleth, but leaveth it to be understood, as being easy to be understood. "*He performeth*" or *perfecteth,* to wit, all that he hath promised; engaged himself to perform what he hath begun to do, or what is yet to be performed; it being usual in the Hebrew language to understand a verbal noun after the verb. He implies that God is not like men, who make large promises, but either through inability, or carelessness, or unfaithfulness, do not perform them, but will certainly be as good as his word.—*Matthew Pool,* 1624—1679.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The word which we translate "*performeth*" comes from a

root that signifies both to *perfect* and to *desist* or *cease*. For when a business is performed and perfected, the agent then ceases and desists from working: he puts to the last hand when he finishes the work. To such a happy issue the Lord hath brought all his doubtful and difficult matters before; and this gives him encouragement that he will still be gracious, and perfect that which concerneth him now, as he speaks, Psalm cxxxviii. 8, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." The Septuagint renders it by τόν ἐνεργετη σοντά με, who *profiteth* or *benefiteth* me. And it is a certain truth, that all the results and issues of providence are profitable and beneficial to the saints. But the supplement in our translation well conveys the importance of the place: "who performeth *all things*;" and it involves the most strict and proper notion of providence, which is nothing else but the performance of God's gracious purposes and promises to his people. And therefore Vatablus and Muis supply and fill up the room which the conciseness of the original leaves, with *quæ promisit:* "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth *the things which he hath promised.*" Payment is the performance of promises. Grace makes the promise, and providence the payment. Piscator fills it with *benignitatem et misericordiam suam;* "unto God that performeth *his kindness and mercy.*" But still it supposes the mercy performed to be contained in the promise, and much more so in the providential performance of it to us.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—David even then when he fled from Saul in the cave he looks upon God as having *performed all things for him.* The word is, he hath *perfected all things;* and it is observable that David uses the same expression of praising God here when he was in the cave, hiding himself to save his life as he did when he triumphed over his enemies.—Ps. vi. and Ps. cviii.—*Jeremiah Burroughs,* 1599—1646.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The Targum curiously paraphrases this clause: "Who ordered the spider that wrought the web, on my account, at the mouth of the cave;" applying a later historical fact, which, however, may have had its prototype in David's history.—*Andrew A. Bonar. in "Christ and his Church in the Book of Psalms,"* 1859.

Verse 3.—"*Him that would swallow me up.*" If I were to take you to my house, and say that I had an exquisitely fat man, and wished you to join me in eating him, your indignation could be restrained by nothing. You would pronounce me to be crazy. There is not in New York a man so mean that he would not put down a man who should propose to have a banquet off from a fellow man, cutting steaks out of him, and eating them. And that is nothing but feasting on the human body, while they all will sit down, and take a man's soul, and look for the tender loins, and invite their neighbours in to partake of the little titbits. They will take a man's honour and name, and broil them over the coals of their indignation, and fill the whole room with the aroma thereof, and give their neighbour a piece, and watch him, and wink as he tastes it. You all eat men up. . . . You eat the souls, the finest elements of men. You are more than glad if you can whisper a word that is derogatory to a neighbour, or his wife, or his daughter. . . . The morsel is too exquisite to be lost. Here is the soul of a person, here is a person's hope for this world and the world to come, and you have it on your fork, and you cannot refrain from tasting it, and give it to some one else to taste. You are cannibals, eating men's honour and name and rejoicing in it—and that, too, when you do not always know that the things charged against them are true; when in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the probabilities are that they are not true.—*Henry Ward Beecher,* 1870.

Verse 3.—"*God shall send forth his mercy and his truth,*" viz., to save me. That is to say, God, to manifest his mercy, and vindicate the truth of his promises, will save me. The reader will observe, that mercy and truth are here poetically represented as ministers of God, standing in his presence, ready to execute his pleasure, and employed by him in the salvation of his people.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 3.—"*His mercy and his truth.*" He need not send down angels, he need send but "*mercy and truth*" down, which elsewhere it is said he prepares in the heavens. Ps. lxi. 7. He prepares commissions for them, and sends them down with them for execution.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 4.—"*My soul is among lions.*" This may also be construed of the church and that both in respect of her spiritual enemies and temporal. As for her ghostly

foes, the devil is a *roaring lion* (1 Pet. v. 8), and our sins are the *whelps of lions*, ready to devour us. And concerning outward enemies, the church in this world is like Daniel in the lion's den, or as "the sucking child playing upon the hole of the asp." Isa. xi. 8. She hath here no visible power or outward help to fly to for succour, all her trust is in the Lord, and "under the shadow of his wings is her refuge, till this evil is overpast." . . . . And surely, beloved, if the church had not any other enemies, but only these monstrous Antichrists of Rome, yet she might truly complain with our prophet here, "*My soul is among lions.*" Eleven popes had that name, whereof all, excepting two or three, were roaring lions in their Bulls, and ravening lions in seeking after their prey. *Leo* the tenth so pilled* and polled† the goodly nations of Germany with his impardonable pardons and merciless indulgences, as that his insupportable cruelty gave the first occasion of the Reformation of religion in that country.—*John Boys.*

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—"Mudge translates literally, 'I lie with my soul amidst lionesses.'" This agrees with the opinion of Bochart, who thinks that the animals here intended are lionesses, properly, when giving suck to their young, a time when they are peculiarly fierce and dangerous, "nor need we wonder," he observes, "that the lioness is reckoned among the fiercest lions; for the lioness equals, or even exceeds, the lion in strength and fierceness;" and this he proves from the testimonies of ancient writers.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc.*, 1846.

Verse 4.—"*And I lie even among them that are set on fire.*" The whole pith lies in the word אֶשְׁכְּבָה, *I will recline*, which denotes a tranquil and secure condition of body and mind, like a man *reclining* and sleeping, as Ps. iii. 5: "*I laid me down and slept, I awaked;*" and lived composedly; Ps. iv. 9; "*I will both lay me down in peace,*" etc.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—The horrors of a lion's den, the burning of a fiery furnace, and the cruel onset of war, are the striking images by which David here describes the peril and wretchedness of his present condition.—*John Morison.*

Verse 6.—"*Net.*" Not having fire-arms, the ancients were much more skilful than the moderns in the use of snares, nets, and pits for capturing wild animals. A large class of Biblical figures and allusions necessarily presupposes this state of things.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 7.—"*My heart is fixed, O God,*" etc. The Psalmist, knowing that it is the order and work of God, first to prepare the heart for communion, and then to incline his own ear to hear his people, and to entertain communion with them in ordinances, he doth observe this order, and follow it with a practise suitable to it in his daily addresses to God, that is thus, wheresoever he doth find his heart put into a fitted and prepared frame for communion with God, he doth not let it die again, and go out of frame by a slothful neglect of such a disposition of heart. No, but he immediately sets himself to duty, to worship God, and to the acts of his worship, in his ordinances, as he expresseth himself in Ps. lvii, 7; viz., thus—נָכוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹהִים נָכוֹן לִבִּי, *Nachon libbi Elohim, nachon libbi* (there is the first; he finds his heart fitted and prepared for communion with God): "My heart," saith he, "is fitted or prepared" (for the word נָכוֹן, *nachon* is the passive conjugation *niphal*, signifying, he is fitted or prepared, from the root, כּוּן *chun*, he fitted or prepared, in the active; and so it is rather to be rendered prepared or fitted, then "fixed," thus: לִבִּי, *libbi*, my heart; נָכוֹן, *nachon*, is fitted or prepared), "O God, my heart is fitted or prepared" for communion with thee. Well, what follows? He presently sets himself upon that great duty and ordinance of communion with God, in the praising of his name and singing forth those praises, as in the words immediately following in the same verse, thus: "My heart is prepared, O God, my heart is prepared:" therefore, וַאֲזַמְּרָה, *ashidah va-azamerah*, "*I will sing and give praise.*"—*William Strong, in "Communion with God,"* 1656.

Verse 7.—"*My heart is fixed, O God,*" etc. Fitness for duty lies in the orderly temper of body and mind, making a man willing to undertake, and able to finish his work with comfortable satisfaction. If either the body or mind be distempered, a man is unfit for such an undertaking; both must be in a suitable frame, like a well-tuned instrument, else there will be no melody: hence when David prepared himself for praises and worship, he tells us *his heart was ready and fixed*, and then, his *tongue*

* Pill=peel, to pillage, plunder, strip. † Poll, used synonymously with peel.

was ready also (Psalm xlv. 1.), so was his hand with Psaltery and harp; all these were awakened into a suitable posture. That a man is or hath been in a fit order for service may be concluded from (1.) His alacrity to undertake a duty. (2.) His activity in the prosecution. (3.) His satisfaction afterward. Right grounds and principles in these things being still pre-supposed.—*Richard Gilpin*, (1625—1699, 1700) *in "Dæmonologia Sacra."*

Verse 7.—"*I will sing.*" It should alarm the wicked that they are contending with a people who sing and shout on the battle-field. Yea, they never sing louder than when most distressed and afflicted. Whether saints conquer or are conquered they still sing on. Blessed be God for that. Let sinners tremble at contending with men of a spirit so heavenly.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 7.—Sincerity makes the Christian sing, when he hath nothing to his supper, David was in none of the best case when in the cave, yet we never find him merrier: his heart makes sweeter music than ever his harp did.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 7, 8.—That worship that is performed with a sleepy, drowsy body, is a weak worship, but the Psalmist here makes the awaking of the body to be the fruit and effect of the preparation of the heart; "*Awake up, my glory; awake, Psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.*" Why so? My heart is prepared. The heart prepared and thereby awakened, will awake the body. To worship God therefore without a prepared heart, is to worship him with a drowsy body, because with a drowsy heart, and therefore weakly.—*John Angier, in "An Help to better Hearts, for better Times,"* 1647.

Verse 8.—"*Awake up, my glory; awake, Psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.*" We must prevent God by early praise as well as prayer; "The God of my mercy shall prevent me," sings David; and every child of David must prevent God again with his songs. Jehoshaphat delighted God with instruments of music before his deliverance. Faith must tune an ἐπινίκιον, a psalm of victory before the triumph. Praise is the ingenious mother of future mercies; as the Virgin Mary sang at Hebron before the birth of her son at Bethlehem. Oh, heavenly contention between mercy and duty!—*Samuel Lee*, 1625—1691.

Verse 8.—"*Awake up, my glory,*" etc. We must sing *with excited grace.* Not only with grace habitual, but with excited and actual: the musical instrument delights not but when it is played upon. In this duty we must follow Paul's advice to Timothy (2 Tim. i. 6), ἀναζωπυρεῖν, stir up the grace that is in us, and cry out as David, "*Awake love, awake delight.*" Ps. lvii. 8. The clock must be wound up before it can guide our time; the bird pleaseth not in her nest, but in her notes; the chimes only make music while they are going. Let us therefore beg the Spirit to blow upon our garden, that the spices thereof may flow out, when we set upon this joyous service. God loves active grace in duty, that the soul should be ready trimmed when it presents itself to Christ in any worship.—*John Wells, in "Morning Exercises,"* 1674.

Verse 8.—"*I will awake early,*" Literally, "I will awake the dawn," a bold figure of poetry, as if the writer had said—The morning shall not awake me to praise; but in my songs I will anticipate the dawn.—*R. T. Society's Notes.*

Verse 8.—It will answer our purpose to take notice, first, of the *terms* David uses, and then, secondly, press the *exhortation.* Of the terms he uses: 1. My *glory.* That is my *soul* (say some) because the spirit of a man is the glory of a man, whereby he is dignified and raised so much above the *brutes*, as to be but a "little lower than the angels," nay, to be akin to God himself, "the Father of spirits." My *musical skill*, say others, the glory of the artist above the unskilful; and that wherein David had the glory of excelling, as Jubal had of the first invention. My *tongue*, say others; for this is also the glory of a man above dumb creatures, and the glory of a wise man above a fool. And as the tongue is the glory of a man, so the glory of the tongue is to glorify God. Praise is the glory of all other uses to which the tongue is employed; and the tongue is, in the body, that "temple of the Holy Ghost," what the silver trumpet was in the temple of Solomon; to sound the high praises of God, and express the raised affections of our souls.

2. "*Awake Psaltery and harp.*" The one for a Psalm, the other for a spiritual song or hymn; that is to say, all my musical instruments and skill I will employ in, and consecrate to the glory of him who "puts new songs into my mouth." He first teaches my fingers to fight, and then to play the *epinikion*, or song of triumph. Sound, then, my Psaltery and harp, emulous of those that are around the throne

above; your melody can soften my cares, lay my fears, and turn my *cave* into a *choir*. As to these instruments in the worship of God, they were doubtless allowed to David, and to the church in his time. They were agreeable to the state of that church and people, who were led very much by their senses; and whose infant and less discerning condition made it needful for the natural man to have something to fasten upon and be entertained with in the worship of God, and to sweeten and take off from the labour and burden of that service. But as the gospel worship and appointments are a more spiritual, pleasant, and reasonable service, and need them less, so in the gospel institution we find no footsteps of them; and we know who first brought them into the church, as well as who first brought them into the world. It is not my business here to dispute this matter; and he must at any time do it but indifferently, whose inclination is against him all the while, and whose genius tempts him to wish himself solidly confuted in all he can advance. But since I find these instruments in my text, and since the sound of such texts as these is made use of to turn the public worship so frequently into concerts of music, I shall leave them with this remark: that to let them alone, especially in public worship, though one thought them tolerable, has a much better grace with it than to declare them "sorely displeasing to God, and that they filthily defile his holy house and place of prayer."

3. "*I myself will awake early.*" And without this, all the rest had been an empty sound; there would have been no melody to the Lord, whatsoever good music he might have made to himself. He would not put God off with a sacrifice of mere air. He summons the attendance of all his powers. Himself is the offering; and his music plays to the sacrifice, as it goes up in holy affections and spiritual joys; and unless these accompany the song, the mere breath of an organ, or the trembling of the strings of an harp is as good devotion and less offensive to God. Consider the *nature and excellency of the duty*. Singing Psalms is a compound of several other duties. It contains prayer to a very great advantage: the stretch of the voice does humour and lead on the earnest reaching of the mind after the desired blessing. It is the very element and breath of praise; and the apostle tells us that "teaching and admonishing one another" is performed in singing "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." For when we sing of *judgment*, it is awakening to sinners; and when we sing of *mercy*, it is comforting to all. Meditation cannot have a better help. The solemn movement of the time gives room for the mind to compass the full sense of the matter, and to impress it deep; and while the tongue is making the *pause*, the heart may make *elevation*. In short, it gives an accent to all duty; it is the music of all other ordinances; it is adapted and suited to all circumstances; as appears from the Psalms composed upon all occasions and subjects, doctrinal, prophetical, hortatory, and historical; of praise and prayer, of grief and joy, in the penitential and complaining, in the triumphal and rejoicing; as if singing of psalms could stand for everything, and, like the manna in the wilderness, gives a taste of all the other food we enjoy in the house of God.—*Benjamin Grosvenor, D.D.* (1675—1758), *in "An Exhortation to the Duty of Singing." Eastcheap Lectures*, 1810.

Verse 8.—The *Psaltery* was a stringed instrument, usually with twelve strings, and played with the fingers. The *harp* or lyre was a stringed instrument, usually consisting of ten strings. Josephus says that it was struck or played with a key. It appears, however, that it was sometimes played with the fingers.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—"*I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.*" The Spirit of God who indited this scripture, made his penman know that the Gentiles should have the use of his Psalms.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 9.—"*The people*"—"*the nations.*" The Hebrew church was neither called nor qualified to be a missionary society, but it never ceased to desire and hope for the conversion of the nations. This is seen in those passages in which the Psalmists betray a consciousness that they shall one day have all the world for auditors. How boldly does David exclaim, "*I will sing unto thee among the nations.*" In the same spirit, a later Psalmist summons the church to lift up her voice, so that all the nations may hear her recital of the Lord's mighty acts: "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people." Ps. cv. 1. The full import of this class of texts is often hidden from the English reader by the circumstance that our translators have hardly ever used the word *people* in its plural form. Twice in the Revelation they venture to write *peoples;*

everywhere else the singular form has to do duty for both numbers; so that in not a few passages the sense is greatly obscured to those who have no access either to the original or to other versions. In the Psalms, in particular, the mention of the Gentiles is more frequent than the English reader is made aware of. It is to be observed, moreover, that in addition to this strain of indirect prediction, the conversion of the world is articulately celebrated in many glorious Psalms. Indeed, so numerous are these, and so generally distributed over the centuries between David and Ezra, that it would seem that at no time during the long history of inspired Psalmody, did the Spirit cease to indite new songs in which the children of Zion might give utterance to their world-embracing hopes.—*William Binnie, D.D., in "The Psalms: their History, Teachings, and Use,"* 1870.

Verses 10, 11.—A hard and ungrateful heart beholds even in prosperity only isolated drops of divine grace; but a grateful one like David's, though chased by persecutors, and striking the harp in the gloom of a cave, looks upon the mercy and faithfulness of God as a mighty ocean, waving and heaving from the earth to the clouds, and from the clouds to the earth again.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 11.—"*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens,*" etc. Greater words of prayer than these never came from human lips. Heaven and earth have as they imply, a mutually interwoven history, and the blessed, glorious end of this is in the sunrise of the Divine glory over both.—*Franz Delitzsch,* 1869.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—*Repetiton in prayer.* I. Its dangers. May degenerate into "vain repetitions." Carried to excess painfully suggests the idea, God is unwilling. II. Its uses. Eases the soul like tears. Manifests intense emotion. Enables those of less mental activity to join in a general supplication.—*R. A. Griffin.*

Verse 1.—Here are—I. Calamities. 1. War. 2. Pestilence. 3. Privations. 4. Sin, greatest of all. 5. Death. 6. Curse of a broken law. II. Here is a refuge from these calamities. 1. In God. 2. Specially in the mercy of God. III. There is flying to that refuge. 1. By faith; "*My soul trusteth in thee;*" "*Under the shadow,*" etc. 2. By prayer; "*Be,*" etc. IV. Here is continuance both in faith and prayer; "*until,*" etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 1, 4, 6, 7.—Note the varying condition of the same heart, at the same time. "*My soul trusteth in thee.*" "*My soul is among lions.*" "*My soul is bowed down.*" "*My heart is fixed.*"

Verse 2.—Prayer to the performing God. He performs all his promises, all my salvation, all my preservation, all needed between here and heaven. Here he reveals his omnipotence, his grace, his faithfulness, his immutability; and we are bound to show our faith, patience, joy, and gratitude.

Verse 2.—Strange reasons. I. The Psalmist, in the depths of distress, cries to God, because he is most high in glory. Surely this thought might well paralyse him with the fear of divine inaccessibility, but the soul quickened with suffering, sees through and beyond the metaphor, rejoices in the truth, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly." II. He cries to God for help, because God *is* performing all things for him. Why urge him then? Prayer is the music to which "the mighty man of war" goes forth to battle.—*R. A. G.*

Verse 3.—The saint's comfort in adversity. I. All contingencies are provided for: "*He shall* (or will) *send.*" II. The highest resources are available: "*from heaven.*" III. The worst foes will be overcome in the end: "*him that would swallow me up.*" IV. By the holiest means: "*mercy and truth.*"—*R. A. G.*

Verse 3.—The celestial messengers. What they are. The certainty of their being sent. Their effectual operation. The grateful receiver.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—The harmony of the divine attributes in salvation. Mercy

founded on truth, truth vindicating mercy. Mercy without injustice, justice honoured in mercy.

Verse 4.—"*My soul is among lions.*" How came I there? If for God's sake, then I may remember—1. So was my Lord in the wilderness. 2. The lions are chained. 3. Their howling is all they can do. 4. I shall come out of their den alive, unhurt, honoured. 5. The Lion of Judah is with me. 6. I shall soon be among the angels.

Verse 5.—I. The end which God has in view, both in heaven and earth, in a sinful and in sinless worlds—his own glory. II. Our duty to acquiesce in that end: "*Be thou,*" etc.—not self, not men, not angels—"*Be thou exalted,*" etc. In this we would acquiesce—1. Actively, by seeking that end. 2. Passively, by submission to his will.—*G. R.*

Verse 6 (*first clause*).—I. Who are they? 1. Those who lead us into sin. 2. Who argue from worldly philosophy. 3. Who proclaim priestly and sacramental superstition. 4. Who decoy us from the church of God. 5. Who teach Antinomian doctrine. II. How shall we escape them? 1. Keep out of their way. 2. Keep to God's way. 3. Trust daily in the Lord.

Verse 6.—"*My soul is bowed down.*" I. *The prostration.* 1. Caused by enemies, weakness, fear, pain. 2. Deep, agonising, self-revealing. 3. Common to the Head and the members. II. *The consolation.* 1. Bowed down, but not condemned. 2. Hoping in the promise. 3. Trusting in God. 4. Expecting a blessing from the trial.

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—It is implied that the "*heart*" is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose in religion further than it is done with the heart. The heart must be "*fixed;*" fixed *for* the duty, fitted and put in frame for it; fixed *in* the duty by a close application; *attending on the Lord* without distraction.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—I. What is fixed? the heart, not the mind merely, but the will, the conscience, the affections, which draw the mind after them: "*My heart is fixed*"—found an anchorage, a resting-place, not therefore at the mercy of every gale, etc. II. The objects upon which it is fixed. 1. Upon God. 2. Upon his word. 3. Upon his salvation. 4. Upon heaven. III. The fixedness of the heart upon these objects, denotes—1. Singleness of aim. 2. Uniformity of action. 3. Perseverance to the end.—*G. R.*

Verses 7, 8, 9.—1. He that will be thankful must treasure up in his heart and memory the courtesy that is done him; so had David done, and therefore he mentions *his heart;* and to make it more emphatical, he names it again, "*My heart.*" 2. After he remembers it, he must be affected with it, and resolve upon it; so doth David: "*My heart is ready,*" or else, "*My heart is fixed;*" confirmed I am in it to be thankful, and I cannot be altered. 3. 'Tis not enough that a man carry about with him a thankful heart; he must *anunciare*, tell it abroad, and make it known publicly what God hath done for him; yea, and do it joyfully too: "*I will,*" saith David, "*sing and give praise.*" 4. He must use all means he can to make it known—"*tongue,*" "*psaltery,*" and "*harp,*" all are little enough. Whence, by an apostrophe, David turns to these. "*Awake, my glory:*" i.e. *Tongue, awake; lute and harp, awake; I myself will awake.* 5. He must not do it in a sleepy manner, but with intention and earnestness of spirit: "*Awake, awake, I will awake.*" 6. He must take the first opportunity to do it, and not hang off and delay it: "I will awake *early.*" 7. He must do it in such a place, and such an assembly as may most redound to God's honour: "I will praise thee, O Lord, *among the people:* I will sing unto thee *among the nations.*"—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 8.—"*I myself will wake early.*" I will sleep lightly, for I am in an enemy's country; I will ask God to arouse me; I will set the alarum of watchfulness; I will hear the cock of providential warning; the light of the Sun shall arouse me; the activities of the church, the trumpet of my foes, and the bell of duty shall combine to awaken me.

Verse 9.—Who? "I." What? "Will praise." Whom? "Thee, O Lord." Where? "Among the people." Why?

Verse 9.—Public profession. I. A necessity. II. A privilege. III. A duty. —*R. A. G.*

Verse 10.—The mercy of God reaches to the heavens—I. As a throne. God is exalted in our eyes by his mercy. II. As a ladder. By mercy we ascend from earth to heaven. III. As a rainbow. Present and past mercies argue exemption

for the saints from the wrath of heaven. IV. As a mountain. Its base is on the earth though its summit is lost in clouds. The influence of the cross towers to the heaven of heavens. Who can tell the glory of the summit of this mountain, whose *base* is refulgent with glory!—*R. A. G.*

Verse 10.—The amazing greatness of mercy. It is not said merely that it is high as heaven, but great unto the heavens. It is *high* as the heavens, over-topping the greatest sin, and highest thought of man. II. It is *wide* as the far-reaching sky, compassing men of all ages, countries, classes, etc. III. It is *deep*. Everything of God is proportionate; this, therefore, is deep in abiding foundation, and infinite wisdom.

HUNT, BARNARD & CO., LTD., Printers, London and Aylesbury.

THE

TREASURY OF DAVID:

CONTAINING

AN ORIGINAL EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS;

A COLLECTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS FROM THE WHOLE RANGE OF LITERATURE;

A SERIES OF HOMILETICAL HINTS UPON ALMOST EVERY VERSE;

AND LISTS OF WRITERS UPON EACH PSALM.

IN SIX VOLUMES

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

VOL III.

PSALM LVIII. TO LXXXVII.

3443-2

MARSHALL BROTHERS, LTD.

PUBLISHERS

LONDON, EDINBURGH AND NEW YORK.

THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE: The Scene of C. H. Spurgeon's famous Ministry.

Specially drawn for "The Treasury of David" by E. H. Fitchew.

PREFACE.

THIS volume completes one half of my labour upon this priceless book, and my humble prayer is that I may be spared to conclude the other portion So uncertain is human life, and so often have men's best designs remained unfinished, that I will press on with all diligence, lest, perhaps, the lamp of life should go out ere the writer has seen by its light the word FINIS at the conclusion of the last verse.

This volume has cost more labour than any other, because upon the larger proportion of the Psalms contained in it no great writers have expatiated at length. Some six or seven of them are specially notable, and have, therefore, been expounded and preached upon on all hands, but the rest remain almost untrodden ground in sacred literature, hence the gathering of extracts has required a wider range of reading and far more laborious research. Where one author writes upon a portion of Scripture, all write, while other passages remain almost untouched. This has driven me very much more to the Latin authors, and in them to a vein of exposition very little worked in these days. The neglect of these voluminous expositors is, however, not very censurable, for as a rule the authors are rather heavy than weighty. "Art is long and life is short," hence I found myself unequal to the unaided accomplishment of my task, and I have had to call in the aid of my excellent friend Mr. Gracey, the accomplished classical tutor of "the Pastors' College," to assist me in the work of winnowing the enormous heaps of Latin comments. Huge folios, full of dreary wordspinning, yield here and there a few goodly grains, and these, I trust, will be valuable enough to my readers to repay my coadjutor and myself for our pains. For the selection of extracts I alone am responsible, for the accuracy of the translations we are jointly accountable. The reader will note that not without much expense of money, as well as toil, he has here furnished to his hand the pith of Venema, Le Blanc, Lorinus, Gerhohus, Musculus, Martin Geier, Mollerus, and Simon de Muis ; with occasional notes from Vitringa, Jansenius, Savonarola, Vatablus, Turrecremata, Marloratus, Palanterius, Theodoret, and others, as they were judged worthy of insertion. I can truly say that I have never flinched from a difficulty, or spared exertion in order to make the work as complete as it lay in my power to render it, either by my own endeavours or the help of others. My faithful amanuensis, Mr. Keys, has been spared to me, and has been a continual visitor at the British Museum. Lambeth

Palace, Dr. Williams' Museum, and Sion College; and many have been the courtesies which, despite differences of creed, I have received in his person from those who are in authority in those treasures of literature; for all which I would now record my hearty thanks.

No object has been before me but that of serving the church and glorifying God by doing this work right thoroughly. I cannot hope to be remunerated pecuniarily; if only the bare outlay be met I shall be well content, the rest is an offering to the best of Masters, whose word is meat and drink to those who study it. The enjoyment of the work is more than sufficient reward, and the hope of helping my brethren in their Biblical studies is very sweet to me.

The late increase of wages to printers, and the rise both in paper and binding, may compel an advance in the very low price charged for these volumes hitherto, but this shall not be made unless it becomes absolutely necessary to screen me from loss. As a larger sale will secure a return of my outlay, the matter is mainly in the hands of the public. Volume I. being now in the third edition, and the second edition of Volume II. being upon the press, I am led to hope that the present volume will also meet with a large and rapid sale; and if so, the old price may suffice to cover the outlay.

My venerable friend, Mr. George Rogers, has furnished me with many hints for the notes to preachers, and it is hoped that this portion of the work has been so improved that it will not be the least useful part of it. Testimonies received lead to the belief that in the two former volumes numerous students have found help in that department.

There is no need to multiply words in this preface, but it is incumbent upon me to bless the Lord for help given, help daily and hourly sought while I have been occupied in this service; and it is also on my heart to ask a favourable mention of my volumes among their friends from those who kindly appreciate them.

C. H. Spurgeon

INDEX

OF AUTHORS QUOTED OR REFERRED TO.

Adam, John, 362
Adams, Thomas (1614), 6, 118, 119, 120, 121, 198, 199, 200, 222, 260, 263, 299, 323, 393, 394, 416, 447, 457, 474
Ainsworth, Henry (—1622), 5, 106, 169, 310, 394
Alexander, J. Addison (1850), 4, 7, 11, 32, 98, 102, 196, 197, 220, 240, 265, 269, 361, 363, 385, 414, 437, 471, 481
Alexander, Wm. Henry (1867), 238
Alexander, Wm. Lindsay (1862), 159
Alleine, Joseph (1633-1668), 279
Alting, James (1618—1679), 397
Ambrose, Isaac (1592—1674), 163
Amyrant, Moses (1596—1664), 53
Anderson, James (1646), 106, 190
Andrewes, Lancelot (1555—1626), 327, 460
Annesley, Samuel (1620—1696), 199
Aristophanes, 36
Arndt, 19, 59
Arvine, K., 428
Ash, Simeon (1642), 256
Athanasius, 53
Atheneus, 96
Augustine (353—429), 46, 73, 155, 206, 368, 395, 470, 473, 474
Augustodunensis, 430

Bacon, Francis (1560—1626), 373
Baker, Sir Richard, 438, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 447
Barclay, John (1734—1798), 214
Barlow, John (1618), 206
Barnes, Albert (1798—1870), 33, 96, 131, 218, 236, 317, 353, 370, 425, 428, 472
Barth, T. C (1865), 32, 157
Bateman, Gregory (1862), 297
Baylie, Robert (1643), 320
Beard, J. R. (1866), 237
Beddome, Benjamin (1717—1795), 78, 405, 406
Bellarmine, Robt. (1542—1621), 99, 116, 121, 122, 193, 455, 469, 470, 474
Berridge, John (1716—1793), 57, 58, 458
Bertram, R. A. (1867), 11, 24
Bewick, John (1644), 100
" Biblical Treasury," 367
Bickersteth, Edward (1784—1850), 135
Binnie, William (1870), 131, 150, 214, 233, 242, 415
Blackerby, Samuel (1673), 267
Bochart, Samuel (1599—1667), 366
Boettcher, 150
Bogan, Zachary (1625-1659), 262
Bonar, Andrew (1859), 11, 20, 23, 74, 96, 121, 154, 214, 308, 391, 417, 461, 469
Boothroyd, Benjamin (—1836), 20, 25, 34, 96, 132, 155, 168, 170, 189, 323, 442
Bossuet, 444
Boston, Thomas (1676—1732), 97
Bouchier, Barton (1855), 44, 104, 279, 296, 298, 457, 460
Bower, Hubert (1871), 153
Boys, John (1560—1643), 132, 151, 415, 460
Bradford, John (1510—1555), 261
Bradley, Charles (1838), 265
Bradwardine, Thomas (—1349), 262
Bridge, William (1600—1670), 156
Brinsley, John (1600—1665), 34, 36
Brooks, Thomas (1608—1680), 42, 69, 73, 74, 193, 283, 318, 359, 439, 443, 444
Brown, John (1853), 218
Bruce, James (1730—1794), 297
Bruce, Robert (1559—1631), 305, 306, 308
Bryant, Jacob (1715—1804), 365
Bunyan, John (1628—1688), 165, 188
Burder, Samuel (1839), 6, 106, 160, 194, 260
Burges, Cornelius (1641), 310
Burgess, George (1839), 110
Burnet, Gilbert (1643—1714), 457
Burroughs, Jeremiah (1599—1646), 86, 115, 193, 195, 221, 310
Bush, George (1796—), 366

Calvin, John (1509—1564), 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 36, 46, 55, 56, 106, 115, 153, 154, 159, 164, 217, 234, 256, 257, 258, 260, 262, 265, 325, 356, 357, 367, 397, 470, 487
Campbell, John (1766—1840), 8
Capel, Richard (1586—1656), 5
Carmichael, Alexander (1677), 55, 96, 357
Carpenter, William (1828), 62
Carson, Alexander (1776—1844), 100, 298
Carter, Charles (1869), 239
Carter, William (1649), 99
Caryl, Joseph (1602—1673), 5, 9, 10, 11, 35, 37, 59, 60, 62, 86, 87, 101, 117, 121, 123, 167, 194, 219, 232, 234, 258, 261, 266, 268, 282, 288, 289, 296, 298, 299, 307, 327, 348, 358, 360, 363, 368, 379, 407, 408, 409, 415, 456, 470, 473
Case, Thomas (1598—1680), 405
Cassiodorus, Magnus Aurelius (470—560), 187
Castellio, Sebastian (1515—1563), 259
Cayley, C. B. (1860), 263, 322
Chalmers, Thomas (1780—1847), 353, 408
Chandler, Samuel (1693—1766), 71, 78, 154, 233, 487
Charnock, Stephen (1628—1680), 116, 360, 362, 408
Chateaubriand, François Vicomte de (1768—1848), 7

Chester, J. C., 385
Chevallier, E. (1869) (See Lenormant)
" Christian Treasury, The " (1849), 327
Chrysostom (347—407), 45, 69
" Circling Year, The " (1871), 285
Clarke, Adam (1760—1832), 8, 21, 38, 101, 106, 115, 121, 199, 223, 239, 264, 297, 321, 322, 348, 350, 369, 383, 404, 426, 455, 458, 459, 461, 473
Clarkson, David (1621—1686), 97, 261, 382, 483
Clay, William K. (1839), 356, 367, 440, 474
Clerke, Richard (1634), 368
Cobbet, Thomas (1608—1686), 43, 187, 188, 221
Collins, John (1623—1690), 317, 321
" Comprehensive Bible, The " [Bagster's], 153, 155
Conant, Thomas J. (1871), 96, 102, 157
Cotton, John (1585—1652), 223
Cox, F. A. (1852), 282
Cradock, W. (1650), 424, 426
Cragge, John (1657), 307
Cramer, J. Andreas (1723—1788), 370
Crane, Thomas (1672), 264, 296, 371
Cresswell, Daniel (1776—1844), 114, 241, 296, 362, 384, 396, 473
Crouch, William (1708), 258
Cruden, Alexander (1701—1770), 282
Cruso, Timothy (1657—1697), 73, 189, 322, 397
Cuvier, Geo. Leopold (1769—1832), 6
" Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature " (1866), 237
Cyril (315—386), 155

Damiano, Peter (988—1072), 75
Darby, J. N. (1870), 358, 364, 397
Davison, Francis, 473
De Burgh, William (1860), 161, 233, 237
De Dieu, Louis (1590—1642), 159
Delitzsch, Franz (1869), 95, 131, 156, 264, 305, 361, 379, 442
Dickson, David (1583—1662), 20, 22, 23, 37, 98, 117, 154, 194, 195, 198, 200, 238, 242, 286, 287, 317, 325, 326, 348, 356, 370, 381, 382, 384, 394, 396, 414, 456, 459, 483
" Dictionary of Illustrations " (1872), 430
Diodati, John (1576—1649), 23, 160, 261, 320, 325, 370, 371
Diodorus, 284
Dionysius (1471), 206
Dixon, Richard (1811), 441
Donne, John (1573—1631), 53, 56, 59, 77, 87, 88, 100, 115, 168, 258, 439
Driesche, John Van den (1550), 350
Dryden, John (1631—1700), 256
Duncan, Mary B. M. (1825—1865), 42
Duns, John (1868), 6, 409
Dunster, John (1613), 380
Durham, James, 459
Dyke, Jeremiah (—1620), 44

Edwards, Jonathan (1703—1758), 239, 255, 284
Elton, Edward (1620), 257
Elwin, Fountain (1842), 44
Encyclopædia Britannica, 118
Erskine, Ebenezer (1680—1754), 309, 310
Evans, Alfred Bowen (1852), 43, 45
Evans, Christmas (1766—1838), 163
Evans, J. Harrington (1785—1849), 155, 221
Everard, John (1653), 160
Ewald, Henrich (1853 ?), 159

Faber, Fredk. Wm. (1852), 16
Faringdon, Anthony (1596—1658), 152
Fausset, A. R. (1866), 6, 20, 22, 25, 34, 60, 76, 100, 115, 123, 154, 160, 169, 199, 259, 283, 355, 368, 416, 470
Featley, Daniel (1582—1645), 79
Fenton, Thomas (1732), 119, 159, 223, 259, 281, 355, 394, 483
Firmin, Giles (1617—1697), 263
Flavel, John (1627—1691), 472
Follengo, Giambattista (1490—1559), 381
Forster, Chas. (1844), 171, 356
" Four Friends " (1867), 95, 297
Frame, James (1869), 205, 206
Frank, Mark (1613—1664), 195, 429
Fraser, John (1745—1818), 75
French, W. and Skinner, G. (1842), 55, 156, 239
Frisch, 425
Froysel, Thomas (1678), 362
Fry, John (1842), 233, 441, 458, 484
Fuller, Andrew (1754—1815), 162, 169, 218
Fuller, Thomas (1608—1661), 126, 264, 458
Fysh, Frederic (1850), 154, 160, 236, 405, 441

Gadsby, John (1862), 188, 265, 406.
Gandy, Samuel (1837), 213
Gataker, Thomas, 416, 417
Geddes, Alexander (1737—1802), 217, 487
Geier, Martin (1614—1681), 25
Gerhohus (1093—1169), 131, 187, 189, 190, 191, 215, 218, 219, 239, 259, 325, 326
Gibbens, Nicholas (1602), 10
Gibbon, John (1661), 78
Gill, John (1697—1771), 4, 21, 53, 59, 85, 154, 169, 171, 194, 219, 220, 223, 240, 263, 352, 360, 364, 371, 382, 404, 425, 426, 437, 456, 470
Gilpin, Richard (1625—1699), 219, 260
Ginsburg, Christian (1863), 282
Good, J. Mason (1764—1827), 106, 194, 198, 488
Goodwin, Thomas (1600—1679), 46, 62, 72, 117, 120, 191, 222, 306, 320, 360, 372, 430, 458, 468, 470, 473, 474
Gordon, Geo. Lord Byron (1788—1854), 307
Gordon, Robert (1825), 124
Gosse, Philip Henry (1861), 7
Gotthold (See Scriver)
Graham, William (1870), 163
Grant, Peter (1867), 239
Grant, Sir Robert (1806—1840), 223
Gray, Andrew, 481
Green, William (1762), 157
Green, Professor, 444
Greenfield, William (See Comprehensive Bible), 157, 171, 191, 383
Greenhill, William (1591—1677), 10, 72, 300, 306, 310
Gregg, T. D. (1855), 300
Grosse, Alexander (—1654), 237, 305
Gurnall, William (1617—1679), 45, 54, 86, 96, 99, 125, 131, 187, 321, 324, 348, 350, 355, 358, 369, 383, 406, 481
Gussetius, 240
Guthrie, William (1620—1655), 190, 269

Haak, Theodore (1618—1657), 157
Hall, Joseph (1574—1656), 166, 167, 239, 319, 322, 367, 371
Hall, Robert (1764—1831), 192, 482
Hall, Thomas (1659—60), 413, 417
Halyburton, Thomas (1674—1712), 216
Hambleton, John (1839), 290
Hammond, Henry (1605—1660), 25, 35, 55, 79, 155, 168, 169, 280, 351
Hampolus, 457
Hapstone, Dalman (1867), 95
Hare, Francis (1740), 168
Harmer, Thomas (1715—1788), 34, 197, 237
Hartwig, G. (1886), 286
Hawker, Robert (1753—1827), 56, 190
Hawkins, Ernest, 441
Hayward, Sir John (1560—1627), 193
Heminge, Nicholas (1513—1600), 437
Hengstenberg, E. W. (1845), 19, 23, 35, 37, 46, 69, 116, 154, 186, 234, 241, 279, 280, 282, 350, 423, 441, 481, 486
Henry, Matthew (1662—1714) 20, 24, 25, 69, 74, 76, 77, 80, 101, 105, 117, 120, 259, 317, 322, 354, 355, 358, 362, 372, 381, 383, 426, 443, 468, 469, 470, 471
Herder, J. G. Von (1744—1803), 159
Herschell, Ridley (1860), 150
Heskins, Samuel (1654), 122
Heywood, Oliver (1629—1702), 216
Hill, John (1711—1746), 19, 23
Hiller, Prescott (1869), 9, 20, 95
Hinckley, John (1657), 11
Hodge, A. A. (1866), 20
Hodge, Charles (1871), 232
Homer, 396
Hood, E. Paxton (1860), 285, 363
Hooker, Thomas (1586—1647), 96
Hooper, John (1495—1555), 55, 59, 257, 319, 327
Hopkins, Ezekiel (1633—1690), 166
Horne, George (1730—1792), 171, 189, 196, 198, 218, 259, 260, 264, 381, 459
Horsley, Samuel (1733—1806), 9, 234, 239, 242, 483
Horton, Thomas (—1673), 71, 73, 74, 76, 77, 299, 300, 323, 486
Howe, John (1630—1705), 133, 440
Howitt, William (1850), 102
Hubbard, F. G. (1856), 296
Hugo (circa 1120), 60, 131
Hupfeld, 34, 156, 159
Hurst, Henry (1629—1696), 96
Hyatt, John (1767—1826), 471

Jackson, Arthur (1593—1666), 281, 355, 371
Jacombe, Thomas (1622—1687), 407
James, J. Angell (1785—1859), 72
Jameson, Dr. (1748), 366
Janneway, James (1636—1674), 255
Jansenius, Cornelius (1510—1576), 259, 284
Jay, William (1769—1853), 43, 79, 98, 215, 471
Jebb, John (1846), 4, 42, 423
Jehuda, Rabbi, 241
Jesse, Edward (1856), 439
Jones, Thomas (1871), 263
Josephus, Flavius (37—93), 281, 326

Kalisch, M. M. (1867), 365
Kay, William (1871), 21, 22, 150, 240, 281, 405
Keble, John (1792—1866) 158
Kempis, Thomas à (1380), 96
Kennicott, Benjamin, 455
Ker, John (1869), 285, 321
Kitto, John (1804—1854), 364, 371, 486
Krummacher, F. Wilhelm (1796—1868), 19, 373

Lange, J. P. (1864), 69
Langley, John (1644), 287, 288, 289
Latimer, Hugh (1480—1555), 122
Law, Edmund (1703—1787), 155
Law, Henry (1858), 151
Lawrence, Matthew (1657), 74, 322
Le Blanc, Thomas (—1669), 54, 56, 58, 60, 71, 73, 96, 98, 101, 102, 114, 123, 155, 168, 198, 221, 237, 239, 258, 305, 327, 350, 351, 352, 361, 364, 369, 409, 456, 459, 461
Le Breton, A. C. (1849), 384
Le Clerc, John (1657—1736), 366
Lee, Samuel (1625—1691), 57, 373
Leifchild, John (1860), 217
Leigh, Edward (1602—3—1671), 96, 102, 168
Lenormant, François and Chevalier, E. (1869), 33
Liddon, Henry Parry (1863—5), 70
Littledale (See Neale)
Loe, William (1623), 37
Lombard, Peter (—1164), 233, 469
Lorinus, John (1569—1634), 100, 101, 102, 114, 119, 131, 154, 189, 200, 269, 280, 382, 460
Love, Christopher (1618—1651), 61
Luther, Martin (1483—1546), 104, 413
Lye, Thomas (1621—1684), 57
Lyra, Nicholas de (1270—1340), 199
Lyte, Francis Henry (1834), 129

Macaulay, T. Babington (1800—1859), 27
M'Caul, Alexander (1840), 153
McCheyne, Robt Murray (1813—1843), 240
Macintosh, Charles (1858), 53 (See " Things New and Old ")
Macmillan, Hugh (1868), 104
Makelvie, William (1863), 442
Mant, Richard (1776—1849), 7, 74, 85, 193, 299, 326, 394, 396
Manton, Thomas (1620—1677), 131, 265, 308
Marbury, Edward, 458
March, Henry (1839), 275
Marsh, E. Gerrard (1832), 170, 487
Martial, 234
Martin, Samuel (1871), 102, 170
Martyr, Peter (1500—1562), 96
Mather, Samuel (1626—1671), 223, 232, 352
Mayer, John (1653), 35, 223, 364
Melvill, Henry (1798—1871), 77, 324, 354, 361, 446
Mendelssohn, Moses (1729—1786), 265
Merrick James (1720—1769), 288
Mestral, Armand de (1856), 370
Millington, Thos. S. (1863), 36, 120
Mills, 160
Milman, Henry Hart (1791—1868), 281
Milton, John (1608—1674), 160
Milward, John (—1864), 86
Moffatt, H. B. (1861), 417
Mollerus, D. H. (1639), 234, 238, 264, 281, 317, 319, 326, 348, 350, 355, 359, 370, 382, 429, 438
Montgomery, James (1771—1854), 233

Morison, John (1829), 123
Moulin, Peter du (1600—1684), 192
Mudge, Zachary (1744), 260
Muis, Simon de (1587—1644), 71, 150, 215, 306, 350
Müller, George (1856), 55
Murcot, John (1657), 194
Murphy, James G. (1863), 241, 365
Musculus, Wolfgang (1497—1563), 132, 135, 188, 190, 191, 195, 200, 215, 219, 220, 221, 233, 280, 283, 287, 306, 308, 328, 347, 348, 350, 351, 353, 357, 369, 381, 382, 383, 392, 396, 437, 481.
Musgrave, Philip (1846), 430

Nalton, James (1664), 323
Neale, John Mason, and Littledale, R. F. (1860), 241, 413, 469
Ness, Christopher (1621—1705), 355, 370
Newton, John (1725—1807), 45, 156, 162
Nicholson, William (—1671), 24, 25, 120, 224
North, Brownlow (1865), 354
Noyes, Geo. R. (1846), 190

O'Neill, William (1854), 284
Origen, 102
Osburn, William (1856), 368
Ovid, 260
Owen, John (1616—1683), 43, 164, 306, 319

Palanterius, Johannes Paulus (1600), 373
Parkhurst, John (1728—1797), 348
Parry, Edward (1660), 257, 259, 260, 263
Patrick, Simon (1626—1707), 121, 193
Payson, Edward (1783—1827), 115, 318
Pearson, Richard (1684), 308
Penn, William (1644—1718), 197
Pennington, John (1656), 456
Perkins, William (1558—1602), 96
Perowne, J. J. Stewart (1864), 8, 34, 53, 69, 98, 154, 156, 186, 188, 224, 236, 298, 299, 317, 324, 361, 382, 383, 385, 438, 439, 471, 486
Perowne, T. Thomason (1858), 254, 265
Perronet, Edward (1780), 227
Phillips, George (1846), 8, 168, 233, 351
Philo, 257
Philpot, Joseph C. (1862—1869), 283
Pierson, Thomas, 436, 441
Pirie, Alexander, 397, 404
" Plain Commentary, A" (1859), 99, 188, 214, 380, 481, 483
Plato, 257
Pledger, Elias (—1676), 382
Pliny, 118
Plumer, William S. (1867), 20, 33, 85, 115, 289, 290, 358, 385, 456, 461, 469
Plutarch, 23
Polycarp, 216
Pool, Matthew (1624—1679), 35, 95, 362, 371, 383
Pope, Alexander (1688—1744), 396
Porter, J. L. (1865), 380
Power, P. Bennet (1862), 43, 44, 352, 384
Preston, John (1587), 361
Price, Daniel (1809), 373
Price, William (1642), 414
Prideaux, Humphrey (1648—1724), 282
Pridham, Arthur (1869), 85, 132, 191, 323, 364, 444, 469
Pringle, Alexander (1657), 78
Pusey Edward Bouverie (1800—), 216, 485

Quarles, Francis (1592—1644), 362, 473
Quesnel, Pasquier (1634—1719), 135, 235

Reid, William (1871), 133
Religious Tract Society's Notes, 10, 55
Renti, Gaston J. B. Baron de (—1649), 133
Reyner, Edward (1600—1670), 87
Richardson, John (—1654), 259
Ritter, Carl (1779—1859), 428
Roberts, Francis (1657), 158
Roberts, Joseph (1844), 5, 6, 55, 193, 444
Robinson, Edward (1867), 36, 106
Robinson, Ralph (1614—1655), 45, 104, 235, 236, 487
Rogers, George (1871), 5, 223, 326
Rogers, Timothy (1660—1729), 123, 320
Romaine, William, 480
Rosenmüller, Ernst Fried, Karl (1798—1835), 237
Ruskin, John (1819—), 240
Rutherford, Sam. (1600—1661), 71, 188, 320
Ryland, John (1753—1825), 321
Ryland, R. H. (1853), 150

Saurin, James (1677—1730), 352
Savonarola, Girolamo (1452—1498), 220, 392 393, 395, 396
Schenchzer, Johann Jacob (1672—1733), 284
Schultens, 61
Scott, Thomas (1747—1821), 8, 122, 360, 486
Scott, Walter (1771—1832), 59
Scriver, Chstn. [Gotthold] (1629—1693), 266
Secker, William (1660), 133, 444, 446
Shakspeare, William (1564—1616), 23, 86
Shaw, Thomas (1692—1751), 106
Sheffield, John (1654), 267
Sheppard, Thomas (1605—1649), 73, 406
Sherlock, Thomas (1678—1761), 235
Sherman, James (—1862), 220, 239
Shower, John (1657—1715), 406
Shute, Josias (1645), 366
Sibbes, Richard (1577—1635), 241, 269, 483
Sidney, Edwin (1866), 326
Simpson, James Young (1811—1870), 196
Singleton, John (—1706), 43
Skinner, G. (See French)
Slater, Samuel (1704), 327
Smith, Albert Richard (1816—1860), 20
Smith, B. M. (1867), 347
Smith, Henry, 416
Smith, James (1802—1862), 318, 363
Smith, Miles (1624), 119
Smith, William (1863), 430, 483
Sonnini, C. N. S. de M. (1775—1811) 288
Sophocles, 120
South, Robert (1633—1716), 125
Spalding, John (1703), 22, 166, 265
Stanford, Charles (1859), 196, 236
Stanley, Arthur Penrhyn (1864), 481
Stevenson, W. Fleming (1862), 56
Stoughton, John (1852), 454
Streat, William (1633), 33, 242
Street, Stephen (1790), 369
Strickland, John (1645), 361
Strong, William (1654), 72, 156, 284
Struther, William (1633), 38, 56
Sturm, Christopher Christian (1750—1786), 286
Suicer, John Caspar (1620—1684), 45

Swinnock, George (1627—1673), 8, 76, 259, 263, 267, 268, 349, 360, 407, 417, 442
Sydenham, Humphry (1637), 25
Symmachus (circa A.D. 400), 34
Szegedinus Pannonius, Stephanus (1593), 96

Talmud, The, 326
Taylor, Francis (1645), 288, 289, 290
Taylor, Jeremy, 461
Theodoret (393—457), 165
Theophylact, 45
"Things New and Old" (1858—1865), 254, 325, 439, 440, 443, 457
Tholuck, Augustus F. (1856), 37, 54, 61, 77, 216, 222, 237, 319, 354, 393, 474, 487
Thomasius, Josephus Maria (1649—1713), 413
Thomé de Jesu, Fra (1582), 196
Thomson, W. M. (1859), 80, 392, 429
Thomson, Mrs., 220
Thrupp, Joseph F. (1860), 32, 79, 100, 328, 403, 404, 428
Tillotson, John (1630—1694), 61
Trapp, John (1611—1669), 37, 45, 56, 63, 85, 86, 117, 118, 121, 122, 156, 160, 215, 218, 261, 279, 286, 287, 317, 321, 323, 347, 354, 357, 364, 372, 381, 382, 394, 440, 456, 469
Tremellius, 9
Tucker, William H. (1840), 21, 404
Tuckney, Anthony (1599—1670), 194
Turner, Sharon (1768—1847), 256, 286
Turrecremata, Johannes de (1476), 350
Tweedie, Dr. (1859), 37

Urbanus (1541), 487

Valerian, 60
Vatablus, Francis (1545), 259, 299
Veal, Edward (1708), 63
Venema, Hermann (1697—1787), 5, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 34, 37, 55, 61, 98, 99, 100, 106, 116, 117, 121, 154, 155, 188, 194, 195, 197, 215, 220, 280, 296, 305, 306, 317, 392, 394, 405, 406, 424, 429, 441, 444, 455, 456
Villiers, Montague (1855), 269
Virgil, 37
Volney, Comte de (1755—1820), 240, 367
Votier, J. (1652), 8

Wagner, George (1862), 353
Walford, William (1837), 9, 32, 197
Walker, George (1644), 10
Wall, Thomas (1657), 170, 171
Wall, William (1646—1728), 428
Walter, Edward (1854), 215, 430
"Wanderings over Bible Lands and Seas" (1862), 24
Warner, Richard (1828), 199
Warren, John (1656), 309
Watson, Thomas (1660), 98, 192, 220, 257, 296, 305, 321, 370, 416, 426, 443, 471, 473, 487
Watts, Isaac (1674—1748), 298
Wedderburn, Alexander (1701), 359
Weemse, John (1636), 355
Weiss, Benjamin (1858), 71, 470
Wells, John (1676), 76
Wesley, John (1703—1791), 60, 219
"Westminster Assembly's Annotations," 369
Wetenhall, Edward (1691), 310
Whately, M. L. (1870), 158
Whewell, William (1795), 104
White, Thomas (1658), 263
Whitney, G. H. (1872), 428
Wilcocks, Thomas (1536), 35, 198, 205
Wilcox, Daniel, 446
Wilkinson, Henry (1675), 197
Wilks, Matthew (1746—1829), 445, 446
Williams, Griffith (1636), 162
Willison, John (1680—1750), 235, 258
Wilson, Samuel (1703—1750), 123
Wilson, Thomas (1641), 192
Wilson, W. (1860), 186, 205, 215, 218, 353, 367, 403, 408, 424
Wisheart, William (1657—1727), 61, 62, 63
Witherspoon, John (1722—1749), 125
Wood, J. G. (1869), 9, 79, 356, 366, 395
Woodcock, Thomas (1695), 241
Wordsworth, Christopher (1868), 23, 69, 197, 282, 307, 471
Wright, Abraham (1661), 21, 24, 56, 77, 96, 381, 385, 408, 455

PSALM LVIII.

To the Chief Musician.—*Although David had his own case in his mind's eye, yet he wrote not as a private person, but as an inspired prophet, and therefore his song is presented, for public and perpetual use, to the appointed guardian of the Temple psalmody.* Al-taschith. *The wicked are here judged and condemned, but over the godly the sacred "* Destroy not *" is solemnly pronounced.* Michtam of David. *This is the fourth of the Psalms of the Golden Secret, and the second of the " Destroy nots." These names if they serve for nothing else may be useful to aid the memory. Men give names to their horses, jewels, and other valuables, and these names are meant not so much to describe as to distinguish them, and in some cases to set forth the owner's high esteem of his treasure ; after the same fashion the Oriental poet gave a title to the song he loved, and so aided his memory, and expressed his estimation of the strain. We are not always to look for a meaning in these superscriptions, but to treat them as we would the titles of poems, or the names of tunes.*

DIVISION.—*The ungodly enemy is accused, verses* 1—5 ; *judgment is sought from the judge, verses* 6—8 ; *and seen in prophetic vision as already executed, verses* 9—11.

EXPOSITION.

DO ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation ? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men ?

2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness ; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb : they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

4 Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent : *they are* like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear ;

5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

1. *" Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation ? "* The enemies of David were a numerous and united band, and because they so unanimously condemned the persecuted one, they were apt to take it for granted that their verdict was a right one. " What everybody says must be true," is a lying proverb based upon the presumption which comes of large combinations. Have we not all agreed to hound the man to the death, and who dare hint that so many great ones can be mistaken ? Yet the persecuted one lays the axe at the root by requiring his judges to answer the question whether or not they were acting according to justice. It were well if men would sometimes pause, and candidly consider this. Some of those who surrounded Saul were rather passive than active persecutors ; they held their tongues when the object of royal hate was slandered ; in the original, this first sentence appears to be addressed to them, and they are asked to justify their silence. Silence gives consent. He who refrains from defending the right is himself an accomplice in the wrong. *" Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men ? "* Ye too are only men though dressed in a little brief authority. Your office for men, and your relation to men both bind you to rectitude ; but have ye remembered this ? Have ye not put aside all truth when ye have condemned the godly, and united in seeking the overthrow of the innocent ? Yet in doing this be not too sure of success, for ye are only the " sons of men," and there is a God who can and will reverse your verdicts.

2. *" Yea, in heart ye work wickedness."* Down deep in your very souls ye hold a rehearsal of the injustice ye intend to practise, and when your opportunity arrives, ye wreak vengeance with a gusto ; your hearts are in your wicked work, and your hands are therefore ready enough. Those very men who sat as judges, and pretended to so much indignation at the faults imputed to their victim, were in their

hearts perpetrating all manner of evil. "*Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.*" They were deliberate sinners, cold, calculating villains. As righteous judges ponder the law, balance the evidence, and weigh the case, so the malicious dispense injustice with malice aforethought in cold blood. Note in this verse that the men described sinned with heart and hand; privately in their heart, publicly in the earth; they worked and they weighed—they were active, and yet deliberate. See what a generation saints have to deal with! Such were the foes of our Lord, a generation of vipers, an evil and adulterous generation; they sought to kill him because he was righteousness itself, yet they masked their hatred to his goodness by charging him with sin.

3. "*The wicked are estranged from the womb.*" It is small wonder that some men persecute the righteous seed of the woman, since all of them are of the serpent's brood, and enmity is set between them. No sooner born than alienated from God—what a condition to be found in! Do we so early leave the right track? Do we at the same moment begin to be men and commence to be sinners? "*They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*" Every observer may see how very soon infants act lies. Before they can speak they practise little deceptive arts. This is especially the case in those who grow up to be adepts in slander, they begin their evil trade early, and there is no marvel that they become adepts in it. He who starts early in the morning will go far before night. To be untruthful is one of the surest proofs of a fallen state, and since falsehood is universal, so also is human depravity.

4. "*Their poison is like the poison of a serpent.*" Is man also a poisonous reptile? Yes, and his venom is even as that of a serpent. The viper has but death for the body in his fangs; but unregenerate man carries poison under his tongue, destructive to the nobler nature. "*They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear.*" While speaking of serpents the Psalmist remembers that many of them have been conquered by the charmer's art, but men such as he had to deal with, no art could tame or restrain; therefore, he likens them to a serpent less susceptible than others to the charmer's music, and says that they refused to hear reason, even as the adder shuts her ear to those incantations which fascinate other reptiles. Man, in his natural corruption, appears to have all the ill points of a serpent without its excellences. O sin, what hast thou done!

5. "*Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.*" Ungodly men are not to be won to right by arguments the most logical, or appeals the most pathetic. Try all your arts, ye preachers of the word! Lay yourselves out to meet the prejudices and tastes of sinners, and ye shall yet have to cry, "Who hath believed our report?" It is not in your music, but in the sinner's ear that the cause of failure lies, and it is only the power of God that can remove it.

> "You can call spirits from the vasty deep,
> But will they come when you do call for them?"

No, we call and call, and call in vain, till the arm of the Lord is revealed. This is at once the sinner's guilt and danger. He ought to hear but will not, and because he will not hear, he cannot escape the damnation of hell.

6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.

7 Let them melt away as waters *which* run continually: *when* he bendeth *his bow to shoot* his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.

8 As a snail *which* melteth, let *every one of them* pass away: *like* the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not see the sun.

6. "*Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth.*" If they have no capacity for good, at least deprive them of their ability for evil. Treat them as the snake-charmers do their serpents, extract their fangs, break their teeth. The Lord can do this, and he will. He will not suffer the malice of the wicked to triumph, he will deal them such a blow as shall disable them from mischief. "*Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord.*" As if one brute creature had not enough of evil in it to complete the emblem of ungodly nature, another specimen of *feræ naturæ* is fetched in. For fierce cruelty the wicked are likened to young lions, monsters in the prime of their vigour, and the fury of their lustiness; and it is asked that

their grinders may be smashed in, broken off, or dashed out, that the creatures may henceforth be harmless. One can well understand how the banished son of Jesse, while poisoned by the venomous slander of his foes, and worried by their cruel power, should appeal to heaven for a speedy and complete riddance from his enemies.

7. "*Let them melt away as waters which run continually.*" Like mountain torrents dried up by the summer heats let them disappear; or like running streams whose waters are swiftly gone, so let them pass away; or like water spilt which none can find again, so let them vanish out of existence. Begone, ye foul streams, the sooner ye are forgotten the better for the universe. "*When he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.*" When the Lord goes forth to war, let his judgments so tell upon these persecutors that they may be utterly cut in pieces as a mark shattered by many shafts. Or perhaps the meaning is, when the ungodly man marches to the conflict, let his arrows and his bow drop into fragments, the string cut, the bow snapped, the arrows headless, the points blunted; so that the boastful warrior may not have wherewithal to hurt the object of his enmity. In either sense the prayer of the Psalm has often become fact, and will be again fulfilled as often as need arises.

8. "*As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away.*" As the snail makes its own way by its slime, and so dissolves as it goes, or as its shell is often found empty, as though the inhabitant had melted away, so shall the malicious eat out their own strength while they proceed upon their malevolent designs, and shall themselves disappear. To destroy himself by envy and chagrin is the portion of the ill-disposed. "*Like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.*" Solemn is this curse, but how surely does it fall on many graceless wretches! They are as if they had never been. Their character is shapeless, hideous, revolting. They are fitter to be hidden away in an unknown grave than to be reckoned among men. Their life comes never to ripeness, their aims are abortive, their only achievement is to have brought misery to others, and horror to themselves. Such men as Herod, Judas, Alva, Bonner, had it not been better for them if they had never been born? Better for the mothers who bore them? Better for the lands they cursed? Better for the earth in which their putrid carcasses are hidden from the sun? Every unregenerate man is an abortion. He misses the true form of God-made manhood; he corrupts in the darkness of sin; he never sees or shall see the light of God in purity, in heaven.

9 Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in *his* wrath.

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

11 So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

9. "*Before your pots can feel the thorns.*" So sudden is the overthrow of the wicked, so great a failure is their life, that they never see joy. Their pot is put upon the hook to prepare a feast of joy, and the fuel is placed beneath, but before the thorns are lit, before any heat can be brought to bear upon the pot, yea, even as soon as the fuel has touched the cooking vessel, a storm comes and sweeps all away; the pot is overturned, the fuel is scattered far and wide. Perhaps the figure may suppose the thorns, which are the fuel, to be kindled, and then the flame is so rapid that before any heat can be produced the fire is out, the meat remains raw, the man is disappointed, his work is altogether a failure. "*He shall take them away as with a whirlwind.*" Cook, fire, pot, meat and all, disappear at once, whirled away to destruction. "*Both living, and in his wrath.*" In the very midst of the man's life, and in the fury of his rage against the righteous, the persecutor is overwhelmed with a tornado, his designs are baffled, his contrivances defeated, and himself destroyed. The passage is difficult, but this is probably its meaning, and a very terrible one it is. The malicious wretch puts on his great seething pot, he gathers his fuel, he means to play the cannibal with the godly; but he reckons without his host, or rather without the Lord of hosts, and the unexpected tempest removes all trace of him, and his fire, and his feast, and that in a moment.

10. "*The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.*" He will have

no hand in meting it out, neither will he rejoice in the spirit of revenge, but his righteous soul shall acquiesce in the judgments of God, and he shall rejoice to see justice triumphant. There is nothing in Scripture of that sympathy with God's enemies which modern traitors are so fond of parading as the finest species of benevolence. We shall at the last say, "Amen," to the condemnation of the wicked, and feel no disposition to question the ways of God with the impenitent. Remember how John, the loving disciple, puts it. "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." "*He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*" He shall triumph over them, they shall be so utterly vanquished that their overthrow shall be final and fatal, and his deliverance complete and crowning. The damnation of sinners shall not mar the happiness of saints.

11. "*So that a man shall say.*" Every man however ignorant shall be compelled to say, "*Verily,*" in very deed, assuredly, "*there is a reward for the righteous.*" If nothing else be true this is. The godly are not after all forsaken and given over to their enemies; the wicked are not to have the best of it, truth and goodness are recompensed in the long run. "*Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.*" All men shall be forced by the sight of the final judgment to see that there is a God, and that he is the righteous ruler of the universe. Two things will come out clearly after all—there is a God and there is a reward for the righteous. Time will remove doubts, solve difficulties, and reveal secrets; meanwhile faith's foreseeing eye discerns the truth even now, and is glad thereat.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The proper meaning of the root of *Michtam* is *to engrave*, or *to stamp a metal.* It therefore, in strictness, means, *an engraving* or *sculpture.* Hence in the Septuagint, it is translated στηλογραφία, an inscription on a column. I would venture to offer a conjecture in perfect harmony with this view. It appears by the titles of four out of these six Psalms, that they were composed by David while flying and hiding from the persecutions of Saul. What, then, should hinder us from imagining that they were inscribed on the rocks and on the sides of the caves which so often formed his place of refuge? This view would accord with the strict etymological meaning of the word, and explain the rendering of the Septuagint.—*John Jebb, in "A Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms,"* 1846.

[See also Explanatory Notes on Psalms xvi. and lvi. "Treasury of David," Vol. I., pp. 192, 197—98; Vol. II., pp. 464, 468.]

Whole Psalm.—Kimchi says this Psalm was written on account of Abner, and the rest of Saul's princes, who judged David as a rebel against the government, and said it was for Saul to pursue after him to slay him; for if they had restrained him, Saul would not have pursued after him; and indeed they seem to be wicked judges who are addressed in this Psalm; *do not destroy.* Arama says, it declares the wickedness of Saul's judges.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*Are ye dumb* (when) *ye* (should) *speak righteousness,* (and) *judge equitably, sons of man?*" The first words are exceedingly obscure. One of them (אֵלֶם), not expressed in the English, and the ancient versions, means *dumbness,* as in Psalm lxi. 1, and seems to be here used as a strong expression for *entirely speechless.* In what respect they were thus dumb, is indicated by the verb which follows, but the connection can be made clear in English only by a circumlocution. The interrogation, *are ye indeed,* expresses wonder, as at something scarcely credible. Can it be so? Is it possible? are you really silent, you, whose very office is to speak for God, and against the sins of men?—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"*O congregation,*" *O band,* or *company.* The Hebrew *ælem,* which hath the signification of *binding as a sheaf or bundle,* seemeth here to be a company that are combined or confederate.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 2.—"*In heart ye work wickedness,*" etc. The Psalmist doth not say, they had wickedness in their heart, but they did work it there: the heart is a shop within, an under-ground shop; there they did closely contrive, forge, and hammer out their wicked purposes, and fit them into actions; yea, *they weighed the violence of their hands in the earth.* That is an allusion to merchants, who buy and sell by weight; they weigh their commodity to an ounce; they do not give it out in gross, but by exact weight. Thus saith the Psalmist, *they weigh the violence of their hands;* they do not oppress grossly, but with a kind of exactness and skill, they sit down and consider what and how much violence they may use in such a case, or how much such a person may endure, or such a season may bear. They are wiser than to do all at once, or all to one, lest they spoil all. They "*weigh*" what they do, though what they do be so bad that it will hold no weight when God comes to weigh it. Nor do they arrive at this skill presently, but after they have, as it were, served an apprenticeship at it; and they bind themselves to the trade very early; for as it follows at the third verse of the Psalm, "*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies,*" that is, they are estranged both by nature and by early practice; they lose no time, they go to it young, even "as soon as they are born," as soon as they are fit for any use, or to do any thing, they are using and setting themselves to do wickedly.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 2.—The word עוֹלוֹת, *wickedness,* properly signifies the *inclinations of scales,* when the scale weighs down to one side; then it is transferred to respect of persons, to injustice and iniquity, especially in public tribunals and decisions, as in Psalm lxxxii. 2, *How long will ye judge* (עָוֶל) by *an unjust inclination of the scales?*—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—The principles of the wicked are even worse than their practices, premeditated violence is doubly guilty.—*George Rogers.*

Verse 3.—"*The wicked are estranged from the womb,*" etc. How early men do sin! How late do they repent! *As soon as they are born* "they go astray," but if left to themselves they will not return till they die; they will never return. Children can neither go nor speak as soon as born, but as soon as born they can "go astray" and "speak lies;" that is, their first speaking is lying, and their first going is straying; yea, when they cannot go naturally, they can go astray morally or metaphorically: the first step they are able to take is a step out of the way.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—"*They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*" Of all sins, no sin can call Satan father like to lying. All the corruption that is in us came from Satan, but yet this sin of forging and lying is from the devil more than any; tastes of the devil more than any. Hence every man is a liar (Romans iii. 4), and so every man is every sinner else; but in a special manner every man is a liar; for that the very first depravation of our nature came in by lying, and our nature doth taste much still of this old block to be given to lying, the devil also breathing into us a strong breath to stir us up to lying. Hence *no sooner do we speak but we lie.* As we are in body, subject to all diseases, but yet, some to one sickness rather than to another: so in the soul, all are apt enough to all sin, and some rather to one vice than to another; but all are much inclined to lying. A liar then is as like the devil as ever he can look: as unlike to God as ever he can be.—*Richard Capel,* 1586—1656, *in "Tentations, their Nature, Danger, Cure."*

Verse 3.—The figure of the wicked going astray as soon as they are born, seems to be taken from the disposition and power of a young serpent soon after its birth. The youngest serpent can convey poison to anything which it bites; and the suffering in all cases is great, though the bite is seldom fatal. Place a stick near the reptile whose age does not amount to many days, and he will immediately snap at it. The offspring of the tiger and of the alligator are equally fierce in their earliest habits.—*Joseph Roberts, in "Oriental Illustrations of the Sacred Scriptures,"* 1844.

Verse 4.—"*Poison.*" There is such a thing as poison; but where to be found? *Ubicanque fuerit, in homine quis quæreret?* Wheresoever it is, in man who would look for it? God made man's body of the dust; he mingled no poison with it.

He inspireth his soul from heaven; he breathes no poison with it. He feeds him with bread; he conveys no poison with it. *Unde venenum?* Whence is the poison? Matt. xiii. 27—"Didst not thou, O Lord, sow good seed in thy field?" *Unde zizaniæ*—"From whence then hath it tares?" Whence? *Hoc fecit inimicus*—"The enemy hath done this." We may perceive the devil in it. That great serpent, the red dragon, hath poured into wicked hearts this poison. His own poison, *malitiam*, wickedness. *Cum infundit peccatum, infundit venenum*—"When he pours in sin he pours in poison." Sin is poison. Original pravity is called corruption; actual poison. The violence and virulence of this venomous quality comes not at first. *Nemo fit repente pessimus*—No man becomes worst at the first dash. We are born corrupt, we have made ourselves poisonous. There be three degrees, as it were so many ages, in sin. *First*—secret sin; an ulcer lying in the bones, but skinned over with hypocrisy. *Secondly*—open sin, bursting forth into manifest villainy. The former is corruption, the second is eruption. *Thirdly*—frequented and confirmed sin, and that is rank poison, envenoming soul and body.—*Thomas Adams*, 1614.

Verse 4.—"*Adder.*" Heb. פֶּתֶן, *pethen*, the Egyptian cobra (*Naja hage*), one of the venomous *Colubrine* Snakes (*Colubridæ*). This is one of the so called hooded snakes, with which serpent charmers chiefly deal. The Spectacled Snake proper (*Naja tripudians*) is a closely related species. The well known Cobra di Capello is another. They are all noted for their deadly bite. The hollow fangs communicate with a poison gland, which being pressed in the act of biting, sends a few drops into the puncture. The venom quickly acts on the whole system, and death soon ensues.—*John Duns, D.D., in "Biblical Natural Science,"* 1868.

Verse 4.—"*The deaf adder.*" Certain it is, says a modern writer upon the Psalms, that the common adder or viper here in England, the bite of which too, by the way, is very venomous, if it is not wholly *deaf*, has the sense of hearing very imperfectly. This is evident from the danger there is of treading upon these animals, unless you happen to see them; for if they do not see you, and you do not disturb them, they never endeavour to avoid you, which when they are disturbed and do see you, they are very solicitous of doing. Allowing, then, that there is a species of these noxious animals, which either not having the sense of hearing at all, or having it only in a low degree, may very well be said to be deaf; this may help to explain the present poetical passage of the Psalmist. He very elegantly compares the pernicious and destructive practices of wicked men to the venom of a serpent; and his mentioning this species of animals, seems to have brought to his mind another property of at least one sort of them, in which they likewise resembled perverse and obstinate sinners, who are deaf to all advice, utterly irreclaimable, and not to be persuaded. This the adder resembled, which is a very venomous animal, and moreover is deaf, or very near it. And perhaps his saying that *she stoppeth her ear*, may be no more than a poetical expression for deafness; just as the *mole*, which in common speech is said to be *blind*, might in a poetical phrase, be said to shut her eyes; as in fact she does when you expose her to the light. The next clause, "*Which refuseth to hear*," etc., is another poetical expression for the same thing.—*Samuel Burder, in "The Scripture Expositor,"* 1810.

Verse 4.—"*The deaf adder.*" Several of the serpent tribe are believed to be either quite deaf, or very dull of hearing. Perhaps that which is called the *puddeyan*, the "beaver-serpent," is more so than any other. I have frequently come close up to these reptiles; but they did not make any effort to move out of the way. They lurk in the path, and the victim on whom they pounce will expire within a few minutes after he is bitten.—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 4.—"*The deaf adder.*" The "*adder*," or "*asp*," is the *haje naja* or *cobra* of Egypt, according to Cuvier. The hearing of all the serpent tribes is imperfect, as all are destitute of a tympanic cavity, and of external openings to the ear. The "*deaf adder*" is not a particular species. The point of the rebuke is, the *pethen*, or "adder," here in question, *could* hear in some degree but *would* not; just as the unrighteous judges, or persecutors, of David could hear with their outward ears such appeals as he makes in verses 1, 2, but would not. The charmer usually could charm the serpent by shrill sounds, either of his voice or of the flute, the serpent's comparative deafness rendering it the more amenable to those sounds which it could hear. But exceptional cases occurred of a "*deaf adder*" which was *deaf* only in the sense that it refused to hear, or to be acted on. Also Jer. viii. 17; compare Eccl. x. 11.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 4.—*" The deaf adder that stoppeth her ear."* With respect to what is said of the animal's stopping its ears, it is not necessary to have recourse to the supposition of its actually doing so, which by some persons has been stated, but it is sufficient to know, that whilst some serpents are operated upon in the manner above described, others are partly or altogether insensible to the incantation.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 4 (*second clause*).—This clause admits of a different construction, *like the deaf adder he stops his ear*, which some interpreters prefer, because an adder cannot stop its ears, and need not stop them if naturally deaf, whereas it is by stopping his, that the wicked man becomes like a deaf adder.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verses 4, 5.—Experienced and skilful as the serpent-charmers are, however, they do not invariably escape with impunity. Fatal terminations to these exhibitions of the psyllic art now and then occur; for there are still to be found *"deaf adders, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."* . . . . Roberts mentions the instance of a man who came to a gentleman's house to exhibit tame snakes, and on being told that a cobra, or hooded snake, was in a cage in the house, was asked if he could charm it; on his replying in the affirmative, the serpent was released from the cage, and no doubt, in a state of high irritation. The man began his incantations, and repeated his charms; but the snake darted at him, fastened upon his arm, and before night he was a corpse.—*Philip Henry Gosse, in "The Romance of Natural History,"* 1681.

Verses 4, 5.—One day, a rattlesnake entered our encampment. Among us was a Canadian who could play the flute, and who, to divert us, marched against the serpent with his new species of weapon. On the approach of his enemy, the haughty reptile curls himself into a spiral line, flattens his head, inflates his cheeks, contracts his lips, displays his envonomed fangs and his bold throat; his tongue flows like two flames of fire; his eyes are burning coals; his body, swoollen with rage, rises and falls like the bellows of a forge; his dilated skin assumes a dull and scaly appearance; and his tail, whence proceeds the death-announcing sound, vibrates with such rapidity as to resemble a light vapour. The Canadian begins to play upon his flute—the serpent starts with surprise, and draws back his head. In proportion as he is struck with the magic notes, his eyes lose their fierceness; the oscillations of his tail become slower, and the sounds which it makes become weaker, and gradually die away. Less perpendicular upon their spiral line, the rings of the charmed serpent are by degrees expanded, and sink one after another on the ground in concentric circles. The shades of azure, green, white, and gold recover their brightness on his quivering skin, and slightly turning his head, he remains motionless, in the attitude of attention and pleasure. At this moment the Canadian advances a few steps, producing with the flute sweet and simple notes. The serpent, inclining his variegated neck, opens a passage with the head through the high grass, and begins to creep after the musician; stopping when he stops, and beginning to follow him again as soon as he advances forward. In this manner he was led out of the camp, attended by a great number of spectators, both savages and Europeans, who could scarcely believe their eyes which had witnessed this effect of harmony.—*François Auguste, Viscount de Chateaubriand,* 1768—1848.

Verses 4, 5.—The serpent, when she begins to feel the charmer, clappeth one ear presently to the ground, and stoppeth the other ear with her tail, although by hearkening to the charmer, as some observe, she would be provoked to spit out her poison, and renew her age.* So hot is man upon his harlot sin, that he is deaf to all that would counsel him to the contrary; he stoppeth his ear, hardeneth his heart, stiffeneth his neck against the thunders of the law, the still voice of the gospel, the motions of the Spirit, and the convictions of his own conscience. When sin calls, they run through thick and thin for haste; when the world commands, how readily do they hearken, how quickly do they hear, how faithfully do they obey! but when the blessed God crieth to them, chargeth them by his unquestionable authority, beseecheth them for their own unchangeable felicity, they, like statues of men, rather than living creatures, stand still and stir not at all. Other things move swiftly to their centres; stones fall tumbling downward, sparks fly apace upward, coneys run with speed to their burrows, rivers with violence to the ocean, and yet silly man hangs off from his Maker, that neither entreaties, nor threatenings,

* This is a specimen of the old-fashioned *un*-natural history. No one will be misled by it.—*C. H. S.*

nor the word, nor the works of God, nor hope of heaven, nor fear of hell, can quicken or hasten him to his happiness. Who would imagine that a reasonable soul should act so much against sense and reason ?—*George Swinnock*, 1627—1673.

Verse 5.—"*Will not hearken.*" The Lord hath some of his elect ones whom he seeth walking in by-paths and crooked ways : the Lord giveth a commission to his servants, the ministers, and saith, Go invite and call yon soul to come to me, and say, Return, O Shulamite ; but the soul stirs not : the Lord sends and calls again : yet with the deaf adder, he hearkeneth not to the voice of the enchanter : well, saith the Lord, " If you will not come ; I will fetch you ; if fair means will not do, foul means must ; then he hisseth for the fly and the bee of affliction, and calls forth armies of trouble, and gives them commission to seize upon, and to lay siege to such a man or woman, and saith, Ply them with your cannon shot, till you make them yield, give up the keys and strike the sail ; he sends sickness to their bodies, a consumption to their estate, death to their friends, shame to their reputation, a fire to their house, and the like, and bids them prey and spoil, till they see and acknowledge the hand of the Lord lifted up.—*J. Votier's "Survey of Effectual Calling,"* 1652.

Verse 6.—"*Break their teeth," destroy the fangs* of these serpents, in which *their poison is* contained. This will amount to the same meaning as above. Save me from the *adders*, the sly and poisonous slanderers : save me also from the *lions*—the tyrannical and bloodthirsty men.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"*Great teeth.*" מְלְתָּעוֹת, according to Michaelis and Gesenius, are the *eye-teeth*, which in lions are sharp and terrible.—*George Phillips, B.D., in "The Psalms in Hebrew : With a Commentary,"* 1846.

Verses 6—9.—David's enemies were strong and fierce as young lions : he therefore prayed that *their teeth might be broken*, even their strongest teeth, their *grinders*, with which they were ready to devour him ; that so they might be disabled from doing mischief. They overwhelmed him like an inundation : but he desired it might prove a land-flood, which is soon wasted. They were about to shoot at him : but he would have their bows, or their arrows, to be shivered to pieces, and become like straw, and do no execution, and he prayed that they might waste insensibly as the snail, which leaves its substance all along its track ; and that they might come to nothing, like an abortion. He also predicted, that their prosperous rage (which resembled the crackling of thorns under a pot), would soon be extinct, and produce no effect ; while the Lord in his wrath would hurry them into speedy destruction ; as a furious whirlwind drives a living man down a precipice, or into a dreadful pit.—*Thomas Scott*, 1747—1821.

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—Perowne renders this clause, "*Let them melt away, as water* (*which*) *runneth apace,*" and says that the reference is to "water running away, and so wasted and lost."

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—In desert parts of Africa it has afforded much joy to fall in with a brook of water, especially when running in the direction of the journey, expecting it would prove a valuable companion. Perhaps before it accompanied us two miles it became invisible by sinking into the sand ; but two miles further along it would re-appear, and raise hopes of its continuance ; but after running a few hundred yards, would sink finally into the sand, no more again to rise.—*John Campbell*, 1766—1840.

Verse 8.—"*As a snail which melteth away as it goeth,*" lit., "*which goeth in melting*" (or slime), the noun being in the accusative as describing the nature of the action, and the allusion being to the slimy trail which the snail leaves behind it, so that *it seems* to waste away. Evidently this is nothing more than a poetical hyperbole, and need not be explained, therefore, as a popular error or a mistake in natural history.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D., in "The Book of Psalms ; a New Translation, with Introductions and Notes,"* 1864.

Verse 8.—"*As a snail which melteth,*" etc. This is a very remarkable and not very intelligible passage. The Jewish Bible renders the passage in a way which explains the idea which evidently prevailed at the time the Psalms were composed : "As a snail let him melt as he passeth on." The ancients had an idea that the slimy track made by a snail as it crawled along was subtracted from the substance of

its body, and that in consequence the farther it crept the smaller it became, until at last it wasted entirely away. The commentators on the Talmud took this view of the case. The Hebrew word, שַׁבְלוּל *shablul*, which undoubtedly does signify a snail of some kind, is thus explained :—" The Shablul is a creeping thing ; when it comes out of its shell, saliva pours from itself until it becomes liquid, and so dies." Other explanations of this passage have been offered, but there is no doubt that the view taken by these commentators is the correct one, and that the Psalmist, when he wrote the terrible series of denunciations in which the passage occurs, had in his mind the popular belief regarding the gradual wasting away of the snail as it " passeth on." It is needless to say that no particular species of snail is mentioned, and almost as needless to state that in Palestine there are many species of snails, to any or all of which these words are equally applicable.—*J. G. Wood, in " Bible Animals,"* 1869.

Verse 8.—*" The untimely birth of a woman."* The wicked are all, so to speak, human abortions ; they are and for ever remain defective beings, who have not accomplished the great purpose of their existence. Heaven is the one end for which man is created, and he who falls short of it does not attain the purpose of his being ; he is an eternal abortion.—*O. Prescott Hiller.*

Verse 8 (*second clause*).—David when he curseth the plots of wicked men, that though they have conceived mischief ; and though they have gone with it a long time, and are ready to bring it forth, yet saith he, *" Let them be "* (that is, let their counsels and designs be) *" like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun : "* that is, let them be dashed and blasted, let them never bring forth their poisonous brood to the hurt and trouble of the world.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—*" Before your cooking vessels,"* etc. It would puzzle Œdipus himself to make any tolerable sense of the English translation of this verse. It refers to the usage of travellers in the East, who when journeying through the deserts, make a hasty blaze with the thorns which they collect, some green and full of sap, others dry and withered, for the purpose of dressing their food ; in which circumstances, violent storms of wind not unfrequently arise, which sweep away their fuel and entire apparatus, before the vessels which they use become warm by the heat. An expressive and graphical image of the overwhelming ruin of wicked men !—*William Walford,* 1837.

Verse 9.—*" Before your pots feel the bramble."* By this proverbial expression the Psalmist describes the sudden eruption of the divine wrath ; sudden and violent as the ascension of the dry bramble underneath the housewife's pot. The brightness of the flame which this furnishes, the height to which it mounts in an instant, the fury with which it seems to rage on all sides of the vessel, give force, and even sublimity to the image, though taken from one of the commonest occurrences of the lowest life—a cottager's wife boiling her pot ! The sense, then, will be : " Before your pots feel the bramble, he shall sweep them away in whirlwind and hurricane."—*Samuel Horsley,* 1733—1806.

Verse 9.—In all the book of God I do not remember any sentence so variously and differently translated as this verse. . . . This variety of translations ariseth chiefly from the original Hebrew word, סִירוֹת *siroth*, which in the Hebrew tongue signifies, first, *pots* or *caldrons*, wherein flesh is sod, as Ex. xvi. 3 ; xxxviii. 3 ; Ezek. xi. 11. Secondly, *thorns*, and pricks of thorns and briers, as Isa. xxxiv. 13 ; Hosea ii. 8. Thirdly, because the pricks of the great bramble are very sharp and hooked, this word is used to signify fish-hooks. Amos iv. 2. In all our English Bibles of the old, new and Geneva translation, and some Latin Bibles, this word is taken to signify pots or caldrons ; but the Septuagint, Hierome, vulgar Latin, Austine, Pagnine, Tremellius, and all others that I have seen, take this word in the second sense, for the sharp pricks of thorns and brambles. Here, certainly, this word signifies the sharp pricks of the great dog-bramble, where here in the Hebrew text is אָטָד *atad*, and is used (Jud. ix. 14, 15) in Jotham's parable to signify the bramble, which being made king of the trees, kindled a fire, which devoured the cedars of Lebanon. Now this bramble in the body, and every branch of it, is beset with sharp hooked pricks, some of which are green and have life and moisture in them, and though they be sharp, yet they are not so stiff and strong as to make any deep wound in a man's flesh. Others are greater, more hooked, and hardened by drying and parching with the vehement heat of the sun ; and they strike to the quick, and bold fast, or tear where they catch hold of man's skin or flesh. The first are here

called, –, living or green; the others are called, יָבֵשׁ, dried, or parched and hardened; and the prophetical Psalmist affirmeth that "God who judgeth in the earth, will take away and destroy as with a tempestuous whirlwind, every one of them, as well the green as the dry," as Tremellius out of the original doth most truly translate the word. . . . The whole text runs thus: "Before they feel your thorns or pricks, O ye bramble, he will take away every one as with a whirlwind, as well the green as the dry." "*Before they*," that is, the righteous whom ye hate and persecute; "*do feel*," that is, have a full sense and understanding of your thorns or pricks, that is, of the sharpness, fury, and mischief which is in the heart and hand of all and every one among you; for every one in your band and congregation is a grievous thorn and sharp prick of the cursed bramble, sharply set and bent to do mischief in malice and fury to the people and church of God. "He that is God who judgeth in the earth" (as it is expressed in the eleventh verse, in the last words) "will take away as with a whirlwind" (that is, scatter and destroy tempestuously), "every one, as well the living and green as the dry and hardened." That is, of every sort banded together, as well the green-headed and young persecutors, sharp set, but not so strong to hurt, as the old and dry who are hardened in malice by long custom, and in power and policy are strong to do mischief.—*George Walker, in a Fast Sermon before the House of Commons*, 1644.

Verse 10.—"*The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.*" When the just man seeth the vengeance and rejoiceth, it is not of malice, but of benevolence, either hoping that the wicked may by punishment be amended, or loving God's justice above men's persons, not being displeased with the punishment of the wicked, because it proceedeth from the Lord, nor desiring that the wicked may be acquitted from penalty because they deserve in justice to be punished.—*Nicholas Gibbens.*

Verse 10.—"*The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.*" Not that he shall be glad of the vengeance purely as it is a hurt, or a suffering to the creature, but the righteous shall be glad when he seeth the vengeance of God, as it is a fulfilling of the threatening of God against the sin of man, and an evidence of his own holiness. Psalm lxiv. 9, 10.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10.—"*He shall wash his feet*," etc. That is, he gets comfort and encouragement by seeing the Lord avenge his cause against his adversaries.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10.—"*He shall wash his feet in the blood*," etc. As the victorious survivor of a conflict, walking over the battle-field, might be said to do.—*R. T. Society's Notes.*

Verse 10.—When angels execute God's judgments upon sinners, the saints see much in it; they see matter of fear and praise; of fear, in that God's power, wrath, and hatred are manifested in them against sin and sinners; of praise, in that themselves are delivered and justice is performed. When the wicked are taken away by a divine stroke, by the hand of justice, and God hath the glory of his justice, *the righteous rejoice at it:* but is that all? No, "*he washeth his feet in the blood of the wicked;*" that is, by this judgment he fears and reforms. It is a metaphor taken from the practice of those parts where they went barefoot, or with sandals and so contracted much filth, and used to wash and cleanse their feet when they came in; so here, the godly seeing the hand of God upon the wicked, fears and judges himself for his sins, purges his conscience and affections, and stands now in awe of that God who hath stricken the wicked for those sins which he himself in part is guilty of. Waldus, a man of note in Lyons, seeing one struck dead in his presence, he washed his hand in his blood; for presently he gave alms to the poor, instructed his family in the true knowledge of God, and exhorted all that came unto him to repentance and holiness of life.—*William Greenhill*, 1691—1677.

Verse 10.—No doubt, at the sight of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim destroyed, angels saw cause to rejoice and sing, "Hallelujah." Wickedness was swept away; earth was lightened of a burden; justice, the justice of God, was highly exalted; love to his other creatures was displayed in freeing them from the neighbourhood of hellish contaminations. On the same principles (entering, however, yet deeper into the mind of the Father, and sympathising to the full in his justice), the Lord Jesus himself, and each one of his members shall cry "Hallelujah," over Antichrist's ruined hosts. Rev. xix. 3. "*The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*" He shall be refreshed at the end of his journey (John xiii. 5; Luke vii. 44; Gen. xviii. 4), he shall wipe off all the dust of the way, and end its weariness by entering into that strange,

that divine joy over sin destroyed, justice honoured, the law magnified, vengeance taken for the insult done to Godhead, the triumph of the Holy One over the unholy. It is not merely *the time when* that joy begins—it is also the occasion and cause of that day's rapturous delight.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 10.—A broad and vital distinction is to be made between *desire for the gratification of personal vengeance*, and zeal for the vindication *of the glory of God.* "The glory of God" includes necessarily the real good of the offender and the well-being of society. Desire for *retaliation* is always wrong; desire for *retribution* may be in the highest degree praiseworthy. For personal motives only can I desire retaliation upon the wrong-doer; but for motives most interested and noble I may desire retribution.—*R. A. Bertram, in "The Imprecatory Psalms,"* 1867.

Verse 11.—"*So that a man shall say, Verily,*" etc. This shall be said not by *a man*, nor by any particular man, but by men in general, by man as opposed to God. The particle translated "*verily*" really means *only*, and denotes that this and nothing else is true.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 11.—"*So that,*" etc. There is something worth noting from the connexion of this verse with the context, and is implied in the first word, "*so that,*" which joins this verse with the former parts of this Psalm, and shows this to be an illation from them. What? did God so suddenly, "as with a whirlwind," overthrow those wicked judges who lorded it over his people? did he make those "lions" melt like snails? did he confirm the joints of his people, which were little before, trembling and smiting one against another, as if they had been so many forlorn wretches exposed and cast forth, and no eye to pity them; as if they had been floating with Moses upon the sea in a basket of bulrushes, without any pilot to guide them, and even ready to cry out with the disciple, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Did he then command a calm, and bring them to the haven where they would be? Did he turn their howling like dragons and chattering like cranes, under the whips and saws of tyrannical taskmasters, into a song of joy and triumph? Did he dismantle himself of that cloud wherein for a time he had so enveloped himself, that he seemed not to behold the pressures of his people? Did he, I say, then step in to his people's rescue, by breaking their yokes as in the day of Midian, and kissing them with the kisses of his mouth? "*So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.*" Observe: Though the passages of God's providence may seem so rugged and uncouth, as if they were destructive to his church, and likely to put out the eye of his own glory; yet our God will so dispose of them in the close, that they shall have an advantageous tendency, to the setting forth of his honour and our good.—*John Hinckley*, 1657.

Verse 11.—Some of the judgments of God are a shallow, or a ford, over which a lamb may wade; every child may read the meaning of them; and "*a man*"—any ordinary man—"*may say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—This judging here does not refer to the judgment to come, at the last day, when there shall be a general convention of quick and dead before the Lord's dreadful tribunal; though so, 'tis most true *affore tempus*, that there will be a time when God will ride his circuit here in a solemn manner, "so that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth;" but that is not the scope of this place. 'Tis in the present tense, ὁ κρινων, *that now judgeth*, or *is now judging* the earth and the inhabitants thereof; and therefore it must be understood of a judgment on this side, the judgment of the great day; and so God judges the earth, or in the earth, three manner of ways. First, by a providential ordering and wise disposal of all the affairs of all creatures. Secondly, in relieving the oppressed and pleading the cause of the innocent. Thirdly, in overthrowing and plaguing the wicked doers.—*John Hinckley.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 3.—I. The natural effects of original sin are seen in early suffering and death. II. Its moral effects are seen in the early commission of actual sin. III. Early depravity is evinced in the conscious guilt of telling lies.—*G. R.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—The inner pandemonium, or the calendar of the heart's crime.

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—A generation of serpents.—*T. Adams's Sermon.*

Verse 4.—Sin as a poison. Poisons may be attractive in colour and taste, slow or rapid in action, painful in effect, withering, soporific or maddening. In all cases deadly.

Verse 5.—The serpent charmer. I. He charms with moral suasion, promise, threatening, etc. II. He charms wisely, earnestly, affectionately, argumentatively. III. He charms in vain; the will is averse. Hence the need of divine grace and of the gospel.

Verse 8.—The snail-like course of ungodly men. Their sin destroys their property, health, time, influence, life.

Verse 11.—Remarkable cases of divine judgments and their results.

PSALM LIX.

To the Chief Musician.—*Strange that the painful events in David's life should end in enriching the repertoire of the national minstrelsy. Out of a sour, ungenerous soil spring up the honey-bearing flowers of Psalmody. Had he never been cruelly hunted by Saul, Israel and the church of God in after ages would have missed this song. The music of the sanctuary is in no small degree indebted to the trials of the saints. Affliction is the tuner of the harps of sanctified songsters.* Altaschith. *Another "* destroy not *" Psalm. Whom God preserves Satan cannot destroy. The Lord can even preserve the lives of his prophets by the very ravens that would naturally pick out their eyes. David always found a friend to help him when his case was peculiarly dangerous, and that friend was in his enemy's household; in this instance it was Michal, Saul's daughter, as on former occasions it had been Jonathan, Saul's son.* Michtam of David. *This is the Fifth of the Golden Secrets of David; God's chosen people have many such.* When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him. *Great efforts are made to carry the Psalms away to other authors and seasons than those assigned in the headings, it being the fashion just now to prove one's learning by disagreeing with all who have gone before. Perhaps in a few years the old titles will be as much reverenced as they are now rejected. There are spasms in these matters, and in many other things among the would-be "intellectuals" of the schools. We are not anxious to show our readiness at conjecture, and therefore are content with reading this Psalm in the light of the circumstance here mentioned; it does not seem unsuitable to any verse, and in some the words are very appropriate to the specified occasion.*

Divisions.—*In verses* 1 *and* 2 *he prays, in* 3 *and* 4 *he complains of his woes, and again in verse* 5 *he prays. Here he inserts a Selah, and ends one portion of his song. In* 6 *and* 7 *he renews his complaint, in* 8, 9, 10 *declares his confidence in God, and in* 11, 12, 13 *lifts up his heart in prayer; closing another part of his Psalm with Selah. Then he prays again in* 14, 15, *and afterwards betakes himself to singing.*

EXPOSITION.

DELIVER me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me.

2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.

1. *"Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God."* They were all round the house with the warrant of authority, and a force equal to the carrying of it out. He was to be taken dead or alive, well or ill, and carried to the slaughter. No prowess could avail him to break the cordon of armed men, neither could any eloquence stay the hand of his bloody persecutor. He was taken like a bird in a net, and no friend was near to set him free. Unlike the famous starling, he did not cry, "I can't get out," but his faith uttered quite another note. Unbelief would have suggested that prayer was a waste of breath, but not so thought the good man, for he makes it his sole resort. He cries for deliverance and leaves ways and means with his God. *"Defend me from them that rise up against me."* Saul was a king, and therefore sat in high places, and used all his authority to crush David; the persecuted one therefore beseeches the Lord to set him on high also, only in another sense. He asks to be lifted up, as into a lofty tower, beyond the reach of his adversary. Note how he sets the title *"My God,"* over against the word *"mine enemies."* This is the right method of effectually catching and quenching the fiery darts of the enemy upon the shield of faith. God is our God, and therefore deliverance and defence are ours.

2. *"Deliver me from the workers of iniquity."* Saul was treating him very unjustly, and besides that was pursuing a tyrannical and unrighteous course towards others, therefore David the more vehemently appeals against him. Evil men

were in the ascendant at court, and were the ready tools of the tyrant, against these also he prays. Bad men in a bad cause may be pleaded against without question. When a habitation is beset by thieves, the good man of the house rings the alarm-bell; and in these verses we may hear it ring out loudly, "*deliver me*," "*defend me*," "*deliver me*," "*save me*." Saul had more cause to fear than David had, for the invincible weapon of prayer was being used against him, and heaven was being aroused to give him battle. "*And save me from bloody men.*" As David remembers how often Saul had sought to assassinate him, he knows what he has to expect from that quarter and from the king's creatures and minions who were watching for him. David represents his enemy in his true colours before God; the bloodthirstiness of the foe is a fit reason for the interposition of the righteous God, for the Lord abhors all those who delight in blood.

3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD.

4 They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault: awake to help me, and behold.

3. "*For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul.*" They were in ambuscade for the good man's life. He knew their design and cried to God to be rescued from it. Like wild beasts they crouched, and waited to make the fatal spring; but their victim used effectual means to baffle them, for he laid the matter before the Lord. While the enemy lies waiting in the posture of a beast, we wait before God in the posture of prayer, for God waits to be gracious to us and terrible towards our foes. "*The mighty are gathered against me.*" None of them were absent from the muster when a saint was to be murdered. They were too fond of such sport to be away. The men at arms who ought to have been fighting their country's battles, are instead thereof hunting a quiet citizen; the gigantic monarch is spending all his strength to slay a faithful follower. "*Not for my transgressions, nor for my sin, O Lord.*" He appeals to Jehovah that he had done no ill. His only fault was, that he was too valiant and too gracious, and was, besides, the chosen of the Lord, therefore the envious king could not rest till he had washed his hands in the blood of his too popular rival. We shall always find it to be a great thing to be innocent; if it does not carry our cause before an earthly tribunal, it will ever prove the best of arguments in the court of conscience, and a standing consolation when we are under persecution. Note the repetition of his declaration of integrity. David is sure of his innocence. He dares repeat the plea.

4. "*They run and prepare themselves without my fault.*" They are all alive and active, they are swift to shed blood. They prepare and use their best tactics; they besiege me in my house, and lay their ambuscades as for some notable enemy. They come up fully armed to the attack, and assail me with all the vigour and skill of a host about to storm a castle; and all for no cause, but out of gratuitous malice. So quick are they to obey their cruel master, that they never stay to consider whether their errand is a good one or not; they run at once, and buckle on their harness as they run. To be thus gratuitously attacked is a great grief. To a brave man the danger causes little distress of mind compared with the injustice to which he is subjected. It was a cruel and crying shame that such a hero as David should be hounded down as if he were a monster, and beset in his house like a wild beast in its den. "*Awake to help me, and behold.*" When others go to sleep, keep thou watch, O God. Put forth thy might. Arouse thee from thine inaction. Only look at thy servant's sad condition and thy hand will be sure to deliver me. We see how thorough was the Psalmist's faith in the mercy of his Lord, for he is satisfied that if the Lord do but look on his case it will move his active compassion.

5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.

5. "*Thou*," thyself, work for me personally, for the case needs thine interposition. "*Therefore*," because I am unjustly assailed, and cannot help myself. "*O Lord*," everliving, "*God of Hosts*," able to rescue me; "*the God of Israel*," pledged by covenant to redeem thine oppressed servant; "*awake to visit all the heathen*," arouse thy holy mind, bestow thy sacred energies, punish the heathen among thine Israel, the falsehearted who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. And when thou art about the business, let all the nations of thine enemies, and all the heathenish

people at home and abroad know that thou art upon circuit, judging and punishing. It is the mark of a thoughtful prayer that the titles which are in it applied to God are appropriate, and are, as it were, congruous to the matter, and fitted to add force to the argument. Shall Jehovah endure to see his people oppressed? Shall the God of hosts permit his enemies to exult over his servant? Shall the faithful God of a chosen people leave his chosen to perish? The name of God is, even in a literal sense, a fortress and high tower for all his people. What a forceful petition is contained in the words, "*awake to visit!*" Actively punish, in wisdom judge, with force chastise. "*Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors.*" Be merciful to them as men, but not as transgressors; if they continue hardened in their sin, do not wink at their oppression. To wink at sin in transgressors will be to leave the righteous under their power, therefore do not pass by their offences but deal out the due reward. The Psalmist feels that the overthrow of oppression which was so needful for himself must be equally desirable for multitudes of the godly placed in like positions, and therefore he prays for the whole company of the faithful, and against the entire confraternity of traitors. "*Selah.*" With such a subject before us we may well pause. Who would not sit still and consider, when vengeance is being meted out to all the enemies of God? How wrong is that state of mind which hates to hear of the punishment of the wicked!

6 They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords *are* in their lips: for who, *say they,* doth hear?

6. "*They return at evening.*" Like wild beasts that roam at night, they come forth to do mischief. If foiled in the light, they seek the more congenial darkness in which to accomplish their designs. They mean to break into the house in the dead of night. "*They make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.*" Howling with hunger for their prey, they sneak round and round the walls, prowling with stealthy footstep, and barking in unamiable concert. David compares his foes to Eastern dogs, despised, unowned, loathsome, degraded, lean, and hungry, and he represents them as howling with disappointment, because they cannot find the food they seek. Saul's watchmen and the cruel king himself must have raved and raged fiercely when they found the image and the pillow of goats' hair in the bed instead of David. Vain were their watchings, the victim had been delivered, and that by the daughter of the man who desired his blood. Go, ye dogs, to your kennels and gnaw your bones, for this good man is not meat for your jaws.

7. "*Behold, they belch out with their mouth.*" The noisy creatures are so remarkable in their way, that attention is called to them with a *behold. Ecce homines,* might we not say, *Ecce canes!* Their malicious speech gushes from them as from a bubbling fountain. The wicked are voluble in slander; their vocabulary of abuse is copious, and as detestable as it is abundant. What torrents of wrathful imprecation will they pour on the godly! They need no prompters, their feelings force for themselves their own vent, and fashion their own expressions. "*Swords are in their lips.*" They speak daggers. Their words pierce like rapiers, and cleave like cutlasses. As the cushion of a lion's paw conceals his claw, so their soft ruby lips contain bloody words. "*For who, say they, doth hear?*" They are free from all restraint, they fear no God in heaven, and the government on earth is with them. When men have none to call them to account, there is no accounting for what they will do. He who neither fears God nor regards man sets out upon errands of oppression with gusto, and uses language concerning it of the most atrociously cruel sort. David must have been in a singular plight when he could hear the foul talk and hideous braggings of Saul's black guards around the house. After the style in which a Cavalier would have cursed a Puritan, or Claverhouse a Covenanter, the Saulites swore at the upstart whom the king's majesty had sent them to arrest. David called them dogs, and no doubt a pretty pack they were, a cursed cursing company of curs. When they said, "Who doth hear?" God was listening, and this David knew, and therefore took courage.

8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.

9 *Because of* his strength will I wait upon thee: for God *is* my defence.
10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies.

8. "*But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them.*" He speaks to God as to one who is close at hand. He points to the liers in wait and speaks to God about them. They are laughing at me, and longing for my destruction, but thou hast the laugh of them seeing thou hast determined to send them away without their victim, and made fools of by Michal. The greatest, cleverest, and most malicious of the enemies of the church are only objects of ridicule to the Lord; their attempts are utterly futile, they need give no concern to our faith. "*Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.*" As if David had said—What are these fellows who lie in ambush? And what is the king their master, if God be on my side? If not only these but all the heathen nations were besetting the house, yet Jehovah would readily enough disappoint them and deliver me. In the end of all things it will be seen how utterly contemptible and despicable are all the enemies of the cause and kingdom of God. He is a brave man who sees this to-day when the enemy is in great power, and while the church is often as one shut up and besieged in his house.

9. "*Because of his strength will I wait upon thee.*" Is my persecutor strong? Then, my God, for this very reason I will turn myself to thee, and leave my matters in thy hand. It is a wise thing to find in the greatness of our difficulties a reason for casting ourselves upon the Lord.

"And when it seems no chance nor change
From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And, patient, waits on thee."

"*For God is my defence,*" my high place, my fortress, the place of my resort in the time of my danger. If the foe be too strong for me to cope with him, I will retreat into my castle, where he cannot reach me.

10. "*The God of my mercy shall prevent me.*" God who is the giver and fountain of all the undeserved goodness I have received, will go before me and lead my way as I march onward. He will meet me in my time of need. Not alone shall I have to confront my foes, but he whose goodness I have long tried and proved will gently clear my way, and be my faithful protector. How frequently have we met with preventing mercy—the supply prepared before the need occurred, the refuge built before the danger arose. Far ahead into the future the foreseeing grace of heaven has projected itself, and forestalled every difficulty. "*God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.*" Observe that the words, "*my desire,*" are not in the original. From the Hebrew we are taught that David expected to see his enemies without fear. God will enable his servant to gaze steadily upon the foe without trepidation; he shall be calm, and self possessed, in the hour of peril; and ere long he shall look down on the same foes discomfited, overthrown, destroyed. When Jehovah leads the way victory follows at his heels. See God, and you need not fear to see your enemies. Thus the hunted David, besieged in his own house by traitors, looks only to God, and exults over his enemies.

11 Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord, our shield.
12 *For* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying *which* they speak.
13 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them*, that they *may* not *be:* and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

11. "*Slay them not, lest my people forget.*" It argues great faith on David's part, that even while his house was surrounded by his enemies he is yet so fully sure of their overthrow, and so completely realises it in his own mind, that he puts in a detailed petition that they may not be too soon or too fully exterminated. God's victory over the craft and cruelty of the wicked is so easy and so glorious that it seems a pity to end the conflict too soon. To sweep away the plotters all at once were to end the great drama of retribution too abruptly. Nay, let the righteous be buffeted a little longer, and let the boasting oppressor puff and brag through

his little hour, it will help to keep Israel in mind of the Lord's justice, and make the brave party who side with God's champion accustomed to divine interpositions. It were a pity for good men to be without detractors, seeing that virtue shines the brighter for the foil of slander. Enemies help to keep the Lord's servants awake. A lively, vexatious devil is less to be dreaded than a sleepy, forgetful spirit which is given to slumber. "*Scatter them by thy power.*" Blow them to and fro, like chaff in the wind. Let the foemen live as a vagabond race. Make Cains of them. Let them be living monuments of divine power, advertisements of heaven's truth. To the fullest extent let divine justice be illustrated in them. "*And bring them down.*" Like rotten fruit from a tree. From the seats of power which they disgrace, and the positions of influence which they pollute, let them be hurled into humiliation. This was a righteous wish, and if it be untempered by the gentleness of Jesus, we must remember that it is a soldier's prayer, and the wish of one who was smarting under injustice and malice of no ordinary kind. "*O Lord, our shield.*" David felt himself to be the representative of the religious party in Israel, and therefore he says "*our shield,*" speaking in the name of all those who make Jehovah their defence. We are in good company when we hide beneath the buckler of the Eternal; meanwhile he who is the shield of his people is the scatterer of their enemies.

12. "*For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride.*" Such dreadful language of atheism and insolence deserves a fit return. As they hope to take their victims, so let them be taken themselves, entangled in their own net, arrested in the midst of their boastful security. Sins of the lips are real sins, and punishable sins. Men must not think because their hatred gets no further than railing and blasphemy that therefore they shall be excused. He who takes the will for the deed, will take the word for the deed and deal with men accordingly. Wretches who are persecutors in talk, burners and stabbers with the tongue, shall have a reckoning for their would-be transgressions. Pride though it show not itself in clothes, but only in speech, is a sin; and persecuting pride, though it pile no fagots at Smithfield, but only revile with its lips, shall have to answer for it among the unholy crew of inquisitors. "*And for cursing and lying which they speak.*" Sins, like hounds, often hunt in couples. He who is not ashamed to curse before God, will be sure to lie unto men. Every swearer is a liar. Persecution leads on to perjury. They lie and swear to it. They curse and give a lying reason for their hate. This shall not go unnoted of the Lord, but shall bring down its recompense. How often has it happened that while haughty speeches have been fresh in the mouths of the wicked they have been overtaken by avenging providence, and made to see their mischief recoil upon themselves!

13. "*Consume them in wrath.*" As if he had changed his mind and would have them brought to a speedy end, or if spared would have them exist as ruins, he cries, "*consume them,*" and he redoubles his cry, "*consume them,*" nay, he gives a triple note, "*that they may not be.*" Revilers of God whose mouths pour forth such filth as David was on this occasion obliged to hear, are not to be tolerated by a holy soul; indignation must flame forth, and cry to God against them. When men curse the age and the place in which they live, common humanity leads the righteous to desire that they may be removed. If they could be reformed it would be infinitely better; but if they cannot, if they must and will continue to be like mad dogs in a city, then let them cease to be. Who can desire to see such a generation perpetuated? "*And let them know;*" *i.e.*, let all the nations know, "*that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth.*" He whose government is universal fixes his headquarters among his chosen people, and there in special he punishes sin. So David would have all men see. Let even the most remote nations know that the great moral Governor has power to destroy ungodliness, and does not wink at iniquity in any, at any time, or in any place. When sin is manifestly punished it is a valuable lesson to all mankind. The overthrow of a Napoleon, is a homily for all monarchs, the death of a Tom Paine a warning to all infidels, the siege of Paris a sermon to all cities. *Selah.* Good cause there is for this rest, when a theme so wide and important is introduced. Solemn subjects ought not to be hurried over; nor should the condition of the heart while contemplating themes so high be a matter of indifference. Reader, bethink thee. Sit thou still awhile and consider the ways of God with man.

14 And at evening let them return; *and* let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

15 Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.

14. Here verse six is repeated, as if the songster defied his foes and revelled in the thought of their futile search, their malice, their disappointment, their rage, their defeated vigilance, their wasted energy. He laughs to think that all the city would know how they were deceived, and all Israel would ring with the story of the image and the goats' hair in the bed. Nothing was more a subject of Oriental merriment, than a case in which the crafty are deceived, and nothing more makes a man the object of derision than to be outwitted by a woman, as in this instance Saul and his base minions were by Michal. The warrior poet hears in fancy the howl of rage in the council of his foes when they found their victim clean escaped from their hands.

15. "*Let them wander up and down for meat.*" Like dogs that have missed the expected carcass, let them go up and down dissatisfied, snapping at one another, and too disappointed to be quiet and take the matter easily. "*And grudge if they be not satisfied.*" Let them act like those who cannot believe that they have lost their prey: like a herd of Oriental dogs, unhoused, unkennelled, let them prowl about seeking a prey which they shall never find. Thus the menial followers of Saul paraded the city in vain hope of satisfying their malice and their master. "Surely," say they, "we shall have him yet. We cannot endure to miss him. Perhaps he is in yonder corner, or concealed in such a hidingplace. We must have him. We grudge him his life. Our lust for his blood is hot, nor can we be persuaded but that we shall light upon him." See the restlessness of wicked men; this will increase as their enmity to God increases, and in hell it will be their infinite torment. What is the state of the lost, but the condition of an ambitious camp of rebels, who have espoused a hopeless cause, and will not give it up, but are impelled by their raging passions to rave on against the cause of God, of truth, and of his people.

16 But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God *is* my defence, *and* the God of my mercy.

16. "*But I will sing of thy power.*" The wicked howl, but I sing and will sing. Their power is weakness, but thine is omnipotence; I see them vanquished and thy power victorious, and for ever and ever will I sing of thee. "*Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning.*" When those lovers of darkness find their game is up, and their midnight howlings die away, then will I lift up my voice on high and praise the lovingkindness of God without fear of being disturbed. What a blessed morning will soon break for the righteous, and what a song will be theirs! Sons of the morning, ye may sigh to-night, but joy will come on the wings of the rising sun. Tune your harps even now, for the signal to commence the eternal music will soon be given; the morning cometh and your sun shall go no more down for ever. "*For thou hast been my defence.*" The song is for God alone, and it is one which none can sing but those who have experienced the lovingkindness of their God. Looking back upon a past all full of mercy, the saints will bless the Lord with their whole hearts, and triumph in him as the high place of their security. "*And refuge in the day of my trouble.*" The greater our present trials the louder will our future songs be, and the more intense our joyful gratitude. Had we no day of trouble, where were our season of retrospective thanksgiving? David's besetment by Saul's bloodhounds creates an opportunity for divine interposition and so for triumphant praise.

17. "*Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing.*" What transport is here! What a monopolising of all his emotions for the one object of praising God! Strength has been overcome by strength; not by the hero's own prowess, but by the might of God alone. See how the singer girds himself with the almightiness of God, and calls it all his own by faith. Sweet is the music of experience, but it is all for God; there is not even a stray note for man, for self, or for human helpers. "*For God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.*" With full assurance he claims possession of the Infinite as his protection and security. He sees God in all, and all his own. Mercy rises before him, conspicuous and manifold, for he feels he is undeserving,

and security is with him, undisturbed and impregnable, for he knows that he is safe in divine keeping. Oh, choice song! My soul would sing it now in defiance of all the dogs of hell. Away, away, ye adversaries of my soul, the God of my mercy will keep ye all at bay—

" Nor shall th' infernal lion rend
Whom he designs to keep."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

This Psalm has in its stern contents something no doubt strange to our ears. But never let us omit to distinguish from each other the times and diverse economies, and to place ourselves, as far as possible, in sympathy with the experience of a heart which burned for nothing more than for the glorifying of God in this world. Everything that tended to obscure the theocratic relation of God to his people, called up in the soul of David the most vehement passion. The scornful oppression with which Saul and his venal satellites visited him, the man of God, could not but have, upon the eyes of all, the appearance as if Jehovah were no longer Lord in his own land, who inexorably adhered to his laws and rights. Treason, falsehood, and every kind of evil then prevailed unchecked. What wonder, that as formerly Moses in the wilderness was provoked against the stiff-necked people, so also David, whom the awful holiness of God had already made to tremble, should feel his spirit stirred against the ungodly who surrounded him, and should say, with Job, " My bowels boiled within me."—*Frederick William Krummacher, D.D., in " David, the King of Israel,"* 1867.

Verse 1.—*" O my God."* There are two pleas which the Psalmist makes use of; one was, that God was *his God*, ver. 1; the other was the *power* and *strength* of his *enemies*. It is a blessed thing to have the covenant to fly to in all times of straits and troubles; there is always an anchor-hold of hope there. *" My God,"* is such a plea as infinitely over-balances all other things. He has engaged himself to do his people good; and it is time for him to work when the enemy exalts himself. The church's enemies are never so near destruction as when they think they have nothing to do, but take and divide the spoil. We may plead God's promise and the enemies' power too; both are a ground of hope to a believer in Jesus.—*John Hill* (1711–1746), *in " Sermons on Several Occasions."*

Verse 1.—*" That rise up against me."* He insists upon the strength and violence of his enemies, with the view of exciting his mind to greater fervour in the duty of prayer. These he describes as *rising up* against him, in which expression he alludes, not simply to the audacity or fierceness of their assaults, but to the eminent superiority of power which they possessed; and yet he asks that he may be lifted up on high, as it were, above the reach of this over-swelling inundation.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—On the expression, " they lie in wait for my *soul*," compare 1 Sam. xix. 11, " And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life [*soul*] to night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain;" and Ps. vii. 2, 5.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 3.—*" The mighty are gathered against me,"* is rendered by Chandler, *The mighty are turned aside to lay snares against me.*

Verse 3.—*" The mighty are gathered against me."* As if he would say, " But I am weak, be thou, however, my strength, and vindicate my innocence.—*Arnd.*

Verses 3, 4.—He pleads his own innocency, not as to God, but as to his persecutors. Note, 1. The innocency of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless like doves, yet for Christ's sake are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly. 2. Though our innocency will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves well toward those that have behaved themselves ill

towards us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocency, we may with humble confidence appeal to God, and beg of him to plead our injured cause which he will do in due time.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*They run,*" as armed warriors rushing to the assault (Ps. xviii. 29). The Hebrew for "prepare themselves," (נס) means also "they *establish* themselves;" they make firm their footing, like forces assaulting a city. Job xxx. 14.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 4.—"*They run and prepare.*" The zeal and diligence of the wicked in the cause of unrighteousness might well reprove the languor and tardiness of saints in the work of faith and labour of love. In the church of God nothing is the source of more mischief than the want of true zeal and liveliness. It is only when "many run to and fro" that "knowledge shall be increased."—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 4.—"*Without fault.*" As it respected Saul, he was a faithful subject and an obedient son-in-law.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 4.—"*Awake to help me,*" literally, *Awake to meet me.* In time of temptation the Lord seems to be absent from us, and not to observe our distress—to be, as it were, as Jesus, in the storm, is described as having been "asleep in the hinder part of the ship." Mark iv. 38. But it is only an appearance; the Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps. cxxi. 4); he is always ready to come to our help when we call upon him.—*O. Prescott Hiller.*

Verse 4.—"*And behold.*" The expression is one which savours at once of faith and of the infirmity of the flesh. In speaking of God, as if his eyes had been hitherto shut to the wrongs which he had suffered, and needed now for the first time to be opened for the discovery of them, he expresses himself according to the weakness of our human apprehension. On the other hand, in calling upon God *to behold* his cause, he shows his faith by virtually acknowledging that nothing was hid from his providential cognisance.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—"*O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel.*" In time of straits we should set our eyes most upon those styles of God which most serve to strengthen our faith, especially such as hold forth his power and goodwill to employ his power for us.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Lord God of hosts.*" YAHVEH, *Elohim, Tsebaoth;* as in lxxx. 4, 19; lxxxiv. 8. Comp. 2 Sam. v. 10; 1 Kings xix. 10, 14; Ps. lxxxix. 8.—*From "The Psalms translated from the Hebrew, with Notes chiefly exegetical. By William Kay, D.D.,* 1871."

Verse 5.—"*Lord God of hosts.*" Some have thought this equivalent to God of battles; the true force of the epithet, however, is, "Sovereign of the stars, material hosts of heaven, and of the angels their inhabitants."—*A. A. Hodge, in "Outlines of Theology,"* 1866.

Verse 5.—1. "*God of hosts,*" and therefore *able;* 2. "*God of Israel,*" and therefore *willing.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 6.—"*At evening.*" The *evening* expresses the time of calamity and want, and alludes to the wild beasts which are wont in the *evening* to go forth in quest of prey.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 6.—"*They make a noise like a dog.*" The noise I heard then I shall never forget. To say that if all the sheep-dogs in going to Smithfield on a market-day, had been kept on the constant bark and pitted against the yelping curs upon all the carts in London, they could have given any idea of the canine uproar that now first astonished me, would be to make the feeblest of images. The whole city rang with one vast riot. Down below me, at Tophane; over about Stamboul; far away at Scutari; the whole sixty thousand dogs that are said to overrun Constantinople, appeared engaged in the most active extermination of each other, without a moment's cessation. The yelping, howling, barking, growling, and snarling, were all merged into one uniform and continuous even sound, as the noise of frogs becomes, when heard at a distance. For hours there was no lull. I went to sleep and woke again, and still, with my windows open, I heard the same tumult going on; nor was it until daybreak that anything like tranquility was restored.—*Albert Smith, in "A Month at Constantinople,"* 1850.

Verse 6.—In bringing their secret plans to bear, they are represented as hungry dogs, prowling about the city in the darkness for prey; ranging, each with his

own object, but in one common cause. To take in the full force of this metaphor it must be remembered that in Eastern cities formerly, as at the present day, it was the custom to cast out all the refuse of food—bones, offal, etc.—into the streets, which was consumed chiefly by dogs, great numbers of which were kept, as it would seem, for that particular purpose. With this idea in mind, the metaphor has great propriety in its application to Christ's enemies.

" Every evening they return,
They howl like dogs,
And surround the city.'

William Hill Tucker.

Verses 6, 7.—This is a continued metaphor, which must be well observed, of a famished and rabid dog, unable to satisfy either its hunger or thirst; and describes men, howling formerly like dogs, pursuing, seizing all good things for themselves, and devouring; but now destitute of all things, unable to quench their cupidity, despised, miserable, and desperate wanderers. Such did Saul and his messengers sent against David in Najoth Rama show themselves to be, and give the prelude to their coming misery.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verses 6, 7.—1. They are diligent about it: " *They return at evening.*" 2. *Mad*, and set to do it: " *They make a noise like a dog*," and threaten boldly. 3. Unwearied and obdurate in their purpose: " *They go round about the city.*" 4. Impudent, and brag what they will do to me: " *Behold, they belch out with their mouth.*" 5. And their words are bloody: " *Swords are in their lips.*"—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 7.—" *Behold, they belch out with their mouth*," etc. Bark like dogs, so Aben Ezra; or, *bubble out*, as a fountain bubbles out with water; so they cast out their wickedness in great abundance (see Jer. vi. 7); the phrase denotes the abundance of evil things and wicked speeches that come out of their mouths, which showed the naughtiness of their hearts; so David's enemies blustered and threatened what they would do to him could they find him; and Christ's enemies poured out their wicked charges of blasphemy and sedition against him in great plenty, and without proof.—*John Gill.*

Verse 8.—God seeth and smileth, he looketh and laugheth at these giants; he sitteth in heaven far above their reach; neither doth he much trouble himself about the matter; no more should we, but trust in him, and know that there is a counsel in heaven, that will dash the mould of all contrary counsels upon the earth, as the stone cut out of the mountain did the four great monarchies. Dan. ii. 34. And therefore though the wicked, in the pride of his heart, doth persecute the poor; though they belch out with their mouth, and seek to double murder the innocent, by detraction and by deadly practice, yet God both hears and jeers at their madness, and will bring all their purposes to nought with little ado; nay, the very cruelty of his enemies will move God to make haste. The saints fare the better for the insolence and outrages of their enemies, whose ruin is thereby accelerated; and somewhat God will do the sooner for his people, lest the enemy exalt himself. Ps. cxl. 8.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—In the close of the verse, mention is made of *all nations*, to intimate, that though they might equal the whole world in numbers, they would prove a mere mockery with all their influence and resources. Or the words may be read—EVEN AS *thou hast all the nations in derision.* One thing is obvious, that David ridicules the vain boasting of his enemies, who thought no undertaking too great to be accomplished by their numbers.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 8, 9:—

8 But thou, Lord, laughest at them;
Thou deridest all the heathen.
9 His strength! Toward thee will I keep watch,
For God is my high-fort.

William Kay

Verse 9.—" *Because of his strength will I wait upon thee.*" Those seem to come nearest the meaning of the Psalmist, who construe the words as one continuous sentence, " *I will put in trust his strength with thee*," meaning that however

intemperately Saul might boast of his strength, he would rest satisfied in the assurance that there was a secret divine providence restraining his actions. We must learn to view all men as subordinated in this manner, and to conceive of their strength and their enterprises as depending upon the sovereign will of God. In my opinion, the following version is the best—"*His strength is with thee, I will wait.*" The words are parallel with those in the end of the Psalm, where there can be no doubt that the nominative case is employed, "*My strength is with thee,* I will sing."—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—"*His strength*" is great, humanly viewed; but to the eye of faith what is it! LXX, τὸ κράτος μοι (= *uzzi*); and so most ancient versions. (The contrast is given in verses 16, 17.)—*William Kay.*

Verse 9.—"*Will I wait upon thee,*" *lit.*, "*I will keep watch* to thee," alluding to the title, "When Saul sent, and they *watched* the house *to kill* him." David sets *watching before God,* against their *watching to kill* him.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 9.—How weak soever the believer finds himself, and how powerful soever he perceives his enemy to be, it is all one to him, he hath no more to do but to put faith on work, and to wait till God works. "*Because of his* (that is, the enemy's) *strength, I will wait upon thee,*" saith he to the Lord, "*for God is my defence.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—"*The God of my mercy shall prevent me.*" Oh, how the saints sing of the love of Christ! Oh, how they sing that this love was not moved by worthiness, and it disdains all hire and price, but loves us because he loves us! Deut. vii. 8. O sing of his wonderful love, and of the *prevention* of this love of Christ: "*The God of my mercy shall prevent me.*" How, 1. It preventeth thy love to him. 1 John iv. 19: "We love God, because he first loved us." 2. It preventeth our sins, as in Paul's case. Acts ix. 3: "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven." 3. It preventeth our calamities. Psalm lxxix. 8: "Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us." And, 4. It prevents our endeavours: "*The God of my mercy shall prevent me.*"—*John Spalding, in "Synaxis Sacra,"* 1703.

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—The Psalmist was sure of mercy upon these grounds, he knew he was safe, because God was his God, and the God of his mercy: "*The God of my mercy shall prevent me.*" Some read it, *hath prevented me;* others, *doth prevent me;*" and others as in my text, *shall prevent me.* Each of these senses is exceedingly sweet and full. Take it in the first sense, *hath prevented me,* and it implies thus much, that the Psalmist never was in any difficulty, temptation, or fear, but God was beforehand with him; having always the mercy ready which he stood in need of; and had given it in due season, and that when he least expected it, and it may be was least prepared for it. Take it in the second sense, *doth prevent,* it argues the Psalmist's ground of confidence when all present appearances were gone; as if he had said, "God is of one mind, his thoughts are thoughts of peace, and not of evil; he may vary his providence, but his heart is the same as ever; why should I fear, why should I not hope and rejoice? for my God is a tried God, he is working for me even now. He prevents my fears, and he will prevent my falling." Take the words as they lie in my text, and it comes to the same thing. "God sees all my enemies' designs, and he is ready for them; my prayer is heard, and sure I am deliverance will come, though I know not the time of it."

My design, under the Spirit's influence, is to look into my own heart and yours, and show you what wonders of providence and grace God, as *the God of our mercy,* has caused to pass before us. In discoursing on these words, I shall enquire, I. In what sense, or in what respects, God is *the God of our mercy?* II. How, as the God of our mercy, he doth prevent us? III. Apply. I. I am to enquire in what respects God is said to be *the God of his people's mercy,* and it seems to include in it these three things. I. That all the mercy which is in God's nature, is for his saints. It is a great word that (1 Peter v. 10), "*the God of all grace.*" God has in him all sorts of grace for his saints. He hath pardoning, quickening, strengthening, comforting, and preserving grace. His mercy is rich mercy, abundant mercy, inexhaustible mercy, sure mercy. A man's riches are his glory; God glories in his mercy; it is his delight, he rests in it; and so may we, because there is an infinite inconceivable fulness of it in *him.* "With thee is the fountain of life." God distributes and parcels out this mercy, that we may conceive of it the better; hence he is called by the apostle, "*The Father of mercies,* and the *God of all comfort.*"

2 Cor. i. 3. God is not called the author of our mercies, but the *Father* of them; to show how freely they come from him; they are his bowels; he is pleased with them, as the father is with his own child; dwell on the name, it is a sweet one, the *Father of mercies*. In my text, David grasps all this mercy, lays hold of it as his own mercy: "*The God of my mercy* shall prevent me." That is one sense. 2. It supposes, farther, that there is a portion of mercy laid by, in the purpose of God, for every saint; a portion of mercy which he may call *his own*. This some understand to be Christ's meaning to Paul (2 Cor. xii. 9): "My grace is sufficient for thee;" *i.e.*, that grace which I have allotted for thee thou wilt find sufficient. I knew what thou wouldst need in my eternal counsels; I have made provision beforehand; I have taken care thou shouldst have enough. 3. The words suppose, farther, that God has taken it upon him as his charge, to keep this portion of his mercy for his people. Whatever it be, soul, it is trust for thee with him. Every saint may apply to God, as the God of every mercy which he needs.—*Condensed from John Hill's Sermon.*

Verse 10.—"*God shall let me see* my desire *upon mine enemies.*" The words "*my desire,*" are not in the original, and would be better omitted. The sense is —God will enable me to look down calmly upon my enemies. So Christ looked upon his murderers. So Stephen was enabled to do when they "gnashed upon him with their teeth." "All that sat in the council looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Acts vi. 15.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 11.—"*Slay them not,*" that they may be a whetstone to others' faith—as the Spartans (mentioned in Plutarch's Apothegms) refused to allow the destruction of a neighbouring city which had often called forth their armies, saying, "Destroy not the whetstone of our young men."—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 11.—"*Slay them not:*"—

"Live loathed and long
You smiling, smooth, detested parasites."

W. Shakspeare.

Verse 11.—The enemies must serve for monuments of the divine righteousness, not less in the abiding wretchedness of their race than by their own sudden destruction. Parallel to this verse, and to verses 6, 14, is the curse which David utters upon Joab, in 2 Sam. iii. 29: "Let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that *lacketh bread;*" then the threatening of the man of God to Eli, in 1 Sam. ii. 36, where, after announcing the violent death of the evildoers themselves, corresponding to verse 13 here, it is said: "And it shall come to pass that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him [the new high priest] for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread." Christian expositors have all along drawn attention to the fact, that the substance of our verse, as that also of verses 6, 14, has gone into fulfilment on the Jews. "They have been scattered into all lands, and must go and stand before the eyes of all Christians as a living witness, that they have crucified the true Messiah and Saviour of the world. So that if you see a Jew, think on this word." (*Arnd.*)—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 11.—"*Slay them not;*" namely, suddenly. "*Scatter them.*" It should seem that he hath a relation to Cain's punishment, whom God would not have killed, but would have him to be a wanderer all the days of his life for a spectacle, and an example of his judgments. Gen. iv. 12. Others translate it, *shake them;* namely, their degree of honour and glory.—*John Diodati*, 1576—1649.

Verse 12.—"*For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips,*" etc. Albeit the persecutors do not accomplish their purpose against the righteous; yet their pride, their brags, their lies, their slanders, their curses against the godly, are a sufficient ditty for damnation and wrath to come upon them.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 12.—"*The word of their lips.* The phrase, *word of the lips*, is often used for empty loquacity and boasting; the opposite of a word that is solid and founded on fact, as in 2 Kings xviii. 20. "Thou speakest, but it is only a *word of the lips.*" Prov. xiv. 23. "In all labour there is profit: but the *word of the lips* tendeth only to penury."—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 13.—"*Consume them,*" emphatically, "*consume them in wrath, that they may not be;*" which at first sight seems contrary to his first desire, "*Slay them not;*" but it is not so, for he speaks not of their life, as if he would have them so consumed, that they should not remain alive; but he desires only a consumption of their power, royalty, command, etc. And so these words are a farther explication of his second desire, "*Bring them down.*" He would have them so brought down and consumed in their strength, dignity, command, wealth, riches, that made them proud, that they never be able any more to oppose God, hurt his people, trample upon religion and his church; he would have them live.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 13.—"*Consume them.*" I hear of sad doings in Poland, of villages burnt down, of peaceable men deported to Siberia by hundreds, of women flogged; and when I look away to that Warsaw market-place where a woman, nearly naked, is being publicly beaten, and when I see cruel Mouravieff smile as the blood jets forth from the scourged shoulders, I will not deny that I feel very much tempted to say, "Happy man, whose bullet in fair fight should empty that saddle!" Am I bloodthirsty in this? Am I vindictive? Do you condemn me for this feeling?—*R. A. Bertram.*

Verse 13.—"*That they may not be.*" By the word, וְאֵינֵמוֹ, *that they may not be,* may be understood either a vile and wretched state in general, or even total destruction. The *former* must indeed here be admitted, as is plain from the context, yet not to the exclusion of the *latter* sense; since a miserable condition, such as in a disease, issues in destruction at length. *Not to be* is evidently by no means rarely taken for to be *nobody,* to be wretched, afflicted, despised. Comp. Jer. xxxi. 15.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 13.—"*Selah.*" Though God be in all his words *Yea* and *Amen,* yet in setting this seal of "*Selah*" to this doctrine, he hath testified his will that he would have all these things the better understood and the deeplier imprinted; that if the wicked go on to persecute the godly, "*Selah,*" assuredly God will have them in derision; "*Selah,*" assuredly God shall shiver their bones, shake their best actions, and discover their impurity; "*Selah,*" assuredly God's hand shall be heavy upon them, and they shall not discern it to be his hand till they are consumed. "*Selah,*" assuredly, verily, amen, this is a faithful, an infallible truth; as the Lord liveth it shall be so.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 14.—"*Dog.*" Is it the influence of Christianity extending its law of kindness to the lower animals, or something in the nature of northern dogs and northern men, which makes dogs among us Anglo-Saxons, and all the associations connected with them, so entirely different from what they are in the East? Imagine the effigy of an Oriental saint reposing with its feet on a dog, like that of William the Silent, the heroic Prince of Orange, on the faithful spaniel which rescued his life in the night attack of the Spanish troops, and like so many a sculptured knight of mediæval times! The very presence of such an image would, in Oriental eyes, be the greatest desecration an enemy could inflict on a sacred edifice. And in the Bible how exceedingly contemptuous, and how inapplicable to English dogs, are the terms employed in describing canine habits. "*They grin like a dog, and go about the city, and grudge if they be not satisfied;*" "*Without are dogs.*" What possible resemblance is there between such a description and the grave dignity of a Newfoundland; the sagacious, acute expression of a terrier; the wistful, almost human eyes of our house spaniels? But here at Tyre, as in most Eastern towns, the familiar words came to us with all their true and forcible meaning. The wolfish, hungry, masterless dogs which "go about the cities (of Alexandria, for instance), gathering in packs like jackals, prowling about for offal, and grudging if they be not satisfied;" or the famished outcasts, like our dogs at Tyre, prowling "outside" the city. To these we may apply the highly unfavourable definitions of Scripture, which every Englishman and Englishwoman must indignantly disclaim on behalf of the loyal, faithful, patient creatures who watch beside our homes like sentinels, and guard our flocks like shepherds, and welcome us with ecstatic joy when we come home again, and sometimes will even die rather than desert a master's grave.—*From "Wanderings over Bible Lands and Seas."* 1862.

Verse 14.—Those that repent of their sins when they are in trouble, *mourn like doves;* those whose hearts are hardened when they are in trouble, *make a noise like dogs.—Matthew Henry.*

Verse 15.—"*Let them wander up and down,*" etc. A beggarly and indigent, and so an unsatisfied and wearisome condition, shall be their lot; the greatest worldly plague that can fall on any—large appetites and no possessions or acquests to satisfy them.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 15.—"*And grudge if they be not satisfied.*" A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet doth not grudge, doth not quarrel with providence, nor fret within himself; but those whose God is their belly, if that be not filled and its appetites gratified, fall out both with God and themselves. It is not poverty, but discontent that makes a man unhappy.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 15.—The hunger of a dog is deservedly their plague, of whom a resemblance of that unclean animal's disposition hath been the sin. Reader, be it thy care to avoid such sins, and cultivate a spirit of lively devotion; that, instead of receiving thy portion where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, thou mayst sing to the God of thy mercy for ever.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 16.—We must not pass by the contrast with the wretched condition of the wicked, which is indicated by the pronouns הֵמָּה, *they*, in verse fifteen, and וַאֲנִי *but I*, which are in exact antithesis; also the "*evening*," mentioned above, and the "*morning*," now occurring, for the times of trouble and happiness, and the *dog-like noise* of the wicked, and the *singing* with joyful sound of David, to pass by other particulars, likewise give to the diverse states additional difference.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 16.—*Cantabo* and *exaltabo*, "*I will sing*," and "*I will sing aloud.*" Here is *singing* only of God's *power;* but there is *singing aloud* of his *mercy;* as if his *mercy* were more exaltable than his power, and *that* reached the very *heavens; this* unto the *clouds.* Ps. xxxvi. 5.—*From Humphrey Sydenham's Sermon, entitled "The Well-toned Cymball,"* 1637.

Verse 17.—"*Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing.*"—Formerly he had said that the strength of his enemy was with God, and now he asserts the same thing of his own. The expression, however, which admits of two meanings, he elegantly applies to himself in a different sense. God has the strength of the wicked in his hands, to curb and to restrain it, and to show that any power of which they boast is vain and fallacious. His own people, on the other hand, he supports and secures against the possibility of falling, by supplies of strength from himself.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 17.—"*Unto thee, O my strength.*" In opposition to *the enemy's* "*strength*," ver. 9. "*Thy* power," or "*strength*"—the Hebrew word is the same (*ver.* 16)—is "*my* strength." There is an elegant play on similar sounds in the Hebrew for "I will *wait* upon thee," אָשְׁמְרָה (ver. 9), and "I will sing,"—אֲזַמְּרָה—*A. R. Faussett.*

Verse 17 (*first clause*).—As on account of *Saul's strength* my *watching* was directed to thee; so now, on account of *thy strength* vouchsafed to me, my *singing* of praises also shall be directed to thee alone.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 17.—"*Strength*"—"*Mercy.*" He joins these two attributes, "*strength*" and "*mercy*," very well; for take away *strength* from him, and he cannot; remove mercy, and he will not, protect; both must go together in any one that will defend: *power*, that he can, *mercy*, that he will; otherwise 'tis but in vain to hope for help from him. David found God to be both, and for both he extols him.—*William Nicholson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—Deliver me from temptation, uphold me in temptation, cleanse me from the result of temptation. The world, the flesh, the devil, and chiefly sin, these are our enemies. We cannot escape them of ourselves, but the Lord by providence and grace can rescue us.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—From being tempted by their promises, cowed by their threats, corrupted by their teaching, influenced by their example, injured by their slander, hindered in usefulness by their opposition.

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—The subtleties of Satan. Watches for places, times, states, and ways in which to assail us. Errors in doctrine, practice, spirit, set forth to

entrap us. "Ye are not ignorant of his devices." Or, the diabolical ambush, discovered by watchfulness, and defeated by faith.

Verse 4.—The activity of the evil a rebuke for the good. I. Their activity, "run." II. Unanimity—"*they* run." III. Their care—"prepare themselves." IV. Their readiness—"without my fault."

Verse 5.—"*O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel.*" This title furnishes an admirable topic.

Verse 9.—The greatness of difficulty a reason for prayer and faith.

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—The divine forwardness to bless.

Verse 11.—The continuance of our enemies a salutary ordinance of God for the prevention of an evil to which we are very liable.

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—God as the God of the church, his government as such, known in all human history.

Verse 16.—The heavenly chorister. I. His song is sweet in contrast with the revilings of others—"but I." II. It treats of subjects which terrify others—"thy power." III. It grows louder on tender themes—"thy mercy." IV. It has its choice seasons—"in the morning." V. It is tuned by experience—"for thou hast." VI. It is all to God's glory—"*thy* power," "*thy* mercy," "*thou* hast."

Verse 17.—I. *A doctrine*—God is his people's strength. II. *An appropriation*—"my strength." III. *A resolution*. The song of gratitude for the past, faith for the present, hope for the future, of bliss for eternity.

PSALM LX.

TITLE.—*Here is a lengthy title, but it helps us much to expound the Psalm.* To the Chief Musician upon Shushan-eduth, *or the Lily of Testimony. The forty-fifth was on the lilies, and represented the kingly warrior in his beauty going forth to war; here we see him dividing the spoil and bearing testimony to the glory of God. Tunes have strange names apparently, but this results from the fact that we do not know what was in the composer's mind, else they might seem to be touchingly appropriate; perhaps the music or the musical instruments have more to do with this title than the Psalm itself. Yet in war-songs roses and lilies are often mentioned, and one remembers Macaulay's Song of the Huguenots, though perhaps we err in mentioning so carnal a verse—*

> *"Now by the lips of those ye love, fair gentlemen of France,*
> *Charge for the golden lillies now, upon them, with the lance."*

Michtam of David, to teach. *David obeyed the precept to teach the children of Israel; he recorded the Lord's mighty acts that they might be rehearsed in the ears of generations to come. Golden secrets are to be told on the house-tops; these things were not done in a corner and ought not to be buried in silence. We ought gladly to learn what inspiration so beautifully teaches.* When he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah. *The combined Aramean tribes sought to overcome Israel, but were signally defeated.* When Joab returned. *He had been engaged in another region, and the enemies of Israel took advantage of his absence, but on his return with Abishai the fortunes of war were changed.* And smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand. *More than this appear to have fallen according to* 1 Chron. xviii. 12, *but this commemorates one memorable part of the conflict. Terrible must have been the battle, but decisive indeed were the results, and the power of the enemy was utterly broken. Well did the Lord deserve a song from his servant.*

DIVISIONS.—*Properly the song may be said to consist of three parts: the complaining verses,* 1—3; *the gladsome,* 4—8; *the prayerful,* 9—12. *We have divided it as the sense appeared to change.*

EXPOSITION.

O GOD, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.

2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh.

3 Thou hast showed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.

1. Before the days of Saul, Israel had been brought very low; during his government it had suffered from internal strife, and his reign was closed by an overwhelming disaster at Gilboa. David found himself the possessor of a tottering throne, troubled with the double evil of faction at home, and invasion from abroad. He traced at once the evil to its true source, and began at the fountainhead. His were the politics of piety, which after all are the wisest and most profound. He knew that the displeasure of the Lord had brought calamity upon the nation, and to the removal of that displeasure he set himself by earnest prayer. *"O God, thou hast cast us off."* Thou hast treated us as foul and offensive things, to be put away; as mean and beggarly persons, to be shunned with contempt; as useless dead boughs, to be torn away from the tree which they disfigure. To be cast off by God is the worst calamity that can befal a man or a people; but the worst form of it is when the person is not aware of it and is indifferent to it. When the divine desertion causes mourning and repentance, it will be but partial and temporary. When a cast-off soul sighs for its God it is not indeed cast off at all. *"Thou hast scattered us."* David clearly sees the fruits of the divine anger, he traces the flight of Israel's warriors, the breaking of her power, the division in her body politic,

to the hand of God. Whoever might be the secondary agent of these disasters, he beholds the Lord's hand as the prime moving cause, and pleads with the Lord concerning the matter. Israel was like a city with a breach made in its wall, because her God was wroth with her. These first two verses, with their depressing confession, must be regarded as greatly enhancing the power of the faith which in the after verses rejoices in better days, through the Lord's gracious return unto his people. "*Thou hast been displeased.*" This is the secret of our miseries. Had we pleased thee, thou wouldst have pleased us; but as we have walked contrary to thee, thou hast walked contrary to us. "*O turn thyself to us again.*" Forgive the sin and smile once more. Turn us to thee, turn thou to us. Aforetime thy face was towards thy people, be pleased to look on us again with thy favour and grace. Some read it, "Thou wilt turn to us again," and it makes but slight difference which way we take it, for a true-hearted prayer brings a blessing so soon that it is no presumption to consider it as already obtained. There was more need for God to turn to his people than for Judah's troops to be brave, or Joab and the commanders wise. God with us is better than strong battalions; God displeased is more terrible than all the Edomites that ever marched into the valley of salt, or all the devils that ever opposed the church. If the Lord turn to us, what care we for Aram-naharaim or Aram-zobah, or death, or hell? but if he withdraw his presence we tremble at the fall of a leaf.

2. "*Thou hast made the earth to tremble.*" Things were as unsettled as though the solid earth had been made to quake; nothing was stable; the priests had been murdered by Saul, the worst men had been put in office, the military power had been broken by the Philistines, and the civil authority had grown despicable through insurrections and intestine contests. "*Thou hast broken it.*" As the earth cracks, and opens itself in rifts during violent earthquakes, so was the kingdom rent with strife and calamity. "*Heal the breaches thereof.*" As a house in time of earthquakes is shaken, and the walls begin to crack, and gape with threatening fissures, so was it with the kingdom. "*For it shaketh.*" It tottered to a fall; if not soon propped up and repaired it would come down in complete ruin. So far gone was Israel, that only God's interposition could preserve it from utter destruction. How often have we seen churches in this condition, and how suitable is the prayer before us, in which the extremity of the need is used, as an argument for help. The like may be said of our own personal religion, it is sometimes so tried, that like a house shaken by earthquake it is ready to come down with a crash, and none but the Lord himself can repair its breaches, and save us from utter destruction.

3. "*Thou hast showed thy people hard things.*" Hardships had been heaped upon them, and the Psalmist traces these rigorous providences to their fountain-head. Nothing had happened by chance, but all had come by divine design and with a purpose, yet for all that things had gone hard with Israel. The Psalmist claims that they were still the Lord's own people, though in the first verse he had said, "thou hast cast us off." The language of complaint is usually confused, and faith in time of trouble ere long contradicts the desponding statements of the flesh. "*Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.*" Our afflictions have made us like men drunken with some potent and bitter wine; we are in amazement, confusion, delirium; our steps reel, and we stagger as those about to fall. The great physician gives his patients potent potions to purge out their abounding and deep-seated diseases. Astonishing evils bring with them astonishing results. The grapes of the vineyard of sin produce a wine which fills the most hardened with anguish when justice compels them to quaff the cup. There is a fire-water of anguish of soul which even to the righteous makes a cup of trembling, which causes them to be exceeding sorrowful almost unto death. When grief becomes so habitual as to be our drink, and to take the place of our joys, becoming our only wine, then are we in an evil case indeed.

4 Thou has given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

5 That thy beloved may be delivered; save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.

4. Here the strain takes a turn. The Lord has called back to himself his servants, and commissioned them for his service, presenting them with a standard to be

used in his wars. *"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee."* Their afflictions had led them to exhibit holy fear, and then being fitted for the Lord's favour, he gave them an ensign, which would be both a rallying point for their hosts, a proof that he had sent them to fight, and a guarantee of victory. The bravest men are usually intrusted with the banner, and it is certain that those who fear God most have less fear of man than any others. The Lord has given us the standard of the gospel, let us live to uphold it, and if needful die to defend it. Our right to contend for God, and our reason for expecting success, are found in the fact that the faith has been once committed to the saints, and that by the Lord himself. *"That it may be displayed because of the truth."* Banners are for the breeze, the sun, the battle. Israel might well come forth boldly, for a sacred standard was borne aloft before them. To publish the gospel is a sacred duty, to be ashamed of it a deadly sin. The truth of God was involved in the triumph of David's armies, he had promised them victory; and so in the proclamation of the gospel we need feel no hesitancy, for as surely as God is true he will give success to his own word. For the truth's sake, and because the true God is on our side, let us in these modern days of warfare emulate the warriors of Israel, and unfurl our banners to the breeze with confident joy. Dark signs of present or coming ill must not dishearten us; if the Lord had meant to destroy us he would not have given us the gospel; the very fact that he has revealed himself in Christ Jesus involves the certainty of victory. *Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*

"Hard things thou hast upon us laid,
And made us drink most bitter wine;
But still thy banner we've display'd,
And borne aloft thy truth divine.

"Our courage fails not, though the night
No earthly lamp avails to break,
For thou wilt soon arise in might,
And of our captors captives make."

"Selah." There is so much in the fact of a banner being given to the hosts of Israel, so much of hope, of duty, of comfort, that a pause is fitly introduced. The sense justifies it, and the more joyful strain of the music necessitates it.

5. *"That thy beloved may be delivered."* David was the Lord's beloved, his name signifies "dear, or beloved," and there was in Israel a remnant according to the election of grace, who were the beloved of the Lord; for their sakes the Lord wrought great marvels, and he had an eye to them in all his mighty acts. God's beloved are the inner seed, for whose sake he preserves the entire nation, which acts as a husk to the vital part. This is the main design of providence, *"That thy beloved may be delivered;"* if it were not for their sakes he would neither give a banner nor send victory to it. *"Save with thy right hand, and hear me."* Save at once, before the prayer is over; the case is desperate unless there be immediate salvation. Tarry not, O Lord, till I have done pleading: save first and hear afterwards. The salvation must be a right royal and eminent one, such as only the omnipotent hand of God linked with his dexterous wisdom can achieve. Urgent distress puts men upon pressing and bold petitions such as this. We may by faith ask for and expect that our extremity will be God's opportunity: special and memorable deliverances will be wrought out when dire calamities appear to be imminent. Here is one suppliant for many, even as in the case of our Lord's intercession for his saints. He, the Lord's David, pleads for the rest of the beloved, beloved and accepted in him the Chief Beloved; he seeks salvation as though it were for himself, but his eye is ever upon all those who are one with him in the Father's love. When divine interposition is necessary for the rescue of the elect it must occur, for the first and greatest necessity of providence is the honour of God, and the salvation of his chosen. This is fixed fate, the centre of the immutable decree, the inmost thought of the unchangeable Jehovah.

6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

7 Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah *is* my lawgiver;

8 Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me.

6. "*God hath spoken in his holiness.*" Faith is never happier than when it can fall back upon the promise of God. She sets this over against all discouraging circumstances; let outward providences say what they will, the voice of a faithful God drowns every sound of tear. God had promised Israel victory, and David the kingdom: the holiness of God secured the fulfilment of his own covenant, and therefore the king spake confidently. The goodly land had been secured to the tribes by the promise made to Abraham, and that divine grant was an abundantly sufficient warrant for the belief that Israel's arms would be successful in battle. Believer make good use of this, and banish doubts while promises remain. "*I will rejoice,*" or "I will triumph." Faith regards the promise not as fiction but fact, and therefore drinks in joy from it, and grasps victory by it. "God hath spoken; I will rejoice;" here is a fit motto for every soldier of the cross. "*I will divide Shechem.*" As a victor David would allot the conquered territory to those to whom God had given it by lot. Shechem was an important portion of the country which as yet had not yielded to his government; but he saw that by Jehovah's help it would be, and indeed was all his own. Faith divides the spoil, she is sure of what God has promised, and enters at once into possession. "*And mete out the valley of Succoth.*" As the east so the west of Jordan should be allotted to the proper persons. Enemies should be expelled, and the landmarks of peaceful ownership set up. Where Jacob had pitched his tent, there his rightful heirs should till the soil. When God has spoken, his divine *shall*, our "*I will*," becomes no idle boast, but the fit echo of the Lord's decree. Believer, up and take possession of covenant mercies, "*Divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.*" Let not Canaanitish doubts and legalisms keep thee out of the inheritance of grace. Live up to thy privileges, take the good which God provides thee.

7. "*Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.*" He claims the whole land on account of the promise. Two other great divisions of the country he mentions, evidently delighting to survey the goodly land which the Lord had given him. All things are ours, whether things present or things to come; no mean portion belongs to the believer, and let him not think meanly of it. No enemy shall withhold from true faith what God has given her, for grace makes her mighty to wrest it from the foe. Life is mine, death is mine, for Christ is mine. "*Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.*" All the military power of the valiant tribe was at the command of David, and he praises God for it. God will bow to the accomplishment of his purposes all the valour of men: the church may cry, "the prowess of armies is mine," God will overrule all their achievements for the progress of his cause. "*Judah is my lawgiver.*" There the civil power was concentrated: the king being of that tribe sent forth his laws out of her midst. We know no lawgiver, but the King who came out of Judah. To all the claims of Rome, or Oxford, or the councils of men, we pay no attention; we are free from all other ecclesiastical rule, but that of Christ; but we yield joyful obedience to him: "*Judah is my lawgiver.*" Amid distractions it is a great thing to have good and sound legislation, it was a balm for Israel's wounds, it is our joy in the church of Christ.

8. Having looked at home with satisfaction, the hero-king now looks abroad with exultation. "*Moab,*" so injurious to me in former years, "*is my washpot.*" The basin into which the water falls when it is poured from an ewer upon my feet. A mere pot to hold the dirty water after my feet have been washed in it. Once she defiled Israel, according to the counsel of Balaam, the son of Beor; but she shall be no longer able to perpetrate such baseness; she shall be a washpot for those whom she sought to pollute. The wicked as we see in them the evil, the fruit, and the punishment of sin, shall help on the purification of the saints. This is contrary to their will, and to the nature of things, but faith finds honey in the lion, and a washpot in filthy Moab. David treats his foes as but insignificant and inconsiderable; a whole nation he counts but as a footbath for his kingdom. "*Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.*" As a man when bathing throws his shoes on one side, so would he obtain his dominion over haughty Esau's descendants as easily as a man casts a shoe. Perhaps he would throw his shoe as nowadays men throw their glove, as a challenge to them to dare dispute his sway. He did not need draw a sword to smite his now crippled and utterly despondent adversary, for if he dared revolt he would only need to throw his slipper at him, and he would tremble. Easily are we victors when Omnipotence leads the way. The day shall come when the church shall with equal ease subdue China and Ethiopia to the sceptre of the Son of David. Every believer also may by faith triumph over all difficulties, and reign

with him who hath made us kings and priests. "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb," shall yet be said of all who rest in the power of Jesus. "*Philistia, triumph thou because of me.*" Be so subdued as to rejoice in my victories over my other foes. Or does he mean, I who smote thy champion have at length so subdued thee that thou shalt never be able to rejoice over Israel again; but if thou must needs triumph it must be with me, and not against me; or rather is it a taunting defiance, a piece of irony? O proud Philistia, where are thy vaunts? Where now thy haughty looks, and promised conquests? Thus dare we defy the last enemy, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" So utterly hopeless is the cause of hell when the Lord comes forth to the battle, that even the weakest daughter of Zion may shake her head at the enemy, and laugh him to scorn. O the glorying of faith! There is not a grain of vainglory in it, but yet her holy boastings none can hinder. When the Lord speaks the promise, we will not be slow to rejoice and glory in it.

9 Who will bring me *into* the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?
10 *Wilt* not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off? and *thou*, O God, *which* didst not go out with our armies?

9. As yet the interior fortresses of Edom had not been subdued. Their invading bands had been slain in the valley of salt, and David intended to push his conquests even to Petra the city of the rock, deemed to be impregnable. "*Who will bring me into the strong city?*" It was all but inaccessible, and hence the question of David. When we have achieved great success it must be a stimulus to greater efforts, but it must not become a reason for self-confidence. We must look to the strong for strength as much at the close of a campaign as at its beginning. "*Who will lead me into Edom?*" High up among the stars stood the city of stone, but God could lead his servant up to it. No heights of grace are too elevated for us, the Lord being our leader, but we must beware of high things attempted in self-reliance. EXCELSIOR is well enough as a cry, but we must look to the highest of all for guidance. Joab could not bring David into Edom. The veterans of the valley of salt could not force the passage, yet was it to be attempted, and David looked to the Lord for help. Heathen nations are yet to be subdued. The city of the seven hills must yet hear the gospel. Who will give the church the power to accomplish this? The answer is not far to seek.

10. "*Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off?*" Yes, the chastising God is our only hope. He loves us still. For a small moment does he forsake, but with great mercy does he gather his people. Strong to smite, he is also strong to save. He who proved to us our need of him by showing us what poor creatures we are without him, will now reveal the glory of his help by conducting great enterprises to a noble issue. "*And thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?*" The self-same God art thou, and to thee faith cleaves. Though thou slay us, we trust in thee, and look for thy merciful help.

11 Give us help from trouble; for vain *is* the help of man.
12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

11. "*Give us help from trouble.*" Help us to overcome the disasters of civil strife and foreign invasion; save us from further incursions from without and division within. Do thou, O Lord, work this deliverance, "*for vain is the help of man.*" We have painfully learned the utter impotence of armies, kings, and nations without thine help. Our banners trailed in the mire have proven our weakness without thee, but yonder standard borne aloft before us shall witness to our valour now that thou hast come to our rescue. How sweetly will this verse suit the tried people of God as a frequent ejaculation. We know how true it is.

12. "*Through God we shall do valiantly.*" From God all power proceeds, and all we do well is done by divine operation; but still we, as soldiers of the great king, are to fight, and to fight valiantly too. Divine working is not an argument for human inaction, but rather is it the best excitement for courageous effort. Helped in the past, we shall also be helped in the future, and being assured of this we resolve to play the man. "*For he it is that shall tread down our enemies.*" From him shall the might proceed, to him shall the honour be given. Like straw on the thrashing-floor beneath the feet of the oxen shall we tread upon our abject foes,

but it shall rather be *his* foot which presses them down than ours; his hand shall go out against them so as to put them down and keep them in subjection. In the case of Christians there is much encouragement for a resolve similar to that of the first clause. *"We shall do valiantly."* We will not be ashamed of our colours, afraid of our foes, or fearful of our cause. The Lord is with us, omnipotence sustains us, and we will not hesitate, we dare not be cowards. O that our King, the true David, were come to claim the earth, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—There are some difficulties attendant upon the title of this Psalm, when it is compared with the contents. We naturally expect after such an inscription, joy, congratulation, and praise for victory; but the Psalmist breaks out into lamentations and bitter complaints: his strains are, however, changed, when he has proceeded as far as verse three, where he begins to feel confidence, and to employ the language of exultation and triumph. The best means of removing this discrepancy seems to be by remarking, that this Psalm was written after some of the battles of which mention is made in the title, but that the author does not restrict himself to those events without taking a wider range, so as to embrace the afflictive condition both of Israel and Judah during the latter part of Saul's life, and the former years of David's reign. In the concluding years of Saul, the Philistines obtained a superiority over him, and finally destroyed him with his army. Subsequently to these events the whole land was in a very disturbed and agitated condition, arising out of the contentions between the partisans of Saul's family, and those who were attached to David. The nations which inhabited the regions adjacent to the land of Canaan were at all times inimical to the Jews, and seized every opportunity of attacking and injuring them. But when David had succeeded in uniting the whole nation under his authority, he proceeded to avenge the injuries and insults that had been inflicted on his countrymen by the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Syrians; and God was pleased to give him signal success in his undertakings. He appears, therefore, to have combined all these transactions, and made them the subject of this Psalm.—*William Walford.*

Title.—*" Shushan-eduth." The lilies of the testimony*—means, that this Psalm has for its chief subject something very lovely and cheering in the law: namely, the words of promise quoted in the beginning of verse six, according to which the land of Canaan belonged to the Israelites, upon which is thus established the confidence expressed in verses 6—8, with respect to their right of property over the land, and their possession of it. This promise, not to cite many other passages which occur in the Five Books of Moses, and even so early as the patriarchs, is contained in Genesis xlix., and Deut. xxxiii. It is evident of what value and importance this promise was, and particularly the remembrance of it at this time.—*T. C. Barth's " Bible Manual,"* 1865.

Title.—The only other *" eduth "* or *" testimony "* in the Psalter, Psalm lxxx., makes mention by name of the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, and is a witness against those tribes for forsaking the Shepherd of Israel who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp, M.A., in " An Introduction to the Study and Use of the Psalms,"* 1860.

Title.—Aram-naharaim.—The name *Aram* corresponds to *Syria* in its widest and vaguest sense, and is joined with other names to designate particular parts of that large country. It even includes Mesopotamia, which is a term of physical rather than political geography, and denotes the space between the Tigris and Euphrates, corresponding to *Aram-Naharaim*, or *Syria of the Two Rivers*, in the verse before us. The king of this country was tributary to the king of Aram-Zobah, as appears from the account of David's second Aramean war (2 Sam. x. 16, 19).—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Title.—*" When he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah."* An insult offered to David's ambassadors by Hanun, king of the Ammonites, led to a serious war. Hanun obtained mercenaries from Syria to reinforce his army, Joab and

Abishai his brother, David's generals, gave them battle. Joab, opposed to the Syrians, gained the first success, and the Ammonites, seeing their allies routed, took to flight into their town. But this defeat provoked a great coalition, embracing all the people between the Jordan and the Euphrates. David, however, fearlessly marched against them at the head of his army; he vanquished all his enemies, and made himself master of the small Aramæan kingdoms of Damascus, Zobah, and Hamath, and subjugated the Eastern Idumæans, who met their final defeat in the Valley of Salt.—*François Lenormant and E. Chevallier, in "A Manual of the Ancient History of the East,"* 1869.

Title.—"*Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand,*" compared with 2 Sam. viii. 13, "David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men," and 1 Chron. xviii. 12, where this very service was performed by *Abishai.* Answer. It is one thing to attribute the victory for the honour of the king that was the cause. But the mentioning of these chief generals, by whom the service was performed, is another. David, under God, must have the honour of the work, for the increase of his name, being set for the typing out of Christ, who must have all the glory of the day, whatever conquest he gets by instruments of that service here, who likewise are typed out in David's worthies, of whom Joab and Abishai were chief. By these he obtained that great victory over Hadadezer. In returning from which Joab found his brother Abishai engaged "*in the valley of salt*" against eighteen thousand Edomites or Syrians (all one), whose valour the Almighty so looked on, as he attributes the whole slaughter to him, because first attempting it. Joab, it seems, took this in his return from the former slaughter, and fell in for the assistance of his brother Abishai (for that was their usual course: though they divided their armies, they did not divide their hearts). But if the enemies were too strong, one would help the other. 1 Chron. xix. 12. And of this eighteen thousand attributed to David and Abishai before, Joab slew twelve thousand of them; the memory of which service is here embalmed with a Psalm; first showing the extremes they were in, doubtful at first they should not get the victory. Secondly, applying it to the kingdom of Christ. Lastly, ascribing all the honour of the conquest to God; saying, through God this valiant service was done; it was he that trod down our enemies; and will do (last verse).—*William Streat, in "The Dividing of the Hoof,"* 1654.

Title.—"*The Valley of Salt.*" The ridge of Usdum exhibits more distinctly its peculiar formation; *the main body of the mountain being a solid mass of rock salt.* . . . We could at first hardly believe our eyes, until we had several times approached the precipices, and broken off pieces to satisfy ourselves, both by the touch and taste. The salt, where thus exposed, is everywhere more or less furrowed by the rains. As we advanced, large lumps and masses, broken off from above, lay like rocks along the shore, or were fallen down as *débris.* The very stones beneath our feet were wholly of salt. . . . The position of this mountain, at the south end of the sea, enables us also to ascertain the place of "*The Valley of Salt*" mentioned in Scripture, where the Hebrews under David, and again under Amaziah, gained decisive victories over Edom. This valley could have been no other than the Ghôr south of the Dead Sea, adjacent to the mountain of salt; it separates indeed the ancient territories of Judah and Edom.—*Edward Robinson's "Biblical Researches in Palestine."*

Title.—The historic record mentions *eighteen thousand* slain, and here but *twelve thousand.* The greater of course includes the less. The discrepancy may be explained by supposing that the title contains the numbers slain by one division of the army, or that the *twelve thousand* were slain in the battle, and the residue in the flight. Or an error may have crept into the text. Every scholar admits that there is sometimes serious difficulty in settling the numbers of the Old Testament. In this place Calvin has *two and twenty thousand,* the common version *twelve thousand,* while the original is *two ten thousand,* which taken in one way would mean *twenty thousand, i.e., two tens of thousands.* Hammond refers the numbers slain to different battles, and so avoids the difficulty.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—"*O God, thou hast cast us off.*" The word here used means properly to be foul, rancid, offensive; and then, to treat anything *as if* it were foul or rancid; to repel, to spurn, to cast away. It is strong language, meaning that God had seemed to treat them as if they were loathsome or offensive to him.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.*" They pray that this may be done with the utmost speed, because there was danger in delay, for the kingdom was already pressed down with a heavy calamity, and on the brink of ruin, which is signified by the word מָטָה whose origin is in a very strong and tremulous inclination to one side, properly from the application of a *lever*, and is applied to those who are leaning so far to one side that they are just on the point of falling; figuratively, therefore, it expresses a *most perilous condition*, in which one is on the edge of destruction.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verses 2.—"*Heal the breaches thereof.*" Even Israel is subject to "*breaches.*" So it was with the literal typical Israel, David's kingdom; so it may be with spiritual mystical Israel, the kingdom of Christ, the church of God upon earth. There are "*breaches*" from *without*, and "*breaches*" from *within*. I will invert the order. From *without*, by open *persecution;* from *within*, by intestine and home-bred *divisions*. Of both these the church of God in all ages hath had sufficient experience. Look we upon the *primitive* times, during the infancy of the church, however the *soundest* and entirest church that ever was, yet how was it *broken!* Broken, as by foreign persecutions, so by home-bred divisions. Both these ways was the church during the apostles' times broken, distressed by enemies from without who persecuted it.—*John Brinsley* (1600—1665), *in* "*The Healing of Israel's Breaches.*"

Verse 2.—"*It shaketh.*" That is, presaging nothing but *ruin* and *downfall*, unless it be speedily underpropped, and "*the breaches thereof*" made up and "*healed.*" Thus did David look upon Israel's disease, and hereupon it was that he was so deeply affected with it, so earnestly desiring the cure of it. The reference, as interpreters conceive, is to those *home-bred divisions*, those civil wars betwixt the two houses of Saul and David, after the death of Saul; then did the "*earth,*" the land, that land of Israel (as the Chaldee explains it), *quake and tremble*, being *broken, riven* (as the word in the original signifieth): even as the earth sometimes by earthquakes is riven, and torn asunder with prodigious chasms, openings, or gapings: so was that kingdom divided in those civil commotions, the nobles and commons taking parts and siding, some with David, some with Ishbosheth.—*John Brinsley.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast showed thy people hard things,*" God will be sure to plough his own ground, whatsoever becometh of the waste; and to weed his own garden, though the rest of the world should be let alone to grow wild.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast given us to drink infatuation, or bewilderment, as men drink wine.*" So Hupfeld explains the construction, referring to Psalm lxxx. 5, "Thou hast made them feed upon weeping like bread;" 1 Kings xxii. 27, "Feed him with affliction as bread, and with affliction as water" (יְגוֹנִים לֶחֶם); Isaiah xxx. 20. But the apposition is capable of being explained in another way, for the second noun may in fact be a predicate further defining the first: "Thou hast given us wine to drink which is (not wine, but) bewilderment."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"*The wine of astonishment.*" "*Intoxicating wine.*" Hebrew, "Wine of staggering," that is, which causeth staggering, or, in other words, intoxicating. Some render, "wine of stupor," or stupefying. Symmachus, "wine of agitation," and this sense I have adopted, which is also that of the Syriac.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.*" Perhaps the delivery of a *banner* was anciently esteemed an obligation to protect, and that the Psalmist might consider it in this light, when, upon a victory over the Syrians and Edomites, after the public affairs of Israel had been in a bad state, he says, "*Thou hast shewed thy people hard things,*" etc. "*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.*" Though thou didst for a time give up thine Israel into the hands of their enemies, thou hast now given them an assurance of thy having received them under thy protection.—*Thomas Harmer* (1715—1788), *in* "*Observations on Divers Passages of Scripture.*"

Verse 4.—"*Thou hast given a banner,*" etc. Thou hast given us by the recent victory, after our prostrate condition, a banner of triumph to *lift up* (so the Hebrew), because of thy faithfulness to thy promise. "*The truth*" here answers to God's "*holiness*" (ver. 6). So long as soldiers see their banner *uplifted*, they flock round it with confidence. But when it is prostrate their spirits and hopes fall. The "*banner*" is a pledge of safety, and a rallying point to those who fight under it.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou hast given a banner,*" etc. The Psalmist compares the *salvation* which the Lord bestows upon his people to a highly excellent "*banner,*" which serves as a signal to one lying prostrate in his misery, to rise up, with an allusion perhaps to Numbers xxi. 8. "And the Lord said to Moses, Make thee a serpent and set it upon a *standard-pole;* and it happened that every one who was bitten, and looked at it, lived." At any rate, that passage in which the serpent is a sympol of the healing power of God, may serve to illustrate the passage before us. Compare "*heal its breaches.*"—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 4.—"*A banner,*" which is a sign or instrument:—1. Of union. This people, who were lately divided and under several banners, thou hast now gathered together and united under one banner; to wit, under my government. 2. Of battle. Thou hast given us an army and power to oppose our enemies. We had our banner to set against theirs. 3. Of triumph. We have not lost our banner but gained theirs, and brought it away in triumph. Comp. Ps. xx. 5.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 6.—"*God hath spoken in his holiness.*" That is, by Samuel he hath promised, as he is an holy God, and true of his word, that I should be king of all Israel, and now he hath performed it. (Sam. v.) Yet Calvin speaks of it as not yet performed; but the course of the history makes it plain that David was now king over the parts of which he here speaketh. "*I will divide Shechem,*" as subject to me, as Joshua having the land under him, divided it amongst his people: so David being king over all the parts of the land, divides to his followers such portions as belonged unto them by inheritance, from which happily some of them had been expelled in the time of Ish-bosheth his reign; or some families in the time of those wars might be utterly wasted away, and so the king having free power to dispose of their lands, might give them amongst his men, and take part to himself.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 6.—"*God hath spoken in his holiness.*" That is, he hath given out his word from heaven, the habitation of his holiness and of his glory; or, he hath spoken it certainly, there is nothing but holiness in his word (and that is the strength of words). David having received this word stands assured, that as Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah would willingly submit to him and yield obedience: so, also, that Moab, Edom, and Philistia, who were his professed enemies, should be subdued to him. He expected to conquer and triumph over them, to put them to the basest offices, as his vassals, because God had decreed and spoken it in his holiness. God hath spoken the word, saith he, therefore it shall be done, yea, 'tis done; and therefore David cried, *All's mine, Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine, Moab and Edom are mine,* as soon as God had spoken the word,—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*I will divide Shechem.*" It is as much as if he should say, I will not look to have my share measured out by others, but I will divide it, and measure myself, and will be the right owner and possessor thereof.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 6.—"*I will divide Shechem,*" etc. Of *Shechem* and the *Valley of Succoth,* or *booths,* so called from Jacob's making *booths,* and *feeding his cattle* there. (See Genesis xxxiii. 17, 18.) By these are meant Samaria; and *David's dividing* or *meting* them out, is a phrase to express his *dominion* over them, in being part of the *regal* power to *distribute* his province into cities and regions, and place judges and magistrates over them. To these the addition of *Gilead* (which contains the whole region of *Bashan,* etc., on the *other side of Jordan*), and then the mention of *Manasseh* and *Ephraim,* are designed, as by so many parts, to denote the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes; and their being *his,* and "*the strength of his head,*" notes him to be the *Lord* over them, and to make use of their strength of his wars, for the defending or enlarging his dominions. And then "*Judah* (מְחֹקְקִי) *is my law-giver;*" as it refers to Jacob's prophecy of the *sceptre and lawgiver not departing from Judah,* denoting that to be the *royal* tribe; so by it is signified the *kingdom of Judah* (under which *Benjamin* is comprehended), that David is possessed of that also.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 6.—"*Succoth.*" If the preceding views are correct, we may rest in the result, that the present Sâkût represents the name and site of the ancient Succoth .... We passed obliquely along the northern slope of the same broad swell, where the ground was covered only by a thick crop of thistles. On our right was a region of lower ground to which we gradually descended; full of grass, wild oats, and thistles, with an occasional thornbush. The soil was like that of an Ohio bottom. The grass,

intermingled with tall daisies and the wild oats, reached to the horses' backs; while the thistles sometimes overtopped the riders' heads. All was now dry; and in some places it was difficult to make our way through the exuberant growth. At last we came to the cause of this fertility, a fine brook winding along the bottom. We crossed it, and passed up again obliquely over another like swell, covered as before only with thistles. Here was an ancient oil vat, very large and of a single stone; it was evidently brought hither, and indicates the former growth of the olive in these parts. We struck the same stream again at its source, called 'Ain el-Beida, a large and fine fountain surrounded with gardens of cucumbers, and watering an extensive tract. We were here on the edge of the higher portion of the Ghôr, where low ridges and swells project out from the foot of the western mountains, and form a rolling plain or plateau, which is well watered, arable, and very extensively cultivated for wheat. The tract further east, which we had now crossed, may be said to extend to the high bank of the lower Jordan valley. It is less elevated, is more generally level, though crossed by low swells between the water-courses, and has little tillage. The inhabitants of Tûbâs are divided into three hostile parties; and they carry their divisions into their agriculture in the Ghôr. One party sows at 'Ain el-Beida, where we now were; another around 'Ain Mak-hûz, more in the north; and the third at Ridghah, Sâkût, and further south. The people of Teyâsîr also sow on the south of Mâlih; the water of which is used for irrigation. The whole tract north of Wady Mâlih was said to be farmed from the government by one of the Sheikhs of the Jenâr family, who live at Jeba' and in its neighbourhood. By him it is again let to the different villages.—*Robinson's "Biblical Researches in Palestine."*

Verses 6, 7.—The chief and principal places where the seditious party had their residence and abode, were those which the Psalmist mentioneth in the sixth and seventh verses, namely *Shechem*, a city in the tribe of Ehpraim; *Succoth*, a city in the tribe of Gad; *Gilead* and *Manasseh*, the utmost borders of the land of Canaan, beyond Jordan. These were some of the chief places which sided with Ish-bosheth whilst he lived, as you may see, 2 Sam. ii.; and, as it seemeth, they still cleaved to the house of Saul after he was dead, not acknowledging David for their king.—*John Brinsley.*

Verse 7.—"*Gilead is mine and Manasseh is mine.*" That is to say, I will possess myself of them and rule over them; not as a *conqueror* over *slaves*, but as a lord over *subjects*, as a father over children, owning and acknowledging them as *mine*. They are my inheritance, and shall be my people, my subjects.—*John Brinsley.*

Verse 7.—"*Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.*" The strong and warlike tribe of Ephraim being to the state what the helmet is to the warriors in battle; or, perhaps the allusions is to Deut. xxxiii. 17: "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the nations."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 7.—"*Judah is* (or *shall be*) *my lawgiver*," *i.e.*, all his subjects should be brought under one *Head*, one governor, who should give them laws, according to which they should be ordered or governed, which power and authority belonged to the tribe of *Judah*, according to that prophecy of Jacob (Gen. xlix. 10), to which the Psalmist here alludeth. No way, no means to bring the people unto unity, to bring them into one *body*, but by bringing them under one *head*, one *lawgiver*, by whose laws they may be regulated and governed. Now in the church, and in matters of religion, this one *Head* is *Christ*, even that "Lion of the tribe of Judah," as he is called (Rev. v. 5). He is the *Law-giver* of his church, and let him so be. This will be found one, ay, and the only means to breed an holy and religious unity, and bring home straying, wandering sheep.—*John Brinsley.*

Verse 7.—No government could stand which was not resident in Judah.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—"*Moab is my washpot.*" Implying that Moab should be reduced to slavery, it being the business of a slave to present the wash-hand basin to his master. With the Greeks, πλύνειν τινά, to wash down any one, was a slang term, signifying to ridicule, abuse, or beat; hence we have the word *washpot* applied to the subject of such treatment.

"You don't appear to be in your right senses, who make a washpot of me in the presence of many men." *Aristophanes.*—*Thomas S. Millington, in "The Testimony of the Heathen to the Truths of Holy Writ,"* 1863.

Verse 8 (*second clause*).—When, keeping in view the idea of washing the feet, a person throws his shoes, which he has taken off, to any one to be taken away or to be cleaned—השליך with על and also with אל, 1 Kings xix. 19, is "*to throw to any one*"—the individual to whom it belongs to perform such an office must be a slave of the lowest kind.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 8.—"*Over Edom will I cast out my shoe,*" which notes either contempt of them, as if he had said, I look upon them as worthy only to scrape and make clean my shoes. Or secondly, conquest over them—I will walk through Edom and subdue it.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—"*Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.*" By extension, immission, or projection of the shoe either upon the necks of people, or over their countries, is meant nothing else but to overcome, subdue, bring under power, possess, and subject to vileness such men and such countries. The very vulgar acceptation of the word *possession*, in the grammatical sense, importeth as much; for the etymology of *possessio* is no more but *pedum positio*. This manner of speaking hath also allusion to the positive law recorded in Deuteronomy (xxv. 6—10); for the letter of the law is, that if the kinsman would not marry the brother's widow and raise up seed unto his brother; the widow loosing his shoe, and spitting in his face, he lost the claim and interest of such possessions as belonged to the woman in right of her husband. And the house of such a man was called *domus discalceati*, that is to say, "The house of him that hath his shoe loosed." The practice also of this law we find recorded in the book of Ruth, in the case of Elimelech's land, between Boaz and the kinsman, about the widow Ruth, who had her interest by right of her husband in the said land. Moreover the frequent use of this phrase meeting us very often in the book of God, makes this to be the meaning of the words, as clear as the day. This king elsewhere singing his trophies, saith, "They are fallen under my feet." "Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon." But the people must "not meddle with Mount Seir; for God would not give them thereof so much as a foot's breadth;" yet even the place whereon the soles of their feet should tread, from the wilderness of Lebanon and from the river Euphrates unto the utmost sea, should be theirs. Psalm xviii. 38; Deut. i. 36.; ii. 5.—*William Loe, in "A sermon before the King at Theobalds," entitled, "The King's Shoe, made and ordained to trample on, and to tread down enemies,"* 1623.

Verse 8.—"*Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.*" Turnus, having slain Pallas—

> "Bestrode the corpse, and pressed it with his foot."
>
> *Virgil.*

Verse 8.—Of the Philistines he says, *Over Philistia it is mine to boast;* for so I would translate, and not, as is usual, *Philistia, triumph thou over me*, which does not yield a consistent meaning.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—Let not our adversaries triumph over our *breaches*. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy." Or, if they will, let them triumph: "*Triumph thou, O Philistia, because of me*, or, *over me.*"—*John Brinsley.*

Verses 8—10.—Moab in the East, Edom in the South, and Philistia in the West (the North is not mentioned, because the banner of David had already been victorious there).—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 9.—"*Who will lead me into Edom?*" The entrance of Petra is by a narrow gorge, lined by lofty precipices, formed by the channel of a rivulet. This defile is nearly two miles in length. At some places the overhanging rocks approach so near to each other that only two horsemen can proceed abreast.—*Dr. Tweedie, in "Ruined Cities of the East,"* 1859.

Verse 9.—The believer, when he promiseth to himself great things, must neither be senseless of the difficutlies of opposition which he is to meet with, nor of his own inability to overcome difficulties; but being sensible of both, most look to God for assistance and furniture to overcome; for when David considered the strength of the fenced royal cities of the enemy, he saith, "*Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? Wilt not thou, O God?*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 11.—"*For vain is the help of man.*" As they had lately experimented in *Saul*, a king of their own choosing, but not able to save them from those proud Philistines.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11.—So long as sight and reason find footing in matters, there is no place for faith and hope; the abundance of human helps puts not grace to proof, but the strength of faith is in the absence of them all. A man is stronger when he goeth on his feet alone, than when he standeth by a grip in his infancy, or leaneth on a staff in his old age: the two feet of faith and hope serve us best when we are fixed on the Rock of Sion alone.—*William Struther.*

Verse 12.—"*Through God we shall do,*" etc. In war these two must be joined, and indeed in all actions: He, *we; God* and *man.* 1. "We shall do valiantly," for God helps not remiss, or cowardly, or negligent men. 2. And yet, that being done, the work is *his:* "He shall tread down;" the blow and the overthrow are not to be attributed to *us*, but to *him.*—*Adam Clarke.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Prayer of a church in low condition. I. *Complaint.* 1. Left of God's Spirit. 2. Scattered. II. *Cause.* Something displeasing to God. Neglect or actual sin; a subject for self-examination. III. *Cure.* The Lord's return to us and ours to him. In our version it is a prayer; in the Septuagint an expression of faith—"Thou wilt return."

Verse 2.—The perturbation, the prayer, the plea.—*G. R.*

Verse 3.—That God does afflict his people severely, and that he has good reason for the same.

Verse 3.—"*The wine of astonishment.*" A purgative, a tonic. Astonishing sin followed by astonishing chastisements, discoveries of corruption, of the spirituality of the law, of the terror of divine wrath, and by astonishing depressions, temptations, and conflicts.

Verse 4.—The banner of the gospel. I. Why a banner? A rallying point, meant to fight under, etc. II. By whom given. "*Thou.*" III. To whom. "*To them that fear thee.*" IV. What is to be done with it. "*To be displayed.*" V. For what cause. "*Because of the truth.*" Truth promotes truth.

Verse 5.—The deliverance of the elect needs a saving God, a mighty God ("*right hand*"), and a prayer-hearing God.

Verse 5 (*last clause*). "*Save . . . and hear.*" The remarkable order of these words—1. In the purpose of God. 2. In the first works of grace. 3. Often under trial. 4. And specially in fierce temptations, God's saving precedes man's praying.

Verse 6.—God's holy promise, ground for present joy, and for boldly taking possession of the promised good.

Verse 7.—"*Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.*" How, and in what respect, this world is the Christians.

Verse 7.—"*Judah is my lawgiver.*" The believer owning no law but that which comes from Christ.

Verse 8.—"*Moab is my washpot.*" How we may make sinners subservient to our sanctification. We are warned by their sin, and punishment, etc. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 983, "Moab is my washpot."

Verse 9.—The soulwinners question. I. The object of attack; the strong city of man's heart, barricaded by depravity, ignorance, prejudice, custom, etc. II. Our main design. To penetrate, to reach the citadel for Jesus. III. Our great enquiry. Eloquence, learning, wit, none of these can force the gate, but there is One who can.

Verse 12.—Divine operation a reason for human activity.

PSALM LXI.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician upon Neginah, a Psalm of David.—*The original indicates that both the hymns and the musical instrument were David's. He wrote the verses, and himself sang them to the stringed instrument whose sound he loved so well. We have left the Psalms entitled* Michtam, *but we shall still find much precious meaning though the golden name be wanting. We have met with the title of this Psalm before, in Psalms IV., VI., LIV., and LV., but with this difference, that in the present case the word is in the singular number: the Psalm itself is very personal, and well adapted for the private devotion of a single individual.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—*This Psalm is a pearl. It is little, but precious. To many a mourner it has furnished utterance when the mind could not have devised speech for itself. It was evidently composed by David after he had come to the throne—see verse* 6. *The second verse leads us to believe that it was written during the Psalmist's enforced exile from the tabernacle, which was the visible abode of God: if so, the period of Absalom's rebellion has been most suitably suggested as the date of its authorship, and Delitzsch is correct in entitling it, "Prayer and thanksgiving of an expelled King on his way back to his throne."*

We might divide the verses according to the sense, but it is preferable to follow the author's own arrangement, and make a break at each SELAH.

EXPOSITION.

HEAR my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.

2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I.

3. For thou hast been a shelter for me, *and* a strong tower from the enemy.

4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

1. "*Hear my cry, O God.*" He was in terrible earnest; he shouted, he lifted up his voice on high. He is not however content with the expression of his need: to give his sorrows vent is not enough for him, he wants actual audience of heaven, and manifest succour as the result. Pharisees may rest in their prayers; true believers are eager for an answer to them: ritualists may be satisfied when they have "said or sung" their litanies and collects, but living children of God will never rest till their supplications have entered the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. "*Attend unto my prayer.*" Give it thy consideration, and such an answer as thy wisdom sees fit. When it comes to crying with us, we need not doubt but that it will come to attending with God. Our heavenly Father is not hardened against the cries of his own children. What a consoling thought it is that the Lord at all times hears his people's cries, and is never forgetful of their prayers; whatever else fails to move him, praying breath is never spent in vain!

2. "*From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee.*" He was banished from the spot which was the centre of his delight, and at the same time his mind was in a depressed and melancholy condition; both actually and figuratively he was an outcast, yet he does not therefore restrain prayer, but rather finds therein a reason for the louder and more importunate cries. To be absent from the place of divine worship was a sore sorrow to saints in the olden times; they looked upon the tabernacle as the centre of the world, and they counted themselves to be at the fag-end of the universe when they could no longer resort to the sacred shrine; their heart was heavy as in a strange land when they were banished from its solemnities. Yet even they knew right well that no place is unsuitable for prayer. There may be an end of the earth, but there must not be an end to devotion. On creation's verge we may call upon God, for even there he is within call. No spot

is too dreary, no condition too deplorable; whether it be the world's end or life's end, prayer is equally available. To pray in some circumstances needs resolve, and the Psalmist here expresses it, "*I will cry.*" It was a wise resolution, for had he ceased to pray he would have become the victim of despair; there is an end to a man when he makes an end to prayer. Observe that David never dreamed of seeking any other God; he did not imagine the dominion of Jehovah to be local: he was at the end of the promised land, but he knew himself to be still in the territory of the Great King; to him only does he address his petitions. "*When my heart is overwhelmed:*"—when the huge waves of trouble wash over me, and I am completely submerged, not only as to my head, but also my heart. It is hard to pray when the very heart is drowning, yet gracious men plead best at such times. Tribulation brings us to God, and brings God to us. Faith's greatest triumphs are achieved in her heaviest trials. It is all over with me, affliction is all over me; it encompasses me as a cloud, it swallows me up like a sea, it shuts me in with thick darkness, yet God is near, near enough to hear my voice, and I will call him. Is not this brave talk? Mark how our Psalmist tells the Lord, as if he knew he were hearing him, that he intended to call upon him: our prayer by reason of our distress may be like to a call upon a far-off friend, but our inmost faith has its quiet heart-whispers to the Lord as to one who is assuredly our very present help.

"*Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*" I see thee to be my refuge, sure and strong; but alas! I am confused, and cannot find thee; I am weak, and cannot climb thee. Thou art so steadfast, guide me; thou art so high, uplift me. There is a mine of meaning in this brief prayer. Along the iron-bound coast of our northern shores, lives are lost because the rocks are inaccessible to the shipwrecked mariner. A clergyman of one of the coast villages has with immense labour cut steps up from the beach to a large chamber, which he has excavated in the chalk cliff: here many mariners have been saved; they have climbed the rock, which had else been too high for them, and they have escaped. We have heard of late, however, that the steps have been worn away by the storms, and that poor sailors have perished miserably within sight of the refuge which they could not reach, for it was too high for them: it is therefore proposed to drive in iron stanchions, and to hang up chain ladders that shipwrecked mariners may reach the chambers in the rock. The illustration is self-interpreting. Our experience leads us to understand this verse right well, for the time was with us when we were in such amazement of soul by reason of sin, that although we knew the Lord Jesus to be a sure salvation for sinners, yet we could not come at him, by reason of our many doubts and forebodings. A Saviour would have been of no use to us if the Holy Spirit had not gently led us to him, and enabled us to rest upon him. To this day we often feel that we not only want a rock, but to be led to it. With this in view we treat very leniently the half-unbelieving prayers of awakened souls; for in their bewildered state we cannot expect from them all at once a fully believing cry. A seeking soul should at once believe in Jesus, but it is legitimate for a man to ask to be led to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is able to effect such a leading, and he can do it even though the heart be on the borders of despair.

How infinitely higher than we are is the salvation of God. We are low and grovelling, but it towers like some tall cliff far above us. This is its glory, and is our delight when we have once climbed into the rock, and claimed an interest in it; but while we are as yet trembling seekers, the glory and sublimity of salvation appal us, and we feel that we are too unworthy even to be partakers of it; hence we are led to cry for grace upon grace, and to see how dependent we are for everything, not only for the Saviour, but for the power to believe on him.

3. "*For thou hast been a shelter for me.*" Observe how the Psalmist rings the changes on, "*Thou hast,*" and "*I will,*"—verses 3, 4, 5, and 6. Experience is the nurse of faith. From the past we gather arguments for present confidence. Many and many a time had the persecutions of Saul and the perils of battle emperilled David's life, and only by miracle had he escaped, yet was he still alive and unhurt; this he remembers, and he is full of hope. "*And a strong tower from the enemy.*" As in a fort impregnable, David had dwelt, because surrounded by omnipotence. Sweet is it beyond expression to remember the lovingkindnesses of the Lord in our former days, for he is unchangeable, and therefore will continue to guard us from all evil.

4. "*I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever.*" Let me once get back to thy courts, and nothing shall again expel me from them: even now in my banishment my

heart is there; and ever will I continue to worship thee in spirit wherever my lot may be cast. Perhaps by the word "*tabernacle*" is here meant the dwelling-place of God; and if so, the sense is, I will dwell with the Lord, enjoying his sacred hospitality, and sure protection.

"There would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come;
No more a stranger, or a guest,
But like a child at home."

He who communes with God is always at home. The divine omnipresence surrounds such a one consciously; his faith sees all around him the palace of the King, in which he walks with exulting security and overflowing delight. Happy are the indoor servants who go not out from his presence. Hewers of wood and drawers of water in the tents of Jehovah are more to be envied than the princes who riot in the pavilions of kings. The best of all is that our residence with God is not for a limited period of time, but for ages; yea, for ages of ages, for time and for eternity: this is our highest and most heavenly privilege, "*I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever.*"

"*I will trust in the covert of thy wings.*" Often does our sweet singer use this figure; and far better is it to repeat one apt and instructive image, than for the sake of novelty to ransack creation for poor, strained metaphors. The chicks beneath the hen how safe, how comfortable, how happy! How warm the parent's bosom! How soft the cherishing feathers! Divine condescension allows us to appropriate the picture to ourselves, and how blessedly instructive and consoling it is! O for more trust; it cannot be too implicit: such a covert invites us to the most unbroken repose. SELAH. Rest we well may when we reach this point. Even the harp may be eloquently silent when deep, profound calm completely fills the bosom, and sorrow has sobbed itself into a peaceful slumber.

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.

6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life: *and* his years as many generations.

7 He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him.

8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

5. "*For thou, O God, hast heard my vows.*" Proofs of divine faithfulness are to be had in remembrance, and to be mentioned to the Lord's honour. The prayer of verse 1 is certain of an answer because of the experience of verse 5, since we deal with an immutable God. "*Vows*" may rightly be joined with prayers when they are lawful, well-considered, and truly for God's glory. It is great mercy on God's part to take any notice of the vows and promises of such faithless and deceitful creatures as we are. What we promise him is his due already, and yet he deigns to accept our vows as if we were not so much his servants as his free suitors who could give or withhold at pleasure. "*Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.*" We are made heirs, joint-heirs with all the saints, partakers of the same portion. With this we ought to be delighted. If we suffer, it is the heritage of the saints; if we are persecuted, are in poverty, or in temptation, all this is contained in the title-deeds of the heritage of the chosen. Those we are to sup with we may well be content to dine with. We have the same inheritance as the First-born himself; what better is conceivable? Saints are described as fearing the name of God; they are reverent worshippers; they stand in awe of the Lord's authority; they are afraid of offending him, they feel their own nothingness in the sight of the Infinite One. To share with such men, to be treated by God with the same favour as he metes out to them, is matter for endless thanksgiving. All the privileges of all the saints are also the privilege of each one.

6. "*Thou wilt prolong the king's life;*" or, better, "days to the days of the King thou wilt add." Death threatened, but God preserved his beloved. David, considering his many perils, enjoyed a long and prosperous reign. "*And his years as many generations.*" He lived to see generation after generation personally; in his descendants he lived as king through a very long period; his dynasty continued

for many generations; and in Christ Jesus, his seed and son, spiritually David reigns on evermore. Thus he who began at the foot of the rock, half drowned, and almost dead, is here led to the summit, and sings as a priest abiding in the tabernacle, a king ruling with God for ever, and a prophet foretelling good things to come. (Verse 7.) See the uplifting power of faith and prayer. None so low but they may yet be set on high.

7. "*He shall abide before God for ever.*" Though this is true of David in a modified sense, we prefer to view the Lord Jesus as here intended as the lineal descendant of David, and the representative of his royal race. Jesus is enthroned before God to eternity; here is our safety, dignity, and delight. We reign in him; in him we are made to sit together in the heavenlies. David's personal claim to sit enthroned for ever is but a foreshadowing of the revealed privilege of all true believers. "*O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him.*" As men cry, "Long live the king," so we hail with acclamation our enthroned Immanuel, and cry, "Let mercy and truth preserve him." Eternal love and immutable faithfulness are the bodyguards of Jesus' throne, and they are both the providers and the preservers of all those who in him are made kings and priests unto God. We cannot keep ourselves, and nothing short of divine mercy and truth can do it; but these both can and will, nor shall the least of the people of God be suffered to perish.

8. "*So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever.*" Because my prayer is answered, my song shall be perpetual; because Jesus for ever sits at thy right hand, it shall be acceptable; because I am preserved in him, it shall be grateful. David had given vocal utterance to his prayer by a cry; he will now give expression to his praise by a song: there should be a parallel between our supplications and our thanksgivings. We ought not to leap in prayer, and limp in praise. The vow to celebrate the divine name "*for ever*" is no hyperbolical piece of extravagance, but such as grace and glory shall enable us to carry out to the letter. "*That I may daily perform my vows.*" To God who adds days to our days we will devote all our days. We vowed perpetual praise, and we desire to render it without intermission. We would worship God *de die in diem*, going right on as the days roll on. We ask no vacation from this heavenly vocation; we would make no pause in this sacred service. God daily performs his promises, let us daily perform our vows: he keeps his covenant let us not forget ours. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth, even for evermore.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The word *Neginah* (the singular of *Neginoth*) may be understood to be synonymous with the *kinnor* or harp: that is to say, the instrument of eight strings, probably played with a bow or plectrum.—*John Jebb.*

Verse 1.—"*Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.*" Aquinas saith that some read the words thus, *Intende ad cantica mea*, attend unto my songs and so the words may be safely read, from the Hebrew word, רָנַן *ranah*, which signifies to shout or shrill out for joy—to note that the prayers of the saints are like pleasant songs and delightful ditties in the ears of God. No mirth, no music, can be so pleasing to us as the prayers of the saints are pleasing to God. Cant. ii. 14; Psalm cxli. 2.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 1.—"*My cry.*" There is a text in Job where the "hypocrites in heart" are spoken of condemingly, because "they cry not when he bindeth them." I like to feel that no hard fortitude is required of the chastened child of God, but that it ought to feel, and may cry, under the rod, without a single rebellious thought.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verses 1, 2.—One ejaculation begetteth another. "*Hear my cry;*" "*attend unto my prayer*" (yet no words hereof mentioned); and verse 2. "*From the end of the earth will I cry:*" he had thus cried, and he will therefore cry again and again. As billows of temptation ever and anon stop his mouth and interrupt him, so as he now and then doth but peep above water, and get breathing space, he will thus

cry, "*Lead me*," or "guide me," or carry me to yonder "*rock which is higher than I.*"—*Thomas Cobbet* (1608—1686), *on Prayer.*

Verse 2.—"*From the end of the earth.*" This may be taken two ways: either *naturally*, and then it is an allusion to men that are far distant and remote from help, relief and comfort; or, as I may say, *ecclesiastically*, with reference to the temple of God, which was "*in medio terræ*," "in the midst and heart of the land," where God manifested and gave tokens of his gracious presence and favour: as if he had said, "I am at the end of the earth; far from any tokens, pledges, or manifestations of the love and favour of God, as well as from outward help and assistance.—*John Owen.*

Verse 2.—"*The end of the earth.*" What place was this, "*the end of the earth*," referring the expression to the writer of the Psalm? We know that the centre of the affections and devotions of the pious Israelite was the "holy city, Jerusalem; whither the tribes went up, even the tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel, and to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." The country of which this city was the capital, was to the Jew the world; it was the world within the world; the earth within the earth; the whole globe beside was to him a waste, a place out of the world; an extra-terrestrial territory, beyond the limits set up by the Lord Almighty. Thus in Holy Writ what is called the world, or the earth, frequently signifieth only that part thereof which was the heritage of the chosen people. . . . "*The end of the earth*," then, as referred to the Psalmist, would signify any place of bodily absence from the temple where the Deity had taken up his special abode, or any place whence his spiritual affections were unable to reach that temple. As referred to us, the expression signifies any sensible distance from God: for as God is the centre of life, hope, love, and joy, distance from him, of whatsoever degree, is the antipodes of the soul, a region of sterility and darkness; the Iceland of man's spirit.—*Alfred Bowen Evans*, 1852.

Verse 2.—"*I will cry unto thee.*" There is in this expression an endeavour to approach unto God; as you do when you "*cry*" after one whom you see at a distance, and are afraid he will go farther from you. It is the great work of faith to cry out after God, at a distance, when you are afraid lest at the next turn he should be quite out of sight. Crying to the Lord supposes him to be withdrawing or departing.—*John Owen.*

Verse 2.—"*Cry.*" No matter how abrupt the prayer be, so it be the representation of our hearts. Thus did David. Where doth he pray? In banishment. When? When his spirit "*is overwhelmed.*" How doth he pray? He "*cried.*" Thus Hannah prayed herself into a composed state of mind. Remember, resignation is the work of the Spirit of God; and therefore you must plead for it before you have it.—*John Singleton* (—1706), *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 2.—"*Cry.*" Crying is a substitute for speech; and also the expression of earnestness.—*William Jay.*

Verse 2.—"*When my heart is overwhelmed.*" Troubles are of various kinds; some are *provoking*, some are *gnawing*, some are *perplexing*, and some are *overwhelming*; but whatever form they assume, they are troubles, and are part of the wear and tear of life. . . . . *Overwhelming troubles* are such as sweep over a man, just as the mighty billows of the ocean sweep over and submerge the sands. These are troubles which struggle with us, as it were, for life and death; troubles which would leave us helpless wrecks; troubles which enter into conflict with us in our prime, which grapple with us in our health and strength, and threaten to conquer us by sheer force, no matter how bravely we may contend. Such trouble the Psalmist knew.—*Philip Bennett Power, in* "*The 'I wills' of the Psalms*," 1861.

Verse 2.—"*Heart.*" The heart is here represented to us as being overwhelmed, or, as it is otherwise translated, "covered over;" it is smothered in, unable to perform its functions with proper action, unable to throw out the blood to the extremities, to give them needed vitality and power for necessary effort. When the action of the heart is paralyzed, even temporally, it will tell upon all the members, a chill there sends its cold vibration through every limb; Satan knows this well, and so all his dealings are heart dealings, efforts to paralyze the very spring of life itself. This is precisely what we ourselves have experienced; we have partially felt death within us, we have felt a gradual numbing of our heart; a gradual diminution in the quickness of its beat; a gradual closing in, and pressure of a weight upon it, and this was the "*overwhelming*" process.—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 2.—"*Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*" The *tower*, in Psalm xviii. 2, is "*an high tower*," and the *rock* is here an *high rock*, the rock "*higher than I;*" and yet there is a way to get into the highest towers; by scaling ladders a man may get over the high walls of towers. This tower and rock were too high for David himself to get into, and therefore he sets to the scaling ladder. "*Lead me to the rock*, and into the tower *that is higher than I. Hear my cry, attend unto my prayer.*" So he makes prayer the scaling ladder to get upon that rock and into that tower that otherwise had been too high for him; he gets that safety and deliverance which otherwise but by prayer unto God had been impossible to have been obtained.—*Jeremiah Dyke.*

Verse 2.—"*Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*" The language is very remarkable. It gives us the idea of a man suffering shipwreck. The vessel in which he has been sailing has sunk. He has been plunged into the mighty ocean; and there he is buffeting the waves, struggling for life, panting for breath, and just about to give up all for lost. Suddenly he discovers a *rock* towering above him. If he can but climb up to the top of it, and get sure footing upon it, the billows will not be able to reach him, and he will be safe. Now, the prayer in our text is the cry of that poor wretch for help. He is so spent and exhausted, that he cannot reach the rock *himself*. He shouts aloud for the friendly hand of some one stronger than himself, or for a rope that may be flung to him by those who are already safe on the rock, if by these helps he may gain it. "*Lead me to the rock*," cries the poor perishing wretch. "O, lead me, guide me, direct me to it; for I am so worn and spent, that I cannot reach it otherwise. I am at the point to die; and I must sink, and be no more seen for ever, if there is none to help me." Thus he calls for some one to rescue him from the deep, and to place him on the "*rock*." But what rock? He knows that unless the rock be a high one, he will not be in safety, though he should be on it. "*The rock*," he says, "must be *higher than I*, or the waves will reach me, and wash me off again." It is not a rock, the top of which just shows itself above the sea, no higher than a man's own body, that will save the life of a shipwrecked mariner. Such a rock may occasion the wreck, but it will not afford any help to the sufferers afterwards; it is a rock to split upon for destruction, not to stand upon for safety. "*Lead me to the rock*," or as it is in the Prayer-book version, "Set me upon the rock, that is *higher than I!*" . . . . The text having shown us the *danger of sin*, does not leave us comfortless; it shows us the *security of the refuge*. We have before remarked, that the prayer of David, as a shipwrecked man, is, to be "led to," and set upon, a "*rock*," that is *higher than himself*. The expression seems to imply much. The rock that is higher than *he*, must be higher than *any man;* for David was a mighty monarch. He implies, therefore, that the refuge he seeks must be more than any "arm of flesh" can afford him; it must be therefore *divine.—Condensed from a Sermon by Fountain Elwin*, 1842.

Verse 2.—It is more the image of one overtaken by the tide, as he is hastening onwards to get beyond its reach, and yet with every step he sees it rolling nearer and nearer to him; he hears its angry roar, the loosening sand sinks beneath his tread—a few minutes more, and the waves will be around him; despair hath "*overwhelmed his heart;*" when in the very depths of his agony he sees a point of rock high above the waves. "O that I could reach it and be safe!" And then comes the cry, the agonising cry, to him that is mighty to save, "*Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*" It is the sinner's cry to the sinner's Saviour!—*Barton Bouchier, A.M., in "Manna in the Heart; or, Daily Comments on the Book of Psalms,"* 1855.

Verse 2.—"*Lead me to the rock.*" If we would find ourselves upon the rock, and enjoy the realisation of being so, we must be dependent upon another's hand. And that hand can do everything for us, even in our worst of times. When we are so blinded by the salt waves that dash in our eyes, so reeling in brain that we cannot perhaps think, much less make continuous efforts, there is a hand which can lead us, which can draw us out of the waters, which can set our feet upon the rock. Surely we have already experienced the power and tenderness of that hand? and it may be that in the reader's case, the waves, as they made sure of their prey, found it supernaturally drawn forth from them, that it might be set upon a rock, immovable amid all waters, and sufficient amid all storms!—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 2.—"*The rock that is higher than I.*" The rock of our salvation, then, is "higher than we." Here we have the Deity of Christ, the Rock, set forth; in this he is "higher than we." And except as he is thus higher, as he is God, he

could not be a Saviour; for "He is a just God, as well as a Saviour." A being no higher than we, or but a little higher, as the angels (for we are but "a little lower than they"), though he might teach us, or warn us, or console us, could never save us. The prey is in the hands of the mighty, and the All-mighty alone is mightier. But a rock is not only high, but deep; it not only erects its front above the waves, but its base is fixed in the ocean's bed. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Job. xi. 7. Here we have the humanity of him who is the rock; that humanity by which he was able to go down to the deeps, as well as ride triumphantly on the bosom of the waters—those deeps, whereof David speaking experimentally of himself, spake prophetically of him; the depths of our fall and degradation—that humanity in which he went down into the grave, into the recesses of the intermediate state, and "preached to the spirits in prison." This is our rock, both deep and high; the rock of our salvation; to which those whose sins have set them at "the end of the earth," desire to be brought, that they may find a place of safe standing. Let not those fear who feel the bitterness of distance from God, for they shall be brought nigh; desolate may be the coast to which they are driven, but over against it is the Paradise of God; clouds and darkness may gather at the base of this rock of safety, but "eternal sunshine settles on its head."—*Alfred Bowen Evans.*

Verse 2.—"*Higher.*" A hiding place must be *locus excelsissimus.* Your low houses are soon scaled. Jesus Christ is a high place; he is as high as heaven. He is the Jacob's ladder that reacheth from earth to heaven. Gen. xxviii. 12. He is too high for men, too high for devils; no creature can scale these high walls.—*Ralph Robinson* (1614—1655), *in "Christ All and in All."*

Verse 4.—"*I will abide in thy tabernacle.*" Some render it, *I shall dwell in thy tent* or *pavilion royal,* making it a metaphor from warfare, where those that are in the king's own tent must needs be in greatest safety. And this sense suiteth well with the following words: "*I will trust in the covert of thy wings.*"—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Covert of thy wings.*" To a person who should penetrate the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, the most conspicuous object would be the outspread wings above the mercy-seat: under their shelter and upon the mercy-seat David would abide in quiet confidence.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5 (*first clause*).—About this time I began to know that there is a God who hears and answers prayer.—*John Newton, in his Journal.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou, O God, hast heard my vows:*" that is, his prayers, which are always to be put up with vows. Indeed, that prayer is a blank which hath not a vow in it. Is it a mercy thou prayest him to give? If sincere, thou wilt vow to praise him for it, and serve him with it. Is it a sin thou prayest against? Except thou jugglest with God, thou wilt vow as well as pray against it.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 5.—"*The heritage.*" Eternal life is called an inheritance. Theodoret remarks: "The true inheritance is eternal life, concerning which Christ saith to the sheep on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. This inheritance the Lord giveth to them that fear him." In Ephesians i. 14, the Spirit is called "the earnest of our inheritance." In Colossians i. 12, the apostle exhorts them "to give thanks unto the Father, who hath made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." On this verse we have the golden comment of Chrysostom, reiterated by Theophylact. He calls it an inheritance, to show that no man obtaineth the kingdom by his own good works; for no man hath so lived as to render himself worthy of the kingdom, but all is of the grace of God. Wherefore, he saith, "When ye have done all, say that we are unprofitable servants, for we have only done what we ought to have done."—*John Casper Suicer's "Thesaurus,"* 1728.

Verse 6.—"*Thou wilt prolong the king's life,*" etc. David cannot be considered as using these words of gratulation with an exclusive reference to himself. It is true that he lived to an extreme old age, and died full of days, leaving the kingdom in a settled condition, and in the hands of his son, who succeeded him; but he did not exceed the period of one man's life, and the greater part of it was spent in

continued dangers and anxieties. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the series of years, and even ages, of which he speaks, extends prospectively to the coming of Christ, it being the very condition of the kingdom, as I have often remarked, that God maintained them as one people under one head, or when scattered, united them again. The same succession still subsists in reference to ourselves. Christ must be viewed as living in his members to the end of the world. To this Isaiah alludes, when he says, "Who shall declare his generation or age?"—words in which he predicts that the church would survive through all ages, notwithstanding the incessant danger of destruction to which it is exposed through the attacks of its enemies, and the many storms assailing it. So here David foretells the uninterrupted succession of the kingdom down to the time of Christ.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 6.—"*The king's life: and his years.*" David speaks designedly of the days of the "*king*" instead of his *own* days, as might have been expected from what had been said, for the purpose of showing that he considered the promise of eternal dominion as relating not to himself personally, but to his family—the royal family of David.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 7.—"*O prepare mercy.*" David having declared in his own behalf the purpose of God towards him for everlasting salvation, "*he*," speaking of himself, "*shall abide before God for ever:*" he withal considering what he was to run through in this life, and what it might require to keep him unto the end, and so "*for ever*," doth presently thereupon, in way of prayer, subjoin, "*O prepare* mercy and truth, which may *preserve* me." As if he had said, I have yet a long journey to go, and through many hazards, and thy promise is, *I shall abide afore thee for ever.* Lord, thou hast need lay up and aforehand prepare an abundance of mercy and truth to preserve me for time to come.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—They that are godly are oppressed and vexed in the church or congregation for this purpose: that when they are pressed, they should cry; and when they cry, that they should be heard; and when they are heard, that they should laud and praise God.—*Augustine.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—The progressive "I wills." I. I will cry. II. I will abide in thy tabernacle. III. I will trust. IV. I will sing praise.

Verse 1.—Answers to prayer to be earnestly sought. I. What hinders the answer of prayer? II. What is our duty when answers are denied? III. What encouragements we have to believe that the delay is only temporary.

Verse 2.—"*Lead me.*" I. Show me the way: reveal Jesus. II. Enable me to tread it: work faith in me. III. Uplift me where I cannot tread: do for me what is beyond me.

Verse 2.—"*Higher than I.*" Jesus greater than our highest efforts, attainments, desires, expectations, conceptions.

Verse 2.—God, the saints' rock.—*John Owen's Two Sermons.* Works. Vol. IX., pp. 237—256.

Verse 2.—The heart's cry and desire. I. A recognition of a place of safety; then, II. We have this place brought before us, as abundantly sufficient, when personal weakness has been realised. IV. The character of this refuge, and the position of a believer when availing himself of it: the place of refuge is "a rock," and the position of the believer is "upon a rock."—*P. B. Power.*

Verses 2, 3.—I. *How* would he pray? "I will *cry* unto thee." II. *Where* would he pray? "From the ends of the earth." III. *When* would he pray? "When my heart is overwhelmed." IV. *For what* would he pray? "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." V. *Whence* does he derive his encouragement to pray? "For thou *hast been*," etc. (verse 3).—*William Jay.*

Verse 3.—"*A shelter*" from the rain of trouble, the storm of persecution, the floods of Satanic temptation, the heat of divine wrath, the blast of death. The

ark, Lot's mountain, the blood-stained door in Egypt, the city of refuge, the cave Adullam. "*A strong tower:*" lasting in itself, impregnable against foes, secure for the occupant.

Verses 4, 7.—I. My privilege, "*I will abide*" (verse 4). II. The ground of it, "*He shall abide,*" etc. (verse 7).

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—Where the priest has presented the sacrifice; where the law is laid up in the ark as fulfilled; where the light of the Spirit's candlestick shines; where the manna abides; where the glory is above the mercy-seat; where no enemy can enter; where I commune with a covenant God.

Verse 5 (*second clause*).—Enquire whether or no it fares with us as with the saints.

Verses 5, 8.—I. Vows heard in heaven. II. Vows to be carefully fulfilled on earth.

Verse 5 (*second clause*).—I. They that fear God have a "heritage." II. This heritage is "given." III. We may know that we possess it.—*William Jay.*

Verse 6.—Our King, his eternal existence, our personal joy in this, and our joy for our descendants.

PSALM LXII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, to Jeduthun.—*This is the second Psalm which is dedicated to Jeduthun or Ethan, the former one being the thirty-ninth, a Psalm which is almost a twin with this in many respects, containing in the original the word translated* only *four times as this does six. We shall meet with two other Psalms similarly appointed for Jeduthun: namely, Psalms LXXVII. and LXXXIX. The sons of Jeduthun were porters or doorkeepers, according to* 1 Chron. xvi. 42. *Those who serve well make the best of singers, and those who occupy the highest posts in the choir must not be ashamed to wait at the posts of the doors of the Lord's house.*

A PSALM OF DAVID.—*Even had not the signature of the royal poet been here placed, we should have been sure from internal evidence that he alone penned these stanzas; they are truly Davidic. From the sixfold use of the word,* ac *or* only, *we have been wont to call it* THE ONLY PSALM.

DIVISION.—*The Psalmist has marked his own pauses, by inserting* SELAH *at the end of verses* 4 *and* 8. *His true and sole confidence in God laughs to scorn all its enemies. When this Psalm was composed it was not necessary for us to know, since true faith is always in season, and is usually under trial. Moreover, the sentiments here uttered are suitable to occasions which are very frequent in a believer's life, and therefore no one historic incident is needful for their explanation.*

EXPOSITION.

TRULY my soul waiteth upon God; from him *cometh* my salvation.

2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as* a tottering fence.

4 They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.

1. "*Truly,*" or verily, or only. The last is probably the most prominent sense here. That faith alone is true which rests on God alone, that confidence which relies but partly on the Lord is vain confidence. If we Englished the word by our word "*verily,*" as some do, we should have here a striking reminder of our blessed Lord's frequent use of that adverb. "*My soul waiteth upon God.*" My inmost self draws near in reverent obedience to God. I am no hypocrite or mere posture maker. To wait upon God, and for God, is the habitual position of faith; to wait on him truly is sincerity; to wait on him only is spiritual chastity. The original is, "only to God is my soul silence." The presence of God alone could awe his heart into quietude, submission, rest, and acquiescence; but when that was felt, not a rebellious word or thought broke the peaceful silence. The proverb that speech is silver but silence is gold, is more than true in this case. No eloquence in the world is half so full of meaning as the patient silence of a child of God. It is an eminent work of grace to bring down the will and subdue the affections to such a degree, that the whole mind lies before the Lord like the sea beneath the wind, ready to be moved by every breath of his mouth, but free from all inward and self-caused emotion, as also from all power to be moved by anything other than the divine will. We should be wax to the Lord, but adamant to every other force. "*From him cometh my salvation.*" The good man will, therefore, in patience possess his soul till deliverance comes: faith can hear the footsteps of coming salvation because she has learned to be silent. Our salvation in no measure or degree comes to us from any inferior source; let us, therefore, look alone to the true fountain, and avoid the detestable crime of ascribing to the creature what belongs alone to the Creator. If to wait on God be worship, to wait on the creature is idolatry;

if to wait on God alone be true faith, to associate an arm of flesh with him is audacious unbelief.

2. "*He only is my rock and my salvation.*" Sometimes a metaphor may be more full of meaning and more suggestive than literal speech; hence the use of the figure of a rock, the very mention of which would awaken grateful memories in the Psalmist's mind. David had often lain concealed in rocky caverns, and here he compares his God to such a secure refuge; and, indeed, declares him to be his only real protection, all-sufficient in himself and never failing. At the same time, as if to show us that what he wrote was not mere poetic sentiment, but blessed reality, the literal word "*salvation*" follows the figurative expression: that our God is our refuge is no fiction, nothing in the world is more a matter of fact. "*He is my defence,*" my height, my lofty rampart, my high-fort. Here we have another and bolder image; the tried believer not only abides in God as in a cavernous rock; but dwells in him as a warrior in some bravely defiant tower or lordly castle. "*I shall not be greatly moved.*" His personal weakness might cause him to be somewhat moved; but his faith would come in to prevent any very great disturbance: not much would he be tossed about. "*Moved,*" as one says, "but not removed." Moved like a ship at anchor which swings with the tide, but is not swept away by the tempest. When a man knows assuredly that the Lord is his salvation, he cannot be very much cast down: it would need more than all the devils in hell greatly to alarm a heart which knows God to be its salvation.

3. "*How long will ye imagine mischief against a man?*" It is always best to begin with God, and then may we confront our enemies. Make all sure with heaven, then may you grapple with earth and hell. David expostulates with his insensate foes; he marvels at their dogged perseverance in malice, after so many failures and with certain defeat before them. He tells them that their design was an imaginary one, which they never could accomplish however deeply they might plot. It is a marvel that men will readily enough continue in vain and sinful courses, and yet to persevere in grace is so great a difficulty as to be an impossibility, were it not for divine assistance. The persistency of those who oppose the people of God is so strange that we may well expostulate with them and say, "How long will ye thus display your malice?" A hint is given in the text as to the cowardliness of so many pressing upon one man; but none are less likely to act a fair and manly part than those who are opposed to God's people for righteousness' sake. Satan could not enter into combat with Job in fair duel, but must needs call in the Sabeans and Chaldeans, and even then must borrow the lightning and the wind before his first attack was complete. If there were any shame in him, or in his children, they would be ashamed of the dastardly manner in which they have waged war against the seed of the woman. Ten thousand to one has not seemed to them too mean an advantage; there is not a drop of chivalrous blood in al their veins. "*Ye shall be slain all of you.*" Your edged tools will cut your own fingers. Those who take the sword shall perish with the sword. However many or fierce the bands of the wicked may be, they shall not escape the just retribution of heaven; rigorously shall the great Lawgiver exact blood from men of blood, and award death to those who seek the death of others. "*As a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.*" Boastful persecutors bulge and swell with pride, but they are only as a bulging wall ready to fall in a heap; they lean forward to seize their prey, but it is only as a tottering fence inclines to the earth upon which it will soon lie at length. They expect men to bow to them, and quake for fear in their presence; but men made bold by faith see nothing in them to honour, and very, very much to despise. It is never well on our part to think highly of ungodly persons; whatever their position, they are near their destruction, they totter to their fall; it will be our wisdom to keep our distance, for no one is advantaged by being near a falling wall; if it does not crush with its weight, it may stifle with its dust.

The passage is thought to be more correctly rendered as follows:—"How long will ye press on one man, that ye may crush him in a body, like a toppling wall, a sinking fence?" * We have, however, kept to our own version as yielding a good and profitable meaning. Both senses may blend in our meditations; for if David's enemies battered him as though they could throw him down like a bulging wall, he, on the other hand, foresaw that they themselves would by retributive justice be overthrown like an old, crumbling, leaning, yielding fence.

* So Dr. Kay, of Calcutta, translates it.

4. "*They only consult to cast him down from his excellency.*" The excellencies of the righteous are obnoxious to the wicked, and the main object of their fury. The elevation which God gives to the godly in Providence, or in repute, is also the envy of the baser sort, and they labour to pull them down to their own level. Observe the concentration of malice upon one point *only*, as here set in contrast with the sole reliance of the gracious one upon his Lord. If the wicked could but ruin the work of grace in us, they would be content; to crush our character, to overturn our influence, is the object of their consultation. "*They delight in lies;*" hence they hate the truth and the truthful, and by falsehood endeavour to compass their overthrow. To lie is bad enough, but to delight in it is one of the blackest marks of infamy. "*They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.*" Flattery has ever been a favourite weapon with the enemies of good men; they can curse bitterly enough when it serves their turn; meanwhile, since it answers their purpose, they mask their wrath, and with smooth words pretend to bless those whom they would willingly tear in pieces. It was fortunate for David that he was well practised in silence, for to cozening deceivers there is no other safe reply. "*Selah.*" Here pause, and consider with astonishment the futile rancour of unholy men, and the perfect security of such as rest themselves upon the Lord.

5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him.
6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation: *he is* my defence; I shall not be moved.
7 In God *is* my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.
8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.

"*My soul, wait thou only upon God.*" When we have already practised a virtue, it is yet needful that we bind ourselves to a continuance in it. The soul is apt to be dragged away from its anchorage, or is readily tempted to add a second confidence to the one sole and sure ground of reliance; we must, therefore, stir ourselves up to maintain the holy position which we were at first able to assume. Be still silent, O my soul! submit thyself completely, trust immovably, wait patiently. Let none of thy enemies' imaginings, consultings, flatteries, or maledictions cause thee to break the King's peace. Be like the sheep before her shearers, and like thy Lord, conquer by the passive resistance of victorious patience: thou canst only achieve this as thou shalt be inwardly persuaded of God's presence, and as thou waitest solely and alone on him. Unmingled faith is undismayed. Faith with a single eye sees herself secure, but if her eye be darkened by two confidences, she is blind and useless. "*For my expectation is from him.*" We expect from God because we believe in him. Expectation is the child of prayer and faith, and is owned of the Lord as an acceptable grace. We should desire nothing but what it would be right for God to give, then our expectation would be all from God; and concerning truly good things we should not look to second causes, but to the Lord alone, and so again our expectation would be all from him. The vain expectations of worldly men come not; they promise, but there is no performance; our expectations are on the way, and in due season will arrive to satisfy our hopes. Happy is the man who feels that all he has, all he wants, and all he expects are to be found in his God.

6. "*He only is my rock and my salvation.*" Alone, and without other help, God is the foundation and completion of my safety. We cannot too often hear the toll of that great bell *only;* let it ring the death-knell of all carnal reliances, and lead us to cast ourselves on the bare arm of God. "*He is my defence.*" Not my defender only, but my actual protection. I am secure, because he is faithful. "*I shall not be moved*"—not even in the least degree. See how his confidence grows. In the second verse an adverb qualified his quiet; here, however, it is absolute; he altogether defies the rage of his adversaries, he will not stir an inch, nor be made to fear even in the smallest degree. A living faith grows; experience develops the spiritual muscles of the saint, and gives a manly force which our religious childhood has not yet reached.

7. "*In God is my salvation and my glory.*" Wherein should we glory but in him who saves us? Our honour may well be left with him who secures our souls.

To find all in God, and to glory that it is so, is one of the sure marks of an enlightened soul. "*The rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God.*" He multiplies titles, for he would render much honour to the Lord, whom he had tried, and proved to be a faithful God under so many aspects. Ignorance needs but few words, but when experience brings a wealth of knowledge, we need varied expressions to serve as coffers for our treasure. God who is our rock when we flee for shelter, is also our *strong* rock when we stand firm and defy the foe; he is to be praised under both characters. Observe how the Psalmist brands his own initials upon every name which he rejoicingly gives to his God—*my* expectation, *my* rock, *my* salvation, *my* glory, *my* strength, *my* refuge; he is not content to know that the Lord is all these things; he acts faith towards him, and lays claim to him under every character. What are the mines of Peru or Golconda to me if I have no inheritance in them? It is the word *my* which puts the honey into the comb. If our experience has not yet enabled us to realise the Lord under any of these consoling titles, we must seek grace that we may yet be partakers of their sweetness. The bees in some way or other penetrate the flowers and collect their juices; it must be hard for them to enter the closed cups and mouthless bags of some of the favourites of the garden, yet the honey-gatherers find or make a passage; and in this they are our instructors, for into each delightful name, character, and office of our covenant God our persevering faith must find an entrance, and from each it must draw delight.

8. "*Trust in him at all times.*" Faith is an abiding duty, a perpetual privilege. We should trust when we can see, as well as when we are utterly in the dark. Adversity is a fit season for faith; but prosperity is not less so. God at all times deserves our confidence. We at all times need to place our confidence in him. A day without trust in God is a day of wrath, even if it be a day of mirth. Lean ever, ye saints, on him, on whom the world leans. "*Ye people, pour out your heart before him.*" Ye to whom his love is revealed, reveal yourselves to him. His heart is set on you, lay bare your hearts to him. Turn the vessel of your soul upside down in his secret presence, and let your inmost thoughts, desires, sorrows, and sins be poured out like water. Hide nothing from him, for you *can* hide nothing. To the Lord unburden your soul: let him be your only father-confessor, for he only can absolve you when he has heard your confession. To keep our griefs to ourselves is to hoard up wretchedness. The stream will swell and rage if you dam it up: give it a clear course, and it leaps along and creates no alarm. Sympathy we need, and if we unload our hearts at Jesus' feet, we shall obtain a sympathy as practical as it is sincere, as consolatory as it is ennobling. The writer in the *Westminster Assembly's Annotations* well observes that it is the tendency of our wicked nature to bite on the bridle, and hide our grief in sullenness; but the gracious soul will overcome this propensity, and utter its sorrow before the Lord. "*God is a refuge for us.*" Whatever he may be to others, his own people have a peculiar heritage in him; "*for us*" he is undoubtedly a refuge; here then is the best of reasons for resorting to him whenever sorrows weigh upon our bosoms. Prayer is peculiarly the duty of those to whom the Lord has specially revealed himself as their defence.

"SELAH." Precious pause! Timely silence! Sheep may well lie down when such pasture is before them.

9 Surely men of low degree *are* vanity, *and* men of high degree *are* a lie: to be laid in the balance, they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.

10 Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart *upon them.*

11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power *belongeth* unto God.

12 Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

9. "*Surely men of low degree are vanity.*" Here the word is *only* again; men of low degree are only vanity, nothing more. They are many and enthusiastic, but they are not to be depended on; they are mobile as the waves of the sea, ready to be driven to and fro by any and every wind; they cry "Hosanna" to-day, and "Crucify him" to-morrow. The instability of popular applause is a proverb;

as well build a house with smoke as find comfort in the adulation of the multitude. As the first son of Adam was called Abel or vanity, so here we are taught that all the sons of Adam are Abels: it were well if they were all so in character as well as in name; but alas! in this respect, too many of them are Cains. "*And men of high degree are a lie.*" That is worse. We gain little by putting our trust in the aristocracy, they are not one whit better than the democracy; nay, they are even worse, for we expect something from them, but get nothing. May we not trust the *élite?* Surely reliance may be placed in the educated, the chivalrous, the intelligent? For this reason are they a lie; because they promise so much, and in the end, when relied upon, yield nothing but disappointment. How wretched is that poor man who puts his trust in princes. The more we rely upon God, the more shall we perceive the utter hollowness of every other confidence. "*To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.*" Take a true estimate of them; judge them neither by quantity nor by appearance, but by weight, and they will no longer deceive you. Calmly deliberate, quietly ponder, and your verdict will be that which inspiration here records. Vainer than vanity itself are all human confidences: the great and the mean, alike, are unworthy of our trust. A feather has some weight in the scale, vanity has none, and creature confidence has less than that: yet such is the universal infatuation, that mankind prefer an arm of flesh to the power of the invisible but almighty Creator; and even God's own children are too apt to be bitten with this madness.

10. "*Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery.*" Wealth ill-gotten is the trust only of fools, for the deadly pest lies in it; it is full of canker, it reeks with God's curse. To tread down the poor and silence their cries for justice, is the delight of many a braggart bully, who in his arrogance imagines that he may defy both God and man; but he is warned in these words, and it will be well for him if he takes the warning, for the Judge of all the earth will surely visit upon men the oppression of the innocent, and the robbery of the poor: both of these may be effected legally in the courts of man, but no twistings of the law, no tricks and evasions will avail with the Court of Heaven. "*If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*" If they grow in an honest, providential manner, as the result of industry or commercial success, do not make much account of the circumstance; be not unduly elated, do not fix your love upon your money-bags. To bow an immortal spirit to the constant contemplation of fading possessions is extreme folly. Shall those who call the Lord their glory, glory in yellow earth? Shall the image and superscription of Cæsar deprive them of communion with him who is the image of the invisible God? As we must not rest in men, so neither must we repose in money. Gain and fame are only so much foam of the sea. All the wealth and honour the whole world can afford would be too slender a thread to bear up the happiness of an immortal soul.

11. "*God hath spoken once.*" So immutable is God that he need not speak twice, as though he had changed; so infallible, that one utterance suffices, for he cannot err; so omnipotent, that his solitary word achieves all his designs. We speak often and say nothing; God speaks once and utters eternal verities. All our speaking may yet end in sound; but he speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. "*Twice have I heard this.*" Our meditative soul should hear the echo of God's voice again and again. What he speaks once in revelation, we should be always hearing. Creation and providence are evermore echoing the voice of God; "He that hath hears to hear, let him hear." We have two ears, that we may hear attentively, and the spiritual have inner ears with which they hear indeed. He hears twice in the best sense who hears with his heart as well as his ears. "*That power belongeth unto God.*" He is the source of it, and in him it actually abides. This one voice of God we ought always to hear, so as to be preserved from putting our trust in creatures in whom there can be no power, since all power is in God. What reason for faith is here! It can never be unwise to rest upon the almighty arm. Out of all troubles he can release us, under all burdens sustain us, while men must fail us at the last, and may deceive us even now. May our souls hear the thunder of Jehovah's voice as he claims all power, and henceforth may we wait only upon God!

12. "*Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.*" This tender attribute sweetens the grand thought of his power: the divine strength will not crush us, but will be used for our good; God is so full of mercy that it belongs to him, as if all the mercy in the universe came from God, and still was claimed by him as his possession.

His mercy, like his power, endureth for ever, and is ever present in him, ready to be revealed, "*For thou renderest to every man according to his work*," This looks rather like justice than mercy; but if we understand it to mean that God graciously rewards the poor, imperfect works of his people, we see in it a clear display of mercy. May it not also mean that according to the work he allots us is the strength which he renders to us? he is not a hard master; he does not bid us make bricks without straw, but he metes out to us strength equal to our day. In either meaning we have power and mercy blended, and have a double reason for waiting only upon God. Man neither helps us nor rewards us; God will do both. In him power and grace are eternally resident; our faith should therefore patiently hope and quietly wait, for we shall surely see the salvation of God. *Deo soli gloria.* All glory be to God only.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Psalms lxii. *and* lxiii. *compared.*—ONLY AND EARLY.—There is a sweet and profitable lesson taught us in Psalms lxii. and lxiii. The heart is ever prone to divide its confidence between God and the creature. This will never do. We must "wait *only* upon God." "He *only*" must be our "rock," our "salvation," and our "defence." Then we are frequently tempted to look to an arm of flesh *first*, and when that fails us, we look to God. This will never do either. He must be our *first* as well as our *only* resource. "O God, thou art my God, *early* will I seek thee." This is the way in which the heart should ever treat the blessed God. This is the lesson of Psalm lxiii. When we have learnt the blessedness of seeking God "*only*," we shall be sure to seek him "*early*."—*Charles Mackintosh, in "Things New and Old,"* 1858.

Whole Psalm.—There is in it throughout not one single word (and this is a rare occurrence), in which the prophet expresses *fear* or *dejection;* and there is also no prayer in it, although, on other occasions, when in danger, he never omits to pray. . . . The prophet found himself remarkably well furnished in reference to that part of piety which consists in πληροφορία, the full assurance and perfection of faith; and therefore he designed to rear a monument of this his state of mind, for the purpose of stimulating the reader to the same attainment.—*Moses Amyraut,* 1596—1664.

Whole Psalm.—Athanasius says of this Psalm: "Against all attempts upon thy body, thy state, thy soul, thy fame, temptations, tribulations, machinations, defamations, say this Psalm."—*John Donne.*

Verse 1.—"*Only.*" The particle may be rendered *only*, as restrictive; or, *surely*, as affirmative. Our translators have rendered it differently in different verses of this Psalm; in verse 1, "*truly*;" in verses, 2, 4, 5, 6, "*only*;" in verse 9, "*surely.*" If we render "*only*," the meaning will be here that God exclusively is the object of trust; if "*surely*," that this truth, that God is his salvation, has come home to him with a more lively conviction, with a more blessed certainty than ever.—The first line of the verse rendered literally is, "*Only unto God my soul is silence.*"—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 1.—"*Truly my soul waiteth upon God,*" etc. In the use of means, for answers of prayer, for performance of promises, and for deliverance from enemies, and out of every trouble: or, *is silent*, as the Targum; not as to prayer, but as to murmuring; patiently and quietly waiting for salvation until the Lord's time come to give it; being *subject* to him, as the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions; resigned to his will, and patient under his afflicting hand: it denotes a quiet, patient waiting on the Lord, and not merely bodily exercise in outward ordinances; but an inward frame of spirit, a soul-waiting on the Lord, and that in truth and reality, in opposition to mere form and show.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*Truly my soul waiteth upon God;*" or, as the Hebrew, *My soul is silent.* Indeed, waiting on God for deliverance, in an afflicted state, consists much in a holy silence. It is a great mercy, in an affliction, to have bodily senses, so as not to lie raving, but still and quiet, much more to have the heart silent and patient;

and we find the heart is as soon heated into a distemper as the head. Now what the sponge is to the cannon, when hot with often shooting, hope is to the soul in multiplied afflictions; it cools the spirit and meekens it, so that it doth not break out into distempered thoughts or words against God. [See also verse 5].—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 1.—"*Waiteth.*" *Waiting* is nothing else but *hope and trust lengthened.*—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*My soul is silent before God.*" As if he had said: To me as a man God has put in subjection all his creatures; to me as a king he has subjected the whole of Judæa, the Philistines, the Moabites, Syrians, Idumeans, Ammonites, and other tribes; having taken me from the sheep-cotes he has adorned me with a crown and a sceptre now these thirty years, and extended my kingdom to the sea, and to the great river Euphrates; it is not without reason, then, that I subject myself to God alone in this affliction, wherein Absalom thirsts to crush me, especially since he reveals the deliverance prepared for me, and from him alone can I expect it.—*Thomas Le Blanc* (—1869), *in Psalmorum Davidicorum Ana ysis.*

Verse 1.—"*Is silent.*" The Hebrew word used is דּוּמִיָּה *dumijah*, that is, silent, resting, expecting, reflecting, solicitous, and observing. For, first, we ought to be subject to God as silent disciples before a master. . . . Whatever God has allowed to happen to me, yet I will be silent before him, and from my heart admire, both enduring his strokes and receiving his teaching. . . . Secondly, we ought to be subject to God as creatures keeping quiet before their Creator. . . "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." Isaiah xlv. 9. Thirdly, we ought to be subject to God as clay in the hands of the potter, ready for the form into which he wishes *to fashion us.* . . "*As clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.*" Jer. xviii. 6. Fourthly, we ought to be subject to God, as a maid servant to her master, observing his wish, even in the most menial affairs. . . . Fifthly, we ought to be subject to God, as a wife to her husband (*sponsa sponso*), who in her love is solicitous and careful to do whatever may be pleasing to him. "*My beloved is mine, and I am his.*" Cant. ii. 16. And, "*I am my beloved's.*" Cant. vi. 3.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—After almost every quiet prayer and holy meditation in the divine presence, we have the consciousness that there was an ear which heard us, and a heart which received our sighs. The effect of a silent colloquy with God is so soothing! There was a time when I used greatly to wonder at these words of Luther:—

> "Bear and forbear, and *silent* be,
> Tell to no man thy misery;
> Yield not in trouble to dismay,
> God can deliver any day."

I wondered because we feel the outpouring of grief into the heart of a friend to be so sweet. At the same time, he who talks much of his troubles to *men* is apt to fall into a way of saying too little of them to *God:* while, on the other hand, he who has often experienced the blessed alleviation which flows from silent converse with the Eternal, loses much of his desire for the sympathy of his fellows. It appears to me now as if spreading out our distress *too largely* before men served only to make it broader, and to take away its *zest;* and hence the proverb, "Talking of trouble makes it double." On the contrary, if when in distress we can contrive to maintain calm composure of mind, and to bear it always as in the sight of God, submissively waiting for succour from him, according to the words of the Psalmist, "*Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation;*" in that case, the distress neither extends in breadth nor sinks in depth. It lies upon the surface of the heart like the morning mist, which the sun as it ascends dissipates into light clouds.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, in "Hours of Christian Devotion,"* 1870.

Verse 1.—The natural mind is ever prone to *reason*, when we ought *to believe;* to be *at work*, when we ought to be *quiet;* to go our own way, when we ought steadily to walk on in God's ways, however trying to nature. . . . And how does it work, when we thus anticipate God, by going our own way? We bring, in many instances, guilt on our conscience; but if not, we certainly weaken faith, instead of increasing it; and each time we work thus a deliverance of our own, we find it more and more difficult to trust in God, till at last we give way entirely to our natural fallen reason, and unbelief prevails. How different if one is enabled to wait God's own time, and to look alone to him for help and deliverance! When at last help comes, after many seasons of prayer it may be, and after much exercise of faith

and patience it may be, how sweet it is, and what a present recompense does the soul at once receive for trusting in God, and waiting patiently for his deliverance! Dear Christian reader, if you have never walked in this path of obedience before, do so now, and you will then know experimentally the sweetness of the joy which results from it.—*George Müller, in "A Narrative of some of the Lord's Dealings,"* 1856.

Verse 2.—"*I shall not be greatly moved.*" Grace makes the heart move leisurely to all things except God. A mortified man is as a sea that hath no winds, that ebbs not and flows not. The mortified man sings and is not light, and weeps and is not sad, is zealous in God's cause, and yet composed in spirit; he is not so eager on anything, but he can quit it for God. Ah! few can act, but they over act.—*Alexander Carmichael, in "The Believer's Mortification of Sin,"* 1677.

Verse 3:—

"How long will ye assault a man?
How long will ye all crush him,
As though he were a leaning wall—
A fence nearly thrust down?"

French and Skinner.

Verse 3.—"*Against a man.*" That sure is but a poetical expression for *against me, i.e., David,* the speaker, against whom the neighbouring nations raised war, and his own subjects rebellions. Thus doth Christ oft speak of himself under the title of the *Son of Man,* in the third person; and Paul (2 Cor. xii. 2), Οἶδα ἄνθρωπον, "*I knew a man,*" *i.e.,* undoubtedly *himself.—Henry Hammond.*

Verse 3.—"*As a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.*" Christ gave no blow, but merely asked his murderers whom they sought for; and yet they fell flat and prostrate to the ground (John xviii.), so that the wicked persecutors of the godly are aptly and properly likened and compared to a tottering and trembling wall. For as soon as ever the blasts of God's wrath and judgment are moved and kindled against them, they are so quivering and comfortless, that they would take them to be most their friends who would soonest despatch them out of the world; as Christ said aptly of them, they would pray the mountains to fall upon them. Luke xxiii.—*John Hooper.*

Verse 3.—"*As a bowing wall shall ye be.*" In consequence of heavy rains and floods, and unsound foundations, it is very common to see walls much out of perpendicular; and some of them so much so, that it might be thought scarcely possible for them to stand. "Poor old Rāman is very ill, I hear." "Yes, the wall is bowing." "Begone, thou low caste! thou art a *kutte-chiover,*" that is, "a ruined wall." "By the oppression of the head-man, the people of that village are like a ruined wall."—*J. Roberts's "Oriental Illustrations."*

Verse 3.—"*A bowing wall.*" A wall, when ill built, bulges out in the centre, presenting the appearance of nearly twice its actual breadth; but, as it is hollow within, it soon falls to ruin. The wicked, in like manner, are dilated with pride and assume, in their consultations, a most formidable appearance; but David predicts that they would be brought to unexpected and utter destruction, like a wall badly constructed, and hollow in the interior, which falls with a sudden crash, and is broken by its own weight into a thousand pieces.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—"*They only consult,*" etc. *Truly* I am he whom if "*they shall consult to cast down from his excellency, they shall delight in a lie, they shall bless with their mouth and curse inwardly.*" That is: what I have said of worldly men, boasting themselves upon a man, falling into ruin, I desire that you should know that the same fate shall never befall me who trust in God; for otherwise does the matter stand.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—"*Excellency.*" Rather, *elevation;* the figure of the preceding verse being followed out.—*Religious Tract Society's Notes.*

Verse 5.—"*My soul, wait thou only upon God.*" They trust not God *at all* who trust him not *alone.* He that stands with one foot on a rock, and another foot upon a quicksand, will sink and perish, as certainly as he that standeth with both feet upon a quicksand. David knew this, and therefore calleth earnestly upon

his soul (for his business lay most within doors) to trust only upon God. See verse 1.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—"*My expectation is from him.*" As if he had said, never will he frustrate the patient waiting of his saints; doubtless my silence shall meet with its reward; I shall restrain myself, and not make that false haste which will only retard my deliverance.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—"*My expectation is from him.*" In an account of the voyage of some of the early missionaries who left Hermannsburg for South Africa, is the following incident:—After a long calm, a brother prayed thus to the Lord for favouring wind: "Lord, thou givest them that fear thee the desires of their heart, and dost help them; help us now, that we may no longer be becalmed upon the sea; help us on our journey, thou who ridest on the wings of the wind." He was so joyful over this word of the Lord, that he rose up and said in his heart: "Now I have already that for which I prayed." After the prayer, one of the crew stepped over to the helmsman, and said, half mocking, half in earnest, "So we shall have wind: didn't you hear the prayer? It doesn't look very like it!" So he said, and half an hour after there came so strong a blast that the waves broke over the ship.—*William Fleming Stevenson, in "Praying and Working,"* 1862.

Verse 5.—He shifteth much needless labour, and provideth great contentment, who closeth himself with God alone. To deal with man alone, apart from God, is both an endless and fruitless labour. If we have counsel to ask, help or benefit to obtain, or approbation to seek, there is none end with man: for every man we must have sundry reasons and motives; and what pleaseth one will offend twenty: as many heads, as many wits and fancies. No man can give contentment to all, or change himself into so many fashions, as he shall encounter humours; and yet it is more easy to take sundry fashions than to be acceptable in them.—*William Struther.*

Verses 6, 7.—Twice in this Psalm hath he repeated this, in the second and in the sixth verses, "*He is my rock, and my salvation, and my defence,*" and (as it is enlarged in the seventh verse) "*my refuge and my glory.*" If my "*refuge,*" what enemy can pursue me? If my "*defence,*" what temptation shall wound me? If my "*rock,*" what storm shall shake me? If my "*salvation,*" what melancholy shall deject me? If my "*glory,*" what calumny shall defame me?—*John Donne.*

Verses 6, 7.—How quickly the soul of the faithful returns again to the God of its confidence. He spared a moment to admonish the ungodly, but like the dove of Noah he returns to the ark. Observe how the expressions of this holy confidence are repeated, with every pleasing variety of expression, to denote the comfort of his heart. Reader, ask yourself—are such views of Christ your views of him? Do you know him in those covenant characters? Is Jesus your rock, your salvation, your defence?—*Robert Hawker, D.D.*

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—On the shields of the Greeks, Neptune was depicted; on the shields of the Trojans, Minerva; because in them they put their confidence, and in their protection deemed themselves secure. . . . Now, Christ is the insignia of our shields. Often does David say, God is his protector. The Hebrew is *magen;* that is, shield, buckler, as Ps. xviii. 2 & 30.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 7.—There are several names of God given in this verse, that so every soul may take with him that name which may minister most comfort to him. Let him that is pursued by any particular temptation, invest God, as God is *a refuge, a sanctuary;* let him that is buffeted with Satan, battered with his own concupiscence, receive God, as God is his *defence* and *target;* let him that is shaked with perplexities in his understanding, or scruples in his conscience, lay hold on God, as God is his *rock* and his *anchor;* let him that hath any diffident jealousy and suspicion of the free and full mercy of God, apprehend God, as God is his *salvation;* and let him that walks in the ingloriousness and contempt of the world, contemplate God, as God is *glory.* Any of these notions is enough to any man; but God is all these, and all else, that all souls can think, to every man.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 8.—"*Trust in him,*" etc. To trust in God is to cast our burden on the Lord, when it is too heavy for our own shoulder (Ps. lv. 22); to dwell "in the secret place of the Most High" when we know not where to lay our heads on earth

(Ps. xci. 1); to "look to our Maker" and to "have respect to the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah xvii. 7); to lean on our Beloved (Cant. viii. 5; Isaiah xxxvi. 6); to stay ourselves, when sinking, on the Lord our God (Isaiah xxvi. 3). In a word, trust in God is that high act or exercise of faith whereby the soul, looking upon God and casting itself on his goodness, power, promises, faithfulness, and providence, is lifted up above carnal fears and discouragements; above perplexing doubts and disquietments; either for the obtaining and continuance of that which is good, or for the preventing or removing of that which is evil. . . . "*Trust in him at all times.*" This holy duty is indeed never out of season; so much the original word for *time*, עת, imports. True, indeed, our Saviour saith, and saith truly, "My time," *i.e.*, my time of discovering myself to be a wonder-working God, "is not yet come." Yea, but *all time* in respect of *trust in God*, is an appointed, yea, and an *accepted* time. The wise man tells us (Eccl. iii. 1), "There is an appointed time for every purpose under heaven:" a time to kill and to heal, to plant and to pluck up, to weep and to laugh, to get and to lose, to be born and to die. In *all* these *trust in God* is not, like snow in harvest, uncomely, but seasonable, yea, necessary. There may be, indeed, a time when God will not be found, but no time wherein he must not be trusted. *Nullum tempus occurrit regi*, saith the law; let me add, *nec fiduciæ*, and it is sound divinity. The time of trusting in God cannot be lapsed. But more expressly. There are some *special* instances and nicks of time for trust. 1. *The time of prosperity;* when we sit under the warm beams of a meridian sun; when we wash our steps in butter and feet in oil; when the candle of the Lord shines on our tabernacle; when "our mountain stands strong:" now, now is the time for trust, but not in our mountain (for it is a mountain of ice and may soon dissolve), but *in our God.* Halcyon days to come are temptations to security, but to saints times for trust. . . . 2. *The time for adversity.* This also is a seasonable time for trust; when we have no bread to eat, but that of "carefulness;" nor wine to drink, but that of "affliction" and "astonishment;" no, not water either, but that of our "tears." *Now* is a time, not for overgrieving, murmuring, sinking, desponding, but for *trusting,* In a tempest, then, a believer thinks it seasonable to cast anchor upward. Thus did good Jehoshaphat: "O our God; we know not what to do: only *our eyes are unto thee.*" 2 Chron. xx. 12. Thus David: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Ps. lvi. 3. Times of trouble are proper times for trust, be the trouble either spiritual or temporal. . . . "*At all times.*" 1. *Quando:* When must we trust? "At what time?" At all times, *omni hora*, "every hour:" so the Syriac version. As a true friend is to love, so a sound believer is to trust, at all times. Prov. xvii. 17. 2. *Quamdiu:* The duration of this trust: "How long?" "All the day long." Ps. xliv. 8. All our lives long: all the days of their *appointed* time must God's Jobs not only "wait," but "trust," till their change come. Yea, "for ever" (Isaiah xxvi. 4); nay, "for ever and ever." Ps. lii. 8.—*Thomas Lye, M.A.* (1621—1684), *in "The Morning Exercises at Cripplegate."*

Verse 8.—"*Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him.*" According to our love, so is our faith and trust in God; and according to our trust, such is our freedom at the throne of grace. Trust in him, and pour out your hearts before him; pour them out, like water, in joyful tears. For when the stone in the heart is melted by mercy, the eyes will issue like a fountain of tears. Good men have melting spirits. It is a branch of the covenant and a fruit of the effusion of the Spirit of grace. It is asserted by the learned in chemistry that no menstruums are so powerful as sulphureous and oily liquors to melt down the hardest minerals; to be sure there is nothing like the oil of mercy, so potent a solvent for an iron heart.—*Samuel Lee.*

Verse 8.—"*At all times.*" I might mention many times in which we might trust in the Lord, but they are comprised in this little word "*all*," and a precious word it is: "Trust in him at *all* times." When you are full of fears, then you shall bring the little word "*all*" unto him, and say, I have nothing to encourage me to come to thee but that precious little word, "*all.*"—*John Berridge.*

Verse 8.—"*Pour out your heart.*" The word "*pour*" plainly signifies that the heart is full of grief, and almost afraid to empty itself before the Lord. What does he say to you? "Come and pour out all your trouble before me." He is never weary with hearing the complaints of his people; therefore you should go and keep nothing back; tell him everything that hurts you, and pour "all your complaints into his merciful bosom." That is a precious word: "*Pour out your heart before him.*" Make him your counsellor and friend; you cannot please him

better than when your hearts rely wholly upon him. You may tell him, if you please, you have been so foolish as to look to this friend and the other for relief, and found none; and you now come to him, who commands you, to "*pour out your heart before him.*"—*John Berridge.*

Verse 8.—"*Pour out your heart.*" Pour it out as water. Not as milk, whose colour remains. Not as wine, whose savour remains. Not as honey, whose taste remains. But as water, of which, when it is poured out, nothing remains. So let sin be poured out of the heart, that no colour of it may remain in external marks, no savour in our words, no taste in our affections. "I will cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the Lord." Isaiah xiv. 22. Thus Hugo. But if you fear lest there remain anything in your heart not poured forth, bring the whole heart, and cast it before the eyes of the Lord, and sacrifice it to him, that he may create a new heart in thee.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 9.—Other doctrines, moral or civil instructions, may be delivered to us possibly, and probably, and likely, and credibly, and under the like terms and modifications, but this in our text, is assuredly, undoubtedly, undeniably, irrefragably. "*Surely men of low degree,*" etc. For howsoever when they two are compared together with one another, it may admit discourse and disputation, whether men of high degree, or of low degree, do most violate the laws of God; that is, whether prosperity or adversity make men most obnoxious to sin; yet, when they come to be compared, not with one another, but both with God, this asseveration, this "*surely*" reaches to both: "*Surely men of low degree are vanity,* and, as *surely men of high degree are a lie.*" And though this may seem to leave room for men of middle ranks, and fortunes, and places, that there is a mediocrity that might give an assurance, and an establishment, yet there is no such thing in this case; for (*as surely* still) "*to be laid in the balance, they are all*" (not all of low, and all of high degree, all rich, and all poor), but all, of all conditions, "*altogether lighter than vanity.*" Now, all this doth destroy, not extinguish, not annihilate, that affection in man, of hope and trust, and confidence in anything; but it rectifies that hope, and trust, and confidence, and directs it upon the right object. Trust not in flesh, but in spiritual things, that we neither bend our hope downward, to infernal spirits, to seek help in witches; nor miscarry it upward, to seek it in saints or angels, but fix it in him who is nearer us than our own souls—our blessed, and gracious, and powerful God, who in this one Psalm is presented unto us by so many names of assurance and confidence: "*my expectation, my salvation, my rock, my defence, my glory, my strength, my refuge,*" and the rest. . . . "*Men of high degree are a lie.*" The Holy Ghost hath been pleased to vary the phrase here, and to call "*men of high degree*" not "*vanity,*" but "*a lie;*" because the poor, men of low degree, in their condition promise no assistance, feed not men with hope, and therefore cannot be said *to lie;* but in the condition of men of high degree, who are of power, there is a tacit promise, a natural and inherent assurance of protection and assistance flowing from them. For the magistrate cannot say that he never promised me justice, never promised me protection; for in his assuming that place, he made me that promise. I cannot say that I never promised my parish my service; for in my induction I made them that promise, and if I perform it not I am *a lie:* for so the word *chasab* (which we translate *a lie*) is frequently used in the Scriptures, for that which is defective in the duty it should perform: "Thou shalt be a spring of water" (says God in Isaiah), *cujus aquæ non mentiuntur,* "whose waters never lie;" that is, never dry, never fail. So, then, when men of high degree do not perform the duties of their places, then they are a lie of their own making; and when I over-magnify them in their place, flatter them, humour them, ascribe more to them, expect more from them, rely more upon them than I should, then they are a lie of my making. . . . . "*To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.*" Vanity is nothing, but there is a condition worse than nothing. Confidence in the things or persons of this world, but most of all a confidence in ourselves, will bring us at last to that state wherein we would fain be nothing, and cannot. But yet we have a "*balance*" in our text; and all these are but put together in one balance. In the other scale there is something put too, in comparison whereof all this world is so light. God does not leave our great and noble faculty and affection of hope, and trust, and confidence without something to direct itself upon, and rectify itself in. He does not; for, for that he proposes himself. The words immediately before the text are, God "*is a refuge;*" and, in comparison

of him, " *To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.*"—*John Donne.*

Verse 9.—" *Surely men of low degree are vanity.*"

" Who o'er the herd would wish to reign,
Fantastic, fickle, fierce, and vain!
Vain as the leaf upon the stream,
And fickle as a changeful dream;
Fantastic as a woman's mood,
And fierce as Frenzy's fevered blood,
Thou many-headed monster thing,
O, who would with to be thy king!"

Walter Scott (1771—1832).

Verse 9.—" *Surely men of low degree are vanity,*" etc. Or, *sons of Adam;* of the earthly man; of fallen Adam; one of his immediate sons was called Hebel, *vanity;* and it is true of all his sons, but here it designs only one sort of them; such as are poor and low in the world; mean men, as the phrase is rendered in Isaiah ii. 9; these are subject to sinful vanity; their thoughts are vain, their affections vain, their minds vain, their conversation vain, sinful, foolish, fallacious, and inconstant.—*John Gill.*

Verse 9.—"*Men . . . are a lie.*" An active lie—they deceive others; and a passive lie—they are deceived by others; and they who are most actively a lie, are most usually and most deservedly a passive lie, or fed with lies.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*Lighter than vanity.*"—If there were any one among men immortal, not liable to sin, or change, whom it were impossible for any one to overcome, but who was strong as an angel, such a one might be something; but inasmuch as every one is a man, a sinner, mortal, weak, liable to sickness and death, exposed to pain and terror, like Pharaoh, even from the most insignificant animals, and liable to so many miseries that it is impossible to count them, the conclusion must be a valid one: " Man is nothing."—*Arndt.*

Verse 10.—" *Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery.*" Now this robbery and wrong is done two manner of ways—to God and to man. He that putteth his trust for salvation in any other, save in God, loses not only his salvation, but also robs God of his glory, and does God manifest wrong, as much as lieth in him; as the wicked people amongst the Jews did, who said as long as they honoured and trusted unto the queen of heaven, all things prospered with them; but when they hearkened to the true preachers of God's word, all things came into a worse state, and they were overwhelmed with scarcity and trouble. Hosea ii.; Jeremiah xliv. He also that puts his trust and confidence in any learning or doctrine beside God's word, not only falls into error and loses the truth; but also, as much as lies in him, he robs God's book of his sufficient truth and verity, and ascribes it to the book of men's decrees; which is as much wrong to God and his book as may be thought or done. In which robbery, or rather sacrilege, no man should put his trust, as the prophet saith.—*John Hooper.*

Verse 10.—"*Become not vain in robbery.*" What? would he have them serious in robbery? No; the meaning is this: do not trust in a thing of nought; if you rob, oppress, deceive, or wrong others, you trust to a vain thing—in a thing that is not—in a thing that will never do you good: there will be no tack, no hold in anything got in such a manner. When you think to get riches by wrong dealing, or closely circumventing others, you " *become vain in robbery.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10.—"*If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*" We naturally love riches, and therefore as naturally spend many thoughts, both how to get and how to keep them. If a man have riches, or an increase of riches, it is not unlawful for him to think of them (yet we should be as sparing of our thoughts that way as may be, our thoughts and the bent of our souls should always be upon God), but that which the Psalmist forbids is the settling of our hearts; as if he had said, Let not your thoughts stay or dwell here. Riches are themselves transient things, therefore they should have but our transient thoughts. "*Set not your hearts upon them,*" for they may quickly be unsettled. Samuel bespake Saul in the same language about a worldly concernment, when he went out to seek his father's asses: " Set not thy mind on them." 1 Sam. ix. 20. 'Tis like Saul was overburdened with this thought, " What's become of, or what shall I do for, my father's asses? "

" Be not solicitous about them," saith Samuel, " greater things are towards thee."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10.—"*If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*" Consider what is here meant by " riches." Indeed, some may imagine that it is hardly possible to mistake the meaning of this common word. Yet, in truth, there are thousands in this mistake; and many of them quite innocently. A person of note hearing a sermon preached upon this subject several years since, between surprise and indignation, broke out aloud, " Why does he talk about riches here? There is no rich man at Whitehaven, but Sir James L———r." And it is true there was none but he that had forty thousand pounds a year, and some millions in ready money. But a man may be rich that has not a hundred a year—not even one thousand pounds in cash. Whosoever has food to eat, and raiment to put on, with something over, is rich. Whoever has the necessaries and conveniences of life for himself and his family, and a little to spare for them that have not, is properly a rich man; unless he is a miser, a lover of money, one that hoards up what he can and ought to give to the poor. For if so, he is a poor man still, though he has millions in the bank; yea, he is the poorest of men; for

> " The beggars but a common lot deplore
> The rich poor man's emphatically poor."

. . . . . O! who can convince a rich man that he sets his heart upon riches? For considerably above half a century I have spoken on this head, with all the plainness that was in my power. But with how little effect! I doubt whether I have in all that time convinced fifty misers of covetousness. When the lover of money was described ever so clearly, and painted in the strongest colours, who applied it to himself? To whom did God and all that knew him say, " Thou art the man? " If he speaks to any of you that are present, O do not stop your ears! Rather say, with Zaccheus, " Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have done any wrong to any man, I restore him fourfold." He did not mean that he had done this in time past; but that he determined to do so for the time to come. I charge thee before God, thou lover of money, to " go and do likewise! "

I have a message from God unto thee, O rich man! whether thou wilt hear or whether thou wilt forbear. Riches have increased with thee; at the peril of thy soul, " set not thine heart upon them! " Be thankful to him that gave thee such a talent, so much power of doing good. Yet dare not rejoice over them but with fear and trembling. *Cave ne inhæreas*, says pious Kempis, *ne capiaris et pereas;* " Beware thou cleave not unto them, lest thou be entangled and perish." Do not make them thy end, thy chief delight, thy happiness, thy god! See that thou expect not happiness in money, nor anything that is purchasable thereby; in gratifying either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life.—*John Wesley's Sermon "On the Danger of Increasing Riches."*

Verse 10.—"*If riches increase,*" etc.—" The lust of riches," says Valerian, " stirs with its stimulus the hearts of men, as oxen perpetually plough the soil." Hugo, on Isaiah, says: " The more deeply riches are sown in the heart through love, the more deeply will they pierce through grief."—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 10.—"*If riches increase*" (נוב)—*lit.*, " sprout up " *of their own accord*, as distinguished from riches acquired by " oppression " and " robbery "—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 10.—Riches have in them uncertainty and deceitfulness. Riches have never been true to those that trusted in them, but ever have proved " a lie in their right hand." Isaiah xliv. 20. Hence they are called " lying vanities," Jonah ii. 8; and compared to a flock of birds sitting upon a man's ground, which upon the least fright, take wing and fly away. Riches have " wings," saith Solomon; and rather than want they will "*make* to themselves wings." Prov. xxiii. 5. Yea, though they have not the wings so much as of a little sparrow, wherewith to fly to you; yet will they make to themselves the large wings of a great eagle, wherewith to fly from you. Oh, how many have riches served as Absalom's mule served her master, whom she lurched, and left, in his greatest need, hanging betwixt heaven and earth, as if rejected of both! A spark of fire may set them on flying, a thief may steal them, a wicked servant may embezzle and purloin them, a pirate or shipwreck at sea, a robber or bad debtor at land; yea, an hundred ways sets them packing. They are as the apples of Sodom, that look fair yet crumble away with

the least touch—golden delusions, a mere mathematical scheme or fancy of man's brain, 1 Cor. vii. 31; the semblances and empty show of good without any reality or solid consistency: *nec vera, nec vestra;* as they are slippery upon the account of verity, so they are no less in respect of prosperity and possession, for they are winged birds, especially in this, that they fly from man to man (as the birds do from tree to tree), and always from the owner of them. This is a sore deceit and cosenage, yet your heart is more deceitful, inasmuch as it will deceive you with these deceitful riches, *a quo aliquid tale est, illud est magis tale;* they are so, because the heart is so.—*Christopher Love* (1618—1651), *in "A Chrystal Mirrour, or Christian Looking-glass,"* 1679.

Verse 10.—"*Set not your heart upon them.*" The word שית properly is *to place*, to arrange in a fixed firm order, is specially used of the foundation stones of a building being placed fitly and firmly together . . . Therefore *to set the heart* upon riches is, to fix the mind closely and firmly upon them, to give it wholly up to them with all its powers; at the same time to be puffed up with confidence and arrogance, as Cl. Schultens observes.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verses 10—13.—Our estimate of man depends upon our estimate of God. David knows that men of low and high degree, if separated from the primal fount of every good, weigh *nothing*, and are less than nothing. Riches are nothing, especially ill-gotten ones. Man is not to get proud when riches increase. But such is the course of things, that in proportion as the gifts of God are rich, men confide more in the gifts than in the rich giver. But holy David is better instructed. Once and again he has heard the divine voice in his soul, "that power belongeth unto God only." Job xxxiii. 14. This powerful God is merciful: can then any merit attach to our poor works? and yet the Lord rendereth to every pious man according to his imperfect pious work.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 11.—"*God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this.*" Nothing is able to settle our confidence in God, but the powerful impression of his own word. "*Twice have I heard this; that power,*" etc. How did he hear this "*twice?*" Once from the voice of *creation*, and again from the voice of *government*. *Mercy* was heard in government after man had sinned, not in creation: but we have heard of the power of God twice; once we heard of it in creation, and again more gloriously in the work of redemption, wherein his power and mercy were linked together. Or, "*Twice have I heard this; that power,*" etc.; that is, it is a most certain and undoubted truth, that *power* is essential to the divine nature. The repetition of a thing confirms the certainty of it. *Mercy* is also essential; but power is more apparently so, because no act of *mercy* can be exercised without *power*. Or, though God spake this but *once*, yet David heard it *twice*, or often: that is, he thoroughly weighed and considered it as God's *once* speaking. In this sense a gracious person hears that *twice* that God speaks but *once*. Or, *twice*, that is, frequently; because what God had *once* spoken, had been often repeated and inculcated, and often cleared and confirmed to him by repeated experimental evidence of the certainty thereof; and he had thereupon received the same more and more heartily, and had taken deeper impressions of it by repeated and inculcated thoughts. —*William Wisheart* (1657—1727), *in "Theologia; or, Discourses of God."*

Verse 11.—"*God hath spoken once,*" etc. He made it known irrevocably and with great solemnity, so that it was not necessary to repeat it. With the Romans anything is said to be done *once*, which there is either no need to repeat, or which has no return. With the Hebrews also, and Orientals, אחת *is at one turn*, as in 1 Sam. xxvi. 8: "*Now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth* AT ONE TURN, and I will not *smite him the second time*. See Schultens. So also Ps. lxxxix. 35. "ONCE *have I sworn in my holiness, I will not lie unto David.*" But what is the force of *to hear twice?* It may be taken in various ways. *To hear twice* can be regarded in the general sense of *frequently* or often. This will give the meaning:—God has but once spoken, yet I have often observed in my experience that his declaration is true.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 11.—"*Once; yea twice.*" This is answerable to the phrase of the Latins, *Semel atque iterum;* and it is usual in all writers to use a certain number for an uncertain, and particularly among poets: *Felice ter et amplius, Horace.*—*John Tillotson*, 1630—1694.

Verse 11.—"*Twice have I heard,*" etc. There are several renderings and interpretations of these words; but that which to me seems most intended by our

rendering is, I heard what was once spoken twice at once; that is, I heard it speedily, and I heard it believingly: as soon as ever the word came to me I received it, and I received it not only with my ear, but with my heart. That is a blessed way of hearing; and they who hear so, at first speaking, may well be said to hear that *twice* which God speaketh once.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—"*Power belongeth unto God.*" Believe the mighty power of God. Consider (1). It is difficult to believe his power. But how can that be? Is not this a piece of natural divinity, that God is almighty? What need is there, then, to press people to believe it? Great need; because this is the great thing we are apt to question in cases of difficulty. Else, why do we pray with cheerfulness when we see great probability of a thing, but faint in prayer when it is otherwise? And why do we cry out, in sad times, "Oh, we shall never see good days again?" (2.) The firm belief of God's power is of great concern and moment in religion. Faith is never quite laid by till the soul questions the power of God. "Oh, he cannot pardon, he cannot save!" When it cometh to this, the soul is no longer able to hold out. So that the life and vigour of faith is very much concerned in the belief of God's power. It is, indeed, one of the first steps to all religion. Therefore it is put in the front of our creed: "I believe in God, the Father ALMIGHTY;" and he that believes that first article will the more easily believe all the rest. (3.) God is much displeased, even with his own children, when his power is questioned by them. For this God takes up Moses short: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" (Numb. xi. 23); as if he had said: "What, Moses, dost thou think that my power is exhausted or weakened? What an unworthy conceit is this!" For this also Christ rebuked Martha very sharply: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" John xi. 40. Yea, God is so tender of the glory of his power, and he hath sharply chastened his dear children when their faith staggered in this matter; as we see in Zacharias, who, for questioning the power of God, was immediately stricken dumb upon the place. Well, then, let it be your great care to have your faith confirmed in the belief of God's almighty power. For this end, ponder the verbal declarations made of it in the Holy Scriptures; consider and improve the manifestations he hath given of it, both in your own and former times; and pray much that God would strengthen and increase your faith.—*William Wisheart.*

Verses 11, 12.—Except some of the ancient versions, almost every version, translation, and commentary, says Dr. A. Clarke, have missed the sense and meaning of this verse. Of the former verse the Doctor offers the following translation: "Once hath God spoken; these two things have I heard." But what are the two things the Psalmist had heard? 1. כִּי עֹז לֵאלֹהִים, "*That strength is the Lord's;*" that is, he is the origin of power. 2. וְלְךָ־אֲדֹנָי חָסֶד, "*and to thee, Lord, is mercy;*" that is, *he is the fountain of mercy.* These, then, are the *two* grand truths that the *law*, yea, the whole *revelation* of God, declares through every page. He is the *Almighty*—he is the *Most Merciful;* and hence the *inference*, the powerful, just, and holy God, the most merciful and compassionate Lord, *will* by-and-by *judge the world*, and *will render to man according to his works.* How this beautiful meaning, adds the Doctor, should have been unseen by almost every interpreter is hard to say; but these verses contain one of the most instructive truths in the Bible.—*William Carpenter, in "An Explanation of Scripture Difficulties,"* 1828.

Verses 11, 12.—I confess I wonder to find so constantly in Scripture that the inspired writers put "merciful" and "mighty," "terrible" and "great," all together: you shall find it so. Neh. i. 5. "O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy," etc. You have it also in Dan. ix. 4, in his solemn prayer. "O Lord," says he, "the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy," etc. Thus mercy, and great, and terrible are constantly joined together.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12.—"*Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.*" Something more is necessary to invite us to a dependence on God than his bare "*power*" and ability to help us. There must be also a firm persuasion of the promptitude and readiness of his will to do what he is able; and this we have in the other attribute of his "*mercy.*" . . . . "Unto thee," unto thee *alone*, and unto none else. The tenderest mercy amongst the creatures is none at all, being compared with the divine mercy. It belongeth "*unto thee,*" as thy prerogative and peculiar excellency. Mercy is a peculiar jewel of his crown. Or, *thine, O Lord, is mercy.* Nothing amongst the

creatures deserves the name of mercy but his own. Nothing is worthy to be so called, but what is proper and peculiar to God. Or, *with thee is mercy*, as it is expressed elsewhere. Psalm cxxx. 4, 7. It is *with him;* that is, it is inseparable from his nature. He is merciful in a way peculiar to himself, " the Father of mercies." 2 Cor. i. 3.—*William Wisheart.*

Verse 12.—"*For thou renderest to every man according to his work;*" namely—judgment to the wicked, and mercy to the righteous; where the Syriac interpreter giveth the good note: *Est gratia Dei ut reddat homini secunda opera bona, quia merces bonorum operum est ex gratia:* It is mercy in God to set his love on them that keep his commandments. Exod. xx. 6.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 12.—"*Thou renderest to every man according to his work.*" Learn to admire the grace of God in rewarding your works. It is much that he accepts them; and what is it, then, that he rewards them? It is much that he doth not damn you for them, seeing they are all defiled, and have something of sin cleaving to them; and what is it, then, that he crowns them? You would admire the bounty and munificence of a man that should give you a kingdom for taking up a straw at his foot, or give you a hundred thousand pounds for paying him a penny rent you owed him: how, then, should you adore the rich grace and transcendent bounty of God in so largely recompensing such mean services, in setting a crown of glory upon your heads, as the reward of those works which you can scarcely find in your hearts to call good ones! You will even blush one day to see yourselves so much honoured for what you are ashamed of, and are conscious to yourselves that you have deserved nothing by. You will wonder then to see God recompensing you for doing what was your duty to do, and what was his work in you; giving you grace, and crowning that grace; enabling you to do things acceptable to him, and then rewarding you as having done them.—*Edward Veal* (—1708), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. *What* he did? " Waited upon God." Believed, was patient, was silent in resignation, was obedient. II. To whom he did it? To his God, who is true, a sovereign, gracious, etc. III. How he did it? With his soul, truly, and only. IV. What came of it? Salvation present, personal, eternal, etc.

Verse 2.—"*God a rock.*" David speaks of him as high and strong, and as a rock to stand upon, a rock of defence and refuge, a rock of habitation (Psalm lxxi. 3, in Hebrew), and a rock to be praised. Ps. xcv. i. See the Concordance for many hints.

["*Christ the Rock:*" *a Sermon on* 1 *Cor. x.* 4. By RALPH ROBINSON, in "*Christ All and In All.*"]

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—See " SPURGEON'S *Sermons,*" No. 80, "*God alone the Salvation of His People.*"

Verses 2 & 6.—"*I shall not be greatly moved.*" "*I shall not be moved.*" Growth in faith. How it is produced, preserved, and evidenced.

Verse 4.—Wherein lies a believer's excellency? Who would cast him down, and why, and how they seek to do it?

Verse 4.—"*They delight in lies.*" Those who invent them, or spread them, or laugh at them, or readily believe them. Romanists, self-righteous persons, the presumptuous, persecutors, zealous errorists, etc.

Verse 5 (*first clause*).—See " SPURGEON'S *Sermons,*" No. 144, "*Waiting only upon God.*"

Verse 5 (*second clause*).—Great expectations from a great God; because of great promises, great provisions, and great foretastes.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—What we expect from God, and why and when?

Verse 8 (*first clause*).—How are we to live by faith on divine providence?—*T. Lye's Sermon in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 8 (*first clause*).—All trust, from all saints, at all times.

Verse 8 (*first clause*).—Times when this exhortation is most needed. Times of prosperity, of desertion by friends, of calumny, of poverty, of conscious sin, of chastisement, of death.

Verse 8.—"*Pour out your hearts.*" This teacheth us to deal plainly with God in laying open our hearts before him; and then, no doubt, we shall find ease.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—The peculiar security of the peculiar people.

Verse 10.—Evils usually connected with the love of riches. Idolatry, covetousness, carking care, meanness, forgetfulness of God and spiritual truth, neglect of charity, hardness of heart, tendency to injustice, etc. Means for escaping this seductive sin.

Verse 11.—I. How God speaks. "*Once,*" plainly, powerfully, immutably, etc. II. How we should hear. "*Twice,*" continually, in heart as well as ear, observantly in practice, in spirit as well as in letter.

Verses 11 & 12.—The constant union of power and mercy in the language of Scripture.

PSALM LXIII.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.—*This was probably written while David was fleeing from Absalom; certainly at the time he wrote it he was king* (*verse* 11), *and hard pressed by those who sought his life. David did not leave off singing because he was in the wilderness, neither did he in slovenly idleness go on repeating Psalms intended for other occasions; but he carefully made his worship suitable to his circumstances, and presented to his God a wilderness hymn when he was in the wilderness. There was no desert in his heart, though there was a desert around him. We too may expect to be cast into rough places ere we go hence. In such seasons, may the Eternal Comforter abide with us, and cause us to bless the Lord at all times, making even the solitary place to become a temple for Jehovah.*

*The distinguishing word of this Psalm is "*EARLY.*" When the bed is softest we are most tempted to rise at lazy hours; but when comfort is gone, and the couch is hard, if we rise the earlier to seek the Lord, we have much for which to thank the wilderness.*

DIVISION.—*In the first eight verses the writer expresses his holy desires after God, and his confidence in him, and then in the remaining three verses he prophesies the overthrow of all his enemies. The Psalm is peculiarly suitable for the bed of sickness, or in any constrained absence from public worship.*

EXPOSITION.

O GOD, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

2 To see thy power and thy glory, so *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

3 Because thy lovingkindness *is* better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

5 My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips:

6 When I remember thee upon my bed, *and* meditate on thee in the *night* watches.

7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

1. *"O God, thou art my God;"* or, O God, thou art my Mighty One. The last Psalm left the echo of *power* ringing in the ear, and it is here remembered. Strong affiance bids the fugitive poet confess his allegiance to the only living God; and firm faith enables him to claim him as his own. He has no doubts about his possession of his God; and why should other believers have any? The straightforward, clear language of this opening sentence would be far more becoming in Christians than the timorous and doubtful expressions so usual among professors. How sweet is such language! Is there any other word comparable to it for delights? *Meus Deus.* Can angels say more? *"Early will I seek thee."* Possession breeds desire. Full assurance is no hindrance to diligence, but is the mainspring of it. How can I seek another man's God? but it is with ardent desire that I seek after him whom I know to be my own. Observe the eagerness implied in the time mentioned; he will not wait for noon or the cool eventide; he is up at cockcrowing to meet his God. Communion with God is so sweet that the chill of the morning is forgotten, and the luxury of the couch is despised. The morning is the time for dew and freshness, and the Psalmist consecrates it to prayer and devout fellowship. The best of men have been betimes on their knees. The word *"early"* has not only the sense of early in the morning, but that of eagerness, immediateness.

He who truly longs for God longs for him now. Holy desires are among the most powerful influences that stir our inner nature; hence the next sentence, *"My soul thirsteth for thee."* Thirst is an insatiable longing after that which is one of the most essential supports of life; there is no reasoning with it, no forgetting it, no despising it, no overcoming it by stoical indifference. Thirst will be heard; the whole man must yield to its power: even thus is it with that divine desire which the grace of God creates in regenerate men; only God himself can satisfy the craving of a soul really aroused by the Holy Spirit. *"My flesh longeth for thee;"* by the two words *"soul"* and *"flesh,"* he denotes the whole of his being. "The *flesh*," in the New Testament sense of it, never longs after the Lord, but rather it lusteth against the spirit; David only refers to that sympathy which is sometimes created in our bodily frame by vehement emotions of the soul. Our corporeal nature usually tugs in the other direction, but the spirit when ardent can compel it to throw in what power it has upon the other side. When the wilderness caused David weariness, discomfort, and thirst, his flesh cried out in unison with the desire of his soul. *"In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."* A weary place and a weary heart make the presence of God the more desirable; if there be nothing below and nothing within to cheer, it is a thousand mercies that we may look up and find all we need. How frequently have believers traversed in their experience this *"dry and thirsty land,"* where spiritual joys are things forgotten! and how truly can they testify that the only true necessity of that country is the near presence of their God! The absence of outward comforts can be borne with serenity when we walk with God; and the most lavish multiplication of them avails not when he withdraws. Only after God, therefore, let us pant. Let all desires be gathered into one. Seeking first the kingdom of God—all else shall be added unto us.

2. *"To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."* He longed not so much to see the sanctuary as to see his God; he looked through the veil of ceremonies to the invisible One. Often had his heart been gladdened by communion with God in the outward ordinances, and for this great blessing he sighs again; as well he might, for it is the weightiest of all earth's sorrows for a Christian man to lose the conscious presence of his covenant God. He remembers and mentions the two attributes which had most impressed themselves upon his mind when he had been rapt in adoration in the holy place; upon these his mind had dwelt in the preceding Psalm, and the savour of that contemplation is evidently upon his heart when in the wilderness: these he desires to behold again in the place of his banishment. It is a precious thought that the divine power and glory are not confined in their manifestation to any places or localities; they are to be heard above the roaring of the sea, seen amid the glare of the tempest, felt in the forest and the prairie, and enjoyed wherever there is a heart that longs and thirsts to behold them. Our misery is that we thirst so little for these sublime things, and so much for the mocking trifles of time and sense. We are in very truth always in a weary land, for this is not our rest; and it is marvellous that believers do not more continuously thirst after their portion far beyond the river where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; but shall see the face of their God, and his name shall be in their foreheads. David did not thirst for water or any earthly thing, but only for spiritual manifestations. The sight of God was enough for him, but nothing short of that would content him. How great a friend is he, the very sight of whom is consolation. Oh, my soul, imitate the Psalmist, and let all thy desires ascend towards the highest good; longing here to see God, and having no higher joy even for eternity.

3. *"Because thy lovingkindness is better than life."* A reason for that which went before, as well as for that which follows. Life is dear, but God's love is dearer. To dwell with God is better than life at its best; life at ease, in a palace, in health, in honour, in wealth, in pleasure; yea, a thousand lives are not equal to the eternal life which abides in Jehovah's smile. In him we truly live, and move, and have our being; the withdrawal of the light of his countenance is as the shadow of death to us: hence we cannot but long after the Lord's gracious appearing. Life is to many men a doubtful good; lovingkindness is an unquestioned boon: life is but transient, mercy is everlasting: life is shared in by the lowest animals, but the lovingkindness of the Lord is the peculiar portion of the chosen. *"My lips shall praise thee."* Openly, so that thy glory shall be made known, I will tell of thy goodness. Even when our heart is rather desiring than enjoying we should still continue to magnify the Most High, for his love is truly precious; even if we do

not personally, for the time being, happen to be rejoicing in it. We ought not ot make our praises of God to depend upon our own personal and present reception of benefits; this would be mere selfishness: even publicans and sinners have a good word for those whose hands are enriching them with gifts; it is the true believer only who will bless the Lord when he takes away his gifts or hides his face.

4. *"Thus will I bless thee while I live."* As I now bless thee so will I ever do; or rather, *so* as thou shalt reveal thy lovingkindness to me, I will in return continue to extol thee. While we live we will love. If we see no cause to rejoice in our estate, we shall always have reason for rejoicing in the Lord. If none others bless God, yet his people will; his very nature, as being the infinitely good God, is a sufficient argument for our praising him as long as we exist. *"I will lift up my hands in thy name."* For worship the hands were uplifted, as also in joy, in thanksgiving, in labour, in confidence; in all these senses we would lift up our hands in Jehovah's name alone. No hands need hang down when God draws near in love. The name of Jesus has often made lame men leap as a hart, and it has made sad men clap their hands for joy.

5. *"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness."* Though unable to feast on the sacrifice at thine altar, my soul shall even here be filled with spiritual joys, and shall possess a complete, a double contentment. There is in the love of God a richness, a sumptuousness, a fulness of soul-filling joy, comparable to the richest food with which the body can be nourished. The Hebrews were more fond of fat than we are, and their highest idea of festive provision is embodied in the two words, *"marrow and fatness:"* a soul hopeful in God and full of his favour is thus represented as feeding upon the best of the best, the dainties of a royal banquet. *"And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."* More joy, more praise. When the mouth is full of mercy, it should be also full of thanksgiving. When God gives us the marrow of his love, we must present to him the marrow of our hearts. Vocal praise should be rendered to God as well as mental adoration; others see our mercies, let them also hear our thanks.

6. *"When I remember thee upon my bed."* Lying awake, the good man betook himself to meditation, and then began to sing. He had a feast in the night, and a song in the night. He turned his bedchamber into an oratory, he consecrated his pillow, his praise anticipated the place of which it is written, "There is no night there." Perhaps the wilderness helped to keep him awake; and if so, all the ages are debtors to it for this delightful hymn. If day's cares tempt us to forget God, it is well that night's quiet should lead us to remember him. We see best in the dark if we there see God best. *"And meditate on thee in the night watches."* Keeping up sacred worship in my heart as the priests and Levites celebrated it in the sanctuary. Perhaps David had formerly united with those "who by night stand in the house of the Lord," and now as he could not be with them in person, he remembers the hours as they pass, and unites with the choristers in spirit, blessing Jehovah as they did. It may be, moreover, that the king heard the voices of the sentries as they relieved guard, and each time he returned with renewed solemnity to his meditations upon his God. Night is congenial, in its silence and darkness, to a soul which would forget the world, and rise into a higher sphere. Absorption in the most hallowed of all themes makes watches, which else would be weary, glide away all too rapidly; it causes the lonely and hard couch to yield the most delightful repose—repose more restful than even sleep itself. We read of beds of ivory, but beds of piety are better far. Some revel in the night, but they are not a tithe so happy as those who meditate in God.

7. *"Because thou hast been my help."* Meditation had refreshed his memory and recalled to him his past deliverances. It were well if we oftener read our own diaries, especially noting the hand of the Lord in helping us in suffering, want, labour, or dilemma. This is the grand use of memory, to furnish us with proofs of the Lord's faithfulness, and lead us onward to a growing confidence in him. *"Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."* The very shade of God is sweet to a believer. Under the eagle wings of Jehovah we hide from all fear, and we do this naturally and at once, because we have aforetime tried and proved both his love and his power. We are not only safe, but happy in God; we *"rejoice"* as well as repose.

8. *"My soul followeth hard after thee,"* or is glued to thee. We follow close at the Lord's heel, because we are one with him. Who shall divide us from his love? If we cannot walk with him with equal footsteps, we will at least follow after with

all the strength he lends us, earnestly panting to reach him and abide in his fellowship. When professors follow hard after the world, they will fall into the ditch; but none are ever too eager after communion with the Lord. *"Thy right hand upholdeth me."* Else he would not have followed the Lord with constancy, or even have longed after him. The divine power, which has so often been dwelt upon in this and the preceding Psalms, is here mentioned as the source of man's attachment to God. How strong are we when the Lord works in us by his own right hand, and how utterly helpless if he withhold his aid!

9 But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

10 They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.

11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

9. As David earnestly sought for God, so there were men of another order who as eagerly sought after his blood; of these he speaks: *"But those that seek my soul, to destroy it."* At his life they aimed, at his honour, his best welfare; and this they would not merely injure but utterly ruin. The devil is a destroyer, and all his seed are greedy to do the same mischief; and as he has ruined himself by his crafty devices, so also shall they. Destroyers shall be destroyed. Those who hunt souls shall be themselves the victims. *"Shall go into the lower parts of the earth."* Into the pits which they digged for others they shall fall themselves. The slayers shall be slain, and the grave shall cover them. The hell which they in their curse invoked for others, shall shut its mouth upon them. Every blow aimed against the godly will recoil on the persecutor; he who smites a believer drives a nail in his own coffin.

10. *"They shall fall by the sword."* So David's enemies did. They that take the sword shall perish with the sword; bloody men shall feel their own life gushing forth from them, when their evil day shall at last come, and they shall be given up to feel in their own persons the horrors of death. *"They shall be a portion for foxes."* Too mean to be fit food for the lions, the foxes shall sniff around their corpses, and the jackals shall hold carnival over their carcasses. Unburied and unhonoured they shall be meat for the dogs of war. Frequently have malicious men met with a fate so dire as to be evidently the award of retributive justice. Although the great assize is reserved for another world, yet even here, at the common sessions of providence, justice often bears her avenging sword in the eyes of all the people.

11. *"But the king shall rejoice in God."* Usurpers shall fade, but he shall flourish; and his prosperity shall be publicly acknowledged as the gift of God. The Lord's anointed shall not fail to offer his joyful thanksgiving: his well-established throne shall own the superior lordship of the King of kings; his rejoicing shall be alone in God. When his subjects sing, *"Io triumphe,"* he will bid them chant, *"Te Deum."* *"Every one that sweareth by him shall glory."* His faithful followers shall have occasion for triumph: they shall never need to blush for the oath of their allegiance. Or, "swearing by *him*," may signify adherence to *God*, and worship paid to him. The heathen swore by their gods, and the Israelite called Jehovah to witness to his asseveration; those, therefore, who owned the Lord as their God should have reason to glory when he proved himself the defender of the king's righteous cause, and the destroyer of traitors. *"But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped."* And the sooner the better. If shame will not do it, nor fear, nor reason, then let them be stopped with the sexton's shovel-full of earth; for a liar is a human devil, he is the curse of men, and accursed of God, who has comprehensively said, "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." See the difference between the mouth that praises God, and the mouth that forges lies: the first shall never be stopped, but shall sing on for ever; the second shall be made speechless at the bar of God.

O Lord, we seek thee and thy truth; deliver us from all malice and slander, and reveal to us thine own self, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*When he was in the wilderness of Judah.*" Even in Canaan, though a fruitful land, and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses. . . . It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven. . . . All the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must not put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even then it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are Psalms proper for a wilderness; and we have reason to thank God it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin.—*Matthew Henry.*

Title.—"*The Wilderness of Judah*" is the whole wilderness towards the east of the tribe of Judah, bounded on the north by the tribe of Benjamin, stretching southward to the south-west end of the Dead Sea; westward, to the Dead Sea and the Jordan; and eastward, to the mountains of Judah.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Title.—The term "*wilderness*" (מִדְבָּר, as distinguished from עֲרָבָה, a *steppe*) was given to a district which was not regularly cultivated and inhabited, but used for pasturage (from דָּבַר, to *drive*), being generally without wood and defective in water, but not entirely destitute of vegetation.—*J. P. Lange.*

Title.—Hagar saw God in the wilderness, and called a well by the name derived from that vision, *Beer-lahai-roi.* Gen. xvi. 13, 14. Moses saw God in the wilderness. Exod. iii. 1—4. Elijah saw God in the wilderness. 1 Kings xix. 4—18. David saw God in the wilderness. The Christian church will see God in the wilderness. Rev. xii. 6—14. Every devout soul which has loved to see God in his house will be refreshed by visions of God in the wilderness of solitude, sorrow, sickness, and death.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—This is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and touching Psalms in the whole Psalter. Donne says of it: "As the whole Book of Psalms is, *oleum effusum* (as the spouse speaks of the name of Christ), an ointment poured out upon all sorts of sores, a cerecloth that supples all bruises, a balm that searches all wounds; so are there some certain Psalms that are imperial Psalms, that command over all our affections, and spread themselves over all occasions—catholic, universal Psalms, that apply themselves to all necessities. This is one of these; for of those constitutions which are called apostolical, one is that the church should meet every day to sing this Psalm. And, accordingly, St. Chrysostom testifies 'That it was decreed and ordained by the primitive Fathers, that no day should pass without the public singing of this Psalm.'"—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is aptly described by Clauss as "A precious confession of a soul thirsting after God and his grace, and finding itself quickened through inward communion with him, and which knows how to commit its outward lot also into his hand." Its lesson is, that the consciousness of communion with God in trouble is the sure pledge of deliverance. This is the peculiar fountain of consolation which is opened up to the sufferer in the Psalm. The Berleb Bible describes it as a Psalm "which proceeds from a spirit really in earnest. It was the favourite Psalm of M. Schade, the famous preacher in Berlin, which he daily prayed with such earnestness and appropriation to himself, that it was impossible to hear it without emotion."—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—"*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee*" (or, I will diligently seek thee, as merchants precious stones that are of greatest value): "*my soul thirsteth for thee.*" He doth not say my soul thirsteth for water, but my soul thirsteth for *thee;* nor he doth not say my soul thirsteth for the blood of my enemies, but my soul thirsteth for *thee;* nor he doth not say my soul thirsteth for deliverance out of this dry and barren wilderness, but my soul thirsteth for *thee* in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; nor he doth not say my soul thirsteth for a crown, a kingdom, but my soul thirsteth for *thee*, my flesh longeth for *thee.* These words are a notable metaphor, taken from women with child, to note his earnest, ardent, and strong affections towards God.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 1.—"*O God.*" This is a serious word; pity it should ever be used as a by-word.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*My God*" in Hebrew is the same word with which the Lord cried out upon the cross to the Father about the ninth hour: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" For in Hebrew this Psalm begins *Elohim, Eli.* Now, *Elohim* is *plural*, and *Eli* is singular, to express the mystery of the Trinity, the

mystery of the Unity, the distinct subsistence of the (three) hypostases, and their consubstantiality.—*Psalterium Quin. Fabri stapulensis*, 1513.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—In David we have a notable example of a sensitive, tender, self-analyzing soul, living in sustained communion with God, while deeply sensible of the claims of the civil and religious polity of Israel, and, moreover, while externally devoted to a large round of exacting public duties. And in this Psalm public misfortunes do but force him back upon the central strength of the life of his spirit. For the time his crown, his palace, his honours, the hearts of his people, the love of his child, whom he loved, as we know, with such passing tenderness, are forfeited. The Psalmist is alone with God. In his hour of desolation he looks up from the desert to heaven. "*O God,*" he cries, "*thou art my God.*" In the original language he does not repeat the word which is translated "*God.*" In *Elohim*, the true idea of the root is that of awe, while the adjectival form implies permanency. In *Eli*, the second word employed, the etymological idea is that of might, strength. We might paraphrase, "O thou Ever-awful One, my Strength, or my Strong-God art thou." But the second word, *Eli*, is in itself nothing less than a separate revelation of an entire aspect of the Being of God. It is, indeed, used as a proper and distinct name of God. The pronominal suffixes for the second and third persons are, as Gesenius has remarked, never once found with this name *El;* whereas *Eli*, the first person, occurs very frequently in the Psalter alone. We all of us remember it in the words actually uttered by our Lord upon the cross, and which he took from the Syriacised version of Psalm xxii. The word unveils a truth unknown beyond the precincts of revelation. It teaches us that the Almighty and Eternal gives himself in the fulness of his Being to the soul that seeks him. Heathenism, indeed, in its cultus of domestic and local deities, of its penates, of its θεοὶ ἐπιχώριοι, bore witness by these superstitions to the deep yearning of the human heart for the individualizing love of a higher power. To know the true God was to know that such a craving was satisfied. "*My God.*" The word represents not a human impression, or desire, or conceit, but an aspect, a truth, a necessity of the divine nature. Man can, indeed, give himself by halves; he can bestow a little of his thought, of his heart, of his endeavour, upon his brother man. In other words, man can be imperfect in his acts as he is imperfect and finite in his nature. But when God, the Perfect Being, loves the creature of his hand, he cannot thus divide his love. He must perforce love with the whole directness, and strength, and intensity of his Being; for he is God, and therefore incapable of partial and imperfect action. He must give himself to the single soul with as absolute a completeness as if there were no other being besides it, and, on his side, man knows that this gift of himself by God is thus entire; and in no narrow spirit of ambitious egotism, but as grasping and representing the literal fact, he cries, "*My God.*" Therefore does this word enter so largely into the composition of Hebrew names. Men loved to dwell upon that wondrous relation of the Creator to their personal life which is so strikingly manifested. Therefore, when God had "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," we find St. Paul writing to the Galatians as if his own single soul had been redeemed by the sacrifice of Calvary: "He loved me, and gave himself for me."—*Henry Parry Liddon, in "Some Words for God: being Sermons preached before the University of Oxford*, 1863—1865."

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—There is a great deal more in it than men of the world are aware of; to say, "*O God, thou art my God,*" in this connection and conjunction: there is more in it in regard of excellency, and there is more in it in regard of difficulty likewise. It is not an unfruitful thing to say it, and it is not an easy thing to say it neither. It confers a great deal of benefit, and requires a great deal of grace, which belongs unto it, in the truth and reality of it. The benefit of it, first, is very great; yea, in effect all things else. To say God is ours, is to say the whole world is ours, and a great deal more; it is to give us title to everything which may be requisite or convenient for us. Whatever we can desire or stand in need of, it is all wrapt up in this, "*Thou art my God.*" But then, again, it is a matter of difficulty (as those things which are excellent are). It is a thing which is not so easily said as the world imagines it and thinks it to be. Indeed, it is easy to the mouth, but it is not easy to the heart. It is easy to have a fancy to say it, but it is not to have a faith to say it: this carries some kind of hardship with it, and it is not presently attained unto; but the mind of man withdraws from it. There are two states and conditions in which it is very difficult to say, "*O God, thou art my God:*" the one

is the state of nature and unregeneracy; and the other is the state of desertion, and the hiding of God's face from the soul.—*Thomas Horton* (—1673).

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—The relations of God to his people are not bare and empty titles, but they carry some activity with them, both from him towards them, and from them also answerably towards him. Those whom God is a God to, he bestows special favours upon them; and those to whom God is a God, they return special services to him. And so we shall find it to be all along in Scripture, as this David in another place: "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee." Ps. cxviii. 28. And so here: "*Thou art my God; early will I seek thee.*" While the servants of God have claimed any interest in him, they have also exhibited duty to him. The text is an expression not only of faith, but likewise of obedience, and so to be looked upon by us.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 1.—"*Early;*" *in the morning*, before all things, God is to be sought, otherwise he is sought in vain: as the manna, unless collected at early dawn, dissolves.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 1.—"*My soul thirsteth for thee.*" Oh that Christ would come near, and stand still, and give me leave to look upon him! for to look seemeth the poor man's privilege, since he may, for nothing and without hire, behold the sun. I should have a king's life, if I had no other thing to do than for evermore to behold and eye my fair Lord Jesus: nay, suppose I were holden out at heaven's fair entry, I should be happy for evermore, to look through a hole in the door, and see my dearest and fairest Lord's face. O great King! why standest thou aloof? Why remainest thou beyond the mountains? O Well-beloved, why dost thou pain a poor soul with delays? A long time out of thy glorious presence is two deaths and two hells to me. We must meet. I must see him, I dow* not want him. Hunger and longing for Christ hath brought on such a necessity of enjoying Christ, that, cost me what it will, I cannot but assure Christ that I will not, I dow not want him; for I cannot master nor command Christ's love.—*Samuel Rutherford* (1600—1661).

Verse 1.—"*My flesh,*" that is, my bodily sensitive appetite, which thirsts, ardently longs for consolation, which it receives from the abounding of spiritual consolation to the soul. This meaning greatly pleases me. God giveth the upper and the nether springs. Rebekah, after drawing water in her pitcher, for Eliezer, Abraham's servant, added, "*I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking,*" Gen. xxiv. 19. Jacob dug a well near to Sychar, which was afterwards called Samaria, and as the woman of Samaria said, "*drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle,*" John iv. 12. When Moses with the rod smote the rock twice, "*the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also,*" Numb. xx. 11. So God satisfies with this consolation both our higher and lower nature.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—"*My flesh longeth for thee.*" The verb כָּסַף is used only in this place, and therefore the signification of it is rather uncertain, but it will receive light from the Arabic dialect. In Golius's Lexicon it signifies, *caligavit oculus, alteratus colore, et mente debilitatus fuit.* His eye grew dim, his colour was changed, and his mind was weakened; and therefore, as used by the Psalmist, implies the utmost intenseness of fervency of desire, as though it almost impaired his sight, altered the very hue of his body, and even injured his understanding; effects sometimes of eager and unsatisfied desires.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 1.—"*In a dry.*" Here we must read, בְּאֶרֶץ [Keeretz], instead of בְּאֶרֶץ [Beeretz], for it is, "*like* this," and not, "*in this*" (which has no force), even like this dry, wearied, and waterless region; so am I for seeing thee in the sanctuary, for beholding thy power and thy glory.—*Benjamin Weiss, in a "New Translation of the Book of Psalms, with Critical Notes,"* etc., 1858.

Weiss appears to have the authority of several MSS. for this, but he seldom errs in the direction of too little dogmatism.—*C. H. S.*

Verses 1, 2.—"*O God, thou art my God.*"—He embraceth him at first word, as we use to do friends at first meeting. "*Early will I seek thee,*" says he: "*my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh*" (that is, myself) "*longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.*" Surely David had some extraordinary business now with God to be done for himself, as it follows (verse 2): "*To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary;*" where God had met him, and manifested himself to him. . . . The very sight of a friend rejoiceth a man (Prov. xxxvii. 17):

* Am not able to do without him.

"As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the face of his friend." It alone whets up joy by a sympathy of spirits; and in answer hereunto it is characteristically to God's people called the seeking of God's face, that is, himself, for so his face is taken: "Thou shalt have no other gods before my face;" that is, thou shalt have myself, or none but myself. Personal communion with God is the end of our graces; for as reason and the intercourse of it makes men sociable one with another, so the divine nature makes us sociable with God himself: and the life we live by is but an engine, a glass to bring God down to us.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2.—"*To see thy power,*" etc. I. It is, or should be, the desire of every Christian to see and enjoy more and more of the glory of God. II. That the accomplishment of this design is to be sought by a devout and diligent attendance upon the worship of the sanctuary. How is God's character in the sanctuary manifested to believers? 1. By the ministry of reconciliation—by the exhibition of gospel truth. 2. Believers grow in their knowledge of the divine character in the sanctuary, by observing and feeling the application of those great doctrines to the souls of men, by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. III. The effects that result to the believer in his history and experience, from an increasing knowledge of the power and glory of God. The effects of this knowledge are great and manifold. 1. The believer, by fresh displays of the divine glory, is disenchanted from the fascination of the world. 2. Another effect of an increasing acquaintance with God, and of every view of the divine glory we obtain, is that the mind is disentangled from the embarrassments into which it is sometimes thrown by the aspect of providence. 3. By seeing the divine power and glory in the sanctuary, we shall have our strength renewed to go on our Christian course afresh. 4. A view of the divine glory crucifies our lusts, and puts the corruptions of our heart to death. 5. Fresh views of the divine power and glory nourish our humility. 6. These views of the divine glory in the sanctuary arm us for our conflict with the last enemy. Concluding remarks: 1. That it is characteristic of every good man, that he is devoutly attached to the solemnities of public worship. 2. That his object in going to the sanctuary is definite and distinct.—*John Angell James.*

Verse 2.—"*So as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*" To converse with ordinances, and not to converse with God; to have to do with ordinances, and not to have to do with God, alas! they are but dry breasts, and a miscarrying womb that will never bring forth the fruits of holiness. Ordinances without God are but like bones that have no marrow in them; they are but like shells without a kernel. Your hearing will be in vain; and your praying will be in vain; there will be no spirit-moving, no voice-answering, no heart-warnings, no soul-refreshing, no God-meetings. —*William Strong* (—1654) *in the "Saints' Communion."*

Verse 2.—God's glory is in the firmament, in all the creatures, but more especially and fully in the church. Psalm xxix. 9, "In his temple doth every one speak of his glory;" there it is most visible, affecting, and provoking of every one to speak. In the world few take notice of it, but in the temple every one sees it, and speaks of it. The world is God opened, and so glorious; the church is Christ opened, and so very glorious. This made David long to be in the sanctuary when he was in the wilderness; and why so? "*To see thy power and thy glory.*" Could not David see them in the heavens, in the mountains, in the goodly cedars, and other works of God? Yes, but not as in the sanctuary; and therefore he saith, "*To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary;*" there I have seen thee otherwise than ever elsewhere; there he saw the king upon his throne and in his glory.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy lovingkindness is better than life;*" or, "*better than lives,*" as the Hebrew hath it [*chaiim*]. Divine favour is better than life; it is better than life with all its revenues, with all its appurtenances, as honours, riches, pleasures, applause, etc.; yea, it is better than many lives put together. Now you know at what a high rate men value their lives; they will bleed, sweat, vomit, purge, part with an estate, yea, with a limb, yea, limbs, to preserve their lives. As he cried out, "Give me any deformity, any torment, any misery, so you spare my life." Now, though life be so dear and precious to a man, yet a deserted soul prizes the returnings of divine favour upon him above life, yea, above many lives. Many men have been weary of their lives, as is evident in Scripture and history; but no

man was ever yet found that was weary of the love and favour of God. No man sets so high a price upon the sun as he that hath long lain in a dark dungeon, etc.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy lovingkindness is better than life.*" The love of life is a very frequent and pernicious snare, which a sense of God's love must deliver us from being entangled by. What so desirable as life, if a man have no place in the heart of God? This is the greatest temporal blessing, and nothing can outdo it, but the favour of the God of our life; and this excels indeed. What comparison is there between the breath in our nostrils, and the favour of an eternal God? any more than there is between an everlasting light and a poor vanishing vapour. Compare Isaiah lx. 19 with James iv. 14. Who would not, therefore, hate his own life, which hangs in doubt continually before him, and of which he can have no assurance, when he knows that the living God is his certain portion? Who would not freely yield up and part with ten thousand such lives, one after another (if he had so many), rather than the wrath of God should be kindled but a little.—*Timothy Cruso* (1657—1697).

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—God's *mercy is better than lives.* What lives? Those which for themselves men have chosen. One hath chosen for himself a life of business, another a country life, another a life of usury, another a military life; one this, another that. Divers are the lives, but *better is thy life than* our *lives.* Better is that which thou givest to men amended, than that which perverse men choose? One life thou givest, which should be preferred to all our lives, whatsoever in the world we might have chosen.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—"*Life*" is an *impure good.* It is a good which is implicated and involved with abundance of evils. There are many crosses, and troubles, and calamities, which the life of man is subject unto; which, though it have some comfort in it, yet that comfort is much troubled and mixed; yea, but now the favour of God it is good, and nothing but good. As it is said of his blessing, it adds no sorrow with it, nor has it any inconvenience in it, nor has it any evil attendant upon it.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 3.—"*My lips shall praise thee.*" Is it possible that any man should love another and not commend him, nor speak of him? If thou hast but a hawk or a hound that thou lovest, thou wilt commend it; and can it stand with love to Christ, yet seldom or never to speak of him nor of his love, never to commend him unto others, that they may fall in love with him also? You shall see the Spouse (Cant. v. 9, 16) when she was asked, *what her beloved was above others?* she sets him out in every part of him, and concludes with this: "*he is altogether lovely:*" "*because thy lovingkindness* (saith *David*) *is better than life, my lips shall praise thee, and I will bless thee while I live.*" Can it stand with this life of love, to be always speaking about worldly affairs, or news at the best; both week-day and Sabbath-day, in bend and at board, in good company and in bad, at home and abroad? I tell you, it will be one main reason why you desire to live, that you may make the Lord Jesus known to your children, friends, acquaintance, that so in the ages to come his name might ring, and his memorial might be of sweet odour, from generation to generation. Ps. lxxi. 18. If before thy conversion, especially, thou hast poisoned others by thy vain and corrupt speeches, after thy conversion thou wilt seek to season the hearts of others by a gracious, sweet, and wise communication of savoury and blessed speeches; what the Lord hath taught thee thou wilt talk of it unto others, for the sake of him whom thou lovest.—*Thomas Sheppard* (1605—1649), *in "The Sound Beleever."*

Verses 3—6.—David exalts *lovingkindness* as a queen above all other, even the most precious, blessings bestowed upon him, "*because thy lovingkindness is better than* [above] *life.*" Around her throne he places seven members of his body and faculties of his mind, as the seven chief angels . . . who stand before the Lord, that they may praise and admire her; these are his lips, his tongue, his hands, his will, his mouth, his memory, and his intellect. For first, he extols the lovingkindness of God with his lips (verse 3): "*My lips shall praise thee.*" Secondly, with his tongue (verse 4): "*Thus will I bless thee while I live.*" Thirdly, with his hands: "*I will lift up my hands in thy name.*" Fourthly, with his will (verse 5): "*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.*" Fifthly, with his mouth: "*And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*" Sixthly, with his memory (verse 6): "*When I remember thee upon my bed.*" Seventhly and lastly, with his intellect: "*And meditate on thee in the night watches.*"—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 4.—"*Thus will I bless thee.*" There are two ways especially in which God is blest of his creatures. The one is *objectively*, by way of representation; and the other is *significatively*, by way of publication. According to the first sense, so all the creatures bless him: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." Psalm xix. 1. "Sun and moon, and fire and hail, and snow and vapours." Psalm cxlviii. 3, 7, 8. All these they so bless him thus. But according to the second sense, so he is blest only by angels and men, who are therefore to do it with so much the greater intension. "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power," etc. Psalm cxlv. 10, 11.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 4.—"*I will lift up my hands.*" The practice of lifting up the hands in prayer towards heaven, the supposed residence of the object to which prayer is addressed, was anciently used both by believers, as appears from various passages in the Old Testament; and by the heathen, agreeably to numerous instances in the classical writers. Parkhurst, considering the "hand" to be the chief organ or instrument of man's power and operations, and properly supposing the word to be thence used very extensively by the Hebrews for power, agency, dominion, assistance, and the like, regards the lifting up of men's hands in prayer, as an emblematical acknowledging of the *power*, and imploring of the *assistance*, of their respective gods. Is it not, however, the natural and unstudied gesture of earnest supplication?—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 5.—"*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.*" My soul shall be satisfied as if I had received all that is intimated by the rich pieces of the peace-offering.—*Andrew A. Bonar*, on Levit. iii. 9, 10.

Verse 5.—"*My soul shall be satisfied with fatness and fatness;*" so the Hebrew hath it; that is, my soul shall be topful of comfort, it shall be filled up to the brim with pleasure and delight, in the remembrance and enjoyment of God upon my bed, or upon my beds, in the plural, as the Hebrew hath it. David had many a hard bed and many a hard lodging, whilst he was in his wilderness condition. It oftentimes so fell out that he had nothing but the bare ground for his bed, and the stones for his pillows, and the hedges for his curtains, and the heavens for his canopy; yet, in this condition, God was sweeter than marrow and fatness to him; though his bed was never so hard, yet in God he had full satisfaction and content. Jer. xxxi. 14; Philip. iv. 9.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 5.—There is that in a gracious God and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a soul. Psalm xxxvi. 8; lxv. 4. And there is that in a gracious soul, which takes abundant satisfaction in God, and in communion with him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—Sanctified *Knowledge*, saith, There is an infinite fulness in Christ, the fulness of a fountain. *Faith* saith, This is all for me, for he is my husband; then *Prayer* saith, If all this be thine, I will go and fetch it for thee; and *Thankfulness* says, I will return praise to God for it (and that's better than the receiving of mercies): "*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*"—*Matthew Lawrence, in "The Use and Practice of Faith,"* 1657.

Verse 5.—In the words which I have chosen as the subject of discourse, the Psalmist expresses his humble expectation of having his soul feasted in the sanctuary. I intend, *first*, to show how the Lord satisfies the souls of men as with marrow and fatness; and, *secondly*, to point out the reason which believers have to conclude that they shall be thus satisfied in the ordinances of divine worship. I. I will endeavour, then, in the first place, to show how the Lord satisfies the souls of men as with marrow and fatness. And, in general, it may be observed, that he imparts such satisfaction by condescending to hold communion with them. This is the feast which our Lord promises to every sinner who opens his heart to receive him: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. iii. 20. This was also the banquet to which the spouse of Christ was admitted, when she said, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." S. Song ii. 4. More particularly, 1. The Lord satisfies the souls of his people as with marrow and fatness, *by feasting them with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.* The Son of God became incarnate, shed his blood, and fulfilled all righteousness,

that he might be food for our souls. " The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John i. 14. And in his incarnate person he is living bread to us, bread that gives spiritual and eternal life to our souls, and effectually prevents them from perishing. . . . 2. The Lord satisfies the souls of his people as with marrow and fatness, *by showing them his glory in the face of Christ.* By this means the Psalmist David desired and expected to have his soul feasted, as we learn from the second verse of this Psalm : " To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." . . . A saving sight of the glory of God in our Immanuel must be inexpressibly comfortable ; it is a feast to the soul, and is productive of joy unspeakable and full of glory. . . . 3. The Lord satisfies the souls of his people as with marrow and fatness, *by shedding abroad his love in their hearts.* This was another way in which David expected to have his soul feasted. He had felt the sweetness of divine love, he had tasted that the Lord was gracious ; he knew by happy experience that his lovingkindness was sweeter than all the comforts of life ; and he hoped to be blessed with further experience of his love, with such experience as would warm his heart, and afford matter of a new song of praise to God : and thus be expected to be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. He says, therefore, in the third verse of this Psalm, " Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." . . . 4. The Lord satisfies the souls of his people as with marrow and fatness, *when he feasts them with new-covenant promises.* He hath given us exceeding great and precious promises ; promises which are filled with all the fulness of God, and which are all in Christ, yea, and amen, to the glory of God. These promises are published to us all in the gospel, that we may embrace them by faith. But, alas ! so great is the folly of men, that they put from them these words of grace, and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Such folly is natural even to the people of God as well as others. . . . . But when the rock of Israel, in a day of power, speaks these promises to them, they no longer reject, but cordially receive them in Christ, and gladly feast upon them. Then his words are found, and they eat them ; and his word is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts. . . . 5. The Lord also satisfies the souls of his people, *by filling them with the Spirit.* We are famishing while we are in a state of nature, " having not the Spirit ; " for while without the Spirit, we are also without Christ. But when the Lord puts his Spirit within us, then our starving souls begin to be feasted ; for this blessed Spirit shows us the things of Christ, and applies him to us ; by which means we are enabled to eat his flesh, and drink his blood. And after the Holy Ghost is thus given, he is never taken away. . . . It is the promise of our Redeemer, that, if a man believe on him, " out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water : " and " this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." John vii. 38, 39. 6. The Lord satisfies his people as with marrow and fatness, *when he revives former experiences* of his kindness. Often he gives them, so to speak, a new feast upon an old experience. . . . II. I now proceed to point out some of the reasons which believers have to conclude that their souls shall be satisfied in the ordinances of divine worship. And, 1. They may reasonably found such a conclusion upon *the divine goodness.* 2. Believers may ground an expectation of being satisfied as with marrow and fatness, on the incarnation, the humiliation, and the death of Christ. 3. The fulness laid up in Christ is also a good foundation for such a hope. 4. Believers may also conclude from the divine promise that their souls shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. 5. From their being blessed with the spiritual appetite. 6. Their former experience of the Lord's satisfying them, may also encourage believers to hope that he will again satisfy them, as with marrow and fatness.—*Outline of a Sermon, by John Fraser* (1745—1818).

Verse 5 :—

Ever full, but hungry ever,
What they have, they still desire ;
Never suffer surfeit's loathing,
Nor yet famine's torments dire :
Hungering still, they eat, and eating,
Still the sacred food require.

Peter Damiano (988—1072).

Verses 5, 6.—David had his sweetmeats and heavenly junkets in the night, when the eyes of others were closed, and saw not the charger which was sent from above for his spiritual refreshment. His solitary meditations brought him more solace and comfort than the whole creation could afford him : " *When I remember*

thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." Communion with God in secret is a heaven upon earth. What food can compare with the hidden manna? Some persons have excellent banquets in their closets. That bread which the saints eat in secret, how pleasant is it! Ah! what stranger can imagine the joy, the melody, which even the secret tears of the saints cause! Believers find rich mines of silver and gold in solitary places; they fetch up precious jewels out of secret holes, out of the bottom of the ocean, where are no inhabitants. Naturalists observe that those fish are sweetest which lie hid. Saints have often sweet joy and refreshment in secret; they have meat to eat, which the world knoweth not of. The fig-tree, olive, and vine would not leave their sweetness, fatness, and cheerfulness, to be kings over other trees. Judges ix. 11—13. They that know what it is to enjoy God in secret, would not leave it, or lose it, to be kings or commanders over the whole world.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 6.—" *When I remember thee upon my bed* (and), *meditate on thee in the night watches.*" Thus the English version connects this verse with verse 5. But the division of the strophes renders the following translation preferable, which, moreover, obviates the need of supplying " and : " " Whenever I remember thee upon my bed, I meditate on thee in the night watches." The remembrance of thee on my bed so engrosses me, that I cannot draw my mind off the thought, so as to fall into the obliviousness of sleep; I often meditate on thee through the whole night watches. So Ps. cxix. 55, 148; Ps. i. 2. The Hebrew is *beds;* probably alluding to the fact that in his unsettled life in exile, he seldom slept for many nights in the same bed, but through fear of adversaries slept in different places. There were three night watches: *the first* (Lam. ii. 19); *the middle* (Judg. vii. 19); *the third,* or *morning watch* (Exod. xiv. 24; 1 Sam. ii. 11). In the New Testament the Roman usage of four prevails.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 6.—"*Remember—and meditate.*" The *meditation* of anything hath more sweetness in it than bare remembrance. The memory is the chest to lay up a truth, but meditation is the palate to feed upon it. The memory is like the ark in which the manna was laid up; meditation is like Israel's eating of the manna. When David began to meditate upon God, it was *sweet* to him as marrow. There is as much difference between a truth remembered and a truth meditated, as between a cordial in the glass and a cordial drunk down.—*John Wells* (1668), *in Sabbath Holiness."*

Verse 6.—" *Upon my bed.*" The *bed* may be looked upon as a place for the remembrance of God in it, according to a threefold notion. I. As *a place of choice.* In the bed, of choice, rather than anywhere else, where I am left to my liberty. David when he had a mind to remember God, he would make choice of his bed for it, as most suitable and agreeable to it. In case of excessive weariness, or weakness contracted to the body from some occasion (this is often put accidentally in Scripture,) " To commune with our hearts upon our bed," etc., the occasion of it here; it may fall out that the bed may be the fittest place for such a duty as this. Ps. iv. 4. II. As it is *a place of necessity.* In my bed at least, when I cannot anywhere else, as having restraints upon me. David, when (as now it was with him) he was detained from the public ordinances, whether by sickness, or any other impediment which he could not withstand, yet he would not now wholly forget God; he would remember him even in his bed. This is another notion in which we may take it. III. As *a place of indifferency;* that is, there as well as anywhere besides. I will not only remember thee when I am up, when I shall make it my business to remember thee, but even in my bed too. I will take an occasion and opportunity to remember thee there. By commending myself to thee, when I lie down to rest, and acknowledging and owning of thee when I first awake.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 6.—There were " *night watches* " kept in the tabernacle for praising God (Ps. cxxxiv. i,), which it is probable David, when he had liberty, joined with the Levites in; but now he could not keep place with them, he kept time with them, and wished himself among them.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—"*Because thou hast been.*" The surest way, and the nearest way, to lay hold upon God is the consideration of that which he hath done already, which was David's way here; because, says he, this was God's way before, therefore will I look for God in this way still. The language in which God spake to man,

the Hebrew, hath no present tense. They form not their verbs, as our western languages do, in the present tense, but they begin at that which is past. God carries us in his language, in his speaking, upon that which is past, upon that which he hath done already. I cannot have better security for present nor future than God's former mercies exhibited to me.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou hast been my help.*" From this one word—that God hath been my *help*—I make account that we have both these notions; first, that God hath not left me to myself, he hath come to my succour, he hath helped me; and then, that God hath not left out myself, he hath been my help, but he hath left something for me to do with him and by his help. My security for the future in this consideration of that which is past lies not only in this, that God hath delivered me, but in this also, that he hath delivered me by way of a help, and help always presumes an endeavour and co-operation in him that is helped. God did not elect me as a helper, nor create me, nor redeem me, nor convert me, by way of helping me; for he alone did all, and he had no use at all for me. God infuses his first grace, the first way, merely as a giver; entirely, all himself; but his subsequent grace as a helper; therefore we call them auxiliant graces, helping graces, and we always receive them when we endeavour to make use of his former grace.—*John Donne.*

Verse 7.—"*My help.*" I. In *duty.* He helps his people here. There is nothing which God requires of his people, as to be done by them, but himself helps them in the doing of it. He is not like the Egyptian task-masters, which require brick and give no straw wherewithal to make it. II. In *conflict.* He assists here also. As when the Israelite and the Egyptian strove together, Moses came in and helped the Israelite (Exod. ii. 12); even so does God in this case with us, when we are wrestling and struggling with Satan, who is our spiritual enemy, the Lord is here nigh to help us, which may encourage us still in our resistance and opposition: we have a mighty second to stand for us, and to take up our quarrel. III. In *affliction.* God helps his people; namely, to bear patiently those crosses which he lays upon them. He takes part with them in their sufferings, and in all their afflictions is afflicted himself, as sometimes he expresses it. He lays no more upon them than he does help them, and enable them, to endure. 1. He helps them *from*, by way of prevention. 2. He helps them *in*, by way of support. 3. He helps them *out*, by way of rescue, and redemption, and deliverance.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 7.—"*My help.* Thou hast been not only my helper, but my "*help*," for we could never have helped ourselves, nor could any creature have been helpful to us but by him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—"*MY help.*" There is more encouragement in the least blessing bestowed upon ourselves than in the greatest blessing bestowed upon a stranger; and, therefore, on every account we may safely say, that a whole library of biographical books, and those relating exclusively to righteous individuals, could not so minister to the assurance of a believer as the documents which his own memory can furnish. These, then, should often engage his study, whether he be the rich or the poor. He should do just as David did. Doubtless David was well acquainted with the histories of Noah, and of Abraham, of Jacob, of Joseph, of Moses; and the records of these eminent servants of God were records of surprising deliverances, of divine promises made good, and human wants supplied. Nevertheless, when himself in the wilderness, David did not recur to these records for encouragement. His exclamation is: "*Because thou hast been MY help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.*"—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 7.—"*Will I rejoice.*" As a bird, sheltered in the rich foliage from the heat of he sun, sings its merry notes; so he celebrates his songs of praise from the shadow of the wings of God.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 8.—"*My soul followeth hard after thee.*" This is the language of a good man in his worst frames; for when he has lost his nearness to God, he will be uneasy till he has again obtained it, and will follow after it with all his might. It is also his language in his best frames; for when he knows and enjoys most of God, he wants to know and enjoy more. But it may especially be considered as the language of an afflicted and seeking soul, not sinking under its burden, but earnestly breathing after deliverance, and supported by the prospect of obtaining it. Hence it follows, "*Thy right hand upholdeth me.*" . . . I. I shall consider what is implied in the soul's following hard after God, and then enquire the reason of it. I. Following

hard after God supposes, 1. A previous acquaintance with him. An unknown good, be it ever so desirable in itself, cannot be the object of desire. Hence, when God shines into the heart, it is to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, as the foundation of all gracious exercises, and especially as the source of all fervent desires after him. 2. Following hard after God is expressive of ardent and intense desires. It does not consist in cold and languid wishes, but insatiable longings after communion with God and conformity to his will. 3. It implies laborious exertion. My soul followeth, it followeth *hard after thee.* Not earth nor heaven merely is the object of pursuit, but God himself. And the desires of a truly renewed soul are not sluggish and ineffectual; they lead him to the use of all appointed means, and to the exertion of his utmost endeavours till the object be attained. 4. Perseverance in seeking. *To follow* implies this, and to follow *hard* implies it more strongly. It is as if the Psalmist had said, "Does God retire? I will pursue. Does he withhold the blessing? I will wrestle with him till I obtain it. He long waited to be gracious, and I will now wait till he is so." II. We are to enquire the reason why David thus followed hard after God. 1. Guilt and distress followed hard after him. 2. His enemies also followed hard after him. Satan did so, and once and again caused him to stumble and fall. 3. He had followed hard after other things to no purpose. 4. We may add the powerful attractives of divine grace.—*Condensed from Benjamin Beddome's Sermon, "The Christian's Pursuit," in "Short Discourses,"* 1809.

Verse 8.—"*My soul followeth hard after thee.*" דָּבְקָה אַחֲרֶיךָ. The primary sense of דָּבַק is *agglutinavit*, to glue together; from thence it signifies figuratively *to associate*, to adhere to, to be united with; and particularly to be firmly united with strong affection. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ, and cleave to his wife;" properly, be closely united and compacted with his wife, with the most permanent affection. Gen. ii. 24. The Psalmist, therefore, means that his soul adhered to God with the warmest affection, and longed to offer up his sacrifices of praise in his sanctuary.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 8.—"*My soul followeth hard after thee.*" דָּבְקָה, *adhæsit, adherescit anima mea post te:* My soul cleaves after thee, as do things which hang by another; the root is of so great frequency in Scripture, as of enquiry amongst critics; it importeth here the posture of David's spirit, and speaketh it close to God; and so depending upon him, as nothing could loosen it from him; Satan's subtlety, Saul's cruelty, his own personal loss and indemnity, are not all of them of any force or dexterity, to cut asunder or untie the Gordian knot of this unity. The cleaving of David's spirit was a glueing of the Lord's spirit: a marriage of the Lord's making is altogether incapable of the devil's breaking.

It is no wonder David's words report him so much devoted to God, seeing with the same breath they speak him supported by God: "*Thy right hand upholdeth me,*" saith he.—*Alexander Pringle, in "A Stay in Trouble; or, the Saint's Rest in the Evil Day,"* 1657.

Verse 8.—"*My soul followeth hard after thee.*" The original is נַפְשִׁי אַחֲרֶיךָ. "*My soul cleaves after thee.*" As if he had said, Go, lead on, my God! Behold, I follow as near, as close, as I can; *e vestigio;* I would not leave any distance, but pursue thy footsteps, step by step, leaning upon thine everlasting arms, that are underneath me, and following thy manuduction.—*John Gibbon, in "The Morning Exercises,"* 1661.

Verse 8.—The *soul's* following, and following *hard* after God—what means this? Surely it intends much more than a languid, inert inclination; or "the desire of the slothful which killeth him, because his hands refuse to labour." It evinces an intenseness of concern that quickens and rouses the man into life and earnestness; that draws his very soul along with it; that reconciles him to every needful exertion and sacrifice, however trying; and urges him to persevere, whatever difficulties or discouragements he meets with in his course. And sometimes the distance is long, and the progress up hill, and the road rough, and the weather unfriendly, and enemies would thrust us back; and sometimes we lose sight of him, and ask those we meet: "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" and when we spy him again, he seems to advance as we advance, and when we gain upon him and get nearer, he seems to look back and frown, and tell us to retire. The exercises and feelings of Christians in the divine life will enable them to explain these allusions. Who among them all has not, like the Jews, been sometimes "discouraged because of the way?" Who has not resembled Barak's adherents—"Faint, yet

pursuing ? " Who has not frequently said, " *My soul followeth hard after thee* " ? —*William Jay.*

Verses 9, 10.—If the Psalmist's divine longing was unquenched, so also was his faith ; and in the latter part of the Psalm he foretells with full assurance the final overthrow of his enemies. Nor did his denunciations fail to meet with a certain accuracy of fulfilment even in the battle by which his own deliverance was effected. The armies encountered in the wood of Ephraim, across the Jordan ; there was " a great slaughter that day of tweny thousand men ; " " and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured." Thus David's words concerning the " *lower parts of the earth,*" and the " *sword,*" and the " *foxes,*" had not been idly spoken : the pitfalls of the forest, and the swords of the royal pursuers, and the wild beasts that had there made their lairs, all effectually did their work ; and the fate of the rebel army was shared by their leader, who, caught in the thick boughs of the oak, pierced through the heart by Joab, and cut down by his attendants, received no further funeral honours than to be cast " into a great pit in the wood," and have a " very great heap of stones " laid upon him to cover him.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp, in " An Introduction to the Study and Use of the Psalms,"* 1860.

Verse 10.—" *They shall fall.*" The word is ordinarily applied to *water.* 2 Sam. xiv. 14 ; Lam. iii. 49. But here, by the immediate mention of the " *sword,*" it is restrained to the *effusion of blood,* and being in the third person plural, in the active sense, it is after the Hebrew idiom to be interpreted in the passive sense, *they shall pour out by the hand of the sword, i.e., they shall be poured out by the sword,* the *hand* of *the sword* being no more than the edge of the sword.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 10.—" *They shall be a portion for foxes.*" Beasts were given to men for their food, but here men are given to beasts for a prey. A lamentable spectacle to see the vilest of all creatures ravenously feast themselves with the flesh of the noblest, and irrespectively hale and tear in pieces the casket which whilome enclosed the richest jewel in the world. Is it not against the law of nature that men should become beasts' meat ; yea, the meat of such beasts as are carrion, and not man's meat ? Questionless it is, yet nature giveth her consent to this kind of punishment of unnatural crimes. For it is consonant to reason, that the law of nature should be broken in their punishment who brake it in their sin ; that they who devoured men like beasts should be devoured of beasts like men, that they who with their hands offered unnatural violence to their sovereign should suffer the like by the claws and teeth of wild beasts, their slaves ; that they who bear a fox in their breast in their life, should be entombed in the belly of a fox at their death.

St. Austin, expounding this whole prophecy of Christ, yieldeth a special reason of this judgment of God by which the Jews were condemned to foxes. The Jews, saith he, therefore killed Christ that they might not lose their country ; but, indeed, they therefore lost their country because they killed Christ ; because they refused the Lamb and chose Herod the fox before him, therefore by the just retribution of the Almighty, they were allotted to the foxes for their portion. Notwithstanding this allusion of St. Austin to foxes in special, Jansenius and other expositors extend this grant in my text to all wild beasts and fowls, which are, as it were, impatient with the fox, and have full power and liberty given them to seize upon the corpses of traitors to God and their country ; but foxes bear the name because they abound in those parts where was such store of them, that Samson in a short time, with a wet finger, caught three hundred.—*Daniel Featley, D.D., in " Clavis Mystica,"* 1636.

Verse 10.—"*They shall be a portion for foxes.*" If the body of a human being were to be left on the ground, the *jackals* would certainly leave but little traces of it ; and in the olden times of warfare, they must have held high revelry in the battle-fields after the armies had retired. It is to this propensity of the *jackal* that David refers—himself a man of war, who had fought on many a battle-field, and must have seen the carcasses of the slain mangled by these nocturnal prowlers.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 10.—What a doom is that which David pronounces upon those who seek the soul of the righteous to destroy it : " *They shall be a portion for foxes ;* " by which *jackals* are meant, as I suppose. These sinister, guilty, woebegone brutes,

when pressed with hunger, gather in gangs among the graves, and yell in rage, and fight like fiends over their midnight orgies; but on the battle-field is their great carnival. Oh! let me never even dream that any one dear to me has *fallen by the sword*, and lies there to be torn, and gnawed at, and dragged about by these hideous howlers.—*W. M. Thomson, D.D., in "The Land and the Book,"* 1861.

Verse 11.—"*Every one that sweareth by him,*" *i.e.*, to David, that comes into his interest, and takes an oath of allegiance to him, shall glory in his success. Or, "*that swears by him,*" *i.e.*, by the blessed name of God, and not by any idol. Deut. vi. 15. And then it means all good people that make a sincere and open profession of God's name: they shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's advancement: "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me." They that heartily espouse the cause of Christ, shall glory in its victory at last. "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him."—*Matthew Henry.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—While the Atheist says, "No God," and the heathen worship "gods many," the true believer says, "O God, thou art my God." He is so, 1. By choice. II. By covenant. III. By confession.

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—Seeking God "*early.*" 1. Early in respect of *life.* II. Early in respect of *diligence.* III. Early in respect of *fervour.* IV. Early in respect of *times* or *continuance.*—*Alexander Shanks.*

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—*Earnest seeking.* That which is longed for will be eagerly sought. 1. The soul is *resolute.* "I *will* seek." 2. The soul is *reasonable.* "I will *seek.*" 3. The soul is *ready.* "*Early* will I." 4. The soul is *persevering.* Let this be the resolution and action of both saved and unsaved.—*G. J. K.*

Verse 3.—I. *Love's resolution.* "My lips shall praise thee." 1. *To praise.* This is congenial to the renewed nature. It delights not in grumbling, reproaching, or scolding. Praise expresses appreciation, gratitude, happiness, affection. 2. *To praise God.* 3. *To praise God practically.* "*My lips.*" By speaking well *to* him; by speaking well *of* him; of his wisdom, justice, love, grace, etc. 4. *To praise God continually.* "As long as I live," etc. II. *Love's reason.* "Because thy lovingkindness." Love must praise God because—1. It owes its existence to him. "We love him because he first loved us." 2. Because it is fostered by him. "The love of God is shed abroad," etc. 3. Because the expressions of his love demand praise. "Kindness" to needy, helpless, lost. "Lovingkindness," not wounding our natures. "Better than life;" either the principle, pleasures, or pursuits of life.—*G. J. K.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy lovingkindness is better than life.*" I. *Love enjoyed with life.* II. *Love compared with life.* III. *Love preferred to life.*—*G. J. K.*

Verses 5, 6.—I. *The empty vessel filled.* How? By meditation. With what? God's goodness as marrow and fatness. To what extent? Satisfaction II. *The full vessel running over.* "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." The soul overflows with praise—joyful praise.—*G. J. K.*

Verses 5, 6.—Describe the nature of, and show the intimate connection between, (1) the believer's employments and (2) his enjoyments.—*J. S. Bruce.*

Verse 6.—I. Important duties too much neglected: "Remembering God," "Meditating on him." II. Favourable seasons within the reach of all: "Upon my bed;" "In the night watches."—*J. S. B.*

Verse 7.—A well-founded resolve. I. Upon what based. II. How expressed.—*J. S. B.*

Verse 8.—I. *The soul's pursuit after God.* It follows, 1. In desire. 2. In action. 3. Earnestly. 4. Quickly. 5. Closely. II. *The soul's support.* "*Thy* right hand upholdeth me," the arm of strength. In doing and bearing.—*G. J. K.*

Verse 8.—"A mighty hunter before the Lord." I. The object of pursuit:

'Thee." II. The manner of pursuit: "Hard after." III. The dangers encountered.—*J. S. B.*

Verse 8 (*second clause*).—God's right hand upholds his people three ways. I. As to *sin;* lest they should fall by it. II. As to *suffering;* lest they should sink under it. III. As to *duty;* lest they should decline from it.—*W. Jay.*

Verses 9, 10.—I. The enemies of the Christian. Evil spirits, evil men, evil habits, etc., etc. II. Their intent. To destroy the soul. III. Their fall. Certain, shameful, destructive. IV. Their future. Hell is reserved for them.—*G. J. K.*

Verse 11.—Three topics. I. Royal rejoicing. II. Lawful swearing. III. Evil speaking.

PSALM LXIV.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician. *The leader of the choir, for the time-being, is charged with this song. It were well if the chief musicians of all our congregations estimated their duty at its due solemnity, for it is no mean thing to be called to lead the sacred song of God's people, and the responsibility is by no means light.*

A Psalm of David.—*His life was one of conflict, and very seldom does he finish a Psalm without mentioning his enemies; in this instance his thoughts are wholly occupied with prayer against them.*

DIVISION.—*From* 1—6 *he describes the cruelty and craftiness of his foes, and from* 7—10 *he prophesies their overthrow.*

EXPOSITION.

HEAR my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

2 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:

3 Who whet their tongue like a sword, *and* bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows, *even* bitter words:

4 That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.

5 They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?

6 They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward *thought* of every one *of them*, and the heart, *is* deep.

1. "*Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer.*" It often helps devotion if we are able to use the voice and speak audibly; but even mental prayer has a voice with God which he will hear. We do not read that Moses had spoken with his lips at the Red Sea, and yet the Lord said to him, "Why criest thou unto me?" Prayers which are unheard on earth may be among the best heard in heaven. It is our duty to note how constantly David turns to prayer; it is his battleaxe and weapon of war: he uses it under every pressure, whether of inward sin or outward wrath, foreign invasion or domestic rebellion. We shall act wisely if we make prayer to God our first and best trusted resource in every hour of need. "*Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.*" From harm and dread of harm protect me; or it may be read as an expression of his assurance that it would be so; "from fear of the foe thou wilt preserve me." With all our sacrifices of prayer we should offer the salt of faith.

2. "*Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked.*" From their hidden snares hide me. Circumvent their counsels; let their secrets be met by thy secret providence, their counsels of malice by thy counsels of love. "*From the insurrection of the workers of iniquity.*" When their secret counsels break forth into clamorous tumults, be thou still my preserver. When they think evil, let thy divine thoughts defeat them; and when they do evil, let thy powerful justice overthrow them: in both cases, let me be out of reach of their cruel hand, and even out of sight of their evil eye. It is a good thing to conquer malicious foes, but a better thing still to be screened from all conflict with them, by being hidden from the strife. The Lord knows how to give his people peace, and when he wills to make quiet, he is more than a match for all disturbers, and can defeat alike their deep-laid plots and their overt hostilities.

3. "*Who whet their tongue like a sword.*" Slander has ever been the master

weapon of the good man's enemies, and great is the care of the malicious to use it effectively. As warriors grind their swords, to give them an edge which will cut deep and wound desperately, so do the unscrupulous invent falsehoods which shall be calculated to inflict pain, to stab the reputation, to kill the honour of the righteous. What is there which an evil tongue will not say? What misery will it not labour to inflict? "*And bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words.*" Far off they dart their calumnies, as archers shoot their poisoned arrows. They studiously and with force prepare their speech as bended bows, and then with cool, deliberate aim, they let fly the shaft which they have dipped in bitterness. To sting, to inflict anguish, to destroy, is their one design. Insult, sarcasm, taunting defiance, nicknaming, all these were practised among Orientals as a kind of art; and if in these Western regions, with more refined manners, we are less addicted to the use of rough abuse, it is yet to be feared that the less apparent venom of the tongue inflicts none the less poignant pain. However, in all cases, let us fly to the Lord for help. David had but the one resource of prayer against the twofold weapons of the wicked, for defence against sword or arrow he used the one defence of faith in God.

4. "*That they may shoot in secret at the perfect.*" They lie in ambush, with bows ready bent to aim a coward's shaft at the upright man. Sincere and upright conduct will not secure us from the assaults of slander. The devil shot at our Lord himself, and we may rest assured he has a fiery dart in reserve for us; He was absolutely perfect, we are only so in a relative sense, hence in us there is fuel for fiery darts to kindle on. Observe the meanness of malicious men; they will not accept fair combat, they shun the open field, and skulk in the bushes, lying in ambush against those who are not so acquainted with deceit as to suspect their treachery, and are too manly to imitate their despicable modes of warfare. "*Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.*" To secrecy they add suddenness. They give their unsuspecting victim no chance of defending himself; they pounce on him like a wild beast leaping on its prey. They lay their plans so warily that they fear no detection. We have seen in daily life the arrow of calumny wounding its victim sorely; and yet we have not been able to discover the quarter from which the weapon was shot, nor to detect the hand which forged the arrowhead, or tinged it with the poison. Is it possible for justice to invent a punishment sufficiently severe to meet the case of the dastard who defiles my good name, and remains himself in concealment? An open liar is an angel compared with this demon. Vipers and cobras are harmless and amiable creatures compared with such a reptile. The devil himself might blush at being the father so so base an offspring.

5. "*They encourage themselves in an evil matter.*" Good men are frequently discouraged, and not unfrequently discourage one another, but the children of darkness are wise in their generation and keep their spirits up, and each one has a cheering word to say to his fellow villain. Anything by which they can strengthen each other's hands in their one common design they resort to; their hearts are thoroughly in their black work. "*They commune of laying snares privily.*" Laying their heads together they count and recount their various devices, so as to come at some new and masterly device. They know the benefit of co-operation, and are not sparing in it they pour their experience into one common fund, they teach each other fresh methods. "*They say, Who shall see them?*" So sedulously do they mask their attacks, that they defy discovery; their pitfalls are too well hidden, and themselves too carefully concealed to be found out. So they think, but they forget the all-seeing eye, and the all-discovering hand, which are ever hard by them. Great plots are usually laid bare. As in the Gunpowder Plot, there is usually a breakdown somewhere or other; among the conspirators themselves truth finds an ally, or the stones of the field cry out against them. Let no christian be in bondage through fear of deep-laid Jesuitical schemes for surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel; the toils of the net are broken, the arrows of the bow are snapped, the devices of the wicked are foiled. Therefore, fear not, ye tremblers; for the Lord is at your right hand, and ye shall not be hurt of the enemy.

6. "*They search out iniquities.*" Diligently they consider, invent, devise, and seek for wicked plans to wreak their malice. These are no common villains, but explorers in iniquity, inventors and concoctors of evil. Sad indeed it is that to ruin a good man the evil-disposed will often show as much avidity as if they were searching after treasure. The Inquisition could display instruments of torture.

revealing as much skill as the machinery of our modern exhibitions. The deep places of history, manifesting most the skill of the human mind, are those in which revenge has arranged diplomacy, and used intrigue to compass its diabolical purposes. "*They accomplish a diligent search.*" Their design is perfected, consummated, and brought into working order. They cry "Eureka;" they have sought and found the sure method of vengeance. Exquisite are the refinements of malice! hell's craft furnishes inspiration to the *artistes* who fashion deceit. Earth and the places under it are ransacked for the *materiel* of war, and profound skill turns all to account. "*Both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.*" No superficial wit is theirs; but sagacity, sharpened by practice and keen hatred. Wicked men have frequently the craft to hasten slowly, to please in order to ruin, to flatter that ere long they may devour, to bow the knee that they may ultimately crush beneath their foot. He who deals with the serpent's seed has good need of the wisdom which is from above: the generation of vipers twist and turn, wind and wriggle, yet evermore they are set upon their purpose, and go the nearest way to it when they wander round about. Alas! how dangerous is the believer's condition, and how readily may he be overcome if left to himself. This is the complaint of reason and the moan of unbelief. When faith comes in, we see that even in all this the saints are still secure, for they are all in the hands of God.

7 But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.

8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.

9 And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.

10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

7. "*But God shall shoot at them with an arrow.*" They shoot, and shall be shot. A greater archer than they are shall take sure aim at their hearts. One of his arrows shall be enough, for he never misses his aim. The Lord turns the tables on his adversaries, and defeats them at their own weapons. "*Suddenly shall they be wounded.*" They were looking to surprise the saint, but, lo! they are taken at unawares themselves; they desired to inflict deadly wounds, and are smitten themselves with wounds which none can heal. While they were bending their bows, the great Lord had prepared his bow already, and he let slip the shaft when least they looked for such an unsparing messenger of justice. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The righteous need not learn the arts of self-defence or of attack, their avengement is in better hands than their own.

8. "*So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves.*" Their slander shall recoil. Their curses shall come home to roost. Their tongue shall cut their throats. It was both sword, and bow and arrow; it shall be turned against them, and bring home to them full punishment. "*All that see them shall flee away.*" Afraid, both of them and their overthrow, their former friends shall give them wide space, lest they perish with them. Who cares to go near to Herod when the worms are eating him? or to be in the same chariot with Pharaoh when the waves roar round him? Those who crowded around a powerful persecutor, and cringed at his feet, are among the first to desert him in the day of wrath. Woe unto you, ye liars! Who will desire fellowship with you in your seething lake of fire?

9. "*And all men shall fear.*" They shall be filled with awe by the just judgments of God, as the Canaanites were by the overthrow of Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Those who might have been bold in sin shall be made to tremble and to stand in awe of the righteous Judge. "*And shall declare the work of God.*" It shall become the subject of general conversation. So strange, so pointed, so terrible shall be the Lord's overthrow of the malicious, that it shall be spoken of in all companies. They sinned secretly, but their punishment shall be wrought before the face of the sun. "*For they shall wisely consider of his doing.*" The judgments of God are frequently so clear and manifest that men cannot mis-read them, and if they have any thought at all, they must extract the true teaching from them. Some of the divine judgments are a great deep, but in the case of malicious persecutors the matter is plain enough, and the most illiterate can understand.

10. *"The righteous shall be glad in the Lord."* Admiring his justice and fully acquiescing in its displays, they shall also rejoice at the rescue of injured innocence yet, their joy shall not be selfish or sensual, but altogether in reference to the Lord. *"And shall trust in him."* Their observation of providence shall increase their faith; since he who fulfils his threatenings will not forget his promises. *"And all the upright in heart shall glory."* The victory of the oppressed shall be the victory of all upright men; the whole host of the elect shall rejoice in the triumph of virtue. While strangers fear, the children are glad in view of their Father's power and justice. That which alarms the evil, cheers the good. Lord God of mercy, grant to us to be preserved from all our enemies, and saved in thy Son with an everlasting salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is applied by R. Obadiah to Haman and Moredecai. The enemy is Haman, the perfect man shot at is Mordecai; about whom Haman communed with his friends to lay snares for him, and search diligently for occasions against him and his people, which issued in his own destruction. The ancient Midrash of the Jews applies it to Daniel, when cast into the den of lions; and Jarchi supposes that David, by a spirit of prophecy, foresaw it, and prayed for him who was of his seed; and that everything in the Psalm beautifully falls in with that account. Daniel is the perfect man aimed at; the enemy are the princes of Darius's court, who consulted against him, communed of laying snares for him, and gained their point, which proved their own ruin. But the Psalm literally belongs to David, by whom it was composed.—*John Gill.*

Whole Psalm.—A cry of God's elect, when persecuted for righteousness' sake, to their Deliverer and sure Avenger. The general principle stated is very clear. The Psalm will adjust itself, as an experimental utterance, to the lips of Christian faith whenever brought into contact with the evil forces of the prince of this world, so as to suffer affliction for the gospel's sake; for it expresses the condition and the hope of one actually imperilled for the truth. How aptly a portion of this Psalm applies to the suffering Truth Himself in the days of his affliction, when, pierced in his spirit by lying words, he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, needs not be pointed out.—*Arthur Pridham, in "Notes and Reflections on the Psalms,"* 1869.

Verse 1.—*"Preserve my life."* Hebrew, *lives;* so called for the many faculties, operations, revolutions, and commodities of life.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—*"Who whet their tongue,"* etc. The verb means, says Parkhurst, "to whet, sharpen," which is performed by *reiterated* motion or friction; and by a beautiful metaphor it is applied to a wicked tongue. It has, however, been rendered, "*vibrate,*" as it is certain a serpent does his tongue.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 3.—The ingenuity of man has been wonderfully tasked and exercised in two things, inventing destructive weapons of war, and devising various methods of ruining men by wicked words. The list of the former is found in military writings. But the various forms of evil speaking can hardly be catalogued. Evil speakers have arrows, sharp, barbed, dipped in poison. They have "swords, flaming, swords, two-edged swords, drawn swords, drawn in anger, with which they cut, and wound, and kill the good name of their neighbour." Sins of the tongue are commonly very cruel. When slander is secret, as it commonly is, you cannot defend yourself from its assaults. Its canons are infernal. One of them is, "If a lie will do better than the truth, tell a lie." Another is, "Heap on reproach; some of it will stick."—*William S. Plumer.*

Verses 3, 4.—We saw in the Museum at Venice an instrument with which one of the old Italian tyrants was accustomed to shoot poisoned needles at the objects of his wanton malignity. We thought of gossips, backbiters, and secret slanderers, and wished that their mischievous devices might come to a speedy end. Their weapons of inuendo, shrug, and whisper, appear to be as insignificant as needles;

but the venom which they instil is deadly to many a reputation.—*C. H. Spurgeon, in "Feathers for Arrows; or, Illustrations for Preachers and Teachers."*

Verses 3, 4.—David, upon sad experience, compareth a wicked, reviling tongue to three fatal weapons—a *razor*, a *sword*, and an *arrow*. To a *razor*, such a one as will take off every little hair: so a reviling tongue will not only take advantage of every gross sin committed by others, but those peccadilloes, the least infirmities which others better qualified cannot so much as discern; secondly, to a *sword* that wounds: so the tongues of reproaching men cut deeply into the credits and reputations of their brethren, but a sword doth mischief only near hand, not afar off; and, therefore, it is in the third place compared to an *arrow*, that can hit at a distance: and so revilers do not ill offices to those only in the parish or town where they live, but to others far remote. How much, then, doth it concern every man to walk circumspectly; to give no just cause of reproach, not to make himself a scorn to the fools of the world; but, if they will reproach (as certainly they will), let it be for forwardness in God's ways, and not for sin, that so the reproach may fall upon their own heads, and their scandalous language into their own throats.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verses 3, 7, 8.—The most mischievous weapons of the wicked are *words*, "even bitter words;" but *the Word* is the chief weapon of the Holy Spirit: and as with this sword the great Captain foiled the tempter in the wilderness, so may we vanquish "the workers of iniquity" with the true Jerusalem blade.—*J. L. K.*

Verse 4.—"*That they may shoot in secret.*" The wicked are said to shoot their arrows *in secret* at the perfect; and then "they say, Who shall see them?" verse 5. Thus Satan lets fly a temptation so secretly, that he is hardly suspected in the thing. Sometimes he useth a wife's tongue to do his errand; another while he gets behind the back of a husband, friend, servant, etc., and is not seen all the while he is doing his work. Who would have thought to have found a devil in Peter, tempting his Master, or suspected that Abraham should be his instrument to betray his beloved wife into the hands of a sin? yet it was so. Nay, sometimes he is so secret, that he borrows God's bow to shoot his arrows from, and the poor Christian is abused, thinking it is God chides and is angry, when it is the devil tempts him to think so, and only counterfeits God's voice.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 6.—"*They search out iniquities,*" etc. It is a sign that malice boils up to a great height in men's hearts, when they are so active to find matter against their neighbours. Love would rather not see or hear of others' failings; or if it doth and must, busieth itself in healing and reforming them to the utmost of its power.—*John Milward* (—1684), *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 7.—"*With an arrow suddenly.*" As was Ahab, and the rich fool (Luke xii.): while he sat pruning himself like a bird on a bough, death fetched him off suddenly by his shaft, shot at him, and down he came tumbling. See 1 Thess. v. 3.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8 (*first clause*).—

> In these cases,
> We still have judgment here, that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
> To plague the inventor: This even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
> To our own lips.
>
> *William Shakspere.*

Verse 8.—"*Their own tongue to fall upon themselves.*" That is, their own words shall be brought as a testimony against them, and condemn them. "The tongue is a little member" (saith the apostle James, ch. iii. 5), and therefore a light member; yet it falls heavy, as heavy as lead. A man were better have his house fall upon him, than that, in this sense, his tongue should fall upon him. Some have been pressed to death because they would not speak, but stood mute before the judge; but more have been pressed to death by their sinful freedom, or rather licentiousness in speaking; this hath brought them to judgment, and cast them in judgment. . . . A strange thing that the fall of a man's tongue should oppress his body and whole estate; yet so it is, the weight of a man's tongue falling upon him crushes him to powder.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—"*Their own tongue to fall upon themselves.*" The arrows of idle words, though shot out of sight, and possibly quite forgotten, will hereafter drop down upon the heads of such as drew the bow. Words are but wind, is the common saying, but they are such wind as will either blow the soul to its haven of rest, if holy, wholesome, savoury, spiritual, and tending to edification, or else sink it into the Dead Sea, and bottomless gulf of eternal misery, if idle, prophane, frothy, and unprofitable.—*Edward Reyner* (1600—1670), *in "Rules for the Government of the Tongue."*

Verse 10.—"*The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him.*" That is, if they have failed in their trust heretofore, and not given God honour by confiding in him, yet these wonderful works of God (of which he speaks in the Psalm) work this hope.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10.—"*All the upright in heart.*" The word of this text, *jashar*, signifies *rectitudinem*, and *planitiem*, it signifies a direct way; for the devil's way was circular, compassing the earth; but the angel's way to heaven upon Jacob's ladder was a straight, a direct way. And then it signifies, as a direct and straight, so a plain, a smooth, an even way, a way that hath been beaten into a path before, a way that the fathers and the church have walked in before, and not a discovery made by our curiosity, or our confidence, in venturing from ourselves, or embracing from others, new doctrines and opinions. The persons, then, whom God proposes to be partakers of his retributions, are first, *recti* (that is, both direct men, and plain men), and then, *recti corde*, this qualification, this straightness and smoothness must be in the heart; all the upright in heart shall have it. Upon this earth, a man cannot possibly make one step in a straight and a direct line. The earth itself being round, every step we make upon it must necessarily be a segment, an arc of a circle. But yet, though no piece of a circle be a straight line, yet if we take any piece, nay, if we take the whole circle, there is no corner, no angle in any place, in any entire circle. A perfect rectitude we cannot have in any way in this world; in every calling there are some inevitable temptations. But, though we cannot make up one circle of a straight line (that is impossible to human frailty), yet we may pass on without angles and corners, that is, without disguises in our religion, and without the love of craft and falsehood, and circumvention, in our civil actions. A compass is a necessary thing in a ship, and the help of that compass brings the ship home safe, and yet that compass hath some variations, it doth not look directly north; neither is that star which we call the north-pole, or by which we know the north-pole, the very pole itself; but we call it so, and we make our uses of it, and our conclusions by it, as if it were so, because it is the nearest star to that pole. He that comes as near uprightness as infirmities admit, is an upright man, though he have some obliquities.—*John Donne.*

Verse 10.—"*All the uprigh in heart shall glory.*" The Psalm began in the first person singular, "Hear my voice, O God," but it ends by comprehending all the righteous. He who is most anxious about his own salvation will be found to be the man of the truest and widest love to others; while, he who talks most of unselfishness in religion is generally the most selfish. We cannot take a more efficient method for benefiting others than by being earnestly prayerful for ourselves that we may be preserved from sin. Our example will in itself be useful, and our godliness, by putting power into testimony, will increase the value of every rebuke, exhortation, or encouragement we may utter. Our sin is or will be the church's sorrow, and the way to make all the upright rejoice is to be upright ourselves.—*C.H. S.*

Verse 10.—"*Shall glory.*" This retribution is expressed in the original in the word *halal;* and *halal*, to those translators that made up our Book of Common Prayer, presented the signification of gladness, for so it is there: "*They shall be glad.*" So it did to the translators that came after, for there it is, "*They shall rejoice;*" and to our last translators it seemed to signify glory, "*They shall glory,*" say they. But the first translation of all into our language (which was long before any of these three), calls it *praise*, and puts it into the passive: "*All men of rightful heart shall be praised.*" And so truly *jithhalelu*, in the original, bears it, nay, requires it; which is not of praise which they shall give to God, but of a praise that they shall receive for having served God with an upright heart; not that they shall praise God in doing so, but that godly men shall praise them for having done so. All this will grow naturally out of the root; for the root of this word is *lucere, splendere*, to shine out in the eyes of men, and to create in them a holy and a reverential

admiration; as it was John Baptist's praise, that he was "*A burning and a shining lamp.*" Properly it is, by a good and a holy exemplary life, to occasion others to set a right value upon holiness, and to give a due respect for holy men. . . . "*Shall glory.*" It is so far from diminishing this glory, as that it exalts our consolation that God places this retribution in the future; if they do not yet, certainly they *shall* glory, and if they do now, that glory shall not go out, still they shall, they shall for ever glory.—*John Donne.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. *The preservation of life desired.* 1. The desire expressed. 2. Qualified—from violent death, from fear of, etc. II. *The preservation of life prayed for.* 1. For self-improvement. 2. For usefulness. 3. For the divine glory.—*G. R.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—Applied to Satan. I. *The danger considered.* 1. The enemy, wicked, mighty, malicious, experienced. 2. His counsel. He tempts cunningly, and with deliberation. 3. The secrecy of it. He may be exciting others against me, or sowing evil in myself. II. *The deliverance implored.* "Hide me." 1. Keep me from being tempted. 2. Keep me from evil when tempted. 3. Bring me out of it all unharmed. 4. Meanwhile, let me be in thy secret place. III. *The consolation of faith.* 1. God does preserve praying ones. 2. Our enemy is *his* enemy. 3. He has preserved us. 4. We are his own. 5. His honour is involved.

Verse 3.—"*Bitter words.*" An excellent topic in reference both to the sinner and to professed saints.

Verse 3.—*The whetting of the tongue.* Fresh faults discovered, evil motives imputed, exaggerations invented, lies forged, inuendoes suggested, old slanders furbished, and ancient hatreds rekindled.

Verse 5.—The mutual encouragements of sinners a rebuke to professors who dishearten each other.

Verse 6 (*two first clauses*).—The fault-hunter; his motive, his character, his pretences, and his punishment.

Verse 9.—I. *The subject for consideration*—Judgments upon the wicked. 1. As judgments. 2. As judgments from God—that work of God—his doing. II. *The consideration of the subject.* 1. They are intended to be considered by others. 1. They are to be considered wisely. III. *The effect of this consideration.* 1. Fear of God. 2. Praise to God; shall declare, etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—I. *The persons.* 1. What they are, in distinction from others; the righteous; the justified. 2. What they are in themselves; upright in heart; not perfect, but sincere. II. *Their privilege.* 1. Amidst all their persecutions to joy in God. 2. Amidst all their dangers to trust in God.—*G. R.*

Verses 9, 10.—I. An act of God; something of his doing. II. Its effect upon men in general: "*All men shall fear, and shall declare,*" etc. III. A special duty resulting from it, incumbent on good men: "*The righteous,*" etc.—*H. Dove.*

PSALM LXV.

TITLE.—*This title is very similar to many we have before studied.* To the Chief Musician. *It is consigned to the care of the usual overseer of song. When a man does his work well, there is no use in calling in others for novelty's sake.* A Psalm *and* Song of David. *The Hebrew calls it a* Shur and Mizmor, *a combination of psalm and song, which may be best described by the term, "A Lyrical Poem." In this case the psalm may be said or sung, and be equally suitable. We have had two such Psalms before, Psalms XXX. and XLVIII., and we have now the first of a little series of four following each other. It was meet that Psalms of pleading and longing should be followed by hymns of praise.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.—*David sings of the glory of God in his church, and in the fields of nature: here is the song both of grace and providence. It may be that he intended hereby to commemorate a remarkably plentiful harvest, or to compose a harvest hymn for all ages. It appears to have been written after a violent rebellion had been quelled, verse* 7, *and foreign enemies had been subdued by signal victory, verse* 8. *It is one of the most delightful hymns in any language.*

We shall view in the first four verses the way of approach to God, then from 5 *to* 8 *we shall see the Lord in answer to prayer performing wonders for which he is praised, and then from* 9—13 *we shall sing the special harvest-song.*

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

2 O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

3 Iniquities prevail against me: *as for* our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

4 Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple.

1. *"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion."* Though Babylon adores Antichrist, Zion remains faithful to her King; to him, and to him only, she brings her perpetual oblation of worship. Those who have seen in Zion the blood of sprinkling, and know themselves to belong to the church of the firstborn, can never think of her without presenting humble praise to Zion's God; his mercies are too numerous and precious to be forgotten. The praises of the saints wait for a signal from the divine Lord, and when he shows his face they burst forth at once. Like a company of musicians gathered to welcome and honour a prince, who wait till he makes his appearance, so do we reserve our best praises till the Lord reveals himself in the assembly of his saints; and, indeed, till he shall descend from heaven in the day of his appearing. Praise also waits like a servant or courtier in the royal halls—gratitude is humble and obedient. Praise attends the Lord's pleasure, and continues to bless him, whether he shows tokens of present favour or no; she is not soon wearied, but all through the night she sings on in sure hope that the morning cometh. We shall continue to wait on, tuning our harps, amid the tears of earth; but O what harmonies will those be which we will pour forth, when the home-bringing is come, and the King shall appear in his glory. The passage may be rendered "praise is silent for thee;" it is calm, peaceful, and ready to adore thee in quietness. Or, it may mean, our praise is but silence compared with thy deservings, O God. Or, in solemn silence we worship thee, because our praise cannot be uttered; accept, therefore, our silence as praise. Or, we are so engrossed in thy praise, that to all other things we are dumb; we have no tongue for anything but thee. Perhaps the poet best expressed the thought of the Psalmist when he said—

> "A sacred reverence checks our songs,
> And praise sits silent on our tongues."

Certainly, when the soul is most filled with adoring awe, she is least content with her own expressions, and feels most deeply how inadequate are all mortal songs to proclaim the divine goodness. A church, bowed into silent adoration by a profound sense of divine mercy, would certainly offer more real praise than the sweetest voices aided by pipes and strings; yet, vocal music is not to be neglected, for this sacred hymn was meant to be sung. It is well before singing to have the soul placed in a waiting attitude, and to be humbly conscious that our best praise is but silence compared with Jehovah's glory.

"*And unto thee shall the vow be performed.*" Perhaps a special vow made during a season of drought and political danger. Nations and churches must be honest and prompt in redeeming their promises to the Lord, who cannot be mocked with impunity. So, too, must individuals. We are not to forget our vows, or to redeem them to be seen of men—*unto God* alone must they be performed, with a single eye to his acceptance. Believers are all under covenant, which they made at conversion, and have renewed upon being baptised, joining the church, and coming to the table, and some of them are under special pledges which they entered into under peculiar circumstances: these are to be piously and punctually fulfilled. We ought to be very deliberate in promising, and very punctilious in performing. A vow unkept will burn the conscience like a hot iron. Vows of service, of donation, of praise, or whatever they may be, are no trifles; and in the day of grateful praise they should, without fail, be fulfilled to the utmost of our power.

2. "*O thou that hearest prayer.*" This is thy name, thy nature, thy glory. God not only has heard, but is now hearing prayer, and always must hear prayer, since he is an immutable being, and never changes in his attributes. What a delightful title for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Every right and sincere prayer is as surely heard as it is offered. Here the Psalmist brings in the personal pronoun "*thou*," and we beg the reader to notice how often "thou," "thee," and "thy," occur in this hymn; David evidently believed in a personal God, and did not adore a mere idea or abstraction. "*Unto thee shall all flesh come.*" This shall encourage men of all nations to become suppliants to the one and only God, who proves his Deity by answering those who seek his face. Flesh they are, and therefore weak; frail and sinful, they need to pray; and thou art such a God as they need, for thou art touched with compassion, and dost condescend to hear the cries of poor flesh and blood. Many come to thee now in humble faith, and are filled with good, but more shall be drawn to thee by the attractiveness of thy love, and at length the whole earth shall bow at thy feet. To come to God is the life of true religion; we come weeping in conversion, hoping in supplication, rejoicing in praise, and delighting in service. False gods must in due time lose their deluded votaries, for man when enlightened will not be longer befooled; but each one who tries the true God is encouraged by his own success to persuade others also, and so the kingdom of God comes to men, and men come to it.

3. "*Iniquities prevail against me.*" Others accuse and slander me, and in addition my own sins rise up and would beset me to my confusion, were it not for the remembrance of the atonement which covers every one of my iniquities. Our sins would, but for grace, prevail against us in the court of divine justice, in the court of conscience, and in the battle of life. Unhappy is the man who despises these enemies, and worse still is he who counts them his friends! He is best instructed who knows their deadly power, and flees for refuge to him who pardons iniquity. "*As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.*" Thou dost cover them all, for thou hast provided a covering propitiation, a mercy-seat which wholly covers thy law. Note the word "*our*," the faith of the one penitent who speaks for himself in the first clause, here embraces all the faithful in Zion; and he is so persuaded of the largeness of forgiving love that he leads all the saints to sing of the blessing. What a comfort that iniquities which prevail against us, do not prevail against God. They would keep us away from God, but he sweeps them away from before himself and us; they are too strong for us, but not for our Redeemer, who is mighty, yea, and almighty to save. It is worthy of note that as the priest washed in the laver before he sacrificed, so David leads us to obtain purification from sin before we enter upon the service of song. When we have washed our robes and made them white in his blood, then shall we acceptably sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

4. "*Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee.*" After cleansing comes benediction, and truly this is a very rich one. It comprehends

both election, effectual calling, access, acceptance, and sonship. First, we are chosen of God, according to the good pleasure of his will, and this alone is blessedness. Then, since we cannot and will not come to God of ourselves, he works graciously in us, and attracts us powerfully; he subdues our unwillingness, and removes our inability by the almighty workings of his transforming grace. This also is no slight blessedness. Furthermore, we, by his divine drawings, are made nigh by the blood of his Son, and brought near by his Spirit, into intimate fellowship; so that we have access with boldness, and are no longer as those who are afar off by wicked works: here also is unrivalled blessedness. To crown all, we do not come nigh in peril of dire destruction, as Nadab and Abihu did, but we approach as chosen and accepted ones, to become dwellers in the divine household: this is heaped-up blessedness, vast beyond conception. But dwelling in the house we are treated as sons, for the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever. Behold what manner of love and blessedness the Father has bestowed upon us that we may dwell in his house, and go no more out for ever. Happy men who dwell at home with God. May both writer and reader be such men. "*That he may dwell in thy courts.*" Acceptance leads to abiding: God does not make a temporary choice, or give and take; his gifts and calling are without repentance. He who is once admitted to God's courts shall inhabit them for ever; he shall be

> "No more a stranger or a guest,
> But like a child at home."

Permanence gives preciousness. Terminating blessings are but half-blessings. To dwell in the courts of the Great King is to be ennobled; to dwell there for ever is to be emparadised: yet such is the portion of every man whom God has chosen and caused to approach unto him, though once his iniquities prevailed against him.

5 *By* terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; *who art* the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off *upon* the sea:

6 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; *being* girded with power:

7 Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

5. "*By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.*" God's memorial is that he hears prayer, and his glory is that he answers it in a manner fitted to inspire awe in the hearts of his people. The saints, in the commencement of the Psalm, offered praise in reverential silence; and now, in the like awe-stricken spirit, they receive answers to their prayers. The direct allusion here is, no doubt, to the Lord's overthrow of the enemies of his people in ways calculated to strike terror into all beholders; his judgments in their severe righteousness were calculated to excite fear both among friends and foes. Who would not fear a God whose blows are so crushing? We do not always know what we are asking for when we pray; when the answer comes, the veritable answer, it is possible that we may be terrified by it. We seek sanctification, and trial will be the reply: we ask for more faith, and more affliction is the result: we pray for the spread of the gospel, and persecution scatters us. Nevertheless, it is good to ask on, for nothing which the Lord grants in his love can do us any harm. Terrible things will turn out to be blessed things after all, when they come in answer to prayer.

See in this verse how righteousness and salvation are united, the terrible things with the gracious answers. Where but in Jesus could they be blended? The God who saves may answer our prayers in a way which puts unbelief into a flutter; but when faith spies the Saviour, she remembers that "things are not what they seem," and she is of good courage. He who is terrible is also our refuge from terror when we see him in the Well-beloved. "*Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth.*" The dwellers in the far-off isles trust in God; those most remote from Zion yet confide in the ever living Jehovah. Even those who dwell in countries, frozen or torrid, where nature puts on her varied terrors, and those who see dread

wonders on the deep, yet fly from the terrors of God and place their confidence in the God of terrors. His arm is strong to smite, but also strong to save. "*And of them that are afar off upon the sea.*" Both elements have their elect bands of believers. If the land gave Moses elders, the sea gave Jesus apostles. Noah, when all was ocean, was as calm with God as Abraham in his tent. All men are equally dependent upon God: the seafaring man is usually most conscious of this, but in reality he is not more so than the husbandman, nor the husbandman than anyone else. There is no room for self-confidence on land or sea, since God is the only true confidence of men on earth or ocean. Faith is a plant of universal growth, it is a tree of life on shore and a plant of renown at sea; and, blessed be God, those who exercise faith in him anywhere shall find that he is swift and strong to answer their prayers. A remembrance of this should quicken our devotions when we approach unto the Lord our God.

6. "*Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains.*" He, as it were, fixed them in their sockets, and preserved them from falling by earthquake or storm. The firmest owe their stability to him. Philosophers of the forget-God school are too much engrossed with their laws of upheaval to think of the Upheaver. Their theories of volcanic action and glacier action, etc., etc., are frequently used as bolts and bars to shut the Lord out of his own world. Our poet is of another mind, and sees God's hand settling Alps and Andes on their bases, and therefore he sings in his praise. Let me for ever be just such an unphilosophic simpleton as David was, for he was nearer akin to Solomon than any of our modern theorists. "*Being girded with power.*" The Lord is so himself, and he therefore casts a girdle of strength around the hills, and there they stand, braced, belted, and bulwarked with his might. The poetry is such as would naturally suggest itself to one familiar with mountain scenery; power everywhere meets you, sublimity, massive grandeur, and stupendous force are all around you; and God is there, the author and source of all.

Let us learn that we poor puny ones, if we wish for true establishment, must go to the strong for strength. Without him, the everlasting hills would crumble; how much more shall all our plans, projects, and labours come to decay. Repose, O believer, where the mountains find their bases—viz., in the undiminished might of the Lord God.

7. "*Which stilleth the noise of the seas.*" His soft breath smooths the sea into a glass, and the mountainous waves into ripples. God does this. Calms are of the God of peace; it needs not that we look for a hurricane when it is said that he cometh. He walked of old in the garden in the cool of the day; he is resting even now, for his great seventh day is not yet over, and he is always "the Lord and giver of peace." Let mariners magnify the God who rules the waves. "*The noise of their waves.*" Each separate brawler amid the riot of the storm is quieted by the divine voice. "*And the tumult of the people.*" Nations are as difficult to rule as the sea itself, they are as fitful, treacherous, restless, and furious; they will not brook the bridle nor be restrained by laws. Canute had not a more perilous sea by the rising billows than many a king and emperor has had when the multitude have been set on mischief, and have grown weary of their lords. God alone is King of nations. The sea obeys him, and the yet more tumultuous nations are kept in check by him. Human society owes its preservation to the continued power of God: evil passions would secure its instant dissolution; envy, ambition, and cruelty would create anarchy to-morrow, if God did not prevent; whereof we have had clear proof in the various French revolutions. Glory be unto God who maintains the fabric of social order, and checks the wicked, who would fain overthrow all things. The child of God in seasons of trouble should fly at once to him who stills the seas: nothing is too hard for him.

8. "*They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens.*" Signs of God's presence are not few, nor confined to any one region. Zembla sees them as well as Zion, and Terra del Fuego as surely as the Terra Sacra. These tokens are sometimes terrible phenomena in nature—such as earthquake, pestilence, tornado, or storm; and when these are seen, even the most barbarous people tremble before God. At other times they are dread works of providence—such as the overthrow of Sodom, and the destruction of Pharaoh. The rumour of these judgments travels to earth's utmost verge, and impresses all people with a fear and trembling at such a just and holy God. We bless God that we are not afraid but rejoice at his tokens; with solemn awe we are glad when we behold his mighty acts. We fear,

but not with slavish fear. *"Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice."* East and west are made happy by God's favour to the dwellers therein. Our rising hours are bright with hope, and our evening moments mellow with thanksgiving. Whether the sun go forth or come in we bless God and rejoice in the gates of the day. When the fair morning blushes with the rosy dawn we rejoice; and when the calm evening smiles restfully we rejoice still. We do not believe that the dew weeps the death of the day; we only see jewels bequeathed by the departing day for its successor to gather up from the earth. Faith, when she sees God, rounds the day with joy. She cannot fast, because the bridegroom is with her. Night and day are alike to her, for the same God made them and blessed them. She would have no rejoicing if God did not make her glad; but, blessed be his name, he never ceases to make joy for those who find their joy in him.

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, *which* is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

12 They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side.

13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

9. *"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it."* God's visits leave a blessing behind; this is more than can be said of every visitor. When the Lord goes on visitations of mercy, he has abundance of necessary things for all his needy creatures. He is represented here as going round the earth, as a gardener surveys his garden, and as giving water to every plant that requires it, and that not in small quantities, but until the earth is drenched and soaked with a rich supply of refreshment. O Lord, in this manner visit thy church, and my poor, parched, and withering piety. Make thy grace to overflow towards my graces; water me, for no plant of thy garden needs it more.

> " My stock lies dead, and no increase
> Doth my dull husbandry improve;
> O let thy graces without cease
> Drop from above."

"Thou greatly enrichest it." Millions of money could not so much enrich mankind as the showers do. The soil is made rich by the rain, and then yields its riches to man; but God is the first giver of all. How truly rich are those who are enriched with grace; this is great riches. *"With the river of God, which is full of water.* The brooks of earth are soon dried up, and all human resources, being finite, are liable to failure; but God's provision for the supply of rain is inexhaustible; there is no bottom or shore to his river. The deluge poured from the clouds yesterday may be succeeded by another to-morrow, and yet the waters above the firmament shall not fail. How true is this in the realm of grace; there " the river of God is full of water," and " of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." The ancients in their fables spake of Pactolus, which flowed over sands of gold; but this river of God, which flows above and from which the rain is poured, is far more enriching; for, after all, the wealth of men lies mainly in the harvest of their fields, without which even gold would be of no value whatever. *"Thou preparest them corn."* Corn is specially set apart to be the food of man. In its various species it is a divine provision for the nutriment of our race, and is truly called the staff of life. We hear in commerce of " prepared corn-flour," but God prepared it long before man touched it. As surely as the manna was prepared of God for the tribes, so certainly is corn made and sent by God for our daily use. What is the difference whether we gather wheat-ears or manna, and what matters it if the first comes upward to us, and the second downward? God is as much

present beneath as above; it is as great a marvel that food should rise out of the dust, as that it should fall from the skies. "*When thou hast so provided for it.*" When all is prepared to produce corn, the Lord puts the finishing stroke, and the grain is forthcoming; not even, when all the material is prepared, will the wheat be perfected without the continuous and perfecting operation of the Most High. Blessed be the Great Householder; he does not suffer the harvest to fail, he supplies the teeming myriads of earth with bread enough from year to year. Even thus does he vouchsafe heavenly food to his redeemed ones: "He hath given meat unto them that fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant."

10. "*Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof.*" Ridge and furrow are drenched. The ridges beaten down and settled, and the furrows made to stand like gutters flooded to the full. "*Thou makest it soft with showers.*" The drought turned the clods into iron, but the plenteous showers dissolve and loosen the soil. "*Thou blessest the springing thereof.*" Vegetation enlivened by the moisture leaps into vigour, the seed germinates and sends forth its green shoot, and the smell is that of a field which the Lord has blessed. All this may furnish us with a figure of the operations of the Holy Spirit in beating down high thoughts, filling our lowly desires, softening the soul, and causing every holy thing to increase and spread.

11. "*Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.*" The harvest is the plainest display of the divine bounty, and the crown of the year. The Lord himself conducts the coronation, and sets the golden coronal upon the brow of the year. Or, we may understand the expression to mean that God's love encircles the year as with a crown; each month has its gems, each day its pearl. Unceasing kindness girdles all time with a belt of love. The providence of God in its visitations makes a complete circuit, and surrounds the year. "*And thy paths drop fatness.*" The footsteps of God, when he visits the land with rain, create fertility. It was said of the Tartar hordes, that grass grew no more where their horses' feet had trodden; so, on the contrary, it may be said that the march of Jehovah, the Fertiliser, may be traced by the abundance which he creates. For spiritual harvests we must look to him, for he alone can give "times of refreshing" and feasts of Pentecost.

12. "*They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness.*" Not alone where man is found do the showers descend, but away in the lone places, where only wild animals have their haunt, there the bountiful Lord makes the refreshing rain to drop. Ten thousand oases smile while the Lord of mercy passes by. The birds of the air, the wild goats, and the fleet stags rejoice as they drink from the pools, new filled from heaven. The most lonely and solitary souls God will visit in love. "*And the little hills rejoice on every side.*" On all hands the eminences are girt with gladness. Soon they languish under the effects of drought, but after a season of rain they laugh again with verdure.

13. "*The pastures are clothed with flocks.*" The clothing of man first clothes the fields. Pastures appear to be quite covered with numerous flocks when the grass is abundant. "*The valleys also are covered over with corn.*" The arable as well as the pasture land is rendered fruitful. God's clouds, like ravens, bring us both bread and flesh. Grazing flocks and waving crops are equally the gifts of the Preserver of men, and for both praise should be rendered. Sheep-shearing and harvest should both be holiness unto the Lord. "*They shout for joy.*" The bounty of God makes the earth vocal with his praise, and in opened ears it lifts up a joyous shout. The cattle low out the divine praises, and the rustling ears of grain sing a soft sweet melody unto the Lord.

> "Ye forests bend, ye harvests wave to him;
> Breathe your still song into the reaper's heart,
> As home he goes beneath the joyous moon.
> Bleat out afresh, ye hills; ye mossy rocks
> Retain the sound; the broad responsive low
> Ye valleys raise; for the GREAT SHEPHERD reigns,
> And his *unsuffering* kingdom yet will come."

"*They also sing.*" The voice of nature is articulate to God; it is not only a shout, but a song. Well ordered are the sounds of animate creation as they combine with the equally well-tuned ripple of the waters, and sighings of the wind. Nature has no discords. Her airs are melodious, her chorus is full of harmony. All, all is for the Lord; the world is a hymn to the Eternal, blessed is he who, hearing, joins in it, and makes one singer in the mighty chorus.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

From Psalm lxv. onwards we find ourselves in the midst of a series of Psalms which, with a varying arrangement of the words, are inscribed both מִזְמוֹר and שִׁיר (lxv.—lxviii.) The two words signify a *Psalm-song*. This series, as is universally the case, is arranged according to the community of prominent watchwords. In Psalm lxv. 2 we read: *"To thee is the vow paid;"* and in lxvi. 13: *"I will pay thee my vows;"* in Psalm lxvi. 20: *"Blessed be Elohim;"* and in lxvii. 8: *"Elohim shall bless us."* Besides Psalms lxvi. and lxvii. have this feature in common, that לַמְנַצֵּחַ, which occurs fifty-five times in the Psalter, is accompanied by the name of the poet in every instance, with the exception of these two anonymous Psalms. The frequently occurring *Sela* of both Psalms also indicates that they were intended to have a musical accompaniment.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Title.—A Psalm of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.—The Psalm is assigned to them, not as being its authors, but because it is supposed that it was often rehearsed by them at the beginning of the return from captivity, to teach us that those things ought especially to be sung concerning that happy restoration which these prophets were wont to sing about. But this inscription is not in the Hebrew text, nor in some translations, but only in certain versions. Jeremiah was not carried away to Babylon; see Jeremiah xxxix. 11, etc. Moreover, both he and Ezekiel died before the return.—*Pool's Synopsis.*

Whole Psalm.—The author of the Psalm is mentioned, but not the date of its composition; but, from an examination of its contents, it would seem to have been intended as a song for the "day of atonement," and for the "feast of tabernacles," which followed immediately after. Num. xxix. 7, 12. The sins of the year were then "covered over," and a thorough purification of the sanctuary was made by a special service of expiation. The labours of the year were also by that time all concluded, and its fruits secured; and Israel could look on the goodness of God towards them, through its entire extent; and this Psalm was penned to serve as a fitting expression of their feelings. It opens with a reference to the "silence" that reigned in the sanctuary; to the profound, unbroken, solemn stillness that reigned within it; while, in deep abasement, the people without waited in hushed expectation the return of their high priest from the immediate presence of God. Lev. xvi. 17. It goes on to a statement of the blessedness of those who are accepted of God, and admitted to fellowship with One so unspeakably great; and concludes with a description of the various processes by which the Almighty had fitted the earth to yield a year's supplies for his people.—*Dalman Hapstone, in "The Ancient Psalms in appropriate Metres. . . . . with Notes."* 1867.

Whole Psalm.—We have here a psalm of thanksgiving to be sung in the Temple during a public festivity, at which the sacrifices were to be offered which had been vowed during a long and protracted drought (verses 1, 2). To the thanksgiving, however, for a gracious rain, and the hope of an abundant harvest (verses 9—14), is added gratitude for a signal deliverance during a time of distress and commotion affecting all the nations around (verses 7, 8). Thus the Psalm becomes a song of praise to Jehovah as the God of history and the God of nature alike.—*From the "Psalms Chronologically Arranged. By Four Friends."* 1867.

Whole Psalm.—This is a charming psalm. Coming after the previous sad ones, it seems like the morning after the darkness of night. There is a dewy freshness about it, and from the ninth verse to the end there is a sweet succession of landscape pictures that reminds one of the loveliness of spring; and truly it is a description, in natural figures, of that happy state of men's minds which will be the result of the "Day-Spring's visiting us from on high." Luke i. 7, 8.—*O. Prescott Hiller.*

Verse 1.—*"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion."* The believer sometimes seems to want words to exalt God, and stops, as it were, in the middle; his thoughts are overmatched. Thus praise waits, or is silent for God; it is silent to other things, and it waits to be employed about him. The soul is often put to a nonplus in crying up the grace of God, and wants words to express its greatness; yea, to answer the elevation of the thoughts; the heart indites a song of praise, but it cannot tune it. The Psalmist is stopped, as it were, through admiration (which

is *silentium intellectus*), for when the mind can rise no higher, it falls admiring; hence some say, God is most exalted with fewest words.—*Alexander Carmichael.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise waiteth for thee, O God.*" Mercy is not yet come, we expect it: whilst thou art preparing the mercy, we are preparing the praise.—*Edward Leigh in "Annotations on the Five Poetical Books of the Old Testament."* 1657.

Verse 1.—"*Praise waiteth on thee.*" As a servant, whose duty it is to do what thou commandest; or, *for thee;* is ready to be offered in thy courts for special favours. I think there is an allusion to the daily service in which God was praised. —*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise waiteth for thee, O God.*" *Te decet hymnus*, so the vulgar edition reads this place. To thee, O Lord, belong our hymns, our psalms, our praises, our cheerful acclamations, and conformable to that, we translate it, "*Praise waiteth for thee, O God.*" But if we take it according to the original, it must be *tibi silentium laus est*, Thy praise, O Lord, consists in silence. That man praises God best that says least of him; of his mysterious essence, of his unrevealed will and secret purposes.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 1.—"*To thee is silence and praise.*"—*Piscator.*

Verse 1.—The Hebrew may be rendered, "*Praise is silent for thee.*" As if the holy man had said, "Lord, I quietly wait for a time to praise thee; my soul is not in an uproar because thou stayest. I am not murmuring, but rather stringing my harp and tuning my instrument with much patience and confidence, that I may be ready to strike up when the joyful news of my deliverance come."—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 1.—"*To thee belongeth silence-praise.*" Praise without any tumult. (Alexander.) It has been said, "The most intense feeling is the most calm, being condensed by repression." And Hooker says of prayer, "The very silence which our unworthiness putteth us unto doth itself make request for us, and that in the confidence of his grace. Looking inward, we are stricken dumb; looking upward, we speak and prevail." Horsley renders it, "Upon thee is the repose of prayer."—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—*Praise is silent for thee.*" The Chaldee interpretation is, that our praise is not sufficiently worthy that we should praise God. The very praises of angels are esteemed as nothing before him. For so its rendering is: "*Before thee, O God, whose Majesty dwells in Zion, the praise of angels is regarded as silence.*" . . . . Jerome's version here is, "*To thee silence is praise, O God, in Zion.*" Atheneus says, silence is a divine thing; and Thomas à Kempis calls silence the nutriment of devotion.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—"*To thee belong submission, praise, O God, in Sion.*" [Version of the American Bible Union.] Thou hast a claim for submission in times of sorrow, for praise in seasons of joy.—*Thomas J. Conant, in "The Psalms. . . with occasional Notes."* 1871.

Verse 1.—"*Vow.*" A vow is a voluntary and deliberate promise made unto God in an extraordinary case. "It is a religious promise made unto God in a holy manner:" so a modern writer defines it.* It is a "holy and religious promise, advisedly and freely made unto God, concerning something which to do or to omit appeareth to be grateful and well-pleasing unto him:" so Bucanus. I forbear Aquinas's definition of a vow. If these which I have given satisfy not, then view it in the words of Peter Martyr, a man of repute, and well-known to our own nation in the days of Edward VI., of ever-blessed memory: "It is a holy promise, whereby we bind ourselves to offer somewhat unto God." There is one more who defines it, and he is a man whose judgment, learning, and holiness hath perfumed his name; it is learned Perkins, in his "Cases of Conscience." "A vow," saith he, "is a promise made unto God of things lawful and possible."—*Henry Hurst* (—1690), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—The reference here is to the vows or promises which the people had made in view of the manifested judgments of God, and the proofs of his goodness. Those vows they were now ready to carry out in expressions of praise.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*O thou that hearest prayer,*" etc. This is one of his titles of honour, he is a God that hears prayer; and it is as truly ascribed to him as mercy or justice.

---

* Szegedinus.

He hears all prayer, therefore, *"unto thee shall all flesh come."* He never rejects any that deserves the name of prayer, how weak, how unworthy soever the petitioner be. *"All flesh!"* And will he (may faith say) reject mine only? Rom. x. 12, "He is rich unto all that call upon him;" Ps. lxxxvi. 5, "Thou art plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee;" Heb. xi. 6. "A rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This must be believed as certainly as we believe that God is. As sure as God is the true God, so sure is it that none who sought him diligently departed from him without a reward. He rewards all seekers, for *indefinita in materia necessaria æquipollet universali.* And if all, why not me? You may as well donbt that he is God, as doubt that he will not reward, not hear prayer; so James i. 5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 2.—*"O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come."* What avails prayer, if it be not heard? But God's people need not lay it aside on that score. Our text bears two things with respect to that matter. 1. A comfortable title ascribed to God, with the unanimous consent of all the sons of Zion, who are all praying persons: *"O thou that hearest prayer."* He speaks to *"God in Zion,"* or Zion's God, that is in New Testament language, to God in Christ. An absolute God thundereth on sinners from Sinai, there can be no comfortable intercourse betwixt God and them, by the law: but in Zion, from the mercy-seat, in Christ, he is the hearer of prayer; they give in their supplications, and he graciously hears them. Such faith of it they have, that praise waits there for the prayer-hearing God. 2. The effect of the savour of this title of God, spread abroad in the world: *"Unto thee shall all flesh come:"* not only Jews, but Gentiles. The poor Gentiles who have long in vain implored the aid of their idols, hearing and believing that God is the hearer of prayer, will flock to him, and present their petitions. They will throng in about his door, where by the gospel they understand beggars are so well served. They will *"come in even unto thee,"* Heb. They will come in even to thy seat, thy throne of grace, even unto thyself through the Mediator. . . . That God is the hearer of prayer, and will hear the prayers of his people, is evident from these considerations:—First. The supernatural instinct of praying that is found in all that are born of God, Gal. iv. 6. It is as natural for them to fall a praying when the grace of God has touched their hearts, as for children when they are born into the world to cry, or to desire the breasts. Zechariah xii. 10, compared with Acts ix. 11, where in the account that is given of Paul, at his conversion, it is particularly noticed, "Behold he prayeth." Hence the whole saving change on a soul comes under the character of this instinct. Jeremiah iii. 4, 19. Secondly. The intercession of Christ, Rom. viii. 34. It is a great part of the work of Christ's intercession to present the prayers of his people before his Father, Rev. viii. 4, to take their causes in hand, contained in their supplications. 1 John ii. 1. Thirdly. The promise of the covenant, whereby God's faithfulness is impawned for the hearing of prayer, as Matt. vii. 7: see also Isaiah lxv. 24. Fourthly. The many encouragements given in the Word to the people of God, to come with their cases unto the Lord by prayer. He invites them to his throne of grace with their petitions for supply of their needs. Cant. ii. 14. He sends afflictions to press them to come. Hosea v. 15. He gives them ground of hope of success, Psalm l. 15, whatever extremity their case is brought to. Isaiah xli. 17. He shows them that however long he may delay for their trial, yet praying and not fainting shall be successful at length. Luke xviii. 8. Fifthly. The gracious nature of God, with the endearing relations he stands in to his people. Exodus xxii. 27. He wants not power and ability to fulfil the holy desires of his people; he is gracious, and will withhold no good from them that they really need. He has the bowels of a father to pity them, the bowels of a mother to her sucking child. He has a most tender sympathy with them in all their afflictions, the touches on them are as on the apple of his eye; and he never refuses them a request, but for their good. Rom. viii. 28. Sixthly. The experiences which the saints of all ages have had of the answer of prayer. The faith of it brings them to God at conversion, as the text intimates; and they that believe cannot be disappointed. Lastly. The present ease and relief that prayer sometimes gives to the saints, while yet the full answer of prayer is not come. Psalm cxxxviii. 3.—*Thomas Boston* (1676—1732).

Verse 2.—*"O thou that hearest prayer."* Observe 1. That God is called the hearer of prayers, since he hears, without distinction of persons, the prayers of every one poured forth with piety, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles; as in

Acts x. 34, 35. . . . . It follows, therefore, as a necessary consequence, *that all flesh should come to him.* 2. *To come to God*, is not indeed simply tantamount to saying, *to draw near to God*, to adore, call upon, and worship him, but to come *to Zion* for the purpose of adoring God; for it was just now said, that God must be praised in Zion, and to this the phrase, *to come to God*, must be referred. On this account also אל is not used, but עד, whose proper force is *right up to God*, or to the place of the habitation of God to render adoration to God.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*To thee shall all flesh come.*" To Christ "*all flesh comes*," that is (1), every sinner and carnal man. He himself says, Matt. ix. 13, "*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*" The Grecian priest in olden times, when approaching to receive the sacrifice, used to exclaim, *Who comes there?* and the reply was, *Many and good.* But God receives publicans and sinners, and inviteth them to his banquet, and eateth with them; but for the purpose of delivering them from sin. "*All flesh shall see the salvation of God.*" (2.) *All flesh* may be taken for the whole flesh, the whole body; all the senses and members of the body shall come to God that they may pay him tribute as their King.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"*All flesh.*" By *flesh* is meant man in his weakness and need.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"*Iniquities prevail against me.*" There are two ways in which iniquities may prevail against the Christian—the first is in the growing sense of his guilt, the second is in the power of their acting. This prevalence cannot be entire, for sin shall not have dominion over them; but it may be occasional and partial. There are two ways, according to Scripture, in which God purges our transgressions; and they always go together. The one is by pardoning mercy. Thus David prays "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." Thus the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. The other is by sanctifying grace: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." And this is as much the work of God as the former. He subdues our iniquities as well as forgives them.—*William Jay.*

Verse 3.—"*Iniquities.*" Literally, *Words of iniquities*, by some regarded as a pleonastic phrase for iniquities themselves. More probably, however, the phrase means the charge or accusation of iniquity.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 3.—The deeds of iniquity are said *to prevail against us*, in so far as they are too strong and powerful for us to deny or refute, and to subject us to a demand of those penalties which the sin merits; hence there remains no other refuge than the clemency and grace of God, the Judge. See Psalms cxliii. 2; cxxx. 3, 4.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 3.—"*As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.*" In the Hebrew it is, Thou shalt hide them. It alludes to the mercy-seat, which was covered with the wings of the Cherubim; so are the sins of the godly, when repented of, covered with the wings of mercy and favour.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou shalt purge them away;*" or "*Thou coverest them.*" The pronoun is emphatic, as though to express the conviction that God and God alone could do this.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—The holy prophets, and penmen of Scripture, have no grounds of hope for pardon of sin, save those which are common to the meanest of God's people; for David, in his confession, cometh in by himself alone, aggravating his own sins most: "*Iniquities prevail against me*," saith he. But in hope of pardon, he joineth with the rest of God's people, saying, "*As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verses 3, 4.—Now, soul, thou art molested with many lusts that infest thee, and obstruct thy commerce with heaven; yea, thou hast complained to thy God, what loss thou hast suffered by them; is it now presumption to expect relief from him, that he will rescue thee from them, that thou mayest serve him without fear, who is thy liege Lord? You have the saints for your precedents; who, when they have been in combat with their corruptions, yea, been foiled by them, have even then exercised their faith on God, and expected the ruin of those enemies, which, for the present, have overrun them. "*Iniquities prevail against me;*" he means his own sins; but see his faith; at the same time that they prevailed over him, he beholds God destroying them, as appears in the very next words, "*As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.*" See here, poor Christian, who thinkest that thou shalt never get above deck, holy David has a faith, not only for himself, but also for all believers, of whose number I suppose thee one. And mark the ground he hath

for this his confidence, taken from God's choosing act: *"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts."* As if he had said, Surely he will not let them be under the power of sin, or in want of his gracious succour, whom he sets so near himself. This is Christ's own argument against Satan, in the behalf of his people. *"The Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee."* Zech. iii. 2.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—*"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest."* The benedictions of the Psalter advance in spirituality and indicate a growth. The first blessed the godly reader of the word. Ps. i. 1. The second described the pardoned child. Ps. xxxii. 1. The third pronounced a blessing upon faith. Ps. xxxiv. 8 and Ps. xl. 4. The fourth commended the active and generous believer, abundant in deeds of charity (Ps. xli. 1); and this last, mounting to the fountain head of all benediction, blesses the elect of God.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—*"The man whom thou choosest."* Christ, whom God chose, and of whom he said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," is, indeed, "over all, God blessed for ever;" but in him his elect are blessed too. For his sake, not for our own, are we chosen; in him, not in ourselves, are we received by God, being accepted in the Beloved; and, therefore, in him are we blessed: he is our blessing. With that High Priest who has ascended into the holy place and entered within the vail, we enter into the house of God; we learn to dwell therein; we are filled with its spiritual joys; we partake of its holy mysteries and sacraments of grace and love.—*From "A Plain Commentary on the Book of Psalms,"* 1859.

Verse 4.—*"We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."* We shall be so filled, that nothing can be said to be wanting, we shall have nothing to look for outside. What can be wanting, in the house of him who made everything, who is the master of everything, who will be all unto all, in whom is an inexhaustible treasure of good. Of him is said in Psalm ciii. "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things;" and in Psalm xvii. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."—*Robert Bellarmine* (1542—1621).

Verse 4.—*"Satisfied with the goodness of thy house."* There is an allusion here to the oblations which were devoted to God, of which, also, sacred persons partook.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 5.—*"By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us."* The reason why he answers thus is, because what God doth for his people, take one thing with another, is still in order to the crucifying of the flesh; and what more *terrible* than such a death? We pray for *pleasing* things, as we imagine, but as we are flesh as well as spirit; so the flesh hath still a part in every prayer, and what we beg is partly carnal, and upon the matter, in part, we beg we know not what. Now, the answer as it comes from God, take all together, is spiritual, which is a crucifying thing to sinful flesh; hence comes in all the terror. . . . You pray for pardon; that is a pleasing thing, yet rightly understood not pleasing to the flesh; it mortifies corruption, breaks the heart, engages to a holy life: every answer from our God to us, one way or the other, first or last, shall tend that way. God useth so to give good things unto his children, as withal to give himself, and show to them his heavenly glory in what is done. . . . Now God is *terrible* to sinful flesh: so far as he appears, it dies. Jacob, therefore, whilst he conquered God in prayer, himself was overcome, signified by that touch upon his thigh put out of joint, where the chiefest stress in wrestling lies. When we are weak, then are we strong; because as God appears, we die unto ourselves and live in him.—*William Carter, in a Fast Sermon entitled, "Light in Darkness,"* 1648.

Verse 5.—God's judgments are these *terribilia*, terrible, fearful things; and he is faithful in his covenant; and by terrible judgments he will answer, that is, satisfy our expectation: and that is a covenient sense of these words. But the word which we translate "*righteousness*" here, is *tzadok*, and *tzadok* is not faithfulness, but holiness; and these "*terrible things*" are reverend things; and so Tremellius translates it, and well. *Per res reverendas, by reverend things*, things to which there belongs a reverence—"*thou shalt answer us.*" And thus, the sense of this place will be, that the God of our salvation (that is, God working in the Christian church) calls us to holiness, to righteousness, by terrible things; not terrible in the way and nature of revenge, but terrible, that is, stupendous, reverend,

mysterious; so that we should not make religion too homely a thing, but come always to all acts and exercises of religion with reverence, with fear, and trembling, and make a difference between religious and civil actions.—*John Donne.*

Verse 5.—God's deliverance of his church and people "*by terrible things*" is "*in righteousness.*" The meaning of the point is this: God in all the deliverances of his people by terrible things, doth therein manifest his righteousness. He doth therein nothing but what is according to righteousness and justice. To clear this, consider that there is a double righteousness, the righteousness of his word, which is the righteousness of his faithfulness; and the righteousness of his works, or his just acts of righteousness. And God doth manifest both these in his deliverance of his people by terrible things.—*John Bewick.* 1644.

Verse 5.—But what is the meaning when they say, "*wilt thou answer us?*" *Us*, who are inhabitants of Zion, who are constituted thy people, and truly worship Thee; *us*, moreover, in contact with enemies, who stirred up strife against us, and wished us ill; *us*, lastly, who aim at and seek the stability of the Kingdom and Church, and every kind of felicity and safety; with such things *wilt thou answer us*, it says, that is, for our advantage and benefit, and according to our vows, and therefore by pleading our cause, and deciding in our favour, and satisfying our desires; and in this way rendering us happy and establishing us, and subduing and confounding our foes.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 5.—"*Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth.*" How could God be the confidence of all the ends of the earth, if he does not reign and constantly work? The stability of the mountains is ascribed not to certain physical laws, but to the power of God. The noise of the seas is stilled not by laws without a powerful agent, but by the immediate influence of the Almighty Ruler. Human laws also may be the means of restraining persecution, but they are only means; and it is God who stilleth the tumult of the people. It is God who maketh the outgoings of the morning and evening to sing. The Scriptures, in viewing the works which God does through means, never lose sight of God himself. God visits and waters the earth: God prepares the corn. Without his own immediate power, the laws of nature could not produce their effect. How consoling and satisfactory is this view of Divine Providence, compared with that of an infidel philosophy, that forbids us to go further back than to the power of certain physical laws, which it grants, indeed, were at first established by God, but which can now perform their office without him.—*Alexander Carson.* (1776—1844).

Verse 5.—"*All the ends of the earth.*" God is *in himself potentially*, "*The confidence of all the ends of the earth.*" Hereafter he will be recognised by all to be so (Ps. xxiii. 27, 28), of which the Queen of Sheba's coming to Solomon "from the uttermost parts of the earth" is a type. Matt. xii. 42.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 5.—"*And of them that are afar off upon the sea.*" We must beseech God in the words of this Psalm, that since He stands upon the shore, and beholds our perils, he would make us, who are tossed on the turbulent sea, secure for his name's sake, and enable us to hold between Scylla and Charybdis, the middle course, and escaping the danger on either hand, with a sound vessel and safe merchandise, reach the port.—*Lorinus (from Augustine).*

Verses 5—8.—The divine watering of the earth is obviously symbolical of the descent of the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension; and when on the great day of Pentecost the devout Jews, "out of every nation under heaven," heard the apostle speaking in their several tongues the wonderful works of God, it was a testimony that God was beginning spiritually to make "*the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.*" To God "which stilleth the noise of the waves and the tumult of the people," the apostles betook themselves in prayer after their first conflict with Jewish authorities, the first conflict of the infant Christian community with the powers of this world: the language of the Psalm (ver. 5), "*O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea,*" is reflected in the opening words of their prayer on that occasion (Acts iv. 24), "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;" and if, when they prayed, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," it was no idle sign that "by terrible things in righteousness" were they being answered by the God of their salvation. These are, of course, mere illustrations of the inner harmony of Scripture; but, as such, they may not be without their value.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 6.—"*Setteth fast the mountains.*" It is by thy strength they have been raised, and by thy power they are girded about and preserved. He represents the mountains as being formed and pitched into their proper places by the mighty hand of God; and shows that they are preserved from splitting, falling down, or mouldering away, as it were, by a girdle by which they are surrounded. The image is very fine. They were hooped about by the divine power.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.*" That is, thou makest men to rejoice, they are glad, they rejoice in, or at, the outgoings in the morning. And at the evening men rejoice too, for then they go to their rest, being wearied with the labour of the day. Or, we may thus expound it: Thou makest men who live at the outgoings of the morning, and at the outgoings of the evening, to rejoice. As if it had been said, Thou makest the eastern people and the western people, all people from east to west, rejoice. And that which makes all people to rejoice, naturally, is the rising of light with them in the east, and the coming of light towards them in the west.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.*" How contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them (Gen. i. 4), both are equally welcome to the world in their season; it is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening which befriend the repose of the night. Doth the watchman wait for the morning? so doth the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it for the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in, and in which God was constantly honoured. Thou makest them to sing, so the word is; for every morning and every evening songs of praise were sung by the Levites; it was that which the duty of every day required. And we are to look upon our daily worship alone, and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily business, and the most delightful of our daily comforts; and if therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8.—Lyranus, Dionysius Carthusianus, Cajetanus, Placidus Parmensis, (who treads in the footsteps of Cajetanus though he does not mention him,) take the first clause to refer to the wonder of all mankind at the wonderful works of God on the land and the sea; and explain the second respecting the sacrifices which were wont to be offered in the morning and evening: that God made these acceptable to himself and delightful to those who offered them, especially after the return from captivity. In the beginning of the Psalm sacrifices are hinted at by *praise* and *vows*, as we have seen, and in the history of Esdra it is recorded, that *the morning and evening sacrifice were offered unto the Lord* by those who had returned; and that those who approached, when they entered, and others who had made their offerings, when they departed, gave praises to God. Hence it is here said, that the outgoings of the morning and of the evening, that is to say, when they who praise God go forth from either sacrifice, God will be well pleased, he will receive delight from that praise, and it will be grateful to him.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 8.—Figuratively, "*the outgoing of the morning,*" or dawn, is the light of grace in the beginning of conversion; "*the outgoing of the evening*" is the fine light of grace in the hour of death.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it,*" etc. How beautiful are the words of the inspired poet, read in this month of harvest, nearly three thousand years after they were written! For nearly three thousand years since the royal poet looked over the plains of Judea covered with the bounty of God, and broke forth into his magnificent hymn of praise, has the earth rolled on in her course, and the hand of God has blessed her, and all her children, with seed-time and harvest, with joy and abundance. The very steadfastness of the Almighty's liberality, flowing like a mighty ocean through the infinite vast of the universe, makes his creatures forget to wonder at its wonderfulness, to feel true thankfulness at its immeasurable goodness. The sun rises and sets so surely; the seasons run on amid all their changes with such inimitable truth, that we take as a matter of course that which is amazing beyond all stretch of imagination, and good beyond the widest expansion of the noblest human heart.

The poor man, with his half-dozen children, toils, and often dies, under the vain labour of winning bread for them. God feeds his family of countless myriads swarming over the surface of all countless worlds, and none know need but through the follies of themselves, or the cruelty of their fellows. God pours his light from innumerable suns on innumerable rejoicing planets; he waters them everywhere in the fittest moment; he ripens the food of globes and of nations, and gives them fair weather to garner it. And from age to age, amid his endless creatures of endless forms and powers, in the beauty and the sunshine, and the magnificence of nature, he seems to sing throughout creation the glorious song of his own divine joy, in the immortality of his youth, in the omnipotence of his nature, in the eternity of his patience, and the abounding boundlessness of his love. What a family hangs on his sustaining arm! The life and soul of infinite ages, and of uncounted worlds! Let a moment's failure of his power, of his watchfulness, or of his will to do good, occur, and what a sweep of death and annihilation through the universe! How stars would reel, planets expire, and nations perish! But from age to age, no such catastrophe occurs, even in the midst of national crimes, and of atheism that denies the hand that made and feeds it. Life springs with a power ever new; food springs up as plentifully to sustain it, and sunshine and joy are poured over all from the invisible throne of God, as the poetry of the existence which he has given. If there come seasons of dearth, or of failure, they come but as warnings to proud and tyrannic man. The potato is smitten that a nation may not be oppressed for ever; and the harvest is diminished that the laws of man's unnatural avarice may be rent asunder. And then, again, the sun shines, the rain falls, and the earth rejoices in a renewed beauty, and in a redoubled plenty.—*William Howitt, in "The Year-Book of the Country,"* 1850.

Verse 9.—*"Thou visitest the earth."* God seems to come with the coming-in of each of the seasons. In some respects, during winter, God seems like a man travelling into a far country. Darkness, and barrenness, and coldness, suggest absence on the part of God. The spring looks like his return. The great change it involves cheerily whispers, "He is not far from any one of us." In longer days, and a warmer atmosphere, and a revived earth, God comes to us. These things are not of necessity, but of providence. There are second causes, but above all these is the First Cause, intelligent, loving, and free, God rules in all, over all, and above all. He is not displaced or supplanted by the forces and agencies which he employs, he is not absorbed by care of other worlds, he is not indifferent toward the earth. A personal superintendence and providence are not beneath his dignity, or in anywise distasteful to him. As Maker, and Life-giver, and Father, *"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it."—Samuel Martin, in "Rain upon the Mown Grass, and other Sermons."* 1871.

Verse 9.—The Psalmist is here foretelling the gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the conversion of the nations of the earth to Christ.—*Origen.*

Verse 9.—The chiefs of Hebrew theology attribute four keys to God, which he never entrusted to any angel or seraph, and as the first of these they place *the key of rain.* He himself is said, in Job xxviii. 26, to give a law to the rain, and in chap. xxvi. 8, *to bind up the waters in the clouds.—Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 9.—*"With the river of God, which is full of water."* That is, the clouds figuratively described.—*Edward Leigh* (1602-3—1671).

Verse 9.—*"The river of God,"* as opposed to earthly streams. However these may fail, the divine resources are exhaustless.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 9.—*"The river of God."* The Chaldee paraphrase is, *From the fountain of God which is in the heavens, which is full of the rain-storms of blessing, thou wilt prepare their cornfields.—Lorinus.*

Verse 9.—*"Thou preparest their grain; for so dost thou prepare the earth."* [Version of Am. Bib. Un.] *"So,"* namely, with this design, and for this end. In the Hebrew, "for so dost thou prepare her:" referring to "the earth," which in Hebrew is *fem.*, while grain is *masc.* The meaning can be expressed in English only by using the word (earth) which the Hebrew pronoun represents. The English pronoun (it) would necessarily refer to "grain," and would represent neither the meaning of the Hebrew nor its form.—*Thomas J. Conant.*

Verse 9.—*"Thou preparest them corn,"* etc. Corn is the special gift of God to man. There are several interesting and instructive ideas connected with this view of it. All the other plants we use as food are unfit for this purpose in their natural condition, and require to have their nutritious qualities developed, and

their natures and forms to a certain extent changed by a gradual process of cultivation. There is not a single useful plant grown in our gardens and fields, but is utterly worthless for food in its normal or wild state; and man has been left to himself to find out, slowly and painfully, how to convert these crudities of nature into nutritious vegetables. But it is not so with corn. It has from the very beginning been an abnormal production. God gave it to Adam, we have every reason to believe, in the same perfect state of preparation for food in which we find it at the present day. It was made expressly for man, and given directly into his hands. "Behold," says the Creator, "I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth;" that is, all the cereal plants—such as corn, wheat, barley, rice, maize, etc., whose peculiar characteristic it is to produce seed. . . . .

There is another proof that corn was created for man's use, in the fact that it has never been found in a wild state. The primitive types from which all our other esculent plants were derived are still to be found in a state of nature in this or other countries. The wild beet and cabbage still grow on our sea-shores; the crab-apple and the sloe, the savage parents of our luscious pippins and plums, are still found among the trees of the wood; but where are the original types of our corn plants? Where are the wild grasses which, according to some authors, the cumulative processes of agriculture, carried on through successive ages, have developed into corn, wheat, and barley? Much has been written, and many experiments have been tried, to determine the natural origin of these cereals, but every effort has hitherto proved in vain. Reports have again and again been circulated that corn and wheat have been found growing wild in some parts of Persia and the steppes of Tartary, apparently far from the influence of cultivation; but when tested by botanical data, these reports have turned out, in every instance, to be unfounded. Corn has never been known as anything else than a cultivated plant.

History and observation probe that it cannot grow spontaneously. It is never, like other plants, self-sown and self-diffused. Neglected of men, it speedily disappears and becomes extinct. It does not return, as do all other cultivated varieties of plants, to a natural condition, and so become worthless as food, but utterly perishes, being constitutionally unfitted to maintain the struggle for existence with the aboriginal vegetation of the soil. All this proves that it must have been produced miraculously; or, in other words, given by God to man directly, in the same abnormal condition in which it now appears; for nature never could have developed or preserved it. In the mythologies of all the ancient nations it was confidently affirmed to have had a supernatural origin. The Greeks and Romans believed it to be the gift of the goddess Ceres, who taught her son, Triptolemus, to cultivate and distribute it over the earth; and from her, the whole class of plants received the name of cereals, which they now bear. And we only express the same truth when we say to him, whom these pagans ignorantly worshipped, *"Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it."*

Let me bring forth one more proof of special design, enabling us to recognise the hand of God in this mercy. Corn is universally diffused. It is almost the only species of plant which is capable of growing everywhere in almost every soil, in almost any situation. In some form or other, adapted to the various modifications of climate and physical conditions, which occur in different countries, it is spread over an area of the earth's surface as extensive as the occupancy of the human race. . . . .

Rice is grown in tropical countries where periodical rains and inundations, followed by excessive heat, occur, and furnishes the chief article of diet for the largest proportion of the human race. Wheat will not thrive in hot climates, but flourishes all over the temperate zone, at various ranges of elevation, and is admirably adapted to the wants of highly civilised communities. Maize spreads over an immense geographical area in the new world, where it has been known from time immemorial, and formed a principal element of that Indian civilisation which surprised the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru. Barley is cultivated in those parts of Europe and Asia where the soil and climate are not adapted for wheat; while oats and rye extend far into the black north, and disappear only from those desolate Arctic regions where man cannot exist in his social capacity. By these striking adaptations of different varieties of grain, containing the same essential ingredients, to different soils and climates, Providence has furnished the indispensable food for the sustenance of the human race throughout the whole habitable globe.

and all nations, and tribes, and tongues can rejoice together, as one great family, with the joy of harvest.—*Hugh Macmillan, in "Bible Teachings in Nature."* 1868.

Verses 9—13.—I do not know any picture of rural life that in any measure comes up to the exquisite description here brought before us, and which every one's heart at once recognises as so true to nature in all its branches. In the brief compass of five verses we have the whole scene vividly sketched, from the first preparation of the earth or soil; the provision of the corn-seed for the sower; the rain in its season, the former and the latter rain, watering the ridges, settling the furrows, and causing the seed to swell and to spring forth, and bud and blossom; then the crowning of the whole year in the appointed weeks of harvest, and men's hearts rejoicing before God according to the joy in harvest, the very foot-paths dropping with fatness, and the valleys shouting and singing for joy. Our harvest-homes are times of rejoicing too, but I would that our tillers and reapers of the soil would as piously refer all to God as the Psalmist did. "*Thou* waterest the earth, *Thou* greatly enrichest it, *Thou* preparest the corn, *Thou* waterest the ridges, *Thou* settlest the furrows, *Thou* makest it soft with showers, *Thou* blessest the springing thereof, *Thou* crownest the year with thy goodness." Not one word of man, of man's skill, or of man's labour, not one thought of self. How different from him whose grounds brought forth abundantly, and whose only thought was, "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 10.—The rain hath a *mollifying nature.* When the earth is like iron under our feet by long droughts or hard frosts, a few good showers supple it, and make it tender. David, speaking of the earth, saith, "*Thou makest it soft with showers.*" Jesus Christ hath a softening virtue. Sometimes the heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. . . . . If Christ would but now drop a few drops from heaven, the veriest flint in the congregation would be turned into a fountain of water. . . . . The rain hath a *fructifying virtue.* All the labour of the husbandman comes to nothing if either the former or the latter rain be denied. The Psalmist sets out this virtue of the rain in verses 9—13. Want of rain brings a famine upon the earth. . . . . If Christ do not rain, there will be no fruits; but if Christ will drop down his dew, the pastures will be green. All the labour and pains of the spiritual husbandman will come to nothing if the rain come not down from Christ; and, if he please to pour down showers, let not the eunuch say, "I am a dry tree." Though your heart be as dry and withered as the rod of Aaron was, yet if Christ will rain upon it, it shall both bud, and blossom, and bring forth almonds. . . . . The rain hath a *recreating virtue.* It causeth a gladness and cheerfulness in the hearts of men, and it begets a kind of briskness in the sensitive creatures: the birds chirp, the beasts of the field rejoice in their kind; yea, there is a kind of joy in the very inanimate creatures. The Psalmist speaks of this: "The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." When rain comes after a long drought, there is melody made by all creatures in this lower world. Jesus Christ hath a cheering virtue; he doth fill the soul with joy when he comes down into the soul; the heart that was dead, and dull, and heavy is made pleasant and joyful when these showers fall upon it. When Jesus Christ comes to the soul, he brings joy to the soul: "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." Isa. ix. 3.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 10.—Thou art the right Master-cultivator, who cultivates the land much more and much better than the farmer does. He does nothing more to it than break up the ground, and plough, and sow, and then lets it lie. But God must be always attending to it with rain and heat, and must do everything to make it grow and prosper, while the farmer lies at home and sleeps.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 11.—"*Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.*" Dr. William Whewell, in his Bridgewater Treatise, notes the evidence of design in the length of the year, and, although it may not perhaps be considered to be a direct comment on the text, I beg to quote it here, as it may awaken a train of thought, and make more conspicuous the goodness of God, in the revolution of the seasons. "If any change in the length of the year were to take place, the working of the botanical world would be thrown into utter disorder, the functions of plants would be entirely

deranged, and the whole vegetable kingdom involved in instant decay and rapid extinction. That this would be the case, may be collected from innumerable indications. Most of our fruit trees, for example, require the year to be of its present length. If the summer and the autumn were much shorter, the fruit could not ripen; if these seasons were much longer, the tree would put forth a fresh suit of blossoms, to be cut down by the winter. Or, if the year were twice its present length, a second crop of fruit would probably not be matured, for want, among other things, of an immediate season of rest and consolidation, such as the winter is. Our forest trees, in like manner, appear to need all the seasons of our present year for their perfection; the spring, summer, and autumn, for the development of their leaves and consequent formation of their *proper juice*, and of wood from this; and the winter for the hardening and solidifying the substance thus formed. . . . . The processes of the rising of the sap, of the formation of proper juices, of the unfolding of leaves, the opening of flowers, the fecundation of the fruit, the ripening of the seed, its proper deposition in order for the reproduction of a new plant; all these operations require a certain portion of time, and could not be compressed into a space less than a year, or at least could not be abbreviated in any very great degree. And, on the other hand, if the winter were greatly longer than it now is, many seeds would not germinate at the return of spring. Seeds which have been kept too long, require stimulants to make them fertile. If, therefore, the duration of the seasons were much to change, the processes of vegetable life would be interrupted, deranged, distempered. What, for instance, would become of our calendar of Flora, if the year were lengthened or shortened by six months? Some of the dates would never arrive in the one case, and the vegetable processes which mark them would be superseded; some seasons would be without dates in the other case, and these periods would be employed in a way hurtful to the plants, and no doubt speedily destructive. We should have, not only a *year of confusion*, but, if it were repeated and continued, a year of death. . . . . The same kind of argument might be applied to the animal creation. The pairing, nesting, hatching, fledging, and flight of birds, for instance, occupy each its peculiar time of the year; and, together with a proper period of rest, fill up the twelve months; the transformations of most insects have a similar reference to the seasons, their progress and duration. 'In every species' (except man's), says a writer* on animals, 'there is a particular period of the year in which the reproductive system exercises its energies. And the season of love and the period of gestation are so arranged that the young ones are produced at the time wherein the conditions of temperature are most suited to the commencement of life.' It is not our business here to consider the details of such provisions, beautiful and striking as they are. But the prevalence of the great law of periodicity in the vital functions of organised beings will be allowed to have a claim to be considered in its reference to astronomy, when it is seen that their periodical constitution derives its use from the periodical nature of the motions of the planets round the sun; and that the duration of such cycles in the existence of plants and animals has a reference to the arbitrary elements of the solar system, a reference which, we maintain, is inexplicable and unintelligible, except by admitting into our conceptions an intelligent Author, alike of the organic and inorganic universe."

Verse 11.—"*Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.*" God has surrounded this year with his goodness, "compassed and enclosed it" on every side. So we translate the same word, (Ps. v. 12) "With favour wilt thou compass (or crown) him as with a shield." He has given us instances of his goodness in every thing that concerns us; so that turn which way we will, we meet with the tokens of his favour; every part of the year has been enriched with the blessings of heaven, and no gap has been left open for any desolating judgment to enter by.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 11.—"*Thou crownest the year.*" A full and *plentiful harvest* is the *crown* of the year; and this springs from the unmerited *goodness* of God. This is the *diadem* of the earth. עטרת *ittarta*, "*Thou encirclest,*" as with a diadem. A most elegant expression, to show the progress of the sun through the *twelve* signs of the zodiac, producing the seasons, and giving a sufficiency of light and heat alternately, to all places on the surface of the globe, by its north and south declination (amounting to 23° 28′ at the solstices) on each side of the equator. A more beautiful image

* Flemming.

could not have been chosen; and the very appearance of the *space*, termed the *zodiac* on a celestial globe, shows with what propriety the idea of a *circle* or *diadem* was conceived by this inimitable poet.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 11.—"*Thou crownest.*" The herbs, fruits, and flowers, produced by the earth, are here finely represented as a beautiful variegated crown, set upon her head, by the hands of the great Creator.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 11.—*To crown* the year of goodness, is to raise it to the highest degree and summit of prosperity, happiness and glory. *To crown*, to fill up, to make glorious and joyful: *the year of the goodness* of God is the time in which he unfolds his own highest goodness; *one is crowned*, when the effects of this goodness are displayed on the grandest scale, and bring great glory and joy. Such was the time when he shone forth, and the clouds dropped fatness, and all parts of the earth were filled with fertility. . . . . The paths of God are the clouds, before called the *river* of God (see Ps. civ. 3), now the *paths* in which God himself seems to move, and whence, from the place of rain, from the river of God, flows fatness itself, or the copious abundance of all that is sweetest and best.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 11.—"*Thy paths drop fatness.*" When the conqueror journeys through the nations, his paths drop blood; fire and vapour of smoke are in his track, and tears, and groans, and sighs attend him. But where the Lord journeys, his "*paths drop fatness.*" When the kings of old made a progress through their dominions, they caused a famine wherever they tarried; for the greedy courtiers who swarmed in their camp devoured all things like locusts, and were as greedily ravenous as palmer-worms and caterpillars. But where the great King of kings journeys, he enriches the land; his "*paths drop fatness.*" By a bold Hebrew metaphor the clouds are represented as the chariots of God: "He maketh the clouds his chariot;" and as the Lord Jehovah rides upon the heavens in the greatness of his strength, and in his excellency on the sky, the rains drop down upon the lands, and so the wheel-tracks of Jehovah are marked by the fatness which makes glad the earth. Happy, happy are the people who worship such a God, whose coming is ever a coming of goodness and of grace to his creatures.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—"*Paths*" here are properly such tracks as are made by chariot wheels. —*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 12.—"*The wilderness.*" By *desert*, or *wilderness*, the reader is not always to understand a country altogether barren and unfruitful, but such only as is rarely or never sown or cultivated; which, though it yields no crops of corn or fruit, yet affords herbage more or less for the grazing of cattle, with fountains or rills of water, though more sparingly interspersed than in other places.—*Thomas Shaw* (1692—1751).

Verse 13.—The phrase, "*the pastures are clothed with flocks,*" cannot be regarded as the vulgar language of poetry. It appears peculiarly beautiful and appropriate, when we consider the numerous flocks which whitened the plains of Syria and Canaan. In the eastern countries, sheep are much more prolific than with us, and they derive their name from their great fruitfulness; bringing forth, as they are said to do, "thousands and ten thousands in their streets," Ps. cxliv. 13. They, therefore, formed no mean part of the wealth of the East.—*James Anderson, in editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 13.—The hills, where not tilled, were bushy and green, and sprinkled with numerous flocks; the valleys broad and covered with a rich crop of wheat; the fields full of reapers and gleaners in the midst of the harvest, with asses and camels receiving their loads of sheaves, and feeding unmuzzled and undisturbed upon the ripe grain.—*Edward Robinson.*

Verse 13.—It may seem strange, that he should first tell us, that "*they shout for joy,*" and then add the feebler expression, that "*they sing;*" interposing, too, the intensative particle, גַּם, *aph, they shout for joy,* YEA, *they also sing.* The verb, however, admits of being taken in the future tense, *they shall sing;* and this denotes a continuation of joy, that they would rejoice, not only one year, but through the endless succession of the seasons. I may add, what is well-known, that in Hebrew the order of expression is frequently inverted in this way.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 13.—"*They also sing.*" *They ardently sing:* such is the real meaning of גַּם; primarily "heat" or "warmth," thence "ardour, passion, anger," and thence again "the nostrils," as the supposed seat of this feeling.—*John Mason Good.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The fitness, place, use, and power of silence in worship.

Verse 1.—The limitations, advantages, and obligations of vows.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—The hearing and granting of prayer is the Lord's property, his usual practice, his pleasure, his nature, and his glory.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—I. *The humble confession.* Sins prevail against us. 1. *When* we are unwatchful, or go into temptation, and even after most sacred engagements. 2. *How.* Through our inbred corruption, natural constitution, suddenness of temptation, neglect of means of grace, and want of fellowship. 3. In *whom.* In the best of men: David says, "against me." Let us take home the caution. II. *The reassuring confidence.* Sin is forgiven. 1. By God: "Thou." 2. By atonement: covering all. 3. Effectually: "purge away." 4. Comprehensively: "our transgressions."

Verse 3.—I. *A cry of distress.* Mansoul besieged: "Iniquities prevail against me." II. *A shout of delight.* Mansoul relieved: "Thou shalt purge them away."—*E. G. Gange.*

Verse 4.—Nearness to God is the foundation of a creature's happiness. This doctrine appears in full evidence, while we consider the three chief ingredients of true felicity, *viz.*, the contemplation of the noblest object, to satisfy all the powers of the understanding; the love of the supreme good, to answer the utmost propensities of the will, and the sweet and everlasting sensation and assurance of the love of an Almighty Friend, who will free us from all the evils which our nature can fear, and confer upon us all the good which a wise and innocent creature can desire. Thus all the capacities of man are employed in their highest and sweetest exercises and enjoyments.—*Isaac Watts.*

Verse 4.—Election, effectual calling, access, adoption, final perseverance, satisfaction. This verse is a body of divinity in miniature.

Verse 5.—Treat the first clause experimentally, and show how prayers for our own sanctification are answered by trial; for God's glory, by our persecution; for our babes' salvation, by their death; for the good of others, by their sickness, etc., etc.

Verse 7.—The Lord, the giver, creator, and preserver of peace.

Verse 8.—Tokens of God's presence; those causing terror, and those inspiring joy.

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—The peculiar joys of morning and evening.

Verse 9.—"*The river of God.*" John Bunyan's treatise on "The Water of Life" would be suggestive on this topic.

Verse 9.—Divine visits and their consequences.

Verses 9—13.—A Harvest Sermon. I. *The general goodness of God.* Visiting the earth in rotation of seasons: "Seed time and harvest," etc. II. *The greatness of his resources:* "The river of God, which is full of water;" not like Elijah's brook, which dried up. III. *The variety of his benefactions:* "Corn;" "Water;" "Blessest the springing thereof," etc. IV. *The perpetuity of his blessings:* "Crownest the year."—*E. G. G.*

Verse 10.—Divine grace like rain. I. In itself. II. In its abundance. III. In its effects on the heart and entire nature; falling on ridge and furrow; softening, etc. IV. In its fruitful results. See the extract from Ralph Robinson *in loc.*

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 675: "Spring in the Heart."

Verse 11.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 532: "Thanksgiving and Prayer."

Verse 12 (*first clause*).—I. *Our dwelling place:* "the wilderness." II. *Our spiritual provision:* "pastures." III. *Our heavenly refreshment:* "they drop."

Verse 12.—Causes for joy for small churches. God remembers them, stablishes and increases them, feeds them and revives them, etc.

Verse 13.—The song of nature and the ear which hears it.

PSALM LXVI.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician.—*He had need be a man of great skill, worthily to sing such a Psalm as this: the best music in the world would be honoured by marriage with such expressions.* A Song *or* Psalm, *or a Song and Psalm. It may be either said or sung; it is a marvellous poem if it be but read; but set to suitable music, it must have been one of the noblest strains ever heard by the Jewish people. We do not know who is its author, but we see no reason to doubt that David wrote it. It is in the Davidic style, and has nothing in it unsuited to his times. It is true the "house" of God is mentioned, but the tabernacle was entitled to that designation as well as the temple.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—*Praise is the topic, and the subjects for song are the Lord's great works, his gracious benefits, his faithful deliverances, and all his dealings with his people, brought to a close by a personal testimony to special kindness received by the prophet-bard himself. Verses* 1, 2, 3, 4 *are a kind of introductory hymn, calling upon all nations to praise God, and dictating to them the words of a suitable song. Verses* 5, 6, 7 *invite the beholder to "*Come and see*" the works of the Lord, pointing attention to the Red Sea, and perhaps the passage of Jordan. This suggests the similar position of the afflicted people which is described, and its joyful issue predicted, from verse* 8 *to verse* 12. *The singer then becomes personal, and confesses his own obligations to the Lord (verses* 13, 14, 15); *and, bursting forth with a vehement "*Come and hear,*" declares with thanksgiving the special favour of the Lord to himself, verses* 16—20.

EXPOSITION.

MAKE a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:
2 Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.
3 Say unto God, How terrible *art thou in* thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.
4 All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing *to* thy name. Selah.

1. "*Make a joyful noise unto God.*" "In Zion," where the more instructed saints were accustomed to profound meditation, the song was silent unto God, and was accepted of him: but in the great popular assemblies a joyful noise was more appropriate and natural, and it would be equally acceptable. If praise is to be wide-spread, it must be vocal; exulting sounds stir the soul and cause a sacred contagion of thanksgiving. Composers of tunes for the congregation should see to it that their airs are cheerful; we need not so much noise, as *joyful* noise. God is to be praised with the voice, and the heart should go therewith in holy exultation. All praise from all nations should be rendered unto the Lord. Happy the day when no shouts shall be presented to Juggernaut or Buddha, but all the earth shall adore the Creator thereof. "*All ye lands.*" Ye heathen nations, ye who have not known Jehovah hitherto, with one consent let the whole earth rejoice before God. The languages of the lands are many, but their praises should be one, addressed to one only God.

2. "*Sing forth the honour of his name.*" The noise is to be modulated with tune and time, and fashioned into singing, for we adore the God of order and harmony. The honour of God should be our subject, and to honour him our object when we sing. To give glory to God is but to restore to him his own. It is our glory to be able to give God glory; and all our true glory should be ascribed unto God, for it is his glory. "All worship be to God only," should be the motto of all true believers. The name, nature, and person of God are worthy of the highest honour. "*Make his praise glorious.*" Let not his praise be mean and grovelling: let it arise with grandeur and solemnity before him. The pomp of the ancient festivals is not to be imitated by us, under this dispensation of the Spirit, but we are to

throw so much of heart and holy reverence into all our worship that it shall be the best we can render. Heart worship and spiritual joy render praise more glorious than vestments, incense, and music could do.

3. "*Say unto God.*" Turn all your praises to him. Devotion, unless it be resolutely directed to the Lord, is no better than whistling to the wind. "*How terrible art thou in thy works.*" The mind is usually first arrested by those attributes which cause fear and trembling; and, even when the heart has come to love God, and rest in him, there is an increase of worship when the soul is awed by an extraordinary display of the more dreadful of the divine characteristics. Looking upon the convulsions which have shaken continents, the hurricanes which have devastated nations, the plagues which have desolated cities, and other great and amazing displays of divine working, men may well say: "How terrible art thou in thy works." Till we see God in Christ, the terrible predominates in all our apprehensions of him. "*Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee;*" but, as the Hebrew clearly intimates, it will be a forced and false submission. Power brings a man to his knee, but love alone wins his heart. Pharaoh said he would let Israel go, but he lied unto God; he submitted in word but not in deed. Tens of thousands, both in earth and hell, are rendering this constrained homage to the Almighty; they only submit because they cannot do otherwise; it is not their loyalty, but his power, which keeps them subjects of his boundless dominion.

4. "*All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee.*" All men must even now prostrate themselves before thee, but a time will come when they shall do this cheerfully: to the worship of fear shall be added the singing of love. What a change shall have taken place when singing shall displace sighing, and music shall thrust out misery! "*They shall sing to thy name.*" The nature and works of God will be the theme of earth's universal song, and he himself shall be the object of the joyful adoration of our emancipated race. Acceptable worship not only praises God as the mysterious Lord, but it is rendered fragrant by some measure of knowledge of his name or character. God would not be worshipped as an unknown God, nor have it said of his people, "Ye worship ye know not what." May the knowledge of the Lord soon cover the earth, that so the universality of intelligent worship may be possible: such a consummation was evidently expected by the writer of this Psalm; and, indeed, throughout all Old Testament writings, there are intimations of the future general spread of the worship of God. It was an instance of wilful ignorance and bigotry when the Jews raged against the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. Perverted Judaism may be exculsive, but the religion of Moses, and David, and Isaiah was not so.

"*Selah.*" A little pause for holy expectation is well inserted after so great a prophecy, and the uplifting of the heart is also a seasonable direction. No meditation can be more joyous than that excited by the prospect of a world reconciled to its Creator.

5 Come and see the works of God: *he is* terrible *in his* doing toward the children of men.

6 He turned the sea into dry *land:* they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.

7 He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

5. "*Come and see the works of God.*" Such glorious events, as the cleaving of the Red Sea and the overthrow of Pharaoh, are standing wonders, and throughout all time a voice sounds forth concerning them—"Come and see." Even till the close of all things, the marvellous works of God at the Red Sea will be the subject of meditation and praise; for, standing on the sea of glass mingled with fire, the triumphal armies of heaven sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. It has always been the favourite subject of the inspired bards, and their choice was most natural. "*He is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.*" For the defence of his church and the overthrow of her foes he deals terrific blows, and strikes the mighty with fear. O thou enemy, wherefore dost thou vaunt thyself? Speak no more so exceeding proudly, but remember the plagues which bowed the will of Pharaoh, the drowning of Egypt's chariots in the Red Sea, the

overthrow of Og and Sihon, the scattering of the Canaanites before the tribes. This same God still liveth, and is to be worshipped with trembling reverence.

6. "*He turned the sea into dry land.*" It was no slight miracle to divide a pathway through such a sea, and to make it fit for the traffic of a whole nation. He who did this can do anything, and must be God, the worthy object of adoration. The Christian's inference is that no obstacle in his journey heavenward need hinder him, for the sea could not hinder Israel, and even death itself shall be as life; the sea shall be dry land when God's presence is felt. "*They went through the flood on foot.*" Through the river the tribes passed dry-shod, Jordan was afraid because of them.

"What ail'd thee, O thou mighty sea?
Why roll'd thy waves in dread?
What bade thy tide, O Jordan, flee
And bare its deepest bed?

O earth, before the Lord, the God
Of Jacob, tremble still;
Who makes the waste a water'd sod,
The flint a gushing rill."

"*There did we rejoice in him.*" We participate this day in that ancient joy. The scene is so vividly before us that it seems as if we were there personally, singing unto the Lord because he hath triumphed gloriously. Faith casts herself bodily into the past joys of the saints, and realises them for herself in much the same fashion in which she projects herself into the bliss of the future, and becomes the substance of things hoped for. It is to be remarked that Israel's joy was in her God, and there let ours be. It is not so much what he has done, as what he is, that should excite in us a sacred rejoicing. "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him."

7. "*He ruleth by his power for ever.*" He has not deceased, nor abdicated, nor suffered defeat. The prowess displayed at the Red Sea is undiminished: the divine dominion endures throughout eternity. "*His eyes behold the nations.*" Even as he looked out of the cloud upon the Egyptians and discomfited them, so does he spy out his enemies, and mark their conspiracies. His hand rules and his eye observes, his hand has not waxed weak, nor his eye dim. As so many grasshoppers he sees the people and tribes, at one glance he takes in all their ways. He oversees all and overlooks none. "*Let not the rebellious exalt themselves.*" The proudest have no cause to be proud. Could they see themselves as God sees them they would shrivel into nothing. Where rebellion reaches to a great head, and hopes most confidently for success, it is a sufficient reason for abating our fears, that the Omnipotent ruler is also an Omniscient observer. O proud rebels, remember that the Lord aims his arrows at the high-soaring eagles, and brings them down from their nests among the stars. "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." After a survey of the Red Sea and Jordan, rebels, if they were in their senses, would have no more stomach for the fight, but would humble themselves at the Conqueror's feet. "*Selah.*" Pause again, and take time to bow low before the throne of the Eternal.

8 O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard:
9 Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.
10 For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
11 Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.
12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy *place*.

8. "*O bless our God, ye people.*" Ye chosen seed, peculiarly beloved, it is yours to bless your covenant God as other nations cannot. Ye should lead the strain, for he is peculiarly your God. First visited by his love, ye should be foremost in his praise. "*And make the voice of his praise to be heard.*" Whoever else may sing with bated breath, do you be sure to give full tongue and volume to the song. Compel unwilling ears to hear the praises of your covenant God. Make rocks, and hills, and earth, and sea, and heaven itself to echo with your joyful shouts.

9. "*Which holdeth our soul in life.*" At any time the preservation of life, and especially the soul's life, is a great reason for gratitude, but much more when we

are called to undergo extreme trials, which of themselves would crush our being. Blessed be God, who, having put our souls into possession of life, has been pleased to preserve that heaven-given life from the destroying power of the enemy. "*And suffereth not our feet to be moved.*" This is another and precious boon. If God has enabled us not only to keep our life, but our position, we are bound to give him double praise. Living and standing is the saint's condition through divine grace. Immortal and immovable are those whom God preserves. Satan is put to shame, for instead of being able to slay the saints, as he hoped, he is not even able to trip them up. God is able to make the weakest to stand fast, and he will do so.

10. "*For thou, O God, hast proved us.*" He proved his Israel with sore trials. David had his temptations. All the saints must go to the proving house; God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without trial. Why ought we to complain if we are subjected to the rule which is common to all the family, and from which so much benefit has flowed to them? The Lord himself proves us, who then shall raise a question as to the wisdom and the love which are displayed in the operation? The day may come when, as in this case, we shall make hymns out of our griefs, and sing all the more sweetly because our mouths have been purified with bitter draughts. "*Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.*" Searching and repeated, severe and thorough, has been the test; the same result has followed as in the case of precious metal, for the dross and tin have been consumed, and the pure ore has been discovered. Since trial is sanctified to so desirable an end, ought we not to submit to it with abounding resignation.

11. "*Thou broughtest us into the net.*" The people of God in the olden time were often enclosed by the power of their enemies, like fishes or birds entangled in a net; there seemed no way of escape for them. The only comfort was that God himself had brought them there, but even this was not readily available, since they knew that he had led them there in anger as a punishment for their transgressions; Israel in Egypt was much like a bird in the fowler's net. "*Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.*" They were pressed even to anguish by their burdens and pains. Not on their backs alone was the load, but their loins were pressed and squeezed with the straits and weights of adversity. God's people and affliction are intimate companions. As in Egypt every Israelite was a burden-bearer, so is every believer while he is in this foreign land. As Israel cried to God by reason of their sore bondage, so also do the saints. We too often forget that God lays our afflictions upon us; if we remembered this fact, we should more patiently submit to the pressure which now pains us. The time will come when, for every ounce of present burden, we shall receive a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

12. "*Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads.*" They stormed, and hectored, and treated us like the mire of the street. Riding the high horse, in their arrogance, they, who were in themselves mean men, treated the Lord's people as if they were the meanest of mankind. They even turned their captives into beasts of burden, and rode upon their heads, as some read the Hebrew. Nothing is too bad for the servants of God when they fall into the hands of proud persecutors. "*We went through fire and through water.*" Trials many and varied were endured by Israel in Egypt, and are still the portion of the saints. The fires of the brick-kilns and the waters of the Nile did their worst to destroy the chosen race; hard labour and child-murder were both tried by the tyrant, but Israel went through both ordeals unharmed, and ever thus the church of God has outlived, and will outlive, all the artifices and cruelties of man. Fire and water are pitiless and devouring, but a divine fiat stays their fury, and forbids these or any other agents from utterly destroying the chosen seed. Many an heir of heaven has had a dire experience of tribulation; the fire through which he has passed has been more terrible than that which chars the bones, for it has fed upon the marrow of his spirit, and burned into the core of his heart; while the waterfloods of affliction have been even more to be feared than the remorseless sea, for they have gone in even unto the soul, and carried the inner nature down into deeps horrible, and not to be imagined without trembling. Yet each saint has been more than conqueror hitherto, and, as it has been, so it shall be. The fire is not kindled which can burn the woman's seed, neither does the dragon know how to vomit a flood which shall suffice to drown it. "*But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*" A blessed issue to a mournful story. Canaan was indeed a broad and royal domain for the once enslaved tribes: God, who took them into Egypt, also brought them into the land which flowed

with milk and honey, and Egypt was in his purposes *en route* to Canaan. The way to heaven is *vid* tribulation.

> "The path of sorrow and that path alone,
> Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown,"

How wealthy is the place of every believer, and how doubly does he feel it to be so in contrast with his former slavery: what songs shall suffice to set forth our joy and gratitude for such a glorious deliverance and such a bountiful heritage. More awaits us. The depth of our griefs bears no proportion to the height of our bliss. For our shame we shall have double, and more than double. Like Joseph we shall rise from the prison to the palace, like Mordecai we shall escape the gallows prepared by malignity, and ride the white horse and wear the royal robe appointed by benignity. Instead of the net, liberty; instead of a burden on the loins, a crown on our heads; instead of men riding over us, we shall rule over the nations: fire shall no more try us, for we shall stand in glory on the sea of glass mingled with fire; and water shall not harm us, for there shall be no more sea. O the splendour of this brilliant conclusion to a gloomy history. Glory be unto him who saw in the apparent evil the true way to the real good. With patience we will endure the present gloom, for the morning cometh. Over the hills faith sees the daybreak, in whose light we shall enter into the wealthy place.

13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows,
14 Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.

13. "*I will.*" The child of God is so sensible of his own personal indebtedness to grace, that he feels he must utter a song of his own. He joins in the common thanksgiving, but since the best public form must fail to meet each individual case, he makes sure that the special mercies received by him shall not be forgotten, for he records them with his own pen, and sings of them with his own lips. "*I will go into thy house with burnt offerings;*" the usual sacrifices of godly men. Even the thankful heart dares not come to God without a victim of grateful praise; of this as well as of every other form of worship, we may say, "the blood is the life thereof." Reader, never attempt to come before God without Jesus, the divinely promised, given, and accepted burnt offering. "*I will pay thee my vows.*" He would not appear before the Lord empty, but at the same time he would not boast of what he offered, seeing it was all due on account of former vows. After all, our largest gifts are but payments; when we have given all, we must confess, "O Lord, of thine own have we given unto thee." We should be slow in making vows, but prompt in discharging them. When we are released from trouble, and can once more go up to the house of the Lord, we should take immediate occasion to fulfil our promises. How can we hope for help another time, if we prove faithless to covenants voluntarily entered upon in hours of need.

14. "*Which my lips have uttered,*" or vehemently declared; blurted out, as we say in common speech. His vows had been wrung from him; extreme distress burst open the door of his lips, and out rushed the vow like a long pent-up torrent, which had at last found a vent. What we were so eager to vow, we should be equally earnest to perform; but, alas! many a vow runs so fast in words that it lames itself for deeds. "*And my mouth hath spoken.*" He had made the promise public, and had no desire to go back; an honest man is always ready to acknowledge a debt. "*When I was in trouble.*" Distress suggested the vow; God in answer to the vow removed the distress, and now the votary desires to make good his promise. It is well for each man to remember that he was in trouble: proud spirits are apt to speak as if the road had always been smooth for them, as if no dog dare bark at their nobility, and scarce a drop of rain would venture to besprinkle their splendour; yet these very upstarts were probably once so low in spirits and condition that they would have been glad enough of the help of those they now despise. Even great Cæsar, whose look did awe the world, must have his trouble and become weak as other men; so that his enemy could say in bitterness, "when the fit was on him, I did mark how he did shake." Of the strong and vigorous man the nurse could tell a tale of weakness, and his wife could say of the boaster, "I did hear him groan;

his coward lips did from their colour fly." All men have trouble, but they act not in the same manner while under it; the profane take to swearing and the godly to praying. Both bad and good have been known to resort to vowing, but the one is a liar unto God, and the other a conscientious respecter of his word.

15. *"I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings."* The good man will give his best things to God. No starveling goat upon the hills will he present at the altar, but the well-fed bullocks of the luxuriant pastures shall ascend in smoke from the sacred fire. He who is miserly with God is a wretch indeed. Few devise liberal things, but those few find a rich reward in so doing. *"With the incense of rams."* The smoke of burning rams should also rise from the altar; he would offer the strength and prime of his flocks as well as his herds. Of all we have we should give the Lord his portion, and that should be the choicest we can select. It was no waste to burn the fat upon Jehovah's altar, nor to pour the precious ointment upon Jesus's head; neither are large gifts and bountiful offerings to the church of God any diminution to a man's estate: such money is put to good interest and placed where it cannot be stolen by thieves nor corroded by rust. *"I will offer bullocks with goats."* A perfect sacrifice, completing the circle of offerings, should show forth the intense love of his heart. We should magnify the Lord with the great and the little. None of his ordinances should be disregarded; we must not omit either the bullocks or the goats. In these three verses we have gratitude in action, not content with words, but proving its own sincerity by deeds of obedient sacrifice.

"Selah." It is most fit that we should suspend the song while the smoke of the victims ascends the heavens: let the burnt-offerings stand for praises while we meditate upon the infinitely greater sacrifice of Calvary.

16 Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me:*

19 *But* verily God hath heard *me;* he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed *be* God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

16. *"Come and hear."* Before, they were bidden to come and see. Hearing is faith's seeing. Mercy comes to us by way of ear-gate. "Hear, and your soul shall live." They saw how terrible God was, but they heard how gracious he was. *"All ye that fear God."* These are a fit audience when a good man is about to relate his experience; and it is well to select our hearers when inward soul matters are our theme. It is forbidden us to throw pearls before swine. We do not want to furnish wanton minds with subjects for their comedies, and therefore it is wise to speak of personal spiritual matters where they can be understood, and not where they will be burlesqued. All God-fearing men may hear us, but far hence ye profane. *"And I will declare what he hath done for my soul."* I will count and recount the mercies of God to me, to my soul, my best part, my most real self. Testimonies ought to be borne by all experienced Christians, in order that the younger and feebler sort may be encouraged by the recital to put their trust in the Lord. To declare man's doings is needless; they are too trivial, and, besides, there are trumpeters enough of man's trumpery deeds; but to declare the gracious acts of God is instructive, consoling, inspiriting, and beneficial in many respects. Let each man speak for himself, for a personal witness is the surest and most forcible; second-hand experience is like "cauld kale het again;" it lacks the flavour of first-hand interest. Let no mock modesty restrain the grateful believer from speaking of himself, or rather of God's dealings to himself, for it is justly due to God; neither let him shun the individual use of the first person, which is most correct in detailing the Lord's ways of love. We must not be egotists, but we must be egotists when we bear witness for the Lord.

17. *"I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue."* It is well when prayer and praise go together, like the horses in Pharaoh's chariot. Some cry who do not sing, and some sing who do not cry: both together are best. Since the Lord's answers so frequently follow close at the heels of our petitions,

and even overtake them, it becomes us to let our grateful praises keep pace with our humble prayers. Observe that the Psalmist did both cry and speak; the Lord hast cast the dumb devil out of his children, and those of them who are least fluent with their tongues are often the most eloquent with their hearts.

18. *"If I regard iniquity in my heart."* If, having seen it to be there, I continue to gaze upon it without aversion; if I cherish it, have a side glance of love towards it, excuse it, and palliate it; *"The Lord will not hear me."* How can he? Can I desire him to connive at my sin, and accept me while I wilfully cling to any evil way? Nothing hinders prayer like iniquity harboured in the breast; as with Cain, so with us, sin lieth at the door, and blocks the passage. If thou listen to the devil, God will not listen to thee. If thou refusest to hear God's commands, he will surely refuse to hear thy prayers. An imperfect petition God will hear for Christ's sake, but not one which is wilfully mis-written by a traitor's hand. For God to accept our devotions, while we are delighting in sin, would be to make himself the God of hypocrites, which is a fitter name for Satan than for the Holy One of Israel.

19. *"But verily God hath heard me."* Sure sign this that the petitioner was no secret lover of sin. The answer to his prayer was a fresh assurance that his heart was sincere before the Lord. See how sure the Psalmist is that he has been heard; it is with him no hope, surmise, or fancy, but he seals it with a *"verily."* Facts are blessed things when they reveal both God's heart as loving and our own heart as sincere. *"He hath attended to the voice of my prayer."* He gave his mind to consider my cries, interpreted them, accepted them, and replied to them; and therein proved his grace and also my uprightness of heart. Love of sin is a plague spot, a condemning mark, a killing sign, but those prayers, which evidently live and prevail with God, most clearly arise from a heart which is free from dalliance with evil. Let the reader see to it, that his inmost soul be rid of all alliance with inquity, all toleration of secret lust, or hidden wrong.

20. *"Blessed be God."* Be his name honoured and loved. *"Which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."* He has neither withdrawn his love nor my liberty to pray. He has neither cast out my prayer nor me. His mercy and my cries still meet each other. The Psalm ends on its key note. Praise all through is its spirit and design. Lord enable us to enter into it. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is said to be recited on Easter day, by the Greek church: it is described in the Greek Bible as *A Psalm of the Resurrection*, and may be understood to refer, in a prophetic sense, to the regeneration of the world, through the conversion of the Gentiles.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 1.—*"Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:"* Heb., *all the earth;* shout aloud for joy, as the people did at the return of the ark, so that the earth rang again. God shall show himself to be the God not of *Jews* only, but of *Gentiles* also; these shall as well cry *Christ*, as those *Jesus;* these say, *Father*, as those *Abba*. And, as there was great joy in Samaria when the gospel was there received (Acts viii. 8), so shall there be the like in all other parts of the earth.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—*"All ye lands."* Where, consider, that he does not sing praises well, who desires to sing alone.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—*"Make his praise glorious."* Another meaning is, *give* or *place glory*, that is, your glory *to his praise*, be fully persuaded when you praise him that it will redound to your own glory, regard this as your own glory; praise him in such a way that all your praises may be given to glorify God; or, let your glory tend in this direction that he may be praised. Desire not the glory of eternal blessedness, unless for the praise of God, as the blessed spirits in that temple do nothing but say glory to God, and sing the hymn of his glory without end, "Holy, holy, holy." —*Lorinus.*

Verse 3.—"*Say.*" *Dicite, say,* says David, delight to speak of God; *Dicite,* say something. There was more required than to think of God. Consideration, meditation, speculation, contemplation upon God and divine objects, have their place and their season; but this is more than that, and more than admiration too; for all these may come to an end in ecstacies, and in stupidities, and in useless and frivolous imaginations.—*John Donne.*

Verse 3.—"*Unto God.*" *To* God, not *concerning* God, as some interpret, but *to God himself;* to his praises, and with minds raised to God, as it is in verse 4, *sing to himself;* Gejerus also correctly remarks, that the following discourse is addressed to God. Besides, it is to *our* God, as in verse 8, "*O bless our God, ye people:*" he is called God absolutely, because he alone is the true God.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 3.—"*How terrible.*" Take from the Bible its awful doctrines and from providence its *terrible* acts, and the whole system, under which God has placed us, would be emasculated.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Thine enemies shall submit themselves unto thee.*" In this, our first consideration is, that *God himself hath enemies;* and then, how should we hope to be, nay, why should we wish to be, without them. God had good, that is, glory from his enemies; and we may have good, that is, advantage in the way to glory, by the exercise of our patience, from enemies too. Those for whom God had done most, the angels, turned enemies first; vex not thou thyself, if those whom thou hast loved best hate thee deadliest. . . . . God himself hath enemies. "*Thine enemies shall submit,*" says the text, to God; there thou hast one comfort, though thou have enemies too; but the greater comfort is, that God calls thine enemies his. *Nolite tangere Christos meos* (Ps. cv. 15), says God of all holy people; you were as good touch me, as touch any of them, for, "they are the apple of mine eye" (Ps. xvii. 8). Our Saviour Christ never expostulated for himself; never said, Why scourge you me? why spit you upon me? why crucify you me? As long as their rage determined in his person, he opened not his mouth; when Saul extended the violence to the church, to his servants, then Christ came to that, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" . . . Here is a holy league, defensive and offensive; God shall not only protect us from others, but he shall fight for us against them; our enemies are his enemies.—*Condensed from John Donne.*

Verse 3.—"*Thine enemies submit themselves.*" Literally, *lie unto thee.* This was remarkably the case with *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians.* They promised again and again to let the people go, when the hand of the Lord was upon them; and they as frequently falsified their word.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3 (*second clause*).—In times of affliction every hypocrite—all tag and rag—will be ready to come in to God in an outward profession; but usually this submission to God at this time is not out of truth. Hence it is said, "*Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee:*" in the original it is, "*they shall lie unto thee,*" and so it is translated by Arias Montanus, and some others, noting hereby that a forced submission to God is seldom in truth. —*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 3.—The earthquakes in New England occasioned a kind of religious panic. A writer, who was then one of the ministers of Boston, informs us, that immediately after the great earthquake, as it was called, a great number of his flock came and expressed a wish to unite themselves with the church. But, on conversing with them, he could find no evidence of improvement in their religious views or feelings, no convictions of their own sinfulness; nothing, in short, but a kind of superstitious fear, occasioned by a belief that the end of the world was at hand. All their replies proved that they had not found God, though they had seen "'*the greatness of his power*" in the earthquake.—*Edward Payson, D.D.*

Verse 5.—"*Come and see the works of God.*" An indirect censure is here passed upon that almost universal thoughtlessness which leads men to neglect the praises of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—"*Come and see.*" The church at all times appeals to the world. "*Come and see,*" as Jesus said to the two disciples of John the Baptist, and Philip to Nathanael. John i. 39, 46. God's marvels are to be seen by all, and *seeing* them is the first step towards *believing* in their divine author.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 6.—"*He turned the sea into dry land.*" The Psalmist refers to the passage through the Red Sea and the Jordan, not as to transactions which took place and

were concluded at a given period of time, but as happening really in every age. God's guidance of his people is a constant drying up of the sea and of the Jordan, and the joy over his mighty deeds is always receiving new materials.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—"*There did we rejoice in him;*" where those things have been done, there have we rejoiced in him, not taking any credit to ourselves as if they were our acts, but rejoicing and glorying in God, and have praised him, as may be seen in Exod. xv. and Joshua iii. The prophet uses the future for the past, unless, perhaps, he meant to insinuate that these miracles would be succeeded by much greater ones, of which they were only the types and figures. A much greater miracle is that men should pass over the bitter sea of this life, and cross the river of mortality, that never ceases to run, and which swallows up and drowns so many, and still come safe and alive to the land of eternal promise, and there rejoice in God himself, beholding him face to face; and yet this greater miracle is so accomplished by God, that many pass through this sea as if it were dry land, and cross this river with dry feet; that is to say, having no difficulty in despising all things temporal, be they good or be they bad; that is to say, being neither attached to the good things, nor fearing the evil things, of this world, that they may arrive in security at the heavenly Jerusalem, where we will rejoice in him, not in hope, but in complete possession for eternity.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 7.—"*His eyes behold the nations.*" The radical meaning of the word נבט is αὐγάζειν, *to shine*, and metonymically *to examine with a bright eye;* to inspect with a piercing glance, and thence *to behold*, for either good or evil, as Prov. xv. 3: "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*" Here it is taken in an adverse sense, and means, to watch from a watch-tower, to threaten from a lofty place. Ps. xxxvii. 32: "*The wicked watcheth the righteous;*" and Job xv. 22: He is waited for "*from the watch-tower for the sword;*" that is to say, *the sword is drawn above the head of the wicked, as if it threatened him from the watch-tower of God.* But, at the same time, there is also a reference to God's looking from the pillar of fire, and of cloud, upon the host of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. Exod. xiv. 24.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 7.—"*His eyes behold the nations.*" This should give check to much iniquity. Can a man's conscience easily and delightfully swallow that which he is sensible falls under the cognizance of God, when it is hateful to the eye of his holiness, and renders the action odious to him? "Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?" saith Job (chap. xxxi. 4). . . . . The consideration of this attribute should make us humble. How dejected would a person be if he were sure all the angels in heaven, and men upon earth, did perfectly know his crimes, with all their aggravations! But what is created knowledge to an infinite and just censuring understanding? When we consider thathe knows our actions, where of there are multitudes, and our thoughts, whereof there are millions; that he views all the blessings bestowed upon us; all the injuries we have returned to him; that he exactly knows his own bounty, and our ingratitude; all the idolatry, blasphemy, and secret enmity in every man's heart against him; all tyrannical oppressions, hidden lusts, omissions of necessary duties, violations of plain precepts, every foolish imagination, with all the circumstances of them, and that perfectly in all their full anatomy, every mite of unworthiness and wickedness in every circumstance . . . . should not the consideration of this melt our hearts into humiliation before him, and make us earnest in begging pardon and forgiveness of him.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 9.—"*Which holdeth our soul in life.*" As the works of creation at first, and upholding all by his power and providence, are yoked together as works of a like wonder, vouchsafed the creation in common, Heb. i. 2, 3; so just in the like manner we find regeneration and perseverance joined, as the sum of all other works in this life. Thus "begotten again," and "kept by the power of God to salvation," are joined by the Apostle, 1 Pet. i. 3 and 5, "Called and preserved in Christ Jesus;" so in Jude, verse 1. . . . . "Blessed be God," says Peter, "who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again." And, "O bless our God, ye people, which holdeth our souls in life," says the Psalmist. Yea, if we do narrowly eye the words in either, both Peter and the Psalmist do bless God for both at once. Blessed be God for "begetting us," who are also "kept by the power of God;" so it follows in Peter. In the Psalmist both are comprehended in this one word:

1. " which *putteth* our souls in life " (so the margin, out of the Hebrew), that is, who puts life into your soul at the first, as he did into Adam when he made him a living soul; 2. and then which "*holdeth*," that is, continueth our souls in that life. So the translators render it also, according to the Psalmist's scope, and " O bless the Lord," saith the Psalmist, for these and both these.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 9.—"*Which holdest our soul in life.*" It is truth, that all we have is in the hand of God; but God keeps our life in his hand last of all, and he hath that in his hand in a special manner. Though the soul continue, *life* may not continue; there is the soul when there is not life: life is that which is the union of soul and body. "*Thou holdest our soul in life;*" that is, thou holdest soul and body together. So Daniel describes God to Belshazzar, Dan. v. 23, " The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." The breath of princes is in the hand of God, and the same hand holds the breath of the meanest subject. This may be matter of comfort to us in times of danger, and times of death: when the hand of man is lifted up to take thy life remember thy life is held in the hand of God; and, as God said to Satan (Job. ii. 6): Afflict the body of Job, but save his life; so God saith still to bloody wretches, who are as the limbs of Satan: The bodies of such and such are in your hands, the estates of such and such are in your hands, but save their lives.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*Putteth our soul in life.*" An elegant and emphatic expression, only to be understood by observing the exact force of the words. The *soul* is the *life*, as is well known, the word שׂים is *to place, to place upon, to press in*, the word מיים signifies properly *joinings, fastenings together*, and hence these faculties and powers by which nature is held together and made firm.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 9.—"*Which holdeth our soul in life.*" He holdeth our soul in life, that it may not drop away of itself; for being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—"*And suffereth not our feet to be moved.*" It is a great mercy to be kept from desperate courses in the time of sad calamities, to be supported under burdens, that we sink not; and to be prevented from denying God, or his truth, in time of persecution.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—"*Thou, O God, hast proved us.*" It is not known what corn will yield, till it come to the flail; nor what grapes, till they come to the press. Grace is hid in nature, as sweet water in rose-leaves; the fire of affliction fetcheth it out. "*Thou hast tried us as silver.*" The wicked also are tried (Rev. iii. 10), but they prove reprobate silver (Jer. vi. 28), or at best, as alchymy gold, that will not bear the seventh fire, as Job did (ch. xxiii. 10).—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—"*As silver is tried.*" Convinced from the frequent use of this illustration, that there was something more than usually instructive in the processes of assaying and purifying silver, I have collected some few facts upon the subject. The hackneyed story of the refiner seeing his image in the molten silver while in the fire, has so charmed most of us, that we have not looked further; yet, with more careful study, much could be brought out.

To assay silver requires great personal care in the operator. " The principle of assaying gold and silver is very simple theoretically, but in practice great experience is necessary to insure accuracy; and there is no branch of business which demands more personal and undivided attention. The result is liable to the influence of so many contingencies, that no assayer who regards his reputation will delegate the principal processes to one not equally skilled with himself. Besides the result ascertainable by weight, there are allowances and compensations to be made, which are known only to an experienced assayer, and if these were disregarded, as might be the case with the mere novice, the report would be wide from the truth." * Pagnini's version reads: " Thou hast melted us by blowing upon us," and in the monuments of Egypt, artificers are seen with the blowpipe operating with small fire-places, with cheeks to confine and reflect the heat; the worker evidently paying personal attention, which is evident also in Malachi iii. 3, " He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

To assay silver requires a skilfully-constructed furnace. The description of this furnace would only weary the reader, but it is evidently a work of art in itself. Even the trial of our faith is much more precious than that of gold which perisheth.

* Encycl. Britan.

He has refined us, but not with silver, he would not trust us there, the furnace of affliction is far more skilfully arranged than that.

To assay silver the heat must be nicely regulated. "During the operation, the assayer's attention should be directed to the heat of the furnace, which must be neither too hot nor too cold: if too hot, minute portions of silver will be carried off with the lead, and so vitiate the assay; moreover, the pores of the cupel being more open, greater absorption will ensue, and there is liability to loss from that cause. One indication of an excess of heat in the furnace, is the rapid and perpendicular rising of the fumes to the ceiling of the muffle, the mode of checking and controlling which has been pointed out in the description of the improved furnace. When the fumes are observed to fall to the bottom of the muffle, the furnace is then too cold; and, if left unaltered, it will be found that the cupellation has been imperfectly performed, and the silver will not have entirely freed itself from the base metals.*

The assayer repeats his trying processes. Usually two or more trials of the same piece are made, so that great accuracy may be secured. Seven times silver is said to be purified, and the saints through varied trials reach the promised rest.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—"*Thou broughtest us into the net,*" etc. Our enemies have pursued us (like the wild beasts taken by the hunter) into most grievous straits (1 Sam. xiii. 6). h ey have used us like beasts of burden, and laid sore loads upon us, which they have fast bound upon our backs. "*Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.*" *Coarctationem in lumbis;* we are not only hampered, as in a net, but fettered, as with chains; as if we had been in the jailor's or hangman's hands.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 12.—"*Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads.*" The agents are *men.* Man is a sociable-living creature, and should converse with man in love and tranquility. Man should be a supporter of man; is he become an overthrower? He should help and keep him up; doth he ride over him and tread him under foot? O apostasy, not only from religion, but even from humanity! *Quid homini inimicissimum? Homo.*†—The greatest danger that befalls man comes whence it should least come, from man himself. *Cætera animantia,* says Pliny, *in suo genere, probe degunt,* etc. Lions fight not with lions; serpents spend not their venom on serpents; but man is the main suborner of mischief to his own kind. . . . .

1. *They ride.* What need they mount themselves upon beasts, that have feet malicious enough to trample on us? They have a "foot of pride," Psalm xxxvi. 11, from which David prayed to be delivered; a presumptuous heel, which they dare lift up against God; and, therefore, a tyrannous toe, to spurn dejected man. They need not horses and mules, that can kick with the foot of a revengeful malice, Psalm xxxii. 9.

2. *Over us.* The way is broad enough wherein they travel, for it is the devil's road. They might well miss the poor, there is room enough besides; they need not ride over us. It were more brave for them to justle with champions that will not give them the way. We never contend for their path; they have it without our envy, not without our pity. Why should they ride over us?

3. *Over our heads.* Is it not contentment enough to their pride to *ride,* to their malice to ride *over us,* but must they delight in bloodiness to ride over our *heads?* Will not the breaking of our arms and legs, and such inferior limbs, satisfy their indignation? Is it not enough to rack our strength, to mock our innocence, to prey on our estates, but must they thirst after our bloods and lives? *Quo tendit sæva libido?*—Whither will their madness run? But we must not tie ourselves to the letter. Here is a mystical or metaphorical gradation of their cruelty. Their riding is proud; their riding over us is malicious; and their riding over our heads is bloody oppression.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12 (*first clause*).—The time was when the Bonners and butchers rode over the faces of God's saints, and madefied ‡ the earth with their bloods, every drop whereof begot a new believer.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—"*Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads.*" This verse is like that sea (Matt. viii. 24), so tempestuous at first, that the vessel was covered with waves; but Christ's rebuke quieted all, and there followed a great calm. Here are cruel Nimrods riding over innocent heads, as they would over fallow lands; and

---

* Encycl. Britain † Seneca. ‡ Madefy, to moisten, to make wet.

dangerous passages through fire and water; but the storm is soon ended, or rather the passengers are landed. "*Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*" So that this strain of David's music, or Psalmody, consists of two notes—one mournful, the other mirthful; the one a touch of distress, the other of redress: which directs our course to an observation of *misery* and of *mercy;* of grievous misery, of gracious mercy. There is desolation and consolation in one verse: a deep dejection, as laid under the feet of beasts; a happy deliverance, "*broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*" In both these strains God hath his stroke; he is a principal in this concert. He is brought in for an *actor*, and for an *author;* an actor in the persecution, an author in the deliverance. "*Thou causest,*" etc.; "*Thou broughtest,*" etc. In the one he is a causing worker; in the other a sole working cause. In the one he is joined with company; in the other he works alone. He hath a finger in the former; his whole hand in the latter. We must begin with *misery* before we come to *mercy.* If there were no trouble, we should not know the worth of a deliverance. The passion of the saints is given, by the hearty and ponderous description, for very grievous; yet it is written in the forehead of the text, "The Lord caused it." "*Thou causedst men to ride,*" etc. Hereupon, some wicked libertine may offer to rub his filthiness upon God's purity, and to plead an authentical derivation of all his villany against the saints from the Lord's warrant: "*He caused it.*" We answer, to the justification of truth itself, that God doth ordain and order every persecution that striketh his children, without any allowance to the instrument that gives the blow. God works in the same action with others, not after the same manner. In the affliction of Job were three agents—God, Satan, and the Sabeans. The devil works on his body, the Sabeans on his goods; yet Job confesseth a third party: "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away." Here oppressors trample on the godly, and God is said to cause it. He causeth affliction for trial (so verses 10, 11: "Thou hast tried us," etc.); they work it for malice; neither can God be accused nor they excused.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—"*Thou hast placed men over our heads.*" Thus Jerome renders, although the Hebrew noun, אֱנוֹשׁ, is in the singular, the word itself denotes *an obscure, mean man,* who is mentioned with indignity, but ought to be buried in oblivion. The singular noun is taken collectively, and so also is רֹאשֵׁנוּ, with the affix. Such were the Egyptian and Babylonish idolaters, whom the Hebrew served. *To place any one over the head of another,* or, as the Hebrew word הִרְכַּבְתָּ means, *to ride,* to be superior to, to subdue to oneself and subject, and to sit upon and insult, just as the horseman rules with the rein, and spur, and whip the beast which he rides.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 12.—"*To ride over our heads.*" This is an allusion to beasts of burden, and particularly to camels, whose heads the rider almost sits over, and so domineers over them as he pleases.—*Thomas Fonton, in "Annotations on the Book of Job, and the Psalms."* 1732.

Verse 12.—"*We went through fire and through water.*" The children of Israel when they had escaped the Red Sea, and seen their enemies the Egyptians dead, they thought all was cocksure, and therefore sang *Epicinia,* songs of rejoicing for the victory. But what followed within a while? The Lord stirred up another enemy against them, from out their bowels, as it were, which was hunger, and this pinched them sorer, they thought, than the Egyptian. But was this the last? No; after the hunger came thirst, and this made them to murmur as much as the former; and after the thirst came fiery serpents, and fire and pestilence, and Amalekites, and Midianites, and what not? Thus hath it been with the church not only under the law, but also under Christ, as it might be easily declared unto you. Neither hath it been better with the several members thereof; they likewise have been made conformable to the body and to the Head. What a sight of temptations did Abraham endure? So Jacob, so Joseph, so the patriarchs, so the prophets? Yea, and all they that would live godly in Christ Jesus, though their sorrow in the end were turned to joy, yet they wept and lamented first. Though they were brought at the length to a wealthy place, yet they passed through fire and water first.—*Miles Smith.*—1624.

Verse 12.—"*We went through fire and through water.*" There was a great variety of such perils; and not only of several, but of contrary sorts: "*We went through fire and through water,*" either of which singly and alone denotes an extremity of evils. Thus, through water (Ps. lxix. 1, 2): "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am

come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." Or, through fire (Ezek. xv. 7): "And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I set my face against them." But when through both successively, one after the other, this denotes an accumulation of miseries, or trials, indeed: as we read Isa. xliii. 2, with God's promise to his people in such conditions: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Which promise is here, you see, acknowledged by the Psalmist to have been performed: God was with the three children when they walked through the fire, in the very letter of Isaiah's speech; and with the children of Israel when they went through the water of the Red Sea.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12.—"*We went through fire and through water.*" In allusion, probably, to the ordeal by fire and water, which is of great antiquity.

On the question who had interred the body of Polynices:—

> "All denied:
> Offering, in proof of innocence, to grasp
> The burning steel, to walk through fire, and take
> Their solemn oath they knew not of the deed."—*Sophocles.*

From T. S. Millington's "Testimony of the heathen to the Truths of Holy Writ." 1863.

Verse 12.—"*Fire and water.*" The Jewish law required both these for purification of spoil in war, where they could be borne. Num. xxxi. 23: "Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified through the water of separation." God's saints are, therefore, subject to both ordeals.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 12.—"*But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*" Every word is sweetly significant, and amplifies God's mercy to us. Four especially are remarkable:—1. The deliverer; 2. The deliverance; 3. The delivered; and, 4. Their felicity or blessed advancement. So there is in the deliverer, *aliquid celsitudinis*, "*Thou;*" in the delivery, *certitudinis*, "*broughtest out,*" in the delivered, *solitudinis*, "*us;*" in the happiness, *plenitudinis*, "*into a wealthy place.*" There is highness and lowness, sureness and fulness. The deliverer is great, the deliverance is certain, the distress grievous, the exaltation glorious. There is yet a first word, that like a key unlocks this golden gate of mercy, a *veruntamen*:—BUT. This is *vox respirationis*, a gasp that fetcheth back again the very life of comfort. "*But thou broughtest,*" etc. We were fearfully endangered into the hands of our enemies; they rode and trode upon us, and drove us through hard perplexities. "*But thou,*" etc. If there had been a full-point or period at our misery, if those gulfs of persecution had quite swallowed us, and all our light of comfort had been thus smothered and extinguished, we might have cried, *Periit spes nostra*, yea, *periit salus nostra.*—Our hope, our help is *quite* gone. He had mocked us that would have spoken, Be of good cheer. This same *but* is like a happy oar, that turns our vessel from the rocks of despair, and lands it at the haven of comfort.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12 (*second and third clause*).—1. The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water, yet they get through them; we went through fire and water, and did not perish in the flames or floods. Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God there is a way through them. 2. The inlet to a better state is much more happy. "*Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place,*" into a well-watered place; for the word is, *like the gardens of the Lord*, and therefore fruitful.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—Thou, O God, with the temptation hast given the issue. "*Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*" 1. Thou hast proved, and thou hast brought. 2. Thou laidst the trouble, and thou tookest it off; yea, and hast made us an ample recompense, for thou hast brought us to a moist, pleasant, lovely, fertile, rich place, a happy condition, a flourishing condition of things, so that thou hast made us to forget all our trouble.—*William Nicholson, in "David's Harp strung and tuned."* 1662.

Verse 12.—"*A wealthy place.*" The hand of God led them in that fire and water of affliction through which they went; but who led them out? The Psalmist tells us in the next words: "*Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place;*" the margin

saith, *"into a moist place."* They were in fire and water before. *Fire* is the extremity of heat and dryness; *water* is the extremity of moistness and coldness. *A moist place* notes a due temperament of heat and cold, of dryness and moistness, and therefore elegantly shadows that comfortable and contentful condition into which the good hand of God had brought them, which is significantly expressed in our translation by *"a wealthy place;"* those places flourishing most in fruitfulness, and so in wealth, which are neither over hot nor over cold, neither over dry nor over moist.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13.—You see all the parts of this song; the whole concert or harmony of all is praising God. You see *quo loco*, in his house; *quo modo*, with burnt-offering; *quo animo*, paying our vows.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 13.—*"Burnt-offerings."* For ourselves, be we sure that the best sacrifice we can give to God is obedience; not a dead beast, but a living soul. The Lord takes not delight in the blood of brutish creatures. It is the mind, the life, the soul, the obedience, that he requires: 1 Sam. xv. 22, "To obey is better than sacrifice." Let this be our burnt-offering, our holocaust, a sanctified body and mind given up to the Lord, Rom. xii. 1, 2. First, the heart: "My son, give me thy heart." Is not the heart enough? No, the hand also: Isaiah i. 16, Wash the hands from blood and pollution. Is not the hand enough? No, the foot also: "Remove thy foot from evil." Is not the foot enough? No, the lips also: "Guard the doors of thy mouth;" Ps. xxxiv. 13, "Refrain thy tongue from evil." Is not thy tongue enough? No, the ear also: "Let him that hath ears to hear, hear." Is not the ear enough? No, the eye also: "Let thine eyes be towards the Lord." Is not all this sufficient? No, give body and spirit: 1 Cor. vi. 20, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." When the eyes abhor lustful objects, the ear slanders, the foot erring paths, the hands wrong and violence, the tongue flattery and blasphemy, the heart pride and hypocrisy; this is thy holocaust, thy whole burnt-offering.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verses 13, 15.—In the *"burnt-offerings,"* we see his approach to the altar with the common and general sacrifice; and next, in his *"paying vows,"* we see he has brought his *peace-offerings* with him. Again, therefore, he says at the altar: *"I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings"* (ver 15). This is the general offering, brought from the best of his flock and herd. Then follow the *peace-offerings: "With the incense* (קְטֹרֶת, *fuming smoke*) *of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah."* Having brought his offerings, he is in no haste to depart, notwithstanding; for his heart is full. Ere, therefore, he leaves the sanctuary, he utters the language of a soul at peace with God: verses 16—20. This, truly, is one whom *"the very God of peace"* has sanctified, and whose whole spirit, and body, and soul he will preserve blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thess. v. 23.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verses 13—15.—He tells what were the vows he promised in his trouble, and says he promised the richest sacrifices of cattle that could be made according to the law. These were three: rams, cows, and goats. Rams included lambs; cows included heifers; and goats, kids.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 14.—*"Which my lips have uttered."* Hebrew, *have opened:* that is which I have uttered, *diductis labiis*, with lips wide open. *Videmus qualiter vota nuncupari soleant*, saith Vatablus. Here we see after what sort vows used to be made, when we are under any pressing affliction; but when once delivered, how heavily many come off in point of payment.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 14.—Express mention is made of *opened lips* to indicate that the *vows* were made with great vehemence of mind, and in a state of need and pressure; so that his *lips* were *broken through* and widely opened. For the root, פצה contains the idea of *opening* anything *with violence;* to *break open*, as the Latin expression is, *rumpere labia.*—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 15.—*"I will offer,"* etc. Thou shalt have the best of the herd and of the fold.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 15.—*"Fatlings."* For as I will not come empty into thy house, so I will not bring thee a niggardly present; but offer sacrifices of all sorts, and the best and choicest in every kind.—*Symon Patrick.*

Verse 15.—"*Bullocks with goats.*" That is, I will liberally provide for every part of the service at the tabernacle.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 16.—"*Come and hear, all ye that fear God.*" One reason why the saints are so often inviting all that fear God to come unto them is, because the saints see and know the great good that they shall get by those that fear God. The children of darkness are so wise in their generation as to desire most familiarity and acquaintance with those persons whom they conceive may prove most profitable and advantageous to them, and to pretend much friendship there where is hope of most benefit. And shall not the saints, the children of light, upon the same account wish and long for the society of those that fear God, because they see what great good they shall gain by them? It is no wonder that the company of those that fear God is so much in request, since it is altogether gainful and commodious; it's no wonder they have many invitations, since they are guests by which something is still gotten; and, indeed, among all persons living, those that fear God are the most useful and enriching.—*Samuel Heskins, in "Soul Mercies Precious in the Eyes of Saints . . . . set forth in a little Treatise on Psalm lxvi.* 16." 1654.

Verse 16.—"*All ye that fear God.*" For such only will hear to good purpose; others either cannot, or care not. "*And I will declare,*" etc. Communicate unto you my soul-secrets and experiments. There is no small good to be gotten by such declarations. Bilney, perceiving Latimer to be zealous without knowledge, came to him in his study and desired him for God's sake to hear his confession. "I did so," saith Latimer, "and, to say the truth, by his confession I learned more than afore in many years. So from that time forward I began to smell the word of God, and forsake the school-doctors, and such fooleries."—*John Trapp.*

Verse 16.—"*Ye that fear God.*" Observe the invitation given to those only "*who fear God,*" because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" he loosens the feet to "*come,*" opens the ears to "*hear;*" and therefore, he who has no fear of God will be called to no purpose, either to come or to hear.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 16.—"*I will declare.*" Consider the ends which a believer should propose in the discharge of this duty ["of communicating Christian experience"]. The principal end he should have in view when he declares his experience is the glory of that God, who hath dealt so bountifully with him. He would surely have the Lord exalted for his faithfulness and goodness to him; he would have it published, that the name of the Lord might be great; that sinners might know that his God is faithful to his word; that he hath not only engaged to be "a present help in time of need," but that he hath found him in reality to be so. As he knows the enemies of God are ready enough to charge him with neglect of his people, because of the trials and afflictions they are exercised with; so he would, in contradiction to them, declare what he hath found in his own experience, that in very faithfulness he afflicts those that are dearest to him. And with what lustre doth the glory of God shine, when his children are ready to acknowledge that he never called them out to any duty but his grace was sufficient for them; that he never laid his hand upon them in any afflictive exercise, but he, at the same time, supplied them with all those supports which they stood in need of? I say, for Christians thus to stand up, on proper occasions, and bear their experimental testimony to the faithfulness and goodness of God, what a tendency hath it to make the name of the Lord, who hath been their strong tower, glorious in the midst of the earth. . . . . How may we blush and be ashamed, that we have so much conversation in the world and so little about what God hath done for our souls? It is a very bad sign upon us, in our day, that the things of God are generally postponed; while either the affairs of state, or the circumstances of outward life, or other things, perhaps, of a more trifling nature, are the general subjects of our conversation. What! are we ashamed of the noblest, the most interesting subject? It is but a poor sign that we have felt anything of it, if we think it unnecessary to declare it to our fellow Christians. What think you? Suppose any two of us were cast upon a barbarous shore, where we neither understood the language, nor the customs of the inhabitants, and were treated by them with reproach and cruelty; do you think we should not esteem it a happiness that we could unburden ourselves to each other, and communicate our griefs and troubles? And shall we think it less so, while we are in such a world as this, in a strange land, and at a dstance from our Father's house? Shall we neglect conversing with each other? No; let our conversation not only be in heaven, but

about spiritual and heavenly things.—*Samuel Wilson* (1703–1750), *in "Sermons on Various Subjects."*

Verse 16.—*"I will declare."* After we are delivered from the dreadful apprehensions of the wrath of God, it is our duty to be publicly thankful. It is for the glory of our Healer to speak of the miserable wounds that once pained us; and of that kind hand that saved us when we were brought very low. It is for the glory of our Pilot to tell of the rocks and of the sands; the many dangers and threatening calamities that he, by his wise conduct, made us to escape: and to see us safe on the shore, may cause others that are yet afflicted, and tost with tempests, to look to him for help; for he is able and ready to save them as well as us. We must, like soldiers, when a tedious war is over, relate our combats, our fears, our dangers, with delight; and make known our experiences to doubting, troubled Christians, and to those that have not yet been under such long and severe trials as we have been.—*Timothy Rogers* (1660—1729), *in "A Discourse on Trouble of Mind."*

Verse 17.—This verse may be rendered thus: *"I cried unto him with my mouth, and his exaltation was under my tongue;"* that is, I was considering and meditating how I might lift up and exalt the name of God, and make his praise glorious. Holy thoughts are said to be under the tongue when we are in a preparation to bring them forth.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 17.—*"He was extolled with my tongue."* It is a proof that prayer has proceeded from unworthy motives, when the blessings which succeed it are not acknowledged with as much fervency as when they were originally implored. The ten lepers all cried for mercy, and all obtained it, but only one returned to render thanks.—*John Morison.*

Verse 17.—*"He was extolled with my tongue:" lit.* "an extolling (of Him was) *under* my tongue," implying *fulness* of praise (Psalm x. 7). A store of praise being conceived as *under the tongue*, whence a portion might be taken on all occasions. The sense is, "scarcely had I *cried* unto him when, by delivering me, he gave me abundant reason to extol him." (Psalm xxxiv. 6.)—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 17.—*"With my tongue."* Let the praise of God be in thy tongue, under thy tongue, and upon thy tongue, that it may shine before all men, and that they may see that thy heart is good. The fish *lucerna* has a shining tongue,* from which it takes its name; and in the depths of the sea the light of its tongue reveals it: if thy heart has a tongue, shining with the praises of God, it will sufficiently show itself of what sort it is. Hence the old saying, "Speak, that I may see thee."—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 18.—*"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* The very supposition that "if he regarded iniquity in his heart, the Lord would not hear him," implies the possibility that such may be the state even of believers; and there is abundant reason to fear that it is in this way their prayers are so often hindered, and their supplications so frequently remain unanswered. Nor is it difficult to conceive how believers may be chargeable with regarding iniquity in their heart, even amidst all the solemnity of coming into the immediate presence of God, and directly addressing him in the language of prayer and supplication.

It is possible that they may put themselves into such a situation, in a state of mind but little fitted for engaging in that holy exercise; the world, in one form or another, may for the time have the ascendancy in their hearts; and there may have been so much formality in their confessions, and so much indifference in their supplications, that when the exercise is over, they could not honestly declare that they really meant what they acknowledged, or seriously desired what they prayed for. A Christian, it is true, could not be contented to remain in a state like this; and, when he is awakened from it, as he sooner or later will be, he cannot fail to look back upon it with humiliation and shame. But we fear there are seasons in which believers themselves may make a very near approach to such a state: and what then is the true interpretation of prayers offered up at such a moment? It is in fact just saying, that there is something which, for the time, they prefer to what they are formally asking of God; that, though the blessings which they do ask may be for a time withheld, yet they would find a compensation in the enjoyment of the

* A reviewer condemns us for quoting false natural history, but no intelligent reader will be misled thereby.—*Editor.*

worldly things which do at the moment engross their affections; and that, in reality, they would not choose to have at that instant such an abundant communication of spiritual influence imparted to them, as would render these worldly objects less valuable in their estimation, and would turn the whole tide of their affections towards spiritual things. . . . .

The Christian may sometimes betake himself to prayer, to ask counsel of God in some perplexity regarding divine truth, or to seek direction in some doubtful point of duty; but, instead of being prepared fairly to exercise his judgment, in the hope that, while doing so, the considerations that lie on the side of truth will be made to his mind clear and convincing; he may have allowed his inclinations so to influence and bias his judgment towards the side of error, or in favour of the line of conduct which he wishes to pursue, that when he asks counsel it may only be in the hope that his previous opinion will be confirmed, and when he seeks direction it is in reality on a point about which he was previously determined. . . . .

Another case is, I fear, but too common, and in which the believer may be still more directly chargeable with regarding iniquity in his heart. It is possible that there may be in his heart or life something which he is conscious is not altogether as it should be—some earthly attachment which he cannot easily justify—or some point of conformity to the maxims and practices of the world, which he finds it difficult to reconcile with christian principle; and yet all the struggle which these have from time to time cost him, may only have been an effort of ingenuity on his part to retain them without doing direct violence to conscience—a laborious getting up of arguments whereby to show how they may be defended, or in what way they may lawfully be gone into; while the true and simple reason of his going into them, namely, the love of the world, is all the while kept out of view. And, as an experimental proof how weak and inconclusive all these arguments are, and at the same time how unwilling he still is to relinquish his favourite objects, he may be conscious that in confessing his sins he leaves them out of the enumeration, rather because he would willingly pass them over, than because he is convinced that they need not be there; he may feel that he cannot and dare not make them the immediate subject of solemn and deliberate communing with God; and, after all his multiplied and ingenious defences, he may be reconciled to them at last, only by ceasing to agitate the question whether they are lawful or not.—*Robert Gordon, D.D.* 1825.

Verse 18.—Whence is it that a man's regarding or loving sin in his heart hinders his prayers from acceptance with God? 1. The first reason is, because in this case he cannot pray by the Spirit. All prayers that are acceptable with God are the breathings of his own Spirit within us. Rom. viii. 26. As without the intercession of Christ we cannot have our prayers accepted, so without the intercession of the Spirit we cannot pray. . . . . II. The second reason is, because as long as a man regards inquity in his heart he cannot pray in faith; that is, he cannot build a rational confidence upon any promise that God will accept him. Now, faith always respects the promise, and promise of acceptance is made only to the upright: so long, therefore, as men cherish a love of sin in their heart, they either understand not the promises, and so they pray without understanding, or they understand them, and yet misapply them to themselves, and so they pray in presumption: in either case, they have little cause to hope for acceptance. . . . . III. The third reason is, because while we regard iniquity in our hearts we cannot pray with fervency; which, next to sincerity, is the great qualification of prayer, to which God has annexed a promise of acceptance (Matt. xi. 12): "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matt. vii. 7: Those only that seek are like to find, and those that knock to have admittance; all which expressions denote vehemence and importunity. Now, the cause of vehemence, in our prosecution of any good, is our love of it; for proportionable to the affection we bear to anything is the earnestness of our desires and the diligence of our pursuit after it. So long, therefore, as the love of sin possesses our hearts, our love to spiritual things is dull, heavy, inactive, and our prayers for them must needs be answerable. O the wretched fallacy that the soul will here put upon itself! At the same time it will love its sin and pray against it; at the same time it will entreat for grace, with a desire not to prevail: as a father confesses of himself, that before his conversion he would pray for chastity, with a secret reserve in his wishes that God would not grant his prayer. Such are the mysterious, intricate treacheries by which the love of sin will make a soul deceive and circumvent itself. How languidly and faintly will it pray for spiritual mercies; conscience, in the meanwhile, giving the lie to every such petition! The soul, in

this case, cannot pray against sin in earnest; it fights against it, but neither with hope nor intent to conquer; as lovers, usually, in a game one against another, with a desire to lose. So, then, while we regard iniquity, how is it possible for us to regard spiritual things, the only lawful object of our prayers? and, if we regard them not, how can we be urgent with God for the giving of them? And where there is no fervency on our part. no wonder if there is no answer on God's.—*Robert South.* 1633—1716.

Verse 18.—"*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" Though the subject-matter of a saint's prayer be founded on the word, yet if the end he aims at be not levelled right, this is a door at which his prayer will be stopped: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James iv. 3. Take, I confess, a Christian in his right temper, and he aims at the glory of God; yet, as a needle that is touched with a loadstone may be removed from its point to which nature hath espoused it, though trembling till it again recovers it; so a gracious soul may in a particular act and request vary from this end, being jogged by Satan, yea, disturbed by an enemy nearer home —his own unmortified corruption. Do you not think it possible for a saint, in distress of body and spirit, to pray for health in the one, and comfort in the other, with too selfish a respect to his own case and quiet? Yes, surely; and to pray for gifts and assistance in some eminent service, with an eye to his own credit and applause; to pray for a child with too inordinate a desire that the honour of his house may be built up in him. And this may be understood as the sense, in part, of that expression, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" For though to desire our own health, peace, and reputation, be not an inquity, when contained within the limits that God hath set; yet, when they overflow to such a height, as to overtop the glory of God, yea, to stand but in a level with it, they are a great abomination. That which in the first or second degree is wholesome food, would be rank poison in the fourth or fifth: therefore, Christian, catechize thyself, before thou prayest: O, my soul, what sends thee on this errand? Know but thy own mind what thou prayest for, and thou mayest soon know God's mind how thou shalt speed. Secure God his glory, and thou mayest soon know God's mind how thou shalt speed.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 18.—"*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*"

1. They regard iniquity in their heart, who practise it secretly, who are under restraint from the world, but are not possessed of an habitual fear of the omniscient God, the searcher of all hearts, and from whose eyes there is no covering of thick darkness where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Jer. xxiii. 24.

2. They regard iniquity in the heart, who entertain and indulge the desire of sin, although in the course of providence they may be restrained from the actual commission of it. I am persuaded the instances are not rare, of men feeding upon sinful desires, even when through want of opportunity, through the fear of man, or through some partial restraint of conscience, they dare not carry them into execution.

3. They regard iniquity in their heart, who reflect upon past sins with delight, or without sincere humiliation of mind. Perhaps our real disposition, both towards sin and duty, may be as certainly discovered by the state of our minds after, as in the time of action. The strength and suddenness of temptation may betray even a good man into the commission of sin; the backwardness of heart and power of inward corruption may make duty burdensome and occasion many defects in the performance; but every real Christian remembers his past sins with unfeigned contrition of spirit, and a deep sense of unworthiness before God; and the discharge of his duty, however difficult it may have been at the time, affords him the utmost pleasure on reflection. It is otherwise with many; they can remember their sins without sorrow, they can speak of them without shame, and sometimes even with a mixture of boasting and vain glory. Did you never hear them recall their past follies, and speak of them with such relish, that it seems to be more to renew the pleasure than to regret the sin? Even supposing such persons to have forsaken the practice of some sins, if they can thus look back upon them with inward complacency, their seeming reformation must be owing to a very different cause from renovation of heart.

4. They regard iniquity in the heart, who look upon the sins of others with approbation; or, indeed, who can behold them without grief. Sin is so abominable a thing, so dishonouring to God, and so destructive to the souls of men, that

no real Christian can witness it without concern. Hence it is so frequently taken notice of in Scripture, as the character of a servant of God, that he mourns for the sins of others. Ps. cxix. 136, 158.

5. In the last place, I suspect that they regard sin in the heart, who are backward to bring themselves to the trial, and who are not truly willing that God himself would search and try them. If any, therefore, are unwilling to be tried, if they are backward to self-examination, it is an evidence of a strong and powerful attachment to sin. It can proceed from nothing but from a secret dread of some disagreeable discovery, or the detection of some lust which they cannot consent to forsake. . . . . There are but too many who, though they live in the practice of sin, and regard iniquity in their hearts, do yet continue their outward attendance on the ordinances of divine institution, and at stated times lay hold of the seals of God's covenant. Shall they find any acceptance with him? No. He counts it a profane mockery; he counts it a sacrilegious usurpation. Ps. l. 16, 17. Shall they have any comfort in it? No: unless in so far as in righteous judgment he suffers them to be deceived; and they are deceived, and they are most unhappy, who lie longest under the delusion. Ps. l. 21. Shall they have any benefit by it? No: instead of appeasing his wrath, it provokes his vengeance; instead of enlightening their minds, it blinds their eyes; instead of sanctifying their nature, it hardens their hearts. See a description of those who had been long favoured with outward privileges and gloried in them. John xii. 39, 40. So that nothing is more essential to an acceptable approach to God in the duties of his worship in general, and particularly to receiving the seals of his covenant, than a thorough and universal separation from all known sin. Job. xi. 13, 14.—*John Witherspoon* (1722—1749), *in a Sermon entitled "The Petitions of the Insincere Unavailing."*

Verses 18, 19, 20.—Lord, I find David making a syllogism, in mood and figure, two propositions he perfected. *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me; but verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer."* Now I expected that David should have concluded thus: "Therefore I regard not wickedness in my heart; but far otherwise he concludes: *"Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."* Thus David hath deceived, but not wronged me. I looked that he should have clapped the crown on his own, and he puts it on God's head. I will learn this excellent logic; for I like David's better than Aristotle's syllogisms, and whatsoever the premises be, I make God's glory the conclusion.—*Thomas Fuller.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 3.—The terrible in God's works of nature and providence.

Verse 4.—I. *Who?* All the earth. 1. All, collectively, all classes and tribes. 2. All numerically. 3. All harmoniously. II. *What?* Shall worship and sing. 1. Humiliation; then, 2. Exultation. III. *When?* Shall, etc. Denotes 1. Futurity. 2. Certainty. God has spoken it. All things are tending towards it. —*G. R.*

Verse 5.—Here is—I. A subject for general study: the "works of God." II. For particular study: "his doing towards," etc. 1. These are most wonderful. 2. In these we are most concerned.

Verse 6.—Great difficulties, unexpectedly overcome, made the theme of joy.

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—Our share in the past deliverances of the church.

Verse 7.—Sovereignty, immutability ("for ever"), and omniscience,—the enemies of proud rebels.

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—To get a hearing for the gospel difficult, necessary, and possible. Ways and means for so doing.

Verses 8, 9. — I. Praise *to*. 1. As God. 2. As *our* God. II. Praise *for*. Preservation. 1. Of natural life. 2. Of spiritual life. III. Praise *by*, "ye people." 1. On your own account. 2. On account of others. Or, 1. Individually. 2. Unitedly.—*G. R.*

Verse 9.—Perseverance the subject of gratitude. I. The maintenance of the inner life. II. The integrity of the outward character

Verse 10.—The assaying of the saints.

Verse 10.—I. The design of the afflictions. 1. To prove them. 2. To reprove them. II. The illustration of that design. As silver, etc. III. The issue of the trial.

Verses 11, 12.—The hand of God should be acknowledged. I. In our temptations: "Thou broughtest us." II. In our bodily afflictions: "Thou laidest," etc. III. In our persecutions: "Thou hast caused," etc. IV. In our deliverances: "Thou broughtest us out," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—*Fire and water.* Varied trials. 1. Discover different evils. 2. Test all parts of manhood. 3. Educate varied graces. 4. Endear many promises. 5. Illustrate divine attributes. 6. Afford extensive knowledge. 7. Create capacity for the varied joys of heaven.

Verse 12 (*first clause*).—The rage of oppression.—*Thomas Adams' Sermon.*

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—A plentiful place, free from penury; a pleasant place, void of sorrow; a safe place, free from dangers and distresses.—*Daniel Wilcocks.*

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—The victory of patience, with the expiration of malice.—*Thomas Adams' Sermon.*

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—The wealth of a soul whom God has tried and delivered. Among other riches he has the wealth of experience, of strengthened graces, of confirmed faith, and of sympathy for others.

Verse 13.—God's house; or, the place of praises.—*Thomas Adams' Sermon.*

Verses 13—15.—I. Resolutions made (verse 13). 1. What? To offer praise. 2. Why? For deliverance. 3. Where? In thy house. II. Resolutions uttered (verse 14). 1. To God. 2. Before men. III. Resolutions fulfilled. 1. In public acknowledgment. 2. In heartfelt gratitude. 3. In more frequent attendance at the house of God. 4. The renewed self-dedication. 5. In increased liberality.—*G. R.*

Verse 16.—I. What has God done for the soul of every Christian? II. Why does the Christian wish to declare what God has done for his soul? III. Why does he wish to make this declaration to those only who fear God? 1. Because they alone can understand such a declaration. 2. They alone will really believe him. 3. They only will listen with interest, or join with him in praising his Benefactor.—*E. Payson.*

Verse 16.—I. Religious teaching should be *simple:* "I will declare." II. *Earnest:* "Come and hear." III. *Seasonable:* "All ye that." IV. *Discriminating:* "Fear God." V. *Experimental:* "What he hath," etc.

Verse 17.—I. The two principal parts of devotion. Prayer and praise. II. Their degree. In prayer, crying. In praise, extolling. III. Their order: 1. Prayer. 2. Then praise. What is won by prayer is worn in praise.

Verses 18, 19.—I. The test admitted. II. The test applied. III. The test approved.

Verse 19.—The fact that God has heard prayer.

Verse 20.—The mercy of God. I. In permitting prayer. II. In inclining to prayer. III. In hearing prayer.

PSALM LXVII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician. *Who he was matters not, and who we may be is also of small consequence, so long as the Lord is glorified.* On Neginoth, *or upon stringed instruments. This is the fifth Psalm so entitled, and no doubt like the others was meant to be sung with the accompaniment of "harpers harping with their harps." No author's name is given, but he would be a bold man who should attempt to prove that David did not write it. We will be hard pushed before we will look for any other author upon whom to father these anonymous odes which lie side by side with those ascribed to David, and wear a family likeness to them.* A Psalm *or* Song. *Solemnity and vivacity are here united. A Psalm is a song, but all songs are not Psalms: this is both the one and the other.*

EXPOSITION.

GOD be merciful unto us, and bless us; *and* cause his face to shine upon us. Selah.

2 That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.

3 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah.

5 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

6 *Then* shall the earth yield her increase; *and* God, *even* our own God, shall bless us.

7 God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

1. *"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us."* This is a fit refrain to the benediction of the High Priest in the name of the Lord, as recorded in Num. vi. 24, 25. "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." It begins at the beginning with a cry for *mercy*. Forgiveness of sin is always the first link in the chain of mercies experienced by us. Mercy is a foundation attribute in our salvation. The best saints and the worst sinners may unite in this petition. It is addressed to the God of mercy, by those who feel their need of mercy, and it implies the death of all legal hopes or claims of merit. Next, the church begs for a blessing; *"bless us"*—a very comprehensive and far-reaching prayer. When we bless God we do but little for *our* blessings are but words, but when God blesses he enriches us indeed, for his blessings are gifts and deeds. But his blessing alone is not all his people crave, they desire a personal consciousness of his favour, and pray for a smile from his face. These three petitions include all that we need here or hereafter.

This verse may be regarded as the prayer of Israel, and spiritually of the Christian church. The largest charity is shown in this Psalm, but it begins at home. The whole church, each church, and each little company, may rightly pray, "bless *us*." It would, however, be very wrong to let our charity end where it begins, as some do; our love must make long marches, and our prayers must have a wide sweep, we must embrace the whole world in our intercessions.

"Selah." Lift up the heart, lift up the voice. A higher key, a sweeter note is called for.

2. *"That thy way may be known upon earth."* As showers which first fall upon the hills afterwards run down in streams into the valleys, so the blessing of the Most High comes upon the world through the church. We are blessed for the sake of others as well as ourselves. God deals in a way of mercy with his saints, and then they make that way known far and wide, and the Lord's name is made famous in the earth. Ignorance of God is the great enemy of mankind, and the

testimonies of the saints, experimental and grateful, overcome this deadly foe. God has a set way and method of dealing out mercy to men, and it is the duty and privilege of a revived church to make that *way* to be everywhere known. "*Thy saving health among all nations*," or, *thy salvation*. One likes the old words, "saving health," yet as they are not the words of the Spirit but only of our translators, they must be given up: the word is *salvation*, and nothing else. This all nations need, but many of them do not know it, desire it, or seek it; our prayer and labour should be, that the knowledge of salvation may become as universal as the light of the sun. Despite the gloomy notions of some, we cling to the belief that the kingdom of Christ will embrace the whole habitable globe, and that all flesh shall see the salvation of God: for this glorious consummation we agonize in prayer.

3. "*Let the people praise thee, O God.*" Cause them to own thy goodness and thank thee with all their hearts; let nations do this, and do it continually, being instructed in thy gracious way. "*Let all the people praise thee.*" May every man bring his music, every citizen his canticle, every peasant his praise, every prince his Psalm. All are under obligations to thee, to thank thee will benefit all, and praise from all will greatly glorify thee; therefore, O Lord, give all men the grace to adore thy grace, the goodness to see thy goodness. What is here expressed as a prayer in our translation, may be read as a prophecy, if we follow the original Hebrew.

4. "*O let the nations be glad and sing for joy*," or, they shall joy and triumph. When men know God's way and see his salvation, it brings to their hearts much happiness. Nothing creates gladness so speedily, surely, and abidingly as the salvation of God. Nations never will be glad till they follow the leadership of the great Shepherd; they may shift their modes of government from monarchies to republics, and from republics to communes, but they will retain their wretchedness till they bow before the Lord of all. What a sweet word is that "to sing for joy!" Some sing for form, others for show, some as a duty, others as an amusement, but to sing from the heart, because overflowing joy must find a vent, this is to sing indeed. Whole nations will do this when Jesus reigns over them in the power of his grace. We have heard hundreds and even thousands sing in chorus, but what will it be to hear whole nations lifting up their voices, as the noise of many waters and like great thunders. When shall the age of song begin? When shall groans and murmurs be exchanged for holy hymns and joyful melodies? "*For thou shalt judge the people righteously.*" Wrong on the part of governors is a fruitful source of national woe, but where the Lord rules, rectitude is supreme. He doeth ill to none. His laws are righteousness itself. He rights all wrongs and releases all who are oppressed. Justice on the throne is a fit cause for national exultation. "*And govern the nations upon earth.*" He will lead them as a shepherd his flock, and through his grace they shall willingly follow, then will there be peace, plenty, and prosperity. It is great condescension on God's part to become the Shepherd, of nations, and to govern them for their good: it is a fearful crime when a people who know the salvation of God, apostatize and say to the Lord "depart from us." There is some cause for trembling lest our nation should fall into this condemnation; may God forbid.

"*Selah.*" Before repeating the chorus, the note is again elevated, that full force may be given to the burst of song and the accompaniment of harps.

> "Strings and voices, hands and hearts,
> In the concert bear your parts;
> All that breathe, your Lord adore,
> Praise him, Praise him, evermore!"

5. These words are no vain repetition, but are a chorus worthy to be sung again and again. The great theme of the Psalm is the participation of the Gentiles in the worship of Jehovah; the Psalmist is full of it, he hardly knows how to contain or express his joy.

6. "*Then shall the earth yield her increase.*" Sin first laid a curse on the soil, and grace alone can remove it. Under tyrannical governments lands become unproductive; even the land which flowed with milk and honey is almost a wilderness under Turkish rule; but, when the principles of true religion shall have elevated mankind, and the dominion of Jesus shall be universally acknowledged, the science of tillage shall be perfected, men shall be encouraged to labour, industry shall banish penury, and the soil shall be restored to more than its highest condition of fertility.

We read that the Lord turneth "a fruitful land into barrenness," for the wickedness of them that dwell therein, and observation confirms the truth of the divine threatening; but even under the law it was promised, "the Lord God shall make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land for good." There is certainly an intimate relation between moral and physical evil, and between spiritual and physical good. Alexander notes that the Hebrew is in the past tense, and he concludes that it is ungrammatical to render it in the future; but to us it seems that the prophet-bard, hearing the nations praise the Lord, speaks of the bounteous harvest as already given in consequence. On the supposition that all the people praise Jehovah, the earth has yielded her increase. The future in the English appears to be the clearest rendering of the Hebrew.

"*And God, even our own God, shall bless us.*" He will make earth's increase to be a real blessing. Men shall see in his gifts the hand of that same God whom Israel of old adored, and Israel, especially, shall rejoice in the blessing, and exult in her own God. We never love God aright till we know him to be ours, and the more we love him the more do we long to be fully assured that he is ours. What dearer name can we give to him than "mine own God." The spouse in the song has no sweeter canticle than "my beloved is mine and I am his." Every believing Jew must feel a holy joy at the thought that the nations shall all be blessed by Abraham's God; but every Gentile believer also rejoices that the whole world shall yet worship the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is our Father and our God.

7. "*God shall bless us.*" The prayer of the first verse is the song of the last. We have the same phrase twice, and truly the Lord's blessing is manifold; he blesses and blesses and blesses again. How many are his beatitudes! How choice his benedictions! They are the peculiar heritage of his chosen. He is the Saviour of all men, but specially of them that believe. In this verse we find a song for all future time. God shall bless us is our assured confidence; he may smite us, or strip us, or even slay us, but he must bless us. He cannot turn away from doing good to his elect. "*And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.*" The far off shall fear. The ends of the earth shall end their idolatry, and adore their God. All tribes, without exception, shall feel a sacred awe of the God of Israel. Ignorance shall be removed, insolence subdued, injustice banished, idolatry abhorred, and the Lord's love, light, life, and liberty, shall be over all, the Lord himself being King of king and Lord of lords. *Amen, and Amen.*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—How admirably balanced are the parts of this missionary song! The people of God long to see all the nations participating in their privileges. "visited with God's salvation, and gladdened with the gladness of his nation" (Psalm cvi. 5). They long to hear all the nationalities giving thanks to the Lord, and hallowing his name; to see the face of the whole earth, which sin has darkened so long, smiling with the brightness of a second Eden. This is not a vapid sentiment. The desire is so expressed as to connect with it the thought of duty and responsibility. For how do they expect that the happy times are to be reached? They trust, in the first instance, to the general diffusion of the knowledge of God's way, the spreading abroad of the truth regarding the way of salvation. With a view to that, they cry for a time of quickening from the presence of the Lord, and take encouragement in this prayer from the terms of the divinely-appointed benediction. As if they had said, "Hast thou not commanded the sons of Aaron to put thy name upon us, and to say: The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord cause his face to shine on thee and be gracious to thee? Remember that sure word of thine. God be gracious unto us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. Let us be thus blessed, and we shall in our turn become a blessing. All the families of the earth shall, through us, become acquainted with thy salvation." Such is the church's expectation. And who shall say it is unreasonable? If the little company of a hundred and twenty disciples who met in the upper chamber at

Jerusalem, all of them persons of humble station, and unconspicuous talents, were endued with such power by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that within three hundred years the paganism of the empire was overthrown, one need not fear to affirm that, in order to the evangelisation of the world, nothing more is required than that the churches of Christendom be baptised with a fresh effusion of the same Spirit of power.—*William Binnie.*

Whole Psalm.—There are seven stanzas; twice three two-line stanzas, having one of three lines in the middle, which forms the clasp or spangle of the septiad, a circumstance which is strikingly appropriate to the fact that the Psalm is called "the Old Testament Paternoster" in some of the old expositors.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 1.—"*God be merciful unto us, and bless us,*" etc. God forgives, then he gives; till he be merciful to pardon our sins through Christ, he cannot bless or look kindly on us sinners. All our enjoyments are but blessings in bullion, till gospel grace and pardoning mercy stamp and make them current. God cannot so much as bear any good will to us, till Christ makes peace for us: "On earth peace, good will towards men." Luke ii. xiv. And what joy can a sinner take, though it were to hear of a kingdom fallen to him, if he may not have it with God's good will.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 1.—"*God be merciful unto us*"—Hugo attributes these words to penitents; "*Bless us,*" to those setting out in the Christian life; "*Cause his face to shine upon us,*" to those who have attained, or the sanctified. The first seek for pardon, the second for justifying peace, the third for edification and the grace of contemplation.—*Lorinus.*

Verses 1 *and* 2.—Connect the last clause of verse 1 with the first of verse 2, and observe that God made his face to shine upon Moses, and make known to him his way. "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel," as if the common people could only see the deeds of the Lord, but his way, his plans, his secrets were revealed only to him upon whom the light of God's face had shone. —*C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—"*That thy way may be known,*" etc. The Psalmist here supposes that there *are* certain rules or principles, in accordance with which God bestows blessings on mankind; and he prays that those rules and principles may be everywhere made known upon the earth.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*That thy way may be known,*" etc. By nature we know little of God, and nothing of Christ, or the way of salvation by him. The eye of the creature, therefore, must be opened to see the way of life before he can by faith get into it. God doth not use to waft souls to heaven like passengers in a ship, who are shut under the hatches, and see nothing all the way they are sailing to their port; if so, that prayer might have been spared which the Psalmist, inspired of God, breathes forth in the behalf of the blind Gentiles: "*That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.*" As faith is not a naked assent, with affiance and innitency * on Christ; so neither is it a blind assent, without some knowledge. If, therefore, thou continuest still in thy brutish ignorance, and knowest not so much as who Christ is, and what he hath done for the salvation of poor sinners, and what thou must do to get interest in him, thou art far enough from believing. If the day be not broke in thy soul, much less is the Sun of Righteousness arisen by faith in thy soul.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*That thy way may be known.*" The sinful Jew, obstinate in his unbelief, shall see and hate. He shall see, and be enraged at the salvation of the Gentiles; but let us see and *know*, that is, love. For *to know* is often put for *to love*, as in the passages—"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them: I know mine, and am known of mine;" that is, I love my own sheep, and they love me. . . . There is here a sudden transition from the third person to the second, that in speaking of God he might not say, "*His way,*" or "*His salvation,*" but "*thy way,*" and "*Thy salvation;*" setting forth the vehemence of an ardent suppliant, and the grace of God as he reveals himself to that suppliant while still pouring forth his prayers.—*Gerhohus* (1093—1169).

Verse 2.—"*That thy way may be known,*" etc. As light, so the participation of God's light is communicative: we must not pray for ourselves alone, but for all

* Innitency.—Act of leaning on.

others, that God's way may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. *"Thy way;"* that is, thy will, thy word, thy works. God's will must be known on earth, that it may be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Except we know our Master's will, how shall we do it? *Ergo*, first pray with David here: *"Let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth;"* and then, *"Let all the people praise thee."* God's will is revealed in his word, and his word is his way wherein we must walk, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. Or, *"Thy way;"* that is, thy works, as David elsewhere (Ps. xxv. 10): "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth." Or, as others * most fitly: *"Thy way,"* that is, thy *Christ; "Thy saving health,"* that is, thy *Jesus:* for "I am the way," saith our Saviour (John xiv. 6): "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me;" wherefore, *"Let thy Son be known upon earth; thy Jesus among all nations."—John Boys.*

Verse 3.—*"Let the people praise thee."* Mark the sweet order of the blessed Spirit: first, mercy; then, knowledge; last of all, praising of God. We cannot see his countenance except he be merciful to us; and we cannot praise him except his way be known upon earth. His mercy breeds knowledge; his knowledge, praise.—*John Boys.*

Verse 3.—*"Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee."* What then? *"Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us."* We have comforts increased, the more we praise God for what we have already received. The more vapours go up, the more showers come down; as the rivers receive, so they pour out, and all run into the sea again. There is a constant circular course and recourse from the sea, unto the sea; so there is between God and us; the more we praise him, the more our blessings come down; and the more his blessings come down, the more we praise him again; so that we do not so much bless God as bless ourselves. When the springs lie low, we pour a little water into the pump, not to enrich the fountain, but to bring up more for ourselves.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 3.—This verse is exceedingly emphatic. 1. First, by an apostrophe to God, in the pronoun, Thee. As if he said: Let the people praise *thee*, not strange gods; for thou art the only true God. 2. Secondly, inasmuch as it is not said, Let *us* praise thee, O God; but let the *people* praise thee, and let *all* the people. For here is expressed the longing of the pious heart, and its fond desire that God should be praised and magnified throughout all lands and by all people of the round earth. 3. Thirdly, by the iteration, in which the same particle is repeated in this and the fifth verse no less than four times, as if the duty could not be sufficiently inculcated. It is not enough to have said it once; it is delightful to repeat it again.—*Wolfgang Musculus* (1497—1563).

Verse 4.—*"For thou shalt judge the people righteously,"* etc. The Psalmist may here seem to contradict himself; for if mercy make men rejoice, then judgment occasioneth men to tremble. Answer is made, that all such as have known the ways of the Lord, and rejoice in the strength of his salvation, all such as have the pardon of their sins assured and sealed, fear not that dreadful assize, because they know the judge is their advocate. Or, (as Jerome,) let all nations rejoice, because God doth judge righteously, being the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. Acts x. 34. Or, *let all nations rejoice*, because God doth govern all nations; that whereas theretofore they wandered in the fond imaginations of their own hearts, in wry ways, in by-ways; now they are directed by the Spirit of truth to walk in God's highway, which leads unto the celestial Jerusalem; now they shall know Christ, the way, the truth, and the life. For judging is often used for ruling. 1 Sam. vii. 15; 2 Cor. i. 10. So David doth here expound himself: *"thou shalt judge,"* that is, thou shalt *"govern the nations."—John Boys.*

Verse 4.—*"Govern."* Lead and guide them as the shepherd his flock.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 4.—*"And lead* (margin) *the nations."* God now *overrules* the nations in their ways, but surely they are *led* by another guide. There is a bridle in their jaws causing them to err. They are held and shaken in the sieve of vanity, until he come to whom the government pertains.—*Arthur Pridham.*

---

* Augustine; Jerome; Hilary.

Verses 5, 6.—"*Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee!*" What then? "*Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.*" Our unthankfulness is the cause of the earth's unfruitfulness. While man is blessin God *for* his mercies, He is blessing man *with* his mercies.—*William Secker, in "The Nonsuch Professor."* 1660.

Verse 6.—"*Then shall the earth yield her increase.*" An increase of wealth is but the natural result of increased piety and intelligence. There are certain qualities essential to temporal prosperity. These are industry, economy, moderation; and such are the qualities begotten of godliness. . . . . Nor is it an unreasonable expectation that our globe should, under the reign of reighteousness, yield all those temporal advantages of which it is capable. Science, favoured by piety, may greatly add to the earth's fruitfulness; and mechanical genius may still further abbreviate human toil, and increase human comforts. The great inventions and discoveries of science, by which toil is lessened and comfort enhanced, are all the products of Christian minds. . . . . Can we, then, doubt that in the era to which we look forward, labour shall cease to be a burden? Can we believe that the life of the labouring classes is to continue to be all but a ceaseless round of toil and vexation—every hand stretched out to procure something that is needed, or to ward off something that is feared? Scripture predicts the mitigation of the curse; and, in the discoveries of science and the inventions of mechanics, we see the means by which the prediction is to be accomplished. This consummation may still be in the distant future; but if we do not grudge the oak years for its growth, the glory to be revealed is surely worthy of a process as gradual.—*William Reid, in "Things to Come Practically Considered."* 1871.

Verse 6.—"*God, even our own God, shall bless us.*" What a rapturous expression is that. "*God, even our own God, shall bless us!*" and that, "Thy God, thy glory!" Upon interest in God follows their interest in his glory and blessedness; which is so much the dearer and more valuable, as it is theirs; their glory from their God. They shall be blessed by God, their own God; "drink waters out of their own well." How endearing a thing is propriety! Another man's son is ingenuous, comely, personable; this may be a matter of envy; but mine own is so, this is a joy. I read in the life of a devout nobleman of France,* that receiving a letter from a friend in which were inserted these words: "*Deus meus et omnia,*" my God and my all, he thus returns back to him: "I know not what your intent was to put into your letter these words, '*Deus meus et omnia*, My God and my all:' only you invite me thereby to return the same to you, and to all creatures. 'My God and my all; my God and my all; my God and my all.' If, perhaps, you take this for your motto, and use it to express how full your heart is of it, think you it possible I should be silent upon such an invitation, and not express my sense thereof? Likewise be it known unto you, therefore, that he is 'my God and my all;' and, if you doubt of it, I shall speak of it a hundred times over. I shall add no more, for anything else is superfluous to him that is truly penetrated with 'my God and my all;' I leave you, therefore, in this happy state of jubilation, and conjure you to beg for me, of God, the solid sense of these words." And do we think, "my God and my all," or, "my God and my glory," will have lost its emphasis in heaven? or that it will be less significant among awaked souls? These things concur, then, concerning the object; it is most excellent, even divine, entire, permanent, and *theirs:* how can it but satisfy?—*John Howe, in "The Blessedness of the Righteous."*

Verse 6.—"*Our own God.*" How unexpressible was the inward pleasure wherewith we may suppose those words to have been uttered. How delightful an appropriation! as if it were intended to be said, the blessing itself were less significant, it could not have that savour with it, if it were not from our own God. Not only, therefore, allow, but urge your spirits thus to look towards God, that you may both delight in him as being in himself the most excellent one, and also as being yours; for know, you are not permitted only, but obliged to eye, accept, and rejoice in him as such.—*John Howe.*

Verses 6, 7.—The promise refers directly to the visible fertility of the renewed earth at the time of Israel's recovery, but it includes a fuller reference to higher things; for the true increase yielded by any of God's works is the revenue of praise which redounds to his holy name. Such, then, is the promise I have to bring before

* Monsieur de Renti.

you. In its widest sense, the lower creation is now made subject to vanity, because of man's sin; but in the kingdom of Christ this curse will be removed, and all God's works will yield their full increase—a tribute of unmingled honour and praise to his name.

Let us consider—1. The preparation for this increase. 2. The increase itself. 3. The blessing of God, which will crown it.

I. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THIS INCREASE. What are the means? What is the way of its accomplishment? Whence does it proceed? Our Psalm is full of instruction. Consider—1. *Its fountain:* the free mercy of God. The Psalm begins, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us." Whatever the details and steps of the work of redemption, all must be traced up to this original fountain, the sovereign grace and mercy of our God. . . . . The eternal, free, unchangeable, inexhaustible mercy of our God, revealed through his dear Son Jesus Christ; this is the fountain-head of the blessed increase here foretold. . . . . 2. *The order* in which this increase is granted may next be considered. Salvation is given to the Jew first, and then also to the Greek. The prayer of this Psalm is, "Cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." It is the divine plan first to choose his people and bless them, and then to make them a blessing, as we see in Abraham, the father of the faithful. It is through his church that God blesses the world. . . . . The same principle is true in every revival of pure religion. . . . . But all this order of divine mercy has yet to be more fully seen in what is before us; in the restoration of Israel, and its effect upon the world at large. . . . . 3. *The immediate precursor of this increase is the return of our Lord* from heaven, the coming of Christ to judge the earth and reign over all nations. The Psalm calls all nations to rejoice in this: "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth." . . . . The world craves, and will crave more and more for righteous government. The Lord has promised to supply this natural want of the human heart, though he take vengeance on his hardened enemies. Even in the coming of the Lord to judgment, goodness will so finally triumph that the nations are to be glad and sing for joy. . . . . It is the Lord judging the people and governing the nations, and all the people praising him, that prepares directly and immediately for the promised blessedness. "*Then shall the earth yield her increase.*" . . . .

II. THE INCREASE ITSELF. This increase has many aspects. Let us view them in a climax of benefits. 1. *Natural fertility.* The first sentence of curse and barrenness, of thorns and thistles, was pronounced on Adam's fall, and renewed on Cain's murder. It seems to have been partially removed after the deluge. . . . . Even now, two-thirds of our world are ocean, incapable of increase; half of the rest, and perhaps more, is almost desert, and of the remainder the largest part is very imperfectly tilled. There is room, even in the latter for a vast increase, when the whole earth might become like the garden of the Lord. 2. *The redemption of art.* Its activity, its talent, and discoveries are now great and wonderful; but it is mainly turned to human self-sufficiency and vanity, and bears little fruit to God's glory and the highest benefit of man. But in the period predicted in this Psalm, every creature, when redeemed to man's use, shall be also reclaimed to God's glory. . . . . 3. *The redemption of science.* . . . . 4. *Society will yield its increase to God.* . . . . Men now live as without God in the world, full though it be of proofs of his wisdom and love. . . . . What a change when every social circle shall be a fellowship of saints, and all bent to one great purpose, the divine glory and the blessedness of each other. 5. *The soul shall yield its increase.* The earth is only the figure of the human heart, a soil ever fertile for good or evil. Thus the apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, regards it: "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Then the thorns and briers of a crooked and perverse generation will cease. . . . . The fruits of righteousness will abound from the human race to the glory of God. Much praise, much zeal, much reverence, much humility, will distinguish his servants. Faith, hope, and love will all be in the fullest exercise. Christ will be all and in all, and every power will be consecrated to him. This is the best increase the earth yields to God. 6. *The large number*

of God's true servants, thus yielding themselves to him, is another part of this blessedness. . . . . 7. *The perpetuity of this increase* has to be added to this glory. This is according to the promise made to the Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.—*Condensed from Edward Bickersteth's Sermon in the "Bloomsbury Lent Lectures."* 1848.

Verses 6, 7.—Double blessings from God—temporal and spiritual; blessings peculiar to the Jews, and blessings suited to Christians. O Lord, I refuse not the temporal blessings it pleases thee to send me; I will receive them with humble gratitude as the gift of thy goodness: but I entreat from thee especially for spiritual blessings; and that thou wouldest treat me rather as a Christian than as a Jew.—*Pasquier Quesnel* (1634—1719), *in "Les Psaumes de David avec des Reflexions Morales."*

Verse 7.—Note, how joy in God, and fear of God, are combined. By joy the sadness and anxiety of diffidence are excluded, but by fear, contempt and false security are banished. So Ps. ii., "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Here is mercy in God the Father. II. Here is blessing as the fruit of that mercy in God the Son. III. Here is the experience of that blessing in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.

Verse 1.—The need of seeking a blessing for ourselves.

Verses 1, 2.—The prosperity of the church at home, the hope for missions abroad.

Verse 2.—I. The way of God towards the earth. 1. A way of mercy. 2. Of blessing. 3. Of comfort. II. The knowledge of that way. 1. By outward means. 2. By inward teaching. III. The effect of that knowledge. Salvation among all nations.

Verse 2.—What is the true health of men?

Verse 3.—Viewed, I. As the desire of every renewed heart. II. As a prayer. III. As a prophecy.

Verse 4.—I. The reign of God in the world: it is not left to itself. II. The joy of the world on that account: "Let the nations," etc. III. The reason of that joy: "He will judge righteously." 1. As faithful to his law. 2. Faithful to his promises of mercy.

Verses 5—7.—I. The prayer (verse 5). II. The promise (verse 6). 1. Of temporal good. 2. Of spiritual good. III. The prediction (verse 7).

Verses 6, 7.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 819: "The Minstrelsy of Hope."

Verse 7.—I. God to man: "shall bless us." II. Man to God: "shall fear him."

PSALM LXVIII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, a Psalm or Song of David.—*We have already said enough upon this title when dealing with Psalms LXV. and LXVI. The present is obviously a song to be sung at the removal of the ark; and in all probability was rehearsed when David conducted it with holy joy from the house of Obed-edom to the prepared place on Mount Zion. It is a most soul stirring hymn. The first verses were often the battle-song of the Covenanters and Ironsides; and the whole Psalm fitly pictures the way of the Lord Jesus among his saints, and his ascent to glory. The Psalm is at once surpassingly excellent and difficult. Its darkness in some stanzas is utterly impenetrable. Well does a German critic speak of it as a Titan very hard to master. Our slender scholarship has utterly failed us, and we have had to follow a surer Guide. We trust our thoughts may not however prove unprofitable.*

DIVISION.—*With the words of the first two verses the ark is uplifted, and the procession begins to move. In verses* 3—6, *the godly in the assembly are exhorted to commence their joyous songs, and arguments are adduced to help their joy. Then the glorious march of Jehovah in the wilderness is sung: verses* 7—10, *and his victories in war are celebrated in verses* 11—14. *The joyous shouts are louder as Zion comes in sight, and the ark is borne up the hill: verses* 15—19. *On the summit of the mount the priests sing a hymn concerning the Lord's goodness and justice; the safety of his friends, and ruin of his foes; verses* 20—23. *Meanwhile the procession is described as it winds up the hill; verses* 24—27. *The poet anticipates a time of wider conquest, verses* 28—31: *and concludes with a noble burst of song unto Jehovah.*

EXPOSITION.

LET God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.

2 As smoke is driven away, *so* drive *them* away: as wax melteth before the fire, *so* let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

1. *"Let God arise."* In some such words Moses spake when the cloud moved onward, and the ark was carried forward. The ark would have been a poor leader if the Lord had not been present with the symbol. Before we move, we should always desire to see the Lord lead the way. The words suppose the Lord to have been passive for awhile, suffering his enemies to rage, but restraining his power. Israel beseeches him to "arise," as elsewhere to "awake," "gird on his sword," and other similar expressions. We, also, may thus importunately cry unto the Lord, that he would be pleased to make bare his arm, and plead his own cause. *"Let his enemies be scattered."* Our glorious Captain of the vanguard clears the way readily, however many may seek to obstruct it; he has but to arise, and they flee, he has easily over-thrown his foes in days of yore, and will do so all through the ages to come. Sin, death, and hell know the terror of his arm; their ranks are broken at his approach. Our enemies are *his* enemies, and in this is our confidence of victory. *"Let them also that hate him flee before him."* To hate the infinitely good God is infamous, and the worst punishment is not too severe. Hatred of God is impotent. His proudest foes can do him no injury. Alarmed beyond measure, they shall flee before it comes to blows. Long before the army of Israel can come into the fray, the haters of God shall flee before HIM who is the champion of his chosen. He comes, he sees, he conquers. How fitting a prayer is this for the commencement of a revival! How it suggests the true mode of conducting one:—the Lord leads the way, his people follow, the enemies flee.

2. *"As smoke is driven away."* Easily the wind chases the smoke, completely it removes it, no trace is left; so, Lord, do thou to the foes of thy people. They fume in pride, they darken the sky with their malice, they mount higher and higher in arrogance, they defile wherever they prevail: Lord, let thy breath, thy Spirit,

thy Providence, make them to vanish for ever from the march of thy people. Philosophic scepticism is as flimsy and as foul as smoke; may the Lord deliver his Church from the reek of it. *"As wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God."* Wax is hard by itself, but put it to the fire, how soft it is. Wicked men are haughty till they come into contact with the Lord, and then they faint for fear; their hearts melt like wax when they feel the power of his anger. Wax, also, burns and passes away; the taper is utterly consumed by the flame: so shall all the boastful power of the opposers of the gospel be as a thing of nought. Rome, like the candles on her altars, shall dissolve, and with equal certainty shall infidelity disappear. Israel saw, in the ark, God on the mercy-seat—power in connection with propitiation—and they rejoiced in the omnipotence of such a manifestation; this is even more clearly the confidence of the New Testament church, for we see Jesus, the appointed atonement, clothed with glory and majesty, and before his advance all opposition melts like snow in the sun: the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. When he comes by his Holy Spirit, conquest is the result; but when he arises in person, his foes shall utterly perish.

3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, *is* God in his holy habitation.

6 God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry *land*.

3. *"But let the righteous be glad."* The presence of God on the throne of grace is an overflowing source of delight to the godly; and let them not fail to drink of the streams which are meant to make them glad. *"Let them rejoice before God."* The courtiers of the happy God should wear the garments of gladness, for in his presence is fulness of joy. That presence, which is the dread and death of the wicked, is the desire and delight of the saints. *"Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice."* Let them dance with all their might, as David did, for very joy. No bounds should be set to joy in the Lord. "Again, I say, rejoice," says the apostle, as if he would have us add joy to joy without measure or pause. When God is seen to shine propitious from above the mercy-seat in the person of our Immanuel, our hearts must needs leap within us with exultation, if we are indeed among those made righteous in his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit. Move on, O army of the living God, with shouts of abounding triumph, for Jesus leads the van.

4. *"Sing unto God, sing praises to his name."* To time and tune, with order and care, celebrate the character and deeds of God, the God of his people. Do it again and again; and let the praise, with resolution of heart, be all directed to him. Sing not for ostentation, but devotion; not to be heard of men, but of the Lord himself. Sing not to the congregation, but "unto God." *"Extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name* JAH." Remember his most great, incomprehensible, and awful name; reflect upon his self-existence and absolute dominion, rise to the highest pitch of joyful reverence in adoring him. Heaven beholds him riding on the clouds in storm, and earth has seen him marching over its plains with majesty. The Hebrew seems to be: "Cast up a highway for him who marcheth through the wilderness," in allusion to the wanderings of the tribes in the desert. The marches of God were in the waste howling wilderness. His eternal power and Godhead were there displayed in his feeding, ruling, and protecting the vast hosts which he had brought out of Egypt. The ark brought all this to remembrance, and suggested it as a theme for song. The name JAH is an abbreviation of the name Jehovah; it is not a diminution of that name, but an intensified word, containing in it the essence of the longer, august title. It only occurs here in our version of Scripture, except in connection with other words such as Hallelu*jah*. *"And rejoice before him."* In the presence of him who marched so gloriously at the head of the elect nation, it is most fitting that all his people should display a holy delight. We ought to avoid dulness in our worship. Our songs should be weighty with solemnity, but not heavy with sadness. Angels are nearer the throne than we, but their deepest awe is consonant with the purest bliss: our sense of divine greatness

must not minister terror but gladness to our souls; we should "rejoice before him."

It should be our wish and prayer, that in this wilderness world, a highway may be prepared for the God of grace. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God," is the cry of gospel heralds, and we must all zealously aim at obedience thereto; for where the God of the mercy-seat comes, blessings innumerable are given to the sons of men.

5. "*A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.*" In the wilderness the people were like an orphan nation, but God was more than a father to them. As the generation which came out of Egypt gradually died away, there were many widows and fatherless ones in the camp, but they suffered no want or wrong, for the righteous laws and the just administrators whom God had appointed, looked well to the interests of the needy. The tabernacle was the Palace of Justice; the ark was the seat of the great King. This was great cause for joy to Israel, that they were ruled by ONE who would not suffer the poor and needy to be oppressed. To this day and for ever, God is, and will be, the peculiar guardian of the defenceless. He is the President of Orphanages, the Protector of Widows. He is so glorious that he rides on the heavens, but so compassionate that he remembers the poor of the earth. How zealously ought his church to cherish those who are here marked out as Jehovah's especial charge. Does he not here in effect say, "Feed my lambs?" Blessed duty, it shall be our privilege to make this one of our life's dearest objects. The reader is warned against mis-quoting this verse; it is generally altered into "*the husband* of the widow," but Scripture had better be left as God gave it.

6. "*God setteth the solitary in families.*" The people had been sundered and scattered over Egypt; family ties had been disregarded, and affections crushed; but when the people escaped from Pharoah they came together again, and all the fond associations of household life were restored. This was a great joy. "*He bringeth out those which are bound with chains.*" The most oppressed in Egypt were chained and imprisoned, but the divine Emancipator brought them all forth into perfect liberty. He who did this of old continues his gracious work. The solitary heart, convinced of sin and made to pine alone, is admitted into the family of the First-born; the fettered spirit is set free, and its prison broken down, when sin is forgiven; and for all this, God is to be greatly extolled, for he hath done it, and magnified the glory of his grace. "*But the rebellious dwell in a dry land.*" If any find the rule of Jehovah to be irksome, it is because their rebellious spirits kick against his power. Israel did not find the desert dry, for the smitten rock gave forth its streams; but even in Canaan itself men were consumed with famine, because they cast off their allegiance to their covenant God. Even where God is revealed on the mercy-seat, some men persist in rebellion, and such need not wonder if they find no peace, no comfort, no joy, even where all these abound. Justice is the rule of the Lord's kingdom, and hence there is no provision for the unjust to indulge their evil lustings: a perfect earth, and even heaven itself, would be a dry land to those who can only drink of the waters of sin. Of the most soul-satisfying of sacred ordinances these witless rebels cry, "what a weariness it is!" and, under the most soul-sustaining ministry, they complain of "the foolishness of preaching." When a man has a rebellious heart, he must of necessity find all around him a dry land.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:

8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: *even* Sinai itself *was moved* at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

10 Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.

7. "*O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people.*" What a sweetly suitable association, "thou" and "thy people;"—thou before, and thy people following! The Lord went before, and, therefore, whether the Red Sea or burning sand lay in the way, it mattered not; the pillar of cloud and fire always led them

by a right way. "*When thou didst march through the wilderness.*" He was the Commander-in-chief of Israel, from whom they received all orders, and the march was therefore *his* march. "His stately step the region drear beheld." We may speak, if we will, of the "wanderings of the children of Israel," but we must not think them purposeless strayings, they were in reality a well-arranged and well considered march.

"SELAH." This seems an odd place for a musical pause or direction, but it is better to break a sentence than spoil praise. The sense is about to be superlatively grand, and, therefore, the *selah* intimates the fact to the players and singers, that they may with suitable solemnity perform their parts. It is never untimely to remind a congregation that the worship of God should be thoughtfully and heartily presented.

8. "*The earth shook.*" Beneath the sublime tread the solid ground trembled. "*The heavens also dropped at the presence of God,*" as if they bowed before their God, the clouds descended, and "a few dark shower-drops stole abroad." "*Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God.*" Moses tells us, in Ex. xix., that "the whole mountain quaked greatly." That hill, so lone and high, bowed before the manifested God. "*The God of Israel.*" The one only living and true God, whom Israel worshipped, and who had chosen that nation to be his own above all the nations of the earth. This passage is so sublime, that it would be difficult to find its equal. May the reader's heart adore the God before whom the unconscious earth and sky act as if they recognised their Maker and were moved with a tremor of reverence.

9. "*Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain.*" The march of God was not signalized solely by displays of terror, for goodness and bounty were also made conspicuous. Such rain as never fell before dropped on the desert sand, bread from heaven and winged fowls fell all around the host; good gifts were poured upon them, rivers leaped forth from rocks. The earth shook with fear, and in reply, the Lord, as from a cornucopia, shook out blessings upon it; so the original may be rendered. "*Whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.*" As at the end of each stage, when they halted, weary with the march, they found such showers of good things awaiting them that they were speedily refreshed. Their foot did not swell all those forty years. When they were exhausted, God was not. When they were weary, he was not. They were his chosen heritage, and, therefore, although for their good he allowed them to be weary, yet he watchfully tended them and tenderly considered their distresses. In like manner, to this day, the elect of God in this wilderness state are apt to become tired and faint, but their ever-loving Jehovah comes in with timely succours, cheers the faint, strengthens the weak, and refreshes the hungry; so that once again, when the silver trumpets sound, the church militant advances with bold and firm step towards "the rest which remaineth." By this faithfulness, the faith of God's people is confirmed, and their hearts stablished; if fatigue and want made them waver, the timely supply of grace stays them again upon the eternal foundation.

10. "*Thy congregation hath dwelt therein.*" In the wilderness itself, enclosed as in a wall of fire, thy chosen church has found a home; or, rather, girdled by the shower of free gifts which fell all around the camp, thy flock has rested. The congregation of the faithful find the Lord to be their "dwelling-place in all generations." Where there were no dwellings of men, God was the dwelling of his people. "*Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.*" Within the guarded circle there was plenty for all; all were poor in themselves, yet there were no beggars in all the camp, for celestial fare was to be had for the gathering. We, too, still dwell within the circling protection of the Most High, and find goodness made ready for us: although poor and needy by nature, we are enriched by grace; divine preparations in the decree, the covenant, the atonement, providence, and the Spirit's work, have made ready for us a fulness of the blessing of the Lord. Happy people, though in the wilderness, for all things are ours, in possessing the favour and presence of our God.

11 The Lord gave the word: great *was* the company of those that published *it*.

12 Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.

13 Though ye have lien among the pots, *yet shall ye be as* the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was *white* as snow in Salmon.

11. In the next verses we do not sing of marching, but of battle and victory "*The Lord gave the word.*" The enemy was near, and the silver trumpet from the tabernacle door was God's mouth to warn the camp; then was there hurrying to and fro, and a general telling of the news; "*great was the company of those that published it.*" The women ran from tent to tent and roused their lords to battle. Ready as they always were to chant the victory, they were equally swift to publish the fact that the battle-note had been sounded. The ten thousand maids of Israel, like good handmaids of the Lord, aroused the sleepers, called in the wanderers, and bade the valiant men hasten to the fray. O for the like zeal in the church to-day, that, when the gospel is published, both men and women may eagerly spread the glad tidings of great joy.

12. "*Kings of armies did flee apace.*" The lords of hosts fled before the Lord of Hosts. No sooner did the ark advance than the enemy turned his back: even the princely leaders stayed not, but took to flight. The rout was complete, the retreat hurried and disorderly;—they "did flee, did flee;" helter skelter, pell-mell, as we say.

> "Where are the kings of mighty hosts?
> Fled far away, fled far and wide.
> Their triumph and their trophied boasts
> The damsels in their bowers divide."

"*And she that tarried at home divided the spoil.*" The women who had published. the war-cry shared the booty. The feeblest in Israel had a portion of the prey. Gallant warriors cast their spoils at the feet of the women and bade them array themselves in splendour, taking each one "a prey of divers colours, of divers colours of needlework on both sides." When the Lord gives success to his gospel, the very least of his saints are made glad and feel themselves partakers in the blessing.

13. "*Though ye have lien among the pots.*" Does he mean that the women at home, who had been meanly clad as they performed their household work, would be so gorgeously arrayed in the spoil, that they would be like doves, of silver wing and golden plumage? Or, would he say that Israel, which had been begrimed in the brick-kilns of Egypt, should come forth lustrous and happy in triumph and liberty? Or, did the song signify that the ark should be brought from its poor abode with Obed-edom into a fairer dwelling-place? It is a hard passage, a nut for the learned to crack. If we knew all that was known when this ancient hymn was composed, the allusion would no doubt strike us as being beautifully appropriate, but as we do not, we will let it rest among the unriddled things. Alexander reads it, "When ye shall lie down between the borders, ye shall be like the wings," etc., which he considers to mean, "when settled in peace, the land shall enjoy prosperity;" but this version does not seem to us any more clear than our authorised one. Of making many conjectures there is no end; but the sense seems to be, that from the lowest condition the Lord would lift up his people into joy, liberty, wealth, and beauty. Their enemies may have called them squatters among the pots—in allusion to their Egyptian slavery; they may have jested at them as scullions of Pharaoh's kitchen; but the Lord would avenge them and give them beauty for blackness, glory for grime. "*Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*" The dove's wing flashes light like silver, and anon gleams with the radiance of "the pale, pure gold." The lovely, changeable colours of the dove might well image the mild, lustrous beauty of the nation, when arrayed in white holiday-attire, bedecked with their gems, jewels, and ornaments of gold. God's saints have been in worse places than among the pots, but now they soar aloft into the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

14. "*When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.*" The victory was due to the Almighty arm alone; he scattered the haughty ones who came against his people, and he did it as easily as snow is driven from the bleak sides of Salmon. The word *white* appears to be imported into the text, and by leaving it out the sense is easy. A traveller informed the writer that on a raw and gusty day, he saw the side of what he supposed to be Mount Salmon suddenly

swept bare by a gust of wind, so that the snow was driven hither and thither into the air like the down of thistles, or the spray of the sea: thus did the Omnipotent one scatter all the potentates that defied Israel. If our authorized version must stand, the conjectures that the bleached bones of the enemy, or the royal mantles cast away in flight. whitened the battle-field, appear to be rather too far-fetched for sacred poetry. Another opinion is, that Salmon was covered with dark forests, and appeared black, but presented quite another aspect when the snow covered it, and that by this noteworthy change, from sombre shade to gleaming whiteness, the poet sets forth the change from war to peace. Whatever may be the precise meaning, it was intended to pourtray the glory and completeness of the divine triumph over the greatest foes. In this let all believers rejoice.

15 The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan; an high hill *as* the hill of Bashan.

16 Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is* the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.

17 The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*.

18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them*.

19 Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*, *even* the God of our salvation. Selah.

15. Here the priests on the summit of the chosen hill begin to extol the Lord for his choice of Zion as his dwelling-place. "*The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan*," or more accurately, "a hill of God is Bashan," that is to say, Bashan is an eminent mountain, far exceeding Zion in height. According to the Hebrew custom, every great or remarkable thing is thus designated. Where we talk of the Devil's Dyke, the Devil's Ditch, the Devil's Punch Bowl, etc., the more commendable idiom of the Hebrews speaks of the hill of God, the trees of the Lord, the river of God, etc. "*An high hill as the hill of Bashan*," or rather, "a mount of peaks is Bashan." It does not appear that Zion is compared with Bashan, but contrasted with it. Zion certainly was not a high hill comparatively; and it is here conceded that Bashan is a greater mount, but not so glorious, for the Lord in choosing Zion had exalted it above the loftier hills. The loftiness of nature is nothing before the Lord. He chooses as pleases him, and, according to the counsel of his own will, he selects Zion, and passes by the proud, uplifted peaks of Bashan; thus doth he make the base things of this world, and things that are despised, to become monuments of his grace and sovereignty.

16. "*Why leap ye, ye high hills?*" Why are ye moved to envy? Envy as ye may, the Lord's choice is fixed. Lift up yourselves, and even leap from your seats, ye cannot reach the sublimity which Jehovah's presence has bestowed on the little hill of Moriah. "*This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in.*" Elohim makes Zion his abode, yea, Jehovah resides there. "*Yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.*" Spiritually the Lord abides eternally in Zion, his chosen church, and it was Zion's glory to be typical thereof. What were Carmel and Sirion, with all their height, compared to Zion, the joy of the whole earth! God's election is a patent of nobility. They are choice men whom God has chosen, and that place is superlatively honoured which he honours with his presence.

17. "*The chariots of God are twenty thousand.*" Other countries, which in the former verse were symbolically referred to as "high hills," gloried in their chariots of war; but Zion, though far more lowly, was stronger than they, for the omnipotence of God was to her as two myriads of chariots. The Lord of Hosts could summon more forces into the field than all the petty lords who boasted in their armies: his horses of fire and chariots of fire would be more than a match for their fiery steeds and flashing cars. The original is grandly expressive, "the war-chariots of Elohim are myriads, a thousand thousands." The marginal reading of our Bibles, "*even many thousands*," is far more correct than the rendering, "*even thousands of angels.*" It is not easy to see where our venerable translators found these "angels," for they are not in the text; however, as it is a blessing to entertain them unawares,

we are glad to meet with them in English, even though the Hebrew knows them not; and the more so because it cannot be doubted that they constitute a right noble squadron of the myriad hosts of God. We read in Deuteronomy xxxiii. 2, of the Lord's coming "with ten thousands of saints," or holy ones, and in Heb. xii. 22, we find upon Mount Zion "an innumerable company of angels," so that our worthy translators putting the texts together, inferred the angels, and the clause is so truthfully explanatory, that we have no fault to find with it. *"The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place,"* or, "it is a Sinai in holiness." God is in Zion as the Commander-in-chief of his countless hosts, and where he is, there is holiness. The throne of grace on Zion is as holy as the throne of justice on Sinai. The displays of his glory may not be so terrible under the new covenant as under the old; but they are even more marvellous if seen by the spiritual eye. Sinai has no excellency of glory beyond Zion; but the rather it pales its light of law before the noontide splendours of Zion's grace and truth. How joyful was it to a pious Hebrew to know that God was as truly with his people in the tabernacle and temple as amid the terrors of the Mount of Horeb; but it is even more heart-cheering to us to be assured that the Lord abides in his church, and has chosen it to be his rest for ever. May we be zealous for the maintenance of holiness in the spiritual house which God condescends to occupy: let a sense of his presence consume, as with flames of fire, every false way. The presence of God is the strength of the church; all power is ours when God is ours. Twenty thousand chariots shall bear the gospel to the ends of the earth; and myriads of agencies shall work for its success. Providence is on our side, and it "has servants everywhere." There is no room for a shade of doubt or discouragement, but every reason for exultation and confidence.

18. *"Thou hast ascended on high."* The ark was conducted to the summit of Zion; God himself took possession of the high places of the earth, being extolled and very high. The antitype of the ark, the Lord Jesus, has ascended into the heavens with signal marks of triumph. To do battle with our enemies, the Lord descended and left his throne; but now the fight is finished, he returns to his glory; high above all things is he now exalted. *"Thou hast led captivity captive."* A multitude of the sons of men are the willing captives of Messiah's power. As great conquerors of old led whole nations into captivity, so Jesus leads forth from the territory of his foe a vast company as the trophies of his mighty grace. From the gracious character of his reign it comes to pass that to be led into captivity by him is for our captivity to cease, or to be itself led captive; a glorious result indeed. The Lord Jesus destroys his foes with their own weapons; he puts death to death, entombs the grave, and leads captivity captive. *"Thou hast received gifts for men,"* or, received gifts among men: they have paid thee tribute, O mighty Conqueror, and shall in every age continue to do so willingly, delighting in thy reign. Paul's rendering is the gospel one: Jesus has "received gifts for men," of which he makes plentiful distribution, enriching his church with the priceless fruits of his ascension, such as apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and all their varied endowments. In him, the man who received gifts for man, we are endowed with priceless treasures, and, moved with gratitude, we return gifts to him, yea, we give him ourselves, our all. *"Yea, for the rebellious also:"* these gifts the rebels are permitted to share in; subdued by love, they are indulged with the benefits peculiar to the chosen. The original runs, "even the rebellious," or, "even from the rebellious," of which the sense is that rebels become captives to the Lord's power, and tributaries to his throne.

> "Great King of grace, my heart subdue,
> I would be led in triumph too;
> A willing captive to my Lord,
> To own the conquests of his word."

"That the Lord God might dwell among them." In the conquered territory, Jah Elohim would dwell as Lord of all, blessing with his condescending nearness those who were once his foes. When Canaan was conquered, and the fort of Zion carried by storm, then was there found a resting-place for the ark of God; and so when the weapons of victorious grace have overcome the hearts of men, the Lord God, in all the glory of his name, makes them to be his living temples. Moreover, the ascension of Jesus is the reason for the descent of the Lord God, the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus dwells with God, God dwells with men. Christ on high is the reason of the Spirit below. It was expedient that the Redeemer should rise, that the Comforter should come down.

19. *"Blessed be the Lord."* At the mention of the presence of God among men the singers utter an earnest acclamation suggested by reverential love, and return blessings to him who so plentifully blesses his people. *"Who daily loadeth us with benefits."* Our version contains a great and precious truth, though probably not the doctrine intended here. God's benefits are not few nor light, they are loads; neither are they intermittent, but they come "daily;" nor are they confined to one or two favourites, for all Israel can say, "he loadeth *us* with benefits." Delitzsch reads it, "He daily bears our burden;" and Alexander, "Whoever lays a load upon us, the Mighty God is our salvation." If he himself burdens us with sorrow, he gives strength sufficient to sustain it; and if others endeavour to oppress us, there is no cause for fear, for the Lord will come to the rescue of his people. Happy nation, to be subdued by a King whose yoke is easy, and who secures his people from all fear of foreign burdens which their foes might try to force upon them. *"Even the God of our salvation."* A name most full of glory to him, and consolation to us. No matter how strong the enemy, we shall be delivered out of his hands; for God himself, as King, undertakes to save his people from all harm. What a glorious stanza this is! It is dark only because of its excessive light. A world of meaning is condensed into a few words. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light, therefore blessed be the Saviour's name for evermore. All hail! thou thrice blessed Prince of Peace! All thy saved ones adore thee, and call thee blessed.

"Selah." Well may the strings need tuning, they have borne an unparalleled strain in this mighty song. Higher and yet higher, ye men of music, lift up the strain. Dance before the ark, ye maidens of Israel; bring forth the timbrel, and sing unto the Lord who hath triumphed gloriously.

20 *He that is* our God *is* the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord *belong* the issues from death.

21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies, *and* the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea:

23 That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* enemies, *and* the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

20. *"He that is our God is the God of salvation."* The Almighty who has entered into covenant with us is the source of our safety, and the author of our deliverances. As surely as he is our God he will save us. To be his is to be safe. *"And unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."* He has ways and means of rescuing his children from death: when they are at their wit's end, and see no way of escape, he can find a door of deliverance for them. The gates of the grave none can open but himself, we shall only pass into them at his bidding; while on the heavenward-side he has set open the doors for all his people, and they shall enjoy triumphant issues from death. Jesus, our God, will save his people from their sins, and from all else besides, whether in life or death.

21. *"But God shall wound the head of his enemies."* The Preserver is also the Destroyer. He smites his foes on the crown of their pride. The seed of the woman crushes the serpent's head. There is no defence against the Lord, he can in a moment smite with utter destruction the lofty crests of his haughty foes. *"And the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses."* He may glory in his outward appearance, and make his hair his pride, as Absalom did; but the Lord's sword shall find him out, and pour out his soul. Headstrong sinners will find that providence overcomes them despite their strong heads. They who go on in sin will find judgments come on them; and the adornment of their pride may be made the instrument of their doom. He covers the head of his servants, but he crushes the head of his foes. At the second coming of the Lord Jesus, his enemies will find his judgments to be beyond conception terrible.

22. This verse, by the insertion of the words, *"my people,"* is made to bear the meaning which the translators thought best; but, if their interpolated word is omitted we probably get nearer to the sense. *"The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring again from the depths of the sea."* Though his foes should endeavour to escape, they should not be able. Amos describes the Lord as saying, "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb

up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them." As there is no resisting Israel's God, so is there no escape from him, neither the heights of Bashan nor the depths of the great sea can shelter from his eye of detection and his hand of justice. The powers of evil may flee to the utmost ends of the earth, but the Lord will arrest them, and lead them back in chains to adorn his triumph.

23. "*That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies.*" Vengeance shall be awarded to the oppressed people, and that most complete and terrible. "*And the tongue of thy dogs in the same.*" So overwhelming should be the defeat of the foe that dogs should lick their blood. Here "the stern joy which warriors feel" expresses itself in language most natural to the oriental ear. To us, except in a spiritual sense, the verse sounds harshly; but read it with an inner sense, and we also desire the utter and crushing defeat of all evil, and that wrong and sin may be the objects of profound contempt. Terrible is the God of Israel when he cometh forth as a man of war, and dreadful is even the Christ of God when he bares his arm to smite his enemies. Contemplate Rev. xix. and note the following:—"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. . . . . And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

24 They have seen thy goings, O God; *even* the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.

25 The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after; among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.

26 Bless ye God in the congregations, *even* the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

27 There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler, the princes of Judah *and* their council, the princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali.

24. "*They have seen thy goings, O God.*" In the song the marchings of the Lord had been described; friends and foes had seen his goings forth with the ark and his people. We suppose that the procession was now climbing the hill, and entering the enclosure where the tabernacle of the ark was pitched; it was suitable at this moment to declare with song that the tribes had seen the glorious progress of the Lord as he led forth his people. "*Even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.*" The splendid procession of the ark, which symbolised the throne of the great King, was before the eyes of men and angels as it ascended to the holy place; and the Psalmist points to it with exultation before he proceeds to describe it. All nature and providence are, as it were, a procession attending the great Lord, in his visitations of this lower globe. Winter and summer, sun and moon, storm and calm, and all the varied glories of nature swell the pomp of the King of kings, of whose dominion there is no end.

25. "*The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after.*" This was the order of the march, and God is to be worshipped evermore with due decorum. First the singers, and lastly the musicians, for the song must lead the music, and not the music drown the singing. In the midst of the vocal and instrumental band,

or all around them, were the maidens: *"among them were the damsels playing with timbrels."* Some have imagined that this order indicates the superiority of vocal to instrumental music; but we need not go so far for arguments, when the simplicity and spirituality of the gospel already teach us that truth. The procession depicted in this sublime song was one of joy, and every means was taken to express the delight of the nation in the Lord their God.

26. *"Bless ye God in the congregations."* Let the assembled company magnify the God whose ark they followed. United praise is like the mingled perfume which Aaron made, it should all be presented unto God. He blesses us; let him be blessed. *"Even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel."* A parallel passage to that in Deborah's song: "They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord." The seat of the ark would be the fountain of refreshing for all the tribes, and there they were to celebrate his praises. "Drink," says the old inscription, "drink, weary traveller; drink and pray." We may alter one word, and read it, drink and praise. If the Lord overflows with grace, we should overflow with gratitude. Ezekiel saw an ever-growing stream flow from under the altar, and issue out from under the threshold of the sanctuary, and wherever it flowed it gave life: let as many as have quaffed this life-giving stream glorify "the fountain of Israel."

27. *"There is little Benjamin with their ruler."* The tribe was small, having been greatly reduced in numbers, but it had the honour of including Zion within its territory. "And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." Little Benjamin had been Jacob's darling, and now the tribe is made to march first in the procession, and to dwell nearest to the holy place. *"The princes of Judah and their council."* Judah was a large and powerful tribe, not with one governor, like Benjamin, but with many princes "and their company," for so the margin has it. "From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel," and the tribe was a quarry of stones wherewith to build up the nations: some such truth is hinted at in the Hebrew. *"The princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali."* Israel was there, as well as Judah; there was no schism among the people. The north sent a representative contingent as well as the south, and so the long procession set forth the hearty loyalty of all the tribes to their Lord and King. O happy day, when all believers shall be one around the ark of the Lord; striving for nothing but the glory of the God of grace.

28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.

29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.

30 Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, *till every one* submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people *that* delight in war.

31 Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

The prophet now puts into the mouth of the assembly a song, foretelling the future conquests of Jehovah.

28. *"Thy God hath commanded thy strength."* His decree had ordained the nation strong, and his arm had made them so. As a commander-in-chief, the Lord made the valiant men pass in battle array, and bade them be strong in the day of conflict. This is a very rich though brief sentence, and, whether applied to an individual believer, or to the whole church, it is full of consolation. *"Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."* As all power comes from God at first, so its continual maintenance is also of him. We who have life should pray to have it "more abundantly;" if we have strength we should seek to be still more established. We expect God to bless his own work. He has never left any work unfinished yet, and he never will. "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly;" and now, being reconciled to God, we may look to him to perfect that which concerneth us, since he never forsakes the work of his own hands.

29. *"Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee."* The palace of God, which towered above Jerusalem, is prophesied as becoming a

wonder to all lands, and when it grew from the tabernacle of David to the temple of Solomon, it was so. So splendid was that edifice that the queen of far-off Sheba came with her gifts; and many neighbouring princes, overawed by the wealth and power therein displayed, came with tribute to Israel's God. The church of God, when truly spiritual, wins for her God the homage of the nations. In the latter-day glory this truth shall be far more literally and largely verified.

30. *"Rebuke the company of spearmen;"* or, *"the beasts of the reeds,"* as the margin more correctly renders it. Speak to Egypt, let its growing power and jealousy be kept in order, by a word from thee. Israel remembers her old enemy, already plotting the mischief, which would break out under Jeroboam, and begs for a rebuking word from her Omnipotent Friend. Anti-christ also, that great red dragon, needs the effectual word of the Lord to rebuke its insolence. *"The multitude of the bulls,"* the stronger foes; the proud, headstrong, rampant, fat, and roaring bulls, which sought to gore the chosen nation,—these also need the Lord's rebuke, and they shall have it too. All Egypt's sacred bulls could not avail against a "thus saith Jehovah." Popish bulls, and imperial edicts, have dashed against the Lord's church, but they have not prevailed against her, and they never shall. *"With the calves of the people."* The poorer and baser sort are equally set on mischief, but the divine voice can control them; multitudes are as nothing to the Lord when he goes forth in power; whether bulls or calves, they are but cattle for the shambles when Omnipotence displays itself. The gospel, like the ark, has nothing to fear from great or small; it is a stone upon which every one that stumbleth shall be broken. *"Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver."* The Lord is asked to subdue the enemies of Israel, till they rendered tribute in silver ingots. Blessed is that rebuke, which does not break but bend; for subjection to the Lord of hosts is liberty, and tribute to him enriches him that pays it. The taxation of sin is infinitely more exacting than the tribute of religion. The little finger of lust is heavier than the loins of the law. Pieces of silver given to God are replaced with pieces of gold. *"Scatter thou the people that delight in war."* So that, notwithstanding the strong expression of verse 23, God's people were peacemen, and only desired the crushing of oppressive nations, that war might not occur again. Let the battles of peace be as fierce as they will; heap coals of fire on the heads of enemies, and slay their enmity thereby. That "they who take the sword should perish by the sword," is a just regulation for the establishment of quiet in the earth. What peace can there be, while blood-thirsty tyrants and their myrmidons are so many? Devoutly may we offer this prayer, and, with equal devotion, we may bless God that it is sure to be answered, for "he breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire."

31. *"Princes shall come out of Egypt."* Old foes shall be new friends. Solomon shall find a spouse in Pharaoh's house. Christ shall gather a people from the realms of sin. Great sinners shall yield themselves to the sceptre of grace, and great men shall become good men, by coming to God. *"Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."* Cush shall hasten to present peace offerings. Sheba's queen shall come from the far south. Candace's chamberlain shall ask of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter. Abyssinia shall yet be converted, and Africa become the willing seeker after grace, eagerly desiring and embracing the Christ of God. Poor Ethiopia, thy hands have been long manacled and hardened by cruel toil, but millions of thy sons have in their bondage found the liberty with which Christ made men free; and so thy cross, like the cross of Simon of Cyrene, has been Christ's cross, and God has been thy salvation. Hasten, O Lord, this day, when both the civilization and the barbarism of the earth shall adore thee, Egypt and Ethiopia blending with glad accord in thy worship! Here is the confidence of thy saints, even thy promise; hasten it in thine own time, good Lord.

32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:

33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, *which were* of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.

34 Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency *is* over Israel, and his strength *is* in the clouds.

35 O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power unto *his* people. Blessed *be* God.

32. *"Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth."* Glorious shall that song be in which whole empires join. Happy are men that God is one who is consistently the object of joyous worship, for not such are the demons of the heathen. So sweet a thing is song that it ought to be all the Lord's; a secular concert seems almost a sacrilege, a licentious song is treason. *"O sing praises unto the Lord."* Again and again is God to be magnified; we have too much sinning against God, but cannot have too much singing to God. *"Selah."* Well may we rest now that our contemplations have reached the millennial glory. What heart will refuse to be lifted up by such a prospect!

33. *"To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old."* Before, he was described in his earthly manifestations, as marching through the desert; now, in his celestial glory, as riding in the heavens of the primeval ages. Long ere this heaven and earth were made, the loftier abodes of the Deity stood fast; before men or angels were created, the splendours of the Great King were as great as now, and his triumphs as glorious. Our knowledge reaches but to a small fragment of the life of God, whose "goings forth were of old, even from everlasting." Well might the Jewish church hymn the eternal God, and well may we join therewith the adoration of the Great Firstborn:—

> "Ere sin was born, or Satan fell,
> He led the host of morning stars.
> Thy generation who can tell?
> Or count the number of thy years?"

"Lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice." Was there a thunder-clap just then heard in heaven? Or. did the poet's mind flash backward to the time when from the heaven of heavens the voice of Jehovah broke the long silence and said, "Light be," and light was. To this hour, the voice of God is power. This gospel, which utters and reveals his word, is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Our voices are fitly called to praise him whose voice spoke us into being, and gives us the effectual grace which secures our well-being.

34. *"Ascribe ye strength unto God."* When even his voice rends the rocks and uproots the cedars, what cannot his hand do? His finger shakes the earth; who can conceive the power of his arm? Let us never by our doubts or our daring defiances appear to deny power unto God; on the contrary, by yielding to him and trusting in him, let our hearts acknowledge his might. When we are reconciled to God, his omnipotence is an attribute of which we sing with delight. *"His excellency is over Israel."* The favoured nation is protected by his majesty; his greatness is to them goodness, his glory is their defence. *"And his strength is in the clouds."* He does not confine his power to the sons of men, but makes it like a canopy to cover the skies. Rain, snow, hail, and tempest are his artillery; he rules all nature with awe-inspiring majesty. Nothing is so high as to be above him, or too low to be beneath him; praise him, then, in the highest.

35. *"O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places."* Thou inspirest awe and fear. Thy saints obey with fear and trembling, and thine enemies flee in dismay. From thy threefold courts, and especially from the holy of holies, thy majesty flashes forth and makes the sons of men prostrate themselves in awe. *"The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people."* In this thou, who art Israel's God by covenant, art terrible to thy foes by making thy people strong, so that one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. All the power of Israel's warriors is derived from the Lord, the fountain of all might. He is strong, and makes strong: blessed are they who draw from his resources, they shall renew their strength. While the self-sufficient faint, the All-sufficient shall sustain the feeblest believer. *"Blessed be God."* A short but sweet conclusion Let our souls say Amen to it; and yet, again, Amen.

NEW TRANSLATION.

In order that our readers may see the Psalm at a glance in a good translation, we subjoin the version of FRANZ DELITZSCH ; *recommending our ministerial brethren to procure the volumes of his valuable Commentary on the Psalms, issued by the* Messrs. CLARK, of Edinburgh.

PSALM LXVIII.

HYMN OF WAR AND VICTORY IN THE STYLE OF DEBORAH.

2 LET Elohim arise, let His enemise be scattered,
And let those who hate Him flee before His face.

3 As smoke is driven away, do Thou drive them away ;
As wax melteth before the fire,
Let the wicked perish before Elohim.

4 And let the righteous rejoice, let them exult before Elohim,
And let them be glad with joy.
5 Sing unto Elohim, harp His name,
Pave a highway for Him who rideth along through the steppes ;
Jah is his name, and exult ye before Him.

6 A Father of the fatherless and an Advocate of the widows
Is Elohim in his Holy habitation.
7 Elohim maketh a household for the solitary,
He leadeth forth prisoners into prosperity ;
Yet the rebellious abide in a land of drought.

8 Elohim, when Thou wentest forth before Thy people,
When Thou didst march along in the wilderness—(*Sela.*)
9 The earth shook,
The heavens also dropped before Elohim,
Yon Sinai before Elohim, the God of Israel.

10 With plentiful rain didst Thou, Elohim, water Thine inheritance,
And when it was parched, THOU hast confirmed it.
11 Thy creatures have settled down therein,
Thou didst provide with Thy goodness for the poor, Elohim.

12 The Lord will sound forth the mandate ;
Of the women who herald victory there is a great army.
13 The kings of hosts shall flee, shall flee,
And she that tarrieth at home shall divide the spoil.

14 If ye encamp among the sheep-folds,
The dove's wings are covered with silver
And her feathers with glistening gold.
15 When the Almighty scattereth kings therein,
It becometh snow-white upon Zalmon.

16 A mountain of Elohim is the mountain of Bashan,
A mountain full of peaks is the mountain of Bashan.
17 Why look ye enviously, ye many-peaked mountains,
Upon the mountain which Elohim hath chosen, to dwell thereon ?
Yea, Jahve will dwell [there] for ever.

18 The war-chariots of Elohim are myriads, a thousand thousands,
The Lord is among them, it is a Sinai in holiness.
19 Thou hast ascended up to the height, Thou hast led captives captive,
Thou hast received gifts among men,
Even from the rebellious, that Jah Elohim might dwell [there].

20 Blessed be the Lord:
Day by day doth He bear our burden,
He, God, is our salvation. (*Sela.*)
21 He, God, is to us a God for deeds of deliverance,
And Jahve the Lord hath ways of escape for death.

22 Yea, Elohim will smite the head of His enemies,
The hairy scalp of him who stalketh along in his trespasses.
23 The Lord hath said: Out of Bashan will I bring back,
I will bring back out of the depths of the sea,
24 That thou mayest bathe thy foot in blood,
That the tongue of thy dogs may have its share of the enemy.

25 They behold Thy splendid procession, Elohim,
The splendid procession of my God, my King in holiness.
26 Before went the singers, behind the players on stringed instruments,
In the midst of damsels striking timbrels.
27 In the choirs of the congregation bless ye Elohim,
The Lord, ye who are out of the fountain of Israel.
28 There is Benjamin the youngest, their ruler;
The princes of Judah—their motley band,
The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.

29 Thy God hath commanded thy supreme power—
Uphold in power, Elohim, what Thou hast wrought for us!—
30 From Thy temple above Jerusalem
Let kings present offerings into Thee.
31 Threaten the wild beast of the reed, the troops of bulls with the calves of the people,
That they may prostrate themselves with ingots of silver!—
He hath scattered the peoples that delight in wars.
32 Magnates come out of Egypt,
Cush—quickly do his hands stretch out unto Elohim.

33 Ye kingdoms of the earth, sing unto Elohim,
Praising the Lord with stringed instruments—(*Sela.*)
34 To Him who rideth in the heaven of heavens of the primeval time—
Lo, He made Himself heard with His voice, a mighty voice.
35 Ascribe ye might unto Elohim!

Over Israel is His majesty,
And His omnipotence in the heights of the heavens.
36 Terrible is Elohim out of thy sanctuaries;
"The God of Israel giveth might and abundant strength to the people!"
Blessed be Elohim!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—In this Psalm we have especial reason to condemn or to admire the timidity, or the caution and delicacy of our translators, whichever it may be considered, for the manner in which they have rendered the names of the Almighty. They almost universally translate them "God" or "Lord;" whereas, it has been observed that, almost all the remarkable titles of the Deity are employed in describing and praising the person addressed here. He is called "Elohim" in verse 2; "Adonai," verse 12; "Shaddai," verse 15; "Jehovah," verse 17; "Jah," verse 19; and "Al," verse 20. The Hebrew names of God have, each of them, a distinct and peculiar meaning. No one word will suffice for them all. The vague use of the terms "God" and "Lord" in our translation can never convey to the reader's mind the important ideas which the original expressions, if properly translated, would bear, and we have lost a strong additional confirmation of the deity of Messiah, by abandoning the testimony which the ascription to him of God's peculiar titles would give to this great truth.—*R. H. Ryland.*

Whole Psalm.—As lxvii. opened with a reference to the form of blessing (Numb. vi. 24-26), so this with a reference to the prayer used when the cloud-pillar summoned the camp to commence a march. *There* the presence (*panim*) of God shed saving light on his people; here his enemies flee from it (*mippanayv*, ver. 1). . . . In the Jewish ritual the Psalm is used at Pentecost, the Anniversary of the Giving of the Law, and the Feast of Finished Harvest. . . . The remarkable character of the Psalm is indicated by the fact that there are no fewer than thirteen words in it which are not found elsewhere. The Pentecostal Gift of Tongues seems needed for its full exposition.—*William Kay.*

Whole Psalm.—By many critics esteemed the loftiest effusion of David's lyrical muse.—*William Binnie.*

Whole Psalm.—To judge from the antiquity of its language, the concise description, the thoroughly fresh, forcible, and occasional artlessly ironical expression of its poetry, we consider this poem as one of the most ancient monuments of Hebrew poetry.—*Boettcher.*

Whole Psalm.—It must be confessed that in this Psalm there are as many precipices, and as many labyrinths, as there are verses, or even words. It has not inappropriately been designated the cross of critics, the reproach of interpreters.—*Simon de Muis.*

Whole Psalm.—The beginning of this Psalm clearly intimates that the inspired Psalmist had light given him to see the march of Israel through the wilderness, the ark of the covenant moving before the people to find a resting place. The Psalmist is filled with praise, when he is enabled to see that God revealed his Fatherly love in the whole of that movement—that his eye was upon the fatherless, the widow, the solitary, and afflicted; but David is also carried by the Spirit to the Mount of Olives, where he sees the ascending Lord; he sees the triumphal chariots, with an innumerable company of angels, and then beholds the Lord welcomed in glory as the mighty Conqueror; and not only so, but as having received or purchased gifts for men, even the rebellious (ver. 18), "that the Lord God might dwell among them," or *within them.* "Wherefore," the command of our Father is, "come out from among them, and be ye separate," etc. (2 Cor. vi. 17-18). The doxology of God's people is, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits." Our blessed Master attends day by day to all our wants, and causes his love to flow to us, because he is God our Salvation—Selah. What comfort ought this to afford under every condition! for the Lord Jesus goes before us through the desert. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The widow, the fatherless, the desolate, are all the objects of his care and love. He has gone before us to prepare our heavenly rest; the work is finished. He now comes, day by day, to load us with blessings, and at the last will carry us safely through death into life and glory. To the Lord our Saviour belong the issues from death; then, "Death, where is thy sting?" etc.—*Ridley H. Herschell, in "Strength in Weakness. Meditations on some of the Psalms in time of Trial."* 1860.

Verse 1.—"*Let God arise,*" etc. The moving ark * is a type of Jesus going forth to cast down rebel foes. It is high joy to trace the Antitype's victorious march.

* See Numbers x. 35, 36.

How mightily the Lord advanced! The strength of God was in his arm. His sword was Deity. His darts were barbed with all Jehovah's might. "He had on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of Lords." Rev. xix. 16. His foes, indeed, strove mightily. It was no easy work to rescue souls from Satan's grasp, or to lay low the prison-house of darkness. The enemy rushed on, clad in his fiercest armour, wild in his keenest rage, wily in his deadliest crafts. He plied his every temptation, as a terrific battery. But the true Ark never quailed. The adversary licked the dust. Malignant passions maddened in opposing breasts. The kings stood up; rulers took counsel; all plots were laid; the ignominious death was planned and executed. But still the Ark moved on. The cross gave aid, not injury. The grave could not detain. Death could not vanquish. The gates of hell fly open. The mighty conqueror appears. And, as in Canaan, the ark ascended Zion's hill amid triumphant shouts, so Jesus mounts on high. The heaven of heavens receives him. The Father welcomes the all-conquering Saviour. Angelic hosts adore the glorious God-man. The Rising Prayer has full accomplishment, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee."

And now, from glory's throne, he cheers his humble followers in their desert march. Their toils, their conflicts, and their fears are many. They ofttimes seem as a poor worm beneath the crushing feet. But they survive, they prosper, they lift up the head. As of old the ark was victory, so Jesus is victory now. Yes, every child of faith shall surely set a conquering foot upon the host of foes. Hear this, ye mad opposers, and desist. Where are the nations who resisted Israel? Where are the Pharaohs, the beleaguered kings, the Herods, the chief-priests, the Pilates? Share not their malice, lest you share their end. Read in this word your near destruction, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee."

And, as the Rising Prayer has never failed, so, too, the Resting Prayer now teems with life. "Return, O Lord." Jesus is ready to fly back. Israel's many thousands wait, but wait not in vain. "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry," Heb. x. 37. O joyful day, triumphant sight! What ecstacy, what shouts, what glory! Salvation's Lord returns. Welcome, welcome to him!—*Henry Law, in "'Christ is All.' The Gospel of the Old Testament."* 1858.

Verse 1.—"*Arise.*" The mercifulness of God is seen in his patience toward the wicked, implied in the word "*arise*," for he seemeth, as it were, to *sleep* (Psalm xliv. 23), and not to mark what is done amiss. The Lord is patient, and would have none to perish, but would have all men to come to repentance. He was longer in destroying one city (*Jericho*, Joshua vi. 4), than in building the whole world; slow to wrath, and ready to forgive, desiring not the death of a sinner, but rather he should amend. He doth not arise to particular punishments, much less to the general judgment, but after long suffering and great goodness. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I," quoth our Lord, "have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Matt. xxiii. 37.—*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—"*Let his enemies be scattered.*" You may, if you please, take the words either as a prayer, or as a *prophecy: as a prayer* that they *may;* or as a prophecy, that they *shall be scattered.* Or, you may read it, *Surgente Domino. As soon as the Lord shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered,* and so make it a theological axiom: and so it is a proposition *æternæ veritatis*, everlastingly true, true in the first age of the world, and true in the last age of the world, and will be true to the world's end. We may make it our prayer, that they may be destroyed; and we may prophesy, that they shall be destroyed. *Summa votorum est, non ex incerto poscentis, sed ex cognitione scientiâque sperantis*, saith Hilary. It is a prayer not proceeding from a doubting and wavering heart, as if God did at sometimes deliver his church, and at others fail and leave her to the will of her enemies; but grounded upon certain knowledge and infallible assurance that he will "*arise, and not keep silence,*" and avenge himself of his enemy. For there is a kind of presage and prophecy in prayer: if we pray as we should, he hath promised to grant our request; which is a fairer assurance than any prophet can give us. "*Let God arise,*" and *God will arise*, it is but the difference of a tense, and the Hebrews commonly use the one for the other. . . . .

In this prayer or prophecy, or conclusion, you may, as in a glass, behold the providence of God over his people, and the destiny and fatal destruction of wicked

men. Or, you may conceive God sitting in heaven, and looking down upon the children of men, and laughing to scorn all the designs of his enemies; his *exsurgat*, his rising, as a tempest to scatter them, and as a fire to melt them. And these two, *exsurgat* and *dissipabuntur*, the rising of God and the destruction of his enemies, divide the text, and present before our eyes two parties or sides, as it were, in main opposition. Now, though the *exsurgat* be before the *dissipabuntur*, God's rising before the scattering, yet there must be some persons to rouse God up and awake him before he will arise to destroy. We will, therefore, as the very order of nature required, consider first the persons which are noted out unto us by three several appellations, as by so many marks and brands in their forehead. They are, 1. *Enemies;* 2. *Haters of God;* 3. *Wicked men.* But God, *rising* in this manner, is more especially against the fact than the person, and against the person only for the fact. We must, therefore, search and inquire after that; and we find it wrapt up and secretly lurking in the *dissipabuntur*, in their punishment; for scattering supposeth a gathering together, as corruption doth generation. That, then, which moved God to rise is this: his *enemies*, they that *hated him, the wicked*, were gathered together, and consulted against God and his church, as we see it this day; and, seeing it, are here met together to fall down before God in all humility, that he may arise and scatter them. This is *nunc opportunitatis*, the very time and appointed time *for* God to *arise*. In which phrase is implied a kind of pause and deliberation, as if God were not always up, and ready to execute judgment. And, hereby, he manifesteth—1. His patience to the wicked: he is not always up, as it were, to destroy his enemies; 2. His justice, which cometh at length, though it come not so soon as men in misery expect; 3. His mercy to his children: though for a while he seem to sleep, and not to hearken to the voice of their complaints, yet, at last, he rises up and helps them. Lastly, we shall take notice of the effect, or end, of this rising; and that is the destruction of his enemies, here drawn out to our view, in four several expressions, as in so many colours:—1. *Dissipabuntur, they shall be scattered;* 2. *Fugient, they shall fly;* 3. *Deficient, they shall vanish like smoke;* 4. *Liquefient, they shall be melted as wax;* which all meet and are concentred in *peribunt, they shall perish at the presence of God.—Anthony Farindon.*

Verses 1—3.—Whether the Jewish Church fully comprehended the meaning of the predictions or not, it is absolutely certain that her members were taught, in more places than one, earnestly to pray for Christ's second advent; and to one of these prayers I would now direct your attention, considering, I. *The Prayer of the Jewish Church for the Second Advent of Christ.* II. *The duty of the Christian Church to join in it.* The Psalmist, moved by the Spirit of God, adopts the words used by Moses in the wilderness, when the ark, in which God dwelt between the cherubim, set forward; for we read in the 10th of Numbers, "It came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." But the wanderings of Israel were now over, and the ark of the Lord had found a place of rest. The people of God were in the land promised to their fathers; their enemies were subdued; and the ark went forth no more with the armies of Israel. It is not, therefore, the removal of the ark to which the prophet alludes in his prayer. The context of the Psalm, and the expressions used, carry us on far beyond the days of David, and refer us to times still future. David prays for the return of him of whom the ark was a type, whose glorious advent he beheld by the spirit of prophecy. The words of the text contain a prayer for the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never has this prayer been yet answered in its full extent. The Lord has oft interfered in behalf of his people, or to rouse the wicked to repentance; but these interpositions were temporary, and the world was left again to the government of his providence. God has often given tokens sufficient to show the world what he will do when the day of his wrath is come. . . . But yet the world and the church abound with wickedness, and mourn because of sin. They that hate the Lord flee not before him, but are still suffered to open their mouths in blasphemy; nor have the wicked perished in the presence of God. . . . This rising up, for which the Psalmist prays, is connected with the restoration of Israel, the establishment of universal peace, and the conversion of all nations: ver. 22, 29, 30, 31. II. As members of the Christian Church, we continually profess our faith in the second coming of Christ; and, it may be, that we sometimes meditate upon his glorious appearance; but have we, like David, adopted it as one of the subjects of our addresses at the throne of grace? . . . . Has

our faith ever enabled us to take up the language of the text, and say, "*Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him*"? This leads me, in the second place, to point out our duty to join in the Psalmist's petitions. If it were a prayer suited only to the individual case of David, no obligation could rest upon us to unite in it; but it is a prayer for the universal church, for every one who loves the Saviour, and desires to see "the King in his beauty," for every one who mourns over the state of the world and the church. It is a prayer frequently repeated in Holy Scripture of the Old Testament taught by our Lord, now offered up by saints in the presence of God, and with which the Scriptures of the New Testament conclude. . . . .

It is remarkable that only one prayer of the departed saints has been made known to us, and that this one should be a prayer to the same effect. In the 5th Chapter of the Revelation, the Lord is pleased to give us a view of the state of those who have died as martyrs. St. John says, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Though removed from this scene of woe and misery, safe from all the attempts of the wicked, and in the enjoyment of God's presence, their happiness is not yet complete, and they still find subject matter for prayer and supplication. They still long for that day when the Lord shall arise to judgment, and put an end to the triumph of the wicked. With this prayer also the New Testament concludes. . . . . We cannot, therefore, doubt, but that it is our duty to join in a prayer which the Holy Ghost has dictated, which our Lord has appointed, which the saints in heaven use, and which the beloved disciple offered up. The nature of the prayer presents another argument to enforce this duty. We are bound to pray for those things which promote the honour of Christ, and the eternal happiness of his people. But never shall the honour of Christ be complete, nor his people happy, nor the righteous be glad and rejoice exceedingly, until God arise and his enemies be scattered.—*Alexander M'Caul, D.D., in "Plain Sermons on Subjects Practical and Prophetic."* 1840.

Verse 2.—"*As smoke is driven away,*" etc. The Psalmist adds a striking figure to illustrate how easily God can overthrow the machinations of our enemies, comparing them to *smoke which vanishes away when blown upon by the wind,* or *wax which melts before the fire.* We consider it utterly incredible that such a formidable array of opposition should be made to disappear in a moment. But the Spirit takes this method of chiding the fearfulness of our carnal minds, and teaching us that there is no such strength in our enemies as we suppose—that we allow the smoke of them to blind our eyes, and the solid mass of resistance which they present to deceive us into a forgetfulness of the truth, that the mountains themselves flow down at the presence of the Lord.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—"*As smoke is driven away,*" etc. "Their end was bitter as the smoke," said an aged teacher. What meanest thou, O Master? asked his young disciple. "I was thinking of the end of the unrighteousness," replied the old man, "and of how too often I, like the Psalmist, have been envious when they were in prosperity. Their lives have seemed so bright and glowing that I have thought they resembled the blaze of a cheerful fire on a winter's night. But, as I have watched them, they have suddenly vanished like the flame that fades into black and bitter smoke; and I have ceased to envy them. Trust not, O my scholar, only to that which appears brilliant; but watch also for its ending, lest thou be deceived."—*Hubert Bower, in "Parables and Similitudes of the Christian Life."* 1871.

Verse 3.—"*But let the righteous be glad.*" The wicked flee from the presence of God, since it inspires them with terror; the righteous on the other hand rejoice in it, because nothing delights them more than to think that God is near them.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—"*Extol him that rideth upon the heavens.*" Or, as Symmachus, Jerome, Bishop Lowth, Merrick, and others render, "Prepare the way for him who rideth through the deserts: עֲרָבוֹת *Aravoth;* i.e., who rode through the wilderness on the cherubim; alluding to the passage of the ark.—"*Comprehensive Bible.*"

Verse 4.—"*Rideth.*" Said, perhaps, with allusion to the cherubim on which

Jehovah was borne (xviii. 10), God himself being the Leader and Captain of his people, riding as it were at their head as an earthly captain might lead his army, riding on a war-horse.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 4.—"*Upon the heavens.*" The ancient versions in general render the word בָּעֲרָבוֹת, *super occasus*, or *occasum*. The *desert* or *solitude* is the proper and general meaning of it, and there is no authority to render it by *the heavens*, but that of the Rabbins, which, indeed, is little or none; and of the Chaldee paraphrase which gives it עַל כּוּרְסֵי יְקָרֵיהּ בִּעֲרָבוֹת, *super thronam gloriæ ejus in nono cœlo*: who sits upon the throne of his glory in the ninth heaven. The Psalmist here alludes, as I apprehend, to the passage of the Israelites through the deserts in their way to the promised land, and describes it in many of the principal circumstances of it in the following verses; and God is said to *ride*, or, *be carried through the deserts*, as the ark of his presence was carried through them, and accompanied the Israelites in all their various stages during their continuance and pilgrimage in them.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 4.—God always goes at the head of his people through the deserts of suffering and need; in the deserts of trouble they find in him a true leader.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 4.—"*His name* JAH." JAH, as the concentration of Jehovah, is the more emphatic term (*Stier.*) It occurs for the first time in Ex. xv. 2.—*Frederic Fysh, in "A Lyrical Literal Version of the Psalms."* 1850.

Verse 5.—"*A father of the fatherless.*" In a spiritual sense, the *orphans*, whose father God is, says Hilary, are those who have renounced their father the Devil, and those to whom Christ, at his departure, sent another *Comforter*, according to his promise—"I will not leave you orphans."—*Lorinus.*

Verse 5.—Does not James i. 27, refer to this verse, for we have "the *fatherless*," "the *widow*," and then the "*holiness*," of the God we serve?—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 5.—"*God in his holy habitation.*" Albeit the Lord be infinite and uncomprehended by any place, yet hath he appointed a trysting-place where his people shall find him by his own ordinance, to wit, the assembly of his saints, his holy temple shadowing forth Christ to be incarnate, who now is in heaven, now is incarnate, and sitting at the right hand of God, in whom dwells the Godhead; here, here is God to be found.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 6.—"*God setteth the solitary in families.*" It may be interpreted of the fruitfulness and increase of the church with converts, under the gospel dispensation, even from among the Gentiles, who were before solitary, or were alone, without God and Christ, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; but, being called and converted by the ministry of the word, were brought into and placed in gospel churches, or families. . . . . Gospel churches, like families, have a master over them, who is Christ the Son and firstborn, of whom they are named; where are saints of various ages, sizes, and standing; some fathers, some young men, and some children; where are provisions suitable for them, and stewards to give them their portion of meat in due season, who are the ministers of the word; and laws and rules, by which they are directed and regulated, and everything is kept in good decorum.—*John Gill.*

Verse 8.—"*The God of Israel.*" Sinai was the seat not only of God, but of the *covenant God* of the people of Israel; from which the law was proclaimed, and the covenant struck between God and his people.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 9.—The "*Thou*" in the Hebrew is emphatic: "Thine inheritance, even when it was wearied (*i.e.*, worn out) *thou* didst confirm;" or, "*fortify* it." Thou who alone couldst strengthen one worn out, didst so for thy people.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 9.—"*A liberal rain.*" The words translated *a liberal rain*, read literally in the Hebrew *a rain of freenesses;* and I agree with interpreters in thinking that he alludes to the blessing as having come in the exercise of free favour, and to God, as having of his own unprompted goodness provided for all the wants of his people. Some read, *a desirable rain;* others, *a rain flowing without violence*, or *gentle;* but neither of these renderings seems eligible. Others read, *a copious* or *plentiful rain;* but I have already stated what appears to me to be the preferable sense.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9.—"*A gracious rain;*" that is, of manna.—*Edmund Law* (1703—1787), *quoted by Richard Warner in loc.* 1828.

Verse 9.—"*Rain.*" One fountain, says Cyril, waters thy paradise, and the rain that falls upon all the world is the same; it is white in the bloom of the hawthorn, red in the rose, purple in the hyacinth, and diverse in diverse kinds, and all in all; yet it itself is the same and of the same kind. . . . . So also the Holy Spirit, though he is one and the same and not divisible, yet to every one he divideth grace according as he wills.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 9.—"*A plentiful rain.*" Thy love has been as a shower! The returns, but a dew-drop, and that dew-drop stained with sin.—*James Harrington Evans.* 1785—1849.

Verse 10.—"*Thy congregation.*" The words are choice and expressive. Addressing God, (the poet) intentionally and emphatically calls the people of Israel חֲיָתְךָ *thy combined congregation*, in contrast to former divisions and various dissensions, to signify, that the people was now welded together, formed into one society, and united at the same time, that it was well ordered, and constituted as the *society of God*, wherein his laws flourished and were wont to be observed.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 10.—"*Thy congregation.*" Or, *Thy living creatures*, חַיָּתְךָ, τὰ ζῶά LXX., *animalia*, Vulgate; probably a reference to the immense number of quails which were miraculously brought to the camp of the Israelites, and, in a manner, *dwelt around it.*—*Note in the "Comprehensive Bible."*

Verse 10.—"*Thy congregation.*" Or, *Thy living creatures.* That desolate place, where only wild beasts before could live, was now by those showers of manna (verse 9) enabled to sustain a multitude of other *tamer living creatures*, even of *men* and all their *flocks* and *herds.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—Rather:—"As for thy food (manna and quails), they dwelt in the midst of it.—*Edmund Law.*

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—*As to thy food, they dwelt amidst it.* The ambiguity of the word חַיָּה has occasioned various renderings of this line. Parkhurst considers the radical sense of חַיָּה is "to be vigorous, strong;" hence the noun denotes *force*, a body of men (2 Sam. xxiii. 13); and also that which gives strength, the means of support, or food (Judg. vi. 4 and xvii. 10); and compare Neh. ix. 6. Our translators took the term in the first sense; I take it in the second, because the connection seems to require it, and because חַיִל refers always to a body of men, as soldiers, as actually engaged in some kind of warfare. Hence what is called the *troop* of Philistines (2 Sam. xxiii. 13) is called the *camp* of the Philistines. 1 Chron. xi. 15. And, lastly, because the common version has no antecedent to which בָּהּ, *in it*, or *amidst it*, can refer; but this version has one in the noun *food*. I think there is then a reference not only to the manna, but to the quails, which God brought in abundance around the camp. Exod. xvi. 13; Num. xi. 31. Thus he *prepared in his goodness for the poor.*—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 10.—"*Thou hast prepared in thine own sweetness for the poor, O God.*" *In thine own sweetness*, not in his sweetness. For the needy he is, for he hath been made weak, in order that he may be made perfect: he hath acknowledged himself indigent, that he may be replenished.—*Augustine.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.*" You shall find, when the enemies of the church are destroyed, that God hath many preachers made that do teach his praises. . . . . The words in the original are very significant, and do note two things. First, the word which you read "*company*," in the Hebrew it is "army," "great was the army of preachers." An army of preachers is a great matter; nay, it is a great matter to have seven or eight good preachers in a great army; but to have a whole army of preachers that is glorious. Secondly, it doth note out the heartiness of this preaching army, for the word נֶפֶשׁ, soul, is to be understood as in that place of Ecclesiastes; it is said there, "The words or book of the preacher," which, being in the feminine gender, doth suppose *nephesh*, and as if he should say, as Vatablus hath it: the words or book of him that hath a preaching soul or heart, or the words of a preaching soul or heart. So here where it is said, great is the army of preachers, the word being in the feminine gender, it is as if he should say, great is the army of preaching souls, whose very hearts within them shall preach of the Lord's works. Now, my brethren, it is much to have a preaching army; but if this army shall with heart and soul preach

of God's praise, O that is a blessed thing. Yet thus shall it be when the enemies of God shall be destroyed. And, therefore, seeing God will not lose all those sermons of his own praises, in due time the enemies of the church shall be scattered.—*William Bridge, in "The True Soldier's Convoy."* 1640.

Verse 11.—It is owing to the word, the appointment, and power of God, that any persons are induced or enabled to preach the gospel.—*John Newton* (1725—1807), *in "Messiah."*

Verses 11, 12.—This account of Israel's victories is applicable to victories obtained by the exalted Redeemer, when the enemies of man's salvation were vanquished by the resurrection of Christ, and the heathen nations were compelled to own his power; and this great victory was first notified by *women* to the disciples.—*From "A Practical Illustration of the Book of Psalms; by the Author of the Family Commentary on the New Testament."* [Mrs. Thomson.] 1826.

Verses 11, 12.—The Lord did give his word at his ascension, and there were a multitude of them that published it, and by this means kings of armies were put to flight: they conquered by the word: there is not such another way to rout kings and their armies.—*William Strong.* —1654.

Verses 11—14.

> The Lord giveth the word!
> A great company of women announce the glad tidings!
> Kings with their armies flee—they flee!
> And those, who dwell within the house, divide the spoil!
> Although they lie among the hearth-stones,
> They are become like a dove's wings overlaid with silver,
> And like her pinions overlaid with yellow gold.
> When the Almighty scattereth kings,
> They glisten therein, as snow upon Salmon.

Those who dwell within the house—i.e., the women. They are thus described in allusion to their retired habits of life, in eastern countries. *Lie among the hearth-stones—i.e.,* are habitually employed in the lowest domestic offices, and whose ordinary dress, therefore, is mean and soiled. *The hearth-stones*—Hebrew rests (for boilers). *They are become*—by being decked in the spoils of the enemy.—*Glisten as snow*—Hebrew (each woman) *is snowy: therein—i.e.,* in the spoils distributed amongst them.—*French and Skinner's Translation and Notes.*

Verse 12.—*"Kings of armies did flee apace."* In the Hebrew it is, they fled, they fled; fled is twice. Why so? That is, they did flee very hastily, and they fled most confusedly, they fled all ways; they fled, they fled, noting the greatness of the flight.—*William Bridge.*

Verse 12.—*"The kings of hosts shall flee."*—The "hosts" are the numerous well-equipped armies which the kings of the heathen lead forth to the battle against the people of God. The unusual expression, "kings of hosts," sounds very much like an ironically disparaging antithesis to the customary "Jahve of Hosts."—*Böttcher, quoted by Delitzsch.*

Verse 12.—*"She that tarried at home."* That is, all the noncombatants, saith Kimchi. Or, the women also (those *domi portæ*) came forth to pillage. These days of the gospel do abound with many godly matrons and holy virgins. And it is easy to observe that the New Testament affordeth more store of good women than the old.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 12.—*"Divided the spoil,"* not merely (as Hupfeld) "receives her portion of the spoil," but rather "distributes among her daughters and handmaidens, etc., the share of the spoil" which her husband has brought home.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 13.—It would neither be profitable nor possible to give the reader all the conjectures with which learned men have illustrated or darkened this passage. My aim has been to give a selection, not perhaps what may be called a judicious one, but a sort of sample selection, containing specimens of interpretations. Hammond, who is a very high authority, collects what are probably the best suggestions; we, therefore, give the substance of his long note upon this place. Solomon Jarchi and others see in the word the idea of boundaries, ways, and paths which serve as divisions of land, hence the divergence of the Septuagint into the meaning of portions and inheritances. The boundaries were usually heaps of stones, broken bricks, and rubbish, hence another meaning. But stones, bricks, etc., were

often used to support pots in the open-air cookery of the orientals, hence we come to the meaning of "among the *pots*." And, as Job on his dunghill sat among ashes, and scraped himself with a potsherd, we see that sitting among such rubbish was a conspicuous image of the most dejected and squalid condition. In the wings of a dove, Hammond sees an allusion to the golden cherubic wings which covered the ark, whereby God's presence was exhibited to his people, and their prosperity secured. His explanation of the whole is as follows:—"The Israelites that were oppressed, and long lay in a sad and black, destitute, despised condition, were now at length advanced to all prosperity, splendour, and glory (as was remarkable in their coming out from the kilns of Egypt, with the jewels and wealth of the Egyptians, and afterward more illustriously at their enjoying of Canaan). And so, under Christ's kingdom, the heathenish idolaters that were brought to the basest and most despicable condition of any creatures, worshipping wood and stone, etc., and given up to the vilest lusts, and a reprobate mind (Rom. i.), should from that detestable condition be advanced to the service of Christ, and practice of all Christian virtues, charity, meekness, etc., the greatest inward beauties in the world."—*C. H. S.*

Verse 13.—"*Though ye have lien among the pots*," etc. That is, probably, though ye have laboured and lain down *between the brick-kilns* in Egypt,—a poor, enslaved, and oppressed people, yet ye shall gradually rise to dignity, prosperity, and splendour; as a dove, which has been defiled with dirt, disordered, and dejected, by washing herself in a running stream, and trimming her plumage, gradually recovers the serenity of her disposition, the purity of her colour, and the richness and varied elegance of her appearance.—*W. Greenfield, in "Comp. Bible."*

Verse 13.—"*Though ye have lien among the pots;*" or, *between two rows of stones* (understand hearth-stones), as in camps, and elsewhere also, which even to this day used to be laid and disposed to make fire between them to dress meat by, setting on or hanging over it pots and kettles, etc. Others, *between* or *among dripping-pans*, or *pots*, the sense being all one, and this—though you should be cast or thrust out into the uttermost slavery, or vilest condition (as in Egypt), all besmoked and besmutted, like cooks and scullions, yet shall God through his gracious blessing make you to shine again like a goodly flying dove, which glistereth as if it were of silver and gold.—*Theodore Haak's "Translation of the Dutch Annotations, as ordered by the Synod of Dort in* 1618." London, 1657.

Verse 13.—"*Though ye had lain among the folds.*" Though ye had been treated by the Egyptians as a company of *contemptible shepherds*, and were held in abomination by them as such. See Genesis xlvi. 34.—*William Green, in "A New Translation of the Psalms, with Notes,"* etc. 1762.

Verse 13 (*first clause*).—German, "*lie a-field*," *i.e.*, though you thus, in deep peace, lie among the sheepfolds.—*T. C. Barth.*

Verse 13.—"*Will ye lie down among the sheepfolds?*" A sharp remonstrance. Will ye lie at ease, in the quiet of your pastoral life, as the dove with unsoiled plumage in her peaceful nest, while your brethren are in the tumult and dust of the conflict! Compare Judges v. 16 (from which this allusion is taken) and 17.—*Thomas J. Conant.*

Verse 13.—"*Though ye have lien among the pots*," etc. Here is one Hebrew word in the original which especially renders the Scripture intricate; namely שפתים, *shephattajim;* which, being a word of divers significations and translations, occasions various interpretations. It is rendered, I. *limits or bounds;* II. *lots* or *inheritances;* III. *pots* or *pot-ranges*. 1. Some render it *two limits*, or *two bounds* (the word being of the *dual number*); *viz.*, the *two limits*, bounds, or coasts of the enemies, ready to afflict, vex, and infest them on each hand. Or, two confines of the country where they fortified themselves against their enemies. This sense some later writers embrace: and it's one of the interpretations which Ainsworth gives, though not in the first place. But this version seems here very unsuitable, for that it quite destroys the elegance and fitness of the opposition between the two metaphors, representing Israel's different conditions, *before* and *under* David's Government. Some render it *two lots*, or *two inheritances*. So the LXX., ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν κλήρων; that is, *amidst the lots*, or *between the inheritances; inheritances*, as in Canaan, being anciently set out by *lots*. This Hierom seems to follow, turning it, *Si dormiatis inter medios cleros:* and thus he expounds it: "When thou believest the two Testaments, in both thou shalt find the Holy Ghost. And though there be a beauty, even according to the letter, to know what thou readest, the force of all the comeliness is in the sense. Therefore, the outward ornament of the words is demonstrated by the name of *silver;* but the more secret mysteries are contained in the hidden

gifts of *gold*, etc. So that, with him, the *two lots* are the *two Testaments;* the *dove* is the Holy Ghost; her *wings covered with silver*, the *outward letter of the Testaments*, the *feathers of yellow gold*, the *inward, spiritual, and mysterious sense.* But this is rather a witty allegorical allusion, than a judicious and solid exposition. Augustine also expounds the words much to this effect, but altogether as unsatisfactorily. The ancient Fathers are not always the best expositors. 3. But most do render the word *pots* or *pot-ranges*. Thus: "Although ye have lien among the pots (or, *between the pot-ranges;* or, *between the two banks* or *rows—viz.*, of stone to hang pots on in the camp or leaguer), yet shall ye be *as the wings of a dove covered* (or *decked*) *with silver, and her feathers with yellow-greenish gold.*" And they observe in the words a double metaphor: (1.) The one of Israel's lying among the pots, as scullions lie among the pots, kettles, or cauldrons in the camp or leaguer in time of war, and so are blacked, soiled, smutted, deformed; denoting Israel's abject, low, mean, sullied, deformed, and despicable condition under afflictions and extreme distresses in time past in Egypt, the wilderness, Canaan, and in the time of the Judges. (2.) The other of Israel's being like *the wings of a dove* (which is of very speedy flight for escape), *of bright silver and beauteous golden colour;* representing their escape and deliverance at last out of all their blacking, smutting, and deforming afflictions, into the contrary, beauteous, prosperous, and happy state under the kingdom of David, especially of Jesus Christ the *true* David. *Blackness* notes extreme affliction, affliction and misery; *doves' wings*, escape; white *silver-colour* and beauteous *golden colour*, prosperity and felicity. Thus the metaphors are elegantly opposed one to another, and very significantly set forth the several conditions of Israel; first, as lying among the pots of deep afflictions in former times, but after as assured of deliverance, of better days, and that they should be as a *silver-winged and golden-feathered dove*, full of beauty, comeliness, prosperity, and felicity. To this effect R. David Kimchi, Pagnin, Calvin, Muis, Foord, Ainsworth, and others expound these words.—*Francis Roberts, in a Sermon entitled "The Checquer-Work of God's Providences, towards His Own People, made up of Blacks and Whites,"* etc. 1657.

Verse 13.—*"Though ye have lien among the pots,"* etc. Miss Whately, in her work, "Ragged Life in Egypt," describing some of the sights witnessed from the flat roofs of the houses in Cairo, among other interesting objects, states:—The roofs are usually in a great state of litter, and were it not that *Hasna*, the seller of *geeleh*, gets a palm-branch, and makes a clearance once in a while, her roof would assuredly give way under the accumulation of rubbish. One thing never seemed cleared away, and that was the heaps of old broken pitchers, sherds, and pots, that in these and similar houses are piled up in some corner; and there is a curious observation in connection with this. A little before sunset, numbers of *pigeons* suddenly emerge from behind the pitchers and other rubbish, where they have been sleeping in the heat of the day, or pecking about to find food. They dart upwards, and career through the air in large circles, their outspread wings catching the bright glow of the sun's slanting rays, so that they really resemble bright "yellow gold;" then, as they wheel round, and are seen *against* the light, they appear as if turned into molten silver, most of them being pure white, or else very light coloured. This may seem fanciful, but the effect of *light* in these regions is difficult to describe to those who have not seen it; and, evening after evening, we watched the circling flight of the doves, and always observed the same appearance. It was beautiful to see these birds, rising clean and unsoiled, as doves always do, from the dust and dirt in which they had been hidden, and soaring aloft in the sky till nearly out of sight among the bright sunset clouds. Thus a believer, who leaves behind him the corruptions of the world, and is rendered bright by the Sun of Righteousness shining upon his soul, rises higher and higher, nearer and nearer to the light, till, lost to the view of those who stay behind, he has passed into the unknown brightness above!—*Miss Whately, in "Ragged Life in Egypt."*

Verse 13.—*"Silver"* and *"yellow gold."* The changing colours of the dove's plumage are here described. Mant reads it—

> "Whose wings, a silver light illumes,
> And gleams of verdant gold play o'er her burnished plumes!"

It will illustrate the variety of the translations, if we add that of Keble:

> 'His plumes inlaid with silver sheen,
> His pinions of the pale pure gold."

Personally, I have had cause to remark the flash of the wing of a pigeon, for, in passing before my study window, that bird has often led me to imagine that some unusual light had flashed across the sky; in every case, a mild and silvery light. As to the varying hues of the plumage of birds, Mr. Gosse, after quoting from Sonnerat's Voyage in New Guinea, says, "In reference to the brilliant metallic hues of the epimachus and other birds, the traveller takes occasion to notice the iridiscent effect which is produced by the different angle at which light falls on the feathers. The emerald green, for instance, will often fling out rays of its two constituent primary colours, at one time being blue-green, at another gold-green, while in certain lights all colour vanishes, and a velvet-black is presented to the eye." This it seems to me is a very natural and complete explanation of the poetic language here employed.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 14.—"*Salmon*" or Zalmon, properly Tsalmon, צַלְמוֹן a woody hill near Shechem (Judges ix. 48). Whether it is this that is referred to in Psalm lxviii. 14, is disputed. Some interpreters take צַלְמוֹן here in its etymological meaning of darkness, =צֵל; thus Luther renders the clause "so wird es helle wo es dunkel ist," *thus it be bright where it is dark*, and understands it with a Messianic reference. Ewald adopts much the same rendering. The majority, however, retain the name as a proper name, but exhibit great variety in their explanation of the passage. Hengstenberg thinks that the phrase, "it snows on Tsalmon," is equivalent to "there is brightness where there was darkness," the hill, originally dark with wood, is now white with snow. De Dieu supposes a comparison: Tsalmon is white with the bones of the slaughtered kings, as if with snow. Some suppose that there is here a mere note of time: it was winter, the snow was on Tsalmon (Herder); and this Hupfeld adopts, with the explanation that the statement is made derisively, with reference to those who tarried at home, deterred by the winter's snow. He considers the passage (12—14) as a fragment of an ancient song, celebrating some of the early conquests of Israel in Canaan, and deriding those, who, from indolence or fear, shrank from the enterprise. He translates thus:

"The kings of the armies, flee, flee,
And the housewife shares the spoil!
Will ye lie among the shippens?
Pigeon feathers decked with silver,
And their wings with yellow gold!
As the Almighty scattered kings therein,
It was snowing on Tsalmon."

William Lindsay Alexander, in "A Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature." 1866.

Verse 14.—The verb may be viewed as in the second person—*Thou, O God! didst make it fair and white as Mount Salmon with snow.* The reader may adopt either construction, for the meaning is the same. It is evident that David insists still upon the figure of the whiteness of silver, which he had previously introduced. The country had, as it were, been blackened or sullied by the hostile confusion into which it was thrown, and he says that it had now recovered its fair appearance, and resembled Salmon, which is well known to have been ordinarily covered with snows. Others think that Salmon is not the name of a place, but an appellative, meaning *a dark shade.* I would retain the commonly received reading. At the same time, I think that there may have been an allusion to the etymology. It comes from the word צֵל, *tselem*, signifying *a shade*, and Mount Salmon had been so called on account of its blackness. This makes the comparison more striking; for it intimates that as the snows whitened this black mountain, so the country had resumed its former beauty, and put on an aspect of joy, when God dispelled the darkness which had lain upon it during the oppression of enemies.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*It was as white as snow in Salmon.*" That is, this thine inheritance, thy peculiar people, appeared as bright and glorious in the sight of their neighbours, as the snowy head of Salmon glisters by the reflection of the sunbeams.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 14.—"*White as snow in Salmon.*" The expression here used seems to denote, that everything seemed so bright and cheerful to the mind of God's people, as Salmon does to their eyes, when glistening with snow. As snow is much less common, and lies a much shorter time in Judæa than in England, no wonder that it is much more admired; accordingly, the son of Sirach speaks of it with a kind

of rapture. "The eye will be astonished at the beauty of its whiteness, and the heart transported at the raining of it." Ecclus. xliii. 18 or 20.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 14.—"*Salmon.*" Dean Stanley conjectures that Salmon is another name for Mount Ebal; it was certainly near Shechem (see Judges ix. 48), but it is almost hopeless to expect to identify it, for Mr. Mills, the industrious author of "Nablus and the modern Samaritans," could not find any one who knew the name of Salmon, neither could he discover any traditions in reference to it, or indeed any allusions to it in Samaritan literature. The word signifies a shade, and may, perhaps, popularly be accepted as identical with the name the "Black Forest."—*C. H. S.*

Verse 15.—"*Hill of Bashan.*" The world's physical greatness must yield to the church's spiritual grandeur. The "hill of God" is here an emblem of the *world-kingdoms*, which (Psalm lxv. 6) are great only by the grace of God. A great hill reminds us of the *creative* power of God. Hence, "the hill of Elohim" (the general name of God as *the Creator*) stands in contrast to *the hill* which (verse 16) "the Lord" (Jehovah) will dwell in for ever. It lay in the north, in the region east of Jordan, or the land of Hermon, the kingdom of Og, the most formidable enemy whom Israel encountered on their march to Canaan. "The hill of Bashan is the high snow-summit of Anti-Lebanon, or Hermon, the extreme limit of Bashan. There was a peculiar propriety, from its position on the boundary between Judæa and the heathen world, in employing it as a symbol of the world's might (verse 22; Psalm xlii. 6; lxxxix. 12)" (*Hengstenberg*). The original name of Hermon was Sion; *i.e.*, *lofty* (Deut. iv. 48); allied in sound to Zion, which suggested the contrast here between *the world-hills* and *the Lord's hill.*—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verses 15, 16—

> "A mountain of God Mount Bashan is:
> A mountain of peaks Mount Bashan is.
> Why are ye piqued, ye peaked mountains?
> At the mountain *which* God desires to dwell in?
> Yea, Jehovah will dwell therein for ever."
>
> *Frederic Fysh's Version.*

Verse 16.—"*Why leap ye?*" As triumphing, and making a show of your natural advantages over Sion. Or, to insult over it, and compare and equalise yourselves in honour with it; poetical kind of speeches. Others translate it, *Why gaze you, as though you were ravished with admiration?—John Diodati.*

Verse 16.—"*This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in.*" This low, little, barren hill of Zion; and God's election maketh the difference, as it did of Aaron's rod from the rest, and doth still of the church from the rest of the world. The Lamb Christ is on Mount Zion. Rev. xiv. 1.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 17.—"*The chariots of God.*" What are these "chariots of God?" Come, we will not stand to mince the matter, look but round about thee, and thou shalt see those *innumerable* chariots and angels here spoken of; for so many *creatures* as thou seest, so many angels and chariots of God thou seest; they are all his host, they are all his chariots wherein he rides; and, whether you see it or no, "*The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.*" The glory of the Lord fills them all (had we but our eyes open to see it so), and they are all at his command, and there is not one creature but doth his pleasure. Oh, brethren! how glorious and blessed a thing it is, that looking round about us to behold and see, that look how many creatures *visible* and *invisible* thou seest or conceivest in thy mind to be, for thy soul now to look on them as so many fiery chariots and horsemen for its defence, protection, and preservation! And, on the other hand, "How fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God," who hath all these chariots and horsemen at his command to execute his will and vengeance on those that neglect, hate, and oppose him.—*John Everard, in "Militia Cœlestis, or the Heavenly Host."* 1653.

Verse 17.—

> "About his chariot numberless were pour'd
> Cherub, and seraph, potentates, and thrones,
> And Virtues, winged Spirits, and chariots win
> From the armoury of God, where stand of old
> Myriads."
>
> *John Milton, in "Paradise Lost."*

Verse 17.—"*Twenty thousand;*" rather, *two myriads,* רִבֹּתַיִם singular רִבּוֹ; for רִבּוֹת only here in the dual, the infinite number doubled. "*Thousands of angels,*" lit., *thousands of iteration; i.e.*, with marg., *many thousands* (Bythner, Gesenius, etc.), שִׁנְאָן only here, from שָׁנָה, *to repeat.* The rendering *of angels* was probably suggested by the references to Sinai, next clause (see Deut. xxxiii. 2, where for *saints* read *holy ones*); "*chariots*" (רֶכֶב) being used collectively for those who rode in them, as often elsewhere.—*William de Burgh.*

Verse 18.—"*Thou hast ascended on high,*" etc. Some think it refers to God's goings forth on behalf of his people Israel, leading them forth to victory, taking their enemies captive, and enriching them with the spoils. Suppose it be so, we are warranted to consider it as mainly referring to Christ, for so the apostle has applied it. Ephesians iv. 8.

The apostle not only applies it to Christ, but *proves* it applicable. Thus he reasons (verses 9, 10), "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended," etc. The captivity which he led captive was our spiritual enemies who had led us captive—Satan, death; and, having obtained the victory, he proceeds to divide the spoils. *Gifts to men*—as David made presents. And hence comes our ordinances, ministers, etc. There was a glorious fulfilment immediately after his ascension, in a rich profusion of gifts and graces to his church, like David's presents. Here it is "*received;*" in Ephesians, "*gave.*" He received that he might give; received the spoil that he might distribute it. But, as I wish to appropriate the passage to the work allotted me, the whole of that to which I would at this time call your attention will be contained in two things:—

I. *The great blessings of the Christian ministry.*

1. Ministers are *received for,* and are *given to,* you by Christ. As men, and as sinful men, ministers are as nothing, and wish not to make anything of themselves; but, as the gifts of Christ, it beomes you to make much of them. (1.) If you *love Christ,* you will make much of your minister, on account of his being *his* gift—a gift designed to supply Christ's absence in a sort. He is gone ("ascended"), but he gives you his servants. By-and-by you hope to be with him, but as yet you are as sheep in the wilderness. He gives you a shepherd. (2.) If you *fear God,* you will be afraid of treating your pastor amiss, seeing he is the gift of Christ. God took it ill of Israel for despising Moses. Numbers xii. 8. He is "*my servant.*"

2. Ministers are not only given to, but *received for* you, of God the Father, as a covenant blessing, among the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. In this view, consider that Christ received nothing at his Father's hand but what cost him dear—cost him his life. Or, if the allusion be to the dividing of the spoils, suppose we say, he received them as a conqueror receives the spoils at the hand of the foe. Your minister was one of those who, like yourselves, were brands consuming in the fire. Christ took him from your enemies and gives him to you. Make much of the gift on this account. "This I received of the Amorite."

3. Consider your unworthiness of such a blessing. You are *men,* mere men, and what is more, *rebellious* men, who had joined with Satan. And must you share the spoils? It is not usual to divide the spoils amongst rebels. . . . Men that put him to death had these gifts given to them; and we should all have done the same. Some of you, it is likely, have been vile and abandoned characters, and yet, etc. . . . .

4. The end of it: "That the Lord God might dwell among them." "But will God, indeed, dwell with men?" God had not dwelt with the world, nor in it, while sin bore the rule; but Christ's mediation was for the bringing it about. "Will God, indeed, dwell with men?" He will; and how? It is by the means of ordinances and ministers. A church of Christ is God's house; and where any one builds a house, it is a token that he means to dwell there. What a blessing to a village, a country, for God to build a house in it. It is by this that we may hope for a blessing upon the means to the conversion of our children and friends, and for the edification of believers.

II. *Point out some corresponding duties as answering to these your privileges.*

1. Constant and diligent attendance at the house of God. If the house of God be God's dwelling, let it be yours, your home. If God gives you a pastor, do you thankfully receive and prize him. He hath not dealt so with every village.

2. Cheerfully contribute to his support. Christ has given you freely, and you ought to give him freely. Consider it is not a gift, but as a debt, and not as done to him, but to Christ.

3. Follow these things which make for peace, with which the presence and blessing of God are connected.

4. Shun those things that tend to provoke the Lord to withdraw his gifts, and to cease to dwell among you.—*Andrew Fuller's Sketch of a Sermon, addressed to the Church at Moulton, on the Ordination of Mr. (since Doctor) Carey, August 1st,* 1787.

Verse 18.—But who is he of whom it is written, that *"he ascended up on high?"* I confess that the sixty-eighth Psalm, wherein these words are first written, is literally to be understood, not of any triumph for the slaughter of the host of Sennacherib, which was done in the time of king Hezekias (as the Jews do most fabulously dream), when the very title of this Psalm, that ascribeth it unto David, doth sufficiently confute this vanity; nor yet for any of the victories of David which he obtained against his bordering enemies, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Idumæans, and the Philistines (as some would have it); but of that great and glorious pomp which was then done and showed, when king David with great joy and triumph did bring the *ark* of the covenant into the hill of Sion; and, therefore, these words, *"Thou art gone up on high,"* do signify that the ark, which formerly had lain in an *obscure* place, and was transported from one place to another, was now ascended and seated in a most *illustrious and conspicuous* place, even in the kingly palace; and these words, *"thou hast led captivity captive,"* do signify those *enemies* which formerly had spoiled and wasted divers countries; but now, being *vanquished* by king David, were led *captive* in this triumph (for so it was the manner of those times, as Plutarch doth excellently declare in the life of Paulus Æmilius); and the other words, *"thou hast received gifts for men,"* do signify those spoils that were freely offered for conditions of peace, and were triumphantly carried about in this pompous show, for the greater solemnity of the same; and then (as the manner was among the chieftains when they triumphed, *Bellica laudatis dona dedisse viris,* to bestow warlike gifts upon worthy men), gifts were bestowed on several men, in several manner, as Sigonius sheweth. Yet I say that, *mystically,* this Psalm is an ἐπινίκιον, or a triumphal song, penned by king David upon the foresight of Jesus Christ arising from the dead, and with great joy and triumph *ascending* up into heaven, and thence sending his Holy Spirit unto his apostles and disciples; and, having overcome all his enemies, collecting by the ministry of his preachers, his churches and chosen people together, and so guiding and defending them here in this life, until he doth receive them into eternal glory.—*Griffith Williams.* 1636.

Verse 18.—*"Thou hast led captivity captive."* The expression is emphatical. He has conquered and triumphed over all the powers which held us in captivity, so that captivity itself is taken captive. The spirit and force of it is destroyed; and his people, when released by him, and walking in his ways, have no more to apprehend from those whose captives they were, than a conqueror has to fear from a prisoner in chains. The energy of the phrase is not unlike that of the apostle: "Death is swallowed up in victory."—*John Newton.*

Verse 18.—*"Thou hast led captivity captive,"* etc. The ancient prophecy of David is fulfilled here on the foot of mount Olivet. To take "captivity captive," signifies that Christ conquered the allied principalities and powers, the devil, sin, death, and hell; and that he deprived them of the instruments wherewith they enslaved men. He not only silenced the cannon on the spiritual Gibraltar, but he took rock, fortification, and all. He not only silenced the horrible and destructive battlements of the powerful and compactly-united ghostly enemies, but he threw down the towers, razed the castles, and took away the keys of the dungeons. He is the Master henceforth, and for ever. He did, also, at the same time, save his people. Where, O Jesus, is the army of which thou art the Captain? "Here! all the names are written in pearls on the breastplate which I wear as a high-priest." He had no sooner left the grave than he began to distribute his gifts, and did so all along the road on his way to his Father's house; and, especially after he entered the heaven of heavens, did he shower down gifts unto men, as a mighty conqueror loaded with treasures with which to enrich and adorn his followers and people. They were gifts of mercy: gifts to the rebellious; to those who threw down their arms at his feet in penitent submission, "that the Lord God may dwell among them." The apostle shows that a portion of these gifts are gifts of ministry. Accordingly, whenever God condescends to dwell among a people and in a country, he gives that people and country his ministry. He sends them his gospel in the mouths of faithful servants. He establishes there his house; the board and the

candlestick; and then, in his Spirit, he dwells there and blesses his heritage.—*Christmas Evans.* 1766—1838.

Verse 18.—The apostle (Eph. iv. 8) does not quote the words of the Psalm literally, but according to the sense. The phrase, "*Thou hast received gifts,*" as applied to Christ at his glorification, could only be for the purpose of distribution, and hence the apostle quotes them in this sense, "*He gave gifts to men.*" This Hebrew phrase may be rendered either, "Thou hast received gifts in the human nature," or, "Thou hast received gifts for the sake of man" (see Gen. xviii. 28; 2 Kings xiv. 6.) The apostle uses the words in the sense of the *purpose* for which the gifts were received, and there is no contradiction between the Psalmist and the apostle. Thus, the difficulties of this quotation vanish when we examine them closely, and the Old and New Testaments are in complete harmony. Rosenmüller expounds Ps. xviii., and never mentions the name of Christ; and the neologists in general see no Messiah in the Old Testament. To these, indeed, Eph. iv. 8, if they had any modesty, would present a formidable obstacle. Paul asserts the Psalm belongs to Christ, and they assert he is mistaken, and that he has perverted (De Wette) and destroyed its meaning. They assert that *Lamarom*, "on high," means the heights of Mount Zion, and Paul says it means heaven. Which is right? (see the scriptural usage of the word, Ps. vii. 7; xviii. 16; xciii. 4; cii. 19; Jer. xxv. 30; Is. xxxvii. 23). These passages connect the word with the heavenly mansions, and justify the application of the apostle.—*William Graham, in "Lectures on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians."*

Verse 18.—No sooner is Christ inaugurated in his throne, but he scatters his coin, and gives gifts. He gives gifts, or the gift of gifts, the gift of the Holy Ghost. "If thou knewest the gift of God," said Christ to the Samaritan woman (John iv. 10): that gift was the water of life, and that water of life was the Spirit, as John, who knew best his mind, gave the interpretation, "This spake he of the Spirit." John vii. 39. O my soul, consider of this princely gift of Christ! Such a gift was never before, but when God gave his Son. "God so loved the world, that he gave his Son;" and Christ so loved the world, that he gave his Spirit. But, O my soul, consider especially to whom this Spirit was given; the application of the gift is the very soul of thy meditation; "unto us a Son is given," said the prophet (Isa. ix. 6); and "unto us the Holy Ghost is given," saith the apostle (Rom. v. 5); and yet above all consider the reasons of this gift in reference to thyself. Was it not to make thee a temple and receptacle of the Holy Ghost? Stand a while on this! Admire, O my soul, at the condescending, glorious, and unspeakable love of Christ in this! It was infinite love to come down into our nature when he was incarnate; but this is more, to come down into thy heart by his Holy Spirit: he came near to us then, but as if that were not near enough, he comes nearer now, for now he unites himself unto thy person, now he comes and dwells in thy soul by his Holy Spirit.—*Isaac Ambrose.* 1592—1674.

Verse 18.—"*Thou hast received gifts for men.*" The glorious ascending of God from Mount Sinai, after the giving of the law, was a representation of his "ascending up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," as Eph. iv. 10. And, as God then "led captivity captive" in the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptians who had long held his people in captivity and under cruel bondage; so dealt the Lord Christ now in the destruction and captivity of Satan and all his powers (Col. ii. 15); only, whereas it is said in the Psalm that he "received the gift for men," here (Eph. iv.) it is said that "he gave gifts to men," wherein no small mystery is couched; for, although Christ is God, and is so gloriously represented in the Psalm, yet an intimation is given that he should act what is here mentioned in a condition wherein he was capable to receive from another, as he did in this matter. Acts ii. 33. And so the phrase in the original doth more than insinuate: סַתָּנוֹת בָּאָדָם לָקַחְתָּ "Thou hast received gifts in Adam,"—in the man, or human nature. And לָקַח signifies as well to *give* as to *receive*, especially when anything is received to be given. Christ received this gift in the human nature to give it unto others. Now, to what end is this glorious theatre, as it were, prepared, and all this preparation made, all men being called to the preparation of it? It was to set out the greatness of the gift he would bestow, and the glory of the work which he would effect; and this was to furnish the church with ministers, and ministers with gifts for the discharge of their office and duty. And it will one day appear that there is more glory, more excellency, in giving one poor minister unto a congregation, by furnishing him with spiritual gifts for the discharge of his duty, than in the pompous instal-

ment of a thousand popes, cardinals, or metropolitans. The worst of men, in the observance of a few outward rites and ceremonies, can do the latter; Christ only can do the former, and that as he is ascended up on high to that purpose.—*John Owen.*

Verse 18.—As the passage which we have now been considering is applied by Paul in a more spiritual sense to Christ (Eph. iv. 8), it may be necessary to show how this agrees with the meaning and scope of the Psalmist. It may be laid down as an incontrovertible truth, that David, in reigning over God's ancient people, shadowed forth the beginning of Christ's eternal kingdom. This must appear evident to every one who remembers the promise made to him of a never-failing succession, and which received its verification in the person of Christ. As God illustrated his power in David, by exalting him with the view of delivering his people, so has he magnified his name in his only begotten Son. But let us consider more particularly how the parallel holds. Christ, before he was exalted, emptied himself of his glory, having not merely assumed the form of a servant, but humbled himself to the death of the cross. To show how exactly the figure was fulfilled, Paul notices, that what David had foretold was accomplished in the person of Christ, by his being cast down to the lowest parts of the earth in the reproach and ignominy to which he was subjected, before he ascended to the right hand of his Father. Ps. xxii. 7. That in thinking upon the ascension, we might not confine our views to the body of Christ, our attention is called to the result and fruit of it, in his subjecting heaven and earth to his government. Those who were formerly his inveterate enemies he compelled to submission and made tributary; this being the effect of the word of the Gospel, to lead men to renounce their pride and their obstinacy, to bring down every high thought which exalteth itself, and reduce the senses and the affections of men to obedience unto Christ. As to the devils and reprobate men who are instigated to rebellion and revolt by obstinate malice, he holds them bound by secret control, and prevents them from executing intended destruction. So far the parallel is complete. Nor, when Paul speaks of Christ having *given gifts to men*, is there any real inconsistency with what is here stated, although he has altered the words, having followed the Greek version in accommodation to the unlearned reader. It was not himself that God enriched with the spoils of the enemy, but his people; and neither did Christ seek, or need to seek, his advancement, but made his enemies tributary, that he might adorn his Church with the spoil. From the close union subsisting between the head and members, to say that God manifest in the flesh received gifts from the captives, is one and the same thing with saying that he distributed them to his Church. What is said in the close of the verse is no less applicable to Christ: that he obtained his victories that as God he might dwell among us. Although he departed, it was not that he might remove to a distance from us, but, as Paul says, "that he might fill all things." Eph. iv. 10. By his ascension to heaven, the glory of his divinity has been only more illustriously displayed; and, though no longer present with us in the flesh, our souls receive spiritual nourishment from his body and blood, and we find, notwithstanding distance of place, that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 18.—"*Thou hast received gifts for men.*" Heb. בָּאָדָם, *in man; "in human nature,"* says Dr. Adam Clarke, "and God, manifest in human flesh, dwells among mortals." "The gifts which Jesus Christ distributes *to man* he has received *in man*, in and by virtue of his *incarnation*, and it is in consequence of his being made man that it may be said, 'the Lord God dwells among them;' for Jesus was called *Immanuel*, 'God with us,' in consequence of his incarnation."—*Ed. Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 18.—"*Yea, for the rebellious also.*" I feared, also, that this was the mark that the Lord did set on Cain, even continual fear and trembling under the heavy load of guilt that he had charged upon him for the blood of his brother Abel. Thus did I wind and twine and shrink under the burden that was upon me, which burden also did so oppress me, that I could neither stand, nor go, nor lie, either at rest or quiet. Yet that saying would sometimes come to my mind, He hath received gifts for the rebellious. Psalm lxviii. 18. "The rebellious," thought I; why, surely, they are such as once were under subjection to their prince, even those who, after they have sworn subjection to his government, have taken up arms against him; and this, thought I, is my very condition; once I loved him, feared him, served him; but now I am a rebel; I have sold him. I have said, let him go if he will; but

yet he has gifts for rebels, and then why not for me?—*John Bunyan, in "Grace Abounding."*

Verse 18 (*last clause*).—Thou didst not regard their former disobedience, but, even although seeing them contradicting, thou didst continue to do them good, until thou madest them *thine own abode* (οἰκητήριον).—*Theodoret.*

Verse 18 (*last clause*).—The Chaldee has, "Upon the rebellious, who become proselytes and return by repentance, the Schechinah of the glory of the Lord God dwelleth."

Verse 19.—"*Blessed be the Lord,*" etc. Methinks the sweet singer of Israel seems to raise his note to the emulation of the choir of heaven in the melody of their *Allelujahs;* yea, let me say, now that he sings above in that blessed consort of glorious spirits, his ditty cannot be better than this that he sang here upon earth, and wherein we are about to bear our parts at this time. Prepare, I beseech you, both your ears for David's song, and your hearts and tongues for your own. And first, in this angelical strain your thoughts cannot but observe the descant and the ground. The descant of gratulation, "*Blessed be the Lord,*" wherein is both applause and excitation; an applause given to God's goodness, and an excitation of others to give that applause. The ground is a threefold respect. Of what God is in himself, *God and Lord;* of what God is and doth to us, "*which loadeth us daily with benefits;*" of what he is both in himself and to us, "*the God of our salvation;*" which last (like to some rich stone) is set off with a dark foil: "*To God the Lord belong the issues from death.*" So, in the first for his own sake, in the second for our sakes, in the third for his own and ours; as God, as Lord, as a benefactor; as a Saviour and deliverer. "*Blessed be the Lord.*" It is not hard to observe that David's *Allelujahs* are more than his *Hosannas,* his thanks more than his suits. Ofttimes doth he praise God when he begs nothing; seldom ever doth he beg that favour, for which he doth not raise up his soul to an anticipation of thanks; neither is this any other than the universal undersong of all his heavenly ditties, "*Blessed be the Lord.*" *Praises* (as our former translation hath it) is too low; honour is more than praise; blessing is more than honour. Neither is it for nothing that from this word בָּרַךְ, *to bless,* is derived בֶּרֶךְ, *the knee,* which is bowed in blessing; and the crier before *Joseph* proclaimed *Abrech,* calling for the honour of the knee from all beholders. Gen. xli. 43. Every slight, trivial acknowledgment of worth is a praise; blessing is in a higher strain of gratitude, that carries the whole sway of the heart with it in a kind of divine rapture. Praise is a matter of compliment; blessing of devotion. The apostle's rule is, *that the less is blessed of the greater, Abraham* of the King of Salem, the prophet's charge is, that *the greater should be blessed of the less,* yea, the greatest of the least, God of man. This agrees well; blessing is an act that will bear reciprocation; God blesseth man, and man blesseth God. God blesseth man imperatively; man blesseth God optatively. God blesseth man in the acts of mercy; man blesseth God in the notions, in the expressions of thanks. God blesses man when he makes him good and happy; man blesseth God when he confesseth how good, how gracious, how glorious he is; so as the blessing is wholly taken up in agnition,* in celebration: in the one we acknowledge the bounty of God to us; in the other we magnify him vocally, really, for that bounty. O see, then, what high account God makes of the affections and actions of his poor, silly, earth-creeping creatures; that he gives us in them power to bless himself, and takes it as an honour to be blessed of us. *David* wonders that God should so vouchsafe to bless man; how much more must we needs wonder at the mercy of God, that will vouchsafe to be blessed by man, a worm, an atom, a nothing? Yet both, *James* tells us, that *with the tongue we bless God;* and the Psalmist calls for it here as a service of dear acceptation, "*Blessed be the Lord.*" Even we men live not (chameleon like) upon the air of thanks, nor grow the fatter for praises; how much less our Maker? O God, we know well that whatsoever men or angels do, or do not, thou canst not but be infinitely blessed in thyself; before ever any creature was, thou didst equally enjoy thy blessed self from all eternity: what can this worthless, loose film of flesh either add to or detract from thine infiniteness? Yet thou, *that humblest thyself to behold the things that are done in heaven and earth,* humblest thyself also to accept the weak breath of our praises, that are sent up to thee from earth to heaven. How

* Agnition, acknowledgment.

should this encourage the vows, the endeavours of our hearty thankfulness, to see them graciously taken? If men would take up with good words, with good desires, and quit our bonds for thanks, who would be a debtor? With the God of Mercy this cheap payment is current. If he, then, will honour us so far as to be blessed of us, Oh let us honour him so far as to bless him.—*Joseph Hall, in "A Sermon of Public Thanksgiving for the Wonderful Mitigation of the late Mortality."* 1625.

Verse 19.—*"Blessed be the Lord."* It is not a little remarkable to see the saints so burdened and overcharged with the duty of singing his praise, that, 1. They are forced to come off with an excess of praise, and offer to praise him, and even leave it, as it were, as they found it, and say no more, lest they should spill his praises; but, as Rev. v. 12, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive glory and honour," though I be not worthy or able to give it to him. 2. That they speak broken language and half sentences in their songs, when they are deeply loaden with the deep sense of his love, as *"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits;"* there is no more in the original but *"Blessed be the Lord, that loadeth us."*—*John Spalding, in "Synaxis Sacra."* 1703.

Verse 19.—*"Who daily loadeth us with benefits."* Though some may have more than others, yet every one hath his load, as much as he can carry. Every vessel cannot bear up with the like sail, and therefore God, to keep us from oversetting, puts on so much as will safest bring us to heaven, our desired port.—*Ezekiel Hopkins.*

Verse 19.—*"Who daily loadeth us with benefits."* Such is man's self-love that no inward worth can so attract his praises as outward beneficence. While thou makest much of thyself, every one shall speak well of thee; how much more while thou makest much of them! Here God hath met with us also. Not to perplex you with scanning the variety of senses wherewith I have observed this Psalm, above all other of David's, to abound; see here, I beseech you, a four-fold gradation of divine bounty. First, here are *"benefits."* The word is not expressed in the original, but necessarily implied in the sense: for there are but three loads whereof man is capable from God, favours, precepts, punishments, the other two are out of the road of gratulation. When we might therefore have expected judgments, behold *benefits*. And those, secondly, not sparingly hand-fulled out to us, but dealt to us by the whole load: *"loadeth with benefits."* Whom, thirdly, doth he load but *"us"?* Not worthy and well-deserving subjects, but *"us,"* סוֹרְרִים, *rebels*. And, lastly, this he doth, not at one dole and no more (as even churls' rare feasts use to be plentiful), but יוֹם יוֹם successively, unweariedly, perpetually. One favour were too much, here are *"benefits;"* a sprinkling were too much, here is a *load*; once were too oft, here is *daily* largition.* Cast your eyes, therefore, a little upon this threefold exaggeration of beneficence; the measure, *a load of benefits;* the subject, unworthy *"us;"* the time, *"daily."* *"Who daily loadeth us with benefits."*

Where shall we begin to survey this vast load of mercies? Were it no more, but that he hath given us a world to live in, a life to enjoy, air to breathe in, earth to tread on, fire to warm us, water to cool and cleanse us, clothes to cover us, food to nourish us, sleep to refresh us, houses to shelter us, variety of creatures to serve and delight us; here were a just load. But now, if we yet add to these, civility of breeding, dearness of friends, competency of estate, degrees of honour, honesty or dignity of vocation, favour of princes, success in employments, domestic comforts, outward peace, good reputation, preservation from dangers, rescue from evils; the load is well mended. If yet, ye shall come closer, and add due proportion of body, integrity of parts, perfection of senses, strength of nature, mediocrity of health, sufficiency of appetite, vigour of digestion, wholesome temper of seasons, freedom from cares; this course must needs heighten it yet more. If still ye shall add to these, the order, and power, and exercise of our inward faculties, enriched with wisdom, art, learning, experience, expressed by a not un-handsome elocution, and shall now lay all these together that concern estate, body, mind; how can the axle-tree of the soul but crack under the load of these favours? But, if from what God hath done for us as men, we look to what he hath done for us as Christians; that he hath embraced us with an everlasting love, that he hath moulded us anew, enlivened us by his Spirit, fed us by his word and sacraments, clothed us with his merits, bought us with his blood, becoming vile to make us glorious, a curse, to invest us with blessedness; in a word, that he hath given himself to us, his Son for us; *Oh the height, and depth, and breadth* of the rich mercies of our God! Oh

* Largition, largess, bounty.

the boundless, topless, bottomless, load of divine benefits, whose immensity reaches from the centre of this earth, to the unlimited extent of the very empyreal heavens! *"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he hath done for the children of men."—Joseph Hall.*

Verse 20.—*"Our God is the God of salvation"* (that is of deliverance, of outward deliverance); *"and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death,"* or the goings out from death; that is, God hath all ways that lead out from death in his own keeping, he keepeth the key of the door that lets us out from death. When a man is in the valley of the shadow of death, where shall he issue out? Where shall he have a passage? Nowhere, saith man, he shall not escape. But God keepeth all the passages; when men think they have shut us up in the jaws of death, he can open them, and deliver us. *"To him belong the issues from death;"* it is an allusion to one that keepeth a passage or a door: and God is a faithful keeper, and a friendly keeper, who will open the door for the escape of his people, when they cry unto him.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 20.—*"And unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."* Buildings stand by the benefit of their foundations that sustain them, support them; and of their buttresses that comprehend them, embrace them; and of their contignations * that knit and unite them. The foundation suffers them not to sink; the buttresses suffer them not to swerve; the contignation and knitting suffer them not to cleave. The body of our building is in the former part of this verse; it is this; He that is our God is the God of salvation; *ad salutes*, of salvations, in the plural, so it is in the original; the God that gives us spiritual and temporal salvation too. But of this building, the foundation, the buttresses, the contignation, are in this part of the verse, which constitutes our text, and in the three diverse acceptations of the words amongst our expositors, *"Unto God the Lord belong the issues of death."* For, first, the foundation of this building (that our God is the God of all salvation) is laid in this, *"That unto this God the Lord belong the issues of death;"* that is, it is in his power to give us an issue and deliverance, even then, when we are brought to the jaws and teeth of death, and to the lips of that whirlpool, the grave; and so, in this acceptation, this *exitus mortis*, the issue of death, is *liberatio a morte*, a deliverance from death; and this is the most obvious and most ordinary acceptation of these words, and that upon which our translation lays hold: *"the issues from death."* And then, secondly, the buttresses that comprehend and set le this building; that, *"He that is our God is the God of salvation,"* are thus raised; *"Unto God the Lord belong the issues of death,"* that is, the disposition and manner of our death, what kind of issue and transmigration we shall have out of this world, whether prepared or sudden, whether violent or natural, whether in our perfect senses or shaked and disordered by sickness; there is [no] condemnation to be argued out of that, no judgment to be made upon that; for howsoever they die, *precious in his sight is the death of his saints*, and with him are the issues of death, the ways of our departing out of this life are in his hands; and so in this sense of the words, this *exitus mortis*, the issue of death, is *liberatio in morte*, a deliverance in death; not that God will deliver us from dying, but that he will have a care of us in the hour of death, of what kind soever our passage be; and this sense and acceptation of the words, the natural frame and contexture doth well and pregnantly administer unto us. And then, lastly, the contignation and knitting of this building, that He that is our God, is the God of all salvation, consists in this, Unto this God the Lord belong the issues of death, that is, that this God the Lord, having united and knit both natures in one, and being God, having also come into this world, in our flesh, he could have no other means to save us, he could have no other issue out of this world, no return to his former glory, but by death. And so in this sense, this *exitus mortis*, the issue of death, is *liberatio per mortem*, a deliverance by death, by the death of this God our Lord, Christ Jesus; and this, St. Augustine's acceptation of the words, and those many and great persons that have adhered to him. In all these three lines then, we shall look upon these words, first, as the God of power, the Almighty Father, rescues his servants from the jaws of death; and then, as the God of mercy, the glorious Son rescued us by taking upon himself the issue of death; and then (between these two), as the God of comfort, the Holy Ghost rescues us

* Contignation, a framing together; from *contigno*, to join together, or lay with beams and rafters.

from all discomfort, by his blessed impressions before; that what manner of death soever be ordained for us, yet this *exitus mortis* shall be *introitus in vitam*, our issue in death shall be an entrance into everlasting life. And these three considerations, our deliverance *a morte, in morte, per mortem*, from death, in death, and by death, will abundantly do all the offices of the foundation, of the buttresses, of the contignation of this our building, that *"He that is our God is the God of salvation,"* because *"Unto this God the Lord belong the issues of death."—John Donne.*

Verse 20.—*"The issues from death."* That is, the issue, or escape, from death, both in the resurrection and in the various perils of our present life.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 20.—*"Issues from death."* The English version cannot be sustained by the Hebrew; for מ has never the force of *from*, and, therefore, the expression, as Dr. Hammond observes, must signify the several plagues and judgments inflicted by God on impenitent enemies—such as drowning in the sea, killing by the sword, etc.; which were the ways of punishing and destroying the Egyptians and Canaanites. Thus the two members of the verse are antithetical: the first speaks of God as a deliverer, and the second as a punisher; and in this respect the verse corresponds with the preceding.—*George Phillips, in "The Psalms. . . . . with a Critical, Exegetical and Philological Commentary."* 1846.

Verse 21.—*"The hairy scalp."* That is, even the most fearful enemies, that with their ghastly visage, deformed with long hair, would strike a terror into the hearts of beholders.—*Edward Leigh.*

Verse 21.—*"Hairy scalp."* It was a practice among some of the ancient inhabitants of Arabia to allow the hair to grow luxuriantly on the *top of the head*, and to shave the head in other parts.—*Francis Hare.* 1740.

Verse 22.—*"I will bring the enemy."* Both the preceding and following verse prove that this is the sense, and not as many interpreters supply, *my people.* Bashan was *east* of Judæa, and the *sea* on the west; so that the meaning is, that God would bring his enemies from every quarter to be slain by his people.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 23.—*"That thy foot may be dipped,"* etc. The blood of thy enemies, shed in such abundance that thy dogs shall lap and drink it, shall be the sea in which thou shalt pass, and that red without a figure. And, proportionably shall be the destructions on the enemies of Christ and Christians in the age of the Messiah.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verses 26—28.—This Psalm was sung, it is probable, on the removal of the ark into the City of David. Numb. x. It was now that the ark had rest, and the tribes assembled three times a year at Jerusalem, the place that God had chosen. The text is a lively description of their worship.

I. Offer a few remarks by way of expounding the passage. 1. Israel had their lesser congregations in ordinary every Sabbath-day, and their national ones three times a year. Their business in all was *to bless God.* 2. This business was to be carried on by *all Israel*, beginning at the fountain head, and proceeding through all its streams. God has blessed Israel; let Israel bless God. 3. All the tribes are supposed to be present; four are mentioned in the name of the whole, as inhabiting the confines of the land. Their union was a source of joy; they had been divided by civil wars, but now they are met together. 4. Those tribes which are named had each something particular attending it. Little Benjamin (see Judges xxi.) had nearly been a tribe lacking in Israel, but now appears with its ruler. Judah had been at war with Benjamin: Saul was a Benjamite; David was of Judah: yet they happily lost their antipathies in the worship of God. Zebulun and Naphtali were distant tribes; yet they were there! dark, too, yet there. 5. The princes and the people were all together. 6. They were supposed to be strong, but were reminded that what they had of strength was of God's commanding. Their union and success, as well as that degree of righteousness among them which exalted the nation, was of God. They are not so strong, but that they need strengthening, and are directed to pray as well as praise: *"Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."*

II. Apply the subject. Two things are here exemplified, namely—diligence and brotherly union; and three things recommended, namely—united praise; united acknowledgment that, for what they are, they are indebted to God; and united

prayer for future mercies. Each of these affords a rule for us. 1. The worship of God must be attended with *diligence*. There are the princes of Zebulun and Naphtali. They had to travel above two hundred miles three times a year, thither and back again; that is, twelve hundred in a year, twenty-four miles a week. Those who neglect the worship of God for little difficulties show that their heart is not in it, and when they do attend cannot expect to profit: "they have snuffed at it." Those whose hearts are in it often reap great advantage. God blessed the Israelites in their journeys, as well as when there (Psalm lxxxiv. 6): "The rain filleth the pools;" and so the Christians. There is a peculiar promise to those that seek him *early*. 2. The worship of God must be attended to with *brotherly love*. All the tribes must go up together. It is a kind law that enjoins *social* worship; we need each other to stimulate. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." God has made us so that we shall be greatly influenced by each other, both to good and evil. It greatly concerns us to cultivate such a spirit. To this end we must cherish an affectionate behaviour in our common intercourse—bear, forbear, and forgive; and, whatever differences we may have, not suffer them to hinder our worship. The tribes, as we have seen, had their differences; yet they were there. When all Israel met at Hebron to anoint David king, what should we have said if some had kept away because others went? 3. Our business, when assembled, must be to *bless God* in our congregations; and a pleasant work this is. Israel had reasons, and great reasons, and Christians more. Thank him for his unspeakable gift; bless him for the means of grace, and the hopes of glory. Bless him; he "healeth all thy diseases," etc. Psalm ciii. This is an employment that fits for heaven. The tears of a mourner in God's house were supposed to defile his altar. We may mourn for *sin;* but a fretful spirit, discontented and unthankful, defiles God's altar still. 4. Another part of our business is to unite in acknowledging that whatever we are, we owe it to God alone; "Thy God hath commanded thy strength." We possess a degree of strength both individually and socially. Art thou strong in faith, in hope, in zeal? It is in him thou art strong. Are we strong as a society? It is God that increaseth us with men like a flock; it is he that keeps us in union, gives us success, etc. 5. Another part of our business must be to unite in prayer for future mercies. We are not so strong, either as individuals or societies, but that there is room for increase; and this is the proper object of prayer. God has wrought a great work for us in regeneration. God has wrought much for us as a church in giving us increase, respect, and room in the earth. Pray that each may be increased; or, in the words of the text: *"Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."* Are there none who are strangers to all this?—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 27.—*"Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun, Naphtali."* The two royal tribes, 1. that of Benjamin, from which the first king sprang; 2. that of Judah, from which the second; and the two learned tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali. And we may note, that the kingdom of the Messiah should at length be submitted to by all the potentates and learned men in the world.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 27.—*"Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun, Naphtali."* The same tribes are prominent in the New Testament, as foremost in the battle of the church against the world. Paul, the "least" of the apostles (1 Cor. xv. 8—10), was by origin Saul of Benjamin (Phil. iii. 5). Christ, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," James and John, the brothers, the other James, Thaddeus, and Simon, were from Judah, and the other apostles were from Naphthalim and Zabulon, or Galilee (Matt. iv. 13).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 27.—*"Their ruler."* The *prince* of that tribe. The Greek version saith, *in a trance;* taking the Hebrew רוזם to be of זום, though it be not found elsewhere in this form; yet rare words but once used, are sundry times found in this and other Psalms. These things applied to Christ's times and after are very mystical. *Benjamin*, the least, is put here *first;* so in the heavenly Jerusalem, the *first foundation is a jasper* (Rev. xxi. 19), which was the *last* precious stone in Aaron's breastplate, on which *Benjamin's* name was graven (Exod. xxviii. 10, 20, 21). In this tribe *Paul* excelled as a prince of God, though one of the least apostles (1 Cor. xv. 8—10), who was converted in a *trance* or *ecstacy* (Acts ix. 3, 4, etc.); and in ecstacies he and other apostles saw the mysteries of Christ's kingdom.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 27.—*"Their council;"* or, *their stone*, the Messiah, that sprung from Judah, Gen. xlix. 24; Ps. cxviii. 22.—*John Gill.*

Verses 27, 28.—There are all the twelve tribes of Israel with their rulers present, to conduct the ark of God to the hill, in which it pleased him to dwell; for, though

all the tribes are not mentioned, these, which are named, include the whole, since Zebulun and Naphtali are the most remote, and Judah and Benjamin the nearest tribes to Zion. Benjamin was a dwindled family through the signal depopulation of that tribe, from which it never entirely recovered. Jud. xx. 43—48 ; 1 Chron. xii. 29.—*Edward Garrard Marsh, in "The Book of Psalms translated into English Verse . . . with Practical and Explanatory Notes."* 1832.

Verse 28.—"*Thy God hath commanded thy strength.*" Singularly appropriate to the occasion for which they were composed are these stimulating words. The ark of God had during several years been kept in private houses. David had pitched a tent for its reception, and intended providing a better shrine, he would deposit the ark in the temporary sanctuary, and he gathers thirty thousand chosen men of Israel, and with these and with a multitude of the people he proceeds to the house in which the ark had been kept. The people *can* render the service of song, so " David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of firwood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals" (2 Sam. vi. 5). The breach of Uzzah delayed the restoratiou of the ark three months ; but David returned to the work, and with gladness, with burnt offerings and peace offerings, with feasting, dancing, and the sound of a trumpet, he brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place in the tabernacle he had pitched for it. David *can* provide a sacred place for the ark of his God, and his " God has commanded his strength." Thirty thousand chosen men *can* attend on this occasion, and a multitude besides. Then, why should they tarry at home ? The occasion is worthy of their presence, and their " God has commanded their strength." There are sweet singers and skilful players in Israel, and why should they be silent. The occasion calls for praise, and their " God has commanded their strength." There are cattle upon the thousand hills of Canaan, and shall no sacrifice be brought ? The occasion demands oblations, and Israel's " God has commanded their strength." There is a mountain in Canaan, beautiful for situation, and rich in historic association. God's ark *can* be brought to this mountain, and if it can be, it ought to be, for Israel's God has commanded Israel's strength. There are twelve tribes in Israel which may unite in bringing up God's ark, then let none hold back, for their " God has commanded their strength." "*Thy strength*" is thy best—all that is within thee ; all that thou canst do, and be, and become ; and all that thou hast—the two mites, if these be all, and the alabaster box of spikenard, very costly, if this be thy possession. . . . By that which God is in himself, by that which God is to us, by law on the heart, and by law oral and written, by the new kingdom of his love, and by all his benefits, "*Thy God commands thy strength.*" He speaks from the beginning, and from the end of time, from the midst of chaos, and from the new heavens and new earth, from Bethel and from Gethsemane, from Sinai and from Calvary, and he saith to us all, " My son, give me thine heart," consecrate to me the best and, devote to me thy strength.—*Samuel Martin.*

Verse 30.—"*Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds.*" This is our marginal version, which is the proper one. Most modern critics consider that the lion is here intended, which frequently makes its den among reeds or brush-wood. Innumerable lions wander about among the reeds and copses, on the borders of the rivers of Mesopotamia. The river Jordan was infested with them (Jer. iv. 7, and xlix. 19). Hence, the wild beasts of the reeds may signify the Syrian kings, who often contended with David.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 30.—The idolatrous king of Egypt is here enigmatically represented as dwelling, like the crocodile, among the reeds of the Nile ; and with him are introduced the " *bulls* " and " *calves,*" who were the gods of the people of Egypt, before whom they were ever dancing in their superstitious revels. " Quell these insults upon thy majesty, nor put down only the superstition of Egypt, but all their pomp of war also, that the Gentiles may be converted unto thee, and the idols be utterly abolished."—*Edward Garrard Marsh.*

Verse 30.—When the enemies of God rise up against his church, it is time for the church to fall down to God, to implore his aid against those enemies. Holy prayers are more powerful than profane swords.—*Thomas Wall, in "A Comment on the Times."* 1657.

Verse 30.—The words contain, first, a declaration of God's enemies ; secondly, an imprecation against those enemies. The enemies are marshalled into four ranks.

1. A company of spearman, or (as some translations read it) the beast of the reeds. 2. The multitude of the bulls. 3. The calves of the people. 4. The men that delight in war. The imprecation is also twofold; the first more gentle; it is but "*rebuke* the spearmen;" and that with a limitation too—"*till they submit themselves with pieces of silver.*" For they that will not, but delight in war, more severely deal with such: Scatter them; "*Scatter the men that delight in war.*" . . . The church of God never wanted enemies, never will. "There is no peace to the wicked," saith God: there shall be no peace to the godly, say the wicked. The wicked shall have no peace which God can give; the godly shall have no peace which the wicked can take away.—*Thomas Wall.*

Verse 30.—1. Scrupulosity. 2. Envy. 3. Ignorance. 4. Ambition or pride. Upon which these four beasts in the text do act their enmity against the church: scrupulosity sets forth unto us the beast of the reeds; envy, the bulls; ignorance, the calves; the pride, the men "that delight in war."—*Thomas Wall.**

Verse 31.—"*Ethiopia.*" It is a matter of fact, familiar to the learned reader, that the names "*Ethiopia,*" and "*Ethiopians,*" are frequently substituted in our English version of the Old Testament, where the Hebrew preserves the proper name, "Cush." And the name, "Cush," when so applied in Scripture, belongs uniformly not to the African, but to the Asiatic, Ethiopia, or Arabia.—*Charles Forster, in "The Historical Geography of Arabia."*

Verse 33.—"*And that a mighty voice;*" or, *a voice of strength;* a strong and powerful voice, such as the gospel is, when accompanied with the power and Spirit of God. It is a soul-shaking and awakening voice; it is a heart-melting and a heart-breaking one; it is a quickening and an enlightening voice; it quickens dead sinners, gives life unto them, and the entrance of it gives light to dark minds: it is a soul-charming and alluring one; it draws to Christ, engages the affections to him, and fills with unspeakable delight and pleasure.—*John Gill.*

Verse 33.—"*To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens.*" He who manages the heavens, directing their course and influence. He formed every orb, ascertained its motion, proportioned its solid contents to the orbit in which it was to revolve, and to the other bodies of the same system; and, as an able rider manages his horse, so does God the sun, moon, planets, and all the hosts of heaven.—*W. Greenfield, in Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 33.—The praises of the church are sung to him, who, after his sufferings here below, re-ascended to take possession of his ancient throne, high above all heavens; who, from thence, speaketh to the world by his glorious gospel, mighty and powerful, as thunder, in its effects upon the hearts of men (see Ps. xxix. throughout). The power of Christ's voice, when he was on earth, appeared by the effects which followed, when he said, "Young man, arise:" "Lazarus, come forth:" "Peace, be still;" and it will yet further appear, when "all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth."—*George Horne.*

Verse 34.—"*His strength is in the clouds.*" This refers to the phenomena of thunder and lightning; for all nations have observed that the electric fluid is an irresistible agent—destroying life, tearing towers and castles to pieces, rending the strongest oaks, and cleaving the most solid rocks; and the most enlightened nations have justly considered it as an especial manifestation of the power and sovereignty of God.—*W. Greenfield, in Comprehensive Bible.*

* This instance of spiritualising may act rather as a beacon than as an example. The author was an able divine, but in this sermon gives more play to his imagination than his common sense.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1, 2.—First. The church of God ever had, and will have, enemies and haters; for against these doth the Psalmist arm himself and the church with this prayer.

Secondly. The church's enemies are God's enemies; they that hate the church, hate God. "Thine enemies," "them that hate thee."

Thirdly. God sometimes seems to sleep or lie still, and let these enemies and haters do what they will for a season. This, also, is implied: he to whom we say, "Arise," is either asleep or lies still.

Fourthly. There is a time when God will arise.

Fifthly. God's rising time is the enemies' scattering time, his haters' flying time.

Sixthly. It is the duty of God's people to pray him up when he seems to be down, and to exalt him in their praises when he doth arise to their rescue and redemption; for these words are both a prayer and a triumph, as they are used both by Moses and David.—*Thomas Case, in a Fast Sermon, preached before the House of Commons, entitled, "God's Rising, his Enemies' Scattering."* 1644.

Verses 1—3.—Prayer for the Second Advent.—*A. M'Caul.*

Verse 4.—I. The name that inspires the song: "Jah." 1. Self-existent. 2. Immutable. 3. Eternal. II. The song inspired by that name. 1. Of exultation. 2. Of confidence. 3. Of joy.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—The claims of widows and orphans upon the church of God, from God's relation to them and his indwelling in the church.

Verse 6.—Comparison of churches to families. See extract from *Dr. Gill.*

Verse 6.—I. Two curable evils: "solitary," "bound with chains." II. Two rich blessings: "set in families," "bringeth out." III. One monster evil, and its miserable consequences.

Verses 7, 8.—I. God has his seasons for delivering his people from their troubles: "When thou," etc. II. His deliverance is complete: "The earth shook," etc.; all things gave way before him. III. The deliverance is greater for the delay. 1. It is so in itself. 2. It is more prized: as in the case of Job, Abraham, Israel at the Red Sea, Daniel, his three companions, etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 7, 8, 9.—I. The presence of God in his church. 1. His pre-eminence: "before." 2. As covenant God of Israel. 3. As active and making active. 4. His rule within: they follow. 5. His design without: marching for war. II. The blessed consequences. 1. The most stolid shake. 2. The lofty bow. 3. Difficulties removed: "Sinai." 4. Blessings plenteous. 5. Church revived.

Verse 9.—I. God's mercy compared to a shower. 1. It is direct from heaven; not through priests. 2. It is pure and unmixed. 3. No one has a monopoly of it. 4. There is no substitute for it. 5. It is sovereignly dispensed, as to (1) time; (2) place; (3) manner; and (4) measure. 6. It works efficiently. Isaiah lv. 10. 7. Prayer can get it. II. There are seasons when these showers fall. 1. In the house of God. 2. In the means of grace. 3. In prayer. 4. In affliction. 5. When saints are weary (1) through working; (2) through sickness; (3) through non-success. 6. By the Holy Spirit refreshing the heart. III. These showers are meant to "confirm" God's people. IV. They are wanted *now.*

Verse 9.—I. The church is God's inheritance. 1. Chosen. 2. Purchased. 3. Acquired. II. Though his inheritance, at times it may be weary. III. When weary, it will be refreshed by him.—*G. R.*

Verse 10 (*second clause*).—Special goodness, for a special people, specially prepared.

Verse 10 (*second clause*).—It is spoken in reference to the "*poor,*" because, I. They are the larger mass of mankind; and, whatever pride may think, in the eye of reason, policy, and revelation, by far the most important, useful, and necessary part. II. They would be more peculiarly affected by deficiency. III. To encourage those in humble and trying life to depend upon him. IV. To enforce our attention to them from the divine example.—*W. Jay.*

Verse 11.—The divinity of the gospel; the divers ways and agents for its publication.

Verses 11, 12.—I. The word given: "The Lord," etc. II. The word proclaimed: "Great," etc. III. The word obeyed: "Kings," etc. Thus it was in

Old Testament times, when to Joshua, to Gideon, to David, etc., the Lord gave the word, and it ran through the hosts, and "kings of armies," etc. Thus it was in apostolic times, when the word of reconciliation was given. Thus it is still, and will be more signally than ever hereafter.—*G. R.*

Verse 12 (*last clause*).—The church in redemption as a spouse tarrying at home; her home duties; the spoil of her Lord's glorious and finished work, and her dividing it.

Verse 13.—I. The contrast. 1. Instead of humiliation, exaltation. 2. Instead of pollution, purity. 3. Instead of inertness, activity. 4. Instead of deformity, beauty. II. Its application. 1. To penitence and pardon. 2. To depravity and regeneration. 3. To affliction and recovery. 4. To desertion and consolation. 5. To death and glory.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—I. Where earth's greatest battles are fought. "Scattered," "in it," *i.e.*, in Zion. "There brake he," etc. II. By whom? The Almighty. III. When? In answer to his people's faith and prayer. IV. How? 1. Without noise, gently: as the fall of snow. 2. Without human aid: as untrodden snow. 3. Without violence: "all bloodless lay the untrodden snow."—*G. R.*

Verses 15, 16.—I. The superiority of the hill of Zion. 1. In fertility, to the hill of Bashan; to earthly pleasures. 2. In glory, to other hills; to human heights of learning and power. II. The reason of that superiority. 1. The place of God's choice. 2. Of his delight. 3. Of his abode. 4. Of his continuance for ever.—*G. R.*

Verse 16.—I. The church the dwelling-place of God. 1. Elected of old. 2. Favoured for ever. 3. Affording rest, etc., as a home for God. 4. Receiving honour, etc., for herself. II. The church, therefore, envied by others. 1. They feel their own greatness outdone. 2. They leap with rage. 3. They are unreasonable in so doing.

Verses 17, 18.—I. The comparison between Zion and Sinai. 1. The same Lord is there: "The Lord is among," etc. 2. The same attendants: "The chariots," etc. II. The contrast. 1. God descended at Sinai, ascended from near Zion. 2. Put a yoke upon them at Sinai, leads captivity captive at Zion. 3. At Sinai demanded obedience, in Zion bestows gifts. 4. In Sinai spoke terror, in Zion receives gifts for the rebellious. 5. In Sinai appeared for a short season, in Zion dwells for ever.—*G. R.*

Verse 18.—I. Christ's *ascension*. II. His *victories*. III. The *gifts* he received for men; and IV. The great *end* for which he bestows them.—*J. Newton.*

Verse 18.—"*That the Lord God might dwell among them.*" It is ground for devout wonder that God should dwell among men, when we contemplate his *immensity, loftiness, independence, holiness,* and *sovereignty;* yet he does so—I. In the coming of Christ into the world. II. In the residence of his Spirit in the heart. III. In the presence of God in his churches.—*William Staughton, D.D.* 1770—1829.

Verse 19.—I. The load of benefits. II. The load of obligation. III. The load of praise due in return.

Verse 19.—I. Salvation is not to be forgotten in the midst of daily mercies. II. Daily mercies are not to be forgotten in the enjoyment of salvation.—*G. R.*

Verse 20.—Death in God's hand. I. Escapes from it. II. Entrances to it. III. The exit out of it beyond. IV. The gate which, when closed, shuts us in it for ever.

Verse 20.—I. What God has been to his people. 1. Their salvation. 2. Their portion: "Our God." II. What he will be: With them. 1. Until death. 2. In death. 3. After death.—*G. R.*

Verse 21.—The power, pride, wisdom, and very life of evil, to be conquered by God.

Verse 22.—I. Where his people may be driven. II. The certainty of their return. III. The reasons for being assured of this.

Verse 23.—*The allowable procession in the sanctuary.* The marshalled order of doctrine, the holy walk of believers, the banners of joy, the music of devotions, the shouts to the King.

Verse 24 (*last clause*).—Work for holy women in the church.

Verse 27.—I. The variety of song. 1. The royal tribe of Benjamin in the time of Saul. 2. The princely tribe of Judah, as David was prince regent in the time of Saul. 3. The literary tribe of Zebulun: "Out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer." 4. The eloquent tribe: "Naphtali giveth goodly words."

II. The harmony of song. Let all unite in praising the Lord, the fountain of Israel. "Ten thousand thousand are their tongues," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 30, 31.—I. Hindrances to the progress of divine truth. 1. Idolatry. Worship of the crocodile—"beasts of the reeds," (LXX)—of bulls and calves, as in Egypt. 2. Covetousness. 3. War. II. The means for their removal. Prayer and the divine "rebuke." "Scatter thou," etc. III. The consequences of this removal; verse 31.

Verse 35. I. Consider God's jealousy towards his people for his holiness in the three "holy places." 1. In the outer court of profession. 2. In the holy place of our priesthood. 3. In the holy of holies with his Son. II. Consider his terribleness to his foes, as inferred from those "holy places."

Verse 35.—"*Blessed be God.*" A brief, but very suggestive text.

PSALM LXIX.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim. *Thus for the second time we have a Psalm entitled "upon the lilies." In the forty-first they were golden lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, and blooming in the fair gardens which skirt the ivory palaces: in this we have the lily among thorns, the lily of the valley, fair and beautiful, blooming in the garden of Gethsemane.* A Psalm of David. *If any enquire, "of whom speaketh the Psalmist this? of himself, or of some other man?" we would reply, "of himself, and of some other man." Who that other is, we need not be long in discovering; it is the Crucified alone who can say, "in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." His footprints all through this sorrowful song have been pointed out by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, and therefore we believe, and are sure, that the Son of Man is here. Yet it seems to be the intention of the Spirit, while he gives us personal types, and so shows the likeness to the firstborn which exists in the heirs of salvation, to set forth also disparities between the best of the sons of men, and the Son of God, for there are verses here which we dare not apply to our Lord; we almost shudder when we see our brethren attempting to do so, as for instance verse* 5. *Especially do we note the difference between David and the Son of David in the imprecations of the one against his enemies, and the prayers of the other for them. We commence our exposition of this Psalm with much trembling, for we feel that we are entering with our Great High Priest into the most holy place.*

DIVISIONS.—*This Psalm consists of two portions of* 18 *verses each. These again may each be sub-divided into three parts. Under the first head, from verses* 1—4, *the sufferer spreads his complaint before God; then he pleads that his zeal for God is the cause of his sufferings, in verses* 5—12: *and this encourages him to plead for help and deliverance, from verses* 13—18. *In the second half of the Psalm he details the injurious conduct of his adversaries, from verses* 19—21; *calls for their punishment, verses* 22—28, *and then returns to prayer, and to a joyful anticipation of divine interposition and its results, verses* 29—36.

EXPOSITION.

SAVE me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul.

2 I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

3 I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored *that* which I took not away.

1. *"Save me, O God."* "He saved others, himself he cannot save." With strong cryings and tears he offered up prayers and supplications unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared (Heb. v. 7). Thus David had prayed, and here his Son and Lord utters the same cry. This is the second Psalm which begins with a "Save me, O God," and the former (Ps. liv.) is but a short summary of this more lengthened complaint. It is remarkable that such a scene of woe should be presented to us immediately after the jubilant ascension hymn of the last Psalm, but this only shows how interwoven are the glories and the sorrows of our ever-blessed Redeemer. The head which now is crowned with glory is the same which wore the thorns; he to whom we pray, "Save us, O God," is the selfsame person who cried, "Save me, O God." *"For the waters are come in unto my soul."* Sorrows, deep, abounding, deadly, had penetrated his inner nature. Bodily anguish is not his first complaint; he begins not with the gall which embittered his lips, but with the mighty griefs which broke into his heart. All the sea outside a vessel is less to be feared than that which finds its way into the hold.

A wounded spirit who can bear. Our Lord in this verse is seen before us as a Jonah, crying, "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul." He was doing business for us on the great waters, at his Father's command; the stormy wind was lifting up the waves thereof, and he went down to the depths till his soul was melted because of trouble. In all this he has sympathy with us, and is able to succour us when we, like Peter, beginning to sink, cry to him, "Lord, save, or we perish."

2. "*I sink in deep mire.*" In water one might swim, but in mud and mire all struggling is hopeless; the mire sucks down its victim. "*Where there is no standing.*" Everything gave way under the Sufferer; he could not get foothold for support—this is a worse fate than drowning. Here our Lord pictures the close, clinging nature of his heart's woes. "He began to be sorrowful, and very heavy." Sin is as mire for its filthiness, and the holy soul of the Saviour must have loathed even that connection with it which was necessary for its expiation. His pure and sensitive nature seemed to sink in it, for it was not his element, he was not like us born and acclimatised to this great dismal swamp. Here our Redeemer became another Jeremiah, of whom it is recorded (Jer. xxxviii. 6) that his enemies cast him into a dungeon wherein "was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire." Let our hearts feel the emotions, both of contrition and gratitude, as we see in this simile the deep humiliation of our Lord. "*I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.*" The sorrow gathers even greater force; he is as one cast into the sea, the waters go over his head. His sorrows were first within, then around, and now above him. Our Lord was no faint-hearted sentimentalist; his were real woes, and though he bore them heroically, yet were they terrible even to him. His sufferings were unlike all others in degree, the waters were such as soaked into the soul; the mire was the mire of the abyss itself, and the floods were deep and overflowing. To us the promise is, "the rivers shall not overflow thee," but no such word of consolation was vouchsafed to him. My soul, thy Well-beloved endured all this for thee. Many waters could not quench his love, neither could the floods drown it; and, because of this, thou hast the rich benefit of that covenant assurance, "as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." He stemmed the torrent of almighty wrath, that we might for ever rest in Jehovah's love.

3. "*I am weary of my crying.*" Not of it, but by it, with it. He had prayed till he sweat great drops of blood, and well might physical weariness intervene. "*My throat is dried,*" parched, and inflamed. Long pleading with awful fervour had scorched his throat as with flames of fire. Few, very few, of his saints follow their Lord in prayer as far as this. We are, it is to be feared, more likely to be hoarse with talking frivolities to men than by pleading with God; yet our sinful nature demands more prayer than his perfect humanity might seem to need. His prayers should shame us into fervour. Our Lord's supplications were salted with fire, they were hot with agony; and hence they weakened his system, and made him "a weary man and full of woes." "*Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.*" He wanted in his direst distress nothing more than his God; that would be all in all to him. Many of us know what watching and waiting mean; and we know something of the failing eye when hope is long deferred: but in all this Jesus bears the palm; no eyes ever failed as his did or for so deep a cause. No painter can ever depict those eyes; their pencils fail in every feature of his all fair but all marred countenance, but most of all do they come short when they venture to pourtray those eyes which were fountains of tears. He knew how both to pray and to watch, and he would have us learn the like. There are times when we should pray till the throat is dry, and watch till the eyes grow dim. Only thus can we have fellowship with him in his sufferings. What! can we not watch with him one hour? Does the flesh shrink back? O cruel flesh to be so tender of thyself, and so ungenerous to thy Lord!

4. "*They that hate me.*" Surprising sin that men should hate the altogether lovely one, truly is it added, "*without a cause,*" for reason there was none for this senseless enmity. He neither blasphemed God, nor injured man. As Samuel said: "Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed?" Even so might Jesus enquire. Besides, he had not only done us no evil, but he had bestowed countless and priceless benefits. Well might he demand, "For which of these works do ye stone me?" Yet from his cradle to his cross, beginning with Herod and not ending with Judas, he had foes without number; and he justly said, they "*are more than the hairs of mine*

head." Both the civilians and the military, laics and clerics, doctors and drunkards, princes and people, set themselves against the Lord's anointed. "This is the heir, let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours," was the unanimous resolve of all the keepers of the Jewish vineyard; while the Gentiles outside the walls of the garden furnished the instruments for his murder, and actually did the deed. The hosts of earth and hell, banded together, made up vast legions of antagonists, none of whom had any just ground for hating him. "*They that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty.*" It was bad that they were many, but worse that they were mighty. All the ecclesiastical and military powers of his country were arrayed against him. The might of the Sanhedrim, the mob, and the Roman legions were combined in one for his utter destruction: "Away with such a fellow from this earth; it is not fit that he should live," was the shout of his ferocious foes. David's adversaries were on the throne when he was hiding in caverns, and our Lord's enemies were the great ones of the earth; while he, of whom the world was not worthy, was reproached of men and despised of the people. "*Then I restored that which I took not away.*" Though innocent, he was treated as guilty. Though David had no share in plots against Saul, yet he was held accountable for them. In reference to our Lord, it may be truly said that he restores what he took not away; for he gives back to the injured honour of God a recompense, and to man his lost happiness, though the insult of the one and the fall of the other were neither of them, in any sense, his doings. Usually, when the ruler sins the people suffer, but here the proverb is reversed—the sheep go astray, and their wanderings are laid at the Shepherd's door.

5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.

6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.

7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.

8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.

9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

10 When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.

11 I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them.

12 They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I *was* the song of the drunkards.

5. "*O God, thou knowest my foolishness.*" David might well say this, but not David's Lord; unless it be understood as an appeal to God as to his freedom from folly which men imputed to him when they said he was mad. That which was foolishness to men was superlative wisdom before God. How often might we use these words in their natural sense, and if we were not such fools as to be blind to our own folly, this confession would be frequently on our lips. When we feel that we have been foolish we are not, therefore, to cease from prayer, but rather to be more eager and fervent in it. Fools had good need consult with the infinitely wise. "*And my sins are not hid from thee.*" They cannot be hid with any fig leaves of mine; only the covering which thou wilt bring me can conceal their nakedness and mine. It ought to render confession easy, when we are assured that all is known already. That prayer which has no confession in it may please a Pharisee's pride, but will never bring down justification. They who have never seen their sins in the light of God's omniscience are quite unable to appeal to that omniscience in proof of their piety. He who can say, "*Thou knowest my foolishness,*" is the only man who can add, "But thou knowest that I love thee."

6. "*Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake.*" If he were deserted, others who were walking in the same path of faith would be discouraged and disappointed. Unbelievers are ready enough to catch at anything

which may turn humble faith into ridicule, therefore, O God of all the armies of Israel, let not my case cause the enemy to blaspheme—such is the spirit of this verse. Our blessed Lord ever had a tender concern for his people, and would not have his own oppression of spirit become a source of discouragement to them. *"Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel."* He appealed to the Lord of hosts by his power to help him, and now to the God of Israel by his covenant faithfulness to come to the rescue. If the captain of the host fail, how will it fare with the rank and file? If David flee, what will his followers do? If the king of believers shall find his faith unrewarded, how will the feeble ones hold on their way? Our Lord's behaviour during his sharpest agonies is no cause of shame to us; he wept, for he was man, but he murmured not, for he was sinless man; he cried, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" for he was human, but he added, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," for his humanity was without taint of rebellion. In the depths of tribulation no repining word escaped him, for there was no repining in his heart. The Lord of martyrs witnessed a good confession. He was strengthened in the hour of peril, and came off more than a conqueror, as we also shall do, if we hold fast our confidence even to the end.

7. *"Because for thy sake I have borne reproach."* Because he undertook to do the Father's will, and teach his truth, the people were angry; because he declared himself to be the Son of God, the priesthood raved. They could find no real fault in him, but were forced to hatch up a lying accusation before they could commence their sham trial of him. The bottom of the quarrel was, that God was with him, and he with God, while the Scribes and Pharisees sought only their own honour. Reproach is at all times very cutting to a man of integrity, and it must have come with acute force upon one of so unsullied a chraacter as our Lord: yet see, how he turns to his God, and finds his consolation in the fact that he is enduring all for his Father's sake. The like comfort belongs to all misrepresented and persecuted saints. *"Shame hath covered my face."* Men condemned to die frequently had their faces covered as they were dragged away from the judge's seat, as was the case with the wicked Haman in Esther vii. 8: after this fashion they first covered our Lord with a veil of opprobious accusation, and then hurried him away to be crucified. Moreover, they passed him through the trial of cruel mockings, besmeared his face with spittle, and covered it with bruises, so that Pilate's "Ecce Homo" called the world's attention to an unexampled spectacle of woe and shame. The stripping on the cross must also have suffused the Redeemer's face with a modest blush, as he hung there exposed to the cruel gaze of a ribald multitude. Ah, blessed Lord, it was our shame which thou wast made to bear! Nothing more deserves to be reproached and despised than sin, and lo, when thou wast made sin for us thou wast called to endure abuse and scorn. Blessed be thy name, it is over now, but we owe thee more than heart can conceive for thine amazing stoop of love.

8. *"I am become a stranger unto my brethren."* The Jews his brethren in race rejected him, his family his brethren by blood were offended at him, his disciples his brethren in spirit forsook him and fled; one of them sold him, and another denied him with oaths and cursings. Alas, my Lord, what pangs must have smitten thy loving heart to be thus forsaken by those who should have loved thee, defended thee, and, if need be, died for thee. *"And an alien unto my mother's children."* These were the nearest of relatives, the children of a father with many wives felt the tie of consanguinity but loosely, but children of the same mother owned the band of love; yet our Lord found his nearest and dearest ones ashamed to own him. As David's brethren envied him, and spake evil of him, so our Lord's relatives by birth were jealous of him, and his best beloved followers in the hour of his agony were afraid to be known as having any connection with him. These were sharp arrows of the mighty in the soul of Jesus, the most tender of friends. May none of us ever act as if we were strangers to him; never may we treat him as if he were an alien to us: rather let us resolve to be crucified with him, and may grace turn the resolve into fact.

9. *"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."* His burning ardour, like the flame of a candle, fed on his strength and consumed it. His heart, like a sharp sword, cut through the scabbard. Some men are eaten up with lechery, others with covetousness, and a third class with pride, but the master-passion with our great leader was the glory of God, jealousy for his name, and love to the divine family. Zeal for God is so little understood by men of the world, that it always draws down

opposition upon those who are inspired with it; they are sure to be accused of sinister motives, or of hypocrisy, or of being out of their senses. When zeal eats us up, ungodly men seek to eat us up too, and this was pre-eminently the case with our Lord, because his holy jealousy was pre-eminent. With more than a seraph's fire he glowed, and consumed himself with his fervour. *"And the reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me."* Those who habitually blasphemed God now curse me instead. I have become the butt for arrows intended for the Lord himself. Thus, the Great Mediator was, in this respect, a substitute for God as well as for man, he bore the reproaches aimed at the one, as well as the sins committed by the other.

10. *"When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach."* Having resolved to hate him, everything he did was made a fresh reason for reviling. If he ate and drank as others, he was a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber; if he wept himself away and wore himself out with fasting, then he had a devil and was mad. Nothing is more cruel than prejudice, its eye colours all with the medium through which it looks, and its tongue rails at all indiscriminately. Our Saviour wept much in secret for our sins, and no doubt his private soul-chastenings on our behalf were very frequent. Lone mountains and desert places saw repeated agonies, which, if they could disclose them, would astonish us indeed. The emaciation which these exercises wrought in our Lord made him appear nearly fifty years old when he was but little over thirty; this which was to his honour was used as a matter of reproach against him.

11. *"I made sackcloth also my garment."* This David did literally, but we have no reason to believe that Jesus did. In a spiritual sense he, as one filled with grief, was always a sackcloth wearer. *"And I became a proverb to them."* He was ridiculed as " the man of sorrows," quoted as " the acquaintance of grief." He might have said, " here I and sorrow sit." This which should have won him pity only earned him new and more general scorn. To interweave one's name into a mocking proverb is the highest stretch of malice, and to insult one's acts of devotion is to add profanity to cruelty.

12. *"They that sit in the gate speak against me."* The ordinary gossips who meet at the city gates for idle talk make me their theme, the business men who there resort for trade forget their merchandise to slander me, and even the beggars who wait at men's doors for alms contribute their share of insult to the heap of infamy. *"And I was the song of the drunkard."* The ungodly know no merrier jest than that in which the name of the holy is traduced. The flavour of slander is piquante, and gives a relish to the revellers' wine. The character of the man of Nazareth was so far above the appreciation of the men of strength to mingle strong drink, it was so much out of their way and above their thoughts, that it is no wonder it seemed to them ridiculous, and therefore well adapted to create laughter over their cups. The saints are ever choice subjects for satire. Butler's Hudibras owed more of its popularity to its irreligious banter than to any intrinsic cleverness. To this day the tavern makes rare fun of the tabernacle, and the ale-bench is the seat of the scorner. What a wonder of condescension is here that he who is the adoration of angels should stoop to be the song of drunkards! What amazing sin that he whom seraphs worship with veiled faces should be a scornful proverb among the most abandoned of men.

> " The by-word of the passing throng,
> The ruler's scoff, the drunkard's song."

13 But as for me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, *in* an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.

14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.

15 Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness *is* good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.

17 And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.

18 Draw nigh unto my soul, *and* redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies.

13. *"But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord."* He turned to Jehovah in prayer as being the most natural thing for the godly to do in their distress. To whom should a child turn but to his father. He did not answer them; like a sheep before her shearers he was dumb to them, but he opened his mouth unto the Lord his God, for he would hear and deliver. Prayer is never out of season, it stands us in good stead in every evil day. *"In an acceptable time."* It was a time of rejection with man, but of acceptance with God. Sin ruled on earth, but grace reigned in heaven. There is to each of us an accepted time, and woe be to us if we suffer it to glide away unimproved. God's time must be our time, or it will come to pass that, when time closes, we shall look in vain for space for repentance, Our Lord's prayers were well-timed, and always met with acceptance. *"O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me."* Even the perfect one makes his appeal to the rich mercy of God, much more should we. To misery no attribute is more sweet than mercy, and when sorrows multiply, the multitude of mercy is much prized. When enemies are more than the hairs of our head, they are yet to be numbered, but God's mercies are altogether innumerable, and let it never be forgotten that every one of them is an available and powerful argument in the hand of faith. *"In the truth of thy salvation."* Jehovah's faithfulness is a further mighty plea. His salvation is no fiction, no mockery, no changeable thing, therefore he is asked to manifest it, and make all men see his fidelity to his promise. Our Lord teaches us here the sacred art of wrestling in prayer, and ordering our cause with arguments; and he also indicates to us that the nature of God is the great treasury of strong reasons, which shall be to us most prevalent in supplication.

14. *"Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink."* He turns into prayer the very words of his complaint; and it is well, if, when we complain, we neither feel nor say anything which we should fear to utter before the Lord as a prayer. We are allowed to ask for deliverance from trouble as well as for support under it; both petitions are here combined. How strange it seems to hear such language from the Lord of glory. *"Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters."* Both from his foes, and the griefs which they caused him, he seeks a rescue. God can help us in all ways, and we may, therefore, put up a variety of requests without fear of exceeding our liberty to ask, or his ability to answer.

15. *"Let not the waterflood overflow me."* He continues to recapitulate the terms of his lament. He is willing to bear suffering, but entreats grace that it may not get the victory over him. He was heard in that he feared. *"Neither let the deep swallow me up."* As Jonah came forth again, so let me also arise from the abyss of woe: here also our Lord was heard, and so shall we be. Death itself must disgorge us. *"Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me."* When a great stone was rolled over the well, or pit, used as a dungeon, the prisoner was altogether enclosed, and forgotten like one in the oubliettes of the Bastille; this is an apt picture of the state of a man buried alive in grief and left without remedy; against this the great sufferer pleaded and was heard. He was baptised in agony but not drowned in it; the grave enclosed him, but before she could close her mouth he had burst his prison. It is said that truth lies in a well, but it is assuredly an open well, for it walks abroad in power; and so our great Substitute in the pit of woe and death was yet the Conqueror of death and hell. How appropriately may many of us use this prayer. We deserve to be swept away as with a flood, to be drowned in our sins, to be shut up in hell; let us, then, plead the merits of our Saviour, lest these things happen unto us.

16. *"Hear me, O Lord."* Do not refuse thy suppliant Son. It is to the covenant God, the ever-living Jehovah, that he appeals with strong cryings. *"For thy loving-kindness is good."* By the greatness of thy love have pity upon thine afflicted. It is always a stay to the soul to dwell upon the pre-eminence and excellence of the Lord's mercy. It has furnished sad souls much good cheer to take to pieces that grand old Saxon word, which is here used in our version, *"lovingkindness."* Its composition is of two most sweet and fragrant things, fitted to inspire strength into the fainting, and make desolate hearts sing for joy. *"Turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies."* If the Lord do but turn the eye of pity, and the hand of power, the mourner's spirit revives. It is the gall of bitterness to be without the comfortable smile of God; in our Lord's case his grief culminated in "Lama

Sabachthani," and his bitterest cry was that in which he mourned an absent God. Observe how he dwells anew upon divine tenderness, and touches again that note of abundance, " The multitude of thy compassions."

17. *"And hide not thy face from thy servant."* A good servant desires the light of his master's countenance; that *servus servorum*, who was also *rex regium*, could not bear to lose the presence of his God. The more he loved his Father, the more severely he felt the hiding of his face. *"For I am in trouble."* Stay thy rough wind in the day of thine east wind; do not add sorrow upon sorrow. If ever a man needs the comforting presence of God it is when he is in distress; and, being in distress, it is a reason to be pleaded with a merciful God why he should not desert us. We may pray that our flight be not in the winter, and that God will not add spiritual desertion to all our other tribulations. *"Hear me, speedily."* The case was urgent, delay was dangerous, nay deadly. Our Lord was the perfection of patience, yet he cried urgently for speedy mercy; and therein he gives us liberty to do the same, so long as we add, " nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

18. *"Draw nigh unto my soul."* The near approach of God is all the sufferer needs; one smile of heaven will still the rage of hell. *"And redeem it."* It shall be redemption to me if thou wilt appear to comfort me. This is a deeply spiritual prayer, and one very suitable for a deserted soul. It is in renewed communion that we shall find redemption realised. *"Deliver me because of mine enemies,"* lest they should, in their vaunting, blaspheme thy name, and boast that thou art not able to rescue those who put their trust in thee. Jesus, in condescending to use such supplications, fulfils the request of his disciples: " Lord, teach us to pray."

19 Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries *are* all before thee.

20 Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none; and for comforters, but I found none.

21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Here we have a sad recapitulation of sorrows, with more especial reference to the persons concerned in their infliction.

19. *"Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour."* It is no novelty or secret, it has been long continued: thou, O God, hast seen it; and for thee to see the innocent suffer is an assurance of help. Here are three words piled up to express the Redeemer's keen sense of the contempt poured upon him; and his assurance that every form of malicious despite was observed of the Lord. *"Mine adversaries are all before thee."* The whole lewd and loud company is now present to thine eye: Judas and his treachery; Herod and his cunning; Caiaphas and his counsel; Pilate and his vacillation; Jews, priests, people, rulers, all, thou seest and wilt judge.

20. *"Reproach hath broken my heart."* There is no hammer like it. Our Lord died of a broken heart, and reproach had done the deed. Intense mental suffering arises from slander; and, in the case of the sensitive nature of the immaculate Son of Man, it sufficed to lacerate the heart till it broke. " Then burst his mighty heart." *"And I am full of heaviness."* Calumny and insult bowed him to the dust; he was sick at heart. The heaviness of our Lord in the garden is expressed by many and forcible words in the four gospels, and each term goes to show that the agony was beyond measure great; he was filled with misery, like a vessel which is full to the brim. *"And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none."* " Deserted in his utmost need by those his former bounty fed." Not one to say him a kindly word, or drop a sympathetic tear. Amongst ten thousand foes there was not one who was touched by the spectacle of his misery; not one with a heart capable of humane feeling towards him. *"And for comforters, but I found none."* His dearest ones had sought their own safety, and left their Lord alone. A sick man needs comforters, and a persecuted man needs sympathy; but our blessed Surety found neither on that dark and doleful night when the powers of darkness had their hour. A spirit like that of our Lord feels acutely desertion by beloved

and trusted friends, and yearns for real sympathy. This may be seen in the story of Gethsemane :—

" Backwards and forwards thrice he ran,
As if he sought some help from man ;
Or wish'd, at least, they would condole—
'Twas all they could—his tortur'd soul.

Whate'er he sought for, there was none ;
Our Captain fought the field alone.
Soon as the chief to battle led,
That moment every soldier fled."

21. *"They gave me also gall for my meat."* This was the sole refreshment cruelty had prepared for him. Others find pleasure in their food, but his taste was made to be an additional path of pain to him. *"And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."* A criminal's draught was offered to our innocent Lord, a bitter portion to our dying Master. Sorry entertainment had earth for her King and Saviour. How often have our sins filled the gall-cup for our Redeemer ? While we blame the Jews, let us not excuse ourselves.

22 Let their table become a snare before them : and *that which should have been for their* welfare, *let it become* a trap.

23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not ; and make their loins continually to shake.

24 Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.

25 Let their habitation be desolate ; *and* let none dwell in their tents.

26 For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten ; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.

27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity : and let them not come into thy righteousness.

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

From this point David and our Lord for awhile part company, if we accept the rendering of our version. The severe spirit of the law breathes out imprecations, while the tender heart of Jesus offers prayers for his murderers. The whole of these verses, however, may be viewed as predictions, and then they certainly refer to our Lord, for we find portions of them quoted in that manner by the apostle in Rom. xi. 9, 10, and by Christ himself in Matt. xxiii. 38.

22. *"Let their table become a snare before them."* There they laid snares, and there they shall find them. From their feasts they would afford nothing but wormwood for their innocent victim, and now their banquets shall be their ruin. It is very easy for the daily provisions of mercy to become temptations to sin. As birds and beasts are taken in a trap by means of baits for the appetite, so are men snared full often by their meats and drinks. Those who despise the upper springs of grace, shall find the nether springs of worldly comfort prove their poison. The table is used, however, not alone for feeding, but for conversation, transacting business, counsel, amusement, and religious observance : to those who are the enemies of the Lord Jesus the table may, in all these respects, become a snare. This first plague is terrible, and the second is like unto it. *"And that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap."* This, if we follow the original closely, and the version of Paul in the Romans, is a repetition of the former phrase ; but we shall not err if we say that, to the rejectors of Christ, even those things which are calculated to work their spiritual and eternal good, become ocasions for yet greater sin. They reject Christ, and are condemned for not believing on him ; they stumble on this stone, and are broken by it. Wretched are those men, who not only have a curse upon their common blessings, but also on the spiritual opportunities of salvation.

" Whom oils and balsams kill, what salve can cure ? "

This second plague even exceeds the first.

23. *"Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not."* They shall wander in a darkness

that may be felt. They have loved darkness rather than light, and in darkness they shall abide. Judicial blindness fell upon Israel after our Lord's death and their persecution of his apostles; they were blinded by the light which they would not accept. Eyes which see no beauty in the Lord Jesus, but flash wrath upon him, may well grow yet more dim, till death spiritual leads to death eternal. "*And make their loins continually to shake.*" Their conscience shall be so ill at ease that they shall continually quiver with fear; their backs shall bend to the earth (so some read it) with grovelling avarice, and their strength shall be utterly paralyzed, so that they cannot walk firmly, but shall totter at every step. See the terrifying, degrading, and enfeebling influence of unbelief. See also the retaliations of justice: those who will not see shall not see; those who would not walk in uprightness shall be unable to do so.

24. "*Pour out thine indignation upon them.*" What can be too severe a penalty for those who reject the incarnate God, and refuse to obey the commands of his mercy? They deserve to be flooded with wrath, and they shall be; for upon all who rebel against the Saviour, Christ the Lord, "the wrath is come to the uttermost." 1 Thess. ii. 16. God's indignation is no trifle; the anger of a holy, just, omnipotent, and infinite Being, is above all things to be dreaded; even a drop of it consumes, but to have it poured upon us is inconceivably dreadful. O God, who knoweth the power of thine anger?

"*And let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.*" Grasping them, arresting them, abiding on them. If they flee, let it overtake and seize them; let it lay them by the heels in the condemned cell, so that they cannot escape from execution. It shall indeed be so with all the finally impenitent, and it ought to be so. God is not to be insulted with impunity; and his Son, our ever gracious Saviour, the best gift of infinite love, is not to be scorned and scoffed at for nothing. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, but what shall be the "sorer punishment" reserved for those who have trodden under foot the Son of God?

25. "*Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.*" This may signify that their posterity shall be cut off, and the abode which they occupy shall be left a ruin; or, as our Lord quoted it, it refers to the temple, which was left by its divine occupant and became a desolation. What occurs on a large scale to families and nations is often fulfilled in individuals, as was conspicuously the case with Judas, to whom Peter referred this prophecy, Acts i. 20, "For it is written in the book of Psalms, let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein." The fierce proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar, "that every people, nation, and language, that speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill," is but an anticipation of that dread hour when the enemies of the Lord shall be broken in pieces, and perish out of the land.

26. "*For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten.*" They are cruel where they should be pitiful. When a stroke comes to any in the providence of God, their friends gather around them and condole, but these wretches hunt the wounded and vex the sick. Their merciless hearts invent fresh blows for him who is "smitten of God and afflicted." "*And they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.*" They lay bare the wounds with their rough tongues. They lampoon the mourner, satirise his sorrows, and deride his woes. They pointed to the Saviour's wounds, they looked and stared upon him, and then they uttered shameful accusations against him. After this fashion the world still treats the members of Christ. "Report," say they, "and we will report it." If a godly man be a little down in estate, how glad they are to push him over altogether, and, meanwhile, to talk everywhere against him. God takes note of this, and will visit it upon the enemies of his children; he may allow them to act as a rod to his saints, but he will yet avenge his own elect. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem, and for Zion, with a great jealousy; and I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction."

27. "*Add iniquity unto their iniquity.*" Unbelievers will add sin to sin, and so, punishment to punishment. This is the severest imprecation, or prophecy, of all. For men to be let alone to fill up the measure of their iniquity, is most equitable, but yet most awful. "*And let them not come into thy righteousness.*" If they refuse it, and resist thy gospel, let them shut themselves out of it.

"He that will not when he may,
When he would he shall have nay."

Those who choose evil shall have their choice. Men who hate divine mercy shall not have it forced upon them, but (unless sovereign grace interpose) shall be left to themselves to aggravate their guilt, and ensure their doom.

28. *"Let them be blotted out of the book of the living."* Though in their conceit they wrote themselves among the people of God, and induced others to regard them under that character, they shall be unmasked and their names removed from the register. Enrolled with honour, they shall be erased with shame. Death shall obliterate all recollection of them; they shall be held no longer in esteem, even by those who paid them homage. Judas first, and Pilate, and Herod, and Caiaphas, all in due time, were speedily wiped out of existence; their names only remain as by-words, but among the honoured men who live after their departure they are not recorded. *"And not be written with the righteous."* This clause is parallel with the former, and shows that the inner meaning of being blotted out from the book of life is to have it made evident that the name was never written there at all. Man in his imperfect copy of God's book of life will have to make many emendations, both of insertion and erasure; but, as before the Lord, the record is for ever fixed and unalterable. Beware, O man, of despising Christ and his people, lest thy soul should never partake in the righteousness of God, without which men are condemned already.

29 But I *am* poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

31 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox *or* bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

32 The humble shall see *this, and* be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God.

33 For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.

34 Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein.

35 For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession.

36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

Imprecations, prophecies, and complaints are ended, and prayer of a milder sort begins, intermingled with bursts of thankful song, and encouraging foresights of coming good.

29. *"But I am poor and sorrowful."* The Psalmist was afflicted very much, but his faith was in God. The poor in spirit and mourners are both blessed under the gospel, so that here is a double reason for the Lord to smile on his suppliant. No man was ever poorer or more sorrowful than Jesus of Nazareth, yet his cry out of the depths was heard, and he was uplifted to the highest glory. *"Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high."* How fully has this been answered in our great Master's case, for he not only escaped his foes personally, but he has become the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him, and this continues to glorify him more and more. O ye poor and sorrowful ones, lift up your heads, for as with your Lord so shall it be with you. You are trodden down to-day as the mire of the streets, but you shall ride upon the high places of the earth ere long; and even now ye are raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

30. *"I will praise the name of God with a song."* He who sang after the passover, sings yet more joyously after the resurrection and ascension. He is, in very truth, "the sweet singer of Israel." He leads the eternal melodies, and all his saints join in chorus. *"And will magnify him with thanksgiving."* How sure was our Redeemer of ultimate victory, since he vows a song even while yet in the furnace. In us, also, faith foresees the happy issue of all affliction, and makes us even now begin the music of gratitude which shall go on for ever increasing in volume, world without end. What clear shining after the rain we have in this and succeeding verses. The darkness is past, and the glory light shines forth as the sun. All the honour is

rendered unto him to whom all the prayer was presented; he alone could deliver and did deliver, and, therefore, to him only be the praise.

31. *"This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs."* No sacrifice is so acceptable to God, who is a Spirit, as that which is spiritual. He accepted bullocks under a dim and symbolical dispensation; but in such offerings, in themselves considered, he had no pleasure. "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" Here he puts dishonour upon mere outward offerings by speaking of the horns and hoofs, the offal of the victim. The *opus operatum*, which our ritualists think so much of, the Lord puffs at. The horning and hoofing are nothing to him, though to Jewish ritualists these were great points, and matters for critical examination; our modern rabbis are just as precise as to the mingling of water with their wine, the baking of their wafers, the cut of their vestments, and the performance of genuflections towards the right quarter of the compass. O fools, and slow of heart to perceive all that the Lord has declared. "Offer unto God thanksgiving" is the everlasting rubric of the true directory of worship. The depths of grief into which the suppliant had been plunged gave him all the richer an experience of divine power and grace in his salvation, and so qualified him to sing more sweetly "the song of loves." Such music is ever most acceptable to the infinite Jehovah.

32. *"The humble shall see this, and be glad."* Grateful hearts are ever on the look out for recruits, and the rejoicing Psalmist discerns with joy the fact, that other oppressed and lowly men observing the Lord's dealings with his servants are encouraged to look for a like issue to their own tribulations. The standing consolation of the godly is the experience of their Lord, for as he is so are we also in this world; yea, moreover, his triumph has secured ours, and therefore, we may on the most solid grounds rejoice in him. This gave our great leader satisfaction as he foresaw the comforts which would flow to us from his conflict and conquest. *"And your heart shall live that seek God."* A similar assurance is given in Psalm xxii., which is near akin to this. It would have been useless to seek if Jesus' victories had not cleared the way, and opened a door of hope; but, since the Breaker has gone up before us, and the King at the head of us, our hope is a living one, our faith is living, our love is living, and our renewed nature is full of a vitality which challenges the cold hand of death to damp it.

33. *"For the Lord heareth the poor."* The examples of David and David's Lord, and tens of thousands of the saints, all go to prove this. Monarchs of the nations are deaf to the poor, but the Sovereign of the Universe has a quick ear for the needy. None can be brought lower than was the Nazarene, but see how highly he is exalted: descend into what depths we may, the prayer-hearing God can bring us up again. *"And despiseth not his prisoners."* Poor men have their liberty, but these are bound; however, they are God's prisoners, and, therefore, prisoners of hope. The captive in the dungeon is the lowest and least esteemed of men, but the Lord seeth not as man seeth; he visited those who are bound with chains, and proclaims a jail-delivery for his afflicted. God despises no man, and no prayer that is honest and sincere. Distinctions of rank are nothing with him; the poor have the gospel preached to them, and the prisoners are loosed by his grace. Let all poor and needy ones hasten to seek his face, and to yield him their love.

34. *"Let the heavens and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein."* The doxology of a glowing heart. The writer had fathomed the deeps, and had ascended to the heights; and, therefore, calls on the whole range of creation to bless the Lord. Our Well-Beloved here excites us all to grateful adoration: who among us will hold back? God's love to Christ argues good to all forms of life; the exaltation of the Head brings good to the members, and to all in the least connected with him. Inasmuch as the creation itself also is by Christ's work to be delivered from bondage, let all that have life and motion magnify the Lord. Glory be unto thee, O Lord, for the sure and all-including pledge of our Surety's triumph: we see in this the exaltation of all thy poor and sorrowful ones, and our heart is glad.

35. *"For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah."* Poor, fallen Israel shall have a portion in the mercy of the Lord; but, above all, the church, so dear to the heart of her glorious bridegroom, shall be revived and strengthened. Ancient saints so dearly loved Zion, that even in their distresses they did not forget her; with the first gleam of light which visited them, they fell to pleading for the faithful: see notable instances of this which have passed under our eye already.

Psalms v. 11, xiv. 7, xxii. 23, li. 18. To us, in these modern times, it is the subject of cheering hope that better days are coming for the chosen people of God, and for this we would ever pray. O Zion, whatever other memories fade away, we cannot forget thee. *"That they may dwell there, and have it in possession."* Whatever captivities may occur, or desolations be caused, the land of Canaan belongs to Israel by a covenant of salt, and they will surely repossess it; and this shall be a sign unto us, that through the atonement of the Christ of God, all the poor in spirit shall enjoy the mercies promised in the covenant of grace. The sure mercies of David shall be the heritage of all the seed.

36. *"The seed also of his servants shall inherit it."* Under this image, which, however, we dare not regard as a mere simile, but as having in itself a literal significance, we have set forth to us the enrichment of the saints, consequent upon the sorrow of their Lord. The termination of this Psalm strongly recalls in us that of the twenty-second. The *seed* lie near the Saviour's heart, and their enjoyment of all promised good is the great concern of his disinterested soul. Because they are his Father's servants, therefore he rejoices in their welfare. *"And they that love his name shall dwell therein."* He has an eye to the Father's glory, for it is to his praise that those who love him should attain, and for ever enjoy, the utmost happiness. Thus a Psalm, which began in the deep waters, ends in the city which hath foundations. How gracious is the change. Hallelujah.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—*"To the Chief Musician, on the lilies, of David."* *"On the lilies,"* points to the beauty of the subject treated of.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Whole Psalm.—The subject of the Psalm is an ideal person, representing the whole class of religious sufferers. The only individual in whom the various traits meet is Christ. That he is not, however, the exclusive, or even the immediate subject, is clear from the confession in verse 5. There is no Psalm, except the twenty-second, more distinctly applied to him in the New Testament.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Whole Psalm.—This has usually been regarded as a Messianic Psalm. No portion of the Old Testament Scriptures is more frequently quoted in the New, with the exception of Psalm xxii. When Jesus drives the buyers and sellers from the temple (John ii. 17), his disciples are reminded of the words of verse 9 (first clause). When it is said (John xv. 25) that the enemies of Jesus hated him without a cause, this is looked upon as the fulfilment of Scripture, the reference is probably to verse 4, though it may be also to xxv. 18. To him, and the reproach which he endured for the sake of God, St. Paul refers the words of this Psalm, verse 9 (second clause), "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." In verse 12 we have a foreshadowing of the mockery of our Lord by the soldiers in the prætorium (Matt. xxvii. 27—30); in verse 21, the giving of the vinegar and the gall found their counterpart in the scenes of the crucifixion, Matt. xxvii. 34. In John xix. 28 there is an allusion, probably to verse 21 of this Psalm, and to xxii. 15. The imprecation in verse 25 is said, in Acts i. 20, to have been fulfilled in the case of Judas Iscariot, though, as the words of the Psalm are plural, the citation is evidently made with some freedom. According to Rom. xi. 9, 10, the rejection of Israel may best be described in the words of verses 22, 23.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm follows in striking connection with the preceeding, and in contrast with the glory of his kingdom. The two have been compared to the transfiguration on the mount, where, after the manifestation of Christ in glory, there appeared also Moses and Elias, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. The clearest anticipation of future glory must not shut out the conviction, that it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom.—*W. Wilson.*

Whole Psalm.—Remember this is the fourth Psalm which declares at length the passion and resurrection of our Lord. Through the whole Psalm Christ speaks in person. He prays for deliverance by the Father, because he has suffered by the

Jews, without cause, many afflictions and persecutions. He supplicates on behalf of his members, that the hope of the faithful, resting on his resurrection, may not be disappointed. By the power of his prescience he declares the future events which should occur to his enemies.—*Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus, circa* 468—560.

Whole Psalm.—In this Psalm the whole Christ speaks; now in his own person, now crying with the voice of his members to God his father.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 1.—"*Save me, O God.*" Let his distances be never so great, he is resolved to cry after the Lord; and if he get but his head never so little above water, the Lord shall hear of him. One would think his discouragements such as he were past crying any more; *the waters entered into his soul, in deep waters, the streams running over him: he sticketh fast in the mire where is no standing* (he is at the very bottom, and there fast in the mire), *he is weary of crying;* yet, verses 6, 13: *But, Lord, I make my prayer to thee:* and as he recovers breath, so breathes out fresh supplications to the Lord. If men or devils would be forbidding to pray, as the multitude sometimes did the poor blind man to cry after Jesus; yet, as he, so an importunate suppliant "*will cry so much the more,* Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Mark x. 47, 48.—*Thomas Cobbet.*

Verse 1.—"*The waters are come in unto my soul.*" What means he by *coming in unto his soul?* Surely no other than this:—that they oppressed his spirit, and, as it were, penetrated into his conscience, raising fears and perplexities there, by reason of his sins, which at present put his faith and hope to some disorder; so that he could not for a while see to the comfortable end of his affliction, but was as one under water, covered with his fears, as appears by what follows (verse 2): "*I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing.*" He compares himself to one in a quagmire that can feel no ground to bear him up; and, observe whence his trouble rose, and where the waters made their entrance (verse 5): "*O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.*" This holy man lay under some fresh guilt, and this made him so uncomfortable under his affliction, because he saw his sin in the face of that, and tasted some displeasure from God for it in his outward trouble, which made it so bitter in the going down; and, therefore, when once he had humbled himself by confessing his sin, and was able to see the coast clear between heaven and him, so as to believe the pardon of his sin, and hope for good news from God again, he then returns to his sweet temper, and sings in the same affliction, where before he sunk.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*I sink in deep mire.*" I was taking a quiet walk along the banks [of the Nile], when I came to a part so soft and miry that I was brought to a stand, as my foot sank at every step. . . . . Being brought to a stand, I hailed the reis to heave to, and take me on board. One of the men was, therefore, sent in the small boat; but the river, near the western side, was so shallow that he could not get the boat within some distance of the bank. He, consequently, as is usual in such cases, jumped overboard that he might carry me to the boat on his back. No sooner, however, had he sprung from the boat than I heard him scream. I turned to see what was the matter, when I found him struggling in the mud. He was sinking as though in quicksand; and the more he struggled, the faster and deeper he sank. His fellow-boatmen were not slack. They quickly saw the dilemma he was in, and two of them dashed into the water and swam to the small boat. I was almost choked with terror, and I breathed, or rather gasped, with difficulty. "Can they reach the poor fellow?" I said to myself; "if not, he must inevitably be swallowed up alive!" Now they reach the boat! Now they near him! And now, praise the Lord, he grasps firmly hold. O that death-like grasp of the side of the boat! But this was not until he had sunk up to his bosom! Seeing him safe, I breathed more freely; and I feel that now, though only relating the circumstance, the excitement has caused an increased and painful action of the heart. How I thought of poor David! Had he really witnessed a similar scene to this literally when, speaking of the feelings of his soul, spiritually, he said: "*I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me*"? O what an agonising state to be in! and yet many of my readers, I have no doubt, who never witnessed such a scene literally, know something about it spiritually, as David did, whether he had seen it with his bodily eyes or not. Well might he, in the struggling of his soul, exclaim: "*Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink!*" Let me grasp firmly hold of the ark, and be pulled safely on board! Well! just

at the right time, just before the poor fellow's arms (shall I say his arms of faith ?) were disabled, swallowed up, deliverance came.—*John Gadsby, in "My Wanderings."*

Verse 2.—"*I sink,*"—"*there is no standing.*" I saw indeed there was cause of rejoicing for those that held to Jesus ; but as for me, I had cut myself off by my transgressions, and left myself neither foot-hold, nor hand-hold, amongst all the stays and props in the precious word of life. And truly I did now feel myself to sink into a gulf, as an house whose foundation is destroyed ; I did liken myself, in this condition, unto the case of a child that was fallen into a mill-pit, who, though it could make some shift to scrabble and sprawl in the water, yet, because it could find neither hold for hand nor foot, therefore, at last, it must die in that condition.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 2.—"*Mire.*" If the abyss be only full of water, a good swimmer has still the hope of rising again to the surface.—*The Berleb. Bible.*

Verse 2.—"*Where the floods overflow me.*" The plea in effect is this: Lord, I am ready to drown ; if ever thou wouldst save a poor perishing servant of thine, save me : my troubles and temptations are too deep for me, I am ready to sink over head and ears in them, and therefore, Lord, reach hither thy gracious hand, and bear up my head above water, lest otherwise I miscarry. Especially if such extremities continue, the continuance of them may be pleaded.—*Thomas Cobbet.*

Verse 2.—"*The floods overflow me.*" The word *flood* in these two verses is the well-known Shibboleth which the Ephraimites were unable to pronounce. Jud. xii. 6. It occurs again, Isaiah xxvii. 12, " flood of the river."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"*I am weary of my crying.*" The word יעף means properly, *to gape, to gasp*, then, *to become weary.* . . . . but, *to gasp in his crying*, is not so much to grow weary because of the great vehemence thereof, but while the crying lasts, and while he is in the act, to succumb under the burden of his dangerous and shameful calamity. —*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 3.—"*I am weary of my crying.*" He had cried to God for the ways of man ; he had cried to man of the ways of God ; he had not ceased, from his first beginning to teach, till he said upon the cross, " I thirst." His eyes had grown dim, and his flesh was faint and weary with his sufferings, through the long passion of his life on earth. He had been waiting in poverty, and insult, and treachery, and scourging, and pain, until he cried, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? "—*From "A Plain Commentary."*

Verse 3.—"*I am weary of my crying,*" etc. David is like the post, who layeth by three horses as breathless; his heart, his throat, his eyes. . . . . *Objection.* But I have neither weeping one way or other, ordinary nor marred. *Answer.* Looking up to heaven, lifting up of the eyes, goeth for prayer also in God's books. " My prayer unto thee, and will look up," (Psalm v. 3). "*Mine eyes fail with looking upward*" (Psalm lxix. 3). Because, first, prayer is a pouring out of the soul to God, and faith will come out at the eye, in lieu of another door : often affections break out at the window, when the door is closed ; as smoke venteth at the window, when the chimney refuseth passage. Stephen looked up to heaven (Acts vii. 55). He sent a post ; a greedy, pitiful, and hungry look up to Christ, out at the window, at the nearest passage, to tell that a poor friend was coming up to him. Second. I would wish no more, if I were in hell, but to send a look up to heaven. There be many love-looks of the saints, lying up before the throne, in the bosom of Christ. The twinkling of thy eyes in prayer are not lost to Christ ; else Stephen's look, David's look, should not be registered so many hundred years in Christ's written Testament.—*Samuel Rutherford, in "The Trial and Triumph of Faith."*

Verse 3.—"*Crying.*" Meanwhile, we see how the saints, in the vicissitudes of affairs, even when they are innocent, are not insensible and stony ; they do not despise the threatening perils ; they become anxious, they cry and sigh during their temptations.—*Musculus.*

Verse 3.—"*Mine eyes fail.*" O pitiable sight ! that that sight should fail, by which Jesus saw the multitudes and, therefore, ascended the mount to give the precepts of the New Testament ; by which, beholding Peter and Andrew, he called them ; by which, looking upon the man sitting at the receipt of custom, he called and made him an evangelist ; by which, gazing upon the city, he wept over it. . . . With these eyes thou didst look upon Simon, when thou didst say, "*Thou art the son of Jonas ; thou shalt be called Cephas.*" With these eyes thou didst gaze upon the woman who was a sinner, to whom thou didst say, "*Thy faith hath saved thee ;*

go in peace." Turn these eyes upon us, and never turn them away from our continual prayers.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 3.—"*I wait for my God.*" The hour is coming when our eyes must fail, and be closed; but, even then, "*Let us wait for our God*;" in this respect, let us die the death of the righteous person, who died for us; "and let our last end be like his."—*George Horne.*

Verse 4.—"*Without a cause.*" In suffering, let not the mind be disturbed; for the injustice which is done to the innocent in his sufferings, is not laid to the charge of the sufferer, but to his who inflicts suffering. . . . It is well known what Tertullian relates of Socrates, when his wife met him after his condemnation, and addressed him with a woman's tears: "*Thou art unjustly condemned, Socrates.*" His reply was, "*Wouldst thou have me justly?*"—*Lorinus.*

Verse 4.—"*Then I restored that which I took not away.*" It was the great and blessed work of our Lord Jesus here upon the earth, to restore what he took not away. In handling this: I. Show what is it which was taken away, and from whom? II. Wherein it appears that Christ took it not away. III. How he restored it? IV. Why he did so? V. Use.

I. *What is it which was taken away, and from whom?* 1. There was glory taken from God. Not his essential glory, nor any perfection of his being, for that cannot be taken away; but that glory which shines forth in the moral government of his creatures, and that glory which we are bound to give him. 2. There was righteousness, holiness, and happiness taken from man also. (1) There was a loss of righteousness to the guilty sinner; (2) of holiness to the polluted sinner; (3) of happiness to the miserable sinner. II. *Wherein it appears that Christ did not take away those things from either.* 1. It is plain, as to God, he never took away any glory from him; for he never did anything dishonourable or offensive to God. John viii. 29; Isaiah l. 5; Luke i. 35. 2. It is also clear, as to man, that he took not away any righteousness, holiness, or happiness from him. He was not such a fountain of guilt, pollution, and misery, as the first Adam had been, but the contrary. 3. The Scripture, therefore, speaks of Christ's being cut off, but not for himself, Dan. ix. 26; 1 Pet. iii. 18; Isa. liii. 4, 5. 4. The innocency of Christ was conspicuous in his very sufferings. Though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. Acts xiii. 28. III. *How did Christ restore those things which he took not away?* In general, by his active and passive obedience. 1. Christ's doing the will of God in such a manner as he did it, was a greater honour to God than ever had been, or could be done before. 2. Christ's suffering of the will of God, made a considerable addition to the glory of God, which had been impaired by the sin of man, Heb. v. 8; John xvii. 4; and xiii. 31. 3. Christ hath provided for the justification of the sinner by the obedience which he fulfilled, Rom. v. 8. 4. Christ communicates that grace which is necessary for our sanctification also. 5. Christ hath merited for us a present blessedness in this world. 6. Jesus Christ hath procured for us a more full and absolute blessedness in the world to come. IV. *Why did Jesus Christ make it his work to restore what he took not away?* 1. It was a necessary work, a work which must be done, in order to his being a Saviour. 2. It was a work impossible for any mere creature to do; so that if Christ did not, it could not be done by any person besides him.—*Timothy Cruso's Sermon.*

Verse 4.—"*Then I restored that which I took not away.*" Rosenmüller observes, that this seems to be a proverbial sentence, to denote an innocent man unjustly treated. According to the law, if a man stole and killed, or sold an ox, he was to restore five oxen; or a sheep, he was to restore four; and if the ox or sheep was found alive, he was to restore two. Hence, to oblige a man to restore when he had taken nothing, was the greatest injustice. Exod. xxii. 1—5. Ainsworth observes, that though it may be taken for all unjust criminations, whereof David and Christ were innocent, yet in special, it was verified in Christ, who, "being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6; notwithstanding, for witnessing himself to be the Son of God, he was put to death by the Jews. John xix. 7.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 4.—"*I restored that which I took not away.*" The devil took away by arrogating in heaven what was not his, when he boasted that he was like the Most High, and for this he pays a righteous penalty. . . . Adam also took away what was not his own, when, by the enticement of the devil, "You will be as gods," he sought

after a likeness to God, by yielding to the deception of the woman. But the Lord Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal with God. . . . And yet his enemies said, "Let him be crucified, for he hath made himself the Son of God."—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 4.—"*I restored that which I took not away.*" What a blessed verse is here! Amidst all the opposition and contradiction of sinners against himself, Jesus manifested that character, by which Jehovah had pointed him out to the church by the prophet; "Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in." Isaiah lviii. 12. But what was it Christ restored? Nay, all that was lost. Adam by sin had done all that he could to take away God's glory, and with it his own glory and happiness. He had robbed God of his glory, God's law of its due, himself of God's image, and of God's favour. Sin had brought in death, spiritual and eternal; and he and all his descendants stood tremblingly exposed to everlasting misery. All these and more Jesus restored. As man's Surety and man's Representative, and called to it by the authority of Jehovah, the Lord Christ restored to God his glory, and man God's image of favour; and having destroyed sin, death, hell, and the grave, he restored to his redeemed a better paradise than our nature had lost! Hail! oh, thou blessed Restorer of all our long lost privileges.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou knowest.*" The knowledge of God is of a double use to pious men. The first is, as we observe in this place, to console the innocent: the second is, to make them circumspect, since all their thoughts, and words, and deeds are under the very eye of God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou knowest my offences,*" etc., that is to say, that I am not an offender. This verse is not a confession of sin, but a protestation of innocence. The writer maintains that he is a sufferer, not for his sins, but for his piety. See verses 7, etc.—*George R. Noyes, in "A New Translation of the Book of Psalms, with Notes,"* etc. 1846.

Verse 5.—"*My sins are not hid from thee.*" The sins of those for whom Christ died, by being imputed to him, no doubt became his in the eye of the law, in such a sense as to make him answerable for them. But the Scriptures, be it observed, while they speak of him as "wounded for *our* transgressions, and bruised for *our* iniquities," and as "bearing *our* sins in his own body on the tree," as if afraid to use any forms of expression which would even seem to derogate from his immaculate purity, never speak of the sins of those for whom he died as his *own* sins.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 5.—"*My sins are not hid.*" Not as the first Adam, do I, the second Adam, hide myself or my *sins*, especially in thy sight, O God; but lifted up upon the cross I suffered without the gate for *sins* in such a way, that I desire that *my sins* should be conspicuous to every creature in heaven, earth, and hell—*my sins* which, as they refer to my person, are marked with no taint, and, as they pertain to my people believing in me, are blotted out by my blood.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 6.—"*Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake,*" etc. This says, that unless the carriage and deportment of the godly man redounds to the comfort of all the rest of the godly, it in some way tends to the discredit of the godly. Since this is the case, when they slip aside, or carry not aright; since they are all in hazard of doing so, it should be matter of affecting and afflicting exercise, lest they do so. Fellow professors are ashamed of the person that walketh not aright; they are ashamed that ever they should have been in company or fellowship with him; they are ashamed that ever such a person should have owned such a cause, and that ever such a thing should have befallen a professor of such a cause; and, besides, they are weakened by him in their hopes of persevering for themselves. Again, they are in hazard of being a discredit to all the godly, because, say they, it seems the Lord has granted no peremptory promise, as to the manner of their final perseverance; and corruption enough remains in them still, to overturn all their stock of grace, if they get not present renewed influences.—*William Guthrie,* 1620—1655.

Verse 6.—"*Ashamed for my sake.*" I pray that they may *not be confounded* by external enemies with their boundless insults and reproaches, because they seem to be the worshippers of a God crucified and dead, and are themselves like dead men, and lie rotting before his sepulchre, as if their good name were gone. Rather

let my enemies who do not wish me to live be terror-stricken at my angelic countenance, and fall like the dead.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 6.—"*For my sake.*" ּ: more exactly, "*in me.*" In these words the voice of the Sponsor of his people's peace is clearly audible. The prayer of the Sufferer has its answer in the declarative testimony which now forms the basis of the gospel: "He that believeth on him shall not be confounded." 1 Peter ii. 6. —*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 6.—Because I, for their sakes, do at thy command bear that shame which they should else have done, Lord, take it off from them, because thou hast laid it upon me; so it expressly follows, verse 7: "Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 7.—"*Shame hath covered my face.*" It is a great question whether shame or death be the greater evil. There have been those who have rather chosen death, and have wiped off a dishonour with their blood. So Saul slew himself rather than he would fall into the hands of the Philistines, who would have insulted over him, and mocked him as they did Samson. So that king (Jer. xxxviii. 19) rather chose to lose his country, life, and all, than to be given to the Jews, his subjects, to be mocked of them. . . . Confusion of face is one of the greatest miseries that hell itself is set forth unto us by. There is nothing that a noble nature more abhors than shame, for honour is a spark of God's image; and the more of God's image there is in any one, the more is shame abhorred by him, which is the debasing of it, and so the greater and more noble any one's spirit, the more he avoids it. To a base, low spirit, indeed, shame is nothing; but to a great spirit (as to David), than to have his "glory turned into shame," as Psalm iv. 2, is nothing more grievous. And the greater glory any loseth, the greater is his shame. What must it be then to Christ, who because he was to satisfy God in point of honour debased by man's sin, therefore of all punishments besides, he suffered most of shame; it being also (as was said) one of the greatest punishments in hell. And Christ, as he assumed other infirmities of our nature, that made him possible in other things—as to be sensible of hunger, want of sleep, bodily torments, of unkindnesses, contempt, so likewise of disgrace and shame. He took that infirmity as well as fear; and though he had a strength to bear and despise it (as the author to the Hebrews speaks), yet none was ever more sensible of it. As the delicacy of the temper of his body made him more sensible of pains than ever any man was, so the greatness of his spirit made him more apprehensive of the evil of shame than ever any was. So likewise the infinite love and candour of his spirit towards mankind made him take in with answerable grief the unkindnesses and injuries which they heaped upon him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—"*A stranger unto my brethren.*" Unless this aversion of his brethren had pained him, he would not have complained of it. It would not have pained him unless he had felt a special affection for them.—*Musculus.*

Verse 8.—In the east where polygamy prevails, the husband is a stern and unfeeling despot; his harem a group of trembling slaves; and the children, while they regard their common father with indifference or terror, cling to their own mother with the fondest affection, as the only part, as the only parent, in whom they feel an interest. Hence it greatly aggravated the affliction of David that he had become "*an alien unto his mother's children:*" the enmity of the other children of his father, the children of his father's other wives, gave him less concern.—*W. Greenfield, in Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 9.—"*For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*" He who recollects that the Scriptures speak of a "peace which passeth understanding," and a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," will be more disposed to lament the low state of his own feeling, than to suspect the propriety of sentiments the most rational and scriptural, merely because they rise to a pitch that he has never reached. The Sacred Oracles afford no countenance to the supposition that devotional feelings are to be condemned as visionary and enthusiastic merely on account of their intenseness and elevation; provided they be of the right kind, and spring from legitimate sources, they never teach us to suspect they can be carried too far. David danced before the Lord with all his might, and when he was reproached for degrading himself in the eyes of his people by indulging in such transports, he replied, "If this be vile, I will yet make myself more vile." That the objects which interest

the heart in religion are infinitely more durable and important than all others will not be disputed; and why should it be deemed irrational to be affected by them in a degree somewhat suitable to their value?—*Robert Hall.* 1764—1831.

Verse 9.—"*The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*" Consider the examples of the saints of old, who have taken heaven by force. David broke his sleep for meditation. Psalm cxix. 148. His violence for heaven was boiled up to zeal, Psalm cxix. 139: "My zeal hath consumed me." And Paul did "*reach forth* (ἐπεκτεινόμενος) unto those things which were before. The Greek word signifies to stretch out the neck, a metaphor taken from racers that strain every limb, and reach forward to lay hold upon the prize. We read of Anna, a prophetess (Luke ii. 37); "she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." How industrious was Calvin in the Lord's vineyard. When his friends persuaded him for his health's sake to remit a little of his labour, saith he, "Would you have the Lord find me idle when he comes?" Luther spent three hours a day in prayer. It is said of holy Bradford, preaching, reading, and prayer, was his whole life. I rejoice, said bishop Jewel, that my body is exhausted in the labours of my holy calling. How violent were the blessed martyrs! They wore their fetters as ornaments, they snatched up torments as crowns, and embraced the flames as cheerfully as Elijah did the fiery chariot that came to fetch him to heaven. Let racks, fires, pullies, and all manner of torments come, so I may win Christ, said Ignatius. These pious souls "resisted unto blood." How should this provoke our zeal! Write after these fair copies.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 9.—"*The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*" Zeal in and for true religion is a praiseworthy thing. Was *David* zealous? it may then become a royal spirit. Was *Christ* our Savour zealous? it may become an heroical spirit. Albeit, zeal is out of grace with most men who sit still, and love to be at quiet rest; yet it is no disgrace to any generous spirit that is regenerate, to have the zeal of God's house to eat him up. It is a slander to call it folly. Was not zealous David wiser than his teachers, than his enemies, than the aged? Lukewarm men call it fury; God's Spirit names it a "live coal," that hath a most vehement flame. Why bears zeal the imputation of indiscretion, rashness, puritanism, or headiness? Was it David's rashness? It was fervency in religion. Was Christ indiscreet? The wisdom of his Father. Festus called Paul mad, with a loud voice (Acts xxvi. 24), when he spake but words of truth and soberness (verse 25). Christ's kinsmen thought that he was beside himself. Mark iii. 21. Was the judgment of such stolid men any disparagement to our Saviour's zeal? Nay, it is a commendation. To root out evil from, and to establish good in, the house of God is a good thing. Gal. iv. 18. *Thomas Wilson, in "A Sermon preached before sundry of the Honourable House of Commons," entitled, "David's Zeale for Zion."* 1641.

Verse 9.—"*Zeal,*" "*reproaches.*" Grace never rises to so great a height as it does in times of persecution. Suffering times are a Christian's harvest times. Let me instance in that grace of zeal: I remember Moulin speaking of the French Protestants, saith, "When Papists hurt us for reading the Scriptures, we burn with zeal to be reading of them; but now persecution is over, our Bibles are like old almanacks," etc. All the reproaches, frowns, threatenings, oppositions, and persecutions that a Christian meets with in a way of holiness, do but raise his zeal and courage to a greater height. Michal's scoffing at David did but inflame and raise his zeal: "If this be to be vile, I will be more vile," 2 Sam. vi. 20—22. Look, as fire in the winter burns the hotter, by an αντιπεριστασις, because of the coldness of the air; so in the winter of affliction and persecution, that divine fire, the zeal of a Christian, burns so much the hotter, and flames forth so much the more vehemently and strongly. In times of greatest affliction and persecution for holiness' sake, a Christian hath, first, a good captain to lead and encourage him; secondly, a righteous cause to prompt and embolden him; thirdly, a gracious God to relieve and succour him; fourthly, a glorious heaven to receive and reward him; and, certainly, these things cannot but mightily raise him and inflame him under the greatest opposition and persecution. These things will keep him from fearing, fawning, fainting, sinking, or flying in a stormy day; yea, these things will make his face like the face of an adamant, as God promised to make Ezekiel's. Ezekiel iii. 7—9, and Job xli. 24. Now an adamant is the hardest of stones, it is harder than a flint, yea, it is harder than the nether-millstone. The naturalists [Pliny] observe, that the hardness of this stone is unspeakable: the fire cannot burn it, nor so much as heat it through, nor the hammer cannot break it, nor the water

cannot dissolve it, and, therefore, the Greeks call it an adamant from its untameableness; and in all storms the adamant shrinks not, it shrinks not, it fears not, it changeth not its hue; let the times be what they will, the adamant is still the same. In times of persecution, a good cause, a good God, and a good conscience will make a Christian like an adamant, it will make him invincible and unchangeable. When one desired to know what kind of man Basil was, there was presented to him in a dream, saith the history, a pillar of fire with this motto, *Talis est Basilius*, Basil is such a one, he is all on a-light fire for God. Persecutions will but set a Christian all on a-light fire for God.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 9.—"*Eaten me up.*" The verb means, not only "to eat up, to devour," but "to corrode or consume," by separating the parts from each other, as fire. And the radical import of the Hebrew word for "*zeal*" seems to be "to eat into, corrode, as fire." The word, says Parkhurst, is in the Hebrew Bible generally applied to the fervent or ardent affections of the human frame; the effects of which are well known to be ever like those of fire, corroding and consuming. And, accordingly, the poets, both ancient and modern, abound with descriptions of these ardent and consuming affections, taken from fire and its effects.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 9.—"*Eaten me up.*" He who is zealous in his religion, or ardent in his attachments, is said to be eaten up. "Old Muttoo has determined to leave his home for ever; he is to walk barefoot to the Ganges for the salvation of his soul: his zeal has eaten him up."—*J. Roberts' Oriental Illustrations.*

Verse 9.—"*The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.*" We should, if it were possible, labour to wipe off all the reproach of Christ, and take it upon ourselves that we might rather be spit upon and contemned than Christ. It was a brave speech of Ambrose, "he wished it would please God to turn all the adversaries from the church upon himself, and let them satisfy their thirst with his blood:" this is a true Christian heart. And, therefore, if it be for our sakes, and we have anything in the business by which Christ is reproached, we should be willing rather to sacrifice ourselves, than that Christ should be reproached; and as Jonah, when he knew that the tempest rose for his sake, says he, "Cast me into the sea;" and so Nazianzen, when contention rose about him, says he, "Cast me into the sea, let me lose my place, rather than the name of Christ should suffer for me."—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 10.—"*When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.*" Behold here, virtue is accounted vice; truth, blasphemy; wisdom, folly. Behold, the peace-maker of the world is judged a seditious person; the fulfiller of the law, a breaker of the law; our Saviour, a sinner; our God, a devil. O poor troubled heart! wherefore dost thou weakly wail for any injury or abuse that is offered to thee? God handleth thee no otherwise in this world than he handled his only Son, who hath pledged thee in this bitter potion; not only taking essay thereof, but drinking to thee a full draught. It is not only a comfort, but a glory, to be a partner and fellow-sufferer with Christ, who delighteth also to see in us some representation of himself. Dogs bark not at those whom they know, and with whom they are familiar; but against strangers they usually bark; not always for any hurt which they feel or fear, but commonly by nature or depraved custom. How then canst thou be a stranger to the world, if it doth not molest thee; if it detracteth not from thee?—*Sir John Hayward* (1560—1627), *in* "*The Sanctuary of a Troubled Soule.*"

Verse 10.—There is nothing so well meant, but it may be ill interpreted.—*Simon Patrick.*

Verses 10, 11.—That Christ was derided and scoffed at is plain, from Mark v.; for, when he said, "The girl is not dead, but sleepeth, they laughed him to scorn;" and when he spoke of the necessity of giving alms, "Now, the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him." And, in his passion, he was derided by the soldiers, by Herod, by the high priests, and many others.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 11.—"*I made sackcloth also my garment,*" etc. Though we nowhere read that Jesus put on *sackcloth* on any occasion, yet it is not improbable that he did; besides, the phrase may only intend that he mourned and sorrowed at certain times, as persons do when they put on sackcloth; moreover, as the common garb of his forerunner was raiment of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle; so it is very likely

his own was very mean, suitable to his condition, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor. *"And I became a proverb to them;"* a by-word; so that, when they saw any person in sackcloth or in vile raiment, behold, such an one looks like Jesus of Nazareth.—*John Gill.*

Verse 11.—*"I became a proverb."* Two things are usually implied when a man is said to be a by-word. First, that he is in a very low condition: some men are so high that the tongues of the common people dare not climb over them, but where the hedge is low every man goes over. Secondly, that he is in a despised condition: to be a by-word carries a reflexion of disgrace. He that is much spoken of, in this sense, is ill spoken of; and he is quite lost in the opinion of men, who is thus found in their discourse. . . . . Hence, observe, great sufferers in many things of this world, are the common subject of discourses, and often the subject of disgrace. Such evils as few men have felt or seen, all men will be speaking of. Great sorrows, especially if they be the sorrows of great men, are turned into songs, and poetry plays its part with the saddest disasters. . . . . Holy David met with this measure from men in the day of his sorrows: *"When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb* (or a by-word) *to them."* In the next verse he tells us in detail who did this: *"They that sit in the gate* (that is, great ones) *speak against me, and I was the song of the drunkard,"* that is, of the common sort.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—*"They that sit in the gate:" i.e.*, as it is generally interpreted, the judges or chief persons of the state; for the gates of cities were the places of judicature. But Hilary interprets this of those who sat *to beg* at the gates of the city; which seems a more probable interpretation, better to agree with the design of the Psalmist, and to suit with the *"drunkards,"* mentioned in the next clause.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 12.—*"They that sit in the gate."* The magistrates at the gate. Literally, "assessors at the gate;" "judges sitting to determine causes."—*John Mason Good.*

Verse 12.—*"I was the song of the drunkards."* Holy walking is the *drunkards' song*, as David was; and so preciseness and strictness of walking is ordinarily: the world cannot bear the burning and shining conversations of some of the saints; they are so cuttingly reproved by them, that with those heathens, they curse the sun, that by its shining doth scorch them. It is no new thing; the seed of the serpent did alway persecute the seed of the woman; and he that was born after the flesh, persecuteth him that was born after the spirit; even so it is now, saith the apostle; and so it is now, may we say. Ishmael mocked Isaac, and is it not so still? Or, if it be not so bold a sin as formerly, it is because the times, not sinners' hearts, are changed; they malign them still, watch for their halting: "report, say they, and we will report it."—*John Murcot.*

Verse 12.—*"I was the song of the drunkards."* When magistrates discountenance true religion, then it becometh a matter of derision to rascals, and to every base villain without controlment, and a table-talk to every tipler. The shame of the cross is more grievous than the rest of the trouble of it: this is the fourth time that the shame of the cross is presented unto God, in these four last verses: *"I was the song of the drunkards;"* after complaining of his being reproached and being *made a proverb.—David Dickson.*

Verse 12.—There is a tavern, or profane mirth, in drinking, and roaring, and revelling, and instead of another minstrel, David must be *the song of the drunkards;* nor can the Philistines be merry unless Samson be made the fool in the play (Judges xvi. 25): "Unless they scoff and jeer the ways and servants of God" (as Mr. Greenham saith), "the fools cannot tell how to be merry;" and then the Devil is merry with them for company. But what? Not merry without abusing their host? This some must dearly pay for, when a reckoning is called for; or, they rather called to make it. Then they will be off from their merry pins, and will find that this was very far from being the "Comfort of the Holy Ghost," wherein and whereby that good Spirit and our Comforter was grieved, and holiness scoffed and laughed at.—*Anthony Tuckney* (1599—1670), *in "A Good Day Well Improved."*

Verse 13.—*"But as for me, my prayer,"* etc. The phrase is full of emphasis; *And I, my prayer to thee:* that is, such am I altogether, this is my main occupation; as it is in Psalm cix. 4: *And I, a prayer;* this was my employment, this ever my only refuge, this my present help and remedy.—*Venema.*

Verse 13.—"*An acceptable time.*" All times are not alike. We will not always find admittance at the same rate, with the same ease. As he will not always be chiding, so he will not always be so pleasing neither. We may knock, and knock again, and yet stand without a while; sometimes, so long, till our knees are ready to sink under us, our eyes ready to drop out, as well as drop with expectation, and our hearts ready to break in pieces, while none heareth, or none regardeth. We should have come before, or pitched our coming at a better time. . . . . The prophet David expressly speaks of "*an acceptable time*" to make our prayers in. And, "To-day if you will hear his voice," in the Psalmist, paraphrased by the apostle, "To-day, while it is called to-day," shows there is a set day, or days, of audience with God, wherein he sets himself, as it were, with all readiness to hear and help us—an *accepted time*. And will ye, next, know what it is that makes it so? There are but two things that do. Either God's being in a good or pleasing disposition towards us, or our being in a good and pleasing disposition towards him. Come we but to him in either of these, and we have nicked the time; we are sure to be accepted.—*Mark Frank*. 1613—1664.

Verse 13.—

Heavier the cross, the heartier prayer,
The bruised herbs most fragrant are.
If sky and wind were always fair,
The sailor would not watch the star;
And David's Psalms had ne'er been sung
If grief his heart had never wrung.

—*From the German.*

Verse 15.—Faith in God giveth hope to be helped, and is half a deliverance before the full deliverance come; for the Psalmist is now with his head above the water, and not so afraid as when he began the Psalm.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 15.—"*The pit.*" According to Dean Stanley, the word *Beer* here used is always rendered "well," except in this and three other cases. When such wells no longer yielded a full supply of water they were used as prisons, no care being taken to cleanse out the mire remaining at the bottom. The Dean also tells us in the Appendix to his "Sinai and Palestine," that "they have a broad margin of masonry round the mouth, and often a stone filling up the orifice." The rolling of this stone over the mouth of the well was the well's "shutting her mouth;" and the poor prisoner was, to all intents and purposes, buried alive.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 17.—"*Hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble.*" An upright servant, albeit he be troubled for God's cause, and do miss comfort from God; yet will he not change his Master, nor despair of his favour.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 17.—"*Hide not thy face.*" The proper sense of the word פנה gives the meaning to the phrase, *veil not thy face from thy servant.* In this there is a reference to a king, who, to prevent promiscuous approach to his chamber, spreads a veil before it, and admits to his presence only his minister of high confidence. So in Psalm xxxi. 21. The face of God is his majesty, and his gracious and favourable presence; the *servant* of God is his minister enjoying intimate access, and *to veil the face from him* is to prevent him coming into the presence of God; and, therefore, it belongs to the servant of God to be treated in a widely different manner.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 17.—"*Thy servant.*" Hide not, he says, from thy servant; as if he should say, such as I am, I am thy servant. It belongs to the Master to take care of his servant, if in peril for his sake. In this same verse he says he is in a strait. In verse 18 he declares that he is in jeopardy of his life.—*Musculus.*

Verse 19.—"*Thou hast known my reproach,*" etc. It is a great deal of comfort that God does take notice of our reproaches; this was the comfort of the Psalmist. If a man suffer reproach, and disgrace, and trouble for his friends, while he is abroad from them; O, says he, did my friends know what I suffer, and suffer for them, it would comfort me: if it be comfort to be known, much more when they shall be accounted their own. Christ is acquainted with all the sufferings of every member; and, therefore, do not say, I am a poor creature; who takes notice of my sufferings? Heaven takes notice of your sufferings; Christ takes notice of them better than yourselves.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 20.—"*Reproach hath broken my heart.*" Mental emotions and passions

are well known by all to affect the actions of the heart, in the way of palpitation, fainting, etc. That these emotions and passions, when in overwhelming excess, occasionally, though rarely, produce laceration or rupture of the walls of the heart, is stated by most medical authorities who have written on the affections of this organ; and our poets even allude to this effect as an established fact.

"The grief that does not speak,
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break."

But, if ever human heart was riven and ruptured by the mere amount of mental agony that was endured, it would surely, we might even argue, *a priori*, be that of our Redeemer, when, during those dark and dreadful hours on the cross, he, "being made a curse for us," "bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and suffered for sin the malediction of God and man, "full of anguish," and now "exceeding sorrowful even unto death." There are theological as well as medical arguments in favour of the opinion that Christ, in reality, died from a ruptured or broken heart. If the various wondrous prophecies and minute predictions in Psalms xxii. and lxix., regarding the circumstances connected with Christ's death, be justly held as literally true, such as, "They pierced my hands and my feet," "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," etc., why should we regard as merely metaphorical, and not as literally true, also, the declarations in the same Psalms, "*Reproach hath broken my heart*," "*My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.*"—*Sir James Young Simpson* (1811—1870) *in W. Stroud's "Treatise on the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ."*

Verse 20.—"*I looked for some to take pity, but there was none.*" Even under ordinary circumstances we yearn for sympathy. Without it, the heart will contract and droop, and shut like a flower in an unkindly atmosphere, but it will open again amidst the sounds of frankness and the scenes of love. When we are in trouble, this want is in proportion still more pressing; and, for the sorrowful heart to feel alone, is a grief greater than nature can sustain. A glance of sympathy seems to help it more than the gift of untold riches; and a loving look, even from a little child who is sorry for us, or a simple word from some homely friend, will sometimes brace the spirit to new exertions, and seem almost to waken life within the grasp of death.—*Charles Stanford, in "Central Truths."* 1859.

Verse 21.—"*They gave me also gall*," etc. Such are the comforts often administered, by the world, to an afflicted and deserted soul.—*George Horne.*

Verse 21.—"*Gall and vinegar*" are here put together to denote the most unpalatable forms of food and drink. The passion of our Lord was providentially so ordered as to furnish a remarkable coincidence with this verse. The Romans were accustomed to give sour wine, with an infusion of myrrh, to convicts on the cross, for the purpose of deadening the pain. This practice was adhered to in our Saviour's case (Mark xv. 23). Though in itself not cruel, but the contrary, it formed part of the great process of murderous persecution. On the part of the Roman soldiery it may have been an act of kindness; but considered as an act of the unbelieving Jews, it was giving *gall and vinegar* to one already overwhelmed with anguish. And so Matthew, in accordance with his general method, represents it as a verification of this passage (Matt. xxvii. 34). He does not contradict Mark's account, before referred to, but merely intimates that the wine and myrrh thus offered were to be regarded as identical with the gall and vinegar of this prediction. And, in order to prevent the coincidence from being overlooked, our Lord, before he died, complained of thirst, and vinegar was administered.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 21.—"*Gall for my meat.*" Since the life of sin first began in tasting, contrary to the obedience due to God, the Redeemer of sinners willed to be obedient even unto death, upon the cross, and to end his life, in fulfilment of the prophecy, with the bitter taste of gall and vinegar, that, in this manner, we, seeing the beginning of our perdition and the end of our redemption, might feel ourselves to be most sufficiently redeemed and most perfectly cured.—*Thomé de Jesu* (1582), *in "The Sufferings of Jesus."*

Verse 21.—"*Vinegar.*" Commentators have frequently remarked the refreshing quality of the Eastern vinegar. I shall not repeat their observations, but rather would ask, why the Psalmist prophetically complains of the giving him *vinegar* to drink, in that *deadly thirst*, which, in another Psalm, he describes by the tongue's cleaving to the jaws, if it be so refreshing? Its refreshing quality cannot be

doubted; but may it not be replied, that, besides the gall which he mentions, and which ought not to be forgotten, vinegar itself, refreshing as it is, was only made use of by the meanest people? When a *royal* personage has vinegar given him in his thirst, the *refreshment of a slave*, of a *wretched prisoner*, instead of that of a *prince*, he is greatly dishonoured, and may well complain of it as a bitter insult, or represent such insults by this image.

Sweet wines, as appears from the ancient *Eastern* translators of the Septuagint, were chiefly esteemed formerly, for that which our version renders "*royal wine* in abundance, according to the state of the King," (Esth. i. 7.) they translate, "much and *sweet* wine, such as the *King himself* drank." Perhaps, it was with a view to this, that the soldiers offered our Lord *vinegar* (wine that was become very sour), in opposition to that *sweet* wine princes were wont to drink: for Luke tells us that they did this in mockery (ch. xxiii. 36.) "And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar." Medicated wine, to deaden their sense of pain, was wont, we are told, to be given to Jewish criminals, when about to be put to death; but, they gave our Lord vinegar, and that in mockery—in mockery (as they did other things) of his *claim to royalty*. But the force of this does not appear, if we do not recollect the quality of the wines drank anciently by princes, which, it seems, were of the *sweet* kind.—*Thomas Harmer.*

Verse 22.—The imprecations in this verse and those following it are revolting only when considered as the expression of malignant selfishness. If uttered by God, they shock no reader's sensibilities, nor should they, when considered as the language of an ideal person, representing the whole class of righteous sufferers, and particularly him, who, though he prayed for his murderers while dying (Luke xxiii. 34), had before applied the words of this very passage to the unbelieving Jews (Matt. xxiii. 38), as Paul did afterwards (Rom. xi. 9, 10). The general doctrine of providential retribution, far from being confined to the Old Testament, is distinctly taught in many of our Saviour's parables. See Matt. xxi. 41; xxii. 7; xxiv. 51.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 22.—"*Let their table become a snare.*" *Their table* figuratively sets forth their prosperity, the abundance of all things. It represents peace and security, as in Psalm xxxiii. 5; Job xxvi. 16. It likewise describes mutual friendship, a blending of minds and plans; the emblem and sign whereof *convivia* are accustomed to be. Psalm xli. 10; Dan. xi. 27.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 22.—"*Let their table,*" etc. One said well, *Licitis perimus omnes*, etc., "Ruin usually ariseth from the use of lawful things;" there being most danger where it is least suspected. In all our comforts, there is a forbidden fruit, which seemeth fair and tasteth sweet, but which must not be touched.—*Henry Wilkinson* (1675), *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 22.—"*Let their table become a snare.*"—Many would have excused themselves from following Christ, in the parable of the feast: some had bought land, some had married wives, and others had bought yokes of oxen, and could not come (Luke xiv. 18—20), that is, an immoderate love of the world hindered them: their lawful enjoyments, from servants, become their idols; they worshipped them more than God, and would not quit them to come to God. But this is recorded to their reproach; and we may herein see the power of self upon the worldly man, and the danger that comes to him by the abuse of lawful things. What, thy wife dearer to thee than thy Saviour! and thy land and oxen preferred to thy soul's salvation. O beware, that thy comforts prove not snares first, and then curses: to over-rate them, is to provoke him that gave them to take them away again. Come, and follow him that giveth life eternal to the soul.—*William Penn* (1644—1718), *in "No Cross, No Crown."*

Verse 22.—"*Let their table become a snare.*" That is, for a recompense for their inhumanity and cruelty towards me. Michaelis shows how exactly these comminations were fulfilled in the history of the final siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. Many thousands of the Jews had assembled in the city to eat the paschal lamb, when Titus unexpectedly made an assault upon them. In this siege, the greater part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem miserably perished.—*William Walford.*

Verses 22, 23.—Observe the Divine retribution of the Jews. They gave gall and vinegar as food and drink to Christ; and their own spiritual food and drink has become a snare to them. His eyes were blindfolded; their eyes were darkened. His loins were scourged; their loins were made to shake.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verses 23—28.—He denounceth ten plagues, or effects of God's wrath, to come upon them for their wickedness.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 24.—"*Pour out.*" Observe what is denoted by *pouring out.* First, the facility with which God is able, without any labour, to destroy his enemies, as easy is it as to incline a vial full of liquid and pour it out. Secondly, the pouring out denotes the abundance of his anger. Thirdly, that his wrath is sudden, overwhelming, and inevitable. When it drops, one must take care; when it is poured forth, it crushes the thoughtless.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 25.—"*Let their habitation;*"—that is, not only the place where they dwell, but even their very offices and functions, "*be void,*" viz., by thy just taking them away from amongst men; "*and let none,*" viz., of their seed and posterity, "*dwell* in their tents," viz., that they have dwelt in: he meaneth, that he would have them die without heir or issue.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 25.—"*Let none dwell in their tents.*" After the temple itself was taken, or rather turned to ashes, the miserable remnant of the Jewish people begged of Titus that he would permit them to pass through the breaches of the wall with their wives and children, and go into the wilderness—a request which he indignantly refused. (*Josephus.*) So that, literally, "there was no inhabitant for their tents."—*John Mason Good.*

Verse 26.—When David's misery deserved compassion, Shimei's foul mouth loaded him with malediction. Hereof he complained: "*They persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.*" The picking out of such an opportunity doubled his malicious rancour. Such words would have galled at another time, which now are ready to kill. Let an arrow fly against the wind, it will hardly stick upright; with the wind, it pierceth deep. While thine enemy stands, he may ward thy blows; but once fallen on his back, he is at thy mercy: and how base is that spirit which will prey on prostrate fortunes! Little children have so much valour and justice, as to call him a coward that strikes his adversary when he is down. To insult upon those whom God hath humbled, and to draw blood of that back which is yet blue from the Maker's stripes, is even the murder of a virulent tongue. Nor will it be any rare thing at the day of judgment for cursers to be indicted of murder. They would kill if they durst; they do kill as far as they can. I would be loth to trust his hand, that bans one with his lips. Balaam would soon have been the death of all Israel, if either tongue or sword could have effected his will.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 26.—"*They talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.*" The very talking and venting of ill speeches, to the prejudice of Christ's cause and truth, and true holiness in his saints, especially when they are under suffering and afflictions, whatsoever, is a high provocation of God's wrath.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 26.—It were to be wished, that the sorrows of the penitent, when wounded with a sense of sin, never subjected him to the scorn and contempt of those who would be thought Christians.—*George Horne.*

Verse 27.—"*Add iniquity unto their iniquity.*" This is that retaliation of sin which God returns into their bosoms that foster it; that since "they loved cursing, it shall be unto them." Psalm cix. 17. So David here (though it was not in him *precantis votum,* but *prophetantis vaticinium,* he did not desire it to be so, but he knew it would be so), "*Add iniquity unto their iniquity.*" Neither doth God this by infusion of wickedness, but by subtraction of his Spirit. He is *causa deficiens, non efficiens:* as the recalling of the sun from us causeth darkness; so the privation of grace creates the prevalence of ungodliness. It is in him not *peccatum, sed judicium,*—not sin, but judgment. When he leaves us to ourselves, it is no wonder if we fall into horrid and prodigious sins. *Peccatum est malum in se: effectum prioris mali, et causa subsequentis: est et supplicium, et causa supplicii:* Sin is evil in itself, the effect of former evil, the cause of future: it is both punishment itself, and the cause of punishment. In all the storehouse of God's plagues there is not a greater vengeance. With other punishments the body smarteth; the soul groaneth under this. Hence, sins multiply without limits, that the plagues may be without end. Every affliction is sore that offends us; but that is direful which offends God. Such do at once act and suffer: it is both an active and a passive sin. The punish-

ment they suffer is (in them) sin ; the sin they do is (from God) a punishment.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 27.—"*Add iniquity unto their iniquity.*" Or, as the original signifies, *perverseness*, treat their *perverseness* with *perverseness :* act, in thy judgments, as *crookedly* towards them as they dealt *crookedly* towards thee. They shall get, in the way of punishment, what they have dealt out in the way of oppression.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 27.—"*Add iniquity unto their iniquity.*" Sin, carried far enough, becomes its own punishment. Let but a voracious glutton be bound to sit at a well-furnished table but two hours after he had filled his stomach, he would account it an intolerable penance. Let but the drunkard be forced to drink on with those that can drink him down, how is he a burden to himself, and a scorn to his fellow drunkards ! Let but a lazy sluggard be confined three days to his bed, and how weary will he be of his bed of down ! How is the idle person more weary of his idleness than another is of work !—*Samuel Annesley* (1620—1696), *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 28.—"*Let them be blotted out of the book of the living.*" All the Israelites who came up out of Egypt were put down in a muster-roll of the living, called " the writing of the house of Israel " (Ezek. xiii. 9), and " the book of life." Those who had died were excluded when the names were written out afresh each year. They were, thereby, consigned to oblivion (Prov. x. 7). Hence, *the book of life* was used as an image for God's *book of predestination to eternal life* (Psalm cxxxix. 16 ; Exod. xxxii. 32 ; Psalm lxxxvii. 6 ; Dan. xii. 1 ; Phil. iv. 3 ; Rev. xvii. 8 ; xiii. 8 ; xxi. 27 ; Luke x. 20). The book of life, *in the human point of view*, has names written in it who have a name to live, but are dead, being in it only by external call, or in their own estimation, and in that of others. But, *in the divine point of view*, it contains only those who are elected finally to life. The former may be blotted out, as was Judas (Rev. iii. 5 ; Matt. xiii. 12 ; xxv. 29 ; vii. 23 ; Exod. xxxii. 33) ; but the latter never (Rev. xx. 12, 15 ; John x. 28, 29 ; Acts xiii. 48).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 28.—"*Let them be wiped out,*" etc. This verse alludes to the ancient Jewish practice of recording the names of the inhabitants of every division, or tribe, of the people, in a volume somewhat similar to the *Dom-boc* of the Saxons. See Luke ii.1. The names of those who died were blotted or *wiped* out, and appeared no longer on the list of the living. Such a book is attributed to God in Psalm cxxxix. 16 . and the *blotting out of Moses from God's book*, in Exod. xxxii. 32, is a figurative expression, for depriving him of life.—*Richard Warner.*

Verse 28.—"*Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,*" etc. We come to the question, Whether to be written in heaven be an infallible assurance of salvation, or, whether any there registered may come to be blotted out ? The truth is, that none written in heaven can ever be lost ; yet they object against it this verse. Hence, they infer, that some names once there recorded are afterwards put out ; but this opinion casteth a double aspersion on God himself. Either it makes him ignorant of future things, as if he foresaw not the end of elect and reprobate, and so were deceived in decreeing some to be saved that shall not be saved ; or, that his decree is mutable, in excluding those upon their sins whom he hath formerly chosen. From both these weaknesses St. Paul vindicates him (2 Tim. ii. 19) : "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." First, " The Lord knows them that are his ; " this were not true if God's prescience could be deluded. Then, his " foundation stands sure ; " but that were no sure foundation, if those he hath decreed to be his should afterwards fall out not to be his. The very conclusion of truth is this, *impossibilis est deletio ;* they which are " written in heaven " can never come into hell. To clear this from the opposed doubt, among many, I will cull out three proper distinctions :—

1. One may be said to be written in heaven *simpliciter*, and *secundum quid.* He that is simply written there, *in quantum prædestinatus ad vitam*, because elected to life, can never be blotted out. He that is written after a sort may, for he is written *non secundum Dei præscientiam, sed secundum præsentem justitiam*—not according to God's former decree, but according to his present righteousness. So they are said to be blotted out, not in respect of God's knowledge, for he knows they never were written there ; but according to their present condition, apostatising from grace to sin.*

2. Some are blotted out *non secundum rei veritatem, sed hominum opinionem*—

* Lyra.

not according to the truth of the thing, but according to men's opinion. It is usual in the Scriptures to say a thing is done *quando innotescat fieri*, when it is declared to be done. Hypocrites have a simulation of outward sanctity, so that men in charity judge them to be written in heaven. But when those glistening stars appear to be only *ignes fatui*, foolish meteors, and fall from the firmament of the church, then we say they are blotted out. The written *ex existentia*, by a perfect being, are never lost; but *ex apparentia*, by a dissembled appearance, may. Some God so writes, *in se ut simpliciter habituri vitam*—that they have life simply in themselves, though not of themselves. Others he so writes, *ut habeant non in se, sed in sua causa;* from which falling they are said to be obliterated.*

3. Augustine says, we must not so take it, that God first writes and then dasheth out. For if a Pilate could say, *Quod scripsi, scripsi*—"What I have written, I have written," and it shall stand; shall God say, *Quod scripsi, expungam*—What I have written, I will wipe out, and it shall not stand? They are written, then, *secundum spem ipsorum, qui ibi se scriptos putabant*—according to their own hope that presumed their names there; and are blotted out *quando ipsis constet illos non ibi fuisse*—when it is manifest to themselves that their names never had any such honour of inscription. This even that Psalm strengthens whence they fetch their opposition: "*Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.*" So that to be blotted out of that book, it is, indeed, never to be written there. To be wiped out in the end, is but a declaration that such were not written in the beginning.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 32.—"*Your heart shall live that seek God.*" As such who are poor in spirit, and truly humbled, do live upon God's alms, and are daily at his doors for relief of their necessities, and for communion with his gracious goodness; so shall they thrive well in this trade.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 32.—"*Your heart shall live.*" The *heart*, or the *soul*, is said *to live, to be converted*, or to return, when it is refreshed and cured of its pains and griefs. In this way it could be said of Jacob, when the good tidings were brought, that his *spirit revived.* . . . . On the contrary, when Nabal heard the bad news, it is recorded that *his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.*—*Lorinus.*

Verse 33.—"*The Lord heareth the poor.*" The consolation is much greater when it is said, "The Lord heareth the poor," than if it were written, He hath heard poor David.—*Musculus.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Our trials like waters. I. They should be kept out of the heart. II. There are, however, leaks which admit them. III. Take note when the hold is filling. IV. Use the pumps, and cry for help.

Verses 2, 3.—The sinner aware of his position, unable to hope, overwhelmed with fear, finding no comfort in prayer, unvisited with divine consolation. Direct and console him.

Verse 3.—I. Here is faith in the midst of trouble: "My God." II. Hope in the midst of disappointment: "Mine eyes fail," etc. III. Prayer in the midst of discouragement: "I am weary," etc.; "My throat," etc.

Or, I. There is praying beyond prayer: "I am weary," etc. II. Hoping beyond hope: "Mine eyes," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—Jesus as the Restorer, the Christian imitating him in the same office; Christianity a power which will do this for the whole race in due season.

Verse 5.—*Our foolishness.* Wherein it appears generally, how it may display itself in individuals, what it occasions, and what are the divine provisions to meet it.

Verse 5.—I. God's knowledge of sin is an inducement to repent. 1. Because it is foolish to endeavour to hide any sin from him. 2. Because it is impossible

---

* Aquinas.

to confess all our sin to him. II. It is an encouragement to hope for pardon. 1. Because, in the full knowledge of sin, he has declared himself to be merciful and ready to forgive. 2. Because he has made provision for pardon, not according to our knowledge of sin, but his own.—*G. R.*

Verses 8, 9.—I. A grievous trial. II. An honourable reason for it: for Christ's sake. III. Consoling supports under it.

Verse 9.—I. The object of zeal: "thy house;" thy Zion; thy Church. II. The degree of zeal: "hath eaten me up." Our Lord was consumed by his own zeal. So Paul: "And I if I be offered up," etc. III. The manifestation of zeal: "The reproaches," etc.; of thy justice; of thy law; of thy moral government; of thy lovingkindness. "Who himself bare our sins," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 10—12.—A prophecy. I. Of the Saviour's tears: "When I wept." II. Of his fasting. III. Of reproach. IV. Of his humiliation: "I made sackcloth," etc. V. Of the perversion of his words: as, "I will destroy this temple," etc. VI. Of the opposition of the Pharisees and rulers: "They that sit in the gate," etc. VII. Of the contempt of the lowest of the people: "I was the song," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 11.—Proverbial sayings of a scoffing character.

Verse 13.—"*An acceptable time.*" While life lasts usually, and especially when we are repentant, feel our need, are importunate, give all glory to God, have faith in his promise, and expect a gracious reply.

Verse 13.—"*Multitude of thy mercy.*" Seen in many forbearances before conversion, countless pardons, innumerable gifts, many promises, frequent visits, and abundant deliverances. Of all these who can count the thousandth part?

Verse 13.—"*The truth of thy salvation.*" An instructive topic. Its reality, certainty, completeness, eternity, etc., all illustrate its *truth* under various aspects.

Verses 14—16.—I. The depth from which prayer may rise. II. The height to which it may ascend. Thus Jonah, when at the bottom of the sea, says, "My prayer came up," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 15 (*last clause*).—A tremendous evil, our desert of it, our hope against it, our fear of it, and the reasons which secure us against it.

Verse 17.—I. Prayer: "Hide not thy face." II. Person: "Thy servant." III. Plea: "For I am in trouble." IV. Pressure: "Hear me speedily."

Verse 19.—I. God knows what his people suffer; how much, how long, from whom, for what. II. His people should find consolation in this knowledge. 1. That trial is permitted by him. 2. That it is apportioned by him. 3. That it has its design from him. 4. That when the design is accomplished, it will be removed by him.—*G. R.*

Verse 20.—The Saviour's broken heart.

Broken hearts, such as are sentimental, caused by disappointed pride, penitence, persecution, sympathy, etc.

Verse 21.—The conduct of men to Jesus throughout his entire life, rendering to him evil for all his good, and where good would have seemed to be the inevitable return.

Verse 22.—*The table a snare.* Excess in feasting; looseness in conversation; want of principle in confederate councils; superstition in religion.

Verse 23.—The judicial curse which falls on some despisers of Christ; their understandings fail to perceive the truth; and they tremble, because they are unable to receive strengthening comforts.

Verse 29.—I. The humiliation that precedes exaltation. 1. Deep: "I am poor and sorrowful." 2. Confessed: "I am poor," etc. II. The exaltation that follows humiliation. 1. Divine: "Thy salvation, O Lord." "Though the Lord be high," etc. 2. Complete: God does nothing by halves. 3. Pre-eminent: "Set me up on high."—*G. R.*

Verses 30, 31.—I. The effect of deliverance upon the people of God. It fills them with praise and thanksgiving. II. The effect in relation to God. He is more pleased with it than with any other offerings: "Whoso offereth praise," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 32.—I. The joy of a good man's heart is in the experience of others. II. The life of his heart is in God.

Verse 33.—I. What the people of God are in their own esteem: "poor" and "prisoners." II. What they are in the divine esteem: not unnoticed; not unheard; not despised.

Verse 34.—"*The sea,*" etc. How God is, should be, and shall be praised by the sea.

Verse 35.—Salvation, edification, preservation, peace, full assurance.

Verses 35, 36.—Observe the sequence:—"Save," "build," "dwell and have," "inherit," "love and dwell."

Verse 36.—I. The sure evidence of grace: "love his name." II. The blessing given. III. The enduring character of it: "shall dwell."

Verse 36.—I. The inheritance: "Inherit it;" we reign with Christ on earth, then in heaven. II. The title. 1. Legal: "Seed of his servants"—Abraham. Jacob, David—David's Lord and Son. 2. Moral: "They that love his name." —*G. R.*

Verse 36.—I. The covenant inheritance. II. To whom it belongs. III. The certainty of their obtaining; and, IV. The perpetuity of their possessing it.

PSALM LXX.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David.—*So far the title corresponds with Psalm XL., of which this is a copy with variations. David appears to have written the full-length Psalm, and also to have made this excerpt from it, and altered it to suit the occasion. It is a fit pendant to Psalm LXIX., and a suitable preface to Psalm LXXI.* To bring to remembrance. *This is the poor man's memorial. David personally pleads with God that he may not be forgotten, but David's Lord may be heard here also. Even if the Lord seems to forget us, we must not forget him. This memorial Psalm acts as a connecting link between the two Psalms of supplicatory expostulation, and makes up with them a precious triad of song.*

EXPOSITION.

[The Reader is referred for full Exposition and Notes to Psalm XL., verses 13—17, in "*Treasury of David*," Vol. II., pp. 239—241.]

MAKE haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.
2 Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.

3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha.

4 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.

5 But I *am* poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou *art* my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.

1. This is the second Psalm which is a repetition of another, the former being Psalm liii., which was a rehearsal of Psalm xiv. The present differs from the Fortieth Psalm at the outset, for that begins with, "Be pleased," and this, in our version, more urgently with, "*Make haste;*" or, as in the Hebrew, with an abrupt and broken cry, "*O God, to deliver me; O Lord, to help me hasten.*" It is not forbidden us, in hours of dire distress, to ask for speed on God's part in his coming to rescue us. The only other difference between this and verse 13 of Psalm xl., is the putting of *Elohim* in the beginning of the verse for *Jehovah*, but why this is done, we know not; perhaps, the guesses of the critics are correct, but perhaps they are not. As we have the words of this Psalm twice in the letter, let them be doubly with us in spirit. It is most meet that we should day by day cry to God for deliverance and help; our frailty and our many dangers render this a perpetual necessity.

2. Here the words, "together," and, "to destroy it," which occur in Psalm xl., are omitted: a man in haste uses no more words than are actually necessary. His enemies desired to put his faith to shame, and he eagerly entreats that they may be disappointed, and themselves covered with confusion. It shall certainly be so; if not sooner, yet at that dread day when the wicked shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. "*Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt;*" turned back and driven back are merely the variations of the translators. When men labour to turn others back from the right road, it is God's retaliation to drive them back from the point they are aiming at.

3. "*Let them be turned back.*" This is a milder term than that used in Psalm xl., where he cries, "let them be desolate." Had growing years matured and mellowed the Psalmist's spirit? To be "turned back," however, may come to the same thing as to be "desolate;" disappointed malice is the nearest akin to desolation that can well be conceived. "*For a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha.*" They thought to shame the godly, but it was their shame, and shall be their shame for

ever. How fond men are of taunts, and if they are meaningless "Ahas," more like animal cries than human words, it matters nothing, so long as they are a vent for scorn and sting the victim. Rest assured, the enemies of Christ and his people shall have wages for their work; they shall be paid in their own coin; they loved scoffing, and they shall be filled with it—yea, they shall become a proverb and a by-word for ever.

4. Anger against enemies must not make us forget our friends, for it is better to preserve a single citizen of Zion, than to kill a thousand enemies. *"Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee."* All true worshippers, though as yet in the humble ranks of seekers, shall have cause for joy. Even though the seeking commence in darkness, it shall bring light with it. *"And let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified."* Those who have tasted divine grace, and are, therefore, wedded to it, are a somewhat more advanced race, and these shall not only feel joy, but shall with holy constancy and perseverance tell abroad their joy, and call upon men to glorify God. The doxology, "Let the Lord's name be magnified," is infinitely more manly and ennobling than the dog's bark of "Aha, aha."

5. *"But I am poor and needy."* Just the same plea as in the preceding Psalm, verse 29: it seems to be a favourite argument with tried saints; evidently our poverty is our wealth, even as our weakness is our strength. May we learn well this riddle. *"Make haste unto me, O God."* This is written instead of "yet the Lord thinketh upon me," in Psalm xl.: and there is a reason for the change, since the key note of the Psalm frequently dictates its close. Psalm xl. sings of God's thoughts, and, therefore, ends therewith; but the peculiar note of Psalm lxx. is "Make haste," and, therefore, so it concludes. *"Thou art my help and my deliverer."* My help in trouble, my deliverer out of it. *"O Lord, make no tarrying."* Here is the name of "Jehovah" instead of "my God." We are warranted in using all the various names of God, for each has its own beauty and majesty, and we must reverence each by its holy use as well as by abstaining from taking it in vain.

I have presumed to close this recapitulatory exposition with an original hymn, suggested by the watchword of this Psalm, "MAKE HASTE."

Make haste, O God, my soul to bless!
My help and my deliv'rer thou;
Make haste, for I'm in deep distress,
My case is urgent; help me *now*.

Make haste, O God! make haste to save!
For time is short, and death is nigh;
Make haste ere yet I'm in my grave,
And with the lost for ever lie.

Make haste, for I am poor and low;
And Satan mocks my prayers and tears;
O God, in mercy be not slow,
But snatch me from my horrid fears.

Make haste, O God, and hear my cries;
Then with the souls who seek thy face,
And those who thy salvation prize,
I'll magnify thy matchless grace.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Francke would apply the present Psalm to the state of the Christian church after the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, and would put the words in the mouths of the faithful of that time. On the same ground of transferring the language adapted to Christ in Psalm xl. to the faithful in this Psalm, we need not hesitate to take them on our lips, as the language of the church in every age. I cannot but reassert my conviction of the intentional arrangement of the Psalms in the order in which we now have them, made in all probability, partially

at least, at the time they were handed over to public use. It is surely a daring conjecture made by Walford, that the repetition of this Psalm arose from some mistake of the persons by whom the Psalms were collected and arranged, after the return from the captivity in Babylon.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 2.—"*Let them be confounded;*" viz., among themselves, and in their own understandings: "*and put to shame;*" viz., in the sight and presence of men before whom they think to attain great glory, in banding themselves against me.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 3.—"*Aha, aha.*" In describing his human foes, our Saviour represents them as saying to him, "*Aha, aha.*" These exclamations are ebullitions of exulting insolence. They can escape from the lips of those only who are at once haughty and cruel, and insensible to the delicacies and decorums of demeanour. Doubtless, they would be the favourite expressions of the rude rabble that accompanied the traitor in his ignoble campaign against Incarnate Love, and of the rude aristocratic mob that held over the Apostle of Heaven the mockery of an ecclesiastical trial, and of the larger, more excited, and more rancorous multitude that insultingly accompanied him to the cross, and mocked him, and wagged their heads at him, and railed upon him as he meekly, but majestically, hung on the accursed tree. The prescient Saviour would, no doubt, catch in his ears the distant mutter of all the violent and ruthless exclamations with which his foes were about to rend the air; and, amid these heartless and sneering ejaculations, he could not but feel the keen and poisoning edge of the malevolent and hilarious cry, "*Aha, aha.*" O miracle of mercy! He who deserved the hallelujahs of an intelligent universe, and the special hosannahs of all the children of men, had first to anticipate, and then to endure from the mouths of the very rebels whom he came to bless and to save, the malicious tauntings of "*Aha, aha.*"—*James Frame.*

Verse 4.—"*Such as love thy salvation.*" They love it for its own sake; they love it for the sake of him who procured it by his obedience unto death; they love it for the sake of that Holy Spirit who moved them to seek it and accept it; and they love it for the sake of their own souls, which they cannot but love, and which, without it, would be the most miserable outcasts in the universe. No wonder that in the light of its intrinsic importance, and of its intrinsic relations, they should be "such as love God's salvation." All men are lovers as well as seekers; for all men love. Some love money more than God's salvation; others love pleasure, even the pleasures of sin, more than God's salvation; and others love bustle and business more than God's salvation. But, as the stamp of the material, the temporal and the evanescent, is on all these earthly objects of men's love, the friends of Jesus elevate above them all, as the worthier object of their regard and embrace, the salvation of God.—*James Frame.*

Verse 4.—"*Let God be magnified.*" Not only "*The Lord be magnified,*" but also "*alway.*" Behold, when thou wast straying, and wast turned away from him; he recalled thee: *Be the Lord magnified.* Behold, he hath inspired thee with confession of sins; thou hast confessed, he hath given pardon: *Be the Lord magnified.* . . . . Now, thou hast begun to advance, thou hast been justified, thou hast arrived at a sort of excellence of virtue; is it not a seemly thing that *thou* also sometime be magnified? No! *Let them say, Be the Lord alway magnified.* A sinner thou art, be he magnified in order that he may call; thou confessest, be he magnified in order that he may forgive: now thou livest justly, be he magnified in order that he may direct; thou perseverest even unto the end, be he magnified in order that he may glorify. *Be the Lord,* then, *alway magnified.* Let just men say this, let them say this that seek him. Whosoever doth not say this, doth not seek him. . . . . *Be the Lord magnified.* But, wilt thou thyself never be great? wilt thou be nowhere? In him was something, in me nothing; but if in him is whatsoever I am, *be he magnified,* not I. But, what of these? "*But I am poor and needy:*" he is rich, he abounding, he needing nothing. Behold my light, behold whence I am illumined, for I cry, "Thou shalt illumine my candle, O Lord; my God, thou shalt illumine my darkness. The Lord doth loose men fettered, the Lord raiseth up men crushed, the Lord maketh wise the blind men, the Lord keepeth the proselytes." Psalm xviii. 28; Psalm cxlvi. 7. What, then, of thee? "*But I am needy and poor.*" I am like an orphan, my soul is like a widow destitute and desolate; help I seek,

alway mine infirmity I confess. *"But I am poor and needy."* There have been forgiven me my sins, now I have begun to follow the commandments of God; still, however, I am needy and poor. Why still needy and poor? Because I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind. Rom. vii. 23. Why needy and poor? Because, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteous-Matt. v. 6. Still I hunger, still I thirst.—*Augustine.*

Verse 5.—*"But I am poor and needy."* He had been rich, but for our sake he had become poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. Out of the fulness of his grace he had voluntarily entered, for our sakes, into a state in which he had experience, and most bitter experience, of the want of the means of enjoyment. . . . . But the word here rendered *"poor"* is often, elsewhere, translated afflicted; in various ways he was afflicted. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and the acquaintance of grief. He was reproached, and "reproach broke his heart."—*James Frame.*

Verse 5.—*"I am poor and needy."* By this I hold to be meant the chastisements, and fiery trials that come from *God the Father;* the temptations and bitter assaults of that foul and fell fiend, *Satan;* the persecutions and vexations inflicted by the hands of unreasonable *and wicked men;* and (but in this following *Christ* must be exempted) the inward corruptions, disordered motions, unsettled affections, and the original pollutions brought from the mother's womb; with the soul and body's inaptness and unableness with cheerfulness and constancy to run the direct and just paths of God's commandments. Many of these made the Head, all of these (and more, too) the members, *"poor and needy."—John Barlow.* 1618.

Verse 5.—*"O Lord, make no tarrying."* His prayer for himself, like his prayer for his foes and for his friends, was answered. The Lord made no tarrying. Ere four and twenty hours had rolled past, his rescued spirit was in Paradise, and the crucified thief was with him. O what a change! The morning saw him condemned at the bar of an earthly tribunal, sentenced to death, and nailed to the bitter tree; before the evening shadowed the hill of Calvary, he was nestling in the bosom of God, and had become the great centre of attraction and of admiration to all the holy intelligences of the universe. The morning saw him led out through the gate of the Jerusalem below, surrounded by a ribald crowd, whose hootings rung in his ear; but ere the night fell, he had passed through the gate of the Jerusalem above, and his tread was upon the streets of gold, and angel anthems rose high through the dome of heaven, and joy filled the heart of God.—*James Frame.*

Verse 5 (*third clause*).—*"Helper,"* in all good works; *"Deliverer,"* from all evil ones. *"Make no long tarrying:"* it is the cry of the individual sinner.—*Dionysius the Carthusian* (1471), *quoted in Neale and Littledale's Commentary.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Occasion of his prayer. 1. Affliction. 2. Helplessness. II. Subject of his prayer. Deliverance, help. III. Importunity of his prayer. The time of deliverance may be in answer to prayer, as well as deliverance itself.

Verse 1.—I. Times when such urgent prayer is allowable, praiseworthy, or faulty. II. Reasons for expecting a speedy reply. III. Consolations if delay should occur.

Verse 2.—I. There are those who seek our soul's hurt. II. We must oppose them, not dally or yield. III. Our best weapon is prayer to God. IV. Their defeat is here described.

Verse 3.—I. Who are these who cry "shame"? II. What master do they serve? III. What shall their wages be?

Verse 4.—Joy for seekers, and employment for finders.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—I. The character. II. The saying. III. The wish.

Verse 5.—I. Who need help? II. Who renders help? III. What it comes to: "deliver." IV. What prayer it suggests.

Verse 5.—I. Confession: "I am poor and needy." II. Profession: "Thou art my help," etc. III. Supplication: "Make haste;" "Make no tarrying."

PSALM LXXI.

There is no title to this Psalm, and hence some conjecture that Psalm LXX. is intended to be a prelude to it, and has been broken off from it. Such imaginings have no value with us. We have already met with five Psalms without title, which are, nevertheless, as complete as those which bear them.

We have here THE PRAYER OF THE AGED BELIEVER, *who, in holy confidence of faith, strengthened by a long and remarkable experience, pleads against his enemies, and asks further blessings for himself. Anticipating a gracious reply, he promises to magnify the Lord exceedingly.*

DIVISION.—*The first four verses are faith's cry for help; the next four are a testimony of experience. From verse* 9—13, *the aged saint pleads against his foes, and then rejoices in hope, verses* 14—16. *He returns to prayer again in verses* 17 *and* 18, *repeats the confident hopes which cheered his soul, verses* 19, 20, 21; *and then he closes with the promise of abounding in thanksgiving. Throughout, this Psalm may be regarded as the utterance of struggling, but unstaggering, faith.*

EXPOSITION.

IN thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.
2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.

3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou *art* my rock and my fortress.

4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.

1. "*In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.*" Jehovah deserves our confidence; let him have it all. Every day must we guard against every form of reliance upon an arm of flesh, and hourly hang our faith upon the ever faithful God. Not only *on* God must we rest, as a man stands on a rock, but *in* him must we trust, as a man hides in a cave. The more intimate we are with the Lord, the firmer will our trust be. God knows our faith, and yet he loves to hear us avow it; hence, the Psalmist not only trusts in the Lord, but tells him that he is so trusting. "*Let me never be put to confusion.*" So long as the world stands, stand thou by me; yea, for ever and ever be faithful to thy servants. If thou forsake me, men will ridicule my religion, and how shall I be able to answer them? Confusion will silence me, and thy cause will be put to shame. This verse is a good beginning for prayer; those who commence with trust shall conclude with joy.

2. "*Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape.*" Be true, O God, to thy word. It is a righteous thing in thee to keep the promises which thou hast made unto thy servants. I have trusted thee, and thou wilt not be unrighteous to forget my faith. I am taken as in a net, but do thou liberate me from the malice of my persecutors. "*Incline thine ear unto me, and save me.*" Stoop to my feebleness, and hear my faint whispers; be gracious to my infirmities, and smile upon me: I ask salvation; listen thou to my petitions, and save me. Like one wounded and left for dead by mine enemies, I need that thou bend over me and bind up my wounds. These mercies are asked on the plea of faith, and they cannot, therefore, be denied.

3. "*Be thou my strong habitation.*" Permit me to enter into thee, and be as much at home as a man in his own house, and then suffer me to remain in thee as my settled abode. Whereas foes molest me, I need a dwelling framed and bulwarked, to sustain a siege and resist the attacks of armies; let, then, thine omnipotence secure me, and be as a fortress unto me. Here we see a weak man, but he is in a strong habitation; his security rests upon the tower in which he hides, and

is not placed in jeopardy through his personal feebleness. *"Whereunto I may continually resort."* Fast shut is this castle against all adversaries, its gates they cannot burst open; the drawbridge is up, the portcullis is down, the bars are fast in their places; but, there is a secret door, by which friends of the great Lord can enter at all hours of the day or night, as often as ever they please. There is never an hour when it is unlawful to pray. Mercy's gates stand wide open, and shall do so, till, at the last, the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door. Believers find their God to be their habitation, strong and accessible, and this is for them a sufficient remedy for all the ills of their mortal life. *"Thou hast given commandment to save me."* Nature is charged to be tender with God's servants; Providence is ordered to work their good, and the forces of the invisible world are ordained as their guardians. David charged all his troops to spare the young man Absalom, but yet he fell. God's commandment is of far higher virtue, for it compels obedience, and secures its end. Destruction cannot destroy us, famine cannot starve us; but we laugh at both, while God's mandate shields us. No stones of the field can throw us down, while angels bear us up in their hands; neither can the beasts of the field devour us, while David's God delivers us from their ferocity, or Daniel's God puts them in awe of us. *"For thou art my rock and my fortress."* In God we have all the security which nature which furnishes the rock, and art which builds the fortress, could supply; he is the complete preserver of his people. Immutability may be set forth by the rock, and omnipotence by the fortress. Happy is he who can use the personal pronoun "my"—not only once, but as many times as the many aspects of the Lord may render desirable. Is he a strong habitation? I will call him "*my* strong habitation," and he shall be *my* rock, *my* fortress, *my* God (verse 4), *my* hope, *my* trust (verse 5), *my* praise (verse 6). All mine shall be his, all his shall be mine. This was the reason why the Psalmist was persuaded that God had commanded his salvation, namely, because he had enabled him to exercise a calm and appropriating faith.

4. *"Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked."* God is on the same side with us, and those who are our enemies are also his, for they are wicked; therefore will the Lord surely rescue his own confederates, and he will not suffer the evil to triumph over the just. He who addresses such a prayer as this to heaven, does more injury to his enemies than if he had turned a battery of Armstrongs upon them. *"Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man."* Being wicked to God, they become unrighteous towards men, and cruel in their persecutions of the godly. Two hands are here mentioned: they grasp and they crush; they strike and they would slay if God did not prevent; had they as many hands as Briareus, the finger of God would more than match them.

5 For thou *art* my hope, O Lord GOD: *thou art* my trust from my youth.
6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise *shall be* continually of thee.
7 I am as a wonder unto many; but thou *art* my strong refuge.
8 Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise *and with* thy honour all the day.

5. *"For thou art my hope, O Lord God."* God who gives us grace to hope in him, will assuredly fulfil our hope, and, therefore, we may plead it in prayer. His name is "Jehovah, the hope of Israel" (Jer. xvii. 13); and, as he cannot be a false or failing hope, we may expect to see our confidence justified. *"Thou art my trust from my youth."* David had proved his faith by notable exploits when he was a youth and ruddy; it was to him a cheering recollection, and he felt persuaded that the God of his youth would not forsake him in his age. They are highly favoured who can like David, Samuel, Josiah, Timothy, and others say, "Thou art my trust from my youth."

6. *"By thee have I been holden up from the womb."* Before he was able to understand the power which preserved him, he was sustained by it. God knows us before we know anything. The elect of old lay in the bosom of God before they were laid on their mothers' bosoms; and when their infantile weakness had no feet strong enough to carry it, the Lord upheld it. We do well to reflect upon divine goodness to us in childhood, for it is full of food for gratitude. *"Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels."* Even before conscious life, the care of God is over his chosen. Birth is a mystery of mercy, and God is with both mother and babe. If marriages are registered in heaven, we may be sure that births are also.

Holy women do well to bless God for his mercy to them in nature's perilous hour; but every one who is born of woman has equal cause for thankfulness. She, whose life is preserved, should render thanks, and so should he whose life is given. *"My praise shall be continually of thee."* Where goodness has been unceasingly received, praise should unceasingly be offered. God is the circle where praise should begin, continue, and endlessly revolve, since in him we live, and move, and have our being.

7. *"I am as a wonder unto many."* "To thousand eyes a mark and gaze am I." The saints are men wondered at; often their dark side is gloomy even to amazement, while their bright side is glorious even to astonishment. The believer is a riddle, an enigma puzzling the unspiritual; he is a monster warring with those delights of the flesh, which are the all in all of other men; he is a prodigy, unaccountable to the judgments of ungodly men; a wonder gazed at, feared, and, by-and-by, contemptuously derided. Few understand us, many are surprised at us. *"But thou art my strong refuge."* Here is the answer to our riddle. If we are strong, it is in God; if we are safe, our refuge shelters us; if we are calm, our soul hath found her stay in God. When faith is understood, and the grounds of her confidence seen, the believer is no longer a wonder; but the marvel is that so much unbelief remains among the sons of men.

8. *"Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day."* What a blessed mouthful! A man never grows nauseated though the flavour of it be all day in his mouth. God's bread is always in our mouths, so should his praise be. He fills us with good; let us be also filled with gratitude. This would leave no room for murmuring or backbiting; therefore, may we well join with holy David in this sacred wish.

9 Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.

10 For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together.

11 Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for *there* is none to deliver *him*.

12 O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.

13 Let them be confounded *and* consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

9. *"Cast me not off in the time of old age."* David was not tired of his Master, and his only fear was lest his Master should be tired of him. The Amalekite in the Bible history left his Egyptian servant to famish when he grew old and sick, but not so the Lord of saints; even to hoar hairs he bears and carries us. Alas for us, if we were abandoned by our God, as many a courtier has been by his prince! Old age robs us of personal beauty, and deprives us of strength for active service; but it does not lower us in the love and favour of God. An ungrateful country leaves its worn-out defenders to starve upon a scanty pittance, but the pensioners of heaven are satisfied with good things. *"Forsake me not when my strength faileth."* Bear with me, and endure my infirmities. To be forsaken of God is the worst of all conceivable ills, and if the believer can be but clear of that grievous fear, he is happy: no saintly heart need be under any apprehension upon this point.

10. *"For mine enemies speak against me."* Dogs howl over a dying lion. When David's arm was able to chastise his foes, they were yet impudent enough to slander him, and he fears that now they will take fresh license in the hour of his weakness. The text most probably means that his enemies had said that God would forsake him; and, therefore, he is the more earnest that the Lord's faithful dealings may give them the lie. *"And they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together."* The Psalmist had enemies, and these were most malicious; seeking his utter destruction, they were very persevering, and staid long upon the watch; to this they added cunning, for they lay in ambush to surprise him, and take him at a disadvantage: and all this they did with the utmost unanimity and deliberation, neither spoiling their design by want of prudence, nor marring its accomplishment by a lack of unity. The Lord our God is our only and all-sufficient resort from every form of persecution.

11. *"Saying, God hath forsaken him."* O bitter taunt! There is no worse arrow in all the quivers of hell. Our Lord felt this barbed shaft, and it is no marvel

if his disciples feel the same. Were this exclamation the truth, it were indeed an ill day for us; but, glory be to God, it is a barefaced lie. *"Persecute and take him."* Let loose the dogs of persecution upon him, seize him, worry him, *"for there is none to deliver him."* Down with him, for he has no friends. It is safe to insult him, for none will come to his rescue. O cowardly boasts of a braggart foe, how do ye wound the soul of the believer; and only when his faith cries to his Lord is he able to endure your cruelty.

12. *"O God, be not far from me."* Nearness to God is our conscious security. A child in the dark is comforted by grasping its father's hand. *"O my God, make haste for my help."* To call God ours, as having entered into covenant with us, is a mighty plea in prayer, and a great stay to our faith. The cry of "make haste" has occurred many times in this portion of the Psalms, and it was evoked by the sore pressure of affliction. Sharp sorrows soon put an end to procrastinating prayers.

13. *"Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul."* It will be all this to them to see thy servant preserved; their envy and malice, when disappointed, will fill them with life-consuming bitterness. The defeat of their plans shall nonplus them, they shall be confounded as they enquire the reason for their overthrow; the men they seek to destroy seem so weak, and their cause so contemptible, that they will be filled with amazement as they see them not only survive all opposition, but even surmount it. How confounded must Pharaoh have been when Israel multiplied, despite his endeavours to exterminate the race; and how consumed with rage must the Scribes and Pharisees have become when they saw the gospel spreading from land to land by the very means which they used for its destruction. *"Let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt."* He would have their shame made visible to all eyes, by their wearing it in their blushes as a mantle. They would have made a laughing-stock of the believer, if his God had forsaken him; therefore, let unbelief and atheism be made a public scoffing in their persons.

14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.

15 My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness *and* thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.

16 I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only.

14. The holy faith of the persecuted saint comes to the front in these three verses. *"But I will hope continually."* When I cannot rejoice in what I have, I will look forward to what shall be mine, and will still rejoice. Hope will live on a bare common, and sing on a branch laden down with snow. No date and no place are unsuitable for hope. Hell alone excepted, hope is a dweller in all regions. We may always hope, for we always have grounds for it: we will always hope, for it is a never-failing consolation. *"And will yet praise thee more and more."* He was not slack in thanksgiving; in fact, no man was ever more diligent in it; yet he was not content with all his former praises, but vowed to become more and more a grateful worshipper. When good things are both continual and progressive with us, we are on the right tack. We ought to be misers in doing good, and our motto should be "more and more." While we do not disdain to "rest and be thankful," we cannot settle down into resting in our thankfulness. *"Superior,"* cries the eagle, as he mounts towards the sun: higher and yet higher is also our aims, as we soar aloft in duty and devotion. It is our continual hope that we shall be able more and more to magnify the Lord.

15. *"My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day."* We are to bear testimony as experience enables us, and not withhold from others that which we have tasted and handled. The faithfulness of God in saving us, in delivering us out of the hand of our enemies, and in fulfilling his promises, is to be everywhere proclaimed by those who have proved it in their own history. How gloriously conspicuous is righteousness in the divine plan of redemption! It should be the theme of constant discourse. The devil rages against the substitutionary sacrifice, and errorists of every form make this the main point of their attack; be it ours, therefore, to love the doctrine, and to spread its glad tidings on every side, and at all times. Mouths are never so usefully employed as in recounting the righteousness of God revealed in the salvation of believers in Jesus. The

preacher who should be confined to this one theme would never need seek another: it is the *medulla theologiæ*, the very pith and marrow of revealed truth. Has our reader been silent upon this choice subject? Let us, then, press him to tell abroad what he enjoys within: he does not well who keeps such glad tidings to himself. "*For I know not the numbers thereof.*" He knew the sweetness of it, the sureness, the glory, and the truth of it; but as to the full reckoning of its plenitude, variety, and sufficiency, he felt he could not reach to the height of the great argument. Lord, where I cannot count I will believe, and when a truth surpasses numeration I will take to admiration. When David spoke of his enemies, he said they were more in number than the hairs of his head; he had, therefore, some idea of their number, and found a figure suitable to set it out; but, in the case of the Lord's covenant mercies, he declares, "I know not the number," and does not venture upon any sort of comparison. To creatures belong number and limit, to God and his grace there is neither. We may, therefore, continue to tell out his great salvation all day long, for the theme is utterly inexhaustible.

16. "*I will go in the strength of the Lord God.*" Our translators give us a good sense, but not the sense in this place, which is on this wise, "I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord Jehovah." He would enter into those deeds by admiring study, and then, wherever he went, he would continue to rehearse them. He should ever be a welcome guest who can tell us of the mighty acts of the Lord, and help us to put our trust in him. The authorised version may be used by us as a resolve in all our exertions and endeavours. In our own strength we must fall; but, when we hear the voice which saith, "Go in this thy might," we may advance without fear. Though hell itself were in the way, the believer would pursue the path of duty, crying: "*I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.*" Man's righteousness is not fit to be mentioned—filthy rags are best hidden; neither is there any righteousness under heaven, or in heaven, comparable to the divine. As God himself fills all space, and is, therefore, the only God, leaving no room for another, so God's righteousness, in Christ Jesus, fills the believer's soul, and he counts all other things but dross and dung "that he may win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith." What would be the use of speaking upon any other righteousness to a dying man? and all are dying men. Let those who will cry up man's natural innocence, the dignity of the race, the purity of philosophers, the loveliness of untutored savages, the power of sacraments, and the infallibility of pontiffs; this is the true believer's immovable resolve: "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." For ever dedicated to thee, my Lord, be this poor, unworthy tongue, whose glory it shall be to glorify thee.

17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.

18 Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto *this* generation, *and* thy power to every one *that* is to come.

17. "*O God, thou hast taught me from my youth.*" It was comfortable to the Psalmist to remember that from his earliest days he had been the Lord's disciple. None are too young to be taught of God, and they make the most proficient scholars who begin betimes. "*And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.*" He had learned to tell what he knew, he was a pupil teacher; he continued still learning and declaring, and did not renounce his first master; this, also, was his comfort, but it is one which those who have been seduced from the school of the gospel, into the various colleges of philosophy and scepticism, will not be able to enjoy. A sacred conservatism is much needed in these days, when men are giving up old lights for new. We mean both to learn and to teach the wonders of redeeming love, till we can discover something nobler or more soul-satisfying; for this reason we hope that our greyheads will be found in the same road as we have trodden, even from our beardless youth.

18. "*Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not.*" There is something touching in the sight of hair whitened with the snows of many a winter: the old and faithful soldier receives consideration from his king, the venerable servant is beloved by his master. When our infirmities multiply, we may, with

confidence, expect enlarged privileges in the world of grace, to make up for our narrowing range in the field of nature. Nothing shall make God forsake those who have not forsaken him. Our fear is lest he should do so; but his promise kisses that fear into silence. *"Until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation."* He desired to continue his testimony and complete it; he had respect to the young men and little children about him, and knowing the vast importance of training them in the fear of God, he longed to make them all acquainted with the power of God to support his people, that they also might be led to walk by faith. He had leaned on the almighty arm, and could speak experimentally of its all-sufficiency, and longed to do so ere life came to a close. *"And thy power to every one that is to come."* He would leave a record for unborn ages to read. He thought the Lord's power to be so worthy of praise, that he would make the ages ring with it till time should be no more. For this cause believers live, and they should take care to labour zealously for the accomplishment of this their most proper and necessary work. Blessed are they who begin in youth to proclaim the name of the Lord, and cease not until their last hour brings their last word for their divine Master.

19 Thy righteousness also, O God, *is* very high, who hast done great things: O God, who *is* like unto thee!

20 *Thou*, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

21 Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.

19. *"Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high."* Very sublime, unsearchable, exalted, and glorious is the holy character of God, and his way of making men righteous. His plan of righteousness uplifts men from the gates of hell to the mansions of heaven. It is a high-doctrine gospel, gives a high experience, leads to high practice, and ends in high felicity. *"'Who hast done great things."* The exploits of others are mere child's play compared with thine, and are not worthy to be mentioned in the same age. Creation, providence, redemption, are all unique, and nothing can compare with them. *"O God, who is like unto thee."* As thy works are so transcendent, so art thou. Thou art without compeer, or even second, and such are thy works, and such, especially, thy plan of justifying sinners by the righteousness which thou hast provided. Adoration is a fit frame of mind for the believer. When he draws near to God, he enters into a region where everything is surpassingly sublime; miracles of love abound on every hand, and marvels of mingled justice and grace. A traveller among the high Alps often feels overwhelmed with awe, amid their amazing sublimities; much more is this the case when we survey the heights and depths of the mercy and holiness of the Lord. *"O God, who is like unto thee."*

20. *"Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again."* Here is faith's inference from the infinite greatness of the Lord. He has been strong to smite; he will be also strong to save. He has shown me many heavy and severe trials, and he will also show me many and precious mercies. He has almost killed me, he will speedily revive me; and though I have been almost dead and buried, he will give me a resurrection, and *"bring me up again from the depths of the earth."* However low the Lord may permit us to sink, he will fix a limit to the descent, and in due time will bring us up again. Even when we are laid low in the tomb, the mercy is that we can go no lower, but shall retrace our steps and mount to better lands; and all this, because the Lord is ever mighty to save. A little God would fail us, but not Jehovah the Omnipotent. It is safe to lean on him, since he bears up the pillars both of heaven and earth.

21. *"Thou shalt increase my greatness."* As a king, David grew in influence and power. God did great things for him, and by him, and this is all the greatness believers want. May we have faith in God, such as these words evince. *"And comfort me on every side."* As we were surrounded with afflictions, so shall we be environed with consolations. From above, and from all around, light shall come to dispel our former gloom; the change shall be great, indeed, when the Lord returns to comfort us.

22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery, *even* thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel.

23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed.

24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

Here is the final vow of praise.

22. *"I will also praise thee with the psaltery."* Love so amazing calls for sweetest praise. David would give his best music, both vocal and instrumental, to the Best of Masters. His harp should not be silent, nor his voice. *"Even thy truth, O my God."* This is ever a most enchanting attribute—viz., the truth or faithfulness of our covenant God. On this we rest, and from it we draw streams of richest consolation. His promises are sure, his love unalterable, his veracity indisputable. What saint will not praise him as he remembers this? *"Unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel."* Here is a new name, and, as it were, a new song. The Holy One of Israel is at once a lofty and an endearing name, full of teaching. Let us resolve, by all means within our power, to honour him.

23. *"My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee."* It shall be no weariness to me to praise thee. It shall be a delightful recreation, a solace, a joy. The essence of song lies in the holy joy of the singer. *"And my soul, which thou hast redeemed."* Soul-singing is the soul of singing, Till men are redeemed, they are like instruments out of tune; but when once the precious blood has set them at liberty, then are they fitted to magnify the Lord who bought them. Our being bought with a price is a more than sufficient reason for our dedicating ourselves to the earnest worship of God our Saviour.

24. *"My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long."* I will talk to myself, and to thee, my God, and to my fellow men: my theme shall be thy way of justifying sinners, the glorious display of thy righteousness and grace in thy dear Son; and this most fresh and never-to-be-exhausted subject shall be ever with me, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. Others talk of their beloveds, and they shall be made to hear of mine. I will become an incessant talker, while this matter lies on my heart, for in all company this subject will be in season. *"For they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt."* As in many other Psalms, the concluding stanzas speak of that as an accomplished fact, which was only requested in former verses. Faith believes that she has her request, and she has it. She is the substance of things hoped for—a substance so real and tangible, that it sets the glad soul a-singing. Already sin, Satan, and the world are vanquished, and the victory is ours.

"Sin, Satan, Death appear
To harass and appal;
Yet since the gracious Lord is near,
Backward they go, and fall.

We meet them face to face,
Through Jesus' conquest blest;
March in the triumph of his grace,
Right onward to our rest."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm, which has no title in the Hebrew, in the LXX. has the title, *"By David, of the sons of Jonadab, and of those who were first made prisoners."* If any authority be allowed to this title, we must suppose that this was a Psalm written by David, which was used, as particularly adapted to the circumstances of their condition, by the Rechabites, who were descended from Jonadab (Jer. xxxv.), and the Jews, who were taken by the Chaldeans as captives to Babylon. However this may be, it seems probable that David was the author of this Psalm, and that he wrote it in his extreme age, and but a little while before he died. The line which

follows the next Psalm, and closes the second book, perhaps has a reference to this fact. Some of the Fathers interpret the Psalm mystically of the church in her old age, and her trials at the end of the world.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm, I am aware, is anonymous, and is, therefore, by many recent critics referred to some later writer; but I am satisfied that Venema and Hengstenberg have adduced sufficient reasons for retaining the opinion of Calvin and the older expositors, that it is from David's pen, and is the plaintive song of his old age. It shows us the soul of the aged saint, darkened by the remembrance of his great transgression, and by the swarms of sorrows with which that sin filled all his later years. But he finds comfort in reverting to the happy days of his childhood, and especially to the irrevocable trust which he was then enabled to repose in God. The thoughts and feelings expressed remind one of those which invest with such a solemn, tender interest the Second Epistle to Timothy, which embalms the dying thoughts of the great apostle. Like Paul, David takes a retrospect of the Lord's dealings with him from the beginning; and, in effect, declares, with the dying apostle: "I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12. Only, there is this notable difference between the two, that while Paul gathered confirmation of his faith from the experience of a thirty years' walk with his Lord, David's experience stretched over more than twice so many years; for it began with his childhood.—*William Binnie.*

Whole Psalm.—It will be asked how Christ could use such verses as verses 9 and 18, since these look forward apparently to the frailty of age. The reply to this felt difficulty is, that these expressions are used by him in sympathy with his members, and in his own case denote the state equivalent to age. *His* old age was, ere he reached three and thirty years, as John viii. 57 is supposed to imply; for "Worn-out men live fast." Barclay seems to give the right sense in the following lines:—

> "Grown old and weak, with pain and grief,
> Before his years were half complete."

Besides, the words signify, "Forsake me not from this time onward, even were I to live to grey hairs." This is a view that conveys precious consolation to aged ones, who might be ready to say that Christ could not altogether enter into their feelings, having never experienced the failing weakness of age, the debility, the decay, the bodily infirmities so trying to the spirit. But this Psalm shows us, that in effect he did pass through that stage of our sojourning, worn out and wasted in bodily frame and feeling, by living so much in so short a time. The aged members of his church may find his sweet sympathy breathed out in Isaiah xlvi. 3, 4; and, here they may almost see him learning the lesson in a human way, as he bends under the weight of our frailties. For this reason, among others, this Psalm was specially prized by Robert Blair, one of our godly forefathers. He used to call it "*His Psalm.*" —*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—"*In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.*" As if he should say: O Lord, permit not those who put their trust in thee to be confounded, and to be held up as a laughing-stock. I have placed all my hope in thee, and thou art that God who, for the sake of thy goodness and truth, hast never deserted those who hope in thee. If thou shalt suffer me to be confounded, the enemies to triumph, and my hope to be placed in thee in vain, certainly this shame shall fall upon thine own name. . . . . Let us, therefore, learn from this place to be more anxious about what may happen to the name of God through us, than to our own; whether it be through us in doing, or in us in suffering. The prophet is fearful lest he should be confounded on account of his hope placed in God, although it was not in his own power, nor could he prevent it. . . . .

It is necessary, first, that we should be of those who place their hope in God, then it is necessary that this piety of our hearts should not be confined to ourselves only, but should be known to all those who come in contact with us, even our opponents and enemies; else it is not possible for us to dread this kind of confusion feared by the prophet, when nobody knows that our hope is placed in God. No artist suffers confusion, if he has never shared the good opinion of his fellow men. To no sick man can it be said, Physician, heal thyself, if his reputation for medical skill has never stood high. So of those, it cannot be said, They hoped in God, let him save them if he will have them, of whom it was never remarked that they placed

any hope in God. This solicitude, therefore, belongs only to those whose hope is in the Lord: upon others it cannot fall.—*Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.*" It is a good beginning, and a recommendation to our prayers, when we can declare our faith and trust to be in God alone.—*Edward Walter, in "A Help to the profitable reading of the Psalms."* 1854.

Verse 2.—"*Deliver me in thy righteousness.*" "*Incline thine ear.*" Let my deliverance be the fruit of thy promise, and of my prayer; and so it will be much the sweeter.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*In thy righteousness.*" The *righteousness* of God is in this place that virtue by which he makes good his promises—revenges injuries and rewards piety—which is elsewhere called his *veracity.* Upon this perfection David here calls, not because he was innocent before God, but because God had bound himself to him by promises, as if he were, in the presence of the men who were persecuting him, both innocent and righteous; and, therefore, worthy of being delivered from this last terrible calamity into which he had fallen through Absalom, since God had thus acted towards him.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy righteousness.*" Not *mine.* He knew that he was being chastened for his sin against Uriah. He pleads no merit of his own.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 2.—"*Incline thine ear.*" And since I am so wounded that I am not able to send up my cry to thee, the Most High, do thou *incline thine ear to me* as I lie half-dead, left by the robbers who have wounded and spoiled me.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 3.—"*Whereunto I may continually resort.*" Would he then want to repair to him always? Our necessities, our work, our danger require it constantly. We are commanded to pray without ceasing. And if, while we acknowledge and feel the obligation, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, we shall not lament it. Loving him, as well as depending upon him, we shall find it good to draw near to God, and delight ourselves in the Almighty; and we shall never find him, when we want him, inaccessible. There is a way to our "*strong habitation,*" and we know the way. There is a door, and we have the key. No sentinel keeps us back; the dwelling is our *own:* and who dares to forbid us all its accommodations and contents? Kings, however disposed, cannot be always approachable. Owing to the multitude of their claims, and the limitation of their powers, and the importance of keeping up a sense of their dignity, they are only accessible at certain times, and with stately formalities. But the King of kings allows us to come boldly to the throne of grace; and enjoins us in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make our requests unto him. We cannot be too importunate, or by our continual coming weary him.—*William Jay.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast given commandment to save me.*" Let us observe his words; he ascribes to the word and command of God a saving virtue, which no power on earth, none in hell, nor death itself can resist. Only, he says, give the command that I may be saved, and, in a moment, I shall be wholly saved.—*Musculus.*

Verse 4.—"*The cruel man*" is literally the leavened man, leavened with hatred of truth and enmity to God; and, therefore, a violent opposer of his people. So, in 1 Cor. v. 8, we are cautioned against the "leaven of malice and wickedness," which, in accordance with the figure, may pervade the whole natural character of an ungodly man, his faculties and affections.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou art my hope.*" Not only is our hope *in* him, but he himself is our hope. "God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ," saith St. Paul, "our hope." 1 Tim. i. 1. Yea, there is a deeper, nearer depth: "The glory of the mystery of the gospel," says St. Paul, "is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ himself is our hope, as the only Author of it; Christ is our hope, as the End of it; and Christ, who is the Beginning and the End, is our hope also by the way; for he saith, "Christ *in* you, the hope of glory." Col. i. 27. Each yearning of our hearts, each ray of hope which gleams upon us, each touch which thrills through us, each voice which whispers in our inmost hearts of the good things laid up in store for us, if we will love God, are the light of Christ enlightening us, the touch of Christ raising us to new life, the voice of Christ, "Whoso cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;" it is "Christ in us, the hope of glory," drawing us up by his Spirit who dwelleth in us, unto himself our hope. For our hope is not the glory of heaven, not joy, not

peace, not rest from labour, not fulness of our wishes, nor sweet contentment of the whole soul, nor understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge, not only a torrent of delight; it is "Christ our God," "the hope of glory." Nothing which God *could* create is what we hope for; nothing which God could give us out of himself, no created glory, or bliss, or beauty, or majesty, or riches. What we hope for is our Redeeming God himself, his love, his bliss, the joy of our Lord himself who hath so loved us, to be our joy and our portion for ever.—*E. B. Pusey.*

Verse 5.—"*From my youth.*" The remembering and acknowledging of God in youth will be great satisfaction in old age. O what joy will reflection upon youthful piety yield! Even Seneca, a heathen, could say: "Youth well spent is the greatest comfort of old age." David could confidently plead with God for deliverance out of the hand of the wicked: "*For,*" saith he, "*thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth.*" "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth." (verse 9; see also verses 17, 18). An ingenuous master will not turn off a superannuated servant. When the proconsul bade Polycarp deny Christ and swear by the emperor, he answered: "I have served Christ these eighty-six years, and he hath not once injured me, and shall I now deny him?" Jacob could say: "God hath fed me all my life long unto this day; he hath been kind to me all my days, and I trust he will look to me even to the end; and shall I now turn my back on him?" Whither can I go to mend myself for a master? "Thou only hast the words of eternal life." He that hath been the stay of my youth, will be the staff of my age. I dare venture my soul upon his promise who hath hitherto maintained me by his providence. "In the days of my youth, the secret of God was upon my tabernacle, his candle did shine upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness;" and, though now "the sun, and the light, and moon and stars be darkened," in this my natural horizon, yet "the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." I have abundant experience of his grace and presence. O the days of mercy I have had many years ago! A good man said: "I got that in my youth, which I would not for all the world have to get now."—*Oliver Heywood.* 1629—1702.

Verse 6.—He did not, like most men, recognise the hand of God only when, in an extraordinary manner, it became manifest in life; but his eye of faith regards the ordinary works of God as miracles. The translation from his mother's womb to the light of day is to him an object of praise. (Psalm xxii. 9, 10.) And, really, is not the preservation of the embryo, in its narrow confines, a miracle? is it not a pledge, simultaneous with man's growing into being, of our after experience in life, that we have a God "who bringeth us out of death to light"? (Psalm lxviii. 20.) Is not the reason of our finding so little to praise, to be sought in our having no eyes for his daily miracles? The Psalmist *has* eyes for the daily miracles of the Lord; and, therefore, his mouth is daily full of the praise of the Lord.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 6.—Blessed be God that ever I was born.—*Halyburton.*

Verse 6.—This verse corresponds with the preceding, except that David proceeds farther. He not only celebrates the goodness of God, which he had experienced from his childhood, but, also, those proofs of it which he had received previous to his birth. An almost similar confession is contained in Psalm xxii. 9, 10, by which is magnified the wonderful power and inestimable goodness of God in the generation of men, the way and manner of which would be altogether incredible, were it not a fact with which we are quite familiar. If we are astonished at that part of the history of the flood, in which Moses declares (Genesis viii. 13), that Noah and his household lived ten months amidst the offensive nuisance produced by so many living creatures, when he could not draw the breath of life, have we not equal reason to marvel that the infant, shut up within its mother's womb, can live in such a condition as would suffocate the strongest man in half an hour? But we thus see how little account we make of the miracles which God works, in consequence of our familiarity with them. The Spirit, therefore, justly rebukes this ingratitude, by commending to our consideration this memorable instance of the grace of God which is exhibited in our birth and generation. When we are born into the world, although the mother do her office, and the midwife may be present with her, and many others may lend their help, yet did not God, putting, so to speak, his hand

under us, receive us into his bosom, what would become of us? and what hope would there be of the continuance of our life? Yea, rather, were it not for this, our very birth would be an entrance into a thousand deaths. God, therefore, is with the highest propriety said *to take us out of our mother's bowels.* To this corresponds the concluding part of the verse, *"My praise shall be continually of thee;"* by which the Psalmist means that he had been furnished with matter for praising God without intermission.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—*"I am as a wonder unto many."* The Hebrew word translated *"wonder"* would, perhaps, be better expressed by *portent.* It denotes anything uncommon, and wonderful, and admits a double meaning. Some interpreters are of opinion, that it is here taken in the most favourable sense, and that the Psalmist represents himself as considered, by the many, as a *prodigy of God's goodness.* But the whole tenor of the Psalm is against this meaning; which is not badly expressed by Green: "I am become a gazing-stock to the multitude."—*Alexander Geddes.* 1737—1802.

Verse 7.—*"I am as a wonder unto many,"* etc. On several account a converted man may be an object of surprise among his contemporaries. This may arise from the circumstance of his conversion dating at a late period of his life, when his long continuance in a state of impenitence seemed to render it almost certain that he would persist in it to the last. It is, indeed, a wonder to see any human being's course entirely altered at a late period, and to observe him afterwards moving in a totally different direction, influenced by different principles. Or, to take the instance of another convert, the character he is enabled to sustain, founded upon his great change, is in such marked and continued contrast to his former habits of life as to render it difficult to recognise in the Christian of to-day the sinner of yesterday. "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Or, in yet another example, the means divinely employed to effect conversion may be, apparently, so disproportionate to the magnitude of the result, as to place the result itself under suspicion and doubt. Every godly man, like Ananias of old, may hesitate to admit into his society the persecutor or the profligate of unhappy notoriety, except upon clearly discerning that he has become a new creature in Christ Jesus, and that old evil habits have passed away. At the same time, his former ungodly associates are mortified at his renunciation of fellowship with them, and are malicious enough to promulgate false reports concerning his character and motives. "They think it strange," says the apostle, "that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." Yet to such a convert his God is a sun and shield—a shield from the shafts of cruel slander, and a refuge to him from all storms of persecution. In all similar cases the language of the Psalmist becomes particularly appropriate: "*I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge.*"—*John Leifchild.*

Verse 7.—*"A wonder."* The Messiah did not attract the admiring gaze of mankind. He did arrest attention; he did excite *"wonder;"* but it was not the wonder of admiration. A few, whose eyes God had opened, saw, indeed, in some measure, the real grandeur there was amid all this apparent meanness. They "beheld his glory—the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father;" a glory that bedimmed all created lustre. But the great body of those who beheld him were "astonished" at him. His external appearance, especially when contrasted with his claim to Messiahship, shocked them. The Galilean peasant—the Nazarene carpenter—the son of Joseph, claiming God for his own Father,—declaring himself the "bread of life," and "the light of the world," and asserting that the destinies of eternity hung on the reception or rejection of him and his message; all this excited a mingled emotion of amazement and indignation, scorn and horror, in the bosom of the great majority of his countrymen. He was *"a wonder,"* a prodigy unto many. A mixture of pity and contempt, disgust and wonder, seems to have stirred the stern bosom of the Roman governor, when he brought him out wearing the robe of mock royalty and the torturing crown, and exclaimed, "Behold the man." Even his friends were confounded, though their astonishment bore a different character. The closing scene, notwithstanding what appear to us very plain forewarnings, appears to have come on them like a thunderbolt. They were overwhelmed with amazement, as well as with sorrow. What blank astonishment sat on their countenances when he made the announcement, "Verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me!" How must their amazement have risen at the successive scenes of Gethsemane, and the hall of the high priest, and the court of Pilate, till at last

they saw him, in whom they trusted that he should redeem Israel, nailed to a cross like a felonious slave—execrated of man, and deserted of God! Then their amazement reached its consummation: they were "astonished at him."—*John Brown, in "The Sufferings and Glories of the Messiah."*

Verse 8.—"*Let my mouth be filled with thy praise.*" *Let my mouth*, I say, *be so filled with thy praise*, that from the bottom of my heart, even to the lips of my mouth, the plenitude of thy grace, O God, infused into my heart, and diffused over my lips, may loyally magnify thee; so shall I not be found like that people, of whom thou dost say: "This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Isa. xxix. 13.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 9.—"*Cast me not off in the time of old age,*" etc.; for now I have most need of thee. The white rose is soonest cankered; so is the white head soonest corrupted. *Sæpe nigrum cor est, caput album.* Satan maketh a prey of old Solomon, Asa, Lot, others; whom when young he could never so deceive. The heathens, therefore, well warn us to look well to our old age, as that which cometh not alone, but is infested with many diseases, both of body and mind. This David knew, and, therefore, prayed as here: "*Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.*" He is a rare old man that can say with Caleb (Joshua xiv. 10, 14), "Behold, the Lord hath kept me alive," etc.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*Cast me not off in the time of old age,*" etc. It is not unnatural or improper for a man who sees old age coming upon him to pray for special grace, and special strength, to enable him to meet what he cannot ward off, and what he cannot but dread; for who can look upon the infirmities of old age, as coming upon himself, but with sad and pensive feelings? Who would wish *to be* an old man? Who can look upon a man tottering with years, and broken down with infirmities; a man whose sight and hearing are gone; a man who is alone amidst the graves of all the friends that he had in early life; a man who is a burden to himself, and to the world; a man who has reached the "Last scene of all that ends the strange, eventful history"—that scene of

> "Second childishness, and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything;"

that scene when one can say—

> "I have lived long enough; my way of life
> Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf;
> And that which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have;"

who can think of all this and not pray for special grace for himself, should he live to see those days of infirmity and weakness? And who, in view of such infirmities, can fail to see the propriety of seeking the favour of God in early years?—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—"*Cast me not off in the time of old age,*" etc. David, mindful of the noble actions which, through God's assistance, he had achieved in his youth, beseeches him not to desert his servant, when persecuted by a rebellious son, in his old age. The weakness and temptations peculiar to that time of life, render this a petition necessary for all to make, before we are overtaken by it. The church findeth but too much occasion to make the same, now that she is sunk in years; when faith languisheth, charity waxeth cold, and the infirmities of a spiritual old age are coming fast upon her.—*George Horne.*

Verse 9.—"*Cast me not off.*" God had cast off his predecessor, Saul, and things looked as if he now meant to cast *him* off. His people also seemed disposed, by their joining with Absalom, to cast him off: hence the force of the petition.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 9.—"*Forsake me not when my strength faileth.*" Neither will Christ forsake his church in the latter days of its age, when the weakness of faith becomes more prevalent.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 9.—"*Forsake me not when my strength faileth.*" June 28. This day I enter on my eighty-sixth year. I now find I grow old: (1) My sight is decayed, so that I cannot read a small print, unless in a strong light. (2) My strength is decayed, so that I walk much slower than I did some years since. (3) My memory

of names, whether of persons or places, is decayed, till I stop a little to recollect them. What I should be afraid of, is, if I took thought for the morrow, that my body should weigh down my mind, and create either stubbornness, by the decrease of my understanding, or peevishness, by the increase of bodily infirmities; But thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God.—*John Wesley.*

Verse 11.—All kinds of distresses are obnoxious to the worst of misjudgings from malevolent minds. The sufferings of Christ produced this censorious scoff, "Let God deliver him, if he will have him." (Matt. xxvii. 43.) David's trouble easily induced his adversaries to conclude that *"God had forsaken him, and that there was none to deliver him."* But in troubles of this nature, where especially there are frightful complainings against themselves, men are more easily drawn out to be peremptory in their uncharitable judgments concerning them, because the trouble itself is somewhat rare, and apt to beget hideous impressions, and, withal the vent which the afflicted parties give by their bemoaning of their estate, in hope to ease themselves thereby, is but taken as a testimony against themselves, and the undoubted echoes of their real feelings.—*Richard Gilpin* (1625—1700), *in "Dæmonologia Sacra; or, a Treatise of Satan's Temptations."* [In Nichol's Series of Puritan Divines.]

Verse 13.—*"Let them be confounded,"* etc. Let them, who were so wicked that they never hoped anything good of me, *be confounded* by the evidence of the blessings which manifestly fall upon me; and, *let them fail,* the grounds of their abuse being taken away, as a fire fails when the fagots are removed.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 13.—*"Let them be confounded,"* etc. By the law of retaliation (*talio*), he might have said: "Be thou an adversary to their souls, and seek their hurt." Nothing of this is hinted at: his only desire is that they may be confounded and fail, that they may be covered with disgrace and shame. He seeks nothing beyond the frustration of their attempts, that they may begin to be ashamed, and have no cause for boasting that they came off victorious.—*Musculus.*

Verse 13.—Shame ariseth from utter disappointments. If hope deferred causeth shame, then much more hope destroyed. When a man sees his hopes quite cut off, so that he can no way reach the thing he looked for, shame takes hold of him strongly. —*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13.—*"That are adversaries to my soul."* That hated him with a diabolical hatred, as the devil hates the souls of men, and who has his name *Satan* from the word here used. All wicked men are Satans, full of enmity against God and all good men; and such were David's enemies, spiteful and malicious, and nothing would satisfy them but his life.—*John Gill.*

Verse 14.—*"But I will hope continually."* Behold, O Lord, I have prayed to thee, and I am comforted. Hope has thus taught me. I am glad; because in thee I have trusted, I shall never be confounded. Sorrow returned, equipped with vast array, fortified at all points with swords and spears, and with great clamour beleaguered my city. The din of his horsemen terrified me; and, standing at the gates, he commanded silence, and thus loudly spake: "Behold the man who trusted in God; who said, I shall not be confounded for ever; who took hope for a consoler." And, when he observed me blushing at these words, he drew nearer, and said: "Where are the promises which were thy trust? Where the consolation? Where the deliverance? What have thy tears availed thee? What help have thy prayers brought thee from heaven? Thou hast cried, and no one has answered; thou has wept, and who have been moved with pity for thee? Thou hast called upon thy God, and he has been silent. Thou hast prayed to him, and he has hidden himself from thee: there has come no voice nor sound. . . . Arise, therefore, and flee for help to man, that he may free thee from thy prison." With these words, there arose such a din of arms in the camp—such a clamour of men and sounding of trumpets—that I could hardly keep up heart; and, unless my beloved Hope had brought me help, Sorrow would have seized and carried me off in chains to his own place. Comes Hope to me, gleaming in divine brightness, and, smiling, said: "O soldier of Christ, how is thy heart? What is this struggle in thy mind?" At these words, I began to blush. "Fear not," she said, "Evil shall not capture thee; thou shalt never perish. Behold, I am with thee, to deliver thee. Dost thou not know what is written (Psalm xii.), 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' As one of the foolish women hath this Sorrow spoken; never shall he be

able to persuade thee that there is no God, or that God does not exercise a providence over all."—*Girolamo Savonarola*, 1452—1498.

Verse 14.—"*And I will always hope, and add to* (literally, *add upon*, accumulate, increase) *all thy praise.*" To all thy praise which I have uttered hitherto, I will continue still to add.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 14.—"*I will expect continually.*" But what did he *expect?* That for which he prayed in the ninth verse—the preservation of his prosperity, the presence and the help of God to the very end of life. Wherefore, he adds, *continually*, in perpetuity, in the time of old age—*usque ad mortem.—Hermann Venema.*

Verse 14.—As there is no end to the lovingkindness of Jehovah, there should be none to our gratitude. The hope of a Christian enableth him to be thankful, even in the dark season of affliction.—*Mrs. Thomson.*

Verse 15.—The "*righteousness*" of God, here mentioned, includes not only the rectitude of his nature, and the equity of his proceedings, but likewise that everlasting righteousness which his Son hath brought in for our justification. God's *righteousness* and *salvation* are here joined together; and, therefore, let no man think to put them asunder, or expect salvation without righteousness.—*Mrs. Thomson.*

Verse 15.—"*I know not the numbers.*" David began his arithmetic, in the 14th verse, with *addition*: "I will yet praise thee more and more;" but he is fairly beaten in this first rule of sacred mathematics. His calculation fails him, the mere enumeration of the Lord's mercies overwhelms his mind: he owns his inadequacy. Reckon either by time, by place, or by value, and the salvation of God baffles all powers of estimation.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 16.—"*I will go.*" The word *to go* must be here taken in the sense of going to battle against enemies. This, he says, he will do, trusting not to his own, but to the power of the Lord, his heart fired with the memory of the righteousness of God. So is it in another place: "Some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we in the name of our God."—*Musculus.*

Verse 16.—"*I will go in the strength of the Lord.*" The minister goes thus by realising this strength and depending on it. In this strength he goes into the path of communion with God, into the fields of conflict, in the privacy of domestic life, and in all the walks of active life. His boast is in the *righteousness* of Christ; and he *mentions* this to God as the ground of his confidence, to himself as the spring of his comforts, to others as the hope of salvation.—*Substance of Sermon by James Sherman. The first preached by him after his settlement at Surrey Chapel. September 4th*, 1836.

Verse 16.—"*The strengths of the Lord God.*" The power of God is expressed in the plural number, to show the greatness of it, which is as a garrison to the believer.—*John Gill.*

Verse 16.—"*I will go in the strength of the Lord.*" The phrase, *to go in*, or, *with the strengths of God*, does not teach us that he *would go* by means of them, by their help and assistance, as many have thought, *first*, because the word is used to signify the illustrious and mighty deeds of God; *secondly*, because it denotes the *subject* of praise; but *to go with the strengths of Jehovah*, as the rendering ought to be . . . is *to go* as if girt with his former deeds of power—girt with them as if with the *material* of praise.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 17.—"*O God, thou hast taught me from my youth.*" Whence was it that David understood "more than the ancients"? (Psalm cxix. 100.) He had a Father to teach him; God was his instructor. Many a child of God complains of ignorance and dulness; remember this, thy Father will be thy tutor; he hath promised to give "his Spirit to lead thee into all truth" (John vi. 13); and God doth not only inform the understanding, but incline the will; he doth not only teach us what we should do, but enables us to do it. (Ezekiel xxxvi. 27): "I will cause you to walk in my statutes." What a glorious privilege is this, to have the star of the word pointing us to Christ, and the loadstone of the Spirit drawing!—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 17.—"*Thou hast taught me from my youth.*" If you ask me what were the ways by which David was taught, I might ask you what they were not. . . . . God taught him by his shepherd's crook; and by the rod and sceptre of a king he taught him. He taught him by the shouts of the multitude—"Saul hath slain

his thousands and David his ten thousands ; " and he taught him just as much, if not more, by the contempt he met in the court of the Philistines. He taught him by the arrows of Jonathan, levelled in friendship ; and he taught him by the javelin of Saul levelled at his life. He taught him by the faithlessness of Abiathar, and the faithlessness of even his faithful Joab ; and he taught him by the faithfulness of Abishai, and the faithfulness of Mephibosheth ; and, let me add too, by the rebellion of Absalom, and the selfishness of Adonijah ; they were all means, by which the Lord taught his servant. And be assured, you that are under his teaching, there is nothing in your lives, but he can teach you by it : by comforts and crosses, by your wounds and your healings, by what he gives and by what he takes away. He unteaches his child, that he may teach him ; shows him his folly, that he may make him wise ; strips him of his vain confidence, that he may give him strength ; makes him know that he is nothing, that he may show him that he has all in the Lord—in Jesus his Beloved one.—*James Harrington Evans.*

Verse 17.—"*Thou hast taught me from my youth.*" Youth needs a teacher that it may embrace virtue. Seneca says, *Virtue is a hard thing to youth, it needs a ruler and guide : vices are acquired without a master.* How prone he was in his boyhood and youth to vices, we may see in Psalm xxv. " Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." Jerome, in his Epistle to Nepotianus, says : " As fire in green wood is stifled, so wisdom in youth, impeded by temptations and concupiscence, does not unfold its brightness, unless by hard work, and steady application and prayer, the incentives of youth are inwardly repelled. Hence it is that almost all nations have provided good and wise teachers of the young. Among the Spartans, one was chosen from the Magistrates and Senators to be παιδονόμος, rector of the boys. . . . . At Athens there were twelve men named *Sophronistae*, elected by the suffrages of all the tribes, to moderate the manners of youth. . . . . God is a teacher of his servants. Plato says, οὐδὲν εἶναι θειότερον, that there is nothing more divine than the education of children. Of God the Father, or the whole Trinity, Hannah, the mother of Samuel, says, 1 Samuel ii. 3 : " The Lord is a God of knowledge ; " [*Scientiarum*, Vulg.] that is, as the Chaldee has it, he knows all things. . . . . Socrates says, that he is *the mind of the universe.* Without him, therefore, all are demented ; but with him, and through him, in a single moment they become wise. Philo, in his treatise of the sacrifice of Cain and Abel, says, Masters cannot fill the mind of their pupils as if they were pouring water into a vessel ; but when God, the fountain of wisdom, communicates knowledge to the human race, he does it without delay, in the twinkling of an eye. . . . . *His anointing shall teach you of all things.*—1 John ii. 27.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 17.—"*From my youth.*" Is it such " a crown of glory " to be found old in the ways of righteousness ? Do you then begin to be godly betimes ; that, if you live in this world you may have this crown set upon your heads when you are ancient ; for is it not better for you to be plants of God's house than weeds upon the dunghill ? Those that are wicked are but as weeds upon a dunghill, but you that are godly are as plants in God's own orchard. In the last of the Romans, verse 7, we find that *Andronicus and Junia* are commended because they were in Christ before Paul : " They were in Christ before me." It is an honourable thing to be in Christ before others ; this is honourable when you are young ; and then going on in the ways of godliness all your young time, and so in your middle age, and till you come to be old.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 17.—"*Wondrous works.*" Observe that he calls the blessing of divine aid so often received in affliction, *wondrous works.* By this expression, he shows us, with what grievous perils he was tossed ; then how he had been snatched from them by the hand of God, contrary to the expectation of all men. Therefore, God is wonderful among his saints. To this end the adversities of the saints tend, that they may show forth in them the wonderful works of God.—*Musculus.*

Verses 17, 18.—The integrity of our hearts and ways, in former walkings after God, and service for God, may by faith in Christ, as all in our justification, be pleaded. See also Isa. xxxviii. 3 and Psalm cxix. 10. The Lord himself maketh it to himself a motive to show mercy to his people (Isa. lxiii. 8 ; Jer. ii. 2) ; only we must use this plea more rarely and sparingly, in a self-denying way, in faith in Christ's righteousness, as made ours.—*Thomas Cobbet.*

Verse 18.—"*Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not.*" God exalts pardoning grace to some more, and sanctifying grace to others ; he is

the God of grace. Those ships that have been in long voyages at sea, three or four years out, have gone through hot climates and cold, passed the equinoctial line again and again, and have run through many a difficulty, and great storms, and yet have been kept alive at sea, as they speak, when these shall meet one another at sea near the haven, how will they congratulate? And old disciples should do so, that God hath kept grace alive in their souls. And I would ask you how many thousand ships have you seen cast away before your eyes? How many that have made "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," as the apostle speaks? This and that profession, that has run into this and that error damnable, or false opinions and teaching, though all of smaller moment; others that have struck upon quicksands of worldly preferments, and many split upon rocks, and yet you have been kept. This should move you to bless this your God, the God of grace, the more. Come, let me knock at your hearts; are none of you old professors, like old hollow oaks, who stand in the woods among professors still, and keep their stand of profession still, and go to ordinances, etc.; but the "rain they drink in," as the apostle's word is, serves to no other end but to rot them. "These are nigh unto cursing." Or, have you green fruits still growing on you, as quickly and lively affections to God and Christ, and faith and love, as at the first, and more abounding? O bless God you are so near the haven, and lift up your hearts, your redemption draws near; and, withal, raise your confidence, that that God of grace, who hath called you into his eternal glory, will keep you for it, and possess you of it shortly.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 18.—"*Forsake me not; until,*" etc. Apostasy in old age is fearful. He that climbs almost to the top of a tower, then slipping back, hath the greater fall. The patient almost recovered, is more deadly sick by a relapse. There were stars struck from heaven by the dragon's tail (Rev. xii. 4); they had better never have perched so high. The place where the Israelites fell into that great folly with the daughters of Moab, was in the plain, within the prospect of the Holy Land; they saw their inheritance, and yet fell short of it. So wretched is it for old men to fall near to their very entry of heaven, as old Eli in his indulgence (1 Sam. ii.); old Judah in his incest (Gen. xxxviii.); old David with Bathsheba; old Asa trusting in the physicians more than in God (2 Chron. xvi. 12); and old Solomon built the high places. Some have walked like cherubs in the midst of the stones of fire, yet have been cast as profane out of God's mountain. Ez. xxviii. 14, 16. Thus the seaman passeth all the main, and suffers wreck in the haven. The corn often promiseth a plenteous harvest in the blade, and shrinks in the ear. You have trees loaden with blossoms, yet, in the season of expectation, no fruit. A comedy that holds well many scenes, and goes lamely off in the last act, finds no applause. "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke xvii. 32): think on that pillar of salt, that it may season thee.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 18.—"*Until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation,*" etc. Are there better preachers of the works of God to be found than hoary parents in the circle of their children; or grandparents in that of their grandchildren?—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 18.—

With years oppressed, with sorrows worn,
Dejected, harassed, sick, forlorn,
To thee, O God, I pray;
To thee my withered hands arise,
To thee I lift these failing eyes:
Oh, cast me not away!

Thy mercy heard my infant prayer;
Thy love, with all a mother's care,
Sustained my childish days:
Thy goodness watched my ripening youth,
And formed my heart to love thy truth,
And filled my lips with praise.

O Saviour! has thy grace declined?
Can years affect the Eternal Mind,
Or time its love destroy?
A thousand ages pass thy sight,
And all their long and weary flight
Is gone like yesterday.

Then, e'en in age and grief, thy name
Shall still my languid heart inflame,
And bow my faltering knee:
Oh, yet this bosom feels the fire,
This trembling hand and drooping lyre,
Have yet a strain for thee!

Yes, broken, tuneless, still, O Lord,
This voice, transported, shall record
Thy goodness, tried so long;
Till, sinking slow, with calm decay,
Its feeble murmurs melt away
Into a seraph's song.

Sir Robert Grant.

Verse 19.—"*O God, who is like unto thee?*" Either for greatness or goodness, for power or for mercy, for justice, truth, and faithfulness; for the perfections of his nature, or the works of his hands; and to be praised, reverenced, and adored, as he is.—*John Gill.*

Verse 19.—"*Who is like unto thee!*" מִי כָמֹכָה, *Mi camocha.* God is alone: who can resemble him? He is eternal; he can have none *before*, and there can be none *after;* for, in the infinite *unity* of *trinity*, he is that eternal, unlimited, impartible, incomprehensible, and uncompounded, ineffable Being, whose *essence* is hidden from all created intelligences, and whose *counsels* cannot be fathomed by any creature that even his own hand can form. "WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE!" will excite the wonder, amazement, praise, and adoration of angels and men to all eternity.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 20.—"*Thou shalt quicken me again,*" etc. Here Jerome triumpheth over the Jews, challenging them when this was ever verified in David, for he was never dead and quickened again; and, therefore, this must needs be expounded of him as that in Psalm xvi: "*Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave;*" and to "*the depths of the earth,*" here, answer those words, Ephesians iv. 9, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" Yet, this may also be applied to David, being figuratively understood, as a like speech of Hannah, 1 Samuel ii.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 20.—"*And thou shalt bring me up,*" etc. This is an allusion to men who are unhappily fallen into a deep pit of water. The meaning is, Thou shalt draw me out of the extreme danger into which I am plunged, and wherein I shall perish without thy help.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 21.—Greatness increasing with comfort, and comfort increasing with greatness; very rarely united.—*George Rogers.*

Verse 22.—"*With the psaltery.*" . . . "*with the harp.*" There was a typical signification in them; and upon this account they are not only rejected and condemned by the whole army of Protestant divines, as for instance, by Zuinglius, Calvin, Peter Martyr, Zepperus, Parœus, Willet, Ainsworth, Ames, Calderwood, and Cotton; who do, with one mouth, testify against them, most of them expressly affirming that they are a part of the abrogated legal pedagogy; so that we might as well recall the incense, tapers, sacrifices, new moons, circumcision, and all the other shadows of the law into use again. But Aquinas himself also, though a Popish schoolman, pleads against them upon the same account, *quia aliquid figurabant*, and saith, the Church in his time did not use them, *ne videatur judaizare*, lest they should seem to judaize.—*Samuel Mather, on The Types.*

Verse 22.—"*Psaltery.*" . . . "*harp.*" Suppose singing with instruments were not typical, but only an external solemnity of worship, fitted to the solace of the outward senses of children under age, such as the Israelites were in the Old Testament (Gal. iv. 1, 2, 3); yet now, in the grown age of the heirs of the New Testament, such external pompous solemnities are ceased, and no external worship reserved, but such as holdeth forth simplicity and gravity; nor is any voice now to be heard in the church of Christ, but such as is significant and edifying by signification (1 Cor. xiv. 10, 11, 26), which the voice of instruments is not.—*John Cotton*, 1585—1652.

Verse 22.—"*Holy One of Israel.*" This name of God occurs in the Psalms only in two other places, lxxviii. 41; lxxxix. 18; these last two being, according to

Delitzsch, older Psalms than this. In Isaiah, this name of God occurs thirty times; in Habakkuk once; in Jeremiah (who may have adopted it from Isaiah) twice (l. 29; li. 5).—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 23.—"*My lips;*" "*my soul.*" Hypocrites praise God with the "*lips*" only; but David joins the *soul* to the lips.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 23.—"*Greatly.*" See how the word great is repeated. Great things done, verse 19; great troubles shown, verse 20; greatness increased, verse 21; and great rejoicing consequent thereon, in the present verse. In a great God, doing great things, it is meet greatly to rejoice.—*C. H. S.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Arguments used to induce the Lord to hear, drawn, I. From his *justice* and *equity*: "Deliver me in thy righteousness." II. From his *word* and *promise*: "Thou hast given commandment," etc. III. From his *power*: "Thou art my rock," etc. IV. From his *relation* to him: "My God, my hope." V. From the *qualities* of his *adversaries*: "They were wicked, unrighteous, and cruel." VI. From his *confidence*: "Thou art my hope." VII. From his *gracious providence*: "By thee have I been holden up," etc. VIII. From his *thankful heart*: "My praise shall be continually," etc. IX. He had *none to trust to* but God: "Thou art my refuge."—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—Faith is a present act; faith is a personal act, faith deals only with God, faith knows what she is about, faith kills her fears by prayer.

Verse 2.—An appeal. I. To the power of God: "Deliver me." II. To the faithfulness of God: "In thy righteousness." III. To the providence of God: "Cause me to escape." IV. To the condescension of God: "Incline thine ear." V. To the mercy of God: "Save me."

Verse 2.—*Cause me to escape.* From whom? From what? How? By what power? For what end?

Verse 3.—(First two clauses.) The believer abiding in God and continually resorting to him.

Verse 3.—(Third clause.) A command based on the divine promise, clothed with divine power, addressed to all necessary agencies, and embracing all exigencies.

Verse 4.—I. When God is for us, the wicked are against us. II. When the wicked are against us, God is for us.

Verse 5.—God the essence of hope and faith.

Verse 7 (*first clause*) may be accommodated to, I. *The Saviour.* II. *The Saint.* He is a *wonder*, in reference to (1) What he once was; (2) What he now is; (3) What he will hereafter be. III. *The Sinner* is "a wonder unto many;" a wonder to three worlds: to (1) angels; (2) saints; (3) devils and lost souls.—*Warwell Fenn.* 1830.

Verse 7.—Consider the text, with reference to *David*, to *Christ*, and to the *Christian.* I. With reference to *David.* 1. David was a wonder as a man. 2. As a king. 3. As a servant of God. II. With respect to *Christ.* 1. Christ was a wonder in his person. 2. In his life. 3. In his miracles. 4. In his teaching. 5. In his sufferings. 6. In his ascension and mediatorial glory. III. With regard to the *Christian.* 1. The Christian is a wonder to himself. 2. To the world. 3. To wicked spirits. 4. To the angels in heaven.—*John Cawood.* 1830.

Verse 8.—I. What? filled with what?—murmurings? doubts? fears? No! Praise. My own?—of men? No. "*Thy praise.*" "*Thy* honour." II. When? "All the day." 1. The whole day. 2. Every day; a good preparation for heaven.

Verse 9.—There are some peculiar circumstances of old age which render this blessing—the favour and presence of God—necessary. I. Old age is a time of but little natural enjoyment, as Barzillai acknowledged. 2 Sam. xix. 35. II. It is a time of life in which the troubles of life are often known to increase. III. Old age is a time in which the troubles of life not only increase, but become less tolerable. IV. Old age is a time that ought to command respect, and does so among dutiful children and all serious Christians: but it is often known to be attended with neglect.

This is the case especially where they are poor and dependent. It has been the case where public characters have lost their youthful vivacity, and the brilliancy of their talents.—*A. Fuller.*

Verse 9.—There is, I. Fear, mixed with faith. 1. Natural to old age. 2. Suggested by the usage of the world. II. Faith, mixed with fear: "Cast me not," etc. 1. Old age is not a sin. 2. It is a crown of glory if found, etc.

Verses 11, 12.—Two great lies and two sweet prayers.

Verses 13, 14.—I. What the wicked gain by opposing the righteous: "Let them," etc., *verse* 13.—II. What the righteous gain from being opposed by them,—*verse* 14: "But I," etc.

Verse 14.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 998: "More and More."

Verse 15.—I. The determination avowed. 1. To recount the instances of the divine faithfulness in his deliverances. 2. To recount them publicly: "My mouth," etc. 3. Constantly: "All the day." II. The reason assigned: "For I know not," etc. "Eternity's too short to utter all thy praise." Therefore, I begin it now, and will continue it.

Verse 16.—I. The resolution: "I will go." II. The reservation: "Thy strength only—thy righteousness only."

Verse 17.—"*O God, thou hast taught me.*" None but God can teach us experimentally; and the lessons he teaches are always useful and important. He teaches all his scholars to know themselves—their depravity, poverty, and slavery. He teaches them his law—its purity, claims and penalty. He teaches them his gospel—its fulness, freeness, and sensibility. He teaches them to know himself; as a reconciled God, as their Father and faithful friend. His teaching is accompanied with power and authority. We may know divine teaching by its effects: it always produces humility—they sit at his feet; dependence upon him; abhorrence of sin; love to God as a teacher; obedience to the lessons taught; thirst for further attainments; and it brings us daily to Jesus.—*James Smith.*

Verse 18.—The peculiar testimony of pious old age, what it is based upon, to whom it should be directed, and what we may hope from it.

Verse 19.—A sermon might be instructively worked out upon "the high things of God."

Verse 20.—I. The future benefit of present trials: "Hereafter," said Æneas to his shipwrecked companions, "it will delight us to think of these things." II. The present benefit of future mercies: "Glory to thee for all the grace we have not tasted yet."

Verse 22.—A choice subject for song—"thy truth," which may mean either doctrinal truth, or the attribute of faithfulness, its manifestation in history, and in our own experience.

Verses 22, 23.—I. The soul of music: Not in the instrument, or the voice, but in the soul. "I will sing with the understanding also." "Making melody in the heart," etc. II. The music of the soul. The "soul which thou hast redeemed." Redemption is the music of souls once lost. Their only song in heaven.

Verse 24.—How to make familiar talk edifying and useful.

PSALM LXXII.

TITLE.—*A Psalm* for Solomon.—*The best linguists affirm that this should be rendered,* of *or* by *Solomon. There is not sufficient ground for the rendering* for. *It is pretty certain that the title declares Solomon to be the author of the Psalm, and yet from verse* 20 *it would seem that David uttered it in prayer before he died. With some diffidence we suggest that the spirit and matter of the Psalm are David's, but that he was too near his end to pen the words, or cast them into form; Solomon, therefore, caught his dying father's song, fashioned it into goodly verse, and, without robbing his father, made the Psalm his own. It is, we conjecture, the Prayer of David, but the Psalm of Solomon. Jesus is here, beyond all doubt, in the glory of his reign, both as he now is, and as he shall be revealed in the latter-day glory.*

DIVISION.—*We shall follow the division suggested by Alexander. "A glowing description of the reign of Messiah as righteous, verses* 1—7; *universal, verses* 8—11; *beneficent, verses* 12—14; *and perpetual, verses* 15—17; *to which are added a doxology, verses* 18, 19; *and a postscript, verse* 20."

EXPOSITION.

GIVE the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

4 He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers *that* water the earth.

7 In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

1. *"Give the king thy judgments, O God."* The right to reign was transmitted by descent from David to Solomon, but not by that means alone: Israel was a theocracy, and the kings were but the viceroys of the greater King; hence the prayer that the new king might be enthroned by divine right, and then endowed with divine wisdom. Our glorious King in Zion hath all judgment committed unto him. He rules in the name of God over all lands. He is king "Dei Gratia" as well as by right of inheritance. *"And thy righteousness unto the king's son."* Solomon was both king and king's son; so also is our Lord. He has power and authority in himself, and also royal dignity given him of his Father. He is the righteous king; in a word, he is "the Lord our righteousness." We are waiting till he shall be manifested among men as the ever-righteous Judge. May the Lord hasten in his own time the long-looked-for day. Now wars and fightings are even in Israel itself, but soon the dispensation will change, and David, the type of Jesus warring with our enemies, shall be displaced by Solomon the prince of peace.

2. *"He shall judge thy people with righteousness."* Clothed with divine authority, he shall use it on the behalf of the favoured nation, for whom he shall show himself strong, that they be not misjudged, slandered, or in any way treated maliciously. His sentence shall put their accusers to silence, and award the saints their true position as the accepted of the Lord. What a consolation to feel that none can suffer wrong in Christ's kingdom: he sits upon the great white throne, unspotted by a single deed of injustice, or even mistake of judgment: reputations are safe

enough with him. *"And thy poor with judgment."* True wisdom is manifest in all the decisions of Zion's King. We do not always understand his doings, but they are always right. Partiality has been too often shown to rich and great men, but the King of the last and best of monarchies deals out even-handed justice, to the delight of the poor and despised. Here we have the poor mentioned side by side with the king. The sovereignty of God is a delightful theme to the poor in spirit; they love to see the Lord exalted, and have no quarrel with him for exercising the prerogatives of his crown. It is the fictitious wealth which labours to conceal real poverty, which makes men cavil at the reigning Lord, but a deep sense of spiritual need prepares the heart loyally to worship the Redeemer King. On the other hand, the King has a special delight in the humbled hearts of his contrite ones, and exercises all his power and wisdom on their behalf, even as Joseph in Egypt ruled for the welfare of his brethren.

3. *"The mountains shall bring peace to the people."* Thence, aforetime, rushed the robber bands which infested the country; but now the forts there erected are the guardians of the land, and the watchmen publish far and near the tidings that no foe is to be seen. Where Jesus is there is peace, lasting, deep, eternal. Even those things which were once our dread, lose all terror when Jesus is owned as monarch of the heart: death itself, that dark mountain, loses all its gloom. Trials and afflictions, when the Lord is with us, bring us an increase rather than a diminution of peace. *"And the little hills, by righteousness."* Seeing that the rule of the monarch was just, every little hill seemed clothed with peace. Injustice has made Palestine a desert; if the Turk and Bedouin were gone, the land would smile again; for even in the most literal sense, justice is the fertilizer of lands, and men are diligent to plough and raise harvests when they have the prospect of eating the fruit of their labours. In a spiritual sense, peace is given to the heart by the righteousness of Christ; and all the powers and passions of the soul are filled with a holy calm, when the way of salvation, by a divine righteousness, is revealed. Then do we go forth with joy, and are led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing.

4. *"He shall judge the poor of the people."* He will do them justice, yea, and blessed be his name, more than justice, for he will delight to do them good. *"He shall save the children of the needy."* Poor, helpless things, they were packhorses for others, and paupers themselves, but their King would be their protector. Happy are God's poor and needy ones; they are safe under the wing of the Prince of Peace, for he will save them from all their enemies. *"And shall break in pieces the oppressor."* He is strong to smite the foes of his people. Oppressors have been great breakers, but their time of retribution shall come, and they shall be broken themselves. Sin, Satan, and all our enemies must be crushed by the iron rod of King Jesus. We have, therefore, no cause to fear: but abundant reason to sing—

> "All hail the power of Jesus' name!
> Let angels prostrate fall;
> Bring forth the royal diadem,
> And crown him Lord of all."

It is much better to be poor than to be an oppressor; for both the needy and their children find an advocate in the heavenly Solomon, who aims all his blows at haughty ones, and rests not till they are utterly destroyed.

5. *"They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure."* And well they may. Such righteousness wins the cheerful homage of the poor and the godly, and strikes dismay into the souls of unrighteous oppressors; so that all through the lands, both good and bad are filled with awe. Where Jesus reigns in power men must render obeisance of some sort. His kingdom, moreover, is no house of cards, or dynasty of days: it is as lasting as the lights of heaven; days and nights will cease before he abdicates his throne. Neither sun nor moon as yet manifest any failure in their radiance, nor are there any signs of decrepitude in the kingdom of Jesus; on the contrary, it is but in its youth, and is evidently the coming power, the rising sun. Would to God that fresh vigour were imparted to all its citizens to push at once the conquests of Immanuel to the uttermost ends of the earth. *"Throughout all generations"* shall the throne of the Redeemer stand. Humanity shall not wear out the religion of the Incarnate God. No infidelity shall wither it away, nor superstition smother it; it shall rise immortal from what seemed its grave; as the true phœnix, it shall revive from its ashes! As long as there are

men on earth Christ shall have a throne among them. Instead of the fathers shall be the children. Each generation shall have a regeneration in its midst, let Pope and Devil do what they may. Even at this hour we have before us the tokens of his eternal power; since he ascended to his throne, eighteen hundred years ago, his dominion has not been overturned, though the mightiest of empires have gone like visions of the night. We see on the shore of time the wrecks of the Cæsars, the relics of the Moguls, and the last remnants of the Ottomans. Charlemagne, Maximilian, Napoleon, how they flit like shadows before us! They were and are not; but Jesus for ever is. As for the houses of Hohenzollern, Guelph, or Hapsburg, they have their hour; but the Son of David has all hours and ages as his own.

6. *"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass."* Blessings upon his gentle sway! Those great conquerors who have been the scourges of mankind have fallen like the fiery hail of Sodom, transforming fruitful lands into deserts: but he with mild, benignant influence softly refreshes the weary and wounded among men, and makes them spring up into newness of life. Pastures mown with the scythe, or shorn by the teeth of cattle, present, as it were, so many bleeding stems of grass, but when the rain falls it is balm to all these wounds, and it renews the verdure and beauty of the field; fit image of the visits and benedictions of "the consolation of Israel." My soul, how well it is for thee to be brought low, and to be even as the meadows eaten bare and trodden down by cattle, for then to thee shall the Lord have respect; he shall remember thy misery, and with his own most precious love restore thee to more than thy former glory. Welcome Jesus, thou true *Bien-aimé*, the Well-beloved, thou art far more than Titus ever was—the Delight of Mankind. *"As showers that water the earth."* Each crystal drop of rain tells of heavenly mercy which forgets not the parched plains: Jesus is all grace, all that he does is love, and his presence among men is joy. We need to preach him more, for no shower can so refresh the nations. Philosophic preaching mocks men as with a dust shower, but the gospel meets the case of fallen humanity, and happiness flourishes beneath its genial power. Come down, O Lord, upon my soul, and my heart shall blossom with thy praise:—

> "He shall come down as still and light
> As scatter'd drops on genial field;
> And in his time who loves the right,
> Freely shall bloom, sweet peace her harvest yield."

7. *"In his days shall the righteous flourish."* Beneath the deadly Upas of unrighteous rule no honest principles can be developed, and good men can scarcely live; but where truth and uprightness are on the throne, the best of men prosper most. A righteous king is the patron and producer of righteous subjects. None flourish under Nero but those who are monsters like himself: like will to like; and under the gentle Jesus the godly find a happy shelter. *"And abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."* Where Jesus reigns he is known as the true Melchizedek, king both of righteousness and peace. Peace based upon right is sure to be lasting, but no other will be. Many a so-called Holy Alliance has come to the ground ere many moons have filled their horns, because craft formed the league, perjury established it, and oppression was the design of it; but when Jesus shall proclaim the great Truce of God, he will ordain perpetual peace, and men shall learn war no more. The peace which Jesus brings is not superficial or shortlived; it is abundant in its depth and duration. Let all hearts and voices welcome the King of nations; Jesus the Good, the Great, the Just, the Ever-blessed.

8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

8. *"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea."* Wide spread shall be the rule of Messiah; only the Land's End shall end his territory: to the Ultima Thule shall his sceptre be extended. From Pacific to Atlantic, and from Atlantic to Pacific,

he shall be Lord, and the oceans which surround each pole shall be beneath his sway. All other power shall be subordinate to his; no rival nor antagonist shall he know. Men speak of the Emperor of all the Russias, but Jesus shall be Ruler of all mankind. "*And from the river unto the ends of the earth.*" Start where you will, by any river you choose, and Messiah's kingdom shall reach on to the utmost bounds of the round world. As Solomon's realm embraced all the land of promise, and left no unconquered margin; so shall the Son of David rule all lands given him in the better covenant, and leave no nation to pine beneath the tyranny of the prince of darkness. We are encouraged by such a passage as this to look for the Saviour's universal reign; whether before or after his personal advent we leave for the discussion of others. In this Psalm, at least, we see a personal monarch, and he is the central figure, the focus of all the glory; not his servant, but himself do we see possessing the dominion and dispensing the government. Personal pronouns referring to our great King are constantly occurring in this Psalm; *he* has dominion, kings fall down before *him*, and serve *him;* for *he* delivers, *he* spares, *he* saves, *he* lives, and daily is *he* praised.

9. "*They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him.*" Unconquered by arms, they shall be subdued by love. Wild and lawless as they have been, they shall gladly wear his easy yoke; then shall their deserts be made glad, yea, they shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. "*And his enemies shall lick the dust.*" If they will not be his friends, they shall be utterly broken and humbled. Dust shall be the serpent's meat; the seed of the serpent shall be filled therewith. Homage among Orientals is often rendered in the most abject manner, and truly no sign is too humiliating to denote the utter discomfiture and subjugation of Messiah's foes. Tongues which rail at the Redeemer deserve to lick the dust. Those who will not joyfully bow to such a prince richly merit to be hurled down and laid prostrate; the dust is too good for them, since they trampled on the blood of Christ.

10. "*The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents.*" Trade shall be made subservient to the purposes of mediatorial rule; merchant princes, both far and near, shall joyfully contribute of their wealth to his throne. Seafaring places are good centres from which to spread the gospel; and seafaring men often make earnest heralds of the cross. Tarshish of old was so far away, that to the eastern mind it was lost in its remoteness, and seemed to be upon the verge of the universe; even so far as imagination itself can travel, shall the Son of David rule; across the blue sea shall his sceptre be stretched; the white cliffs of Britain already own him, the gems of the Southern Sea glitter for him, even Iceland's heart is warm with his love, Madagascar leaps to receive him; and if there be isles of the equatorial seas whose spices have as yet not been presented to him, even there shall he receive a revenue of glory. He has made many an islet to become a Holy Isle, and hence, a true Formosa. "*The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.*" Agriculture and pasturage shall contribute their share. Foreign princes from inland regions, as yet unexplored, shall own the all-embracing monarchy of the King of kings; they shall be prompt to pay their reverential tribute. Religious offerings shall they bring, for their King is their God. Then shall Arabia Felix be happy indeed, and the Fortunate Isles be more than fortunate. Observe, that true religion leads to generous giving; we are not taxed in Christ's dominions, but we are delighted to offer freely to him. It will be a great day when kings will do this: the poor widow has long ago been before them, it is time that they followed; their subjects would be sure to imitate the royal example. This free-will offering is all Christ and his church desire; they want no forced levies and distraints, let all men give of their own free will, kings as well as commoners; alas! the rule has been for kings to give their subjects' property to the church, and a wretched church has received this robbery for a burnt offering; it shall not be thus when Jesus more openly assumes the throne.

11. "*Yea, all kings shall fall down before him.*" Personally shall they pay their reverence, however mighty they may be. No matter how high their state, how ancient their dynasty, or far-off their realms, they shall willingly accept him as their Imperial Lord. "*All nations shall serve him.*" The people shall be as obedient as the governors. The extent of the mediatorial rule is set forth by the two far-reaching *alls*, all kings and all nations: we see not as yet all things put under him, but since we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour in heaven, we are altogether without doubt as to his universal monarchy on earth. It is not to be imagined that an Alexander or a Cæsar shall have wider sway than the Son of God. "Every

knee shall bow to him, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Hasten it, O Lord, in thine own time.

12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.

13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

12. *"For he shall deliver the needy."* Here is an excellent reason for man's submission to the Lord Christ; it is not because they dread his overwhelming power, but because they are won over by his just and condescending rule. Who would not fear so good a Prince, who makes the needy his peculiar care, and pledges himself to be their deliverer in times of need? *"When he crieth."* He permits them to be so needy as to be driven to cry bitterly for help, but then he hears them, and comes to their aid. A child's cry touches a father's heart, and our King is the Father of his people. If we can do no more than cry it will bring omnipotence to our aid. A cry is the native language of a spiritually needy soul; it has done with fine phrases and long orations, and it takes to sobs and moans; and so, indeed, it grasps the most potent of all weapons, for heaven always yields to such artillery. *"The poor also, and him that hath no helper."* The proverb says, "God helps those that help themselves;" but it is yet more true that Jesus helps those who cannot help themselves, nor find help in others. All helpless ones are under the especial care of Zion's compassionate King; let them hasten to put themselves in fellowship with him. Let them look to him, for he is looking for them.

13. *"He shall spare the poor and needy."* His pity shall be manifested to them; he will not allow their trials to overwhelm them; his rod of correction shall fall lightly; he will be sparing of his rebukes, and not sparing in his consolations. *"And shall save the souls of the needy."* His is the dominion of souls, a spiritual and not a worldly empire; and the needy, that is to say, the consciously unworthy and weak, shall find that he will give them his salvation. Jesus calls not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He does not attempt the superfluous work of aiding proud Pharisees to air their vanity; but he is careful of poor Publicans whose eyes dare not look up to heaven by reason of their sense of sin. We ought to be anxious to be among these needy ones whom the Great King so highly favours.

14. *"He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence."* These two things are the weapons with which the poor are assailed: both law and no law are employed to fleece them. The fox and the lion are combined against Christ's lambs, but the Shepherd will defeat them, and rescue the defenceless from their teeth. A soul hunted by the temptations of Satanic craft, and the insinuations of diabolical malice, will do well to fly to the throne of Jesus for shelter. *"And precious shall their blood be in his sight."* He will not throw away his subjects in needless wars as tyrants have done, but will take every means for preserving the humblest of them. Conquerors have reckoned thousands of lives as small items; they have reddened fields with gore, as if blood were water, and flesh but manure for harvests; but Jesus, though he gave his own blood, is very chary of the blood of his servants, and if they must die for him as martyrs, he loves their memory, and counts their lives as his precious things.

15 And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; *and* daily shall he be praised.

16 There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

17 His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

15. *"And he shall live."* *Vive le Roi!* O King! live for ever! He was slain, but is risen and ever liveth. *"And to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba."* These

are coronation gifts of the richest kind, cheerfully presented at his throne. How gladly would we give him all that we have and are, and count the tribute far too small. We may rejoice that Christ's cause will not stand still for want of funds; the silver and the gold are his, and if they are not to be found at home, far-off lands shall hasten to make up the deficit. Would to God we had more faith and more generosity. *"Prayer also shall be made for him continually."* May all blessings be upon his head; all his people desire that his cause may prosper, therefore do they hourly cry, "Thy kingdom come." Prayer *for* Jesus is a very sweet idea, and one which should be for evermore lovingly carried out; for the church is Christ's body, and the truth is his sceptre; therefore we pray for him when we plead for these. The verse may, however, be read as "through him," for it is by Christ as our Mediator that prayer enters heaven and prevails. "Continue in prayer" is the standing precept of Messiah's reign, and it implies that the Lord will continue to bless. *"And daily shall he be praised."* As he will perpetually show himself to be worthy of honour, so shall he be incessantly praised:—

> "For him shall constant prayer be made,
> And praises throng to crown his head;
> His name, like sweet perfume, shall rise
> With every morning's sacrifice."

16. *"There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains."* From small beginnings great results shall spring. A mere handful in a place naturally ungenial shall produce a matchless harvest. What a blessing that there is a handful; "except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah;" but now the faithful are a living seed, and shall multiply in the land. *"The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon."* The harvest shall be so great that the wind shall rustle through it, and sound like the cedars upon Lebanon:—

> "Like Lebanon, by soft winds fann'd,
> Rustles the golden harvest far and wide."

God's church is no mean thing; its beginnings are small, but its increase is of the most astonishing kind. As Lebanon is conspicuous and celebrated, so shall the church be. *"And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."* Another figure. Christ's subjects shall be as plentiful as blades of grass, and shall as suddenly appear as eastern verdure after a heavy shower. We need not fear for the cause of truth in the land; it is in good hands, where the pleasure of the Lord is sure to prosper. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." When shall these words, which open up such a vista of delight, be fulfilled in the midst of the earth?

17. *"His name shall endure for ever."* In its saving power, as the rallying point of believers, and as renowned and glorified, his name shall remain for ever the same. *"His name shall be continued as long as the sun."* While time is measured out by days, Jesus shall be glorious among men. *"And men shall be blessed in him."* There shall be cause for all this honour, for he shall really and truly be a benefactor to the race. He himself shall be earth's greatest blessing; when men wish to bless others they shall bless in his name. *"All nations shall call him blessed."* The grateful nations shall echo his benedictions, and wish him happy who has made them happy. Not only shall some glorify the Lord, but all; no land shall remain in heathenism; all nations shall delight to do him honour.

18 Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.

19 And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory: Amen, and Amen.

20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

18, 19. As Quesnel well observes, these verses explain themselves. They call rather for profound gratitude, and emotion of heart, than for an exercise of the understanding; they are rather to be used for adoration than for exposition. It is, and ever will be, the acme of our desires, and the climax of our prayers, to behold Jesus exalted King of kings and Lord of lords. He has done great wonders such

as none else can match, leaving all others so far behind, that he remains the sole and only wonder-worker; but equal marvels yet remain, for which we look with joyful expectation. He is the Blessed God, and his name shall be blessed; his name is glorious, and that glory shall fill the whole earth. For so bright a consummation our heart yearns daily, and we cry "*Amen, and Amen.*"

20. "*The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.*" What more could he ask? He has climbed the summit of the mount of God; he desires nothing more. With this upon his lip, he is content to die. He strips himself of his own royalty and becomes only the "son of Jesse," thrice happy to subside into nothing before the crowned Messiah. Before his believing eye the reign of Jesus, like the sun, filled all around with light, and the holy soul of the man after God's own heart exulted in it, and sung his "Nunc dimittis:" "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!" We, too, will cease from all petitioning if it be granted to us to see the day of the Lord. Our blissful spirits will then have nothing further to do but for ever to praise the Lord our God.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*For Solomon.*" I shall but mention a threefold analogy between Christ and Solomon. 1. In his *personal wisdom* (1 Kings iv. 29, 30); so Christ (Col. ii. 3); "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." 2. In the *glorious peace and prosperity of his kingdom*: the kingdom was peacably settled in his hand. 1 Chron. xxii. 9; iv. 24, 25. And so he fell to the work of building the temple, as Christ doth the church; so Christ (Isa. ix. 6); he is the Prince of Peace, the great Peacemaker. Eph. ii. 14. 3. In his *marriage with Pharaoh's daughter.* Some observe that the daughter of Pharaoh never seduced him: neither is there any mention made of the Egyptian idols. 1 Kings xi. 5, 7. In his other outlandish marriages he did sin; but *this* is mentioned as by way of special exception (1 Kings xi. 1); for she was a *proselyte*, and so it was no sin to marry her: and the love between her and Solomon is made a type of the love between Christ and the church. So Christ hath taken us Gentiles to be spouse unto him. Psalm xlv.—*Samuel Mather* (1626—1671), *in "The Figures or Types of the Old Testament."*

Whole Psalm.—The Seventy-second Psalm contains a description of an exalted king, and of the blessings of his reign. These blessings are of such a nature as to prove that the subject of the Psalm must be a divine person. 1. His kingdom is to be everlasting. 2. Universal. 3. It secures perfect peace with God and goodwill among men. 4. All men are to be brought to submit to him through love. 5. In him all the nations of the earth are to be blessed; *i.e.*, as we are distinctly taught in Gal. iii. 16, it is in him that all the blessings of redemption are to come upon the world. The subject of this Psalm is, therefore, the Redeemer of the world.—*Charles Hodge, in "Systematic Theology."*—1871.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm was penned by a king, it is dedicated to a king, and is chiefly intended concerning him who is "King of kings."—*Joseph Caryl, in a Sermon entitled "David's Prayer for Solomon."*

Whole Psalm.—Two Psalms bear *Solomon's* name in their titles. One of these is the Hundred and Twenty-seventh, the other is the Seventy-second; and here the traces of his pen are unequivocal. A mistaken interpretation of the note appended to it, "The prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended," led most of the old commentators to attribute the Psalm to David, and to suppose that it is a prayer offered in his old age "for Solomon," as the peaceful prince who was to succeed him on the throne. However, it has long been known that the note in question refers to the whole of the preceding portion of the Psalter, much of which was written by Asaph and the sons of Korah; and there can be no doubt that the title can only be translated, "of Solomon." So clear are the traces of Solomon's pen that Calvin, whose sagacity in this kind of criticism has never been excelled, although he thought himself obliged, by the note at the end of the Psalm, to attribute the substance of it to David, felt Solomon's touch so sensibly, that he threw out the conjecture that

the prayer was the father's, but that it was afterwards thrown into the lyrical form by the son. This is not the place for detailed exposition; I will, therefore, content myself with remarking that, properly speaking, the Psalm is not "for Solomon" at all. If it refers to him and his peaceful reign, it does so only in as far as they were types of the Person and Kingdom of the Prince of Peace. The Psalm, from beginning to end, is not only capable of being applied to Christ, but great part is incapable of being fairly applied to any other.—*William Binnie.*

Whole Psalm.—This is the fourth of those Psalms which predict the two natures of Christ. This Psalm admonishes us that we believe in Christ as perfect God, and perfect Man and King.—*Psalter of Peter Lombard* (—1164).

Whole Psalm.—That under the type of Solomon (to whom it is inscribed) the Messiah is "The King" of whom this Psalm treats, we have the consent, not only of the most eminent divines of modern times, and of the Fathers of the early Christian church, but of the ancient and most distinguished Jewish expositors; of which reference, indeed, it contains the most conclusive internal evidence. And, as under a new type, so is the kingdom here presented to us in a new aspect, in marked contradistinction to its character as foreshadowed by its other great type, the Davidical: for the character of David's reign was conquest. He was "a man of war" (1 Chron. xxviii. 1—3); the appointed instrument for subjecting the enemies of God's people Israel, by whom they were put in undisturbed possession of the promised land. But the character of Solomon's reign was peace, the import of his name, succeeding to the throne after all enemies had been subdued, and governing the kingdom which David's wars had established (1 Kings ii. 12), the two types, respectively, of Christ as he is yet to be manifested at his next appearing; first revealed as David, as seen in the vision of that event (Rev. xix. 11): "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness *he doth judge and make war*," etc., subduing the Antichristian confederacy (verses 19—21), as before predicted in the Second Psalm, of this same confederacy: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." And then, as Solomon, taking his throne, and extending the blessings of his kingdom of peace to the ends of the earth. David in the Second Psalm; Solomon in this.—*William De Burgh.*

Whole Psalm.—The reader is reminded of James Montgomery's hymn, beginning, "Hail to the Lord's Anointed;" it is a very beautiful versification of this Psalm, and will be found in "Our Own Hymn Book," No. 353.

Verse 1.—"*Give the king thy judgments, O God.*" Right and authority to execute judgment and justice. The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son.—*John Fry.*

Verse 1.—"*The king*" . . . . "*The king's son.*" I do not apprehend, with the generality of interpreters, that by "*The king*," and "*The king's son*," David means himself and his son, but *Solomon* only, to whom both the titles agree, as he was David's son, and anointed by him *king* during his lifetime.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 1.—"*The king*" . . . . "*The king's son.*" We see that our Lord is here termed both מֶלֶךְ, and בֶּן־מֶלֶךְ, being king himself, and also the son of a king; both as respects his human origin, having come forth from the stock of David, and also as to his divine origin; for the Father of the universe may, of course, be properly denominated King. Agreeably to this designation, we find on the Turkish coins the inscription: *Sultan, son of Sultan.*—*George Phillips.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy judgments.*" From whom does he seek these? O God, he says, give them. Therefore is it the gift of God that kings should judge righteously and observe justice. Moreover, he does not simply say, O God, give judgments to the king, and righteousness to the king's son; but *thy* judgments and *thy* righteousness. Grant them this grace, that what is just in thy sight they may judge. The world has its own judgments and its own righteousness, but deals in such a way that true righteousness is more oppressed than approved. Not such are the judgments and righteousness of God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 3.—"*The mountains shall bring peace to the people,*" etc. Those who apply this Psalm to Solomon expound the distich thus; "That the steep mountains on the frontier, strongly garrisoned, shall secure the land from hostile invasion; and the hills, cleared of the banditti, which in the rude ages were accustomed to inhabit

them, under the government of the king, intended in this Psalm, should be the peaceful seats of a useful, civilised peasantry." This sense is not ill expressed in Mr. Merrick's translation:

> "Peace, from the fort-clad mountain's brow,
> Descending, bless the plains below;
> And justice from each rocky cell,
> Shall violence and fraud expel."

But so little of the Psalm is at all applicable to Solomon, and the greater part of it so exclusively belongs to the Messiah, that I think these mountains and hills allude to the nature of the land of Judæa; and the general sense is, that, in the times of the great king, the inhabitants of that mountainous region shall live in a state of peace and tranquility. The thing intended is the happy condition of the natural Israel, in the latter day restored to God's favour, and to the peaceful possession of their own land. It is a great confirmation of this sense, that *"righteousness"* is mentioned as the means of the peace which shall be enjoyed.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 3.—*"The mountains shall bring peace to the people."* It was, and still is, common in the East to announce good or bad news from the tops of mountains and other eminences. By this means acts of justice were speedily communicated to the remotest parts of the country. Thus, when Solomon decided the controversy between the two harlots, the decision was quickly known over all the land. See 1 Kings iii. 28.—*Alexander Geddes.*

Verse 3.—*"The mountains shall bring peace."* The reference is to the fertility of the soil, which now is shown in an extraordinary way, when mountain summits, which are either oppressed with hopeless sterility or yield at a far inferior rate to the valleys, produce all things plentifully. And by this figure he signifies that this happiness of his kingdom shall not be the portion of a few only, but shall abound in all places and to all people, of every condition and of every age. No corner of the land, he affirms, shall be destitute of this fertility.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 3.—*"The mountains shall bring peace."* You may be sure to have peace when your mountains shall bring forth peace; when those mountains, which heretofore were mountains of prey and hills of the robbers, shall be a quiet habitation; when peace shall not be walled up in cities, or fenced in by bulwarks, but the open fields and highways, the mountains and the hills shall yield it abundantly; under every hedge, and under every green tree, there shall you find it; when the cottagers and the mountaineers shall have their fill of it; when they shall eat and be satisfied, lie down and none shall make them afraid, then the blessing is universal: and this is the work of *righteousness.*—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—The *"mountains"* and *"hills"* are not at all named as the most unfruitful places of the land, which they really were not, in Palestine, compare Deut. xxxiii. 15; Psalm cxlvii. 8, "Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains;" Psalm lxv. 12,—nor even because what is on them can be seen everywhere, and from all sides (*Tholuck*), compare against this, Joel iv. 18, "The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk," Isa. lv. 12,—but, as being the most prominent points and ornaments of the country, and, therefore, as representing it, well fitted to express the thought that the country shall be *everywhere* filled with peace.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 4.—*"The children of the needy."* The phrase, *the children of the afflicted,* is put for *the afflicted,* an idiom quite common in Hebrew; and a similar form of expression is sometimes used by the Greeks, as when they say *υἱοὺς ἰατρῶν, the sons of physicians* for *physicians.*—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—

> The lofty glory of the Flavian family shall remain,
> Enduring like the sun and stars.
>
> *Martial.*—Bk. ix. Epig. 7.

Verse 6.—*"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass,"* etc. This is spoken and promised of Christ, and serves to teach us that Christ coming to his church and people, by the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit, is most useful and refreshing to their souls, like showers of rain to the dry ground, or a meadow newly cut to make it spring again. Christless souls are like the dry ground; without the moisture of saving grace their hearts are hard; neither rods, mercies, nor sermons,

make impression upon them. Why? They are without Christ, the fountain of grace and spiritual influences. Before the fall man's soul was like a well-watered garden, beautiful, green, and fragrant; but by his apostasy from God, in Adam our first head, the springs of grace and holiness are quite dried up in his soul; and there is no curing of this drought but by the soul's union with a new head; to wit, Christ our second Adam, who has the Spirit given him without measure for the use of all his members. Now, when we are united by faith to Christ, our Head of influences, the dry land is turned into water-springs; Christ "comes down as the rain" by his Spirit of regeneration, and brings the springs of grace into the soul. He is the first and immediate receptacle of the Holy Spirit, and all regenerating and sanctifying influences, and out of his fulness we must by faith receive them. And when at any time the springs of grace are interrupted in the soul by sin or unbelief, so as the ground turns dry, the plants wither, and the things which remain are ready to die, the soul hath need to look up to Jesus Christ to come down with new showers upon the thirsty ground and decayed plants.

1. As the rain is the free gift of God to the dry ground, it comes free and cheap to poor and rich, small and great, and costs them nothing: so Christ with his blessings is God's free gift to a dry and perishing world; for which we should be continually thankful. 2. As nothing can stop the falling of the rain; so nothing can hinder Christ's gracious influences, when he designs to awake, convince, or soften a hard heart. When those showers do fall on sinners, the most obstinate will must yield, and cry, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? 3. As the rain is most necessary and suitable to the dry ground, and to the various plants it produceth, and also to the different parts of every plant or tree—such as the root, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit; so Christ is absolutely necessary, and his influence most suitable to all his people's souls, and to every faculty of them—the understanding, will, memory, and affections; and to all their different graces, faith, love, repentance, etc.; to root and establish them, strengthen and confirm them, quicken and increase them, cherish and preserve them. 4. As the rain comes in divers ways and manners to the earth, sometimes with cold winds and tempests, thunders and lightnings, and at other times with calmness and warmth; so Christ comes to sinners, sometimes with sharp convictions and legal terrors, and sometimes with alluring invitations and promises. 5. O how pleasant are the effects of rain to languishing plants, to make them green and beautiful, lively and strong, fragrant and beautiful! So the effects of Christ's influences are most desirable to drooping souls, for enlightening and enlivening them, for confirming and strengthening them, for comforting and enlarging them, for appetising and satisfying them, transforming and beautifying them. A shower from Christ would soon make the church, though withered, turn green and beautiful, and to send forth a smell as of a field that the Lord hath blessed; and likewise some drops of this shower, falling down upon the languishing graces of communicants, would soon make them vigorous and lively in showing forth their Saviour's death at his table.—*John Willison.*

Verse 6.—There cannot be a more lively image of a flourishing condition than what is conveyed to us in these words. The grass which is forced by the heat of the sun, before the ground is well prepared by rains, is weak and languid, and of a faint complexion; but when clear shining succeeds the gentle showers of spring, the field puts forth its best strength, and is more beautifully arrayed than ever Solomon in all his glory.—*Thomas Sherlock.* 1678—1761.

Verse 6.—"*He shall come down,*" יֵרֵד. There is a fourfold descending of Christ which the Scripture mentions. 1. His incarnation, the manifestation of himself in the flesh. II. The abasing himself in condition; he did not only assume human flesh, but all the natural infirmities of our flesh. III. The subjecting of himself to death. IV. The distillations of his grace and spiritual blessings upon his church.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 6 (*first clause*).—Some render this "like dew on the fleece." The mysterious fleece of Gideon, which, on being exposed to the air, is first of all filled with the dew of heaven while all the ground around it is quite dry, and which afterwards becomes dry while the earth is watered, pictures to us, according to the old divines, that the dew of Heaven's grace was poured out upon Judæa at the time when all the rest of the world remained in barrenness and ignorance of God; but that now, by a strange alteration, this same Judæa lies in dryness and forgetfulness of God, while, on the contrary, all the other nations of the earth are inundated with the dew of heavenly grace.—*Pasquier Quesnel.*

Verse 6.—"*Upon the mown grass.*" The Hebrew word used here hath a double signification. It signifies a shorn fleece of wool, and it signifies a meadow newly mown. This hath occasioned divers readings. Some read it, He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool: so the Septuagint. They that follow this reading make it an allusion unto the dew that fell upon Gideon's fleece (Judges vi. 37—39), when all the land beside was dry, and, again, upon the rest of the land when the fleece was dry. Others read it according to our translation: "*He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.*" This seems to me more agreeable to the meaning of the Holy Ghost; especially because of the clause following, which is added by way of explication: "*As showers that water the earth.*" "*As the showers,*" רְבִיבִים. Rain and showers differ only as less and more; rain signifies smaller showers, and showers signify greater rain. Deut. xxxii. 2. Rain falling in multitude of drops is called a shower. "*That water the earth.*" The word זרזיף *zarziph*, which is here translated "*water,*" is only used in this place in all the Bible. It signifies to water by dispersion, to water by drops. The showers are dispersed in drops all over the face of the earth, in a very regular and artificial way. "God hath divided," saith Job, "a watercourse for the overflowings of water." Job xxxviii. 25. The rain is from the cloud spouted out by drops after such a manner that every part hath its share.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 6.—"*The mown grass;*" literally, "*that which is shorn,*" whether *fleece* or *meadow.* In the former sense it occurs Jud. vi. 37, and so the older translators all take it, (Aq. ἐπὶ κουράν, LXX. and others ἐπὶ πλόκον, Jerome and Vulgate, *in vellus,*) probably with the idea that the reign of the monarch would be accompanied by signal tokens of the divine favour and blessing, like the dew upon Gideon's fleece; in the latter sense, the word is found Amos vii. 1; and this is indisputably its meaning here, as the parallel shows. The *mown* meadow is particularly mentioned, because the roots of the grass would be most exposed to the summer heat after the crop had been gathered in, and the effect would be most striking in the shooting of the young green blade after the shower.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 7.—"*Righteous.*" "*Peace.*" Do you ask what he is individually? The answer is, "King of Righteousness: "a being loving righteousness, working righteousness, promoting righteousness, procuring righteousness, imparting righteousness to those whom he saves, perfectly sinless, and the enemy and abolisher of all sin. Do you ask what he is practically, and in relation to the effect of his reign? The answer is, "King of Peace:" a sovereign whose kingdom is a shelter for all who are miserable, a covert for all who are persecuted, a resting-place for all who are weary, a home for the destitute, and a refuge for the lost.—*Charles Stanford.*

Verse 7.—"*Abundance of peace.*" Literally, "*multitude* of peace;" that is, the things which produce peace, or which indicate peace, will not be few, but numerous; they will abound everywhere. They will be found in towns and villages, and private dwellings; in the calm and just administration of the affairs of the State; in abundant harvests; in intelligence, in education, and in undisturbable industry; in the protection extended to the rights of all.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 7.—"*So long as the moon endureth.*" It does not necessarily follow from these words that the moon will ever cease to exist. The idea, commonly held, of the annihilation of the starry firmament is without foundation in Scripture. Such an idea has a pernicious influence on the human mind, inasmuch as it leads men to depreciate that which bears in such striking character the stamp and impress of the divine glory.—*Frederic Fysh.*

Verse 8.—"*From the river.*" There are many modern interpreters who, from the mention of the "*river*"—namely, the river Euphrates—in the other clause of the verse, think that the boundaries of the land of Palestine are here to be understood, that country being described as extending from the Red Sea to the Sea of Syria, otherwise called the Sea of the Philistines, and the Great Sea; and from the Euphrates to the Great Desert lying behind Palestine and Egypt. These are the limits of the Israelitish territory: the former, from the south to the west; the latter, from the north to the east. (Gen. xv. 18.) But, in this passage, there can scarcely be a doubt that by the "*river*"—to wit, the Euphrates—is indicated the extreme boundary of the earth towards the east. In a highly poetical, magnificent description, such as is given in this song, of a king exalted above all others, nothing can be conceived more inappropriate than saying that the dominions of such a king should be bounded

by the limits of Palestine.—*Ernest F. C. Rosenmüller* (1768—1835), *in "The Biblical Cabinet,"* vol. xxxii.

Verse 9.—*"They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him,"* etc. This is equivalent to saying, *the wild Arabs, that the greatest conquerors could never tame,* shall bow before him, or become his vassals; nay, his enemies, and, consequently, these Arabs among the rest, *"shall lick the dust,"* or court him with the most abject submissions.—*T. Harmer's Observations.*

Verse 9.—*"His enemies shall lick the dust."* Bear in mind that it was a custom with many nations that, when individuals approached their kings, they kissed the earth, and prostrated their whole body before them. This was the custom especially throughout Asia. No one was allowed to address the Persian kings, unless he prostrated himself on the ground and kissed the footsteps of the king, as Xenophon records.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verses 9, 10.—*"Wilderness," "Tarshish," "Sheba."* The most *uncivilized,* the most *distant,* and most *opulent* nations shall pay their homage to him.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verses 9—11.—*"They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust."* They shall humble themselves under the mighty hand of Christ; they shall acknowledge and receive him as their Lord; they shall fear and reverence him as their King; they shall veil and bow to his sceptre; they shall put themselves, and all that is theirs, under Christ; they shall give themselves to the exaltation and setting up of Christ. *"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts."* They shall consecrate their abilities to Christ's service; they shall communicate of their substance to the maintenance of Christ's church, and minister to the preservation and increase of Christ's kingdom. *"All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him."* All shall adore and serve him as their king; all shall exalt and honour him, as loyal subjects, their heavenly sovereign; all persons, from the highest to the lowest, must serve the Lord Jesus, and study to make him glorious; grace works obedience in the hearts of princes, as well as in the hearts of beggars. The sun, as well as the stars, did obeisance unto Joseph in his vision; kings, as well as inferior persons, do obeisance unto Christ, under his kingdom and gospel.—*Alexander Grosse* (—1654), *in "Sweet and Soule-Perswading Inducements leading unto Christ,"* 1632.

Verse 10.—*"Tarshish"* was an old, celebrated, opulent, cultivated, commercial city, which carried on trade in the Mediterranean, and with the seaports of Syria, especially Tyre and Joppa, and that it most probably lay on the extreme west of that sea. Was there then, in ancient times, any city in these parts which corresponded with these clearly ascertained facts? There was. Such was Tartessus in Spain, said to have been a Phœnician colony; a fact which of itself would account for its intimate connection with Palestine and the Biblical narratives.

As to the exact spot where Tartessis (so written originally) lay, authorities are not agreed, as the city had ceased to exist when geography began to receive attention; but it was not far from the Straits of Gibraltar, and near the mouth of the Guadalquivir, consequently at no great distance from the famous Granada of later days. The reader, however, must enlarge his notion beyond that of a mere city, which, how great soever, would scarcely correspond with the ideas of magnitude, affluence, and power, that the Scriptures suggest. The name, which is of Phœnician origin, seems to denote the district of south-western Spain, comprising the several colonies which Tyre planted in that country, and so being equivalent to what we might designate Phœnician Spain. We are not, however, convinced that the opposite coast of Africa was not included, so that the word would denote to an inhabitant of Palestine the extreme western parts of the world.—*J. R. Beard, in "A Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature."* 1866.

Verse 10.—*"The isles,"* אִיִּים, only in the Psalter besides, Ps. xcvii. 1, where, and uniformly, so rendered. The word, however, denotes all habitable land as opposed to water (see Gen. x. 5, where first it occurs, with Isa. xlii. 15), and so *" maritime land,* whether the sea coast of continent or island " (Gesenius); especially the countries washed by the Mediterranean, and the remote coasts to the west of Palestine. So in the parallel prophecy, Isa. lx. 9, and xi. 11; xli. 1, 2; xlii. 10—12; xlix. 1, etc. Accordingly, *"The isles* shall wait for his law " (Isa. xlii. 4) is expounded in Matt. xii. 22—" In Him shall *the Gentiles* trust."—*William De Burgh.*

Verse 10.—"*Sheba and Seba.*" There appear to have been two nations living in the same region, viz., Southern Arabia. One of these was descended from Cush, the son of Ham, and the other from Joktan, a descendant of Shem. These two peoples were often antagonistic in interests, despite the similarity of their names, but their divisions would be healed, and unitedly they would offer tribute to the Great King. It is an Arab proverb, "divided as the Sabæans," but Christ makes them one. "The Greek geographers usually couple Abyssinia with Yemen, in Arabia, and invariably represent the Abyssinians as an Arab or Sabæan race. Modern travellers, also, unanimously agree in recognising the Arab type among those Abyssinian populations which do not belong to the African stock." That the Sabæan nations were wealthy is clear from the Greek historian Agatharchides. "The Sabæans," says he, "have in their houses an incredible number of vases and utensils of all sorts, of gold and silver, beds and tripods of silver, and all the furniture of astonishing richness. Their buildings have porticoes with columns sheathed with gold, or surmounted by capitals of silver. On the friezes, ornaments, and the framework of the doors, they place plates of gold encrusted with precious stones. They spend immense sums in adorning these edifices, employing gold, silver, ivory, precious stones, and materials of the greatest value." They appear, also, to have acquired great wealth by trading, both with India and Africa, their peninsula lying between those two regions. Rich would be their gifts if Lenormant and Chevallier's description of their commerce be correct. "The principal importations from India were gold, tin, precious stones, ivory, sandal-wood, spices, pepper, cinnamon, and cotton. Besides these articles, the storehouses of southern Arabia received the products of the opposite coast of Africa, procured by the Sabæans in the active coasting trade they carried on with this not far distant land, where Mosyton (now Ras Abourgabeh) was the principal port. These were, besides the spices that gave name to that coast, ebony, ostrich feathers, and more gold and ivory. With the addition of the products of the soil of southern Arabia itself, incense, myrrh, laudanum, precious stones, such as onyx and agates, lastly, aloes from the island of Socotra, and pearls from the fisheries in the Gulf of Ormus, we shall have the list of the articles comprised in the trade of this country with Egypt, and with those Asiatic countries bordering on the Mediterranean; and, at the same time, by considering this list, we may form an idea of how great must have been the importance and activity of such a traffic."

Poor as God's people usually are, the era will surely arrive when the richest of the rich will count it all joy to lay their treasures at Jesus' feet.—C. H. S.

Verse 12.—"*He shall deliver the needy when he crieth.*" There needeth no mediator between him and his subjects: *he heareth the needy when they cry.* The man that hath nothing within him or without him to commend him to Christ, to assist, help, relieve, or comfort him in heaven or earth, is not despised by Christ, but delivered from that which he feareth.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 13.—"*He shall spare;*" more correctly, *compassionate* or *comfort the poor and needy; and shall save the souls,* or *preserve the lives of the needy.*—*William Henry Alexander, in "The Book of Praises: being the Book of Psalms . . . . with Notes Original and Selected."* 1867.

Verse 13.—"*And shall save the souls of the needy.*" Scipio used to say, that he would rather save a single citizen than slay a thousand enemies. Of this mind ought all princes to be towards their subjects; but this affection and love rose to the highest excellence and power in the breast of Christ. So ardent is his love for his own, that he suffers not one of them to perish, but leads them to full salvation and, opposing himself to both devils and tyrants who seek to destroy their souls, he constrains their fury and confounds their rage.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 14.—"*And precious shall their blood be in his sight.*" The Angolani so despised their slaves that they would sometimes give as many as twenty-two for one hunting dog. . . . But Christ prefers the soul of one of his servants to the whole world, since he died that it might be made more capable of entering into eternal felicity. For breaking one goblet the Roman cast his slave into the pond to be devoured by the murænæ. But the Son of God came down from heaven to earth to deliver mankind, his vile, ungrateful, faithless servants, from the pangs

of the serpent, like the golden fleece, and save them as Jonah from the whale. Is not their blood precious in his sight?—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 15.—"*And he shall live*;" Hebrew, "So shall he live;" *i.e.*, the poor man. —*Charles Carter.*

Verse 15.—"*And he shall live.*" There is a clear reference to the coronation of kings in the loud acclamations, *Long live the King!* and the bestowal of the customary gifts and presents, as is plain from 2 Sam. xvi. 16; 1 Kings i. 39; 1 Sam. x. 27; 2 Chron. xvii. 5.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 15.—"*He shall live.*" Alexander the Great acknowledged at death that he was a frail and feeble man. "Lo! I," said he, "am dying, whom you falsely called a god." But Christ proved that he was God when, by his own death, he overcame, and, as I may say, slew death.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 15.—"*He shall live.*" It is a great consolation to soldiers imperilled amid many forms of death, that their king *shall live.* Whence one of the chief of these warriors, consoling himself, said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that at the last day I shall rise from the earth." Great is the consolation of the dying, that he for whom, or in whom, they die, *shall live* for evermore. With whom, if we die, we shall also live again, and share his riches equally with himself; for rich indeed is our Solomon, in whom are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 15.—"*Prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.*" it might have been rendered, "Prayer also shall be made *through* him continually, and daily shall he be blessed." The word is rendered "blessed," when speaking of an act of worship towards God; and the word translated "for" is sometimes used for "through," as Joshua ii. 15,—"Through the window." If we hold the translation "for him," then it must be understood of the saints praying for the Father's accomplishment of his promises, made to the Son in the covenant of redemption, that his kingdom may come, his name be glorified, and that he may see his seed, and that the full reward may be given him for his sufferings, and so that he may receive the joy that was set before him.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 15.—"*Prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.*" In all conquered countries, *two* things marked the subjection of the people: 1. Their money was stamped with the name of the conqueror. 2. They were obliged to pray for him in their acts of public worship.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 16.—"*An handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains.*" Not only would the soil be likely to lack depth of earth, but the seed itself would be apt to be blown away by the winds of heaven, or washed down by the teeming rain to the base beneath.—*Peter Grant.* 1867.

Verse 16.—"*An handful of corn,*" etc. Upon mature consideration, I am persuaded that the proper sense of the word פְּסַת, or, פִּסָּה, is "a patch" or "piece;" and that it is used here just as we use the same words in English, in such expressions as these,—"a patch of wheat, a patch of barley, a piece of corn."—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 16.—"*An handful of corn.*" Doubtless it has been familiar to you to see corn merchants carrying small bags with them, containing just a handful of corn, which they exhibit as specimens of the store which they have for sale. Now, let me beg of every one of you to carry a small bag with this precious corn of the gospel. When you write a letter, drop in a word for Christ; it may be a seed that will take root. . . . Speak a word for Christ wherever you go; it may be seed productive of a great deal of fruit. Drop a tract on the counter, or in a house; it may be a seed productive of a plenteous harvest. The most difficult place, the steepest mountain, the spot where there is the least hope of producing fruit, is to be the first place of attack; and the more labour there is required, the more is to be given, in the distribution of the seeds.—*James Sherman.*

Verse 16.—"*Shall shake like Lebanon.*" With a plentiful ear, shall yield so large and strong a stalk that, with the motion of the wind, it shall shake cedar-like.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 16.—"*Shall shake as Lebanon.*" That is to say, shall wave backwards and forwards with the wind, like the tall cedars of Lebanon. This implies that the corn will be lofty and luxuriant.—*French and Skinner.*

Verse 16.—Neither *wave* nor *shake* conveys the full force of the Hebrew verb רעשׁ which suggests the additional idea of a rushing noise, like that of the wind

among the cedars of Lebanon. This comparison is certainly more natural and obvious than that which some interpreters assume with the grain-crops or harvest-fields of Lebanon itself. This would be merely likening one harvest to another, nor is any such allusion ever made elsewhere to the mountain, though its circumjacent plains and valleys were productive.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 16.—"*Like Lebanon.*" By dint of skill and labour, they have compelled a rocky soil to become fertile. Sometimes, to avail themselves of the waters, they have made a channel for them, by means of a thousand windings, on the declivities, or have arrested them in the valleys by embankments. At other times, they have propped up the earth, that was ready to roll down, by means of terraces and walls. Almost all the mountains being thus husbanded, present the appearance of a staircase, or of an amphitheatre, each tier of which is a row of vines or mulberry-trees. I have counted, upon one declivity, as many as a hundred, or a hundred and twenty, tiers from the bottom of the valley to the top of the hill. I forgot, for the moment, that I was in Turkey.—*Volney.*

Verse 16.—"*Like Lebanon.*" To understand the images taken from Mount Lebanon, it is necessary to remark that four enclosures of mountains are described, rising one upon another. The first and lowest of these is described as rich in grain and fruits. The second is barren, being covered only with thorns, rocks, and flints. The third, though higher still, is blessed with a perpetual spring; the trees are always green. There are innumerable orchards laden with fruit, and it forms, altogether, a terrestrial paradise,

> " Where fruits and blossoms blush,
> In social sweetness, on the self-same bough."

The fourth, or highest ridge of all, is the region of perpetual snow. Now, the imagery in the 72nd Psalm is evidently taken from the first of these ridges of Lebanon, where (most probably following the ancient mode of cultivating) the monks of Lebanon, for they were the chief cultivators of the terraced soil, industriously husband every particle of productive earth. In the expressive words of Burckhardt, "*Every inch of ground* is cultivated," so that no image could have been more singularly expressive of the universal cultivation under Messiah's reign, than to say that "*His fruit shall shake like Lebanon;*" or, understanding the Psalmist to speak figuratively, what moral landscape could be painted more richly than he does, when he intimates that those barren mountains of our world, which at present yield no fruit unto God, shall be cultivated in that day so industriously and so fully, that the fruit shall wave like the terraced corn-fields, or shake like the hanging mulberry-trees on the terraced heights of Lebanon.—*Robert Murray McCheyne.* 1813—1843.

Verse 16.—"*Shall flourish like grass.*" The peculiar characters of the grass, which adapt it especially for the service of man, are its apparent *humility* and *cheerfulness.* Its humility, in that it seems created only for lowest service,—appointed to be trodden on and fed upon. Its cheerfulness, in that it seems to exult under all kinds of violence and suffering. You roll it, and it is stronger next day; you mow it, and it multiplies its shoots, as if it were grateful; you tread upon it, and it only sends up richer perfume. Spring comes, and it rejoices with all the earth,—glowing with variegated flame of flowers,—waving in soft depth of fruitful strength. Winter comes, and, though it will not mock its fellow plants by growing then, it will not pine and mourn, and turn colourless and leafless as they. It is always green; and is only the brighter and gayer for the hoar-frost.—*John Ruskin.*

Verse 17.—"*His name shall be continued.*" *Yinnon:* The Kethiv, *yanin*, would be; " shall produce fresh progeny," or " send forth new shoots."

M. Renan was far from intending to supply a commentary on this verse, when he said of the Lord Jesus, " Son culte *se rajeunira sans cesse.*" Yet it would not be easy to find a more forcible illustration of the meaning of *yanin.*—*William Kay.*

Verse 17 (*second clause*).—The version and sense which Gussetius gives seems best of all: *His name shall generate,* or *beget children before the sun;* that is, his name preached, as the gospel, which is his name (Acts ix. 15), shall be the means of begetting many sons and daughters openly and publicly, in the face of the sun, and wherever that is.—*John Gill.*

Verse 17.—"*All nations shall call him blessed.*" It is sometimes inadvertently said that the Old Testament is narrow and exclusive, while the New Testament is broad and catholic in its spirit. This is a mistake. The Old and New Testaments

are of one mind on this matter. Many are called, and few chosen. This is the common doctrine of the New as well as of the Old. They are both equally catholic in proclaiming the gospel to all. The covenant with Adam and with Noah is still valid, and sure to all who return to God; and the call of Abram is expressly said to be a means of extending blessing to all the families of man. The New Testament does not aim at anything more than this: it merely hails the approaching accomplishment of the same gracious end.—*James G. Murphy, in "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis."* 1863.

Verse 19.—"*Amen, and Amen.*" Rabbi Jehudah the Holy, said, "He that said *Amen* in this world is worthy to say it in the world to come. David, therefore, utters *Amen* twice in this Psalm, to show that one 'Amen' belongs to this world, the other to that which is to come. He who saith 'Amen' devoutly, is greater than he who uttereth the prayers, for the prayers are but the letter, and the Amen is the seal. The scribe writeth the letters, the prince alone seals them."—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 19.—"*Amen, and Amen.*" What is "*Amen*" in Matt. xvi. 28 is ἀληθῶς or "verily" in Luke ix. 27. Our Saviour hath this phrase peculiar to himself, "Amen, Amen," to give confirmation to the doctrine, and to raise our attention and faith; or to show that not only truth is spoken, but by him who is truth itself. . . . There is no need for a rubric by the men of the Great Synagogue, or a canon, to command a man to blush, when it is only the natural passion that will command it; so, when the heart is warm in prayer with serious and earnest affections, a double Amen doth as naturally flow from us as milk from a mother's breast to her suckling. And *Amen* comes from אָמַן, *aman*, which signifies "to nurse;" as if it were, if not the mother, yet the faithful nurse, of lively devotion. Assent to repetitions is essential unto prayer, and it is not signified publicly but by one Amen. —*Thomas Woodcock* (—1695) *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 19.—"*Amen*" is a short word, but marvellously pregnant, full of sense, full of spirit. It is a word that seals all the truths of God, and seals every particular promise of God. And it is never likely to arise in the soul, unless there be first an almighty power from heaven, to seize on the powers of the soul, to subdue them, and make it say, "Amen." There is such an inward rising of the heart, and an innate rebellion against the blessed truth of God, that unless God, by his strong arm, bring the heart down, it never will nor can say, "Amen."—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 20.—"*The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.*" This announcement carries with it an intimation that other Psalms besides are to follow. It would have been superfluous, if the Psalms had not been to follow which bear on their front the name of David. To this, indeed, it must point, bearing the character of an enigma, that these additional Psalms stood in other relations than those given in the first two books. We shall attain perfect clearness and certainty by perceiving that all the Psalms of David in the last two books are inserted as component parts into the later cycles. The subscription at the end of the second book must have been designed to separate the free from the bound, the scattered and serial Psalms of David from each other. Analogous in some measure is the subscription, *at an end are the speeches of Job*, in Job xxxi. 40, which is not contradicted by the fact that Job appears again speaking in chapters xl. and xlii.; it should rather be regarded as serving to give us a right understanding of that formal conclusion.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 20.—At the conclusion of this Psalm, the Hebrew copies have, *Here end the orisons of David, the son of Jesse.* But, as several other Psalms of David follow, we must understand the note to mean either, "Here ends this book of the orisons of David," or, "Here ends the collection of hymns made by David himself;" additions being afterwards made to it, containing other hymns of David, by Asaph and others, and, lastly, by Esdras.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 20.—"*The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.*" So long as the fivefold division of the Psalter was neglected, this note gave nothing but perplexity to the commentators. Augustine, and his master, Ambrose of Milan, finding it standing in their Psalters, between the seventy-second and seventy-third Psalms, took it for part of the title of the latter, and tortured their ingenuity in divining its import. Calvin saw that the note is retrospective, but, not having observed its position at the end of a book, he thought it pertained exclusively to the Psalm

immediately preceding, and took it to mean that that Psalm embalms the last prayers of the aged king. But he was at a loss to reconcile this with the two obvious facts, that the *title of the* Psalm ascribes it to Solomon, and that quite a different Psalm is elsewhere preserved as "the last words of David" (2 Sam. xxiii. 1). And this perplexity of the great Reformer is shared by the older commentators generally. We get rid of it at once, by simply remarking the position of the note in question. It is set down after a doxology which marks the end of the Second Book. It has no special reference, therefore, to the seventy-second Psalm. It either refers to the Second Book, or, more probably, to both the First and Second.—*William Binnie.*

Verse 20.—"*The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.*" [Compared with] Ps. 86, title, "*A prayer of David.*" How can the prayers of David be said to be ended, when more begin? Answer: The end David had in making the Psalms, prayers, and praises, is one thing; but to make a final end of praying is another. Many several opinions have been given to reconcile this. Some that here end the prayers he made for Solomon. Some that here end the prayers he made in the days of his affliction. Some that here end the praises that he made, not the prayers, turning the word *tepillahs* into *tehillahs.* Some that here end David's, the rest that follow are Asaph's. Some that this Psalm was the last, the rest *posthumes*, found after his death. Some think it is spoken as the phrase is in Job, ch. 31, last verse: "The words of Job are ended;" and yet he had some words after this, but not so many. But the soundest resolution is this:—Here ends the prayers of David the son of Jesse; that is, here they are perfected. If any ask hereafter what or where lies the end that all these Psalms were made for? tell them here it lies in this Psalm, and, therefore, placed in the midst of all; as the centre in midst of a circle, all the lines meet here, and all the Psalms determine here; for it is only a prophetical treatise of the kingdom of Christ drawn out to the life, and it is dedicated to Solomon, because here is wisdom; other men had other ends, it may be, but the son of Jesse had no other end in the world but to set out Christ's kingdom in making of his Psalms.—*William Streat, in "The Dividing of the Hoof."* 1654.

Verse 20.—"*The son of Jesse.*" It is the note of true humility and sincere love to God to abase ourselves, and acknowledge our low condition, wherein God did find us when he did let forth his love to us, that thereby we may commend the riches of God's goodness and grace unto us, appeareth here in David.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 20.—"*Are ended.*" The sense is, that David, the son of Jesse, had nothing to pray for, or to wish, beyond the great things described in this Psalm. Nothing can be more animated than this conclusion. Having described the blessings of Messiah's reign, he closes the whole with his magnificent doxology:—

> Blessed be Jehovah God,
> God of Israel, alone performing wonders;
> And blessed be his name of glory,
> And let his glory fill the whole of the earth.
> Amen, and Amen.
> Finished are the prayers of David, the son of Jesse.
>
> *Samuel Horsley.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—I. He shall. II. They shall. Ring the changes on these, as the Psalm does.

Verse 1.—The prayer of the ancient church now fulfilled. I. Our Lord's titles. 1. King, by divine nature. 2. King's Son, in both natures. Thus we see his power innate and derived. II. Our Lord's authority: "Judgments." 1. To rule his people. 2. To rule the world for his people's benefit. 3. To judge mankind. 4. To judge devils. III. Our Lord's character. He is righteous in rewarding and punishing, righteous towards God and man. IV. Our loyal prayer. This asks for his rule over ourselves and the universe.

Verse 2.—Christ's rule in his church. I. The subjects. 1. Thy people, the elect, called, etc. 2. Thy poor, through conviction and consciousness of sin. II. The ruler. He, only, truly, constantly, etc. III. The rule—righteous, impartial, gentle, prudent, etc. Lesson. Desire this rule.

Verse 3.—Mountains of divine decree, of immutable truth, of almighty power, of eternal grace, etc. These mountains of God are securities of peace.

Verse 4.—The poor man's King, or the benefits derived by the poor from the reign of Jesus.

Verse 5.—The perpetuity of the gospel, reasons for it, things which threaten it, and lessons derived from it.

Verse 6.—The field, the shower, the result. This verse is easily enough handled in a variety of ways.

Verse 7.—I. The righteous flourish more at one season than another. II. They flourish most when Jesus is with them: "in his days," etc. III. The fruit of their growth is proportionally abundant: "and abundance," etc.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 7.—"*Abundance of peace.*" Abundant overtures of peace, abundant redemption making peace, abundant pardon conferring peace, abundant influences of the Spirit sealing peace, abundant promises guaranteeing peace, abundant love spreading peace, etc.

Verse 8.—The universal spread of the gospel. Other theories as to the future overturned, and their evil influence exposed; while the benefit and certainty of this truth is vindicated.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—The ignoble end of Christ's enemies.

Verse 10.—Christian finance; voluntary but abundant are the gifts presented to Jesus.

Verse 12.—Christ's peculiar care of the poor.

Verse 12.—I. Pitiable characters. II. Abject condition: "cry;" "no helper." III. Natural resort: "crieth." IV. Glorious interposition.

Verse 14.—The martyr's hope in life and comfort in death.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 14 (*last clause*).—The martyr's blood. I. Seen of God when shed. II. Remembered by him. III. Honoured by being a benefit to the church. IV. Rewarded especially in heaven.

Verse 15.—"*Prayer shall be made for him.*" We are to pray for Jesus Christ. Owing to the interest he has in certain objects, what is done for them is done for himself; and so he esteems it. We, therefore, pray for him when we pray for his ministers, his ordinances, his gospel, his church—in a word, his *cause.* But what should we pray for on his behalf? I. The degree of its resources; that there be always a sufficiency of suitable and able instruments to carry on the work. II. The freedom of its administration; that whatever opposes or hinders its progress may be removed. III. The diffusion of its principles; that they may become general and universal. IV. The increase of its glory, as well as its extent.—*W. Jay.*

Verse 15.—Prayer for Jesus, a suggestive topic. Daily praise, a Christian duty.

Verse 15.—A living Saviour, a giving people; the connection between the two. Or, Christ in the church fills the exchequer, fosters the prayer-meeting, and sanctifies the service of song.

Verse 16.—I. A happy description of the gospel; it is "a handful of corn." II. The places where it is sown. III. The blessed effects which this gospel, when thus sown, will produce in the world.—*J. Sherman.*

Verse 16.—I. Commencement. II. Publicity. III. Growth. IV. Result.

Verse 16.—I. What? "Corn." II. How much? "A handful." III. Where?

" In the earth upon the top of the mountains." IV. Will it grow? " The fruit," etc. V. What then? " They of the city," etc.

Verse 17.—I. Christ glorified in the Church: " men shall be blessed," etc. II. Glorified in the world; " all nations," etc. III. Glorified in worlds to come: " endure," " be continued," etc. IV. Glorified for ever.—*G. Rogers.*

Verses 17, 18, 19.—The Four Blesseds, their meaning and order.

Verse 18.—The clauses may be treated under the following heads. I. The object of praise. II. The subject of praise. III. The duration of praise. IV. The extent of the praise; and, V. The echo of the praise. " Amen, and Amen."—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 18.—"*Wondrous things.*" The unparalleled works of the Lord in providence and grace.

Verse 20.—I. Prayer should be frequent: " The prayers." II. Should be individual: " of David." III. Should be early commenced: " the son of Jesse." IV. Should be continued till they are no more needed.

HERE ENDETH THE SECOND BOOK OF
THE PSALMS.

PSALM LXXIII.

TITLE.—A Psalm of Asaph. *This is the second Psalm ascribed to Asaph, and the first of eleven consecutive Psalms bearing the name of this eminent singer. Some writers are not sure that Asaph wrote them, but incline to the belief that David was the author, and Asaph the person to whom they were dedicated, that he might sing them when in his turn he became the chief musician. But though our own heart turns in the same direction, facts must be heard; and we find in* 2 Chron. xxix. 30, *that Hezekiah commanded the Levites to sing "the words of David and of Asaph the seer;" and, moreover, in* Nehemiah xii. 46, *David and Asaph are mentioned together, as distinct from "the chief of the singers," and, as it would seem, as joint authors of psalmody. We may, therefore, admit Asaph to be the author of some, if not all, of the twelve Psalms ascribed to him. Often a great star which seems to be but one to the eyes of ordinary observers, turns out upon closer inspection to be of a binary character; so here the Psalms of David are those of Asaph, too. The great sun of David has a satellite in the moon of Asaph. By reading our notes on Psalm Fifty, in Vol. II., the reader will glean a little more concerning this man of God.*

SUBJECT.—*Curiously enough this Seventy-third Psalm corresponds in subject with the Thirty-seventh; it will help the memory of the young to notice the reversed figures. The theme is that ancient stumbling-block of good men, which Job's friends could not get over; viz.—the present prosperity of wicked men and the sorrows of the godly. Heathen philosophers have puzzled themselves about this, while to believers it has too often been a temptation.*

DIVISIONS.—*In verse* 1 *the Psalmist declares his confidence in God, and, as it were, plants his foot on a rock while he recounts his inward conflict. From* 2 *to* 14 *he states his temptation; then, from* 15 *to* 17 *he is embarrassed as to how to act, but ultimately finds deliverance from his dilemma. He describes with awe the fate of the ungodly in verses* 18—20, *condemns his own folly and adores the grace of God,* 21—24, *and concludes by renewing his allegiance to his God, whom he takes afresh to be his portion and delight.*

EXPOSITION.

TRULY God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart.

1. *"Truly,"* or, more correctly, *only, "God is good to Israel."* He is only good, nothing else but good to his own covenanted ones. He cannot act unjustly or unkindly to them; his goodness to them is beyond dispute, and without mixture. *"Even to such as are of a clean heart."* These are the true Israel, not the ceremonially clean but the really so; those who are clean in the inward parts, pure in the vital mainspring of action. To such he is, and must be, goodness itself. The writer does not doubt this, but lays it down as his firm conviction. It is well to make sure of what we do know, for this will be good anchor-hold for us when we are molested by those mysterious storms which arise from things which we do not understand. Whatever may or may not be the truth about mysterious and inscrutable things, there are certainties somewhere; experience has placed some tangible facts within our grasp; let us, then, cling to these, and they will prevent our being carried away by those hurricanes of infidelity which still come from the wilderness, and, like whirlwinds, smite the four corners of our house and threaten to overthrow it. O my God, however perplexed I may be, let me never think ill of thee. If I cannot understand thee, let me never cease to believe in thee. It must be so, it cannot be otherwise, thou art good to those whom thou hast made good; and where thou hast renewed the heart thou wilt not leave it to its enemies.

2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.

3 For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

4 For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm.

5 They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men.

6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment.

7 Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.

8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily.

9 They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.

10 Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.

11 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?

12 Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches.

13 Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

2. Here begins the narrative of a great soul-battle, a spiritual Marathon, a hard and well-fought field, in which the half-defeated became in the end wholly victorious. "*But as for me.*" He contrasts himself with his God who is ever good; he owns his personal want of good, and then also compares himself with the clean in heart, and goes on to confess his defilement. The Lord is good to his saints, "*but as for me,*" am I one of them? Can I expect to share his grace? Yes, I do share it; but I have acted an unworthy part, very unlike one who is truly pure in heart. "*My feet were almost gone.*" Errors of heart and head soon affect the conduct. There is an intimate connection between the heart and the feet. Asaph could barely stand, his uprightness was going, his knees were bowing like a falling wall. When men doubt the righteousness of God, their own integrity begins to waver. "*My steps had well nigh slipped.*" Asaph could make no progress in the good road, his feet ran away from under him like those of a man on a sheet of ice. He was weakened for all practical action, and in great danger of actual sin, and so of a disgraceful fall. How ought we to watch the inner man, since it has so forcible an effect upon the outward character. The confession in this case is, as it should be, very plain and explicit.

3. "*For I was envious at the foolish.*" "The foolish" is the generic title of all the wicked: they are beyond all other fools, and he must be a fool who envies fools. Some read it, "the proud;" and, indeed, these, by their ostentation, invite envy, and many a mind which is out of gear spiritually, becomes infected with that wasting disease. It is a pitiful thing that an heir of heaven should have to confess "I was envious," but worse still that he should have to put it, "I was envious at the foolish." Yet this acknowledgment is, we fear, due from most of us. "*When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*" His eye was fixed too much on one thing; he saw their present, and forgot their future, saw their outward display, and overlooked their soul's discomfort. Who envies the bullock his fat when he recollects the shambles? Yet some poor afflicted saint has been sorely tempted to grudge the ungodly sinner his temporary plenty. All things considered, Dives had more cause to envy Lazarus than Lazarus to be envious of Dives.

4. "*For there are no bands in their death.*" This is mentioned as the chief wonder, for we usually expect that in the solemn article of death, a difference will appear, and the wicked will become evidently in trouble. The notion is still prevalent that a quiet death means a happy hereafter. The Psalmist had observed that the very reverse is true. Careless persons become case-hardened, and continue presumptuously secure, even to the last. Some are startled at the approach of judgment, but many more have received a strong delusion to believe a lie. What with the surgeon's drugs and their own infidelity, or false peace, they glide into eternity

without a struggle. We have seen godly men bound with doubts, and fettered with anxieties, which have arisen from their holy jealousy; but the godless know nothing of such bands: they care neither for God nor devil. "*Their strength is firm.*" What care they for death? Frequently they are brazen and insolent, and can vent defiant blasphemies even on their last couch. This may occasion sorrow and surprise among saints, but certainly should not suggest envy, for, in this case, the most terrible inward conflict is infinitely to be preferred to the profoundest calm which insolent presumption can create. Let the righteous die as they may, let my last end be like theirs.

5. "*They are not in trouble as other men.*" The prosperous wicked escape the killing toils which afflict the mass of mankind; their bread comes to them without care, their wine without stint. They have no need to enquire, "Whence shall we get bread for our children, or raiment for our little ones?" Ordinary domestic and personal troubles do not appear to molest them. "*Neither are they plagued like other men.*" Fierce trials do not arise to assail them: they smart not under the divine rod. While many saints are both poor and afflicted, the prosperous sinner is neither. He is worse than other men, and yet he is better off; he ploughs least, and yet has the most fodder. He deserves the hottest hell, and yet has the warmest nest. All this is clear to the eye of faith, which unriddles the riddle; but to the bleared eye of sense it seems an enigma indeed. They are to have nothing hereafter, let them have what they can here; they, after all, only possess what is of secondary value, and their possessing it is meant to teach us to set little store by transient things. If earthly good were of much value, the Lord would not give so large a measure of it to those who have least of his love.

6. "*Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain.*" They are as great in their own esteem as if they were aldermen of the New Jerusalem; they want no other ornament than their own pomposity. No jeweller could sufficiently adorn them; they wear their own pride as a better ornament than a gold chain. "*Violence covereth them as a garment.*" In their boastful arrogance they array themselves; they wear the livery of the devil, and are fond of it. As soon as you see them, you perceive that room must be made for them, for, regardless of the feelings and rights of others, they intend to have their way, and achieve their own ends. They brag and bully, bluster and browbeat, as if they had taken out a license to ride roughshod over all mankind.

7. "*Their eyes stand out with fatness.*" In cases of obesity the eyes usually appear to be enclosed in fat, but sometimes they protrude; in either case the countenance is changed, loses its human form, and is assimilated to that of fatted swine. The face is here the index of the man: the man has more than suffices him; he is glutted and surfeited with wealth, and yet is one of the wicked whom God abhorreth. "*They have more than heart could wish.*" Their wishes are gratified, and more; their very greediness is exceeded; they call for water, and the world gives them milk; they ask for hundreds, and thousands are lavished at their feet. The heart is beyond measure gluttonous, and yet in the case of certain ungodly millionaires, who have rivalled Sardanapalus both in lust and luxury, it has seemed as if their wishes were exceeded, and their meat surpassed their appetite.

8. "*They are corrupt.*" They rot above ground; their heart and life are depraved. "*And speak wickedly concerning oppression.*" The reek of the sepulchre rises through their mouths; the nature of the soul is revealed in the speech. They choose oppression as their subject, and they not only defend it, but advocate it, glory in it, and would fain make it the general rule among all nations. "Who are the poor? What are they made for? What, indeed, but to toil and slave that men of education and good family may enjoy themselves? Out on the knaves for prating about their rights! A set of wily demagogues are stirring them up because they get a living by agitation. Work them like horses, and feed them like dogs; and if they dare complain, send them to the prison or let them die in the workhouse." There is still too much of this wicked talk abroad, and, although the working classes have their faults, and many of them very grave and serious ones too, yet there is a race of men who habitually speak of them as if they were an inferior order of animals. God forgive the wretches who thus talk. "*They speak loftily.*" Their high heads, like tall chimneys, vomit black smoke. Big talk streams from them, their language is colossal, their magniloquence ridiculous. They are Sir Oracle in every case, they speak as from the judge's bench, and expect all the world to stand in awe of them.

9. *"They set their mouth against the heavens."* Against God himself they aim their blasphemies. One would think, to hear them, that they were demi-gods themselves, and held their heads above the clouds, for they speak down upon other men as from a sublime elevation peculiar to themselves. Yet they might let God alone, for their pride will make them enemies enough without their defying him. *"And their tongue walketh through the earth."* Leisurely and habitually they traverse the whole world to find victims for their slander and abuse. Their tongue prowls in every corner far and near, and spares none. They affect to be universal censors, and are in truth perpetual vagrants. Like the serpent, they go nowhere without leaving their slime behind them; if there were another Eden to be found, its innocence and beauty would not preserve it from their filthy trail. They themselves are, beyond measure, worthy of all honour, and all the rest of mankind, except a few of their parasites, are knaves, fools, hypocrites, or worse. When these men's tongues are out for a walk, they are unhappy who meet them, for they push all travellers into the kennel: it is impossible altogether to avoid them, for in both hemispheres they take their perambulations, both on land and sea they make their voyages. The city is not free from them, and the village swarms with them. They waylay men in the king's highway, but they are able to hunt across country, too. Their whip has a long lash, and reaches both high and low.

10. *"Therefore his people return hither."* God's people are driven to fly to his throne for shelter; the doggish tongues fetch home the sheep to the Shepherd. The saints come again, and again, to their Lord, laden with complaints on account of the persecutions which they endure from these proud and graceless men. *"And waters of a full cup are wrung out to them."* Though beloved of God, they have to drain the bitter cup; their sorrows are as full as the wicked man's prosperity. It grieves them greatly to see the enemies of God so high, and themselves so low, yet the Lord does not alter his dispensations, but continues still to chasten his children, and indulge his foes. The medicine cup is not for rebels, but for those whom Jehovah Rophi loves.

11. *"And they say, How doth God know?"* Thus dare the ungodly speak. They flatter themselves that their oppressions and persecutions are unobserved of heaven. If there be a God, is he not too much occupied with other matters to know what is going on upon this world? So they console themselves if judgments be threatened. Boasting of their own knowledge, they yet dare to ask, *"Is there knowledge in the most High?"* Well were they called foolish. A God, and not know! This is a solecism in language, a madness of thought. Such, however, is the acted insanity of the graceless theists of this age; theists in name, because avowed infidelity is disreputable, but atheists in practice beyond all question.

I could not bring my mind to accept the rendering of many expositors by which this verse is referred to tried and perplexed saints. I am unable to conceive that such language could flow from their lips, even under the most depressing perplexities.

12. *"Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world."* Look! See! Consider! Here is the standing enigma! The crux of Providence! The stumbling-block of faith! Here are the unjust rewarded and indulged, and that not for a day or an hour, but in perpetuity. From their youth up these men, who deserve perdition, revel in prosperity. They deserve to be hung in chains, and chains are hung about their necks; they are worthy to be chased from the world, and yet the world becomes all their own. Poor purblind sense cries, Behold this! Wonder, and be amazed, and make this square with providential justice, if you can. *"They increase in riches;"* or, strength. Both wealth and health are their dowry. No bad debts and bankruptcies weigh them down, but robbery and usury pile up their substance. Money runs to money, gold pieces fly in flocks; the rich grow richer, the proud grow prouder. Lord, how is this? Thy poor servants, who become yet poorer, and groan under their burdens, are made to wonder at thy mysterious ways.

13. *"Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain."* Poor Asaph! he questions the value of holiness when its wages are paid in the coin of affliction. With no effect has he been sincere; no advantage has come to him through his purity, for the filthy-hearted are exalted and fed on the fat of the land. Thus foolishly will the wisest of men argue, when faith is napping. Asaph was a seer, but he could not see when reason left him in the dark; even seers must have the sunlight of revealed truth to see by, or they grope like the blind. In the presence of temporal circumstances, the pure in heart may seem to have cleansed themselves altogether in vain,

but we must not judge after the sight of the eyes. *"And washed my hands in innocency."* Asaph had been as careful of his hands as of his heart; he had guarded his outer as well as his inner life, and it was a bitter thought that all this was useless, and left him in even a worse condition than foul-handed, black-hearted worldlings. Surely the horrible character of the conclusion must have helped to render it untenable; it could not be so while God was God. It smelt too strong of a lie to be tolerated long in the good man's soul; hence, in a verse or two, we see his mind turning in another direction.

14. *"For all the day long have I been plagued."* He was smitten from the moment he woke to the time he went to bed. His griefs were not only continued, but renewed with every opening day, *"And chastened every morning."* This was a vivid contrast to the lot of the ungodly. There were crowns for the reprobates and crosses for the elect. Strange that the saints should sigh and the sinners sing. Rest was given to the disturbers, and yet peace was denied to the peace-makers. The downcast seer was in a muse and a maze. The affairs of mankind appeared to him to be in a fearful tangle; how could it be permitted by a just ruler that things should be so turned upside down, and the whole course of justice dislocated.

Here is the case stated in the plainest manner, and many a Christian will herein recognise his own experience. Such knots have we also sought to untie, and have sadly worn our fingers and broken our teeth. Dear-bought has our wisdom been, but we have bought it; and, henceforth, we cease to fret because of evil-doers, for the Lord hath showed us what their end will be.

15 If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children.

16 When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me.

17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.

15. *"If I say, I will speak thus."* It is not always wise to speak one's thoughts; if they remain within, they will only injure ourselves; but, once uttered, their mischief may be great. From such a man as the Psalmist, the utterance which his discontent suggested would have been a heavy blow and deep discouragement to the whole brotherhood. He dared not, therefore, come to such a resolution, but paused, and would not decide to declare his feelings. It was well, for in his case second thoughts were by far the best. *"I should offend against the generation of thy children."* I should scandalise them, grieve them, and perhaps cause them to offend also. We ought to look at the consequences of our speech to all others, and especially to the church of God. Woe unto the man by whom offence cometh! Rash, undigested, ill-considered speech, is responsible for much of the heart-burning and trouble in the churches. Would to God that, like Asaph, men would bridle their tongues. Where we have any suspicion of being wrong, it is better to be silent; it can do no harm to be quiet, and it may do serious damage to spread abroad our hastily formed opinions. To grieve the children of God by appearing to act perfidiously and betray the truth, is a sin so heinous, that if the consciences of heresy-mongers were not seared as with a hot iron, they would not be so glib as they are to publish abroad their novelties. Expressions which convey the impression that the Lord acts unjustly or unkindly, especially if they fall from the lips of men of known character and experience, are as dangerous as firebrands among stubble; they are used for blasphemous purposes by the ill-disposed; and the timid and trembling are sure to be cast down thereby, and to find reason for yet deeper distress of soul.

16. *"When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me."* The thought of scandalising the family of God he could not bear, and yet his inward thoughts seethed and fermented, and caused an intolerable anguish within. To speak might have relieved one sorrow, but, as it would have created another, he forbore so dangerous a remedy; yet this did not remove the first pangs, which grew even worse and worse, and threatened utterly to overwhelm him. A smothered grief is hard to endure. The triumph of conscience which compels us to keep the wolf hidden beneath our own garments, does not forbid its gnawing at our vitals. Suppressed fire in the bones rages more fiercely than if it could gain a vent at the mouth. Those who know Asaph's dilemma will pity him as none others can.

17. *"Until I went into the sanctuary of God."* His mind entered the eternity where God dwells as in a holy place, he left the things of sense for the things invisible,

his heart gazed within the veil, he stood where the thrice holy God stands. Thus he shifted his point of view, and apparent disorder resolved itself into harmony. The motions of the planets appear most discordant from this world which is itself a planet; they appear as "progressive, retrograde, and standing still;" but could we fix our observatory in the sun, which is the centre of the system, we should perceive all the planets moving in perfect circle around the head of the great solar family. "*Then understood I their end.*" He had seen too little to be able to judge; a wider view changed his judgment; he saw with his mind's enlightened eye the future of the wicked, and his soul was in debate no longer as to the happiness of their condition. No envy gnaws now at his heart, but a holy horror both of their impending doom, and of their present guilt, fills his soul. He recoils from being dealt with in the same manner as the proud sinners, whom just now he regarded with admiration.

18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

19 How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

20 As a dream when *one* awaketh; *so*, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

18. The Psalmist's sorrow had culminated, not in the fact that the ungodly prospered, but that God had arranged it so: had it happened by mere chance, he would have wondered, but could not have complained; but how the arranger of all things could so dispense his temporal favours, was the vexatious question. Here, to meet the case, he sees that the divine hand purposely placed these men in prosperous and eminent circumstances, not with the intent to bless them but the very reverse. "*Surely thou didst set them in slippery places.*" Their position was dangerous, and, therefore, God did not set his friends there but his foes alone. He chose, in infinite love, a rougher but safer standing for his own beloved. "*Thou castedst them down into destruction.*" The same hand which led them up to their Tarpeian rock, hurled them down from it. They were but elevated by judicial arrangement for the fuller execution of their doom. Eternal punishment will be all the more terrible in contrast with the former prosperity of those who are ripening for it. Taken as a whole, the case of the ungodly is horrible throughout; and their worldly joy instead of diminishing the horror, actually renders the effect the more awful, even as the vivid lightning amid the storm does not brighten but intensify the thick darkness which lowers around. The ascent to the fatal gallows of Haman was an essential ingredient in the terror of the sentence—"hang him thereon." If the wicked had not been raised so high they could not have fallen so low.

19. "*How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment!*" This is an exclamation of godly wonder at the suddenness and completeness of the sinners' overthrow. Headlong is their fall; without warning, without escape, without hope of future restoration! Despite their golden chains, and goodly apparel, death stays not for manners but hurries them away; and stern justice unbribed by their wealth hurls them into destruction. "*They are utterly consumed with terrors.*" They have neither root nor branch left. They cease to exist among the sons of men, and, in the other world, there is nothing left of their former glory. Like blasted trees, consumed by the lightning, they are monuments of vengeance; like the ruins of Babylon they reveal, in the greatness of their desolation, the judgments of the Lord against all those that unduly exalt themselves. The momentary glory of the graceless is in a moment effaced, their loftiness is in an instant consumed.

20. "*As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.*" They owe their existence and prosperity to the forbearance of God, which the Psalmist compares to a sleep; but, as a dream vanishes so soon as a man awakes, so the instant the Lord begins to exercise his justice and call men before him, the pomp and prosperity of proud transgressors shall melt away. When God awakes to judgment, they who despise him shall be despised; they are already "such stuff as dreams are made of," but then the baseless fabric shall not leave a wreck behind. Let them flaunt their little hour, poor unsubstantial sons of dreams; they will soon be gone; when the day breaketh, and the Lord awakes as a mighty man out of his sleep, they will vanish away. Who cares for the wealth of dream-

land? Who indeed but fools? Lord, leave us not to the madness which covets unsubstantial wealth, and ever teach us thine own wisdom.

21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.

22 So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.

23 Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.

24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory.

21. The holy poet here reviews his inward struggle and awards himself censure for his folly. His pain had been intense; he says, *"Thus my heart was grieved."* It was a deep-seated sorrow, and one which penetrated his inmost being. Alexander reads it, "My heart is soured." His spirit had become embittered; he had judged in a harsh, crabbed, surly manner. He had become atrabilious, full of black bile, melancholy, and choleric; he had poisoned his own life at the fountain-head, and made all its streams to be bitter as gall. *"And I was pricked in my reins."* He was as full of pain as a man afflicted with renal disease; he had pierced himself through with many sorrows; his hard thoughts were like so many calculi in his kidneys; he was utterly wretched and woebegone, and all through his own reflections. O miserable philosophy, which stretches the mind on the rack, and breaks it on the wheel! O blessed faith, which drives away the inquisitors, and sets the captives free!

22. *"So foolish was I."* He, though a saint of God, had acted as if he had been one of the fools whom God abhorreth. Had he not even envied them?—and what is that but to aspire to be like them? The wisest of men have enough folly in them to ruin them unless grace prevents. *"And ignorant."* He had acted as if he knew nothing, had babbled like an idiot, had uttered the very drivel of a witless loon. He did not know how sufficiently to express his sense of his own fatuity. *"I was as a beast before thee."* Even in God's presence he had been brutish, and worse than a beast. As the grass-eating ox has but this present life, and can only estimate things thereby, and by the sensual pleasure which they afford, even so had the Psalmist judged happiness by this mortal life, by outward appearances, and by fleshly enjoyments. Thus he had, for the time, renounced the dignity of an immortal spirit, and, like a mere animal, judged after the sight of the eyes. We should be very loth to call an inspired man a beast, and yet, penitence made him call himself so; nay, he uses the plural, by way of emphasis, and as if he were worse than any one beast. It was but an evidence of his true wisdom that he was so deeply conscious of his own folly. We see how bitterly good men bewail mental wanderings; they make no excuses for themselves, but set their sins in the pillory, and cast the vilest reproaches upon them. O for grace to detest the very appearance of evil!

23. *"Nevertheless I am continually with thee."* He does not give up his faith, though he confesses his folly. Sin may distress us, and yet we may be in communion with God. It is sin beloved and delighted in which separates us from the Lord, but when we bewail it heartily, the Lord will not withdraw from us. What a contrast is here in this and the former verse! He is as a beast, and yet continually with God. Our double nature, as it always causes conflict, so is it a continuous paradox: the flesh allies us with the brutes, and the spirit affiliates us to God. *"Thou hast holden me by my right hand."* With love dost thou embrace me, with honour ennoble me, with power uphold me. He had almost fallen, and yet was always upheld. He was a riddle to himself, as he had been a wonder unto many. This verse contains the two precious mercies of communion and upholding, and as they were both given to one who confessed himself a fool, we also may hope to enjoy them.

24. *"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel."* I have done with choosing my own way, and trying to pick a path amid the jungle of reason. He yielded not only the point in debate, but all intention of debating, and he puts his hand into that of the great Father, asking to be led, and agreeing to follow. Our former mistakes are a blessing, when they drive us to this. The end of our own wisdom is the beginning of our being wise. With HIM is counsel, and when we come to him, we are sure to be led aright. *"And afterward."* "Afterward!" Blessed word. We can cheerfully put up with the present, when we foresee the future. What is around

us just now is of small consequence, compared with afterward. "*Receive me to glory.*" Take me up into thy splendour of joy. Thy guidance shall conduct me to this matchless terminus. Glory shall I have, and thou thyself wilt admit me into it. As Enoch was not, for God took him, so all the saints are taken up—received up into glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee.

26 My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.

28 But *it is* good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

25. "*Whom have I in heaven but thee?*" Thus, then, he turns away from the glitter which fascinated him to the true gold which was his real treasure. He felt that his God was better to him than all the wealth, health, honour, and peace, which he had so much envied in the worldling; yea, He was not only better than all on earth, but more excellent than all in heaven. He bade all things else go, that he might be filled with his God. "*And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*" No longer should his wishes ramble, no other object should tempt them to stray; henceforth, the Everliving One should be his all in all.

26. "*My flesh and my heart faileth.*" They had failed him already, and he had almost fallen; they would fail him in the hour of death, and, if he relied upon them, they would fail him at once. "*But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*" His God would not fail him, either as a protection or a joy. His heart would be kept up by divine love, and filled eternally with divine glory. After having been driven far out to sea, Asaph casts anchor in the old port. We shall do well to follow his example. There is nothing desirable save God; let us, then, desire only him. All other things must pass away; let our hearts abide in him, who alone abideth for ever.

27. "*For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish.*" We must be near God to live; to be far off by wicked works is death. "*Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.*" If we pretend to be the Lord's servants, we must remember that he is a jealous God, and requires spiritual chastity from all his people. Offences against conjugal vows are very offensive, and all sins against God have the same element in them, and they are visited with the direst punishments. Mere heathens, who are far from God, perish in due season; but those who, being his professed people, act unfaithfully to their profession, shall come under active condemnation, and be crushed beneath his wrath. We read examples of this in Israel's history; may we never create fresh instances in our own persons.

28. "*But it is good for me to draw near to God.*" Had he done so at first he would not have been immersed in such affliction; when he did so he escaped from his dilemma, and if he continued to do so he would not fall into the same evil again. The greater our nearness to God, the less we are affected by the attractions and distractions of earth. Access into the most holy place is a great privilege, and a cure for a multitude of ills. It is good for all saints, it is good for me in particular; it is always good, and always will be good for me to approach the greatest good, the source of all good, even God himself. "*I have put my trust in the Lord God.*" He dwells upon the glorious name of the Lord Jehovah, and avows it as the basis of his faith. Faith is wisdom; it is the key of enigmas, the clue of mazes, and the pole star of pathless seas. Trust and you will know. "*That I may declare all thy works.*" He who believes shall understand, and so be able to teach. Asaph hesitated to utter his evil surmisings, but he has no diffidence in publishing abroad a good matter. God's ways are the more admired the more they are known. He who is ready to believe the goodness of God shall always see fresh goodness to believe in, and he who is willing to declare the works of God shall never be silent for lack of wonders to declare.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The Seventy-third Psalm is a very striking record of the mental struggle which an eminently pious Jew underwent, when he contemplated the respective conditions of the righteous and the wicked. Fresh from the conflict, he somewhat abruptly opens the Psalm with the confident enunciation of the truth of which victory over doubt had now made him more and more intelligently sure than ever, that "*God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.*" And then he relates the most fatal shock which his faith had received, when he contrasted the prosperity of the wicked, who, though they proudly contemned God and man, prospered in the world and increased in riches, with his own lot, who, though he had cleansed his heart and washed his hands in innocency, had been "plagued all the day long and chastened every morning." The place where his doubts were removed and his tottering faith re-established, was "the sanctuary of God." God himself was the Teacher. What, then, did he teach? By what divinely imparted considerations was the Psalmist reassured? Whatever is the proper rendering of the fourth verse; whether, "There are no sorrows (tending) to their death," or, "There are no sorrows *until* their death,"—their whole life to the very last is one unchequered course of happiness—that verse conveys to us the Psalmist's *mistaken* estimate of the prosperity of the wicked, before he went unto the sanctuary of God. The true estimate, at which he afterwards arrived, is found in verses 18—20. Now, admitting (what, by the way, is somewhat difficult of belief, inasmuch as the sudden and fearful temporal destruction of *all* or even the *most* prosperous cannot be made out) that the end of these men "means only and always their end *in this world*, we come to the conclusion that, in the case of the wicked, this Psalm does not plainly and undeniably teach that punishment awaits them after death; but only that, in estimating their condition, it is necessary, in order to vindicate the justice of God, to take in their whole career, and set over against their great prosperity the sudden and fearful reverses and destruction which they not unfrequently encounter. But, in turning to the other side of the comparison, the case of the righteous, we are *not* met by the thought, that as the prosperity of the wicked is but the preparation for their ruin, the raising higher the tower that the fall may be the greater, so the adversity of the godly is but an introduction to worldly wealth and honour. That thought is not foreign to the Old Testament writers. "Evil-doers shall be cut off;" writes one of them, "but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Psalm xxxvii. 9—11. *But it is not so much as hinted at here.* The daily chastening may continue, flesh and heart may fail, but God is good to Israel notwithstanding: he is their portion, their guide, their help while they live, and he will take them to his glorious presence when they die. "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." The New Testament has nothing higher or more spiritual than this. The reference of the last clause to happiness after death is, I believe, generally acknowledged by Jewish commentators. They left it to the candour of Christian expositors to doubt or deny it.—*Thomas Thomason Perowne, in "The Essential Coherence of the Old and New Testaments."* 1858.

Whole Psalm.—In Psalm Seventy-three the soul looks *out*, and reasons on what it sees there; namely, successful wickedness and suffering righteousness. What is the conclusion? "I have cleansed my heart in vain." So much for looking about. In Psalm Seventy-seven the soul looks *in*, and reasons on what it finds there. What is the conclusion? "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" So much for looking in. Where, then, should we look? Look *up*, straight up, and *believe* what you see there. What will be the conclusion? You will understand the "*end*" of man, and trace the "*way*" of God.—*From "Things New and Old, a Monthly Magazine."* 1858.

Whole Psalm.—In this Psalm, the Psalmist (Asaph) relates the great difficulty which existed in his own mind, from the consideration of the wicked. He observes (verses 2 and 3), "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

In the fourth and following verses he informs us what, in the wicked, was his temptation. In the first place, he observed, that they were *prosperous*, and all things went well with them. He then observed their *behaviour* in their prosperity, and the use which they made of it; and that God, notwithstanding such abuse, *continued* their prosperity. Then he tells us by what means he was helped out of this difficulty, viz., by going into the *sanctuary* (verses 16 and 17), and proceeds to inform us what considerations they were which helped him, viz.—1. The consideration of the *miserable end* of wicked men. However they prosper for the present, yet they come to a woeful end at last (verses 18—20). 2. The consideration of the *blessed end* of the saints. Although the saints, while they live, may be afflicted, yet they come to a happy end at last (verses 21—24). 3. The consideration that the godly have a much *better portion* than the wicked, even though they have no other portion but God; as in verses 25, 26. Though the wicked are in prosperity, and are not in trouble as other men; yet the godly, though in affliction, are in a state infinitely better, because they have God for their portion. They need desire nothing else; he that hath God hath all. Thus the Psalmist professes the sense and apprehension which he had of things: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." In the twenty-fourth verse the Psalmist takes notice how the saints are happy in God, both when they are in this world and also when they are taken to another. They are blessed in God in this world, in that *he guides them by his counsel;* and when he takes them out of it they are still happy, in that he *receives them to glory*. This probably led him to declare that he desired *no other portion*, either in this world or in that to come, either in heaven or upon earth.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 1.—"*Truly:*" it is but a particle; but the smallest filings of gold are gathered up. Little pearls are of great price. And this small particle is not of small use, being rightly applied and improved. First, take it (as our translators give it us) as *a note of asseveration*. "*Truly.*" It is a word of faith, opposite to the Psalmist's sense and Satan's injections. Whatsoever sense sees or feels, whatsoever Satan insinuates and says; yet precious faith with confidence asserts, "*Truly, verily God is good.*" He is not only good in word, but in deed also. Not only seemingly good, but certainly good. Secondly, consider it as *an adversative particle*, "*Yet,*" so our old translation. Ainsworth renders it, *yet surely;* taking in the former and this together. And then the sense runs thus: How ill soever things go in the world, how ill soever it fares with God's church and people amongst men, *yet God is good* to Israel. Thirdly, some conceive that the word carries *admiration*. Oh, how good is God to Israel. Where expressions and apprehensions fail, there the Psalmist takes up God's providences with admiration. Oh, how wonderfully, how transcendently good is God to Israel!

This "*yet*" (as I conceive) hath a threefold reference to the body of the Psalm. For as interpreters observe, though these words are set in the beginning, yet they suggest the conclusion of the Psalmist's conflict. And the Psalmist seems to begin somewhat abruptly: "*Yet God is good.*" But having filled his thoughts with his former foiles and fears, and now seeing himself in a safe condition both for the present and the future, he is full of confidence and comfort; and that which was the strongest and chiefest in his heart now breaks out first: "*Yet God is good.*" 1. *This* "*yet*" relates unto his sufferings, verse 14: "*All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*" Notwithstanding the variety and frequency of the saint's sufferings, "*yet God is good.*" Though sorrow salutes them every morning at their first awaking, and trouble attends them to bed at night, "*yet God is good.*" Though temptations many and terrible make batteries and breaches upon their spirits, "*yet God is good to Israel.*" 2. This "*yet*" reflects upon his sinnings, the frettings and wranglings of his distempered heart (verses 2, 3, and verse 21). Though sinful motions do mutiny in the soul against God's wise administrations, though there be foolish, proud quarrellings with divine providences, and inexcusable distrust of his faithful promises; though fretfulness at others' prosperity and discontent at their own adversity, "*yet God is good.*" Israel's sinful distempers cause not the Almighty to change the course of his accustomed goodness. While corruptions are kept from breaking out into scandal, while the soul contends against them, and is humbled for them (as the Psalmist was), this conclusion must be maintained: "*yet God is good.*" 3. This "*yet*" looks back upon his misgivings. There had been distrustful despondency upon the good man's heart. For from

both the premises (viz., his sufferings and sinnings) he had inferred this conclusion, verse 13, *"Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency."* As if he had said, "I have kept fasts, observed Sabbaths, heard sermons, made prayers, received sacraments, given alms, avoided sins, resisted temptations, withstood lusts, appeared for Christ and his cause and servants in vain: yea, his heart had added an asseveration (*verily*) to this faithless opinion, but now he is of another mind: *"Yet God is good."* The administrations of God are not according to the sad surmises of his people's misgiving hearts. For, though they through diffidence are apt often to give up their holy labours as lost, and all their conscientious care and carriage as utterly cast away; *"yet God is good to Israel."—Simeon Ash, in a Sermon entitled "God's Incomparable Goodness unto Israel."* 1647.

Verse 1.—David opens the Psalm abruptly, and from this we learn what is worthy of particular notice, that, before he broke forth into this language, his mind had been agitated with many doubts and conflicting suggestions. As a brave and valiant champion, he had been exercised in very painful struggles and temptations; but, after long and arduous exertion, he at length succeeded in shaking off all perverse imaginations, and came to the conclusion that *yet* God is gracious to his servants, and the faithful guardian of their welfare. Thus these words contain a tacit contrast between the unhallowed imaginations suggested to him by Satan, and the testimony in favour of true religion with which he now strengthens himself, denouncing, as it were, the judgment of the flesh, in giving place to misgiving thoughts with respect to the providence of God. We see, then, how emphatic is this exclamation of the Psalmist. He does not ascend into the chair to dispute after the manner of the philosophers, and to deliver his discourse in a style of studied oratory; but, as if he had escaped from hell, he proclaims with a loud voice, and with impassioned feeling, that he had obtained the victory.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—

> Yet sure the gods are good: I would think so,
> If they would give me leave!
> But virtue in distress, and vice in triumph,
> Make atheists of mankind.
>
> *Dryden.*

Verse 1.—*"God is good."* There is a beauty in the name appropriated by the Saxon nations to the Deity, unequalled except by his most reverential Hebrew appellation. They called him "God," which is literally, "The Good." The same word thus signifying the Deity, and his most endearing quality.—*Turner.*

Verse 1.—*"God is good."* Let the devil and his instruments say what they will to the contrary, I will never believe them; I have said it before, and I see no reason to reverse my sentence; *"Truly God is good."* Though sometimes he may hide his face for awhile, yet he doth that in faithfulness and love; there is kindness in his very scourges, and love bound up in his rods; he is good to Israel: do but mark it first or last: "The true Israelite, in whom there is no guile, shall be refreshed by his Saviour." The Israelite that wrestles with tears with God, and values his love above the whole world, that will not be put off without his Father's blessing, shall have it with a witness: "He shall reap in joy though he may at present sow in tears. Even to such as are of a clean heart." The false-hearted hypocrite, indeed, that gives God only his tongue and lip, cap and knee, but reserves his heart and love for sin and the world, that hath much of compliment, but nothing of affection and reality, why let such a one never expect, while in such a state, to taste those reviving comforts that I have been treating of; while he drives such a trade, he must not expect God's company.—*James Janeway.* 1636—1674.

Verse 1.—*"Even to such as are of a clean heart."* Purity of heart is the characteristical note of God's people. Heart-purity denominates us the Israel of God; it makes us of Israel indeed; but all are not Israel which are of Israel." Romans ix. 6. Purity of heart is the jewel which is hung only upon the elect. As chastity distinguisheth a virtuous woman from an harlot, so the true saint is distinguished from the hypocrite by his heart-purity. This is like the nobleman's star or garter, which is a peculiar ensign of honour, differing him from the vulgar; when the bright star of purity shineth in a Christian's heart it doth distinguish him from the formal professor. . . . .

God *"is good"* to the pure in heart. We all desire that God should be good to

us ; it is the sick man's prayer : " The Lord be good to me." But how is God good to them ? Two ways. 1. To them that are pure all things are sanctified, Titus i. 15 : " To the pure all things are pure ; " estate is sanctified, relations are sanctified ; as the temple did sanctify the gold and the altar did sanctify the offering. To the unclean nothing is clean ; their table is a snare, their temple-devotion a sin. There is a curse entailed upon a wicked man (Deut. xxviii. 16), but holiness removeth the curse, and cuts off the entail : " to the pure all things are pure." 2. The clean hearted have all things work for their good. Romans viii. 28. Mercies and afflictions shall turn to their good ; the most poisonous drugs shall be medicinal ; the most cross providence shall carry on the design of their salvation. Who, then, would not be clean in heart ?—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—"*But as for me.*" Literally, it is, *And I*, which ought to be read with emphasis ; for David means that those temptations which cast an affront upon the honour of God, and overwhelm faith, not only assail the common class of men, or those who are endued only with some small measure of the fear of God, but that he himself, who ought to have profited above all others in the school of God, had experienced his own share of them. By thus setting himself forth as an example, he designed the more effectually to arouse and incite us to take great heed to ourselves.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—Let such also as fear God and begin to look aside on the things of this world, know it will be hard even for them to hold out in faith and in the fear of God in time of trial. Remember the example of David, he was a man that had spent much time in travelling towards heaven ; yet, looking but a little aside upon the glittering show of this world, had very near lost his way, his feet were almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipt.—*Edward Elton.* 1620.

Verse 2.—He tells us that his "*feet were almost gone.*" The word signifies *to bow*, or *bend under one.* " My steps had *well nigh slipped,*" or *poured out, kept not* within their *true bounds ;* but like water *poured out*, and not confined, runs aside. Though these expressions be metaphorical, and seemingly dark and cloudy, yet they clearly represent unto us this truth, that his *understanding* was *misguided*, his *judgment* was *corrupt*, his *affections disordered*, turbulent, and guilty of too great a passion ; and this, the consequents (verse 22 in which he acknowledges himself *ignorant, foolish*, and *brutish*) do sufficiently evidence. Our *understanding* and *judgment* may well bear the comparison to *feet*, for as the one, in our motion, *supports the body*, so the other, in human actions and all employments, *underprops the soul.* The *affections*, also, are as *paths* and *steps ;* as these of the *feet*, so these are the *prints* and expressions of the judgment and mind.—*Edward Parry, in "David Restored."* 1660.

Verse 2.—"*Almost gone.*" There is to be noted that the prophet said he was *almost* gone, and not altogether. Here is the presence, providence, strength, safeguard, and keeping of man by Almighty God, marvellously set forth. That although we are tempted and brought even to the very point to perpetrate and do all mischief, yet he stays us and keeps us, that the temptation shall not overcome us.—*John Hooper.* 1495—1555.

Verses 2—14.—But the prosperity of wicked and unjust men, both in public and in private life, who, though not leading a happy life in reality, are yet thought to do so in common opinion, being praised improperly in the works of poets, and all kinds of books, may lead you—and I am not surprised at your mistake—to a belief that the gods care nothing for the affairs of men. These matters disturb you. Being led astray by foolish thoughts, and yet not being able to think ill of the gods, you have arrived at your present state of mind, so as to think that the gods do indeed exist, but that they despise and neglect human affairs.—*Plato.*

Verse 3.—"*I was envious at the foolish,*" etc. If we consider with ourselves how unlikely a thing it is to grow big with riches, and withal to enter through the eye of a needle, how unusual a thing it is to be emparadised in this life and yet enthroned in that to come, it will afford us matter of comfort if we are piously improsperous as well as of terror if we are prosperously impious. We should be taught by the precept of the prophet David *not to fret ourselves because of evildoers*, nor to be envious against the workers of iniquity ; for " The prosperity of fools shall but destroy them," saith Solomon, and " the candle of the wicked shall be put out." Prov. xxiv. 1, 2, 19, 20. Prosperity it seems is a dangerous weapon, and none but the innocent

should dare to use it. The Psalmist himself, before he thought upon this, began to envy the prosperity of wicked men.—*William Crouch, in "The Enormous Sin of Covetousness detected."* 1708.

Verse 3.—"*I was envious at the foolish.*" Who would envy a malefactor's going up a high ladder, and being mounted above the rest of the people, when it is only for a little, and in order to his being turned over and hanged? That is just the case of wicked men who are mounted up high in prosperity; for it is so only that they may be cast down deeper into destruction. It would be a brutish thing to envy an ox his high and sweet pasture, when he is only thereby fitted for the day of slaughter. Who would have envied the beasts of old, the garlands and ribbons with which the heathen adorned them when they went to be sacrificed? These external ornaments of health, wealth, pleasures, and preferments, wherewith wicked men are endowed, cannot make their state happy, nor change their natures for the better. Whatever appearance these things make in the eyes of the world, they are but like a noisome dunghill covered with scarlet, as vile and loathsome in God's sight as ever. How quickly is the beauty of earthly things blasted. "The triumphing of the wicked is short." Job xx. 5. They live in pleasures on the earth for awhile, but God "sets them in slippery places," from whence they soon slide into perpetual pain and anguish. They have a short time of mirth, but they shall have an eternity of mourning.—*John Willison.*

Verse 3.—"*For I was envious at the foolish.*" The sneering jest of Dionysius the younger, a tyrant of Sicily, when, after having robbed the Temple of Syracuse, he had a prosperous voyage with the plunder, is well known. "See you not," says he to those who were with him, "how the gods favour the sacrilegious?" In the same way the prosperity of the wicked is taken as an encouragement to commit sin; for we are ready to imagine that, since God grants them so much of the good things of this life, they are the objects of his approbation and favour. We see how their prosperous condition wounded David to the heart, leading him almost to think that there was nothing better for him than to join himself to their company, and to follow their course of life.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—"*Envious.*" If you are touched with envy at *seeing the peace of the wicked,* shut your eyes, do not look at it, for envious eyes think anything vast on which they gaze. Actius Sincerus, a man of rare wit and great reputation, when in the presence of king Frederic, witnessed a discussion among physicians on what would most effectually sharpen the eyesight? The fumes of fennel, said some; the use of a glass, said others; some one thing, some another: but I, said he, replied, Envy. The doctors were astonished, and much amusement afforded to the audience at their expense. Then I continued: Does not Envy make all things seem larger and fuller? And what could be more to your purpose than that the very faculty of seeing should itself be made greater and stronger.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—"*The prosperity of the wicked.*" Socrates, being asked what would be vexatious to good men, replied, "The prosperity of the bad." What would vex the bad? "The prosperity of the good."—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—Diogenes, the cynic, seeing Harpalus, a vicious fellow, still thriving in the world, he was bold to say that wicked Harpalus's living long in prosperity was an argument that God had cast off his care of the world, that he cared not which end went forward. But he was a heathen. Yet, for all that, the lights of the sanctuary have burnt dim; stars of no small magnitude have twinkled; men of eminent parts, famous in their generation for religion and piety, have staggered in their judgment to see the flourishing estate of the wicked. It made Job to complain, and Jeremiah to expostulate with God; and David was even ready to sink in seeing the prosperity of ungodly men: to see the one in wealth, the other in want; the one honourable, the other despised; the one upon a throne, the other on a dunghill.—*John Donne.*

Verse 4.—"*There are no bands in their death,*" etc. That is, when they die, they die in their strength, they do not pine away with long and tedious sickness; they live in pleasure, and die with ease. They are not bound to their beds, and tied down with the cords of chronical, lingering diseases.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—"*There are no bands in their death,*" etc. It is not their lot to look upon frequent and bitter deaths, like the righteous, nor is there in their affliction any firmness or permanence. If at any time affliction falls upon them, they are speedily delivered from it. Moreover, whatever calamity happens to them, they

have the strength and support of riches; and, elevated by their wealth, they appear to forget their troubles.—*Cornelius Jansenius.* 1510—1576.

Verse 4.—"*There are no bands in their death.*" The Hebrew word חֲרָצִים signifieth a *band* which is *knotted* or *tied;* and then the sense may be, they have not that which might bind them over unto a speedy and troublesome death; hence, *Castelio* writes, *non sunt necessitates quæ eos enecent,* there are no necessities which threaten their death—such as variety of distempers, sicknesses, and diseases, those messengers of death. *Aquila,* therefore, renders the word οὐκ εἰσι δυσπαθείαι, there are no pangs or distempers; no *sorrows* or sicknesses, saith *Ainsworth:* they are *not bound over to death or execution* by the variety of diseases, or by the power of injury of others. The prophet, by telling us "*their strength is firm,*" expounds this phrase, and lets us know that these wicked men had lives spun of *even threads,* without danger of *ravelling* or *breaking.* They had lusty bodies, strong limbs, sound vitals, without agonies or ruptures; lived as those that had no cause to fear death; and when they expired, it was without much antecedent pain; they fell as ripe apples from the tree.—*Edward Parry.*

Verse 4.—By "*bands*" we may understand, any heavy burdens, which are wont to be *bound* on them upon whom they are laid; and so, by way of analogy, and grievous pains or torturing diseases. "*Their strength is firm,*" continues vigorous till their death.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 4.—"*In their death.*" It comes upon them in vigorous health, for they are strong and robust, and drag not out a sickly existence through continuous complaints. Some regard the bands of death as hindrances, as if it were said—They suddenly die, in a moment, nor are they racked with pains, as in Job xxi. 13. It is considered the highest felicity for the profane, when they have enjoyed the pleasures and the pomp of life, to descend in an instant to the grave. Even Julius Cæsar, on the day before he was slain, declared that it seemed to him to be a happy death to die suddenly and unexpectedly. Therefore, according to these interpreters, David complains that the ungodly, without the vexations of disease, pass on to death by a smooth and tranquil course; but there is more truth in the opinion of those who, reading both clauses of the verse together, their strength is firm, and there are no bands to death, think that they are not dragged to death like captives; for since diseases overcome our strength, they are so many messengers of death to admonish us of our frailty. They are not, therefore, in vain compared to chains with which God binds us to his yoke lest vigour and strength should incite us to be froward. "*But their strength is firm.*"—*Franciscus Vatablus.*

Verse 4.—Men may die like lambs and yet have their place for ever with the goats.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"*They are not in the trouble of men,*" for God has given them over to the desires of their own hearts, that they who are filthy may be filthy still: like a sick man, are they, to whom a wise physician forbids nothing, since the disease is incurable.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 5.—"*Other men.*" Hebrew, אָדָם *Adam:* the *whole human race.*—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 6.—A chain of pearl doth not better become their necks, nor the richest robes adorn their backs, than sin doth, in their judgments, become and suit their souls; they glory in their shame. Plato saith of Protagoras that he boasted, whereas he had lived sixty years, he had spent forty years in corrupting youth. They brag of that which they ought to bewail.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 6.—"*Violence covereth them as a garment.*" They wear it, and shew it openly as their garment. See the like phrase of cursing, Ps. cix. 18, 19. But the meek, and godly, cover themselves otherwise, Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10, 12, 14, etc. —*John Richardson.*

Verse 7.—"*Their eyes.*" "A man may be known by his look," saith the son of Sirach, Ecclus. xix. 29. The choleric, the lascivious, the melancholy, the cunning, etc., frequently bear their tempers and ruling passions strongly marked on their countenances: but more especially doth the soul of a man look forth at his "*eyes.*" —*George Horne.*

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—They sink others' eyes into their heads with leanness, while their own eyes "*stand out with fulness.*"—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 8.—"*They are corrupt.*" Prosperity, in an irreligious heart, breeds *corruption*, which from thence is emitted by the breath in conversation, to infect and taint the minds of others.—*George Horne.*

Verse 8.—"*They speak wickedly concerning oppression.*" Indeed, we see that wicked men, after having for some time got everything to prosper according to their desires, cast off all shame, and are at no pains to conceal themselves, when about to commit iniquity, but loudly proclaim their own turpitude. "What!" they will say, "is it not in my power to deprive you of all that you possess, and even to cut your throat?" Robbers, it is true, can do the same thing; but then they hide themselves for fear. These giants, or rather inhuman monsters, of whom David speaks, on the contrary not only imagine that they are exempted from subjection to any law, but, unmindful of their own weakness, foam furiously, as if there were no distinction between good and evil, between right and wrong.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9.—"*Their tongue walketh through the earth.*" This shows the boundless and unlimited disorder of the tongue. The earth carries a numerous offspring of men, who are of several habits, states, and conditions, which give occasion of variety of discourses and different kinds of language. These men spare none: "*Their tongue walketh through the earth,*" and leaves nothing unspoken of. If men be *poor*, they talk of oppressing and mastering of them; if they *oppose*, they discourse of violence and suppressing. . . . . If in this perambulation they meet with *truth*, they darken it with lies and home-made inventions; if with *innocence*, they brand it with false accusations and bitter aspersions; if with a strict government and *good laws*, then they cry, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;" if with *religion*, they term it *heresy*, or superstition; if with *patience*, they term it obstinacy and perverseness; if with the *church*, they think of nothing less than devouring it, and cry, "Let us take the houses of God in possession;" if with the thoughts of a resurrection, and of future hopes, "Let us eat and drink," cry they, "for to-morrow we shall die." Thus no corner is left unsearched by their *abusive tongue, which walks through the earth.* . . . . They may *walk over the earth*, but they will "*set their mouth against the heavens.*" Here they say, stand fixed and resolute, and take that place, as a special white they would hit.—*Edward Parry.*

Verse 10.—"*Therefore his people return hither.*" It seems impossible to ascertain, with any degree of precision, the meaning of this verse, or to whom it relates. Some think it intends those people who resort to the company of the wicked, because they find their temporal advantage by it; while others are of opinion that the people of God are meant, who, by continually revolving in their thoughts the subject here treated of, namely, the prosperity of the wicked, are sore grieved and forced to shed tears in abundance. Mr. Mudge translates the verse thus: "*Therefore let his (God's) people come before them, and waters in full measure would be wrung out from them;*" that is, should God's people fall into their hands, they would squeeze them to the full, they would wring out all the juice out of their bodies. He takes *waters in full measure* to have been a proverbial expression.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 11.—"*How doth God know?*" etc. Men may not disbelieve a Godhead; nay, they may believe there is a God, and yet question the truth of his threatenings. Those conceits that men have of God, whereby they mould and frame him in their fancies, suitable to their humours, which is a thinking that he is such a one as ourselves (Psalm l.), are streams and vapours from this pit, and the "hearts of the sons of men are desperately set within them to do evil" upon these grounds; much more when they arise so high as in some who say: "*How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?*" If men give way to this, what reason can be imagined to stand before them? All the comminations of Scripture are derided as so many theological scarecrows, and undervalued as so many pitiful contrivances to keep men in awe.—*Richard Gilpin.*

Verse 11.—Ovid thus speaks in one of his verses: "*Solicitor nullos esse putare deos;*" I am tempted to think that there are no gods.

Verse 14.—"*All the day long have I been plagued,*" etc. Sickly tempers must have a medicinal diet: to be purged both at spring and fall will scarce secure some from the malignity of their distempers. The Lord knows our frame, and sees what is usually needful for every temper; and when he afflicts most frequently, he does no more than he sees requisite.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 14.—If a man be watchful over his own ways, and the dealings of God with him, there is seldom a day but he may find some rod of affliction upon him; but, as through want of care and watchfulness, we lose the sight of many mercies, so we do of many afflictions. Though God doth not every day bring a man to his bed, and break his bones, yet we seldom, if at all, pass a day without some rebuke and chastening. "*I have been chastened every morning,*" saith the Psalmist. . . . . As sure, or as soon, as I rise I have a whipping, and my breakfast is bread of sorrow and the water of adversity. . . . . Our lives are full of afflictions; and it is as great a part of a Christian's skill to know afflictions as to know mercies; to know when God smites, as to know when he girds us; and it is our sin to overlook afflictions as well as to overlook mercies.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—The way to heaven is an *afflicted way*, a perplexed, persecuted way, *crushed close* together with crosses, as was the Israelites' way in the wilderness, or that of Jonathan and his armour-bearer, that had a sharp rock on the one side and a sharp rock on the other. And, whilst they crept upon all four, flinty stones were under them, briars and thorns on either hand of them; mountains, crags, and promontories over them; *sic potitur cælum*, so heaven is caught by pains, by patience, by violence, affliction being our inseparable companion. "The cross way is the highway to heaven," said that martyr [Bradford]; and another, "If there be any way to heaven on horseback, it is by the cross." Queen Elizabeth is said to have swum to the crown through a sea of sorrows. They that will to heaven, must sail by hell-gates; they that will have knighthood, must kneel for it; and they that will get in at the strait gate, must crowd for it. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," saith our Saviour; strive and strain, even to an *agony*, as the word signifieth. Heaven is compared to a hill; hell to a hole. To hell a man may go without a staff, as we say; the way thereto is easy, steep, strawed with roses; 'tis but a yielding to Satan, a passing from sin to sin, from evil purposes to evil practices, from practice to custom, etc. *Sed revocare gradum*, but to turn short again, and make straight steps to our feet, that we may force through the strait gate, *hic labor, hoc opus est, opus non pulvinaris sed pulveris;* this is a work of great pains, a duty of no small difficulty.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 15.—"*I should offend,*" etc. That is, I do God's church a great deal of injury, which hath always been under afflictions, if I think or say, that all her piety hath been without hope, or her hope without effect. Others understand it to mean, I deceive the generation, *viz.*, I propound a false doctrine unto them, which is apt to seduce them. Others, "behold the generation," etc.; that is to say, notwithstanding all afflictions, it is certain that thou art a Father to the Church only; which is sufficient to make me judge well of these afflictions; I have done ill, and confess I have erred in this my rash judgment.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 17.—By the *sanctuaries of God* some, even among the Hebrews, understand the celestial mansions in which the spirits of the just and angels dwell; as if David had said, This was a painful thing in my sight, until I came to acknowledge in good earnest that men are not created to flourish for a short time in this world, and to luxuriate in pleasures while in it, but that there condition here is that of pilgrims, whose aspirations, during their earthly pilgrimage, should be towards heaven. I readily admit that no man can form a right judgment of the providence of God but he who elevates his mind above the earth; but it is more simple and natural to understand the word "*sanctuary*" as denoting celestial doctrine. As the book of the law was laid up in the sanctuary, from which the oracles of heaven were to be obtained, that is to say, the declaration of the will of God; and as this was the true way of acquiring profitable instruction, David very properly puts *entering into the sanctuaries* for *coming to the school of God*, as if his meaning were this: Until God become my schoolmaster, and until I learn by his word what otherwise my mind, when I come to consider the government of the world, cannot comprehend, I stop short all at once, and understand nothing about the subject. When, therefore,

we are here told that men are unfit for contemplating the arrangements of divine providence, until they obtain wisdom elsewhere than from themselves, how can we attain to wisdom but by submissively receiving what God teaches us, both by his word and by his Holy Spirit? David by the word *"sanctuary"* alludes to the external manner of teaching, which God had appointed among his ancient people; but along with the word he comprehends the secret illumination of the Holy Spirit.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 17.—The joy of a wicked man is imperfect in itself, because it is not so as it seems to be, or it is not sincerely so. 'Tis not pure gold, but alloyed and adulterated with sorrow. It may look well to one that is blear eyed, but it will not pass for good to one that looks well to it. Let any one consider and weigh it well in the balance of *the sanctuary*, whither David went to fetch the scales for the same purpose, and he will find it too light by many grains. 'Tis not so withinside as it is without; no more than a mud wall that is plastered with white, or a stinking grave covered with a glorious monument. It is τρυλλος, looking fair and smooth, like true joy; as a wounded member that is healed too soon (and you know how God by the prophet complains of the hurt of his people that was slightly healed, Jer. vi. 14), and it looks as well as any other part of the body; but, underneath, there is still a sore, which festers so much more, and is the worse, for that the outside is so well. Where pretences, and cloaks, and disguises are the fairest; there the knavery, and the poison, and the evil concealed are usually foulest.—*Zachary Bogan* (1625—1659), *in "Meditations of the Mirth of a Christian Life."*

Verse 17.—*"Then understood I."* There is a famous story of providence in Bradwardine to this purpose. A certain hermit that was much tempted, and was utterly unsatisfied concerning the providence of God, resolved to journey from place to place till he met with some who could satisfy him. An angel in the shape of a man joined himself with him as he was journeying, telling him that he was sent from God to satisfy him in his doubts of providence. The first night they lodged at the house of a very holy man, and they spent their time in discourses of heaven, and praises of God, and were entertained with a great deal of freedom and joy. In the morning, when they departed, the angel took with him a great cup of gold. The next night they came to the house of another holy man, who made them very welcome, and exceedingly rejoiced in their society and discourse; the angel, notwithstanding, at his departure killed an infant in the cradle, which was his only son, he having been for many years before childless, and, therefore, was a very fond father of this child. The third night they came to another house, where they had like free entertainment as before. The master of the family had a steward whom he highly prized, and told them how happy he accounted himself in having such a faithful servant. Next morning he sent this his steward with them part of their way, to direct them therein. As they were going over the bridge the angel flung the steward into the river and drowned him. The last night they came to a very wicked man's house, where they had very untoward entertainment, yet the angel, next morning, gave him the cup of gold. All this being done, the angel asked the hermit whether he understood those things? He answered, his doubts of providence were increased, not resolved, for he could not understand why he should deal so hardly with those holy men, who received them with so much love and joy, and yet give such a gift to that wicked man who used them so unworthily. The angel said, I will now expound these things unto you. The first house where we came the master of it was a holy man; yet, drinking in that cup every morning, it being too large, it did somewhat unfit him for holy duties, though not so much that others or himself did perceive it; so I took it away, since it is better for him to lose the cup of gold than his temperance. The master of the family where we lay the second night was a man given much to prayer and meditation, and spent much time in holy duties, and was very liberal to the poor all the time he was childless; but as soon as he had a son he grew so fond of it, and spent so much time in playing with it, that he exceedingly neglected his former holy exercise, and gave but little to the poor, thinking he could never lay up enough for his child; therefore I have taken the infant to heaven, and left him to serve God better upon earth. The steward whom I did drown had plotted to kill his master the night following; and as to that wicked man to whom I gave the cup of gold, he was to have nothing in the other world, I therefore gave him something in this, which, notwithstanding, will prove a snare to him, for he will be more intemperate; and "let him that is filthy be filthy still." The truth of this story I affirm not, but the moral is very

good, for it shows that God is an indulgent Father to the saints when he most afflicts them; and that when he sets the wicked on high he sets them also in slippery places, and their prosperity is their ruin. Proverbs i. 32.—*Thomas White, in "A Treatise of the Power of Godlinesse."* 1658.

Verse 17.—*"Their end."* Providence is often mysterious and a source of perplexity to us. Walking in Hyde Park one day, I saw a piece of paper on the grass. I picked it up; it was a part of a letter; the beginning was wanting, the end was not there; I could make nothing of it. Such is providence. You cannot see beginning or end, only a part. When you can see the whole, then the mystery will be unveiled.—*Thomas Jones.* 1871.

Verse 18.—*"Slippery places."* The word in the original signifies *slick*, or *smooth*, as ice or polished marble, and is from thence by a metaphor used for flattery. Hence, Abenezra renders it, *In locis adulationis posuisti eos:* thou hast set them in places of flattery.—*Edward Parry.*

Verse 18.—They are but exalted, as the shellfish by the eagle, according to the naturalists, to be thrown down on some rock and devoured. Their most glorious prosperity is but like a rainbow, which showeth itself for a little time in all its gaudy colours, and then vanisheth. The Turks, considering the unhappy end of their viziers, use this proverb, "He that is in the greatest office is but a statue of glass." Wicked men walk on glass or ice, *"thou hast set them in slippery places;"* on a sudden their feet slip—they fall, and break their necks.—*George Swinnock.*

Verses 18, 20.—Their banqueting-house is very *slippery*, and the feast itself a mere *dream.—Thomas Adams.*

Verse 19.—*"They are utterly consumed with terrors."* Their destruction is not only sudden, but entire; it is like the breaking in pieces of a potter's vessel, a sherd of which cannot be gathered up and used; or like the casting of a millstone into the sea, which will never rise more; and this is done *"with terrors,"* either by terrible judgments inflicted on them from without, or with terrors inwardly seizing upon their minds and consciences, as at the time of temporal calamities, or at death, and certainly at the judgment, when the awful sentence will be pronounced upon them. See Job xxvii. 20.—*John Gill.*

Verse 19.—If thou shouldst live the longest measure of time that any man hath done, and spend all that time in nothing but pleasures (which no man ever did but met with some crosses, afflictions, or sicknesses), but at the evening of this life must take up the lodging in the "everlasting burnings" and "devouring fire" (Isaiah xxx. 14); were those pleasures answerable to these everlasting burnings? An English merchant that lived at Dantzic, now with God, told us this story, and it was true. A friend of his (a merchant also), upon what grounds I know not, went to a convent, and dined with some friars. His entertainment was very noble. After he had dined and seen all, the merchant fell to commending their pleasant lives: "Yea," said one of the friars to him, "we live gallantly indeed, had we anybody to go to hell for us when we die."—*Giles Firmin* (1617—1617), *in "The Real Christian, or, A Treatise of Effectual Calling."*

Verse 20.—*"As a dream when one awaketh."* The conception is rather subtle, but seems to have been shrewdly penetrated by Shakspere, who makes the Plantagenet prince (affecting, perhaps, the airs of a ruler in God's stead) say to his discarded favourite—

> "I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,
> So surfeit-swelled, so old and so profane,
> But being awake I do despise my dream."
>
> *Henry IV.*

For as it is the inertness of the sleeper's will and intellect that gives reality to the shapes and figments, the very sentiments and purposes that throng his mind; so it seems, as it were, to be the negligence and oversight of the Moral Ruler that makes to prosper the wicked or inane life and influence. So Paul says, in reference to the polytheism of the ancient world: "and the times of this ignorance God winked at." Acts xvii. 30.—*C. B. Cayley, in "The Psalms in Metre."* 1860.

Verse 21.—*"Thus my heart was grieved,"* etc. Two similitudes are used, by which his grief and indignation or zeal are described. First, he says his heart boiled over like yeast. The passion which was stirred up in his thoughts he compares to

the yeast which inflates the whole mass, and causes it to swell or boil over. . . . . The other simile is taken from the internal pains which *calculi* produce: *"I was pricked in my reins."* They who have felt them are aware of the torture, and there is no need for a long description. It signifies that his great pain was mingled with indignation, and that this came fresh upon him as often as he looked upon the prosperity of the ungodly.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 21.—*"Reins."* Before all the other intestines there are the kidneys (כִּלְיָה, νεφροί), placed on both sides of the lumbar vertebræ on the hinder wall of the abdomen, of which the Scripture makes such frequent mention, and in the most psychically significant manner. It brings the tenderest and the most inward experience of a manifold kind into association with them. When man is suffering most deeply within, *he is pricked in his kidneys* (*" reins "*). When fretting affliction overcomes him, his kidneys are cloven asunder (Job xvi. 13; compare Lam. iii. 13); when he rejoices profoundly, they exult (Prov. xxiii. 16); when he feels himself very penetratingly warned, they chasten him (Psalm xvi. 7); when he very earnestly longs, they are consumed away with his body (Job xix. 27); As the omniscient and all-penetrating knower of the most secret hidden things of man, God is frequently called (from Psalm vii. 10 to the Apocalypse) the Trier of the hearts and reins; and of the ungodly it is said, that God is far from their reins (Jeremiah xii. 2), that is, that he, being withdrawn back into himself, allows not himself to be perceived by them.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 22.—*"So foolish was I, and ignorant,"* etc. Is not a cavilling spirit at the Lord's dispensations bad, both in its roots and fruits? What are the roots of it but (1) ignorance; (2) pride, this lifteth up (Heb. ii. 4); (3) impatiency, or want of waiting on God to see the issues of matters; so in Jonah iv. 8—11; (4) forgetfulness who the Lord is, and who man is that grumbles at his Maker, Lam. iii. 39, Rom. ix. 20. And as for the fruits, they are none of the best, but bad enough. Men are ready to flag in duty, yea, to throw it off, ver. 13, and Mal. iii. 14; yea, in the way to blaspheme God; see Job ii. 9; Mal. iii. 13; Rev. xvi. 9.—*Thomas Crane, in " A Prospect of Divine Providence."* 1672.

Verse 22.—*"I was as a beast before thee."* I permitted my mind to be wholly occupied with *sensible things*, like the beasts that perish, and did not look into a future state, nor did I consider nor submit to the wise designs of an unerring providence.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 22.—*"I was as a beast before thee."* The original has in it no word of comparison; it ought to be rather translated, *"I was a very beast before thee,"* and we are told that the Hebrew word being in the plural number, gives it a peculiar emphasis, indicating some monstrous or astonishing beast. It is the word used by Job which is interpreted " behemoth,"—" I was a very monster before thee," not only a beast, but one of the most brutish of all beasts, one of the most stubborn and intractable of all beasts. I think no man can go much lower than this in humble confession. This is a description of human nature, and of the old man in the renewed saint, which is not to be excelled.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 22.—Among the many arguments to prove the penmen of the Scripture inspired by the Spirit of God, this is not the last and least—that the penmen of holy writ do record their own faults and the faults of their dearest and nearest relatives. For instance hereof, how coarsely doth David speak of himself: *"So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee."* And do you think that the face of St. Paul did look the more foul by being drawn with his own pencil, when he says, " I was a murderer, a persecutor, the greatest of sinners," etc. This is not usual in the writings of human authors, who praise themselves to the utmost of what they could, and rather than lose a drop of applause they will lick it up with their own tongues. Tully writes very copiously in setting forth the good service which he did the Roman state, but not a word of his covetousness, of his affecting popular applause, of his pride and vain glory, of his mean extraction and the like. Whereas, clean contrary, Moses sets down the sin and punishment of his own sister, the idolatry and superstition of Aaron his brother, and his own fault in his preposterous striking the rock, for which he was excluded the land of Canaan.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 23.—*"I am continually with thee,"* as a child under the tender care of a parent; and as a parent, during my danger of falling in a slippery path, *"thou hast holden me,* thy child, *by my right hand."—George Horne.*

Verse 23.—"*I am continually with thee.*" He does not say that the Lord is continually with " his people," and holds, and guides, and receives them ; he says, " He is continually with *me* ; He holds *me* ; He will guide *me* ; He will receive *me.*" The man saw, and felt, and rejoiced in his own personal interest in God's care and love. And he did this (mark), in the very midst of affliction, with " flesh and heart failing ; " and in spite too of many wrong and opposite, and sinful feelings, that had just passed away ; under a conviction of his own sinfulness and folly, and, as he calls it, even " brutishness." Oh ! it is a blessed thing, brethren, to have a faith like this.—*Charles Bradley.* 1838.

Verse 23.—"*I am still with thee.*" The word translated *still* properly means *always*, and denotes that there had been no change or interruption in the previous relation of the parties. There is a perfectly analogous usage of the French *toujours.* —*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 24.—"*Thou shalt guide me.*" How are we to work our way in strange lands, if left entirely to our own resources ? Hence it is, that so much is said in the Bible about guides, and that the Lord is called the guide of his people. They are in a foreign land, a land of pits and snares ; and, without a good guide, they will be sure to fall into the one, or be caught in the other. " This God is our God, for ever and ever," said the Psalmist ; and not only so, but he *condescends* to " be our guide, and will be, even unto death " (Psalm xlviii. 14). Can we have a *better* guide ? When a guide has been well recommended to us by those who have tried him, it is our wisdom to place ourselves unreservedly in his hands ; and if he says our way lies to the right, it would show our folly to say we were determined to go to the left.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 24.—"*Guide*" . . "*receive.*" After conversion, God still works with us : he doth not only give grace, but actual help in the work of obedience : " He worketh all our works in us," Isa. xxvi. 12. His actual help is necessary to direct, quicken, strengthen, protect and defend us. In our way to heaven, we need not only a rule and path, but a guide. The rule is the *law* of God ; but the guide is the *Spirit* of God.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 24.—"*Afterward.*" After all our toil in labour and duty, after all our crosses and afflictions, after all our doubts and fears that we should never receive it ; after all the hidings of his face, and clouds and darkness that have passed over us ; and after all our battles and fightings for it, oh, then how seasonably will the reception of this reward come in : "*Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*" O blessed *afterwards ;* when all your work is done, when all your doubts and fears are over, and when all your battles are fought ; then, Oh then, ye shall receive the reward.—*John Spalding.*

Verse 24.—"*Receive me to glory.*" Mendelssohn in his *Beor*, has perceived the probable allusion in this clause to the translation of Enoch. Of Enoch it is said, (Gen. v. 24.) לָקַח אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים, " God *took* him." Here (Psalm lxxiii. 24), the Psalmist writes, קַבּוֹד תִּקָּחֵנִי. " Thou shalt *take* me to glory, or gloriously." In another (Psalm xlix. 16) we read, כִּי יִקָּחֵנִי. " For he (God) shall *take* me." I can hardly think that the two latter expressions were written and read in their context by Jews without reference to the former.—*Thomas Thomason Perowne.*

Verse 25.—"*Whom have I in heaven but thee,*" etc. How small is the number of those who keep their affections fixed on God alone ! We see how superstition joins to him many others as rivals for our affections. While the Papists admit in word that all things depend upon God, they are, nevertheless, constantly seeking to obtain help from this and the other quarter independent of him.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 25.—It pleased David, and it pleases all the saints, more that God is their salvation, whether temporal or eternal, than that he saves them. The saints look more at God than at all that is God's. They say, *Non tua, sed te ; we desire not thine, but thee,* or nothing of thine like thee. "*Whom have I in heaven but thee ?*" saith David. What are saints ? what are angels, to a soul without God ? 'Tis true of things as well as of persons. What have we in heaven but God ? What's joy without God ? What's glory without God ? What's all the furniture and riches, all the delicacies, yea, and all the diadems of heaven, without the God of heaven ? If God should say to the saints, Here is heaven, take it amongst you, but I will withdraw myself, how would they weep over heaven itself, and make it a *Baca,* a valley of tears indeed. Heaven is not heaven unless we enjoy God. 'Tis the

presence of God which makes heaven: glory is but our nearest being unto God. As Mephibosheth replied, when David told him, "I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land:" "Let him take all, if he will," saith Mephibosheth, I do not so much regard the land as I regard thy presence; "Let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace to his own house," where I may enjoy him. So if God should say to the saints, Take heaven amongst you, and withdraw himself, they would even say, Nay, let the world take heaven, if they will, if we may not have thee in heaven, heaven will be but an earth, or rather but a hell to us. That which saints rejoice in, is that they may be in the presence of God, that they may sit at his table, and eat bread with him; that is, that they may be near him continually, which was Mephibosheth's privilege with David. That's the thing which they desire and which their souls thirst after; that's the wine they would drink. "My soul," saith David (Psalm xlii. 2), "thirsteth for God, for the living God; when" (methinks the time is very long, when) "shall I come and appear before God?"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 25, 26.—Gotthold was invited to an entertainment, and had the hope held out that he would meet with a friend whom he loved, and in whose society he took the greatest delight. On joining the party, however, he learned that, owing to some unforeseen occurrence, this friend was not to be present, and felt too much chagrined to take any share in the hilarity. The circumstance afterwards led him into the following train of thought: The pious soul, that sincerely loves and fervently longs for the Lord Jesus, experiences what I lately did. She seeks her Beloved in all places, objects, and events. If she find him, who is happier? If she find him not, who more disconsolate? Ah! Lord Jesus, thou best of friends, thou art the object of my love; my soul seeketh thee, my heart longeth after thee. What care I for the world, with all its pleasures and pomps, its power and glory, unless I find thee in it? What care I for the daintiest food, the sweetest drinks, and the merriest company, unless thou art present, and unless I can dip my morsel in thy wounds, sweeten my draught with thy grace, and hear thy pleasant words. Verily, my Saviour, were I even in heaven, and did not find thee there, it would seem to me no heaven at all. Wherefore, Lord Jesus, when with tears, sighs, yearnings of heart, and patient hope, I seek thee, hide not thyself from me, but suffer me to find thee; for, "Lord! whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."—*Christian Scriver.*

Verse 26.—"*My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*" In which words we may take notice of five things. I. The order inverted. When he mentions his malady he begins with the failing of the flesh, and then of the heart; but when he reports the relief he begins with that of the heart. From hence observe *that when God works a cure in man (out of love) he begins with the heart—he cures that first.* And there may be these reasons for it. 1. Because the sin of the heart is often the procuring cause of the malady of body and soul. 2. The body ever fares the better for the soul, but not the soul for the body. 3. The cure of the soul is the principal cure. II. The suitableness of the remedy to the malady. Strength of heart for failing of heart, and a blessed portion for the failing of the flesh. Observe, *that there is a proportionate remedy and relief in God for all maladies and afflictions whatsoever, both within and without. If your hearts fail you, God is strength; if your flesh fails you, or comforts fail you, God is a portion.* III. The prophet's interest; he calls God his portion. Observe, *that true Israelites have an undoubted interest in God:—He is theirs.* IV. The prophet's experience in the worst time. He finds this to be true, that when communicated strength fails, there is a never-failing strength in God. Observe, *that Christians' experiences of God's all-sufficiency are then fullest and highest when created comforts fail them.* V. There is the prophet's improvement of his experience for support and comfort against future trials and temptations. Observe, *that a saint's consideration of his experience of God's all-sufficiency in times of exigency, is enough to bear up and to fortify his spirit against all trials and temptations for the time to come.* Thus you may improve the text by way of observation; but there are two principal doctrines to be insisted on. First, that God is the rock of a saint's heart, his strength and his portion for ever. Secondly, that divine influence and relief passeth from

God to his people when they stand in most need thereof. 1st. God is the rock of a saint's heart, strength, and portion for ever. Here are two members or branches in this doctrine. 1. That God is the rock of a saint's heart, strength. 2. That God is the portion of a saint. Branch 1. God is the rock of a saint's heart, strength. He is not only strength, and the strength of their hearts, but the rock of their strength; so Isaiah xvii. 10. Psalm lxii. 7, צוּר, the same word that is used in the text, from hence comes our English word "*sure.*" Explication. God is the rock of our strength, both in respect of our naturals and also of our spirituals: he is the strength of nature and of grace (Psalm xxvii. 1); the strength of my life natural and spiritual. God is the strength of thy natural faculties—of reason and understanding, of wisdom and prudence, of will and affections. He is the strength of all thy graces, faith, patience, meekness, temperance, hope, and charity; both as to their being and exercise. He is the strength of all thy comfort and courage, peace and happiness, salvation and glory. Psalm cxl. 7. "O God, the rock of my salvation." In three respects. 1st. He is the author and giver of all strength. Psalm xviii. 32: "It is God that girdeth me with strength." Psalm xxiv. 11: "He will give strength to his people." Psalm cxxxviii. 3; Psalm lxviii. 35. 2ndly. He is the increaser and perfecter of a saint's strength; it is God that makes a saint strong and mighty both to do and suffer, to bear and forbear, to believe and to hope to the end; so Hebrews xi. 34: "*Out of weakness they were made strong;*" so 1 John ii. 14. And therefore is that prayer of Peter, 1 Peter v. 10. 3rdly. He is the preserver of your strength; your life is laid up in God. Col. iii. 3. Your strength is kept by the strength of God; so Psalm xci. 1. God doth overshadow the strength of saints, that no breach can be made upon it. Psalm lxiii. 7. "*In the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.*"—*Samuel Blackerby.* 1673.

Verse 26.—Oh, strange logic! Grace hath learned to deduce strong conclusions out of weak premises, and happy out of sad. If the *major* be, "*My flesh and my heart faileth;*" and the *minor*, "There is no blossom in the fig-tree, nor fruit in the vine," etc.; yet his *conclusion* is firm and undeniable: "*The Lord is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever;*" or, "Yet will I rejoice in the God of my salvation." And if there be more in the *conclusion* than in the *premises*, it is the better; God comes even in the conclusion.—*John Sheffield, in "The Rising Sun."* 1654.

Verse 26.—"*My flesh and my heart faileth.*" They who take the expression in a bad sense, take it to be a confession of his former sin, and to have relation to the combat mentioned in the beginning of the Psalm, between the flesh and the spirit; as if he said, I was so surfeited with self-conceitedness that I presumed to arraign divine actions at the bar of human reason, and to judge the stick under water crooked by the eye of my sense, when, indeed, it was straight; but now I see that flesh is no fit judge in matters of faith; that neither my flesh nor heart can determine rightly of God's dispensations, nor hold out uprightly under Satan's temptations; for if God had not supported me my flesh had utterly supplanted me: "*My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart.*" Flesh is sometimes taken for corrupt nature. Gal. v. 13. First, because it is propagated by the flesh (John iii. 6); secondly, because it is executed by the flesh (Rom. vii. 25); thirdly, because corruption is nourished, strengthened, and increased by the flesh. 1 John ii. 16. They who take the words in a good sense, do not make them look back so far as to the beginning of the Psalm, but only to the neighbour verse.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 26.—"*God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*" The Hebrew carrieth it, but God is the *rock of my heart, i.e.*, a sure, strong, and immoveable foundation to build upon. Though the winds may blow, and the waves beat, when the storm of death cometh, yet I need not fear that the house of my heart will fall, for it is built on a sure foundation: God is the rock of my heart. The strongest child that God hath is not able to stand alone; like the hop or ivy, he must have somewhat to support him, or he is presently on the ground. Of all seasons, the Christian hath most need of succour at his dying hour; then he must take his leave of all his comforts on earth, and then he shall be sure of the sharpest conflicts from hell, and, therefore, it is impossible he should hold out without extraordinary help from heaven. But the Psalmist had armour of proof ready, wherewith to encounter his last enemy. As weak and fearful a child as he was, he durst venture a walk in the dark entry of death, having his Father by the hand: "*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,*" Psalm xxiii. Though at the troubles of my life, and my

trial at death, my heart is ready to fail me, yet I have a strong cordial which will cheer me in my saddest condition: *"God is the strength of my heart."*

"And my portion." It is a metaphor taken from the ancient custom among the Jews, of dividing inheritances, whereby every one had his allotted portion; as if he had said, God is not only my rock to defend me from those tempests which assault me, and, thereby, my freedom from evil; but he is also my portion, to supply my necessities, and to give me the fruition of all good. Others, indeed, have their parts on this side the land of promise, but the author of all portions is the matter of my portion. My portion doth not lie in the rubbish and lumber, as theirs doth whose portion is in this lie, be they never so large; but my portion containeth him whom the heavens, and heaven of heavens, can never contain. God is the strength of my heart, and my portion *"for ever;"* not for a year, or an age, or a million of ages, but for eternity. Though others' portions, like roses, the fuller they blow, the sooner they shed; they are worsted often by their pride, and wasted through their prodigality, so that at last they come to want—and surely death always rends their persons and portions asunder; yet my portion will be ever full, without diminution. Without alteration, this God will be my God for ever and ever, my guide and aid unto death; nay, death, which dissolveth so many bonds, and untieth such close knots, shall never part me and my portion, but give me a perfect and everlasting possession of it.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 28.—*"It is good for me to draw near to God."* When he saith *'tis good*, his meaning is *'tis best.* This positive is superlative. It is more than good for us to draw nigh to God at all times, it is best for us to do so, and it is at our utmost peril not to do so; "For, lo," saith the Psalmist (verse 27), "they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee." It is dangerous to be far from God, but it is more dangerous to go far from him. Every man is far off by nature, and wicked men go further off: the former *shall perish*, the latter *shall be destroyed.* He that fares best in his withdrawings from God, fares bad enough; therefore, it is best for us to draw nigh unto God. He is the best friend at all times, and the only friend at sometimes. And may we not say that God suffers and orders evil times, and the withdrawings of the creature, for that very end, that we might draw nearer unto him? Doth he not give up the world to a spirit of reviling and mocking that he may stir up in his people a spirit of prayer?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 28.—*"It is good;"* that is, it puts in us a blessed quality and disposition. It makes a man to be like God himself; and, secondly, *"it is good,"* that is, it is comfortable; for it is the happiness of the creature to be near the Creator; it is beneficial and helpful. *"To draw near."* How can a man but be near to God, seeing he filleth heaven and earth: "Whither shall I go from thy presence?" Psalm cxxxix. 7. He is present always in power and providence in all places, but graciously present with some by his Spirit, supporting, comforting, strengthening the heart of a good man. As the soul is said to be *tota in toto*, in several parts by several faculties, so God, is present to all, but in a diverse manner. Now we are said to be near to God in divers degrees: *first*, when our *understanding is enlightened; intellectus est veritatis sponsa;* and so the young man speaking discreetly in things concerning God, is said not to be far from the kingdom of God, Mark xii. 34. *Secondly, in minding:* when God is present to our minds, so that the soul is said to be present to that which it mindeth; contrarily it is said of the wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts," Psalm x. 4. *Thirdly, when the will upon the discovery of the understanding comes to choose the better part, and is drawn from that choice to cleave to him*, as it was said of Jonathan's heart, "it was knit to David," 1 Sam. xviii. 1. *Fourthly*, when *our whole affections are carried to God*, loving him as the chief good. Love is the firstborn affection. That breeds desire of communion with God. Thence comes joy in him, so that the soul pants after God, "as the hart after the water springs," Psalm xlii. 1. *Fifthly*, and especially, *when the soul is touched with the Spirit of God working faith*, stirring up dependence, confidence, and trust on God. Hence ariseth sweet communion. The soul is never at rest till it rests on him. Then it is afraid to break with him or to displease him; but it groweth zealous and resolute, and hot in love, stiff in good cases; resolute against his enemies. And yet this is not all, for God will have also the outward man, so as the whole man must present itself before God in word, in sacraments; speak of him and to him with reverence, and yet with strength of affection mounting up in prayer,

as in a fiery chariot; hear him speak to us; consulting with his oracles; fetching comforts against distresses, directions against maladies. *Sixthly*, and especially, we draw near to him *when we praise him;* for this is the work of the souls departed and of the angels in heaven, that are continually near unto him. The prophet here saith, "*It is good for me.*" How came he to know this? Why, he had found it by experience, and by it he was thoroughly convinced.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 28.—"*To draw near to God.*" It is not one isolated act. It is not merely turning to God, and saying, "I have come to him." The expression is "*draw.*" It is not a single act; it is the drawing, the coming, the habitual walk, going on, and on, and on, so long as we are on earth. It is, therefore, an habitual religion which must be pressed and enforced upon ts.—*Montagu Villiers.* 1855.

Verse 28.—"*To draw near to God.*" To draw near to God, I. A man should make his peace with God, in and through the Mediator Jesus Christ; for, until once that be done, a man must be said to be far from God, and there is a partition-wall standing betwixt God and him. It is the same with that advice given by Eliphaz to Job: "*Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee,*" Job xxii. 21. Be friends with God, and all shall be well with you. II. It is to seek more after communion and fellowship with God, and to pursue after intimacy and familiarity with him; and to have more of his blessed company with us in our ordinary walk and conversation; according to that word, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance," Psalm lxxxix. 15. III. As it stands here in the text, it is the expression of one who hath made up his peace already, and is on good terms with God; and doth differ a little from what the words absolutely imply; and so we may take it thus, I. It implies the confirming or making sure our interest in God, and so it supposeth the man's peace to be made with God; for, whoever be the author of this Psalm, it supposeth he has made his peace; and, therefore, in the following words it is subjoined, "*I have put my trust in the Lord,*" etc.; that is, I have trusted my soul unto God, and made my peace with him through a mediator. It is "*good,*" whatever comes, it is always "*good*" to be "*near to God,*" that way, and to be made sure in him. II. It implies to be more conformed unto the image of God, and, therefore, this nearness to him is opposed to that of being far from God. It is good, says he, to draw near to God in my duty; when so many are far from him. III. It implies, to lay by all things in the world, and to seek fellowship and communion with God, and to be more set apart for his blessed company, and to walk with him in a dependence upon him as the great burden-bearer, as he who is to be all in all unto us. In a word, to draw near unto God, is to make our peace with him, and to secure and confirm that peace with him, and to study a conformity unto him, and to be near unto him in our walk and conversation; in our fellowship, and whole carriage, and deportment, to be always near unto him. —*William Guthrie.*

Verse 28.—The Epicurean, says Augustine, is wont to say, *It is good for me to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh:* The Stoic is wont to say, *For me it is good to enjoy the pleasures of the mind:* The Apostle used to say (not in words, but in sense), *It is good for me to cleave to God.—Lorinus.*

Verse 28.—"*The Lord God.*" The names "*The Lord Jehovah*" are a combination expressive of God's sovereignty, self-existence, and covenant relation to his people. —*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—It containeth the godly man's *trial*, in the former part of it, and his *triumph*, in the latter part of it. We have, I. The grievous conflict between the flesh and the spirit, to the 15th verse. II. The glorious conquest of the spirit over the flesh, to the end.—*G. Swinnock.*

Whole Psalm.—I. The cause of his distemper. II. The cure of it. III. The Psalmist's carriage after it.—*G. Swinnock.*

Verse 1.—The true Israel, the great blessing, and the sureness of it: or, the proposition of the text expounded, enforced, and applied.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—Israel's receipts from God are, I. For quantity, the greatest; II. For variety, the choicest; III. For quality, the sweetest; IV. For security, the surest; V. For duration, the most lasting.—*Simeon Ash.*

Verse 2.—I. How far a believer may fall. II. How far he shall not fall. III. What fears are and what are not allowable.

Verse 2.—A retrospect of our slips; prospect of future danger; present preparation for it.

Verse 4.—Quiet deaths: the cases of the godly and ungodly distinguished by the causes of the quiet, and the unreliableness of mere feelings shown.

Verse 5.—The bastard's portion contrasted with that of the true son.

Verse 7.—The dangers of opulence and luxury.

Verse 8.—Connection between a corrupt heart and a proud tongue.

Verse 10.—I. The believer's cup is bitter. II. It is full. III. Its contents are varied "waters." IV. It is but a "cup," measured and limited. V. It is the cup of "his people," and, consequently, works good in the highest degree.

Verse 11.—The atheist's open question; the oppressor's practical question; the careless man's secret question; and the fearful saint's fainting question. The reasons why it is ever asked, and the conclusive reasons which put the matter beyond question.

Verse 12.—This verse suggests solemn enquiries for persons who are growing rich.

Verse 14.—The frequent and even constant chastisements of the righteous; the necessity and design thereof; and the consolations connected therewith.

Verse 15.—How we may bring injury on the saints; why we should avoid so doing, and how.

Verse 17.—I. Entrance into the place of fellowship with God, its privileges, and the way thereto. II. Lessons learned in that hallowed place; the text mentions one. III. Practical influence of the fellowship, and the instruction.

Verses 17, 18.—The sinner's end; See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 486.

Verse 18.—"*Thou didst set them in slippery places.*" I. It implies that they were always exposed to *sudden, unexpected destruction.* As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once without warning. II. They are liable to fall *of* themselves, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down. III. There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell but the mere pleasure of God.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 19.—The first sight and sense of hell by a proud and wealthy sinner, who has just died in peace.

Verses 18—20.—The end of the wicked is, I. Near: "Thou hast set," etc. It may happen at any time. II. Judicial: "Thou bringest," etc. III. Sudden: "How are they," etc. IV. Tormenting: "They are utterly consumed," etc. V. Eternal: Left to themselves; gone from the mind of God; and disregarded as a dream when one awaketh. No after act respecting them, either for deliverance or annihilation.—*G. R.*

Verse 20.—The contemptible object:—a self-righteous, or boastful, or persecuting, or cavilling, or wealthy sinner when his soul is called before God.

Verse 22.—Our folly, ignorance, and brutishness. When displayed. What effect the fact should have upon us; and how greatly it illustrates divine grace.

Verse 23.—I. God does not forsake his people when they forsake him: "Nevertheless I am continually," etc. II. God does not lose his hold on them when they lose their hold on him: "Nevertheless thou hast holden," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 22—25. I. The Psalmist's confession concerning the flesh. II. The faithful expressions of the spirit. III. The conclusion of the whole matter. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 467.

Verses 23, 24.—I. What he says of the present: "I am continually with thee." II. What he says of the past: "Thou hast holden me," etc. III. What he says of the future: "Thou shalt guide," etc.—*W. Jay.*

Verses 23, 24.—Communion, upholding, on-leading, reception to glory, four glorious privileges; especially as bestowed on one who was grieved, foolish, ignorant, and a beast. Note the contrasts.

Verse 24.—The Enoch walk, and the Enoch reception into glory.

Verse 25.—God the best portion of the Christian.—*Jonathan Edwards' Works, Vol. II., pp.* 104—7.

Verse 25.—Heaven and earth ransacked to find a joy equal to the Lord himself. Let the preacher take up various joys and show the inferiority.

Verse 26.—I. The Psalmist's complaint: "My flesh and my heart faileth." II. His comfort: "But God," etc. Or, we may take notice, I. Of the frailty of his flesh. II. Of the flourishing of his faith. Doctrine 1. That man's flesh will fail him. The highest, the holiest man's heart will not always hold out. The prophet was great and gracious, yet his flesh failed him. Doctrine 2. That it is the comfort of a Christian, in his saddest condition, that God is his portion.—*G. Swinnock.*

Verse 26.—"The Fading of the Flesh."—*Swinnock's Treatise.* [*Nichol's Puritan Series.*]

Verse 26.—Where we fail and where we cannot fail.

Verse 27.—I. The sad conditions. II. The terrible punishments. III. The implied consolations.

Verse 28.—To draw near to God is our wisdom, our honour, our safety, our peace, our riches.—*Thomas Watson's Sermon, "The Happiness of Drawing near to God."* 1669. See also, *"The Saint's Happiness," R. Sibbes's Sermon.*

Verse 28.—David's conclusion; or, the saint's resolution.—*R. Sibbes.*

Verse 28.—I. The language of prayer: "It is good," etc. II. Of faith: "I have put," etc. III. Of praise: "That I may declare."—*G. R.*

Verse 28.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," Nos. 287—8, "Let us pray." No. 879, "An assuredly good thing."

PSALM LXXIV.

TITLE.—Maschil of Asaph. *An instructive Psalm by Asaph. The history of the suffering church is always edifying; when we see how the faithful trusted and wrestled with their God in times of dire distress, we are thereby taught how to behave ourselves under similar circumstances: we learn moreover, that when the fiery trial befalls us, no strange thing has happened unto us, we are following the trail of the host of God.*

DIVISION.—*From verse* 1—11 *the poet pleads the sorrows of the nation, and the despite done to the assemblies of the Lord; then he urges former displays of divine power as a reason for present deliverance (verses* 12—23). *Whether it is a prophetic Psalm, intended for use in troubles foreseen, or whether it was written by a later Asaph, after the invasion by Sennacherib or during the Maccabean wars, it would be very hard to determine, but we see no difficulty in the first supposition.*

EXPOSITION.

O GOD, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

2 Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even* all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.

4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns *for* signs.

5 *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.

6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.

8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

9 We see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.

10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck *it* out of thy bosom.

1. *"O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?"* To cast us off at all were hard, but when thou dost for so long a time desert thy people it is an evil beyond all endurance—the very chief of woes and abyss of misery. It is our wisdom when under chastisement to enquire, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?" and if the affliction be a protracted one, we should the more eagerly enquire the purport of it. Sin is usually at the bottom of all the hidings of the Lord's face; let us ask the Lord to reveal the special form of it to us, that we may repent of it, overcome it, and henceforth forsake it. When a church is in a forsaken condition it must not sit still in apathy, but turn to the hand which smiteth it, and humbly enquire the reason why. At the same time, the enquiry of the text is a faulty one for it implies two mistakes. There are two questions, which only admit of negative replies. "Hath God cast away his people?" (Roms xi. 1); and the other, "Will

the Lord cast off for ever?" (Psalm lxxvii. 7). God is never weary of his people so as to abhor them, and even when his anger is turned against them, it is but for a small moment, and with a view to their eternal good. Grief in its distraction asks strange questions and surmises impossible terrors. It is a wonder of grace that the Lord has not long ago put us away as men lay aside cast-off garments, but he hateth putting away, and will still be patient with his chosen. *"Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?"* They are thine, they are the objects of thy care, they are poor, silly, and defenceless things: pity them, forgive them, and come to their rescue. They are but sheep, do not continue to be wroth with them. It is a terrible thing when the anger of God smokes, but it is an infinite mercy that it does not break into a devouring flame. It is meet to pray the Lord to remove every sign of his wrath, for it is to those who are truly the Lord's sheep a most painful thing to be the objects of his displeasure. To vex the Holy Spirit is no mean sin, and yet how frequently are we guilty of it; hence it is no marvel that we are often under a cloud.

2. *"Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old."* What a mighty plea is redemption. O God, canst thou see the bloodmark on thine own sheep, and yet allow grievous wolves to devour them? The church is no new purchase of the Lord; from before the world's foundation the chosen were regarded as redeemed by the Lamb slain: shall ancient love die out, and the eternal purpose become frustrate? The Lord would have his people remember the Paschal Lamb, the bloodstained lintel, and the overthrow of Egypt; and will he forget all this himself? Let us put him in remembrance, let us plead together. Can he desert his blood-bought and forsake his redeemed? Can election fail and eternal love cease to flow? Impossible. The woes of Calvary, and the covenant of which they are the seal, are the security of the saints.

"The rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed." So sweet a plea deserved to be repeated and enlarged upon. The Lord's portion is his people—will he lose his inheritance? His church is his kingdom, over which he stretches the rod of sovereignty; will he allow his possessions to be torn from him? God's property in us is a fact full of comfort: his value of us, his dominion over us, his connection with us are all so many lights to cheer our darkness. No man will willingly lose his inheritance, and no prince will relinquish his dominions; therefore we believe that the King of kings will hold his own, and maintain his rights against all comers. *"This mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt."* The Lord's having made Zion the especial centre of his worship, and place of his manifestation, is yet another plea for the preservation of Jerusalem. Shall the sacred temple of Jehovah be desecrated by heathen, and the throne of the Great King be defiled by his enemies? Has the Spirit of God dwelt in our hearts, and will he leave them to become a haunt for the devil? Has he sanctified us by his indwelling, and will he, after all, vacate the throne? God forbid.

It may be well to note that this Psalm was evidently written with a view to the temple upon Zion, and not to the tabernacle which was there in David's time, and was a mere tent; but the destructions here bewailed were exercised upon the carved work of a substantial structure. Those who had seen the glory of God in Solomon's peerless temple might well mourn in bitterness, when the Lord allowed his enemies to make an utter ruin of that matchless edifice.

3. *"Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations."* The ruin made had already long been an eyesore to the suppliant, and there seemed no hope of restoration. Havoc lorded it not only for a day or a year, but with perpetual power. This is another argument with God. Would Jehovah sit still and see his own land made a wilderness, his own palace a desolation? Until he should arise, and draw near, the desolation would remain; only his presence could cure the evil, therefore is he entreated to hasten with uplifted feet for the deliverance of his people. *"Even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary."* Every stone in the ruined temple appealed to the Lord; on all sides were the marks of impious spoilers, the holiest places bore evidence of their malicious wickedness; would the Lord for ever permit this? Would he not hasten to overthrow the foe who defied him to his face, and profaned the throne of his glory? Faith finds pleas in the worst circumstances, she uses even the fallen stones of her desolate palaces, and assails with them the gates of heaven, casting them forth with the great engine of prayer.

4. *"Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations."* Where thy people sang like angels, these barbarians roar like beasts. When thy saints come together

for worship, these cruel men attack them with all the fury of lions. They have no respect for the most solemn gatherings, but intrude themselves and their blasphemies into our most hallowed meetings. How often in times of persecution or prevalent heresy has the church learned the meaning of such language. May the Lord spare us such misery. When hypocrites abound in the church, and pollute her worship, the case is parallel to that before us; Lord save us from so severe a trial. *"They set up their ensigns for signs."* Idolatrous emblems used in war were set up over God's altar, as an insulting token of victory, and of contempt for the vanquished and their God. Papists, Arians, and the modern school of Neologians have, in their day, set up their ensigns for signs. Superstition, unbelief, and carnal wisdom have endeavoured to usurp the place of Christ crucified, to the grief of the church of God. The enemies without do us small damage, but those within the church cause her serious harm; by supplanting the truth and placing error in its stead, they deceive the people, and lead multitudes to destruction. As a Jew felt a holy horror when he saw an idolatrous emblem set up in the holy place, even so do we when in a Protestant church we see the fooleries of Rome, and when from pulpits, once occupied by men of God, we hear philosophy and vain deceit.

5. *"A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees."* Once men were renowned for felling the cedars and preparing them for building the temple, but now the axe finds other work, and men are as proud of destroying as their fathers were of erecting. Thus in the olden times our sires dealt sturdy blows against the forests of error, and laboured hard to lay the axe at the root of the trees; but, alas! their sons appear to be quite as diligent to destroy the truth and to overthrow all that their fathers built up. O for the good old times again! O for an hour of Luther's hatchet, or Calvin's mighty axe!

6. *"But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers."* The invaders were as industrious to destroy as the ancient builders had been to construct. Such fair carving it was barbarous to hew in pieces, but the Vandals had no mercy and broke down all, with any weapon which came to hand. In these days men are using axes and sledge-hammers against the gospel and the church. Glorious truths, far more exquisite than the goodliest carving, are cavilled over and smashed by the blows of modern criticism. Truths which have upheld the afflicted and cheered the dying are smitten by pretentious Goths, who would be accounted learned, but know not the first principles of the truth. With sharp ridicule, and heavy blows of sophistry, they break the faith of some; and would, if it were possible, destroy the confidence of the elect themselves. Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans are but types of spiritual foes who labour to crush the truth and the people of God.

7. *"They have cast fire into thy sanctuary."* Axes and hammers were not sufficient for the purpose of the destroyers, they must needs try fire. Malice knows no bounds. Those who hate God are never sparing of the most cruel weapons. To this day the enmity of the human heart is quite as great as ever; and, if providence did not restrain, the saints would still be as fuel for the flames. *"They have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground."* They made a heap of the temple, and left not one stone upon another. When the Lord left Mount Zion, and the Roman gained entrance, the military fury led the soldiery to burn out and root up the memorial of the famous House of the Lord. Could the powers of darkness have their way, a like fate would befall the church of Christ. "Rase it," say they, "rase it even to the foundation thereof." Defilement to the church is destruction; her foes would defile her till nothing of her purity, and consequently of her real self, remained. Yet, even if they could wreak their will upon the cause of Christ, they are not able to destroy it, it would survive their blows and fires; the Lord would hold them still like dogs in a leash, and in the end frustrate all their designs.

8. *"They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together."* It was no idle wish, their cruelty was sincere, deep-seated, a matter of their inmost heart. Extirpation was the desire of Haman, and the aim of many another tyrant; not a remnant of the people of God would have been left if oppressors could have had their way. Pharaoh's policy to stamp out the nation has been a precedent for others, yet the Jews survive, and will; the bush though burning has not been consumed. Even thus the church of Christ has gone through baptisms of blood and fire, but it is all the brighter for them. *"They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land."* Here is no allusion to places called synagogues, but to assemblies; and as no

assemblies for worship were held but in one place, the ruin of the temple was the destruction of all the holy gatherings, and so in effect all the meeting-places were destroyed. One object of persecutors has always been to put an end to all conventicles, as they have called them. Keep them from meeting and you will scatter them, so have the foemen said; but, glory be to God, saints are independent of walls, and have met on the hill side, by the moss, or in the catacombs, or in a boat at sea. Yet has the attempt been almost successful, and the hunt so hot, that the faithful have wandered in solitude, and their solemn congregations have been under such circumstances, few and far between. What sighs and cries have in such times gone up to the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. How happy are we that we can meet for worship in any place we choose, and none dare molest us.

9. "*We see not our signs.*" Alas, poor Israel! No Urim and Thummim blazed on the High Priest's bosom, and no Shekinah shone from between the cherubim. The smoke of sacrifice and cloud of incense no more arose from the holy hill; solemn feasts were suspended, and even circumcision, the covenant sign, was forbidden by the tyrant. We, too, as believers, know what it is to lose our evidence and grope in darkness; and too often do our churches also miss the tokens of the Redeemer's presence, and their lamps remain untrimmed. Sad plaint of a people under a cloud! "*There is no more any prophet.*" Prophecy was suspended. No inspiring psalm or consoling promise fell from bard or seer. It is ill with the people of God when the voice of the preacher of the gospel fails, and a famine of the word of life falls on the people. God-sent ministers are as needful to the saints as their daily bread, and it is a great sorrow when a congregation is destitute of a faithful pastor. It is to be feared, that with all the ministers now existing, there is yet a dearth of men whose hearts and tongues are touched with the celestial fire. "*Neither is there any among us that knoweth how long.*" If some one could foretell an end, the evil might be borne with a degree of patience, but when none can see a termination, or foretell an escape, the misery has a hopeless appearance, and is overwhelming. Blessed be God, he has not left his church in these days to be so deplorably destitute of cheering words; let us pray that he never may. Contempt of the word is very common, and may well provoke the Lord to withdraw it from us; may his long-suffering endure the strain, and his mercy afford us still the word of life.

10. "*O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?*" Though we know not how long yet thou dost. The times and seasons are with thee. When God is reproached, there is hope for us, for it may be he will hearken and avenge his dishonoured name. Wickedness has great license allowed it, and justice lingers on the road; God has his reasons for delay, and his seasons for action, and in the end it shall be seen that he is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness. "*Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?*" He will do so for ever, unless thou dost give him his quietus. Wilt thou never defend thyself, and stop slanderous tongues? Wilt thou always endure the jeers of the profane? Is there to be no end to all this sacrilege and cursing? Yes, it shall all be ended, but not by-and-by. There is a time for the sinner to rage, and a time in which patience bears with him; yet it is but a time, and then, ah, then!

11. "*Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?*" Wherefore this inaction, this indifference for thine own honour and thy people's safety? How bold is the suppliant! Does he err? Nay, verily, we who are so chill, and distant, and listless in prayer are the erring ones. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and he who learns the art shall surely prevail with God by its means. It is fit that we should enquire why the work of grace goes on so slowly, and the enemy has so much power over men: the enquiry may suggest practical reflections of unbounded value.

> "Why dost thou from the conflict stay?
> Why do thy chariot wheels delay?
> Lift up thyself, hell's kingdom shake,
> Arm of the Lord, awake, awake."

"*Pluck it out of thy bosom.*" A bold simile, but dying men must venture for their lives. When God seems to fold his arms we must not fold ours, but rather renew our entreaties that he would again put his hand to the work. O for more agony in prayer among professing Christians, then should we see miracles of grace. We have here before us a model of pleading, a very rapture of prayer. It is humble, but very bold, eager, fervent, and effectual. The heart of God is always moved by

such entreaties. When we bring forth our strong reasons, then will he bring forth his choice mercies.

12 For God *is* my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.
13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.
14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, *and* gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.
15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.
16 The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.
17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.
18 Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.
19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude *of the wicked:* forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.
20 Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.
21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name.
22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.
23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

Having spread the sad case before the Lord, the pleader now urges another series of arguments for divine help. He reasons from the Lord's former wonders of grace, and his deeds of power, imploring a repetition of the same divine works.

12. *"For God is my King of old."* How consoling is this avowal! Israel in holy loyalty acknowledges her King, and claims to have been his possession from of old, and thence she derives a plea for defence and deliverance. If the Lord be indeed the sole monarch of our bosoms, he will in his love put forth his strength on our behalf; if from eternity he has claimed us as his own, he will preserve us from the insulting foe. *"Working salvation in the midst of the earth."* From the most remote period of Israel's history the Lord had worked out for her many salvations; especially at the Red Sea, the very heart of the world was astonished by his wonders of deliverance. Now, every believer may plead at this day the ancient deeds of the Lord, the work of Calvary, the overthrow of sin, death, and hell. He who wrought out our salvation of old will not, cannot desert us now. Each past miracle of grace assures us that he who has begun to deliver will continue to redeem us from all evil. His deeds of old were public and wrought in the teeth of his foes, they were no delusions or make-believes; and, therefore, in all our perils we look for true and manifest assistance, and we shall surely receive it.

13. *"Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength."* Infinite power split the Red Sea in twain. Israel delighted to rehearse this famous act of the Lord. *"Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters."* Monsters long accustomed to the deep found themselves left high and dry. Huge things of the sea-cave and the coral grot were deprived of their vital element, and left with crushed heads upon the dry channel bed. There, too, that old dragon Pharaoh was utterly broken, and Egypt herself had the head of her power and pomp broken with an almighty blow. Even thus is that old dragon broken by him who came to bruise the serpent's head, and the sea of wrath no longer rolls before us; we pass through it dry-shod. Our faith as to the present is revived by glad memories of the past.

14. *"Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces."* It is the Lord who has done it all. The mighty dragon of Egypt was utterly slain, and his proud heads broken in pieces. Our Lord Jesus is the true Hercules, dragons with a hundred heads are crushed beneath his foot: the infernal hydra he utterly vanquishes. *"And gavest*

him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness." Not only did the wild beasts feed upon the carcasses of the Egyptians, but the dwellers along the shores stripped the bodies and enriched themselves with the spoil. Israel, too, grew rich with the relics of her drowned adversaries. How often do great afflictions work our lasting good. Leviathan, who would have devoured us, is himself devoured, and out of the monster we gather sweetness. Let us not give way to fear; hydra-headed evils shall be slain, and monstrous difficulties shall be overcome, and all things shall work our lasting good.

15. *"Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood."* Jordan was divided by Jehovah's power; the Lord is able to repeat his miracles, what he did with a sea, he can do with a river; lesser difficulties shall be removed as well as greater ones. Perhaps the fountain refers to the smitten rock, which from its cleft poured forth a perpetual stream; so the Lord opens to us springs of water in the wilderness. *"Thou driedst up mighty rivers,"* rivers which were permanent, and not like the transient torrents of the land, were dried up for awhile; the Jordan itself, being such, was laid dry for a season. Observe the repetition of the pronoun "thou;" the song is all for God, and the prayer is all directed to him. The argument is that he who wrought such wonders would be pleased to do the like now that an emergency had arisen.

16. *"The day is thine, the night also is thine."* Thou art not restricted by times and seasons. Our prosperity comes from thee, and our adversity is ordained by thee. Thou rulest in the darkness, and one glance of thine eye kindles it into day. Lord, be not slack to keep thy word, but rise for the help of thy people. *"Thou hast prepared the light and the sun."* Both light and the light-bearer are of thee. Our help, and the instrument of it, are both in thy hand. There is no limit to thy power; be pleased to display it and make thy people glad. Let thy sacred preparations of mercy ripen; say, "Let there be light," and light shall at once dispel our gloom.

17. *"Thou hast set all the borders of the earth."* Land and sea receive their boundaries from thee. Continents and islands are mapped by thy hand. Observe, again, how everything is ascribed to the divine agency by the use of the pronoun "thou;" not a word about natural laws, and original forces, but the Lord is seen as working all. It will be well when all our "ologies" are tinctured with "theology," and the Creator is seen at work amid his universe. The argument of our text is, that he who bounds the sea can restrain his foes; and he who guards the borders of the dry land can also protect his chosen. *"Thou hast made summer and winter."* Return, then, good Lord, to us the bright summer days of joy. We know that all our changes come of thee, we have already felt the rigours of thy winter, grant us now the genial glow of thy summer smile. The God of nature is the God of grace; and we may argue from the revolving seasons that sorrow is not meant to rule the year, the flowers of hope will blossom, and ruddy fruits of joy will ripen yet.

18. *"Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord."* Against thee, the ever glorious Maker of all things, have they spoken, thine honour have they assailed, and defied even thee. This is forcible pleading indeed, and reminds us of Moses and Hezekiah in their intercessions: "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" "It may be that the Lord thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, who hath reproached the living God." Jehovah is a jealous God, and will surely glorify his own name; here our hope finds foothold. *"And that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name."* The meanness of the enemy is here pleaded. Sinners are fools, and shall fools be allowed to insult the Lord and oppress his people; shall the abjects curse the Lord and defy him to his face? When error grows too bold its day is near, and its fall certain. Arrogance foreshadows ripeness of evil, and the next step is rottenness. Instead of being alarmed when bad men grow worse and more audacious, we may reasonably take heart, for the hour of their judgment is evidently near.

19. *"O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked."* Thy poor church is weak and defenceless as a dove, but yet her adversaries cannot touch her without thy permission; do not give them leave to devour her, consign her not to the merciless fangs of her foes. She is thy dove, thy turtle, thy favoured one, do not cast her to her enemies. Be merciful, and preserve the weak. Thus may we each plead, and with good hope of prevailing, for the Lord is very pitiful and full of compassion. *"Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever."* They look to thee for everything, for they are very poor, and they are thy poor, and there

is a company of them, collected by thyself; do not turn thy back on them for long, do not appear strange unto them, but let their poverty plead with thee; turn thou unto them, and visit thine afflicted. In such pleas we also can personally join when at any time we are sorely tried, and the Lord's presence is hidden from us.

20. *"Have respect unto the covenant."* Here is the master-key,—heaven's gate must open to this. God is not a man that he should lie; his covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing that hath gone forth out of his lips. The Lord had promised to bless the seed of Abraham, and make them a blessing; here they plead that ancient word, even as we also may plead the covenant made with the Lord Jesus for all believers. What a grand word it is! Reader, do you know how to cry, "Have respect unto thy covenant"? *"For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."* Darkness is the fit hour for beasts of prey, and ignorance the natural dwelling-place of cruelty. All the world is in a measure dark, and hence everywhere there are cruel enemies of the Lord's people; but in some places a sevenfold night of superstition and unbelief has settled down, and there rage against the saints reaches to madness. Has not the Lord declared that the whole earth shall be filled with his glory? How can this be if he always permits cruelty to riot in dark places? Surely, he must arise, and end the days of wrong, the era of oppression. This verse is a most telling missionary prayer.

21. *"O let not the oppressed return ashamed."* Though broken and crushed they come to thee with confidence; suffer them not to be disappointed, for then they will be ashamed of their hope. *"Let the poor and needy praise thy name."* By thy speedy answer to their cries make their hearts glad, and they will render to thee their gladdest songs. It is not the way of the Lord to allow any of those who trust in him to be put to shame; for his word is, "He shall call upon me, and I will deliver him, and he shall glorify me."

22. *"Arise, O God, plead thine own cause."* Answer thou the taunts of the profane by arguments which shall annihilate both the blasphemy and the blasphemer. God's judgments are awful replies to the defiances of his foes. When he makes empires crumble, and smites persecutors to the heart, his cause is pleaded by himself as none other could have advocated it. O that the Lord himself would come into the battle-field. Long has the fight been trembling in the balance; one glance of his eye, one word from his lip, and the banners of victory shall be borne on the breeze. *"Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily."* The Lord is begged to remember that he is himself reproached, and that by a mere man—that man a fool, and he is also reminded that these foul reproaches are incessant, and repeated with every revolving day. It is bravely done when faith can pluck pleas out of the dragon's mouth, and out of the blasphemies of fools find arguments with God.

23. *"Forget not the voice of thine enemies."* Great warrior, let the foemen's taunt provoke thee to the fray. They challenge thee; accept thou the gage of battle, and smite them with thy terrible hand. If the cries of thy children are too feeble to be heard, be pleased to note the loud voices of thy foes, and silence their profanities for ever. *"The tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually."* The ungodly clamour against thee and thy people, their blasphemies are loud and incessant, they defy thee, even thee, and because thou repliest not they laugh thee to scorn. They go from bad to worse, from worse to worst; their fury swells like the thunders of an advancing tempest. What will it come to? What infamy will next be hurled at thee and thine? O God, wilt thou for ever bear this? Hast thou no regard for thine honour, no respect for thy glory?

Much of this Psalm has passed over our mind while beholding the idolatries of Rome,* and remembering her bloody persecution of the saints. O Lord, how long shall it be ere thou wilt ease thyself of those profane wretches, the priests, and cast the harlot of Babylon into the ditch of corruption? May thy church never cease to plead with thee till judgment shall be executed, and the Lord avenged upon Antichrist.

---

* The Author visited Rome in November and December, 1871, while this portion of the Treasury of David was in progress.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—There is one singularity in this Psalm which reminds one strongly of Psalm xliv.: there is not one mention of national or personal sin throughout, no allusion to the Lord's righteous dealing in their punishment, no supplication for pardon and forgiveness; and yet one can hardly doubt that the writer of the Psalm, be he who he may, must have felt as keenly as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or any other prophet of the captivity, the sins and iniquities which had brought all this sore evil upon them. But still, though there be expostulation, there is no complaint; though there be mourning, there is no murmuring; there is far more the cry of a smitten child, wondering why, and grieving that his father's face is so turned away from him in displeasure, and a father's hand so heavy on the child of his love. Or, as we might almost say, it is like the cry of one of those martyred ones beneath the altar, wondering at the Lord's continued endurance of his heritage thus trampled under foot of the marauder and oppressor, and exclaiming, "How long, O Lord, how long?" And yet it is the appeal of one who was still a sufferer, still groaning under the pressure of his calamities, "Why hast thou cast *us* off for ever? *We* see not *our* signs, there is no more any prophet among *us*."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Whole Psalm.—The peculiarity of this Psalm is marked by the very frequent use of the נצח, *"for ever:"* verses 1, 3, 10.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—This Psalm, and particularly these words, do contain the church's sad lamentation over the deep affliction, together with her earnest expostulations with God about the cause. Two things there are that the church in these words doth plead with God. First, *The greatness of her affliction;* secondly, *the nearness of her relation.* 1. *The greatness of her affliction.* And there were three things in her affliction that did make it lie very heavy upon her. First, the *root* of this affliction; and that was God's *"anger:"* "Why doth thine *anger* smoke," etc. Secondly, the *height* of this affliction: God was not only angry, but he did *"smoke"* in his anger. Thirdly, the *length* of this affliction: it was so long that God did seem to cast them off *"for ever."* 2. *The nearness of her relation:* "Against *the sheep of thy pasture;*" as if they should have said, Lord, if thou hadst done this against thine enemies, it had been no wonder; if thou hadst poured out thy wrath against the vessels of wrath, it had not been so much. But what! wilt thou draw out thy sword against *the sheep of thy pasture?* It were no wonder that thou shouldst take the fat and the strong, and pour out thy judgments upon them; but wilt thou do it to *thy sheep?* There be several doctrines that I may raise from these words; as, First doctrine: That God's people are his sheep. Second doctrine: That God may be sorely angry with his own people, with his own sheep. Third doctrine: That when God is angry with his people, it becomes them carefully to enquire into the cause. Fourth doctrine: That when God's people are under afflictions, they ought to take notice of, and be much affected with, his anger, from which they do proceed. Fifth doctrine: That God's people under afflictions are, or should be, more affected with his anger than with their smart. This is that which the church doth complain of, not that the church did so smart, but that God was displeased and angry; that did most affect them. Sixth doctrine: That God's people are apt to have misgiving thoughts of God when they are in sore afflictions. God was angry with his people, and their hearts did misgive them, as if God did cast off his people. Seventh doctrine: That God may be angry with his people, so sore, and so long, that in the judgment of sense it may seem that they are for ever cast off. Eighth doctrine: That though the people of God may not murmur against his proceedings, yet they may humbly expostulate with him about the cause.—*Joseph Alleine.* 1633—1668.

Verse 1.—*"Why doth thine anger smoke,"* etc. Anger is a fire; and in men, and other creatures enraged, a smoke seemeth to go out of their nostrils. Xenophon saith of the Thebans, when they are angry they breathe fire. This then is spoken of God, after the manner of men.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—*"The sheep of thy pasture."* There is nothing more imbecile than a sheep: simple, frugal, gentle, tame, patient, prolific, timid, domesticated, stupid, useful. Therefore, while the name of *sheep* is here used, it is suggested how pressing

the necessity is for divine assistance, and how well-befitting the Most High it would be to make their cause his own.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 2.—"*Remember thy congregation.*" It is not without reason that they do not say, Remember *us*, but "*Remember thy congregation,*" not ours, but thine; nor *that* because it has now begun to be thine, but "*which thou hast purchased of old, the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed:*" likewise, this Mount Zion; not wherein we, but wherein "*thou* hast dwelt." They had nothing which they could bring before an angry God with greater confidence, than that ancient loving-kindness shown to their fathers in former days.—*Musculus.*

Verse 2.—"*The rod of thine inheritance.*" שֵׁבֶט נַחֲלָה, *the inheritance-rod* is the staff with which the inheritance is measured; קְנֵה הַמִּדָּה=שֵׁבֶט, the land-surveyor's rod (Ez. xl. 3): and this is used as גּוֹרָל, *the lot*, is for *the portion*, for the *inheritance itself.*—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"*Thine inheritance.*" It signifies a nation, which through all successions God had a peculiar right and title to.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast redeemed,*" *i.e.* the purchased people, by restoring them when they had been alienated, and had fallen into the hands of others: like a *goel*, or near kinsman, who ransoms a brother hurried into captivity, and regains an *inheritance* that has been sold.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 3.—"*Lift up thy feet.*" Or, *thy hammers*, that is, "thy strokes," to "stamp" or "beat down" the enemy "unto perpetual desolations." Thus the "feet" are used to "tread down with," Isa. xxvi. 6; and so the Greek taketh it here, changing the metaphor, and translating it, "thy hands," which are also instruments to strike down with. Or, "*lift up thy feet,*" that is, come quickly to see "*the perpetual desolations,*" which the enemy hath made.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 3.—"*Lift up thy feet.*" Abu Walid renders it, *Tread hard upon thine enemies.* The Jewish Arab, *Shew forth thy punishment*, adding in a note that the *lifting up the feet* implies punishment, the bringing under by force being usually expressed by *treading under the feet.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 3.—"*Lift up thy feet,*" etc. To these *desolations* they seek that God would *lift up his footsteps*, that is, that he would approach. In Gen. xxix. 1, there occurs the phrase, *to lift the feet;* here the expression is much more marked—*to lift up the footsteps*—and must be taken to mean a swift, impetuous, majestic, and powerful approach: like a hero, who strikes the ground with heavy tread, and advances rapidly with far-sounding footsteps.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 3.—"*In the sanctuary.*" Their cities had been laid waste, their provinces, their farms, their vineyards, their oliveyards. They themselves had been everywhere cut down without striking a blow in defence, and their means of life had been snatched away without resistance. Yet they speak not of these things; not because things of this sort ought not to cause grief, nor yet because the saints are not touched with a sense of their loss; but because those things which threatened the extinction of religion and the worship of God, overtopped the feeling of all these other misfortunes with an intolerable sorrow.—*Musculus.*

Verse 4.—"*Thine enemies roar,*" etc. The word שָׁאַג is used especially of the roar of the lion. . . . . In this place we may justly extend the application of the verb to those noisy words, whether mirthful or boastful, blasphemous against God and calamitous to his people (verse 10), breathing terror and threatenings through edicts; or rude and senseless, as in their idolatrous worship; or in their prayers and thoughtless songs. As in Isa. lii. 5, its meaning is *to howl.*—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—"*They set up their ensigns for signs.*" The meaning is, that the enemy, having abolished the signs of the true God, of his people and religion, such as circumcision, the feasts, sacrifices, the other ordinances of religion, and other marks of liberty, substituted his own idolatrous signs, as the signs of his authority and religion. —*Hermann Venema.*

Verses 4—7.—[*The persecution under Antiochus.* B.C. 168.] Athenæus proceeded to Jerusalem, where, with the assistance of the garrison, he prohibited and suppressed every observance of the Jewish religion, forced the people to profane the Sabbath, to eat swine's flesh and other unclean food, and expressly forbade the national rite of circumcision. The Temple was dedicated to Jupiter Olympus: the statue of that deity was erected on part of the altar of burnt offerings, and

sacrifice duly performed. . . . . As a last insult, the feasts of the Bacchanalia, the license of which, as they were celebrated in the later ages of Greece, shocked the severe virtue of the older Romans, were substituted for the national festival of Tabernacles. The reluctant Jews were forced to join in these riotous orgies, and to carry the ivy, the insignia of the God. So near was the Jewish nation, and the worship of Jehovah, to total extermination.—*Henry Hart Milman* (1791—1868), *in "A History of the Jews."*

[*Under Titus.*] And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings lying round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern-gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy.—*Josephus.*

Verse 5.—"*A man was famous,*" etc. It enhances the cruelty of the enemy that the temple which had been built at the cost of so much treasure, adorned with such great elegance and splendour, and finished with untiring industry and consummate skill, was not saved thereby from their barbarous hands, but was utterly overthrown. There is a simile in these verses. The enemies breaking to pieces with great violence and casting down the altars and beams of the temple, are compared to the woodman, who with axe in hand cuts down the strong trees of the wood.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 5.—"*A man was famous,*" etc. That is, very renowned were the workmen, who, by Hiram's order, cut down the rough cedars and firs in the thick Tyrian forests, for the building of thy Temple, and thereby they did an acceptable service to thee.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 6.—"*The carved work thereof.*" Even barbarian invaders are wont to spare the more splendid buildings for art's sake. Demetrius, when he had taken a picture painted by Protogenes in the suburbs of Rhodes, was besought by the Rhodians to be lenient towards art, lest he should destroy the painting. He replied that he would sooner burn the statues of his father than so great a work of art. The ferocity of these enemies, therefore, outdoes the barbarity of others, for they ruthlessly cast down an edifice sculptured and polished with the greatest skill.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 6.—"*The carved work.*" פִּתּוּחִים *Pittuchim:* used in 1 Kings vi. 29, of the "carved figures of cherubim, and palm-trees, and open flowers," which were on the Temple walls.—*William Kay.*

Verse 6.—"*With axes and hammers.*" It is noted by a learned interpreter, that the words in the original rendered in our translation, "*with axes and hammers,*" are not properly Hebrew, but Syriac words, purposely to hint thereby the time when and the persons by whom this was done.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 8.—"*The synagogues of God.*" It is the opinion of Spencer, Vitringa, and of the learned in general, that the institution of synagogues for worship originated in the reading of the law publicly after the collection of its volumes by Ezra, and that, consequently, there were no such places of solemn assembly previous to the Babylonish captivity. Some of the Jews themselves have expressed a conviction that this is the fact, and the Scriptures give no intimation of their existence antecedently to that time. We are aware, however, that one of the first Hebraists of the present day, the Rev. Dr. M'Caul, inclines to the opinion of an earlier origin than that generally adopted. We quote his words: "The existence of such places before the Babylonish captivity has been much disputed; and most writers, arguing from the silence of the Old Testament, incline to the opinion that they originated in Babylon, and that after the restoration similar oratories were opened in the land of Israel; and hence some infer that the Seventy-fourth Psalm, which says in the eighth verse, '*They have burned up all the synagogues in the land,*' was written in the post-Babylonian times. The argument from silence is, however, far from conclusive. The translation of מוֹעֲדֵי as *synagogues*, in the verse just cited, might fairly lead to a similar translation in some other passages which were confessedly written before the captivity; and the circumstances, character, and necessities of the Israelites, the great body of whom were far removed from the temple, prove indisputably that in their towns and villages they must have had some locality where they assembled on their sabbaths, new moons, and other solemn days, for the

purpose of receiving instruction in the law, and for public prayer. That locality, however different from subsequent arrangements, was the origin of the *synagogue.* How such assemblies were conducted before the captivity it is now impossible to say."—*F. A. Cox.*

Verse 8.—"*Synagogues.*" Dr. Prideaux affirms that they had no synagogue before the Babylonish captivity; for the main service of the synagogue, says he, being the reading of the law unto the people, where there was no book of the law to be read, there certainly could be no synagogue. But how rare the book of the law was through all Judæa, before the Babylonish captivity, many texts of Scripture tell us. When Jehoshaphat sent teachers through all Judæa, to instruct the people in the law of God, they carried a book of the law with them (2 Chron. xvii. 9), which they needed not have done if there had been any copies of the law in those cities to which they went; which certainty there would have been had there been any synagogues in them. And when Hilkiah found the law in the temple (2 Kings xxii. 8), neither he nor king Josiah needed to have been so surprised at it, had books of the law been common in those times. Their behaviour on that occasion sufficiently proves they had never seen it before, which could not be the case had there then been any other copies of it to be found among the people; and if there were no copies of the law at that time among them, there could then be most certainly no *synagogues* for them to resort to for the hearing of it read unto them. From whence he concludes there could be no *synagogues* among the Jews, till after the Babylonish captivity.—*Cruden's Concordance.*

Verse 8.—"*Synagogues.*" The assertion of those who are in favour of the Maccabæan origin of the Psalm, that these words describe the destruction of the *synagogues*, is met by the remark, that in all the copious accounts which we have of the transactions of these times, there is nothing said of any such work of destruction.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 8.—"*Synagogues.*" In the Old Testament we find no traces of meetings for worship in synagogues. Temporary altars, groves, and high places were used alike by the Jewish saints and sinners for the worship of God and idols. The only pre-exile instance which seems to indicate that the devout in Israel were in the habit of resorting to pious leaders for blessings and instruction on stated occasions, is to be found in 2 Kings iv. 23, where the Shunammite's husband asks, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him (Elisha) to-day? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath." Yet 2 Kings xxii. 8, etc.; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14, etc., testify undoubtedly against the existence of places of worship under the monarchy. It is during the exile, whilst the temple-worship was in abeyance, that we find indubitable proof of the systematic meetings on fasts for devotion and instruction (Zech. vii. 3—5; viii. 19). Religious meetings were also held on Sabbaths and fasts, to instruct the exiles in the divine law, and to admonish them to obey the divine precepts (Ezra x. 1—9; Neh. viii. 1—3; ix. 1—3; xiii. 1—3). These meetings, held near the temple and in other localities, were the origin of the *synagogue*, and the place in which the people assembled was denominated *the house of assembly.* Hence, also, the synagogue in the temple itself. . . . . These synagogues soon became very popular, so that the Psalmist in depicting worship in the time of the Maccabees declares that the many meeting-places of God—or "*the Synagogues of God*" as the A.V. rightly renders it—have been laid waste.—*Christian D. Ginsburg, in Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature.*

Verse 8 (*second clause*).—The sense seems to be, *they* (the Chaldæan invaders) *have abolished all the solemnities in the land.* They have taken away the daily sacrifice; they have put an end to the festivals and feasts of our holy ritual. Compare Lam. ii. 6: "He hath violently taken away his tabernacle; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly," (or rather, his assembly, his *moëd*). "The Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion."—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 9.—"*We see not our signs.*" As if they had said, heretofore God was wont to give us signs and tokens, he would even work miracles for us, or he would send a prophet to instruct and advise us what to do; we had those who could tell us "*how long,*" that is, how long our troubles should last, and when we should have our expected end of them; but now we are in trouble, and no man can tell us how long, now we are left to the wide world, to shift for ourselves as well as we can; the Lord will not advise us what to do, nor give us his mind what's best to be done, or how to proceed: thus deplorable was their condition upon the hiding of God's face from them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*We see not our signs.*" These signs, which he mourned that he did not see, were certain outward marks of God's special favour, certain testimonies of his presence, certain memorials that he was with them to bless them. And it is said that there were five things in Solomon's temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which were not in the second temple, which was erected after the Babylonish captivity.' Five memorials or tokens of God's special presence were there wanting. One was the ark of the covenant; another, the fire from heaven upon the brazen altar; the third, the Shechinah, or cloud that rested upon the mercy-seat; the fourth, the Urim and Thummim which were in the breast-plate of the high-priest; and the fifth, the spirit of prophecy. For though there were the prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, at the time of, and shortly after, the restoration; yet the spirit of prophecy ceased with Malachi, and did not re-appear until John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. . . . . The lamentation of the church here, then, was, that she saw not her signs. So now, the church of the living God, the regenerate family of Zion, have often reason to pour out the same melancholy complaint. Signs of God's favour, marks and testimonies of the work of grace upon their souls, are often so out of sight, so buried in obscurity, so enveloped in clouds of darkness, that the living family are compelled, from soul-feeling, to take up the language of lamentation here expressed, and say, "*We see not our signs.*"—*J. C. Philpot.* 1802—1869.

Verse 9.—"*Our signs.*" The ordinary "*signs*" of Israel being God's peculiar people are the passover (Exod. xii. 13), the Sabbath (Exod. xxxi. 13), the temple, the altar, the sacrifices; the extraordinary ones are God's miracles wrought in his people's behalf (Ps. lxxviii. 43).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 9.—"*There is no more any prophet.*" By us it ought to be observed what they do not say: It is not,—here is no more any giant or warlike leader who may deliver us from the adversary: but, there is no more any prophet. And yet when the prophets were with them, they were contemptible in the eyes of all, maltreated by the wicked and put to death.—*Musculus.*

Verse 10.—"*Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?*" The sinner never leaves his sin till sin first leaves him: did not death put a stop to his sin, he would never cease from sin. This may be illustrated by a similitude thus: A company of gamesters resolve to play all night, and accordingly they sit down to chess tables or some other game; their candle, accidentally or unexpectedly, goes out, or is put out, or burnt out; their candle being out, they are forced to give over their game, and go to bed in the dark; but had the candle lasted all night, they would have played all night. This is every sinner's case in regard of sin: did not death put out the candle of life, the sinner would sin still. Should the sinner live for ever, he would sin for ever; and, therefore, it is a righteous thing with God to punish him for ever in hellish torments. Every impenitent sinner would sin to the days of eternity, if he might live to the days of eternity. "*O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?*" For ever, and evermore; or for ever and yet—for so the Hebrew loves to exaggerate: as if the sinner, the blasphemer, would set a term of duration longer than eternity to sin in. The Psalmist implicitly saith, Lord, if thou dost but let them alone for ever, they will certainly blaspheme thy name for ever and ever. I have read of the crocodile, that he knows no *maximum quod sic*, he is always growing bigger and bigger, and never comes to a certain pitch of monstrosity so long as he lives. *Quamdiu vivit crescit.* Every habituated sinner would, if he were let alone, be such a monster, perpetually growing worse and worse.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 12.—"*God is my King of old,*" etc. Let us learn from this verse how to think of our God. First, that he is our King, and therefore we ought to be encouraged to pray for his help against the ungodly, and to place ourselves in entire submission to his will and government. Secondly, that he is not a new God, but the Ancient of Days, and that whatever salvation has been wrought not only in the midst of his own people, but in the midst of the whole earth, even among those by whom he is not acknowledged, has been wrought by him. Let this meaning strike at the root of all trust in other gods, or in any creature.—*Musculus.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou didst divide the sea.*" Thou, O Lord, didst make firm the flowing sea, that there might be a way for our fathers to pass over, and in those very waters through which thou didst lead thy ransomed, thou didst utterly over-

throw the hosts of Egypt, who were like dragons for ferocity, as they sought to devour thy people.—*Jansenius.*

Verse 14.—"*Thou brakest the heads of leviathan,*" etc. It is spoken of Pharaoh's army which God destroyed in the Red Sea; that is, the destruction of the Egyptians was a pledge of the accomplishment of God's promise to cast the Canaanite out of the promised land, and to give them possession of it. Many hardships they were to pass through in the wilderness, but God gave them this mercy as food, not to their bodies, but food to their faith, while they were in the wilderness: therefore, those former great and glorious promises were accomplished. So that former mercies are food that God gives unto the faith of his people to feed upon, till he hath perfectly accomplished whatever he hath promised unto his church.—*William Strong.*

Verse 14.—"*Leviathan.*" The Arabic Lexicographers (quoted by Bochart) affirm that *Pharao*, in the Egyptian language, signified a crocodile. Parkhurst remarks that in Schenchzer's Physica Sacra may be seen a medal with Julius Cæsar's head on one side, and on the reverse a crocodile with this inscription: ÆGYPTO CAPTA, *Egypt taken.* M. Mariette has discovered at Karnak a monumental stele of Thothmes, on which that king says of himself,

> "Fierce as the huge crocodile, I made them see the glory of my God;
> Terrible Lord of the waters, none dare even approach him."

Verse 14.—"*Leviathan*" is a name given not only to the crocodile, but to the whale and other large fishes. The Zum, or people inhabiting the wilderness, are supposed, by many sensible writers, to be the Ichthyophagi, or fish-eaters, who occupied, according to ancient authors, a part of the coast of the Red Sea. The Psalmist is here speaking of Israel's passage through its waters; and it is a singular fact that Diodorus, who lived about two hundred years ago, mentions a tradition, prevalent amongst these very persons, to the effect that in the time of their remote forefathers an extraordinary reflux took place, the channel of the gulf becoming dry, and the green bottom appearing, whilst the whole body of water rolled away in an opposite direction. There can be little doubt that this strange people would have used for food, and various purposes, such great fish as might have been cast ashore on the termination of the miracle. Most writers give this text a figurative meaning, but that is no reason why it may not be also literally understood; for such a mode of speaking is common in the Bible. But whether we understand it one way or the other, we have the testimony of heathens to its propriety and force. If, by the term "*Leviathan,*" we believe Egypt to be intended, and by its "*heads*" those petty states into which that country was divided, the traditions of India, and the East, inform us that such designations were well understood, and therefore beautifully applicable.—*Anon., in "Biblical and Theological Gleanings: by William O'Neill."* 1854.

Verse 14.—"*Meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.*" May not the exact meaning be that even as the sea-monsters washed upon the shore furnished food for the inhabitants of the Red Sea, even so the symbolic dragon power of Egypt when destroyed at the Red Sea became food for Israel's faith, and even furnished provision for their wilderness journey by the spoil which was cast up by the tide.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 15.—"*Flood.*" God in dividing Jordan did not only divide the water that ordinarily belonged to the river, or the water which came from its fountains, but also the extraordinary additional waters by the great rains a little before harvest. So God *cleaved* both *the fountain, i.e.*, the fountain water, *and the flood.*—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 16.—"*The day is thine, the night also is thine.*"

Ah! don't be sorrowful, darling,
And don't be sorrowful, pray—
Taking the year together, my dear,
There isn't more night than day.

* * * * *

And God is God, my darling,
Of night as well as day;
And we feel and know that we can go,
Wherever he leads the way.

A God of the night, my darling,
Of the night of death so grim,
The gate that leads out of life, good wife,
Is the gate that leads to Him.

From "In the Sere and Yellow Leaf," in "The Circling Year."

Verse 16.—"*Day.*" "*Night.*" These changes are *according to a fixed law.* Day and night are the ordinances of heaven upon earth for the growth of earth's life, and, if we could trace the sunshine and the dark in every follower of God, we should see them arranged with equal wisdom. It is a more complex work, but, be sure of this, there is order in it all, and the hand that rules the world in its orbit, and that makes it fulfil its course through light and shade, is governing our lives for a higher than earthly end. One feature of the law is presented so far for our guidance. *It is a law of alternation.* It is day and night, and, let us thank God, it is also in due time night and day. Each has its time and use.—*John Ker.* 1869.

Verse 16.—"*Thou hast prepared the light.*" It is but recently that we have been able to form any conception of the power of light as an agent in the economy of the globe; the discoveries of Actinism are among the most interesting and marvellous of natural science. The discovery that "no substance can be exposed to the sun's rays without undergoing a chemical change," has been described as scarcely less important in its effects than the discovery of the law of gravitation. A sunbeam is one of the most powerful of all the agencies of nature; magical as it is, it breaks up the strongest chemical affinities; it is the author of colour, and is the creator of a myriad combinations, which all tend to the harmony of the world. Nor ought we to forget the moral influence of light. We are all aware of the sensible difference produced in our moral natures by a fine day or a dark day. Light gives zest and tone to the spirits; light gives buoyancy and joy to the soul; light crowds the chambers of the mind with ideas; Light is *Life:* the merest insect could not live without light; and even blind natures receive, in those organs which are not the property of vision, the assurance of its benignant operations. Light is *Order:* and at its wand and command the separation takes place, and dark and light pair off into their separate ranks. Light is *Beauty:* whether in the refulgence of the moon; the chill sparkle of the stars; the unrivalled play of colours in the attenuated film of the soap-bubble, at once the toy of childhood and the tool of the sage; the rich play of tints in the mother-of-pearl, or the rich gorgeous rays in the plumes of birds. Light is *Purity:* forms that rankle out of the glance of its clear, steady beam, contract around themselves loathsomeness and disgust, and become the seats of foulness and shame. Light is *Growth:* where it is, we know that nature pursues her work in life and in vigour; light gives vitality to the sap; light removes obstructions from the pathway of the growing agencies, while, in its absence, forms become stunted, gnarled, and impaired. Light is *Health:* as it darts its clear and brilliant points to and fro, it brings in its train those blessings of elasticity and energy, which give the fulness of being—which is perfect health to the expanding forms. There is a fine consistency, when Scripture makes light to contain, as it were, the seeds of all things, and when the prelude of all creation is made to be those words, "God said, Let there be light."

This, then, is the part light is made to play in the history of the world; it is used by moral power to become the creator of moral influence. What a long series of creations elapsed before moral causes seemed to operate in the affairs of the globe! But he, whose nature and whose name was Light, had given to light its distinct being and work; and that creative word, "*Let there be light,*" spoke right forwards to the moral energies which were to be superinduced by its creation. Thus light, it is true, went before all things, and became the cause of moral consequences; but then, this arose from the divine hand, whence darted its benevolent beams. *It was God* who gave it its divine commission, to divide between light and darkness; *it was God* who made it the fountain of knowledge and of day; *it was God* who gave to it the faculty to become, in turn, a creator, and to warm into life and beauty a myriad seeds and shapes of loveliness.—*E. Paxton Hood.*

Verse 16.—"*The light and the sun.*" I was considerably affected in my younger days by the long-standing objection, that Moses made *light* to exist before the creation of the sun; as books then usually taught, what some still fancy, that there could not have been light without this luminary. But not choosing, on such important point, to attach my faith to any general assertion, I sought to find out if any

investigator of the nature of light had perceived any distinction in its qualities or operation, which made it a fluid or matter independent of the sun. It was not easy, before the year 1791, to meet with the works of any student of nature on such a subject, as it had been little attended to; but I at length saw the fact asserted by Henckel, a German of the old school, of some value in his day, and soon afterwards some experiments were announced in England which confirmed the supposition. It has been a favourite point of attention with me ever since; and no truth in philosophy seems to be now more clearly ascertained than that light has a distinct existence, separate and independent of the sun. This is a striking confirmation of the Mosaic record; for that expressly distinguishes the existence and operation of light from the solar action upon it, and from that radiation of it which is connected with his beams and presence. By Moses, an interval of three days is placed between the luminous creation, and the appearance and position of the sun and moon. Light was, therefore, operating by its own laws and agencies, without the sun, and independently of his peculiar agency, from the first day to the fourth of our terrestrial fabrication. But from the time that the sun was placed in his central position, and his rays were appointed to act on our earth, they have been always performing most beneficial operations, essential to the general course of things.—*Sharon Turner* (1768—1847), *in "The Sacred History of the World."*

Verse 17.—*"Thou hast set all the borders of the earth."* The actual distribution of sea and land over the surface of the globe is likewise of the highest importance to the present condition of organic life. If the ocean were considerably smaller, or if Asia and America were concentrated within the tropics, the tides, the oceanic currents, and the meteorological phenomenon on which the existence of the vegetable and animal kingdoms depend, would be so profoundly modified, that it is extremely doubtful whether man could have existed, and absolutely certain that he could never have risen to a high degree of civilisation. The dependence of human progress upon the existing configuration of the globe necessarily leads us to the conclusion that both must be the harmonious work of the same Almighty Power, and that a divine and immutable plan has from all eternity presided over the destinies of our planet. It is almost superfluous to point out how largely the irregular windings and undulations of the coasts, the numerous islands scattered over the face of the waters, the promontories stretching far away into the domains of the sea, and the gulfs plunging deeply into the bosom of the land, have contributed to the civilisation of the human race by multiplying its points of contact with the ocean, the great highway of nations.—*G. Hartwig, in "The Harmonies of Nature."* 1866.

Verse 17.—*"Thou hast set all the borders of the earth."* Consider the form of the earth. It is known to be globular, and in shape nearly like an orange. And why has God chosen that form? With a view that it might be inhabited by living creatures on its whole surface. In order to this, every part of the globe must have sufficient light and heat, the wind must have a free circulation, and the water must be diffused over all its parts. The rotundity of the earth is best calculated to promote these conveniences: for this round form admits light and heat, without which there could be no life all over the globe. The revolutions of day and night, the changes in the temperature of the air, heat, cold, dryness or moisture, could not have taken place without this form. Had the earth been square, had it been conic, had it been an hexagon, or any other angular form, what must the consequence have been? The greatest part of our earth would have been drowned, whilst the rest would have languished with drought. Some countries must have been torn in pieces by storms, while others would have been deprived of the wholesome circulation of wind. I have new reason to admire the supreme wisdom, when I reflect on the enormous mass which composes our world. Were the earth softer, or more spongy than it is, men and animals would sink into it; were it harder and less penetrable, it would resist the toil of the labourer, and lose its capacity for producing and nourishing the multitude of plants, herbs, roots, and flowers, which now spring out of its bosom. There are regular and distinct strata found in the earth; some of stone, others of metal and minerals. There are numerous and evident advantages which result from these in favour of mankind. Do not the strata of gravel, sunk deep in the earth, purify and in a manner filter the water, and render it sweet and fit for use? On the surface of the earth there is a varied prospect; there is an admirable mixture of plains and valleys, of small hills and mountains. The man must be blind indeed that does not see the wise purpose of the Great Author of

nature, in thus diversifying the surface of the earth. Were the earth an even plain, how much beauty would it lose? Besides, this variety of valley and mountain is very favourable to the health of living creatures, and were there no hills, the earth would be less peopled with men and animals. There would be fewer plants, fewer simples and trees. We should be deprived of metals and minerals: the vapours would not be condensed, nor should we have either springs or rivers. Must we not then acknowledge that the whole plan of the earth, its form, its inward and outward construction, are all regulated according to the wisest laws, which all combine towards the pleasure and happiness of mankind. O thou supreme Author of nature, thou hast done all things well! Whichever way I turn my eyes, whether I penetrate into the interior structure of the globe thou hast appointed me to inhabit, or whether I examine its surface, I everywhere discover marks of profound wisdom and infinite goodness.—*Christopher Christian Sturm.*

Verse 17.—"*Thou hast made summer and winter.*" *Plasmasti ea.* Now thou that hast done all this and more for mankind in general, wilt thou be wanting to thy church?—*John Trapp.*

Verse 17.—"*Winter.*" As if fatigued with so many cares, nature now rests; this, however, is only to collect new force, again to be employed for the good of the world. But even this rest, which nature enjoys in winter, is a secret activity. A new creation is preparing in silence. The necessary dispositions are already making, that the desolate earth may again recover the children she has lost. The corn which is to serve us for food, already shoots. The fibres of plants, which are to adorn our fields and gardens, begin insensibly to open. O my beneficent Creator! Here I find fresh cause to adore thy wisdom and power. The repose which nature takes is as worthy to enter into the plan of thy wise providence, as the activity she shows in spring and summer. Thou hast wisely combined the several revolutions of the earth, thou hast equally divided its rest and labour. It is thy will that each day should vary the scenes of nature, in that way which is most proper for the perfection of the whole. Pardon, O God, my temerity, if I have been so stupid as to blame anything in the government of the world. I am more than ever convinced that all the plans of thy providence, though they may appear extraordinary to my weak reason, are replete with wisdom and goodness.—*Christopher Christian Sturm.* 1750—1786.

Verse 19.—"*O deliver not,*" etc. How weak soever the church be, and how many and strong soever the enemy be, yet cannot they all devour the church, except the Lord should deliver his church over into their hands, against which evil the church hath ground of confidence to pray, "*O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked;*" for he hath given his church wings, and a hiding-place too, as the comparison importeth, if he please to give her the use thereof also.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 19.—The people of God are taught in this form of supplication how to edge and keen their prayers, and make them vigorous; to wit, by disclaiming any ability or sufficiency in themselves; by styling themselves a congregation of poor, silly, weak doves, no way able to encounter an army of bestial, cunning, crafty, bloody, boisterous enemies. This plea the people of God make use of: "With thee the fatherless findeth mercy," Hosea xiv. 3.—*John Langley.*

Verse 19.—"*The soul of thy turtledove.*" They compare themselves to a turtledove, whose nature leads it, in whatever way it may be afflicted, not to indulge in noisy impatience, but to mourn in secret; so the afflicted people of Israel were unable to do anything but breathe their sighs and groans to God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 19.—"*Thy turtledove.*" God's people are an harmless, innocent people, altogether unable and insufficient to help themselves against their enemies, who are numerous, cruel, and barbarous. Hence they are resembled to sheep, doves; called in the Word, fatherless, orphans, little ones, babes, poor, simple, needy. They are men bound to their good behaviour, may not harbour so much as a bad thought against any; are called to suffer, not to do wrong. Julian did jeer at them for this; he would strike them on the one cheek, and tell them that their Master taught them to turn the other; his soldiers would take away their cloaks, and mind them that they must part with their coats also. Out of their own dispositions they judge of others, therefore may easily be deceived and entrapped. Thus Gedaliah, that sweet man, would not believe the relation of Johanan touching the conspiracy of the crocodile Ishmael against him; nay, was even angry with him

for his faithful dealing that way, and it cost him his life. Jer. xl. 16; and xli. That famous admiral of France, Jasper Coligny, though he had information and intelligence from sundry parts beyond the seas, that the court did intend to mischief him, and that there was no security in their promises and agreements, though backed with oaths, thrust himself, notwithstanding, upon the lion, and was smoothed with one paw and torn with the other: being such, they lie open to the rage of many adversaries. . . . .

One would think these turtles should rather win the love of all that come near them than incur the hatred of any, for they are quiet and peaceable persons. In the mount of the Lord there is no hurt done (Isa. xl. 9), yet, notwithstanding, they are maligned by a world of people. Because they are not like them (1 Peter iv. 4); because they are not of their number (John xv. 19); because their persons and their sacrifices are more acceptable with God than the others' (Gen. iv. 4); because they reprove them for their evil ways (John iii. 20); because they are for the most part poor and mean, have no great forecast in worldly affairs, are no deep politicians, they are such as those *pauperes Lugdunensis*, those poor men of Lyons in France, therefore are exposed to beasts and lions (Matt. i. 25); because they mourn for sin in themselves and others: they quarrel with the dove even because of her mournful note. They will jeer at sighing sisters, and men that hang the head like a bulrush; yet, seeing this bulrush cannot grow without mire and mud, why should it not hang the head?—*John Langley.*

Verse 19.—"*Thy turtledove.*" This expression may, perhaps, be further illustrated from the custom, ancient and modern, of keeping doves as favourite birds (see *Theocritus* v. 96, and *Virgil*, Eclog. iii. v. 68, 69), and from the care taken to secure them from such animals as are dangerous to them.—*James Merrick.*

Verse 19.—*Turtle Doves*, of whatever species they be, whether travellers or domesticated, are equally preserved by the inhabitants of Egypt: they do not kill, and never eat them. Wishing to know the motive of this abstinence among people who possess so little in the greater part of their actions, I learnt that it was for the honour of humanity. It is a consequence of the respect due to hospitality, which the Arabs hold in such high estimation, and of which they have communicated some shades to the people who dwell among them. They would regard it as a violation of this hospitality not to spare those birds, which come with a perfect confidence to live amongst them, and there to become skilful but useless receptors of love and tenderness. The very farmer, who sees his harvests a prey to the flights of turtle doves which alight on his fields, neither destroys nor harasses them, but suffers them to multiply in tranquillity.—*C. N. S. de M. Sonnini.* 1775—1811.

Verse 19.—"*Forget not the congregation of thy poor.*" *Thy* poor, by way of discrimination. There may be a greater distance between poor and poor, than there is between poor and rich. There are many "ragged regiments," "congregations of poor," whom the Lord will forget for ever; but *his* poor shall be saved. And these poor are of two sorts; either poor in regard of wealth and outward substance, or poor in regard of friends or outward assistance. A rich man, especially a godly rich man, may be in a poor case, destitute and forsaken, wanting patronage and protection. God saveth his poor in both notions, both those that have no friends, and those that have no estates.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 20.—"*Have respect.*" The word, in the original signification of it, imports a fastening of the eyes upon some object, that a man desires to look into. Hence, by a metaphor, it is transferred to the eyes of the mind, and signifies a serious weighing and consideration of a thing. God is said to "wink at the times of ignorance," or not to regard it, Acts xvii. 30. God's people here look at God, as if he did wink at his covenant, and neither look at it, nor them in their miseries. The Psalmist desires him that he would be mindful of it for his people's deliverance.—*Francis Taylor, in "A Sermon preached before the House of Commons," entitled "God's Covenant the Churches Plea."* 1645.

Verse 20.—"*Have respect unto the covenant.*" This presseth the Lord more than the former; this is the close grappling, as 'twere, with him in the words of Jacob: "I will not let thee go till thou hast blessed me." This is the throwing out of the greatest sheet-anchor in the tempest, for it lays hold on God's faithfulness, and truth, and fatherly goodness. If they be not in covenant with God, it may be charged upon them,—"you have violated my holy law, you have incensed my wrath against you by your perverse ways, therefore I will not help you, but give

you up : " but now the souls that be in covenant with God will not be put off so (be it spoken with holy reverence), but will cry out, O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, yet *"have respect unto thy covenant."* Yet be sure you walk uprightly before the Lord. . . . . With what face can any one say, *"Lord, have respect unto thy covenant,"* when he casts his own covenant behind his back, and cannot say with the prophet David, " I have a respect to all thy commandments " ? How canst thou say, " Deliver me not up to the many beasts without," when thou art not afraid to be delivered up to thy vile, bestial lusts and affections that are within ? Thou hypocrite, first labour the subduing of the monsters that are within thee, then a fair way will be open to have thine enemies subdued round about thee.—*John Langley.*

Verse 20.—*"Have respect unto the covenant."* Those persons and preachers who decline to think and speak of gospel mercies and free salvation as secured by *covenant,* deprive themselves and others of much of the blessed comforts of God's word. Such was not the manner of the inspired Psalmist.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 20.—God seems to his people to neglect his covenant, when they are oppressed by ungodly men. So Asaph complains. After an acknowledgment that God was the Shepherd of Israel, and so in covenant with his people, and accordingly had wonderfully brought them out of Egypt, and made them flourish marvellously in the land of Canaan. he attributes their misery to God's neglect. Many reasons may be given of this unkind carriage of God's people to him. As, first, because their misery blinds them ; and blind men when they are smitten suspect every man that comes near them. Secondly, self-love makes us suspect any rather than ourselves, yea, even God himself. The people should have reflected upon themselves that were nocent, but in their sorrows they reflect upon God that was innocent. We are all Adam and Eve's children. When Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, she tacitly lays the fault upon God : " The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Gen. iii. 13. Hadst thou not made a subtil serpent I had not broken thy commandment. Adam lays it openly upon God : " The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Gen. iii. 12. Hadst thou not given me such a companion to betray me, I had been innocent. So we their posterity, when trouble is upon us, suspect God's breaking covenant, rather than our own. Thus our nurses beat the stone when children stumble through their own neglect. Thirdly, in time of need we most commonly suspect such as are best able to help us. The sick man, if he be in danger of death, suspects not his ignorant neighbours, but his skilful physician. He that is oppressed in his estate, when the sentence goes against him, suspects none more than the advocate, or the judge. We know God is best able to help us ; our corruption, therefore, makes us to suspect him most, if our troubles continue. Fourthly, we most suspect those who, as we think, have most reason to help us in our miseries, and do it not. If the servant want meal or apparel, he complains not of his fellow servants but of his master, who is tied by covenant to provide for him ; if the child be wronged by the servants, he lays not the fault upon his brethren but upon his father, who by bands of nature is obliged to take care of him. So we, being in covenant with God, wonder not much if others fail us, but complain heavily if God seems to neglect us.—*Francis Taylor.*

Verse 20.—The Psalmist moves God in prayer to look to his covenant by this argument : *"For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty ;"* that is, of cruel men, or of men so full of cruelty, that they deserve rather to be called *cruelty* than cruel : this sort of men inhabit and fill up all those places where the light of holy truth doth not shine. Now, if they who want the light, or have no true knowledge of God among them, are hereby prepared for the acting of all manner of wickedness, how much more are they prepared for the acting of any wickedness who have thrust the light from them, and are in dark places of their own making ? The prophet Hosea shews (ch. iv. 1), that where there is no knowledge of God in a land, for want of means, there is no truth nor mercy (that is, there is none exercised) in that land, but oppression, deceit, and falsehood bear down all : how much more must it be so where there is no knowledge of God in a land, because of the contempt of means, and rebellion against the light ? What wickedness will not they do in the dark, who put out the candle that they may not see what they do.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 20 (*second clause*).—This might have some literal meaning. *"The dark places of the earth,"* some have thought, may here describe in the first instance, the caves, the dens, and the woods of the land ; for there are many such (as travellers

testify) in the land of Judæa, and in unsettled times they have often been the abodes of robbers and murderers, who have thence sallied forth to molest and cut off the traveller, to ravish peaceful villages, to waylay and plunder the merchant, to commit all sorts of crimes, and then to return in impunity to these their dark retreats, where they laugh at all law, human or divine; they quaff, with horrid pleasure, the recollection of the widow's tears, and listen with inhuman joy to the echoing remembrance of the orphan's moan and the dying father's shriek. But what a land thus infested would be, is but a faint image of the heathen world. Wherever heathenism spreads itself, there are *"the dark places of the earth."* The Scripture often tells us that.—*John Hambleton.* 1839.

Verse 20.—*"The dark places."* An allusion, as some interpreters conceive, to the dens of wild beasts, wherein they hide themselves to seize upon their prey, Psalm civ. 21, 22. To these cruel men are compared. Psalm x. 8, 9. " He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor." Such places oppressors and robbers choose. Others take it for an allusion to prisons and dark dungeons void of light. As the prophet, Isaiah xlii. 7, describes a prison: " To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." So trouble in Scripture is compared to darkness, and prosperity to light; because darkness is irksome, and light comfortable: " The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; " and then the sorry hiding-places whither God's people went to hide themselves are here meant. Yet, could they not there be quiet, but were pursued, found out, and spoiled by their adversaries. Others take *"dark places"* for obscure and mean places, as *dark men*, in the original, are called *mean men* in our translation, Prov. xxii. 29. And then it may either signify that the meanest men did oppress God's people, or, that the poorest and meanest of God's people were not spared. Such usage have we found in our time, when the poor cottages of our foes have sent out pillagers, and no cottagers of ours have escaped spoiling in divers places.—*Francis Taylor.*

Verse 20.—*"Cruelty."* Heathenism is cruel. It is not changed in character since the days when parents made their children to pass through fire to Moloch. At this very day, for instance, infanticide prevails in China; and the " law," says a book of authority—" the law, otherwise so rigorous, does not take the slightest cognisance of that crime, nor ever subjects those guilty of it to punishment. Every morning before it is light, waggons traverse the different quarters of the city of Pekin to receive the dead infants." Well may they go " before it is light; " " the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." " The missionaries of that city obtained details, which justify belief that the number of infants (chiefly females) destroyed there is upwards of three thousand annually." Think of this same proportion, extended throughout that densely-peopled empire. Among the same people, suicide is also of frequent occurrence. What a contrast with the religion which stays the rash hand, and calls out, " Do thyself no harm! "

We might pass to India; and there the flames of the funeral piles, on which so many widows were annually burnt, had hardly expired, when we were shocked, only a few years since, with other proofs of the cruelty of heathenism. What painful details were those, which our government brought to light respecting the secret murderers of India! What think you of a vast fraternity of murderers, consisting of many thousands of persons, which has existed from generation to generation, which has been ramified over the whole country from Cape Comorin to the Himalaya mountains, which has flourished alike under Hindoo, Mahometan, and British rulers, and which has every year destroyed multitudes of victims—and all this under the sanction of religion? The murderous system, they say, has been enjoined them by the goddess Kalee, who is represented as having made a grant of half the human race to her votaries (to be murdered, that is,) according to certain prescribed forms.—*John Hambleton.*

Verse 23.—If we are compelled to close our most solemn and urgent devotions, and our most earnest supplications, without seeing one ray of light beaming upon our path, it may comfort us to remember that so the pious Psalmist closed this complaint. To hope against hope is the most blessed kind of hope.—*William S. Plumer.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. The divine displeasure a fact. II. It is but in measure, and we are very liable to exaggerate it. III. Even while it lasts our relation to him is unaffected: "Sheep of thy pasture." IV. Our business is to enquire the reason of it, and act accordingly.

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—The Lord's anger with his people compared to smoke.—I. It is not a consuming fire. II. It suggests fear of the fire. III. It darkens the light of joy. IV. It blinds the eyes of faith. V. It checks the breath of life. VI. It blackens the beauty of our worldly comforts.

Verse 2.—I. The Lord's relation to his people. 1. Election. 2. Redemption. 3. Indwelling. II. The prayer arising from it: "Remember."

Verse 3.—Church mischief. I. The church has enemies. II. Wickedness in the church is their great weapon. III. This causes much desolation to weak saints, to enquirers, to peace, to prayer, to usefulness. IV. The cure for it is God's interposition.

Verses 3, 4.—The power of prayer. I. On one side were, 1. Desolation: "perpetual," etc. 2. Desecration. 3. Declamation: "enemies roar." 4. Demonstration: "they set up." II. On the other side is, 1. Supplication. 2. This brings God to the rescue effectually and quickly.

Verse 4.—"*Ensigns for signs.*" The craft of Satan in supplanting truth with deceptive counterfeits.

Verse 5.—True fame. To build for God with labour, daring, diligence, skill, etc.

Verse 6.—Vandal work against the truth of God.

Verses 6, 7.—Things feared by a church. I. Injury to her doctrines or ordinances: "carved work." II. The fire of strife, division, etc. III. The defilement of sin. Either of these three will throw a church down; let her guard and pray against them.

Verse 8.—The destruction of rural churches, the aim of our enemies: the injury they would so do, and our duty to prevent it: the means the destroyers use: bribery, oppression, etc. Our proper method for sustaining such churches.

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—I. There are such things as "*signs*," that is, tokens and marks of God's special favour to the soul. II. There is also "*a seeing* those signs, when God, the Holy Ghost, is pleased to shine upon them. III. There is a third state, where there is *not seeing the signs*, those signs being enveloped in darkness, dimness, and obscurity.—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 9.—Teacheth us, that evident signs of God's wrath and displeasure, as the want of his word, the stopping of the true ministers' mouths, etc., should touch us to the quick.—*T. Wilcocks.*

Verse 10.—A prayer for revival. I. How God is reproached. II. What are the ill effects of it. III. When we may expect him to arise.

Verse 11.—I. The patience of God with man: He "withdraws his hand, even," etc., he hesitates to strike. II. The impatience of man with God: "pluck it," etc. —*G. R.*

Verse 12.—I. The sovereignty of God. II. Its antiquity. III. Our loyalty to it. IV. The practical character of his reign: "working." V. The graciousness of it: "working salvation." VI. The place of its operation: "in the midst of the earth."

Verse 14.—God's defeat of our enemies, and the benefit accruing to ourselves.

Verse 15.—The wonderful nature of gracious supplies, illustrated by the smitten rock.

Verse 16.—God present alike in all dispensations of providence.

Verses 16, 17.—I. The God of grace is the God of nature: "The day is thine," etc. II. The God of nature is the God of grace: the wisdom, the power, the faithfulness the same. See Psalm xix.—*G. R.*

Verse 19.—The soul of the believer compared to a turtledove.

Verse 20.—The title given to heathen nations: "dark places of the earth." Not without the light of nature, or of reason, or of natural conscience, or of philosophy, as of Greece and Rome; but without the light of revelation. II. Their condition: "full of," etc.: cruelty in their public, social, and private relationships. See Rom i.:

" without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." III. Their part in the covenant. This is known from their part in its promises, and in prophecies: " I will give thee the heathen," etc. IV. The prayer of others on their behalf: " Have respect," etc.; " Oh send forth thy light," etc. The conversion of the world will be in answer to the prayers of the church.—*G. R.*

Verse 22.—God pleading his own cause in providential visitations of nations and individuals, as also in remarkable conversions and awakenings.

Verse 22.—I. The glory of our cause: it is the Lord's own. II. The hope of our cause: he will plead it himself. III. The hope thus derivable from the violence of man: it will move the Lord to arise.

PSALM LXXV.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician. *Here is noble work for him, for the cry of the last Psalm is about to be heard, and the challenge of the foes of Israel taken up by God himself. Here the virgin daughter of Zion despises her foe, and laughs him to scorn. The destruction of Sennacherib's army is a notable illustration of this sacred song.* Al-taschith. *Here is another of the "destroy not" Psalms, and the title may be intended as a check upon the natural fierceness of the oppressed, or a taunt for the savage foe, who is here bitterly bidden to destroy not, because the nation is well aware that he cannot. Here, in holy faith, the sucking child plays at the hole of the asp, and the weaned child puts his hand on the cockatrice den.* A Psalm *or* Song of Asaph. *For reading or singing. A hymn to God and a song for his saints. Happy were the people who having found a Milton in David had an almost equal songster in Asaph; happiest of all, because these poets were not inspired by earth's Castalian fount, but drank of "the fount of every blessing."*

DIVISION.—*The people's song of gratitude and adoration begins the hymn in verse* 1. *In the next four verses* 2—5, *the Lord reveals himself as ruling the world in righteousness. Then follows a warning voice from the church to her enemies, verses* 6—8, *and a closing song anticipatory of the glory due to God and the utter defeat of the foe.*

EXPOSITION.

UNTO thee, O God, do we give thanks, *unto thee* do we give thanks: for *that* thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.

1. *"Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks."* Not to ourselves for we were helpless, but to Elohim who heard our cry, and replied to the taunt of our foes. Never let us neglect thanksgiving, or we may fear that another time our prayers will remain unanswered. As the smiling flowers gratefully reflect in their lovely colours the various constituents of the solar ray, so should gratitude spring up in our hearts after the smiles of God's providence. *"Unto thee do we give thanks."* We should praise God again and again. Stinted gratitude is ingratitude. For infinite goodness there should be measureless thanks. Faith promises redoubled praise for greatly needed and signal deliverances. *"For that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare."* God is at hand to answer and do wonders—adore we then the present Deity. We sing not of a hidden God, who sleeps and leaves the church to her fate, but of one who ever in our darkest days is most near, a very present help in trouble, "Near is his name." Baal is on a journey, but Jehovah dwells in his church. Glory be unto the Lord, whose perpetual deeds of grace and majesty are the sure tokens of his being with us always, even unto the end of the world.

2 When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly.

3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.

4 I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn.

5 Lift not up your horn on high: speak *not with* a stiff neck.

2. *"When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly."* This is generally believed to be the voice of God, who will, when he accepts his people, mount his judgment seat and avenge their cause in righteousness. It is rendered by some, "I will take a set time;" and by others, "I will seize the moment."

> "God never is before his time,
> He never is too late."

He determines the period of interposition, and when that arrives swift are his blows and sure are his deliverances. God sends no delegated judge, but sits himself upon

the throne. O Lord, let thy set time come for grace. Tarry no longer, but for the truth and the throne of Jesus be thou speedily at work. Let the appointed assize come, O Jesus, and sit thou on thy throne to judge the world in equity.

3. *"The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved."* When anarchy is abroad, and tyrants are in power, everything is unloosed, dissolution threatens all things, the solid mountains of government melt as wax; but even then the Lord upholds and sustains the right. *"I bear up the pillars of it."* Hence, there is no real cause for fear. While the pillars stand, and stand they must for God upholds them, the house will brave out the storm. In the day of the Lord's appearing a general melting will take place, but in that day our covenant God will be the sure support of our confidence.

> "How can I sink with such a prop
> As my eternal God,
> Who bears the earth's huge pillars up,
> And spreads the heavens abroad."

"Selah." Here may the music pause while the sublime vision passes before our view; a world dissolved and an immutable God uplifting all his people above the terrible commotion.

4. *"I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly."* The Lord bids the boasters boast not, and commands the mad oppressors to stay their folly. How calm is he, how quiet are his words, yet how divine the rebuke. If the wicked were not insane, they would even now hear in their consciences the still small voice bidding them cease from evil, and forbear their pride. *"And to the wicked, Lift not up the horn."* He bids the ungodly stay their haughtiness. The horn was the emblem of boastful power; only the foolish, like wild and savage beasts, will lift it high; but they assail heaven itself with it, as if they would gore the Almighty himself. In dignified majesty he rebukes the inane glories of the wicked, who beyond measure exalt themselves in the day of their fancied power.

5. *"Lift not up your horn on high."* For their abounding pride there is a double rebuke. A word from God soon abases the lofty. Would to God that all proud men would obey the word here given them; for, if they do not, he will take effectual means to secure obedience, and then woe will come upon them, such as shall break their horns and roll their glory in the mire for ever. *"Speak not with a stiff neck."* Impudence before God is madness. The out-stretched neck of insolent pride is sure to provoke his axe. Those who carry their heads high shall find that they will be lifted yet higher, as Haman was upon the gallows which he had prepared for the righteous man. Silence, thou silly boaster! Silence! or God will answer thee. Who art thou, thou worm, that thou shouldst arrogantly object against thy Maker's laws and cavil at his truth? Be hushed, thou vainglorious prater, or vengeance shall silence thee to thine eternal confusion.

6 For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor
from the south.

7 But God *is* the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

8 For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, and the wine is red; it is
full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof,
all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and* drink *them*.

6. *"For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south."* There is a God, and a providence, and things happen not by chance. Though deliverance be hopeless from all points of the compass, yet God can work it for his people; and though judgment come neither from the rising or the setting of the sun, nor from the wilderness of mountains, yet come it will, for the Lord reigneth. Men forget that all things are ordained in heaven; they see but the human force, and the carnal passion, but the unseen Lord is more real far than these. He is at work behind and within the cloud. The foolish dream that he is not, but he is near even now, and on the way to bring in his hand that cup of spiced wine of vengeance, one draught of which shall stagger all his foes.

7. *"But God is the judge."* Even now he is actually judging. His seat is not vacant; his authority is not abdicated; the Lord reigneth evermore. *"He putteth down one, and setteth up another."* Empires rise and fall at his bidding. A dungeon

here, and there a throne, his will assigns. Assyria yields to Babylon, and Babylon to the Medes. Kings are but puppets in his hand; they serve his purpose when they rise and when they fall. A certain author has issued a work called "Historic Ninepins,"* a fit name of scorn for all the great ones of the earth. God only is; all power belongs to him; all else is shadow, coming and going, unsubstantial, misty, dream-like.

8. *"For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup."* The punishment of the wicked is prepared, God himself holds it in readiness; he has collected and concocted woes most dread, and in the chalice of his wrath he holds it. They scoffed his feast of love; they shall be dragged to his table of justice, and made to drink their due deserts. *"And the wine is red."* The retribution is terrible, it is blood for blood, foaming vengeance for foaming malice. The very colour of divine wrath is terrible; what must the taste be? *"It is full of mixture."* Spices of anger, justice, and incensed mercy are there. Their misdeeds, their blasphemies, their persecutions have strengthened the liquor as with potent drugs:

> "Mingled, strong, and mantling high;
> Behold the wrath divine."

Ten thousand woes are burning in the depths of that fiery cup, which to the brim is filled with indignation. *"And he poureth out of the same."* The full cup must be quaffed, the wicked cannot refuse the terrible draught, for God himself pours it out for them and into them. Vain are their cries and entreaties. They could once defy him, but that hour is over, and the time to requite them is fully come. *"But the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."* Even to the bitter end must wrath proceed. They must drink on and on for ever, even to the bottom where lie the lees of deep damnation; these they must suck up, and still must they drain the cup. Oh the anguish and the heart-break of the day of wrath! Mark well, it is for all the wicked; all hell for all the ungodly; the dregs for the dregs; bitters for the bitter; wrath for the heirs of wrath. Righteousness is conspicuous, but over all terror spreads a tenfold night, cheerless, without a star, Oh happy they who drink the cup of godly sorrow, and the cup of salvation; these. though now despised, will then be envied by the very men who trod them under foot.

9 But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

9. *"But I will declare for ever."* Thus will the saints occupy themselves with rehearsing Jehovah's praises, while their foes are drunken with the wrath-wine. They shall chant while the others roar in anguish. and justly so, for the former Psalm informed us that such had been the case on earth,—"thine enemies roar in the sanctuary,"—the place where the chosen praised the Lord. *"I will sing praises to the God of Jacob."* The covenant God, who delivered Jacob from a thousand afflictions, our soul shall magnify. He has kept his covenant which he made with the patriarch, and has redeemed his seed, therefore will we spread abroad his fame world without end.

10. *"All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off."* Power and liberty being restored to Israel, she begins again to execute justice, by abasing the godless who had gloried in the reign of oppression. Their power and pomp are to be smitten down. Men wore horns in those days as a part of their state, and these, both literally and figuratively, were to be lopped off; for since God abhors the proud, his church will not tolerate them any longer. *"But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted."* In a rightly ordered society, good men are counted great men, virtue confers true rank, and grace is more esteemed than gold. Being saved from unrighteous domination, the chief among the chosen people here promises to rectify the errors which had crept into the commonwealth, and after the example of the Lord himself, to abase the haughty and elevate the humble.

This memorable ode may be sung in times of great depression, when prayer has performed her errand at the mercy-seat, and when faith is watching for speedy deliverance. It is a song of the second advent, CONCERNING THE NEARNESS OF THE JUDGE WITH THE CUP OF WRATH.

---

* Timbs.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*Al-taschith.*" *Destroy not.* This seems to have been used by David as a maxim during the violent persecutions of Saul, as if to remind himself to forbear revenge, though it was often in his power to inflict it, upon his unnatural enemy.—*F. G. Hubbard, in "The Psalms Chronologically arranged, with Historical Introductions. New York."* [1856.]

Whole Psalm.—As these words are really a prayer, while at the same time the Psalm is thrown into the form, not of petitions, but of a thanksgiving, it ought to be considered as a thank-prayer, uttered beforehand, and containing petitions within it.—*Berleb. Bible*

Verse 1.—"*Thy name is near.*" The *name of God* is said to be *near*, because it had come into public notice, and was in every mind and every tongue—opposed to what is *unknown* and *obscure*, which is said to be far remote. Compare Deut. xxx. 11.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1.—The Psalmist doubles this duty in the practice of the saints; "*Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, we give thanks,*" we do it, we do it; as if none else did it but they, or as if they had done nothing else.—*Joseph Caryl, in "A Sermon before the House of Commons," entitled, "The Saints' Thankfull Acclamation."*

Verse 3.—"*I bear up the pillars of it.*" I prevent it from falling to pieces, as a house, supported by columns too weak to bear its weight, would do.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 3.—"*I bear up the pillars of it.*" Learn to whom the glory of bearing up the world is due. God's providence is the true Atlas which supports the world, and doth shoulder up the world, whilst it treads on sin and sinners. Upon a serious view taken of providence on this wise displayed, we may say as they said of old, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God," 1 Kings xviii. 39.—*Thomas Crane.*

Verse 3.—We can imagine a monarch, and especially an eastern monarch, in the plentitude of his power, and the arrogance of his pride, as he casts his haughty glance over the ensigns of his might, saying to himself, "I bear up the pillars of the earth." But one could never imagine such a thought arising in the heart, or proceeding from the lips of David or Hezekiah. I know not who of the sons of Adam, frail and feeble at their best estate, could have ever said, "*The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it.*" I know of none but him who said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and who, as he said these words, ascended up into heaven to exercise that sovereignty, and repair that mighty ruin which had been wrought on earth when Satan triumphed in Paradise.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 4.—"*Fools.*" The ungodly are spiritual fools. If one had a child very beautiful, yet if he were a fool, the parent would have little joy in him. The Scripture hath dressed the sinner in a fool's coat: and let me tell you, better be a fool void of reason, than a fool void of grace: this is the devil's fool. Prov. xiv. 9. Is not he a fool who refuseth a rich portion? God offers Christ and salvation, but the sinner refuseth this portion: "Israel would none of me." Ps. lxxxi. 11. Is not he a fool who preferreth an annuity before an inheritance? Is not he a fool who tends this mortal part, and neglects his angelical part? As if one should paint the wall of his house, and let the timber rot. Is not he a fool who will feed the devil with his soul? As that emperor who fed his lion with a pheasant. Is not he a fool who lays a snare for himself? Prov. i. 18. Who consults his own shame? Hab. ii. 10. Who loves death? Prov. viii. 36.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—"*Horn.*" The word *horn* was used in the Hebrew metaphorically to express either *honour*, as Ps. cxii. 9; cxxxii. 18, etc.; or *strength*, Mic. iv. 13, "I will make thine horn iron." Deut. xxxiii. 17, etc. To humble and cast down was often represented by the figure of breaking or cutting off the horn, as here (ver. 10). Lam. ii. 3, "Cut off all the horn of Israel." To exalt the horn of any one was to bestow honour and dignity upon him; so also, to make it bud. Ps. cxxxii. 17, lxxxix. 18; Ezek. xxix. 21. Here, *to lift up the horn* betokens presumption. It

was also somewhat later a symbol for kingdom, Zech. i. 18, and Daniel.—*"Four Friends."*

Verse 5.—*"Speak not with a stiff neck."* Mr. Bruce has observed that the Abyssinian kings have a *horn* on their *diadem;* and that the keeping it erect, or in a projecting form, makes them appear as if they had a *stiff neck;* and refers to this passage for the antiquity of the usage, and the *appearance* also.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—*"For promotion cometh neither from the east,"* etc. The word *"promotion"* here is used in a very expressive way; it means the *desire of self-advancement,* הָרִים (*harim*), and would teach us that all our inward schemes, and outward plans, cannot gain for us advancement, unless based upon the fear and love of God; we look forward to improve our circumstances, like to the ascending of a mountain, and nerve ourselves to the effort of ascent, fondly thinking that no eye watches our efforts; but as "shame is the promotion of fools," so disappointment is often the return of rashness. . . . . From the *east* promotion doth not come; the word *"east"* here is very expressive, מִמּוֹצָא (*mimmotza*), the rising of the sun, the outgoing of light, the dawning of the day, and the manifesting or revealing of God. We look around; and in the early dawning of youth, with high hopes, mental energies, and perhaps superior talents, anticipate victory over our compeers, and a course of worldly success and prosperity; but alas! how often are all these hopes blighted and a succession of reverses humbles our spirits.

Promotion cometh not from the *"west."* The original is וּמִמַּעֲרָב (*umimmagnarab*) and it means duskiness, darkness, and the setting sun,—hence the west. When the clouds of years press upon us, and darkened shadows overtake us in various ways, such as loss of dear and early friends, the buoyancy of youth gone by, hopes softened down to personal ease, and the power of the constitution reduced; then God often wills that promotion shall not come.

We now approach to the last point from whence promotion cometh not, that is from the *"south,"* מִדְבָּר (*midbar*) a waste place, the Arabian desert; hence the south. In dry and solitary places like the sandy desert little advancement can be looked for; like the human intellect, unless cultivated and improved by care and education it is barren as the desert to all holy feelings and improvement, the natural passions like *sand* choke up every patch susceptible of cultivation, and close up all the avenues to thought and devotion. A godless man is like the Arabian desert, of no profit to himself or his neighbours; like ever-shifting sands being tossed to and fro by his own wayward passions; heated with the suns of turbulence, self-will, and recklessness, he is a desert, a waste where God will not vouchsafe the light of his countenance for promotion. Like the disobedient Jews of old, Psalm lxxviii. 49, we may speak of this man saying, "How oft did he provoke him in the wilderness and grieve him in the desert!" Let us then cultivate the higher part of our being, and then we may produce fruit unto holiness; let us not wreck so noble a ship as the soul by careless steering and neglect, but trim its sails with early good instruction, and then may we arrive at the haven where we would be.

Having now illustrated the three points mentioned in our text, let us turn to the *one* (*the north*) where promotion or advancement may be looked for. Coldness is emblematical of purity, and coldness is an attribute of the north. The pure in heart shall see God. God is the northern light that gleams over the stillness of life's night. "He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes; he casteth forth his ice like morsels."

Be it ours to be humbly dependent upon God; for whatever station he may choose to keep us in, godliness alone will prove our promotion and true riches. If our anxieties are directed towards pleasing him, then shall we prosper, and he will shew us "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. xxii. 1.)—*Condensed from a Sermon by Gregory Bateman, preached March 16th, 1862, on his entering upon the Vicarage of Ulrome.*

Verse 6.—*"For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south."* Here are three of the four winds specified, and it is said, "promotion" comes from neither of them. But why is it not also said that promotion comes not from the *north?* that is the question. I answer;—it were answer enough to say, that we ought not to put questions curiously about such things; it should satisfy us that the Spirit of God is pleased to say it is so, and no more. Yet some tell us, the reason why it is not said promotion cometh not from the *north,* is because indeed it cometh out of the north, which, say they, is intimated in the Hebrew word

for the *north*, which signifies *hidden* or *secret*. Promotion comes not from the east, nor west, nor south, but from the *north*. It comes from the north in a figure or mystery, that is, it comes from some hidden providence, or secret hand, which many take no more notice of than we do of the furthest part of the *north*. God promotes many in this world to power, and sends them great prosperity, we see not how or which way: the causes and contrivances of it are hidden close, and in the breast of God. This also is a truth; in that sense we may say, "Fair weather cometh from the *north*." Promotion is visible, but the manner of it is a secret; we see not the causes for which, nor the ways in which it cometh. It is enough to touch these niceties, and to touch them can do no hurt, while the matter arising from them hath the clear consent of, and is harmonious with other plain places of Scripture.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*Promotion;*" or, "*lifting up.*" The word is evidently an emphatic word in the Psalm; it is the same which occurs in verses four and five, and again in verse seven and verse ten. I have, therefore, given the same rendering of it throughout. The rendering of the authorised version "*promotion*," besides losing sight of the manifestly designed repetition of the same word, is peculiarly unfortunate in conveying a wrong idea. "*Lifting up*," in its Hebrew sense, does not mean "*promotion*," as we commonly understand it, but deliverance from trouble, safety, victory. The image, in particular, of lifting up the head or the horn (the last, borrowed from wild beasts, such as buffaloes, etc., in whom the horn is the symbol of strength), denotes courage, strength, and victory over enemies.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 6.—"*Nor from the south.*" "From the wilderness," the great wilderness lying in that direction. Three quarters are mentioned, the north only being omitted. This may be accounted for, supposing the Psalm to refer to Sennacherib, by the fact that the Assyrian army approached from the north; and therefore it would be natural to look in all directions but that for assistance to repel the invader.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 6, 7.—"I thought to promote thee to great honour," said the king of Moab to Balaam; and yet that promotion ended in a dishonoured and a bloody death. I have often thought of many of the Lord's servants on earth, so superciliously passed by and passed over in man's catalogue of worthies, with what glad and grateful surprise they will at length receive that promotion denied on earth, when their own Master shall say to them, "Friend, come up higher;" and then as they sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, shall they have honour of them that sit at meat with them.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verses 6—10.—The rise and fall of nations and empires are in this Psalm ascribed to God. He exalts one and puts down another at his pleasure. In this he generally uses instrumentality, but that instrumentality is always rendered effectual by his own agency. When nations or individuals are prosperous, and glorious, and powerful, they usually ascribe all to themselves or to fortune. But it is God who has raised them to eminence. When they boast he can humble them. In these verses God is considered as the governor of the world, punishing the wicked, and pouring out judgments on his enemies. The calamities of war, pestilence, and famine, are all ministers of providence to execute wrath.—*Alexander Carson.*

Verse 7.—

> "Here he exalts neglected worms
> To sceptres and a crown;
> Anon the following page he turns,
> And treads the monarch down."
>
> —*Isaac Watts.*

Verse 8.—"*In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red* (which notes fierce wrath); *and it is full of mixture.*" This mixture is of judgments, plagues, and punishments; "this is the portion of their cup" (Ps. xi.). But what will the Lord do with this mixed cup? Who shall sip at the top of the cup he tells us not; but he is express whose the bottom is: "*he poureth out of the same*"—some drops are spilt here and there—"*but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.*" Alas, they loathe it, their stomachs turn at it; they have not been brought up to drink dregs; they have had their wine well refined, and sparkling with spirits in crystal glasses; and how can they get this down?

They who have drunk so willingly and freely of the cup of sin, shall be forced, whether they will or no, to drink the cup of judgment. And it is not a sip or two shall serve their turns; they must drink all, dregs and all, they shall drink it to the bottom, and yet they shall never come to the bottom; they have loved long draughts, and now they shall have one long enough; there is eternity to the bottom. If a cup of affliction, which, in the effect, is a cup of salvation, be sometime, or for a time, nauseous to the godly, how deadly sick will the ungodly be, who must for ever, drink a cup of wrath and death.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—"*In the hand of the Lord there is a cup,*" etc. It is a "*cup:*" well, there is a cup that David thirsts for: "I will take the cup of salvation." Ps. cxvi. 13. There is "*wine*" in it: better; for wine cheers the hearts, and puts alacrity into the spirits. That wine is "*red:*" better still; so it should be; this argues the lustre and goodness of it: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup," Prov. xxiii. 31: the colour adds to the pleasure. But now it is "*full of mixture:*" alas, this mixture spoils all. It is compounded, brewed, made unwholesome: this changeth the condition of the cup, of the wine, of the colour, of all. It is mixed with the wrath of God, the malice of Satan, the anguish of soul, the gall of sin, the tears of despair: it is "*red,*" that is, of a sanguine colour, the wine of blood. But yet so long as it is in the cup, they need not meddle with it: nay, but the Lord will "*pour it out;*" he shall hold their mouths to it, and make them drink it: the rankest poison in the world, the gall of dragons, and venom of asps, is pleasant and healthful to it. Yet be it but a little of the top, let them but taste it; nay, they must "*drink it off,*" to the very bottom, the sediments, dregs, lees, and all; even the very filth of vengeance. And lest any drops should be left behind, they shall "*wring them out,*" and suck them down to their confusion. The cup is all bitter, and full of sorrow, saith Augustine: the godly do often taste the top, and feel the bitterness, but then it is suddenly snatched from them; but the ungodly shall drink the very grounds, and extremest poison.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 8.—"*In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red;*" red with wrath, in the day of God's wrath. "*It is full of mixture:*" it hath no mixture of good, no sweetness at all in it, but all sorts of evil are mingled in that cup. "*And he poureth out of the same;*" upon many occasions he pours it out in the world; "*but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink:*" they have not only the cup, but the dregs of the cup, that is, the worst of the cup; for as in a good cup, the deeper the sweeter; so in an evil cup, the deeper the worse: the dregs are the worst, the bottom is the bitterest of a bitter cup.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—"*A cup.*" There seems to be here an allusion to the *cup of malediction,* as the Jews called that "mixed cup of wine" and frankincense, which used to be given to condemned criminals before their execution, in order to take away their senses.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—"*The wine is red,*" or "the wine *foameth,*" *i.e.,* as it is poured into the cup from the wine-jar, as is expressed in the next member of the verse. "*Mixture,*" *i.e.* the aromatic herbs, etc., which were put into the wine to make it more intoxicating.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 8.—"*The wine is red.*" The remedy is suitable to the disease, and the punishment to the sin: *Sanguinem sitisti sanguinem vitis* (as he once says); Thou hast thirsted after blood, and blood thou shalt drink. Because men delight in blood, therefore, blood shall be poured out unto them; yea, *their own blood* shall be poured out. This is the way of God's providence, and the manner of his dealings in the world; which because it is filled with cruelty shall be therefore filled with blood.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 8.—"*Red.*" The Hebrew word חמר rather means *turbid:* and it probably contains a further allusion to the particulars above mentioned; the wine being rendered *turbid* by stirring up the lees, and by the mixture of intoxicating drugs.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—"*Full of mixture.*" There are some who think that mixture is here named because they rarely drink pure wine in those regions, since they are so warm; and because the wine is there more generous than in these colder quarters. But a different signification is intended; it is that spices are mingled with the wine.—*Francis Vatablus.* 1547.

Verse 8.—"*Mixture.*" In all the afflictions of God's people there is an intermixture and temperament of love and favour, which shews itself in them. As, first of all, there is a mixture of *strength and patience* for the bearing of it. Secondly,

there is a mixture of *comfort and goodness* as to the things themselves. God is not altogether in affliction, but he is very much in mercy with it; and as he is pleased to exercise his servants with several troubles, so he does likewise vouchsafe them many blessings together with them, which he does comfort them withal. And then, thirdly, there is another thing also which is much observable in the afflictions of God's people, which makes this mixture complete, and that is, a mixture of *improvement and edification.*—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 8.—"*The dregs.*"* Now, as the cup of red wine is the Christian doctrine which converts the soul, and in which the true believer spiritually luxuriates, so "*the dregs thereof*" are those merely outward, formal, and ceremonious circumstancials, which are nothing in themselves more than the dregs and leavings of the signified reality and spiritual substance. And when the text says that the wicked shall wring out the dregs of Christian doctrine, and shall drink of them, we are led to fix our attention upon the main peculiarity of Pharisaical religion. As God satisfies his people with the true spiritual refreshment of genuine Christian doctrine; so does he leave to the unenlightened spirit, who will not seek him as he ought to do, the mere outside formalities, which belong indeed to religion necessarily, but of it form no vital part. They are but the refuse of the magnificent heaven-realising substance.—*T. D. Gregg.* 1855.

Verse 8.—"*All the wicked.*" They shall *all* do it too, we may not omit that: "*all* the wicked of the earth." As there is an universality of the *judgment*, so there is universality of the sufferers; they shall drink *all* of it, and they shall *all* of them drink it, that so no man may favour or flatter himself with hope of escape.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 8.—"*Shall wring them out.*" Here is the necessity also of it; it is *unavoidable*; "*They shall drink it,*" that is, even against their minds, whether they will or no. It is very likely that wicked men would be very loath to come to this condition: they can be content to sin, but they cannot endure to be punished for sin. . . . . This cup shall not pass from them, but they shall drink of it, even against their stomachs, where they never so much loath it. Yea, and which is more, they shall suck it up; God will turn the cup up to them, and will make them to take it every jot; he will not spare them one drop of it, which they shall be suffered to leave behind. . . . . The Lord himself (as I may say) will stand over them, and see them do it without any favour or indulgence.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 8.—When God's people have drunk the red wine in the cup, the wicked must drink the dregs: the cup passeth from place to place till all be drank off.—*William Greenhill.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The unceasing thanksgiving of the church, her grand cause for adoration: the nearness of her God, and the evident proof thereof in the displays of his power.

Verse 1.—I. Do we give thanks? II. We do give thanks. III. What thanks do we give? IV. When do we give thanks? V. Let us give thanks again.

Verse 2.—Good resolutions commendable, how they should be made, strengthened, and performed.

Verse 3.—The Lord the stay of his people under the worst circumstances.

Verse 3.—Teacheth us that no disorder or confusion should hinder us from doing that which God requireth of us; nay, rather, the more things are out of order the more readily should we labour to redress them.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 4.—I. Who spoke to them? "I." II. Who were they? "Fools," "wicked." III. What did you say? IV. What was the good of it? Or, Rebuke of sin, a duty.

---

* We quote this for its singularity rather than its value. It is a notable instance of the force of party zeal. Thus the Evangelical Anglican, in his ardour against Ritualistic errors, finds aid in a passage which would not ordinarily be understood to relate to the question. Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with.

Verse 4.—The unhallowed trio:—wickedness, folly, pride.

Verse 5.—Arguments against pride in heart, appearance, and speech.

Verses 6, 7.—The changes of providence not the tricks of fortune.

Verse 7.—God acts as a judge and not arbitrarily in his providential arrangements.

Verse 8.—"*In the hand of the Lord there is a cup,*" etc. I. As a matter of *preparation*, consider it so, and thus it is "in the hand of the Lord." II. By way of *qualification:* it is he that tempers it; it was "full of mixture." III. By way of *distribution*, as giving to every one his share and portion in it.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 8.—The cup of wrath. Where it is, what it is, how full it is, who brings it, who must drink it.

Verse 8.—"Full of mixture." Wrath of God, remorse, memory of lost joy, fear of future, recriminations, despair, shame, etc., all these are ingredients of the mingled cup.

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—I. "The dregs" of the cup: the wrath of wrath, the gall of bitterness. II. The dregs of the people: "all the wicked."

Verse 9.—Our life work: to declare and to sing.

PSALM LXXVI.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician on Neginoth. *The Precentor is here instructed to perform this song to the music of stringed instruments. The Master of the harpers was called upon for his most skilful minstrelsy, and truly the song is worthy of the sweetest sounds that strings can yield.* A Psalm or Song of Asaph. *The style and matter indicate the same hand as that which wrote the preceding; and it is an admirable arrangement which placed the two in juxtaposition. Faith in the 75th Psalm sung of victories to come, and here it sings of triumphs achieved. The present Psalm is a most jubilant war song, a pæan to the King of kings, the hymn of a theocratic nation to its divine ruler. We have no need to mark divisions in a song where the unity is so well preserved.*

EXPOSITION.

IN Judah *is* God known: his name *is* great in Israel.

2 In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.

3 There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.

4 Thou *art* more glorious *and* excellent than the mountains of prey.

5 The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands.

6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

7 Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

8 Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still.

9 When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah.

10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

11 Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.

12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes: *he is* terrible to the kings of the earth.

1. *"In Judah is God known."* If unknown in all the world beside, he has so revealed himself to his people by his deeds of grace, that he is no unknown God to them. *"His name is great in Israel."* To be known, in the Lord's case, is to be honoured: those who know his name admire the greatness of it. Although Judah and Israel were unhappily divided politically, yet the godly of both nations were agreed concerning Jehovah their God; and truly whatever schisms may mar the visible church, the saints always "appear as one" in magnifying the Lord their God. Dark is the outer world, but within the favoured circle Jehovah is revealed, and is the adoration of all who behold him. The world knows him not and therefore blasphemes him, but his church is full of ardour to proclaim his fame unto the ends of the earth.

2. *"In Salem also is his tabernacle."* In the peaceful city he dwells, and the peace is perpetuated, because there his sacred tent is pitched. The church of God is the place where the Lord abides, and he is to her the Lord and giver of peace. *"And his dwelling place in Zion."* Upon the chosen hill was the palace of Israel's Lord. It is the glory of the church that the Redeemer inhabits her by his Holy Spirit. Vain are the assaults of the enemy, for they attack not us alone, but the

Lord himself. Immanuel, God with us, finds a home among his people, who then shall work us ill?

3. *"There brake he the arrows of the bow."* Without leaving his tranquil abode, he sent forth his word and snapped the arrows of his enemies before they could shoot them. The idea is sublime, and marks the ease, completeness, and rapidity of the divine action. *"The shield, and the sword, and the battle."* Every weapon, offensive and defensive, the Lord dashed in pieces; death-bearing bolts and life-preserving armour were alike of no avail when the Breaker sent forth his word of power. In the spiritual conflicts of this and every age, the like will be seen; no weapon that is formed against the church shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against her in judgment she shall condemn. *"Selah."* It is meet that we should dwell on so soul-stirring a theme, and give the Lord our grateful adoration,—hence a pause is inserted.

4. *"Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey."* Far more is Jehovah to be extolled than all the invading powers which sought to oppress his people, though they were for power and greatness comparable to mountains. Assyria had pillaged the nations till it had become rich with mountains of spoil, this was talked of among men as glory, but the Psalmist despises such renown, and declares that the Lord was far more illustrious. What are the honours of war but brags of murder? What the fame of conquerors but the reek of manslaughter? But the Lord is glorious in holiness, and his terrible deeds are done in justice for the defence of the weak and the deliverance of the enslaved. Mere power may be glorious, but it is not excellent: when we behold the mighty acts of the Lord, we see a perfect blending of the two qualities.

5. *"The stouthearted are spoiled."* They came to spoil, and lo! they are spoiled themselves. Their stouthearts are cold in death, the angel of the pestilence has dried up their life-blood, their very heart is taken from them. *"They have slept their sleep."* Their last sleep—the sleep of death. *"And none of the men of might have found their hands."* Their arms are palsied, they cannot lift a finger, for the rigor of death has stiffened them. What a scene was that when Sennacherib's host was utterly destroyed in one night. The hands which were furious to pull down Jerusalem, could not even be raised from the sod, the most valiant warriors were as weak as the palsied cripples at the temple gate, yea, their eyes they could not open, a deep sleep sealed their vision in everlasting darkness. O God, how terrible art thou! Thus shalt thou fight for us, and in the hour of peril overthrow the enemies of thy gospel. Therefore in thee will we trust and not be afraid.

6. *"At thy rebuke."* A word accomplished all, there was no need of a single blow. *"O God of Jacob."* God of thy wrestling people, who again like their father supplant their enemy; God of the covenant and the promise, thou hast in this gracious character fought for thine elect nation. *"Both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep."* They will neither neigh nor rattle again; still are the trampings of the horses and the crash of the cars; the cavalry no more creates its din. The Israelites always had a special fear of horses and scythed chariots; and, therefore, the sudden stillness of the entire force of the enemy in this department is made the theme of special rejoicing. The horses were stretched on the ground, and the chariots stood still, as if the whole camp had fallen asleep. Thus can the Lord send a judicial sleep over the enemies of the church, a premonition of the second death, and this he can do when they are in the zenith of power; and, as they imagine, in the very act of blotting out the remembrance of his people. The world's Rabshakehs can write terrible letters, but the Lord answers not with pen and ink, but with rebukes, which bear death in every syllable.

7. *"Thou, even thou, art to be feared."* Not Sennacherib, nor Nisroch his god, but Jehovah alone, who with a silent rebuke had withered all the monarch's host.

> "Fear him, ye saints, and then ye shall
> Have nothing else to fear."

The fear of man is a snare, but the fear of God is a great virtue, and has great power for good over the human mind. God is to be feared profoundly, continually, and alone. Let all worship be to him only. *"And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?"* Who indeed? The angels fell when their rebellion provoked his justice; Adam lost his place in Paradise in the same manner; Pharaoh and other proud monarchs passed away at his frown; neither is there in earth or hell any who can abide the terror of his wrath. How blest are they who are sheltered

in the atonement of Jesus, and hence have no cause to fear the righteous anger of the Judge of all the earth.

8. *"Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven."* So complete an overthrow was evidently a judgment from heaven; those who saw it not, yet heard the the report of it, and said, "This is the finger of God." Man will not hear God's voice if he can help it, but God takes care to cause it to be heard. The echoes of that judgment executed on the haughty Assyrian are heard still, and will ring on adown all the ages, to the praise of divine justice. *"The earth feared, and was still."* All nations trembled at the tidings, and sat in humbled awe. Repose followed the former turmoils of war, when the oppressor's power was broken, and God was reverenced for having given quiet to the peoples. How readily can Jehovah command an audience! It may be that in the latter days he will, by some such miracles of power in the realms of grace, constrain all earth's inhabitants to attend to the gospel, and submit to the reign of his all-glorious Son. So be it, good Lord.

9. *"When God arose to judgment."* Men were hushed when he ascended the judgment-seat and actively carried out the decrees of justice. When God is still the people are in tumult; when he arises they are still as a stone. *"To save all the meek of the earth."* The Ruler of men has a special eye towards the poor and despised; he makes it his first point to right all their wrongs. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." They have little enough of it now, but their avenger is strong and he will surely save them. He who saves his people is the same God who overthrew their enemies; he is as omnipotent to save as to destroy. Glory be unto his name. *"Selah."* Here pause, and let devout contemplations adore the God of Jacob.

10. *"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee."* It shall not only be overcome but rendered subservient to thy glory. Man with his breath of threatening is but blowing the trumpet of the Lord's eternal fame. Furious winds often drive vessels the more swiftly into port. The devil blows the fire and melts the iron, and then the Lord fashions it for his own purposes. Let men and devils rage as they may, they cannot do otherwise than subserve the divine purposes. *"The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."* Malice is tethered and cannot break its bounds. The fire which cannot be utilised shall be damped. Some read it "thou shalt gird," as if the Lord girded on the wrath of man as a sword to be used for his own designs, and certainly men of the world are often a sword in the hand of God, to scourge others. The verse clearly teaches that even the most rampant evil is under the control of the Lord, and will in the end be overruled for his praise.

11. *"Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God."* Well may we do so in memory of such mercies and judgments. To vow or not is a matter of choice, but to discharge our vows is our bounden duty. He who would defraud God, his own God, is a wretch indeed. He keeps his promises, let not his people fail in theirs. He is their faithful God and deserves to have a faithful people. *"Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared."* Let surrounding nations submit to the only living God, let his own people with alacrity present their offerings, and let his priests and Levites be leaders in the sacred sacrifice. He who deserves to be praised as our God does, should not have mere verbal homage, but substantial tribute. Dread Sovereign, behold I give myself to thee.

12. *"He shall cut off the spirit of princes."* Their courage, skill, and life are in his hands, and he can remove them as a gardener cuts off a slip from a plant. None are great in his hand. Cæsars and Napoleons fall under his power as the boughs of the tree beneath the woodman's axe. *"He is terrible to the kings of the earth."* While they are terrible to others he is terrible to them. If they oppose themselves to his people, he will make short work of them; they shall perish before the terror of his arm, "for the Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name." Rejoice before him all ye who adore the God of Jacob.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—No Psalm has a greater right to follow Ps. lxxv. than this, which is inscribed *To the Precentor, with accompaniment of stringed instruments* (*vid.* iv. 1), *a Psalm by Asaph, a song.* Similar expressions (*God of Jacob*, lxxv. 10, lxxvii. 7; *saints, wicked of the earth*, lxxv. 9, lxxvi. 10), and the same impress throughout speak in favour of unity of authorship. In other respects too, they form a pair: Ps. lxxv. prepares the way for the divine deed of judgment as imminent, which Ps. lxxvi. celebrates as having taken place.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 1.—"*In Judah is God known.*" God is truly and savingly known only in and through his Son; God indeed is obscurely and darkly known in his *works*, as a God of power; in his providence, as a God of authority, wisdom, and order; in his common mercies, as a God of bounty; and in his punishments and judgments, as a God of justice; but in Christ opened and preached in the gospel, God is known with a clear, a comfortable, and saving knowledge, as a father of grace and singular mercy and lovingkindness. "*In Judah*" (saith the Psalmist) "*is God known: his name is great in Israel.*" "*In Judah,*" in his church, where his word and ordinances are, where Christ is preached, and the mystery of man's salvation is opened, there God is known *truly* without error, *perspicuously* without obscurities, and *savingly* without uncertainties; there he is known as a *King* in his courts, for the glory and beauty which he there manifesteth; as a *teacher* in his school, for the wisdom and knowledge which he there dispenseth; as a *dweller* in his house, for the holy orders he there prescribeth, and gracious rule and dominion he there erecteth and beareth in the souls of his servants; as a *bridegroom* in the banqueting house, for the spiritual dainties he there maketh, for the clear and open manifestation of himself, and love and comforts he there ministereth to his spiritual friends and guests; "*and his name is great in Israel;*" his power, wisdom, truth, love, and goodness is much magnified and very glorious in their apprehensions who know him in Christ Jesus.—*Alexander Grosse.*

Verse 1.—"*His name.*" By the "*name*" of God here, God himself is understood; for in so many good effects as God uttereth himself toward his kirk, *so many names* he giveth to himself whereby he may be praised of her. As for example, when he promiseth unto his kirk freely grace and mercy, his kirk giveth him a *name*, and calleth him merciful. When he keepeth his promise, and uttereth himself a faithful God to his kirk, his kirk giveth him a *name*, and calleth him a true God. When he delivereth his kirk out of danger, and sheweth him a mighty God, and terrible against his enemies, the kirk giveth him a *name*, and calleth him a potent God, and so forth in the rest of his effects: so that by the *name* of God is understood here God himself, as God maketh himself to be known in his wonderful works.—*Robert Bruce.*

Verse 1.—"*His name is great in Israel.*" Properly the great name in Israel, that is, the church, is the name of Jesus, which is great, first, by its efficacy: for it signifies Saviour. There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. Secondly, it is great in dignity: for it is the name that is above every name. . . . . Thirdly, it is great in the breadth of its range, Ps. viii. 1: "*How excellent is thy name in all the earth.*"—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"*In Salem also is his tabernacle.*" It is not without meaning that Jerusalem has the appellation of *Salem;* for it is thereby insinuated that the *tabernacle* of God, notwithstanding the assaults of foes, in the very heart of the tumults of war remained *in peace.* How much more now that the invaders had been overthrown, would *prosperity* be enjoyed?—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*In Salem also is his tabernacle.*" God the Holy Ghost is a spirit of peace, he is the comforter; he seals up peace (2 Corinthians i. 22). This blessed dove brings the olive branch of peace in his mouth: now a peaceable disposition evidenceth something of God in a man, therefore God loves to dwell there. "In Salem is God's tabernacle:" Salem signifies peace; God dwells in a peaceable spirit.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—"*In Salem also is his tabernacle,*" etc. All the old versions, as well as the two English ones, have missed one especial force of this passage. There is no direct reference in words to any human habitation, but to the lair of the Lion of Judah. The word סֻכּוֹ does not only mean *his tabernacle*, but *his covert*, and is so

translated in another place (Jer. xxv. 38): "He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion:" and the vaguer word סֻכּוֹ which succeeds may well be translated by "den," or some equivalent phrase. Ps. x. 9.—*Simon De Muis.*

Verses 2, 3.—The care of Salem, or Zion, lies at the bottom of all God's powerful actings and workings among the sons of men. Every mighty work of God throughout the world may be prefaced with these two verses. The whole course of affairs in the world is steered by Providence in reference to the good of Salem.—*John Owen.*

Verse 3.—"*There.*" Observe how it is said, "*There he brake,*" namely, in his temple, his habitation there. For unto that his temple doth the coherence in the verse afore carry it, for that was last in mention, and with the greatest emphasis. In the story we read how that Sennacherib's overthrow was from Hezekiah's prayer in the temple; for upon Sennacherib's letter, and Hezekiah's hearsay of the blasphemy, he took himself thither, went instantly into the temple, and began his prayer thus: "O thou God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims." He invocates him under that style of his dwelling in the holiest, and so hearing prayers there. Thus you have it recorded both in Isaiah and in 2 Kings xxix. 15. And how suitably, in answer hereunto, it is said here in the Psalm, that God gave forth sentence presently out of his tabernacle: yea, and that so suddenly too, as that the very execution is said to be done there, that is, from thence. And yet again, in the eighth verse of the Psalm, it is said to be a sentence from heaven too; "*Thou didst cause judgment*" (so called because it was the sentence of God as a judge) "*to be heard from heaven.*" Thus Hezekiah prayed, and thus God heard; and both as in the temple.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 3.—"*There.*" These men, to wit the King of Asshur and his accomplices, came to cast out God out of his dwelling place; but he stood to the defence of his own house, and showed them that he would not remove for their pleasure.—*Robert Bruce.*

Verse 4.—God was not known in Babylon, in Egypt, in other nations; his tabernacle and dwelling place was not amongst them, therefore they were not glorious. But see what is in the 4th verse, "*Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey;*" thou Judah, thou Israel, thou Salem, thou Zion, that hast spiritual mercies and blessings, art more glorious than they, whatever their glory be. Have the nations abroad goodly towers? thou hast the temple; have they stately cities? thou hast Jerusalem, the city of God; have they wise men? thou hast the prophets; have they gods of gold, silver, and stones? thou hast the true living God, Jehovah, to be thy God; have they human laws that are good? thou hast divine laws that excel; have they temporal excellencies? thou hast spiritual; have they the glory of the world? thou hast the glory of heaven.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 4.—"*The mountains of prey.*" Why are they called the mountains *of prey?* There is a reference to *the lairs of the lions* in the mountains, whence they rush forth upon those who come that way, and tear them in pieces. In the same way the dwelling place of God was represented above under the title of a tabernacle or lair. Moreover, this is a mystic epithet of the *mountains of Judah*, by which it is hinted that the enemies who venture to approach that lair are wont to be torn in sunder: a terrible example of which had just been shown in the case of the Assyrian, there overthrown, torn, and spoiled. Compare Isaiah xxxi. 4.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 5.—"*The stouthearted are spoiled.*" There is indicated in these words that consternation of mind which deprives of judgment and power. *The valiant are spoiled of their heart:* that is, they who at other times were wise and courageous *have* now *lost their heart*, and have been reduced to foolishness and stupidity.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 5.—"*The stouthearted are spoiled.*" After the breaking of their weapons their spoliation is recorded, for that follows the slaughter of foes. Nor is mention made of that without reason. They had come to spoil, therefore are they deservedly spoiled.—*Musculus.*

Verse 5.—"*The stouthearted are spoiled.*" Some translate it, "*They are spoiled of their stout heart.*" The stouthearted, the strong, are spoiled. The strong man may be spoiled by a stronger; that's a good sense, but it is more elegantly rendered, "*they are spoiled of their stout heart;*" that is, the Lord takes their heart out of their bosom. Daring men, who fear nothing, are turned into *Magor-missabibs*—

fear round about; their stout hearts are taken from them, and then they are so far from being a terror to other men, that they run from the shadow of a man; their courage is down; they cannot give a child a confident look, much less look dangers or enemies in the face.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—The strength and power of a man is in his hands; if they be gone, all his hope is gone. If a man's sword be taken from him, he will do what he can with his hands; but if his hands be gone, he may go to sleep for any disturbance he will work. For men not to find their hands, is not to have that power for the execution of their designs which formerly they had.—*John Owen.*

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—As we say of a man that goes lamely or lazily, "he cannot find his feet;" so of a man that acts lamely or lazily, or of a soldier that fights faintly and cowardly, "*he cannot find his hands.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 5, 6.—

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever were still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride:
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

—*George Gordon, Lord Byron.*

Verse 6.—"*Cast into a deep sleep.*" It is observable, that the verb here used is the same as is used in the narrative of the act of Jael, and of the death of the proud enemy of Israel, Sisera, "*cast into a deep sleep,*" by God's power, working by the hand of a woman.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou, even thou, art to be feared.*" The emphasis in the word "*thou,*" redoubled, implies as much as if he had said, Not principalities, not powers, not hell, not death, nor anything for themselves, but thou, O Lord, alone art to be feared. Arguments and reasons to confirm it are two, here laid down in the text: the first is drawn from God's anger, who hath decreed, and accordingly executes vengeance upon all the proud. The second is drawn from his power; not princes, not armies, not men, not angels, are able to endure the breath of his fury; for, "*Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?*" . . . . The anger of God is a terrible, unspeakable, unsupportable, intolerable burden. Every word in the text hath a special emphasis to prove this. "*Who may stand?*" *Who?* Shall angels? They are but like refracted beams or rays, if God should hide his face, they would cease to shine. Shall man? His glory and pomp, like the colours in the rainbow, vanish away, when God puts forth in anger the brightness of his face. Shall devils? If he speak the word they are tumbled down from heaven like lightning. "*Stand in thy sight.*" "*Stand.*" What! a reed against a cedar, a thistle in Lebanon against a cedar in Lebanon; a feather against a flame, a grasshopper against an Almighty, a head of glass against a rod of brass? "*When once thou art angry?*" "*Angry.*" By sending out his wrath, that it wounds like arrows; angry, in pouring it out, that it drowns like water; angry, in kindling of it, that it burns like fire; a consuming fire, but you tell me such a fire may be quenched; an unquenchable fire, but since that may cease to burn, when it lacks matter, it is in one word an everlasing fire, that never goes out. That, that's it; such anger as is never fully shown, but in punishment of reprobates; in no punishment, but that in hell; in none in hell, but that eternal.—*John Cragge's "Cabinet of Spirituall Jewells."* 1657.

Verse 9.—"*God arose to judgment.*" This great judgment was wrought upon the enemies *when God rose:* it was not done when God sat; for the whole time when he sat his enemies were aloft, stirring their time, raging in murder, oppression, and blood. . . . . He bringeth in God here after the manner of earthly judges

after the custom of our judges; for first they sit down, they try, seek out, and advise, and after consideration they resolve, and after resolution they rise up, give forth judgment, and pronounce the sentence; even so the prophet bringeth in God after the same manner; sitting, and after sitting, rising and pronouncing the sentence. —*Robert Bruce.*

Verse 9.—"*To save all the meek.*" We see from this passage what care God takes of the afflicted. When he is angry with the ungodly, he is angry with them chiefly because they have oppressed the poor and the innocent. Although he detests all iniquity, yet he is most indignant with that which is committed against the needy and guiltless. So in Ps. xii. "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord." So in this verse, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth.—*Musculus.*

Verse 9.—Is not this the day when the Saviour comes to reign? the day when the results of things shall best be seen; the day when every saint with anointed eye shall see that events all tended to the glory of God; the day when they shall sing better far than now.

> "Surely the wrath of man praiseth thee.
> Thou girdest thyself with the remnant of wrath."
>
> —*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 10.—"*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.*" Persecutions tend to correct the failings of good men, and to exercise and illustrate their several graces and virtues. By these, good men are usually made much better and more approved, while they tend to exercise our patience, to quicken our devotion, to evidence our zeal and Christian fortitude, and to show to the whole world what love we bear to the truth, and how much we are willing to undergo for the honour of God. Till they have suffered something for it, truth is too apt to grow cheap and be less prized many times, even by those that are good men in the main; whereas we are apt on the contrary, never to value it at a higher rate, or to be more zealous for it, or to make better use of it, than when it is opposed and persecuted. What more truly beneficial therefore, or tending to the divine glory, than for God, who useth to bring good out of evil, to make use also of the opposers of his truth, to rouse up his servants whom he sees growing more remiss and negligent than they should be, and to suffer such temptations to assault them, by which their drowsy minds may be spurred on into a greater love and zeal for the truth, and a deeper sense of the divine benefit in it, and, in general, excited to the more diligent performance of their duty.—*Richard Pearson.* 1684.

Verse 10.—"*The wrath of man shall praise thee.*" In the Septuagint it is, The wrath of man shall *keep holy-day* to thee, shall increase a festival for thee. God many times gets up in the world on Satan's shoulders. When matters are ravelled and disordered, he can find out the right end of the thread, and how to disentangle us again; and when we have spoiled a business, he can dispose it for good, and make an advantage of those things which seem to obscure the glory of his name.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 10.—"*The wrath of man shall praise thee.*" The wrath of wicked men against the people of God is very tributary to his praise. 1. It puts them upon many subtil devices and cunning stratagems, in frustrating of which the wisdom of God and his care of his Church is very much illustrated. 2. The wrath of wicked men impels them to many violent and forcible attempts upon the people of God to destroy them, and so gives him occasion to manifest his power in their defence. 3. It makes them sometimes fit to be his instruments in correcting his people, and so he vindicates himself from the suspicion of being a patron to sin in them that are nearest to him, and makes them that hate holiness promote it in his people, and them that intend them the greatest hurt, to do them the greatest good. 4. It administers occasion to him for the manifestation of the power of his grace in upholding the spirits of his people and the being of his church in despite of all that enemies can do against them. 5. It serves very much to adorn God's most signal undertakings for his people in the world. 6. It serves to manifest the glory of God's justice upon his people's enemies in the day when he rises up to avenge himself upon them, when he shall stand over them, lashing them with scorpions, and at every blow mind their former cruelties. Here, take that for your inhuman rage against my people at such a place, and that for your barbarous usage of them at

such a time. Now see how good it is to be imprisoned, beaten, tortured, burnt, and sawn asunder. Thus the enemies themselves are often constrained to acknowledge with Adoni-Bezek the righteous hand of God upon them in the day of inquisition.—*Condensed from John Warren's Sermon before Parliament.* 1656.

Verse 10.—"*The wrath of man.*" Wrath is anger accented unto the highest pitch, or blown up into a flame. "*The wrath of man,*" (in the original it is *The wrath of Adam,* or *the wrath of clay,* weak, impotent man) "*shall praise thee,*" *i.e.,* it shall turn to the praise and glory of God through his overruling providence, though quite otherwise intended. God will bring honour to himself, and serve his own holy and wise designs out of it. . . . . This expression, "*the wrath of man,*" imports the weakness and impotence of it; it is but the wrath of *Adam,* or of *red clay.* How contemptibly doth the Spirit of God speak of man, and of the power of man, in Scripture? "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" The wrath of man, when it is lengthened out to its utmost boundaries, can only go to the length of killing the body or of the breaking the sheath of clay in which the soul lodges, and then it can do no more.—*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 10.—"*Shall praise thee.*" God turns the wrath of man to the praise of his adorable sovereignty. Never have the Lord's people had such awful impressions of the sovereignty of God, as when they have been in the furnace of man's wrath, then they became dumb with silence. When the Chaldean and Sabean robbers are let loose to plunder and spoil the substance of Job, he is made to view adorable sovereignty in it, saying, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." It is in such a case as this that God says to his own people, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen." What work of God about the church is advanced by the wrath of men? 1. His *discovering* work; for by the wind of man's wrath he separates between the precious and the vile, betwixt the chaff and the wheat. In the day of the church's prosperity and quiet hypocrites and true believers are mingled together, like the chaff and the wheat in the barn floor: but the Lord, like the husbandman, opens the door of his barn, and puts the wind of man's wrath through it, that the world may know which is which. O, sirs, much chaff is cast up already, both among ministers and professors; but it is like the wind and sieve, may cast up much more yet ere all be done. 2. God's *purging* work is advanced among his own children by the wrath of men: there is much of the dross of corruption cleaves to the Lord's people while in the wilderness. Now, the Lord heats the furnace of man's wrath, and casts his people into it, that when he has tried them, he may bring them forth as gold. 3. God's *uniting* work is thereby advanced. In a time of peace and external tranquility the sheep of Christ scatter and divide among themselves; but God lets loose the dogs upon them, and then the flock runs together; or like pieces of metal cast into the fire, they run together in a lump. 4. God's *enlarging* work, or his work of spreading the gospel, is sometimes advanced by the wrath of man. Acts viii. 1—5. The gospel, like the chamomile, the more it is trodden upon, the more it spreads.—*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 10.—"*The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*" "*The remainder of wrath,*" *i.e.,* what is left behind of the wrath of men, when God has glorified himself thereby. Even after God has defeated the purposes of wicked men, and made them contribute to his glory, yet there is abundance of wrath remaining. But what becomes of that wrath that is left? God shall "*restrain*" it. The word signifies to *gird up.* However God may see fit to slacken the bridle of his providence, and suffer wicked men to vent their wrath and enmity, as far as it shall contribute to his glory; yet the superplus and the remainder of his wrath that is not for his glory and his people's profit, God will gird it up, that they shall not get it vented. . . . . If any wrath of man remain beyond what shall bring in a revenue of praise unto God, he will *restrain it,* and bind it up like the waters of a mill: he will suffer as much of the current of water to run upon the wheel, as serves to carry it about and grind his corn, but the remainder of the water he sets it off another way: so God will let out as much of the current of man's wrath as shall serve the ends of his glory and our good, but the remainder of the stream and current he will *restrain,* and turn another way. In Isai. xxviii. we are told that God will not be aye "threshing his corn, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." All this comfort is sure and certain, there

is not the least peradventure about it, that the flame of man's wrath shall praise the Lord, and the superfluous fire shall be quenched, or hemmed in; for here we have God's parole of honour for it: "*Surely* the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."—*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 10.—"*The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain,*" חֵמָה *Chemoth* "wrath," in the plural number, seems to be put in opposition to *chamoth*, the *single wrath* of man in the former part of the verse; to shew there is more wrath which God is to restrain, than merely that of man. There is also more pride which needs a like restraint; namely, that of the *first Lucifer*, who sinned, and, as is thought, fell by aspiring to ascend, and to be like the Most High. There are finally, other *counsels* also, as well as other *wrath* and *pride*, besides human, which God confounds. There is a wisdom that descendeth not from above (no, nor grows on earth) but is devilish, James iii. 15. And both *wrath*, *pride*, and *wisdom*, of *devils* as well as *men*, shall God *restrain*, when he pleases not to turn them to his praise. Let there be hellish plots, yet our God shall confound them.—*From "A Sermon preached. . . . before the Queen. . . . . By Edward* [*Wetenhall*] *Lord Bishop of Corke and Rosse.* 1691."

Verse 10.—"*Thou shalt restrain.*" This, in the Hebrew, is expressed in one word, תַּחְגֹּר, which imports the begirding or binding of it in on every side, that it shall by no means break out, but shall be kept in, as a dog in a chain, as a lion in his den, how violent soever.—*Cornelius Burges, in "Another Sermon preached to the Honourable House of Commons. . . . November the fifth,* 1641."

Verse 11.—"*Round about him.*" A description of his people, as the twelve tribes pitched about the tabernacle, Num. ii. 2; and the four-and-twenty elders were round about God's throne, Rev. iv. 4. So the Chaldee expoundeth it;—*Ye that dwell about his sanctuary.—Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 12.—"*Cut off.*" He deals with princes as men deal with a vine. An axe is too strong for a cluster of grapes, or a sprig of a vine; it easily cuts them off: so God by a judgment easily cuts off the spirit of princes; they are not able to stand against the least judgments of God: when he puts strength into worms, or any other creatures they fall.—*William Greenhill, in a Sermon, entitled, "The Axe at the Root."*

Verse 12.—The Lord *cuts off the spirit of princes;* the word is, *he slips off*, as one should slip off a flower between one's fingers, or as one should slip off a bunch of grapes from a vine, so soon is it done. How great uncertainty have many great ones, by their miserable experience, found in their outward glory and worldly felicity! What a change hath a little time made in all their honours, riches, and delights! That victorious emperor Henry the Fourth, who had fought two-and-fifty pitched battles, fell to that poverty before he died, that he was forced to petition to be a prebend in the church of Spier, to maintain him in his old age. And Procopius reports of King Gillimer, who was a potent king of the Vandals, who was so low brought, as to intreat his friend to send him a sponge, a loaf of bread, and a harp; a sponge to dry up his tears, a loaf of bread to maintain his life, and a harp to solace himself in his misery. Philip de Comines reports of a Duke of Exeter, who though he had married Edward the Fourth's sister, yet he saw him in the Low Countries begging barefoot. Bellisarius, the chief man living in his time, having his eyes put out, was led at last in a string, crying, "give a halfpenny to Bellisarius."—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Reverence for God's name proportionate to true knowledge of it.

Verse 2.—The peculiar relation of God to his church.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—A peaceful church the tabernacle of God. The benefits peace confers, the evils of strife, the causes of dissension, and the means of promoting unity.

Verse 3.—Christian glories, or the victories vouchsafed to the church over heathenism, heresy, persecution, etc.

Verse 3.—I. Where enemies are conquered; "There;" not on the battle-field so much as in the house of God; as Amalek by Moses on the Mount; Sennacherib by Hezekiah in the Sanctuary. II. How there? 1. By faith. 2. By prayer. "*The* weapons of our warfare," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—The Lord, our portion, compared with the treasures of empires.

Verse 4.—I. What the world is, compared with the church: "Mountains of prey." 1. Cruelty instead of love. 2. Violence instead of peace. II. What the church is, compared with the world. 1. "More glorious," because "more excellent." 2. "More excellent," because "more glorious." Both are more real and abiding.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—"*They have slept their sleep.*" Divers kinds of deaths or sleeps for the various classes of men.

Verse 7.—The anger of God. A very suggestive subject.

Verses 8, 9.—I. The characters described: "the meek of the earth." II. The need implied. 1. To be vindicated. 2. To be saved. III. The divine interposition on their behalf: "Thou didst cause," etc. "When God arose," etc. IV. The effect of their deliverance: "The earth feared," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—I. Evil permitted for good: "The wrath," etc. II. Restrained for good: "The remainder," etc. Or, I. Ruled. II. Overruled.—*G. R.*

Verse 11.—I. To whom vows may be made. Not to man, but God. II. What vows should be thus made. 1. Of self-dedication. 2. Of self-service. 3. Of self-sacrifice. III. How kept: "Vow and pay." 1. From duty. 2. From fear of his displeasure.—*G. R.*

Verse 11.—The propriety, obligation, pleasure, and profit of presenting gifts unto the Lord.

PSALM LXXVII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, to Jeduthun. *It was meet that another leader of the psalmody should take his turn. No harp should be silent in the courts of the Lord's house.* A Psalm of Asaph. *Asaph was a man of exercised mind, and often touched the minor key; he was thoughtful, contemplative, believing, but withal there was a dash of sadness about him, and this imparted a tonic flavour to his songs. To follow him with understanding, it is needful to have done business on the great waters, and weathered many an Atlantic gale.*

DIVISIONS.—*If we follow the poetical arrangement, and divide at the Selahs, we shall find the troubled man of God pleading in verses* 1—3, *and then we shall hear him lamenting and arguing within himself,* 4—9. *From verses* 10—15 *his meditations run Godward, and in the close he seems as in a vision to behold the wonders of the Red Sea and the wilderness. At this point, as if lost in an ecstacy, he hurriedly closes the Psalm with an abruptness, the effect of which is quite startling. The Spirit of God knows when to cease speaking, which is more than those do who, for the sake of making a methodical conclusion, prolong their words even to weariness. Perhaps this Psalm was meant to be a prelude to the next, and, if so, its sudden close is accounted for. The hymn now before us is for experienced saints only, but to them it will be of rare value as a transcript of their own inner conflicts.*

EXPOSITION.

I CRIED unto God with my voice, *even* unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.

2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.

3 I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.

1. *"I cried unto God with my voice."* This Psalm has much sadness in it, but we may be sure it will end well, for it begins with prayer, and prayer never has an ill issue. Asaph did not run to man but to the Lord, and to him he went, not with studied, stately, stilted words, but with a cry, the natural, unaffected, unfeigned expression of pain. He used his voice also, for though vocal utterance is not necessary to the life of prayer, it often seems forced upon us by the energy of our desires. Sometimes the soul feels compelled to use the voice, for thus it finds a freer vent for its agony. It is a comfort to hear the alarm-bell ringing when the house is invaded by thieves. *"Even unto God with my voice."* He returned to his pleading. If once sufficed not, he cried again. He needed an answer, he expected one, he was eager to have it soon, therefore he cried again and again, and with his voice too, for the sound helped his earnestness. *"And he gave ear unto me."* Importunity prevailed. The gate opened to the steady knock. It shall be so with us in our hour of trial, the God of grace will hear us in due season.

2. *"In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord."* All day long his distress drove him to his God, so that when night came he continued still in the same search. God had hidden his face from his servant, therefore the first care of the troubled saint was to seek his Lord again. This was going to the root of the matter and removing the main impediment first. Diseases and tribulations are easily enough endured when God is found of us, but without him they crush us to the earth. *"My sore ran in the night, and ceased not."* As by day so by night his trouble was on him and his prayer continued. Some of us know what it is, both physically and spiritually, to be compelled to use these words: no respite has been afforded us by the silence of the night, our bed has been a rack to us, our body has been in torment, and our spirit in anguish. It appears that this sentence is wrongly translated, and should be, "my hand was stretched out all night;" this shews that his prayer ceased not, but with uplifted hand he continued to seek succour of his God. *"My soul refused*

to be comforted." He refused some comforts as too weak for his case, others as untrue, others as unhallowed; but chiefly because of distraction, he declined even those grounds of consolation which ought to have been effectual with him. As a sick man turns away even from the most nourishing food, so did he. It is impossible to comfort those who refuse to be comforted. You may bring them to the waters of the promise, but who shall make them drink if they will not do so? Many a daughter of despondency has pushed aside the cup of gladness, and many a son of sorrow has hugged his chains. There are times when we are suspicious of good news, and are not to be persuaded into peace, though the happy truth should be as plain before us as the King's highway.

3. "*I remembered God, and was troubled.*" He who is the wellspring of delight to faith became an object of dread to the Psalmist's distracted heart. The justice, holiness, power, and truth of God have all a dark side, and indeed all the attributes may be made to look black upon us if our eye be evil; even the brightness of divine love blinds us, and fills us with a horrible suspicion that we have neither part nor lot in it. He is wretched indeed whose memories of The Ever Blessed prove distressing to him; yet the best of men know the depth of this abyss. "*I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.*" He mused and mused but only sank the deeper. His inward disquietudes did not fall asleep as soon as they were expressed, but rather they returned upon him, and leaped over him like raging billows of an angry sea. It was not his body alone which smarted, but his noblest nature writhed in pain, his life itself seemed crushed into the earth. It is in such a case that death is coveted as a relief, for life becomes an intolerable burden. With no spirit left in us to sustain our infirmity, our case becomes forlorn; like a man in a tangle of briars who is stripped of his clothes, every hook of the thorns becomes a lancet, and we bleed with ten thousand wounds. Alas, my God, the writer of this exposition well knows what thy servant Asaph meant, for his soul is familiar with the way of grief. Deep glens and lonely caves of soul depressions, my spirit knows full well your awful glooms! "*Selah.*" Let the song go softly; this is no merry dance for the swift feet of the daughters of music, pause ye awhile, and let sorrow take breath between her sighs.

4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
5 I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.
6 I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.
7 Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?
8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth *his* promise fail for evermore?
9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.

4. "*Thou holdest mine eyes waking.*" The fears which thy strokes excite in me forbid my eyelids to fall, my eyes continue to watch as sentinels forbidden to rest. Sleep is a great comforter, but it forsakes the sorrowful, and then their sorrow deepens and eats into the soul. If God holds the eyes waking, what anodyne shall give us rest? How much we owe to him who giveth his beloved sleep! "*I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*" Great griefs are dumb. Deep streams brawl not among the pebbles like the shallow brooklets which live on passing showers. Words fail the man whose heart fails him. He had cried to God but he could not speak to man, what a mercy it is that if we can do the first, we need not despair though the second should be quite out of our power. Sleepless and speechless Asaph was reduced to great extremities, and yet he rallied, and even so shall we.

5. "*I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*" If no good was in the present, memory ransacked the past to find consolation. She fain would borrow a light from the altars of yesterday to light the gloom of to-day. It is our duty to search for comfort, and not in sullen indolence yield to despair; in quiet contemplation topics may occur to us which will prove the means of raising our spirits, and there is scarcely any theme more likely to prove consolatory than that which deals with the days of yore, the years of the olden time, when the Lord's faithfulness was tried and proved by hosts of his people. Yet it seems that even this consideration created depression rather than delight in the good man's soul, for he contrasted his own mournful condition with all that was bright in the venerable

experiences of ancient saints, and so complained the more. Ah, sad calamity of a jaundiced mind to see nothing as it should be seen, but everything as through a veil of mist.

6. *"I call to remembrance my song in the night."* At other times his spirit had a song for the darkest hour, but now he could only recall the strain as a departed memory. Where is the harp which once thrilled sympathetically to the touch of these joyful fingers? My tongue, hast thou forgotten to praise? Hast thou no skill except in mournful ditties? Ah me, how sadly fallen am I! How lamentable that I who like the nightingale could charm the night, am now fit comrade for the hooting owl. *"I commune with mine own heart."* He did not cease from introspection, for he was resolved to find the bottom of his sorrow, and trace it to its fountain head. He made sure work of it by talking not with his mind only, but his inmost heart; it was heart work with him. He was no idler, no melancholy trifler; he was up and at it, resolutely resolved that he would not tamely die of despair, but would fight for his hope to the last moment of life. *"And my spirit made diligent search."* He ransacked his experience, his memory, his intellect, his whole nature, his entire self, either to find comfort or to discover the reason why it was denied him. That man will not die by the hand of the enemy who has enough force of soul remaining to struggle in this fashion.

7. *"Will the Lord cast off for ever?"* This was one of the matters he enquired into. He painfully knew that the Lord might leave his people for a season, but his fear was that the time might be prolonged and have no close; eagerly, therefore, he asked, will the Lord utterly and finally reject those who are his own, and suffer them to be the objects of his contemptuous reprobation, his everlasting castoffs? This he was persuaded could not be. No instance in the years of ancient times led him to fear that such could be the case. *"And will he be favourable no more?"* Favourable he had been; would that goodwill never again show itself? Was the sun set never to rise again? Would spring never follow the long and dreary winter? The questions are suggested by fear, but they are also the cure of fear. It is a blessed thing to have grace enough to look such questions in the face, for their answer is self-evident and eminently fitted to cheer the heart.

8. *"Is his mercy clean gone for ever?"* If he has no love for his elect, has he not still his mercy left? Has that dried up? Has he no pity for the sorrowful? *"Doth his promise fail for evermore?"* His word is pledged to those who plead with him; is that become of none effect? Shall it be said that from one generation to another the Lord's word has fallen to the ground; whereas aforetime he kept his covenant to all generations of them that fear him? It is a wise thing thus to put unbelief through the catechism. Each one of the questions is a dart aimed at the very heart of despair. Thus have we also in our days of darkness done battle for life itself.

9. *"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"* Has El, the Mighty One, become great in everything but grace? Does he know how to afflict, but not how to uphold? Can he forget anything? Above all, can he forget to exercise that attribute which lies nearest to his essence, for he is love? *"Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"* Are the pipes of goodness choked up so that love can no more flow through them? Do the bowels of Jehovah no longer yearn towards his own beloved children? Thus with cord after cord unbelief is smitten and driven out of the soul; it raises questions and we will meet it with questions: it makes us think and act ridiculously, and we will heap scorn upon it. The argument of this passage assumes very much the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Strip it naked, and mistrust is a monstrous piece of folly. *"Selah."* Here rest awhile, for the battle of questions needs a lull.

10 And I said, This *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the most High.

11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.

13 Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary: who *is so* great a God as *our* God?

14 Thou *art* the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.

15 Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

10. *"And I said, This is my infirmity."* He has won the day, he talks reasonably now, and surveys the field with a cooler mind. He confesses that unbelief is an infirmity, a weakness, a folly, a sin. He may also be understood to mean, " this is my appointed sorrow," I will bear it without complaint. When we perceive that our affliction is meted out by the Lord, and is the ordained portion of our cup, we become reconciled to it, and no longer rebel against the inevitable. Why should we not be content if it be the Lord's will? What he arranges it is not for us to cavil at. *"But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High."* Here a good deal is supplied by our translators, and they make the sense to be that the Psalmist would console himself by remembering the goodness of God to himself and others of his people in times gone by: but the original seems to consist only of the words, " the years of the right hand of the most High," and to express the idea that his long continued affliction, reaching through several years, was allotted to him by the Sovereign Lord of all. 'Tis well when a consideration of the divine goodness and greatness silences all complaining, and creates a childlike acquiescence.

11. *"I will remember the works of the Lord."* Fly back, my soul, away from present turmoils, to the grandeurs of history, the sublime deeds of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts; for he is the same and is ready even now to defend his servants as in the days of yore. *"Surely I will remember thy wonders of old."* Whatever else may glide into oblivion, the marvellous works of the Lord in the ancient days must not be suffered to be forgotten. Memory is a fit handmaid for faith. When faith has its seven years of famine, memory like Joseph in Egypt opens her granaries.

12. *"I will meditate also of all thy work."* Sweet work to enter into Jehovah's work of grace, and there to lie down and ruminate, every thought being absorbed in the one precious subject. *"And talk of thy doings."* It is well that the overflow of the mouth should indicate the good matter which fills the heart. Meditation makes rich talking; it is to be lamented that so much of the conversation of professors is utterly barren, because they take no time for contemplation. A meditative man should be a talker, otherwise he is a mental miser, a mill which grinds corn only for the miller. The subject of our meditation should be choice, and then our talk will be edifying; if we meditate on folly and affect to speak wisdom, our double-mindedness will soon be known unto all men. Holy talk following upon meditation has a consoling power in it for ourselves as well as for those who listen, hence its value in the connection in which we find it in this passage.

13. *"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary,"* or *in holiness.* In the holy place we understand our God, and rest assured that all his ways are just and right. When we cannot trace his way, because it is " in the sea," it is a rich consolation that we can trust it, for it is in holiness. We must have fellowship with holiness if we would understand " the ways of God to man." He who would be wise must worship. The pure in heart shall see God, and pure worship is the way to the philosophy of providence. *"Who is so great a God as our God?"* In him the good and the great are blended. He surpasses in both. None can for a moment be compared with the mighty One of Israel.

14. *"Thou art the God that doest wonders."* Thou alone art Almighty. The false gods are surrounded with the pretence of wonders, but thou really workest them. It is thy peculiar prerogative to work marvels: it is no new or strange thing with thee, it is according to thy wont and use. Herein is renewed reason for holy confidence. It would be a great wonder if we did not trust the wonder-working God. *"Thou hast declared thy strength among the people."* Not only Israel, but Egypt, Bashan, Edom, Philistia, and all the nations have seen Jehovah's power. It was no secret in the olden time and to this day it is published abroad. God's providence and grace are both full of displays of his power; he is in the latter peculiarly conspicuous as " mighty to save." Who will not be strong in faith when there is so strong an arm to lean upon? Shall our trust be doubtful when his power is beyond all question? My soul see to it that these considerations banish thy mistrust.

15. *"Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph."* All Israel, the two tribes of Joseph as well as those which sprang from the other sons of Jacob, were brought out of Egypt by a display of divine power, which is here ascribed not to the hand but to the arm of the Lord, because it was the fulness of

his might. Ancient believers were in the constant habit of referring to the wonders of the Red Sea, and we also can unite with them, taking care to add the song of the Lamb to that of Moses, the servant of God. The comfort derivable from such a meditation is obvious and abundant, for he who brought up his people from the house of bondage will continue to redeem and deliver till we come into the promised rest. *"Selah."* Here we have another pause preparatory to a final burst of song.

16 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.

17 The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.

18 The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.

19 Thy way *is* in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

16. *"The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid."* As if conscious of its Maker's presence, the sea was ready to flee from before his face. The conception is highly poetical, the Psalmist has the scene before his mind's eye, and describes it gloriously. The water saw its God, but man refuses to discern him; it was afraid, but proud sinners are rebellious and fear not the Lord. *"The depths also were troubled."* To their heart the floods were made afraid. Quiet caves of the sea, far down in the abyss, were moved with affright; and the lowest channels were left bare, as the water rushed away from its place, in terror of the God of Israel.

17. *"The clouds poured out water."* Obedient to the Lord, the lower region of the atmosphere yielded its aid to overthrow the Egyptian host. The cloudy chariots of heaven hurried forward to discharge their floods. *"The skies sent out a sound."* From the loftier aerial regions thundered the dread artillery of the Lord of Hosts. Peal on peal the skies sounded over the heads of the routed enemies, confusing their minds and adding to their horror. *"Thine arrows also went abroad."* Lightnings flew like bolts from the bow of God. Swiftly, hither and thither, went the red tongues of flame, on helm and shield they gleamed; anon with blue bale-fires revealing the innermost caverns of the hungry sea which waited to swallow up the pride of Mizraim. Behold, how all the creatures wait upon their God, and show themselves strong to overthrow his enemies.

18. *"The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven,"* or *"in the whirlwind."* Rushing on with terrific swiftness and bearing all before it, the storm was as a chariot driven furiously, and a voice was heard (even thy voice, O Lord!) out of the fiery car, even as when a mighty man in battle urges forward his charger, and shouts to it aloud. All heaven resounded with the voice of the Lord. *"The lightnings lightened the world."* The entire globe shone in the blaze of Jehovah's lightnings. No need for other light amid the battle of that terrible night, every wave gleamed in the fire-flashes, and the shore was lit up with the blaze. How pale were men's faces in that hour, when all around the fire leaped from sea to shore, from crag to hill, from mountain to star till the whole universe was illuminated in honour of Jehovah's triumph. *"The earth trembled and shook."* It quaked and quaked again. Sympathetic with the sea, the solid shore forgot its quiescence and heaved in dread. How dreadful art thou, O God, when thou comest forth in thy majesty to humble thine arrogant adversaries.

19. *"Thy way is in the sea."* Far down in secret channels of the deep is thy roadway; when thou wilt thou canst make a sea a highway for thy glorious march. *"And thy path in the great waters."* There, where the billows surge and swell, thou still dost walk; Lord of each crested wave. *"And thy footsteps are not known."* None can follow thy tracks by foot or eye. Thou art alone in thy glory, and thy ways are hidden from mortal ken. Thy purposes thou wilt accomplish, but the means are often concealed, yea, they need no concealing, they are in themselves too vast and mysterious for human understanding. Glory be to thee, O Jehovah.

20. *"Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."* What a transition from tempest to peace, from wrath to love. Quietly as a flock Israel was guided on, by human agency which veiled the excessive glory of the divine

presence. The smiter of Egypt was the shepherd of Israel. He drove his foes before him, but went before his people. Heaven and earth fought on his side against the sons of Ham, but they were equally subservient to the interests of the sons of Jacob. Therefore, with devout joy and full of consolation, we close this Psalm; the song of one who forgot how to speak and yet learned to sing far more sweetly than his fellows.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Whenever, and by whomsoever, the Psalm may have been written, it clearly is individual, not national. It utterly destroys all the beauty, all the tenderness and depth of feeling in the opening portion, if we suppose that the people are introduced speaking in the first person. The allusions to the national history may indeed show that the season was a season of national distress, and that the sweet singer was himself bowed down by the burden of the time, and oppressed by woes which he had no power to alleviate; but it is his own sorrow, not the sorrow of others under which he sighs, and of which he has left the pathetic record.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 1.—In the beginning of the Psalm, before speaking of his sorrows, he hastens to show the necessary and most efficacious remedy for allaying sorrow. He says that he did not, as many do, out of their impatience of grief or murmuring, either accuse God of cruelty or tyranny, or utter blasphemous words by which dishonour might fall upon God, or by indulging in sorrow and distrust hasten his own destruction, or fill the air with vain complainings, but fled straight to God, and to him unburdened his sorrow, and sought that he would not shut him from that grace which he bountifully offers to all. This is the only and sure sovereign remedy which most effectually heals his griefs.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 1.—"*I cried.*" To the Orientals the word קרא presented the idea of a *crash*, as of the heavens sending out thunders and lightnings. Whence beyond other things he metaphorically says, *he cried for sorrow; . . .* shaken with a tempest of thoughts he burst out into an open and loud-sounding complaint.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1.—"*Even unto God with my voice.*" The repetition here is emphatic. The idea is that it was an earnest or fervent cry.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 1 (*last clause*).—At the second knock, the door of grace flew open: *the Lord heard me.—John Collings.*

Verse 2.—"*In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.*" Days of trouble must be days of prayer; in days of inward trouble, especially when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversions of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God, and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind, must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but pray it away.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*My sore ran in the night.*" Hebrew: *My hand was poured out;* that is, stretched out in prayer; or wet with continual weeping. *Non fuit remissa, nec retracta in lectum.—John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*My sore ran in the night, and ceased not,*" etc.—"There is no healing of this wound, no easing of this sore, no cleansing of the conscience, no quieting of a man's spirit: till God whom the soul seeketh show himself as the Physician, the evil continueth still and groweth."—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"*My soul refused to be comforted.*" God has provided suitable and sufficient comfort for his people. He sends them comforters just as their circumstances require. But they at times refuse to hear the voice of the charmer. The Lord has perhaps taken away an idol—or he withholds his sensible presence, that they may learn to live by faith—or he has blighted their worldly prospects—or he has written vanity and emptiness upon all their gourds, cisterns, and delights. They give way to passion, as did Jonah—or they sink into sullen gloom—or allow

unhumbled pride to rule the spirit—or yield to extreme sorrow, as Rachel did—or fall under the power of temptation—or imbibe the notion that they have no right to comfort. This is wrong, all wrong, decidedly wrong. Look at what is left you, at what the gospel presents to you, at what heaven will be to you. But the Psalmist was recovered from this state. He was convinced that it was wrong. He was sorry for his sin. He was reformed in his spirit and conduct. He wrote this Psalm to instruct, caution, and warn us. Observe, they who are entitled to all comfort, often through their own folly, enjoy the least. The Lord's people are often their own tormentors, they put away the cup of comfort from them, and say they are unworthy of it.

O Thou source of every blessing,
Chase my sorrows, cheer my heart,
Till in heaven, thy smiles possessing,
Life, and joy, and peace impart.

—*James Smith.*

Verse 2.—"*My soul refused to be comforted.*" Poor I, that am but of yesterday, have known some that have been so deeply plunged in the gulf of despair, that they would throw all the spiritual cordials that have been tendered to them against the walls. They were strong in reasoning against their own souls, and resolved against everything that might be a comfort and support unto them. They have been much set against all ordinances and religious services; they have cast off holy duties themselves, and peremptorily refused to join with others in them; yea, they have, out of a sense of sin and wrath, which hath laid hard upon them, refused the necessary comforts of this life, even to the overthrow of natural life, and yet out of this horrible pit, this hell upon earth, hath God delivered their souls, and given them such manifestations of his grace and favour, that they would not exchange them for a thousand worlds. O despairing souls, you see that others, whose conditions have been as bad if not worse than yours, have obtained mercy. God hath turned their hell into a heaven; he hath remembered them in their low estate; he hath pacified their raging consciences, and quieted their distracted souls; he hath wiped all tears from their eyes; and he hath been a well-spring of life unto their hearts. Therefore be not discouraged, O despairing souls, but look up to the mercy-seat.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 3.—"*I remembered God, and was troubled.*" If our hearts or consciences condemn us, it is impossible to remember him without being troubled. It will then be painful to remember that he is our Creator and Benefactor, for the remembrance will be attended with a consciousness of base ingratitude. It will be painful to think of him as Lawgiver; for such thoughts will remind us that we have broken his law. It will be painful to think of his holiness; for if he is holy, he must hate our sins, and be angry with us as sinners:—of his justice and truth, for these perfections make it necessary that he should fulfil his threatenings and punish us for our sins. It will be painful to think of his omniscience—for this perfection makes him acquainted with our most secret offences, and renders it impossible to conceal them from his view; of his omnipresence—for the constant presence of an invisible witness must be disagreeable to those who wish to indulge their sinful propensities. It will be painful to think of his power—for it enables him to restrain or destroy, as he pleases: of his sovereignty, for sinners always hate to see themselves in the hands of a sovereign God: of his eternity and immutability—for from his possessing these perfections it follows that he will never alter the threatenings which he has denounced against sinners, and that he will always live to execute them. It will be painful to think of him as judge; for we shall feel, that as sinners, we have no reason to expect a favourable sentence from his lips. It will even be painful to think of the perfect goodness and excellence of his character; for his goodness leaves us without excuse in rebelling against him, and makes our sins appear exceeding sinful.—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 3.—"*I remembered God, and was troubled.*" All had not been well between God and him; and whereas formerly, in his remembrance of God, his thoughts were chiefly exercised about his love and kindness, now they were wholly possessed with his own sin and unkindness. This causeth his trouble. Herein lies a share of the entanglements occasioned by sin. Saith such a soul in itself, "Foolish creature, hast thou thus requited the Lord? Is this the return that thou hast made unto him for all his love, his kindness, his consolations, mercies? Is this

thy kindness for him, thy love to him? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Is this thy boasting of him, that thou hadst found so much goodness and excellence in him and his love, that though all men should forsake him, thou never wouldst do so? Are all thy promises, all thy engagements which thou madest unto God, in times of distress, upon prevailing obligations, and mighty impressions of his good Spirit upon thy soul, now come to this, that thou shouldst so foolishly forget, neglect, despise, cast him off? Well! now he is gone; he is withdrawn from thee; and what wilt thou do? Art thou not even ashamed to desire him to return?" They were thoughts of this nature that cut Peter to the heart upon his fall. The soul finds them cruel as death, and strong as the grave. It is bound in the chains of them, and cannot be comforted, Ps. xxxviii. 3—6.—*John Owen.*

Verse 3.—There are moments in the life of all believers when God and his ways become unintelligible to them. They get lost in profound meditation, and nothing is left them but a desponding sigh. But we know from Paul the apostle that the Holy Spirit intercedes for believers with God, when they cannot utter their sighs. Romans viii. 26.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 3.—"*Selah.*" In the end of this verse is put the word "*Selah.*" And it doth note unto the reader or hearer what a miserable and comfortless thing man is in trouble, if God be not present with him to help him. It is also put as a spur and prick for every Christian man and woman to remember and call upon God in the days of their troubles. For as the Jews say, wheresoever this word "*Selah*" is, it doth admonish and stir up the reader or hearer to mark what was said before it; for it is a word always put after very notable sentences.—*John Hooper.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou holdest mine eyes waking.*" Thou art afflicted with want of sleep:—A complaint incident to distempered bodies and thoughtful minds. Oh, how wearisome a thing it is to spend the long night in tossing up and down in a restless bed, in the chase of sleep; which the more eagerly it is followed, flies so much the farther from us! Couldst thou obtain of thyself to forbear the desire of it, perhaps it would come alone: now that thou suest for it, like to some froward piece, it is coy and overly, and punishes thee with thy longing. Lo, he that could command a hundred and seven and twenty provinces, yet could not command rest. 'On that night his sleep departed from him,' Esth. vi. 1, neither could be forced or entreated to his bed. And the great Babylonian monarch, though he had laid some hand on sleep, yet he could not hold it; for "his sleep brake from him," Dan. ii. 1. And, for great and wise Solomon, it would not so much as come within his view. "Neither day nor night seeth he sleep with his eyes," Eccl. viii. 16. Surely, as there is no earthly thing more comfortable to nature than bodily rest (Jer. xxxi. 26); so, there is nothing whose loss is more grievous and disheartening. . . . . Instead of closing thy lids to wait for sleep, lift up thy stiff eyes to him that "giveth his beloved rest," Psalm cxxvii. 2. Whatever be the means, he it is that "*holdeth mine eyes waking.*" He that made thine eyes, keeps off sleep from thy body, for the good of thy soul: let not thine eyes wake, without thy heart. The spouse of Christ can say, "I sleep, but my heart waketh," Cant. v. 2. How much more should she say, "Mine eyes wake, and my heart waketh also!" When thou canst not sleep with thine eyes, labour to see him that is invisible: one glimpse of that sight is more worth than all the sleep that thine eyes can be capable of. Give thyself up into his hands, to be disposed of at his will. What is this sweet acquiescence but the rest of the soul? which if thou canst find in thyself, thou shalt quietly digest the want of thy bodily sleep.—*Joseph Hall, in his "Balm of Gilead."*

Verse 4.—"*I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*" He adds that he was so cut down and lifeless that he could not speak. Little griefs, as it is often said, are uttered, great ones strike us dumb. In great troubles and affrights the spirit fails the exterior members, and flows back to its fountain; the limbs stand motionless, the whole body trembles, the eyes remain fixed, and the tongue forgets its office. Hence it is that Niobe was represented by the poets as turned into a stone. The history of Psammenitus also, in Herodotus, is well known, how over the misfortunes of his children he sat silent and overwhelmed, but when he saw his friend's calamities he bewailed them with bitter tears.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 4.—"*I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*" Sometimes our grief is so violent that it finds no vent, it strangles us, and we are overcome. It is with us in our desertions as with a man that gets a slight hurt; at first he walks up and

down, but not looking betimes to prevent a growing mischief, the neglected wound begins to fester, or to gangrene, and brings him to greater pain and loss. So it is with us many times in our spiritual sadness; when we are first troubled, we pray and pour out our souls before the Lord; but afterwards the waters of our grief drown our cries and we are so overwhelmed, that if we might have all the world we cannot pray, or at least we can find no enlargement, no life, no pleasure in our prayers; and God himself seems to take no delight in them, and that makes us more sad, Psalm xxii. 1.—*Timothy Rogers* (1660—1729), *in "A Discourse on Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy."*

Verse 4.—*"Troubled."* Or, *bruised:* the Hebrew word properly signifieth an astonishment caused by some great blow received.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 4.—*"I cannot speak."* Words are but the body, the garment, the outside of prayer; sighs are nearer the heart work. A dumb beggar getteth an alms at Christ's gates, even by making sighs, when his tongue cannot plead for him; and the rather, because he is dumb. *Objection.* I have not so much as a voice to utter to God; and Christ saith, "Cause me to hear thy voice" (Cant. ii. 14). *Answer.* Yea, but some other thing hath a voice beside the tongue: "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping" (Psalm vi. 8). Tears have a tongue, and grammar, and language, that our Father knoweth. Babes have no prayer for the breast, but weeping: the mother can read hunger in weeping.—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 4.—If through all thy discouragements thy condition prove worse and worse, so that thou canst not pray, but art struck dumb when thou comest into his presence, as David, then fall a-making signs when thou canst not speak; groan, sigh, sob, "chatter," as Hezekiah did; bemoan thyself for thine unworthiness, and desire Christ to speak thy requests for thee, and God to hear him for thee.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 5.—*"The days of old."* Doubtless to our first parents the darkness of the first night was somewhat strange; persons who had never seen anything but the light of the day, when the shadows of the night first did encompass them, could not be without some apprehension: yet when at the back of a number of nights they had seen the day-spring of the morning light constantly to arise; the darkness of the blackest nights was passed over without fear, and in as great security, as the light of the fairest days. To men who have always lived upon land, when first they set to sea, the winds, waves, and storms are exceeding terrible; but when they are a little beaten with the experience of tempests, their fears do change into resolution and courage. It is of no small use to remember that those things which vex most our spirit, are not new, but have already been in times before our days.—*Robert Baylie's Sermon before the House of Commons.* 1643.

Verse 6.—*"I call to remembrance my song in the night."* Either, (1) "I will now, in the present night of affliction, remember my former songs." "Though this is a time of distress, and my present circumstances are gloomy, yet I have known brighter days. He that lifted me up, has cast me down, and he can raise me up again." Sometimes this reflection, indeed, adds a poignancy to our distress, as it did to David's trouble, Ps. xlii. 4. Yet it will bear a better improvement, which he seems to make of it; verse 11, and so Job, (ii. 10.) *"Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"* And his case shows that after the most sweeping calamities the Lord can again give things a turn in favour of them that hope in him. Therefore, present troubles should not make us forget former comforts, especially as the former so much exceeded our deserts, and the present afflictions fall so short of our demerits. Or, (2) the text may mean, "I will remember how I have been enabled to sing in the former nights of affliction." And surely it is especially seasonable to remember supports and consolations granted under preceding distresses. Elihu complained (Job xxxv. 10), "There is none that saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night." David comforted himself with the thought, "Though deep calleth unto deep, yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me." Ps. xlii. 8. And the Lord promised by Isaiah (xxx. 29), "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept." No doubt Paul and Silas remembered their song in the night, when imprisoned at Philippi; and it afforded them encouragement under subsequent trials. And cannot many of you, my brethren, in like manner, remember the supports and consolations you have enjoyed in former difficulties,

and how the Lord turned the shadow of death into morning? And ought you not to trust to him that hath delivered, that he will yet deliver? He that hath delivered in six troubles will not forsake you in seven. The "clouds may return after the rain;" but not a drop can fall without the leave of him, who rides on the heavens for your help, and in his excellency on the sky. Did you not forbode at first a very different termination of the former troubles? and did the Lord disappoint your fears, and put a new song into your mouth; and will you not now begin to trust him, and triumph in him? Surely you have found that the Lord can clear the darkest skies. "Light is sown for the righteous," and ere long you shall see an eternal day. If such songs are given to the pilgrims of the night, how shall they sing in that world where the sun shall set no more! There will be no night there. —*John Ryland.* 1753—1825.

Verse 6.—"*I call to remembrance:*" being glad in this scarcity of comfort, to live upon the old store, as bees do in winter.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*My song in the night.*" The "songs of the night" is as favourite a word of the Old Testament as "glory in tribulation" is of the New, and it is one of those which prove that both Testaments have the self-same root and spirit.—*John Ker.*

Verse 6.—"*My spirit made diligent search.*" He falls upon self-examination, and searcheth his spirit, to consider why the hand of God was so against him, and why the face of God was so hid from him. Some read it, "I digged into my spirit;" as Ezekiel digged into the wall, to search for and find out the abomination, that made the Lord thus leave him in the dark, and hide his face from him. He searcheth the wound of his spirit; that was another way to cure it. It is a notable way to cure the wounds of the soul, for the soul to search them.—*John Collings.*

Verse 6.—"*My spirit made diligent search.*" The verb חפס, *chaphas*, signifies such an investigation as a man makes who is obliged to *strip himself* in order to do it; or, *to lift up coverings*, to search fold by fold, or in our own phrase, *to leave no stone unturned.*—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"*My spirit made diligent search.*" As Ahasuerus, when he could not sleep, called for the records and chronicles of his kingdom, so the doubting soul betakes himself to the records of heaven, the word of God in the Scriptures, and one while he is reading there, another while looking into his heart, if he can find there anything that answers the characters of Scripture-faith, as the face in the glass doth the face of man. David, when he was at a loss what to think of himself, and many doubts did clog his faith, insomuch that the thinking of God increased his trouble, he did not sit down and let the ship drive, as we say, not regarding whether God loved him or no, but *communes with his own heart, and his spirit makes diligent search.* Thus it is with every sincere soul under doubtings: he dares no more sit down contented in that unresolved condition, than one who thinks he smells fire in his house dares settle himself to sleep till he hath looked in every room and corner, and satisfied himself that all is safe, lest he should be waked with the fire about his ears in the night; and the poor doubting soul is much more afraid, lest it should wake with hell-fire about it: whereas a soul in a state and under the power of unbelief is secure and careless.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 6.—"*Diligent search.*" This duty requires diligence. External acts of religion are facile; to lift up the eye to heaven, to bow the knee, to read a prayer, this requires no more labour than for a papist to tell over his beads; but to examine a man's self, to take the heart all in pieces as a watch, and see what is defective, this is not easy. Reflective acts are hardest. The eye can see everything but itself. It is easy to spy the faults of others, but hard to find out our own. —*Thomas Wat on.*

Verse 8.—"*Doth his promise fail for evermore?*" Let no appearing impossibilities make you question God's accomplishment of any of his gracious words. Though you cannot see how the thing can be done, 'tis enough, if God has said that he will do it. There can be no obstructions to promised salvation, which we need to fear. He who is the God of this salvation, and the Author of the promise, will prepare his own way for the doing of his own work, so that "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill brought low." Luke iii. 5. Though the valleys be so deep that we cannot see the bottom, and the mountains so high that we cannot see the tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one and level the other; Isa. lxiii. 1: "I that speak in righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save." If

anything would keep back the kingdom of Christ, it would be our infidelity; but he will come, though he should find no faith on the earth. See Rom. iii. 3. Cast not away your confidence because God defers his performances. Though providences run cross, though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure and faithful word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within yourselves. The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time, will be hastened in his time, which is always the more convenient season.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 9.—"*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*" In what pangs couldst thou be, O Asaph, that so woeful a word should fall from thee: "*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*" Surely, the temptation went so high, that the next step had been blasphemy. Had not that good God, whom thy bold weakness questions for forgetfulness, in great mercies remembered thee, and brought thee speedily to remember thyself and him; that, which thou confessest to have been infirmity, had proved a sinful despair. I dare say for thee, that word washed thy cheeks with many a tear, and was worthy of more; for, O God, what can be so dear to thee, as the glory of thy mercy? There is none of thy blessed attributes, which thou desirest to set forth so much unto the sons of men, and so much abhorrest to be disparaged by our detraction, as thy mercy. Thou canst, O Lord, forget thy displeasure against thy people; thou canst forget our iniquities, and cast our sins out of thy remembrance, Micah vii. 18, 19; but thou canst no more forget to be gracious, than thou canst cease to be thyself. O my God, I sin against thy justice hourly, and thy mercy interposes for my remission: but, oh, keep me from sinning against thy mercy. What plea can I hope for, when I have made my advocate my enemy? —*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 9.—"*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*" The poor child crieth after the mother. What shall I do for my mother! Oh, my mother, my mother, what shall I do for my mother! And it may be the mother stands behind the back of the child, only she hides herself, to try the affection of the child: so the poor soul cries after God, and complains, Oh, my Father! my Father; Where is my heavenly Father? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure? when (all the while), God is nearer than they think for, shining upon them in "a spirit of grace and supplications," with sighs and "groans that cannot be uttered." Thus the gracious woman, Mary Magdelene, she seeks after Christ, she enquires, she cries after him, and weeps: My dear Saviour, my dear Lord and Master, he is "taken out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid him!" Thus she complains to the disciples, and thus she complains to the angels, when Christ stood at her very back and overheard all: nay, when she turned her about and saw him, yet at first she did not know him; nay, when he spoke to her and she to him, yet she knew him not, but thought he had been the gardener, John xx. 15. Thus is it with many a gracious soul; though God speaks home to their hearts in his Word, and they speak to him by prayer, and they cannot say but the Spirit "*helps their infirmities;*" yet they complain for want of his presence, as if there were nothing of God in them.—*Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 9.—"*Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?*" The metaphor here is taken from a *spring*, the mouth of which is closed, so that its waters can no longer run in the same channel; but, being confined, break out and take some other course. Wilt thou take thy mercy from the Israelites and give it to some other people?—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9.—"*Selah.*" Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions, when on a sudden he first checked himself with that word, "*Selah;*" stop there; go no further; let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises; and he then chid himself, verse 10: "This is mine infirmity."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—"*This is my infirmity.*" Literally, this is my disease,—which appears to mean, This is my lot and I must bear it; lo! it is a partial evil, for which the equity of God's government should not be questioned. The authorised version, "*This is my infirmity,*" suggests, perhaps advisedly, another signification, viz., These thoughts are but hallucinations of my agony,—but to this gloss I should scruple to commit myself.—*C. B. Cayley.*

Verse 10.—It is the "*infirmity*" of a believer to be thinking of himself, and

drawing false inferences (for *all* such inferences are necessarily erroneous), from what he sees or feels, as to the light in which he is beheld and estimated on the part of God. It is his *strength*, on the other hand, to remember the right hand of the Most High—to meditate upon the changeless truth and mercy of that God who has committed himself in holiness to the believing sinner's sure salvation, by causing the Son of his love to suffer in our stead the dread reality of penal death.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 10.—"*Infirmity.*" An "*infirmity*" is this,—some sickness or indisposition of the soul, that arises from the weakness of grace. Or an infirmity is this,—when the purpose and inclination of the heart is upright, but a man wants strength to perform that purpose; when "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41); when a man can say with the apostle, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not," Rom. vii. 18. When the bent and inclination of the soul is right, but either through some violence of corruption or strength of temptation, a man is diverted and turned out of the way. As the needle in the seaman's compass, you know if it be right it will stand always northwards, the bent of it will be toward the North Pole, but being jogged and troubled, it may sometimes be put out of frame and order, yet the bent and inclination of it is still northward; this is an infirmity.—*James Nalton.* 1664.

Verse 10.—It is unnecessary to state all the renderings which the learned have given of this verse. It is unquestionably ambiguous, as the word חלותי may be derived from different roots, which have different significations. I derive it from חול or חלל which signifies to be *in pain* as a woman in labour, and as it is in the infinitive, I render it, "*the time of my sorrow* or *pain.*" The next term, שנות, I derive from שנה *to change*, as the Chaldee does, Ainsworth, Hammond, and others; and I render potentially. I consider the whole as a beautiful metaphor. The author considers himself as in distress, like a woman in travail; and like her, hopes soon to have his sorrow turned to joy. He confides in God's power to effect such a change; and hence naturally recollects the past instances of God's favour to his people.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 10.—"*I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.*" Not the moments, nor the hours, nor days of a few short afflictions, that his left hand hath dealt to me: but the "*years of his right hand;*" those long, large, and boundless mercies wherewith he hath comforted me.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 10.—"*I will remember the years,*" etc. The words in the Hebrew text are *shenoth jemin gneljon*, which I find to be variously rendered and translated by interpreters. I shall not trouble you with them all at this present time, but only take notice of two of them, which I conceive are the principal and most comprehensive; the one is of our oldest English translation, and the other of our last and newest; the former reads the words thus: "*The right hand of the Most High can change all this.*" The latter reads the words thus, as we have it now before us, "*I will remember the years,*" etc. The main ground of this variation is the different exposition of the Hebrew word *shenoth*, which may be translated either *to change*, from the *verb* in the *infinitive mood*, or else may be translated *years*, from the *noun* in the *plural number*. This hath given the occasion to this difference and variety of translation, but the sense is very good and agreeable which way soever we take it—

First, take it according to the *former* translation, as it does exhibit to us the power of God. "*The right hand of the Lord can change all this.*" This was that whereby David did support himself in his present affliction; that the Lord was able *to change and alter* this his condition to him, and that *for the better.* . . . . For the second sense here before us, that's this: "*I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High;*" where the word "*remember*" is borrowed from the next following verse, to supply the sense of this, as otherwise being not in the text. Now here the prophet David fetches a ground of comfort from God's *practice*, as before he did from his *power;* there, from what God *could* do; here, from what he had done already in former time, and ages, and generations.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 11.—"*I will remember,*" etc. *Remember* and *commemorate* as the Hebrew (by a double reading) importeth.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11.—"*I will remember.*" Faith is a considering grace: he that believes will not make haste; no, not to think or speak of God. Faith hath a good memory, and can tell the Christian many stories of ancient mercies; and when his present meal falls short, it can entertain the soul with a cold dish, and not complain that

God keeps a bad house. Thus David recovered himself, when he was even tumbling down the hill of temptation: *"This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember thy wonders of old."* Therefore, Christian, when thou art in the depths of affliction, and Satan tempts thee to asperse God, as if he were forgetful of thee, stop his mouth with this: No, Satan, God hath not forgot to do for me, but I have forgot what he hath done for me, or else I could not question his fatherly care at present over me. Go, Christian, play over thy own lessons, praise God for past mercies, and it will not be long before thou hast a new song put into thy mouth for a present mercy. . . . .

Sometimes a little writing is found in a man's study that helps to save his estate, for want of which he had gone to prison; and some one experience remembered keeps the soul from despair, a prison which the devil longs to have the Christian in. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope," Lam. iii. 21. David was famous for his hope, and not less eminent for his care to observe and preserve the experiences he had of God's goodness. He was able to recount the dealings of God with him; they were so often the subject of his meditation and matter of his discourse, that he had made them familiar to him. When his hope is at a loss, he doth but exercise his memory a little, and he recovers himself presently, and chides himself for his weakness. *"I said, this is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."* The hound, when he hath lost the scent, hunts backward and so recovers it, and pursues his game with louder cry than ever. Thus, Christian, when thy hope is at a loss, and thou questionest thy salvation in another world, then look backward and see what God hath already done for thee. Some promises have their day of payment here, and others we must stay to receive in heaven. Now the payment which God makes of some promises here, is an earnest given to our faith that the others also shall be faithfully discharged when their date expires; as every judgment inflicted here on the wicked is sent as a pledge of that wrath the full sum whereof God will make up in hell.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 11.—*"The works of the Lord."* . . . . *"Thy wonders."* The Psalmist does not mean to draw a distinction between the *works* and the *wonders* of God; but, rather, to state that all God's works are wonders. . . . . all, whether in providence or grace—all God's works are wonderful. If we take the individual experience of the Christian, of what is that experience made up? Of wonders. The work of his conversion, wonderful!—arrested in a course of thoughtlessness and impiety; graciously sought and gently compelled to be at peace with God, whose wrath he had provoked. The communication of knowledge, wonderful!—Deity and eternity gradually piled up; the Bible taken page by page, and each page made a volume which no searching can exhaust. The assistance in warfare, wonderful!—himself a child of corruption, yet enabled to grapple with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and often to trample them under foot. The solaces in affliction, wonderful!—sorrow sanctified so as to minister to joy, and a harvest of gladness reaped from a field which has been watered with tears. The foretastes of heaven, wonderful!—angels bringing down the clusters of the land, and the spirit walking with lightsome tread the crystal river and the streets of gold. All wonderful! Wonderful that the Spirit should strive with man; wonderful that God should bear with his backslidings; wonderful that God should love him notwithstanding his pollution; wonderful that God should persist in saving him, in spite, as it were, of himself. Oh! those amongst you who know anything, experimentally, of salvation through Christ, well know that the work is wonderful in its commencement, wonderful in its continuance, and they will need no argument to vindicate the transition from *"works"* to *"wonders."* It will be the transition of your own thoughts and your own feelings, and you will never give in the record of God's dealings with yourselves without passing, as the Psalmist passed, from mentioning to ascription. Ye may set yourselves to commemorate God's *"works,"* ye will find yourselves extolling God's *"wonders."* Ye may begin with saying, *"I will remember the works of the Lord;"* but ye will conclude by exclaiming, *"Surely I will remember thy wonders of old."—Henry Melvill.*

Verse 11.—*"Thy wonders."* The word is in the singular here, and also in verse 14. So also in the next verse, *"Thy work,"* because the one great wonder, the one great work in which all others were included, is before his thoughts.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 11.—*"Thy wonders."* He had before spoken to others, but here he turns to God. It is good for a soul in a hard exercise, to raise itself from thinking of God and of his works, unto speaking unto God directly: no ease or relief will be found

till address be made unto himself, till we turn our face toward him and direct our speech unto him, as here the Psalmist doth, from the midst of the eleventh verse to the end of the psalm.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 13.—"*Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary.*" The word "*sanctuary*" is to be taken either for heaven or for the temple. I am rather inclined to refer it to heaven, conceiving the meaning to be, that the ways of God rise high above the world, so that if we are truly desirous to know them, we must ascend above all heavens. Although the works of God are in part manifest to us, yet all our knowledge of them comes far short of their immeasurable height. Besides, it is to be observed, that none enjoy the least taste of his works but those who by faith rise up to heaven. And yet, the utmost point to which we can ever attain is, to contemplate with admiration and reverence the hidden wisdom and power of God, which, while they shine forth in his works, yet far surpass the limited powers of our understanding.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 13.—"*Thy way is in the sanctuary.*" That is, every one of the elect may and ought to learn in thy church the conduct and proceedings of thy providence towards those that were thine.—*John Diodati.*

Verses 13, 19.—"*In the sanctuary*" and "*In the sea.*" *His "way"* is "*in the sanctuary,*" and *His "way"* is "*in the sea.*" Now there is a great difference between these two things. First of all, God's way is in the *sanctuary*, where all is *light*, all is *clear*. There is no mistake there. There is nothing, in the least degree, that is a harass to the spirit. On the contrary, it is when the poor, troubled one enters into the sanctuary, and views things there in the light of God, that he sees the end of all else—everything that is entangled, the end of which he cannot find on the earth. But not only is God's way in the sanctuary (and when we are there, all is bright and happy); but God's way is in the "*sea.*" He walks *where we cannot always trace his footsteps.* God moves mysteriously by times, as we all know. There are ways of God which are purposely to try us. I need not say that it is not at all as if God had pleasure in our perplexities. Nor is it as if we had no sanctuary to draw near to, where we can rise above it. But, still, there is a great deal in the ways of God that must be left entirely in his own hands. The way of God is thus not only in the sanctuary, but also in the sea. And yet, what we find even in connection with his footsteps being in the sea is, " Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron." That was through the sea; afterwards, it was through the wilderness. But it had been through the sea. The beginnings of the ways of God with his people were there; because, from first to last, God must be the confidence of the saint. It may be an early lesson of his soul, but it never ceases to be the thing to learn. How happy to know that, while the sanctuary is open to us, yet God himself is nearer still—and to him we are brought now. As it is said (1 Pet. iii.), " Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." This is a most precious thing; because there we are in the sanctuary at once, and brought to God himself. And I am bold to say, that heaven itself would be but a small matter if it were not to God that we are brought. It is better than any freedom from trial—better than any blessing, to be in the presence of the One we belong to; who is himself the source of all blessing and joy. That we are brought to him now is infinitely precious. There we are in the sanctuary brought to God. But, still, there are other ways of God outside the sanctuary—"*In the sea.*" And there we often find ourselves at a loss. If we are occupied with the sea itself, and with trying to scan God's footsteps there, then "*they are not known.*" But confidence in God himself is always the strength of faith. May the Lord grant us increasing simplicity and quietness in the midst of all that we pass through, for his name's sake.—*From "Things New and Old."* 1865.

Verse 14.—"*The God that doest wonders.*" If he said, *Thou art the God that hast done wonders*, it would be plain that he spake only of those ancient miracles which were wrought in former days: but now that he saith, *Thou art the God that doest wonders*, he evidently refers to those wonderful works, which he is doing now, and shall not cease to do even to the end of the world.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 15.—"*The sons of Jacob and Joseph.*" The distinction between the sons of Jacob and Joseph is not meaningless. For by the sons of Jacob or Israel the believing Jews are properly intended, those that trace their descent to him not only

according to the flesh but according to faith. Of whom although *Joseph* was one, yet since he was sold by his brethren and after many sufferings among foreign tribes raised to high rank, it is highly congruous to distinguish him from the sons of *Jacob*, and he is fitly regarded as a prince of the Gentiles apart from *Jacob's* sons, who sold him.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 15.—"*The sons of Jacob and Joseph.*" Was it Joseph or was it Jacob that begat the children of Israel? Certainly Jacob begat; but as Joseph nourished them, they are called by his name also.—*Talmud.*

Verse 16.—"*The waters saw thee, O God,*" etc. "The waters of the Red Sea," says Bishop Horne, "are here beautifully represented as endued with sensibility; as seeing, feeling, and being confounded, even to the lowest depths, at the presence and power of their great Creator, when he commanded them to open a way, and to form a wall on each side of it, until his people were passed over." This in fact is true poetry; and in this attributing of life, spirit, feeling, action, and suffering to inanimate objects, there are no poets who can vie with those of the Hebrew nation. —*Richard Mant.*

Verse 16.—"*The depths also were troubled.*" The *depths* are mentioned in addition to the *waters*, to show that the dominion and power of God reach not only to the surface of the waters, but penetrate to the most profound abysses, and agitate and restrain the waters from their lowest bottom.—*Mollerus.*

Verses 16—18.—The waters saw thee, but men do not see thee. The depths were troubled, but men say in their heart, There is no God. The clouds poured out water, but men pour not out cries and tears unto God. The skies send out a sound, but men say not, Where is God my Maker? Thine arrows also went abroad, but no arrows of contrition and supplication are sent back by men in return. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven, but men hear not the louder thunders of the law. The lightnings lightened the world, but the light of truth shines in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. The earth trembled and shook, but human hearts remain unmoved.

"My heart it shakes not at the wrath
And terrors of a God."

—*George Rogers.*

Verses 16—19.—As soon as ever the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place, and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind and encompassed the Egyptians. Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunder-bolts also were darted upon them; nor was there anything which used to be sent by God upon men, as indications of his wrath, which did not happen at this time; for a dark and dismal night oppressed them. And thus did all these men perish, so that there was not one man left to be a messenger of this calamity to the rest of the Egyptians.—*Josephus.*

Verse 19.—"*Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters,*" etc. Until lately, not much was known of oceanic currents, nor of their influences on the condition of particular localities and the intercourse of man with man. They are now seen to be the "*way*" or "*path*" *of the Creator* "*in the great waters.*" Numerous agencies tend to the production of these currents. Amongst them we may reckon the propagation of the tide wave in its progress over the globe, the duration and strength of certain winds, the variations in density which sea-water undergoes in different latitudes, and at different depths, by change of temperature, and the quantity of salt it contains, and by the hourly alterations of atmospheric pressure which take place within the tropics. The oceanic currents are nearly constant in breadth, crossing the sea in many directions. Long bands of seaweed carried by the currents shew at once their velocity, and the line of demarcation between the waters at rest and the waters in motion. Between the tropics there is a general movement of the sea from east to west, called the equatorial current, supposed to be due to the trade winds, and the progress of the tide wave. There are narrower currents carrying warm water to higher and cold water to lower latitudes.—*Edwin Sidney, in "Conversations on the Bible and Science."* 1866.

Verse 19.—"*Thy way is in the sea,*" where no man can wade, except God be before him, but where any man may walk if God take him by the hand and lead him through. —*David Dickson.*

Verse 19.—"*Thy footsteps are not known.*" He often goeth so much out of our sight, that we are unable to give an account of what he doeth, or what he is about to do. Frequently the pillar of divine providence is dark throughout, to Israelites as well as Egyptians; so that his own people understand not the riddles, till he is pleased to be his own interpreter, and to lead them into his secrets.—*Samuel Slater* (—1704), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 19.—"*Thy footsteps are not known.*" That is, they are not always known; or, they are not known in all things; yea, they are not altogether known in anything. —*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 19.—"*Thy footsteps are not known.*" Upon some affair of great consequence, which had occurred in some providential dispensations, Luther was very importunate at the throne of grace to know the mind of God in it; and it seemed to him as if he heard God speak to his heart thus: "I am not to be traced." Referring to this incident, one adds, "If he is not to be traced, he may be trusted;" and that religion is of little value which will not enable a man to trust God where he can neither trace nor see him. But there is a time for everything beneath the sun, and the Almighty has his 'times and seasons.' It has been frequently with my hopes and desires, in regard to providence, as with my watch and the sun, which has often been ahead of true time; I have gone faster than providence, and have been forced to stand still and wait, or I have been set back painfully. That was a fine sentiment of Flavel, "Some providences, like Hebrew letters, must be read backwards."—*Quoted in "Christian Treasury,"* 1849. *Author not mentioned.*

Verse 19.—See also notes on verse 13.

Verse 20.—"*Thou leddest thy people like a flock,*" etc. From this verse the afflicted may learn many consolations. First, that the best people that be are no better able to resist temptation, than the simple sheep is able to withstand the brier that catcheth him. The next, that man is of no more ability to beware of temptations, than the poor sheep is to avoid the brier, being preserved only by the diligence of the shepherd. The third, that as the shepherd is careful of his entangled and briered sheep, so is God of his afflicted faithful. And the fourth is, that the people of Israel could take no harm of the water, because they entered the sea at God's commandment. Whereof we learn, that no danger can hurt when God doth command us to enter into it; and all dangers overcome us if we choose them ourselves, besides God's commandment; as Peter, when he went at God's commandment upon the water, took no hurt; but when he entered into the bishop's house upon his own presumption, was overcome and denied Christ. The Israelites, when they fought at God's commandment, the peril was nothing; but when they would do it of their own heads, they perished: so that we are bound to attend upon God's commandment, and then no danger shall destroy us, though it pain us. The other doctrine is in this, that God used the ministry of Moses and Aaron in the deliverance of his people, who did command them to do nothing but that the Lord did first bid. Whereof we learn that such as be ministers appointed of God, and do nothing but as God commandeth, are to be followed; as Paul saith, "Follow me, as I follow Christ."—*John Hooper.*

Verse 20.—"*Thou leddest thy people like a flock.*" Observe, the good shepherd leads his followers *like sheep:* First, with great solicitude and care, to protect them from wolves. Secondly, with consideration and kindness, for the sheep is a harmless animal. Thirdly, with a wise strictness, for sheep easily wander, and they are of all animals the most stupid.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 20.—"*Leddest thy people.*" Our guiding must be mild and gentle, else it is not *duxisti*, but *traxisti;* drawing and driving, and no leading. *Leni spiritu non dura manu*, rather by an inward sweet influence to be led, than by an outward extreme violence to be forced forward. So did God lead his people here. Not the greatest pace, I wis, for they were a year marching that they might have posted in eleven days, as Moses saith. (Deut. i. 2.) No nor yet the nearest way neither, as Moses telleth us. (Ex. xiii. 18.) For he fetched a compass divers times, as all wise governors by his example must do, that desire rather safely to lead, than hastily to drive forward. "The Spirit of God leadeth this people," saith Isaiah (ch. lxiii. 14) "as an horse is ridden down the hill into a valley;" which must not be at a gallop, lest horse and ruler both come down one over another; but warily and easily.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 20.—"*By the hand of Moses and Aaron.*" He says not, Moses and Aaron

led the people of Israel; but, *Thou* leddest the people, and that *thy* people, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Great was the power of these two men; nevertheless neither of them was the shepherd of the sheep, but each was a servant to the one and only true shepherd, to whom the sheep exclusively belonged. Nor yet was either the leader of the sheep, but the shepherd himself was present and led his own flock, to whom these two acted as servants. There are therefore three things to be learned from this passage. First, the sheep do not belong to the servants, but to the true shepherd. Secondly, the true shepherd is the leader of his own sheep. Thirdly, the office of Moses and Aaron was to attend to this duty, that the Lord's sheep should be properly led and pastured. So Christ himself leads the sheep, his own sheep, and for this work he employs the ministry of his servants.—*Musculus.*

Verse 20.—The Psalmist has reached the climax of his strain, he has found relief from his sorrow by forcing his thoughts into another channel, by dwelling on all God's mightiest wonders of old; but there he must end: in his present intensity of passion he cannot trust himself to draw forth in detail any mere *lessons* of comfort. There are seasons when even the holiest faith cannot bear to listen to words of reasoning; though it can still find a support whereon to rest, in the simple contemplation, in all their native grandeur, of the deeds that God hath wrought.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The benefit of using the voice in private prayer.

Verses 1, 3, 5, 10.—Note the wise man's progress out of his soul trouble. I. I cried. II. I remembered. III. I considered. IV. I said.

Verse 2.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 853. "A Sermon for the Most Miserable of Men."

Verse 2.—I. Special prayer: "In the day," etc. II. Persevering prayer: hands lifted up to God by night as well as by day. III. Agonising prayer: "my soul refused to be comforted," until the answer came. "Being in an agony, he prayed," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—When this is wise, and when it is censurable.

Verse 4.—I. A good man cannot rest on his bed until his soul rests on God. II. He cannot speak freely to others until God speaks peace to his soul.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—Occupation for the sleepless, and consolation for the speechless.

Verses 5, 6.—There are four rules for obtaining comfort in affliction. I. The consideration of God's goodness to his people of old. II. Remembrance of our own past experience. III. Self-examination. IV. The diligent study of the word.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—"*Remembrance.*" A good memory is very helpful and useful. 1. It is a great means of *knowledge:* for what signifies your reading or hearing, if you remember nothing? 2. It is a means of *faith:* 1 Cor. xv. 2. 3. It is a means of *comfort.* If a poor Christian in distress could remember God's promises they would inspire him with new life; but when they are forgotten, his spirits sink. 4. It is a means of *thankfulness.* 5. It is a means of *hope;* for "experience worketh hope" (Rom. v. 4), and the memory is the storehouse of experience. 6. It is a means of *repentance;* for, how can we repent or mourn for what we have forgotten? 7. It is a means of *usefulness.* When one spark of grace is truly kindled in the heart, it will quickly endeavour to heat others also.—*R. Steele.*

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—To place the question in a strong light, let us consider, I. Of whom is the question raised? "the Lord." II. What course of action is in question? "cast off for ever." III. Towards whom would the action be performed?

Verse 8.—These questions, I. Suppose a change in the immutable Jehovah in two glorious attributes. II. Are contrary to all past evidence. III. Can only arise from the flesh and Satan; and, therefore, IV. Are to be met in the power of the Spirit, with strong faith in the Eternal God.

Verse 10.—A confession applicable to many other matters. Such as, fear of death, fear of desertion, dread of public service, sensitiveness of neglect, etc.

Verse 10.—"*My infirmity.*" Different meanings of this word. These would furnish a good subject. Some infirmities are to be patiently endured, others gloried in, others taken in prayer to God for his Spirit's help, and others lamented and repented of.

Verses 10, 11, 12.—Remember, meditate, talk.

Verses 11, 12.—I. Consolation derived from the remembrance of the past. II. Consolation increased by meditation. III. Consolation strengthened by communication: " and talk," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—Themes for thought and topics for conversation. Creation, Providence, Redemption, etc.

Verses 13, 19.—"*In the sea,*" "*in the sanctuary.*" God's way incomprehensible, though undoubtedly right: in his holiness lies the answer to the enigmas.

Verse 14.—*Thaumaturgeis*, or the Great Wonder-worker.

Verse 15.—"*And Joseph.*" The honour of nourishing those who have been begotten of God by other men's labours.

Verse 15.—Redemption by power, the consequence, evidence, and necessary attendant of redemption by price.

Verse 15.—I. The redeemed: " thy people;" " the sons of," etc. 1. In captivity though they are his people. 2. His people though they are in captivity. II. The redemption: from Egyptian bondage. III. The Redeemer: " Thou, with thine arm," etc. God by Christ, his arm: " Mine own arm brought," etc. ' To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? " etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 16—18.—I. The homage of nature to the God of grace. II. Its subserviency to his designs.—*G. R.*

Verse 19.—I. The ways of God to men are peculiar: " in the sea:" " thy path," etc. II. They are uniform, they lie in regular " footsteps." III. They are inscrutable: like the path of the ship upon the waters, not of the ploughshare on the land.

Verse 19.—God's way is in the sea. In things changeable, ungovernable, vast, unfathomable, terrible, overwhelming, the Lord has the ruling power.

Verse 20.—I. The subjects of divine guidance: " thy people." II. The manner of their guidance: " like a flock "—separated, united, dependent. III. The agents employed: " by the hand;" the Great Shepherd leads by the hand of under-shepherds. " May every under-shepherd keep his eye intent on Thee."—*G. R.*

Verse 20.—Church history. I. The church a flock. II. God seen as leading it on. III. Instrumentality always used.

PSALM LXXVIII.

TITLE.—Maschil of Asaph. *This is rightly entitled an instructive Psalm. It is not a mere recapitulation of important events in Israelitish history, but is intended to be viewed as a parable setting forth the conduct and experience of believers in all ages. It is a singular proof of the obtuseness of mind of many professors that they will object to sermons and expositions upon the historical parts of Scripture, as if they contained no instruction in spiritual matters: were such persons truly enlightened by the Spirit of God, they would perceive that all Scripture is profitable, and would blush at their own folly in undervaluing any portion of the inspired volume.*

DIVISION.—*The unity is well maintained throughout, but, for the sake of the reader's convenience, we may note that verses* 1—8 *may be viewed as a preface, setting forth the Psalmist's object in the epic which he is composing. From* 9—41 *the theme is Israel in the wilderness; then intervenes an account of the Lord's preceding goodness towards his people in bringing them out of Egypt by plagues and wonders,* 42—52. *The history of the tribes is resumed at verse* 53, *and continued to verse* 66, *where we reach the time of the removal of the ark to Zion, and the transference of the leadership of Israel from Ephraim to Judah, which is rehearsed in song from verses* 67—72.

EXPOSITION.

GIVE ear, O my people, *to* my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:

3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

4 We will not hide *them* from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath doné.

5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:

6 That the generation to come might know *them, even* the children *which* should be born; *who* should arise and declare *them* to their children:

7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:

8 And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation *that* set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

1. *"Give ear, O my people, to my law.* The inspired bard calls on his countrymen to give heed to his patriotic teaching. We naturally expect God's chosen nation to be first in hearkening to his voice. When God gives his truth a tongue, and sends forth his messengers trained to declare his word with power, it is the least we can do to give them our ears and the earnest obedience of our hearts. Shall God speak, and his children refuse to hear? His teaching has the force of law, let us yield both ear and heart to it. *"Incline your ears to the words of my mouth."* Give earnest attention, bow your stiff necks, lean forward to catch every syllable. We are at this day, as readers of the sacred records, bound to study them deeply, exploring their meaning, and labouring to practise their teaching. As the officer of an army commences his drill by calling for "Attention," even so every trained soldier of Christ is called upon to give ear to his words. Men lend their ears to music, how much more then should they listen to the harmonies of the gospel; they sit enthralled in the presence of an orator, how much rather should they yield to the eloquence of heaven.

2. *"I will open my mouth in a parable.* Analogies are not only to be imagined, but are intended by God to be traced between the story of Israel and the lives of believers. Israel was ordained to be a type; the tribes and their marchings are living allegories traced by the hand of an all-wise providence. Unspiritual persons may sneer about fancies and mysticisms, but Paul spake well when he said "which things are an allegory," and Asaph in the present case spake to the point when he called his narrative "a parable." That such was his meaning is clear from the quotation, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."—Matthew xiii. 34, 35. *"I will utter dark sayings of old;"*—enigmas of antiquity, riddles of yore. The mind of the poet-prophet was so full of ancient lore that he poured it forth in a copious stream of song, while beneath the gushing flood lay pearls and gems of spiritual truth, capable of enriching those who could dive into the depths and bring them up. The letter of this song is precious, but the inner sense is beyond all price. Whereas the first verse called for attention, the second justifies the demand by hinting that the outer sense conceals an inner and hidden meaning, which only the thoughtful will be able to perceive.

3. *"Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us."* Tradition was of the utmost service to the people of God in the olden time, before the more sure word of prophecy had become complete and generally accessible. The receipt of truth from the lips of others laid the instructed believer under solemn obligation to pass on the truth to the next generation. Truth, endeared to us by its fond associations with godly parents and venerable friends, deserves of us our best exertions to preserve and propagate it. Our fathers told us, we heard them, and we know personally what they taught; it remains for us in our turn to hand it on. Blessed be God we have now the less mutable testimony of written revelation, but this by no means lessens our obligation to instruct our children in divine truth by word of mouth: rather, with such a gracious help, we ought to teach them far more fully the things of God. Dr. Doddridge owed much to the Dutch tiles and his mother's explanations of the Bible narratives. The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sabbath-school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mothers' tears and fathers' prayers.

4. *"We will not hide them from their children."* Our negligent silence shall not deprive our own and our father's offspring of the precious truth of God, it would be shameful indeed if we did so. *"Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord."* We will look forward to future generations, and endeavour to provide for their godly education. It is the duty of the church of God to maintain, in fullest vigour, every agency intended for the religious education of the young; to them we must look for the church of the future, and as we sow towards them so shall we reap. Children are to be taught to magnify the Lord; they ought to be well informed as to his wonderful doings in ages past, and should be made to know *"his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done."* The best education is education in the best things. The first lesson for a child should be concerning his mother's God. Teach him what you will, if he learn not the fear of the Lord, he will perish for lack of knowledge. Grammar is poor food for the soul if it be not flavoured with grace. Every satchel should have a Bible in it. The world may teach secular knowledge alone, 'tis all she has a heart to know, but the church must not deal so with her offspring; she should look well to every Timothy, and see to it that from a child he knows the Holy Scriptures. Around the fire-side fathers should repeat not only the Bible records, but the deeds of the martyrs and reformers, and moreover the dealings of the Lord with themselves both in providence and grace. We dare not follow the vain and vicious traditions of the apostate church of Rome, neither would we compare the fallible record of the best human memories with the infallible written word, yet would we fain see oral tradition practised by every Christian in his family, and children taught cheerfully by word of mouth by their own mothers and fathers, as well as by the printed pages of what they too often regard as dull, dry task books. What happy hours and pleasant evenings have children had at their parents' knees as they have listened to some "sweet story of old." Reader, if you have children, mind you do not fail in this duty.

5. *"For he established a testimony in Jacob."* The favoured nation existed for the very purpose of maintaining God's truth in the midst of surrounding idolatry.

Theirs were the oracles, they were the conservators and guardians of the truth. *"And appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children."* The testimony for the true God was to be transmitted from generation to generation by the careful instruction of succeeding families. We have the command for this oral transmission very frequently given in the Pentateuch, and it may suffice to quote one instance from Deut. vi. 7: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Reader, if you are a parent, have you conscientiously discharged this duty?

6. *"That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born."* As far on as our brief life allows us to arrange, we must industriously provide for the godly nurture of youth. The narratives, commands, and doctrines of the word of God are not worn out; they are calculated to exert an influence as long as our race shall exist. *"Who should arise and declare them to their children."* The one object aimed at is transmission; the testimony is only given that it may be passed on to succeeding generations.

7. *"That they might set their hope in God."* Faith cometh by hearing. Those who know the name of the Lord will set their hope in him, and that they may be led to do so is the main end of all spiritual teaching. *"And not forget the works of God."* Grace cures bad memories; those who soon forget the merciful works of the Lord have need of teaching; they require to learn the divine art of holy memory. *"But keep his commandments."* Those who forget God's works are sure to fail in their own. He who does not keep God's love in memory is not likely to remember his law. The design of teaching is practical: holiness towards God is the end we aim at, and not the filling of the head with speculative notions.

8. *"And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation."* There was room for improvement. Fathers stubborn in their own way, and rebellious against God's way, are sorry examples for their children; and it is earnestly desired that better instruction may bring forth a better race. It is common in some regions for men to count their family custom as the very best rule; but disobedience is not to be excused because it is hereditary. The leprosy was none the less loathsome because it had been long in the family. If our fathers were rebellious we must be better than they were, or else we shall perish as they did. *"A generation that set not their heart aright."* They had no decision for righteousness and truth. In them there was no preparedness, or willingness of heart, to entertain the Saviour; neither judgments, nor mercies could bind their affections to their God; they were fickle as the winds, and changeful as the waves. *"And whose spirit was not stedfast with God."* The tribes in the wilderness were constant only in their inconstancy; there was no depending upon them. It was, indeed, needful that their descendants should be warned, so that they might not blindly imitate them. How blessed would it be if each age improved upon its predecessor; but, alas! it is to be feared that decline is more general than progress, and too often the heirs of true saints are far more rebellious than even their fathers were in their unregeneracy. May the reading of this patriotic and divine song move many to labour after the elevation of themselves and their posterity.

9 The children of Ephraim, *being* armed, *and* carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.

10 They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law;

11 And forgat his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.

12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.

13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap.

14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.

15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.

16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.

17 And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.

18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

19 Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?

21 Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel;

22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:

23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,

24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

25 Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full.

26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind.

27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:

28 And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations.

29 So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire;

30 They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat *was* yet in their mouths,

31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel.

32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.

33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.

34 When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God.

35 And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

38 But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.

39 For he remembered that they *were but* flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert!

41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

9. *"The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle."* Well equipped and furnished with the best weapons of the times, the leading tribe failed in faith and courage and retreated before the foe. There were several particular instances of this, but probably the Psalmist refers to the general failure of Ephraim to lead the tribes to the conquest of Canaan. How often have

we also, though supplied with every gracious weapon, failed to wage successful war against our sins, we have marched onward gallantly enough till the testing hour has come, and then "in the day of battle" we have proved false to good resolutions and holy obligations. How altogether vain is unregenerate man! Array him in the best that nature and grace can supply, he still remains a helpless coward in the holy war, so long as he lacks a loyal faith in his God.

10. *"They kept not the covenant of God."* Vows and promises were broken, idols were set up, and the living God was forsaken. They were brought out of Egypt in order to be a people separated unto the Lord, but they fell into the sins of other nations, and did not maintain a pure testimony for the one only true God. *"And refused to walk in his law."* They gave way to fornication, and idolatry, and other violations of the decalogue, and were often in a state of rebellion against the benign theocracy under which they lived. They had pledged themselves at Sinai to keep the law, and then they wilfully disobeyed it, and so became covenant-breakers.

11. *"And forgat his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them."* Had they remembered them they would have been filled with gratitude and inspired with holy awe: but the memory of God's mercies to them was as soon effaced as if written upon water. Scarcely could one generation retain the sense of the divine presence in miraculous power, the succeeding race needed a renewal of the extraordinary manifestations, and even then was not satisfied without many displays thereof. Ere we condemn them, let us repent of our own wicked forgetfulness, and confess the many occasions upon which we also have been unmindful of past favours.

12. Egypt, here called *the field of Zoan*, was the scene of marvellous things which were done in open day *in the sight of* Israel. These were extraordinary, upon a vast scale, astounding, indisputable, and such as ought to have rendered it impossible for an Israelite to be disloyal to Jehovah, Israel's God.

13. *"He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through."* A double wonder, for when the waters were divided the bottom of the sea would naturally be in a very unfit state for the passage of so vast a host as that of Israel; it would in fact have been impassable, had not the Lord made the road for his people. Who else has ever led a nation through a sea? Yet the Lord has done this full often for his saints in providential deliverances, making a highway for them where nothing short of an almighty arm could have done so. *"And he made the waters to stand as an heap."* He forbade a drop to fall upon his chosen, they felt no spray from the crystal walls on either hand. Fire will descend and water stand upright at the bidding of the Lord of all. The nature of creatures is not their own intrinsically, but is retained or altered at the will of him who first created them. The Lord can cause those evils which threaten to overwhelm us to suspend their ordinary action, and become innocuous to us.

14. *"In the daytime also he led them with a cloud."* He did it all. *He* alone. He brought them into the wilderness, and he led them through it; it is not the Lord's manner to begin a work, and then cease from it while it is incomplete. The cloud both led and shadowed the tribes. It was by day a vast sun-screen, rendering the fierce heat of the sun and the glare of the desert sand bearable. *"And all the night with a light of fire."* So constant was the care of the Great Shepherd that all night and every night the token of his presence was with his people. That cloud which was a shade by day was as a sun by night. Even thus the grace which cools and calms our joys, soothes and solaces our sorrows. What a mercy to have a light of fire with us amid the lonely horrors of the wilderness of affliction. Our God has been all this to us, and shall we prove unfaithful to him? We have felt him to be both shade and light, according as our changing circumstances have required.

> "He hath been our joy in woe,
> Cheer'd our heart when it was low,
> And, with warnings softly sad,
> Calm'd our heart when it was glad."

May this frequently renewed experience knit our hearts to him in firmest bonds.

15. *"He clave the rocks in the wilderness."* Moses was the instrument, but the Lord did it all. Twice he made the flint a gushing rill. What can he not do? *"And gave them drink as out of the great depths,"*—as though it gushed from earth's innermost reservoirs. The streams were so fresh, so copious, so constant, that they seemed to well up from earth's primeval fountains, and to leap at once from "the deep which coucheth beneath." Here was a divine supply for Israel's urgent

need, and such an one as ought to have held them for ever in unwavering fidelity to their wonder-working God.

16. The supply of water was as plenteous in quantity as it was miraculous in origin. Torrents, not driblets came from the rocks. Streams followed the camp; the supply was not for an hour or a day. This was a marvel of goodness. If we contemplate the aboundings of divine grace we shall be lost in admiration. Mighty rivers of love have flowed for us in the wilderness. Alas, great God! our return has not been commensurate therewith, but far otherwise.

17. *"And they sinned yet more against him."* Outdoing former sins, going into greater deeps of evil: the more they had the more loudly they clamoured for more, and murmured because they had not every luxury that pampered appetites could desire. It was bad enough to mistrust their God for necessaries, but to revolt against him in a greedy rage for superfluities was far worse. Ever is it the nature of the disease of sin to proceed from bad to worse: men never weary of sinning, but rather increase their speed in the race of iniquity. In the case before us the goodness of God was abused into a reason for greater sin. Had not the Lord been so good they would not have been so bad. If he had wrought fewer miracles before, they would not have been so inexcusable in their unbelief, so wanton in their idolatry. *"By provoking the most High in the wilderness."* Although they were in a position of obvious dependence upon God for everything, being in a desert where the soil could yield them no support, yet they were graceless enough to provoke their benefactor. At one time they provoked his jealousy by their hankering after false gods, anon they excited his wrath by their challenges of his power, their slanders against his love, their rebellions against his will. He was all bounty of love, and they all superfluity of naughtiness. They were favoured above all nations, and yet none were more ill-favoured. For them the heavens dropped manna, and they returned murmurs; the rocks gave them rivers, and they replied with floods of wickedness. Herein, as in a mirror, we see ourselves. Israel in the wilderness acted out, as in a drama, all the story of man's conduct towards his God.

18. *"And they tempted God in their heart."* He was not tempted, for he cannot be tempted by any, but they acted in a manner calculated to tempt him, and it is always just to charge that upon men which is the obvious tendency of their conduct. Christ cannot die again, and yet many crucify him afresh, because such would be the legitimate result of their behaviour if its effects were not prevented by other forces. The sinners in the wilderness would have had the Lord change his wise proceedings to humour their whims, hence they are said to tempt him. *"By asking meat for their lust."* Would they have God become purveyor for their greediness? Was there nothing for it but that he must give them whatever their diseased appetites might crave? The sin began in their hearts, but it soon reached their tongues. What they at first silently wished for, they soon loudly demanded with menaces, insinuations, and upbraidings.

19. From this verse we learn that unbelief of God is a slander against him. *" Yea, they spake against God."* But how? The answer is, *"They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"* To question the ability of one who is manifestly Almighty, is to speak against him. These people were base enough to say that although their God had given them bread and water, yet he could not properly order or furnish a table. He could give them coarse food, but could not prepare a feast properly arranged, so they were ungrateful enough to declare. As if the manna was a mere make-shift, and the flowing rock-stream a temporary expedient, they ask to have a regularly furnished table, such as they had been accustomed to in Egypt. Alas, how have we also quarrelled with our mercies, and querulously pined for some imaginary good, counting our actual enjoyments to be nothing because they did not happen to be exactly conformed to our foolish fancies. They who will not be content will speak against providence even when it daily loadeth them with benefits.

20. *"Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed."* They admit what he had done, and yet, with superabundant folly and insolence, demand further proofs of his omnipotence. *"Can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?"* As if the manna were nothing, as if animal food alone was true nourishment for men. If they had argued, " can he *not* give flesh? " the argument would have been reasonable, but they ran into insanity; when, having seen many marvels of omnipotence, they dared to insinuate that other things were beyond the divine power. Yet, in this also, we have imitated their

senseless conduct. Each new difficulty has excited fresh incredulity. We are still fools and slow of heart to believe our God, and this is a fault to be bemoaned with deepest penitence. For this cause the Lord is often wroth with us and chastens us sorely; for unbelief has in it a degree of provocation of the highest kind.

21. *"Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth."* He was not indifferent to what they said. He dwelt among them in the holy place, and, therefore, they insulted him to his face. He did not hear a report of it, but the language itself came into his ears. *"So a fire was kindled against Jacob."* The fire of his anger which was also attended with literal burnings. *"And anger also came up against Israel."* Whether he viewed them in the lower or higher light, as Jacob or as Israel, he was angry with them: even as mere men they ought to have believed him; and, as chosen tribes, their wicked unbelief was without excuse. The Lord doeth well to be angry at so ungrateful, gratuitous and dastardly an insult as the questioning of his power.

22. *"Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation."* This is the master sin, the crying sin. Like Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, it sins and makes Israel to sin; it is in itself evil and the parent of evils. It was this sin which shut Israel out of Canaan, and it shuts myriads out of heaven. God is ready to save, combining power with willingness, but rebellious man will not trust his Saviour, and therefore is condemned already. In the text it appears as if all Israel's other sins were as nothing compared with this; this is the peculiar spot which the Lord points at, the special provocation which angered him. From this let every unbeliever learn to tremble more at his unbelief than at anything else. If he be no fornicator, or thief, or liar, let him reflect that it is quite enough to condemn him that he trusts not in God's salvation.

23. *"Though he had commanded the clouds from above."* Such a marvel ought to have rendered unbelief impossible: when clouds become granaries, seeing should be believing, and doubts should dissolve. *"And opened the doors of heaven."* The great storehouse doors were set wide open, and the corn of heaven poured out in heaps. Those who would not believe in such a case were hardened indeed; and yet our own position is very similar, for the Lord has wrought for us great deliverances, quite as memorable and undeniable, and yet suspicions and forebodings haunt us. He might have shut the gates of hell upon us, instead of which he has opened the doors of heaven; shall we not both believe in him and magnify him for this?

24. *"And had rained down manna upon them to eat."* There was so much of it, the skies poured with food, the clouds burst with provender. It was fit food, proper not for looking at but for eating; they could eat it as they gathered it. Mysterious though it was, so they that called it manna, or "what is it?" yet it was eminently adapted for human nourishment; and as it was both abundant and adapted, so also was it available! They had not far to fetch it, it was nigh them, and they had only to gather it up. O Lord Jesus, thou blessed manna of heaven, how all this agrees with Thee! We will even now feed on Thee as our spiritual meat, and will pray Thee to chase away all wicked unbelief from us. Our fathers ate manna and doubted; we feed upon Thee and are filled with assurance. *"And had given them of the corn of heaven."* It was all a gift without money and without price. Food which dropped from above, and was of the best quality, so as to be called heavenly corn, was freely granted them. The manna was round, like coriander seed, and hence was rightly called corn; it did not rise from the earth, but descended from the clouds, and hence the words of the verse are literally accurate. The point to be noted is that this wonder of wonders left the beholders, and the feasters, as prone as ever to mistrust their Lord.

25. *"Man did eat angels' food."* The delicacies of kings were outdone, for the dainties of angels were supplied. Bread of the mighty ones fell on feeble man. Those who are lower than the angels fared as well. It was not for the priests, or the princes, that the manna fell; but for all the nation, for every man, woman and child in the camp: and there was sufficient for them all, for *"he sent them meat to the full."* God's banquets are never stinted; he gives the best diet, and plenty of it. Gospel provisions deserve every praise that we can heap upon them; they are free, full, and pre-eminent; they are of God's preparing, sending, and bestowing. He is well fed whom God feeds; heaven's meat is nourishing and plentiful. If we have ever fed upon Jesus we have tasted better than angels' food; for

> "Never did angels taste above
> Redeeming grace and dying love."

It will be our wisdom to eat to the full of it, for God has so sent it that we are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels. Happy pilgrims who in the desert have their meat sent from the Lord's own palace above; let them eat abundantly of the celestial banquet, and magnify the all-sufficient grace which supplies all their needs, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

26. *"He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven."* He is Lord Paramount, above the prince of the power of the air: storms arise and tempests blow at his command. Winds sleep till God arouses them, and then, like Samuel, each one answers, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." *"And by his power he brought in the south wind."* Either these winds followed each other, and so blew the birds in the desired direction, or else they combined to form a south-east wind; in either case they fulfilled the design of the Lord, and illustrated his supreme and universal power. If one wind will not serve, another shall; and if need be, they shall both blow at once. We speak of *fickle* winds, but their obedience to their Lord is such that they deserve a better word. If we ourselves were half as obedient as the winds, we should be far superior to what we now are.

27. *"He rained flesh also upon them as dust."* First, he rained bread and then flesh, when he might have rained fire and brimstone. The words indicate the speed, and the abundance of the descending quails. *"And feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea;"* there was no counting them. By a remarkable providence, if not by miracle, enormous numbers of migratory birds were caused to alight around the tents of the tribes. It was, however, a doubtful blessing, as easily acquired, and superabounding riches generally are. The Lord save us from meat which is seasoned with divine wrath.

28. *"And he let it fall in the midst of their camp."* They had no journey to make; they had clamoured for flesh, and it almost flew into their mouths, *"round about their habitations."* This made them glad for the moment, but they knew not that mercies can be sent in anger, else had they trembled at sight of the good things which they had lusted after.

29. *"So they did eat, and were well filled."* They greedily devoured the birds, even to repletion. The Lord shewed them that he could "provide flesh for his people," even enough and to spare. He also shewed them that when lust wins its desire it is disappointed, and by the way of satiety arrives at distate. First the food satiates, then it nauseates. *"For he gave them their own desire."* They were filled with their own ways. The flesh-meat was unhealthy for them, but as they cried for it they had it, and a curse with it. O my God, deny me my most urgent prayers sooner than answer them in displeasure. Better hunger and thirst after righteousness than to be well filled with sin's dainties.

30, 31. *"They were not estranged from their lust."* Lust grows upon that which it feeds on. If sick of too much flesh, yet men grow not weary of lust, they change the object, and go on lusting still. When one sin is proved to be a bitterness, men do not desist, but pursue another iniquity. If, like Jehu, they turn from Baal, they fall to worshipping the calves of Bethel.

"But while their meat was yet in their mouths," before they could digest their coveted meat, it turned to their destruction. *"The wrath of God came upon them"* before they could swallow their first meal of flesh. Short was the pleasure, sudden was the doom. The festival ended in a funeral. *"And slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel."* Perhaps these were the ringleaders in the lusting; they are first in the punishment. God's justice has no respect of persons, the strong and the valiant fall as well as the weak and the mean. What they ate on earth they digested in hell, as many have done since. How soon they died, though they felt not the edge of the sword! How terrible was the havoc, though not amid the din of battle! My soul, see here the danger of gratified passions; they are the janitors of hell. When the Lord's people hunger God loves them, Lazarus is his beloved, though he pines upon crumbs; but when he fattens the wicked he abhors them; Dives is hated of heaven when he fares sumptuously every day. We must never dare to judge men's happiness by their tables, the heart is the place to look at. The poorest starveling believer is more to be envied than the most full-fleshed of the favourites of the world. Better be God's dog than the devil's darling.

32. *"For all this they sinned still."* Judgments moved them no more than mercies. They defied the wrath of God. Though death was in the cup of their iniquity, yet they would not put it away, but continued to quaff it as if it were a healthful

potion. How truly might these words be applied to ungodly men who have been often afflicted, laid upon a sick bed, broken in spirit, and impoverished in estate, and yet have persevered in their evil ways, unmoved by terrors, unswayed by threatenings. *"And believed not for his wondrous works."* Their unbelief was chronic and incurable. Miracles both of mercy and judgment were unavailing. They might be made to wonder, but they could not be taught to believe. Continuance in sin and in unbelief go together. Had they believed they would not have sinned, had they not have been blinded by sin they would have believed. There is a reflex action between faith and character. How can the lover of sin believe? How, on the other hand, can the unbeliever cease from sin? God's ways with us in providence are in themselves both convincing and converting, but unrenewed nature refuses to be either convinced or converted by them.

33. *"Therefore their days did he consume in vanity."* Apart from faith life is vanity. To wander up and down in the wilderness was a vain thing indeed, when unbelief had shut them out of the promised land. It was meet that those who would not live to answer the divine purpose by believing and obeying their God should be made to live to no purpose, and to die before their time, unsatisfied, unblest. Those who wasted their days in sin had little cause to wonder when the Lord cut short their lives, and sware that they should never enter the rest which they had despised. *"And their years in trouble."* Weary marches were their trouble, and to come to no resting place was their vanity. Innumerable graves were left all along the track of Israel, and if any ask, "Who slew all these?" the answer must be, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Doubtless much of the vexation and failure of many lives results from their being sapped by unbelief, and honeycombed by evil passions. None live so fruitlessly and so wretchedly as those who allow sense and sight to override faith, and their reason and appetite to domineer over their fear of God. Our days go fast enough according to the ordinary lapse of time, but the Lord can make them rust away at a bitterer rate, till we feel as if sorrow actually ate out the heart of our life, and like a canker devoured our existence. Such was the punishment of rebellious Israel, the Lord grant it may not be ours.

34. *"When he slew them, then they sought him."* Like whipped curs, they licked their Master's feet. They obeyed only so long as they felt the whip about their loins. Hard are the hearts which only death can move. While thousands died around them, the people of Israel became suddenly religious, and repaired to the tabernacle door, like sheep who run in a mass while the black dog drives them, but scatter and wander when the shepherd whistles him off. *"And they returned and enquired early after God."* They could not be too zealous, they were in hot haste to prove their loyalty to their divine King. "The devil was sick, and the devil a monk would be." Who would not be pious when the plague is abroad? Doors, which were never so sanctified before, put on the white cross then. Even reprobates send for the minister when they lie a dying. Thus sinners pay involuntary homage to the power of right and the supremacy of God, but their hypocritical homage is of small value in the sight of the Great Judge.

35. *"And they remembered that God was their rock."* Sharp strokes awoke their sleepy memories. Reflection followed infliction. They were led to see that all their dependence must be placed upon their God; for he alone had been their shelter, their foundation, their fountain of supply, and their unchangeable friend. What could have made them forget this? Was it that their stomachs were so full of flesh that they had no space for ruminating upon spiritual things? *"And the high God their redeemer."* They had forgotten this also. The high hand and outstretched arm which redeemed them out of bondage had both faded from their mental vision. Alas, poor man, how readily dost thou forget thy God! Shame on thee, ungrateful worm, to have no sense of favours a few days after they had been received. Will nothing make thee keep in memory the mercy of thy God except the utter withdrawal of it?

36. *"Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth."* Bad were they at their best. False on their knees, liars in their prayers. Mouth-worship must be very destestable to God when dissociated from the heart: other kings love flattery, but the King of kings abhors it. Since the sharpest afflictions only extort from carnal men a feigned submission to God, there is proof positive that the heart is desperately set on mischief, and that sin is ingrained in our very nature. If you beat a tiger with many stripes you cannot turn him into a sheep. The devil cannot be whipped out of human nature, though another devil, namely hypocrisy, may be whipped

into it. Piety produced by the damps of sorrow and the heats of terror is of mushroom growth; it is rapid in its upspringing—"they enquired early after God"—but it is a mere unsubstantial fungus of unabiding excitement. *"And they lied unto him with their tongues."* Their godly speech was cant, their praise mere wind, their prayer a fraud. Their skin-deep repentance was a film too thin to conceal the deadly wound of sin. This teaches us to place small reliance upon professions of repentance made by dying men, or upon such even in others when the basis is evidently slavish fear, and nothing more. Any thief will whine out repentance if he thinks the judge will thereby be moved to let him go scot free.

37. *"For their heart was not right with him."* There was no depth in their repentance, it was not heart work. They were fickle as a weathercock, every wind turned them, their mind was not settled upon God. *"Neither were they stedfast in his covenant."* Their promises were no sooner made than broken, as if only made in mockery. Good resolutions called at their hearts as men do at inns; they tarried awhile, and then took their leave. They were hot to-day for holiness, but cold towards it to-morrow. Variable as the hues of the dolphin, they changed from reverence to rebellion, from thankfulness to murmuring. One day they gave their gold to build a tabernacle for Jehovah, and the next they plucked off their ear-rings to make a golden calf. Surely the heart is a chameleon. Proteus had not so many changes. As in the ague we both burn and freeze so do inconstant natures in their religion.

38. *"But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not."* Though they were full of flattery, he was full of mercy, and for this cause he had pity on them. Not because of their pitiful and hypocritical pretensions to penitence, but because of his own real compassion for them he overlooked their provocations. *"Yea, many a time turned he his anger away."* When he had grown angry with them he withdrew his displeasure. Even unto seventy times seven did he forgive their offences. He was slow, very slow, to anger. The sword was uplifted and flashed in mid-air, but it was sheathed again, and the nation yet lived. Though not mentioned in the text, we know from the history that a mediator interposed, the man Moses stood in the gap; even so at this hour the Lord Jesus pleads for sinners, and averts the divine wrath. Many a barren tree is left standing because the dresser of the vineyard cries, "let it alone this year also." *"And did not stir up all his wrath."* Had he done so they must have perished in a moment. When his wrath is kindled but a little men are burned up as chaff; but were he to let loose his indignation, the solid earth itself would melt, and hell would engulf every rebel. Who knoweth the power of thine anger, O Lord? We see the fulness of God's compassion, but we never see all his wrath.

39. *"For he remembered that they were but flesh."* They were forgetful of God, but he was mindful of them. He knew that they were made of earthy, frail, corruptible material, and therefore he dealt leniently with them. Though in this he saw no excuse for their sin, yet he constrained it into a reason for mercy; the Lord is ever ready to discover some plea or other upon which he may have compassion. *"A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."* Man is but a breath, gone never to return. Spirit and wind are in this alike, so far as our humanity is concerned; they pass and cannot be recalled. What a nothing is our life. How gracious on the Lord's part to make man's insignificance an argument for staying his wrath.

40. *"How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness."* Times enough did they rebel: they were as constant in provocation as he was in his patience. In our own case, who can count his errors? In what book could all our perverse rebellions be recorded? The wilderness was a place of manifest dependence, where the tribes were helpless without divine supplies, yet they wounded the hand which fed them while it was in the act of feeding them. Is there no likeness between us and them? Does it bring no tears into our eyes, while, as in a glass, we see our own selves. *"And grieve him in the desert."* Their provocations had an effect; God was not insensible to them, he is said to have been grieved. His holiness could not find pleasure in their sin, his justice in their unjust treatment, or his truth in their falsehood. What must it be to grieve the Lord of love! Yet we also have vexed the Holy Spirit, and he would long ago have withdrawn himself from us, were it not that he is God and not man. We are in the desert where we need our God, let us not make it a wilderness of sin by grieving him.

41. *"Yea, they turned back."* Their hearts sighed for Egypt and its fleshpots.

They turned to their old ways again and again, after they had been scourged out of them. Full of twists and turns, they never kept the straight path. *"And tempted God."* As far as in them lay they tempted him. His ways were good, and they in desiring to have them altered tempted God. Before they would believe in him they demanded signs, defying the Lord to do this and that, and acting as if he could be cajoled into being the minion of their lusts. What blasphemy was this! Yet let us not tempt Christ lest we also be destroyed by the destroyer. *"And limited the Holy One of Israel."* Doubted his power and so limited him, dictated to his wisdom and so did the same. To chalk out a path for God is arrogant impiety. The Holy One must do right, the covenant God of Israel must be true, it is profanity itself to say unto him thou shalt do this or that, or otherwise I will not worship thee. Not thus is the Eternal God to be led by a string by his impotent creature. He is the Lord and he will do as seemeth him good.

42 They remembered not his hand, *nor* the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

43 How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan:

44 And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink.

45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.

46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpiller, and their labour unto the locust.

47 He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore trees with frost.

48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts.

49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels *among them.*

50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence;

51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:

52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

42. *"They remembered not his hand."* Yet it must have been difficult to forget it. Such displays of divine power as those which smote Egypt with astonishment, it must have needed some more than usual effort to blot from the tablets of memory. It is probably meant that they practically, rather than actually, forgot. He who forgets the natural returns of gratitude, may justly be charged with not remembering the obligation. *"Nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy."* The day itself was erased from their calendar, so far as any due result from it or return for it. Strange is the faculty of memory in its oblivions as well as its records. Sin perverts man's powers, makes them forceful only in wrong directions, and practically dead for righteous ends.

43. *"How he had wrought his signs in Egypt."* The plagues were ensigns of Jehovah's presence and proofs of his hatred of idols; these instructive acts of power were wrought in the open view of all, as signals are set up to be observed by those far and near. *"And his wonders in the field of Zoan."* In the whole land were miracles wrought, not in cities alone, but in the broad territory, in the most select and ancient regions of the proud nation. This the Israelites ought not to have forgotten, for they were the favoured people for whom these memorable deeds were wrought.

44. *"And had turned their rivers into blood."* The waters had been made the

means of the destruction of Israel's newborn infants, and now they do as it were betray the crime—they blush for it, they avenge it on the murderers. The Nile was the vitality of Egypt, its true life-blood, but at God's command it became a flowing curse; every drop of it was a horror, poison to drink, and terror to gaze on. Sometimes he has allowed men, who were his rod, to make rivers crimson with gore, and this is a severe judgment; but the event now before us was more mysterious, more general, more complete, and must, therefore, have been a plague of the first magnitude. *"And their floods, that they could not drink."* Lesser streams partook in the curse, reservoirs and canals felt the evil; God does nothing by halves. All Egypt boasted of the sweet waters of their river, but they were made to loathe it more than they had ever loved it. Our mercies may soon become our miseries if the Lord shall deal with us in wrath.

45. *"He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them."* Small creatures become great tormentors. When they swarm they can sting a man till they threaten to eat him up. In this case, various orders of insects fought under the same banner; lice and beetles, gnats and hornets, wasps and gadflies dashed forward in fierce battalions, and worried the sinners of Egypt without mercy. The tiniest plagues are the greatest. What sword or spear could fight with these innumerable bands? Vain were the monarch's armour and robes of majesty, the little cannibals were no more lenient towards royal flesh than any other; it had the same blood in it, and the same sin upon it. How great is that God who thus by the minute can crush the magnificent. *"And frogs, which destroyed them."* These creatures swarmed everywhere when they were alive, until the people felt ready to die at the sight; and when the reptiles died, the heaps of their bodies made the land to stink so foully, that a pestilence was imminent. Thus not only did earth and air send forth armies of horrible life, but the water also added its legions of loathsomeness. It seemed as if the Nile was first made nauseous and then caused to leave its bed altogether, crawling and leaping in the form of frogs. Those who contend with the Almighty, little know what arrows are in his quiver; surprising sin shall be visited with surprising punishment.

46. *"He gave also their increase unto the caterpiller, and their labour unto the locust."* Different sorts of devourers ate up every green herb and tree. What one would not eat another did. What they expected from the natural fertility of the soil, and what they looked for from their own toil, they saw devoured before their eyes by an insatiable multitude against whose depredations no defence could be found. Observe in the text that the Lord did it all—"he sent," "he gave," "he destroyed," "he gave up," etc.; whatever the second agent may be, the direct hand of the Lord is in every national visitation.

47. *"He destroyed their vines with hail."* No more shall thy butler press the clusters into thy cup, O Pharaoh! The young fruitbearing shoots were broken off, the vintage failed. *"And their sycomore trees with frost."* Frost was not usual, but Jehovah regards no laws of nature when men regard not his moral laws. The sycomore fig was perhaps more the fruit of the many than was the vine, therefore this judgment was meant to smite the poor, while the former fell most heavily upon the rich. Mark how the heavens obey their Lord and yield their stores of hail, and note how the fickle weather is equally subservient to the divine will.

48. *"He gave up their cattle also to the hail."* What hail it must have been to have force enough to batter down bullocks and other great beasts. God usually protects animals from such destruction, but here he withdrew his safeguards and gave them up: may the Lord never give *us* up. Some read, "shut up," and the idea of being abandoned to destructive influences is then before us in another shape. *"And their flocks to hot thunderbolts."* Fire was mingled with the hail, the fire ran along upon the ground, it smote the smaller cattle. What a storm must that have been: its effects were terrible enough upon plants, but to see the poor dumb creatures stricken must have been heart breaking. Adamantine was the heart which quailed not under such plagues as these, harder than adamant those hearts which in after years forgot all that the Lord had done, and broke off from their allegiance to him.

49. *"He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble."* His last arrow was the sharpest. He reserved the strong wine of his indignation to the last. Note how the Psalmist piles up the words, and well he might; for blow followed blow, each one more staggering than its predecessor, and then the crushing stroke was reserved for the end. *"By sending evil angels among them."* Messengers of evil entered their houses at midnight, and smote the

dearest objects of their love. The angels were evil to them, though good enough in themselves; those who to the heirs of salvation are ministers of grace, are to the heirs of wrath executioners of judgment. When God sends angels, they are sure to come, and if he bids them slay they will not spare. See how sin sets all the powers of heaven in array against man; he has no friend left in the universe when God is his enemy.

50. *"He made a way to his anger,"* coming to the point with them by slow degrees; assailing their outworks first by destroying their property, and then coming in upon their persons as through an open breach in the walls. He broke down all the comforts of their life, and then advanced against their life itself. Nothing could stand in his way; he cleared a space in which to do execution upon his adversaries. *"He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence."* In their soul was the origin of the sin, and he followed it to its source and smote it there. A fierce disease filled the land with countless funerals; Jehovah dealt out myriads of blows, and multitudes of spirits failed before him.

51. *"And smote all the firstborn in Egypt."* No exceptions were made, the monarch bewailed his heir as did the menial at the mill. They smote the Lord's firstborn, even Israel, and he smites theirs. *"The chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham."* Swinging his scythe over the field, death topped off the highest flowers. The tents of Ham knew each one its own peculiar sorrow, and were made to sympathise with the sorrows which had been ruthlessly inflicted upon the habitations of Israel. Thus curses come home to roost. Oppressors are repaid in their own coin, without the discount of a penny

52. *"But made his own people to go forth like sheep."* The contrast is striking, and ought never to have been forgotten by the people. The wolves were slain in heaps, the sheep were carefully gathered, and triumphantly delivered. The tables were turned, and the poor serfs became the honoured people, while their oppressors were humbled before them. Israel went out in a compact body like a flock; they were defenceless in themselves as sheep, but they were safe under their Great Shepherd; they left Egypt as easily as a flock leaves one pasture for another. *"And guided them in the wilderness like a flock."* Knowing nothing of the way by their own understanding or experience, they were, nevertheless, rightly directed, for the All-wise God knew every spot of the wilderness. To the sea, through the sea, and from the sea, the Lord led his chosen; while their former taskmasters were too cowed in spirit, and broken in power, to dare to molest them.

53. *"And he led them on safely, so that they feared not."* After the first little alarm, natural enough when they found themselves pursued by their old taskmasters, they plucked up courage and ventured boldly into the sea, and afterwards into the desert where no man dwelt. *"But the sea overwhelmed their enemies."* They were gone, gone for ever, never to disturb the fugitives again. That tremendous blow effectually defended the tribes for forty years from any further attempt to drive them back. Egypt found the stone too heavy and was glad to let it alone. Let the Lord be praised who thus effectually freed his elect nation.

What a grand narrative have we been considering. Well might the mightiest master of sacred song select "Israel in Egypt" as a choice theme for his genius; and well may every believing mind linger over every item of the amazing transaction. The marvel is that the favoured nation should live as if unmindful of it all, and yet such is human nature. Alas, poor man! Rather, alas, base heart!

We now, after a pause, follow again the chain of events, the narration of which had been interrupted by a retrospect, and we find Israel entering into the promised land, there to repeat her follies and enlarge her crimes.

54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, *even to* this mountain, *which* his right hand had purchased.

55 He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:

57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel:

60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent *which* he placed among men;

61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand.

62 He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance.

63 The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage.

64 Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.

65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, *and* like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.

66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach.

54. *"And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary."* He conducted them to the frontier of the Holy Land, where he intended the tabernacle to become the permanent symbol of his abode among his people. He did not leave them halfway upon their journey to their heritage; his power and wisdom preserved the nation till the palm trees of Jericho were within sight on the other side of the river. *"Even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased."* Nor did he leave them then, but still conducted them till they were in the region round about Zion, which was to be the central seat of his worship. This the Lord had purchased in type of old by the sacrifice of Isaac, fit symbol of the greater sacrifice which was in due season to be presented there: that mountain was also redeemed by power, when the Lord's right hand enabled his valiant men to smite the Jebusites, and take the sacred hill from the insulting Canaanite. Thus shall the elect of God enjoy the sure protection of the Lord of hosts, even to the border land of death, and through the river, up to the hill of the Lord in glory. The purchased people shall safely reach the purchased inheritance.

55. *"He cast out the heathen also before them,"* or "he drove out the nations." Not only were armies routed, but whole peoples displaced. The iniquity of the Canaanites was full; their vices made them rot above ground; therefore, the land ate up its inhabitants, the hornets vexed them, the pestilence destroyed them, and the sword of the tribes completed the execution to which the justice of long provoked heaven had at length appointed them. The Lord was the true conqueror of Canaan; he cast out the nations as men cast out filth from their habitations, he uprooted them as noxious weeds are extirpated by the husbandman. *"And divided them an inheritance by line."* He divided the land of the nations among the tribes by lot and measure, assigning Hivite, Perizzite, and Jebusite territory to Simeon, Judah, or Ephraim, as the case might be. Among those condemned nations were not only giants in stature, but also giants in crime; those monsters of iniquity had too long defiled the earth; it was time that they should no more indulge the unnatural crimes for which they were infamous; they were, therefore, doomed to forfeit life and lands by the hands of the tribes of Israel. The distribution of the forfeited country was made by divine appointment; it was no scramble, but a judicial appointment of lands which had fallen to the crown by the attainder of the former holders. *"And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents."* The favoured people entered upon a furnished house: they found the larder supplied, for they fed upon the old corn of the land, and the dwellings were already builded in which they could dwell. Thus does another race often enter into the lot of a former people, and it is sad indeed when the change which judgment decrees does not turn out to be much for the better, because the incomers inherit the evils as well as the goods of the ejected. Such a case of judicial visitation ought to have had a salutary influence upon the tribes; but, alas, they were incorrigible, and would not learn even from examples so near at home and so terribly suggestive.

56. *"Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God."* Change of condition had not altered their manners. They left their nomadic habits, but not their

tendencies to wander from their God. Though every divine promise had been fulfilled to the letter, and the land flowing with milk and honey was actually their own, yet they tried the Lord again with unbelief, and provoked him with other sins. He is not only high and glorious, but most High, yea *the* most High, the only being who deserves to be so highly had in honour; yet, instead of honouring him, Israel grieved him with rebellion. "*And kept not his testimonies.*" They were true to nothing but hereditary treachery; steadfast in nothing but in falsehood. They knew his truth and forgot it, his will and disobeyed it, his grace and perverted it to an occasion for greater transgression. Reader, dost thou need a looking-glass? See here is one which suits the present expositor well; does it not also reflect thine image?

57. "*But turned back.*" Turned over the old leaf, repeated the same offences, started aside like an ill-made bow, were false and faithless to their best promises. "*And dealt unfaithfully like their fathers,*" proving themselves legitimate by manifesting the treachery of their sires. They were a new generation, but not a new nation—another race yet not another. Evil propensities are transmitted; the birth follows the progenitor; the wild ass breeds wild asses; the children of the raven fly to the carrion. Human nature does not improve, the new editions contain all the errata of the first, and sometimes fresh errors are imported. "*They were turned aside like a deceitful bow,*" which not only fails to send the arrow towards the mark in a direct line, but springs back to the archer's hurt, and perhaps sends the shaft among his friends to their serious jeopardy. Israel boasted of the bow as the national weapon, they sang the song of the bow, and hence a deceitful bow is made to be the type and symbol of their own unsteadfastness; God can make men's glory the very ensign of their shame, he draws a bar sinister across the escutcheon of traitors.

58. "*For they provoked him to anger with their high places.*" This was their first error—will worship, or the worship of God, otherwise than according to his command. Many think lightly of this, but indeed it is no mean sin; and its tendencies to further offence are very powerful. The Lord would have his holy place remain as the only spot for sacrifice; and Israel, in wilful rebellion, (no doubt glossed over by the plea of great devotion,) determined to have many altars upon many hills. If they might have but one God, they insisted upon it that they would not be restricted to one sacred place of sacrifice. How much of the worship of the present day is neither more nor less than sheer will-worship! Nobody dare plead a divine appointment for a tithe of the offices, festivals, ceremonies, and observances of certain churches. Doubtless God, so far from being honoured by worship which he has not commanded, is greatly angered at it. "*And moved him to jealousy with their graven images.*" This was but one more step; they manufactured symbols of the invisible God, for they lusted after something tangible and visible to which they could shew reverence. This also is the crying sin of modern times. Do we not hear and see superstition abounding. Images, pictures, crucifixes, and a host of visible things are had in religious honour, and worst of all men now-a-days worship what they eat, and call that a God which passes into their belly, and thence into baser places still. Surely the Lord is very patient, or he would visit the earth for this worst and basest of idolatry. He is a jealous God, and abhors to see himself dishonoured by any form of representation which can come from man's hands.

59. "*When God heard this, he was wroth.*" The mere report of it filled him with indignation; he could not bear it, he was incensed to the uttermost, and most justly so. "*And greatly abhorred Israel.*" He cast his idolatrous people from his favour, and left them to themselves, and their own devices. How could he have fellowship with idols? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Sin is in itself so offensive that it makes the sinner offensive too. Idols of any sort are highly abhorrent to God, and we must see to it that we keep ourselves from them through divine grace, for rest assured idolatry is not consistent with true grace in the heart. If Dagon sit aloft in any soul, the ark of God is not there. Where the Lord dwells no image of jealousy will be tolerated. A visible church will soon become a visible curse if idols be set up in it, and then the pruning knife will remove it as a dead branch from the vine.

Note that God did not utterly cast away his people Israel even when he greatly abhorred them, for he returned in mercy to them, so the subsequent verses tell us: so now the seed of Abraham, though for awhile under a heavy cloud, will be gathered yet again, for the covenant of salt shall not be broken. As for the spiritual seed,

the Lord hath not despised nor abhorred them ; they are his peculiar treasure and lie for ever near his heart.

60. *So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men.*" His glory would no more reveal itself there, he left Shiloh to become a complete ruin. At the door of that tent shameless sin had been perpetrated, and all around it idols had been adored, and therefore the glory departed, and Ichabod was sounded as a word of dread concerning Shiloh and the tribe of Ephraim. Thus may the candlestick be removed though the candle is not quenched. Erring churches become apostate, but a true church still remains ; if Shiloh be profaned Zion is consecrated. Yet is it ever a solemn caution to all the assemblies of the saints, admonishing them to walk humbly with their God, when we read such words as those of the prophet Jeremiah in his seventh chapter, " Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." Let us take heed, lest as the ark never returned to Shiloh after its capture by the Philistines, so the gospel may be taken from us in judgment, never to be restored to the same church again.

61. "*And delivered his strength into captivity.*" The ark was captured by the Philistines in battle, only because the Lord for the punishment of Israel chose to deliver it into their hands, otherwise they could have had no power at all against it. The token of the divine presence is here poetically called " his strength ; " and, indeed, the presence of the Lord is his strength among his people. It was a black day when the mercy-seat was removed, when the cherubim took flight, and Israel's palladium was carried away. "*And his glory into the enemy's hand.*" The ark was the place for the revealed glory of God, and his enemies exulted greatly when they bore it away into their own cities. Nothing could more clearly have shewn the divine displeasure. It seemed to say that Jehovah would sooner dwell among his avowed adversaries than among so false a people as Israel ; he would sooner bear the insults of Philistia than the treacheries of Ephraim. This was a fearful downfall for the favoured nation, and it was followed by dire judgments of most appalling nature. When God is gone all is gone. No calamity can equal the withdrawal of the divine presence from a people. O Israel, how art thou brought low ! Who shall help thee now that thy God has left thee !

62. "*He gave his people over also unto the sword.*" They fell in battle because they were no longer aided by the divine strength. Sharp was the sword, but sharper still the cause of its being unsheathed. "*And was wroth with his inheritance.*" They were *his* still, and twice in this verse they are called so ; yet his regard for them did not prevent his chastising them, even with a rod of steel. Where the love is most fervent, the jealousy is most cruel. Sin cannot be tolerated in those who are a people near unto God.

63. "*The fire consumed their young men.*" As fire slew Nadab and Abihu literally, so the fire of divine wrath fell on the sons of Eli, who defiled the sanctuary of the Lord, and the like fire, in the form of war, consumed the flower of the people. "*And their maidens were not given to marriage.*" No nuptial hymns were sung, the bride lacked her bridegroom, the edge of the sword had cut the bands of their espousals, and left unmarried those who else had been extolled in hymns of congratulation. Thus Israel was brought very low, she could not find husbands for her maids, and therefore her state was not replenished ; no young children clustered around parental knees. The nation had failed in its solemn task of instructing the young in the fear of Jehovah, and it was a fitting judgment that the very production of a posterity should be endangered.

64. "*Their priests fell by the sword.*" Hophni and Phineas were slain ; they were among the chief in sin, and, therefore, they perished with the rest. Priesthood is no shelter for transgressors ; the jewelled breastplate cannot turn aside the arrows of judgment. "*And their widows made no lamentation.*" Their private griefs were swallowed up in the greater national agony, because the ark of God was taken. As the maidens had no heart for the marriage song, so the widows had no spirit, even to utter the funeral wail. The dead were buried too often and too hurriedly to allow of the usual rites of lamentation. This was the lowest depth ; from this point things will take a gracious turn.

65. "*The Lord awaked as one out of sleep.*" Justly inactive he had suffered the enemy to triumph, his ark to be captured, and his people to be slain ; but now he arouses himself, his heart is full of pity for his chosen, and anger against the insulting

foe. Woe to thee, O Philistia, now shalt thou feel the weight of his right hand! Waking and putting forth strength like a man who had taken a refreshing draught the Lord is said to be, *"like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine."* Strong and full of energy the Lord dashed upon his foes, and made them stagger beneath his blows. His ark from city to city went as an avenger rather than as a trophy, and in every place the false gods fell helplessly before it.

66. *"He smote his enemies in the hinder parts."* The emerods rendered them ridiculous, and their numerous defeats made them yet more so. They fled but were overtaken and wounded in the back to their eternal disgrace. *"He put them to a perpetual reproach."* Orientals are not very refined, and we can well believe that the hemorrhoids were the subject of many a taunt against the Philistines, as also were their frequent defeats by Israel until at last they were crushed under, never to exist again as a distinct nation.

67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim:

68 But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.

69 And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*, like the earth which he hath established for ever.

70 He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds:

71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.

72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

67. *"Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph."* God had honoured Ephraim, for to that tribe belonged Joshua the great conqueror, and Gideon the great judge, and within its borders was Shiloh the place of the ark and the sanctuary; but now the Lord would change all this and set up other rulers. He would no longer leave matters to the leadership of Ephraim, since that tribe had been tried and found wanting. *"And chose not the tribe of Ephraim."* Sin had been found in them, folly and instability, and therefore they were set aside as unfit to lead.

68. *"But chose the tribe of Judah."* To give the nation another trial this tribe was elected to supremacy. This was according to Jacob's dying prophecy. Our Lord sprang out of Judah and he it is whom his brethren shall praise. *"The Mount Zion which he loved."* The tabernacle and ark were removed to Zion during the reign of David; no honour was left to the wayward Ephraimites. Hard by this mountain the Father of the Faithful had offered up his only son, and there in future days the great gatherings of his chosen seed would be, and therefore Zion is said to be lovely unto God.

69. *"And he built his sanctuary like high palaces."* The tabernacle was placed on high, literally and spiritually it was as a mountain of beauty. True religion was exalted in the land. For sanctity it was a temple, for majesty it was a palace. *"Like the earth which he hath established for ever."* Stability as well as stateliness were seen in the temple, and so also in the church of God. The prophet saw both in vision.

70. *"He chose David also his servant."* It was an election of a sovereignly gracious kind, and it operated practically by making the chosen man a willing servant of the Lord. He was not chosen because he was a servant, but in order that he might be so. David always esteemed it to be a high honour that he was both elect of God, and a servant of God. *"And took him from the sheepfolds."* A shepherd of sheep he had been, and this was a fit school for a shepherd of men. Lowliness of occupation will debar no man from such honours as the Lord's election confers, the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He delights to bless those who are of low estate.

71. *"From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance."* Exercising the care and art of those who watch for the young lambs, David followed the ewes in their wanderings; the tenderness and patience thus acquired would tend to the development of characteristics most becoming in a king. To the man thus prepared, the office and dignity which God had appointed for him, came in due season, and he was enabled worthily to wear them. It is wonderful how often divine wisdom so arranges the early and obscure

portion of a choice life, so as to make it a preparatory school for a more active and noble future.

72. *"So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart."* David was upright before God, and never swerved in heart from the obedient worship of Jehovah. Whatever faults he had, he was unfeignedly sincere in his allegiance to Israel's superior king; he shepherded for God with honest heart. *"And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands."* He was a sagacious ruler, and the Psalmist magnifies the Lord for having appointed him. Under David, the Jewish kingdom first rose to an honourable position among the nations, and exercised an influence over its neighbours. In closing the Psalm which has described the varying conditions of the chosen nation, we are glad to end so peacefully; with all noise of tumult or of sinful rites hushed into silence. After a long voyage over a stormy sea, the ark of the Jewish state rested on its Ararat, beneath a wise and gentle reign, to be wafted no more hither and thither by floods and gales. The Psalmist had all along intended to make this his last stanza, and we too may be content to finish all our songs of love with the reign of the Lord's anointed. Only we may eagerly enquire, when will it come? When shall we end these desert roamings, these rebellions, and chastisings, and enter into the rest of a settled kingdom, with the Lord Jesus reigning as " the Prince of the house of David ? "

Thus have we ended this lengthy parable, may we in our life-parable have less of sin, and as much of grace as are displayed in Israel's history, and may we close it under the safe guidance of " that great Shepherd of the sheep." AMEN.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm appears to have been occasioned by the removal of the sanctuary from Shiloh in the tribe of Judah, and the co-incident transfer of pre-eminence in Israel from the former to the latter tribe, as clearly evinced by David's settlement as the head of the church and nation. Though this was the execution of God's purpose, the writer here shows that it also proceeded from the divine judgment on Ephraim, under whose leadership the people had manifested the same sinful and rebellious character which had distinguished their ancestors in Egypt.—*B. M. Smith, in "The Critical and Explanatory Pocket Bible."* 1867.

Verse 1.—*"Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears."* Inclining the ears does not denote any ordinary sort of hearing, but such as a disciple renders to the words of his master, with submission and reverence of mind, silent and earnest, that whatever is enunciated for the purpose of instruction may be heard and properly understood, and nothing be allowed to escape. He is a hearer of a different stamp, who hears carelessly, not for the purpose of learning or imitation, but to criticise, to make merry, to indulge animosity, or to kill time.—*Musculus.*

Verse 1.—*"Incline your ears."* Lay them close to my lips, that no parcel of this sacred language fall to the ground by your default.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—*"To the words of my mouth."* Was it not sufficient for the parallelism to say, *To my words?* Obviously. Why then is there any notice taken of the *mouth?* Because those who can prescribe laws to their subjects are also those who scorn to address them with their mouth. Such is the custom of kings, princes, pontiffs, both Roman and others. For the higher every one rises in dignity, the less he considers it becoming to him to speak to the people, to teach and instruct them by word of mouth. They think they owe nothing to the people, but are altogether taken up with this, that they may be looked up to as princes, and so retain a certain secular majesty of command. But, with one's own mouth to teach the ignorant, is a singular proof of love and paternal affection, such as becomes the preceptor, pastor and teacher. This Christ most constantly employed, because he was touched with paternal affection towards the lost sheep, and came as a shepherd to seek them. The manner of earthly princes he therefore rejected, and clothed himself with that paternal custom which becomes the shepherd and teacher, going about and opening his mouth in order to give instruction. See Matthew v. 1. Rightly,

therefore, was the prophet not content with saying, *"Give ear, O my people, to my law:"* he adds, *"Incline your ears to the words of my mouth."* Thus he indicates that he was about to address and instruct them with paternal affection.—*Musculus.*

Verse 2.—*"Parable." "Dark sayings."* מָשָׁל, *an authoritative weighty speech or saying.* The Hebrew term very nearly answers to the Greek, κύριαι δόξαι, i.e., *authoritative sentences or maxims,* or *weighty sayings,* expressing or implying *a comparison,* as such sayings frequently do. חִידָה, *an enigma, a parable,* which penetrates the mind, and when understood makes a deep impression of what is intended or represented by it. Here חִידוֹת seems to refer to the historical facts mentioned in the subsequent part of the Psalm, considered as *enigmas* of spiritual concerns.—*John Parkhurst.*

Verse 2.—*"Parable."* Parables are the speeches of wise men, yea, they are the extracts and spirits of wisdom. The Hebrew word signifies to rule, or have authority, because such speeches come upon us with authority, and subdue our reason by the weight of theirs.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 2.—*"I will utter."* The metaphor in this word is taken from a fountain which pours forth water abundantly. For אַבִּיעָה properly means to gush forth, or bubble up. The heart of teachers in the Church ought to be full, and ready to pour forth those streams by which the Church is watered. Their spring ought not to become exhausted, and fail in the summer.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 3.—*"Which we have heard and known."* We have *"heard"* the *law* and *"known"* the *facts.—Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—*"Fathers."* Those are worthy of the name of *fathers* in the church, in relation to posterity, who transmit to posterity the truth of God contained in Scripture, such as here is set down in this Psalm: and this is the only infallible sort of tradition, which delivereth to posterity what God delivered to the prophets or their predecessors by Scripture, such as is the doctrine delivered in this Psalm.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—*"We will not hide them from their children,"* etc. Thou must not only praise God thyself, but endeavour to transmit the memorial of his goodness to posterity. Children are their parents' heirs; it were unnatural for a father, before he dies, to bury up his treasure in the earth, where his children should not find or enjoy it; now the mercies of God are not the least part of a good man's treasure, nor the least of his children's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience. "Our fathers have told us what works thou didst in their days, how thou didst drive out the heathen," etc., Psalm xliv. 1, 2; from this they ground their confidence, verse 4, "Thou art my King, O God; command deliverances for Jacob," and excite their thankfulness, verse 8, "In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever." Indeed, as children are their parents' heirs, so they become in justice liable to pay their parents' debts; now the great debt which the saint at death stands charged with, is that which he owes to God for his mercies, and, therefore, it is but reason he should tie his posterity to the payment thereof. Thus mayest thou be praising God in heaven and earth at the same time.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 4—6.—The cloth that is dyed in the wool will keep colour best. Disciples in youth will prove angels in age. Use and experience strengthen and confirm in any art or science. The longer thy child hath been brought up in Christ's school, the more able he will be to find out Satan's wiles and fallacies, and to avoid them. The longer he hath been at the trade the more skill and delight will he have in worshipping and enjoying the blessed God. The tree when it is old stands strongly against the wind, just as it was set when it was young.

The children of Merindal so answered one another in the matters of religion, before the persecuting Bishop of Cavailon, that a stander-by said unto the bishop, I must needs confess I have often been at the disputations of the doctors in the Sorbonne, but I never learned so much as by these children. Seven children at one time suffered martyrdom with Symphrosia, a godly matron, their mother. Such a blessing doth often accompany religious breeding; therefore Julian the apostate, to hinder the growth and increase of Christianity, would not suffer children to be taught either human or divine learning.

Philip was glad that Alexander was born whilst Aristotle lived, that he might

be instructed by Aristotle in philosophy. It is no mean mercy that thy children are born in the days of the gospel, and in a valley of vision, a land of light, where they may be instructed in Christianity. Oh, do not fail, therefore, to acquaint thy children with the nature of God, the natures and offices of Christ, their own natural sinfulness and misery, the way and means of their recovery, the end and errand for which they were sent into the world, the necessity of regeneration and a holy life, if ever they would escape eternal death! Alas! how is it possible they should ever arrive at heaven if they know not the way thither?

The inhabitants of Mitylene, sometime the lords of the seas, if any of their neighbours revolted, did inflict this punishment,—they forbade them to instruct their children, esteeming this a sufficient revenge.—(*Ælian.*) Reader, if thou art careless of this duty, I would ask thee what wrong thy children have done thee that thou shouldst revenge thyself by denying them that which is their due. I mean pious instruction.

The Jewish rabbis speak of a very strict custom and method for the instruction of their children, according to their age and capacity. At five years old they were *filii legis*, sons of the law, to read it. At thirteen they were *filii præcepti*, sons of the precept, to understand the law. At fifteen they were *Talmudistæ*, and went to deeper points of the law, even to Talmudic doubts. As thy children grow up, so do thou go on to instruct them in God's will. They are "born like the wild ass's colt," Job xi. 12—that is, unruly, foolish, and ignorant. We often call a fool an ass, but here it is a "wild ass," which is more silly and untractable than a tame one; nay, it is a "wild ass's colt," which is most rude, unruly, and foolish. How, then, shall thy ignorant children come to know God or themselves without instruction?

Thy duty is to acquaint thy children with the works of God. Teach them his doings as well as his sayings. "Take heed to thyself, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons," Deut. iv. 9. God's wonders should be had in everlasting remembrance. "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered," Ps. cxi. 4. Now, one special way to do this is by writing them in our children's memories, hereby they are transmitted to posterity. This was the godly practice of the patriarchs, to instruct their children concerning the creation of the world, transgression of man, destruction of the old world, God's providence, the Messiah to be revealed, and the like. The parents' mouths were large books, in which their children did read the noble acts of the Lord. The precept is here urged [verses 2—7] upon a double ground, *partly for God's praise*, in the perpetuity of his worthy deeds: his words are of great weight, and therefore, as curious pictures or precious jewels, must in memory of him be bequeathed from father to son whilst the world continueth. If they are written on paper or parchment they may perish (and is it not a thousand pities that such excellent records should be lost?); but if they be written by fathers successfully on their children's hearts, no time shall blot or wear them out, Exod. xii. 26, 27. Therefore, as the rabbis observe, the night before the passover the Jews (to keep God's mercies in memory to his honour) were wont to confer with their children on this wise. The child said, Why is it called the passover? The father said, Because the angel passed over us when it slew the Egyptians, and destroyed us not. The child said, Why do we eat unleavened bread? The father answered, Because we were forced to hasten out of Egypt. The child said, Why do we eat bitter herbs? The father answered, To mind us of our afflictions in Egypt.

But the duty is also urged, *partly for their own profit*, verse 7, "*That they might set their hope in God*," etc. Acquaintance with God's favour will encourage their faith; knowledge of his power will help them to believe his promise. Reader, obedience to this precept may tend much to thy own and thy children's profit. By teaching thy children God's actions, thou wilt fix them the faster, and they will make the greater impression, upon thy own spirit. A frequent mention of things is the best art of memory: what the mouth preacheth often the mind will ponder much. Besides, it may work for thy children's weal; the more they be acquainted with the goodness, wisdom, power, and faithfulness of God which appear in his works, the more they will fear, love, and trust him.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 5.—"*He established a testimony in Jacob*," etc. The meaning is, that God ordained a law, and commanded that the fathers should each one tell his children those things which he had learned from his parents. In this verse therefore we understand by "*testimony*" and "*law*," that particular law which is written in

Deut. iv. 9 in these words: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons."—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 5.—By the *"testimony"* and *"law"* are meant the whole contents of the Pentateuch, the direct commandments contained in it, and the deeds of the Lord, which are to be considered as indirect commandments: for all the deeds of God contain a kernel of instruction, of duty, and of warning; "I have done this for thee, what dost thou for me?"—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5.—*"To their children."* He who learns the law in his youth, resembles him that writes easily on new and pliable parchment; but he who begins to learn it in his old age, is like a man that tries to write on old and shrivelled parchment.—*John Van den Driesche,* [*Drusius.*] 1550—1616.

Verses 5, 6.—Five generations appear to be mentioned: 1. "Fathers;" 2. "Their children;" 3. "The generation to come;" 4. "And their children;" 5. And their children.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—Children should earnestly hearken to the instruction of their parents that they themselves may afterwards be able to tell the same to their sons, and so a golden chain be formed, wherewith being bound together, the whole family may seek the skies. Whilst the father draws the son, the son the grandson, the grandson his children to Christ, as the magnet of them all, that they all may be made one.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 7.—*"Set their hope in God."* Their hope was to be set not in the law which punishes, but in grace freely given which redeems; therefore is it added *"and not forget the works of God."—Johannes De Turrecremata.* 1476.

Verse 8.—*"And might not be as their fathers."* The warning is taken from an example at home. He does not say, That they might not be as the nations, which know not God: but, That they might not be *"as their fathers."* Domestic examples of vice are much more pernicious than foreign ones. Hence one says: *Sic natura jubet, velocius et citius nos corrumpunt vitiorum exempla domestica.* Let us learn from this place, that it is not safe in all things to cleave to the footsteps of our fathers. He speaks of those fathers who perished in the wilderness: of whom, see Num. xiv., Deut. i., and Ps. lxviii. 6.—*Musculus.*

Verse 8.—*"As their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation."* Forasmuch as this bad emulation of their ancestors is with difficulty plucked from the minds of men, because of our innate reverence for our fathers, the prophet heaps up words in the description of the crimes of their fathers. He says they were דור סרה, that is, a generation detracting from the authority of God, and continually breaking the bonds of the law, and in their petulance shaking off the yoke, as a violent and refractory horse, or an untamed bullock, enduring not the rein, or refusing to yield its neck to the yoke, but constantly drawing back and rejecting the bridle.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 8, 9.—Look carefully to the ground of the active obedience, that it be sound and sincere. The same right principles whereby the sincere soul acts for Christ, will carry him to suffer for Christ, when a call from God comes with such an errand. "The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." Why? what is the matter? so well armed, and yet so cowardly? This seems strange: read the preceding verse and you will cease wondering; they are called there, *"A generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God."* Let the armour be what it will, yea, if soldiers were in a castle, whose foundations were rock, and walls brass; yet if their hearts be not right to their prince, an easy storm will drive them from the walls, and a little scare open their gate, which hath not this bolt of sincerity on it to hold it fast. In our late wars we have seen that the honest hearts within thin and weak works have held the town, when no walls could defend treachery from betraying trust.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 9.—*"The children of Ephraim, being armed,"* etc. "When ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you; and ye would

not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah." Deut. i. 41—44.

Verse 9.—Many persons suppose the passage to refer to the event recorded in 1 Chron. vii. 21, 22, where are mentioned the sons of Ephraim, " whom the men of Gath that were born in the land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him." The manner of the relation shews that the slaughter must have been great ; and this flight and defeat, and their not acknowledging their dependence upon God, it is supposed the Psalmist has in view in this place. But the objection to this interpretation is, that the event referred to in the book of Chronicles, evidently occurred at a time anterior to that of the Israelitish exodus from Egypt ; whilst the 11th verse of this Psalm speaks of these same Ephraimites being forgetful of God's doings and wonderful works which he did at the time of their exit from Egypt. It is, therefore, more probable that בְּנֵי אֶפְרַיִם may designate the Israelitish people generally, which Mendlessohn thinks to be the case. He observes that " the meaning of the noun Ephraim was that of a general term for Israel before the reigning of the house of David, because that Joshua the son of Nun, the first judge, was of this tribe ; also because the territory assigned to this tribe was in the region of Shiloh : and it is possible that because of the reputation of this tribe in those days, all those who were in high esteem were also called Ephraimites." He might have added another and stronger reason than any of the preceding for this application of the term to Israel, and it is, that Jeroboam, who may be regarded as the founder of the Israelitish monarchy, is said, in 1 Kings xi. 26, to have been a descendant of Ephraim. The war alluded to may have been one of those which were waged between the ten tribes and the people of Judah.—*George Phillips.*

Verse 10.—"*Walk in his law.*" Note, we must walk in the law of God, this is that narrow and sacred way which Christ traces before us. At Athens there was ἱερα ὁδος, the sacred way, by which, as Harpocratio relates, the priests of the mysteries travelled to Eleusin. At Rome also there was a way which was called *Via Sacra.* To us also there is a way to the skies, consecrated by the footsteps of the saints. It behoves us therefore not to loiter, but to be ever on the march.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 12.—"*Zoan.*" The name of a city in Egypt (Numb. xiii. 22), though it be not set down in the story in Exodus, is twice specified by the writer of this psalm, here, and verse 43, as the scene wherein the wondrous works were wrought on Pharaoh by Moses ; either because really the first and principal of the miracles were shewed Pharaoh there, this city being the seat of the king, and a most ancient city, as appears by the expression used of Hebron, in Numbers xiii. 22, where to set out the antiquity of that city, where Abraham, the tenth from Noah, dwelt, 'tis said, that " it was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt ; " or perhaps only in poetical style, as " the field " or country of Zoan, is all one with the " land of Egypt " foregoing. Thus, in other prophetic writings, when judgments are threatened, instead of " Egypt " sometimes we find " Zoan " alone, Isa. xix. 11, where " the princes of Zoan " are all one with the counsellors of Pharoah ; sometimes " the princes of Zoan," with the addition of some other city, as verse 13, " the princes of Zoan, the princes of Noph," *i.e.*, again, the counsellors of that kingdom, which as it follows, " have seduced Egypt,"—brought the whole nation to ruin. So Isa. xxx. 4, where they send to Egypt for relief, 'tis said, their " princes were at Zoan, their ambassadors at Hanes."—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 12.—"*In the field of Zoan.*" We see in this passage that it was not without reason that God most powerfully displayed his wondrous works, his virtue and his glory in the more famous cities : not that he despised the humbler and obscure, but that he might more conveniently in this way scatter abroad the knowledge and renown of his name. For this cause he desired Moses to perform his miracles in the royal city, and in its *field ;* for the same reason he afterwards fixed his dwelling-place in the most famous city of Canaan, in which he decreed also that Christ his Son should be crucified and the foundation of his heavenly kingdom laid.—*Musculus*

Verse 13.—"*He made the waters to stand as an heap.*" The original word imports, those great heaps which are made use of as dykes or banks to restrain the waters.

But the Jews have not only understood these expressions literally, but have likewise taken upon them to add particular circumstances, as if the history had been so concise, that it wanted to be supplied therewith. They say, that the sea had formed, as it were, twelve roads or causeways, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites.—*James Saurin.*

Verse 13.—"*He made the waters to stand as an heap.*" God did not wish altogether to take the sea from the gaze of the Hebrews, but to interrupt and divide it, that like a wall it might stand firm on either side of the way. This was done, first, that the miracle might be evident, for in that sea there is no tidal rise or fall of the waters. Secondly, that the people might have greater joy at the sight of so great a miracle. Thirdly, that in their whole passage they might depend more upon the providence of God, who, in a single moment, could allow the sea to return to its bed and drown all of them. It is God's will that we should flee to him the more ardently at the aspect of present danger. Fourthly and lastly, that the people might pass over the more rapidly, since they knew not how long God wished the miracle to last.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 14.—That there was a mystery in this *pillar of cloud and fire* is clear from Isaiah iv. 5, 6, for there never was a *literal* cloud and fire upon Mount Zion. This fiery pillar did cease when they were entered into Canaan; Isaiah therefore intends a *spiritual* thing under those expressions. So it is represented by the Apostle as representing a gospel-mystery: 1 Cor. x. 2. It signified and shadowed forth, 1. Something of *Christ himself*; 2. The *benefits* of Christ; 3. The *ordinances* of Christ.

1. *Christ himself.*—Some have noted a shadow both of his *Deity* and *humanity*. There was a *fiery brightness* in the clouds, which yet was but a dark shadow of the glory of his Deity, which was often in visions so represented; but his divine nature was veiled and over-clouded by his human, as in this shadow there was a pillar of *cloud* as well as *fire*. In Rev. x. 1, Christ is represented as *clothed with a cloud, and his feet as pillars of fire;* expressions notably answering this ancient type and shadow. 2. It holds forth something of the *benefits* of Christ. What benefits had they from this pillar of fire and cloud? They had three: (1) Light and direction. (2) Defence and protection. (3) Ornament and glory. All which we have in a higher manner in Christ by the gospel. 3. It figured also the *ordinances*, and his presence in and with them; for the ordinances are the outward and visible tokens of God's presence with his people, as this fiery pillar was of old. And, therefore, when the Tabernacle was made and set up, *it rested upon the Tabernacle*, Exodus xl. 38. There be some duties are secret, which the world sees not, nor may see; as alms-deeds and personal and secret prayer. But the *ordinances* of institution are things that ought to be practised with all the publickness that may be: they are outward and visible tokens of God's presence, particularly that great ordinance of *baptism*, as in 1 Cor. x. 2. The cloud, it seems, had a refreshing moisture in it, to shade, refresh, and cool them from the burning heat; and they were bedewed * with it, as we are with the water of baptism; whereby this legal cloud became a type of gospel baptism. And so you see how it represented something of *Christ himself*, and something of his *benefits*, and something of all his *ordinances* under the New Testament.—*Samuel Mather.*

Verse 14.—"*All the night.*" We need not dwell long upon the thought of what this "*all*" was to the Israelites. In night *marchings*, and night restings, it was very precious; whether they were in motion or at rest, it was alike needed, alike good. This light of fire, unless continuous, would have been of comparatively little worth. Were it suddenly extinguished as they marched, all Israel would have been plunged into confusion and dismay; the quenching of the light would have changed into a disordered rabble, the marshalled host.—*Philip Bennett Power, in "Breviates: or Short Texts and their Teachings."*

Verse 15.—"*The rocks.*" They were typical of Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4; who is frequently compared to one for height, strength, and duration, shade, shelter, and protection; and is called the "Rock of Israel," the "Rock of offence to both houses of Israel," the "Rock of salvation," the "Rock of refuge," the "Rock of strength," the "Rock that is higher than" the saints, and on which the church is built, and who is "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."—*John Gill.*

* Rather "*baptised*" in it, as Paul puts it in 1 Cor. x. 2.

Verse 15.—"*Gave them drink as out of the great depths.*" As if he had formed a lake or an ocean, furnishing an inexhaustible supply.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 16.—"*He brought streams also out of the rock,*" etc. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The second murmuring for water at Kadesh seems to have been a more aggravated act of rebellion than the former, and yet the water is given in greater abundance. Oh, the freeness of the sovereign grace of God!—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 17.—"*And they sinned yet more against him.*" He does not say that they sinned only, but that they sinned against God. "*And they sinned yet more against him,*" namely, *God.* Against what God? Against him who had delivered them by great and unheard of wonders out of Egypt, who had led them as free men across the Red Sea with a dry foot, who had continued to lead and to protect them with pillars of cloud and fire by day and night, and had given them to drink abundantly of water drawn from the arid rock. Against this God they had added sin to sin. Simply to sin is human, and happens to the saints even after they have received grace: but to sin against God argues a singular degree of impiety. To sin against God is to injure and dishonour him in things immediately pertaining to himself. So they sinned against God, because after so many distinguished proofs and testimonies of his care made manifest to them, they continued to think and speak evil against him. All sins indeed, of whatever class they may be, are done against God, because they are opposed to his will; but those which are committed peculiarly against God, are certainly greater than others. Such are those wrought against his name, goodness, providence, power, truth, and worship, and against those things which specially concern him, whatever they may be. So we read of the sins of the sons of Eli, 1 Sam. ii. 24, 25: "It is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?"—*Musculus.*

Verse 17.—*They sinned yet more.*" Their sin was not murmuring only, sinful as that is, but *uncontrolled desire.* And for what was that desire? It was for meat. They had grown so weary of the bread of heaven which God so mercifully provided; and they wanted something in addition—something, too, which was not absolutely necessary to their existence. When they murmured for water at Massah, they murmured for something *needful.* Their sin *then* was in *murmuring,* instead of *praying.* But here they lusted for something *unnecessary,* and this was an aggravation of their sin. And thus the Psalmist, evidently comparing this sin with the murmuring at Massah, says, "They sinned *yet more* against him."—*George Wagner, in "The Wanderings of the Children of Israel."*

Verse 18.—"*They tempted God in their heart.*" They tempted God, tried his patience over and over again, made as it were another experiment upon it; and, from the expression of "*tempting him in their heart,*" it would seem as if they had made it a thing of mental calculation whether he would still bear with them.—*Thomas Chalmers* (1780—1847), *in "Daily Scripture Readings."*

Verse 18.—"*They tempted God.*" We know that, although "God cannot be tempted with evil," he may justly be said to be tempted, whensoever men, by being dissatisfied with his dealings, virtually ask that he will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial with their feelings. If you reflect a little, you can hardly fail to peceive, that in a very strict sense, this and the like may be said to be a tempting of God. Suppose a man to be discontended with the appointments of Providence; suppose him to murmur and repine at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear: is he not to be charged with provoking God to change his purposes? and what is this if it be not "tempting" God—a striving to induce him to swerve from his plans, though every one of those plans has been settled by infinite wisdom? Or, again, if any one of us, notwithstanding multiplied proofs of the Divine lovingkindness, doubt or question whether God do indeed love him; of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to give additional evidence, as though there were deficiency, and challenges him to fresh demonstrations of what he has already abundantly displayed? This would be called "*tempting*" amongst men. If a child were to show by his actions that he doubted or disbelieved the affection of his parents, he would be considered as thereby

striving to extort from them fresh proofs of that affection, though they had already done as much as either in justice or in wisdom they ought to have done; this would be a clear tempting of them, and that too in the ordinary sense of the term. In short, unbelief of every kind and degree may be said to be a tempting of God; for not to believe on the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to tempt him to give more than he has already given—offering our possible assent, if proof were increased, as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed. . . . You cannot distrust God, and not accuse him of a want either of power or of goodness; you cannot repine,—no, not even in thought—without virtually telling him that his plans are not the best, nor his dispensations the wisest, which might have been appointed in respect of yourselves. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety in circumstances of perplexity, or of peril, is nothing less than a call upon God to depart from his fixed course,—a suspicion, or rather an assertion, that he might proceed in a manner more worthy of himself, and therefore a challenge to him to alter his dealings, if he would prove that he possesses the attributes which he claims. You may not intend thus to accuse, or provoke God, whenever you murmur; but your murmuring does all this, and cannot fail to do it. You cannot be dissatisfied, without virtually saying that God might order things better; you cannot say that he might order things better, without virtually demanding that he change his course of acting, and give other proofs of his infinite perfections. And thus you *tempt* him, tempt him even as did the Israelites in the wilderness.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 18.—*"Asking meat for their lust."* God had given them meat for their hunger in the manna, wholesome, pleasant food, and in abundance; he had given them meat for their faith, out of the heads of Leviathan which he brake in pieces, Ps. lxxiv. 14. But all this would not serve, they must have meat *"for their lust;"* dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God, than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 19.—It is particularly to be observed, that the sin of which the children of Israel were on this occasion guilty, was not in wishing for bread and water, but in thinking for one moment, that after the Lord had brought them out of Egypt, he would suffer them for the lack of any needful thing, to come short of Canaan. It was no sin to be hungry and thirsty; it was a necessity of their nature. There is nothing living that does not desire and require food: when we do not we are dead, and that they did so was no sin. Their sin was *to doubt that God could or would support them in the wilderness, or allow those who followed his leadings to lack any good thing.* This was their sin. It is just the same with the Christian now. These Israelites did not more literally require a supply of daily food for their bodies, than does the Christian for his soul. Not to do so is a sign of death, and the living soul would soon die without it. And so far from its being a sin, our Lord has pronounced that man blessed who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, adding the most precious promise, that all such shall be satisfied. But it is a sin, and very great sin, should this food not be perceptibly, and to the evidence of our senses, immediately supplied, to murmur and be fearful. It was for *the trial of their faith* that these things happened to the Israelites, as do the trials of all Christians in all ages: and it is "after we have suffered awhile" that we may expect to be established, strengthened, settled.—*Brownlow North, in "Ourselves. A Picture sketched from the History of the Children of Israel."* [1865.]

Verses 19, 20.—After all their experience, they doubted the divine omnipotence, as if it were to be regarded as nothing, when it refused to gratify their lusts. Unbelief is so deeply rooted in the human heart, that when God performs miracles on *earth*, unbelief doubts whether he can perform them in *heaven*, and when he does them in *heaven*, whether he can do them on *earth?*—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 20.—*"Can he give bread also?"* They should have said, "Will he serve our lusts?" but that they were ashamed to say.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 0.—Who will say that a man is thankful to his friend for a past kindness, if he nourishes an ill opinion of him for the future? This was all that ungrateful Israel returned to God, for his miraculously broaching the rock to quench their thirst: "Behold, he smote the rock,"—*"Can he give bread also?"* This, indeed,

was their trade all the time they were in the wilderness. Wherefore, God gives them their character, not by what they seemed to be while his mercies were before them; then they could say, "God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer;" but by their temper and carriage in straits; when the cloth was drawn, and the feast taken out of their sight, what opinion then had they of God? Could they sanctify his name so far as to trust him for their dinner to-morrow who feasted them yesterday? Truly no, as soon as they feel their hunger return, like froward children, they are crying, as if God meant to starve them. Wherefore, God rejects their praises, and owns not their hypocritical acknowledgments, but sets their ingratitude upon record; they forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel. O how sad is this, that after God hath entertained a soul at his table with choice mercies and deliverances, these should be so ill husbanded, that not a bit of them should be left to give faith a meal, to keep the heart from fainting, when God comes not so fast to deliver as desired. He is the most thankful man that treasures up the mercies of God in his memory, and can feed his faith with what God hath done for him, so as to walk in the strength thereof in present straits.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 23.—"*Opened the doors of heaven.*" There is an allusion here to the flood as in verse 15.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 23.—"*Opened the doors of heaven.*" God, who has the key of the clouds, "*opened the doors of heaven,*" that is more than *opening the windows*, which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, Mal. iii. 19.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 23.—"*Opened the doors of heaven.*" This is a metaphor taken from a granary, from which corn is brought; and by *opening the doors* is signified, that the manna fell very plentifully. Compare Gen. vii. 11.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verses 24, 25.—"*Manna.*" The prophet celebrates this miracle, *first*, because of the unusual place whence the manna was sent. For he did not produce fruits from the earth wherewith to feed them, but rained down this food from the clouds, and from the depths of the skies. *Secondly*, because of the facility of the distribution. By the command of God alone, without any labour of men, yea, while they slept, this food was prepared. Therefore is it said, "*He gave,*" etc. *Thirdly*, he celebrates its great abundance which sufficed to supply so great a multitude. *Fourthly*, the excellence of the food. He calls it the food of the excellent or the strong, such as was not pleasant merely to the common multitude, but to the princes also, and to the heroes, for it was the food of "*the mighty ones.*"—*Mollerus.*

Verse 25.—"*Man.*" Rather, as Exodus xvi. 6, "*every* man." Not one of them was left without it.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 25.—"*Man did eat angels' food.*" 'Tis called "*angels' food,*" not because the angels do daily feed upon it, but because it was both made and ministered by the ministry of angels, and that phrase sets forth the excellency of it.—*Christopher Ness* (1621—1705), *in "The Sacred History and Mystery of the Old Testament."*

Verse 25.—"*Angels' food.*" Manna is called *the bread of angels* because it was brought down by their ministry; and it was so pleasant in taste, that if the angels had eaten bread, it might have served them.—*John Weemse.*

Verse 25.—"*Angels' food.*" So their manna was called, either, 1. because it was provided and sent by the ministry of angels; or, 2. because it seemed to come down from heaven, the dwelling-place of the angels; or, 3. to set forth the excellency of this bread, that it was meat, as one would say, fit for angels, if angels needed meat. And so, indeed, the exceeding glory of Stephen's countenance is set forth by this, that they "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel," Acts vi. 15; and Paul calls an excellent tongue, "the tongue of angels," 1 Cor. xiii. 1.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 25.—The more excellent the benefit is which God giveth, the greater is the ingratitude of him who doth not esteem of it and make use of it as becometh; as we see in Israel's sin, who did not esteem of manna as they should have done. Had the Lord fed them with dust of earth, or roots of grass, or any other mean thing, they should have had no reason to complain: but when he giveth them a new food, created every morning for their sakes, sent down from heaven as fresh furniture every day, of such excellent colour, taste, smell and wholesomeness;

what a provocation of God was it, not to be content now ; in special, when he gave them abundantly of it ? " He sent them meat to the full."—*David Dickson.*

Verse 26.—*"He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven : and by his power he brought in the south wind."* Here, on examining the geographical position of the Israelites, we see exactly how the south-east winds would bring the " *quails,*" The Israelites had just passed the Red Sea, and had began to experience a foretaste of the privations which they were to expect in the desert, through which they had to pass. Passing northwards in their usual migrations, the birds would come to the coast of the Red Sea, and there would wait until a favourable wind enabled them to cross the water. The south-east wind afforded them just the very assistance which they needed, and they would naturally take advantage of it.—*J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."* 1869.

Verse 27.—*"As dust."* The amazing clouds of fine dust or sand, which a violent wind raises in the deserts of the East, constitute the point of comparison.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 27.—*"Feathered fowls."* Hebrew, " fowl of wing ; " *i.e.,* flying fowls, in distinction from domestic poultry.—*Williams, in Notes to Calvin in loc.*

Verses 27, 31.—If the cemetery on Sarbut-el-Khadem be, what all the antecedent evidences combine to indicate, the workmanship of the Israelites, (a chief burial-ground of their fatal encampment at Kibroth-Hattaavah), it may most reasonably be expected that its monuments shall contain symbolic representations of the miracle of the " feathered fowls," and of the awful plague which followed it. Now Niebuhr happily enables us to meet this just expectation, by his copies of the hieroglyphics on three of those tombstones, published in the XLVth. and XLVIth. plates of his first volume, and prefaced plate XLIV. by *a plan of the cemetery itself,* which is of more value than any or all subsequent descriptions. It was discovered by the present writer (as stated in a former work, [" The Voice of Israel "] on the evidence of no less than four Sinaitic inscriptions, that the birds of the miracle, named by Moses, generically, שְׂלָו, *salu,* and by the Psalmist, still more generally, עוֹף כָּנָף, *"winged fowls,"* or more correctly " long-winged fowls," were not (as rendered by all our versions, ancient and modern) *"quails,"* but a crane-like red bird resembling a goose, named in the Arabic *nuham.* The discovery received subsequently a singular and signal corroboration from the further discovery, by Dean Stanley, and previously by Schubert, of immense flocks of these very nuhams on the reputed scene of the miracle at Kibroth-Hattaavah. With these antecedents in his mind, the reader will now turn to the three monuments copied by Niebuhr in the cemetery of Sarbut-el-Khadem. He will at once see that a crane-like bird resembling a goose, with slender body and long-legs, is the leading hieroglyphic symbol in all the three tablets. No fewer than twenty-five of these symbolic birds occur in the first, ten in the second, and fifteen in the third tablet. The goose appears occasionally, but the principal specimens have the air of the goose, but the form of the crane. In a word, they are the very species of birds seen by Dean Stanley, both at this point of Sinai, and at the first cataract of the Nile ; and which constantly occur also in Egyptian monuments : as though the very food of Egypt, after which the Israelites lusted, was sent to be at once their prey and their plague. " And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, *when we sat by the flesh pots."* Exod. xvi. 3.

The reader has here before him the irrefragable fact that the very birds which by every kind of evidence stand identified with the *salus,* or long-legged and long-winged fowls of the miracle, are the very birds depicted on the tombstones of Sarbut-el-Khadem, both standing, flying, and apparently even trussed and cooked. . . . The inevitable inference is . . . that these tombstones record the miracle of the " feathered fowls," and stand over the graves of the gluttons who consumed them. —*Charles Forster, in "Israel in the Wilderness."* 1865.

Mr. Forster thus deciphers by his alphabet some of the mixed legends and devices :—

> " From the sea the cranes congregate to one spot ;
> The archers shoot at the cranes passing over the plain.
> Evil-stomached they rush after the prey—
> The sepulchre their doom—their marrow corrupted by God.
> The sleepy owl, emblem of death, God sends destruction among them.

* * * * * * * * *

The mother of sepulchres—the black and white geese,
A sudden death, greedily lusting after flesh, die the gluttons.
The mountain top ascend the Hebrews,
They eat, devour, consume, till nothing is left, exceeding all bounds.
Their bodies corrupted, by gluttony they die."

Verse 29.—Note: The prophet in this Psalm institutes, as it were, a conflict between God and man. God contends with blessings, man with sins. God exerts his power for the benefit of undeserving man, v. 12, "Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers:" man repays the divine power with infidelity, v. 17, "And they sinned yet more against him." And farther on, in v. 19, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" *Secondly*, God showers down his bounty to overwhelm ungrateful sinners with his gifts, v. 23, "He commanded the clouds from above, etc., and rained down manna upon them." These less than men (*homunciones*) oppose their gluttony to the liberality of God, and abuse the gifts conferred, v. 29, "They did eat, and were well filled." *Thirdly*, divine justice renews the conflict to scourge at once stupidity out of them, v. 30, 31, "While their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them." Still obdurate they kick against the goad, v. 32, "For all this they sinned still." *Fourthly*, mercy flies down from heaven, to invite them to peace, v. 38, "But he being full of compassion." Men are but emboldened by his compassion, and the more easily relapse into sin, v. 40, "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness?" *Fifthly*, and *lastly*, when all seems lost, love draws nigh, and performs unheard-of wonders, to touch their hardness, and to deliver them from the dangers by which they were pressed, v. 43, "How he set his signs in Egypt." To these shafts of his love sinners oppose a forgetfulness of all his benefits, v. 42, "They remembered not his hand nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." And all this took place before they entered the land of promise. The conflict that happened between the Hebrews and God in the land of promise is related in the next section of the Psalm.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 30.—"*They were not estranged from their lust.*" This implies, that they were still burning with their lust. If it is objected that this does not agree with the preceding sentence, where it is said, that "they did eat, and were thoroughly filled," I would answer, that if, as is well known, the minds of men are not kept within the bounds of reason and temperance, they become insatiable; and, therefore, a great abundance will not extinguish the fire of a depraved appetite.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 30.—"*They were not estranged from their lust.*" Satiated they were, but not satisfied. It is as easy to quench the fire of Etna, as the thoughts set on fire by lust.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 30.—"*They were not estranged from their lust.*" Consider that there is more real satisfaction in mortifying lusts than in making provision for them or in fulfilling them: there is more true pleasure in crossing and pinching our flesh than in gratifying it; were there any true pleasure in sin, hell would not be hell, for the more sin, the more joy. You cannot satisfy one lust if you would do your utmost, and make yourself never so absolute a slave to it; you think if you had your heart's desire you would be at rest: you much mistake; they had it.—*Alexander Carmichael.*

Verse 31.—"*The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them.*" Two things are here worthy of notice. 1. One, Why he gave them abundance and sufficiency of quails, and afterwards punished the murmuring and unbelieving. If he had punished them before, he would have appeared to have had greater ability to destroy them, than to give them flesh. Therefore, that he might first declare his power, and so make the unbelief of the people the more plain, and show how deserving they were of punishment, he first showed he could give, because they believed he could not, and then punished them for their unbelief. . . . . 2. The other, that he destroyed the fat and the chosen men among the people, although they all are said to have murmured. Without a doubt, they were first in the crime, and therefore they are specially mentioned in the punishment.—*Musculus.*

Verse 31.—"*Slew the fattest of them.*" They were fed as sheep for the slaughter. The butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites that did eat moderately of the quails, and were never the worse;

for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust. Let epicures and sensualists here read their doom; they who make *"a god of their belly, their end is destruction,"* Phil. iii. 19.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 31—34.—The Christian has more true pleasure from the creature than the wicked, as it comes more refined to him than to the other. The unholy wretch sucks dregs and all, dregs of sin and dregs of wrath, whereas the Christian's cup is not thus spiced. *First*, dregs of sin; the more he hath of the creature's delights given him, the more he sins with them. Oh, it is sad to think what work they make in his naughty heart! they are but fuel for his lusts to kindle upon; away they run with their enjoyments, as the prodigal with his bags, or like hogs in shaking time; no sight is to be had of them, or thought of their return as long as they can get anything abroad, among the delights of the world. None so prodigiously wicked as those who are fed high with carnal pleasures. They are to the ungodly as the dung and ordure is to the swine which grows fat by lying in it; so their hearts grow gross and fat; their consciences more stupid and senseless in sin by them; whereas the comforts and delights that God gives unto a holy soul by the creature, turn to spiritual nourishment to his graces, and draw these forth into exercise, as they do others' lusts. *Secondly*, dregs of wrath. The Israelites had little pleasure from their dainties, when the wrath of God fell upon them, before they could get them down their throats. The sinner's feast is no sooner served in but divine justice is preparing to send up a reckoning after it, and the fearful expectation of this cannot but spoil the taste of the other.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 32.—*"For all this they sinned still."* They went on sinning, *"and believed not for his wondrous works."* That is, even his great *wonders* or miracles, did not bring them to believe. Neither *speculative atheism*, nor *atheism of heart*, nor *practical atheism* was ever cured by miracle, because they are all founded in a wicked disposition. "Men are not always in a mood to be convinced." It is not want of evidence, but the want of right dispositions that keeps men from believing God.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 32.—They did believe the history of his works, namely, that such things as are there recorded were done; they could not but believe that God had wrought wonders for them in Egypt, that he had drowned Pharaoh in, and brought them safe through, the Red Sea: they saw these things, their senses were witnesses, but yet they did not believe the *prophecy* or *promise* which was virtually in those works, namely, that God would do more wonders for them till he had finished and accomplished their deliverance. That history of bringing through the Red Sea had this prophecy in it—that they should be brought safe to Canaan; but they did not believe the voice of this prophecy. When God gave them water out of the rock, this work promised that he would give them meat out of the clouds, if they needed it; but this they believed not. Hence the same Psalm reports their unbelief, under this notion (ver. 19, 20). "They spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?" *"When the Lord heard this* (language of unbelief) he was wroth."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 32, 33.—What faith can do to a prophecy of judgment, the same can unbelief to a promise of mercy; overthrow it. The Psalmist assigns this to the unbelief of the works of God, as well as of his word. *"They believed not his wondrous works. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble:"* but are not the days of all men consumed in vanity? Is not man at his best estate altogether vanity? Yes, but here was a special vanity, and somewhat more penal and judicial lay upon that generation for their unbelief, than lies upon mankind as the fruit of sin in general. And what was that? Even the evil threatened in the text [Isa. vii. 9, latter part]: they could not be established. God lets them wander forty years in a wilderness, up and down, forward and backward; now in hope, anon in fear; now in joy, anon in sorrow; now in success, by-and-by in disappointment.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 32.—Experience ought to strengthen faith; but there must be present faith to use experience.—*J. N. Darby, "in Practical Reflections on the Psalms."* [1870.]

Verse 33.—*"Their days did he consume in vanity."* He says with great significance, In vanity their days were consumed, because they were plainly deprived of

their hope, and endured all their sufferings in vain. They did not attain what they had hoped for, but only their children entered the land.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 33.—"*Days*" are put in the first place, and then "*years;*" by which it is intimated, that the duration of their life was cut short by the curse of God, and that it was quite apparent that they failed in the midst of their course.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 34—36.—There are some if they come under afflictions, or if they fall in sickness, or a fever, and God shake death over their head; or if they be at some solemn ordinances, they will be at resolving and purposing, and readily bringing vows on themselves, of personal covenanting with God; but as they are easily gotten, so they easily vanish: "*When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God.*" Several times our afflictions are like a gutter; when there is a great shower we will be running over with purposes after God. "*Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant:*" and yet when he slew them they sought after him, and they early enquired after him: so that indeliberate actions and covenantings with God, as they are hastily forgotten, they no less suddenly vanish; the action ought then to be deliberate when we indenture with the Cautioner, and oblige ourselves to more watchfulness, and more tenderness, or else it will soon vanish.—*Alexander Wedderburn, in "David's Testament, opened up in Fourly Sermons."* 1701.

Verses 34—37.—In these words you see plainly that these people are very early and earnest in seeking God to take off his hand, to remove judgments that were upon them, but not that God would cure them of those sins that provoked him to draw his sword, and to make it drunk with their blood; for, notwithstanding the sad slaughters that divine justice had made among them, they did but flatter and lie, and play the hypocrites with God; they would fain be rid of their sufferings, but did not care to be rid of their sins. Ah! but a gracious soul cries out, Lord, do but take away my sins, and it will satisfy me and cheer me, though thou shouldst never take off thy heavy hand. A true Nathanael sighs it out under his greatest affliction, as that good man did, *A me, me salva, Domine,** deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man myself. No burden to the burden of sin. Lord! says the believing soul; deliver me from my inward burden, and lay upon me what outward burden thou pleasest.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verses 34—37.—There are a sort of men that lie in the enmity of their natures, and in an unreconciled state, living in the visible church, who are not only much restrained, and bite their enmity in, but who, by means of an inferior work of the word and Spirit of God upon their hearts, are brought to seek unto God for friendship, yea, and do much for him in outward actions, and side and take part with his friends; and yet their hearts being unchanged, the cursed enmity of their nature remaining unkilled and not taken away, they lie still in the gall of bitterness. For instance, look to these in Psalm lxxviii. 34—37. It is said that they 'sought the Lord early as their Redeemer,' whilst he was aslaying of them; yet they did but "*flatter him with their mouths,*" etc. A flatterer, you know, differs from a friend, in that he pretendeth much kindness, yet wants inward good-will, doing it for his own ends. And so do many seek God, that yet he accounts as enemies; for they seek him whilst they see themselves in his lurch.

Now, it is hard to discover these, because they pretend much friendship, and externally (it may be) do as many outward kindnesses as the true friends; as flatters will abound in outward kindnesses as much as true friends, nay, often exceed them, because they may not be discovered. Now, if none of the former signs reach to them, nor touch them, then there is no better way left than to search unto the grounds of all they do, and to examine whether it proceeds from true, inward, pure, and constant good-will, yea or no, or self-respects? As now, when we see an ape do many things that a man doth, how do we therefore distinguish those actions in the one and in the other? Why, by the inward principles from whence they spring, by saying that they proceed from reason in the one, but not so in the other. If, therefore, it can be evinced, that all that any man seems to do for God, comes not from good-will to him, it is enough to convince them to be persons unreconciled; for whereas all outward kindnesses and expressions of friendship proceed not from friend-like dispositions and pure good-will, but altogether from self-respects, it is

* Augustine.

but feigned flattery, even among men; and when discovered once, it breeds double hatred. And there is much more reason it should do so with God, because he being a God that knows the heart, to flatter him is the greater mockery; for that is it which chiefly provoketh men to hate such as dissemble friendship, because there is mockery joined with it. Now, that God accounteth every one that doth not turn to him out of pure good-will a flatterer is plain by these words in verses 36, 37: "*Notwithstanding, they did but flatter him, and dealt falsely in his covenant.*" If men's hearts be not inwardly for God, and with him, as a friend would be to a friend, in their actions he esteems them against him. "Thy heart," says Peter to Simon Magus, "is not right before the Lord," Acts viii. 22, and therefore he tells him he was "still in the gall of bitterness."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 35.—"*Redeemer.*" That is, from Egyptian bondage; for the bulk of the people did not understand the spiritual redemption which was typified by that transaction.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 35.—Between this and the following verse the Masorah puts this note, "*half of the book,*" *i.e.*, half of the Book of Psalms ends here.—*John Gill.*

The numbering of the verses must differ from ours, for on counting the verses as in our version, we find verse 57 to be the centre verse of the book.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 36.—"*They did flatter him,*" etc. But could they flatter God? Man is flattered when that is ascribed to him which he hath not, or when he is applauded for what he hath, beyond the worth of it. God cannot be flattered thus: he is as much beyond flatterings as he is beyond sufferings. The Jews, then, are said to flatter God, not because they applauded him by fair speeches more than was his due, but because by fair speeches they hoped to prevent what themselves did deserve; or they flattered God with their own promises, not with his praises. They sinned against him, and he slew them; and when the sword found them they sought God, they creeped to him and fawned upon him, they came as with ropes about their necks, confessing they were worthy to die, yet humbly begging for life: and if God would but humbly sheathe his sword and spare them, O what manner of men they would be in all holy conversation and godliness. Thus "they flattered God with their mouth, while their hearts were not right:" they made great shews of repentance and turning to God, but they meant no such thing; this was their flattery. Neither can the Lord be flattered any other way. And as he cannot be flattered by over-praising him, so his person cannot be unduly honoured by over-respecting him.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 36.—God may be the object, self is the end, and a heavenly object is made subservient to a carnal design. Hypocrisy passes a compliment on God, and is called "*flattery*": "*They did flatter him with their mouth,*" etc. They gave him a parcel of good words for their own preservation. . . . . An hypocrite may well be termed a religious atheist, an atheist masked with religion.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 36.—"*They lied unto him with their tongues.*" The heart is the metal of the bell, the tongue is but the clapper; when the metal of the bell is right and good (as silver) such will the sound be; if the metal of the bell be cracked, or lead, the sound will soon discover it to a judicious ear. God can see the diseases and spots of the heart upon the tongue. As Jacob said to his mother, "If I dissemble, my father will find me out, and I shall meet with a curse instead of a blessing."—*George Swinnock.*

Verses 36—38.—There is no disputing the fact which gives accuracy to the text, that God was moved by a repentance which had not in it even the elements of godly sorrow for sin; which could not even, by a casual observer, much less by him who searches the heart, have been mistaken for that penitence which supposes an inward and radical change, and, nevertheless, even such a repentance as this sufficed to procure a recompense at the hands of God. Though the sackcloth was on the body and not on the soul; though it was the punishment of the sin and not the sin itself which led to this outward humiliation, God did not turn away from the forced supplication, but vouchsafed the deliverance which was sought at his hands. Yes, God, who never expresses greater abhorrence of any character than of that of the hypocrite; God, who rejects nothing more indignantly than outward homage when it is not the index of inward prostration—God may be said to have removed the humiliation of the people as though he could not read their hearts, or as though,

having read them, and noted their unsubdued rebellion, he still thought the apparent contrition deserving of some recompense. . . . .

If God would not leave the show and semblance of contrition without a recompense, will he be unmindful of real penitence? If *"many a time turned he his anger away"* from those who *"did but flatter him with their mouths,* and lied unto him with their tongues," has he nothing in store for those who are humble in spirit, and who come to him with the sacrifice of a broken heart? Oh! the turning away of temporal wrath because idols were outwardly abandoned, this is a mighty pledge that eternal wrath will be averted if we are inwardly stricken, and flee for refuge to the Saviour. God must have eternal good in store for his friends, if even his enemies are recompensed with temporal good. Yes, as I mark the Philistines and the Ammonites oppressing the idolatrous Israelites, and then see the oppressors driven back in return even for heartless service, oh! I learn that true penitence for sin and true faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will cause all enemies to be scattered; I return from the contemplation of the backsliding people, emancipated notwithstanding the known hollowness of their vows, I return assured that a kingdom which neither Philistine nor Ammonite can invade, shall be the portion of all who seek deliverance through Christ.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 37.—*"Their heart was not right with him."* God pleases them when he replenishes them with food, not their heart with his graces; therefore they repay him with the mouth, and not with the heart. They are altogether mouth and tongue: but God is all heart and breast. They give words; God gives milk and perfect love. Love does not reach the inner nature of many men, it sticks in the entrance.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 37.—*"Their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast,"* etc. This is the ever-repeated complaint, see verses 8, 22. There is no permanence, no stability in the reformation which has been produced. Compare Hosea vi. 4.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 38.—According to *B. Kiddushin* 30*a*, this verse is the middle one of the 5896 פסוקים, στίχοι, of the Psalter. According to *B. Maccoth* 22*b*, Ps. lxxviii. 38, and previously Deut. xxviii. 58, 59; xxix. 9, were recited when the forty strokes of the lash save one, which, according to 2 Cor. xi. 24, Paul received five times, were being counted out to the culprit.—*Franz Delitzch.*

Verse 38.—*"He, being full of compassion,"* etc. When his hand was up, and he giving the blow, he called it back again, as one that could not find it in his heart to do it; and when he did it, *"he did not stir up all his wrath;"* he let fall some drops of it, but would not shed the whole shower of it; and he giveth the reason of both, for *"they are but flesh;"* and, indeed, his primary scope is to show mercy; and that he afflicts is but upon occasion; and therefore he is provoked, and provoked much before he doth it. As it is natural to the bee to give honey, but it stings; but it stings but by occasion when it is provoked; and this we see to be true in God by experience, who suffers men, and suffers them long; they continue in their sins, and yet he continues in his mercies, and withholds his judgments.—*John Preston* (1587—1628), *in "The Golden Sceptre held forth to the Humble."*

Verse 38.—*"Forgave"* is a very inadequate translation of the Hebrew word, which necessarily suggests the idea of expiation as the ground of pardon.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 38.—*"Many a time turned he his anger away."* God is provoked every day, yet is he slow to anger. Yea, sometimes when he has determined to bring evil upon a people, and has put himself into a posture of judgment, drawn out the sword, and smitten them; though they cease not to provoke him, he ceaseth to punish them; as a tender father in correcting a rebellious and graceless child, holds his hand sometimes, before the child begs for mercy, and of mere grace forbears: so God did with Israel. Notwithstanding their dissembling with their flattering tongues, and covenant-breaking hearts, *"He forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath."* The words are, *"He multiplied to turn away his anger:"* as they multiplied to provoke it, he multiplied to turn it away; and so at length overnumbered their sins with his mercies, that they were not destroyed.—*John Strickland, in "A Sermon preached before the House of Commons," entitled "Mercy rejoicing against Judgment."* 1645.

Verse 38.—*"He did not stir up all his wrath."* His patience is manifest in

moderating his judgments when he sends them. Doth he empty his quiver of his arrows, or exhaust his magazine of thunder? No; he could roll one thunderbolt successively upon all mankind; it is as easy with him to create a perpetual motion of lightning and thunder, as of the sun and stars, and make the world as terrible by the one as it is delightful by the other. He opens not all his store; he sends out a light party to skirmish with men, and puts not in array his whole army. *"He stirs not up all his wrath;"* he doth but pinch, where he might have torn asunder; when he takes away much, he leaves enough to support us. If he had stirred up all his anger, he had taken away all, and our lives to boot. He rakes up but a few sparks, takes but one firebrand to fling upon men, when he might discharge the whole furnace upon them; he sends but a few drops out of the cloud, which he might make to break in the gross, and fall down upon our heads to overwhelm us; he abates much of what he might do.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 39.—*"A wind that passeth away."*

The secret wheels of hurrying time do give
So short a warning, and so fast they drive,
That I am dead before I seem to live.

And what's a life? a weary pilgrimage,
Whose glory in one day doth fill thy stage
With childhood, manhood, and decrepid age.

And what's a life? the flourishing array
Of the proud summer-meadow, which to-day
Wears her green plush, and is to-morrow hay.

And what's a life? a blast sustained with clothing,
Maintained with food, retained with vile self-loathing,
Then weary of itself, again to nothing.

—*Francis Quarles.*

Verse 40.—*"How oft did they provoke,"* etc. They provoked God at least ten times (Num. xiv. 22) during the first two years of their journey through the wilderness: (1) at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 11, 12): (2) at the waters of Marah (Exod. xv. 24): (3) in the wilderness of sin (Exod. xvi. 2): (4) when they kept the manna until the following day (Exod. xvi. 10): (5) when the manna was collected on the Sabbath (Exod. xvi. 27): (6) in Rephidim, where there was no water (Num. xx. 2, 13): (7) at Horeb, when a molten calf was made (Exod. xxii. 1, etc.): (8) at Taberah (Num. xi. 1, 2, 3): (9) when they lusted for flesh (Num. xi. 4): (10) when they murmured at the news brought by the men, who had been sent to search the land (Num. xiv. 1, etc.).—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 40.—*"How oft."* God kept an account how oft they provoked him, though they did not, Numb. xiv. 22: "They have tempted me these ten times."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 41.—*"They turned back."* As for that expression, וַיָּשׁוּבוּ, which we translate, *"and they turned back;* that is, say some, to go back again into *Egypt*, or as others, returned back to their *old wont* of rebellion; I say, it hath no such meaning here; it is a Hebraism, and should be rendered, *"they returned and tempted,"* that is, *sæpius tentaverunt*, they *oftentimes tempted* him, or they *tempted* him *again.*—*Thomas Froysel, in "Sermons concerning Grace and Temptations."* 1678.

Verse 41.—*"Tempted God."* This only expresses the fact that men act towards him as if he could be tempted, or in a way fitted to put him to the proof, to provoke his righteous displeasure, and make him proceed against them, as it were just for him actually to do because of their offences. It is not in the least degree opposed to the statement of James—"God cannot be tempted with evil," which is to the effect that he cannot be influenced by evil, so as to be drawn into it, turned toward it—so as to feel its power or experience its contamination. He is infinitely far removed from it, raised above it, under all its forms. He is so because of the absolute perfection of his being and blessedness.—*John Adam, in "Exposition of the Epistle of James."* 1867.

Verse 41.—*"Limited the Holy One of Israel."* They limited either, 1. God's power, as above, verses 19, 20. Or, 2. God's will, directing and prescribing to him what to do, and when, and in what manner; and murmuring at him if he did not always grant their particular and various desires.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 41.—"*They limited the Holy One of Israel.*" Here, then, is an awful charge, and mysterious it seems to *us* as awful. How dreadful that man, the worm, should arrogate to himself *that*, to say to him that made him, "*Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.*" Amazing, I say, the charge! to contract the dimensions and operations of the Deity. Amazing insolence, to draw a boundary line, beyond which the Creator himself must not pass, to define and prescribe to the Lawgiver of nature himself the pathway of his providence! The turpitude is immense. But we know, my friends, that the crime is not uncommon; and one of the natural results of sin seems to be this,—that the sinful spirit, whether of man or of the lost archangel, unable to shake the firm foundations of the Eternal Throne, *amuses* its malignity, and seeks a temporary cessation from its withering cares, in putting up barriers on the outskirts and frontiers of the Almighty empire, vainly hoping to annoy the Possessor of the throne they cannot disturb.

Affecting words! Do they affect you as they affect me? "*They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.*" Somehow, it seems no combination of words could have been so affecting. *They* limited *God*. They limited *the Almighty*. They limited *the Infinite*. *No!* These words have an awful and affecting surge of meaning in them; for while they describe *Him*, they also convey his relation to us. *They* limited;—*The One*;—the solitary, awful and self-contained Being whose essence is eternity and power; whose self-existence is declared by the amazing marvels of nature; whose life was essential being. They limited *Him*—*The One* in whose being all being was swallowed up and absorbed—*The One* before whose glance mountains and hills fled away and were not found—*The One* from everlasting, God; *high over all, blessed for evermore*. *The One* to whom all the nations were as the drop of a bucket, and who took up the isles as a very little thing,—Him "*they limited.*"

They had known his character as "*The Holy One*"; it was all they knew of his character; but it was surrounded with an awfulness more dread than even the solitary power and self-repose of Deity. In awful words and meanings they had heard his character proclaimed—*The Holy One*. Him they *limited*. *Him*, whose throne was curtained with the dreadful wings of sinless archangels, crying through the darkness of that ineffable brightness, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! and whose holiness was asserted even by the disorders of the rolling world.

They limited him.—More personal, and therefore more wonderful, became the enormity. The generations of their race had testified for Him, the Holy One of Israel; they had beheld the marvels of his holiness and power in Egypt, in the Red Sea; they had heard of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; they had heard of him who had spoken to their Captain in the bush burning with fire; they beheld his pillar of fire and cloud; they knew themselves divinely selected and chosen; and him who chose *they limited!* That which should have ensured their faith became only the fountain of their criminality.—*E. Paxton Hood.*

Verse 41.—"*They limited the Holy One of Israel.*" God cannot bear it with patience, that we should *limit him*, either to the time, or manner, or means of help. He complains of the Jews for this presumption, *they limited the Holy One of Israel.* It is insufferable to circumscribe an infinite wisdom and power. He will work, but when he pleases, and how he pleases, and by what instruments he pleases, and if he please, without instruments, and if he please by weak and improbable, by despised and exploded instruments.—*Joseph Caryl, in a "Sermon before the House of Commons," entitled, "The Workes of Ephesus."*

Verse 41.—(*last clause*). This was Israel's sin, and has it not often been ours? Our God is the "Holy One," and will do what is most for His glory; he is the Holy One "*of Israel*," and will therefore consult his people's welfare. We must not limit his *wisdom*, for it is infinite; we must not limit his *power*, for it is omnipotent; we must not limit his *mercy*, for it is as high as heaven and deep as hell; we must not limit him to *time*, for he will display his sovereignty: he will not be tied to walk by our rules, or be bound to keep our time; but he will perform his word, honour our faith, and reward them that diligently seek him.—*James Smith.*

Verse 41.—"*Limited.*" In the only other place where the Hebrew word occurs (Ezra ix. 4), it means to set a mark upon a person, which some apply here, in the figurative sense of stigmatising or insulting.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 41.—"*Limited the Holy One of Israel,*" or *signed* him; signed him with a sign, so the Targum; they tempted him by asking a sign of him, as Jarchi interprets it; insisting that a miracle be wrought, by which it might be known whether the

Lord was among them or not, Exod. xvii. 7; with which compare Matt. xv. 1: or they set bounds, so Kimchi, to his power and goodness, saying, this he could do, and the other he could not; see verses 19, 20; and so men limit the Lord when they fix on a blessing they would have, even that, and not another; and the measure of it, to what degree it should be bestowed on them, as well as the set time when they would have it; whereas the blessing itself, and the degree of it, and the time of giving it, should be all left with the Lord who knows which and what of it is most convenient for us, and when is the best time to bestow it on us.—*John Gill.*

Verse 41.—"*Limited the Holy One of Israel*"—mistrust of God's power to effectuate all his grace, to do what is needed in any case for his people, and carry out his purposes for them. The moment I suppose anything cannot be for blessing, I limit God. This is a great sin—doubly, when we think of all he has done for us. The Holy Ghost ever reasons from God's revealed, infinite love to all its consequences. He reconciled; surely he will save to the end. He did not spare his Son; how shall he not give all things?—*J. N. Darby.*

Verse 42.—"*They remembered not his hand,*" etc. God hates forgetfulness of his blessings. First, because he has commanded that we should not forget them, Deut. iv. 9; and viii. 14. Secondly, because forgetfulness is a sign of contempt. Thirdly, it is the peculiarity of singular carelessness. Fourthly, it springs from unbelief. Fifthly, it is the greatest mark of ingratitude.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 42.—"*They remembered not his hand,*" etc. The rallying point of faith in time of trial is *the primary manifestation of grace.* To an Israelite a remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt is the test of active faith. In like manner, to the tried believer now it is the Cross that furnishes the outlet of deliverance from the misty darkness with which Satan sometimes is permitted to envelope our conscience, when the Lord has not been kept watchfully before our face. Because Israel forgot that first deliverance, they went on frowardly in the way of evil. Because a Christian sometimes stops short of the Cross in his spiritual conflicts, he fails to defeat the enemy and remains unfruitful and unhappy, until by some special intervention of the great Restorer, he is again brought, in spirit, to that place where God first met him, and welcomed him in Jesus in the fulness of forgiveness and of peace. No intermediate experience, how truthful soever in its character, will meet his case. It is at the cross alone that we regain a thorough right-mindedness about ourselves as well as about God. If we would glorify him, we must "hold fast the *beginning* of our confidence stedfast unto the end," Heb. iii. 14.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 42.—"*They remembered not his hand,*" etc. Eaten bread is soon forgotten. *Nihil citius senescit quam gratia.* Nothing so soon grows stale as a favour.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 43.—"*Zoan,*" or *San,* seems to have been one of the principal capitals, or royal abodes of the Pharaohs (Isaiah xix. 11, 13; xxx. 4): and accordingly "*the field of Zoan,*" or the fine alluvial plain around the city, is described as the scene of the marvellous works which God wrought in the time of Moses.—*John Kitto.*

Verses 43—51.—Moses wrought wonders destructive, Christ wonders preservative; he turned water into blood, Christ water into wine; he brought flies and frogs and locusts and caterpillars, destroying the fruits of the earth, and annoying it; Christ increased a little of these fruits, five loaves and a few fishes, by blessing them, so that he herewith fed five thousand men: Moses smote both men and cattle with hail, and thunder and lightning, that they died, Christ made some alive that were dead, and saved from death the diseased and sick; Moses was an instrument to bring all manner of wrath and evil angels amongst them, Christ cast out devils and did all manner of good, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, limbs to the lame, and cleansing to the leper, and when the sea was tempestuous appeasing it; Moses slew their first-born, thus causing an horrible cry in all the land of Egypt; Christ saveth all the first-born, or by saving makes them so; for thus they are called, Heb. xii. 23.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 44.—"*Turned their rivers into blood,*" etc. This displays also the folly of creature worship. Pharaoh adores the life-sustaining power of nature, as embodied in the majestic river before him. The God of nature transforms the running water into a river of death before his eyes. It demonstrates, in the way that was most striking to the Hebrew and the Egyptian, that the God of Israel was the true and

only God of heaven and earth, and that all other objects of worship were but the creatures of God or the works of men's hands.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 44.—"*Turned their river into blood,*" etc. They looked upon their river not only as consecrated to a deity; but, if we may believe some authors, as their chief national god; and worshipped it accordingly. . . . . They must have felt the utmost astonishment and horror, when they beheld their sacred stream changed and polluted, and the divinity whom they worshipped so shamefully soiled and debased. And these appearances must have had a salutary effect upon the Israelites; as they were hence warned not to accede to this species of idolatry; but to have it ever in contempt, as well as abhorrence.

It is to be observed, that God might, if it had been the divine pleasure, have many different ways tainted and polluted the streams of Egypt. But he thought proper to change it to blood. Now the Egyptians, and especially their priests, were particularly nice and delicate in their outward habit and rites; and there was nothing which they abhorred more than blood, they seldom admitted any bloody sacrifices; and with the least stain of gore they would have thought themselves deeply polluted. Their affectation of purity was so great that they could not bear to come within contact with a foreigner, or even to handle his clothes; but to touch a dead body was an abomination, and required to be immediately expiated. . . . On these accounts the priests were continually making ablutions. There were four stated times, twice in the day, and as often in the night, at which they were all obliged to bathe themselves. Many accidents caused them to repeat it much oftener. Hence this evil brought upon them must have been severely felt, as "there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt," Exod. vii. 21.—*Jacob Bryant* (1715—1804), *in "Observations upon the Plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians."*

Verse 44.—"*And their floods, that they could not drink.*" A third calamity accompanying this plague was the impossibility of drinking the water of the Nile, a vexation the keener felt by them, because the water of the Nile, after having been purified from the slime by a kind of almond-dough is, on the one hand, most agreeable, tasteful and healthy, so that it appears to strangers almost as an artificially prepared drink—whence the Egyptian proverb originated: "the water of the Nile is as sweet as honey and sugar," and the adage, "that if Mohammed had drank of it, he would have besought God to be immortal, that he might always enjoy it; and it is, on the other hand, the *only* drinkable water which the inhabitants can possibly use; for, says Maillet (I. p. 20): "The well and cistern-water in Egypt is detestable and unwholesome; fountains are so rare, that they are a kind of prodigy in that country; and, as to rain-water, that is out of the question, as scarcely any rain falls in Egypt."—*M. M. Kalisch, in "A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament."* 1867.

Verse 45.—"*Flies.*" [Exodus viii. 13, 14. כִּנִּים or כִּנִּם]. It is a matter of difficulty precisely to determine the species or kind of animals denoted by that expression; but so much is certain: 1. That they must be a very small kind of insects, as they are represented to arise from the grains of dust; 2. That they are noxious both to man and beasts (ver. 13.) and in a still higher degree than the frogs. The singular, כִּן, is used in Isaiah li. 6, where it represents something very frail, weak, and perishable. The etymology leads to the Greek root, κνάω, to *gnaw* or pinch—and this coincides with the English noun *gnats*, with which, indeed, all the qualities just mentioned perfectly agree. And the Septuagint, which is naturally of great authority in all matters concerning the natural phenomena of Egypt, its home, translates also σκνῖφες (musquito gnats); which Philo, likewise an Egyptian, describes thus: "It is an insect although of very small size, yet of a most troublesome nature; for it hurts not only the surface, causing intolerable and protracted itching, but penetrates also into the interior through the ears and noses. It flies even into the eyes of those who do not guard themselves, and produces pain." All which qualities are perfectly applicable to gnats.—*M. M. Kalisch.*

Verse 45.—"*He sent divers sorts of flies.*" "I will send swarms *of flies* upon thee," etc. (Exod. viii. 21.) Heb. עָרֹב, *arob, a mixture*, or *mixed swarm*, i.e. probably of flies, wasps, hornets, and other vexatious and stinging insects. It will be observed that "*flies*" in our version, being printed in italics, is not in the original. . . . . the Septuagint renders עָרֹב, *arob*, by κυνόμυιαν, *dog fly*, from its biting, an insect that fastens its teeth so deep in the flesh, and sticks so very close, that it oftentimes makes cattle run mad. . . . .

"He sent (ערב, *arob*) *divers sorts of flies among them which devoured them."* The *arob* is described as *devouring* the Egyptians, which is an act which seems inapplicable to a fly. Upon the whole we strongly incline to the opinion which has found some able supporters of late years, that the Egyptian beetle (*blatta Ægyptiaca*) is denoted in this place. The beetle, which is almost everywhere a nuisance, is particularly abundant and offensive in Egypt, and all the circumstances which the Scriptures in different places intimates concerning the *arob*, applies with much accuracy to this species. It devours everything that comes in its way, even clothes, books, and plants, and does not hesitate to inflict severe bites on men. If also we conceive that one object of these plagues was to chasten the Egyptians through their own idols, there is no creature of its class which could be more fitly employed than this insect. What precise place it filled in the religious system of that remarkable people has never, we believe, been exactly determined; but that it occupied a conspicuous place among their sacred creatures seems to be evinced by the fact, that there is scarcely any figure which occurs more frequently in Egyptian sculpture and painting. —*George Bush.*

Verse 45.—*"Flies, which devoured them."* [See Exodus viii. 24.] *"The land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies."* Bochart understands by *land, the inhabitants*, whose blood these flies sucked, and left such a poison in it, that their bodies swelled, and many of them died. Le Clerc understands it of the flesh and other eatables, which those vermin having preyed upon, and fly-blown, bred maggots, stench and putrefaction throughout the land.—*Jameson's Critical and Practical Exposition of the Pentateuch.* 1748.

Verse 45.—*"And frogs, which destroyed them."* Galerius observes, that the Egyptians were punished in this plague upon all the five senses. The sight was punished, that was offended with the multitude, with the greatness, with the hideous form and colour of these frogs. Their hearing was offended with the croaking of them; for it was but harsh music to dainty ears. Their smell was offended with the stench of them. Their taste was offended that they came into their troughs, the places of their dough, and so hindered them of the food that was provided for their nourishment. . . . . "The frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants," (Exod. viii. 4.) So that thou shalt not rid thyself of this annoyance. What! in their meat, and drink; and upon their bodies! Then observe with me, beloved, God can lay judgments upon people, that shall not be more painful, and troublesome, than odious, loathsome and noisome.—*Josias Shute, in "Judgment and Mercy: or the Plague of Frogs* { *inflicted* / *removed.*—1645."

Verse 45.—*"Frogs."* The Egyptians suffered most keenly from the infliction. They were a singularly fastidious people, and abhorred the contact of anything that they held to be unclean. We may well realise, therefore, the effect of a visitation of frogs, which rendered their houses unclean by entering them, and themselves unclean by leaping upon them; which deprived them of rest by getting on their beds, and of food by crawling into their ovens and upon the dough in the kneading-troughs. And, as if to make the visitation still worse, when the plague was removed, the frogs died in the places into which they had intruded, so that the Egyptians were obliged to clear their houses of the dead carcases, and to pile them up in heaps, to be dried by the sun, or eaten by birds and other scavengers of the East. As to the species of frog which thus invaded the houses of the Egyptians, there is no doubt whatever. It can be but the *green*, or *edible frog* (*Rana esculenta*), which is so well known for the delicacy of its flesh. This is believed to be the only aquatic frog of Egypt, and therefore must be the species which came out of the river into the houses. Both in Egypt and Palestine it exists in very great numbers, swarming in every marshy place, and inhabiting the pools in such numbers that the water can scarcely be seen for the frogs. Thus the multitudes of the frogs which invaded the Egyptians was no matter of wonder, the only miraculous element being that the reptiles were simultaneously directed to the houses, and their simultaneous death when the plague was taken away.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 45.—*"Frogs."* The rod is lifted up again. Behold, that Nilus, which they had before adored, was never so beneficial as it is now troublesome; yielding them not only a dead, but a living annoyance: it never did so store them with fish as it now plagues them with frogs. Whatsoever any man makes his god, besides the true one, shall be one day his tormentor. Those loathsome creatures leave their own element to punish them which rebelliously detained Israel from their own.

No bed, no table, can be free from them: their dainty ladies cannot keep them out of their bosoms; neither can the Egyptians sooner open their mouths than they are ready to creep into their throats, as if they would tell them, that they came on purpose to revenge the wrongs of their Maker.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 46.—"*Caterpiller.*" חָסִיל, *chasil*, is rendered βροῦχοι by the LXX, in 2 Chron. vi. 28, and by Aquila here, and also by the Vulgate in Chron. and in Isai. xxxiii. 4, and it is rendered by Jerome here, *bruchus*, "the chaffer," which everyone knows to be a great devourer of the leaves of trees. The Syriac in Joel i. 4, ii. 25, renders it צרצורא *tzartzooro*, which Michaelis, from the Arabic צרצר *tsartzar*, a cricket, interprets the *mole-cricket*, which, in its grub state, is also very destructive to corn, grass, and other vegetables, by cankering the roots on which it feeds.—*Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 46.—"*Caterpiller.*" In former times, any destructive, crawling creature occurring in cultivated places was thus called; now, by general consent, we restrict the term to the second stage of insects of the Lepidopterous order, namely, butterflies and moths. These caterpillers, by the voracity with which they attack the leaves, the fruit, and sometimes the solid wood of plants and trees, are made conspicuous even to those who are little acquainted with natural history.—"*Biblical Treasury.*"

Verse 46.—"*Locust.*" Their quantity is incredible to all who have not themselves witnessed their astonishing numbers; the whole earth is covered with them for the space of several leagues. The noise they make in browsing on the trees and herbage may be heard at a great distance, and resembles that of an army plundering in secret. The Tartars themselves are a less destructive enemy than these little animals. One would imagine that fire had followed their progress. Wherever their myriads spread, the verdure of the country disappears; trees and plants stripped of their leaves and reduced to their naked boughs and stems, cause the dreary image of winter to succeed in an instant to the rich scenery of spring. When these clouds of locusts take their flight, to surmount any obstacles, or to traverse more rapidly a desert soil, the heavens may literally be said to be obscured with them.—*F. C., Comte de Volney.*

Verse 47.—"*He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost.*" The grape vine for the rich, and the sycamore fig for the poor, were cut off by the just judgment of God upon the nation.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 47.—The sycomore (not sycamore, for this is altogether different, though, in consequence of a typographical error, often confounded with it in our Bibles) was the name of a tree, common in Egypt, Amos. vii. 14; Luke xix. 4. This tree resembled the mulberry in its leaves, and the fig in its fruit; and on its produce the inferior ranks of people, for the most part, lived. The Psalmist refers to but one sort, still he clearly means every kind, of valuable tree.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 49.—"*By sending evil angels.*" Evils come uncalled, but not unsent. Are they not here called "*angels*"? they are sent; the word *angel* means a messenger. Not things only without life, but not living creatures neither, brute, nor men, nor Satan's self can hurt unless God bid. The three days' darkness in Egypt, how came it? "He sent darkness," saith David. Psalm cv. 28. So the hail, thunder, and lightning, the Lord sent them, saith Moses. The frogs, flies, lice, grasshoppers, and caterpillars, that infected Egypt, and the lions that slew the idolators in Samaria (2 Kings xvii.), the text saith of them all, *Dominus immisit*, the Lord sent them. And for men—"Am I come" (said Rabshakeh) "without the Lord?" He bade me go. Yea, the devil, the arch-evil-angel, who seeks to devour, yet must be *sent* ere he can do ought. The lying spirit in the mouths of the false prophets longed to seduce Ahab; God must first bid; *Egredere*, go forth, and do so. The use of this is easy without my help: not to fear, doing well; not man, fiend, any creature, can hurt you, God not sending them. But sinning, to fear everything. The weakest creature can quell the mightiest man, if God bid, go. A mouse (saith the poet) will bite a wicked man. Be it proud Herod, great Antiochus; if God but ask the creatures, *Quem mittam*, which of you shall I send? the worm will answer, *Ecce me*, send me; I will devour him. And such poor, silly, despicable creatures are some of these "*evil angels*" in my text. "*He sent:*" what sent he? "*evil angels,*" the next thing in this Scripture.

"*Evil angels?*" *Par dispar*, a pair of words which seem not well matched. The latter may say to the former, *Quid mihi et tibi*, what have I to do with thee? Angels

were the best and holiest of God's creatures. They all were good, very good, Moses saith; but angels κατ' ἐξοχην, excellently good. Then is *"evil"* here an evil epithet for angels. And is never read but here, and here (some think) not well translated. But the phrase of *"evil angels"* hath other meaning here: *evil angels, i.e.*, the angels, *i.e.*, the messengers of evil. It is in the Hebrew, not מַלְאָכִים, but מַלְאֲכֵי; insomuch that some expositors think the Psalmist means the words of Moses and Aaron; that they were sent from God to be the messengers of evil, *i.e.*, of all the plagues that God would bring on Egypt. That sense I censure not, but follow not. The Greek Fathers have another—that by the *"evil angels"* are meant the *evil spirits.* Christ calls them angels too, the devil's angels. Augustine likes not that sense. The most current exposition is as a Jewish writer speaks: the "evil angels" are the ten several plagues.—*Richard Clerke.* (—1634.)

Verse 49.—*"By sending evil angels among them."* That the devil and his angels are so very evil, that for them everlasting fire is prepared, no believer is ignorant: but that there should be sent by means of them an infliction from the Lord God upon certain whom he judgeth to be deserving of this punishment, seemeth to be a hard thing to those who are little prone to consider how the perfect justice of God doth use well even evil things. For these indeed, as far as regardeth their substance, what other person but himself hath made? But evil he hath not made them; yet he doth use them, inasmuch as he is good, conveniently and justly; just as on the other hand unrighteous men do use his good creatures in evil manner: God therefore doth use evil angels not only to punish evil men, as in the case of all those concerning whom the Psalm doth speak, as in the case of king Ahab, whom a spirit of lying by the will of God did beguile, in order that he might fall in war; but also to prove and make manifest good men, as he did in the case of Job.—*Augustine.*

Verse 50.—*"He made a way to his anger."* Literally—"weighed a way:" implying that God, in punishing the Egyptians so severely, did nothing but what was just and equitable, when *weighed* in the balance of right. Prov. iv. 26.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 50.—*"He made a way to his anger."* As if the Psalmist had said, If there were not *"a way"* for his anger, that is, for the execution of his anger, *he forced* his way; though he did not find a way, yet he *"made"* one, and fought himself through all difficulties which seemed to oppose the destruction of his enemies. We put in the margin, *"he weighed a path,"* he made the path as exact as if he had put it into a balance; the way was fitted to the largeness of his own anger, and 'twas fitted to the dimensions of their wickedness. Thus *"he made a way to his anger,"* both by suiting the way to his anger and by removing all impediments out of the way of his anger. If God will work to save, who shall let it? and if God will work to destroy, who or what shall let it?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 51.—*"The chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham."* The sun of the last day of the sojourn of Israel in Egypt had set. It was the fourth day after the interview with Moses. Pharaoh, his princes, and the priests of his idols would doubtless take courage from this unwonted delay. Jehovah and his ministers are beaten at length, for now the gods of Egypt prevail against them. The triumph would be celebrated in pomps and sacrifices, in feasts and dances. Nothing is more likely than that the banquet halls of Pharaoh at Rameses were blazing with lamps, and that he and his princes were pouring forth libations of wine to their gods, and concerting schemes amid their revelry, for the perpetuation of the thraldom of Israel. . . . . Pharaoh Sethos started from his couch that night yelling in fierce and bitter agony, and gnawing at the sharp arrow that was rankling in his vitals, like a wounded lion. His son, his first-born, his only son, just arrived at man's estate, just crowned king of Egypt, and associated with his father in the cares of sovereignty writhed before him in mortal throes, and died. His transports of grief were re-echoed, and with no feigned voice, by the princes, the councillors, and the priests that partook of his revelry. Each one rends his garments and clasps to his bosom the quivering corpse of his first-born son. On that fearful night "there was a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt," but if we have rightly read its history, the loudest, wildest wail of remorseful anguish would arise from Pharaoh's banquet hall!—*William Osburn, in "Israel in Egypt."* 1856.

Verse 52.—*"But made his own people to go forth like sheep."* It is not said that they went forth like sheep; but that he made them go forth like sheep. It is not

a description of the character of the people, but a commendation of the providence and goodness of God, by which, after the manner of a good shepherd, he led forth from Egypt his own people with all security, like sheep snatched from the midst of wolves.—*Musculus.*

Verse 53.—"*They feared not.*" First, they had no cause for fear, *in their departure from Egypt.* Though they saw the Egyptians slain, yet against them not even a dog moved its tongue. 2. They were all in sound health. 3. They were enriched with the spoils of the Egyptians. 4. They went forth a great multitude. 5. They supplied themselves with arms. Secondly, *they feared not to enter the Red Sea,* for the fear started by the approach of Pharaoh was swiftly suppressed. Thirdly, *they feared not to wander in the desert* for forty years, God going before his pillar. Fourthly, *they feared not, though enemies attacked them.*—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 54.—"*He brought them to the border of his sanctuary,*" or *holiness;* that is, to the holy land; so called in divers respects, but especially because of his sanctuary, the place of his residence; to which he makes all the land to be but as bounds and limits, because of the eminency of that place, the holiness whereof did, as it were, spread to all other parts of the land, as if the whole had been a sanctuary, and consecrated ground. It is therefore to the honour of the whole land, as well as of the sanctuary, that he calleth it "*the holy border,*" a "*border of his sanctuary.*"—*Westminster Assembly's Annotations.*

Verse 57.—"*They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.*" The eastern bow, which when at rest is in the form of a ◠, must be *recurved,* or *turned the contrary way,* in order to be what is called *bent* and *strung.* If a person who is unskilful or weak attempt to *recurve* and string one of these bows, if he take not great heed it will spring back and regain its quiescent position, and perhaps break his arm. And sometimes I have known it, when bent, to *start aside,* and regain its quiescent position, to my no small danger, and in one or two cases to my injury. This image is frequently used in the sacred writings; but no person has understood it, not being acquainted with the eastern *bow* ◠, which must be *recurved* or bent the contrary way ◡, in order to be proper for use. If not well made, they will fly back in discharging the arrow. It is said of the *bow* of Jonathan, "*it turned not back,*" 2 Samuel i. 22, אָחוֹר לֹא יָשׁוּג, *lo nasog achor,* "did not twist itself backward." It was a good bow, one on which he could depend. Hosea, chap. vii. 16, compares the unfaithful Israelites to a "*deceitful bow;*" one that, when bent, would suddenly start aside and recover its former position. We may find the same passage in Jer. ix. 3. And this is precisely the kind of bow mentioned by *Homer,* Odyss. xxi., which none of Penelope's suitors could bend, called καμπύλα τόξα and αγκύλο τόξα, the *crooked bow,* in the state of rest; but τόξον παλίντονον, the *recurved bow* when prepared for use. And of his trial of *strength* and *skill* in the bending of the bow of Ulysses, none of the critics and commentators have been able to make anything, because they knew not the instrument in question. On the τόξου θησις of Homer I have written a dissertation elsewhere. The image is very correct; these Israelites, when brought out of their natural bent, soon recoiled, and relapsed into their former state.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 57.—"*Starting aside like a broken bow*" (English Prayer Book): but if a bow breaks, it will not start aside, for the elasticity which should make it start aside will be destroyed.—*Stephen Street.*

Verse 57.—"*They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.*" When the bow is unbent the rift it hath may be undiscerned, but go to use it by drawing the arrow to the head, and it flies in pieces; thus doth a false heart when put to the trial. As the ape in the fable, drest like a man, when nuts are thrown before her, cannot then dissemble her nature any longer, but shows herself an ape indeed; a false heart betrays itself before it is aware, when a fair occasion is presented for its lust; whereas sincerity keeps the soul pure in the face of temptation.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 57.—The fourth thing is *the deceitful bow,* קֶשֶׁת רְמִיָּה, a slack or warping bow *arcus doli vel dolosus seu fallax* (Hebrew) will be sure to deceive the archer that shoots in it; 'twill turn back into belly, as the archer's phrase is; and though he level both his eye and his arrow never so directly to the mark and think confidently with himself to hit it; yet, in the event, the arrow, through the warping of the bow, flies a quite contrary way, yea, and sometimes reflects upon the archer himself. *Non semper feriet, quodcunque minabitur arcus,* the bow smites not all it threatens, and the ill-fashioned or casting bow will turn in the shooter's hand, and send the

arrow sometimes one way and sometimes another way; yea, and sometimes it rebounds into his own sides; or if it be a rotten bow (though otherwise fair to look upon), when an arrow is drawn to the head it breaks in the hand, and deceives the archer. The same thing happeneth when the string of the bow is naughty, and breaks when the arrow is drawn. This is no less than a divine Scripture allegory. Behold, such a fallacious, warping, and rotten bow is man's deceitful heart; his purposes and promises are the arrows that he puts upon the string, the mark he aims at is repentance, to the which (in affliction especially) he looketh with an accurate and intent eye, as though he would repent indeed; but, alas! his heart deceives him, as being unsound in God's statutes, Psalm cxix. 80; and hence it is that his promises and pretences do fall at his foot, or vanish in the air as smoke. Thus a *deceiving*, as well as a *deceived* heart, turns him aside, Isaiah xliv. 20, as it did those false Israelites: oh, then, look to the secret warpings of your own heart, and seeing you are God's bow, you must be bent by him, and stand bent for him, Zech. ix. 13; thereby you shall be like Jonathan's bow that "never returned empty," 2 Samuel i. 22.—*Christopher Ness, in "A Chrystal Mirrour."* 1679.

Verses 57—59.—Not to be settled in the faith, is provoking to God. To espouse the truth, and then to fall away, brings an ill report upon the gospel, which will not go unpunished. *"They turned back, and dealt unfaithfully. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel."* The apostate drops as a windfall into the devil's mouth.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 58.—*"High places."* Or, altars, chapels, and such like places, to celebrate divine service in, out of the only place which was by him consecrated, and was alone acceptable unto him; or peradventure also dedicated to idols; and were so called, because that they chose out the choicest hills and hillocks for those purposes.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 59.—*"When God heard this."* The Psalmist represents the noise of the ill deeds of the people ascending to the ears of the Eternal.—*Armand de Mestral, in "Commentaire sur le Livre de Psaumes."* 1856.

Verse 60.—It is a heathenish delusion and false confidence to suppose that God is bound to any place or spot, as the Trojans thought because they had the temple of Pallas in their city it could not be taken, and in the present day the manner of the Papists is to bind Christ to Rome and the chair of Peter, and then defiantly maintain "I shall never be moved" (Ps. x. 6). For, they say, the ship of Peter may sink a little, but not altogether. Then the only point that is deficient is this, that they are not the ship of Peter, but rather an East Indiaman with a cargo of Indian apes and such like foreign merchandize, pearls, purple, silk, brass, iron, silver, gold, incense, lead, that they may carry on simony and make merchandize of religion, and deceive the whole world (Rev. xviii. 11—24).—*Johann Andreas Cramer.* 1723—1788.

Verse 61.—*"And delivered his strength into captivity,"* etc. He calls the ark the *strength of God*, not because the virtue of God was shut up therein, or was so bound to it that he could not, unless through it, be powerful and strong: but because his presence, whose symbol the ark was, had always revealed its virtue and might to Israel, in the perpetual defence and various deliverances of that people. After the same manner he calls it the beauty or glory of God, because God by his own presence declared his glory among the people, and desired that it should be conspicuous by this external symbol.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 63.—*"The fire consumed their young men."* *"Fire"* here may be regarded as an image of destructive war, as in Num. xxi. 28. "For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab," etc.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 63 (*first clause*).—When religion is overthrown among God's people, let not the commonwealth think to stand: when God gave his glory unto the enemies' hand, "He gave his people over also unto the sword, and *the fire consumed their young men.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 63.—*"Not given to marriage."* *"Not praised:"* *viz.* they had not been honoured with nuptial songs according to the customs of those times, see Jer. vii. 34; xvi. 9; xxv. 10. The meaning is, they had not been honourably married, because men were grown scarce by reason of the wars, Isai. iv. 1; Jer. xxxi. 22. Or, they

had been married without any solemnity, like poor bond-women; or privately, as in the time of public calamities.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 64.—"*Their widows made no lamentation.*" This implies the extent of the destruction, and is full of meaning to one who has been in an Oriental city, during a plague or other devastating calamity. At first the cry of wailing, which always follows a death in ordinary circumstances, is loud and frequent: but such cries do not increase, but subside, with the increase of the calamity and desolation. Death becomes a familiar object in every house; and every one, absorbed in his own losses, has little sympathy to spare for others. Hence the loudest lamentations cease to be noticed, or to draw condoling friends to the house of mourning; and therefore, as well as from the stupefaction of feeling which scenes of continued horror never fail to produce, a new death is received in silence, or only with sighs and tears. In fact, all the usual observances are suspended. The dead are carried out and buried without mourning ceremonies, and without the presence of surviving friends, by men who make it an employment to take away the dead, on the backs of mules or asses, from the homes they leave desolate. We have seen this.—*Kitto's "Pictorial Bible."* 1856.

Verse 64.—"*Their widows made no lamentation.*" The meaning is, either 1. That being overwhelmed with sorrow they could not weep; or, 2. That being in captivity amongst the Philistines they were not suffered to lament the death of their husbands; or 3. That dying with grief, they lived not to make any lamentations for them at their funerals; or 4. That they were so taken up and oppressed with their own miseries, and especially with the miseries of the church and people of God in general, that they had not leisure to bewail their husbands; of both which last we have a clear instance in the wife of Phinehas in particular, 1 Sam. iv. 19, 20, who dying, made no mention of her husband.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 64.—The daughter-in-law of Eli, when she was at once travailing, and in that travail dying, to make up the full sum of God's judgment upon that wicked house, as one insensible of the death of her father, of her husband, of herself, in comparison of this loss, calls her (then unseasonable) son Ichabod, and with her last breath says, "The glory is departed from Israel, the ark is taken."—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 65.—"*Then the Lord awaked.*" Know how to understand this and similar passages in Scripture, as to the Lord's sleeping and forgetting his people, Ps. xiii. 1; xliv. 33; lxxvii. 9. These are not to be understood as to an universal and absolute forgetting and sleep of providence; for God hath not his vacation time; he still holds the reins of government in his hand, all the world over. Neither do they infer an absolute cessation of providence in reference to that object-matter which the Lord to our apprehension seems to forget, and lies dormant; for there is a promoting-work of providence, which we see not, and are not so sensible of for the present, as hath been shewed. Besides, such forgetting and sleep of providence, as it is such, bespeaks the beauty of providence in the way of bringing things to pass. It is so far from inferring an *interregnum*, or letting fall the sceptre of government, as that it is a glorious demonstration that God orders matters, and that wisely, whilst he seems to forget, and be as one asleep. As the night, as night, falls under the providence of God as well as the day, for there are the ordinances of heaven for the night season, Jer. xxxi. 35: so the dark night, when as to matters the Lord seems to sleep, is part and parcel of his all-wise model of government. The seventy years' captivity was a long night of the church's distress; and yet thus it must be according to the ordinance of providence. Jer. xxix. 10.—*Thomas Crane.*

Verse 65.—"*Like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine:*" whose spirit and courage is revived and inflamed by a liberal draught of generous wine; which comparison is no more injurious to the Divine Majesty than that of a thief's coming in the night, to which Christ's second coming is compared, 1 Thess. v. 2.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 66.—"*He smote his enemies in the hinder parts.*" This has reference to the Philistines being smitten with hemorrhoids, or piles, whilst the ark was retained a captive by them, 1 Sam. v. 6, 12. . . . . The Greek version, as quoted by Suidas is, *he smote his enemies on the back parts of the seat;* signifying, he says, a disease modestly expressed.—*John Gill.*

Verse 67.—The moving of the ark is not the removing of it; Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not. God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among

men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed ; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Sion.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 67, 68.—"*Refused.*" "*Chose not.*" "*Chose.*" As God's love is set out to us, as not independently pitched, but as having all the persons in his eye and having them all in view ; so by this also, that he hath not pitched it upon everybody. This is distinct from the former ; for an indefinite is not knowing whom he pitched it upon. Now, as he knew whom he pitched upon, so he hath pitched but upon some, not on every one. . . . If God would love, it was fit he should be free. It is a strange thing that you will not allow God that which kings and princes have the prerogative of, and you will allow it them. They will have favourites whom they will love, and will not love others ; and yet men will not allow God that liberty, but he must either love all mankind, or he must be cruel and unjust. The specialness of his love greateneth it, and endeareth it to us. You shall find almost all along the Bible, that when God would express his love, he doth it with a speciality to his own elect, which he illustrates by the contrary done to others. . . . And you shall find frequently in the Scripture, when he mentioneth his choice of some persons, he holdeth up likewise on purpose his refusing of others. . . . When he speaks of an election out of the tribes, he contents not himself to say he chose Judah, but he puts in the rejection, the preterition at least, of Joseph. "*He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim : But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.*" . . . He speaks of the times of the judges. The rejection of the ten tribes began to show itself soon ; he says, he refused the tabernacle of Ephraim, but he chose Judah. After Solomon's time, they fell to worshipping of calves (let me tell you, it is the declining of election that undoes a nation, when election grows low, and ceases in an age), till at last the ten tribes were cast off, as they are at this day ; but the tribe of Judah had election among them. . . .

Though at the first, and for a long time, both were alike his people, yet at last election began to pass a discrimination. Ephraim, or the ten tribes, had at first the advantage of Judah in spirituals ; for the ark, the token of God's presence, was committed unto their keeping at Shiloh ; the seal of God's worship and ordinances was intrusted to them, and Judah must come up thither, if they would seek the Lord. But Ephraim, for their sinning against that worship, forfeited and lost it, and should therefore have the keeping of it no longer, no, not for ever any more ; but Judah had it at Bethlehem, till at last it was fixedly seated in Sion, as " the earth is established " (ver. 69) ; and this for no other reason than that he had loved them, and out of love had chosen them (ver. 67—69). For otherwise Judah was, as well as Ephraim, alike involved in the same guilt of sin which had forfeited it, as ver. 56—60 of the Psalm plainly show. "*Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies,*" etc. He speaks it of the whole in those verses, and yet takes the occasion against Ephraim to remove it for ever. Thus, the first are last, and the last first ; and those whom God's presence is with for a while, upon some eminent sin God begins to withdraw from them and by degrees, as he did by that people of the ten tribes till at last he cast them off from being a people, but dealt not so with Judah, though these made a forfeiture of their temple and worship, and nation, in the captivity of Babylon, yet God restored all again to greater glory at last. The ground was that in verse 68, "*Zion which he loved.*"—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 70.—"*He took him from the sheepfolds.*" The art of feeding cattle, and the art of ruling men are sisters, saith Basil.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 71.—"*From following the ewes great with young.*" A good and steady lamber is of great value to a grazier, but I would advise all graziers to attend to this operation themselves, as few servants will be found to pay that attention which is necessary, or which a master himself would do, and the slightest neglect is, in many cases, followed with the greatest disadvantage. I have attended to the practice of lambing for several years, therefore, trust I am not a novice in it, or incomptent to give a description of it. Many lambs may be lost without its being possible to charge the lamber with neglect or ignorance, though greater attention on his part might have saved many that otherwise perish. . . . . The practice of lambing is at times very intricate, and is apt to exhaust the patience of a lamber. Sheep are obstinate, and lambing presents a scene of confusion, disorder, and trouble, which it is the lamber's business to rectify, and for which he ought always to be prepared :

some of the ewes perhaps leave their lambs, or the lambs get intermixed, and the ewes which have lost their lambs run about bleating, while others want assistance These are only a few of the various occurrences which call for the immediate attention of the lamber.—*Daniel Price, in "A System of Sheep-grazing and Management."* 1809.

Verse 71.—"*From following the ewes great with young.*" It hath been reported that a learned doctor of Oxford hung up his leathern breeches in his study for a memorial to visitors of his mean original; the truth I avouch not, but history tells us of Agathocles who arose from a potter to be king of Sicily, and would be served in no other plate at his table but earthenware, to mind him of his former drudgery. 'Twere well if some would remember whose shoes they have cleaned, whose coals they have carried, and whose money they have borrowed, and deal gratefully with their creditors, as the good Lord Cromwell did by the Florentine merchant in the time of Henry the Eighth, when Wolsey* like a butcher forgot the king his master. 'Twas otherwise with holy David, who being in kingly dignity, graciously calls to mind his following the ewes great with young, when now feeding the sheep of Israel. His golden sceptre points at his wooden hook, and he plays the old lessons of his oaten pipe upon his Algum harp, and spreads his Bethlehem tent within his marble palace on Mount Zion.—*Samuel Lee.*

Verse 71.—"*To feed Jacob his people.*"† Observe a good shepherd must be humble and faithful, he ought to have bread in a wallet, a dog by a string, a staff with a rod, and a tuneful horn. The bread is the word of God, the wallet is the memory of the word; the dog is zeal, wherewith the shepherd glows for the house of God, casts out the wolves with pious barking, following preaching and unwearied prayer: the string by which the dog is held is the moderation of zeal, and discretion, whereby the zeal of the shepherd is tempered by the spirit of piety and knowledge. The staff is the consolation of pious exhortation by which the too timid are sustained and refreshed, lest they fail in the time of tribulation; but the rod is the authority and power by which the turbulent are restrained. The tuneful horn, which sounds so sweetly, signifies the sweetness of eternal blessedness, which the faithful shepherd gently and often instils into the ears of his flock.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius.* 1600.

Verse 72.—In spite of his transgressions, which he always bitterly repented of, and which were therefore blotted out of the Book of God, he remains to all princes and rulers of the earth as the noblest pattern. In perfect inward truth he knew and felt himself to be "*King by the grace of God.*" The crown and sceptre he bore merely in trust from the King of all kings; and to his latest breath he endeavoured with all his earnestness to be found as a genuine theocratic king, who in everything must conduct his earthly government according to the ordinances and directions of God. Therefore the Lord made all that he took in hand prosper, and nothing was clearer to the people than that the Lord was *truly with the king.*—*Frederick William Krummacher, in "David the King of Israel."* 1867.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The duty of attending to God's word. Modes of neglecting the duty; ways of fulfilment; reasons for obedience; evils of inattention.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—Preach on the "Parable of the Prodigal Nation," as given in the whole Psalm.—*C. A. Davies, of Chesterfield.*

Verses 2, 3.—I. Truths are none the worse for being old: "sayings of old." "Old wood," says Lord Bacon, "is best to burn; old books are best to read; and old friends are best to trust." II. Truths are none the worse for being concealed under metaphors: "I will open," etc., "in a parable;" "dark sayings." 1. They lead to more research. 2. They become eventually better known. III. Truths

* Foxe's Martyrology.

† This is a curious specimen of mediæval spiritualising, and is here inserted as such. It is amusing to note that a Tractarian expositor quotes the passage with evidently intense admiration.

are none the worse for being often repeated. 1. They are more tested. 2. They are better testified.—*G. R.*

Verse 3.—The connection between what we have "heard," and what we have personally "known" in religion.

Verse 4.—A good resolution, and a blessed result.—*C. D.*

Verse 4.—I. What is to be made known? "The praises of the Lord;" "his strength and his wonderful works." II. To whom are they to be made known? "To the generations to come." III. By whom? Parents—one generation to another. IV. How made known? 1. By hiding nothing. 2. By declaring everything God has done.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—Scriptural tradition, or the heirloom of the gospel.

Verses 5—8.—Family religion. I. The fathers' knowledge the children's heritage —verses 5, 6. II. The fathers' fall the children's preservation—verses 7, 8.—*C. D.*

Verses 5—8.—I. Truth once started can never be arrested—verses 5, 6. II. Truth received binds the soul to God—verse 7. III. Truth rejected lights beacons for others—verse 8.—*C. D.*

Verse 6.—Care for the rising generation and for future posterity.

Verse 7.—Practical philosophy. I. Fix your hope wisely. II. Store the memory richly. III. So shall you guide the actions obediently.

Verses 7, 8.—On the deceitfulness of the heart, in disregarding providential dispensations in general.—*John Jamieson's "Sermons on the Heart,"* I. 430.

Verse 8.—Stubbornness not steadfastness, or the difference between a natural vice and a gracious quality.

Verse 8.—The false heart (*middle clause*), with its left hand, "Stubbornness in the wrong" (*first clause*), and its right hand, "Fickleness in the right" (*last clause*).—*C. D.*

Verse 9.—Who were they? What had they? What did they? When did they do it?

Verses 9, 67.—The backsliding of prominent believers. I. The Lord's soldiers: who they were; belonged to God's chosen people; were distinguished by grace. Gen. xlviii. 17—20. Strong by God's blessing. Deut. xxxiii. 17. Honourable place among their brethren. Favoured with the tabernacle at Shiloh—verse 60. II. Their equipment: armour defensive and offensive; like that of others who triumphed. III. Their behaviour in battle: to turn back was traitorous, cowardly, dangerous, disastrous, dishonourable. IV. Their punishment—verse 57. Deprived of their special honour. Rev. iii. 11—*C. D.*

Verses 10, 11.—The gradations of sin: neglecting, rejecting, forgetting God.—*C. D.*

Verses 12—16.—God revealed in his deeds. The wonder-working God—verses 12—16. The avenging God—verse 12. The interposing God—verse 13. The guiding God—verse 14. The Father-God—verses 14—16.—*C. D.*

Verses 12—17.—Obstinacy of unbelief. It makes head against God's majesty—verse 17; his gracious providence—verses 14—16; his interposing care—verse 13; his avenging justice—verse 12; his distinguishing grace—verses 12—16.—*C. D.*

Verses 12—17.—Prodigies cannot convert the soul. Luke xvi. 31.—*C. D.*

Verse 14.—The adaptations of God: a beautiful theme.—*C. D.*

Verse 14.—I. Direction. II. Protection. III. Refreshment.—*R. P. Buddicom.*

Verse 14.—The Lord guides his people by being, I. Their shade in prosperity, cooling and calming. II. Their light in adversity, cheering and warming.

Verses 15, 16.—Divine supplies seasonable, plentiful, of the best, marvellous.

Verse 16.—Streams from the Rock Christ Jesus. I. Their source. II. Their variety. III. Their abundance.—*B. Davies, of Greenwich.*

Verse 17.—Sin in its progress feeds upon divine mercies to aid its advance, as also every other surrounding circumstance.

Verses 17—21.—I. They tempted God's patience; verse 17. II. They tempted God's wisdom; verse 18. III. They tempted God's power; verses 19, 20. IV. They tempted God's wrath; verse 21.—*E. G. Gange, of Bristol.*

Verse 18.—"*Meat for their lust.*" In what respects temporal mercies may be so sought, and so become.

Verses 18—21.—The progress of evil. I. They are drawn away by their lust; verse 18. II. Lust having conceived bringeth forth sin: verses 19—20. III. Sin being finished bringeth forth death: verse 21. "Their carcases fell."—*C. D.*

Verse 19.—Unbelief a slander of God.

Verses 21, 22.—Evil consequences of unbelief. I. The sin itself: they doubted the ultimate certainty, completeness, and reality of God's salvation from Egypt. II. The aggravation of it: the object of it was God; they who entertained it were God's people: The aids to faith were overlooked: "though." III. What it led them to; inward sin—verse 18; outward sin—verse 19, etc. IV. What it brought upon them; verse 21. Fiery serpents, etc.—*C. D.*

Verse 22.—Unbelief the mother of sorrows.

Verse 25.—Different kinds of food. Beasts' food, Luke xv. 16. Sinners' food, Hosea iv. 8. Formalists' food, Hosea xii. 1. Saints' food, Jer. xv. 16; John vi. 53—57. Angels' food. Christ's food, John iv. 34.—*C. D.*

Verses 29—31.—Dangerous prayers. When lust dictates, wrath may answer. Let grace dictate, and mercy will answer.—*C. D.*

Verses 34—37.—The hypocrite's feet, verse 34. The hypocrite's memory, verse 35. The hypocrite's tongue, verse 36. The hypocrite's heart, verse 37. Or, the hypocrite's cloak and the hypocrite's heart.—*C. D.*

Verse 36.—Flattery of God. I. A common sin. II. A hateful sin. III. A dangerous sin.—*B. D.*

Verses 38 (*last clause*) and 50 (*first clause*).—God's anger as exercised against his people and against his foes.—*C. D.*

Verses 39 and 35.—God's memory of his people and their memory of God.

Verse 42.—The day of days. I. The enemy encountered on that day. II. The conflict endured. III. The deliverance accomplished. IV. The joy experienced.—*B. D.*

Verse 45.—The power of little things when commissioned to plague us.

Verse 47 (*last clause*).—Sometimes it will not shoot. Sometimes it will. And when it does it misses the mark.

Verse 52.—I. God has a people in the world. II. He brings them away from others. III. He brings them into fellowship with himself. IV. He brings them into fellowship with each other. V. He guides them to their rest.

Verse 55.—Divine supplantings. He supplants the fallen angels in heaven. One nation of earth by another (see all history). The thoughts and affections of the heart in regeneration, &c.—Isaiah lv. 13.—*C. D.*

Verses 56, 57.—On the deceitfulness of the heart, with respect to the performance of duty.—*J. Jamieson.* I. 326

On the deceitfulness of the heart, with respect to the omission of duty.—*J. Jamieson.* I. 353.

Verses 59—72.—I. A gloomy sunset, verses 59, 60. II. A baleful night, verses 60—64. III. A blessed sunrise, verses 65—72.—*C. D.*

Verse 69.—The builder of the church. Its sanctity. Grandeur. Comprehensiveness (like the earth, Mark xi. 17). Perpetuity.—*C. D.*

Verses 70, 71.—I. David's calling. Two questions present themselves. 1. How was David's shepherd-life an unconscious preparation for his calling? 2. How did the divine summons, when it came, fit him for his mighty destiny? Observe—he was sent back to his flocks. Nothing could train him more perfectly than that waiting. Two great convictions awakened in him then, that formed in him elements of strength. (1.) The belief in a divine leader (see Ps. xxiii.) (2.) The belief in a divine choice. II. Its modern lessons. 1. There is a divine plan in every life. 2. There is a divine vocation for every man. 3. There is a divine Shepherd for every man.—*E. L. Hull.*

Verses 70—72.—Scriptural promotions. I. Analogies between lower and higher service, verse 71. II. Humbler work, a preparation for higher, verses 71, 72. III. Promotion the act of the Divine will, verses 70, 71. IV. Our powers shall be equal to the position to which God promotes us.—*C. D.*

PSALM LXXIX.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—A Psalm of Asaph. *A Psalm of complaint such as Jeremiah might have written amid the ruins of the beloved city. It evidently treats of times of invasion, oppression, and national overthrow. Asaph was a patriotic poet, and was never more at home than when he rehearsed the history of his nation. Would to God that we had national poets whose song should be of the Lord.*

DIVISION.—*From verse* 1 *to* 4 *the complaint is poured out, from* 5 *to* 12 *prayer is presented, and, in the closing verse, praise is promised.*

EXPOSITION.

O GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given *to be* meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and *there was* none to bury *them.*

4. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

1. "*O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance.*" It is the cry of amazement at sacrilegious intrusion; as if the poet were struck with horror. The stranger pollutes thine hallowed courts with his tread. All Canaan is thy land, but thy foes have ravaged it. "*Thy holy temple have they defiled.*" Into the inmost sanctuary they have profanely forced their way, and there behaved themselves arrogantly. Thus, the holy land, the holy house, and the holy city, were all polluted by the uncircumcised. It is an awful thing when wicked men are found in the church and numbered with her ministry. Then are the tares sown with the wheat, and the poisoned gourds cast into the pot. "*They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.*" After devouring and defiling, they have come to destroying, and have done their work with a cruel completeness. Jerusalem, the beloved city, the joy of the nation, the abode of her God, was totally wrecked. Alas! alas, for Israel! It is sad to see the foe in our own house, but worse to meet him in the house of God: they strike hardest who smite at our religion. The Psalmist piles up the agony; he was a suppliant, and he knew how to bring out the strong points of his case. We ought to order our case before theLord with as much care as if our success depended on our pleading. Men in earthly courts use all their powers to obtain their ends, and so also should we state our case with earnestness, and bring forth our strong arguments.

2. "*The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.*" The enemy cared not to bury the dead, and there was not a sufficient number of Israel left alive to perform the funeral rites; therefore, the precious relics of the departed were left to be devoured of vultures and torn by wolves. Beasts on which man could not feed fed on him. The flesh of creation's Lord became meat for carrion crows and hungry dogs. Dire are the calamities of war, yet have they happened to God's saints and servants. This might well move the heart of the poet, and he did well to appeal to the heart of God by reciting the grievous evil. Such might have been the lamentation of an early Christian as he thought of the amphitheatre and all its deeds of blood. Note in the two verses how the plea is made to turn upon God's property in the temple and the people:—we read "thine inheritance," "thy temple," "thy servants," and "thy saints." Surely the Lord will defend his own, and will not suffer rampant adversaries to despoil them.

3. *"Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem."* The invaders slew men as if their blood was of no more value than so much water; they poured it forth as lavishly as when the floods deluge the plains. The city of holy peace became a field of blood. *"And there was none to bury them."* The few who survived were afraid to engage in the task. This was a serious trial and grievous horror to the Jews, who evinced much care concerning their burials. Has it come to this, that there are none to bury the dead of thy family, O Lord? Can none be found to grant a shovelful of earth with which to cover up the poor bodies of thy murdered saints? What woe is here! How glad should we be that we live in so quiet an age, when the blast of the trumpet is no more heard in our streets.

4. *"We are become a reproach to our neighbours."* Those who have escaped the common foe make a mockery of us; they fling our disasters into our face, and ask us, "Where is your God?" Pity should be shown to the afflicted, but in too many cases it is not so, for a hard logic argues that those who suffer more than ordinary calamities must have been extraordinary sinners. Neighbours especially are often the reverse of neighbourly; the nearer they dwell the less they sympathise. It is most pitiable it should be so. *"A scorn and derision to them that are round about us."* To find mirth in others' miseries, and to exult over the ills of others, is worthy only of the devil and of those whose father he is. Thus the case is stated before the Lord, and it is a very deplorable one. Asaph was an excellent advocate, for he gave a telling description of calamities which were under his own eyes, and in which he sympathised, but we have a mightier Intercessor above, who never ceases to urge our suit before the eternal throne.

5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.

7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.

8 O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.

9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight *by* the revenging of the blood of thy servants *which* is shed.

11. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;

12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.

5. *"How long, Lord?"* Will there be no end to these chastisements? They are most sharp and overwhelming; wilt thou much longer continue them? *"Wilt thou be angry for ever?"* Is thy mercy gone so that thou wilt for ever smite? *"Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?"* There was great cause for the Lord to be jealous, since idols had been set up, and Israel had gone aside from his worship, but the Psalmist begs the Lord not to consume his people utterly as with fire, but to abate their woes.

6. *"Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee."* If thou must smite look further afield; spare thy children and strike thy foes. There are lands where thou art in no measure acknowledged; be pleased to visit these first with thy judgments, and let thine erring Israel have a respite. *"And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name."* Hear us the prayerful, and avenge thyself upon the prayerless. Sometimes providence appears to deal much more severely with the righteous than with the wicked, and this verse is a bold appeal founded upon such an appearance. It in effect says—Lord, if thou must empty out the vials of thy wrath, begin with those who have no measure of regard for thee, but are openly up in arms against thee; and be pleased to spare thy people, who are thine notwithstanding all their sins.

7. *"For they have devoured Jacob."* The oppressor would quite eat up the

saints if he could. If these lions do not swallow us, it is because the Lord has sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths. *"And laid waste his dwelling place,"* or his pasture. The invader left no food for man or beast, but devoured all as the locust. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

8. *"O remember not against us former iniquities."* Sins accumulate against nations. Generations lay up stores of transgressions to be visited upon their successors; hence this urgent prayer. In Josiah's days the most earnest repentance was not able to avert the doom which former long years of idolatry had sealed against Judah. Every man has reason to ask for an act of oblivion for his past sins, and every nation should make this a continual prayer. *"Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low."* Hasten to our rescue, for our nation is hurrying down to destruction; our numbers are diminished and our condition is deplorable. Observe how penitent sorrow seizes upon the sweeter attributes, and draws her pleas from the "tender mercies" of God; see, too, how she pleads her own distress, and not her goodness, as a motive for the display of mercy. Let souls who are brought very low find an argument in their abject condition. What can so powerfully appeal to pity as dire affliction? The quaint prayer-book version is touchingly expressive: "O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon; for we are come to great misery." This supplication befits a sinner's life. We have known seasons when this would have been as good a prayer for our burdened heart as any that human mind could compose.

9. *"Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name."* This is masterly pleading. No argument has such force as this. God's glory was tarnished in the eyes of the heathen by the defeat of his people, and the profanation of his temple; therefore, his distressed servants implore his aid, that his great name may no more be the scorn of blaspheming enemies. *"And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake."* Sin,—the root of the evil—is seen and confessed; pardon of sin is sought as well as removal of chastisement, and both are asked not as matters of right, but as gifts of grace. God's name is a second time brought into the pleading. Believers will find it their wisdom to use very frequently this noble plea: it is the great gun of the battle, the mightiest weapon in the armoury of prayer.

10. *"Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?"* Why should those impious mouths be filled with food so sweet to them, but so bitter to us? When the afflictions of God's people become the derision of sinners, and cause them to ridicule religion, we have good ground for expostulation with the Lord. *"Let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed."* Justice is desired that God may be vindicated and feared. It is but meet that those who taunted the people of God because they smarted under the Lord's rod, should be made themselves also to smart by the same hand. If any complain of the spirit of this imprecation, we think they do so needlessly; for it is the common feeling of every patriot to desire to see his country's wrongs redressed, and of every Christian to wish a noble vengeance for the church by the overthrow of error. The destruction of Antichrist is the recompense of the blood of the martyrs, and by no means is it to be deprecated; far rather is it one of the most glorious hopes of the latter days.

11. *"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee."* When thy people cannot sing, and dare not shout aloud, then let their silent sigh ascend into thine ear, and secure for them deliverance. These words are suitable for the afflicted in a great variety of conditions; men of experience will know how to adapt them to their own position and to use them in reference to others. *"According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die."* Faith grows while it prays; the appeal to the Lord's tender mercy is here supplemented by another addressed to the divine power, and the petitioner rises from a request for those who are brought low, to a prayer for those who are on the verge of death, set apart as victims for the slaughter. How consoling is it to desponding believers to reflect that God can preserve even those who bear the sentence of death in themselves. Men and devils may consign us to perdition, while sickness drags us to the grave, and sorrow sinks us in the dust; but, there is One who can keep our soul alive, ay, and bring it up again from the depths of despair. A lamb shall live between the lion's jaws if the Lord wills it. Even in the charnel, life shall vanquish death if God be near.

12. *"And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord."* They denied thine existence, mocked thy power, insulted thy worship, and destroyed thy house; up, therefore, O Lord, and make them feel to the full that thou art not to be mocked with impunity. Pour into their laps good store of shame because they dared insult the God of Israel. Recompense them fully, till they have received the perfect number of punishments. It will be so. The wish of the text will become matter of fact. The Lord will avenge his own elect though he bear long with them.

13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

13. *"So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever; we will shew forth thy praise to all generations."* The gratitude of the church is lasting as well as deep. On her tablets are memorials of great deliverances, and, as long as she shall exist, her sons will rehearse them with delight. We have a history which will survive all other records, and it is bright in every line with the glory of the Lord. From the direst calamities God's glory springs, and the dark days of his people become the prelude to unusual displays of the Lord's love and power.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is, in every respect, the pendant of Ps. lxxiv. The points of contact are not merely matters of style (cf. lxxix. 5, "how long for ever?" with lxxiv. 1, 10; lxxix. 10, יִוָּדַע, with lxxiv. 5; lxxix. 2, the giving over to the wild beasts, with lxxiv. 19, 14; lxxix. 13, the conception of Israel as of a flock, in which respect Ps. lxxix. is judiciously appended to Ps. lxxviii. 70—72, with Ps. lxxiv. 1, and also with Ps. lxxiv. 19.) But the mutual relationships lie still deeper. Both Psalms have the same Asaphic stamp, both stand in the same relation to Jeremiah, and both send forth their complaints out of the same circumstances of the time, concerning a destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, such as only the age of the Seleucidæ (1 Macc. 1. 31, iii. 45, 2 Macc. viii. 3), together with the Chaldæan period can exhibit, and in conjunction with a defiling of the Temple and a massacre of the servants of God, of the *Chasîdîm* (1 Macc. vii. 13, 2 Macc. xiv. 6), such as the age of the Seleucidæ exclusively can exhibit. The work of the destruction of the Temple which was in progress in Ps. lxxiv., appears in Psalm lxxix. as completed, and here, as in the former Psalm, one receives the impression of the outrages, not of some war, but of some persecution: it is straightway the religion of Israel for the sake of which the sanctuaries are destroyed and the faithful are massacred.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 1.—*"Thy holy temple have they defiled."* This was not only the highest degree of the enemy's inhumanity and barbarity, ... but also a calamity to the people of God never to be sufficiently deplored. For by the overthrow of the temple the true worship of God, which had been instituted at that temple alone, appeared to be extinguished, and the knowledge of God to vanish from among mankind. No pious heart could ponder this without the greatest grief.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 1.—*"They have laid Jerusalem on heaps."* They have made Jerusalem to be nothing but *graves.* Such multitudes were cruelly slain and murdered, that Jerusalem was, as it were, but one *grave.*—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 1—4.—In the time of the Maccabees, Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, sent Bacchides to Jerusalem; who slew the scribes, who came to require justice, and the Assideans, the first of the children of Israel who sought peace of them. Bacchides "took of them threescore men, and slew them in one day, according to the words which he wrote, the flesh of thy saints have they cast out, and their blood have they shed round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them." And

in that last and most fearful destruction, when the eagles of Rome were gathered round the doomed city, and the temple of which God had said, "Let us depart hence;" when one stone was not to be left upon another, when the fire was to consume the sanctuary, and the foundations of Sion were to be ploughed up; when Jerusalem was to be filled with slain, and the sons of Judah were to be crucified round her walls in such thick multitudes that no more room was left for death; when insult, and shame, and scorn was the lot of the child of Israel, as he wandered an outcast, a fugitive in all lands; when all these bitter and deadly things came upon Jerusalem, it was a punishment for many and long-repeated crimes; it was the accomplishment of a warning which had been often sent in vain. Yea, fiercely did thy foes assault thee, O Jerusalem, but thy sins more fiercely still!—*"Plain Commentary."*

Verses 1, 4, 5.—Entering the inhabited part of the old city, and winding through some crooked, filthy lanes, I suddenly found myself on turning a sharp corner, in a spot of singular interest; the "Jews' place of Wailing." It is a small paved quadrangle; on one side are the backs of low modern houses, without door or window; on the other is the lofty wall of the Haram, of recent date above, but having below five courses of bevelled stones in a perfect state of preservation. Here the Jews are permitted to approach the sacred enclosure, and wail over the fallen temple, whose very dust is dear to them, and in whose stones they still take pleasure (Ps. cii. 14). It was Friday, and a crowd of miserable devotees had assembled—men and women of all ages and all nations, dressed in the quaint costumes of every country of Europe and Asia. Old men were there,—pale, haggard, careworn men, tottering on pilgrim staves; and little girls with white faces, and lustrous black eyes, gazing wistfully now at their parents, now at the old wall. Some were on their knees, chanting mournfully from a book of Hebrew prayers, swaying their bodies to and fro; some were prostrate on the ground, pressing forehead and lips to the earth; some were close to the wall, burying their faces in the rents and crannies of the old stones; some were kissing them, some had their arms spread out as if they would clasp them to their bosoms, some were bathing them with tears, and all the while sobbing as if their hearts would burst. It was a sad and touching spectacle. Eighteen centuries of exile and woe have not dulled their hearts' affections, or deadened their feelings of devotion. Here we see them assembled from the ends of the earth, poor, despised, down-trodden outcasts,—amid the desolations of their fatherland, beside the dishonoured ruins of their ancient sanctuary,—chanting, now in accents of deep pathos, and now of wild woe, the prophetic words of their own Psalmist,—*"O God the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled . . . We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever?"—J. L. Porter, in "The Giant Cities of Bashan."* 1865.

Verse 2.—*"The dead bodies of thy servants,"* etc. It is a true saying of S. Augustine, The care of our funeral, the manner of our burial, the exequial pomp, all these *magis sunt vivorum solatia quam subsidia mortuorum,* are rather comforts for the living than any way helps for the dead. To be interred profiteth not the party deceased; his body feels it not, his soul regards it not; and we know that many holy martyrs have been excluded from burial, who in a Christian scorn thereof bespake their persecutors in words of those which were slain at Pharsalia: "Thou effectest nothing by this anger; what matters it whether disease dissolve the body, or the funeral pile!" But yet there is an honesty* which belongeth to the dead body of man. Jehu commanded Jezebel to be buried; David thanked the people of Jabesh-Gilead for burying of Saul. Peter, who commanded Ananias and Sapphira, those false abdicators of their patrimony, to die, commanded to have them buried being dead. It is an axiom of charity. *Mortuo non prohibeas gratiam,* withhold not kindness from the dead. It shows our love and regard for men in our own flesh to see them buried; it manifesteth our faith and hope of the resurrection; and therefore when that body which is to rise again, and to be made glorious and immortal in heaven, shall be cast to the fowls of the air or beasts of the field, it argueth in God great indignation against sin (Jer. xxii. 19, of Jehoiakim, "He shall be buried as an ass is buried, and cast forth without the gates of Jerusalem"); in man inhuman and barbarous cruelty.—*John Dunster, in "Prodromus."* 1613.

* *i.e.*, a right, a proper respect.

Verses 2, 3.—[The following extract is from the writings of a godly monk who applies the language of the Psalm to the persecutions of his time. He wrote at Rome during the period of the Reformation, and was evidently a favourer of the gospel.] At this day what river is there, what brook, in this our afflicted Europe, (if it is still ours) that we have not seen flowing with the blood of Christians? And that too shed by the swords and spears of Christians? Wherefore there is made a great wailing in Israel; and the princes and elders mourn; the young men and virgins are become weak, and the beauty of the woman is changed. Why? The holy place itself is desolate as a wilderness. Hast thou ever seen so dire a spectacle? They have piled up in heaps the dead bodies of thy servants to be devoured by birds: the unburied remains of thy saints, I say, they have given to the beasts of the earth. What greater cruelty could ever be committed? So great was the effusion of human blood at that time, that the rivulets, yea, rather, the rivers round the entire circuit of the city, flowed with it. And thus truly is the form of our most beautiful city laid waste, and its loveliness; and so reduced is it, that not even the men who carry forth dead bodies for burial can be obtained, though pressed with the offer of large rewards; so full of fear and horror were their minds: and this was all the more bitter, because "*We are become a reproach to those round about us,*" and are spoken of in derision by the infidels abroad and by enemies at home. Who is so bold as to endure this and live? How long therefore shall this most bitter disquietude last?—*Giambattista Folengo.* 1490—1559.

Verse 2.—"*Dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls.*" With what unconcern are we accustomed to view, on all sides of us, multitudes "dead in trespasses and sins," torn in pieces, and devoured by wild passions, filthy lusts, and infernal spirits, those dogs and vultures of the moral world! Yet, to a discerning eye, and a thinking mind, the latter is by far the more melancholy sight of the two.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy servants.*" "*Thy saints.*" No temporal wrath, no calamities whatsoever can separate the Lord's children from God's love and estimation of them, nor untie the relation between God and them: for here, albeit their carcases fall, and be devoured by the fowls of heaven and beasts of the earth, yet remain they the Lord's servants and saints under these sufferings.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*We are become a reproach.*" If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were "counted as the off-scouring of all things."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.*" This was more grevious to them than stripes or wounds, saith Chrysostom, because these being inflicted upon the body are divided after a sort betwixt soul and body, but scorns and reproaches do wound the soul only. *Habet quendam aculeum contumelia,* they leave a sting behind them, as Cicero observeth.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—It is the height of reproach a father casts upon his child when he commands his slave to beat him. Of all outward judgments this is the sorest, to have strangers rule over us, as being made up of shame and cruelty. If once the heathen come into God's inheritance, no wonder the church complains that she is "*become a reproach to her neighbours, a shame and derision to all round about her.*"—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 5.—"*How long, Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever?*" The voice of complaint says not, How long, Lord, shall this wickedness of our enemy endure? How long shall we see this desolation? But, how long, O Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever? We are admonished, therefore, in this passage, that we should recognise the anger of God against us in all our afflictions, lest as the nations are accustomed, we only accuse the malice of our enemies, and never think of our sins and the divine punishment. It cannot be that he who acknowledges the anger of God that is upon him, should not at the same time acknowledge his fault also, unless he wishes to attribute the iniquity to God of being angry and inflicting stripes upon the undeserving.—*Musculus.*

Verse 5.—The word "*jealousy*" signifies not mere revenge, but revenge mingled

with love, for unless he loved, says Jerome, he would not be jealous, and after the manner of a husband avenge the sin of his wife.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 6.—Neglect of prayer by unbelievers is threatened with punishment. The prophet's imprecation is the same in effect with a threatening, see Jer. x. 25, and same imprecation, Ps. lxxix. 6. The prophets would not have used such an imprecation against those that call not upon God, but that their neglect of calling on his name makes them liable to his wrath and fury; and no neglect makes men liable to the wrath of God but the neglect of duty. Prayer, then, is a duty even to the heathen, the neglect of which provokes him to pour out his fury on them.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 7.—"*They have devoured Jacob.*" Like wolves who cruelly tear and devour a flock of sheep. For the word which follows signifies not only a habitation in general, but also a sheepcot.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 8.—"*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" The prophet numbers himself with the people not only in their affliction, but also in their distress, and liability to the anger of God because of the crimes committed. He was not a partner in those enormous sins by which they had provoked the jealousy of God, and yet he exempts not himself from the people at large. Thus, in the following verse, he says, "*And purge away our sins.*" He says not, Remember not the iniquity of this people; nor, And purge away their sins: But, Remember not *our* iniquities: and Purge away *our* sins. In this way the prophets, though holy men, were wont to make themselves sharers of the people's sins, not by sinning, but by weeping and praying and imploring the mercy of God. See Isaiah lix. 12. "*Our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us.*" . . . Daniel ix. 5. "*We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled,*" etc. 1. Let us also follow this example, that so far we may have fellowship with the whole Church, that we may be partners of those who truly love and worship God. 2. Then, that abstaining from false worship, we may not sin wickedly with the wicked. 3. That whenever we ought to weep or pray, we may mourn and confess not only our own, but also the shortcomings of the whole church corporate, as if they were common to ourselves, even if we have no part in them, and may implore for them the mercy of God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 8.—"*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" The Jews have a saying, that there is no punishment happens to Israel, but there is an ounce in it for the sin of the calf; their meaning is, that this is always remembered and visited, according to Exodus xxxii. 34; the phrase may take in all the sins of former persons, their ancestors, and of former times, from age to age, they had continued in, which had brought ruin upon them; and all their own sins of nature and of youth, all past ones to the present time.—*John Gill.*

Verse 8.—"*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" Old debts vex most; the delay of payment increases them by interest upon interest; and the return of them being unexpected, a person is least provided for them. We count old sores, breaking forth, incurable. Augustus wondered at a person sleeping quietly that was very much in debt, and sent for his pillow, saying, " surely there is some strange virtue in it, that makes him rest so secure." My brethren, if one debt unto God's law be more than the whole creation can satisfy, what do any of us mean to rest secure with so vast a burden upon our consciences and accounts? Ah! take heed thou beest not surprised and arrested with old debts. *O God, thou rememberest former iniquities against us.* God will call over, and charge thy sins upon thee, when all the sweet is gone.—*Elias Pledger* (—1676), *in* " *Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 8.—"*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" The only right way to remedy a miserable condition, is to sue for the remission of sins, and for the renewed evidence of reconciliation: for before the church here do ask any thing for their outward delivery, they pray, "*O remember not against us former iniquities.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 8.—"*Speedily.*" Lest they come too late, for we are at our last gasp.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—"*Prevent.*" God's mercy must anticipate. "*come to meet,*" man's necessity.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 8.—"*We are brought very low.*" Literally, "We are greatly thinned." Few of us remain.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—"*We are brought very low.*" We are very greatly exhausted (emptied out): that is, we are utterly destitute of all things, both fortune, and strength of mind and body, just like a well or a vessel completely emptied.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 8.—"*Very low.*" Past the hopes of all human help, and therefore the glory of our deliverance will be wholly thine.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 9.—"*Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name and deliver us.*" "Help us" under our troubles, that we may bear them well; "help us" out of our troubles, that the spirit may not fail. "Deliver us" from sin, and from sinking.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—"*God of our salvation.*" If human reason were to judge of the many and great blows wherewith God so often smote and wasted his people, it would call God not the Saviour of the people, but the destroyer and oppressor. But the faith of the Prophet judges far otherwise of God, and sees even in an angry and pursuing God, the salvation of his people. The gods of the nations, though they do not afflict even in temporal things, are gods not of the salvation of their worshippers but of their perdition. But our God, even when he is most severely angry, and smites, is not the God of destruction, but of salvation.—*Musculus.*

Verse 9.—"*For thy name's sake.*" Twice the appeal is made "*for thy name's sake;*" that revelation of God which he had made of himself to Moses when he passed by and proclaimed the name of Jehovah, Ex. xxiv. 6, 7. Compare Ps. xx. 1, xxiii. 3; xxix. 2.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 9.—"*For thy name's sake.*" The good which God doth unto his church, be it temporal or spiritual, is for his own sake. What I do (saith God), I do for mine holy name's sake; there is nothing to move me but mine own name; that is holy, great, and glorious, and I will for my name's sake do much for my church and people. That they were preserved in Babylon, was for his holy name's sake; that they were brought out of Babylon, was for his holy name's sake; that they were replanted in Canaan, was for his holy name's sake; that they had a temple, sacrifices, priests, prophets, ordinances again, was for his name's sake; when they were near to destruction often, in former days, God wrought for his name's sake, Ezek. xx.; so Isaiah xlviii. 8, 9. It is not for the enemies' sake that God doth preserve or deliver his people; nor for their sakes, their prayers, tears, faith, obedience, holiness, that he doth great things for them, bestows great mercies upon them; but it is for his own name's sake. For man's sake God cursed the earth, Gen. viii. 21; but it is for his name's sake that he blesseth it. The choicest mercies God's people have, are for his name's sake: they have pardon of sin for his name's sake, Ps. xxv. 11, 1 John ii. 12; purging of sin for his name's sake; Ps. lxxix. 9; leading in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, Ps. xxiii. 2; quickening of their dead and dull hearts for his name's sake, Ps. cxliii. 11. Though his people offend him, yet he forsakes them not, for his great name's sake.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 9.—If God could not be more glorified in our peace and reconciliation, than in our death and damnation, it were a wicked thing to desire it. But God hath cleared this up to us, that he is no loser by acts of mercy. In this lies the greatest revenue of his crown, or else he would not love "mercy rather than sacrifice." God is free to choose what suits his own heart best, and most conduceth to the exalting of his great name: and he delights more in the mercy shown to one than in the blood of all the damned, that are made a sacrifice to his justice. And, indeed, he had a higher end in their damnation than their suffering; and that was the enhancing of the glory of his mercy, in his saved ones. This is the beautiful piece God takes delight in, and the other but the shadow of it. Then thou art in a fit disposition to pray for peace, and mayest go with encouragement when thy heart is deeply affected with the honour that will accrue to God by it. It is an argument God will not deny. "This," said Abigail to David, "shall be no grief to thee nor offence of heart unto my Lord," 1 Sam. xxv.; she meant, he should never have cause to repent that he was kept from shedding blood. Thus mayest thou plead with God, and say, O Lord, when I shall with saints and angels be praising thy pardoning grace in heaven, it will not grieve thee that thy mercy kept thee from shedding my blood, damning my soul in hell.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 9.—When the Lord's people are brought very low, let them not look for a lifting up or relief except from God only; therefore say they here, "*Help us, O*

Lord." Such as have laid hold on God for salvation promised in the covenant, may also look for particular deliveries out of particular troubles, as appendices of the main benefit of salvation; therefore, "*Help us, O God of our salvation,*" say they. When men do ask anything, the granting whereof may glorify God, they may confidently expect to have it; and in special when God may be so glorified, and his people may also be preserved and comforted: "*Help us* (say they) *for the glory of thy name: and deliver us.*" As the conscience of sin useth to step in oftener between us and mercy, so must we call oftener for remission of sin; for earnest affection can double and treble the same petition without babbling: "*Deliver us, and purge away our sins.*" It is the glory of the Lord to forget sin, and when remission of sins is prayed for according to God's promise, the Lord's glory is engaged for the helping of faith to obtain it: "*Purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 11.—"*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.*" The propriety of styling the sons of Adam "*prisoners,*" can scarcely fail to be discerned when we remember the restraint which the immortal spirit endures whilst it inhabits its present earthly house, or recollect the hardships to which many of our race are subjected, or, once more, the degrading slavery to which they reduce themselves by serving their own lusts and refusing to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ would make them free. Now, in whichever of these senses men are prisoners, it is clear that they have occasion and that they are wont to sigh, and that it is the part of the pious and faithful believer in God to bear this in mind, and, inasmuch as he has put on bowels of compassion, to say, as well for others as for himself, "*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.*" Three things, then, are suggested by the first clause of the passage before us. The first is, that all who live in this world are prisoners. . . . . We would go on to remark, secondly, that these various prisoners have their respective sorrowful sighings. Thirdly, then, let it be observed, will the believer, conscious of these several sighings of the crowd of prisoners whom he sees all around him, pray to the Almighty that they may come before his everlasting presence.—*W. C. Le Breton.* (1849.)

Verse 11.—"*The sighing.*" The nature of a sigh will suggest to us some important particulars connected with the state of bondage spoken of in the text. A sigh is an *unexpressed declaration.* Although we do not speak, still we can tell a long tale of sorrow with a sigh. How often the mourner who will not tell a human being of his grief, will vent it when he is alone, with a long-drawn, an uneven sigh! Now, I direct your attention to this, because it is a perfect picture of the spiritual condition in which some men are. They are not loud in their complaints; they are not standing in the corners of the streets proclaiming their exceeding sinfulness; they are not continually making their neighbours and their friends hear them preach about their vileness—a vileness which, if any one else attributed to them, would stir up all their wrath. Theirs is not the character of men in strife; but of men bearing a heavy burden, which presses from them an evidence of what they endure. And if any of you, brethren, thus walk in sighs and sorrow before God, he takes these sighs as applications to him for relief. Your misery, if entirely pent in, would be obstinate impenitency, but if vented, even in a sigh, is a declaration of your need. Let me encourage you, brethren, not to spare these evidences of your state. There are times when you feel so dead that you cannot enter into long confessions; when the spirit is so weary that you feel that you cannot speak. Much might at such a season be spoken by a sign. "Destroy it not," we say, "for a blessing is in it:" pour it forth, and it will reach the throne. And here it will prove to be not only *an unexpressed declaration of your state,* but also *an unexpressed wish for deliverance* therefrom. When the captive gazes through the bars of iron which night and day stand like mute sentinels before the narrow window of his cell, and when his eyes fall upon the green fields and groves beyond, he sighs, and turns away from the scene with a wish. He spake not a word, yet he wished. That sigh was a wish that he could be set free. And such sighs as these are heard by God. Your longings, your sorrows, when they are not fulfilled, your sad thoughts,—"Oh! when shall I be delivered from the burden of my sin, and from the coldness of my heart!"—all these wishes were your sighs, and they have been heard on high.—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 11.—"*The prisoner.*" An eastern prison is still a place of great misery, chiefly from the limited supply of water to the prisoners.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 11.—"*Come before thee.*"

Though not a human voice he hears,
And not a human form appears
His solitude to share,
He is not all alone—the eye
Of him who hears the prisoner's sigh
Is even on him there.

J. L. Chester,

Verse 11.—"*Preserve thou those that are appointed to die.*" Ought not pious people more closely to imitate their heavenly Father in caring for those who have been condemned to die? An eminent Christian lady keeps a record of all who have been sentenced to death, so far as she hears of them, and prays for them every day till their end come. Is not such conduct in sympathy with the heart of God! —*William S. Plummer.*

Verse 12.—"*Render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom,*" etc. This may seem to be contrary to common justice; because that the punishment should not exceed the fault. But here you are to know, that this hath not respect unto what the enemies of God's church have acted, but what they have deserved. And therefore when the prophet here says, "*Render unto our neighbours sevenfold,*" it is not sevenfold beyond their deserts; for one scorn that a wicked man poureth upon a child of God (and so upon God), cannot be recompensed with ten thousand reproaches poured upon wicked men. The least reproach poured upon God is an infinite wrong. And the reproach of his people is so much his, as he reckons it as his own; and will therefore render to their enemies their reproach "*sevenfold*" (and that's but equal) "*into their bosom.*"—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 12.—"*Unto our neighbours.*" Because their scorn was more intolerable, and also more inexcusable than the oppression of distant enemies.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 12.—"*Into their bosom.*" An expression which originally seems to have had reference to the practice of carrying and holding things in the lap, or the front fold of the flowing oriental dress, has in usage the accessory sense of retribution or retaliation.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 4.—Saints the subject of derision to sinners. When justly so. When unjustly. What do they see to excite ridicule; what shall we do under the trial; how will it end?

Verse 5.—I. The cause of the anger: jealousy. II. The moderation of it. If it continued for ever, the people would perish, the promises be unfulfilled, the covenant fail, and the Lord's honour be impeached. III. The staying of it. By prayer; by pleading his name, his glory, and the blood of Jesus.

Verse 8.—A sinner's confession, petition, and plea.

Verse 9.—I. A threefold prayer. II. An encouraging title: "God of our salvation." III. A victorious plea.

Verse 9.—I. The Prayer. "Help us," etc. 1. Purge away sin. 2. Deliver us from our troubles. 3. Help us to serve thee in future. II. The Plea. 1. For thy name's sake. 2. The glory of thy name. 3. The glory of thy name as our salvation. The order in both cases is inverted.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—The revenge for the martyrs, which it is lawful and incumbent upon us to desire.

Verse 11.—I. The prisoner. 1. Under forced bondage to sin. 2. Under the bondage of conviction. 3. In the dungeon of despair. II. The prisoner's application for relief. III. The source from which he looked for help.—*P. B. Power.*

Verse 11.—I. The degree of protection solicited: "According to the greatness of thy power." II. The protection itself: "Preserve thou." III. The objects of it: "Those that are appointed to die."—*W. C. Le Breton.*

Verse 11.—I. Mournful condition. A prisoner, sighing, appointed to die. II. Hopeful facts: a God, a God hearing sighs, a God of great power. III. Suitable prayers: "come before thee": "preserve."

Verse 11.—"*Appointed to die,*" used as a description of deep spiritual distress. Fears of the divine decree, of having apostatised, of having sinned away the day of grace, of the sin which is unto death, etc. How these cases can be effectually met.

Verse 13.—The obligations of the Protestant church based on her martyrs' blood, her great deliverances, her nearness to God. She ought to secure gospel teaching to coming generations.

Verse 13.—I. Relation claimed: "We thy people, the sheep of," etc. II. Obligation admitted: "So we," etc., when thou hast interposed for our deliverance, we will praise thee. III. Resolution formed. 1. To give thanks for ever. 2. To transmit his praise to generations following.—*G. R.*

PSALM LXXX.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth. *For the fourth time we have a song upon Shoshannim, or the lilies; the former ones being Psalms* xlv., lx., *and* lxix. *Why this title is given it would be difficult to say in every case, but the delightfully poetical form of the present Psalm may well justify the charming title.* Eduth *signifies testimony. The Psalm is a testimony of the church as a "lily among thorns." Some interpreters understand the present title to refer to an instrument of six strings, and Schleusner translates the two words, "the hexachord of testimony." It may be that further research will open up to us these "dark sayings upon a harp." We shall be content to accept them as evidence that sacred song was not lightly esteemed in the days of old.* A Psalm of Asaph. *A later Asaph we should suppose, who had the unhappiness to live, like the "last minstrel," in evil times. If by the Asaph of David's day, this Psalm was written in the spirit of prophecy, for it sings of times unknown to David.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalm divides itself naturally at the refrain which occurs three times: "Turn us again, O God," etc. Verses* 1—3 *is an opening address to the Lord God of Israel; from* 4—7 *is a lamentation over the national woe; and from* 8—19 *the same complaint is repeated, the nation being represented in a beutiful allegory as a vine. It is a mournful Psalm, and its lilies are lilies of the valley.*

EXPOSITION.

GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth.

2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us.

3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

1. *"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel."* Hear thou the bleatings of thy suffering flock. The name is full of tenderness, and hence is selected by the troubled Psalmist: broken hearts delight in names of grace. Good old Jacob delighted to think of God as the Shepherd of Israel, and this verse may refer to his dying expression: "From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." We may be quite sure that he who deigns to be a shepherd to his people will not turn a deaf ear to their complaints *"Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock."* The people are called here by the name of that renowned son who became a second father to the tribes, and kept them alive in Egypt; possibly they were known to the Egyptians under the name of "the family of Joseph," and if so, it seems most natural to call them by that name in this place. The term may, however, refer to the ten tribes of which Manasseh was the acknowledged head. The Lord had of old in the wilderness led, guided, shepherded all the tribes; and, therefore, the appeal is made to him. The Lord's doings in the past are strong grounds for appeal and expectation as to the present and the future. *"Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth."* The Lord's especial presence was revealed upon the mercy-seat between the cherubim, and in all our pleadings we should come to the Lord by this way: only upon the mercy-seat will God reveal his grace, and only there can we hope to commune with him. Let us ever plead the name of Jesus, who is our true mercy-seat, to whom we may come boldly, and through whom we may look for a display of the glory of the Lord on our behalf. Our greatest dread is the withdrawal of the Lord's presence, and our brightest hope is the prospect of his return. In the darkest times of Israel, the light of her Shepherd's countenance is all she needs.

2. *"Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us."* It is wise to mention the names of the Lord's people in prayer, for

they are precious to him. Jesus bears the names of his people on his breastplate. Just as the mention of the names of his children has power with a father, so is it with the Lord. The three names were near of kin; Ephraim and Manasseh represent Joseph, and it was meet that Benjamin, the other son of the beloved Rachel, should be mentioned in the same breath: these three tribes were wont to march together in the wilderness, following immediately behind the ark. The prayer is that the God of Israel would be mighty on behalf of his people, chasing away their foes, and saving his people. O that in these days the Lord may be pleased to remember every part of his church, and make all her tribes to see his salvation. We would not mention our own denomination only, but lift up a prayer for all the sections of the one church.

3. "*Turn us again, O God.*" It is not so much said, "turn our captivity,' but turn "us." All will come right if we are right. The best turn is not that of circumstances but of character. When the Lord turns his people he will soon turn their condition. It needs the Lord himself to do this, for conversion is as divine a work as creation; and those who have been once turned unto God, if they at any time backslide, as much need the Lord to turn them again as to turn them at the first. The word may be read, "restore us;" verily, it is a choice mercy that "he restoreth my soul." "*And cause thy face to shine.*" Be favourable to us, smile upon us. This was the high priest's blessing upon Israel: what the Lord has already given us by our High-priest and Mediator we may right confidently ask of him. "*And we shall be saved.*" All that is wanted for salvation is the Lord's favour. One glance of his gracious eye would transform Tophet into Paradise. No matter how fierce the foe, or dire the captivity, the shining face of God ensures both victory and liberty. This verse is a very useful prayer. Since we too often turn aside, let us often with our lips and heart cry, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?

5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.

6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves.

7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

4. "*O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?*" How long shall the smoke of thy wrath drown the smoking incense of our prayers? Prayer would fain enter thy holy place but thy wrath battles with it, and prevents its entrance. That God should be angry with us when sinning seems natural enough, but that he should be angry even with our prayers is a bitter grief. With many a pang may the pleader ask, "How long?" Commander of all the hosts of thy creatures, able to save thy saints in their extremity, shall they for ever cry to thee in vain?

5. "*Thou feedest them with the bread of tears.*" Their meat is seasoned with brine distilled from weeping eyes. Their meals, which were once such pleasant seasons of social merriment, are now like funeral feasts to which each man contributes his bitter morsel. Thy people ate bread of wheat before, but now they receive from thine own hand no better diet than bread of tears. "*And givest them tears to drink in great measure.*" Tears are both their food and their drink, and that without stint. They swallow tierces of tears, and swim in gulfs of grief, and all this by God's own appointment; not because their enemies have them in their power by force of arms, but because their God refuses to interpose. Tear-bread is even more the fruit of the curse than to eat bread in the sweat of one's face, but it shall by divine love be turned into a greater blessing by ministering to our spiritual health.

6. *Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours.*" Always jealous and malicious, Edom and Moab exulted over Israel's troubles, and then fell to disputing about their share of the spoil. A neighbour's jeer is ever most cutting, especially if a man has been superior to them, and claimed to possess more grace. None are so unneighbourly as envious neighbours. "*And our enemies laugh among themselves.*" They

find mirth in our misery, comedy in our tragedy, salt for their wit in the brine of our tears, amusement in our amazement. It is devilish to sport with another's griefs; but it is the constant habit of the world which lieth in the wicked one to make merry with the saints' tribulations; the seed of the serpent follow their progenitor and rejoice in evil.

7. *"Turn us again, O God of hosts."* The prayer rises in the form of its address to God. He is here the God of Hosts. The more we approach the Lord in prayer and contemplation the higher will our ideas of him become.

8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

9 Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.

11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

12 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;

15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.

16 *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.

18 So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.

19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

8. *"Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt."* There it was in unfriendly soil: the waters of the Nile watered it not, but were as death to its shoots, while the inhabitants of the land despised it and trampled it down. Glorious was the right hand of the Lord when with power and great wonders he removed his pleasant plant in the teeth of those who sought its destruction. *"Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it."* Seven nations were digged out to make space for the vine of the Lord; the old trees, which long had engrossed the soil were torn up root and branch; oaks of Bashan, and palm trees of Jericho were displaced for the chosen vine. It was securely placed in its appointed position with divine prudence and wisdom. Small in appearance, very dependent, exceeding weak, and apt to trail on the ground, yet the vine of Israel was chosen of the Lord, because he knew that by incessant care, and abounding skill, he could make of it a goodly fruitbearing plant.

9. *"Thou preparedst room before it."* The weeds, brambles, and huge stones were cleared; the Amorites, and their brethren in iniquity, were made to quit the scene, their forces were routed, their kings slain, their cities captured, and Canaan became like a plot of land made ready for a vineyard. *"And didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land."* Israel became settled and established as a vine well rooted, and then it began to flourish and to spread on every side. This analogy might be applied to the experience of every believer in Jesus. The Lord has planted us, we are growing downward, "rooting roots," and by his grace we are also advancing in manifest enlargement. The same is true of the church in a yet closer degree, for at this moment through the goodwill of the dresser of the vineyard her branches spread far and wide.

10. *"The hills were covered with the shadow of it."* Israel dwelt up to the mountains' summits, cultivating every foot of soil. The nation multiplied and

became so great that other lands felt its influence, or were shadowed by it. *"And the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars."* The nation itself was so great that even its tribes were powerful and worthy to take rank among the mighty. A more correct rendering describes the cedars as covered with the vine, and we know that in many lands vines climb the trees, and cover them. What a vine must that be which ascends the cedars of God, and even overtops them! It is a noble picture of the prosperity of the Israelitish people in their best days. In Solomon's time the little land of Israel occupied a high place among the nations. There have been times when the church of God also has been eminently conspicuous, and her power has been felt far and near.

11. *"She sent out her boughs unto the sea."* Along the Mediterranean and, perhaps, across its waters, Israel's power was felt. *"And her branches unto the river."* On her eastern side she pushed her commerce even to the Euphrates. Those were brave days for Israel, and would have continued, had not sin cut them short. When the church pleases the Lord, her influence becomes immense, far beyond the proportion which her numbers or her power would lead us to expect; but, alas! when the Lord leaves her she becomes as worthless, useless, and dspised as an untended vine, which is of all plants the most valueless.

12. *"Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?"* Thou hast withdrawn protection from her after caring for her with all this care;—wherefore is this, O Lord? A vine unprotected is exposed to every form of injury: none regard it, all prey upon it: such was Israel when given over to her enemies; such has the church full often been. *"So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her."* Her cruel neighbours have a pluck at her, and marauding bands, like roaming beasts, must need pick at her. With God no enemy can harm us, without him none are so weak as to be unable to do us damage.

13. *"The boar out of the wood doth waste it."* Such creatures are famous for rending and devouring vines. Babylon, like a beast from the marshes of the Euphrates, came up and wasted Judah and Israel. Fierce peoples, comparable to wild swine of the forest, warred with the Jewish nation, until it was gored and torn like a vine destroyed by greedy hogs. *"And the wild beast of the field doth devour it."* First one foe and then another wreaked vengeance on the nation, neither did God interpose to chase them away. Ruin followed ruin; the fox devoured the young shoots which had been saved from the damage wrought by the boar. Alas, poor land. How low wast thou brought! An oak or cedar might have been crushed by such ravages, but how canst thou endure it, O weak and tender vine? See what evils follow in the train of sin, and how terrible a thing it is for a people to be forsaken of their God.

14. *"Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts."* Turn thyself to us as well as us to thee. Thou hast gone from us because of our sins, come back to us, for we sigh and cry after thee. Or, if it be too much to ask thee to come, then do at least give us some consideration and cast an eye upon our griefs. *"Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine."* Do not close thine eyes; it is thy vine, do not utterly turn away from it as though it were quite gone from thy mind. Great Husbandman, at least note the mischief which the beasts have done, for then it may be thy heart will pity, and thy hand will be outstretched to deliver.

15. *"And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted."* Shall all thy care be lost? Thou hast done so much, wilt thou lose thy labour? With thy power and wisdom thou didst great things for thy people, wilt thou now utterly give them up, and suffer thine enemies to exult in the evil which they delight in? *"And the branch that thou madest strong for thyself."* A prayer for the leader whom the Lord had raised up, or for the Messiah whom they expected. Though the vine had been left, yet one branch had been regarded of the Lord, as if to furnish a scion for another vine; therefore, is the prayer made in this form. Let us pray the Lord, if he will not in the first place look upon his church, to look upon the Lord Jesus, and then behold her in mercy for his sake. This is the true art of prayer, to put Christ forward and cry,

> "Him and then the sinner see,
> Look through Jesus' wounds on me."

16. *"It is burned with fire."* In broken utterances the sorrowful singer utters his distress. The vineyard was like a forest which has been set on fire; the choice vines were charred and dead. *"It is cut down."* The cruel axe had hacked after

its murderous fashion, the branches were lopped, the trunk was wounded, desolation reigned supreme. *"They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance."* God's rebuke was to Israel what fire and axe would be to a vine. His favour is life, and his wrath is as messengers of death. One angry glance from Jehovah's eye is sufficient to lay all the vineyards of Ephraim desolate. O Lord, look not thus upon our churches. Rebuke us, but not in anger.

17. *"Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand."* Let thy power rest on thy true Benjamin, son of thy right hand; give a commission to some chosen man by whom thou wilt deliver. Honour him, save us, and glorify thyself. There is no doubt here an outlook to the Messiah, for whom believing Jews had learned to look as the Saviour in time of trouble. *"Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself."* Send forth thy power with him whom thou shalt strengthen to accomplish thy purposes of grace. It pleases God to work for the sons of men by sons of men. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." Nations rise or fall largely through the instrumentality of individuals: by a Napoleon the kingdoms are scourged, and by a Wellington nations are saved from the tyrant. It is by the man Christ Jesus that fallen Israel is yet to rise, and indeed through him, who deigns to call himself the Son of Man, the world is to be delivered from the dominion of Satan and the curse of sin. O Lord, fulfil thy promise to the man of thy right hand, who participates in thy glory, and give him to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand.

18. *"So will not we go back from thee."* Under the leadership of one whom God had chosen the nation would be kept faithful, grace would work gratitude, and so cement them to their allegiance. It is in Christ that we abide faithful: because he lives we live also. There is no hope of our perseverance apart from him. *"Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name."* If the Lord gives life out of death, his praise is sure to follow. The Lord Jesus is such a leader, that in him is life, and the life is the light of men. He is our life. When he visits our souls anew we shall be revivified, and our praise shall ascend unto the name of the Triune God.

19. *"Turn us again, O Lord of hosts."* Here we have another advance in the title and the incommunicable name of Jehovah, the I AM is introduced. Faith's day grows brighter as the hours roll on; and her prayers grow more full and mighty. *"Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved."* Even we who were so destroyed. No extremity is too great for the power of God. He is able to save at the last point, and that too by simply turning his smiling face upon his afflicted. Men can do little with their arm, but God can do all things with a glance. Oh, to live for ever in the light of Jehovah's countenance.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—It is an Asaph-prayer again, full of pleas in Israel's behalf. It is as if they had before them Isaiah lxiii. 11, "Then he remembered the days of old." They call to his mind the days of *Joseph*, when (Gen. xlix. 24) the Lord miraculously fed them in Egypt. And then the *tabernacle days*, when (first, since the days of Eden), the Lord was known to dwell between the cherubim, on the mercy-seat. They call to his mind *wilderness times* (verse 2), when their march was gladdened by his presence, "Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh" looking on the Pillar of Glory as it rose before them, the guide and partner of their way (see Num. x. 32—34) "O God, bring us back again! Cause thy face to shine! and all shall be well again!" —*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—The prophet does not nakedly begin his prayer, but mingles therewith certain titles, by which he most aptly addresses God, and urges his cause. He does not say, O thou who sustainest and governest all things which are in heaven and in earth, who hast placed thy dwelling-place above the heaven of heavens; but, Thou who art the Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubims. Those things which enhance the favour and providence of God revealed to Israel, he brings to remembrance that he might

nourish and strengthen confidence in prayer. . . . Let us learn from this example to feed and fortify our confidence in praying to God, with the marks of that divine and paternal kindness revealed to us in Christ our Shepherd and propitiation.—*Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel.*" It is the part of the shepherd to give ear to the bleatings and cries of the sheep, to call them to mind, that he may readily run to their help.—*Venema.*

Verse 1.—"*O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.*" Yon shepherd is about to lead his flock across the river; and, as our Lord says of the good shepherd, you observe that he goes before, and the sheep follow. Not all in the same manner, however. Some enter boldly, and come straight across. These are the loved ones of the flock, who keep hard by the footsteps of the shepherd, whether sauntering through green meadows, by the still waters, feeding upon the mountains, or resting at noon beneath the shadow of great rocks. And now others enter, but in doubt and alarm. Far from their guide, they miss the ford, and are carried down the river, some more, some less, and yet, one by one, they all struggle over and make good their landing. Notice those little lambs. They refuse to enter, and must be driven into the stream by the shepherd's dog, mentioned by Job in his "parable." Poor things! how they leap and plunge, and bleat in terror! That weak one yonder will be swept quite away, and perish in the sea. But, no; the shepherd himself leaps into the stream, lifts it into his bosom, and bears it trembling to the shore. All safely over, how happy they appear. The lambs frisk and gambol about in high spirits, while the older ones gather round their faithful guide, and look up to him in subdued but expressive thankfulness.

Now, can you watch such a scene, and not think of that Shepherd who leadeth Joseph like a flock, and of another river which all his sheep must cross? He, too, goes before, and, as in the case of this flock, they who keep near him fear no evil. They hear his sweet voice saying, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." With eye fastened on him, they scarcely see the stream, or feel its cold and threatening waves. The great majority, however, "linger, shivering on the brink, and fear to launch away." They lag behind, look down upon the dark river, and, like Peter on stormy Gennesaret, when faith failed, they begin to sink. Then they cry for help, and not in vain. The Good Shepherd hastens to their rescue, and none of all his flock can ever perish. Even the weakest lambkins are carried safely over. I once saw flocks crossing the Jordan "to Canaan's fair and happy land," and there the scene was even more striking and impressive. The river was broader, the current stronger, and the flocks larger, while the shepherds were more picturesque and Biblical. The catastrophe, too, with which many more sheep were threatened—of being swept down into that mysterious sea of death, which swallows up the Jordan itself—was more solemn and suggestive.—*W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book."*

Verse 1.—"*Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.*" Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock art considered by the unbelieving to have no thoughts for our affairs; therefore stretch forth thine hand for our assistance, that the mouth of them that speak iniquities may be shut. We seek not gold and riches, or the dignities of this world, but we long for thy light, we desire most ardently to know thee, therefore "shine forth."—*Savonarola.*

Verse 1.—"*Thou that dwellest between the cherubims.*" From this phrase the following ideas may be derived:—(1) That God is a King, sitting on his throne, and surrounded by his "*ministers.*" His throne is the heavens, the symbol of which is the holy of holies, his "*ministers*" are "*angels,*" and are elsewhere distinguished by that name, as Gen. iii., Ps. xviii., 11; (2) that God is the "*King*" of Israel, dwelling among them by the external symbol of his presence. His most illustrious ministers are depicted by the "*cherubims,*" who comprehend his heavenly as well as earthly ministers; (3) that God is the covenant "*King*" of his people, and has fixed his dwelling-place above the "*ark of the covenant,*" an argument that he will observe the covenant and fulfil its promises, that he will guard his people, and procure for them every felicity; (4) lastly, that God is willing to reveal to the people his *grace* and *mercy* through the covering of the ark, called the "*mercy seat,*" on which God sat.—*Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.*" The three tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, the three sons of Rachel, went immediately

behind the ark. Whenever the ark arose against the enemy, Moses used to exclaim "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." The Psalmist repeats this exclamation. "Cause thy face to shine upon us," was the blessing of Aaron; the Psalmist prays for the renewal of that blessing.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 3.—"*Turn us, and cause thy face to shine.*" To thyself convert us, from the earthly to the heavenly; convert our rebellious wills to thee, and when we are converted, show thy countenance that we may know thee; show thy power that we may fear thee; show thy wisdom that we may reverence thee; show thy goodness that we may love thee; show them once, show them a second time, show them always, that through tribulation we may pass with a happy face, and be saved. When thou dost save, we shall be saved; when thou withdrawest thy hand, we cannot be saved.—*Savonarola.*

Verse 4.—"*Lord God of hosts.*" All creatures are mustered, and trained, and put into garrison, or brought forth into the field, by his command. Which way can we look beside his armies? If upward into heaven, there is a band of soldiers, even a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, Luke ii. 13. If to the lower heavens, there is a band of soldiers, Gen. ii. 1; it was *universa militia cœli*, to which those idolaters burnt incense. On the earth, not only men are marshalled to the service; so Israel was called the "host of the living God;" but even the brute creatures are ranged in arrays. So God did levy a band of flies against the Egyptians; and a band of frogs that marched into their bedchambers. He hath troops of locusts, Proverbs xxx. 27, and armies of caterpillars. Not only the chariots and horsemen of heaven to defend his prophets; but even the beast, the most indocible, and despicable creatures, wherewith to confound his enemies. If Goliath stalk forth to defy the God of Israel, he shall be confuted with a pebble. If Herod swells up to a god, God will set his vermin on him, and all the king's guard cannot save him from them. You have heard of rats that could not be beaten off till they had destroyed that covetous prelate; and of the fly that killed Pope Adrian. God hath more ways to punish than he hath creatures. "*The Lord God of hosts*" is not properly a title of creation, but of Providence. All creatures have their existence from God as their Maker; but so have they also their order from him as their Governor. It refers not so much to their being as to their marshalling; not to their natural but militant estate; not only as creatures do they owe him for their making, but as they are soldiers for their managing. Their order is warlike, and they serve under the colours of the Almighty. So that here, God would be respected, not as a creator, but as a general.

His *anger*, therefore, seems so much the more fearful, as it is presented to us under so great a title: "*the Lord God of Hosts*" *is angry.* They talk of Tamerlane that he could daunt his enemies with the very look of his countenance. Oh! then what terror dwells in the countenance of an offended God! The reprobates shall call to the rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Rev. vi. 16. If *ira agni* doth so affright them, how terrible is *ira leonis*, the wrath of the lion? It may justly trouble us all to hear that the Lord, "*the Lord God of Hosts,*" is *angry;* in the sense whereof the prophet breaks forth here into this expostulation; "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth?"—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4.—"*Angry against the prayer of thy people.*" There may be infirmities enough in our very prayers to make them unacceptable. As if they be *Exanimes*, without life and soul; when the heart knows not what the tongue utters. Or *Perfunctoriæ*, for God will have none of those prayers that come out of feigned lips. Or *Tentativæ*, for they that will *petere tentando*, tempt God in prayer, shall go without. Or *Fluctuantes*, of a wild and wandering discourse, ranging up and down, which the Apostle calls "beating the air," as huntsmen beat the bushes, and as Saul sought his father's asses. Such prayers will not stumble upon the kingdom of heaven. Or it they be *Preproperæ*, run over in haste, so some use to chop up their prayers, and think long till they have done. But they that pray in such haste shall be heard at leisure. Or *sine fiducia;* the faithless man had as good hold his peace as pray; he may babble, but prays not; he prays ineffectually, and receives not. He may lift up his hands, but he does not lift up his heart. Only the prayer of the righteous availeth, and only the believer is righteous. But the formal devotion

of a faithless man is not worth the crust of bread which he asks. Or *sine humilitate*, so the pharisee's prayer was not truly *supplicatio*, but *superlatio*. A presumptuous prayer profanes the name of God instead of adoring it. All, or any, of these defects may mar the success of our prayers.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 5.—"*In great measure.*" The Hebrew *shalish* is the name of a measure, so called of *three*, as containing *a third part of the greatest measure*, four times as big as the usual cup to drink in.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 7.—"*Turn us again, O God of hosts.*" See verse 3 and observe that there it was only, "*Turn us again, O God,*" here "*O God of hosts,*" and verse 19, "*O Lord God of hosts.*" As the bird by much waving gathereth wind under the wing, and mounteth higher, so doth faith in prayer: *viresque acquirit eundo.*—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—Salvation may be certainly expected in God's order; and if we labour to be sure of our turning to God, and living in the sense of communion with him, we need not make question of salvation, for that shall follow infallibly on the former two. "*Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*" The last is not put up by way of prayer here, but promised to themselves, and put out of question, that it shall follow: "*Turn us, so shall we be saved,*" say they.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt,*" etc. The blessings are here placed before us in figurative language, taken from the *vine*, and the care usually expended upon it. They are, 1. The transplanting of the vine from an unfruitful to a very rich and fertile soil. 2. Its plantation and care. 3. Its incredible fruitfulness derived hence.—*Venema.*

Verses 8—19.—Mant's version of the passage is so exquisite that we quote it in full:—

8 Thy hands from Egypt brought a goodly vine,
And planted fair in fertile Palestine;
9 Clear'd for its grasping roots th' unpeopled land,
And gave it high to rise, and firm to stand.
10 Far o'er the eternal hills her shadow spread,
Her tendrils wreath'd the cedar's towering head;
11 And, as the centre of the land she stood,
Her branches reach'd the sea, her boughs the eastern flood.

12 Why hast thou now her hedges rent away,
And left her bare, the passing traveller's prey?
13 The field-fed beast devours each tender shoot,
Fierce from the wood the boar assails her root.
14 Return, O God; from heaven thine eyes incline;
Behold, and visit this neglected vine:
15 Regard the plant, thou once didst love so well,
And chief thy pleasant branch, the hope of Israel.

16 Burnt though she be and rent, her haughty foe
The deathful terrors of thy wrath shall know.
17 But on the man, by thee with strength array'd,
The Son of Man by thee for conquest made,
18 Thy hand shall rest; till we thy triumph see,
Resound thy praise, and still remember thee.
19 Turn us again, thou God of heav'n's high powers,
Beam with thy radiance forth, and peace shall still be ours.

Verse 10.—"*The hills,*" etc. That the sides of hills are the most commodious places for vineyards, is sufficiently known; as also that the vine hath props on which it climbs, and rests itself, and that these are lower or higher, according to the nature of the several soils or climates. In fertile soils, as now-a-days in Lombardy, the vines run up the *trees*, and *cover* them. And so here with respect to the luxuriant growth of this fruitful vine, it may not unfitly be said, in the poetical style, to run up to and reach the tops of the tall "*cedars,*" as Joseph is said to be "a fruitful bough, whose branches run over the wall." Gen. xlix., 22.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 12.—"*Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?*" Why hast thou done this, O Lord? What is the advantage? The guard of angels thou hast removed; they used to ward off the robbers; they used to defend it. Where,

to-day, is this faithful guard? Where are the prophets? Where the apostles? Where the teachers? Where the pastors surrounding the vine? Casting out devils, excommunicating heretics, arresting perverse men, and guarding the imperfect. What is the hedge? The guard of angels, the defence of pastors, the sacred doctrine of preachers. Where is the hedge? It is destroyed. Who has destroyed it? Thou O Lord, who hast taken away the preachers, gathered the pastors into heaven, removed the angels. Why hast thou cast down her hedges? Was it that she might fill up her iniquities, complete the measure of her wickedness, that at length she might be punished and renovated? But what was wanting to her? What sin was not found in her? Behold, Lord, for her wickedness is full. And now they gather her grapes, even all who go out of the way. Not the true vine-dressers, not the true husbandmen, gather her grapes, not all good, not a few good, not partly good and partly bad, not even one good, but all who pass beyond the way, pluck her. All who keep not thy precepts, who know not the way of God, open sinners, disreputable, these are the men that are chosen to minister at the altar, to these are benefices given, these gather her grapes for themselves, not for thee. They regard not thy poor; they feed not the hungry; they clothe not the naked; they help not the stranger; they defend not the widow and orphan: they eat up the lamb of the flock, and the fatted calf from the midst of the herd. They sing to the sound of psaltery and organ, like David; they think they have the instruments of song, arranged in choirs, praising God with the lips, but in heart they are far from God. Drinking wine in cups, perfumed with the richest odours, they suffer nothing for the grief of Joseph; with no pity are they moved for the needy and poor. These, then, are the men who go out of thy way and gather the grapes of thy vine. But what shall I say, Lord? For even all who transgress thy way, gather thy vintage? Walking in thy way and seeing the hedge of thy vine broken down, they have gone out of thy way. They have not walked in a straight course, but leaving thy way, have turned their feet to thy vine, to pluck her, to gather her fruit, not the spiritual fruit, but the temporal. What is it you say? This I say, Lord: The rich men of this world walking in the way of their sins, seeking by thy will and against thy will the riches, honours, dignities, and pleasures of this world, have turned aside from thy ways. The riches of this world they have ceased to pursue; its honours they seek no longer; they are turned to thy vine, to ecclesiastical dignities and riches. The hedge is broken down which repelled the unworthy, and now even they who go out of thy way have entered, and gather her grapes. What is your indictment? This: To-day in the theatre, to-morrow in the bishop's chair. To-day at the custom-house, to-morrow a canon in the choir. To-day a soldier, to-morrow a priest. They have transgressed thy way, and turned to thy vine: not, indeed, that they might cultivate her for thee, but that they might gather her grapes for themselves.—*Savonarola.*

Verse 13.—"*The boar out of the wood doth waste it.*" The very boar that laid her waste is a singular wild beast. Singular, because proud. For thus saith every proud one, It is I, it is I, and no other.—*Augustine.*

Verse 13.—"*The boar out of the wood doth waste it.*" No image of a destructive enemy could be more appropriate than that which is used. We have read of the little foxes that spoil the vines, but the *wild boar* is a much more destructive enemy, breaking its way through fences, rooting up the ground, tearing down the vines themselves, and treading them under its feet. A single party of these animals will sometimes destroy an entire vineyard in a single night. We can well imagine the damage that would be done to a vineyard even by the domesticated swine, but the wild boar is infinitely more destructive. It is of very great size, often resembling a donkey rather than a boar, and is swift and active beyond conception. The wild boar is scarcely recognisable as the very near relation of the domestic species. It runs with such speed, that a high-bred horse finds some difficulty in overtaking it, while an indifferent steed would be left hopelessly behind. Even on level ground the hunter has hard work to overtake it; and if it can get upon broken or hilly ground, no horse can catch it. The wild boar can leap to a considerable distance, and can wheel and turn when at full speed, with an agility that makes it a singularly dangerous foe. Indeed, the inhabitants of countries where the wild boar flourishes would as soon face a lion as one of these animals, the stroke of whose razor-like tusks is made with lightning swiftness, and which is sufficient to rip up a horse and cut a dog nearly asunder.—*J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."* 1869.

Verse 13.—"*The boar.*"

> In vengeance of neglected sacrifice,
> On Œneus' fields she sent a monstrous boar,
> That levell'd harvests and whole forests tore.
>
> —*Pope's Homer's Iliad.*

Verse 13.—"*The wood.*" Or rather *marsh;* that is, a moist marshy piece of ground where trees and plants flourish, and which wild beasts delight in. Such is the neighbourhood of the river Jordan, thus described by Maundrell: "After having descended the outermost bank, you go about a furlong upon a level strand, before you come to the immediate bank of the river. The second bank is so beset with bushes and trees, such as tamarisks, willows, oleanders, and the like, that you can see no water till you have made your way through them. In this thicket anciently (and the same is reported of it to this day,) several sorts of wild beasts were wont to harbour themselves." . . . . In these places, according to the same author, live many wild boars. Bp. Pococke in particular observed very large herds of them on the other side of Jordan, where it flows out of the Sea of Tiberias; and several of them on the same side on which he was, lying among the reeds by the sea.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 13.—According to the Talmud, the middle letter of the word rendered "*wood,*" in this verse, is the middle letter of the Hebrew Psalter.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 14.—"*Look down from heaven, and behold.*" This prayer is fit for none but the truly contrite, and those who are in heart returning. Otherwise, with what conscience could we entreat God to look down from heaven and behold our affairs? Should we not inflame his anger all the more, if besides living in sin, we dared to challenge the all holy eyes of God to behold from heaven our wickedness?—*Musculus.*

Verse 14.—"*Look down from heaven.*" Thou hast gone far from us, thou hast ascended to heaven. Thou hast departed from us, look down at least upon us from heaven, if thou art not willing to descend to earth, if our sins do not merit this.—*Savonarola.*

Verse 14.—"*Visit this vine.*" Still it has roots, still some branches are living. In the beginning of the world it began, and never has failed, and never will. For thou hast said, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. It may be diminished, it can never utterly fail. This vine is the vine which thou hast planted. There is one spirit, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Lord of all, who is all in all. Visit, then, this vine, for thy visitation preserves her spirit; visit by thy grace, by thy presence, by thy Holy Spirit. Visit with thy rod, and with thy staff; for thy rod and thy staff comfort her. Visit with thy scourge that she may be chastened and purified, for the time of pruning comes. Cast out the stones, gather up the dry branches, and bind them in bundles for burning. Raise her up, cut off the superfluous shoots, make fast her supports, enrich the soil, build up the fence, and visit this vine, as now thou visitest the earth and waterest it.—*Savonarola.*

Verse 17.—"*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,*" etc. Neither the church, nor any member thereof needeth any more security for their stability and perpetuation, but Christ; for now when the vineyard is burnt, and the visible church defaced, the remnant are content to rest satisfied with this, which also they take for granted, and do subscribe unto it: "*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.*" The consanguinity of Christ with the believer, and his humiliation in his human nature, are strong supporters of the faith and comfort of his people that do seek salvation through him; therefore do the faithful here fix themselves on this, that as he is God's Son, so he is a branch of their vineyard also; that as he is at the right hand of the Father as God, so he is "*the man of his right hand*" also; the Son of Man, or of *Adam,* partaker of flesh and blood with us, of the same stock that we are of, in all things like to us, except sin; for the *Son of Man* is the style whereby Christ styled himself in his humiliation. The perpetuity of the church, and the perseverance of the saints, is founded upon the sufficiency of Christ; and the unfeigned believer may assure himself, as of the continuance of the church, so of his own perseverance and constant communion with God through him. "*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,*" etc.; "*so will not we go back from thee.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 17.—"*The man of thy right hand.*" "*The Son of Man.*" These striking expressions apply in the fullest and most perfect sense to Christ. If *the Man of*

God's right hand be the man placed there, to whom can the title apply but to him? for, "to which of the angels said God at any time, Sit on my right hand?" (Heb. i. 5); and much less has he said this of any Jewish king. As to the other appellation, *The Son of Man*, it is one of Christ's most definite titles, being given to him in Scripture no less than seventy-one times; in sixty-seven instances by himself; once by Daniel, once by the martyr Stephen; and twice by the Apostle John in the Revelation. He it is, too, whom the Father has made strong for the salvation of his church, and who will yet turn away captivity from the chosen people, and restore them to a place in the church, so that henceforth they *"will not go back from God."—Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 17.—*"The man of thy right hand."* The man of the right hand is, I. *Most dear*, whom one holds equally dear with his own right hand, Matt. v. 29, 30. Jacob called the son of his most beloved wife, Benjamin, the son of his right hand, Gen. xxxv. 18, who was so dear to him that his life was bound up in the lad's life, chap. xliv. 30. II. *Most honoured;* a man upon whom one wishes to confer the highest honour, is placed at the right hand as Solomon placed his mother, 1 Kings ii. 19, and the spouse stands at the right hand, Ps. xlv. 10. Sitting down at the right hand is in Scripture a proof of the greatest honour. III. *Allied*, because covenants and mutual agreements are ratified by giving the right hand, 2 Kings x. 15. Jehu said to Jehonadab, *Is thy heart right?* and Jehonadab answered, *It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand.* The right hand used to be given, as in Gal. ii. 9. *The man of God's right hand*, therefore, is one most dear to God, most honoured, and joined with him in covenant.—*James Alting.* 1618—1679.

Verse 17.—Though the phrase, *"man of thy right hand,"* may have an immediate reference to the King who ruled in Judah when this psalm was penned, it must ultimately and most properly intend Jesus Christ, the great antitype of all the kings of David's line. The New Testament is the best interpreter of the Old; and it assures us that this highly dignified man is the Son of God. Heb. i. 1, 3, 13. But if we would understand the genuine import of the phrase, we must attend to a custom which obtained in Judea and other eastern countries. At meals, the master of the feast placed the person whom he loved best on his right hand, as a token of love and respect; and as they sat on couches, in the intervals between the dishes, when the master leaned on his left elbow, the man at his right hand, leaning also on his, would naturally repose his head on the master's bosom, while at the same time the master laid his right hand on the favourite's shoulder or side, in testimony of his favourable regards. This custom is obviously referred to in John xxi. 20, where John is called "the disciple whom Jesus loved, who also leaned on his breast at supper." Now, since Christ is called *the man of God's right hand*, this says that he is the object of his warmest and most honourable regards. In him he is well pleased, and in token of this, he has set him in the most honourable place. He is the Son of Man, whom the Father made to stand strong for himself, *i.e.*, to support the honour and dignity of the divine character amidst a perverse and crooked generation: the consideration of the Father's right hand being upon him, or of the Father's satisfaction in him as our Surety, serves to animate and embolden our addresses to his throne, and is the keenest incitement to put in practice that resolution, *"Henceforth will we not go back from thee."—Alexander Pirie.*

Verse 18.—*"So will not we,"* etc. How are we to understand the connection between this and the preceding words? It may be understood two ways. 1. *As it would oblige them to the yielding of steadfast obedience;* it would lay them under a special engagement never to revolt any more, as they had done; if God would grant this request, it would be a most eminent tie and bond upon them to the most constant and faithful service. 2. *As it would enable them to yield such obedience.* And this I conceive to be chiefly aimed at; if God would lay such help upon Christ for them, they should receive power by that means to discharge their duty to him better than ever heretofore; though they were very feeble and wavering, false and treacherous of themselves, yet here would be a successful remedy.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 19.—*"Turn us again."* How well that we can look to God when our face is set wrong, that he may turn us, and so his face shine on us, as to bring blessing and present deliverance to his people.—*J. N. Darby.*

Verse 19.—During distress God comes: and when he comes it is no more distress. —*Gaelic Proverb.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—In what respects the Lord acted as a Shepherd to Israel, as illustrative of his dealings with his Church.

Verse 2.—Salvation expected in connection with the people of God, their prayers, labours, and daily service.

Verse 3.—The double work in salvation, (1) Turn us ; (2) Turn to us.

Verse 4.—What prayers they are which make God angry.

Verse 5.—Unpalatable provender. I. Analyse the Provision. II. Note the hand which sends it. III. Consider the healthfulness of the diet. IV. Remember the alleviating accompaniments.

Verse 7.—Conversion, communion, confidence of salvation.

Verses 8—15.—Parallel between the Church and a vine.

Verse 12.—I. The hedges of the Church. II. Their removal. III. The deplorable consequences.

Verse 13.—What are the greatest enemies of the Church ? Where do they come from ? How shall we defeat them ?

Verses 17, 18.—The power of God seen in Jesus, the cause of the perseverance of the saints.

Verse 18 (*last clauses.*)—The need of quickening in order to acceptable worship.

PSALM LXXXI.

TITLE —To the chief Musician upon Gittith. *Very little is known of the meaning of this title. We have given the best explanation known to us in connection with Psalm VIII. in Vol. I. of this work. If it e intended to indicate a vintage song, it speaks well for the piety of the people for whom it was written : it is to be feared that in few places even in Christian countries would holy hymns be thought suitable to be sung in connection with the wine-press. When the bells upon the horses shall be holiness unto the Lord, then shall the juice of the grape gush forth to the accompaniment of sacred song.* A Psalm of Asaph. *This poet here again dwells upon the history of his country ; his great forte seems to be rehearsing the past in admonitory psalmody. He is the poet of the history and politics of Israel. A truly national songster, at once pious and patriotic.*

DIVISIONS.—*Praise is called for to celebrate some memorable day, perhaps the passover ; whereupon the deliverance out of Egypt is described,* 1—7. *Then the Lord gently chides his people for their ingratitude, and pictures their happy estate had they but been obedient to his commands.*

EXPOSITION.

SING aloud unto God our strength : make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

2 Take a Psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.

3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

4 For this *was* a statute for Israel, *and* a law of the God of Jacob.

5 This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt : *where* I heard a language *that* I understood not.

6 I removed his shoulder from the burden : his hands were delivered from the pots.

7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee ; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder : I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

1. *"Sing"* in tune and measure, so that the public praise may be in harmony ; sing with joyful notes, and sounds melodious. *"Aloud."* For the heartiest praise is due to our good Lord. His acts of love to us speak more loudly than any of our words of gratitude can do. No dulness should ever stupify our psalmody, or half-heartedness cause it to limp along. Sing aloud, ye debtors to sovereign grace, your hearts are profoundly grateful : let your voices express your thankfulness. *"Unto God our strength."* The Lord was the strength of his people in delivering them out of Egypt with a high hand, and also in sustaining them in the wilderness, placing them in Canaan, preserving them from their foes, and giving them victory. To whom do men give honour but to those upon whom they rely, therefore let us sing aloud unto our God, who is our strength and our song. *"Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob."* The God of the nation, the God of their father Jacob, was extolled in gladsome music by the Israelitish people : let no Christian be silent, or slack in praise, for this God is our God. It is to be regretted that the niceties of modern singing frighten our congregations from joining lustily in the hymns. For our part we delight in full bursts of praise, and had rather discover the ruggedness of a want of musical training than miss the heartiness of universal congregational song. The gentility which lisps the tune in wellbred whispers, or leaves the singing altogether to the choir, is very like a mockery of worship. The gods of Greece and Rome may be worshipped well enough with classical music, but Jehovah can only be adored

with the heart, and that music is the best for his service which gives the heart most play.

2. *"Take a psalm."* Select a sacred song, and then raise it with your hearty voices. *"And bring hither the timbrel."* Beat on your tambourines, ye damsels, let the sound be loud and inspiriting. "Sound the trumpets, beat the drums." God is not to be served with misery but with mirthful music, sound ye then the loud timbrel, as of old ye smote it by "Egypt's dark sea." *"The pleasant harp with the psaltery."* The timbrel for sound, must be joined by the harp for sweetness, and this by other stringed instruments for variety. Let the full compass of music be holiness unto the Lord.

3. *"Blow up the trumpet in the new moon."* Announce the sacred month, the beginning of months, when the Lord brought his people out of the house of bondage. Clear and shrill let the summons be which calls all Israel to adore the Redeeming Lord. *"In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day."* Obedience is to direct our worship, not whim and sentiment: God's appointment gives a solemnity to rites and times which no ceremonial pomp or hierarchical ordinance could confer. The Jews not only observed the ordained month, but that part of the month which had been divinely set apart. The Lord's people in the olden time welcomed the times appointed for worship; let us feel the same exultation, and never speak of the Sabbath as though it could be other than "a delight" and "honourable." Those who plead this passage as authority for their man-appointed feasts and fasts must be moonstruck. We will keep such feasts as the Lord appoints, but not those which Rome or Canterbury may ordain.

4. *"For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob."* It was a precept binding upon all the tribes that a sacred season should be set apart to commemorate the Lord's mercy; and truly it was but the Lord's due, he had a right and a claim to such special homage. When it can be proved that the observance of Christmas, Whitsuntide, and other Popish festivals was ever instituted by a divine statute, we also will attend to them, but not till then. It is as much our duty to reject the traditions of men, as to observe the ordinances of the Lord. We ask concerning every rite and rubric, "Is this a law of the God of Jacob?" and if it be not clearly so, it is of no authority with us, who walk in Christian liberty.

5. *"This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony."* The nation is called Joseph, because in Egypt it would probably be known and spoken of as Joseph's family, and indeed Joseph was the foster-father of the people. The passover, which is probably here alluded to, was to be a standing memorial of the redemption from Egypt; and everything about it was intended to testify to all ages, and all peoples, the glory of the Lord in the deliverance of his chosen nation. *"When he went out through the land of Egypt."* Much of Egypt was traversed by the tribes in their exodus march, and in every place the feast which they had kept during the night of Egypt's visitation would be a testimony for the Lord, who had also himself in the midnight slaughter gone forth through the land of Egypt. The once afflicted Israelites marched over the land of bondage as victors who trample down the slain. *"Where I heard a language that I understood not."* Surely the connection requires that we accept these words as the language of the Lord. It would be doing great violence to language if the "I" here should be referred to one person, and the "I" in the next verse to another. But how can it be imagined that the Lord should speak of a language which he understood not, seeing he knows all things, and no form of speech is incomprehensible to him? The reply is, that the Lord here speaks as the God of Israel identifying himself with his own chosen nation, and calling that an unknown tongue to himself which was unknown to them. He had never been adored by psalm or prayer in the tongue of Egypt; the Hebrew was the speech known in his sacred house, and the Egyptian was outlandish and foreign there. In strictest truth, and not merely in figure, might the Lord thus speak, since the wicked customs and idolatrous rites of Egypt were disapproved of by him, and in that sense were unknown. Of the wicked, Jesus shall say, "I never knew you;" and probably in the same sense this expression should be understood, for it may be correctly rendered, "a speech I knew not I am hearing." It was among the griefs of Israel that their taskmasters spake an unknown tongue, and they were thus continually reminded that they were strangers in a strange land. The Lord had pity upon them, and emancipated them, and hence it was their bounden duty to maintain inviolate the memorial of the divine goodness. It is no small mercy to be brought out from an ungodly world and separated unto the Lord.

6. *"I removed his shoulder from the burden."* Israel was the drudge and slave of Egypt, but God gave him liberty. It was by God alone that the nation was set free. Other peoples owe their liberties to their own efforts and courage, but Israel received its Magna Charta as a free gift of divine power. Truly may the Lord say of everyone of his freed men, "I removed his shoulder from the burden." *"His hands were delivered from the pots."* He was no longer compelled to carry earth, and mould it, and bake it; the earth-basket was no more imposed upon the people, nor the tale of bricks exacted, for they came out into the open country where none could exact upon them. How typical all this is of the believer's deliverance from legal bondage, when, through faith, the burden of sin glides into the Saviour's sepulchre, and the servile labours of self-righteousness come to an end for ever.

7. *"Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee."* God heard his people's cries in Egypt, and at the Red Sea: this ought to have bound them to him. Since God does not forsake us in our need, we ought never to forsake him at any time. When our hearts wander from God, our answered prayers cry "shame" upon us. *"I answered thee in the secret place of thunder."* Out of the cloud the Lord sent forth tempest upon the foes of his chosen. That cloud was his secret pavilion, within it he hung up his weapons of war, his javelins of lightning, his trumpet of thunder; forth from that pavilion he came and overthrew the foe that his own elect might be secure. *"I proved thee at the waters of Meribah."* They had proved him and found him faithful, he afterwards proved them in return. Precious things are tested, therefore Israel's loyalty to her King was put to trial, and, alas, it failed lamentably. The God who was adored one day for his goodness was reviled the next, when the people for a moment felt the pangs of hunger and thirst. The story of Israel is only our own history in another shape. God has heard us, delivered us, liberated us, and too often our unbelief makes the wretched return of mistrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Great is our sin; great is the mercy of our God: let us reflect upon both, and pause a while. *"Selah."* Hurried reading is of little benefit; to sit down a while and meditate is very profitable.

8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;

9 There shall no strange God be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.

10 I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

11 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.

12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: *and* they walked in their own counsels.

13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, *and* Israel had walked in my ways!

14 I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.

15 The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever.

16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

8. *"Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee."* What? Are the people so insensible as to be deaf to their God? So it would seem, for he earnestly asks a hearing. Are we not also at times quite as careless and immovable? *"O Israel, if thou will hearken unto me."* There is much in this "if." How low have they fallen who will not hearken unto God himself! The deaf adder is not more grovelling. We are not fond of being upbraided, we had rather avoid sharp and cutting truths; and, though the Lord himself rebuke us, we fly from his gentle reproofs.

9. *"There shall no strange god be in thee."* No alien god is to be tolerated in Israel's tents. *"Neither shalt thou worship any strange god."* Where false gods are, their worship is sure to follow. Man is so desperate an idolater that the image is always a strong temptation: while the nests are there the birds will be eager to

return. No other god had done anything for the Jews, and therefore they had no reason for paying homage to any other. To us the same argument will apply. We owe all to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: the world, the flesh, the devil, none of these have been of any service to us; they are aliens, foreigners, enemies, and it is not for us to bow down before them. "Little children keep yourselves from idols," is our Lord's voice to us, and by the power of his Spirit we would cast out every false god from our hearts.

10. *"I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt."* Thus did Jehovah usually introduce himself to his people. The great deliverance out of Egypt was that claim upon his people's allegiance which he most usually pleaded. If ever people were morally bound to their God, certainly Israel was a thousand times pledged unto Jehovah, by his marvellous deeds on their behalf in connection with the Exodus. *"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."* Because he had brought them out of Egypt he could do great things for them. He had proved his power and his good will; it remained only for his people to believe in him and ask large things of him. If their expectations were enlarged to the utmost degree, they could not exceed the bounty of the Lord. Little birds in the nest open their mouths widely enough, and perhaps the parent birds fail to fill them, but it will never be so with our God. His treasures of grace are inexhaustible,

> "Deep as our helpless miseries are,
> And boundless as our sins."

The Lord began with his chosen nation upon a great scale, doing great wonders for them, and offering them vast returns for their faith and love, if they would but be faithful to him. Sad, indeed, was the result of this grand experiment.

11. *"But my people would not hearken to my voice."* His warnings were rejected, his promises forgotten, his precepts disregarded. Though the divine voice proposed nothing but good to them, and that upon an unparalleled scale of liberality, yet they turned aside. *"And Israel would none of me."* They would not consent to his proposals, they walked in direct opposition to his commands, they hankered after the ox-god of Egypt, and their hearts were bewitched by the idols of the nations round about. The same spirit of apostacy is in all our hearts, and if we have not altogether turned aside from the Lord, it is only grace which has prevented us.

12. *"So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust."* No punishment is more just or more severe than this. If men will not be checked, but madly take the bit between their teeth and refuse obedience, who shall wonder if the reins are thrown upon their necks, and they are let alone to work out their own destruction. It were better to be given up to lions than to our hearts' lusts. *"And they walked in their own counsels."* There was no doubt as to what course they would take, for man is everywhere wilful and loves his own way,—that way being at all times in direct opposition to God's way. Men deserted of restraining grace, sin with deliberation; they consult, and debate, and consider, and then elect evil rather than good, with malice aforethought and in cool blood. It is a remarkable obduracy of rebellion when men not only run into sin through passion, but calmly "walk in their own counsels" of iniquity.

13. *"Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!"* The condescending love of God expresses itself in painful regrets for Israel's sin and punishment. Such were the laments of Jesus over Jerusalem. Certain doctrinalists find a stumbling-stone in such passages, and set themselves to explain them away, but to men in sympathy with the divine nature the words and the emotions are plain enough. A God of mercy cannot see men heaping up sorrow for themselves through their sins without feeling his compassion excited toward them.

14. *"I should soon have subdued their enemies."* As he did in Egypt overthrow Pharaoh, so would he have baffled every enemy. *"And turned my hand against their adversaries."* He would have smitten them once, and then have dealt them a return blow with the back of his hand. See what we lose by sin. Our enemies find the sharpest weapons against us in the armoury of our transgressions. They could never overthrow us if we did not first overthrow ourselves. Sin strips a man of his armour, and leaves him naked to his enemies. Our doubts and fears would long ago have been slain if we had been more faithful to our God. Ten thousand evils which afflict us now would have been driven far from us if we had been more jealous of holiness in our walk and conversation. We ought to consider not only

what sin takes from our present stock, but what it prevents our gaining: reflection will soon show us that sin always costs us dear. If we depart from God, our inward corruptions are sure to make a rebellion. Satan will assail us, the world will worry us, doubts will annoy us, and all through our own fault. Solomon's departure from God raised up enemies against him, and it will be so with us, but if our ways please the Lord he will make even our enemies to be at peace with us.

15. *"The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him."* Though the submission would have been false and flattering, yet the enemies of Israel would have been so humiliated that they would have hastened to make terms with the favoured tribes. Our enemies become abashed and cowardly when we, with resolution, walk carefully with the Lord. It is in God's power to keep the fiercest in check, and he will do so if we have a filial fear, a pious awe of him. *"But their time should have endured for ever."* The people would have been firmly established, and their prosperity would have been stable. Nothing confirms a state or a church like holiness. If we be firm in obedience we shall be firm in happiness. Righteousness establishes, sin ruins.

16. *"He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat."* Famine would have been an unknown word, they would have been fed on the best of the best food, and have had abundance of it as their every day diet. *"And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee."* Luxuries as well as necessaries would be forthcoming, the very rocks of the land would yield abundant and sweet supplies; the bees would store the clefts of the rocks with luscious honey, and so turn the most sterile part of the land to good account. The Lord can do great things for an obedient people. When his people walk in the light of his countenance, and maintain unsullied holiness, the joy and consolation which he yields them are beyond conception. To them the joys of heaven have begun even upon earth. They can sing in the ways of the Lord. The spring of the eternal summer has commenced with them; they are already blest, and they look for brighter things. This shows us by contrast how sad a thing it is for a child of God to sell himself into captivity to sin, and bring his soul into a state of famine by following after another god.

O Lord, for ever bind us to thyself alone, and keep us faithful unto the end.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—It is remarkable that as Psalm lxxx. treats of the church of God under the figure of a vine, so the present is entitled, *"upon Gittith,"* literally upon the winepress. Whether the expression was meant to refer to a musical instrument, or to some direction as to the tune, is uncertain. In our Saviour's adoption of the figure of a vineyard to represent his church, he speaks of a winepress dug in it, Matt. xxi. 33. The idea refers itself to the final result in some sense, in a way of salvation of souls, as the same figure of a winepress is used in Rev. xiv. of the final destruction of the ungodly.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 2.—*"Timbrel."* The *toph*, English version *tabret*, *timbrel*, LXX. τύμπανον, once ψαλτήριον. It was what would now be called a tambourine, being played by the hand; and was specially used by women. It is thrice mentioned in the Psalms: lxxxi. 2; cxlix. 3; cl. 4.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 2.—*"The Psaltery."* It is probably impossible to be sure as to what is intended by a psaltery. The Genevan version translates it *viol*, and the ancient viol was a six-stringed guitar. In the Prayer-book version, the Hebrew word is rendered *lute*, which instrument resembled the guitar, but was superior in tone. The Greek word psalterion denotes a stringed instrument played with the fingers. Cassiodorus says that the psaltery was triangular in shape, and that it was played with a bow. Aben Ezra evidently considered it to be a kind of pipe, but the mass of authorities make it a stringed instrument. It was long in use, for we read of it in David's time as made of fir-wood (2 Sam. vi. 5), and in Solomon's reign, of algum trees (2 Chr. ix. 11), and it was still in use in the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 3.—"*Blow up the trumpet,*" etc. The Jews say this blowing of trumpets was in commemoration of Isaac's deliverance, a ram being sacrificed for him, and therefore they sounded with trumpets made of rams' horns: or in remembrance of the trumpet blown at the giving of the law; though it rather was an emblem of the gospel and the ministry of it, by which sinners are aroused, awakened and quickened, and souls are charmed and allured, and filled with spiritual joy and gladness.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"*The trumpet.*" The sound of the trumpet is very commonly employed in Scripture as an image of the voice or word of God. The voice of God, and the voice of the trumpet on Mount Sinai, were heard together (Ex. xix. 5, 18, 19), first the trumpet-sound as the symbol, then the reality. So also John heard the voice of the Lord as that of a trumpet (Rev. i. 10; iv. 1), and the sound of the trumpet is once and again spoken of as the harbinger of the Son of Man, when coming in power and great glory, to utter the almighty word which shall quicken the dead to life, and make all things new (Matthew xxiv. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16). The sound of the trumpet, then, was a symbol of the majestic, omnipotent voice or word of God; but of course only in those things in which it was employed in respect to what God had to say to men. It might be used also as from man to God, or by the people, as from one to another. In this case, it would be a call to a greater than the usual degree of alacrity and excitement in regard to the work and service of God. And such probably was the more peculiar design of the blowing of trumpets at the festivals generally, and especially at the festival of trumpets on the first day of the second month.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 3.—"*In the new moon,*" etc. The feast of the *new moon* was always proclaimed by sound of trumpet. For want of astronomical knowledge, the poor Jews were put to sad shifts to know the real time of the new moon. They generally sent persons to the top of some hill or mountain about the time which, according to their supputations, the new moon should appear. The first who saw it was to give immediate notice to the Sanhedrim; they closely examined the reporter as to his credibility, and whether his information agreed with their calculations. If all was found satisfactory, the president proclaimed the new moon by shouting out, מקדש, *mikkodesh!* "It is consecrated." This word was repeated *twice* aloud by the people; and was then proclaimed everywhere by *blowing of horns*, or what is called the sound of *trumpets*. Among the Hindoos some feasts are announced by the sound of the *conch*, or *sacred shell.*—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—"*In the time appointed.*" The word rendered "*the time appointed,*" signifies the *hidden* or *covered* period; that is, the time when the moon is concealed or covered with darkness. This day was a joyful festival, returning every month; but the first day of the seventh moon was the most solemn of the whole; being not only the first of the moon, but of the civil year. This was called the feast of trumpets, as it was celebrated by the blowing of trumpets from sun-rising to sun-setting; according to the command, "It shall be a day of the blowing of trumpets to you."

This joy was a memorial of the joy of creation, and the joy of giving the law: it also pre-indicated the blowing of the gospel-trumpet, after the dark, the covered period of the death of Christ, when the form of the church changed, and the year of the "redeemed" began; and, finally, it prefigured the last day, when the trumpet of God shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.—*Alexander Pirie.*

Verse 5.—"*I heard a language that I understood not.*" The "*language*" that he then heard—the religious worship of idolaters,—vows offered up "to birds and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things," Rom. i. 23, and strength and mercy sought from every object in nature, *except himself,*—was a language unknown to him—"he knew it not."—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 6.—"*Pots,*" or *burden-baskets.* Compare Exodus vi. 6, 7. Rosellini gives a drawing of these baskets from a picture discovered in a tomb at Thebes. "Of the labourers," says he, "some are employed in transporting the clay in vessels, some in intermingling it with straw; others are taking the bricks out of the form, and placing them in rows; still others with a piece of wood upon their backs, and ropes on each side, carry away the bricks already burned or dried. Their dissimilarity to the Egyptians appears at the first view: their complexion, physiognomy

and beard permit us not to be mistaken in supposing them to be Hebrews."—*Frederic Fysh.*

Verse 6.—"*Pots.*" The bricklayer's baskets; hanging one at each end of a yoke laid across the shoulders.—*William Kay.*

Verse 7.—To "*answer in the secret place of thunder,*" refers us to the pillar of cloud and fire, the habitation of the awful Majesty of God, whence God glanced with angry eyes upon the Egyptians, filled them with consternation and overthrew them.—*Venema.*

Verse 10.—"*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*" Surely this teaches us, that the greater and more valuable the blessings are which we implore from the divine beneficence, the more sure shall we be to receive them in answer to prayer. . . . . But, though men are to be blamed, that they so seldom acknowledge God in any thing, yet they are still more to be blamed, that they seek not from him the chief good. Men may, however, possibly cry to God for inferior things, and apply in vain. Even good men may ask for temporal blessings, and not receive them; because the things we suppose good, may *not* be good, or not good *for us*, or not good for us *at present*. But none shall seek God for the best of blessings in vain. If we ask *enough*, we shall have it.

While the worldling drinks in happiness, if it will bear the name, with the mouth of an insect, the Christian imbibes bliss with the mouth of an angel. His pleasures are the same in kind, with the pleasure of the infinitely happy God.—*John Ryland.*

Verse 10.—"*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*" You may easily over-expect the creature, but you cannot over-expect God: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" widen and dilate the desires and expectations of your souls, and God is able to fill every chink to the vastest capacity. This honours God, when we greaten our expectation upon him; it is a sanctifying of God in our hearts.—*Thomas Case* (1598—1682), *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 10.—"*Open thy mouth wide.*" This implies, 1. Warmth and fervency in prayer. To open the mouth is in effect to open the heart, that it may be both engaged and enlarged. . . . We may be said to open our mouths wide when our affections are quick and lively, and there is a correspondence between the feelings of the heart and the request of the lips; or when we really pray, and not merely seem to do so. This is strongly and beautifully expressed in Psalm cxix. 131: "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments." . . . 2. It implies a holy fluency and copiousness of expression, so as to order our cause before him, and fill our mouths with arguments. When the good man gets near to God, he has much business to transact with him, many complaints to make, and many blessings to implore; and, as such seasons do not frequently occur, he is the more careful to improve them. He then pours out his whole soul, and is at no loss for words; for when the heart is full, the tongue overflows. Sorrow and distress will even make those eloquent who are naturally slow of speech. . . . . 3. Enlarged hope and expectation. We may be too irreverent in our approaches to God, and too peremptory in our application; but if the matter and manner of our prayer be right, we cannot be too confident in our expectations from him. . . . Open thy mouth wide then, O Christian; stretch out thy desires to the uttermost, grasp heaven and earth in thy boundless wishes, and believe there is enough in God to afford thee full satisfaction. Not only come, but come with boldness to the throne of grace: it is erected for sinners, even the chief of sinners. Come to it then, and wait at it, till you obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Those who expect most from God are likely to receive the most. The desire of the righteous, let it be ever so extensive, shall be granted.—*Benjamin Beddome.*

Verse 10.—"*I will fill it.*" Consider the import of the promise: "Open thy mouth wide, *and I will fill it.*" "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." Particularly, 1. If we open our mouths to God in prayer, he will fill them more and more with suitable petitions and arguments. When we attempt to open the mouth, God will open it still wider. Thus he dealt with Abraham when he interceded for Sodom: the longer he prayed, the more submissive and yet the more importunate he became. By praying we increase our ability to pray, and find a greater facility in the duty. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly," 2. God will fill the mouth with abundant thanksgivings. Many of David's Psalms begin with prayer, and end with the most animated praises.

No mercies so dispose to thankfulness as those which are received in answer to prayer; for according to the degree of desire will be the sweetness of fruition. . . . . 3. We shall be filled with those blessings we pray for, if they are calculated to promote our real good and the glory of God. Do we desire fresh communications of grace, and manifestations of divine love; a renewed sense of pardoning mercy, and an application of the blood of Christ? Do we want holiness, peace, and assurance? Do we want to hear from God, to see him, and be like him? The promise is, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus," Phil. iv. 19. You shall have what you desire, and be satisfied: it shall be enough, and you shall think it so. "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."—*Benjamin Beddome.*

Verse 10.—The custom is said still to exist in Persia that when the king wishes to do a visitor, an ambassador for instance, especial honour, he desires him to open his mouth wide; and the king then crams it as full of sweetmeats as it will hold; and sometimes even with jewels. Curious as this custom is, it is doubtless referred to in Psalm lxxxi. 10: "*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*;" not with baubles of jewels, but with far richer treasure.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 11.—"*My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.*" Know, sinner, that if at last thou missest heaven, which, God forbid! the Lord can wash his hands over your head, and clear himself of your blood: thy damnation will be laid at thine own door: it will then appear there was no cheat in the promise, no sophistry in the gospel, but thou didst voluntarily put eternal life from thee, whatever thy lying lips uttered to the contrary: "*My people would have none of me.*" So that, when the jury shall sit on thy murdered soul, to inquire how thou camest to thy miserable end, thou wilt be found guilty of thy own damnation. No one loseth God, but he that is willing to part with him.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 11.—"*And Israel would none of me.*" It is added, "*and Israel would none of me,*" more closely, *was not borne to me by a natural bent.* For this is the original force of the word אבה, as it still survives in Job. ix. where it is used of the ships borne outward by a favourable wind and tide.—*Venema.*

Verse 11.—"*Israel would none of me.*" That is, would not be content alone with me, would not *take quiet contentment in me* (as the Hebrew word signifies); the Lord was not good enough for them, but their hearts went out from him to other things.—*Thomas Sheppard,* 1605—1649.

Verse 12.—"*So I gave them up.*" The word *give up* suggests the idea of a *divorce,* whereby a husband sends away a capricious wife, and commands her to live by herself. . . . Transferred to God, it teaches us nothing else than that God withdraws his *protecting* and *guiding* hand from the people, and leaves them to themselves; so that he ceases to chasten and defend them, but, on the other hand, suffers them *to become hardened and to perish.*—*Venema.*

Verse 12.—"*So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts,*" etc. A man may be given up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved, but to be given up to sin is a thousand times worse, because that is the fruit of divine anger, in order to the damnation of the soul; here God wounds like an enemy and like a cruel one, and we may boldly say, God never punished any man or woman with this spiritual judgment in kindness and love.—*John Shower* (1657—1715), *in* "*The Day of Grace.*"

Verse 12.—"*I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts.*" O dreadful word! The same will the Spirit do upon our rejecting or resisting of his leading. He may long strive, but he will "not always strive," Gen. vi. 3. If the person led shall once begin to struggle with him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow his guidance, what is then to be done, but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes him so to cast off a person as to lead him no more. . . .

Let it be your great and constant care and endeavour to get the Spirit's leading continued to you. You have it; pray keep it. Can it be well with a Christian, when this is suspended or withdrawn from him? How does he wander and bewilder himself, when the Spirit does not guide him! How backward is he to good, when the Spirit does not bend and incline him thereunto! How unable to go, when the Spirit does not uphold him! What vile lusts and passions rule him, when the Spirit does not put forth his holy and gracious government over him! O, it is of infinite concern to all that belong to God, to preserve and secure to themselves the Spirit's

leading! Take a good man without this, and he is like a ship without a pilot, a blind man without a guide, a poor child that has none to sustain it, the rude multitude that have none to keep them in any order. What a sad difference is there in the same person, as to what he is when the Spirit *leads* him, and as to what he is when the Spirit *leaves* him! . . . .

OBJECTION.—" But does the Spirit at any time do this to God's people? Does he ever suspend and withdraw his guidance from persons who once lived under it? "

ANSWER.—Yes; too often. It is what he usually does, when his leadings are not followed. This is a thing that grieves him; and when he is grieved he departs, withholds, and recalls his former gracious influences, though not totally and finally; yet for a time and in such a degree. As a guide, that is to conduct the traveller; if this traveller shall refuse to follow him, or shall give unkind usage to him, what does the guide then do? Why, he recedes, and leaves him to shift for himself. It is thus in the case in hand: if we comply with the Spirit, in his motions, and use him tenderly, he will hold on in his leading of us; but if otherwise, he will concern himself no more about us. O, take heed how you carry yourselves towards him: not only upon ingenuousness, it is base to be unkind to our Guide, (" Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? " Jer. ii. 17,) but also upon the account of self-love: for " as we behave ourselves to him, so he will behave himself to us ": *"Ita nos tractat, ut a nobis tractatur."—Thomas Jacombe* (1622—1687), *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verses 12.—*"I gave them up . . . . and they walked in their own counsels."* That was to give them up to a spirit of division, to a spirit of discontent, to a spirit of envy and jealousy, to a spirit of ambition, of self-seeking and emulation, and so to a spirit of distraction and confusion, and so to ruin and destruction. Such, and no better, is the issue, when God gives a people up to their own counsels; then they soon become a very chaos, and run themselves into a ruinous heap. As good have no counsel from man, as none but man's.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—God calls upon Israel to hear and obey him, they will not: " But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me." What was the result of their refusal? " So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." God doth not testify his anger for their contempt of him by sending plague, or flames, or wild beasts among them. He doth not say, Well, since they thus slight my authority, I will be avenged on them to purpose; I will give them up to the sword, or famine, or racking diseases, or greedy devouring lions, which would have been sad and grievous; but he executes on them a far more sad and grievous judgment, when he saith, *"So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels."* God's leaving one soul to one lust,* is far worse than leaving him to all the lions in the world. Alas! it will tear the soul worse than a lion can do the body, and rend it in pieces, when there is none to deliver it. God's giving them up to their own wills, that they walked in their own counsels, is in effect a giving them up to eternal wrath and woe.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 12.—God moves everything in his ordinary providence according to their particular natures, God moves everything ordinarily according to the nature he finds it in. Had we stood in innocency, we had been moved according to that originally righteous nature; but since our fall we are moved according to that nature introduced into us with the expulsion of the other. Our first corruption was our own act, not God's work; we owe our creation to God, our corruption to our selves. Now since God will govern his creature, I do not see how it can be otherwise, than according to the present nature of the creature, unless God be pleased to alter that nature. God forces no man against his nature; he doth not force the will in conversion, but graciously and powerfully inclines it. He doth never force nor incline the will to sin, but leaves it to the corrupt habits it hath settled in itself: *"So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels;"* counsels of their own framing, not of God's. He moves the will, which is *sponte mala*, according to its own nature and counsels. As a man flings several things out of his hand, which are of several figures, some spherical, tetragons, cylinders, conics, some round and some square, though the motion be from the agent, yet the variety of their motions is from their own figure and frame; and if any will hold his hand upon a ball in its motion, regularly it will move

* " One's soul to one's lust " ?

according to its nature and figure; and a man by casting a bowl out of his hand, is the cause of the motion, but the bad bias is the cause of its irregular motion. The power of action is from God, but the viciousness of that action from our own nature. As when a clock or watch hath some fault in any of the wheels, the man that winds it up, or putting his hand upon the wheels moves them, he is the cause of the motion, but it is the flaw in it, a deficiency of something, is the cause of its erroneous motion; that error was not from the person that made it, or the person that winds it up, and sets it on going, but from some other cause; yet till it be mended it will not go otherwise, so long as it is set upon motion. Our motion is from God,—Acts xvii. 28, "In him we move,"—but not the disorder of that motion. It is the fulness of a man's stomach at sea is the cause of his sickness, and not the pilot's government of the ship.

God doth not infuse the lust, or excite it, though he doth present the object about which the lust is exercised. God delivered up Christ to the Jews, he presented him to them, but never commanded them to crucify him, nor infused that malice into them, nor quickened it; but he, seeing such a frame, withdrew his restraining grace, and left them to the conduct of their own vitiated wills. All the corruption in the world ariseth from lust in us, not from the object which God in his providence presents to us: 2 Peter i. 4, "The corruption that is in the world through lust."—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 13.—"*Oh that my people had hearkened unto me,*" etc. God sometimes doth not mind his children when they cry, that they may hereby take occasion to remember how oft he hath cried and they have not minded him. Doth not the Lord cry out to his people of duty, and they do not hear him? Doth he not complain here of this neglect, not only as a dishonour, but as a grief unto him? No marvel then if God let his people cry out of misery, and doth not hear them. The Lord shuts his ear that we might consider how we have shut our ears; yea, he shuts his ears that he may open ours. We are moved to hear and answer the call and command of God, though we find that he doth not hear nor answer our call and cry. If the Lord should always be swift to hear us, how slow should we be in hearing him, and while we have our desires, forget most of our duties.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 13.—"*Oh that my people had hearkened,*" etc. God speaks as if he were comforted when he is but heard, or as if we comforted him when we hear him. God beseecheth us, and speaks entreaties to us, that his counsels and commands may be heard: "*Oh that my people had hearkened unto me.*" The Lord tells them indeed it would have proved their consolation (ver. 14): "*I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.*" Yet while he speaks so pathetically, he seems to include his own consolation in it as well as theirs. "*Oh that my people had hearkened unto me:*" it would have been good for them, and it would have given high content to myself.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13.—"*O that my people had hearkened unto me,*" etc. There is to us a deep mysteriousness in all this; but the desire of God for our salvation, and right moral state, is here most obviously manifested; and let us proceed on that which is obvious, not on that which is obscure.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 13.—"*Walked in my ways.*" None are found in the *ways* of God, but those who have *hearkened* to his words.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 14.—"*Turned my hand.*" God expresseth the utter overthrow of the enemies of his people, but by the *turning of a hand:* if God do but turn his hand, they are all gone presently, soon subdued. If he do but touch the might, the pomp, the greatness, the riches and the power of all those in the world that are opposers of his church, presently they fall to the ground: a touch from the hand of God will end our wars.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16.—"*Honey out of the rock.*" The rock spiritually and mystically designs Christ, the Rock of salvation, 1 Cor. x. 4; the "*honey*" out of the rock, the fulness of grace in him, and the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David, and the precious promises of the everlasting covenant; and the gospel, which is sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb; and with these such are filled and satisfied who hearken to Christ and walk in his ways; for, as the whole of what is here said shows what Israel lost by disobedience, it clearly suggests what such enjoy who hear and obey.—*John Gill.*

Verse 16.—"*Honey out of the rock.*" God extracts honey out of the rock—the sweetest springs and pleasures from the hardness of afflictions; from mount Calvary and the cross, the blessings that give greatest delight; whereas the world makes from the fountains of pleasure stones and rocks of torment.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 16.—"*Honey out of the rock.*" Most travellers who have visited Palestine in summer, have had their attention directed to the abundance of honey, which the bees of the land have stored up in the hollows of trees and in crevices of the rock. In localities where the bare rocks of the desert alone break the sameness of the scene, and all around is suggestive of desolation and death, the traveller has God's care of his chosen people vividly brought to mind, as he sees the honey, which the bees had treasured up beyond his reach, trickling in shining drops down the face of the rock.—*John Duns.*

Verse 16.—When once a people, or a person are accepted of God, he spares no cost, nor thinks anything too costly for them. "*He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.*" I would not have fed thee with wheat only, that's good; but with the finest wheat, that's the best. We put in the margin, "*with the fat of wheat*"; they should not have the bran, but the flour, and the finest of the flour; they should have had not only honey, but honey out of the rock, which, as naturalists observe, is the best and purest honey. Surely God cannot think any thing of this world too good for his people, who hath not thought the next world too good for them; certainly God cannot think any of these outward enjoyments too good for his people, who hath not thought his Son too good for his people; that's the apostle's argument, Rom. viii. 32: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" even the best of outward good things, when he seeth it good for us.—*Joseph Caryl.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Congregational singing should be general, hearty, joyful. The reasons for this, and the benefits of it.

Verses 1—3.—I. Praise should be sincere. It can come from the people of God only. II. It should be constant: they should praise God at all times. III. It should be special. There should be seasons of special praise. 1. Appointed by God, as Sabbaths and solemn feasts. 2. Demanded by providence on occasion of special deliverances and special mercies. IV. It should be public: "sing aloud:" "bring hither," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—The rule of ordinances and worship; pleas for going beyond it; instances in various churches; the sin and danger of such will-worship.

Verse 5.—What there is in the language of the world which is unintelligible to the sons of God.

Verse 6.—The emancipation of believers. Law-work is burdensome, servile, never completed, unrewarded, more and more irksome. Only the Lord can deliver us from this slavish toil, and he does it by grace and by power. We do well to remember the time of our liberation, exhibit gratitude for it, and live consistently with it.

Verse 7.—I. Answered prayers,—bonds of gratitude. II. Former testing times,—warning memories. III. The present a time for new answers as it is also for resh tests.

Verse 7.—Waters of Meribah. The various test-points of the believer's life.

Verses 8—10.—I. A compassionate Father, calling to his child: "O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me." II. A jealous sovereign, laying down his law: "There shall no strange god be in thee." III. An all-sufficient Friend, challenging confidence: "I am the Lord thy God: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."—*Richard Cecil.* 1748—1810.

Verses 8, 11, 13.—The command, the disobedience, the regret.

Verse 9.—Idolatry our besetting sin. What are likely to become our idols. The

sin of permitting them so to be. The judgments we may expect. The means we should use to purge ourselves therefrom.

Verse 10.—I. Emptiness supposed in poor sinners: they have lost God. 2. A fill proposed and offered to empty sinners. This is a soul-fill; a filling with all the fulness of God. 3. The party communicating this soul-fill to the sinner: "*I*," more generally, "*I the Lord*," in opposition to strange gods. 4. The sinner's duty in order to this communication: "*Open thy mouth wide.*"—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 10.—I. The God of past mercy: "which brought thee out of Egypt." II. Expects present petitions: "Open thy mouth wide." III. Promises future good: "I will fill it."

Verse 11.—I. Who? "Israel," the chosen, instructed and favoured people. II. What? "would none of me," my laws, promises, calls, worship, etc. III. Of whom? "Of ME," their God, good, kind, loving, etc.

Verses 11, 12.—I. The sin of Israel. They would not hearken. The mouth is opened in attentive hearing: "open thy mouth wide:" but my people," etc. Their sin was greatly aggravated. 1. By what God had done for them. 2. By the gods they had preferred to him. II. The punishment. 1. Its greatness: "I gave them up," etc. 2. Its justice: "They would none of me."—*G. R.*

Verse 13.—The excellent estate of an obedient believer. I. Enemies subdued. II. Enjoyments perpetuated. III. Abundance possessed.

Verses 13, 14.—The sin and loss of the backslider.

Verse 14.—Spiritual enemies best combatted by an obedient life.

Verse 16.—I. Spiritual dainties. II. By whom provided. III. To whom given. IV. With what result—"satisfied."

PSALM LXXXII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—A Psalm of Asaph. *This poet of the temple here acts as a preacher to the court and to the magistracy. Men who do one thing well are generally equal to another; he who writes good verse is not unlikely to be able to preach. What preaching it would have been had Milton entered the pulpit, or had Virgil been an apostle.*

Asaph's sermon before the judges is now before us. He speaks very plainly, and his song is rather characterised by strength than by sweetness. We have here a clear proof that all psalms and hymns need not be direct expressions of praise to God; we may, according to the example of this Psalm, admonish one another in our songs. Asaph no doubt saw around him much bribery and corruption, and while David punished it with the sword, he resolved to scourge it with a prophetic Psalm. In so doing, the sweet singer was not forsaking his profession as a musician for the Lord, but rather was practically carrying it out in another department. He was praising God when he rebuked the sin which dishonoured him, and if he was not making music, he was hushing discord when he bade rulers dispense justice with impartiality.

The Psalm is a whole and needs no formal division.

EXPOSITION.

GOD standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.

2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.

3 Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

4 Deliver the poor and needy: rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked.

5 They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

6 I have said, Ye *are* gods; and all of you *are* children of the most High.

7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

1. *"God standeth in the congregation of the mighty."* He is the overlooker, who, from his own point of view, sees all that is done by the great ones of the earth. When they sit in state he stands over them, ready to deal with them if they pervert judgment. Judges shall be judged, and to justices justice shall be meted out. Our village squires and country magistrates would do well to remember this. Some of them had need go to school to Asaph till they have mastered this Psalm. Their harsh decisions and strange judgments are made in the presence of him who will surely visit them for every unseemly act, for he has no respect unto the person of any, and is the champion of the poor and needy. A higher authority will criticise the decision of petty sessions, and even the judgments of our most impartial judges will be revised by the High Court of heaven. *"He judgeth among the gods."* They are gods to other men, but he is GOD to them. He lends them his name, and this is their authority for acting as judges, but they must take care that they do not misuse the power entrusted to them, for the Judge of judges is in session among them. Our puisne judges are but puny judges, and their brethren who administer common law will one day be tried by the common law. This great truth is, upon the whole, well regarded among us in these times, but it was not so in the earlier days of English history, when Jeffries, and such as he, were an insult to the name of justice. Oriential judges, even now, are frequently, if not generally, amenable to bribes, and in past ages it was very hard to find a ruler who had any notion of justice apart from his own arbitrary will. Such plain teaching as this Psalm contains was needful indeed, and he was a bold, good man who, in such uncourtly phrases, delivered his own soul.

2. *"How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked?"* It is indirectly stated that the magistrates had been unjust and corrupt. They not only excused the wicked, but even decided in their favour against the righteous. A little of this is too much, a short time too long. Some suitors could get their claims settled at once, and in their own favour, while others were wearing out their lives by waiting for an audience, or were robbed by legal process because their opponents had the judge's ear: how long were such things to be perpetrated? Would they never remember the Great Judge, and renounce their wickedness? This verse is so grandly stern that one is tempted to say, "Surely an Elijah is here." *"Selah."* This gives the offenders pause for consideration and confession.

3. *"Defend the poor and fatherless."* Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Look not to the interests of the wealthy whose hands proffer you bribes, but protect the rights of the needy, and especially uphold the claims of orphans whose property too often becomes a prey. Do not hunt down the peasant for gathering a few sticks, and allow the gentlemanly swindler to break through the meshes of the law. *"Do justice to the afflicted and needy."* Even they can claim from you as judge no more than justice; your pity for their circumstances must not make you hold the scales unfairly: but if you give them no more than justice, at least be sure that you give them that to the full. Suffer not the afflicted to be further afflicted by enduring injustice, and let not the needy long stand in need of an equitable hearing.

4. *"Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked."* Break the nets of the man-catchers, the legal toils, the bonds, the securities, with which cunning men capture and continue to hold in bondage the poor and the embarrassed. It is a brave thing when a judge can liberate a victim like a fly from the spider's web, and a horrible case when magistrate and plunderer are in league. Law has too often been an instrument for vengeance in the hand of unscrupulous men, an instrument as deadly as poison or the dagger. It is for the judge to prevent such villainy.

5. *"They know not, neither will they understand."* A wretched plight for a nation to be in when its justices know no justice, and its judges are devoid of judgment. Neither to know his duty nor to wish to know it is rather the mark of an incorrigible criminal than of a magistrate, yet such a stigma was justly set upon the rulers of Israel. *"They walk on in darkness."* They are as reckless as they are ignorant. Being both ignorant and wicked they yet dare to pursue a path in which knowledge and righteousness are essential: they go on without hesitation, forgetful of the responsibilities in which they are involved, and the punishment which they are incurring. *"All the foundations of the earth are out of course."* When the dispensers of law have dispensed with justice, settlements are unsettled, society is unhinged, the whole fabric of the nation is shaken. When injustice is committed in due course of law the world is indeed out of course. When "Justices' justice" becomes a by-word it is time that justice dealt with justices. Surely it would be well that certain of "the great unpaid" should be paid off, when day after day their judgments show that they have no judgment. When peasants may be horsewhipped by farmers with impunity, and a pretty bird is thought more precious than poor men, the foundations of the earth are indeed sinking like rotten piles unable to bear up the structures built upon them. Thank God we have, as an almost invariable rule, incorruptible judges; may it always be so. Even our lesser magistrates are, in general, most worthy men; for which we ought to be grateful to God evermore.

6. *"I have said, ye are gods."* The greatest honour was thus put upon them; they were delegated gods, clothed for a while with a little of that authority by which the Lord judges among the sons of men. *"And all of you are children of the Most High."* This was their *ex-officio* character, not their moral or spiritual relationship. There must be some government among men, and as angels are not sent to dispense it, God allows men to rule over men, and endorses their office, so far at least that the prostitution of it becomes an insult to his own prerogatives. Magistrates would have no right to condemn the guilty if God had not sanctioned the establishment of government, the administration of law, and the execution of sentences. Here the Spirit speaks most honourably of these offices, even when it censures the officers; and thereby teaches us to render honour to whom honour is due, honour to the office even if we award censure to the office-bearer.

7. *"But ye shall die like men."* What sarcasm it seems! Great as the office made the men, they were still but men, and must die. To every judge this verse is a *memento mori!* He must leave the bench to stand at the bar, and on the way

must put off the ermine to put on the shroud. *"And fall like one of the princes."* Who were usually the first to die: for battle, sedition, and luxury, made greater havoc among the great than among any others. Even as princes have been cut off by sudden and violent deaths, so should the judges be who forget to do justice. Men usually respect the office of a judge, and do not conspire to slay him, as they do to kill princes and kings; but injustice withdraws this protection, and puts the unjust magistrate in personal danger. How quickly death unrobes the great. What a leveller he is. He is no advocate for liberty, but in promoting equality and fraternity he is a masterly democrat. Great men die as common men do. As their blood is the same, so the stroke which lets out their life produces the same pains and throes. No places are too high for death's arrows: he brings down his birds from the tallest trees. It is time that all men considered this.

8. *"Arise, O God, judge the earth."* Come thou Judge of all mankind, put the bad judges to thy bar and end their corruption and baseness. Here is the world's true hope of rescue from the fangs of tyranny. *"For thou shalt inherit all nations."* The time will come when all races of men shall own their God, and accept him as their king. There is one who is " King by right divine," and he is even now on his way. The last days shall see him enthroned, and all unrighteous potentates broken like potter's vessels by his potent sceptre. The second advent is still earth's brightest hope. Come quickly, even so, come, Lord Jesus.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Asaph, who has written so much in the previous Psalms of the coming of Christ in the flesh, now speaks of his second coming to judgment.—*Josephus Maria Thomasius.* 1649—1713.

Verse 1.—*"God standeth."* He is said to *stand*, because of his immutability, his power, his abiding presence, and also because of his promptness in act, to decide for the right, and to help the poor, as he did S. Stephen. But one commentator draws a yet deeper lesson from the word *stand*. He reminds us that it is for the judge to sit, and for the litigants or accused to stand; as it is written, " Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood by Moses from the morning until the evening." Exodus xviii. 13. It is then a solemn warning for judges to remember, that whatever cause is before them is God's cause, since right and wrong are at stake in it, and that by acquitting the guilty, or condemning the innocent, they pass sentence against God himself.—*Albertus Magnus, Le Blanc, and Agellius, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—*"God standeth in the congregation of the mighty,"* or, *"of God."* These words are exegetical, and help to illustrate what he had said before: *"God standeth in the congregation of God."* What is that? Why he judgeth as supreme amongst the judges of the world. He stands not as a cipher, or a bare spectator, but he himself makes one amongst them. 1. He judgeth actively amongst them. We look upon men, and think the judgment is theirs, but it is God that exerciseth judgment amongst them. He knows the causes, directs the judges, and executes the sentence. 2. Passively, he is so in the midst of these earthly gods, that if they do unjustly he will execute justice on them, and judge the judges of the world; for though they be great, yet there is a greater than they, to whom they must shortly give an account.—*Thomas Hall.* 1659—60.

Verse 1.—*"In the congregation."*—Rulers must understand that they are not placed over stocks and stones, nor over swine and dogs, but over the congregation of God: they must therefore be afraid of acting against God himself when they act unjustly.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—*"And accept the persons of the wicked."* The last clause exemplifies one of the most peculiar Hebrew idioms. The combination usually rendered *respect persons* in the English Bible, and applied to judicial partiality, means literally to *take* (or *take up*) *faces*. Some suppose this to mean the raising of the countenance,

or causing to look up from dejection. But the highest philological authorities are now agreed that the primary idea is that of accepting one man's face or person rather than another's, the precise form of expression, though obscure, being probably derived from the practice of admitting suitors to confer with governors or rulers face to face, a privilege which can sometimes only be obtained by bribes, especially, though not exclusively, in oriental courts.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 3.—It is said of Francis the First, of France, that when a woman kneeled to him to beg justice, he bade her stand up; for, said he, Woman, it is justice that I owe thee, and justice thou shalt have; if thou beg anything of me, let it be mercy. A happy place and people surely, where justice (as it seemeth), was not extorted, but dropt as kindly as honey from the comb; where there was no sale of offices, no exchanging of fees, no subtleties of delay, no truckling for expedition, no making snares of petty penal statutes: where Justice had scales in her hand, not to weigh gold, but equity; where judges and magistrates were as Noah's ark to take in weary doves, and as the horns of the altar, for oppressed innocency to betake itself unto; where lawyers, advocates, pleaders, did not call evil good, or good evil, bitter sweet, etc., where plaintiffs and accusers did not inform or persecute through malice, envy, or for advantage; where subordinate officers durst not help potent delinquents out of the briars, nor suffer poor men, tempest-tossed in law, to languish in their business within ken of harbour for want of giving a sop to Cerberus, or sacrificing to the great Diana of expedition; where those setting dogs, such as base, promoting informers, were not countenanced, and severly punished upon any false, unjust, or malicious information. To close up all, where the magistrate owed justice to the people, and paid it; where the people begged for *mercy* and had it.—*William Price*, 1642.

Verses 3, 4.—The touchstone of magistrates' justice is in the causes and cases of the *poor, fatherless, afflicted and needy*, who are not able to attend long their suits of law, have no friends nor money to deal for them; to whom, therefore, the mighty should be eyes to direct them, and a staff to their weakness, to support and help them in their right.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*They know not, neither will they understand,*" etc. Every judge must have in him (as Baldus acutely said) two kinds of salt: the first is *sal scientiæ*, that he may know his duty; the second is *sal conscientiæ*, that he may do his duty. Such as fail in the first, are censured here with a *nescierunt*, and *non intellexerunt;* such as fail in the second, are branded here with an *ambulant in tenebris.*

The dangers upon the neglect of these duties are two: the one concerning the whole commonwealth, "*All the foundations of the earth are out of course;*" the other especially touching the private persons of the judges, at the seventh verse, "*Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes,*" and after death comes judgment, verse 8: "*Arise, O God, judge the earth.*" Almighty God "standeth in the congregation of princes, and is a judge among gods"; he sits Chief Justice in every session and assize, to mark what matters pass, and how they pass, ready to judge those righteously, who judge others unjustly, "giving wrong judgment, and accepting the persons of the wicked." Ps. lxvii. 4.* Thus I have made the way plain before you; God infinitely rich in mercy, grant, that both I in speaking, and you in hearing, may walk therein (as the blessed Apostle phraseth it, Gal. ii. 14) "with a right foot."

"*They know not, neither will they understand.*" That is, they neither "*know*" God, who made them gods; nor yet "*understand*" his law, which is a lantern to their feet, and a light to their paths. Or, as Placidus Parmensis upon the place,—They neither consider how they that be called "*gods,*" as commissioners and ministers of God, ought to judge others: nor yet remember how they shall be judged themselves at the last day, when "all the foundations of the world shall be moved," and God himself shall "arise to judge the earth." Or, they be so corrupt and abominable, that they will neither learn what is their office from others, nor yet understand it by themselves. Or briefly, to give that gloss (which fits best I think the text, I am sure the time), *Nescierunt quid facti, non intelexerunt quid juris;* they were both ignorant in the matter of fact, as not searching out the cause; and ignorant in the matter of law, sitting (as Paul said of Ananias), to give judgment according to the law, and yet commanding that which is contrary to the law. The first concerns

* πρὸς τὸ κριτήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ.

a good deal the jury, the second a great deal the judges; in both are condemned, as the nurses of all confusions in a commonwealth, *ignorantia simplex*, and *affectata*; simple ignorance, when as they be so shallow that they cannot; affected ignorance, when as they be so deep, that they will not understand what is right and reason.—*John Boys, in "The Judges Charge,"* 1618.

Verse 6.—"*Ye are gods,*" etc. It is of course, to civil governors, especially those entrusted with the administration of justice, that the prophet addresses this stern admonition. He calls them "the gods," and "the sons of the Most High." To the people of Israel this kind of appellation would not seem over bold: for it was applied to judges in well-known texts of the Law of Moses. Thus, in the code of civil statutes delivered at Sinai, it is said, "Thou shalt not revile *the gods*, nor curse the ruler of thy people." Exod. xxii. 28. Nor is that the only instance of the kind. In two other passages of the same code (Exod. xxi. 6, and xxii. 8, 9), the word which our translators have rendered "the judges," is in the Hebrew, "the gods," or "God." Since the ordinary Hebrew word for God (Elohim) is almost always used in the plural form, it is hard to say whether it ought to be rendered in these passages in the singular or plural. The meaning is the same either way. It is a matter of indifference, for example, whether the law in Exodus xxi. 6, be rendered thus, "his (the bondman's) master shall bring him to *the gods*"; or, with the Septuagint, "his master shall bring him to the judgment-seat of God."* In either case the terms are plainly meant to imply that the Majesty of God is present in the place of judgment. As it is said of Solomon that he "sat on the throne of the LORD as King," 1 Chron. xxix. 23, so it may be said of every magistrate that he sits in God's seat. God has put upon him a portion of his own dominion and authority; and has ordained that he is to be obeyed, not for wrath's sake only, but for conscience sake. The civil magistrate, in discharging his high function, may justly claim to govern with a divine right.

No one needs to be told that this old doctrine of the divine right of rulers has been woefully abused. Sycophantic divines have often made of it a flattering unction for the ears of princes; teaching them that they owed no obedience to the laws; that they were responsible to none but God for their administration; that any attempt on the part of the people to curb their tyranny, or to depose them from their seats when milder measures failed, was rebellion against God whose Vicegerents they were. Even now, the same doctrine occasionally makes itself heard from the pulpit and the press; and thus men attempt to subject the consciences of the people to the caprice of tyrants. Let it be carefully observed that the harp of Asaph lends no sanction to this "right divine of kings to govern wrong." If the prophet testifies that princes are gods, he includes in the honour the humblest magistrate. The elders administering justice in the gate of Bethlehem, though their town be little among the thousands of Judah, sit in God's seat as truly as King Solomon on his ivory throne in the porch of judgment at Jerusalem. The common saying that "the divine right of kings is the divine right of constables," is a rough way of expressing a Bible truth. Let this be borne in mind, and no one will allege Scripture in defence of royal claims to indefeasible and irresponsible authority, or claim for such authority the sanction of divine right.

But while care ought to be taken to guard the divine right of civil government from abuse, the right itself is not to be forgotten. The state is an ordinance of God, having, like the family, its foundation in the very constitution of human nature. The officers of the state, whether supreme or subordinate, have a divine right to administer justice in the community over which Providence has placed them. They who resort to the civil magistrate for judgment, resort to the judgment-seat of God; just as they who resort to the Ministry of the Word resort to the Great Prophet of the Church. Unless the magistrate had received a commission from God, he could not lawfully bear the sword. To take the life of an unarmed fellow-man, without a commission from the Most High warranting the act, would be to commit murder.—*William Binnie.*

Verse 6.—In his *Lex Rex*, Rutherford argues from this Psalm that judges are not the creatures of kings, to execute their pleasure, and do not derive their power from the monarch, but are authorized by God himself as much as the king, and are therefore bound to execute justice whether the monarch desires it or no.

---

*Πρὸς τὸ κριτήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Verse 6.—"*I have said, ye are gods.*" Princes and judges are "*gods*" (*Elohim*), on the ground that "unto them the word of God came" (John x. 35), constituting them such. Even here, when God is about to pass sentence on them, he begins with recognizing their divinely-appointed dignity on which they presumed, as if giving them absolute power to do as they pleased, right or wrong; forgetting that high office has its *duties* as well as its *dignities*. *Sonship* is closely allied to *kingship* and *judgeship*. These combined dignities, which by all others have been abused, shall be realized in all their grandest ideal by the coming King, Judge, and Son of the Most High (Ps. ii. 6, 7, 10—12.)—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 6.—"*I have said, ye are gods.*" As parasites in base flattery and compliance with their pride, have vainly called some of them so, and as some princes have most wickedly and blasphemously affected to be called, yea to be adored, as gods, (God will take highest vengeance upon all those who take his name upon them, or submit to it when given them), so God himself hath put his own name upon magistrates, to mind them of their duty, or for a twofold end: First, that being called gods, they should judge and rule as God doth, or with a mind like God, free from the mixture of a private or passionate spirit, and filled with a love to, and a delight in, impartial judgment and righteousness. Secondly, that being called gods, all men might learn their duty, freely to submit to them and duly honour them; seeing any dishonour done to them reflects upon God whose name they bear.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*Gods.*" It is not *Jah* or *Jehovah*, a name of *essence*, but *Eloah* or *Elohim*, a name of *office* that is given them.—*Thomas Gataker.*

Verses 6, 7.—"*Ye are gods;*" there he considered their pomp and dignity: "*But ye shall die like men;*" there he minds their end, that with the change of his note they might also change countenance. He tells them their honour, but withal their lot. In power, wealth, train, titles, friends, they differ from others; in death they differ not from others. They are cold when winter comes, withered with age, weak with sickness, and melt away with death, as the meanest: all to ashes. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower," 1 Pet. i. 24: the glory, that is, the best of it, but a flower. No great difference, the flower shows fairer, the grass stands longer, one scythe cuts down both. Beasts fat and lean, fed in one pasture, killed in one slaughter. The prince in his lofty palace, the beggar in his lowly cottage, have double difference, local and ceremonial height and lowness; yet meet at the grave, and are mingled in ashes. We walk in this world as a man in a field of snow; all the way appears smooth, yet cannot we be sure of any step. All are like actors on a stage, some have one part and some another, death is still busy amongst us; here drops one of the players, we bury him with sorrow, and to our scene again: then falls another, yea all, one after another, till death be left upon the stage. Death is that damp which puts out all the dim lights of vanity. Yet man is easier to believe that all the world shall die, than to suspect himself.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 7.—"*Ye shall die like men,*" etc. Even you which glisten like angels, whom all the world admires, and sues and bows to, which are called honourable, mighty and gracious lords, I will tell you to what your honour shall come: first, ye shall wax old like others, then ye shall fall sick like others, then ye shall die like others, then ye shall be buried like others, then ye shall be consumed like others, then ye shall be judged like others, even like the beggars which cry at your gates: one sickens, the other sickens; one dies, the other dies; one rots, the other rots: look in the grave, and shew me which was Dives and which was Lazarus. This is some comfort to the poor, that once he shall be like the rich; one day he shall be as wealthy, and as glorious as a king; one hour of death will make all alike; they which crowed over others, and looked down upon them like oaks, others shall walk upon them like worms, and they shall be gone as if they had never been.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 7.—"*Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.*" The meditation of death would pull down the plumes of pride; thou art but dust animated; shall dust and ashes be proud? Thou hast a grassy body, and shall shortly be mowed down: "*I have said, ye are gods;*" but lest they should grow proud, he adds a corrective: "*ye shall die like men;*" ye are dying gods.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 7.—"*And fall like one of the princes.*" Tyrants seldom go to their graves in peace. Most of the Cæsars fell by the hands of the people, *q.d.*, If you be like

tyrants in sin, expect to be like them in punishment; as I cast them out of their thrones for their insolence and violence, so will I cast you out, and you shall fall like one of these tyrannical princes.—*Thomas Hall.*

Verse 7.—1. Ye shall fall from the highest pinnacle of honour and reputation. The place of magistracy, which knoweth you now, will know you no more. One of the ancients, standing by Cæsar's tomb, crieth out, *Ubi nunc pulchritudo Cæsaris? quo abiit magnificentia ejus?* Where is now the beauty; what is become of the magnificence; where are the armies now; where the honours, the triumphs, the trophies of Cæsar? All was gone when Cæsar was gone. Your honours and your worships, your power, and your places, all die with you, if not before you. 2. Ye fall from your greatest treasures and possessions. As ye brought nothing into the world, so it is certain ye shall carry nothing out of the world, 1 Tim. vi. 7. Saladin, the mighty monarch of the east, is gone, and hath carried no more along with him than ye see—*i.e.*, a shirt hung up for that purpose—said the priest that went before the bier. 3. Ye fall from all your friends and relations; when ye die, they that were near and dear to you will leave you.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 7.—*Impressiveness* is a leading characteristic of the "death" or "fall" of "princes:" such incidents, from a variety of causes, are most striking. But can the same remark be commonly made respecting the decease of the children of poverty? Regard being had to the startling effect which the demise of the potentate is calculated to produce,—has the departure of the *peasant*, for example, in itself, the same tendency to beget solemnity and awe, so that, even under this point of view, the peasant might be justly affirmed to *"fall like one of the princes"?* Indeed, if you think of the outward circumstances attending *his* last moments; and then, immediately afterwards, of those which belong to the close of the life of the dweller in regal or stately halls, there would seem to be hardly any ground here for instituting the slightest comparison: but I would have you to associate the man, as he lies on the eve of dissolution, not with others, his superiors in rank, in a similar case, but with *himself*, when, in the full vigour of existence, he walked to and fro, and performed his own humble but laborious share of this world's business; and, as you subsequently mark how the great Destroyer has crushed all his energies, and left but a corpse behind, you will surely admit that there is as wide a difference between the individual as he *was* and as he *is*, as there can possibly be between the scenes at the death-beds, respectively, of princes and of the poor. Yes, and as *impressive* a difference too; so that you have only to allow the exhibition of the striking change to have its legitimate effect upon the mind, and then, so far as that effect will be concerned, you may declare of the rural labourer, that *"he has fallen like one of the princes;"* seeing that he has given a lesson every whit as awakening and as emphatic in its admonitions, as could the other.—*Hugh B. Moffatt*, 1861.

Verses 7, 8.—Your day is coming! The saints are raising the loud cry of verse 8, inviting Messiah, the true God, the Son of the Most High (John x. 34), the Mighty One, the Judge and Ruler, to arise and take his *inheritance*, for he is the *"heir of all things;"* and to be the true Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Barak, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel, who will *judge*, or govern and rule, a mismanaged earth. We sing this song of Zion in his ears, urging him to come quickly; and we sing it to one another in joyful hope, while the foundations of earth seem out of course, because here we find *Messiah the true Judge of a misgoverned world.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 8.—*"Arise, O God."* A metaphor taken from the common gesture of judges, whose usual manner is to sit while they are hearing of cases; to arise and stand up when they come to give sentence.—*Thomas Gataker.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The sovereignty of God over the most powerful and exalted. How that sovereignty reveals itself, and what we may expect from it.

Verse 1.—The Lord's presence in cabinets and senates.

Verse 2.—A common sin. Regard for the persons of men often influences our judgment of their opinions, virtues, vices, and general bearing; this involves injustice to others, as well as deep injury to the flattered.

Verse 3.—A plea for orphans.

Verse 5.—I. The characters of wicked princes. 1. Ignorance: "They know not." 2. Wilful blindness: "Neither will they," etc. 3. Unrestrained perverseness: "They walk on," etc. II. The consequences to others: "All the foundations," etc. 1. Of personal security. 2. Of social comfort. 3. Of commercial prosperity. 4. Of national tranquility. 5. Of religious liberty; all are out of course.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—(*middle clause*).—A description of the pilgrimage of presumptuous sinners.

Verse 6.—"*Ye are gods.*" The passages in the Old Testament which involve the doctrine of the divinity of Christ.—*J. P. Lange.*

Verse 8.—I. The invocation: "Arise," etc. II. The prediction: "For thou shalt," etc.—*G. R.*

PSALM LXXXIII.

TITLE.—A Song *or* Psalm of Asaph. *This is the last occasion upon which we shall meet with this eloquent writer. The patriotic poet sings again of wars and dangers imminent, but it is no godless song of a thoughtless nation entering upon war with a light heart. Asaph the seer is well aware of the serious dangers arising from the powerful confederate nations, but his soul in faith stays itself upon Jehovah, while as a poet-preacher he excites his countrymen to prayer by means of this sacred lyric. The Asaph who penned this song was in all probability the person referred to in* 2 Chron. xx. 14, *for the internal evidence referring the subject of the Psalm to the times of Jehoshaphat is overwhelming. The division in the camp of the confederate peoples in the wilderness of Tekoa not only broke up their league, but led to a mutual slaughter, which crippled the power of some of the nations for many years after. They thought to destroy Israel and destroyed each other.*

DIVISION.—*An appeal to God in a general manner fills the verses from* 1—4 : *and then the Psalmist enters into details of the league,* 5—8. *This leads to an earnest entreaty for the overthrow of the enemy,* 9—15, *with an expression of desire that God's glory may be promoted thereby.*

EXPOSITION.

KEEP not thou silence, O God : hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult : and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation ; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

1. *"Keep not thou silence, O God."* Man is clamorous, be not thou speechless. He rails and reviles, wilt not thou reply ? One word of thine can deliver thy people ; therefore, O Lord, break thy quiet and let thy voice be heard. *"Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God."* Here the appeal is to EL, the Mighty One. He is entreated to act and speak, because his nation suffers and is in great jeopardy. Now entirely the Psalmist looks to God ; he asks not for " a leader bold and brave," or for any form of human force, but casts his burden upon the Lord, being well assured that his eternal power and Godhead could meet every difficulty of the case.

2. *"For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult."* They are by no means sparing of their words, they are like a hungry pack of dogs, all giving tongue at once. So sure are they of devouring thy people that they already shout over the feast. *"And they that hate thee have lifted up the head."* Confident of conquest, they carry themselves proudly and exalt themselves as if their anticipated victories were already obtained. These enemies of Israel were also God's enemies, and are here described as such by way of adding intensity to the argument of the intercession. The adversaries of the church are usually a noisy and a boastful crew. Their pride is a brass which always sounds, a cymbal which is ever tinkling.

3. *"They have taken crafty counsel against thy people."* Whatever we may do, our enemies use their wits and lay their heads together ; in united conclave they discourse upon the demands and plans of the campaign, using much treachery and serpentine cunning in arranging their schemes. Malice is cold-blooded enough to plot with deliberation ; and pride, though it be never wise, is often allied with craft. *"And consulted against thy hidden ones."* Hidden away from all harm are the Lord's chosen ; their enemies think not so, but hope to smite them ; they might as well attempt to destroy the angels before the throne of God.

4. *"They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation."* Easier said than done. Yet it shows how thorough-going are the foes of the church. Theirs was the policy of extermination. They laid the axe at the root of the matter. Rome has always loved this method of warfare, and hence she has gloated over the massacre of Bartholomew, and the murders of the Inquisition. *"That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance."* They would blot them out of history as well as out of existence. Evil is intolerant of good. If Israel would let Edom alone yet Edom cannot be quiet, but seeks like its ancestor to kill the chosen of the Lord. Men would be glad to cast the church out of the world because it rebukes them, and is thus a standing menace to their sinful peace.

5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:

6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ismaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes.

7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;

8 Assur also is joined with them; they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

5. *"For they have consulted together with one consent."* They are hearty and unanimous in their designs. They seem to have but one heart, and that a fierce one, against the chosen people and their God. *"They are confederate against thee."* At the Lord himself they aim through the sides of his saints. They make a covenant, and ratify it with blood, resolutely banding themselves together to war with the Mighty God.

6. *"The tabernacles of Edom."* Nearest of kin, yet first in enmity. Their sire despised the birthright, and they despise the possessors of it. Leaving their rock-built mansions for the tents of war, the Edomites invaded the land of Israel. *"And the Ishmaelites."* A persecuting spirit ran in their blood, they perpetuated the old grudge between the child of the bondwoman and the son of the freewoman. *"Of Moab."* Born of incest, but yet a near kinsman, the feud of Moab against Israel was very bitter. Little could righteous Lot have dreamed that his unhallowed seed would be such unrelenting enemies of his uncle Abraham's posterity. *"And the Hagarenes"*—perhaps descendants of Hagar by a second husband. Whoever they may have been, they cast their power into the wrong scale, and with all their might sought the ruin of Israel. Children of Hagar, and all others who dwell around Mount Sinai, which is in Arabia, are of the seed which gendereth to bondage, and hence they hate the seed according to promise.

7. *"Gebal"* was probably a near neighbour of Edom, though there was a Gebal in the region of Tyre and Sidon. *"And Ammon, and Amalek."* Two other hereditary foes of Israel, fierce and remorseless as ravening wolves. In the roll of infamy let these names remain detestably immortalised. How thick they stand! Their name is legion, for they are many. Alas, poor Israel, how art thou to stand against such a Bloody League? Nor is this all. Here comes another tribe of ancient foemen, *"the Philistines;"* who once blinded Samson, and captured the ark of the Lord; and here are old allies become new enemies; the builders of the temple conspiring to pull it down, even *"the inhabitants of Tyre."* These last were mercenaries who cared not at whose bidding they drew sword, so long as they carved something for their own advantage. True religion has had its quarrel with merchants and craftsmen, and because it has interfered with their gains, they have conspired against it.

8. *"Assur is also joined with them."* It was then a rising power, anxious for growth, and it thus early distinguished itself for evil. What a motley group they were; a league against Israel is always attractive, and gathers whole nations within its bonds. Herod and Pilate are friends, if Jesus is to be crucified. Romanism and Ritualism make common cause against the gospel. *"They have holpen the children of Lot."* All these have come to the aid of Moab and Ammon, which two nations were among the fiercest in the conspiracy. There were ten to one against Israel, and yet she overcame all her enemies. Her name is not blotted out; but many, nay, most of her adversaries are now a name only, their power and their excellence are alike gone.

"Selah." There was good reason for a pause when the nation was in such jeopardy: and yet it needs faith to make a pause, for unbelief is always in a hurry.

9 Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites; as *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:

10 *Which* perished at En-dor: they became *as* dung for the earth.

11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:

12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.

14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

9. *"Do unto them as unto the Midianites."* Faith delights to light upon precedents, and quote them before the Lord; in the present instance, Asaph found a very appropriate one, for the nations in both cases were very much the same, and the plight of the Israelites very similar. Yet Midian perished, and the Psalmist trusted that Israel's present foes would meet with the like overthrow from the hand of the Lord. *"As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison."* The hosts were swept away by the suddenly swollen torrent, and utterly perished; which was a second instance of divine vengeance upon confederated enemies of Israel. When God wills it, a brook can be as deadly as a sea. Kishon was as terrible to Jabin as was the Red Sea to Pharaoh. How easily can the Lord smite the enemies of his people. God of Gideon and of Barak, wilt thou not again avenge thine heritage of their bloodthirsty foes?

10. *"Which perished at En-dor."* There was the centre of the carnage, where the heaps of the slain lay thickest. *"They became as dung for the earth,"* manuring it with man; making the earth, like Saturn, feed on its own children. War is cruel, but in this case its avengements were most just,—those who would not give Israel a place above ground are themselves denied a hiding-place under the ground; they counted God's people to be as dung, and they became dung themselves. Asaph would have the same fate befall other enemies of Israel; and his prayer was a prophecy, for so it happened to them.

11. *"Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb."* Smite the great ones as well as the common ruck. Suffer not the ringleaders to escape. As Oreb fell at the rock and Zeeb at the winepress, so do thou mete out vengeance to Zion's foes wherever thou mayest overtake them. They boastfully compare themselves to ravens and wolves; let them receive the fate which is due to such wild beasts. *"Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna."* These were captured and slain by Gideon, despite their claiming to have been anointed to the kingdom. Zebah became a sacrifice, and Zalmunna was sent to those shadowy images from which his name is derived. The Psalmist seeing these four culprits hanging in history upon a lofty gallows, earnestly asks that others of a like character may, for truth and righteousness' sake, share their fate.

12. *"Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession."* Viewing the temple, and also the dwellings of the tribes, as all belonging to God, these greedy plunderers determined to push out the inhabitants, slay them, and become themselves landlords and tenants of the whole. These were large words and dark designs, but God could bring them all to nothing. It is in vain for men to say "Let us take," if God does not give. He who robs God's house will find that he has a property reeking with a curse; it will plague him and his seed for ever. "Will a man rob God?" Let him try it, and he will find it hot and heavy work.

13. *"O my God, make them like a wheel;"* like a rolling thing which cannot rest, but is made to move with every breath. Let them have no quiet. May their minds eternally revolve and never come to peace. Blow them away like thistle down, *"as the stubble before the wind."* Scatter them, chase them, drive them to destruction. Every patriot prays thus against the enemies of his country, he would be no better than a traitor if he did not.

14. *"As the fire burneth a wood."* Long years have strewn the ground with

deep deposits of leaves; these being dried in the sun are very apt to take fire, and when they do so the burning is terrific. The underwood and the ferns blaze, the bushes crackle, the great trees kindle and to their very tops are wrapped in fire, while the ground is all red as a furnace. In this way, O Lord, mete out destruction to thy foes, and bring all of them to an end. *"The flame setteth the mountains on fire."* Up the hill sides the hanging woods glow like a great sacrifice, and the forests on the mountain's crown smoke towards heaven. Even thus, O Lord, do thou conspicuously and terribly overthrow the enemies of thine Israel.

15. *"So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm."* The Lord will follow up his enemies, alarm them, and chase them till they are put to a hopeless rout. He did this, according to the prayer of the present Psalm, for his servant Jehoshaphat; and in like manner will he come to the rescue of any or all of his chosen.

16 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.
17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:
18 That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone *is* JEHOVAH, *art* the most high over all the earth.

16. *"Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord."* Shame has often weaned men from their idols, and set them upon seeking the Lord. If this was not the happy result, in the present instance, with the Lord's enemies, yet it would be so with his people who were so prone to err. They would be humbled by his mercy, and ashamed of themselves because of his grace; and then they would with sincerity return to the earnest worship of Jehovah their God, who had delivered them.

17. Where no good result followed, and the men remained as fierce and obstinate as ever, justice was invoked to carry out the capital sentence. *"Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish."* What else could be done with them? It was better that they perished than that Israel should be rooted up. What a terrible doom it will be to the enemies of God to be "confounded and troubled for ever,"—to see all their schemes and hopes defeated, and their bodies and souls full of anguish without end: from such a shameful perishing may our souls be delivered.

18. *"That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."* Hearing of the Lord's marvellous deeds in defeating such a numerous confederacy, the very heathen would be compelled to acknowledge the greatness of Jehovah. We read in 2 Chron. xx. 30, that the fear of God was on all the neighbouring kingdoms when they heard that Jehovah fought against the enemies of Israel. Jehovah is essentially the Most High. He who is self-existent is infinitely above all creatures, all the earth is but his footstool. The godless race of man disregards this, and yet at times the wonderful works of the Lord compel the most unwilling to adore his majesty.

Thus has this soul-stirring lyric risen from the words of complaint to those of adoration; let us in our worship always seek to do the same. National trouble called out the nation's poet laureate, and well did he discourse at once of her sorrows, and prayers, and hopes. Sacred literature thus owes much to sorrow and distress. How enriching is the hand of adversity!

The following attempt to versify the Psalm, and tune it to gospel purposes, is submitted with great diffidence.

O God, be thou no longer still,
Thy foes are leagued against thy law;
Make bare thine arm on Zion's hill,
Great Captain of our Holy War.

As Amalek and Ishmael
Had war for ever with thy seed,
So all the hosts of Rome and hell
Against thy Son their armies lead.

Though they're agreed in nought beside,
Against thy truth they all unite;
They rave against the Crucified,
And hate the gospel's growing might.

By Kishon's brook all Jabin's band
At thy rebuke were swept away;
O Lord, display thy mighty hand,
A single stroke shall win the day.

Come, rushing wind, the stubble chase!
Come, sacred fire, the forests burn!
Come, Lord, with all thy conquering grace,
Rebellious hearts to Jesus turn!

That men may know at once that thou,
Jehovah, lovest truth right well;
And that thy church shall never bow
Before the boastful gates of hell.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*A Song* or *Psalm.*" When the two words (*Shir, Mizmor,*) occur together, the meaning seems to be, *a lyric poem appointed to be sung.*—*John Jebb.*

Title.—This Psalm, according to the title, was composed by Asaph. In accordance with this, we read, in 1 Chron. xx. 14, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehasiel, of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. This Jehasiel is probably the author of the Psalm. Our Psalm is a true picture of the state of feeling which prevailed throughout the people during the danger under Jehoshaphat. According to the history of Chronicles, they praised God at that time, in the midst of their danger, with loud voice, ver. 19; and here in the title, which is an appendage to that of Ps. xlviii., the Psalm is called a *song of praise;* and it is such in reality, although it bears the form of a *prayer,*—a song of triumph sung before the victory,—no contest, no doubt, the distress is simply committed to God.

The mention of the *Amalekites* among the enemies of Israel, in ver. 7, renders it impossible to come down to times later than that of Jehoshaphat. The last remains of the Amalekites were, according to 1 Chron. iv. 43, rooted out by the Simeonites, under Hezekiah. From that time they disappear altogether from history. Ewald's assertion that Amalek stands here "only as a name of infamy applied to parties well-known at the time," is to be considered as a miserable shift. The Psalm must have been composed previous to the extension of the empire of the Assyrians over Western Asia. For the Assyrians named last, in the eighth verse, appear here in the very extraordinary character of an ally of the sons of Lot.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—"*Keep not thou silence, O God.*" In Scripture there are three reasons why the Lord *keeps silence* when his people are in danger, and *sits still* when there is most need to give help and assistance. One is, the Lord doth it *to try their faith,* as we see clearly, Matthew viii. 24, where it is said that our Lord Christ *was asleep:* "There arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish." We read more fully in Mark iv. and Luke viii., he left them, when the ship was covered with waves, and they were rowing for their lives, their Lord was *asleep* the while, and he said to them, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that you have no faith? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Truly, the Lord will not suffer his people to be *overwhelmed,* that is certain, but he will suffer them to come very near, that the waves *cover* them, and fear and horror shall cover their souls, and all *to try their faith.* . . . . 2. I find another reason in Isaiah lix., and that is, the Lord doth keep silence in the midst of the troubles of his people, *to try men's uprightness,* and discover who will stick to God, and his cause, and his people, out of *uprightness of heart.* For if God should always *appear* for his cause, God and his cause should have many favourites and friends; but sometimes God leaves his cause, and leaves his people, and leaves his gospel, and

his ordinances to the wide world, to see who will plead for it and stick to it. . . . . 3. There is a third reason: God, as it were, *keeps silence* in the midst of the greatest troubles, that he may, as it were, *gather the wicked into one fagot, into one bundle, that they may be destroyed together.* There is a great deal of ado to *"gather the saints"* in this world; and truly there is some ado to gather the *wicked.* So God withdraws himself from his people, yet he hath a *hook* within their hearts, he holds them up secretly by his Spirit, that they shall not leave him; yet the world shall not see but that God hath quite *left* them, and all their ordinances and his gospel and everything; and there the wicked *come together* and insult, whereby God may come upon them *at once,* and destroy them, as we find ten nations in the Psalm. And so in Genesis, God stirs up the nations against Abraham and his posterity, and there are ten nations that God promised to cut off before Abraham at once, the Perizzites and the Jebuzites, and the Canaanites, etc. So God *heaps them together,* and burns them like stubble. Those that burn stubble have *rakes,* and they gather it *to heaps,* and then they fire it. This is the way of *God's keeping silence* among his people, and *sitting still* in the midst of their miseries, thus God gathers their enemies in heaps as stubble, that he may burn them together.—*Gualter* [*Walter*] *Cradock, in "Divine Drops."* 1650.

Verse 1.—*"Keep not thou silence,"* etc.—The Hebrew words have great emphasis, and express the main *causes* of silence—closing the mouth, deafness of the ears, and a tranquility maintained to such an extent as to reject all disquietude. The first clause, let not thy *mouth* be closed, and thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth immovably, properly denotes, from the inherent force of the word דבק whose root means to *fix* to and compact firmly, what is fastened with *lime* or daubed with plaster. . . . The second clause, *"be not thou deaf,"* properly pertains to the ears, as Mich. vii. 16, *"Their ears shall be deaf."* The third, *"be not still,"* suggests the course of the thoughts of the mind when it is brought to a state of clear tranquility, all cares and commotions being laid aside. The word שקט is properly *to settle, to settle down,* as when the disturbed dregs of liquor settle down and seek the bottom, whence it is applied to the mind when freed from a great fermentation of cares and the sediment of anxieties and bitterness, a mind serene, clear, and refined. . . .

Let us now see what the poet had in mind when he poured out these prayers, or what he wished to indicate. He hinted, that the people were reduced to these earnest entreatles, because unless God should speedily bring help to them, it might seem that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is like the false gods, a sort of deity, either mute, or deaf, or at his ease.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1.—Is the Lord silent? Then be not thou silent; but cry unto him till he breaks the silence.—*Starke, in Lange's Bibelwerk.*

Verse 1.—The reference to *"tumult"* in the following verse gives force to the earnest appeal in this. Amidst all the tumult of gathering foes, he earnestly calls on God to break his silence, and to speak to them in wrath.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 2.—*"For, lo."* The prayer begins with the particle *"lo,"* which has not only the force of *arousing* God, but also gives the idea of *something present,* with the view of pointing out the opportune moment for God to gird himself for the work.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—*"Thine enemies make a tumult."* The whole world is but like an *army,* a *brigade* of men (as it were) under a *general;* and God is the Lord of Hosts, that is, the Lord of *his armies:* now when there is a tumult in an army, they complain to the *officers,* to the *general* especially; and he must come and suppress it. Therefore, saith he, Thou Lord of hosts, thou art general of the world; lo, there is a *tumult* in the world, a *mutiny.*—*Walter Cradock.*

Verse 3.—*"Thy hidden ones."* This representation of God's people is worthy our notice. It may be taken two ways. First, As referring to their *safety.* We often hide only to preserve. This is the meaning of the word in the parable, with regard to the discovery of the treasure in the field; "which, when a man hath found, he hideth it." His aim is not to conceal but to secure; and the cause is put for the effect. Thus God's people are hidden. He hid Noah in the Ark, and the waters that drowned the world could not *find* him. When his judgments were coming over the land, "Come, my people," saith he, "enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thee also for a little season, until the indignation be overpast." Hence the promise, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy

presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Hence the confidence expressed by David, "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock." The Saviour could say, "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." And, "All the saints are in his hand." They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. For he himself is their "refuge," their "hiding-place." They are his "*hidden ones.*"

Secondly. As intimating their *concealment.* This is not absolute. But it holds in various respects and degrees. It is true with regard to the nature of their *spiritual life.* Our life, says the Apostle, is hid with Christ in God; and that he refers to its invisibleness, rather than to its safety, is obvious from the words following: "When he who is our life shall *appear, we* also shall *appear* with him in glory." . . . The heart of the believer only knows his own bitterness; and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy. The manna on which he feeds is hidden manna. And no one knoweth the new name in the white stone given him, but the receiver. . . .

They are sometimes hidden by *persecution.* For though this does not prevent their being Christians, it hinders them from appearing as such; especially by secluding them from their social and public assemblies. . . .. They are sometimes hidden by the obscurity of their stations. Not many of the wise, and mighty, and noble are called: but when they *are* called, they are also *exhibited.* They are like cities set on hills, which cannot be hid. A little religion in high life goes a great way, and is much talked of, because it is so often a strange thing. But God has chosen the poor of this world; and they are often rich in faith. Yet how is their moral wealth to be known? How few opportunities have they for religious display or exertion! There may be the principle of benevolence, where there is no ability to give. And the Lord seeth the heart, but men can only judge from actions. Many who are great in the sight of the Lord are living in cottages and hovels; and are scarcely known, unless to a few neighbours equally obscure.

They are sometimes hidden by their *disposition.* They are reserved, and shrink back from notice. They are timid and self-diffident. This restrains them in religious conversation, especially as it regards their own experience. This keeps them from making a profession of religion, and joining a Christian church. Joseph of Arimathæa was a disciple of Jesus; but secretly, for fear of the Jews. And Nicodemus, from the same cause, came to Jesus by night. They had difficulties in their situations, from which others were free. They ought to have overcome them; and so they did at last: but it was a day of small things with them at first. Others are circumstanced and tried in a similar way; and we must be patient towards all men.

They are sometimes hidden by their *infirmities.* We would not plead for sin; but grace may be found along with many imperfections. The possessors have what is essential to religion in them; but not everything that is ornamental, and lovely, and of good report.

The same will also apply to *errors.* Here, again, we are far from undervaluing divine truth. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. But it is impossible for us to say how much ignorance, and how many mistakes, may be found, even in the Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile.—*William Jay.*

Verse 3.—The less the world knows thee, the better for thee; thou mayst be satisfied with this one thing—God knows them that are his: not lost, although *hidden* is the symbol of a Christian.—*Frisch, in Lange's Bibelwerk.*

Verse 4.—"*That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.*" This desperate and dreadful scheme, and wretched design of theirs, took not effect; but, on the contrary, the several nations hereafter mentioned, who were in this conspiracy, are no more, and have not had a name in the world for many hundreds of years; whilst the Jews are still a people and are preserved, in order to be called and saved, as all Israel will be in the latter day, Rom. xi. 25. So Diocletian thought to have rooted the Christian name out of the world; but in vain.—*John Gill.*

Verse 5.—"*For they have consulted together with one consent.*" Margin, as in Hebrew, *heart.* There is no division in their counsels on this subject. They have one *desire*—one *purpose*—in regard to the matter. Pilate and Herod were made friends together against Christ (Luke xxiii. 12); and the world, divided and hostile in other matters, has been habitually united in its opposition to Christ and to a pure and spiritual religion.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 5.—"*They have consulted together with one consent,*" etc. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends that they may join in crucifying Christ, sure Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"*They have consulted together,*" etc. Though there may fall out a private grudge betwixt such as are wicked, yet they will all agree and unite against the saints: if two greyhounds are snarling at a bone, yet put up a hare between them, and they will leave the bone, and follow after the hare; so, if wicked men have private differences amongst themselves, yet if the godly be near them, they will leave snarling at one another, and will pursue after the godly.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—"*They are confederate against thee.*" "They have made a covenant," כרית יברית, *berith yachrithu*, "they have cut the covenant sacrifice." They have slain an animal, divided him in twain, and passed between the pieces of the victim; and have thus bound themselves to accomplish their purpose.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"*The tabernacles of Edom,*" etc. The prophet having entered his suit and complaint in general, he comes to particulars, and tells God who they are that had done this. God might say, Who are these that conspire against me, and against my people, and hidden ones? Lord, saith the prophet, I will tell thee who they are. . . . He names some *ten nations* that joined together against *one poor Israel.* It is a thing you should observe, that when the people of God are conspired against, God rests not in *general complaints*, but he will know *who* they are. As I told you, He is the Lord of Hosts, the great *general.* When there is a mutiny the general asks, what officer, or what corporal, or what sergeant, or who did begin the mutiny? and it is a fearful thing when the poor persecuted saint shall bring thy name as a persecutor before the God of heaven. When a poor saint shall go home and say, There is a confederacy in London, a conspiracy against the saints of God; and when a poor saint shall say, such a magistrate, such a minister, such a man in such a street, such a woman set her husband against the saints, and against thine ordinances; it is a fearful thing. Therefore I remember a blessed woman, if it be true that is reported of her in the *Book of Martyrs*, that when the wicked abused her, and reproached her, and oppressed her, she would say no more but this, "I will go home and tell my Father:" give over, or else I will bring your names before God, and tell him: there was all, and that was enough; for he would presently take it up. A man may better bear a pound of dirt on his *feet*, than a grain of dirt in his *eye;* the saints are "the apple of God's eye."—*Walter Cradock.*

Verse 6.—"*Hagarenes.*" These people dwelt on the east of Gilead; and were nearly destroyed in the days of Saul, being totally expelled from their country, 1 Chron. v. 10, but afterwards recovered some strength and consequence.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verses 6, 7, 8.—It may be observed that these were on all sides of the land of Israel; the Edomites, Ishmaelites, and Amalekites, were on the south; the Moabites, Ammonites, and Hagarenes, were on the east; the Assyrians on the north; and the Philistines, Gebalites, and Tyrians, on the west; so that Israel was surrounded on all sides with enemies, as the Lord's people are troubled on every side, 2 Cor. iv. 8; and so the Gog and Magog army, of which some understand this, will encompass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, Rev. xx. 9.—*John Gill.*

Verses 6—8.—The enemies of Israel, as enumerated by the Psalmist, fall into four main divisions: 1st, those most nearly connected with the Israelites themselves by the ties of blood-relationship, the descendants of Esau and Ishmael; 2ndly, the two branches of the descendants of Lot along with their respective Arabian auxiliaries, viz., the Moabites, who had engaged the assistance of the Hagarenes, and the Ammonites, who had gathered round their standard the Giblites and Amalekites; 3rdly, the inhabitants of the coast, the Philistines and Tyrians; 4thly, the more distant Assyrians.

Of all these the bitterest in their hostility to Israel were those who were the most nearly allied to them in blood—the Edomites. Their hostility was founded upon hatred. From their conduct to the Israelites through a long course of years it would seem as though in them were lastingly perpetuated that older hatred where-

with their forefather Esau had hated Jacob because of Isaac's blessing. And though they had once and again succeeded, according to the prophecy, in breaking Israel's yoke from off their neck, yet they never could wrest away from Israel the possession of the birthright, and with it of the promises, which their ancestors had profanely despised: from Israel, not from Edom, was the Redeemer of the world to spring, and in Israel were all the families of the earth to be blessed. The Edomites may accordingly be appropriately viewed as the types of those whom the Church of Christ has ever found her bitterest foes, the sceptics who have refused to acknowledge that redemption through a personal Redeemer, on which, as on a basis, the church is founded, whose intellectual pride is offended by the humbling doctrines of Christianity, and who hate those that hold them for their possession of blessings which *they* have wilfully neglected; whose human learning has nevertheless all along been subservient on the whole to the edification of the church, in spite of the violence with which they have striven, and for a while, as it would sometimes appear, successfully, to gain the mastery over her by opposing her, and to exercise a temporary dominion. Dwelling themselves in tabernacles, they cannot bear that others, more blessed than they, should have the houses of God in possession: "owning themselves to be astray, and unable to find the way to the truth, they are yet most importunate and imperious that others should come away from the ancient paths, and try to join them, or at least, wander as they are wandering." In conjunction with the Edomites the Psalmist makes mention of the Ishmaelites. And these, as the descendants of the bondwoman, may fitly represent those Jewish opponents of Christianity, still, perhaps, locally, if not generally, formidable, who in their rejection of Christian doctrine have been swayed by the same feelings of intellectual pride as the sceptics of Christian descent; who professing to hold fast to that covenant of Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage, persecuted, so long as they were able, those born after the Spirit. . . . .

In the descendants of Lot and their Arabian auxiliaries, we have the types of a different class of foes. The historical origin of the former marks them as the appropriate representatives of the slaves of sinful lusts; who hate the church not for the humbling tone of her doctrines, but for the standard of holiness which she exacts and for which she is continually witnessing. And experience shews how such persons are wont, in their attacks upon the church, to enlist into their service those who are more wildly, but at the same time more ignorantly, unholy than themselves; how in order, if possible, to uproot those fences and safeguards of the law of holiness on which, having transgressed them, they hate to look, they appeal to the unbridled passions of the lawless multitude by whom the very existence of the fences had been utterly disregarded.

From the enemies of the Church who are animated by feelings of positive hatred we pass to those who act from calculation rather than passion, and whose proceedings are all directed with a view to their own earthly aggrandisement. The Philistines and Tyrians had engaged in the hostile confederacy with the hope of obtaining Israelitish captives, from whom they might reap a profit by selling them abroad as slaves. It does not appear that they regarded the Israelites in themselves with other feelings than those of mere selfish indifference.

Both nations had tendered their services to Israel in the days of Israel's prosperity; for the Philistines had probably furnished the Cherethites and Pelethites of David's body-guard, and the Tyrians had furnished Solomon with materials and workmen for the building of the temple: both nations were now seeking to enrich themselves at Israel's expense in the days of Israel's adversity. And these then are the fitting types of all who in their varying professions of friendliness or hostility to the Church of God are actuated by the mere mercenary desire of lucre; favouring, and even zealously favouring her interests, when they can procure a good recompense for their services; unhesitatingly combining with her bitterest enemies to vilify and despoil her, whenever the opportunity offer of increasing their worldly substance thereby.

The last class of enemies are those of whom Assyria is the type; the worldly potentates, whether ecclesiastical or temporal, papal or imperial, who are unscrupulously ready to employ all means for the ultimate accomplishment of their one object, that of extending and consolidating their dominion. . . . .

Such potentates seem to represent most truly that determined and resolute selfishness, which, to eyes that are not dazzled by the grandeur of its proportions or the gorgeousness in which it is arrayed, must ever appear as one of the most

terrible embodiments of the enmity of the world to God. Pride of intellect and unbelief,—unholiness and lawlessness of life,—covetousness,—worldly ambition,—such are the characteristics of four important classes of those by whom God's church is threatened.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 7.—"*Gebal.*" 1. It is generally supposed to indicate the mountainous tract extending from the Dead Sea southward to Petra, still named *Jebâl.* But some of the best writers identify it with No. 2, as mentioned in conjunction with Tyre. 2. A place spoken of in connection with Tyre, Ezek. xxvii. 9. Most probably the residence of the Giblites, and therefore to the north of Palestine, Josh. xiii. 5. The Giblites were employed by Hiram, king of Tyre, in preparing materials for Solomon's temple, 1 Kings v. 18, margin.

The Greek name of this place was Byblus. The town is called *Jebeil*, and has a population of about six hundred. It is about seventeen miles north of Beyroot. The ancient ruins are very extensive. Immense numbers of granite columns are strewn about in the village and over the surrounding fields. These columns are mostly small, varying from one foot to two feet in diameter. Some of the stones measure nearly twenty feet in length. The citadel is the most remarkable ruin. The port is nearly choked up with sand and ruins.—*George H. Whitney's "Hand-Book of Bible Geography."* 1872.

Verse 8.—"*Assur also,*" etc. This determines the date of this Psalm to the latter times of the Jewish kingdom; for the other nations here mentioned had molested them before, but the Assyrians not till towards the end.—*William Wall*, 1645 or 1646—1727-8.

Verse 9.—"*Do unto them as unto the Midianites.*" That is, dash their heads together, make their policies to cross one another.—*Walter Cradock.*

Verse 9.—"*The brook of Kison.*" The river Kishon traverses the plain [of Esdraelon] and terminates in the Bay of Acre or Akka. This is the stream regarding which it is written, after Barak and Deborah had gained their victory over Sisera, " The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Although it is now no insignificant stream, yet it needs heavy rains to make it really considerable in magnitude: it is very unequal in size, and seems to be only temporary in its character. At any rate, when Robinson passed its head waters in midsummer, he found the channels all dry, and they had been so for a whole year. On the other hand, in the winter the waters are often exceedingly abundant; particularly in the northern and southern chief tributaries; so that, in 1799, at the time of the French invasion, many of the vanquished Turks perished in the floods which swept down from Deburieh, and which inundated the plain. It was a scene like that described in Judges v. regarding the fate of Sisera's hosts.—*Carl Ritter* (1779—1859) *in "The Comparative Geography of Palestine and the Sinaitic Peninsula." Translated by William L. Gage.* 1866.

Verse 10.—"*They became as dung for the earth.*" The land was enriched or made fertile by their flesh, their blood, and their bones.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 10.—"*They became as dung for the earth.*" In the year 1830, it is estimated that more than a million bushels of " human and inhuman bones " were imported from the continent of Europe into the port of Hull. The neighbourhood of Leipsic, Austerlitz, Waterloo, etc., where the principal battles were fought some fifteen or twenty years before, were swept alike of the bones of the hero, and the horse which he rode. Thus collected from every quarter, they were shipped to Hull, and thence forwarded to the Yorkshire bone-grinders, who, by steam-engines and powerful machinery, reduced them to a granulary state. In this condition they were sent chiefly to Doncaster, one of the largest agricultural markets of the country, and were there sold to the farmers to manure their lands. The oily substance gradually evolving as the bone calcines, makes better manure than almost any other substance —particularly human bones.—*K. Arvine.*

Verse 11.—The word *nobles* is placed in antithesis with the names *Oreb* and *Zeeb.* The word נדיבים nobles, denotes properly *liberal, munificent,* and *beneficent* men, such as princes and potentates ought to be among men, but the names *Oreb* and *Zeeb* have the very opposite signification, for the one signifies a *raven,* the other a

wolf. When into such rapacious and truculent beasts their nobles have degenerated, as a just reward the hostile shock shall come upon them.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 13.—"*A wheel.*" What sort of vegetable is this whose stems our muleteers are cutting up and chewing with so much relish? It is a wild artichoke. We can amuse ourselves with it and its behaviour for a while, and may possibly extract something more valuable than the insipid juice of which our men are so fond. You observe that in growing it throws out numerous branches of equal size and length in all directions, forming a sort of sphere or globe a foot or more in diameter. When ripe and dry in autumn, these branches become rigid and light as a feather, the parent stem breaks off at the ground, and the wind carries these vegetable globes whithersoever it pleaseth. At the proper season thousands of them come scudding over the plain, rolling, leaping, bounding with vast racket, to the dismay both of the horse and his rider. Once, on the plain north of Hamath, my horse became quite unmanageable among them. They charged down upon us on the wings of the wind, which broke them from their moorings, and sent them careering over the desert in countless numbers. Our excellent native itinerant, A—— F——, had a similar encounter with them on the eastern desert, beyond the Hauran, and his horse was so terrified that he was obliged to alight and lead him. I have long suspected that this wild artichoke is the *gulgal*, which, in Psalm lxxxiii. 13, is rendered "*wheel*," and in Isaiah xvii. 13, "*a rolling thing.*" Evidently our translators knew not what to call it. The first passage reads thus: "O my God, make them like a wheel—*gulgal*—as the stubble before the wind," and the second, "Rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing—*gulgal*—before the whirlwind." Now, from the nature of the parallelism, the *gulgal* cannot be a "*wheel*," but something corresponding to chaff. It must also be something that does not fly like the chaff, but in a striking manner *rolls* before the wind. The signification of *gulgal* in Hebrew and its equivalent in other Shemitic dialects, requires this, and this rolling artichoke meets the case most emphatically, and especially when it rolls before the whirlwind. In the encounter referred to north of Hamath, my eyes were half blinded with the stubble and chaff which filled the air; but it was the extraordinary behaviour of this "*rolling thing*" that riveted my attention. Hundreds of these globes, all bounding like gazelles in one direction over the desert, would suddenly wheel short round at the bidding of a counter-blast, and dash away with equal speed on their new course. An Arab proverb addresses this "rolling thing" thus: "Ho! 'akkûb, where do you put up to-night?" to which it answers as it flies, "Where the wind puts up." They also derive one of their many forms of cursing from this plant: "May you be whirled, like the 'akkûb, before the wind, until you are caught in the thorns, or plunged into the sea." If this is not the "*wheel*" of David, and the "*rolling thing*" of Isaiah, from which they also borrowed their imprecations upon the wicked, I have seen nothing in the country to suggest the comparison.—*W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book."*

Verse 13.—"*Make them like a wheel.*" That is, cause them to fall into such great calamities that they can find no counsel or remedy for their misfortunes, and that they may run hither and thither like a wheel or a ball, and yet see not where they ought to stop, or whither they ought to escape. Such are the minds of wicked men in calamities, wherever they turn they find no harbour wherein to rest, no certain consolation can they discover. They are tossed with perpetual disquietude; by running hither and thither and seeking various remedies they but weary themselves the more and plunge themselves the more deeply in their woes. This must necessarily happen to those who seek to cure evil with evil. Therefore Isaiah also says, *the wicked are like the troubled sea.*—*Mollerus.*

Verse 13.—"*Like a wheel.*" Mortals, like cylinders, are rolled hither and thither, oppressed with innumerable ills. *Aurea Carmina.*—*Pythagoras* (?).

Verse 13.—There is no greater evidence against error, than that it is not constant to itself, no greater argument against these pretended great spirits, than that they cannot sit, know not where to fix, are always moving, as if the Psalmist's curse had taken hold of them, as if God had made them "*like a wheel and as stubble before the wind,*" that can sit nowhere, rest at nothing, but turn about from one uncertainty to another. The Holy Spirit is a spirit that will sit still, and be at peace, continue and abide.—*Mark Frank.*

Verses 13, 14.—In imagery both obvious and vivid to every native of the gusty

hills and plains of Palestine, though to us comparatively unintelligible, the Psalmist describes them as driven over the uplands of Gilead like the clouds of chaff blown from the threshing-floors; chased away like the spherical masses of dry weeds which course over the plains of Esdraelon and Philistia—flying with the dreadful hurry and confusion of the flames, that rush and leap from tree to tree and hill to hill when the wooded mountains of a tropical country are by chance ignited.—*William Smith in "A Dictionary of the Bible."* 1863.

Verse 14.—*"Mountains on fire."* Many of the mountains in this country are covered with dense forests. The leaves which fall every autumn accumulate, sometimes for years, until we have a particularly dry summer, when, somehow or other, either by accident or design, they are always set on fire, and burn sometimes for several days. The mountains in one of the States of the neighbouring Republic are on fire at this very moment while I am now writing, and have been burning for more than a week, and we can distinctly see the red glare in the sky above them, although from their great distance, even the tops of the mountains themselves from whence the flames arise are beyond the limits of our horizon.—*From "Philip Musgrave: or Memoirs of a Church of England Missionary in the North American Colonies."* 1846.

Verse 14.—*"Fire"* has greater force on a *mountain*, where the wind is more powerful, than upon a *wood* situated in a valley—*Honorius Augustodunensis.*

Verse 14.—Humboldt saw forests on fire in South America and thus describes them. "Several parts of the vast forests which surround the mountain, had taken fire. Reddish flames, half enveloped in clouds of smoke, presented a very grand spectacle. The inhabitants set fire to the forests, to improve the pasturage, and to destroy the shrubs that choke the grass. Enormous conflagrations, too, are often caused by the carelessness of the Indians, who neglect, when they travel, to extinguish the fires by which they have dressed their food."

Verse 14.—Let us pray the divine aid to break this power and enmity of the natural man; that it may yield unto the word of grace; and let the wood, hay and stubble of all false doctrine perish before the brightness of the face of God.—*Edward Walter.* 1854.

Verse 18.—*"That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH,"* etc. Early English History informs us, that some bloodthirsty persecutors were marching on a band of Christians. The Christians, seeing them approaching, marched out towards them, and, at the top of their voices, shouted, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" (Praise Jehovah). The name of the Lord being presented, the rage of the persecutors abated. Josephus says, that the Great Alexander, when on his triumphal march, being met near Jerusalem by the Jewish high priest, on whose mitre was engraved the name of Jehovah, "approached by himself, and adored that name," and was disarmed of his hostile intent. There was significance and power in the glorious old name as written by the Jews. But the name of Jesus is now far more mighty in the world than was the name Jehovah in these earlier ages.—*"The Dictionary of Illustrations,"* 1872.

Verse 18.—*"JEHOVAH"* is one of the incommunicable names of God, which signifies his eternal essence. The Jews observe that in God's name *Jehovah* the Trinity is implied. *Je* signifies the present tense, *ho* the preter-perfect tense, *vah* the future. The Jews also observe that in his name Jehovah all the Hebrew letters are *literæ quiescentes*, that denote rest, implying that in God and from God is all our rest. Every gracious soul is like Noah's dove, he can find no rest nor satisfaction but in God. God alone is the godly man's ark of rest and safety. Jehovah is the incommunicable name of God, and is never attributed to any but God: *"Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH."*

Verse 18.—*"The most high."* His being the High and lofty One, notes forth the transcendancy and super-excellency of his divine being in itself, and that it is utterly of another kind from creatures, and indeed that it only is truly being. When the Psalmist says, *"That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH art the* MOST HIGH *over all the earth,"* he thereby argues his height from his name, that his name is alone Jehovah, and therefore he is most high, and in that very respect. Now Jehovah is the name of his essence, "I AM," and he is MOST HIGH in respect of such a glorious being as is proper alone unto him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The long silence of God, the reasons for it, and our reasons for desiring him to end it.

Verse 3.—"*Thy hidden ones.*" I. Hidden as to their new nature, which is an enigma to men. II. Hidden for protection, as precious things. III. Hidden, for solace and rest. IV. Hidden, because not yet fully revealed.

Verse 4.—The immortality of the church.

Verse 5.—The confederacies of evils against the saints.

Verses 13—15.—The instability, restlessness, and impotence of the wicked; their horror when God deals with them in justice.

Verse 16.—A prayer for the Pope and his priests.

Verse 17.—The righteous fate of persecutors, and troublers.

Verse 18.—The Golden Lesson: how taught, to whom, by whom, through whom?

PSALM LXXXIV.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—To the chief musician upon Gittith. A Psalm for the sons of Korah. *This Psalm well deserved to be committed to the noblest of the sons of song. No music could be too sweet for its theme, or too exquisite in sound to match the beauty of its language. Sweeter than the joy of the wine press, (for that is said to be the meaning of the word rendered* upon Gittith), *is the joy of the holy assemblies of the Lord's house; not even the favoured children of grace, who are like the sons of Korah, can have a richer subject for song than Zion's sacred festivals.*

It matters little when this Psalm was written, or by whom; for our part it exhales to us a Davidic perfume, it smells of the mountain heather and the lone places of the wilderness, where King David must have often lodged during his many wars. This sacred ode is one of the choicest of the collection; it has a mild radiance about it, entitling it to be called The Pearl of Psalms. *If the twenty-third be the most popular, the one-hundred-and-third the most joyful, the one-hundred-and-nineteenth the most deeply experimental, the fifty-first the most plaintive, this is one of the most sweet of the Psalms of Peace.*

Pilgrimages to the tabernacle were a great feature of Jewish life. In our own country, pilgrimages to the shrine of Thomas of Canterbury, and our Ladye of Walsingham, were so general as to affect the entire population, cause the formation of roads, the erection and maintenance of hostelries, and the creation of a special literature; this may help us to understand the influence of pilgrimage upon the ancient Israelites. Families journeyed together, making bands which grew at each halting place; they camped in sunny glades, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the hill and through the slough, and, as they went along, stored up happy memories which would never be forgotten. One who was debarred the holy company of the pilgrims, and the devout worship of the congregation, would find in this Psalm fit expression for his mournful spirit.

DIVISION.—*We will make our pauses where the poet or the musician placed them, namely, at the Selahs.*

EXPOSITION.

HOW amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

4 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

1. *"How amiable,"* or, How *lovely!* He does not tell us how lovely they were, because he could not. His expressions show us that his feelings were inexpressible. Lovely to the memory, to the mind, to the heart, to the eye, to the whole soul, are the assemblies of the saints. Earth contains no sight so refreshing to us as the gathering of believers for worship. Those are sorry saints who see nothing amiable in the services of the Lord's house. *"Are thy tabernacles."* The tabernacle had been pitched in several places, and, moreover, was divided into several courts and portions; hence, probably, the plural number is here used. It was all and altogether lovely to David. Outer court, or inner court, he loved every portion of it. Every cord and curtain was dear to him. Even when at a distance, he rejoiced to remember the sacred tent where Jehovah revealed himself, and he cried out with exultation while he pictured in fond imagination its sacred services, and solemn

rites, as he had seen them in bygone times. Because they are *thy* tabernacles, "*O Lord of hosts,*" therefore are they so dear to thy people. Thy pavilion is the centre of the camp, around which all thy creatures gather, and towards which their eyes are turned, as armies look to the tent of the king. Thou rulest all the companies of creatures with such goodness, that all their hosts rejoice in thy dwelling-place, and the bands of thy saints especially hail thee with joyful loyalty as Jehovah of hosts.

2. "*My soul longeth,*"—it pines, and faints to meet with the saints in the Lord's house. The desire was deep and insatiable—the very soul of the man was yearning for his God. "*Yea, even fainteth;*" as though it could not long hold out, but was exhausted with delay. He had a holy lovesickness upon him, and was wasted with an inward consumption because he was debarred the worship of the Lord in the appointed place. "*For the courts of the Lord.*" To stand once again in those areas which were dedicated to holy adoration was the soul-longing of the Psalmist. True subjects love the courts of their king. "*My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*" It was God himself that he pined for, the only living and true God. His whole nature entered into his longing. Even the clay-cold flesh grew warm through the intense action of his fervent spirit. Seldom, indeed, does the flesh incline in the right direction, but in the matter of Sabbath services our weary body sometimes comes to the assistance of our longing heart, for it desires the physical rest as much as the soul desires the spiritual repose. The Psalmist declared that he could not remain silent in his desires, but began to cry out for God and his house; he wept, he sighed, he pleaded for the privilege. Some need to be whipped to church, while here is David crying for it. He needed no clatter of bells from the belfry to ring him in, he carried his bell in his own bosom: holy appetite is a better call to worship than a full chime.

3. "*Yea, the sparrow hath found an house.*" He envied the sparrows which lived around the house of God, and picked up the stray crumbs in the courts thereof; he only wished that he, too, could frequent the solemn assemblies and bear away a little of the heavenly food. "*And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.*" He envied also the swallows whose nests were built under the eaves of the priests' houses, who there found a place for their young, as well as for themselves. We rejoice not only in our personal religious opportunities, but in the great blessing of taking our children with us to the sanctuary. The church of God is a house for us and a nest for our little ones. "*Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts.*" To the very altars these free birds drew near, none could restrain them nor would have wished to do so, and David wished to come and go as freely as they did. Mark how he repeats the blessed name of Jehovah of Hosts; he found in it a sweetness which helped him to bear his inward hunger. Probably David himself was with the host, and, therefore, he dwelt with emphasis upon the title which taught him that the Lord was in the tented field as well as within the holy curtains. "*My King and my God.*" Here he utters his loyalty from afar. If he may not tread the courts, yet he loves the King. If an exile, he is not a rebel. When we cannot occupy a seat in God's house, he shall have a seat in our memories and a throne in our hearts. The double "my" is very precious; he lays hold upon his God with both his hands, as one resolved not to let him go till the favour requested be at length accorded.

4. "*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.*" Those he esteems to be highly favoured who are constantly engaged in divine worship—the canons residentiary, yea, the pew-openers, the menials who sweep and dust. To come and go is refreshing, but to abide in the place of prayer must be heaven below. To be the guests of God, enjoying the hospitalities of heaven, set apart for holy work, screened from a noisy world, and familiar with sacred things—why this is surely the choicest heritage a son of man can possess. "*They will be still praising thee.*" So near to God, their very life must be adoration. Surely their hearts and tongues never cease from magnifying the Lord. We fear David here drew rather a picture of what should be than of what is; for those occupied daily with the offices needful for public worship are not always among the most devout; on the contrary, "the nearer the church the further from God." Yet in a spiritual sense this is most true, for those children of God who in spirit abide ever in his house, are also ever full of the praises of God. Communion is the mother of adoration. They fail to praise the Lord who wander far from him, but those who dwell in him are always magnifying him.

"Selah." In such an occupation as this we might be content to remain for ever. It is worth while to pause and meditate upon the prospect of dwelling with God and praising him throughout eternity.

5 Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee ; in whose heart *are* the ways *of them.*

6 *Who* passing through the valley of Baca make it a well ; the rain also filleth the pools.

7 They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer : give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

5. *"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee."* Having spoken of the blessedness of those who reside in the house of God, he now speaks of those who are favoured to visit it at appointed seasons, going upon pilgrimage with their devout brethren : he is not, however, indiscriminate in his eulogy, but speaks only of those who heartily attend to the sacred festivals. The blessedness of sacred worship belongs not to half-hearted, listless worshippers, but to those who throw all their energies into it. Neither prayer, nor praise, nor the hearing of the word will be pleasant or profitable to persons who have left their hearts behind them. A company of pilgrims who had left their hearts at home would be no better than a caravan of carcasses, quite unfit to blend with living saints in adoring the living God. *"In whose heart are the ways of them,"* or far better, *"in whose heart are thy ways."* Those who love the ways of God are blessed. When we have God's ways in our hearts, and our heart in his ways, we are what and where we should be, and hence we shall enjoy the divine approval.

6. *"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well."* Traversing joyfully the road to the great assembly, the happy pilgrims found refreshment even in the dreariest part of the road. As around a well men meet and converse cheerfully, being refreshed after their journey, so even in the vale of tears, or any other dreary glen, the pilgrims to the skies find sweet solace in brotherly communion and in anticipation of the general assembly above, with its joys unspeakable. Probably there is here a local allusion, which will never now be deciphered, but the general meaning is clear enough. There are joys of pilgrimage which make men forget the discomforts of the road. *"The rain also filleth the pools."* God gives to his people the supplies they need while traversing the roads which he points out for them. Where there were no natural supplies from below, the pilgrims found an abundant compensation in waters from above, and so also shall all the sacramental host of God's elect. Ways, which otherwise would have been deserted from want of accommodation, were made into highways abundantly furnished for the travellers' wants, because the great annual pilgrimages led in that direction ; even so, Christian converse and the joy of united worship make many duties easy and delightful which else had been difficult and painful.

7. *"They go from strength to strength."* So far from being wearied they gather strength as they proceed. Each individual becomes happier, each company becomes more numerous, each holy song more sweet and full. We grow as we advance if heaven be our goal. If we spend our strength in God's ways we shall find it increase. *"Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."* This was the end of the pilgrims' march, the centre where all met, the delight of all hearts. Not merely to be in the assembly, but to appear before God was the object of each devout Israelite. Would to God it were the sincere desire of all who in these days mingle in our religious gatherings. Unless we realise the presence of God we have done nothing ; the mere gathering together is nothing worth.

8. *"O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer."* Give me to go up to thy house, or if I may not do so, yet let my cry be heard. Thou listenest to the united supplications of thy saints, but do not shut out my solitary petition, unworthy though I be. *"Give ear, O God of Jacob."* Though Jehovah of hosts, thou art also the covenant God of solitary pleaders like Jacob ; regard thou, then, my plaintive supplication. I wrestle here alone with thee, while the company of thy people have gone on before me to happier scenes, and I beseech thee bless me ; for I am resolved to hold thee till thou speak the word of grace into my soul. The repetition of the request

for an answer to his prayer denotes his eagerness for a blessing. What a mercy it is that if we cannot gather with the saints, we can still speak to their Master.

Selah.—A pause was needed after a cry so vehement, a prayer so earnest.

9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

10 For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

12 O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

9. *"Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed."* Here we have the nation's prayer for David; and the believer's prayer for the Son of David. Let but the Lord look upon our Lord Jesus, and we shall be shielded from all harm; let him behold the face of his Anointed, and we shall be able to behold his face with joy. We also are anointed by the Lord's grace, and our desire is that he will look upon us with an eye of love in Christ Jesus. Our best prayers when we are in the best place are for our glorious King, and for the enjoyment of his Father's smile.

10. *"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand."* Of course the Psalmist means a thousand days spent elsewhere. Under the most favourable circumstances in which earth's pleasures can be enjoyed, they are not comparable by so much as one in a thousand to the delights of the service of God. To feel his love, to rejoice in the person of the anointed Saviour, to survey the promises and feel the power of the Holy Ghost in applying precious truth to the soul, is a joy which worldlings cannot understand, but which true believers are ravished with. Even a glimpse at the love of God is better than ages spent in the pleasures of sense. *"I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."* The lowest station in connection with the Lord's house is better than the highest position among the godless. Only to wait at his threshold and peep within, so as to see Jesus, is bliss. To bear burdens and open doors for the Lord is more honour than to reign among the wicked. Every man has his choice, and this is ours. God's worst is better than the devil's best. God's doorstep is a happier rest than downy couches within the pavilions of royal sinners, though we might lie there for a lifetime of luxury. Note how he calls the tabernacle "the house of *my* God;" there's where the sweetness lies: if Jehovah be our God, his house, his altars, his doorstep, all become precious to us. We know by experience that where Jesus is within, the outside of the house is better than the noblest chambers where the Son of God is not to be found.

11. *"For the Lord God is a sun and shield."* Pilgrims need both as the weather may be, for the cold would smite them were it not for the sun, and foes are apt to waylay the sacred caravan, and would haply destroy it if it were without a shield. Heavenly pilgrims are not left uncomforted or unprotected. The pilgrim nation found both sun and shield in that fiery cloudy pillar which was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and the Christian still finds both light and shelter in the Lord his God. A sun for happy days and a shield for dangerous ones. A sun above, a shield around. A light to show the way and a shield to ward off its perils. Blessed are they who journey with such a convoy; the sunny and the shady side of life are alike happy to them. *"The Lord will give grace and glory."* Both in due time, both as needed, both to the full, both with absolute certainty. The Lord has both grace and glory in infinite abundance; Jesus is the fulness of both, and, as his chosen people, we shall receive both as a free gift from the God of our salvation. What more can the Lord give, or we receive, or desire. *"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."* Grace makes us walk uprightly and this secures every covenant blessing to us. What a wide promise! Some apparent good may be withheld, but no real good, no, not one. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." God has all good, there is no good apart from him, and there is no good which he either needs to keep back or will on any account refuse us, if we are but ready to receive it. We must be upright and neither lean to this or that form of evil: and this uprightness must be practical,—we must *walk* in truth and holiness, then shall we be heirs of all things, and as we come of age all things shall be in our actual possession; and, meanwhile, according to our capacity for receiving shall be the measure of the divine bestowal. This is true, not of a favoured few, but of all the saints for evermore.

12. *"O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."* Here is the key of the Psalm. The worship is that of faith, and the blessedness is peculiar to believers. No formal worshipper can enter into this secret. A man must know the Lord by the life of real faith, or he can have no true rejoicing in the Lord's worship, his house, his Son, or his ways. Dear reader, how fares it with thy soul?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—Here note, that the sons, that is, the posterity of wicked and rebellious Korah, have an honourable place in God's sacred and solemn service: for to them sundry of David's psalms are commended. . . . . Here see the verifying of God's word, for the comfort of all godly children, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, Ezek. xviii. 14, 17, 20, if he sees his father's sins and turn from them.—*Thomas Pierson* (1570—1633) *in "David's Heart's Desire."*

Whole Psalm.—

O Lord of hosts, how lovely in mine eyes
The tents where thou dost dwell!
For thine abode my spirit faints and sighs;
The courts I love so well.
My longing soul is weary
Within thy house to be;
This world is waste and dreary,
A desert land to me.

The sparrow, Lord, hath found a shelter'd home,
The swallow hath her nest;
She layeth there her young, and though she roam,
Returneth there to rest.
I, to thine altar flying,
Would there for ever be;
My heart and flesh are crying,
O living God, for thee!

How blest are they who in thy house abide!
Thee evermore they praise.
How strong the man whom thou alone dost guide,
Whose heart doth keep thy ways.
A pilgrim and a stranger,
He leaneth on thine arm;
And thou, in time of danger,
Dost shield him from alarm.

From strength to strength through Baca's vale of woe,
They pass along in prayer,
And gushing streams of living water flow,
Dug by their faithful care;
Thy rain is sent from heaven
To fertilise the land,
And wayside grace is given
Till they in Zion stand.

Lord God of hosts, attend unto my prayer!
O Jacob's God, give ear!
Behold, O God, our Shield, we through thy care,
Within thy courts appear!
Look thou upon the glory
Of thine Anointed's face;
In him we stand before thee,
To witness of thy grace!

One day with thee excelleth o'er and o'er
A thousand days apart;
In thine abode, within thy temple-door,
Would stand my watchful heart.
Men tell me of the treasure
Hid in their tents of sin;
I look not there for pleasure,
Nor choose to enter in.

Own thou the Lord to be thy Sun, thy Shield—
No good will he withhold;
He giveth grace, and soon shall be reveal'd
His glory, yet untold.
His mighty name confessing,
Walk thou at peace and free;
O Lord, how rich the blessing
Of him who trusts in thee!

—*German Choral Music.*

Verse 1.—"*How amiable are thy tabernacles.*" What was there in them that appeared so amiable? Perchance, the edifice was famed for the skill and cost bestowed on it? But the temple of extraordinary beauty was not yet constructed. The tabernacle was lowly, more suited to pilgrims than to a great people, and little becoming the king himself. Therefore to the pious there is no need of vast or sumptuous temples to the end that they should love the house of God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*How amiable are thy tabernacles.*" What made the tabernacle of Moses lovely was not the outside, which was very mean, as the Church of God outwardly is, through persecution, affliction, and poverty; but what was within, having many golden vessels in it, and those typical of things much more precious: moreover, here the priests were to be seen in their robes, doing their duty and service, and, at certain times, the high priest in his rich apparel; here were seen the sacrifices slain and offered, by which the people were taught the nature of sin, the strictness of justice, and the necessity and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ: here the Levites were heard singing their songs, and blowing their trumpets: but much more amiable are the Church of God and its ordinances in gospel times, where Christ, the great High-Priest, is seen in the glories of his person, and the fulness of his grace; where Zion's priests, or the ministers of the gospel, stand clothed, being full fraught with salvation, and the tidings of it; where Christ is evidently set forth, as crucified and slain, in the ministry of the word, and the administration of ordinances; here the gospel trumpet is blown, and its joyful sound echoed forth, and songs of love and grace are sung by all believers; besides, what makes these tabernacles still more lovely are, the presence of God here, so that they are no other than the house of God, the gate of heaven; the provisions that are here made, and the company that is here enjoyed.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*Amiable.*" The adjective is rendered by the English versions "*amiable,*" in the sense of the French *amiable*, lovely. But the usage of the Hebrew word requires it to be understood as meaning *dear, beloved*, which is exactly the idea here required by the context. The plural, *dwellings*, has reference to the subdivisions and appurtenances of the sanctuary, and is applied to the tabernacle in Ps. xlviii. 3. Compare Ps. lxviii. 35. The divine titles are as usual significant. While one suggests the covenant relation between God and the petitioner, the other makes his sovereignty the ground of a prayer for his protection.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"*Tabernacles.*" By the name of "*tabernacles*" we are put in mind of the church's peregrination and wandering from one place unto another, until she come unto her true country. For as tabernacle and tents of war be removed hither and thither, so the Church of God in this life hath no sure and quiet abode, but often is compelled to change her seat. This pilgrimage, whereby indeed every man, as Augustine doth say, is a pilgrim in this world, doth admonish us of sin, which is the cause of this peregrination. For, because of sin we are cast with our first parents out of Paradise into the land wherein we sojourn. So that we are removed from Jerusalem, that is, from the sight and fruition of peace, into Babylon, that is, into confusion and exile, wherein we wander far and wide.—*Nicholas Heminge* [*Hemmingius*] (1513—1600], *in "The Faith of the Church Militant."*

Verses 1, 2.—When we cannot express the greatness of a thing in direct terms, we are fain to fly to wonder, and so doth David here, because he cannot express

sufficiently how amiable the Tabernacles of the Lord are, he therefore falls to wondering, and helps himself with a question; How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But is not David's wondering itself wonderful, that the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts should be so wonderfully amiable? Is it not a wonder they should be amiable at all? For are not his tabernacles, tents of war? and is there anything in war that can be amiable? If he had said: How *terrible* are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; his wonder had been with some congruity; for the Lord of Hosts is terrible in all his works; but to say, How *amiable* are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, seems to imply a contradiction; for though they may be amiable, as they are tabernacles, yet they must needs be terrible, as they are Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts; and when this terribleness hath made an abatement in their amiableness; what place will be left for wonder, to give cause to say, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But if he had said, How terrible are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; though it might have been wonderful in the degree, yet it could not be wonderful in the kind: for what wonder is it, if the Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts be terrible? But when he saith, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; this is not only wonderful in the degree, but in the kind much more. For what can be more wonderful, than that being Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts, they should be amiable, and so amiable as to be wondered at? But is it not, that God is in himself so amiable, that all things of His, even his terrors themselves, are amiable; his tabernacles and his tents, his sword and his spear, his, darts and his arrows, all amiable; terrible no doubt to his enemies, but amiable, wonderfully amiable to all that love and fear him, and great reason they should be so seeing they are all in their defence, and for their safeguard; though they be Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts to the wicked, yet they are Courts of the Prince of Peace to the godly, and this makes *my soul to long for the courts of the Lord.* For I desire indeed to be a courtier, yet not as I am now: God knows I am very unfit for it, but because God's Courts are such, they make any one fit, that but comes into them; they receive not men fit, but make them fit; and he that was before but a shrub in Baca, as soon as he comes into the Courts of the Lord is presently made a cedar in Lebanon.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"*My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth,*" etc. Every amiableness is not so great to make a longing, nor every longing so great to make a fainting; nor every fainting so great, to make the soul to faint; Oh, then, consider how great this amiableness is, which makes my soul not only to long, but to faint with longing! And blame me not for fainting, as though it were my own fault for not restraining my longing; for seeing his Tabernacles are of infinite amiableness, they must needs work in me an infinite delighting, and that delighting an infinite longing; and what restraint can there be of that which is infinite? No, alas, my fainting is but answerable to my longing, and my longing but answerable to the amiableness. If I had the offer made me, which was made to Christ, to enjoy all the kingdoms of the earth, but with condition to want the Courts of the Lord; this want would bring to my soul a greater grief than that enjoying would give it contentment: for seeing his Tabernacles are so amiable, where He is Lord of Hosts, how amiable must they needs be, where he is Prince of Peace? and Prince of Peace he is in his Courts, though in his camp he be Lord of Hosts.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"*My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth.*" The word כָּלְתָה (fainteth) signifies to be consumed with longing, as the Latins say, *deperire aliquem amore* (he is dying of love), that is, he so vehemently loves, and is enflamed with so great a desire to obtain the loved object, that he wastes and pines away unless his wish is gratified. Therefore, an ardent longing is meant, which so torments and burns the mind, that flesh and marrow waste away, so long as it is not permitted to enjoy the things desired.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 2.—"*Soul . . . heart . . . flesh.*" Marking the whole man, with every faculty and affection. The verbs are also very expressive. The first, "*longeth,*" means literally, "hath grown pale," as with the intensity of the feeling; the second, "*fainteth,*" is more exactly "faileth," or "is consumed." Job. xix. 27.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 2.—"*Crieth.*" The word that is here rendered "*crieth,*" is from רָנַן, that signifies to shout, shrill, or cry out, as soldiers do at the beginning of a battle, when they cry out, Fall on, fall on, fall on, or when they cry out after a victory, Victory, victory, victory! The Hebrew word notes a strong cry, or to cry as a child cries

when it is sadly hungry, for now every whit of the child cries, hands cry, and face cries, and feet cry.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 2.—"*Living God.*" Ps. xlii. 2, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," is the only other place in the Psalms where God is so named. This particular form of expression, *El Chay*, occurs but twice beside in the Bible, Josh. iii. 10; Hosea i. 10.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"*The sparrow hath found an house,*" etc. The tender care of God, over the least of his creatures, is here most touchingly alluded to. The Psalmist, while in exile, envies them their privileges. He longs to be nestling, as it were, in the dwelling-place of God. The believer finds a perfect home and rest in God's altars; or, rather, in the great truths which they represent. Still, his confidence in God is sweetened and strengthened by the knowledge of his minute, universal, providential care. It becomes his admiring delight. "God fails not," as one has beautifully said, "to find a house for the most *worthless*, and a nest for the most *restless* of birds." What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul finds that casts itself on the watchful, tender care of him who provides so fully for the need of all his creatures! We know what the expression of "nest" conveys, just as well as that of "a house." Is it not a place of security, a shelter from storm, a covert to hide oneself in, from every evil, a protection from all that can harm, "a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in"? But there is one thing in these highly privileged birds which strikes us forcibly in our meditations—they knew not him from whom all this kindness flowed—they knew neither his heart nor his hand. They enjoyed the rich provisions of his tender care; he thought of everything for their need, but there was no fellowship between them and the Great Giver. From this, O my soul, thou mayest learn a useful lesson. Never rest satisfied with merely frequenting such places, or with having certain privileges there; but rise, in spirit, and seek and find and enjoy direct communion with the living God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The heart of David turns to God himself. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 3.—"*The swallow a nest,*" etc. The confidence which these birds place in the human race is not a little extraordinary. They not only put themselves, but their offspring in the power of men. I have seen their nests in situations where they were within the reach of one's hand, and where they might have been destroyed in an instant. I have observed them under a doorway, the eaves of a low cottage, against the wall of a tool-shed, on the knocker of a door, and the rafter of a much-frequented hay-loft.—*Edward Jesse, in "Gleanings in Natural History."* 1856.

Verse 3.—"*Even thine altars.*" There were two altars; the "brazen altar," and the "golden altar;" to those, no doubt, the Psalmist refers. Both were of shittim wood, which sets forth the holy humanity—the perfect manhood, of the Lord Jesus. Incarnation lies at the foundation of all his work for us, and of all our blessing in him. The one altar was overlaid with brass, the other with pure gold. The *overlaying* shadows forth his Godhead, but in distinct aspects. We have the same Jesus in both, but shadowed forth in different circumstances. In the one, humiliation and suffering; in the other, exaltation and glory.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 3.—"*Thine altars.*" There is in the original a pathetical, a vehement, a broken expressing, expressed, *O thine altars.* It is true, (says David) thou art here in the wilderness, and I may see thee here, and serve thee here, but *O thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.*—*John Donne.*

Verse 3.—"*Thine altars*" is a poetical way of saying "*Thy house.*" It is manifestly a special term, instead of a general. Yet it has been seriously argued, that no birds could or would ever be suffered to build their nests on the altar. Surely this sort of expression, which is hardly a figure, is common enough. *A parte potiori fit denominatio.* We say, "There goes a sail." What should we think of a man who should argue that a sail cannot go? The altars mean the temple. There was

> "no jutty frieze,
> Buttress, nor coigne of vantage, but these birds
> Had made their pendant bed;"

not to mention that trees grew within the sacred enclosure, where birds might have built their nests.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—A custom, existing among several nations of antiquity, is deemed capable of illustrating the present passage. For birds, whose nests chanced to be

die." His life was sought after by the cruelty of his enemies; and he desireth God to keep him alive.

2ndly. His argument from the aim of his life; *"And it shall praise thee."* The glorifying of God was his aim. The fruit of all God's benefits is to profit us, and praise God. David professeth that all the days of his life he would live in the sense and acknowledgment of such a benefit.

3rdly. The ground of his hope and confidence in the last clause: *"And let thy judgments help me."* Our hopes of help are grounded on God's judgments, whereby is meant his word. There are judgments decreed, and judgments executed; doctrinal judgments, and providential judgments. That place intimateth the distinction: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil:" Eccl. viii. 11. There is *sententia lata et dilata.* Here God's judgments are put for the sentence pronounced; and chiefly for one part of them, the promises of grace. As also, "I have hoped in thy judgments:" Ps. cxix. 43. Promises are the objects of hope.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 175.—*"Let my soul live."* What is the life that the Psalmist is now praying for, but the salvation for which he had just expressed his longing? The taste that he has received makes him hunger for a higher and more continued enjoyment—not for selfish gratification, but that he might employ himself in the praise of his God. Indeed, as we have drawn towards the close of this Psalm, we cannot but have observed that character of praise to pervade his experience, which has been generally remarked in the concluding Psalms of this sacred book. Much do we lose of spiritual strength for want of occupying ourselves more in the exercise of praise.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 175.—*"Live and praise."* The saint improves his earthly things for an heavenly end. Where layest thou up thy treasure? Dost thou bestow it on thy voluptuous appetite, thy hawks and thy hounds; or lockest thou it up in the bosom of Christ's poor members? What use makest thou of thy honour and greatness? To strengthen the hands of the godly or the wicked? And so of all thy other temporal enjoyments. A gracious heart improves them for God; when a saint prays for these things, he hath an eye to some heavenly end. If David prays for life, it is not that he may live, but *"live and praise God."* When he was driven from his regal throne by the rebellious arms of Absalom, see what his desire and hope were, 2 Sam. xv. 25: "The king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation." Mark, not shew me my crown, my palace, but the ark, the house of God.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 175.—*"Live and praise."* Liveliness of soul is the Spirit's gift, and it will show itself in abounding praises.—*Henry Law.*

Verse 175.—*"Let thy judgments help me."* In the second clause it would be harsh to understand the word *"judgments"* of the commandments, to which it does not properly belong to give help. It seems, then, that the prophet, perceiving himself liable to numberless calamities—even as the faithful, by reason of the unbridled license of the wicked, dwell in this world as sheep among wolves,—calls upon God to protect him in the way of restraining, by his secret providence, the wicked from doing him harm. It is a very profitable doctrine, when things in the world are in a state of great confusion, and when our safety is in danger amidst so many and varied storms, to lift up our eyes to the judgments of God, and to seek a remedy in them.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 175, 176—

> Though like a sheep estranged I stray,
> Yet have I not renounced thy way.
> Thine hand extend; thine own reclaim;
> Grant me to live, and praise thy name.
>
> *Richard Mant.*

Verse 176.—*"I have gone astray like a lost sheep."* Though a sheep go astray, yet it is soon called back by the voice of the shepherd: "My sheep hear my voice." Thus David when he went against Nabal was called back by the Lord's voice in a woman; and when he had slain Uriah he was brought again by Nathan. And therefore if we will be sheep, then though we sometimes go astray, yet we must be easily reclaimed.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 4.—"*Still praising.*" It is not enough to praise him, it must be a praising him *still*, before it will make a blessedness; and though to praise God be an easy matter, yet *to praise him still*, will be found a busy work, indeed to flesh and blood a miserable work, for if I be still praising him, what time shall I have for any pleasure? O my soul, if thou make it not thy pleasure, thy chief, thy only pleasure to be praising him, thou art not like in haste to come to blessedness. And marvel not that David speaks thus under the law, when St. Paul under the Gospel saith as much: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, let all be done to the glory and praise of God."—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—"*In whose heart are thy ways.*" That is, who love the ways that lead to thy house.—*Ernest Hawkins.*

Verse 5.—"*In whose heart are the ways of them.*" Literally, "*The steeps are on their hearts.*" The steep ascents on which the tabernacle stood. Horsley renders, "*They are bent on climbing the steep ascents.*" Perhaps the מְסִלּוֹת were more properly the *raised causeways* or stairs leading up to Mount Zion, or all through the mountain country on the road to Jerusalem.—*John Fry.*

Verse 5.—"*In whose heart are the ways.*" The natural heart is a pathless wilderness, full of cliffs and precipices. When the heart is renewed by grace, *a road is made, a highway is prepared for our God.* See Isai. xl. 3, 4.—*Frederick Fysh.*

Verse 6.—"*Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well,*" etc. I consider the valley here mentioned to be the same as the valley of *Bochim*, mentioned in Judges ii. 1, 5, which received its name from the *weeping* of the Jews, when they were rebuked by an angel for their disobedience to the commands of God. This valley is called הַבְּכָאִים, *Habb'caim*, in 2 Sam. v. 24, the ה of בָּכָה, *to weep* being changed into א. Josephus mentions, that the circumstance there related occurred ἐν τοῖς ἄλσεσι τοῖς καλουμένοις Κλαυθμῶσι. Antiquit. Jud. lib. vii. c. 4. הַבְּכָאִים, *Habb'caim*, is rendered in that verse by the LXX. Κλαυθμῶν, *weepings*; and in Judges ii. 1 הַבֹּכִים, *Habbocim*, is also rendered by the LXX. Κλαυθμῶν, *weepings*. The valley mentioned in Ps. lxxxiv. 6 is called by the LXX. Κλαυθμῶν. I am inclined therefore to think, that in this place, joining to הַבְּכָא the ם of the following word, and supplying י before it, we ought to read הַבְּכָאִים עַיִן instead of הַבָּכָא מַעְיָן. . . All the ancient versionists seem to have thought, that the valley in this verse received its name from בָּכָה, *bacah, to weep.* I translate the verse, "Passing through the valley of Bochim, they will make it a fountain even of blessings; it shall be covered with the former rain." The Psalm has been supposed to have been written by Jehoshaphat. Probably he passed through Bochim, which seems to have been an arid valley, when he marched against the Moabites and Ammonites: see 2 Chron. xx. After the victory, the army of Jehoshaphat assembled in a valley, where they blessed the Lord; and from this circumstance it received the name of Berachah: see ver. 26. Perhaps the word בְּרָכוֹת in this verse has an allusion to that circumstance; and perhaps the valley of Berachah was, before that glorious occasion, called the valley of Bochim.—*Richard Dixon.*

Verse 6.—*Passing through the valley of weeping make him*, that is, Jehovah, *a fountain.* That is, they trust, and from him look for help, who having plain paths in their mind must pass through many difficulties. Similar help is sought by those, who, suffering from a scanty supply of water, press on through a dry valley, and yet do not despair or grow weary, but have God for their fountain, from which they drink and are refreshed.—*Venema.*

Verse 6.—"*The valley of Baca.*" Valley of tear-shrubs.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—"*Baca,*" signifieth a mulberry-tree, which loves to grow in dry places that be sandy and barren, 2 Sam. v. 23, 24, or 1 Chron. xiv. 14, 15. Now they whose hearts be set upon God's house and holy worship, when they go thitherward through a sandy, dry, barren valley, do make it a well,—that is, repute and count it as a well; the word יְשִׁיתוּהוּ signifieth to put or set, as Gen. iii. 15; Ps. xxi. 6, 12, and lxxxiii. 11, 13. For thus will they say with themselves, thinking upon the comfort of God's favour to whom they go, that it shall be to them as the rain of blessings, a plentiful and liberal rain upon the ground.—*Thomas Pierson.*

Verse 6.—"*Make it a well.*" That which seemed an impediment turns to a furtherance; at least, no misery can be so great, no estate so barren, but a godly heart can make it a well, out of which to draw forth water of comfort; either water to cleanse, and make it a way to repentance; or water to cool, and make it a way

to patience; or water to moisten, and make it a way of growing in grace; and if the well happen to be dry, and afford no water from below, *yet the rain shall fill their pools*, and supply them with water from above. If natural forces be not sufficient, there shall be supernatural graces added to assist them, that though troubles of the world seem rubs in the way to blessedness, yet in truth they are none, they hinder not arriving at the mark we aim at, they hinder us not from being made members of Sion, they hinder us not from approaching the presence of God. No, my soul, they are rather helps, for by this means *we go from strength to strength*, from strength of patience, to strength of hope; from strength of hope, to strength of faith, to strength of vision; and then will be accomplished that which David speaks here; *"Blessed is the man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart his ways are."—Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6.—*"The rain."* Little as there may be of water, that little suffices on their way. It is *"a well"* to them. They find only *"pools* (which) *the early rain has* (barely) *covered"*—but are content with the supply by the way. It is as good and sufficient to them as if showers of the heavy autumnal rains had filled the well. Pilgrims forget the scanty supply at an inn, when they have abundance in view at the end. Israelites going up to the Passover made light of deficient water, for their hearts were set on reaching Jerusalem.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verses 6, 7.—The most gloomy present becomes bright to them: passing through even a terrible wilderness, they turn it into a place of springs, their joyous hope and the infinite beauty of the goal, which is worth any amount of toil and trouble, afford them enlivening comfort, refreshing, strengthening in the midst of the arid steppe.

Not only does their faith bring forth water out of the sand and rocks of the desert, but God also on his part lovingly anticipates their love, and rewardingly anticipates their faithfulness: a gentle rain, like that which refreshes the sown fields in the autumn, descends from above and enwraps the valley of Baca in a fulness of blessing . . . the arid steppe becomes resplendent with a flowery festive garment (Isai. xxxv. 1—19), not to outward appearance, but to them spiritually in a manner none the less true and real. And whereas under ordinary circumstances, the strength of the traveller diminishes in proportion as he has traversed more and more of his toilsome road, with them it is the very reverse; *"they go from strength to strength."—Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 7.—*"They go from strength to strength."* Junius reads it, and so it is in the Hebrew, " They go from company to company." As they went up to Jerusalem they went in troops and companies. Possibly we translate it strength, because much of our safety consisteth in good society.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 7.—*"Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."* That is, every one of them answering to the character described. Others as well as they would appear in Zion before God; but not to enjoy his presence, and receive tokens of his favour. Blessedness was now to be enjoyed, but it could only be enjoyed by those who had been previously fitted for it by character and attainment. As certainly as these had been acquired, so certainly would the blessedness be enjoyed by each and by all of them. *"Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."* No one has perished by the way—none been devoured by wild beasts—none cut off by the wandering banditti—none become faint-hearted and turned back. The whole bands are assembled—young and old, weak and strong; all answer to their names, and testify to the goodness of the Lord in bearing them up, and bringing through—in affording them rest, and yielding them pleasure. So shall it ever be with true spiritual pilgrims. The grace of God will always prove sufficient to preserve them, safe and blameless, to his heavenly kingdom and glory—troubles shall not overwhelm them—temptations not wholly overcome them—spiritual enemies shall not destroy them. They are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and the Lamb himself shall see to it that each of them is found in the day of account. Then shall he be able to say, " Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost." " They are all here before God."—*William Makelvie.* 1863.

Verse 8.—There are two distinct thoughts of great practical value to the Christian, in this short prayer. There is the sense of *divine majesty*, and the consciousness of

divine relationship. As *"Lord of hosts,"* he is almighty in power; as the *"God of Jacob,"* he is infinite in mercy and goodness to his people.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 9.—While many, alas, are satisfied with mere formalities in religion, or with the dry discussion of doctrines, high or low, as they may be called, see thou and be occupied with Christ himself. It is the knowledge of his person that gives strength and joy to the soul. At all times, under all circumstances, we can say, *"Look upon the face of thine Anointed."* We cannot always say, *Look on us;* but we may always say, *Look on Him.* In deepest sorrow through conscious failure, or in trials and difficulties through faithfulness to his name, we can ever plead with God what Christ is. God is ever well pleased with him—ever occupied with him as risen from the dead and exalted to his own right hand in heaven; and he would have us also to be occupied with him as the heart's exclusive object. True faith can only rest on *God's estimate* of Christ, not on inward thoughts and feelings. That which may be called the faith of the formalist, rests on the ability of his own mind to judge of these matters. He trusts in himself. This is the essential difference between faith in appearance and faith in reality.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 9.—*"Look upon the face of thine anointed."* For I shall never come to look upon thy face, if thou vouchsafe not first to look upon mine: if thou afford me not as well the benefit of thine eyes, to look upon me, as the favour of thine ears to hear me, I shall be left only to a bare expectation, but never come to the happiness of fruition; but when thou vouchsafest to look upon my face, that look of thine hath an influence of all true blessedness, and makes me find what a happiness it is to have the God of Jacob for my shield.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 10.—*"A day."* The least good look that a man hath from God, and the least good word that a man hears from God, and the least love letter and love token that a man receives from God, is exceedingly precious to that man that hath God for his portion. *"One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere."* He doth not say, One year in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, but *One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere; nor doth he say, One quarter of a year in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, but *"One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere"; nor doth he say, One month is better than a thousand elsewhere, but *"One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere," to shew that the very least of God is exceeding precious to a gracious soul that hath God for his portion.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 10.—Another sign of God's children is, to delight to be much in God's presence. Children are to be in the presence of their father; where the King is, there is the court; where the presence of God is, there is heaven. God is in a special manner present in his ordinances, they are the Ark of his presence. Now, if we are his children, we love to be much in holy duties. In the use of ordinances we draw near to God, we come into our Father's presence; in prayer we have secret conference with God; the soul while it is praying, is as it were parlying with God. In the word we hear God speaking from heaven to us; and how doth every child of God delight to hear his Father's voice! In the sacrament God kisseth his children with the kisses of his lips; he gives them a smile of his face, and a privy-seal of his love: oh, it is good to draw near to God. It is sweet being in his presence: every true child of God saith, *"A day in thy courts is better than a thousand!"*—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 10.—*"I had rather be a doorkeeper,"* etc. Some read it, "I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty in the tents of the wicked;" alluding to the law concerning servants, who if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door-post, Exod. xxi. 5, 6. David loved his Master, and loved his work so well, that he desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—*"I had rather be a doorkeeper."* In the sense that Christ is a Door, David may well be content to be a Door-Keeper, and though in God's house there be many mansions, yet seeing all of them are glorious, even the door-keeper's place is not without its glory. But if you think the office to be mean, consider then whose officer he is, for even a door-keeper is an officer in God's house, and God never dis-

placeth his officers unless it be to advance them to a higher; whereas, in the courts of princes, the greatest officers are oftentimes displaced, turned off often with disgrace.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 10.—"*I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,*" etc. Happy are those persons, whom God will use as besoms to sweep out the dust from his temple; or who shall tug at an oar in the boat where Christ and his church are embarked.—*William Secker, in "The Nonsuch Professor."*

Verse 10.—"*Doorkeeper.*" This is a Korhite Psalm, and the descendants of Korah were, in fact, porters, and "keepers of the gates of the tabernacle, and keepers of the entry," as well as being permitted to swell the chorus of the inspired singers of Israel.—*Bossuet, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 10.—Instead of, "*I had rather be a doorkeeper,*" the margin has, according to the Hebrew, "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold." Ainsworth's translation is: "I have chosen to sit at the threshold, in the house of my God;" and Dr. Boothroyd's is: "Abide, or sit, at the threshold." See 2 Kings xii. 9; xxii. 4; xxv. 18; 1 Chron. ix. 19; 2 Chron. xxiii. 4; Esther ii. 21; vi. 2. In all these passages the marginal reading is *threshold.* I think the word "*door-keeper*" does not convey the proper meaning of the words, "to sit at the threshold"; because the preference of the Psalmist was evidently given to a very *humble* position; whereas that of a door-keeper, in Eastern estimation, is truly respectable and confidential.

The marginal reading, however, "to sit at the threshold," at once strikes on an Eastern mind as a situation of deep humility.

See the poor heathen devotee: he goes and sits near the threshold of his temple. Look at the beggar: he sits, or prostrates himself, at the threshold of the door or gate, till he shall have gained his suit.—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 10.—"*House.*" "*Tents.*" Observe the force of the contrasted expressions. The "*house*" is the Lord's; the "*tents*" are of the wicked. The pleasures of sin are for a season only; the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 10.—"*The tents.*" It is not any tents, or tents of any ordinary kind, that are understood, but rich, powerful, glorious, and splendid tents.—*Venema.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord God is a sun,*" conveys a striking and impressive truth, when we think of the sun only in his obvious character as a source of light and heat. But what new energy is given to this magnificent emblem, when we learn from astronomy that he is a grand centre of attraction, and when we, in addition, take in that sublime generalization that the sun is the ultimate source of every form of power existing in the world! The wind wafts the commerce of every nation over the mighty deep; but the heat of the sun has rarefied that air, and set that wind in motion. The descending stream yields a power which grinds your grain, turns your spindles, works your looms, drives your forges; but it is because the sun gathered up the vapour from the ocean, which fell upon the hills, and is finding its way back to the source whence it came. The expansive energy of steam propels your engine; but the force with which it operates is locked up in the coal (the remains of extinct forests stored among your hills), or is derived from the wood that abounds in your forests, which now crown and beautify their summits. Both these primeval and these existing forests drew their subsistence from the sun: it is the chemical force resident in his rays which disengaged their carbon from the atmosphere, and laid it up as a source of power for future use. The animal exerts a force by muscular contraction; he draws it from the vegetable on which he feeds; the vegetable derives it from the sun, whose rays determine its growth. Every time you lift your arm, every time you take a step, you are drawing on the power the sun has given you. When you step into the railway carriage, it is the sun-power that hurries you along. When gentle breezes fan your languid cheek, and when the resistless tornado levels cities in its fury, they are the servants of the sun. What an emblem of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being!—*Professor Green.*

Verse 11.—The "*sun,*" which among all inanimate creatures is the most excellent, notes all manner of excellency, provision, and prosperity; and the "*shield,*" which among all artificial creatures is the chiefest, notes all manner of protection whatsoever. Under the name of "*grace,*" all spiritual good is wrapped up; and under the name of "*glory,*" all eternal good is wrapped up; and under the last clause, "*No good thing will he withhold,*" is wrapped up all temporal good: all put together speaks out God to be an all-sufficient portion.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord God is a shield.*" He is a shield to our *persons:* "Touch

not," said he, " mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." " The Lord," said Moses in his name, " the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in. He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." " Hast thou considered my servant Job ? " said God to Satan :—" Yes," replied Satan, " I have : thou hast set a hedge about him. Yes, brethren ; *"the Lord God is a shield."* He is a shield to our *graces*. The dislike and malice of Satan is principally levelled at us when we become subjects of divine influence " Simon, Simon," said our Saviour, " Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat, but," he adds, " I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." There was a shield to the good man's faith, or he and it too had been gone. You may remember the name of Little Faith in Bunyan's Pilgrim. It appears that Hopeful was greatly surprised that the robbers had not taken his jewels from him ; but he was given to understand that *they* were not in his own keeping. Yes, Christian, HE shall be thy *"shield"* to cover thy hope when it appears to thee to be giving up the ghost. . . . Yes, and He will be a shield *to thy property*. " Hast thou not set a hedge about *all* that he hath ? " Though Job was tried a little while, his property was only put out to interest ; by and by it came back cent. per cent. ; and he gained, besides, a vast increase of knowledge and of grace.—*Matthew Wilks*. 1746—1829.

Verse 11.—Turn your thoughts to the combination ; *"the Lord God is a sun and shield."* As a sun he shows me more and more of my sinfulness ; but then as a shield, he gives me power to oppose it and assurance that I shall conquer. As a sun, he discloses so much of the enormity of guilt, that I am forced to exclaim, " Mine iniquities are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear ; " but then as a shield, he shows me that he has laid the load on a Surety, who bore it into a land of forgetfulness. As a sun, he makes me daily more and more sensible of the utter impossibility of my working out a righteousness of my own ; but then, as a shield, he fastens constantly my thoughts on that righteousness of his Son, which is meritoriously conveyed to all who believe on his name. As a sun, in short, he brings facts to my knowledge, (inasmuch as he brings myself and mine enemies to my knowledge,) which would make the matter of deliverance seem out of reach and hopeless if he were not at the same time a shield ; but seeing that he is both, a shield as well as a sun, the disclosures which he makes as a sun only prepare me for the blessing which he imparts as a shield. Who then shall wonder, that after announcing the character of God, the Psalmist should break into expressions of confidence and assurance ? It may be, that as the corruption of nature is brought continually before me, deeper and wider and darker, Satan will ply me with the suggestion ; " The guiltiness is too inveterate to be eradicated, and too enormous to be pardoned " ; and if God were a sun, and nothing more, it might be hard to put away the suggestion as a device of the father of lies. I might then fear. I might fear God's holiness, thinking I should never be fitted for communion with Deity ; I might fear God's justice, thinking I should never find acquittal at the last dread assize. But can I fear either, when besides a sun, God is also a shield ? Can I fear God's justice, when as a shield he places sufferings to my account, which satisfy the law, even to the last penalty ? Can I fear his holiness, when he gives me interest in an obedience, which fulfils every precept ? Does not the one character, that of a shield, help me to scatter those solicitudes, which may well be excited through the operation of the other character, that of a sun ? And am I not warranted—nay, am I not living far below my privilege—if I fail in deriving from the combination of character a boldness and a confidence, not to be overborne by those suspicions, which have Satan for their author ? As a sun, God shows me myself ; as a shield, God shows me himself. The sun discloses mine own nothingness ; the shield, Divine sufficiency. The one enables me to discern that I deserve nothing but wrath, and can earn nothing but shame ; the other, that I have a title to immortality, and may lay claim to an enduring inheritance in heaven. I learn, in short, from God as *"a Sun,"* that if I have " wages," I must have eternal death ; but from God as *"a Shield,"* that if I will receive the " free gift " I may have " eternal life." Whom then shall I fear ? Myself—confessedly my worst enemy ? " The Sun " makes a man start from himself ; the " Shield " assures him that he shall be protected against himself and builded up " for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Shall I shrink from Satan and the hosts of principalities and powers ? The " Sun " shows them awful in their might, and vehement in their malice ; but the " Shield " exhibits them spoiled and led captive, when Christ died and rose again. Shall I dread death ?

Indeed the "Sun" makes death terrible, forcing me to read God's curse in the motionless limbs and mouldering features; but then the "Shield" displays the open sepulchre, the quickened dust, the marvels of a resurrection, the mountain and the ocean and the valley yielding up the sleeping generations. Is death to be dreaded? Take the catalogue of things, which, inasmuch as we are fallen creatures, God, as our "Sun," instructs us to fear; and we shall find, that insomuch as we are redeemed creatures, God as our "Shield" enables us to triumph over all our fears. Who therefore shall hesitate to agree, that there results from this combination of character exactly that system of counterpoise, which we affirm to be discoverable in grace as well as in providence? Who can fail, if indeed we have been disciplined by that twofold tuition, which informs man first that he has destroyed himself and then that God hath "laid help on One that is mighty," the former lesson humiliating, the latter encouraging, the one making way for the other, so that the scholar is emptied of every false confidence that he may be fitted to entertain the true—oh! who, we say, can fail to gather from the combination of Divine character the inference drawn by the Psalmist? to exclaim (that is), after recording that "the Lord God is a Sun and Shield"—"He will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"?—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 11.—The words of the text are as a voice from heaven, inviting me up thither, and answering all the doubts and fears of such as believe and follow the joyful sound. Am I in *darkness*, and fear I shall never find the way? Open thine eye, O my soul! look up to the Father of lights: *the Lord is a sun*, whose steady beams shall direct thy steps. Is there an inward veil to be removed from my mind, as well as obscurity from my path? He is sufficient for both. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, and lead on to it. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) He can make the day dawn, and the day star to arise in our hearts; (2 Peter i. 19), and by *both*, guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke i. 79.) Doth the same light that discovers my way, discover what opposition I am like to meet with? what enemies and dangers I am to go through? Hear, O my soul, *the Lord is a shield.* Light and strength are conjoined; none can miscarry under his conduct, nor have any reason to be discouraged. With this he comforteth Abraham. Gen. xv. 1, *"Fear not: I am thy shield."* Do I groan under a sense of my unmeetness for the heavenly kingdom? Let this support my soul, *"the Lord will give grace."* Am I altogether unworthy of so high happiness? It springs from his own most free, unbounded love; *"the Lord will give glory."* Am I urged with a thousand wants that need supply, what more can be added? *"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."* Nothing that is evil can be desired; and nothing that is good shall be denied. Here, O my soul, is a fountain opened; here thy eager thirst may be fully satisfied; thy largest desires filled up; and thy mind be ever at rest.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 11.—Why need a saint fear darkness, when he has such a sun to guide him? Or dread dangers, when he has such a shield to guard him?—*William Secker.*

Verse 11.—*"The Lord will give glory."* "Man," says a wise author, "is the glory of this lower world; the soul is the glory of man; grace is the glory of the soul; and heaven is the glory of grace." Heaven, or glory, is grace matured and brought to infinite perfection; there we shall see his face, and have his name written in our foreheads; and we shall reign with him for ever and ever.—*Matthew Wilks.*

Verse 11.—*"No good thing will he withhold,"* etc. But how is this true, when God oftentimes withholds riches and honours, and health of body from men, though they walk never so uprightly; we may therefore know that honours and riches and bodily strength are none of God's good things; they are of the number of things indifferent which God bestows promiscuously upon the just and unjust, as the rain to fall and the sun to shine. The good things of God are chiefly peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost in this life; fruition of God's presence, and vision of his blessed face in the next, and these good things God never bestows upon the wicked, never withholds from the godly, and they are all cast up in one sum where it is said, *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt:* "Blessed are the pure of heart (and such are only they that walk uprightly) for they shall see God." But is walking uprightly such a matter with God, that it should be so rewarded? Is it not more pleasing to God to see us go stooping than walking upright, seeing stooping is the gait of humility, than which there is nothing to God more pleasing? It is no doubt a hard matter to stoop and go upright both at once, yet both must be done, and both indeed are done, are done at once by every one that is godly; but when I say

they are done both at once, I mean not of the body, I know two such postures in the body both at once are impossible ; but the soul can do it, the soul can stoop and go upright both at once ; for then doth the soul walk upright before God, when it stoops in humility before God and men.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 11.—This is an immense fountain ; the Lord fill all the buckets of our hearts at the spring, and give us capacious souls, as he hath a liberal hand. —*Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Why called Tabernacles ? To include (1) the holiest of all ; (2) The holy place ; (3) The court and precincts of the Tabernacle. "*Amiable*" is predicated of these. The courts amiable—the holy place more amiable—the holiest of all most amiable. II. Why called the Tabernacles of the Lord of hosts ? To denote (1) Its connection with the boundless universe ; (2) Its distinction from it. Present everywhere where God is peculiarly present here. III. Why called *amiable ?* (1) Because of the character in which God dwells here. Is condescension amiable ? Is love ? Is mercy ? Is grace ? These are displayed here. (2) Because of the purpose for which he resides here. To save sinners ; to comfort saints.

Verse 2.—I. The Object of Desire : (1) The house of the Lord ; (2) The Lord of the house ; the life of God in us and our life in him. II. The Occasion of the Desire. Exclusion from the Sanctuary. David says not, Oh how I long for my palace, my crown, my sceptre, my kingdom ; but, Oh how I long to return to the house of God ! III. The Strength of the Desire. (1) It was an inward longing, " my soul longeth," etc. ; (2) A painful longing, " yea, fainteth ; " (3) A prayerful longing, " my heart crieth out ; " (4) An entire longing, " my heart and my flesh," etc. ; Or, I. The value of God's house is known by attending it. II. It is better known by being afterwards banished from it. III. It is best known by being restored to it.

Verses 1, 2, 3.—The Titles for God in these three verses are worth dwelling upon. " Jehovah of Hosts ; " " the living God ; " " my King and my God."

Verse 3.—I. The Eloquence of Grief. David in his banishment envies the sparrows and the swallows that had built their nests by the house of God, more than Absalom who had usurped his palace and his throne. II. The Ingenuity of Prayer. Why should sparrows and swallows be nearer to thy altars than I am, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God ! " Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Verse 4.—I. The Privilege suggested—dwelling in the house of God. Some birds fly over the house of God—some occasionally alight upon it—others build their nests and train up their young there. This was the privilege which the Psalmist desired. II. The Fact asserted. " Blessed are they that dwell," etc., who make it the spiritual home of themselves and their children. III. The Reason given. " They will be still," etc. (1) They will have much for which to praise God ; (2) They will see much to praise in God.

Verse 5.—Man is blessed, I. When his strength is in God. Strength to believe, strength to obey, strength to suffer. II. When God's ways are in him. " In whose heart," etc. When the doctrines, precepts, and promises of God are deeply engraved upon the heart.

Verse 7.—I. Trusting God in trouble brings present comfort—" Who passing," etc. II. Present comfort ensures still larger supplies—" The rain also," etc.

Verse 7.—There is, I. Progression. " They go : " (1) The people of God cannot remain stationary ; (2) They must not recede ; (3) They should always be advancing. II. Invigoration. " From strength to strength." (1) From one ordinance to another ; (2) from one duty to another ; (3) from one grace to another ; (4) from one degree of grace to another. Add faith to faith, virtue to virtue, knowledge to knowledge," etc. III. Completion. " Every one of them," etc.

Verse 8.—I. Prayer is not confined to the Sanctuary. David, in his banishment, says, " Hear my prayer." II. Help is not confined to the sanctuary. The Lord of hosts is " here," as well as in his tabernacles. See verse 1. III. Grace is not confined

to the Sanctuary. Here, too, in the wilderness is the covenanting God, the God of Jacob.

Verse 9.—Observe, I. The Faith. Our shield is thine Anointed—Thine Anointed is our Shield. This is not David, because he says *our* Shield, but David's greater Son. A gleam of Gospel light through the thick clouds. II. The Prayer. "Behold, O God," etc. "Look," etc. Look upon him as our Representative, and look upon us in him. III. The Plea. (1) He has engaged to be our defence from thine anger; (2) he has been anointed to this office by thee.

Verse 10.—Here is, I. A comparison of places. "A day in thy courts," etc. How much more a day in heaven! What, then, must an eternity in heaven be! II. A comparison of Persons. "I would rather be a doorkeeper," etc. Better be the least in the Church than the greatest in the world. If "better reign in hell than serve in heaven" was Satan's first thought after he fell, it was the first thought only.

Verse 11.—I. What God is to his people. "A sun and shield." (1) The source of all good; (2) a defence from all evil. II. What he gives. (1) Grace here; (2) glory hereafter. III. What he withholds. All that is not good. If he withholds health or wealth, or his own smiles from us, it is because they are not good for us at that particular time.

Verse 12.—I. The one thing that makes man blessed. Trust in God. "Blessed," etc. (1) For all things; (2) at all times; (3) in all circumstances. II. The Blessing contained in that one thing. God himself becomes ours; (1) his mercy for our pardon; (2) his power for our protection; (3) his wisdom for our guidance; (4) his faithfulness for our preservation; (5) his all-sufficiency for our supply. III. The certainty of the blessing. (1) From David's own experience; (2) from his solemn appeal to God respecting it. "O Lord God of hosts," etc.

[*All the above are by Rev. George Rogers.*]

Verse 5.—The preciousness of intensity and enthusiasm in religious belief, worship, and life.

Verses 5, 6, 7.—The blessed people are described, 1. By their earnest desire and resolution to take this journey, though they dwelt far off from the tabernacle, ver. 5. 2. By their painful passage, yet some refreshments by the way, ver. 6. 3. By their constant progress, till they came to the place they aimed at, ver. 7.—*T. Manton.*

Verse 6.—As the valley of weeping symbolizes dejection, so a "well" symbolizes ever-flowing salvation and comfort (compare John iv. 14; also Isa. xii. 3).

Verse 6.—I. "*The valley of Baca.*" Of this valley we may observe, 1. It is much frequented. 2. Unpleasant to flesh and blood. 3. Very healthful. 4. Very safe. 5. Very profitable. II. The toilsome effort: "make it a well." 1. Comfort may be obtained in the deepest trouble. 2. Comfort must be obtained by exertion. 3. Comfort obtained by one is of use to others, as a well may be. III. The heavenly supply. "The rain also filleth the pools." All is from God; effort is of no avail without him.

Verse 8.—Pleas for answers to prayer in the titles here used. I. He is JEHOVAH, the living, all-wise, all-powerful, faithful, gracious, and immutable God. II. He is God of hosts, having abundant agencies under his control; he can send angels, restrain devils, actuate good men, overrule bad men, and govern all other agents. III. He is the God of Jacob, of chosen Jacob, as seen in Jacob's dream; God of Jacob in his banishment, in his wrestling (and so a God overcome by prayer), God pardoning Jacob's sins, God preserving Jacob and his seed after him.

Verse 9.—I. What god is to us. II. What we would have him look at. III. Where we would be: hidden behind the shield—seen in the person of Christ.

Verse 10.—I. Days in God's courts. Days of hearing, of repenting, of believing, of adoration, of communion, of revival, etc. II. Their preciousness. Better than a thousand days of victory, of pleasure, of money-making, of harvest, of discussion, of travelling amid beauties of nature. III. Reasons for this preciousness. They are more pleasurable, more profitable now, and more preparatory for the future and for heaven. The employment, the society, the enjoyment, the result, etc., are all better.

Verse 12.—The blessedness of the life of faith over that of carnal enjoyment, religious feeling, self-confidence, living upon marks and evidences, trusting in man, etc.

PSALM LXXXV.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, A Psalm for the Sons of Korah. *There is no need to repeat our observations upon a title which is of so frequent occurrence; the reader is referred to notes placed in the headings of preceding Psalms. Yet it may not be out of place to quote the forty-sixth verse of Nehemiah XII.—"In the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God."*

SUBJECT AND OCCASION.—*It is the prayer of a patriot for his afflicted country, in which he pleads the Lord's former mercies, and by faith foresees brighter days. We believe that David wrote it, but many question that assertion. Certain interpreters appear to grudge the Psalmist David the authorship of any of the Psalms, and refer the sacred songs by wholesale to the times of Hezekiah, Josiah, the Captivity, and the Maccabees. It is remarkable that, as a rule, the more sceptical a writer is, the more resolute is he to have done with David; while the purely evangelic annotators are for the most part content to leave the royal poet in the chair of authorship. The charms of a new theory also operate greatly upon writers who would have nothing at all to say if they did not invent a novel hypothesis, and twist the language of the Psalm in order to justify it. The present Psalm has of course been referred to the Captivity, the critics could not resist the temptation to do that, though, for our part, we see no need to do so: it is true a captivity is mentioned in the first verse, but that does not necessitate the nation's having been carried away into exile, since Job's captivity was turned, and yet he had never left his native land: moreover, the text speaks of the captivity of* Jacob *as brought back, but, had it referred to the Babylonian emigration, it would have spoken of Judah; for Jacob or Israel, as such, did not return. The first verse in speaking of "the land" proves that the author was not an exile. Our own belief is that David penned this national hymn when the land was oppressed by the Philistines, and in the spirit of prophecy he foretold the peaceful years of his own reign and the repose of the rule of Solomon, the Psalm having all along an inner sense of which Jesus and his salvation are the key. The presence of Jesus the Saviour reconciles earth and heaven, and secures to us the golden age, the balmy days of universal peace.*

DIVISIONS.—*In the first four verses the poet sings of the Lord's former mercies and begs him to remember his people; from* 5 *to* 7 *he pleads the cause of afflicted Israel; and then, having listened to the sacred oracle in verse* 8, *he publishes joyfully the tidings of future good,* 9—13.

EXPOSITION.

LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

1. "LORD, *thou hast been favourable unto thy land.*" The self-existent, all-sufficient JEHOVAH is addressed: by that name he revealed himself to Moses when his people were in bondage, by that name he is here pleaded with. It is wise to dwell upon that view of the divine character which arouses the sweetest memories of his love. Sweeter still is that dear name of "Our Father," with which Christians have learned to commence their prayers. The Psalmist speaks of Canaan as the Lord's land, for he chose it for his people, conveyed it to them by covenant, conquered it by his power, and dwelt in it in mercy; it was meet therefore that he should smile upon a land so peculiarly his own. It is most wise to plead the

Lord's union of interest with ourselves, to lash our little boat as it were close to his great barque, and experience a sacred community in the tossings of the storm. It is *our* land that is devastated, but O Jehovah, it is also *thy* land. The Psalmist dwells upon the Lord's favour to the chosen land, which he had shewed in a thousand ways. God's past doings are prophetic of what he will do: hence the encouraging argument—"Thou hast been favourable unto thy land," therefore deal graciously with it again. Many a time had foes been baffled, pestilence stayed, famine averted, and deliverance vouchsafed, because of the Lord's favour; that same favourable regard is therefore again invoked. With an immutable God this is powerful reasoning; it is because he changes not that we are not consumed, and know we never shall be if he has once been favourable to us. From this example of prayer let us learn how to order our cause before God.

It is clear that Israel was not in exile, or the prayer before us would not have referred to *the land* but to the nation.

"*Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.*" When down-trodden and oppressed through their sins, the Ever-merciful One had looked upon them, changed their sad condition, chased away the invaders, and given to his people rest: this he had done not once, nor twice, but times without number. Many a time have we also been brought into soul-captivity by our backslidings, but we have not been left therein; the God who brought Jacob back from Padan-aram to his father's house, has restored us to the enjoyment of holy fellowship;—will he not do the like again? Let us appeal to him with Jacob-like wrestlings, beseeching him to be favourable, or sovereignly gracious to us notwithstanding all our provocations of his love. Let declining churches remember their former history, and with holy confidence plead with the Lord to turn their captivity yet again.

2. "*Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people.*" Often and often had he done this, pausing to pardon even when his sword was bared to punish. Who is a pardoning God like thee, O Jehovah? Who is so slow to anger, so ready to forgive? Every believer in Jesus enjoys the blessing of pardoned sin, and he should regard this priceless boon as the pledge of all other needed mercies. He should plead it with God—"Lord hast thou pardoned me, and wilt thou let me perish for lack of grace, or fall into thine enemies' hands for want of help. Thou wilt not thus leave thy work unfinished." "*Thou hast covered all their sin.*" All of it, every spot, and wrinkle, the veil of love has covered all. Sin has been divinely put out of sight. Hiding it beneath the propitiatory, covering it with the sea of the atonement, blotting it out, making it to cease to be, the Lord has put it so completely away that even his omniscient eye sees it no more. What a miracle is this! To cover up the sun would be easy work compared with the covering up of sin. Not without a covering atonement is sin removed, but by means of the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, it is most effectually put away by one act, for ever. What a covering does his blood afford!

3. "*Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.*" Having removed the sin, the anger is removed also. How often did the longsuffering of God take away from Israel the punishments which had been justly laid upon them! How often also has the Lord's chastising hand been removed from us when our waywardness called for heavier strokes! "*Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.*" Even when judgments had been most severe, the Lord had in mercy stayed his hand. In mid volley he had restrained his thunder. When ready to destroy, he had averted his face from his purpose of judgment and allowed mercy to interpose. The book of Judges is full of illustrations of this, and the Psalmist does well to quote them while he intercedes. Is not our experience equally studded with instances in which judgment has been stayed and tenderness has ruled? What a difference between the fierce anger which is feared and deprecated here, and the speaking of peace which is foretold in verse 8. There are many changes in Christian experience, and therefore we must not despair when we are undergoing the drearier portion of the spiritual life, for soon, very soon, it may be transformed into gladness.

> "The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
> Can give us day for night,
> Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
> To rivers of delight."

4. "*Turn us, O God of our salvation.*" This was the main business. Could the erring tribes be rendered penitent all would be well. It is not that God needs

turning from his anger so much as that we need turning from our sin; here is the hinge of the whole matter. Our trials frequently arise out of our sins, they will not go till the sins go. We need to be turned from our sins, but only God can turn us: God the Saviour must put his hand to the work; it is indeed a main part of our salvation. Conversion is the dawn of salvation. To turn a heart to God is as difficult as to make the world revolve upon its axis. Yet when a man learns to pray for conversion there is hope for him, he who turns to prayer is beginning to turn from sin. It is a very blessed sight to see a whole people turn unto their God; may the Lord so send forth his converting grace on our land that we may live to see the people flocking to the loving worship of God as the doves to their cotes. "*And cause thine anger toward us to cease.*" Make an end of it. Let it no longer burn. When sinners cease to rebel, the Lord ceases to be angry with them; when they return to him he returns to them; yea, he is first in the reconciliation and turns them when otherwise they would never turn of themselves. May all those who are now enduring the hidings of Jehovah's face seek with deep earnestness to be turned anew unto the Lord, for so shall all their despondencies come to an end.

Thus the sweet singer asks for his nation priceless blessings, and quotes the best of arguments. Because the God of Israel has been so rich in favour in bygone years, therefore he is entreated to reform and restore his backsliding nation.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

5. "*Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?*" See how the Psalmist makes bold to plead. We are in time as yet and not in eternity, and does not time come to an end, and therefore thy wrath! Wilt thou be angry always as if it were eternity? Is there no boundary to thine indignation? Will thy wrath never have done? And if for ever angry, yet wilt thou be angry "*with us,*" thy favoured people, the seed of Abraham, thy friend? That our enemies should be always wroth is natural but wilt *thou*, our God, be always incensed against us? Every word is an argument. Men in distress never waste words. "*Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?*" Shall sons suffer for their fathers' faults, and punishment become an entailed inheritance? O merciful God, hast thou a mind to spin out thine anger, and make it as long as the ages? Cease thou, as thou hast ceased aforetime, and let grace reign as it has done in days of yore. When we are under spiritual desertion we may beg in the like manner that the days of tribulation may be shortened, lest our spirit should utterly fail beneath the trial.

6. "*Wilt thou not revive us again?*" Hope here grows almost confident. She feels sure that the Lord will return in all his power to save. We are dead or dying, faint and feeble, God alone can revive us, he has in other times refreshed his people, he is still the same, he will repeat his love. Will he not? Why should he not? We appeal to him—"Wilt thou not?" "*That thy people may rejoice in thee.*" Thou lovest to see thy children happy with that best of happiness which centres in thyself, therefore revive us, for revival will bring us the utmost joy. The words before us teach us that gratitude has an eye to the giver, even beyond the gift—"thy people may rejoice *in thee.*" Those who were revived would rejoice not only in the new life but in the Lord who was the author of it. Joy in the Lord is the ripest fruit of grace, all revivals and renewals lead up to it. By our possession of it we may estimate our spiritual condition, it is a sure gauge of inward prosperity. A genuine revival without joy in the Lord is as impossible as spring without flowers, or daydawn without light. If, either in our own souls or in the hearts of others, we see declension, it becomes us to be much in the use of this prayer, and if on the other hand we are enjoying visitations of the Spirit and bedewings of grace, let us abound in holy joy and make it our constant delight to joy in God.

7. "*Shew us thy mercy, O LORD.*" Reveal it to our poor half-blinded eyes. We cannot see it or believe it by reason of our long woes, but thou canst make it plain to us. Others have beheld it, Lord shew it to us. We have seen thine anger, Lord let us see thy mercy. Thy prophets have told us of it, but, O Lord, do thou thyself display it in this our hour of need. "*And grant us thy salvation.*" This includes deliverance from the sin as well as the chastisement, it reaches from the

depth of their misery to the height of divine love. God's salvation is perfect in kind, comprehensive in extent, and eminent in degree; grant us this, O Lord, and we have all.

8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace
unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.
9 Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell
in our land.
10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have
kissed *each other*.
11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down
from heaven.
12 Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is* good; and our land shall yield
her increase.
13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set *us* in the way of
his steps.

Having offered earnest intercession for the afflicted but penitent nation, the sacred poet in the true spirit of faith awaits a response from the sacred oracle. He pauses in joyful confidence, and then in ecstatic triumph he gives utterance to his hopes in the richest form of song.

8. *"I will hear what God the LORD will speak."* When we believe that God hears us, it is but natural that we should be eager to hear him. Only from him can come the word which can speak peace to troubled spirits; the voices of men are feeble in such a case, a plaister far too narrow for the sore; but God's voice is power, he speaks and it is done, and hence when we hear him our distress is ended. Happy is the suppliant who has grace to lie patiently at the Lord's door, and wait until his love shall act according to its old wont and chase all sorrow far away. *"For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints."* Even though for a while his voice is stern with merited rebuke, he will not always chide, the Great Father will reassume his natural tone of gentleness and pity. The speaking of peace is the peculiar prerogative of the Lord Jehovah, and deep, lasting, ay, eternal, is the peace he thus creates. Yet not to all does the divine word bring peace, but only to his own people, whom he means to make saints, and those whom he has already made so. *"But let them not turn again to folly."* For if they do so, his rod will fall upon them again, and their peace will be invaded. Those who would enjoy communion with God must be jealous of themselves, and avoid all that would grieve the Holy Spirit; not only the grosser sins, but even the follies of life must be guarded against by those who are favoured with the delights of conscious fellowship. We serve a jealous God, and must needs therefore be incessantly vigilant against evil. Backsliders should study this verse with the utmost care, it will console them and yet warn them, draw them back to their allegiance, and at the same time inspire them with a wholesome fear of going further astray. To turn again to folly is worse than being foolish for once; it argues wilfulness and obstinacy, and it involves the soul in sevenfold sin. There is no fool like the man who will be a fool cost him what it may.

9. *"Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him."* Faith knows that a saving God is always near at hand, but *only* (for such is the true rendering) to those who fear the Lord, and worship him with holy awe. In the gospel dispensation this truth is conspicuously illustrated. If to seeking sinners salvation is nigh, it is assuredly very nigh to those who have once enjoyed it, and have lost its present enjoyment by their folly; they have but to turn unto the Lord and they shall enjoy it again. We have not to go about by a long round of personal mortifications or spiritual preparations, we may come to the Lord, through Jesus Christ, just as we did at the first, and he will again receive us unto his loving embrace. Whether it be a nation under adversity, or a single individual under chastisement, the sweet truth before us is rich with encouragement to repentance, and renewed holiness.

"That glory may dwell in our land." The object of the return of grace will be a permanent establishment of a better state of things, so that gloriously devout worship shall be rendered to God continuously, and a glorious measure of prosperity shall be enjoyed in consequence. Israel was glorious whenever she was faithful—

her dishonour always followed her disloyalty; believers also live glorious lives when they walk obediently, and they only lose the true glory of their religion when they fall from their stedfastness.

In these two verses we have, beneath the veil of the letter, an intimation of the coming of THE WORD OF GOD to the nations in times of deep apostasy and trouble, when faithful hearts would be looking and longing for the promise which had so long tarried. By his coming, salvation is brought near, and glory, even the glory of the presence of the Lord, tabernacles among men. Of this the succeeding verses speak without obscurity.

10. "*Mercy and truth are met together.*" In answer to prayer, the exulting Psalmist sees the attributes of God confederating to bless the once afflicted nation. Mercy comes hand-in-hand with Truth to fulfil the faithful promise of their gracious God; the people recognise at once the grace and the veracity of Jehovah, he is to them neither a tyrant nor a deceiver. "*Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*" The Lord whose just severity inflicted the smart, now in pity sends peace to bind up the wound. The people being now made willing to forsake their sins, and to follow after righteousness, find peace granted to them at once. "The war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled;" for idolatry was forsaken, and Jehovah was adored.

This appears to be the immediate and primary meaning of these verses; but the inner sense is Christ Jesus, the reconciling Word. In him, the attributes of God unite in glad unanimity in the salvation of guilty men, they meet and embrace in such a manner as else were inconceivable either to our just fears or to our enlightened hopes. God is as true as if he had fulfilled every letter of his threatenings, as righteous as if he had never spoken peace to a sinner's conscience; his love in undiminished, splendour shines forth, but no other of his ever-blessed characteristics is eclipsed thereby. It is the custom of modern *thinkers* (?) to make sport of this representation of the result of our Lord's substitutionary atonement, but had they ever been themselves made to feel the weight of sin upon a spiritually awakened conscience, they would cease from their vain ridicule. Their doctrine of atonement has well been described by Dr. Duncan as the admission "that the Lord Jesus Christ did something or other, which somehow or other, was in some way or other connected with man's salvation." This is their substitute for substitution. Our facts are infinitely superior to their dreams, and yet they sneer. It is but natural that natural men should do so. We cannot expect animals to set much store by the discoveries of science, neither can we hope to see unspiritual men rightly estimate the solution of spiritual problems—they are far above and out of their sight. Meanwhile it remains for those who rejoice in the great reconciliation to continue both to wonder and adore.

11. "*Truth shall spring out of the earth.*" Promises which lie unfulfilled, like buried seeds, shall spring up and yield harvests of joy; and men renewed by grace shall learn to be true to one another and their God, and abhor the falsehood which they loved before. "*And righteousness shall look down from heaven,*" as if it threw up the windows and leaned out to gaze upon a penitent people, whom it could not have looked upon before without an indignation which would have been fatal to them. This is a delicious scene. Earth yielding flowers of truth, and heaven shining with stars of holiness; the spheres echoing to each other, or being mirrors of each other's beauties. "Earth carpeted with truth and canopied with righteousness," shall be a nether heaven. When God looks down in grace, man sends his heart upward in obedience.

The person of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ explains this verse most sweetly. In Him truth is found in our humanity, and his deity brings divine righteousness among us. His Spirit's work even now creates a hallowed harmony between his church below, and the sovereign righteousness above; and in the latter day, earth shall be universally adorned with every precious virtue, and heaven shall hold intimate intercourse with it. There is a world of meaning in these verses, only needing meditation to draw it out. Reader, "the well is deep," but if thou hast the Spirit, it cannot be said, that "thou hast nothing to draw with."

12. "*Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good.*" Being himself pure goodness, he will readily return from his wrath, and deal out good things to his repenting people. Our evil brings evil upon us, but when we are brought back to follow that which is good, the Lord abundantly enriches us with good things. Material good will always be bestowed where it can be enjoyed in consistency with spiritual good.

"And our land shall yield her increase." The curse of barrenness will fly with the curse of sin. When the people yielded what was due to God, the soil would recompense their husbandry. See at this day what sin has done for Palestine, making her gardens a wilderness; her wastes are the scars of her iniquities: nothing but repentance and divine forgiveness will reclaim her desolations. The whole world also shall be bright with the same blessing in the days yet to come,—

> "Freed from the curse, the grateful garden gives
> Its fruits in goodly revenue. Nor frost,
> Nor blight, nor mildew fall, nor cankerworm,
> Nor caterpillar, mar one ripening hope.
> The clouds drop fatness. The very elements
> Are subject to the prayerful will of those
> Whose pleasure is in unison with God's."

13. *"Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps."* God's march of right will leave a track wherein his people will joyfully follow. He who smote in justice will also bless in justice, and in both will make his righteousness manifest, so as to affect the hearts and lives of all his people. Such are the blessings of our Lord's first advent, and such shall be yet more conspicuously the result of his second coming. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This beautiful Psalm, like some others, has come down to us without name or date; the production of some unknown poetic genius, touched, purified, and exalted by the fire of celestial inspiration; a precious relic of that golden age, when the Hebrew music was instinct with a spirit such as never breathed on Greece or Rome. It is interesting to reflect on the anonymous origin of some of the Psalms: to remember how largely the church of God is indebted to some nameless worthies who wrote for us hymns and spiritual songs, full of richer strains than were ever poured forth by the most illustrious of pagan name. These holy men are passed away, they have left no record of their history; but they have bequeathed legacies of rich, varied, and inspired sentiments, which will render the church debtors to them to the end of time.—*John Stoughton.* 1852.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm may be thus divided: verses 1, 2, 3, express the thanks of the people for their return from captivity; verses 4, 5, 6, their prayer for their own *reformation;* in verse 7, they pray for the coming of the *Messiah;* verse 8 contains the *words* of the *High-priest,* with *God's gracious answer;* which answer is followed by the grateful acclamations *of the people,* to the end of the Psalm.

To prepare for this interpretation, let us observe, how very strangely the words are expressed at present—*"I will hear what God the Lord will say:* FOR *he shall speak peace unto his people."* But surely, God could not be consulted, *because* it was unnecessary; nor could the High-priest possibly say, that he would ask of God, *because* he knew what God would answer; especially, as we have now *a question to God* proposed, and yet no *answer from God* given at all. Under these difficulties we are happily relieved; since it appears, on satisfactory authorities, that, instead of the particle rendered *"for,"* the word here originally signified *in* or *by me,* which slight variation removes the obscurity, and restores that very light which has long been wanted.

The *people* having prayed for the speedy arrival of their great *salvation;* the *High-priest* says, (as it should be here expressed), *"I will hear what the Almighty sayeth.—Jehovah* BY ME sayeth, PEACE *unto his people, even unto his saints: but let them not turn again to folly."* Whereupon, as the Jews understood *peace* to comprehend *every* blessing, and of course *their greatest* blessing, they at once acknowledged the *certainty* of this salvation, the *glory* of their land—they proclaim it as *nigh* at hand—and then, in rapture truly prophetical, they see this glory as actually arrived, as already *dwelling* in Judea—they behold God in fulfilling most strictly what he had promised most graciously—they see therefore the *mercy* of God, and the *truth*

of God met together—they see that scheme perfected, in which the *righteousness* (*i.e.*, the justice) of God harmonizes with the *peace* (*i.e.* the happiness) of man ; so that righteousness and peace *salute* each other with the tenderest affection. In short, they see TRUTH *flourishing out of the earth ; i.e.* they see *him*, who is *the way, the truth*, and *the life*, born here *on earth ;* and they even see the *righteousness*, or justice of God, looking down from *heaven*, as being well pleased.

Verse the 12th is at present translated so unhappily, that it is quite despoiled of all its genuine glory. For, could the prophet, after all the rapturous things said before, coldly say here, that God *would give what was good*—and that *Judea* should have *a plentiful harvest?* No ; consistency and good sense forbid it ; and truth confirms their protest against it. The words here express the reasons of all the preceding energies, and properly signify—*Yea, Jehovah granteth* THE BLESSING ; *and our land granteth* HER OFFSPRING. And what can be *the blessing*—what, amidst these sublime images, can be *Judea's offspring*—but HE, and HE only, who was *the blessing of all lands* in general, and *the glory of Judea* in particular ? And what says the verse following ? *"Righteousness goeth before* HIM—certainly, not before *the fruits of the earth*—but certainly before that illustrious person, even the MESSIAH " —*"Righteousness goeth before* HIM, *and directeth his goings in the way."*

As to the word rendered *the blessing*, and applied to the redemption ; the same word is so used by Jeremiah, thus : " Behold, the days come, that I will perform *that good thing* (the blessing) which I have promised . . . at that time will I cause to grow up unto David the Branch of righteousness " (ch. xxxiii. 14, 15). And as to the Messiah being here described, partly as springing up from the earth ; so says Isaiah : " In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious ; and *the fruits of the earth* shall be excellent and comely." But this evangelical prophet, in another place, has the very same complication of images with that found in the Psalm before us. For Isaiah also has *the heavens*, with their *righteousness ;* and *the earth*, with *its salvation :* " Drop down, ye *heavens* from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness ; let *the earth* open, and let *them* bring forth salvation." But, " let *them* bring forth "—who, or what can be here meant by *them*, but *the heavens* and the *earth* ? It is heaven and earth which are here represented as *bringing forth*, and introducing the Saviour of the world. For what else can be here meant as *brought forth* by *them ?* What, but HE alone ; who, deriving his *divine* nature from heaven, and his *human* from the earth, was (what no other being ever was) both GOD and MAN.—*Benjamin Kennicott.*

Verse 1.—*"Thy land."* *The land* of Jehovah the poet calls it, in order to point out the close relation of God to it, and to the people thereof, and so confirm the *favour* of God towards it. For this land God has chosen as the dwelling-place of his people, true religion, and his own presence ; this also in his own time He himself had trodden in the person of his Son, and in it He first gathered and founded his Church.—*Venema.*

Verse 1.—*"The captivity of Jacob."* All true believers are the sons of Jacob, and the seed of Abraham ; as well the believing Gentiles, who are the sons of Jacob according to the Spirit, as the believing Jews the sons of Jacob according to the flesh ; and the Church of these true Jacobins and Israelites is the land of the Lord, and the *captivity* here mentioned is bondage under sin. In this captivity Satan is the gaoler, the flesh is our prison, ungodly lusts are the manacles, a bad conscience the tormentor, all of them against us ; only Christ is *Emmanuel*, God with us ; he turneth away the captivity of Jacob in forgiving all his offences, and in covering all his sins.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 2.—*"Thou hast forgiven the iniquity."* נָשָׂאתָ, *nasatha avon, Thou hast borne*, or *carried away, the iniquity.* An allusion to the ceremony of the scape-goat.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—*"Thou hast covered all their sin."* When God is said *to cover sin*, he does so not as one would cover a sore with a plaster, thereby merely hiding it only ; but he covers it with a plaster that effectually cures and removes it altogether.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 2.—*"Selah."* Rabbi Kimchi regards it as a sign to elevate the voice. The authors of the Septuagint translation appear to have regarded it as a musical or rythmical note. Herder regarded it as indicating a change of note ; Mathewson as a musical note, equivalent, perhaps, to the word *repeat.* According to Luther

and others, it means *silence*. Gesenius explains it to mean, "Let the instruments play and the singers stop." Wocher regards it as equivalent to *sursum corda*—up, my soul! Sommer, after examining all the seventy-four passages in which the word occurs recognises in every case "an actual appeal or summons to Jehovah." They are calls for aid and prayers to be heard, expressed either with entire directness, or if not in the imperative, "Hear, Jehovah!" or Awake, Jehovah! and the like, still earnest addresses to God that he would remember and hear, etc. The word itself he regards as indicating a blast of the trumpets by the priests. Selah, itself, he thinks an abridged expression, used for Higgaion Selah—Higgaion indicating the sound of the stringed instruments, and Selah a vigorous blast of trumpets.—*From the "Bibliotheca Sacra," quoted by Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.*" Or *gathered* it; sin occasions wrath, and the people of God are as deserving of it as others; but the Lord has gathered it up, and poured it forth upon his Son, and their Surety; hence nothing of this kind shall ever fall upon them, either here or hereafter; and it is taken away from them, so as to have no sense, apprehension, or conscience of it, which before the law had wrought in them, when pardon is applied unto them, which is what is here meant.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast turned thyself.*" Here are six *hasts* drawing in the next *turn*, verse 4. God hath, and therefore God will, is a strong medium of hope, if not a demonstration of Scripture-logic. See 2 Cor. i. 10.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Cause thine anger toward us to cease.*" The phrase, *break thine indignation towards us*, (that is, wherewith thou art angry with us, in order that it may cease of itself,) comprehends the abolition of the signs and the effects of anger. The word פּרר, for this is the root to be taken, properly denotes a *breaking* by means of *notches* and *gaps*, as when the *edge* of anything is broken by many notches and gaps, and it is made utterly worn and useless. *Indignation*, so long as it is vigorous and spreads its effects, has an *edge*, which smites and pierces; but it is considered blunt and broken, when it ceases to exert itself, and produces evils no longer; this they affirm of the *anger* of God.—*Venema.*

Verse 6.—"*Wilt thou not revive us again?*" The Hebrew is, *Wilt thou not return and revive us?* We translate the verb *return* by the adverb *again*: "*Wilt thou not revive us again?*" Thou hast given us many *revives*: when we were as *dead men*, and like carcases rotting in the grave, thou didst revive us, wilt thou not revive us once more, and act over those powerfully merciful works and strong salvations once more, or again?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*That thy people may rejoice in thee.*" Bernard in his 15th Sermon on Canticles says, Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, joy in the heart. Is any among us sad? Let Jesus enter the heart, and thence spring to the countenance, and behold, before the rising brightness of his name, every cloud is scattered, serenity returns. Origen in his 10th Hom. on Genesis, has the remark, Abraham rejoiced not in present things, neither in the riches of the words, nor deeds of time. But do you wish to hear, whence he drew his joy? Listen to the Lord speaking to the Jews, John viii. 56: "Your father, Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad:" hope heaped up his joys.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 6.—"*That thy people may rejoice in thee.*" When God changeth the cheer of his people, their joy should not be in the gift, but in the Giver.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 6.—It is the most natural thing, the most delightful thing, for the people of God to rejoice in God. God is the fountain of joy, and whom should he fill with it but his people? And whom should his people breathe it into again but him? This posture God delights to have them in; this posture they delight to be in; but this cannot be in that estate of death and captivity wherein God for a long season shutteth them up. "The living, the living shall praise thee," but alas, the dead cannot.—*John Pennington*, 1656.

Verse 6.—Truly sin kills. Men are dead in trespasses and sins, dead in law, dead in their affections, dead in a loss of comfortable communion with God. Probably the greatest practical heresy of each age is a low idea of our undone condition under the guilt and dominion of sin. While this prevails we shall be slow to cry for *reviving* or *quickening*. What sinners and churches need is quickening by the Holy Ghost.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verses 6—7.—"*Wilt thou not revive us,*" by the first and spiritual resurrection, and so thy people, quickened from a life of sin to a life of grace, will rejoice in thee, not in themselves, presuming nothing on their own power. And in order that these things may be fulfilled in us, "*Shew us, O Lord, thy mercy,*" that is, Christ, through whom thou hast pitied the human race, shew him to us after this exile that we may see him face to face.—*Richardus Hampolus.*

Verse 7.—"*Thy mercy.*" It is not merely of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, but all is mercy, from first to last,—mercy that met us by the way,—mercy that looked upon us in our misery,—mercy that washed us from our sins in his own blood,—mercy that covered our nakedness and clad us in his own robe of righteousness,—mercy that led and guided us by the way,—and mercy that will never leave nor forsake us till mercy has wrought its perfect work in the eternal salvation of our souls through Jesus Christ.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 8.—"*I will hear,*" etc. The true attitude for a sinner to take in the presence of divine revelation, is that of a *listener.* To enter the place of a *doer* before you have occupied that of a *listener,* is to reverse God's order, and throw everything into confusion. Adam tried this plan, and found it a failure. He tried "works." He "sewed fig leaves together," but it was no use. He could not even satisfy his own conscience, or remove his guilty fear. He had to listen to the voice of God—to hearken to divine revelation.—"*Things New and Old.*" 1859.

Verse 8.—"*I will hear,*" etc. The eye as a mere organ of sense must give place to the ear. Therefore it is wittily observed, that our Saviour commanding the abscession of the offending hand, foot, and eye, (Mark ix. 43—47), yet never spake of the ear. If thy hand, thy foot, or thine eye, cause thee to offend, deprive thyself of them; but part not with thine ear, for that is an organ to derive unto thy soul's salvation. As Christ says there, a man may enter into heaven, lamed in his feet, as Mephibosheth, blind in his sight, as Barzillai, maimed in his hand, as the dry-handed man in the gospel; but if there be not an ear to hear of the way, there will be no foot to enter into heaven. If God be not first in the ear, he is neither sanctifiedly in the mouth, nor comfortably in the heart. The Jews had eyes to see Christ's miracles, but because they had no ears to hear his wisdom, therefore they had no feet to enter into his kingdom. The way into the house is by the door, not by the window: the eye is but the window of the heart, the ear is the door. Now Christ stands knocking at the door, not at the window. Rev. iii. 20. And he will not come in at the window, but at the door: "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." John x. 2. He comes now in by his oracles, not by his miracles. "To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice," ver. 3. The way to open and let him in is by the door; to hear his voice. There was a man in the gospel blind and deaf: blind eyes is ill; but deaf ears, worse. It is bad to have the eyes seeled,* but worse to have the ears sealed up. Open your ears therefore to this heavenly voice. Bernard hath this description of a good ear: Which willingly hears what is taught, wisely understands what it heareth, and obediently practises what it understandeth. O give me such an ear, and I will hang on it jewels of gold, ornaments of praise.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 8.—"*I will hear,*" etc. My text carries in it a poetical allusion to the consulting of the cloud of glory, which was between the cherubims, and to the receiving answer from it, upon all critical occasions. David turned his thoughts from all the other views he might have, to this, "*I will hear what God the Lord will speak*"; that so he might depend wholly on the assurances that he should receive of God's favour, upon the repentance and prayers of the people; and in consideration of God's covenant with them, he knew the answer would be "*peace;*" which being the form of salutation in those ages, among friends, imported an entire reconciliation. So that by *speaking peace* is to be understood an assurance of God's love and favour "*to his people, and to his saints:*" that is, to the people that was *sanctified,* and dedicated to the service of God by so many federal rites.—*Gilbert Burnet,* 1643—1714-5.

Verse 8.—"*I will hear what God the Lord will speak.*" Carnal men speak peace to themselves on account of some supposed goodness in themselves. And unsound professors steal peace from God's promises, such as Isa. lv. 7; Hosea xiv. 4. But

* *Seel,* to close up: a term in falconry.

an upright heart will not be satisfied without hearing God speak peace to his heart by his Spirit. And for this he will pray, and wait, and hearken, and when God speaks peace, there comes such sweetness with it, and such discovery of his love, as lays a powerful influence on the soul not to turn again to folly. This peace is an humbling, melting peace, which brings humiliation to the soul as well as joy; but this never happens when men speak peace to themselves.—*John Berridge*, 1716—1793.

Verse 8.—"*I will hear what God the* LORD *will speak*," etc. His prayer being finished, and he having spoke, he now stands and listens, as you use to do when you expect an echo, what echo he should have, what answer would be returned from heaven, whether his prayer had already come: "*I will hear what the Lord will speak;*" or, as some read it, "*I will hear what the Lord doth speak:*" for sometimes there is a present echo, a speedy answer returned to a man's heart, even ere the prayer is half finished. "*He will speak peace.*" When the child of God wants peace, he can have no peace till God speak it. . . . . Let God's people be in never so great distress, yet it is an easy thing for God to give peace to them. Mark the expression here used: it is but *speaking* peace, that is, it is as easy for him to give peace as it is for you to speak a word; it is no more to him. Then our comfort is, that as he only must do it, so he easily can do it, even with a word.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—"*He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints*," etc. The voice of the Lord is comfortable, and his words are sweet to those that fear him. It is a plain sign that all is not well with us, when the voice of God doth cast us into fear, when we are afraid to hear the word preached, when just reproofs of our sins are unwelcome to us, and anger us, and make us think the less of our minister that chideth and threateneth us.

A good life and a well-governed conversation doth not fear the voice of God; the word of God is the light which God hath set up in his church, to guide her feet in the ways of peace. They that do evil hate the light, and will not come near it, lest their works should be reproved; the children of the light resort to it, and call upon God: "Search my reins and my heart, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me."—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 8.—"*To his people and to his saints.*" He will give *prosperity* to *the people* in general; and to *his saints*—his followers, in particular.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—"*To his saints.*" It is remarkable that we have the suffrage of a celebrated Jewish writer, Kimchi, to understand the word rendered "*saints*" in this place, of the godly among the Gentiles, as distinguished from the Lord's people, the Jews.—*John Fry.*

Verse 8.—"*He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not return again to folly.*" This imports that if his *saints turn again to folly*, which by woeful experience we find too frequently done, God may *change his voice*, and turn his peace, formerly spoken, into a warlike defiance to their conscience.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 8.—"*But let them not turn again to folly.*" If God did not in the end speak peace, they would indeed return to folly. For his end of speaking peace is, that they might not return to folly: Ps. cxxv. 3, "The rod of the wicked shall not always be upon the righteous, lest they put forth their hand to iniquity;" therefore, at the last verse, "peace shall be upon Israel" . . . . .

As it is a rule in physic still to maintain nature, and therefore when that shall be in hazard to be destroyed, they leave giving purging physic, and give cordials; so doth God with his people: though with purging physic he often brings their spirits very weak and low, yet he will uphold and maintain their spirits, so as they shall not fail and be extinguished, but then he will give cordials to raise them up again.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—It is hard to know, in spiritual exercises, whether it be more difficult to attain some good frame, or to keep and maintain it when it is attained; whether more seriousness is required for making peace with God, or for keeping of it when made; whether more diligence should be in preparing for a communion, or more watchfulness after it: sure both are required; and it was our blessed Lord's word, Matt. xxvi. 41, after the first celebration of his supper, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Here that saying holds eminently: "*Non minor est virtus, quam quærere, parta tueri:* no less virtue and valour is requisite to maintain, than to make a purchase or conquest. In the words there are, 1. A great mercy promised from the Lord to his people, viz., "*He will speak peace to them.*" 2. A

special caveat and advertisement given them, pointing at their hazard: *"But let them not turn again to folly:"* that is, let not his people and saints to whom he hath spoken peace, return to sin; let them beware of bourding* and dallying with God's mercy, and of turning his grace into wantonness, of cooling in their affections to him, of slipping back to their old way, and of embracing their old lovers and idols; for that is folly, even in folio, to speak so.—*James Durham, in "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ."*

Verse 9.—*"That glory may dwell in our land."* What land the true church of Christ, the saints and they that fear God, do dwell in; there doth *glory* dwell: there God, there Christ by his Spirit bringing righteousness and salvation to such a society, is glorious; and for his presence the people are glorious; and the land glorious above all other lands whatsoever.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—*"Mercy and truth; righteousness and peace."* Note, four virtues stand out prominently in the incarnation; namely, mercy, truth, righteousness and peace, or love producing peace. These were like four steps of the throne of Christ, or four princes standing near and accompanying Him. 1. On the right hand, is mercy presenting the olive. 2. On the left, truth holding the white lily. 3. Before Him walks justice bearing the balance. 4. Peace follows Him, having a *cornucopiæ* full of flowers, and scattering the flowers around.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 10.—*"Mercy and truth; righteousness and peace."* These four divine attributes parted at the fall of Adam, and met again at the birth of Christ. Mercy was ever inclined to save man, and Peace could *not* be his enemy; but Truth exacted the performance of God's threat,—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and Righteousness could not but give to every one his due, Jehovah must be true in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. Now, there is no religion upon earth, except the Christian, which can satisfy the demands of all these claimants, and restore an union between them; which can show how God's word can be true, and his work just, and the sinner, notwithstanding, find mercy, and obtain peace.—*George Horne.*

Verse 10.—This is a remarkable text, and much has been said on it; but there is a beauty in it which, I think, has not been noticed. *Mercy* and *peace* are on one side; *truth* and *righteousness* on the other. *Truth* requires *righteousness; mercy* calls for *peace.* They meet together on the way; one going to make inquisition for sin, the other to plead for reconciliation. Having met, their differences on certain considerations, not here particularly mentioned, are adjusted; and their mutual claims are blended together in one common interest; on which *peace* and *righteousness* immediately embrace. Thus, *righteousness* is given to *truth*, and *peace* is given to *mercy.* Now, *where* did these meet? In Christ Jesus. *When* were they reconciled? When he poured out his life on Calvary.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 10.—*"Mercy and truth are met together."* 1. They meet together *in God;* "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth," Ps. xxv. 9; *mercy* in making, and *truth* in keeping his promise to his people. Paul saith, Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the *truth* of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his *mercy.* Rom. xv. 8. God promised his Son unto the Jews; and he gave him in the fulness of time to be both a light to the Gentiles, and glory of his people Israel; herein shewing his *mercy* more principally to the Gentiles, his *truth* unto the Jews, and so his mercy and truth embraced each other, so that he made both people but one, to wit, one flock, in one sheepfold, under one shepherd.

If we take *truth and righteousness* for God's justice in punishing, *mercy and peace* for his graciousness in pardoning; yet they meet together in all his ways, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. For as the mercies of the wicked are full of cruelty, so the very judgments of God upon his servants are full of mercy. In his wrath he remembers pity; punishing a little, that he may pardon a great deal; destroying the flesh only, to save the spirit, 1 Cor. v. 5. *Misericordiæ est aliquando subtrahere misericordiam.* It was good for Joseph that he was a captive; good for Naaman that he was a leper; good for Bartimæus that he was blind, and for David that he was in trouble. Bradford thanked God more of his prison, than of any parlour or pleasure. All things are for the best unto the faithful, and so

* *Bourding*=jesting.

God's *"mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other,"* his mercy being just, and his justice being merciful; but God in giving his only Son into the world, more abundantly shewed his *mercy and justice kissing one another.* His *justice* that every soul that sins should die; but his *mercy* desires not the death of a sinner. Ezekiel xxxiii. 11 . . . . . .

2. Righteousness and peace meet together *in man;* so Augustine expounds it: an unjust man is full of quarrels, like Ishmael, "every man's hand is against him, and his hand against every man"; but he who is righteous, and giveth every man his due, shall have peace, so much as is possible with all men, especially with his own self and soul. Righteousness and peace are so near, so dear, that thou canst not have the one without the other.

3. Righteousness and peace meet *in Christ,* God's man; for by these two, some divines understand the Old Testament and the New. The Law doth exact *justice,* requiring of a malefactor "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot;" but the Gospel is full of *mercy* and *peace,* saying unto the sinner, who truly repenteth him of his sins, and unfeignedly believes the word of promise, "Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee;" "Daughter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole;" "Go thy way, thy belief hath saved thee;" "Behold, thou art now made whole, sin no more." These two testaments meet together in Christ, as in their proper centre, they *"kissed each other"* on this [Christmas] day, because the gospel performed what the law promised.—*John Boys.*

Verse 10.—When our Lord spake that parable of the prodigal son, and represented the Father as seeing his child afar off in his misery, and how he had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, one cannot but feel what a touching and tender illustration he has given of this most exquisite passage of his own word: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verses 10, 11.—Mercy and Peace, if they had met, or Truth and Righteousness, either of the two, it had not been strange. But for these that seem to be in opposition to do it, that makes this meeting marvellous in our eyes.

Will you stay a little and take a view of the parties? Four they are. These four, 1. Mercy, and 2. Truth, 3. Righteousness, and 4. Peace. Which quaternion at the first sight divides itself into two and two. Mercy and Peace, they two pair well; they be *collectaneæ,* as Bernard saith of them in one place, 'bed-fellows,' sleep together; *collactaneæ,* as in another place, 'sucked one milk, one breast' both. And as these two, so the other two, Truth and Righteousness seem to be of one complexion and disposition, and commonly take part together. Of these Mercy seems to favour us; and Peace no enemy to us or to any (seeing we must speak of them as of persons); mild and gentle persons both. For Righteousness I know not well what to say: *gestat gladium,* (bears the sword), and I fear *non frustra* (not in vain). Nor of Truth, who is *vera* and *severa,* 'severe' too otherwhile. These I doubt are not like affected. The reason of my doubt. One of them, Righteousness, it is told here for great news, that she but "looked down hitherwards from heaven." Before then she would not have done that. A great sign it is of heart-burning, when one will not do so much as look at another—not endure his sight. We cannot promise ourselves much of her. No, nor of Truth. One was so bold in a place to say, *omnis homo mendax* (Rom. iii. 4), and feared no challenge for it. By that it seems all stands not well with her neither. So then two for us, two against us.

For their order. Mercy is first, and Peace last. With both ends we shall do well enough. God sends us to do but so with the midst! Yet this is not amiss that they which favour us less are in the midst; hemmed in on both sides, closed about with those that wish us well; and they between us and them. On the one side, Mercy before; on the other, Peace behind another; that in this double meeting Mercy sorts not herself, goes not to Righteousness; nor Righteousness to her, but to Peace. A kind of cross meeting, as it were, there is—the better hope of accord. Mercy and Righteousness have no symbolizing quality at all, no hope of them; but Truth with Mercy hath. There is truth as well in the promise of Mercy as in the threat of justice.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 11.—*"Truth shall spring."* The literal sense is, that the promises which for a long time are not fulfilled, and seem like seeds or roots hidden and concealed under ground, when they shall be fulfilled, shall be considered to spring up, to grow, etc.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 11.—"*Spring.*" The Metaphor is taken from flowers and trees. In the Greek the expression is ἀνέτειλε, that is, *has sprung* like the morning, for ἀνατέλλω and ἀνατολή are properly said of the rising of the sun and moon.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 11.—"*Shall look down.*" This *looking down*, נִשְׁקָף rendered generally παρακύπτω in the Greek, implies such a look as in 1 Pet. i. 12, angels give into the things of salvation, and such a look as the disciples gave into the sepulchre. It is really the *Righteous One* who is resting over them in complacent love, not as in Psa. xiv. 2, and liii. 2, but fulfilling Ps. cii. 19, 20.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 12.—It has sometimes been objected that the Christian doctrine of a Millennium cannot be true, for the earth could not support the teeming millions that would naturally be found upon it, if wars and vices should cease to waste its population. But omitting other and pertinent answers that have been given, we find one here that covers the whole ground, *the earth shall yield her increase.* Now and then the season is unusually propitious, and we have a specimen of what God can do when he chooses. He can without any miracle make it many times more fruitful than it has ever been.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 13.—"*Righteousness shall go before him,*" etc. The meaning of this difficult verse may probably be as follows :—Righteousness shall go before Him (Jehovah), and shall make his footsteps a pathway for his servants to walk in.—*Ernest Hawkins.*

Verse 13.—"*Shall set us in the way of his steps.*" It is reported in the Bohemian History, that St. Wenceslaus, their king, one winter night going to his devotions, in a remote church, barefooted in the snow and sharpness of unequal and pointed ice, his servant Podavivus who waited upon his master's piety, and endeavoured to imitate his affections, began to faint through the violence of the snow and cold ; till the king commanded him to follow him, and set his feet in the same footsteps, which his feet should mark for him : the servant did so, and either fancied a cure, or found one ; for he followed his prince, helped forward with shame and zeal to his imitation, and by the forming footsteps for him in the snow. In the same manner does the blessed Jesus ; for, since our way is troublesome, obscure, full of objection and danger, apt to be mistaken, and to affright our industry, he commands us to mark his footsteps, to tread where his feet have stood, and not only invites us forward by the argument of his example, but he hath trodden down much of the difficulty, and made the way easier and fit for our feet. For he knows our infirmities, and himself hath felt their experience in all things but in the neighbourhood of sin ; and therefore he hath proportioned a way and a path to our strength and capacities, and, like Jacob, hath marched softly and in evenness with the children and the cattle, to entertain us by the comforts of his company, and the influence of a perpetual guide.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—The sinner who feels his need of salvation, is *set—in the way of his steps ;* as Bartimæus sat by the way-side begging, by which way Jesus walked ; and when he came where he was, heard his prayer, and restored him his sight.—*Adam Clarke.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—There is, I. Captivity. 1. Of the people of God. 2. Although they are the people of God. 3. Because they are the people of God. " You only have I known," etc. II. Restoration from Captivity : " Thou hast brought back," etc. 1. The fact. 2. The Author : " Thou : by thine own power ; in thine own manner ; at thine own time. III. The cause of the Restoration ; the favour of God : " Thou hast been favourable." 1. On account of favour past. " Thou hast." 2. On account of favour in reserve.

Verse 2.—I. The subjects of forgiveness : " Thy people." 1. By choice. 2. By redemption. 3 By effectual calling. II. The time of forgiveness : " Thou hast forgiven," etc. III. The method of forgiveness. 1. Forgiven. Heb. borne, same word as in Lev. xvi. 22 : " The goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities." 2. Covered ; as the mercy seat covered the law that had been broken. IV. The extent of forgiveness : "*all* their sin."

Verse 3.—I. The language of penitence. It is implied here that the wrath was, 1. Great: 2. Just: "*thy* wrath." II. The language of faith. 1. In the grace of pardon: "Thou hast turned away wrath." We could not, by anything we could do or suffer. 2. In the method of pardon: "Turned away." Turned it from us to our Surety. III. The language of praise: "Thou hast—thou hast."

Verse 4.—I. In what salvation consists. 1. In the removal of God's enmity from us. 2. In the removal of our enmity to him. II. By whom it is accomplished. By the God of salvation. 1. He causes his anger toward us to cease, and 2. Our anger toward him. III. How is it obtained? By prayer: "Turn us," etc.

Verse 6.—I. Revivals imply decline. 1. That there is grace to be revived. 2. That this grace has declined. II. Revivals are from God: "Wilt not thou," etc.: they cannot be got up by men. III. Revivals are frequently needed: "Wilt not thou revive us *again*." IV. Revivals are in answer to prayer: "Wilt thou not," etc. V. Revivals are occasions for great joy. 1. *To* the saints. 2. *In* God.

Verse 7.—I. Salvation is God's work: "Thy salvation." 1. The plan is his. 2. The provision is his. 3. The condition is his. 4. The application is his. 5. The consummation is his. II. Salvation is God's gift. 1. Of his mercy: "Show us thy mercy." 2. Of his grace: "Grant us," etc. III. Salvation is God's answer to prayer. 1. It is the first object of prayer. 2. It includes every other.

Verse 8.—I. We should look for an answer to prayer. Having spoken to God, we should hear what he has to say to us in reply. 1. In his word. 2. In his providence. 3. By his Spirit in our own souls. II. We should look for an answer of peace: "He will speak peace." III. We should avoid whatever might deprive us of that peace: "But let them not turn," etc.

Verse 10.—I. The attributes displayed in man's salvation. 1. Mercy in the promise. 2. Truth in its fulfilment. 3. Righteousness in the manner of its fulfilment. 4. Peace in its results. II. These attributes harmonized in man's salvation. 1. How? "Met together—kissed each other." 2. Why? Each on its own account. All on each others' account. 3. Where? Met and kissed, (1.) In the covenant. (2.) At the incarnation. (3.) At the cross. (4.) At the conversion of every sinner. (5.) At the completion of the saints in heaven.

Verse 12.—I. All spiritual good is from God: "The Lord will give," etc. 1. Is repentance a good thing? The Lord will give repentance. 2. Is pardon? "The Lord," etc. 3. Is faith? 4. Is justification? 5. Is regeneration? 6. Is growth in grace? 7. Is preservation unto the end? 8. Is eternal glory? "The Lord will give," etc. II. All temporal good is from God. "Our land," etc. 1. In a lawful manner *our* land. 2. In the use of appointed means: "Shall yield her increase," etc. 3. In dependance upon the divine blessing. "Who giveth fruitful seasons," etc. Spiritual good is not less given in the use of appointed means.

Verse 13.—I. The righteousness by which we are justified long precedes our justification: this righteousness is "gone before," etc. II. Our justification by that righteousness precedes our sanctification. III. The righteousness of sanctification invariably follows that of justification.

[*All the above are by the Rev. Geo. Rogers.*]

Verse 8.—*Thomas Goodwin* has three sermons upon this verse, (*First clause*), entitled The Return of Prayers. (*Second clause*).—Tidings of Peace. (*Last clause*).—The Folly of Relapsing after Peace spoken.

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—They should not turn again to folly, I. Because it will be a greater aggravation in sinning. It is made the aggravation of Solomon's sin (1 Kings xi. 9), that "God had appeared to him twice." II. The second reason is intimated in the word "*folly:*" as if the Lord should have said, Set aside the unkindness and wrong you do to me, yet therein you befool yourselves; you will have the worst of it.—*T. Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—Joy in the Lord the best evidence of revived piety.

Verse 12.—The fertility of our spheres of labour the gift of God.

Verse 10.—The Pulpit, vol. XXVIII, 1836, contains a sermon by R. W. Sibthorpe, in which the preacher, I. Considers the harmony of the divine perfections in *the redemption of a sinner*. II. The wisdom of the divine dealings in *the calling and guidance of the believer*; so that mercy, truth, etc., each becomes in turn conspicuous in our experience. III. The completeness of the divine image *in the sanctified soul* so that the perfected saint abounds in mercy and truth, is filled with peace, and is conformed to his righteous Lord.

PSALM LXXXVI.

TITLE.—A Prayer of David. *We have here one of the five Psalms entitled* Tephillahs *or prayers. This Psalm consists of praise as well as prayer, but it is in all parts so directly addressed to God that it is most fitly called "a prayer." A prayer is none the less but all the more a prayer because veins of praise run through it. This Psalm would seem to have been specially known as David's prayer; even as the ninetieth is "the prayer of Moses." David composed it, and no doubt often expressed himself in similar language; both the matter and the wording are suitable to his varied circumstances and expressive of the different characteristics of his mind. In many respects it resembles Psalm XVII., which bears the same title, but in other aspects it is very different; the prayers of a good man have a family likeness, but they vary as much as they agree. We may learn from the present Psalm that the great saints of old were accustomed to pray very much in the same fashion as we do; believers in all ages are of one genus. The name of God occurs very frequently in this Psalm, sometimes it is Jehovah, but more commonly Adonai, which it is believed by many learned scholars was written by the Jewish transcribers instead of the sublimer title, because their superstitious dread led them to do so: we, labouring under no such tormenting fear, rejoice in Jehovah, our God. It is singular that those who were so afraid of their God, that they dared not write his name, had yet so little godly fear, that they dared to alter his word.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalm is irregular in its construction but may be divided into three portions, each ending with a note of gratitude or of confidence: we shall therefore read from* 1 *to* 7, *and then, after another pause at the end of verse* 13, *we will continue to the end.*

EXPOSITION.

BOW down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I *am* poor and needy.

2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.

3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.

4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

5 For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.

7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

1. *"Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me."* In condescension to my littleness, and in pity to my weakness, "bow down thine ear, O LORD." When our prayers are lowly by reason of our humility, or feeble by reason of our sickness, or without wing by reason of our despondency, the Lord will bow down to them, the infinitely exalted Jehovah will have respect unto them. Faith, when she has the loftiest name of God on her tongue, and calls him Jehovah, yet dares to ask from him the most tender and condescending acts of love. Great as he is he loves his children to be bold with him. *"For I am poor and needy"*—doubly a son of poverty, because, first, poor and without supply for my needs, and next, needy, and so full of wants though unable to supply them. Our distress is a forcible reason for our being heard by the Lord God, merciful, and gracious, for misery is ever the master argument with mercy. Such reasoning as this would never be adopted by a proud man, and when we hear it repeated in the public congregation by those great ones of the earth who count the peasantry to be little better than the earth they tread upon, it sounds like a mockery of the Most High. Of all despicable sinners those are the worst who use the language of spiritual poverty while they think themselves to be rich and increased in goods.

2. *"Preserve my soul."* Let my life be safe from my enemies, and my spiritual nature be secure from their temptations. He feels himself unsafe except he be covered by the divine protection. *"For I am holy."* I am set apart for holy uses, therefore do not let thine enemies commit a sacrilege by injuring or defiling me: I am clear of the crimes laid to my charge, and in that sense innocent; therefore, I beseech thee, do not allow me to suffer from unjust charges: and I am inoffensive, meek, and gentle towards others, therefore deal mercifully with me as I have dealt with my fellow men. Any of these renderings may explain the text, perhaps all together will expound it best. It is not self-righteous in good men to plead their innocence as a reason for escaping from the results of sins wrongfully ascribed to them; penitents do not bedaub themselves with mire for the love of it, or make themselves out to be worse than they are out of compliment to heaven. No, the humblest saint is not a fool, and he is as well aware of the matters wherein he is clear as of those wherein he must cry *"peccavi."* To plead guilty to offences we have never committed is as great a lie as the denial of our real faults. *"O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee."* Lest any man should suppose that David trusted in his own holiness he immediately declared his trust in the Lord, and begged to be saved as one who was not holy in the sense of being perfect, but was even yet in need of the very elements of salvation. How sweet is that title, "my God," when joined to the other, "servant;" and how sweet is the hope that on this ground we shall be saved; seeing that our God is not like the Amalekitish master who left his poor sick servant to perish. Note how David's poor *I am* (or rather the *I* repeated without the *am*) appeals to the great I AM with that sacred boldness engendered by the necessity which breaks through stone walls, aided by the faith which removes mountains.

3. *"Be merciful unto me, O Lord."* The best of men need mercy, and appeal to mercy, yea to nothing else but mercy; they need it for themselves, and crave it eagerly of their God as a personal requisite. *"For I cry unto thee daily."* Is there not a promise that importunity shall prevail? May we not, then, plead our importunity as an argument with God. He who prays every day, and all the day, for so the word may mean, may rest assured that the Lord will hear him in the day of his need. If we cried sometimes to man, or other false confidences, we might expect to be referred to them in the hour of our calamity, but if in all former time we have looked to the Lord alone, we may be sure that he will not desert us now. See how David pleaded, first that he was poor and needy, next that he was the Lord's set-apart one, then that he was God's servant and had learned to trust in the Lord, and lastly that he had been taught to pray daily; surely these are such holy pleadings as any tried believer may employ when wrestling with a prayer-hearing God, and with such weapons the most trembling suppliant may hope to win the day.

4. *"Rejoice the soul of thy servant."* Make my heart glad, O my Master, for I count it my honour to call myself again and again thy servant, and I reckon thy favour to be all the wages I could desire. I look for all my happiness in thee only, and therefore *"unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul."* As the heliotrope looks to the sun for its smile, so turn I my heart to thee. Thou art as the brazen serpent to my sick nature, and I lift up my soul's eye to thee that I may live. I know that the nearer I am to thee the greater is my joy, therefore be pleased to draw me nearer while I am labouring to draw near. It is not easy to lift a soul at all; it needs a strong shoulder at the wheel when a heart sticks in the miry clay of despondency: it is less easy to lift a soul up to the Lord, for the height is great as well as the weight oppressive; but the Lord will take the will for the deed, and come in with a hand of almighty grace to raise his poor servant out of the earth and up to heaven.

5. *"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive."* Good at giving and forgiving; supplying us with *his* good, and removing *our* evil. Here was the great reason why the Psalmist looked to the Lord alone for his joy, because every joy-creating attribute is to be found in perfection in Jehovah alone. Some men who would be considered good are so self-exaltingly indignant at the injuries done them by others, that they cannot forgive; but we may rest assured that the better a being is, the more willing he is to forgive, and the best and highest of all is ever ready to blot out the transgressions of his creatures. *"And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."* God does not dispense his mercy from a slender store which perchance may be so impoverished as to give out altogether, but out of a cornucopia he pours forth the infinite riches of his mercy: his goodness flows forth in abounding streams

towards those who pray and in adoring worship make mention of his name. David seems to have stood in the cleft of the rock with Moses, and to have heard the name of the Lord proclaimed even as the great lawgiver did, for in two places in this Psalm he almost quotes *verbatim* the passage in Exodus xxxiv. 6—" The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

6. *"Give ear, O* LORD, *unto my prayer."* Even the glory which his spirit had beheld did not withdraw him from his prayer, but rather urged him to be more fervent in it; hence he implores the Lord to hear his requests. *"Attend to the voice of my supplications."* Here are repetitions, but not vain repetitions. When a child cries it repeats the same note, but it is equally in earnest every time, and so was it with the suppliant here. Note the expression, " the voice of my supplications," as if they were not all voice but were partly made up of inarticulate noise, yet amid much that was superfluous there really was a distinct voice, an inner meaning, a living sense which was the heart's intention. This he would have the Lord sift out from the chaff, and hear amid the mingled din. May our prayers never be voiceless; may the soul's intent always give them a live core of meaning.

7. *"In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me."* A pious resolve backed by a judicious reason. It is useless to cry to those who cannot or will not hear; once convince men that prayer has no effect upon God, and they will have no more of it. In these busy days, and especially in troublous times, men cannot afford to waste time in entreaties which must be unavailing. Our experience confirms us in the belief that Jehovah the living God really does aid those who call upon him, and therefore we pray and mean to pray, not because we are so fascinated by prayer that for its own sake we would continue in it if it proved to be mere folly and superstition, as vain philosophers assert; but because we really, indeed, and of a truth, find it to be a practical and effectual means of obtaining help from God in the hour of need. There can be no reason for praying if there be no expectation of the Lord's answering. Who would make a conscience of pleading with the winds, or find a solace in supplicating the waves? The mercy seat is a mockery if there be no hearing nor answering. David, as the following verses show, believed the Lord to be a living and potent God, and indeed to be " God alone," and it was on that account that he resolved in every hour of trouble to call upon him.

8 Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord; neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.

9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.

10 For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou *art* God alone.

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

13 For great *is* thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

8. *"Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord."* There are gods by delegated office, such as kings and magistrates, but they are as nothing in the presence of Jehovah; there are also gods by the nomination of superstition, but these are vanity itself, and cannot be compared with the living and true God. Even if the heathen idols were gods, none of them in power or even in character, could be likened unto the self-existent, all-creating God of Israel. If every imaginary deity could start into actual existence, and become really divine, yet would we choose Jehovah to be our God, and reject all others. *"Neither are there any works like unto thy works."* What have the false gods ever made or unmade? What miracles have they wrought? When did they divide a sea, or march through a wilderness scattering bread from the skies? O Jehovah, in thy person and in thy works, thou art as far above all gods as the heavens are above the nethermost abyss.

9. *"All nations whom thou hast made,"* and these include all mankind, since they all come of the first Adam—thy creature, and their lives are all distinct creations of thine omnipotence. All these *"shall come"* with penitent hearts, in thine own way, to thine own self, *"and worship before thee, O Lord."* Because thou art thus

above all gods, the people who have been so long deceived shall at last discover thy greatness, and shall render thee the worship which is thy due: thou hast created them all, and unto thee shall they all yield homage. This was David's reason for resorting to the Lord in trouble, for he felt that one day all men would acknowledge the Lord to be the only God. It makes us content to be in the minority to-day, when we are sure that the majority will be with us to-morrow, ay, and that the truth will one day be carried unanimously and heartily. David was not a believer in the theory that the world will grow worse and worse, and that the dispensation will wind up with general darkness, and idolatry. Earth's sun is to go down amid tenfold night if some of our prophetic brethren are to be believed. Not so do we expect, but we look for a day when the dwellers in all lands shall learn righteousness, shall trust in the Saviour, shall worship thee alone, O God, *"and shall glorify thy name."* The modern notion has greatly damped the zeal of the church for missions, and the sooner it is shown to be unscriptural the better for the cause of God. It neither consorts with prophecy, honours God, nor inspires the church with ardour. Far hence be it driven.

10. *"For thou art great."* He had before said, "thou art good;" it is a grand thing when greatness and goodness are united; it is only in the Divine Being that either of them exists absolutely, and essentially. Happy is it for us that they both exist in the Lord to an equal degree. To be great and not good might lead to tyranny in the King, and for him to be good and not great might involve countless calamities upon his subjects from foreign foes, so that either alternative would be terrible; let the two be blended, and we have a monarch in whom the nation may rest and rejoice. *"And doest wondrous things."* Being good, he is said to be ready to forgive; being great, he works wonders: we may blend the two, for there is no wonder so wonderful as the pardon of our transgressions. All that God does or makes has wonder in it; he breathes, and the wind is mystery; he speaks, and the thunder astounds us; even the commonest daisy is a marvel, and a pebble enshrines wisdom. Only to fools is anything which God has made uninteresting: the world is a world of wonders. Note that the verb *doest* is in the present, the Lord is doing wondrous things, they are transpiring before our eyes. Where are they? Look upon the bursting buds of spring or the maturing fruits of autumn, gaze on the sky or skim the sea, mark the results of providence and the victories of grace, everywhere at all times the great *Thaumaturge* stretches forth his rod of power. *"Thou art God alone."* Alone wast thou God before thy creatures were; alone in godhead still art thou now that thou hast given life to throngs of beings; alone for ever shalt thou be, for none can ever rival thee. True religion makes no compromises, it does not admit Baal or Dagon to be a god; it is exclusive and monopolizing, claiming for Jehovah nothing less than all. The vaunted liberality of certain professors of modern thought is not to be cultivated by believers in the truth. "Philosophic breadth" aims at building a Pantheon, and piles a Pandemonium; it is not for us to be helpers in such an evil work. Benevolently intolerant, we would, for the good of mankind, as well as for the glory of God, undeceive mankind as to the value of their compromises,—they are mere treason to truth. Our God is not to be worshipped as one among many good and true beings, but as God alone; and his gospel is not to be preached as one of several saving systems, but as the one sole way of salvation. Lies can face each other beneath one common dome; but in the temple of truth the worship is one and indivisible.

11. *"Teach me thy way, O LORD."* Instruct me thus at all times, let me live in thy school; but teach me now especially since I am in trouble and perplexity. Be pleased to shew me the way which thy wisdom and mercy have prepared for my escape; behold I lay aside all wilfulness, and only desire to be informed as to thy holy and gracious mind. Not *my* way give me, but *thy* way teach me, I would follow thee and not be wilful. *"I will walk in thy truth."* When taught I will practise what I know, truth shall not be a mere doctrine or sentiment to me, but a matter of daily life. The true servant of God regulates his walk by his master's will, and hence he never walks deceitfully, for God's way is ever truth. Providence has a way for us, and it is our wisdom to keep in it. We must not be as the bullock which needs to be driven and urged forward because it likes not the road, but be as men who voluntarily go where their trusted friend and helper appoints their path.

"Unite my heart to fear thy name." Having taught me one way, give me one heart to walk therein, for too often I feel a heart and a heart, two natures contending,

two principles struggling for sovereignty. Our minds are apt to be divided between a variety of objects, like trickling streamlets which waste their force in a hundred runnels; our great desire should be to have all our life-floods poured into one channel and to have that channel directed towards the Lord alone. A man of divided heart is weak, the man of one object is *the* man. God who created the bands of our nature can draw them together, tighten, strengthen, and fasten them, and so braced and inwardly knit by his uniting grace, we shall be powerful for good, but not otherwise. To fear God is both the beginning, the growth, and the maturity of wisdom, therefore should we be undividedly given up to it, heart, and soul.

12. "*I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart.*" When my heart is one, I will give thee all of it. Praise should never be rendered with less than all our heart, and soul, and strength, or it will be both unreal and unacceptable. This is the second time in the Psalm that David calls the Lord "my God," the first time he was in an agony of prayer (verse 2), and now he is in an ecstacy of praise. If anything can make a man pray and praise, it is the knowledge that the Lord is his God. "*And I will glorify thy name for evermore;*" into eternity gratitude will prolong its praise. God has never done blessing us, let us never have done blessing him. As he ever gives us grace, let us ever render to him the glory of it.

13. "*For great is thy mercy toward me.*" Personal experience is ever the master singer. Whatever thou art to others, to me thy mercy is most notable. The Psalmist claims to sing among the loudest, because his debt to divine mercy is among the greatest. "*And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.*" From the direst death and the deepest dishonour David had been kept by God, for his enemies would have done more than send him to hell had they been able. His sense of sin also made him feel as if the most overwhelming destruction would have been his portion had not grace prevented, therefore does he speak of deliverance from the nethermost abode of lost spirits. There are some alive now who can use this language unfeignedly, and he who pens these lines most humbly confesses that he is one. Left to myself to indulge my passions, to rush onward with my natural vehemence, and defy the Lord with recklessness of levity, what a candidate for the lowest abyss should I have made myself by this time. For me, there was but one alternative, great mercy, or the lowest hell. With my whole heart do I sing, "Great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

The Psalmist here again touches a bold and joyful note, but soon he exchanges it for the mournful string.

14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them.

15 But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.

17 Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

14. "*O God, the proud are risen against me.*" They could not let God's poor servant alone, his walk with God was as smoke to their eyes, and therefore they determined to destroy him. None hate good men so fiercely as do the high-minded and domineering. "*And the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul.*" Unitedly oppressors sought the good man's life; they hunted in packs, with keen scent, and eager foot. In persecuting times many a saint has used these words in reference to Papal bishops and inquisitors. "*And have not set thee before them.*" They would not have molested the servant if they had cared one whit for the master. Those who fear not God are not afraid to commit violent and cruel acts. An atheist is a misanthrope. Irreligion is akin to inhumanity.

15. "*But thou, O Lord.*" What a contrast! We get away from the hectorings and blusterings of proud but puny men to the glory and goodness of the Lord. We turn from the boisterous foam of chafing waves to the sea of glass mingled with fire, calm and serene. "*Art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.*" A truly glorious doxology, in which there is not one redundant word. As we have before observed, it is mainly transcribed from Exodus xxxiv. 6. Here is compassion for the weak and sorrowing, grace for

the undeserving, longsuffering for the provoking, mercy for the guilty, and truth for the tried. God's love assumes many forms, and is lovely in them all. Into whatsoever state we may be cast, there is a peculiar hue in the light of love which will harmonize with our condition; love is one and yet sevenfold, its white ray contains the chromatic scale. Are we sorrowful? We find the Lord full of compassion. Are we contending with temptation? His grace comes to our aid. Do we err? He is patient with us. Have we sinned? He is plenteous in mercy. Are we resting on his promise? He will fulfil it with abundant truth.

16. *"O turn unto me."* As though the face of God had been before averted in anger, the suppliant pleads for a return of conscious favour. One turn of God's face will turn all our darkness into day. *"And have mercy upon me,"* that is all he asks, for he is lowly in heart; that is all he wants, for mercy answereth all a sinner's needs. *"Give thy strength unto thy servant."* Gird me with it that I may serve thee, guard me with it that I may not be overcome. When the Lord gives us his own strength we are sufficient for all emergencies, and have no cause to fear any adversaries. *"And save the son of thine handmaid."* He meant that he was a home-born servant of God. As the sons of slaves were their master's property by their birth, so he gloried in being the son of a woman who herself belonged to the Lord. What others might think a degrading illustration he uses with delight, to show how intensely he loved the Lord's service; and also as a reason why the Lord should interpose to rescue him, seeing that he was no newly-purchased servant, but had been in the house from his very birth.

17. *"Shew me a token for good."* Let me be assured of thy mercy by being delivered out of trouble. *"That they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed."*

> "Some token of thy favour show,
> Some sign which all my foes may see;
> And fill'd with blank confusion know,
> My comfort and my help in thee."

What bodes good to me shall make them quail and blush. Disappointed and defeated, the foes of the good man would feel ashamed of what they had designed. *"Because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me."* God doth nothing by halves, those whom he helps he also consoles, and so makes them not merely safe but joyful. This makes the foes of the righteous exceedingly displeased, but it brings to the Lord double honour. Lord, deal thou thus with us evermore, so will we glorify thee, world without end. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The prophet David has penned two Psalms which he has eminently appropriated to himself as his own: the one is styled *David's prayer*, though many other Psalms are prayers—it is Psalm lxxxvi.; the other *David's praise.* Ps. cxlv. The first his *tephilla*, the latter his *tehilla;* in each of these he makes a solemn rehearsal of the very words of Moses, in Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7. In Psalm lxxxvi. he brings them in as they were a support unto his faith in his distresses from sins and miseries, to which use he puts them, ver. 3, 4, 6, and 7. And again, ver. 16, 17, he makes a plea of these words by way of prayer. In Psalm cxlv., he brings them in as they are an *elogium* or celebration of the glorious nature and excellencies of God, to excite the sons of men to love and praise him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Title.—This Psalm was published under the title of *"A Prayer of David"*; not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a Psalm will admit the expression of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this Psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetical flights or figures, in comparison with some other Psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer.—*Matthew Henry.*

Title.—There was much, very much, of God's peculiar character, his glorious name, brought to view in the close of the last Psalm. This may account for its

being followed by another, "*A Prayer of David*," almost equally full of the character of Jehovah. The key-note of this Psalm is Jehovah's name.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—Christ prays throughout the whole of this Psalm. All the words are spoken exclusively by Christ, who is both God and man.—*Psalt. Cassiodori*, 1491.

Whole Psalm.—In this Psalm Christ the Son of God and Son of Man, one God with the Father, one man with men, to whom we pray as God; prays in the form of a servant. For he prays for us, and he prays in us, and he is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our Priest. He prays in us as our Head. He is prayed to by us as our God.—*Psalt. Pet. Lombard.* 1474.

Verse 1.—"*Bow down thine ear, O* LORD." As the careful physician doth to his feeble patient: so Basil glosseth here.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 1—4.—"*Poor*," "*holy*," "*trusteth*," "*I cry*." The petitioner is first described as *poor*, then *holy*, next *trusting*, after that *crying*, finally, *lifted up to God*. And each epithet has its fitting verb; *bow down* to the poor, *preserve* the holy, *save* the trusting, *be merciful* to him who cries, *rejoice* the lifted-up. It is the whole gamut of love from the Incarnation to the Ascension; it tells us that Christ's humiliation will be our glory and joy.—*Neale and Littledale's Commentary.*

Verse 2.—"*Holy*." The word has been variously translated:—*Godly*, De Muis, Ainsworth and others; *charitable*, or *beneficent*, Piscator; *merciful* or *tenderhearted*, Mariana; *diligently* or *earnestly compassionate*, Vatablus; *meek*, Calvin; *a beloved one*, Version of American Bible Union; *one whom thou lovest*, Perowne; *a devoted or dedicated man*, Weiss.

Verse 2.—"*For I am Holy*." Some have objected to David's pleading his own good character; but if he did not go beyond the truth, and the occasion called for it, there was nothing wrong in his so doing. Job, David, Peter, John and Paul all did it, Job xxvii. 5; Ps. cxvi. 16; John xxi. 15—17; Rev. i. 10; 1 Cor. ix. 1. Nor is it presumptuous to ask God to show mercy to us for we show it to others; or to forgive us for we forgive others, Matt. v. 7; vi. 14, 15.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 2.—"*I am holy . . . thy servant which trusteth in thee*." They that are holy, yet must not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*Save thy servant that trusteth in thee*." When God saves his servant, he saves what belongs to himself; and, when he saves him that trusts in him, he shows himself to be just and faithful, in carrying out what he promised.—*Bellarmine.*

Verses 2—5.—The aspirations after holiness which are found in this Psalm, coupled with its earnest invocation of mercy from the God with whom there is forgiveness, render it peculiarly applicable to those whose daily access is to a throne of needed grace. Christians know that while their *standing* is the blameless perfection of the Lord their righteousness, they are in many things offenders still. Nor do we ever fully prove the preciousness of Jesus as our portion, except we are drawn to him by that Spirit which reveals to us a nakedness and poverty within ourselves, which his blessed fulness can alone redress.

There is a consciousness of personal sanctification through faith (verse 2) associated with an acutely sensitive perception of intrinsic worthlessness, such as only finds relief in the remembrance of unaltered grace (verse 5), which, to the exercised spirit of one really growing in the knowledge of God, will address itself with an especial acceptance.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 3.—"*Be merciful unto me*." Lest any should by the former words, ("*I am holy*,") suspect him to be a merit-monger, he beggeth mercy with instancy and constancy of request.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*I cry unto thee daily*." A great difference between saints and sinners in prayer is that sinners who pray at all, pray only when they are in *trouble*, whereas saints *cry daily* unto God. Compare Job xxvii. 10.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 4.—"*Rejoice the soul of thy servant*," etc. As I have not found rest in anything created, I have raised up my soul on the wings of thought and desire to thee my Creator. Love bears one's soul up; and it has been truly said, that the soul is more where it loves, than where it actually is. Thought and desire are the wings of love; for he that loves is borne on to, and abides in, what he loves, by thinking constantly on, and longing for, the object of his love. Whoever truly, and

from his heart, loves God, by thinking on him and longing for him, lifts up his soul to God; while, on the contrary, whoever loves the earth, by thinking on and coveting the things of the earth, lets his soul down to its level.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 4.—"*Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift my soul.*" If thou hadst corn in thy rooms below, thou wouldst take it up higher, lest it should grow rotten. Wouldest thou remove thy corn, and dost thou suffer thy heart to rot on the earth? Thou wouldest take thy corn up higher: lift up thy heart to heaven. And how can I, dost thou say? What ropes are needed? What machines? What ladders? Thy affections are the steps; thy will the way. By loving thou mountest, by neglect thou descendest. Standing on the earth thou art in heaven, if thou lovest God. For the heart is not so raised as the body is raised: the body to be lifted up changes its place: the heart to be lifted up changes its will.—*Augustine.*

Verse 4.—"*Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul,*" intimates that he had brought himself to the Lord as a living sacrifice, even as the *heave-offering* in the tabernacle—to show that it belonged to God and to his altar, and, that man had no part in it—was lifted up by the hands of the priests.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 4.—"*I lift up my soul.*" It denotes the devotion, fervency, heartiness, and sincerity of his prayer; the doing of it with a true heart, the lifting up of the heart with the hands unto God, Lam. iii. 41; or by way of offering unto the Lord, not the body only, but the soul or heart also; or as a deposition committed into his hands.—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—"*Lord.*" Here, and in all the verses in this psalm where אֲדֹנָי, *Adonai*, occurs, many MSS. read יְהוָה, *Yehovah.* The Jews, out of reverence to the incommunicable name Jehovah pronounce אֲדֹנָי where יְהוָה is in the text. It is, therefore, not improbable that יְהוָה is the true reading in all these places.—*Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 5.—"*For thou, Lord, art good,*" and whither should beggars go but to the door of the good house-keeper?—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"*Ready to forgive.*" The mercy of God is a ready mercy, and his pardons are ready for his people; his pardons and mercies are not to seek, he hath them at hand, he is "*good and ready to forgive.*" Whereas most men, though they will forgive, yet they are not *ready* to forgive, they are hardly brought to it, though they do it at last. But God is "*ready to forgive*"; he hath, as it were, pardons ready drawn (as a man who would be ready to do a business, he will have such writings as concern the passing of it ready); there is nothing to do but to put in the date and the name; yea indeed, the date and the name are put in from all eternity. Thus the Scripture speaks to show how forward God is to do good; he needs not set his heart to it; his heart is ever in the exactest fitness.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*Plenteous in mercy.*" It is a thing marvellously satisfactory and pleasing to the heart of a man to be still taking from a great heap; and upon this ground are those proverbial sayings, There is no fishing like to a fishing in the sea, no service like the service of a king: because in one there is the greatest plenty and abundance of that kind of pleasure that fishers look after; and for them that serve, and must live by their service, there is none like that of princes, because they have abundance of reward and opportunity whereby to recompense the services of those that do wait and attend upon them. . . .

And upon the same ground is it that the Scriptures, in several places, do not only assert and testify that God is merciful and gracious, but abundant in mercy and full of grace; and not simply that there is redemption in him, but *plenteousness* of redemption: Ps. ciii. 8, cxxx. 7; Isai. lv. 7; "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc.; "Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy; and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The commodity which we stand in need of is mercy and the pardon of our sins, in case we have been unholy and ungodly creatures; this commodity is abundantly in God. There it is treasured up as waters are in the store-house of the sea; there is no end of the treasures of his grace, mercy, pardon, and compassion. There is no man, being in want, but had ten times rather go to a rich man's door to be relieved, than to the door of a poor man, if he knoweth the rich man to be as liberal and bountifully disposed as the poor man can be.—*John Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"*Supplications.*" תַּחֲנוּנַי, *deprecations.* The Psalmist forms a peculiar Hebrew word, feminine plural, not found elsewhere, to convey more impressively the idea of suppliant weakness.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verses 8—10.—There are two kinds of doubt which are wont in the hour of temptation to assail the soul; the doubt as to God's *willingness*, and the doubt as to God's *power* to succour. The first of these the Psalmist has already put from him; he now shows that he has overcome the second. God is able as well as willing to help, and every being on the face of the earth who receives help, receives it from the hand of Him who is the only God, and who shall one day be recognized (so speaks the strong prophetic hope within him, ver. 9) as the only God.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verses 9, 10.—"*All nations shall worship before thee,*" because as *King of Nations*, thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestable, thy Majesty terrible and unsupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and for the proof of this, "*thou doest wondrous things,*" which all nations admire, and from whence they might easily infer that "*thou art God alone;*" not only none like thee, but none beside thee.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 11.—"*Teach me thy way:*" "*I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart.*" Here is the "Via, Veritas, Vita" of the Gospel (John xiv. 6). "Via tua, Veritas tua, Vita tua, Christus." Christ is our Way, Truth, and Life, because he is Man united to God, and is one substance with the Father.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 11.—"*Teach me.*" There is no point on which the world is more dark than that of its own ignorance—we might truly say, "it is ignorant of its ignorance"—it knows enough when it learns by rote a few first principles of religion; it comforts itself that it is not atheistical because it believes that there is a God; but as to knowing his ways, laws, mind, or any such things, with them it has nothing at all to do. The people of the world do not care for enlightenment; they feel no pressing need for it; in all probability they have an instinctive feeling that if enlightened they would know a little more than they wish to know, that their newly-acquired knowledge would interfere with their old habits and ways, and this is one reason why all spiritual teaching which goes beneath the surface is distasteful to the majority of men. They cannot bear to be brought into contact with God, in anything but a general way; the particulars of his character may not agree over well with the particulars of their lives!

It is the fashion in the present day to talk of man's enlightenment, and to represent human nature as upheaving under its load, as straining towards a knowledge of truth; such is not in reality the case, and whenever there is an effort in the mind untaught of the Spirit, it is directed towards God as the great *moral* and not as the great *spiritual* Being. A man untaught of the Holy Ghost may long to know a *moral*, he can never desire to know a *spiritual* Being.—*John Hyatt*, 1767–1826.

Verse 11.—"*Teach.*" The common version of the verb here is too vague, as it fails to bring out the peculiar suitableness of the term to express the kind of teaching here specifically meant. The original meaning of the Hebrew word is *to point out* or *mark* the way.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 11.—"*I will walk in thy truth.*" Conform to Scripture. Let us lead Scripture lives. Oh that the Bible might be seen to be printed in our lives! Do what the Word commands. Obedience is an excellent way of commenting upon the Bible.

Let the Word be the sun-dial by which you set your life. What are we the better for having the Scriptures, if we do not direct all our speeches and actions according to it? What is a carpenter better for his rule about him, if he sticks it at his back, and never makes use of it for measuring and squaring? So, what are we the better for the rule of the Word, if we do not make use of it, and regulate our lives by it?—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 11.—"*I will walk in thy truth.*" *Walking*, in the Scripture, takes in the whole of our conversation or conduct: and to walk *in* anything, intends a fulness of it. For a man to *walk in* pride, is something more than to be proud: it says, that pride is his way, his element; that he is wholly under the influence of it.—*William Jay.*

Verse 11.—"*Unite my heart to fear thy name.*" The *end* which he desired to secure was that he might truly fear God, or properly reverence and honour him; the *means* which he saw to be necessary for this was that his "*heart*" might be "*united*" in this one great object; that is, that his heart might be single in its views

and purposes; that there might be no distracting purposes; that one great aim might be always before him. The *word* rendered *unite*—יחד, *yâhhad*—occurs as a verb only in three places. In Gen. xlix. 6 it is rendered *united:* "Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou *united.*" In Isa. xiv. 20 it is translated *joined*: "Thou shalt not be *joined* unto them." The *adverb*—יחד, *ya-hhad*—occurs often, and is rendered *together*, Gen. xiii. 6; xxii. 6, 8, 19; xxxvi. 7; *et sæpe.* The *idea* is that of union, or conjunction; of being together; of constituting *one;* and this is accomplished in the heart when there is one great ruling object before the mind which nothing is allowed to interfere with. It may be added, that there is no more appropriate prayer which a man can offer than that his heart *may* have such unity of purpose, and that nothing may be allowed to interfere with that one supreme purpose.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 11.—"*Unite my heart,*" etc. Sincerity drives but one design, and that is to please and enjoy God; and what can more establish and fix the soul in the hour of temptation than this? The reason why the hypocrite is unstable in all his ways, is given us by the apostle: he is "a double-minded man," a man of two souls in one body; as a profane wretch once boasted, that he had one soul for God, and another for any thing. But all the designs of a gracious heart are united in one; and so the entire stream of his affections runs strong.

It is base by-ends and self-interests, that, like a great many ditches cut out of the bank of a river, draw away the stream out of its proper channel, and make its waters fail. But if the heart be *united* for God, then we may say of such a Christian, as was said of a young Roman, "What he does is done with all his might." A man of only one design, puts out all his strength to carry it; nothing can stand before him.

Sincerity brings a man's will into subjection to the will of God; and this being done, the greatest danger and difficulty is over with such a man. This is that holy oil which makes the wheels of the soul run nimbly, even in the difficult paths of obedience.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 11.—"*Unite my heart.*"

Give me thine heart but as I gave it thee:
Or give it me at least as I
Have given mine
To purchase thine.
I halv'd it not when I did die;
But gave myself wholly to set thee free.

The heart I gave thee was a living heart;
And when thy heart by sin was slain,
I laid down mine
To ransom thine,
That thy dead heart might live again,
And live entirely perfect, not in part.

But whilst thine heart's divided, it is dead;
Dead unto me, unless it live
To me alone,
It is all one
To keep all, and a part to give:
For what's a body worth without an head!

Yet, this is worse, that what thou keep'st from me
Thou dost bestow upon my foes;
And those not mine
Alone, but thine;
The proper causes of thy woes,
From whom I gave my life to set thee free.

Have I betroth'd thee to myself, and shall
The devil, and the world, intrude
Upon my right,
E'en in my sight?
Think not thou canst me so delude:
I will have none, unless I may have all.

I made it all, I gave it all to thee,
I gave all that I had for it:
If I must lose,
I'd rather choose
Mine interest in all to quit:
Or keep it whole, or give it whole to me.
—*Francis Quarles, in "The School of the Heart."*

Verse 11.—"*Unite my heart to fear thy name.*"

In knotts, to be loosed never,
Knitt my heart to thee for ever,
That I to thy name may beare
Fearful love and loving feare.
—*Francis Davison.*

Verse 12.—"*I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name.*" We glorify God by praising him. Doxology, or praise, is a God-exalting work. Ps. l. 23. "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.*" The Hebrew word, *Bara*, to create, and *Barak*, to praise, are little different, because the end of creation is to praise God. Though nothing can add to God's essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes of others. When we praise God, we spread his fame and renown, we display the trophies of his excellency. In this manner the angels glorify him; they are the choristers of heaven, and do trumpet forth his praise. Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels. Believers are called "temples of God," 1 Cor. iii. 16. When our tongues praise, then the organs of God's spiritual temple are sounding. How sad it is that God hath no more glory from us in this way! Many are full of murmuring and discontent, but seldom bring glory to God, by giving him the praise due to his name. We read of the saints having harps in their hands, the emblems of praise. Many have tears in their eyes and complaints in their mouths, but few have harps in their hands, blessing and glorifying God. Let us honour God this way. Praise is the quit-rent we pay to God: while God renews our lease, we must renew our rent.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 12.—"*I will praise thee, O Lord,*" etc. Such a soul as David was is enlarged to talk high of God: "*I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.*" Alas! poor creature, how canst thou praise him "*for evermore*"? A soul fired with desire to praise God, burns after both more perfect things and more lasting than it is able to perform. "To will is present with it," etc. See but the reachings and longings of such a soul, how it swells in desires to glorify God!—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12.—"*With all my heart.*" When my *heart* is *united* to fear thy name, then shall I praise thee with my whole heart.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 13.—"*Hell*" is put metaphorically for great and extreme dangers, or miseries which seem irrecoverable and remediless; these are figuratively called *hell*, because hell, properly taken, is a place from whence there is no recovery. There's no release from the chains of darkness: all changes are on earth; heaven and hell know none. When David praises the Lord *for delivering his soul from the lowest hell*, he meaneth an estate on earth of the lowest and deepest danger imaginable: mercy helped him at the worst. To be as low as hell, is to be at the lowest.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13.—"*The lowest hell.*" According to Jewish traditions, there are seven different regions, in the abode of departed souls.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.*" Some one having a troublesome cause was to be sent to prison: another comes and defends him; what does he say when he thanks him? Thou hast delivered my soul out of prison. A debtor was to be tortured: his debt is paid; he is said to be delivered from being tortured. They were not in all these evils; but because they were in such due course towards them, that unless aid had been brought, they would have been in them, they rightly say that they are delivered from thence, whither they were not suffered by their deliverers to be taken.—*Augustine.*

Verses 13, 16.—There is no stronger argument of God's infallible readiness to grant our requests, than the experience of his former concessions. So David reasons, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the

bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine," 1 Sam. xvii. 37. This is the argument *a priori*, the voice of a strong faith, that persuades the conscience God will be gracious to him, because he hath been gracious. The prophet thus often comforted his soul: "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress;" therefore, "have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer," Ps. iv. 1. So, "Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell;" therefore, *"O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me."* Let the justiciaries deduce arguments from their own present merits, my soul from God's former mercies. Thou, O Lord, madest me good, restoredst me when I was evil; therefore have mercy upon me, miserable sinner, and give me thy salvation. Thus Paul grounded his assurance: because the Lord had stood with him, and delivered him out of the lion's mouth; therefore the Lord shall deliver me still, from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 15.—*"Thou, O Lord,* Adonai, *art a God;* El, the strong God, *full of compassion;"* the same words as Moses useth. Instead of *Jehovah, Adonai* is used, "O Lord;" but then *El*, strong God, is the same word.

The meaning is, let all the strength and power thou the strong God hast in thee be for my advantage. Now, is it not a bold request to say, Lord, wilt thou give me all thy strength to help me? A very bold request indeed; but his mercy moves him to grant it. Thus then petition him: Thou art a God merciful and gracious, give thy strength to me! Thou, O God, givest all thy attributes up to thy children, to serve their advantage, as well as to serve thy own glory; give me thy strength!—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 15.—*"Full of compassion."* The original word *Rachum* is very emphatical; it signifies such tenderness as parents have toward their children when their bowels yearn within them.—*"Critical and Practical Exposition of the Pentateuch."* 1748.

Verse 16.—*"Save the son of thine handmaid."* Deliver me, who am as completely thy property, as the offspring of a female slave born in her master's house, and which belongs of right to him. Gen. xiv. 14; Jer. ii. 14.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 17.—*"Shew me a token for good."* These words do not, as some think, necessarily imply David's asking for some specific or miraculous token: he regards deliverance itself as a token. We ask whether it be not true, that in the same measure as we recognise the mysteriously governing influence of God in every-day events, we regard those things as signs and miracles, which to others appear common-place.?—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 17.—Perhaps, the *"token for good"* means that spiritual joy which he asked for in the beginning of the Psalm, when he said, *"Rejoice the soul of thy servant;"* for such joy to a holy soul in tribulation is the clearest sign of the grace of God, and on the sight of it all manner of persecutors are confounded; and then the meaning would be, *"shew me a token for good;"* give me the grace of that spiritual joy that will appear exteriorly in my countenance, *"that they which hate me may see"* such calmness and tranquillity of soul, *"and be confounded,"* for thou, O Lord, hast helped me in the struggle, consoled me in my sorrow, and hast already converted my sadness into interior joy and gladness.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 17.—*"Shew me a token for good,"* may be rendered "make me a sign for good." Weiss paraphrases it, "make of me such a sign or monument of good that all my enemies may be arrested by it, and be daunted at injuring a man so assisted by the Lord."

Verse 17.—*"Hast holpen me,"* in struggle; *"and comforted me,"* in sorrow.—*Augustine.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. A singular request—that the Lord should bow his ear. II. A singular plea—" I am poor and needy." III. The singular grace of God will answer the request, because singular grace has made the petitioner feel his need.

Verse 2.—I. The blessing sought is present, spiritual, complete and final preservation. II. Our reasons for expecting it are—1. Our belonging to God—" I am holy." 2. God's belonging to us—" my God." 3. Our faith, which has the promises. 4. Our fruits, which prove our faith—" thy servant."

Verse 3.—Importunity. 1. When she pleads—" daily." 2. How she pleads—" I cry." 3. To whom she pleads—" unto thee." 4. For what she pleads—" be merciful."

Verse 3.—" I will cry daily " for pardoning, sanctifying, assisting, preserving, providing and guiding mercy.—*William Jay.*

Verse 4.—I. The believer's joy is from God—" Rejoice," etc. II. The believer's joy is in God—" unto thee," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—The great lift. I. The heavy weight—" my soul." II. The weak worker—" I lift." III. The great height—" unto thee." IV. The appointed machinery—means of grace; and, V. The expected aid—" Rejoice," etc.

Verse 5.—Encouraging thoughts of God. 1. He has goodness in his essence. 2. He has forgiveness in readiness. 3. He has mercy in action, flowing forth from him plenteously. 4. His very discrimination is gracious—" all them that call upon him."

Verse 6.—The praying man desires above all things an answer. Objections to such an expectation. Grounds for continuing to expect, and duties incumbent upon those who realise such expectations.

Verse 6.—" The voice of supplication." It is the voice of weakness, of penitence, of faith, of hope, of the new nature, of knowledge, etc.

Verse 7.—1. Help needed. 2. Help sought. 3. Help found.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—I. A time to be expected—" day of my trouble." II. A resolve to be practised—" I will call upon thee." III. A result to be experienced—" thou wilt answer me."

Verse 7.—Prayer is the design of trouble, the evidence that it is sanctified, its solace, and the medium of deliverance from it.—*William Jay.*

Verse 8.—I. God is one; the only God: characters of false gods inferior far. II. His works are unique. Nature, providence, grace, all peculiar in many respects. A good theme for a thoughtful preacher.

Verse 9.—The certain conversion of the world as opposed to modern theories.

Verse 10.—I. God is " great," therefore great things may be expected of him. II. He is unsearchable, therefore " wondrous things " may be expected of him. III. He is irresistible, therefore impossibilities to others may be expected of him: " Thou art God alone."—*G. R.*

Verse 11.—In the disposition of mind which is expressed in these words, the believer stands opposed to four descriptions of character. I. The ignorant and thoughtless sinner, who neither regards his way nor his end. II. The Antinomian, who is zealous for doctrines, and averse from the practice of religion. III. The Pharisee, who disregards religious sentiment, and makes practice all in all. IV. The hypocrite, who appears to be divided between religion and the world.—*John Hyatt*, 1811.

Verse 11.—The Christian as a scholar, a man of action, and a man of devotion.

Verse 11.—Holiness taught, truth practised, God adored; and thus the life perfected.

Verse 11 (*middle clause*).—We should walk in the belief of the truth, its practice, enjoyment, and profession.—*William Jay.*

Verse 11 (*third clause*).—The necessity, benefit, and reasonableness of wholeheartedness in religion.

Verse 12.—The art of praising God by heart.

Verse 13.—I. Where I might have been—" the lowest hell." II. What thou hast done for me—" hast delivered." III. What thou art doing—" great is thy mercy."

Verse 13 (*first clause*).—God's mercy *great* in election, redemption, calling, pardon, upholding, etc. It *is* so, at this very moment, in supplying my needs, preserving

from danger, consoling in sorrow, etc. Great is thy mercy *towards me*—so great a sinner, with such needs, so provoking, so full of doubts, etc.

Verses 13, 14, 15.—The three verses describe salvation, consequent persecution, and all-sufficient consolation.

Verse 15.—The shades of the light of love. Compassion upon suffering, grace towards unworthiness, long-suffering to provocation, mercy towards sin, truth towards the promise.

Verse 16.—I. My pedigree—"son of thine handmaid." II. My occupation—"thy servant." III. My character—needing "mercy." IV. My request—"turn unto me."

Verse 16.—In what respects a servant of God may be girt with divine power.

Verse 17.—What inward feelings and outward providences are "tokens for good."

PSALM LXXXVII.

TITLE.—A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah. *A sacred hymn and a national lyric. A theocracy blends the religious and the patriotic ideas in one; and in proportion as nations become Christianized, their popular songs will become deeply imbued with pious sentiments. Judged by this standard, our own land is far in arrears. This "Psalm or song" was either composed by the sons of Korah, or dedicated to them: as they kept the doors of the house of the Lord, they could use this beautiful composition as a Psalm within the doors, and as a song outside.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—*The song is in honour of Zion, or Jerusalem, and it treats of God's favour to that city among the mountains, the prophecies which made it illustrious, and the honour of being a native of it. Many conceive that it was written at the founding of David's city of Zion, but does not the mention of Babylon imply a later date? It would seem to have been written after Jerusalem and the Temple had been built, and had enjoyed a history, of which glorious things could be spoken. Among other marvels of God's love in its later history, it had been untouched by Sennacherib when other cities of Israel and Judah had fallen victims to his cruelty. It was in Hezekiah's reign that Babylon became prominent, when the ambassadors came to congratulate the king concerning his recovery, at that time also Tyre would be more famous than at any period in David's day. But as we have no information, and the point is not important, we may leave it, and proceed to meditate upon the Psalm itself. We have no need to divide so brief a song.*

EXPOSITION.

HIS foundation *is* in the holy mountains.

2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this *man* was born there.

5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.

6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, *that* this *man* was born there. Selah.

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be there:* all my springs *are* in thee.

1. *"His foundation is in the holy mountains.'* The Psalm begins abruptly, the poet's heart was full, and it gained vent on a sudden.

> "God's foundation stands for ever
> On the holy mountain towers;
> Sion's gates Jehovah favours
> More than Jacob's thousand bowers."

Sudden passion is evil, but bursts of holy joy are most precious. God has chosen to found his earthly temple upon the mountains; he might have selected other spots, but it was his pleasure to have his chosen abode upon Zion. His election made the mountains holy, they were by his determination ordained and set apart for the Lord's use.

The foundation of the church, which is the mystical Jerusalem, is laid in the eternal, immutable, and invincible decrees of Jehovah. He wills that the church shall be, he settles all arrangements for her calling, salvation, maintenance and perfection, and all his attributes, like the mountains round about Jerusalem, lend

their strength for her support. Not on the sand of carnal policy, nor in the morass of human kingdoms, has the Lord founded his church, but on his own power and godhead, which are pledged for the establishment of his beloved church, which is to him the chief of all his works. What a theme for meditation is the founding of the church of God in the ancient covenant engagements of eternity; the abrupt character of this first verse indicates long consideration on the part of the writer, leading up to his bursting forth in wonder and adoration. Well might such a theme cause his heart to glow. Rome stands on her seven hills and has never lacked a poet's tongue to sing her glories, but more glorious far art thou, O Ziona, among the eternal mountains of God: while pen can write or mouth can speak, thy praises shall never lie buried in inglorious silence.

2. "*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*" The gates are put for the city itself. The love of God is greatest to his own elect nation, descended from his servant Jacob, yet the central seat of his worship is dearer still; no other supposable comparison could have so fully displayed the favour which Jehovah bore to Jerusalem,—he loves Jacob best and Zion better than the best. At this hour the mystical teaching of these words is plain. God delights in the prayers and praises of Christian families and individuals, but he has a special eye to the assemblies of the faithful, and he has a special delight in their devotions in their church capacity. The great festivals, when the crowds surrounded the temple gates, were fair in the Lord's eyes, and even such is the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. This should lead each separate believer to identify himself with the church of God; where the Lord reveals his love the most, there should each believer most delight to be found. Our own dwellings are very dear to us, but we must not prefer them to the assemblies of the saints; we must say of the church—

> "Here my best friends, my kindred dwell:
> Here God, my Saviour reigns."

3. "*Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.*" This is true of Jerusalem. Her history, which is the story of the nation of which she is the capital, is full of glorious incidents, and her use and end as the abode of the true God, and of his worship, was pre-eminently glorious. Glorious things were taught in her streets, and seen in her temples. Glorious things were foretold of her, and she was the type of the most glorious things of all. This is yet more true of the church: she is founded in grace, but her pinnacles glow with glory. Men may glory in her without being braggarts, she has a lustre about her brow which none can rival. Whatever glorious things the saints may say of the church in their eulogies, they cannot exceed what prophets have foretold, what angels have sung, or what God himself has declared. Happy are the tongues which learn to occupy themselves with so excellent a subject, may they be found around our fire-sides, in our market-places, and in all the spots where men most congregate. Never let thy praises cease, O thou bride of Christ, thou fairest among women, thou in whom the Lord himself hath placed his delight, calling thee by that pearl of names, Hephzibah, —"for my delight is in her." Since the Lord has chosen thee, and deigns to dwell in thee, O thou city of beauty, none can rival thee, thou art the eye of the world, the pearl, the queen of all the cities of the universe; the true "eternal city," the metropolitan, the mother of us all. The years to come shall unveil thy beauties to the astonished eyes of all peoples, and the day of thy splendour shall come to its sevenfold noon.

"*Selah.*" With the prospect before him of a world converted, and the most implacable foes transformed into friends, it was meet that the Psalmist should pause. How could he sing the glories of new-born Tyre and Ethiopia, received with open arms into union with Zion, until he had taken breath and prepared both voice and heart for so divine a song.

4. "*I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me.*" This shall be a glorious subject to speak of concerning Zion, that her old foes are new-born and have become her friends, worshipping in the temple of her God. Rahab or Egypt which oppressed Israel shall become a sister nation, and Babylon in which the tribes endured their second great captivity, shall become a fellow-worshipper; then shall there be mention made in familiar talk of the old enmities forgotten and the new friendships formed. Some consider that these are the words of God himself, and should be rendered "I will mention Rahab and Babylon as knowing

me:" but we feel content with our common version, and attribute the words to the Psalmist himself, who anticipates the conversion of the two great rival nations and speaks of it with exultation. *"Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia."* These also are to bow before the Lord. Philistia shall renounce her ancient hate, Tyre shall not be swallowed up by thoughts of her commerce, and distant Ethiopia shall not be too far off to receive the salvation of the Lord. *"This man was born there."* The word *man* is inserted by the translators to the marring of the sense, which is clear enough when the superfluous word is dropped,—"Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this was born there"—i.e., this nation has been born into Zion, regenerated into the church of God. Of the new births of nations we will make mention, for it is at once a great blessing and a great wonder. It is a glorious thing indeed when whole nations are born unto God.

> "Mark ye well Philistia's legions,
> Lo, to seek the Lord they come;
> And within the sacred regions
> Tyre and Cush have found a home.'

Many understand the sense of these verses to be that all men are proud of their native country, and so also is the citizen of Zion, so that while of one it is said, "he was born in Egypt" and of another, "he came from Ethiopia," it would be equally to the honour of others that they were home-born sons of the city of God. The passage is not so clear that any one should become dogmatical as to its meaning, but we prefer the interpretation given above.

5. *"And of Zion, it shall be said, This and that man was born in her."* Not as nations only, but one by one, as individuals, the citizens of the New Jerusalem shall be counted, and their names publicly declared. Man by man will the Lord reckon them, for they are each one precious in his sight; the individual shall not be lost in the mass, but each one shall be of high account. What a patent of nobility is it, for a man to have it certified that he was born in Zion; the twice born are a royal priesthood, the true aristocracy, the imperial race of men. The original, by using the noblest word for man, intimates that many remarkable men will be born in the church, and indeed every man who is renewed in the image of Christ is an eminent personage, while there are some, who, even to the dim eyes of the world, shine forth with a lustre of character which cannot but be admitted to be unusual and admirable. The church has illustrious names of prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, missionaries and the like, which bear comparison with the grandest names honoured by the world, nay, in many respects far excel them. Zion has no reason to be ashamed of her sons, nor her sons of her. "Wisdom is justified of her children." *"And the highest himself shall establish her"*—the only establishment worth having. When the numbers of the faithful are increased by the new birth, the Lord proves himself to be the upbuilder of the church. The Lord alone deserves to wear the title of Defender of the Faith; he is the sole and sufficient Patron and Protector of the true church. There is no fear for the Lord's heritage, his own arm is sufficient to maintain his rights. The Highest is higher than all those who are against us, and the good old cause shall triumph over all.

6. *"The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there."* At the great census which the Lord himself shall take, he will number the nations without exception and make an exact registry of them, whether they were by their natural descent Babylonians or Tyrians, or other far-off heathen. May it be our happy lot to be numbered with the Lord's chosen both in life and death, in the church-roll below, and in the church-roll above. Jehovah's census of his chosen will differ much from ours; he will count many whom we should have disowned, and he will leave out many whom we should have reckoned. His registration is infallible. Let us pray then for that adoption and regeneration which will secure us a place among the heaven-born. It was thought to be a great honour to have one's name written in the golden book of the Republic of Venice, kings and princes paid dearly for the honour, but the book of life confers far rarer dignity upon all whose names are recorded therein.

7. In vision the Psalmist sees the citizens of Zion rejoicing at some sacred festival, and marching in triumphant procession with vocal and instrumental music; —*"As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there."* Where God is there must be joy, and where the church is increased by numerous conversions

the joy becomes exuberant and finds out ways of displaying itself. Singers and dancers, Psalmists and pipers, united their efforts and made a joyful procession to the temple, inspired not by Bacchus, or by the Castalian fount, but by draughts from the sacred source of all good, of which they each one sing "*All my springs are in thee.*" Did the poet mean that henceforth he would find all his joys in Zion, or that to the Lord he would look for all inspiration, comfort, strength, joy, life and everything. The last is the truest doctrine. Churches have not such all-sufficiency within them that we can afford to look to them for all, but the Lord who founded the church is the eternal source of all our supplies, and looking to him we shall never flag or fail. How truly does all our experience lead us to look to the Lord by faith, and say " all my fresh springs are in thee." The springs of my faith and all my graces ; the springs of my life and all my pleasures ; the springs of my activity and all its right doings ; the springs of my hope, and all its heavenly anticipations, all lie in thee, my Lord. Without thy Spirit I should be as a dry well, a mocking cistern, destitute of power to bless myself or others. O Lord, I am assured that I belong to the regenerate whose life is in thee, for I feel that I cannot live without thee ; therefore, with all thy joyful people will I sing thy praises.

" With joy shall sing the choral train,
The minstrels breathe the answering strain :
' O Zion, Zion, fair, I see
The fountains of my bliss in thee.' "

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*A Psalm or Song for the Sons of Korah.*" The title prefixed is " A Psalm to be sung by the sons of Korah," i.e. of fallen man. Korah signifies the state in which trees are during winter, when stript of their verdure and fruit. In the same sense it is used for the bald head, when age or sickness has deprived it of its glory and left it without hair. This is a lively description of fallen man. He has lost his pristine beauty and fruitfulness. When he left God and turned to his own ways, he became like the trees of the field in winter, from which the genial warmth of the sun is withdrawn, or like the head, which by the abating of the natural heat and vigour is left naked and bald. But being brought to a right sense of this, and finding himself stript of all the glory which the first Adam had in paradise, he has been led to seek the restoration of his nature, and has obtained of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, a much better state than he had lost. Every such person is entitled to sing this sacred hymn, and he is called upon to do it. The name of the person whom he is to celebrate is not mentioned at first, but is soon discovered by the character given of him.—*William Romaine.*

Whole Psalm.—Bishop Bruno entitles this Psalm, " The voice of prophecy concerning the heavenly Jerusalem," that is, the Church of Christ.

Verse 1.—"*His foundation is in the holy mountains.*" The foundation that God has given his city is in " the holy mountains." What are these holy mountains ? What can they be but the eternal purpose of Jehovah—the purpose out of which the being of the Church and the whole dispensation of Divine love have sprung ? What but those attributes of mercy, justice, holiness, and sovereignty, from the ineffable embrace and holy co-operation of which it comes to pass that his chosen people are redeemed ? What but the promise of life that was given in Christ to the elect before the world began ? What but the everlasting covenant, " ordered in all things and sure " from which grace and salvation proceed ? What but these things, and Christ himself, the Rock of Ages, on which rock we know that the Church is so firmly founded, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her ? Yes, these are the holy mountains, whereon the city of God is built, and in which its deep and strong foundations are laid. The sure decree, the divine perfections, the promise of him that cannot lie, the oath and covenant of God, and the incarnate Son himself, are the holy mountains, the perpetual hills, whose summits are gloriously crowned

by the city of the Great King. There the city sits securely, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.—*Andrew Gray.*

Verse 1.—"*Mountains.*" The situation of Jerusalem is in several respects singular amongst the cities of Palestine. Its elevation is remarkable, occasioned, not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judæa, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest table-lands of the country. Hebron, indeed, is higher still, by some hundred feet; and from the south, accordingly, the approach to Jerusalem is by a slight descent. But from every other side, the ascent is perpetual; and, to the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the west or east, it must always have presented the appearance, beyond any other capital of the then known world—we may add, beyond any important city that has ever existed on the earth—of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the sultry plains of the Jordan or of the coast, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho or Damascus, Gaza or Tyre, on a mountain fastness. In this respect it concentrated in itself the character of the whole country of which it was to be the capital—the "mountain throne," the "mountain sanctuary," of God. "The 'mount' of God is as the 'mount' of Bashan; an high mount as the mount of Bashan. Why leap ye so, ye high 'mountains'? this is the 'mountain' which God desireth to dwell in". . . . It was emphatically the lair of the lion of Judah, of "Ariel," the Lion of God. "In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel. In Salem is his 'leafy covert,' and his 'rocky den' in Zion. . . . Thou art more glorious and excellent than the 'mountains of the robbers.'" And this wild and fastness-like character of Jerusalem was concentrated yet again in the fortress, the "stronghold" of Zion. That point, the highest in the city, the height which most readily catches the eye from every quarter, is emphatically the "hill fort," the "rocky hold" of Jerusalem—the refuge where first the Jebusite, and then the Lion of God, stood at bay against the hunters.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.*

Verses 1, 2.—If we suppose the Psalm to have been composed in the days of Hezekiah, it will appear quite intelligible that the Psalmist should break out so suddenly at the beginning with praise of the *security* of Zion: he merely lends his mouth in this case to the full heart of the people; "*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob,*" is seen in its true light, for this preference for Sion was at that time *verified*—its gates remained closed upon the enemies, while all the rest of the country was subject to their sway.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord loveth the gates,*" etc. The gates of a walled city give access to it and power over it, and therefore are naturally here put for the whole. The Hebrew participle (*loving*) implies constant and habitual attachment.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion.*" Because of the going out and coming in of the people of God. Thus indeed the disposition of lovers is shown, that they are filled with a remarkable affection of love towards those places through which those whom they love frequently pass, as doors and gates, and those ways which they daily traverse. What other reason could God have for loving the gates of Zion?—*Musculus.*

Verse 2.—"*The gates of Zion*" are the doctrines of the Gospel, "*the tabernacles of Jacob*" are the teachings of the law, the law was accomplished in the gospel; therefore it is said that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."—"*Plain Commentary,*" 1859.

Verse 2.—"*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more,*" etc. No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs were very acceptable unto him; but if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the church choir, his saints' prayers in concert together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together; the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels make but one concert.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all,*" etc. It is here assumed that the Lord loves the dwellings of Jacob—he loves those that are true Israelites. These are succeeded by the name *Christian,* for the Christian Church is now become the true Israel of God. He loves his saints on account of that image

of himself which they bear; he loves them on account of those graces which are infused into them when they are renewed by the spirit; he loves them on account of the relation they stand in to him as his people, and as his church, who are qualified for the duties of the relation by that love of their Father, that reliance upon his care, that delight in his person, that enjoyment in his service, which belongs to dutiful and affectionate children. He loves them because they imitate his perfections in some humble measure—because they receive the word of his mouth—because they are ready to obey every call of his providence, setting themselves in the paths of his testimony wherever he may direct—because they yield themselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their bodies as instruments of righteousness, no longer walking after the deeds of the flesh, but after the will of God. He takes a delight in them; the Lord delighteth in the righteous; he knoweth their way; he loves, approves, and confirms them. The most common occupations of life—the honest industry of the servants of God, is looked upon by him with approbation. By these they show forth their Father, and the praises of him who called them from darkness to light. The most ordinary duties of our calling become sacrifices to God, and religious duties, when performed in the spirit, and directed to the great end of glorifying God. He looks with peculiar complacency on the dwellings of his people on account of those domestic devotional acknowledgments of his majesty which are there maintained, when the head walks before his family as a priest to offer praise and thanksgiving; this attracts peculiar approbation and delight. He loves to see his people training up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and their children walking after them in the paths of that obedience which he has enjoined. He delights to see the course of purity which runs in Christian families. He loves to see the progress which the younger parts of religious families make in piety, while they grow in grace, and in favour with God and man. He looks down with peculiar delight on such circles as these: there he deigns his presence, and bestows peculiar blessings. However obscure the dwellings of Jacob may be, to him they are open and manifest at all times; and whether in cottages or in palaces, his eye rests there with complacency; and he says of such places, "Here will I dwell for ever and ever." Prayer and devotion sanctify every family, and diffuse a spirit of piety through all the avocations of life, so that we need not retire from the world, but are rather called to show forth the virtues of the Christian life in it.

But it is said, that, although "he loves the dwellings of Jacob," yet "*he loves the gates of Zion more* than all the dwellings of Jacob"—that nothing in the dwellings of Jacob so much attracts his attention as the people of God connected together in a spiritual capacity. I. In the first place, the Divine Being regards with peculiar complacency the worship of his saints on its own account. II. On account of that union of mind and consent of heart, evinced in the assembling of God's people together, and constituting themselves into a church. III. Because of the testimony which the church bears toward the truth. IV. Upon account of that deference to his authority, which is evinced by maintaining and keeping up the practice of those institutes which rest entirely on that authority. V. By making the assembly of the saints the grand means of conversion. VI. That peculiar presence of God is generally vouchsafed to his saints, and made manifest to them, although it be hidden from the world, which induces the conviction that God is present of a truth. VII. The Divine Being shows his preference of the gates of Zion to the dwellings of Jacob, by continually maintaining in operation those gifts which are for the edification of the saints, and without which the union of the saints would be with difficulty maintained. VIII. The Divine Being shews his preference to Zion by that marvellous protection which is afforded to the interest of the church of God; whereby, though weak, and frequently reduced to a handful of disciples, yet they have been protected, and their society on earth continued.—*Robert Hall.*

Verse 2.—Some absent themselves from public worship, under pretence that they can serve the Lord at home as well in private. How many are apt to say, they see not but their time may be as well spent at home, in praying, reading some good book, or discoursing on some profitable subject, as in the use of ordinances in public assemblies! They see not but private prayer may be as good to them as public, or private reading and opening the Scripture as profitable as public preaching; they say of their private duties, as Naaman of the waters of Damascus, 2 Kings v. 12: May I not serve the Lord as acceptably, with as much advantage,

in private exercises of religion? May I not wash in these and be clean? They see not the great blessings God has annexed to public worship more than to private. Oh, but if it be thus, if one be as good as the other, what means the Lord to prefer one before the other? To what purpose did the Lord choose the gates of Zion, to place his name there, if he might have been worshipped as well in the dwellings of Jacob? How do men of this conceit run counter to the Lord? He prefers the gates of Zion, not only before one or some, but before all the dwellings of Jacob; and they prefer one such dwelling before the gates of Zion.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 3.—*'Glorious things are spoken"* of the people of God. Take the church for a visible congregation, a mixed congregation; glorious things are spoken of that. It is the house of God. Take it as visible, "the vessels of honour and dishonour," 2 Tim. ii. 20, and the field, the "tares and the wheat," Matt. xiii. 1. etc., it is God's field. Though we take the church as visible, it hath a glorious name for the good that is in it, especially for the wheat. But take the church of God for the company of his children that are gathered by the means of grace, dwelling in the visible church, enjoying the ordinances: so they are the house and temple of Christ, "the temple of the Holy Ghost, the body of Christ, the spouse of Christ." They are God's delight, they are spiritual kings and priests, etc. The most glorious things that can be, all other excellencies in the world, are but titular things, mere shadows of things. There is some little reality in earthly things, but it is nothing in comparison, it is scarce worth the name of reality, but Solomon calls them "vanity of vanities." In comparison of the excellencies of the church all is nothing. I might be large in these particulars. It is enough to give you the generals of the delights and excellencies of God's house, "the beauty of the Lord."—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 3.—*"The glories of the wilderness are in thee."* The Shechinah, which appeared upon Sinai, and marshalled the army of the Israelites upon their journey through the wilderness, has now fixed its residence in thee, O city of God. Compare Ps. lxviii. 17.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 4.—*"I will make mention,"* etc. As if he had said, I do not deny the due praises which belong to other places and countries, but rather am wont to make honorable mention of them among my acquaintance; and to allow that *"this man,"* that is, some one notable person, though comparatively of no great value, was born in them.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 4.—*"Rahab,"* a poetical name of *Egypt.* The same word signifies "fierceness, insolence, pride"; if Hebrew when applied to Egypt, it would indicate the national character of the inhabitants.—*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.*

Verse 4.—It should comfort the church that God is able to make her chiefest enemies to become converts, and that he hath done it sundry times, and will yet do it more; and that he can take order with those enemies which shall not be converted, as he did with *Rahab* and *Babylon;* for, *"I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me,"* signifieth a mention-making of them; *viz.* to the edification of the church's children, both concerning what God had done in those nations in justice; and what he would do to them in mercy, or unto other enemies like unto them.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—*"Rahab," "Babylon," "Philistia," "Tyre," "Ethiopia."* This is the glory of the Church, that into her the fulness of the nations shall enter,—the proud from Egypt, who for her haughtiness is called Rahab,—the worldly from Babylon, the city of confusion,—the wrathful from Philistia, so long the enemies of Israel,—the covetous from Tyre, the rich city of the traders,—and the slaves of ignorance from Cush, and from the land of Ham,—all these shall learn the love of Christ and confess his truth, and shall enter into that all-glorious city, and be admitted and acknowledged as citizens of the celestial Sion.—*"Plain Commentary."*

Verse 4.—By this testimony of the nations here mentioned, we may understand the testimony of the Gentile Christians in general, though, perhaps, a special reference is had to that extraordinary scene which took place at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak

in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" Acts ii. 5—8.

The reader will find that there is a remarkable agreement between the nations specified in the book of the Acts, and the nations pointed out in the Psalm before us. Rahab, that is, Egypt, is first mentioned; and in the Acts we find enumerated, "Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene;" next Babylon is in the record; and the "Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia," were inhabitants of what once was the Babylonian empire: Philistia is also mentioned; and "dwellers in Judea" are spoken of in the Acts—"dwellers in Judea" speaking a different language from what was common at Jerusalem. Who could these be, so probably, as the inhabitants of the ancient Philistia, which was in the precincts of the allotment of Judah? Here, too, perhaps, on account of its port of Joppa, was a grand resort of "Cretes and Arabians," and "strangers of Rome."

The Grecian settlements of Asia Minor are the only ones specified in the Acts of the Apostles, which we have not noticed in the Psalm—"Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia:" but what could so probably indicate these countries, and all who spoke the dialects of the Grecian tongue, as the great mart of Tyre, in frequenting which, the Jews would have the most frequent opportunity of intercourse with these nations?—*John Fry.*

Verse 4.—"*Born in her.*" *The* Missionary Society set forth in the Prophets, by our Lord and by his apostles, is, the Church; and so, whereas our natural state, after Adam's fall, was alienation from God, and disunion among ourselves, would He restore "glory to God in the highest and on the earth peace, good-will towards men," by binding us up in one holy fellowship, and making the continuance of his blessings dependent upon that unity, which he imparted and preserves. To adduce the whole proof for this, would be to go through the whole Old Testament; for the Old Testament is direct prophecy and type, is one large prophecy of the Redeemer and his Kingdom or Church. No sooner had disunion multiplied with the multiplying of men, but in the second generation from Adam, he formed union through a Church, and "Men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. iv. 26), *i.e.*, they began to unite in worshipping the Lord, and amid the growing corruption, religion was no longer entrusted to the insulated care of single families, but concentrated in a church. And when, after the flood, one righteous man was called out of the fast-corrupting world, unity was preserved, in that one only was called, but in that one a church was founded; for this was the reason assigned by God himself: "All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," (Gen. xviii. 18. 19). "God called Abraham *alone*, and blessed him, and increased him" (Isai. li. 2), and formed the Jewish Church out of him, that however it might spread, it might be bound in one by its origin of one; and he gave it also outward marks and signs between him and it, which by severing it from others, might keep it one in itself. The temporal people had their union through a temporal birth of one, and outward signs; the Christian Church has its unity by a spiritual birth and inward graces, through the power deposited in her to give spiritual birth, so that through one mother, we are all born of one Father, God, and amongst ourselves are brethren, by being members of One, our ever-blessed Lord.

The unity of the Christian Church and her office of gathering all nations unto the Lord, are set forth, in many ways, in prophecy. Thus, in our Psalm, Zion is set forth as the special object of God's love, as having (in language which anticipates the Gospel) been "founded" by him "on the holy mountains," as the "city of God," whereof "glorious things are spoken." And what are these? That she should be the spiritual birthplace of all nations. It is not merely said, as in other places, that they should "come to her," should "flow into her," but that they should be "born in her." "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man (*i.e.* all, one by one) was born in her;" and whence? all the nations of the earth, Rahab or Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Ethiopia, Philistia, the most learned, the most powerful, the wealthiest, the furthest, and her nearest, oldest and bitterest enemy Philistia, all, being already born after the flesh, as Egyptians, Babylonians, Ethiopians, Tyrians, Philistines, should be "born in her," and by being "born there," should become children of God, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, written by God in the

roll of his book. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there;" he shall account them as his, being re-born in his Church.

In like manner, with regard to every prophecy, whereat men's hearts beat, as an encouragement to Missionary labours. Throughout, it is the Lord and Saviour of the Church, or the Church itself, filled with his Spirit, and restored and enlarged, and widening herself by his favour, and gathering his people into herself, his fold. —*E. B. Pusey, in a Sermon entitled "The Church the converter of the Heathen."* 1838.

Verses 4—6. It is made the honour and dignity of Sion, that is, of the true Church of God, to have such and such born in it: *"this and that man* was born in *her."* There are two things signified in this expression, as branches of their honour; the one is the *quality* of the persons; and the other is the *number* of them. For the *quality* of them, *"this;"* for the *number* of them, *"this and that."* To have both of these born in Sion, persons of *note and eminency*, and a *multitude and plurality* of such persons; this is a part of that dignity and renown which belongs unto it. . . . .

And so for the noun, *"man;"* the Hebrew word אִישׁ which is here used for a man, except qualified by some other word as joined with it, signifies a man of *worth*, not a common or ordinary person. The Church brings forth as these, אַנְשֵׁי שֵׁם, men of renown, famous and eminent men, and that in all kinds of perfections, whether natural, or civil, or spiritual; men of parts, or men of power, or men of piety. There are those in all these excellencies which have been and still are born in her.

First, take it for *natural* or *acquired* abilities; men of parts, and knowledge, and wisdom, and improved understandings; the church is not without these: *"this man," i.e.*, this *learned* man, or this *wise* man was born in Sion. All are not idiots who are Christians; no, but there are some of very rare and admirable accomplishments in all kinds and pieces of learning and secular knowledge, which are graciously qualified. There's Paul with his parchments, and Peter with his fisher's net. So also secondly, take it for civil or secular qualifications; men of dignity, and power, and estate: *"this man," i.e.*, this *honourable* man, אִישׁ רָאשׁ, eminent in countenance, as he is called, Isaiah iii. 2, *he* is likewise born in Sion; the mighty man, and the man of war. The Syriac interpreter was so far sensible of this, as that he expresses it in the very text; and therefore instead of saying, *"This* man was born there," he says, "*A potent man* was born there, 'and *he* has established it;'" whereby (as I conceive), he takes in the word *"highest,"* which follows afterwards in the verse, and refers it here to this place . . . . . And again, the Chaldee paraphrast in the text, *"This King* was born there," understanding thereby Solomon, as most conceive and apprehend it.

Thirdly, take it for *spirituals*, and for these accomplishments especially; *"This man," i.e.*, this *godly* man; this is that which is most proper and essential to Sion, and to the being born in it; yea, it is that which *makes Sion* itself, in the sense we now take it. It is the highest perfection of it, and the greatest commendation to it of any thing else. This is the great honour of the church, that it forms men to such qualities and dispositions as those are, which no other place does beside. . . . . As for other places, they may perhaps now and then reach to some *other principles*, and those likewise very glorious in the eyes of the *world*—morality, and civility, and ingenuity, and smoothness of behaviour. The school of nature and common reason may sometimes come up to these, and that in a very great measure; yea, but now go a little higher, to brokenness of heart, to self-denial, to love of enemies, to closing with Christ, the frame and spirit of the gospel; this is to be found nowhere but only *in Sion*. And here it is: *"This man* was born *there."*

"Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there." Here's the excellency of the ordinances, and that power and energy which is stirring in the Church of Christ; that it is able to work such a miraculous alteration *as this;* to bring men from darkness to light, from Satan to God, from a state of sin and corruption and unregeneracy, to a state of grace and holiness and regeneration; yea, from the lowest degree of the one to the highest degree of the other. That *Philistia* should turn into *Palestina*, *Tyre* into *Jerusalem*, *Ethiopia* into *Judea;* here's the wonder of all; the reconciling of these two opposite terms thus both together. That "princes should come out of *Egypt*," and that *Ethiopia* should stretch out her hands to God, as it is in Ps. lxviii. 31; that the blackamoor should change his skin, and that the leopard should change his spots; and that this Ethiopian should become this Christian; that he which was born *there*, should be

born *here.*"—*Thomas Horton, in "Zion's Birth-Register unfolded in a Sermon to the native citizens of London."* 1656.

Verses 4—6.—Foreign nations are here described not as captives or tributaries, not even as doing voluntary homage to the greatness and glory of Zion, but as actually incorporated and enrolled, by a new birth, among her sons. Even the worst enemies of their race, the tyrants and oppressors of the Jews, Egypt and Babylon, are threatened with no curse, no shout of joy is raised at the prospect of their overthrow, but the privileges of citizenship are extended to them, and they are welcomed as brothers. Nay more, God himself receives each one as a child newly-born into his family, acknowledges each as his son, and enrols him with his own hand on the sacred register of his children. It is the mode of anticipating a future union and brotherhood of all the nations of the earth, not by conquest, but by incorporation into one state, and by a birth-right so acquired, which is so remarkable. In some of the prophets, more especially in Isaiah, we observe the same liberal, conciliatory, comprehensive language towards foreign states, as Tyre and Ethiopia, and still more strikingly toward Egypt and Assyria (chap. xix. 22—25). But the Psalm stands alone amongst the writings of the Old Testament, in representing this union of nations as a new birth unto the city of God . . . . It it is the first announcement of that great amity of nations, or rather of that universal common citizenship of which heathen philosophers dreamt, which was "in the mind of Socrates when he called himself a citizen of the world," which had become a common-place of Stoic philosophy, which Judaism tried finally to realize by the admission of proselytes, through baptism, into the Jewish community; which Rome accomplished, so far as the external semblance went, first by subduing the nations, and then by admitting them to the rights of Roman citizenship. But the true fulfilment of this hope is to be found only in that kingdom which Christ has set up. He has gathered into his commonwealth all the kingdoms of the earth. He has made men one, members of the same family, by teaching them to feel that they are all children of the same Father. He has made it evident that the hope of the Jewish singer is no false hope; that there is a Father in heaven who cares for all, whatever name they bear. Thus the Psalm has received a better and higher fulfilment than that which lies on the surface of its words. It was fulfilled in Christ.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 4—7.—The main thought is that contained in ver. 4—7, the glorifying of Sion by the reception of the heathen into the number of its citizens; and a well-defined form and arrangement of this thought forms the proper kernel of the Psalm, viz.. "Sion, the *birth-place* of the nations," which occurs in every one of the three verses (4—6), which are bounded by a Selah behind and before.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5.—*"This man."* The word rendered *"Man"* is generally used for a person of eminence; and the clause "this and that man," is simply, "a Man and a Man," which some think is used as a peculiar superlative, and means, *the most eminent of men*, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and they suppose, that He, in his divine nature, is *"the Highest"* who *"shall establish the church."* No doubt he is the glory of the church, and of his people Israel: but his crucifixion was the deepest disgrace imaginable to Jersusalem itself.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 5.—*"This man."* It is well to observe that the word for *"man,"* used here, is not אָדָם *adam*, the common name for man, but אִישׁ *ish*, which is usually employed when a name is introduced to be designated with distinction and honour. There are in Hebrew, in fact, three words to designate man, with varied signification —אָדָם *adam*, the common name; אִישׁ *ish*, the name of excellency and honour; and אֱנוֹשׁ *enosh*, man in his weak and inferior character, as liable to misfortune, misery, and death. The illustrative discrimination with which these words are respectively employed gives to many passages of the Hebrew Scripture a force and significance which cannot be perserved in translation into a language which has but one word to represent all these meanings—or indeed has no word for man but the one answering to *Adam*, unless indeed our "male," in a sense of dignity and strength, answers in some measure to *ish.*—*John Kitto, in "The Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 6.—The Lord will *"count"* (יִסְפֹּר), *record it in a book*, when *"he writes up the people"* (בִּכְתֹּב עַמִּים), *registers the several nations* of the earth; that *"this man was born in"* Sion. The Psalmist here describes the peculiar regard of God to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and figuratively represents him, as keeping a register of all the nations of the earth, and marking, as it were, in that register, every one

that was a citizen of *Jerusalem*, as thereby entitled to his distinguishing favour and protection.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 6.—"*This man was born there.*" When events shall be traced to their principles at the last day, many a scene will come forth into prominence, which now is of little regard. Humble churches will then prove to have been the birthplace, and stately palaces the graves of many an immortal soul, while every saved soul will ascribe its springs of glory to its Redeemer, through the instrumentality of that church, which he has ordained.—*Edward Garrard Marsh.*

6.—"*Selah.*" The Hebrew text addeth "*Selah,*" which St. Jerome translateth *semper* (always). For the Church, as a bride glorious in her husband, shall evermore be preached of; glorious things shall be spoken of her, and in her shall be continually sung the ineffable glory of the everlasting grace of God in Christ our Lord. And so the Jews for the most part interpret the word "*Selah*" by "*everlasting.*" This is evident in their epitaphs, even as the Jewish epitaph is in Hebrew at Basle—"His soul continues in Paradise, Amen, Amen, Amen, for ever and ever."—*Urbanus Regius* [*? Le Roi*] (—1541) *in "The Solace of Sion."*

7.—"*The singers;*" "*the players on instruments.*" Song and music were prominent features of Divine worship in David's time. This is evident from the large number of two hundred and eighty-eight Levites who were expressly appointed for singing and the performance of music. Not less than two hundred and fifty-five singing men and singing women returned from the exile . . . The chief instruments used by the Levites were, according to the records of the Books of Chronicles, cymbals, harps and lutes: according to Psalm v. (title), we should add the flute, which is frequently noticed on Egyptian monuments.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 7.—(*First clause*). *For all its inhabitants are expert musicians;* lit. *sing like flute-players.* The Hebrews seem to have surpassed all nations in the skill of poetry and music; and every citizen could sing and dance. This pre-eminence the Psalmist seems to hint at.—*Alexander Geddes.*

Verse 7.—"*All my springs are in thee.*" The original word מעין, which we render "*springs,*" is used in a figurative sense, to denote *any one's posterity.* Thus Proverbs v. 16, "Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad"; *i.e.*, thy posterity be exceeding numerous. And thus in the place before us: the inhabitants of Jerusalem should triumph and sing, "*All my springs,*" or fountains, all my friends, my family, my children, are in thee, are thy citizens, enjoy the glorious privileges thou art favoured with, are all inserted in God's register, and entitled to his protection and favour. Thus there is a harmony and connection between all the parts of this ode, which I think is very intelligible and poetical.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 7.—"*All my springs are in thee.*" Whatever conduit pipe be used, Christ is the fountain and foundation of every drop of comfort; Christ is the God of all true consolation. It is not in the power of all the angels of heaven to give any soul one drop of comfort, nor can all on earth give you one dram of comfort. They can speak the words of comfort, but they cannot cause the soul to receive comfort. God comforts by them, 2 Cor. vii. 6. Titus was but an instrument. Comforting is called frequently in Scripture the speaking to the heart, Hos. ii. 14. Who is able to speak to the heart but he who is the Lord and commander of the heart? God hath put all the oil of spiritual joy into the hands of Christ, Isa. lxi. 3, and none but he can give it out. He that wants comfort must go to Christ, he that hath received any true comfort must ascribe it to Christ. "*All my springs,*" saith the Church, "are in thee."—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 7.—The silver springs of grace, and the golden springs of glory are in him.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 7.—"*Springs.*" The meaning of this verse is obscure, partly from its abrupt brevity, and partly from the ambiguity of one word. The word "*springs*" is, beyond all controversy, to be here taken metaphorically; but interpreters are not agreed as to the explanation of the metaphor. Some understand it as denoting *hopes*, some *affections*, and others *thoughts*. Did the idiom of the language admit, I would willingly subscribe to the opinion of those who translate it *melodies* or *songs*. But as this might be considered unsupported by the usage of the Hebrew term, I am rather inclined to adopt, as most suitable to the subject in hand, the opinion that *lookings* is the proper translation, the root of the word signifying *an eye*. It is as if the Psalmist had said, I will always be earnestly looking, as it were, with fixed eyes upon thee.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—"*My springs.*"

Whether songs or melodies
In Thee are all my well-springs.

This passage is given obscurely in most of the versions; it is here rendered strictly, and, as the author hopes, perspicuously. As the Greeks had their Pierian springs, their fountain of Aganippe dedicated to the Muses, Jerusalem had, in like manner, her sacred springs, her fountains of inspiration, in a much higher degree. It is to these the holy bard alludes in the passages before us, as Milton does in the following, who has perhaps copied from the present in his address to the "Heavenly Muse":

"Or if Zion's hill
Delight thee more, or *Siloa's fount that flowed*
Hard by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thine aid to my adventurous song.'

—*John Mason Good.*

Verse 7.—"*All my springs.*" Fitly may we here quote the delightful hymn of Robert Robinson which has puzzled so many, but which has in it a fine classical allusion to Hippocrene and Mount Parnassus.

"Come, thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace,
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above:
Praise the mount—oh fix me on it,
Mount of God's unchanging love."

—*C. H. S.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 2, 3.—I. The foundation of Zion. 1. It is but one: "foundation." 2. It is the Lord's: "his." 3. It is in conformity with holiness: "holy mountains." 4. It consists of eternal purposes. 5. It is built up on immutable principles. 6. It is situated in a glorious position. II. The favour enjoyed by Zion. 1. God "loves the dwellings of Jacob." He led, fed, guarded, lighted, visited them. 2. He loves Zion "better"; and gives all those blessings in a richer form. 3. There are more to love. 4. Their occupations are more spiritual. 5. Their songs and worship are more enthusiastic. 6. Their testimony is more powerful. 7. Their knowledge of truth is more clear. 8. Their fellowship is on a scale more heavenly. Let us be in the Church, and love her. III. The fame of Zion. "Glorious things are spoken," 1. *of* her in history; 2. *in* her by ministry; 3. *for* her by Jesus; 4. *about* her in prophecy. Here is a fruitful theme.

Verse 3.—The idea of the text presents the Church as "the city of God"; let us touch upon some of the "glorious things" that are spoken of it. I. There are glorious things with respect to the *erection* of the city. 1. There is the plan of its erection. There was never a plan so faultless, so complete, so wonderful for its beauty and grandeur. The gates, the walls, the buildings, the streets, the monuments, the fountains, the gardens, unite to proclaim it a masterpiece of skill. The Architect was he who built the skies. 2. There is the *site* where the city is erected. See verse 1. 3. There is the *date* of the city's erection. A halo and a glory attach, in a case like this, to great antiquity. Now it is long since the city was built. It was standing in the days of Paul. "Ye are come unto the city of the living God." Heb. xii. 22. David was well acquainted with it. Ps. xlvi. 4. It

was standing before the flood. Noah, Enoch, Abel, dwelt in it. It is almost as old as the creation. II. There are glorious things to tell of the *defences* of the city. It has been besieged ever since it was a city at all, and it is not taken to this hour. "We have a strong city," etc. III. There are glorious things in connexion with the *stores* and *supplies* on which the city depends: 1, their excellence; 2, their abundance; 3, their source. IV. There are glorious things respecting the *King* of the city; his name, person, character, etc. V. There are glorious things in connexion with the *citizens* of the city.—*Andrew Gray*, 1805—1861.

Verse 3.—I. Observe, that a city is not like a flower, a tree, or a plant—something that grows out of the earth, and is nourished from the earth, and dependent wholly on its juices. It is an artificial thing, constructed by wisdom and raised by power, as it was designed by genius and forethought. II. A city upon earth is surrounded generally by walls. III. Jerusalem (the most celebrated of cities, from which this figure is obviously drawn) was built upon the brow of a hill, an extremely conspicuous and beautiful object. IV. In a city there are various buildings, and structures of various shapes, materials and value: illustrate by the different denominations, etc. V. A city has municipal laws. VI. It has also trade, traffic, etc. VII. The figure, as applied to the Church of Christ, involves the idea of safety or security, honour, etc. VIII. There is also the idea of fewness.—*John Cumming*, 1843.

Verse 3.—The things "spoken" of the city of God. I. It shall be the permanent and the peculiar residence of God. II. It shall be the scene of delightful privileges and blessings. III. It shall be invested with absolute and inviolable security. IV. It shall possess renown and empire throughout the whole world. V. Its institutions and existence shall be perfected in the celestial state.—*James Parsons*, 1839.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—I. Behold what the "man" was: a native of "Philistia," a heathen, and an enemy to God. II. Behold what happened to him: he "was born there," *i.e.*, new born in Zion. III. Behold what he became—he became by his new birth a freeman and burgess of Zion, etc.

Verses 4, 5.—I. What is not the most honourable birth-place—not Rahab nor Egypt, nor Babylon, nor any earthly palace or kingdom. II. What is? "Of Zion," etc. 1. Because it is a nobler birth; a being born again of the Spirit of God. 2. Because it is a nobler place; the residence of the Highest, and established for ever. Because it brings nobler rank and privileges.—*G. R.*

Verses 4—7.—I. Zion shall produce many good and great men. II. Zion's interest shall be established by divine power. III. Zion's sons shall be registered with honour. IV. Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 4—7.—I. The excellence of the church is here stated. II. Her enlargement is here promised.—*J. Scholefield*, 1825.

Verse 5.—The renowned men of the church of God. 1. Great warriors, who have fought with temptation. 2. Great poets, whose lives were Psalms. 3. Great heroes, who have lived and died for Jesus. 4. Great kings who have ruled themselves, etc. Apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, men renowned for virtues such as only grace can produce.

Verse 5.—"*This and that man.*" The individuality of true religion. 1. Each soul sins for itself. 2. Rejects or accepts the Saviour for itself. 3. Must be judged, and 4. Saved or lost individually. The consequent need of personal piety; the temptations to neglect it; and the habits which promote it.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—The Established Church of God—her Head, her protection her power, etc.

Verse 6.—I. "The Lord" will make the Census. II. He will "count" whether a man be rightly there or no. III. Every man truly born in Zion shall be admitted on the register.

Verse 6.—I. The time referred to. "When he writeth up," etc.; when all the true Israel is saved. II. The account to be taken: "When he writeth up," etc., *i.e.*, revises and re-enters the names in the Lamb's Book of Life. Compares the called with the chosen. III. The test to be applied. 1. Their being in Zion, or

having the means of grace. 2. Their being born there. IV. The completion of their number: "The Lord shall count." An exact number of stones in a perfect building and of members in a perfect body. So in Christ's Church. All make one bride. V. The notice taken of each one: "This man was born there." Men fell as a whole; they are saved individually.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—I. In God our joy. II. From God our supplies. III. To God our praise.

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—All the springs within me, all the springs which flow for me, are in my God. There are "upper and nether springs," springs "shut up," "valley" springs (Ps. civ. 10), rock springs, etc.; but all these flow from the Lord.

HUNT, BARNARD & CO., LTD., Printers London and Aylesbury.

THE

TREASURY OF DAVID:

CONTAINING

AN ORIGINAL EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS;

A COLLECTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS FROM THE WHOLE RANGE OF LITERATURE;

A SERIES OF HOMILETICAL HINTS UPON ALMOST EVERY VERSE;

AND LISTS OF WRITERS UPON EACH PSALM.

IN SIX VOLUMES

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

VOL. IV.

PSALM LXXXVIII. TO CX.

33433

MARSHALL BROTHERS, LTD.

PUBLISHERS

LONDON, EDINBURGH AND NEW YORK.

C. H. SPURGEON IN HIS LIBRARY AT WESTWOOD.

Specially drawn for "The Treasury of David" by E. H. Fitchew.

PREFACE.

THE labour of compiling the notes of this volume may be judged of from the fact that upon my writing to one of the most scholarly men of this age for a little assistance in my researches upon that well-known Psalm, the 103rd I received a note commencing, "I have hunted through my books, and have been surprised to find that, with the exception of what is universally known, there is so little about Psalm 103." This most generous-hearted brother had the warmest zeal and love to stimulate his investigations, yet this was the result, and had I repeated the experiment upon other Biblical students, and changed the Psalm, I should in very few instances have received any other reply. Hence, gentle reader, your patience has been exercised in waiting for Vol. IV. of the Treasury, and my toil has been correspondingly increased. Here, however, is the volume, as portly as its fellows, and I hope not inferior to any of them; at least, I can honestly say, if it be so, it is not the fault of my endeavours, for I have bated no jot of energy, spared no cost, and withheld no time, though this last has been a very precious commodity with me, and has frequently been snatched from rest which fatigue demanded, and which prudence might have wisely yielded.

Nor is this the only reason for the time which this volume has occupied, though we judge it to be quite sufficient, but we have desired to complete this work at our best, and not to allow the close of it to exhibit signs of fatigue and decline. We have often sat down to write our comment upon a Psalm, and have risen from the task because we did not feel at home at it. It is of no use compelling the mind, its productions in such a case are like forced fruits, disappointing and devoid of flavour. We like to write after the manner of JOHN BUNYAN, who said, "As I pulled, it came," and we prefer that the pulling should be as gentle as possible. So it has happened that we have lingered for months over a Psalm, feeling quite unfit to enter upon it. Especially was this the case over the hundred and ninth Psalm, which we sometimes think we never should have been able to handle at all if it had not been for the Bulgarian massacres, which threw us into such a state of righteous indignation that while we were musing the fire burned, and we melted the sentences, and wished that we could pour them boiling hot upon the monsters. Later tidings make us feel that the other side might well be favoured with similar visitations. Other Psalms have had their difficulties, though none to be compared with CIX. The grand *Cosmos* of Psalm CIV. was not to be dismissed in a few days; even now, after laying our best efforts at its feet, we feel dissatisfied with the poor result. However, we have done our best,

and have grappled honestly with all hard places. We are so far through our labour, and look for a full deliverance. If some of our friends have had to wait, we hope they will be gainers by obtaining fruit all the riper and better from coming in due season. The book is finished, however, and with it two-thirds of my allotted task, for which may God be praised.

I am the more surprised at the general paucity of sermons and comments upon this portion of the book of Psalms, because it contains some of the more notable compositions, such as Psalms 84, 90, 91, 92, and 103. These and some of the others are so rich that, had several volumes existed illustrating any one of them, it would not have been a matter of wonder. When I have found one sermon upon a passage, it has generally been easy to collect a score upon the same; preachers evidently run so much in ruts that they leave a large portion of the Scriptures without exposition. This suggests many thoughts, which, as they will naturally occur to every thoughtful reader, I need not enlarge upon in a mere preface, but this much may be said, we trust, without giving offence—if the habit of expounding the passages of Scripture which are read in public worship should ever become more common, the preparation for doing this in an interesting and instructive manner would greatly tend to enlarge the range of texts discussed from the pulpit, and would almost inevitably lead to the people's receiving from their teachers more of God's word and less of man's, and this would be no small benefit.

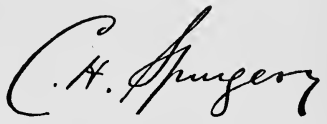
In this volume, as in all the rest, we have had the indefatigable assistance of Mr. J. L. KEYS, who, in addition to a vast amount of copying, has visited various libraries and museums to select from rare works which could not be found in any other places. Our venerable friend, the Rev. GEORGE ROGERS, has all along contributed his invaluable sermon-outlines, for which we are deeply grateful. Mr. GRACEY, the classical tutor of the Pastors' College, assisted us through the earlier Psalms of this volume in making selections from the Latin authors, and when he was obliged to decline, owing to the pressure of his engagements, his place was ably filled by the Rev. E. T. GIBSON, late of Crayford, to whom we also owe certain notes from German authors. I think it right to repeat the intimation that I am not to be understood as endorsing all the passages quoted from other authors. The names are given, and each writer bears his own responsibility.

Only one word of self-defence shall further delay the courteous reader. A critic has so greatly mistaken my meaning as to find in the title to the Sermon Notes a specimen of human vanity. I am amazed at his discovery. I do not pretend to be entirely free from that vice, but no trace of it is discoverable there by my keenest and most conscientious inspection; on the contrary, I called those outlines "Hints to the Village Preacher,"* because I did not think those of them which are my own to be good enough to offer to my brethren in the regular ministry, but hoped that they might aid those

* This was the original heading.

good men, engaged all the week in business, who are generally, but I think incorrectly, called *lay-preachers*, and are not supposed to have the facilities of time and books which fall to the lot of the regular ministry. I thought this somewhat modest on my part, and did not see how it could be misunderstood. Our village ministers are among the most thoughtful and usefu of our brotherhood, and I never dreamed of casting a slur upon them; as, however, I have been misunderstood, I will now, without altering the title, take higher ground, and say that I trust the hints may be useful to any preachers in city or country; for the other day I met one of the most eminent metropolitan divines, and he most kindly thanked me for having suggested to him by a hint in the Treasury a sermon which he hoped had been most acceptable to his congregation, and he remarked that there was no need to be so very bashful about the aforesaid "hints." I have followed his advice, and may now, perhaps, be misunderstood again. It is a small matter to be unjustly censured, but still I would not even seem to despise brethren in more obscure spheres, for it is the last thing in my heart.

For the generous reviews which the former volumes have received on all hands I am deeply grateful. I commit this fourth volume to the press, praying that it may, according to the Lord's will, tend to the upbuilding of his church and his own glory.



INDEX

OF AUTHORS QUOTED OR REFERRED TO.

Abbott, Robert (1560—1617), 465, 468, 478
Abenezra, 229
Adams, Thomas (1614), 77, 106, 107, 160, 161, 216, 271, 293, 296, 351, 378, 383, 384, 454, 455
Addison, Joseph (1671—1719), 418
Aeschylus, 203
Agellius (1532—1608), 386
Ainsworth, Henry (—1622), 42, 57
Albertus, Magnus, 377
Alexander, Joseph Addison (—1860), 12, 46, 66, 124, 149, 150, 171, 176, 178, 187, 285, 320, 329, 347, 349, 354, 359
Alexander, William (1877), 447
Alting, Jacob (1618—1679), 57
Ames, William (1576—1633), 121
Amyraldus, 226
Anacreon, 53
Anderson, James, 376, 433
Andrewes, Lancelot (1555—1626), 389
Aquinas, 121
Arnd, Joshua (1626—1685), 467
Arndt, Frederic (1861), 122, 320
Arnot, William (1858), 153
Arrowsmith, John (1600—1660), 104
Arvine, K. (1859), 174, 216
Athanasius, 123
Augustine (353—429), 38, 110, 125, 157, 173, 200, 201, 203, 227, 326, 377, 379, 381, 383, 451, 452

Bacon, Francis (1560—1626), 70, 242, 263, 314
Bacon, Leonard (1845), 131
Bailey, Philip James (—), 113
Baker, Sir Richard (1568—1645), 259, 260, 263, 264 268, 272, 285, 288, 291, 292, 293, 295
Bardsley, James Waring (1876), 319
Barker, Edmund (1661), 80
Barlow, John (1618), 207
Barnes, Albert (1798—1870), 11, 18, 70, 101, 113, 127, 149, 151, 186, 188, 219, 246, 287, 322, 329, 413, 414, 450, 452, 468
Barrow, John (1764—1849), 359
Barrow, William (1754—1836), 326
Barrows, E. P. (1873 ?), 248, 327
Barth, T. C. (1865), 78
Barton, John (1871), 316
Basil (326—379), 348
Baxter, Richard (1615—1691), 420
Beattie, James (1735—1803), 294
Bede, " The Venerable " (673—735), 76
Bellarmine, Robert (1542—1621), 47, 48, 95, 97, 169, 186, 188, 217, 218, 229, 378, 381, 452
Belsunce, M. de (1720), 102
Bengel, John Albert (1687—1752), 71, 178, 225, 466
Berlenbürger, Bebel (1726—39), 354
Bernard (1091—1157), 38, 98, 99, 102, 109, 110, 112, 174, 295
Berridge, John (1716—1793), 104
Bertram, R. A. (1867), 453, 455
" Biblical Treasury, The," 262
Bingham, Joseph, 123
Binney, Thomas (1798—1874), 75
Binnie, William (1870), 53, 57, 138, 220, 243, 332
Bogan, Zachary (1625—1659), 126
Bolton, Robert (1572—1631), 11
Bonar, Andrew (1859), 9, 100, 175, 192, 214, 236, 284, 347, 410, 432, 445, 456, 466, 478
Bonar, Horatius (1861), 114, 330
" Book of Golden Deeds, A " (1864), 101
Booth, Abraham (1734—1806), 44
Boothroyd, Benjamin (—1836), 216, 389
Borromeo, Carlo (1538—1584), 101
Boston, Thomas (1676—1732), 40, 41
Bouchier, Barton (1855), 139, 148, 174, 242, 450
Bowen, George (1873), 235, 267, 293, 298
Bowes, G. S. (1862), 201, 431
Boys, John (1571—1625), 37, 39, 173, 215, 217
Bradbury, Chas. (1785), 81
Bradley, Chas. (1840), 104, 160, 161
Bradshaw, William (1571—1618), 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 84
Brady, N. (See Tate)
Brehm, Christian Ludwig (1787—). (See Cassell's " Book of Birds ")
Bridge, Stephen (1852), 231
Bridge, William (1600—1670), 103, 105, 107, 380
Brooks, Thomas (1608—1680), 37, 156, 377, 450
Brown, John (1862), 177, 178, 315
Bruyere, Jean de la (1639—1696), 126
Bucer, Martin (1491—1551), 12, 191
Bunyan, John (1628—1688), 78, 323, 451, 456
Burder, Samuel (1839), 12, 66, 100, 127, 173, 202, 235, 261
Burgess, Anthony (1656), 153
Burns, Robert (1759—1796), 319
Burroughs, Jeremiah (1599—1646), 43
Burton, John (1871), 328
Byron (See Gordon)
Bythner, Victorinus (—1670), 42, 71, 100

Calmet, Augustine (1672—1757), 127
Calvin, John (1509—1564), 44, 51, 57, 70, 78, 83, 123, 176, 177, 205, 217, 219, 248, 292, 314, 317, 321, 324, 325, 330, 332, 349, 350, 376, 381, 383, 394, 420, 433, 446, 448, 458, 471
Camoens, Luiz de (1524—1579), 417
Cardinalis, Hugh, 377
Carr, Benjamin Wildon (1878), 470
Carson, Alexander (1776—1844), 43, 330, 417
Cary, Thomas (—), 99

Caryl, Joseph (1602—1673), 18, 43, 75, 78, 101, 110, 132, 149, 150, 156, 173, 229, 261, 269, 290, 291, 293, 315, 317, 325, 329, 330, 349, 383, 415, 449, 452
Cassell's " Book of Birds," 323, 360
Cassell's " Popular Natural History," 325
Cassiodorus, Magnus Aurelius (470—560), 326, 390
Castalio or Chasteillon, Sebastian (1515—1563), 470
Catullus, 14
Cawood, John (1830), 87
Chadbourne, P. A. (1867), 153
Chalmers, Thomas (1780—1847), 187, 200, 207, 214, 219, 247, 321, 385
Champneys, W. Weldon (1842), 288
Chandler, Samuel (1693—1766), 246, 247, 349
Chardin, John (1643—1713), 71
Charles, Mrs., 189
Charnock, Stephen (1628—1680), 48, 49, 51, 71, 132, 170, 172, 228, 230, 265, 271, 272, 292, 295
Cheever, Geo. B. (1852), 126, 317
" Christ the Consoler " [Anon] (1872), 14, 19
Chrysostom (347—407), 470
Clarke, Adam (1760—1832), 12, 52, 53, 76, 96, 123, 126, 150, 170, 177, 188, 191, 215, 245, 259, 260, 289, 293, 321, 327, 331, 348, 383, 409, 414, 417
Clarke, Samuel (1599—1682), 416
Clarkson, David (1621—1686), 205, 236, 297
Clay, William Keatinge (1839), 269, 448
Clemens, Alexandrinus, 217
Cobbet, Thomas (1657), 258
Cobbin, Ingram (1839), 235, 316
Cocceius, John (1603—1669), 186
Cole, Thomas (1627—1697), 174
Coleman, John Noble (1863), 83
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772—1834), 125
Collings, John (1623—1690), 422
Collins, John (—1687), 231
Colquhoun, John (1814), 13, 21
" Comprehensive Bible, The " (Bagster's), 150, 387, 389
Conant, Thomas J. (1871), 170, 264
Cook, Eliza (1869), 141
Coombe, Andrew (1836), 246
Coombs, Jessie (1867), 85
Cooper, William (1661), 207, 376
Cope, Anthony (1551), 264
Corderius, Balthazar (1592—1650), 227
Coverdale, Myles (1487—1568), 477
Cowles, Henry (1872), 73, 125, 153, 185, 247, 260, 269, 290, 294, 298
Cowley, Abraham (1618—1667), 53
Cresswell, Daniel (1776—1844), 42, 75, 121, 237, 380, 387
Cumming, John (1843), 187

Dale, Thomas (1836), 81, 453
Daillé, Jean (1594—1670), 50, 51
Dallas, A. R. C. (1860), 185
Dana, Richard Henry (1787—), 318
Darby, J. N. (1870), 432
Dathe, John Augustus (1731—1791), 447
Davies, Benjamin (1814—1875), 446
Davies, Samuel (1724—1761), 200
Dawson, William (1773—1841), 110, 112, 113
De Burgh, William (1860), 138, 220, 313
De Dieu, Louis (1590—1642), 121
Defoe, Daniel (1663—1731), 101
Delitzsch, Franz (1871), 122, 206, 236, 243, 298, 432, 445, 456, 457
Dickson, David (1583—1662), 8, 15, 42, 50, 56, 69, 83, 97, 99, 110, 112, 124, 170, 177, 187, 202, 203, 204, 220, 226, 236, 259, 287, 292, 297, 348, 354, 379, 384, 387, 388, 410, 414, 420, 431, 432, 433, 434, 466
Diodati, John (1576—1649), 139
Disraeli, Isaac (1766—1848), 218
Dixon, Richard (1811), 473
Donne, John (1573—1631), 55, 84
Dryden, John (1631—1700), 220
Dugard, Thomas (1648), 55
Duncan, Mary B. M. (1825—1865), 95, 96, 97, 102, 103, 106, 108, 111, 112, 114
Dunlop, Wm. (1692—1720), 285, 286
Duns, John (1868), 109, 321
Dunwell, F. H. (1853), 453
Dyke, Daniel (1624), 155, 156
Dyke, Jeremiah (1620), 97, 111

Edersheim, Alfred (1866), 137, 228, 230, 243, 248, 262, 458, 464, 469
Edwards, John (1637—1716), 56, 77, 294
Edwards, Jonathan (1703—1758), 46, 124, 150
Elwin, Fountain (1842), 477
Eobanus, Hessius, 39
Epaminondas, 45
Epictetus, 133, 153
Erskine, Ebenezer (1680—1754), 46
Erskine, Ralph (1685—1752), 243, 381
Eusebius (267—338), 123
Euthymius Zigabenus (1125), 217
Evans, James Harrington (1785—1849), 50
Eyring, 243

Fagius, Paulus (1504—1550), 101
Farmer, John (1744), 154
Farrar, Frederick Wm. (1863), 15
Fausset, A. R. (1866), 14, 15, 16, 45, 52, 124, 126, 139, 172, 203, 260, 264, 297, 298, 326, 351, 354, 395, 414
Featley, Daniel (1582—1645), 474
Fenton, Thomas (1732), 318, 387, 395
Fillincius, 121
Fisher, John (1459—1535), 259
Fisk, George (1851), 377
Flavel, John (1627—1691), 42
Folengo, Giambattista (1490—1559), 43, 113, 348
Foster, John (1768—1843), 75
Fowler, Christopher (1610—1678), 156
Fraser, Donald (1873), 350, 446
Fry, John (1842), 173, 409
Fuller, Andrew (1754—1815), 85, 124
Fuller, Thomas (1608—1661), 101, 173, 261 288, 289, 385, 386
Fysh, Frederic (1850), 214

Gataker, Thomas (1574—1654), 208
Geddes, Alexander (1737—1802), 48, 421
Geier, Martin (1614—1681), 50, 122, 127, 131, 138, 139, 140, 170, 186, 203, 227, 260, 447, 452
Genebrard, Gilbert (1537—1597), 85, 227, 378
Gesenius, F. H. W. (1786—1842), 171
Gesner, Solomon (1559—1605), 170
Gibson, Edward Thomas (1878), 449
Gilfillan, George, 312

Gill, John (1697—1771), 38, 85, 154, 186, 187, 226, 247, 259, 260, 314, 315, 316, 317, 319, 326, 327, 328, 353, 355, 360, 375, 377, 381, 388, 395, 411, 413, 414, 417, 421
Gilpin, Richard (1625—1699), 108, 381
Girdlestone, R. B. (1871), 229, 294, 297
Gloag, P. J. (1870), 445
Good, John Mason (1764—1827), 95, 100, 127, 202, 348
Goodwin, John (1593—1665), 291
Goodwin, Thomas (1600—1679), 13, 15, 16, 40, 42, 43, 49, 80, 125, 230, 271, 321, 350, 448, 457
Goold, W. H. (1865), 185
Gordon, George, Lord Byron (1788—1854), 318
Gorranus, 470
Gosse, P. H. (1856), 420
Gotch, William (1863), 389
Gouge, William (1575—1653), 175, 383
Gray, Andrew (1805—1861), 42
Gray, Thomas (1716—1771), 56, 262
Greenhill, William (1591—1677), 51, 98, 161, 297, 387
Gregory, Nazianzen (324—389), 38
Grosart, A. B. (1865), 289
Grove, Henry (1683—1737), 207
Gurnall, William (1617—1679), 17, 113, 122, 245, 248, 265, 286, 293, 457

Hakewill, George (1579—1649), 244, 245, 246, 247
Hall, Joseph (1574—1656), 153, 385, 390, 420
Hall, Robert (1764—1839), 201, 202
Hamilton, James (1814—1867), 67, 69, 84, 85, 323, 359, 388, 392, 447
Hammond, Henry (1605—1660), 173, 220, 247, 292, 331, 411
Hammond, Joseph (1875), 445
Hampolus (See Ricardus), 9, 417
Hare, J. C. (1849), 297
Harmer, Thomas (1715—1788), 71
Hartwig, G. (1866), 171, 327
Hawker, Robert (1753—1827), 18, 44
Hawkins, Ernest (1859), 20
Heber, Reginald (1783—1826), 184
Hengstenberg, E. W. (1845), 66, 186, 229, 235, 237, 284, 289, 314, 351, 411, 477
Henry, Matthew (1662—1714), 14, 38, 43, 45, 52, 54, 190, 191, 227, 237, 269, 293, 313, 320, 325, 328, 333, 348, 349, 355, 358, 359, 384, 393, 414, 451, 457
Herbert, George (1593—1632), 212
Herder, J. G. von (1744—1803), 314
Herle, Charles (1598—1659), 169
Hervey, James (1714—1758), 315, 472
Hibbard, F. G. (1856), 7, 447
Hinton, James (1871), 294
Hitchcock, Edward (1851), 190
Hitzig, F. (1833), 206
Hole, Matthew (1730), 217
Homes, Nathaniel (1678), 378
Honorius (circa 1120), 216
Hood, E. P. (1865), 54
Horace, 100
Horn, R. (1628), 96, 106
Horne, George (1730—1792), 170, 176, 229, 247, 288, 291, 325, 348, 387, 394
Horsley, Samuel (1733—1806), 39, 160, 169, 170, 191, 217, 228, 266, 313, 453, 456, 457
Horton, Thomas (1673), 159, 160, 331
Houghton, William (1863), 127, 262
Howe, John (1630—1705), 40, 54
Hugo (circa 1120), 19, 38, 149, 174, 187, 227, 326
Hull, E. L. (1867), 353
Humboldt, F. H. A. von (1769—1859), 312
Huntington, William (1744—1813), 17

Irons, J. (1786—1852), 421

Jackson, Arthur (1593—1666), 56, 320
Jacomb, T. (1622—1687), 470
Jahn, Johann (1750—1816), 394
Jansenius, C. (1510—1576), 354
Jay, William (1769—1853), 52, 129, 287, 353, 411, 414
Jeanes, H. (1611—1662), 121, 377, 432
Jenison, R. (1621), 394
Jennings, A. C. (1875), 322
Johnson, Samuel (1709—1784), 77, 81
Jones, Theophilus (1830), 470
Judkin, T. J. (1841), 45
Jukes, A. (1858), 351
Junius (1545—1602), 470, 477
Justin, Martyr, 189

Kalish, M. M. (1858), 359
Kay, William (1871), 14, 19, 21, 56, 95, 219, 297, 353, 381, 433, 453, 471, 477
Keble, J. (1792—1866), 259, 332
Keer, W. B. (1863), 83
Kennedy, 206
Kimchi, D. (1240), 7, 56, 186, 187
King, J. (1559—1621), 264
Kingsley, C. (1858), 191
Kirby, Mary and Elizabeth (1873), 322
Kitto, John (1804—1854), 47, 219, 265, 314, 388, 446

Lactantius, 100
Lake, Arthur (1626), 80
Lange J. P. (Commentary), 15
Lardner, Dionysius (1793—1859), 358
Lavington, S. (1728—1807), 331
Law, Henry (1858), 390
Lawrence, Henry (1646), 109
Lawrence, Matthew (1657), 384, 385, 391
Lawson, George (1662), 474
Layard, A. H. (1817), 318
Le Blanc, Thomas (1669), 10, 14, 17, 18, 45, 47, 70, 72, 95, 96, 123, 149, 186, 205, 260, 268, 321, 328, 331, 417, 454
Le Clerc, J. (1657—1736), 450, 452
Le Conte, J. (1874), 189
Lee, S. (1625—1691), 353, 393
Lenormant, F., and Chevallier (1869), 354
Lepsius, Carl Richard (1853), 358
Levi, Rabbi, 378
Lewis, W. G. (1872), 133
Linnæus (1707—1778), 128
Littledale, R. F. (See also Neale, J. M.)
Lockyer, N. (1612—1684), 150, 157
Lombard, Peter (1164), 215
Long, J. (1871), 130
Lorinus, J. (1569—1634), 71, 138, 139, 217, 219, 313, 316, 318, 324, 329, 332, 377, 394, 448, 451
Lowth, R. (1710—1787), 191
Lucas, Richard (1697), 158
Lucian, 206

Luther, Martin (1483—1546), 68, 70, 85, 216, 318, 455, 476
Lye, T. (1621—1684), 50, 243
Lyte, H. F. (1834), 78

McCheyne, R. M. (1813—1843), 18, 44, 130
McLaren, A. (1871), 470, 471
Macmillan, Hugh (1871), 206, 289, 322
Mant, Richard (1776—1849), 40, 46, 52, 171, 175, 229, 295
Manton, Thomas (1620—1677), 68, 188, 272
Marot, Clement (1495—1544), 218
Marshall, Stephen (1655), 266, 267, 268
Martius, Karl Von (1794), 128
Mason, William (1719—1791), 173
Massillon, J. B. (1663—1742), 456
Melvill, Henry (1798—1871), 79, 83, 109, 176, 298
Mendelssohn, Moses (1729—1786), 171
Merry, C. M. (1864), 84
Millington, Thos. S. (1873), 355, 356, 357
Milton, John (1608—1674), 149, 172, 191, 206, 317, 323, 327, 472
Moll, Carl Bernard (1869), 8, 15, 229, 264, 325
Mollerus, D. H. (1639), 9, 12, 19, 52, 71, 73, 139, 140, 187, 227, 263, 267, 348, 350, 451, 454
Molyneux, Capel (1855), 47, 48, 50, 51
Montanus, B. A. (1527—1598), 127
Montgomery, R. (1807—1855), 190
More, Hannah, 115
Morison, John (1829), 7, 96, 230
Mudge, Zachary (1760), 314
Muis, Simon de (1587—1644), 95
Munster, S. (1489—1552), 470
Murphy, J. G. (1875), 315, 354, 356, 357, 358, 433
Musculus Wolfgang (1497—1563), 38, 41, 50, 52, 56, 99, 110, 177, 204, 206, 208, 292, 295, 376, 378, 387, 389, 448, 449, 452, 454, 457, 469, 476

Neale, J. M., and Littledale, R. F. (1860—1871), 9, 14, 38, 47, 149, 151, 153, 186, 188, 203, 227, 360, 377, 382, 417, 450
Neander, J. A. W. (1789—1850), 470
Ness, C. (1621—1705), 353, 354, 390
"New Cyclopædia of Illustrative Anecdote" (1875), 454
Nicholson, William (1671), 44, 53, 161, 226
Noel, Baptist W. (1798—1873), 292

Oosterzee, J. J. Van (1874), 290, 393
Origen, 219
Orton, Job (1717—1783), 20
Osburn, W. (1856), 356
Ovid, 419
Owen, John (1616—1683), 130, 132, 176, 205, 475, 476
Owen, John (1853), 271
Oxenden, Charles (1838), 259

Palanterius, J. P. (1600), 97
Palmer, Herbert (1601—1647), 230
Park, Mungo (1771—1806), 412
Patrick, Symon (1626—1707), 190, 191
Payson, E. (1783—1827), 74, 188, 383
Pell, Daniel (1659), 418, 419, 420
'Percy Anecdotes," 102
Perowne, J. J. Stewart (1864), 42, 73, 157, 177, 214, 218, 226, 287, 289, 312, 385, 416, 445, 468
Philo, 72
Phillips, George (1846), 228, 237, 354
Philpot, J. C. (1802—1869), 9, 16, 412, 413, 458
Pico, Giovanni Della Mirandola (1463—1494), 69
Pierce, S. E. (1818), 351
Pigot, R. (1866), 81
Pindar, 44
Pitcairn, David (1846), 48
"Plain Commentary" (A) (1859), 10, 11, 71, 81, 228, 313, 347, 422, 433, 434
Plumer, W. S. (1867), 18, 157, 186, 318, 320, 378, 387, 394, 419, 420, 434
Pococke, Richard (1704—1765), 130
Pollok, Robert (1799—1827), 449, 455
Pool, Matthew (1624—1679), 126, 140, 354
Porter, J. L. (1863), 434
Porter, Jane (1776—1850), 124
Possidonius, 103
Power, P. B. (1862), 39
Prideaux, John (1636), 464, 470, 477
Pridham, Arthur (1869), 54, 191, 410, 433
Procter, Bryan, 114
Pulley, William, 53
Pulsford, John (1857), 287, 469
Purchas, Samuel (1577—1628), 358

Quarles, F. (1592—1644), 173
Quesnel, P. (1634—1719), 173
"Quiver," The, 431

Ranew, N. (1670), 431
Rawson, G. (1876), 473
Ray, John (1678—1705), 326
"Rays from the East," 433
Religious Tract Society's Monthly Vol., 129
Reynolds, Edward (1599—1676), 465, 466, 467, 469, 475, 476
Richmond, Legh (1772—1827), 189
Rickelius, 44
Rivet, A. (1572—1651), 468, 470, 473
Roberts, Joseph (1844), 46, 127, 357
Robinson, Ralph (1614—1655), 104, 130, 318
Roger of Wendover (1237), 236
Rogers, Eugene, 472
Rogers, Timothy (1660—1729), 263, 412
Romaine, William (1714—1795), 410, 411, 414, 416, 419, 420, 421, 422
Rosenmüller, 478
Row, John (1680), 331
Russell, Patrick (1805), 295
Ryland, R. H. (1853), 198, 431
Ryther, John (1632—1681), 418

Sadoleto, J. (1477—1547), 148
Salter, H. G. (1840), 156
Sanchez, 312
Saphir, Adolph (1870), 259, 395, 449
Scaliger, J. J. (1540—1609), 100
Schaff, P. (1870), 189
Schnurrer, C. F., 478
Schubert, G. H. Von (1780—1860), 130
Schultens, A. (1686—1760), 246
Scott, Sir Walter (1771—1832), 360
Secker, William (1660), 81
Sedgwick, William (1668), 200
Seneca, 14

Serle, Ambrose (1815), 321
Sheffield, John (1654), 206, 359
Shelomo, 85
Shepard, Thomas (1605—1649), 353
Shute, C. (1658), 82
Shute, J. (1645), 357
Sibbes, R. (1577—1635), 205, 416
Sidney, E. (1866), 172
Sidney, Sir Philip (1554—1586), 360
Singer, J. H. (1839), 466
Slater, Samuel (1704), 106, 161, 202, 203
" Smith's Dictionary of the Bible," 15, 127, 434
Smith, Henry (1560—1591), 82, 83, 106
Smith, Peter (1644), 413
Smith, Samuel (1656), 70, 72, 73, 79
South, Robert (1633—1716), 178, 378, 379
Southey, R. (1774—1843), 359
" Speaker's Commentary," The (1873), 190, 316, 389, 453, 455
Spenser, Edmund (1552—1599), 107
Stanford, Charles (1870), 226
Stanley, A. P. (1864), 243
Starke C. (1740), 321 328
Staunton, E. (1644), 391
Sterne, L. (1713—1768), 294
Stevenson, J. (1856), 284, 285, 288
Stier, R. (1834), 472
Stowell, Hugh (1856), 243, 245
Stratten, J. (1867), 45
Street, S. (1790), 72
Stuart, M. (1780—1852), 177
Sumner, C. R. (1850), 80
Swinnock, G. (1627—1673), 42, 44, 140, 269 415

Tandon Moquin (1869), 327, 328
Targum, 158
Tate and Brady (1659—1726), 473, 476
Taylor, Isaac (1787), 68
Taylor, Jeremy (1613—1667), 72
Tegner, E. (1782—1847), 72, 187
Tertullian, 376
Theodoret, 123
Tholuck, A. F. (1856), 67, 73, 314, 434
Thomson, J. (1700—1748), 124, 219, 472
Thomson, W. M. (1859), 128, 261, 262, 457
Thrupp, J. F. (1860), 85, 127, 190, 229, 284, 411, 417, 447
Toplady, A. M. (1740—1778), 40, 41, 46, 450
Trapp, John (1611—1669), 44, 50, 53, 71, 75, 125, 149, 151, 157, 170, 186, 200, 205, 217, 229, 247, 264, 284, 287, 293, 313, 330, 354, 377, 387 414, 419, 420, 452, 454, 466
Tremellius, E. (1510—1580), 470, 477
Tristram, H. B. (1867), 261
Tucker, W. H. (1840), 47, 226, 237, 247
Turner, Sharon (1768—1847), 153
Turrecremata, J. De (1476), 122
Tymme, T. 1634) 82

Vatablus, F. (1545), 12, 111, 416, 470
Vaughan, H. (1621—1695), 293, 432
Venema, H. (1697—1787), 138, 157, 170, 216, 219, 290, 321, 324, 409, 413, 414, 415
Virgil, 206, 220, 389, 418
Vives, J. L. (1492—1540), 220
Vove, F. C. (1643), 259

Waldo, P. (1775), 174
Walford, W. (1837), 127, 242, 420
Walton, Isaac (1593—1683), 319
Warner, R. (1828), 40
Washbourne, T. (1655), 76
Watson, Thomas (1660), 99, 104, 112, 160, 191, 245, 286, 383, 388, 455, 471
Weiss, B. (1858), 468
Welch, J. (1570—1622), 13
Wells, J. (1676), 122, 431
Wesley, Charles (1708—1788), 279
Wesley, John (1703—1791), 158, 319
Westfield, T. (1658), 386
Westminster Assembly's Annotations, 100
Whewell, W. (1795—1866), 325
Whitecross, J., 98
Whitfield, F. (1874) 289, 450
Whiting, N. (1659), 158
Wilcox, D. (1676—1733), 209
Wilkinson, Sir J. G. (1854), 356
Wilkinson, R. (1612), 77
Williams, Isaac (1873), 47, 391
Willison, J. (1680—1750), 388, 414
Wilson, G. (1861), 151
Wilson, J. (1847), 323
Wilson, T. (1621), 226
Wilson, W. (1860), 9, 188, 228, 237, 350, 388, 432
Winer, G. B. (1789), 127
Witsius, H. (1636—1708), 469
Wood, J. G. (1869), 109, 261, 262, 322, 323, 328, 457
Wordsworth, Christopher (1868), 9, 37, 68, 77, 113, 121, 125, 169, 185, 187, 192, 226, 289, 312, 333, 347, 432, 464, 477
Wordsworth, W. (1770—1850), 126
Wright, Abraham (1661), 131, 140, 449, 474

PSALM LXXXVIII.

TITLE.—A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah. *This sad complaint reads very little like a* Song, *nor can we conceive how it could be called by a name which denotes a song of praise or triumph; yet perhaps it was intentionally so called to show how faith "glories in tribulations also." Assuredly, if ever there was a song of sorrow and a Psalm of sadness, this is one. The sons of Korah, who had often united in chanting jubilant odes, are now bidden to take charge of this mournful dirge-like hymn. Servants and singers must not be choosers.* To the chief Musician. *He must superintend the singers and see that they do their duty well, for holy sorrow ought to be expressed with quite as much care as the most joyful praise; nothing should be slovenly in the Lord's house. It is more difficult to express sorrow fitly than it is to pour forth notes of gladness.* Upon Mahalath Leannoth. *This is translated by Alexander,* "concerning afflictive sickness," *and if this be correct, it indicates the mental malady which occasioned this plaintive song.* Maschil. *This term has occurred many times before, and the reader will remember that it indicates an instructive or didactic Psalm:—the sorrows of one saint are lessons to others; experimental teaching is exceedingly valuable.* Of Heman the Ezrahite. *This, probably, informs us as to its authorship; it was written by Heman, but which Heman it would not be easy to determine, though it will not be a very serious mistake if we suppose it to be the man alluded to in* 1 *Kings* iv. 31, *as the brother of Ethan, and one of the five sons of Zerah* (1 *Chron.* ii. 6), *the son of Judah, and hence called "the Ezrahite:" if this be the man, he was famous for his wisdom, and his being in Egypt during the time of Pharaoh's oppression may help to account for the deep bass of his song, and for the antique form of many of the expressions, which are more after the manner of Job than David. There was, however, a Heman in David's day who was one of the grand trio of chief musicians, "Heman, Asaph, and Ethan"* (1 *Chron.* xv. 19), *and no one can prove that this was not the composer. The point is of no consequence; whoever wrote the Psalm must have been a man of deep experience, who had done business on the great waters of soul trouble.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.—*This Psalm is fragmentary, and the only division of any service to us would be that suggested by Albert Barnes, viz.—A description of the sick man's sufferings (verses* 1—9), *and a prayer for mercy and deliverance* (10—18). *We shall, however, consider each verse separately, and so exhibit the better the incoherence of the author's grief. The reader had better first peruse the Psalm as a whole.*

EXPOSITION.

O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day *and* night before thee:
2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry;
3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.
4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man *that hath* no strength:
5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand.
6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.
7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves. Selah.
8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: *I am* shut up, and I cannot come forth.
9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.
10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah.

11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? *or* thy faithfulness in destruction?

12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? *why* hidest thou thy face from me?

15 I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up: *while* I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.

16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.

17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.

18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, *and* mine acquaintance into darkness.

1. "*O Lord God of my salvation.*" This is a hopeful title by which to address the Lord, and it has about it the only ray of comfortable light which shines throughout the Psalm. The writer has salvation, he is sure of that, and God is the sole author of it. While a man can see God as his Saviour, it is not altogether midnight with him. While the living God can be spoken of as the life of our salvation, our hope will not quite expire. It is one of the characteristics of true faith that she turns to Jehovah, the saving God, when all other confidences have proved liars unto her. "*I have cried day and night before thee.*" His distress had not blown out the sparks of his prayer, but quickened them into a greater ardency, till they burned perpetually like a furnace at full blast. His prayer was personal—whoever had not prayed, he had done so; it was intensely earnest, so that it was correctly described as a cry, such as children utter to move the pity of their parents; and it was unceasing, neither the business of the day nor the weariness of the night had silenced it: surely such entreaties could not be in vain. Perhaps, if Heman's pain had not been incessant his supplications might have been intermittent; it is a good thing that sickness will not let us rest if we spend our restlessness in prayer. Day and night are both suitable to prayer; it is no work of darkness, therefore let us go with Daniel and pray when men can see us; yet, since supplication needs no light, let us accompany Jacob and wrestle at Jabbok till the day breaketh. Evil is transformed to good when it drives us to prayer. One expression of the text is worthy of special note; "*before thee*" is a remarkable intimation that the Psalmist's cries had an aim and a direction towards the Lord, and were not the mere clamours of nature, but the groanings of a gracious heart towards Jehovah, the God of salvation. Of what use are arrows shot into the air? The archer's business is to look well at the mark he drives at. Prayers must be directed to heaven with earnest care. So thought Heman—his cries were all meant for the heart of his God. He had no eye to onlookers as Pharisees have, but all his prayers were before his God.

2. "*Let my prayer come before thee.*" Admit it to an audience; let it speak with thee. Though it be *my* prayer, and therefore very imperfect, yet deny it not *thy* gracious consideration. "*Incline thine ear unto my cry.*" It is not music save to the ear of mercy, yet be not vexed with its discord, though it be but a cry, for it is the most natural expression of my soul's anguish. When my heart speaks, let thine ear hear. There may be obstacles which impede the upward flight of our prayers—let us entreat the Lord to remove them; and as there may also be offences which prevent the Lord from giving favourable regard to our requests—let us implore him to put these out of the way. He who has prayed day and night cannot bear to lose all his labour. Only those who are indifferent in prayer will be indifferent about the issue of prayer.

3. "*For my soul is full of troubles.*" I am satiated and nauseated with them. Like a vessel full to the brim with vinegar, my heart is filled up with adversity till it can hold no more. He had his house full and his hands full of sorrow; but, worse than that, he had his heart full of it. Trouble in the soul is the soul of trouble. A little soul trouble is painful; what must it be to be sated with it? And how much worse still to have your prayers return empty when your soul remains full of grief.

" And my life draweth nigh unto the grave." He felt as if he must die, indeed he thought himself half dead already. All his life was going, his spiritual life declined, his mental life decayed, his bodily life flickered ; he was nearer dead than alive. Some of us can enter into this experience, for many a time have we traversed this valley of death-shade, ay ! and dwelt in it by the month together. Really to die and be with Christ will be a gala day's enjoyment compared with our misery when a worse than physical death has cast its dreadful shadow over us. Death would be welcomed as a relief by those whose depressed spirits make their existence a living death. Are good men ever permitted to suffer thus ? Indeed they are ; and some of them are even all their life-time subject to bondage. O Lord, be pleased to set free thy prisoners of hope ! Let none of thy mourners imagine that a strange thing has happened unto him, but rather rejoice as he sees the footprints of brethren who have trodden this desert before.

4. *" I am counted with them that go down into the pit."* My weakness is so great that both by myself and others I am considered as good as dead. If those about me have not ordered my coffin they have at least conversed about my sepulchre, discussed my estate, and reckoned their share of it. Many a man has been buried before he was dead, and the only mourning over him has been because he refused to fulfil the greedy expectations of his hypocritical relatives by going down to the pit at once. It has come to this with some afflicted believers, that their hungry heirs think they have lived too long. *" I am as a man that hath no strength."* I have but the name to live ; my constitution is broken up ; I can scarce crawl about my sick room, my mind is even weaker than my body, and my faith weakest of all. The sons and daughters of sorrow will need but little explanation of these sentences, they are to such tried ones as household words.

5. *" Free among the dead."* Unbound from all that links a man with life, familiar with death's door, a freeman of the city of the sepulchre, I seem no more one of earth's drudges, but begin to anticipate the rest of the tomb. It is a sad case when our only hope lies in the direction of death, our only liberty of spirit amid the congenial horrors of corruption. *" Like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more."* He felt as if he were as utterly forgotten as those whose carcases are left to rot on the battle-field. As when a soldier, mortally wounded, bleeds unheeded amid the heaps of slain, and remains to his last expiring groan unpitied and unsuccoured, so did Heman sigh out his soul in loneliest sorrow, feeling as if even God himself had quite forgotten him. How low the spirits of good and brave men will sometimes sink. Under the influence of certain disorders everything will wear a sombre aspect, and the heart will dive into the profoundest deeps of misery. It is all very well for those who are in robust health and full of spirits to blame those whose lives are sicklied o'er with the pale cast of melancholy, but the evil is as real as a gaping wound, and all the more hard to bear because it lies so much in the region of the soul that to the inexperienced it appears to be a mere matter of fancy and diseased imagination. Reader, never ridicule the nervous and hypochondriacal, their pain is real ; though much of the evil lies in the imagination, it is not imaginary. *" And they are cut off from thy hand."* Poor Heman felt as if God himself had put him away, smitten him and laid him among the corpses of those executed by divine justice. He mourned that the hand of the Lord had gone out against him, and that he was divided from the great Author of his life. This is the essence of wormwood. Man's blows are trifles, but God's smitings are terrible to a gracious heart. To feel utterly forsaken of the Lord and cast away as though hopelessly corrupt is the very climax of heart-desolation.

6. *" Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps."* What a collection of forcible metaphors, each one expressive of the utmost grief. Heman compared his forlorn condition to an imprisonment in a subterranean dungeon, to confinement in the realms of the dead, and to a plunge into the abyss. None of the similes are strained. The mind can descend far lower than the body, for there are bottomless pits. The flesh can bear only a certain number of wounds and no more, but the soul can bleed in ten thousand ways, and die over and over again each hour. It is grievous to the good man to see the Lord whom he loves laying him in the sepulchre of despondency ; piling nightshade upon him, putting out all his candles, and heaping over him solid masses of sorrow : evil from so good a hand seems evil indeed, and yet if faith could but be allowed to speak she would remind the depressed spirit that it is better to fall into the hand of the Lord than into the hands of man, and moreover she would tell the despondent heart that

God never placed a Joseph in a pit without drawing him up again to fill a throne: that he never caused a horror of great darkness to fall upon an Abraham without revealing his covenant to him; and never cast even a Jonah into the deeps without preparing the means to land him safely on dry land. Alas, when under deep depression the mind forgets all this, and is only conscious of its unutterable misery; the man sees the lion but not the honey in its carcase, he feels the thorns but he cannot smell the roses which adorn them. He who now feebly expounds these words knows within himself more than he would care or dare to tell of the abysses of inward anguish. He has sailed round the Cape of Storms, and has drifted along by the dreary headlands of despair. He has groaned out with one of old—"My bones are pierced in me in the night season; and my sinews take no rest. I go mourning without the sun. Terrors are turned upon me, they pursue my soul as the wind." Those who know this bitterness by experience will sympathise, but from others it would be idle to expect pity, nor would their pity be worth the having if it could be obtained. It is an unspeakable consolation that our Lord Jesus knows this experience, right well, having, with the exception of the sin of it, felt it all and more than all in Gethsemane when he was exceeding sorrowful even unto death.

7. "*Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.*" Dreadful plight this, the worst in which a man can be found. Wrath is heavy in itself; God's wrath is crushing beyond conception, and when that presses hard the soul is oppressed indeed. The wrath of God is the very hell of hell, and when it weighs upon the conscience a man feels a torment such as only that of damned spirits can exceed. Joy or peace, or even numbness of indifference, there can be none to one who is loaded with this most tremendous of burdens. "*And thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves,*" or *all thy breakers*. He pictures God's wrath as breaking over him like those waves of the sea which swell, and rage, and dash with fury upon the shore. How could his frail barque hope to survive those cruel breakers, white like the hungry teeth of death? Seas of affliction seemed to rush in upon him with all the force of omnipotence; he felt himself to be oppressed and afflicted like Israel in Egypt, when they cried by reason of their afflictions. It appeared impossible for him to suffer more, he had exhausted the methods of adversity and endured *all* its waves. So have we imagined, and yet it is not really quite so bad. The worst case might be worse, there are alleviations to every woe; God has other and more terrible waves which, if he chose to let them forth, would sweep us into the infernal abyss, whence hope has long since been banished.

"*Selah.*" There was need to rest. Above the breakers the swimmer lifts his head and looks around him, breathing for a moment, until the next wave comes. Even lamentation must have its pauses. Nights are broken up into watches, and even so mourning has its intervals. Such sorrowful music is a great strain both on voices and instruments, and it is well to give the singers the relief of silence for a while.

8. "*Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me.*" If ever we need friends it is in the dreary hour of despondency and the weary time of bodily sickness; therefore does the sufferer complain because divine providence had removed his friends. Perhaps his disease was infectious or defiling, so that he was legally separated from his fellow men, perhaps their fears kept them away from his plague-stricken house, or else his good name had become so injured that they naturally avoided him. Most friends require but small excuse for turning their backs on the afflicted. The swallows offer no apology for leaving us to winter by ourselves. Yet it is a piercing pain which arises from the desertion of dear associates; it is a wound which festers and refuses to be healed. "*Thou hast made me an abomination unto them.*" They turned from him as though he had become loathsome and contaminating, and this because of something which the Lord had done to him; therefore, he brings his complaint to the prime mover in his trouble. He who is still flattered by the companions of his pleasure can little guess the wretchedness which will be his portion should be become poor, or slanderously accused, for then one by one the parasites of his prosperity will go their way and leave him to his fate, not without cutting remarks on their part to increase his misery. Men have not so much power to bless by friendship as to curse by treachery. Earth's poisons are more deadly than her medicines are healing. The mass of men who gather around a man and flatter him are like tame leopards; when they lick his hand it is well for him to remember that with equal gusto they would drink his blood. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man." "*I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.*" He was a

prisoner in his room, and felt like a leper in the lazarretto, or a condemned criminal in his cell. His mind, too, was bound as with fetters of iron; he felt no liberty of hope, he could take no flights of joy. When God shuts friends out, and shuts us in to pine away alone, it is no wonder if we water our couch with tears.

9. "*Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction.*" He wept his eyes out. He exhausted the lachrymal glands, he wore away the sight itself. Tears in showers are a blessing, and work our good; but in floods they become destructive and injurious. "*Lord, I have called daily upon thee.*" His tears wetted his prayers, but did not damp their fervour. He prayed still, though no answer came to dry his eyes. Nothing can make a true believer cease praying; it is a part of his nature, and pray he must. "*I have stretched out my hands unto thee.*" He used the appropriate posture of a supplicant, of his own accord; men need no posture-maker, or master of the ceremonies, when they are eagerly pleading for mercy, nature suggests to them attitudes both natural and correct. As a little child stretches out its hands to its mother while it cries, so did this afflicted child of God. He prayed all over, his eyes wept, his voice cried, his hands were outstretched, and his heart broke. This was prayer indeed.

10. "*Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?*" Wherefore then suffer me to die? While I live thou canst in me display the glories of thy grace, but when I have passed into the unknown land, how canst thou illustrate in me thy love? If I perish thou wilt lose a worshipper who both reverenced, and in his own experience illustrated, the wonders of thy character and acts. This is good pleading, and therefore he repeats it. "*Shall the dead arise and praise thee?*" He is thinking only of the present, and not of the last great day, and he urges that the Lord would have one the less to praise him among the sons of men. Shades take no part in the quires of the Sabbath, ghosts sing no joyous psalms, sepulchres and vaults send forth no notes of thanksgiving. True the souls of departed saints render glory to God, but the dejected Psalmist's thoughts do not mount to heaven but survey the gloomy grave: he stays on this side of eternity, where in the grave he sees no wonders and hears no songs.

"*Selah.*" At the mouth of the tomb he sits down to meditate, and then returns to his theme.

11. "*Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?*" Thy tender goodness —who shall testify concerning it in that cold abode where the worm and corruption hold their riot? The living may indite "Meditations among the Tombs," but the dead know nothing, and therefore can declare nothing. "*Or thy faithfulness in destruction?*" If the Lord suffered his servant to die before the divine promise was fulfilled, it would be quite impossible for his faithfulness to be proclaimed. The poet is dealing with this life only, and looking at the matter from the point of view afforded by time and the present race of men; if a believer were deserted and permitted to die in despair, there could come no voice from his grave to inform mankind that the Lord had rectified his wrongs and relieved him of his trials, no songs would leap up from the cold sod to hymn the truth and goodness of the Lord; but as far as men are concerned, a voice which loved to magnify the grace of God would be silenced, and a loving witness for the Lord removed from the sphere of testimony.

12. "*Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?*" If not here permitted to prove the goodness of Jehovah, how could the singer do so in the land of darkness and deathshade? Could his tongue, when turned into a clod, charm the dull cold ear of death? Is not a living dog better than a dead lion, and a living believer of more value to the cause of God on earth than all the departed put together? "*And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*" What shall be told concerning thee in the regions of oblivion? Where memory and love are lost, and men are alike unknowing and unknown, forgetful and forgotten, what witness to the divine holiness can be borne? The whole argument amounts to this—if the believer dies unblest, how will God's honour be preserved? Who will bear witness to his truth and righteousness?

13. "*But unto thee have I cried, O Lord;*" I have continued to pray for help to thee, O Jehovah, the living God, even though thou hast so long delayed to answer. A true-born child of God may be known by his continuing to cry; a hypocrite is great at a spurt, but the genuine believer holds on till he wins his suit. "*And in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.*" He meant to plead on yet, and to increase his earnestness. He intended to be up betimes, to anticipate the daylight, and

begin to pray before the sun was up. If the Lord is pleased to delay, he has a right to do as he wills, but we must not therefore become tardy in supplication. If we count the Lord slack concerning his promise we must only be the more eager to outrun him, lest sinful sloth on our path should hinder the blessing.

"Let prayer and holy hymn
Perfume the morning air;
Before the world with smoke is dim
Bestir thy soul to prayer.
While flowers are wet with dew
Lament thy sins with tears,
And ere the sun shines forth anew
Tell to thy Lord thy fears."

14. "*Lord, why casteth thou off my soul?*" Hast thou not aforetime chosen me, wilt thou now reject me? Shall thine elect ones become thy reprobates? Dost thou, like changeable men, give a writing of divorcement to those whom thy love has espoused. Can thy beloveds become thy cast-offs? "*Why hidest thou thy face from me?*" Wilt thou not so much as look upon me? Canst thou not afford me a solitary smile? Why this severity to one who has in brighter days basked in the light of thy favour? We may put these questions to the Lord, nay, we ought to do so. It is not undue familiarity, but holy boldness. It may help us to remove the evil which provokes the Lord to jealousy, if we seriously beg him to shew us wherefore he contends with us. He cannot act towards us in other than a right and gracious manner, therefore for every stroke of his rod there is a sufficient reason in the judgment of his loving heart; let us try to learn that reason and profit by it.

15. "*I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.*" His affliction had now lasted so long that he could hardly remember when it commenced; it seemed to him as if he had been at death's door ever since he was a child. This was no doubt an exaggeration of a depressed spirit, and yet perhaps Heman may have been born under the cypress, and have been all his days afflicted with some chronic disease or bodily infirmity; there are holy men and women whose lives are a long apprenticeship to patience, and these deserve both our sympathy and our reverence,—our reverence we have ventured to say, for since the Saviour became the acquaintance of grief, sorrow has become honourable in believers' eyes. A life-long sickness may by divine grace prove to be a life-long blessing. Better suffer from childhood to old age than be let alone to find pleasure in sin.

"*While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.*" Long use had not blunted the edge of sorrow, God's terrors had not lost their terror; rather had they become more overwhelming and had driven the man to despair. He was unable to collect his thoughts, he was so tossed about that he could not judge and weigh his own condition in a calm and rational manner. Sickness alone will thus distract the mind; and when a sense of divine anger is added thereto, it is not to be wondered at if reason finds it hard to hold the reins. How near akin to madness soul-depression sometimes may be, it is not our province to decide; but we speak what we do know when we say that a feather-weight might be sufficient to turn the scale at times. Thank God, O ye tempted ones who yet retain your reason! Thank him that the devil himself cannot add that feather while the Lord stands by to adjust all things. Even though we have grazed upon the rock of utter distraction, we bless the infinitely gracious Steersman that the vessel is seaworthy yet, and answers to her helm: tempest-tossed from the hour of her launch even to this hour, yet she mounts the waves and defies the hurricane.

16. "*Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.*" What an expression, "fierce wrath," and it is a man of God who feels it! Do we seek an explanation? It seemed so to him, but "things are not what they seem." No punitive anger ever falls upon the saved one, for Jesus shields him from it all; but a father's anger may fall upon his dearest child, none the less but all the more, because he loves it. Since Jesus bore my guilt as my substitute, my Judge cannot punish me, but my Father can and will correct me. In this sense the Father may even manifest "fierce wrath" to his erring child, and under a sense of it that dear broken-down one may be laid in the dust and covered with wretchedness, and yet for all that he may be accepted and beloved of the Lord all the while. Heman represents God's wrath as breaking over him as waves over a wreck. "*Thy terrors have cut me off.*" They have made me a marked man, they have made me feel like a leper separated from the congre-

gation of thy people, and they have caused others to look upon me as no better than dead. Blessed be God this is the sufferer's idea and not the very truth, for the Lord will neither cast off nor cut off his people, but will visit his mourners with choice refreshments.

17. *" They came round about me daily like water."* My troubles, and thy chastisements poured in upon me, penetrating everywhere, and drowning all. Such is the permeating and pervading power of spiritual distress, there is no shutting it out ; it soaks into the soul like the dew into Gideon's fleece ; it sucks the spirit down as the quicksand swallows the ship ; it overwhelms it as the deluge submerged the green earth. *" They compassed me about together."* Griefs hemmed him in. He was like the deer in the hunt, when the dogs are all around and at his throat. Poor soul ! and yet he was a man greatly beloved of heaven !

18. *" Lover and friend hast thou put far from me."* Even when they are near me bodily, they are so unable to swim with me in such deep waters, that they stand like men far away on the shore while I am buffeted with the billows ; but, alas, they shun me, the dearest lover of all is afraid of such a distracted one, and those who took counsel with me avoid me now ! The Lord Jesus knew the meaning of this in all its wormwood and gall when in his passion. In dreadful loneliness he trod the wine-press, and all his garments were distained with the red blood of those sour grapes. Lonely sorrow falls to the lot of not a few ; let them not repine, but enter herein into close communion with that dearest lover and friend who is never far from his tried ones. *" And mine acquaintance into darkness,"* or better still, *my acquaintance is darkness.* I am familiar only with sadness, all else has vanished. I am a child crying alone in the dark. Will the heavenly Father leave his child there ? Here he breaks off, and anything more from us would only spoil the abruptness of the unexpected FINIS.

[*We have not attempted to interpret this Psalm concerning our Lord, but we fully believe that where the members are, the Head is to be seen pre-eminently. To have given a double exposition under each verse would have been difficult and confusing ; we have therefore left the Messianic references to be pointed out in the* Notes, *where, if God the Holy Ghost be pleased to illustrate the page, we have gathered up more than enough to lead each devout reader to behold Jesus, the man of sorrows and the acquaintance of grief.*]

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—*" Mahalath Leannoth."* I lean to the idea, that the words *Mahalath Leannoth* are intended to denote some musical instrument of the plaintive order, and in this opinion KIMCHI and other Jewish writers perfectly agree. They assert that it was a wind-instrument, answering very much to the flute, and employed mainly in giving utterance to sentiments of grief, upon occasions of great sorrow and lamentation. With this view of the title, I should look for no new translation, but should just read it substantially as our translators here : " A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the giver of victory, upon Mahalath Leannoth, an instruction for Heman, the Ezrahite.—*John Morison.*

Title.—*" Leannoth "* is variously rendered, according as it is derived from עָנָה, *anah, to suffer, be afflicted,* or from עָנָה, *anah, to chant, sing.* Gesenius, De Wette, Dr. Davies, and others take the latter view ; while Mudge, Hengstenberg, Alexander, and others take the former. Mudge translates, *to create dejection* ; Alexander renders, *mahalath leannoth, concerning afflictive sickness* ; Hengstenberg reads, *upon the distress of oppression.* The Septuagint (ἀποκριθῆναι) and the Vulgate (*respondendum*) indicate a *responsive* song, and Houbigant translates the words in question, *for the choirs, that they may answer.* Many etymologists consider the primary idea of עָנָה, *anah, to sing,* that of *answering.* The tone of the psalm in question, however, being decidedly that of *sadness and dejection,* it appears more probable that *leannoth* denotes the strictly elegiac character of the performance, and the whole title may read therefore, *" A Song or Psalm, for the sons of Korah, to the chief musician, upon the flutes* [*or the hollow instruments*], *to afflict* [*or cause dejection*], *a didactic Psalm of Heman, the Ezrahite."—F. G. Hibbard, in " The Psalms chronologically arranged, with Historical Introductions." New York,* 1856.

Title.—The explanation :—to be performed mournfully with subdued voice,

agrees with the mournful contents, whose tone is even more gloomy than that of Ps. lxxvii.—*From "The Psalms, By C. B. Moll."* [*Lange's Series of Commentaries.*]

Title.—"*Heman.*" 1. David was not the only man acquainted with sad exercise and affliction of spirit, for here is another, to wit, *Heman the Ezrahite*, as deep in trouble of spirit as he or any other beside. 2. They are not all men of weak minds and shallow wits who are acquainted with trouble of spirit, and borne down with the sense of God's wrath; for here is *Heman*, one amongst the wisest of all Israel (and inferior to none for wisdom, except to Solomon alone), under the heaviest exercise we can imagine possible for a saint. 3. When it pleaseth God to exercise a man of parts, of great gifts and graces, he can make his burden proportionable to his strength, and give him as much to do with the difficulties he puts him to, as a weaker man shall find in his exercise, as appeareth in the experience of *Heman*. 4. Wise men in their trouble must take the same course with the simpler sort of men; that is, they must run to God as others do, and seek relief only in his grace, who as he distributeth the measures of trouble, can also give comfort, ease, and deliverance from them, as the practice of *Heman* doth teach us. 5. What trouble of wounded spirit some of God's children have felt in former times, others dear to God may find the like in after ages, and all men ought to prepare for the like, and should not think the exercise strange when it cometh, but must comfort themselves in this, that other saints whose names are recorded in Scripture, have been under like affliction; for the Psalm is appointed "to give instruction"; it is "*Maschil of Heman.*" 6. What is at one time matter of mourning to one of God's children, may become matter of joy and singing afterward, both to himself and to others, as this sad anguish of spirit in *Heman* is made a song of joy unto God's glory, and the comfort of all afflicted souls, labouring under the sense of sin and felt wrath of God, unto the world's end; it is "*A Song, a Psalm for the sons of Korah.*" 7. Such as are most heartily afflicted in spirit, and do flee to God for reconciliation and consolation through Christ, have no reason to suspect themselves, that they are not esteemed of and loved as dear children, because they feel so much of God's wrath: for here is a saint who hath drunken of that cup (as deep as any who shall read this Psalm), here is one so much loved and honoured of God, as to be a penman of Holy Scripture, and a pattern of faith and patience unto others; even *Heman the Ezrahite.—David Dickson.*

Whole Psalm.—"We have in this Psalm the voice of our suffering Redeemer," says Horne; and the contents may be thus briefly stated—

1. *The plaintive wailing* of the suffering one, verses 1, 2. It strongly resembles Ps. xxii. 1, 2.

2. *His soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*, verses 3, 4, 5. The word "*free*" in our version, is חָפְשִׁי, properly denoting separation from others, and here rendered by Junius and Tremellius, "set aside from intercourse and communication with men, having nothing in common with them, like those who are afflicted with leprosy, and are sent away to separate dwellings." They quote 2 Chron. xxvi. 21.

3. *His feelings of hell*, verses 6, 7. For he feels God's prison, and the gloom of God's darkest wrath. And "*Selah*" gives time to ponder.

4. *His feelings of shame and helplessness*, verse 8. "His own receive him not."

5. *The effects of soul-agony upon his body*, verse 9.

6. *His submission to the Lord*, verse 9. It is the very tone of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, *not my will!*"

7. *The sustaining hope of resurrection*, verses 10 (with a solemn pause, "*Selah*"), 11, 12. The "*land of forgetfulness*," and "*the dark*," express the unseen world, which, to those on this side of the vail, is so unknown, and where those who enter it are to us as if they had for ever been forgotten by those they left behind. God's wonders shall be made known there. There shall be victory gained over death and the grave: God's "*lovingkindness*" to man, and his "*faithfulness*," pledge him to do this new thing in the universe. Messiah must return from the abodes of the invisible state; and in due time, Heman, as well as all other members of the Messiah's body, must return also. Yes, God's *wonders* shall be known at the grave's mouth. God's *righteousness*, in giving what satisfied justice in behalf of Messiah's members, has been manifested gloriously, so that resurrection must follow, and the land of forgetfulness must give up its dead. O morning of surpassing bliss, hasten on! Messiah has risen; when shall all that are his arise? Till that day dawn, they must take up their Head's plaintive expostulations, and remind their

God in Heman's strains of what he has yet to accomplish. *" Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?"* etc.

8. *His perseverance in vehement prayer*, verses 13, 14.

9. *His long-continued and manifold woes*, verses 15, 16, 17.

10. *His loneliness of soul*, verse 18. Hengstenberg renders the last clause of this verse more literally—" The dark kingdom of the dead is instead of all my companions." What unutterable gloom! completed by this last dark shade—all sympathy from every quarter totally withdrawn! Forlorn indeed! Sinking from gloom to gloom, from one deep to another, and every billow sweeping over him, and wrath, like a tremendous mountain, *" leaning "* or resting its weight on the crushed worm. Not even Psalm xxii. is more awfully solemnising, there being in this deeply melancholy Psalm only one cheering glimpse through the intense gloom, namely, that of resurrection hoped for, but still at a distance. At such a price was salvation purchased by him who is the resurrection and the life. He himself wrestled for life and resurrection in our name—and that price so paid is the reason why to us salvation is free. And so we hear in solemn joy the harp of Judah struck by Heman, to overawe our souls not with his own sorrows, but with what Horsley calls " The lamentation of Messiah," or yet more fully, *The sorrowful days and nights of the Man of Sorrows.—Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm stands alone in all the Psalter for the unrelieved gloom, the hopeless sorrow of its tone. Even the very saddest of the others, and the Lamentations themselves, admit some variations of key, some strains of hopefulness; here only all is darkness to the close.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Whole Psalm.—The prophecy in the foregoing Psalm of the conversion of all nations is followed by this Passion-Psalm, in order that it may never be forgotten that God has purchased to himself an universal church, by the precious blood of his dear Son.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—All the misery and sorrow which are described in this Psalm, says Brentius, have been the lot of Christ's people. We may therefore take the Psalm, he adds, to be common to Christ and his church.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 1.—*" My."* That little word *" my "* opens for a moment a space between the clouds through which the Sun of righteousness casts one solitary beam. Generally speaking, you will find that when the Psalm begins with lamentation, it ends with praise; like the sun, which, rising in clouds and mist, sets brightly, and darts forth its parting rays just before it goes down. But here the first gleam shoots across the sky just as the sun rises, and no sooner has the ray appeared, than thick clouds and darkness gather over it; the sun continues its course throughout the whole day enveloped in clouds; and sets at last in a thicker bank of them than it ever had around it during the day. " Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." In what a dark cloud does the sun of Heman set!—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 1.—*" Before thee."* He had not recklessly poured forth his complaints, or cast them to the winds, as many are wont to do, who have no hope in their calamities; but he had always mingled with his complaining prayers for obtaining deliverance, and had directed them to God, where faith assured him his prayers would be seen again. This must be attentively noted, since herein is seen of what kind the complaints of the saints are.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 1.—*" Before thee."* Other men seek some hiding place where they may murmur against God, but the Psalmist comes into the Lord's presence and states his grievances. When a man dares to pour out his complaint before the Lord's own face, his woes are real, and not the result of petulance or a rebellious spirit.—*C. H. S.*

Verses 1, 2.—*" Before thee."* Not seeking to be seen by human eye, but by God alone, therefore, *" let my prayer come before thee,"* that is, let it be acceptable before thee, after the similitude of ambassadors who are admitted to audience; and when my prayer has entered *" incline thine ear unto my cry,"* because thou hearest the desire of the afflicted.—*Richardus Hampolus.*

Verse 2.—*" Incline thine ear,"* etc. It is necessary that God should incline his ear unto our prayer, else it would be in vain to come before Him. The prodigal did not venture to present his prayer before the father ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him. For then he said, Luke xv. 21, "Father, I have sinned against

heaven, and in thy sight," etc., and so he obtained mercy. Esther did not present her prayer to Ahasuerus before he descended from his throne and inclined himself to her. Esth. v. 2, etc.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—"*My soul is full of troubles.*" The Lord Jesus emptied himself of glory, that he might be full of trouble. His soul, which was free from human sin, was full of human troubles, that we who are full of sin might be free from trouble; his life drew nigh to the terrors of the unseen world, that we might not be its spoil and prey.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 3.—"*My soul is full of troubles.*" Hear into what a depth of spiritual distress three worthy servants of God in these later times were plunged and pressed down under the sense of God's anger for sin. Blessed *Mistress Brettergh* upon her last bed was horribly hemmed in with the sorrows of death; the very grief of hell laid hold upon her soul; a roaring wilderness of woe was within her, as she confessed of herself. She said, her sin had made her a prey to Satan; and wished that she had never been born, or that she had been made any other creature rather than a woman. She cried out many times, woe, woe, woe, etc.; a weak, a woful, a wretched, a forsaken woman; with tears continually trickling from her eyes. *Master Peacock*, that man of God, in that his dreadful visitation and desertion, recounting some smaller sins, burst out in these words: "And for these," saith he, "I feel now a hell in my conscience." Upon other occasions he cried out, groaning most pitifully, "Oh me, wretch! Oh mine heart is miserable! Oh, oh, miserable and woful! The burden of my sin lieth so heavy upon me, I doubt it will break my heart. Oh how woful and miserable is my state that I am hunted by hell-hounds!" When by-standers asked if he would pray, he answered, "I cannot." Suffer us, say they, to pray for you. "Take not," replied he, "the name of God in vain, by praying for a reprobate."

What grievous pangs, what sorrowful torments, what boiling heats of the fire of hell that blessed saint of God, *John Glover*, felt inwardly in his spirit, saith Foxe, no speech outwardly is able to express. Being young, saith he, I remember I was once or twice with him, whom partly by his talk I perceived, and partly by mine own eyes saw to be so worn and consumed by the space of five years, that neither almost any brooking of meat, quietness of sleep, pleasure of life, yea, and almost no kind of senses was left in him. Upon apprehension of some backsliding, he was so perplexed, that if he had been in the deepest pit of hell, he could almost have despaired no more of his salvation; in which intolerable griefs of mind, saith he, although he neither had, nor could have any joy of his meat, yet was he compelled to eat against his appetite, to the end to defer the time of his damnation so long as he might; thinking with himself, but that he must needs be thrown into hell, the breath being once out of his body. I dare not pass out of this point, lest some child of God should be here discouraged, before I tell you that every one of these three was at length blessedly recovered, and did rise most gloriously out of their several depths of extremest spiritual misery, before their end.

Hear, therefore, *Mistress Brettergh's* triumphant songs and ravishments of spirit, after the return of her well-beloved: "O Lord Jesu, dost thou pray for me? O blessed and sweet Saviour, how wonderful! How wonderful are thy mercies! Oh thy love is unspeakable, thou hast dealt so graciously with me! O my Lord and my God, blessed be thy name for evermore, which hast shewed me the path of life. Thou didst, O Lord, hide thy face from me for a little season, but with everlasting mercy thou hast had compassion on me. And now, blessed Lord, thy comfortable presence is come; yea, Lord, thou hast had respect unto thine handmaid, and art come with fulness of joy, and abundance of consolation. O blessed be thy name, my Lord and my God. O the joys that I feel in my soul! They be wonderful. O Father, how merciful and marvellously gracious art thou unto me! yea, Lord, I feel thy mercy and I am assured of thy love; and so certain am I thereof, as Thou art the God of truth, even so sure do I know myself to be thine, O Lord my God, and this my soul knoweth right well. Blessed be the Lord that hath thus comforted me, and hath brought me now to a place more sweet unto me than the garden of Eden. Oh the joy, the delightsome joy that I feel! O praise the Lord for his mercies, and for this joy which my soul feeleth full well; praise his name for evermore.

Hear with what heavenly calmness and sweet comforts *Master Peacock's* heart was refreshed and ravished when the storm was over: "Truly, my heart and soul,"

saith he, (when the tempest was something allayed) " have been far led and deeply troubled with temptations, and stings of conscience, but I thank God they are eased in good measure. Wherefore I desire that I be not branded with the note of a cast-away or reprobate. Such questions, oppositions, and all tending thereto, I renounce. Concerning mine inconsiderate speeches in my temptation, I humbly and heartily ask mercy of God for them all." Afterward by little, and little, more light did arise in his heart, and he brake out into such speeches as these : " I do, God be praised, feel such comfort from that, what shall I call it ? " " Agony," said one that stood by. " Nay," quoth he, " that is too little ; that had I five hundred worlds, I could not make satisfaction for such an issue. Oh, the sea is not more full of water, nor the sun of light, than the Lord of mercy ; yea, his mercies are ten thousand times more. What great cause have I to magnify the great goodness of God, that hath humbled such a wretched miscreant, and of so base condition, to an estate so glorious and stately. The Lord hath honoured me with his goodness ! I am sure he hath provided a glorious kingdom for me. The joy that I feel in mine heart is incredible." For the third, (namely, *John Glover*) hear Mr. Foxe : " Though this good servant of God suffered many years so sharp temptations, and strong buffettings of Satan ; yet the Lord, who graciously preserved him all the while, not only at last did rid him out of all discomfort, but also framed him thereby to such mortification of life, as the like lightly hath not been seen ; in such sort, as he being like one placed in heaven already, and dead in this world both in word and meditation, led a life altogether celestial, abhorring in his mind all profane doings—*Robert Bolton* (1572—1631), *in " Instructions for a right Comforting afflicted Consciences."*

Verse 3.—*" My life."* The Hebrew word rendered *life* is in the plural number, as in Gen. ii. 7 ; iii. 14, 17 ; vi. 17 ; vii. 15 ; *et al. Why* the plural was used as applicable to life cannot now be known with certainty. It *may* have been to accord with the fact, that man has *two* kinds of life ;—the animal life,—or life in common with the inferior creation ; and intellectual, or higher life,—the life of the *soul.* The meaning here is, that he was about to die ; or that his *life* or *lives* approached that state when the grave closes over us ; the extinction of the mere animal life ; and the separation of the soul—the immortal part—from the body.—*Albert Barnes.*

3. *" The grave."* The word which is rendered " *hell* " in the Prayer Book translation, and " *the grave* " in the Bible version, and which is usually translated either as *hell* or *the grave,* is in the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל and in the Greek " *Hades.*" " *Hades* " signifies " the unseen world." The word " *Sheol* " is literally " the Devouring, or the Insatiable." (Compare Hab. ii. 5, " who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied ; " and also Prov. xxx. 15, 16.) " *Sheol* " seems to have presented itself to the thoughts of the ancient Hebrews as a gloomy, silent, inevitable, and mysterious abode, situated within the earth, whither the souls of the departed were compelled to repair and to dwell, upon their being separated from the body. (Isa. xiv. 9—20). They believed that the spirits of all human kind were contained there in a state of waiting, and there especially dwelt the souls of the giants before the flood (1 Pet. iii. 19, 20), and of the great ones of old, the *Rephaim,* whom they pictured to themselves as fearful and gigantic spectres (Compare Prov. ii. 18). These ideas became modified and developed with the increasing clearness of divine teaching ; and they divided the abode of the dead into different states of hope and comfort, which they called Abraham's bosom and paradise (Luke xvi. 22, 23 ; xxiii. 43) ; and of misery and suffering (Wisdom iii. 1). Life and immortality were brought to light by the Saviour, and also judgment and Hell—the *Gehenna* of everlasting punishment, as distinguished from the Unseen World. (Compare Rev. xx. 13, 14.) From these speculations of Jewish Rabbis respecting *Sheol* the church of Rome appears to have developed the doctrine of Purgatory. It should be added that it was a received opinion among the followers of Rabbinical teaching, that all of the seed of Abraham, though they would be dwellers in *Sheol* before the general resurrection, would finally escape the *Gehenna* of everlasting fire. The rich man (Luke xvi. 23) is in Hades in torments when he calls to Abraham his father.—*" Plain Commentary."*

Verse 4.—*" I am counted with them that go down into the pit."* Not only myself, says he, but others also now despair of my life, and number me with those whose corpses are borne forth to burial. For now all my powers have failed and my vital

spirits become quenched. He uses the word גֶּבֶר which indicates fortitude rather than אָדָם or אִישׁ in order to show how great the severity of these evils was, and the vehemence of his griefs, which had broken even a most robust man.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 4.—"*I am counted with them that go down into the pit.*" Next to the troubles of Christ's soul, are mentioned the disgrace and ignominy to which he submitted: He who was the fountain of immortality, from whom no one could take his life, who could in a moment have commanded twelve legions of angels to his aid, or have caused heaven and earth, at a word speaking, to fly away before him, he was *counted among them that go down into the pit;* he died, to all appearance, like the rest of mankind; nay, he was forcibly put to death, as a malefactor; and seemed, in the hands of his executioners, *as a man that had no strength*, no power, or might, to help and save himself. His strength went from him; he became weak, and like another man. The people shook their heads at him, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save."—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 4.—There is in the original an antithesis, which cannot be conveyed by mere translation, arising from the fact that the first word for *man* is one implying strength.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*Free among the dead.*" In the former verse he had said that he had approached very near to death, now he is plainly dead: there he was about to be buried, here he is laid in the sepulchre: thus had his sufferings increased. *Free* is to be understood of the affairs of this life, as when it is said, Job iii. 19, "And the servant is free from his master."—*Martin Bucer*, 1491—1551.

Verse 5.—"*Free among the dead.*" בַּמֵּתִים חָפְשִׁי *bammethim chophshi*, I rather think, means *stripped among the dead.* Both the *fourth* and *fifth* verses seem to allude to a *field of battle:* the *slain* and the *wounded* are found scattered over the plain; the *spoilers* come among them, and strip, not only the *dead*, but those also who appear to be *mortally wounded* and cannot recover, and are so feeble as not to be able to *resist.* Hence the Psalmist says, "*I am as a man that hath no strength*," verse 4.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—"*Free.*" There is no immunity so long as we are in the flesh, there is no truce, but constant unrest distracts us. Liberty, therefore, is given to us after death, because we rest from our labours.—*Franciscus Vatablus.*

Verse 5.—"*Cut off from thy hand.*" Beware how you ever look upon yourself as *cut off* from life and from enjoyment; you are not cut off, only taken apart, laid aside, it may be but for a season, or it may be for life; but still you are part of the body of which Christ is the Head. Some must suffer and some must serve, but each one is necessary to the other, "the whole body is fitly framed together by that which every joint supplieth," "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you:" Eph. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xii. 21. Your feet may be set fast; they may have run with great activity, and you sorrow now, because they can run no more. But do not sorrow thus, do not envy those who are running; you have a work to do; it may be the work of the head, or of the eye, it surely is whatever work God gives to you. It may be the work of lying still, of not stirring hand or foot, of scarcely speaking, scarcely showing life. Fear not: if He your heavenly Master has given it to you to do, it is *His* work, and He will bless it. Do not repine. Do not say, *This* is work, and, this is *not*; how do you know? What work, think you, was Daniel doing in the lions' den? or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace? Their work was "glorious, laudable, and honourable," they were glorifying God in suffering.—*From "Sickness, its Trials and Blessings."* [Anon.] 1868.

Verse 6.—"*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,*" etc. He expands his meaning by another similitude. For he compares himself to a captive who has been cast into a deep, foul, dark, and slimy pit, where he is shut up and plunged in filth and darkness, having not a remnant of hope and life; after the manner of Jeremiah's sufferings, chap. xxxvii. By this simile he means that he was in the greatest anxieties and sorrows of mind, destitute of every hope and sense of consolation, and that the terrors of death continually increased and augmented.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 6.—When a saint is under terrible impressions of Jehovah's infinite wrath, he cannot but be under great horror of conscience, and in perplexing depths of mental trouble. The sense which he hath of avenging wrath, occasions a conflict

in his spirit, inexpressibly agonizing and terrible. When his troubled conscience is inflamed, by a sense of the fiery indignation of God almighty, the more he thinks of him as his infinite enemy, the more he is dismayed: every thought of *him*, brings doleful tidings, and pours oil upon the raging flame. Trouble of conscience for sin, is indeed very disquieting; but, a sense of the vindictive wrath of God, kindled in the conscience, is still more dreadful. No words can express the direful anguish, which the disconsolate soul then feels. The Christian cannot at that time think so much as one quieting, one cheering thought. What he first thinks of is tormenting to his wounded spirit: he changes that thought for another, and that is still more tormenting. He finds himself entangled, as in the midst of a thicket of thorns; so that, which way soever he turns himself, he is pierced and grieved afresh. This dismal thought often arises in his troubled mind,—That if death were, in his present condition, to surprise and cut him off, he should sink for ever and ever, under the intolerable wrath of the infinite Jehovah. The most exquisite torment of body is almost nothing, in comparison of the anguish of his spirit at such times. Oh! how inconceivable is the anguish, the agony, especially of a holy soul, when it is conflicting with the tremendous wrath of the eternal God! The bodily torture even of crucifixion, could not extort from the holy Jesus the smallest sigh or complaint; but the sense of his Father's wrath in his soul, wrung from him that doleful outcry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"—*John Colquhoun, in "A Treatise on Spiritual Comfort,"* 1814.

Verse 7.—"*Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.*" Others read, *sustains itself*, or *bears up itself upon me*, which is as if a giant should with his whole weight stay himself upon a child.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 7.—There are some that feel the wrath of God on their souls and consciences, and yet are not under wrath, but are true saints of God. Examples ye have in Paul, that chosen vessel of God to bear the name of Jesus among the Gentiles, he had fightings without and terrors within. Heman the Ezrahite said, 'The waves of the Lord's indignation are gone over my head, so that they are like to drown me; I suffer terrors and doubtings from my very youth, so that I can never be quit of them.' And both these were the dear children of God. Now, if thou feelest nothing but wrath, and thou dost ask how thou shalt judge of thy state when thou art bearing such a wrath, that put all the sand of the sea in balance with it, it would overweigh it; and when thou hast such a fire in thy conscience, that, put iron and brass in that fire, it would melt them, for they were not able to abide it: how then shalt thou know, in this case, that thou art loved of God, and that he hath chosen thee to eternal life? I tell thee, if thou art the chosen child of God, and a vessel of mercy, under a sense of wrath, in this estate this will be thy disposition. First, Thou wilt hate and detest thy sin, which is the cause of thy misery, and hath brought thee to this pain. Secondly, Thou wilt have some dolour and sorrow for thy sin, and thou wilt lament because thou hast provoked God to anger against thee. Thirdly, Thou wilt have a desire to be reconciled to God; and thou wouldst gladly be at peace with him, that thy sins may be taken away out of his sight. Fourthly, There will be hunger and thirst for the blood of Christ to quench that wrath, and for his righteousness to cover thy soul. Fifthly, There will be a patient waiting upon the Lord's deliverance, and when thou canst not get to this persuasion, then there will be a hope above hope, and thou wilt say with Job, xiii. 15, 'Lord, I will trust in thee, though thou shouldst slay me.'—*John Welch.*

Verse 8.—There are times when an unspeakable sadness steals upon me, an immense loneliness takes possession of my soul, a longing perchance for some vanished hand and voice to comfort me as of old, a desolation without form and void, that wraps me in its folds, and darkens my inmost being. It was not thus in the first days of my illness. Then all was so new and strange, that a strange spiritual strength filled my soul, and seemed to bear me up as with angel hands. The love and kindness that my sickness called forth, came to me with a sweet surprise; tender solicitude made my very pain into an occasion of joy to me; and hope was strong and recovery was near, only a few brief weeks between me and returning health, with nothing of sickness remaining, but the memory of all that love and sympathy, like a line of light my Saviour's feet had left, as he walked with me on the troubled sea.

But now that hope is deferred, and returning health seems to loiter by the way,

and recovery is delayed, and the trial lengthens out like an ever-lengthening chain, my soul begins to faint and tire, and the burthen to grow heavier. Even to those who love me most, my pain and helplessness is now an accustomed thing, while to me it keeps its keen edge of suffering, but little dulled by use. My ills to them are a tedious oft-told tale which comes with something of a dull reiterance. It has become almost a matter of course that in the pleasant plan I should be left out, that in the pleasant walk I should be left behind; a matter of course that the pleasures of life should pass me by with folded hand and averted face; and sickness, and monotonous days, and grey shadows should be my portion. . . .

And O my God, my spirit sometimes faints beneath a nameless dread that this loneliness will grow deeper and deeper, if it be thy will that my sickness should continue, or recovery be long delayed. I can no longer be the companion of those I love; shall I be as dear to them as if I could have kept by their side, and been bound up with all their active interests and pleasures? I have to see others take my place, and do my work for them; shall I not suffer loss in their eyes, and others enter into the heritage of love which might have been mine? Will they not grow weary of me, weary of the same old ills, oft repeated, but ever new, and turn with an unconscious feeling of relief, to brighter hearts, and more joyous lives?

My God, my God, to whom can I turn for comfort but unto thee, thou who didst drink the bitter cup of human loneliness to the dregs that thou mightest make thyself a brother to the lonely, a merciful and faithful High Priest to the desolate soul; thou who alone canst pass within, the doors being shut to all human aid, into that secret place of thunder, where the tempest-tossed soul suffers and struggles alone; thou who alone canst command the winds and tempests, and say unto the sea, "Be still!" and unto the wind, "Blow not!" and there shall be a great calm.

As a child alone in the dark, my heart cries out for thee, cries for thine embracing arms, for thy voice of comfort, for thy pierced heart on which to rest my aching head, and feel that Love is near.—*From "Christ the Consoler. A Book of Comfort for the Sick."* [Anon.] 1872.

Verse 8.—*"Thou hast put away mine acquaintance."* This tempest of afflictions is all the heavier, because, First, all my acquaintance departed far from me, like swallows in winter time: Prov. xiv. 20. *The poor is hated even of his own neighbour, but the rich hath many friends.* Seneca wisely admonishes: *Flies follow honey, wolves corpses, ants food, the mob follows the pay, not the man.* Job said, Chap. xix. 13, He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. Secondly, Not only do they often depart from the afflicted, but they themselves add to his trouble, and precipitate his falling fortune. A rich man beginning to fall is held up by his friends; but a poor man being down, is thrust away by those who once pretended to love him.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 8.—*"Thou hast made me an abomination unto them:"* *lit,* "abominations," as if I were one great mass of abominations. (Gen. xlvi. 34; xliii. 32.) As Israel was an abomination to the Egyptians, so Messiah, the antitypical Israel, was to the world.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 8.—*"An abomination."* As one who is unclean,—excluded from social intercourse; Gen. xlvi. 34. Compare Job ix. 31; xix. 19; xxx. 10. *"I cannot come forth."* The man suspected of leprosy was "shut up seven days:" Levit. xiii. 4.—*William Kay.*

Verse 9.—*"Mine eye mourneth,"* . . . *"I have called."* Weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears: *"Mine eye mourns,"* but *"I cry unto thee daily."* Let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together: "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—The first clause seems literally to mean the soreness and dimness of sight caused by excessive weeping, and is so taken by many of the commentators, and Lorinus aptly quotes a Latin poet, *Catullus,* in illustration:—

> Mœsta neque assiduo tabescere lumina fleto
> Cessarent.
>
> Nor my sad eyes to pine with constant tears
> Could cease.
>
> —*Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 10.—He assureth himself God would not fail to comfort him before he died; and again, that the Lord would rather miraculously raise him from the dead, than not glorify himself in his deliverance: and in this also he taketh a safe course, for he seeks for what he might expect, rather in an ordinary way, than by looking for miracles.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—"*Shall the dead arise and praise thee?*" So far from this being an argument against the resurrection, it is Messiah's own most powerful plea for it—that otherwise man would be deprived of salvation, and God of the praise which the redeemed shall give for it to all eternity. Thou canst not show wonders to *the dead* as such; for "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matt. xxii. 32.) Or even if thou wert to show thy wonders, it is only by their rising to life again that they can duly praise thee for them.—*A. R. Faussel.*

Verse 10.—"*The dead.*" The word comes from a root which expresses what is weak and languid, and at the same time stretched out and long-extended, and which can accordingly be employed to describe the shadowy forms of the under world as well as the giants and heroes of the olden time.—*Carl Bernhard Moll, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 10.—"*The dead.*" An attentive consideration seems to leave little room for doubt that the dead were called Rephaim (as Gesenius also hints) from some notion of Scheol being the residence of the fallen spirits or buried giants.—*F. W. Farrar, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.*

Verses 10, 11.—Can my soul ever come to think I shall live in thy favour, in thy free grace and loving-kindness, to be justified by it, to apprehend myself a living man, and all my sins forgiven? To do this, saith he, is as great a wonder as to raise a man up from death to life; therefore he useth that expression, "*Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?*" He calleth it a wonder; for of all works else, you shall find in Scripture the resurrection from the dead counted the greatest wonder.

The phrase in the 10th verse, as the Septuagint translates it, is exceeding emphatical. Saith he, "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the physicians arise and praise thee?" So they read it, and so some good Hebrecians read it also; that is, Go send for all the college of physicians, all the angels out of heaven, all the skilful ministers and prophets that were then upon the earth, Gad and David, for he lived in David's time; send for them all. All these physicians may come with their cordials and balms; they will never cure me, never heal my soul, never raise me up to life again, except thou raise me; for I am "free among the dead," saith he. Now then, to work faith in such a one; for this poor soul, being thus dead, to go out of himself, and by naked and sheer faith to go to Jesus Christ alone, whom God raised from the dead, and to believe on him alone; this is now as great a power as indeed to raise a man up from death to life.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verses 10—12.—In these verses we find mention made of four things on the part of God: "wonders," "loving-kindness," "faithfulness," and "righteousness." These were four attributes of the blessed Jehovah which the eyes of Heman had been opened to see, and which the heart of Heman had been wrought upon to feel. But he comes, by divine teaching, into a spot where these attributes seem to be completely lost to him; and yet, (so mysterious are the ways of God!) that spot was made the very place where those attributes were more powerfully displayed, and made more deeply and experimentally known to his soul.

The Lord led the blind by a way that he knew not into these spots of experience, that in them he might more fully open up to him those attributes of which he had already gained a glimpse; but the Lord brought him in such a mysterious way, that all his former knowledge was baffled. He therefore puts up this inquiry to the Lord, how it was possible that in those spots where he now was, these attributes could be displayed or made known?

1. He begins—"*Will thou shew wonders to the dead?*" He is speaking here of his own experience; *he* is that "dead" person to whom those "wonders" are to be shown. And being in that state of experience, he considered that every act of mercy shown to him where he then was, must be a "wonder." "*Shall the dead arise and praise thee?*" What! the dark, stupid, cold, barren, helpless soul, that cannot lift up one little finger, that cannot utter one spiritual word, that cannot put forth one gracious desire, that cannot lift up itself a hair's breadth out of the mass that presses it down—"Shall it *arise*?" and more than that, "*praise thee?*" What! can lamentation ever be turned into praise? Can complaint ever be changed

into thanksgiving? Can the mourner ever shout and sing? Oh, it is a wonder of wonders, if "the dead" are to "arise," if "the dead" are to "praise thee;" if the dead are to stand upon their feet, and shout victory through thy blood!—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—"*In the grave.*" Here is a striking figure of what a living soul feels under the manifestations of the deep corruptions of his heart. All his good words, once so esteemed; and all his good works, once so prized; and all his prayers, and all his faith, and hope, and love, and all the imaginations of his heart, are not merely paralysed and dead, not merely reduced to a state of utter helplessness, but also in soul-feeling turned into rottenness and corruption. When we feel this we are spiritually brought where Heman was, when he said, "Shall thy lovingkindness be *declared* in the grave?" What! wilt thou manifest thy love to a stinking corpse? What! is thy love to be shed abroad in a heart full of pollution and putrefaction? Is thy lovingkindness to come forth from thy glorious sanctuary, where thou sittest enthroned in majesty, and holiness, and purity,—is it to leave that eternal abode of ineffable light and glory, and enter into the dark, polluted, and loathsome "grave"? What! is thy lovingkindness to come out of the sanctuary into the charnel-house? Shall it be "declared" *there*—revealed there—spoken there—manifested there—made known there? For nothing else but the *declaration* of it there will do. He does not say, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the Scriptures?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in Christ?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared by the mouth of ministers?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in holy and pure hearts?"—but he says, "Shall thy lovingkindness be *declared*," uttered, spoken, revealed, manifested, "in the *grave*?" where everything is contrary to it, where everything is unworthy of it,—the last of all places fit for the lovingkindness of an all-pure God to enter.—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—"*Thy faithfulness in destruction.*" You will see God's faithfulness to have been manifested most,—in destruction. You will see God's faithfulness to his covenant most clearly evidenced in destroying your false religion, in order to set up his own kingdom in your soul; in destroying everything which alienated and drew away your affections from him, that he alone might be enshrined in your hearts; and you will say, when the Lord leads you to look at the path he has led you, in after years, "Of all God's mercies his greatest have been those that seemed at the time to be the greatest miseries; the richest blessings which he has given us, are those which came wrapped up in the outside covering of curses; and his faithfulness has been as much or more manifested in destruction, than in restoration."—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—It is not by leaving man in the "destruction" which sin and death produce, that God will declare his "faithfulness" to his promises which have flowed out of his "loving-kindness;" for instance, his promise that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. xiii. 15; and Hos. xiii. 14).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 12.—"*Wilt thou show thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*"—where I have forgotten thee, where I turned aside from thee, where I have let slip out of my memory all thy previous dealings with me—and shall thy righteousness be manifested even there? Wilt thou prove thine equity in showing forth mercy, because for me a sacrifice has been offered, thy righteousness running parallel with the atoning stream of Christ's blood? When I have forgotten thee and forsaken thee, and turned my back upon thee, can thy righteousness be there manifested? What! righteousness running side by side with mercy! and righteousness still preserving all its unbending strictness, because this very backsliding of heart, this very forgetfulness of soul, this very alienation of affection, this very turning my back upon thee, have all been atoned for; and righteousness can be still shown "in the land of forgetfulness," because all my sins committed in the land of forgetfulness have been atoned for by redeeming blood!—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 13.—"*But,*" etc. That "*but*" seems to come in as an expression of his resolution hitherto, that though these were his apprehensions of his condition, yet he had sought the Lord, and would go on to do the same. Suppose thou findest no relish in the ordinances, yet use them; thou art desperately sick, yet eat still, take all that is brought thee, some strength will come of it. Say, "Be I damned or saved, hypocrite or no hypocrite, I resolve to go on."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 13.—" *In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.*" The morning prayer is the best. . . . In the morning God gave various gifts. First, the manna, Exod. xvi. 13, *And in the morning the dew lay round about the host:* He who is in the camp of God, and bravely fights, receives from God dew and consolation, if in the morning, that is, in the beginning of temptation, he prays. In the evening flesh was given, whence death overtook them, but in another case in the morning the manna was given, whereby life was sustained, until they came into the land of promise. Secondly, the law was given in the morning, Exod. xix. 16, *And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud.* In morning devotion the thunders of God, that is, his judgments, are more distinctly heard; his lightnings, that is, his divine enlightenments, are best seen; the thick cloud upon the mount, that is, the divine overshadowing of the soul, is perceived; and the voice of the trumpet is best heard, that is, inspiration then with greater force moves the mind. Thirdly, in the morning, very early, the children of Israel went forth from Egypt; for in the middle of the night God smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, Exod. xii. 29. . . . In the morning pray, and you shall conquer your daily and nightly foes; and the Red Sea itself, that is, the place of temptation, shall be to thee a field of glory, of victory and exultation, and all things shall go well with thee.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 13.—" *Unto thee have I cried, O Lord.*" There is something concomitant with the Christian's present darkness of spirit, that distinguisheth it from the hypocrite's horror; and that is the lively working of grace, which then commonly is very visible, when his peace and former comfort are most questioned by him; the less joy he hath from any present sense of the love of God, the more abounding you shall find him in sorrow for his sin that clouded his joy; the further Christ is gone out of his sight, the more he clings in his love to Christ, and vehemently cries after him in prayer, as we see in Heman here. O the fervent prayers that then are shot from his troubled spirit to heaven, the pangs of affection which are springing after God, and his face and favour! Never did a banished child more desire admittance into his angry father's presence, than he to have the light of God's countenance shine on him, which is now veiled from him.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 14.—" *Why hidest thou thy face from me?*" Numerous are the complaints of good men under this dark cloud; and to a child of light it is indeed a darkness that may be felt; it beclouds and bewilders the mind; the brightest evidences are in a great measure hid; the Bible itself is sealed, and fast closed; we see not our signs, nor our tokens for good; every good thing is at a distance from us, behind the cloud, and we cannot get at it; there is a dismal gloom upon our path; we know not where we are, where to step, nor which way to steer; which way God is gone we know not, but he knoweth the way that we take; and such a prayer as this suits us well,—Seek thy servants, for we are lost. Christ is hid, and there is a frowning cloud upon the sweet countenance of God, in which he hides his blessed face; or, as he did to the disciples, holds our eyes, that we should not see him. But, though this is often the case with believers, and they cannot see one beam of light before them; though all evidences are hid, and the light of the Lord's countenance is withdrawn; though no signs nor love tokens appear; and though the life-giving commandment is hid from them, and he shows them no wonders out of his law; yet these Israelites have light in their dwellings—they have light to see the corruptions of their own hearts; to see the workings of unbelief, legal pride, enmity, rebellion, the double diligence of Satan, and the wretched advantages he takes of them in these dark seasons.—*William Huntington.*

Verse 15.—" *I am afflicted.*" (Vulg. *Pauper sum ego.*) God more readily hears the poor, and gives himself wholly to them. First, his eyes, to behold them, Ps. xi. 5, " *His eyes behold the poor.*" Secondly, his ears, to hear them, Ps. x. 17, " *Thou wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt cause thine ears to hear.*" Thirdly, his hand, to help, Ps. cvii. 41, " *Yet setteth he the poor on high from his affliction.*" Fourthly, his breast and his arms, to receive the fugitives and those in peril, Ps. lx. 9, " *The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed.*" Fifthly, memory to recollect for them, Ps. ix. 18, " *The needy shall not alway be forgotten.*" Sixthly, intellect, to care for them, and watch over their comfort, Ps. xl. 17, " *But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*" Seventhly, goodwill, to love their prayers, Ps. xxii. 24, " *For he hath*

not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him." Eighthly and lastly, he gives himself wholly to them, to preserve them, Ps. lxxii. 13, "*He shall save the souls of the needy.*"—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 15.—"*I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.*" How much some suffer! I have seen a child, who at the age of twenty months had probably suffered more bodily pain than the whole congregation of a thousand souls, where its parents worshipped. Asaph seems to have been of a sad heart. Jeremiah lived and died lamenting. Heman seems to have been of the same lot and of the same turn of mind.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 15.—(*First clause*). We found the heat more oppressive this day than we had yet experienced it. The hillocks of sand between which we were slowly moving at the usual camel's pace, reflected the sun's rays upon us, till our faces were glowing as if we had been by the side of a furnace. . . . Perhaps it was through this part of the desert of Shur that Hagar wandered, intending to go back to her native country; and it may have been by this way that Joseph carried the young child Jesus when they fled into the land of Egypt. Even in tender infancy the sufferings of the Redeemer began, and he complains, "*I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.*" Perhaps these scorching beams beat upon his infant brow, and this sand-laden breeze dried up his infant lips, while the heat of the curse of God began to melt his heart within. Even in the desert we see the suretyship of Jesus.—*R. M. McCheyne's "Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews."*

Verse 15.—"*From my youth up.*" That is, for a long time;—so long, that the remembrance of it seems to go back to my very childhood. My whole life has been a life of trouble and sorrow, and I have not strength to bear it longer. It may have been literally true that the author of the Psalm had been a man always afflicted; or, this may be the language of strong emotion, meaning that his sufferings had been of so long continuance that they seemed to him to have begun in his very boyhood.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 15.—"*While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.*" The word doth not signify properly the distraction of a man that is mad, but the distraction of a man that is in doubt. It is the distraction of a man who knows not what to do, not of a man who knows not what he doth, and yet that distraction doth often lead to a degree of this; for a man who is much troubled to know what to do, and cannot know it, grows at last to do he knows not what.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 15.—"*While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.*" The Psalm hath this striking peculiarity in it, namely, that it not only hath reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, and him alone; but that he himself is the sole speaker from the beginning to the end. And although the whole of the Psalms are of him, and concerning him, more or less, and he is the great object and subject of all; yet, secondarily and subordinately we meet with many parts in the Psalms where his church is also noticed, and becomes concerned, from union with him, in what is said. But in this Psalm there is allusion to no other.* All is of him and his incommunicable work. All is of the Son of God in our nature. It contains an account of the cries of the Lord Jesus "when in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears."

The soul-agonies of Christ even from the moment of his incarnation to his death, may be contemplated, or read, from the sacred records of Scripture, but cannot come within the province of any created power to conceive, much less unfold. It is remarkable that whatever the Lord meant to convey by the phrase, "*I am distracted,*" this is the only place in the whole Bible where the word "*distracted*" is used. Indeed the inspired writers have varied their terms of expression, when speaking of Christ's sufferings, as if unable to convey any full idea. Matthew renders it that the Lord Jesus said: "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!*" (Matt. xxvi. 38.) Mark describes him as "being sore amazed, and very heavy!" (Mark xiv. 33.) And Luke: his "being in an agony!" (Luke xxii. 44.) But here we must rest, in point of apprehension, for we can proceed no further.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 15.—O Lord, the monotony of my changeless days oppresses me, the constant weariness of my body weighs me down. I am weary of gazing on the same dull objects: I am tired of going through the same dull round day after day; the very inanimate things about my room, and the patterns on the walls, seem

* We differ from Dr. Hawker in his exclusion of the saints from this Psalm. Where the Head is the members are never far away.—ED.

quickened with the waste of my life, and, through the power of association, my own thoughts and my own pain come back upon me from them with a dull reverberation. My heart is too tired to hope ; I dare not look forward to the future ; I expect nothing from the days to come, and yet my heart sinks at the thought of the grey waste of years before me ; and I wonder how I shall endure, whether I shall faint by the way, before I reach my far-off home.—*From " Christ the Consoler."*

Verse 16.—*" Thy fierce wrath goeth over me."* Like a sea of liquid fire ; (xlii. 7). —*Heb.* " Thy hot *wraths."* LXX. *αἱ ὀργαί σου.—William Kay.*

Verse 16.—*" Thy terrors have cut me off."* In the Hebrew verb the last syllable is repeated for the purpose of putting vehemence into the expression. The word נצת signifies, to shut up and press into some narrow place, in order that one may not breathe or escape. . . . In this sense Gregory Nazianzen in his first oration concerning peace, calls grief *δεσμον καρδιας* (the prison of the heart.)—*Mollerus.*

Verse 17.—*" Like water ; "*—not merely because it drowns, but because it searches every crevice, goes to the very bottom, and makes its way on all sides when once it obtains an entrance, thus fitly denoting the penetrating force of temptation and trouble.—*Hugo Cardinalis.*

Verse 18.—*" Lover and friend hast thou put far from me,"* etc. Next to the joys of religion, those of friendship are most rational, sublime, and satisfactory. But they, like all other earthly joys, have their mixtures and alloys, and are very precarious. We are often called to weep with our friends, and sometimes to weep over them. Grief and tears for their death are the sad tribute we pay for loving and being beloved, and living long in this world. This seems to have been the case with the author of this melancholy Psalm, where our text is. He was exercised with great afflictions of body, and deep distress of mind. " His soul was full of troubles, and his life drew nigh to the grave. He was shut up and confined by weakness and pain, and could not go forth," to his business or pleasure, to the social or solemn assembly, ver. 3—8. He adds, that " he had been afflicted and ready to die from his youth up," v. 15 ; which seems to intimate that he was now an old man. Some of his acquaintance and friends had deserted him, and he was " become an abomination to them," v. 8. They would not assist him, nor afford him the comfort of a friendly visit, and the cheap kindness of a soft, compassionate word. Others of them, who would have been faithful and kind to him in his distress, were taken out of the world ; and this at a time when, through age and infirmities, he peculiarly needed their company and assistance. To this he refers in the text ; and with this he concludes the Psalm, as the heaviest stroke of all, *" Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness."* This is a common case ; and frequently the case of the aged. It is no unusual thing for old people to outlive their nearest relations ; the companions of their lives ; their children, and sometimes their grandchildren too ; and they are, as the Psalmist expresseth it, " like a sparrow alone upon the house-top." . . .

What chiefly afflicted the Psalmist, and will afflict every generous heart, was, that his friends and lovers were removed into *" darkness ; "* that is, to the grave, which is called in Scripture, " the land of darkness and the shadow of death, without any order or succession ; and where the light is as darkness." Job x. 21, 22. They were put so far from him, that he could see them no more ; were dead and buried out of his sight ; neither would one of their friends on earth any more behold them. Thus are our friends put into darkness. The eyes that used to sparkle with pleasure, when we met after a long absence, are closed in death. The voice that used to delight and edify us is sealed up in everlasting silence. There is no conversing with them personally nor by letters. Not lands and seas divide us from them, but regions of vast, unknown space, which we cannot yet pass over ; and which they cannot and indeed would not tread back, as much as they loved us. We have no way of conveying intelligence to them or receiving it from them. Perhaps they were put far away from us in their youth, or in the midst of their days and usefulness ; when we promised ourselves many years of pleasure in their friendship and converse, and expected many years of service from them, for their families, for the church, and the world. Alas ! one awful, fatal stroke hath broken down all the pleasing fabric of love and happiness.

But these are reflections which must not be dwelt upon. When they begin

to grow very painful, as they soon will, it is time to turn our thoughts to that which is the second thing observable in the text; namely, the Psalmist's devout acknowledgment of the hand of God in this affliction. "*Thou hast put them far from me.*" This good man, through the whole Psalm, ascribeth all his afflictions, and particularly the death of his friends, to the hand of God. He takes no notice of their diseases; he neither blames them for imprudence and delay, nor those who attended them for neglect or misapplication; but looks beyond all second causes to the great Lord of all; owns him as the supreme sovereign of every life, and disposer of every event. And we shall do well to make this idea of the blessed God familiar to our minds, as it is at once most instructive and most comfortable.

The holy Scriptures confirm the dictates of reason upon this subject; assuring us that God "maketh peace and createth evil;" that "out of the mouth of the Lord proceedeth evil and good;" that the most casual events are under his direction, so that "not a sparrow falleth to," nor lighteth on, "the ground without him;" much less do his rational creatures and children die without his notice and appointment. By whatever disease or casualties they die, it is God who "taketh away their breath, changeth their countenance, and sendeth them into darkness." With awful majesty God claimeth this as his prerogative; "I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." (Deut. xxxii. 39.) He removeth our friends who hath a right to do it. They were our friends, but they are his creatures; and may he not do what he will with his own? He gave them life of his free goodness, and he hath a right to demand it when he pleaseth. Dear as they were to us, we must acknowledge they were sinners; and, as such, had forfeited their lives to the justice of God: and shall not he determine when to take them away? They were our friends; but do we not hope and believe that, by repentance, faith in Christ, and sanctifying grace, they were become his friends too; dear to him by many indissoluble ties? Hath he not then a superior claim to them, and a greater interest in them? Is it not fit that he should be served first? May he not call home his friends when he pleaseth? Shall he wait for, or ask, our consent first? He doth it, whom we cannot, dare not, gainsay. "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what doest thou?" (Job. ix. 12.) He doth it, who is infinitely good and wise; and doth everything in the best time and manner. His knowledge is perfect and unerring; his goodness boundless and never-failing. Though his judgments are a great deep, and his schemes utterly unsearchable by us; yet we may reasonably believe that he consulteth the happiness of his servants in what is most mysterious and most grievous; and his word giveth us the strongest assurance of it. So that whether we exercise the faith of Christians or the reason of men, we must acknowledge the hand of God, yea, his wisdom and goodness, in removing our acquaintance into darkness.—*Job Orton*, 1717—1783.

Verse 18.—"*Mine acquaintance into darkness.*" Rather, *my acquaintanceship is darkness*, that is, darkness is all I have to converse with; my circle of acquaintance is comprised in blank darkness.—*Ernest Hawkins.*

Verse 18.—To be discountenanced or coldly treated by Christian friends, is often a consequence of a believer's having forfeited his spiritual comfort. When the Lord is angry with his rebellious child, and is chastening him, he not only giveth Satan leave to trouble him, but permitteth some of the saints who are acquainted with him, to discountenance him, and by their cold treatment of him, to add to his grief. When the father of a family resolves the more effectually to correct his obstinate child, he will say to the rest of the household, "Do not be familiar with him; shew him no countenance; put him to shame." In like manner, when the Lord is smiting, especially with spiritual trouble, his disobedient child, he, as it were, saith to others of his children, "Have for a season no familiarity with him; treat him with coldness and neglect; in order that he may be ashamed, and humbled for his iniquity." Job, under his grievous affliction, complained thus, "He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me," etc. (ch. xix. 13—19). And likewise Heman, "*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness.*" When the favour of God to the soul is clouded, the comfort of Christian society is also obscured. When He frowns on one, his children commonly appear to frown likewise; and when he makes himself strange to one, so for the most part do they. If a holy man, then, under trouble of spirit, begins to be treated with disregard, and even with contempt, by some of his Christian brethren, he ought not to be surprised; neither should he take occasion to be angry, or to quarrel with them; but he should look above them, and take the afflictive dispensation, only

out of the hand of the Lord, as a necessary part of the chastisement intended for him. He ought to say with respect to them, as David concerning Shimei, " The Lord hath bidden them ; " or, as Heman did, " THOU *hast put away mine acquaintance far from me.*"—*John Colquhoun.*

Verse 18.—The very rhythm of the last line shows that the piece is not complete. The ear remains in suspense ; until the majestic lxxxixth shall burst upon it like a bright Resurrection-morning.—*William Kay.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Confidence in prayer,—" God of my salvation." II. Earnestness in prayer,—" I have cried." III. Perseverance in prayer,—" Day and night."—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—Prayer as an ambassador. I. An audience sought, or the benefit of access. II. Attention entreated, or the blessing of success. III. The Process explained, or prayer comes and God inclines.

Verse 3.—I. A good man is exposed to inward troubles. 1. To soul troubles. 2. To the soul full of troubles. II. To outward troubles. " My life," etc. 1. From outward persecutions. 2. From inward griefs. III. To both inward and outward troubles at the same time. " Soul full," etc., " *and* my life," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Conscious weakness, painfully felt, at certain times, in various duties. Intended to keep us humble, to drive us to our knees, and to bring greater glory to God.

Verses 4, 5.—I. The resemblance of the righteous man to the wicked. 1. In natural death. 2. In bodily infirmities. II. His difference from them. He is " counted with them " but is not of them. 1. He experiences natural death only. 2. His strength is perfected in weakness. 3. For him to die is gain.—*G. R.*

Verses 6, 7.—1. What the afflictions of the people of God appear to be to themselves. 1. Extreme,—" laid me in the lowest pit." 2. Inexplicable,—" in darkness." 3. Humiliating,—" in the deeps." 4. Severe,—" thy wrath lieth hard." 5. Exhaustive,—" afflicted with all thy waves." II. What they are in reality. 1. Not extreme, but light. 2. Not inexplicable, but according to the will of God. 3. Not humiliating, but elevating. " Humble yourselves under," etc. 4. Not severe, but gentle. Not in anger, but in love. 5. Not exhaustive, but partial. Not all thy waves, but a few ripples only. The slight motion in the harbour when there is a boisterous ocean beyond.—*G. R.*

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—This may describe us when despondency is chronic, when trouble is overwhelming, when sickness detains us at home, when we feel restrained in Christian labour, or hampered in prayer.

Verse 9.—I. Sorrow before God,—" Mine eye," etc. II. Prayer to God,—" I have called," etc. III. Waiting for God,—" called daily." IV. Dependence on God,—" I have stretched," etc. These hands can do nothing without thee.—*G. R.*

Verses 10—12.—I. The supposition. 1. That a child of God should be wholly dead. 2. That he should remain for ever in the grave. 3. That he should be destroyed. 4. That he should always remain in darkness. 5. That he should be entirely forgotten, as though he had never existed. II. The consequences involved in this supposition. 1. God's wonders to them would cease. 2. His praise from them would be lost. 3. His lovingkindness to them would be unknown. 4. His faithfulness destroyed. 5. His wonders to them would be lost to others. 6. His former righteousness to them would be forgotten. III. The plea founded upon these consequences,—" Wilt thou," etc. It cannot be that thy praise for grace shown to thy people can be lost, and none can render it but themselves. " Then what wilt thou do unto thy great name ? "—*G. R.*

Verse 13.—I. Blessings delayed to prayer,—" Unto thee," etc. II. Blessings anticipated by prayer,—" In the morning," etc. Daily mercies anticipated by morning prayers.—*G. R.*

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—The advantages of early morning prayer-meetings.

Verse 14.—I. Afflictions are mysterious though just. II. Just though mysterious. —*G. R.*

Verse 14.—Solemn enquiries, to be followed by searching examinations, by sorrowful confessions, stern self-denials, and sweet restorations.

Verse 15.—I. The afflictions of the righteous may be long continued though severe. " I am afflicted, etc., from my youth up." II. Severe though long continued. 1. Painful,—" afflicted." 2. Threatening,—" ready to die." 3. Terrific,—" suffer thy terrors." 4. Distracting,—" I am," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—The personal sufferings of Christ for the salvation of his people.—*Sermon by Robert Hawker.* Works, Vol. IV. p. 91.

Verse 16.—I. Good men are often tried men. II. Tried men frequently misjudge the Lord's dealings. III. The Lord does not take them at their word, he is better than their fears.—*G. R.*

Verse 18.—The loss of friends intended to remind us of our own mortality, to wean us from earth, to lead us to more complete trust in the Lord, to chasten us for sin, and to draw us away to the great meeting place.

Verse 18.—The words of our text will lead us to remark that, I. The happiness of life greatly depends on intimate friendships. II. The trial of parting with intimate friends is exceedingly painful. III. In this, as indeed in every affliction, the best consolation is drawn from a belief in, and meditation upon, God's governing providence.—*Joseph Lathrop,* 1845.

PSALM LXXXIX.

We have now reached the majestic COVENANT PSALM, *which, according to the Jewish arrangement, closes the third book of the Psalms. It is the utterance of a believer, in presence of great national disaster, pleading with his God, urging the grand argument of covenant engagements, and expecting deliverance and help, because of the faithfulness of Jehovah.*

TITLE.—Maschîl. *This is most fitly called a* Maschîl, *for it is most instructive. No subject is more important or is so fully the key to all theology as that of the covenant. He who is taught by the Holy Spirit to be clear upon the covenant of grace will be a scribe well instructed in the things of the kingdom; he whose doctrinal theory is a mingle-mangle of works and grace is scarcely fit to be teacher of babes.* OF ETHAN THE EZRAHITE: *perhaps the same person as Jeduthun, who was a musician in David's reign; was noted for his wisdom in Solomon's days, and probably survived till the troubles of Rehoboam's period. If this be the man, he must have written this Psalm in his old age, when troubles were coming thick and heavy upon the dynasty of David and the land of Judah; this is not at all improbable, and there is much in the Psalm which looks that way.*

DIVISION.—*The sacred poet commences by affirming his belief in the faithfulness of the Lord to his covenant with the house of David, and makes his first pause at verse* 4. *He then praises and magnifies the name of the Lord for his power, justice, and mercy,* 5—14. *This leads him to sing of the happiness of the people who have such a God to be their glory and defence,* 15—18. *He rehearses the terms of the covenant at full length with evident delight,* 19—37, *and then mournfully pours out his complaint and petition,* 38—51, *closing the whole with a hearty benediction and a double Amen. May the Holy Spirit greatly bless to us the reading of this most precious Psalm of instruction.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,

4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

1. "*I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.*" A devout resolve, and very commendable when a man is exercised with great trouble on account of an apparent departure of the Lord from his covenant and promise. Whatever we may observe abroad or experience in our own persons, we ought still to praise God for his mercies, since they most certainly remain the same, whether we can perceive them or not. Sense sings but now and then, but faith is an eternal songster. Whether others sing or not, believers must never give over; in them should be constancy of praise, since God's love to them cannot by any possibility have changed, however providence may seem to frown. We are not only to believe the Lord's goodness, but to rejoice in it evermore; it is the source of all our joy; and as it cannot be dried up, so the stream ought never to fail to flow, or cease to flash in sparkling crystal of song. We have not one, but many *mercies* to rejoice in, and should therefore multiply the expressions of our thankfulness. It is *Jehovah* who deigns to deal out to us our daily benefits, and he is the all-sufficient and immutable God; therefore our rejoicing in him must never suffer diminution. By no means let his exchequer of glory be deprived of the continual revenue which we owe to it. Even time itself must not bound our praises—they must leap into eternity; he blesses us with eternal mercies—let us sing unto him *for ever.* "*With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.*" The utterances of the present

will instruct future generations. What Ethan sung is now a text-book for Christians, and will be so as long as this dispensation shall last. We ought to have an eye to posterity in all that we write, for we are the schoolmasters of succeeding ages. Ethan first spoke with his mouth that which he recorded with his pen—a worthy example of using both means of communication; the mouth has a warmer manner than the pen, but the pen's speech lives longest, and is heard farther and wider. While reading this Psalm, such is the freshness of the style, that one seems to hear it gushing from the poet's mouth; he makes the letters live and talk, or, rather, sing to us. Note, that in this second sentence he speaks of *faithfulness*, which is the mercy of God's mercies—the brightest jewel in the crown of goodness. The grace of an unfaithful God would be a poor subject for music, but unchangeable love and immutable promises demand everlasting songs. In times of trouble it is the divine faithfulness which the soul hangs upon; this is the bower anchor of the soul, its holdfast, and its stay. Because God is, and ever will be, faithful, we have a theme for song which will not be out of date for future generations; it will never be worn out, never be disproved, never be unnecessary, never be an idle subject, valueless to mankind. It will also be always desirable to make it known, for men are too apt to forget it, or to doubt it, when hard times press upon them. We cannot too much multiply testimonies to the Lord's faithful mercy—if our own generation should not need them others will: sceptics are so ready to repeat old doubts and invent new ones that believers should be equally prompt to bring forth evidences both old and new. Whoever may neglect this duty, those who are highly favoured, as Ethan was, should not be backward.

2. "*For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever.*" His heart was persuaded of it, and he had affirmed it as an indisputable truth. He was certain that upon a sure foundation the Lord intended to pile up a glorious palace of goodness—a house of refuge for all people, wherein the Son of David should for ever be glorified as the dispenser of heavenly grace. "*Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.*" This divine edifice, he felt assured, would tower into the skies, and would be turreted with divine faithfulness even as its foundations were laid in eternal love. God's faithfulness is no thing of earth, for here nothing is firm, and all things savour of the changes of the moon and the fickleness of the sea: heaven is the birthplace of truth, and there it dwells in eternal vigour. As the blue arch above us remains unimpaired by age, so does the Lord's truth; as in the firmament he hangs his covenant bow, so in the upper heavens the faithfulness of God is enthroned in immutable glory. This Ethan said, and this we may say; come what will, mercy and faithfulness are built up by "the Eternal Builder," and his own nature is the guarantee for their perpetuity. This is to be called to mind whenever the church is in trouble, or our own spirits bowed down with grief.

3. "*I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant.*" This was the ground of the Psalmist's confidence in God's mercy and truth, for he knew that the Lord had made a covenant of grace with David and his seed, and confirmed it by an oath. Here he quotes the very words of God, which were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, and are a condensation of the original covenant in 2 Samuel vii. Well might he write in the former verse, "I have said," when he knew that Jehovah had said, "I have sworn." David was the Lord's elect, and with him a covenant was made, which ran along in the line of his seed until it received a final and never-ending fulfilment in "the Son of David." David's house must be royal: as long as there was a sceptre in Judah, David's seed must be the only rightful dynasty; the great "King of the Jews" died with that title above his head in the three current languages of the then known world, and at this day he is owned as king by men of every tongue. The oath sworn to David has not been broken, though the temporal crown is no longer worn, for in the covenant itself his kingdom was spoken of as enduring for ever. In Christ Jesus there is a covenant established with all the Lord's *chosen*, and they are by grace led to be the Lord's *servants*, and then are ordained kings and priests by Christ Jesus. How sweet it is to see the Lord, not only making a covenant, but owning to it in after days, and bearing witness to his own oath; this ought to be solid ground for faith, and Ethan, the Ezrahite, evidently thought it so. Let the reader and writer both pause over such glorious lines, and sing of the mercies of the Lord, who thus avows the bonds of the covenant, and, in so doing, gives a renewed pledge of his faithfulness to it. "*I have*," says the Lord, and yet again "*I have*," as though he himself was nothing loath to dwell upon the theme. We also would lovingly linger over the *ipsissima*

verba of the covenant made with David, reading them carefully and with joy. They are thus recorded in 2 Sam. vii. 12—16: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." After reading this, let us remember that the Lord has said to us by his servant Isaiah, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Verse 4.—"*Thy seed will I establish for ever.*" David must always have a seed, and truly in Jesus this is fulfilled beyond his hopes. What a seed David has in the multitude which have sprung from him who was both his Son and his Lord. The Son of David is the Great Progenitor, the second Adam, the Everlasting Father, he sees his seed, and in them beholds of the travail of his soul. "*And build up thy throne to all generations.*" David's dynasty never decays, but on the contrary, is evermore consolidated by the great Architect of heaven and earth. Jesus is a king as well as a progenitor, and his throne is ever being built up—his kingdom comes —his power extends.

Thus runs the covenant; and when the church declines, it is ours to plead it before the ever faithful God, as the Psalmist does in the latter verses of this sacred song. Christ must reign, but why is his name blasphemed and his gospel so despised? The more gracious Christians are, the more will they be moved to jealousy by the sad estate of the Redeemer's cause, and the more will they argue the case with the great Covenant-maker, crying day and night before him, "Thy kingdom come."

"*Selah.*" It would not be meet to hurry on. Rest, O reader, at the bidding of this Selah, and let each syllable of the covenant ring in thine ears; and then lift up the heart and proceed with the sacred poet to tell forth the praises of the Lord.

5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.

6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? *who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?

7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him.

8 O LORD God of hosts, who *is* a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.

11 The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine: *as for* the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

12 The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

13 Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand.

14 Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

5. "*And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord.*" Looking down upon what God had done, and was about to do, in connection with his covenant of grace, all heaven would be filled with adoring wonder. The sun and moon, which had been made tokens of the covenant, would praise God for such an extraordinary display of mercy, and the angels and redeemed spirits would sing, "as it were, a new song." "*Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.*" By which is probably intended the holy ones on earth. So that the "whole family in heaven and earth" would join in the praise. Earth and heaven are one in admiring and adoring

the covenant God. Saints above see most clearly into the heights and depths of divine love, therefore, they praise its wonders; and saints below, being conscious of their many sins and multiplied provocations of the Lord, admire his faithfulness. The heavens broke forth with music at the wonders of mercy contained in the glad tidings concerning Bethlehem, and the saints who came together in the temple magnified the faithfulness of God at the birth of the Son of David. Since that auspicious day, the general assembly on high and the sacred congregation below have not ceased to sing unto Jehovah, the Lord that keepeth covenant with his elect.

6. "*For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord;*" therefore all heaven worships him, seeing none can equal him. "*Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?*"—therefore the assemblies of the saints on earth adore him, seeing none can rival him. Until we can find one equally worthy to be praised, we will give unto the Lord alone all the homage of our praise. Neither among the sons of the morning nor the sons of the mighty can any peer be found for Jehovah, yea none that can be mentioned in the same day; therefore he is rightly praised. Since the Lord Jesus, both as God and as man, is far above all creatures, he also is to be devoutly worshipped. How full of poetic fire is this verse! How bold is the challenge! How triumphant the holy boasting! The sweet singer dwells upon the name of Jehovah with evident exultation; to him the God of Israel is God indeed and God alone. He closely follows the language long before rehearsed by Miriam, when she sang, "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee?" His thoughts are evidently flying back to the days of Moses and the marvels of the Red Sea, when God was gloriously known by his incommunicable name; there is a ring of timbrels in the double question, and a sound as of the twinkling feet of rejoicing maidens. Have we no poets now? Is there not a man among us who can compose hymns flaming with this spirit? O, Spirit of the living God, be thou the inspirer of some master minds among us!

7. "*God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.*" The holiest tremble in the presence of the thrice Holy One; their familiarity is seasoned with the profoundest awe. Perfect love casts out the fear which hath torment, and works in lieu thereof that other fear which is akin to joy unutterable. How reverent should our worship be! Where angels veil their faces, men should surely bow in lowliest fashion. Sin is akin to presumptuous boldness, but holiness is sister to holy fear. "*And to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.*" The nearer they are the more they adore. If mere creatures are struck with awe, the courtiers and favourites of heaven must be yet more reverent in the presence of the Great King. God's children are those who most earnestly pray "hallowed be thy name." Irreverence is rebellion. Thoughts of the covenant of grace tend to create a deeper awe of God, they draw us closer to him, and the more his glories are seen by us in that nearer access, the more humbly we prostrate ourselves before his Majesty.

8. "*O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee?*" Or *Jehovah, God of Hosts, who is like thee, Mighty Jah.* Alexander remarks, that the infinite superiority of God to men and angels is here expressed, or rather indicated, by an accumulation of descriptive titles. Here we have the name which displays his self-existence, the title which denotes his dominion over all his creatures, and an adjective which sets forth the power with which he exercises his sovereignty. Yet this great and terrible God has entered into covenant with men! Who would not reverence him with deepest love? "*Or to thy faithfulness round about thee.*" He dwells in faithfulness; it is said to be the girdle of the loins of his only-begotten Son, who is the express image of his person. None in all creation is faithful as he is; even his angels might prove faithless if he left them to themselves, but he cannot "lie unto David," or forget to keep his oath. Men often fail in truth because their power is limited, and then they find it easier to break their word than to keep it; but the strong Jehovah is equal to all his engagements, and will assuredly keep them. Unrivalled might and unparalleled truth are wedded in the character of Jehovah. Blessed be his name that it is so.

9. "*Thou rulest the raging of the sea.*" Always, even in the hour of ocean's maddest fury, the Lord controls it. At the Red Sea the foaming billows saw their God and stood upright in awe. "*When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.*" None else can do this; to attempt it would be madness, but the Lord's "hush" silences the boisterous storm. So did the Lord's Anointed calm the storms of Galilee, for he is Lord of all: so also does the great Ruler of Providence evermore

govern the fickle wills of men, and quiet the tumults of the people. As a mother stills her babe to sleep, so the Lord calms the fury of the sea, the anger of men, the tempest of adversity, the despair of the soul, and the rage of hell. "The Lord sitteth upon the floods: yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever," and in all his ruling and over-ruling he has respect unto his covenant; therefore, although our house be not so with God as our hearts would wish, yet we will rejoice in his covenant ordered in all things and sure, and delight in him as all our salvation and all our desire.

10. "*Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces as one that is slain.*" Egypt was crushed like a corpse beneath the chariot wheels of the destroyer: its pomp and glory were broken like the limbs of the dead in battle. Egypt was Israel's ancient foe, and its overthrow was a theme to which devout minds constantly reverted, as to a subject fit for their most exulting songs. We, too, have seen our Rahab broken, our sins o'erthrown, and we cannot but unite in the ascription of praise unto the Lord. "*Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.*" Thy strength has strewn thy foes dead upon the plain, or compelled them to flee hither and thither in dismay. Jehovah has overthrown his enemies with his own right arm, unaided and alone. Proud Rahab, swelling in her fury like the sea, was utterly broken and scattered before the Lord of Hosts.

11. "*The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine.*" All things are alike God's —rebellious earth as well as adoring heaven. Let us not despair of the kingdom of truth; the Lord has not abdicated the throne of earth or handed it over to the sway of Satan. "*As for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.*" The habitable and cultivated earth, with all its produce, owns the Lord to be both its Creator and Sustainer, builder and upholder.

12. "*The north and the south thou hast created them.*" North and south, opposite poles, agree in this—that Jehovah fashioned them. "*Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name,*" that is to say, east and west are equally formed by thee, and therefore give thee praise. Turn to all points of the compass, and behold the Lord is there. The regions of snow and the gardens of the sun are his dominions: both the land of the dawning and the home of the setting sun rejoice to own his sway. Tabor was on the west of Jordan and Hermon on the east, and it seems natural to consider these two mountains as representatives of the east and west. Keble paraphrases the passage thus:—

> "Both Hermon moist, and Tabor lone,
> They wait on thee with glad acclaim."

13. "*Thou hast a mighty arm,*" omnipotence is thine in smiting or uplifting; "*strong is thy hand,*" thy power to create and grasp is beyond conception great; "*and high is thy right hand*"—thy skill is incomparable, thy favour ennobling, thy working glorious. The power of God so impressed the Psalmist that in many ways he repeated the same thought: and indeed the truth of God's omnipotence is so full of refreshment to gracious hearts that it cannot be too much dwelt upon, especially when viewed in connection with his mercy and truth, as in the following verse.

14. "*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*" They are the basis of the divine government, the sphere within which his sovereignty moves. God as a sovereign is never unjust or unwise. He is too holy to be unrighteous, too wise to be mistaken; this is constant matter for joy to the upright in heart. "*Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*" They are the harbingers and heralds of the Lord; he calls these to the front to deal with guilty and changeful man; he makes them, in the person of the Lord Jesus, to be his ambassadors, and so poor, guilty man is enabled to endure the presence of his righteous Lord. If mercy had not paved the way, the coming of God to any man must have been swift destruction.

Thus has the poet sung the glories of the covenant God. It was meet that before he poured forth his lament he should record his praise, lest his sorrow should seem to have withered his faith. Before we argue our case before the Lord it is most becoming to acknowledge that we know him to be supremely great and good, whatever may be the appearance of his providence; this is such a course as every wise man will take who desires to have an answer of peace in the day of trouble.

15 Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance,

16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

17 For thou *art* the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.

18 For the LORD *is* our defence; and the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.

15. "*Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.*" He is a blessed God of whom the Psalmist has been singing, and therefore they are a blessed people who partake of his bounty, and know how to exult in his favour. Praise is a peculiarly joyful sound, and blessed are those who are familiar with its strains. The covenant promises have also a sound beyond measure precious, and they are highly favoured who understand their meaning and recognise their own personal interest in them. There may also be a reference here to the blowing of trumpets and other gladsome noises which attended the worship of Jehovah, who, unlike the gods of the heathen was not adored by the shrieks of wretched victims, or the yells and outcries of terror-stricken crowds, but by the joyful shouts of his happy people. "*They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.*" For them it is joy enough that Jehovah is favourable to them; all day long this contents them and enables them with vigour to pursue their pilgrimage. Only a covenant God could look with favour upon men, and those who have known him in that relationship learn to rejoice in him, yea, to walk with him in fellowship, and to continue in communion with him. If we give God our ear and hear the joyful sound, he will shew us his face and make us glad. While the sun shines, men walk without stumbling as to their feet, and when the Lord smiles on us we live without grief as to our souls.

16. "*In thy name shall they rejoice all the day.*" And good cause they have for so doing, for to the soul which, in Christ Jesus, has entered into covenant with God, every attribute is a fountain of delight. There is no hour in the day, and no day in our life, in which we may not rejoice in the name, person, and character of the Lord. We need no other reason for rejoicing. As philosophers could make merry without music, so can we rejoice without carnal comforts; the Lord All-sufficient is an all-sufficient source of joy. "*And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*" By the Lord's righteous dealings the saints are uplifted in due time, however great may have been the oppression and the depression from which they may have suffered. In the righteousness which the covenant supplies, which is entirely of the Lord, believers are set on high, in a secure and blessed position, so that they are full of sacred happiness. If God were unjust, or if he regarded us as being without righteousness, we must be filled with misery, but as neither of these things is so, we are exalted indeed, and would extol the name of the Lord.

17. "*For thou art the glory of their strength.*" Surely in the Lord Jehovah have we both righteousness and strength. He is our beauty and glory when we are strong in him, as well as our comfort and sustenance when we tremble because of conscious weakness in ourselves. No man whom the Lord makes strong may dare to glory in himself, he must ascribe all honour to the Lord alone; we have neither strength nor beauty apart from him. "*And in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.*" By the use of the word *our* the Psalmist identifies himself with the blessed people, and this indicates how much sweeter it is to sing in the first person than concerning others. May we have grace to claim a place among those in covenant with God, in Christ Jesus, for then a sense of divine favour will make us also bold and joyous. A creature full of strength and courage lifts up its horn, and so also does a believer become potent, valiant, and daring. The horn was an eastern ornament, worn by men and women, or at least is so at this day, and by the uplifting of this the wearer showed himself to be in good spirits, and in a confident frame of mind: we wear no such outward vanities, but our inward soul is adorned and made bravely triumphant when the favour of God is felt by us. Worldly men need outward prosperity to make them lift up their heads, but the saints find more than enough encouragement in the secret love of God.

18. "*For the Lord is our defence.*" Whoever else may defend us, he is our ultimate Defender and Shield. "*And the Holy One of Israel is our king.*" He who protects should govern, our defender should be acknowledged as our king. Kings are called the shields of nations, and the God of Israel is both our Ruler and our Defence. Another sense may be that Israel's defender and king was of the Lord, belonging to him and sent by him; even the protectors of the land being them-

selves protected by the Lord. The title " the Holy One of Israel " is peculiarly delightful to the renewed heart. God is one, we worship none beside. He is holiness itself, the only being who can be called " the Holy One," and in his perfection of character we see the most excellent reason for our faith. He who is holy cannot break his promises, or act unjustly concerning his oath and covenant. Moreover, he is the Holy One *of Israel*, being specially the God of his own elect, ours by peculiar ties, ours for ever and ever. Who among the saints will not rejoice in the God of election ? Are they not indeed a people greatly blessed who can call this God their God for ever and ever ?

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty ; I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.

20 I have found David my servant ; with my holy oil have I anointed him :

21 With whom my hand shall be established : mine arm also shall strengthen him.

22 The enemy shall not exact upon him ; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

23 And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.

24 But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him : and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

25 I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.

26 He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

27 Also I will make him *my* firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.

29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

30 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments ;

31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments ;

32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

35 Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.

36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.

37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

19. " *Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one.*" The Psalmist returns to a consideration of the covenant made with David. The holy one here meant may be either David or Nathan the prophet, but most probably the latter, for it was to him that the word of the Lord came by night. 2 Sam. vii. 4, 5. God condescends to employ his gracious ministers to be the means of communication between himself and his favoured ones,—even to King David the covenant was revealed by Nathan the prophet ; thus the Lord puts honour upon his ministers. " *I have laid help upon one that is mighty.*" The Lord had made David a mighty man of valour, and now he covenants to make him the helper and defender of the Jewish state. In a far fuller sense the Lord Jesus is essentially and immeasurably mighty, and on him the salvation of his people rests by divine appointment, while his success is secured by divine strength being engaged to be with him. Let us lay our faith where God has laid our help. " *I have exalted one chosen out of the people.*" David

was God's elect, elect out of the people, as one of themselves, and elect to the highest position in the state. In his extraction, election, and exaltation, he was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus, who is the man of the people, the chosen of God, and the king of his church. Whom God exalts let us exalt. Woe unto those who despise him, they are guilty of contempt of court before the Lord of Hosts, as well as of rejecting the Son of God.

20. "*I have found David my servant.*" David was discovered by the Lord among the sheepfolds and recognised as a man of gracious spirit, full of faith and courage, and therefore fit to be leader in Israel. "*With my holy oil have I anointed him.*" By the hand of Samuel, David was anointed to be king long before he ascended the throne. The verse must also be expounded of the Prince Emanuel; he became the servant of the Lord for our sakes, the Father having found for us in his person a mighty deliverer, therefore upon him rested the Spirit without measure, to qualify him for all the offices of love to which he was set apart. We have not a Saviour self-appointed and unqualified, but one sent of God and divinely endowed for his work. Our Saviour Jesus is also the Lord's Christ, or anointed. The oil with which he is anointed is God's own oil, and holy oil; he is divinely endowed with the Spirit of holiness.

21. "*With whom my hand shall be established,*" or, "with whom my hand shall ever be present." The almightiness of God abides permanently with Jesus in his work as Redeemer and Ruler of his people. "*Mine arm also shall strengthen him.*" The fulness of divine power shall attend him. This covenant promise ought to be urged in prayer before the Lord, for the great lack of the church at this time is power. We have everything except the divine energy, and we must never rest content until we see it in full operation among us. Jesus must be among us, and then there will be no lack of force in any of our church agencies.

22. "*The enemy shall not exact upon him;*" he shall not be vexed and persecuted as a helpless debtor by an extortionate creditor. "*Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.*" Graceless men shall no longer make his life a burden. David had in his earlier history been hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains, and though he had striven in all things to act justly towards Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed, yet Saul was never content with his displays of loyalty, but persecuted him relentlessly. The covenant, therefore, engaged that his life of hardship and oppression should come to an end for ever; it did so in David's own person, and more remarkably still in the life of Solomon his son. Who does not in all this see a type of the Lord Jesus, who though he was once seized for our debts, and also evil entreated by the ungodly, is now so exalted that he can never be exacted upon any more, neither can the fiercest of his enemies vex him again. No Judas can now betray him to death, no Pilate can deliver him to be crucified. Satan cannot tempt him, and our sins cannot burden him.

23. "*And I will beat down his foes before his face*"—crushing them and their plans. God himself thus fights the battles of his Son, and effectually overturns his foes. "*And plague them that hate him,*" or *smite his haters.* May none of us learn the terror of this threatening, which is surely being fulfilled upon all those unbelievers who have rejected the Son of God, and died in the hardness of their hearts. The prophecy is also having another fulfilment in the overthrow of systems of error, and the vexation caused to their promoters. There is no such plague to bad men as the prosperity of the cause of Jesus.

24. "*But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him.*" These were the two attributes of which the Psalmist began to sing in the first verse of the Psalm, doubtless because he saw them to be most prominent in the covenant which he was about to plead with God. To David and his seed, God was gracious and faithful, and though through their sin the literal kingdom lost all its glory and the dynasty became obscure, yet the line remained unbroken and more than all its former glory was restored by the enthronisation of him who is Prince of the kings of the earth, with whom the Lord's mercy and faithfulness remain for ever. All who are in Jesus should rejoice, for they shall prove in their own experience the faithful mercy of the Lord. "*And in my name shall his horn be exalted.*" Gloriously does the Lord Jesus lift up his head, raised to the highest place of honour by the mandate of the Father. David and Solomon in their dignity were but faint types of the Lord Jesus, who is far above all principalities and powers. The fullest exaltation of the horn of Jesus is yet to come in that millenial period which is hastening on,

25. "*I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.*" He

shall reach far beyond the little rivers which stand for boundaries in Palestine ; he shall by his power embrace all lands from sea to sea. He shall lave his hand in the ocean and his right hand in earth's mightiest streams. As monarchs hold in their hands a globe to set forth their dominion over the earth, he shall grasp the far more unconquerable sea, and be Lord of all. This power is to be given him of the Lord, and is to be abiding ; so we understand the words " *I will set.*" The verse has in it a voice of good cheer concerning sailors, and all dwellers on the waters ; the hand of Jesus is over them, and as he found his first apostles by the sea, so we trust he still finds earnest disciples there.

26. " *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father.*" David's seed would be a praying race, and so in the main they were, and when they were not they smarted for it. The Lord Jesus was pre-eminent in prayer, and his favourite mode of address was " Father." Never was there a son more filial in his cries than " the Firstborn among many brethren." God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son who lived without prayer. " *My God,*" so our Lord called his Father when upon the cross. " *And the rock of my salvation.*" It was to his Father that he turned for help when in sore anguish in Gethsemane, and to him he committed his spirit in the article of death. In this filial crying the true sons should imitate him. This is the common language of the elect family : adoption, reverence, trust, must all speak in their turns, and will do if we are heirs according to promise. To say to God " Thou art my father " is more than learning and talent can teach us ; the new birth is essential to this. Reader, hast thou the nature of a child and the spirit of one who can cry, " Abba, Father " ?

27. " *Also I will make him my firstborn.*" Among the kings the seed of David were to be most favoured and indulged with most love and paternal regard from God : but in Jesus we see this in the highest degree verified, for he has pre-eminence in all things, inasmuch as by inheritance he has a more glorious name than any other, and is " *higher than the kings of the earth.*" Who can rival heaven's Firstborn ? The double portion and the government belong to him. Kings are honoured when they honour him, and those who honour him are kings ! In the millenial glory it shall be seen what the covenant stores up for the once despised Son of David, but even now faith sees him exalted as King of kings and Lord of lords. Lo, we bow before thee, thou Heir of all things ! Our sheaves do obeisance to thy sheaf. All thy mother's children call thee blessed. Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise. Jesus is no servant of princes, nor would he have his bride, the church, degrade herself by bowing before kings and eating the bread of a pensioner at their hands. He and his kingdom are higher than the kings of the earth. Let the great ones of the earth be wise and submit to him, for he is Lord, and he is the governor among the nations.

28. " *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore.*" The kings of David's line needed mercy, and mercy prevented their house from utterly perishing until the Son of Mary came. He needs no mercy for himself, but he is a representative man, and the mercy of God is required for those who are in him : for such mercy is kept for ever. " *And my covenant shall stand fast with him.*" With Jesus the covenant is ratified both by blood of sacrifice and by oath of God ; it cannot be cancelled or altered, but is an eternal verity, resting upon the veracity of one who cannot lie. What exultation fills our hearts as we see that the covenant of grace is *sure* to all the seed, because it stands fast with *him* with whom we are indissolubly united.

29. " *His seed also will I make to endure for ever.*" David's seed lives on in the person of the Lord Jesus, and the seed of Jesus in the persons of believers. Saints are a race that neither death nor hell can kill. Rome and its priests, with their inquisition and other infernal cruelties, have laboured to exterminate the covenant seed, but " vain is their rage, their efforts vain." As long as God lives, his people must live. " *And his throne as the days of heaven.*" Jesus reigns on, and will reign till the skies shall fall, yea, and when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, his throne shall stand. What a blessed covenant is this ! Some commentators talk of conditions, but we fail to see any ; the promises are as absolute as they can possibly be, and if any conditions as to the conduct of the favoured individuals can be conceived, they are disposed of in the succeeding verses.

30. " *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments.*" It was possible, terribly possible, that David's posterity might wander from the Lord; indeed they did so, but what then ? Was the mercy of God to pass away from David's

seed ?—far from it. So, too, the seed of the Son of David are apt to start aside, but are they therefore cast away ? Not a single word gives liberty for such an idea, but the very reverse. Expositors in their fear of Calvinistic doctrine shake off the fear of adding to the word of God, or else they would not have spent their time in talking about " the conditions " of this absolutely unconditional covenant.

31. " *If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments.*" The dreadful " *if* " is suggested again, and the sad case is stated in other forms. But if it should be so, what then ? Death and rejection ? Ah, no ; Blessed be God, No ! If their sin be negative or positive, if it be forsaking or profanation ; if either judgments or commandments or both be violated, yet there is not a word as to final destruction, but the very reverse. Legalism will import its ifs, but the Lord slays the ifs as fast as they rise. Eternal shalls and wills make glorious havoc among the ifs and buts.

32. " *Then will I visit their transgression with the rod.*" Not with the sword, not with death and destruction ; but still with a smarting, tingling, painful rod. Saints must smart if they sin : God will see to that. He hates sin too much not to visit it, and he loves his saints too well not to chasten them. God never plays with his rod, he lays it well home to his children, he *visits* them with it in their houses, bodies, and hearts, and makes them know that he is grieved with their ways. He smites home and chastens " *their iniquity with stripes,*" which are either many or few in proportion as the heart is properly affected by them. The rod is a covenant blessing, and is meant to be used. As sin is so frequent, the rod never rests long together ; in God's family the rod is not spared, or the children would be spoiled.

33. " *Nevertheless.*" And a glorious nevertheless too ! " *Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him.*" O glorious fear-killing sentence ! This crowns the covenant with exceeding glory. Mercy may seem to depart from the Lord's chosen, but it shall never altogether do so. Jesus still enjoys the divine favour, and we are in him, and therefore under the most trying circumstances the Lord's lovingkindness to each one of his chosen will endure the strain. If the covenant could be made void by our sins it would have been void long ere this ; and if renewed its tenure would not be worth an hour's purchase if it had remained dependant upon us. God may leave his people, and they may thereby suffer much and fall very low, but utterly and altogether he never can remove his love from them ; for that would be to cast a reflection upon his own truth, and this he will never allow, for he adds, " *nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.*" Man fails in all points, but God in none. To be faithful is one of the eternal characteristics of God, in which he always places a great part of his glory : his truth is one of his peculiar treasures and crown jewels, and he will never endure that it should be tarnished in any degree. This passage sweetly assures us that the heirs of glory shall not be utterly cast off. Let those deny the safety of the saints who choose to do so, we have not so learned Christ. We believe in the gospel rod, but not in the penal sword for the adopted sons.

34. " *My covenant will I not break.*" It is his own covenant. He devised it, drew up the draft of it, and voluntarily entered into it ; he therefore thinks much of it. It is not a man's covenant, but the Lord claims it as his own. It is an evil thing among men for one to be a " covenant-breaker," and such an opprobrious epithet shall never be applicable to the Most High. " *Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*" Alterations and afterthoughts belong to short-sighted beings who meet with unexpected events which operate upon them to change their minds, but the Lord who sees everything from the beginning has no such reason for shifting his ground. He is besides immutable in his nature and designs, and cannot change in heart, and therefore not in promise. A word once given is sacred ; once let a promise pass our lips and honesty forbids that we should recall it,—unless indeed the thing promised be impossible, or wicked, neither of which can happen with the promises of God. How consoling it is to see the Lord thus resolute. He, in the words before us, virtually reasserts his covenant and rehearses his engagements. This he does at such length, and with such reiteration, that it is evident he takes pleasure in that most ancient and solemn contract. If it were conceivable that he had repented of it, he would not be found dwelling upon it, and repeating it with renewed emphasis.

35. " *Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.*" Because he could swear by no greater he swore by himself, and by that peculiar attribute which is his highest glory, being the subject of threefold adoration by all the hosts

of heaven. God here pledges the crown of his kingdom, the excellent beauty of his person, the essence of his nature. He does as good as say that if he ceases to be true to his covenant he will have forfeited his holy character. What more can he say? In what stronger language can he express his unalterable adherence to the truth of his promise? An oath is the end of all strife; it ought to be the end of all doubt on our part. We cannot imagine that God could lie, yet he puts it so—that if the covenant were not kept by him, he would regard it as a lie. Here is ground for strong confidence; may our faith be of such a nature as these assurances will warrant.

36. "*His seed shall endure for ever.*" David's line in the person of Jesus is an endless one, and the race of Jesus, as represented in successive generations of believers, shows no sign of failure. No power, human or Satanic, can break the Christian succession; as saints die others shall rise up to fill their places, so that till the last day, the day of doom, Jesus shall have a seed to serve him. "*And his throne as the sun before me.*" In our Lord Jesus the dynasty of David remains upon the throne. Jesus has never abdicated, nor gone into banishment. He reigns, and must reign so long as the sun continues to shine upon the earth. A seed and a throne are the two great promises of the covenant, and they are as important to us as to our Lord Jesus himself; for we are the seed who must endure for ever, and we are protected and ennobled by that King whose royalties are to last for ever.

37. "*It shall be established for ever as the moon.*" The kingdom may wax and wane to mortal eyes, but it shall still abide as long as the moon walks in her silver beauty. "*And as a faithful witness in heaven.*" The most stable part of the universe is selected as a type of Messiah's kingdom, and both sun and moon are made to be symbols of its long endurance. Whatever else there is in the sky which faithfully witnesses to the unbending course of nature is also called upon to be a sign of the Lord's truth. When heaven and earth witness, and the Lord himself swears, there remains no excuse for doubting, and faith joyfully reposes in confident expectation.

38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.

39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.

40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.

41 All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours.

42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle.

44 Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground.

45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.

46 How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

47 Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?

48 What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

49 Lord, where *are* thy former lovingkindnesses, *which* thou swarest unto David in thy truth?

50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; *how* I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people:

51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

52 Blessed *be* the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

38. *" But thou hast cast off and abhorred."* The Lord had promised not to cast off the seed of David, and yet it looked as if he had done so, and that too in the most angry manner, as if he loathed the person of the king. God's actions may appear to us to be the reverse of his promises, and then our best course is to come before him in prayer and put the matter before him just as it strikes our apprehension. We are allowed to do this, for this holy and inspired man did so unrebuked, but we must do it humbly and in faith. *" Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed."* He deserved the wrath, doubtless, but the Psalmist's point is, that this appeared to him to conflict with the gracious covenant. He puts the matter plainly, and makes bold with the Lord, and the Lord loves to have his servants so do ; it shows that they believe his engagements to be matters of fact.

39. *" Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant."* The dispensations of providence looked as if there had been a disannulling of the sacred compact, though indeed it was not so. *" Thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground."* The king had been subject to such sorrow and shame that his diadem had been as it were taken from his head, dashed on the earth, and rolled in the mire. He was a theocratic monarch, and the Lord, who gave him his crown, took it from him and treated it with contempt,—at least so it seemed. In these sad days also we may utter the same plaint, for Jesus is not acknowledged in many of the churches, and usurpers have profaned his crown. When we hear of kings and queens set up as " heads of the church," and a priest styled " The Vicar of Christ," while parliaments and courts take upon themselves to legislate for the church of God, we may bitterly lament that things should come to so wretched a pass. Few are there who will acknowledge the crown rights of King Jesus, the very subject is considered to be out of date. O Lord how long !

40. *" Thou hast broken down all his hedges."* He was no longer sheltered from the slanderous assaults of contemptuous tongues ; the awe which should guard the royal name had ceased to separate him from his fellows. The " divinity which doth hedge a king " had departed. Hitherto, the royal family had been like a vine within an enclosure, but the wall was now laid low, and the vine was unprotected. It is sorrowfully true that in many places the enclosures of the church have been destroyed, the line of demarcation between the church and the world has almost vanished, and godless men fill the sacred offices. Alas, O Lord God, shall it be always so ? Shall thy true vine be deserted by thee, thou great Husbandman ? Set up the boundaries again, and keep thy church as a vineyard reserved for thyself. *" Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin."* The forts of the land were in the possession of the enemy and were dismantled, the defences of the kingdom were overthrown. Thus has it happened that precious truths, which were the bulwarks of the church, have been assailed by heresy, and the citadels of sound doctrine have been abandoned to the foe. O God, how canst thou suffer this ? As the God of truth, wilt thou not arise and tread down falsehood ?

41. *" All that pass by the way spoil him."* Idle passers-by, who have nothing else to do, must needs have a pluck at this vine, and they do it without difficulty, since the hedges are gone. Woe is the day when every petty reasoner has an argument against religion, and men in their cups are fluent with objections against the gospel of Jesus. Although Jesus on the cross is nothing to them, and they pass him by without inquiring into what he has done for them, yet they can loiter as long as you will, if there be but the hope of driving another nail into his hands and helping to crucify the Lord afresh. They will not touch him with the finger of faith, but they pluck at him with the hand of malice. *" He is a reproach to his neighbours."* David's successors had unneighbourly neighbours, who were a reproach to good fellowship, because they were so ready to reproach their neighbour. The Jews were much taunted by the surrounding Gentiles when at any time they fell into trouble. At this time the people of God, who follow the Lord fully, are subject to a thousand reproaches, and some of them of the most bitter kind. These reproaches are really the reproach of Christ, and, at bottom, are meant for him. Shall it always be so ? Shall he, who deserves to be universally adored, be subject to general scorn ? Where, then, O God, is thy faithfulness to thy covenant ?

42. *" Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries."* Thou hast done it, *thou*, who hast sworn to give him help and victory, thou hast, instead thereof sided with his enemies, and lent them thy strength, so that they have gained the supremacy. *" Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice."* They are boasting over him, and are glorying in his defeat, and this is done by thyself. O God,—how

is this? Where is the covenant? Hast thou forgotten thine own pledges and promises?

43. "*Also turned the edge of his sword.*" When he goes to war he is as unsuccessful as though his sword refused to cut, and gave way like a sword of lead. His weapons fail him. "*And hast not made him to stand in the battle.* His heart fails him as well as his sword—he wavers, he falls. This has happened even to naturally brave men—a terrible dread has unmanned them. At this present the church has few swords of true Jerusalem metal; her sons are pliable, her ministers yield to pressure. We need men whose edge cannot be turned, firm for truth, keen against error, sharp towards sin, cutting their way into men's hearts. Courage and decision are more needed now than ever, for charity towards heresy is the fashionable vice, and indifference to all truth, under the name of liberal-mindedness, is the crowning virtue of the age. The Lord send us men of the school of Elias, or, at least, of Luther and Knox.

44. "*Thou hast made his glory to cease.*" The brightness of his reign and the prosperity of his house are gone, his fame is tarnished, his honour disgraced. "*And cast his throne down to the ground.*" He has lost his power to govern at home or to conquer abroad. This happened to kings of David's line, and, more grievous to tell, it is happening in these days to the visible kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Where are the glories of Pentecost? Where is the majesty of the Reformation? Where does his kingdom come among the sons of men? Woe is unto us, for the glory has departed, and the gospel throne of Jesus is hidden from our eyes!

45. "*The days of his youth hast thou shortened.*" The time of the king's energy was brief, he grew feeble before his time. "*Thou hast covered him with shame.*" Shame was heaped upon him because of his premature decay and his failure in arms. This was very grievous to the writer of this Psalm, who was evidently a most loyal adherent of the house of David. In this our day we have to bemoan the lack of vigour in religion—the heroic days of Christianity are over, her raven locks are sprinkled with untimely grey. Is this according to the covenant? Can this be as the Lord has promised? Let us plead with the righteous Judge of all the earth, and beseech him to fulfil his word wherein he has promised that those who wait upon him shall renew their strength.

Selah. The interceding poet takes breath amid his lament, and then turns from describing the sorrows of the kingdom to pleading with the Lord.

46. "*How long, Lord?*" The appeal is to Jehovah, and the argument is the length of the affliction endured. Chastisement with a rod is not a lengthened matter, therefore he appeals to God to cut short the time of tribulation. "*Wilt thou hide thyself for ever?*" Hast thou not promised to appear for thy servant—wilt thou then for ever forsake him? "*Shall thy wrath burn like fire?*" Shall it go on and on evermore till it utterly consume its object? Be pleased to set a bound! How far wilt thou go? Wilt thou burn up the throne which thou hast sworn to perpetuate? Even thus we would entreat the Lord to remember the cause of Christ in these days. Can he be so angry with his church as to leave her much longer? How far will he suffer things to go? Shall truth die out, and saints exist no more? How long will he leave matters to take their course? Surely he must interpose soon, for, if he do not, true religion will be utterly consumed, as it were, with fire.

47. "*Remember how short my time is.*" If so brief, do not make it altogether bitter. If thine anger burn on it will outlast this mortal life, and then there will be no time for thy mercy to restore me. Some expositors ascribe these words, and all the preceding verses, to the state of the Lord Jesus in the days of his humiliation, and this gives an instructive meaning; but we prefer to continue our reference all through to the church, which is the seed of the Lord Jesus, even as the succeeding kings were the seed of David. We, having transgressed, are made to feel the rod, but we pray the Lord not to continue his stripes lest our whole life be passed in misery. "*Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*" If the Lord do not shine upon his work we live for nothing—we count it no longer life if his cause does not prosper. We live if the King lives, but not else. Everything is vanity if religion be vanity. If the kingdom of heaven should fail, everything is a failure. Creation is a blot, providence an error, and our own existence a hell, if the faithfulness of God can fail and his covenant of grace can be dissolved. If the gospel system can be disproved, nothing remains for us or any other of the sons of men, which can render existence worth the having.

48. "*What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?*" All must die. None

of our race can answer to the question here propounded except in the negative; there is none that can claim to elude the arrows of death. "*Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?*" Neither by strength, wisdom, nor virtue can any man escape the common doom, for to the dust return we must. Since then we must all die, do not make this life all wretchedness, by smiting us so long, O Lord. Thy Son our covenant Head died, and so also shall we; let us not be so deserted of thee in this brief span that we shall be quite unable to testify to thy faithfulness; make us not feel that we have lived in vain. Thus the brevity of life and the certainty of death are turned into pleas with the Most High.

"*Selah.*" Here we rest again, and proceed to further pleadings.

49. "*Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?*" Here he comes to grand pleading, hand to hand work with the covenant angel. We may remind the Lord of his first deeds of love, his former love to his church, his former favour to ourselves. Then may we plead his oath, and beg him to remember that he has sworn to bless his chosen; and we may wrestle hard also, by urging upon him his own character, and laying hold upon his inviolable truth. When things look black we may bring forth our strong reasons, and debate the case with our condescending God, who has himself said, "Come now, and let us reason together."

50. "*Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants.*" By reason of their great troubles they were made a mock of by ungodly men, and hence the Lord's pity is entreated. Will a father stand by and see his children insulted? The Psalmist entreats the Lord to compassionate the wretchedness brought upon his servants by the taunts of their adversaries, who jested at them on account of their sufferings. "*How I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people.*" The Psalmist himself laid the scorn of the great and the proud to heart. He felt as if all the reproaches which vexed his nation were centred in himself, and therefore in sacred sympathy with the people he poured out his heart. We ought to weep with those that weep; reproach brought upon the saints and their cause ought to burden us: if we can hear Christ blasphemed, and see his servants insulted, and remain unmoved, we have not the true Israelite's spirit. Our grief at the griefs of the Lord's people may be pleaded in prayer, and it will be acceptable argument.

There is one interpretation of this verse which must not be passed over; the original is, "*Remember my bearing in my bosom all the many nations;*" and this may be understood as a pleading of the church that the Lord would remember her because she was yet to be the mother of many nations, according to the prophecy of Ps. lxxvii. She was as it were ready to give birth to nations, but how could they be born if she herself died in the meanwhile? The church is the hope of the world; should she expire, the nations would never come to the birth of regeneration, but must abide in death.

51. "*Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord.*" Here is another forcible point; the scoffers are the Lord's enemies as well as ours, and their reproach falls upon him as well as upon us; therefore we cry for the Lord's interposition. When Jehovah's own name is in the quarrel, surely he will arise. "*Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.*" Tracking him and finding occasion to blaspheme at every turn; not only watching his words and actions, but even his harmless steps. Neither Christ nor his church can please the world, whichever way we turn scoffers will rail. Does this verse refer to the oft-repeated sarcasm—"Where is the promise of his coming?" Is the reproach aimed at the delays of the Messiah, those long-expected footfalls which as yet are unheard? O Lord, how long shall this thread-bare taunt continue? How long? How long?

"Come, for creation groans
Impatient of thy stay,
Worn out with these long years of ill,
These ages of delay.

"Come, in thy glorious might,
Come with the iron rod,
Scattering thy foes before thy face.
Most Mighty Son of God."

52. "*Blessed be the Lord for evermore.*" He ends where he began; he has sailed round the world and reached port again. Let us bless God before we pray, and while we pray, and when we have done praying, for he always deserves it of us.

If we cannot understand him, we will not distrust him. When his ways are beyond our judgment we will not be so foolish as to judge; yet we shall do so if we consider his dealings to be unkind or unfaithful. He is, he must be, he shall be, for ever, our blessed God. "*Amen, and Amen.*" All our hearts say so. So be it, Lord, we wish it over and over again. Be thou blessed evermore.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

Whole Psalm.—The present Psalm makes a pair with the preceding one. It is a spiritual Allegro to that Penseroso . . . That Psalm was a dirge of Passion-Tide, this Psalm is a carol of Christmas.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—There are many passages in this Psalm which do clearly evidence that it is to be interpreted of Christ; yea, there are many things in this Psalm that can never be clearly, pertinently, and appositely applied to any but Jesus Christ. For a taste, see ver. 19, "*I have laid help upon one that is mighty,*" mighty to pardon, reconcile, to justify, to save, to bring to glory; suitable to that of the Apostle, Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save to the uttermost"—that is, to all ends and purposes, perfectly, completely, fully, continually, perpetually. Christ is a thorough Saviour, a mighty Saviour: Isa. lxiii. 1, "Mighty to save." There needs none to come after him to finish the work which he hath begun: ver. 19, "*I have exalted one chosen out of the people,*" which is the very title given to our Lord Jesus: Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect," or chosen one, "in whom my soul delighteth": ver. 20, "*I have found David my servant.*" Christ is very frequently called by that name, as being most dearly beloved of God, and most highly esteemed and valued by God, and as being typified by him both as king and prophet of his church: ver. 20, "*With my holy oil have I anointed him;*" suitable to that of Christ; Luke iv. 18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;" and therefore we need not doubt of the excellency, authority, certainty, and sufficiency of the gospel: ver. 27, "*I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.*" Christ is the first-born of every creature, and in all things hath the pre-eminence: ver. 29, "*His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.*" This is chiefly spoken of Christ and his kingdom. The aspectable heaven is corruptible, but the kingdom of heaven is eternal; and such shall be Christ's seed, throne and kingdom: ver. 36, "*His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.*" "Christ shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand," Isa. liii. 10. "*And his throne as the sun before me*"; that is, perpetual and glorious, as the Chaldee explaineth it, "*shall shine as the sun.*" Other kingdoms and thrones have their times and their turns, their rise and their ruins, but so hath not the kingdom and throne of Jesus Christ. Christ's dominion is "an everlasting dominion," which shall not pass away; "and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," Dan. vii. 13, 14. I might give further instances out of this Psalm, but enough is as good as a feast. Now saith God, "I have made a covenant with him"; so then there is a covenant that God the Father hath made with Christ the Mediator; which covenant, the Father engages to the Son, shall stand fast, there shall be no cancelling or disannulling of it. God the Father hath not only made a covenant of grace with the saints in Christ, but he has also made a covenant of redemption, as we call it for distinction sake, with Jesus Christ himself: "My covenant shall stand fast with him;" that is, with Christ, as we have fully and clearly demonstrated.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 1.—This one short verse contains the summary, pith, and argument of the whole long Psalm; wherein observe THE SONG'S DITTY, *the lovingkindness and truth of the Lord,* manifested unto the whole world generally, to David's house (that is, the church) especially. THE SINGER'S DUTY, *magnifying the mercies of God always, even from one generation to another.* And by all means; with his *mouth,* for that is expressed in this verse; with his *mind,* for that is implied in the next—"*I have said,*" etc., that is, believed in my heart, and therefore spake it with my tongue, Ps. cxvi. 10. "For out of the heart's abundance the mouth speaketh," Matt. xii. 34.—*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—"*I will sing.*" It is to be observed that he does not say, I will *speak* of the goodness of the Lord; but, I will sing. The celebration of the divine goodness

has joined with itself the joy and exultation of a pious mind, which cannot be poured forth better than in song. That pleasantness and exuberance of a happy spirit, which by singing is instilled into the ears of the listeners, has a certain wonderful power of moving the affections; so that not in vain were pious minds taught by the Holy Spirit to inculcate the wonderful work of God in songs composed for this purpose, to commit them to memory and to appoint them to be sung.—*Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*I will sing.*"—The Psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the Psalm with songs of praise; for we must in every thing, in every state, give thanks. We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining: but we do more, we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgiving; and in these verses we find that which will be in matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or public account.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*Sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.*" S. Gregory the Great raises the question here as to how a perpetual singing of the *mercies* of God is compatible with unalloyed bliss in heaven, inasmuch as the thought of mercy connotes the memory of sin and sorrow, which needed mercy, whereas Isaiah saith that "the former troubles are forgotten," and "the former things shall not be remembered, nor come upon the heart" (ch. lxv. 16, 17). And he replies that it will be like the memory of past sickness in time of health, without stain, without grief, and serving only to heighten the felicity of the redeemed, by the contrast with the past, and to increase their love and gratitude towards God. And so sings the Cluniac:*

"Their breasts are filled with gladness,
Their mouths are tuned to praise,
What time, now safe for ever,
On former sins they gaze:
The fouler was the error,
The sadder was the fall,
The ampler are the praises
Of Him who pardoned all."

Note, too, that he says, "with *my* mouth," not with that of any deputy; "*I will make known*," not secretly or timidly, not in a whisper, but boldly preach, "*Thy faithfulness*," or *truth*, not my own opinion, far less my own falsehood, but thy Truth, which is, thine Only-begotten Son.—*Gregory, Bernard, Hugo, and Augustine: quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"*Mercies.*" The word may be rendered *graces, kindnesses, goodnesses,* and designs the abundance of grace.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*The mercies.*" His manifold and sundry mercies: as if he should say, we have tasted of more than one, yea, we have felt all his mercies; I will therefore praise the same for ever. I will sing his mercy for creating this universe, which is *macrocosmos*, a great world; and for making man, which is *microcosmos*, a little world. 1. My song shall set forth his kindness, for that he gave me being. 2. For adding to my being, life, which he denieth unto stones. 3. To life, sense, which he denieth unto plants. 4. To sense, speech and understanding, which he denieth unto brute beasts. . . .

I am exceeding much bound unto God for creating me when I was not; and for preserving me under his wings ever since I was: yet I am more bound to his mercy for redeeming me, for blessing me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ his Son (Eph. 1, 3), for his electing of me, for his calling of me, for his justifying of me, for his sanctifying of me. These graces are the riches of his goodness and glory, *misericordiæ in æternum*, everlasting mercies, as reaching from everlasting predestination to everlasting glorification. O Lord, I will alway sing thy *mercies* in promising, and ever shew thy *truth* in performing thy promise made to David, thy chosen servant, concerning thy Son, my Saviour, saying, "Thy seed will I establish for ever." So the fathers expound our text: I will ever sing thy mercies, in vouchsafing to send thy Son to visit thy servants, sick to death in sin. First, I will ever sing of thy mercifulness, and then will ever be shewing thy faithfulness. *Neque enim exhiberetur veritas in impletione promissorum, nisi præcederet misericordia in remissione peccatorum.* (*For truth, in the fulfilment of the promises, would not be shown forth; unless mercy, in the forgiveness of sins, should precede it.*) And what

* Bernard of Clairvaux.

is *God's mercy set up for ever, and his truth established in the heavens*, but that which Isaiah terms, " the sure mercies of David "; that is, as Paul construeth Isaiah, the holy promise made to David: and the promise made to David, is briefly this, " Thy seed will I establish for ever, and set up thy throne from generation to generation." —*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—" *For ever.*" I know some join *in æternum* to the noun *misericordias*, and not to the verb *cantabo*, making the sense to be this: I will alway sing thy mercies which endure for ever. But *always* is referred as well, if not better, unto the verb, " *I will sing*: " as who would say, Lord, thy mercies are so manifest, and so manifold, so great in their number, and so good in their nature, that I will always, so long as I have any being, sing praises unto thee. Haply some will object, " All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth " (Isa. xl. 6, 7). David being persecuted by Saul, said, " There is but a step between me and death " (1 Sam. xx. 3). Nay, David, thy life is shorter than a stride, but " a span long," as thyself witnesseth, Ps. xxxix. 5. How can he then that begs his bread but for a day promise to spend his breath in magnifying the Lord for ever? Answer is made, that the prophet will not only commend the mercies of the Lord in word, but also commit them unto writing. *Ut sciat hæc ætas, posteritasque legat* * (*that this age may know, and that posterity may read.*) As the tongue of the prophet is termed elsewhere " the pen of a writer; " so the writing of the Prophet is here termed *his mouth*, as Euthymeus upon the place (Acts iv. 25), *Liber Psalmorum os David* (*The Book of Psalms is the mouth of David*). He doth intend to note the mercies of God, and to set forth his truth in a book, the which he will leave behind him (as an instrument) to convey the same *from generation to generation*, from the generation of Jews to the generation of Christians. Or from the Old Testament to the New: for the blessed Apostles in their sermons usually cite sentences out of the Psalms. S. Peter telleth us that the gospel was preached unto the dead (1 Peter iv. 6); so may we say, that the gospel is preached by the dead. For the most ancient fathers, and other judicious authors, who have spent their days in writing learned expositions and godly meditations upon the Holy Scriptures, although they be dead, yet they " sing alway the mercies of the Lord, and shew the truth of his word from one generation to another." It is reported in our chronicles of Athelstan, *parum ætati vixit, multum gloriæ* (*he lived but little of time, but much of glory*). So many zealous and industrious doctors have lived (in respect of their age) but a little, yet in respect of their acts, a great while, shining still in their works and writings, as lights of the world.

Or the prophet may be said to *sing ever* intentionally, though not actually. For as the wicked, if he could live alway, would sin alway, so the good man (if God should suffer him alway to breathe on earth) would sing alway the mercies of the Lord.—*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—" *With my mouth.*" The author has heard continual praises from a tongue half eaten away with cancer. What use, beloved reader, are you making of your tongue?—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 2.—" *I have said.*" The word אָמַרְתִּי, " *I have said*," is used, in the Book of Psalms, to express two things; either a fixed purpose, or a settled opinion of the person speaking. The Psalmist, therefore, delivers the whole of this second verse in his own person, and introduces not God speaking till the next verse.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 2.—" *I have said*," etc. The perpetuity of mercy is one eminent piece of this Psalm, for with that he begins: " *Mercy shall be built up for ever*," etc. And they are the sure mercies of our spiritual David (Christ), he means. Now, to set forth the perpetuity hereof, he first useth words that express firmitude, as " *established*," " *built up for ever*," ver. 2, 4. Then he uses such similitudes as are taken from things which are held most firm and inviolable amongst men, as verse 4, *fœdus incidi*, I have cut or engraven my covenant (so in the Hebrew), alluding to what was then in use, when covenants were mutually to be made, such as they intended to be inviolate, and never to be broken; to signify so much, they did engrave and cut them into the most durable lasting matter, as marble, or brass, or the like. You may see this to have been the way of writing in use, as what was to last for ever: as Job xix. 23, 24. " Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were

* Eobanus Hessus.

printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" And what is that rock or marble here? No other than the heart itself of our gracious and most merciful Jehovah, and his most unalterable and immovable purposes, truth and faithfulness. This is that foundation "*in the heavens*," whereon mercy is built up for ever, as ver. 2, which (as the Apostle says) "remains for ever;" and so they become "the sure mercies of David," Isai. lv. 3. Again, solemn oaths amongst men serve to ratify and make things sworn to perpetual. This also is there specified as having been taken by God: "Once have I sworn by my holiness," etc., and sworn by him that cannot lie, and sworn to that end, "to show the immutability of his counsel," Heb. vi. 17. And not only is the immutability of his mercy illustrated by these things taken from what is firm on earth, but he ascends up to the heavens, and first into the very highest heavens: ver. 2, "*For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shall thou establish in the very heavens:*" comparing them to an house built not on earth, or upon a foundation of earth, which thieves break through, and violence destroys, but in heaven, whither they cannot reach.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2.—"*Mercy shall be built up for ever.*" What is this "*mercy*" that is "built up for ever"? but the glorious and the gracious scheme, the glorious and the gracious fabric, of our salvation, founded in the eternal purpose of God—carried into execution by the labours and the death of Jesus Christ—and then applied and brought home to the heart by the illuminating and converting power of the Holy Ghost? This is that "mercy" which is "built up for ever." It was planned from everlasting, and will know no ruin or decay, through the illimitable line of eternity itself. Who is the builder of this fabric? Not man's free-will. Not man's own righteousness or wisdom. Not human power nor human skill. Every true believer will here join issue with David, that it is God, and God alone, who builds up the temple of his Church; and who, as the builder of it, is alone entitled to all the glory.

The elect constitute and form one grand house of mercy: an house, erected to display and to perpetuate the riches of the Father's free grace, of the Son's atoning merit, and of the Holy Ghost's efficacious agency. This house, contrary to the fate of all sublunary buildings, will never fall down, nor ever be taken down. As nothing can be added to it, so nothing can be diminished from it. Fire cannot injure it; storms cannot overthrow it; age cannot impair it. It stands on a rock, and is immovable as the rock on which it stands—the three-fold rock of God's inviolable decree of Christ's finished redemption, and of the Spirit's never-failing faithfulness.—*Augustus Montague Toplady*, 1740—1778.

Verse 2—"*Built up.*" Mention of a building of mercy, presupposes miserable ruins, and denotes that this building is intended for the benefit of an elect world ruined by Adam's fall. Free grace and love set on foot this building for them, every stone in which, from the lowest to the highest, is mercy to them; from top to bottom, from the foundation-stone to the top-stone, all is free and rich mercy to them. And the ground of this glorious building is God's covenant with his chosen: "*I have made a covenant with my chosen.*"—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 2.—"*Built up.*" Former mercies are fundamental to later ones. The mercies that we enjoy this day are founded upon the mercies of former days, such as we ought joyfully and thankfully to recount with delight and praise; remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High.—*John Howe.*

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The meaning of this passage appears to be, that the constancy of the celestial motions, the regular vicissitudes of day and night, and alternations of the seasons, were emblems of God's own immutability.—*R. Warner*, 1828.

Verse 2.—

> "For I have said, Thy mercies rise,
> A deathless structure, to the skies:
> The heav'ns were planted by thy hand,
> And, as the heav'ns, Thy truth shall stand."
>
> —*Richard Mant.*

Verse 3.—"*I have made a covenant with my chosen.*" We must ponder here with pious wonder how God has deigned to enter into a covenant with man, the immortal with the mortal, the most powerful with the weakest, the most just with the most unjust, the richest with the poorest, the most blessed with the most wretched. The prophet wonders that God is mindful of man, and visits the son of man. Of how much greater admiration, I say, is it worthy, that they are also joined together,

and that not after a simple fashion, but by the ties of a covenant? If man had affirmed this of himself, that God was united and bound to him by a covenant, who is there that would not have condemned him of temerity? Now God himself is introduced affirming this very thing of himself, that he had made a covenant with man. What saint does not see in this thing, how great the φιλανθρωπία of God is!—*Musculus.*

Verse 3.—"*I have made a covenant with my chosen.*" On heaven's side is God himself, the party proposer. Though he was the party offended, yet the motion for a covenant comes from him. . . . The Father of mercies saith, "The lost creatures cannot contract for themselves; and if another undertake not for them, they must perish: they cannot choose an undertaker for themselves. I will choose one for them, and I will make a covenant with my chosen." On man's side is God's chosen, or *chosen One*, for the word of God is singular; the Son, *the last Adam.* Who else as fit to be undertaker on man's side? who else could have been the Father's choice for this vast undertaking? No angel nor man was capable of it, but "*the Mighty One*" (verse 19) whom the Father points out to us as his *chosen*, Isai, xlii. 1.—*Thomas Boston.*

Verses 3, 4.—"*I have made a covenant with my chosen,*" etc. Do you suppose that this was spoken to David, in his own person only? No, indeed; but to David as the antitype, figure, and forerunner of Jesus Christ. Hence, the Septuagint version renders it, *I have covenanted* τοις εκλεκτοις μου, *with my elect people*, or with my chosen ones: *i.e.* with them in Christ, and with Christ in their name. "*I have sworn unto David my servant,*" unto the Messiah, who was typified by David; unto my co-eternal Son, who stipulated to take on himself "the form of a servant"; thy seed, *i.e.* all those whom I have given to thee in the decree of election, all those whom thou shalt live and die to redeem, these "*will I establish for ever,*" so as to render their salvation irreversible and inamissable: "*and build up thy throne,*" thy mediatorial throne, as King of saints and covenant Head of the elect, "*to all generations*": there shall always be a succession of favoured sinners to be called and sanctified, in consequence of thy fœderal obedience unto death; and every period of time shall recompense thy covenant-sufferings with an increasing revenue of converted souls, until as many as are ordained to eternal life are gathered in.

Observe, here, that when Christ received the promise from the Father concerning the establishment of his (*i.e.* of Christ's) throne to all generations, the plain meaning is, that his people shall be thus established; for, consider Christ in his divine capacity as the Son of God, and his throne was already established, and had been from everlasting, and would have continued to be established without end, even if he had never been incarnate at all. Therefore, the promise imports that Christ shall reign, not simply as a person in the Godhead (which he ever did, ever will, and ever must); but relatively, mediatorially, and in his office-character, as the deliverer and king of Zion. Hence it follows, that his people cannot be lost: for he would be a poor sort of a king who had or might have no subjects to reign over. Consequently, that "throne" of glory on which Christ sits is already encircled in part, and will at last be completely surrounded and made still more glorious, by that innumerable company, that general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven.—*Augustus Montague Toplady.*

Verse 5.—"*The heavens,*" etc. Now, for this kingdom of his, the heavens are said to praise his wonders, which is spoken of the *angels*, who are often called the heavens, from their place; as in Job it is said, "The heavens are not clean in his sight." And these knowing the wonders of that covenant of grace, they, even they are said to praise; "The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord." In the Hebrew it is "thy wonder," or "thy miracle," in the singular number which, in Eph. iii. 10, the angels are said to adore: and in Luke i., to "sing glory to the Highest:" for his grace to man is that miracle. Now the material heavens do not praise the mercy of God, or the grace of God, or the covenant of grace, or the throne of grace that is established in the heavens. They understand nothing of Christ; no, they do not so much as materially give occasion to man to praise God for these; and therefore this is meant of the angels; and most interpreters understand the next words of them: "*Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints,*" angels, and the holy ones made perfect, for there the great congregation is. For even in the heavens, who can be compared to the Lord, where all his angels thus do praise him? "*Who among the sons of the mighty,*" of all the powers of the earth, "*can be likened unto the*

Lord?" for he is the "King of kings, and he is the Lord of lords:" God above all gods, even angels themselves, as elsewhere the Psalmist hath it. And he says not only, "*There is none like thee;*" but, "Who is like unto thee?" his excellency so exceeds. And in the 7th verse, he is there presented with all his saints and angels round about him, as one that is greatly to be feared, or that is terrible in himself, by reason of his greatness, in this his council and assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him. For saints and angels, they are of his council in heaven (as might be shewn), and encompass the manifestation of his glory there round about.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy wonders,*" etc. As the heavens are a proof of God's power, in respect of his first framing them out of nothing; so are they a pattern of God's faithfulness, in their constant and orderly motion according to his word since their framing: "*The heavens shall praise thy faithfulness also.*" However the power and faithfulness of God may be seen and heard in the work and speech of the heavens by all men, yet are they not observed and hearkened unto except in the Church by God's children: therefore saith he, "*They shall praise thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy wonders.*" Thy wondrousness (*literally*, wonder), not "Thy wondrous works," but "Thy wonderful mysterious nature and being," as separate and distinct from all created beings.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy wonders,*" etc. It is a wonderful salvation, it is such a salvation as the angels desire to pry into it; and it is such a salvation, that all the prophets desire to pry into it; it is almost six thousand years since all the angels in heaven fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; it is almost six thousand years since Abel fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; and what think ye is his exercise this day? He is even wondering at this great salvation.—*Andrew Gray,* 1616.

Verse 6.—"*Who in the heaven?*" Who in the sky? Ainsworth reads it. In the clouds, *in nubibus, æquabitur*, is to be equalled, saith Calvin, to Jehovah, *Quis enim in superiore nube par æstimetur Jehova.* Who in the higher clouds is equal to Jehovah, so Tremellius reads it. "*Who in the heavens?*" *i.e.*, say some, in the starry heavens, among the celestial bodies, sun, moon, or stars; which were adored as gods, not only by the Persians, but also by some idolatrous Jews, because of their brightness and beauty, their lustre and glory. Which of all those famous lamps, and heavenly luminaries, is to be compared to the Father of lights, and Sun of righteousness? They may glister like glowworms in the night of Paganism, among them who are covered with the mantle of darkness, but when this Sun ariseth, and day appeareth, they all vanish and disappear.

"*Who in the heavens?*" *i.e.*, say others, in the heaven of heavens, the highest, the third heavens, among the celestial spirits, cherubims and seraphims, angels and archangels, principalities and powers, thrones and dominions? Who among the innumerable company of angels? who among those pure, those perfect spirits, who are the ancientest, the honourablest house of the creation, is to be compared to the Father of Spirits.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 6.—"*Who can be compared?*" The Dutch have translated these words, "*Who can be shadowed with him?*" that is, they are not worthy to be accounted shadows unto such a comparison with him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"*Who among the sons of the mighty.*" Literally, "*Who is he among the sons of*" *Alim* (or of Gods, as in Ps. xxix. 1), *i.e.*, according to Suicer, the powerful, the princes of the earth.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 7.—"*God is greatly to be feared.*" Ainsworth reads, "God is daunting terrible." The original word is נַעֲרָץ, from עָרַץ, *arats, he was broken, bruised, terrified.* "An epithet of God," says Bythner, "as though breaking all things."—*Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 7.—"*God is greatly to be feared.*" The worship of God is to be performed with great fear and reverence; "*God is greatly to be feared.*" Piscator translates it, *Vehementer formidandus*, to be vehemently feared; and opposes it to that formal, careless, trifling, vain spirit, which too often is found in those that approach the Lord in the duties of his worship.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 7.—"*God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.*" Those saints of his who walk close with him, have a daunting power in their appearance. I ap-

peal to guilty consciences, to apostates, to professors who have secret haunts of wickedness: sometime when you come but into the presence of one who is a truly gracious godly man or woman whom your conscience tells you walks close with God, doth not even the very sight of such an one terrify you? the very lustre of that holiness you see in such an one strikes upon your conscience. Then you think, such an one walks close with God indeed, but I have basely forsaken the Lord, and have had such a haunt of wickedness, I have brought dreadful guilt upon my soul since I saw him last. Ecclesiastical stories tell us of Basil, when the officers came to apprehend him, he being then exercised in holy duties, that there was such a majesty and lustre came from his countenance, that the officers fell down backward (as they did who came to apprehend Christ), they were not able to lay hold of him. Surely, when the saints shall be raised in their holiness, when every one of them shall have their hearts filled with holiness, it will cause abundance of fear even in all hearts of those that converse with them.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 8.—"*Thy faithfulness round about thee.*" For just as the tyrants of this world move abroad surrounded by impiety, avarice, contempt of God, and pride, as with a body-guard, so God sits on his exalted throne, surrounded with majesty, faithfulness, mercy and equal love to all his people, as with a vesture of gold.—*J. Baptista Folengius.*

Verse 8.—"*Thy faithfulness round about thee.*" Whatever he doth, he is mindful of his faithfulness and covenant, before and behind, and on each side; he can look no way, but that is in his eye. And though he employ angels, and send them down into the world, and they stand round about him; yet he hath better harbingers than these—mercy, and truth, and faithfulness, that wait round about him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou rulest the raging of the sea.*" Surely the Spirit of God would have us to take notice, that though the sea be indeed such a giant, such a monster, as will make a heart of oak shake, or a heart of brass melt, yet what is it to God, but an infant? he can bind it and lay it to sleep, even as a little child. And if the great sea be in the hand of God as a little child, what is great to God! and how great is God! What is strong to God! and how strong is God! What or who is too great, or too strong for God to deal with?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou rulest.*" Here under a figure taken from God's providential government, we have an exhibition of the power of God in defeating the efforts of the enemies of his Church. An instance of this, in the literal sense, we have in the appeasing of the storm by our Lord. "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Here we see that God reigns over the sea immediately, and alters or modifies the arrangements of nature according to his sovereign pleasure. That which Jesus did on one occasion is constantly done by the God of providence. He has not left the ocean to be disturbed at random by the winds, nor to be kept in peace by the laws of nature. He rules the raging of the sea. He raises the waves, and he stilleth them. This exhiblts a continually working providence. And what he does in providence he does also in his kingdom of grace. He suffers the fury of the enemy to swell against his cause, but he stills it at his pleasure.—*Alexander Carson.*

Verse 10.—"*Broken;*" "*scattered.*" God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—"*Rahab.*" The reason why *Egypt* is expressed in Scripture under this word, ariseth from the two significations of it; first, it signifies *strength*, for Egypt was a very strong nation, and therefore the Israelites were reproved for going to them for help, and relying upon their strength, which though great in itself, yet should be to them but a broken reed; secondly, it signifieth *pride*, or *the proud*; men are usually proud of strength, and *Egypt* being a strong nation, was also a very proud nation.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—"*The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine.*" Therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee, therefore we will not fear what man can do against us.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12.—"*The north and the south thou hast created them,*" etc. The heights of Huttin, commonly fixed on by tradition as the Mount of Beatitudes, appear

a little to the west of Tiberias. Over these the graceful top of Mount Tabor is seen, and beyond it the little Hermon, famous for its dews; and still farther, and apparently higher, the bleak mountains of Gilboa, on which David prayed that there might fall no dew nor rain. A view of the position of Tabor and Hermon from such a situation as that which we now occupied, shewed us how accurately they might be reckoned the "*umbilicus terræ*"—the central point of the land, and led us to infer that this is the true explanation of the manner in which they are referred to in the 89th Psalm, 12th verse. It is as if the Psalmist had said, North, south, and *all that is between*—or in other words, The whole land from north to south, to its very centre and throughout its very marrow—shall rejoice in thy name.—*R. M. McCheyne.*

Verse 12.—"*Tabor and Hermon.*" These hills, the one to the east and the other to the west, in Canaan, were much frequented by the saints of God. David speaks of the sacred hill of *Hermon*, and compares brotherly-love to the dew of it. Pss. xlii. 6; cxxxiii. 3. And *Tabor*, yet more eminent for the memorable spot of Christ's transfiguration, and from whence God the Father proclaimed his perfect love and approbation of Jesus as his dear Son. Well might this hymn, therefore, in allusion to those glorious events, call even the holy hills to rejoice in Jehovah's name, Matt. xvii. 1—5.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 13.—"*Strong is thy hand*"; even thy left hand; as much as to say *tu polles utraque manu*, thou hast both hands alike powerful.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 14.—"*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*" As if the Psalmist had said, "The ornaments with which God is invested, instead of being a robe of purple, a diadem, or a sceptre, are, that he is the righteous and impartial judge of the world, a merciful father, and a faithful protector of his people." Earthly kings, from their having nothing in themselves to procure for them authority, and to give them dignity, are under the necessity of borrowing elsewhere what will invest them therewith; but God, having in himself all-sufficiency, and standing in no need of any other helps, exhibits to us the splendour of his own image in his righteousness, mercy, and truth.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*" The Holy Ghost alludeth to the thrones of earthly princes, which were underpropped with pillars, as Solomon's throne with lions, 1 Kings xix. 20, that were both a support and an ornament to it. Now, saith the Psalmist, justice and judgment are the pillars upon which God's throne standeth, as Calvin expoundeth it, the robe and diadem, the purple and sceptre, the regalia with which God's throne is adorned.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 14.—"*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*" Jehovah is here exhibited, by the sacred poet, under the character of a Sovereign, and of a Judge, he being presented to our adoring regard as on his *throne;* the throne of universal empire, and absolute dominion; as exercising his authority, and executing his laws, with an omnipotent but impartial hand. For "Justice and judgment are the *habitation*," the *preparation*, the *establishment*, or the *basis*, of this throne. Our textual translation is, *habitation;* the marginal, *establishment;* the Septuagint, *preparation;* and, if I mistake not, our best modern interpreters render the original term, *basis* or *foundation;* which, on the whole, seems most agreeable. The *basis*, then, of Jehovah's government, or that on which it rests, is "*justice and judgment.*" By "*justice*," I conceive we are to understand the attribute so called; and, by "*judgment*," the impartial exercise of that attribute in the Divine administration. So that were not the Most High to administer impartial justice in his moral government, he might be considered, if it be lawful to use the expression, as abdicating his throne.—*Abraham Booth*, 1734—1806.

Verse 14.—"*Justice*," which defends his subjects, and does every one right. "*Judgment*," which restrains rebels, and keeps off injuries. "*Mercy*," which shows compassion, pardons, supports the weak. "*Truth*," that performs whatsoever he promiseth.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 14.—"*Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*" Note, 1. Mercy is said to go before the face of God, because God sends mercy before judgment, that he might find less to punish: so Bellarmine. 2. That God permits not his face to be seen before he has forgiven our sins through mercy: so Rickelius. 3. That no one comes to the knowledge of God, but he who has obtained mercy beforehand. 4. That

God comes to no one unless His grace go before Him. . . . . Truth goes before the face of God, because God keeps it ever before his eyes, to mould his actions thereby. Pindar calls truth θυγατερα Διος the daughter of God. Epaminondas the Theban general, cultivated truth so studiously, that he is reported never to have spoken a falsehood even in jest. In the courts of kings this is a rare virtue.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 14.—" *Mercy and truth.*" *Mercy* in promising ; *truth* in performing. *Truth,* in being as good as thy word ; *mercy,* in being better.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—" *Shall go.*" In his *active going forth,* tender mercy and goodness announce him, and faithful truth will tell his people he is there when he comes forth. His activities are mercy and faithfulness, because his will is at work and his nature is love. Yet his throne still maintains justice and judgment.—*J. N. Darby.*

Verse 15.—" *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.*" Not that *hear ;* for then the blessing were cheap indeed. Thousands *hear* the Gospel sound, but sometimes not ten of a thousand know it.—*Thomas James Judkin,* 1841.

Verse 15.—" *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound* "—viz., of the trumpets sounded in token of joy at the great festivals, and chiefly on the first day of the seventh month, the feast of trumpets (Lev. xxiii. 24), and on extraordinary occasions, especially after the yearly atonement, on the day of jubilee, the tenth day of the seventh month of the fiftieth year, proclaiming liberty to bondmen, and restoration of their inheritance to them that had forfeited it (Lev. xxv. 8—10). As the jubilee joy did not come till after the atonement, so no Gospel joy and liberty are ours till first we know Christ as our atonement. " In the day of the people's gladness " they blew the trumpets over their sacrifices, " that they might be to them for a memorial before God " (Num. x. 10). David and Israel brought up the ark of the Lord to Zion " with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet " (2 Sam. vi. 15). In Num. xxiii. 21, Balaam makes it the distinguishing glory of Israel, " The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them," (Compare Ps. xcviii. 6 ; xxvii. 6. *margin*).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 15.—" *People that know the joyful sound.*" Here it is supposed that we have intelligence in respect of " *the joyful sound.*" For there is knowledge not merely of the utterances and intonations, but of the sense and substance, of the thought and feeling, which they convey. And I suppose this to be the meaning of Christ when he says, " My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me ; and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." And I have often been surprised, to note the accuracy with which persons otherwise not very intelligent, not largely informed, not of critical acumen, will yet, when they hear a discourse, judge, discriminate, determine ; will be able to say at once—" Truth, clear, unmixed, without a cloud upon it ; " or—" Doctrine clouded, statements confused, not the lucid Gospel ; " or be able to say, if it be so—" No Gospel at all ; contradiction to the truth of Christ." They " *Know the joyful sound,*" as it rolls from the plentitude of God's own voice and bosom, in his august and blessed revelations ; as it is confirmed, authenticated and sealed by the precious blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; as it is witnessed to by the eternal Spirit ; " the joyful sound," that there is salvation for lost and ruined men by faith in the blood and in the obedience of him who died upon the tree, and is now enthroned in the highest place in heaven.—*James Stratten,* 1845.

Verse 15.—" *They shall walk in the light of thy countenance.*" Surely, next to the love of God's heart, believers value the smiles of his face ; from which, as from the agency of the sun, arise the buddings of conscious joy, the leaves of unsullied profession, the variegated blossom of holy tempers, and the beneficent fruits of moral righteousness. They are totally mistaken who suppose that " *the light of God's countenance,*" and the privileges of the gospel, and the comforts of the Spirit, conduce to make us indolent and unactive in the way of duty. The text cuts up this surmise by the roots. For, it does not say, they shall *sit down* in the light of thy countenance ; or, they shall *lie down* in the light of thy countenance ; but " *they shall* WALK in the light of thy countenance." What is walking ? It is a progressive motion from one point of space to another. And what is that holy walking which God's Spirit enables all his people to observe ? It is a continued, progressive motion from sin to holiness ; from all that is evil, to every good word and work. And the self-same " light of God's countenance " in which you, O believer, are enabled to walk, and which at first gave you spiritual feet wherewith to walk, will keep you in

a walking and in a working state, to the end of your warfare.—*Augustus Montague Toplady.*

Verse 15.—There is the dreadful and there is the joyful sound. The dreadful sound was at Mount Sinai. The joyful sound is from Mount Sion. When the people heard the former they were far from beholding the glory of God's face. Moses only was admitted to see his " back-parts;" the people were kept at a distance, and the light of God's glory that they saw was so terrible to them, that they could not abide it. But they that know the " joyful sound," they shall be admitted near, nearer than Moses, so as to see the glory of God's face or brightness of his countenance, and that not only transiently, as Moses saw God's back-parts, but continually. The light of God's glory shall not be terrible to them, but easy and sweet, so that they may dwell in it and walk in it ; and it shall be to them instead of the light of the sun ; for the sun shall no more be their light by day, nor the moon by night, but God shall be their everlasting light. Compare this with Isa. ii. 5, and Rev. xxi. 23, 24 and xxii. 4, 5.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 16.—" *And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*" In these words briefly we may notice, 1. The believer's promotion ; he is " *exalted.*" In the first Adam we were debased unto the lowest hell, the crown having fallen from our heads ; but in Christ, the second Adam, we are again exalted ; yea, exalted as high as heaven, for we " sit together with him in heavenly places," says the apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in heaven in Christ, his glorious Head and representative, Eph. ii. 6. 2. We have the ground of the believer's preferment and exaltation ; it is " *in thy righteousness.*" It is not in any righteousness of his own ; no, this he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but " dung and loss," " filthy rags," dogs' meat : but it is in *thy* righteousness ; that is, the righteousness of God, as the apostle calls it : Rom. i. 17, Phil. iii. 9. The righteousness of God is variously taken in Scripture. Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of his nature : Ps. xi. 7, " The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." Sometimes for his rectoral equity, or distributive justice which he exerciseth in the government of the world, rewarding the good and punishing evil-doers : Ps. xcvii. 2, " Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Sometimes it is put for his veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing his word of promise, or in executing his word of threatening : Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6, " Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds : thy righteousness is like the great mountains." Sometimes it is put for the perfect righteousness which Christ the Son of God, as our Surety and Mediator, brought in, by his obedience to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners : and this as I said, is frequently called the righteousness of God ; and in this sense I understand it here in the text : " *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*"—*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 17.—" *In thy favour our horn shall be exalted.*" A man of lofty bearing is said to carry his horn very high. To him who is proudly interfering with the affairs of another it will be said, " Why show your *kombu*," " horn," " here ? " " See that fellow, what a fine horn he has ; he will make the people run." " Truly, my lord, you have a great horn." " Chinnan has lost his money ; ay, and his hornship too." " Alas ! alas ! I am like the deer, whose horns have fallen off."—*Joseph Roberts' " Oriental Illustrations."*

Verse 19 (*second clause*).—[New Translation] " *A mighty chief have I supplied with help.*" Literally, " I have equalized help," that is, I have laid or given sufficient help, " upon a mighty one." The verb denotes " to equalize," or " make one thing equal or equiponderant to another," as a means to the end, or vice versa.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 19.—" *Chosen* " has here its strict sense, but not without allusion to its specific use as signifying a young warrior.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 20.—" *With my holy oil have I anointed him.*" As the literal David was thrice anointed king, once by Samuel in Jesse's house at Bethlehem ; once at Hebron, after the death of Saul, as king over Judah ; and again at seven years' end, as ruler over all Israel : so also " God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power " in his nativity at Bethlehem ; a second time over his Church at his

resurrection, when the tyrant who sought his life was overcome, and then only over the small "confederation" (which *Hebron* means) of his Jewish disciples; but a third time in his ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Vision of Peace, where he, now crowned as King of Glory, was anointed over all heaven and earth, supreme over all the princes of God. He was thrice anointed in another sense also, once as Prophet, once as Priest, and once as King.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 20—24.—"*I have* FOUND *David*," God exclaims. When sin brought death into the world, and annihilated the hopes of mankind from the first covenant, *I*—the Almighty—in my care for them, *sought out* a Redeemer. I sought for him in the Divine Nature; and I "*found*" him in my Only Son. I endowed him with ample powers, and I covenanted that, in the weakness of his Incarnation, "*my hand*" and "*arm*" should "*strengthen*" him. I declared that Satan "*the enemy*" should "*not exact upon him;*" nor should Judas—"the son of wickedness"—be enabled to "*afflict him.*" The Jews, "*his foes,*" shall fall before him; they shall be "*smitten down*" in their rejection of him; they shall perish from off their land, and be dispersed abroad among the nations. My "*truth*" shall be ever with him; and acting in my "*name*" and power, he shall be exalted and glorified amongst men.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 22.—"*The enemy shall not exact upon him.*" The allusion appears to us to be made to a cruel and unjust creditor, who exacts not only his just debts, but some exaggerated demand, with usurious interest, which was not permitted.—*Williams, quoted by Ed. of Calvin.*

Verse 25.—"*I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.*" That is, he should reign from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates; figuratively expressed by his left hand being extended to the sea, and his right hand to the rivers. A similar expression is used, according to Curtius, by the Scythian ambassadors to Alexander. "If," said they, "the gods had given thee a body as great as thy mind, the whole world would not be able to contain thee. Thou wouldst reach with one hand to the east, and with the other to the west."—*Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 25.—"*I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.*" A certain artist was in the habit of saying that he should represent Alexander in such a manner, that in one hand he should hold a city and from the other pour a river. Christ is represented here as of immense stature, higher than all mountains, with one hand holding the earth, and the other the sea, while from Eastern sea to Western he extends his arms.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 26.—"*He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father.*" When did David call God his Father? It is striking that we do not find anywhere in the Old Testament that the patriarchs or prophets called God their Father. You do not find them addressing him as Father: they did not know him as such. This verse is unintelligible in reference to David; but in regard to the True David it is exactly what he did say, —"My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God." Never until Christ uttered these words, never until he appeared on earth in humanity as the Son of God, did any man or any child of humanity address God in this endearing character. It was after Christ said, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father," that believers were enabled to look up to God and to say, "Abba, Father." Here you see distinctly that this applies to Christ. He was the first to say this: David did not say it. If there were no other proof in the whole Psalm, that one clause would be a demonstration to me that no other man than the Lord Jesus Christ can be here spoken of.—*Capel Molyneux,* 1855.

Verse 26.—"*My Father.*" Christ commenced his labours by referring to his Father, for in Luke ii. he says, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and his last words were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" and through his whole life he most constantly addressed God as his Father. "*He shall cry unto me: Thou art my Father,*" as far as my divinity is concerned. "*My God,*" as far as my humanity is concerned; "*the support of my salvation,*" as regards my mortality.—*Bellarmine.*

Verses 26—28. Christ had a command to be a sufferer, and a body prepared him for that purpose; so he had likewise a command to be an advocate, and a life given him, and a throne prepared for him at the right hand of God to that end. This commission is contained in the words before us; and this after his exaltation,

ver. 24, 25. Yet for the full completing of it, ver. 27, the matter of the plea is there mentioned, "*Thou art the rock of my salvation,*" the foundation, the first cause, of all thy salvation I have wrought in the world, being the first mover of it, and promising the acceptance of me in the performance of what was necessary for it. As he hath authority to cry to God, so he hath an assurance of the prevalency of his cry, in regard of the stability of the covenant of mediation, which shall stand fast with him, or be faithful to him; "*my mercy will I keep for him for evermore,*" ver. 28. The treasures of my mercy are reserved only to be opened and dispensed by him; and the enjoying of his spiritual seed for ever, and the establishing of his own throne thereby, is the promised fruit of this cry, ver. 28.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 27.—"*I will make him my first-born.*" First, because he is first in the order of predestination; for it is through him, as through the head, that we are predestinated, as we read in Ephes. i. Secondly, because he is first in the second generation to life everlasting, whence he is called (Colos. i.) "*the firstborn from the dead*"; and in Rev. i., "*the first-begotten of the dead*"; and, thirdly, because he had the rights of the first-born; for "*he was appointed heir of all things*"; and he was made not only first-born, but also, "*high above the kings of the earth*"; that is, Prince of the kings of the earth, and King of kings.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 27.—"*Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.*" This promise plainly implies superiority of a nature similar to what was enjoyed of old by the eldest son of a family—the birth-right privileges and blessings, which consisted principally in three important particulars: First, A double portion of the parent's earthly possessions, Deut. xxi. 17; Secondly, Rule or authority over the younger branches of the family, 2 Chron. xxi. 3; and, Thirdly, The exercise of the priesthood, because God claimed all the first-born as his, and in their stead he appointed the Levites to do the priest's office, Numb. viii. 14—17. But, whilst it is literally true that Jesus was the first-born son of his virgin mother, and on that account entitled to the customary privileges, the promise in the 89th Psalm gives intimation of something specific and unusual. David was the youngest son of Jesse, the lowest on the list of a numerous family,—the very last individual among them who could have expected exaltation over all others. But, notwithstanding these natural disadvantages, he was God's choice; and by referring to the Scripture history it would be easy to show, in a variety of particulars, how the promise made to David, "*I will make him my first-born,*" was literally and remarkably fulfilled in the son of Jesse. In like manner Jesus, to all human appearance, entering the world as heir-apparent only to the poverty of Mary and her espoused husband, was far removed from every prospect of realizing that combination of royal and sacerdotal prerogative, which nevertheless was made sure to him by the promise of his heavenly Father: "I will make him *my* first-born." The pronoun "*my*" gives great emphasis to the promise, but this word is interpolated; and however truly it conveys an idea of the unspeakable superiority which belongs to Jesus Christ as the result of his relationship with God, still we shall find that, even without this important pronoun, the promise simply of being "*first-born*" has a sublimity and grandeur about it which needs neither ornament nor addition. The great Jehovah, the Maker and the Owner and the Ruler of the universe, hath said respecting his Christ, "I will make him my first-born"; that is, I will constitute him the chief of all creatures, and the depository of all power, and the possessor of all privileges, and the heir of all creation. By way of excellence, *he* is *the* first-born, "higher than all the kings of the earth,"—enjoying priority in point of time, and precedence in point of place.—*David Pitcairn, in "The Anointed Saviour,"* 1846.

Verse 27.—"*My firstborn.*" In the Hebrew idiom all kings were *the sons of God:* but David is the chief of these, God's *first-born.* The Greeks had a similar mode of expressing themselves. Kings were the nurslings of Jupiter.—*Alexander Geddes.*

Verse 28.—"*My mercy will I keep for him for evermore.*" How will he keep his mercy for Christ for evermore? Very simply, I think. Is not Christ the Fountain of all mercy to us? Is it not the mercy of God the Father flowing to us through Christ that we enjoy? Is he not the Depository of it all? God says, then, I will keep it for him; for ever and ever shall it be lodged in Christ, and his people shall enjoy it throughout eternity.—*Capel Molyneux.*

Verses 28—30.—Here is comfort to those who are true branches, and continue to bring forth fruit in the midst of all the trials that befall them, that God will not suffer them to be cut off by their corruption. If anything in them should provoke God

to do it, it must be sin. Now for that, you see how Christ promiseth that God will take order therewith, and will purge it out of them. This is the covenant made with David (as he was a type of Christ, with whom the same covenant is made sure and firm), that "*if his seed forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments*,"—What! presently turn them out of doors, and cut them off, as those he meant to have no more to do with? What! nothing but utter rejection? Is there no means of reclaiming them? Never a rod in the house? Yes—"*then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes*," whip out their stubbornness and sinfulness; "*but my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him*" as I did from Saul, as it is in 1 Chron. xvii. 13.

Let the saints consider this, that they may return when they are fallen, and submit to him and his nature, and suffer him to do what he will with them, and endure cutting, and lancing, and burning, so long as he cuts them not off; endure chastening, and all his dealings else, knowing that all the fruit is but to take away the sin, to make them "partakers of his holiness;" and "if by any means," as Paul speaks of himself (Phil. iii. 11), be the means what it will, it is no matter. And God, if at any time he seems to cut thee off, yet it is but as the incestuous Corinthian was cut off, that 'the flesh might be destroyed, and the spirit saved.'—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 29.—"*His seed*" and "*throne*" are coupled together, as if his *throne* could not stand if his *seed* did fail. If his subjects should perish, what would he be king of? If his members should consume, what would he be head of?—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 30.—"*If his children forsake my law.*" An objection is supposed: 'Suppose this seed who are included in the covenant fall into transgression, how shall the covenant stand fast then?' The covenant, with the seed, shall stand for ever, but the seed must be a holy seed. Then the objector supposes—'Suppose the seed become unholy?' Well, God explains—"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments"—that is, if the seed practically fall away—"If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Mark the case. What is it that God will do? The case supposed is that the seed of Christ forsakes the law and breaks his statutes. I need not say to you that that is realized every day. These are not the ungodly or the unconverted that are spoken of, but God's own children. Do you say, 'Can they be guilty of breaking God's statutes, and forsaking God's law?' We do it every day. There is no single day of our lives that we do not do it. . . .

How astonished many would be, if they knew what the real case was of those perhaps whom they admire, and think highly advanced and exalted in the Divine life, if they were to know the falls, the wretched falls, falls in heart, in word and in practice; if they were to know the deep distress that the children of God, who are far advanced as they suppose in the Divine life, are continually suffering from the effect of such transgression! That is exactly what God says; he comes and contemplates such a case, and he says, "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then"—what? What will God do? Some people say, "Then God will leave them." Those who object to the doctrine of final perseverance say this: "It is true he will preserve the believer from the toils of the Devil and the temptations of the world, but not from the breaking forth of his own natural evil. He may be betrayed by that, and finally lost." God exactly meets that case; he contemplates the worst case—actual transgression. He says, "If a child of mine breaks my law." He does not say anything about the Devil, or the outward temptations of the world; but he says, "If they forsake my law and break my statutes." Let us be instructed by God. He does not say he will leave them and forsake them. Mark what he will do! He says—"I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." That is the provision which God has made in his covenant: and it is delightful to see how God has contemplated our case to the uttermost. There is nothing in our history that God has not met in the covenant with Christ. If you are in union with Christ, and a partaker of the covenant, your case is met in every conceivable emergency. Nothing can befall you which is not contemplated—nothing which God has not provided for. Even if you fall, God has provided for it; but take heed; the provision involves much that will be terrible and desperately

painful to your mind. There is nothing to encourage sin about it; there is nothing to give us license, nothing to lead a man to boast, "I am safe at last." Be it so: but safe how? How will God secure their safety? "I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."—*Capel Molyneux.*

Verse 30.—"*If his children forsake my law.*" If they fall into sins of commission; if they shoot beyond the mark. "*And walk not in my judgments.*" If they fall into sins of omission, and shoot short. Where note that "*every transgression and disobedience* (that is, every commission and omission) *receiveth a just recompence of reward*," Heb. ii. 2.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 30.—"*His children*," בָּנָיו, *his sons, i.e.* Christians, born through the griefs of Christ on the cross, like the pangs of one in travail.—*Geier.*

Verse 30.—A man may forsake the doctrines of the Gospel. He may fall into great errors, great aberrations from Truth; he may forsake the ordinances of the Lord's house, though he sees God's word is clear upon the point. He esteems those things as nothing worth, which the Lord esteems so well, that he has given them to his church as a sacred deposit, which she is to convey down to the latest posterity till time shall be no more. And what is still more—a man may forsake for a time the principles of the precious Gospel of the living God. But I can imagine a state still more solemnly affecting than even this. It is a part of God's wisdom, (and it is for our good that it is so—all God's wisdom is for his people's good)—it is a part of the wisdom of God, that sin should lead to sin; that one neglect shall pave the way to another; that that which is bad shall lead to that which is worse, and that which is worse shall prepare the way for that which is worst. . . . . The longer I live, the more I am brought to this—to know that there is not a sin that ever was committed, but I need the grace of God to keep me from it.—*James Harrington Evans.*

Verses 30—34.—God here says two things; first, that he will chastise them, next, that he will not, on that account, cast them out of his covenant. O wonderful tempering of the kindness and severity of God! in which he finds his own glory, and believers their safety! The heavenly Father loves the blood and the marks of his Christ which he sees upon them, and the remains of faith and godliness which are preserved hidden in the depth of their heart; this is why he will not cast them off. On the other hand, he considers that it accords neither with his wisdom nor his holiness to bestow his grace and salvation upon those who do not repent for having cast off his law and given themselves up to iniquity. In order to harmonize these opposite desires, he takes the rod, and chastises them, to arouse their conscience, and to excite their faith; to restore them, by the repentance which his discipline produces, to such a state, as that he may be able to bestow upon them, without shame, the blessings he has promised to the children of his Son; just as a wise parent, by moderate and judicious correction gradually draws back his son from those irregularities of life into which he has plunged; and thereby preserves his honour, and himself the pleasure of being able to love and please him without misgiving. Or, as a skilful surgeon, by the pain which his knife, or cautery, or bitter potions, cause his patient, saves his life, and wards off death.—*Jean Daillé.*

Verses 30—34.—When our heavenly Father is, as it were, forced to put forth his anger, he then makes use of a father's rod, not an executioner's axe. He will neither break his children's bones, nor his own covenant. He lashes in love, in measure, in pity, and compassion.—*Thomas Lye*, 1621—1684.

Verse 32.—"*Then will I visit their transgression with the rod*," etc. He does not simply say, I will smite them; but, I will visit with the rod. It is one thing merely to smite, it is another thing to smite by visiting. For visitation implies oversight and paternal care. The metaphor is taken from those who undertake to watch over the sick, or train up children, or tend sheep. He does not say, I will visit *them* with the rod; but, I will visit *their transgression* with the rod. We ought to think perpetually, what it is the rod of God visits in us, that we may confess our transgressions, and amend our lives.—*Musculus.*

Verse 33.—"*Nevertheless my lovingkindness*," etc. Except the covenant of grace had this article in it for remission of sin and for fatherly correction, to drive unto repentance, that the penitent person coming to God by faith might have sin forgiven him and lovingkindness shown to him; this covenant should fail us no less than the covenant of works.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 33.—"*I will not utterly take from him.*" Why "from *him*"? Because all

God's lovingkindness to his people is centred in Christ. Does God love you? it is because he loves Christ; you are one with Christ. Your transgressions are your own; they are separate from Christ; but God's love is not your own; it is Christ's: you receive it because you are one with him. How beautifully that is distinguished here—"If they transgress, I will punish *them*; but my lovingkindness will I not take from *him*"—in whom alone they find it; and in union with whom alone they enjoy it.—*Capel Molyneux.*

Verse 33.—"*From him.*" The words, "*Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him,*" are worthy of consideration; for the question being about those who are chastised, it would appear that he should have written, from *them*, and not from *him*. But the prophet has thus worded it, because, being the children and members of his Christ, the favours which God bestows upon us belong to him in some manner; and it seems that the Psalmist wishes to show us hereby, that it is in Jesus Christ, and for love of him alone, that God bestows favours on us. And that which follows, in the 34th verse, agrees herewith,—"*My covenant will I not break*"—for it is properly to Jesus Christ, on account of his admirable obedience, that God the Father has promised to be merciful to our iniquities, and never to leave one of those to perish who are in covenant with him.—*Jean Daillé.*

Verse 33.—"*Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.*" Man's faith may fail him sometimes, but God's faithfulness never fails him: *God will not suffer his faithfulness to fail.* God's operations may have an aspect that way; the devil's temptations, and our unbelieving hearts, may not only make us think so, but persuade us it is so, whereas it cannot be so, for the Lord will not suffer it, he will not make a lie in his truth or faithfulness; so the Hebrew is: he is a God that cannot lie, he is Truth, speaks truth, and not one of his promises can or shall fail; which may afford strong consolation unto all that are under any promise of God.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 34.—"*My covenant will I not break.*" He had said above, "*If the children of David break my statutes;*" and now, alluding to that breach, he declares that he will not requite them as they requite him, "*My covenant will I not break,*" implying, that although his people may not altogether act in a manner corresponding to their vocation, as they ought to do, he will not suffer his covenant to be broken and disannulled on account of their fault, because he will promptly and effectually prevent this in the way of blotting out their sins by a gratuitous pardon.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 35.—"*Once have I sworn by my holiness.*" He lays here his holiness to pledge for the assurance of his promise, as the attribute most dear to him, most valued by him, as though no other could give an assurance parallel to it, in this concern of an everlasting redemption, which is there spoken of. He that swears, swears by a greater than himself. God having no greater than himself, swears by himself; and swearing here by his holiness seems to equal that single to all his other attributes, as if he were more concerned in the honour of it than of all the rest. It is as if he should have said, Since I have not a more excellent perfection to swear by than that of my holiness, I lay this to pawn for your security, and bind myself by that which I will never part with, were it possible for me to be stripped of all the rest. It is a tacit imprecation of himself, If I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be trusted by angels or men. This attribute he makes most of.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 36.—"*His seed shall endure for ever.*" They shall continue for ever in three senses. *First.* In the succession of their race to the end of the world. It will never be cut off.—"The Church is in danger!" *What* Church? "Upon this rock," says he, "I will build *my* Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Yea, his people shall continue to increase in number and excellency. We shall leave the world better than we entered it: and so will our *children;* till Jerusalem shall be established, and be made a praise in the whole earth. *Secondly.* In their religious character to the end of their own life. If left to themselves, we could not be sure of their persevering to the end of a day or an hour. But they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. He upholdeth them with his hand. They shall hold on their way. In all their dangers they shall be more than conquerors. *Thirdly.* In their glorified state, through eternal ages. The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. All other greatness is only for life: it is frequently less durable—at death it *ends.* But *then,*

the Christian's greatness—I will not say, begins; for it began the moment he prayed —but then it continues, increases, and is perfected.—*William Jay.*

Verse 37.—"*It shall be established for ever as the moon.*" This clause Kimchi expounds not only of the perpetuity, but of the quality and condition of David's Kingdom, after this fashion: If his children be good, they shall be like the moon, when full and shining; if bad, like the moon waning and obscure. Nevertheless the kingdom itself shall not ccase, just as the moon does not go out of existence, whilst it is obscure, but lasts perpetually.—*Musculus.*

Verse 37.—"*And as a faithful witness in heaven.*" [New Translation] "*And as the rainbow's faithful sign.*" The rainbow is not expressly mentioned in the original, which speaks only of "the faithful witness in heaven." Some commentators understand the "witness" thus mentioned to be no other than the moon itself. I prefer however the interpretation that fixes it on the rainbow, which God after the deluge appointed as a "sign" or "witness" of his mercy in Christ. Gen. ix. 12—17. Conformably to this appointment, the Jews, when they behold the rainbow, are said to bless God, who remembers his covenant and is faithful to his promise. And the tradition of this its designation to proclaim comfort to mankind was strong among the heathens: for, according to the mythology of the Greeks, the "rainbow" was the daughter of "wonder," "a sign to mortal men," and regarded, upon its appearance, as a messenger of the celestial deities. Thus Homer with remarkable conformity to the Scripture account speaks of the "rainbow," which "Jove hath set in the cloud, a sign to men."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 38.—"*But thou hast cast off,*" etc. The complainings of the saints meanwhile are so exaggerated, that carnal feeling makes itself more apparent in them, than faith . . . . Yet such is the goodness of God, he is not offended with these complaints, provided faith is not altogether extinguished, or succumbs.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 39.—"*Thou hast profaned his crown,*" etc. The *crown* of a king (like that of the high priest, on which was inscribed "holiness to the Lord") (Exod. xxviii. 36) was a sacred thing, and therefore to cast it in the dust was to *profane* it.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 40.—"*Hedges*" and "*strong holds.*" Both of these may refer to the appointments of a vineyard in which the king was the vine. It was usually fenced around with a stone wall, and in it was a small house or tower, wherein a keeper was set to keep away intruders. When the wall, or hedge, was thrown down, every passer by plucked at the fruit, and when the tower was gone the vineyard was left open to the neighbours who could do as they would with the vines. When the church is no longer separated from the world, and her divine Keeper has no more a dwelling-place within her, her plight is wretched indeed.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 43.—"*Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword,*" etc. The arms and military prowess of thy people are no longer of any use to them; THOU art *against* them, and therefore they are fallen. In what a perilous and hopeless situation must that soldier be who, defending his life against his mortal foe, has his sword *broken*, or its *edge turned;* or, in modern warfare, whose *gun misses fire!* The *Gauls*, when invaded by the Romans, had no method of *hardening iron;* at every blow their swords *bended*, so that they were obliged, before they could strike again, to put them under their foot or over their knee, to straighten them; and in most cases, before this could be done, their better armed foe had taken away their life! The edge of their sword was turned, so that they could not stand in battle; and hence the *Gauls* were conquered by the Romans.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 43.—"*Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword,*" that it cannot do execution as it has done; and what is worse, thou hast "turned the edge" of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and hast not made him "to *stand*," as he used to do, "*in the day of battle.*" The spirit of men is what the Father and Former of spirits makes them; nor can we stand with any strength or resolution, farther than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them; but it is sad with the church when those cannot stand that should stand up for it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 45.—"*The days of his youth hast thou shortened.*" Our kings have not

reigned half their days, nor lived out half their lives. The *four* last kings of Judea reigned but a short time, and either died by the sword or in captivity. *Jehoahaz* reigned only *three months*, and was led captive to Egypt, where he *died*. *Jehoiakim* reigned only *eleven years*, and was tributary to the Chaldeans, who *put him to death*, and cast his body into the common sewer. *Jehoiachim* reigned *three months and ten days*, and was led *captive* to Babylon, where he continued in prison to the time of Evil-merodach, who, though he loosed him from prison, never invested him with any power. *Zedekiah*, the last of all, had reigned only *eleven years* when he was taken, *his eyes put out*, was *loaded with chains*, and thus carried to Babylon. Most of these kings died a violent and *premature* death. Thus the "*days of their youth*"—of their power, dignity, and life, "*were shortened*," and they themselves "*covered with shame*." "*Selah*;" so it most incontestably is.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 45.—"*Thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.*" Thou hast wrapped him up in the winding-sheet of shame. Lord, this is true.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 46, 47.—This undoubtedly sounds like the voice of one who knows no hereafter. The Psalmist speaks as if all his hopes were bound by the grave; as if the overthrow of the united kingdom of Judah and Ephraim had bereft him of all his joy; and as if he knew no future kingdom to compensate him with its hopes. But it would be doing cruel injustice to take him thus at his word. What we hear is the language of passion, not of sedate conviction. This is well expressed by John Howe in a famous sermon. "The expostulation (he observes) was somewhat passionate, and did proceed upon the sudden view of this disconsolate case, very abstractly considered, and by itself only; and the Psalmist did not, at that instant, look beyond it to a better and more comfortable scene of things. An eye bleared with present sorrow sees not far, nor comprehends so much at one view, as it would at another time, or as it doth presently when the tear is wiped out and its own beams have cleared it up."

It would be unwarrantable, therefore, to infer from Ethan's expostulation, that the saints who lived under the early kings were strangers to the hope of everlasting life. I am inclined to go further, and to point to this very complaint as affording a presumption that there was in their hearts an irrepressible sentiment of immortality. The bird that frets and wounds itself on the bars of its cage shews thereby that its proper home is the free air. When inveterate sensuality has succeeded in quenching in a man's heart the hope of a life beyond the grave, the dreary void which succeeds utters itself, not in solemn complaints like Ethan's, but in songs of forced mirth—dismal Anacreontic songs: "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die."

> "'Tis time to live if I grow old,
> 'Tis time short pleasures now to take,
> Of little life the best to make,
> And manage wisely the last stake." *
>
> —*William Binnie.*

Verse 46.—"*Shall thy wrath burn like fire?*" an element that hath no mercy.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 47.—"*Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*" If I should demand of any, for what cause especially man came into the world; he would answer with the Psalmist, God did not create man in vain. Did He create man to heap up wealth together? no, for the apostle saith, "we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain, that we can carry nothing out. And, having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." 1 Tim. vi. 6, 7, 8. Did he create him to hawk after power and principality? no, for Nebuchadnezzar lusting after these, lost no less than a kingdom. Did he create him to eat, drink and play? no, for Seneca, though an heathen saith, *major sum*, etc., I am greater, and born to greater things, than that I should be a vile slave of my senses. What then is the proper end of man? That we should live to the praise of the glory of his grace wherewith he hath made us freely accepted in his Beloved. Eph. i. 6.—*William Pulley.*

Verse 47.—"*Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*" If we think that God hath made man "*in vain*," because so many have short lives, and long afflictions in this world, it is true that God "*hath made*" them so; but it is not true, that therefore they are "made in vain." For those whose days are few and full of trouble, yet may

* Anacreon's *Age*, as translated by Cowley.

glorify God, and do some good, may keep their communion with God, and go to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. If we think that God has made men in vain, because the most of men neither serve him nor enjoy him, it is true, that as to themselves, they were made in vain, better for them they had not been born, than not be " born again " ; but it was not owing to God, that they were made in vain, it was owing to themselves ; nor are they made in vain as to him ; for he has " made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil," and those whom he is not glorified by he will be glorified upon.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 47.—" *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain ?* " When I add to the consideration of my short time, that of dying mankind, and behold a dark and deadly shade universally overspreading the world, the whole species of human creatures vanishing, quitting the stage round about me, and disappearing almost as soon as they show themselves ; have I not a fair and plausible ground for that (seemingly rude) challenge ? Why is there so unaccountable a phenomenon ? such a creature made to no purpose ; the noblest part of this inferior creation brought forth into being without any imaginable design ? I know not how to untie the knot, upon this only view of the case, or avoid the absurdity. It is hard sure to design the supposal, (or what it may yet seem hard to suppose), " *that all men were made in vain.*"—*John Howe.*

Verse 47.—" *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain ?* " Two thoughts crush us—*Man was made to mourn, and man was made in vain.* Yes, this thought is painfully pressed upon us,—man is " *made in vain !* " In how many particulars, especially when we survey that large range of characters to which we may give the denomination of *wasted lives ;* there to behold peerless *genius* frittering itself away upon unworthy attainments, upon worthless performances ; *imagination* that might adorn truth, if that *were* possible ; *wit*, that might select and discriminate the true from the false ; and *eloquence* that might enforce the true ;—where do we find these ? Unsatisfactory and miserable world, may we well exclaim, where nothing is real, and nothing is realised ; when I consider how our lives are passed in the struggle for existence ; when I consider the worry of life, where it is not a woe—the woe, where it is not a worry ; when I consider how the millions pass their time in a mere toil for sensual objects, and that those to whom the sad contradiction of life never comes, are the most wretched of all, did they but know it ; when I consider the millions of distorted existences ; and the many millions !—the greater number of the world by far—who wander Christless, loveless, hopeless, over the broad highway of it ; when I consider life in many of the awakened as a restless dream, as children beating the curtain and crying in the night ; when I consider how many questions recur for ever to us ; and will not be silenced, and cannot be answered ; when I consider the vanity of the philosopher's inquisitiveness, and the end of Royalty in the tomb ; when I look round on the region of my own joys, and know how short their lease is, and that their very ineffableness is a blight upon them ; when I consider how little the best can do, and that none can do anything well ; and, finally, when I consider the immeasurable immensity of thought within, unfulfilled, and the goading restlessness, I can almost exclaim with our unhappy poet [Byron]—

> " Count all the joys thine hours have seen,
> Count all thy days from anguish free,
> And know, whatever thou hast been,
> 'Twere something better not to be."

—*E. Paxton Hood, in " Dark Sayings on a Harp,"* 1865.

Verses 47, 48.—In these verses, the fundamental condition of Israel's blessedness is found to be an acknowledgment of the total unprofitableness of the flesh. Resurrection is the basis upon which the sure mercies of David rest availably for faith (Acts xiii. 34). This is rather implied than directly stated in the present Psalm.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 48.—" *What man.*" *Mi gheber*, says the original ; it is not *Ishe*, which is the first name of man in the scriptures, and signifies nothing but a *sound ;* a voice, a word, a musical air which dies, and evaporates ; what wonder if man, that is but *Ishe*, a *sound*, should die too ? It is not Adam, which is another name of man, and signifies nothing but *red earth* ; let it be earth red with blood, (with that murder which we have done upon ourselves,) let it be earth red with blushing, (so the word

is used in the original,) with a conscience of our own infirmity, what wonder if man, that is but Adam, guilty of this self-murder in himself, guilty of this in-born frailty in himself, die too? It is not *Enos*, which is also a third name of man, and signifies nothing but a *wretched and miserable creature;* what wonder that man, that is but earth, that is a burden to his neighbours, to his friends, to his kindred, to himself, to whom all others, and to whom myself desires death, what wonder if he die? But this question is framed upon more of these names; not *Ishe*, not Adam, not Enos; but it is *Mi gheber, Quis vir;* which is the word always signifying a man accomplished in all excellences, a man accompanied with all advantages; fame, and a good opinion justly conceived, keeps him from being *Ishe*, a mere sound, standing only upon popular acclamation; innocency and integrity keeps him from being Adam, red earth, from bleeding, or blushing at anything he hath done; that holy and religious art of arts, which St. Paul professed. *That he knew how to want, and how to abound*, keeps him from being Enos, miserable or wretched in any fortune; he is *gheber*, a great man, and a good man, a happy man, and a holy man, and yet *Mi gheber, Quis homo*, this man must see death.—*John Donne.*

Verse 48.—This Psalm is one of those twelve that are marked in the forehead with *Maschil;* that is, *a Psalm giving instruction.* It consisteth of as many verses as the year doth of weeks, and hath, like the year, its summer and winter. The summer part is the former; wherein, the church having reaped a most rich crop (the best blessings of heaven and earth) the Psalmist breaketh forth into the praises of their gracious Benefactor, "*I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*": so he beginneth, and so he goeth on a great way. Who now would expect anything but mercies, and singing, and summer all the way? But summer ceaseth, and winter commenceth, at verse 38: "*But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.*" Mercies and singing are now turned into troubles and mourning. But nothing shall you hear but bitter querimonies and expostulations till you come to the last verse. There the good man's come to himself again. Though God were angry with his people, he cannot part with God in discontent. Though God had laden them with crosses, he lifts up his head, and presents God with blessing; "*Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.*" He blesseth him as well for winter as for summer, for troubles as for mercies. And thus the last verse of the Psalm having as much affinity with the first in matter, as the last day of the year hath with the first in season; if we circle the Psalm, and bring both ends together, we find a fit resemblance between the year and it.

The text is one of the Psalmist's winter-drops; a black line from that pen, which erstwhile was so filled with joy, and wrote nothing but rubrics. He complaineth in the next precedent verse, of the brevity of his own life (it was like a winter's day, very short); in this, of the instability of man's life; as though he had said, I am not the only mortal. Other men's lives, though haply clothed with more comforts than mine, are altogether as mortal as mine; for his interrogations are equivalent to strong negations. As to *see sleep* is to sleep; so to *see* or *taste death* is to die. There is no surviving such a sight. Death says, as God once to Moses, "There shall no man *see* me *and live.*" Exod. xxxiii. 20.—*Thomas Du-gard, in a Funeral Sermon*, 1648.

Verse 48.—Death spares no *rank*, no *condition* of men. Kings as well as subjects, princes as well as the meanest rustics are liable to this fatal stroke. The lofty cedars and low shrubs; palaces and cottages are alike here. Indeed, we read that Julius Cæsar bid the master of the ship wherein he was sailing, take courage notwithstanding the boisterous tempest, because he had Cæsar and his fortunes embarked in his vessel, as much as to say, the element on which they then were could not prove fatal to an emperor, to so great a one as he was. Our William surnamed Rufus said, he never heard of a king that was drowned. And Charles the fifth, at the Battle of Tunis, being advised to retire when the great ordnance began to play, told them that it was never known that an emperor was slain with great shot, and so rushed into the battle. But this we are sure of, it was never known or heard that any king or crowned head escaped the blow of death at last. The sceptre cannot keep off 'the arrows that fly by day, and the sickness which wastes at noon-day;' it is no screen, no guard against the shafts of death. We have heard of great tyrants and usurpers who vaunted that they had the power of life and death, and as absolutely disposed of men as Domitian did of flies; but we have heard likewise that in a short time (and generally the shorter the more furious they have been) their sceptres are fallen out of their hands; their crowns are toppled off their heads, and they

are themselves snatched away by the King of Terrors. Or, if we speak of those royal personages that are mild and gentle, and like Vespasian are the darlings and delight of the people, yet these no less than others have their fatal hour, and their regal honour and majesty are laid in the dust. *The King doth not die,* may be a Common-law maxim, but it is a falsehood according to the laws of God and Nature, and the established constitution of heaven. For God himself who hath said, " *Ye are gods,*" hath also added, " *Ye shall die like men.*" In the *Escurial* the palace of the Kings of Spain, is their *cemetery* too ; there their royal ashes lie. So in the place where the kings and queens of England are crowned, their predecessors are entombed : to tell them, as it were, that their crowns exempt them not from the grave, and that there is no greatness and splendour that can guard them from the arrest of death. He regards the rich and wealthy no more than the poor and necessitous : he snatches persons out of their mansion-houses and hereditary seats, as well as out of almshouses and hospitals. His dominion is over masters as well as servants, parents as well as children, superiors as well as inferiors.—*John Edwards.*

Verse 48.—

" The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th' inevitable hour—
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

" Can storied urn, or animated bust,
Back to its mansions call the fleeting breath ?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death ? "

—*Thomas Gray,* 1716—1771.

Verse 50.—" *How I do bear in my bosom the reproach,*" etc. I take the reproaches of thy servants and thine anointed, (1) as if they reproached me in mine own particular; or, (2) in that they lie so heavy upon my heart ; or, (3) in that I am resolved quietly to endure them, and to swallow them down in silence, as not being indeed able to shake them off ; because in the eye of reason our condition is at present so contrary to what we waited for ; or, (4) in that their reproaches came not to his ears by hearsay only, but were openly to his face cast as it were into his bosom.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 50.—" *I do bear in my bosom the reproach,*" etc. The reproach of religion and of the godly doth lie near, and should lie near, the heart of every lively member of the church.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 51.—" *They have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.*" This phrase is obscure in diction, and therefore variously interpreted : 1. Some by the *footsteps of Christ,* judge that his advent in the flesh is meant : others refer the words to David, and take the meaning to be, imitation of him. The first exposition yields this sense : Be mindful, O Lord, of the reproach of thy enemies, wherewith they insult our expectation of thy Anointed, and scoff at his advent as if it would never come. The second interpretation is this : Recollect, O Lord, what contempt thy enemies heap upon us on account of thy servant David, because we fondly cherish his memory and his example, and nourish the hope of thy Covenant with him, clinging tenaciously thereto. . . . Thirdly, this clause may be so interpreted that by עֲקֵבוֹת, that is, the heel, we may understand the extremities of the Kingdom of Christ, of David. Thus we may imagine the enemies of God threw this in the teeth of the people of Israel, that they had already come to the end and extremity of the Kingdom of David.—*Musculus.*

Verse 51 (*second clause*).—The *Chaldee* has : " They have scoffed at the tardiness of Thy Messiah's footsteps." So *Kimchi :* " He delays so long, they say He will never come." Compare 2 Peter iii. 4, 9. The Arabic *âqaba* is used in the sense of " delaying."—*William Kay.*

Verse 51.—" *The footsteps,*" or *foot soles,* that is, the ways, life, actions, and sufferings, Pss. lvi. 6 and xlix. 5. This referred to Christ, respecteth the oracle, Gen. iii. 15, that the Serpent should bruise the foot-sole of the woman's seed ; referred to Christians which follow his footsteps, in suffering and dying with him, that we may be glorified with him (1 Pet. ii. 21 ; Rom. viii. 17) ; it noteth the scandal of the Cross of Christ, " to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor. i.

23; 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14.) The Chaldee understands it of the slackness of the footsteps. —*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 52.—"*Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.*" Victory begins to shine in the phrase, *Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen, and Amen.* Some think that these words are not the words of the Psalmist, because they are of opinion that they do not agree with the preceding, but were written by another, or added by the Collector of the Psalms as a concluding doxology; or if the Psalmist wrote them, he did so merely in finishing his prayer. But it is a matter of the greatest moment; for it indicates the victory of faith, since he observes that after that grief, the reproach of the heel is gloriously removed that the Messiah may remain a victor for ever, having bruised the serpent's head, and taken away from him in perpetuity all his power of hurting. That this should certainly take place, he adds the seal of faith again and again: "*Amen, and Amen.*"—*James Alting*, 1618—1679.

Verse 52.—This doxology belongs alike to all the Psalms of the Third Book, and ought not to be treated as if it were merely the last verse of the Psalm to which it adjoins. It ought to be set forth in such a shape as would enable and invite God's people to sing it as a separate formula of praise, or in connection with any other Psalm. —*William Binnie.*

Verse 52.—As to the words *Amen, and Amen*, I readily grant that they are here employed to mark the end of the third book of the Psalms.—*John Calvin.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Mercies celebrated. 1. When?—"for ever." 2. By whom?—by those who are the subjects of them. 3. Therefore they must live for ever to celebrate them. II. Faithfulness declared. 1. To our own generation. 2. To succeeding generations by its influence upon others.

Verse 2.—I. The Testimony. 1. To the constancy of Mercy. (1) It builds up its trophies every moment. (2) It preserves them for ever. 2. To the constancy of Faithfulness. It remains as the ordinances of heaven. II. Its Confirmation. "I have said," etc., said it, 1. Upon the ground of Scripture. 2. of experience. 3. of reason. 4. of observation of others.

Verses 3, 4. I. The Covenant made. 1. With whom?—with David and in him with David's Lord and Son. The true David—the chosen one—the servant of the Father in redemption. 2. For what?—(1) for his seed. He should have a seed and that seed should be established. (2) for himself, "his throne," etc. II. The Covenant confirmed. 1. By decree. "I have made," etc. 2. By promise. "I will establish." 3. By oath. "I have sworn."

Verse 6.—We have a comparison between God and the most excellent in heaven and earth—challenge both worlds. 1. The true God, sovereign of heaven and earth is incomparably great in his BEING and EXISTENCE; (1) because his being is of himself *eternal*; (2) because he is a *perfect* being; (3) because he is *independent*; (4) because he is unchangeable. 2. God is incomparably great in his ATTRIBUTES and PERFECTIONS. (1) In his *holiness*; (2) in his *wisdom* and *knowledge*; (3) in his *power*; (4) in his *justice*; (5) in his patience; (6) in his *love* and *goodness*. 3. God is incomparably great in his WORKS—creation; providence; redemption, and human salvation.—*Theophilus Jones*, 1830.

Verse 6.—The Incomparableness of God, in his Being, Attributes, Works, and Word.—*Swinnock*. [Nichol's Edition of Swinnock's Works, Vol. IV., pp. 373–508.]

Verses 6, 7.—I. In creation God is far above other beings. Verse 6. II. In Redemption he is far above himself in creation. Verse 7.

Verses 9, 10.—God's present rule in the midst of confusion, and rebellion; and his ultimate overthrow of all adverse forces.

Verse 11.—I. God's possession of heaven, the model of his possession of earth. II. God's possession of earth most certain, and its manifestation in the future most sure. III. The course of action suggested to his people by the two facts.

Verse 12.—The joy of creation in its Creator.

Verse 14.—I. The Equity of the divine government—" justice," etc. No creature can eventually be unjustly dealt with under his dominion, and his kingdom ruleth over all. II. The Sovereignty of the divine government. Truth before mercy. Mercy founded upon truth. " Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham." The covenant made in mercy to Abraham is fulfilled in truth to Jacob.

Verse 15.—I. The gospel is a joyful sound. Good tidings, etc. II. It is a joyful sound to those who know it, hear it, believe it, love it, obey it. III. They to whom it is a joyful sound are blessed. " They shall walk," etc.

Verse 15.—1. There is a theoretical knowledge of the gospel. 2. An experimental knowledge, and, 3. A practical knowledge.—*W. Dransfield*, 1859.

Verse 16.—I. Exultation. 1. " In thy name," etc., as rich in mercy as the God of salvation—of all grace—of all consolation. 2. At what season—" all the day," morning, noon, and night. II. Exaltation. " In thy righteousness," etc. 1. How not exalted. Not in their own righteousness. 2. How exalted. " In *thy*," etc. Procured for them—by a divine person (*thy*)—imputed to them. Ours, though thine. The righteousness of God as God could not exalt us, but his righteousness as God-man can. Exalted above hell, above earth, above Paradise, above angels. Exalted to friends of God—children of God—one with God, to heaven.

Verse 16 (*second clause*).—Consider, I. What the believer is exalted *above* or *from*, by God's righteousness. I. It exalts him above the law. 2. Above the world. 3. Above the power and malice of Satan. 4. Above death. 5. Above all accusations (Rom. viii. 33, 34). II. *To* what happiness or dignity the believer is exalted by virtue of that righteousness. 1. To a state of peace and reconciliation with God. 2. To sonship. 3. To fellowship and familiarity with God, and access to him. 4. And finally, to a state of endless glory.—*E. Erskine.*

Verse 17.—I. The blessedness of the righteous. 1. Their internal glory. Reliance upon divine strength. 2. Their internal honour. " In thy favour," etc. II. The participation in that blessedness. The *their* of the people of God becomes *our*. Their strength our horn. Happy they, who, with respect to all the privileges of the saints, can thus turn *their* into *our*.

Verse 17.—1. Consider our natural weakness. 2. Consider our strength in God. 3. Give God the glory of it.

Verse 18.—I. Jehovah—his power, self-existence, and majesty—our defence. II. The Holy One of Israel—his character, covenant character, and unity—our government.

Verse 19.—I. The work required. " Help." 1. By whom? By God himself. 2. For what? To reconcile God to man, and man to God. II. The person selected for this work. 1. Human. " Chosen out of the people." 2. Divine. " Thy Holy One." III. His qualifications for the work. 1. His own ability for the office. " One that is mighty." 2. His appointment to it by God. " I have laid," etc. " I have chosen," etc.

Verse 19 (*last clause*).—Election, extraction, exaltation.

Verses 20, 21.—I. The Messiah would be of the seed of David. The true David. II. He would be a servant of the Father. " My servant." III. He would be consecrated to his office by God. " With my holy oil," etc. IV. He would perfectly fulfil it. " With whom my hand," etc. V. He would be sustained in it by the Father. " Mine arm," etc.

Verses 22, 23.—I. A prophecy of the conflict of the Messiah with Satan. Satan could not exact any debt or homage from him. II. Of his refutation of his enemies. " I will beat down," etc. The Scribes and Pharisees were beaten down before his face. III. Of the destruction of their city and nation. " And plague them," etc.

Verse 26.—Our Lord's filial spirit, and how it was displayed.

Verse 29.—I. The subjects of Messiah's reign. " His seed." 1. For union—*his* seed. 2. For resemblance. 3. For multitude. II. The duration of his reign. 1. They for ever one with him. 2. He for ever on the throne.

Verses 30—34.—I. The persons referred to. " His children." " Ye are all the children," etc. II. The supposition concerning them. " If his children forsake," etc. 1. They may possibly—may fall, though not fall away. 2. They will probably, because they are far from being perfect. 3. They have actually: as David himself and others. III. The threatening founded upon that supposition. 1. Specified—" the rod—stripes." They shall smart for it sooner or later. 2. Certified. " Then will I." IV. The qualification of the threatening. " Nevertheless," etc. 1. The

nevertheless characterized. Loving-kindness not removed, etc. 2. Emphasized. The rod may seem to be in anger, nevertheless, etc.

There is, I. An if. II. A then. III. A nevertheless.

Verse 39.—I. Providences may often seem to be at variance with promises. II. Promises are never at variance with providences. It is the covenant of thy servant and his crown still.

Verse 39.—How the throne of King Jesus may be profaned.

Verse 40.—I. What God had done. "Broken down," etc. II. What he had not done. Not taken away sorrow for his departure and desire for his return.

Verse 43.—Cases in which the sword of the gospel appears to have its edge turned.

Verses 44, 45.—I. A prophecy that the Messiah would be meek and lowly. "Made his glory to cease." II. Would become a servant to the Father. "Cast his throne down," etc. III. Would be cut off in the midst of his days. "The days of his youth," etc. IV. That he would die an ignominious death. "Hast covered him," etc.

Verse 45.—The excellence of the first days of Christianity, and in what respect their glory has departed from us.

Verse 46.—The hand of God is to be acknowledged. I. In the nature of affliction. "Wilt thou hide thyself," etc. II. In the duration of affliction. "How long, Lord?" III. In the severity of affliction. Wrath burning like fire. IV. In the issue of affliction. How long? for ever? In all these respects the words are applicable both to Christ and to his people.

Verse 46.—"*Remember.*" The prayer of the dying thief, the troubled believer, the persecuted Christian.

Verse 47.—I. An appeal to divine goodness. "Remember," etc. Let not my life be all trouble and sorrow. II. To divine wisdom. "Wherefore," etc. Was man made only to be miserable? Will not man have been made in vain if his life be but short, and that short life be nothing but sorrow?

Verse 52.—I. The voice. "Blessed," etc. In himself in all his works and ways—in his judgments as well as in his mercies—as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—"for evermore." II. The echo, "Amen and amen." Amen, says the church on earth—says the church in heaven—say the angels of God—says the whole holy and happy universe—says eternity past and eternity to come.

PSALM XC.

TITLE.—A Prayer of Moses the man of God. *Many attempts have been made to prove that Moses did not write this Psalm, but we remain unmoved in the conviction that he did so. The condition of Israel in the wilderness is so pre-eminently illustrative of each verse, and the turns, expressions, and words are so similar to many in the Pentateuch, that the difficulties suggested are, to our mind, light as air in comparison with the internal evidence in favour of its Mosaic origin. Moses was mighty in word as well as deed, and this Psalm we believe to be one of his weighty utterances, worthy to stand side by side with his glorious oration recorded in Deuteronomy. Moses was peculiarly a man of God and God's man; chosen of God, inspired of God, honoured of God, and faithful to God in all his house, he well deserved the name which is here given him. The Psalm is called a prayer, for the closing petitions enter into its essence, and the preceding verses are a meditation preparatory to the supplication. Men of God are sure to be men of prayer. This was not the only prayer of Moses, indeed it is but a specimen of the manner in which the seer of Horeb was wont to commune with heaven, and intercede for the good of Israel. This is the oldest of the Psalms, and stands between two books of Psalms as a composition unique in its grandeur, and alone in its sublime antiquity. Many generations of mourners have listened to this Psalm when standing around the open grave, and have been consoled thereby, even when they have not perceived its special application to Israel in the wilderness and have failed to remember the far higher ground upon which believers now stand.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.—*Moses sings of the frailty of man, and the shortness of life, contrasting therewith the eternity of God, and founding thereon earnest appeals for compassion. The only division which will be useful separates the contemplation* 1—11 *from the prayer* 12—17*: there is indeed no need to make even this break, for the unity is well preserved throughout.*

EXPOSITION.

LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God.

3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

4 For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.

5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are *as* a sleep: in the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up.

6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told.*

10 The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath.

1. *"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."* We must consider the whole Psalm as written for the tribes in the desert, and then we shall see

the primary meaning of each verse. Moses, in effect, says—wanderers though we be in the howling wilderness, yet we find a home in thee, even as our forefathers did when they came out of Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt in tents among the Canaanites. To the saints the Lord Jehovah, the self-existent God, stands instead of mansion and rooftree; he shelters, comforts, protects, preserves, and cherishes all his own. Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the saints dwell in their God, and have always done so in all ages. Not in the tabernacle or the temple do we dwell, but in God himself; and this we have always done since there was a church in the world. We have not shifted our abode. King's palaces have vanished beneath the crumbling hand of time—they have been burned with fire and buried beneath mountains of ruins, but the imperial race of heaven has never lost its regal habitation. Go to the Palatine and see how the Cæsars are forgotten of the halls which echoed to their despotic mandates, and resounded with the plaudits of the nations over which they ruled, and then look upward and see in the ever-living Jehovah the divine home of the faithful, untouched by so much as the finger of decay. Where dwelt our fathers, a hundred generations since, there dwell we still. It is of New Testament saints that the Holy Ghost has said, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in God and God in him!" It was a divine mouth which said, "Abide in me," and then added, "he that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit." It is most sweet to speak with the Lord as Moses did, saying, "Lord, thou art our dwelling place," and it is wise to draw from the Lord's eternal condescensions reasons for expecting present and future mercies, as the Psalmist did in the next Psalm wherein he describes the safety of those who dwell in God.

2. "*Before the mountains were brought forth.*" Before those elder giants had struggled forth from nature's womb, as her dread firstborn, the Lord was glorious and self-sufficient. Mountains to him, though hoar with the snows of ages, are but new-born babes, young things whose birth was but yesterday, mere novelties of an hour. "*Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world.*" Here too the allusion is to a birth. Earth was born but the other day, and her solid land was delivered from the flood but a short while ago. "*Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,*" or, "thou art, O God." God was, when nothing else was. He was God when the earth was not a world but a chaos, when mountains were not upheaved, and the generation of the heavens and the earth had not commenced. In this Eternal One there is a safe abode for the successive generations of men. If God himself were of yesterday, he would not be a suitable refuge for mortal men; if he could change and cease to be God he would be but an uncertain dwelling-place for his people. The eternal existence of God is here mentioned to set forth, by contrast, the brevity of human life.

3. "*Thou turnest man to destruction,*" or "to dust." Man's body is resolved into its elements, and is as though it had been crushed and ground to powder. "*And sayest, Return, ye children of men,*" *i.e.*, return even to the dust out of which ye were taken. The frailty of man is thus forcibly set forth; God creates him out of the dust, and back to dust he goes at the word of his Creator. God resolves and man dissolves. A word created and a word destroys. Observe how the action of God is recognised; man is not said to die because of the decree of fate, or the action of inevitable law, but the Lord is made the agent of all, his hand turns and his voice speaks; without these we should not die, no power on earth or hell could kill us.

> "An angel's arm can't save me from the grave,
> Myriads of angels can't confine me there."

4. "*For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.*" A thousand years! This is a long stretch of time. How much may be crowded into it,—the rise and fall of empires, the glory and obliteration of dynasties, the beginning and the end of elaborate systems of human philosophy, and countless events, all important to household and individual, which elude the pens of historians. Yet this period, which might even be called the limit of modern history, and is in human language almost identical with an indefinite length of time, is to the Lord as nothing, even as time already gone. A moment yet to come is longer than "yesterday when it is past," for that no longer exists at all, yet such is a chiliad to the Eternal. In comparison with eternity, the most lengthened reaches of time are mere points, there is, in fact, no possible comparison between them. "*And as a watch in the night,*" a time which is no sooner come than gone. There is scarce time enough in a thousand years for the angels to change watches; when their millennium of service

is almost over it seems as though the watch were newly set. We are dreaming through the long night of time, but God is ever keeping watch, and a thousand years are as nothing to him. A host of days and nights must be combined to make up a thousand years to us, but to God, that space of time does not make up a whole night, but only a brief portion of it. If a thousand years be to God as a single night-watch, what must be the life-time of the Eternal!

5. "*Thou carriest them away as with a flood.*" As when a torrent rushes down the river-bed and bears all before it, so does the Lord bear away by death the succeeding generations of men. As the hurricane sweeps the clouds from the sky, so time removes the children of men. "*They are as a sleep.*" Before God men must appear as unreal as the dreams of the night, the phantoms of sleep. Not only are our plans and devices like a sleep, but we ourselves are such. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." "*In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.*" As grass is green in the morning and hay at night, so men are changed from health to corruption in a few hours. We are not cedars, or oaks, but only poor grass, which is vigorous in the spring, but lasts not a summer through. What is there upon earth more frail than we!

6. "*In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up.*" Blooming with abounding beauty till the meadows are all besprent with gems, the grass has a golden hour, even as man in his youth has a heyday of flowery glory. "*In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*" The scythe ends the blossoming of the field-flowers, and the dews at night weep their fall. Here is the history of the grass—sown, grown, blown, mown, gone; and the history of man is not much more. Natural decay would put an end both to us and the grass in due time; few, however, are left to experience the full result of age, for death comes with his scythe, and removes our life in the midst of its verdure. How great a change in how short a time! The morning saw the blooming, and the evening sees the withering.

7. This mortality is not accidental, neither was it inevitable in the original of our nature, but sin has provoked the Lord to anger, and therefore thus we die. "*For we are consumed by thine anger.*" This is the scythe which mows and the scorching heat which withers. This was specially the case in reference to the people in the wilderness, whose lives were cut short by justice on account of their waywardness; they failed, not by a natural decline, but through the blast of the well-deserved judgments of God. It must have been a very mournful sight to Moses to see the whole nation melt away during the forty years of their pilgrimage, till none remained of all that came out of Egypt. As God's favour is life, so his anger is death; as well might grass grow in an oven as men flourish when the Lord is wroth with them. "*And by thy wrath are we troubled,*" or terror-stricken. A sense of divine anger confounded them, so that they lived as men who knew that they were doomed. This is true of us in a measure, but not altogether, for now that immortality and life are brought to light by the gospel, death has changed its aspect, and, to believers in Jesus, it is no more a judicial execution. Anger and wrath are the sting of death, and in these believers have no share; love and mercy now conduct us to glory by the way of the tomb. It is not seemly to read these words at a Christian's funeral without words of explanation, and a distinct endeavour to show how little they belong to believers in Jesus, and how far we are privileged beyond those with whom he was not well pleased, "whose carcases fell in the wilderness." To apply an ode, written by the leader of the legal dispensation under circumstances of peculiar judgment, in reference to a people under penal censure, to those who fall asleep in Jesus, seems to be the height of blundering. We may learn much from it, but we ought not to misapply it by taking to ourselves, as the beloved of the Lord, that which was chiefly true of those to whom God had sworn in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. When, however, a soul is under conviction of sin, the language of this Psalm is highly appropriate to his case, and will naturally suggest itself to the distracted mind. No fire consumes like God's anger, and no anguish so troubles the heart as his wrath. Blessed be that dear substitute,

> "Who bore that we might never bear
> His Father's righteous ire."

8. "*Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.*" Hence these tears! Sin seen by God must work death; it is only by the covering blood of atonement that life comes to any of us. When God was overthrowing the tribes in the wilderness he had their iniquities before him, and therefore dealt with them in severity. He could

not have their iniquities before him and not smite them. "*Our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*" There are no secrets before God; he unearths man's hidden things, and exposes them to the light. There can be no more powerful luminary than the face of God, yet, in that strong light, the Lord set the hidden sins of Israel. Sunlight can never be compared with the light of him who made the sun, of whom it is written, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If by his countenance is here meant his love and favour, it is not possible for the heinousness of sin to be more clearly manifested than when it is seen to involve ingratitude to one so infinitely good and kind. Rebellion in the light of justice is black, but in the light of love it is devilish. How can we grieve so good a God? The children of Israel had been brought out of Egypt with a high hand, fed in the wilderness with a liberal hand, and guided with a tender hand, and their sins were peculiarly atrocious. We, too, having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and saved by abounding grace, will be verily guilty if we forsake the Lord. What manner of persons ought we to be? How ought we to pray for cleansing from secret faults?

It is to us a wellspring of delights to remember that our sins, as believers, are now cast behind the Lord's back, and shall never be brought to light again: therefore we live, because, the guilt being removed, the death-penalty is removed also.

9. "*For all our days are passed away in thy wrath.*" Justice shortened the days of rebellious Israel; each halting place became a graveyard; they marked their march by the tombs they left behind them. Because of the penal sentence their days were dried up, and their lives wasted away. "*We spend our years as a tale that is told.*" Yea, not their days only, but their *years* flew by them like a thought, swift as a meditation, rapid and idle as a gossip's story. Sin had cast a shadow over all things, and made the lives of the dying wanderers to be both vain and brief. The first sentence is not intended for believers to quote, as though it applied to themselves, for our days are all passed amid the lovingkindness of the Lord, even as David says in the twenty-third Psalm, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Neither is the life of the gracious man unsubstantial as a story-teller's tale; he lives in Jesus, he has the divine Spirit within him, and to him "life is real, life is earnest"—the simile only holds good if we consider that a holy life is rich in interest, full of wonders, chequered with many changes, yet as easily ordered by Providence as the improvisatore arranges the details of the story with which he beguiles the hour. Our lives are illustrations of heavenly goodness, parables of divine wisdom, poems of sacred thought, and records of infinite love; happy are we whose lives are such tales.

10. "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten.*" Moses himself lived longer than this, but his was the exception not the rule: in his day life had come to be very much the same in duration as it is with us. This is brevity itself compared with the men of the elder time, it is nothing when contrasted with eternity. Yet is life long enough for virtue and piety, and all too long for vice and blasphemy. Moses here in the original writes in a disconnected manner, as if he would set forth the utter insignificance of man's hurried existence. His words may be rendered, "The days of our years! In them seventy years:" as much as to say, "The days of our years? What about them? Are they worth mentioning? The account is utterly insignificant, their full tale is but seventy." "*And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow.*" The unusual strength which overleaps the bound of threescore and ten only lands the aged man in a region where life is a weariness and a woe. The strength of old age, its very prime and pride, are but labour and sorrow; what must its weakness be? What panting for breath! What toiling to move! What a failing of the senses! What a crushing sense of weakness! The evil days are come and the years wherein a man cries, "I have no pleasure in them." The grasshopper has become a burden and desire faileth. Such is old age. Yet mellowed by hallowed experience, and solaced by immortal hopes, the latter days of aged Christians are not so much to be pitied as envied. The sun is setting and the heat of the day is over, but sweet is the calm and cool of the eventide; and the fair day melts away, not into a dark and dreary night, but into a glorious, unclouded, eternal day. The mortal fades to make room for the immortal; the old man falls asleep to wake up in the region of perennial youth. "*For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*" The cable is broken and the vessel sails upon the sea of eternity; the chain is snapped and the eagle mounts to its native air above the clouds. Moses mourned for men as he thus sung; and well he might, as all his comrades fell at his side. His words are more nearly rendered,

"He drives us fast and we fly away;" as the quails were blown along by the strong west wind, so are men hurried before the tempests of death. To us, however, as believers, the winds are favourable; they bear us as the gales bear the swallows away from the wintry realms, to lands

> "Where everlasting spring abides
> And never withering flowers."

Who wishes it to be otherwise? Wherefore should we linger here? What has this poor world to offer us that we should tarry on its shores? Away, away! This is not our rest. Heavenward, Ho! Let the Lord's winds drive fast if so he ordains, for they waft us the more swiftly to himself, and our own dear country.

11. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" Moses saw men dying all around him: he lived among funerals, and was overwhelmed at the terrible results of the divine displeasure. He felt that none could measure the might of the Lord's wrath. "*Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*" Good men dread that wrath beyond conception, but they never ascribe too much terror to it: bad men are dreadfully convulsed when they awake to a sense of it, but their horror is not greater than it had need be, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. Holy Scripture when it depicts God's wrath against sin never uses an hyperbole: it would be impossible to exaggerate it. Whatever feelings of pious awe and holy trembling may move the tender heart, it is never too much moved; apart from other considerations the great truth of the divine anger, when most powerfully felt, never impresses the mind with a solemnity in excess of the legitimate result of such a contemplation. What the power of God's anger is in hell, and what it would be on earth, were it not in mercy restrained, no man living can rightly conceive. Modern thinkers rail at Milton and Dante, Bunyan and Baxter, for their terrible imagery; but the truth is that no vision of poet, or denunciation of holy seer, can ever reach to the dread height of this great argument, much less go beyond it. The wrath to come has its horrors rather diminished than enhanced in description by the dark lines of human fancy; it baffles words, it leaves imagination far behind. Beware ye that forget God lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. God is terrible out of his holy places. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah! Remember Korah and his company! Mark well the graves of lust in the wilderness! Nay, rather bethink ye of the place where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Who is able to stand against this justly angry God? Who will dare to rush upon the bosses of his buckler, or tempt the edge of his sword? Be it ours to submit ourselves as dying sinners to this eternal God, who can, even at this moment, command us to the dust, and thence to hell.

12 So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.

13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us, *and* the years *wherein* we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

12. "*So teach us to number our days.*" Instruct us to set store by time, mourning for that time past wherein we have wrought the will of the flesh, using diligently the time present, which is the accepted hour and the day of salvation, and reckoning the time which lieth in the future to be too uncertain to allow us safely to delay any gracious work or prayer. Numeration is a child's exercise in arithmetic, but in order to number their days aright the best of men need the Lord's teaching. We are more anxious to count the stars than our days, and yet the latter is by far more practical. "*That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" Men are led by reflections

upon the brevity of time to give their earnest attention to eternal things; they become humble as they look into the grave which is so soon to be their bed, their passions cool in the presence of mortality, and they yield themselves up to the dictates of unerring wisdom; but this is only the case when the Lord himself is the teacher; he alone can teach to real and lasting profit. Thus Moses prayed that the dispensations of justice might be sanctified in mercy. "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," when the Lord himself speaks by the law. It is most meet that the heart which will so soon cease to beat should while it moves be regulated by wisdom's hand. A short life should be wisely spent. We have not enough time at our disposal to justify us in misspending a single quarter of an hour. Neither are we sure of enough of life to justify us in procrastinating for a moment. If we were wise in heart we should see this, but mere head wisdom will not guide us aright.

13. "*Return, O Lord, how long?*" Come in mercy to us again. Do not leave us to perish. Suffer not our lives to be both brief and bitter. Thou hast said to us, "Return, ye children of men," and now we humbly cry to thee, "Return, thou preserver of men." Thy presence alone can reconcile us to this transient existence; turn thou unto us. As sin drives God from us, so repentance cries to the Lord to return to us. When men are under chastisement they are allowed to expostulate, and ask "how long?" Our fault in these times is not too great boldness with God, but too much backwardness in pleading with him. "*And let it repent thee concerning thy servants.*" Thus Moses acknowledges the Israelites to be God's servants still. They had rebelled, but they had not utterly forsaken the Lord; they owned their obligations to obey his will, and pleaded them as a reason for pity. Will not a man spare his own servants? Though God smote Israel, yet they were his people, and he had never disowned them, therefore is he entreated to deal favourably with them. If they might not see the promised land, yet he is begged to cheer them on the road with his mercy, and to turn his frown into a smile. The prayer is like others which came from the meek lawgiver when he boldly pleaded with God for the nation; it is Moses-like. He here speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

14. "*O satisfy us early with thy mercy.*" Since they must die, and die so soon, the Psalmist pleads for speedy mercy upon himself and his brethren. Good men know how to turn the darkest trials into arguments at the throne of grace. He who has but the heart to pray need never be without pleas in prayer. The only satisfying food for the Lord's people is the favour of God; this Moses earnestly seeks for, and as the manna fell in the morning he beseeches the Lord to send at once his satisfying favour, that all through the little day of life they might be filled therewith. Are we so soon to die? Then, Lord, do not starve us while we live. Satisfy us at once, we pray thee. Our day is short and the night hastens on, O give us in the early morning of our days to be satisfied with thy favour, that all through our little day we may be happy. "*That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*" Being filled with divine love, their brief life on earth would become a joyful festival, and would continue so as long as it lasted. When the Lord refreshes us with his presence, our joy is such that no man can take it from us. Apprehensions of speedy death are not able to distress those who enjoy the present favour of God; though they know that the night cometh they see nothing to fear in it, but continue to live while they live, triumphing in the present favour of God and leaving the future in his loving hands. Since the whole generation which came out of Egypt had been doomed to die in the wilderness, they would naturally feel despondent, and therefore their great leader seeks for them that blessing which, beyond all others, consoles the heart, namely, the presence and favour of the Lord.

15. "*Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.*" None can gladden the heart as thou canst, O Lord, therefore as thou hast made us sad be pleased to make us glad. Fill the other scale. Proportion thy dispensations. Give us the lamb, since thou has sent us the bitter herbs. Make our days as long as our nights. The prayer is original, childlike, and full of meaning; it is moreover based upon a great principle in providential goodness, by which the Lord puts the good over against the evil in due measure. Great trial enables us to bear great joy, and may be regarded as the herald of extraordinary grace. God's dealings are according to scale; small lives are small throughout; and great histories are great both in sorrow and happiness. Where there are high hills there are also deep valleys. As God provides the sea for leviathan, so does he find a pool for the minnow; in the sea all things are in fit proportion for the mighty monster, while in the little brook all things befit the tiny fish. If we have

fierce afflictions we may look for overflowing delights, and our faith may boldly ask for them. God who is great in justice when he chastens will not be little in mercy when he blesses, he will be great all through; let us appeal to him with unstaggering faith.

16. "*Let thy work appear unto thy servants.*" See how he dwells upon that word *servants*. It is as far as the law can go, and Moses goes to the full length permitted him: henceforth Jesus calls us not servants but friends, and if we are wise we shall make full use of our wider liberty. Moses asks for displays of divine power and providence conspicuously wrought, that all the people might be cheered thereby. They could find no solace in their own faulty works, but in the work of God they would find comfort. "*And thy glory unto their children.*" While their sons were growing up around them, they desired to see some outshinings of the promised glory gleaming upon them. Their sons were to inherit the land which had been given them by covenant, and therefore they sought on their behalf some tokens of the coming good, some morning dawnings of the approaching noonday. How eagerly do good men plead for their children. They can bear very much personal affliction if they may but be sure that their children will know the glory of God, and thereby be led to serve him. We are content with the work if our children may but see the glory which will result from it: we sow joyfully if they may reap.

17. "*And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.*" Even upon us who must not see thy glory in the land of Canaan; it shall suffice us if in our characters the holiness of God is reflected, and if over all our camp the lovely excellences of our God shall cast a sacred beauty. Sanctification should be the daily object of our petitions. "*And establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*" Let what we do be done in truth, and last when we are in the grave; may the work of the present generation minister permanently to the building up of the nation. Good men are anxious not to work in vain. They know that without the Lord they can do nothing, and therefore they cry to him for help in the work, for acceptance of their efforts, and for the establishment of their designs. The church as a whole earnestly desires that the hand of the Lord may so work with the hand of his people, that a substantial, yea, an eternal edifice to the praise and glory of God may be the result. We come and go, but the Lord's work abides. We are content to die, so long as Jesus lives and his kingdom grows. Since the Lord abides for ever the same, we trust our work in his hands, and feel that since it is far more his work than ours he will secure it immortality. When we have withered like grass, our holy service, like gold, silver, and precious stones, will survive the fire.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The correctness of the title which ascribes the Psalm to Moses is confirmed by its unique simplicity and grandeur; its appropriateness to his times and circumstances; its resemblance to the Law in urging the connection between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch, without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation; its marked unlikeness to the Psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally, the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Title.—"*A prayer of Moses.*" Moses may be considered as the first composer of sacred hymns.—*Samuel Burder.*

Title.—The Psalm is described in the title as a *prayer*. This description shews, as Amyraldus saw, that the kernel of the Psalm is the *second* part, and that the design of the first is to prepare the way for the second, and lay down a basis on which it may rest.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Title.—"*A prayer of Moses.*" Moses was an old and much-tried man, but age and experience had taught him that, amidst the perpetual changes which are taking place in the universe, one thing at least remains immutable, even the faithfulness of him who is "from everlasting to everlasting God." How far back into the past may the patriarch have been looking when he spake these words? The burning bush, the fiery furnace of Egypt, the Red Sea, Pharaoh with his chariots of war, and the weary march of Israel through the wilderness, were all before him; and in all of them he had experienced that "God is the Rock, his work perfect, all his ways judgment" (Deut. xxxii. 4). But Moses was looking beyond these scenes of his personal history when he said, "Remember the days of old, consider the years

of many generations" (Deut. xxxii. 7), and we may be sure that he was also looking beyond them when he indited the song, "*Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.*" Yes; he was casting in his mind how God had been the refuge of Jacob and Isaac, of Abraham, Noah, and all the patriarchs. Moses could take a retrospect of above a thousand years, which had all confirmed the truth. I can do more. At this point of time I can look back to the days of Moses and Joshua and David, and descending thence to the days of the Son of God upon earth, and of Paul and Peter, and all the saints of the Church down to the present hour; and what a thousand years avouched to Moses, three thousand now avouch to me: the Lord is the dwelling-place of those that trust in him from generation to generation. Yes; and to him who was the refuge of a Moses and an Abraham, I too in the day of trouble can lift my hands. Delightful thought! That great Being who, during the lapse of three thousand years, amidst the countless changes of the universe, has to this day remained unchanged, is MY God.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, in "Hours of Christian Devotion,"* 1870.

Whole Psalm.—Although some difficulties have been started, there seems no reason to doubt that this Psalm is the composition of Moses. From the remotest period his name has been attached to it, and almost every Biblical scholar, from Jerome down to Hengstenberg, has agreed to accept it as a prayer of that "man of God" whose name it has always carried. If so, it is one of the oldest poems in the world. Compared with it Homer and Pindar are (so to speak) modern, and even King David is of recent date. That is to say, compared with this ancient hymn the other Psalms are as much more modern as Tennyson and Longfellow are more modern than Chaucer. In either case there are nearly five centuries between.—*James Hamilton.*

Whole Psalm.—The 90th Psalm might be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions—the deepest in feeling—the loftiest in theologic conception—the most magnificent in its imagery. True is it in its report of human life—as troubled, transitory, and sinful. True in its conception of the Eternal—the Sovereign and the Judge; and yet the refuge and hope of men, who, notwithstanding the most severe trials of their faith, lose not their confidence in him; but who, in the firmness of faith, pray for, as if they were predicting, a near-at-hand season of refreshment. Wrapped, one might say, in mystery, until the distant day of revelation should come, there is here conveyed the doctrine of Immortality; for in the very plaint of the brevity of the life of man, and of the sadness of these, his few years of trouble, and their brevity, and their gloom, there is brought into contrast the Divine immutability; and yet it is in terms of a submissive piety: the thought of a life eternal is here in embryo. No taint is there in this Psalm of the pride and petulance—the half-uttered blasphemy—the malign disputing or arraignment of the justice or goodness of God, which have so often shed a venomous colour upon the language of those who have writhed in anguish, personal or relative. There are few probably among those who have passed through times of bitter and distracting woe, or who have stood—the helpless spectators of the miseries of others, that have not fallen into moods of mind violently in contrast with the devout and hopeful melancholy which breathes throughout this ode. Rightly attributed to the Hebrew Lawgiver or not, it bespeaks its remote antiquity, not merely by the majestic simplicity of its style, but negatively, by the entire avoidance of those sophisticated turns of thought which belong to a late—a lost age in a people's intellectual and moral history. This Psalm, undoubtedly, is centuries older than the moralizings of that time when the Jewish mind had listened to what it could never bring into a true assimilation with its own mind—the abstractions of the Greek Philosophy.

With this one Psalm only in view—if it were required of us to say, in brief, what we mean by the phrase—"The Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry"—we find our answer well condensed in this sample. This magnificent composition gives evidence, not merely as to the mental qualities of the writer, but as to the tastes and habitudes of the writer's contemporaries, his hearers, and his readers; on these several points—*first*, the free and customary command of a poetic diction, and its facile imagery; so that whatever the poetic soul would utter, the poet's material is near at hand for his use. There is then that depth of feeling—mournful, reflective, and yet hopeful and trustful, apart from which poetry can win for itself no higher esteem than what we bestow upon other decorative arts, which minister to the demands of luxurious *sloth.* There is, moreover, as we might say, underlying this poem, from the first

line to the last, the substance of philosophic thought, apart from which, expressed or understood, poetry is frivolous, and is not in harmony with the seriousness of human life: this Psalm is of a sort which Plato would have written, or Sophocles—if only the one or the other of these minds had possessed a heaven-descended Theology. —*Isaac Taylor.*

Verse 1.—"*Lord.*" Observe the change of the Divine names in this Psalm. Moses begins with the declaration of the Majesty of the Lord (*Adonai*), but when he arrives at ver. 13, he opens his prayer with the Name of grace and covenanted mercy to Israel—JEHOVAH; and he sums up all in ver. 17, with a supplication for the manifestation of the *beauty* נֹעַם of "the Lord our God" (JEHOVAH, ELOHIM).—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place.*" Many seem to beg God's help in prayer, but are not protected by him: they seek it only in a storm, and when all other means and refuges fail them. But a Christian must maintain constant communication with God; must dwell in God, not run to him now and then.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 1.—This exordium breathes life, and pertains to a certain hope of the resurrection and of eternal life. Since he calls God, who is eternal, our habitation, or to speak more clearly, our place of refuge, to whom fleeing we may be in safety. For if God is our dwelling-place, and God is life, and we dwellers in him, it necessarily follows, that we are in life, and shall live for ever. . . . For who will call God the dwelling-place of the dead? Who shall regard him as a sepulchre? He is life; and therefore they also live to whom he is a dwelling-place. After this fashion Moses, in the very introduction, before he lets loose his horrible thunderings and lightnings, fortifies the trembling, that they may firmly hold God to be the living dwelling-place of the living, of those that pray to him, and put their trust in him.

It is a remarkable expression, the like of which is nowhere in Sacred Scripture, that God is a *dwelling-place.* Scripture in other places says the very opposite, it calls men temples of God, in whom God dwells; "the temple of God is holy," says Paul, "which temple ye are." Moses inverts this, and affirms, we are inhabitants and masters in this house. For the Hebrew word מָעוֹן properly signifies a dwelling place, as when the Scripture says, "In Zion is his dwelling place," where this word (Maon) is used. But because a house is for the purpose of safety, it results, that this word has the meaning of a refuge or place of refuge. But Moses wishes to speak with such great care that he may show that all our hopes have been placed most securely in God, and that they who are about to pray to this God may be assured that they are not afflicted in this work in vain, nor die, since they have God as a place of refuge, and the divine Majesty as a dwelling-place, in which they may rest secure for ever. Almost in the same strain Paul speaks, when he says to the Colossians, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." For it is a much clearer and more luminous expression to say, Believers dwell in God, than that God dwells in them. He dwelt also visibly in Zion, but the place is changed. But because he (the believer) is in God, it is manifest, that he cannot be moved nor transferred, for God is a habitation of a kind that cannot perish. Moses therefore wished to exhibit the most certain life, when he said, God is our dwelling place, not the earth, not heaven, not paradise, but simply God himself. If after this manner you take this Psalm it will become sweet, and seem in all respects most useful. When a monk, it often happened to me when I read this Psalm, that I was compelled to lay the book out of my hand. But I knew not that these terrors were not addressed to an awakened mind. I knew not that Moses was speaking to a most obdurate and proud multitude, which neither understood nor cared for the anger of God, nor were humbled by their calamities, or even in prospect of death.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—"*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place,*" etc. In this first part the prophet acknowledgeth that God in all times, and in all ages hath had a special care of his saints and servants, to provide for them all things necessary for this life; for under the name of "*dwelling place,*" or *mansion house,* the prophet understandeth all helps and comforts necessary for this life, both for maintenance and protection. For the use of such houses was wont to be not only to defend men from the injury of the weather, and to keep safely, within the walls and under the roof all other things necessary for this life, and to be a place of abode, wherein men might the more commodiously provide for all other things necessary, and walk in some calling

profitable to their neighbour and to the glory of God; but also to protect them from the violence of brute beasts and rage of enemies. Now the prophet herein seems to note a special and more immediate providence of God; (for of all kind of people they seemed to be most forsaken and forlorn); that whereas the rest of the world seemed to have their habitations and mansions rooted in the earth, and so to dwell upon the earth; to live in cities and walled towns in all wealth and state; God's people were as it were without house and home. Abraham was called out of his own country, from his father's house, where no doubt he had goodly buildings and large revenues, and was commanded by God to live as a foreigner in a strange country, amongst savage people, that he knew not; and to abide in tents, booths, and cabins, having little hope to live a settled and comfortable life in any place. In like manner lived his posterity, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs, wandering from place to place in the land of Canaan; from thence translated into the land of Egypt, there living at courtesy, and as it were tenants at will, and in such slavery and bondage, that it had been better for them to have been without house and home. After this for forty years together (at which time this Psalm was penned) they wandered up and down in a desolate wilderness, removing from place to place, and wandering, as it were in a maze. So that of all the people of the earth, God's own people had hitherto lived as pilgrims and banished persons, without house or home; and therefore the prophet here professeth that God himself more immediately by his extraordinary providence, for many ages together had protected them, and been as it were a mansion house unto them; that is, the more they were deprived of these ordinary comforts of this life, the more was God present with them, supplying by his extraordinary and immediate providence what they wanted in regard of ordinary means. The due consideration of this point may minister matter of great joy and comfort to such children of God as are thoroughly humbled with the consideration of man's mortality in general, or of theirs whom they rely and depend upon in special.—*William Bradshaw*, 1621.

Verse 1.—"*Our dwelling place.*" God created the earth for beasts to inhabit, the sea for fishes, the air for fowls, and heaven for angels and stars, so that man hath no place to dwell and abide in but God alone.—*Giovanni della Mirandola Pico*, 1463—1494.

Verses 1, 2.—The comfort of the believer against the miseries of this short life is taken from the decree of their election, and the eternal covenant of redemption settled in the purpose and counsel of the blessed Trinity for their behoof, wherein it was agreed before the world was, that the *Word* to be incarnate, should be the Saviour of the elect: for here the asserting of the eternity of God is with relation to his own chosen people; for "*Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations*," and, "*thou art God from everlasting to everlasting*," is in substance thus much:—Thou art from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God in purpose and affection toward us thy people, and so thou art *our God* from everlasting, in regard of thy eternal purpose of love, electing us, and in regard of thy appointing redemption for us by the Redeemer.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 1, 2.—If man be ephemeral, God is eternal.—*James Hamilton.*

Verses 1—6.—

"O Lord, thou art our home, to whom we fly,
And so hast always been, from age to age;
Before the hills did intercept the eye,
Or that the frame was up of earthly stage,
One God thou wert, and art, and still shall be;
The line of time, it doth not measure thee.

Both death and life obey thy holy lore,
And visit in their turns as they are sent;
A thousand years with thee they are no more
Than yesterday, which, ere it is, is spent:
Or as a watch by night, that course doth keep,
And goes and comes, unwares to them that sleep.

Thou carryest man away as with a tide:
Then down swim all his thoughts that mounted high;
Much like a mocking dream, that will not bide,
But flies before the sight of waking eye;
Or as the grass, that cannot term obtain,
To see the summer come about again.

At morning, fair it musters on the ground ;
At even it is cut down and laid along :
And though it spared were, and favour found,
The weather would perform the mower's wrong :
Thus hast thou hanged our life on brittle pins,
To let us know it will not bear our sins."

—*Francis Bacon.*

Verse 2.—" *The earth and the world.*" The word *earth* here is used to denote the world as distinguished either from heaven (Gen. i. 1), or from the sea (Gen. i. 10). The term " *world* " in the original is commonly employed to denote the earth considered as *inhabited*, or as capable of being inhabited, a dwelling-place for living beings.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—" *From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*" The everlastingness of which Moses speaks is to be referred not only to the essence of God, but also to his providence, by which he governs the world. He intends not merely that he is, but that he is God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—Such a God (he says) have we, such a God do we worship, to such a God do we pray, at whose command all created things sprang into being. Why then should we fear if this God favours us ? Why should we tremble at the anger of the whole world ? If he is our dwelling-place, shall we not be safe though the heavens should go to wrack ? For we have a Lord greater than all the world. We have a Lord so mighty that at his word all things sprang into being. And yet we are so fainthearted that if the anger of a single prince or king, nay, even of a single neighbour, is to be borne, we tremble and droop in spirit. Yet in comparison with this King, all things beside in the whole world are but as the lightest dust which a slight breath moves from its place, and suffers not to be still. In this way this description of God is consolatory, and trembling spirits ought to look to this consolation in their temptations and dangers.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3.—" *Thou turnest man to destruction,*" etc. The prophet conceiveth of God as of a *potter*, that having of dust tempered a mass, and framed it into a vessel, and dried it, doth presently, within a minute or an hour after, dash it again in pieces, and beat it to dust, in passion as it were speaking unto it, " Get thee to dust again." The word here translated " *destruction,*" signifies a beating, or grinding, or pounding of a thing to powder. And the prophet seems to allude to the third of Genesis, where God speaks of Adam, " Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return," as if he should say, O Lord, thou that hast made and framed man of the dust of the earth, thou beatest him to dust again ; and as thou madest him by thy word alone, so with thy word thou suddenly turnest, and beatest him again to dust ; as a man that makes a thing, and presently mars it again. . . . He doth it with a word, against which is no resistance, when that word is once come out of his mouth ; it is not all the diet, physic, and help, and prayers in the world that can save the life. And this he can do suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye. And therefore we should, as we love our lives, fear him, and take heed how we offend and displease him that can with a word turn the strongest man into dust.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 3.—" *Thou turnest man to destruction,*" etc. The first word for " *man,*" signifies a man full of misery, full of sicknesses and infirmities, a miserable man, אנוש. And the other word here used in the end of the verse, signifies a man made of *clay*, or of the very slime of the earth. From hence we learn what is the nature of all men, of all the sons of *Adam*, viz., a piece of living *clay*, a little piece of red earth. And besides that man is subject to *breaking* and *crushing*, every way a miserable man ; so is he of a brittle mould, a piece of red clay, that hath in it for a time a living soul, which must return to God that gave it ; and the body, this piece of earth, return to the earth from whence it came : and if we had no Scripture at all to prove this, daily experience before our eyes makes it clear how all men, even the wisest, the strongest, the greatest and the mightiest monarchs and princes in the world, be but miserable men, made of red earth, and quickly turn again to dust.—*Samuel Smith, in " Moses his Prayer,"* 1656.

Verse 3.—" *Thou turnest man to destruction.*" Augustine says, We walk amid perils. If we were glass vases we might fear less dangers. What is there more fragile than a vase of glass ? And yet it is preserved, and lasts for centuries : we therefore are more frail and infirm.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—" *Return ye.*" One being asked what life was? made an answer answerless, for he presently turned his back and went his way.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—" *A thousand years,*" etc. As to a very rich man a thousand sovereigns are as one penny; so, to the eternal God, a thousand years are as one day.—*John Albert Bengel*, 1687—1752.

Verse 4.—The Holy Ghost expresseth himself according to the manner of men, to give us some notion of an infinite duration, by a resemblance suited to our capacity. If a thousand years be but as a day to the life of God, then as a year is to the life of man, so are three hundred and sixty-five thousand years to the life of God; and as seventy years are to the life of man, so are twenty-five millions five hundred and fifty thousand years to the life of God. Yet still, since there is no proportion between time and eternity, we must dart our thoughts beyond all these, for years and days measure only the duration of created things, and of those only that are material and corporeal, subject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—" *As yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*" He corrects the previous clause with an extraordinary abbreviation. For he says that the whole space of human life, although it may be very long, and reach a thousand years, yet with God it is esteemed not only as one day, which has already gone, but is scarcely equal to the fourth part of a night. For the nights were divided into four watches, which lasted three hours each. And indeed by the word *night*, it is meant that human affairs in this life are involved in much darkness, many errors, dangers, terrors and sorrows.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 4.—" *As a watch in the night.*" The night is wont to appear shorter than the day, and to pass more swiftly, because those who sleep, says Euthymius, notice not the lapse of time. On account of the darkness also, it is less observed; and to those at work the time seems longer, than to those who have their work done.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 4.—" *A watch in the night.*" Sir John Chardin observes in a note on this verse, that as the people of the East have no clocks, the several parts of the day and of the night, which are eight in all, are given notice of. In the Indies, the parts of the night are made known as well by instruments of music in great cities, as by the rounds of the watchmen, who with cries, and small drums, give them notice that a fourth part of the night is passed. Now as these cries awaked those who had slept all that quarter part of the night, it appeared to them but as a moment.—*Harmer's Observations.*

Verse 4.—The ages and the dispensations, the promise to Adam, the engagement with Noah, the oath to Abraham, the covenant with Moses—these were but watches, through which the children of men had to wait amid the darkness of things created, until the morning should dawn of things uncreated. Now is " the night far spent, and the day at hand."—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 5.—" *Thou carriest them away as with a flood.*" זְרַמְתָּם (*zeram-tam*) *thou hast inundated them*, namely, the years of man, i.e., thou hast hurried them away with a flood, thou hast made them to glide away as water, *they will be as a sleep.*—*Bythner's " Lyre of David."*

Verse 5.—" *Thou carriest them away as with a flood.*" Let us meditate seriously upon the swift passage of our days, how our life runs away like a stream of waters, and carrieth us with it. Our condition in the eyes of God in regard of our life in this world is as if a man that knows not how to swim, should be cast into a great stream of water, and be carried down with it, so that he may sometimes lift up his head or his hands, and cry for help, or catch hold of this thing and that, for a time, but his end will be drowning, and it is but a small time that he can hold out, for the flood which carries him away will soon swallow him up. And surely our life here if it be rightly considered, is but like the life of a person thus violently carried down a stream. All the actions and motions of our life are but like unto the strivings and strugglings of a man in that case: our eating, our drinking, our physic, our sports, and all other actions are but like the motions of the sinking man. When we have done all that we can, die we must, and be drowned in this deluge.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 5.—" *Away as with a flood.*" " A man is a bubble," said the Greek proverb, which Lucian represents to this purpose, saying, " All the world is a storm, and men rise up in their several generations like bubbles. Some of these instantly sink

into the deluge of their first parent, and are hidden in a sheet of water, having no other business in the world but to be born, that they might be able to die; others float up and down two or three turns, and suddenly disappear, and give their place to others: and they that live longest upon the face of the waters are in perpetual motion, restless and uneasy, and being crushed in by a great drop from a cloud, sink into flatness and a froth; the change not being great; it being hardly possible that a bubble should be more a nothing than it was before."—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Verse 5 (*first clause*).—The most ancient mode of measuring small portions of time was by water flowing out of a vessel, the clepsydra of the Greeks and Romans; and Ovid has compared the lapse of time to the flowing of a river [Metam. xv. 180].—*Stephen Street.*

Verse 5.—"*They are as a sleep.*" For as in the visions of sleep, we seeing, see not, hearing we hear not, tasting or touching we neither taste nor touch, speaking we speak not, walking we walk not; but when we seem to employ movements and gestures, in no respect do we employ them, since the mind vainly forms without any real objects images of things that exist not, as if they existed. In this very way, the imaginations of those who are awake closely resemble dreams; they come, they go, they confront us and flee from us; before they are seized, they fly away.—*Philo, in Le Blanc.*

Verse 5.—"*They are as a sleep.*" Our life may be compared to sleep in four respects. 1. In regard of the shortness of it. 2. In regard of the easiness of being put out of it. 3. In regard of the many means to disquiet and break it off. 4. With regard to the many errors in it.

For the first three. Sleep is but short, and the sweeter it is, the shorter it seems to be. And as it is but short of itself, though it should last the full swing of nature; so the soundest sleep is easily broken; the least knock, the lowest call puts men out of it; and a number of means and occasions there be to interrupt and break it off. And is it not so with the life of man? Is not the longest life short? Is it not the shorter, the sweeter and fuller of contents it is? And is it not easily taken away? Are there not many means to bring us unto our end? even as many as there are to waken us out of sleep.

For the fourth. How many errors are we subject to in sleep? In sleep the prisoner many times dreams that he is at liberty; he that is at liberty, that he is in prison; he that is hungry, that he is feeding daintily; he that is in want, that he is in great abundance; he that abounds, that he is in great want. How many in their sleep have thought they have gotten that which they shall be better for for ever, and when they are even in the hope of present possessing some such goodly matter, or beginning to enjoy it, or in the midst of their joy, they are suddenly awaked, and then all is gone with them, and their golden fancies vanish away in an instant. So for evil and sorrow as well. And is it not just so in the life of man?—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 5.—"*They are like grass.*" In this last similitude, the prophet compares men to *grass*, that as *grass* hath a time of growing and a time of withering, even so has man. "*In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up.*" In which words Moses compares the former part of man's life, which is the space of thirty-three years, to the time of growing of grass, and that is accounted the time of the perfection of man's strength and age; at which age, according to the course of nature, man flourisheth as grass doth; that is the time of a man's prime and flourishing estate.

But "*in the evening*"; that is, when the grass is ripe, and ready to be cut down, "*it withereth.*" Even so man, being once at his strength, and ripest age, doth not stand at a stay, nor continueth long so; but presently begins to decay, and to wither away, till old age comes, and he is cut down by the scythe of death.

Now, in that Moses useth so many similitudes, and all to show how frail this life of man is, we are taught, that the frailty, vanity, and shortness of man's life is such, that examples will scarcely shew it. Death comes as a *flood*, violently and suddenly; we are as a *sleep*; we are as *grass*; our life is like *a dream*; we spend our days *as a tale that is told*, verse 9. All these similitudes Moses hath in this Psalm, as if he wanted words and examples, how to express the vanity, frailty, and shortness thereof.—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 6.—"*In the morning.*" This can hardly mean "in early youth," as some of the Rabbis explain. The words, strictly speaking, are a part of the comparison ("they are as grass which springeth afresh in the morning"), and are only thus

placed first to give emphasis to the figure. In the East, one night's rain works a change as if by magic. The field at evening was brown, parched, arid as a desert; in the morning it is green with the blades of grass. The scorching hot wind (James i. 11) blows upon it, and again before evening it is withered.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 6.—"*Cut down.*"

Stout and strong to-day,
To-morrow turned to clay.

This day in his bloom,
The next, in the tomb.

It is true that to some Death sends his grey harbingers before, and gives them timely warning of his approach. But in how many cases does he arrive unannounced, and, lifting up his scythe, mow down the lofty! On shipboard there is but a plank between us and death; on horseback, but a fall. As we walk along the streets, Death stretches a threatening finger from every tile upon the roofs! "He comes up into our windows, and enters into our palaces; he cuts off the children from without, and the young men from the streets." Jer. ix. 21. Our life is less than an handbreadth. How soon and how insensibly we slip into the grave!—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 7.—"*For we are consumed by thine anger.*" This is a point disputed by philosophers. They seek for the cause of death, since indeed proofs of immortality that cannot be despised exist in nature. The prophet replies, that the chief cause must not be sought in the material, either in a defect of the fluids, or in a failure of the natural heat; but that God being offended at the sins of men, hath subjected this nature to death and other infinite calamities. Therefore, our sins are the causes which have brought down this destruction. Hence he says, *In thine anger we vanish away.—Mollerus.*

Verse 7.—"*For we are consumed by thine anger,*" etc. Whence we may first of all observe, how they compare their present estate in the wilderness, with the estate of other nations and people, and shew that their estate was far worse than theirs: for others died now one, and then one, and so they were diminished; but for them, they were hastily consumed, and suddenly swept away by the plague and pestilence which raged amongst them. Hence we may observe, first of all—That it is a ground of humiliation to God's people when their estate is worse than God's enemies'. Moses gathers this as an argument to humble them, and to move them to repentance and to seek unto God; viz., that because of their sins they were in a far worse case and condition than the very enemies of God were. For though their lives were short, yet they confess that theirs was far worse than the very heathen themselves, for they were *suddenly consumed by his anger.* When God is worse to his own church and people than he is to his enemies; when the Lord sends wars in a nation called by his name, and peace in other kingdoms that are anti-Christian; sends famine in his church, and plenty to the wicked; sends the plague and pestilence in his church, and health and prosperity to the wicked; oh, here is matter of mourning and humiliation; and it is that which hath touched God's people to the quick, and wounded them to the heart, to see the enemies of the church in better condition than the church itself.—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 7.—"*By thy wrath are we troubled.*" The word used by Moses is much stronger than merely "troubled." It implies being cut off, destroyed—in forms moreover of overwhelming terror.—*Henry Cowles, in "The Psalms; with Notes." New York*, 1872.

Verse 8.—God needs no other light to discern our sins by but the light of his own face. It pierceth through the darkest places; the brightness thereof enlighteneth all things, discovers all things. So that the sins that are committed in deepest darkness are all one to him as if they were done in the face of the sun. For they are done in his face, that shines more, and from which proceeds more light than from the face of the sun. So that this ought to make us the more fearful to offend; he sees us when we see not him, and the light of his countenance shines about us when we think ourselves hidden in darkness.

Our sins are not only then in his sight when they are a committing and whilst the deed is doing; but ever after, when the act is past and gone and forgotten,

yet then is it before the face of God, even as if it were in committing: and how should this make us afraid to sin! When our sins are not only in his sight while they are a committing, but so continue still for ever after they are past and done.

God *sets our sins before him;* this shows he is so affected with them, he takes them so to heart, that he doth in a special manner continue the remembrance of them. As those that having had great wrong will store it up, or register it, or keep some remembrance of it or other, lest they should forget, when time shall serve to be quit with those that have wronged them: so doth God, and his so doing is a sign that he takes our sins deeply to heart; which should teach us to fear the more how we offend him. When God in any judgment of death, or sickness, or loss of friends, shews his wrath, we should think and meditate of this; especially when he comes nearest us: Now the Lord looks upon my sins, they are now before him; and we should never rest till we have by repentance moved him to blot them out. Yea, to this end we should ourselves call them to remembrance. For the more we remember them, the more God forgets them; the more we forget them, the more God remembers them; the more we look upon them ourselves, the more he turneth his eyes from them.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 8.—It is a well known fact that the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are very much affected by the situation in which they are placed in respect to us, and by the light in which they are seen. Objects seen at a distance, for example, appear much smaller than they really are. The same object, viewed through different mediums, will often exhibit different appearances. A lighted candle, or a star, appears bright during the absence of the sun; but when that luminary returns, their brightness is eclipsed. Since the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are thus affected by extraneous circumstances, it follows, that no two persons will form precisely the same ideas of any object, unless they view it in the same light, or are placed with respect to it in the same situation.

Apply these remarks to the case before us. The Psalmist addressing God, says, "*Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*" That is, our iniquities or open transgressions, and our secret sins, the sins of our hearts, are placed as it were, full before God's face, immediately under his eye; and he sees them in the pure, clear, all-disclosing light of his own holiness and glory. Now if we would see our sins as they appear to him, that is, as they really are, if we would see their number, blackness and criminality, and the malignity and desert of every sin, we must place ourselves, as nearly as is possible, in his situation, and look at sin, as it were, through his eyes. We must place ourselves and our sins in the centre of that circle which is irradiated by the light of his countenance, where all his infinite perfections are clearly displayed, where his awful majesty is seen, where his concentrated glories blaze, and burn, and dazzle, with insufferable brightness. And in order to this, we must, in thought, leave our dark and sinful world, where God is unseen and almost forgotten, and where consequently, the evil of sinning against him cannot be fully perceived—and mount up to heaven, the peculiar habitation of his holiness and glory, where he does not, as here, conceal himself behind the veil of his works, and of second causes, but shines forth the unveiled God, and is seen as he is.

My hearers, if you are willing to see your sins in their true colours; if you would rightly estimate their number, magnitude and criminality, bring them into the hallowed place, where nothing is seen but the brightness of unsullied purity, and the splendours of uncreated glory; where the sun itself would appear only as a dark spot; and there, in the midst of this circle of seraphic intelligences, with the infinite God pouring all the light of his countenance round you, review your lives, contemplate your offences, and see how they appear. Recollect that the God, in whose presence you are, is the Being who forbids sin, the Being of whose eternal law sin is the transgression, and against whom every sin is committed.—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 9.—"*For all our days go back again* (יָפְחוּ) *in thy wrath.*" Hitherto he has spoken of the cause of that wrath of God which moveth him to smite the world with such mortality. Now here he further sets forth the same by the effects thereof in reference to that present argument he hath in hand. 1. That our days do as it were go backward in his wrath: that whereas God gave us being to live, our life and our being are nothing else but a going backward, as it were, to death and to nothing. Even as if a stranger being suddenly rapt and carried mid-way to his home, where are all his comforts, he should spend all the time that is behind, not in going forward

to his home, but in going backward to the place from which he was suddenly brought. All the sons of Adam as soon as they have being and live are brought suddenly a great part of their way: and whereas they should go forward and live longer and longer, they from their first beginning to live go backward again to death and to nothing. This is the sum in effect of that which the Lord saith in the beginning of the Psalm, (ver. 3:) "*Thou bringest men to destruction; saying, Return again, ye sons of Adam:*" as if he should say, Thou makest a man, and when he is made, he in thy wrath doth haste to nothing else but destruction and to be marred again. Thus do our days as it were go backward, and we in them return from whence we came.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 9.—When I was in Egypt, three or four years ago, I saw what Moses himself might have seen, and what the Israelites, no doubt, very often witnessed:—a crowd of people surrounding a professed story-teller, who was going through some tale, riveting the attention and exciting the feelings of those who listened to him. This is one of the customs of the East. It naturally springs up among any people who have few books, or none; where the masses are unable to read, and where, therefore, they are dependent for excitement or information on those who can address the ear, and who recite, in prose or verse, traditionary tales and popular legends. I dare say this sort of thing would be much in repute among the Israelites themselves during their detention in the wilderness, and that it served to beguile for them many a tedious hour. It is by this custom, then, that we venture to illustrate the statement of the text.

The hearing of a story is attended by a rapid and passing interest—it leaves behind it a vague impression, beyond which comparatively but few incidents may stand out distinctly in the after thought. In our own day even, when tales are put into printed books, and run through three or four volumes, we feel when we have finished one, how short it appears after all, or how short the time it seemed to take for its perusal. If full of incident, it may seem sometimes long to remember, but we generally come to the close with a sort of feeling that says, "And so that's all." But this must have been much more the case with the tales "that were told." These had to be compressed into what could be repeated at one time, or of which three or four might be given in an evening or an hour. The story ended; and then came the sense of shortness, brevity, the rapid flight of the period employed by it, with something like a feeling of wonder and dissatisfaction at the discovery of this. "For what is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."—*Thomas Binney.*

Verse 9.—"*As a tale.*" The grace whereof is *brevity.*—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*As a tale that is told.*" The Chaldee has it, *like the breath of our mouth in winter.*—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 9.—The thirty-eight years, which after this they were away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth. After they came out of Egypt, their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of "*a tale that is told;*" for it was only to pass away time like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness; all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the rising. . . . The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year when it is past is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one; most mixed, but all short and transient; that which was long in the doing may be told in a short time.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—"*We spend our years as a tale that is told,*" or, *as a meditation* (so some translate) suddenly or swiftly: a discourse is quickly over, whether it be a discourse from the mouth, or in the mind; and of the two the latter is far the more swift and nimble of foot. A discourse in our thoughts outruns the sun, as much as the sun outruns a snail; the thoughts of a man will travel the world over in a moment; he that now sits in this place, may be at the world's end in his thoughts, before I can speak another word.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*We spend our years as a tale that is told.*" This seems to express both a necessary fact and a censure. The rapid consumption of our years—their speedy passing away, is inevitable. But they may be spent also in a trifling manner to little valuable purpose, which would complete the disconsolate reflection on them, by the addition of guilt and censure.—*John Foster,* 1768—1843.

Verse 9.—"*As a tale that is told.*" In the Hebrew it is הֶגְיוֹן, *sicut meditatio,*

(*as a meditation*) and so we read it in the margin, as if all our years were little else than a continual meditation upon the things of this world. Indeed, much of man's time is spent in this kind of vain meditation, as how to deceive and play fast and loose for advantage; such a meditation had they, Isaiah lix. 13, or meditating with the heart lying words; the same word in the Hebrew as in my text; or how to heap up riches, such a meditation had that covetous man in the gospel, Luke xii. 17; or how to violate the sacred bonds of religion and laws of God, such a meditation had they, Ps. ii. 1—3; and in such vain meditations as these do men spend their years "as a tale that is told." . . .

To close this point with Gregory Nazianzen.

What are we but a vain dream that hath no existence or being, a mere phantasm or apparition that cannot be held, a ship sailing in the sea which leaves no impression or track behind it, a dust, a vapour, a morning dew, a flower flourishing one day and fading another, yea, the same day behold it springing and withered, but my text adds another metaphor from the flying of a bird, "*and we fly away*," not go and run but fly, the quickest motion that any corporeal creature hath. Our life is like the flight of a bird, 'tis here now and 'tis gone out of sight suddenly. The Prophet therefore speaking of the speedy departure of Ephraim's glory expresseth it thus, "It shall flee away like a bird," Hos. ix. 11; and Solomon saith the like of riches, "they make themselves wings and flee away like an eagle toward heaven"; Prov. xxiii. 5. David wished for the wings of a dove that he might flee away and be at rest, and good cause he had for it, for this life is not more short than miserable. . . .

Be it our care then not to come creeping and coughing to God with a load of diseases and infirmities about us, when we are at death's door and not before, but to consecrate the first fruits of our life to his service. It is in the spending our time (as one compares it) as in the distilling of waters, the thinnest and purest part runs out first and only the lees at last: what an unworthy thing will it be to offer the prime of our time to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the dregs of it to God. He that forbad the lame and the blind in beasts to be sacrificed, will not surely allow it in men; if they come not to present their bodies a living sacrifice, while they are living and lively too, ere they be lame or blind or deformed with extremity of age, it is even a miracle if it prove then a holy, acceptable, or reasonable service.—*Thomas Washbourne*, 1655.

Verse 9 (*second clause*).—The Hebrew is different from all the Versions. "*We consume our years* (כְּמוֹ הֶגֶה *kemo hegeh*) *like a groan.*" We live a dying, whining, complaining life, and at last a *groan* is its termination!—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9.—The Vulgate translation has, "*Our years pass away like those of a spider.*" It implies that our life is as frail as the thread of a spider's web. Constituted most curiously the spider's web is; but what more fragile? In what is there more wisdom than in the complicated frame of the human body; and what more easily destroyed? Glass is granite compared with flesh; and vapours are rocks compared with life.—*C.H.S.*

Verse 10.—"*It is soon cut off, and we fly away.*" At the Witan or council assembled by Edwin of Northumbria at Godmundingham (modern name Godmanham), to debate on the mission of Paulinus, the King was thus addressed by a heathen Thane, one of his chief men:—"The present life of man, O King, may be likened to what often happens when thou art sitting at supper with thy thanes and nobles in winter-time. A fire blazes on the hearth, and warms the chamber; outside rages a storm of wind and snow; a sparrow flies in at one door of thy hall, and quickly passes out at the other. For a moment and while it is within, it is unharmed by the wintry blast, but this brief season of happiness over, it returns to that wintry blast whence it came, and vanishes from thy sight. Such is the brief life of man; we know not what went before it, and we are utterly ignorant as to what shall follow it. If, therefore, this new doctrine contain anything more certain, it justly deserves to be followed.—*Bede's Chronicle.*

Verse 10.—*The time of our life is threescore years and ten* (saith Moses), or set it upon the tenters, and rack it to *fourscore*, though not one in every fourscore arrives to that account, yet can we not be said to live so long; for take out, first, ten years for infancy and childhood, which Solomon calls the time of wantonness and vanity (Eccles. xi.), wherein we scarce remember what we did, or whether we lived or no; and how short is it then? Take out of the remainder a third part for sleep, wherein

like blocks we lie senseless, and how short is it then ? Take out yet besides the time of our carking and worldly care, wherein we seem both dead and buried in the affairs of the world, and how short is it then ? And take out yet besides, our times of wilful sinning and rebellion, for while we sin, we live not, but we are *" dead in sin,"* and what remaineth of life ? yea, how short is it then ? so short is that life which nature allows, and yet we sleep away part, and play away part, and the cares of the world have a great part, so that the true spiritual and Christian life hath little or nothing in the end.—*From a Sermon by Robert Wilkinson, entitled " A Meditation of Mortalitie, preached to the late Prince Henry, some few daies before his death,"* 1612.

Verse 10.—*" Threescore years and ten."* It may at first seem surprising that Moses should describe the days of man as *" Threescore years and ten."* But when it is remembered, that, in the second year of the pilgrimage in the wilderness, as related in Numbers xiv., God declared that all those who had been recently numbered at Sinai should die in the wilderness, before the expiration of forty years, the lamentation of Moses on the brevity of human life becomes very intelligible and appropriate ; and the Psalm itself acquires a solemn and affecting interest, as a penitential confession of the sins which had entailed such melancholy consequences on the Hebrew nation ; and as a humble deprecation of God's wrath ; and as a funeral dirge upon those whose death had been pre-announced by the awful voice of God.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 10.—There have been several *gradual abbreviations* of man's life. Death hath been coming nearer and nearer to us, as you may see in the several ages and periods of the world. Adam, the first of human kind, lived nine hundred and thirty years. And seven or eight hundred years was a usual period of man's life before the Flood. But the Sacred History (which hath the advantage and pre-eminence of all other histories whatsoever, by reason of its antiquity) acquaints us that immediately after the Flood the years of man's life were shortened by no less than half. . . . *After the Flood* man's life was apparently shorter than it was before, for they fell from nine hundred, eight hundred, and seven hundred years to four hundred and three hundred, as we see in the age of Arphaxad, Salah, Heber : yea, they fell to two hundred and odd years, as we read of Peleg, Reu, Serug, and Tharah ; yea, they came down to less than two hundred years. In the space of a few years man's life was again cut shorter by almost half, if not a full half. We read that Abraham lived but one hundred and seventy-five years, so that man's age ran very low then. See the account given in Scripture of Nahor, Sarah, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (who died at a hundred) which confirms the same. And again the *third time*, man's life was shortened by almost *another half*, viz., about the year of the World 2,500, in Moses' time. For he sets the bounds of man's life thus : " The days of our years are threescore years and ten ; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow ; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Ps. xc. 10. Eighty years is the utmost limit he sets man's life at, *i.e.*, in the most ordinary and common account of man's life. Though some are of the opinion that these words do not give an account of the duration of man's life in general, but refer to the short lives of the Israelites in the wilderness, yet I do not see but it may take in both ; and Moses who composed the Psalm, lived a hundred and twenty years himself, yet he might speak of the common term of man's life, and what usually happened to the generality of men.—*John Edwards.*

Verse 10.—*" Their strength is labour and sorrow."* Most commonly old age is a feeble estate ; the very grasshopper is a burden to it. Eccl. xii. 5. Even the old man himself is a burden, to his wife, to his children, to himself. As Barzillai said to David, " I am this day fourscore years old : and can I discern between good and evil ? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink ? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women ? " 2 Sam. xix. 35. Old age, we say, is a good guest, and should be made welcome, but that he brings such a troop with him ; blindness, aches, coughs, etc. ; these are troublesome, how should they be welcome ? *" Their strength is labour and sorrow."* If their very strength, which is their best, be labour and grief, what is their worst ?—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 10.—*" Their strength is labour and sorrow."*—

> Unnumbered maladies his joints invade,
> Lay siege to life, and press the dire blockade.
> —*Samuel Johnson*, 1709—1784.

Verse 10.—"*Their strength.*" Properly, "*the pride*" of the days of our life is labour and sorrow—*i.e.*, our days at their best.—*Barth's* "***Bible Manual.***"

Verse 10.—"*We fly away.*"

Bird of my breast, away!
The long-wish'd hour is come!
On to the realms of cloudless day.
On to thy glorious home!

Long has been thine to mourn
In banishment and pain.
Return, thou wand'ring dove, return,
And find thy ark again!

Away, on joyous wing,
Immensity to range;
Around the throne to soar and sing,
And faith for sight exchange.

* * * * *

Flee, then, from sin and woe,
To joys immortal flee;
Quit thy dark prison-house below,
And be for ever free!

I come, ye blessed throng,
Your tasks and joys to share;
O, fill my lips with holy song,
My drooping wing upbear.

—*Henry Francis Lyte*, 1793—1847.

Verse 11.—"*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" We may take some scantling, some measure of the wrath of man, and know how far it can go, and what it can do, but we can take no measure of the wrath of God, for it is unmeasurable.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—"*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" None at all; and unless the power of that can be known, it must abide as unspeakable as the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 11.—Moses, I think, here means, that it is a holy awe of God, and that alone, which makes us truly and deeply feel his anger. We see that the reprobate, although they are severely punished, only chafe upon the bit, or kick against God, or become exasperated, or are stupefied, as if they were hardened against all calamities; so far are they from being subdued. And though they are full of trouble, and cry aloud, yet the Divine anger does not so penetrate their hearts as to abate their pride and fierceness. The minds of the godly alone are wounded with the wrath of God; nor do they wait for his thunder-bolts, to which the reprobate hold out their hard and iron necks, but they tremble the very moment when God moves only his little finger. This I consider to be the true meaning of the prophet.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 11.—"*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" etc. The meaning is, What man doth truly know and acknowledge the power of thy anger, according to that measure of fear wherewith thou oughtest to be feared? Note hence, how Moses and the people of God, though they feared God, yet notwithstanding confess that they failed in respect of that measure of the fear of God which they ought to have had; for we must not think, but Moses and some of his people did truly fear God. But yet in regard of the power of God's anger, which was now very great and grievous, their fear of God was not answerable and proportionable; then it is apparent that Moses and this people failed in respect of the measure of the fear of God which they ought to have had, in regard of the greatness and grievousness of the judgments of God upon them.

See, that the best of God's servants in this life fall short in their fear of God, and so in all graces of the Spirit; in that love of God, in faith, in repentance, and in obedience, we come short all of us of that which the Lord requires at our hands. For though we do know God, and that he is a just God, and righteous, and cannot wink at sin; yet what man is there that so fears before him as he ought to be feared? what man so quakes at his anger as he should; and is so afraid of sin as he ought to be? We have no grace here in perfection, but the best faith is mixed with infidelity; our hope with fear; our joy with sorrow. It is well we can discern our

wants and imperfections, and cry out with the man in the gospel, " I believe ; Lord, help my unbelief ! "—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 11.—" *Who knoweth the power of thine anger ?* " No man knows the power of God's anger, because that power has never yet put itself forth to its full stretch. Is there, then, no measure of God's wrath—no standard by which we may estimate its intenseness ? There is no fixed measure or standard, but there is a variable one. The wicked man's fear of God is a measure of the wrath of God. If we take the man as he may be sometime taken, when the angel of death is upon him, when the sins of his youth and of his maturer years throng him like an armed troop, and affright and afflict him—when with all his senses keenly alive to the rapid strides of bodily decay, he feels that he must die, and yet that he is not prepared—why, it may come to pass, it does occasionally, though not always come to pass, that his anticipations of the future are literally tremendous. There is such a fear and such a dread of that God into whose immediate presence he feels himself about to be ushered, that even they who love him best, and charm him most, shrink from the wildness of his gaze and the fearfulness of his speech. And we cannot tell the man, though he may be just delirious with apprehension, that his fear of God invests the wrath of God with a darker than its actual colouring. On the contrary, we know that " *according to the fear, so is the wrath.*" We know that if man's fear of God be wrought up to the highest pitch, and the mind throb so vehemently that its frame-work threaten to give way and crumble, we know that the wrath of the Almighty keeps pace with this gigantic fear. . . .

If it has happened to you—and there is not perhaps a man on the face of the earth to whom it does not sometimes happen—if it has ever happened to you to be crushed with the thought, that a life of ungodliness must issue in an eternity of woe, and if amid the solitude of midnight and amid the dejections of sickness there pass across the spirit the fitful figures of an avenging ministry, then we have to tell you, it is not the roar of battle which is powerful enough, nor the wail of orphans which is thrilling enough, to serve as the vehicle of such a communication ; we have to tell you, that you fly to a refuge of lies, if you dare flatter yourselves that either the stillness of the hour or the feebleness of disease has caused you to invest vengeance with too much of the terrible. We have to tell you, that the picture was not overdrawn which you drew in your agony. " *According to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*" Fear is but a mirror, which you may lengthen indefinitely, and widen indefinitely, and wrath lengthens with the lengthening and widens with the widening, still crowding the mirror with new and fierce forms of wasting and woe. We caution you, then, against ever cherishing the flattering notion, that fear can exaggerate God's wrath. We tell you, that when fear has done its worst, it can in no degree come up to the wrath which it images. . . .

Now, it is easy to pass from this view of the text to another, which is in a certain sense similar. You will always find, that men's apprehensions of God's wrath are nicely proportioned to the fear and reverence which are excited in them by the name and the attributes of God. He will have but light thoughts of future vengeance, who has but low thoughts of the character and properties of his Creator : and from this it comes to pass, that the great body of men betray a kind of stupid insensibility to the wrath of Jehovah. . . . Look at the crowd of the worldly and the indifferent. There is no fear of God in that crowd ; they are " of the earth earthy." The soul is sepulchred in the body, and has never wakened to a sense of its position with reference to a holy and avenging Creator. Now, then, you may understand the absence of all knowledge of the power of God's wrath. " *Who knoweth the power of thine anger ? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*"—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 11.—" *Who knoweth the power of thine anger ?* " etc. This he utters, 1. By way of lamentation. He sighing forth a most doleful complaint against the security and stupor he observed in that generation of men in his time, both in those that had already died in their sins, as well as of that new generation that had come up in their room, who still lived in their sins ; oh, says he, ' Who of them knoweth the power of thine anger ? ' namely, of that wrath which followeth after death, and seizeth upon men's souls for ever ; that is, who considers it, or regards it, till it take hold upon them ? He utters it, 2. In a way of astonishment, out of the apprehension he had of the greatness of that wrath. " *Who knoweth the power of thine anger ?* " that is, who hath or can take it in according to the greatness of it ? which he endeavours to set forth, as applying himself to our own apprehension, in this wise, " *Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*" Where those words, " *thy*

fear" are taken *objective*, and so signify the *fear of thee*; and so the meaning is, that according to whatever proportion our souls can take in, in fears of thee and of thine anger, so great is thy wrath itself. You have souls that are able to comprehend vast fears and terrors; they are as extensive in their fears as in their desires, which are stretched beyond what this world or the creatures can afford them, to an infinity. The soul of man is a dark cell, which when it begets fears once, strange and fearful apparitions rise up in it, which far exceed the ordinary proportion of worldly evils (which yet also our fears usually make greater than they prove to be); but here, as to that punishment which is the effect of God's own immediate wrath, let the soul enlarge itself, says he, and widen its apprehension to the utmost; fear what you can imagine, yet still God's wrath, and the punishment it inflicts, are not only proportionable, but infinitely exceeding all you can fear or imagine. *"Who knoweth the power of thine anger?"* It passeth knowledge.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12.—*"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."* Moses who was learned in all the sciences of the Egyptians (among which arithmetic was one) desireth to learn this point of arithmetic only of thee, O Lord; and why? Is it because, as Job speaketh, thou hast determined the number of his days? Would Moses have thee reveal to every man the moment of his end? Such speculations may well beseem an Egyptian, an Israelite they do not beseem. Thy children, O Lord, know that it is not for them so to know times and seasons which thou keepest in thine own power, and are a secret sealed up with thee: we should not pry into that counting-house, nor curiously inquire into that sum. It is not then a mathematical numbering of days that Moses would be schooled in, but a moral; he would have God not simply to teach him to number, but to number *"so"*; and *"so"* points out a special manner, a manner that may be useful for the children of God. And indeed our petitions must bear this mark of profitable desires, and we should not ask aught of thee but that by which (if we speed) we may become the better; he that so studies his mortality learns it as he should, and it is only thou, O Lord, that takest him out such a lesson. But what is the use, O Moses, that thou wouldst have man make of such a knowledge? *"Even to apply his heart unto wisdom."* O happy knowledge, by which a man becomes wise; for wisdom is the beauty of a reasonable soul. God created him therewith, but sin hath divorced the soul and wisdom; so that a sinful man is indeed no better than a fool, so the Scripture calleth him; and well it may call him so, seeing all his carriage is vain, and the upshot of his endeavours but vexation of spirit. But though sin have divorced wisdom and the soul, yet are they not so severed but they may be reunited; and nothing is more powerful in furthering this union than this feeling meditation—that we are mortal.—*Arthur Lake.*

Verse 12.—*"So teach us,"* etc. Moses sends you to God for teaching. "Teach thou us; not as the world teacheth—teach thou us." No meaner Master; no inferior school; not Moses himself except as he speaks God's word and becomes the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; not the prophets, not apostles themselves, neither "holy men of old," except as they "spake and were moved by the Holy Ghost." This knowledge comes not from flesh and blood, but from God. "So teach thou us." And so David says, "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in thy truth." And hence our Lord's promise to his disciples, "The Holy Ghost, he shall teach you all things."—*Charles Richard Sumner*, 1850.

Verse 12.—*"Teach us to number our days."* Mark what it is which Moses here prays for, only to be taught to number his days. But did he not do this already? Was it not his daily work this, his constant and continual employment? Yes, doubtless it was; yea, and he did it carefully and conscientiously too. But yet he thought he did it not well enough, and therefore prays here in the text to be taught to do better. See a good man, how little he pleaseth himself in any action of his life, in any performance of duty that he does. He can never think that he does well enough whatever he does, but still desires to do otherwise, and would fain do better. There is an affection of modesty and humility which still accompanies real piety; and every pious man is an humble, modest man, and never reckons himself a perfect proficient, or to be advanced above a teaching, but is content and covetous to be a continual learner; to know more than he knows and to do better than he does; yea, and thinks it no disparagement to his graces at all to take advice, and to seek instruction where it is to be had.—*Edm. Barker's Funeral Sermon for Lady Capell.* 1661.

Verse 12.—" *Teach us to number our days.*"

" Improve Time in time, while the Time doth last,
For all Time is no time, when the Time is past."

—*From Richard Pigot's " Life of Man, symbolised by the Months of the Year,"* 1866.

Verse 12.—" *Teach us to number our days.*" The proverbial oracles of our parsimonious ancestors have informed us that the fatal waste of fortune is by small expenses, by the profusion of sums too little singly to alarm our caution, and which we never suffer ourselves to consider together. Of the same kind is prodigality of life: he that hopes to look back hereafter with satisfaction upon past years, must learn to know the present value of single minutes, and endeavour to let no particle of time fall useless to the ground. An Italian philosopher expressed in his motto that time was his estate; an estate, indeed, that will produce nothing without cultivation, but will always abundantly repay the labours of industry, and satisfy the most extensive desires, if no part of it be suffered to lie waste by negligence, to be overrun by noxious plants, or laid out for show rather than for use.—*Samuel Johnson.*

Verse 12.—" *To number our days,*" is not simply to take the reckoning and admeasurement of human life. This has been done already in Holy Scripture, where it is said, " *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*" Nor yet is it, in the world's phrase, to calculate the chances of survivorship, which any man may do in the instance of the aggregate, but which no man can do in the case of the individual. But it is to take the measure of our days as compared with the work to be performed, with the provision to be laid up for eternity, with the preparation to be made for death, with the precaution to be taken against judgment. It is to estimate human life by the purposes to which it should be applied, by the eternity to which it must conduct, and in which it shall at last be absorbed. Under this aspect it is, that David contemplates man when he says, " *Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee,*" Ps. xxxix. 5; and then proceeds to include in this comprehensive estimate even those whose days have been the longest upon earth: " Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.—"*Thomas Dale,* 1847.

Verse 12.—" *To number our days.*" Number we our days by our daily prayers—number we them by our daily obedience and daily acts of love—number we them by the memories that they bring of holy men who have entered into their Saviour's peace, and by the hopes which are woven with them of glory and of grace won for us!—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 12.—" *Apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" Sir Thomas Smith, secretary to Queen Elizabeth, some months before his death said, That it was a great pity men knew not to what end they were born into this world, until they were ready to go out of it.—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 12.—" *Apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" St. Austin says, " We can never do that, except we number every day as our last day." Many put far the evil day. They refuse to leave the earth, when the earth is about to take its leave of them.—*William Secker.*

Verse 12.—" *Apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" Moses speaketh of *wisdom* as if it were physic, which doth no good before it be applied; and the part to apply it to is the *heart,* where all man's affections are to love it and to cherish it, like a kind of hostess. When the heart seeketh it findeth, as though it were brought unto her, like Abraham's ram. Therefore God saith, " They shall seek me and find me, because they shall seek me with their hearts," Jer. xxix. 13; as though they should not find him with all their seeking unless they did seek him with their heart. Therefore the way to get wisdom is to apply your hearts unto it, as if it were your calling and living, to which you were bound 'prentices. A man may apply his ears and his eyes as many truants do to their books, and yet never prove scholars; but from that day when a man begins to apply his heart unto wisdom, he learneth more in a month after than he did in a year before, nay, than ever he did in his life. Even as you see the wicked, because they apply their hearts to wickedness, how fast they proceed, how easily and how quickly they become perfect swearers, expert drunkards, cunning deceivers, so if ye could apply your hearts as thoroughly to knowledge and goodness, you might become like the apostle which teacheth you. Therefore, when Solomon sheweth men the way how to come by wisdom, he speaks

often of the heart, as, " Give thine heart to wisdom," " let wisdom enter into thine heart," " get wisdom," " keep wisdom," " embrace wisdom," Prov. ii. 10, iv. 5, xiii. 8, as though a man went a wooing for wisdom. Wisdom is like God's daughter, that he giveth to the man that loveth her, and sueth for her, and meaneth to set her at his heart. Thus we have learned how to apply knowledge that it may do us good ; not to our ears, like them which hear sermons only, nor to our tongues like them which make table-talk of religion, but to our hearts, that we may say with the virgin, " My heart doth magnify the Lord," Luke i., and the heart will apply it to the ear and to the tongue, as Christ saith, " *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*," Matt. xii. 34.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 12.—Of all arithmetical rules this is the hardest—*to number our days.* Men can number their herds and droves of oxen and of sheep, they can estimate the revenues of their manors and farms, they can with a little pains number and tell their coins, and yet they are persuaded that their days are infinite and innumerable and therefore do never begin to number them. Who saith not upon the view of another, surely yonder man looketh by his countenance as if he would not live long, or yonder woman is old, her days cannot be many : thus we can number other men's days and years, and utterly forget our own, therefore this is the true wisdom of mortal men, to number their own days.—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 12.—Observe here, after that Moses had given us a description of the wrath of God, presently his thoughts are taken up with the meditation of death. The wrath of God thought on makes us think of death. . . . Let us often think of the wrath of God, and let the thought of it so far work upon us, as to keep us in a constant awe and fear of God ; and let this fear drive us to God by prayer, that fearing as we ought, we may pray as we are commanded, and praying, we may prevent the wrath of God. If our present sorrows do not move us, God will send greater ; and when our sorrows are grown too great for us, we shall have little heart or comfort to pray. Let our fears then quicken our prayers ; and let our prayers be such as are able to overcome our fears : so both ways shall we be happy, in that our fears have taught us to pray, and our prayers have made us to fear no more.—*Christopher Shute, in " Ars pié moriendi : or, The true Accomptant. A Sermon,"* etc., 1658.

Verse 12.—It is evident, that the great thing wanted to make men provide for eternity, is the practical persuasion that they have but a short time to live. They will not apply their hearts unto wisdom until they are brought to the numbering of their days. And how are you to be brought, my brethren ? The most surprising thing in the text is, that it should be in the form of a prayer. It is necessary that God should interfere to make men number their days. We call this surprising. What ! is there not enough to make us feel our frailty, without an actual, supernatural impression ? What ! are there not lessons enough of that frailty without any new teaching from above ? Go into our churchyards—all ages speak to all ranks. Can we need more to prove to us the uncertainty of life ? Go into mourning families—and where are they not to be found ?—in this it is the old, in that it is the young, whom death has removed—and is there not eloquence in tears to persuade us that we are mortal ? Can it be that in treading every day on the dust of our fathers, and meeting every day with the funerals of our brethren, we shall not yet be practically taught to number our days, unless God print the truth on our hearts, through some special operation of his Spirit ? It is not thus in other things. In other things the frequency of the occurrence makes us expect it. The husbandman does not pray to be made believe that the seed must be buried and die before it will germinate. This has been the course of the grain of every one else, and where there is so much experience what room is there for prayer ? The mariner does not pray to be taught that the needle of his compass points towards the north. The needle of every compass has so pointed since the secret was discovered, and he has not to ask when he is already so sure. The benighted man does not pray to be made to feel that the sun will rise in a few hours. Morning has succeeded to night since the world was made, and why should he ask what he knows too well to doubt ? But in none of these things is there greater room for assurance than we have each one for himself, in regard to its being appointed to him once to die. Nevertheless, we must pray to be made to know—to be made to feel—that we are to die, in the face of an experience which is certainly not less than that of the parties to whom we have referred. This is a petition that we may believe, believe as they do : for they act on their belief in the fact, which this experience incontestably attests.

And we may say of this, that it is amongst the strangest of the strange things that may be affirmed of human nature, that whilst, in regard to inferior concerns, we can carefully avail ourselves of experience, taking care to register its decisions and to deduce from them rules for our guidance—in the mightiest concern of all we can act as though experience had furnished no evidence, and we were left without matter from which to draw inferences. And, nevertheless, in regard to nothing else is the experience so uniform. The grain does not always germinate—but every man dies. The needle does not always point due north—but every man dies. The sun does not cross the horizon in every place in every twenty-four hours—but every man dies. Yet we must pray—pray as for the revelation of a mystery hidden from our gaze—we must pray to be made to know—to be made to believe—that every man dies! For I call it not belief, and our text calls it not belief, in the shortness of life and the certainty of death, which allows men to live without thought of eternity, without anxiety as to the soul, or without an effort to secure to themselves salvation. I call it not belief—no, no, anything rather than belief. Men are rational beings, beings of forethought, disposed to make provision for what they feel to be inevitable; and if there were not a practical infidelity as to their own mortality, they could not be practically reckless as to their own safety.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 12.—"*So teach us to number our days,*" etc. Five things I note in these words: first, that death is the haven of every man; whether he sit on the throne, or keep in a cottage, at last he must knock at death's door, as all his fathers have done before him. Secondly, that man's time is set, and his bounds appointed, which he cannot pass, no more than the Egyptians could pass the sea; and therefore Moses saith, "*Teach us to number our days,*" as though there were a number of our days. Thirdly, that our days are few, as though we were sent into this world but to see it; and therefore Moses, speaking of our life, speaks of days, not of years, nor of months, nor of weeks; but "*Teach us to number our days,*" shewing that it is an easy thing even for a man to number his days, they be so few. Fourthly, the aptness of man to forget death rather than anything else; and therefore Moses prayeth the Lord to teach him to number his days, as though they were still slipping out of his mind. Lastly, that to remember how short a time we have to live, will make us apply our hearts to that which is good.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 12.—"*Our hearts.*" In both the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the term "*heart*" is applied alike to the mind that thinks, to the spirit that feels, and the will that acts. And it here stands for the whole mental and moral nature of man, and implies that the whole soul and spirit, with all their might, are to be applied in the service of wisdom.—*William Brown Keer*, 1863.

Verse 12.—"*Wisdom.*" I consider this "*wisdom*" identical with the hypostatic *wisdom* described by Solomon, Prov. vii. 15—31, and ix. 1, 5, even Immanuel, the *wisdom*, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of his people. The chief pursuit of life should be the attainment of an experimental knowledge of Christ, by whom "kings reign and princes decree justice; whose delights are with the sons of men, and who crieth, Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." David in the Psalms, and Solomon, his son, in the Proverbs, have predictively manifested Messiah as the hypostatic *wisdom*, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."—*J. N. Coleman.*

Verse 13.—"*Let it repent thee.*" According to the not unfrequent and well known phraseology of Scripture, God is said to repent, when putting away men's sorrow, and affording new ground of gladness, he appears as it were to be changed.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*O satisfy us with thy mercy.*" A poor hungry soul lying under sense of wrath, will promise to itself happiness for ever, if it can but once again find what it hath sometimes felt; that is, one sweet fill of God's sensible mercy towards it.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 14.—"*O satisfy us.*" That is everywhere and evermore the cry of humanity. And what a strange cry it is, when you think of it, brethren! Man is the offspring of God; the bearer of his image; he stands at the head of the terrestrial creation; on earth he is peerless; he possesses wondrous capacities of thought, and feeling, and action. The world, and all that is in it, has been formed in a complete and beautiful adaptation to his being. Nature seems to be ever calling to him with a

thousand voices, to be glad and rejoice; and yet he is unsatisfied, discontented, miserable! This is a most strange thing—strange, that is, on any theory respecting man's character and condition, but that which is supplied by the Bible; and it is not only a testimony to the ruin of his nature, but also to the insufficiency of everything earthly to meet his cravings.—*Charles M. Merry*, 1864.

Verse 14.—"*O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*" We pass now to this particular prayer, and those limbs that make up the body of it. They are many; as many as words in it: satisfy, and satisfy us, and do that early, and do that with that which is thine, and let that be mercy. So that first it is a prayer for fulness and satisfaction,—*satisfy:* and then it is a prayer not only of appropriation to ourselves, satisfy me, but of a charitable dilation and extension to others, satisfy *us*, all us, all thy servants, all thy church; and then thirdly it is a prayer of despatch and expedition, "Satisfy us *early;*" and after that, it is a prayer of evidence and manifestation, satisfy us with that which is, and which we may discern to be *thine*; and then lastly it is a prayer of limitation even upon God himself, that God will take no other way herein but the way of "*mercy.*" "*Satisfy us early with thy mercy.*" . . . . . There is a spiritual fulness in this life of which St. Hierome speaks, *Ebrietas felix, satietas salutaris*, A happy excess and a wholesome surfeit; *quæ quanto copiosius sumitur, majorem donat sobrietatem.* In which the more we eat, the more temperate we are, and the more we drink, the more sober. In which (as St. Bernard also expresses it in his mellifluence) *Mutua interminabili inexplicabili generatione, desiderium generat satietatem, et satietas parit desiderium*, By a mutual and reciprocal, by an undeterminable and inexpressible generation of one another, the desire of spiritual graces begets a satiety, and then this satiety begets a farther desire. This is a holy ambition, a sacred covetousness. Naphtali's blessing, "*O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord,*" Deut. xxxiii. 23; St. Stephen's blessing, "*Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,*" Acts vi. 5; the blessed Virgin's blessing, "*Full of grace*"; Dorcas' blessing, "*Full of good works and of alms-deeds,*" Acts ix. 36; the blessing of him who is blessed above all, and who blesseth all, even Christ Jesus, "*Full of wisdom, full of the Holy Ghost, full of grace and truth.*" Luke ii. 40, Luke iv. 1, John i. 14. . . . . "*Satisfy us early with*" that which is thine, "*thy mercy;*" for there are mercies (in a fair extent and accommodation of the word, that is refreshings, eases, deliverances), that are not *his* mercies, nor his satisfactions. . . . . It is not his mercy, except we go by good ways to good ends; except our safety be established by alliance with his friends, except our peace may be had with the perfect continuance of our religion, there is no safety, there is no peace. But let me feel the effect of this prayer, as it is a prayer of manifestation, let me discern that that which is done upon me is done by the hand of God, and I care not what it be, I had rather have God's vinegar, than man's oil, God's wormwood, than man's manna, God's justice, than any man's mercy; for therefore did Gregory Nyssen call St. Basil in a holy sense, Ambidextrum, because he took everything that came by the right handle, and with the right hand, because he saw it come from God. Even afflictions are welcome when we see them to be his: though the way that he would choose, and the way that this prayer entreats, be only mercy, "*Satisfy us early with thy mercy.*"—*John Donne.*

Verse 16.—"*And thy glory unto their children.*" That is to say, that our children may see the glorious fruit of this affliction in us, that so they may not be discouraged thereby to serve thee, but rather the more heartened, when they shall see what a glorious work thou hast wrought in and upon us by afflicting us.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verses 16, 17.—"*Thy work.*" "*The work of our hands.*" You will observe a beautiful parallelism between two things which are sometimes confounded and sometimes too jealously sundered: I mean *God's agency* and *man's instrumentality*, between man's personal activity and that power of God which actuates and animates, and gives it a vital efficacy. For forty years it had been the business of Moses to bring Israel into a right state politically, morally, religiously: *that* had been *his* work. And yet, in so far as it was to have any success or enduringness, it must be God's work. "The work of our hands" do thou establish; and this God does when, in answer to prayer, he adopts the works of his servants, and makes it his own "work," his own "glory," his own "beauty."—*James Hamilton.*

Verses 16, 17.—There is a twofold Rabbinical tradition respecting this verse and the preceding one; that they were the original prayer recited by Moses as a

blessing on the work of making the Tabernacle and its ornaments, and that subsequently he employed them as the usual formula of benediction for any newly undertaken task, whenever God's *glorious Majesty* was to be consulted for an answer by Urim and Thummim.—*Lyranus, R. Shelomo, and Genebrardus, quoted by Neale.*

Verses 16, 17.—They were content to live and to die as pilgrims, provided only they could feel that in his sterner dealings with them God was, however slowly, preparing the way for that display of glorious blessedness which should be the lot of their descendants. In a similar spirit they ask God to establish the work of their hands, though they reckoned not that they should behold its results. Their comfort in sowing was the belief that their children would reap.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verses 16, 17.—It is worthy of notice that this prayer was answered. Though the first generation fell in the wilderness, yet the labours of Moses and his companions were blessed to the second. These were the most devoted to God of any generation that Israel ever saw. It was of them that the Lord said, " I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." It was then that Balaam could not curse, but, though desirous of the wages of unrighteousness, was compelled to forego them, and his curse was turned into a blessing. We are taught by this case, amidst temporal calamities and judgments, in which our earthly hopes may be in a manner extinguished, to seek to have the loss repaired by spiritual blessings. If God's work does but appear to us, and our posterity after us, we need not be dismayed at the evils which afflict the earth.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 17.—" *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,*" etc. Let us try to look at our life's work in relation to the Lord's beauty. Our *work* and Divine *Beauty*, at first sight, how different; yet, on deeper insight, how truly *one*, how inseparably united. There is light so beauty-giving, that nothing it touches is positively ugly. In our sea-girt island, with our fickle climate and grey atmosphere, we can only rarely imagine what magic power the serene skies, the balmy air, the sunny atmosphere of the South have over even the least interesting object in nature; but from certain hours, in certain places, I think we may form an idea of the transforming faculty of light.

There is also spiritual light, so beauty-inspiring, that the plainest face within which it is born is illumined with singular loveliness, which wins its way into many a heart. Who of us has not marvelled at an unexpected light, in what we had always thought an uninteresting face? Who has not beheld a light divine irradiate the human countenance, giving joy, and prophesying perfection, where we had least thought to find beauty? May we not take these facts as emblems, albeit faint and imperfect, of what the " *Beauty of the Lord* " does for us, and our work? You know what the natural light can do for material objects; you know what mental and moral light can work for human faces; rise from these, and know what spiritual light, Divine Light, can do for immortal beings and immortal works.—*Jessie Coombs, in " Thoughts for the Inner Life,"* 1867.

Verse 17.—" *The beauty of the Lord.*" In the word נֹעַם (beauty) there is something like a deluge of grace. Thus far, he says, we have sought thy work, O Lord. There we do nothing, but are only spectators and recipients of thy gifts, we are merely passive. There thou showest thyself to us, and makest us safe, by thy work alone, which thou doest, when thou dost liberate us from that disease which Satan inflicted on the whole human race in Adam, to wit, Sin and Eternal death.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 17.—God is glorified and his work advances when his church is beautiful. " *The beauty of the Lord* " is the beauty of holiness,—that beauty which in the Lord Jesus himself shone with lustre so resplendent, and which ought to be repeated or reflected by every disciple. And it is towards this that all amongst us who love the Saviour, and who long for the extension of his Kingdom, should very mainly direct their endeavours. Nothing can be sadder than when preaching or personal effort is contradicted and neutralized by the low or unlovely lives of those who pass for Christians; and nothing can go further to insure success than when prayer is carried out and preaching is seconded by the pure, holy, and benevolent lives of those who seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.—*James Hamilton.*

Verse 17.—" *The work of our hands.*" Jarchi interprets this of the work of the Tabernacle, in which the hands of the Israelites were employed in the wilderness; so Arama of the Tabernacle of Bezaleel.—*John Gill.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The near and dear relation between God and his people, so that they mutually dwell in each other.

Verse 1.—The abode of the church the same in all ages; her relation to God never changes.

Verse 1.—I. The soul is at home in God. 1. Originally. Its birth-place—its native air—home of its thoughts, will, conscience, affections, desires. 2. Experimentally. When it returns here it feels itself at home: "Return unto thy rest," etc. 3. Eternally. The soul, once returned to this home, never leaves it: "it shall go no more out for ever." II. The soul is not at home elsewhere. "Our dwelling place," etc. 1. For all men. 2. At all times. He is ever the same, and the wants of the soul substantially are ever the same.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—A Discourse upon the Eternity of God. S. Charnock. Works I. pp. 344—373, Nichol's Edition.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The consideration of God's eternity may serve, I. For the support of our faith; in reference to our own condition for the future; in reference to our posterity; and to the condition of God's church to the end of the world. II. For the encouragement of our obedience. We serve the God, who can give us an everlasting reward. III. For the terror of wicked men.—*Tillotson's Sermon on the Eternity of God.*

Verse 3.—I. The cause of death—"thou turnest." II. The nature of death—"return." III. The necessities of death—reconciliation with God, and preparation to return.

Verse 4.—I. Contemplate the lengthened period with all its events. II. Consider what he must be to whom all this is as nothing. III. Consider how we stand towards him.

Verse 5.—Comparison of mortal life to sleep. See William Bradshaw's remarks in our Notes on this verse.

Verses 5, 6.—The lesson of the Meadows. I. Grass growing the emblem of youth. II. Grass flowering—or man in his prime. III. The scythe. IV. Grass mown—or man at death.

Verse 7.—I. Man's chief troubles are the effect of death. 1. His own death. 2. The death of others. II. Death is the effect of Divine anger: "We are consumed by," etc. III. Divine anger is the effect of sin. Death by sin.—*G. R.*

Verse 8.—I. The notice which God takes of sin. 1. Individual. "*Our* iniquities." 2. Universal notice—"iniquities"—not one only, but all. 3. Minute, even the most secret sins. 4. Constant: "Set them before" him—"in the light," etc. II. The notice which we should take of them on that account. 1. In our thoughts. Set them before us. 2. In our consciences. Condemn ourselves on account of them. 3. In our wills. Turn from them by repentance—turn to a pardoning God by faith.—*G. R.*

Verse 9.—I. Every man has a history. His life is as a tale—a separate tale—to be told. II. Every man's history has some display of God in it. All our days, some may say, are passed away in thy wrath—all, others may say, in thy love—and others, some of our days in anger and some in love. III. Every man's history will be told. In death, at judgment, through eternity.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—I. What life is *to* most. It seldom reaches its natural limits. One half die in childhood: more than half of the other half die in manhood; few attain to old age. II. What life is *at* most. "Threescore years," etc. III. What it is to most beyond that limit. "If by reason," etc. IV. What it is to all. "It is soon cut off," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 11.—I. The anger of God against sin is not fully known by its effects in this life. "Who knoweth the power," etc. Here we see the hidings of its power. II. The anger of God against sin hereafter is equal to our greatest fears. "According to thy fear," etc.; or, "the fear of thee," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—I. The Reckoning. 1. What their usual number. 2. How many of them are already spent. 3. How uncertain the number that remains. 4. How much of them must be occupied with the necessary duties of this life. 5. What afflictions and helplessness may attend them. II. The use to be made of it. 1. To "seek wisdom"—not riches, worldly honours, or pleasures—but wisdom; not the wisdom of the world, but of God. 2. To "apply the heart" to it. Not mental

merely, but moral wisdom; not speculative merely, but experimental; not theoretical merely, but practical. 3. To seek it at once—immediately. 4. To seek it constantly—"*apply* our hearts," etc. III. The help to be sought in it. "So teach us," etc. 1. Our own ability is insufficient through the perversion both of the mind and heart by sin. 2. Divine help may be obtained. "If any man lack wisdom," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—The Sense of Mortality. Show the variety of blessings dispensed to different classes by the right use of the sense of mortality. I. It may be an antidote for the sorrowful. Reflect, "there is an end." II. It should be a restorative to the labouring. III. It should be a remedy for the impatient. IV. As a balm to the wounded in heart. V. As a corrective for the worldly. VI. As a sedative to the frivolous.—*R. Andrew Griffin, in "Stems and Twigs,"* 1872.

Verse 13.—In what manner the Lord may be said to repent.

Verse 14 (*first clause*).—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 513: "The Young Man's Prayer."

Verse 14.—I. The deepest yearning of man is for satisfaction. II. Satisfaction can only be found in the realization of Divine mercy.—*C. M. Merry*, 1864.

Verse 14.—"*O satisfy us early with thy mercy,*" etc. Learn, 1. That our souls can have no solid satisfaction in earthly things. 2. That the mercy of God alone can satisfy our souls. 3. That nothing but satisfaction in God can fill our days with joy and gladness.—*John Cawood*, 1842.

Verse 14.—I. The most cheerful days of earth are made more cheerful by thoughts of Divine mercy. II. The most sorrowful days of earth are made glad by the consciousness of Divine love.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—I. The joy of faith is in proportion to the sorrow of repentance. II. The joy of consolation is in proportion to suffering in affliction. III. The joy of the returning smiles of God is in proportion to the terror of his frowns.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—The Balance of life, or the manner in which our joys are set over against our sorrows.

Verse 16.—I. Our duty—"work," and our desire about it. II. Our children's portion—"glory," and our prayer in reference to it.

Verse 17.—The Right Establishment, or the work which will endure—why it will endure and should endure. Why we wish our work to be of such a nature, and whether there are enduring elements in it.

PSALM XCI.

This Psalm is without a title, and we have no means of ascertaining either the name of its writer, or the date of its composition, with certainty. The Jewish doctors consider that when the author's name is not mentioned we may assign the Psalm to the last-named writer; and, if so, this is another Psalm of Moses, the man of God. Many expressions here used are similar to those of Moses in Deuteronomy, and the internal evidence, from the peculiar idioms, would point towards him as the composer. The continued lives of Joshua and Caleb, who followed the Lord fully, make remarkably apt illustrations of this Psalm, for they, as a reward for abiding in continued nearness to the Lord, lived on "amongst the dead, amid their graves." For these reasons it is by no means improbable that this Psalm may have been written by Moses, but we dare not dogmatize. If David's pen was used in giving us this matchless ode, we cannot believe as some do that he thus commemorated the plague which devastated Jerusalem on account of his numbering the people. For him, then, to sing of himself as seeing "the reward of the wicked" would be clean contrary to his declaration, "I have sinned, but these sheep, what have they done?"; and the absence of any allusion to the sacrifice upon Zion could not be in any way accounted for, since David's repentance would inevitably have led him to dwell upon the atoning sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood by the hyssop.

In the whole collection there is not a more cheering Psalm, its tone is elevated and sustained throughout, faith is at its best, and speaks nobly. A German physician was wont to speak of it as the best preservative in times of cholera, and in truth it is a heavenly medicine against plague and pest. He who can live in its spirit will be fearless, even if once again London should become a lazar-house, and the grave be gorged with carcases.

DIVISION.—*On this occasion we shall follow the divisions which our translators have placed at the head of the Psalm, for they are pithy and suggestive.* 1. *The state of the godly.* 3. *Their safety.* 9. *Their habitation.* 11. *Their servants.* 14. *Their friend; with the effects of them all.*

EXPOSITION.

HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

1. "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High.*" The blessings here promised are not for all believers, but for those who live in close fellowship with God. Every child of God looks towards the inner sanctuary and the mercy-seat, yet all do not *dwell* in the most holy place; they run to it at times, and enjoy occasional approaches, but they do not habitually reside in the mysterious presence. Those who through rich grace obtain unusual and continuous communion with God, so as to abide in Christ and Christ in them, become possessors of rare and special benefits, which are missed by those who follow afar off, and grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Into the secret place those only come who know the love of God in Christ Jesus, and those only *dwell* there to whom to live is Christ. To them the veil is rent, the mercy-seat is revealed, the covering cherubs are manifest, and the awful glory of the Most High is apparent: these, like Simeon, have the Holy Ghost upon them, and like Anna they depart not from the temple; they are the courtiers of the Great King, the valiant men who keep watch around the bed of Solomon, the virgin souls who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Elect out of the elect, they have "attained unto the first three," and shall walk with their Lord in white, for they are worthy. Sitting down in the august presence-chamber where shines the mystic light of the Sheckinah, they know what it is to be raised up together, and to be made to sit together with Christ in the heavenlies, and of them it is truly said that their conversation is in heaven. Special grace like theirs brings with it special immunity. Outer court worshippers little know what

belongs to the inner sanctuary, or surely they would press on until the place of nearness and divine familiarity became theirs. Those who are the Lord's constant guests shall find that he will never suffer any to be injured within his gates; he has eaten the covenant salt with them, and is pledged for their protection.

"*Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*" The Omnipotent Lord will shield all those who dwell with him, they shall remain under his care as guests under the protection of their host. In the most holy place the wings of the cherubim were the most conspicuous objects, and they probably suggested to the Psalmist the expression here employed. Those who commune with God are safe with him, no evil can reach them, for the outstretched wings of his power and love cover them from all harm. This protection is constant—they *abide* under it, and it is all-sufficient, for it is the shadow of *the Almighty*, whose omnipotence will surely screen them from all attack. No shelter can be imagined at all comparable to the protection of Jehovah's own shadow. The Almighty himself is where his shadow is, and hence those who dwell in his secret place are shielded by himself. What a shade in the day of noxious heat! What a refuge in the hour of deadly storm! Communion with God is safety. The more closely we cling to our Almighty Father the more confident may we be.

2. "*I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress.*" To take up a general truth and make it our own by personal faith is the highest wisdom. It is but poor comfort to say 'the Lord is a refuge,' but to say he is *my* refuge, is the essence of consolation. Those who believe should also speak—"I will *say*," for such bold avowals honour God and lead others to seek the same confidence. Men are apt enough to proclaim their doubts, and even to boast of them, indeed there is a party nowadays of the most audacious pretenders to culture and thought, who glory in casting suspicion upon everything; hence it becomes the duty of all true believers to speak out and testify with calm courage to their own well-grounded reliance upon their God. Let others say what they will, be it ours to say of the Lord, "he is our *refuge*." But what we say we must prove by our actions, we must fly to the Lord for shelter, and not to an arm of flesh. The bird flies away to the thicket, and the fox hastens to its hole, every creature uses its refuge in the hour of danger, and even so in all peril or fear of peril let us flee unto Jehovah, the Eternal Protector of his own. Let us, when we are secure in the Lord, rejoice that our position is unassailable, for he is our *fortress* as well as our refuge. No moat, portcullis, drawbridge, wall, battlement and donjon, could make us so secure as we are when the attributes of the Lord of Hosts environ us around. Behold this day the Lord is to us instead of walls and bulwarks! Our ramparts defy the leaguered hosts of hell. Foes in flesh, and foes in ghostly guise are alike baulked of their prey when the Lord of Hosts stands between us and their fury, and all other evil forces are turned aside. Walls cannot keep out the pestilence, but the Lord can.

As if it were not enough to call the Lord his refuge and fortress, he adds, "*My God! in him will I trust.*" Now he can say no more; "my God" means all, and more than all, that heart can conceive by way of security. It was most meet that he should say "in him will I trust," since to deny faith to such a one were wilful wickedness and wanton insult. He who dwells in an impregnable fortress, naturally trusts in it; and shall not he who dwells in God feel himself well at ease, and repose his soul in safety? O that we more fully carried out the Psalmist's resolve! We have trusted in God, let us trust him still. He has never failed us, why then should we suspect him? To trust in man is natural to fallen nature, to trust in God should be as natural to regenerated nature. Where there is every reason and warrant for faith, we ought to place our confidence without hesitancy or wavering. Dear reader, pray for grace to say, "In *him* will I trust."

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day;

6 *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.

7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

3. "*Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.*" Assuredly no subtle plot shall succeed against one who has the eyes of God watching for his defence. We are foolish and weak as poor little birds, and are very apt to be lured to our destruction by cunning foes, but if we dwell near to God, he will see to it that the most skilful deceiver shall not entrap us.

> "Satan the fowler who betrays
> Unguarded souls a thousand ways,"

shall be foiled in the case of the man whose high and honourable condition consists in residence within the holy place of the Most High. "*And from the noisome pestilence.*" He who is a Spirit can protect us from evil spirits, he who is mysterious can rescue us from mysterious dangers, he who is immortal can redeem us from mortal sickness. There is a deadly pestilence of error, we are safe from that if we dwell in communion with the God of truth; there is a fatal pestilence of sin, we shall not be infected by it if we abide with the thrice Holy One; there is also a pestilence of disease, and even from that calamity our faith shall win immunity if it be of that high order which abides in God, walks on in calm serenity, and ventures all things for duty's sake. Faith by cheering the heart keeps it free from the fear which, in times of pestilence, kills more than the plague itself. It will not in all cases ward off disease and death, but where the man is such as the first verse describes, it will assuredly render him immortal where others die; if all the saints are not so sheltered it is because they have not all such a close abiding with God, and consequently not such confidence in the promise. Such special faith is not given to all, for there are diversities in the measure of faith. It is not of all believers that the Psalmist sings, but only of those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High. Too many among us are weak in faith, and in fact place more reliance in a phial or a globule than in the Lord and giver of life, and if we die of pestilence as others die it is because we acted like others, and did not in patience possess our souls. The great mercy is that in such a case our deaths are blessed, and it is well with us, for we are for ever with the Lord. Pestilence to the saints shall not be noisome but the messenger of heaven.

4. "*He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.*" A wonderful expression! Had it been invented by an uninspired man it would have verged upon blasphemy, for who should dare to apply such words to the Infinite Jehovah? But as he himself authorised, yea, dictated the language, we have here a transcendent condescension, such as it becomes us to admire and adore. Doth the Lord speak of his feathers, as though he likened himself to a bird? Who will not see herein a matchless love, a divine tenderness, which should both woo and win our confidence? Even as a hen covereth her chickens so doth the Lord protect the souls which dwell in him; let us cower down beneath him for comfort and for safety. Hawks in the sky and snares in the field are equally harmless when we nestle so near the Lord. "*His truth*"—his true promise, and his faithfulness to his promise "*shall be thy shield and buckler.*" Double armour has he who relies upon the Lord. He bears a shield and wears an all-surrounding coat of mail—such is the force of the word "buckler." To quench fiery darts the truth is a most effectual shield, and to blunt all swords it is an equally effectual coat of mail. Let us go forth to battle thus harnessed for the war, and we shall be safe in the thickest of the fight. It has been so, and so shall it be till we reach the land of peace, and there among the "helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim," we will wear no other ornament, his truth shall still be our shield and buckler.

5. "*Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.*" Such frail creatures are we that both by night and by day we are in danger, and so sinful are we that in either season we may be readily carried away by fear; the promise before us secures the favourite of heaven both from danger and from the fear of it. Night is the congenial hour of horrors, when alarms walk abroad like beasts of prey, or ghouls from among the tombs; our fears turn the sweet season of repose into one of dread, and though angels are abroad and fill our chambers, we dream of demons and dire visitants from hell. Blessed is that communion with God which renders us im-

pervious to midnight frights, and horrors born of darkness. Not to be afraid is in itself an unspeakable blessing, since for every suffering which we endure from real injury we are tormented by a thousand griefs which arise from fear only. The shadow of the Almighty removes all gloom from the shadow of night: once covered by the divine wing, we care not what winged terrors may fly abroad in the earth. "*Nor for the arrow that flieth by day.*" Cunning foes lie in ambuscade, and aim the deadly shaft at our hearts, but we do not fear them, and have no cause to do so. That arrow is not made which can destroy the righteous, for the Lord hath said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." In times of great danger those who have made the Lord their refuge, and therefore have refused to use the carnal weapon, have been singularly preserved; the annals of the Quakers bear good evidence to this; yet probably the main thought is, that from the cowardly attacks of crafty malice those who walk by faith shall be protected, from cunning heresies they shall be preserved, and in sudden temptations they shall be secured from harm. Day has its perils as well as night, arrows more deadly than those poisoned by the Indian are flying noiselessly through the air, and we shall be their victims unless we find both shield and buckler in our God. O believer, dwell under the shadow of the Lord, and none of the archers shall destroy thee, they may shoot at thee and wound thee grievously, but thy bow shall abide in strength. When Satan's quiver shall be empty thou shalt remain uninjured by his craft and cruelty, yea, his broken darts shall be to thee as trophies of the truth and power of the Lord thy God.

6. "*Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness.*" It is shrouded in mystery as to its cause and cure, it marches on, unseen of men, slaying with hidden weapons, like an enemy stabbing in the dark, yet those who dwell in God are not afraid of it. Nothing is more alarming than the assassin's plot, for he may at any moment steal in upon a man, and lay him low at a stroke; and such is the plague in the days of its power, none can promise themselves freedom from it for an hour in any place in the infected city; it enters a house men know not how, and its very breath is mortal; yet those choice souls who dwell in God shall live above fear in the most plague-stricken places—they *shall not be afraid of the "plagues which in the darkness walk." "Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*" Famine may starve, or bloody war devour, earthquake may overturn and tempest may smite, but amid all, the man who has sought the mercy seat and is sheltered beneath the wings which overshadow it, shall abide in perfect peace. Days of horror and nights of terror are for other men, his days and nights are alike spent with God, and therefore pass away in sacred quiet. His peace is not a thing of times and seasons, it does not rise and set with the sun, nor does it depend upon the healthiness of the atmosphere or the security of the country. Upon the child of the Lord's own heart pestilence has no destroying power, and calamity no wasting influence: pestilence walks in darkness, but he dwells in light; destruction wastes at noonday, but upon him another sun has risen whose beams bring restoration. Remember that the voice which saith "thou shalt not fear" is that of God himself, who hereby pledges his word for the safety of those who abide under his shadow, nay, not for their safety only, but for their serenity. So far shall they be from being injured that they shall not even be made to fear the ills which are around them, since the Lord protects them.

> "He, his shadowy plumes outspread,
> With his wing shall fence thy head:
> And his truth around thee wield,
> Strong as targe or bossy shield!
> Naught shall strike thee with dismay,
> Fear by night, nor shaft by day."

7. "*A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand.*" So terribly may the plague rage among men that the bills of mortality may become very heavy and continue to grow ten times heavier still, yet shall such as this Psalm speaks of survive the scythe of death. "*It shall not come nigh thee.*" It shall be so near as to be at thy side, and yet not nigh enough to touch thee; like a fire it shall burn all around, yet shall not the smell of it pass upon thee. How true is this of the plague of moral evil, of heresy, and of backsliding. Whole nations are infected, yet the man who communes with God is not affected by the contagion; he holds the truth when falsehood is all the fashion. Professors all around him are

plague-smitten, the church is wasted, the very life of religion decays, but in the same place and time, in fellowship with God, the believer renews his youth, and his soul knows no sickness. In a measure this also is true of physical evil; the Lord still puts a difference between Israel and Egypt in the day of his plagues. Sennacherib's army is blasted, but Jerusalem is in health.

"Our God his chosen people saves
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves."

8. "*Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.*" The sight shall reveal both the justice and the mercy of God; in them that perish the severity of God will be manifest, and in the believer's escape the richness of divine goodness will be apparent. Joshua and Caleb verified this promise. The Puritan preachers during the plague of London must have been much impressed with this verse as they came out of their hiding-places to proclaim mercy and judgment to the dissolute age which was so sorely visited with the pest. The sight of God's judgments softens the heart, excites a solemn awe, creates gratitude, and so stirs up the deepest kind of adoration. It is such a sight as none of us would wish to see, and yet if we did see it we might thus be lifted up to the very noblest style of manhood. Let us but watch providence, and we shall find ourselves living in a school where examples of the ultimate reward of sin are very plentiful. One case may not be judged alone lest we misjudge, but instances of divine visitation will be plentiful in the memory of any attentive observer of men and things; from all these put together we may fairly draw conclusions, and unless we shut our eyes to that which is self-evident, we shall soon perceive that there is after all a moral ruler over the sons of men, who sooner or later rewards the ungodly with due punishment.

9 Because thou hast made the LORD *which is* my refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation;

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

9, 10. Before expounding these verses I cannot refrain from recording a personal incident illustrating their power to soothe the heart, when they are applied by the Holy Spirit. In the year 1854, when I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighbourhood in which I laboured was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. I gave myself up with youthful ardour to the visitation of the sick, and was sent for from all corners of the district by persons of all ranks and religions. I became weary in body and sick at heart. My friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest; I felt that my burden was heavier than I could bear, and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dover Road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it, for it bore in a good bold handwriting these words:—"*Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.*" The effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm. The providence which moved the tradesman to place those verses in his window I gratefully acknowledge, and in the remembrance of its marvellous power I adore the Lord my God.

The Psalmist in these verses assures the man who dwells in God that he shall be secure. Though faith claims no merit of its own, yet the Lord rewards it wherever he sees it. He who *makes* God his refuge shall find him a refuge; he who dwells in God shall find his dwelling protected. We must *make* the Lord our habitation by choosing him for our trust and rest, and then we shall receive immunity from harm; no evil shall touch us personally, and no stroke of judgment shall assail our household. The *dwelling* here intended by the original was only a tent, yet the frail covering would prove to be a sufficient shelter from harm of all sorts. It matters

little whether our abode be a gipsy's hut or a monarch's palace if the soul has made the Most High its habitation. Get into God and you dwell in all good, and ill is banished far away. It is not because we are perfect or highly esteemed among men that we can hope for shelter in the day of evil, but because our refuge is the Eternal God, and our faith has learned to hide beneath his sheltering wing.

" For this no ill thy cause shall daunt,
No scourge thy tabernacle haunt."

It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord; the most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten him to his reward. Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach is his honour, death is his gain. No evil in the strict sense of the word can happen to him, for everything is overruled for good. Happy is he who is in such a case. He is secure where others are in peril, he lives where others die.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

12 They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

11. " *For he shall give his angels charge over thee.*" Not one guardian angel, as some fondly dream, but all the angels are here alluded to. They are the body-guard of the princes of the blood imperial of heaven, and they have received commission from their Lord and ours to watch carefully over all the interests of the faithful. When men have a charge they become doubly careful, and therefore the angels are represented as bidden by God himself to see to it that the elect are secured. It is down in the marching orders of the hosts of heaven that they take special note of the people who dwell in God. It is not to be wondered at that the servants are bidden to be careful of the comfort of their Master's guests; and we may be quite sure that when they are specially charged by the Lord himself they will carefully discharge the duty imposed upon them. " *To keep thee in all thy ways.*" To be a body-guard, a garrison to the body, soul, and spirit of the saint. The limit of this protection " in all thy ways " is yet no limit to the heart which is right with God. It is not the way of the believer to go out of his way. He keeps in the way, and then the angels keep him. The protection here promised is exceeding broad as to place, for it refers to *all* our ways, and what do we wish for more? How angels thus keep us we cannot tell. Whether they repel demons, counteract spiritual plots, or even ward off the subtler physical forces of disease, we do not know. Perhaps we shall one day stand amazed at the multiplied services which the unseen bands have rendered to us.

12. " *They,*" that is the angels, God's own angels, shall cheerfully become our servitors. " *They shall bear thee up in their hands*"; as nurses carry little children, with careful love, so shall those glorious spirits upbear each individual believer. " *Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone;*" even minor ills they ward off. It is most desirable that we should not stumble, but as the way is rough, it is most gracious on the Lord's part to send his servants to bear us up above the loose pebbles. If we cannot have the way smoothed it answers every purpose if we have angels to bear us up in their hands. Since the greatest ills may arise out of little accidents, it shews the wisdom of the Lord that from the smaller evils we are protected.

13. " *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder.*" Over force and fraud shalt thou march victoriously; bold opponents and treacherous adversaries shall alike be trodden down. When our shoes are iron and brass, lions and adders are easily enough crushed beneath our heel. " *The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*" The strongest foe in power, and the most mysterious in cunning, shall be conquered by the man of God. Not only from stones in the way, but from serpents also, shall we be safe. To men who dwell in God the most evil forces become harmless, they wear a charmed life, and defy the deadliest ills. Their feet come into contact with the worst of foes, even Satan himself nibbles at their heel, but in Christ Jesus they have the assured hope of bruising Satan under their feet shortly.

The people of God are the real " George and the dragon," the true lion-kings and serpent-tamers. Their dominion over the powers of darkness makes them cry, " Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy word."

14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

14. Here we have the Lord himself speaking of his own chosen one. " *Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.*" Not because he deserves to be thus kept, but because with all his imperfections he does love his God; therefore not the angels of God only, but the God of angels himself will come to his rescue in all perilous times, and will effectually deliver him. When the heart is enamoured of the Lord, all taken up with him, and intensely attached to him, the Lord will recognise the sacred flame, and preserve the man who bears it in his bosom. It is love,—love set upon God, which is the distinguishing mark of those whom the Lord secures from ill. " *I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.*" The man has known the attributes of God so as to trust in him, and then by experience has arrived at a yet deeper knowledge, this shall be regarded by the Lord as a pledge of his grace, and he will set the owner of it above danger or fear, where he shall dwell in peace and joy. None abide in intimate fellowship with God unless they possess a warm affection towards God, and an intelligent trust in him; these gifts of grace are precious in Jehovah's eyes, and wherever he sees them he smiles upon them. How elevated is the standing which the Lord gives to the believer. We ought to covet it right earnestly. If we climb on high it may be dangerous, but if God sets us there it is glorious.

15. " *He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.*" He will have need to pray, he will be led to pray aright, and the answer shall surely come. Saints are first called *of* God, and then they call *upon* God; such calls as theirs always obtain answers. Not without prayer will the blessing come to the most favoured, but by means of prayer they shall receive all good things. " *I will be with him in trouble,*" or " I *am* with him in trouble." Heirs of heaven are conscious of a special divine presence in times of severe trial. God is always near in sympathy and in power to help his tried ones. " *I will deliver him, and honour him.*" The man honours God, and God honours him. Believers are not delivered or preserved in a way which lowers them, and makes them feel themselves degraded; far from it, the Lord's salvation bestows honour upon those it delivers. God first gives us conquering grace, and then rewards us for it.

16. " *With long life will I satisfy him.*" The man described in this Psalm fills out the measure of his days, and whether he dies young or old he is quite satisfied with life, and is content to leave it. He shall rise from life's banquet as a man who has had enough, and would not have more even if he could. " *And shew him my salvation.*" The full sight of divine grace shall be his closing vision. He shall look from Amana and Lebanon. Not with destruction before him black as night, but with salvation bright as noonday smiling upon him he shall enter into his rest.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The Talmud writers ascribe not only the ninety-first Psalm, but the nine ensuing, to the pen of Moses; but from a rule which will in no respect hold, that all the Psalms which are without the name of an author in their respective titles are the production of the poet whose name is given in the nearest preceding title. And though it is impossible to prove that this highly beautiful ode was not written by David, the general drift of its scenery and allusions rather concur in showing that, like the last, we are indebted for it to the muse of Moses: that it was composed by him during the journey through the wilderness, shortly after the plague of the fiery serpents; when the children of Israel, having returned to a better spirit, were again received into the favour of JEHOVAH. Besides political enemies, the children of Israel in the wilderness had other evils in great numbers to encounter, from the nature and diseases of the climate, which exposed them to

coups de soleil, or *sun smitings*, during the heat of the day; and to pestilential vapours, *moon smitings*, during the damp of the night, so as to render the miraculous canopy of the cloud that hung over them in the former season, and the miraculous column of fire that cheered and purified them in the latter, equally needful and refreshing. In Egypt, they had seen so much of the plague, and they had been so fearfully threatened with it as a punishment for disobedience, that they could not but be in dread of its reappearance, from the incessant fatigues of their journeying. In addition to all which, they had to be perpetually on their guard against the insidious attacks of the savage monsters and reptiles of " that great and terrible wilderness," as Moses describes it on another occasion, " wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; where there was no water " (Deut. viii. 15); and where, also, as we learn from other parts of Scripture, bears, lions, leopards or tigers, and " the wolf of the evening," as Jeremiah has beautifully expressed it, prowled without restraint. Now in the Psalm before us, and especially in the verses 6 to 13, we have so clear and graphic a description of the whole of these evils presented to us, as to bring its composition directly home to the circumstances and the period here pitched upon, and to render it at least needless to hunt out for any other occasion.—*J. M. Good's " Historical Outline of the Book of Psalms,"* 1842.

Whole Psalm.—It is one of the most excellent works of this kind which has ever appeared. It is impossible to imagine anything more solid, more beautiful, more profound, or more ornamented. Could the Latin or any modern language express thoroughly all the beauties and elegancies as well of the *words* as of the *sentences*, it would not be difficult to persuade the reader that we have no poem, either in *Greek* or *Latin*, comparable to this Hebrew ode.—*Simon de Muis.*

Whole Psalm.—Psalm XC. spoke of man withering away beneath God's anger against sin. Psalm XCI. tells of a Man, who is able to tread the lion and adder under his feet.—Undoubtedly the Tempter was right in referring this Psalm to " the Son of God " (Matthew iv. 6).

The imagery of the Psalm seems to be in part drawn from that Passover Night, when the Destroying Angel passed through Egypt; while the faithful and obedient Israelites were sheltered by God.—*William Kay.*

Verse 1.—" *He,*" no matter who he may be, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, patrician or plebeian, young or old, for " God is no respecter of persons," but " he is rich to all that call upon him."—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 1.—" *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High.*" Note, he who dwells in the secret place of the Most High is not he that conjures up one or two slight and fleeting acts of hope in him, but the man that places in him an assiduous and constant confidence. In this way he establishes for himself in God by that full trust, a home, a dwelling-place, a mansion, . . . The Hebrew for *he that dwelleth*, is יֹשֵׁב, that is, dwelling in quietude, and resting, enduring and remaining with constancy.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—" *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High.*" What intimate and unrestrained communion does this describe!—the Christian in everything making known his heart, with its needs and wishes, its thoughts and feelings, its doubts and anxieties, its sorrows and its joys, to God, as to a loving, perfect friend. And all is not on one side. This Almighty Friend has admitted his chosen one to his " *secret place.*" It is almost too wonderful to be true. It is almost too presumptuous a thought for such creatures as we are to entertain. But he himself permits it, *desires* it, teaches us to realise that it is *communion* to which he calls us. " The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." And what is this " *secret*" ? It is *that* in God which the world neither knows, nor sees, nor cares to enjoy. It is his mind revealed to those that love him, his plans, and ways (" He made known his *ways* to *Moses*," Ps. ciii. 7), and thoughts opened to them. Yea, and things hid from angels are manifest to the least of his friends, (1 Peter i. 12). He wishes us to know him, and by his Word and by his Spirit he puts himself before us. Ah! it is not his fault if we do not know him. It is our own carelessness.—*Mary B. M. Duncan, in " Under the Shadow,"* 1867.

Verse 1.—By " *secret*" here is meant a place of refuge from the storms of the world under the secret of his providence, who careth for all his children. Also, by the " *secret of the most High,*" some writers understand the castle of his mighty defence, to which his people run, being pursued by enemies, as the wild creature doth to his hole or den for succour, when the hunter hath him in chase, and the dogs

are near. This then being the meaning of that which the prophet calleth the "*secret place of the most High*," and our dwelling in it, by confidence in him; we learn, in all troubles, to cleave to *God* chiefly or only for help, and to *means* but as underlings to his providence. . . . . .

That which is here translated "*dwelleth*," is as much in weight as sitteth, or is settled; and so, our dwelling in God's secret, is as much as our sitting down in it; the meaning is, we must make it our rest, as if we should say, Here will we dwell. From whence we learn, that God's children should not come to God's *secret-place* as guests to an inn, but as inhabitants to their own dwellings; that is, they should continue to trust in God, as well in want as in fulness; and as much when they *wither* in their root, as when they *flourish* in it.—*Robert Horn.*

Verse 1.—"*He that dwelleth*," etc. 1. "He dwells," therefore he shall "abide." He shall lodge quietly, securely. 2. "He dwells in the secret place," therefore he shall "abide under the shadow." In the cool, the favour, the cover from the heat. 3. "He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, therefore he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;" *i.e.*, of the all-powerful God, of the God of heaven; of that God whose name is Shaddai, All-sufficient.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—"*Shall abide.*" The Hebrew for "*shall abide*" is יָלִין, which signifies *he shall pass the night.* Abiding denotes a constant and continuous dwelling of the just in the assistance and protection of God. That help and protection of God is not like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, or in a vineyard; which is destroyed in a moment, nor is it like a tent in the way which is abandoned by the traveller. It is a strong tower, a paternal home, wherein we spend all our life with the best, wealthiest, and mightiest of parents. *Passing the night* also denotes security and rest in time of darkness, temptations and calamities. With God Abraham passed the night, when He foretold to him the affliction of his descendants in Egypt, and their deliverance, Gen. xv. 12 seq. Then also God said to him (verse 1), *Fear not Abram, I am thy shield.* And leading him forth he showed him the glittering stars, and said, Tell the number of the stars, if thou be able; so shall thy seed be.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—"*The shadow.*" The allusion of this verse may be to the awful and mystic symbols of the ark. Under the ancient ceremony, the high priest only could enter, and that but once a year, into the holy place, where stood the emblems of the divine glory and presence; but under the present bright and merciful dispensation, every true believer has access, with boldness, into the holiest of all; and he who now dwelleth in the secret place of prayer and communion with the God of salvation, shall find the divine mercy and care spread over him for his daily protection and solace.—*John Morison.*

Verse 1.—"*Under the shadow of the Almighty.*" This is an expression which implies great nearness. We must walk very close to a companion, if we would have his shadow fall on us. Can we imagine any expression more perfect in describing the *constant presence* of God with his chosen ones, than this—they shall "*abide under his shadow*"? In Solomon's beautiful allegory, the Church in a time of special communion with Christ, says of him—"I sat down under his shadow with great delight" (Cant. ii. 3)—"sat down," desiring not to leave it, but to abide there for ever. And it is he who chooses to dwell in the secret place of the most High, who shall "abide under the shadow of the Almighty." There is a condition and a promise attached to it. The condition is, that we "dwell in the secret place,"—the promise, that if we do so we "shall abide under the shadow." It is of importance to view it thus. For when we remember the blessing is a *promised* blessing—we are led to feel it is a gift—a thing therefore to be prayed for in faith, as well as sought for by God's appointed means. Ah, the hopes that *this* awakens! My wandering, wavering, unstable heart, that of itself cannot keep to one course two days together, is to seek its perseverance from God, and not in its own strength. He will hold it to him if it be but seeking for stedfastness. It is not we who cling to him. It is he who keeps near to us.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verses 1—4; 9.—O you that be in fear of any danger, leave all carnal shifts, and carking counsels, and projects, and dwell in the rock of God's power and providence, and be like the dove that nestles in the holes of the rock; by faith betake yourselves unto God, by faith dwell in that rock, and there nestle yourselves, make your nests of safety in the clefts of this rock. But how may we do this thing, and what is the way to do it? Do this,—Set thy faith on work to make God that unto thee which thy necessity requires, pitch and throw thyself upon his power and

providence, with a resolution of spirit to rest thyself upon it for safety, come what will come. See an excellent practice of this, Ps. xci. 1, "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;*" that is, he shall be safe from all fears and dangers. Ay, that is true, you will say, who makes any doubt of it? But how shall a man come to dwell, and get into this secret place, within this strong tower? See verse 2: "*I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress;*" as if he had said, I will not only say, that he is a refuge; but he is *my* refuge, I will say to the Lord; that is, I will set my faith on work in particular, to throw, devolve, and pitch myself upon him for my safety. And see what follows upon this setting faith thus on work, verses 3, 4: "*Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers,*" etc. So confident the Psalmist is that upon this course taken, safety shall follow.

Our safety lies not simply upon this, because God is a refuge, and is an habitation, but "Because *thou hast made* the Lord which is my refuge, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee," etc. It is therefore the *making* of God our habitation, upon which our safety lies; and this is the way to make God an habitation, thus to pitch and cast ourselves by faith upon his power and providence.—*Jeremiah Dyke.*

Verse 1.—We read of a stag that roamed about in the greatest security, by reason of its having a label on its neck, "*Touch me not, I belong to Cæsar*": thus the true servants of God are always safe, even among lions, bears, serpents, fire, water, thunder, and tempests; for all creatures know and reverence the shadow of God.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 2.—"*My refuge, my fortress, my God.*" "*My refuge.*" God is our "*refuge.*" He who avails himself of a refuge is one who is forced to fly. It is a quiet retreat from a pursuing enemy. And there are trials, and temptations, and enemies, from which the Christian does best to fly. He cannot resist them. They are too strong for him. His wisdom is to fly into the refuge of the secret place of his God—to rest in the shadow of the Almighty. His "strength is to sit still" *there.* Isai. xxx. 7. "*My fortress.*" The Psalmist says, moreover, that God is his "*fortress.*" Here the idea is changed—no longer a peaceful, quiet hiding-place, but a tower of defence—strong, manifest, ready to meet the attacks of all enemies, ready and able to resist them all. God is a Friend who meets every want in our nature, who can supply every need. So when we are weak and fainting, and unable to meet the brunt of battle, and striving against sin and sorrow and the wrath of man, he is our safe, quiet resting-place—our *fortress* also where no harm can reach us, no attack injure us. "*My God.*" Now the Psalmist, as a summing up of all his praises, says "I will say of him, He is . . . my God!" Is there anything omitted in the former part of his declaration? *Everything* is here—all possible ascription of honour, and glory, and power to him "*as God*"—"God over all, blessed for ever," and of love, reverence, trust, obedience, and filial relation towards him on the part of the Psalmist, as MY God . . . when reflecting on the refuge and strength which the Lord has always been to him, and recalling his blessed experiences of sweet communion with God—words fail him. He can only say (but oh, with what expression!) MY GOD!—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 2.—"*My God.*" Specially art thou my God, first, on thy part, because of the special goodness and favour which thou dost bestow upon me. Secondly, on my part, because of the special love and reverence with which I cling to thee.—*J. Paulus Palanterius.*

Verses 2—4.—If the severity and justice of God terrify, the Lord offereth himself as *a bird with stretched out wings* to receive the supplicant, ver. 4. If enemies who are too strong do pursue, the Lord openeth his bosom as a *refuge*, ver. 2. If the child be assaulted, he becometh a fortress, ver. 2. If he be hotly pursued and enquired after, the Lord becometh a *secret place* to hide his child; if persecution be hot, God giveth himself for a *shadow*; if potentates and mighty rulers turn enemies, the Lord interposeth as the *Most High and Almighty Saviour*, ver. 1. If his adversaries be crafty like fowlers or hunters, the Lord promiseth to prevent and break the snares, ver. 3. Whether evils do come upon the believer night or day, secretly or openly, to destroy him, the Lord preserveth his child from *destruction*; and if stumbling-blocks be laid in his child's way, he hath his instruments, his servants, his angels, prepared to keep the believer that he stumble not: "*He shall give his angels charge over thee*"; not one angel only, but all of them, or a number of them.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.*" Are we therefore beasts? Beasts doubtless. *When man was in honour he understood not, but was like the foolish beasts.* [Ps. xlix.] Men are certainly beasts, wandering sheep, having no shepherd. Why art thou proud, O man? Why dost thou boast thyself O smatterer? See what a beast thou art, for whom the snares of the fowler are being prepared. But who are these *fowlers*? The fowlers indeed are the worst and wickedest, the cleverest and the cruellest. The fowlers are they who sound no horn, that they may not be heard, but shoot their arrows in secret places at the innocent. . . . But lo! since we know the fowlers and the beasts, our further enquiry must be, what this *snare* may be. I wish not myself to invent it, nor to deliver to you what is subject to doubt. The Apostle shows us this snare, for he was not ignorant of the devices of these fowlers. Tell us, I pray, blessed Paul, what this snare of the devil is, from which the faithful soul rejoices that it is delivered? *They that will be rich* [in this world?] says he, *fall into temptation and the snare* [of the devil?] (1 Tim. 6). Are not the riches of this world, then, the snare of the devil? Alas! how few we find who can boast of freedom from this snare, how many who grieve that they seem to themselves too little enmeshed in the net, and who still labour and toil with all their strength to involve and entangle themselves more and more. Ye who have left all and followed the Son of man who has not where to lay his head, rejoice and say, *He hath delivered me from the snare of the fowlers.*—*Bernard.*

Verse 3.—"*Surely he shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence.*" Lord Craven lived in London when that sad calamity, the plague, raged. His house was in that part of the town called Craven Buildings. On the plague growing epidemic, his Lordship, to avoid the danger, resolved to go to his seat in the country. His coach and six were accordingly at the door, his baggage put up, and all things in readiness for the journey. As he was walking through his hall with his hat on, his cane under his arm, and putting on his gloves, in order to step into his carriage, he overheard his negro, who served him as postillion, saying to another servant, "I suppose, by my Lord's quitting London to avoid the plague, that his God lives in the country, and not in town." The poor negro said this in the simplicity of his heart, as really believing a plurality of gods. The speech, however, struck Lord Craven very sensibly, and made him pause. "My God," thought he, "lives everywhere, and can preserve me in town as well as in the country. I will even stay where I am. The ignorance of that negro has just now preached to me a very useful sermon. Lord, pardon this unbelief, and that distrust of thy providence, which made me think of running from thy hand." He immediately ordered his horses to be taken from the coach, and the baggage to be taken in. He continued in London, was remarkably useful among his sick neighbours, and never caught the infection.—*Whitecross's Anecdotes.*

Verses 3, 6.—"*Pestilence.*" It is from a word (דָּבַר) that signifies to speak, and speak out; the pestilence is a speaking thing, it proclaims the wrath of God amongst a people. Drusius fetches it from the same root, but in *piel*, which is to decree; showing that the pestilence is a thing decreed in heaven, not casual. Kirker thinks it is called דֶּבֶר, because it keeps order, and spares neither great nor small. The Hebrew root signifies to destroy, to cut off, and hence may the plague or pestilence have its name. The Septuagint renders it *θάνατος*, death, for ordinarily it is death; and it is expressed by "*Death.*" Rev. vi. 8, he sat on the pale horse, and killed with sword, hunger, death, and beasts of the earth; it refers to Ezek. xiv. 21, where the pestilence is mentioned. Pestilence may be from a word which signifies to spread, spoil, rush upon, for it doth so; 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, seventy thousand slain in three days; and plague, *a* πλήγη from πλησσω, to smite, to wound, for it smites suddenly, and wounds mortally; hence it is in Numb. xiv. 12, "I will smite them with the pestilence." This judgment is very grievous, it is called in verse 3 the "noisome pestilence," because it is infectious, contagious; and therefore the French read it, "*de la peste dangereuse*," from the dangerous pestilence, it doth endanger those that come near it: and Musculus hath it, *a peste omnium pessima*, from the worst pestilence of all: and others, the woful pestilence; it brings a multitude of woes with it to any place or person it comes unto, it is a messenger of woful fears, sorrows, distractions, terrors, and death itself.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall cover thee with his feathers,*" etc. Christ's wings are both for healing and for hiding (Mat. iv. 2), for curing and securing us; the devil and

his instruments would soon devour the servants of God, if he did not set an invincible guard about them, and cover them with the golden feathers of his protection.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall cover thee with his feathers,*" etc. This is the promise of the present life. For the promise of the life to come, who can explain? If the expectation of the just be gladness, and such gladness, that no object of desire in the world is worthy to be compared with it, what will the thing itself be which is expected? No eye, apart from thee, O God, hath seen what thou hast prepared for them that love thee. Under these wings, therefore, four blessings are conferred upon us. For under these we are *concealed*; under these we are *protected* from the attack of the hawks and kites, which are the powers of the air: under these a salubrious shade *refreshes* us, and wards off the overpowering heat of the sun; under these also we are *nourished* and cherished.—*Bernard.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall cover thee with his feathers,*" etc.

His plumes shall make a downie bed,
Where thou shalt rest; He shall display
His wings of truth over thy head,
Which, like a shield, shall drive away
The feares of night, the darts of day.
Thomas Cary.

Verse 4.—"*His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*" That which we must oppose to all perils is the truth, or Word of God; so long as we keep that, and ward off darts and swords by that means, we shall not be overcome.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—The true remedy against tormenting fear is faith in God; for many terrible things may befall men when they are most secure, like unto those which befall men in the night: but for any harm which may befall the believer this way, the Lord here willeth him to be nothing afraid: "*Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.*" Many sadder accidents may befall men when they are most watching and upon their guard, but the Lord willeth the believer to be confident that he shall not be harmed this way: "*Thou shalt not be afraid for the arrow that flieth by day.*" Many evils are men subject unto, which come upon them men cannot tell how, but from such evils the Lord assureth the believer he shall have no harm: "*Thou shalt not be afraid of the pestilence which walketh in darkness.*" Men are subject to many evils which come upon them openly, and not unawares, such as are calamities from enemies and oppressors; the Lord willeth the believer to be confident that he shall not be harmed this way: "*Thou shalt not be afraid for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou shalt not be afraid.*" Not only do the pious stand safe, they are not even touched with fear. For the prophet does not say, Thou shalt not be seized; but, Thou shalt not be afraid. Certainly such a confidence of mind could not be attributed to natural powers, in so menacing and so overwhelming a destruction. For it is natural to mortals, it is implanted in them by God the author and maker of nature, to fear whatever is hurtful and deadly, especially what visibly smites and suddenly destroys. Therefore does he beautifully join together these two things; the first, in saying, *Thou shalt not be afraid;* the second, by adding, *For the terror.* He acknowledges that this plague is terrible to nature; and then by his trust in divine protection he promises himself this security, that he shall not fear the evil, which would otherwise make human nature quail. Wherefore, in my judgment, those persons are neither kind (*humani*) nor pious who are of opinion that so great a calamity is not to be dreaded by mortals. They neither observe the condition of our nature, nor honour the blessing of divine protection; both of which we see here done by the prophet.—*Musculus.*

Verse 5.—Not that we are always actually delivered out of every particular danger or grievance, but because all will turn (such is our confidence in God) to our greater good; and the more we suffer the greater shall our reward and our glory be. To the same purpose is the expression of Isaiah: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Isai. xliii. 2. So also Habakkuk iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," &c.; and Job v. 19, 20, etc. And therefore here is no ground, if the words be rightly understood, for any man absolutely

to presume or conclude that he shall actually be delivered out of any particular danger; much less upon such a presumption wilfully to run into dangers. If such figures, the ornament of all language; such rhetorical, emphatical amplifications be allowed to human writers, and well enough understood in ordinary language; why not to holy writers as well, who had to do with men, as well as others; whose end also was to use such expressions as might affect and move? That human writers have said as much of the security of good and godly men, I shall need to go no further than Horace his Ode, *Integer vitæ scelerisque purus*, &c. Most dangerous then and erroneous is the inference of some men, yea, of some expositors, here, upon these words of the Psalmist, that no godly man can suffer by the plague, or pestilence: nor is old Lactantius his assertion much sounder, *Non potest ergo fieri, quin hominem justum inter descrimina tempestatum*, &c., that no just man can perish by war, or by tempest. (Instit. l, v., c. 18). Most interpreters conclude here, that the godly are preserved in time of public calamities; which, in a right sense, may be true; but withal they should have added, that all godly men are not exempted at such times; to prevent rash judgments.—*Westminster Assembly's Annotations.*

Verse 5.—"*The arrow.*" The arrow in this passage probably means the pestilence. The Arabs denote the pestilence by an allusion to this flying weapon. "I desired to remove to a less contagious air. I received from Solyman, the emperor, this message; that the emperor wondered what I meant, in desiring to remove my habitation; *is not the pestilence God's arrow, which will always hit his mark?* If God would visit me herewith, how could I avoid it? is not the plague, said he, in my own palace, and yet I do not think of removing."—*Busbequiu's Travels.* "What, say they, is not the plague the dart of Almighty God, and can we escape the blow that he levels at us? is not his hand steady to hit the persons he aims at? can we run out of his sight, and beyond his power?"—*Smith's Remarks on the Turks*, 1673. *Herbert* also speaking of Curroon, says, "That year his empire was so wounded with God's arrows of plague, pestilence, and famine, as this thousand years before was never so terrible." See Ezekiel v. 16.—*S. Burder's Scripture Expositor.*

Verses 5, 6.—Joseph Scaliger explains, in Epis. 9, these two verses thus, *thou shalt not fear*, מִפַּחַד *from consternation by night*, מֵחֵץ, *from the arrow flying by day*, מִדֶּבֶר *from pestilence walking at evening*, מִקֶּטֶב, *from devastation at noon.* Under these four he comprehends all the evils and dangers to which man is liable. And as the Hebrews divide the four-and-twenty hours of day and night into four parts, namely, evening, midnight, morning, and mid-day, so he understands the hours of danger to be divided accordingly: in a word, "that the man who has made God his refuge," is always safe, day and night, at every hour, from every danger.—*Bythner.*

Verse 6.—"*The pestilence that walketh in darkness; the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*" The description is equally forcible and correct. The diseases of all hot climates, and especially where vegetation is highly luxuriant, and marshes and miry swamps are abundant, as in the wilderness here referred to, proceed from the accumulating vapours of the *night*, or from the violence of the sun's rays at *mid-day.* The Beriberi of Ceylon, the spasmodic cholera and jungle-fever of India, and the greater part of the fevers of inter-tropical climates, especially that called the yellow fever, chiefly originate from the first of these—"the *pestilence* that stalketh in darkness"; while sun-strokes or coups de soleil, apoplexies, inflammations of the brain, and liver-complaints of most kinds, proceed from the second, "the *destruction* that wasteth at noonday." And it is in allusion to this double source of mischief that the Psalmist exclaims most beautifully on another occasion, cxxi. 6: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." And hence the Israelites were miraculously defended against both during their passage through the wilderness by the pillar of a cloud in the day-time, to ward off the solar rays; and by the pillar of fire by night, to dissipate the collecting vapours, and preserve the atmosphere clear, dry, and healthy.—*J. M. Good.*

Verse 6.—The putrid plague-fever often comes on in the night while the patient is asleep; the solstitial disease seizes in heat of harvest upon a man in open air, and cuts him off, perhaps ere evening. It is safety from perils like these that is spoken of. All these blessings are derived from and rest on (verse 1) the position of him that claims them "*under the covert of the Most High.*"—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 6.—"*The pestilence that walketh in darkness.*" It walketh not so much in natural darkness, or in the darkness of the night, as in a figurative darkness,

no man knowing where it walks, or whither it will walk, in the clearest light, whether to the poor man's house, or to the rich man's house, whether to the dwelling of the plebeian, or of the prince, till it hath left its own mark, and given a deadly stroke.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—" *Ten thousand.*" The word *myriad* would better represent the exact idea in the original, as the Hebrew word is different from that which is translated " a thousand." It is here put for any large number.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 7.—" *It shall not come nigh thee.*" Not nigh thee? What? when they die on this side and on that side, on every hand of a man, doth it not come nigh him? Yes, nigh him, but not so nigh as to hurt him: *the power of God can bring us near to danger, and yet keep us far from harm.* As good may be locally near us, and yet virtually far from us, so may evil. The multitude thronged Christ in the Gospel, and yet but one touched him so as to receive good; so Christ can keep us in a throng of dangers, that not one shall touch us to our hurt.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—" *It shall not come nigh thee.*" Not with a view of showing that all good men may hope to escape from the pestilence, but as proofs that some who have had superior faith have done so, I have collected the following instances from various sources.—*C. H. S.*

Before his departure from Isna [Isny], the town was greatly afflicted with the pestilence; and he understanding that many of the wealthiest of the inhabitants intended to forsake the place, without having any respect or care of such as laboured with that disease, and that the houses of such as were infected, were commanded to be shut up by the magistrate, he openly admonished them, either to continue in the town, or liberally to bestow their alms before their departure, for the relief of such as were sick. And during the time of the visitation, he himself in person would visit those that were sick; he would administer spiritual comfort unto them, pray for them, and would be present with them day and night; and yet by the providence of God he remained untouched, and was preserved by the allpowerful hand of God.—*From the Life of Paulus Fagius, in T. Fuller's Abel Redevivus.*

In 1576, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, the worthiest of all the successors of St. Ambrose, when he learnt at Lodi, that the plague had made its appearance in his city, went at once to the city. His council of clergy advised him to remain in some healthy part of his diocese till the sickness should have spent itself, but he replied that a bishop, whose duty it is to give his life for his sheep, could not rightly abandon them in time of peril. They owned that to stand by them was the higher course. " Well," he said, " is it not a bishop's duty to choose the higher course? " So back into the town of deadly sickness he went, leading the people to repent, and watching over them in their suffering, visiting the hospitals, and, by his own example, encouraging his clergy in carrying spiritual consolation to the dying. All the time the plague lasted, which was four months, his exertions were fearless and unwearied, and what was remarkable was, that of his whole household only two died, and they were persons who had not been called to go about among the sick.—*From " A Book of Golden Deeds,"* 1864.

Although Defoe's history of the plague is a work of fiction, yet its statements are generally facts, and therefore we extract the following:—" The misery of the poor I had many occasions to be an eye-witness of, and sometimes also of the charitable assistance that some pious people daily gave to such, sending them relief and supplies both of food, physic, and other help, as they found they wanted. . . . Some pious ladies were transported with zeal in so good a work, and so confident in the protection of Providence in discharge of the great duty of charity, that they went about in person distributing alms to the poor, and even visiting poor families, though sick and infected, in their very houses, appointing nurses to attend those that wanted attending, and ordering apothecaries and surgeons . . . giving their blessing to the poor in substantial relief to them, as well as hearty prayers for them. I will not undertake to say, as some do, that none of those charitable people were suffered to fall under the calamity itself; but this I may say, that I never knew anyone of them that came to any ill, which I mention for the encouragement of others in case of the like distress; and, doubtless, if they that give to the poor lend to the Lord, and he will repay them, those that hazard their lives to give to the poor, and to comfort and assist the poor in such misery as this, may hope to be protected in the work."—*Daniel Defoe's Journal of the Plague in London.*

Horne, in his notes on the Psalms, refers to the plague in Marseilles and the

devotion of its bishop. There is a full account of him in the *Percy Anecdotes* from which we cull the following :—" M. de Belsunce, Bishop of Marseilles, so distinguished himself for his humanity during the plague which raged in that city in 1720, that the Regent of France offered him the richer and more honourable See of Laon, in Picardy ; but he refused it, saying, he should be unwilling to leave a flock that had been endeared to him by their sufferings. His pious and intrepid labours are commemorated in a picture in the Town Hall of Marseilles, in which he is represented in his episcopal habit, attended by his almoners, giving his benediction to the dying. . . . But perhaps the most touching picture extant of the bishop's humane labours, is to be found in a letter of his own, written to the Bishop of Soissons, Sept. 27, 1720. ' Never,' he says, ' was desolation greater, nor was ever anything like this. Here have been many cruel plagues, but none was ever more cruel : to be sick and dead was almost the same thing. What a melancholy spectacle have we on all sides ! we go into the streets full of dead bodies, half rotten through, which we pass to come to a dying body, to excite him to an act of contrition, and give him absolution.' " Notwithstanding exposure to a pestilence so fatal, the devoted bishop escaped uninjured.

While France justly boasts of " Marseilles' good Bishop," England may congratulate herself on having cherished in her bosom a clergyman who in an equally earnest manner discharged his pastoral care, and watched over the simple flock committed to his charge, at no less risk of life, and with no less fervour of piety and benevolence. The Rev. W. Mompesson was rector of Eyam in Derbyshire, in the time of the plague that nearly depopulated the town in the year 1666. During the whole time of the calamity, he performed the functions of the physician, the legislator, and the minister of his afflicted parish ; assisting the sick with his medicines, his advice, and his prayers. Tradition still shows a cavern near Eyam, where this worthy pastor used to preach to such of his parishioners as had not caught the distemper. Although the village was almost depopulated, his exertions prevented the spread of the plague to other districts, and he himself survived unharmed.

Verse 8.—" *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.*" First, indeed, because of thy own escape ; secondly, on account of thy complete security ; thirdly, for the sake of comparison ; fourthly, because of the perfect pre-eminence of justice itself. For then it will not be the time of mercy, but of judgment ; nor shall any mercy in any way be ever shown towards the wicked there, where no improvement can be hoped for. Far away will be that softness of human infirmity, which meanwhile charity nevertheless uses for salvation, collecting in the ample folds of her outspread net good and bad fishes, that is, pleasant and hurtful affections. But this is done at sea. On the shore she chooses only the good, and so rejoicing with them that do rejoice, it hence comes to pass that she weeps not with those that weep.—*Bernard.*

Verse 9.—Here commences the second half of the Psalm. And it is as though the Psalmist feared lest (as is too often the case with us) we should, in dwelling on the promises and blessings of God, and applying them to ourselves, forget the condition to which they are annexed—the character of those who are to receive them. He therefore pauses here to remind us of the opening verses of the Psalm, by repeating again their substance.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 9.—" *Because thou hast made the Lord,*" etc. What faith is this, what trust is that which God hath promised protection and deliverance to in the time of a plague ? What act of faith is it ? What faith is it ? I answer *first*, there is a faith of persuasion, called faith, whereby men are persuaded and verily believe that they shall not die, nor fall by the hand of the plague. This is well ; but I do not find in the 91st Psalm that this protection is entailed upon this persuasion, neither do I find this faith here mentioned.

There is also a faith of reliance, whereby a man doth rely upon God for salvation ; this is a justifying faith, true justifying faith ; this is true faith indeed : but I do not find in this Psalm, that this promise of protection and deliverance in the time of a plague is entailed upon this, nor that this is here mentioned.

But again, there is a faith, I may call it a faith of recourse unto God, whereby a man doth betake himself unto God for shelter, for protection as to his habitation : when other men do run one this way, another that way, to their hiding places : in the time of a plague for a man then to betake himself to God as to his habitation,

I think this is the faith here spoken of in this 91st Psalm: for do but mark the words of the Psalm: at the 1st verse, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High," in the hiding place of the Most High; as if he should say, "When others run from the plague and pestilence and run to their hiding places," "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High," that betakes himself to God as his hiding place and his habitation, he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, shall be protected; and so at the 9th verse, "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling;" as if he should say to us, In time of a plague men are running and looking out for habitations and hiding places; but because thou hast made the Lord thy habitation, and hast recourse to him as thy habitation, "no evil shall befall thee, neither shall the plague come nigh thy dwelling:" and again at the 11th verse it is said, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways," the ways of thy calling; as if he should say, In the time of a plague men will be very apt to leave station and calling, and so run away from the plague and pestilence; but saith he, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways," the ways of thy calling and place; that is, look when a man in the time of a plague shall conscientiously keep his station and place, and betake himself to God as his habitation; this is the faith that is here spoken of, and this is the faith that God hath promised protection to, here in the 91st Psalm. . . . This promise of protection and deliverance is not made to a believer as a believer, but as acting and exercising faith; for though a man be a believer, if he do not act and exercise his faith, this promise will not reach him, therefore if a believer die, not exercising faith and trusting in God, it is no disparagement to the promise.—*William Bridge.*

Verse 9.—No man can have two *homes*—two places of *constant* resort. And if the Lord be truly "*our habitation*," we can have no other refuge for our souls, no other resting-place for our hearts.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verses 9, 10.—There is a threefold preservation which the church and the members of it may look for from divine providence. One from, another in, and a third by, dangers. *First*, from dangers, according to the promise in one of the Psalms, "Because thou hast made the Lord who is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation: there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." Austin had appointed to go to a certain town to visit the Christians there, and to give them a sermon or more. The day and place were known to his enemies, who set armed men to lie in wait for him by the way which he was to pass, and kill him. As God would have it, the guide whom the people had sent with him to prevent his going out of the right way mistook, and led him into a by-path, yet brought him at last to his journey's end. Which when the people understood, as also the adversaries' disappointment, they adored the providence of God, and gave him thanks for that great deliverance.*

II. In dangers. So in Job v. 19, 20. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death; and in war from the power of the sword." In time of famine the widow of Sarepta's store was made to hold out. The providence of God was with Daniel in the lion's den, shutting up the mouths of those furious beasts: and with the men in the fiery furnace, giving a prohibition to the fire that it should not burn, when they were in the jaws of danger, yea of death. The church hath always been a lily among thorns, yet flourishes still. This bush is yet far from a consumption, although it has seldom or never been out of the fire.

III. By danger. There is a preservation from greater evils by less. No poison but Providence knoweth how to make an antidote; so Jonah was swallowed by a whale, and by that danger kept alive. Joseph thrown into a pit, and afterwards sold into Egypt, and by these hazards brought to be a nursing father to the church. Chrysostom excellently, Fides in periculis secura est, in securitate periclitatur.† Faith is endangered by security, but secure in the midst of danger, as Esther's was when she said, "If I perish I perish." God preserveth us, not as we do fruits that are to last but for a year, in sugar; but as flesh for a long voyage in salt: we must expect in this life much brine and pickle, because our heavenly Father preserveth us as those whom he resolveth to keep for ever, in and by dangers themselves. Paul's

* Agnoscunt omnes miram Dei providentiam, cui ut liberatori gratias merito egerunt. Possidonius in vita August, chap. xii.

† Homil. xxvi. operis imperf. in Matt.

thorn in the flesh, which had much of danger and trouble in it, was given him on purpose to prevent pride, which was a great evil. " Lest I," said he, " should be exalted above measure through abundance of revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Elsewhere having commemorated Alexander the coppersmith's withstanding and doing him much evil, yea Nero's opening his mouth as a lion against him, and the Lord's delivering of him thence, he concludeth as more than a conqueror. " And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom ; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen." 2 Tim. iv. 14, 15, 17, 18.—*John Arrowsmith*, (1602—1659.)

Verses 9—14.—Dependence on Christ is not the cause of his hiding us, but it is the qualification of the person that shall be hid.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 10.—" *There shall no evil befall thee,*" etc. It is a security in the very midst of evils. Not like the security of angels—safety in a world of safety, quiet in a calm ; but it is quiet in a storm, safety amid desolation and the elements of destruction, deliverance where everything else is going to wreck.—*Charles Bradley*, 1840.

Verse 10.—God doth not say no afflictions shall befall us, but no *evil.—Thomas Watson.*

Verse 10.—Sin which has kindled a fire in hell, is kindling fires on earth continually. And when they break out, every one is asking how they happened. Amos replies, " Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it ? " And when desolation is made by fire, Isaiah declares, The Lord hath " consumed us, because of our iniquities." Many years ago my house was oft threatened to be destroyed, but the Lord insured it, by giving me the 10th verse of the 91st Psalm ; and the Lord's providence is the best insurance.—*John Berridge.*

Verse 11.—" *He shall give his angels charge,*" etc. Charge ; charge is a strict command, more than a bare command ; as when you would have a servant do a business certainly and fully, you lay a charge upon him, I charge you that you do not neglect that business ; you do not barely tell what he should do, prescribe him his work, but you charge him to do it. So says the Lord unto the angels : My servants or children, now they are in the plague and pestilence, O my angels, I charge you stir not from their houses, I charge you, stir not from such an one's bed-side ; it is a charge, " He shall give his angels charge."

Further, he doth not only, and will not only charge his angel, but his angels ; not one angel charged with the safety of his people, but many angels ; for their better guard and security, " He shall give his angels charge." And again, " He will give his angels charge over *thee* to keep thee ; " to keep *thee* ; charge over *thee* and to keep thee ; not only over the whole church of God, but over every particular member of the church of God ; " He will give his angels charge over thee to keep thee ; " this is his marvellous care. Well, but besides this, " He will give his angels charge to keep thee *in all thy ways*," not in some of thy ways, but in all thy ways. As God's providence is particular in regard of our persons, so it is universal in regard of our ways. " He will give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee," not in some but " in all thy ways."

But is this all ? No ; " They shall bear thee up in their hands," as every servant desires and loves to take up the young heir, or the young master into his arms, so the angels. It is a great matter that the Lord promiseth to pitch his tents. " And the angels of the Lord shall pitch their tents round about them that fear him ; " but here is more ; the angels shall not only pitch their tents, be their guard, but their nurses, to bear them up in their hands ; but why ? " That thou dash not thy foot against a stone." When children begin to go, they are very apt to fall and get many a knock ; to stumble at every little stone. Now there are many stones of stumbling that are in our way, and we are very apt to fall and miscarry ; but such is the goodness of God, the providence of God, the goodness of his providence, that as he hath provided his angels to be our guard, in opposition to all our foreign enemies, so he hath provided his angels to be our nurses, in opposition to all our weaknesses and infirmities, that we get no hurt, that we miscarry not in the least.

But what need God make use of angels to protect his people, he is able to do it alone ; and is it not for God's dishonour to make use of them for the protection of his people ? No, it is for the honour of God, for the more honourable the servants

are, the instruments are, that a king or prince doth use for the protecting of his people, the more honourable is that king or prince. Now the angels, they are honourable creatures; frequently they are called gods; "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels." . . . They are the fittest people in the world for this employment, fittest in regard of themselves, fittest in regard of the saints. They are fittest in regard of themselves, for *First*, they are an exceeding strong and potent people; who more fit to look to and care for the concernments of the saints and people of God, than those that are strong and potent? It is said of the angels in the ciii. Psalm, that they excel in strength. v. 20. . . . One angel you know destroyed a hundred and fourscore thousand of the host of Assyria in a night; as one constable will scare away twenty thieves, so one good angel invested with God's authority is able to drive away a thousand evil angels, devils: they are an exceeding strong and potent people. *Second.* As they are an exceeding strong and potent people, so they are a very knowing and a wise people; and who so fit to manage the affairs and concerns of the saints and people of God, and to protect and defend them, as a knowing and understanding people? You know what Joab said to David; "Thou art for wisdom as an angel of God." Says our Saviour, "No man knoweth that day and time, no, not the angels in heaven;" as if the angels in heaven knew every secret and were acquainted with every hidden thing: they are an exceeding knowing people, very prudent and very wise. *Third.* As they are an exceeding knowing and wise people, so they are also exceeding active and expeditious, quick in despatches. Who more fit to protect and defend the saints and people of God, than those that are active, expedite, and quick in their despatches? such are the angels. In the first of Ezekiel ye read that every one had four wings; why? because of their great activity and expedition, and the quick despatch they make in all their affairs. *Fourth.* As they are an active and expeditious people, so they are a people very faithful both to God and man; in the ciii. Psalm they are ready to do God's will, and not only ready to fulfil God's will, but they do it: "Bless the Lord all ye his angels that excel in strength (v. 20), that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure." They are very faithful; and who so fit to do the work, to attend and look to the concernments of the saints and people of God, as those that are faithful? *Fifth.* As they are an exceeding faithful people, so they are a people that are very loving to the saints and children of God, very loving; otherwise they were not fit to be their nurses: what is a nurse without love? They are loving to the saints. "Do it not," (said the angel unto John), "I am thy fellow-servant;" do not give divine worship to me, I am thy fellow-servant; fellow-servants are loving to one another; they are fellow-servants with the saints. . . . It is recorded of Alexander that being in great danger and to fight next day with his enemies, he slept very soundly the night before; and he being asked the reason thereof, said, Parmenio wakes; meaning a great and faithful captain of his; Parmenio wakes, says he. The angels are called watchmen; they watch and are faithful, therefore you may be secure, quiet, and at rest: trust in the Lord for ever, upon this account, in this day trust in the Lord.

If these things be so, then, friends, why should we not stoop to any work commanded, though it lie much beneath us? Do not you think that the attending upon a sick man, a man that hath a plague sore running upon him, is a work that lies much beneath angels? yet the angels do it because it is commanded, though much beneath them yet they stoop to it because it is commanded: and what though a work lie much beneath you, yet if it be commanded, why should you not stoop to it? You will say, Such an one is much beneath me, I will not lay my hand under his shoes, he is much beneath me; ah, but the angels lay their hands under your shoes, and the work they do for you is much beneath them: why should we not be like our attendants? This is angelical obedience; the angels do you many a kindness, and never look for thanks from you, they do many a kindness that you are not aware of: why are you delivered sometimes you know not how? here is a hand under a wing, the ministration of angels is the cause of it. But I say the work they stoop to for you is much beneath them, and therefore why should we not stoop to any work commanded, though it lie much beneath us?—*William Bridge.*

Verse 11.—"*He shall give his angels charge over thee,*" etc. When Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, he alleged but one sentence of Scripture for himself, Matthew iv. 6, and that Psalm out of which he borrowed it made so plain against him, that he was fain to pick here a word and there a word, and leave out that which went

before, and skip in the midst, and omit that which came after, or else he had marred his cause. The Scripture is so holy, and pure, and true, that no word nor syllable thereof can make for the Devil, or for sinners, or for heretics: yet, as the Devil alleged Scripture, though it made not for him, but against him, so do the libertines, and epicures, and heretics, as though they had learned at his school.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 11.—One angel armed with the power and glory of God is stronger than a whole country. Earthly princes are subject to many changes and great unsurety of life and estate. The reason is, their enemies may kill their watch, and corrupt their guard. But what men or kingdoms can touch the Church's watch? what angels of gold are able to corrupt the angels of God? and then how can that perish that is committed to keepers so mighty and faithful? Secondly, the charge of us is given to those ministering spirits by parcels, not in gross and piece-meal, not in a lump: our members in a book, our hairs by tale and number. For it is upon record, and, as it were, delivered to them in writing in one Psalm, *They keep all our bones*, Ps. xxxiv. 20; in this, *they keep our very foot*, putting it in security (ver. 12); and elsewhere our whole man and every member. And can a charge so precisely and so particularly given and taken, be neglected? Thirdly, their manner of keeping us, as it is set down in the text, cannot but promise great assurance; for, is not the little child safe while the nurse carrieth it in her arms, or beareth it in her hands? So while these nurses so bear us, can we be in danger? but our nurses on earth may fall; these nurses, the *angels*, cannot.—*Robert Horn.*

Verse 11.—"*His angels.*" Taking the word *angel* in its literal meaning, as *messenger*, we may look upon any agency which God employs to strengthen, protect, and help us, as *his angel* to us.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 11.—"*To keep thee in all thy ways.*" How should those heavenly spirits bear that man in their arms, like nurses, upon earth living; or bear up his soul to heaven, like winged porters, when he dies, that refuseth the right way? They shall keep us in all our ways. Out of the way it is their charge to oppose us, as to preserve us in the way. Nor is this more a terror to the ungodly, than to the righteous a comfort. For if an angel would keep even a Balaam from sinning, how much more careful are all those glorious powers to prevent the miscarriages of God's children! From how many falls and bruises have they saved us! In how many inclinations to evil have they turned us, either by removing occasions, or by casting in secretly good motions! We sin too often, and should catch many more falls, if those holy guardians did not uphold us. Satan is ready to divert us, when we endeavour to do well; when to do ill, angels are as ready to prevent us. We are in Joshua the high-priest's case, with Satan on the one hand, on the other an angel, Zech. iii. 1: without this, our danger were greater than our defence, and we could neither stand nor rise.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 11.—"*To keep thee in all thy ways.*" Their commission, large as it is, reaches no further: when you leave that, you lose your guard; but while you keep your way, angels, yea, the God of angels, will keep you. Do not so much fear losing your estate or your liberty or your lives, as losing your way, and leaving your way: fear that more than anything; nothing but sin exposeth you to misery. So long as you keep your way, you shall keep other things; or if you lose any of them, you shall get what is better: though you may be sufferers for Christ you shall not be losers by him.—*Samuel Slater* (—1704), *in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 11.—"*In all thy ways.*" Your ways are God's ways, your way is the way commanded by God. If you be out of God's ways, you are out of your own way: if you be in your way, the angels shall keep you, even in the time of a plague, and bear you up in their hands that you dash not your foot against a stone; but if you be out of your way, I will not insure your safety. When Balaam went upon the devil's errand an angel met him and scared his ass, and the ass ran his foot against the wall, dashed his foot against the wall. The promise is, "Thou shalt not dash thy foot against a stone"; but he was out of his way, and the angel met him and scared his ass, and his ass made him rush his leg against the wall. Jonah went out of his way when he ran away from God; God bade him go one way, and he went another. Well, what then? were the angels with him for his protection? the very sea would not be quiet till he was thrown overboard: instead of angels to protect him, he had a whale to devour him. I confess indeed, through the free grace and mercy of God, the belly of destruction was made a chamber of preservation to him, but he was out of his way; and instead of an angel to keep him that he dash not his foot, his whole body was thrown overboard. Says Solomon, "As

a bird from her nest, so is a man out of his place": so long as the bird is in her nest it is free from the hawk, it is free from the birding-piece, it is free from the nets and gins and snares as long as it is in its nest; but when the bird is off her nest then she is exposed to many dangers. So, so long as a man is in his way, in his place and in his way, he is well and under protection; but when a man is off his nest, out of his place and out of his way, then is he exposed to all dangers: but be but in your way and then you may assure yourselves of divine protection, and of the management thereof by the hands of angels. Oh who would not labour always to be in that way which God hath appointed him to be in? Why should we not always consider with ourselves and say, But am I in my way? Old Mr. Dod being upon the water and going out of one boat into another, slipped between them, and the first word he spake was this, "Am I in my way?" so we should always be saying, But am I in my way? am I in my way? I am now idling away my time, but am I in my way? Oh my soul, am I in my way? I am in my calling this day without prayer in the morning and reading the Scriptures; but am I in my way? Oh my soul, am I in my way? I am now in such frothy company where I get no good, but hurt; but am I in my way? Ever consider this, Am I in my way? You may expect the Lord's protection and the angels' attendance, if you be in your way, but not else.—*William Bridge.*

Verse 11.—We have the safeguard of the empire; not only the protection of the King, from which the wicked as outlaws are secluded; but also the keeping of angels, to whom he hath given a charge over us, to keep us in all his ways. So nearly we participate of his divine things, that we have his own guard royal to attend us.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 11.—"*He shall give his angels charge over thee,*" etc.

And is there care in heaven, and is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
That may compassion of their evils move?
There is, else much more wretched were the race
Of men than beasts. But oh, the exceeding grace
Of highest God, that loves his creatures so,
And all his works with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed angels he sends to and fro,
To serve us wicked men, to serve his wicked foe!

How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us that succour want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love and nothing for reward.
Oh, why should heavenly God to man have such regard!

—*Edmund Spenser*, 1552—1599.

Verses 11, 12.—It is observable that Scripture is the weapon that Satan doth desire to wield against Christ. In his other ways of dealing he was shy, and did but lay them in Christ's way, offering only the occasion, and leaving him to take them up; but in this he is more confident, and industriously pleads it as a thing which he could better stand to and more confidently avouch. The care of his subtlety herein, lay in the misrepresentation and abuse of it, as may be seen in these particulars: (1) In that he urged this promise to promote a sinful thing, contrary to the general end of all Scripture, which was therefore written 'that we sin not.' (2) But more especially in his clipping and mutilating of it. He industriously leaves out that part of it which doth limit and confine the promise of protection to lawful undertakings, such as this was not, and renders it as a general promise of absolute safety, be the action what it will. It is a citation from Ps. xci. 11, 12 which there runs thus, "*He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*" These last words, "*in all thy ways,*" which doth direct to a true understanding of God's intention in that promise, he deceitfully leaves out, as if they were needless and unnecessary parts of the promise, when indeed they were on purpose put there by the Spirit of God, to give a description of those persons and actions, unto whom, in such cases, the accomplishment of the promise might be expected; for albeit.

the word in the original, which is translated "*ways*"—דְּרָכִים—doth signify any kind of way or action in the general, yet in this place it doth not; for then God were engaged to an absolute protection of men, not only when they unnecessarily thrust themselves into dangers, but in the most abominably sinful actions whatsoever, which would have been a direct contradiction to those many scriptures wherein God threatens to withdraw his hand and leave sinners to the danger of their iniquities; but it is evident that the sense of it is no more than this, 'God is with you, while you are with him.' We have a paraphrase of this text, to this purpose, in Prov. iii. 23, "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble;" where the condition of this safety, pointed to in the word "then," which leads the promise, is expressly mentioned in the foregoing verses, "My son, let them"—that is, the precepts of wisdom—"not depart from thine eyes . . . Then"—not upon other terms—"shalt thou walk in thy way safely." The "*ways*" then in this promise cited by Satan, are the ways of duty, or the ways of our lawful callings. The fallacy of Satan in this dealing with Scripture is obvious, and Christ might have given this answer, as Bernard hath it, That God promiseth to keep him in his ways, but not in self-created dangers, for that was not his way, but his ruin; or if a way, it was Satan's way, but not his. (3) To these two, some add another abuse, in a subtle concealment of the following verse in Ps. xci.: "*Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder.*" This concerned Satan, whose cruelty and poisonous deceits were fitly represented by the lion and the adder, and there the promise is also explained to have a respect to Satan's temptations—that is—God would so manage his protection, that his children should not be led into a snare.—*Richard Gilpin.*

Verses 11, 12.—There is, to my mind, a very remarkable coincidence of expression between the verses of this Psalm, about the office of God's angels, and that passage in Isaiah where Christ's sympathy and presence receive the same charge attributed to them without interposition. In Isaiah lxiii. 9, we read, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." And again, "They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone," compared with, "And he bare them, and he carried them all the days of old." Christ in us, by sympathy with our nature—Christ in us, by the indwelling of his Spirit in each individual heart—thus he knows all our needs. Christ with us, in every step, all-powerful to make all work for good, and with love and pity watching over our interests—thus his presence saves us, and *all* things are made his messengers to us.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 12.—"*Angels . . . shall bear thee up . . . lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" Angels are introduced as bearing up the believer in their hands, not that he may be carried in safety over some vast ocean, not that he may be transported through hostile and menacing squadrons, not that, when exposed to some extraordinary danger, he may be conveyed to a place of refuge, but, as bearing him up in their arms, "*lest at any time he hurt his foot against a stone.*" . . . Angels, the topmost beings in creation, the radiant, the magnificent, the powerful—angels are represented as holding up a righteous man, lest some pebble in the path should make him trip, lest he hurt his foot against a stone.

Is there, after all, any want of keeping between the agency and the act, so that there is even the appearance of angels being unworthily employed, employed on what is beneath them, when engaged in bearing us up, lest at any time we hurt the foot against a stone? Nay, the hurting the foot against a stone has often laid the foundation of fatal bodily disease: the injury which seemed too trifling to be worth notice has produced extreme sickness, and ended in death. Is it different in spiritual respects, in regard of the soul, to which the promise in our text must be specially applied? Not a jot. Or, if there be a difference, it is only that the peril to the soul from a slight injury is far greater than that to the body: the worst spiritual diseases might commonly be traced to inconsiderable beginnings. . . .

It can be no easy thing, this keeping the foot from being hurt against a stone, seeing that the highest of created beings are commissioned to effect it. Neither is it. The difficulty in religion is the taking up the cross "daily," rather than the taking it up on some set occasion, and under extraordinary circumstances. The serving God in little things, the carrying religious principle into the details of life, the discipline of our tempers, the regulation of our speech, the domestic Christianity, the momentary sacrifices, the secret and unobserved self-denials; who that knows anything of the difficulties of piety, does not know that there is greater danger of

his failing in these than in trials of apparently far higher cost, and harder endurance; if on no other account, yet because the very absence of what looks important, or arduous, is likely to throw him off his guard, make him careless or confident, and thereby almost insure defect or defeat?—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 12.—To carry them in their hands is a metaphor, and signifies a perfect execution of their custody, to have a special care of them, and therefore is rather expressed so, than carrying them on their shoulders. That which one carries on their hand they are sure to keep. The Spaniards have a proverb when they would signify eminent favour and friendship, 'they carry him upon the palms of their hands,' that is, they exceedingly love him, and diligently keep him. "*Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" He persists in the metaphor: children often stumble and fall, unless they be led and carried in hands and arms. By *stones* are meant all difficulties, objections, perils, both to the outward and inward man, as Christ is said to take care of hairs and sparrows, that is, of every thing even to a hair. Now we know what this charge is, saving that Zanchy adds also the metaphor of schoolmasters, and says that we are poor rustic people, strangers; but being adopted into the household of God, he gives his most noble ministers, *the angels*, charge, first of our nursing, and then of our education; when we are weaned, to instruct us, to admonish, to institute, to correct us, to comfort us, to defend us, to preserve us from all evil, and to provoke us to all good. And these angels, seeing we are so dear to God, that for our sakes he spared not his own Son, take this charge with all their hearts upon them, and omit nothing of their duty from our birth to the end of our life.—*Henry Lawrence, in "A Treatise of our Communion and Warre with Angells,* 1646.

Verse 13.—"*Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*" What avails a human foot among these? What force of human affection can stand fast among such terrible monsters? These are spiritual wickednesses, and are designated by not incongruous titles. . . . One is an *asp*, another a basilisk, a third a *lion*, and a fourth a *dragon*, because each in his own invisible way variously wounds,—one by his bite, another by his look, a third by his roar or blow, and a fourth by his breath. . . . . .

Consider this also, whether perchance we are able to meet these four temptations with four virtues. The lion roars, who will not fear? If any there be, he shall be *brave*. But when the lion is foiled, the dragon lurks in the sand, in order to excite the soul with his poisonous breath; breathing therein the lust of earthly things. Who, think you, shall escape his wiles? None but the *prudent*. But perhaps whilst you are careful in attacking these, some annoyance vexes you; and lo! the asp is upon you forthwith. For he seems to have found for himself a reasonable moment. Who is he that shall not be exasperated by this asp? Certainly the man of *temperance* and modesty, who knows how to abound, and to suffer want. On this opportunity, I think, the Evil Eye with its wicked allurements may determine to fascinate thee. Who shall turn away his face? Truly the *just* man, who not only desires not to take to himself the glory due to God, but not even to receive what is presented by another: if yet he is a just man, that justly executes what is just, who performs not his righteousness before men, who, lastly, although he is just, lifts not up his head. For this virtue consists specially in humility. This purifies the intention, this also obtains merit all the more truly and effectually, because it arrogates less to itself.—*Bernard.*

Verse 13.—"*Adder.*" The *pethen* is classed with the lion as being equally to be dreaded by the traveller. . . . There is no doubt that the Egyptian cobra is the *pethen* of Scripture.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 13.—"*Dragon.*" The expression is used (1) for "sea-monsters," (2) for serpents, (3) for wild beasts or birds characteristic of desolate places, and (4) it is used figuratively to represent the enemies of the Lord, and especially Pharaoh, as head and representative of the Egyptian power, and Nebuchadnezzar, the head and representative of the Chaldean monarchy. The term is thus a general one, signifying any monstrous creature, whether of the land or of the water, and is to be set down with the one or the other, according as the context indicates.—*John Duns, in "Biblical Natural Science."*

Verse 13.—"*Thou shalt tread upon;*" "*thou shalt trample under feet.*" Thou shalt tread upon them, not accidentally, as a man treads upon an adder or a serpent in the way; but his meaning is, thou shalt intentionally tread upon them like a

conqueror, thou shalt tread upon them to testify the dominion over them, so when the Lord Jesus gave that promise (Luke x. 19) to his disciples, that they should do great things, he saith, *You shall tread upon serpents;* that is, you shall have power to overcome whatsoever may annoy you: serpentine power is all hurtful power, whether literal or mystical. As the Apostle assures all believers (Rom. xvi. 20), *"God shall tread down Satan* (that old serpent) *under your feet shortly."—Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13 (*second clause*).—But what is said unto Christ? *"And thou shalt tread on the lion and dragon." Lion,* for overt wrath; *dragon* for covert lurking.—*Augustine.*

Verse 14.—*"Because he hath set his love upon me."* Vulg. *"Because he hath hoped in me."* Whatever is to be done, whatever is to be declined, whatever is to be endured, whatever is to be chosen, thou O Lord art my hope. This is the only cause of all my promises, this the sole reason of my expectation. Let another pretend to merit, let him boast that he bears the burden and heat of the day, let him say that he fasts twice on the Sabbath, let him finally glory that he is not as other men; for me it is good to cleave unto God, to place my hope in the Lord God. Let others hope in other things, one in his knowledge of letters, another in his worldly-wisdom, one in his nobility, one in his dignity, another in some other vanity, for thy sake I have made all things loss, and count them but dung; since thou, Lord, art my hope.—*Bernard,* quoted by *Le Blanc.*

Verse 14 (*first clause*).—As there is a *because* and a *therefore* in the process of the law, in concluding death for sin, so there is a *because* and a *therefore* in the process of grace, and of the *gospel,* which doth reason from one grace given to infer another grace to be given, even grace for grace; and such is this here: *"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him."—David Dickson.*

Verse 14.—He does not say, Because he is without sin, because he has perfectly kept all my precepts, because he has merit and is worthy to be delivered and guarded. But he produces those qualities which are even found in the weak, the imperfect, and those still exposed to sin in the flesh, namely, adhesion, knowledge of his name, and prayer.—*Musculus.*

Verse 14.—*"He hath set his love upon me."* In the love of a divinely illuminated believer there is (1) the sweet property of *gratitude.* The soul has just and enlarged views of the salvation which he has obtained through the name of Jesus. The evils from which he is saved; the blessings in hand, and the blessings in hope; the salvation in time, and the salvation through eternity, which can and shall be enjoyed through the name of Jesus, excites feelings of the most ardent gratitude in the soul of the Christian. (2) Another delightful ingredient in this settled love is, *admiration.* Everything in the scheme and execution of God's redeeming plan is an object of admiration. All that the Lord Jesus is in himself; all that he has done; all that he does at the present; and all that he has promised to do for his people, deserves the warmest admiration. This holy feeling is experienced in the breast of the man to whom the Lord can say, *"He hath set his love upon me."* (3) Another ingredient in the illuminated love of the believer is *delightful complacency.* Nothing can afford complacent delight in any excellency unless we are persuaded that we either do possess, or may possess it. I may go to the palace of the greatest monarch in the world, and be deeply struck with astonishment and admiration at the wonder beheld, but there will not be one thrill of complacency felt in my bosom at the view of the astonishing objects which crowd upon my vision. Why? Because I neither have, nor can have any interest in them; they are not mine, nor ever can be; therefore, I cannot take complacent delight in them. But the love of the Christian is a delightful love, (as Mr. Baxter called it,) because there is in the Lord everything that is worthy of infinite and eternal admiration; and then there is the thought which produces a thrill of pleasure,—whatever I admire I can, in some measure, possess. The illuminated eye of God's favourite sees everything in the Lord to supply his necessities; everything to satisfy his desires, all his own; which makes the soul delight itself in the Lord, and he rests in his love. Therefore, the Lord says of the object of his lovingkindness, "He hath set his love upon me"—he hath renounced sin as the greatest abomination; he hath taken off the heart from all idolatrous attachment to the creature, and placed it fixedly and supremely upon God.—*William Dawson, Methodist Preacher* (1773—1841).

Verse 14.—*"He hath set his love upon me."* We have a similar expression in

daily use, which means the bending of all our energies to one end—a ceaseless effort after one object. We say, " I have set my heart on such a thing." This is what God will have from us—an intense, single-hearted love. We must love him " with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind," so that, like Jesus, we may " delight to do his will." Just let us think of the way in which setting our heart on anything affects us, head, hands, time, thought, action—all are at work for its attainment. How we sacrifice everything else to it! Comfort, ease, present advantage, money, health, nay, our very selves, go freely for the sake of our cherished wish.

Have I *so* " set my heart upon " God? Temperaments differ. This may be an overdrawn picture of the way in which some of us seek a cherished object. But each knows his own capability in this way. God also knows our frame, and requires his best at every man's hand.

There is one thing in this verse which may encourage us very much. It is not because of *perfect* love that God will deliver. It is to the will to love and serve—it is to the *setting* the heart, that the promise is made—to the " full purpose of heart " that is *set* to cleave unto the Lord.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 14.—" *I will set him on high.*" That is, in an inaccessible, or lofty place, I will set him, which means, I will deliver him. When men truly know God to be a deliverer, they both put confidence in him, and call upon him. Then God exalts and delivers him that calls.—*Franciscus Vatablus.*

Verse 14.—" *I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.*" There is a great deal of safety in the knowledge of God, in his attributes, and in his Christ. A man's safety we see lies in his running to the tower (Prov. xxiii. 10); he runs and is safe. And it is the knowledge of this tower that sets a man a running to it. Hence we find safety attributed to the knowledge of the Lord. " *I will set him on high,*" I will exalt him, and so he shall be safe. Why so? " *Because he hath known my name* "; for the knowing of God aright was that which made him run, and so he is exalted and set on high. Then a man is safe when he hath got this tower to be his tower, when he hath gotten God to be his God. Now when we know God, we get him to be our God, and make this tower our tower, Jer. xxiv. 7: " I will give them an heart to know me, and I will be their God."—*Jeremiah Dyke, in " The Righteous Man's Tower,"* 1639.

Verses 14—16.—" *He hath known my name.*" From this text I would introduce to your notice the most desirable character under the sun; and I would exhibit him before you to excite each one to seek, until you obtain the same blessedness. The character that I shall exhibit is GOD'S FAVOURITE, one who is an object of the " loving-kindness of the Lord "; and in reading this passage there are two things which strike our attention concerning such a character. *First*, what the Lord says *of* him. *Second*, what the Lord says *to* him.

Now, then, my brethren—LOOK! There stands before you GOD'S FAVOURITE!

I. Listen to *what God says* OF *him.* 1. He says of him, " *He knows my name.*" The first principle of the life of God in the fallen soul of man is knowledge; spiritual, divine knowledge. The first operation of the Holy Ghost in the work of salvation, is a conviction of the character and perfections and relations of God. The Lord says, " he knows my name." He knows my name as Omniscient, Omnipresent, Holy, Just and True. (1) He first knows my name as a sin-hating, sin-avenging God; and this knowledge was a means of leading him to a deep sense of his own personal corruption, guilt, and danger as a sinner. (2) But the favourite of the Lord knows his name as revealed to Moses, as " The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." He knows the name of the Lord as concentrated in the name of Jesus, who " shall save his people from their sins." By the *white* beams of God's holiness, (if I may so speak), the sinner sees his corruption, guilt and deformity: by the *red* beams of God's justice he sees his unspeakable danger: by the *mild* beams of God's mercy, he discovers a ground of hope—that there is pardon for his aggravated crimes. But it is in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God appears most delightful. Hence we can say to every saved soul, as Paul did to the Corinthians:—" God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." As all the colours of the rainbow meet in one sunbeam, so all the perfections of God as perfectly unite, and more beautifully shine

forth, in the person and offices of Jesus Christ, upon the soul of the penitent believer. This saving knowledge is always vital, active, and powerful.—*William Dawson.*

Verse 14.—"*He hath known my name.*" May we not get some light on this expression from the custom of the Jews, keeping the name JEHOVAH sacred to their own use, regarding it as too holy even to be pronounced by them in common use, and thus preserving it from being taken in vain by the heathen around? Thus it was known to Jews only. . . . But whatever be the origin of the expressions, to "know *his name*," to "trust in *his name*," to "believe in *his name*," it evidently in all these cases means whatever is revealed concerning him—all that by which he maketh himself known. His Word, his Providence, above all, his Son, are included thus in his *name*, which we must know, believe in, and trust. So that to "know his name" is to know himself, as revealed in the Gospel.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 14 (*last clause*).—Sound love to God, floweth from and is joined with sound knowledge of God, as his Majesty is declared unto us in Scripture: the believer who hath set his *love* upon God, "*hath known my name*," saith he.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 15.—"*I will answer him.*" I think we sometimes discourage ourselves by a misconception of the exact meaning of the expression, "*answer*," taking it to mean only *grant*. Now, an answer is not necessarily an acquiescence. It may be a refusal, an explanation, a promise, a conditional grant. It is, in fact, simply *attention to our request expressed*. In this sense, before we call he will answer, and while we are yet speaking he will hear, Isaiah lxv. 24.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 15.—"*I will be with him in trouble.*" *I will be with him in trouble*, says God: and shall I seek meanwhile anything else than trouble? It is good for me to cleave unto God. Not only so, but also to put my hope in the Lord: because *I will deliver him*, he says, *and honour him. I will be with him in trouble. My delights*, he says, *are with the sons of men.* Emanuel God with us. *Hail*, thou art *highly favoured*, says the Angel to Mary, *the Lord is with thee.* In the fulness of grace he is with us, in the plentitude of glory we shall be with him. He descends in order to be near to those who are of a troubled heart, that he may be with us in our trouble. . . . . It is better for me, O Lord, to be troubled, whilst only thou art with me, than to reign without thee, to feast without thee, to be honoured without thee. It is good rather to be embraced by thee in trouble, to have thee in this furnace with me, than to be without thee even in heaven. For what have I in heaven, and without thee what do I desire upon earth? The furnace tries the gold, and the temptation of trouble just men.—*Bernard.*

Verse 15.—"*I will be with him in trouble.*" God hath made promises of his special presence with his saints in suffering. If we have such a friend to visit us in prison, we shall do well enough; though we change our place, we shall not change our keeper. "*I will be with him.*" God will hold our head and heart when we are fainting! What if we have more afflictions than others, if we have more of God's company? God's honour is dear to him; it would not be for his honour to bring his children into sufferings, and leave them there; he will be with them to animate and support them; yea, when new troubles arise. Job v. 19. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles."—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 15.—"*I will be with him in trouble.*" Again God speaks and acts like a tender-hearted mother towards a sickly child. When the child is in perfect health she can leave it in the hands of the nurse; but when it is sick she will attend it herself; she will say to the nurse, "You may attend a while to some other business, I will watch over the child myself." She hears the slightest moan; she flies to the cradle; she takes it in her arms; she kisses its lips, and drops a tear upon its face, and asks, "What can I do for thee, my child? How can I relieve thy pain and soften thy sufferings? Don't weep and break my heart; it is thy mother's arms that are around thee; it is thy mother's lap on which thou art laid; it is thy mother's voice that speaks to thee; it is thy mother that is with thee; fear not." So the Lord speaks to his afflicted children. "*I will be with him in trouble.*" No mother can equally sympathise with her suffering child; as the Lord does with his suffering people. No! could all the love that ever dwelt in all the mothers' hearts that ever existed, be united in one mother's heart, and fixed on her only child, it would no more bear a comparison with the love of God to his people than the summer midnight glow-worm is to be compared to the summer mid-day sun.

Oh, that delightful sentence! "*I will be with him in trouble.*" At other times God will leave them in the hands of angels: "I will give them charge over them, to

keep them in all their ways; they bear them up lest at any time they dash their feet against a stone." But when they are in trouble, I will say to the angels, "Stand aside, I will take care of them myself." "*I* will be with them in trouble." So he speaks to his people: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." When languishing in sickness, he will make his bed, and his pillow; when travelling through the valley of the shadow of death, the Lord will be with him, and enable him to sing, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Thus he is with them as their physician and nurse, in pain and sickness; as their strength in weakness; as their guide in difficulty; their ease in pain; and as their life in death. "*I will be with him in trouble.*"—*William Dawson.*

Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him.*" Saint Bernard interprets this of *heaven;* because he thought nothing long that had an end. This, indeed, is the emphasis of heaven's joy; those blessed souls never sin, never weep more; they shall not only be with the Lord, but ever with the Lord. This is the accent which is set on the eulogies given to heaven in Scripture. 'Tis "an inheritance," and that an "incorruptible one, that fadeth not away;" it is "a crown of glory," and that a weighty one, yea, "an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory." When once it is on the saint's head it can never fall, or be snatched off; it is a feast, but such a one that hath a sitting down to it but no rising up from it.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him.*" Observe the joyful contrast here to the mournful words in the foregoing Psalm. "We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten," (xc. 9, 10.) The life of Israel in the wilderness was shortened by Disobedience. The Obedience of Christ in the wilderness has won for us a blessed immortality.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him,*" etc. The margin here is "length of days;" that is, days lengthened out or multiplied. The meaning is, I will give him length of days as he desires, or until he is satisfied with life;—implying (1) that it is natural to desire long life; (2) that long life is to be regarded as a blessing (comp. Prov. iii. 2, 16; Ex. xx. 12); (3) that the tendency of religion is to lengthen out life; since virtue, temperance, regular industry, calmness of mind, moderation in all things, freedom from excesses in eating and drinking,—to all of which religion prompts,—contribute to health and to length of days; and (4) that a time will come, even under this promised blessing of length of days, when a man will be "*satisfied*" with living; when he will have no strong desire to live longer; when, under the infirmities of advanced years, and under his lonely feelings from the fact that his early friends have fallen, and under the influence of a bright hope of heaven, he will feel that he has had *enough* of life here, and that it is better to depart to another world. "*And shew him my salvation.*" In another life, after he shall be satisfied with this life.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him.*" This promise concerning length of life contains a gift of God by no means to be despised. Many enemies indeed will plot against his life, and desire to extinguish him as suddenly and as quickly as possible; but I shall so guard him that he shall live to a good old age and be filled with years, and desire to depart from life.—*J. B. Folengius.*

Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him.*"

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.
Philip James Bailey, in "Festus."

Verse 16.—"*Long life.*"

They err who measure life by years,
With false or thoughtless tongue;
Some hearts grow old before their time;
Others are always young.

'Tis not the number of the lines
On life's fast filling page,
'Tis not the pulse's added throbs,
Which constitute their age.

Some souls are serfs among the free
While others nobly thrive ;
They stand just where their fathers stood
Dead, even while they live.

Others, all spirit, heart, and sense,
Theirs the mysterious power,
To live in thrills of joy or woe,
A twelvemonth in an hour !

Bryan W. Procter.

Verse 16.—" *Long life.*"

He liveth long who liveth well !
All other life is short and vain :
He liveth longest who can tell
Of living most for heavenly gain

He liveth long who liveth well !
All else is being flung away ;
He liveth longest who can tell
Of true things truly done each day.

Horatius Bonar.

Verse 16.—" *I will shew him my salvation.*" The last, greatest, climax of blessing, including and concluding all ! What God does is perfectly done. Hitherto has his servant caught glimpses of the " great salvation." The Spirit has revealed step by step of it, as he was able to bear it. The Word has taught him, and he has rejoiced in his light. But all was seen *in part* and known *in part.* But when God has satisfied his servant with length of days, and time for him is over, eternity begun, he will " *shew him his salvation.*" All will be plain. All will be known. God will be revealed in his love and his glory. And we shall know all things, even as we are known ! —*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. The secret dwelling-place. There is the dweller in the dark world, in the favoured land, in the holy city, in the outer court ; but the holy of holies is the " secret place "—communion, acceptance, etc. II. The protecting shadow—security, peace, etc. ; like hamlets of olden time clustered beneath castle walls.—*Charles A. Davis.*

Verse 1.—1. *The person.* One who is in intimate, personal, secret, abiding communion with God, dwelling near the mercy-seat, within the veil. II. The Privilege. He is the guest of God, protected, refreshed, and comforted by him, and that to all eternity.

Verses 1, 2.—Four names of God. I. We commune with him reverently, for he is the Most High. II. We rest in him as the Almighty. III. We rejoice in him as Jehovah or Lord. IV. We trust him as EL, the mighty God.

Verse 2.—I. Observe the nouns applied to God—refuge from trouble, fortress in trouble, God at all times. II. Observe the pronouns applied by man—" *I* " will say, " *my* refuge, my fortress," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The power, excellence, fruit, reasonableness, and open avowal of personal faith.

Verse 3.—Invisible protection from invisible dangers ; wisdom to meet cunning, love to war with cruelty, omnipresence to match mystery, life to baffle death.

Verse 3.—SURELY, or reasons for assured confidence in God's protection.

Verses 3—7.—Pestilence, panic, and peace ; (for times of widespread disease).—*Charles A. Davis.*

Verses 3, 8, 9.—I. Saints are safe—" *surely,*" (verse 3). II. The evil is bounded —" *only,*" (verse 8). III. The Lord has reasons for preserving his own—" *because,*" (verse 9).

Verse 4.—I. The compassion of God. II. The confidence of saints. III. The panoply of truth.

Verses 5, 6.—I. The exposure of all men to fear. 1. Continually, day and night. 2. Deservedly: "conscience doth make cowards of us all." II. The exemption of some men from fear. 1. Because of their trust. 2. Because of the divine protection.

Verse 7.—How an evil may be near but not nigh.

Verse 8.—What we have actually seen of the reward of the wicked.

Verses 9, 10.—I. God our spiritual habitation. II. God the keeper of our earthly habitation. III. General truth that the spiritual blesses the temporal.

Verse 10.—I. The Personal Blessing. II. The Domestic Blessing. III. The connection between the two.

Verses 14—16.—The six "I wills."

Verses 11, 12.—A "wrested" Scripture righted. I. Satan's version—presumptuousness. II. The Holy Spirit's version—trustfulness.—*Charles A. Davis.*

Verses 11, 12.—I. The Ministry of Angels as employed by God. 1. Official: "he shall give," etc. 2. Personal: "over thee." 3. Constant: "in all thy ways." II. As enjoyed by man. 1. For preservation: "shall bear thee," etc.; tenderly but effectually. 2. Under limitation. They cannot do the work of God, or of Christ, or of the Spirit, or of the word, or of ministers, for salvation; "are they not all ministering spirits," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—Preservation from minor evils most precious because they are often most grievous, lead to greater evils, and involve much damage.

Verse 13.—The believer's love set upon God.

Verse 13.—I. Every child of God has his enemies. 1. They are numerous: "the lion, adder, young lion, dragon." 2. Diversified: subtle and powerful—"lion and adder;" new and old—"young lion" and the "old dragon." II. He will finally obtain a complete victory over them—"Thou shalt tread," etc.; "shall put thy foot," etc.; "the Lord shall bruise Satan," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—Here we have, I. Love for love: "Because," etc. 1. The fact of the saints' love to God. There is, first, love in God without their love, then love for their love. 2. The evidence of his love to them: "I will deliver him"—from sin, from danger, from temptation, from every evil. II. Honour for honour. 1. His honouring God. "He hath known my name" and made it known; God honouring him; "I will set him on high"—high in honour, in happiness, in glory.—*G. R.*

Verses 15, 16.—Observe, I. The exceeding great and precious promises. 1. Answer to prayer: "he shall call," etc. 2. Comfort in trouble: "I will be with him." 3. Deliverance from trouble: "I will deliver him." 4. Greater honour after trouble: deliver "and honour him." 5. Length of days; life long enough to satisfy him. 6. God's salvation: "shew him my salvation;" far beyond what man could think or desire. II. To whom these promises belong; who is the *he* and the *him* to whom these promises are made. He "calls upon God," says the fifteenth verse; he "hath known my name," says the verse preceding; he "hath set his love upon me," says the former part of the same verse; he "has made the Lord his habitation," says the ninth verse; he "dwelleth in the secret place of the most High," says the first verse. Hannah More says, "To preach privileges without specifying to whom they belong is like putting a letter in the post-office without a direction." It may be very good and contain a valuable remittance, but no one can tell for whom it is intended. All the promises of Scriptures are plainly directed to those to whom they belong. The direction put upon the promises of this Psalm is unmistakably clear and often repeated.—*G. R.*

PSALM XCII.

TITLE.—A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath-day. *This admirable composition is both a Psalm and a Song, full of equal measures of solemnity and joy; and it was intended to be sung upon the day of rest. The subject is the praise of God; praise is Sabbatic work, the joyful occupation of resting hearts. Since a true Sabbath can only be found in God, it is wise to meditate upon him on the Sabbath day. The style is worthy of the theme and of the day, its inspiration is from the "fount of every blessing"; David spake as the Spirit gave him utterance. In the church of Christ, at this hour, no Psalm is more frequently sung upon the Lord's day than the present. The delightful version of Dr. Watts is familiar to us all—*

> *"Sweet is the work, my God, my King,*
> *To praise thy name, give thanks, and sing;*
> *To shew thy love by morning light,*
> *And talk of all thy truth at night."*

The Sabbath was set apart for adoring the Lord in his finished work of creation, hence the suitableness of this Psalm; Christians may take even a higher flight, for they celebrate complete redemption. No one acquainted with David's style will hesitate to ascribe to him the authorship of this divine hymn: the ravings of the Rabbis who speak of its being composed by Adam, only need to be mentioned to be dismissed. Adam in Paradise had neither harps to play upon, nor wicked men to contend with.

EXPOSITION.

IT is a good *thing* to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:

2 To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,

3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

1. "*It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,*" or JEHOVAH. It is good ethically, for it is the Lord's right; it is good emotionally, for it is pleasant to the heart; it is good practically, for it leads others to render the same homage. When duty and pleasure combine, who will be backward? To give thanks to God is but a small return for the great benefits wherewith he daily loadeth us; yet as he by his Spirit calls it a good thing, we must not despise it, or neglect it. We thank men when they oblige us, how much more ought we to bless the Lord when he benefits us. Devout praise is always good, it is never out of season, never superfluous, but it is especially suitable to the Sabbath; a Sabbath without thanksgiving is a Sabbath profaned. "*And to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.*" It is good to give thanks in the form of vocal song. Nature itself teaches us thus to express our gratitude to God; do not the birds sing, and the brooks warble as they flow? To give his gratitude a tongue is wise in man. Silent worship is sweet, but vocal worship is sweeter. To deny the tongue the privilege of uttering the praises of God involves an unnatural strain upon the most commendable promptings of our renewed manhood, and it is a problem to us how the members of the Society of Friends can deprive themselves of so noble, so natural, so inspiring a part of sacred worship. Good as they are, they miss one good thing when they decline to sing praises unto the name of the Lord. Our personal experience has confirmed us in the belief that it is good to sing unto the Lord; we have often felt like Luther when he said, "Come, let us sing a Psalm, and drive away the devil."

2. "*To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning.*" The day should begin with praise: no hour is too early for holy song. Lovingkindness is a most appropriate theme for those dewy hours when morn is sowing all the earth with orient pearl.

Eagerly and promptly should we magnify the Lord; we leave unpleasant tasks as long as we can, but our hearts are so engrossed with the adoration of God that we would rise betimes to attend to it. There is a peculiar freshness and charm about early morning praises; the day is loveliest when it first opens its eyelids, and God himself seems then to make distribution of the day's manna, which tastes most sweetly if gathered ere the sun is hot. It seems most meet that if our hearts and harps have been silent through the shades of night, we should be eager again to take our place among the chosen choir who ceaselessly hymn the Eternal One. "*And thy faithfulness every night.*" No hour is too late for praise, the end of the day must not be the end of gratitude. When nature seems in silent contemplation to adore its Maker, it ill becomes the children of God to refrain their thanksgiving. Evening is the time for retrospect, memory is busy with the experience of the day, hence the appropriate theme for song is the divine *faithfulness*, of which another day has furnished fresh evidences. When darkness has settled down o'er all things, "a shade immense," then there comes over wise men a congenial, meditative spirit, and it is most fitting that they should take an expanded view of the truth and goodness of Jehovah—

"This sacred shade and solitude, what is it?
'Tis the felt presence of the Deity."

"*Every night,*" clouded or clear, moonlit or dark, calm or tempestuous, is alike suitable for a song upon the faithfulness of God, since in all seasons, and under all circumstances, it abides the same, and is the mainstay of the believer's consolation. Shame on us that we are so backward in magnifying the Lord, who in the daytime scatters bounteous love, and in the night season walks his rounds of watching care.

3. "*Upon an instrument of ten strings;*" with the fullest range of music, uttering before God with the full compass of melody the richest emotions of his soul. "*And upon the psaltery;*" thus giving variety to praise: the Psalmist felt that every sweet-sounding instrument should be consecrated to God. George Herbert and Martin Luther aided their private devotions by instrumental music; and whatever may have been the differences of opinion in the Christian church, as to the performance of instrumental music in public, we have met with no objection to its personal and private use. "*Upon the harp with a solemn sound,*" or upon *meditation with a harp;* as much as to say, my meditative soul is, after all, the best instrument, and the harp's dulcet tones come in to aid my thoughts. It is blessed work when hand and tongue work together in the heavenly occupation of praise.

"Strings and voices, hands and hearts,
In the concert bear your parts:
All that breathe, your God adore,
Praise him, praise him, evermore."

It is, however, much to be feared that attention to the mere mechanism of music, noting keys and strings, bars and crochets, has carried many away from the spiritual harmony which is the soul and essence of praise. Fine music without devotion is but a splendid garment upon a corpse.

4. "*For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work.*" It was natural for the Psalmist to sing, because he was glad, and to sing unto the Lord, because his gladness was caused by a contemplation of the divine work. If we consider either creation or providence, we shall find overflowing reasons for joy; but when we come to review the work of redemption, gladness knows no bounds, but feels that she must praise the Lord with all her might. There are times when in the contemplation of redeeming love we feel that if we did not sing we must die; silence would be as horrible to us as if we were gagged by inquisitors, or stifled by murderers. "*I will triumph in the works of thy hands.*" I cannot help it, I must and I will rejoice in the Lord, even as one who has won the victory and has divided great spoil. In the first sentence of this verse he expresses the unity of God's *work*, and in the second the variety of his *works;* in both there is reason for gladness and triumph. When God reveals his work to a man, and performs a work in his soul, he makes his heart glad most effectually, and then the natural consequence is continual praise.

5 O LORD, how great are thy works! *and* thy thoughts are very deep.
6 A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this

5. "*O Lord, how great are thy works!*" He is lost in wonder. He utters an exclamation of amazement. How vast! How stupendous are the doings of Jehovah! Great for number, extent, and glory and design are all the creations of the Infinite One. "*And thy thoughts are very deep.*" The Lord's plans are as marvellous as his acts; his designs are as profound as his doings are vast. Creation is immeasurable, and the wisdom displayed in it unsearchable. Some men think but cannot work, and others are mere drudges working without thought; in the Eternal the conception and the execution go together. Providence is inexhaustible, and the divine decrees which originate it are inscrutable. Redemption is grand beyond conception, and the thoughts of love which planned it are infinite. Man is superficial, God is inscrutable; man is shallow, God is deep. Dive as we may we shall never fathom the mysterious plan, or exhaust the boundless wisdom of the all-comprehending mind of the Lord. We stand by the fathomless sea of divine wisdom, and exclaim with holy awe, "O the depth!"

6. "*A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.*" In this and the following verses the effect of the Psalm is heightened by contrast; the shadows are thrown in to bring out the lights more prominently. What a stoop from the preceding verse; from the saint to the brute, from the worshipper to the boor, from the Psalmist to the fool! Yet, alas, the character described here is no uncommon one. The boorish or boarish man, for such is almost the very Hebrew word, sees nothing in nature; and if it be pointed out to him, his foolish mind will not comprehend it. He may be a philosopher, and yet be such a brutish being that he will not own the existence of a Maker for the ten thousand matchless creations around him, which wear, even upon their surface, the evidences of profound design. The unbelieving heart, let it boast as it will, does not know; and with all its parade of intellect, it does not understand. A man must either be a saint or a brute, he has no other choice; his type must be the adoring seraph, or the ungrateful swine. So far from paying respect to great thinkers who will not own the glory or the being of God, we ought to regard them as comparable to the beasts which perish, only vastly lower than mere brutes, because their degrading condition is of their own choosing. O God, how sorrowful a thing it is that men whom thou hast so largely gifted, and made in thine own image, should so brutify themselves that they will neither see nor understand what thou hast made so clear. Well might an eccentric writer say, "God made man a little lower than the angels at first, and he has been trying to get lower ever since."

7 When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; *it is* that they shall be destroyed for ever:

8 But thou, LORD, *art most* high for evermore.

9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

7. "*When the wicked spring as the grass,*" in abundance, and apparent strength, hastening on their progress like verdant plants, which come to perfection in a day, "*and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish;*" flowering in their prime and pride, their pomp and their prosperity; "*it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.*" They grow to die, they blossom to be blasted. They flower for a short space to wither without end. Greatness and glory are to them but the prelude of their overthrow. Little does their opposition matter, the Lord reigns on as if they had never blasphemed him; as a mountain abides the same though the meadows at its feet bloom or wither, even so the Most High is unaffected by the fleeting mortals who dare oppose him: they shall soon vanish for ever from among the living. But as for the wicked—how can our minds endure the contemplation of their doom "*for ever.*" Destruction "*for ever*" is a portion far too terrible for the mind to realise. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the full terror of the wrath to come!

8. "*But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore.*" This is the middle verse of the Psalm, and the great fact which this Sabbath song is meant to illustrate. God is at once the highest and most enduring of all beings. Others rise to fall, but he is the Most High to eternity. Glory be to his name! How great a God we worship! Who would not fear thee, O thou High Eternal One! The ungodly are destroyed for ever, and God is most high for ever; evil is cast down, and the Holy One reigns supreme eternally.

9. *" For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord."* It is a wonder full of instruction and warning, observe it, O ye sons of men ; *" for, lo, thine enemies shall perish ; "* they shall cease from among men, they shall be known no more. In that the thing is spoken twice it is confirmed by the Lord, it shall surely be, and that speedily. *" All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered ; "* their forces shall be dispersed, their hopes broken, and themselves driven hither and thither like chaff before the tempest. They shall scatter like timid sheep pursued by the lion, they will not have the courage to remain in arms, nor the unity to abide in confederacy. The grass cannot resist the scythe, but falls in withering ranks, even so are the ungodly cut down and swept away in process of time, while the Lord whom they despised sits unmoved upon the throne of his infinite dominion. Terrible as this fact is, no true-hearted man would wish to have it otherwise. Treason against the great Monarch of the universe ought not to go unpunished ; such wanton wickedness richly merits the severest doom.

10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of* an unicorn : I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

11 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies, *and* mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me.

10. *" But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn."* The believer rejoices that he shall not be suffered to perish, but shall be strengthened and enabled to triumph over his enemies, by the divine aid. The unicorn may have been some gigantic ox or buffalo now unknown, and perhaps extinct—among the ancients it was the favourite symbol of unconquerable power ; the Psalmist adopts it as his emblem. Faith takes delight in foreseeing the mercy of the Lord, and sings of what he will do as well as of what he has done. *" I shall be anointed with fresh oil."* Strengthening shall be attended with refreshment and honour. As guests were anointed at feasts with perfumed unguents, so shall the saints be cheered and delighted by fresh outpourings of divine grace ; and for this reason they shall not pass away like the wicked. Observe the contrast between the happiness of the brutish people and the joy of the righteous, the brutish men grow with a sort of vegetable vigour of their own, but the righteous are dealt with by the Lord himself, and all the good which they receive comes directly from his own right hand, and so is doubly precious in their esteem. The Psalmist speaks in the first person, and it should be a matter of prayer with the reader that he may be enabled to do the same.

11. *" Mine eye also shall see* MY DESIRE *on mine enemies."* The words, " my desire," inserted by the translators, had far better have been left out. He does not say what he should see concerning his enemies, he leaves that blank, and we have no right to fill in the vacant space with words which look vindictive. He would see that which would be for God's glory, and that which would be eminently right and just. *" And mine ears shall hear* MY DESIRE *of the wicked that rise up against me."* Here, again, the words " my desire " are not inspired, and are a needless and perhaps a false interpolation. The good man is quite silent as to what he expected to hear ; he knew that what he should hear would vindicate his faith in his God, and he was content to leave his cruel foes in God's hands, without an expression concerning his own desire one way or the other. It is always best to leave Scripture as we find it. The broken sense of inspiration is better let alone than pieced out with additions of a translator's own invention ; it is like repairing pure gold with tinsel, or a mosaic of gems with painted wood. The holy Psalmist had seen the beginning of the ungodly, and expected to see their end ; he felt sure that God would right all wrongs, and clear his Providence from the charge of favouring the unjust ; this confidence he here expresses, and sits down contentedly to wait the issues of the future.

12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree : he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing ;

15 To shew that the LORD *is* upright: *he is* my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in him.

12. The song now contrasts the condition of the righteous with that of the graceless. The wicked "spring as the grass," but "*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree*," whose growth may not be so rapid, but whose endurance for centuries is in fine contrast with the transitory verdure of the meadow. When we see a noble palm standing erect, sending all its strength upward in one bold column, and growing amid the dearth and drought of the desert, we have a fine picture of the godly man, who in his uprightness aims alone at the glory of God; and, independent of outward circumstances, is made by divine grace to live and thrive where all things else perish. The text tells us not only what the righteous is, but what he shall be; come what may, the good man shall flourish, and flourish after the noblest manner. "*He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*" This is another noble and long-lived tree. "As the days of a tree are the days of my people," saith the Lord. On the summit of the mountain, unsheltered from the blast, the cedar waves its mighty branches in perpetual verdure, and so the truly godly man under all adversities retains the joy of his soul, and continues to make progress in the divine life. Grass, which makes hay for oxen, is a good enough emblem of the unregenerate; but cedars, which build the temple of the Lord, are none too excellent to set forth the heirs of heaven.

13. "*Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.*" In the court-yards of Oriental houses trees were planted, and being thoroughly screened, they would be likely to bring forth their fruit to perfection in trying seasons; even so, those who by grace are brought into communion with the Lord, shall be likened to trees planted in the Lord's house, and shall find it good to their souls. No heart has so much joy as that which abides in the Lord Jesus. Fellowship with the stem begets fertility in the branches. If a man abide in Christ he brings forth much fruit. Those professors who are rooted to the world do not flourish; those who send forth their roots into the marshes of frivolous pleasure cannot be in a vigorous condition; but those who dwell in habitual fellowship with God shall become men of full growth, rich in grace, happy in experience, mighty in influence, honoured and honourable. Much depends upon the soil in which a tree is planted; everything, in our case, depends upon our abiding in the Lord Jesus, and deriving all our supplies from him. If we ever really grow in the courts of the Lord's house we must be planted there, for no tree grows in God's garden self-sown; once planted of the Lord, we shall never be rooted up, but in his courts we shall take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward to his glory for ever.

14. "*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.*" Nature decays but grace thrives. Fruit, as far as nature is concerned, belongs to days of vigour; but in the garden of grace, when plants are weak in themselves, they become strong in the Lord, and abound in fruit acceptable with God. Happy they who can sing this Sabbath Psalm, enjoying the rest which breathes through every verse of it; no fear as to the future can distress them, for their evil days, when the strong man faileth, are the subject of a gracious promise, and therefore they await them with quiet expectancy. Aged believers possess a ripe experience, and by their mellow tempers and sweet testimonies they feed many. Even if bedridden, they bear the fruit of patience; if poor and obscure, their lowly and contented spirit becomes the admiration of those who know how to appreciate modest worth. Grace does not leave the saint when the keepers of the house do tremble; the promise is still sure though the eyes can no longer read it; the bread of heaven is fed upon when the grinders fail; and the voice of the Spirit in the soul is still melodious when the daughters of music are brought low. Blessed be the Lord for this! Because even to hoar hairs he is the I AM, who made his people, he therefore bears and carries them.

"*They shall be fat and flourishing.*" They do not drag out a wretched, starveling existence, but are like trees full of sap, which bear luxuriant foliage. God does not pinch his poor servants, and diminish their consolations when their infirmities grow upon them; rather does he see to it that they shall renew their strength, for their mouths shall be satisfied with his own good things. Such an one as Paul the aged would not ask our pity, but invite our sympathetic gratitude; however feeble his outward man may be, his inner man is so renewed day by day that we may well envy his perennial peace.

15. This mercy to the aged proves the faithfulness of their God, and leads them "*to shew that the Lord is upright*" by their cheerful testimony to his ceaseless goodness.

We do not serve a Master who will run back from his promise. Whoever else may defraud us, he never will. Every aged Christian is a letter of commendation to the immutable fidelity of Jehovah. "*He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*" Here is the Psalmist's own seal and sign manual: still was he building upon his God, and still was the Lord a firm foundation for his trust. For shelter, for defence, for indwelling, for foundation, God is our rock; hitherto he has been to us all that he said he would be, and we may be doubly sure that he will abide the same even unto the end. He has tried us, but he has never allowed us to be tempted above what we are able to bear: he has delayed our reward, but he has never been unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labour of love. He is a friend without fault, a helper without fail. Whatever he may do with us, he is always in the right; his dispensations have no flaw in them, no, not the most minute. He is true and righteous altogether, and so we weave the end of the Psalm with its beginning, and make a coronet of it, for the head of our Beloved. "*It is a good thing to sing praises unto the Lord,*" for "*he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—This is entitled "*A Psalm to be sung on the day of the Sabbath.*" It is known that the Jews appropriated certain Psalms to particular days. R. Selomo thinks that it refers to the future state of the blessed, which is a perpetual sabbath. Others pretend that it was composed by Adam, on the seventh day of the creation. It might, with more probability, have been supposed to be put, by a poetic fiction, into the mouth of Adam, beholding, with wonder and gratitude, the recent creation. But ver. 2 seems to refer to the morning and evening sacrifice, which the Psalmist considers as most proper for prayer and praise.—*D. Cresswell.*

Title.—"*For the Sabbath day.*" Perchance, as *Lud. de Dieu* remarks on this place, every day of the week had its allotted Psalms, according to what is said in the *Talmud*, lib. קדשים. The songs which the Levites formerly sang in the sanctuary are these: on the first day, Ps. xxiv.; on the second, Ps. xlviii.; on the third, Ps. lxxxii.; on the fourth, the 104th; on the fifth, the 81st; on the sixth, the 93rd; on the seventh, the 92nd, the beginning of which is, *a Psalm or a Canticle for the Sabbath day*, that is to say, for the future age, which will be altogether a sabbath.—*Martin Geier.*

Title.—"*For the Sabbath.*"—It is observable that the name JEHOVAH occurs in the Psalm seven times—the sabbatical number (1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13, 15).—*C. Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*It is a good thing.*" It is *bonum, honestum, jucundum, utile;* an honest, pleasant, and profitable good. The altar of incense was to be overlaid with pure gold, and to have a crown of gold round about it. Which (if we may allegorically apply it) intimateth unto us, that the spiritual incense of prayers and praises is rich and precious, a golden, and a royal thing.—*Henry Jeanes, in "The Works of Heaven upon Earth,"* 1649.

Verse 1.—"*It is a good thing to give thanks,*" etc. Giving of thanks is more noble and perfect in itself than petition; because in petition often our own good is eyed and regarded, but in giving of thanks only God's honour. The Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Now, a subordinate end of petition is to receive some good from God, but the sole end of thanks is to give glory unto God.—*William Ames* (1576—1633), *in "Medulla Theologica."*

Verse 1.—"*Give thanks;*" "*praises.*" We thank God for his benefits, and praise him for his perfections.—*Filliucius, out of Aquinas.*

Verse 1.—"*To sing praises.*" 1. *Singing is the music of nature.* The Scriptures tell us, the mountains sing (Isai. xliv. 23); the valleys sing (Psalm lxv. 13); the trees of the wood sing (1 Chron. xvi. 33). Nay, the air is the birds' music-room, where they chant their musical notes.

2. *Singing is the music of ordinances.* Augustine reports of himself, that when he came to Milan and heard the people sing, he wept for joy in the church to hear that pleasing melody. And Beza confesses, that at his first entrance into the congregation, and hearing them sing Ps. xci., he felt himself exceedingly comforted, and did retain the sound of it afterwards upon his heart. The Rabbis tell us, that the

Jews, after the feast of the Passover was celebrated, sang Psalm cxi., and the five following Psalms; and our Saviour and his apostles "sang an hymn" immediately after the blessed supper, (Matt. xxvi. 30).

3. *Singing is the music of saints.* (1.) They have performed this duty in their greatest numbers, (Psalm cxlix. 1). (2.) In their greatest straits, (Isai. xxvi. 19). (3.) In their greatest flight, (Isai. xlii. 10, 11). (4.) In their greatest deliverances, (Isai. lxv. 14). (5.) In their greatest plenties. In all these changes singing hath been their stated duty and delight. And indeed it is meet that the saints and servants of God should sing forth their joys and praises to the Lord Almighty; every attribute of him can set both their song and their tune.

4. *Singing is the music of angels.* Job tells us, "The morning stars sang together," (Job xxxviii. 7). Now these morning stars, as Pineda tells us, are the angels; to which the Chaldee paraphrase accords, naming these morning stars, *aciem angelorum*, "a host of angels." Nay, when this heavenly host was sent to proclaim the birth of our dearest Jesus, they delivered their message in this raised way of duty, (Luke ii. 13). They were *αἰνούντων*, delivering their messages in a "laudatory singing," the whole company of angels making a musical choir. Nay, in heaven, there is the angels' joyous music, they there sing hallelujahs to the Most High, and to the Lamb who sits upon the throne, (Rev. v. 11, 12).

5. *Singing is the music of heaven.* The glorious saints and angels accent their praises this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness; and this is the music of the bride-chamber, (Rev. xv. 3). The saints who were tuning here their Psalms, are now singing hallelujahs in a louder strain, and articulating their joys, which here they could not express to their perfect satisfaction. Here they laboured with drowsy hearts, and faltering tongues; but in glory these impediments are removed, and nothing is left to jar their joyous celebrations.—*John Wells* (—1676), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 2.—"*In the morning.*" When indeed the mind after the rest of the night is more active, devoted and constant. In other parts of the day, as at noon, or in the afternoon, many sounds of business disturb, and greater lassitude oppresses. Compare Pss. v. 4, lix. 17, lxiii. 2, lxxxviii. 14, cxix. 147, 148, where this same part of the day is celebrated as the fittest for sacred meditations. However, this ought not to be taken exclusively, as if, in the morning alone, and not also at noon or in the evening, it was suitable to celebrate divine grace.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*In the morning.*" The Brahmins rise three hours before the sun, to pray. The Indians would esteem it a great sin to eat in the morning before praying to their gods. The ancient Romans considered it impious if they had not a little chamber in their house, appropriated to prayer. Let us take a lesson from these Turks and heathen; their zealous ardour ought to shame us. Because we possess the true light, should their zeal surpass ours?—*Frederic Arndt, in "Lights of the Morning,"* 1861.

Verse 2.—"*To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning.*" Our praise ought to be suitably arranged. In the time of prosperity or the *morning* we should declare thy lovingkindness, because whatever of prosperity we have proceeds from the mercy and grace of God; and in the time of adversity or *night*, we should declare thy justice or faithfulness, because whatever adversity happens to us is ordained by the just judgment of God.—*J. Turrecremata.*

Verse 2.—God's "*mercy*" is itself the *morning ray*, which scatters away darkness (xxx. 5, lix. 16); his "*faithfulness*" the guardian, that assures us against *night peril.—F. Delitzsch.*

Verse 2.—"*In the morning, and . . every night.*" God is Alpha and Omega. It is fit we should begin and end the day with his praise, who begins and ends it for us with mercy. Well, thou seest thy duty plainly laid before thee. As thou wouldst have God prosper thy labour in the day, and sweeten thy rest in the night, clasp them both together with thy morning and evening devotions. He that takes no care to set forth God's portion of time in the morning, doth not only rob God of his due, but is a thief to himself all the day after, by losing the blessing which a faithful prayer might bring from heaven on his undertakings. And he that closeth his eyes at night without prayer, lies down before his bed is made.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy faithfulness* (Vulg. '*veritas,*') *every night.*" Truth can be taken in its proper signification. Thus St. Jerome on our Psalm takes it, and says: "The truth of the Lord is announced in the night, as if it were wrapped up in some verbal

obscurities. In an enigma it is spoken, and in parables; that seeing, they should not see, and hearing, they should not understand. Moses ascended mount Sinai, Exod. xxiv., and passed into the tempest and into the blackness and darkness, and there spake with the Lord." Thus Jerome. Christ brings back the light to us, as Lactantius teaches. Shall we wait, says he, till Socrates shall know something? Or Anaxagoras find light in the darkness? Or Democritus draw forth the truth from a well? Or till Empedocles expands the paths of his soul? Or Ascesilas and Carneades see, feel, and perceive? Behold a voice from heaven teaches us the truth, and reveals it more clearly to us than the sun himself. . . . . In the night truth is to be shown forth, that the night may be turned into day.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—" *Upon an instrument of ten strings.*" Eusebius, in his comment on this Psalm, says: " *The psaltery of ten strings* is the worship of the Holy Spirit performed by means of the *five* senses of the body, and by the *five* powers of the soul." And to confirm this interpretation, he quotes the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 15: " I will pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also." " As the mind has its influence by which it moves the body, so the spirit has its own influence by which it moves the soul." Whatever may be thought of this gloss, one thing is pretty evident from it, that *instrumental music* was not in use in the church of Christ in the time of Eusebius, which was near the middle of the *fourth* century. Had any such thing then existed in the Christian Church, he would have doubtless alluded to or spiritualized it; or, as he quoted the words of the apostle above, would have shown that *carnal usages* were substituted for *spiritual exercises.—Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—In Augustine to Ambrose there is the following passage bearing on this same subject:—" Sometimes, from over jealousy, I would entirely put from me and from the church the melodies of the sweet chants that we use in the Psalter, lest our ears seduce us; and the way of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, seems the safe one, who, as I have often heard, made the reader chant with so slight a change of voice, that it was more like speaking than singing. And yet, when I call to mind the tears I shed when I heard the chants of thy church in the infancy of my recovered faith, and reflect that I was affected, not by the mere music, but by the subject brought out as it were by clear voices and appropriate tune, then, in turn, I confess how useful is the practice."

Verse 3.—We are not to conceive that God enjoyed the harp as feeling a delight like ourselves in mere melody of sounds; but the Jews, who were yet under age, were restricted to the use of such childish elements. The intention of them was to stimulate the worshippers, and stir them up more actively to the celebration of the praise of God with the heart. We are to remember that the worship of God was never understood to consist in such outward services, which were only necessary to help forward a people, as yet weak and rude in knowledge, in the spiritual worship of God. A difference is to be observed in this respect between his people under the Old and under the New Testament; for now that Christ has appeared, and the church has reached full age, it were only to bury the light of the Gospel, should we introduce the shadows of a departed dispensation. From this, it appears that the Papists, in employing instrumental music, cannot be said so much to imitate the practice of God's ancient people, as to ape it in a senseless and absurd manner, exhibiting a silly delight in that worship of the Old Testament which was figurative, and terminated with the gospel.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—Chrysostom says, " Instrumental music was only permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols; but now instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him withal." Theodoret has many like expressions in his comments upon the Psalms and other places. But the author under the name of Justin Martyr is more express in his determination, as to matter of fact, telling us plainly, " that the use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches as it was among the Jews in their infant state, but only the use of plain song."—*Joseph Bingham.*

Verse 3.—Instrumental music, the more I think of it, appears with increasing evidence to be utterly unsuited to the genius of the gospel dispensation. There was a glare, if I may so express it, which characterized even the divine appointments of Judaism. An august temple, ornamented with gold and silver, and precious stones, golden candlesticks, golden altars, priests in rich attire, trumpets, cymbals,

harps; all of which were adapted to an age and dispensation when the church was in a state of infancy. But when the substance is come, it is time that the shadows flee away. The best exposition of harps in singing is given by Dr. Watts—

> "Oh may my heart in tune be found,
> Like David's harp of solemn sound."
>
> —*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—"*On meditation with a harp.*" [New translation.] By a bold but intelligible figure, *meditation* is referred to as an instrument, precisely as the lyre and harp are, the latter being joined with it as a mere accompaniment.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 3.—"*With a solemn sound.*" Let Christians abound as much as they will in the holy, heavenly exercise of singing in God's house and in their own houses; but let it be performed as a holy act, wherein they have immediately and visibly to do with God. When any social open act of devotion or solemn worship of God is performed, God should be reverenced as present. As we would not have the ark of God depart from us, nor provoke God to make a breach upon us, we should take heed that we handle the ark with reverence.—*Jonathan Edwards, in "Errors connected with singing praises to God."*

Verse 4.—"*Thou Lord hast made me glad through thy work.*" One of the parts of the well-spending of the Sabbath, is the looking upon, and consideration of the works of creation. The consideration of the Lord's works will afford us much sweet refreshment and joy when God blesses the meditation; and when it is so we ought to acknowledge our gladness most thankfully and lift up our heart in his ways.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*Thy work.*" The "work of God" here is one no less marvellous than that of creation, which was the original ground of hallowing the Sabbath (see *title* of this Psalm)—namely, the final redemption of his people.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 4.—"*Made me glad through thy work,*" etc. Surely there is nothing in the world, short of the most undivided reciprocal attachment, that has such power over the workings of the human heart as the mild sweetness of Nature. The most ruffled temper, when emerging from the town, will subside into a calm at the sight of an extended landscape reposing in the twilight of a fine evening. It is then that the spirit of peace settles upon the heart, unfetters the thoughts, and elevates the soul to the Creator. It is then that we behold the Parent of the universe in his works; we see his grandeur in earth, sea, sky; we feel his affection in the emotions which they raise, and half-mortal, half-etherealized, forget where we are in the anticipation of what that world must be, of which this lovely earth is merely the shadow.—*Miss Porter.*

Verse 4.—"*I will triumph in the works of thy hands.*" Here it will be most fitting to remind the reader of those three great bursts of adoring song, which in different centuries have gushed forth from souls enraptured with the sight of nature. They are each of them clear instances of triumphing in the works of God's hands. How majestically Milton sang when he said of our unfallen parents,—

> "Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
> Their Maker, in fit strains pronounc'd or sung
> Unmeditated; such prompt eloquence
> Flow'd from their lips, in prose or numerous verse,
> More tunable than needed lute or harp
> To add more sweetness."

Then he gives us that noble hymn, too well-known for us to quote, the reader will find it in the fifth book of the Paradise Lost, commencing—

> "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty!"

Thomson also, in his Seasons, rises to a wonderful height, as he closes his poem with a hymn—

> "These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God."

Coleridge in his "Hymn before Sun-rise, in the Vale of Chamouni," equally well treads the high places of triumphant devotion, as he cries—

> "Awake my soul! not only passive praise
> Thou owest! not alone these swelling tears,
> Mute thanks and secret ecstacy! Awake,
> Voice of sweet song! Awake, my heart, awake!
> Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my hymn."

Verse 5.—"*Thy thoughts.*" The plural of מַחֲשָׁבָה, from the verb חָשַׁב, to meditate, to count, to *weave*; and this last word gives a good idea of what is here made the subject of admiration and praise, the wonderful intricacy and contrivance with which the Divine Mind designs and executes his plans, till at length the result is seen in a beautifully woven tissue of many delicately mingled and coloured threads.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy thoughts are very deep.*" Verily, my brethren, there is no sea so deep as these thoughts of God, who maketh the wicked flourish, and the good suffer: nothing so profound, nothing so deep: therein every unbelieving soul is wrecked, in that depth, in that profundity. Dost thou wish to cross this depth? Remove not from the wood of Christ's cross; and thou shalt not sink: hold thyself fast to Christ.—*Augustine.*

Verse 6.—Expressively he wrote: "The *man-brute* will not know; the fool will not understand this," viz., that when the wicked spring up with rapid and apparently vigorous growth as the summer flowers in Palestine, it is that they may ripen soon for a swift destruction. The *man-brute* precisely translates the Hebrew words; one whom God has endowed with manhood, but who has debased himself to brutehood; a man as being of God's creation in his own image, but a brute as being self-moulded (shall we say self-made?) into the image of the baser animals!—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 6.—"*A brutish man knoweth not,*" etc. A sottish sensualist who hath his *soul for salt* only, to keep his body from putrefying (as we say of swine) he takes no knowledge of God's great works, but grunts and goes his ways, contenting himself with a natural use of the creatures, as beasts do.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*A brutish man knoweth not,*" etc. That is, he being a beast, and having no sanctified principle of wisdom in him, looks no further than a beast into all the works of God and occurrences of things; looks on all blessings as things provided for man's delight by God; but he extracts seldom holy, spiritual, and useful thoughts out of all, he wants the art of doing it.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"*A brutish man knoweth not.*" How universally do men strive, by the putrid joys of sense and passion, to destroy the fineness of the sensibilities which God has given them! This mind, which might behold a world of glory in created things, and look through them as through a transparent veil to things infinitely *more* glorious, signified or contained within the covering, is as dull and heavy as a piece of anthracite coal. Who made it so? Alas, habits of sense and sin have done this. If from childhood the soul had been educated for God, in habits accordant with its spiritual nature, it would be full of life, love, and sensibility, in harmony with all lovely things in the natural world, beholding the spiritual world through the natural, alive to all excitement from natural and intellectual beauty, and as ready to its duty as a child to its play. What a dreadful destruction of the mind's inner sensibilities results from a sensual life! What a decline, decay, and paralysis of its intuitive powers, so that the very existence of such a thing as spiritual intuition, in reference to a spiritual world, may be questioned, if not denied!

A man may be frightfully successful in such a process of destruction if long enough continued, upon his own nature. "Who can read without indignation of Kant," remarks De Quincey, "that at his own table, in social sincerity and confidential talk, let him say what he would in his books, he exulted in the prospect of absolute and ultimate annihilation; that he planted his glory in the grave, and was ambitious of rotting for ever! The King of Prussia, though a personal friend of Kant's, found himself obliged to level his State thunders at some of his doctrines, and terrified him in his advance; else I am persuaded that Kant would have formally delivered Atheism from the Professor's chair, and would have enthroned the horrid ghoulish creed, which privately he professed, in the University of Königsberg. It required the artillery of a great king to make him pause. The fact is, that as the

stomach has been known by means of its natural secretion, to attack not only whatsoever alien body is introduced within it, but also (as John Hunter first showed), sometimes to attack itself and its own organic structure; so, and with the same preternatural extension of instinct, did Kant carry forward his destroying functions, until he turned them upon his own hopes, and the pledges of his own superiority to the dog, the ape, the worm."—*George B. Cheever, in "Voices of Nature,"* 1852.

Verse 6.—"*A fool.*" The simpleton is an automaton, he is a machine, he is worked by a spring; mere gravity carries him forward, makes him move, makes him turn, and that unceasingly and in the same way, and exactly with the same equable pace: he is uniform, he is never inconsistent with himself; whoever has seen him once, has seen him at all moments, and in all periods of his life; he is like the ox who bellows, or the blackbird which whistles: that which is least visible in him is his soul; it does not act, it is not exercised, it takes its rest.—*Jean de la Bruyère* (1639—1696), *quoted by Ramage.*

Verse 6.—"*Neither doth a fool understand this.*"

He roved among the vales and streams,
In the green wood and hollow dell;
They were his dwellings night and day,
But nature ne'er could find the way
Into the heart of Peter Bell.

In vain, through every changeful year,
Did Nature lead him as before;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

In vain, through water, earth, and air,
The soul of happy sound was spread,
When Peter on some April morn,
Beneath the broom or budding thorn,
Made the warm earth his lazy bed.

At noon, when by the forest's edge
He lay beneath the branches high,
The soft blue sky did never melt
Into his heart; he never felt
The witchery of the soft blue sky!

There was a hardness in his cheek,
There was a hardness in his eye.
As if the man had fixed his face,
In many a solitary place,
Against the wind and open sky.

—*W. Wordsworth,* 1770—1850.

Verse 7.—"*When the wicked spring as the grass,*" etc. Their felicity is the greatest infelicity.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 7.—Little do they think that they are suffered to prosper that like *beasts* they may be fitter for slaughter. The fatter they are, the fitter for slaughter, and the sooner slain: "He slew the fattest of them," Ps. lxxviii., 31.—*Zachary Bogan.*

Verse 8.—Here is the central pivot of the Psalm. "*But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore,*" *lit.*, "art *height,*" &c., the abstract used for the concrete, to imply that the essence of all that is *high* is concentrated in Jehovah. When God and the cause of holiness *seem low*, God *is really* never higher than then; for out of seeming weakness he perfects the greatest strength. When the wicked seem *high*, they are then on the verge of being cast down for ever. The believer who can realize this will not despair at the time of his own depression, and of the seeming exaltation of the wicked. If we can feel "*Jehovah most high for evermore,*" we can well be unruffled, however low we lie.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 9.—"*Lo thine enemies;*" "*lo thine enemies.*" He represents their destruction as present, and as certain, which the repetition of the words implies.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 9.—"*Thine enemies shall perish.*" This is the only Psalm in the Psalter which is designated a Sabbath-song. The older Sabbath was a type of our rest in Christ from sin; and therefore the final extirpation of sin forms one of the leading subjects of the Psalm.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 9.—"*All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.*" The wicked may unite and confederate together, but the bands of their society are feeble. It is seldom that they long agree together; at least as to the particular object of their pursuit. Though they certainly harmonize in the general one, that of working iniquity. But God will soon by his power, and in his wrath, confound and scatter them even to destruction.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 10.—"*Thou shalt lift up, as a rĕĕym, my horn,*" seems to point to the mode in which the *bovidæ* use their horns, lowering the head and then tossing it up.—*William Houghton, in Smith's Bible Dictionary.*

Verse 10.—"*The horn of an unicorn.*"—After discussing the various accounts which are given of this animal by ancient and modern writers, Winer says, I do not hesitate to say, it is the *Antelope Leucoryx*, a species of goat with long and sharp horns.—*William Walford.*

Verse 10.—"*I shall be anointed with fresh oil.*" Montanus has, instead of "*fresh oil,*" given the literal meaning of the original *virido oleo*, "*with green oil.*" Ainsworth also renders it: "*fresh or green oil.*" The remark of Calmet is: "The plants imparted somewhat of their colour, as well as of their fragrance, hence the expression, "*green oil.*" Harmer says, "I shall be anointed with green oil." Some of these writers think the term *green*, as it is in the original, signifies "precious fragrant oil;" others, literally "green" in colour; and others, "fresh" or newly-made oil. But I think it will appear to mean "cold-drawn oil," that which has been expressed or squeezed from the nut or fruit without the process of boiling. The Orientals prefer this kind to all others for anointing themselves; it is considered the most precious, the most pure and efficacious. Nearly all their medicinal oils are thus extracted; and because they cannot gain so much by this method as by the boiling process, oils so drawn are very dear. Hence their name for the article thus prepared is also *patche*, that is, "*green oil.*" But this term, in Eastern phraseology, is applied to other things which are unboiled or raw; thus unboiled water is called *patche-tameer*, "*green* water:" *patche-pal*, likewise, "*green* milk," means that which has not been boiled, and the butter made from it is called "*green* butter;" and uncooked meat or yams are known by the same name. I think, therefore, the Psalmist alludes to that valuable article which is called "*green* oil," on account of its being expressed from the nut or fruit, without the process of boiling.—*Joseph Roberts's Oriental Illustrations.*

Verse 10.—"*Anointed with fresh oil.*" Every kind of benediction and refreshment I have received, do receive, and shall receive, like one at a feast, who is welcomed as a friend, and whose *head* is copiously anointed with oil or fragrant balm. In this way, the spirits are gently refreshed, an inner joyousness excited, the beauty of the face and limbs, according to the custom of the country, brought to perfection. Or, there is an allusion to the custom of *anointing* persons at their solemn installation in some splendid office. Compare Ps. xxiii. 5, "*Thou anointest my head with oil,*" and Ps. xlv. 7, "*God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness.*"—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—The phrase is not "I am anointed," מָשַׁח; but בָּלַל, *imbutus sum—perfusus sum;* apparently in reference to the abundance of perfume employed on the occasion, viz., his being elected King over all the tribes, as indicative of the greater popularity of the act, or the higher measure of Jehovah's blessing on his people. The difference, indeed, between the first anointing of David and that of Saul, as performed by Samuel, is well worthy of notice on the present occasion. When Samuel was commanded to anoint Saul, he "took a *vial* of oil, and poured it upon his head," in private, 1 Sam. xvi. 13. Here we find the horn again made use of, and apparently full to the brim—*David was soaked or imbued with it.—John Mason Good.*

Verse 11.—"*Mine enemies.*"—The word here used שׁוּר *shur*—occurs nowhere else. It means, properly, a lier-in-wait, one who *watches*; one who is in ambush; and refers to persons who *watched* his conduct; who *watched* for his ruin.—*A. Barnes.*

Verse 12.—"*Like the palm tree.*" Look now at those stately palm-trees, which stand here and there on the plain, like military sentinels, with feathery plumes nodding gracefully on their proud heads. The stem, tall, slender, and erect as Rectitude herself, suggests to the Arab poets many a symbol for their lady-love; and Solomon, long before them, has sung, "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! This thy stature is like a palm-tree," (S. Song vii. 6, 7). Yes; and Solomon's father says, "*The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree,*" etc. The royal poet has derived more than one figure from the customs of men, and the habits of this noble tree, with which to adorn his sacred ode. The palm grows slowly, but steadily, from century to century uninfluenced by those alternations of the seasons which affect other trees. It does not rejoice over much in winter's copious rain, nor does it droop under the drought and the burning sun of summer. Neither heavy weights which men place upon its head, nor the importunate urgency of the wind, can sway it aside from perfect uprightness. There it stands, looking calmly down upon the world below, and patiently yielding its large clusters of golden fruit from generation to generation. They "*bring forth fruit in old age.*"

The allusion to being "*planted in the house of the Lord*" is probably drawn from the custom of planting beautiful and long-lived trees in the courts of temples and palaces, and in all "high places" used for worship. This is still common; nearly every palace, and mosque, and convent in the country has such trees in the courts, and being well protected there, they flourish exceedingly.

Solomon covered all the walls of the "Holy of Holies" round about with palm-trees. They were thus planted, as it were, within the very house of the Lord; and their presence there was not only ornamental, but appropriate and highly suggestive. The very best emblem, not only of patience in well-doing, but of the rewards of the righteous—a fat and flourishing old age—a peaceful end—a glorious immortality.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 12.—"*The palm tree.*" The palms were entitled by Linnæus, "the princes of the vegetable world;" and Von Martius enthusiastically says, "The common-world atmosphere does not become these vegetable monarchs: but in those genial climes where nature seems to have fixed her court, and summons around her of flowers, and fruits, and trees, and animated beings, a galaxy of beauty,—there they tower up into the balmy air, rearing their majestic stems highest and proudest of all. Many of them, at a distance, by reason of their long perpendicular shafts, have the appearance of columns, erected by the Divine architect, bearing up the broad arch of heaven above them, crowned with a capital of gorgeous green foliage." And Humboldt speaks of them as "the loftiest and stateliest of all vegetable forms." To these, above all other trees, the prize of beauty has always been awarded by every nation, and it was from the Asiatic palm world, or the adjacent countries, that human civilization sent forth the first rays of its early dawn.

On the northern borders of the Great Desert, at the foot of the Atlas mountains, the groves of date palms form the great feature of that parched region, and few trees besides can maintain an existence. The excessive dryness of this arid tract, where rain seldom falls, is such that wheat refuses to grow, and even barley, maize, and Caffre corn, (Holcus sorghum,) afford the husbandman only a scanty and uncertain crop. The hot blasts from the south are scarcely supportable even by the native himself, and yet here forests of date palms flourish, and form a screen impervious to the rays of the sun, beneath the shade of which the lemon, the orange, and the pomegranate, are cherished, and the vine climbs up by means of its twisted tendrils; and although reared in constant shade, all these fruits acquire a more delicious flavour than in what would seem a more favourable climate. How beautiful a comment do these facts supply to the words of Holy Writ, "*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree!*" Unmoved by the scorching and withering blasts of temptations or persecutions, the Christian sustained by the secret springs of Divine grace, lives and grows in likeness to his Divine Master, when all others are overcome, and their professions wither. How striking is the contrast in the Psalm. The wicked and worldlings are compared to grass, which is at best but of short duration, and which is easily withered; but the emblem of the Christian is the palm tree, which stands for centuries. Like the grateful shade of the palm groves, the Christian extends around him a genial, sanctified, and heavenly influence; and just as the great value of the date palm lies in its abundant, wholesome, and delicious fruit, so do those who are the true disciples of Christ abound in "fruits of righteousness," for, said our Saviour, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so

shall ye be my disciples."—" *The Palm Tribes and their Varieties.*" *R. T. Society's Monthly Volume.*

Verse 12.—" *The righteous shall flourish.*" David here tells us *how* he shall flourish. " He shall flourish *like the palm tree :* he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Of the wicked he had said just before, " When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish ; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." They flourish as the *grass*, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven. What a contrast with the worthlessness, the weakness, transitoriness, and destiny, of grass—in a warm country too—are the palm tree and cedar of Lebanon ! They are evergreens. How beautifully, how firmly, how largely, they grow ! How strong and lofty is the cedar ! How upright, and majestic, and tall, the palm tree. The palm also bears fruit, called dates, like bunches of grapes. It sometimes yields a hundredweight at once.

He tells us *where* he shall flourish. " Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." The allusion is striking. It compares the house of God to a garden, or fine well-watered soil, favourable to the life, and verdure, and fertility, of the trees fixed there. The reason is, that in the sanctuary we have the communion of saints. *There* our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. *There* are dispensed the ordinances of religion, and the word of truth. *There* God commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore.

He also tells us *when* he shall flourish. " They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." This is to show the permanency of their principles, and to distinguish them from natural productions.

> " The plants of grace shall ever live ;
> Nature decays, but grace must thrive ;
> Time, that doth all things else impair,
> Still makes them flourish strong and fair."

The young Christian is lovely, like a tree in the blossoms of spring : the aged Christian is valuable, like a tree in autumn, bending with ripe fruit. We therefore look for something superior in old disciples. More deadness to the world, the vanity of which they have had more opportunities to see ; more meekness of wisdom ; more disposition to make sacrifices for the sake of peace ; more maturity of judgment in divine things ; more confidence in God ; more richness of experience.

He also tells us *why* he shall flourish. " They shall be fat and flourishing ; to shew that the Lord is upright." We might rather have supposed that it was necessary to shew that *they* were upright. But by the grace of God they are what they are—not they, but the grace of God which is in them. From *him* is their fruit found. Their preservation and fertility, therefore, are to the praise and glory of God ; and as what he does for them he had *engaged* to do, it displays his truth as well as his mercy, and proves that he is upright.—*William Jay.*

Verse 12.—" *The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.*"

1. *The palm tree grows in the desert.* Earth is a desert to the Christian ; true believers are ever refreshed in it as a palm is in the Arabian desert. So *Lot* amid Sodom's wickedness, and *Enoch* who walked with God amongst the antediluvians.

2. *The palm tree grows from the sand, but the sand is not its food ;* water from below feeds its tap roots, though the heavens above be brass. Some Christians grow, not as the lily, Hos. xiv. 5, by green pastures, or the willow by water-courses, Isai. xliv. 4, but as the palm of the desert ; so *Joseph* among the Cat-worshippers of Egypt, *Daniel* in voluptuous Babylon. Faith's penetrating root reaches the fountains of living waters.

3. *The palm tree is beautiful*, with its tall and verdant canopy, and the silvery flashes of its waving plumes ; so the Christian virtues are not like the creeper or bramble, tending downwards, their palm branches shoot upwards, and seek the things above where Christ dwells, Col. iii. 1 : some trees are crooked and gnarled, but the Christian is a tall palm as a son of the light, Matt. iii. 12 ; Phil. ii. 15. The Jews were called a crooked generation, Deut. xxxii. 5, and Satan a crooked serpent, Isai. xxvii., but the Christian is upright like the palm. Its beautiful, unfading leaves make it an emblem of victory ; it was twisted into verdant booths at the feast of Tabernacles ; and the multitude, when escorting Christ to his coronation in Jerusalem, spread leaves on the way, Matt. xxi. 8 ; so victors in heaven are represented as having palms in their hands, Rev. vii. 9. No dust adheres to the leaf as it does with the *palm tree* ; the Christian is in the world, not of it ; the dust of earth's desert adheres

Verse 12.—"*Like the palm tree.*" Look now at those stately palm-trees, which stand here and there on the plain, like military sentinels, with feathery plumes nodding gracefully on their proud heads. The stem, tall, slender, and erect as Rectitude herself, suggests to the Arab poets many a symbol for their lady-love; and Solomon, long before them, has sung, "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! This thy stature is like a palm-tree," (S. Song vii. 6, 7). Yes; and Solomon's father says, "*The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree,*" etc. The royal poet has derived more than one figure from the customs of men, and the habits of this noble tree, with which to adorn his sacred ode. The palm grows slowly, but steadily, from century to century uninfluenced by those alternations of the seasons which affect other trees. It does not rejoice over much in winter's copious rain, nor does it droop under the drought and the burning sun of summer. Neither heavy weights which men place upon its head, nor the importunate urgency of the wind, can sway it aside from perfect uprightness. There it stands, looking calmly down upon the world below, and patiently yielding its large clusters of golden fruit from generation to generation. They "*bring forth fruit in old age.*"

The allusion to being "*planted in the house of the Lord*" is probably drawn from the custom of planting beautiful and long-lived trees in the courts of temples and palaces, and in all "high places" used for worship. This is still common; nearly every palace, and mosque, and convent in the country has such trees in the courts, and being well protected there, they flourish exceedingly.

Solomon covered all the walls of the "Holy of Holies" round about with palm-trees. They were thus planted, as it were, within the very house of the Lord; and their presence there was not only ornamental, but appropriate and highly suggestive. The very best emblem, not only of patience in well-doing, but of the rewards of the righteous—a fat and flourishing old age—a peaceful end—a glorious immortality.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 12.—"*The palm tree.*" The palms were entitled by Linnæus, "the princes of the vegetable world;" and Von Martius enthusiastically says, "The common-world atmosphere does not become these vegetable monarchs: but in those genial climes where nature seems to have fixed her court, and summons around her of flowers, and fruits, and trees, and animated beings, a galaxy of beauty,—there they tower up into the balmy air, rearing their majestic stems highest and proudest of all. Many of them, at a distance, by reason of their long perpendicular shafts, have the appearance of columns, erected by the Divine architect, bearing up the broad arch of heaven above them, crowned with a capital of gorgeous green foliage." And Humboldt speaks of them as "the loftiest and stateliest of all vegetable forms." To these, above all other trees, the prize of beauty has always been awarded by every nation, and it was from the Asiatic palm world, or the adjacent countries, that human civilization sent forth the first rays of its early dawn.

On the northern borders of the Great Desert, at the foot of the Atlas mountains, the groves of date palms form the great feature of that parched region, and few trees besides can maintain an existence. The excessive dryness of this arid tract, where rain seldom falls, is such that wheat refuses to grow, and even barley, maize, and Caffre corn, (Holcus sorghum,) afford the husbandman only a scanty and uncertain crop. The hot blasts from the south are scarcely supportable even by the native himself, and yet here forests of date palms flourish, and form a screen impervious to the rays of the sun, beneath the shade of which the lemon, the orange, and the pomegranate, are cherished, and the vine climbs up by means of its twisted tendrils; and although reared in constant shade, all these fruits acquire a more delicious flavour than in what would seem a more favourable climate. How beautiful a comment do these facts supply to the words of Holy Writ, "*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree!*" Unmoved by the scorching and withering blasts of temptations or persecutions, the Christian sustained by the secret springs of Divine grace, lives and grows in likeness to his Divine Master, when all others are overcome, and their professions wither. How striking is the contrast in the Psalm. The wicked and worldlings are compared to grass, which is at best but of short duration, and which is easily withered; but the emblem of the Christian is the palm tree, which stands for centuries. Like the grateful shade of the palm groves, the Christian extends around him a genial, sanctified, and heavenly influence; and just as the great value of the date palm lies in its abundant, wholesome, and delicious fruit, so do those who are the true disciples of Christ abound in "fruits of righteousness," for, said our Saviour, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so

shall ye be my disciples."—" *The Palm Tribes and their Varieties.*" *R. T. Society's Monthly Volume.*

Verse 12.—" *The righteous shall flourish.*" David here tells us *how* he shall flourish. " He shall flourish *like the palm tree :* he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Of the wicked he had said just before, " When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish ; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." They flourish as the *grass*, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven. What a contrast with the worthlessness, the weakness, transitoriness, and destiny, of grass—in a warm country too—are the palm tree and cedar of Lebanon ! They are evergreens. How beautifully, how firmly, how largely, they grow ! How strong and lofty is the cedar ! How upright, and majestic, and tall, the palm tree. The palm also bears fruit, called dates, like bunches of grapes. It sometimes yields a hundredweight at once.

He tells us *where* he shall flourish. " Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." The allusion is striking. It compares the house of God to a garden, or fine well-watered soil, favourable to the life, and verdure, and fertility, of the trees fixed there. The reason is, that in the sanctuary we have the communion of saints. *There* our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. *There* are dispensed the ordinances of religion, and the word of truth. *There* God commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore.

He also tells us *when* he shall flourish. " They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." This is to show the permanency of their principles, and to distinguish them from natural productions.

> " The plants of grace shall ever live ;
> Nature decays, but grace must thrive ;
> Time, that doth all things else impair,
> Still makes them flourish strong and fair."

The young Christian is lovely, like a tree in the blossoms of spring : the aged Christian is valuable, like a tree in autumn, bending with ripe fruit. We therefore look for something superior in old disciples. More deadness to the world, the vanity of which they have had more opportunities to see ; more meekness of wisdom ; more disposition to make sacrifices for the sake of peace ; more maturity of judgment in divine things ; more confidence in God ; more richness of experience.

He also tells us *why* he shall flourish. " They shall be fat and flourishing ; to shew that the Lord is upright." We might rather have supposed that it was necessary to shew that *they* were upright. But by the grace of God they are what they are—not they, but the grace of God which is in them. From *him* is their fruit found. Their preservation and fertility, therefore, are to the praise and glory of God ; and as what he does for them he had *engaged* to do, it displays his truth as well as his mercy, and proves that he is upright.—*William Jay.*

Verse 12.—" *The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.*"

1. *The palm tree grows in the desert.* Earth is a desert to the Christian ; true believers are ever refreshed in it as a palm is in the Arabian desert. So *Lot* amid Sodom's wickedness, and *Enoch* who walked with God amongst the antediluvians.

2. *The palm tree grows from the sand, but the sand is not its food ;* water from below feeds its tap roots, though the heavens above be brass. Some Christians grow, not as the lily, Hos. xiv. 5, by green pastures, or the willow by water-courses, Isai. xliv. 4, but as the palm of the desert ; so *Joseph* among the Cat-worshippers of Egypt, *Daniel* in voluptuous Babylon. Faith's penetrating root reaches the fountains of living waters.

3. *The palm tree is beautiful*, with its tall and verdant canopy, and the silvery flashes of its waving plumes ; so the Christian virtues are not like the creeper or bramble, tending downwards, their palm branches shoot upwards, and seek the things above where Christ dwells, Col. iii. 1 : some trees are crooked and gnarled, but the Christian is a tall palm as a son of the light, Matt. iii. 12 ; Phil. ii. 15. The Jews were called a crooked generation, Deut. xxxii. 5, and Satan a crooked serpent, Isai. xxvii., but the Christian is upright like the palm. Its beautiful, unfading leaves make it an emblem of victory ; it was twisted into verdant booths at the feast of Tabernacles ; and the multitude, when escorting Christ to his coronation in Jerusalem, spread leaves on the way, Matt. xxi. 8 ; so victors in heaven are represented as having palms in their hands, Rev. vii. 9. No dust adheres to the leaf as it does with the *baltree* ; the Christian is in the world, not of it ; the dust of earth's desert adheres

And the Psalmist, in the next words, declares the greatness of the privilege: "*To shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*" Consider the oppositions that lie against the flourishing of believers in old age, the difficulties of it, the temptations that must be conquered, the actings of the mind above its natural abilities which are decayed, the weariness that is apt to befall us in a long spiritual conflict, the cries of the flesh to be spared, and we shall see it to be an evidence of the faithfulness, power, and righteousness of God in covenant; nothing else could produce this mighty effect. So the prophet, treating of the same promise, Hosea xiv. 4—8, closeth his discourse with that blessed remark, ver. 9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." Spiritual wisdom will make us to see that the faithfulness and power of God are exerted in this work of preserving believers flourishing and fruitful unto the end.—*John Owen.*

Verse 14.—Constancy is an ingredient in the obedience Christ requires. His trees bring forth fruit in old age. Age makes other things decay, but makes a Christian flourish. Some are like hot horses, mettlesome at the beginning of a journey, and tired a long time before they come to their journey's end. A good disciple, as he would not have from God a temporary happiness, so he would not give to God a temporary obedience; as he would have his glory last as long as God lives, so he would have his obedience last as long as he lives. Judas had a fair beginning, but destroyed all in the end by betraying his Master.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 14.—"*Flourishing.*" Here is not only mention of growing but of *flourishing*, and here's flourishing three times mentioned, and 'tis growing and flourishing not only like a tree, but like a "*palm tree,*" (which flourisheth under oppression), and like a "*cedar*" (not growing in ordinary places, but) "in *Lebanon,*" where were the goodliest cedars. Nor doth the Spirit promise here a flourishing in boughs and leaves only (as some trees do, and do no more), but in fruit; and this not only fruit for once in a year, or one year, but they "*still bring forth fruit,*" and that not only in the years of their youth, or beginnings in grace, but "*in old age,*" and that not only in the entrance of that state which is called *old age*, threescore years, but that which the Scripture calls the perfection of *old age*, threescore years and ten, as the learned Hebrews observe upon the word used in the Psalm. What a *divine climax* doth the Spirit of God make in this Scripture, to show that the godly man as to his state, is so far from declining, that he is still climbing higher and higher!—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 15.—"*He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*" Implying that God can no more be moved or removed from doing righteously, than a rock can be removed out of its place.—*Joseph Caryl.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. It is a good thing to have cause for gratitude. Every one has this. II. It is a good thing to have the principle of gratitude. This is the gift of God. III. It is a good thing to give expression to gratitude. This may excite gratitude in others.—*G. R.*

Verses 1—3.—The blessedness of praise, verse 1. The theme of praise, verse 2. The ingenuity of praise, verse 3—inanimate nature enlisted in the holy work.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 2.—I. Our praises of God should be *intelligent*, declaring his varied attributes. II. *Seasonable*, declaring each attribute in appropriate time. III. *Continual*, every night, and every day.

Verse 3.—I. All the powers of the soul should be praise. "Upon an instrument of ten strings," all the chords of the mind, affections, will, etc. II. All the utterances of the lips should be praise. III. All the actions of the life should be praise.

Verse 3.—In our praise of God there should be, I. *Preparation*—for instruments should be tuned. II. *Breadth of thought*—"upon an instrument of ten strings." III. *Absorption of the whole nature*—"ten strings." IV. *Variety*—psaltery, harp, etc. V. *Deep reverence*—"solemn sound."

Verse 4 (*first sentence*).—I. My state—"glad." II. How I arrived at it—"thou hast made me glad." III. What is the ground of it?—"through thy work." IV. What, then, shall I do?—ascribe it all to God, and bless him for it.

Verse 4.—I. The divinest gladness—of God's creation, having God's work for its argument. II. The divinest triumph—caused by the varied works of God in creation, providence, redemption, &c. The first is for our own hearts, the second is for the convincing of those around us.

Verse 5.—The unscalable mountains and the fathomless sea: or the divine works and the divine thoughts (God-revealed and hidden) equally beyond human apprehension.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 7.—Great prosperity the frequent forerunner of destruction to wicked men, for it leads them to provoke divine wrath—I. By hardness of heart, as Pharaoh. II. By pride, as Nebuchadnezzar. III. By haughty hatred of the saints, as Haman. IV. By carnal security, as the rich fool. V. By self-exaltation, as Herod.

Verses 7—10.—Contrasts. Between the wicked and God, verses 7, 8. Between God's enemies and his friends, verses 9, 10.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verses 7, 12—14.—The wicked and the righteous pourtrayed.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—Christian illumination, consecration, gladness, and graces, are all of them the anointing of the Spirit.—*William Garrett Lewis*, 1872.

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—The subject of David's confidence was—I. Very comprehensive, including renewed strength, fresh tokens of favour, confirmation in office, qualification for it, and new joys. II. Well grounded, since it rested in God and his promises. III. Calming all fears. IV. Exciting hopes. V. Causing pity for those who have no such confidence.

Verse 12.—I. The righteous flourish in all places. Palm in the valley, cedar on the mountain. II. In all seasons. Both trees are evergreen. III. Under all circumstances. Palm in drought, cedar in storm and frost.—*G. R.*

Verses 14—16.—I. Regeneration—"planted." II. Growth in grace—"flourish." III. Usefulness—"fruit." IV. Perseverance—"old age." V. The reason of it all—"to shew that the Lord," etc.

Verses 15, 16.—The reason and the pledge of final perseverance.—*C. A. Davis.*

PSALM XCIII.

This brief Psalm is without title or name of author, but its subject is obvious enough, being stated in the very first line. It is the Psalm of Omnipotent Sovereignty : *Jehovah, despite all opposition, reigns supreme. Possibly at the time this sacred ode was written, the nation was in danger from its enemies, and the hopes of the people of God were encouraged by remembering that the Lord was still King. What sweeter and surer consolation could they desire ?*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty ; the LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself : the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.

2 Thy throne *is* established of old : thou *art* from everlasting.

3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice ; the floods lift up their waves.

4 The LORD on high *is* mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea, than* the mighty waves of the sea.

5 Thy testimonies are very sure : holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

1. " *The Lord reigneth,*" or Jehovah reigns. Whatever opposition may arise, his throne is unmoved ; he has reigned, does reign, and will reign for ever and ever. Whatever turmoil and rebellion there may be beneath the clouds, the eternal King sits above all in supreme serenity ; and everywhere he is really Master, let his foes rage as they may. All things are ordered according to his eternal purposes, and his will is done. In the verse before us it would seem as if the Lord had for a while appeared to vacate the throne, but on a sudden he puts on his regal apparel and ascends his lofty seat, while his happy people proclaim him with new joy, shouting " The Lord reigneth." What can give greater joy to a loyal subject than a sight of the king in his beauty ? Let us repeat the proclamation, " the Lord reigneth," whispering it in the ears of the desponding, and publishing it in the face of the foe. " *He is clothed with majesty.*" Not with emblems of majesty, but with majesty itself : everything which surrounds him is majestic. His is not the semblance but the reality of sovereignty. In nature, providence, and salvation the Lord is infinite in majesty. Happy are the people among whom the Lord appears in all the glory of his grace, conquering their enemies, and subduing all things unto himself ; then indeed is he seen to be clothed with majesty.

" *The Lord is clothed with strength.*" His garments of glory are not his only array, he wears strength also as his girdle. He is always strong, but sometimes he displays his power in a special manner, and may therefore be said to be clothed with it ; just as he is always majestic essentially, but yet there are seasons when he reveals his glory, and so wears his majesty, or shows himself in it. May the Lord appear in his church, in our day, in manifest majesty and might, saving sinners, slaying errors, and honouring his own name. O for a day of the Son of man, in which the King Immortal and Almighty shall stand upon his glorious high throne, to be feared in the great congregation, and admired by all them that believe. " *Wherewith he hath girded himself.*" As men gird up their loins for running or working, so the Lord appears in the eyes of his people to be preparing for action, girt with his omnipotence. Strength always dwells in the Lord Jehovah, but he hides his power full often, until, in answer to his children's cries, he puts on strength, assumes the throne, and defends his own. It should be a constant theme for prayer, that in our day the reign of the Lord may be conspicuous, and his power displayed in his church and on her behalf. " Thy kingdom come " should be our daily prayer : that the Lord Jesus does actually reign should be our daily praise.

" *The world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.*" Because Jehovah reigns terrestrial things for a while are stable. We could not be sure of anything if we

were not sure that he has dominion. When he withdraws his manifest presence from among men all things are out of order; blasphemers rave, persecutors rage, the profane grow bold, and the licentious increase in wantonness; but when the divine power and glory are again manifested order is restored, and the poor distracted world is at peace again. Society would be the football of the basest of mankind if God did not establish it, and even the globe itself would fly through space, like thistledown across the common, if the Lord did not hold it in its appointed orbit. That there is any stability, either in the world or in the church, is the Lord's doings, and he is to be adored for it. Atheism is the mother of anarchy; the reigning power of God exhibited in true religion is the only security for the human commonwealth. A belief in God is the foundation and corner-stone of a well-ordered state.

2. *"Thy throne is established of old."* Though thou mayest just now appear in more conspicuous sovereignty, yet thine is no upstart sovereignty: in the most ancient times thy dominion was secure, yea, before time was, thy throne was set up. We often hear of ancient dynasties, but what are they when compared with the Lord? Are they not as the bubble on the breaker, born an instant ago and gone as soon as seen? *"Thou art from everlasting."* The Lord himself is eternal. Let the believer rejoice that the government under which he dwells has an immortal ruler at its head, has existed from all eternity and will flourish when all created things shall have for ever passed away. Vain are the rebellions of mortals, the kingdom of God is not shaken.

3. *"The floods have lifted up, O Lord."* Men have raged like angry waves of the sea, but vain has been their tumult. Observe that the Psalmist turns to the Lord when he sees the billows foam, and hears the breakers roar; he does not waste his breath by talking to the waves, or to violent men; but like Hezekiah he spreads the blasphemies of the wicked before the Lord. *"The floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves."* These repetitions are needed for the sake both of the poetry and the music, but they also suggest the frequency and the violence of wicked assaults upon the government of God, and the repeated defeats which they sustain. Sometimes men are furious in words—they lift up their voice, and at other times they rise to acts of violence—they lift up their waves; but the Lord has control over them in either case. The ungodly are all foam and fury, noise and bluster, during their little hour, and then the tide turns or the storm is hushed, and we hear no more of them; while the kingdom of the Eternal abides in the grandeur of its power.

4. *"The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters."* The utmost of their power is to him but a sound and he can readily master it, therefore he calls it a noise by way of contempt. When men combine to overthrow the kingdom of Jesus, plot secretly, and by-and-by rage openly, the Lord thinks no more of it than of so much noise upon the sea-beach. Jehovah, the self-existent and omnipotent, cares not for the opposition of dying men, however many or mighty they may be.

> "Loud the stormy billows spoke,
> Loud the billows raised their cry;
> Fierce the stormy billows broke,
> Sounding to the echoing sky.
> Strong the breakers tossing high,
> Stronger is Jehovah's might,
> True thy words; and sanctity
> Well becomes thy temple bright."

"Yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." When the storm raises Atlantic billows, and drives them on with terrific force, the Lord is still able to restrain them, and so also when impious men are haughty and full of rage the Lord is able to subdue them and overrule their malice. Kings or mobs, emperors or savages, all are in the Lord's hands, and he can forbid their touching a hair of the heads of his saints.

5. *"Thy testimonies are very sure."* As in providence the throne of God is fixed beyond all risk, so in revelation his truth is beyond all question. Other teachings are uncertain, but the revelations of heaven are infallible. As the rocks remain unmoved amid the tumult of the sea, so does divine truth resist all the currents of man's opinion and the storms of human controversy; they are not only sure, but *very sure*. Glory be to God, we have not been deluded by a cunningly-devised fable: our faith is grounded upon the eternal truth of the Most High. *"Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."* Truth changes not in its doctrines, which are very sure, nor holiness in its precepts, which are incorruptible. The teaching

and the character of God are both unaltered. God has not admitted evil to dwell with him, he will not tolerate it in his house, he is eternally its enemy, and is for ever the sworn friend of holiness. The church must remain unchanged, and for ever be holiness unto the Lord; yea, her King will preserve her undefiled by the intruder's foot. Sacred unto the Lord is the church of Jesus Christ, and so shall she be kept evermore. "Jehovah reigns," is the first word and the main doctrine of the Psalm, and holiness is the final result: a due esteem for the great King will lead us to adopt a behaviour becoming his royal presence. Divine sovereignty both confirms the promises as sure testimonies, and enforces the precepts as seemly and becoming in the presence of so great a Lord.

The whole Psalm is most impressive, and is calculated to comfort the distressed, confirm the timorous, and assist the devout. O thou who art so great and gracious a King, reign over us for ever! We do not desire to question or restrain thy power, such is thy character that we rejoice to see thee exercise the rights of an absolute monarch. All power is in thine hands, and we rejoice to have it so. Hosanna! Hosanna!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This is one of those magnificent Psalms which describe Jehovah's reign. Even Jewish interpreters say of them: "These all treat of the things which will take place in the times of Messiah." Throughout it reads like a commentary and application of the great fundamental truth, "Jehovah reigneth." Already he hath laid the foundations of his kingdom in his Church, and anon shall he in his faithfulness and power establish it. Those elements which have hitherto resisted shall not be allowed to continue. Right royally he manifests himself. "*He is clothed with majesty; clothed is Jehovah, might hath he girt about him.*" The present state of things is connected with Christ's humiliation. But when he puts on his royal mantle of majesty, and girds about him the sword of his might: "*thus the world shall be established; it cannot be moved.*" And yet, though seemingly the enemy has long prevailed, "*Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.*" The establishment of his throne is the ground and the pledge of the establishment of the world and of his kingdom. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." In view of all this the Church stands a wondering spectator, first struck with awe, and then filled with adoring gratitude. "*The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah, they have lifted up their roaring; the floods are lifting up their dashing noise.*" The latter term refers to the sound of the waves *as they break*, and in connexion with it the change of tense is very marked. The enemies of God and his kingdom have risen like the floods or waves of the sea, lashed by the storm; with roaring noise have they advanced; but as they near the vessel which bears the King, their noise is that of waves dashing into foam. Their utmost nearness is—to their destruction; their utmost noise is—in breaking. And even now, and in the height of the storm also, far overtopping not only all danger, but even its threatening noise is Jehovah. "*Jehovah on high*" (even there) "*is mightier than the roaring of many waters and mighty, than the breaking waves of the sea*" (the word here rendered "*breaking waves*" being literally a *derivative* from the verb to break). What a picture this of our safety; what an epitome of the history of God's government and of his church! Thus the calming of the storm on the lake of Galilee was not only a parabolic representation of the history of the Kingdom of God, but also typical of the final consummation of all things; a summary of the past, a prophecy of the future, a type of the end. And what applies to the Church as a whole, holds equally true of individual believers. Let us ever remember that the noise is that of the *breaking* wave. Our greatest dangers are only breaking waves; waves which break at his feet. The same expression is also sometimes applied to the waves of God's wrath or judgments threatening to engulf the believer, as in Ps. xlii. 7; lxxxviii. 7. These also, blessed be his name, are only breaking waves. Meanwhile, while waiting for the manifestation of his majesty and might, "we have the more sure word of prophecy." "*Thy testimonies are very sure*" (very reliable, literally very *Amen*-ed): and, so far as we are concerned, our faith and patience are tried and proved: "*Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.*"

Thus we have here the history of the Church of God deduced from the text, "*Jehovah reigneth.*" These words are to us as "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts." So long as they are left us, all that threatens us from without is only like the noise of the breaking wave. The unspeakable comfort conveyed in this assurance is ever tested in the experience of God's people. There is no truth more precious to the heart of the Christian than that "*the Lord reigneth.*" The conviction of this must carry us far above all cares and fears. A personal God, a living God, a reigning God—alike in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth—and this God the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,—such are the steps by which we reach a height, where, far removed from the turmoil of men, we gain a comprehensive and clear view of earth and its concerns. I would not exchange the assurance which these two words, "*Jehovah reigneth,*" convey, for all the wisdom, combined with all the power, of this world. Received into my heart, they are the solution of every difficulty, the end of all perplexity. It seems to me as if, after puzzling over the cross-writing and hieroglyphics of men, I turned a fresh leaf, on the top of which stood these words, as the text to be preached out in all history, whether of the individual, the family, or the nation, the Church or the world. It seems as if, after revolving sorrowfully and helplessly all the difficulties and wants which distress my heart, I were at once rising above those floating clouds into clear atmosphere: as if all at once I were unburdened; as if I had reached a haven of rest; as if I had found a firm foundation, an ultimate principle. After all, in every real trial there is but this one final and full comfort. What matters the opinion of men,—who may be for and who against me; who may be with me, or who may leave me? Who would speak of prospects or probabilities, of the support to be derived from wealth or power, or of the defections of friends on whose sympathy and help we had counted? "*Jehovah reigneth!*" There is light here across my every path, provided I follow Christ, walking in the narrow way. Only let me be sure that, in any and every respect, I am on the Lord's side and in the Lord's way, and I ask no more. My God has all the silver and all the gold in his own hand. He holdeth the hearts of all men at his disposal; he directeth all events, from the least to the greatest. If I want power with God or with men, let me pray; for, Jehovah reigneth. Nor let me think that special interpositions are either impossible or rare. They are constant. The course of God's providence is one of constant interposition; for "all things work together for good to them that love God." Only these interpositions are not violent, and therefore not noticed by the superficial observer; they are the interpositions of all-wise and almighty God, not of poor, weak man; they are the *interpositions*, not *interferences*; they are the working of the machinery by the Master-mind which designed, and the Master-hand which framed it. They are not the stoppage, but the working of the machinery, whereby its real object is wrought out.

Lastly, let me note in the Psalm these three things.

In *creation and nature:* pre-established law *along with* continuous, personal government,—not as opposed to, but as pre-supposing one another (vers. 1, 2). In *Providence:* "The LORD on *high* is mightier than the noise of many waters"—which would otherwise strike terror, even as their swelling would threaten constant danger. And in *grace:* "His testimonies are *very* sure." I can rest on them. Not one tittle or iota shall fall to the ground. Wherever I have a word of promise, I can safely plant my steps. The conclusion and inference from the whole matter is that "*holiness*"—not fear nor man-serving, but separation unto the Lord—"*becometh,*" or is the right, wise, and proper attitude of his house and people.—*Alfred Edersheim, in "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms,"* 1866.

Whole Psalm.—It is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud that it was the custom of the Jews to sing this Psalm on the sixth day of the week, to which it is well suited as celebrating the re-establishing and founding again of the world in the new creation (ver. 1): which is confirmed by a title given to it in the Septuagint—"*On the day before the Sabbath, when the earth was founded: A Psalm of thanksgiving to* (or *for*) *David*"—adopted by the Vulgate and the Oriental Versions in general. And thus is this Psalm identified in subject with the preceding: as also Hengstenberg observes—"The reference, which it is impossible not to notice, in which 'The Lord on high is mightier,' here (ver. 4) stands to 'But Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore' (Ps. xcii. 8)—the kernel and middle point of the whole Psalm—has already led commentators to notice a near connexion between these two Psalms . . . .

which is decidedly favoured by the contents; both Psalms minister consolation to the Church, exposed to danger by the might of the world." He might have added —in the promise they give of "the *rest* [the Sabbatism] that remains to the people of God," when both shall be fulfilled.—*W. De Burgh.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord reigneth.*" It is a kind of proclamation in which God's people are invited to declare before men and angels that the Lord is King, he and he only. It is the response of the Church to the preaching of the gospel—so rapturously hailed in Isaiah—the preaching of the messenger "that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"—*William Binnie.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord.*" He describes God by the name *Jehovah*, partly, to lead us to think of the God of Israel, accustomed by this name to be distinguished from the gods of the nations; partly, to call to mind the virtues of veracity, grace and justice, comprehended by this name, and now clearly made known. . . . When he says, Jehovah *reigns*, without adding any restriction, or mentioning any people, it would seem that the *Kingdom of Jehovah is* to be taken absolutely and generally, with equal reference to the government of *the world* and *the church.* In the *former* sense Jehovah may be said *to reign*, not as if he then at last begun to reign, but because he proved himself to be the King of the world in an extraordinary way, by giving public and manifest signs; by which it was clearly established that Jehovah is the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord and Ruler of the whole universe, and a just and equitable judge, in inflicting notable judgments upon sinners, in casting down the idols, and vindicating the cause of true religion and virtue. This meaning I regard as contained in the general proposition: yet directly in its primary signification I understand the Kingdom of God in his Church, partly, because God is here said to vindicate the cause of religion, and of his people; partly, he is said, in Ps. xcix. to show himself *exalted in Zion*, and *there to undertake the Kingdom*, Is. xxiv. 23, and often elsewhere in the Prophetic word; and lastly, because *Jehovah*, the King of his people, he himself *who reigns*, is set forth as the *ruler* of the universe. He is the King therefore of his people, he has his *Kingdom* in their midst, but to him all things in heaven and earth are subject as well.

In this latter sense, therefore, the phrase, *Jehovah has reigned*, will stand for, *He has undertaken the Kingdom, he is become King*, as it is often used in the histories of the Kings of Judah and Israel; so also in Is. xxiii. 23, and elsewhere. . . . When he is said to *have taken* the Kingdom in the midst of his people, it must not be understood absolutely, but in a restricted sense, in reference partly to the *manner* and form of rule, being more or less *theocratic*; partly, to the displays of the Divine Majesty, being more or less conspicuous; and partly, to the servile or afflicted state of his people, as extending from the Babylonish exile up to the time of the Maccabees. In which times God is said *to have taken the Kingdom*, in many other prophecies beside this, Is. xxiv., Obad. ult., Mic. iv. 8, &c.—*Venema.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord reigneth.*" These are the initial words of Pss. xcvii. and xcix. also. Perhaps a threefold manner of reigning is suggested, namely, over things subjected to God by a natural necessity, over those that resist his will and as far as in them lies withdraw themselves from his dominion, and over those who spontaneously and freely obey. For in this place the Kingdom is declared to be co-extensive with the foundation of the world: in Ps. xcvii. it is hinted at for the exultation of the earth, and for the gladness of the isles; in Ps. xcix. God is said to reign, although the people are angry, and the earth is filled with commotion.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord reigneth.*" Having considered in all quarters the worldly rule of idols, and earthly deities or kings, the Psalmist at last bursts forth into the words which attribute supreme government to none other, but to Jehovah the true God. Let it be granted that the monarchs of Assyria, the kings of Egypt, and the masters of other nations, extend their empire far and wide; let it be allowed that royal majesty is ascribed to the idols by their worshippers; yet all these are as nothing to the kingdom and majesty of Jehovah.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord reigneth,*" *i.e.*, the Lord has become King (Ps. xcvi. 10; xcvii. 1; xcix. 1). The formula proclaimed at *the accession* of earthly sovereigns (2 Sam. xv. 10; 1 Kings i. 11, 13; *margin*, 2 Kings ix. 13, "Jehu *reigneth*"). The reference is not to the *ordinary and constant* government of God, but to his *assuming* a *new* and glorious kingdom. The arrogant proclamation of the world-power was

virtually "the Assyrian reigneth"; the overthrow of him was God's counter-proclamation: "The Lord (Jehovah) reigneth." The antitypical sense is, the world-powers under Antichrist, energized by Satan (Rev. xvi. 14; xvii. 12—14, 17), shall make one last desperate stroke, seemingly for the moment successful, for the dominion of the earth, in defiance of the Lord, (2 Thess. ii.) But Christ will take his great power and reign as King of kings and Lords of lords, having overthrown utterly the antichristian enemy. (Isai. xxiv. 23; Obad. 21; Zech. xiv. 9; Rev. xi. 15, 17; xix. 6.)—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord reigneth.*" The very first words of this Psalm seem to indicate a morning of calm repose after a night of storm, a day of stillness after the tumult of battle. "The LORD reigneth." "He hath put all enemies under his feet."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—"*The world also is established.*" The word *world* is properly taken for the habitable globe, and metonymically for the inhabitants of the earth. This is clear from Ps. xxiv. 1; l, 2; lxxxix. 12; ix. 9; xcvi. 1, 3; xcviii. 9. In this passage the former signification seems to obtain, because this majestic King has fortified no tower or palace strongly, but the whole *world*, by the word of his power, that therein there might be a constant habitation for the men who worship him, even to the destined day of the last judgment.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy throne is established.*" The invariable perpetuity of the divine kingdom is celebrated in these words. No vicissitudes are apprehended there, as in earthly monarchies and kingdoms, where thrones are not infrequently shaken, either on account of the death of their kings or principal men, or by reason of the unfaithfulness of subjects or ministers, or because of the schemes or attacks of enemies: none of which can disturb the divine rule.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy throne is established of old.*" Lest any one should suspect that the royal dignity depicted and demonstrated in the previous verse by the creation of the world, which was the effect of kingly power and majesty, was a new thing or came into existence yesterday or the day before, or that God had recently obtained the office of ruling and governing, or that by long use and experience he had acquired skill, or held a somewhat foreign throne as other kings are wont, he says that this dignity is as ancient as creation itself, so that the throne of this kingdom was founded at the very time when the foundations of the earth were laid; and as the earth was established by him as his *footstool, so the heaven was his throne*, (Isai. lxvi. 1), which endures for ever. Especially does he teach that from eternity, before the formation of the world, God always remained the same in himself, not needing creation or any creature, thereby to obtain any new perfection.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 2.—"*Of old.*" The Italian, *from all eternity:* Hebrew, *from then*, an Hebrew phrase to signify an eternity without any beginning, Prov. viii. 22; as eternity without end is signified by another term, which is as much as, *until then.*—*Diodati.*

Verse 3.—"*The floods have lifted up,*" etc. Advisedly in this place does he make mention of floods, in order better to depict the effects of war. For when rivers are raised and swollen with inundations, they burst the restraining banks, and sweep far and wide over the neighbouring plains, carrying everything in their course. Such is the manner of war; when armies are despatched into countries, they lay waste and fill all places with slaughter. Whence Virgil employs this simile (Æneid II.) in describing the violence of the Grecian army breaking into the Citadel of Priam,—[rendered by Dryden thus]—

> "In rush the Greeks, and all the apartments fill;
> Those few defendents whom they find, they kill.
> Not with so fierce a rage the foaming flood
> Roars, when he finds his rapid course withstood;
> Bears down the dams with unresisted sway,
> And sweeps the cattle and the cots away."

—*Mollerus.*

Verse 3.—"*Their waves.*" The word נָהָר signifies a wave; because the water being dashed against a rock, or the shore, or another wave, is broken into spray. For the central idea of the word is breaking. And this aptly serves to picture the issue of those commotions and wars which are undertaken for the overthrow of

empires and the church. For as mighty waves fill the beholders with horror, so great and powerful armies fill all things with fear and terror. But as the waves striking, in a moment are broken, and disappear, so the mighty power of kings and princes is often dissolved at one glance of God. The Church dwells in this life, like as a rock in the waves, beaten by the waves of every tempest; but yet remains immutable, because the Son of God confirms and sustains her.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 4.—"*The Lord on high.*" "*On high*" is not to be regarded in the sense of locality, as none compete with God in that, but in reference to dominion and glory.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 4.—"*The Lord on high is mightier,*" etc. Therefore consider not so much thy distress, as thy Deliverer; and when men's malicious combination may affright thee, let Divine association support thee. The danger may exceed thy resistance, but not God's assistance; the enemies' power may surpass thy strength, their subtlety outwit thy prudence, but neither can excel the wisdom and might of God that is with thee. O learn therefore to try God in his strength, to trust him in difficulties; and when the merciless waves are ready to swallow thee, commit thyself to his custody. The mariner in straits looks up to heaven, do thou so; and remember that when the waters of affliction are never so high, yet "*the Lord on high is mightier than they.*"—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy testimonies,*" *i.e.*, thy words; either, 1, Thy precepts, which are commonly called God's *testimonies.* And so having spoken of God's kingdom, he now showeth that the laws of that kingdom are just, and true, and holy; which is a singular commendation of it. Or, 2, Thy promises, as may be gathered from the following words, "*are sure,*" or *true,* or *faithful*; which attribute properly belongs, and everywhere in Scripture is ascribed, to promises rather than to precepts. And the promises no less than the precepts are God's *testimonies,* or the witnesses or declarations of his mind and will to mankind. And he seems here to speak of those great and precious promises concerning the erection and establishment of his kingdom in the world by the Messias; which, saith he, are infallibly true, and shall certainly be accomplished in thy time.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 5.—"*Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord.*" Singular things are expected of all that draw nigh to God in any duty, but especially in the office of the ministry; they must sanctify themselves with a singular care above that of the rest of the people. Those that stand in the presence of princes must be exact in their carriage. God appointed both the weights and measures of the sanctuary to be twice as large as those of the commonwealth, to shew that he expects much more of those that serve him there, than he doth of others. Holiness becomes every house well, but best God's; and every man, but most of all the minister, who is the mirror in which the people behold heaven, and the convoy to direct them thither. Now if the glass be spotted, instead of an angel they look upon a fury; and if the conduct be false, there is more danger in the guide than the way. None, therefore, are to walk so strictly as the ministry.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 5.—"*Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.*" No hangings, no tapestry become God's house so well as holiness; and no place is so proper as the house of God for this costly, comely furniture. . . . . The blind heathen were choice and devout in the service of dumb idols; they served them in white, an emblem of purity; they thought nothing too good for those false gods, for whom the worst was not bad enough. Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, enacted, that none should serve the gods *obiter,* or by the by, that their sacrificers should purify themselves some days beforehand.—*George Swinnock.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—Revivals of religion described. I. God reigns. II. His power is felt. III. His kingdom is established. IV. Opposition is overcome. V. The word is valued. VI. Holiness is cultivated.

Verses 1, 2.—The prophet in the first verse describes our King; I. From his

office. 1. He "reigns." He is the great and chief Monarch; he is no idle spectator of things below; but wisely, and justly, and powerfully administers all things. 2. He is a glorious King: "He is clothed with majesty." 3. He is a potent King: "The Lord is clothed with strength." 4. He is a warlike King: "He hath girded himself," buckled his sword upon his armour; for offence towards his enemies, for defence of his kingdom. II. From his kingdom. 1. It is universal: "The world." 2. It is fixed, firm, and stable: "The world also is stablished, and cannot be moved." 3. It is an everlasting kingdom: "From everlasting to everlasting; thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting."—*Adam Clarke.*

Verses 1, 2.—Shew, I. The royal proclamation. II. The imperial robe. III. The stable kingdom. IV. The ancient throne. V. The Eternal King.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 1, 2.—I. Make the great proclamation. The right, stability, antiquity, extent, perpetuity of the Lord's dominion. II. Note the different emotions it inspires. In the rebellious, condemned, loyal, &c. III. Negotiate for submission to the King.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 3.—The voice of the floods. I. The voice of Nature is the voice *of* God. II. It is a voice *from* God. III. It is a voice *for* God.

"God hath a voice that ever is heard,
In the peal of thunder, the chirp of the bird:
It comes in the torrent, all rapid and strong,
In the streamlet's soft gush, as it ripples along;
In the waves of the ocean, the furrows of land,
In the mountains of granite, the atom of sand;
Turn where ye may, from the sky to the sod,
Where can ye gaze that ye see not a God?"

—*G. R. Poetry by Eliza Cook.*

Verse 4.—I. God is mighty in creation. II. He is mightier in providence. III. He is mightiest in redemption.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—I. Faithfulness becometh the word of God. II. Holiness becometh the house of God.—*G. R.*

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—I. Holiness becometh God's typical house, the temple. II. His greater spiritual house, the church. III. His smaller spiritual house, the believer. IV. His eternal house, heaven.—*C. A. D.*

PSALM XCIV.

SUBJECT.—*The writer sees evil-doers in power, and smarts under their oppressions. His sense of the divine sovereignty, of which he had been singing in the previous Psalm, leads him to appeal to God as the great Judge of the earth; this he does with much vehemence and importunity, evidently tingling under the lash of the oppressor. Confident in God's existence, and assured of his personal observation of the doings of men, the Psalmist rebukes his atheistic adversaries, and proclaims his triumph in his God: he also interprets the severe dispensation of Providence to be in very deed most instructive chastisements, and so he counts those happy who endure them. The Psalm is another pathetic form of the old enigma—"Wherefore do the wicked prosper?" It is another instance of a good man, perplexed by the prosperity of the ungodly, cheering his heart by remembering that there is, after all, a King in heaven, by whom all things are overruled for good.*

DIVISIONS.—*In the first seven verses the Psalmist utters his complaint against wicked oppressors. From* 8 *to* 11 *he reasons against their sceptical notion that God did not notice the actions of men. He then shews that the Lord does bless his people and will deliver them, though for a while they may be chastened,* 12—15. *He again pleads for help in verse* 16, *and declares his entire dependence upon God for preservation,* 17—19; *yet a third time urges his plaint,* 20, 21; *and then concludes with the confident assurance that his enemies, and all other wicked men, would certainly be made to reap the due reward of their deeds,—"yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off."*

EXPOSITION.

O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

4 *How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things? *and* all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?

5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.

6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*.

1. "*O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself:*" or, *God of retributions, Jehovah, God of retributions, shine forth!* A very natural prayer when innocence is trampled down, and wickedness exalted on high. If the execution of justice be a right thing,—and who can deny the fact?—then it must be a very proper thing to desire it; not out of private revenge, in which case a man would hardly dare to appeal to God, but out of sympathy with right, and pity for those who are made wrongfully to suffer. Who can see a nation enslaved, or even an individual downtrodden, without crying to the Lord to arise and vindicate the righteous cause? The toleration of injustice is here attributed to the Lord's being hidden, and it is implied that the bare sight of him will suffice to alarm the tyrants into ceasing their oppressions. God has but to shew himself, and the good cause wins the day. *He* comes, he sees, he conquers! Truly in these evil days we need a manifest display of his power, for the ancient enemies of God and man are again struggling for the mastery, and if they gain it, woe unto the saints of God.

2. "*Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth.*" Ascend thy judgment-seat and be acknowledged as the ruler of men: and, moreover, raise thyself as men do who are about to strike with all their might; for the abounding sin of mankind requires a heavy blow from thy hand. "*Render a reward to the proud,*" give them measure for measure, a fair retaliation, blow for blow. The proud look down upon the

gracious poor and strike them from above, as a giant might hurl down blows upon his adversary; after the same manner, O Lord, lift up thyself, and "return a recompense upon the proud," and let them know that thou art far more above them than they can be above the meanest of their fellow men. The Psalmist thus invokes the retributions of justice in plain speech, and his request is precisely that which patient innocence puts up in silence, when her looks of anguish appeal to heaven.

3. "*Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?*" Shall wrong for ever rule? Are slavery, robbery, tyranny, never to cease? Since there is certainly a just God in heaven, armed with almighty power, surely there must be sooner or later an end to the ascendancy of evil, innocence must one day find a defender. This "*how long?*" of the text is the bitter plaint of all the righteous in all ages, and expresses wonder caused by that great enigma of providence, the existence and predominance of evil. The sound "how long?" is very akin to howling, as if it were one of the saddest of all the utterances in which misery bemoans itself. Many a time has this bitter complaint been heard in the dungeons of the Inquisition, at the whipping-posts of slavery, and in the prisons of oppression. In due time God will publish his reply, but the full end is not yet.

4. "*How long shall they utter and speak hard things?*" The ungodly are not content with deeds of injustice, but they add hard speeches, boasting, threatening, and insulting over the saints. Will the Lord for ever endure this? Will he leave his own children much longer to be the prey of their enemies? Will not the insolent speeches of his adversaries and theirs at last provoke his justice to interfere? Words often wound more than swords, they are as hard to the heart as stones to the flesh; and these are poured forth by the ungodly in redundance, for such is the force of the word translated *utter;* and they use them so commonly that they become their common speech (they utter and speak them)—will this always be endured? "*And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?*"—they even soliloquise and talk to themselves, and of themselves, in arrogance of spirit, as if they were doing some good deed when they crush the poor and needy, and spit their spite on gracious men. It is the nature of workers of iniquity to boast, just as it is a characteristic of good men to be humble—will their boasts always be suffered by the great Judge, whose ear hears all that they say? Long, very long, have they had the platform to themselves, and loud, very loud, have been their blasphemies of God, and their railings at his saints—will not the day soon come when the threatened heritage of shame and everlasting contempt shall be meted out to them?

Thus the oppressed plead with their Lord, and shall not God avenge his own elect? Will he not speak out of heaven to the enemy, and say, "Why persecutest thou me?"

5. "*They break in pieces thy people, O Lord,*" grinding them with oppression, crushing them with contempt. Yet the men they break in pieces are God's own people, and they are persecuted because they are so; this is a strong plea for the divine interposition. "*And afflict thine heritage,*" causing them sorrowful humiliation and deep depression of heart. The term, "thine heritage," marks out the election of the saints, God's peculiar interest and delight in them, his covenant relation, of long standing, to them and their fathers; this also is a storehouse of arguments with their faithful God. Will he not defend his own? Will a man lose his inheritance, or permit it to be contemptuously despoiled? Those who are ground down, and trampled on, are not strangers, but the choice and chosen ones of the Lord; how long will he leave them to be a prey to cruel foes?

6. "*They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.*" They deal most arrogantly with those who are the most evident objects of compassion. The law of God especially commends these poor ones to the kindness of good men, and it is peculiar wickedness which singles them out to be the victims not only of fraud but of murder. Must not such inhuman conduct as this provoke the Lord? Shall the tears of widows, the groans of strangers, and the blood of orphans be poured forth in vain? As surely as there is a God in heaven, he will visit those who perpetrate such crimes; though he bear long with them, he will yet take vengeance, and that speedily.

7. "*Yet they say, the Lord shall not see.*" This was the reason of their arrogance, and the climax of their wickedness: they were blindly wicked because they dreamed of a blind God. When men believe that the eyes of God are dim, there is no reason to wonder that they give full license to their brutal passions. The persons mentioned above not only cherished an infidel unbelief, but dared to avow it, uttering the

monstrous doctrine that God is too far away to take notice of the actions of men. "*Neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*" Abominable blasphemy and transparent falsehood! If God has actually become his people's God, and proved his care for them by a thousand acts of grace, how dare the ungodly assert that he will not notice the wrongs done to them? There is no limit to the proud man's profanity, reason itself cannot restrain him; he has broken through the bounds of common sense. Jacob's God heard him at the brook Jabbok; Jacob's God led him and kept him all his life long, and said concerning him and his family, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm;" and yet these brutish ones profess to believe that he neither sees nor regards the injuries wrought upon the elect people! Surely in such unbelievers is fulfilled the saying of the wise, that those whom the Lord means to destroy he leaves to the madness of their corrupt hearts.

8 Understand, ye brutish among the people: and *ye* fools, when will ye be wise?

9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

10 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?*

11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* vanity.

8. "*Understand, ye brutish among the people.*" They said that God did not *note*, and now, using the same word in the original, the Psalmist calls on the wicked to *note*, and have regard to the truth. He designates them as boors, boarish, swinish men, and well was the term deserved; and he bids them understand or consider, if they can. They thought themselves to be wise, and indeed the only men of wit in the world, but he calls them "boars among the people": wicked men are fools, and the more they know, the more foolish they become. "No fool like a learned fool" is a true proverb. When a man has done with God, he has done with his manhood, and has fallen to the level of the ox and the ass, yea, beneath them, for "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." Instead of being humbled in the presence of scientific infidels, we ought to pity them; they affect to look down upon us, but we have far more cause to look down upon them. "*And ye fools, when will ye be wise?*" Is it not high time? Ye know the ways of folly, what profit have ye in them? Have ye no relics of reason left? no shreds of sense? If as yet there lingers in your minds a gleam of intelligence, hearken to argument, and consider the questions now about to be proposed to you.

9. "*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?*" He fashioned that marvellous organ, and fixed it in the most convenient place near to the brain, and is he deaf himself? Is he capable of such design and invention, and yet can he not discern what is done in the world which he made? He made you hear, can he not himself hear? Unanswerable question! It overwhelms the sceptic, and covers him with confusion. "*He that formed the eye, shall he not see?*" He gives us vision; is it conceivable that he has no sight himself? With skilful hand he fashioned the optic nerve, and the eyeball, and all its curious mechanism, and it surpasses all conception that he can himself be unable to observe the doings of his creatures. If there be a God, he must be a personal intelligent being, and no limit can be set to his knowledge.

10. "*He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?*" He reproves whole nations, can he not reprove individuals? All history shows that he visits national sin with national judgment, and can he not deal with single persons? The question which follows is equally full of force, and is asked with a degree of warmth which checks the speaker, and causes the inquiry to remain incomplete. It begins, "*He that teacheth man knowledge,*" and then it comes to a pause, which the translators have supplied with the words, "*shall not he know?*" but no such words are in the original, where the sentence comes to an abrupt end, as if the inference were too natural to need to be stated, and the writer had lost patience with the brutish men with whom he had argued. The earnest believer often feels as if he could say, "Go to, you are not worth arguing with! If you were reasonable men, these things would be too obvious to need to be stated in your hearing. I forbear." Man's knowledge comes from God. Science in its first principles was taught to our progenitor Adam,

and all after advances have been due to divine aid; does not the author and revealer of all knowledge himself know?

11. Whether men admit or deny that God knows, one thing is here declared, namely, that "*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.*" Not their words alone are heard, and their works seen, but he reads the secret motions of their minds, for men themselves are not hard to be discerned of him, before his glance they themselves are but vanity. It is in the Lord's esteem no great matter to know the thoughts of such transparent pieces of vanity as mankind are, he sums them up in a moment as poor vain things. This is the sense of the original, but that given in the authorised version is also true—the thoughts, the best part, the most spiritual portion of man's nature, even these are vanity itself, and nothing better. Poor man! And yet such a creature as this boasts, plays at monarch, tyrannises over his fellow worms, and defies his God! Madness is mingled with human vanity, like smoke with the fog, to make it fouler but not more substantial than it would have been alone.

How foolish are those who think that God does not know their actions, when the truth is that their vain thoughts are all perceived by him! How absurd to make nothing of God when in fact we ourselves are as nothing in his sight.

12 Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;

13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.

14 For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will be forsake his inheritance.

15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.

12. "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord.*" The Psalmist's mind is growing quiet. He no longer complains to God or argues with men, but tunes his harp to softer melodies, for his faith perceives that with the most afflicted believer all is well. Though he may not feel blessed while smarting under the rod of chastisement, yet blessed he is; he is precious in God's sight, or the Lord would not take the trouble to correct him, and right happy will the results of his correction be. The Psalmist calls the chastened one a "*man*" in the best sense, using the Hebrew word which implies strength. He is a man, indeed, who is under the teaching and training of the Lord. "*And teachest him out of thy law.*" The book and the rod, the law and the chastening, go together, and are made doubly useful by being found in connection. Affliction without the word is a furnace for the metal, but there is no flux to aid the purifying: the word of God supplies that need, and makes the fiery trial effectual. After all, the blessing of God belongs far rather to those who suffer under the divine hand than to those who make others suffer: better far to lie and cry out as a "man" under the hand of our heavenly Father, than to roar and rave as a brute, and to bring down upon one's self a death blow from the destroyer of evil. The afflicted believer is under tuition, he is in training for something higher and better, and all that he meets with is working out his highest good, therefore is he a blessed man, however much his outward circumstances may argue the reverse.

13. "*That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.*" The chastening hand and instructive book are sanctified to us, so that we learn to rest in the Lord. We see that his end is our everlasting benefit, and therefore abide quiet under all trying providences and bitter persecutions, waiting our time. The Mighty Hunter is preparing the pit for the brutish ones; they are prowling about at this time, and tearing the sheep, but they will soon be captured and destroyed, therefore the people of the Lord learn to rest in days of adversity, and tarry the leisure of their God. Wicked men may not yet be ripe for punishment, nor punishment ready for them: hell is a prepared place for a prepared people; as days of grace ripen saints for glory, so days of wantonness help sinners to rot into the corruption of eternal destruction.

14. "*For the Lord will not cast off his people.*" He may cast them down, but he never can cast them off. During fierce persecutions the saints have been apt to think that the Lord had left his own sheep, and given them over to the wolf; but

it has never been so, nor shall it ever be, for the Lord will not withdraw his love, "*neither will he forsake his inheritance.*" For a time he may leave his own with the design of benefiting them thereby, yet never can he utterly desert them.

"He may chasten and correct,
But he never can neglect;
May in faithfulness reprove,
But he ne'er can cease to love."

15. "*But judgment shall return unto righteousness.*" The great Judge will come, the reign of righteousness will commence, the course of affairs will yet be turned into the right channel, and then all the godly will rejoice. The chariot of right will be drawn in triumph through our streets, "*and all the upright in heart shall follow it,*" as in gladsome procession. A delightful hope is here expressed in poetic imagery of much beauty. The government of the world has been for a while in the hands of those who have used it for the basest and most vicious ends; but the cry of prayer will bring back righteousness to the throne, and then every upright heart will have its portion of joy.

16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? *or* who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

Notwithstanding the Psalmist's persuasion that all would be well eventually, he could not at the time perceive any one who would stand side by side with him in opposing evil; no champion of the right was forthcoming, the faithful failed from among men. This also is a bitter trial, and a sore evil under the sun; yet it has its purpose, for it drives the heart still more completely to the Lord, compelling it to rest alone in him. If we could find friends elsewhere, it may be our God would not be so dear to us; but when, after calling upon heaven and earth to help, we meet with no succour but such as comes from the eternal arm, we are led to prize our God, and rest upon him with undivided trust. Never is the soul safer or more at rest than when, all other helpers failing, she leans upon the Lord alone. The verse before us is an appropriate cry, now that the church sees error invading her on all sides, while faithful ministers are few, and fewer still are bold enough to "stand up" and defy the enemies of truth. Where are our Luthers and our Calvins? A false charity has enfeebled the most of the valiant men of Israel. One John Knox would be worth a mint at this hour, but where is he? Our grand consolation is that the God of Knox and Luther is yet with us, and in due time will call out his chosen champions.

17 Unless the LORD *had been* my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.
18 When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.
19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.

17. "*Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.*" Without Jehovah's help the Psalmist declares that he should have died outright, and gone into the silent land, where no more testimonies can be borne for the living God. Or he may mean that he would not have had a word to speak against his enemies, but would have been wrapped in speechless shame. Blessed be God, we are not left to that condition yet, for the Almighty Lord is still the helper of all those who look to him. Our inmost soul is bowed down when we see the victories of the Lord's enemies—we cannot brook it, we cover our mouths in confusion; but he will yet arise and avenge his own cause, therefore have we hope.

18. "*When I said, My foot slippeth*"—is slipping even now: I perceived my danger, and cried out in horror, and then, at the very moment of my extremity, came the needed help, "*thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.*" Often enough is this the case, we feel our weakness, and see our danger, and in fear and trembling we cry out. At such times nothing can help us but *mercy*; we can make no appeal to any fancied merit, for we feel that it is our inbred sin which makes our feet so ready to fail us; our joy is that mercy endureth for ever, and is always at hand to pluck us out of the danger, and hold us up, where else we should fall to our destruction. Ten thousand times has this verse been true in relation to some of us, and especially to the writer of this comment. The danger was imminent, it was upon us, we were

going; the peril was apparent, we saw it, and were aghast at the sight; our own heart was failing, and we concluded that it was all over with us; but then came the almighty interposition: we did not fall, we were held up by an unseen hand, the devices of the enemy were frustrated, and we sang for joy. O faithful Keeper of our souls, be thou extolled for ever and ever! We will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in our mouths.

19. "*In the multitude of my thoughts within me.*" When I am tossed to and fro with various reasonings, distractions, questionings, and forebodings, I will fly to my true rest, for "*thy comforts delight my soul.*" From my sinful thoughts, my vain thoughts, my sorrowful thoughts, my griefs, my cares, my conflicts, I will hasten to the Lord; he has divine *comforts*, and these will not only console but actually *delight* me. How sweet are the comforts of the Spirit! Who can muse upon eternal love, immutable purposes, covenant promises, finished redemption, the risen Saviour, his union with his people, the coming glory, and such like themes, without feeling his heart leaping with joy? The little world within is, like the great world without, full of confusion and strife; but when Jesus enters it, and whispers "Peace be unto you," there is a calm, yea, a rapture of bliss. Let us turn away from the mournful contemplation of the oppression of man and the present predominance of the wicked, to that sanctuary of pure rest which is found in the God of all comfort.

20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?

21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

20. "*Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?*" Such thrones there are, and they plead a right divine, but their claim is groundless, a fraud upon mankind and a blasphemy of heaven. God enters into no alliance with unjust authority, he gives no sanction to unrighteous legislation. "*Which frameth mischief by a law?*" They legalise robbery and violence, and then plead that it is the law of the land; and so indeed it may be, but it is a wickedness for all that. With great care men prepare enactments intended to put down all protests, so as to render wrong-doing a permanent institution, but one element is necessary to true conservatism, viz., righteousness; and lacking that, all their arrangements of the holders of power must come to an end, and all their decrees must in process of time be wiped out of the statute-book. Nothing can last for ever but impartial right. No injustice can be permanent, for God will not set his seal upon it, nor have any fellowship with it, and therefore down it must come, and happy shall be the day which sees it fall.

21. "*They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous,*" so many are there of them that they crowd their assemblies, and carry their hard measures with enthusiasm; they are the popular party, and are eager to put down the saints. In counsel, and in action, they are unanimous; their one resolve is to hold their own tyrannical position, and put down the godly party. "*And condemn the innocent blood.*" They are great at slander and false accusation, nor do they stick at murder; no crime is too great for them, if only they can trample on the servants of the Lord. This description is historically true in reference to persecuting times; it has been fulfilled in England, and may be again if Popery is to advance in future time at the same rate as in the past few years. The dominant sect has the law on its side, and boasts that it is the national church; but the law which establishes and endows one religion rather than another is radically an injustice, God has no fellowship with it, and therefore the synagogue of Ritualism will yet be a stench in the nostrils of all sane men. What evil times are in store for us it is not for us to prophesy; it is ours to leave the matter in the hands of him who cannot be in fellowship with an oppressive system, and will not always endure to be insulted to his face by Popish idols, and their priests.

22 But the LORD is my defence; and my God *is* the rock of my refuge.

23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; *yea*, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

22. Let the wicked gather as they may, the Psalmist is not afraid, but sweetly sings, "*The Lord is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge.*" Firm as a rock is Jehovah's love, and there do we betake ourselves for shelter. In him, even

in him alone, we find safety, let the world rage as it may; we ask not aid from man, but are content to flee into the bosom of omnipotence.

23. The natural result of oppression is the destruction of the despot; his own iniquities crush him ere long. Providence arranges retaliations as remarkable as they are just. High crimes in the end bring on heavy judgments, to sweep away evil men from off the face of the earth; yea, God himself interposes in a special manner, and cuts short the career of tyrants while they are in the very midst of their crimes. Wicked men are often arrested by the pursuivants of divine justice redhanded, with the evidences of their guilt upon them. "*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness.*" While the stolen bread is in their mouths wrath slays them, while the illgotten wedge of gold is yet in their tent judgment overtakes them. God himself conspicuously visits them, and reveals his own power in their overthrow, "*yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.*"

Here, then, the matter ends; faith reads the present in the light of the future, and ends her song without a trembling note.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth.*" It may perhaps seem to accord too little with a lover of piety, so strenuously to urge upon God to show himself an avenger against the wicked, and to rouse him as if he were lingering and procrastinating. But this supplication must be regarded in its proper bearing: for David does not pray, neither should we pray, that God would take vengeance on the wicked in the same way that men, inflamed with anger and hatred, are wont often to avenge themselves of their enemies, but that he would punish them after his own divine manner and measure. The vengeance of God is for the most part a medicine for the evil; but ours is at times destruction even to the good. Therefore truly the Lord is alone the God of revenges. For we, when we think we have inflicted a penalty upon our enemy, are often much mistaken. What injury to us was the body of our enemy? in depriving him of which we nevertheless express all our bitterness. What wounded thee and wrought thee harm and shame, was the spirit of thine enemy, and that thou art not able to seize and hold, but God is able; and he alone has such power that in no way can the spirit escape his strength and force. Leave vengeance with him, and he will repay. He admonishes us, that if we ourselves wish to be avengers of our own pains and injuries we may hurt ourselves more deeply than our enemy: for when we take vengeance on him, we indeed wound and do violence to his body, which in itself is vile and of little regard; but in our own best and most precious part, that is, in our spirit; we ourselves, by losing patience, receive a deep stain, because when virtue and humanity have been expelled thence, we meanwhile incur faults to be atoned for therein. Wherefore God is entreated to become himself the avenger of our injuries, for he alone knows aright and is able to avenge; and to become such an avenger that only the very thing which injured us may be punished. Some greedy man has cheated thee in money, may he punish avarice in him. A proud man has treated thee with scorn, may he destroy his pride, etc. . . . This is vengeance most worthy to be inflicted of God, and by us to be sought.—*Jacopo Sadoleto*, 1477—1547.

Verse 1.—I do not think that we sufficiently attend to the distinction that exists between revenge and vengeance. "Revenge," says Dr. Johnson, "is an act of passion, vengeance of justice; injuries are revenged, crimes avenged." And it is from not attending to this essential distinction that the scorner has been led into such profane remarks, as if there were a vindictive spirit in the Almighty, and as if he found delight in wreaking vengeance on an adversary. The call which the Psalmist here makes on God as a God to whom vengeance belongeth, is no other than if he had said, "O God, to whom justice belongeth!" Vengeance indeed is not for man, because with man's feelings and propensities it would ever degenerate into revenge. "I will be even with him," says nature; "I will be above him," says grace.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—The two divine names (*El* and *Jehovah*,—*God* and *Lord*) recognize

God as almighty, eternal, self-existent, bound by covenant to his people, and alone entitled to take vengeance.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verses 1—6.—

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learn'd the way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe."

John Milton.

Verse 3.—"*How long shall the wicked, how long,*" etc. Twice he saith it, because the wicked boast day after day, with such insolency and outrage, as if they were above control.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*How long shall the wicked triumph?*" For "*triumph,*" the Hebrew word is יַעֲלוֹז which signifies *to exalt.* That is, they give themselves vain applause on account of their prosperity, and declare their success both with words and with the gestures of their body, like peacocks spreading their feathers. "*How long shall they utter?*" etc. For "*utter*" the Hebrew is יַבִּיעוּ, *they shall flow, they shall cast forth.* The metaphor is taken from fountains springing out of the rock with a rush and abundance of water. Where the abundance of words is noted, their rashness, their waste and profusion, their sound and eagerness, their continuance and the difficulty of obstructing them.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—"*How long shall the wicked triumph?*" What answer shall we give, what date shall we put to this, "*How long?*" The answer is given in verse 23, "*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness,*" etc. As if he had said, Except the Lord cut them off in their wickedness, they will never leave off doing wickedly. They are men of such a kind that there is no curing of them, they will never have done doing mischief until they be cut off by death, therefore God threatens death to deter men from sin. A godly man saith, "If God kill me, yet will I trust in him;" and some wicked men say (in effect, if not in the letter), Till God kills us we will sin against him.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 3, 4.—"*Triumph,*" "*utter and speak,*" "*boast.*" In the very terms wherein the Psalmist complains of the continued prevalence of the wicked, there is matter of comfort, for we have three (rather four, as in the authorised version) words to denote speaking, and only one, *workers,* to denote action, showing us that they are far more powerful with their tongues than with their hands.—*Hugo Cardinalis, quoted by Neale.*

Verse 5.—"*They break in pieces thy people.*" They tread down; they grind; they crush. The Hebrew word is often used as meaning to crush under foot; to trample on; and hence it means to oppress. Lam. iii. 34, Isai. iii. 15.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6.—"*Widow*"; "*fatherless.*" An old Jewish writer * has pointed out how aptly the titles of *widow* and *orphan* befitted the Hebrew nation, because it had no helper save God only, and was cut off from all other people by its peculiar rites and usages, whereas the Gentiles, by their mutual alliances and intercourse, had, as it were, a multitude of kindred to help them in any strait.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 7.—"*They say, The Lord shall not see.*" As if they had said, Though God should set himself to search us out, and would greatly wish to see what we are doing, yet he shall not. We will carry it so closely and cunningly, that the eye of God shall not reach us. Their works were so foul and bloody, that the sun might be

* Philo Judæus.

ashamed to look upon them, and they were so secret that they believed God could not look upon them, or bring them to shame for them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—"*The Lord . . . the God of Jacob.*" The divine names are, as usual, significant. That the self-existent and eternal God should not see, is a palpable absurdity; and scarcely less so, that the God of Israel should suffer his own people to be slaughtered without even observing it. The last verb means to mark, note, notice.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verses 8—11.—In these words the following particulars are to be observed. (1.) A certain spiritual *disease* charged on *some* persons, *viz.* darkness, and *blindness* of mind, appearing in their ignorance and folly. (2.) The great *degree* of this disease; so as to render the subjects of it *fools.* "*Ye fools, when will ye be wise?*" And so as to reduce them to a degree of *brutishness.* "*Ye brutish among the people.*" This ignorance and folly were to such a degree as to render men like beasts. (3.) The *obstinacy* of this disease; expressed in that interrogation, "*When will ye be wise?*" Their blindness and folly were not only very great, but deeply rooted and established, resisting all manner of cure. (4.) Of what *nature* this blindness is. It is especially in things pertaining to God. They were strangely *ignorant* of his perfections, like beasts; and had *foolish* notions of him, as though he did not see, nor know: and as though he would not execute justice, by chastising and punishing wicked men. (5.) The *unreasonableness* and *sottishness* of the notion they had of God, that he did not *hear*, did not *observe* their reproaches of him and his people, is shown by observing that he *planted* the ear. It is very *unreasonable* to suppose that he who gave power of perceiving words to *others*, should not perceive them himself. And the sottishness of their being insensible of God's all-seeing eye, and particularly of his seeing their wicked actions, appears, in that God is the being who *formed* the eye, and gave others a *power* of seeing. The sottishness of their apprehension of God, as though he did not know what they did, is argued from his being the *fountain* and original of all knowledge. The unreasonableness of their expecting to escape God's just chastisements and judgments for sin, is set forth by his chastising even the *heathen*, who did not sin against that light, or against so great mercies, as the wicked in Israel did; nor had ever made such a profession as they. (6.) We may observe, that this dreadful disease is ascribed to *mankind in general.* "*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of* MAN, *that they are vanity.*" The Psalmist had been setting forth the vanity and unreasonableness of the thoughts of *some* of the children of men; and immediately upon it he observes, that this vanity and foolishness of thought is *common* and *natural to mankind.* From these particulars we may fairly deduce the following doctrinal observation: *That there is an extreme and brutish blindness in things of religion, which naturally possesses* the *hearts of mankind.*—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verses 8—15.—God hath ability, bowels, verity. Ability, *He that made the eye, cannot he see? He that planted the ear, cannot he hear?* verses 8, 9, 10, 11. Bowels, *He doth but chasten his, not cast them off*, verses 12, 13, 14. Verity, *this is but until a pit be made for the wicked*, verse 13. *Mordecai* is frowned upon, but till a gallows be made for Haman, and then *judgment returns unto righteousness.*—*Nicholas Lockyer.*

Verse 9.—"*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?*" etc. The Psalmist does not say, He that planteth the ear, *hath he not an ear?* He that formed the eye, *hath he not eyes?* No; but, Shall he not *hear?* Shall he not *see?* And why does he say so? To prevent the error of humanizing God, of attributing members or corporeal parts to the infinite Spirit.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9.—"*Planted the ear.*" The mechanism of the ear, like a root *planted* in the earth, is sunk deep into the head, and concealed from view.—*Bagster's Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 9.—The *planting* or deep seated position of the ear, as well as its wonderful construction, are illustrated by the following extract:—"The organ or instrument of hearing is in all its most important parts so hidden within the head, that we cannot perceive its construction by a mere external inspection. What in ordinary language we call the ear, is only the outer porch or entrance-vestible of a curious series of intricate, winding passages, which, like the lobbies of a great building, lead from the outer air into the inner chambers. Certain of these passages are full of air; others are full of liquid; and their membranes are stretched like parchment

curtains across the corridors at different places, and can be thrown into vibration, or made to tremble, as the head of a drum or the surface of a tambourine does when struck with a stick or the fingers. Between two of these parchment-like curtains, a chain of very small bones extends, which serves to tighten or relax these membranes, and to communicate vibrations to them. In the innermost place of all, rows of fine threads, called nerves, stretch like the strings of a piano from the last points to which the tremblings or thrillings reach, and pass inwards to the brain. If these threads or nerves are destroyed, the power of hearing as infallibly departs as the power to give out sound is lost by a piano or violin when its strings are broken.

We know far less, however, of the ear than of the eye. The eye is a single chamber open to the light, and we can see into it, and observe what happens there. But the ear is many-chambered, and its winding tunnels traversing the rock-like bones of the skull are narrow, and hidden from us as the dungeons of a castle are, like which, also, they are totally dark. Thus much, however, we know, that it is in the innermost recesses of these unilluminated ivory vaults, that the mind is made conscious of sound. Into these gloomy cells, as into the bright chamber of the eye, the soul is ever passing and asking for news from the world without; and ever and anon, as of old in hidden subterranean caverns where men listened in silence and darkness to the utterance of oracles, reverberations echo along the surrounding walls, and responses come to the waiting spirit, whilst the world lifts up its voice and speaks to the soul. The sound is that of a hushed voice, a low but clear whisper; for as it is but a dim shadow of the outer world we see; so it is but a faint echo of the outer world we hear."—*George Wilson, in "The Five Gateways of Knowledge,"* 1861.

Verse 9.—"*He that planted the ear, &c.*" Shall the Author of these senses be senseless? Our God is not as that Jupiter of Crete, who was pictured without ears, and could not be at leisure to attend upon small matters. He is *οὖς καὶ νοῦ*; he is also *ὁλοφθαλμὸς*, all eye, all ear. We read of a people called *Panotii*; God only is so, to speak properly.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*Formed the eye.*" The term used of the creation of the eye, is not merely "*made*," as the Prayer Book version reads, but "*formed*," *πλάσας, finxit*, directing our attention to the wonderful mechanism of the organs of sight, and thence to the marvellous skill of the Artificer.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 9.—"*He that formed the eye.*" The word here used is frequently employed in reference to a *potter*; and the idea is that God has moulded or formed the eye as the potter fashions the clay. The more the eye is studied in its structure, the more deeply shall we be impressed with the wonderful skill and wisdom of God.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—"*The eye.*" As illustrating the wisdom displayed in the eye we have selected the following. "Our physical good demands that we should have the power of comprehending the world in all the respects in which it is possible for matter or its forces to affect our bodies. The senses completely meet this want. . . . . We are too apt to confine ourselves to the mere mechanism of the eye or ear, without considering how the senses supplement each other, and without considering the provision made in the world that it may be a fit place for the exercise of the senses. The eye would be useless without all the properties of light; the ear would have no power in a world without an atmosphere. Sight enables us to avoid danger, and seek distant needful objects. What a vast length of time and wearisome labour would it require for a blind man to learn what one glance of the eye may give to one blessed with sight. A race of blind men could not exist on this globe.

The sense of sight alone, as a means of adapting us to the world, would strike us as wonderful in its results, and worthy of the conception of the highest intelligence in adapting means to ends, if we knew nothing of the adjustments by which sight is secured. We can conceive of the power of sight as direct perception, without the aid of light, or of a special organ corresponding to the eye. But constituted as we are, we see only through the agency of light; and we perceive light only by a special organ; and objects only in consequence of a peculiar structure of that organ. Of all these relationships of light to objects, and of light to the eye, and of the parts of the eye to each other, not one of them is a necessary condition of matter. The arrangement of so many things by which this wonderful power of perceiving distant objects is secured, is the only one that will secure the end desired, out of an endless number of arrangements that can be conceived of. . . . . Whoever contrived the organ through which we are to perceive, understood perfectly all the properties of light,

and the wants of the being that was to use it. The eye of man, though limited in its power to a certain range, gives all that the common wants of life demand. And if man needs greater range of vision, he has but to study the eye itself, and fashion instruments to increase its power; as he is able when the proper time has come in his civilization, to increase by science and art the efficacy of nearly all his physical powers. For the ordinary purposes of life, neither telescopic nor microscopic adjustment of the eye is needful.

But the eye has not only the power of vision so necessary to man, but it is an instrument of power, an instrument made up of distinct parts, of solids and liquids, of transparent and opaque tissues, of curtains, and lenses, and screens. Its mechanism can be accurately examined and the use of each part as perfectly understood as any of the works of man. We examine every part of it as we would a microscope. We have first the solid case which is to hold all the machinery, and upon which are to be fastened the cords and pulleys of its skilful mounting. This covering, opaque, white, and glistening, like silver on the back and sides of the eye, in front, where the light must enter, suddenly becomes transparent as the clearest crystal. Within this is a second coating that coming to the front changes just as suddenly into an opaque screen, through the tissues of which no ray of light can pass. That screen is self-adjusting, with a net-work that no art of man ever equalled. Whether expanding or contracting, its opening in the centre always remains a perfect circle, adapted in size to the intensity of the light. How much light shall enter the eye it determines without aid from us. Next there must be connection with the brain, the seat of the being for whom the provision is made. These two coatings are pierced upon the back part of the eye, and a thread drawn out from the brain is passed through this opening and spread out within the eye as a delicate screen upon which all impressions are to be made. To fill the larger portion of the cavity, there is packed into it a clear jelly, and imbedded in this a lens, fashioned with a skill that no artist can equal, to refract the light and throw the image on the perceptive screen. In front of this lens is another humor, not like jelly as the other, because in this, that delicate fringe the iris, is to float, and nothing but a watery fluid will answer its purpose. Here then we have a great variety of materials all brought together, of the exact quality and in the quantity needed, placed in the exact position which they ought to occupy, so perfectly adjusted that the most that man can do is to imitate the eye without ever hoping to equal it.

Nor is the curious structure of the eye itself all that is worthy of our attention. The instrument when finished must be mounted for use. A cavity is formed in solid bone, with grooves and perforations for all the required machinery. The eye, when placed, is packed with soft elastic cushions and fastened by strings and pulleys to give it variety and rapidity of motion. Its outer case is to cover it when not in use, and protect it when in danger. The delicate fringe upon its border never needs clipping; and set like a well-arranged defence, its points all gracefully turned back, that no ray of light may be obstructed. Above the protecting brow is another defence to turn aside the acrid fluids from the forehead, while near the eye is placed a gland that bathes the whole organ with a clear soothing fluid, to prevent all friction and keep its outward lens free from dust, and polished for constant use. When we consider all this, the perfect adaptation of the eye to our wants, the arrangement of every part of its structure on strict mechanical and optical principles, and all the provisions for its protection, we pronounce the instrument perfect, the work of a Being like man, but raised immeasurably above the most skilful human workman. What shall we say when we learn that this instrument was prepared in long anticipation of its use; that there is a machinery within it to keep it in constant repair; that the Maker not only adjusted the materials, but that he was the chemist who formed all these substances from the dust of the earth? We may be told that the architect found this dust ready at hand, existing from all eternity. We may not be able to prove the contrary, nor do we need to do so for this argument. It is enough for our present purpose to know that the eyes with which we now see, these wonderfully complex and perfect instruments, were not long since common earth, dust upon which we perchance have trod.

We can understand the mechanism of the eye, we can comprehend the wisdom that devised it; but the preparation of materials, and the adjustment of parts, speak of a power and skill to which man can never hope to attain. When he sees his most cunning workmanship surpassed both in plan and execution, shall he fail to recognise design? Shall we fail to recognise a builder when we contemplate such

a work?"—*P. A. Chadbourne, in "Lectures on Natural Theology; or, Nature and the Bible from the same Author. New York,* 1867."

Verse 9.—"*Shall he not see?*" A god or a saint that should really cast the glance of a pure eye into the conscience of the worshipper would not long be held in repute. The grass would grow again around that idol's shrine. A seeing god would not do: the idolater wants a blind god. The first cause of idolatry is a desire in an impure heart to escape from the look of the living God, and none but a dead image would serve the turn.—*William Arnot.*

Verse 9.—He who made the sun itself, and causes it to revolve, being a small portion of his works, if compared with the whole, is he unable to perceive all things? —*Epictetus.*

Verse 9.—That is wise counsel of the Rabbins, that the three best safeguards against falling into sin are to remember, first, that there is an ear which hears everything; secondly, that there is an eye which sees everything; thirdly, that there is a hand which writes everything in the Book of Knowledge, which shall be opened at the Judgment.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verses 9, 10.—It was no limited power that could make this eye to see, this ear to hear, this heart to understand; and, if that eye which he hath given us, can see all things that are within our prospect, and that ear, that he hath planted, can hear all sounds that are within our compass, and that heart, that he hath given us, can know all matters within the reach of our comprehension; how much more shall the sight, and hearing, and knowledge of that Infinite Spirit, which can admit of no bounds, extend to all the actions and events of all the creatures, that lie open before him that made them!—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 10.—"*He that teacheth man knowledge——.*" The question posts midway (for the words in Italics are not Scripture), the point of application being too obvious to need mention. "He that teacheth man all his knowledge." [Fill out the rest yourselves: think, What then?]—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 10.—"*He that teacheth man knowledge.*" What knowledge have we but that which is derived from himself, or from the external world?—and what is that world, but his Creation?—and what is creation, but the composition, structure, and arrangement of all things according to his previous designs, plans, intentions, will, and mandate? In studying creation in any of its departments, we therefore study his mind: and all that we can learn from it must be his ideas, his purposes, and his performances. No author, in his compositions—no artificer, in his mechanisms, can more truly display their talents and ideas to others, than the unseen Creator manifests his thoughts and intelligence to us in the systems and substances which he has formed, and presents to our continual contemplation. In this sense, Nature is an unceasing revelation of them to us.—*Sharon Turner.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord knoweth the thoughts.*" The thoughts of man's heart—what millions are there of them in a day! The twinkling of the eye is not so sudden a thing as the twinkling of a thought; yet those thousands and thousands of thoughts which pass from thee, that thou canst not reckon, they are all known to God.—*Anthony Burgess.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.*" What a humbling thought is here suggested to us! Let us examine it.

1. If vanity had been ascribed to the meaner parts of the creation—if all inanimate and irrational beings, whose days are as a shadow, and who know not whence they came nor whither they go, had thus been characterized—it had little more than accorded with our own ideas. But the humiliating truth belongs to man, the *lord* of the lower creation—to man, that distinguished link in the chain of being which unites in his person mortality and immortality, heaven and earth. "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of *man*, that they are vanity."

2. Had vanity been ascribed only to the exercise of our sensual or mortal part, or of that which we possess in common with other animals, it had been less humiliating. But the charge is pointed at that which is the peculiar glory of man, the intellectual part, his *thoughts*. It is here, if anywhere, that we excel the creatures which are placed around us. We can contemplate our own existence, dive into the past and the future, and understand whence we came and whither we go. Yet in this tender part we are touched. Even the "*thoughts*" of man are vanity.

3. If vanity had been ascribed merely to those loose and trifling excursions of

the imagination which fall not under the influence of choice, a kind of comers and goers, which are ever floating in the mind, like insects in the air on a summer's evening, it had been less affecting. The soul of man seems to be necessarily active. Everything we see, hear, taste, feel, or perceive, has some influence upon thought, which is moved by it as leaves on the trees are moved by every breeze of wind. But " thoughts " here include those exercises of the mind in which it is voluntarily or intensely engaged, and in which we are in earnest ; even all our schemes, contrivances, and purposes. One would think, if there were anything in man to be accounted of, it should be those exercises in which his intellectual faculty is seriously and intensely employed. Yet the Lord knoweth that even these are vanity.

4. If during our state of childhood and youth only vanity had been ascribed to our thoughts, it would have been less surprising. This is a truth of which numberless parents have painful proof ; yea, and of which children themselves, as they grow up to maturity, are generally conscious. Vanity at this period, however, admits of some apology. The obstinacy and folly of some young people, while they provoke disgust, often excite a tear of pity. But the charge is exhibited against *man.* " Man *at his best estate* is altogether vanity."

5. The decision proceeds from a quarter from which there can be no appeal. " *The Lord knoweth* " it. Opinions dishonourable to our species may sometimes arise from ignorance, sometimes from spleen and disappointment, and sometimes from a gloomy turn of mind, which views mankind through a distorted medium. But the judgment given in this passage is the decision of him who cannot err ; a decision therefore to which, if we had no other proof, it becomes us to accede.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 11.—" *They are vanity.*" The Syriac version is, *for they are a vapour.* Compare James iv. 14.—*John Gill.*

Verse 12.—" *Blessed is the man,*" *&c.* I shall show the various benefits of affliction, when it is sanctified by the Spirit of God to those persons who are exercised by it. I. The Great God has made affliction the occasion of converting sinners, and bringing them into a spiritual acquaintance with Christ his Son. See Isa. xlviii. 10. II. God not only makes affliction the occasion of converting sinners at first, but after conversion he sanctifies an afflicted state to the saints, to weaken the remains of indwelling sin in them, and make them afraid of sinning against him in future time. III. God, in afflicting the saints, increases that good work of grace, which his Spirit has implanted in them. God causes his saints to grow in grace, when he corrects them with the rod of sorrow ; God assimilates and makes the saints like unto himself, in a greater degree, by temporal troubles and distresses. Heb. xii. 10, 11. IV. God afflicts the saints for the improvement of their knowledge in divine things. The Psalmist says, in the words of the text, " *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.*" See also Ps. cxix. 71. V. The great God, by afflicting the saints, brings them unto him with greater nearness and frequency, by prayer and supplication. VI. God afflicts the saints, to make them better acquainted with the perfections of his nature. VII. To make them more conformed to Christ his Son. VIII. To subdue the pride of their hearts, and make them more humble. IX. God oftentimes discovers to the saints, in the season of their affliction, in a clearer manner, that grace which he has implanted in them, and refreshes their souls with the consolations of his Spirit. X. God afflicts the saints, to divide their hearts more from the love of the world, and to make them more meet for heaven.—*Outline of a Sermon by John Farmer,* 1744.

Verse 12.—Here observe generally, what it is which afflictions, or God by afflictions, teacheth his children ; even the self-same thing which he teacheth in his word ; as the schoolmaster teacheth his scholars the same thing by the rod, which he teacheth by words. The word, then, is the storehouse of all instruction. Look not for any new diverse doctrine to be taught thee by affliction, which is not in the word. For, in truth, herein stands our teaching by affliction, that it fits and prepares us for the word, by breaking and sub-dividing the stubbornness of our hearts, and making them pliable, and capable of the impression of the word. Wherefore, as the Apostle saith, that the law is our schoolmaster to Christ, Gal. iii. Because the law, by showing unto us our disease, forceth us to the physician. So likewise it may be said that afflictions are schoolmasters to the law. For whilst we are at ease and in prosperity, though the sons of thunder terrify never so much with the fearful cracks of legal menaces, yet are we as deaf men, nothing moved therewith.

But when we are humbled and meekened by affliction, then is there way made for the terrors of the law; then do we begin with some reverence of attention to listen and give ear unto them. When therefore God sends us any affliction, we must know that then he sends us to the law and to the testimony. For he teaches us indeed in our affliction, but it is in his law. And therefore if in our affliction we will learn anything, we must take God's book into our hands, and carefully and seriously peruse it. And hereby shall it appear that our afflictions have been our teachers, if by them we have felt ourselves stirred up to greater diligence, zeal, and reverence in reading and hearing the word. . . . . After that the prophet had preferred his complaint to the Lord against the adversaries of the church, from the first verse to the eighth, he leaveth God, and in a sudden conversion of speech, turns himself from the party complained unto, to the parties complained of, the cruel oppressors of the church, terrifying them by those just judgments of God, which in fine must overtake them, and so consequently cheering and comforting the distressed church. But because the distress of the church's enemies of itself could be no sufficient matter of comfort unto her, therefore a second argument of further and that far more effectual consolation is added in this twelfth verse, drawn from the happy condition of the church, even whilst she is thus overborne with those tigerly and tyrannical persecutors. And the argument is propounded by the prophet, not directing his speech to the church, but rather in his own person bringing in the church suddenly turning her speech from her enemies, with whom she was expostulating, to God himself, and breaking forth into this pathetical expostulation, "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.*" From the coherence of which words with the former, we may observe, that the outward miseries of our enemies is but cold comfort, unless withal we have a persuasion of our own inward happiness. . . . It would do the child little good to see the rod cast into the fire, if he himself should be cast in after it. Therefore the church having in this place meditated of the just judgments of God, which should in due time befall her adversaries, and not finding sufficiency of comfort therein, here in this verse proceedeth to a further meditation of her own case and condition. Wherein she seemeth thus to reason to herself. What though these mine enemies be brought to their deserved ends? what though I know they be reserved for shame and confusion? What ease can this bring to my mind now dejected, and happy thinking itself as miserable as these my foes? Now these doubtful thoughts something disquieting her, further comfort is ministered unto her by the Spirit of God in this verse, whereby she is enabled to answer that objection she made against herself, namely, that she is assured, that as her adversaries' case is wretched, so is her own most happy and blessed.—*Daniel Dyke, in "The Schoole of Affliction,"* 1633.

Verse 12.—"*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest,*" etc. If by outward afflictions thy soul be brought more under the inward teachings of God, doubtless thy afflictions are in love. All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; that man that finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning, is a happy man. If God, by the affliction that is upon thee, shall teach thee how to loathe sin more, how to trample upon the world more, and how to walk with God more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to die to sin more, and how to die to thy relations more, and how to die to thy self-interest more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to live to Christ more, how to lift up Christ more, and how to long for Christ more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions to get assurance of a better life, and to be still in a gracious readiness and preparedness for the day of thy death, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to mind heaven more, and how to fit for heaven more, thy afflictions are in love. If God by afflictions shall teach thy proud heart how to lie more low, and thy hard heart how to grow more humble, and thy censorious heart how to grow more charitable, and thy carnal heart how to grow more spiritual, and thy froward heart how to grow more quiet, &c., thy afflictions are in love. Pambo, an illiterate dunce, as the historian terms him, was a-learning that one lesson, "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue," nineteen years, and yet had not learned it. Ah! it is to be feared that there are many who have been in this school of affliction above this nineteen years, and yet have not learned any saving lesson all this while. Surely their afflictions are not in love, but in wrath. Where God loves, he afflicts in love, and wherever God afflicts in love, there he will first and last teach such souls such lessons as shall do them good to all eternity.

If you enjoy the special presence of God with your spirits in your affliction, then your affliction is in love. Hast thou a special presence of God with thy spirit, strengthening of that, stilling of that, satisfying of that, cheering and comforting of that? "*In the multitude of my thoughts*,"—that is, of my troubled, intricate, ensnared, intertwined, and perplexed thoughts, as the branches of a tree by some strong wind are twisted one within another, as the Hebrew word properly signifies,—"*Thy comforts delight my soul.*" Here is a presence of God with his soul, here are comforts and delights that reach the soul, here is a cordial to strengthen the spirit.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 12.—You may and ought to get especial rejoicing faith out of sanctified afflictions. Thus: "Whom God doth correct and teach, *him* he loves, *he* is blessed: (Ps. xciv. 12: Heb. xii. 6:) but God doth so to me: *ergo.*" Here are bills and prayers for mercies; but who looks after the issue, the teaching, the holy use? Sanctified afflictions are very good evidences, and so very comfortable. There are those who would not have lost their sufferings, temptations, afflictions, for any good. The blessed Spirit hath taught them that way many a divine truth by heart out of the word; they are sensible of it, and from it conclude the love of God in Christ to them; and thence they have joy and comfort,—*that* joy that angels cannot give, and devils cannot take. Sanctified troubles are tokens of special love.—*Christopher Fowler* (1610—1678,) *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 12.—If we have nothing but the rod, we profit not by the rod; yea, if we have nothing but the word, we shall never profit by the word. It is the Spirit given with the word, and the Spirit given with the rod, by which we profit under both, or either. Chastening and divine teaching must go together, else there will be no profit by chastening.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—God sees that the sorrows of life are very good for us; for, as seeds that are deepest covered with snow in winter flourish most in spring; or as the wind by beating down the flame raiseth it higher and hotter; and as when we would have fires flame the more, we sprinkle water upon them; even so, when the Lord would increase our joy and thankfulness, he allays it with the tears of affliction.—*H. G. Salter.*

Verse 12.—"*And teachest.*" *Teaching* implies both a schoolmaster, *a teacher*, instructing and *lessons taught.* In this *teaching* both these points are here noted out. And for the first, namely, the *schoolmaster*, it is twofold: 1. The outward affliction and chastisement, "*Whom thou chastisest, teachest*," that is, whom by chastising thou teachest. 2. God himself, who is the chief and principal head schoolmaster, the other being but an inferior and subordinate one: "*Whom thou teachest.*" And for the second point, *the lessons taught*, they are included generally in those words, "*in thy law.*" To begin then with the schoolmasters, and first with the first.

The first schoolmaster is affliction. A sharp and severe and swingeing schoolmaster indeed, and so much the fitter for such stout and stubborn scholars as we are; who because we will not be overcome by fair means, must needs therefore be dealt withal by foul. For God doth not willingly afflict us, but being necessarily thereunto enforced, by that strength of corruption in us, which otherwise will not be subdued. So physicians and surgeons are constrained to come to cutting, lancing, and burning, when milder remedies will not prevail. Let us therefore hereby take notice of the hardness of our hearts, the fallow ground whereof cannot be broken up but by this sharp plough of affliction. See what dullards and blockheads we are, how slow to understand spiritual things, not able to conceive of them by the instruction of words, unless they be even beaten and driven into our brains by blows. So thick and brawny is that foreskin which is drawn over our uncircumcised ears and hearts, that no doctrine can enter, unless it be pegged, and hammered, and knocked into us by the fists of this sour and crabbed *schoolmaster.*

The second schoolmaster is God himself. Afflictions of themselves, though severe schoolmasters, yet can do us no good, unless God come by his Spirit, and teach our hearts inwardly. Let us therefore pray, that as in the ministry of God's word, so also of his works and judgments, we may be *all taught of God.* For it is his Spirit that quickeneth and animateth the outward means, which otherwise are a dead letter. And this is the reason that many men have rather grown worse by their afflictions, than anything better; because God's Spirit hath not gone with the affliction, to put life and spirit into it, as Moses observed in the Israelites, Deut. **xxix.** 2—4.—*Daniel Dyke.*

Verse 13.—" *That thou mayest give him rest.*" Here usually, but hereafter certainly. *Mors ærumnarum requies*, was Chaucer's motto: those that die in the Lord *shall rest from their labours*. Meanwhile they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. 1 Cor. xi. 32.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 13.—" *To give him rest.*" This is the end of God's teaching, that his servant may wait in patience, unmoved by, safe *from, the days of evil* (comp. xlix. 5) seeing the evil all round lifting itself up, but seeing also the secret, mysterious retribution, slowly but surely accomplishing itself. In this sense the " rest " is the rest of a calm, self-possessed spirit, as Isai. vii. 4; xxx. 15; xxxii. 17; lvii. 20; and " *to give him* " signifies " that thou mayest give him."—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 13.—" *Rest.*" Let there be a revival of the passive virtues. Mr. Hume calls them the " monkish virtues." Many speak of them slightingly, especially as compared with the dashing qualities so highly esteemed in the world. But quietness of mind and of spirit, like a broken heart, is of great price in the sight of God. Some seem to have forgotten that silence and meekness are graces.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 13.—" *Rest from the days of adversity.*" *To rest from the days of adversity* is not to be disturbed by them to such an extent as to murmur, or despond in spirit, but to trust in God, and in silence of the mind and affections expect from God deliverance. See Isai. vii. 4; xxvi. 20, &c. Moreover he says not בִּימֵי *in*, but מִימֵי *from the days* of adversity, an expression of greater elegancy and wider range of meaning. For there is a reference to the primary form of the verb שָׁקַט *to sink, to settle down*, as when the dregs of disturbed liquor fall to the bottom; when it is applied to the mind when shaken with a great agitation of cares, and full of bitterness. The dregs, therefore, sprung *from the days of adversity*, are pointed out as settling down. Besides, not only is rest of mind while the evils continue indicated, but also while they are ceasing, since מ, *from*, has here, as not infrequently elsewhere, a *negativ f orce.*—*Venema.*

Verse 13.—" *Until the pit be digged for the wicked.*" Behold, thou hast the counsel of God, and the reason why he spareth the wicked: the pit is being digged for the sinner. Thou wishest to bury him at once: the pit is as yet being dug for him: do not be in haste to bury him.—*Augustine.*

Verse 15.—My text contains two parts; the providence of God to his people, and the prosperity of the providence among them. The providence of God to his people lies much in after-games: God seems to go away from his, and then the wicked have the better: anon he returns, and then his people carry the day. "*Judgment shall return unto righteousness;*" or *justice shall return unto judgment;* a phrase of speech frequent in the Old Testament to note retaliation, *quid* for *quo*, like for like. The term is distinct as well as the phrase, and helps to give the sense of the Spirit of God here; צָרַק, from צָוַק, *se asseruit*, justice shall assert itself; Christ shall assert his people, his promises, his threatenings. " Shall *return*," *retro-agi:* what evil men do to good shall be re-done to them, done back again upon them by God. Or this root, here rendered " *return*," may be rendered to abide and rest. In Psalm xxiii. 6, it is so rendered: " I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Justice doth, as it were, go from home sometimes, when it visits the saints; but it returns to its home and dwelling, *i.e.*, the wicked. Justice is, as it were, from home, till it returns to the wicked, there it abides and dwells. " *Justice shall dwell and rest in judgment*," *i.e.*, in the execution of punishments upon wicked men. מִשְׁפָּט, from שָׁפַט, *judicium exercuit*, notes the exercise and execution of justice: a thing rests in its end; justice dwells and rests in judgment, *i.e.*, in its execution, in its end for which, and unto which and whom it is appointed.—*Nicholas Lockyer*, 1612—1684-5.

Verse 15.—" *Shall follow it.*" The right reading is in the margin,—*shall be after it*, or *after that;* that is, (1) *shall observe it.* " He poureth contempt upon princes; he setteth the poor on high from affliction; whoso is wise *shall observe these things*," etc., Ps. cvii. 43: this Scripture, I think, in part explains the text. (2) " *Shall be after it;*" that is, shall confess and acknowledge it. 'Tis not a small thing to bring men to confess the justice of God in his dealings. (3) " *Shall be after it;*" that is, shall triumph in it, and so to be compared with and opened by Ps. lviii. 10, 11. (4) " *Shall be after it;*" that is, the works of God shall be of effectual operation, to bring such as are upright in heart more to love and obey God, and so it is to be compared with Ps. xxxi. 23.—*Nicholas Lockyer.*

Verse 16.—"*Who will rise up,*" etc. I think we ought to look upon David here in a public capacity, as a prince or magistrate; and then as such he deplores the increase and confidence of the wicked; and having fortified himself in God by prayer, he resolves, in the words of the text, to do the duty of his station, to employ all the power God had given him for the extirpation of wickedness, and the reformation of an impious people; and earnestly invites and calls in to his assistance all that had either heart or ability for such a work, as being well aware of the great difficulty of it. This is the sense I prefer, because it best becomes the zeal and faith of David, best suits the spirit and genius of several other parallel Psalms, and seems plainly to me to have the countenance of the Targum and the Septuagint.

In the words thus explained we have these three things: 1. *The deplorable state of Israel.* This is easily to be collected from the form and manner of David's expressing himself here, "*Who will stand up for me?*" or *who will take my part?* As if he should have said, Such is the number and power of the wicked, that how much soever my heart is set upon a reformation, I can hardly hope to effect it, without the concurrence and joint endeavours of good men. And yet, alas! how little is the assistance I can reasonably expect of this kind? How few are the sincere friends of goodness? How great and how general is the coldness and indifference which possesses men in the things of God? 2. *The duty of the magistrate.* This is plainly implied here, and is, to curb and restrain wickedness, and to promote a general reformation. 3. *The duty of all good people.* Which is, as far as in them lies, to assist and encourage the magistrate in this good work.—*Richard Lucas*, 1697.

Verse 16.—"*Who will rise up for me against the wicked?*" In all ages, men who neither feared God nor regarded man have combined together and formed confederacies, to carry on the works of darkness. And herein they have shown themselves wise in their generation, for by this means they more effectually promoted the kingdom of their father the devil, than otherwise they could have done. On the other hand, men who did fear God, and desire the happiness of their fellow-creatures, have in every age found it needful to join together in order to oppose the works of darkness, to spread the knowledge of God their Saviour, and to promote his kingdom upon earth. Indeed he himself has instructed them so to do. From the time that men were upon the earth, he hath taught them to join together in his service, and has united them in one body by one Spirit. And for this very end he has joined them together, "that he might destroy the works of the devil;" first in them that are already united, and by them that are round about them.—*John Wesley, in a Sermon on these words, preached before the Society for Reformation of Manners, Jan.* 30, 1763.

Verse 17.—"*Had been my help.*" The word signifieth not only *help*, but *summum et plenum auxilium*, an *helpfulness*, or *full help:* the Hebrew hath a letter more than ordinary, to increase the signification, as learned Mr. Leigh observeth: there is the sufficiency of help.—*Nathaniel Whiting, in "The Saints' Dangers, Deliverances, and Duties,"* 1659.

Verse 19.—"*In the multitude of my thoughts,*" etc. That is, just when they were come to their height and extremity in me. The comforts of God are seasonable, and observe the proper time for their coming, neither too soon, nor too late, but "*in,*" that is, just in the very point and nick of time. There is another thing here spoken of. In the "*thoughts*" and in the "*multitude*" of the "thoughts;" not in the indifferency of thoughts, but in the perplexity; not in the paucity of thoughts, but in the plurality: our extremity is God's opportunity. "In the mount will the Lord be seen," when we have thought and thought and thought all we could, and know not what to think more, then does God delight to tender and exhibit his comforts to us. . . .

In the words "*within me*" we have, next, the intimacy or closeness of this grief. The Hebrew word is בְּקִרְבִּי, *in medio mei.* The Arabic *be-kalbi, in corde meo.* And so likewise the Septuagint, ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ μου, *in my very heart.* This is added by way of further intention and aggravation of the present evil and distress. *First,* To show the *secrecy* of this grief. Those evils which are external, and in the body, every one is ready to bemoan them, and to bewail them, and to take notice of them, and to shew a great deal of bowels towards those which are afflicted with them; but these griefs which are inward, and in the mind, they are such as are known but

to God himself. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness," saith Solomon, Proverbs xiv. 10.

Secondly, Here is hereby denoted the *settledness* and *radication* of this evil: it was within him and it was within his heart, that is, it was deeply rooted and fastened, and such as had a strong ground-work and foundation in him; such were these troublesome "*thoughts*," they were got into his very inwards and bowels, and so were not easily got out again. *Thirdly*, Here is hereby also signified the *impression* which they had upon him, and the *sense* which he himself had of them. They were such as did grievously afflict him, and pierce him, and went near unto him, they went to his very heart, and touched him, as it were, to the quick, through the grievousness of them, as he speaks in another place concerning the reproaches of his enemies, Psalm xlii. 10: "As with a sword (or killing) in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"

Now what are these "*comforts*" of God which the Psalmist does more especially intend here in this place? In a word, they are the comforts which do flow from our *communion* with him. The comforts of his attributes, and the comforts of his promises, and the comforts of his gracious presence drawing near unto our souls, when it pleases him to shine upon us, and to express his good will to us, and to give us some evidence and assurance of his love and favour towards us; these are his comforts.

"*Delight*." This is a transcendent expression, which the Holy Ghost in the pen of the prophet David comes up unto. It had been a great matter to have said, they satisfy my soul, or, they quiet me, no more but so; that is the highest pitch which a perplexed spirit can wish to itself. Those which are in great pain, they would be glad if they might have but ease, they cannot aspire so high as *pleasure and delight*, this is more than can be expected by them; but see here now the notable efficacy of these Divine comforts; they do not only *pacify* the mind, but they *joy* it; they do not only *satisfy* it, but *ravish* it; they not only *quiet*, but *delight* it. "*Thy comforts delight my soul*." That is, not only take away the present grief, but likewise put in the room and place of it most unspeakable comfort and consolation; as the *sun* does not only dispel darkness, but likewise brings in a glorious light in the stead of it.

"*My soul*." We showed before how the grief was in the mind, and therefore the comfort must be so also, that the remedy may answer the malady. Bodily pleasure will not satisfy for mind distraction: nothing will ease the soul but such comforts as are agreeable to itself, and such are these present comforts of God, they delight the *soul*.—*Thomas Horton*.

Verse 19.—*Thoughts* considered simply in themselves do not contain any matter of grief or evil; they are the proper and natural issue and emanations of the soul which come from it with a great deal of easiness, and with a great deal of delight; but it is the *exorbitancy and irregularity* of them which is here intended, when they do not proceed *evenly and fairly* as they ought to do, but with some kind of *interruption*; and so the word which is here used in the text seems to import; the Hebrew *sagnaphim* carrying an affinity with *segnaphim*, which is derived from a root which signifies properly a bough. Now we know that in a bough there are two things especially considerable, as pertinent to our present purpose. First, there's the *perplexity* of it. And, secondly, there's the *agitation*. Boughs usually catch, and intangle one in another, and boughs they are easily shaken, and moved up and down by the wind. If there be never so little *air* or *breath* stirring abroad, the boughs presently discover it, and are made sensible of it. So that this expression does serve very well to intimate and set forth unto us the perplexity and inconstancy of thoughts, which David was now troubled withal, and whereof he now complains, as grievous and offensive to him. They were not thoughts *in any consideration*, but *thoughts of distraction*, such thoughts as did bring some grief and trouble with them. This the Septuagint translators were so fully apprehensive of, that they quite leave out *thoughts*, and render it only by *griefs*, κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ὀδυνῶν μου: *according to the multitude of my sorrows*. But it is more full and agreeable to the word to put them both together,—*my grievous and sorrowful thoughts*—such thoughts as in regard of the carriage and ordering of them, do bring grief and sorrow with them.

And here we may by the way observe thus much, that God need not go far to punish and afflict men when he pleases; he can do it even with *their own thoughts*, no more but so. He can gather a rod of these boughs, and make a scourge of these twistings, wherewith to lash them, and that to purpose. If he does but raise a

tempest in the mind, and cause these thoughts to bluster and bustle one with another, there will be trouble and affliction enough, though there were nothing else. It is no matter whether there be any *ground* or *occasion* for it in the things themselves; it is enough that there be so but in the *conceit and apprehension.* God can so use a *fancy,* a mere toy and imagination itself, and so set it on upon the soul, that there shall be no quiet nor rest for it.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 19.—Observe the greatness of this man's distress. This is forcibly expressed in the text, though in our translation it is scarcely obvious. The word in it rendered "*thoughts,*" scholars tell us, signifies originally the small branches of trees. The idea in the Psalmist's mind appears to be this: 'Look at a tree, with its branches shooting in every direction, entangling and entwining themselves one with another; let the wind take them—see how they feel it, how restless they become and confused, beating against and striving one with another. Now my mind is like that tree. I have a great many thoughts in it; and thoughts which are continually shifting and changing; they are perplexed and agitated thoughts, battling one with another. There is no keeping the mind quiet under them; they bring disorder into it as well as sorrow. And mark the word "*multitude*" in the text; there is exactly the same idea in that. It signifies more than number; confusion. Think of a crowd collected and hurrying about: 'so,' says the Psalmist, 'are my thoughts. I have a crowd of them in my mind, and a restless confused crowd. One painful thought is bad enough, but I have many; a multitude of them; and almost countless, a disturbed throng.' We now, then, understand the case we have before us. The man's sorrow arose, at this time, from disquieting thoughts within his own breast; and his sorrow was great, because these thoughts were many, and at the same time tumultuous. When the Psalmist says, "*Thy comforts,*" he means more than comforts of which God is the author or giver. God is the author and giver of all our comforts—of all the earthly comforts that surround us; they are all the work and gift of his gracious hand. . . . We are to understand *here* such comforts as are peculiarly and altogether God's, such as flow at once from God; not from him through creatures to us, but from him immediately to us without the intervention of creatures. The comforts that we get from his attributes—from meditating on, and what we call realising them; the comforts we get from his promises—believing and hoping in him; and the comforts of his presence, he drawing near to our souls and shining into them—we knowing he is near us, conscious of it by the light and happiness and renewed strength within us. "*Thy* comforts"—the comforts we get from the Lord Jesus Christ; from looking at him, considering him; thinking of his person, and offices, and blood, and righteousness, and intercession, and exaltation, and glory, and his second coming; our meeting him, seeing him, being like him. "*Thy* comforts"—the comforts which come from the Holy Spirit, "the Comforter": when he opens the Scriptures to us, or speaks by ceremonies and ordinances, or witnesses within us of our adoption of God; shining in on his own work of grace in our hearts; enabling us to see that work, and to see in it God's peculiar, eternal love to us; not opening to us the book of life, and showing us our names there, but doing something that makes us almost as joyful as though that book were opened to us; showing us the hand of God in our own souls—his converting, saving hand—his hand apprehending us as his own; making us feel, as it were, his grasp of love, and feel, too, that it is a grasp which he will never loosen.—*Charles Bradley.*

Verse 19.—"*Thy comforts delight my soul.*" Xerxes offered great rewards to him that could find out a new pleasure; but the comforts of the Spirit are satisfactory, they recruit the heart. There is as much difference between heavenly comforts and earthly, as between a banquet that is eaten and one that is painted on the wall.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 19.—"*Thy comforts.*" Troubles may be of our own begetting; but true comforts come only from that infinite fountain, the God of consolation; for so he hath styled himself.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 19.—"*Delight my soul.*" The original word, שַׁעְשְׁעוּ, signifies "*to cause to leap or dance for joy*"; but the English language will not bear an application of this image to the soul; though we say "to make the *heart* leap for joy."—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 19.—Because the malignant host is first entered into the ground of my text, consider with me: 1. The rebels, or mutineers, "*thoughts.*" 2. The number of them, no less than a "*multitude.*" 3. The captain whose colours they bear; a

disquieted mind; "*my* thoughts." 4. The field where the battle is fought; in the heart; *apud me*, "within me." In the other army we find, 1. *Quanta*, how puissant they are; "*comforts*." 2. *Quota*, how many they are; indefinitely set down; abundant comfort. 3. *Cujus*, whose they are; the Lord's, he is their general; "*thy* comforts." 4. *Quid operantur*, what they do; they delight the soul. In the nature of them, being comforts, there is tranquillity; in the number of them, being many comforts, there is sufficiency; in the owner of them, being "*thy*" comforts, there is omnipotency; and in the effect of them, delighting the soul, there is security. —*From Thomas Adams' Sermon entitled "Man's Comfort."*

Verse 19.—A text of this kind shows us forcibly the power of Divine grace in the human heart: how much it can do to sustain and cheer the heart. The world may afflict a believer, and pain him; but if the grace which God has given him is in active exercise in his soul, the world cannot make him unhappy. It rather adds by its ill treatment to his happiness; for it brings God and his soul nearer together—God the fountain of all happiness, the rest and satisfaction of his soul.

This Psalm was evidently written by a deeply afflicted man. The wicked, he says, were triumphing over him; and had been so for a long while. He could find no one on earth to take his part against them. "*Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?*" he asks in the 16th verse; "*or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?*" And it seemed, too, as though God had abandoned him. His enemies thought so, and he seems to have been almost ready to think so himself. But what was the fact? All this time the Lord was secretly pouring consolation into his soul, and in the end made that consolation abundant. In appearance a wretched, he was in reality a happy man; suffering, yet comforted; yea, the text says *delighted*—"*Thy comforts delight my soul.*"—*Charles Bradley*, 1845.

Verse 20.—"*The throne of iniquity . . . . which frameth mischief by a law.*" The first pretext of wicked men to colour their proceedings against innocent men is their *throne*; the second is the *law*; and the third is their *council*. What tyrant could ask more? But God has prepared an awful hell for impenitent tyrants, and they will be in it long before they now expect to leave the world.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 20.—"*The throne of iniquity . . . . which frameth mischief by a law.*" If there never had been such thrones in the world, there would not have been that mention made of them in the Scripture. But such there have been. That of Jeroboam was one, who would not suffer the people, according to the divine command, to go up to Jerusalem to worship God, who had there placed his name; but spread, for them that went, nets upon Mizpah, and set snares upon Mount Tabor. (Hosea v. 1.) And such thrones there have been since, too many of them. Well saith the Psalmist, "*Shall they have fellowship with thee?*" No, no; God keeps his distance from them. Those that we call "stinking dunghills" are not so offensive to God as thrones of iniquity are, which shall neither be approved by him nor secured. Stay a while, Christians, and "in patience possess your souls;" for the world shall see that in due time he will overturn them all.—*Samuel Slater, in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 20.—"*Which frameth mischief by a law,*" *i.e.*, frame wicked laws, or under the colour of law and justice, oppress the innocent. *Summum jus, summa injuri*, the higher the law, the greater the injustice, and injuries may and are too often done *ex pravâ interpretatione legis*, from a wicked interpretation of the law. With those who do injustice with the sword of justice, God will have no fellowship.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 23.—"*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity,*" etc. It is an ill work wicked ones are about, they make fetters for their own feet, and build houses for to fall upon their own heads; so mischievous is the nature of sin that it damnifies and destroys the parents of it.—*William Greenhill.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Retribution the prerogative of God alone. II. Under what aspects may we desire his rendering it. III. How, and when he will surely fulfil this righteous wish.

Verse 1.—I. Vengeance belongs to God and not to man. II. Vengeance is better in the hands of God than of man. "Let us fall into the hands of God," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The peculiar provocation of the sin of pride and its kindred vices. Its influence on the proud, on their fellow men, and upon God himself.

Verse 3.—The duration of the reign of evil. I. Till it has filled up its measure of guilt. II. Till it has proved its own folly. III. Till it has developed the graces and prayers of saints. IV. Till it has emptied man of all human trust and driven us to look to the Lord alone, his Spirit, and his advent.

Verse 3.—I. The sweet potion of the wicked—present triumph. II. The gall which embitters it—it is but temporary, and is prayed against.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verses 5—10.—I. High-handed oppression by the wicked (verses 5, 6). II. Hard-hearted indifference to Divine supervision (verse 7). III. Clear-headed demonstration of the Divine cognisance and vengeance (verses 8—10).—*C. A. D.*

Verses 6—9.—I. Conspicuous sin. II. Absurd supposition. III. Overwhelming argument.

Verse 8.—Practical Atheists. I. Truly described. II. Wisely counselled.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 8—11.—I. The Exhortation (verse 8). II. The Expostulation (verses 9, 10). III. The Affirmation (verse 11).—*G. R.*

Verses 9, 10.—True Rationalism; or, Reason's Revelation of God.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 11.—I. With respect to the present world, consider what multitudes of thoughts are employed in vain. 1. In seeking satisfaction where it is not to be found. 2. In poring on events which cannot be recalled. 3. In anticipating evils which never befall us. 4. To these may be added the valuing ourselves on things of little or no account. 5. In laying plans which must be disconcerted. II. Let us see what are man's thoughts with regard to religion, and the concerns of a future life. 1. What are the thoughts of the heathen world about religion? 2. What are all the thoughts of the Christian world, where God's thoughts are neglected? 3. What is all that practical atheism which induces multitudes to act as if there were no God? 4. What are all the unbelieving, self-flattering imaginations of wicked men, as though God were not in earnest in his declarations and threatenings? 5. What are the conceits of the self-righteous, by which they buoy up their minds with vain hopes, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of God?—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 11.—God's intimate knowledge of man. A startling truth. A humiliating truth.

Verses 12, 13.—Christ's College. The Master, the Book, the Rod, the blessed Scholar, and the result of his education.

Verses 12, 13.—I. The Blessed. 1. Divinely taught. 2. Divinely chastised. II. The Blessing. 1. Rest in Affliction. 2. Rest from Affliction.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—I. Fear implied. That God will cast off, forsake, etc. II. Fear denied. God will not cast off—will not forsake.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—I. Display this bright doctrine on a dark background. What if the converse were true? Considerations that might lead us to apprehend it true. II. Joyfully regard the glowing truth itself. The doctrine declared. The reasons hinted (His people. His inheritance). The confidence expressed.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 15.—I. Judgment suspended. II. Judgment returned. III. Judgment acknowledged.—*G. R.*

Verse 16.—I. The question asked by the church of her champions. II. The answer of every true-hearted man. III. The yet more encouraging answer of her Lord.

Verses 16, 17.—The sole source of succour. I. A loud cry for help. As from a champion, or advocate. II. Earth's answer. A dead silence, disturbed only by echo (verse 17). III. The succouring voice that breaks the silence—the Lord's (verse 17).—*C. A. D.*

Verse 18.—The blessedness of the confession of weakness. I. The confession. II. The succour. III. The time. IV. The acknowledgment.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 19.—I. In the multitude of my *unbelieving* thoughts thy comforts delight my soul. II. In the multitude of my *penitential* thoughts thy comforts, etc. III. In the multitude of my *worldly* thoughts, etc. IV. In the multitude of my *family* or *social* thoughts, etc. V. Of my *desponding* thoughts, etc. VI. Of my *prospective* thoughts, etc. Or, I. There is no consolation for man in himself. II. There is no consolation for him in other creatures. III. His only consolation is in God.—*G. R.*

Verse 19.—I. The soul jostled in the thoroughfare of anxious thoughts. II. The delectable company nevertheless enjoyed.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 20.—" It is the law of the land, you know,"—the limit of this authority both in temporal and spiritual matters.

Verse 20.—I. God can have no fellowship with the wicked. II. The wicked can have no fellowship with God.—*G. R.*

Verse 20.—Divine politics. I. There are thrones erected in opposition to the throne of God, " thrones of iniquity," *e.g.* which trespass on civil liberty, which infringe religious equality, which derive revenue from evil commerce, etc. II. Such thrones, whatever their pretensions, are excluded from divine fellowship ; between them and God a great gulf is fixed.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 21, 22.—I. The Danger of the righteous (verse 21). II. Their Defence (verse 22).—*G. R.*

Verses 21—23.—I. Sentence passed in the court of injustice (verse 21). II. An element in the case not considered by the court (verse 22). III. The sentence consequently alighting on the right heads (verse 23). (This passage, under a very thin veil, exhibits Christ. Matt. xxvii. 1.)—*C. A. D.*

Verse 23.—I. None may punish God's enemies but himself. " He shall bring," etc. II. None need punish them but himself. 1. It will be complete,—" shall cut them off." 2. Certain. " Yea," etc.—*G. R.*

PSALM XCV.

This Psalm has no title, and all we know of its authorship is that Paul quotes it as "in David." (Heb. iv. 7.) It is true that this may merely signify that it is to be found in the collection known as David's Psalms; but if such were the Apostle's meaning it would have been more natural for him to have written, "saying in the Psalms;" we therefore incline to the belief that David was the actual author of this poem. It is in its original a truly Hebrew song, directed both in its exhortation and warning to the Jewish people, but we have the warrant of the Holy Spirit in the epistle to the Hebrews for using its appeals and entreaties when pleading with Gentile believers. It is a Psalm of invitation to worship. It has about it a ring like that of the church bells, and like the bells it sounds both merrily and solemnly, at first ringing out a lively peal, and then dropping into a funeral knell as if tolling at the funeral of the generation which perished in the wilderness. We will call it THE PSALM OF THE PROVOCATION.

DIVISION.—*It would be correct as to the sense to divide this Psalm into an invitation and a warning, so as to commence the second part with the last clause of verse* 7: *but upon the whole it may be more convenient to regard verse* 6 *as "the beating heart of the Psalm," as Hengstenberg calls it, and make the division at the end of verse* 5. *Thus it will form* (1) *an invitation with reasons, and* (2) *an invitation with warnings.*

EXPOSITION.

O COME, let us sing unto the LORD, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

3 For the LORD *is* a great God, and a great King above all gods.

4 In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills *is* his also.

5 The sea *is* his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry *land*.

1. "*O come, let us sing unto the Lord.*" Other nations sing unto their gods, let us sing unto Jehovah. We love him, we admire him, we reverence him, let us express our feelings with the choicest sounds, using our noblest faculty for its noblest end. It is well thus to urge others to magnify the Lord, but we must be careful to set a worthy example ourselves, so that we may be able not only to cry "Come," but also to add "*let us* sing," because we are singing ourselves. It is to be feared that very much even of religious singing is not unto the Lord, but unto the ear of the congregation: above all things we must in our service of song take care that all we offer is with the heart's sincerest and most fervent intent directed towards the Lord himself. "*Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.*" With holy enthusiasm let us sing, making a sound which shall indicate our earnestness; with abounding joy let us lift up our voices, actuated by that happy and peaceful spirit which trustful love is sure to foster. As the children of Israel sang for joy when the smitten rock poured forth its cooling streams, so let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. The author of this song had in his mind's eye the rock, the tabernacle, the Red Sea, and the mountains of Sinai, and he alludes to them all in this first part of his hymn. God is our abiding, immutable, and mighty rock, and in him we find deliverance and safety, therefore it becomes us to praise him with heart and with voice from day to day; and especially should we delight to do this when we assemble as his people for public worship.

> "Come let us to the Lord sing out
> With trumpet voice and choral shout."

2. "*Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving.*" Here is probably a reference to the peculiar presence of God in the Holy of Holies above the mercy-seat, and also to the glory which shone forth out of the cloud which rested above

the tabernacle. Everywhere God is present, but there is a peculiar presence of grace and glory into which men should never come without the profoundest reverence. We may make bold to come before the immediate presence of the Lord—for the voice of the Holy Ghost in this Psalm invites us, and when we do draw near to him we should remember his great goodness to us and cheerfully confess it. Our worship should have reference to the past as well as to the future; if we do not bless the Lord for what we have already received, how can we reasonably look for more. We are permitted to bring our petitions, and therefore we are in honour bound to bring our thanksgivings. "*And make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms.*" We should shout as exultingly as those do who triumph in war, and as solemnly as those whose utterance is a Psalm. It is not always easy to unite enthusiasm with reverence, and it is a frequent fault to destroy one of these qualities while straining after the other. The perfection of singing is that which unites joy with gravity, exultation with humility, fervency with sobriety. The invitation given in the first verse is thus repeated in the second with the addition of directions, which indicate more fully the intent of the writer. One can imagine David in earnest tones persuading his people to go up with him to the worship of Jehovah with sound of harp and hymn, and holy delight. The gladsomeness of his exhortation is noteworthy, the noise is to be *joyful*; this quality he insists upon twice. It is to be feared that this is too much overlooked in ordinary services, people are so impressed with the idea that they ought to be serious that they put on the aspect of misery, and quite forget that joy is as much a characteristic of true worship as solemnity itself.

3. "*For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.*" No doubt the surrounding nations imagined Jehovah to be a merely local deity, the god of a small nation, and therefore one of the inferior deities; the Psalmist utterly repudiates such an idea. Idolaters tolerated gods many and lords many, giving to each a certain measure of respect; the monotheism of the Jews was not content with this concession, it rightly claimed for Jehovah the chief place, and the supreme power. He is great, for he is all in all; he is a great King above all other powers and dignitaries, whether angels or princes, for they owe their existence to him; as for the idol gods, they are not worthy to be mentioned. This verse and the following supply some of the reasons for worship, drawn from the being, greatness, and sovereign dominion of the Lord.

4. "*In his hand are the deep places of the earth.*" He is the God of the valleys and the hills, the caverns, and the peaks. Far down where miners sink their shafts, deeper yet where lie the secret oceans by which springs are fed, and deepest of all in the unknown abyss where rage and flame the huge central fires of earth, there Jehovah's power is felt, and all things are under the dominion of his hand. As princes hold the mimic globe in their hands, so does the Lord in very deed hold the earth. When Israel drank of the crystal fount which welled up from the great deep, below the smitten rock, the people knew that in the Lord's hands were the deep places of the earth. "*The strength of the hills is his also.*" When Sinai was altogether on a smoke the tribes learned that Jehovah was God of the hills as well as of the valleys. Everywhere and at all times is this true; the Lord rules upon the high places of the earth in lonely majesty. The vast foundations, the gigantic spurs, the incalculable masses, the untrodden heights of the mountains are all the Lord's. These are his fastnesses and treasure-houses, where he stores the tempest and the rain; whence also he pours the ice-torrents and looses the avalanches. The granite peaks and adamantine aiguilles are his, and his the precipices and the beetling crags. Strength is the main thought which strikes the mind when gazing on those vast ramparts of cliff which front the raging sea, or peer into the azure sky, piercing the clouds, but it is to the devout mind the strength of God; hints of Omnipotence are given by those stern rocks which brave the fury of the elements, and like walls of brass defy the assaults of nature in her wildest rage.

5. "*The sea is his.*" This was seen to be true at the Red Sea when the waters saw their God, and obediently stood aside to open a pathway for his people. It was not Edom's sea though it was red, nor Egypt's sea though it washed her shores. The Lord on high reigned supreme over the flood, as King for ever and ever. So is it with the broad ocean, whether known as Atlantic or Pacific, Mediterranean or Arctic; no man can map it out and say "'Tis mine"; the illimitable acreage of waters knows no other lord but God alone. Jehovah rules the waves. Far down in vast abysses, where no eye of man has gazed, or foot of diver has descended, he is sole proprietor; every rolling billow and foaming wave owns him for monarch;

Neptune is but a phantom, the Lord is God of ocean. "*And he made it.*" Hence his right and sovereignty. He scooped the unfathomed channel and poured forth the overflowing flood; seas were not fashioned by chance, nor their shores marked out by the imaginary finger of fate; God made the main, and every creek, and bay, and current, and far-sounding tide owns the great Maker's hand. All hail, Creator and Controller of the sea, let those who fly in the swift ships across the wonder-realm of waters worship thee alone!

"*And his hands formed the dry land.*" Whether fertile field or sandy waste, he made all that men call *terra firma*, lifting it from the floods and fencing it from the overflowing waters. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." He bade the isles upraise their heads, he levelled the vast plains, upreared the table-lands, cast up the undulating hills, and piled the massive Alps. As the potter moulds his clay, so did Jehovah with his hands fashion the habitable parts of the earth. Come ye, then, who dwell on this fair world, and worship him who is conspicuous where'er ye tread! Count it all as the floor of a temple where the footprints of the present Deity are visible before your eyes if ye do but care to see. The argument is overpowering if the heart be right; the command to adore is alike the inference of reason and the impulse of faith.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

7 For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To-day if ye will hear his voice,

8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and* as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

10 Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:

11 Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

6. Here the exhortation to worship is renewed and backed with a motive which, to Israel of old, and to Christians now, is especially powerful; for both the Israel after the flesh and the Israel of faith may be described as the people of his pasture, and by both he is called "our God." "*O come, let us worship and bow down.*" The adoration is to be humble. The "joyful noise" is to be accompanied with lowliest reverence. We are to worship in such style that the bowing down shall indicate that we count ourselves to be as nothing in the presence of the all-glorious Lord. "*Let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*" As suppliants must we come; joyful, but not presumptuous; familiar as children before a father, yet reverential as creatures before their maker. Posture is not everything, yet is it something; prayer is heard when knees cannot bend, but it is seemly that an adoring heart should show its awe by prostrating the body, and bending the knee.

7. "*For he is our God.*" Here is the master reason for worship. Jehovah has entered into covenant with *us*, and from all the world beside has chosen us to be his own elect. If others refuse him homage, we at least will render it cheerfully. He is ours, and our God; ours, therefore will we love him; our God, therefore will we worship him. Happy is that man who can sincerely believe that this sentence is true in reference to himself. "*And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*" As he belongs to us, so do we belong to him. "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." And we are his as the people whom he daily feeds and protects. Our pastures are not ours, but his; we draw all our supplies from his stores. We are his, even as sheep belong to the shepherd, and his hand is our rule, our guidance, our government, our succour, our source of supply. Israel was led through the desert, and we are led through this life by "that great Shepherd of the sheep." The hand which cleft the sea and brought water from the rock is still with us, working equal wonders. Can we refuse to "worship and bow down" when we clearly see that "this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide, even unto death"?

But what is this warning which follows? Alas, it was sorrowfully needed by the Lord's ancient people, and is not one whit the less required by ourselves. The favoured nation grew deaf to their Lord's command, and proved not to be truly

his sheep, of whom it is written, "My sheep hear my voice": will this turn out to be our character also? God forbid. "*To day if ye will hear his voice.*" Dreadful "*if.*" Many would not hear, they put off the claims of love, and provoked their God. "To-day," in the hour of grace, in the day of mercy, we are tried as to whether we have an ear for the voice of our Creator. Nothing is said of to-morrow, "he limiteth a certain day," he presses for immediate attention, for our own sakes he asks instantaneous obedience. Shall we yield it? The Holy Ghost saith "To-day," will we grieve him by delay?

8. "*Harden not your heart.*" If ye will hear, learn to fear also. The sea and the land obey him, do not prove more obstinate than they!

> "Yield to his love who round you now
> The bands of a man would cast."

We cannot soften our hearts, but we can harden them, and the consequences will be fatal. To-day is too good a day to be profaned by the hardening of our hearts against our own mercies. While mercy reigns let not obduracy rebel. "*As in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness*" (or, "like Meribah, like the day of Massah in the wilderness"). Be not wilfully, wantonly, repeatedly, obstinately rebellious. Let the example of that unhappy generation serve as a beacon to you; do not repeat the offences which have already more than enough provoked the Lord. God remembers men's sins, and the more memorably so when they are committed by a favoured people, against frequent warnings, in defiance of terrible judgments, and in the midst of superlative mercies; such sins write their record in marble. Reader, this verse is for you, for you even if you can say, "He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture." Do not seek to turn aside the edge of the warning; thou hast good need of it, give good heed to it.

9. "*When your fathers tempted me.*" As far as they could do so they tempted God to change his usual way, and to do their sinful bidding, and though he cannot be tempted of evil, and will never yield to wicked requests, yet their intent was the same, and their guilt was none the less. God's way is perfect, and when we would have him alter it to please us, we are guilty of tempting him; and the fact that we do so in vain, while it magnifies the Lord's holiness, by no means excuses our guilt. We are in most danger of this sin in times of need, for then it is that we are apt to fall into unbelief, and to demand a change in those arrangements of providence which are the transcript of perfect holiness and infinite wisdom. Not to acquiesce in the will of God is virtually to tempt him to alter his plans to suit our imperfect views of how the universe should be governed. "*Proved me.*" They put the Lord to needless tests, demanding new miracles, fresh interpositions, and renewed tokens of his presence. Do not we also peevishly require frequent signs of the Lord's love other than those which every hour supplies? Are we not prone to demand specialities, with the alternative secretly offered in our hearts, that if they do not come at our bidding we will disbelieve? True, the Lord is very condescending, and frequently grants us marvellous evidences of his power, but we ought not to require them. Steady faith is due to one who is so constantly kind. After so many proofs of his love, we are ungrateful to wish to prove him again, unless it be in those ways of his own appointing, in which he has said, "Prove me now." If we were for ever testing the love of our wife or husband, and remained unconvinced after years of faithfulness, we should wear out the utmost human patience. Friendship only flourishes in the atmosphere of confidence, suspicion is deadly to it: shall the Lord God, true and immutable, be day after day suspected by his own people? Will not this provoke him to anger? "*And saw my work.*" They tested him again and again, throughout forty years, though each time his work was conclusive evidence of his faithfulness. Nothing could convince them for long.

> "They saw his wonders wrought,
> And then his praise they sung;
> But soon his works of pow'r forgot,
> And murmur'd with their tongue.
>
> "Now they believe his word,
> While rocks with rivers flow;
> Now with their lusts provoke the Lord,
> And he reduc'd them low."

Fickleness is bound up in the heart of man, unbelief is our besetting sin; we must

for ever be seeing, or we waver in our believing. This is no mean offence, and will bring with it no small punishment.

10. "*Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.*" The impression upon the divine mind is most vivid; he sees them before him now, and calls them "*this* generation." He does not leave his prophets to upbraid the sin, but himself utters the complaint and declares that he was grieved, nauseated, and disgusted. It is no small thing which can grieve our long-suffering God to the extent which the Hebrew word here indicates, and if we reflect a moment we shall see the abundant provocation given; for no one who values his veracity can endure to be suspected, mistrusted, and belied, when there is no ground for it, but on the contrary the most overwhelming reason for confidence. To such base treatment was the tender Shepherd of Israel exposed, not for a day or a month, but for forty years at a stretch, and that not by here and there an unbeliever, but by a whole nation, in which only two men were found so thoroughly believing as to be exempted from the doom which at last was pronounced upon all the rest. Which shall we most wonder at, the cruel insolence of man, or the tender patience of the Lord? Which shall leave the deepest impression on our minds, the sin or the punishment? unbelief, or the barring of the gates of Jehovah's rest against the unbelievers? "*And said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.*" Their heart was obstinately and constantly at fault; it was not their head which erred, but their very heart was perverse: love, which appealed to their affections, could not convert them. The heart is the mainspring of the man, and if it be not in order, the entire nature is thrown out of gear. If sin were only skin-deep, it might be a slight matter; but since it has defiled the soul, the case is bad indeed. Taught as they were by Jehovah himself in lessons illustrated by miracles, which came to them daily in the manna from heaven, and the water from the flinty rock, they ought to have learned something, and it was a foul shame that they remained obstinately ignorant, and would not know the ways of God. Wanderers in body, they were also wanderers in heart, and the plain providential goodness of their God remained to their blinded minds as great a maze as those twisting paths by which he led them through the wilderness. Are we better than they? Are we not quite as apt to misinterpret the dealings of the Lord? Have we suffered and enjoyed so many things in vain? With many it is even so. Forty years of providential wisdom, yea, and even a longer period of experience, have failed to teach them serenity of assurance, and firmness of reliance. There is ground for much searching of heart concerning this. Many treat unbelief as a minor fault, they even regard it rather as an infirmity than a crime, but the Lord thinketh not so. Faith is Jehovah's due, especially from those who claim to be the people of his pasture, and yet more emphatically from those whose long life has been crowded with evidences of his goodness: unbelief insults one of the dearest attributes of Deity, it does so needlessly and without the slightest ground, and in defiance of all-sufficient arguments, weighty with the eloquence of love. Let us in reading this Psalm examine ourselves, and lay these things to heart.

11. "*Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.*" There can be no rest to an unbelieving heart. If manna and miracles could not satisfy Israel, neither would they have been content with the land which flowed with milk and honey. Canaan was to be the typical resting-place of God, where his ark should abide, and the ordinances of religion should be established; the Lord had for forty years borne with the ill manners of the generation which came out of Egypt, and it was but right that he should resolve to have no more of them. Was it not enough that they had revolted all along that marvellous wilderness march? Should they be allowed to make new Massahs and Meribahs in the Promised Land itself? Jehovah would not have it so. He not only said but swore that into his rest they should not come, and that oath excluded every one of them; their carcases fell in the wilderness. Solemn warning this to all who leave the way of faith for paths of petulant murmuring and mistrust. The rebels of old could not enter in because of unbelief, "let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should even seem to come short of it."

One blessed inference from this Psalm must not be forgotten. It is clear that there is a rest of God, and that some must enter into it: but "they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." The unbelievers could not enter, but "we which have believed do enter into rest." Let us enjoy it, and praise the Lord for it for

ever. Ours is the true Sabbatic rest, it is ours to rest from our own works as God did from his. While we do so, let us " come into his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—These six Psalms, xcv. to c., form, if I mistake not, one entire prophetic poem, cited by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, under the title of the Introduction of the First Born into the world. Each Psalm has its proper subject, which is some particular branch of the general argument, the establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom. The 95th Psalm asserts Jehovah's Godhead, and his power over all nature, and exhorts his people to serve him. In Psalm 96th all nations are exhorted to join in his service, because he cometh to judge all mankind, Jew and Gentile. In the 97th Psalm, Jehovah reigns over all the world, the idols are deserted, the Just One is glorified. In the 98th Psalm, Jehovah hath done wonders, and wrought deliverance for himself: he hath remembered his mercy towards the house of Israel; he comes to judge the whole world. In the 99th, Jehovah, seated between the cherubim in Zion, the visible Church, reigns over all the world, to be praised for the justice of his government. In the 100th Psalm, all the world is called upon to praise Jehovah the Creator, whose mercy and truth are everlasting.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is twice quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as a warning to the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, in the writer's day, that they should not falter in the faith, and despise God's promises, as their forefathers had done in the wilderness, lest they should fail of entering into his rest; see Heb. iii. 7, where verse 7 of this Psalm is introduced with the words, " As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice," and see Heb. iv. 7, where it is said, " Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying *in David*, To-day." It has by some been inferred from these words, that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews ascribes this Psalm to *David*. It may be so. But it seems not improbable that the words " in David " mean simply " the Book of Psalms," the whole being named from the greater part; and that if he had meant that David wrote the Psalm, he would have written, " David spake," or, " the Holy Ghost spake by David," and not as it is written, " as it is said *in David*."—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—" *O come, let us sing unto the Lord*," etc. The first verse of the Psalm begins the invitation unto praise and exultation. It is a song of three parts, and every part (like Jacob's part of the sheep) brings forth twins; each a double string, as it were, in the music of this praise, finely twisted of two parts into a kind of *discordant concord*, falling into a musical close through a differing yet reconciled diapason. The first couple in this song of praise are *multitude* and *unity*, *concourse* and *concord*: " *O come*," there's *multitude* and *concourse*; " *let us*," there's *unity* and *concord*. The second twisted pair, are *tongue* and *heart*, " *let us sing*," there's the voice and sound; and " *heartily rejoice*," there's the heart and soul. The third and last intertwisted string, or part of the musick, is *might* and *mercy*, (rock or) *strength* and *salvation*; *God's strength* and *our salvation*: " to the strength (or rock) of our salvation."—*Charles Herle* (1598—1659) *in a " Sermon before the House of Lords," entitled " David's Song of Three Parts."*

Verse 1.—" *Come.*" The word " *come* " contains an exhortation, exciting them to join heart and lips in praising God; just as the word is used in Genesis where the people, exciting and encouraging each other, say, " Come, let us make bricks; " and " Come, let us make a city and a town; " and, in the same chapter, the Lord says, " Come, let us go down, and there confound their tongue."—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 1.—If it be so that one " *come, let us* " goes further than twenty times *go and do*, how careful should such be whom God hath raised to eminence of place that their examples be Jacob's ladders to help men to heaven, not Jeroboam's stumbling-blocks to lie in their way, and make Israel to sin.—*Charles Herle.*

Verse 1.—There is a silent hint here at that human listlessness and distraction of cares whereby we are more prompt to run after other things than to devote ourselves seriously to the becoming praises and service of God. Our foot has a greater

proclivity to *depart* to the field, the oxen, and the new wife, than to *come* to the sacred courts, Luke xiv. 18, *seq.* See Is. ii. 3, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord."—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*Joyful noise.*" The verb הָרִיעַ, signifies to make a loud sound of any sort, either with the voice or with instruments. In the Psalms, it generally refers to the mingled din of voices and various instruments, in the Temple service. This wide sense of the word cannot be expressed otherwise in the English language than by a periphrasis.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 1.—"*The rock of our salvation.*" Jesus is the Rock of ages, in which is opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness; the Rock which attends the church in the wilderness, pouring forth the water of life, for her use and comfort; the Rock which is our fortress against every enemy, shadowing and refreshing a weary land.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*Let us come before his presence.*" Hebrew, *prevent his face*, be there with the first. "*Let us go speedily.* . . . I will go also," Zech. viii. 21. Let praise wait for God in Sion, Ps. lxv. 1.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—"*Let us chaunt aloud to him the measured lay.*" זַמְּרוֹת, I take to be songs, in measured verse, adjusted to the bars of a chaunt.—*S. Horsley.*

Verse 3.—He that hath a mind to praise God, shall not want matter of praise, as they who come before princes do, who for want of true grounds of praise in them, do give them flattering words; "*for the Lord is a great God*," for power and pre-eminency, for strength and continuance.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—The Supreme Being has *three* names here: אֵל *El*, יְהוָה *Jehovah*, אֱלֹהִים *Elohim*, and we should apply none of them to *false gods*. The *first* implies his *strength*; the *second*, his *being* and *essence*; the *third*, his *covenant relation* to mankind. In public worship these are the views we should entertain of the Divine Being.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—"*Above all gods.*" When he is called a great *God* and *King* above *all gods*, we may justly imagine that the reference is to the angels who are wont to be introduced absolutely under this name, and to the supreme *Judges* in the land, who also wear this title, as we have it in Ps. lxxxii.—*Venema.*

Verse 4.—"*In his hand.*" The dominion of God is founded upon his preservation of things. "The Lord is a great King above all gods." Why? "*In his hand are the deep places of the earth.*" While his hand holds, his hand hath a dominion over them. He that holds a stone in the air exerciseth a dominion over its natural inclination in hindering it from falling. The creature depends wholly upon God in its preservation; as soon as that divine hand which sustains everything were withdrawn, a languishment and swooning would be the next turn in the creature. He is called Lord, *Adonai*, in regard of his sustentation of all things by his continual influx, the word coming of אָדוֹן, which signifies a basis or pillar that supports a building. God is the Lord of all, as he is the sustainer of all by his power, as well as the Creator of all by his word.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—

> "In whose hand are the recesses of the earth
> And the treasures of the mountains are his."
>
> —*Thomas J. Conant's Translation.*

Verse 4.—"*In his hand are the deep places of the earth.*" This affords consolation to those, who for the glory of the divine name are cast into prisons and subterraneous caves; because they know, that even there it is not possible to be the least separated from the presence of Christ. Wherefore he preserved Joseph when hurled by his brethren into the old pit, and when thrust by his shameless mistress into prison; Jeremiah also when sent down into the dungeon; Daniel among the lions, and his companions in the furnace. So all who cleave to him with a firm faith, he wonderfully keeps and delivers to this day.—*Solomon Gesner*, 1559—1605.

Verse 4.—"*In his hand are the deep places of the earth.*" As an illustration of the working and presence of the Lord in the mines amid the bowels of the earth we have selected the following:—"The natural disposition of coal in detached portions," says the author of an excellent article in the Edinburgh Review, "is not simply a phenomenon of geology, but it also bears upon natural considerations.

It is remarkable that this natural disposition is that which renders the fuel most accessible and most easily mined. Were the coal situated at its normal geological depth, that is, supposing the strata to be all horizontal and undisturbed or upheaved, it would be far below human reach. Were it deposited continuously in one even superficial layer, it would have been too readily, and therefore too quickly, mined, and therefore all the superior qualities would be wrought out, and only the inferior left; but as it now lies it is broken up by geological disturbances into separate portions, each defined and limited in area, each sufficiently accessible to bring it within man's reach and labour, each manageable by mechanical arrangements, and each capable of gradual excavation without being subject to sudden exhaustion. Selfish plundering is partly prevented by natural barriers, and we are warned against reckless waste by the comparative thinness of coal-seams, as well as by the ever augmenting difficulty of working them at increased depths. By the separation of seams one from another, and by varied intervals of waste sandstones and shales, such a measured rate of winning is necessitated as precludes us from entirely robbing posterity of the most valuable mineral fuel, while the fuel itself is preserved from those extended fractures and crumblings and falls, which would certainly be the consequence of largely mining the best bituminous coal, were it aggregated into one vast mass. In fact, by an evident exercise of forethought and benevolence in the Great Author of all our blessings, our invaluable fuel has been stored up for us in deposits the most compendious, the most accessible, yet the least exhaustible, and has been locally distributed into the most convenient situations. Our coalfields are so many *Bituminous Banks*, in which there is abundance for an adequate currency, but against any sudden run upon them nature has interposed numerous checks; whole reserves of the precious fuel are always locked up in the bank-cellar under the invincible protection of ponderous stone-beds. It is a striking fact, that in this nineteenth century, after so long an inhabitation of the earth by man, if we take the quantities in the broad view of the whole known coal-fields, so little coal has been excavated, and that there remains an abundance for a very remote posterity, even though our own best coal-fields may be then worked out."

But it is not only in these inexhaustible supplies of mineral fuel that we find proofs of divine foresight, all the other treasures of the earth-rind equally convince us of the intimate harmony between its structure and the wants of man. Composed of a wonderful variety of earths and ores, it contains an inexhaustible abundance of all the substances he requires for the attainment of a higher grade of civilisation. It is for his use that iron, copper, lead, silver, tin, marble, gypsum, sulphur, rock-salt, and a variety of other minerals and metals, have been deposited in the veins and crevices, or in the mines and quarries, of the subterranean world. It is for his benefit that, from the decomposition of the solid rocks results that mixture of earths and alkalis, of marl, lime, sand, or chalk, which is most favourable to agriculture.

It is for him, finally, that, filtering through the entrails of the earth, and dissolving salutary substances on their way, the thermal springs gush forth laden with treasures more inestimable than those the miner toils for. Supposing man had never been destined to live, we well may ask why all those gifts of nature—useless to all living beings but to him—why those vast coal-fields, those beds of iron ore, those deposits of sulphur, those hygeian fountains, should ever have been created? *Without* him there is no design, no purpose, in their existence; *with* him they are wonderful sources of health or necessary instruments of civilisation and improvement. Thus the geological revolutions of the earth-rind harmoniously point to man as to its future lord; thus, in the life of our planet and that of its inhabitants, we everywhere find proofs of a gigantic unity of plan, embracing unnumbered ages in its development and progress.—*G. Hartwig, in "The Harmonies of Nature,"* 1866.

Verse 4.—"*The deep places of the earth,*" *penetralia terræ*, which are opposed to the heights of the hills, and plainly mean the deepest and most retired parts of the terraqueous globe, which are explorable by the eye of God, and by his only.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 4.—"*The strength of the hills.*" The word translated "*strength*" is plural in Hebrew, and seems properly to mean fatiguing exertions, from which some derive the idea of strength, others that of extreme height, which can only be reached by exhausting effort.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 4.—"*The strength of the hills is his also.*" The reference may be to *the wealth of the hills*, obtained only by *labour* [*Gesenius*], corresponding to the former—"the deep places of the earth," explained as referring to *the mines* [*Mendelssohn*].

Go where man may, with all his toil and searching in the heights or in the depths of the earth, he cannot find a place beyond the range of God's dominion.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verses 4, 5.—"*Hills,*" "*The Sea,*" "*the dry land.*" The relation of areas of land to areas of water exercises a great and essential influence on the distribution of heat, variations of atmospheric pressure, directions of the winds, and that condition of the air with respect to moisture, which is so necessary for the health of vegetation. Nearly three-fourths of the earth's surface is covered with water, but neither the exact height of the atmosphere nor the depth of the ocean are fully determined. Still we know that with every addition to or subtraction from the present bulk of the waters of the ocean, the consequent variation in the form and magnitude of the land would be such, that if the change was considerable, many of the existing harmonies of things would cease. Hence, the inference is, that the magnitude of the sea is one of the conditions to which the structure of all organised creatures is adapted, and on which indeed they depend for well-being. The proportions between land and water are exactly what the world as constituted requires; and the whole mass of earth, sea, and air, must have been balanced with the greatest nicety before even a crocus could stand erect, or a snowdrop or a daffodil bend their heads to the ground. The proportions of land and sea are adjusted to their reciprocal functions. Nothing deduced from modern science is more certain than this. —*Edwin Sidney, in "Conversations on the Bible and Science."*

Verse 5.—"*The sea is his.*" When God himself makes an oration in defence of his sovereignty, Job xxxviii., his chief arguments are drawn from creation: "The Lord is a great King above all gods. The sea is his, and he made it." And so the apostle in his sermon to the Athenians. As he "made the world, and all things therein," he is styled "Lord of heaven and earth," Acts xvii. 24. His dominion also of property stands upon this basis: Ps. lxxxix. 11, "The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them." Upon this title of forming Israel as a creature, or rather as a church, he demands their services to him as their Sovereign. "O Jacob and Israel, thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant, O Israel," Isa. xliv. 21. The sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to himself as their entire creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon him in regard of their being and well-being.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 5.—"*He made it.*"

> The Earth was form'd, but in the womb as yet
> Of waters, embryon immature involv'd,
> Appear'd not: over all the face of Earth
> Main ocean flow'd, not idle; but, with warm
> Prolifick humour softening all her globe,
> Fermented the great mother to conceive,
> Satiate with genial moisture; when God said,
> Be gather'd now, ye waters under Heaven
> Into one place, and let dry land appear.
> Immediately the mountains huge appear
> Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave
> Into the clouds; their tops ascend the sky:
> So high as heav'd the tumid hills, so low
> Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,
> Capacious bed of waters.
>
> —*John Milton.*

Verse 6.—You hold it a good rule in worldly business, not to say to your servants, "O come," "arise ye, go ye;" but, *Let us* come, let us go, let us arise. Now shall the children of this world be wiser in their generation than the children of light? Do we commend this course in mundane affairs, and neglect it in religious offices? Assuredly, if our zeal were as great to religion, as our love is towards the world, masters would not come to church (as many do) without their servants, and servants without their masters; parents without their children, and children without their parents; husbands without their wives, and wives without their husbands; but all of us would call one to another, as Esay prophesied (ch. ii. 3): "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and

he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths," and as David here practised.—*John Boys.*

Verse 6.—" *Let us worship and bow down.*" To fall upon the ground is a gesture of worship, not only when the worshipper mourns, but when the worshipper rejoiceth. It is said (Matthew ii. 10, 11) that the wise men when they found Christ, " *rejoiced with exceeding great joy,*" and presently, " *they fell down, and worshipped him.*" Neither is this posture peculiar to worship in times or upon occasions of extraordinary joy and sorrow; for the ordinary invitation was, " *O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—" *Let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*" Not before a crucifix, not before a rotten image, not before a fair picture of a foul saint: these are not *our makers;* we made them, they made not us. Our God, unto whom we must sing, in whom we must rejoice, before whom we must worship, " *is a great King above all gods*": he is no god of lead, no god of bread, no brazen god, no wooden god; we must not fall down and worship our *Lady,* but our *Lord;* not any *martyr,* but our *Maker*; not any *saint,* but our *Saviour:* " *O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.*" *Wherewith:* with voice, " *Let us sing*"; with soul, " *Let us heartily rejoice*"; with hands and knees, " *Let us worship and bow down: let us kneel*"; with all that is within us, with all that is without us: he that made all, must be worshipped with all, especially when we " come before his presence."—*John Boys.*

Verse 6.—" *Bow down.*" That is, so as to touch the floor with the forehead, while the worshipper is prostrate on his hands and knees. See 2 Chron. vii. 3.—*John Fry,* 1842.

Verse 6.—" *Worship,*" " *bow down,*" " *kneel.*" Kimchi distinguishes the several gestures expressed by the different words here used. The first we render " worship," signifies, according to him, the prostration of the whole body on the ground, with the hands and legs stretched out. The second a bowing of the head, with part of the body; and the third a bending of the knees on the ground.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 7.—" *We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*" See how elegantly he hath transposed the order of the words, and as it were not given its own attribute to each word; that we may understand these very same to be " *the sheep,*" who are also " *the people.*" He said not, the sheep of his pasture, and the people of his hand; which might be thought more congruous, since the sheep belong to the pasture; but he said, " *the people of his pasture*": the people themselves are sheep. But again, since we have sheep which we buy, not which we create; and he had said above, " *Let us fall down before our Maker*"; it is rightly said, " *the sheep of his hand.*" No man maketh for himself sheep, he may buy them, they may be given, he may find them, he may collect them, lastly he may steal them; make them he cannot. But our Lord made us; therefore " *the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand,*" are the very sheep which he hath deigned by his grace to create unto himself.—*Augustine.*

Verse 7.—" *The sheep of his hand,*" is a fit though figurative expression, the shepherd that feeds, and rules, and leads the *sheep,* doing it by his *hand,* which manageth the rod and staff (Ps. xxiii. 4), by which they are administered. The Jewish Arab reads, *the people of his feeding,* or *flock, and the sheep of his guidance.*—*H. Hammond.*

Verse 7.—" *For we are his people whom he feeds in his pastures, and his sheep whom he leads as by his hand.*" [French Version.] Here is a reason to constrain us to praise God; it is this,—that not only has he created us, but that he also directs us by special providence, as a shepherd governs his flock. Jesus Christ, Divine Shepherd of our souls, who not only feeds us in his pastures, but himself *leads* us *with his hand,* as intelligent sheep. Loving Shepherd, who *feeds* us not only from the pastures of Holy Writ, but even with his own flesh. What subjects of ceaseless adoration for a soul penetrated by these great verities! What a fountain of tears of joy at the sight of such prodigious mercy!—*Quesnel.*

Verse 7.—" *To-day if ye will hear his voice.*" If we put off repentance another day, we have a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.—*W. Mason.*

Verse 7.—He that hath promised pardon on our repentance hath not promised to preserve our lives till we repent.—*Francis Quarles.*

Verse 7.—You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may be too late.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 7.—" *If ye will hear his voice.*" Oh! what an *if* is here! what a reproach is here to those that hear him not! " My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me " ; " but ye will not come to me that ye might have life." And yet there is mercy, there is still salvation, if ye will hear that voice. Israel heard it among the thunders of Sinai, " which voice they that heard it entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more " ; so terrible was the sight and sound that even Moses said, " I exceedingly quake and fear " : and yet they heard too the Lord's still voice of love in the noiseless manna that fell around their tents, and in the gushing waters of the rock that followed them through every march for forty years. Yet the record of Israel's ingratitude runs side by side with the record of God's mercies—" My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 7.—" *If ye will hear his voice.*" And yet, as S. Bernard tells us, there is no difficulty at all in hearing it ; on the contrary, the difficulty is to stop our ears effectually against it, so clear is it in enunciation, so constant in appeal. Yet there are many who do not hear, from divers causes ; because they are far off ; because they are deaf ; because they sleep ; because they turn their heads aside ; because they stop their ears ; because they hurry away to avoid hearing ; because they are dead ; all of them types of various forms and degrees of unbelief.—*Bernard and Hugo Cardinalis, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 7.—" *If ye will hear his voice.*" These words seem to allude to the preceding words, in which we are represented as the *sheep of God's pasture*, and are to be considered as an affectionate call of our heavenly Shepherd to follow and obey him.—*From " Lectures on the Liturgy, from the Commentary of Peter Waldo,"* 1821.

Verses 7, 8.—It will be as difficult, nay, more difficult, to come to Christ to-morrow, than it is to-day : therefore " *to-day hear his voice, and harden not your heart.*" Break the ice now, and by faith venture upon your present duty, wherever it lies : do what you are now called to. You will never know how easy the yoke of Christ is, till it is bound about your necks, nor how light his burden is, till you have taken it up. While you judge of holiness at a distance, as a thing without you and contrary to you, you will never like it. Come a little nearer to it ; do but take it in, actually engage in it, and you will find religion carries meat in its mouth ; it is of a reviving, nourishing, strengthening nature. It brings that along with it, that enables the soul cheerfully to go through with it.—*Thomas Cole* (1627—1697) *in the " Morning Exercises."*

Verse 8.—" *Harden not your hearts.*" An old man, one day taking a child on his knee, entreated him to seek God *now*—to pray to him, and to love him ; when the child, looking up at him, asked, " But why do not *you* seek God ? " The old man, deeply affected, answered, " I would, child ; but my heart is *hard*—my heart is *hard.*"—*Arvine's Anecdotes.*

Verse 8.—" *Harden not your heart.*"—*Heart* is ascribed to reasonable creatures, to signify sometimes the whole soul, and sometimes the several faculties appertaining to the soul.

1. It is frequently put for the whole soul, and that for the most part when it is set alone ; as where it is said, " Serve the Lord with all your heart," 1 Sam. xii. 20.

2. For that principal part of the soul which is called the mind or understanding. " I gave my heart to know wisdom," Eccles. i. 17. In this respect darkness and blindness are attributed to the heart, Eph. iv. 18, Rom. i. 21.

3. For the will : as when heart and soul are joined together, the two essential faculties of the soul are meant, namely, the mind and will : *soul* put for the mind, heart for the will. " Serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul," Deut. xi. 13.

4. For the memory. " I have hid thy word in my heart," saith the prophet, Psalm cxix. 11. The memory is that faculty wherein matters are laid up and hid.

5. For the conscience. It is said that " David's heart smote him," that is, his conscience, 1 Sam. xxiv. 5, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. Thus is heart taken, 1 John iii. 20, 21.

6. For the affections : as where it is said, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matt. xxii. 37. By the *mind* is meant the understanding faculty ; by the *soul*, the will ; by the *heart*, the affections.

Here in this text the heart is put for the whole soul, even for mind, will, and

affections. For blindness of mind, stubbornness of will, and stupidity of affections go together.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 8.—*In " Massah—in Meribah."* Our translators say, *" in the provocation, in the day of temptation."* But the places were denominated by names taken from the transactions that occurred in them ; and the introduction of those names gives more liveliness to the allusion. See to the same effect Ps. lxxxi. 7 ; where the Bible translation retains the proper name.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—Let us not fail to notice, that while it is *the flock* who speak in verses 1—7, it is *the Shepherd* who takes up their expostulating words, and urges them home himself at verse 8 to the end, using the argument which by the Holy Ghost is addressed to us also in Hebrews iii. There is something very powerful in this expostulation, when connected with the circumstances that give rise to it. In themselves, the burst of adoring love, and the full outpouring of affection in verses 1—7 are irresistibly persuasive ; but when (verse 8) the voice of the Lord himself is heard (such a voice, using terms of vehement entreaty !) we cannot imagine expostulation carried further. Unbelief alone could resist this voice ; blind, malignant unbelief alone could repel *The flock, and then the Shepherd, inviting men now to enter the fold.—Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 9.—*" Your fathers tempted me."* Though God cannot be tempted with evil he may justly be said to be tempted whenever men, by being dissatisfied with his dealings, virtually ask that he will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial to their feelings. If you reflect a little, you will hardly fail to perceive, that in a very strict sense, this and the like may be called tempting God. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of providence, suppose him to murmur and to repine at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear ; is he not to be charged with the asking God to change his purposes ? And what is this if it is not tempting God, and striving to induce him to swerve from his plans, though every one of those plans has been settled by Infinite Wisdom ?

Or again, if any one of us, notwithstanding the multiplied proofs of Divine loving-kindness, doubt or question whether or not God do indeed love him, of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to the giving additional evidence, as though there was a deficiency, and challenges him to a fresh demonstration of what he has already abundantly displayed ? This would be called tempting amongst men. If a child were to show by his actions that he doubted or disbelieved the affection of his parents, he would be considered as striving to extract from them new proofs, by asking them to evince their love more, though they may already have done as much as in wisdom and in justice they ought to do. And this is clearly tempting them, and that too in the ordinary sense of the term. In short, unbelief of every kind and every degree may be said to tempt God. For not to believe upon the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to provoke him to give more, offering our possible assent if proof were increased as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed. And if in this, and the like sense, God may be tempted, what can be more truly said of the Israelites, than that they tempted God in Massah ? . . . . We are perhaps not accustomed to think of unbelief or murmuring as nothing less than a tempting God, and therefore, we do not attach to what is so common, its just degree of heinousness. It is so natural to us to be discontented whenever God's dealings are not just what we like, to forget what has been done for us as soon as our wishes seem thwarted, to be impatient and fretful under every new cross, that we are scarcely conscious of committing a sin, and much less one more than usually aggravated. Yet we cannot be dissatisfied with God's dealings, and not be virtually guilty of tempting God. It may seem a harsh definition of a slight and scarcely avoidable fault, but nevertheless it is a true definition. You cannot mistrust God, and not accuse him of want either of power or of goodness. You cannot repine, no, not even in thought, without virtually telling him that his plans are not the best, nor his dispensations the wisest which he might have appointed in respect of yourselves. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety in circumstances of perplexity, or peril, are nothing less than the calling upon God to depart from his fixed course—a suspicion, or rather an assertion that he might proceed in a manner more worthy of himself, and, therefore, a challenge to him to alter his dealings if he would prove that he possesses the attributes which he claims. You may not intend thus to accuse or to provoke God whenever you murmur, but your murmuring does all this, and cannot fail to

do it. You cannot be dissatisfied without virtually saying that God might order things better; you cannot say that he might order things better without virtually demanding that he change his course of acting, and give other proofs of his Infinite perfections.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 9.—"*Your fathers tempted me.*" There are two ways of interpreting the words which follow. As *tempting God* is nothing else than yielding to a diseased and unwarrantable craving after proof of his power, we may consider the verse as connected throughout, and read, *They tempted me and proved me, although they had already seen my work.* God very justly complains, that they should insist upon new proof, after his power had been already amply testified by undeniable evidences. There is another meaning, however, that may be given to the term "*proved,*"—according to which, the meaning of the passage would run as follows:—Your fathers tempted me in asking where God was, notwithstanding all the benefits I had done them; and they proved me, that is, they had actual experience of what I am, inasmuch as I did not cease to give them open proofs of my presence, and consequently they saw my work.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9.—"*Proved me,*" put me to the proof of my existence, presence, and power, by requiring me to work, *i.e.* to act in an extraordinary manner. And this desire, unreasonable as it was, I gratified. They not only demanded, but they וַיִּרְאוּ likewise saw "*my work,*" *i.e.* what I could do.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 9.—"*Forty years.*" To understand this passage we must bear in mind the event referred to. The same year in which the people of Israel came forth from Egypt, they were distressed for water at Rephidim, (Ex. xvii. 1;) and the place had two names given to it, Massah and Meribah, because the people tempted God and chided with Moses. The Lord did not swear *then* that they should not enter into the land of Canaan; but this was in the following year, after the return of the spies. (Num. xiv. 20—38.) And God said then that they had tempted him "ten times"; that is, during the short time since their deliverance from Egypt. It was after *ten* temptations that God deprived them of the promised land.

Bearing in mind these facts, we shall be able to see the full force of the passage. The "provocation" or contention, and "temptation" refer clearly to the latter instance, as recorded in Numb. xiv., because it was then that God sware that the people should not enter into his rest. The people's conduct was alike in both instances.

To connect "forty years" with grieved, was the work of the Punctuists, and this mistake the Apostle corrected; and it is to be observed that he did not follow in this instance the *Septuagint,* in which the words are arranged as divided by the Masorites. Such a rendering as would correspond with the Hebrew is as follows,—

"To-day when ye hear his voice,
8. Harden not your hearts as in the provocation,
In the day of temptation in the wilderness.
9. When your fathers tempted me, they proved me
And saw my works forty years:
10. I was therefore offended with that generation and said.
Always do they go astray in heart,
And they have not known my ways;
11. So that I sware in my wrath,
'They shall by no means enter into my rest.'"

The meaning of the ninth verse is, that when the children of Israel tempted God, they proved him, *i.e.*, found out by bitter experience how great his displeasure was, and saw his works or his dealings with them forty years. He retained them in the wilderness during that period until the death of all who disbelieved his word at the return of the spies; he gave them this proof of his displeasure.—*John Owen, of Thrussington,* 1853.

Verse 10.—O the desperate presumption of man, that he should offend his Maker "*forty years*"! O the patience and longsuffering of his Maker, that he should allow him forty years to offend in! Sin begins in the "*heart,*" by its desires *wandering* and going astray after forbidden objects; whence follows inattention to the "*ways*" of God, to his dispensations, and our own duty. Lust in the heart, like vapour in the stomach, soon affects the head, and clouds the understanding.—*George Horne.*

Verse 10.—"*Forty Years.*" It is curious to know that the ancient Jews believed that "the days of the Messiah were to be forty years." Thus Tanchuma, F. 79, 4.

" Quamdiu durant anni Messiæ ? R. Akiba dixit, xl. annos, quemadmodum Israelitæ per tot annos in deserto fuerunt." It is remarkable, that in forty years after the ascension, the whole Jewish nation were cut off equally as they who fell in the wilderness.—*John Brown, in " An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews."* 1862.

Verse 10.—*" Was I grieved."* The word is a strong word, expressive of *loathing* and *disgust.—J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 10.—*" This generation."* The word דּוֹר, *dor*, signifies an age, or the allotted term of human life ; and it is here applied to the men of an age, as if the Psalmist had said, that the Israelites whom God had delivered were incorrigible, during the whole period of their lives.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 10.—*" It is a people that do err in their heart."* We may observe here, that he does not simply say, This people errs. What mortal is there that does not err ? Or, where is there a multitude of mortals, exposed to no errors ? But he adds, *" In their heart."* Every error therefore is not blamed here, but the error of their heart is fastened upon. It is to be noted, therefore, that there is a twofold kind of error :

1. One is of the intellect, by which we go astray through ignorance. In this kind of erring Paul erred when he persecuted the Church of Christ ; the Sadducees erred, not knowing the Scriptures, Matt. xxii. ; and to this day many in the Church go astray, endowed with zeal for God, but destitute of a true knowledge of Him.

2. The other kind of erring is of the heart and affections, by which men go astray, not through ignorance, but through corruption and perversity of heart. This error of heart is a mind averse to God, and alienated from the will and way of God, which is elsewhere thus described in the case of this very people : " And their heart was not right with him."—*Musculus.*

Verse 10.—*" It is a people that do err in their heart."* *To err in heart* may mean either to err in judgment, or in disposition, intention : for the Hebrew לֵבָב, and after it the Greek καρδία, means either *animus, judicium,* or, *mens, cogitatio, desiderium.* I understand καρδία here, as used according to the Hebrew idiom (in which it is often pleonastic, at least it seems so to us,) so that the phrase imports simply, *They always err,* i.e. they are continually departing from the right way.—*Moses Stuart.*

Verse 10.—*" Err in their heart."* He had called them sheep, and now he notes their wandering propensity, and their incapacity for being led ; for the footsteps of their Shepherd they did not know, much less follow.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 10.—*" They have not known my ways "* ; that is, they have not regarded my ways, have not allowed of them, or loved them ; for otherwise they were not ignorant of them ; they heard his words, and *saw his works.—David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—*" They have not known my ways."* This ungrateful people did not approve of God's ways—they did not enter into his designs—they did not conform to his commands—they paid no attention to his miracles—and did not acknowledge the benefits which they received from his hands.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 10.—*" A people that do err in their heart," &c.* These words are not to be found in Numb. xiv. ; but the inspired Psalmist expresses the sense of what Jehovah said on that occasion. *" They do always err in their heart,"* [Heb. iii. 10]. They are radically and habitually evil. *" They have not known my ways."* God's *" ways "* may mean either his dispensations or his precepts. The Israelites did not rightly understand the former, and they obstinately refused to acquire a practical knowledge—the only truly valuable species of knowledge—of the latter. The reference is probably to God's mode of dealing: Rom. xi. 33 ; Deut. iv. 32, viii. 2, xxix. 2—4. Such a people deserved severe punishment, and they received it. *" So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest."* The original words in the Hebrew are, *" If they shall enter into my rest."* This elliptical mode of expressing oaths is common in the Old Testament : Deut. i. 35 ; 1 Sam. iii. 14 ; Ps. lxxxix. 35 ; Isai. lxii. 8. This awful oath is recorded in the 14th chapter of Numbers : " But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice ; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it : but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went ; and his seed shall possess it. (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea. And the LORD spake unto Moses and

unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me." The words of the oath seem here borrowed from the account in Deut. i. 35. There are many threatenings of God which have a tacit condition implied in them; but when God interposes his oath, the sentence is irreversible.

The curse was not causeless, and it did come. We have an account of its actual fulfilment, Numb. xxvi. 64, 65. The "rest" from which they were excluded was the land of Canaan. Their lives were spent in wandering. It is termed "God's rest," as there he was to finish his work of bringing Israel into the land promised to their fathers, and fix the symbol of his presence in the midst of them,—dwelling in that land in which his people were to rest from their wanderings, and to dwell in safety under his protection. It is *his* rest, as of his preparing, Deut. xii. 9. It is *his* rest—rest like his, rest along with him. We are by no means warranted to conclude that all who died in the wilderness came short of everlasting happiness. It is to be feared many of them, most of them, did; but the curse denounced on them went only to their exclusion from the earthly Canaan.—*John Brown.*

Verses 10, 11.—"*And said.*" Mark the gradation, first grief or *disgust* with those who *erred* made him *say*; then *anger* felt more heavily against those who did not *believe* made him *swear*. The people had been called sheep in verse 7, to sheep the highest good is rest, but into this rest they were never to come, for they had not known or delighted in the ways in which the good Shepherd desired to lead them. —*John Albert Bengel.*

Verse 11.—The word *swearing* is very significant, and seems to import these two things. 1st. The certainty of the sentence here pronounced. Every word of God both is, and must be truth; but ratified by an oath, it is truth with an advantage. It is signed irrevocable. This fixes it like the laws of the Medes and Persians, beyond all possibility of alteration; and makes God's word, like his very nature, unchangeable. 2ndly. It imports the terror of the sentence. If the children of Israel could say, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die," what would they have said had God then sworn against them? It is terrible to hear an oath from the mouth but of a poor mortal, but from the mouth of an omnipotent God, it does not only terrify, but confound. An oath from God is truth delivered in anger; truth, as I may so speak, with a vengeance. When God speaks, it is the creature's duty to hear; but when he swears, to tremble.—*Robert South.*

Verse 11.—"*That they should not enter into my rest.*" There is something unusual and abrupt in the conclusion of this Psalm, without any cheering prospect to relieve the threatening. This may be best explained by assuming, that it was not meant to stand alone, but to form one of a series.—*J. A. Alexander.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—An invitation to praise the Lord. I. A favourite method of worship —"let us sing." II. A fitting state of mind for singing—joyful gratitude. III. A fitting subject to excite both gladness and thankfulness—the rock of our salvation.

Verse 1.—"*The rock of our salvation.*" Expressive imagery. Rock of shelter, support, indwelling, and supply—illustrate this last by the water flowing from the rock in the wilderness.

Verse 2.—I. What is meant by coming before his presence? Certainly not the holiness of places, etc. II. What offering is most appropriate when we come into his presence?

Verse 3.—I. The greatness of God as god. He is to be conceived of as great in goodness, power, glory, etc. II. His dominion over all other powers in heaven or earth. III. The worship which is consequently due to him.

Verses 4, 5.—The universality of the divine government. I. In all parts of the globe. II. In all providences. III. In every phase of moral condition. Or, Things

deep, or high, dark or perilous are in his hand; circumstances shifting, terrible, overwhelming as the sea, are under his control as much as the comfortable terra firma of peace and prosperity.

Verse 6.—A true conception of God begets—I. A disposition to worship. II. Mutual incitement to worship. III. Profound reverence in worship. IV. Overwhelming sense of God's presence in worship.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verses 6, 7.—God is to be worshipped—I. As our Creator—" our maker." II. As our Redeemer, " the people," etc. III. As our Preserver, " the sheep, etc."—*George Rogers.*

Verse 7.—The entreaty of the Holy Ghost. I. The special voice—" the Holy Ghost saith "—1. In Scripture. 2. In the hearts of his people. 3. In the awakened. 4. By his deeds of grace. II. A special duty, " hear his voice," instructing, commanding, inviting, promising, threatening. III. A special time—" to-day." While God speaks, after so long a time, in the day of grace, now, in your present state. IV. The special danger—" harden not your hearts," by indifference, unbelief, asking for signs, presumption, worldly pleasures, etc.

Verse 7.—Sinners entreated to hear God's voice. " Hear his voice," because—I. Life is short and uncertain; II. You cannot properly or lawfully promise to give what is not your own; III. If you defer, though but till to-morrow, you must harden your hearts; IV. There is great reason to fear that, if you defer it to-day, you will never commence; V. After a time God ceases to strive with sinners; VI. There is nothing irksome or disagreeable in a religious life, that you should wish to defer its commencement.—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 7.—The Difference of Times with respect to Religion.—Upon a spiritual account there is great difference of time. To make this out, I will shew you, I. That *sooner* and *later* are not alike, in respect of eternity. II. That *times of ignorance* and of *knowledge* are not alike. III. That *before* and *after voluntary commission of known iniquity*, are not alike. IV. That *before* and *after contracted naughty habits*, are not alike. V. That the time of *God's gracious and particular visitation* and the time when God *withdraws* his gracious presence and assistance, are not alike. VI. The flourishing time of our *health and strength*, and the hour of *sickness, weakness*, and approach of *death*, are not alike. VII. Now and hereafter, present and future, *this world* and *the world to come*, are not alike.—*Benjamin Whichcot.*

Verse 7.—This supposition, " *If ye will hear*," and the consequence inferred thereupon, " *harden not your hearts*," doth evidently demonstrate that a right hearing will prevent hardness of heart; especially hearing of Christ's voice, that is, the gospel. It is the gospel that maketh and keepeth a soft heart.—*William Gouge.*

Verses 8—11.—I. Israel's fearful experiment in tempting God. II. The awful result. III. Let it not be tried again.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 10.—The error and the ignorance which are fatal.

Verse 11.—The fatal moment of the giving up of a soul, how it may be hastened, what are the signs of it, and what are the terrible results.

Verses 10, 11.—The kindling, increasing, and full force of divine anger, and its dreadful results.

PSALM XCVI.

SUBJECT.—*This Psalm is evidently taken from that sacred song which was composed by David at the time when "the ark of God was set in the midst of the tent which David had prepared for it, and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God." See the sixteenth chapter of the first book of the Chronicles. The former part of that sacred song was probably omitted in this place because it referred to Israel, and the design of the Holy Ghost in this Psalm was to give forth a song for the Gentiles, a triumphant hymn wherewith to celebrate the conversion of the nations to Jehovah in gospel times. It follows fitly upon the last Psalm, which describes the obstinacy of Israel, and the consequent taking of the gospel from them that it might be preached among the nations who would receive it, and in due time be fully won to Christ by its power. It thus makes a pair with the Ninety-fifth Psalm. It is a grand* MISSIONARY HYMN, *and it is a wonder that Jews can read it and yet remain exclusive. If blindness in part had not happened unto Israel, they might have seen long ago, and would now see, that their God always had designs of love for all the families of men, and never intended that his grace and his covenant should relate only to the seed of Abraham after the flesh. We do not wonder that the large-hearted David rejoiced and danced before the ark, while he saw in vision all the earth turning from idols to the one living and true God. Had Michal, Saul's daughter, only been able to enter into his delight, she would not have reproached him, and if the Jews at this day could only be enlarged in heart to feel sympathy with all mankind, they also would sing for joy at the great prophecy that all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.*

DIVISIONS.—*We will make none, for the song is one and indivisible, a garment of praise without seam, woven from the top throughout.*

EXPOSITION.

O SING unto the LORD a new song : sing unto the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.
4 For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised : he *is* to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the nations *are* idols : but the LORD made the heavens.
6 Honour and majesty *are* before him : strength and beauty *are* in his sanctuary.
7 Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.
8 Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name : bring an offering, and come into his courts.
9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness : fear before him, all the earth.
10 Say among the heathen *that* the LORD reigneth : the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved : he shall judge the people righteously :
11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad ; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.
12 Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* therein : then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice
13 Before the LORD : for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth : he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

1. *"O sing unto the Lord a new song."* **New joys are filling the hearts of men, for the glad tidings of blessing to all people are proclaimed, therefore let them sing**

a new song. Angels inaugurated the new dispensation with new songs, and shall not we take up the strain? The song is for Jehovah alone, the hymns which chanted the praises of Jupiter and Neptune, Vishnoo and Siva are hushed for ever; Bacchanalian shouts are silenced, lascivious sonnets are no more. Unto the one only God all music is to be dedicated. Mourning is over, and the time of the singing of hearts has come. No dismal rites are celebrated, no bloody sacrifices of human beings are presented, no cutting with knives, and outcries of lamentation are presented by deluded votaries. Joy is in the ascendant, and singing has become the universal expression of love, the fitting voice of reverent adoration. Men are made new creatures, and their song is new also. The names of Baalim are no more on their lips, the wanton music of Ashtaroth ceaseth; the foolish ditty and the cruel war-song are alike forgotten; the song is holy, heavenly, pure, and pleasant. The Psalmist speaks as if he would lead the strain and be the chief musician, he invites, he incites, he persuades to sacred worship, and cries with all his heart, "O sing unto Jehovah a new song."

"*Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.*"—National jealousies are dead; a Jew invites the Gentiles to adore, and joins with them, so that all the earth may lift up one common Psalm as with one heart and voice unto Jehovah, who hath visited it with his salvation. No corner of the world is to be discordant, no race of heathen to be dumb. All the earth Jehovah made, and all the earth must sing to him. As the sun shines on all lands, so are all lands to delight in the light of the Sun of Righteousness. *E Pluribus Unum*, out of many one song shall come forth. The multitudinous languages of the sons of Adam, who were scattered at Babel, will blend in the same song when the people are gathered at Zion. Nor men alone, but the earth itself is to praise its Maker. Made subject to vanity for a while by a sad necessity, the creation itself also is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, so that sea and forest, field and flood, are to be joyful before the Lord. Is this a dream? then let us dream again. Blessed are the eyes which shall see the kingdom, and the ears which shall hear its songs. Hasten thine advent, good Lord! Yea, send forth speedily the rod of thy strength out of Zion, that the nations may bow before the Lord and his Anointed.

2. "*Sing unto the Lord, bless his name.*" Thrice is the name of the Lord repeated, and not without meaning. Is it not unto the Three-One Lord that the enlightened nations will sing? Unitarianism is the religion of units; it is too cold to warm the world to worship; the sacred fire of adoration only burns with vehement flame where the Trinity is believed in and beloved. In other ways beside singing, the blessed Lord is to be blessed. His name, his fame, his character, his revealed word and will are to be delighted in, and remembered with perpetual thanksgiving. We may well bless him who so divinely blesses us. At the very mention of his name it is meet to say, "Let him be blessed for ever." "*Shew forth his salvation from day to day.*" The gospel is the clearest revelation of himself, salvation outshines creation and providence; therefore let our praises overflow in that direction. Let us proclaim the glad tidings, and do so continually, never ceasing the blissful testimony. It is ever new, ever suitable, ever sure, ever perfect; therefore let us show it forth continually until he come, both by words and deeds, by songs and sermons, by sacred Baptism and by the Holy Supper, by books and by speech, by Sabbath services and week-day worship. Each day brings us deeper experience of our saving God, each day shows us anew how deeply men need his salvation, each day reveals the power of the gospel, each day the Spirit strives with the sons of men; therefore, never pausing, be it ours to tell out the glorious message of free grace. Let those do this who know for themselves what *his* salvation means; they can bear witness that there is salvation in none other, and that in him salvation to the uttermost is to be found. Let them show it forth till the echo flies around the spacious earth, and all the armies of the sky unite to magnify the God who hath displayed his saving health among all people.

3. "*Declare his glory among the heathen.*" His salvation is his glory, the word of the gospel glorifies him; and this should be published far and wide, till the remotest nations of the earth have known it. England has spent much blood and treasure to keep up her own prestige among barbarians; when will she be equally anxious to maintain the honour of her religion, the glory of her Lord? It is to be feared that too often the name of the Lord Jesus has been dishonoured among the heathen by the vices and cruelties of those who call themselves Christians; may this fact excite true believers to greater diligence in causing the gospel to be proclaimed

as with a trumpet in all quarters of the habitable globe. "*His wonders among all people.*" The gospel is a mass of wonders, its history is full of wonders, and it is in itself far more marvellous than miracles themselves. In the person of his Son the Lord has displayed wonders of love, wisdom, grace, and power. All glory be unto his name; who can refuse to tell out the story of redeeming grace and dying love? All the nations need to hear of God's marvellous works; and a really living, self-denying church would solemnly resolve that right speedily they all shall hear thereof. The tribes which are dying out are not to be excluded from gospel teaching any more than the great growing families which, like the fat kine of Pharaoh, are eating up other races: Red Indians as well as Anglo-Saxons are to hear of the wonders of redeeming love. None are too degraded, none too cultured, none too savage, and none too refined.

4. "*For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised.*" He is no petty deity, presiding, as the heathen imagined their gods to do, over some one nation, or one department of nature. Jehovah is great in power and dominion, great in mind and act; nothing mean or narrow can be found in him or his acts, in all things he is infinite. Praise should be proportionate to its object, therefore let it be infinite when rendered unto the Lord. We cannot praise him too much, too often, too zealously, too carefully, too joyfully. He deserves that nothing in his worship should be little, but all the honour rendered unto him should be given in largeness of heart, with the utmost zeal for his glory. "*He is to be feared above all gods.* Other gods have been worshipped at great cost, and with much fervour, by their blinded votaries, but Jehovah should be adored with far greater reverence. Even if the graven images had been gods they could not have borne comparison for an instant with the God of Israel, and therefore his worship should be far more zealous than any which has been rendered to them. He is to be feared, for there is cause to fear. Dread of other gods is mere superstition, awe of the Lord is pure religion. Holy fear is the beginning of the graces, and yet it is the accompaniment of their highest range. Fear of God is the blush upon the face of holiness enhancing its beauty.

5. "*For all the gods of the nations are idols.*" Mere images of wood and stone, vanities, nothings. "*But the Lord made the heavens.*" The reality of his Godhead is proved by his works, and foremost among these the Psalmist mentions that matchless piece of architecture which casts its arch over every man's head, whose lamps are the light of all mankind, whose rains and dew fall upon the fields of every people, and whence the Lord in voice of thunder is heard speaking to every creature. The idol gods have no existence, but our God is the author of all existences; they are mere earthly vanities, while he is not only heavenly, but made the heavens. This is mentioned as an argument for Jehovah's universal praise. Who can be worshipped but he? Since none can rival him, let him be adored alone.

6. "*Honour and majesty are before him.*" Men can but mimic these things; their pompous pageants are but the pretence of greatness. Honour and majesty are with him and with him alone. In the presence of Jehovah real glory and sovereignty abide, as constant attendants. "*Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.*" In him are combined all that is mighty and lovely, powerful and resplendent. We have seen rugged strength devoid of beauty, we have also seen elegance without strength; the union of the two is greatly to be admired. Do we desire to see the "sublime and beautiful" at one glance? Then we must look to the eternal throne. In the Chronicles we read strength and *gladness*; and the two renderings do not disagree in sense, for in the highest degree in this instance it is true that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever." Not in outward show or parade of costly robes does the glory of God consist; such things are tricks of state with which the ignorant are dazzled; holiness, justice, wisdom, grace, these are the splendours of Jehovah's courts, these the jewels and the gold, the regalia, and the pomp of the courts of heaven.

7. The first six verses commenced with an exhortation to sing, three times repeated, with the name of the Lord thrice mentioned; here we meet with the expression "*Give unto the Lord,*" used in the same triple manner. This is after the manner of those poets whose flaming sonnets have best won the ear of the people, they reiterate choice words till they penetrate the soul and fire the heart. The invocation of the sweet singer is still addressed to all mankind, to whom he speaks as "*Ye kindreds of the people.*" Divided into tribes and families, we are called in our courses and order to appear before him and ascribe to him all honour. "All worship be to God only," is the motto of one of our City companies, and it may

well be the motto of all the families upon earth. Family worship is peculiarly pleasing unto him who is the God of all the families of Israel. "*Give unto the Lord glory and strength,*" that is to say, recognise the glory and power of Jehovah, and ascribe them unto him in your solemn hymns. Who is glorious but the Lord? Who is strong, save our God? Ye great nations, who count yourselves both famous and mighty, cease your boastings! Ye monarchs, who are styled imperial and puissant, humble yourselves in the dust before the only Potentate. Glory and strength are nowhere to be found, save with the Lord, all others possess but the semblance thereof. Well did Massillon declare, "God alone is great."

8. "*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*" But who can do that to the full? Can all the nations of the earth put together discharge the mighty debt? All conceivable honour is due to our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer, and however much of zealous homage we may offer to him, we cannot give him more than his due. If we cannot bring in the full revenue which he justly claims, at least let us not fail from want of honest endeavour. "*Bring an offering, and come into his courts.*" Come with an unbloody sacrifice; atonement for sin having been made, it only remains to bring thank-offerings, and let not these be forgotten. To him who gives us all, we ought gladly to give our grateful tithe. When assembling for public worship we should make a point of bringing with us a contribution to his cause, according to that ancient word, "None of you shall appear before me empty." The time will come when from all ranks and all nations the Lord will receive gifts when they gather together for his worship. O long expected day begin!

9. "*O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*" This is the only beauty which he cares for in our public services, and it is one for which no other can compensate. Beauty of architecture and apparel he does not regard; moral and spiritual beauty is that in which his soul delighteth. Worship must not be rendered to God in a slovenly, sinful, superficial manner; we must be reverent, sincere, earnest, and pure in heart both in our prayers and praises. Purity is the white linen of the Lord's choristers, righteousness is the comely garment of his priests, holiness is the royal apparel of his servitors. "*Fear before him, all the earth.*" "Tremble" is the word in the original, and it expresses the profoundest awe, just as the word "worship" does, which would be more accurately translated by "bow down." Even the bodily frame would be moved to trembling and prostration if men were thoroughly conscious of the power and glory of Jehovah. Men of the world ridiculed "the Quakers" for trembling when under the power of the Holy Spirit; had they been able to discern the majesty of the Eternal they would have quaked also. There is a sacred trembling which is quite consistent with joy, the heart may even quiver with an awful excess of delight. The sight of the King in his beauty caused no alarm to John in Patmos, and yet it made him fall at his feet as dead. Oh, to behold him and worship him with prostrate awe and sacred fear!

10. "*Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth.*" This is the gladdest news which can be carried to them,—the Lord Jehovah, in the person of his Son has assumed the throne, and taken to himself his great power. Tell this out among the heathen, and let the heathen themselves, being converted, repeat the same rejoicingly. The dominion of Jehovah Jesus is not irksome, his rule is fraught with untold blessings, his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. "*The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved.*" Society is safe where God is king, no revolutions shall convulse his empire, no invasions shall disturb his kingdom. A settled government is essential to national prosperity, the reign of the God of truth and righteousness will promote this to the highest degree. Sin has shaken the world, the reign of Jesus will set it fast again upon sure foundations. "*He shall judge the people righteously.*" This is the best method for establishing society on a secure basis, and this is the greatest source of joy to oppressed nations. Iniquity makes the dynasties of tyrants fall, equity causes the throne of Jesus to stand. He will impartially rule over Jew and Gentile, prince and peasant, and this will bring happiness to those who are now the victims of the despot's arbitrary will.

11. "*Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.*" Above and below let the joy be manifested. Let the angels who have stood in amaze at the wickedness of men, now rejoice over their repentance and restoration to favour, and let men themselves express their pleasure in seeing their true prince set upon his throne. The book of creation has two covers, and on each of these let the glory of the Lord be emblazoned in letters of joy. "*Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.*" Let it be no more a troubled sea, wailing over ship-wrecked mariners, and rehearsing the

griefs of widows and orphans, but let it adopt a cheerful note, and rejoice in the kingdom of the Lord. Let it thunder out the name of the Lord when its tides are at its full, and let all its teeming life express the utmost joy because the Lord reigneth even in the depth of the sea. In common with the rest of the creation, the sea has groaned and travailed until now: is not the time close at hand in which its hollow murmur shall be exchanged for an outburst of joy? Will not every billow soon flash forth the praises of him who once trod the sea?

"Waft, waft, ye winds, his story!
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole."

12. "*Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein.*" Let the cultivated plains praise the Lord. Peace enables their owners to plough and sow and reap, without fear of the rapine of invaders, and therefore in glad notes they applaud him whose empire is peace. Both men, and creatures that graze the plain, and the crops themselves are represented as swelling the praises of Jehovah, and the figure is both bold and warranted. for the day shall come when every inhabited rood of ground shall yield its song, and every farmstead shall contain a church. "*Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice.*" He does not say let them rejoice, but they shall do so. The faith of the Psalmist turns itself from the expression of desire to the fully assured prediction of the event. Groves have in old times stood shuddering at the horrid orgies which have been performed within their shade, the time shall come when they shall sing for joy because of the holy worship, the sounds of which they shall hear. The bush is the stronghold of savage men and robbers, but it shall be sanctified to retirement and devotion. Perhaps the Psalmist was thinking of the birds; so Keble must have supposed, for he versifies the passage thus—

"Field exults and meadow fair,
With each bud and blossom there,
In the lonely woodlands now
Chants aloud each rustling bough."

13. "*Before the Lord: for he cometh.*" Even now he is near, his advent should, therefore, be the cause of immediate rejoicing: already are we in his presence, let us worship him with delight. "*For he cometh to judge the earth,*" to rule it with discretion; not to tax it, and control it by force, as kings often do, but to preside as magistrates do whose business it is to see justice carried out between man and man. All the world will be under the jurisdiction of this great Judge, and before his bar all will be summoned to appear. At this moment he is on the road, and the hour of his coming draweth nigh. His great assize is proclaimed. Hear ye not the trumpets? His foot is on the threshold. "*He shall judge the world with righteousness.*" His essential rectitude will determine all causes and cases, there will be no bribery and corruption there, neither can error or failure be found in his decisions. "*And the people with his truth,*" or rather "the nations in faithfulness." Honesty, veracity, integrity, will rule upon his judgment-seat. No nation shall be favoured there, and none be made to suffer through prejudice. The black man shall be tried by the same law as his white master, the aboriginal shall have justice executed for him against his civilised exterminator, the crushed and hunted Bushman shall have space to appeal against the Boer who slaughtered his tribe, and the South Sea Islander shall gain attention to his piteous plaint against the treacherous wretch who kidnapped him from his home. There shall be true judgment given without fear or favour. In all this let the nations be glad, and the universe rejoice.

In closing, let us ourselves join in the song. Since the whole universe is to be clothed with smiles, shall not we be glad? As John Howe observes, "Shall we not partake in this common dutiful joy, and fall into concert with the adoring loyal chorus? Will we cut ourselves off from this gladsome obsequious throng? And what should put a pleasant face and aspect upon the whole world, shall it only leave our faces covered with clouds and a mournful sadness?"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—What has been said of Psalm lxvii. may be fitly applied to the present Psalm. We need not hesitate to add that it is a *millennial* anthem. It accords with the condition of the world when Christ shall sit enthroned in the willing loyalty of our race. The nations join in an acclaim of praise to him as their rightful Judge and King. There is a unanimity in the song, as if it ascended from a world purged into a temple of holiness, and whose inhabitants were indeed a royal priesthood, with one heart to make Jesus king, with one voice to sound forth one peal of melody in praise of the name above every name.

Fix the eye for a moment on the precious vision of which we thus catch a glimpse. It holds true to the deepest principles of our nature, that what we contemplate as possible, much more what we anticipate as certain, lends us the very hope and energy conducive to its realisation. On the contrary, despair paralyses effort. Is it on this account that everywhere in prophecy, old and new, there floats before us the ideal of a recovered and rejoicing world, at times transfigured into a loftier scene, the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? So largely did this thought imbue the prophetic mind, that the language of Paul warms into the animation of poetry, when even "the creature itself," according to his own vivid personification, like some noble bird, drooping under the weight of its chain, with neck outstretched and eyeball distended, is described as looking down into the vista of coming time for its deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God (Rom. viii. 19). He hastens to add, that "we are saved by hope." It is true of the soul individually, we are saved by hope. It is true of our race collectively, if ever a millennium is to dawn upon it, we are saved by such a hope. Our earth may be in ruins meanwhile, blackness on the sky, barrenness on the soil, because sin is everywhere; but a change is promised. What we hope for, we labour for all the more that our hope is no dream of fancy, but has its basis in the science and certainty of absolute truth. "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isai. lxi. 11.) The tuning of the instrument is sometimes heard before the music comes. The mother teaches her child to lisp a hymn before he comprehends its full scope and meaning. And so here, in this holy Psalm, the Jerusalem from above, the mother of us all, trains us to the utterance of a song suitable to seasons of millennial glory, when the Moloch of oppression, the Mammon of our avarice, the Ashtaroth of fiery lust, every erring creed, every false religion, shall have given place to the worship of the one true and living God—to the faith and love of Christ. "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee."—*W. H. Goold, in "The Mission Hymn of the Hebrew Church: a Sermon."* 1865.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is entitled in the *Septuagint*, "*A Hymn of David; when the Temple was rebuilt after the Captivity*," and this appears to be a true description of it; for the substance of it is found in 1 Chron. xvi. 23—33, where it is described as having been delivered by David into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the Lord when the Ark was brought up to Zion. David's Psalm here receives a new name, and is called *a new song* (*sir chadash*), because new mercies of God were now to be celebrated; mercies greater than David had ever received, even when he brought the Ark to Zion. They who now sang the old song, which had thus become a new song, identified themselves with David, and identified him with themselves.—*Chr. Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—Subject.—Call to praise, in view of Christ's second advent and glorious reign.—*To apply it.*—Look forward to the glorious day of the Lord's coming; and realise its approach that you may prepare for it.—*A. R. C. Dallas.*

Verse 1.—"*O sing unto the Lord a new song*," etc. 'A *new* song," unknown to you before. Come, all ye nations of the wide earth, who, up to this hour, have been giving your worship to dead gods that were no gods at all; come and give your hearts to the true and only God in this *new* song!—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 1.—"*A new song.*" It must be "*a new canticle*," a beautiful canticle, and elegantly composed; also a canticle for fresh favours; in like manner, a canticle befitting men who have been regenerated, in whom avarice has been supplanted by charity; and finally, a canticle not like that of Moses, or Deborah, or any of the

old canticles that could not be sung outside the land of promise, according to Psalm cxxxvii., "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" but a new canticle that may be sung all over the world; and he, therefore, adds, "*Sing unto the Lord, all the earth,*" not only Judea, but the whole world.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 1.—"*New.*" The word is used to describe that which is delightful, exquisite, precious, etc.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*New.*" New things are generally most approved, and especially in songs; for Pindar praises old wine and new songs.—*John Cocceius*, 1603—1669.

Verse 1.—"*A new song.*" Our old songs were those of pride, of gluttony, of luxury, in hope of gain, prosperity, or harm to others; our "*new song*" is of praise, reverence, and obedience, and love to God, in newness of life, in the Spirit that quickeneth, no longer in the letter that killeth, but keepeth that new commandment, that we love one another, not with the narrow patriotism and fellow-feeling of a small tribe, or a mere national church, but with a citizenship which embraces *all the whole earth.*—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"*Sing unto the Lord.*" We find it thrice said, *sing unto the Lord*, that we may understand that we are to sing unto him with mind, and tongue, and deed. For all these things must be joined together, and the life ought to correspond with the mouth and mind. As Abbot Absolom says, *When the speech does not jar with the life, there is a sweet harmony.*—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—"*All the earth.*" It is a *missionary-hymn* for all ages of the church; and it becomes more and more appropriate to our times in proportion as the heathen begin to respond to the call, "Sing unto the Lord a new song," and in proportion as we find in the melancholy condition of the church at home occasion to look with a hopeful eye towards the heathen world.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"*From day to day.*" Continually; always. It is a fit subject for unceasing praise. Every man should praise God every day—on each returning morning, and on every evening—for the assurance that there is a way of salvation provided for him, and that he may be happy for ever. If we had right feelings, this would be the first thought which would burst upon the mind each morning, irradiating, as with sunbeams, all around us; and it would be the last thought which would linger in the soul as we lie down at night, and close our eyes in slumber—making us grateful, calm, happy, as we sink to rest, for whether we wake or not in this world, we may be for ever happy.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*From day to day.*" Other news delights us only at first hearing; but the good news of our redemption is sweet from day to day, *ac si in eodem die redemptio fuisset operata*, saith Kimchi here, as if it were done but to-day. *Tam recens mihi nunc Christus est*, saith Luther, *ac si hac hora fudisset sanguinem*, Christ is now as fresh unto me as if he had shed his blood but this very hour.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*Declare.*" The corresponding word is *a book*; and the participle is often rendered a *scribe*, a *writer*, Ps. xlv. 1. The verb is rendered, *tell, shew forth, declare.* The variety of verbs used in verses 1—3, proves that we are to employ all proper means for making known the Saviour. One of these methods is by writing.—*W. S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Declare his glory*"—what a glorious person the Messiah is; the brightness of his Father's glory; having all the perfections of Deity in him; how the glory of God appears in him, and in all that he has done; and especially in the work of redemption, in which the glory of divine wisdom, power, justice, truth, and faithfulness, love, grace, and mercy, is richly displayed; say what glory he is advanced unto, having done his work, being highly exalted, set at the right hand of God, and crowned with glory and honour, and what a fulness of grace there is in him, for the supply of his people; and what a glory is on him, which they shall behold to all eternity.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—*His glory* shines from every ray of light that reaches us from a thousand stars; it sparkles from the mountain tops that reflect the earliest and retain the last rays of the rising and the setting sun; it spreads over the expanse of the sea, and speaks in the murmur of its restless waves; it girdles the earth with a zone of light, and flings over it an aureole of beauty. In the varied forms of animal tribes; in the relations of our world to other worlds, in the revolutions of planets, in the springing of flowers, in the fall of waters, and in the flight of birds; in the sea, the rivers, and the air; in heights and depths, in wonders and mysteries,—Christ wears

the crown, sways the sceptre, and receives from all a tribute to his sovereignty. We cannot augment it; we cannot add one ray of light to the faintness of a distant star, nor give wings to an apterous insect, nor change a white hair into black. We can unfold, but not create; we can adore, but not increase; we can recognise the footprints of Deity, but not add to them.—*John Cumming in "From Patmos to Paradise*, 1873."

Verse 3.—"*Declare his glory among the heathen,*" etc. It is a part of the commission given to the ministers of the gospel, not only to teach their congregations concerning Christ, but also to have a care that they who never did hear of him, may know what he is, what he hath done and suffered, and what good may be had by his mediation. Nothing so glorious to God, nothing so wonderful in itself, as is the salvation of man by Christ; to behold God saving his enemies by the incarnation, sufferings, and obedience of Christ the eternal Son of God: "*Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*Declare his glory.*" It is *his* glory which should be proclaimed, not the learning, ability, and eloquence of the orator who professes to speak for him; it is his *glory*, the loving beauty, the attractiveness of his gospel, the lavish promises to repentant sinners, the blessedness of heaven, which should be the chief themes of discourse; not threats, menaces, sermons on hell or torment to affright men, and at best make them God's trembling slaves, not his loving friends. The preaching is to be "*unto all people,*" in obscure country districts, amongst unpolished and illiterate congregations, and not to be confined, as fashionable preachers like to confine it, to the cultivated and critical audiences of the capital.—*Hugo, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 3.—"*His glory.*" What he had before called *salvation*, he now names *glory*, and afterwards *wonders*. And since this salvation, whereby the human race is redeemed from eternal death and damnation, is glorious and full of wonders, it is therefore worthy of admiration and praise.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 3.—"*His wonders.*" What a wonderful person he is, for he is God manifest in the flesh; what wonderful love he has shown in his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death; what amazing miracles he wrought, and what a wonderful work he performed; the work of our redemption, the wonder of men and angels; declare his wonderful resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, and intercession for his people; the wonderful effusion of his Spirit, and the conquests of his grace, and the enlargement of his kingdom in the world; as also what wonders will be wrought by him when he appears a second time; how the dead will be raised, and all will be judged.—*John Gill.*

Verse 5.—"*For all the gods of the nations are idols.*" *Nothings*, nonentities, a favourite description of idols in Isaiah's later prophecies. See e.g. Isaiah xli. 24, and compare Lev. xix. 4, xxvi. 1, 1 Cor. viii. 4—6, x. 19. A less probable etymology of the Hebrew word makes it a diminutive of (אל) *El*, analogous to *godlings* as an expression of contempt.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*The gods of the nations are idols.*" Their Elohim are *elilim*. See 1 Chron. xvi. 26. The word *elilim* occurs in two places in the Psalms, here and xcvii. 7. It is used most frequently by Isaiah, and properly signifies *nothings*, as St. Paul says, "an *idol* is *nothing*." (1 Cor. viii. 4.)—*Chr. Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord made the heavens.*" Verse 5 is a notandum. What a tribute to astronomy is it that the Lord is so often done homage to as having made the heavens! Let the theology of nature be blended with the theology of conscience—a full recognition of the strength and the glory which shine palpably forth in the wonders of creation, with the spiritual offerings of holy worship and holy service.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 6.—"*Beauty . . . in his sanctuary.*"

> Oh, if so much of beauty doth reveal
> Itself in every vein of life and nature,
> How beautiful must be the Source itself,
> The Ever-Bright One!
>
> —*Esaias Tegner*, 1782—1847.

Verse 6.—"*In his sanctuary.*" That is to say (1) his ark, tabernacle, or temple, as many writers consider. Kimchi, as quoted by Muis, suggests that where joy

or beauty is mentioned as being in his temple, it is set in opposition to the perpetual grief of the Philistines when the ark was in their cities. They saw the Lord's strength, but not his beauty. (2) Others refer the word sanctuary to the church of Christ, which, as Munster remarks, is adorned with heavenly ornaments, and was typified by the magnificence of Solomon's temple. Certainly it is in the church that the spiritual power and beauty of the Lord are to be most clearly seen. (3) The passage may refer to heaven, where the divine presence is more peculiarly manifest.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 7.—"*Ye kindreds of the people.*" There is a peculiar force, observes an early commentator [Cassiodorus], in this phrase, "*kindreds of the people,*" much more than if we had the word "*peoples*" alone; for in every nation there are at all times strangers, aliens, sojourners abiding permanently or for a time, but not reckoned among the natives; while the phrase here includes all such, and provides that none shall be shut out because of his origin.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 7.—"*Ye kindreds of the people.*" He calls upon them to come in kindreds or families, in allusion to the Jewish custom of families coming by themselves on the several festival days to worship in Jerusalem; and the Holy Ghost gives us here to understand that such custom was to serve as a model for Christians, whose families should unite in coming to the church to give glory and honour to God for all the wonderful things he accomplished in the redemption of man; for it was not by our own industry, or by our merits, that we have come to grace, and to be the adopted children of God, but through God's mercy, to whom, therefore, is due all honour and glory.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 8.—"*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*" It is a debt; and a debt, in equity, must be paid. The honour due to his name is to acknowledge him to be holy, just, true, powerful: "The Lord, the faithful God," "good, merciful, long-suffering," etc. Defraud not his name of the least honour.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—"*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*" Is all the glory due unto God's name, and ought it, in strict justice, to have been ascribed unto him by men, ever since man began to exist? How immeasurably great then is the debt which our world has contracted, and under the burden of which it now groans! During every day and every hour which has elapsed since the apostasy of man, this debt has been increasing; for every day and every hour all men ought to have given unto Jehovah the glory which is due to his name. But no man has ever done this fully. And a vast proportion of our race have never done it at all. Now the difference between the tribute which men ought to have paid to God and that which they actually have paid constitutes the debt of which we are speaking. How vast, then, how incalculable is it!—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 8.—"*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*" Every glory will not serve the turn, but such glory as is proper and peculiar for that God we serve. It is a stated rule in Scripture that, *respects to God must be proportioned to the nature of God.* God is a *spirit*, therefore will be worshipped in *spirit and truth.* God is a God of *peace*, therefore lift up pure hands, without *wrath and doubting.* God is a *holy God*, therefore will be *sanctified.* They which worship the sun, among the heathens, they used a flying horse, as a thing most suitable to the swift motion of the sun. Well, then, they that will glorify and honour God with a glory due to his name, must sanctify him as well as honour him. Why? For "God is glorious in holiness," Exod. xv. 11. This is that which God counteth to be his chief excellency, and the glory which he will manifest among the sons of men.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 8.—"*Bring an offering.*" This is language taken from the temple-worship, and means that God is to be worshipped, in the manner which he has prescribed, as a suitable expression of his majesty. The word here rendered "*offering*"—מִנְחָה, *minkhah*—is that which is commonly used to denote a *bloodless* offering, a thank-offering.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—"*In the beauty of holiness,*" or, in the ornament of holiness, alluding to the splendid robes of eastern worshippers.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 9.—"*The beauty of holiness.*" Shall I call *holiness* an attribute? Is it not rather the glorious combination of all his attributes into one perfect whole? As all his attributes proceed from the absolute, so all again converge and meet in holiness. As from the insufferable white light of the Absolute they all seem to diverge and separate into prismatic hues, so they all seem again to converge and

meet and combine in the dazzling white radiance of his holiness. This, therefore, is rather the intense whiteness, purity, clearness, the infinite lustre and splendour of his perfect nature—like a gem without flaw, without stain, and without colour. All of his attributes are glorious, but in this we have a combination of all into a still more glorious whole. It is for this reason that it is so frequently in Scripture associated with the Divine beauty. The poetic nature of the Psalmist is exalted to ecstasy in contemplation of the "*beauty of holiness*," the "*beauty of the Lord*." Beauty is a combination of elements according to the laws of harmony; the more beautiful the parts or elements, and the more perfect the harmonious combination, the higher the beauty. How high and glorious, therefore, must be the beauty of this attribute which is the perfect combination of all his infinite perfections!

You see, then, why this attribute is awful to us. In the ideal man all the faculties and powers, mental, moral, and bodily, work together in perfect harmony, making sweet music—the image of God is clear and pure in the human heart. But, alas! how far are we from the ideal! In the actual man the purity is stained, the beauty is defaced, the harmony is changed into jarring discord, "like sweet bells jangled out of tune." How it came so, we are not now inquiring. We all feel that it *is* so. Therefore is this attribute so awful to us. It is the awfulness of absolute purity in the presence of impurity; it is the awfulness of perfect beauty in the presence of deformity; it is the awfulness of honour in the presence of dishonour and shame; in one word, it is the awfulness of holiness in the presence of sinfulness. How, then, shall we approach him before whom angels bow and archangels veil their faces—him in whose sight the white radiance of heaven itself is stained with impurity?—*Joseph Le Conte, in "Religion and Science,"* 1874.

Verse 9.—"*The beauty of holiness.*" The religion of the gospel of Christ is "*the beauty of holiness*," as it concerns its Author, its plan, its fruits. 1st, As it concerns its *Author*. Whatever we can understand as meant by beauty or holiness, we see in the attributes of God, whether we consider them in all their harmony, or contemplate any one of them in particular. . . . 2ndly, As to its plan. Survey the gospel where we will, or regard whatever we can that is revealed concerning it, we find it to be all "*beauty*"; and we cannot call it by a more appropriate name than "*the beauty of holiness.*" 3rdly, As to its *fruits*. There is a holy separation, a beautiful character of holiness, a separation as to character, feelings, and conduct; these are all the various fruits of grace; and so the man becomes beautiful in holiness. —*Legh Richmond*, 1772—1827.

Verse 10.—"*Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth.*" This clause reads in the old Latin version, "Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth *from the tree.*" Justin Martyr accuses the Jews, that they have erased the words "a ligno," ἀπὸ ξύλου, which are wanting in the original and in the Septuagint. Mrs. Charles renders the verse thus:—

> "The truth that David learned to sing,
> Its deep fulfilment here attains;
> 'Tell all the earth the Lord is King!'
> Lo, from the cross, a King he reigns!"

—*From "Christ in Song. Hymns of Immanuel, with Notes by P. Schaff,"* 1870.

Verse 10.—"*Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth.*" It is not enough to feel *desire*; we must "*say* among the heathen, the Lord reigneth." There is a commandment given us of the LORD to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"—to tell them what Christ hath taught us—to say to them, in fact, "The LORD reigneth." . . . .

We go among the heathen, and say, "the LORD reigneth"—point them to all the various objects in *creation*—to the stars of heaven, to the beauties of vegetation, to the daily occurrences of *providence*, to the body fearfully and wonderfully made, to its continual preservation and supply. We may easily take our text from every thing by which we are surrounded, and say, "The LORD reigneth." But we must not stop here. It is well to have right views of God as the Creator; but it is only as we view him as the God of *Redemption*, that we can praise him "in the beauty of holiness."—*Legh Richmond.*

Verse 10.—"*Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth*" must be the Christian's as it was the Israelite's motto. The earliest preaching of our Saviour and his disciples was the preaching of the gospel of the *kingdom*. It was because *all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth*, that, after his resurrection from the dead, Jesus

sent forth his apostles to go and teach all nations. The substance of the apostles' subsequent preaching was, confessedly, the *kingdom* of God.—*J. F. Thrupp.*

Verse 10.—"*Say among the heathen.*" Go, ye that are already become proselytes unto him, and publish everywhere, in all countries, that the Lord [Christ] is the sovereign of the world, who alone can make it happy: for he shall settle those in peace that submit unto his government: and they shall not be so disturbed as they were wont with wars and tumults: he shall administer equal justice unto all; and neither suffer the good to be unrewarded, nor the evil to escape unpunished.—*Symon Patrick.*

Verse 10.—"*The world also,*" etc. The natural world shall be established; the standing of the world, and its stability, is owing to the mediation of Christ. Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens it; but Christ, as redeemer, upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved, till all that belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty, provoking world. The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established, that it cannot be moved, for it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; it is a "kingdom that cannot be shaken."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—"*It shall not be moved.*" When we learn from the records of geology, as they are inscribed upon the rocks, how numerous and thorough have been the revolutions of the surface and the crust of the globe in past ages; how often and how long the present dry land has been alternately above and beneath the ocean; how frequently the crust of the globe has been fractured, bent, and dislocated; now lifted upward, and now thrown downward, and now folded by lateral pressure; how frequently melted matter has been forced through its strata and through its fissures to the surface; in short, how every particle of the accessible portions of the globe has undergone entire metamorphoses; and especially when we recollect what strong evidence there is that oceans of liquid matter exist beneath the solid crust, and that probably the whole interior of the earth is in that condition, with expansive energy sufficient to rend the globe into fragments; when we review all these facts, we cannot but feel that the condition of the surface of the globe must be one of great insecurity and liability to change. But it is not so. On the contrary, the present state of the globe is one of permanent uniformity and entire security, except those comparatively slight catastrophes which result from earthquakes, volcanoes, and local deluges. Even the climate has experienced no general change within historic times, and the profound mathematical researches of Baron Fourier have demonstrated that, even though the internal parts of the globe are in an incandescent state, beneath a crust thirty or forty miles, the temperature of the surface has long since ceased to be affected by the melted central mass; that it is not now more than one seventeenth of a degree higher than it would be if the interior were ice; and that hundreds of thousands of years will not see it lowered, from this cause, more than the seventeenth part of a degree. And as to the apprehension that the entire crust of the globe may be broken through, and fall into the melted matter beneath, just reflect what solidity and strength there must be in a mass of hard rock from fifty to one hundred miles in thickness, and your fears of such a catastrophe will probably vanish.

Now, such a uniformity of climate and security from general ruin are essential to the comfort and existence of animal nature. But it must have required infinite wisdom and benevolence so to arrange and balance the mighty elements of change and ruin which exist in the earth, that they should hold one another in check, and make the world a quiet, unchanged, and secure dwelling-place for so many thousands of years. Surely that wisdom must have been guided by infinite benevolence.—*Edward Hitchcock, in "The Religion of Geology,"* 1851.

Verse 11.—"*Let the heavens rejoice.*" As the whole creation, both animate and inanimate, has groaned beneath the weight of the curse, so shall the whole creation partake of the great deliverance.—"*The Speaker's Commentary,*" 1873.

Verse 11.—"*Let the sea roar.*"—

> Thou paragon of elemental powers,
> Mystery of waters—never-slumbering sea!
> Impassioned orator with lips sublime,
> Whose waves are arguments which prove a God!
>
> *Robert Montgomery,* 1807—1855.

Verses 11, 12.—God will graciously accept the holy joys and praises of all the hearty well-wishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity never so mean. "*The sea*" can but "*roar*," and how "*the trees of the wood*" can shew that they "*rejoice*," I know not; but "he that searcheth the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit," and understands the language, the broken language of the weakest.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 11—13.—These verses are full of comprehensive beauty and power. They present the gathering together of everything under the confessed dominion of the reigning Christ. Things in heaven, as well as things on earth, rejoice together in the acknowledged blessing of the Lord of peace. The Psalm is throughout a very sweet strain of millennial prophecy.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verses 11—13.—Nothing can excel that noble exultation of universal nature in the 96th Psalm, which has been so often commended, where the whole animate and inanimate creation unite in the praises of their Maker. Poetry here seems to assume the highest tone of triumph and exultation, and to revel, if I may so express myself, in all the extravagance of joy.—*Robert Lowth.*

Verses 11—13.—Although there are some who by *heaven* understand *angels;* by the *earth, men;* by the *sea, troublesome spirits;* by *trees* and *fields*, the *Gentiles* who were to believe, yet this need not be thought strange, because such *prosopopœias* are frequent in Scripture.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 12.—"*Let the field be joyful*," etc. Let the husbandmen, and the shepherds, and all that dwell in the fields, leap for joy; and the woodmen and foresters shout for joy, to see the happy day approaching; when all the idols that are worshipped there shall be thrown down together with their groves.—*Symon Patrick.*

Verse 12.—"*Rejoice.*" The verb עָלַז expresses the vibratory motion, either of a dancer's feet, or of a singer's lip.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 12.—"*The trees of the wood.*"

> His praise, ye winds, that from four quarters blow,
> Breathe soft or loud; and wave your tops, ye Pines,
> With every plant, in sign of worship wave.
>
> *John Milton.*

Verses 12, 13.—"*He cometh*," etc.

> It chanced upon the merry, merry Christmas eve,
> I went sighing past the church across the moorland dreary—
> "Oh! never sin and want and woe this earth will leave,
> And the bells but mock the wailing round, they sing so cheery
> How long, O Lord! how long before thou come again?
> Still in cellar, and in garret, and on moorland dreary
> The orphans moan, and widows weep, and poor men toil in vain,
> Till earth is sick of hope deferred, though Christmas bells be cheery."
>
> Then arose a joyous clamour from the wild fowl on the mere,
> Beneath the stars, across the snow, like clear bells ringing,
> And a voice within cried, "Listen! Christmas carols even here!
> Though thou be dumb, yet o'er their work the stars and snows are singing.
> Blind! I live, I love, I reign; and all the nations through
> With the thunder of my judgments even now are ringing;
> Do thou fulfil thy work but as yon wild fowl do,
> Thou wilt heed no less the wailing, yet hear through it angels singing."
>
> *Charles Kingsley*, 1858.

Verse 13.—"*For he cometh, for he cometh.*" Because the thing was hard to be believed, the Prophet asserts twice that God should come, that he should be Judge and King, and Governor of all.—*Martinus Bucerus* in *Expos. Ecclesiast.*

Verse 13.—"*He cometh.*" Not יָבוֹא, "*He shall come;*" but בָּא לִשְׁפֹּט, "*He cometh;*" to show how near the time is. It is almost day-break, and the court is ready to sit: "The Judge standeth at the door," James v. 9.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 13.—"*To judge.*" Vatablus remarks that *to judge* is the word used instead of *to reign, judicare pro regere*, because judges in the early days of the Holy Land exercised the power both of kings and magistrates. The Lord comes to be to all nations a wiser judge than Samuel, a greater champion than Samson, a mightier deliverer than Gideon.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 13.—"*He cometh to judge the earth.*" That is, to put earth in order, to be its Gideon and Samson, to be its *ruler*, to fulfil all that the Book of Judges delineates of a judge's office. It is, as Hengstenberg says, "a gracious judging," not a time of mere adjudication of causes or pronouncing sentences—it is a day of jubilee. It is the happiest day our world has ever seen. Who would not long for it? Who is there that does not pray for it? It is the day of the Judge's glory, as well as of our world's freedom—the day when "*the judgment of this world*" (John xii. 31, and xvi. 11), which his cross began and made sure, is completed by the total suppression of Satan's reign, and the removal of the curse. All this is anticipated here; and so we entitle this Psalm, *The glory due to him who cometh to judge the earth.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 13.—"*He cometh to judge the earth,*" etc. In this new song they take up the words of Enoch, the seventh from Adam (Jude xiv.), who preached of the Coming of the Lord to judge the world.—*Chr. Wordsworth.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The novelties of grace. I. A new salvation. II. Creates a new heart. III. Suggests a new song. IV. Secures new testimonies, and these, V. Produce new converts.

Verses 1—3.—I. The end desired—to see the earth singing unto the Lord, and blessing his name. II. The means suggested—the showing forth his salvation from day to day; declaring his glory, etc. III. The certainty of its accomplishment. The Lord hath said it. "O sing," etc. When he commands earth must obey.—*G. R.*

Verses 1—3.—The progress of zeal. I. The spring of expansive desire, ver. 1. II. The streamlet of practical daily effort, ver. 2. III. The broad river of foreign missions, ver. 3.—*C. D.*

Verses 1—9.—We are to honour God. I. With songs, verses 1, 2. II. With sermons, verse 3. III. With religious services, verses 7, 8, 9.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—I. Declare among the heathen the glory of God's perfections, that they may acknowledge him as the true God. II. Declare the glory of his salvation, that they may accept him as their only Redeemer. III. Declare the glory of his providence, that they may confide in him as their faithful guardian. IV. Declare the glory of his word, that they may prize it as their chief treasure. V. Declare the glory of his service, that they may choose it as their noblest occupation. VI. Declare the glory of his residence, that they may seek it as their best home.—*William Jackson.*

Verse 3.—I. What the gospel is, "God's glory," "his wonders." II. What shall we do with it—declare it. III. To whom. "Among the heathen," all people.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—"*His wonders among the people.*" I. The wonders of his Being, to inspire them with awe. II. The wonders of his creation, to fill them with amazement. III. The wonders of his judgments, to restrain them with fear. IV. The wonders of his grace, to allure them with love.—*W. Jackson.*

Verses 4—6.—Missionary sermon. I. Contrast Jehovah of the Bible with gods of human device. II. Decide between divine worship and idolatry. III. Appeal for effort on behalf of idolaters.—*C. D.*

Verse 6.—"*Honour and majesty are before him.*" I. As emanations from him. II. As excellencies ascribed to him. III. As characteristics of what is done by him. IV. As marks of all that dwell near him.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 6 (latter clause).—What we may see in God's sanctuary (strength and beauty). What we may obtain there, Ps. xc. 17 (strength and beauty).—*C. D.*

Verse 8.—Jehovah possesses a nature and character peculiar to himself; he sustains various offices and relations, and he has performed many works which he alone could perform. On all these accounts something is due to him from his creatures. And when we regard him with such affections, and yield him such services, as his nature, character, offices, and works deserve, then we give unto him the glory which is due to his name. I. Let us inquire what is due to Jehovah on account of his nature. II. What is due to Jehovah on account of the character he possesses. III. What is due to God on account of the relations and offices which he sustains—

that of a creator, preserver. IV. What is due to Jehovah on account of the works which he has performed, in nature, providence and redemption.—*E. Payson.*

Verse 8.—The object of worship. The nature of worship. The accompaniment of worship (an offering). The place of worship.—*C. D.*

Verse 9 (first clause).—An examination of true and false worship. I. False worship, in the obscurity of ignorance, in the dulness of formalism, in the offensiveness of indulged sin, in the hideousness of hypocrisy. II. True worship, in the beauty of holiness.—*C. D.*

Verse 9.—Holy fear an essential ingredient in true religion.

Verses 10—13.—The reign of righteousness. I. The announcement of a righteous king and judge. II. The joyful reception prepared for him. III. His glorious coming. —*C. D.*

Verses 11, 12.—The sympathy of nature with the work of grace; especially dwelling upon its fuller display in the millennial period.

PSALM XCVII.

SUBJECT.—*As the last Psalm sang the praises of the Lord in connection with the proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles, so this appears to foreshadow the mighty working of the Holy Ghost in subduing the colossal systems of error, and casting down the idol gods. Across the sea to maritime regions a voice cries for rejoicing at the reign of Jesus (verse 1), the sacred fire descends (verse 3), like lightning the gospel flames forth (verse 4), difficulties vanish (verse 5), and all the nations see the glory of God (verse 6). The idols are confounded (verse 7), the church rejoices (verse 8), the Lord is exalted (verse 9). The Psalm closes with an exhortation to holy steadfastness under the persecution which would follow, and bids the saints rejoice that their path is bright, and their reward glorious and certain. Modern critics, always intent upon ascribing the Psalms to anybody rather than to David, count themselves successful in dating this song further on than the captivity, because it contains passages similar to those which occur in the later prophets; but we venture to assert that it is quite as probable that the prophets adopted the language of David as that some unknown writer borrowed from them. One Psalm in this series is said to be "in David," and we believe that the rest are in the same place, and by the same author. The matter is not important, and we only mention it because it seems to be the pride of certain critics to set up new theories; and there are readers who imagine this to be a sure proof of prodigious learning. We do not believe that their theories are worth the paper they are written upon.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalm divides itself into four portions, each containing three verses. The coming of the Lord is described* (1—3); *its effect upon the earth is declared* (4—6); *and then its influence upon the heathen and the people of God. The last part contains both exhortation and encouragement, urging to holiness and inculcating happiness.*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad *thereof.*

2 Clouds and darkness *are* round about him: righteousness and judgment *are* the habitation of his throne.

3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

1. "*The Lord reigneth.*" This is the watchword of the Psalm—Jehovah reigns. It is also the essence of the gospel proclamation, and the foundation of the gospel kingdom. Jesus has come, and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, therefore men are bidden to yield him their obedient faith. Saints draw comfort from these words, and only rebels cavil at them. "*Let the earth rejoice,*" for there is cause for joy. Other reigns have produced injustice, oppression, bloodshed, terror; the reign of the infinitely gracious Jehovah is the hope of mankind, and when they all yield to it the race will have its paradise restored. The very globe itself may well be glad that its Maker and liege Lord has come to his own, and the whole race of man may also be glad, since to every willing subject Jesus brings untold blessings. "*Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.*" To the ancient Israelites all places beyond the seas were isles, and the phrase is equivalent to all lands which are reached by ships. It is remarkable, however, that upon actual islands some of the greatest victories of the Cross have been achieved. Our own favoured land is a case in point, and not less so the islands of Polynesia and the kingdom of Madagascar. Islands are very numerous; may they all become Holy Islands, and Isles of Saints, then will they all be Fortunate Islands, and true Formosas. Many a land owes its peace to the sea; if it had not been isolated it would have been desolated, and therefore the inhabitants should praise the Lord who has moated them about, and given them a defence more available than bars of brass. Jesus deserves to be Lord of the Isles, and to have his praises sounded along every sea-beaten shore. Amen, so let it be.

2. "*Clouds and darkness are round about him.*" So the Lord revealed himself at Sinai, so must he ever surround his essential Deity when he shows himself to the

sons of men, or his excessive glory would destroy them. Every revelation of God must also be an obvelation; there must be a veiling of his infinite splendour if anything is to be seen by finite beings. It is often thus with the Lord in providence; when working out designs of unmingled love he conceals the purpose of his grace that it may be the more clearly discovered at the end. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." Around the history of his church dark clouds of persecution hover, and an awful gloom at times settles down, still the Lord is there; and though men for a while see not the bright light in the clouds, it bursts forth in due season to the confusion of the adversaries of the gospel. This passage should teach us the impertinence of attempting to pry into the essence of the Godhead, the vanity of all endeavours to understand the mystery of the Trinity in Unity, the arrogance of arraigning the Most High before the bar of human reason, the folly of dictating to the Eternal One the manner in which he should proceed. Wisdom veils her face and adores the mercy which conceals the divine purpose; folly rushes in and perishes, blinded first, and by-and-by consumed by the blaze of glory.

"*Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*" There he abides, he never departs from strict justice and right, his throne is fixed upon the rock of eternal holiness. Righteousness is his immutable attribute, and judgment marks his every act. What though we cannot see or understand what he doeth, yet we are sure that he will do no wrong to us or any of his creatures. Is not this enough to make us rejoice in him and adore him? Divine sovereignty is never tyrannical. Jehovah is an autocrat, but not a despot. Absolute power is safe in the hands of him who cannot err, or act unrighteously. When the roll of the decrees, and the books of the divine providence shall be opened, no eye shall there discern one word that should be blotted out, one syllable of error, one line of injustice, one letter of unholiness. Of none but the Lord of all can this be said.

3. "*A fire goeth before him.*" Like an advance guard clearing the way. So was it at Sinai, so must it be: the very Being of God is power, consuming all opposition; omnipotence is a devouring flame which "*burneth up his enemies round about.*" God is longsuffering, but when he comes forth to judgment he will make short work with the unrighteous, they will be as chaff before the flame. Reading this verse in reference to the coming of Jesus, and the descent of the Spirit, we are reminded of the tongues of fire, and of the power which attended the gospel, so that all opposition was speedily overcome. Even now where the gospel is preached in faith, and in the power of the Spirit, it burns its own way, irresistibly destroying falsehood, superstition, unbelief, sin, indifference, and hardness of heart. In it the Lord reigneth, and because of it let the earth rejoice.

4 His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.
5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.

4. "*His lightnings enlightened the world.*" In times of tempest the whole of nature is lighted up with a lurid glare, even the light of the sun itself seems dim compared with the blaze of lightning. If such are the common lights of nature what must be the glories of the Godhead itself? When God draws aside the curtain for a moment how astonished are the nations, the light compels them to cover their eyes and bow their heads in solemn awe. Jesus in the gospel lights up the earth with such a blaze of truth and grace as was never seen or even imagined before. In apostolic times the word flashed from one end of the heavens to the other, no part of the civilised globe was left unilluminated. "*The earth saw, and trembled.*" In God's presence the solid earth quakes, astonished by his glory it is convulsed with fear. To the advent of our Lord and the setting up of his kingdom among men these words are also most applicable; nothing ever caused such a shaking and commotion as the proclamation of the gospel, nothing was more majestic than its course, it turned the world upside down, levelled the mountains, and filled up the valleys. Jesus came, he saw, he conquered. When the Holy Ghost rested upon his servants their course was like that of a mighty storm, the truth flashed with the force and speed of a thunderbolt, and philosophers and priests, princes and people were utterly confounded, and altogether powerless to withstand it. It shall be so again. Faith even now sets the world on fire, and rocks the nations to and fro.

5. "*The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord.*" Inanimate nature

knows its Creator, and worships him in its own fashion. States and kingdoms which stand out upon the world like mountains are utterly dissolved when he decrees their end. Systems as ancient and firmly-rooted as the hills pass away when he does but look upon them. In the Pentecostal era, and its subsequent age, this was seen on all hands, heathenism yielded at the glance of Jehovah Jesus, and the tyrannies based upon it dissolved like melted wax. "*At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.*" His dominion is universal, and his power is everywhere felt. Men cannot move the hills, with difficulty do they climb them, with incredible toil do they pierce their way through their fastnesses, but it is not so with the Lord, his presence makes a clear pathway, obstacles disappear, a highway is made, and that not by his hand as though it cost him pains, but by his mere presence, for power goes forth from him with a word or a glance. O for the presence of the Lord after this sort with his church at this hour! It is our one and only need. With it the mountains of difficulty would flee away, and all obstacles would disappear. O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, O Lord.

In the little world of our nature the presence of Jesus in reigning power is as a fire to consume our lusts and melt our souls to obedience. Sometimes we doubt the presence of the Lord within, for he is concealed with clouds, but we are again assured that he is within us when his light shines in and fills us with holy fear, while at the same time the warmth of grace softens us to penitence, resignation and obedience, even as wax becomes soft in the presence of fire.

6. "*The heavens declare his righteousness.*" It is as conspicuous as if written across the skies, both the celestial and the terrestrial globes shine in its light. It is the manner of the inspired poets to picture the whole creation as in sympathy with the glory of God, and indeed it is not *mere* poetry, for a great truth underlies it, the whole creation has been made to groan through man's sin, and it is yet to share in the joy of his restoration. "*And all the people see his glory.*" The glorious gospel became so well known and widely promulgated, that it seemed to be proclaimed by every star, and published by the very skies themselves, therefore all races of men became acquainted with it, and were made to see the exceeding glory of the grace of God which is resplendent therein. May it come to pass ere long that, by a revival of the old missionary ardour, the glad tidings may yet be carried to every tribe of Adam's race, and once again all flesh may see the glory of Jehovah. It must be so, therefore let us rejoice before the Lord.

7 Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all *ye* gods.

8 Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD.

9 For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

7. "*Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols.*" They shall be so; shame shall cover their faces, they shall blush to think of their former besotted boastings. When a man gravely worships what has been engraved by a man's hand, and puts his trust in a mere nothing and nonentity, he is indeed brutish, and when he is converted from such absurdity he may well be ashamed. A man who worships an image is but the image of a man, his senses must have left him. He who boasts of an idol makes an idle boast. "*Worship him, all ye gods.*" Bow down yourselves, ye fancied gods. Let Jove do homage to Jehovah, let Thor lay down his hammer at the foot of the cross, and Juggernaut remove his blood-stained car out of the road of Immanuel. If the false gods are thus bidden to worship the coming Lord, how much more shall they adore him who are godlike creatures in heaven, even the angelic spirits? Paul quotes this passage as the voice of God to angels when he sent his Son into the world. All powers are bound to recognise the chief power; since they derive their only rightful authority from the Lord, they should be careful to acknowledge his superiority at all times by the most reverent adoration.

8. "*Zion heard, and was glad*" While the heathen are confounded the people of God are made to triumph, for they love to see their God exalted. The day shall come when the literal Zion, so long forsaken, shall joy in the common salvation. It

did so at the first when the apostles dwelt at Jerusalem, and the good days will come back again. "*And the daughters of Judah rejoiced.*" Each individual believer is glad when he sees false systems broken up and idol gods broken down; the judgments of the Lord afford unalloyed delight to those who worship the true God in spirit and in truth. In the first ages of Christianity the believing Israel rejoiced to see Christ's kingdom victorious among the heathen, and even yet, though for a while turning aside, the daughters of Judah will sympathise in the wide-spread reign of Jehovah their God, through the gospel of his dear Son. As the women of Judah went forth to meet David in the dance, singing his victory over the Philistine, so shall they chant the triumphs of David's son and Lord.

9. "*For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth.*" And therefore do we rejoice to see the idols abolished and to see all mankind bending at thy throne. There is but one God, there cannot be another, and he is and ever must be over all. "*Thou art exalted far above all gods.*" As much as ALL is exalted above nothing, and perfection above folly. Jehovah is not alone high over Judea, but over all the earth, nor is he exalted over men only, but over everything that can be called god: the days are on their way when all men shall discern this truth, and shall render unto the Lord the glory which is due alone to him.

10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

12 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

10. "*Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.*" For he hates it, his fire consumes it, his lightnings blast it, his presence shakes it out of its place, and his glory confounds all the lovers of it. We cannot love God without hating that which he hates. We are not only to avoid evil, and to refuse to countenance it, but we must be in arms against it, and bear towards it a hearty indignation. "*He preserveth the souls of his saints.*" Therefore they need not be afraid of proclaiming war with the party which favours sin. The saints are the safe ones: they have been saved and shall be saved. God keeps those who keep his law. Those who love the Lord shall see his love manifested to them in their preservation from their enemies, and as they keep far from evil so shall evil be kept far from them. "*He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.*" It is not consistent with the glory of his name to give over to the power of his foes those whom his grace has made his friends. He may leave the bodies of his persecuted saints in the hand of the wicked, but not their souls, these are very dear to him, and he preserves them safe in his bosom. This foretells for the church a season of battling with the powers of darkness, but the Lord will preserve it and bring it forth to the light.

11. "*Light is sown for the righteous.*" All along their pathway it is strewn. Their night is almost over, their day is coming, the morning already advancing with rosy steps is sowing the earth with orient pearls. The full harvest of delight is not yet ours, but it is sown for us; it is springing, it will yet appear in fulness. This is only for those who are right before the Lord in his own righteousness, for all others the blackness of darkness is reserved. "*And gladness for the upright in heart.*" Gladness is not only for one righteous man in the singular, but for the whole company of the upright, even as the apostle, after speaking of the crown of life laid up for himself, immediately amended his speech by adding, "and not for me only, but also for all them that love his appearing." The upright ought to be glad, they have cause to be glad, yea and they shall be glad. Those who are right-hearted shall also be glad-hearted. Right leads to light. In the furrows of integrity lie the seeds of happiness, which shall develop into a harvest of bliss. God has lightning for sinners and light for saints. The gospel of Jesus, wherever it goes, sows the whole earth with joy for believers, for these are the men who are righteous before the Lord.

12. "*Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous.*" The Psalmist had bidden the earth rejoice, and here he turns to the excellent of the earth and bids them lead the song. If all others fail to praise the Lord, the godly must not. To them God is peculiarly revealed, by them he should be specially adored. "*And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*"—which is the harmony of all his attributes, the superlative wholeness of his character. This is a terror to the wicked, and a cause of thankfulness

to the gracious. To remember that Jehovah is holy is becoming in those who dwell in his courts, to give thanks in consequence of that remembrance is the sure index of their fitness to abide in his presence. In reference to the triumphs of the gospel, this text teaches us to rejoice greatly in its purifying effect; it is the death of sin and the life of virtue. An unholy gospel is no gospel. The holiness of the religion of Jesus is its glory, it is that which makes it glad tidings, since while man is left in his sins no bliss can be his portion. Salvation from sin is the priceless gift of our thrice holy God, therefore let us magnify him for ever and ever. He will fill the world with holiness, and so with happiness, therefore let us glory in his holy name, world without end. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The two preceding Psalms are songs of joy and thanksgiving, in which the gladness of Christ's people is poured forth as they go to meet their triumphant Lord at his second advent, and to bring him back in glory to assume his kingdom. The present Psalm, in language sufficiently explicit, describes the completion of this great event, "the Lord reigneth;" Messiah is on his throne, and now the words of the second Psalm, verse 6, are fulfilled, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Sion." Messiah's first act of sovereignty is judgment. Scriptures bearing upon that event are 2 Thess. i. 7; Jude 14; Isa. lxvi. 15. The character of these judgments is given in the Psalm: clouds and darkness encircling his throne, where, however, righteousness and mercy dwell; a fire which burns up his enemies round about; lightnings flashing upon the world, the earth trembling, and the hills melting like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. Peter, in his second Epistle, and third chapter, evidently refers to these events as yet future in his day.—*R. H. Ryland.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord reigneth.*" Here's good news, glad tidings: "*The Lord reigneth.*" It cannot be published without *praise*, without *rejoicing*, without *singing*, without *blessing*. We should dishonour this truth if we did not publish it; if we should with silence suppress it; if we should not speak well of it. It is so sweet and comfortable, that it fills the whole world with joy; and calls in every ear, and every tongue, and every heart, to be glad to rejoice, and to praise God. "*Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad.*" As though he should say, Let nothing fear but hell: let nothing be disquieted but devils. Let the *lowest*, the *poorest* of the people of God, though but *earth*, yet let them rejoice in this, "*The Lord reigneth.*" . . .

Here are two things of very sweet consideration, 1. The *reign* of the Lord; and, 2. The *reign* of the Lord *in the saints*. First, This *kingdom* that God is now setting up is his everlasting kingdom. It will not be administered by the weakness of man, but by the power of God; not by the folly of man, but by the judgment of God. God will, in this kingdom, nakedly manifest his own righteousness, his own compassion and pity; his own love, his own peace: he will do all things immediately by his own self. And therefore all the pride and ambition, all the oppression and tyranny, and miscarriages that have been in the government of men, shall be wholly taken away. Pure righteousness and judgment and equity shall be infallibly dispensed; and infinite power, strength, holiness, goodness, and authority shall shine forth nakedly in the face of God; and that shall be the judge of all men. We shall no longer be abused and oppressed by the will of men, by the lusts of men. The poor people shall no longer groan under the burden of men's lusts, nor sweat for the pleasure and contents of men; nor their faces any longer be ground by the hardness of the spirit of men; but they shall be under the protection of God. The great cry now of the people is, "Let's have a King!" Ye shall have one, one that will "reign in righteousness," the LORD himself.

Secondly, And this *reign* of the LORD shall be *in his saints;* according to that in Dan. vii. 27. "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey

him." As this kingdom shall be administered in the glory of God; so also in the sweetness and gentleness of man, by brethren, by friends, by the saints of the Most High. God lifting up himself in the saints will administer this reign; and as he will do it by the saints, so he will do it by the softness and tenderness of the saints; "The kingdom and dominion under the whole earth shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." It's now doing; that ye shall obey none but the Lord; ye shall know no other laws but the law of God; ye shall know no other master but Jehovah. He hath made us priests and kings, and we shall reign with him on the earth. This nature of ours, this body of ours, shall reign with Christ, with God, and that upon earth.

"*The Lord reigns.*" The Lord hath served, hath been hitherto much, yea, mostly, "in the form of a servant." It hath been, as it were, the business of the Lord, whilst this world stood, to give supplies to men; to serve men; to give men strength, and wisdom, and riches, and authority, and power, that men might be great and happy, with the goodness of God: and (in this) God hath been *King* too, but in an under way; as saith the Lord, "I have served with your sins" and lusts: now he will no longer *serve*, but *reign;* God will take all the power and authority into his own hands. He will not be any longer under men, but above all men. It's time he should be so; it's reason he should be so; it's just he should be so. Everything now must bow, stoop, and submit to the law, and rule, and will of God. No man shall any longer say, it shall be so, because it is my will to have it so: there shall not be found an heart, or tongue, that shall move against the dominion of the Lord.

Satan hath been a prince; he hath made laws of your captivity and misery; he hath kept you to his task, to do him service. He hath said, *Be angry*, and then you have been full of rage. He hath said, *Be covetous*, and then you have been full of covetousness. He hath said, *Be dark*, and then you have been full of blindness. He hath said, *Be proud*, and then ye have been full of haughtiness. And so he hath, as a monstrous tyrant, tormented the world. The sting of Satan's whips is in your consciences, I know. Your errors and mistakes have been through the kingdom of darkness in you, that you do not know God, or his holy will. You would come into the enjoyment of God; Satan will not let you: you would know God; he will not suffer you: you would be wise unto salvation; he will not permit you. He hath fettered you with his chains of darkness; he hath captivated your judgments; he hath made you to grind at his mill and to drudge in his service; and hath made you to cry out, "O when will the Lord come!" But now his wicked reign is at an end: what ye had, ye shall want, and what ye want, ye shall have; what hath been shall not be; that which shall be, must be, and cannot choose but be: ye shall have love, because the law of God is love; and ye shall have peace, because the kingdom of God is peace; and ye shall have light, because the inheritance is marvellous light; ye shall have righteousness, because this state is true holiness; ye shall have liberty, settledness, stability, and every good thing in this kingdom of God. It's always ill with us while Satan reigns. It's always well with us while God reigns; when our Husband is King we shall have preferment, and honour, and riches, and greatness, and power, and authority, because our God reigns. "*The Lord reigns,*" for us; the Lord takes his kingdom, and it is for us: the Lord hath reigned in himself all this while; now he reigns by us: the Lord counts himself not to have a kingdom, till we have it with him: the Lord thinks himself mean and despised, till we are exalted. He is poor without us. He is weak, while absent from us. He is not himself unless he enjoys us. "Thou art my excellency, my first-born." The power of God is in weakness, till we become mighty. The kingdom of God is in darkness, till we shine forth. The treasures of God were of no worth to him, if we were not his richest jewels.

"*The Lord* doth *reign.*" This is not to be passed by; it's in the present tense. This is the song that we hear and see angels sing. The elders and saints in heaven sing it perpetually; we daily hear it. *Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord reigneth!* There is administered into our hearts and ears *an hallelujah; the Lord reigneth*; indeed every creature speaks it, all in heaven and earth.

"*The Lord doth reign,*" and saith, "I am upon my throne. I am great; none is great but myself. I am King; I have the sceptre in my hand. I am powerful; none is powerful but I." All the power of men is broken. All the thrones of men are shattered into dust. All the wisdom of men is turned into folly. All the strength of men is melted into weakness and water. The meltings and moulderings away

of the powers and dignities of the world, speak it aloud, *The Lord reigns.—William Sedgwick, in "Some Flashes of Lightnings of the Son of Man,"* 1648.

Verse 1.—"*The Lord reigneth.*" He who stood before the judge, he who received the blows, he who was scourged, he who was spit upon, he who was crowned with thorns, he who was struck with fists, he who hung upon the cross, he who as he hung upon the wood was mocked, he who died upon the cross, he who was pierced with the spear, he who was buried, himself arose from the dead. "*The Lord reigneth.*" Let kingdoms rage as much as they can; what can they do to the King of kingdoms, the Lord of all kings, the Creator of all worlds?—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord reigneth.*" I am glad that Christ is Lord of all, for otherwise I should utterly have been out of hope, saith *Miconius* in an epistle to *Calvin*, upon a view of the church's enemies.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.*" Consider the divine government in various views, as legislative, providential, mediatorial, and judicial, and in each of these views the divine government is matter of universal joy.

I. "The Lord reigneth" *upon a throne of legislation*, "let the earth rejoice." He is the one supreme law-giver and is perfectly qualified for that important trust. Nothing tends more to the advantage of civil society than to have good laws established, according to which mankind are to conduct themselves, and according to which their rulers will deal with them. Now the supreme and universal King has enacted and published the best laws for the government of the moral world, and of the human race in particular. Let the earth then rejoice that God has clearly revealed his will to us and not left us in inextricable perplexities about our duty to him and mankind..... Again, "Let the earth rejoice" that these laws are suitably enforced with proper sanctions. The sanctions are such as become a God of infinite wisdom, almighty power, inexorable justice, untainted holiness, and unbounded goodness and grace, and such as are agreeable to the nature of reasonable creatures formed for an immortal duration. Let the earth rejoice that the divine laws reach the inner man, and have power upon the hearts and consciences of men. Human laws can only smooth our external conduct at best, but the heart in the meantime may be disloyal and wicked. Now this defect is supplied by the laws of the King of Heaven, which are spiritual. They require a complete uniformity and self-consistency in us that heart and life may agree, and therefore they are wisely framed to make us entirely good.

II. "The Lord reigneth" *by his providence*, "let the earth rejoice." The providence of God is well described in our shorter catechism, "It is his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions."

"The Lord reigneth" over the kingdoms of the earth, and manages all their affairs according to his sovereign and wise pleasure, and he doth the same for his church. He can reduce confusion into order, make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder of it.

III. "The Lord reigneth" *upon a throne of grace!* "let the earth rejoice." It is the mediatorial government of the Messiah which the Psalmist had more immediately in view, and this is the principal cause of joy to the earth and its guilty inhabitants.

IV. And, lastly, the Lord will reign ere long upon *a throne of universal judgment* conspicuous to the assembled universe, "let the earth therefore rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad."—*Condensed from a Sermon by Samuel Davies*, 1724—1761.

Verse 1.—"*Let the earth rejoice.*" The earth is called upon to rejoice because the Lord reigneth; and well it may, on the day of its enlargement and final emancipation from evil, which seems to be here set forth—a day of judgment, and so also a day of terror and destruction to the enemies of God and goodness—a day when at his presence "the elements shall melt with fervent heat;" but his own righteousness and glory shall be manifested in the sight of all people. Then will the worldly, who serve idols in loving the creature more than the Creator, be confounded and overthrown; but then, too, will the righteous lift up their heads and rejoice because of God's judgments.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 1.—"*The multitude of the isles.*" In Poole's Synopsis we find from the various interpretations of different authors that the word may mean maritime regions, places beyond sea usually reached in ships, and all countries bordering on the ocean.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 1.—"*The isles.*" Figuratively the isles may be taken for all the churches.

Why isles? Because the waves of all temptations roar around them. But as an isle may be beaten by the waves which on every side dash around it, yet cannot be broken, and rather itself doth break the advancing waves, than by them is broken: so also the churches of God, springing up throughout the world, have suffered the persecutions of the ungodly, who roar around them on every side; and behold the isles stand fixed, and at last the sea is calmed.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—When Bulstrode Whitelock was embarked as Cromwell's envoy to Sweden, in 1653, he was much disturbed in mind, as he rested at Harwich the preceding night, which was very stormy, as he thought upon the distracted state of the nation. It happened that a confidential servant slept in an adjacent bed, who, finding that his master could not sleep, at length said:—

"Pray, sir, will you give me leave to ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"Pray, sir, do you think God governed the world very well before you came into it?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And pray, sir, do you think that he will govern it quite as well when you are gone out of it?"

"Certainly."

"Then pray, sir, excuse me, but do not you think you may trust him to govern it quite as well as long as you live?"

To this question Whitelock had nothing to reply; but turning about, soon fell fast asleep, till he was summoned to embark.—*G. S. Bowes, in "Illustrative Gatherings,"* 1862.

Verse 2.—"*Clouds and darkness are round about him.*" The figurative language in the poetical parts of the Old Testament is frequently taken from the historical books, and refers to the facts therein recorded; thus the appearances of God to the saints and patriarchs in old times is the origin of the figure in our text. If you look at the history of these appearances, you will find they were all accompanied with clouds and darkness. The cloud of the Lord went before the children of Israel when they departed from the land of bondage. This cloud had a dark and bright side, and was a symbol of the divine presence. Thus it preceded the people in all their marches, as a pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day. When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priest could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the house. When God descended upon Mount Sinai, "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, upon the top of the mount" (Exod. xix. 16, 18, 20). When our Saviour was transfigured before three of his disciples, "a bright cloud overshadowed them," from which proceeded the voice of the Father, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." And Peter, who was present there, afterwards referring to the fact, says that the voice proceeded "from the excellent glory." Thus, in all the symbols of the divine presence, there was a mixture of splendour with darkness and obscurity. So it is in the operations of Providence: in a moral and figurative sense, we may say that clouds and darkness surround all the operations of divine power and wisdom.

Clouds are emblems of obscurity; darkness, of distress. The works of God's providence are often obscure and productive of distress to mankind, though righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.—*Robert Hall.*

Verse 2.—"*Clouds and darkness are round about him.*" God doth govern the world *mysteriously.* As there are mysteries in the word, so in the works of God; δυσνόητά, "things hard to be understood," (2 Pet. iii. 16,) many riddles which nonplus and puzzle men of the largest and most piercing intellectuals: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take." Job xxiii. 8—10. God knoweth our ways, and counteth our steps; but the wisest of men do not know all God's ways. His way is frequently in the sea, and his chariot in the clouds; so that he is invisible, not only in his essence, but also in the design and tendence of his operations. Those that behold him with an eye of faith, do not yet see him

with an eye of understanding, so as to discern his way, and whither he is going. Paul assures us, " His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." Rom. xi. 33. Some of them, indeed, are obvious, plain, and easy ; we may upon the first view give a satisfactory account of them ; we may read righteousness, equity, mercy, goodness, love, in them, because written in capital letters, and with such beams of light as he that runs may read them. But others of God's ways are dark and obscure, so that they are out of our reach and above our sight. He that goes about in them to trace God, may quickly lose himself. They are like that hand-writing upon the wall, which none of Belshazzar's wise men could read or give the interpretation of (Dan. v. 8). There are *arcana imperii*, " secrets of state and government," which are not fit to be made common. But this may be our comfort :—though God doth not now give any account of his matters, nor is he obliged thereunto, yet he can give a very good and satisfactory account ; and one day his people shall be led into the mystery ; and, though many things which God doeth they know not now, yet they shall know them afterward ; and when they know, they shall approve and admire both the things, and the reason, and the end. They shall then be perfectly reconciled to all providences, and see that all were worthy of God, and that in all he acted θεοπρεπῶς, " as did highly become himself."—*Samuel Slater* (1704) *in* " *The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 2.—How despicable soever Christ's kingdom may seem to the world, yet it is full of heavenly majesty : " *clouds and darkness are round about him.*" The glory of Christ's kingdom is unsearchable, and hid from the eyes of the world, who cannot take up the things of God, except he reveal himself to them, and do open the eyes of the understanding : " *clouds and darkness are round about him.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—" *Darkness.*" This and the four following verses have a striking resemblance to the awful pomp of the march of God, as described Ps. xviii. 8, 9, and lxviii. 8. All the dread phenomena and meteoric array of nature are in attendance ; thunder and lightning, and earthquakes and volcanoes, with streams of melting lava, like streams of melting wax. Yet all is justice and equity, joy, exultation, and glory ; and the wicked alone—the adversaries of Jehovah—feel his judgments—the host of idols and their brutish worshippers.—*John Mason Good.*

Verse 2.—" *Righteousness and judgment.*" *Righteousness* is the essential perfection of the Divine Being. It is his nature: if there had been no creatures for him to govern, he would have had an unchangeable and invincible love of rectitude. *Judgment* is the application of the principle of righteousness in his government of his creatures and their actions ; it is a development of his rectitude in the management of the affairs of his great empire ; it is that superintendence over all, whereby the operations of all things are directed, to some vast and important end. Judgment implies measure and equity, in opposition to what is done without rule and consideration. All the divine conduct is equitable, regulated by rectitude, and everything is directed by a judgment that cannot err.—*Robert Hall.*

Verse 2.—" *Righteousness and judgment,*" etc. When the mercy and grace of our heavenly King are to be described, he is likened to the sun shining in a clear firmament, and gladdening universal nature with his beneficent ray. But when we are to conceive an idea of him, as going forth, in justice and judgment, to discomfit and punish his adversaries, the imagery is then borrowed from a troubled sky ; he is pictured as surrounded by clouds and darkness ; from whence issue lightnings and thunders, storms and tempests, affrighting and confounding the wicked and the impenitent.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 2.—The Lord manageth his kingdom and government with perfect equity. " *Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*" *Righteousness*, whereby he preserves, saves, and rewards the good ; *judgment*, whereby he punishes, confounds, and destroys the wicked : these are " *the habitation of his throne,*" his tribunal, his seat of judicature. These are the basis or foundation, which give unto his throne *rectitudinem et stabilitatem*, " rectitude and establishment." His throne is established in righteousness, and " the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre : " though there be clouds, yet no blemishes ; though darkness, yet no deformities : Ps. xcii. 15. Ever since the creation, all things have been done with that unreprovable exactness, that if the world were to begin again, and the affairs of it to be acted over again, there should not be an alteration in a tittle. All hath been so well, that nothing can be mended. Those dark and obscure passages of Providence, at which good men are startled, and by which all men are posed, are most excellent and curious

strokes, and as so many well-placed shades, which commend the work and admirably set off the beauty of Providence.—*Samuel Slater.*

Verse 2.—

Jove's firm decree, tho' wrapt in night,
Beams midst the gloom a constant light;
Man's fate obscure in darkness lies,
Not to be pierc'd by mortal eyes:
The just resolves of his high mind
A glorious consummation find;
Tho' in majestic state enthron'd
Thick clouds and dark enclose him round,
As from the tower of heav'n his eye
Surveys man's bold impiety;
Till his ripe wrath on vengeance bent,
He arms each god for punishment,
And from his high and holy throne
Sends all his awful judgments down.

—*Æschylus* [*R. Potter's translation*, 1808.]

Verse 3.—"*A fire goeth before him.*" Like a marshal or advance guard before a royal presence, or as the javelin men who precede a judge. Fire is the sign both of grace and wrath (Ex. iii. 2; Ps. xviii. 9). Majesty marches forth in both displays of Deity.—*C. H. S.* from *Poli Synopsis.*

Verse 3.—"*A fire goeth before him.*" That fire which Christ came to send upon the earth, the kindling blaze of the Holy Ghost, which came down in tongues of fire at Pentecost, to burn freely throughout the world, for the destruction of obstinate unbelievers and the purifying of those who gladly received the Word. And of this the prophet spake, saying, "I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD." (Ezek. xxxix. 6.) This divine flame goes still before the face of the Lord in his coming to every faithful soul, as it kindles with longing for him, and burns up all its sins therewith, as he heaps his coals of fire upon its head, to soften and purify it. "It must needs be," teaches a great saint,* "that the fervour of holy desire must go before his face to every soul to which he means to come, a flame which will burn up all the mildew of sin, and make ready a place for the Lord. And then the soul knows that the Lord is at hand, when it feels itself kindled with that fire, and it saith with the prophet, 'My heart was hot within me; then spake I with my tongue.'"—Psalm xxxix. 3.—*Augustine, and others, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 3.—"*A fire goeth before him.*" There is no less, but rather more wrath attending the despisers of the Gospel, than did attend the giving out of the law. Heb. xii. 29.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*His lightnings enlightened the world.*" This passage is applied by Munster to the rapid increase of the kingdom of Christ: for the sound of the Gospel sped through all the world like lightning. There is a prediction almost to this effect in Zech. ix. 14: "His arrow shall go forth as the lightning, and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet."—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 4.—"*The earth saw and trembled.*" The bare *sight* of thee caused the earth to tremble (Ps. lxxvii. 16).—*A. R. Faussett.*

Verse 5.—"*The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord.*" For a parallel passage see Mic. i. 4. There the words are applied to the judgment of God about to fall on the *people of the covenant:* here they are applied to the judgment on the *God-opposing world.* The fact that 'judgment has begun at the house of God' is a token that judgments of a far more destructive kind will overtake 'the (openly) ungodly and sinners' (1 Pet. iv. 7). "*The hills*" symbolize the heights of man's self-exalting pride of intellect, wealth, and power.—*A. R. Faussett.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord of the whole earth.*" In this title lies concealed the reason for the liquefaction of the hills, for the God who here manifests himself is he who created the earth, and is able therefore to reduce it to nothing.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 6.—"*The heavens declare,*" etc. He does not say, the heavens exercise,

* S. Bernard.

but they declare his righteousness. To the eyes of the wicked the righteousness of God is hidden, until it is made manifest by an astonishing miracle.

"*The heavens.*" This phrase is not, *God* declares, but *the heavens* declare his righteousness. The creature is the servant and revealer of the righteousness of God.

"*His righteousness.*" He says not, the heavens declare *our* righteousness, but *his* righteousness. They testify that God is the righteous judge, rather than that the saints themselves are righteous.

"*All the people.*" Not only do the wicked, those oppressive monsters, see, but "all the people." God so reveals his glory that not only the wicked who are punished may see it, but also other mortals to their edification.

"*And shall see.*" They shall not simply hear or know, but they shall see. This at last is a powerful and convincing demonstration of the righteousness of God, which is put before their eyes.

"*His glory.*" Not merely the destruction of the wicked and vengeance on the enemies of God, but his glory; for in the destruction of the wicked, and the deliverance of the innocent, the glory of God is declared. Thus the prophet rejoices not so much concerning the destruction of the wicked as concerning the glory of God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 7.—"*Confounded be all they that serve graven images,*" etc. Albeit such as are lovers of imagery not only do serve images, but also will defend the use of images in the exercise of religion, and glory in them; yet shall they at length be ashamed of their boasting.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—"*Worship him, all ye gods,*" or "*Let all the angels of God worship him.*" The matter of the Psalm itself makes it manifest that the Holy Ghost treateth in it about God's bringing in the firstborn into the world, and the setting up of his kingdom in him. A kingdom is described wherein God would reign, which should destroy idolatry and false worship; a kingdom wherein the isles of the Gentiles should rejoice, being called to an interest therein; a kingdom that was to be preached, proclaimed, declared, unto the increase of light and holiness in the world, with the manifestation of the glory of God unto the ends of all the earth: every part whereof declareth the kingdom of Christ to be intended in the Psalm, and consequently that it is a prophecy of the bringing in of the first-begotten into the world. Our inquiry is, whether the angels be intended in these words. They are כָּל־אֱלֹהִים *omnes dii;* and are so rendered by Jerome, *Adorate eum, omnes dii;* and by our authorised version, "*Worship him, all ye gods.*" The preceding words are, "*Confounded be all they that serve graven images,*" הַמִּתְהַלְלִים בָּאֱלִילִים, *that boast themselves in* or *of* "*idols,*" "*vanities, nothings,*" as the word signifies, wherein ensues this apostrophe, "*Worship him,* כָּל־אֱלֹהִים, *all ye gods.*" And who they are is our present inquiry. Some, as all the modern Jews, say that it is the gods of the Gentiles, those whom they worship, that are intended; so making אֱלֹהִים and אֱלִילִים, "*gods,*" and "*vain idols,*" to be the same in this place.

But (1) It cannot be that the Psalmist should exhort the *idols of the heathen,* some whereof were *devils,* some *dead men,* some *inanimate parts of the creation,* unto a reverential worshipping of God reigning over all. Hence the Targumist, seeing the vanity of that interpretation, perverts the words, and renders them, "Worship before him, all ye nations which serve idols."

(2) אֱלֹהִים, "Elohim," is so far in this place from being exegetical of אֱלִילִים "gods," or "vain idols"; that it is put in direct opposition to it, as is evident from the words themselves.

(3) The word Elohim, which most frequently denoteth the true God, doth never alone, and absolutely taken, signify *false gods* or idols, but only when it is joined with some other word discovering its application, as *his god,* or *their gods,* or *the gods of this or that people,* in which case it is rendered by the LXX., sometimes εἴδωλον, an "idol;" sometimes χειροποίητον, an "idol made with hands;" sometimes βδέλυγμα an "abomination." But here it hath no such limitation or restriction.

Whereas, therefore, there are some creatures who, by reason of some peculiar excellency and likeness unto God, or subordination unto him in their work, are called gods, it must be those, or some of them, that are intended in the expression. Now these are either *magistrates* or *angels.*

(1) *Magistrates* are somewhere called elohim, because of the representation they make of God in his power, and their peculiar subordination unto him in their working.

The Jews, indeed, contend that no other magistrates but those only of the great Sanhedrim are anywhere called gods; but that concerns not our present inquiry. Some magistrates are so called, but none of them are intended by the Psalmist, there being no occasion administered unto him of any such apostrophe unto them.

(2) Angels are called elohim: Λεγόμενοι θεοί, 1 Cor. viii. 5. They have the name of God attributed unto them, and these are they whom the Psalmist speaks unto. Having called on the whole creation to rejoice in the bringing forth of the kingdom of God, and pressed his exhortation upon things on the earth, he turns unto the ministering angels, and calls on them to the discharge of their duty unto the King of that kingdom. Hence the Targumist, in the beginning of Psalm xcvi. expressly mentioned "his high angels," joining in his praise and worship, using the Greek word ἄγγελος, for distinction's sake, as on the same account it often occurs in the Targum.

We have thus evinced that the Psalm treats about the bringing in of the firstborn into the world; as also that they are the ministering angels who are here commanded to worship him.—*John Owen.*

Verse 8.—"*Zion heard,*" etc. But why, it may be asked, does he speak of those things being *heard*, rather than *seen*? Two reasons may be given for this. First, he would have God's believing people anticipate the blessing by hope, ere the consummation of it arrived; and, again, the language intimates, that the glory of the Gospel would be spread to such distant quarters, that the Jews would rather hear of it by report, than witness it with their own eyes.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—"*The daughters of Judah rejoiced.*" David alludes to a custom familiar in Judea, of forming choral bands of maidens after a victory or some happy circumstance. Thus after the passage of the Red Sea, when the Egyptians were drowned and the people of God brought in safety to the farther shore, Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her with timbrels and dancing, saying, Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. When Goliath was slain by David, it is said 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7, "When David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women sang as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 10.—"*Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.*" It is evident that our conversion is sound when we loathe and hate sin from the heart: a man may know his hatred of evil to be true, first, if it be universal: he that hates sin truly, hates all sin. Secondly, true hatred is fixed; there is no appeasing it but by abolishing the thing hated. Thirdly, hatred is a more rooted affection than anger: anger may be appeased, but hatred remains and sets itself against the whole kind. Fourthly, if our hatred be true, we hate all evil, in ourselves first, and then in others; he that hates a toad, would hate it most in his own bosom. Many, like Judah, are severe in censuring others (Gen. xxxviii. 24), but partial to themselves. Fifthly, he that hates sin truly, hates the greatest sin in the greatest measure; he hates all evil in a just proportion. Sixthly, our hatred is right if we can endure admonition and reproof for sin, and not be enraged: therefore, those that swell against reproof do not appear to hate sin.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 10.—"*Hate evil.*" Sin seemeth to have its name of *sana*, שנא (the word here used) because it is most of all to be hated, as the greatest evil; as that which setteth us furthest from God the greatest good.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—Get mortifying graces, especially love to God, for *those that love the Lord, will hate evil.* And the more they love him, the more they will hate it.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 10.—God is a Spirit, and he looks to our very spirits; and what we are in our spirits, in our hearts and affections, that we are to him. Therefore, what ill we shun, let us do it from the heart, by hating it first. A man may avoid an evil action from fear, or out of other respects, but that is not sincerity. Therefore look to thy heart, see that thou hate evil, and let it come from sincere looking to God. "*Ye that love the Lord, hate evil,*" saith David: not only avoid it, but hate it; and not only hate it, but hate it out of love to God.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 10.—"*Hate evil.*"

LUCIAN. I am the declared enemy of all false pretence, all quackery, all lies, and all puffing. I am a lover of truth, of beauty, of undisguised nature; in short, of everything that is lovely.

PHILOSOPHY. To love and to hate, they say, spring from one and the same source.

LUCIAN. That, O philosophy, must be best known to you. My business is to hate the bad, and to love and commend the good; and that I stick to.—*Lucian.* Piscat. c. 8.

Verse 10.—"*He preserveth the souls of his saints.*" Let us observe that there are two parts of divine protection—preservation and deliverance. Preservation is keeping lest we should be imperilled: deliverance has reference to those already involved in perils. The shepherd keeps his sheep lest they should fall among wolves; but if perchance they should fall into the clutches of the wolf he pursues and delivers. Both parts the Prophet exhibits, persuading us that it is the Lord who keeps the souls of his saints lest they fall into the hands of the wicked; and if they should fall, he will deliver them.—*Musculus.*

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown.*" זָרַע does not here signify sown = strewn into the earth, but strewn along his life's way, so that he, the righteous one, advances step by step in the light. Hitzig rightly compares κίδνανται, σκίδνανται, used of the dawn and of the sun. Of the former Virgil also says, *Et jam prima novo spargebat lumine terras.*—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown.*"

> And now Aurora, from the saffron bed
> Of her Tithonus rising, sow'd the earth
> With dewy light.
>
> —*C. R. Kennedy's Translation of Virgil.*

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown.*"

> Now Morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime
> Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearl.
>
> —*John Milton.*

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown for the righteous.*" Most thoughtful men increase in faith and spiritual discernment by often doubting, and by having their doubts cleared up. Religious thought in this way grows into a personal feeling; and the solid rock of truer conviction and deeper trust as a firm foundation for the soul to build upon for eternity, remains behind after all the abrasion of loose and more perishable materials through speculation. A different if not a truer revelation of heavenly realities is given to us through the dark distressing process of doubting, than through the bright joyful exercise of unhesitating faith; just as our knowledge of the chemistry of the sun and stars, of the physical constitution of distant worlds, is derived not from the bright bands of their spectrum, which reveal only their size and shape, but from Fraunhofer's wonderful lines—those black blank spaces breaking up the spectrum bands—which tell us of rays arrested in their path and prevented from bearing their message to us by particular metallic vapours. Unto the upright, just because of the purity and singleness of their motives and the earnestness of their quest after truth, there ariseth light in the darkness. We must remember that "light is *sown* for the righteous"; that its more or less rapid germination and development depend upon the nature of the soil on which it falls and the circumstances that influence it; that, like seed, it at first lies concealed in the dark furrow, under the cheerless clod, in the cold ungenial winter; but that even then, while shining in the darkness, while struggling with doubts and difficulties of the mind and heart, it is nevertheless the source of much comfort, and in its slow, quickening, and hidden growth the cause of lively hope, and of bright anticipation of that time when it shall blossom and ripen in the summer-time of heaven—shine more and more unto the perfect day.—*Hugh Macmillan, in "The Ministry of Nature,"* 1871.

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown for the righteous:*" sown in these two fields, 1. *Of God's eternal decree,* in his power, promise, grace and love. These are the "upper springs." 2. In the field of their *graces,* and holy *duties*; these are the "nether springs;" both which fall into one river, and "make glad the city of God;" both these fields yield a plentiful harvest of comfort to the godly.—*John Sheffield, in "The Rising Sun,"* 1654.

Verse 11.—"*Sown.*" The righteous man's harvest is secret and hidden. It

lieth, like the corn covered in the ground ; " their life is hid ; " and " it is not manifest what they shall be ; " " no eye hath seen, or ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what the Lord hath laid up for them that love him " (Col. iii. 3 ; 1 John iii. 2 ; 1 Cor. ii. 9). Name what you can, and it will be a mystery, a secret thing, that belongs to the upright in heart. First, is not the decree of God a hidden thing ? a depth unsearchable ? and able to make a man astonied ? Did not Paul cry out, " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! " (Rom. xii. 33). And is not the incarnation of Christ a secret too ? what more to be admired than that God should become man, and be manifested in the flesh ? The very angels desired to peep into this mystery. 1 Tim. iii. 16 ; 1 Pet. i. 12 ; Isai. vii. 14. Again, the conversion and regeneration of a sinner is admirable ; it's a noble, yet a secret work : Nicodemus a great doctor could not see it. And if natural births be so strange, what shall we judge of this ? Moreover, peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost is no open matter ; none knoweth it, but he that hath it. So is the earnest of the Spirit, and true seal of salvation ; the power, life and sweetness of the word ; the remission and pardon of sin, with certainty of salvation. And in the fifth place, the harvest is secret, if we consider where it is growing. One close is, *the secret purpose of God ;* and who can understand it ? A second is, *his word ;* and how hardly is that to be searched into ? A third is, *a man's own heart ;* and is not that both secret and deceitful ? And last of all, the very principal part of the harvest is hid *with Christ in heaven ;* and when he appears, it will appear what it shall be.—*John Barlow.*

Verses 11 *and* 12 are both most savoury and precious notanda.—Give me to experience, O Lord, those revelations which follow in the train of obedience ; and O that I felt the charm and enjoyment of holiness, so as to give thanks, in the reflection that with a holy God holiness is an indispensable requisite for our appearing in his presence. We should further be grateful because of this essential attribute in the Godhead ; for it is in virtue of his holiness that evil cannot dwell with him, and that the world will at length be delivered, and this conclusively, from the wickedness and malice and vile sensualities by which it is now so disquieted and deformed. Hasten this consummation, O Lord.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 12.—" *Rejoice in the Lord.*" We must " rejoice evermore ; " for even holy mourning hath the seed of joy in it, which the soul finds by that time it is over. if not in it.—*William Cooper, in the " Morning Exercises."*

Verse 12.—" *Rejoice in the Lord.*" I. Our rejoicing in the Lord denotes our taking a very sincere and cordial pleasure in whatever relates to the ever-blessed God, particularly his existence, perfections, and providence ; the discoveries of his will to us, especially in his word ; the interest we have in him, and the relations wherein we stand to him ; his continual protection, guidance and influence ; his gracious intercourse with us in the duties of religious worship ; and, finally, the hope he has given us of fulness of joy, in his beatific and most glorious presence above. II. Rejoicing in the Lord signifies that our joy in God is superior to all our other joys, otherwise it is a joy unworthy of him, and no way, or not savingly, profitable to us. III. Whatever else we rejoice in, we are to rejoice in such a manner, that we may be properly said to rejoice in the Lord, even when other things are the immediate occasions of our joy. The God we serve is not an envious and a malevolent Being, but exceeding liberal and kind ; he has created us with an inextinguishable desire after happiness, as a secret intimation that he intends to make us happy, if we do not make ourselves miserable ; and while our principal happiness is lodged in himself, and to be found nowhere else, (in which he has shown the singular regard he has to our nature), he feeds our hearts with a thousand little rivulets of joy and satisfaction from created objects : our bodies are endowed with a variety of senses and appetites, and our souls with powers and faculties of their own ; nor was any one sense or faculty made in vain, or to lie always idle and useless ; but every sense, and much more every mental faculty, has not one, but a great number of things provided to entertain it. But then the soul is not to lose itself in this maze and labyrinth of delight ; it is not by this variety to be diverted from that one infinite good, who eminently contains in himself all the various kinds and degrees of true joy.—*Henry Grove,* 1683—1737-8.

Verse 12.—" *Rejoice . . . and give thanks.*" Two things are to be observed : One, that he unites joy in the Lord and praise of God. Rightly : for it is not possible

for a man to praise the Lord truly and from the soul, unless he rejoices in him. Another, that he connects the praise of God with the remembrance of his holiness. And with good reason: for it is the chief use of divine praise, that by the exercise thereof, we should keep fresh in our souls the remembrance of God and of all the blessings received from him. Thus this verse contains the root and fruit of divine praise. The root is joy in God; the fruit is the remembrance of God and his goodness.—*Musculus.*

Verse 12.—" *Ye righteous . . . all ye that are upright in heart.*" Some may say the *just* or the *righteous* man may thus rejoice; but where are any such? "Who can say," saith Solomon, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"? No; "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." A vain thing may it seem then to exhort men to rejoice, when the condition annexed is such as excludeth all from rejoicing. To what end is it to incite the *just* to rejoice when there are none such that may rejoice? The answer is ready at hand in the latter part of the verse. By *just* are meant all such as are "*upright in heart,*" which clause is added partly to exclude the hypocrite, and partly to temper and qualify the rigour of the term before used, if it were strictly and exactly taken. So that it is a note as well of *extent*, as of *restraint.*

1. Of *restraint*, to exclude from this joy, and all right therein, all dissemblers, all counterfeit Christians, all hollow-hearted hypocrites, that repent in the face but not in the heart; that make a sour face that they may seem to fast, saith our Saviour, that justify themselves in the sight of men, but God seeth their hearts what they are, and seeth them to be far other than either they should be, or they pretend themselves to be.

2. Of *extent*, to extend and enlarge this joy, the ground of it and the right to it, to all that are single and sincere-hearted; and so to give and afford a share and a portion in it as well to those that are sincerely righteous on earth, as to those that are perfectly righteous in heaven. It is as a *key* to let in the one. It is as a *bolt* to bar out the other.—*Thomas Gataker.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The sovereignty of God a theme for joy in many respects and to many persons, especially when exhibited in the reign of grace.

Verses 3—6.—The accompaniments of Christ's gospel advent. I. The fire of his Spirit. II. The light of the word. III. The commotion in the world. IV. The removal of obstacles. V. The display of the divine glory.

Verses 4, 5.—I. The terrors which accompanied the giving of the law: "his lightnings," etc. II. The reasons for those terrors. I. To show the guilt of man. 2. His inability to keep the law. 3. To show his need of a law-fulfiller on his behalf. —*G. R.*

Verses 4—6.—A description of the giving of the law. I. The lawgiver's heralds, or, *conviction*, ver. 4. II. The effect of his presence, or, *contrition*, ver. 5. III. The proclamation of the law, or, *instruction* (as by a voice from heaven, ver. 6). IV. The effect of the lawgiving, or, divine *manifestation* (ver. 6, latter clause).—*C. D.*

Verse 5.—The presence of God in the church her invincible power.

Verse 6.—The confusion of heart which will ensue from idolatrous worship, even if it be only spiritual. Breaking of the idol, disappointment in it, injury by it, removal from it, etc.

Verse 8.—I. The world is terrified at the divine judgments. II. The church rejoices in them, "Zion heard," etc.; or, I. When the world is glad the church is sad. II. When the world is sad the church is glad.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—I. What you do now:—"Love the Lord." Reciprocally, personally, supremely, habitually, progressively. II. What you must do:—"Hate evil." Evil working, evil writing, evil speaking, evil thinking; renounce evil, master it, supplant it.—*W. J.*

Verse 10.—I. The distinguishing peculiarity of the people of God: "Ye that love the Lord." II. Its manifestation: "Hate evil." III. Its reward: "The Lord preserveth," etc.; "He delivereth," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 10, 11.—David notes in God three characteristics of a true friend: First, with fidelity and good will he keepeth the souls of the pious. Secondly, with his power and majesty he delivereth them from their enemies. Thirdly, with his wisdom and holiness he enlightens and refreshes them.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 11.—I. *Where is it sown?* The answer to this will come under the following heads, viz. In the purpose of God, In the purchase of Christ, In the office of the Spirit, In the promises of the Word, In the work of Grace wrought in the heart, and, In the preparations made above in glory. II. *When is the season of reaping?* And to this, the answer is, The season of reaping the first fruits, of reaping in part, is at certain times in the present life; the season of reaping more fully is at death; and of reaping most fully and perfectly commenceth at the day of judgment and is continued throughout eternity. 1. The season of reaping in part falls out at some times within the course of this present life. Particularly (1) Times of affliction have been to the upright, seasons of reaping the joy sown. By this they have been prepared for sufferings, supported under them, and made afterwards to forget their sorrows, by reason of the gladness breaking in from the affecting discovery of what God has done for them, and wrought in them. Thus God causeth light to arise in darkness, and in a rainy day refresheth them with a beam from heaven, brightening the drops that fall; brings his people into the wilderness, and there speaks comfortably unto them. (2.) Seasons of suffering for the sake of Christ and the gospel, have been seasons wherein the upright have begun to reap the joy sown. When called to resist unto blood, striving against sin, they have need of more than ordinary comfort, to enable them to meet, and hold firm through the fiery trial: and they have found that then encouragement hath been yielded them in a degree they never before experienced (John xvi. 33). (3.) Seasons wherein God has called the righteous to great and difficult service, have been seasons of reaping the beginnings of joys sown. When their heavenly Father has lifted up the light of his countenance upon them, and shed abroad the sense of his love within them, they are prepared to go whither he sends them, and to do whatever he bids them. (4.) After sore conflicts with Satan, the upright have been revived by the springing of the joy sown. After Christ was tempted came an angel to comfort him. And for the encouragement of his followers, he declares, Rev. ii. 17, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (5.) In waiting upon God in the sanctuary the upright have met with him, and so have had the beginnings of joy sown. 2. A fuller reaping time will be at death; with some as the soul is going; but with all immediately after its release from the body. 3. The season in which the righteous shall reap their joy sown, to the full, and in perfection, shall be at the last day. Then Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, and lead them all in a body, and all of them perfected, into that presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 12.—"*Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*" Be thankful for—1. Its unsullied perfection. 2. Its wondrous forbearance. 3. Its place in our salvation. 4. Its approachableness through Christ. 5. Its predicted triumphs.—*W. J.*

Verse 12.—I. A remembrance at which the world does not give thanks. II. Reasons which make it a matter of thanksgiving with the righteous. Its bearing on the way of salvation; on the doctrines of the gospel; on the law of the Christian life.—*C. D.*

PSALM XCVIII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*This sacred ode, which bears simply the title of "A Psalm," follows fitly upon the last, and is evidently an integral part of the series of royal Psalms. If* XCVII. *described the publication of the gospel, and so the setting up of the kingdom of heaven, the present Psalm is a kind of* CORONATION HYMN, *officially proclaiming the conquering Messiah as Monarch over the nations, with blast of trumpets, clapping of hands, and celebration of triumphs. It is a singularly bold and lively song. The critics have fully established the fact that similar expressions occur in Isaiah, but we see no force in the inference that therefore it was written by him; on this principle half the books in the English language might be attributed to Shakespeare. The fact is that these associated Psalms make up a mosaic, in which each one of them has an appropriate place, and is necessary to the completeness of the whole; and therefore we believe them to be each and all the work of one and the same mind. Paul, if we understand him aright, ascribes Psalm ninety-five to David, and as we believe that the same writer must have written the whole group, we ascribe this also to the son of Jesse. However that may be, the song is worthy to rank among the most devout and soul-stirring of sacred lyrics.*

DIVISION.—*We have here three stanzas of three verses each. In the first,* 1—3, *the subject of praise is announced; in the second,* 4—6, *the manner of that praise is prescribed; and in the third,* 7—9, *the universal extent of it is proclaimed.*

EXPOSITION.

O SING unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

1. "*O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things.*" We had a new song before (Ps. xcvi.) because the Lord was coming, but now we have another new song because he has come, and seen and conquered. Jesus, our King, has lived a marvellous life, died a marvellous death, risen by a marvellous resurrection, and ascended marvellously into heaven. By his divine power he has sent forth the Holy Spirit doing marvels, and by that sacred energy his disciples have also wrought marvellous things and astonished all the earth. Idols have fallen, superstitions have withered, systems of error have fled, and empires of cruelty have perished. For all this he deserves the highest praise. His acts have proved his Deity, Jesus is Jehovah, and therefore we sing unto him as the LORD. "*His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory*"; not by the aid of others, but by his own unweaponed hand his marvellous conquests have been achieved. Sin, death, and hell fell beneath his solitary prowess, and the idols and the errors of mankind have been overthrown and smitten by his hand alone. The victories of Jesus among men are all the more wonderful because they are accomplished by means to all appearance most inadequate; they are due not to physical but to moral power—the energy of goodness, justice, truth; in a word, to the power of his *holy* arm. His holy influence has been the sole cause of success. Jesus never stoops to use policy, or brute force; his unsullied perfections secure to him a real and lasting victory over all the powers of evil, and that victory will be gained as dexterously and easily as when a warrior strikes his adversary with his *right hand* and stretches him prone upon the earth. Glory be unto the Conqueror, let new songs be chanted to his praise. Stirred by contemplating his triumphs, our pen could not forbear to praise him in the following hymn:—

Forth to the battle rides our King;
He climbs his conquering car;
He fits his arrows to the string,
And smites his foes afar.

Convictions pierce the stoutest hearts,
They bleed, they faint, they die;
Slain by Immanuel's well-aimed darts,
In helpless heaps they lie.

Behold, he bares his two-edged sword,
And deals almighty blows,
His all-revealing, killing word
'Twixt joints and marrow goes.

Anon arrayed in robes of grace
He rides the trampled plain,
With pity beaming from his face,
And mercy in his train.

Mighty to save he now appears,
Mighty to raise the dead,
Mighty to stanch the bleeding wound,
And lift the fallen head.

Victor alike in love and arms,
Myriads before him bend;
Such are the Conqueror's matchless charms,
Each foe becomes his friend.

They crown him on the battle-field
Of all the nations King;
With trumpets and with cornets loud
They make the welkin ring.

The salvation which Jesus has accomplished is wrought out with wonderful wisdom, hence it is ascribed to his right hand; it meets the requirements of justice, hence we read of his holy arm; it is his own unaided work, hence all the glory is ascribed to him; and it is marvellous beyond degree, hence it deserves a new song.

2. "*The Lord hath made known his salvation,*"—by the coming of Jesus and by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, by whose power the gospel was preached among the Gentiles. The Lord is to be praised not only for effecting human salvation, but also for making it known, for man would never have discovered it for himself; nay, not so much as one single soul would ever have found out for himself the way of mercy through a Mediator; in every case it is a divine revelation to the mind and heart. In God's own light his light is seen. He must reveal his Son in us, or we shall be unable to discern him. "*His righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.*" This word "righteousness" is the favourite word of the apostle of the Gentiles; he loves to dwell on the Lord's method of making man righteous, and vindicating divine justice by the atoning blood. What songs ought we to render who belong to a once heathen race, for that blessed gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." This is no close secret; it is clearly taught in Scripture, and has been plainly preached among the nations. What was hidden in the types is "openly shewed" in the gospel.

3. "*He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel.*" To them Jesus came in the flesh, and to them was the gospel first preached; and though they counted themselves unworthy of eternal life, yet the covenant was not broken, for the true Israel were called into fellowship and still remain so. The mercy which endureth for ever, and the fidelity which cannot forget a promise, secure to the chosen seed the salvation long ago guaranteed by the covenant of grace. "*All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*" Not to Abraham's seed alone after the flesh, but to the elect among all nations, has grace been given; therefore, let the whole church of God sing unto him a new song. It was no small blessing, or little miracle, that throughout all lands the gospel should be published in so short a time, with such singular success and such abiding results. Pentecost deserves a new song as well as the Passion and the Resurrection; let our hearts exult as we remember it. *Our* God, our own for ever blessed God, has been honoured by those who once bowed down before dumb idols; his salvation has not only been heard of but seen among all people, it has been experienced as well as explained; his Son is the actual Redeemer of a multitude out of all nations.

4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a Psalm.

6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

In these three verses we are taught how to praise the Lord.

4. "*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth.*" Every tongue must applaud, and that with the vigour which joy of heart alone can arouse to action. As men shout when they welcome a king, so must we. Loud hosannas, full of happiness, must be lifted up. If ever men shout for joy it should be when the Lord comes among them in the proclamation of his gospel reign. John Wesley said to his people, "Sing lustily, and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan." "*Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise;*" or "*Burst forth, and sing, and play.*" Let every form of exultation be used, every kind of music pressed into the service till the accumulated praise causes the skies to echo the joyful tumult. There is no fear of our being too hearty in magnifying the God of our salvation, only we must take care that the song comes from the heart, otherwise the music is nothing but a noise in his ears, whether it be caused by human throats, or organ pipes, or far-resounding trumpets. Loud let our hearts ring out the honours of our conquering Saviour; with all our might let us extol the Lord who has vanquished all our enemies, and led our captivity captive. He will do this best who is most in love with Jesus:—

"I've found the pearl of greatest price,
My heart doth sing for joy;
And sing I must, a Christ I have,
Oh, what a Christ have I!"

5. "*Sing unto the Lord with the harp.*" Skill in music should not be desecrated to the world's evil mirth, it should aid the private devotions of the saint, and then, like George Herbert, he will sing,—

"My God, my God,
My music shall find thee,
And every string
Shall have his attribute to sing."

Martin Luther was thus wont to praise the Lord, whom he loved so well. God's praises should be performed in the best possible manner, but their sweetness mainly lies in spiritual qualities. The concords of faith and repentance, the harmonies of obedience and love are true music in the ear of the Most High, and better please him than "heaving bellows taught to blow," though managed by the noblest master of human minstrelsy. "*With the harp.*" A very sweet instrument of music, and capable of great expression. The repetition of the word is highly poetical, and shows that the daintiest expressions of poetry are none too rich for the praise of God. His worship should be plain, but not uncouth, if we can compass elegancies of expression there are occasions upon which they will be most appropriate; God, who accepts the unlettered ditty of a ploughman, does not reject the smooth verse of a Cowper, or the sublime strains of a Milton. All repetitions are not vain repetitions, in sacred song there should be graceful repeats, they render the sense emphatic, and help to fire the soul; even preachers do not amiss when they dwell on a word and sound it out again and again, till dull ears feel its emphasis. "*And the voice of a Psalm,*" or with *a musical voice*, as distinguished from common speech. Our voice has in it many modulations; there is the voice of conversation, the voice of complaint, the voice of pleading, the voice of command, and there ought to be with each of us the voice of a Psalm. Man's voice is at its best when it sings the best words in the best spirit to the best of Beings. Love and war must not monopolise the lyric muse; the love of God and the conquests of Immanuel should win to themselves man's sweetest strains. Do we sing enough unto the Lord? May not the birds of the air rebuke our sullen and ungrateful silence?

6. "*With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise.*" God's worship should be heartily loud. The far resounding trump and horn well symbolise the power which should be put forth in praise. "*Before the Lord, the King.*" On coronation days, and when beloved monarchs ride abroad, the people shout and the trumpets sound till the walls ring again. Shall men be more enthusiastic for their earthly princes than for the divine King? Is there no loyalty left among the subjects of the blessed and only Potentate? *King Jehovah* is his name; and there is none like it, have we no joyful noise for him? Let but the reigning power of Jesus be felt in the soul and we shall cast aside that chill mutter, drowned by the pealing organ, which is now so commonly the substitute for earnest congregational singing.

Say, if your hearts are tuned to sing,
  Is there a subject greater?
Harmony all its strains may bring,
  But Jesus' name is sweeter.

Who of his love doth once partake,
  He evermore rejoices;
Melody in our hearts we make,
  Melody with our voices.

7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

8 Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the hills be joyful together

9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

7. "*Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.*" Even its thunders will not be too grand for such a theme. Handel, in some of his sublime choruses, would have been glad of its aid to express his lofty conceptions, and assuredly the inspired Psalmist did well to call in such infinite uproar. The sea is his, let it praise its Maker. Within and upon its bosom it bears a wealth of goodness, why should it be denied a place in the orchestra of nature? Its deep bass will excellently suit the mystery of the divine glory. "*The world, and they that dwell therein.*" The land should be in harmony with the ocean. Its mountains and plains, cities and villages, should prolong the voice of jubilee which welcomes the Lord of all. Nothing can be more sublime than this verse; the muses of Parnassus cannot rival the muse of Zion, the Castalian fount never sparkled like that "fount of every blessing" to which sacred bards are wont to ascribe their inspiration. Yet no song is equal to the majesty of the theme when Jehovah, the King, is to be extolled.

8. "*Let the floods clap their hands.*" The rolling rivers, the tidal estuaries, the roaring cataracts, are here summoned to pay their homage, and to clap their hands, as men do when they greet their sovereigns with acclamation. "*Let the hills be joyful together,*" or in concert with the floods. Silent as are the mighty mountains, let them forget themselves, and burst forth into a sublime uproariousness of mirth, such as the poet described when he wrote those vivid lines—

"Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud."

9. "*Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth.*" Stiller music such as made the stars twinkle with their soft kind eyes suited his first coming at Bethlehem, but his second advent calls for trumpets, for he is a judge; and for all earth's acclamations, for he has put on his royal splendour. The rule of Christ is the joy of nature. All things bless his throne, yea, and the very coming of it. As the dawn sets the earth weeping for joy at the rising of the sun, till the dewdrops stand in her eyes, so should the approach of Jesu's universal reign make all creation glad. "*With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.*" This is the joy of it. No tyrant and no weakling is he, to oppress the good or to indulge the vain, his law is good, his action right, his government the embodiment of justice. If ever there was a thing to rejoice in upon this poor, travailing earth, it is the coming

of such a deliverer, the ascension to the universal throne of such a governor. All hail, Jesus! all hail! Our soul faints with delight at the sound of thine approaching chariots, and can only cry, "Come quickly. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

Keble's version of the last four verses is so truly beautiful that we cannot deny our readers the luxury of perusing it:—

"Ring out, with horn and trumpet ring,
In shouts before the Lord the King:
Let ocean with his fulness swing
In restless unison:

"Earth's round and all the dwellers there,
The mighty floods the burden bear,
And clap the hand: in choral air
Join every mountain lone.

"Tell out before the Lord, that he
Is come, the Judge of earth to be,
To judge the world in equity,
Do right to realm and throne."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The inscription of the Psalm in Hebrew is only the single word מִזְמוֹר *Mizmor*, "Psalm" (whence probably the title "orphan Mizmor" in the Talmudic treatise Avodah Zara).—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Title.—Hengstenberg remarks, "This is the only Psalm which is entitled simply 'a Psalm.' This common name of all the Psalms cannot be employed here in its general sense, but must have a peculiar meaning." He considers that it indicates that this is the lyric accompaniment of the more decidedly prophetical Psalm which precedes it,—in fact, the Psalm of that prophecy. He also notes that in the original we have in verses 5 and 6 words akin to the title brought into great prominence, and perhaps this may have suggested it.

Title.—It is at least interesting to notice that a song of Zion which so exults in the king's arrival should be called pre-eminently מִזְמוֹר Mizmor; as if the Psalm of Psalms were that which celebrates *Israel, and the earth at large, blessed in Messiah's Advent.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—A noble, spirit-stirring Psalm. It may have been written on the occasion of a great national triumph at the time; but may, perhaps, afterwards be taken up at the period of the great millennial restoration of all things. The victory here celebrated may be in prophetic vision, and that at Armageddon. Then will salvation and righteousness be openly manifested in the sight of the hostile nations. Israel will be exalted; and the blessed conjunction of mercy and truth will gladden and assure the hearts of all who at that time are Israelites indeed. Godliness will form the reigning characteristic of the whole earth.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Whole Psalm.—The subject of the Psalm is the praise of Jehovah. It consists of three strophes of three verses each. The first strophe shows *why*, the second *how* Jehovah is to be praised; and the third *who* are to praise him.—*Frederick Fysh.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is an evident prophecy of Christ's coming to save the world; and what is here *foretold* by David is, in the Blessed Virgin's Song, chanted forth as being *accomplished.* David is the *Voice*, and Mary is the *Echo.*

1. DAVID. "O sing unto the Lord a new song." (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." (The *Echo.*)
2. DAVID. "He hath done marvellous things." (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. "He that is mighty hath done great things." (The *Echo.*)
3. DAVID. "With his own right hand and holy arm hath he gotten himself the victory." (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. "He hath showed strength with his arm, and scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." (The *Echo.*)

4. DAVID. " The Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly showed," &c. (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. " His mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation." (The *Echo.*)
5. DAVID. " He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel." (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. " He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy." (The *Echo.*)

These parallels are very striking; and it seems as if Mary had this Psalm in her eye when she composed her song of triumph. And this is a farther argument that the whole Psalm, whether it record the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, or the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, is yet to be ultimately understood of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, and the proclamation of his gospel through all the nations of the earth: and taken in this view, no language can be too strong, nor poetic imagery too high, to point out the unsearchable riches of Christ.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—*" O sing unto the Lord a new song."* This is man's end, to seek God in this life, to see God in the next; to be a subject in the kingdom of grace, and a saint in the kingdom of glory. Whatsoever in this world befalleth us, we must sing: be thankful for weal, for woe: songs ought always to be in our mouth, and sometimes a new song: for so David here, *" sing a new song:"* that is, let us put off the old man, and become new men, new creatures in Christ: for the old man sings old songs: only the new man sings a new song: he speaketh with a new tongue, and walks in new ways, and therefore doth new things, and sings new songs; his language is not of Babylon or Egypt, but of Canaan; his communication doth edify men, his song glorify God. Or a *new* song, that is, a fresh song, *nova res, novum canticum,* new for a new benefit, Eph. v. 20: *" Give thanks always for all things."* It is very gross to thank God only in gross, and not in parcel. Hast thou been sick and now made whole? praise God with the *leper,* Luke xvii.: sing a new song for this new salve. Dost thou hunger and thirst after righteousness, whereas heretofore thou couldst not endure the words of exhortation and doctrine? sing a new song for this new grace. Doth Almighty God give thee a true sense of thy sin, whereas heretofore thou didst draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with cart ropes, and wast given over to work all uncleanness with greediness? *O sing, sing, sing,* a new song for this new mercy.

Or *new,* that is, no common or ordinary song; but as God's mercy toward us is exceeding marvellous and extraordinary, so our thanks ought to be most exquisite, and more than ordinary: not new in regard of the matter, for we may not pray to God or praise God otherwise than he hath prescribed in his word, which is the old way, but new in respect of the manner and making, that as occasion is offered, we may bear our wits after the best fashion to be thankful.

Or, because this Psalm is prophetical, a *new* song, that is, the song of the glorious angels at Christ's birth, " Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," (Luke ii. 14); a song which the world never heard before: that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head is an old song, the first that ever was sung; but this was no *plain song,* till Christ did manifest himself in the flesh. In the Old Testament there were many old songs, but in the New Testament a new song. That " unto us is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," is in many respects *a new song*; for whereas Christ was but shadowed in the Law, he is showed in the Gospel; and *new,* because sung of new men, of all men. For the sound of the Gospel is gone through all the earth, unto the ends of the world (Rom. x. 18); whereas in old time God's old songs were sung in Jewry: " His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion," Psalm lxxvi. 1, 2.—*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—*" A new song."* O ye who are new in Christ, though formerly old in the Old Adam, sing ye to the Lord.—*Psalter of Peter Lombard,* 1474.

Verse 1.—*" He hath done marvellous things."* He has opened his greatness and goodness in the work of redemption. What *marvels* has not Christ done? 1. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. 2. Born of a virgin. 3. Healed all manner of diseases. 4. Fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes. 5. Raised the dead. 6. And what was more *marvellous,* died himself. 7. Rose again by his own power. 8. Ascended to heaven. 9. Sent down the Holy Ghost. 10. And made his apostles and their testimony the instruments of enlightening, and ultimately converting, the world.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—" *His right hand.*" Since the Psalmist says, that Christ hath gotten him the victory by his right hand and his arm, it is not only a demonstration of his divine and infinite power, but also excludes all other means, as the merits of saints and their meretricious works.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—" *Holy arm.*" The creation was the work of God's *fingers:* " When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers," Ps. viii. 3; redemption a work of his *arm;* " *His holy arm* hath gotten him the victory ": yea, it was a work of his heart, even that bled to death to accomplish it.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 1.—A clergyman in the county of Tyrone had, for some weeks, observed a little ragged boy come every Sunday, and place himself in the centre of the aisle, directly opposite the pulpit, where he seemed exceedingly attentive to the services. He was desirous of knowing who the child was, and for this purpose hastened out, after the sermon, several times, but never could see him, as he vanished the moment service was over, and no one knew whence he came, or anything about him. At length the boy was missed from his usual situation in the church for some weeks. At this time a man called on the minister, and told him a person very ill was desirous of seeing him; but added, " I am really ashamed to ask you to go so far; but it is a child of mine, and he refuses to have any one but you; he is altogether an extraordinary boy, and talks a great deal about things that I do not understand." The clergyman promised to go, and went, though the rain poured down in torrents, and he had six miles of rugged mountain country to pass. On arriving where he was directed, he saw a most wretched cabin indeed, and the man he had seen in the morning was waiting at the door. He was shown in, and found the inside of the hovel as miserable as the outside. In a corner, on a little straw, he beheld a person stretched out, whom he recognised as the little boy who had so regularly attended his church. As he approached the wretched bed the child raised himself up, and, stretching forth his arms, said, " *His own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory,*" and immediately he expired.—*K. Arvine.*

Verse 2.—" *The Lord hath made known his salvation.*" By the appearance of his Son in the flesh, and the wonders which he did. " *His righteousness hath he openly shewed,*" etc., in the gospel, to all men; that righteousness which is called the " righteousness of God," and which is enjoyed by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. Rom. iii. 22.—*B. Boothroyd.*

Verse 2.—" *The Lord hath made known,*" etc. The word הודיע denotes not only a *publication* and promulgation, but also a clear and certain demonstration which produces conviction and causes the matter to be *laid up* in the mind and memory and preserved: for the proper signification of the root ידע is *to lay up what is to be preserved.* The word גלה is added, which properly means to *uncover, to be uncovered,* hence *he revealed* or *uncovered,* that it might be both naked and clear, for the purpose of more fully illustrating the character of the manifestation of the Gospel, opposed to what is obscure, involved in shadows and types, and veiled in legal ceremonies. Of which the apostle treats expressly in 2 Cor. iii. Lastly, when it is added, that *in the sight of the nations* this uncovering is done, it signifies that this salvation pertains to them also, that it comes to them without distinction, since the Gospel is nakedly and clearly announced. From which it also clearly appears, that the matter and reason of the *new song* are found in such a singular event, since God who formerly permitted the nations to walk in their own ways, now under Messiah calls all without distinction to salvation through faith and newness of life.—*Venema.*

Verse 2.—" *Made known:* " He says not, *He shewed,* but *He made known.* Adam knew him, and predicted concerning him, " A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." Abel knew him, who offered the lamb; Seth knew him, and called upon him; Noah knew him, and saved all the race in the ark; Abraham knew him, and offered up his son to him. But because the world had forgotten him and worshipped idols, the Lord made his Jesus *known,* when he sent the Word in flesh to the Jews, and *revealed his righteousness* to the nations, when he justified them through faith. Wherefore did he reveal him to the nations? Because of his mercy. Wherefore did he make him known to the Jews? Because of his truth, that is, his promise.—*Honorius, the Continuator of Gerhohus.*

Verse 3.—" *He hath remembered his mercy and his truth.*" The Psalmist very properly observes, that God in redeeming the world " *remembered his truth,*" which

he had given to Israel his people—language, too, which implies that he was influenced by no other motive than that of faithfully performing what he had himself promised. The more clearly to show that the promise was not grounded at all on the merit or righteousness of man, he mentions the "*mercy*" of God first and afterwards his "*faithfulness*" which stood connected with it. The cause, in short, was not to be found out of God himself, (to use a common expression,) but in his mere good pleasure, which had been testified long before to Abraham and his posterity. The word "*remembered*" is used in accommodation to man's apprehension; for what has been long suspended seems to have been forgotten. Upwards of two thousand years elapsed from the time of giving the promise to the appearance of Christ, and as the people of God were subjected to many afflictions and calamities, we need not wonder that they should have sighed, and given way to ominous fears regarding the fulfilment of this redemption.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—"*He hath remembered his mercy and his truth.*" His *mercy* moved him to make his promise, and his *truth* hath engaged him to perform it; and he hath been mindful of both, by scattering the blessed influences of his light and bounty over the face of the whole earth, and causing all nations to see and partake of the salvation of God.—*Matthew Hole* (—1730).

Verse 3.—"*All the ends of the earth have seen,*" etc. O unhappy Judea, *the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God,* every land is moved to joy, the whole globe is glad, the floods clap their hands, the hills rejoice; yet the evil hearts of the Jews believe not, but are smitten with the penalty of unbelief in the darkness of their blindness.—*Gregory, in Lorinus.*

Verse 3.—"*Have seen.*" There is a degree of point in the expression "*have seen;*" it implies actual faith, united with knowledge, that moves the will to love and to desire; for they cannot be said to have seen God's salvation, who, content with nominal faith, never bestow a thought on the Saviour.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 4.—"*Make a joyful noise.*" Bless God for a Christ. The Argives when delivered by the Romans from the tyranny of the Macedonians and Spartans, *Quæ guadia, quæ vociferationes fuerunt! quid florum in Consulem profuderunt!* what great joys expressed they! what loud outcries made they! The very birds that flew over them fell to the ground, astonied at their noises. The crier at the Nemean games was forced to pronounce the word Liberty, *iterumque, iterumque,* again, and again.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 4—6.—Wherewith is God to be praised? In a *literal* sense with all kind of music: vocal, "*sing unto the Lord:*" chordal, "*Praise him upon the harp:*" pneumatical, "*with trumpets,*" etc. In an *allegorical* exposition (as *Euthymius* interprets it) we must praise God in our actions, and praise him in our contemplation; praise him in our words, praise him in our works; praise him in our life, praise him at our death; being not only *temples* (as Paul), but (as Clemens Alexandrinus calls us) *timbrels* also of the Holy Ghost.—*John Boys.*

Verse 5.—"*With the harp, with the harp.*" The repetition made use of is emphatical, and implies that the most ardent attempts men might make to celebrate the great work of the world's redemption would fall short of the riches of the grace of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—"*The voice of a Psalm.*" The sound of the Zimrah, זמרה, here, as in Psalm lxxxi. 2, is certainly the name of some musical instrument. But what the particular instrument might be, which went by that name, is quite uncertain.—*Samuel Horsley.*

5.—"*The voice of a Psalm.*" With Psalms Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah celebrated their victories. Psalms made glad the heart of the exiles who returned from Babylon. Psalms gave courage and strength to the Maccabees in their brave struggles to achieve their country's independence, and were the repeated expression of their thanksgivings. The Lord of Psalmists and the Son of David, by the words of a Psalm proved himself to be higher than David; and sang Psalms with his apostles on the night before he suffered, when he instituted the holy supper of his love. With Psalms Paul and Silas praised God in the prison at midnight, when their feet were made fast in the stocks, and sang so loud that the prisoners heard them. And after his own example the apostle exhorts the Christians at Ephesus and Colossæ to teach and admonish one another with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Jerome tells us that in his day the Psalms were to be heard in the fields and vineyards

of Palestine, and that they fell sweetly on the ear, mingling with the songs of birds, and the scent of flowers in spring. The ploughman as he guided his plough chanted the hallelujah, and the reaper, the vine dresser, and the shepherd sang the songs of David. "These," he says, "are our love songs, these the instruments of our agriculture." Sidonius Apollinaris makes his boatmen, as they urge their heavily-laden barge up stream, sing Psalms, till the river banks echo again with the hallelujah, and beautifully applies the custom, in a figure, to the voyage of the Christian life.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

5.—"*The voice of a Psalm.*" In D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature" there is a very curious piece upon Psalm-singing, in which he mentions the spread of the singing of Psalms in France, which was first started among the Romanists by the version of Clement Marot, the favoured bard of Francis the First. In Marot's dedication occur the following lines:—

"Thrice happy they, who may behold,
And listen in that age of gold!
As by the plough the labourer strays,
And carman 'mid the public ways,
And tradesman in his shop shall swell
Their voice in Psalm or canticle,
Singing to solace toil; again
From woods shall come a sweeter strain!
Shepherd and shepherdess shall vie
In many a tender Psalmody;
And the Creator's name prolong,
As rock and stream return their song!
Begin then, ladies fair! begin
The age renew'd that knows no sin!
And with light heart, that wants no wing,
Sing! from this holy song-book, sing!"

The singing of these Psalms became so popular that D'Israeli suggests that "it first conveyed to the sullen fancy of the austere Calvin the project" of introducing the singing of Psalms into his Genevan discipline. "This infectious frenzy of Psalm-singing," as Warton almost blasphemously describes it, rapidly propagated itself through Germany as well as France, and passed over to England. D'Israeli says, with a sneer, that in the time of the Commonwealth, "Psalms were now sung at Lord-Mayor's dinners and city feasts; soldiers sang them on their march and at parade; and few houses which had windows fronting the streets, but had their evening Psalms." We can only add, would to God it were so again.—*C.H.S.*

Verses 5, 6.—These were, literally, the instruments most in use among the Jews, and a spiritual signification has been attached to each instrument. They seem to me to represent the cardinal virtues, the *harp* implying prudence; the *psaltery*, justice; the *trumpet*, fortitude; and the *cornet*, temperance.—*Bellarmine.*

Verses 5, 6.—It is evident that the Psalmist here expresses the vehement and ardent affection which the faithful ought to have in praising God, when he enjoins musical instruments to be employed for this purpose. He would have nothing omitted by believers which tends to animate the minds and feelings of men in singing God's praises. The name of God, no doubt, can, properly speaking, be celebrated only by the articulate voice; but it is not without reason that David adds to this those aids by which believers were wont to stimulate themselves the more to this exercise; especially considering that he was speaking to God's ancient people. There is a distinction, however, to be observed here, that we may not indiscriminately consider as applicable to ourselves everything which was formerly enjoined upon the Jews. I have no doubt that playing upon cymbals, touching the harp and the viol, and all that kind of music which is so frequently mentioned in the Psalms, was a part of the education; that is to say, the puerile instruction of the law: I speak of the stated service of the temple. For even now, if believers choose to cheer themselves with musical instruments, they should, I think, make it their object not to dissever their cheerfulness from the praises of God. But when they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends

to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to him. Paul allows us to bless God in the public assembly of the saints only in a known tongue, 1 Cor. xiv. 16. The voice of man, although not understood by the generality, assuredly excels all inanimate instruments of music; and yet we see what Paul determines concerning speaking in an unknown tongue. What shall we then say of chanting, which fills the ears with nothing but an empty sound? Does any one object that music is very useful for awakening the minds of men and moving their hearts? I own it; but we should always take care that no corruption creep in, which might both defile the pure worship of God and involve men in superstition. Moreover, since the Holy Spirit expressly warns us of this danger by the mouth of Paul, to proceed beyond what we are there warranted by him, is not only, I must say, unadvised zeal, but wicked and perverse obstinacy.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 5, 6.—The song and the stringed instruments belonged to the Levites, and the trumpets to the priests alone. Kitto says the trumpets did not join in the concert, but were sounded during certain regulated pauses in the vocal and instrumental music. The harps and voices made the sweetness, while the trumpets and horns added the strength; melody and energy should combine in the worship of God.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"*Trumpets.*" חֲצֹצְרוֹת, *Chatsotseroth*: here only in the Psalter. These were the straight trumpets (such as are seen on the Arch of Titus) used by the priests for giving signals. Numb. x. 2—10; 1 Chron. xv. 24, 28, etc. The *shofar*, שׁוֹפָר (*cornet*), was the ordinary curved trumpet, cornet, or horn.—*William Kay.*

Verse 6.—"*Trumpets.*" The word here used is uniformly rendered *trumpets* in the Scriptures, Num. x. 2, 8—10; xxxi. 6; *et al.* The trumpet was mainly employed for convening a public assembly for worship, or for assembling the hosts for battle. The original word, חֲצֹצְרָה *chatsotserah*, is supposed to have been designed to imitate "the broken pulse-like sound of the trumpet, like the Latin, *taratantara.*" So the German *trarara*, and the Arabic, *haddâdera.* The word here used was given to the long, straight trumpet.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6.—"*Trumpets.*" The trumpet served the same purpose, in a religious and civil sense, as bells among Christians, and the voice among Mohammedans. Indeed, it is understood that Mohammed directed the voice to be employed, in order to mark a distinction between his own sect and the Jews with their trumpets and the Christians with their bells.—*Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 6.—"*With trumpets.*" Origen calls the writings of the evangelists and the apostles *trumpets*, at whose blast all the structures of idolatry and the dogmas of the philosophers were utterly overthrown. He teaches likewise that by the sound of the *trumpets* is prefigured the trumpet of the universal judgment, at which the world shall fall in ruin, and whose sound shall be joy to the just, and lamentation to the unjust.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 6.—"*Before the Lord, the King.*" Since it is distinctly added *before Jehovah the King*, and the words, *with trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise*, are used, there seems to be a reference to that public rejoicing commonly manifested at the coronation of kings, or the celebration of undertakings for the public safety. This idea is not foreign to the present passage, since Jehovah is represented as King and Saviour of the people.—*Venema.*

Verses 7, 8.—"*Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands.*"

> And thou, majestic main!
> A secret world of wonders in thyself,
> Sound his stupendous praise, whose greater voice
> Or bids you roar, or bids your roarings fall.
>
> —*James Thomson.*

Verses 7, 8.—These appeals to nature in her great departments—of the sea in its mighty amplitude, and the earth with its floods and hills—form, not a warrant, but a call on Christian ministers to recognise God more in their prayers and sermons as the God of Creation, instead of restricting themselves so exclusively to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. Do the one, and not leave the other undone.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verses 7, 8.—The setting forth the praise of Christ for the redemption of sinners,

may not only furnish work to all reasonable creatures; but also if every drop of water in the sea, and in every river and flood, every fish in the sea, every fowl of the air, every living creature on the earth, and whatsoever else is in the world: if they all had reason and ability to express themselves; yea, and if all the hills were able by motion and gesticulation to communicate their joy one to another; there is work for them all to set out the praise of Christ.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 7—9.—Matthew Henry on these verses quotes from Virgil's 4th Eclogue the verses (of which we subjoin Dryden's translation) in which the poet, he says, "either ignorantly or basely applies to Asinius Pollio the ancient prophecies which at that time were expected to be fulfilled;" adding that Ludovicus Vives thinks that these and many other things which Virgil says of this long looked-for child "are applicable to Christ."

> O of celestial seed! O foster son of Jove!
> See, lab'ring Nature calls thee to sustain
> The nodding frame of heav'n, and earth, and main!
> See to their base restor'd, earth, seas, and air;
> And joyful ages, from behind, in crowding ranks appear.

Verse 8.—"*Let the floods clap their hands.*" The clapping of the hands being a token of delight and approbation, and the striking or dashing of the water in a river being, for the noise of it, a resemblance of that, *the rivers* are here said to *clap their hands.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 8.—Though the language be figurative, so far as it gives a voice to the inanimate creation in its various departments, yet, like all the figurative language of Scripture, it expresses a truth—that which the Apostle has stated without a metaphor in the express revelation that the "creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." And this because the reason of that bondage will no more exist. It is the consequence of sin: but when the world shall be subjected to the righteous rule of its coming King (as predicted in the last verse of this Psalm), then earth and all creation shall own its present Lord, and join its tribute of praise to that of Israel and the nations, and the redeemed and glorified church.—*William De Burgh.*

Verse 9.—The Psalter is much occupied in celebrating *the benign fruits which Christ's reign is to yield* in all the earth. It will be a reign of HOLINESS. This is its proper and distinctive nature. Under it, the ends of the earth will fear God, and rejoice in his salvation. It will be a reign of JUSTICE. Under it, the wars and oppressions and cruelties, the unequal laws and iniquitous institutions that have so long vexed and cursed the world, shall find a place no more. This happy reformation is usually foretold in the form of a proclamation that the Lord is coming "*to judge the earth.*" It is important, therefore, to keep in mind the true sense and intention of that oft-repeated proclamation. It does not refer, as an unwary reader might suppose, to the Judgment of the Great Day. There is no terror in it. The Psalms that have it for their principal burden are jubilant in the highest degree. The design of the proclamation is to announce Christ in the character of a Peaceful Prince coming to administer equal laws with an impartial hand, and so to cause wrong and contention to cease in the earth. This is Christ's manner of judging the earth. What he has already done in this direction enables us to form a clear conception of what he will yet set himself to do. When he designs to accomplish great and salutary reforms in the political and social institutions of a people, he begins by dislodging bad principles from men's minds and planting Scriptural principles in their stead; by purging evil passions from men's hearts, and baptizing them with the Spirit of truth and justice, godliness and lovingkindness. A sure foundation having been thus laid for a better order of things, he will by some storm of controversy, or of revolution sweep away the institutions in which injustice has entrenched itself, and will thus make it possible for righteousness to have free course. Oh what a store of comfort for the down-trodden, the enslaved, the needy, is laid up in the announcement that the Lord is coming to be the avenger of all such! Well may all the creatures be invited to clap their hands for joy at the thought that he has taken this work in hand; that he sitteth upon the floods; and that the storms that agitate the nations are the chariot in which he rides to take possession of the earth, and make it an abode of righteousness and peace.—*William Binnie.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"*A new song.*" The duty, beauty, and benefit of maintaining freshness in piety, service, and worship.

Verse 1.—"*He hath done marvellous things.*" I. He hath created a marvellous universe. II. He has established a marvellous government. III. He hath bestowed a marvellous gift. IV. He hath provided a marvellous redemption. V. He hath inspired a marvellous book. VI. He hath opened a marvellous fulness. VII. He hath effected a marvellous transformation.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 1.—"*The victory.*" The victories of God in judgment, and in mercy: especially the triumphs of Christ on the cross, and by his Spirit in the heart, and in and by the church at large.

Verse 2.—"*The Lord hath made known his salvation.*" I. The contents of which it is composed. II. The reasons for which it has been provided. III. The price at which it has been procured. IV. The terms on which it shall be imparted. V. The way in which it must be propagated. VI. The manner in which its neglect will be punished.—*W. J.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—I. What is salvation? II. Why it is called the Lord's:—"Salvation is of the Lord." III. How he has made it known. IV. For what purpose. V. With what results.—*E. G. Gange.*

Verse 2.—The great privilege of knowing the gospel. I. *In what it consists.* 1. Revelation by the Bible. 2. Declaration by the minister. 3. Illumination by the Spirit. 4. Illustration in daily providence. II. *To what it has led.* 1. We have believed it. 2. We have so far understood it as to growingly rejoice in it. 3. We are able to tell it to others. 4. We abhor those who mystify it.

Verse 2.—Salvation's glory. I. It is divine—"his salvation." II. It is consistent with justice—"his righteousness." III. It is plain and simple—"openly showed." IV. It is meant for all sorts of men—"heathen."

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—The Lord's memory of his covenant. Times in which he seems to forget it; ways in which even in those times he proves his faithfulness; great deeds of grace by which at other times he shows his memory of his promises; and reasons why he must ever be mindful of his covenant.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—"*All the ends of the earth.*" I. Literally. Missionaries have visited every land. II. Spiritually. Men ready to despair, to perish. III. Prophetically. Dwell on the grand promises concerning the future, and the triumphs of the church.—*E. G. G.*

Verse 3.—"*All the ends of the earth have seen,*" &c. I. The greatest foreigners have seen it; many have "come from the east and the west;" Greeks, Peter's hearers, the Eunuch, Greenlanders, South Sea Islanders, Negroes, Red Indians, &c., &c. II. The ripest saints have seen it; they are at the right end of the earth, stepping out of the wilderness into Canaan, &c. III. The vilest sinners have seen it; those who have wandered so far that they could get no farther without stepping into hell. The dying thief. The woman who was a sinner. Those whom Whitfield called "the devil's castaways."—*W. J.*

Verse 4.—The right use of noise. I. "Make a noise." Awake, O sleeper. Speak, O dumb. II. "Make a joyful noise." The shout of deliverance, of gratitude, of gladness. III. "Make a loud noise, all the earth." Nature with her ten thousand voices. The church with myriad saints. IV. "Make a joyful noise unto God." Praise him alone. Praise him for ever.—*E. G. G.*

Verse 6.—Joy a needful ingredient of praise. The Lord as King, an essential idea in adoration. Expression in various ways incumbent upon us, when praising joyfully such a King.

Verses 7, 8.—Nature at worship. The congregation is—I. Vast. Sea, earth, rivers, hills. II. Varied. Diverse in character, word, aspect, each from the other, constant and alike in this alone, that *all, always* worship God. III. Gladsome. In this like the worshippers in heaven, and for the same reason—sin is absent.—*E. G. G.*

Verse 8.—The song of the sea, and the hallelujah of the hills.

Verse 9.—The last judgment as a theme for thankfulness.

Verse 9.—"*Before the Lord.*" Where we are, where our joy should be, where all our actions should be felt to be, where we shall be—"*before the Lord.*" Enquire—What are we before the Lord? What shall we be when he cometh?

PSALM XCIX.

This may be called THE SANCTUS, *or,* THE HOLY, HOLY, HOLY PSALM, *for the word "holy" is the conclusion and the refrain of its three main divisions. Its subject is the holiness of the divine government, the sanctity of the mediatorial reign. It seems to us to declare the holiness of Jehovah himself in verses* 1, 2, 3; *it mentions the equity of the king whom the Lord had appointed, as an illustration of the Lord's love of holiness, or more probably it describes the Lord as himself the king, in verses* 4 *and* 5, *and it then sets forth the severely righteous character of God's dealings with those favoured persons whom in former times he had selected to approach him on behalf of the people,* 6—9. *It is a hymn fitted for the cherubim who surround the throne, who are mentioned in verse* 1; *it is a Psalm most fitting for saints who dwell in Zion, the holy city, and especially worthy to be reverently sung by all who, like David the king, Moses the lawgiver, Aaron the priest, or Samuel the seer, are honoured to lead the church of God, and plead for her with her Lord.*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

2 The LORD *is* great in Zion; and he *is* high above all the people.

3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; *for* it *is* holy.

1. "*The Lord reigneth.*" One of the most joyous utterances which ever leaped from mortal lip. The overthrow of the reign of evil and the setting up of Jehovah's kingdom of goodness, justice, and truth, is worthy to be hymned again and again, as we have it here for the third time in the Psalms. "*Let the people tremble.*" Let the chosen people feel a solemn yet joyful awe, which shall thrill their whole manhood. Saints quiver with devout emotion, and sinners quiver with terror when the rule of Jehovah is fully perceived and felt. It is not a light or trifling matter, it is a truth which, above all others, should stir the depths of our nature. "*He sitteth between the cherubims.*" In grandeur of sublime glory, yet in nearness of mediatorial condescension, Jehovah revealed himself above the mercy-seat, whereon stood the likeness of those flaming ones who gaze upon his glory, and for ever cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts." The Lord reigning on that throne of grace which is sprinkled with atoning blood, and veiled with the covering wings of mediatorial love, is above all other revelations wonderful, and fitted to excite emotion among all mankind, hence it is added, "*Let the earth be moved.*" Not merely "the people," but the whole earth should feel a movement of adoring awe when it is known that on the mercy seat God sits as universal monarch. The pomp of heaven surrounds him, and is symbolised by the outstretched wings of waiting cherubs; let not the earth be less moved to adoration, rather let all her tribes bow before his infinite majesty, yea, let the solid earth itself with reverent tremor acknowledge his presence.

2. "*The Lord is great in Zion.*" Of old the temple's sacred hill was the centre of the worship of the great King, and the place where his grandeur was most clearly beheld: his church is now his favoured palace, where his greatness is displayed, acknowledged, and adored. He there unveils his attributes and commands the lowliest homage; the ignorant forget him, the wicked despise him, the atheistical oppose him, but among his own chosen he is great beyond comparison. He is great in the esteem of the gracious, great in his acts of mercy, and really great in himself: great in mercy, power, wisdom, justice, and glory. "*And he is high above all the people;*" towering above their highest thoughts and loftiest conceptions. The highest are not high to him, yet, blessed be his name, the lowliest are not despised by him. In such a God we rejoice, his greatness and loftiness are exceedingly delightful in our esteem; the more he is honoured and exalted in the hearts of men, the more exultant are his people. If Israel delighted in Saul because he was head and shoulders above the people, how much more should we exult in our God and King, who is as high above us as the heavens are above the earth.

3. *" Let them praise thy great and terrible name : "* let all the dwellers in Zion and all the nations upon the earth praise the Lord, or " acknowledge thankfully " the goodness of his divine nature, albeit that there is so much in it which must inspire their awe. Under the most terrible aspect the Lord is still to be praised. Many profess to admire the milder beams of the sun of righteousness, but burn with rebellion against its more flaming radiance : so it ought not to be : we are bound to praise a terrible God and worship him who casts the wicked down to hell. Did not Israel praise him " who overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, for his mercy endureth for ever." The terrible Avenger is to be praised, as well as the loving Redeemer. Against this the sympathy of man's evil heart with sin rebels ; it cries out for an effeminate God in whom pity has strangled justice. The well-instructed servants of Jehovah praise him in all the aspects of his character, whether terrible or tender. Grace streaming from the mercy-seat can alone work in us this admirable frame of mind. *" For it is holy,"* or *" He is holy."* In him is no flaw or fault, excess or deficiency, error or iniquity. He is wholly excellent, and is therefore called holy. In his words, thoughts, acts, and revelations as well as in himself, he is perfection itself. O come let us worship and bow down before him.

4 The king's strength also loveth judgment ; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.
5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool ; *for* he *is* holy.

4. *" The king's strength also loveth judgment."* God is the king, the mercy-seat is his throne, and the sceptre which he sways is holy like himself. His power never exerts itself tyranically ; he is a sovereign, and he is absolute in his government, but his might delights in right, his force is used for just purposes only. Men in these days are continually arraigning the Lord's government, and setting up to judge whether he does right or not ; but saintly men in the olden time were of another mind, they were sure that what the Lord did was just, and instead of calling him to account they humbly submitted themselves to his will, rejoicing in the firm persuasion that with his whole omnipotence God was pledged to promote righteousness, and work justice among all his creatures. *" Thou dost establish equity."* Not a court of equity merely, but equity itself thou dost set up, and that not for a time or upon an occasion, but as an established institution, stable as thy throne. Not even for the sake of mercy does the Lord remove or injure the equity of his moral government ; both in providence and in grace he is careful to conserve the immaculate purity of his justice. Most kingdoms have an establishment of some kind, and generally it is inequitable ; here we have an establishment which is equity itself. The Lord our God demolishes every system of injustice, and right alone is made to stand. *" Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob."* Justice is not merely established, but executed in God's kingdom ; the laws are carried out, the executive is as righteous as the legislative. Herein let all the oppressed, yea, and all who love that which is right, find large occasion for praise. Other nations under their despots were the victims and the perpetrators of grievous wrong, but when the tribes were faithful to the Lord they enjoyed an upright government within their own borders, and acted with integrity towards their neighbours. That king-craft which delights in cunning, favouritism, and brute force is as opposite to the divine kingship as darkness to light. The palace of Jehovah is no robber's fortress nor despot's castle, built on dungeons, with stones carved by slaves, and cemented with the blood of toiling serfs. The annals of most human governments have been written in the tears of the downtrodden, and the curses of the oppressed : the chronicles of the Lord's kingdom are of another sort, truth shines in each line, goodness in every syllable, and justice in every letter. Glory be to the name of the King, whose gentle glory beams from between the cherubic wings.

5. *" Exalt ye the Lord our God."* If no others adore him, let his own people render to him the most ardent worship. Infinite condescension makes him stoop to be called *our* God, and truth and faithfulness bind him to maintain that covenant relationship ; and surely we, to whom by grace he so lovingly gives himself, should exalt him with all our hearts. He shines upon us from under the veiling wings of cherubim, and above the seat of mercy, therefore let us come *and worship at his footstool.* When he reveals himself in Christ Jesus, as our reconciled God, who allows

us to approach even to his throne, it becomes us to unite earnestness and humility, joy and adoration, and, while we exalt him, prostrate ourselves in the dust before him. Do we need to be thus excited to worship? How much ought we to blush for such backwardness! It ought to be our daily delight to magnify so good and great a God. "*For he is holy.*" A second time the note rings out, and as the ark, which was the divine footstool, has just been mentioned, the voice seems to sound forth from the cherubim where the Lord sitteth, who continually do cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!" Holiness is the harmony of all the virtues. The Lord has not one glorious attribute alone, or in excess, but all glories are in him as a whole; this is the crown of his honour and the honour of his crown. His power is not his choicest jewel, nor his sovereignty, but his holiness. In this all comprehensive moral excellence he would have his creatures take delight, and when they do so their delight is evidence that their hearts have been renewed, and they themselves have been partakers of his holiness. The gods of the heathen were, according to their own votaries, lustful, cruel, and brutish; their only claim to reverence lay in their supposed potency over human destinies: who would not far rather adore Jehovah, whose character is unsullied purity, unswerving justice, unbending truth, unbounded love, in a word, perfect holiness?

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance *that* he gave them.

8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is* holy.

6. "*Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name.*" Though not ordained to the typical priesthood, Moses was a true priest, even as Melchizedek had been before him. God has ever had a priesthood beside and above that of the law. The three holy men here mentioned all stood in his courts, and saw his holiness, each one after his own order. Moses saw the Lord in flaming fire revealing his perfect law, Aaron full often watched the sacred fire devour the sin-offering, and Samuel witnessed the judgment of the Lord on Eli's house, because of the error of his way. These each one stood in the gap when the wrath of God broke forth, because his holiness had been insulted; and acting as intercessors, they screened the nation from the great and terrible God, who otherwise would in a dreadful manner have executed judgment in Jacob. Let these men, or such as these, lead us in our worship, and let us approach the Lord at the mercy-seat as they did, for he is as accessible to us as to them. They made it their life's business to call upon him in prayer, and by so doing brought down innumerable blessings upon themselves and others. Does not the Lord call us also to come up into the mount with Moses, and to enter the most holy place with Aaron? Do we not hear him call us by our name as he did Samuel? And do we not answer, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"? "*They called upon the Lord, and he answered them.*" Not in vain were their prayers; but being a holy God he was true to his promises, and hearkened to them from off the mercy-seat. Here is reason for praise, for answers to the petitions of some are proofs of God's readiness to hear others. These three men asked large things, they pleaded for a whole nation, and they stayed great plagues and turned away fiery wrath; who would not exercise himself in adoring so great and merciful a God? If he were unholy he would be false to his word and refuse his people's cries; this, then, is recorded for our joy and for his glory, that holy men of old were not suffered to pray in vain.

7. "*He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar.*" We have had mention of the ark and the shekinah, and now of the fiery cloudy pillar, which was another visible token of the presence of God in the midst of Israel. Responses came to Moses and Aaron out of that glorious overshadowing cloud, and though Samuel saw it not, yet to him also came the mystic voice which was wont to thunder forth from that divine canopy. Men have had converse with God, let men therefore speak to God in return. He has told us things to come, let us in return confess the sins which are past; he has revealed his mind to us, let us then pour out our hearts before him.

" They kept his testimonies." When others turned aside they were faithful ; in their hearts they laid up his word, and in their lives they obeyed it. When he spake to them they observed his will, and therefore when they spake to him he yielded to their desires. This keeping of the divine testimonies is a virtue all too rare in these our days ; men run after their own views and opinions, and make light of the truth of God ; hence it is that they fail in prayer, and scoffers have even dared to say that prayer avails not at all. May the good Lord bring back his people to reverence his word, and then will he also have respect unto the voice of their cry. *" And the ordinance that he gave them."* His practical precept they observed as well as his doctrinal instruction. Ordinances are not to be trifled with, or testimonies will also be despised ; and the converse is also true, a light estimate of inspired dogma is sure to end in neglect of moral virtues. To Moses, Aaron, and Samuel special and personal charges were committed, and they were all true to their trust, for they stood in awe of the Lord their God, and worshipped him with their whole souls. They were very different men, and had each one a work to do peculiar to himself, yet because each was a man of prayer they were all preserved in their integrity, fulfilled their office, and blessed their generation. Lord, teach us like Moses to hold up our hands in prayer and conquer Amalek, like Aaron to wave the censer between the living and the dead till the plague is stayed, and like Samuel to say to a guilty people, " God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you ; " if thou wilt make us mighty with thee in prayer, we shall also be kept faithful before thee in the service which thou hast laid upon us.

8. *" Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God."* A sweet title and a cheering fact. Our covenant God in a very special manner heard his three servants when they pleaded for the people. *" Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions."* He forgave the sinners, but he slew their sins. Some apply this verse to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, and remind us that each of these fell into a fault and received chastisement. Of Samuel they assert that, for having set up his sons as his successors, he was compelled to submit to the anointing of Saul as king, which was a great grief to him ; this is to our mind a very doubtful statement, and leads us to abandon the interpretation altogether. We believe that the passage refers to the nation which was spared through the intercession of these three holy men, but yet was severely chastened for its transgressions. In answer to the cry of Moses the tribes lived on, but the then existing generation could not enter Canaan : Aaron's golden calf was broken, though the fire of the Lord did not consume the people ; and Israel smarted under the harsh government of Saul, though at Samuel's request its murmurings against the theocratic rule of their fathers' God was not visited with pestilence or famine. So to forgive sin as at the same time to express abhorrence of it, is the peculiar glory of God, and is best seen in the atonement of our Lord Jesus. Reader, are you a believer ? Then your sin is forgiven you ; but so surely as you are a child of God the rod of paternal discipline will be laid upon you if your walk be not close with God. " You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

9. *" Exalt the Lord our God."* A second time the delightful title of Jehovah our God is used, and it is quickly followed by a third. The Psalm is Trinitarian in its whole structure. In each of his sacred persons the Lord is the God of his people ; the Father is ours, the Son is ours, and the Holy Spirit is ours : let us exalt him with all our ransomed powers. *" And worship at his holy hill."* Where he appoints his temple let us resort. No spot of ground is now fenced about as peculiarly holy, or to be regarded as more sacred than another ; yet his visible church is his chosen hill, and there would we be found, numbered with his people, and unite with them in worship. *" For the Lord our God is holy."* Again this devout description is repeated, and made the climax of the song. Oh for hearts made pure within, so that we may rightly perceive and worthily praise the infinite perfection of the Triune Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm has three parts, in which the Lord is celebrated as he who is to come, as he who is, and as he who was.—*John Albert Bengel*, 1687—1752.

Whole Psalm.—In each of the three strophes Jehovah is acknowledged in his peculiar covenant relation to his people. In the first he is " great in *Zion* " (ver. 2); in the second, he has " executed righteousness in *Jacob* " (ver. 4); and he is " Jehovah *our* God " (ver. 5); in the third, the great examples of this covenant relationship are cited from Israel's ancient history; and again God is twice claimed as " Jehovah *our* God " (ver. 8 and 9).—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—There are *three* Psalms which begin with the words, " The LORD (JEHOVAH) reigneth." (Pss. xciii., xcvii., xcix.) This is the third and last of these Psalms; and it is remarkable that in this Psalm the words " *He is holy* " are repeated *three* times (verses 3, 5, 9). Thus this Psalm is one of the links in the chain which connects the first revelation of God in Genesis with the full manifestation of the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, which is revealed in the commission of the risen Saviour to his apostles: " Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and which prepares the faithful to join in the heavenly Hallelujah of the church glorified, " Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." The other links in this chain in the Old Testament are, the Aaronic benediction, in Num. vi. 24—27; and the Seraphic Trisagion, in Isa. vi. 1—3.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—Many of the preceding Psalms, in extolling the Dominion and Supremacy of the Messiah, have spoken of him solely as the object of triumph and rejoicing. He has been represented in all the bounteousness of his mercy, and the excess of his lovingkindness; and the ideas of might and majesty, with which he has been accompanied, seem chiefly to have been regarded as the means by which these gracious designs will be carried into a sure effect. There is always a great danger in such a feeling, lest our *reciprocal* covenant should be too much forgotten; and we should rest on our privileges to the exclusion of our practice. This was a constant error to the Jews. " We have Abraham to our Father," was continually on their lips; as if the given promise to their nation had been inalienable for ever. Subsequent ages have shown the existence of the same false principle amongst the Gentiles. It is a part of the weakness of human nature; and hence was the prophet inspired to warn the world of the evil, and draw their minds to a just sense of the *awfulness* of the Redeemer's majesty. In this view, joined as it is throughout with assertions of his readiness at all times to listen to the believer and to grant his supplication, the Psalm is at once of great power and of an exceeding consolation.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 1.—" *Let the people tremble . . . let the earth be moved.*" That fear which proceeds from simple reverence as well as that which arises from apprehension of evil, produces bodily shaking. Thus this exhortation may concern believing as well as unbelieving nations.—*Amyraldus.*

Verse 1.—" *Let the people tremble.*" He bids a defiance, as it were, to all his enemies, ὀργιζεσθωσαν, *irascantur, commoveantur, fremant populi;* let the people be angry, fret, and be unquiet, as Psal. ii. 1. " *Let the earth,*" that is, the tyrants of the earth, be moved at it; yet let them know that all their endeavours are but vain.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 1.—" *Let the people tremble.*" Jarchi refers this to the war of Gog and Magog.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—" *Let the people tremble.*" Albeit the church be compassed about with enemies, as the lily among the thorns, yet because her Lord reigneth in the midst of her, she hath reason not only to comfort herself in him, but also hath ground of defying her enemies, and boasting against them: " *The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble.*" The Lord's people do not worship an unknown God, they know who he is, and where to find him; to wit, in his ordinances, on the throne of grace, reconciling himself to the world in Christ: " *He sitteth between the cherubims.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—" *The cherubims.*" These were figures, or representations of angels, inclining their faces one towards the other, and touching one another with their wings. Ex. xxv. 18. The use of these was to cover or overshadow the *mercy-seat* with their wings, ver. 20, and from this *seat* God used to speak unto Moses, ver. 22; Num. vii. 8, 9. Which may be applied unto Christ, whose mediation was signified by the *mercy-seat;* whence it is said, that *he is a propitiation* or covering mercy-seat, Rom. iii. 25; 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10, because by his obedience all our unrighteousness is covered.—*Thomas Wilson* (—1621), *in* " *A Complete Christian Dictionary.*" 1678

Verse 1.—" *He sitteth between the cherubims.*" Our friend Mr. Charles Stanford,

in his delicious work, " Symbols of Christ," has beautifully brought out the connection between the 37th and 38th verses of Matt. xxiii. The house was left desolate because Christ, who was set forth by the symbol of shelter, was rejected by them, and was not permitted to cover them with his wings. It was customary for the Jews to say of a proselyte, " He has taken refuge under the wings of the Shekinah." We now see that to take shelter under the wings of the Shekinah is to hide beneath the wings of Christ. Beneath that living shield which beats back the destroying stroke, and is broad enough to canopy a fugitive world, we take shelter, and there the promise is fulfilled, " He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

Verse 1.—" *He sitteth between the cherubims.*" *The cherubim* is the seat of God, as the scripture sheweth us, a certain exalted heavenly throne, which we see not; but the word of God knoweth it, knoweth it as his own seat: and the word of God and the Spirit of God hath itself revealed to the servants of God where God sitteth. Not that God doth sit, as doth man, but thou, if thou dost wish that God sit in thee, if thou wilt be good, shalt be the seat of God; for thus is it written, " *The soul of the righteous is the seat of wisdom* " [Septuagint translation]. For a throne is in our language called a seat. For some, conversant with the Hebrew tongue, have interpreted cherubim in the Latin language (for it is a Hebrew term) by the words fulness of knowledge. Therefore, because God surpasseth all knowledge, he is said to sit above the fulness of knowledge. Let there be therefore in thee fulness of knowledge, and even thou shalt be the throne of God.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—" *Let the earth be moved.*" Those that submit to him shall be established, and not " *moved,*" Psal. xcvi. 10; but they that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ cannot be moved. The " things which cannot be shaken shall remain," Heb. xii. 27.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—" *He is high above all the people.*" The metaphor is taken from such great objects as trees, animals, palaces, towers, which are the more valued, and are regarded as possessing the greater strength, the higher they rise above others. So Deut. i. 28; ii. 10, 21; ix. 2, Concerning the Canaanites and the giants.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 3.—" *Let them praise thy great and terrible name,*" etc. Although the enemies of the Church of God are in a tumult, and the whole earth is moved, do you nevertheless with joyful spirit entrust your salvation to him, and acknowledge and diligently celebrate his power displayed in the defence of his people and the overthrow of his foes.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 3.—" *Thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.*" The FATHER's name is " *great,*" for he is the source, the Creator, the Lord of all; the SON's name is " *terrible,*" for he is to be our judge; the name of the HOLY GHOST is " *holy,*" for he it is who bestows hallowing and sanctification. The Hebrew commentators see here the mystic Tetragrammaton יהוה, whose true pronunciation was kept a profound secret by the Rabbins, owing to a feeling of awful reverence; while the Greeks are precise in bidding us take it of that name, which is " *terrible* " to God's enemies, " *holy* " to his friends, and " *great* " to both, the name of JESUS.—*Hugo Cardinalis, Genebrardus, and Balthazar Corderius, in Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 3.—" *Let them praise thy terrible name.*" What force the experience of a burdened conscience attaches to the expression, " Thy great and *terrible* name; for it is holy! " The misery of sin consists not merely in its consequences, but in its very nature, which is to separate between God and our souls, and to shut us out from God, and God from us. Yet the Spirit of God indicates, in the covenant of grace, a threefold practical influence of his holiness upon us, of which the issue is the opposite of despair. The various steps are marked as praise, exaltation, and worship (verses 3, 5, 9). Of these the last seems by far the most difficult to realise. For it is in the nature of conscious sin to prevent even our approaches to God, to keep us from all comfortable fellowship with God, and to fill us with a heavy sense of our infinite and almost hopeless distance from him. Yet we will " *praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.*" Great it is; most glorious and high; far above all human conceptions. Viewed in this light, even the fact otherwise so consoling, " The Lord reigneth," leads only to the inference, " Let the people tremble; " and " He sitteth between the cherubim " (or manifesteth himself as the covenant God)

to the conclusion, " Let the earth be moved," or *stagger*. But his name is not only great and terrible in its manifestations, " it is holy," and *therefore* we " praise " it. His greatness is all arrayed on the side of goodness, his power on that of righteousness and truth.—*Alfred Edersheim, in " The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms,"* 1873.

Verse 3.—*" Thy terrible name . . . . holy."* In acts of man's vindictive justice, there is something of impurity, perturbation, passion, some mixture of cruelty; but none of these fall upon God in the several acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel in the resemblance of fire, to signify his anger against the house of Judah for their idolatry, " from his loins downward there was the appearance of fire, but from the loins upward the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber." Ezek. viii. 2. His heart is clean in his most terrible acts of vengeance ; it is a pure flame wherewith he scorcheth and burns his enemies. He is holy in the most fiery appearance.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 3.—*" It is holy."* No attribute is sounded out so loftily, with such solemnity, and so frequently by angels that stand before his throne, as this. Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praises of it as this ? Isaiah vi. 3 : " Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts : the whole earth is full of his glory ; " and Rev. iv. 8 : " The four living creatures rest not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," &c. His power of sovereignty as Lord of hosts is but once mentioned, but with a ternal repetition of his holiness. Do you hear in any evangelical song any other perfection of the divine nature thrice repeated ? Where do we read of the crying out, Eternal, eternal, eternal ; or Faithful, faithful, faithful, Lord God of hosts ! Whatsoever other attribute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and blessed spirits for ever in heaven. . . . . As it seems to challenge an excellency above all his other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest ; as it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead ; as his power is the strength of them, so his holiness is the beauty of them ; as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them : should this be sullied all the rest would lose their honour and their comfortable efficacy ; as at the same instant that the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendour of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice, his wisdom a holy wisdom, his arm of power a " holy arm," Psalm xcviii. 1 ; his truth or promise a " holy promise," Psalm cv. 42. *Holy* and *true* go hand and hand, Rev. vi. 10. " His *name*," which signifies all his attributes in conjunction, *" is holy."—Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—*" The king's strength."* They will remember his strength with joy, because he *" loveth judgment,"* and there is no reason, therefore, to be afraid of him in consequence of his great strength, so long as they continue to walk in the good way.—*George Phillips.*

Verses 4, 5.—Our King *loveth righteousness :* he will execute perfect justice, tempered with perfect mercy. He will judge every man according to his works, summing up and completing the unnoticed righteousness of his providence by an open manifestation to the universe of his holiness and equity. " We believe that he will come to be our judge," therefore let us magnify and exalt him with our lips and hearts ; and let us fall down and worship the man Christ Jesus, who took our nature, even his manhood, from the earth, which is his footstool, into the eternity of the Godhead, in which he is equal to the Father. As heaven, which is the throne of God, and earth, which is his footstool, form one universe, so is God and man one Christ, the everlasting Lord, " holy and true," in whom we sinners may appeal from the throne of eternal justice to the footstool of eternal mercy.—*" Plain Commentary."*

Verse 5 (*second clause*). Mark the peculiar expression, *" Worship at his footstool."* What humility and subjection does it imply ! It is the worship of one whose heart has been subdued by divine grace.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 5.—Bishop Horsley thus renders this verse :—

> " Exalt ye Jehovah our God,
> And make prostration before his footstool ;
> *It is holy."*

Thus he connects " holy " with Jehovah's footstool, mentioned in the preceding clause. There appears to me great propriety and beauty in this construction, which divides the poem into three members. Of these the first terminates with ascribing " holiness " to the *name* of Jehovah : the second, with ascribing the same property to his *abode* : and then, at the conclusion of the hymn, " holiness," essential holiness, is ascribed to Jehovah himself. Our Bible marginal translation recognises this construction of the 5th verse.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 6.—" *Moses and Aaron among his priests,*" or chief *officers*, as in 1 Chron. xviii. 17. Moses was, if not a priest, yet a continual intercessor for the people, and a type of Christ the great Mediator of his church. *Aben-Ezra* called him *Cohen haccohanim*, the priest of priests ; and *Philo*, writing his life, concludeth, This was the life and death of Moses the king, the lawgiver, the prophet, and the chief priest.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—*Moses* twice performed acts essentially priestly (Ex. xxiv. and xl. 22, compared with Leviticus viii.), at the ratification of the covenant, and at the consecration of the priests. For this reason he could the more readily be placed here among the priestly mediators.—*C. B. Moll.*

Verse 6.—" *Priests.*" The word *cohen* is not confined as a title to the priests of the Levitical order, it is applied to Melchizedek and others. Moses is included among God's priests in accordance with the true idea of a priest, as being the official exponent of the divine love and mercy—one who represented God though acting in the interests of man.—*Robert Baker Girdlestone, in " Synonyms of the Old Testament."*

Verse 6.—" *His priests.*" At the foundation of this there is another spiritual idiom, that, namely, according to which all are called priests who possess what constitutes the essence of the ordinary priestly office (although not the externals), inward connection with God, free access to the throne of grace, and the gift and power of intercessory prayer. This figurative idiom occurs even in the law itself, compare Exodus xix. 6, where it is said to all Israel, " Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of *priests*, and an holy nation."—*F. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—*Priests.* The word *cohen*, Priest, is from *cahan, to plead a cause*, as an intercessor, mediator, or advocate ; hence the strict propriety of its use here in reference to Moses.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—" *Them that call upon his name.*" The Hebrew word which we translate to *call* upon God, notes a sort of men whose chief business or trade was to call upon or invocate the name of God, and in this instance it implies that it was the special calling of these men to call upon God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 6—9.—This third strophe is in reality a prophetical picture of the future holy worship of God, in which Moses, Aaron, and Samuel appear as the living representatives of the redeemed church, like the four and twenty elders in the more fully developed Apocalyptic scene of St. John. Rev. v.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 7.—" *They kept his testimonies.*" For this reason they were so promptly heard, even as the Lord himself says, " If a man love me he will keep my words," and again, " If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." " *And the ordinance that he gave them.*" They not only observed the precepts which bind men in general, but the peculiar obligation of governing, directing, and teaching the people committed to them.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 8.—The construction of the verse seems to be this :—" O Lord our God, thou didst hear or answer them," that is, the aforementioned typical mediators, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel ; " thou becamest a forbearing God for them," or, at their intercession ; and that " even when punishing," or, when thou hadst begun to punish " the wicked deeds of them," that is, not of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, but of the people, who had transgressed, and for whom they interceded. This was the case when Moses interceded for the idolaters, Exod. xxii. 32, Aaron for the schismatics, Numb. xvi. 47, and Samuel for the whole nation, 1 Sam. vii. 9.—*George Horne.*

Verse 8.—" *Thou answeredst them . . . . forgavest them.*" Oh, the blessed assurance that nothing can disturb our standing in the covenant. Answer and forgiveness are certain, though vengeance is taken of our inventions. How every word and expression here seems to go right to our hearts ! The very designation of our sins and punish-

ments is so true. Yet, withal, we are not shut out from God. We are able to speak to, and to hear him; we receive what we need, and much more; and, above all, we have the sweet, abiding sense of forgiveness, notwithstanding "our inventions." When we smart under chastisements or disappointments, we know that it is the fire which burns up the hay, wood, and stubble—a Father's dealings in compassion and mercy. We willingly, we gladly take these chastisements, which now are to us fresh pledges of our safety. For safe, eternally safe, remains the foundation, and unclosed the way of access. O surely with all our heart do we accord: "*Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at his holy hill; for Jehovah our God is holy.*"—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 8.—The words of this verse have in them three remarkable particulars. I. The behaviour of the men it speaks of, which is partly good, and partly evil. The former verse saith, "*They kept God's testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them;*" this insinuates (what was also expressed, ver. 6) that they used to *call upon God;* all this was very good. But withal they did sometimes some things amiss, they had some inventions, by-paths, and steps awry, which, as they needed pardon, so they occasionally incensed him so much against them that he would not let them escape altogether, without taking some vengeance for such untowardness. II. God's graciousness in a double respect: 1, in *answering them,* granting their suits and supplications ordinarily. 2. In *forgiving them,* pardoning their failings and faults evermore; never dealing with them altogether according to their sins, but in the midst of any offence of theirs, or judgment of his, remembering mercy. III. His holy justice, notwithstanding, *taking vengeance on their inventions;* chastening them for some faults sometimes, and not letting them always go unpunished, how faithful soever they were generally, or how gracious soever he was eternally.—*Herbert Palmer* (1601—1647), *in a Sermon entitled "The Glass of God's Providence."* 1644.

Verse 8.—"*Thou wast a God that forgavest them,*" literally "*for* them;" on account of their intercessions. God did not destroy those for whom his devoted servants pleaded, in the day of threatened vengeance. Their sins, indeed, he visited with the rod of divine chastisement; but their forfeited lives he spared in answer to prayer.—*John Morison.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou . . . . forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*" Because he loves the person, and hates only the sin; therefore he preserves the one, destroys only the other. This is all the fruit, to take away his sin. The covenant that is made with us in Christ is not a covenant made with works, but with persons; and therefore, though the works be often hateful, yet he goes on to love the persons; and that he may continue to love them, destroys out of them what he hates, but cutteth not them off. A member that is leprous or ulcerous, a man loves it as it is "his own flesh," Eph. v. 29, though he loathes the corruption and putrefaction that is in it; and therefore he doth not presently cut it off, but purgeth it daily, lays plasters to it to eat the corruption out: whereas a wart or even a wen that grows to a man's body, a man gets it cut off, for he doth not reckon it as his flesh.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*" It is not a light punishment, but a "*vengeance,*" "he takes on their inventions;" to manifest that he hates sin as sin, and not because the worst persons commit it. Perhaps, had a profane man touched the ark, the hand of God had not so suddenly reached him. But when Uzzah, a man zealous for him, as may be supposed by his care for the support of the tottering ark, would step out of his place, he strikes him down for his disobedient action, by the side of the ark, which he would indirectly (as not being a Levite) sustain, 2 Sam. vi. 7. Nor did our Saviour so sharply reprove the Pharisees, and turn so short from them as he did from Peter, when he gave a carnal advice, and contrary to that wherein was to be the greatest manifestation of God's holiness, viz., the death of Christ, Mat. xvi. 23. He calls him Satan, a name sharper than the title of the devil's children, wherewith he marked the Pharisees, and given (besides him) to none but Judas, who made a profession of love to him, and was outwardly ranked in the number of his disciples. A gardener hates a weed the more for being in the bed with the most precious flowers.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou tookest vengeance.*" Sometimes the sins of a people may be such, that God will not pardon them as to temporal punishments; nay, not the godly themselves. Even they may have been partakers with others in their sins, or may have so provoked God themselves, and sinned in such a way as to cause

his name to be blasphemed; so that he is concerned in honour to bring some exemplary punishment upon them. So it was with David (2 Sam. xii.): though he pardoned him as to the guilt of eternal death, saved his soul, and spared his life, which was forfeited to divine justice for the murder of Uriah; yet the prophet announced that sharp afflictions must come on him, the sword must never "depart from his house," and the child begotten in adultery must die, and his wives must be given to his neighbours. So, in Psalm xcix. 8, it seems to be spoken of Moses himself, and other godly among the Israelites who died in the wilderness, and were not permitted to come into the land of promise, that "*God forgave them*," yet "*took vengeance of their inventions.*"—*John Collins* (—1687) *in the Morning Exercises.*

Verse 8.—"*Vengeance of their inventions.*" It is remarkable, that in the preceding verses mention is made of Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel in a way which seems to imply that they were upon the Psalmist's mind when he uttered the declaration of the text. These three persons, all eminent for their piety, were also conspicuous for having suffered the Divine displeasure on account of their failings. Moses angered the Lord at the waters of strife, and he is not suffered to enter the promised land; Aaron provoked the Divine anger by making the golden calf, and would have been destroyed, had not Moses by fervent intercession turned away the anger of the Lord lest he should destroy him; so Samuel placed his sons over Israel, who walked not in his ways, and therefore God gave Israel a king, whose crimes caused the prophet to go down with sorrow to the grave.—*Stephen Bridge*, 1852.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. The doctrine of divine sovereignty enunciated. II. The apprehension of divine sovereignty demanded. It ought to be *spiritually* apprehended. God wants to be King in the *hearts* of men. All mortals must tremble before the Immortal; especially the wicked. III. The accessories of divine sovereignty hinted at. Sovereignty never forsakes the mercy-seat. Angels are represented on the mercy-seat, the ministers of sovereignty. IV. The effect of divine sovereignty described. Men should be "moved" to fear and obey the King before whom angels bow. Men should be moved to seek the mercy which angels study.—*William Durban.*

Verse 1.—"*He sitteth between the cherubims*," etc. I. Statement made; where God dwells, on the mercy seat. To hear prayer, and confession, and to grant salvation. II. Effect produced—"Earth moved;" to admiration, to prayer, to sorrowful contrition, to draw near, etc.—*E. G. Gange.*

Verse 2.—I. God is great in Zion *in himself*, all his perfections are here, which cannot be said of creation, or of his Law, or of the heaven of angels. II. Great in his works of *saving* sinners which he cannot do elsewhere. III. Great in his glory as displayed in *redemption* through his Son. IV. Great in his *love* to his redeemed.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord is great in Zion.*" I. In the condescension he displays—Zion is his "habitation," his "rest." II. In the glory he manifests—power and glory are in the sanctuary, Ps. lxiii. 2. III. In the assemblage he draws. "Every one in Zion appeareth before God," Ps. lxxxiv. 7. IV. In the blessings he imparts. V. In the authority he exerts.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 3.—The terrors of the Lord, connected with holiness, and worthy of praise.

Verse 4.—I. Trace the process of the working of right principles through three stages—Love, Establishment, Execution. II. Illustrate from God's character and action. III. Apply to national, and to daily, life.—*C. D.*

Verse 5.—"*Exalt the Lord your God.*" I. Why? For what he is to you. For what he has done for you. For what he has told you. II. How? In your affection. In your meditation. In your supplication. In your conversation. In your profession. In your consecration. In your co-operation. In your expectation.—*W. J.*

Verse 5.—I. The loyal enthusiasm of worship, it exalts the Lord. II. The humble diffidence of worship not aspiring to his exaltation, it kneels at his footstool. III. The good reason for worship.—"He is holy."—*C. D.*

Verses 6, 7.—I. Prayer offered. Moses the prophet, Aaron the priest, Samuel

the ruler, " They called," &c. II. Prayer answered. " He answered them," " he spake," &c. III. Prayer vindicated. They kept the other testimonies, &c.—*G. R.*

Verse 7 (first clause).—The revelation of the cloud, or what God foreshadowed to Israel in the cloudy pillar. I. That God was willing to commune with man. 2. That sinful man could not see God and live. 3. That God should become incarnate, veiled in flesh as in the cloud. 4. That he should be their shelter, protector, guide. 5. That God manifest in the flesh should lead them to the Promised Land—Heaven. —*C. D.*

Verse 8.—Mercy and judgment, or the sea of glass mingled with fire.—*C. D.*

Verse 8.—Observe, I. That God's vengeance for sin does not prevent his forgiveness of sin ; and, II. That God's forgiveness of sin does not prevent his taking vengeance. —*Stephen Bridge.*

Verse 9.—" *The Lord our God.*" A very sweet topic will be found in the consideration of the questions, " In what respect is Jehovah ours ? and in what relations does he stand to his people ? "

PSALM C.

TITLE.—A Psalm of Praise; *or rather* of thanksgiving. *This is the only Psalm bearing this precise inscription. It is all ablaze with grateful adoration, and has for this reason been a great favourite with the people of God ever since it was written. "Let us sing the Old Hundredth" is one of the everyday expressions of the Christian church, and will be so while men exist whose hearts are loyal to the Great King. Nothing can be more sublime this side heaven than the singing of this noble Psalm by a vast congregation. Watts' paraphrase, beginning "Before Jehovah's awful throne," and the Scotch "All people that on earth do dwell," are both noble versions; and even Tate and Brady rise beyond themselves when they sing—*

"With one consent let all the earth
To God their cheerful voices raise."

In this divine lyric we sing with gladness the creating power and goodness of the Lord, even as before with trembling we adored his holiness.

EXPOSITION.

MAKE a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.
2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.
3 Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.
5 For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations.

1. "*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.*" This is a repetition of the fourth verse of Psalm xcviii. The original word signifies a glad shout, such as loyal subjects give when their king appears among them. Our happy God should be worshipped by a happy people; a cheerful spirit is in keeping with his nature, his acts, and the gratitude which we should cherish for his mercies. In every land Jehovah's goodness is seen, therefore in every land should he be praised. Never will the world be in its proper condition till with one unanimous shout it adores the only God. O ye nations, how long will ye blindly reject him? Your golden age will never arrive till ye with all your hearts revere him.

2. "*Serve the Lord with gladness.*" "Glad homage pay with awful mirth." He is our Lord, and therefore he is to be served; he is our gracious Lord, and therefore to be served with joy. The invitation to worship here given is not a melancholy one, as though adoration were a funeral solemnity, but a cheery, gladsome exhortation, as though we were bidden to a marriage feast. "*Come before his presence with singing.*" We ought in worship to realise the presence of God, and by an effort of the mind to approach him. This is an act which must to every rightly instructed heart be one of great solemnity, but at the same time it must not be performed in the servility of fear, and therefore we come before him, not with weepings and wailings, but with Psalms and hymns. Singing, as it is a joyful, and at the same time a devout, exercise, should be a constant form of approach to God. The measured, harmonious, hearty utterance of praise by a congregation of really devout persons is not merely decorous but delightful, and is a fit anticipation of the worship of heaven, where praise has absorbed prayer, and become the sole mode of adoration. How a certain society of brethren can find it in their hearts to forbid singing in public worship is a riddle which we cannot solve. We feel inclined to say with Dr. Watts—

"Let those refuse to sing
Who never knew our God;
But favourites of the heavenly king
Must speak his praise abroad"

3. "*Know that the Lord he is God.*" Our worship must be intelligent. We ought to know whom we worship and why. "Man, know thyself," is a wise aphorism, yet to know our God is truer wisdom; and it is very questionable whether a man can know himself until he knows his God. Jehovah is God in the fullest, most absolute, and most exclusive sense, he is God alone; to know him in that character and prove our knowledge by obedience, trust, submission, zeal, and love is an attainment which only grace can bestow. Only those who practically recognise his Godhead are at all likely to offer acceptable praise. "*It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*" Shall not the creature reverence its Maker? Some men live as if they made themselves; they call themselves "self-made men," and they adore their supposed creators; but Christians recognise the origin of their being and their well-being, and take no honour to themselves either for being, or for being what they are. Neither in our first or second creation dare we put so much as a finger upon the glory, for it is the sole right and property of the Almighty. To disclaim honour for ourselves is as necessary a part of true reverence as to ascribe glory to the Lord. "Non nobis, domine!" will for ever remain the true believer's confession. Of late philosophy has laboured hard to prove that all things have been developed from atoms, or have, in other words, made themselves: if this theory shall ever find believers, there will certainly remain no reason for accusing the superstitious of credulity, for the amount of credence necessary to accept this dogma of scepticism is a thousandfold greater than that which is required even by an absurd belief in winking Madonnas, and smiling Bambinos. For our part, we find it far more easy to believe that the Lord made us than that we were developed by a long chain of natural selections from floating atoms which fashioned themselves. "*We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*" It is our honour to have been chosen from all the world besides to be *his* own people, and our privilege to be therefore guided by his wisdom, tended by his care, and fed by his bounty. Sheep gather around their shepherd and look up to him; in the same manner let us gather around the great Shepherd of mankind. The avowal of our relation to God is in itself praise; when we recount his goodness we are rendering to him the best adoration; our songs require none of the inventions of fictions, the bare facts are enough; the simple narration of the mercies of the Lord is more astonishing than the productions of imagination. That we are the sheep of his pasture is a plain truth, and at the same time the very essence of poetry.

4. "*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving.*" To the occurrence of the word *thanksgiving* in this place the Psalm probably owes its title. In all our public service the rendering of thanks must abound; it is like the incense of the temple, which filled the whole house with smoke. Expiatory sacrifices are ended, but those of gratitude will never be out of date. So long as we are receivers of mercy we must be givers of thanks. Mercy permits us to enter his gates; let us praise that mercy. What better subject for our thoughts in God's own house than the Lord of the house. "*And into his courts with praise.*" Into whatever court of the Lord you may enter, let your admission be the subject of praise: thanks be to God, the innermost court is now open to believers, and we enter into that which is within the veil; it is incumbent upon us that we acknowledge the high privilege by our songs. "*Be thankful unto him.*" Let the praise be in your heart as well as on your tongue, and let it all be for him to whom it all belongs. "*And bless his name.*" He blessed you, bless him in return; bless his name, his character, his person. Whatever he does, be sure that you bless him for it: bless him when he takes away as well as when he gives; bless him as long as you live, under all circumstances; bless him in all his attributes, from whatever point of view you consider him.

5. "*For the Lord is good.*" This sums up his character and contains a mass of reasons for praise. He is good, gracious, kind, bountiful, loving; yea, God is love. He who does not praise the good is not good himself. The kind of praise inculcated in the Psalm, viz. that of joy and gladness, is most fitly urged upon us by an argument from the goodness of God. "*His mercy is everlasting.*" God is not mere justice, stern and cold: he has bowels of compassion, and wills not the sinner's death. Towards his own people mercy is still more conspicuously displayed; it has been theirs from all eternity, and shall be theirs world without end. Everlasting mercy is a glorious theme for sacred song. "*And his truth endureth to all generations.*" No fickle being is he, promising and forgetting. He has entered into covenant with his people, and he will never revoke it, nor alter the thing that has gone out of his lips. As our fathers found him faithful, so will our sons, and

their seed for ever. A changeable God would be a terror to the righteous, they would have no sure anchorage, and amid a changing world they would be driven to and fro in perpetual fear of shipwreck. It were well if the truth of divine faithfulness were more fully remembered by some theologians; it would overturn their belief in the final fall of believers, and teach them a more consolatory system. Our heart leaps for joy as we bow before One who has never broken his word or changed his purpose.

> "As well might he his being quit
> As break his promise or forget."

Resting on his sure word, we feel that joy which is here commanded, and in the strength of it we come into his presence even now, and speak good of his name.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—This is the only Psalm in the whole collection entitled "*A Psalm of Praise.*" It is supposed to have received this appellation because peculiarly adapted, if not designed to be sung, when the *sacrifices of thanksgiving* were offered. See Lev. vii. 12. The Greeks think it was written by David, who here invites all the world to join with the Israelites in the service of God, whose divine sovereignty he here recognises.—*Samuel Burder.*

Whole Psalm.—If we are right in regarding Psalms xciii.—xcix. as forming one continuous series, one great prophetic oratorio, whose title is "Jehovah is King," and through which there runs the same great idea, this Psalm may be regarded as the doxology which closes the strain. We find lingering in it notes of the same great harmony. It breathes the same gladness; it is filled with the same hope, that all nations shall bow down before Jehovah, and confess that he is God.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm contains a promise of Christianity, as winter at its close contains the promise of spring. The trees are ready to bud, the flowers are just hidden by the light soil, the clouds are heavy with rain, the sun shines in his strength; only a genial wind from the south is wanted to give a new life to all things.—"*The Speaker's Commentary,*" 1873.

Whole Psalm.—Luther would have immortalized his name had he done no more than written the majestic air and harmony to which we are accustomed to sing this Psalm, and which, when the mind is in a truly worshipping frame, seems to bring heaven down to earth, and to raise earth to heaven, giving us anticipations of the pure and sublime delights of that noble and general assembly in which saints and angels shall for ever celebrate the praises of God.—*Ingram Cobbin.*

Verse 2.—The first half of this verse is from Psalm ii. 11, only that instead of "*with fear,*" there, where the Psalmist has to do with fierce rebels, there is substituted here "*gladness*" or joy.—*F. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"*Serve the Lord with gladness.*" It is a sign the oil of grace hath been poured into the heart "when the oil of gladness" shines on the countenance. Cheerfulness credits religion.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—"*Serve the Lord.*" It is our privilege to serve the Lord in all things. It is ours to please the Lord in loosing the latchet of a shoe; and to enjoy the expression of his favour therein. The servant of God is not serving at the same time another master; he has not been hired for occasional service; he abides in the service of his God, and cannot be about anything but his Master's business; he eats, he drinks, he sleeps, he walks, he discourses, he findeth recreation, all by the way of serving God. "*Serve the Lord with gladness.*" Can you bear to be waited upon by a servant who goes moping and dejected to his every task? You would rather have no servant at all, than one who evidently finds your service cheerless and irksome.—*George Bowen.*

Verse 3.—"*Know ye that the Lord he is God,*" &c. From the reasons of this

exhortation, learn, that such is our natural atheism, that we have need again and again to be instructed, *that the Lord is God;* of whom, and through whom, and for whom are all things.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*It is he that made us . . . we are his.*" Now, the ground of God's property in all things is his creating of all. . . . Accordingly, you may observe in many scriptures, where the Lord's propriety is asserted, this, as the ground of it, is annexed: Ps. lxxxix. 11, 12, the heavens, the earth, the whole world, and all therein is thine. Why so? "Thou hast founded them." And so are all the regions and quarters of the world, northern and southern, western and eastern; for Tabor was on the west and Hermon on the east; all are thine, for thou hast created them. So sea and land, Ps. xcv. 5. As all things measured by time, so time itself, the measure of all, Ps. lxxiv. 16, 17. "Thou hast made the light," *i.e.* the moon for the night and the sun for the day. He lays claim to all the climes of the earth, and all the seasons of the year, on this account; he made them. This will be more evident and unquestionable, if we take notice of these particulars:—

1. He made all for himself. He was not employed by any to make it for another, for in that case sometimes the maker is not the owner; but the Lord did employ himself in that great work, and for himself did he undertake and finish it. Prov. xvi. 4, Col. i. 15, 16.

2. He made all things of nothing, either without any matter at all, or without any but what himself had before made of nothing. A potter when he makes an earthenware vessel, if the clay be not his own which he makes it of, he is not the full owner of the vessel, though he formed it: "the form is his, the matter is another's;" but since the Lord made all of nothing, or of such matter as himself had made, all is wholly his, matter and form, all entirely.

3. He made all without the help or concurrence of any other. There was none that assisted him, or did in the least co-operate with him in the work of creation. . . . Those that assist and concur with another in the making of a thing may claim a share in it; but here lies no such claim in this case, where the Lord alone did all, alone made all. All is his only.

4. He upholds all things in the same manner as he created, continues the being of all things in the same way as he gave it. He does it of himself, without other support, without any assistant. All would fall into nothing in a moment, if he did not every moment bear them up. So that all things on this account have still their being from him every moment, and their well-being too, and all the means which conduce to it; and therefore all are his own.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 3.—"*It is he that hath made us.*" The emperor Henry, while out hunting on the Lord's day called Quinquagesima, his companions being scattered, came unattended to the entrance of a certain wood; and seeing a church hard by, he made for it, and feigning himself to be a soldier, simply requested a mass of the priest. Now that priest was a man of notable piety, but so deformed in person that he seemed a monster rather than a man. When he had attentively considered him, the emperor began to wonder exceedingly why God, from whom all beauty proceeds, should permit so deformed a man to administer his sacraments. But presently, when mass commenced, and they came to the passage, "*Know ye that the Lord he is God,*" which was chanted by a boy, the priest rebuked the boy for singing negligently, and said with a loud voice, "*It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*" Struck by these words, and believing the priest to be a prophet, the emperor raised him, much against his will, to the archbishopric of Cologne, which see he adorned by his devotion and excellent virtues.—*From "Roger of Wendover's* (—1237) *Flowers of History."*

Verse 3.—"*It is he that hath made us . . . we are his.*" Many a one has drawn balsamic consolation from these words; as for instance Melancthon when disconsolately sorrowful over the body of his son in Dresden on the 12th July, 1559. But in "*He made us and we are his,*" there is also a rich mine of comfort and of admonition, for the Creator is also the Owner, his heart clings to his creature, and the creature owes itself entirely to him, without whom it would not have had a being, and would not continue in being.—*F. Delitzsch.*

Verse 3.—"*He that made us,*" *i.e.* made us what we are, a people to himself; as in Ps. xcv. 5, 1 Sam. xii. 6, and Deut. xxxii. 6. It was not we that made ourselves his (compare Ezek. xxix. 3). "*He* (and not we ourselves) *made us his people, and the flock whom he feeds.*"—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 3.—"*Not we*" is added, because any share, on the part of the church,

in effecting the salvation bestowed upon her, would weaken the testimony which this bears to the exclusive Godhead of the Lord.—*F. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verses 3, 5.—"*Know ye*" what God is in himself, and what he is to you. Knowledge is the mother of devotion, and of all obedience; blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. "Know" it, *i.e.* consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him. Let us know, then, these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship.

1. "*That the Lord he is God,*" the only living and true God; that he is a being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being. 2. That he is our *Creator:* "*it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*" We do not, we could not make ourselves; it is God's prerogative to be his own cause; our being is derived and depending. 3. That therefore *he is our rightful owner.* The Masorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, "He made us, and his we are," or, "to him we belong." Put both the readings together, and we learn, that because God "made us, and not we ourselves," therefore we are not our own, but his. 4. That *he is our sovereign Ruler.* "*We are his people,*" or subjects, and he is our prince, our rector or governor, that gives laws to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do. 5. That *he is our bountiful Benefactor;* we are not only his sheep whom he is entitled to, but "*the sheep of his pasture,*" whom he takes care of. 6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and good (verse 5); "*The Lord is good,*" and therefore doth good; "his mercy is everlasting." 7. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness; "*His truth endureth to all generations,*" and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*Enter into his gates;*" for to the most guilty are the gates of his church open.—*Francis Hill Tucker.*

Verse 4.—"*With thanksgiving.*" On the word תּוֹדָה [the word used in Levit. vii. 12 for sacrifices of thanksgivings], Rabbi Menachen remarks: All sacrifices will be abolished; but the sacrifice of thanksgiving will remain.—*George Phillips.*

Verse 4.—The former part of this Psalm may have been chanted by the precentor when the peace-offering was brought to the altar; and this last verse may have been the response, sung by the whole company of singers, at the moment when fire was applied to the offering.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 5.—"*His mercy is everlasting.*" The everlasting unchangeable mercy of God, is the first motive of our turning to him, and of our continuing stedfast in his covenant, and it shall be the subject of unceasing praise in eternity. As the Lord is good, and his mercy everlasting, so the full perfection of these attributes in a perfect state will call forth praise unwearied from hearts that never faint.—*W. Wilson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—This is a bunch of the grapes of Eshcol. It is a taste of what is still the promised land. The Jewish church came to its perfection in the reign of Solomon, but a greater than Solomon is here. The perfection of the New Testament church is here anticipated. This Psalm teaches, I. *That there will be a joyful state of the whole world* (verse 1). 1. To whom the address is given—to "all lands," and all in those lands. 2. The subject of the address—"Make a joyful noise." What a doleful noise it *has* made! 3. By whom the address is given, by him who secures what he commands. II. *That this joyful state of the whole world will arise from the enjoyment of the Divine Being* (verse 2). 1. Men have long tried to be happy without God. 2. They will find at last that their happiness is in God. The conversion of an individual in this respect is a type of the conversion of the world. III. *That this enjoyment of God will arise from a new relation to him* (verse 3). 1. Of knowledge on our part: he will be known as the Triune God, as a covenant God, as the God of salvation—as God. 2. Of rightful claim on his part; (1) by right of creation—"He hath made us;" (2) By right of redemption—"Ye were not a people.

but are now the people of God," &c.; " I have redeemed thee; thou art mine " (3) by right of preservation—" We are the sheep," &c. IV. *That this new relation to God will endear to us the ordinances of his house* (verse 4). 1. Of what the service will consist—" thanksgiving " and praise. 2. To whom it will be rendered. Enter into *his* gates—*his* courts—be thankful unto *him*—bless *his* name. V. *That this service will be perpetual;* begun on earth, continued in heaven. This fact is founded—1. Upon essential goodness. " For the Lord is good." 2. Upon everlasting mercy. " His mercy," etc. 3. Upon immutable truth. " His truth," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—" *Serve the Lord with gladness,*" 1. For he is the best of beings. 2. For his commandments are not grievous. 3. For he is your Saviour, as well as Creator; your friend, as well as Lord. 4. The angels, so much greater than yourself, know no reason why they should not serve him with gladness. 5. In serving him you serve yourself. 6. You make religion attractive. 7. You get fitness for heaven. —*George Bowen.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—A true heart, I. Is humble—*serves.* II. Is pious—" serve the Lord." III. Is active—*serves.* IV. Is consequently joyful—" with gladness."

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—" Serving the Lord with gladness." See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 769.

Verse 3.—" *Know ye that the Lord he is God.*" That you may be true amid superstition, hopeful in contrition, persistent in supplication, unwearied in exertion, calm in affliction, firm in temptation, bold in persecution, and happy in dissolution.—*W. J.*

Verse 3.—" *We are his people.*" We have been twice born, as all his people are. We love the society of his people. We are looking unto Jesus like his people. We are separated from the world as his people. We experience the trials of his people. We prefer the employment of his people. We enjoy the privileges of his people.—*W. J.*

Verse 4.—A Discourse of Thankfulness which is due to God for his benefits and blessings.—*A Sermon by Thomas Goodwin. Works, vol. ix., pp.* 499—514. *Nichol's edition.*

Verse 4.—I. The privileges of access. II. The duty of thankfulness. III. The reasons for enjoying both.

Verse 5.—I. The inexhaustible fount—the goodness of God. II. The ever-flowing stream—the mercy of God. III. The fathomless ocean—the truth of God. " O the depths! "—*W. Durban.*

PSALM CI.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *This is just such a Psalm as the man after God's own heart would compose when he was about to become king in Israel. It is David all over, straightforward, resolute, devout; there is no trace of policy or vacillation,—the Lord has appointed him to be king, and he knows it, therefore he purposes in all things to behave as becomes a monarch whom the Lord himself has chosen. If we call this* THE PSALM OF PIOUS RESOLUTIONS, *we shall perhaps remember it all the more readily. After songs of praise a Psalm of practice not only makes variety, but comes in most fittingly. We never praise the Lord better than when we do those things which are pleasing in his sight.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me.

4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked *person.*

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

6 Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

1. "*I will sing of mercy and judgment.*" He would extol both the love and the severity, the sweets and the bitters, which the Lord had mingled in his experience; he would admire the justice and the goodness of the Lord. Such a song would fitly lead up to godly resolutions as to his own conduct, for that which we admire in our superiors we naturally endeavour to imitate. Mercy and judgment would temper the administration of David, because he had adoringly perceived them in the dispensations of his God. Everything in God's dealings with us may fittingly become the theme of song, and we have not viewed it aright until we feel we can sing about it. We ought as much to bless the Lord for the judgment with which he chastens our sin, as for the mercy with which he forgives it; there is as much love in the blows of his hand as in the kisses of his mouth. Upon a retrospect of their lives instructed saints scarcely know which to be most grateful for—the comforts which have cheered them, or the afflictions which have purged them. "*Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.*" Jehovah shall have all our praise. The secondary agents of either the mercy or the judgment must hold a very subordinate place in our memory, and the Lord alone must be hymned by our heart. Our soul's sole worship must be the lauding of the Lord. The Psalmist forsakes the minor key, which was soon to rule him in the one hundred and second Psalm, and resolves that, come what may, he will sing, and sing to the Lord too, whatever others might do.

2. "*I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.*" To be holy is to be wise; a perfect way is a wise way. David's resolve was excellent, but his practice did not fully tally with it. Alas! he was not always wise or perfect, but it was well that it was in his heart. A king had need be both sage and pure, and, if he be not so in intent, when he comes to the throne, his after conduct will be a sad example to his people. He who does not even resolve to do well is likely to do very ill. Householders, employers, and especially ministers, should pray for both wisdom and holiness, for they will need them both. "*O when wilt thou come unto me?*"—an ejaculation, but not an interruption. He feels the need not merely of divine help,

but also of the divine presence, that so he may be instructed, and sanctified, and made fit for the discharge of his high vocation. David longed for a more special and effectual visitation from the Lord before he began his reign. If God be with us we shall neither err in judgment nor transgress in character; his presence brings us both wisdom and holiness: away from God we are away from safety. Good men are so sensible of infirmity that they cry for help from God, so full of prayer that they cry at all seasons, so intense in their desires that they cry with sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered, saying, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" "*I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*" Piety must begin at home. Our first duties are those within our own abode. We must have a perfect heart at home, or we cannot keep a perfect way abroad. Notice that these words are a part of a song, and that there is no music like the harmony of a gracious life, no Psalm so sweet as the daily practice of holiness. Reader, how fares it with your family? Do you sing in the choir and sin in the chamber? Are you a saint abroad and a devil at home? For shame! What we are at home, that we are indeed. He cannot be a good king whose palace is the haunt of vice, nor he a true saint whose habitation is a scene of strife, nor he a faithful minister whose household dreads his appearance at the fireside.

3. "*I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.*" I will neither delight in it, aim at it, nor endure it. If I have wickedness brought before me by others I will turn away from it, I will not gaze upon it with pleasure. The Psalmist is very sweeping in his resolve, he declines the least, the most reputable, the most customary form of evil—*no* wicked thing: not only shall it not dwell in his heart, but not even before his eyes, for what fascinates the eye is very apt to gain admission into the heart, even as Eve's apple first pleased her sight, and then prevailed over her mind and hand. "*I hate the work of them that turn aside.*" He was warmly against it; he did not view it with indifference, but with utter scorn and abhorrence. Hatred of sin is a good sentinel for the door of virtue. There are persons in courts who walk in a very crooked way, leaving the high road of integrity; and these, by short cuts, and twists, and turns, are often supposed to accomplish work for their masters which simple honest hearts are not competent to undertake; but David would not employ such, he would pay no secret service money, he loathed the practices of men who deviate from righteousness. He was of the same mind as the dying statesman who said, "Corruption wins not more than honesty." It is greatly to be deplored that in after years he did not keep himself clear in this matter in every case, though, in the main he did; but what would he have been if he had not commenced with this resolve, but had followed the usual crooked policy of Oriental princes? How much do we all need divine keeping! We are no more perfect than David, nay, we fall far short of him in many things; and, like him, we shall find need to write a Psalm of penitence very soon after our Psalm of good resolution. "*It shall not cleave to me.*" I will disown their ways, I will not imitate their policy: like dirt it may fall upon me, but I will wash it off, and never rest till I am rid of it. Sin, like pitch, is very apt to stick. In the course of our family history crooked things will turn up, for we are all imperfect, and some of those around us are far from being what they should be; it must, therefore, be one great object of our care to disentangle ourselves, to keep clear of transgression, and of all that comes of it: this cannot be done unless the Lord both comes to us, and abides with us evermore.

4. "*A froward heart shall depart from me.*" He refers both to himself and to those round about him; he would neither be crooked in heart himself, nor employ persons of evil character in his house; if he found such in his court he would chase them away. He who begins with his own heart begins at the fountain head, and is not likely to tolerate evil companions. We cannot turn out of our family all whose hearts are evil, but we can keep them out of our confidence, and let them see that we do not approve of their ways. "*I will not know a wicked person.*" He shall not be my intimate, my bosom friend. I must know him as a man, or I could not discern his character; but if I know him to be wicked, I will not know him any further, and with his evil I will have no communion. "To know" in Scripture means more than mere perception, it includes fellowship, and in that sense it is here used. Princes must disown those who disown righteousness; if they know the wicked they will soon be known as wicked themselves.

5. "*Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off.*" He had known so bitterly the miseries caused by slanderers that he intended to deal severely with such vipers when he came into power, not to revenge his own ills, but to prevent

others from suffering as he had done. To give one's neighbour a stab in the dark is one of the most atrocious of crimes, and cannot be too heartily reprobated, yet such as are guilty of it often find patronage in high places, and are considered to be men of penetration, trusty ones who have a keen eye, and take care to keep their lords well posted up. King David would lop the goodly tree of his state of all such superfluous boughs, "*Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.*" Proud, domineering, supercilious gentlemen, who look down upon the poor as though they were so many worms crawling in the earth beneath their feet, the Psalmist could not bear. The sight of them made him suffer, and therefore he would not suffer them. Great men often affect aristocratic airs and haughty manners, David therefore resolved that none should be great in his palace but those who had more grace and more sense than to indulge in such abominable vanity. Proud men are generally hard, and therefore very unfit for office; persons of high looks provoke enmity and discontent, and the fewer of such people about a court the better for the stability of a throne. If all slanderers were now cut off, and all the proud banished, it is to be feared that the next census would declare a very sensible diminution of the population.

6. "*Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me.*" He would seek them out, engage their services, take care of them, and promote them to honour: this is a noble occupation for a king, and one which will repay him infinitely better than listening to the soft nothings of flatterers. It would be greatly for the profit of us all if we chose our servants rather by their piety than by their cleverness; he who gets a faithful servant gets a treasure, and he ought to do anything sooner than part with him. Those who are not faithful to God will not be likely to be faithful to men; if we are faithful ourselves, we shall not care to have those about us who cannot speak the truth or fulfil their promises; we shall not be satisfied until all the members of our family are upright in character. "*He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.*" What I wish myself to be, that I desire my servant to be. Employers are to a great degree responsible for their servants, and it is customary to blame a master if he retains in his service persons of notorious character; therefore, lest we become partakers of other men's sins, we shall do well to decline the services of bad characters. A good master does well to choose a good servant; he may take a prodigal into his house for the sinner's good, but if he consults his own he will look in another quarter. Wicked nurses have great influence for evil over the minds of little children, and ungodly servants often injure the morals of the older members of the family, and therefore great care should be exercised that godly servants should be employed as far as possible. Even irreligious men have the sense to perceive the value of Christian servants, and surely their own Christian brethren ought not to have a lower appreciation of them.

7. "*He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house.*" He had power to choose his courtiers, and he meant to exercise it. Deceit among most Orientals is reckoned to be a virtue, and is only censured when it is not sufficiently cunning, and therefore comes to be found out; it was therefore all the more remarkable that David should have so determinedly set his face against it. He could not tell what a deceitful man might be doing, what plots he might be contriving, what mischief he might be brewing, and therefore he resolved that he would at any rate keep him out of his house, that his palace might not become a den of villainy. Cheats in the market are bad enough, but deceivers at our own table we cannot bear. "*He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.*" He would not have a liar within sight or hearing; he loathed the mention of him. Grace makes men truthful, and creates in them an utter horror of everything approaching to falsehood. If David would not have a liar in his sight, much less will the Lord; neither he that loves nor he who makes a lie shall be admitted into heaven. Liars are obnoxious enough on earth; the saints shall not be worried with them in another world.

8. "*I will early destroy all the wicked of the land.*" At the very outset of his government he would promptly deal out justice to the worthless, he would leave them no rest, but make them leave their wickedness or feel the lash of the law. The righteous magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain." To favour sin is to discourage virtue; undue leniency to the bad is unkindness to the good. When our Lord comes in judgment, this verse will be fulfilled on a large scale; till then he sinks the judge in the Saviour, and bids men leave their sins and find pardon. Under the gospel we also are bidden to suffer long, and to be kind, even to the unthankful and the evil; but the office of the magistrate is of another kind, and he

must have a sterner eye to justice than would be proper in private persons. Is he not to be a terror to evil doers? "*That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.*" Jerusalem was to be a holy city, and the Psalmist meant to be doubly careful in purging it from ungodly men. Judgment must begin at the house of God. Jesus reserves his scourge of small cords for sinners inside the temple. How pure ought the church to be, and how diligently should all those who hold office therein labour to keep out and chase out men of unclean lives. Honourable offices involve serious responsibilities; to trifle with them will bring our own souls into guilt, and injure beyond calculation the souls of others. Lord, come to us, that we, in our several positions in life, may walk before thee with perfect hearts.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The contents of this Psalm show that it was written at some remarkable period of David's life. Three different times have been fixed upon as respectively giving occasion for the solemn resolutions which are announced in it. The first is supposed to be when David, immediately after the death of Saul, succeeded to the government of a part of the kingdom; the second, when the whole kingdom was united under the dominion of David; and the third, when he removed the ark from the house of Obededom to Zion, and placed it in the vicinity of his own abode. It is certainly of little importance which of these periods we select, but the second verse of the Psalm has some appearance of relating to the last mentioned. The Psalmist here says, "*When wilt thou come to me?*" which seems to intimate that when he was to have the symbols of God's presence so near to him, he experienced a solemn sentiment respecting the holiness that was now more than ever incumbent upon him—a sentiment which induced him to form the sacred purposes and resolutions which he has specified. These purposes relate to the character of the persons whom he would select for his household, and those whom he would employ in carrying on his government, which appeared to be more firmly established by the divine condescension that was manifested to him, in having the earthly residence of God placed so near to himself. It was quite in agreement with David's character to form purposes of more fervent and steadfast obedience, in proportion to the advantages and favours which the divine goodness bestowed upon him.—*William Walford.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm has been appropriately called "The Householder's Psalm;" and assuredly if every master of a family would regulate his household by these rules of the conscientious Psalmist, there would be a far greater amount, not merely of domestic happiness and comfort, but of fulfilment of the serious and responsible duties which devolve on the respective members of a household. David in some measure may be supposed to speak of the regulation of a royal court and household; and of course with such we in our humbler sphere can have but little in common; yet though there may not be the same duties and the same requirements, yet the same principles should actuate all alike, and the same virtues that adorn the lowlier station may shed a radiance even on the highest.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Whole Psalm.—This is the Psalm which the old expositors used to designate "The Mirror for Magistrates;" and an excellent mirror it is. It would mightily accelerate the coming of the time when every nation shall be Christ's possession, and every capital a "City of the Lord," if all magistrates could be persuaded to dress themselves by it every time they go forth to perform the functions of their godlike office. When Sir George Villiers became the favourite and prime minister of King James, Lord Bacon, in a beautiful Letter of Advice, counselled him to take this Psalm for his rule in the promotion of courtiers. "In those the choice had need be of honest and faithful servants, as well as of comely outsides who can bow the knee and kiss the hand. King David (Psalm ci. 6, 7) propounded a rule to himself for the choice of his courtiers. He was a wise and a good king; and a wise and a good king shall do well to follow such a good example; and if he find any to be faulty, which perhaps cannot suddenly be discovered, let him take on him this resolution as King David did, '*There shall no deceitful person dwell in my house.*'"

It would have been well both for the Philosopher and the Favourite if they had been careful to walk by this rule.—*William Binnie.*

Whole Psalm.—Eyring, in his " Life of Ernest the Pious " (Duke of Saxe-Gotha), relates that he sent an unfaithful minister a copy of the 101st Psalm, and that it became a proverb in the country when an official had done anything wrong: He will certainly soon receive the prince's Psalm to read.—*F. Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—The 101st Psalm was one beloved by the noblest of Russian princes, Vladimir Monomachos; and by the gentlest of English reformers, Nicholas Ridley. But it was its first leap into life that has carried it so far into the future. It is full of a stern exclusiveness, of a noble intolerance, not against theological error, not against uncourtly manners, not against political insubordination, but against the proud heart, the high look, the secret slanderer, the deceitful worker, the teller of lies. These are the outlaws from king David's court; these are the rebels and heretics whom he would not suffer to dwell in his house or tarry in his sight.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in " Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church,"* 1870.

Whole Psalm.—Such a hymn of praise as the grand doxology of Psalm xcix. could not die away without an echo. Accordingly Psalm c. may be regarded as forming the chorus of the church, and this as taking up and applying that part of the doxology which celebrated the *present* manifestation of the " King in his beauty." —*Alfred Edersheim.*

Whole Psalm.—Mr. Fox reports that Bishop Ridley often read and expounded this Psalm to his household, hiring them with money to get it by heart.—*Thomas Lye, in " The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 1.—" *I will sing.*" If thou bestowest mercies upon me; or if thou bringest any judgment upon me; before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymn for all.—*Chaldee Paraphrase.*

Verse 1.—" *I will sing.*" The manner of expression imports a *cordial* resolution; heart and will are engaged in it; there is twice *I will* in the text. The manner of expression imports a *humble* resolution; I cannot sing of merit; but I will sing of mercy, and through mercy I will sing of mercy. To sing of mercy must be a humble song, for mercy towards a miserable sinner is a melting word; and to sing of judgment must be a humble song, for judgment in every sense is an awful word. The manner of the expression imports a *skilful* harper, a dexterous musician, even in a spiritual sense; he knew what should be the subject of the song, and he says, " I will sing of mercy and judgment; " and he knew what should be the object of the song, or to whom it should be sung, and therefore says, " To thee, O Lord, I will sing " ; he knew who should be the singer, and therefore says, " I will " do it; he knew what should be the manner; and therefore says, " I will sing of mercy and judgment; to thee, O Lord, will I *sing.*" It is before the Lord he resolves to sing, as he did before the ark, which was a type of Christ; and so is it a song to the praise of God in Christ. The manner of the expression imports *a firm, fixed, and constant* resolution; so the redoubling of it seems to import; " I will sing, I will sing." He had a mind this exercise of singing should not go down, but be his continual trade, " I will sing, I will sing; " I will sing on earth and I will sing in heaven; I will sing in time and I will sing in eternity. And, indeed, all on whom the spirit of praise and gratitude is poured out resolve never to give over singing. . . . David had heard once, yea, twice, that mercy as well as power belongs to the Lord; and therefore not only once, but twice in a breath he resolves to sing unto the Lord. The word hath a great deal of elegancy and emphasis in it; I will sing of mercy, I will sing of judgment; O, I will sing, O Lord, I will sing; and I will sing unto thee.—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 1.— This song of the sweet singer of Israel is peculiar to earth; they do not sing of " *judgment*" in heaven, for there is no sin there; they do not sing of " *mercy* " in hell, for there is no propitiation for sin there. Time was when the song was not heard even on earth; for in Paradise man walked in innocence, and walking in innocence he walked in the light of his Father's face.—*Hugh Stowell,* 1856.

Verse 1.— " *I will sing of mercy and judgment.*" It comes all to this, as if the Psalmist should say, " I will sing of *merciful judgments*; " for judgment is mercy, as it is the matter of the song: or, to take them separately, " I will sing of mercy *in* mercies, and, I will sing of mercy *in* judgment: " and so I will sing of my blinks and of my showers; I will sing both of my cloudy and my clear day; both of my ups and downs.—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 1.—"*Mercy and judgment.*" As the badge of the ship S. Paul sailed in was *Castor and Pollux*, twin brothers, so the badge of this Psalm is *Mercy and Judgment*, inseparable companions; of whom it may be said, as our prophet sometimes spake of Saul and Jonathan, "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." These are the two brightest stars in the firmament of majesty; the two fairest flowers, and choicest jewels in the imperial crown; like the carnation and the lily, the ruby and the sapphire, or the carbuncle and the diamond, yielding a mutual and interchangeable lustre each to other. They resemble not unfitly the two supporters of the king's arms, or the two seraphim stretching out their golden wings over the propitiatory, or the white and red rose in the same escutcheon.

We read that Solomon set up two goodly pillars in the porch of the temple, the one called *Jachin*, the other *Boaz*, which signify stability and strength: such pillars of the state are *mercy and judgment*. The throne of the King is borne up by them, as Solomon's was with lions of ivory on each side. Therefore, as in one place it is said that "*the throne is established by justice*" (Prov. xvi. 12); so in another that it is "*upheld by mercy*" (Prov. xx. 28); justice being as the bones and sinews in the body politic, and mercy as the veins and arteries. They are the two hands of action, the two eyes of virtue, and the two wings of honour. And as the eyes, if they be rightly set, do both look one way; so do *mercy and judgment*, however in the apprehension of the vulgar they seem to look contrary ways. And as the treble and the bass accord best in music; so do they in managing the commonwealth. Wherefore David promiseth to make them both sound tunable in his song without jar or discord: "*I will sing of mercy and judgment.*". . . .

As *mercy* is here set in the first place; so shall the sentence of mercy and absolution be first pronounced at the last day. And it is a laudable custom of princes, at their first entrance to their kingdoms, to shew mercy, by hearing the mourning of the prisoner, and delivering the children of death, by loosing the bands of wickedness, by taking off the heavy burdens, by letting the oppressed go free, and by breaking every yoke of former extortions. Thus, our prophet himself, as soon as the crown was settled on his head, made inquiry if there remained yet alive any of the house of Saul, on whom he might shew mercy (2 Sam. ix.). O how fair a thing is this mercy in the time of anguish and trouble! It is like a cloud of rain that cometh in the time of drought. But this *mercy*, here spoken of in the first part of our prophet's song, stretcheth further; unfolding itself in *clemency*, in *courtesy*, and in *compassion*. In *clemency*, by pardoning malefactors; in *compassion*, by relieving the afflicted; in *courtesy*, towards all.—*George Hakewill*, or *Hakewell*, 1579–1649.

Verse 1.—"*Mercy and judgment.*" What is the history of every poor sinner, plucked as a brand from the fire, and brought to heaven in peace at last, but a history of "mercy and judgment?" Judgment first awakes to terror and to fear; mercy meets the poor, trembling, returning prodigal, and falls on his neck, and kisses, and forgives. Then, through all his chequered course, God hems up his way with judgment, that he may not wander, and yet brightens his path with mercy, that he may not faint. Is there a child of God that can look into the varied record of his heart or of his outward history, and not see goodness and severity, severity and goodness, tracking him all his journey through? Has he ever had a cup so bitter that he could say, "There is no mercy here"? Has he ever had a lot so bright that he could say, "There is no chastisement or correction here"? Has he ever had any bad tidings, and there have been no good tidings set over against them to relieve them? Has he ever had a sky so dark that he could see in it no star, or a cloud so unchequered that he could trace no rainbow of promise there? . . .

What a beautifully woven web of judgment and mercy does every man's secret history, in his way through the wilderness of life to the land of promise, present! and how good, and how wholesome, and how kindly, and how gracious is this blessed intermingling of both! How do we need the judgment, to keep us humble and watchful and pure! and how do we need the mercy, to keep us hopeful, and to nerve our efforts, and to stir our hearts, and to sustain us in patience, amid life's battle and struggle, and disappointment and vexation! Oh, how good it is for us, that we should thus, therefore, have the rod and staff together—the rod to chasten, and the staff to solace and sustain! How good it is for us, that we should have to "*sing of mercy and judgment*"! And yet, what is judgment itself, but mercy with a sterner aspect? And what are the chidings of judgment, but the sterner tones of the voice of a Father's love? For even judgment is one of the "all things" that "work together for good

to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose."—*Hugh Stowell.*

Verse 1.—"*Mercy and judgment.*" God intermixeth mercy with affliction: he steeps his sword of justice in the oil of mercy; there was no night so dark, but Israel had a pillar of fire in it; there is no condition so dismal, but we may see a pillar of fire to give light. If the body be in pain, conscience is in peace,—there is mercy: affliction is for the prevention of sin,—there is mercy. In the ark there was a rod and a pot of manna, the emblem of a Christian's condition, mercy interlined with judgment.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—"*I will behave myself wisely.*" The first thing he vows touching himself, is wise behaviour; prudence, not sapience; not wise contemplation, but wise action. It is not wise thoughts, or wise speaking, or wise writing, or wise gesture and countenance, will serve the turn, but wise behaviour; the former are graceful, but the other needful. For as the apostle saith of godliness, "Having a show of godliness, but denying the power thereof;" so certainly there are those who in point of wisdom and sufficiency that do little or nothing thoroughly, but *magno conatu nugas*, they make much ado about small matters; using all the perspectives of shifting they can devise to make an empty *superficies* seem a body that hath depth and bulk.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 2.—"*I will walk.*" Walking is a word often used in Holy Scripture, and especially by our prophet in this book of the Psalms; yet more often figuratively than properly. It shall not be amiss, then, out of the property and nature of it, to consider the duties included and implied in it. The natural acts of it, then, are three; *motion*, *progress*, and *moderation*. As it includes *motion*, so is it opposed to lying, or standing, or sitting; as it includes *progress in motion*, so is it opposed to jumping or capering up and down in the same place; as it includes *moderation* in a *progressive motion*, so is it opposed to violent running.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 2.—"*I will walk within my house.*" Much, though not all of the power of godliness, lies within doors. It is in vain to talk of holiness if we can bring no letters testimonial from our holy walking with our relations. Oh, it is sad when they that have reason to know us best, by their daily converse with us, do speak least for our godliness! Few so impudent as to come naked into the streets: if men have anything to cover their naughtiness they will put it on when they come abroad. But what art thou within doors? What care and conscience to discharge thy duty to thy near relations? He is a bad husband that hath money to spend among company abroad, but none to lay in provisions to keep his family at home. And can he be a good Christian that spends all his religion abroad, and leaves none for his nearest relations at home? that is, a great zealot among strangers and little or nothing of God comes from him in his family? Yea, it were well if some that gain the reputation of Christians abroad, did not fall short of others that pretend not to profession in those moral duties which they should perform to their relations. There are some who are great strangers to profession, who yet are loving and kind in their way to their wives. What kind of professors then are they who are dogged and currish to the wife of their bosom? who by their tyrannical lording it over them embitter their spirit, and make them cover the Lord's altar with tears and weeping? There are wives to be found that are not clamorous, peevish and froward to their husbands, who yet are far from a true work of grace in their hearts; do they then walk as becomes holiness who trouble the whole house with their violent passions? There are servants who from the authority of a natural conscience, are kept from railing and reviling language, when reproved by their masters, and shall not grace keep pace with nature? Holy David knew very well how near this part of a saint's duty lies to the very heart of godliness; and therefore, when he makes his solemn vow to walk holily before God, he instanceth this, as one stage wherein he might eminently discover the graciousness of his spirit; "*I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*"—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*Within my house.*" It is easier for most men to walk with a perfect heart in the *church*, or even in the *world*, than in their *own families*. How many are as meek as lambs among *others*, when at *home* they are *wasps* or *tigers*.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*Within my house with a perfect heart.*" Even in our best directed establishments, as well as in private families, cultivation is still in a great measure confined to intellect alone; and the *direct* exercise and training of the moral and religious sentiments and affections are rarely thought of as essential to their full

and vigorous development. Moral precepts are, no doubt, offered in abundance; but these address themselves chiefly to the intellect. We must not be satisfied with merely exclaiming, "Be kind, just, and affectionate," when perhaps at the very moment we are counteracting the effect of the advice by our own opposite conduct. "She told me not to lie," said Guy Rivers in speaking of his mother, "and she set me the example herself by frequently deceiving my father, and teaching me to disobey and deceive him." Conduct like this is more common in real life than is supposed, although generally less flagrant in degree. Parents and teachers indeed too often forget that the sentiments *feel* and *do not reason*, and that, consequently, even a stupid child may, by the instinctive operation of its moral nature at once detect and revolt at the immorality of practices, the true character of which its *reason* is unable to penetrate or expose. It is one of the most effectual methods of cultivating and exciting the moral sentiments in children, to set before them the manifestations of these in our habitual conduct. . . .

What kind of moral duties does the parent encourage, who, recommending kindness, openness, and justice, *tricks* the child into the confession of a fault, and then basely punishes it, having previously promised forgiveness? And how is openness best encouraged—by practising it in conduct, or by neglecting it in practice, and prescribing it in words? Is it to be cultivated by thrusting suspicions in the face of honest intentions? And how is justice to be cultivated by a guardian who *speaks* about it, recommends it, and *in practice* charges each of four pupils the whole fare of a hackney-coach? Or what kind of moral education is that which says, "Do as I bid you, and I will give you sweetmeats or money, or I will tell your mama how good you were," holding out the lowest and most selfish propensities as the motives to moral conduct? Did space permit, I might indeed pursue the whole round of moral and religious duties, and ask similar questions at each. But it is needless. These examples will suffice; and I give them, not as applicable generally either to parents or teachers, but simply as individual instances from among both, which have come within the sphere of my own knowledge, and which bear directly upon the principle under discussion.—*Andrew Combe, in "The Principles of Physiology,"* 1836.

Verse 3.—"*Wicked thing.*" The original hath it, if we will render it word for word, "*I will set no word of Belial before mine eyes.*" But *word* is figuratively there put for *thing;* as likewise Ps. xli. 8; and so is it rendered both by *Montanus* in the margin, and in the text by *Junius;* howbeit, in his comment upon this Psalm, he precisely follows the original, applying it against sycophants and flatterers, the mice and moths of court.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 3.—"*I hate the work of them that turn aside.*" Mr. Schultens hath shown in his commentary on Prov. vii. 25 that סטה hath a much stronger and more significant meaning than that of mere *turning aside;* and that it is used of an unruly horse, that champs upon the bit through his fiery impatience; and when applied to a bad man, denotes one impatient of all restraint, of unbridled passions, and that is headstrong and ungovernable in the gratification of them, trampling on all the obligations of religion and virtue. Such as these are the deserved objects of the hatred of all good men, whose criminal deviations and presumptuous crimes they detest; none of which "*shall cleave to them;*" they will not harbour the love of, or inclination to them, nor habitually commit them, nor encourage the practice of them. Persons of this character are too frequently about the courts of princes, but it is their honour and interest, as far as ever they can, to discountenance them.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 3.—"*It shall not cleave to me.*" A bird may light upon a man's house, but he may choose whether she shall nestle or breed there, or no: and the devil or his instruments may represent a wicked object to a man's sight; but he may choose whether he will entertain or embrace it or no. For a man to set wicked things before his eyes is nothing else but to sin of set purpose, to set himself to sin, or to sell himself to sin, as Ahab did, 1 Kings xxi.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 3.—"*It shall not cleave to me.*" A wicked plan or purpose is thus represented as having a tendency to fasten itself on a man, or to "*stick to him*"—as pitch or wax, or a *burr* does.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 4.—"*A froward heart.*" The original sense of עקש is *torsit, contorsit,* to twist together, and denotes, when applied to men, persons of a perverse, subtle

disposition, that can twist and twine themselves into all manner of shapes, and who have no truth and honour to be depended on.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 4.—"*A froward heart.*" By which I understand "*from-wardness*"—giving way to sudden impulses of anger, or quick conception, and casting it forth in words or deeds of impetuous violence.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 5.—"*Privily slandereth*"—literally, he that *tongueth* his neighbour secretly. "*Will I not suffer,*" is properly, "him I *cannot,*" *i.e.*, cannot live with, cannot bear about me, as the same verb is used in Isai. i. 13.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 5.—"*Him that hath an high look.*" Pride will sit and show itself in the eyes as soon as anywhere. A man is seen what he is *in oculis, in poculis, in loculis* (in his eyes, his cups, and his resorts) say the Rabbins. See Proverbs vi. 17.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—"*Proud heart.*" From רָחַב *latus* or *dilatatus est*, is the noun רָחָב here, *broad*, or *wide*, or *large;* and being applied to the *heart* or *soul*, it notes *largeness of desires.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 5.—Detraction, ambition, and avarice are three weeds which spring and flourish in the rich soil of a court. The Psalmist declareth his resolution to undertake the difficult task of eradicating them for the benefit of his people, that Israelites might not be harassed by informers, or repressed by insolent and rapacious ministers. Shall we imagine these vices less odious in the eyes of that King whose character was composed of humility and charity; or will Christ admit those tempers into the court of heaven, which David determined to exclude from his court upon earth?—*George Horne.*

Verses 5—10.—Perfect, as prophetic of Christ, is the delineation of his associates and disciples. The perverse; the evil-doers; the slanderers, and the proud found no fellowship with him. There were no common principles; no bond of union between them. There was "a gulph" interposed, as in the parable, which they could not pass; and what they saw of Christ, they beheld only from a distance. Nor even now, as then, can "the deceitful" dwell in Christ's "house"—his holy temple; nor the man of "lies be established" by his love and favour. They must renounce their vices before they can be admitted to his covenant; or, however they may claim communion with *him*, he in return can have no sympathy with them.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 6.—"*Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful.*" There is an eye of *search*, and an eye of *favour:* the one is for the seeking and finding them out, that they may serve; the other for countenancing of their persons, and rewarding of their service.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 6.—"*Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,*" etc. Christ's eyes are upon faithful persons, or faithful ministers of the word, who preach the Gospel faithfully, administer the ordinances truly, are faithful to the souls of men in watching over them, reproving and exhorting them; his eyes are upon them to keep and preserve them, and to honour and reward them with a crown of life that fadeth not away. His eyes are also on faithful members of churches, such who truly believe in him, who hold fast the faithful word, and keep close to his worship and ordinances; his eyes are upon them, to show favour to them, to bestow blessings upon them, and to protect and defend them, and to preserve them from perishing: "*That they may dwell with me;*" or, *sit with me;* at his table, or at the council-board, or in judgment, and assist him in the affairs of government; so such as are faithful shall dwell with Christ both here and hereafter; they dwell in him and with him by faith, and have communion with him; they dwell in his house below, and shall dwell with him above for evermore.—*John Gill.*

Verse 6.—"*He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.*" Art thou a godly master? When thou takest a servant into thy house, choose for God as well as thyself. Remember there is a work for God to be done by thy servant as well as by thyself: and shall he be fit for thy turn that is not for God's? Thou desirest the work should prosper thy servant takes in hand, dost thou not? And what ground hast thou, from the promise, to hope that the work should prosper in his hand that sins all the while he is doing of it? "The ploughing of the wicked is sin," Prov. xxi. 4. A godly servant is a greater blessing than we think on. He can work, and set God on work also, for his master's good: Gen. xxiv. 12, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my

master." And sure he did his master as much service by his prayer as by his prudence in that journey. If you were but to plant an orchard, you would get the best fruit trees, and not cumber your ground with crabs. There is more loss in a graceless servant in the house than a fruitless tree in the orchard. Holy David observed, while he was at Saul's court, the mischief of having wicked and ungodly servants, for with such was that unhappy king compassed, that David compares his court to the profane and barbarous heathens', among whom there was scarce more wickedness to be found: Ps. cxx. 5. "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar;" that is, among those who were as prodigiously wicked as any there. And no doubt but this made this gracious man in his banishment, before he came to the crown, having seen the evil of a disordered house, to resolve what he would do when God should make him the head of such a royal family. "*He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.*" He instanceth those sins, not as if he would spend all his zeal against these, but because he had observed them principally to abound in Saul's court, by which he had suffered so much, as you may perceive by Psalm cxx.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 8.—"*That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.*" As the kingdom of David was only a faint image of the kingdom of Christ, we ought to set Christ before our view; who, although he may bear with many hypocrites, yet as he will be the judge of the world, will at length call them all to an account, and separate the sheep from the goats. And if it seems to us that he tarries too long, we should think of that morning which will suddenly dawn, that all filthiness being purged away, true purity may shine forth.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—"*Early.*" From some incidental notices of Scripture (2 Sam. xv. 2; Ps. ci. 8; Jer. xxi. 12), it has been inferred that judges ordinarily held their sessions in the morning. In a climate like that of Palestine, such a custom would be natural and convenient. It is doubtful, however, whether this passage expresses anything more than the promptness and zeal which a righteous judge exercises in the discharge of his duty.—*E. P. Barrows, in "Biblical Geography and Antiquities."*

Verse 8.—The holy vow "*to destroy all the wicked of the land,*" and to "*cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord,*" must begin at our own hearts as his sanctuary, the temple of the Holy Ghost.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—This is a Psalm of wills and shalls. There are nine wills and five shalls. Resolutions should be made, 1. With deliberation; not, therefore, upon trifling matters. 2. With reservation. "If the Lord will," etc. 3. With dependence upon divine strength for their fulfilment.—*G. R.*

Verse 1.—I. The sweet work that is resolved upon is to "*sing.*" II. The sweet singer that thus resolves, namely, David, "*I* will sing." III. The sweet subject of the song, "*mercy and judgment.*" IV. The sweet object of this praise, and the manner in which he would sing it—"*Unto thee, O Lord,* will I sing."—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 1.—What there is in mercy that affords ground of singing. I. The freeness and undeservedness of mercy. II. The unexpectedness of mercy. When I was expecting a frown I got a smile; when I was expecting nothing but wrath, I got a glance of love; instead of a stroke of vengeance, I got a view of glory. III. The seasonableness of mercy is a ground of singing—grace to help in time of need. IV. The greatness and riches of mercy make the recipients thereof sing. V. The sweetness of mercy makes them sing. VI. The sureness and firmness of mercy make them sing—"The sure mercies of David."—*From Ralph Erskine's Sermon, entitled "The Militant's Song."*

Verse 1.—I. The different conditions of the righteous man in this life. Not all mercy, nor all judgment, but mercy and judgment. II. His one duty and privilege in reference to them: "I will sing," etc. 1. Because they are both from God. 2. Because they are both from love. 3. Because they are both for present good. 4. Because they are both preparative for the heavenly rest.—*G. R.*

Verses 1, 2.—The blending of song with holy living. The bell of praise and the pomegranate of holy fruitfulness should both adorn the Lord's priests.

Verse 2.—I. The end desired: "To behave wisely," etc.; consistency of conduct. II. The means employed: "When wilt thou come," etc.; only when God is with us we walk in a perfect way. III. The test proposed: "Within my house," where I am most myself and am best known.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The wisdom of holiness. 1. In selecting our sphere of duty. 2. In timing, arranging, and balancing duties. 3. In managing others according to their tempers. 4. In avoiding disputes with adversaries. 5. In administering rebuke, giving alms, rendering advice, etc.; the blending of the serpent with the dove.

Verse 2.—"*O when wilt thou come unto me?*" A devout ejaculation. I. Revealing the Psalmist's need of the divine presence in order to holiness. II. His intense longing. III. His full expectation. IV. His thorough appreciation of the condescending visit.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—Home piety. Its duty, excellence, influence, sphere, and reward. Note also the change of heart and firmness of purpose necessary to it.

Verse 3.—I. The sight of wickedness is to be avoided: "I will set no wicked thing," etc. II. When seen it is to be loathed: "I hate," etc. III. When felt it is to be repudiated. It may touch me, but "it shall not cleave to me."

Verse 4.—The need of extreme care in the choice of our intimates.

Verse 5.—The detestable nature of slander, hurting three persons at once—the speaker, hearer, and person slandered.

Verse 6.—The duty of believers who are wealthy to encourage and employ persons of pious character.

Verse 8.—The work of the great King when he comes in judgment.

PSALM CII.

SUBJECT.—*This is a patriot's lament over his country's distress. He arrays himself in the griefs of his nation as in a garment of sackcloth, and casts her dust and ashes upon his head as the ensigns and causes of his sorrow. He has his own private woes and personal enemies, he is moreover sore afflicted in body by sickness, but the miseries of his people cause him a far more bitter anguish, and this he pours out in an earnest, pathetic lamentation. Not, however, without hope does the patriot mourn; he has faith in God, and looks for the resurrection of the nation through the omnipotent favour of the Lord; this causes him to walk among the ruins of Jerusalem, and to say with hopeful spirit, "No, Zion, thou shalt never perish. Thy sun is not set for ever; brighter days are in store for thee." It is in vain to enquire into the precise point of Israel's history which thus stirred a patriot's soul, for many a time was the land oppressed, and at any of her sad seasons this song and prayer would have been a most natural and appropriate utterance.*

TITLE.—A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD. *This Psalm is* a prayer *far more in spirit than in words. The formal petitions are few, but a strong stream of supplication runs from beginning to end, and like an under-current, finds its way heavenward through the moanings of grief and confessions of faith which make up the major part of the Psalm. It is a prayer of* the afflicted, *or of "a sufferer," and it bears the marks of its parentage; as it is recorded of Jabez, that "his mother bore him with sorrow," so may we say of this Psalm; yet as Rachel's Benoni, or child of sorrow, was also her Benjamin, or son of her right hand, so is this Psalm as eminently expressive of consolation as of desolation. It is scarcely correct to call it a penitential Psalm, for the sorrow of it is rather of one suffering than sinning. It has its own bitterness, and it is not the same as that of the Fifty-first. The sufferer is afflicted more for others than for himself, more for Zion and the house of the Lord, than for his own house.* When he is overwhelmed, *or sorely troubled, and depressed. The best of men are not always able to stem the torrent of sorrow. Even when Jesus is on board, the vessel may fill with water and begin to sink.* And poureth out his complaint before the LORD. *When a cup is overwhelmed or turned bottom over, all that is in it is naturally poured out; great trouble removes the heart from all reserve, and causes the soul to flow out without restraint; it is well when that which is in the soul is such as may be poured out in the presence of God, and this is only the case where the heart has been renewed by divine grace. The word rendered "complaint" has in it none of the idea of fault-finding or repining, but should rather be rendered "moaning," —the expression of pain, not of rebellion.*

To help the memory we will call this Psalm THE PATRIOT'S PLAINT.

DIVISION.—*In the first part of the Psalm, from* 1—11, *the moaning monopolizes every verse, the lamentation is unceasing, sorrow rules the hour. The second portion, from* 12—28, *has a vision of better things, a view of the gracious Lord, and his eternal existence and care for his people, and therefore it is interspersed with sunlight as well as shaded by the cloud, and it ends up right gloriously with calm confidence for the future, and sweet restfulness in the Lord. The whole composition may be compared to a day which, opening with wind and rain, clears up at noon and is warm with the sun, continues fine, with intervening showers, and finally closes with a brilliant sunset.*

EXPOSITION.

HEAR my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.

2 Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call answer me speedily.

3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.

4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.

5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.

6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.
7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.
8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day: *and* they that are mad against me are sworn against me.
9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.
10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.
11 My days *are* like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

1. "*Hear my prayer, O Lord.*" Or O JEHOVAH. Sincere suppliants are not content with praying for praying's sake, they desire really to reach the ear and heart of the great God. It is a great relief in time of distress to acquaint others with our trouble, we are eased by their hearing our lamentations, but it is the sweetest solace of all to have God himself as a sympathizing listener to our plaint. That he is such is no dream or fiction, but an assured fact. It would be the direst of all our woes if we could be indisputably convinced that with God there is neither hearing nor answering; he who could argue us into so dreary a belief would do us no better service than if he had read us our death-warrants. Better die than be denied the mercy-seat. As well be atheists at once as believe in an unhearing, unfeeling God. "*And let my cry come unto thee.*" When sorrow rises to such a height that words become too weak a medium of expression, and prayer is intensified into a cry, then the heart is even more urgent to have audience with the Lord. If our cries do not enter within the veil, and reach to the living God, we may as well cease from prayer at once, for it is idle to cry to the winds; but, blessed be God, the philosophy which suggests such a hideous idea is disproved by the facts of everyday experience, since thousands of the saints can declare, "Verily, God hath heard us."

2. "*Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble.*" Do not seem as if thou didst not see me, or wouldst not own me. Smile now at any rate. Reserve thy frowns for other times when I can bear them better, if, indeed, I can ever bear them; but now in my heavy distress, favour me with looks of compassion. "*Incline thine ear unto me.*" Bow thy greatness to my weakness. If because of sin thy face is turned away, at least let me have a side view of thee, lend me thine ear if I may not see thine eye. Turn thyself to me again if my sin has turned thee away, give to thine ear an inclination to my prayers. "*In the day when I call answer me speedily.*" Because the case is urgent, and my soul little able to wait. We may ask to have answers to prayer as soon as possible, but we may not complain of the Lord if he should think it more wise to delay. We have permission to request and to use importunity, but no right to dictate or to be petulant. If it be important that the deliverance should arrive at once, we are quite right in making an early time a point of our entreaty, for God is as willing to grant us a favour now as to-morrow, and he is not slack concerning his promise. It is a proverb concerning favours from human hands, that "he gives twice who gives quickly," because a gift is enhanced in value by arriving in a time of urgent necessity; and we may be sure that our heavenly Patron will grant us the best gifts in the best manner, granting us grace to help in time of need. When answers come upon the heels of our prayers they are all the more striking, more consoling, and more encouraging.

In these two verses the Psalmist has gathered up a variety of expressions all to the same effect; in them all he entreats an audience and answer of the Lord, and the whole may be regarded as a sort of preface to the prayer which follows.

3. "*For my days are consumed like smoke.*" My grief has made life unsubstantial to me, I seem to be but a puff of vapour which has nothing in it, and is soon dissipated. The metaphor is very admirably chosen, for, to the unhappy, life seems not merely to be frail, but to be surrounded by so much that is darkening, defiling, blinding, and depressing, that, sitting down in despair, they compare themselves to men wandering in a dense fog, and themselves so dried up thereby that they are little better than pillars of smoke. When our days have neither light of joy nor fire of energy in them, but become as a smoking flax which dies out ignobly in darkness, then have we cause enough to appeal to the Lord that he would not utterly quench us. "*And my bones are burned as an hearth.*" He became as dry as the hearth on which a wood fire has burned out, or as spent ashes in which scarcely a trace of fire can be found. His soul was ready to be blown away as smoke, and his body seemed likely to remain as the bare hearth when the last comforting ember is

quenched. How often has our piety appeared to us to be in this condition! We have had to question its reality, and fear that it never was anything more than a smoke; we have had the most convincing evidence of its weakness, for we could not derive even the smallest comfort from it, any more than a chilled traveller can derive from the cold hearth on which a fire had burned long ago. Soul-trouble experienced in our own heart will help us to interpret the language here employed; and church-troubles may help us also, if unhappily we have been called to endure them. The Psalmist was moved to grief by a view of national calamities, and these so wrought upon his patriotic soul that he was wasted with anxiety, his spirits were dried up, and his very life was ready to expire. There is hope for any country which owns such a son; no nation can die while true hearts are ready to die for it.

4. "*My heart is smitten,*" like a plant parched by the fierce heat of a tropical sun, "*and withered like grass,*" which dries up when once the scythe has laid it low. The Psalmist's heart was as a wilted, withered flower, a burned up mass of what once was verdure. His energy, beauty, freshness, and joy, were utterly gone, through the wasting influence of his anguish. "*So that I forget to eat my bread,*" or "because I forget to eat my bread." Grief often destroys the appetite, and the neglect of food tends further to injure the constitution and create a yet deeper sinking of spirit. As the smitten flower no longer drinks in the dew, or draws up nutriment from the soil, so a heart parched with intense grief often refuses consolation for itself and nourishment for the bodily frame, and descends at a doubly rapid rate into weakness, despondency, and dismay. The case here described is by no means rare, we have frequently met with individuals so disordered by sorrow that their memory has failed them even upon such pressing matters as their meals, and we must confess that we have passed through the same condition ourselves. One sharp pang has filled the soul, monopolized the mind, and driven everything else into the background, so that such common matters as eating and drinking have been utterly despised, and the appointed hours of refreshment have gone by unheeded, leaving no manifest faintness of body, but an increased weariness of heart.

5. "*By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.*" He became emaciated with sorrow. He had groaned himself down to a living skeleton, and so in his bodily appearance was the more like the smoke-dried, withered, burnt-up things to which he had previously compared himself. It will be a very long time before the distresses of the church of God make some Christians shrivel into anatomies, but this good man was so moved with sympathy for Zion's ills that he was wasted down to skin and bone.

6. "*I am like a pelican of the wilderness,*" a mournful and even hideous object, the very image of desolation. "*I am like an owl of the desert;*" loving solitude, moping among ruins, hooting discordantly. The Psalmist likens himself to two birds which were commonly used as emblems of gloom and wretchedness; on other occasions he had been as the eagle, but the griefs of his people had pulled him down, the brightness was gone from his eye, and the beauty from his person; he seemed to himself to be as a melancholy bird sitting among the fallen palaces and prostrate temples of his native land. Should not we also lament when the ways of Zion mourn and her strength languishes? Were there more of this holy sorrow we should soon see the Lord returning to build up his church. It is ill for men to be playing the peacock with worldly pride when the ills of the times should make them as mournful as the pelican; and it is a terrible thing to see men flocking like vultures to devour the prey of a decaying church, when they ought rather to be lamenting among her ruins like the owl.

7. "*I watch, and am like a sparrow alone upon the house top:*" I keep a solitary vigil as the lone sentry of my nation; my fellows are too selfish, too careless to care for the beloved land, and so like a bird which sits alone on the house top, I keep up a sad watch over my country. The Psalmist compared himself to a bird,—a bird when it has lost its mate or its young, or is for some other reason made to mope alone in a solitary place. Probably he did not refer to the cheerful sparrow of our own land, but if he did, the illustration would not be out of place, for the sparrow is happy in company, and if it were alone, the sole one of its species in the neighbourhood, there can be little doubt that it would become very miserable, and sit and pine away. He who has felt himself to be so weak and inconsiderable as to have no more power over his times than a sparrow over a city, has also, when bowed down with despondency concerning the evils of the age, sat himself down in utter wretchedness to lament the ills which he could not heal. Christians of an earnest, watchful kind often find

themselves among those who have no sympathy with them ; even in the church they look in vain for kindred spirits ; then do they persevere in their prayers and labours, but feel themselves to be as lonely as the poor bird which looks from the ridge of the roof, and meets with no friendly greeting from any of its kind.

8. "*Mine enemies reproach me all the day.*" Their rage was unrelenting and unceasing, and vented itself in taunts and insults, the Psalmist's patriotism and his griefs were both made the subjects of their sport. Pointing to the sad estate of his people they would ask him, "Where is your God ?" and exult over him because their false gods were in the ascendant. Reproach cuts like a razor, and when it is continued from hour to hour, and repeated all the day and every day, it makes life itself undesirable. "*And they that are mad against me are sworn against me.*" They were so furious that they bound themselves by oath to destroy him, and used his name as their usual execration, a word to curse by, the synonym of abhorrence and contempt. What with inward sorrows and outward persecutions he was in as ill a plight as may well be conceived.

9. "*For I have eaten ashes like bread.*" He had so frequently cast ashes upon his head in token of mourning, that they had mixed with his ordinary food, and grated between his teeth when he ate his daily bread. One while he forgot to eat, and then the fit changed, and he ate with such a hunger that even ashes were devoured. Grief has strange moods and tenses. "*And mingled my drink with weeping.*" His drink became as nauseous as his meat, for copious showers of tears had made it brackish. This is a telling description of all-saturating, all-embittering sadness,—and this was the portion of one of the best of men, and that for no fault of his own, but because of his love to the Lord's people. If we, too, are called to mourn, let us not be amazed by the fiery trial as though some strange thing had happened unto us. Both in meat and drink we have sinned ; it is not therefore wonderful if in both we are made to mourn.

10. "*Because of thine indignation and thy wrath : for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.*" A sense of the divine wrath which had been manifested in the overthrow of the chosen nation and their sad captivity led the Psalmist into the greatest distress. He felt like a sere leaf caught up by a hurricane and carried right away, or the spray of the sea which is dashed upwards that it may be scattered and dissolved. Our translation gives the idea of a vessel uplifted in order that it may be dashed to the earth with all the greater violence and the more completely broken in pieces ; or to change the figure, it reminds us of a wrestler whom his opponent catches up that he may give him a more desperate fall. The first interpretation which we have given is, however, more fully in accordance with the original, and sets forth the utter helplessness which the writer felt, and the sense of overpowering terror which bore him along in a rush of tumultuous grief which he could not withstand.

11. "*My days are like a shadow that declineth.*" His days were but a shadow at best, but now they seem to be like a shadow which was passing away. A shadow is unsubstantial enough, how feeble a thing must a declining shadow be ? No expression could more forcibly set forth his extreme feebleness. "*And I am withered like grass.*" He was like grass, blasted by a parching wind, or cut down with a scythe, and then left to be dried up by the burning heat of the sun. There are times when through depression of spirit a man feels as if all life were gone from him, and existence had become merely a breathing death. Heart-break has a marvellously withering influence over our entire system ; our flesh at its best is but as grass, and when it is wounded with sharp sorrows, its beauty fades, and it becomes a shrivelled, dried, uncomely thing.

12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever ; and thy remembrance unto all generations.

13 Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion : for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.

14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.

15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.
18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.
19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;
20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;
21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;
22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.
23 He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.
24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years *are* throughout all generations.
25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.
26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:
27 But thou *art* the same, and thy years shall have no end.
28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

12. Now the writer's mind is turned away from his personal and relative troubles to the true source of all consolation, namely, the Lord himself, and his gracious purposes towards his own people. "*But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever.*" I perish, but thou wilt not, my nation has become almost extinct, but thou art altogether unchanged. The original has the word "sit,"—"thou, Jehovah, to eternity shalt sit:" that is to say, thou reignest on, thy throne is still secure even when thy chosen city lies in ruins, and thy peculiar people are carried into captivity. The sovereignty of God in all things is an unfailing ground for consolation; he rules and reigns whatever happens, and therefore all is well.

Firm as his throne his promise stands,
And he can well secure,
What I've committed to his hands,
Till the decisive hour.

"*And thy remembrance unto all generations.*" Men will forget me, but as for thee, O God, the constant tokens of thy presence will keep the race of man in mind of thee from age to age. What God is now he always will be, that which our forefathers told us of the Lord we find to be true at this present time, and what our experience enables us to record will be confirmed by our children and their children's children. All things else are vanishing like smoke, and withering like grass, but over all the one eternal, immutable light shines on, and will shine on when all these shadows have declined into nothingness.

13. "*Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion.*" He firmly believed and boldly prophesied that apparent inaction on God's part would turn to effective working. Others might remain sluggish in the matter, but the Lord would most surely bestir himself. Zion had been chosen of old, highly favoured, gloriously inhabited, and wondrously preserved, and therefore by the memory of her past mercies it was certain that mercy would again be showed to her. God will not always leave his church in a low condition; he may for a while hide himself from her in chastisement, to make her see her nakedness and poverty apart from himself, but in love he must return to her, and stand up in her defence, to work her welfare. "*For the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.*" Divine decree has appointed a season for blessing the church, and when that period has arrived, blessed she shall be. There was an appointed time for the Jews in Babylon, and when the weeks were fulfilled, no bolts nor bars could longer imprison the ransomed of the Lord. When the time came for the walls to rise stone by stone, no Tobiah or Sanballat could stay the

work, for the Lord himself had arisen, and who can restrain the hand of the Almighty? When God's own time is come, neither Rome, nor the devil, nor persecutors, nor atheists, can prevent the kingdom of Christ from extending its bounds. It is God's work to do it,— he must "*arise*"; he will do it, but he has his own appointed season; and meanwhile we must, with holy anxiety and believing expectation, wait upon him.

14. "*For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.*" They delight in her so greatly that even her rubbish is dear to them. It was a good omen for Jerusalem when the captives began to feel a home-sickness, and began to sigh after her. We may expect the modern Jews to be restored to their own land when the love of their country begins to sway them, and casts out the love of gain. To the church of God no token can be more full of hope than to see the members thereof deeply interested in all that concerns her; no prosperity is likely to rest upon a church when carelessness about ordinances, enterprises, and services is manifest; but when even the least and lowest matter connected with the Lord's work is carefully attended to, we may be sure that the set time to favour Zion is come. The poorest church member, the most grievous backslider, the most ignorant convert, should be precious in our sight, because forming a part, although possibly a very feeble part, of the new Jerusalem. If we do not care about the prosperity of the church to which we belong, need we wonder if the blessing of the Lord is withheld?

15. "*So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord.*" Mercy within the church is soon perceived by those without. When a candle is lit in the house, it shines through the window. When Zion rejoices in her God, the heathen begin to reverence his name, for they hear of the wonders of his power, and are impressed thereby. "*And all the kings of the earth thy glory.*" The restoration of Jerusalem was a marvel among the princes who heard of it, and its ultimate resurrection in days yet to come will be one of the prodigies of history. A church quickened by divine power is so striking an object in current history that it cannot escape notice, rulers cannot ignore it, it affects the Legislature, and forces from the great ones of the earth a recognition of the divine working. Oh that we might see in our day such a revival of religion that our senators and princes might be compelled to pay homage to the Lord, and own his glorious grace. This cannot be till the saints are better edified, and more fully builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Internal prosperity is the true source of the church's external influence.

16. "*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" As kings display their skill and power and wealth in the erection of their capitals, so would the Lord reveal the splendour of his attributes in the restoration of Zion, and so will he now glorify himself in the edification of his church. Never is the Lord more honourable in the eyes of his saints than when he prospers the church. To add converts to her, to train these for holy service, to instruct, illuminate, and sanctify the brotherhood, to bind all together in the bonds of Christian love, and to fill the whole body with the energy of the Holy Spirit—this is to build up Zion. Other builders do but puff her up, and their wood, hay, and stubble come to an end almost as rapidly as it was heaped together; but what the Lord builds is surely and well done, and redounds to his glory. Truly, when we see the church in a low state, and mark the folly, helplessness, and indifference of those who profess to be her builders; and, on the other hand, the energy, craft, and influence of those opposed to her, we are fully prepared to own that it will be a glorious work of omnipotent grace should she ever rise to her pristine grandeur and purity.

17. "*He will regard the prayer of the destitute.*" Only the poorest of the people were left to sigh and cry among the ruins of the beloved city; as for the rest, they were strangers in a strange land, and far away from the holy place, yet the prayers of the captives and the forlorn offscourings of the land would be heard of the Lord, who does not hear men because of the amount of money they possess, or the breadth of the acres which they call their own, but in mercy listens most readily to the cry of the greatest need. "*And not despise their prayer.*" When great kings are building their palaces it is not reasonable to expect them to turn aside and listen to every beggar who pleads with them, yet when the Lord builds up Zion, and appears in his robes of glory, he makes a point of listening to every petition of the poor and needy. He will not treat their pleas with contempt; he will incline his ear to hear, his heart to consider, and his hand to help. What comfort is here for those who account themselves to be utterly destitute; their abject want is here met with a most condescending promise. It is worth while to be destitute to be thus assured of the divine regard.

18. "*This shall be written for the generation to come.*" A note shall be made of it,

for there will be destitute ones in future generations,—" the poor shall never cease out of the land,"—and it will make glad their eyes to read the story of the Lord's mercy to the needy in former times. Registers of divine kindness ought to be made and preserved: we write down in history the calamities of nations,—wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are recorded; how much rather then should we set up memorials of the Lord's lovingkindnesses! Those who have in their own souls endured spiritual destitution, and have been delivered out of it, cannot forget it; they are bound to tell others of it, and especially to instruct their children in the goodness of the Lord. " *And the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.*" The Psalmist here intends to say that the rebuilding of Jerusalem would be a fact in history for which the Lord would be praised from age to age. Revivals of religion not only cause great joy to those who are immediately concerned in them, but they give encouragement and delight to the people of God long after, and are indeed perpetual incentives to adoration throughout the church of God. This verse teaches us that we ought to have an eye to posterity, and especially should we endeavour to perpetuate the memory of God's love to his church and to his poor people, so that young people as they grow up may know that the Lord God of their fathers is good and full of compassion. Sad as the Psalmist was when he wrote the dreary portions of this complaint, he was not so absorbed in his own sorrow, or so distracted by the national calamity, as to forget the claims of coming generations; this, indeed, is a clear proof that he was not without hope for his people, for he who is making arrangements for the good of a future generation has not yet despaired of his nation. The praise of God should be the great object of all that we do, and to secure him a revenue of glory both from the present and the future is the noblest aim of intelligent beings.

19, 20. " *For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary,*" or " leaned from the high place of his holiness," " *from heaven did the Lord behold the earth,*" looking out like a watcher from his tower. What was the object of this leaning from the battlements of heaven? Why this intent gaze upon the race of men? The answer is full of astounding mercy: the Lord does not look upon mankind to note their grandees, and observe the doings of their nobles, but " *to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.*" Now the groans of those in prison so far from being musical are very horrible to hear, yet God bends to hear them: those who are bound for death are usually ill company, yet Jehovah deigns to stoop from his greatness to relieve their extreme distress and break their chains. This he does by providential rescues, by restoring health to the dying, and by finding food for the famishing; and spiritually this need of grace is accomplished by sovereign grace, which delivers us by pardon from the sentence of sin, and by the sweetness of the promise from the deadly despair which a sense of sin had created within us. Well may those of us praise the Lord who were once the children of death, but are now brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Jews in captivity were in Haman's time appointed to death, but their God found a way of escape for them, and they joyfully kept the feast of Purim in memorial thereof; let all souls that have been set free from the crafty malice of the old dragon with even greater gratitude magnify the Lord of infinite compassion.

21. " *To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem.*" Great mercy displayed to those greatly in need of it, is the plainest method of revealing the attributes of the Most High. Actions speak more loudly than words; deeds of grace are a revelation even more impressive than the most tender promises. Jerusalem restored, the church re-edified, desponding souls encouraged, and all other manifestations of Jehovah's power to bless, are so many manifestoes and proclamations put up upon the walls of Zion to publish the character and glory of the great God. Every day's experience should be to us a new gazette of love, a court circular from heaven, a daily despatch from the headquarters of grace. We are bound to inform our fellow Christians of all this, making them helpers in our praise, as they hear of the goodness which we have experienced. While God's mercies speak so eloquently, we ought not to be dumb. To communicate to others what God has done for us personally and for the church at large is so evidently our duty, that we ought not to need urging to fulfil it. God has ever an eye to the glory of his grace in all that he does, and we ought not wilfully to defraud him of the revenue of his praise.

22. " *When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.*" The great work of restoring ruined Zion is to be spoken of in those golden ages when the heathen nations shall be converted unto God; even those glorious times will not be able to despise that grand event, which, like the passage of Israel through the

Red Sea, will never be eclipsed and never cease to awaken the enthusiasm of the chosen people. Happy will the day be when all nations shall unite in the sole worship of Jehovah, then shall the histories of the olden times be read with adoring wonder, and the hand of the Lord shall be seen as having ever rested upon the sacramental host of his elect: then shall shouts of exulting praise ascend to heaven in honour of him who loosed the captives, delivered the condemned, raised up the desolations of ages, and made out of stones and rubbish a temple for his worship.

23. "*He weakened my strength in the way.*" Here the Psalmist comes down again to the mournful string, and pours forth his personal complaint. His sorrow had cast down his spirit, and even caused weakness in his bodily frame, so that he was like a pilgrim who limped along the road, and was ready to lie down and die. "*He shortened my days.*" Though he had bright hopes for Jerusalem, he feared that he should have departed this life long before those visions had become realities; he felt that he was pining away and would be a shortlived man. Perhaps this may be our lot, and it will materially help us to be content with it, if we are persuaded that the grandest of all interests is safe, and the good old cause secure in the hands of the Lord.

24. "*I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.*" He betook himself to prayer. What better remedy is there for heart-sickness and depression? We may lawfully ask for recovery from sickness and may hope to be heard. Good men should not dread death, but they are not forbidden to love life: for many reasons the man who has the best hope of heaven, may nevertheless think it desirable to continue here a little longer, for the sake of his family, his work, the church of God, and even the glory of God itself. Some read the passage, "Take me not up," let me not ascend like disappearing smoke, do not whirl me away like Elijah in a chariot of fire, for as yet I have only seen half my days, and that a sorrowful half; give me to live till the blustering morning shall have softened into a bright afternoon of happier existence. "*Thy years are throughout all generations.*" Thou livest, Lord; let me live also. A fulness of existence is with thee, let me partake therein. Note the contrast between himself pining and ready to expire, and his God living on in the fulness of strength for ever and ever; this contrast is full of consolatory power to the man whose heart is stayed upon the Lord. Blessed be his name, he faileth not, and, therefore, our hope shall not fail us, neither will we despair for ourselves or for his church.

25. "*Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth.*" Creation is no new work with God, and therefore to "create Jerusalem a praise in the earth" will not be difficult to him. Long ere the holy city was laid in ruins the Lord made a world out of nothing, and it will be no labour to him to raise the walls from their heaps and replace the stones in their courses. We can neither continue our own existence nor give being to others; but the Lord not only is, but he is the Maker of all things that are; hence, when our affairs are at the very lowest ebb we are not all despairing, because the Almighty and Eternal Lord can yet restore us. "*And the heavens are the work of thine hands.*" Thou canst therefore not merely lay the foundations of Zion, but complete its roof, even as thou hast arched in the world with its ceiling of blue; the loftiest stories of thine earthly palace shall be piled on high without difficulty when thou dost undertake the building thereof, since thou art architect of the stars, and the spheres in which they move. When a great labour is to be performed it is eminently reassuring to contemplate the power of him who has undertaken to accomplish it; and when our own strength is exhausted it is supremely cheering to see the unfailing energy which is still engaged on our behalf.

26. "*They shall perish, but thou shalt endure.*" The power which made them shall dissolve them, even as the city of thy love was destroyed at thy command; yet neither the ruined city nor the ruined earth can make a change in thee, reverse thy purpose, or diminish thy glory. Thou standest when all things fall. "*Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.*" Time impairs all things, the fashion becomes obsolete and passes away. The visible creation, which is like the garment of the invisible God, is waxing old and wearing out, and our great King is not so poor that he must always wear the same robes; he will ere long fold up the worlds and put them aside as worn out vestures, and he will array himself in new attire, making a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. How readily will all this be done. "Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed;" as in the creation so in the restoration, omnipotence shall work its way without hindrance.

27. "*But thou art the same,*" or, "thou art he." As a man remains the same when he has changed his clothing, so is the Lord evermore the unchanging One, though his works in creation may be changed, and the operations of his providence may vary. When heaven and earth shall flee away from the dread presence of the great Judge, he will be unaltered by the terrible confusion, and the world in conflagration will effect no change in him; even so, the Psalmist remembered that when Israel was vanquished, her capital destroyed, and her temple levelled with the ground, her God remained the same self-existent, all-sufficient being, and would restore his people, even as he will restore the heavens and the earth, bestowing at the same time a new glory never known before. The doctrine of the immutability of God should be more considered than it is, for the neglect of it tinges the theology of many religious teachers, and makes them utter many things of which they would have seen the absurdity long ago if they had remembered the divine declaration, "I am God, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "*And thy years shall have no end.*" God lives on, no decay can happen to him, or destruction overtake him. What a joy is this! We may lose our dearest earthly friends, but not our heavenly Friend. Men's days are often suddenly cut short, and at the longest they are but few, but the years of the right hand of the Most High cannot be counted, for they have neither first nor last, beginning nor end. O my soul, rejoice thou in the Lord always, since he is always the same.

28. "*The children of thy servants shall continue.*" The Psalmist had early in the Psalm looked forward to a future generation, and here he speaks with confidence that such a race would arise and be preserved and blessed of God. Some read it as a prayer, "let the sons of thy servants abide." Any way, it is full of good cheer to us; we may plead for the Lord's favour to our seed, and we may expect that the cause of God and truth will revive in future generations. Let us hope that those who are to succeed us will not be so stubborn, unbelieving and erring as we have been. If the church has been minished and brought low by the lukewarmness of the present race, let us entreat the Lord to raise up a better order of men, whose zeal and obedience shall win and hold a long prosperity. May our own dear ones be among the better generation who shall continue in the Lord's ways, obedient to the end. "*And their seed shall be established before thee.*" God does not neglect the children of his servants. It is the rule that Abraham's Isaac should be the Lord's, that Isaac's Jacob should be beloved of the Most High, and that Jacob's Joseph should find favour in the sight of God. Grace is not hereditary, yet God loves to be served by the same family time out of mind, even as many great landowners feel a pleasure in having the same families as tenants upon their estates from generation to generation. Here is Zion's hope, her sons will build her up, her offspring will restore her former glories. We may, therefore, not only for our own sakes, but also out of love to the church of God, daily pray that our sons and daughters may be saved, and kept by divine grace even unto the end,—established before the Lord.

We have thus passed through the cloud, and in the next Psalm we shall bask in the sunshine. Such is the chequered experience of the believer. Paul in the seventh of Romans cries and groans, and then in the eighth rejoices and leaps for joy; and so, from the moaning of the hundred and second Psalm, we now advance to the songs and dancing of the hundred and third, blessing the Lord that, "though weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*A prayer,*" etc. The prayer following is longer than others. When Satan, the Law-Adversary, doth extend his pleas against us, it is meet that we should enlarge our counter pleas for our own souls; as the powers of darkness do lengthen and multiply their wrestlings, so must we our counter wrestlings of prayer. Eph. vi. 12, 18.—*Thomas Cobbet*, 1657.

Title.—"*When he . . . poureth out,*" etc. Here we have the manner of the church's prayer suitable to her extremity illustrated by a simile taken from a vessel overcharged with new wine or strong liquor, that bursts for vent. Oh the heart-burst-

ing cries she sends out all the day! Here is no lazy, slothful, lip labour, stinted form of prayer, no empty sounds of verbal expressions, which can never procure her a comfortable answer from her God, or the least ease to her burthened soul; but poured-out prayers as *Hannah*, 1 Sam. i. 15, and *Jeremy*, Lam. iii. 12, pressed forth with vehemence of spirit and heart pangs of inward grief: thus the Lord deals with his church and people; ere he pours out cups of consolation they must pour out tears in great measure.—*Finiens Canus Vove.*

Title.—

> This is the mourner's prayer when he is faint,
> And to the Eternal Father breathes his plaint.
> —*John Keble.*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm has been attributed to *Daniel*, to *Jeremiah*, to *Nehemiah*, or to some of the other *prophets* who flourished during the time of the captivity. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has applied the *twenty-fifth*, *twenty-sixth*, and *twenty-seventh* verses to our Lord, and the perpetuity of his kingdom.—*Adam Clarke.*

Whole Psalm.—I doubt whether, without apostolic teaching, any of us would have had the boldness to understand it; for in many respects it is the most remarkable of all the Psalms—the Psalm of "THE AFFLICTED ONE"—while his soul is overwhelmed within him in great affliction, and sorrow, and anxious fear.—*Adolph Saphir, in "Expository Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews."*

Verse 1.—"*Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee.*" When, at any time, we see the beggars, or poor folks, that are pained and grieved with hunger and cold, lying in the streets of cities and towns, full of sores, we are somewhat moved inwardly with pity and mercy; but if we our own selves attend and give ear to their wailings, cryings, and lamentable noises that they make, we should be much more stirred to show our pity and mercy on them; for no man else can show the grief of the sick and sore persons, so well and in so pathetic a manner as he himself. Therefore, since the miserable crying and wailing of those that suffer bodily pain and misery can prevail so much upon the hearts of mortal creatures; I doubt not, Good Lord, but thou, who art all merciful, must needs be inclined to exercise thy mercy, if *my* sorrowful cry and petition may *come unto* thine ears, or into thy presence.—*John Fisher* (1459–1535) *in "A Treatise concerning the fruitful Sayings of David,"* 1714.

Verse 1.—"*My prayer.*" His own, and not another's; not what was composed for him, but composed by him; which came out of his own heart, and out of unfeigned lips, and expressed under a feeling sense of his own wants and troubles; and though dictated and inwrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, yet, being put up by him in faith and fervency, it is called his own, and which he desires might be heard. —*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*My cry.*" Lest my praying should not prevail, behold, O God, I raise it to a cry; and crying, I may say, is the greatest bell in all the ring of praying: for louder than crying I cannot pray. O, then, if not my prayer, at least "*let my cry come unto thee.*" If I be not heard when I cry, I shall cry for not being heard; and if heard when I cry, I shall cry to be heard yet more; and so whether heard or not heard, I shall cry still, and God grant I may cry still; so thou be pleased, O God, to "hear my prayer," and to "let my cry come unto thee."—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verses 1, 2.—This language is the language of godly sorrow, of faith, of tribulation, and of anxious hope: of *faith*, for the devout suppliant lifts up his heart and voice to heaven, "as seeing him who is invisible," (Heb. xi. 27) and entreats him to hear his prayer and listen to his crying: *of tribulation*, for he describes himself as enduring affliction, and unwilling to lose the countenance of the Lord *in the time of his trouble: of anxious hope*, for he seems to expect, in the midst of his groaning, that his prayers, like those of Cornelius, will "go up for a memorial before God" who will hear him, "and that right soon."—*Charles Oxenden, in "Sermons on the Seven Penitential Psalms,"* 1838.

Verses 1, 2.—The Lord suffereth his babbling children to speak to him in their own form of speech, (albeit the terms which they use be not fitted for his spiritual, invisible, and incomprehensible majesty); such as are, "*Hear me*," "*hide not thy face*," "*incline thine ear to me*," and such like other speeches.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 1, 2.—Note, David sent his prayer as a sacred ambassador to God. Now there are four things requisite to make an embassy prosperous. The ambassador

must be regarded with favourable eye: he must be heard with a ready ear: he must speedily return when his demands are conceded. These four things David as a suppliant asks from God his King.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"*Incline thine ear unto me.*" The great exhaustion of the afflicted one is hinted at: so worn out is he, that he is hardly able to cry any more, but with a faint voice only feebly mutters, like a weak, sick man, whose voice if we would catch, we must *incline the ear.*—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 3.—"*Consumed like smoke,*" would be better read, "pass away as *in smoke,*" as if they disappeared into smoke and ashes. "*Burned as an hearth,*" is not a felicitous translation, for a "hearth" should be incombustible. Better "burned as a faggot," as any fuel. The sentiment, My days waste away to nothing, turn to no good account, are lost.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 3.—"*My days are consumed like smoke;*" or, as Hebrew, literally, "*in* (*into*) *smoke.*" The very same expression which David, in Ps. xxxvii. 20, had used of "the enemies of the Lord:" "They shall consume into smoke" (compare Ps. lxviii. 2). Hereby the ideal sufferer virtually complains that the lot of the wicked befalls him, though being righteous (Ps. ci.).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 3.—"*My days are consumed like smoke.*" As the smoke is a vapour proceeding from the fire, yet hath no heat in it; so my days are come from the torrid zone of youth into the region of cold and age; and as the smoke seems a thick substance for the present, but presently vanisheth into air; so my days made as great shew at first as if they would never have been spent; but now, alas, are wasted and leave me scarce a being. As the smoke is fuliginous and dark, and affords no pleasure to look upon it; so my days are all black and in mourning; no joy nor pleasure to be taken in them. And as the smoke ascends indeed, but by ascending wastes itself and comes to nothing: so my days are wasted in growing, are diminished in increasing; their plenty hath made a scarcity, and the more they have been the fewer they are. And how, indeed, can my days choose but be consumed as smoke, when "*my bones are burned as an hearth*"? for as when the hearth is burned there can be made no more fire upon it; so, when my bones, which are as the hearth upon which my fire of life is made, come once to be burned; how can any more fire of life be made upon them? and when no fire can be made, what will remain but only smoke?—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*As an hearth.*" Or, as a *trivet,* or, *gridiron;* so the Targum: or, as a *frying-pan:* so the Arabic version.—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—"*My heart is smitten, and withered like grass.*" The metaphor here is taken from grass, cut down in the meadow. Is is first "*smitten*" with the *scythe,* and then "*withered*" by the *sun.* Thus the Jews were smitten with the judgments of God; and they are now withered under the fire of the *Chaldeans.*—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 4.—"*I forget to eat my bread.*" I have heard of some that have forgotten their own names, but I never heard of any that forgot to eat his meat; for there is a certain prompter called hunger that will make a man to remember his meat in spite of his teeth. And yet it is true, when the heart is blasted and withered like grass, such a forgetfulness of necessity will follow. Is it that the withering of the heart is the prime cause of sorrow; at least cause of the prime sorrow; and immoderate sorrow is the mother of stupidity, stupefying and benumbing the animal faculties, that neither the understanding nor the memory can execute their functions? Or is it, that sorrow is so intentive to that it sorrows for, that it cannot intend to think anything else? Or is it, that nature makes account, that to feed in sorrow were to feed sorrow, and therefore thinks best to forbear all eating? Or is it, that as sorrow draws moisture from the brain and fills the eyes with water; so it draws a like juice from other parts, which fills the stomach instead of meat? However it be, it shews a wonderful operation that is in sorrow; to make not only the stomach to refuse its meat, but to make the brain forget the stomach, between whom there is so natural a sympathy and so near a correspondence. But as the vigour of the heart breeds plenty of spirits, which conveyed to all the parts, gives every one a natural appetite; so when the heart is blasted and withered like grass, and that there is no more any vigour in it, the spirits are presently at a stand, and then no marvel if the stomach lose its appetite, and forget to eat bread.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 4.—"*I forget to eat my bread.*" When grief hath thus dejected the spirits,

the man has no appetite for that food which is to recruit and elevate them. Ahab, smitten with one kind of grief, David with another, and Daniel with a third, all forgot, or refused, to eat their bread. 1 Kings xxi. 4; 2 Sam. xii. 16; Dan. x. 3. Such natural companions are mourning and fasting.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 5.—"*My bones cleave to my skin.*" When the bones cleave to the skin, both are near cleaving to the dust.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—That grief readily causes the body to pine away is very well known. It is related of Cardinal Wolsey, by an eye-witness, that when he heard that his master's favour was turned from him, he was wrung with such an agony of grief, which continued a whole night, that in the morning his face was dwindled away into half its usual dimensions.

Verse 6.—"*I am like a pelican of the wilderness.*" The Kaath was a bird of solitude that was to be found in the "*wilderness*," *i.e.*, far from the habitations of man. This is one of the characteristics of the *pelican*, which loves not the neighbourhood of human beings, and is fond of resorting to broad, uncultivated lands, where it will not be disturbed. In them it makes its nest and hatches its young, and to them it retires after feeding, in order to digest in quiet the ample meal which it has made. Mr. Tristram well suggests that the metaphor of the Psalmist may allude to the habit common to the pelican and its kin, of sitting motionless for hours after it has gorged itself with food, its head sunk on its shoulders, and its bill resting on its breast.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 6.—"*A pelican of the wilderness.*" Here only [at Hulet] have I seen the pelican of the wilderness, as David calls it. I once had one of them shot just below this place, and, as it was merely wounded in the wing, I had a good opportunity to study its character. It was certainly the most sombre, austere bird I ever saw. It gave one the blues merely to look at it. David could find no more expressive type of solitude and melancholy by which to illustrate his own sad state. It seemed as large as a half-grown donkey, and when fairly settled on its stout legs, it looked like one. The pelican is never seen but in these unfrequented solitudes.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 6.—Consider that thou needest not complain, like Elijah, that thou art left *alone*, seeing the best of God's *saints* in all ages have smarted in the same kind—instance in *David:* indeed sometimes he boasts how he 'lay in green pastures, and was led by still waters;' but after he bemoans that he 'sinks in deep mire, where there was no standing.' What is become of those green pastures? parched up with the drought. Where are those still waters? troubled with the tempest of affliction. The same David compares himself to an "*owl*," and in the next Psalm resembles himself to an "*eagle*." Do two fowls fly of more different kind? The one the *scorn*, the other the *sovereign;* the one the *slowest*, the other the *swiftest;* the one the most *sharp-sighted*, the other the most *dim-eyed* of all birds. Wonder not, then, to find in thyself sudden and strange alterations. It fared thus with all God's servants in their agonies of temptation; and be confident thereof, though now run aground with grief, in due time thou shalt be all afloat with comfort.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 6.—"*Owl.*" Some kind of owl, it is thought, is intended by the Hebrew word *côs*, translated "*little owl*," in Lev. xi. 17; Deut. xiv. 16, where it is mentioned amongst the unclean birds. It occurs also in Ps. cii. 6. "*I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of ruined places*" (A. V., "desert"). The Hebrew word *côs* means a "cup" in some passages of Scripture, from a root meaning to "receive," to "hide," or "bring together"; hence the pelican, "the cup," or "pouch-bird," has been suggested as the bird intended. In this case the verse in the Psalm would be rendered thus:—"I am become like a pelican in the wilderness, even as the pouch-bird in the desert places." But the fact that both the pelican and the *côs* are enumerated in the list of birds to be avoided as food is against this theory, unless the word changed its meaning in the Psalmist's time, which is improbable. The expression *côs* "of ruined places" looks very much as if some owl were denoted. The Arabic definitely applies a kindred expression as one of the names of an owl, viz., *um elcharab*, *i.e.*, "mother of ruins." The Septuagint gives νυκτικόραξ as the meaning of *côs;* and we know from Aristotle that the Greek word was a synonym of ὄτος, evidently, from his description of the bird, one of the eared owls. Dr. Tristram is disposed to refer the *côs* to the little *Athene Persica*, the most common of all the owls in Palestine, the representative of the *A. noctua* of Southern Europe. The Arabs call this bird "*boomah*," from his note; he is described "as a grotesque

and comical-looking little bird, familiar and yet cautious ; never moving unnecessarily, but remaining glued to his perch, unless he has good reason for believing he has been detected, and twisting and turning his head instead of his eyes to watch what is going on." He is to be found amongst rocks in the wadys or trees by the water-side, in olive yards, in the tombs and on the ruins, on the sandy mounds of Beersheba, and on " the spray-beaten fragments of Tyre, where his low wailing note is sure to be heard at sunset, and himself seen bowing and keeping time to his own music." *W. Houghton, in " Cassell's Biblical Educator,"* 1874.

Verse 6.—*" Owl of the desert."*

> Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower,
> The moping owl does to the moon complain
> Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
> Molest her ancient solitary reign.
>
> —*Thomas Gray* (1716–1771).

Verse 7.—*" I watch."* During the hours allotted to sleep *" I wake,"* like a little bird which sits solitary on the house top, while all beneath enjoy the sleep which he giveth to his beloved.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 7.—*" A sparrow alone upon the house top."* When one of them has lost its mate—a matter of every-day occurrence—he will sit on the house top alone, and lament by the hour his sad bereavement.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 7.—*" I am as a sparrow alone,"* etc. It is evident that the " sparrow alone and melancholy upon the house tops " cannot be the lively, gregarious sparrow which assembles in such numbers on these favourite feeding-places [the house tops of the East]. We must therefore look for some other bird, and naturalists are now agreed that we may accept the *Blue Thrush* (*Petrocossyphus cyaneus*) as the particular tzippor, or small bird, which sits alone on the house tops. The colour of this bird is a dark blue, whence it derives its popular name. Its habits exactly correspond with the idea of solitude and melancholy. The Blue Thrushes never assemble in flocks, and it is very rare to see more than a pair together. It is fond of sitting on the tops of houses, uttering its note, which, however agreeable to itself, is monotonous and melancholy to a human ear.—*J. G. Wood, in " Bible Animals."*

Verse 7.—*" A sparrow."* Most readers are struck with the incongruity of the image, as it appears in our version, intended by the Psalmist to express a condition of distress and desolation. The sparrow is found, indeed, all over the East, in connection with houses, as it is with ourselves ; but it is everywhere one of the most social of birds, cheerful to impertinence ; and mischievously disposed, instead of being retiring in its habits, and melancholy in its demeanour. The word, in the original, is a general term for all the small birds, insectivorous and frugivirous, denominated clean, and that might be eaten according to the law, the thrushes, larks, wagtails, finches, as well as sparrows. It seems to be, indeed, a mere imitation of their common note, like the one which we have in the word " chirrup." Most critics are, therefore, content with the rendering " solitary bird," or " solitary little bird." But this is very unsatisfactory. It does not identify the species ; and there is every probability that there must have been a particular bird which the Psalmist, writing at the close of the Babylonish captivity, had in his eye, corresponding to his representation of it, and illustrative of his isolated condition.

Such there is at the present day, of common occurrence in Southern Europe and Western Asia. Its history is very little known to the world, and its existence has hitherto escaped the notice of all biblical commentators. Remarkably enough, the bird is commonly, but erroneously, called a sparrow, for it is a real thrush in size, in shape, in habits, and in song. It differs singularly from the rest of the tribe, throughout all the East, by a marked preference for sitting solitary upon the habitation of man. It never associates with any other, and only at one season with its own mate ; and even then it is often seen quite alone upon the house top, where it warbles its sweet and plaintive strains, and continues its song, moving from roof to roof. America has its solitary thrush, of another species, and of somewhat different habits. The dark solitary cane and myrtle swamps of the southern states are there the favourite haunts of the recluse bird ; and the more dense and gloomy these are the more certainly is it to be found flitting in them.—*" The Biblical Treasury."*

Verse 7.—*" Alone."* But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth ; for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal where there is no love. The Latin adage meeteth it a

little: "*magna civitas, magno solitudo;*" because in a great town friends are scattered, so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighbourhoods; but we may go further, and affirm most truly, that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity.—*Francis Bacon.*

Verse 7.—"*Alone.*" See the reason why people in trouble love solitariness. They are full of sorrow; and sorrow, if it have taken deep root, is naturally reserved, and flies all conversation. Grief is a thing that is very silent and private. Those people that are very talkative and clamorous in their sorrows, are never very sorrowful. Some are apt to wonder, *why melancholy people delight to be so much alone*, and I will tell you the reason of it. 1. Because the disordered humours of their bodies alter their temper, their humours, and their inclinations, that *they are no more the same that they used to be*; their very distemper is averse to what is joyous and diverting; and they that wonder at them may as wisely wonder why they will be diseased, which they would not be if they knew how to help it; but the *Disease of Melancholy* is so obstinate, and so unknown to all but those who have it, that nothing but the power of God can totally overthrow it, and I know no other cure for it. 2. *Another reason why they choose to be alone is*, because *people do not generally mind what they say*, nor believe them, but rather deride them, which they do not use so cruelly to do with those that are in other distempers; and no man is to be blamed for avoiding society, when it does not afford the common credit to his words that is due to the rest of men. But, 3, Another, and the principal reason why people in trouble and sadness choose to be alone, is, because *they generally apprehend themselves singled out to be the marks of God's peculiar displeasure*, and they are often by their sharp afflictions a terror to themselves, and a wonder to others. It even breaks their hearts to see how low they are fallen, how oppressed, that were once as easy, as pleasant, as full of hope as others are, Job vi. 21: "Ye see my casting down, and are afraid." Ps. lxxi. 7. "I am as a wonder unto many." And it is usually unpleasant to others to be with them. Ps. lxxxviii. 18: "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." And though it was not so with the friends of Job, to see a man whom they had once known happy, to be so miserable; one whom they had seen so very prosperous, to be so very poor, in such sorry, forlorn circumstances, did greatly affect them; he, poor man, was changed, they knew him not, Job. ii. 12, 13, "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." As the prophet represents one under spiritual and great afflictions, "that *he sitteth alone*, and keepeth silence," Lam. iii. 28.—*Timothy Rogers* (1660–1729), *in* "*A Discourse on Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy.*"

Verse 8.—"*Mine enemies reproach me.*" It is true what Plutarch writes, that men are more touched with reproaches than with other injuries; affliction, too, gives a keener edge to calumny, for the afflicted are more fitting objects of pity than of mockery.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 8.—"*Mine enemies reproach me,*" etc. If I be where they are they rail at me to my face; and if I be not amongst them they revile me behind my back; and they do it not by starts and fits, that might give me some breathing time; but they are spitting their poison *all the day long;* and not single and one by one, that might leave hope of resisting; but they make combinations, and enter leagues against me; and to make their leagues the stronger, and less subject to dissolving, they bind themselves by oath, and take the sacrament upon it. And now sum up all these miseries and afflictions; begin with my fasting; then take my groaning; then add my watching; then the shame of being wondered at in company; then the discomfort of sitting disconsolate alone; and, lastly, add to these the spite and malice of my enemies; and what marvel, then, if these miseries joined all together make me altogether miserable; what marvel if I be nothing but skin and bone, when no flesh that were wise would ever stay upon a body to endure such misery.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 8 (*last clause*). Swearing by one, means, to make his name a by-word

of execration, or an example of cursing. (Isai. lxv. 15; Jer. xxix. 22; xlii. 18).—*Carl Bernard Moll, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 9.—"*I have eaten ashes like bread.*" Though the bread indeed be strange, yet not so strange as this,—that having complained before of forgetting to eat his bread, he should now on a sudden fall to *eating of ashes like bread.* For had he not been better to have forgotten it still, unless it had been more worth remembering? For there is not in nature so unfit a thing to eat as *ashes*; it is worse than Nebuchadnezzar's grass.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 9.—"*I have mingled my drink with weeping.*" If you think his bread to be bad, you will find his drink to be worse; for *he mingles his drink with tears:* and what are tears, but brinish and salt humours? and is brine a fit liquor to quench one's thirst? May we not say here, the remedy is worse than the disease? for were it not better to endure any thirst, than to seek to quench it with such drink? Is it not a pitiful thing to have no drink to put in the stomach, but that which is drawn out of the eyes? and yet whose case is any better? No man certainly commits sin, but with a design of pleasure; but sin will not be so committed; for whosoever commit sin, let them be sure at some time or other to find a thousand times more trouble about it than ever they found pleasure in it. For all sin is a kind of surfeit, and there is no way to keep it from being mortal but by this strict diet of eating ashes like bread and mingling his drink with tears. O my soul, if these be works of repentance in David, where shall we find a penitent in the world besides himself? To talk of repentance is obvious in everyone's mouth; but where is any that eats ashes like bread, and mingles his drink with tears?—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 10.—"*For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.*" Thou hast lifted me up of a great height, in that thou madest me like unto thine image, touching my reasonable soul, and hast given me power, by thy grace, to inherit the everlasting joys of heaven, both body and soul, if I did live here after thy commandments. What greater gift canst thou give me, Lord, than to have the fruition of thee that art all in all things? How canst thou lift me higher than to eternal beatitude? But then, alas, thou hast letten me fall down again, for thou hast joined my noble soul with an earthly, heavy, and a frail body; the weight and burden thereof draweth down my mind and heart from the consideration of thy goodness, and from well doing, unto all kinds of vices, and to the regarding of temporal things according to his nature. The earthly mansion keepeth down the understanding. Thus setting me up, as it were, above the wind, thou hast given me a very great fall (Job xxx. 22). I am in creation above all other kind of earthly creatures, and almost equal with angels; but being in this estate thou hast knit a knot thereto, that for breaking the least of thy commandments I shall suffer damnation. So that without thy continual mercy and help I am in worse case herein than any brute beast, whose life or soul dieth with the body.—*Sir Anthony Cope* (1551).

Verse 10.—"*For thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.*" That is that I might fall with greater poise. *Significatur gravissima collisio.* Here the prophet accuseth not God of cruelty, but bewaileth his own misery. *Miserum est fuisse felicem,* it is no small unhappiness to have been happy.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11 (*first clause*).—My days (my term of life) are as the lengthened shade, the lengthening shade of evening, that shows the near approach of night. The comparison, though not strictly expressed, is beautifully suggestive of the thought intended.—*Thomas J. Conant.*

Verse 11 (*last clause*).—The "*and I,*" in the Hebrew, stands in designed contrast to "But *thou,*" ver. 12.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou shalt arise, and have mercy,*" etc. *Tu miserebere,* "*Thou shalt,*" as the Shunamite to the prophet, catching hold on his feet, though Gehazi thrust her away, *Vivit Dominus,* "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not let thee go;" and, as Jacob to the angel, when he had wrestled the whole night with him, *Non dimittam,* I will not let thee loose till I have a blessing from thee.—*From "A Sermon at Paules Crosse on behalfe of Paules Church, March* 26, 1620. *By the B. of London"* [*John King*].

Verse 13.—"*The set time.*" There is a certain set time for God's great actions. He lets the powers of darkness have their hour, and God will take his hour. He

hath a set time for the discovery of his mercy, and he will not stay a jot beyond it. What is this time? verse 9, etc. When they "eat ashes like bread, and mingle their drink with weeping;" when they are most humble, and when the servants of God have moral affection to the church; when their humble and ardent affections are strong, even to the ruin and rubbish of it; when they have a mighty desire and longing for the reparation of it, as the Jews in captivity had for the very dust of the temple: verse 14: "For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." "*For*" there notes it to be a reason why the set time was judged by them to be come. That is God's set time when the church is most believing, most humble, most affectionate to God's interest in it, and most sincere. Without faith we are not fit to desire mercy, without humility we are not fit to receive it, without affection we are not fit to value it, without sincerity we are not fit to improve it. Times of extremity contribute to the growth and exercise of these qualifications. —*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 14.—"*For thy servants take pleasure in her stones.*" That is, they are still attached to her, and regard her with extreme affection, although in ruins. Jerusalem itself affords at this day a touching illustration of this passage. There is reason to believe that a considerable portion of the *lower part* of the walls which enclose the present mosque of Omar, which occupies the site of the ancient Jewish temple, are the same, or at least the southern, western, and eastern sides are the same as those of Solomon's temple. At one part where the remains of this old wall are the most considerable and of the most massive character—where two courses of masonry, composed of massive blocks of stone, rising to the height of thirty feet —is what is called the Wailing Place of the Jews. "Here," says Dr. Olin, "at the foot of the wall, is an open place paved with flags, where the Jews assemble every Friday, and in small numbers on other days, for the purpose of praying and bewailing the desolations of their holy places. Neither the Jews nor Christians are allowed to enter the Haram, which is consecrated to Mohammedan worship, and this part of the wall is the nearest approach they can make to what they regard as the precise spot within the forbidden enclosure upon which the ancient temple stood. They keep the pavement swept with great care, and take off their shoes, as on holy ground. Standing or kneeling with their faces towards the ancient wall, they gaze in silence upon its venerable stones, or pour forth their complaints in half-suppressed, though audible tones. This, to me, was always a most affecting sight, and I repeated my visit to this interesting spot to enjoy and sympathise with the melancholy yet pleasing spectacle. The poor people sometimes sobbed aloud, and still found tears to pour out for the desolations of their 'beautiful house.' 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.'"— *Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 16.—"*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" So sincere is God to his people, that he gives his own glory in hostage to them for their security; his own robes of glory are locked up in their prosperity and salvation: he will not, indeed he cannot, present himself in all his magnificence and royalty, till he hath made up his intended thoughts of mercy to his people; he is pleased to prorogue the time of his appearing in all his glory to the world till he hath actually accomplished their deliverance, that he and they may come forth together in their glory on the same day: "*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" The sun is ever glorious in the most cloudy day, but appears not so till it hath scattered the clouds that muffle it up from the sight of the lower world: God is glorious when the world sees him not; but his declarative glory then appears, when the glory of his mercy, truth and faithfulness break forth in his people's salvation. Now, what shame must this cover thy face with, O Christian, if thou shouldst not sincerely aim at thy God's glory, who loves thee, yea, all his children so dearly, as to ship his own glory and your happiness in one bottom, that he cannot now lose the one, and save the other!—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 16.—"*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" There are two reasons why the Lord appears thus glorious in this work rather than in any other. First, because it is a work that infinitely pleaseth him. Men choose to appear in their clothes and behaviour suitable to the work that they are to be employed in: the woman of Tekoah must feign herself to be a mourner when she

goes on a mournful message; and David, when he goes on a doleful journey, covers his face, and puts on mourning apparel; but when Solomon is to be crowned, he goes in all his royalty; and a bride adorns herself gloriously when she is to be married: verily so doth the Lord, when he goes about a work he takes no pleasure in, he puts on his mourning apparel, he covers himself with a cloud and the heavens with blackness; when he is to do a strange work of judgment, then he mourns, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Hosea xi. 8. But the building of Zion doth infinitely please him, because Zion is as the apple of his eye to him; he bought Zion at a dear rate, with his own blood; he lays Zion in his bosom, he is ravished with Zion, Zion is his love, his dove, his fair one; he hath chosen Zion, and loves the gates of it, better than all the palaces of Jacob; and being so pleasing to him, no marvel if he put on all his glorious apparel when he is to adorn and build up Zion. And, secondly, it is because all the glory that he looks for to eternity must arise out of this one work of building Zion; this one work shall be the only monument of his glory to eternity: this goodly world, this heaven and earth, that you see and enjoy the use of, is set up only as a shop, as a workshop, to stand only for a week, for six or seven thousand years, ("a thousand years is with the Lord but as a day"); and when his work is done he will throw this piece of clay down again, and out of this he looks for no other glory than from a *cabul*, a land of dirt, or a shepherd's cottage, or a gourd which springs up in a night and withers in a day; but this piece he sets up for a higher end, to be the eternal mansion of his holiness and honour; this is his *metropolis*, his temple, his house where his fire and furnace is, his court, his glorious high throne, and therefore his glory is much concerned in this work. When Nebuchadnezzar would have a city for the honour of his kingdom, and the glory of his majesty, he will make it a stately piece. Solomon made all his kingdom very rich and glorious, but he made his court, and especially his throne, another manner of thing, so stately that the like was not to be seen in any other kingdom; and therefore no wonder though he appear in his glory in building up of that, which we may boldly say must be one day made as glorious as his wisdom can contrive, and his power bring to pass.—*Stephen Marshall, in a Sermon preached to the Right Honourable the House of Peers, entitled "God's Master-Piece,"* 1645.

Verses 16, 17.—"*Shall build—shall appear—will regard—and will not despise.*" These futures, in the original, are all present; "*buildeth—appeareth—regardeth—and despiseth not.*" The Psalmist, in his confidence of the event, speaks of it as doing. —*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 17.—"*He will regard the prayer of the destitute,*" etc. The persons are here called "*the destitute.*" The Hebrew word which is here translated "*destitute*" doth properly signify *myrica*, a low shrub, *humiles myricæ*, low shrubs that grow in wildernesses, some think they were *juniper shrubs*, some a kind of wild *tamaris*, but a base wild shrub that grew nowhere but in a desolate forlorn place; and sometimes the word in the text is used to signify the deserts of Arabia, the sandy desert place of Arabia, which was a miserable wilderness. Now when this word is applied to men, it always means such as were *forsaken* men, *despised* men; such men as are stripped of all that is comfortable to them: either they never had children, or else their children are taken away from them, and all comforts banished, and themselves left utterly forlorn, like the barren heath in a desolate howling wilderness. These are the people of whom my text speaks, that the Lord will regard the prayer of "*the destitute;*" and this was now the state of the Church of God when they offered up this prayer, and yet by faith did foretell that God would grant such a glorious answer. . . .

This is also a lesson of singular comfort to every afflicted soul, to assure them their prayers and supplications are tenderly regarded before God. I have often observed such poor forsaken ones, who in their own eyes are brought very low, that of all other people they are most desirous to beg and obtain the prayers of their friends, when they see any that hath gifts, and peace, and cheerfulness of spirit, and liberty, and abilities to perform duties, O how glad they are to get such a man's prayers! "I beseech you, will you pray for me, will you please to remember me at the throne of grace," whereas, in truth, if we could give a right judgment, all such would rather desire the *poor*, and the *desolate*, to be *mediators* for them; for, certainly, whomsoever God neglects, he will listen to the cry of those that are forsaken and

destitute. And therefore, O thou afflicted and tossed with tempests, who thinkest thou art wholly rejected by the Lord, continue to pour out thy soul to him; thou hast a faithful promise from him to be rewarded: "*he will regard the prayer of the destitute.*"—*Stephen Marshall, in a Sermon entitled "The Strong Helper,"* 1645.

Verse 17.—"*He will regard the prayer of the destitute.*" It is worthy of observation that he ascribes the redemption and restoration of the people to the prayers of the faithful. That is truly a free gift, and dependent wholly upon the divine mercy, and yet God himself often attributes it to our prayers, to stir us up and render us the more active in the pursuit of prayer.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 17.—"*The prayer of the destitute.*" A man that is destitute knows how to pray. He needs not any instructor. His miseries indoctrinate him wonderfully in the art of offering prayer. Let us know ourselves destitute, that we may know how to pray; destitute of strength, of wisdom, of due influence, of true happiness, of proper faith, of thorough consecration, of the knowledge of the Scriptures, of righteousness.

These words introduce and stand in immediate connection with a prophecy of glorious things to be witnessed in the latter times. We profess to be eager for the accomplishment of those marvellous things; but are we offering the prayer of the destitute? On the contrary, is not the Church at large too much like the church at Laodicea? Will not a just interpretation of many of its acts and ways bring forth the words, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing"? And do not its prayers meet with this reproachful answer, "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and knowest it not. Thy temporal affluence implies not spiritual affluence. Thy spiritual condition is inversely as the worldly prosperity that has turned thy head. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire. Give all thy trashy gold—trashy while it is with thee—give it to my poor; and I will give thee true gold—namely, a sense of thy misery and meanness; a longing for grace, purity, usefulness; a love of thy fellow-men; and my love shed abroad in thy heart."—*George Bowen.*

Verse 17.—"*Not despise their prayer.*" How many in every place (who have served the Lord in this great work) hath prayer helped at a dead lift? Prayer hath hitherto saved the kingdom. I remember a proud boast of our enemies, when we had lost *Bristol* and the *Vies*, they then sent abroad even into other kingdoms a triumphant paper, wherein they concluded all was now subdued to them, and among many other confident expressions, there was one to this purpose, *Nil restat superare Regem*, etc., which might be construed two ways; either thus,—*There remains nothing for the King to conquer, but only the prayers of a few fanatic people*; or thus,—*There is nothing left to conquer the King, but the prayers of a few fanatic people:* everything else was lost, all was now their own. And indeed we were then in a very low condition. Our strongholds taken, our armies melted away, our hearts generally failing us for fear, multitudes flying out of the kingdom, and many deserting the cause as desperate, making their peace at *Oxford;* nothing almost left us but *preces et lachrymæ;* but blessed be God, *prayer was not conquered;* they have found it the hardest wall to climb, the strongest brigade to overthrow; it hath hitherto preserved us, it hath raised up unexpected helps, and brought many unhoped for successes and deliverances. Let us therefore, under God, set the crown upon the head of prayer. Ye nobles and worthies, be ye all content to have it so; it will wrong none of you in your deserved praise; God and man will give you your due. *Many of you have done worthily, but prayer surpasses you all:* and this is no new thing, prayer hath always had the pre-eminence in the building of Zion. God hath reserved several works for several men and several ages; but in all ages and among all men, prayer hath been the chiefest instrument, especially in the building up of Zion.—*Stephen Marshall.*

Verse 17.—"*Not despise their prayer.*" He will, then, give ear to the suits of the poor, and not reject their supplications. But who will believe this? Is it likely, that when God is in his glory, he will attend to such mean things as hearkening to the poor? Can it stand with the honour of his glory to stand reading petitions, and specially of men that come *in forma pauperis?* scarce credible indeed with men, who, raised in honour, keep a distance from the poor and count it a degree of falling to look downwards: but credible enough with God, who counts it his glory to regard the inglorious; and being the Most High, yet looks as low as to the lowest, and favours them most who are most despised. And this did Christ after his transfiguration, when he had appeared in his glory; he then shewed acts of greatest humility; he then

washed the disciples' feet; and made Peter as much wonder to see his humbleness, as he had done before to see his glory.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 18.—"*Shall praise the Lord.*" The people whom God in mercy brings from a low and mean condition, are the people from whom God promises to receive praise and glory. Indeed, such is the selfishness of our corrupt nature, that if we are anything, or do anything, we are prone to forget God, and sacrifice to our own nets, and burn incense to our own yarn; inasmuch, that whenever God finds a people who shall either trust in him, or praise him, it must be "an afflicted and poor people," (Zeph. iii. 11—13; Ps. xxii. 22—25), or a people brought from such an estate: free grace is even most valued by such a people. And if you look all the Scripture over, you will find that all the praises and songs of deliverance that have been made to God have proceeded from a people that have thus judged of themselves, as those that were brought to nothing; but God in mercy had brought them back again from the gates of death, and usually until they had such apprehensions of themselves they never gave unto God the glory due unto his name.—*Stephen Marshall.*

Verse 18.—Expositors observe upon this text, that this redeemed Church takes no thought *concerning themselves*, about their own *ease*, *pleasure*, *wealth*, *gain*, or anything else which might accrue unto themselves by this deliverance, to make their own life easy or sweet; but their thoughts and studies are wholly laid out, how the present and succeeding generations should give all glory to God for it. . . .

There are three special reasons why this should be the great work of the Lord's saved and rescued people, and why indeed they can do no other than study thus to exalt him. I. One is, because they well know that the Lord hath reserved nothing to himself but only his glory; the benefits he gives to them; all the sweetness and honey that can be found in them he gives them leave to suck out; but his glory and his praise is his own, and that which he hath wholly reserved; of that he is jealous, lest it should either be denied, eclipsed, diminished, or any the least violation offered to it in any kind. All God's people know this of him, and therefore they cannot but endeavour to preserve it for him. II. Secondly, besides, they know, as God is jealous in that point, so it is all the work that he hath appointed them to do; he hath therefore separated them to himself out of all nations of the world, to be his peculiar ones for this very end, that they might give him all the glory and praise of his mercy. "I have (said God) *created* him, *formed*, and *made* him *for my glory*." Isai. xliii. 7. This is the law of his *new creation*, which is as powerful in them as the law of *nature*, or the *first creation*, is in the rest of his works. And therefore with a holy and spiritual naturalness (if I may so call it) the hearts of all the saints are carried to give God the glory, as really as the stones are carried to the centre, or the fire to fly upwards: this is fixed in their hearts, the work of grace hath moulded them to it, that they can do no other but endeavour to exalt God, it being the very end why their spiritual life and all their other privileges are conferred upon them.

III. Yea, thirdly, they know their own interests are much concerned in God's glory, they never are losers by it: if in any work of God he want his praise, they will want their comfort; but if God be a gainer, they shall certainly be no losers. Whatever is poured upon the head of Christ—what ointment soever of praise or glory, it will in a due proportion fall down to the skirts of his garments; nor is there any other way to have any sweetness, comfort, praise, or glory to be derived unto themselves, but by giving all unto him, to whom alone it belongeth, and then although he will never give away his glory—the glory of being the *fountain*, the *first*, *supreme*, *original giver* of all good; yet they shall have the glory of instruments, and of fellow workers with him, which is a glory and praise sufficient.—*Stephen Marshall.*

Verse 18 (*first clause*).—Calvin translates thus,—"*This shall be registered for the generations to come;*" and observes,—"The Psalmist intimates, that this will be a memorable work of God, the praise of which shall be handed down to succeeding ages. Many things are worthy of praise, which are soon forgotten; but the prophet distinguishes between the salvation of the Church, for which he makes supplication, and common benefits. By the word *register* he means that the history of this would be worthy of having a place in the public records, that the remembrance of it might be transmitted to future generations."

Verse 18.—"*This shall be written.*" Nothing is more tenacious than man's memory when he suffers an injury; nothing more lax if a benefit is conferred. For this reason God desires lest his gifts should fall out of mind, to have them committed to writing.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 20.—" *To hear the groaning of the prisoner.*" God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace; but even of their groans, which are the language of nature.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 20.—" *Appointed unto death.*" Who, in their captivity, are experiencing so much affliction, that it is manifest their cruel enemies are desirous of destroying them utterly; or, at least, of bringing them into such a low and pitiable state, as to blot out their name from among the nations of the earth.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 24.—" *O my God.*" The leaving out one word in a will may mar the estate and disappoint all a man's hopes; the want of this one word, *my* (God,) is the wicked man's loss of heaven, and the dagger which will pierce his heart in hell to all eternity.

The degree of satisfaction in any good is according to the degree of our union to it, (hence our delight is greater in food than in clothes, and the saint's joy is greater in God in the other world than in this, because the union is nearer;) but where there is no property there is no union, therefore no complacency. The pronoun *my* is as much worth to the soul as the boundless portion. All our comfort is locked up in that private cabinet. Wine in the glass doth not cheer the heart, but taken down into the body. The property of the Psalmist's in God was the mouth whereby he fed on those dainties which did so exceedingly delight him. No love potion was ever so effectual as this pronoun. When God saith to the soul, as Ahab to Benhadad " Behold, I am thine, and all that I have," who can tell how the heart leaps for joy in, and expires almost in desires after him upon such news! Others, like strangers, may behold his honour and excellencies, but this saint only, like the wife, enjoyeth him. Luther saith, Much religion lieth in pronouns. All our consolation, indeed, consisteth in this pronoun. It is the cup which holdeth all our cordial waters. I will undertake as bad as the devil is, he shall give the whole world, were it in his power, more freely than ever he offered it to Christ for his worship, for leave from God to pronounce those two words, My God. All the joys of the believer are hung upon this one string; break that asunder, and all is lost. I have sometimes thought how David rolls it as a lump of sugar under his tongue, as one loth to lose its sweetness too soon: " I will love thee, O Lord, my strength, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower," Ps. xviii. 1, 2. This pronoun is the door at which the King of saints entereth into our hearts, with his whole train of delights and comforts.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 24.—" *Take me not away,*" is more exactly, Take me not *up*, with possible reference to the case of Elijah, " taken up."—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 24.—" *Take me not away in the midst of my days.*" The word is, " *Let me not ascend in the midst of my days,*" that is, before I have measured the usual course of life. Thus, *to ascend* is the same as to be *cut off;* death cuts off the best from this world, and then they ascend to a better. The word *ascend* is conceived to have in it a double allusion; first, to corn which is taken up by the hand of the reaper, and then laid down on the stubble. Secondly, unto the light of a candle, which as the candle spends, or as that which is the food of the fire is spending, ascends, and at last goes out and vanisheth.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 24.—" *Thy years are throughout all generations.*" The Psalmist says of Christ, " *Thy years are throughout all generations,*" Ps. cii. 24; which Psalm the apostle quoteth of him, Heb. i. 10. Let us trace his existence punctually through all times. Let us go from point to point, and see how in particulars the Scriptures accord with it. The first joint of time we will begin that chronology of his existence withal is that instant afore he was to come into the world.

First, We find him to have existed just afore he came into the world, the instance of his conception, Heb. x. 5, in these words, " Wherefore when he comes into the world, says he, A body hast thou prepared me." Ver. 7, " Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Here is a person distinct from God the Father, a *me*, an *I*, distinct also from that human nature he was to assume, which he terms a "body prepared." . . . Therefore besides and afore that human nature there was a divine person that existed, that was not of this world, but that came into it, " when he cometh into the world, he says," etc., to become a part of it, and be manifested in it.

Secondly, We find him to have existed afore John the Baptist, though John was conceived and born some months afore him. I note these several joints of time because the Scripture notes them, and hath set a special mark upon them: John i. 15. " John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." This priority of

existence is that which John doth specially give witness to. And it is priority in existence, for he allegeth it as a reason why he was preferred afore him; "for he was before me."

Thirdly, We find him existing when all the prophets wrote and spake, 1 Pet. i. 11. The Spirit of Christ is said to have been in all the prophets, even as Paul, who came after Christ, also speaks, "You seek a proof of Christ speaking in me," 2 Cor. xiii. 3. And therefore he himself, whose Spirit it was, or whom he sent, must needs exist as a person sending him.

Fourthly, We find him existing in Moses' time, both because it was he that was tempted in the wilderness, "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents," 1 Cor. x. 9; and it was Christ that was the person said to be tempted by them, as well as now by us, as the word καὶ "as they also," evidently shows. And it points to that angel that was sent with them, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21, in whom the name of God was, and who as God had the power of pardoning sins, ver. 21. See also Acts. vii. 35, Heb. xii. 26.

Fifthly, We find him existing in and afore Abraham's time: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am," John viii. 58.

Sixthly, We find him existing in the days of Noah, 1 Pet. iii. 19. He says of Christ, that he was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit." He evidently distinguisheth of two natures, his divine and human, even as Rom. i. 3, 4 and elsewhere; and then declares how by that divine nature, which he terms "Spirit," in which he was existent in Noah's times, he went and preached to those of the old world, whose souls are now in prison in hell. These words, "in Spirit," are not put to signify the subject of vivification; for such neither his soul nor Godhead could be said to be, for that is not quickened which was not dead; but for the principal and cause of his vivification, which his soul was not, but his Godhead was. And besides by his Spirit is not meant his soul, for that then must be supposed to have preached to souls in hell (where these are affirmed to be). Now, there is no preaching where there is no capacity of faith. But his meaning is, that those persons that lived in Noah's time, and were preached unto, their souls and spirits were now, when this was written, spirits in prison, that is, in hell. And therefore he also adds this word "sometimes": "who were sometimes disobedient in Noah's days." These words give us to understand that this preaching was performed by Noah ministerially, yet by Christ in Noah; who according to his divine person was extant, and went with him, as with Moses, and the church in the wilderness, and preached unto them.

Seventhly, He was extant at the beginning of the world, "In the beginning was the Word." In which words, there being no predicate or attribute affirmed of this word, the sentence or affirmation is terminated or ended merely with his existence: "he was," and he was then, "in the beginning." He says not that he was made in the beginning, but that "he was in the beginning." And it is in the beginning absolutely, without any limitation. And therefore Moses's beginning, Gen. i. 1, is meant, as also the words after show, "All was made by him that was made;" and, ver. 10, the world he came into was made by him. And as from the beginning is usually taken from the first times or infancy of the world; so then, when God began to create, then was our Christ. And this here is set in opposition (John i. 14) unto the time of his being made flesh, lest that should have been thought his beginning. And unto this accords that of Heb. i. 10, where, speaking of Christ, out of Psalm cii., "*Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth;*" so as to be sure he existed then. But further, in Psalm cii. 24, it runs thus, "*Thy years are throughout all generations.*" We have run, you see, through all generations since the creation, and have found his years throughout them all. And yet lest that should be taken only of the generations of this world, he adds (as Rivet expounds it), "*Before thou laidst the foundation of the earth.*"

Eighthly, So then we come to this, that he hath been before the creation, yea, from everlasting.

But, *Ninthly*, If you would have his eternity yet more express, see Heb. vii. 3, where mentioning Melchisedec, Christ's type, he renders him to have been his type in this—"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." Where his meaning is to declare that, look what Melchisedec was *typicè*, or *umbraiter*, in a shadow, that our Christ was really and substantially.

Lastly, Add to this that in Micah v. 2, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth

unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting;" where he evidently speaks of two births Christ had, under the metaphor of going forth: one as man at Bethlehem in the fulness of time, the other as Son of God from everlasting. As Son of God, his goings forth (that is, his birth) are from everlasting. And it is termed, "goings forth," in the plural; because it is *actus continuus*, and hath been every moment continued from everlasting. As the sun begets light and beams every moment, so God doth his Son. So then we have *two everlastings* attributed to Christ's person; one to come, Heb. i. 10, and another past, here in Micah v. 2. And so as of God himself it is said, Ps. xc. 2, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God," so also of Christ.—*Condensed from T. Goodwin's Treatise on "The Knowledge of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ."*

Verse 25.—"*Earth.*" "*Heavens.*" He names here the most stable parts of the world, and the most beautiful parts of the creation, those that are freest from corruptibility and change, to illustrate thereby the immutability of God, that though the heavens and earth have a prerogative of fixedness above other parts of the world, and the creatures that reside below, the heavens remain the same as they were created, and the centre of the earth retains its fixedness, and are as beautiful and fresh in their age as they were in their youth many years ago, notwithstanding the change of the elements, fire and water being often turned into air, so that there may remain but little of that air which was first created, by reason of the continual transmutation; yet this firmness of the earth and heavens is not to be regarded in comparison of the unmoveableness and fixedness of the being of God. As their beauty comes short of the glory of his being, so doth their firmness come short of his stability.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 26.—"*They shall perish.*" The greater the corruption, the vaster the destruction. Some think that the fiery deluge shall ascend no higher than did the watery. It may be the *earth* shall be burned, that is the worst guest at the table, the common sewer of all other creatures, but shall the heavens pass away? It may be the airy heaven; but shall the starry heaven where God hath printed such figures of his glory? Yes, *cælum, elementum, terra*, when *ignis ubique ferox ruptis regnabit habenis*. The former deluge is called the world's winter, the next the world's summer. The one was with a cold and moist element, the other shall be with an element hot and dry. But what then shall become of the saints? They shall be delivered out of all; walking like those three servants in the midst of that great furnace, the burning world, and not be scorched, because there is one among them to deliver them, "the Son of God," Dan. iii. 25, their Redeemer. But shall all quite perish? No, there is rather a mutation than an abolition of their substance. "*Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed*," not abolished. The concupiscence shall pass, not the essence; the form, not the nature. In the altering of an old garment, we destroy it not, but trim it, refresh it, and make it seem new. They pass, they do not perish; the dross is purged, the metal stays. The corrupt quality shall be renewed, and all things restored to that original beauty wherein they were created. "The end of all things is at hand," 1 Pet. iv. 7: an end of us, an end of our days, an end of our ways, an end of our thoughts. If a man could say as Job's messenger, I alone am escaped, it were somewhat; or might find an ark with Noah. But there is no ark to defend them from that heat, but only the bosom of Jesus Christ.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 26.—"*Like a garment.*" The whole creation is as a garment, wherein the Lord shows his power clothed unto men; whence in particular he is said to clothe himself with light as with a garment. And in it is the hiding of his power. Hid it is, as a man is hid with a garment; not that he should not be seen at all, but that he should not be seen perfectly and as he is. It shows the man, and he is known by it; but also it hides him, that he is not perfectly or fully seen. So are the works of creation unto God, he so far makes them his garment or clothing as in them to give out some instances of his power and wisdom; but he is also hid in them, in that by them no creature can come to the full and perfect knowledge of him. Now, when this work shall cease, and God shall unclothe or unveil all his glory to his saints, and they shall know him perfectly, see him as he is, so far as a created nature is capable of that comprehension, then will he lay them aside and fold them up, at least as to that use, as easily as a man lays aside a garment that he will wear or use no more. This lies in the metaphor.—*John Owen.*

Verse 27.—" *Thou art the same.*" The essence of God, with all the perfections of his nature, are pronounced the same, without any variation from eternity to eternity. So that the text doth not only assert the eternal duration of God, but his immutability in that duration; his eternity is signified in that expression, " thou shalt endure;" his immutability in this, " thou art the same." To endure, argues indeed this immutability as well as eternity; for what endures is not changed, and what is changed doth not endure. " *But thou art the same,*" אַתָּה הוּא, doth more fully signify it. He could not be the same if he could be changed into any other thing than what he is. The Psalmist therefore puts, not thou *hast been* or *shall be*, but *thou art* the same, without any alteration; thou art the same, that is, the same God, the same in essence and nature, the same in will and purpose, thou dost change all other things as thou pleaseth; but thou art immutable in every respect, and receivest no shadow of change, though never so light and small. The Psalmist here alludes to the name *Jehovah, I am*, and doth not only ascribe immutability to God, but exclude everything else from partaking in that perfection.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 28.—" *The children of thy servants shall continue.*" In what sense is " *children*" taken? Either the children of their flesh, or of their faith. Some say the children of the same faith with the godly teachers and servants of the Lord, begotten by them to God, as noting the perpetuity of the church, who shall in every age bring forth children to God. 'Tis the comfort of God's people to see a young brood growing up to continue his remembrance in the world, that when they die religion shall not die with them, nor the succession of the church be interrupted. This sense is not altogether incongruous; but rather I think the children of their body are here intended; it being a blessing often promised: see the next Psalm, verse 17. " The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children," " *Shall continue;*" " *shall be established.*" In what sense is it spoken? Some think only *pro more fæderis*, according to the fashion of that covenant which the people of God were then under, when eternity was but more darkly revealed and shadowed out, either by long life, or the continuance of their name in their posterity, which was a kind of literal immortality. Clearly such a kind of regard is had, as appeareth by that which you find in Ps. xxxvii. 28. " *The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.*" How? since they die as others do: mark the antithesis, and that will explain it. " *They are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.*" They are preserved in their posterity. Children are but the parents multiplied, and the parent continued; 'tis *nodosa æternitas;* when the father's life is run out to the last, there is a knot tied, and the line is still continued by the child. I confess, temporal blessings, such as long life, and the promise of a happy posterity, are more visible in the eye of that dispensation of the covenant; but yet God still taketh care for the children of his people, and many promises run that way that belong to the gospel-administration, and still God's service is the surest way to establish a family, as sin is the ready way to root it out. And if it doth not always fall out accordingly, yet for the most part it doth; and we are no competent judges of God's dispensations in this kind, because we see Providence by pieces, and have not the skill to set them together; but at the day of judgment, when the whole contexture of God's dealings is laid before us, we shall clearly understand how *the children of his servants continue, and their seed is established.*—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 28.—O the folly of the world, that seeks to make perpetuities to their houses by devises in the law, which may perhaps reach to continue their estates, but can it reach to continue their seed? It may entail lands to their heirs, but can it entail heirs to their lands? No, God knows! This is a perpetuity of only God's making, a privilege of only God's servants: for " *The children of his servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before him;*" but that any others shall continue is no part of David's warrant.—*Sir R. Baker.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Title.—I. Afflicted men may pray. II. Afflicted men should pray even when overwhelmed. III. Afflicted men can pray—for what is wanted is a pouring out of their complaint, not an oratorical display. IV. Afflicted men are accepted in prayer—for this prayer is placed on record.

Verses 1, 2.—Five steps to the mercy-seat. The Psalmist prays for, I. Audience: "Hear my prayer." II. Access: "Let my cry come before thee." III. Unveiling: "Hide not thy face." IV. An intent ear: "Incline thine ear." V. Answer.—*C. Davis.*

Verses 1, 17, 19, 20.—An interesting discourse may be founded upon these passages. I. The Lord entreated to hear—verse 1. II. The Promise given that he will hear—verse 17. III. The Record that the Lord has heard—verses 19 and 20.

Verse 2.—I. Prayer in trouble is most needed. II. Prayer in trouble is most heeded. III. Prayer in trouble is most speeded: "Answer me speedily." Or, I. Prayer in trouble: "In the day," etc. II. The prayer of trouble: "Hide not thy face;" not remove the trial, but be with me in it. A fiery furnace is a paradise when God is with us there.—*G. R.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*)'—He deprecates the loss of the divine countenance when under trouble. I. That would intensify it a thousandfold. II. That would deprive him of strength to bear the trouble. III. That would prevent his acting so as to glorify God in the trouble. IV. That might injure the result of the trouble.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—I. We often need to be answered speedily. II. God can so answer. III. God has so answered. IV. God has promised so to answer.

Verses 3—11.—I. The causes of grief. 1. The brevity of life. *v.* 3. 2. Bodily pain. *v.* 3. 3. Dejection of spirit. *v.* 4, 5. 4. Solitariness. *v.* 6, 7. 5. Reproach. *v.* 8. 6. Humiliation. *v.* 9. 7. The hidings of God's countenance. *v.* 10. 8. Wasting away. *v.* 11. II. The eloquence of grief. 1. The brevity of life is as vanishing "smoke." 2. Bodily pain is fire in the bones. 3. Dejection of spirit is "withered grass." Who can eat when the heart is sad? 4. Solitariness is like "The pelican in the wilderness, the owl in the desert, and the sparrow upon the house top." 5. Reproach is being surrounded by madmen—"they that are mad." 6. Humiliation is "eating ashes like bread," and "drinking tears." 7. The hidings of God's countenance is lifting up in order to be cast down. 8. Wasting away is a shadow declining and grass withering.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—Unbelieving sorrow makes us forget to use proper means for our support. I. We forget the promises. II. Forget the past and its experiences. III. Forget the Lord Jesus, our life. IV. Forget the everlasting love of God. This leads to weakness, faintness, etc., and is to be avoided.

Verse 6.—This as a text, together with ciii. 5, makes an interesting contrast, and gives scope for much experimental teaching.

Verse 7.—The evils and benefits of solitude; when it may be sought, and when it becomes a folly. Or, the mournful watcher—alone, outside the pale of communion, insignificant, wishful for fellowship, set apart to watch.

Verse 9.—The sorrows of the saints—their number, bitterness, sources, correctives, influences, and consolations.

Verse 10.—I. The trial of trials—*thine* indignation and *thy* wrath. II. The aggravation of that trial—former favour, "thou hast lifted me up," etc. III. The best behaviour under it: see former verse, and verses 12 and 13.

Verse 10 (*last clause.*)—The prosperity of a church or an individual often followed by declension; worldly aggrandisement frequently succeeded by affliction; great joy in the Lord very generally succeeded by trial.

Verses 11, 12.—*I* and *Thou*, or the notable contrast. I. *I:* my days are like a shadow, 1. Because it is unsubstantial; because it partakes of the nature of the darkness which is to absorb it; because the longer it becomes the briefer its continuance. 2. I am like grass cut down by the scythe; scorched by drought. II. *Thou.* Lord. Ever enduring. Ever memorable. Ever the study of passing generations of men.—*C. D.*

Verse 13.—I. Zion often needs restoration. It needs "mercy." II. Its restoration is certain: "Thou shalt arise," etc. III. The seasons of its restoration are determined. There is a "time" to favour her; a "set" time. IV. Intimations of those coming seasons are often given: "The time, the set time, is come."—*G. R.*

Verses 13, 14.—I. Visitation expected. II. Predestination relied upon. III.

Evidence observed. IV. Enquiry suggested—Do we take pleasure in her stones? etc.

Verses 13, 14.—The interest of the Lord's people in the concerns of Zion one of the surest signs of her returning prosperity.

Verse 15.—The inward prosperity of the church essential to her power in the world.

Verse 16.—God is Zion's purchaser, architect, builder, inhabitant, Lord. I. Zion built up. Conversions frequent; confessions numerous; union firm; edification solid; missions extended. II. God glorified. In its very foundation; by its ministry; by difficulties and enemies; by poor workers, and poor materials; and even by our failures. III. Hope excited. Because we may expect the Lord to glorify himself. IV. Inquiry suggested. Am I concerned, as built, or building? not merely doctrinally, but experimentally?

Verse 17.—I. The destitute pray. II. They pray most. III. They pray best. IV. They pray most effectually. Or the surest way to succeed in prayer is to pray as the destitute; show the reason of this.

Verse 18.—I. A memorial. II. A magnificat.—*W. Durban.*

Verses 18—21.—I. Misery in extremis. II. Divinity observant. III. Deity actively assisting. IV. Glory consequently published.

Verses 19—22.—I. The notice which God takes of the world, *v.* 19. 1. The place from which he beholds it: "from heaven," not from an earthly point of view. 2. The character in which he beholds it; "from the height of his sanctuary," from the mercy-seat. II. What attracts his notice most in the world. The groaning of the prisoner and of those appointed to death. III. The purpose for which he notices them. "To loose," etc.; "to declare," etc. 1. For human comfort. 2. For his own glory. IV. When his notice is thus fixed upon the earth. "When," etc., *v.* 22.—*G. R.*

Verse 23.—For the sick. I. Submission—The Lord sent the trial—"*He* weakeneth," etc. II. Service—exonerated from some work, he now requires of me patience, earnestness, etc. III. Preparation—for going home. IV. Prayer—for others to occupy my place. V. Expectation—I shall soon be in heaven, now that my days are shortened.

Verse 24.—I. *The prayer.* "Take me not away," etc. 1. Not in the midst of life, is the prayer of some. 2. Not in the midst of worldly prosperity, is the prayer of many, for the sake of those dependent upon them. 3. Not in the midst of spiritual growth, is the prayer of not a few: "Oh spare me, that I may recover strength," etc. 4. Not in the midst of Christian work and usefulness, is the prayer of others. II. *The plea.* "Thy years," etc.; years are plentiful with thee, therefore to give me longer days will be an easy gift—and thine own are throughout all generations. —*G. R.*

Verses 25—27.—I. The unchangeableness of God amidst past changes: "of old," etc. 1. He was the same before as after he had laid the foundations of the earth. 2. He was the same after as before. II. The unchangeableness of God amidst future changes. "They shall perish," etc. 1. The same before they perish as after. 2. After as before. III. The unchangeableness of God in the past and the future. "Thou art the same," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 26, 27.—I. How far God may change—only in his garments, or outward manifestations of creation and providence. II. Wherein he cannot change—his nature, attributes, covenant, love, etc. III. The comfortable truths which may be safely inferred, or which gather support from this fact.

Verses 26, 27.—I. The material universe of God. 1. No more to him than a garment to the wearer. 2. Ever waxing old, but he the same. 3. Soon to be changed, and left to perish, but of his years no end. II. Our relation to each—1. Let us never love the dress more than the wearer. 2. Nor trust more in the changeful than in the abiding. 3. Nor live for that which will die out.

Verse 28.—The true apostolical succession. I. There always will be saints. II. They will frequently be the seed of the saints after the flesh. III. They will always be the spiritual seed of the godly, for God converts one by means of another. IV. We should order our efforts with an eye to the church's future.

PSALM CIII.

TITLE.— A Psalm of David.—*Doubtless by David; it is in his own style when at its best, and we should attribute it to his later years when he had a higher sense of the preciousness of pardon, because a keener sense of sin, than in his younger days. His clear sense of the frailty of life indicates his weaker years, as also does the very fulness of his praiseful gratitude. As in the lofty Alps some peaks rise above all others, so among even the inspired Psalms there are heights of song which overtop the rest. This one hundred and third Psalm has ever seemed to us to be the Monte Rosa of the divine chain of mountains of praise, glowing with a ruddier light than any of the rest. It is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and its golden fruit has a flavour such as no fruit ever bears unless it has been ripened in the full sunshine of mercy. It is man's reply to the benedictions of his God, his Song on the Mount answering to his Redeemer's Sermon on the Mount. Nebuchadnezzar adored his idol with flute, harp, sacbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music; and David, in far nobler style, awakens all the melodies of heaven and earth in honour of the one only living and true God. Our attempt at exposition is commenced under an impressive sense of the utter impossibility of doing justice to so sublime a composition; we call upon our soul and all that is within us to aid in the pleasurable task; but, alas, our soul is finite, and our all of mental faculty far too little for the enterprise. There is too much in the Psalm for a thousand pens to write, it is one of those all-comprehending Scriptures which is a Bible in itself, and it might alone almost suffice for the hymn-book of the church.*

DIVISION.—*First the Psalmist sings of personal mercies which he had himself received,* 1—5; *then he magnifies the attributes of Jehovah as displayed in his dealings with his people,* 6—19; *and he closes by calling upon all the creatures in the universe to adore the Lord and join with himself in blessing Jehovah, the ever gracious.*

EXPOSITION.

BLESS the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things; so that* thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

1. "*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" Soul music is the very soul of music. The Psalmist strikes the best key-note when he begins with stirring up his inmost self to magnify the Lord. He soliloquizes, holds self-communion and exhorts himself, as though he felt that dulness would all too soon steal over his faculties, as, indeed, it will over us all, unless we are diligently on the watch. Jehovah is worthy to be praised by us in that highest style of adoration which is intended by the term *bless*— "All thy works praise thee, O God, but thy saints shall bless thee." Our very life and essential self should be engrossed with this delightful service, and each one of us should arouse his own heart to the engagement. Let others forbear if they can: "Bless the Lord, O MY soul." Let others murmur, but do thou *bless*. Let others bless themselves and their idols, but do thou bless *the Lord*. Let others use only their tongues, but as for me I will cry, "Bless the Lord, O my *soul*." "*And all that is within me, bless his holy name.*" Many are our faculties, emotions, and capacities, but God has given them all to us, and they ought all to join in chorus to his praise. Half-hearted, ill-conceived, unintelligent praises are not such as we should render to our loving Lord. If the law of justice demanded all our heart and soul and mind for the Creator, much more may the law of gratitude put in a comprehensive claim for the homage of our whole being to the God of grace. It is

instructive to note how the Psalmist dwells upon the *holy* name of God, as if his holiness were dearest to him; or, perhaps, because the holiness or wholeness of God was to his mind the grandest motive for rendering to him the homage of his nature in its wholeness. Babes may praise the divine goodness, but fathers in grace magnify his holiness. By *the name* we understand the revealed character of God, and assuredly those songs which are suggested, not by our fallible reasoning and imperfect observation, but by unerring inspiration, should more than any others arouse all our consecrated powers.

2. "*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" He is in real earnest, and again calls upon himself to arise. Had he been very sleepy before? Or was he now doubly sensible of the importance, the imperative necessity of adoration? Certainly, he uses no vain repetitions, for the Holy Spirit guides his pen; and thus he shews us that we have need, again and again, to bestir ourselves when we are about to worship God, for it would be shameful to offer him anything less than the utmost our souls can render. These first verses are a tuning of the harp, a screwing up of the loosened strings that not a note may fail in the sacred harmony. "*And forget not all his benefits.*" Not so much as one of the divine dealings should be forgotten, they are all really beneficial to us, all worthy of himself, and all subjects for praise. Memory is very treacherous about the best things; by a strange perversity, engendered by the fall, it treasures up the refuse of the past and permits priceless treasures to lie neglected, it is tenacious of grievances and holds benefits all too loosely. It needs spurring to its duty, though that duty ought to be its delight. Observe that he calls *all* that is within him to remember *all* the Lord's benefits. For our task our energies should be suitably called out. God's all cannot be praised with less than our all.

Reader, have we not cause enough at this time to bless him who blesses us? Come, let us read our diaries and see if there be not choice favours recorded there for which we have rendered no grateful return. Remember how the Persian king, when he could not sleep, read the chronicles of the empire, and discovered that one who had saved his life had never been rewarded. How quickly did he do him honour! The Lord has saved us with a great salvation, shall we render no recompense? The name of *ingrate* is one of the most shameful that a man can wear; surely we cannot be content to run the risk of such a brand. Let us awake then, and with intense enthusiasm bless Jehovah.

3. "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*" Here David begins his list of blessings received, which he rehearses as themes and arguments for praise. He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude. Pardoned sin is, in our experience, one of the choicest boons of grace, one of the earliest gifts of mercy,—in fact, the needful preparation for enjoying all that follows it. Till iniquity is forgiven, healing, redemption, and satisfaction are unknown blessings. Forgiveness is first in the order of our spiritual experience, and in some respects first in value. The pardon granted is a present one—*forgiveth*; it is continual, for he still *forgiveth*; it is divine, for God gives it; it is far reaching, for it removes *all* our sins; it takes in omissions as well as commissions, for both of these are *in-equities*; and it is most effectual, for it is as real as the healing, and the rest of the mercies with which it is placed. "*Who healeth all thy diseases.*" When the cause is gone, namely, iniquity, the effect ceases. Sicknesses of body and soul came into the world by sin, and as sin is eradicated, diseases bodily, mental, and spiritual will vanish, till "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick." Many-sided is the character of our heavenly Father, for, having forgiven as a judge, he then cures as a physician. He is all things to us, as our needs call for him, and our infirmities do but reveal him in new characters.

> "In him is only good,
> In me is only ill,
> My ill but draws his goodness forth,
> And me he loveth still."

God gives efficacy to medicine for the body, and his grace sanctifies the soul. Spiritually we are daily under his care, and he visits us, as the surgeon does his patient; *healing* still (for that is the exact word) each malady as it arises. No disease of our soul baffles his skill, he goes on healing *all*, and he will do so till the last trace of taint has gone from our nature. The two *alls* of this verse are further reasons for *all* that is within us praising the Lord.

The two blessings of this verse the Psalmist was personally enjoying, he sang not of others but of himself, or rather of his Lord, who was daily forgiving and healing him. He must have known that it was so, or he could not have sung of it. He had no doubt about it, he felt in his soul that it was so, and, therefore, he bade his pardoned and restored soul bless the Lord with all its might.

4. "*Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.*" By purchase and by power the Lord redeems us from the spiritual death into which we had fallen, and from the eternal death which would have been its consequence. Had not the death penalty of sin been removed, our forgiveness and healing would have been incomplete portions of salvation, fragments only, and but of small value, but the removal of the guilt and power of sin is fitly attended by the reversal of the sentence of death which had been passed upon us. Glory be to our great Substitute, who delivered us from going down into the pit, by giving himself to be our ransom. Redemption will ever constitute one of the sweetest notes in the believer's grateful song. "*Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.*" Our Lord does nothing by halves, he will not stay his hand till he has gone to the uttermost with his people. Cleansing, healing, redemption, are not enough, he must needs make them kings and crown them, and the crown must be far more precious than if it were made of corruptible things, such as silver and gold; it is studded with gems of grace and lined with the velvet of lovingkindness; it is decked with the jewels of mercy, but made soft for the head to wear by a lining of tenderness. Who is like unto thee, O Lord! God himself crowns the princes of his family, for their best things come from him directly and distinctly; they do not earn the crown, for it is of *mercy* not of merit; they feel their own unworthiness of it, therefore he deals with *tenderness;* but he is resolved to bless them, and, therefore, he is ever *crowning* them, always surrounding their brows with coronets of mercy and compassion. He always crowns the edifice which he commences, and where he gives pardon he gives acceptance too. "Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Our sin deprived us of all our honours, a bill of attainder was issued against us as traitors; but he who removed the sentence of death by redeeming us from destruction, restores to us more than all our former honours by crowning us anew. Shall God crown us and shall not we crown him? Up, my soul, and cast thy crown at his feet, and in lowliest reverence worship him, who has so greatly exalted thee, as to lift thee from the dunghill and set thee among princes.

5. "*Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things,*" or rather "filling with good thy soul." No man is ever filled to satisfaction but a believer, and only God himself can satisfy even him. Many a worldling is satiated, but not one is satisfied. God satisfies the very soul of man, his noblest part, his ornament and glory; and of consequence he satisfies his mouth, however hungry and craving it might otherwise be. Soul-satisfaction loudly calls for soul-praise, and when the mouth is filled with good it is bound to speak good of him who filled it. Our good Lord bestows really *good things*, not vain toys and idle pleasures; and these he is always giving, so that from moment to moment he is *satisfying* our soul with good: shall we not be still praising him? If we never cease to bless him till he ceases to bless us, our employment will be eternal. "*So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" Renewal of strength, amounting to a grant of a new lease of life, was granted to the Psalmist; he was so restored to his former self that he grew young again, and looked as vigorous as an eagle, whose eye can gaze upon the sun, and whose wing can mount above the storm. Our version refers to the annual moulting of the eagle, after which it looks fresh and young; but the original does not appear to allude to any such fact of natural history, but simply to describe the diseased one as so healed and strengthened, that he became as full of energy as the bird which is strongest of the feathered race, most fearless, most majestic, and most soaring. He who sat moping with the owl in the last Psalm, here flies on high with the eagle: the Lord works marvellous changes in us, and we learn by such experiences to bless his holy name. To grow from a sparrow to an eagle, and leave the wilderness of the pelican to mount among the stars, is enough to make any man cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Thus is the endless chain of grace complete. Sin is forgiven, its power subdued, and its penalty averted, then we are honoured, supplied, and our very nature renovated, till we are as new-born children in the household of God. O Lord, we must bless thee, and we will; as thou dost withhold nothing from us so we would not keep back from thy praise one solitary power of our nature, but with all our heart, and soul, and strength praise thy holy name.

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

12 As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.

15 *As for* man, his days *are* as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

17 But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

6. "*The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*" Our own personal obligations must not absorb our song; we must also magnify the Lord for his goodness to others. He does not leave the poor and needy to perish at the hands of their enemies, but interposes on their behalf, for he is the executor of the poor and the executioner of the cruel. When his people were in Egypt he heard their groanings and brought them forth, but he overthrew Pharaoh in the Red Sea. Man's injustice shall receive retribution at the hand of God. Mercy to his saints demands vengeance on their persecutors, and he will repay it. No blood of martyrs shall be shed in vain; no groans of confessors in prison shall be left without inquisition being made concerning them. *All* wrongs shall be righted, *all* the oppressed shall be avenged. Justice may at times leave the courts of man, but it abides upon the tribunal of God. For this every right-minded person will bless God. Were he careless of his creature's good, did he neglect the administration of justice, did he suffer high-handed oppressors finally to escape, we should have greater reason for trembling than rejoicing: it is not so, however, for our God is a God of justice, and by him actions are weighed; he will mete out his portion to the proud and make the tyrant bite the dust,—yea, often he visits the haughty persecutor even in this life, so that "the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth."

7. "*He made known his ways unto Moses.*" Moses was made to see the manner in which the Lord deals with men; he saw this in each of the three periods of his life, in the court, in retirement, and at the head of the tribes of Israel. To him the Lord gave specially clear manifestations of his dispensations and modes of ruling among mankind, granting to him to see more of God than had before been seen by mortal man, while he communed with him upon the mount. "*His acts unto the children of Israel.*" They saw less than Moses, for they beheld the deeds of God without understanding his method therein, yet this was much, very much, and might have been more if they had not been so perverse; the stint was not in the revelation, but in the hardness of their hearts. It is a great act of sovereign grace and condescending love when the Lord reveals himself to any people, and they ought to appreciate the distinguished favour shown to them. We, as believers in Jesus, know the Lord's *ways* of covenant grace, and we have by experience been made to see his *acts* of mercy towards us; how heartily ought we to praise our divine teacher, the Holy Spirit, who has made these things known to us, for had it not been for him

we should have continued in darkness unto this day. " Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world ? " Why hast thou made us " of the election who have obtained it " while the rest are blinded ?

Observe how prominent is the personality of God in all this gracious teaching— " *He* made known." He did not leave Moses to discover truth for himself, but became his instructor. What should we ever know if he did not make it known ? God alone can reveal himself. If Moses needed the Lord to make him known, how much more do we who are so much inferior to the great law-giver ?

8. " *The Lord is merciful and gracious.*" Those with whom he deals are sinners. However much he favours them they are guilty and need mercy at his hands, nor is he slow to compassionate their lost estate, or reluctant by his grace to lift them out of it. Mercy pardons sin, grace bestows favour ; in both the Lord abounds. This is that way of his which he made known to Moses (Ex. xxxiv. 6), and in that way he will abide as long as the age of grace shall last, and men are yet in this life. He who " executeth righteousness and judgment," yet delighteth in mercy. " *Slow to anger.*" He can be angry, and can deal out righteous indignation upon the guilty, but it is his strange work ; he lingers long, with loving pauses, tarrying by the way to give space for repentance and opportunity for accepting his mercy. Thus deals he with the greatest sinners, and with his own children much more so : towards them his anger is shortlived and never reaches into eternity, and when it is shown in fatherly chastisements he does not afflict willingly, and soon pities their sorrows. From this we should learn to be ourselves slow to anger ; if the Lord is longsuffering under our great provocations how much more ought we to endure the errors of our brethren ! " *And plenteous in mercy.*" Rich in it, quick in it, overflowing with it ; and so had he need to be or we should soon be consumed. He is God, and not man, or our sins would soon drown his love ; yet above the mountains of our sins the floods of his mercy rise.

" Plenteous grace with thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin ;
Let the healing streams abound ;
Make and keep me pure within."

All the world tastes of his sparing mercy, those who hear the gospel partake of his inviting mercy, the saints live by his saving mercy, are preserved by his upholding mercy, are cheered by his consoling mercy, and will enter heaven through his infinite and everlasting mercy. Let grace abounding be our hourly song in the house of our pilgrimage. Let those who feel that they live upon it glorify the plenteous fountain from which it so spontaneously flows.

9. " *He will not always chide.*" He will sometimes, for he cannot endure that his people should harbour sin in their hearts, but not for ever will he chasten them ; as soon as they turn to him and forsake their evil ways he will end the quarrel. He might find constant cause for striving with us, for we have always something in us which is contrary to his holy mind, but he refrains himself lest our spirits should fail before him. It will be profitable for any one of us who may be at this time out of conscious fellowship with the Lord, to inquire at his hands the reason for his anger, saying, " Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me ? " For he is easily entreated of, and soon ceaseth from his wrath. When his children turn from their sins he soon turns from his chidings. " *Neither will he keep his anger for ever.*" He bears no grudges. The Lord would not have his people harbour resentments, and in his own course of action he sets them a grand example. When the Lord has chastened his child he has done with his anger : he is not punishing as a judge, else might his wrath burn on, but he is acting as a father, and, therefore, after a few blows he ends the matter, and presses his beloved one to his bosom as if nothing had happened ; or if the offence lies too deep in the offender's nature to be thus overcome, he continues to correct, but he never ceases to love, and he does not suffer his anger with his people to pass into the next world, but receives his erring child into his glory.

10. " *He hath not dealt with us after our sins ; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*" Else had Israel perished outright, and we also had long ago been consigned to the lowest hell. We ought to praise the Lord for what he has not done as well as for what he has wrought for us ; even the negative side deserves our adoring gratitude. Up to this moment, at our very worst estate, we have never suffered as we deserved to suffer ; our daily lot has not been apportioned upon the rule of what we merited, but on the far different measure of undeserved kindness.

Shall we not bless the Lord? Every power of our being might have been rent with anguish, instead of which we are all in the enjoyment of comparative happiness, and many of us are exceedingly favoured with inward joy; let then every faculty, yea, all that is within us, bless his holy name.

11. "*For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*" Boundless in extent towards his chosen is the mercy of the Lord; it is no more to be measured than the height of heaven or the heaven of heavens. "*Like the height of the heaven*" is the original language, which implies other points of comparison besides extent, and suggests sublimity, grandeur, and glory. As the lofty heavens canopy the earth, water it with dews and rains, enlighten it with sun, moon, and stars, and look down upon it with unceasing watchfulness, even so the Lord's mercy from above covers all his chosen, enriches them, embraces them, and stands for ever as their dwelling-place. The idea of our version is a very noble one, for who shall tell how exceeding great is the height of heaven? Who can reach the first of the fixed stars, and who can measure the utmost bounds of the starry universe? Yet so great is his mercy! Oh, that great little word so! All this mercy is for "*them that fear him;*" there must be a humble, hearty reverence of his authority, or we cannot taste of his grace. Godly fear is one of the first products of the divine life in us, it is the beginning of wisdom, yet it fully ensures to its possessor all the benefits of divine mercy, and is, indeed, here and elsewhere, employed to set forth the whole of true religion. Many a true child of God is full of filial fear, and yet at the same time stands trembling as to his acceptance with God; this trembling is groundless, but it is infinitely to be preferred to that baseborn presumption, which incites men to boast of their adoption and consequent security, when all the while they are in the gall of bitterness. Those who are presuming upon the infinite extent of divine mercy, should here be led to consider that although it is wide as the horizon and high as the stars, yet it is only meant for them that fear the Lord, and as for obstinate rebels, they shall have justice without mercy measured out to them.

12. "*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*" O glorious verse, no word even upon the inspired page can excel it! Sin is removed from us by a miracle of love! What a load to move, and yet is it removed so far that the distance is incalculable. Fly as far as the wing of imagination can bear you, and if you journey through space eastward, you are further from the west at every beat of your wing. If sin be removed so far, then we may be sure that the scent, the trace, the very memory of it must be entirely gone. If this be the distance of its removal, there is no shade of fear of its ever being brought back again; even Satan himself could not achieve such a task. Our sins are gone, Jesus has borne them away. Far as the place of sunrise is removed from yonder west, where the sun sinks when his day's journey is done, so far were our sins carried by our scapegoat nineteen centuries ago, and now if they be sought for, they shall not be found, yea, they shall not be, saith the Lord. Come, my soul, awaken thyself thoroughly and glorify the Lord for this richest of blessings. Hallelujah. The Lord alone could remove sin at all, and he has done it in a godlike fashion, making a final sweep of all our transgressions.

13. "*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*" To those who truly reverence his holy name, the Lord is a father and acts as such. These he pities, for in the very best of men the Lord sees much to pity, and when they are at their best state they still need his compassion. This should check every propensity to pride, though at the same time it should yield us the richest comfort. Fathers feel for their children, especially when they are in pain, they would like to suffer in their stead, their sighs and groans cut them to the quick: thus sensitive towards us is our heavenly Father. We do not adore a god of stone, but the living God, who is tenderness itself. He is at this moment compassionating us, for the word is in the present tense; his pity never fails to flow, and we never cease to need it.

14. "*For he knoweth our frame.*" He knows how we are made, for he made us. Our make and build, our constitution and temperament, our prevailing infirmity and most besetting temptation he well perceives, for he searches our inmost nature. "*He remembereth that we are dust.*" Made of dust, dust still, and ready to return to dust. We have sometimes heard of "the Iron Duke," and of iron constitutions, but the words are soon belied, for the Iron Duke is dissolved, and other men of like vigour are following to the grave, where "dust to dust" is an appropriate requiem. We too often forget that we are dust, and try our minds and bodies unduly by ex-

cessive mental and bodily exertion, we are also too little mindful of the infirmities of others, and impose upon them burdens grievous to be borne ; but our heavenly Father never overloads us, and never fails to give us strength equal to our day, because he always takes our frailty into account when he is apportioning to us our lot. Blessed be his holy name for this gentleness towards his frail creatures.

15. *" As for man, his days are as grass."* He lives on the grass and lives like the grass. Corn is but educated grass, and man, who feeds on it, partakes of its nature. The grass lives, grows, flowers, falls beneath the scythe, dries up, and is removed from the field : read this sentence over again, and you will find it the history of man. If he lives out his little day, he is cut down at last, and it is far more likely that he will wither before he comes to maturity, or be plucked away on a sudden, long before he has fulfilled his time. *" As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth."* He has a beauty and a comeliness even as the meadows have when they are yellow with the king-cups, but, alas, how shortlived ! No sooner come than gone, a flash of loveliness and no more ! Man is not even like a flower in the conservatory or in the sheltered garden border, he grows best according to nature, as the field-flower does, and like the unprotected beautifier of the pasture, he runs a thousand risks of coming to a speedy end. A large congregation, in many-coloured attire, always reminds us of a meadow bright with many hues ; and the comparison becomes sadly true when we reflect, that as the grass and its goodliness soon pass away, even so will those we gaze upon, and all their visible beauty. Thus, too, must it be with all that comes of the flesh, even its greatest excellencies and natural virtues, for " that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and therefore is but as grass which withers if but a breath of wind assails it. Happy are they who, born from above, have in them an incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.

16. *" For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone."* Only a little wind is needed, not even a scythe is demanded, a breath can do it, for the flower is so frail.

> " If one sharp wind sweep o'er the field,
> It withers in an hour."

How small a portion of deleterious gas suffices to create a deadly fever, which no art of man can stay. No need of sword or bullet, a puff of foul air is deadlier far, and fails not to lay low the healthiest and most stalwart son of man. *" And the place thereof shall know it no more."* The flower blooms no more. It may have a successor, but as for itself its leaves are scattered, and its perfume will never again sweeten the evening air. Man also dies and is gone, gone from his old haunts, his dear home, and his daily labours, never to return. As far as this world is concerned, he is as though he ne'er had been ; the sun rises, the moon increases or wanes, summer and winter run their round, the rivers flow, and all things continue in their courses as though they missed him not, so little a figure does he make in the affairs of nature. Perhaps a friend will note that he is gone, and say,

> " One morn, I miss'd him on the accustom'd hill.
> Along the heath, and near his favourite tree ;
> Another came, nor yet beside the rill,
> Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he."

But when the " dirges due " are silent, beyond a mound of earth, and perhaps a crumbling stone, how small will be the memorial of our existence upon this busy scene ! True there are more enduring memories, and an existence of another kind coeval with eternity, but these belong, not to our flesh, which is but grass, but to a higher life, in which we rise to close fellowship with the Eternal.

17. *" But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him."* Blessed *but !* How vast the contrast between the fading flower and the everlasting God ! How wonderful that his mercy should link our frailty with his eternity, and make us everlasting too ! From old eternity the Lord viewed his people as objects of mercy, and as such chose them to become partakers of his grace ; the doctrine of eternal election is most delightful to those who have light to see it and love wherewith to accept it. It is a theme for deepest thought and highest joy. The *" to everlasting "* is equally precious. Jehovah changes not, he has mercy without end as well as without beginning. Never will those who fear him find that either their sins or their needs have exhausted the great deep of his grace. The main question is, " Do we *fear him* ? " If we are lifting up to heaven the eye of filial fear, the gaze of

paternal love is never removed from us, and it never will be, world without end. "*And his righteousness unto children's children.*" Mercy to those with whom the Lord makes a covenant is guaranteed by *righteousness;* it is because he is just that he never revokes a promise, or fails to fulfil it. Our believing sons and their seed for ever will find the word of the Lord the same; to them will he display his grace and bless them even as he has blessed us. Let us sing, then, for posterity. The past commands our praise and the future invites it. For our descendants let us sing as well as pray. If Abraham rejoiced concerning his seed, so also may the godly, for "instead of the fathers shall be the children," and as the last Psalm told us in its concluding verse, "the children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."

18. Children of the righteous are not, however, promised the Lord's mercy without stipulation, and this verse completes the statement of the last by adding: "*To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*" The parents must be obedient and the children too. We are here bidden to abide by the covenant, and those who run off to any other confidence than the finished work of Jesus are not among those who obey this precept; those with whom the covenant is really made stand firm to it, and having begun in the Spirit, they do not seek to be made perfect in the flesh. The truly godly keep the Lord's commands carefully—they "*remember*"; they observe them practically—"*to do them*": moreover they do not pick and choose, but remember "*his commandments*" as such, without exalting one above another as their own pleasure or convenience may dictate. May our offspring be a thoughtful, careful, observant race, eager to know the will of the Lord, and prompt to follow it fully, then will his mercy enrich and honour them from generation to generation.

This verse also suggests praise, for who would wish the Lord to smile on those who will not regard his ways? That were to encourage vice. From the manner in which some men unguardedly preach the covenant, one might infer that God would bless a certain set of men however they might live, and however they might neglect his laws. But the word teaches not so. The covenant is not legal, but it is holy. It is all of grace from first to last, yet it is no panderer to sin; on the contrary, one of its greatest promises is, "I will put my laws in their hearts and in their minds will I write them"; its general aim is the sanctifying of a people unto God, zealous for good works, and all its gifts and operations work in that direction. Faith keeps the covenant by looking alone to Jesus, while at the same time by earnest obedience it remembers the Lord's commandments to do them.

19. "*The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens.*" Here is a grand burst of song produced by a view of the boundless power, and glorious sovereignty of Jehovah. His throne is *fixed*, for that is the word; it is established, settled, immovable.

> "He sits on no precarious throne,
> Nor borrows leave to be."

About his government there is no alarm, no disorder, no perturbation, no hurrying to and fro in expedients, no surprises to be met or unexpected catastrophes to be warded off;—all is prepared and fixed, and he himself has prepared and fixed it. He is no delegated sovereign for whom a throne is set up by another; he is an autocrat, and his dominion arises from himself and is sustained by his own innate power. This matchless sovereignty is the pledge of our security, the pillar upon which our confidence may safely lean.

"*And his kingdom ruleth over all.*" Over the whole universe he stretches his sceptre. He now reigns universally, he always has done so, and he always will. To us the world may seem rent with anarchy, but he brings order out of confusion. The warring elements are marching beneath his banner when they most wildly rush onward in furious tempest. Great and small, intelligent and material, willing and unwilling, fierce or gentle,—all, all are under his sway. His is the only universal monarchy, he is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. A clear view of his ever active, and everywhere supreme providence, is one of the most delightful of spiritual gifts; he who has it cannot do otherwise than bless the Lord with all his soul.

Thus has the sweet singer hymned the varied attributes of the Lord as seen in nature, grace, and providence, and now he gathers up all his energies for one final

outburst of adoration, in which he would have all unite, since all are subjects of the Great King.

20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

21 Bless ye the LORD, all *ye* his hosts; *ye* ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

20. "*Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength.*" Finding his work of praise growing upon his hands, he calls upon "the firstborn sons of light" to speak the praises of the Lord, as well they may, for as Milton says, they best can tell. Dwelling nearer to that prepared throne than we as yet have leave to climb, they see in nearer vision the glory which we would adore. To them is given an exceeding might of intellect, and voice, and force which they delight to use in sacred services for him; let them now turn all their strength into that solemn song which we would send up to the third heaven. To him who gave angelic strength let all angelic strength be given. They are *his* angels, and therefore they are not loth to ring out his praises. "*That do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.*" We are bidden to do these commandments, and alas we fail; let those unfallen spirits, whose bliss it is never to have transgressed, give to the Lord the glory of their holiness. They hearken for yet more commands, obeying as much by reverent listening as by energetic action, and in this they teach us how the heavenly will should evermore be done; yet even for this surpassing excellence let them take no praise, but render all to him who has made and kept them what they are. O that we could hear them chant the high praises of God, as did the shepherds on that greatest of all birth nights—

> "When such music sweet
> Their hearts and ears did greet
> As never was by mortal finger struck;
> Divinely-warbled voice
> Answering the stringèd noise,
> As well their souls in blissful rapture took:
> The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
> With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close."

Our glad heart anticipates the hour when we shall hear them "harping in loud and solemn guise," and all to the sole praise of God.

21. "*Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts;*" to whatever race of creatures ye may belong, for ye are all his troops, and he is the Generallissimo of all your armies. The fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, should all unite in praising their Creator, after the best of their ability. "*Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure*"; in whatever way ye serve him, bless him as ye serve. The Psalmist would have every servant in the Lord's palace unite with him, and all at once sing out the praises of the Lord. We have attached a new sense to the word "ministers" in these latter days, and so narrowed it down to those who serve in word and doctrine. Yet no true minister would wish to alter it, for we are above all men bound to be the Lord's servants, and we would, beyond all other ministering intelligences or forces, desire to bless the glorious Lord.

22. "*Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion.*" Here is a trinity of blessing for the thrice blessed God, and each one of the three blessings is an enlargement upon that which went before. This is the most comprehensive of all, for what can be a wider call than to all in all places? See how finite man can awaken unbounded praise! Man is but little, yet, placing his hands upon the keys of the great organ of the universe, he wakes it to thunders of adoration! Redeemed man is the voice of nature, the priest in the temple of creation, the precentor in the worship of the universe. O that all the Lord's works on earth were delivered from the vanity to which they were made subject, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God: the time is hastening on and will most surely come; then will all the Lord's works bless him indeed. The immutable promise is ripening, the sure mercy is on its way. Hasten ye winged hours!

"*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" He closes on his key-note. He cannot be content

to call on others without taking his own part; nor because others sing more loudly and perfectly, will he be content to be set aside. O my soul, come home to thyself and to thy God, and let the little world within thee keep time and tune to the spheres which are ringing out Jehovah's praise. O infinitely blessed Lord, favour us with this highest blessing of being for ever and ever wholly engrossed in blessing thee.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—*A Psalm of David*, which he wrote when carried out of himself as far as heaven, saith Beza.—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm.—How often have saints in Scotland sung this Psalm in days when they celebrated the *Lord's Supper!* It is thereby specially known in our land. It is connected also with a remarkable case in the days of John Knox. Elizabeth Adamson, a woman who attended on his preaching, "because he more fully opened the fountain of God's mercies than others did," was led to Christ and to rest, on hearing this Psalm, after enduring such agony of soul that she said, concerning racking pains of body, "A thousand years of this torment, and ten times more joined, are not to be compared to a quarter of an hour of my soul's trouble." She asked for this Psalm again before departing: "It was in receiving it that my troubled soul first tasted God's mercy, which is now sweeter to me than if all the kingdoms of the earth were given me to possess."—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—The number of verses in this Psalm is that of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; and the completeness of the whole is further testified by its return at the close to the words with which it started, "Bless the LORD, O my soul."—*J. F. Thrupp.*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm, in regard to number, is an alphabetical one, harmonised in such a way as that the concluding turns back into the introductory verse, the whole being in this manner finished and rounded off. In like manner, the name Jehovah occurs eleven times. The Psalm is divided into two strophes, the first of ten and the second of twelve verses. The ten is divided by the five, and the twelve falls into three divisions, each of four verses. Jehovah occurs in the first strophe four, and in the second seven times.

The Psalm bears the character of quiet tenderness. It is a still clear brook of the praise of God. In accordance with this, we find that the verses are of equal length as to structure, and consist regularly of two members. It is only at the conclusion, where the tone rises, that the verses become longer: the vessel is too small for the feeling.

The testimony which the *title* bears on behalf of the composition of the Psalm by David, is confirmed by the fact that the Psalm in passages, the independence of which cannot be mistaken, bears a striking resemblance to the other Psalms of David, and by the connection with Psalm cii. David here teaches his posterity to *render thanks*, as in the previous Psalm he had taught them to *pray:* the deliverance from deep distress which formed there the subject of prayer, forms here the subject of thanks.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Whole Psalm.—It is observable that no petition occurs throughout the entire compass of these twenty-two verses. Not a single word of supplication is in the whole Psalm addressed to the Most High. Prayer, fervent, heartfelt prayer, had doubtless been previously offered on the part of the Psalmist, and answered by his God. Innumerable blessings had been showered down from above in acknowledgment of David's supplications; and, therefore, an overflowing gratitude now bursts forth from their joyful recipient. He touches every chord of his harp and of his heart together, and pours forth a spontaneous melody of sweetest sound and purest praise. —*John Stevenson, in "Gratitude: an Exposition of the Hundred and Third Psalm,"* 1856.

Verse 1.—"*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" O how well they are fitted! for what work so fit for my soul as this? Who so fit for this work as my soul? My body, God

knows, is gross and heavy, and very unfit for so sublime a work. No, my soul, it is thou must do it; and indeed what hast thou else to do? it is the very work for which thou wert made, and O that thou wert as fit to do the work as the work is fit for thee to do! But, alas, thou art become in a manner earthy, at least hast lost a great part of thy abilities, and will never be able to go through with this great work thyself alone. If to bless the Lord were no more but to say, Lord, Lord, like to them that cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord;" then my tongue alone would be sufficient for it, and I should not need to trouble any other about it; but to bless the Lord is an eminent work, and requires not only many but very able agents to perform it; and therefore, my soul, when thou goest about it, go not alone; but, take with thee "*all that is within thee*;" all the forces in my whole magazine, whether it be my heart, or my spirits; whether my will, or my affections; whether my understanding, or my memory; take them all with thee, and bless the Lord.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 1.—"*All that is within me.*" The literal translation of the form here used is *my insides* or *inner parts*, the strong and comprehensive meaning of the plural being further enhanced by the addition of *all*, as if to preclude exception and reserve, and comprehend within the scope of the address all the powers and affections.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"*All that is within me*," etc. Let your *conscience* "bless the Lord" by unvarying fidelity. Let your *judgment* bless him, by decisions in accordance with his word. Let your *imagination* bless him, by pure and holy musings. Let your *affections* praise him, by loving whatsoever he loves. Let your *desires* bless him, by seeking only his glory. Let your *memory* bless him, by not forgetting any of his benefits. Let your *thoughts* bless him, by meditating on his excellencies. Let your *hope* praise him, by longing and looking for the glory that is to be revealed. Let your every *sense* bless him by its fealty, your every *word* by its truth, and your every *act* by its integrity.—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 1.—"*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" You have often heard, that when God is said to bless men, and they on the other hand are excited to bless him, the word is taken in two very different senses. God is the only fountain of being and happiness, from which all good ever flows; and hence he is said to bless his creatures when he bestows mercies and favours upon them, gives them any endowments of body and mind, delivers them from evils, and is the source of their present comforts and future hopes. But in this sense, you'll see there is no possibility of any creature's blessing God; for as his infinite and unblemished perfection renders him incapable of receiving any higher excellency, or improvement in happiness; so, could we put the supposition that this immense ocean of good might be increased, it is plain that we, who receive our very being and everything that we have or are from him, could in no case contribute thereto. To *bless* God, then, is, with an ardent affection humbly to acknowledge those divine excellencies, which render him the best and greatest of beings, the only object worthy of the highest adoration; it is to give him the praise of all those glorious attributes which adorn his nature, and are so conspicuously manifested in his works and ways. To bless God, is to embrace every proper opportunity of owning our veneration and esteem of his excellent greatness, and to declare to all about us, as loudly as we can, the goodness and grace of his conduct towards men, and our infinite obligations for all our enjoyments to him, *in whom we live, move, and have our being.* And a right *blessing of God* must take its rise from a heart that is full of esteem and gratitude, which puts life into the songs of praise.

And then, of all others, the most lively and acceptable method of blessing God, is a holy conversation and earnest endeavour to be purified from all iniquity; for blessing of God consists, as I told you, in adoring his excellencies, and expressing our esteem and veneration of them: but what can be so effectual a way of doing this, as the influence that the views of them have upon our lives? That person best exalts the glory of the divine power, who fears God above all, and trembles at the apprehensions of his wrath; and of his justice, who flees from sin, which exposes him to the inexorable severity thereof; and of his love, who is softened thereby into grateful returns of obedience; and then we celebrate his holiness, when we endeavour to imitate it in our lives, and abandon everything that is an abomination to the eyes of his purity. —*William Dunlop*, 1692—1720.

Verse 1.—"*O my soul.*" God's eye is chiefly upon the soul: bring a hundred dishes to table, he will carve of none but this; this is the savoury meat he loves. He who is best, will be served with the best; when we give him the soul in a duty, then

we give him the flower and the cream; by a holy chemistry we still out the spirits. A soul inflamed in service is the cup of "spiced wine of the juice of the pomegranate" (Cant. viii. 2) which the spouse makes Christ to drink of.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 1.—"*Bless his holy name.*" The *name* of God frequently signifies his nature and attributes, in Scripture. Now, *holiness* is the glory of this name; the purity of God is that which beautifies all his perfections, and renders them worthy to be praised. His eternity, and knowledge, and power, without justice, and goodness, and truth, might indeed frighten and confound us; but could not inflame our love, or engage us to hearty blessing. But when infinite mightiness, and unerring wisdom, and eternal dominion, are mixed with unchangeable love, and inviolable veracity and goodness, which exalts itself above all his works; when thus it becomes a *holy name*, then the divine perfections are rendered truly amiable, and suitable objects of our hope and confidence and loudest songs; so that you see how elegantly the Psalmist upon this occasion mentions the purity of God: "*Bless his holy name.*"

And besides this, there is indeed nothing that more exalts the glory of divine grace and of redeeming love towards a soul, than the consideration of *God's holiness;* for if your Maker were not *of purer eyes than man is*, yea, if his hatred to sin, and love to righteousness, were not greater than that of the noblest angel, his pardoning of sin, and patience towards transgressors would not be such a wonderful condescension; but is his name infinitely holy so that "*the heavens are not clean in his sight?*" Is the smallest iniquity the abhorrence of his soul, and what he hates with a perfect hatred? Surely, then, his grace and love must be incomparably greater than our thoughts.—*William Dunlop.*

Verses 1, 2.—The well is seldom so full that water will at first pumping flow forth; neither is the heart commonly so spiritual, after our best care in our worldly converse (much less when we somewhat overdo therein) as to pour itself into God's bosom freely, without something to raise and elevate it; yea, often, the springs of grace lie so low, that pumping only will not fetch the heart up to a praying frame, but arguments must be poured into the soul before the affections rise. Hence are those soliloquies and discourses which we find holy men use with their own hearts to bring them into a gracious temper, suitable for communion with God in ordinances. It seems [by these verses] David either found or feared his heart would not be in so good a frame as he desired; consequently he redoubles his charge: he found his heart somewhat drowsy, which made him thus rouse himself.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 1—3.—The Psalmist's gratitude here has four attributes. The first is *personal.* "Bless the Lord, *my soul.*" He has the self-same application in the close of the Psalm, after he has called on others to do this work. Our religion must be social as well as personal: but while it must not end at home, it must begin at home; and relative religion, without personal, will always be found wanting in excitement, in energy, in extent, in continuance, and very commonly in success. Secondly, it is *fervent.* "*And all that is within me, bless his holy name*"—all my thoughts, my feelings, my understanding, my will, my memory, my conscience, my affections, my passions.

> "If there be passions in my soul,
> (And passions, Lord, there be);
> Let them be all at thy control,
> My gracious Lord, for thee."

Thirdly, it is *rational*, and demanded by the facts of his past life. Therefore "forget not all his benefits." Nothing can properly affect or influence us when it is out of our recollection. "Out of sight out of mind"; and out of mind, out of motive. Whence arose the ingratitude of the Jews of old? Bad memories. "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten the God that formed thee." "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." It should therefore be your concern, not only to recall your mercies, but to reckon them. Lastly, it is *specific:* "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.*" When all the words in a discourse are emphatic, nothing is emphatic, when we dwell on everything, we dwell on nothing effectively. We are more struck, in a landscape, with a selected point of vision for inspection, than by the general prospect. David was a poet, and understood poetry well; and poetry differs from philosophy. The one seeks to rise from particular facts and instances, to establish general principles and rules: the other is always for

descending from generalization to particularization ; and much of its beauty and force arises from individualities.—*William Jay*, 1849.

Verse 2.—"*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" David found some dulness and drowsiness ; hence he so often puts the thorn to his breast ; hence he so impetuously instigateth his soul, as one here phraseth it.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*Forget not.*" This touches the secret spring of so much ingratitude —forgetfulness, the want of re-collection, or gathering together again of all the varied threads of mercy. Compare Deut. vi. 12 ; viii. 11, 14. "*Si oblivisceris, tacebis*" (If thou forgettest, thou wilt be silent).—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 2.—"*Forget not all his benefits.*" That is, forget not any of his benefits, as the form of speech in the original doth import.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"*Benefits.*" The word rendered "benefits"—גְּמוּל, *gemul*, means properly an act, work, doing, whether good or evil, Ps. cxxxvii. 8 ; and then, *desert*, or what a man deserves *for* his act ; *recompense*. It is rendered *deserving* in Judges ix. 16 ; *benefit*, as here, in 2 Chron. xxxii. 25 ; *desert*, Ps. xxviii. 4 ; *reward*, Ps. xciv. 2 ; Isai. iii. 11 ; Obad. 15 ; *recompense*, Prov. xii. 14 ; Isai. xxxv. 4 ; lix. 18 ; lxvi. 6 ; Jer. li. 6 ; Lam. iii. 64 ; Joel. iii. 4, 7. The proper reference here is to the Divine *dealings*, to what God had *done*, as a reason for blessing his name. His *dealings* with the Psalmist had been such as to call for praise and gratitude. What those *dealings* particularly were he specifies in the following verses.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 3.—"*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*" Thine iniquities are more than can be numbered ; and they are an intolerable burden, so that thy soul under them "can in no wise lift up herself." He forgiveth them *all*. He relieveth thee of *all*. He taketh the dreadful burden from thy back, the galling yoke from thy neck, and makes thee free. . . . Thine iniquities are in-equities. There is nothing just or right in thee. Thy very nature is an in-equity, bringing forth nothing but in-equities. In-equities towards thy God, in-equities towards thy neighbour, and in-equities towards thyself, make up the whole of thy life. Thou art a bad tree, and a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit.—*John Pulsford, in "Quiet Hours,"* 1857.

Verse 3.—"*All thine iniquities.*" In this lovely and well-known Psalm, we have great fulness of expression, in reference to the vital subject of redemption.

"Who forgiveth *all* thine iniquities." It is not "*some*" or "*many* of thine iniquities." This would never do. If so much as the very smallest iniquity, in thought, word, or act, were left unforgiven, we should be just as badly off, just as far from God, just as unfit for heaven, just as exposed to hell, as though the whole weight of our sins were yet upon us. Let the reader ponder this deeply. It does not say, "Who forgiveth thine iniquities previous to conversion." There is no such notion as this in Scripture. When God forgives, he forgives like himself. The source, the channel, the power, and the standard of forgiveness are all divine. When God cancels a man's sins, he does so according to the measure in which Christ bore those sins. Now, Christ not only bore *some* or *many* of the believer's sins, he bore them "all," and, therefore, God forgives "*all*." God's forgiveness stretches to the length of Christ's atonement ; and Christ's atonement stretches to the length of every one of the believer's sins, past, present, and future. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all* sin." 1 John i.—"*Things New and Old*," 1858.

Verse 3.—"*Who healeth all thy diseases.*" In one of the prisons of a certain country, was a man who had committed high treason : for this crime he was in due time tried, and, being found guilty, was condemned to die. But more than this ; he was afflicted with an inward disease, which generally proves mortal. Now we may truly say, that this man is *doubly* dead ; that his life is forfeited twice over : the laws of his country have pronounced him guilty of death, and therefore his life is forfeited *once* to the laws of his country, and, if he had not died in *this* way, he must die of his disease ; he is, therefore, "twice dead." Now suppose that the sovereign of that country had made up his mind to wish to save that prisoner's life, *could* he save it ? He could indeed take off the penalty of the law ; he could give him a free pardon, and so restore the life, as sure as it is forfeited by the just sentence of the law ; but, unless he could also send a physician, who could cure the man of his disease, he would die by *that*, and his pardon would only lengthen out for a few weeks or months, a miserable existence. And if this disease were not only a mortal disease, but an *infectious* one, likely to spread itself by the *breath* of the patient, and a *contagious* one, likely to spread by the *touch* of the patient's body or clothes, then it

would be dangerous to others to come near that man; and unless he were cured, and thoroughly and entirely cured, the man, though pardoned, would still be a fit inmate only for the pest-house, and could not be received into the houses of the healthy. You have *seen* such a case as this, brethren; you are at this very moment, perhaps, sitting close by a person in this case; yes, and perhaps you are in this very case yourself! *Perhaps*, do I say? I should say, you ARE in this very case, unless you are really and truly a Christian, a believer in Christ Jesus.—*W. Weldon Champneys*, 1842.

Verse 3.—"*All thy diseases.*" The body experienceth the melancholy consequences of Adam's offence, and is subject to many infirmities; but the soul is subject to as many. What is pride, but lunacy; what is anger, but a fever; what is avarice, but a dropsy; what is lust, but a leprosy; what is sloth, but a dead palsy? Perhaps, there are spiritual maladies similar to all corporeal ones.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—"*All thy diseases.*" O my soul, consider the multitude of infirmities, to which thou art subject; thou hast many suggestions of the flesh; and thou art apt to yield unto them, and strivest not against them by earnest prayer and holy meditations; this is an infirmity. In thy prayers to God, thy thoughts are often wandering, and thou thinkest of other matters, far unworthy of that great Majesty to whom thou prayest: or if not so, yet thou art quickly weary, thy spirits are drowsy in it, and thou hadst rather be doing of something else; this is an infirmity. And indeed thou hast infirmities in all thy senses. In thy seeing, thou canst see a mote in thy brother's eye, and canst not see a beam in thine own eye. In thy smelling, thou thinkest *suavis odor lucri ex re qualibet*, that the savour of gain is sweet, from whence soever it rise. In thy hearing, thou art gladder to hear the profane and idle discourses, than such as be serious and holy; these are thy infirmities: and, O my soul, if I should cut thee up into as many parts as an anatomist, and examine the infirmities of every part, should I not have cause, just cause, to cry out with Saint Paul, O wretch that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin? Who shall heal me of all these infirmities? for whether we call them sins, and then God forgives them; or call them infirmities, and then he heals them; they are to us, all one benefit; in God, all one kindness; that as either of them is well worth remembering; so for both of them, we have just cause to bless him and to praise his name.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*All thy diseases.*" Our *understandings* are so bad that they understand not their own badness; our *wills*, which are the queens of our souls, become the vassals of sin; our *memory*, like jet, good only to draw straws and treasure up trifles of no moment; our *consciences*, through errors in our own understanding, sometimes accusing us when we are innocent, sometimes acquitting us when we are guilty; our *affections* all disaffected and out of order. Must not that needs be a monstrous face, wherein the blueness which should be in the veins is in the lips, the redness which should be in the cheeks, in the nose; the hair that should grow on the head, on the face? and must not our souls needs seem ugly in the sight of God, who have grief growing there where joy should, and joy where grief should? We love what we should hate and hate where we should love; we fear where no fear is, and fear not where we ought to fear; and all our affections either mistake their object, or exceed their due measure.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 4.—"*Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.*" From his earliest days the Psalmist was the child of Providence. Many were the hairbreadth escapes, and the wonderful deliverances, which he experienced. Dangers of various kinds presented themselves as his years advanced. The jaw of the lion, and the paw of the bear, at various times threatened to terminate his existence, and at others the ruthless hand of man. The same God who delivered him from the sword of Goliath, rescued his life from the javelin of Saul. The Almighty Friend who had covered his head in the day of battle, delivered him, at one moment, from the lords of the Philistines, saved him at another out of the hands of the men of Keilah; and again preserved to him his life and throne from the unnatural rebellion of his own son. Well, therefore, might the Psalmist stir up his soul, and all that was within him, to bless the Lord with most fervent gratitude, who, by so many signal deliverances, had "*redeemed his life from destruction.*"—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 4.—"*Who redeemeth.*" Preservation from destruction, גואל *haggoel*, properly, *redemption of life by the kinsman*; possibly looking forward, in the spirit of prophecy,

to him who became partaker of our flesh and blood, that he might have the right to redeem our souls from death by dying in our stead.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 4.—"*From the pit,*" including death, the grave, Hades. The Targum renders "from Gehenna."—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 4.—"*Tender mercies.*" I do not know that I can do better than tell you a little incident that took place in my native town of Stirling. Workmen were blasting the castle rock, near where it abuts upon a walk that lies open to the street. The train was laid and lit, and an explosion was momentarily expected. Suddenly trotting round the great wall of the cliff, came a little child going straight to where the match burned. The men shouted—(it was *mercy*)—and by their very terror in shouting, alarmed and bewildered the poor little thing. By this time the mother also had come round: in a moment saw the danger; opened wide her arms, and cried from her very heart, "*Come to me, my darling,*"—(that was *tender* mercy)—and instantly, with eager pattering feet, and little arms opened to her arms, and tear-filled eyes answering to her eyes—the little thing ran back and away, and stopped not until she was clasped in her mother's bosom—wealth of sunny hair loosened on it, and lips coral red pressed to mother's pallid lip of fear—as the motherly heart gave way to tears, in the thought of so imperilled an escape: for it was barely by a second, as the roar of the shattered rock told.—*Alexander B. Grosart, in "The Pastor an Helper of Joy,"* 1865.

Verse 5.—"*Who satisfieth thy mouth.*" The word rendered "*mouth*" is עֶדְיֵךְ, which is rendered *ornaments* in our version in all other passages—eleven in number—where it occurs, except here and in xxxii. 9, where it is rendered "*mouth;*" and even there it ought properly to be translated *ornament,* and here the sense seems to be *thy ornament,* that which is thy glory, thy spirit, xvi. 9; lxii. 8. It is true that the soul (נַפְשִׁי) is here addressed (see v. 1); but the spirit may be called the *ornament* or *glory* of the *soul.—Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—"*Satisfieth thy mouth.*" Kimchi understands the phrase as expressing David's recovery from sickness. In sickness the soul abhorreth bread, and even dainty meat, Job xxxiii. 20. The physician, too, limits the diet of the patient, and prescribes things which are nauseous to the palate. The commentator, therefore, supposes that David here describes the blessing of health, by *his mouth being filled with good things.—Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 5.—"*Satisfieth.*" God can so satisfy the soul, that each chink and cranny therein shall be filled with spiritual joy.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 5.—"*With good things.*" Mark, what does the Lord satisfy with?—"*good* things." Not *rich* things, not *many* things, not *everything* I ask for, but "*good* things." All my *need* fully supplied, and everything "*good.*" Goodness is God expressed. All his blessings partake of his own nature. They are holy blessings, holy mercies. Everything that *satisfies* must have the nature of God in it. Nothing else will ever "satisfy." The heart was made for God, and only God can meet it.—*Frederick Whitfield,* 1874.

Verse 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" It is an ancient fable that the eagle is able to renew his youth when very old, and poetical allusion is made to it in this Psalm; but this idea is doubtless founded in reality on the great longevity of the bird, and its power, in common with other birds, of moulting its plumage periodically, and so increasing its strength and activity.—*Hugh Macmillan.**

Verse 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*"—The Scripture knows nothing of the idea that the eagle when old renews its youth. That there is nothing of this kind contained in Is. xl. 31, which is commonly appealed to, but that it is rather the powerful flight of the eagle that is there referred to, "they mount up on wings like the eagle, they run and are not weary," is evident from the parallel, to *fly, run, march.—E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" *Thy activity will renew itself like the eagle.* That is to say, From day to day he will receive and increase his strength and vigour, so that he may thrive and flourish like the eagle. The comparison with the eagle is not drawn in point of *renovation,* but in point of vigour and *activity* con-

* We might have filled much of our space with fables from the rabbis and the fathers in reference to eagles; but they are too absurd, and ought never to be repeated We hope, therefore, that the reader will excuse if not commend the omission.

tinually renewing itself; as Is. xl. 31, says, "*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles.*"—*Venema.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*"—This renovation of his youth may be understood three ways. First, as to his natural state, or bodily strength. Secondly, as to his civil state, or worldly successes, as to his honour and kingly renown. Thirdly, as to his spiritual state, or the heightening of his gifts, graces, and comforts. 'Tis probable David had found a declension in all these, and at last, through the goodness of God and his blessing upon him, the renewing of them all from that oldness to a youthfulness again, like that of eagles.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*"—However bold it may sound, we say not too much when we speak of an *eternal youth*, as the glorious privilege of the devout servant of the Lord, but of him alone. All that with reason charms and captivates in the appearance of youth, is seen in heightened measure where the spiritual life develops itself undisturbed in fellowship with God. Does the *innocence* of youth attract you ? In the natural life it is but too frequently a misleading appearance ; but in the life of the soul it returns to a certain extent when the heart is purified through the power of the Holy Ghost, and the life is renewed in conformity with that of Christ the Lord. Does the *enjoyment* of youth surpass in your estimation that of any other here below ? Be it so ; yet all too speedily it is driven away by the cares of later years, whilst enjoyment free from care even in the dark days may dwell in the heart whereon has descended the peace of God through faith. The *strength* of youth, seems it to you desirable ? Ah ! day by day stamps truth upon the words : " Youth shall faint and be weary ; " but even when the natural strength has already long attained its zenith, the Christian often feels himself elevated through a power from on high, which lifts him above physical weakness ; and what no strength of sinew or muscle could accomplish is attained through the power of implicit faith. Yea, even the beautiful *development* which the period of youth shows you, ye would not seek in vain in that man who, leaning on God's hand, forgetting the things that are behind, stretches forward from light to light, from strength to strength, from bliss to bliss. How, finally, can *hope*, that makes the youthful heart beat high with throbs of joy, be lacking to him ? The fairest part of life the sensual man sees soon behind him, the spiritual man always in prospect ; and like the eagle, this last can often from the low atmosphere around him soar to the pure, clear ether, whence already from afar the image, nay, the ineffable reality, shows him a more than earthly joy.

Eternal youth : it may, yet much more than for David, now be the portion of every Christian, but for these alone. Without faith and hope in the heart, even the bravest determination to remain young always, or at least as long as possible, must give way before the first great storm of life. Yet even when faith and hope are not strangers to us, whence is it that in our spiritual life there is frequently so little of the "*eagle*" spoken of here, and so much of the "sparrow alone upon the house top," referred to in Psalm cii. 7 ? Can it be that we allow ourselves too little to be satisfied with the good things of which David had spoken immediately before ; that is to say, that we *live* so little on the best things which God has to bestow,—his word, his Spirit, his grace ? Only through these do we attain that lasting second birth, of which the eagle is the emblem, and an unfading youth of heart the inestimable fruit. Ye who are young in years, seek this undying youth above all the joys of early life ! Recover it, ye middle-aged, in living fellowship with him who maketh all things new within ! Preserve it, old friends of God and of his Christ, as your fairest crown here on earth, and the earnest of your bliss in heaven. And thou, Christian, who sittest down disconsolate, bethink thyself ; the eagle lets his wings hang down, only thereafter to soar with stronger flight !—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, in "The Year of Salvation,"* 1874.

Verse 6.—"*The Lord executeth righteousness,*" &c. Rising from personal blessings to general, the comprehensive fact, evermore to the glory of God, is his sympathy with the suffering and oppressed, and his ready and effective interposition in their case. Who will not praise him that he careth so kindly and so gloriously for those who suffer cruel wrongs from wicked oppressors ?—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 7.—"*He made known his ways unto Moses.*" When Moses went up to Mount Sinai and tarried there with God the space of forty days, we may well think that God in that time, revealed many secrets to him ; and particularly "*made known*

his ways;" (Ex. xxxiii. 19); not only his ways in which he would have us to walk, but his ways in which he walks himself, and the course he holds in the government of worldly affairs; why he suffers the wicked to prosper, and why the godly to be oppressed. These "*ways*" of his he made known to Moses; to the children of Israel, only "his acts." He showed them his wonders upon Pharaoh, and that was his judgment; and he showed them his wonderful favours to themselves in the wilderness, and that was his righteousness; but he showed them not his ways, and the course he held in them: they saw only the events of things, they saw not the reasons of them, as Moses did.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 8.—"*Merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.*" O my soul, here are four properties spoken of to be in God, and are all so necessary, that we could not miss one of them. If he were not "*merciful*" we could hope for no pardon; and if he were no more but merciful we could hope for no more but pardon; but when besides his being merciful he is also "*gracious,*" this gives us a further hope, a hope of a donative; and then it will not be what we are worthy to receive, but what it is fit for him to give. If he were not "*slow to anger*" we could expect no patience; but when besides his slowness to anger he is also "*full of compassion;*" this makes us expect he will be the good Samaritan, and not only bind up our wounds, but take care also for our further curing. What though he chide and be angry for a time; it is but our being patient a while with him, as he a long time hath been patient with us.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 8.—"*Slow to anger.*" In Scripture we find that slowness to anger, and hastiness to be angry, are expressed by the different frame of the nostrils; as, namely, when the Lord is said to be "*slow to anger,*" the Hebrew is, *long of nostrils.*—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—"*Plenteous in mercy.*" וּגְדַל־חָסֶד "great, mighty in mercy," placing his chief glory in this attribute, and hereby teaching us how to estimate true greatness.—*George Horne.*

Verse 8.—"*Plenteous in mercy.*" It is a thing marvellously satisfactory and pleasing to the heart of a man to be still taking from a great heap; and upon this ground are those proverbial sayings, There is no fishing like to fishing in the sea, no service like the service of a king: because in one there is the greatest plenty and abundance of that kind of pleasure that fishers look after; and for them that serve, and must live by their service, there is none like that of princes, because they have abundance of reward and of opportunity whereby to recompense the services of those that do wait and attend upon them. . . . . And upon the same ground it is that the Scriptures, in several places, do not only assert and testify that God is "*merciful*" and "*gracious,*" but abundant in mercy and full of grace; and not simply that there is redemption in him, but plenteousness of redemption, Ps. lxxxvi. 5; and cxxx. 7; Isai. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc.; "Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The commodity which we stand in need of is mercy and the pardon of our sins, because we have been unholy and ungodly creatures; this commodity is abundantly in God. There it is treasured up as waters are in the store-house of the sea; there is no end of the treasures of his grace, mercy, pardon, and compassion. There is no man, being in want, but had rather go to a rich man's door to be relieved, than to the door of a poor man, if he knoweth the rich man to be as liberal and as bountifully disposed as the poor man can be.—*John Goodwin, on "Being filled with the Spirit."*

Verse 9.—"*He will not always chide.*"—Certainly it is as unpleasing to God to chide, as it is to us to be chidden; and so little he likes of anger, that he rids his hands of it as fast as he can: he is not so slow in coming to it, but he is as quick in getting from it; for chiding is a bar to mercy, and anger an impediment to compassion; nothing is so distasteful to God as that any block should lie in the way of his mercy, or that the liberty of his compassion should have any cause of restraint: and then we may be sure he will not himself lay a block in the way with chiding, nor be a cause to restrain his compassion by keeping his anger.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 9 (*Second clause*).—*To keep anger for ever*, corresponds with the French phrase, *Je lui garde, Il me l'a gardé,** which we use when the man, who cannot forgive

* "I am watching him, as he has watched to do a bad turn to me"

the injuries he has received, cherishes secret revenge in his heart, and waits for an opportunity of retaliation. Now David denies that God, after the manner of men, keeps anger on account of injuries done to him, since he condescends to be reconciled.—*Calvin.*

Verse 10.—"*He hath not dealt with us after our sins.*" Might we not have expected, with such conduct, that God would have withdrawn from us the blessing of his providence, withheld from us the communication of his Spirit, permitted us to find the means of grace profitless, left our temptations to multiply, and suffered us to sink into a state of fixed backsliding ?—and then, with our hearts at last sinking into too natural depression, might we not have seemed to hear him saying to us this day, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts."—*Baptist W. Noel*, 1798—1873.

Verse 10.—"*He hath not dealt with us after our sins.*" Why is it that God hath not dealt with us after our sins ? Is it not because he hath dealt with another after our sins ? Another who took our sins upon him; of whom it is said, that "God chastened him in his fierce wrath" ? and why did he chasten him, but for our sins ? O gracious God, thou art too just to take revenge twice for the same faults; and therefore, having turned thy fierce wrath upon him, thou wilt not turn it upon us too; but having rewarded him according to our iniquities, thou wilt now reward us according to his merits.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 11.—Our mind cannot find a comparison too large for expressing the superabundant mercy of the Lord toward his people.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 12.—"*As far as the east is from the west.*" The expression taken from the distance of the *east from west* is pitched upon, saith Kimchi, because those two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, being all known and inhabited. From whence it is that geographers reckon that way their longitudes, as from north to south their latitudes.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 12.—When sin is pardoned, it is never charged again; the guilt of it can no more return than east can become west, or west become east.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 13.—"*Like as a father pitieth his children,*" etc. A chaplain to seamen, at an American port, visited a sailor who appeared to be near death. He spoke kindly to the man upon the state of his soul, and directed him to cast himself on Jesus. With an oath, the sick man bade him begone. The chaplain then told him that he must be faithful to him, for if he died impenitent he would be lost for ever. The man was sullen and silent, and pretended to fall asleep. The visit was repeated more than once, with similar ill success. At length the chaplain, suspecting that the sailor was a Scotchman, repeated a verse of the old version of the Psalms:

"Such pity as a father hath
Unto his children dear,
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship him in fear."

Tears started into the sailor's eyes as he listened to these words. The chaplain asked him if he had not had a pious mother. The man broke into tears. Yes, his mother had, in years gone by, taught him these words, and had also prayed to God for him. Since then he had been a wanderer by sea and land; but the memory of her faith and love moved his heart. The appeals made to him were blessed by the Spirit of God. His life was spared, and proved the reality of his conversion.

Verse 13.—"*Like as a father.*" It is to be observed in this verse, what kind of mercy the prophet attributes to God. He says not, As man pities man, as the rich the poor man, as the strong the feeble, as the freeman the captive, but he makes mention of that pity which a father shews to his son, which is the greatest of all. The word רחם itself supports this view, as it properly signifies *viscarum commotis.* An example of this we have in 1 Kings iii. in the case of the woman who could not bear the slaughter of her child. . . . And afterwards in the case of the father of the prodigal. Luke xv.—*Musculus.*

Verse 13.—" *As a father pitieth his children.*" The father pitieth his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them ; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them ; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them ; when they are fallen, and helps them up again ; when they have offended, and upon their submission, forgives them ; when they are wronged, and rights them. Thus " the Lord pitieth them that fear him."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 13.—" *So the Lord pitieth,*" &c. So and ten thousand times more than so. For he is the " Father of all mercies," and the Father of all the fatherhoods in heaven and earth. Eph. iii. 15.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 13.—" *The Lord pitieth.*" Though it be commonly said, " It is better to be envied, than pitied ; " yet here it is not so ; but it is a far happier thing to be pitied of God, than to be envied of men.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 13.—" *Them that fear him.*" The fear of God is that deference to God which leads you to subordinate your will to his ; makes you intent on pleasing him ; penitent in view of past wilfulness ; happy in his present smile ; transported by his love ; hopeful of his glory.—*George Bowen.*

Verse 13.—" *Them that fear him.*" It may be understood of those who have not yet " received the spirit of adoption," but are yet " trembling at his word," those he " pities."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 13, 14.—The good father doth not turn off the child for being weak and sickly ; but is so much the more indulgent, as his necessity requires succour. If his stomach refuse meat, or cannot answer it with digestion, will he put him out of doors ? No ; when the Shunamite's son complains of his head, she lays him in her bosom. A mother is good to all the fruit of her womb, most kind to the sick infant : when it lies with its eyes fixed on her, not able to declare its grief, or to call for what it desires, this doubles her compassion : " So the Lord doth pity us, remembering our frame, considering that we are but dust " ; that our soul works by a lame instrument ; and therefore he requires not that of an elemental composition, which he doth of angelical spirits. The son is commanded to write out such a copy fairly ; he doth his best, far short of the original ; yet the father doth not chide, but encourage him. Or he gives him a bow and arrows, bids him shoot to such a mark ; he draws his utmost strength, lets go cheerfully ; the arrow drops far short, yet the son is praised, the father pleased. Temptation assaults us, lust buffets us, secular business diverts us, manifold is our weakness, but not beyond our Father's forgiveness : " He will spare us, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," Mal. iii. 17.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 14.—" *He knoweth our frame.*" " Our formation ; " the *manner* in which we are constructed, and the *materials* of which we are made.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 14.—" *He knoweth our frame ; he remembereth that we are dust.*" Not like some unskilled empiric, who hath but one receipt for all, strong or weak, young or old ; but as a wise physician considers his patient, and then writes his bill. Men and devils are but God's apothecaries, they make not our physic, but give what God prescribes. Balaam loved Balak's fee well enough, but could not go a hair's breadth beyond God's commission.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 14.—" *He remembereth that we are dust.*" As if the very matter out of which man was first made, though without sin, were a disadvantage to him in the resisting of sin. It was a disadvantage before man had any sin in him, how much more is it now when most men have nothing at all in them but sin, and the best have very much. " *That which is born of the flesh,*" saith Christ " *is flesh.*" Corrupt nature can produce none but corrupt acts.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—" *We are dust.*"

O how in this thy quire of souls I stand,
—Propt by thy hand—
A heap of sand !
Which busie thoughts—like winds—would scatter quite,
And put to flight,
But for thy might ;
Thy hand alone doth tame
Those blasts, and knit my frame.

—*Henry Vaughan.*

Verses 14, 16.—" *We are dust.*" I never see one of those spiral pillars of dust which, like a mimic simoom, rush along the road upon a windy day, without thinking, " There

is an image of life." Dust and a breath! Observe how the apparent "pillar" is but a condition, an active condition, of the particles of dust, and those particles continually changing. The form depends upon the incessant movement. The heavy sand floats on the impalpable air while it partakes its motion; let that cease and it falls. So the dull clods of the field, smitten by force, take wings and soar in life, partake for a time its rapid course, and then, the force exhausted, fall back into their former state. A whirl, a flux, maintained by forces without, and ceasing when they are withdrawn; that is our life.—*James Hinton, in "Thoughts on Health and some of its Conditions,"* 1871.

Verse 15.—"*As for man.*" The insignificance of man is especially brought out by the use of ENOSH here.—*Robert Baker Girdlestone.*

Verse 15.—Man comes forth, says Job, like *a flower*, and is cut down; he is sent into the world the fairest and noblest part of God's works, fashioned after the image of his Creator, with respect to reason and the great faculties of the mind; he cometh forth glorious as the flower of the field; as it surpasses the vegetable world in beauty, so does he the animal world in the glory and excellence of his nature. The one, if no untimely accident oppress it, soon arrives at the full period of its perfection,—is suffered to triumph for a few moments, and is plucked up by the roots in the very pride and gayest stage of its being; —or if it happens to escape the hands of violence, in a few days it necessarily sickens of itself, and dies away. Man likewise, though his progress is slower, and his duration somewhat longer, yet the periods of his growth and declension are nearly the same, both in the nature and manner of them. If he escapes the dangers which threaten his tenderer years, he is soon got into the full maturity and strength of life; and if he is so fortunate as not to be hurried out of it then by accidents, by his own folly and intemperance—if he escapes these, he naturally decays of himself,—a period comes fast upon him, beyond which he was not made to last. Like flowers or fruits which may be plucked up by force before the time of their maturity, yet cannot be made to outgrow the period when they are to fade and drop of themselves; when that comes, the hand of nature then plucks them both off, and no art of the botanist can uphold the one, or skill of the physician preserve the other, beyond the periods to which their original frames and constitutions were made to extend. As God has appointed and determined the several growths and decays of the vegetable race, so he seems as evidently to have prescribed the same laws to man, as well as all living creatures, in the first rudiments of which there are contained the specific powers of their growth, duration and extinction; and when the evolutions of those animal powers are exhausted and run down, the creature expires and dies of itself, as ripe fruit falls from the tree, or a flower preserved beyond its bloom, drops and perishes upon the stalk.—*Lawrence Sterne*, 1713—1768.

Verse 15.—The Psalmist saith of man, "*as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*" It is not a flower of the *garden*, but of the "*field.*" This latter is more subject to decay than the former, because it lies more open to the nipping air and violent winds, and to the browsing mouth of the beast, and is more liable to be trampled upon: by all these ways it decayeth as well as by the scorching sun, and its own fading temper.—*John Edwards, in "Theologia Reformata."*

Verse 15.—"*As a flower of the field.*"

What is life! like a flower, with the bane in its bosom,
To-day full of promise—to-morrow it dies!—
And health—like the dew-drop that hangs in its blossom,
Survives but a night, and exhales to the skies!
How oft 'neath the bud that is brightest and fairest,
The seeds of the canker in embryo lurk!
How oft at the root of the flower that is rarest—
Secure in its ambush the worm is at work?

—*James Beattie*, 1735—1803.

Verse 16.—"*The wind passeth over it, and it is gone,*" etc. A breath of air, a gentle wind (רוּחַ) passes over him and he is gone. It would not be so strange if a tempest, a whirlwind, passing over should sweep him away. The Psalmist means much more than this. The gentlest touch, the whispering breeze, bears him off. He soon becomes a stranger, no more known in the little space he once filled, going out and coming in.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 16.—"*The wind passeth over it, and it is gone.*" It is well known that a hot wind in the east destroys at once every green thing. Nor is this to be wondered

at, if as Dr. Russell says, the winds sometimes " bring with them a degree and kind of heat, which one would imagine came out of an oven, and which, when it blows hard, will affect metals within the houses, such as locks of room doors, nearly as much as if they had been exposed to the rays of the sun." The blasting effect which seems to be here alluded to, of certain pestilential winds upon the animal frame, is by no means exaggerated by the comparison to the sudden fading of a flower. Maillet describes hundreds of persons in a caravan as stifled on the spot by the fire and dust, of which the deadly wind, that sometimes prevails in the eastern deserts, seems to be composed. And Sir John Chardin describes this wind " as making a great hissing noise," and says that " it appears red and fiery, and kills those whom it strikes by a kind of stifling them, especially when it happens in the day time."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 16.—" *The place thereof shall know him no more,*" &c. Man, once turned to dust, is blown about by every wind, from place to place; and what knows the place, when dust falls upon it; whether it be the dust of a prince, or of a peasant; whether of a man, or of a beast? And must not man then needs be very miserable, when time and place, the two best helps of life, do both forsake him? for what help can we have of time, when his days are but as grass? What help of place, when his place denies him, and will not know him?—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 17.—" *But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.*" No human benevolence is perpetually the same; but by experience we see that those who are kind to-day, may be changed into tyrants to-morrow. Examples of this we have in the life of Nero, and many other rulers. Therefore lest we should suspect the goodness of God to bear any similar character, it is said with inconceivable consolation, that it shall never cease, but is prepared for ever for all those who fear and serve God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 17.—" *From everlasting to everlasting.*" From everlasting, by predestination; to everlasting, by glorification: the one without beginning, the other without end.—*Bernard.*

Verse 18.—" *To do them.*" Commands are to be remembered in order to practice; a vain speculation is not the intent of the publication of them.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 19.—" *The Lord hath prepared his throne.*" The word signifies *established* as well as prepared, and might be so rendered. Due preparation is the natural way to the establishment of a thing; hasty resolves break and moulder. This notes,

1. The peculiarity of his authority. He prepares it, and none else for him. It is a dominion that originally resides in his nature, not derived from any by birth or commission; he alone prepared it. He is the sole cause of his own kingdom; his authority therefore is unbounded, as infinite as his nature. None can set laws to him, because none but himself prepared his throne for him. As he will not impair his own happiness, so he will not abridge himself of his own authority.

2. Readiness to exercise it upon due occasions. He hath prepared his throne, he is not at a loss, he needs not stay for a commission or instructions from any how to act. He hath all things ready for the assistance of his people, he hath rewards and punishments; his treasures and axes, the great mark of authority lying by him, the one for the good, the other for the wicked. His mercy he keeps by him for thousands, Exod. xxxiv. 7; his arrows he hath prepared by him for rebels, Ps. vii. 13.

3. Wise management of it. It is prepared: preparations imply prudence; the government of God is not a rash and heady authority. A prince upon his throne, a judge upon the bench, manages things with the greatest discretion, or should be supposed so to do.

4. Successfulness and duration of it. He hath prepared or established it. It is fixed, not tottering; it is an unmovable dominion; all the strugglings of men and devils cannot overturn it, not so much as shake it. It is established above the reach of obstinate rebels; he cannot be deposed from it, he cannot be mated in it. His dominion, as himself, abides for ever. And as his counsel, so his authority, shall stand; and " he will do all his pleasure," Isai. xlvi. 10.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 19.—" *His throne in the heavens,*" denotes: 1. The glory of his dominion. The heavens are the most stately and comely pieces of the creation; his majesty is there most visible, his glory most splendid, Ps. xix. 1. In heaven his dominion is more acknowledged by the angels: his dominion is not disputed there by the angels

that attend him, as it is on earth by the rebels that arm themselves against him. 2. The supremacy of his empire. The heavens are the loftiest part of the creation, and the only fit palace for him. 3. Peculiarity of this dominion. He rules in the heavens alone. His authority is not delegated to any creature, he rules the blessed spirits by himself; but he rules men that are on his footstool by others of the same kind, men of their own nature. 4. The vastness of his empire. The earth is but a spot to the heavens. What is England in a map to the whole earth, but a spot you may cover with your finger; much less must the whole earth be to the extended heavens. You cannot conceive the many millions of little particles that are in the earth; and if all put together be but one point to that place where the throne of God is seated, how vast must his empire be! He rules there over the angels, which excel in strength, those hosts of his which do his pleasure, in comparison of whom all the men in the world, and the power of the greatest potentates, is no more than the strength of an ant or fly. And since his throne is in the heavens, it will follow that all things under the heaven are part of his dominion; the inferior things of earth cannot but be subject to him; and it necessarily includes his influence on all things below, because the heavens are the cause of all the motion in the world. See Hosea ii. 21, 22. 5. The easiness of managing this government. His throne being placed on high, he cannot but behold all things that are done below; the height of a place gives advantage to a clear eye to behold things below it. "*The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand*," Ps. xiv. 2. He looks not down from heaven as if his presence were confined there, but he looks down majestically, and by way of authority. 6. Duration of it. The heavens are incorruptible, his throne is placed there in an incorruptible state. The throne of God outlives the dissolution of the world.—*Condensed from Charnock.*

Verse 19.—"*His kingdom ruleth over all.*" His Lordship is universal. First, over all *time:* other lords die, but he is eternal. Eternity is properly the duration of an uncreated Ens. It is improperly taken, either for things that have both beginning and end, as everlasting mountains; divers such phrases in Scripture; or for things that have a beginning but shall have no end; so are angels and men's souls eternal; so, eternal life, eternal fire. But God calls himself, "I AM," Exod. iii. 14: I am what I have been, I have been what I am, what I am and have been I shall be. This attribute is incommunicable: all other things had a *non esse* preceding their *esse*; and they have a mutation tending to nothing. "They that war against thee shall be as nothing," Isa. xli. 12: all come to nothing unless they be upheld by the manutency of God: but "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end," Ps. cii. 27. Thou turnest man to destruction, and again sayest, Return: "even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God," Ps. xc. 2; the sole umpire and measurer of beginning and ending. Secondly, over all *places*, heaven, earth, hell, Ps. cxxxv. 6. Kings are limited, and cannot do many things they desire: they cannot command the sun to stand still, nor the wind to blow which way they would: in the lofty air, in the depths of the sea no king reigns. They fondly flatter the pope with his long arms that they reach to purgatory; (but indeed both power and place are alike imaginary;) it is Christ alone that hath the keys of all places. Thirdly, over all *creatures*; binding the influences of Pleiades, and loosing the bands of Orion, Job xxxviii. 31; commanding the fire against the nature of it, to descend, 2 Kings i. 12; creating and ruling the stars, Amos v. 8; overruling the lions, Dan. vi. 22, sending the meteors, Psal. cxlviii. 8, hedging in the sea, lapping it up like a child in swaddling-clothes, Job xxxviii. 8, dividing, diverting, filling it. In both fire and water, those two raging elements that have no mercy, he shows mercy; delivers us from both in both. He calls the fowls, and they come; the beasts, and they hear; the trees, and they spring to obey him. He hath a raven for Elijah, a gourd for Jonah, a dog for Lazarus. Makes the leviathan, the hugest living creature, preserve his prophet. That a terrible lion should be killed, as was by Samson; or not kill, as they forbore Daniel; or kill and not eat, as that prophet, 1 Kings xiii.: here was the Lord. Over metals; he makes iron to swim, stones to cleave asunder. Over the devils; they must obey him though unwillingly. But they continually rebel against him, and break his will! They do indeed against his complacency, not against his permission. There is then no time, not the hour of death; no place, not the sorest torment; no creature, not the devil; but the Lord can deliver us from them. Therefore at all times, in all places, and against all creatures, let us trust in him for deliverance.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 19.—"*His kingdom ruleth over all.*" When Melancthon was extremely

solicitous about the affairs of the church in his days, Luther would have him admonished in these terms, *Monendus est Philippus ut desinat esse rector mundi:* Let not Philip make himself any longer governor of the world.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 20.—"*Bless the Lord, ye his angels,*" etc. The weight of offering praise unto God is too heavy for men to lift; and as for angels, it will take up all their strength and their best abilities to go about it.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 20.—"*Angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments.*" The chief excellence of the angels, the main cause of their strength and power, and of their immense superiority to mankind, is that which is set forth in the following words of the text. After the Psalmist has described the angels as excelling in strength, he adds that they *do God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.* For this is the only living source of lasting strength and power. They who do the will of God faithfully and obediently, have God for them; and then what can be against them? Then work itself strengthens them, and is like a tide bearing them onward; because it is *his* work. They on the other hand who run counter to the will of God, have God against them; and then what can be for them? Can a man push back the sea? can he lay hold on the sun, and drag him out of his course? Then may he hope to be strong, when he is fighting against the will of God. . . .

Hence we see the falsehood of that maxim, so common on the lips of those who plume themselves upon their mastery in the wisdom of this world,—that Might is Right,—a maxim which exactly inverts the truth, and whereby the Prince of darkness is ever setting himself up against the Lord of heaven. The true principle, which is inverted and perverted in this falsehood,—the principle which ought to be written up in the council-chambers of princes and on the walls of senate-houses,—the principle which explains the secret of the strength of the angels, and indeed of all true strength, that is in accordance with the will of God,—may be stated in the selfsame words, if we only invert their order, Right is Might.—*Julius Charles Hare,* 1849.

Verse 20.—"*His angels that do his commandments,*" etc. They hearken to the voice of his word, they look upon God as the great General, and if he give out the word, they give out their strength, and go about the work willingly. They are very attentive to his commands; if he says, Go smite Herod for his pride, Balaam for his covetousness, David for his vainglory, Sennacherib for his blasphemy, and Sodom for its uncleanness, presently they go.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 20.—"*Commandments.*" *Davar* (דָּבָר), to speak, is rendered, "*command*" twenty times . . . direct personal communion between the Lord and his messengers seems to be implied.—*R. B. Girdlestone.*

Verse 20.—"*Hearkening unto the voice of his word.*" Not only, mightily executing the word when heard; but, ever intently listening, *ready to catch the intimation of his will.—William Kay.*

Verse 20.—"*Hearkening unto the voice of his word.*" Angels are vigilant creatures, and wait for opportunities, and when they come they will not lose them. They neither slumber nor sleep, but hearken constantly what the Lord will say, what opportunity there will be for action; so, in Ezekiel i. 11, they are described with their wings stretched upward, manifesting their watchfulness and readiness for service. When Christ was born, a multitude of them appeared and celebrated his nativity, Luke ii. 13; when Christ was taken by Judas and his train, Peter drew his sword in his Master's defence; but what saith Christ? "Put up thy sword, it is not a time now to fight, but to suffer: thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? It is not a time now to pray for help, I must die, and the Scripture must be fulfilled; but if I would, my Father would bid the angels to aid me, and they presently would come, whole legions of them, yea, all the angels in heaven." Let us learn of angels to watch for opportunities, and take them. There are nicks of time wherein to do the work of Christ.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 21.—"*Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts . . . that do his pleasure.*" The sun, moon, stars, and planets do "*his pleasure*" (Ps. xix. 1) unconsciously; the "angels" consciously, and with instinctive love, "hearken unto the voice of his word" (v. 20). Both together constitute the Lord's hosts.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 22.—"*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" That is to say, "Let thy vocation be that of the seraphim, O my soul, and enter on the life of heaven!" Why should

I praise him? Can my praise be of any advantage to him? No; nor that of all the heavenly hosts. It is infinite condescension in him to hearken unto the praises of his most exalted creatures.

Let me bless the Lord, because no function will be more rich in blessings to my soul than this. The admiring contemplation of his excellence is in reality the appropriation thereof; the heart cannot delight in God, without becoming like God. Let me do it, because it is the peculiar privilege of man on this earth to bless the Lord. When he would find any to join him in this, he has to ascend the skies. Let me do it, because the earth is fully furnished with the materials of praise. The sands, the seas, the flowers, the insects; animals, birds, fields, mountains, rivers, trees, clouds, sun, moon, stars,—all wait for me to translate their attributes and distinctions into praise. But, above all, the new creation.

Let me do it, because of him, through him, and to him, are all the things that pertain to my existence, health, comfort, knowledge, dignity, safety, progress, power, and usefulness. A thousand of his ministers in earth, sea, and sky, are concerned in the production and preparation of every mouthful that I eat. The breath that I am commanded and enabled to modulate in praise, neither comes nor goes without a most surprising exhibition of the condescension, kindness, wisdom, power, and presence of him whom I am to praise. Is it not dastardly to be receiving benefits, without even mentioning the name, or describing the goodness of the giver? Let candidates for heaven bless the Lord. There is no place there for such as have not learned this art. How shall I praise him? Not with fine words. No poetic talent is here necessary. Any language that expresses heart-felt admiration will be accepted. Praise him so far as you know him; and he will make known to you more of his glory.—*George Bowen*, 1873.

Verse 22.—The last specification is completely comprehensive; "*all his works in all places of his wide dominions*"—all that he has made, whether intelligent or not intelligent; "*in all places*"—above, beneath, around: in heaven, earth, or hell: let them all fall into this universal chorus of praise and blessing, extolling Jehovah, the One supremely great, supremely good! Nor will he exempt himself; for his personal responsibilities as to his own heart, are his highest. Therefore he closes as he begun, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*"—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 22.—"*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" Inasmuch as the poet thus comes back to his own soul, his Psalm also turns back into itself and assumes the form of a converging circle.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 22.—"*Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.*" We are very much struck by this sudden transition from "all God's works, in all places of his dominion," to himself, a solitary individual. Of course he had already included himself; himself had been summoned when he summoned all God's works in all places of his dominion; but it seems as if a sudden fear had seized the Psalmist, the fear of by any possibility omitting himself; or, if not a fear, yet a consciousness that his very activity in summoning others to praise, might make him forgetful that he was bound to praise God himself, or sluggish in the duty, or ready to take for granted that he could not himself be neglecting what he was so strenuous in pressing on all orders of being. We have a great subject of discourse here. Solomon has said, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Alas! how possible, how easy, to take pains for others, and to be neglectful of one's self: nay, to make the pains we take for others the reason by which we persuade ourselves that we cannot be neglecting ourselves. How important, then, that, if with the Psalmist we call on all God's works in all places of his dominions to bless the Lord; how important, I say, that we add, like persons bent on self-examination, and fearful of self-deceit, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*"—*Henry Melvill.*

Verses 1, 2, 22.—"*Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . Bless the Lord, O my soul,*" with the "*Bless the Lord all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul,*" verse 22; these two form the thrice-repeated blessing from the Lord to the soul in the Mosaic formula, Num. vi. 24—26.—*A. R. Fausset.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—" The Saints blessing the Lord." See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1,078.

Verse 1.—I. We should bless the Most High himself. It is possible to fail to bless *him*, while we praise his gifts, his word, his works, his ways. II. We should bless him individually: " *My* soul." Not merely the family through the father, nor the people through the pastor; nor the congregation through the choir; but personally. III. We should bless him spiritually: " soul." Not only with organ, voice, offering, works, &c. IV. We should bless him unreservedly: " All that is within me." V. We should bless him resolutely, David preached self-communion, self-encouragement, and self-command.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 1.—Here is, I. Self-converse: " Oh my soul." Many talk freely enough to others, but never talk to themselves. They are strangers to themselves—not on speaking terms with themselves—take no interest in their own souls—are dull and melancholy when alone. II. Self-exhortation: " Bless the Lord, O my soul." Thy Creator, thy Benefactor, thy Redeemer. III. Self-encouragement: " All that is within me "—every faculty of my mental, moral and spiritual being: with ten strings—every chord in motion. No need for one faculty of the soul to say to another, " know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least even unto the greatest."—*G. R.*

Verse 1 (*First clause, and v.* 22, *last clause*).—Personal worship the Alpha and Omega of religion.—*C. Davis.*

Verse 2.—Inquire into the causes of our frequent forgetfulness of the Lord's mercies, show the evil of it, and advise remedies.

Verse 3.—I. Forgiveness is *in* God: " There is forgiveness with thee." It is his nature to forgive as well as to punish sin. II. It is *from* God. None can forgive sin but God. None can reveal forgiveness but God. III. It is *like* God, full, free, and everlasting—" all thine iniquities."—*G. R.*

Verse 3.—" *Who healeth all thy diseases.*" I. Why is sin called a disease? 1. As it destroys the moral beauty of the creature. 2. As it excites pain. 3. As it disables from duty. 4. As it leads to death. II. The variety of sinful diseases to which we are subject. Mark vii. 21—23; Gal. v. 19, &c. III. The remedy by which God heals these diseases. 1. His pardoning mercy through the redemption of Christ. 2. The sanctifying influences of grace. 3. The means of grace. 4. The resurrection of the body.—*From " The Study,"* 1873.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—Our diseases by nature, our great Physician, the perfect soundness which he works in us, results of that soundness.

Verses 3, 4, 5.—Mercy's Hexapla. I. Three curses removed. 1. Guilt put away. 2. Corruption cured. 3. Destruction averted. II. Three blessings bestowed. 1. Favours that can gratify. 2. Pleasures that can satisfy. 3. Life that can never die. Or (*Verse* 3) I. Pardon. II. Purification. (*Verse* 4) III. Redemption. IV. Coronation. (*Verse* 5) V. Plenty bestowed. VI. Power renewed.—*W. Durban.*

Verse 4 (first clause).—The Redemption of David's life from destruction. 1. His shepherd life. 2. His military life. 3. His persecuted life. 4. His regal life. 5. His spiritual life.—*W. J.*

Verse 4.—What is redeemed, and from what? Who are redeemed, and by whom?

Verse 5.—I. A singular condition—satisfaction. II. A singular provision—good things. III. A singular result—youth renewed.

Verse 5.—" Rejuvenescence." See Macmillan's " Ministry of Nature," pp. 321—347.

Verse 7.—I. God would have men know him. II. He is his own revealer. III. There are degrees in the revelation. IV. We may pray for increased knowledge of him.

Verse 8.—I. Mercy specified: " Merciful and gracious." II. Mercy qualified: " Slow to anger." Mercy itself may be angered, and then how terrible is the anger. III. Mercy amplified: " Plenteous in mercy." " He will abundantly pardon;" and he only knows what abundant pardon means.—*G. R.*

Verse 9.—I. What God will do to his people. He will sometimes chide—contend with them. 1. Providentially, by outward trials. 2. Experimentally, by inward conflicts. II. What he will not do to them. 1. Not chide continually in this life. 2. Not chide in the least hereafter. " The days of their mourning shall be ended."—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—Work out the terrible supposition, show the reasons why it has not yet been actually so; then suggest that it may yet become a terrible fact, and exhort the guilty to seek mercy.

Verses 11, 12, 13.—The height, length and depth of divine love.

Verse 12.—"Plenary Absolution." See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1,108.

Verse 12.—I. The union implied. Between man and his transgressions. 1. Legally. 2. Actually. 3. Experimentally. 4. Eternally, in themselves considered. II. The separation effected. 1. By whom? "He hath," etc. 2. How? By his own Son coming between the sinner and his sins. III. The Re-union prevented. "As far," etc. When east and west meet, then, and not till then, will the re-union take place. As the two extremities of a straight line can never meet, and cannot be lengthened without receding further from each other, so it will ever be with a pardoned sinner and his sins.—*G. R.*

Verses 13, 14.—"The Tender Pity of the Lord." See "Spurgeon's Sermons." No. 941.

Verses 13, 14.—I. Whom God pities; "them that fear him." II. How he pities "as a father pitieth his children." III. Why he pities; "for he knoweth our frame." He hath reason to know our frame, for he framed us, and having himself made man of the dust, "he remembers that we are dust."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—I. Man's Constitution. II. God's Consideration.—*W. D.*

Verse 15.—Man's earthly career. His rise, progress, glory, fall, and oblivion.

Verses 15—18.—I. What man is when left to himself. "As for man," etc. 1. What here? His days are as grass, his glory as the flower of grass. 2. What hereafter? swept away by a blighting wind, by a blast of divine anger—known no more on the earth, known only in perdition. II. What the mercy of God does for him. 1. Makes a covenant of grace on his behalf from everlasting. 2. Makes a covenant of peace with him in this life. 3. Makes a covenant of promise to him for an eternity to come. III. Who are the objects of this mercy? 1. Those who fear God. 2. Who walk in the footsteps of pious ancestors. 3. Who rely upon covenant mercy. 4. Who are faithful to their covenant engagements.—*G. R.*

Verse 18.—The covenant, in what respects we can keep it, in what frame of mind it must be kept, and what is the practical proof of so doing.

Verse 19.—"A Discourse upon God's Dominion." See Charnock's Works [Nicol's Edition, Vol. II., pp. 400—499].

Verse 19.—I. The nature of the throne. II. The extent of the dominion. III. The character of the monarch. IV. The consequent joy of the subjects: "Bless the Lord."

Verse 20.—The angels' service instructive to us. I. Their personal strength is excellent. As servants of God we also should see to our own spiritual health and vigour. II. They are practical in their obedience, not theorists. III. They are attentive while at work, ready to learn more, and holding fellowship with God, who speaks personally to them. IV. They do all in the spirit of joyful praise, blessing the Lord.

Verses 20, 21.—I. The centre of praise: "Bless the Lord." All praise centres in him. II. The concert of praise. 1. Angels. 2. The hosts of the redeemed. 3. Ministers in particular. 4. The surrounding creation. III. The climax of praise: "Bless the Lord, O my soul." This has the highest claim upon me for gratitude and praise. Vast as the chorus may be, it will not be perfect without my note of praise. This is the culminating note: "Bless the Lord, O my soul."—*G. R.*

Verse 21.—Who are God's ministers? What is their business? To do his pleasure. What is their delight? To bless the Lord.

Verses 21, 22.—Henry Melvill has a notable sermon upon "The Peril of the Spiritual Guide." The drift of it may be gathered from the extract which we have placed as a note upon the passage.

Verse 22.—I. The Chorus. II. The Echo.—*W. D.*

PSALM CIV.

GENERAL REMARKS.—*Here we have one of the loftiest and longest sustained flights of the inspired muse. The Psalm gives an interpretation to the many voices of nature, and sings sweetly both of creation and providence. The poem contains a complete* cosmos : *sea and land, cloud and sunlight, plant and animal, light and darkness, life and death, are all proved to be expressive of the presence of the Lord. Traces of the six days' of creation are very evident, and though the creation of man, which was the crowning work of the sixth day, is not mentioned, this is accounted for from the fact that man is himself the singer : some have even discerned marks of the divine rest upon the seventh day in verse* 31. *It is* a poet's version of Genesis. *Nor is it alone the present condition of the earth which is here the subject of song ; but a hint is given of those holier times when we shall see " a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," out of which the sinner shall be consumed, verse* 35. *The spirit of ardent praise to God runs through the whole, and with it a distinct realization of the divine Being as a personal existence, loved and trusted as well as adored.*

We have no information as to the author, but the Septuagint assigns it to David, and we see no reason for ascribing it to any one else. His spirit, style, and manner of writing are very manifest therein, and if the Psalm must be ascribed to another, it must be to a mind remarkably similar, and we could only suggest the wise son of David —Solomon, the poet preacher, to whose notes upon natural history in the Proverbs some of the verses bear a striking likeness. Whoever the human penman may have been, the exceeding glory and perfection of the Holy Spirit's own divine authorship are plain to every spiritual mind.

DIVISION.—*After ascribing blessedness to the Lord the devout Psalmist sings of the light and the firmament, which were the work of the first and second days (verses* 1—6). *By an easy transition he describes the separation of the waters from the dry land, the formation of rain, brooks, and rivers, and the uprising of green herbs, which were the produce of the third day* (7—18). *Then the appointment of the sun and moon to be the guardians of day and night commands the poet's admiration* (19—23), *and so he sings the work of the fourth day. Having already alluded to many varieties of living creatures, the Psalmist proceeds from verse* 24 *to verse* 30 *to sing of the life with which the Lord was pleased to fill the air, the sea, and the land ; these forms of existence were the peculiar produce of the fifth and sixth days. We may regard the closing verses* (31—35) *as a Sabbath meditation, hymn, and prayer. The whole lies before us as a panorama of the universe viewed by the eye of devotion. O for grace to render due praise unto the Lord while reading it.*

EXPOSITION.

BLESS the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great ; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

2 Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment : who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain :

3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters : who maketh the clouds his chariot : who walketh upon the wings of the wind :

4 Who maketh his angels spirits ; his ministers a flaming fire.

5 *Who* laid the foundations of the earth, *that* it should not be removed for ever.

6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as *with* a garment : the waters stood above the mountains.

1.—*" Bless the Lord, O my soul."* This Psalm begins and ends like the Hundred and Third, and it could not do better : when the model is perfect it deserves to exist in duplicate. True praise begins at home. It is idle to stir up others to praise if we are ungratefully silent ourselves. We should call upon our inmost hearts to

awake and bestir themselves, for we are apt to be sluggish, and if we are so when called upon to bless God, we shall have great cause to be ashamed. When we magnify the Lord, let us do it heartily: our best is far beneath his worthiness, let us not dishonour him by rendering to him half-hearted worship. "*O Lord my God, thou art very great.*" This ascription has in it a remarkable blending of the boldness of faith, and the awe of holy fear: for the Psalmist calls the infinite Jehovah "*my God,*" and at the same time, prostrate in amazement at the divine greatness, he cries out in utter astonishment, "*Thou art very great.*" God was great on Sinai, yet the opening words of his law were, "I am the Lord thy God;" his greatness is no reason why faith should not put in her claim, and call him all her own. The declaration of Jehovah's greatness here given would have been very much in place at the end of the Psalm, for it is a natural inference and deduction from a survey of the universe: its position at the very commencement of the poem is an indication that the whole Psalm was well considered and digested in the mind before it was actually put into words; only on this supposition can we account for the emotion preceding the contemplation. Observe also, that the wonder expressed does not refer to the creation and its greatness, but to Jehovah himself. It is not "the universe is very great!" but "THOU art very great." Many stay at the creature, and so become idolatrous in spirit; to pass onward to the Creator himself is true wisdom. "*Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.*" Thou thyself art not to be seen, but thy works, which may be called thy garments, are full of beauties and marvels which redound to thine honour. Garments both conceal and reveal a man, and so do the creatures of God. The Lord is seen in his works as worthy of *honour* for his skill, his goodness, and his power, and as claiming *majesty*, for he has fashioned all things in sovereignty, doing as he wills, and asking no man's permit. He must be blind indeed who does not see that nature is the work of a king. These are solemn strokes of God's severer mind, terrible touches of his sterner attributes, broad lines of inscrutable mystery, and deep shadings of overwhelming power, and these make creation's picture a problem never to be solved, except by admitting that he who drew it giveth no account of his matters, but ruleth all things according to the good pleasure of his will. His *majesty* is, however, always so displayed as to reflect *honour* upon his whole character; he does as he wills, but he wills only that which is thrice holy, like himself. The very robes of the unseen Spirit teach us this, and it is ours to recognise it with humble adoration.

2. "*Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:*" wrapping the light about him as a monarch puts on his robe. The conception is sublime: but it makes us feel how altogether inconceivable the personal glory of the Lord must be; if light itself is but his garment and veil, what must be the blazing splendour of his own essential being! We are lost in astonishment, and dare not pry into the mystery lest we be blinded by its insufferable glory. "*Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain*"—within which he might dwell. Light was created on the first day and the firmament upon the second, so that they fitly follow each other in this verse. Oriental princes put on their glorious apparel and then sit in state within curtains, and the Lord is spoken of under that image: but how far above all comprehension the figure must be lifted, since the robe is essential light, to which suns and moons owe their brightness, and the curtain is the azure sky studded with stars for gems. This is a substantial argument for the truth with which the Psalmist commenced his song, "O Lord my God, thou art very great."

3. "*Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters.*" His lofty halls are framed with the waters which are above the firmament. The upper rooms of God's great house, the secret stories far above our ken, the palatial chambers wherein he resides, are based upon the floods which form the upper ocean. To the unsubstantial he lends stability; he needs no joists and rafters, for his palace is sustained by his own power. We are not to interpret literally where the language is poetical, it would be simple absurdity to do so. "*Who maketh the clouds his chariot.*" When he comes forth from his secret pavilion 'tis thus he makes his royal progress. "His chariot of wrath deep thunder-clouds form," and his chariot of mercy drops plenty as it traverses the celestial road. "*Who walketh* [or rather *goes*] *upon the wings of the wind.*" With the clouds for a car, and the winds for winged steeds, the Great King hastens on his movements whether for mercy or for judgment. Thus we have the idea of a king still further elaborated—his lofty palace, his chariot, and his coursers are before us; but what a palace must we imagine, whose beams are of crystal, and whose base is consolidated vapour! What a stately car is that which

is fashioned out of the flying clouds, whose gorgeous colours Solomon in all his glory could not rival; and what a Godlike progress is that in which spirit wings and breath of winds bear up the moving throne. " O Lord, my God, thou art very great!"

4. " *Who maketh his angels spirits;*" or *winds*, for the word means either. Angels are pure spirits, though they are permitted to assume a visible form when God desires us to see them. God is a spirit, and he is waited upon by spirits in his royal courts. Angels are like winds for mystery, force, and invisibility, and no doubt the winds themselves are often the angels or messengers of God. God who makes his angels to be as winds, can also make winds to be his angels, and they are constantly so in the economy of nature. " *His ministers a flaming fire.*" Here, too, we may choose which we will of two meanings: God's ministers or servants he makes to be as swift, potent, and terrible as fire, and on the other hand he makes fire, that devouring element, to be his minister flaming forth upon his errands. That the passage refers to angels is clear from Heb. i. 7; and it was most proper to mention them here in connection with light and the heavens, and immediately after the robes and palace of the Great King. Should not the retinue of the Lord of Hosts be mentioned as well as his chariot? It would have been a flaw in the description of the universe had the angels not been alluded to, and this is the most appropriate place for their introduction. When we think of the extraordinary powers entrusted to angelic beings, and the mysterious glory of the seraphim and the four living creatures, we are led to reflect upon the glory of the Master whom they serve, and again we cry out with the Psalmist, " O Lord, my God, thou art very great."

5. " *Who laid the foundations of the earth.*" Thus the commencement of creation is described, in almost the very words employed by the Lord himself in Job xxxviii. 4. " Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened, and who laid the corner stone thereof?" And the words are found in the same connection too, for the Lord proceeds to say, " When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." " *That it should not be removed for ever.*" The language is, of course, poetical, but the fact is none the less wonderful: the earth is so placed in space that it remains as stable as if it were a fixture. The several motions of our planet are carried on so noiselessly and evenly that, as far as we are concerned, all things are as permanent and peaceful as if the old notion of its resting upon pillars were literally true. With what delicacy has the great Artificer poised our globe! What power must there be in that hand which has caused so vast a body to know its orbit, and to move so smoothly in it! What engineer can save every part of his machinery from an occasional jar, jerk, or friction? yet to our great world in its complicated motions no such thing has ever occurred. " O Lord, my God, thou art very great."

6. " *Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment.*" The new-born earth was wrapt in aqueous swaddling bands. In the first ages, ere man appeared, the proud waters ruled the whole earth, " *the waters stood above the mountains,*" no dry land was visible, vapour as from a steaming cauldron covered all. Geologists inform us of this as a discovery, but the Holy Spirit had revealed the fact long before. The passage before us shows us the Creator commencing his work, and laying the foundation for future order and beauty: to think of this reverently will fill us with adoration; to conceive of it grossly and carnally would be highly blasphemous.

7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.

8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.

9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, *which* run among the hills.

11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst.

12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, *which* sing among the branches.

13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;

15 And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man, *and* oil to make *his* face to shine, and bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart.

16 The trees of the LORD are full *of sap;* the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;

17 Where the birds make their nests: *as for* the stork, the fir trees *are* her house.

18 The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats; *and* the rocks for the conies.

7. "*At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.*" When the waters and vapours covered all, the Lord had but to speak and they disappeared at once. As though they had been intelligent agents the waves hurried to their appointed deeps and left the land to itself; then the mountains lifted their heads, the high lands rose from the main, and at length continents and islands, slopes and plains were left to form the habitable earth. The voice of the Lord effected this great marvel. Is not his word equal to every emergency? potent enough to work the greatest miracle? By that same word shall the waterfloods of trouble be restrained, and the raging billows of sin be rebuked: the day cometh when at the thunder of Jehovah's voice all the proud waters of evil shall utterly haste away. "O Lord, my God, thou art very great."

8. The vanquished waters are henceforth obedient. "*They go up by the mountains,*" climbing in the form of clouds even to the summits of the Alps. "*They go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them:*" they are as willing to descend in rain, and brooks, and torrents as they were eager to ascend in mists. The loyalty of the mighty waters to the laws of their God is most notable; the fierce flood, the boisterous rapid, the tremendous torrent, are only forms of that gentle dew which trembles on the tiny blade of grass, and in those ruder shapes they are equally obedient to the laws which their Maker has impressed upon them. Not so much as a solitary particle of spray ever breaks rank, or violates the command of the Lord of sea and land, neither do the awful cataracts and terrific floods revolt from his sway. It is very beautiful among the mountains to see the divine system of water supply—the rising of the fleecy vapours, the distillation of the pure fluid, the glee with which the new-born element leaps adown the crags to reach the rivers, and the strong eagerness with which the rivers seek the ocean, their appointed place.

9. "*Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.*" That bound has once been passed, but it shall never be so again. The deluge was caused by the suspension of the divine mandate which held the floods in check: they knew their old supremacy, and hastened to reassert it, but now the covenant promise for ever prevents a return of that carnival of waters, that revolt of the waves: ought we not rather to call it that impetuous rush of the indignant floods to avenge the injured honour of their King, whom men had offended? Jehovah's word bounds the ocean, using only a narrow belt of sand to confine it to its own limits: that apparently feeble restraint answers every purpose, for the sea is obedient as a little child to the bidding of its Maker. Destruction lies asleep in the bed of the ocean, and though our sins might well arouse it, yet are its bands made strong by covenant mercy, so that it cannot break loose again upon the guilty sons of men.

10. "*He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.*" This is a beautiful part of the Lord's arrangement of the subject waters: they find vents through which they leap into liberty where their presence will be beneficial in the highest degree. Depressions exist in the sides of the mountains, and adown these the waterbrooks are made to flow, often taking their rise at bubbling fountains which issue from the bowels of the earth. It is God who sends these springs even as a gardener makes the water courses, and turns the current with his foot. When the waters are confined in the abyss *the Lord* sets their bound, and when they sport at liberty *he* sends them forth.

11. "*They give drink to every beast of the field.*" Who else would water them if the Lord did not? They are *his* cattle, and therefore he leads them forth to watering. Not one of them is forgotten of him. "*The wild asses quench their thirst.*" The good Lord gives them enough and to spare. They know their Master's crib. Though bit or bridle of man they will not brook, and man denounces them as unteachable, they learn of the Lord, and know better far than man where flows the

cooling crystal of which they must drink or die. They are only asses, and wild, yet our heavenly Father careth for them. Will he not also care for us? We see here, also, that nothing is made in vain; though no human lip is moistened by the brooklet in the lone valley, yet are there other creatures which need refreshment, and these slake their thirst at the stream. Is this nothing? Must everything exist for man, or else be wasted? What but our pride and selfishness could have suggested such a notion? It is not true that flowers which blush unseen by human eye are wasting their sweetness, for the bee finds them out, and other winged wanderers live on their luscious juices. Man is but one creature of the many whom the heavenly Father feedeth and watereth.

12. "*By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.*" How refreshing are these words! What happy memories they arouse of plashing waterfalls and entangled boughs, where the merry din of the falling and rushing water forms a sort of solid background of music, and the sweet tuneful notes of the birds are the brighter and more flashing lights in the harmony. Pretty birdies, sing on! What better can ye do, and who can do it better? When we too drink of the river of God, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life, it well becomes us to "sing among the branches." Where ye dwell ye sing; and shall not we rejoice in the Lord, who has been our dwelling-place in all generations. As ye fly from bough to bough, ye warble forth your notes, and so will we as we flit through time into eternity. It is not meet that birds of Paradise should be outdone by birds of earth.

13. "*He watereth the hills from his chambers.*" As the mountains are too high to be watered by rivers and brooks, the Lord himself refreshes them from those waters above the firmament which the poet had in a former verse described as the upper chambers of heaven. Clouds are detained among the mountain crags, and deluge the hill sides with fertilizing rain. Where man cannot reach the Lord can, whom none else can water with grace he can, and where all stores of refreshment fail he can supply all that is needed from his own halls. "*The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.*" The result of the divine working is fulness everywhere, the soil is saturated with rain, the seed germinates, the beasts drink, and the birds sing —nothing is left unsupplied. So, too, is it in the new creation, he giveth more grace, he fills his people with good, and makes them all confess, "of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace."

14. "*He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man.*" Grass grows as well as herbs, for cattle must be fed as well as men. God appoints to the lowliest creature its portion and takes care that it has it. Divine power is as truly and as worthily put forth in the feeding of beasts as in the nurturing of man; watch but a blade of grass with a devout eye and you may see God at work within it. The herb is for man, and he must till the soil, or it will not be produced, yet it is God that causeth it to grow in the garden, even the same God who made the grass to grow in the unenclosed pastures of the wilderness. Man forgets this and talks of his produce, but in very truth without God he would plough and sow in vain. The Lord causeth each green blade to spring and each ear to ripen: do but watch with opened eye and you shall see the Lord walking through the cornfields. "*That he may bring forth food out of the earth.*" Both grass for cattle and corn for man are food brought forth out of the earth, and they are signs that it was God's design that the very dust beneath our feet, which seems better adapted to bury us than to sustain us, should actually be transformed into the staff of life. The more we think of this the more wonderful it will appear. How great is that God who from among the sepulchres finds the support of life, and out of the ground which was cursed brings forth the blessings of corn and wine and oil.

15. "*And wine that maketh glad the heart of man.*" By the aid of genial showers the earth produces not merely necessaries but luxuries, that which furnishes a feast as well as that which makes a meal. O that man were wise enough to know how to use this gladdening product of the vine; but, alas, he full often turns it to ill account, and debases himself therewith. Of this he must himself bear the blame; he deserves to be miserable who turns even blessings into curses. "*And oil to make his face to shine.*" The easterns use oil more than we do, and probably are wiser in this respect than we are: they delight in anointings with perfumed oils, and regard the shining of the face as a choice emblem of joy. God is to be praised for all the products of the soil, not one of which could come to us were it not that he causeth it to grow. "*And bread which strengtheneth man's heart.*" Men have more

courage after they are fed: many a depressed spirit has been comforted by a good substantial meal. We ought to bless God for strength of heart as well as force of limb, since if we possess them they are both the bounties of his kindness.

16. The watering of the hills not only produces the grass and the cultivated herbs, but also the nobler species of vegetation, which come not within the range of human culture:—

> "Their veins with genial moisture fed,
> Jehovah's forests lift the head:
> Nor other than his tostering hand
> Thy cedars, Lebanon, demand."

"*The trees of the Lord*"—the greatest, noblest, and most royal of trees, those too which are unowned of man, and untouched by his hand. "*Are full of sap,*" or are full, well supplied, richly watered, so that they become, as the cedars, full of resin, flowing with life, and verdant all the year round. "*The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted.*" They grow where none ever thought of planting them, where for ages they were unobserved, and where at this moment they are too gigantic for man to prune them. What would our Psalmist have said to some of the trees in the Yosemite valley? Truly these are worthy to be called the trees of the Lord, for towering stature and enormous girth. Thus is the care of God seen to be effectual and all-sufficient. If trees uncared for by man are yet so full of sap, we may rest assured that the people of God who by faith live upon the Lord alone shall be equally well sustained. Planted by grace, and owing all to our heavenly Father's care, we may defy the hurricane, and laugh at the fear of drought, for none that trust in him shall ever be left unwatered.

17. "*Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.*" So far from being in need, these trees of God afford shelter to others, birds small and great make their nests in the branches. Thus what they receive from the great Lord they endeavour to return to his weaker creatures. How one thing fits into another in this fair creation, each link drawing on its fellow: the rains water the fir trees, and the fir trees become the happy home of birds; thus do the thunder clouds build the sparrow's house, and the descending rain sustains the basis of the stork's nest. Observe, also, how everything has its use—the boughs furnish a home for the birds; and every living thing has its accommodation—the stork finds a house in the pines. Her nest is called a house, because this bird exhibits domestic virtues and maternal love which make her young to be comparable to a family. No doubt this ancient writer has seen storks' nests in fir trees; they appear usually to build on houses and ruins, but there is also evidence that where there are forests they are content with pine trees. Has the reader ever walked through a forest of great trees and felt the awe which strikes the heart in nature's sublime cathedral? Then he will remember to have felt that each bird was holy, since it dwelt amid such sacred solitude. Those who cannot see or hear of God except in Gothic edifices, amid the swell of organs, and the voices of a surpliced choir, will not be able to enter into the feeling which makes the simple, unsophisticated soul hear "the voice of the Lord God walking among the trees."

18. "*The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.*" All places teem with life. We call our cities populous, but are not the forests and the high hills more densely peopled with life? We speak of uninhabitable places, but where are they? The chamois leaps from crag to crag, and the rabbit burrows beneath the soil. For one creature the loftiness of the hills, and for another the hollowness of the rocks, serves as a protection: —

> "Far o'er the crags the wild goats roam,
> The rocks supply the coney's home."

Thus all the earth is full of happy life, every place has its appropriate inhabitant, nothing is empty and void and waste. See how goats, and storks, and conies, and sparrows, each contribute a verse to the Psalm of nature; have we not also our canticles to sing unto the Lord? Little though we may be in the scale of importance, yet let us fill our sphere, and so honour the Lord who made us with a purpose.

19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep *forth*.

21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.

22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.

23 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

19. The appointed rule of the great lights is now the theme for praise. The moon is mentioned first, because in the Jewish day the night leads the way. "*He appointed the moon for seasons.*" By the waxing and waning of the moon the year is divided into months, and weeks, and by this means the exact dates of the holy days are arranged. Thus the lamp of night is made to be of service to man, and in fixing the period of religious assemblies (as it did among the Jews) it enters into connection with his noblest being. Never let us regard the moon's motions as the inevitable result of inanimate impersonal law, but as the appointment of our God. "*The sun knoweth his going down.*" In finely poetic imagery the sun is represented as knowing when to retire from sight, and sink below the horizon. He never loiters on his way, or pauses as if undecided when to descend; his appointed hour for going down, although it is constantly varying, he always keeps to a second. *We* need to be aroused in the morning, but he arises punctually, and though some require to watch the clock to know the hour of rest, he, without a timepiece to consult, hides himself in the western sky the instant the set time has come. For all this man should praise the Lord of the sun and moon, who has made these great lights to be our chronometers, and thus keeps our world in order, and suffers no confusion to distract us.

20. "*Thou makest darkness, and it is night.*" Drawing down the blinds for us, he prepares our bedchamber that we may sleep. Were there no darkness we should sigh for it, since we should find repose so much more difficult if the weary day were never calmed into night. Let us see God's hand in the veiling of the sun, and never fear either natural or providential darkness, since both are of the Lord's own making. "*Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.*" Then is the lion's day, his time to hunt his food. Why should not the wild beast have his hour as well as man? He has a service to perform, should he not also have his food? Darkness is fitter for beasts than man; and those men are most brutish who love darkness rather than light. When the darkness of ignorance broods over a nation, then all sorts of superstitions, cruelties, and vices abound; the gospel, like the sunrising, soon clears the world of the open ravages of these monsters, and they seek more congenial abodes. We see here the value of true light, for we may depend upon it where there is night there will also be wild beasts to kill and to devour.

21. "*The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.*" This is the poetic interpretation of a roar. To whom do the lions roar? Certainly not to their prey, for the terrible sound tends to alarm their victims, and drive them away. They after their own fashion express their desires for food, and the expression of desire is a kind of prayer. Out of this fact comes the devout thought of the wild beast's appealing to its Maker for food. But neither with lions nor men will the seeking of prayer suffice, there must be practical seeking too, and the lions are well aware of it. What they have in their own language asked for they go forth to seek; being in this thing far wiser than many men who offer formal prayers not half so earnest as those of the young lions, and then neglect the means in the use of which the object of their petitions might be gained. The lions roar and seek; too many are liars before God, and roar but never seek.

How comforting is the thought that the Spirit translates the voice of a lion, and finds it to be a seeking of meat from God! May we not hope that our poor broken cries and groans, which in our sorrow we have called "the voice of our roaring" (Ps. xxii. 10), will be understood by him, and interpreted in our favour. Evidently he considers the meaning rather than the music of the utterance, and puts the best construction upon it.

22. "*The sun ariseth.*" Every evening has its morning to make the day. Were it not that we have seen the sun rise so often we should think it the greatest of miracles, and the most amazing of blessings. "*They gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.*" Thus they are out of man's way, and he seldom encounters them unless he desires to do so. The forest's warriors retire to their quarters when the

morning's drum is heard, finding in the recesses of their dens a darkness suitable for their slumbers; there they lay them down and digest their food, for God has allotted even to them their portion of rest and enjoyment. There was one who in this respect was poorer than lions and foxes, for he had not where to lay his head: all were provided for except their incarnate Provider. Blessed Lord, thou hast stooped beneath the conditions of the brutes to lift up worse than brutish men!

It is very striking how the Lord controls the fiercest of animals far more readily than the shepherd manages his sheep. At nightfall they separate and go forth each one upon the merciful errand of ending the miseries of the sickly and decrepit among grass-eating animals. The younger of these animals being swift of foot easily escape them and are benefited by the exercise, and for the most part only those are overtaken and killed to whom life would have been protracted agony. So far lions are messengers of mercy, and are as much sent of God as the sporting dog is sent by man on his errands. But these mighty hunters must not always be abroad, they must be sent back to their lairs when man comes upon the scene. Who shall gather these ferocious creatures and shut them in? Who shall chain them down and make them harmless? The sun suffices to do it. He is the true lion-tamer. They gather themselves together as though they were so many sheep, and in their own retreats they keep themselves prisoners till returning darkness gives them another leave to range. By simply majestic means the divine purposes are accomplished. In like manner even the devils are subject unto our Lord Jesus, and by the simple spread of the light of the gospel these roaring demons are chased out of the world. No need for miracles or displays of physical power, the Sun of Righteousness arises, and the devil and the false gods, and superstitions and errors of men, all seek their hiding places in the dark places of the earth among the moles and the bats.

23. "*Man goeth forth.*" It is his turn now, and the sunrise has made things ready for him. His warm couch he forsakes and the comforts of home, to find his daily food; this work is good for him, both keeping him out of mischief, and exercising his faculties. "*Unto his work and to his labour until the evening.*" He goes not forth to sport but to work, not to loiter but to labour; at least, this is the lot of the best part of mankind. We are made for work and ought to work, and should never grumble that so it is appointed. The hours of labour, however, ought not to be too long. If labour lasts out the average daylight it is certainly all that any man ought to expect of another, and yet there are poor creatures so badly paid that in twelve hours they cannot earn bread enough to keep them from hunger. Shame on those who dare so impose upon helpless women and children. Night work should also be avoided as much as possible. There are twelve hours in which a man ought to work: the night is meant for rest and sleep.

Night, then, as well as day has its voice of praise. It is more soft and hushed, but it is none the less true. The moon lights up a solemn silence of worship among the fir trees, through which the night wind softly breathes its "songs without words." Every now and then a sound is heard, which, however simple by day, sounds among the shadows startling and weird-like, as if the presence of the unknown had filled the heart with trembling, and made the influence of the Infinite to be realized. Imagination awakens herself; unbelief finds the silence and the solemnity uncongenial, faith looks up to the skies above her and sees heavenly things all the more clearly in the absence of the sunlight, and adoration bows itself before the Great Invisible! There are spirits that keep the night watches, and the spell of their presence has been felt by many a wanderer in the solitudes of nature: God also himself is abroad all night long, and the glory which concealeth is often felt to be even greater than that which reveals. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

25 *So is* this great and wide sea, wherein *are* things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

26 There go the ships: *there is* that leviathan, *whom* thou hast made to play therein.

27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give *them* their meat in due season.

28 *That* thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

24. *" O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! "* They are not only many for number but manifold for variety. Mineral, vegetable, animal—what a range of works is suggested by these three names ! No two even of the same class are exactly alike, and the classes are more numerous than science can number. Works in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, works which abide the ages, works which come to perfection and pass away in a year, works which with all their beauty do not outlive a day, works within works, and works within these—who can number one of a thousand ? God is the great worker, and ordainer of variety. It is ours to study his works, for they are great, and sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. The kingdom of grace contains as manifold and as great works as that of nature, but the chosen of the Lord alone discern them. *" In wisdom hast thou made them all,"* or *wrought* them all. They are all his works, wrought by his own power, and they all display his wisdom. It was wise to make them—none could be spared ; every link is essential to the chain of nature—wild beasts as much as men, poisons as truly as odoriferous herbs. They are wisely made—each one fits its place, fills it, and is happy in so doing. As a whole, the " all " of creation is a wise achievement, and however it may be chequered with mysteries, and clouded with terrors, it all works together for good, and as one complete harmonious piece of workmanship it answers the great Worker's end. *" The earth is full of thy riches."* It is not a poor-house, but a palace ; not a hungry ruin, but a well-filled store-house. The Creator has not set his creatures down in a dwelling-place where the table is bare, and the buttery empty, he has filled the earth with food ; and not with bare necessaries only, but with *riches*—dainties, luxuries, beauties, treasures. In the bowels of the earth are hidden mines of wealth, and on her surface are teeming harvests of plenty. All these riches are the Lord's ; we ought to call them not " the wealth of nations," but " thy riches " O Lord ! Not in one clime alone are these riches of God to be found, but in all lands—even the Arctic ocean has its precious things which men endure much hardness to win, and the burning sun of the equator ripens a produce which flavours the food of all mankind. If his house below is so full of riches what must his house above be, where

> " The very streets are paved with gold
> Exceeding clear and fine " ?

25. *" So is this great and wide sea."* He gives an instance of the immense number and variety of Jehovah's works by pointing to the sea. " Look," saith he, " at yonder ocean, stretching itself on both hands and embracing so many lands, it too swarms with animal life, and in its deeps lie treasures beyond all counting." The heathen made the sea a different province from the land, and gave the command thereof to Neptune, but we know of a surety that Jehovah rules the waves. *" Wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts ; "* read *moving things and animals small and great,* and you have the true sense. The number of minute forms of animal life is indeed beyond all reckoning: when a single phosphorescent wave may bear millions of infusoria, and around a fragment of rock armies of microscopic beings may gather, we renounce all idea of applying arithmetic to such a case. The sea in many regions appears to be all alive, as if every drop were a world. Nor are these tiny creatures the only tenants of the sea, for it contains gigantic mammals which exceed in bulk those which range the land, and a vast host of huge fishes which wander among the waves, and hide in the caverns of the sea as the tiger lurks in the jungle, or the lion roams the plain. Truly, O Lord, thou makest the sea to be as rich in the works of thy hands as the land itself.

26. *" There go the ships."* So that ocean is not altogether deserted of mankind. It is the highway of nations, and unites, rather than divides, distant lands. *" There is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein."* The huge whale turns the sea into his recreation ground, and disports himself as God designed that he should do.

The thought of this amazing creature caused the Psalmist to adore the mighty Creator who created him, formed him for his place and made him happy in it. Our ancient maps generally depict a ship and whale upon the sea, and so show that it is most natural, as well as poetical, to connect them both with the mention of the ocean.

27. "*These wait all upon thee.*" They come around thee as fowls around the farmer's door at the time for feeding, and look up with expectation. Men or marmots, eagles or emmets, whales or minnows, they alike rely upon thy care. "*That thou mayest give them their meat in due season;*" that is to say, when they need it and when it is ready for them. God has a time for all things, and does not feed his creatures by fits and starts; he gives them daily bread, and a quantity proportioned to their needs. This is all that any of us should expect; if even the brute creatures are content with a sufficiency we ought not to be more greedy than they.

28. "*That thou givest them they gather.*" God gives it, but they must gather it, and they are glad that he does so, for otherwise their gathering would be in vain. We often forget that animals and birds in their free life have to work to obtain food even as we do; and yet it is true with them as with us that our heavenly Father feeds all. When we see the chickens picking up the corn which the housewife scatters from her lap we have an apt illustration of the manner in which the Lord supplies the needs of all living things—he gives and they gather. "*Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.*" Here is divine liberality with its open hand filling needy creatures till they want no more: and here is divine omnipotence feeding a world by simply opening its hand. What should we do if that hand were closed? there would be no need to strike a blow, the mere closing of it would produce death by famine. Let us praise the open-handed Lord, whose providence and grace satisfy our mouths with good things.

29. "*Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled.*" So dependent are all living things upon God's smile, that a frown fills them with terror, as though convulsed with anguish. This is so in the natural world, and certainly not less so in the spiritual: saints when the Lord hides his face are in terrible perplexity. "*Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.*" The breath appears to be a trifling matter, and the air an impalpable substance of but small importance, yet, once withdrawn, the body loses all vitality, and crumbles back to the earth from which it was originally taken. All animals come under this law, and even the dwellers in the sea are not exempt from it. Thus dependent is all nature upon the will of the Eternal. Note here that death is caused by the act of God, "*thou takest* away their breath"; we are immortal till he bids us die, and so are even the little sparrows, who fall not to the ground without our Father.

30. "*Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.*" The loss of their breath destroys them, and by Jehovah's breath a new race is created. The works of the Lord are majestically simple, and are performed with royal ease—a breath creates, and its withdrawal destroys. If we read the word *spirit* as we have it in our version, it is also instructive, for we see the Divine Spirit going forth to create life in nature even as we see him in the realms of grace. At the flood the world was stripped of almost all life, yet how soon the power of God refilled the desolate places! In winter the earth falls into a sleep which makes her appear worn and old, but how readily does the Lord awaken her with the voice of spring, and make her put on anew the beauty of her youth. Thou, Lord, doest all things, and let glory be unto thy name.

31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works.

32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.

35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

31. "*The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever.*" His works may pass away, but not his glory. Were it only for what he has already done, the Lord deserves

to be praised without ceasing. His personal being and character ensure that he would be glorious even were all the creatures dead. "*The Lord shall rejoice in his works.*" He did so at the first, when he rested on the seventh day, and saw that everything was very good; he does so still in a measure where beauty and purity in nature still survive the Fall, and he will do so yet more fully when the earth is renovated, and the trail of the serpent is cleansed from the globe. This verse is written in the most glowing manner. The poet finds his heart gladdened by beholding the works of the Lord, and he feels that the Creator himself must have felt unspeakable delight in exercising so much wisdom, goodness, and power.

32. "*He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth.*" The Lord who has graciously displayed his power in acts and works of goodness might, if he had seen fit, have overwhelmed us with the terrors of destruction, for even at a glance of his eye the solid earth rocks with fear. "*He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.*" Sinai was altogether on a smoke when the Lord descended upon it. It was but a touch, but it sufficed to make the mountain dissolve in flame. Even our God is a consuming fire. Woe unto those who shall provoke him to frown upon them, they shall perish at the touch of his hand. If sinners were not altogether insensible a glance of the Lord's eye would make them tremble, and the touches of his hand in affliction would set their hearts on fire with repentance. "Of reason all things show some sign," except man's unfeeling heart.

33. "*I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live,*" or, literally, *in my lives.* Here and hereafter the Psalmist would continue to praise the Lord, for the theme is an endless one, and remains for ever fresh and new. The birds sang God's praises before men were created, but redeemed men will sing his glories when the birds are no more. Jehovah, who ever lives and makes us to live shall be for ever exalted, and extolled in the songs of redeemed men. "*I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.*" A resolve both happy for himself and glorifying to the Lord. Note the sweet title—*my God.* We never sing so well as when we know that we have an interest in the good things of which we sing, and a relationship to the God whom we praise.

34. "*My meditation of him shall be sweet.*" Sweet both to him and to me. I shall be delighted thus to survey his works and think of his person, and he will graciously accept my notes of praise. Meditation is the soul of religion. It is the tree of life in the midst of the garden of piety, and very refreshing is its fruit to the soul which feeds thereon. And as it is good towards man, so is it towards God. As the fat of the sacrifice was the Lord's portion, so are our best meditations due to the Most High and are most acceptable to him. We ought, therefore, both for our own good and for the Lord's honour to be much occupied with meditation, and that meditation should chiefly dwell upon the Lord himself: it should be "meditation *of him.*" For want of it much communion is lost and much happiness is missed. "*I will be glad in the Lord.*" To the meditative mind every thought of God is full of joy. Each one of the divine attributes is a well-spring of delight now that in Christ Jesus we are reconciled unto God.

35. "*Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.*" They are the only blot upon creation.

> "Every prospect pleases,
> And only man is vile."

In holy indignation the Psalmist would fain rid the world of beings so base as not to love their gracious Creator, so blind as to rebel against their Benefactor. He does but ask for that which just men look forward to as the end of history: for the day is eminently to be desired when in all God's kingdom there shall not remain a single traitor or rebel. The Christian way of putting it will be to ask that grace may turn sinners into saints, and win the wicked to the ways of truth. "*Bless thou the Lord, O my soul.*" Here is the end of the matter—whatever sinners may do, do thou, my soul, stand to thy colours, and be true to thy calling. Their silence must not silence thee, but rather provoke thee to redoubled praise to make up for their failures. Nor canst thou alone accomplish the work; others must come to thy help. O ye saints, "*Praise ye the Lord.*" Let your hearts cry HALLELUJAH,—for that is the word in the Hebrew. Heavenly word! Let it close the Psalm: for what more remains to be said or written? HALLELUJAH. *Praise ye the Lord.*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is an inspired "Oratorio of Creation."—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm is delightful, sweet, and instructive, as teaching us the soundest views of nature (la mas sana fisica), and the best method of pursuing the study of it, viz., by admiring with one eye the works of God, and with the other God himself, their Creator and Preserver.—*Sanchez, quoted by Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—It might almost be said that this one Psalm represents the image of the whole Cosmos. We are astonished to find in a lyrical poem of such a limited compass, the whole universe—the heavens and the earth—sketched with a few bold touches. The calm and toilsome labour of man, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same, when his daily work is done, is here contrasted with the moving life of the elements of nature. This contrast and generalisation in the conception of the mutual action of natural phenomena, and this retrospection of an omnipresent invisible power, which can renew the earth or crumble it to dust, constitute a solemn and exalted rather than a glowing and gentle form of poetic creation. —*A. Von Humboldt's Cosmos.*

Whole Psalm.—Its touches are indeed few, rapid—but how comprehensive and sublime! Is it God?—"He is clothed with light as with a garment," and when he walks abroad, it is on "the wings of the wind." The winds or lightnings?—They are his messengers or angels: "Stop us not," they seem to say; "the King's business requireth haste." The waters?—The poet shows them in flood, covering the face of the earth, and then as they now lie, enclosed within their embankments, to break forth no more for ever. The springs?—He traces them, by one inspired glance, as they run among the hills, as they give drink to the wild and lonely creatures of the wilderness, as they nourish the boughs, on which sing the birds, the grass, on which feed the cattle, the herb, the corn, the olive-tree, the vine, which fill man's mouth, cheer his heart, and make his face to shine. Then he skims with bold wing all lofty objects—the trees of the Lord on Lebanon, "full of sap,"—the fir-trees, and the storks which are upon them—the high hills, with their wild goats—and the rocks with their conies. Then he soars up to the heavenly bodies—the sun and the moon. Then he spreads abroad his wings in the darkness of the night, which "hideth not from him," and hears the beasts of the forest creeping abroad to seek their prey, and the roar of the lions to God for meat, coming up upon the winds of midnight. Then as he sees the shades and the wild beasts fleeing together, in emulous haste, from the presence of the morning sun, and man, strong and calm in its light as in the smile of God, hieing to his labour, he exclaims, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all!" He casts, next, one look at the ocean—a look glancing at the ships which go there, at the leviathan which plays there; and then piercing down to the innumerable creatures, small and great, which are found below its unlifted veil of waters. He sees, then, all the beings, peopling alike earth and sea, waiting for life and food around the table of their Divine Master —nor waiting in vain—till, lo! he hides his face, and they are troubled, die, and disappear in chaos and night. A gleam, next, of the great resurrection of nature and of man comes across his eye. "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth." But a greater truth still succeeds, and forms the climax of the Psalm—(a truth Humboldt, with all his admiration of it, notices not, and which gives a Christian tone to the whole)—"*The Lord shall rejoice in his works.*" He contemplates a yet more perfect Cosmos He is "to consume sinners" and sin "out of" this fair universe: and then, when man is wholly worthy of his dwelling, shall God say of both it and him, with a yet deeper emphasis than when he said it at first, and smiling at the same time a yet warmer and softer smile, "It is very good." And with an ascription of blessing to the Lord does the poet close this almost angelic descant upon the works of nature, the glory of God, and the prospects of man. It is not merely the unity of the Cosmos that he had displayed in it, but its progression, as connected with the parallel progress of man—its thorough dependence on one Infinite Mind—the "increasing purpose" which runs along it—and its final purification, when it shall blossom into "the bright consummate flower" of the new heavens and the new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness;"—this is the real burden and the peculiar glory of the 104th Psalm.—*George Gilfillan, in "The Bards of the Bible."*

Whole Psalm.—It is a singular circumstance in the composition of this Psalm, that each of the parts of the First Semichorus, after the first, begins with a participle. And these participles are accusatives, agreeing with יְהוָה, the object of the verb בָּרְכִי, at the beginning of the whole Psalm. Bless the Jehovah—putting on—extending—laying—constituting—travelling—making—setting—sending—watering—making—making. Thus, this transitive verb, in the opening of the Psalm, extending its government through the successive parts of the same semichorus, except the last, unites them all in one long period.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Whole Psalm.—As to the details,—the sections intervening between verses 2 and 31,—they may be read as a meditation upon creation and the first "ordering of the world," as itself the counterpart and foreshadowing of the new and restored order in the great Sabbath or Millenary period, or, it may be, they are actually descriptive of this—beginning with the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven (verse 3 with Ps. xviii. 9—11), attended with "the angels of his power" (verse 4 with 2 Thess. i. 7, *Gr.*); followed by the "establishing" of the earth, no more to be "moved" or "agitated" by the convulsions and disturbances which sin has caused: after which Nature is exhibited in the perfection of her beauty—all things answering the end of their creation: all the orders of the animal world in harmony with each other, and all at peace with man; all provided for by the varied produce of the earth, no longer cursed, but blessed, and again made fruitful by God, "on whom all wait . . . who openeth his hand and fills them with good"; and all his goodness meeting with its due acknowledgment from his creatures, who join in chorus to praise him, and say—"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. Hallelujah."—*William De Burgh.*

Verse 1.—"*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" A good man's work lieth most within doors, he is more taken up with his own soul, than with all the world besides; neither can he ever be alone so long as he hath God and his own heart to converse with.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—With what reverence and holy awe doth the Psalmist begin his meditation with that acknowledgment! "*O Lord, my God, thou art very great;*" and it is the joy of the saints that he who is their God is a great God: the grandeur of the prince is the pride and pleasure of all his good subjects.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.*" That is, as Jerome says, Thou art arrayed and adorned with magnificence and splendour; Thou art acknowledged to be glorious and illustrious by thy works, as a man by his garment. Whence it is clear that the greatness celebrated here is not the intrinsic but the exterior or revealed greatness of God.—*Lorinus.*

Verses 1—4.—Each created, redeemed, regenerated soul is bound to praise the Lord, the Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier; for that God the Son, who in the beginning made the worlds, and whose grace is ever carrying on his work to its perfect end by the operation of the Holy Ghost, has been revealed before us in his exceeding glory. He, as the eternal High-priest, hath put on the Urim and Thummim of majesty and honour, and hath clothed himself with light, as a priest clothes himself with his holy vestments: his brightness on the mount of transfiguration was but a passing glimpse of what he is now, ever hath been, and ever shall be. He is the true Light, therefore his angels are the angels of light, his children the children of light, his doctrine the doctrine of light. The universe is his tabernacle; the heavens visible and invisible are the curtains which shroud his holy place. He hath laid the beams and foundations of his holy of holies very high, even above the waters which are above the firmament. The clouds and the winds of the lower heaven are his chariot, upon which he stood when he ascended from Olivet, upon which he will sit when he cometh again.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 2.—"*Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment.*" In comparing *the light* with which he represents God as *arrayed* to "*a garment,*" he intimates, that although God is invisible, yet his glory is conspicuous enough. In respect of his essence, God undoubtedly dwells in light that is inaccessible; but as he irradiates the whole world by his splendour, this is the garment in which he, who is hidden in himself, appears in a manner visible to us. The knowledge of this truth is of the greatest importance. If men attempt to reach the infinite height to which God is exalted, although they fly above the clouds, they must fail in the midst of their

course. Those who seek to see him in his naked majesty are certainly very foolish. That we may enjoy the sight of him, he must come forth to view with his clothing; that is to say, we must cast our eyes upon the very beautiful fabric of the world in which he wishes to be seen by us, and not be too curious and rash in searching into his secret essence. Now, since God presents himself to us clothed with light, those who are seeking pretexts for their living without the knowledge of him, cannot allege in excuse of their slothfulness, that he is hidden in profound darkness. When it is said that *the heavens are a curtain*, it is not meant that under them God hides himself, but that by them his majesty and glory are displayed, being, as it were, his royal pavilion.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—"*With light.*" The first creation of God in the works of the days was the light of sense; the last was the light of reason; and his Sabbath work ever since is the illumination of the spirit.—*Francis Bacon.*

Verse 2.—"*Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.*" It is usual in the East, in the summer season, and upon all occasions when a large company is to be received, to have the court of the house sheltered from the heat of the weather by an umbrella or veil, which being expanded upon ropes from one side of the parapet wall to another may be folded or unfolded at pleasure. The Psalmist seems to allude to some covering of this kind in that beautiful expression of *stretching out the heavens like a curtain.*—*Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 2.—"*Like a curtain.*" With the same ease, by his mere word, with which a man spreads out a tent-curtain, Isai. liv. 2. Is. xl. 22 is parallel, "that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." Ver. 3 continues the description of the work of the second day. There lie at bottom, in the first clause, the words of Gen. i. 7: "God made the vaulted sky and divided between the waters which are under the vault and the waters which are above the vault." The waters above are the materials with which, or out of which, the structure is reared. To construct out of the movable waters a firm palace, the cloudy heaven, "firm as a molten glass" (Job xxxvii. 18), is a magnificent work of divine omnipotence.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"*Like a curtain.*" Because the Hebrews conceived of heaven as a temple and palace of God, that sacred azure was at once the floor of his, the roof of our, abode. Yet methinks the dwellers in tents ever loved best the figure of the heavenly tent. They represent God as daily spreading it out, and fastening it at the extremity of the horizon to the pillars of heaven, the mountains: it is to them a tent of safety, of rest, of a fatherly hospitality in which God lives with his creatures.—*Herder, quoted by Perowne.*

Verse 3.—The metaphorical representation of God, as *laying the beams of his chambers in the waters*, seems somewhat difficult to understand; but it was the design of the prophet, from a thing incomprehensible to us, to ravish us with the greater admiration. Unless *beams* be substantial and strong, they will not be able to sustain even the weight of an ordinary house. When, therefore, God makes the waters the foundation of his heavenly palace, who can fail to be astonished at a miracle so wonderful? When we take into account our slowness of apprehension, such hyperbolical expressions are by no means superfluous; for it is with difficulty that they awaken and enable us to attain even a slight knowledge of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—"*Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters;*" or, "*who layeth his upper chambers above the waters.*" His upper chamber (people in the East used to retire to the upper chamber when they wished for solitude) is reared up in bright æther on the slender foundation of rainy clouds.—*A. F. Tholuck.*

Verse 3.—"*Who layeth the beams,*" etc. "He flooreth his chambers with waters," i.e., the clouds make the flooring of his heavens.—*Zachary Mudge.*

Verse 3.—"*Who walketh upon the wings of the wind;*" see Ps. xviii. 10; which is expressive of his swiftness in coming to help and assist his people in time of need; who helps, and that right early; and may very well be applied both to the first and second coming of Christ, who came leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills, when he first came; and, when he comes a second time will be as a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices, Cant. ii. 8, and viii. 14. The Targum is, "upon the swift clouds, like the wings of an eagle"; hence, perhaps, it is the heathens have a notion that Jupiter is being carried in a chariot through the air when it thunders and lightens.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"*Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.*" In these words there is

an unequalled elegance; not, he *fleeth*—he *runneth*, but—he *walketh;* and that *on the very wings of the wind*; on the most impetuous element raised into the utmost rage, and sweeping along with incredible rapidity. We cannot have a more sublime idea of the Deity; serenely walking on an element of inconceivable swiftness, and, as it seems to us, uncontrollable impetuosity!—*James Hervey*, 1713-14—1758.

Verse 4.—"*Who maketh his angels spirits.*" Some render it, *Who maketh his angels* as *the winds*, to which they may be compared for their invisibility, they being not to be seen, no more than the wind, unless when they assume an external form; and for their penetration through bodies in a very surprising manner; see Acts xii. 6—10; and for their great force and power, being mighty angels, and said to excel in strength, Ps. ciii. 20; and for their swiftness in obeying the divine commands; so the Targum, "He maketh his messengers, or angels, swift as the wind."—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—"*Who maketh his angels spirits.*" The words, "*creating his angels spirits,*" may either mean 'creating them spiritual beings, not material beings,' or 'creating them winds'—*i.e.*, like the winds, invisible, rapid in their movements, and capable of producing great effects. The last mode of interpretation seems pointed out by the parallelism—"*and his ministers*"—or, 'servants'—who are plainly the same as his angels,—"*a flame of fire,*" *i.e.*, like the lightning. The statement here made about the angels seems to be this: 'They are created beings, who in their qualities bear a resemblance to the winds and the lightning.'

The argument deduced by Paul, in Heb. ii. 7, from this statement for the inferiority of the angels is direct and powerful:—He is the Son; they are the creatures of God. "*Only begotten*" is the description of his mode of existence; *made* is the description of theirs. *All* their powers are communicated powers; and however high they may stand in the scale of creation, it is in that scale they stand, which places them infinitely below him, who is so the Son of God as to be "God over all, blessed for ever"—*John Brown, in "An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews."*

Verse 4.—"*A flaming fire.*" Fire is expressive of irresistible power, immaculate holiness, and ardent emotion. It is remarkable that the seraphim, one class at least of these ministers, have their name from a root signifying to burn; and the altar, from which one of them took the live coal, Isai. vi. 6, is the symbol of the highest form of holy love.—*James G. Murphy, in "A Commentary on the Book of Psalms,"* 1875.

Verse 5.—"*Not be removed for ever.*" The stability of the earth is of God, as much as the being and existence of it. There have been many earthquakes or movings of the earth in several parts of it, but the whole body of the earth was never removed so much as one hair's breadth out of its place, since the foundations thereof were laid. *Archimedes*, the great mathematician, said, "If you will give me a place to set my engine on, I will remove the earth." It was a great brag; but the Lord hath laid it too fast for man's removing. Himself can make it quake and shake, he can move it when he pleaseth; but he never hath nor will remove it. He hath laid the foundations of the earth that it shall not be removed, nor can it be at all moved, but at his pleasure; and when it moves at any time, it is to mind the sons of men that they by their sins have moved him to displeasure.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—The philosophical mode of stating this truth may be seen in *Amédée Guillemin's* work entitled "THE HEAVENS." "How is it that though we are carried along with a vast rapidity by the motion of the earth, we do not ourselves perceive our movement? It is because the entire bulk of the earth, atmosphere, and clouds, participate in the movement. This constant velocity, with which all bodies situated on the surface of the earth are animated, would be the cause of the most terrible and general catastrophe that could be imagined, if, by any possibility, the rotation of the earth were abruptly to cease. Such an event would be the precursor of a most sweeping destruction of all organized beings. But the constancy of the laws of nature permits us to contemplate such a catastrophe without fear. It is demonstrated that the position of the poles of rotation on the surface of the earth is invariable. It has also been asked whether the velocity of the earth's rotation has changed, or, which comes to the same thing, if the length of the sidereal day and that of the solar day deduced from it have varied within the historical period? Laplace has replied to this question, and his demonstration shows that it has not varied the one hundredth of a second during the last two thousand years."

Verses 5—9.—

God of the earth and sea, Thou hast laid earth's foundations:
Because thy hand sustaineth,
It ever firm remaineth.
Once didst thou open its deep, hidden fountains,
And soon the rising waters stood above the mountains.

At thy rebuke they fled, at the voice of thy thunder,
The flood thy mandate heeded,
And hastily receded:
The waters keep the place Thou hast assigned them,
And in the hills and vales a channel Thou dost find them.

A limit Thou hast set, which they may not pass over;
The deep within bound inclosing,
Strong barriers interposing,
That its proud waves no more bring desolation,
And sweep away from earth each human habitation.

—*John Barton, in "The Book of Psalms in English Verse: a New Testament Paraphrase,"* 1871.

Verses 6—8.—"*Stood,*" "*fled,*" "*hasted away.*" The words of the Psalm put the original wondrous process graphically before the eye. The change of tense, too, from past to present, in verses 6, 7, 8, is expressive, and paints the scene in its progress. In ver. 6 "*stood*" should be STAND: in ver. 7 "*fled*" should be FLEE: and "*hasted away*" should be HASTE AWAY, as in the P. B. V.—"*The Speaker's Commentary.*"

Verse 7.—"*At thy rebuke they fled.*" The famous description of Virgil comes to mind, who introduces Neptune as sternly rebuking the winds for daring without his consent to embroil earth and heaven, and raise such huge mountain-waves: then swifter than the word is spoken, he calms the swollen seas, scatters the gathered clouds, and brings back the sun.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 7.—"*At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away;*" ran off with great precipitance: just as a servant, when his master puts on a stern countenance, and speaks to him in a thundering, menacing manner, hastes away from him to do his will and work. This is an instance of the mighty power of Christ; and by the same power he removed the waters of the deluge, when they covered the earth, and the tops of the highest hills; and rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry land; and drove back the waters of Jordan for the Israelites to pass through; and who also rebuked the Sea of Galilee when his disciples were in distress; and with equal ease can he and does he remove the depth of sin and darkness from his people at conversion; rebukes Satan, and delivers out of his temptations, when he comes in like a flood; and commands off the waters of affliction when they threaten to overwhelm; who are his servants, and come when he bids them come, and go when he bids them go.—*John Gill.*

Verse 7.—"*At the voice of thy thunder.*" It is very likely God employed the electric fluid as an agent in this separation.—*Ingram Cobbin.*

Verse 7.—"*They hasted away.*"

God said,
Be gather'd now, ye waters under heaven
Into one place, and let dry land appear.
Immediately the mountains huge appear
Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave
Into the clouds; their tops ascend the sky:
So high as heav'd the tumid hills, so low
Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,
Capacious bed of waters: Thither they
Hasted with glad precipitance, uproll'd
As drops on dust conglobing from the dry:
Part rise in crystal wall, or ridge direct,
For haste: such flight the great command impress'd
On the swift floods: As armies at the call
Of trumpet (for of armies thou hast heard)

Troop to their standard ; so the watery throng,
Wave rolling after wave, where way they found,
If steep, with torrent rapture, if through plain,
Soft-ebbing ; nor withstood them rock or hill ;
But they, or under ground, or circuit wide
With serpent errour wandering, found their way,
And on the washy ooze deep channels wore ;
Easy, ere God had bid the ground be dry,
All but within those banks, where rivers now
Stream, and perpetual draw their tumid train.
The dry land, Earth ; and the great receptacle
Of congregated waters, he called Seas :
And saw that it was good.

—*John Milton.*

Verse 8.—"*They go up by the mountains,*" etc. The Targum is, "They ascend out of the deep to the mountains" ; that is, the waters, when they went off the earth at the divine orders, steered their course up the mountains, and then went down by the valleys to the place appointed for them ; they went over hills and dales, nothing could stop them or retard their course till they came to their proper place ; which is another instance of the almighty power of the Son of God.—*John Gill.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou hast set a bound,*" etc. The Baltic Sea, in our own time, inundated large tracts of land, and did great damage to the Flemish people and other neighbouring nations. By an instance of this kind we are warned what would be the consequence, were the restraint imposed upon the sea, by the hand of God, removed. How is it that we have not thereby been swallowed up together, but because God has held in that outrageous element by his word ? In short, although the natural tendency of the waters is to cover the earth, yet this will not happen, because God has established, by his word, a counteracting law, and as his truth is eternal, this law must remain stedfast.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou hast set a bound,*" etc. In these words the Psalmist gives us three things clearly concerning the waters. First, that once (he means it not of the deluge, but of the chaos), the waters did cover the whole earth, till God by a word of command sent them into their proper channels, that the dry land might appear. Secondly, that the waters have a natural propension to return back and cover the earth again. Thirdly, that the only reason why they do not return back and cover the whole earth is, because God hath "*set a bound, that they cannot pass.*" They would be boundless and know no limits, did not God bound and limit them. Wisdom giveth us the like eulogium of the power of God in this, Prov. viii. 29, "He gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment." What cannot he command, who sendeth his commandment to the sea and is obeyed ? Some great princes, heated with rage and drunken with pride, have cast shackles into the sea, as threatening it with imprisonment and bondage if it would not be quiet ; but the sea would not be bound by them ; they have also awarded so many strokes to be given the sea as a punishment of its contumacy and rebellion against either their commands or their designs. How ridiculously ambitious have they been, who would needs pretend to such a dominion ! Many princes have had great power at and upon the sea, but there was never any prince had any power over the sea ; that's a flower belonging to no crown but the crown of heaven.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou hast set a bound,*" etc. A few feet of increase in the ocean wave that pursues its tidal circuit round the globe, would desolate cities and provinces innumerable. . . . But with what immutable and safe control God has marked its limits ! You shall observe a shrub or a flower on a bank of verdure that covers a sea cliff, or hangs down in some hollow ; nay, you shall mark a pebble on the beach, you shall lay a shred of gossamer upon it ; and this vast, ungovernable, unwieldy, tempestuous element shall know how to draw a line of moisture by its beating spray at the very edge, or on the very point of your demarcation, and then draw off its forces, not having passed one inch or hand's breadth across the appointed margin. And all this exact restraint and measurement in the motion of the sea, by that mysterious power shot beyond unfathomable depths of space, from orbs rolling in ether ! a power itself how prodigious, how irresistible, yet how invisible, how gentle, how with minutest exactness measured and exerted.—*George B. Cheever, in "Voices of Nature to her Foster Child, the Soul of Man,"* 1852.

Verse 9.—" *A bound that they may not pass over.*"

Now stretch your eye off shore, o'er waters made
To cleanse the air, and bear the world's great trade,
To rise and wet the mountains near the sun,
Then back into themselves in rivers run,
Fulfilling mighty uses, far and wide,
Through earth, in air, or here, as ocean-tide.
Ho! how the giant heaves himself, and strains
And flings to break his strong and viewless chains;
Foams in his wrath; and at his prison doors,
Hark! hear him! how he beats, and tugs, and roars,
As if he would break forth again, and sweep
Each living thing within his lowest deep.
—*Richard Henry Dana* (1787—).

Verse 10.—" *He sendeth the springs into the valleys,*" etc. Having spoken of the salt waters, he treats afterwards of the sweet and potable, commending the wisdom and providence of God, that from the lower places of the earth and the hidden veins of the mountains, he should cause the fountains of water to gush forth.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 10.—" *He sendeth the springs into the valleys.*" The more of humility the more of grace; if in valleys some hollows are deeper than others the waters collect in them.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 10.—" *He sendeth the springs into the valleys.*" Men cut places for rivers to run in, but none but God can cut a channel to bring spiritual streams into the soul. The Psalmist speaks of the sending forth of springs as one great act of the providence of God. It is a secret mystery which those that have searched deepest into nature cannot resolve us in, how those springs are fed, how they are maintained and nourished, so as to run without ceasing in such great streams as many of them make. Philosophy cannot show the reason of it. The Psalmist doth it well: *God sends them into the valleys*, his providence and power keeps them continually running: he that would have his soul watered must go to God in prayer.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 10.—" *Which run among the hills.*" That is, the *streams* or *springs* run. In many a part of the world can be found a Sault, a *dancing water*, and a Minne-ha-ha, a *laughing water*. The mountain streams *walk*, and *run*, and leap, and praise the Lord.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 10, 13, 14.—" HE." " HE." " HE."

All things are here of *Him*; from the black pines,
Which are his shade on high, and the loud roar
Of torrents, where he listeneth, to the vines
Which slope his green path downward to the shore,
Where the bow'd waters meet him, and adore.
Kissing his feet with murmurs.
—*Byron.*

Verse 11.—" *The wild asses quench their thirst.*" It is particularly remarked of the *asses*, that though they are dull and stupid creatures, yet by Providence they are taught the way to the waters, in the dry and sandy deserts, and that there is no better guide for the thirsty travellers to follow, than to observe the herds of them descending to the streams.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 11.—" *The wild asses quench their thirst.*" As evening approached we saw congregated, near a small stream, what appeared to be a large company of dismounted Arabs, their horses standing by them. As we were already near them, and could not have escaped the watchful eye of the Bedouins, we prepared for an encounter. We approached cautiously, and were surprised to see that the horses still remained without their riders; we drew still nearer, when they galloped off towards the desert. They were *wild asses.*—*Henry Austen Layard.*

Verse 12.—" *By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation.*" Never shall I forget my first ride from Riha to Ain Sultân; our way lay right across the oasis evoked by the waters. It may be that the contrast with the arid desert of the previous day heightened the feelings of present enjoyment, but certainly they echoed the words of Josephus,—a " Divine region." At one time I was reminded of Epping Forest, and then of a neglected orchard with an undergrowth of luxuriant vegetation.

Large thorn bushes and forest shrubs dotted the plain on every side. In some places the ground was carpeted with flowers, and every bush seemed vocal with the cheerful twittering of birds. I use the word "twittering," because I do not think that I ever heard a decided warble during the whole time I was in Syria. Coleridge speaks of the "merry nightingale,"

> "That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
> With fast, quick warble, his delicious notes."

The song of my little Syrian friends seemed to consist of a series of cheerful chirps. Other travellers have been more fortunate. Bonar speaks of the note of the cuckoo; Dr. Robinson of the nightingale. Lord Lindsay tells us of the delight of an evening spent by the Jordan, "the river murmuring along, and the nightingale singing from the trees." Canon Tristram, describing the scenery near Tell-el-Kady, says that "the bulbul and nightingale vied in rival song in the branches above, audible over the noise of the torrent below." In the face of these statements it seems to me remarkable, considering the innumerable references to nature in the Bible, that the singing of birds is only mentioned three times. In the well-known passage which so exquisitely depicts a Syrian spring, we read "the time of the singing of birds is come" (Song of Solomon ii. 12). The Psalmist in speaking of the mighty power and wondrous Providence of God, mentions the springs in "the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches." Canon Tristram commenting on this passage, says, that it may refer especially to the "bulbul and the nightingale, both of which throng the trees that fringe the Jordan and abound in all the wooded valleys, filling the air in early spring with the rich cadence of their notes."—*James Wareing Bardsley, in "Illustrative Texts,"* 1876.

Verse 12.—"*By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation,*"etc. To such birds may saints be compared; being, like them, weak, defenceless, and timorous; liable to be taken in snares, and sometimes wonderfully delivered; as well as given to wanderings and strayings; and to fowls *of the heaven*, being heaven-born souls, and partakers of the heavenly calling. These have their habitation by the fountain of Jacob, by the river of divine love, beside the still waters of the sanctuary, where they sing the songs of Zion, the songs of electing, redeeming, and calling grace.—*John Gill.*

Verse 12.—"*The fowls . . . which sing among the branches.*" The music of birds was the first song of thanksgiving which was offered from the earth, before man was formed.—*John Wesley.*

Verse 12.—"*The fowls of the heaven which sing among the branches.*" How do the blackbird and thrassel [thrush], with their melodious voices, bid welcome to the cheerful spring, and in their fixed months warble forth such ditties as no art or instrument can reach to? . . . . But the nightingale, another of my airy creatures, breathes such sweet loud music out of her little instrumental throat, that it makes mankind to think miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight, when the very labourer sleeps securely, should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and redoubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, "Lord, what music hast thou provided for the saints in heaven, when thou affordest bad man such music on earth?"—*Izaak Walton.*

Verse 12.—

> While o'er their heads the hazels hing,
> The little birdies blithely sing,
> Or lightly flit on wanton wing
> In the birks of Aberfeldy.
> The braes ascend like lofty wa's,
> The foaming stream deep-roaring fa's,
> O'erhung wi' fragrant spreading shaws,
> The birks of Aberfeldy.
>
> —*Robert Burns*, 1759—1796.

Verse 13.—"*The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works;*" that is, with the rain, which is thy work, causing it to be showered down when thou pleasest upon

the earth; or, with the rain, which proceeds from the clouds; or, with the fruits, which thou causeth the earth by this means to bring forth.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 14.—"*He causeth the grass to grow.*" Surely it should humble men to know that all human power united cannot make anything, not even the grass to grow.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 14.—"*For the cattle,*" etc. To make us thankful, let us consider, 1. That God not only provides for us, but for our servants; the cattle that are of use to man, are particularly taken care of; grass is made to grow in great abundance for them, when "the young lions," that are not for the service of man, often "lack, and suffer hunger." 2. That our food is nigh us, and ready to us: having our habitation on the earth, there we have our storehouse, and depend not on "the merchant ships that bring food from afar," Prov. xxxi. 14. 3. That we have even from the products of the earth, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight, so good a master do we serve. Doth nature call for something to support it, and repair its daily decays? Here is "*bread which strengtheneth man's heart,*" and is therefore called the staff of life; let none that have that complain of want. Doth nature go further, and covet something pleasant? Here is "*wine that maketh glad the heart,*" refresheth the spirits, and exhilarates them, when it is soberly and moderately used; that we may not only go through our business, but go through it cheerfully; it is a pity that that should be abused to overcharge the heart, and disfit men for their duty, which was given to revive their heart, and quicken them in their duty. Is nature yet more humoursome, and doth it crave something for ornament too? Here is that also out of the earth; "*oil to make the face to shine,*" that the countenance may not only be cheerful, but beautiful, and we may be the more acceptable to one another.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—"*For the service of man.*" The common version of these words can only mean for his benefit or use, a sense not belonging to the Hebrew word, which, as well as its verbal root, is applied to man's servitude or bondage as a tiller of the ground (Gen. iii. 17—19), and has here the sense of husbandry or cultivation, as in Exod. i. 14, Lev. xxv. 39, it has that of compulsory or servile labour, the infinitive in the last clause indicates the object for which labour is imposed on man.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 14.—"*That he may bring forth food out of the earth.*" The Israelites at the feast of the Passover and before the breaking of bread, were accustomed to say, "Praise be to the Lord our God, thou King of the world, who hath brought forth our bread from the earth": and at each returning harvest we ought to be filled with gratitude, as often as we again receive the valuable gift of bread. It is the most indispensable and necessary means of nourishment of which we never tire, whilst other food, the sweeter it is, the more easily it surfeits: everybody, the child and the old man, the beggar and the king, like bread. We remember the unfortunate man, who was cast on the desert isle, famishing with hunger, and who cried at the sight of a handful of gold, "Ah, it is only gold!" He would willingly have exchanged for a handful of bread, this to him, useless material, which in the mind of most men is above all price. O let us never sin against God, by lightly esteeming bread! Let us gratefully accept the sheaves we gather, and thankfully visit the barns which preserve them; that we may break bread to the hungry, and give to the thirsty from the supplies God has given us. Let us never sit down to table without asking God to bless the gifts we receive from his gracious hand, and never eat bread without thinking of Christ our Lord, who calls himself the living bread, who came down from heaven to give life unto the world. And above all, may we never go to the table of the Lord without enjoying, through the symbols of bread and wine, his body and blood, whereby we receive strength to nourish our spiritual life! Yes, Lord, thou satisfiest both body and soul, with bread from earth and bread from heaven. Praise be to thy holy name, our hearts and mouths shall be full of thy praises for time and eternity!—*Frederick Arndt, in "Lights of the Morning,"* 1861.

Verse 15.—When thou wert taken out of the womb, what a stately palace did he bring thee into, the world, which thou foundest prepared and ready furnished with all things for thy maintenance, as Canaan was to the children of Israel; a stately house thou buildedst not, trees thou plantedst not, a rich canopy spangled, spread as a curtain over thy head; he sets up a taper for thee to work by, the sun, till thou art weary (v. 23), and then it goes down without thy bidding, for it *knows*

its going down" (v. 19); then he draws a curtain over half the world, that men may go to rest: *"Thou causest darkness, and it is night"* (v. 20). As an house this world is, so curiously contrived that to every room of it, even to every poor village, springs do come as pipes to find thee water (v. 10, 11). The pavement of which house thou treadest on, and it brings forth thy food (v. 14), *"Bread for strength, wine to cheer thy heart, oil to make thy face to shine"* (v. 15). Which three are there synecdochically put for all things needful to strength, ornament, and delight.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 15.—*"Wine that maketh glad the heart of man."* The wine mentioned had the quality of fermented liquors; it gladdened the heart. Thus, if taken to excess, it would have led to intoxication. The Hebrew term is *yayin*, answering to the Greek *oinos*, and including every form which the juice of the grape might be made to assume as a beverage. It was this of which Noah partook when he became drunken (Gen. ix. 21, 24). Melchizedek brought it forth to Abraham (Gen. xiv. 18). Lot's daughters gave it to their father and made him drunk (Gen. xix. 35). From this the Nazarite was to separate himself (Num. vi. 3—20). This is the highly intoxicating drink so often mentioned by Isaiah (v. 11—22, xxii. 13, xxviii. 1—7, etc.); but just because of this, it might become to man one of those mercies in connection with the use of which he was to exercise constant self-control. Taken to excess it was a curse; enjoyed as from God, it was something for which man was called to be thankful.—*John Duns.*

Verse 15.—*"And oil to make his face to shine."* Observe, after the mention of wine, he speaks of oil or ointment, because at the banquets among the Jews and other Eastern people, as afterwards among the Greeks and Romans, there was a frequent use of ointments. The reasons why ointment was poured upon the head were: To avoid intoxication: To improve the health: To contribute to pleasure and delight. Homer often refers to this custom, and there is an allusion to it by Solomon, Eccles. ix. 8, *"Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment."* See also Ps. xxiii. 5.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 15.—The ancients made much use of oil to beautify their persons. We read of *"oil to make man's face to shine."* Ruth anointed herself for decoration (Ruth iii. 3), and the woman of Tekoah and the prophet Daniel omitted the use of oil for the contrary reason (2 Sam. xiv. 3; Dan. x. 3). The custom is also mentioned in Matt. vi. 17; Luke vii. 46.—*Ambrose Serle in "Horæ Solitariæ,"* 1815.

Verse 15.—*"Bread which strengtheneth man's heart."* In hunger not only the *strength* is prostrated, but the *natural courage* is also abated. *Hunger* has no enterprise, emulation, nor courage. But when, in such circumstances, a little bread is received into the stomach, even before concoction can have time to prepare it for nutriment, the *strength* is restored, and the *spirits* revived. This is a surprising effect; and it has not yet been satisfactorily accounted for.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 15.—*"Bread which strengtheneth man's heart."* In Homer's Odyssey we meet with the expression "Bread, the marrow of men."

Verse 15.—*"Man's heart."* It is not without reason that instead of the word האדם *of Adam*, which was used in v. 14, there is here employed the word אנוש, an *infirm* and *feeble* man, because he mentions those nourishments of which there was no need before the fall, and which are specially suitable to nourish and exhilarate feeble man.—*Venema.*

Verse 15.—If the transitory earth is so full of the good things of God, what will we have when we come to the land of the living?—*Starke, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 16.—*"The trees of the Lord."* The transition which the prophet makes from men to trees is as if he had said, It is not to be wondered at, if God so bountifully nourishes men who are created after his own image, since he does not grudge to extend his care even to trees. By *"the trees of the Lord,"* is meant those which are high and of surpassing beauty; for God's blessing is more conspicuous in them. It seems scarcely possible for any juice of the earth to reach so great a height, and yet they renew their foliage every year.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 16.—*"The trees of the Lord"* may be so named from their size and stature —this name being used as a superlative in the Hebrew, or to denote aught which is great and extraordinary.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 16.—*"The trees of the Lord,"* etc. The cedars are indeed the trees of the Lord. They are especially his planting. There is a sense in which, above all other trees, they belong to him, and shadow forth in a higher degree his glory. The peculiar expression of the text, however, must not be limited to one particular species of

cedar. . . . Encouraged by this Scripture usage, I shall use the word in a somewhat wider sense than the conventional one, to denote three remarkable examples which may be selected from the *coniferæ* to show the power and wisdom of God as displayed in the trees of the forest. These are, the cedar of Lebanon, the cedar of the Himalayas, and the cedar of the Sierra Nevada. The epithet which the Psalmist applies to one, may most appropriately be applied to all of them; and there are various reasons why the Lord may be said to have a special interest and property in each of them, to a few of which our attention may now be profitably directed.

1. They are "trees of the Lord" on account of the *peculiarities of their structure.* In common with all the pine tribe, they are exceptional in their organization. They reveal a new idea of the creative mind. 2. The cedars are "the trees of the Lord" on account of the *antiquity of their type.* It was of this class of trees that the pre-Adamite forests were principally composed. 3. The cedars are the "trees of the Lord," on account of the *majesty of their appearance.* It is the tree, *par excellence,* of the Bible—the type of all forest vegetation.—*Condensed from Hugh Macmillan's "Bible Teachings in Nature,"* 1868.

Verse 16.—"*Full of sap.*" The cedar has a store of resin. It flows from wounds made in the bark, and from the scales of the cones, and is abundant in the seeds. Both the resin and the wood were much valued by the ancients. The Romans believed that the gum which exuded from the cedar had the power of rendering whatever was steeped in it incorruptible; and we are told that the books of Numa, the early king of Rome, which were found uninjured in his tomb, five hundred years after his death, had been steeped in oil of cedar. The Egyptians also used the oil in embalming their dead.—*Mary and Elizabeth Kirby, in "Chapters on Trees,"* 1873.

Verse 17.—"*Birds.*" The word rendered "*birds*" here is the word which in Ps. lxxxiv. 3 is translated *sparrow,* and which is commonly used to denote *small* birds. Comp. Lev. xiv. 4 (*margin*), and 5—7, 49—53. It is used, however, to denote birds of any kind. See Gen. vii. 14; Ps. viii. 8; xi. 1; cxlviii. 10.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 17.—"*The stork*" is instanced as one of the largest of nest-building birds, as the cedars of Lebanon were introduced in verse 16 as being the largest of uncultivated trees.—*A. C. Jennings and W. H. Lowe, in "The Psalms, with Introductions and Critical Notes,"* 1875.

Verse 17.—"*The stork, the fir trees are her house.*" In many cases the stork breeds among old ruins, and under such circumstances it is fond of building its nest on the tops of pillars or towers, the summits of arches, and similar localities. When it takes up its abode among mankind, it generally selects the breeding-places which have been built for it by those who know its taste, but it frequently chooses the top of a chimney, or some such locality. When it is obliged to build in spots where it can find neither rocks nor buildings, it builds on trees, and, like the heron, is sociable in its nesting, a whole community residing in a clump of trees. It is not very particular about the kind of tree, provided that it be tolerably tall, and strong enough to bear the weight of its enormous nest; and the reader will at once see that the *fir trees* are peculiarly fitted to be the houses for the stork.

The particular species of *fir tree* to which the Psalmist alludes is probably the Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*), which comes next to the great cedars of Lebanon in point of size. It was this tree that furnished the timber and planks for Solomon's temple and palace, a timber which was evidently held in the greatest estimation. This tree fulfils all the conditions which a stork would require in nest-building. It is lofty, and its boughs are sufficiently horizontal to form a platform for the nest, and strong enough to sustain it. On account of its value and the reckless manner in which it has been cut down without new plantations being formed, the Aleppo pine has vanished from many parts of Palestine wherein it was formerly common, and would afford a dwelling-place for the stork. There are, however, several other species of fir which are common in various parts of the country, each species flourishing in the soil best suited to it so that the stork would never be at a loss to find a nesting-place in a country which furnished so many trees suitable to its purposes.—*J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."*

Verse 17.—"*The stork, the fir trees are her house.*" Well-wooded districts are for the most part the favourite resorts of the storks, as they constantly select trees both for breeding purposes and as resting-places for the night; some few species, however, prove exceptions to this rule, and make their nests on roofs, chimneys, or

other elevated situations in the immediate vicinity of men.—*From "Cassell's Book of Birds." From the Text of Dr. Brehm. By T. R. Jones, F.R.S.*

Verse 17.—"*The fir trees.*" The doors of the temple were made of the fir tree; even of that tree which was a type of the humanity of Jesus Christ. Consider Heb. ii. 14. The fir tree is also the house of the stork, that unclean bird, even as Christ is a harbour and shelter for sinners. "*As for the stork,*" saith the text, "*the fir trees are her house;*" and Christ saith to the sinners that see their want of shelter, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." He is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble. He is, as the doors of fir of the temple, the inlet of God's house, to God's presence, and to a partaking of his glory. Thus God did of old, by similitudes, teach his people his way.—*John Bunyan, in "Solomon's Temple Spiritualized."*

Verse 17.—

The eagle and the stork
On cliffs and cedar-tops their eyries build.

—*John Milton.*

Verse 18.—"*The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats.*" There is scarcely any doubt that the *Azel* of the Old Testament is the *Arabian Ibex* or *Beden* (*Capra Nubiana*). This animal is very closely allied to the well-known Ibex of the Alps, or Steinbock, but may be distinguished from it by one or two slight differences, such as the black beard and the slighter make of the horns, which moreover have three angles instead of four, as is the case with the Alpine Ibex. . . . . The colour of its coat resembles so nearly that of the rocks, that an inexperienced eye would see nothing but bare stones and sticks where a practised hunter would see numbers of *Beden*, conspicuous by their beautifully curved horns.

The agility of the *Beden* is extraordinary. Living in the highest and most craggy parts of the mountain ridge, it flings itself from spot to spot with a recklessness that startles one who has not been accustomed to the animal, and the wonderful certainty of its foot. It will, for example, dash at the face of a perpendicular precipice that looks as smooth as a brick wall, for the purpose of reaching a tiny ledge which is hardly perceptible, and which is some fifteen feet or so above the spot whence the animal sprang. Its eye, however, has marked certain little cracks and projections on the face of the rock, and as the animal makes its leap, it takes these little points of vantage in rapid succession, just touching them as it passes upwards, and by the slight stroke of its foot keeping up the original impulse of its leap. Similarly the Ibex comes sliding and leaping down precipitous sides of the mountains, sometimes halting with all the four feet drawn together, on a little projection scarcely larger than a penny, and sometimes springing boldly over a wild crevasse, and alighting with exact precision upon a projecting piece of rock that seems scarcely large enough to sustain a rat comfortably.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 18.—"*Conies.*" When we were exploring the rocks in the neighbourhood of the convent, I was delighted to point attention to a family or two of the *Wubar*, engaged in their gambols on the heights above us. Mr. Smith and I watched them narrowly, and were much amused with the liveliness of their motions, and the quickness of their retreat within the clefts of the rock when they apprehended danger. We were, we believe, the first European travellers who actually noticed this animal, now universally admitted to be the shaphan, or coney of Scripture, within the proper bounds of the Holy Land; and we were not a little gratified by its discovery. . . . . The preparer of the skin mistook it for a rabbit, though it is of a stronger build, and of a duskier colour, being of a dark brown. It is destitute of a tail, and has some bristles at its mouth, over its head, and down its back, along the course of which there are traces of light and dark shade. In its short ears, small, black, and naked feet, and pointed snout, it resembles the hedgehog. It does not, however, belong to the insectivora, but, though somewhat anomalous, it is allied to the pachydermata, among which it is now classed by naturalists.—*John Wilson, in "The Lands of the Bible,"* 1847.

Verse 18.—"*Conies.*" People used to think the conies of Solomon the same as our rabbits, which are indeed "a feeble folk," but which do not "make their houses in the rock." Now that the *coney* is ascertained to be the Damon or Hyrax,—a shy defenceless creature, which lurks among the cliffs of the mountains, and darts into its den at the least approach of danger, the words of Agar acquire their full significance.—*James Hamilton.*

Verse 19.—"*He appointed the moon for seasons.*" When it is said, that the *moon was appointed to distinguish seasons,* interpreters agree that this is to be understood of the ordinary and appointed feasts. The Hebrews having been accustomed to compute their months by the moon, this served for regulating their festival days and assemblies, both sacred and political. The prophet, I have no doubt, by the figure synecdoche, puts a part for the whole, intimating that the moon not only distinguishes the days from the nights, but likewise marks out the festival days, measures years and months, and, in fine, answers many useful purposes, inasmuch as the distinction of times is taken from her course.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 19.—"*He appointed the moon for seasons.*" "He made the moon to serve in her season, for a declaration of times, and a sign to the world. From the moon is the sign of feasts, a light that decreaseth in her perfection. The month is called after her name, increasing wonderfully in her changing, being an instrument of the armies above, shining in the firmament of heaven; the beauty heaven, the glory of the stars, an ornament giving light in the highest places of the Lord."—*Ecclesiasticus x.* 7.

Verse 19.—"*The sun knoweth his going down.*" The second clause is not to be rendered in the common way, "*The sun knoweth his going down,*" but according to the usual idiom, *He,* i.e., *God knoweth the going down of the sun.* Not to mention the unwonted and harsh form of the phrase, by which *the knowledge of his setting* is attributed to the sun, there appears no reason why it should be here used, since it is destitute of force,* or why he should turn from God as a cause, to the moving sun, when both before and afterwards he speaks of God, saying, "*He appointed the moon,*" "*Thou makest darkness.*" Far more fitly, therefore, is he to be understood as speaking of God, as before and after, so in the middle, of the directing cause of the appearances of the moon, the setting of the sun, and the spread of darkness. God also is said more correctly to *know* the going down of the sun, than the sun himself, since to *know* has in effect the force of to *care for,* as is often the case in other passages.—*Venema.*

Verse 20.—"*Thou makest darkness.*" Some observe with Augustine that in Genesis it is said that *light was made,* but not that *darkness was made,* because darkness is nothing, it is mere non-existence. But in this passage it is also said that *night was made;* and the Lord calls himself the *Maker of light and the Creator of darkness.*—*Lorinus.*

Verse 20.—"*Thou makest darkness,*" etc. It would be interesting to consider the wonderful adaptation of the length of the day to the health of man, and to the vigour and perhaps existence of the animal and vegetable tribes. The rejoicing of life depends so much upon the grateful alternation of day and night. For a full consideration of this subject I must refer the reader to Dr. Whewell's Bridgewater Treatise. The subjoined extracts may, however, aid reflection. "The terrestrial day, and consequently the length of the cycle of light and darkness, being what it is, we find various parts of the constitution both of animals and vegetables, which have a periodical character in their functions, corresponding to the diurnal succession of external conditions; and we find that the length of the period, as it exists in their constitution, coincides with the length of the natural day. The alternation of processes which takes place in plants by day and by night is less obvious, and less obviously essential to their well-being, than the annual series of changes. But there are abundance of facts which serve to show that such an alternation is part of the vegetable economy. . . .

"Animals also have a period in their functions and habits; as in the habits of waking, sleeping, etc., and their well-being appears to depend on the coincidence of this period with the length of the natural day. We see that in the day, as it now is, all animals find seasons for taking food and repose, which agree perfectly with their health and comfort. Some animals feed during the day, as nearly all the ruminating animals and land birds; others feed only in the twilight, as bats and owls, and are called *crepuscular;* while many beasts of prey, aquatic birds, and others, take their food during the night. These animals, which are nocturnal feeders, are diurnal sleepers, while those which are crepuscular sleep partly in the night and partly in the day; but in all, the complete period of these functions is twenty-

* This excellent expounder cannot see the beauty of the poetic expression, and so proses in this fashion.

four hours. Man in like manner, in all nations and ages, takes his principal rest once in twenty-four hours; and the regularity of this practice seems most suitable to his health, though the duration of time allotted to repose is extremely different in different cases. So far as we can judge, this period is of a length beneficial to the human frame, independently of the effect of external agents. In the voyages recently made into high northern latitudes, where the sun did not rise for three months, the crews of the ships were made to adhere, with the utmost punctuality, to the habit of retiring to rest at nine, and rising a quarter before six; and they enjoyed, under circumstances apparently the most trying, a state of salubrity quite remarkable. This shows, that according to the common constitution of such men, the cycle of twenty-four hours is very commodious, though not imposed on them by external circumstances."—*William Whewell* (1795—1866).

Verse 21.—"*The young lions . . . . seek their meat from God.*" God feeds not only sheep and lambs, but wolves and lions. It is a strange expression that young lions when they roar after their prey, should be said to *seek their meat of God;* implying that neither their own strength nor craft could feed them without help from God. The strongest creatures left to themselves cannot help themselves. As they who fear God are fed by a special providence of God, so all creatures are fed and nourished by a general providence. The lion, though he be strong and subtle, yet cannot get his own prey; we think a lion might shift for himself; no, 'tis the Lord that provides for him; the young lions seek their meat of God. Surely, then, the mightiest of men cannot live upon themselves: as it is of God that we receive life and breath, so all things needful for the maintenance of this life.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 21.—"*The young lions roar.*" The roar of a lion, according to Burchell, sometimes resembles the sound which is heard at the moment of an earthquake; and is produced by his laying his head on the ground, and uttering a half-stifled growl, by which means the noise is conveyed along the earth. The instant it is heard by the animals reposing in the plains, they start up in alarm, fly in all directions, and even rush into the danger which they seek to avoid.—*From Cassell's Popular Natural History.*

Verse 21.—The roaring of the young lions, like the crying of the ravens, is interpreted, *asking their meat of God.* Doth God put this construction upon the language of mere nature, even in venomous creatures, and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it be weak and broken groanings which cannot be uttered?—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 22.—"*The sun ariseth . . . . they lay them down in their dens.*" As wild beasts since the fall of man may seem to be born to do us hurt, and to rend and tear in pieces all whom they meet with, this savage cruelty must be kept under check by the providence of God. And in order to keep them shut up within their dens, the only means which he employs is to inspire them with terror, simply by the light of the sun. This instance of divine goodness, the prophet commends the more on account of its necessity; for were it otherwise, men would have no liberty to go forth to engage in the labours and business of life.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 23.—"*Man goeth forth unto his work,*" etc. Man alone, among all creatures, in distinction from the involuntary instruments of the Almighty, has a real daily work. He has a definite part to play in life; and can recognise it.—*Carl Bernhard Moll, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 23.—When the light of truth and righteousness shineth, error and iniquity fly away before it, and the "roaring lion" himself departeth for a time. Then the Christian *goeth forth to the work* of his salvation, and to his *labour* of love, until *the evening* of old age warns him to prepare for his last repose, in faith of a joyful resurrection.—*George Horne.*

Verse 24.—"*O Lord, how manifold are thy works!*" etc. If the number of the creatures be so exceeding great, how great, nay, immense, must needs be the power and wisdom of him who formed them all! For (that I may borrow the words of a noble and excellent author) as it argues and manifests more skill by far in an artificer, to be able to frame both *clocks* and *watches*, and *pumps* and *mills*, and *granadoes* and *rockets*, than he could display in making but one of those sorts of

engines; so the Almighty discovers more of his wisdom in forming such a vast multitude of different sorts of creatures, and all with admirable and irreprovable art, than if he had created but a few; for this declares the greatness and unbounded capacity of his understanding. Again, the same superiority of knowledge would be displayed by contriving engines of the same kind, or for the same purposes, after different fashions, as the moving of clocks by springs instead of weights: so the infinitely wise Creator hath shown in many instances that he is not confined to one only instrument for the working one effect, but can perform the same thing by divers means. So, though feathers seem necessary for flying, yet hath he enabled several creatures to fly without them, as two sorts of fishes, one sort of lizard, and the bat, not to mention the numerous tribes of flying insects. In like manner, though the air-bladder in fishes seems necessary for swimming, yet some are so formed as to swim without it, *viz.*, First, the *cartilaginous* kind, which by what artifice they poise themselves, ascend and descend at pleasure, and continue in what depth of water they list, is as yet unknown to us. Secondly, the *cetaceous* kind, or sea-beasts, differing in nothing almost but the want of feet. The air which in respiration these receive into their lungs, may serve to render their bodies equiponderant to the water; and the construction or dilatation of it, by the help of the diaphragm and muscles of respiration, may probably assist them to ascend or descend in the water, by a light impulse thereof with their fins. . . .

Again, the great use and convenience, the beauty and variety of so many springs and fountains, so many brooks and rivers, so many lakes and standing pools of water, and these so scattered and dispersed all the earth over, that no great part of it is destitute of them, without which it must, without a supply other ways, be desolate and void of inhabitants, afford abundant arguments of wisdom and counsel: that springs should break forth on the sides of mountains most remote from the sea: that there should way be made for rivers through straits and rocks, and subterraneous vaults, so that one would think that nature had cut a way on purpose to derive the water, which else would overthrow and drown whole countries.—*John Ray* (1678–1705), *in "The Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation."*

Verse 24.—*"How manifold are thy works!"* When we contemplate the wonderful works of Nature, and walking about at leisure, gaze upon this ample theatre of the world, considering the stately beauty, constant order, and sumptuous furniture thereof; the glorious splendour and uniform motion of the heavens; the pleasant fertility of the earth; the curious figure and fragrant sweetness of plants; the exquisite frame of animals; and all other amazing miracles of nature, wherein the glorious attributes of God, especially his transcendant goodness, are more conspicuously displayed: so that by them, not only large acknowledgments, but even gratulatory hymns, as it were, of praise have been extorted from the mouths of Aristotle, Pliny, Galen, and such like men, never suspected guilty of an excessive devotion; then should our hearts be affected with thankful sense, and our lips break forth in praise.—*William Barrow*, 1754—1836.

Verse 24.—He does not undertake to answer his own question, *"How manifold?"* for he confesses God's works to be greater than his own power of expression; whether these *"works"* belong to the creation of nature or to that of grace. And observe how the concurrent operation of the Blessed Trinity is set forth: *"O Lord, how manifold are thy works,"* teaches of the Father, the Source of all things; *"in wisdom hast thou made them all,"* tells of the Son, the Eternal Word, "Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God, by whom were all things made, and without him was not anything made that was made" (1 Cor. i. 24; John i. 3); *"the earth is full of thy riches,"* is spoken of the Holy Ghost, who filleth the world.—*Augustine, Hugo, and Cassiodorus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 24.—*"In wisdom hast thou made them all."* Not only one thing, as the heavens, Ps. cxxxvi. 5; but everything is wisely contrived and made; there is a most glorious display of the wisdom of God in the most minute thing his hands have made; he has made everything beautiful in its season. A skilful artificer, when he has finished his work and looks it over again, often finds some fault or another in it: but when the Lord had finished his works of creation, and looked over them, he saw that all was good; infinite wisdom itself could find no blemish in them: what weak, foolish, stupid creatures must they be that pretend to charge any of the works of God with folly or want of wisdom?—*John Gill.*

Verse 24.—*"The earth is full of thy riches,"* literally, *thy possessions;* these thou keepest not to thyself, but blessest thy creatures with.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 25.—"*Things innumerable.*" The waters teem with more life than the land. Beneath a surface less varied than that of the continents, the sea enfolds in its bosom an exuberance of life, of which no other region of the globe can afford the faintest idea. Its life extends from the poles to the equator, from east to west. Everywhere the sea is peopled; everywhere, down to its unfathomable depths, live and sport creatures suited to the locality. In every spot of its vast expanse the naturalist finds instruction, and the philosopher meditation, while the very varieties of life tend to impress upon our souls a feeling of gratitude to the Creator of the universe. Yes, the shores of the ocean and its depths, its plains and its mountains, its valleys and its precipices, even its *débris*, are enlivened and beautified by thousands of living beings. There are the solitary or sociable plants, upright or pendant, stretching in prairies, grouped in oases, or growing in immense forests. These plants give a cover to and feed millions of animals which creep, run, swim, fly, burrow in the soil, attach themselves to roots, lodge in the crevices, or build for themselves shelters, which seek or fly from one another, which pursue or fight each other, which caress each other with affection or devour each other without pity. Charles Darwin truly says that the terrestrial forests do not contain anything like the number of animals as those of the sea. The ocean, which is for man the element of death, is for myriads of animals a home of life and health. There is joy in its waves, there is happiness upon its shores, and heavenly blue everywhere.—*Moquin Tandon, in "The World of the Sea," Translated and enlarged by H. Martin Hart*, 1869.

Verses 25, 26.—"*Both small and great beasts.*"

> The sounds and seas, each creek and bay,
> With fry innumerable swarm, and shoals
> Of fish that with their fins and shining scales
> Glide under the green wave, in shoals that oft
> Bank the mid sea; part single, or with mate,
> Graze the sea-weed their pasture, and through groves
> Of coral stray; or, sporting with quick glance,
> Show to the sun their wav'd coats drop't with gold;
> Or, in their pearly shells at ease, attend
> Moist nutriment; or under rocks their food
> In jointed armour watch: on smooth the seal
> And bended dolphins play: part huge of bulk
> Wallowing unwieldy, enormous in their gait,
> Tempest the ocean: there leviathan,
> Hugest of living creatures, on the deep
> Stretch'd like a promontory sleeps or swims,
> And seems a moving land; and at his gills
> Draws in, and at his trunk spouts out, a sea.
>
> —*John Milton.*

Verse 26.—"*Ships.*" The original of ships was doubtless Noah's ark, so that they owe their first draught to God himself.—*John Gill.*

Verse 26.—"*There go the ships.*" Far from separating from each other the nations of the earth (as the ancients, still inexperienced in navigation, supposed), the sea is the great highway of the human race, and unites all its various tribes into one common family by the beneficial bonds of commerce. Countless fleets are constantly furrowing its bosom, to enrich, by perpetual exchanges, all the countries of the globe with the products of every zone, to convey the fruits of the tropical world to the children of the chilly north, or to transport the manufactures of colder climes to the inhabitants of the equatorial regions. With the growth of commerce civilization also spreads athwart the wide causeway of the ocean from shore to shore; it first dawned on the borders of the sea, and its chief seats are still to be found along its confines.—*G. Hartwig, in "The Harmonies of Nature,"* 1866.

Verse 26.—"*Leviathan.*" There is ground for thinking (though this is denied by some) that in several passages the term *leviathan* is used generically, much as we employ *dragon;* and that it denotes a great sea-monster.—*E. P. Barrows, in "Biblical Geography and Antiquities."*

Verse 26.—"*To play therein.*" Dreadful and tempestuous as the sea may appear, and uncontrollable in its billows and surges, it is only the field of *sport*, the *playground*, the *bowling green*, to those huge marine monsters.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 26.—"*Leviathan . . . made to play therein.*" With such wonderful strength is the tail of the whale endowed, that the largest of these animals, measuring some

eighty feet in length, are able by its aid to leap clear out of the water, as if they were little fish leaping after flies. This movement is technically termed " breaching," and the sound which is produced by the huge carcase as it falls upon the water is so powerful as to be heard for a distance of several miles.—*J. G. Wood, in " The Illustrated Natural History,"* 1861.

Verse 26.—" *Leviathan . . . made to play therein.*" Though these immense mammiferous fish have no legs, they swim with great swiftness, and they gambol in the mountains of water lashed up by the storms.—*Moquin Tandon.*

Verse 26.—" *Leviathan . . . made to play.*" He is made to " *play in the sea* " ; he hath nothing to do as man hath, that " goes forth to his work " ; he hath nothing to fear as the beasts have, that lie down in their dens ; and therefore he plays with the waters : it is a pity any of the children of men, that have nobler powers, and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world like the leviathan into the waters, to play therein, spending all their time in pastime.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 26.—" *Therein.*" Fish, great and small, sport and play in the element, but as soon as they are brought out of it, they languish and die. Mark, O soul ! what thy element is, if thou wouldest live joyful and blessed.—*Starke, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 27.—There are five things to be observed in God's sustaining all animals. His power, which alone suffices for all : " *These wait all upon thee.*" Wisdom, which selects a fitting time : " *That thou mayest give them their meat in due season.*" His majesty rising above all : " *That thou givest them they gather,*" like the crumbs falling from the table of their supreme Lord. His liberality, which retains nothing in his open hand that it does not give : " *Thou openest thine hand.*" His original goodness that flows down to all : " *They are filled with good,*" that is, with the good things that spring from thy goodness.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 27.—" *That thou mayest give them their meat in due season ;* " or, *in his time ;* every one in its own time which is natural to them, and they have been used to, at which time the Lord gives it to them, and they take it ; it would be well if men would do so likewise, eat and drink in proper and due time, Eccles. x. 17. Christ speaks a word in season to weary souls ; his ministers give to every one his portion of meat in due season ; and a word spoken in due season, how good and sweet is it ? Is. vii. 4 ; Luke xii. 12 ; Prov. xv. 23.—*John Gill.*

Verses 27—32.—

These, Lord, all wait on thee, that thou their food may'st give them ;
Thou to their wants attendest ;
They gather what thou sendest;
Thine hand thou openest, all their need supplying,
O'erlookest not the least, the greatest satisfying.

When thou dost hide thy face a sudden change comes o'er them
Their breath in myriads taken,
They die, no more t' awaken ;
But myriads more thy Spirit soon createth,
And the whole face of nature quickly renovateth.

The glory of the Lord, changeless, endures for ever ;
In all his works delighting,
Nor e'en the smallest slighting ;
Yet, if he frown, earth shrinks with fear before him,
And, at his touch, the hills with kindling flames adore him.

—*John Burton.*

Verse 28.—" *That thou givest them they gather.*" This sentence describes *The Commissariat of Creation.* The problem is the feeding of " the creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts," which swarm the sea ; the armies of birds which fill the air, and the vast hordes of animals which people the dry land ; and in this sentence we have the problem solved, " *That thou givest them they gather.*" The work is stupendous, but it is done with ease because the Worker is infinite : if he were not at the head of it the task would never be accomplished. Blessed be God for the great THOU of the text. It is every way our sweetest consolation that the personal God is still at work in the world : leviathan in the ocean, and the sparrow

on the bough, may be alike glad of this; and we, the children of the great Father, much more.

The general principle of the text is, God gives to his creatures, and his creatures gather. That general principle we shall apply to our own case as men and women; for it is as true of us as it is of the fish of the sea, and the cattle on the hills: "*That thou givest them they gather.*" I. *We have only to gather, for God gives.* In *temporal* things: God gives us day by day our daily bread, and our business is simply to gather it. As to *spirituals*, the principle is true, most emphatically, we have, in the matter of grace, only to gather what God gives. The natural man thinks that he has to earn divine favour; that he has to purchase the blessing of heaven; but he is in grave error: the soul has only to receive that which Jesus freely gives. II. *We can only gather what God gives;* however eager we may be, there is the end of the matter. The diligent bird shall not be able to gather more than the Lord has given it; neither shall the most avaricious and covetous man. "It is vain for you to rise up early and to sit up late, to eat the bread of carefulness; for so he giveth his beloved sleep." III. *We must gather what God gives*, or else we shall get no good by his bountiful giving. God feeds the creeping things innumerable, but each creature collects the provender for itself. The huge leviathan receives his vast provision, but he must go ploughing through the boundless meadows and gather up the myriads of minute objects which supply his need. The fish must leap up to catch the fly, the swallow must hawk for its food, the young lions must hunt for their prey. IV. The fourth turn of the text gives us the sweet thought that, *we may gather what he gives.* We have divine permission to enjoy freely what the Lord bestows. V. The last thing is, *God will always give us something to gather.* It is written, "The Lord will provide." Thus is it also in spiritual things. If you are willing to gather, God will always give.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 28.—"*Gather.*" The verb rendered "*gather*" means to pick up or collect from the ground. It is used in the history of the manna (Ex. xvi. 1, 5, 16), to which there is obvious allusion. The act of gathering from the ground seems to presuppose a previous throwing down from heaven.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 28.—"*Thou openest thine hand.*" The Greek expositors take *the opening of the hand* to indicate facility. I am of opinion that it refers also to abundance and liberality, as in Ps. cxlv. 16:—"*Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*" Using this same formula, God commands us *not to close the hand, but to open it to the poor.*—*Lorinus.*

Verse 29.—"*They are troubled.*" They are confounded; they are overwhelmed with terror and amazement. The word "*troubled*" by no means conveys the sense of the original word—נִבְהָל, *bahal*—which means properly to tremble; to be in trepidation; to be filled with terror; to be amazed; to be confounded. It is that kind of consternation which one has when all support and protection are withdrawn, and when inevitable ruin stares one in the face. So when God turns away, all their support is gone, all their resources fail, *and they must die.* They are represented as conscious of this; or this is what would occur if they *were* conscious.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 30.—"*Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created.*" The Spirit of God creates every day: what is it that continueth things in their created being, but providence? That is a true axiom in divinity, *Providence is creation continued.* Now the Spirit of God who created at first, creates to this day: "*Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created.*" The work of creation was finished in the first six days of the world, but the work of creation is renewed every day, and so continued to the end of the world. Successive providential creation as well as original creation is ascribed to the Spirit. "*And thou renewest the face of the earth.*" Thou makest a new world; and thus God makes a new world every year, sending forth his Spirit, or quickening power, in the rain and sun to renew the face of the earth. And as the Lord sends forth his power in providential mercies, so in providential judgments. —*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 31.—"*The Lord shall rejoice in his works.*" Man alone amongst the creatures grieves God, and brought tears from the eyes of Christ, who rejoiced in Spirit, because the Father had deigned to reveal the mysteries to the little ones. It repented God that he had made man, because as a wise son maketh a glad father, so a foolish one is a vexation to him.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 31 (*last clause*),—What the Psalmist adds, *Let Jehovah rejoice in his works*, is not superfluous, for he desires that the order which God has established from the beginning may be continued in the lawful use of his gifts. As we read in Gen. vi. 6, that " it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth ; " so when he sees that the good things which he bestows are polluted by our corruptions, he ceases to take delight in bestowing them. And certainly the confusion and disorder which take place, when the elements cease to perform their office, testify that God, displeased and wearied out, is provoked to discontinue, and put a stop to the regular course of his beneficence ; although anger and impatience have strictly speaking no place in his mind. What is here taught is, that he bears the character of the best of fathers, who takes pleasure in tenderly cherishing his children, and in bountifully nourishing them.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 32.—" *He looketh on the earth and it trembleth.*" As man can soon give a cast with his eye, so soon can God shake the earth, that is, either the whole mass of the earth, or the inferior sort of men on the earth when he " *looketh*," or casteth an angry eye " *upon the earth, it trembleth.*" " *He toucheth the hills*" (that is, the powers and principalities of the world), " *and they smoke ;* " if he do but touch them they smoke, that is, the dreadful effects of the power and judgment of God are visible upon them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 32.—No one save a photographer can sketch the desert around Sinai. Roberts' views are noble, and to a certain extent true ; but they do not represent these desert cliffs and ravines. No artist can rightly do it. Only the photographer can pourtray the million of minute details that go to make up the bleakness, the wildness, the awfulness, and the dismal loneliness of these unearthly wastes.

About noon I went out and walked upon the convent roof. The star-light over the mountain-peaks was splendid, while the gloom that hung round these enormous precipices and impenetrable ravines was quite oppressive to the spirit. This is the scene of which David spoke. " *He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth : he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.*" This is the mountain " that was touched, and that burned with fire " (Heb. xii. 18). Not the mount that " might be touched," as our translators have rendered it, but the mount " that was touched," ψηλα φωμενω,—the mount on which the finger of God rested.

We could imagine the black girdle of the thick darkness with which the mountain was surrounded, and the lightnings giving forth their quick fire through this covering, making its blackness blacker. We could imagine, too, the supernatural blaze, kindled by no earthly hand, that shot up out of the midst of this, like a living column of fire, ascending, amid the sound of angelic trumpets and superangelic thunders, to the very heart of heaven.—*Horatius Bonar, in " The Desert of Sinai,"* 1858.

Verse 32.—The philosopher labours to investigate the natural cause of earthquakes and volcanoes. Well, let him account as he will, still the immediate power of Jehovah is the true and ultimate cause. God works in these tremendous operations. " *He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth ; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.*" This is the philosophy of Scripture : this, then, shall be my philosophy. Never was a sentence uttered by uninspired man so sublime as this sentence. The thought is grand beyond conception ; and the expression clothes the thought with suitable external majesty. God needs no means by which to give effect to his purpose by his power, yet, in general, he has established means through which he acts. In conformity with this Divine plan, he created by means, and he governs by means. But the means which he has employed in creation, and the means which he employs in providence, are effectual only by his almighty power. The sublimity of the expression in this passage arises from the infinite disproportion between the means and the end. An earthly sovereign looks with anger, and his courtiers tremble. God looks on the earth, and it trembles to its foundation. He touches the mountains, and the volcano smokes, vomiting forth torrents of lava. Hills are said to melt at the presence of the Lord, " Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." How chill and withering is the breath of that noxious philosophy, that would detach our minds from viewing God in his works of Providence ! The Christian who lives in this atmosphere, or on the borders of it, will be unhealthy and unfruitful in true works of righteousness. This malaria destroys all spiritual life.—*Alexander Carson.*

Verse 32.—" *He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.*" It's therefore ill falling into his hands, who can do such terrible things with his looks and touches.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 33.—" *I will sing unto the Lord.*" The Psalmist, exulting in the glorious prospect of the renovation of all things, breaks out in triumphant anticipation of the great event, and says, " I will sing unto the Lord," בְּחַיָּי *bechaiyai*, " with my *lives*," the life that I *now* have, and the *life* that I *shall have* hereafter.

" *I will sing praise to my God*," בְּעוֹדִי *beodi*, " *in my eternity ;* " my going on, my endless progression. What astonishing ideas! But then, how shall this great work be brought about? and how shall the new earth be inhabited with righteous spirits only? The answer is (verse 35), " *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.*"—*Adam Clarke.*

Verses 33—35.—All having been admonished to glorify God, he discloses what he himself is about to do: with his voice he will declare his praises, " *I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live :* " with his hand he will write Psalms, and set them to music, " *I will sing Psalms to my God while I have my being :* " with his mind he will make sweet meditations, " *My meditation of him shall be sweet :* " with will and affection he will seek after God alone, " *I will be glad in the Lord :* " he predicts and desires the destruction of all sinners who think not of praising God, but dishonour him in their words and works, " *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more :* " lastly, with his whole soul and all his powers he will bless God, " *Bless thou the Lord, O my soul.*"—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 34.—" *My meditation of him shall be sweet.*" A Christian needs to study nothing but *Christ*, there is enough in Christ to take up his study and contemplation all his days; and the more we study Christ, the more we may study him; there will be new wonders still appearing in him.—*John Row*, 1680.

Verse 34.—" *My meditation of him shall be sweet.*" The last words ever written by Henry Martyn, dying among Mohammedans in Persia, was: I sat in the orchard and thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God, in solitude my company, my Friend and Comforter.

Verse 34.—" *My meditation of him shall be sweet.*" I must meditate on Christ. Let philosophers soar in their contemplations, and walk among the stars; what are the stars to Christ, the Sun of righteousness, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person? God manifest in the flesh is a theme which angels rejoice to contemplate.—*Samuel Lavington.*

Verse 34.—" *My meditation of him shall be sweet.*" First. Take this as *an assertion.* The meditation on God is sweet. And the sweetness of it should stir us up to the putting of it in practice. Secondly. Take it as *a resolution*—that he would make it for his own practice; that is, that he would comfort himself in such performances as these are; whilst others took pleasure in other things, he would please himself in communion with God, this should be his solace and delight upon all occasions. David promises himself a great deal of contentment in this exercise of divine meditation which he undertook with much delight: and so likewise do others of God's servants of the same nature and disposition with him in the like undertakings. Thirdly. Take it as *a prayer and petition.* It " *shall be*," that is, *let it be*, the future put for the imperative, as it frequently uses to be; and so the word *gnatam* is to be translated, not, *of God*, but *to God.* Let my meditation, or prayer, or converse, be sweet unto him. *Placeat illi meditatio mea*, so some good authors interpret it. The English translation, " Let my words be acceptable," and the other before that, " Oh that my words might please him," which comes to one and the same effect, all taking it in the notion of *a prayer :* this is that which the servants of God have still thought to be most necessary for them (as indeed it is); God's acceptance of the performances which have been presented by them.—*Condensed from Thomas Horton.*

Verse 34 (*first clause*).—All the ancients join in understanding it thus, " *My meditation shall be sweet to him*," or, as the Jewish Arab, עמדו *with him*, according to that of the Psalmist, Psalm xix. 14: " Let the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight." Thus the Chaldee here, קֳדָמוֹי, *before him;* the LXXII. ἡδυνθείη αὐτῷ, " *Let it be sweet to him* "; the Syriac ܠܘܬ *to him*, and so the others also. And so עַל signifies *to* as well as *on.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 34.—" *I will be glad in the Lord.*" Compare this with verse 31, and observe the mutual and reciprocal pleasure and delight between God who is praised and the soul that praises him. God, *who rejoices in his works*, takes the highest delight in man, the compendium of his other works, and in that work, than which none more excellent can be pursued by man, the work of praising God in which the

blessed are employed. Thus in this very praise of God which is so pleasing to him, David professes to be evermore willing to take delight. *My beloved is mine*, sings the Spouse, *and I am his.—Lorinus.*

Verse 35.—"*Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,*" etc.—It fell to my lot some years ago, to undertake a walk of some miles, on a summer morning, along a sea-shore of surpassing beauty. It was the Lord's day, and the language of the Hundred and fourth Psalm rose spontaneously in my mind as one scene after another unfolded itself before the eye. About half way to my destination the road lay through a dirty hamlet, and my meditations were rudely interrupted by the brawling of some people, who looked as if they had been spending the night in a drunken debauch. Well, I thought, the Psalmist must have had some such unpleasant experience. He must have fallen in with people, located in some scene of natural beauty, who, instead of being a holy priesthood to give voice to nature in praise of her Creator, instead of being, in the pure and holy tenor of their lives, the heavenliest note of the general song,—filled it with a harsh discord. His prayer is the vehement expression of a desire that the earth may no longer be marred by the presence of wicked men, —that they may be utterly consumed, and may give place to men animated with the fear of God, just and holy men, men that shall be a crown of beauty on the head of this fair creation. If this be the right explanation of the Psalmist's prayer, it is not only justifiable, but there is something wrong in our meditations on nature, if we are not disposed to join in it.—*William Binnie.*

Verse 35.—"*Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth.*" This imprecation depends on the last clause of the 31st verse, "*Let Jehovah rejoice in his works.*" As the wicked infect the world with their pollutions, the consequence is, that God has less delight in his own workmanship, and is even almost displeased with it. It is impossible, but that this uncleanness, which, being extended and diffused through every part of the world, vitiates and corrupts such a noble product of his hands, must be offensive to him. Since then the wicked, by their perverse abuse of God's gifts, cause the world in a manner to degenerate and fall away from its first original, the prophet justly desires that they may be exterminated, until the race of them entirely fails. Let us, then, take care so to weigh the providence of God, as that being wholly devoted to obeying him, we may rightly and purely use the benefits which he sanctifies for our enjoying them. Further, let us be grieved, that such precious treasures are wickedly squandered away, and let us regard it as monstrous and detestable, that men not only forget their Maker, but also, as it were, purposely turn to a perverse and an unworthy end, whatever good things he has bestowed upon them.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 35.—"*The sinners.*"

All true, all faultless, all in tune,
  Creation's wondrous choir,
Opened in mystic unison,
  To last till time expire.

And still it lasts: by day and night,
  With one consenting voice,
All hymn thy glory, Lord, aright,
  All worship and rejoice.

Man only mars the sweet accord,
  O'erpowering with harsh din
The music of thy works and word,
  Ill matched with grief and sin.

—*John Keble, in "The Christian Year."*

Verse 35.—"*Bless thou the Lord, O my soul.*" Rehearse the first words of the Psalm which are the same as these. They are here repeated as if to hint that the end of good men is like their beginning, and that he is not of the number who begin in the spirit and seek to be made perfect in the flesh. A worthy beginning of the Psalm, says Cassiodorus, and a worthy end, ever to bless him who never at any time fails to be with the faithful. The soul which blesses shall be made fat. . . . Reined in by this rein of divine praise, he shall never perish.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 35.—This is the first place where HALLELUJAH ("*Praise ye the Lord*") occurs in the Book of Psalms. It is produced by a retrospect of *Creation*, and by

the contemplation of God's goodness in the preservation of all the creatures of his hand, and also by a prospective view of that future Sabbath, when, by the removal of evil men from communion with the good, God will be enabled to look on his works, as he did on the first Sabbath, before the Tempter had marred them, and see " everything very good." See Gen. i. 31 ; ii. 2, 3.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 35.—" *Praise ye the Lord.*" This is the first time that we meet with *Hallelujah ;* and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked ; and the last time we meet with it, it is upon the like occasion, when the New Testament Babylon is consumed, this is the burthen of the song, " *Hallelujah,*" Rev. xix. 1, 3, 4, 6.—*Matthew Henry.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (*first clause*).—An exhortation to one's own heart. I. To remember the Lord as the first cause of all good. Bless not man, or fate, but *the Lord.* II. To do this in a loving, grateful, hearty, praiseful manner. *Bless* the Lord. III. To do it truly and intensely. *O my soul.* IV. To do it *now*—for various reasons and in all possible ways.

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—He is all this essentially, and in nature, providence, grace, and judgment.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—The clearest revelation of God is still a concealment ; even light is but a covering to him. God is clothed with light as we see him in his omniscience, his revelation, his glory in heaven, and his grace on earth.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—I. God is leisurely in his haste : " he *walketh,*" etc. II. God is swift even in his slackness : " he walketh *on the wings of the wind.*" III. The practical conclusions are that there is time enough for the divine purposes, but none for our trifling ; and that we should both wait with patience for the victory of his cause and hasten it by holy activity.

Verse 4.—I. The Nature of Angels. Spirits. II. The Lord of Angels. " Who maketh," etc. What must his own spirituality be who maketh spirits ? III. The ministry of Angels. 1. Their office : " ministers." 2. Their activity or zeal : " a flaming fire." 3. Their dependence : *made* ministers.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 7.—The power of the divine word in nature shows its power in other spheres.

Verse 9.—I. All things have their appointed bounds. II. To pass those bounds without special permission by God is transgression. " Thou hast set a bound that they *may not* pass." III. Extraordinary cases should be followed by a return to ordinary duties. " That they turn not again," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—The thoughtfulness of God for those who, like the valleys, are lowly, hidden, and needy : the abiding character of his supplies : and the joyous results of his care.

Verses 10, 11.—God's care for wild creatures, reflections from it. (1.) Shall he not much more care for his people ? (2.) Will he not look after wild, wandering men ? (3.) Ought we not also to care for all that live ?

Verses 10—12.—From the fertility, life and music which mark the course of a stream, illustrate the beneficial influences of the Gospel.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 14.—" In the Hayfield." (See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 757.) " *He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle.*" I. Grass is in itself instructive. 1. As the symbol of our mortality : " All flesh is grass." 2. As an emblem of the wicked. 3. As a picture of the elect of God. Isai. xxxv. 7 ; xliv. 4 ; Ps. lxxii. 6, 16. 4. Grass is comparable to the food wherewith the Lord supplies the necessities of his chosen ones. Ps. xxiii. 2 ; S. of Sol. i. 7. II. God is seen in the growing of the grass. 1. As a worker : " He causeth," etc. See God in common things—in solitary things. 2. See God as a care-taker : " He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle." God cares for the beasts—the helpless—dumb and speechless things—providing suitable food for them : " grass." Let us, then, see his hand in providence at all times. III. God's working in the grass for the cattle gives us illustrations concerning grace. 1. God " cares for oxen " and satisfies their wants : there must then be something somewhere to satisfy the needs of the nobler creature man, and his immortal soul. 2. Though God provides the grass for the cattle, the cattle must eat it themselves.

The Lord Jesus Christ is provided as the food of the soul. We must, by faith, receive and feed upon Christ. 3. Preventing grace may here be seen in a symbol: before the cattle were made, in this world there was grass. There were covenant supplies for God's people before they were in the world. 4. Here is an illustration of free grace: the cattle bring nothing to purchase the food. Why is this? (1) Because they belong to him, Ps. l. 10. (2) Because he has entered into a covenant with them to feed them, Gen. ix. 9, 10.

In the text there is a mighty blow to free-will: "*He causeth* the grass to grow." Grace does not grow in the heart without a divine cause. If God cares to make grass grow he will also make us grow in grace. Again; the grass does not grow without an object; it is "for the cattle": but the cattle grow for man. What, then, does man grow for? Observe, further, that the existence of the grass is necessary to complete the chain of nature. So the meanest child of God is necessary to the family.

Verse 16.—"The Cedars of Lebanon." (See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 529.) I. The absence of all human culture. These trees are peculiarly the Lord's trees, because, 1. They owe their planting entirely to him: "He hath planted." 2. They are not dependent upon man for their watering. 3. No mortal might protects them. 4. As to their inspection—they preserve a sublime indifference to human gaze. 5. Their exultation is all for God. 6. There is not a cedar upon Lebanon which is not independent of man in its expectations. II. The glorious display of divine care. 1. In the abundance of their supply. 2. They are always green. 3. Observe the grandeur and size of these trees. 4. Their fragrance. 5. Their perpetuity. 6. They are very venerable. III. The fulness of living principle: "The trees of the Lord are full of sap." 1. This is vitally necessary. 2. It is essentially mysterious. 3. It is radically secret. 4. It is permanently active. 5. It is externally operative. 6. It is abundantly to be desired.

Verses 17, 18.—"Lessons from Nature." (See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1,005.) I. For each place God has prepared a suitable form of life: for "the fir trees," "the stork"; for "the high hills," "the wild goat," etc. So, for all parts of the spiritual universe God has provided suitable forms of divine life. 1. Each age has its saints. 2. In every rank they are to be found. The Christian religion is equally well adapted for all conditions. 3. In every church spiritual life is to be found. 4. God's people are to be found in every city. II. Each creature has its appropriate place. 1. Each man has by God a providential position appointed to him. 2. This is also true of our spiritual experience. 3. The same holds good as to individuality of character. III. Every creature that God has made is provided with shelter. IV. For each creature the shelter is appropriate. V. Each creature uses its shelter.

Verse 19.—I. The wisdom of God as displayed in the material heavens. In the changes of the moon and the variety of the seasons. II. The goodness of God as there displayed. In the adaptation of these changes to the wants and enjoyments of men. III. The faithfulness of God as there displayed. Inspiring confidence in his creatures by their regularity.

> "So like the sun may I fulfil
> The appointed duties of the day;
> With ready mind and active will
> March on and keep my heavenly way."

Verse 20.—Darkness and the beasts that creep forth therein. 1. Ignorance of God, and unrestrained lusts. Rom. i. 2. Sins discovered. Beasts there before, but not noticed, now terrify man. 3. Spiritual despondency, dismay, despair, etc. 4. Church lethargy. All sorts of heresies, etc., begin to creep forth. 5. Papal influence. Monks, friars, priests, etc., creep about in this dark age.—*A. G. Brown.*

Verses 20—23.—I. Night work is for wild beasts: "Thou makest darkness," etc. II. Day work is for men: "Man goeth forth," etc. Good men do their work by day; bad men by night: their work is in the dark. Ministers who creep into their studies by night, and "roar after their prey," and "seek their meat from God," are more like wild beasts than rational men.—*G. R.*

Verse 21.—Inarticulate prayers, or how faulty the expression may be and yet how real the prayer in the esteem of God.

Verse 22.—From the effect of sunrise on the beasts of prey, exhibit the influence of Divine Grace on our evil passions.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 23.—"*Early Closing.*" A sermon preached on behalf of the "Early Closing Association," by *James Hamilton*, D.D., 1850. In the "Pulpit," Vol. 57.

Verse 24.—I. The language of wonder: " O Lord, how manifold," etc. Their number, variety, co-operation, harmony. II. Of admiration: " In wisdom," etc. Everywhere the same wisdom displayed. God, says Dr. Chalmers, is as great in minutiæ as in magnitude. III. Of gratitude: " The earth is full," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 24.—I. The works of the Lord are multitudinous and varied. II. They are so constructed as to show the most consummate wisdom in their *design*, and in the *end* for which they are formed. III. They are all God's *property*, and should be used only in reference to the end for which they were created. All *abuse* and *waste* of God's creatures are spoil and robbery on the property of the Creator.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 26.—" *There go the ships.*" (See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1,259.) I. We see that the ships go. 1. The ships are intended for going. 2. The ships in going at last disappear from view. 3. The ships as they go are going upon business. 4. The ships sail upon a changeful sea. II. How go the ships? 1. They must go according to the wind. 2. But still the mariner does not go by the wind without exertion on his own part. 3. They have to be guided and steered by the helm. 4. He who manages the helm seeks direction from charts and lights. 5. They go according to their build. III. Let us signal them. 1. Who is your owner? 2. What is your cargo? 3. Where are you going?

Verses 27—30.—Trace the analogy in the spiritual world. The saints waiting, v. 27; their sustenance from the opened hand, v. 28; their trouble under the hidden face; their death if the Spirit were gone, v. 29; their revival when the Spirit returns, v. 30.

Verses 29, 30.—I. The commencement of life is from God: " Thou sendest forth thy Spirit," etc. II. The continuance of life is from God: " Thou renewest," etc. III. The decline of life is from God: " Thou hidest thy face," etc. IV. The cessation of life is from God: " Thou takest away their breath," etc. V. The resurrection of life is from God: " Thou renewest," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 30.—The season of Spring and its mortal analogies. See John Foster's " Lectures," 1844.

Verse 32.—I. What there is in a look of God. " He looketh," etc. 1. What in a look of anger. 2. What in a look of love. He looked out of the fiery pillar upon the Egyptians. " The Lord hath looked out from his pillar of glory," etc. He gave another look from the same pillar to Israel. II. What there is in a Touch of God: " He toucheth," etc. A touch of his may raise a soul to heaven, or sink a soul to hell.—*G. R.*

Verse 33.—I. The singer—" I." II. The song—" praises." III. The audience —" The Lord," " *My* God." IV. The length of the song—" long as I live; while I have my being."—*A. G. B.*

Verse 33.—Two " I wills." I. Because he made me live. II. Because he has made me to live in him. III. Because he is JEHOVAH and " my God." IV. Because I shall live for ever, in the best sense.

Verse 34.—I. David's contemplation. II. David's exultation.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 35.—I. They who praise not God are not fit to be on the earth: " Let the sinners be consumed," etc. II. Much less are they fit to be in heaven. III. They who praise God are fit both for earth and heaven. Though others do not praise him here, the saints will. " Bless thou the Lord," etc. 1. In opposition to others, they praise him on earth. 2. In harmony with others, they praise him in heaven, etc. Everywhere it is with them, " Praise ye the Lord."—*G. R.*

PSALM CV.

This historical Psalm was evidently composed by King David, for the first fifteen verses of it were used as a hymn at the carrying up of the ark from the house of Obed-edom, and we read in 1 Chron. xvi. 7. *"Then on that day David delivered first this Psalm, to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." Such a song was suitable for the occasion, for it describes the movements of the Lord's people and his guardian care over them in every place, and all this on account of the covenant of which the ark, then removing, was a symbol. Our last Psalm sang the opening chapters of Genesis, and this takes up its closing chapters and conducts us into Exodus and Numbers.*

The first verses are full of joyful praise, and call upon the people to extol Jehovah, 1—7; *then the earliest days of the infant nation are described,* 8—15; *the going into Egypt,* 16—23, *the coming forth from it with the Lord's outstretched arm,* 24—38, *the journeying through the wilderness and the entrance into Canaan.*

We are now among the long Psalms, as at other times we have been among the short ones. These varying lengths of the sacred poems should teach us not to lay down any law either of brevity or prolixity in either prayer or praise. Short petitions and single verses of hymns are often the best for public occasions, but there are seasons when a whole night of wrestling or an entire day of Psalm singing will be none too long. The Spirit is ever free in his operations, and is not to be confined within the rules of conventional propriety. The wind bloweth as it listeth, and at one time rushes in short and rapid sweep, while at another it continues to refresh the earth hour after hour with its reviving breath.

EXPOSITION.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.

2 Sing unto him, sing Psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

4 Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.

5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.

7 He *is* the LORD our God: his judgments *are* in all the earth.

1. *"O give thanks unto the Lord."* Jehovah is the author of all our benefits, therefore let him have all our gratitude. *"Call upon his name,"* or call him by his name; proclaim his titles and fill the world with his renown. *"Make known his deeds among the people,"* or among the nations. Let the heathen hear of our God, that they may forsake their idols and learn to worship him. The removal of the ark was a fit occasion for proclaiming aloud the glories of the Great King, and for publishing to all mankind the greatness of his doings, for it had a history in connection with the nations which it was well for them to remember with reverence. The rest of the Psalm is a sermon, of which these first verses constitute the text.

2. *"Sing unto him."* Bring your best thoughts and express them in the best language to the sweetest sounds. Take care that your singing is "unto him," and not merely for the sake of the music or to delight the ears of others. Singing is so delightful an exercise that it is a pity so much of it should be wasted upon trifles or worse than trifles. O ye who can emulate the nightingale, and almost rival the angels, we do most earnestly pray that your hearts may be renewed that so your floods of melody may be poured out at your Maker's and Redeemer's feet. *"Talk ye of all his wondrous works."* Men love to speak of marvels, and others are generally glad to hear of surprising things; surely the believer in the living God has before him the most amazing series of wonders ever heard of or imagined, his themes are inex-

haustible and they are such as should hold men spellbound. We ought to have more of this "talk": no one would be blamed as a Mr. Talkative if this were his constant theme. Talk ye, all of you: you all know something by experience of the marvellous loving-kindness of the Lord—"talk *ye*." In this way, by all dwelling on this blessed subject, "*all*" his wondrous works will be published. One cannot do it, nor ten thousand times ten thousand, but if all speak to the Lord's honour, they will at least come nearer to accomplishing the deed. We ought to have a wide range when conversing upon the Lord's doings, and should not shut our eyes to any part of them. Talk ye of his wondrous works in creation and in grace, in judgment and in mercy, in providential interpositions and in spiritual comfortings; leave out none, or it will be to your damage. Obedience to this verse will give every sanctified tongue some work to do: the trained musicians can sing, and the commoner voices can talk, and in both ways the Lord will receive a measure of the thanks due to him, and his deeds will be made known among the people.

3. "*Glory ye in his holy name.*" Make it a matter of joy that you have such a God. His character and attributes are such as will never make you blush to call him your God. Idolaters may well be ashamed of the actions attributed to their fancied deities, their names are foul with lust and red with blood, but Jehovah is wholly glorious; every deed of his will bear the strictest scrutiny; his name is holy, his character is holy, his law is holy, his government is holy, his influence is holy. In all this we may make our boast, nor can any deny our right to do so. "*Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.*" If they have not yet found him so fully as they desire, yet even to be allowed and enabled to seek after such a God is cause for gladness. To worship the Lord and seek his kingdom and righteousness is the sure way to happiness, and indeed there is no other. True seekers throw their hearts into the engagement, hence their hearts receive joy; according to the text they have a permit to rejoice and they have the promise that they shall do so. How gladsome all these sentences are! Where can men's ears be when they talk of the gloom of Psalm-singing? What worldly songs are fuller of real mirth? One hears the sound of the timbrel and the harp in every verse. Even seekers find bliss in the name of the Lord Jesus, but as for the finders, we may say with the poet,

> "And those who find thee find a bliss,
> Nor tongue nor pen can show:
> The love of Jesus what it is,
> None but his loved ones know."

4. "*Seek the Lord and his strength.*" Put yourselves under his protection. Regard him not as a puny God, but look unto his omnipotence, and seek to know the power of his grace. We all need strength; let us look to the strong One for it. We need infinite power to bear us safely to our eternal resting-place, let us look to the Almighty Jehovah for it. "*Seek his face evermore.*" Seek, seek, seek, we have the word three times, and though the words differ in the Hebrew, the sense is the same. It must be a blessed thing to *seek*, or we should not be thus stirred up to do so. To seek his face is to desire his presence, his smile, his favour consciously enjoyed. First we seek *him*, then *his strength*, and then *his face;* from the personal reverence, we pass on to the imparted power, and then to the conscious favour. This seeking must never cease—the more we know the more we must seek to know. Finding him, we must "our minds inflame to seek him more and more." He seeks spiritual worshippers, and spiritual worshippers seek him; they are therefore sure to meet face to face ere long.

5. "*Remember his marvellous works that he hath done.*" Memory is never better employed than upon such topics. Alas, we are far more ready to recollect foolish and evil things than to retain in our minds the glorious deeds of Jehovah. If we would keep these in remembrance our faith would be stronger, our gratitude warmer, our devotion more fervent, and our love more intense. Shame upon us that we should let slip what it would seem impossible to forget. We ought to need no exhortation to remember such wonders, especially as he has wrought them all on the behalf of his people. "*His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth*"—these also should be had in memory. The judgments of his mouth are as memorable as the marvels of his hand. God had but to speak and the enemies of his people were sorely afflicted; his threats were not mere words, but smote his adversaries terribly. As the Word of God is the salvation of his saints, so is it the destruction of the ungodly: out of his mouth goeth a two-edged sword with which he will slay the wicked.

6. "*O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.*" Should all the world forget, ye are bound to remember. Your father Abraham saw his wonders and judgments upon Sodom, and upon the kings who came from far, and Jacob also saw the Lord's marvellous works in visiting the nations with famine, yet providing for his chosen a choice inheritance in a goodly land; therefore let the children praise their father's God. The Israelites were the Lord's elect nation, and they were bound to imitate their progenitor, who was the Lord's faithful servant and walked before him in holy faith: the seed of Abraham should not be unbelieving, nor should the children of so true a servant become rebels. As we read this pointed appeal to the chosen seed we should recognise the special claims which the Lord has upon ourselves, since we too have been favoured above all others. Election is not a couch for ease, but an argument for seven-fold diligence. If God has set his choice upon us, let us aim to be choice men.

7. "*He is the Lord our God.*" Blessed be his name. Jehovah condescends to be *our* God. This sentence contains a greater wealth of meaning than all the eloquence of orators can compass, and there is more joy in it than in all the sonnets of them that make merry. "*His judgments are in all the earth,*" or *in all the land*, for the whole of the country was instructed by his law, ruled by his statutes, and protected by his authority. What a joy it is that our God is never absent from us, he is never non-resident, never an absentee ruler, his judgments are in all the places in which we dwell. If the second clause of this verse refers to the whole world, it is very beautiful to see the speciality of Israel's election united with the universality of Jehovah's reign. Not alone to the one nation did the Lord reveal himself, but his glory flashed around the globe. It is wonderful that the Jewish people should have become so exclusive, and have so utterly lost the missionary spirit, for their sacred literature is full of the broad and generous sympathies which are so consistent with the worship of "the God of the whole earth." Nor is it less painful to observe that among a certain class of believers in God's election of grace there lingers a hard exclusive spirit, fatal to compassion and zeal. It would be well for these also to remember that their Redeemer is "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."

8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations.

9 Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;

10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, *and* to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant:

11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:

12 When they were *but* a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

13 When they went from one nation to another, from *one* kingdom to another people;

14 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes;

15 *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

8. "*He hath remembered his covenant for ever.*" Here is the basis of all his dealings with his people: he had entered into covenant with them in their father Abraham, and to this covenant he remained faithful. The exhortation to *remember* (in verse 5) receives great force from the fact that God has remembered. If the Lord has his promise in memory, surely we ought not to forget the wonderful manner in which he keeps it. To us it should be matter for deepest joy that never in any instance has the Lord been unmindful of his covenant engagements, nor will he be so world without end. O that we were as mindful of them as he is. "*The word which he commanded to a thousand generations.*" This is only an amplification of the former statement, and serves to set before us the immutable fidelity of the Lord during the changing generations of men. His judgments are threatened upon the third and fourth generations of them that hate him, but his love runs on for ever, even to "a thousand generations." His promise is here said to be *commanded*, or vested

with all the authority of a law. It is proclamation from a sovereign, the *firman* of an Emperor, whose laws shall stand fast in every jot and tittle though heaven and earth shall pass away. Therefore let us give thanks unto the Lord and talk of all his wondrous works, so wonderful for their faithfulness and truth.

9. "*Which covenant he made with Abraham.*" When the victims were divided and the burning lamp passed between the pieces (Gen. xv.) then the Lord made, or ratified, the covenant with the patriarch. This was a solemn deed, performed not without blood, and the cutting in pieces of the sacrifice: it points us to the greater covenant which in Christ Jesus is signed, sealed, and ratified, that it may stand fast for ever and ever. "*And his oath unto Isaac.*" Isaac did not in vision see the solemn making of the covenant, but the Lord renewed unto him his oath (Gen. xxvi. 2—5). This was enough for him, and must have established his faith in the Most High. We have the privilege of seeing in our Lord Jesus both the sacrificial seal, and the eternal oath of God, by which every promise of the covenant is made yea and amen to all the chosen seed.

10. "*And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law.*" Jacob in his wondrous dream (Gen. xxviii. 10—15) received a pledge that the Lord's mode of procedure with him would be in accordance with covenant relations: for said Jehovah, "I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Thus, if we may so speak with all reverence, the covenant became a law unto the Lord himself by which he bound himself to act. O matchless condescension, that the most free and sovereign Lord should put himself under covenant bonds to his chosen, and make a law for himself, though he is above all law. "*And to Israel for an everlasting covenant.*" When he changed Jacob's name he did not change his covenant, but it is written, "he blessed him there" (Gen. xxxii. 29), and it was with the old blessing, according to the unchangeable word of abiding grace.

11, 12. "*Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.*" This repetition of the great covenant promise is recorded in Gen. xxxv. 9—12 in connection with the change of Jacob's name, and very soon after that slaughter of the Shechemites, which had put the patriarch into such great alarm and caused him to use language almost identical with that of the next verse. "*When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.*" Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, and my house." Thus the fears of the man of God declared themselves, and they were reasonable if we look only at the circumstances in which he was placed, but they are soon seen to be groundless when we remember that the covenant promise, which guaranteed the possession of the land, necessarily implied the preservation of the race to whom the promise was made. We often fear where no fear is.

The blessings promised to the seed of Abraham were not dependent upon the number of his descendants, or their position in this world. The covenant was made with one man, and consequently the number could never be less, and that one man was not the owner of a foot of soil in all the land, save only a cave in which to bury his dead, and therefore his seed could not have less inheritance than he. The smallness of a church, and the poverty of its members, are no barriers to the divine blessing, if it be sought earnestly by pleading the promise. Were not the apostles few, and the disciples feeble, when the good work began? Neither because we are strangers and foreigners here below, as our fathers were, are we in any the more danger: we are like sheep in the midst of wolves, but the wolves cannot hurt us, for our shepherd is near.

13. "*When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people.*" Migrating as the patriarchs did from the region of one tribe to the country of another they were singularly preserved. The little wandering family might have been cut off root and branch had not a special mandate been issued from the throne for their protection. It was not the gentleness of their neighbours which screened them; they were hedged about by the mysterious guardianship of heaven. Whether in Egypt, or in Philistia, or in Canaan, the heirs of the promises, dwelling in their tents, were always secure.

14. "*He suffered no man to do them wrong.*" Men cannot wrong us unless he suffers them to do so; the greatest of them must wait his permission before they can place a finger upon us. The wicked would devour us if they could, but they cannot even cheat us of a farthing without divine sufferance. "*Yea, he reproved kings for*

their sakes." Pharaoh and Abimelech must both be made to respect the singular strangers who had come to sojourn in their land, the greatest kings are very second-rate persons with God in comparison with his chosen servants.

15. "*Saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.*" Abraham and his seed were in the midst of the world a generation of priests anointed to present sacrifice unto the Most High God; since to them the oracles were committed, they were also the prophets of mankind; and they were kings too—a royal priesthood; hence they had received a threefold anointing. Their holy offices surrounded them with a sacredness which rendered it sacrilege to molest them. The Lord was pleased to impress the wild tribes of Canaan with a respectful awe of the pious strangers who had come to abide with them, so that they came not near them to do them ill. The words here mentioned may not have been actually spoken, but the impression of awe which fell upon the nations is thus poetically described. God will not have those touched who have been set apart unto himself. He calls them his own, saying, "*Mine* anointed;" he declares that he has "*anointed*" them to be prophets, priests, and kings unto himself, and yet again he claims them as *his* prophets—"Do *my prophets* no harm." All through the many years in which the three great fathers dwelt in Canaan no man was able to injure them: they were not able to defend themselves by force of arms, but the eternal God was their refuge. Even so at this present time the remnant according to the election of grace cannot be destroyed, nay, nor so much as touched, without the divine consent. Against the church of Christ the gates of hell cannot prevail. In all this we see reasons for giving thanks unto the Lord, and proclaiming his name according to the exhortation of the first verse of the Psalm. Here ends the portion which was sung at the moving of the ark: its fitness to be used for such a purpose is very manifest, for the ark was the symbol both of the covenant and of that mystic dwelling of God with Israel which was at once her glory and her defence. None could touch the Lord's peculiar ones, for the Lord was among them, flaming forth in majesty between the cherubims.

16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.

17 He sent a man before them, *even* Joseph, *who* was sold for a servant:

18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:

19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

20 The king sent and loosed him; *even* the ruler of the people, and let him go free.

21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance:

22 To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.

23 Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

The presence of God having remained with his chosen ones while they sojourned in Canaan, it did not desert them when they were called to go down into Egypt. They did not go there of their own choice, but under divine direction, and hence the Lord prepared their way and prospered them until he saw fit to conduct them again to the land of promise.

16. "*Moreover he called for a famine upon the land.*" He had only to call for it as a man calls for his servant, and it came at once. How grateful ought we to be that he does not often call in that terrible servant of his, so meagre and gaunt, and grim, so pitiless to the women and the children, so bitter to the strong men, who utterly fail before it. "*He brake the whole staff of bread.*" Man's feeble life cannot stand without its staff—if bread fail him he fails. As a cripple with a broken staff falls to the ground, so does man when bread no longer sustains him. To God it is as easy to make a famine as to break a staff. He could make that famine universal, too, so that all countries should be in like case: then would the race of man fall indeed, and its staff would be broken for ever. There is this sweet comfort in the matter, that the Lord has wise ends to serve even by famine: he meant his people to go down into Egypt, and the scarcity of food was his method of leading them there, for "they heard that there was corn in Egypt."

17. "*He sent a man before them, even Joseph.*" He was the advance guard and pioneer for the whole clan. His brethren sold him, but God sent him. Where the hand of the wicked is visible God's hand may be invisibly at work, overruling

their malice. No one was more of *a man*, or more fit to lead the van than Joseph: an interpreter of dreams was wanted, and his brethren had said of him, " Behold, this dreamer cometh." " *Who was sold for a servant*," or rather for a slave. Joseph's journey into Egypt was not so costly as Jonah's voyage when he paid his own fare: his free passage was provided by the Midianites, who also secured his introduction to a great officer of state by handing him over as a slave. His way to a position in which he could feed his family lay through the pit, the slaver's caravan, the slave market and the prison, and who shall deny but what it was the right way, the surest way, the wisest way, and perhaps the shortest way. Yet assuredly it seemed not so. Were we to send a man on such an errand we should furnish him with money—Joseph goes as a pauper; we should clothe him with authority—Joseph goes as a slave; we should leave him at full liberty—Joseph is a bondman: yet money would have been of little use when corn was so dear, authority would have been irritating rather than influential with Pharaoh, and freedom might not have thrown Joseph into connection with Pharaoh's captain and his other servants, and so the knowledge of his skill in interpretation might not have reached the monarch's ear. God's way is *the* way. Our Lord's path to his mediatorial throne ran by the cross of Calvary; our road to glory runs by the rivers of grief.

18. " *Whose feet they hurt with fetters.*" From this we learn a little more of Joseph's sufferings than we find in the book of Genesis: inspiration had not ceased, and David was as accurate an historian as Moses, for the same Spirit guided his pen. " *He was laid in iron*," or " into iron came his soul." The prayer book version, " the iron entered into his soul," is ungrammatical, but probably expresses much the same truth. His fetters hurt his mind as well as his body, and well did Jacob say, " The archers shot at him, and sorely grieved him." Under the cruelly false accusation, which he could not disprove, his mind was, as it were, belted and bolted around with iron, and had not the Lord been with him he might have sunk under his sufferings. In all this, and a thousand things besides, he was an admirable type of him who in the highest sense is " the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." The iron fetters were preparing him to wear chains of gold, and making his feet ready to stand on high places. It is even so with all the Lord's afflicted ones, they too shall one day step from their prisons to their thrones.

19. " *Until the time that his word came.*" God has his times, and his children must wait till his " until " is fulfilled. Joseph was tried as in a furnace, until the Lord's assaying work was fully accomplished. The word of the chief butler was nothing, he had to wait until God's word came, and meanwhile " *the word of the Lord tried him.*" He believed the promise, but his faith was sorely exercised. A delayed blessing tests men, and proves their metal, whether their faith is of that precious kind which can endure the fire. Of many a choice promise we may say with Daniel " the thing was true, but the time appointed was long." If the vision tarry it is good to wait for it with patience. There is a trying word and a delivering word, and we must bear the one till the other comes to us. How meekly Joseph endured his afflictions, and with what fortitude he looked forward to the clearing of his slandered character we may readily imagine: it will be better still if under similar trials we are able to imitate him, and come forth from the furnace as thoroughly purified as he was, and as well prepared to bear the yet harder ordeal of honour and power.

20. " *The king sent and loosed him.*" He was thrust into the roundhouse by an officer, but he was released by the monarch himself. " *Even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.*" The tide had turned, so that Egypt's haughty potentate gave him a call from the prison to the palace. He had interpreted the dreams of captives, himself a captive; he must now interpret for a ruler and become a ruler himself. When God means to enlarge his prisoners, kings become his turnkeys.

21. " *He made him lord of his house.*" Reserving no power, but saying " only in the throne will I be greater than thou." The servitor of slaves becomes lord over nobles. How soon the Lord lifteth his chosen from the dunghill to set them among princes. " *And ruler of all his substance.*" He empowered him to manage the storing of the seven plenteous harvests, and to dispense the provisions in the coming days of scarcity. All the treasures of Egypt were under his lock and key, yea, the granaries of the world were sealed or opened at his bidding. Thus was he in the best conceivable position for preserving alive the house of Israel with whom the covenant was made. As our Lord was himself secured in Egypt from Herod's enmity, so, ages before, the redeemed race found an equally available shelter in the

hour of need. God has always a refuge for his saints, and if the whole earth could not afford them sanctuary, the Lord himself would be their dwelling-place, and take them up to lie in his own bosom. We are always sure to be fed if all the world should starve. It is delightful to think of our greater Joseph ruling the nations for the good of his own household, and it becomes us to abide in quiet confidence in every political disaster, since Jesus is on the throne of providence, King of kings and Lord of lords, and will be so till this dispensation ends.

22. "*To bind his princes at his pleasure.*" He who was bound obtains authority to bind. He is no longer kept in prison, but keeps all the prisons, and casts into them the greatest nobles when justice demands it. "*And teach his senators wisdom.*" The heads of the various peoples, the elders of the nations, learned from him the science of government, the art of providing for the people. Joseph was a great instructor in political economy, and we doubt not that he mingled with it the purest morals, the most upright jurisprudence, and something of that divine wisdom without which the most able senators remain in darkness. The king's authority made him absolute both in the executive and in the legislative courts, and the Lord instructed him to use his power and discretion. What responsibilities and honours loaded the man who had been rejected by his brothers, and sold for twenty pieces of silver! What glories crown the head of that greater one who was "separated from his brethren."

23. "*Israel also came into Egypt.*" The aged patriarch came, and with him that increasing company which bore his name. He was hard to bring there. Perhaps nothing short of the hope of seeing Joseph could have drawn him to take so long a journey from the tombs of his forefathers; but the divine will was accomplished and the church of God was removed into an enemy's country, where for a while it was nourished. "*And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.*" Shem the blessed came to lodge awhile with Ham the accursed: the dove was in the vulture's nest. God so willed it for a time, and therefore it was safe and right: still it was only a sojourn, not a settlement. The fairest Goshen in Egypt was not the covenant blessing, neither did the Lord mean his people to think it so; even so to us "earth is our lodge," but only our lodge, for heaven is our home. When we are best housed we ought still to remember that here we have no continuing city. It were ill news for us if we were doomed to reside in Egypt for ever, for all its riches are not worthy to be compared with the reproach of Christ.

Thus the song rehearsed the removals of the Lord's people, and was a most fit accompaniment to the upbearing of the ark, as the priests carried it into the city of David, where the Lord had appointed it a resting-place.

24 And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies.

25 He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.

26 He sent Moses his servant; *and* Aaron whom he had chosen.

27 They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.

28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word.

29 He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.

30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.

31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, *and* lice in all their coasts.

32 He gave them hail for rain, *and* flaming fire in their land.

33 He smote their vines also and their fig-trees; and brake the trees of their coasts.

34 He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number,

35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.

36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.

37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and *there was* not one feeble *person* among their tribes.

38 Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.

24. "*And he increased his people greatly.*" In Goshen they seem to have increased rapidly from the first, and this excited the fears of the Egyptians, so that they tried to retard their increase by oppression, but the Lord continued to bless them, "*And make them stronger than their enemies.*" Both in physical strength and in numbers they threatened to become the more powerful race. Nor was this growth of the nation impeded by tyrannical measures, but the very reverse took place, thus giving an early instance of what has since become a proverb in the church —"the more they oppressed them the more they multiplied." It is idle to contend either with God or his people.

25. "*He turned their heart to hate his people.*" It was his goodness to Israel which called forth the ill-will of the Egyptian court, and so far the Lord caused it, and moreover he made use of this feeling to lead on to the discomfort of his people, and so to their readiness to leave the land to which they had evidently become greatly attached. Thus far but no further did the Lord turn the hearts of the Egyptians. God cannot in any sense be the author of sin so far as to be morally responsible for its existence, but it often happens through the evil which is inherent in human nature that the acts of the Lord arouse the ill-feelings of ungodly men. Is the sun to be blamed because while it softens wax it hardens clay? Is the orb of day to be accused of creating the foul exhalations which are drawn by its warmth from the pestilential marsh? The sun causes the reek of the dunghill only in a certain sense, had it been a bed of flowers his beams would have called forth fragrance. The evil is in men, and the honour of turning it to good and useful purposes is with the Lord. Hatred is often allied with cunning, and so in the case of the Egyptians, they began "*to deal subtilly with his servants.*" They treated them in a fraudulent manner, they reduced them to bondage by their exactions, they secretly concerted the destruction of their male children, and at length openly ordained that cruel measure, and all with the view of checking their increase, lest in time of war they should side with invaders in order to obtain their liberty. Surely the depths of Satanic policy were here reached, but vain was the cunning of man against the chosen seed.

26. "*He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen.*" When the oppression was at the worst, Moses came. For the second time we have here the expression, "he sent"; he who sent Joseph sent also Moses and his eloquent brother. The Lord had the men in readiness and all he had to do was to commission them and thrust them forward. They were two, for mutual comfort and strength, even as the apostles and the seventy in our Lord's day were sent forth two and two. The men differed, and so the one became the supplement of the other, and together they were able to accomplish far more than if they had been exactly alike: the main point was that they were both *sent*, and hence both clothed with divine might.

27. "*They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.*" The miracles which were wrought by Moses were the Lord's, not his own; hence they are here called "*his* signs," as being the marks of Jehovah's presence and power. The plagues were "words of his signs" (see margin), that is to say, they were speaking marvels, which testified more plainly than words to the omnipotence of Jehovah, to his determination to be obeyed, to his anger at the obstinacy of Pharaoh. Never were discourses more plain, pointed, personal, or powerful, and yet it took ten of them to accomplish the end designed. In the preaching of the gospel there are words, and signs, and wonders, and these leave men without excuse for their impenitence; to have the kingdom of God come nigh unto them, and yet to remain rebellious is the unhappy sin of obstinate spirits. Those are wonders of sin who see wonders of grace, and yet are unaffected by them: bad as he was, Pharaoh had not this guilt, for the prodigies which he beheld were marvels of judgment and not of mercy.

28. "*He sent darkness, and made it dark.*" It was no natural or common darkness to be accounted for by the blinding dust of the simoon, it was beyond all precedent and out of the range of ordinary events. It was a horrible palpable obscurity which men felt clinging about them as though it were a robe of death. It was a thick darkness,a total darkness, a darkness which lasted three days, a darkness in which no

one dared to stir. What a condition to be in! This plague is first mentioned, though it is not first in order, because it fitly describes all the period of the plagues: the land was in the darkness of sorrow, and in the darkness of sin all the time. If we shudder as we think of that long and terrible gloom, let us reflect upon the gross darkness which still covers heathen lands as the result of sin, for it is one of the chief plagues which iniquity creates for itself. May the day soon come when the people which sit in darkness shall see a great light. "*And they rebelled not against his word.*" Moses and Aaron did as they were bidden, and during the darkness the Egyptians were so cowed that even when it cleared away they were anxious for Israel to be gone, and had it not been for the pride of Pharaoh they would have rejoiced to speed them on their journey there and then. God can force men to obey, and even make the stoutest heart eager to pay respect to his will, for fear his plagues should be multiplied. Possibly, however, the sentence before us neither refers to Moses nor the Egyptians, but to the plagues which came at the Lord's bidding. The darkness, the hail, the frogs, the murrain, were all so many obedient servants of the great Lord of all.

29. "*He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.*" So that the plague was not a mere colouring of the water with red earth, as some suppose, but the river was offensive and fatal to the fish. The beloved Nile and other streams were all equally tainted and ensanguined. Their commonest mercy became their greatest curse. Water is one of the greatest blessings, and the more plentiful it is the better, but blood is a hideous sight to look upon, and to see rivers and pools of it is frightful indeed. Fish in Egypt furnished a large part of the food supply, and it was no small affliction to see them floating dead and white upon a stream of crimson. The hand of the Lord thus smote them where all classes of the people would become aware of it and suffer from it.

30. "*Their land brought forth frogs in abundance.*" If fish could not live frogs might, yea, they multiplied both on land and in the water till they swarmed beyond all count. "*In the chambers of their kings.*" They penetrated the choicest rooms of the palace, and were found upon the couches of state. The Lord called for them and they marched forth. Obnoxious and even loathsome their multitudes became, but there was no resisting them; they seemed to spring out of the ground, the very land brought them forth. Their universal presence must have inspired horror and disgust which would cause sickness and make life a burden; their swarming even in the king's own chambers was a rebuke to his face, which his pride must have felt. Kings are no more than other men with God, nay less than others when they are first in rebellion; if the frogs had abounded elsewhere, but had been kept out of his select apartments, the monarch would have cared little, for he was a heartless being, but God took care that there should be a special horde of the invaders for the palace; they were more than ordinarily abundant in the chambers of their kings.

31. "*He spake.*" See the power of the divine word. He had only to say it and it was done: "*and there came divers sorts of flies.*" Insects of various annoying kinds came up in infinite hordes, a mixture of biting, stinging, buzzing gnats, mosquitos, flies, beetles, and other vermin such as make men's flesh their prey, the place of deposit for their eggs, and the seat of peculiar torments. "*And lice in all their coasts.*" These unutterably loathsome forms of life were as the dust of the ground, and covered their persons, their garments, and all they ate. Nothing is too small to master man when God commands it to assail him. The sons of Ham had despised the Israelites and now they were made to loathe themselves. The meanest beggars were more approachable than the proud Egyptians; they were reduced to the meanest condition of filthiness, and the most painful state of irritation. What armies the Lord can send forth when once his right arm is bared for war! And what scorn he pours on proud nations when he fights them, not with angels, but with lice! Pharaoh had little left to be proud of when his own person was invaded by filthy parasites. It was a slap in the face which ought to have humbled his heart, but, alas, man, when he is altogether polluted, still maintains his self-conceit, and when he is the most disgusting object in the universe he still vaunts himself. Surely pride is moral madness.

32. "*He gave them hail for rain.*" They seldom had rain, but now the showers assumed the form of heavy, destructive hail-storms, and being accompanied with a hurricane and thunderstorm, they were overwhelming, terrible, and destructive. "*And flaming fire in their land.*" The lightning was peculiarly vivid, and seemed to run along upon the ground, or fall in fiery flakes. Thus all the fruit of the trees and the harvests of the fields were either broken to pieces or burned on the spot,

and universal fear bowed the hearts of men to the dust. No phenomena are more appalling to the most of mankind than those which attend a thunderstorm; even the most audacious blasphemers quail when the dread artillery of heaven opens fire upon the earth.

33. "*He smote their vines also and their fig trees.*" So that all hope of gathering their best fruits was gone, and the trees were injured for future bearing. All the crops were destroyed, and these are mentioned as being the more prominent forms of their produce, used by them both at festivals and in common meals. "*And brake the trees of their coasts.*" From end to end of Egypt the trees were battered and broken by the terrible hailstorm. God is in earnest when he deals with proud spirits, he will either end them or mend them.

34, 35. "*He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.*" One word from the Captain and the armies leaped forward. The expression is very striking, and sets forth the immediate result of the divine word. The caterpillar is called *the licker*, because it seems to lick up every green thing as in a moment. Perhaps the caterpillar here meant is still the locust in another form. That locusts swarm in countless armies is a fact of ordinary observation, and the case would be worse on this occasion. We have ourselves ridden for miles through armies of locusts, and we have seen with our own eyes how completely they devour every green thing. The description is not strained when we read, "*And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.*" Nothing escapes these ravenous creatures, they even climb the trees to reach any remnant of foliage which may survive. Commissioned as these were by God, we may be sure they would do their work thoroughly, and leave behind them nothing but a desolate wilderness.

36. "*He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.*" Now came the master blow. The Lord spoke before, but now he smites; before he only smote vines, but now he strikes men themselves. The glory of the household dies in a single night, the prime and pick of the nation are cut off, the flower of the troops, the heirs of the rich, and the hopes of the poor all die at midnight. Now the target was struck in the centre, there was no confronting this plague. Pharaoh feels it as much as the woman-slave at the mill; he had smitten Israel, the Lord's firstborn, and the Lord repaid him to his face. What a cry went up throughout the land of Egypt when every house wailed its firstborn at the dead of night! O Jehovah, thou didst triumph in that hour, and with an outstretched arm didst thou deliver thy people.

37. "*He brought them forth also with silver and gold.*" This they asked of the Egyptians, perhaps even demanded, and well they might, for they had been robbed and spoiled for many a day, and it was not meetthat they should go forth empty handed. Glad were the Egyptians to hand over their jewels to propitiate a people who had such a terrible friend above; they needed no undue pressure, they feared them too much to deny them their requests. The Israelites were compelled to leave their houses and lands behind them, and it was but justice that they should be able to turn these into portable property. "*And there was not one feeble person among their tribes*"—a great marvel indeed. The number of their army was very great and yet there was not one in hospital, not one carried in an ambulance, or limping in the rear. Poverty and oppression had not enfeebled them. JEHOVAH ROPHI had healed them; they carried none of the diseases of Egypt with them, and felt none of the exhaustion which sore bondage produces. When God calls his people to a long journey he fits them for it; in the pilgrimage of life our strength shall be equal to our day. See the contrast between Egypt and Israel—in Egypt one dead in every house, and among the Israelites not one so much as limping.

38. "*Egypt was glad when they departed,*" which would not have been the case had the gold and silver been borrowed by the Israelites, for men do not like to see borrowers carry their goods into a far country. The awe of God was on Egypt, and they feared his people and were glad to pay them to be gone. What a change from the time when the sons of Jacob were the drudges of the land, the offscouring of all things, the brickmakers whose toil was only requited by the lash or the stick. Now they were reverenced as prophets and priests; "*for the fear of them fell upon them,*" the people proceeded even to a superstitious terror of them. Thus with cheers and good wishes their former taskmasters sent them on their way: Pharaoh was foiled and the chosen people were once more on the move, journeying to the place which the Lord had given to them by a covenant of salt. "O give thanks unto Jehovah; call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people."

39 He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.
40 *The people* asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places *like* a river.
42 For he remembered his holy promise, *and* Abraham his servant.
43 And he brought forth his people with joy, *and* his chosen with gladness:
44 And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;
45 That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

39. "*He spread a cloud for a covering.*" Never people were so favoured. What would not travellers in the desert now give for such a canopy? The sun could not scorch them with its burning ray; their whole camp was screened like a king in his pavilion. Nothing seemed to be too good for God to give his chosen nation, their comfort was studied in every way. "*And fire to give light in the night.*" While cities were swathed in darkness, their town of tents enjoyed a light which modern art with all its appliances cannot equal. God himself was their sun and shield, their glory and their defence. Could they be unbelieving while so graciously shaded, or rebellious while they walked at midnight in such a light? Alas, the tale of *their* sin is as extraordinary as this story of *his* love; but this Psalm selects the happier theme and dwells only upon covenant love and faithfulness. O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good. We, too, have found the Lord all this to us, for he has been our sun and shield, and has preserved us alike from the perils of joys and the evils of grief;

> "He hath been my joy in woe,
> Cheered my heart when it was low;
> And with warnings softly sad
> Calm'd my heart when it was glad."

So has the promise been fulfilled to us, "the sun shall not hurt thee by day, nor the moon by night."

40. "*The people asked.*" But how badly, how wickedly! And yet his grace forgave the sin of their murmuring and heard its meaning: or perhaps we may consider that while the multitude murmured there were a few, who were really gracious people, who prayed, and therefore the blessing came. "*He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.*" He gave them what they asked amiss as well as what was good for them, mingling judgment with goodness, for their discipline. The quails were more a curse than a blessing in the end, because of their greed and lust, but in themselves they were a peculiar indulgence, and favour: it was their own fault that the dainty meat brought death with it. As for the manna it was unmingled good to them, and really satisfied them, which the quails never did. It was bread *from* heaven, and the bread *of* heaven, sent *by* heaven; it was a pity that they were not led to look up to heaven whence it came, and fear and love the God who out of heaven rained it upon them. Thus they were housed beneath the Lord's canopy and fed with food from his own table; never people were so lodged and boarded. O house of Israel, praise ye the Lord.

41. "*He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out.*" With Moses' rod and his own word he cleft the rock in the desert, and forth leaped abundant floods for their drinking where they had feared to die of thirst. From most unlikely sources the all-sufficient God can supply his people's needs; hard rocks become springing fountains at the Lord's command. "*They ran in the dry places like a river*": so that those at a distance from the rock could stoop down and refresh themselves, and the stream flowed on, so that in future journeyings they were supplied. The desert sand would naturally swallow up the streams, and yet it did not so, the refreshing river ran "in the dry places." We know that the rock set forth our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom there flows a fountain of living waters which shall never be exhausted till the last pilgrim has crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan.

42. "*For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.*" Here

is the secret reason for all this grace. The covenant and he for whose sake it was made are ever on the heart of the Most High. He remembered his people because he remembered his covenant. He could not violate that gracious compact for it was sacred to him,—" his holy promise." A holy God must keep his promise holy. In our case the Lord's eye is upon his beloved Son, and his engagements with him on our behalf, and this is the source and well-head of those innumerable favours which enrich us in all our wanderings through this life's wilderness.

43. " *And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness.*" Up from the wilderness he led them, rejoicing over them himself and making them rejoice too. They were *his* people, *his* chosen, and hence in them he rejoiced, and upon them he showered his favours, that they might rejoice in him as their God, and their portion.

44. " *And gave them the lands of the heathen.*" He drove out the Canaanites and allotted the lands to the tribes. They were called on to fight, but the Lord wrought so wonderfully that the conquest was not effected by their bow or spear—the Lord *gave* them the land. " *And they inherited the labour of the people,*" they dwelt in houses which they had not built, and gathered fruit from vines and olives which they had not planted. They were not settled in a desert which needed to be reclaimed, but in a land fertile to a proverb, and cultivated carefully by its inhabitants. Like Adam, they were placed in a garden. This entrance into the goodly land was fitly celebrated when the ark was being moved to Zion.

45. " *That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws.*" This was the practical design of it all. The chosen nation was to be the conservator of truth, the exemplar of morality, the pattern of devotion: everything was so ordered as to place them in advantageous circumstances for fulfilling this trust. Theirs was a high calling and a glorious election. It involved great responsibilities, but it was in itself a distinguished blessing, and one for which the nation was bound to give thanks. Most justly then did the music close with the jubilant but solemn shout of HALLELUJAH. " *Praise ye the Lord.*" If this history did not make Israel praise God, what would?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This is the first of a series of " *Confitemini Domino* " Psalms, " O give thanks unto the Lord " (cv. 1; cvi. 1; cvii. 1; cxviii. 1; and cxxxvi. 1). —*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—The 105th Psalm is a meditation on the covenant as performed on the part of God, the 106th on the covenant as kept by Israel. They both dwell on the predestinating will of God, electing men to holiness and obedience, and the mode in which human sin opposes itself to that will, and yet cannot make it void.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verses 1—15.—The first fifteen verses were written at the bringing up of the Ark, 1 Chron. xvi. They tell that it is sovereign grace that ruleth over all—it is a sovereign God. Out of a fallen world he takes whom he pleases—individuals, families, nations. He chose *Israel* long ago, that they might be the objects of grace, and their land the theatre of its display. He will yet again return to Israel, when the days of his Kingdom of Glory draw near; and Israel shall have a full share—the very fullest and richest—in his blessings, temporal and spiritual.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—" *Call upon his name.*" The original meaning of this phrase is *call (him) by his name*, i.e., give him the descriptive title most expressive of his divine perfections; or more specifically, call him by his name Jehovah, *i.e.*, ascribe to him the attributes which it denotes, to wit, eternity and self-existence, together with that covenant relation to his people, which though not denoted by the name was constantly associated with it, and therefore necessarily suggested by it. The meaning of the next phrase is obscured, if not entirely concealed in the common version, " *among the people.*" The plural form and sense of the original expression are essential to the writer's purpose, which is to glorify the God of Israel among the nations.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—" *Make known his deeds among the people.*" The people of God were

not shut up in that narrow corner of the earth for the purpose of confining within their straitened territories the true knowledge and worship of God: but God wished that to be the fixed seat of the church, from which the sound of heavenly doctrine should go forth into all nations. Therefore he chose Canaan, which is interjected among the most powerful nations of the world, that from it as from a fountain might more easily issue the doctrine of God to the rest of the nations: as Isaiah says, "*Out of Zion shall go forth the law.*"—*Mollerus.*

Verse 2.—"*Talk ye of all his wondrous works,*" נִפְלְאֹתָיו *niphleothaiv*, "of his miracles." Who have so many of these to boast of as Christians! Christianity is a tissue of miracles; and every part of the work of grace on the soul is a miracle. Genuine Christian converts may talk of miracles from morning to night; and they *should talk of them*, and recommend to others their miracle-working God and Saviour. —*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*Sing*" . . . . "*talk*," etc. Music and conversation are two things by which the mind of man receiveth much good, or a great deal of harm. They who make "Jehovah" and his "wondrous works" the subjects of both, enjoy a heaven upon earth. And they who do in reality love the Saviour, will always find themselves inclined to "*sing to him*," and to "*talk of him.*"—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*Sing Psalms.*" It is not sufficient to offer the empty vessel of our joy unto God, or our singing voice in musical tune only; but also it is required that we fill our joyful voice with holy matter and good purpose, whereby God only may be reasonably praised: "Sing *Psalms* unto him."—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"*Sing Psalms.*" Psalmody is the calm of the soul, the repose of the spirit, the arbiter of peace. It silences the wave, and conciliates the whirlwind of our passions, soothing the impetuous, tempering the unchaste. It is an engenderer of friendship, a healer of dissension, a reconciler of enemies. For who can longer count him his enemy, with whom to the throne of God he hath raised the strain? Psalmody repels the demons, and lures the ministry of angels. It is a weapon of defence in nightly terrors and a respite from daily toil. To the infant it is a presiding genius; to manhood a crown of glory; a balm of comfort to the aged; a congenial ornament to women.—*Basil.*

Verse 4.—"*Seek the Lord, and be strengthened*"; so divers ancient versions read it. They that would be "strengthened in the inward man," must fetch in strength from God by faith and prayer. "*Seek his strength*," and then seek his face; for by his strength we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, Hosea xii. 3. "*Seek his face evermore*," *i.e.*, seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it, in an infinite progression, and yet be for ever satisfied in it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*His strength.*" In classical language, his ægis, or protection, his ark, the symbol of the divine presence.—*John Mason Good.*

Verse 4.—"*Seek his face evermore.*" It is added "*evermore*," lest they should imagine that they had performed their duty, if they assembled twice or three times in the year at the tabernacle, and observed the external rites according to the law. —*Mollerus.*

Verse 4.—"*Seek . . . . seek.*" None do seek the Lord so earnestly, but they have need of stirring up to seek him more earnestly; neither have any attained to such a measure of communion with God, but they have need to seek for a further measure: therefore it is said, "*Seek the Lord, seek his strength, seek his face evermore.*" —*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Remember.*" How others may be affected I do not ask. For myself, I confess, that there is no care or sorrow, by which I am so severely harassed, as when I feel myself guilty of ingratitude to my most kind Lord. It not seldom appears to be a fault so inexplicable, that I am alarmed when I read these words, inasmuch as I consider them addressed to myself, and others like me. Remember, O ye forgetful, thoughtless, and ungrateful, the works of God, which he hath done to us, with so many signs and proofs of his goodness. What more could he have done, which he hath not done?—*Folengius.*

Verse 6.—" *O ye seed of Abraham his servant.*" Consider the relation ye stand in to him. Ye are " *the seed of Abraham his servant*" ; you are born in his house, and being thereby entitled to the privilege of his servants, protection and provision, you are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your master, consult his honour, obey his commands, and do what you can to advance his interests.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8.—" *He hath remembered his covenant.*" As a long series of years had elapsed between the promise and the performance, the prophet uses the word " *remember*," intimating that the Divine promise does not become obsolete by length of time, but that even when the world imagines that they are extinguished and wholly forgotten, God retains as distinct a remembrance of them as ever, that he may accomplish them in due season.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—" *The word which he commanded.*" All that God says must of necessity be said with authority, so that even his promises partake of the nature of commands. —*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 11.—" *The lot of your inheritance :* " literally חֶבֶל, *the cord of your inheritance*, an expression taken from the ancient method of measuring land by the cord or line ; whence the measuring cord is *metonymically* put for the part measured, and divided by the cord. Thus, " *the lines*, חֲבָלִים, the cords, *are fallen unto me in pleasant places*," i.e., as the Psalmist explains it : " I have a goodly heritage." Ps. xvi. 6.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 11.—" Your *inheritance.*" The change of the number (from " thee " to " your ") points out that God made a covenant with all the people in general, though he spake the words only to a few individuals ; even as we have seen a little before, that it was a decree or an everlasting law. The holy patriarchs were the first and principal persons into whose hands the promise was committed ; but they did not embrace the grace which was offered to them as belonging only to themselves, but as a blessing which their posterity in common with them were to become sharers of.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 12.—" *When they were but a few men in number.*" מְתֵי מִסְפָּר. Literally, *homines numeri*, men of number ; so few as easily to be numbered : in opposition to what their posterity afterwards were, as the sand of the sea, without number.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verses 12—14.—One would think that all the world would have been upon them ; but here was the protection, God has a negative voice, " *He suffered no man to do them wrong.*" Many had (as we say) an aching tooth at the people of God, their finger itched to be dealing with them, and the text shews four advantages the world had against them. First, " *They were few.*" Secondly, " *very few.*" Thirdly, " *strangers.*" Fourthly, " *unsettled.*" What hindered their enemies ? It was the Lord's negative voice. " *He reproved kings for their sakes ; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.*" We see an instance of this (Gen. xxxv. 5). When Jacob and his family journeyed, " the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." They had a mind to pursue after them, to revenge the slaughter of the Shechemites ; but God said, *Pursue not*, and then they could not pursue, they must stay at home. And when his people the Jews were safe in Canaan he encourages them to come up freely to worship at Jerusalem, by this assurance, " No man shall desire the land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God, thrice in the year " (Exod. xxxiv. 24). God can stop not only hands from spoiling, but hearts from desiring.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13.—" *From one kingdom to another people.*" Where we might have expected *from kingdom to kingdom*, the ear is somewhat disappointed by the phrase, " *from one kingdom to another people*," which may have been intended to distinguish the Egyptian and other monarchies from the more democratical or patriarchal institutions of the Arabians and other nations.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 13.—Though frequent flitting is neither desirable nor commendable, yet sometimes there is a just and necessary occasion for it, and it may be the lot of some of the best men.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—"*He suffered no man to do them wrong.*" As many rose up, one after another, in troops against them, the Psalmist says indefinitely, that men were withheld from hurting them; for אָדָם, *Adam*, is the word here used, which is the one most generally employed to signify *man*.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 14, 15.—I resolve the words into these three parts. 1. Here is the nearness and the dearness of the saints unto God. They are dearer to him than kings and states, simply considered; that is, otherwise than as they in their persons are also saints; for you see that for their sakes he reproved kings, and so sheweth that he preferreth them to kings.

2. Here is the great danger to kings and states, to deal with his saints otherwise than well. Which appeareth many ways; for he doth not only in words give a charge not to touch them, but he carries it in a high way (for so God will do when he pleads their cause). Touch them not; as if he had said, Let me see if you dare so much as touch them; and it is with an intimation of the highest threatening if they should; upon your peril if you do so; for that is the scope of such a speech. And accordingly in deeds he made this good; for the text saith he suffered no man to do them wrong; not that he did altogether prevent all wrong and injuries, for they received many as they went through those lands; but at no time did he let it go unpunished. In that sense he suffered them not. You know how he plagued Pharaoh, king of Egypt, with great plagues, and all his household, for Abraham's wife's sake, Gen. xii. And so Abimelech, king of Gerar, the Lord cometh upon him with a greatness, and his first word is in Gen. xx. 3, "Behold, thou art but a dead man," afore he had first told him why or wherefore, though then he adds the reason; he brings him upon his knees, verse 4, bids him look to it, that he give satisfaction to Abraham, and restore his wife to him again, verse 7; and well he escaped so; and tells him also that he must be beholden to Abraham's prayers for his life. "He is a prophet," saith he, "and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live."

3. The third is the care and protection which God had over them, set and amplified, 1, by the number and condition of the persons whom he defended; though "*few men in number*," that is, soon reckoned, for their power and strength a few, or very small, εἰς μικρούς, so the Septuagint in the parallel place, 1 Chron. xvi. 19; as also, 2, by what he did for them: He suffered no man, how great soever, to do them any wrong, how small soever; not without recompense and satisfaction; not to do it, though they had a mind to it. Though the people had an ill eye at them, Gen. xxvi. 11, God causeth Abimelech to make a law on purpose; Abimelech charged all his people in Isaac's behalf, and spake in the very words of the text, "He that toucheth this man or his wife shall be put to death."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 15.—"*Mine anointed.*" Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had no external anointing. They were, however, called "*anointed*," because they were separated by God from the multitude of wicked men, and endowed with the Spirit and his gifts, of which the oil was an emblem.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 15.—"*Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.*" We see here a vivid description of the people of God. They are "his anointed ones," "having the residue of his Spirit"; they are his prophets, to whom is intrusted the word of life, that they may be witnesses in the world. To these he gives as it were a safe passport through the world. Though they have ever been but men of number, accounted as a vile thing, they are precious in his sight. They are not distinguished by external dignity, numbers and power, as Rome sets forth the marks of her communion. They are in the midst of kingdoms, but not of them. They form usually the humblest portions of most communities, and yet they receive honour from God. Despised by the world, but unto God kings and priests, ordained and anointed to reign with Christ for ever.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 15.—"*Prophets.*" The נָבִיא is the prophet, or forth-speaker; the term laying stress on the utterance, and not upon the vision. The Hebrew word comes from a root which means to bubble up and overflow as from a full fountain. But the fulness of the true prophets of Jehovah was not that of their own thoughts and emotions. It was of the Divine Spirit within them. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Peter i. 21. The first application of the word is to Abraham (Gen. xx. 7); although, long before Abraham, "Enoch the seventh from Adam, prophesied," Jude 14.—*Donald Fraser, in "Synoptical Lectures on the Books of Holy Scripture."* 1873.

Verse 16.—" *He called for a famine.*" As a master *calls for* a servant ready to do his bidding. On the contrary, God says (Ezek. xxxvi. 29), " I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you." Compare the centurion's words as to sickness being Christ's servant, ready to come or go at his call, Matt. viii. 8, 9. — *A. R. Fausset.*

Verses 17—22.—Joseph may be a fit type to us of our spiritual deliverance. Consider him sold into Egypt, not without the determinate counsel of God, who pre-ordained this to good; " God did send me before you to preserve life," Gen. xlv. 5. Here is the difference, the brethren sold Joseph, we sold ourselves. Consider us thus sold unto sin and death; God had a purpose to redeem us; there is election. Joseph was delivered out of prison, and we ransomed out of the house of bondage; there was redemption. Joseph's cause was made known, and himself acquitted; we could not be found innocent ourselves, but were acquitted in Christ; wherein consists our justification. Lastly, Joseph was clothed in glorious apparel, and adorned with golden chains, and made to ride in the second chariot of Egypt; so our last step is to be advanced to high honour, even the glory of the celestial court; " This honour have all the saints," Psalm cxlix. 9.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verses 17—22.—In many circumstances concerning Joseph—in his being beloved of his father—in his being hated of his brethren—in his sufferings and deep abasement—in his being brought out of prison—in his advancement and exaltation —in his wisdom and prudence—in his providing for his father's family—in his free forgiveness of the injuries he had sustained from his brethren—it may be truly said, we have Christ delineated therein, and set forth thereby, in type, figure, and representatively. But I have nothing to do with this here; I only give this hint to the reader.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce*, 1817.

Verse 18.—" *His soul came into iron*" (margin). The whole person is denoted by the *soul*, because the soul of the captive suffers still more than the body. Imprisonment is one of the most severe trials to the soul. Even to spiritual heroes, such as a Savonarola and St. Cyran, the waters often go over the soul.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 18.—" *His soul came into iron.*" Till we have felt it, we cannot conceive that sickness of heart, which at times will steal upon the patient sufferer; that sense of loneliness, that faintness of soul, which comes from hopes deferred and wishes unshared, from the selfishness of brethren and the heartlessness of the world. We ask ourselves, If the Lord were with me, should I suffer thus, not only the scorn of the learned and the contempt of the great, but even the indifference and neglect of those whom I have served, who yet forget me? So Joseph might have asked; and so till now may the elect ask, as they stand alone without man's encouragement or sympathy, not turned aside by falsehood or scorn, with their face set as a flint, yet deeply feeling what it costs them.—*Andrew Jukes, in " The Types of Genesis,"* 1858.

Verse 19.—" *Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him.*" This verse forms the key to the whole meaning of Joseph's mysterious trial, and at the same time illustrates a deep mystery in the spiritual life of man. By " *the word of the Lord* " that " *tried him,*" the Psalmist evidently refers to the dreams of his future destiny which were sent to Joseph from God; and in saying that they tried him " *until his word came,*" he evidently means that his faith in those promises was tested by his long imprisonment, until the day of his deliverance dawned. Consider for a moment his position, and you will see the purpose of that trial. A youth educated amidst all the quiet simplicity of the early patriarchal life, he was haunted by dream-visions of a mighty destiny. Those visions were mysteriously foretelling his government in Egypt, and the blessings which his wise and just rule would confer on the land; but while unable to comprehend them, he yet believed that they were voices of the future, and promises of God. But the quietude of that shepherd life was not the preparation for the fulfilment of his promised destiny. The education that would form the man who could withstand, firmly, the temptations of Egyptian life with its cities and civilization; the education that would form the ruler whose clear eye should judge between the good and the evil, and discern the course of safety in the hour of a nation's peril—all this was not to be gained under the shadow of his father's tent; it must come through trial, and through trial arising from the very promise of God in which he believed. Hence, a great and startling change

crossed his life, that seemed to forbid the fulfilment of that dream-promise, and tempted him to doubt its truth. Sold into Egypt as a slave, cast into prison through his fidelity to God, the word of the Lord most powerfully tried his soul. In the gloom of that imprisonment it was most hard to believe in God's faithfulness, when his affliction had risen from his obedience; and most hard to keep the promise clearly before him, when his mighty trouble would perpetually tempt him to regard it as an idle dream. But through the temptation, he gained the strong trust which the pomp and glory of the Egyptian court would have no power to destroy; and when the word of deliverance came, the man came forth, strong through trial, to fulfil his glorious destiny of ruling Egypt in the name of God, and securing for it the blessings of heaven. Thus his trial by the word of the Lord—his temptation to doubt its truth—was a divine discipline preparing him for the fulfilment of the promise.

And looking at it in this aspect, this verse presents to us a deep spiritual truth: The promises of God try man, that through the trial he may be prepared for their fulfilment. Our subject then is this: The trial of man by the promises of God. This verse suggests three great facts which exhibit the three aspects of that trial.

I. God's promises must try man. Every promise of the Lord is *of necessity* a trial. Now, this necessity arises from two sources; from man's secret unbelief, and from God's purposes of discipline.

1. *God's word must try man by revealing his secret unbelief.* We never know our want of faith till some glorious promise rouses the soul into the attitude of belief; then the coldness and unfaithfulness of the heart are lighted up by that flash of belief, and the promise is a trial. Thus Paul with his profound insight into the facts of spiritual experience, says, "The word of the Lord is sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" In illustration of this we may observe that many promises of the Lord come to us, as they came to Joseph, like dream-visions of the future. Visions come to the Christian soul, as grand and wonderful as those which came to the Hebrew youth of old; and they, too, are prophecies of what we are destined to be. There comes a time when the voice of God is more clearly heard, and the great inheritance revealed. No dream of the night—no spirit of the dead—has visited us; but like a spirit some truth of God has entered the soul's presence-chamber, and summoned it to noble aspiration and Christ-like endeavour. Then the earnest of the future gleams on life's horizon. The Sabbath of eternity, with all its balm and music, seems near, and rapt with its glory, we are roused to all-surrendering zeal. But I appeal to your experience whether it is not true that such revelations of the promise rapidly become times of trial. Then the mocking voice of unbelief tells us that aspiration is vain. The cold cross-currents of indifference chill the fiery impulses of the heart. We are prisoned like Joseph, by no material bars indeed, but by the invisible bonds of unbelief; and we find it most hard to keep the promise clear and bright, while tempted to believe that our aspirations were merely idle dreams. And *there* is that arousing, by the promise, of the soul's hidden unbelief, which makes every promise an inevitable trial.

2. Again: *God causes his promises to try us, that he may accomplish his own purposes of discipline.* It is a law of our nature that no belief in any unseen thing can ever pass into the active form of strong endeavour to attain it, until we are tempted to disbelieve it. Thus the great idea of an undiscovered land across the wastes of the Atlantic smote the soul of Columbus; but it remained a dreamy faith until by opposition and ridicule he was tempted to regard it as a dream, and then it became heroic endeavour, and the land was found. Thus with all men of genius. They stand in the front of their age, with thoughts which the world cannot understand; but those thoughts are dreams until suffering and scorn try the men, and then they are awakened into effort to realise them. Hence God leads us into circumstances in which we are tempted to doubt his promises, that by temptation he may discipline faith into power. There is a wilderness of temptation in every life, and like Christ, we are often led into it, from the solemn hour when we heard the voice, "Thou art my son;" but like Christ, we come forth strong, through the long, silent wrestling with temptation, to do our Father's will.

II. God sends the Hour of Deliverance: "*until the time that his word came.*" When the discipline was *perfected*, Joseph came forth ready for his mission. But our deliverance does not always come in *this* way. Take from the Bible histories the four great methods by which God sends deliverance. *Sometimes by death.* Thus with Elijah. Weariness, loneliness, failure, had wrung from the strong man the

cry, " Take away my life for I am not better than my fathers." The temptation was becoming too strong, and God sent deliverance in the chariot of fire. *Sometimes by transforming the height of trial into the height of blessing.* The three youths in Babylon had clenched their nerves for the climax of agony, when the fire became a Paradise. So, now, God makes the climax of trial the herald of spiritual blessedness. By suffering we are loosened from the bonds of time and sense ; there is one near us like the Son of God ; and deliverance has come. *Sometimes by the glance of love on the falling soul.* Thus with Peter. The temptation was mastering him : one glance of *that* eye, and he went out weeping and delivered. *Sometimes by continuing the trial, but increasing the power to endure it.* Thus with Paul. After the vision of the third heaven came " the thorn in the flesh." The temptation made him cry thrice to God ; the trial remained, but here was the deliverance—" my grace is sufficient for thee." The suffering lost none of its pressure, but he learned to glory in infirmity ; and *then* came his delivering hour.

III. God makes the Trial by Promise fulfil the Promise itself. In Joseph the temptation to doubt the word of God silently meetened him for its fulfilment. So with us all. We hope not for an Egyptian kingdom, our dream-vision is of a heavenly inheritance, and the palace of a heavenly King. But every temptation resisted, every mocking voice of doubt overcome, is an aid upwards and onwards. Trials, sufferings, struggles, are angels arraying the soul, in the white robes of the heavenly world, and crowning it with the crown that fadeth not away. And when the end comes, then it will be seen that the long dreary endeavour to hold fast the dream-promise—the firm resolute " no " to the temptation to disbelieve, are all more than recompensed with " the exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—*Edward Luscombe Hull, in " Sermons preached at King's Lynn,"* 1867.

Verse 19.—" *The word of the Lord tried him.*" As we try God's word, so God's word tries us ; and happy if, when we are tried, we come forth as gold ; and the trial of our faith proves more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire.—*William Jay.*

Verse 19.—" *Tried him.*" I doubt not that Joseph's brethren were humbled, yet Joseph may be more, he must be cast into the ditch, and into the prison, and the iron must enter not only into his legs, but into his soul. He must be more affected in spirit, because he was to do greater work for God, and was to be raised up higher than the rest, and therefore did need the more ballast.—*Thomas Shepard, in " The Sound Believer,"* 1649.

Verse 19.—" *Tried.*" צָרְפָה, " assayed ; " Ps. xii. 6 ; xvii. 3 ; xviii. 30. He came out of the ordeal, as gold from the fining-pot, more pure and lustrous.—*William Kay.*

Verses 19—21.—" *Tried him.*" " *Made him lord of his house.*" Joseph's feet were hurt in irons, to fit him to tread more delicately in the King's Palace at Zoan ; and when the Lord's time was come, by the same stairs which winded him into the dungeon he climbs up into the next chariot to Pharaoh's. Few can bear great and sudden mercies without pride and wantonness, till they are hampered and humbled to carry it moderately.—*Samuel Lee, in " The Triumph of Mercy in the Chariot of Praise,"* 1677.

Verse 20.—" *The king sent and loosed him.*" And that by his own master, Potiphar, who had clapt him up there by his wanton wife's wicked instigation. He had been bound ignominiously, but now comes he to be loosed honourably.—*Christopher Ness.*

Verse 21.—" *Ruler of all his substance,*" or " *possession.*" Herein also he was a type of Jesus Christ, who, as God, is possessor of heaven and earth, being the creator of them.—*John Gill.*

Verses 21—22.—He was received into the Royal Society of the right honourable the king's privy councillors, and was constituted as Chairman of the council-table, which, though Moses doth not express, yet David intimateth in Ps. cv. 21, 22. All the privy-councillors, as well as the private people were bound (possibly by oath) to obey him in all things, and, as out of the chair, he magisterially *taught these senators wisdom.* Thus the Hebrew reading runs : *He bound the princes to his soul* (or according to his will) and *made wise his elders ;* teaching them not only civil and moral, but also divine wisdom, for which cause God sent Joseph (saith he) into Egypt, that some sound of the redemption of fallen mankind might be heard in that kingdom,

at that time the most flourishing in the world: neither is Moses altogether silent herein, for he calls him a *master of wisdom*, or *father to* Pharaoh (Gen. xlv. 8). Much more to his councillors, and he says that no hand or foot shall move (to wit, in affairs of state, at home, or, in foreign embassies, abroad) without Joseph's order; he was the king's plenipotentiary, Gen. xli. 44.—*Christopher Ness.*

Verse 22.—"*To bind his princes.*" The meaning of אָסַר signifies to exercise control over the greatest men in the kingdom, which power was conferred on Joseph by Pharaoh: see Gen. xli. 40; also verses 43, 44. The capability of binding is to be regarded as an evidence of authority; a power of compelling obedience; or, in default thereof, of inflicting punishment.—*George Phillips.* 1846.

Verse 22.—"*At his pleasure.*" Literally, *with his soul*, which some explain as a bold metaphor, describing Joseph's mind or soul as the cord or chain with which he bound the Egyptians, *i.e.*, forced them to perform his will. But see Ps. xvii. 9; xxvii. 12; xli. 2.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 22.—"*And teach his senators wisdom.*" That is that wisdom wherein he had been instructed of God he might also instruct the princes, and teach prudence to those who were much his seniors. Herein some sparks of divine wisdom shine, that he should order even the princes and old men to learn wisdom from one who was a slave and a foreigner, although the Egyptians are always wont to boast that Egypt is the native place of wisdom.—*Jansenius.*

Verse 23.—"*Egypt*" . . . "*the land of Ham.*" The Egyptians were a branch of the race of Ham. They came from Asia through the desert of Syria to settle in the valley of the Nile. This is a fact clearly established by science, and entirely confirms the statements of the book of Genesis.—*F. Lenormant and E. Chevalier, in* "*A Manual of Ancient History,*" 1869.

Verse 24.—"*He increased his people greatly.*" Behold here the concealed blessing in the secret of the cross. Under it the people of God are in the most fruitful state. —*Berleb. Bible.*

Verse 25.—"*He turned their heart to hate his people.*" Not by putting this wicked hatred into them, which is not consistent either with the holiness of God's nature, or with the truth of his word, and which was altogether unnecessary, because they had that and all other wickedness in them by nature; but partly, by withdrawing the common gifts and operations of his Spirit, and all the restraints and hindrances to it, and wholly leaving them to their own mistakes, and passions, and corrupt affections, which of their own accord were ready to take that course; and partly, by directing and governing that hatred, which was wholly in and from themselves, so as it should fall upon the Israelites rather than upon other people.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verses 25—26.—When by the malice of enemies God's people are brought to greatest straits, there is deliverance near to be sent from God unto them. "*They dealt subtilly with his servants. He sent Moses his servant.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 26.—"*Moses and Aaron.*"—God usually sendeth his servants by two and two for mutual helps and comfort.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 28.—"*He sent darkness.*" The darkness here stands at the beginning (not in the historical order that the particular plague of darkness stood), to mark how *God's wrath* hung over Egypt as a *dark cloud* during all the plagues.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 28.—"*Darkness.*" There is an awful significance in this plague of darkness. The sun was a leading object of devotion among the Egyptians under the name of Osiris. The very name Pharaoh means not only the king but also the sun, and characterises the king himself as the representative of the sun and entitled in some sort of divine honours. But now the very light of the sun has disappeared and primeval chaos seems to have returned. Thus all the forms of Egyptian will-worship were covered with shame and confusion by the plagues.—*James G. Murphy, in* "*A Commentary on Exodus,*" 1866.

Verse 28.—"*Made it dark.*" God is often described as manifesting his displeasure in a cloud. Joel speaks of the day of God's vengeance as "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness" (Joel ii. 2); and Zephaniah em-

ploys nearly the same language (i. 15). The pillar that went before the Israelites, and gave them light, was to the Egyptians " a cloud and darkness " (Exod. xiv. 20). The darkness which was upon the face of the earth " in the beginning," is described by Jehovah in the book of Job as a cloud : " When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it" (Job. xxxviii. 9). So now the land of Egypt may have been wrapped about by a thick palpable cloud, cold, damp, impenetrable : the people would feel it upon their limbs, as swaddling-bands ; the sun would be blotted out by it, and all things reduced almost to a state of death—of which this ninth plague was in a certain sense the shadow cast before. Such a cloud would be even more terrible in Egypt, sunny Egypt, than in other countries ; for there the sky is almost always clear, and heavy rains unknown. But in any place, and under any conditions, it must have been full of horror and misery. Nothing could represent this more forcibly than the short sentence, " Neither rose any from his place for three days." It was an horror of great darkness ; it rested on them like a pall ; they knew not what dangers might be around them, what judgment was next to happen : they had not been forewarned of this plague, and they could not tell but it might be only a prelude to some more awful visitation : their soul melted in them, for fear of those things that might come upon them : they dared not move from chamber to chamber, nor even from seat to seat : wherever they chanced to be at the moment when the darkness fell upon them, there they must remain. Pharaoh might call in vain for his guards ; they could not come to him. Moses and Aaron were no longer within reach, for none could go to seek them. Masters could not command their slaves, nor slaves hasten to obey their master's call ; the wife could not flee to her husband, nor the child cling to its parents : the same fear was upon all, both high and low ; the same paralysing terror and dismay possessed them every one. As says the patriarch Job, they " laid hold on horror " (Job xviii. 20). And this continued for three days and nights : they had no lamps nor torches ; either they could not kindle them, or they dared not move to procure them : they were silent in darkness, like men already dead. Hope and expectation of returning light might at first support them ; but hope delayed through seventy-two weary hours would presently die out, and leave them to despair. The darkness would become more oppressive and intolerable the longer it continued ; " felt " upon their bodies as a physical infliction, and " felt " even more in their souls in agonies of fear and apprehension ; such a darkness as that which, in the book of Revelation, the fifth angel pours out upon the seat of the beast—" Whose kingdom was full of darkness ; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds " (Rev. xvi. 10, 11). If there be any truth in the traditions of the Jews on this subject, there were yet greater alarms under this canopy of darkness, this palpable obscurity, than any which would arise out of the physical infliction. Darkness is a type of Satan's kingdom ; and Satan had some liberty in Egypt to walk up and down upon the land, and to go to and fro in it. The Jewish Rabbis tell us that the devil and his angels were let loose during these three dreadful days ; that they had a wider range and greater liberty than usual for working mischief. They describe these evil spirits going among the wretched people, glued to their seats as they were, with terror ; frightening them with fearful apparitions ; piercing their ears with hideous shrieks and groans ; driving them almost to madness with the intensity of their fears ; making their flesh creep, and the hair of their head to stand on end. Such a climax seems to be referred to by the Psalmist, " He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them " (Ps. lxxviii. 49).—*Thomas S. Millington, in " Signs and Wonders in the Land of Ham,"* 1873.

Verse 28.—*" And they rebelled not against his word."* The plague of darkness and the rest of the plagues which God commanded ; these as they were his servants, were not disobedient to him, they came at his word. See verses 31, 34.—*John Gill.*

Verse 28.—*" They rebelled not against his word " ;* as Jonah did, who, when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh, went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved, either with a foolish fear of Pharaoh's wrath, or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery, to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians ; but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed. They that are instructed to execute judgment, will find their remissness construed a rebellion against God's word.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 29.—"*He turned their waters into blood,*" etc. The Nile begins to rise about the end of June, and attains its highest point at the end of September. About the commencement of the rise it assumes a greenish hue, is disagreeable to the taste, unwholesome, and often totally unfit for drinking. It soon, however, becomes red and turbid, and continues in this state for three or more weeks. In this condition it is again healthy and fit for use. The miracle now performed was totally different from this annual change. For, 1, it occurred after the winter, not the summer, solstice; 2, the water was turned into blood, and not merely reddened by an admixture of red clay or animalcula; 3, the fish died, a result which did not follow from the periodical change of colour; 4, the river stank, and became offensive, which it ceased to be when the ordinary redness made its appearance; 5, the stroke was arrested at the end of seven days, whereas the natural redness continued for at least three weeks; and 6, the change was brought on instantly at the word of command before the eyes of Pharaoh. The calamity was appalling. The sweet waters of the Nile were the common beverage of Egypt. It abounded in all kinds of fish, which formed a principal article of diet for the inhabitants. It was revered as a god by Egypt. And now it was a putrid flood, from which they turned away with loathing.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 29.—"*He turned their waters into blood.*" By the miraculous change of the waters into blood, a practical rebuke was given to their superstitions. This sacred and beautiful river, the benefactor and preserver of the country, this birthplace of their chief gods, this abode of their lesser deities, this source of all their prosperity, this centre of all their devotion, is turned to blood: the waters stink; the canals and pools, the vessels of wood and vessels of stone, which were replenished from the river, all are alike polluted. The Nile, according to Pliny, was the "only source from whence the Egyptians obtained water for drinking" (Hist. Nat. 76, c. 33). This water was considered particularly sweet and refreshing; so much so that the people were in the habit of provoking thirst in order that they might partake more freely of its soft and pleasant draughts. Now it was become abominable to them, and they loathed to drink it.—*Thomas S. Millington.*

Verse 29.—"*And slew their fish.*" Besides the fish cured, or sent to market for the table, a very great quantity was set apart expressly for feeding the sacred animals and birds,—as the cats, crocodiles, ibises, and others; and some of the large reservoirs, attached to the temples, were used as well for keeping fish as for the necessary ablutions of the devout, and for various purposes connected with religion. The quantity of fish in Egypt was a very great boon to the poor classes, and when the Nile overflowed the country inhabitants of the inland villages benefited by this annual gift of the river, as the land did by the fertilizing mud deposited upon it. The canals, ponds, and pools, on the low lands, continued to abound in fish, even after the inundation had ceased; and it was then that their return to the Nile was intercepted by closing the mouths of the canals.—*Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson, in "A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians,"* 1854.

Verse 30.—"*Their land brought forth frogs in abundance.*" This is the natural appearance next in the order of occurrence to the Red Nile, and of it also the God of nature availed himself to vindicate his power before Pharaoh, and before Egypt. The Nile, its branches, and the great canals of irrigation are all bank-full, and the exuberant moisture has aroused from their summer torpor, into life and activity, the frogs of the Nile, in numbers inconceivable to those who have not been in hot countries. Even in ordinary years the annoyance of these loathsome creatures night and day, gives some idea of what this plague must have been, and renders abundantly reasonable the creation of a goddess, *Ranipula*,* at the very commencement of the mythology of ancient Egypt. In the whole of this fearful succession of judgments there is not one more personally revolting than the plague of frogs.—*William Osburn.*

Verse 30.—"*Their land brought forth frogs in abundance.*" It is not difficult for an Englishman, in an Eastern wet monsoon, to form a tolerable idea of that plague of Egypt, in which frogs were in the "houses, bed-chambers, beds and kneading-troughs," of the Egyptians. In the rainy season, myriads of them send forth their

* "Driver away of frogs." Her name was Heki; *Birch* ap. Bunsen. She was the *Buto* of the Greek authors.

constant croak in every direction ; and a man not possessed of over-much patience, becomes as petulant as was the licentious god, and is ready to exclaim,

> " *Croak, croak !* Indeed I shall choke,
> If you pester and bore my ears any more
> With your *croak, croak, croak !* "

A new-comer, on seeing them leap about the rooms, becomes disgusted, and forthwith begins an attack upon them ; but the next evening will bring a return of his active visitors. It may appear almost incredible, but in one evening we killed upwards of forty of these guests in the Jaffna Mission-house. They had principally concealed themselves in a small tunnel connected with the bathing room, where their noise had become almost insupportable.—*Joseph Roberts, in "Oriental Illustrations,"* 1844.

Verse 30.—" *Chambers of their kings.*" God plagued Pharaoh in his *bed-chamber :* it may be because he would show that his judgments can penetrate the greatest privacy ; for the field, and the hall, and the *bed-chamber*, and the closet are all one to God.

It is like enough that it would not move Pharaoh much that his borders were filled with frogs ; but they must come into his *house, and into his bed-chamber.* My observation is—the greatest princes in the world if they offend God are not exempted from judgments. Princes and great persons, are usually exempted from the reproof of men. As for the laws, ofttimes they are as cobwebs, the great flies break through them. Who dare say to a prince, " Thou art wicked " ? Nay, one saith concerning the Pope, it is not lawful to say, " What doth he so ? " Now when they are not within the compass of human reproof, God strikes them.—*Josias Shute, in " Judgment and Mercy : or, the Plague of Frogs,"* 1645.

Verse 31.—" *Flies.*" This term serves to denote a kind of insect that alights on the skin or leaves of plants, by its bite inflicting pain in the one case, and causing destruction in the other. The swarms of flies in Egypt are usually numerous and excessively annoying. They alight on the moist part of the eyelids and nostrils, and inflict wounds that produce great pain, swelling and inflammation. They are also ruinous to the plants in which they lay their eggs. Philo (vit. Mos. ii. p. 110) describes the dog-fly or gad-fly as a grievous pest of Egypt. Gnats and mosquitoes are also abundant and virulent. A plague of such creatures would cause immense suffering and desolation.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 31.—As an illustration of the power of flies we give an extract from Charles Marshall's " Canadian Dominion." " I have been told by men of unquestioned veracity, that at mid-day the clouds of mosquitoes on the plains would sometimes hide the leaders in a team of four horses from the sight of the driver. Cattle could only be recognised by their shape ; all alike becoming black with an impenetrable crust of mosquitoes. The line of the route over the Red River plains would be marked by the carcases of oxen stung to death by this insignificant foe."

Verse 31.—" *Lice in all their coasts.*" The priests, being polluted by this horrible infection, could not stand to minister before their deities. The people could not, in their uncleanness, be admitted within the precincts of their temples. If they would offer sacrifice, there were no victims fit for the purpose. Even the gods, the oxen, and goats, and cats, were defiled with the vermin. The Egyptians not only writhed under the loathsome scourge, but felt themselves humbled and disgraced by it. Josephus notices this :—" Pharaoh," he says, " was so confounded at this new plague, that, what with the danger, the *scandal*, and the nastiness of it, he was half sorry for what he had done " (b. ii. c. 14). The plague assumed the form of a disease, being " in the people." Exod. viii. 17. As Josephus says again, " The bodies of the people bred them, and they were all covered over with them, gnawing and tearing intolerably, and no remedy, for baths and ointments did no good." But, however distressing to their bodies, the foul and disgraceful character of the plague, and the offence brought upon their religion by the defilement of their deities and the interruption of all their religious ceremonies, was its most offensive feature. —*Thomas S. Millington.*

Verse 31.—" *Lice.*" Vermin of the kind is one of the common annoyances of Egypt. Herodotus tells us (ii. 37) that the priests shave their whole body every other day, that no lice or other impure thing may adhere to them when they are

engaged in the service of the gods. It is manifest that this species of vermin was particularly disgusting to the Egyptians.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 32.—"*He gave them hail for rain.*" I had ridden out to the excavations [at Gizeh], when seeing a large black cloud approaching, I sent a servant to the tents to take care of them, but as it began to rain slightly, I soon rode after him myself. Shortly after my arrival a storm of wind began; I therefore ordered the cords of the tents to be secured, but soon a violent shower of rain came in addition, which alarmed all our Arabs, and drove them into the rock-tomb, in which is our kitchen. . . . Suddenly the storm became a regular hurricane, such as I had never witnessed in Europe, and a hailstorm came down on us, which almost turned the day into night. . . . It was not long before first our common tent fell down, and when I had hastened from that into my own, in order to hold it from the inside, this also broke down above me.—*Carl Richard Lepsius, in "Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai."* 1853.

Verse 32.—"*Hail.*" Extraordinary reports of the magnitude of hailstones, which have fallen during storms so memorable as to find a place in general history, have come down from periods of antiquity more or less remote. According to the "Chronicles," a hailstorm occurred in the reign of Charlemagne, in which hailstones fell which measured fifteen feet in length by six feet in breadth, and eleven feet in thickness; and under the reign of Tippoo Sahib, hailstones equal in magnitude to elephants are said to have fallen. Setting aside these and like recitals, as partaking rather of the character of fable than of history, we shall find sufficient to create astonishment in well authenticated observations on this subject.

In a hailstorm which took place in Flintshire on the 9th April, 1672, Halley saw hailstones which weighed five ounces.

On the 4th May, 1697, Robert Taylor saw fall hailstones measuring fourteen inches in circumference.

In the storm which ravaged Como on 20th August, 1787, Volta saw hailstones which weighed nine ounces.

On 22nd May, 1822, Dr. Noggerath saw fall at Bonn hailstones which weighed from twelve to thirteen ounces.

It appears, therefore, certain that in different countries hailstones have occurred in which stones weighing from half to three-quarters of a pound have fallen.—*Dionysius Lardner, in "The Museum of Science and Art,"* 1854.

Verse 34.—"*Locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.*" In this country, and in all the dominions of Prete Janni, is a very great and horrible plague, which is an innumerable company of locusts, which eat and consume all the corn and trees; and the number of them is so great, as it is incredible; and with their multitude they cover the earth, and fill the air in such wise, that it is a hard matter to be able to see the sun. . . . We travelled five days' journey through places wholly waste and destroyed, wherein millet had been sown, which had stalks as great as those we set in our vineyards, and we saw them all broken and beaten down as if a tempest had been there; and this the locusts did. The trees were without leaves, and the bark of them was all devoured; and no grass was there to be seen, for they had eaten up all things; and if we had not been warned and advised to carry victual with us, we and our cattle had perished. This country was all covered with locusts without wings; and they told us these were the seed of them which had eaten up all, and that as soon as their wings were grown they would seek after the old ones. The number of them was so great, that I shall not speak of it, because I shall not be believed: but this I will say, that I saw men, women, and children sit as forlorn and dead among the locusts.—*Samuel Purchas,* 1577—1628.

Verse 34.—"*Locusts and caterpillars.*" God did not bring the same plague twice; but when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one; for he has many arrows in his quiver.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 34.—"*Without number.*" A swarm [of locusts], which was observed in India in 1825, occupied a space of forty English square miles, contained at least forty millions of locusts in one line, and cast a long shadow on the earth. And Major Moore thus describes an immense army of these animals which ravaged the Mahratta country: "The column they composed extended five hundred miles; and so compact was it when on the wing, that like an eclipse, it completely hid the sun, so that no shadow was cast by any object." Brown, in his travels in Africa, states that an

area of nearly two thousand square miles was literally covered by them ; and Kirby and Spence mention that a column of them was so immense, that they took four hours to fly over the spot where the observer stood.—*M. Kalisch.*

Verse 34.—" *Came . . . and that without number.*"

Onward they came, a dark continuous cloud
Of congregated myriads numberless ;
The rushing of whose wings was as the sound
Of some broad river, headlong in its course,
Plunged from a mountain summit ; or the roar
Of a wild ocean in the autumnal storm,
Shattering its billows on a shore of rocks,
Onward they came, the winds impelled them on.
Robert Southey, 1774—1843.

Verse 35.—" *Did eat up all the herbs.*" The locusts had devoured every green herb and every blade of grass ; and had it not been for the reeds, on which our cattle entirely subsisted while we skirted the banks of the river, the journey must have been discontinued, at least in the line that had been proposed. The larvæ, as generally is the case in this class of nature, are much more voracious than the perfect insect ; nothing that is green seems to come amiss to them. . . . The traces of their route over the country are very obvious for many weeks after they have passed it, the surface appearing as if swept by a broom, or as if a harrow had been drawn over it.—*John Barrow*, 1764—1849.

Verse 36.—" *He smote also all the firstborn.*" Did you hear that cry ? 'Tis the moment of midnight, and some tragedy is enacted in that Egyptian dwelling, for such an unearthly shriek ! and it is repeated and re-echoed, as doors burst open and frantic women rush into the street, and, as the houses of priests and physicians are beset, they only shake their heads in speechless agony, and point to the death-sealed features of their own first-born. Lights are flashing at the palace gates, and flitting through the royal chambers ; and as king's messengers hasten through the town enquiring where the two venerable Hebrew brothers dwell, the whisper flies, " The prince-royal is dead ! " Be off, ye sons of Jacob ! speed from your house of bondage, ye oppressed and injured Israelites ! And in their eagerness to " thrust forth " the terrible because Heaven-protected race, they press upon them gold and jewels, and bribe them to be gone.—*James Hamilton.*

Verse 37.—" *There was not one feeble person among their tribes,*" when Israel came out of Egypt ; there was while dwelling there : so there shall be no *feeble saint* go to heaven, but they shall be perfect when carried hence by the angels of God, though they complain of feebleness here. " There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days : for the child shall die an hundred years old ; " Isa. lxv. 20. As there is in all *dying* or departed persons a great *shooting* in their stature observed ; so is there in the *soul* much more. The least infant shoots in the *instant of dissolution* to such a perfect knowledge of God, and such a measure of grace as is not attainable here, that he is " as David ; " and the tallest Christian comes to such a height, that he is " as an angel of God," Zech. xii. 8.—*John Sheffield, in " The Rising Sun,"* 1654.

Verse 37.—" *There was not one feeble person among their tribes.*" They came out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like ; that among so many thousands there was not one sick ! so false was the representation which the Jews' enemies in after ages gave to the matter, that they were all sick of a leprosy, or some loathsome disease, and therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 37.—" *Feeble person.*" A *totterer* or *stumbler.* The word denotes a person unfit for military service.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 39.—In the army of Alexander the Great, the march was begun by a great beacon being set upon a pole as a signal from head-quarters, so that " the fire was seen at night, the smoke in the day-time ; " and the plan is still found in use amongst the caravans of Arabia. It is probable enough, in that unchanging land, that such may have been the custom at the time of the Exodus, and that God taught the

people by parable in this wise, as well as by fact, that he was their true leader, and heaven the general pavilion, whence the order of march was enjoined.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 39.—

When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out of the land of bondage came,
Her father's God before her moved,
An awful guide in smoke and flame

By day, along the astonished lands,
The cloudy pillar glided slow;
By night, Arabia's crimson sands
Returned the fiery column's glow.

There rose the choral hymn of praise,
And trump and timbrel answered keen,
And Zion's daughters poured their lays,
With priest's and warrior's voice between.

But present still, though now unseen,
When brightly shines the prosperous day,
Be thoughts of Thee a cloudy screen,
To temper the deceitful ray!

And oh, when stoops on Judah's path,
In shade and storm, the frequent night,
Be Thou—long-suffering, slow to wrath—
A burning and a shining light.

—*Sir Walter Scott*, 1771—1832.

Verse 40.—"*Quails.*" The quail is met with abundantly in Syria and Judæa, and there seems to be little doubt of its identity with the quails so frequently mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. "We have," says Tristram, "a clear proof of the identity of the common quail with the Hebrew *selav*, in its Arabic name, *salwa*, from a root signifying 'to be fat'—very descriptive of the round, plump form and fat flesh of the quail. . . . It migrates in vast flocks, and regularly crosses the Arabian desert, flying for the most part at night, and when the birds settle they are so utterly exhausted that they may be captured in any numbers by the hand. Notwithstanding their migratory habits, they instinctively select the shortest sea passages, and avail themselves of any island as a halting-place. Thus in Spring and Autumn they are slaughtered in numbers on Malta and many of the Greek islands, very few being seen till the period of migration comes round. They also fly with the wind, never facing it like many other birds." "The Israelites 'spread them out' when they had taken them before they were sufficiently refreshed to escape; exactly as Herodotus tells us that the Egyptians were in the habit of doing with quails—drying them in the sun." Brehm mentions having been a witness to the arrival of a huge flock of quails upon the coast of North Africa, and tells us that the weary birds fell at once to the ground completely exhausted by their toilsome journey, and remained therefore some minutes as though stupefied.—*Cassell's "Book of Birds."*

Verses 40—42.—

Brought from his store, at sute of Israell,
Quailes, in whose beavies each remove pursue;
Himself from skies their hunger to repell,
Candies the grasse with swete congealed dew.
He woundes the rock, the rock doth wounded, swell:
Swelling affoordes new streames to channells new,
All for God's mindfull will can not be dryven,
From sacred word once to his Abraham given.

—*Sir Philip Sidney*, 1554—1586.

Verse 44.—"*They inherited the labour of the people.*" In like manner the heavenly Canaan is enjoyed by the saints without any labour of theirs; this inheritance is not of the law, nor of the works of it; it is the gift of God. Rom. iv. 14 and vi. 23. —*John Gill.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Praise God for former mercies. II. Pray for further mercies. III. Publish his famous mercies.

Verses 1—5.—A series of holy exercises. "Give thanks"—"call upon his name"—"make known"—"sing"—"talk"—"glory"—"rejoice"—"seek"—"remember."

Verse 2.—I. The pleasure of talking *to* God—"Sing," etc.; making melody in the heart. II. The duty of talking *of* God.—"Talk ye," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The Christian's table-talk.

Verse 3.—I. Those who find: or—"glory ye," etc. II. Those who seek: or—"rejoice."

Verse 3 (*second clause*).—Let the seeker rejoice that there is such a God to seek, that he invites us to seek, that he moves us to seek, enables us to seek, and promises to be found of us. The tendency of the seeker is to despond, but there are many grounds of comfort.

Verse 4.—How can we seek the Lord's strength? 1. By desiring to be subject to it. 2. By being supported by it. 3. By being equipped with it for service. 4. By seeing its results upon others.

Verse 4.—Threefold seeking. I. The Lord for mercy. II. His strength for service. III. His face for happiness.—*A. G. Brown.*

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Seeking the Lord the perpetual occupation of a believer.

Verse 5.—Themes for memory. I. What God has done. II. What he has said.

Verses 5 and 8.—Our memory and God's memory. "Remember." "He hath remembered."

Verse 7.—God's relation to his elect and to all mankind.

Verses 9, 10.—The making, swearing, and confirming of the covenant. See our comment on these verses with the passages referred to.

Verse 12.—Comfort to the few. The typical and spiritual Israel few at first. A few in the ark peopled the world. Small companies have done wonders. Christ's presence is promised to two or three. God saveth not by many or by few, etc.

Verses 13, 14.—I. God's people may be often removed. II. They can never be injured. III. God's property in them will not be renounced.

Verses 14, 15. *Dr. T. Goodwin* has an excellent sermon on these verses, entitled "*The Interest of England*," in which he condenses the history of the world, to show, that those nations which have persecuted and afflicted the people of God have invariably been broken in pieces.—(*Goodwin's Works*, vol. xii. pp. 34—60, Nichol's edition).

Verse 15.—In what respect Abraham was a prophet, and how far believers are the same.

Verse 16.—I. All things come at the call of God. He called for plenty, and it came; for famine, and it came; for captivity, and it came; for deliverance, and it came. II. The most unlikely means of accomplishing an end with man is often the direct way with God. He fulfilled the promise of Canaan to Abraham by banishing him from it; of plenty, by sending a famine; of freedom, by bringing into captivity.—*G. R.*

Verse 19.—The duration of our troubles, the testing power of the promise, the comfortable issue which is secured to us.

Verse 24.—Church prosperity *desirable.* Increase of numbers, increase of vigour. *Attainable* under great persecution and opposition. *Divine in its origin*—"*he* increased." *Satisfactory as a test*—it is only true of "his people."

Verse 24 (*second clause*).—In what respects grace can make believers stronger than their enemies.

Verse 25.—I. The natural hatred of the world to the church. II. God's permitting it to be shown. When? Why? III. The subtle manner in which this enmity seeks its object.

Verse 32.—"*He gave them hail for rain.*" Judgment substituted for mercy.

Verse 37 (*first clause*).—Wealth found upon us after affliction.

Verse 37 (*second clause*).—A consummation to be desired. This was the direct result of the divine presence. The circumstances out of which it grew were hard labour and persecution. It enabled them to leave Egypt, to journey far, to carry burdens, to fight enemies, etc.

Verse 39.—I. A dark cloud of providence is the guide of the people of God by day. II. A bright cloud of promises is their guide by night.—*G. R.*

Verse 39.—The Lord's goodness exemplified in our varying conditions. I. For prosperity—a cloud. II. For adversity—a light. A good text would be found in "light in the night."

Verse 40.—I. God often gives in love what is not asked. So the bread from heaven which was beyond all they could ask or think. II. He sometimes gives in anger what is asked. They asked for flesh to eat—"and he brought quails." *G. R.*

Verse 41.—We have, I. A type of the person of Christ, in the rock 1. Unsightly as Horeb—"When we shall see him, there is no beauty," etc. (Isai. liii. 2). 2. Firm and immovable—"Who is a rock, save our God?" (2 Sam. xxi. 32). II. A type of the sufferings of Christ, in the smitten rock. 1. Smitten by the rod of the Law. 2. Smitten to the heart. III. A type of the benefits of Christ, in the water flowing from the rock—pure, refreshing, perpetual, abundant.—*James Bennett*, 1828.

Verse 41.—I. The miraculous energy of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner: "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out." II. The effect in relation to others, which demonstrates at once the excellence and the reality of the miracle in ourselves: "They ran in the dry places like a river."—*Thomas Dale*, 1836.

Verse 41.—I. The grand source—the rock opened. II. The liberal stream—"gushed out." III. The continued flow—"in dry places."

Verse 42.—I. The Lord mindful of *his* promise. II. The Lord mindful of *our* persons. III. The Lord working wonders as the result of both.

Verse 45.—Obedience to God the design of his mercies to us.

PSALM CVI.

GENERAL REMARKS.—*This Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah—"Praise ye the Lord." The space between these two descriptions of praise is filled up with the mournful details of Israel's sin, and the extraordinary patience of God; and truly we do well to bless the Lord both at the beginning and the end of our meditations when sin and grace are the themes. This sacred song is occupied with the historical part of the Old Testament, and is one of many which are thus composed: surely this should be a sufficient rebuke to those who speak slightingly of the historical Scriptures; it ill becomes a child of God to think lightly of that which the Holy Spirit so frequently uses for our instruction. What other Scriptures had David beside those very histories which are so depreciated, and yet he esteemed them beyond his necessary food, and made them his songs in the house of his pilgrimage?*

Israel's history is here written with the view of showing human sin, even as the preceding Psalm was composed to magnify divine goodness. It is, in fact, A NATIONAL CONFESSION, *and includes an acknowledgment of the transgressions of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in Canaan, with devout petitions for forgiveness such as rendered the Psalm suitable for use in all succeeding generations, and especially in times of national captivity. It was probably written by David,—at any rate its first and last two verses are to be found in that sacred song which David delivered to Asaph when he brought up the ark of the Lord* (1 *Chron. xvi.* 34, 35, 36).

While we are studying this holy Psalm, let us all along see ourselves in the Lord's ancient people, and bemoan our own provocations of the Most High, at the same time admiring his infinite patience, and adoring him because of it. May the Holy Spirit sanctify it to the promotion of humility and gratitude.

DIVISION.—*Praise and prayer are blended in the introduction (verses* 1—5). *Then comes the story of the nation's sins, which continues till the closing prayer and praise of the last two verses. While making confession the Psalmist acknowledges the sins committed in Egypt and at the Red Sea (verses* 6—12), *the lusting in the wilderness* (13—15), *the envying of Moses and Aaron* (16—18), *the worship of the golden calf* (19—23), *the despising of the promised land* (24—27), *the iniquity of Baal-Peor* (28—30), *and the waters of Meribah* (32—33). *Then he owns the failure of Israel when settled in Canaan, and mentions their consequent chastisements* (34—44), *together with the quick compassion which came to their relief when they were brought low* (44—46). *The closing prayer and doxology fill up the remaining verses.*

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? *who* can shew forth all his praise?

3 Blessed *are* they that keep judgment, *and* he that doeth righteousness at all times.

4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest unto* thy people; O visit me with thy salvation;

5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

1. *"Praise ye the Lord."* Hallelujah. Praise ye Jah. This song is for the assembled people, and they are all exhorted to join in praise to Jehovah. It is not meet for a few to praise and the rest to be silent; but all should join. If David were present in churches where quartettes and choirs carry on all the singing, he would turn to the congregation and say, "Praise ye the Lord." Our meditation dwells upon human sin; but on all occasions and in all occupations it is seasonable and profitable to praise the Lord. *"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good."* To us needy creatures the goodness of God is the first attribute which excites praise.

and that praise takes the form of gratitude. We praise the Lord truly when we give him thanks for what we have received from his goodness. Let us never be slow to return unto the Lord our praise; to thank him is the least we can do—let us not neglect it. "*For his mercy endureth for ever.*" Goodness towards sinners assumes the form of mercy, mercy should therefore be a leading note in our song. Since man ceases not to be sinful, it is a great blessing that Jehovah ceases not to be merciful. From age to age the Lord deals graciously with his church, and to every individual in it he is constant and faithful in his grace, even for evermore. In a short space we have here two arguments for praise, "for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever;" and these two arguments are themselves praises. The very best language of adoration is that which adoringly in the plainest words sets forth the simple truth with regard to our great Lord. No rhetorical flourishes or poetical hyperboles are needed, the bare facts are sublime poetry, and the narration of them with reverence is the essence of adoration. This first verse is the text of all that which follows; we are now to see how from generation to generation the mercy of God endured to his chosen people.

2. "*Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?*" What tongue of men or angels can duly describe the great displays of divine power? They are unutterable. Even those who saw them could not fully tell them. "*Who can shew forth all his praise?*" To declare his works is the same thing as to praise him, for his own doings are his best commendation. We cannot say one tenth so much for him as his own character and acts have already done? Those who praise the Lord have an infinite subject, a subject which will not be exhausted throughout eternity by the most enlarged intellects, nay, nor by the whole multitude of the redeemed, though no man can number them. The questions of this verse never can be answered; their challenge can never be accepted, except in that humble measure which can be reached by a holy life and a grateful heart.

3. Since the Lord is so good and so worthy to be praised, it must be for our happiness to obey him. "*Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.*" Multiplied are the blessednesses which must descend upon the whole company of the keepers of the way of justice, and especially upon that one rare man who at all times follows that which is right. Holiness is happiness. The way of right is the way of peace. Yet men leave this road, and prefer the paths of the destroyer. Hence the story which follows is in sad contrast with the happiness here depicted, because the way of Israel was not that of judgment and righteousness, but that of folly and iniquity. The Psalmist, while contemplating the perfections of God, was impressed with the feeling that the servants of such a being must be happy, and when he looked around and saw how the tribes of old prospered when they obeyed, and suffered when they sinned, he was still more fully assured of the truth of his conclusion. O could we but be free of sin we should be rid of sorrow! We would not only be just, but "keep judgment"; we would not be content with occasionally acting rightly, but would "do justice at all times."

4. "*Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people.*" Insignificant as I am, do not forget me. Think of me with kindness, even as thou thinkest of thine own elect. I cannot ask more, nor would I seek less. Treat me as the least of thy saints are treated and I am content. It should be enough for us if we fare as the rest of the family. If even Balaam desired no more than to die the death of the righteous, we may be well content both to live as they live, and die as they die. This feeling would prevent our wishing to escape trial, persecution, and chastisement; these have fallen to the lot of saints, and why should we escape them?

> "Must I be carried to the skies
> On flowery beds of ease?
> While others fought to win the prize,
> And sailed through bloody seas."

At the same time we pray to have their sweets as well as their bitters. If the Lord smiled upon their souls we cannot rest unless he smile upon us also. We would dwell where they dwell, rejoice as they rejoice, sorrow as they sorrow, and in all things be for ever one with them in the favour of the Lord. The sentence before us is a sweet prayer, at once humble and aspiring, submissive and expansive; it might be used by a dying thief or a living apostle; let us use it now.

"*O visit me with thy salvation.*" Bring it home to me. Come to my house and

to my heart, and give me the salvation which thou hast prepared, and art alone able to bestow. We sometimes hear of a man's dying by the visitation of God, but here is one who knows that he can only *live* by the visitation of God. Jesus said of Zaccheus, " This day is salvation come to this house," and that was the case, because he himself had come there. There is no salvation apart from the Lord, and he must visit us with it or we shall never obtain it. We are too sick to visit our Great Physician, and therefore he visits us. O that our great Bishop would hold a visitation of all the churches, and bestow his benediction upon all his flock. Sometimes the second prayer of this verse seems to be too great for us, for we feel that we are not worthy that the Lord should come under our roof. Visit me, Lord! Can it be? Dare I ask for it? And yet I must, for thou alone canst bring me salvation: therefore, Lord, I entreat thee come unto me, and abide with me for ever.

5. " *That I may see the good of thy chosen.*" His desire for the divine favour was excited by the hope that he might participate in all the good things which flow to the people of God through their election. The Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he has chosen us in him, and in these precious gifts we desire to share through the saving visitation of the Lord. No other good do we wish to see, perceive, and apprehend, but that which is the peculiar treasure of the saints. " *That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation.*" The Psalmist, having sought his portion in the good of the chosen, now also begs to be a partaker in their joy: for of all the nations under heaven the Lord's true people are the happiest. " *That I may glory with thine inheritance.*" He would have a part and lot in their honour as well as their joy. He was willing to find glory where saints find it, namely, in being reproached for truth's sake. To serve the Lord and endure shame for his sake is the glory of the saints below: Lord, let me rejoice to bear my part therein. To be with God above, for ever blessed in Christ Jesus, is the glory of saints above: O Lord, be pleased to allot me a place there also.

These introductory thanksgivings and supplications, though they occur first in the Psalm, are doubtless the result of the contemplations which succeed them, and may be viewed not only as the preface, but also as the moral of the whole sacred song.

6 We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red sea.

8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.

9 He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

11 And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.

12 Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.

6. " *We have sinned with our fathers.*" Here begins a long and particular confession. Confession of sin is the readiest way to secure an answer to the prayer of verse 4; God visits with his salvation the soul which acknowledges its need of a Saviour. Men may be said to have sinned with their fathers when they imitate them, when they follow the same objects, and make their own lives to be mere continuations of the follies of their sires. Moreover, Israel was but one nation in all time, and the confession which follows sets forth the national rather than the personal sin of the Lord's people. They enjoyed national privileges, and therefore they shared in national guilt. " *We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.*" Thus is the confession repeated three times, in token of the sincerity and heartiness of it. Sins of omission, commission, and rebellion we ought to acknowledge under distinct heads, that we may show a due sense of the number and heinousness of our offences.

7. " *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.*" The Israelites saw the miraculous plagues and ignorantly wondered at them: their design of love, their

deep moral and spiritual lessons, and their revelation of the divine power and justice they were unable to perceive. A long sojourn among idolaters had blunted the perceptions of the chosen family, and cruel slavery had ground them down into mental sluggishness. Alas, how many of God's wonders are not understood, or misunderstood by us still. We fear the sons are no great improvement upon the sires. We inherit from our fathers much sin and little wisdom; they could only leave us what they themselves possessed. We see from this verse that a want of understanding is no excuse for sin, but is itself one count in the indictment against Israel. "*They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies.*" The sin of the understanding leads on to the sin of the memory. What is not understood will soon be forgotten. Men feel little interest in preserving husks; if they know nothing of the inner kernel they will take no care of the shells. It was an aggravation of Israel's sin that when God's mercies were so numerous they yet were able to forget them all. Surely some out of such a multitude of benefits ought to have remained engraven upon their hearts; but if grace does not give us understanding, nature will soon cast out the memory of God's great goodness. "*But provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.*" To fall out at starting was a bad sign. Those who did not begin well can hardly be expected to end well. Israel is not quite out of Egypt, and yet she begins to provoke the Lord by doubting his power to deliver, and questioning his faithfulness to his promise. The sea was only *called* Red, but their sins were scarlet in reality; it was known as the "sea of weeds," but far worse weeds grew in their hearts.

8. "*Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.*" When he could find no other reason for his mercy he found it in his own glory, and seized the opportunity to display his power. If Israel does not deserve to be saved, yet Pharaoh's pride needs to be crushed, and therefore Israel shall be delivered. The Lord very jealously guards his own name and honour. It shall never be said of him that he cannot or will not save his people, or that he cannot abate the haughtiness of his defiant foes. This respect unto his own honour ever leads him to deeds of mercy, and hence we may well rejoice that he is a jealous God.

9. "*He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up.*" A word did it. The sea heard his voice and obeyed. How many rebukes of God are lost upon *us!* Are *we* not more unmanageable than the ocean? God did, as it were, chide the sea, and say, "Wherefore dost thou stop the way of my people? Their path to Canaan lies through thy channel, how darest thou hinder them?" The sea perceived its Master and his seed royal, and made way at once. "*So he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.*" As if it had been the dry floor of the desert the tribes passed over the bottom of the gulf; nor was their passage venturesome, for HE bade them go; nor dangerous, for HE led them. We also have under divine protection passed through many trials and afflictions, and with the Lord as our guide we have experienced no fear and endured no perils. We have been led through the deeps as through the wilderness.

10. "*And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them.*" Pharaoh was drowned, and the power of Egypt so crippled that throughout the forty years' wanderings of Israel they were never threatened by their old masters. "*And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.*" This was a redemption by power, and one of the most instructive types of the redemption of the Lord's people from sin and hell by the power which worketh in them.

11. "*And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.*" The Lord does nothing by halves. What he begins he carries through to the end. This, again, made Israel's sin the greater, because they saw the thoroughness of the divine justice, and the perfection of the divine faithfulness. In the covering of their enemies we have a type of the pardon of our sins; they are sunk as in the sea, never to rise again; and, blessed be the Lord, there is "not one of them left."—Not one sin of thought, or word, or deed, the blood of Jesus has covered all. "I will cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea."

12. "*Then believed they his words.*" That is to say, they believed the promise when they saw it fulfilled, but not till then. This is mentioned, not to their credit, but to their shame. Those who do not believe the Lord's word till they see it performed are not believers at all. Who would not believe when the fact stares him in the face? The Egyptians would have done as much as this. "*They sang his praise.*" How could they do otherwise? Their song was very excellent, and is the type of the song of heaven: but sweet as it was, it was quite as short, and when it was ended

they fell to murmuring. " They sang his praise," but " they soon forgat his works." Between Israel singing and Israel sinning there was scarce a step. Their song was good while it lasted, but it was no sooner begun than over.

13 They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel;
14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.
15 And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

13. " *They soon forgat his works.*" They seemed in a hurry to get the Lord's mercies out of their memories; they hasted to be ungrateful. " *They waited not for his counsel,*" neither waiting for the word of command or promise; eager to have their own way, and prone to trust in themselves. This is a common fault in the Lord's family to this day; we are long in learning to wait *for* the Lord, and *upon* the Lord. With him is counsel and strength, but we are vain enough to look for these to ourselves, and therefore we grievously err.

14. " *But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness.*" Though they would not wait God's will, they are hot to have their own. When the most suitable and pleasant food was found them in abundance, it did not please them long, but they grew dainty and sniffed at angel's food, and must needs have flesh to eat, which was unhealthy diet for that warm climate, and for their easy life. This desire of theirs they dwelt upon till it became a mania with them, and, like a wild horse, carried away its rider. For a meal of meat they were ready to curse their God and renounce the land which floweth with milk and honey. What a wonder that the Lord did not take them at their word! It is plain that they vexed him greatly, " *And tempted God in the desert.*" In the place where they were absolutely dependent upon him and were every day fed by his direct provision, they had the presumption to provoke their God. They would have him change the plans of his wisdom, supply their sensual appetites, and work miracles to meet their wicked unbelief: these things the Lord would not do, but they went as far as they could in trying to induce him to do so. They failed not in their wicked attempt because of any goodness in themselves, but because God " cannot be tempted,"—temptation has no power over him, he yields not to man's threats or promises.

15. " *And he gave them their request.*" Prayer may be answered in anger and denied in love. That God gives a man his desire is no proof that he is the object of divine favour, everything depends upon what that desire is. " *But sent leanness into their soul.*" Ah, that " but "! It embittered all. The meat was poison to them when it came without a blessing; whatever it might do in fattening the body, it was poor stuff when it made the soul lean. If we must know scantiness, may God grant it may not be scantiness of soul: yet this is a common attendant upon worldly prosperity. When wealth grows with many a man his worldly estate is fatter, but his soul's state is leaner. To gain silver and lose gold is a poor increase; but to win for the body and lose for the soul is far worse. How earnestly might Israel have unprayed her prayers had she known what would come with their answer! The prayers of lust will have to be wept over. We fret and fume till we have our desire, and then we have to fret still more because the attainment of it ends in bitter disappointment.

16 They envied Moses also in the camp, *and* Aaron the saint of the LORD.
17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.
18 And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.

16. " *They envied Moses also in the camp.*" Though to him as the Lord's chosen instrument they owed everything they grudged him the authority which it was needful that he should exercise for their good. Some were more openly rebellious than others, and became leaders of the mutiny, but a spirit of dissatisfaction was general, and therefore the whole nation is charged with it. Who can hope to escape envy when the meekest of men was subject to it? How unreasonable was this envy, for Moses was the one man in all the camp who laboured hardest and had most to

bear. They should have sympathised with him ; to envy him was ridiculous. "*And Aaron the saint of the Lord.*" By divine choice Aaron was set apart to be holiness unto the Lord, and instead of thanking God that he had favoured them with a high priest by whose intercession their prayers would be presented, they cavilled at the divine election, and quarrelled with the man who was to offer sacrifice for them. Thus neither church nor state was ordered aright for them ; they would snatch from Moses his sceptre, and from Aaron his mitre. It is the mark of bad men that they are envious of the good, and spiteful against their best benefactors.

17. "*The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.*" Korah is not mentioned, for mercy was extended to his household, though he himself perished. The earth could no longer bear up under the weight of these rebels and ingrates : God's patience was exhausted when they began to assail his servants, for his children are very dear to him, and he that toucheth them touches the apple of his eye. Moses had opened the sea for their deliverance, and now that they provoke him, the earth opens for their destruction. It was time that the nakedness of their sin was covered, and that the earth should open her mouth to devour those who opened their mouths against the Lord and his servants.

18. "*And a fire was kindled in their company ; the flame burned up the wicked.*" The Levites who were with Korah perished by fire, which was a most fitting death for those who intruded into the priesthood, and so offered strange fire. God has more than one arrow in his quiver, the fire can consume those whom the earthquake spares. These terrible things in righteousness are mentioned here to show the obstinacy of the people in continuing to rebel against the Lord. Terrors were as much lost upon them as mercies had been ; they could neither be drawn nor driven.

19 They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.

20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

21 They forgat God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt ;

22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham, *and* terrible things by the Red sea.

23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them.*

19. "*They made a calf in Horeb.*" In the very place where they had solemnly pledged themselves to obey the Lord they broke the second, if not the first, of his commandments, and set up the Egyptian symbol of the ox, and bowed before it. The ox image is here sarcastically called "a calf"; idols are worthy of no respect, scorn is never more legitimately used than when it is poured upon all attempts to set forth the Invisible God. The Israelites were foolish indeed when they thought they saw the slightest divine glory in a bull, nay, in the mere image of a bull. To believe that the image of a bull could be the image of God must need great credulity. "*And worshipped the molten image.*" Before it they paid divine honours, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." This was sheer madness. After the same fashion the Ritualists must needs set up their symbols and multiply them exceedingly. Spiritual worship they seem unable to apprehend ; their worship is sensuous to the highest degree, and appeals to eye, and ear, and nose. O the folly of men to block up their own way to acceptable worship, and to make the path of spiritual religion, which is hard to our nature, harder still through the stumbling-blocks which they cast into it. We have heard the richness of Popish paraphernalia much extolled, but an idolatrous image when made of gold is not one jot the less abominable than it would have been had it been made of dross and dung : the beauty of art cannot conceal the deformity of sin. We are told also of the suggestiveness of their symbols, but what of that, when God forbids the use of them ? Vain also is it to plead that such worship is *hearty.* So much the worse. Heartiness in forbidden actions is only an increase of transgression.

20. "*Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.*" They said that they only meant to worship the one God under a fitting and suggestive similitude by which his great power would be set forth to the multitude ; they pleaded the great Catholic revival which followed upon this return to a more ornate ceremonial, for the people thronged around Aaron, and danced before the calf with all their

might. But in very deed they had given up the true God, whom it had been their glory to adore, and had set up a rival to him, not a representation of him; for how should he be likened to a bullock? The Psalmist is very contemptuous, and justly so: irreverence towards idols is an indirect reverence to God. False gods, attempts to represent the true God, and indeed, all material things which are worshipped are so much filth upon the face of the earth, whether they be crosses, crucifixes, virgins, wafers, relics, or even the Pope himself. We are by far too mealy-mouthed about these infamous abominations: God abhors them, and so should we. To renounce the glory of spiritual worship for outward pomp and show is the height of folly, and deserves to be treated as such.

21, 22. "*They forgat God their Saviour.*" Remembering the calf involved forgetting God. He had commanded them to make no image, and in daring to disobey they forgot his commands. Moreover, it is clear that they must altogether have forgotten the nature and character of Jehovah, or they could never have likened him to a grass-eating animal. Some men hope to keep their sins and their God too—the fact being that he who sins is already so far departed from the Lord that he has actually forgotten him. "*Which had done great things in Egypt.*" God in Egypt had overcome all the idols, and yet they so far forgot him as to liken him to them. Could an ox work miracles? Could a golden calf cast plagues upon Israel's enemies? They were brutish to set up such a wretched mockery of deity, after having seen what the true God could really achieve. "*Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea.*" They saw several ranges of miracles, the Lord did not stint them as to the evidences of his eternal power and godhead, and yet they could not rest content with worshipping him in his own appointed way, but must needs have a *Directory* of their own invention, an elaborate ritual after the old Egyptian fashion, and a manifest object of worship to assist them in adoring Jehovah. This was enough to provoke the Lord, and it did so; how much he is angered every day in our own land no tongue can tell.

23. "*Therefore he said that he would destroy them.*" The threatening of destruction came at last. For the first wilderness sin he chastened them, sending leanness into their soul; for the second he weeded out the offenders, the flame burned up the wicked; for the third he threatened to destroy them; for the fourth he lifted up his hand and almost came to blows (verse 26); for the fifth he actually smote them, "and the plague brake in among them"; and so the punishment increased with their perseverance in sin. This is worth noting, and it should serve as a warning to the man who goeth on his iniquities. God tries words before he comes to blows, "he *said* that he would destroy them"; but his words are not to be trifled with, for he means them, and has power to make them good. "*Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach.*" Like a bold warrior who defends the wall when there is an opening for the adversary and destruction is rushing in upon the city, Moses stopped the way of avenging justice with his prayers. Moses had great power with God. He was an eminent type of our Lord, who is called, as Moses here is styled, "mine *elect*, in whom my soul delighteth." As the Elect Redeemer interposed between the Lord and a sinful world, so did Moses stand between the Lord and his offending people. The story as told by Moses himself is full of interest and instruction, and tends greatly to magnify the goodness of the Lord, who thus suffered himself to be turned from the fierceness of his anger.

With disinterested affection, and generous renunciation of privileges offered to himself and his family, the great Lawgiver interceded with the Lord "*to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.*" Behold the power of a righteous man's intercession. Mighty as was the sin of Israel to provoke vengeance, prayer was mightier in turning it away. How diligently ought we to plead with the Lord for this guilty world, and especially for his own backsliding people! Who would not employ an agency so powerful for an end so gracious! The Lord still hearkens to the voice of a man, shall not our voices be often exercised in supplicating for a guilty people?

24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word:

25 But murmured in their tents, *and* hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.

26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:

27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.

24. "*Yea, they despised the pleasant land.*" They spoke lightly of it, though it was the joy of all lands: they did not think it worth the trouble of seeking and conquering; they even spoke of Egypt, the land of their iron bondage, as though they preferred it to Canaan, the land which floweth with milk and honey. It is an ill sign with a Christian when he begins to think lightly of heaven and heavenly things; it indicates a perverted mind, and it is moreover, a high offence to the Lord to despise that which he esteems so highly that he in infinite love reserves it for his own chosen. To prefer earthly things to heavenly blessings is to prefer Egypt to Canaan, the house of bondage to the land of promise. "*They believed not his word.*" This is the root sin. If we do not believe the Lord's word, we shall think lightly of his promised gifts. "They could not enter in because of unbelief"—this was the key which turned the lock against them. When pilgrims to the Celestial City begin to doubt the Lord of the way, they soon come to think little of the rest at the journey's end, and this is the surest way to make them bad travellers. Israel's unbelief demanded spies to see the land; the report of those spies was of a mingled character, and so a fresh crop of unbelief sprang up, with consequences most deplorable.

25. "*But murmured in their tents.*" From unbelief to murmuring is a short and natural step; they even fell to weeping when they had the best ground for rejoicing. Murmuring is a great sin and not a mere weakness; it contains within itself unbelief, pride, rebellion, and a whole host of sins. It is a home sin, and is generally practised by complainers "in their tents," but it is just as evil there as in the streets, and will be quite as grievous to the Lord. "*And hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord.*" Making a din with their own voices, they refused attention to their best Friend. Murmurers are bad hearers.

26, 27. "*Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness.*" He swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; he commenced his work of judgment upon them, and they began to die. Only let God lift his hand against a man and his day has come; he falls terribly whom Jehovah overthrows. "*To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.*" Foreseeing that their descendants would reproduce their sins, he solemnly declared that he would give them over to captivity and the sword. Those whose carcases fell in the wilderness were, in a sense, exiles from the land of promise, and, being surrounded by many hostile tribes, they were virtually in a foreign land: to die far off from their father's inheritance was a just and weighty doom, which their rebellions had richly deserved. Our own loss of fellowship with God, and the divisions in our churches, doubtless often come to us as punishments for the sins out of which they grow. If we will not honour the Lord we cannot expect him to honour us. Our captains shall soon become captives, and our princes shall be prisoners if we forget the Lord and despise his mercies. Our singing shall be turned into sighing, and our mirth into misery if we walk contrary to the mind of the Lord.

28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

29 Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.

30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and *so* the plague was stayed.

31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

28. "*They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor.*" Ritualism led on to the adoration of false gods. If we choose a false way of worship we shall, ere long, choose to worship a false god. This abomination of the Moabites was an idol in whose worship women gave up their bodies to the most shameless lust. Think of the people of a holy God coming down to this. "*And ate the sacrifices of the dead.*" In the orgies with which the Baalites celebrated their detestable worship Israel joined, partaking even in their sacrifices as earnest inner-court worshippers, though

the gods were but dead idols. Perhaps they assisted in necromantic rites which were intended to open a correspondence with departed spirits, thus endeavouring to break the seal of God's providence, and burst into the secret chambers which God has shut up. Those who are weary of seeking the living God have often shown a hankering after dark sciences, and have sought after fellowship with demons and spirits. To what strong delusions those are often given up who cast off the fear of God! This remark is as much needed now as in days gone by.

29. "*Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.*" Open licentiousness and avowed idolatry were too gross to be winked at. This time the offences clamoured for judgment, and the judgment came at once. Twenty-four thousand persons fell before a sudden and deadly disease which threatened to run through the whole camp. Their new sins brought on them a disease new to their tribes. When men invent sins God will not be slow to invent punishments. Their vices were a moral pest, and they were visited with a bodily pest: so the Lord meets like with its like.

30. "*Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.*" God has his champions left in the worst times, and they will stand up when the time comes for them to come forth to battle. His righteous indignation moved him to a quick execution of two open offenders. His honest spirit could not endure that lewdness should be publicly practised at a time when a fast had been proclaimed. Such daring defiance of God and of all law he could not brook, and so with his sharp javelin he transfixed the two guilty ones in the very act. It was a holy passion which inflamed him, and no enmity to either of the persons whom he slew. The circumstances were so remarkable and the sin so flagrant that it would have involved great sin in a public man to have stood still and seen God thus defied, and Israel thus polluted. Phinehas was not of this mind, he was no trimmer, or palliator of sin, his heart was sound in God's statutes, and his whole nature was ablaze with zeal for God's glory, and therefore, though a priest, and therefore not obliged to be an executioner, he undertook the unwelcome task, and though both transgressors were of princely stock he had no respect of persons, but dealt justice upon them as if they had been the lowest of the people. This brave and decided deed was so acceptable to God as a proof that there were some sincere souls in Israel that the deadly visitation went no further. Two deaths had sufficed to save the lives of the multitude.

31. "*And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.*" Down to the moment when this Psalm was penned the house of Phinehas was honoured in Israel. His faith had performed a valorous deed, and his righteousness was testified of the Lord, and honoured by the continuance of his family in the priesthood. He was impelled by motives so pure that what would otherwise have been a deed of blood was justified in the sight of God; nay, more, was made *the* evidence that Phinehas was righteous. No personal ambition, or private revenge, or selfish passion, or even fanatical bigotry, inspired the man of God; but zeal for God, indignation at open filthiness, and true patriotism urged him on.

Once again we have cause to note the mercy of God that even when his warrant was out, and actual execution was proceeding, he stayed his hand at the suit of one man: finding, as it were, an apology for his grace when justice seemed to demand immediate vengeance.

32 They angered *him* also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

32. "*They angered him also at the waters of strife.*" Will they never have done? The scene changes, but the sin continues. Aforetime they had mutinied about water when prayer would soon have turned the desert into a standing pool, but now they do it again after their former experience of the divine goodness. This made the sin a double, yea a sevenfold offence, and caused the anger of the Lord to be the more intense. "*So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes.*" Moses was at last wearied out, and began to grow angry with them, and utterly hopeless of their ever improving; can we wonder at it, for he was man and not God? After forty years bearing with them the meek man's temper gave way, and he called them rebels, and

showed unhallowed anger; and therefore he was not permitted to enter the land which he desired to inherit. Truly, he had a sight of the goodly country from the top of Pisgah, but entrance was denied him, and thus it went ill with him. It was *their* sin which angered him, but *he* had to bear the consequences; however clear it may be that others are more guilty than ourselves, we should always remember that this will not screen *us*, but every man must bear his own burden.

33. "*Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.*" Which seems a small sin compared with that of others, but then it was the sin of Moses, the Lord's chosen servant, who had seen and known so much of the Lord, and therefore it could not be passed by. He did not speak blasphemously, or falsely, but only hastily and without care; but this is a serious fault in a lawgiver, and especially in one who speaks for God. This passage is to our mind one of the most terrible in the Bible. Truly we serve a jealous God. Yet he is not a hard master, or austere; we must not think so, but we must the rather be jealous of ourselves, and watch that we live the more carefully, and speak the more advisedly, because we serve such a Lord. We ought also to be very careful how we treat the ministers of the gospel, lest by provoking their spirit we should drive them into any unseemly behaviour which should bring upon them the chastisement of the Lord. Little do a murmuring, quarrelsome people dream of the perils in which they involve their pastors by their untoward behaviour.

34 They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them:

35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

36 And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,

38 And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.

39 Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.

40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.

41 And he gave them into the hands of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them.

42 Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

43 Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked *him* with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

34. "*They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them.*" They were commissioned to act as executioners upon races condemned for their unnatural crimes, and through sloth, cowardice, or sinful complacency they sheathed the sword too soon, very much to their own danger and disquietude. It is a great evil with professors that they are not zealous for the total destruction of all sin within and without. We make alliances of peace where we ought to proclaim war to the knife; we plead our constitutional temperament, our previous habits, the necessity of our circumstances, or some other evil excuse as an apology for being content with a very partial sanctification, if indeed it be sanctification at all. We are slow also to rebuke sin in others, and are ready to spare respectable sins, which like Agag walk with mincing steps. The measure of our destruction of sin is not to be our inclination, or the habit of others, but the Lord's command. We have no warrant for dealing leniently with any sin, be it what it may.

35. "*But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.*" It was not the wilderness which caused Israel's sins; they were just as disobedient when settled in the land of promise. They found evil company, and delighted in it. Those whom they should have destroyed they made their friends. Having enough faults of their own, they were yet ready to go to school to the filthy Canaanites, and educate themselves still more in the arts of iniquity. It was certain that they could learn

no good from men whom the Lord had condemned to utter destruction. Few would wish to go to the condemned cell for learning, yet Israel sat at the feet of accursed Canaan, and rose up proficient in every abomination. This, too, is a grievous but common error among professors: they court worldly company and copy worldly fashions, and yet it is their calling to bear witness against these things. None can tell what evil has come of the folly of worldly conformity.

36. "*And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.*" They were fascinated by the charms of idolatry, though it brings misery upon its votaries. A man cannot serve sin without being ensnared by it. It is like birdlime, and to touch it is to be taken by it. Samson laid his head in the Philistine woman's lap, but ere long he woke up shorn of his strength. Dalliance with sin is fatal to spiritual liberty.

37 and 38. "*Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.*" This was being snared indeed; they were spell-bound by the cruel superstition, and were carried so far as even to become murderers of their own children, in honour of the most detestable deities, which were rather devils than gods. "*And shed innocent blood.*" The poor little ones whom they put to death in sacrifice had not been partakers of their sin, and God looked with the utmost indignation upon the murder of the innocent. "*Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan.*" Who knows how far evil will go? It drove men to be unnatural as well as ungodly. Had they but thought for a moment, they must have seen that a deity who could be pleased with the blood of babes spilt by their own sires could not be a deity at all, but must be a demon, worthy to be detested and not adored. How could they prefer such service to that of Jehovah? Did *he* tear their babes from their bosoms and smile at their death throes? Men will sooner wear the iron yoke of Satan than carry the pleasant burden of the Lord; does not this prove to a demonstration the deep depravity of their hearts? If man be not totally depraved, what worse would he do if he were? Does not this verse describe the *ne plus ultra* of iniquity? "*And the land was polluted with blood.*" The promised land, the holy land, which was the glory of all lands, for God was there, was defiled with the reeking gore of innocent babes, and by the bloodred hands of their parents, who slew them in order to pay homage to devils. Alas! alas! What vexation was this to the spirit of the Lord.

39. "*Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.*" Not only the land but the inhabitants of it were polluted. They broke the marriage bond between them and the Lord, and fell into spiritual adultery. The language is strong, but the offence could not be fitly described in less forcible words. As a husband is deeply dishonoured and sorely wounded should his wife become unchaste and run riot with many paramours in his own house, so was the Lord incensed at his people for setting up gods many and lords many in his own land. They made and invented new gods, and then worshipped what they had made. What a folly! Their novel deities were loathsome monsters and cruel demons, and yet they paid them homage. What wickedness! And to commit this folly and wickedness they cast off the true God, whose miracles they had seen, and whose people they were. This was provocation of the severest sort.

40, 41. "*Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.*" Not that even then he broke his covenant or utterly cast off his offending people, but he felt the deepest indignation, and even looked upon them with abhorrence. The feeling described is like to that of a husband who still loves his guilty wife, and yet when he thinks of her lewdness feels his whole nature rising in righteous anger at her, so that the very sight of her afflicts his soul. How far the divine wrath can burn against those whom he yet loves in his heart it were hard to say, but certainly Israel pushed the experiment to the extreme. "*And he gave them into the hand of the heathen.*" This was the manifestation of his abhorrence. He gave them a taste of the result of sin; they spared the heathen, mixed with them and imitated them, and soon they had to smart from them, for hordes of invaders were let loose upon them to spoil them at their pleasure. Men make rods for their own backs. Their own inventions become their punishments. "*And they that hated them ruled over them.*" And who could wonder? Sin never creates true love. They joined the heathen in their wickedness, and they did not win their hearts, but rather provoked their contempt. If we mix with men of the world they will soon become our masters and our tyrants, and we cannot want worse.

42. "*Their enemies also oppressed them.*" This was according to their nature;

an Israelite always fares ill at the hands of the heathen. Leniency to Canaan turned out to be cruelty to themselves. "*And they were brought into subjection under their hand.*" They were bowed down by laborious bondage, and made to lie low under tyranny. In their God they had found a kind master, but in those with whom they had perversely sought fellowship they found despots of the most barbarous sort. He who leaves his God leaves happiness for misery. God can make our enemies to be rods in his hands to flog us back to our best Friend.

43. "*Many times did he deliver them.*" By reading the book of Judges we shall see how truthful is this sentence: again and again their foes were routed, and they were set free again, only to return with vigour to their former evil ways. "*But they provoked him with their counsel.*" With deliberation they agreed to transgress anew; self-will was their counsellor, and they followed it to their own destruction. "*And were brought low for their iniquity.*" Worse and worse were the evils brought upon them, lower and lower they fell in sin, and consequently in sorrow. In dens and caves of the earth they hid themselves; they were deprived of all warlike weapons, and were utterly despised by their conquerors; they were rather a race of serfs than of free men until the Lord in mercy raised them up again. Could we but fully know the horrors of the wars which desolated Palestine, and the ravages which caused famine and starvation, we should shudder at the sins which were thus rebuked. Deeply engrained in their nature must the sin of idolatry have been, or they would not have returned to it with such persistence in the teeth of such penalties; we need not marvel at this, there is a still greater wonder, man prefers sin and hell to heaven and God.

The lesson to ourselves, as God's people, is to walk humbly and carefully before the Lord, and above all to keep ourselves from idols. Woe unto those who become partakers of Rome's idolatries, for they will be joined with her in her plagues. May grace be given to *us* to keep the separated path, and remain undefiled with the fornication of the scarlet harlot of Babylon.

44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry:
45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.
46 He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.
47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, *and* to triumph in thy praise.

44. "*Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry.*" Notwithstanding all these provoking rebellions and detestable enormities the Lord still heard their prayer and pitied them. This is very wonderful, very godlike. One would have thought that the Lord would have shut out their prayer, seeing they had shut their ears against his admonitions; but no, he had a father's heart, and a sight of their sorrows touched his soul, the sound of their cries overcame his heart, and he looked upon them with compassion. His fiercest wrath towards his own people is only a temporary flame, but his love burns on for ever like the light of his own immortality.

45. "*And he remembered for them his covenant.*" The covenant is the sure foundation of mercy, and when the whole fabric of outward grace manifested in the saints lies in ruins this is the fundamental basis of love which is never moved, and upon it the Lord proceeds to build again a new structure of grace. Covenant mercy is sure as the throne of God. "*And repented according to the multitude of his mercies.*" He did not carry out the destruction which he had commenced. Speaking after the manner of men he changed his mind, and did not leave them to their enemies to be utterly cut off, because he saw that his covenant would in such a case have been broken. The Lord is so full of grace that he has not only mercy but mercies, yea a multitude of them, and these hive in the covenant and treasure up good for the erring sons of men.

46. "*He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.*" Having the hearts of all men in his hands he produced compassion even in heathen bosoms. Even as he found Joseph friends in Egypt, so did he raise up sympathisers for his captive servants. In our very worst condition our God has ways and means for allaying the severity of our sorrows: he can find us helpers among those who have been our oppressors, and he will do so if we be indeed his people.

47. This is the closing prayer, arranged by prophecy for those who would in future time be captives, and suitable for all who before David's days had been driven from home by the tyranny of Saul, or who had remained in exile after the various scatterings by famine and distress which had happened in the iron age of the judges. "*Save us, O Lord our God.*" The mention of the covenant encouraged the afflicted to call the Lord their God, and this enabled them with greater boldness to entreat him to interpose on their behalf and rescue them. "*And gather us from among the heathen.*" Weary now of the ungodly and their ways, they long to be brought into their own separated country, where they might again enjoy the means of grace, enter into holy fellowship with their brethren, escape from contaminating examples, and be free to wait upon the Lord. How often do true believers now-a-days long to be removed from ungodly households, where their souls are vexed with the conversation of the wicked. "*To give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.*" Weaned from idols, they desire to make mention of Jehovah's name alone, and to ascribe their mercies to his ever abiding faithfulness and love. The Lord had often saved them for his holy name's sake, and therefore they feel that when again restored they would render all their gratitude to that saving name, yea, it should be their glory to praise Jehovah and none else.

48 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

48. "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting.*" Has not his mercy endured for ever, and should not his praise be of like duration? Jehovah, the God of Israel, has blessed his people, should they not also bless him? "*And let all the people say, Amen.*" They have all been spared by his grace, let them all join in the adoration with loud unanimous voice. What a thunder of praise would thus be caused! Yet should a nation thus magnify him, yea, should all the nations past and present unite in the solemn acclaim, it would fall far short of his deserts. O for the happy day when all flesh shall see the glory of God, and all shall aloud proclaim his praise. "*Praise ye the Lord,*" or "*Hallelujah.*"

Reader, praise thou the Lord, as he who writes this feeble exposition now does with his whole heart.

"Now blest, for ever blest, be He,
The same throughout eternity,
Our Israel's God adored!
Let all the people join the lay,
And loudly, 'Hallelujah,' say,
'Praise ye the living Lord!'"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*For he is good;*" essentially, solely and originally; is communicative and diffusive of his goodness; is the author of all good and no evil; and is gracious and merciful and ready to forgive.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*For he is good: for his goodness endureth for ever.*" Observe here what is a true and perfect confession of the divine goodness. Whenever God so blesses his own people that his goodness is perceived by carnal sense, in bestowing riches, honours, peace, health and things of that kind, then it is easy to acknowledge that God is good, and that acknowledgment can be made by the most carnal men. The case stands otherwise when he visits offenders with the rod of correction and scourges them with the grace of chastisement. Then the flesh hardly bears to confess what by its own sense it does not perceive. It fails to discern the goodness of God unto salvation in the severity of the rod and the scourging, and therefore refuses to acknowledge that goodness in strokes and sufferings. The prophet, however, throughout this Psalm celebrates in many instances the way wherein the sinning people were arrested and smitten. And when he proposed that this Psalm should be

sung in the church of God, Israel was under the cross and afflictions. Yet he demands that Israel should acknowledge that the Lord is good, that his mercy endureth for ever, even in the act of smiting the offender. That therefore alone is a true and full confession of the divine goodness which is made not only in prosperity but also in adversity.—*Musculus.*

Verses 1—3.—There is, (1.) The doxology; (2.) Invitation; (3.) The reason that we should, and why we should, give thanks always; (4.) The greatness of the work. But "who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all his praise?" That is, it is impossible for any man in the world to do this great duty aright, as he should. (5.) The best mode and method of giving thanks. "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times." As if he had said, "This is indeed a vast duty; but yet *he* makes the best essay towards it that sets himself constantly to serve God and keep his commandments."—*William Cooper, in the "Morning Exercises."*

Verses 1, 47, 48.—The first and two last verses of this Psalm form a part of that Psalm which David delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to be sung before the ark of the covenant, after it was brought from the house of Obed-edom to Mount Zion. See 1 Chron. xvi. 34—36. Hence it has been ascribed to the pen of David. Many of the ancients thought, and they are followed by Horsley and Mudge, that it was written during the captivity; resting their opinion chiefly on verse 47; but as that verse occurs in the Psalm of David recorded in 1 Chron. xvi., at the 35th verse, this argument is clearly without force.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 2.—"*Who can utter?*" etc. This verse is susceptible of two interpretations; for if you read it in connection with the one immediately following, the sense will be, that all men are not alike equal to the task of praising God, because the ungodly and the wicked do nothing else than profane his holy name with their unclean lips; as it is said in the fiftieth Psalm: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" And hence to this sentence the following clause should have been annexed, in the form of a reply, "Blessed are they that keep judgment." I am of opinion, however, that the prophet had another design, namely, that there is no man who has ever endeavoured to concentrate all his energies, both physical and mental, in the praising of God, but will find himself inadequate for so lofty a subject, the transcendant grandeur of which overpowers all our senses. Not that he exalts the power of God designedly to deter us from celebrating its praises, but rather as the means of stirring us up to do so to the utmost of our power. Is it any reason for ceasing our exertions, that with whatever alacrity we pursue our course, we yet come far short of perfection? But the thing which ought to inspire us with the greatest encouragement is the knowledge that, though ability may fail us, the praises which from the heart we offer to God are pleasing to him; only let us beware of callousness; for it would certainly be very absurd for those who cannot attain to a tithe of perfection, to make that the occasion of their not reaching to the hundredth part of it. —*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—"*Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?*" etc. Our sight fails us when we look upon the sun, overpowered by the splendour of his rays; and the mind's eye suffers the like in every meditation on God, and the more attention is bestowed in thinking of God, the more is the mental vision blinded by the very light of its own thoughts. For what canst thou say of him, what, I repeat, canst thou adequately say of him, who is sublimer than all loftiness, and more exalted than all height, and deeper than all depth, and clearer than all light, and brighter than all brightness, and more splendid than all splendour, stronger than all strength, more vigorous than all vigour, fairer than all beauty, truer than all truth, and more puissant than puissance, and greater than all majesty, and mightier than all might, richer than all riches, wiser than all wisdom, gentler than all gentleness, juster than all justice, more merciful than all mercy?—*Tertullian, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 2.—"*Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?*" etc. This may be resolved either into a negation or restriction. Few or none can "utter the mighty acts of the LORD," can "show forth all his praise"; few can do it in an acceptable manner, and none can do it in a perfect manner. And indeed it is not unusual in Scripture for such kind of interrogations to amount unto either a negation, or at least an expression of the rareness and difficulty of the thing spoken of: 1 Cor. ii.

16; Ps. xcii.; Isai. liii. 1. Without a full confession of mercies it is not possible to make either a due valuation of them, or a just requital of them. And how impossible a thing it is fully to recount mercies, you may see by Psal. xl. 5: "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."—*Henry Jeanes, in "The Works of Heaven upon Earth,"* 1649.

Verse 2.—"*Mighty acts of the Lord.*" Or *powers*, to which answers the Greek word for the miracles of Christ (Matt. xi. 20, 21), and Kimchi here restrains them to the wonders wrought in Egypt and at the Red Sea; but they may as well be extended to the mighty acts of God, and the effects of his power, in the creation of all things out of nothing; in the sustentation and government of the world; in the redemption of his people by Christ; in the conversion of sinners, and in the final perseverance of the saints; in all which there are such displays of the power of God as cannot be uttered and declared by mortal tongues.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"*Blessed are they that keep judgment,*" etc. That are of right principles and upright practices; this is real and substantial praising of God. Thanks-doing is the proof of thanksgiving; and the good life of the thankful is the life of thankfulness. Those that say, God-a-thank only, and no more, are not only contumelious, but injurious.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*Keep judgment*"; "*doeth righteousness.*" I doubt not that there is some difference; viz. that he is said to keep judgment who judgeth rightly, but he to do righteousness who acts righteously.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—I have read of Louis, king of France, that when he had through inadvertency granted an unjust suit, as soon as ever he had read those words of the Psalmist, "*Blessed is he that doeth righteousness at all times,*" he presently recollected himself, and upon better thoughts gave his judgment quite contrary.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 4.—"*O visit me.*" This is a beautiful figure. The prayer is not, "Give me a more intense desire, increased energy of action, that I may please thee, that I may serve thee, that I may go step by step up to thee, every step bringing with it a fresh sense of meritorious claim upon thee." No such thing. It is "*Visit me;*" "descend down upon me" daily from thine own lofty throne, for the fulfilment of thine own purposes. "*Visit me.*"—*George Fisk*, 1851.

Verse 4.—"*O visit me with thy salvation.*" Hugo takes the *visit* of God as that of a physician of whom healing of the eyes is sought, because it is immediately added, "*That I may see,*" etc.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 4.—There is an ancient Jewish gloss which is noteworthy, that the petition is for a share in the resurrection in the days of Messiah, in order to see his wonderful restoration of his suffering people.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 5.—We may note that the threefold nature of man prompts the union of the three petitions of this verse in one. "*That I may see,*" is the prayer of the body, desiring the open vision of God; "*and rejoice,*" is the wish of the soul or mind, that the affections may likewise be gratified; *and give thanks*, as the spirit needs to pour itself out in worship. Further, there are three names here given to the saints, each for a reason of its own. They are God's "*chosen,*" because of his predestinating grace, "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. i. 4); they are his "*nation,*" having one law and one worship under him as sole king, "And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?" (Deut. iv. 8); they are his "*inheritance,*" for it is written, "I shall give the heathen for thine inheritance" (Ps. ii. 8).—*Hugo Cardinalis and Albertus Magnus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 5.—"*That I may see the good of thy chosen.*" That, having been predestined, and justified, we may come to see the good of thy chosen, which means that the very face of the Lord may be made conspicuous to us. "For we shall be then like him when we shall see him as he is" (1 John iii. 2). By the "*good of thy chosen*" we are not to understand their own probity or goodness, but the supreme happiness that is their lot. "*That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation.*" That we may partake in that unspeakable joy which arises from the beatific vision, which is the

peculiar property of the chosen people, of which strangers cannot taste, of which the gospel says, " Enter into the joy of thy Lord."—*Robert Bellarmine*, 1542—1621.

Verse 6.—" *We have sinned with our fathers.*" Let us look a little further back, to find the age of sin; even as far as the original, from whence comes all the copy of imitation. Be they never so new in act, they are old in example: " *We have sinned with our fathers.*" God tells them they had rebelled of old; " As your fathers did, so do ye " (Acts viii. 51). Antiquity is no infallible argument of goodness: though Tertullian says the first things were the best things; and the less they distanced from the beginning, the poorer they were; but he must be understood only of holy customs. For iniquity can plead antiquity: he that commits a new act of murder finds it old in the example of Cain; drunkenness may be fetched from Noah; contempt of parents from Ham; women's lightness from the daughters of Lot. There is no sin but hath white hairs upon it, and is exceeding old. But let us look further back yet, even to Adam; there is the age of sin. This is that St. Paul calls the old man; it is almost as old as the root, but older than all the branches. Therefore our restitution by Christ to grace is called the new man.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 6.—" *We have sinned with our fathers.*" It enhances the sin considerably by adding " *with our fathers.*" He would have seemed to extenuate, not exaggerate, if he had said, We have sinned with other mortals. But by saying, *We have sinned with our fathers*, he by no means lessens but aggravates their offences, while he hereby extols the goodness of God who blessed not only those who acted sinfully and impiously, but also the children and descendants of the sinful and impious, even those whom he could with the highest justice have cut off as doubly detestable.—*Musculus.*

Verse 6.—" *Sinned; committed iniquity; done wickedly.*" The Rabbins tell us that there are three kinds and degrees of sin here set down in an ascending scale; against one's self, against one's neighbour, against God; sins of ignorance, sins of conscious deliberation, sins of pride and wickedness.—*R. Levi and Genebrardus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 6, 12, 13, 14, 21, 24.—Though the writers of the Scriptures were by divine inspiration infallibly preserved from extravagance, yet they use every appropriate variety of strong and condemnatory language against sin (ver. 6). Surely moral evil cannot be a trifle. Yet it breaks forth on all occasions and on all hands. Sometimes it is in the form of forgetfulness of God (ver. 13, 21), sometimes of rash impetuosity towards evil (ver. 13), sometimes of strong, imperious lusts (ver. 14), sometimes of vile unbelief (ver. 12, 24), and so of the whole catalogue of offences against God and man. O how vile we are!—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 7.—" *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.*" Though the elders went along with Moses, and heard him shew his commission to Pharaoh, and make his demands in the name of the Lord to let Israel go (Exod. iii. 16); yea, and they saw the judgments of God on Egypt; yet " *they did not understand* " that these wonders would do the work of their deliverance. At first they thought it was worse with them. Much less did they understand, that their deliverance should be a type of eternal deliverance, that God would be their God, as after is explained in the preface to the ten commandments. And because they " *understood not his wonders,*" therefore they " *remembered not his mercies.*" A shallow understanding causeth a short memory.—*Nathaniel Homes*, 1652.

Verse 7.—" *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.*" It is more than probable, that many of the Israelites ascribed most of these wonders to the skill of Moses transcending that of the Egyptian magicians, or to his working by the assistance of a higher and more potent spirit than that which assisted them. Or, in case they did believe them to have been the effects of a Divine Power, yet they did not inure their minds seriously to consider it, so as to have a standing awe of that power imprinted upon their hearts by such a consideration: and he that considers great and important matters superficially, in the language of the Scripture, does not *understand them.—Robert South.*

Verse 7.—" *Understood not* " . . . " *remembered not.*" He reproveth both their understanding and memory. Understanding there was need of, that they might meditate unto what eternal blessings God was calling them through these temporal ones; and of memory, that at least they might not forget the temporal wonders which had been wrought, and might faithfully believe, that by the same power which they had already experienced, God would free them from the persecution of

their enemies; whereas they forgot the aid which he had given them in Egypt, by means of such wonders, to crush their enemies.—*Augustine.*

Verse 7.—One sin is a step to another more heinous; for *not observing*, is followed with *not remembering*, and *forgetfulness* of duty draweth on *disobedience* and rebellion. —*David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—"*They provoked him.*" *To provoke*, is an expression setting forth a peculiar and more than ordinary degree of misbehaviour, and seems to import an insolent daring resolution to offend. A resolution not contented with one single stroke of disobedience, but such a one as multiplies and repeats the action, till the offence greatens, and rises into an affront; and as it relates to God, so I conceive it as aimed at him in a threefold respect. 1st, Of his power. 2ndly, Of his goodness. 3rdly, Of his patience.

1st. And first it rises up against *the power and prerogative of God.* It is, as it were, an assault upon God sitting upon his throne, a snatching at his sceptre, and a defiance of his very royalty and supremacy. He that provokes God does in a manner dare him to strike, and to revenge the injury and invasion upon his honour. He considers not the weight of God's almighty arm, and the edge of his sword, the swiftness and poison of his arrows, but puffs at all, and looks the terrors of sin-revenging justice in the face. The Israelites could not sin against God, after those miracles in Egypt, without a signal provocation of that power that they had so late, and so convincing an experience of: a power that could have crushed an Israelite as easily as an Egyptian; and given as terrible an instance of its consuming force upon false friends, as upon professed enemies; in the sight of God, perhaps, the less sort of offenders of the two.

2ndly. Provoking God imports an abuse of *his goodness.* God, as he is clothed with power, is the proper object of our fear; but as he displays his goodness, of our love. By one he would command, by the other he would win and (as it were) court our obedience. And an affront to his goodness, his tenderness, and his mercy, as much exceeds an affront of his power as a wound at the heart transcends a blow on the hand. For when God shall show miracles of mercy, step out of the common road of providence, commanding the host of heaven, the globe of the earth, and the whole system of nature out of its course, to serve a design of goodness upon a people, as he did upon the Israelites; was not a provocation, after such obliging passages, infinitely base and insufferable, and a degree of ingratitude, higher than the heavens struck at, and deeper than the sea that they passed through?

3rdly. Provoking God imports an affront upon *his longsuffering, and his patience.* The movings of nature in the breasts of mankind, tell us how keenly, how regretfully, every man resents the abuse of his love; how hardly any prince, but one, can put up an offence against his acts of mercy; and how much more affrontive it is to despise majesty ruling by the golden sceptre of pardon, than by the iron rod of penal law. But now patience is a further and an higher advance of mercy; it is mercy drawn out at length; mercy wrestling with baseness, and striving, if possible, even to weary and outdo ingratitude; and therefore a sin against this is the highest pitch, the utmost improvement, and, as I may so speak, the *ne plus ultra* of provocation. For when patience shall come to be tired, and even out of breath with pardoning, let all the invention of mankind find something further, either upon which an offender may cast his hope, or against which he can commit a sin. But it was God's patience the ungrateful Israelites sinned against; for they even plied and pursued him with sin upon sin, one offence following and thronging upon the neck of another, the last account still rising highest, and swelling bigger, till the treasures of grace and pardon were so far drained and exhausted, that they provoked God to *swear*, and what is more, *to swear in his wrath*, and with a full purpose of revenge, *that they should never enter into his rest.*—*Robert South.*

Verse 7.—"*They provoked him.*" Wherein lay their provocation? "*They remembered not the multitude of his mercies:*" the former mercies of the Lord did not strengthen their trust in present troubles; that was one provocation. And as former mercies did not strengthen their trust, so the present troubles drew out their distrust, as another Scripture assures, reporting their behaviour in it (Exod. xiv. 11): "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?" What were these fearful forecasts, these amazing bodements of an unavoidable (as they apprehended) ruin, but the overflowings of unbelief, or distrust in God; and this was another provocation. Former mercies are forgotten, yea, eaten up by unbelief, as the seven lean kine in Pharaoh's

dream eat up the fat ones, and present difficulties are aggravated by unbelief, as if all the power of God could not remove and overcome them. And will not the Lord (think you) visit in anger such a sin as this?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—"*At the Red Sea.*" That is to say, *at the Arabian Gulph:* literally, *at the Sea of Suph*, which, if *Suph* be not here a proper name, (as it seems to be in Deut. i. 1, and, with a slight variation, in Numb. xxxi. 14,) means *the sea of weeds*, and that sea is still called by a similar name, in modern Egypt. Its designation, throughout the books of the Old Testament, is in the Syriac version, and the Chaldee Paraphrase, likewise rendered *the sea of weeds;* which name may have been derived from the reeds growing near its shore; or from the weeds, or coralline productions, with which, according to Diodorus Siculus, and Kircher, it abounded; and which were seen through its translucent waters. Finati, quoted by Laborde, speaks of the transparency of its waters, and the corals seen at its bottom. . . . Pliny states, that it is called the Red Sea from King Erythras, or from the reflection of a red colour by the sun, or from its sand and its ground, or from the nature of its water. —*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verses 7, 8.—This Psalm is a Psalm of thanksgiving, as the first and last verses declare. Now because a man is most fit to praise God when he is most sensible of his own sin and unworthiness; the Psalmist doth throughout this Psalm lay Israel's sin and God's mercy together. Ver. 7, "*Our Fathers* (says he) *understood not thy wonders in Egypt.*" They saw them with their eyes, but they did not understand them with their heart; they did not apprehend the design and scope and end of God in those wonders: and therefore, "*they remembered not* (says the text) *thy mercies;*" for a man remembers no more than he understands.

But it may be these mercies were very few, and so their sin in forgetfulness the less? Nay, not so, for verse 7, "*They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies.*"

But it may be this was their infirmity or weakness, and so they were rather to be borne withal? Not so, "*but they rebelled against him;*" so Montanus reads it better.

But it may be this sin was committed whilst they were in Egypt, or among the Egyptians, being put on by them? Not so neither, but when they were come out of Egypt, and only had to deal with God, and saw his glorious power at the Red Sea, then they rebelled against him, "*at the sea, even at the Red Sea.*"

What then, did not the Lord destroy them? No says the text, "*Notwithstanding*" all their grievance, unthankfulness, and their rebellion, "*he saved them for his name's sake.*"—*William Bridge, in a Sermon preached before the House of Commons, Nov.* 5, 1647.

Verse 8.—"*Nevertheless he saved them.*"—If God should not shew mercy to his people with a *nevertheless*, how should the glory of his mercy appear? If a physician should only cure a man that hath the head-ache or the tooth-ache; one that hath taken cold, or some small disease; it would not argue any great skill and excellency in the physician. But when a man is nigh unto death, hath one foot in the grave, or is, in the eye of reason, past all recovery; if then the physician cure him, it argues much the skill and excellency of that physician. So now, if God should only cure, and save a people that were less evil and wicked; or that were good indeed, where should the excellence of mercy appear? But when a people shall be drawing near to death, lying bed-rid, as it were, and the Lord out of his free love, for his own name's sake, shall rise, and cure such an unworthy people, this sets out the glory of his mercy. It is said in the verse precedent, "They rebelled at the sea, even at the Red Sea," or, as in the Hebrew, "even *in* the Red Sea"; when the waters stood like walls on both sides of them; when they saw those walls of waters that never people saw before, and saw the power, the infinite power of God leading them through on dry land; *then* did they rebel, at the sea, *even in* the sea; and yet for all this the Lord saved them with a *notwithstanding* all this. And I say, shall the Lord put forth so much of grace upon a people, that were under the law; and not put forth much more of his grace upon those that are under the gospel?—*William Bridge.*

Verse 8.—"*For his name's sake.*" Improve his name in every case; for he hath a name suiting every want, every need. Do you need wonders to be wrought for you? His name is Wonderful; look to him so to do, for his name's sake. Do you need counsel and direction? His name is the Counsellor: cast yourself on him and his name for this. Have you mighty enemies to debate with? His name is the Mighty God; seek that he may exert his power for his name's sake. Do you

need his fatherly pity? His name is the everlasting Father; "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Plead his pity, for his name's sake. Do you need peace external, internal, or eternal? His name is the Prince of Peace; seek for his name's sake, that he may create peace. O sirs, his name is JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Lord, the healer and physician; seek, for his name's sake, that he may heal all your diseases. Do you need pardon? His name is JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness: seek, for his name's sake, that he may be merciful to your unrighteousness. Do you need defence and protection? His name is JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Lord your banner; seek, for his name's sake, that his banner of love and grace may be spread over you. Do you need provision in extreme want? His name is JEHOVAH-JIREH, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide. Do you need his presence? His name is JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, the Lord is there: IMMANUEL, God with us: look to him to be with you, for his name's sake. Do you need audience of prayer? His name is the Hearer of prayer. Do you need strength? His name is the Strength of Israel. Do you need comfort? His name is the Consolation of Israel. Do you need shelter? His name is the City of Refuge. Have you nothing and need all? His name is All in all. Sit down and devise names to your wants and needs, and you will find he hath a name suitable thereunto; for your supply, he hath wisdom to guide you; and power to keep you; mercy to pity you; truth to shield you; holiness to sanctify you; righteousness to justify you; grace to adorn you; and glory to crown you. Trust in his name, who saves for his name's sake.—*Ralph Erskine*, 1685—1752.

Verse 9.—"*He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up.*" A poetical expression, signifying that the Red Sea retired at God's command, just as a slave would fly from his master's presence on being severely rebuked.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 9.—"*He rebuked.*" We do not read that any voice was sent forth from heaven to rebuke the sea; but he hath called the Divine Power by which this was effected, a rebuke, unless indeed any one may choose to say, that the sea was secretly rebuked, so that the waters might hear, and yet men could not. The power by which God acteth is very abstruse and mysterious, a power by which he causeth that even things devoid of sense instantly obey at his will.—*Augustine.*

Verse 9.—"*Wilderness.*" *Midbar;* a broad expanse of poor dry land, suited for sheep-walks (like our South-Downs, or Salisbury Plain). Compare Isa. lxiii. 13. —*William Kay.*

Verse 11.—"*There was not one of them left.*" An emblem this of the utter destruction of all our spiritual enemies by Christ, who has not only saved us from them, but has entirely destroyed them; he has made an end of sin, even of all the sins of his people; he has spoiled Satan, and his principalities and powers; he has abolished death, the last enemy, and made his saints more than conquerors over all. Likewise it may be a representation of the destruction of the wicked at the last day, who will all be burnt up at the general conflagration, root and branch, not one will be left. See Mal. iv. 1.—*John Gill.*

Verse 12.—"*Then believed they his words.*" There is a temporary faith, as Mark calls it (iv. 17), which is not so much a fruit of the Spirit of regeneration, as of a certain mutable affection, and so it soon passeth away. It is not a voluntary faith which is here extolled by the prophet, but rather that which is the result of compulsion, namely, because men, whether they will or not, by a sense which they have of the power of God, are constrained to show some reverence for him. This passage ought to be well considered, that men, when once they have yielded submission to God, may not deceive themselves, but may know that the touchstone of faith is when they spontaneously receive the word of God, and constantly continue firm in their obedience to it.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 12.—Natural affections raised high in a profession of religion will withstand temptations for a fit, but wait till the stream runs lower, and you will see. What a fit of affection had the Israelites when their eyes had seen that miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea! What songs of rejoicing had they! what resolves never to distrust him again! "*Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.*" Satan doth not presently urge them to murmuring and unbelief, though that was his design, but he staid till the fit was over, and then he could soon tempt them to "*forget his works.*" —*Richard Gilpin in "A Treatise of Satan's Temptations,"* 1677.

Verse 12.—In the very brevity of this verse, the only one of its kind in the narrative portion of the Psalm, we may well see how short-lived were their gratitude, belief, and worship of God; as it follows at once, "*They soon forgat,*" etc.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 12, 13.—"*They sang his praise. They soon forgat his works.*" This was said of that generation of the Israelites, which came out of Egypt. The chapter which contains the portion of their history here alluded to, begins with rapturous expressions of gratitude, and ends with the murmurs of discontent; both uttered by the same lips, within the short space of three days. Their expressions of gratitude were called forth by that wonderful display of the divine perfections, which delivered them from the host of Pharaoh, and destroyed their enemies. Their murmurs were excited by a comparatively trifling inconvenience, which in a few hours was removed. Of persons whose thanksgivings were so quickly, and so easily changed to murmurings, it might well be said,—though they *sang God's praises, "they soon forgat his works.*"

Unhappily, the Israelites are by no means the only persons of whom this may, in truth, be said. Their conduct, as here described, affords a striking exemplification of that spurious gratitude, which often bursts forth in a sudden flash, when dreaded evils are averted, or unexpected favours bestowed; but expires with the occasion that gave it birth; a gratitude resembling the joy excited in an infant's breast by the gift of some glittering toy, which is received with rapture, and pleases for an hour; but when the charm of novelty vanishes, is thrown aside with indifference; and the hand that bestowed it is forgotten. Springing from no higher principle than gratified self-love, it is neither acceptable to God, nor productive of obedience to his laws; nor does it in any respect really resemble that holy, heaven-born affection, whose language it often borrows, and whose name it assumes. It may be called, distinctively, the gratitude of sinners; who, as they love those that love them, will of course be grateful to those that are kind to them; grateful even to God when they view him as kind.

Of these instances, the first which I shall notice is furnished by the works of *creation*; or, as they are often, though not very properly, called, the works of nature. In so impressive a manner do these works present themselves to our senses; so much of variety, and beauty, and sublimity do they exhibit; such power, and wisdom, and goodness do they display; that perhaps no man, certainly no man who possesses the smallest share of sensibility, taste, or mental cultivation, can, at all times, view them without emotion; without feelings of awe, or wonder, or admiration, or delight.

But, alas, how transient, how unproductive of salutary effects, have all these emotions proved? Appetite and passion, though hushed for a moment, soon renewed their importunities; the glitter of wealth and distinction, and power, eclipsed, in our view, the glories of Jehovah; we sunk from that heaven toward which we seemed rising, to plunge afresh into the vortex of earthly pleasures and pursuits; we neglected and disobeyed him, whom we had been ready to adore; and continued to live without God, in a world which we had just seen to be full of his glory.

A second instance of a similar nature is afforded by the manner in which men are often affected by God's works of *providence.* In these works his perfections are so constantly, and often so clearly displayed; our dependence on them is at all times so real, and sometimes so apparent; and they bear, in many cases, so directly and evidently upon our dearest temporal interests, that even the most insensible cannot, always, regard them with indifference.

But the feeling is usually transient; and the acknowledgment is forgotten almost as soon as it is made.

In a similar manner are men often affected by God's works of *grace;* or those works whose design and tendency it is, to promote the spiritual and eternal interests of man. These works most clearly display, not only the natural, but the moral perfections of Jehovah. Here his character shines, full-orbed and complete.

That an exhibition of these wonders should make, at least, a temporary impression upon our minds, is no more than might naturally be expected. For a moment our hearts seem to be melted. We feel, and are ready to acknowledge, that God is good; that the Saviour is kind; that his love ought to be returned; that heaven is desirable! Like a class of hearers described by one great Teacher, we receive the word with joy; a joy not unmingled with something which resembles gratitude; and we sing, or feel as if we could with pleasure sing, God's praises. But we leave his house; the emotions there excited subside; like the earth, when partially softened

by a wintry sun, our hearts soon regain their icy hardness; the wonders of divine grace are forgotten; and God has reason to say in sorrow and displeasure,—Your goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew it goeth away.—*Condensed from a Sermon by Edward Payson*, 1783—1827.

Verse 13.—"*They soon forgat his works.*" They forgat, yea, "*soon*"; they made haste to forget, so the original is: "They made haste, they forgat." Like men that in sleep shake Death by the hand, but when they are awake they will not know him.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 13.—How may we know that we are rightly thankful? When we are careful to register God's mercy, 1 Chron. xvi. 4: "David appointed certain of the Levites, to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel." Physicians say the memory is the first thing that decays; it is true in spirituals: "*They soon forgat his works.*"—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 13.—"*They soon forgat.*" As it is with a sieve or boulter, the good corn and fine flour goes through, but the light chaff and coarse bran remains behind; or as a strainer, that the sweet liquor is strained out, but the dregs are left behind: or as a grate, that lets the pure water run away, but if there be any straws, sticks, mud, or filth, that it holds. Thus it is with most men's memories; by nature they are but, as it were, *pertusa dolia*, mere river tubs, especially in good things very treacherous, so that the vain conceits of men are apt to be held in, when divine instructions and gracious promises run through; trifles and toys, and worldly things, they are apt to remember, tenacious enough; but for spiritual things they leak out; like Israel, *they soon forget them.*—*William Gouge.*

Verse 13.—"*They soon forgat his works.*" Three days afterwards, at the waters of Marah (Exod. xv. 24).—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 13.—"*They waited not.*" The insatiable nature of our desires is astonishing, in that scarcely a single day is allowed to God to gratify them. For should he not immediately satisfy them, we at once become impatient, and are in danger of eventually falling into despair. This, then, was the fault of the people, that they did not cast all their cares upon God, did not calmly call upon him, nor wait patiently until he was pleased to answer their requests, but rushed forward with reckless precipitation, as if they would dictate to God what he was to do. And, therefore, to heighten the criminality of their rash course, he employs the term "*counsel*"; because men will neither allow God to be possessed of wisdom, nor do they deem it proper to depend upon his counsel, but are more provident than becomes them, and would rather rule God than allow themselves to be ruled by him according to his pleasure. That we may be preserved from provoking God, let us ever retain this principle, That it is our duty to let him provide for us such things as he knows will be for our advantage. And verily, faith divesting us of our own wisdom, enables us hopefully and quietly to wait until God accomplishes his own work; whereas, on the contrary, our carnal desire always goes before the counsel of God, by its too great haste.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 13.—"*They waited not.*" They ought to have thought, that so great works of God towards themselves were not without a purpose, but that they invited them to some endless happiness, which was to be waited for with patience; but they hastened to make themselves happy with temporal things, which give no man true happiness, because they do not quench insatiable longing: "for whosoever," saith our Lord, "shall drink of this water, shall thirst again." John iv. 13.—*Augustine.*

Verse 13.—"*They waited not for his counsel.*"—Which neglect of theirs may be understood two ways. First, that they waited not for his open or declared counsel, to direct them what to do, but without asking his advice would needs venture and run on upon their own heads, to do what seemed good in their own eyes. Secondly, that they waited not for the accomplishment of his hidden and secret counsel concerning them; they would not tarry God's time for the bringing forth and bringing about his counsels. Not to wait upon God either way is very sinful. Not to wait for his counsel to direct us what to do, and not to wait for his doing or fulfilling his own counsel, argues at once a proud and an impatient spirit; in the one, men do even slight the wisdom of God, and in the other vainly presume and attempt to prevent his providence.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13.—"*They waited not for his counsel.*" A believer acting his faith, hath great advantage of an unbeliever. An unbeliever is froward and passionate, and

heady and hasty, when he is put to plunge; *he waits not for the counsel of God.* He leaps before he looks, before he hath eyes to see his way; but a believer is quiet and confident, and silent and patient, and prayerful, and standing upon his watch-tower, to see what God will answer at such a time.—*Matthew Lawrence, in "The Use and Practice of Faith,"* 1657.

Verse 14.—"*In the wilderness.*" When God by circumstances of time and place doth call for moderation of carnal appetite, the transgression is more heinous and offensive unto God: "They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness," where they should have contented themselves with any sort of provision.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 14.—"*In the wilderness.*" There, *where they had bread enough and to spare,* yet nothing would serve them but they must have flesh to eat. They were now *purely at God's finding;* so that this was a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of their Creator. They were now, in all probability, *within a step of Canaan,* yet had not patience to stay for dainties till they came thither. *They had flocks and herds of their own,* but they will not kill them; God must give them flesh as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit or their good word: they did not only wish for flesh, "but" they "lusted exceedingly" after it. A desire even of lawful things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called "lusting after evil things" (1 Cor. x. 6), though the quails as God's gift, were good things, and were so spoken of, Ps. cv. 40. Yet this was not all, "they tempted God in the desert," *where they had had such experience of his goodness and power,* and questioned whether he could and would gratify them therein. See Psalm lxxviii. 19, 20.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 15.—"*And he gave them their request,*" etc. The throat's pleasure did shut up paradise, sold the birthright, beheaded the Baptist, and it was the chief of the cooks, Nebuzaradan, that first set fire to the temple, and razed the city. These effects are, 1. Grossness; which takes away agility to any good work; which makes a man more like a tun upon two pottle pots. Cæsar said he mistrusted not Antony and Dolabella for any practices, because they were fat; but Casca and Cassius, lean, hollow fellows, who did think too much. The other are the devil's crammed fowls, too fat to lay. Indeed, what need they travel far, whose felicity is at home; placing paradise in their throats, and heaven in their food? 2. Macilency of grace; for as it puts fatness into their bodies, so leanness into their souls. God fatted the Israelites with quails, but withal "*sent leanness into their soul.*" The flesh is blown up, the spirit doth languish. They are worse than man-eaters, for they are self-eaters: they put a pleurisy into their bloods, and an apoplexy into their souls.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 15.—"*Sent leanness into their soul.*" God affords us as great means for our increase in these Gospel times as ever he did; he puts us into fat pastures, and well watered, Ps. xxiii.; therefore it is a shame for God's people not to grow, not "to bring forth twins," as Cant. vi. 6. They should grow twice as fast, bring forth twice as fast, bring forth twice as many lambs, twice as much wool, twice as much milk, as those that go upon bare commons. All the world may cry shame on such a man that is high fed, and often fed with fat and sweet ordinances, if he be still like Pharaoh's lean kine, as lean and ill-favoured as ever he was before. Certainly, fat ordinances and lean souls do not well agree. We are to look upon it as the greatest of judgments to have *leanness sent into our souls* while we are fed with *manna.* We look on it as an affliction to have an over-lean body; but it's a far sadder condition to have a lean soul. Of the two, it were far better to have a well-thriving soul and a lean body: it is a great mercy when both prosper, 3 John 2: "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Oh it is a sweet thing, especially to have a prospering soul, and still upon the growing hand: and God expects it should be so, where he affords good diet, great means of grace; as Dan. i. 10: "The prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink." If you should look ill, who fare so well, I should be sure to bear the blame; it were so much as my head is worth. So certainly, where God affords precious food for precious souls, if these souls be lean under fat ordinances, either those that are fed, or those that feed them; either the stewards or the household; either minister, or people, or both, are sure to bear the blame. It is but equal and just that such should grow. We do not wonder to see lean sheep upon bare commons, but when we see sheep continue lean

in fat pastures, we think their meat is ill bestowed on them; and therefore let us strive to be on the growing land.—*Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 15.—"*Leanness*" is rendered "loathing" by Bishop Horsley, which accords with the literal state of the case; but I think *leanness*, as applied to the soul, is exceedingly descriptive of its spiritual barrenness and emptiness of aught like Divine tastes or enjoyments.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 17.—"*The earth opened,*" etc. This element was not used to such morsels. It devours the carcases of men; but bodies informed with living souls, never before. To have seen them struck dead upon the earth had been fearful; but to see the earth at once their executioner and grave, was more horrible. Neither the sea nor the earth are fit to give passage; the sea is moist and flowing, and will not be divided, for the continuity of it; the earth is dry and massy, and will neither yield naturally, nor meet again when it hath yielded: yet the waters did cleave to give way unto Israel for their preservation; the earth did cleave to give way to the conspirators in judgment; both sea and earth did shut their jaws again upon the adversaries of God. There was more wonder in this latter. It was a marvel that the waters opened; it was no wonder that they shut again; for the retiring and flowing was natural. It was no less marvel that the earth opened; but more marvel that it shut again; because it had no natural disposition to meet when it was divided. Now might Israel see they had to do with a God that could revenge with ease.

There are two sorts of traitors: the earth swallowed up the one, the fire the other. All the elements agree to serve the vengeance of their Maker. Nadab and Abihu brought fit persons, but unfit fire, to God; these Levites bring the right fire, but unwarranted persons, before him: fire from God consumes both. It is a dangerous thing to usurp sacred functions. The ministry will not grace the man; the man may disgrace the ministry.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 17.—Dathan and Abiram only are mentioned, and this in strict agreement with Numb. xxvi. 11, where it is said, "*the children of Korah* died not." And the same thing is at least *implied* in Numb. xvi. 27, where it is said, that, just before the catastrophe took place, "Dathan and Abiram" (there is no mention of Korah) "came out and stood in the door of their tents." See this noticed and accounted for in Blunt's *Veracity of the Books of Moses*, Part I. § 20, p. 86.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 19.—"*They made a calf.*" And why a calf? Could they find no fitter resemblance of God amongst all the creatures? Why not rather the lordly lion, to show the sovereignty; vast elephant, the immensity; subtle serpent, the wisdom; long-lived hart, the eternity; swift eagle, the ubiquity of God, rather than the silly senseless calf, that eateth hay? But the shape mattereth not much, for if God be made like anything, he may be made like anything, it being as unlawful to fashion him an angel as a worm, seeing the commandment forbids as well the likeness of things in heaven above as in earth beneath (Exod. xx. 4). But probably a calf was preferred before other forms because they had learned it from the Egyptians' worshipping their ox Apis. Thus the Israelites borrowed (Exod. xii. 35) not all gold and silver, but some dross from the Egyptians, whence they fetch the idolatrous forms of their worship.

Verse 19.—The modern Jews are of opinion that all the afflictions which ever since have, do, or shall befall their nation, are still the just punishments on them for this their first act of idolatry. And the rabbins have a saying that God never inflicts any judgment upon them, but there is an ounce of his anger on them for their ancestors' making the golden calf. A reverend friend of mine, conversing at Amsterdam with a Jewish youth (very capable and ingenious for one of that nation) endeavoured to make him sensible of God's anger upon them for rejecting and crucifying of Christ, for which foul act he showed how the Jews have lived many hundred years in miserable banishment. But the youth would in no wise acknowledge in their sufferings any effect or punishment of their murdering of Christ, but taking his Bible turned to God's threatening immediately after their making of the calf (Exod. xxxiii. 34): "Nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them," so interpreting and applying all the numerous calamities which since have befallen them to relate to no other cause than that their first idolatry. Whereas, indeed, the arrears of their idolatry long ago were satisfied, and this is a new debt of later date contracted on themselves by their infidelity.—*Thomas Fuller*, 1608—1661, *in* "*A Pisgah Sight of Palestine.*"

Verse 19.—" *They made a calf*," etc. This people had seen this idolatrous service in Egypt; and now they did not more long after Egyptian food, than after this Egyptian god. . . . It is an easy matter for men to be drawn to the practice of that idolatry that they have been accustomed to see practised in those places that they have a long time lived in. He that would take heed of idolatry, let him take heed of Egypt: the very air of Egypt (as I may so say) is infectious in this kind. See here, they had seen the worship of a young bullock in Egypt, and they must have a bullock. . . .

The local seat of Antichrist (and what seat can that be but *Rome?*) is called in the Revelation by three names: it is called *Egypt*, Rev. ii. 8. It is called *Sodom* in the same verse. It is called *Babylon* in many places of the Revelation. It is called *Babylon*, in regard to her cruelty. It is called *Sodom*, in regard to her filthiness; and *Egypt*, in regard to her *idolatry*.

It is a hard matter for a man to live in Egypt, and not to taste and savour somewhat of the idolatry of Egypt. We had sometime, in England, a proverb about going to Rome. They said, a man that went the first time to Rome, he went to see a wicked man there; he that went the second time to Rome, went to be acquainted with that wicked man there; he that went the third time, brought him home with him. How many have we seen (and it is pity to see so many) of our nobility and gentry to go to those *Egyptian* parts, and return home again: but few of them bring home the same manners, the same religion, nor the same souls they carried out with them.—*Thomas Westfield, Bishop of Bristow, in " England's Face in Israel's Glasse,"* 1658.

Verse 19.—" *In Horeb.*" There is a peculiar stress on the words " *in Horeb*," as denoting the very place where the great manifestation of God's power and presence has been made, and where the law had been given, whose very first words were a prohibition of the sin of idolatry.—*Agellius, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 19, 20.—Apis, or Serapis, was a true living black bull, with a white list or streak along the back, a white mark in fashion of an half-moon on his right shoulder, only two hairs growing on his tail (why just so many and no more, the devil knows), with a fair square blaze on his forehead, and a great bunch called cantharus under his tongue. What art their priests did use to keep up the breed and preserve succession of cattle with such *γωρίσμαια*, or privy marks, I list not to inquire. . . . Besides this natural and living bull, kept in one place, they also worshipped *βοῦν διάχρυσον*, a golden or gilded ox, the image or portraiture of the former. Some conceive this Apis to have been the symbol and emblem of Joseph the patriarch, so called from אב, *ab*, a father, seeing he is said to be made by God a father to Pharaoh (Gen. xlv. 8), that is, preserver of him and his country; and therefore the Egyptians, in after ages, gratified his memory with statues of an ox, a creature so useful in ploughing, sowing, bringing home, and treading out of corn, to perpetuate that gift of grain he had conferred upon them. They strengthen their conjecture because Serapis (which one will have to be nothing else but Apis with addition of שר, *sar*, that is, a prince, whence perchance our English Sir) was pictured with a bushel over his head, and Joseph (we know) was corn-meter-general in Egypt. Though others, on good ground, conceive ox-worship in Egypt of far greater antiquity.

However, hence Aaron (Exod. xxxii. 4), and hence afterwards Jeroboam (who flying from Solomon, lived some years with Shishak, king of Egypt, 1 Kings xi. 40) had the pattern of their calves, which they made for the children of Israel to worship. If any object the Egyptians' idols were bulls or oxen, the Israelites' but calves, the difference is not considerable; for (besides the objector never looked into the mouths of the latter to know their age) *gradus non variat speciem*, a less character is not another letter. Yea, Herodotus calls Apis himself *χόσμος*, a calf, and Vitulus is of as large acceptation among the Latins. Such an old calf the poet describes—

> *Ego hanc vitalam (ne forte recuses,*
> *Bis venit ad mulctram binos alit ubere fœtus)*
> *Depono.*
>
> My calf I lay (lest you mistake't both tides
> She comes to th' pail and suckles twain besides).

But to put all out of doubt, what in Exodus is termed a calf, the Psalmist calleth an ox (Ps. cvi. 20).—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verses 19—22.—It is to be hoped, we shall never live to see a time, when the

miracles of *our* redemption shall be forgotten; when the return of Jesus Christ from heaven shall be despaired of; and when the people shall solicit their teachers to fabricate a new philosophical deity, for them to worship, instead of the God of their ancestors, to whom glory hath been ascribed from generation to generation.—*George Horne.*

Verse 20.—"*An ox that eateth grass.*" The Egyptians, when they consulted Apis, presented a bottle of hay or of grass, and if the ox received it, they expected good success.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 20.—Although some of the Rabbins would excuse this gross idolatry of their forefathers, yet others more wise bewail them, and say that there is an ounce of this golden calf in all their present sufferings.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 21.—"*They forgat God.*" To devise images and pictures to put us in the mind of God, is a very forgetting both of God's nature, and of his authority, which prohibits such devices, for so doth the Lord expound it: "*They forgat God their Saviour.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 21.—Let us observe in this place that Israel is now for the third time accused of forgetting God; above in ver. 7, afterwards in ver. 13, and now in ver. 21. And that he might shew the greatness of this forgetfulness he does not simply say they forgat God, but adds, *their Saviour:* not the Saviour of their fathers in former times, but *their own Saviour.*—*Musculus.*

Verse 22.—"*Land of Ham.*" Egypt is called the land of *Ham*, or rather *Cham*, חָם, because it was peopled by Mizraim, the son of Ham, and grandson of Noah. Plutarch (De Iside and Osiride) informs us, that the Egyptians called their country Χημια, *Chemia;* and the Copts give it the name of Χημι, *Chemi*, to the present day. —*Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 23.—"*Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach.*" Moses stood in the gap, and diverted the wrath of God; the hedge of religion and worship was broken down by a golden calf, and he made it up: Numb. xvi. 41, 42, the people murmured, rose up against Moses and Aaron, trod down the hedge of authority, whereupon the plague brake in upon them; presently Aaron steps into the gap, makes up the hedge, and stops the plague, ver. 47, 48. That which they did was honourable; and they were repairers of breaches. We, through infinite mercy, have had some like Moses and Aaron, to make up our hedges, raise up our foundations, and stop some gaps; but all our gaps are not yet stopped. Are there not gaps in the hedge of doctrine? If it were not so, how came in such erroneous, blasphemous, and wild opinions amongst us? Are there not gaps in the hedges of civil and ecclesiastical authority? Do not multitudes trample upon magistracy and ministry, all powers, both human and divine? Are there not gaps in the worship of God? Do not too many tread down all churches, all ordinances, yea, the very Scriptures? Are there not gaps in the hedge of justice, through which the bulls of Bashan enter, which oppress the poor, and crush the needy? Amos iv. 1: are there not gaps in the hedge of love; is not that bond of perfection broken? Are there not bitter envyings and strife among us; do we not bite and devour one another? are there not gaps in the hedge of conscience? is not the peace broken between God and your souls? doth not Satan come in oft at the gap, and disturb you? are there not gaps also in your several relations, whereby he gets advantage? Surely, if our eyes be in our heads, we may see gaps enough.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 23.—"*The breach.*" This is a metaphor taken from a city which is besieged, and in the walls of which the enemy having made a "*breach,*" is just entering in, to destroy it, unless he be driven back by some valiant warrior. Thus *Moses* stood, as it were "*in the breach,*" and averted the wrath of God, when he was just going to destroy the Israelites. See Exod. xxxii.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 23.—If Christians could be brought to entertain a just sense of the value and power of intercessory prayer, surely it would abound. It is a terrible reproof against the lying prophets of Ezekiel's time: "Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord" (Ezek. xiii. 5). Compare Ex. xxxii. 9—14.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 24.—"*Yea, they despised.*" When the promised inheritance of heaven

(which was figured by the pleasant *land of promise*), is not counted worthy of all the pains and difficulties which can be sustained and met with in the way of going toward it, the promised inheritance is but little esteemed of, as appeareth in the Israelites, who for love of ease, and fear of the Canaanites, were ready to turn back to Egypt: "*They despised the pleasant land.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 24.—"*They despised the pleasant land.*" This was a type of heaven, the good land afar off; the better country, the land of promise and rest; in which is fulness of provisions, and where there will be no hunger and thirst; where flows the river of the water of life, and stands the tree of life, bearing all manner of fruits; where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore; the most delightful company of Father, Son, and Spirit, angels and glorified saints, and nothing to disturb their peace and pleasure neither from within nor from without. And yet this pleasant land may be said to be despised by such who do not care to go through any difficulty to it; to perform the duties of religion; to bear reproach for God's sake; to go through tribulation; to walk in the narrow and afflicted way which leads unto it; and by all such who do not care to part with their sinful lusts and pleasures; but prefer them and the things of this world to the heavenly state.—*John Gill.*

Verse 24.—One great bar to salvation is spiritual sloth. It is said of Israel, "*They despised the pleasant land.*" What should be the reason? Canaan was a paradise of delight, a type of heaven; aye, but they thought it would cost them a great deal of trouble and hazard in the getting, and they would rather go without it, they despised the pleasant land. Are there not millions of us who would rather go sleeping to hell, than sweating to heaven? I have read of certain Spaniards that live near where there is great store of fish, yet are so lazy that they will not be at the pains to catch them, but buy of their neighbours: such a sinful stupidity and sloth is upon the most, that though Christ be near them, though salvation is offered in the Gospel, yet they will not work out salvation.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verses 24, 25.—Murmuring hath in it much unbelief and distrust of God. "*They believed not his word; but murmured in their tents.*" They could not believe that the wilderness was the way to Canaan, that God would provide and furnish a table for them there, and relieve them in all their straits. So it is with us in trouble. We quarrel with God's providence, because we do not believe his promises; we do not believe that this can be consistent with love, or can work for good in the end.—*John Willison*, 1680—1750.

Verse 25.—"*But murmured.*" Murmuring! It must have been a malady characteristic of the Hebrew people, or a disease peculiar to that desert. As we proceed with this narrative we are constantly meeting it, creaking along in discord harsh and chronic, or amazing earth and heaven by its shrill, ear-piercing paroxysms. They lift up their eyes, and as the Egyptians pursue, the people murmur. They come to a fountain, the water is bitter, and once more they murmur. Then no bread; murmurings redoubled. Moses is no longer in the Mount; murmurs. He takes too much upon him; more murmurs. When shall we reach that promised land?—murmurs extraordinary, loud murmurs. We are close to the land, but its inhabitants are giants, and their towns walled up to heaven. Oh, what a take-in! and the last breath of the last survivors of that querulous race goes forth in a hurricane of reproach and remonstrance—a perfect storm of murmurs.—*James Hamilton* (1814—1867) *in* "*Moses the man of God.*"

Verse 25.—The murmuring on this occasion seems to have been a social evil, they *murmured in their tents.* So do men in social life promote among each other prejudice and aversion to true religion.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 28.—"*They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor,*"—rather "bound themselves with his badge": for it was the custom in ancient times, as it is now, in all Pagan countries, for every idol to have some specific badge, or ensign, by which his votaries are known.—*John Kitto, in* "*Daily Bible Illustrations.*"

Verse 28.—"*They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor.*" The narrative (Num. xxv.) seems clearly to show that this form of Baal-worship was connected with licentious rites. Without laying too much stress on the Rabbinical derivation of the word וּפְעוֹר *hiatus, i.e.,* "*aperire hymenem virgineum,*" we seem to have reason to conclude that this was the nature of the worship. Baal-Peor was identified by the Rabbins and early fathers with Priapus (see the authorities quoted by Selden, *De Diis Syris*, i. 4, p. 302, sq., who, however, dissents from this view). This is, moreover, the view of

Creuzer (ii. 411), Winer, Gesenius, Fürst, and almost all critics. The reader is referred for more detailed information particularly to Creuzer's *Symbolik* and Movers' *Phönizier.—William Gotch, in "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible."*

Verse 28.—"*Ate the sacrifices.*" It was usual for the officers to eat the chief part of the sacrifice. Hence the remarks of Paul on this subject, 1 Cor. viii., 1—13.—*Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 28.—"*The dead.*" The word מֵתִים, *maithim*, signifies *dead men;* for the idols of the heathen were generally *men*,—warriors, kings, or lawgivers,—who had been deified after their death; though many of them had been execrated during their life.—*Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 28.—"*And they ate the sacrifices of the dead.*"

> His obsequies to Polydorus paying
> A tomb we raise, and altars to the dead
> With dark blue fillets and black cypress bind
> Our dames with hair dishevell'd stand to mourn;
> Warm frothy blows of milk and sacred blood
> We offer, in his grave the spirit lay,
> Call him aloud, and bid our last farewell. —*Virgil.*

Verse 29.—"*They provoked him to anger with their inventions.*" Note, that it is not said, *with their deeds*, but with their pursuits (*studies*). It is one thing simply to do a thing; it is quite another to pursue it earnestly night and day. The first may take place by chance, or through ignorance, or on account of some temptation, or violence, and that without the consent and against the inclination of the mind. But the latter is brought about in pursuance of a fixed purpose and design and by effort and forethought. We see, therefore, in this passage that the patience of God was at length provoked to anger and fury when the people sinned not merely once and again, but when the pursuit of sin grew and strengthened.—*Musculus.*

Verse 29.—"*Their inventions.*" *Their sins* are here called by the name of "*their inventions.*" And so, sure, they are; as no ways taught us by God, but of our own imagining or finding out. For, indeed, our inventions are the cause of all sins. And if we look well into it we shall find our inventions are so. By God's injunction we should all live, and his injunction is, "You shall not do every man what seems good in his own eyes" (or finds out in his own brains), "but whatsoever I command you, that shall you do." Deut. xii. 8. But we, setting light by that charge of his, out of the old disease of our father Adam ("ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"), think it a goodly matter to be witty, and to find out things ourselves to make to ourselves, to be authors, and inventors of somewhat, that so we may seem to be as wise as *God*, if not wiser; and to know what is for our turns, as well as he, if not better. It was Saul's fault. God bade him destroy Amalek altogether, and he would invent a better way, to save some (forsooth) for sacrifice, which God could not think of. And it was St. Peter's fault, when he persuaded Christ from his passion, and found out a better way (as he thought) than Christ could devise.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 29.—"*Brake in upon them.*" The image is that of a river which had burst its barriers; see Exod. xix. 24. The plague is the slaughter inflicted upon the people by command of Moses; Numb. xxv. 4, 5, 8, 9, 18.—"*The Speaker's Commentary.*"

Verse 30.—"*Then stood up Phinehas.*" All Israel saw the bold lewdness of Zimri, but their hearts and eyes were so full of grief, that they had not room enough for indignation. Phinehas looked on with the rest, but with other affections. When he saw this defiance bidden to God, and this insultation upon the sorrow of his people (that while they were wringing their hands, a proud miscreant durst outface their humiliation with his wicked dalliance), his heart boils with a desire of a holy revenge; and now that hand, which was used to a censer and sacrificing knife, takes up his javelin, and, with one stroke, joins these two bodies in their death, which were joined in their sin, and in the very flagrance of their lust, makes a new way for their souls to their own place. O noble and heroical courage of Phinehas! which, as it was rewarded of God, so is worthy to be admired of men. He doth not stand casting of scruples: Who am I to do this? The son of the high priest. My place is all for peace and mercy: it is for me to sacrifice, and pray for the sin of the people, not to sacrifice any of the people for their sin. My duty calls me to appease the anger of God what I may, not to revenge the sins of men; to pray for their conversion,

not to work the confusion of any sinner. And who are these? Is not the one a great prince in Israel, the other a princess of Midian? Can the death of two so famous personages go unrevenged? Or, if it be safe and fit, why doth my uncle Moses rather shed his own tears than their blood? I will mourn with the rest; let them revenge whom it concerneth. But the zeal of God hath barred out all weak deliberations; and he holds it now both his duty and his glory, to be an executioner of so shameless a pair of offenders. . . .

Now the sin is punished, the plague ceaseth. The revenge of God sets out ever after the sin; but if the revenge of men (which commonly comes later) can overtake it, God gives over the chase. How oft hath the infliction of a less punishment avoided a greater! There are none so good friends to the state, as courageous and impartial ministers of justice: these are the reconcilers of God and the people, more than the prayers of them that sit still and do nothing.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 30.—"*Then stood up Phinehas,*" etc. Mark the mighty principle, which rolled like a torrent in the heart of Phinehas. The Spirit leaves it not obscure. The praise is this, "He was zealous for his God," Numb. xxv. 13. He could not fold his arms, and see God's law insulted, his rule defied, his majesty and empire scorned. The servant's heart blazed in one blaze of godly indignation. He must be up to vindicate his Lord. His fervent love, his bold resolve, fear nothing in a righteous cause. The offending Zimra was a potent prince: nevertheless he spared him not.

Believer, can you read this and feel no shame? Do your bold efforts testify your zeal? Sinners blaspheme God's name. Do you rebuke? His Sabbaths are profaned. Do you protest? False principles are current? Do you expose the counterfeits? Vice stalks in virtue's garb. Do you tear down the mask? Satan enthrals the world. Do you resist? Nay, rather are you not dozing unconcerned? Whether Christ's cause succeeds, or be cast down, you little care. If righteous zeal girded your loins, and braced your nerves, and moved the rudder of your heart, and swelled your sails of action, would God be so unknown, and blasphemy so daring?

Mark, next, the zeal of Phinehas is sound-minded. It is not as a courser without rein, a torrent unembanked, a hurricane let loose. Its steps are set in order's path. It executes God's own will in God's own way. The mandate says, let the offenders die. He aims a death-blow, then, with obedient hand. The zeal, which heaven kindles, is always a submissive grace.—*Henry Law, in "Christ is All,"* 1858.

Verse 30.—"*Stood up,*" as valiantly to do his work of zeal, as Moses had done to discharge the office of intercessor, and because he alone rose to set the example of resistance to the foul rites of Baal-Peor.—*Cassiodorus, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 30.—"*So the plague was stayed.*" God himself puts this peculiar honour of staying the plague (when he was about to destroy the whole camp) upon this fact of Phinehas, saying, "He hath turned away my wrath," Num. xxv. 10, 11, because he was acted with the same zeal for God's glory and Israel's good, as God himself is acted with for them, and feared not to lose his life in God's cause, by putting to death a prince and a princess in the very flagrancy of their lust at one blow. There is such an accent and such an emphasis put by the Lord on this act (as the Jewish Rabbis observe), that here they begin the forty-first section or lecture of the Law, or (as Vatablus saith) the seventh section of the book, which they call Phinehas. Moreover, it teacheth us, that zeal of justice in the cause of God is an hopeful means to remove God's wrath from, and to procure his mercy to, man. Thus David also made an atonement by doing justice on Saul's house, 2 Sam. xxi. 3, etc. . . .

Phinehas by virtue of this promise of the priesthood (Num. xxv. 12, 13) lived himself to a great old age, even (as some say) to three hundred years, as appeareth by Judg. xx. 28, where he then is found alive, for his zeal at this time. He lived so long that some of the Rabbis are of opinion that he died not at all, but is still alive, whom they suppose to be the Elias that is to come before the coming of Christ; but this notion is confuted by others of their Rabbis, and by the mention of his seed succeeding him in sacred Scripture. However, though few after the Flood did near attain to any such age, yet must Phinehas be very old in that time of Israel's warring with Benjamin. . . . Phinehas's priesthood is called "everlasting," not in his person, but in his posterity, whose sons were successively high priests till the captivity of Babylon, 1 Chron. vi. 4—16; and at the return out of captivity, Ezra, the great priest and scribe, was of his line, Ezra vii. 1—6; and so it continued in that line until, or very near, the approach of our evangelical High Priest (as Christ is called, Heb. v. 6), who was of the order of Melchizedek.—*Christopher Ness.*

Verse 30.—Why is the pacifying of God's wrath, and the staying of the plague ascribed to Phinehas, having a blush of irregularity in it, rather than to the acts of Moses and the judges, which were by express command from God and very regular? For answer, the acts of Moses and the judges *slaked the fire* of God's wrath, that of Phinehas *quenched* it; again the acts of Moses and the judges had a rise from a *spark*, that of Phinehas from a *flame of zeal* and holy indignation in him; hence the Lord, who is exceedingly taken with the springs and roots of actions, sets the crown upon the head of Phinehas.—*Edmund Staunton, in a Sermon preached before the House of Lords*, 1644.

Verse 30.—"*So the plague was stayed.*" A man doth not so live by his own faith, but in *temporal respects* the faith of another man may do him good. Masters by their faith obtained healing for their servants, parents for their children, Matt. xv. 28. "Oh, man, great is thy faith!" "Jesus seeing their faith," healed the sick of the palsy. God's people for the town or place where they live: "The innocent" (*i.e.*, the faithful doer) "shall deliver the island," Job xxii. 30. Gen. xviii. 32, "If ten righteous persons shall be found there, I will not destroy it for ten's sake." Especially in Magistrates, *Moses*, Numb. xiv.; *Hezekiah*, Isai. xxxvii., put up prayers, and God saved the people and places they prayed for: "*Then Phinehas executed judgment* (appeased God by faith) *and so the plague was stayed.*"—*Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 32.—"*It went ill with Moses.*" This judgment of God on that sin did not imply that he had blotted Moses out of the book of life, or the number of the saints, or otherwise than forgive his sin. For he continued still to talk with him, and advise with him of the governing of his people, and spake to Joshua that he should be faithful to him as his servant Moses. That was not the true Canaan from which he was shut out, but only the figure and shadow; and that he was allowed to see; a vision well worthy of all his labours, for the more excellent things signified by it. —*Isaac Williams, in "The Characters of the Old Testament,"* 1873.

Verse 33.—"*They provoked his spirit.*" As Abraham was distinguished for his faith, so was Moses for his meekness; for Scripture has declared that he was "very meek, above all the men which were on the face of the earth," Numb. xii. 3. Yet judging from facts recorded of him, we should be inclined to suppose that he was by nature remarkable for sensitiveness and hastiness of temper—that was his one besetting infirmity. Such appears to have been evinced when he slew the Egyptian; when he twice smote the rock in the wilderness; and on that occasion when he was "punished," as the Psalmist says, "*because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips*," and when he broke the two tables of stone. Something of the same kind appears to have been the case with our own Hooker, whose biographer attributes to him such singular meekness, while his private writings indicate a temper keenly alive and sensitive to the sense of wrong.—*Isaac Williams.*

Verse 33.—"*They provoked his spirit.*"—In a dispensation itself mainly gracious, and foreshadowing one which would be grace altogether, it was of prime importance that the mediating men should be merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to anger. And such they were in marvellous manner. . . .

Brimming over with instruction as is this passage, we must leave it with a few remarks.

1. How careful preachers of the gospel and expounders of Scripture should be not to give an erroneous impression of God's mind or message. The mental acumen is rare, but the right spirit is rarer. But what is the right spirit?—A loving spirit, a gentle spirit, a faithful spirit, a meek and weaned spirit, a spirit which says, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," and a spirit which adds, "All that the Lord giveth me, that will I speak," that excellent spirit which is only imparted by the good Spirit of God. For if he withdraw, even a Moses ceases to be meek, and ceasing to be meek, even a Moses becomes a bad divine and an erroneous teacher, striking the rock that has been already stricken once for all, and preaching glad tidings gruffly. He who gives the living water does not grudge it; but sometimes, instead of "Ho! every one that thirsteth," the preacher says, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" and makes the very invitation repulsive.

2. When any one has run long and run well, how sad it is to stumble within a few steps of the goal! If Moses had an earthly wish, it was to see Israel safe in their inheritance, and his wish was all but consummated. Faith and patience had held out well nigh forty years, and in a few months more the Jordan would be crossed

and the work would be finished. And who can tell but this very nearness of the prize helped to create something of a presumptuous confidence? The blood of Moses was hot to begin with, and he was not the meekest of men when he smote the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. But he had got a good lesson in ruling his spirit, and betwixt the long sojourn with Jethro and the self-discipline needful in the charge of this multitude, he might fancy that he had now his foot on the neck of this enemy: when lo! the sin revives and Moses dies.

Blessed is the man that feareth alway! Blessed is the man who, although years have passed without an attempt at burglary, still bars his doors and sees his windows fastened! Blessed is the man who, although a generation has gone since the last eruption, forbears to build on the volcanic soil, and dreads fires which have smouldered for fourscore years! Blessed is the man who, even when the high seas are crossed and the land is made, still keeps an outlook! Blessed is the man who, even on the confines of Canaan, takes heed of the evil heart, lest, with a promise of entering in, he should come short through unbelief!

3. Elevation of mind and sweetness of spirit are pearls of great price, and if we wish to preserve them we had better intrust them to God's own keeping. If Moses lost his faith, it was by first losing self-command: and if a man lose this, it is hard to say what next he may lose: like the mad warrior who makes a missile of his shield and hurls it at the head of an enemy, he is henceforward open to every fiery dart, to the cut and thrust of every assailant. But, as John Newton remarks, "The grace of God is as necessary to create a right temper in a Christian on the breaking of a china plate as on the death of an only son;" and as no man can tell on any dawning day but what that may be the most trying day in all his life, how wise to pray without ceasing, "uphold me according unto thy word. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips." "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."—*James Hamilton.*

Verse 33.—"*They provoked his spirit,*" etc. Angry he certainly was; and when, reverting to a former miracle, the Most High directed him to take the wonder-staff—his rod of many miracles—and at the head of the congregation "speak to the rock," and it would "give forth its water," in the heat and agitation of his spirit he failed to implement implicitly the Divine command. Instead of speaking to the rock he spoke to the people, and his harangue was no longer in the language calm and dignified of the lawgiver, but had a certain tone of petulance and egotism. "Hear now, ye rebels; must we—must I and Aaron, not must Jehovah—fetch you water out of this rock?" And instead of simply *speaking* to it, he raised the rod and dealt it two successive strokes, just as if the rock were sharing the general perversity, and would no more than the people obey its Creator's bidding. He was angry, and he sinned. He sinned and was severely punished. Water flowed sufficient for the whole camp and the cattle, clear, cool, and eagerly gushing, enough for all the million; but at the same moment that its unmerited bounty burst on you, ye rebels, "a cup of wrath was put into the hand of Moses." * To you, ye murmurers, there came forth living water; to your venerable leaders the cup of God's anger.

"The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Numb. xx. 12.—*James Hamilton.*

Verse 33.—"*He spake unadvisedly with his lips.*" The Lord desires him to address the rock, but Moses speaks to Israel. God wishes him to speak a word to the inanimate stone, and Moses strikes it twice. God still is willing that the people shall remain as his inheritance, but Moses evidently treats them with ill-will and much offensiveness. God wishes to relieve, and give refreshing to the people in their thirst, and Moses is selected to co-operate with him in all such joy; but mark how, on this very day, a deep discord between God's inclination and the mind of Moses shows itself. God is inclined to grant forgiveness,—Moses inclines to punishment: before, the very opposite seemed to prevail. God is forbearing,—Moses, filled with bitterness; God seeks to glorify his grace,—with Moses, self, not God, comes into prominence. "Must we,"—not, "must the Lord,"—but "must we fetch you water out of this rock?" We see now, in this prophet, strong at other times, the first plain indications of decay and weariness. He has grown tired (and truly it should

* Van Oosterzee.

not seem strange, for which of us could have sustained a struggle such as his for half the time ?) of carrying these stubborn children any longer now. This man, so truly great, has never for an instant hitherto forgotten his own dignity in presence of all Israel; but now, he is no longer master of himself.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee.*

Verse 33.—"*He spake unadvisedly.*" A gracious person may be surprised and fall suddenly among thieves that lurk behind the bushes. Nay, very holy men, unless wonderful wary, may be quickly tript up by sudden questions and unexpected emergencies. Who knows the subtilty of sin, and the deceitfulness of his own heart ? Take heed of answering quickly, and send up sudden ejaculations to heaven before you reply to a weighty and doubtful motion.—*Samuel Lee.*

Verses 34—38.—The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan made no more deep and durable impressions upon them than those that fetched them out of Egypt; for by that time they were well warm in Canaan; they corrupted themselves, and forsook God. Observe the steps of their apostasy.

1. They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction (ver. 34). When they had got the good land God had promised them, they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants, whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God, that no man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he.

2. When they spared them, they promised themselves, that for all this, they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them; but the way of sin is downhill; omissions make way for commissions; when they neglect to destroy the heathen, the next news we hear is, they "*were mingled among the heathen,*" made leagues with them, and contracted an intimacy with them, so that they "*learned their works*" (ver. 35). That which is rotten will sooner corrupt that which is sound, than be cured or made sound by it.

3. When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but by degrees they learned that too (ver. 36). "*They served their idols*" in the same manner, and with the same rites that they served them; and they became a snare unto them, that sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

4. When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had least harm in them, they little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry, the sacrificing of their living children to their dead gods: but they came to that at last (verses 37, 38) in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and regaled himself in blood and slaughter. "*They sacrificed their sons and daughters,*" pieces of themselves "*to devils;*" and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror; they "*shed innocent blood,*" the most innocent, for it was infant blood, nay, it was the "*blood of their sons and their daughters.*" See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water, and there is no villainy which they that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly "gives them up to a reprobate mind" (Rom. i. 28).—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 37.—"*Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.*" We need no better argument to discover the nature of these gods than this very service in my text accepted of them: for both by the record of sacred writ, and relation of heathen authors and other writers, we know that nothing was so usually commanded nor gratefully accepted by these heathenish gods, as was the shedding of man's blood, and the sacrificing of men, maids, and children unto them, as appears by the usual practice of men in former times. From the testimonies of Scripture, I give only the example of the king of Moab, mentioned in 2 Kings iii. 27, where it is said, that, being in some straits, "He took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall."

The stories likewise of the heathen are full of like examples. When the oracle of Apollo was asked by the Athenians how they might make amends for their killing of Androgeus, it willed them to send yearly to king Minos seven bodies of each sex to appease the wrath of the god. Now this kind of yearly sacrifice continued still in Athens in the time of Socrates. Thus the Carthaginians, being vanquished

by Agathocles, king of Sicily, and supposing their god to be displeased, to appease him did sacrifice two hundred noble men's children. This custom was ancient even before the Trojan war, for then was Iphigenia sacrificed. Thus we read that the Latins sacrificed the tenth of their children to Jupiter; that men and children were usually sacrificed to Saturn in many places in Candia, Rhodomene, Phœnice, Africa, and those commonly the choice and dearest of their children and most nobly descended. The manner of sacrificing their children to Saturn, Diodorus relates to be this: bringing their children to the statue or image of Saturn, which was of huge greatness, they gave them into his hands, which were made so hollow and winding that the children offered slipped and fell down through into a cave and furnace of fire. These sacrifices continued in use till the birth and death of our Saviour Christ, who came to destroy the work of the devil; for such sacrifices were first forbidden by Augustus Cæsar; after more generally by Tiberius (in whose reign our Saviour suffered) who, as Tertullian writes, so straitly forbade them, that he crucified the priests who offered them; howbeit, even in Tertullian's time, and after in Eusebius' and Lactantius' times, such sacrifices were offered (but closely) to Jupiter Latialis.

Who can now doubt, seeing such exceeding superstitious cruelty, but that the gods commanding such sacrifices were very devils and enemies to mankind? God commands no such thing, but forbids it, and threatens plagues to his people, because they had forsaken him and " built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind " (Jer. xix. 5). Most infallibly then we may conclude that none but Satan, that arch-devil, with his angels, were the commanders of such service, for this agrees right well with his nature, who hath been a murderer from the beginning.—*Robert Jenison in " The Height of Israel's Heathenish Idolatrie, in Sacrificing their Children to the Devill,"* 1621.

Verse 37.—*" Yea, they sacrificed their sons,"* etc. From this we learn that inconsiderate zeal is a flimsy pretext in favour of any act of devotion. For by how much the Jews were under the influence of burning zeal, by so much does the prophet convict them of being guilty of greater wickedness; because their madness carried them away to such a pitch of enthusiasm, that they did not spare even their own offspring. Were good intentions meritorious, as idolaters suppose, then indeed the laying aside of all natural affection in sacrificing their own children was a deed deserving the highest praise. But when men act under the impulse of their own capricious humour, the more they occupy themselves with acts of external worship, the more do they increase their guilt. For what difference was there between Abraham and those persons of whom the prophet makes mention, but that the former, under the influence of faith, was ready to offer up his son, while the latter, carried away by the impulse of intemperate zeal, cast off all natural affection, and imbrued their hands in the blood of their own offspring.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 37.—*" Devils,"* שׁדים, *Shedim.* It appears that children were sacrificed to the deities thus named; that they were considered to be of an angry nature, and inimical to the human race, and thus the object of the homage rendered to them was to avert calamities. The name שׁדים may signify either *lord* or *master*, or anything that is *black*, it being derived from an Arabic verb meaning, *to be black*, or *to be master.—John Jahn, in " Biblical Antiquities."*

Verses 37, 38.—We stand astonished doubtless, at this horrid, barbarous, and unnatural impiety, of offering children by fire to a Moloch: but how little is it considered, that children, brought up in the ways of ignorance, error, vanity, folly, and vice, are more effectually sacrificed to the great adversary of mankind!—*George Horne.*

Verse 39.—*" And went a whoring with their own inventions."*—As harlotry is one of the most abominable of sins that can be committed by a daughter or a wife; so often in the Scriptures turning from God and especially the practice of idolatry is called whoredom and fornication, Ps. lxxiii. 27; Ex. xxxiv. 15, 16.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 40.—*" He abhorred his own inheritance."* Whenever great love sinks into great hate it is termed *abhorrence.—Lorinus.*

Verse 43.—*" They were brought low for their iniquity."* Sin is of a weakening and impoverishing nature; it has weakened all mankind, and taken from them

their moral strength to do good; and has brought them to poverty and want; to be beggars on the dunghill; to a pit wherein is no water; and left them in a hopeless and helpless condition; yea, it brings the people of God often times after conversion into a low estate, when God hides his face because of it, temptations are strong, grace is weak, and they become lukewarm and indifferent to spiritual things.—*John Gill.*

Verse 46.—"*He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.*" This improved feeling towards the Jews through God's influence appears in Dan. i. 9; as Joseph similarly had his captivity improved by God's favour (Gen. xxxix. 21). So Evil-merodach, King of Babylon, treated kindly Jeholachin, king of Judah (2 Kings xxv. 27).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 47.—"*Gather us.*" Bishop Patrick says that, in his opinion, this verse refers to those, who, in the days of Saul, or before, were taken prisoners by the Philistines, or other nations; whom David prays God to gather to their own land again; that they might worship him in that place which he had prepared for the ark of his presence.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 48.—"*Amen.*" Martin Luther said once of the Lord's Prayer that "it was the greatest martyr on earth, because it was used so frequently without thought and feeling, without reverence and faith." This quaint remark, as true as it is sad, applies perhaps with still greater force to the word "*Amen.*"

Familiar to us from our infancy is the sound of this word, which has found a home wherever the natives have learnt to adore Israel's God and Saviour. It has been adopted, and without translation retained, in all languages in which the gospel of Jesus the Son of David is preached. The literal signification, "So be it," is known to all; yet few consider the deep meaning, the great solemnity, and the abundant consolation treasured up in this word, which has formed for centuries the conclusion of the prayers and praises of God's people. A word which is frequently used without due thoughtfulness, and unaccompanied with the feeling which it is intended to call forth, loses its power from this very familiarity, and though constantly on our lips, lies bedridden in the dormitory of our soul. But it is a great word this word "*Amen*"; and Luther has truly said, "As your Amen is, so has been your prayer."

It is a word of venerable history in Israel and in the church. The word dates as far back as the law of Moses. When a solemn oath was pronounced by the priest, the response of the person who was adjured consisted simply of the word "*Amen.*" In like manner the people responded "*Amen*" when, from the heights of Ebal and Gerizim, the blessings and the curses of the divine law were pronounced. Again, at the great festival which David made when the ark of God was brought from Obed-Edom, the Psalm of praise which Asaph and his brethren sang concluded with the words, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen" (1 Chron. xvi. 36). Thus we find in the Psalms, not merely that David concludes his Psalm of praise with the word *Amen*, but he says, "*And let all the people say, Amen.*"—*Adolph Saphir, in "The Lord's Prayer,"* 1870.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Take this verse as the theme of the Psalm, and we shall then see that its exhortation to praise, I. Is directed to a special people: chosen, redeemed, but sinful, borne with, and forgiven. II. Is supported by abundant arguments. Man not to be praised, for he sins. God gives in his goodness, and forgives in his mercy, and is therefore to be thanked. III. Is as applicable now as ever: for our story is a transcript of Israel's.

Verse 2.—I. A challenge. II. A suggestion: at least let us do what we can. III. An ambition: in the ages to come we will make known with the church to angels, and all intelligent beings, the mighty acts of divine grace. IV. A question—shall I be there?

Verse 3.—The blessedness of a godly life.

Verse 4.—I. The language of Humility: "Remember me, O Lord." Let me not escape thy notice amongst the many millions of creatures under thy care. II.

The language of Faith. 1. That God has a people to whom he shows special favour. 2. That he himself has provided salvation for them. III. The language of prayer. 1. For the free gift of salvation. 2. For the common salvation—not wishing to be peculiar, but to be as " Thy people," taking them for all in all, both here and hereafter. Walking in the footsteps of the flock.

" Be this my glory, Lord, to be
Joined to thy saints, and near to thee."

—*G. R.*

Verses 4, 7, 45.—In verse 4, a remembrance desired. In verse 7, a failure of remembrance deplored. In verse 45, a divine remembrance extolled.

Verse 5.—The Persons: " Thy chosen " ; " Thy nation " ; " Thine inheritance." II. The Privileges: " The good of thy chosen " ; " The gladness of thy nation " ; " The glory of thine inheritance." III. The Pleas: " That I may see," etc. They were once as I am: make me what they are now. 2. My salvation is everything to me. " That I may see," etc. " That I may rejoice," etc. They are many, I am but one. " That I may glory," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—In what respects men may be partakers in the sins of their ancestors.

Verses 7, 8.—I. On man's part a darkened understanding, ungrateful forgetfulness, and provocation. II. On God's part: understanding discovering a reason for mercy; memory mindful of the covenant; patience revealing its power.

Verses 7, 8.—I. A special provocation: they murmured at the Red Sea. II. A special deliverance; " Nevertheless," etc. III. A special Design: " For his own sake " ; " That he might make his power known."—*G. R.*

Verse 8.—Salvation by grace a grand display of power.

Verse 8.—" Why are men saved? " See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 115. I. The glorious Saviour, " He." II. The favoured persons, who are they? 1. They were a stupid people: " Our fathers understood not," etc., ver. 7. 2. An ungrateful people: " They remembered not," etc., verses 7, 13, 24, etc. 3. A provoking people. III. The reason of salvation: " He saved them for his name's sake." The name of God is his person, his attributes, and his nature. We might, perhaps, include this also: " My name is in him "—that is, in Christ; he saves us for the sake of Christ, who is the name of God. He saved them that he might manifest his nature: " God is love." He saved them to vindicate his name. IV. The obstacles removed: " Nevertheless."

Verse 9.—" Israel at the Red Sea." See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 72. I. Israel's three difficulties. 1. The Red Sea in front of them. This was not put there by an enemy; but by God himself. The Red Sea represents some great and trying providence placed in the path of every new-born child of God, to try his faith, and the sincerity of his trust in God. 2. The Egyptians behind them,—the representatives of the sins which we thought were dead and gone. 3. The third difficulty was faint hearts within them. II. Israel's three helps. 1. Providence. 2. Their knowledge that they were the covenant people of God. 3. The man,—Moses. So the believer's hope and help is in the God-man Christ Jesus. III. God's grand design in it. To give them a thorough baptism into his service, consecrating them for ever to himself (1 Cor. x. 1, 2).

Verse 9 (*second clause*).—Dangerous and difficult paths rendered safe and easy by God's leadership.

Verse 11 (*second clause*).—Song over sins forgiven.

Verses 12—14.—The faith of nature, based on sight, causes transient joy, soon evaporates, dies in utter unbelief, and conducts to greater sin.

Verses 13—15.—I. Mercies are sooner forgotten than trials: " They soon forgat," etc. We write our afflictions on marble, our mercies upon sand. II. We should wait *for* God, as well as *upon* God: " They waited not," etc. III. Immoderate desire for what we have not of worldly goods, tempts God to deprive us of what we have: ver. 14. IV. Prayer may be answered for evil as well as for good: " He gave them their request," then smote them with a plague. V. Carnal indulgence is inimical to spiritual-mindedness: ver. 15. Better have a lean body and healthy soul, than a healthy body and leanness of soul. " Poor in this world, rich in faith." There are few of whom it can be said, " I wish thou mayest prosper and be in health," etc. (3 John 2).—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—The wickedness of inordinate desires. I. They are out of place—

" in the wilderness." II. They are assaults upon God—" and tempted God." III. They are despisers of former mercies—see preceding verses. IV. They involve solemn danger—see following verse.

Verse 16.—The sin of envy. Its base nature, its cruel actions, its unscrupulous ingratitude, its daring assaults, its abomination before God.

Verse 19.—The sinner as an inventor.

Verses 19—22.—I. The Sin remembered. 1. Idolatry: not forgetting God merely, or disowning him, but setting up an idol in his place. 2. Idolatry of the worst kind: changing the glory of God into the similitude of an ox, etc. 3. The idolatry of Egypt under which they had suffered, and from which they had been delivered. 4. Idolatry after many wonderful interpositions of the true God in their behalf. II. The Remembrance of Sin. 1. For Humiliation. It was the sin of their fathers. 2. For self-condemnation. " We have sinned with our fathers." It was our nature in them, and it is their nature in us that has committed this great sin.

Verse 23.—Moses, the intercessor, a type of our Lord. Carefully study his pleading as recorded in Exod. xxxii.

Verse 23.—Mediation required: " He said that he would destroy them," etc. II. Mediation offered: " Moses stood before him in the breach." III. Mediation accepted: " To turn away his wrath," etc. Exod. xxxii.—*G. R.*

Verses 24—26.—Murmuring. I. Arises from despising our mercies. II. Is fostered by unbelief. III. Is indulged in all sorts of places. IV. Makes men deaf to the Lord's voice. V. Provokes great judgments from the Lord.

Verses 24—27.—I. The Rest promised: " The pleasant land." II. The Refusal of the Rest: " They despised," etc. III. The Reason of the Refusal: unbelief. " They could not enter in because of unbelief."—*G. R.*

Verses 30, 31.—The effects of one decisive act for God; immediate, personal, and for posterity.

Verses 32, 33.—I. The afflictions of God's people are for the trial of their faith. II. The trial of their faith is to bring them from dependence upon circumstances to depend upon God himself. III. The forbearance of God with his people is greater than that of the best of men.—*G. R.*

Verse 33.—I. What it is so to speak unadvisedly. II. What is the great cause of it—" they provoked his spirit." III. What the results may be.

Verses 34—42.—I. What Israel did not do. They began well, but did not complete the conquest of their foes: ver. 34. II. What they did do: ver. 35—39. 1. They became friendly with them. 2. They adopted their habits: " learned their works." 3. They embraced their religion: " served their idols." 4. They imitated their cruelties; ver. 37, 38. 5. They did worse than the heathen (ver. 39), they added wicked inventions of their own. III. What God did to them: ver. 40—42. He gave them into the hands of their enemies, and suffered them to be severely oppressed by them. We must either conquer all our foes or be conquered by them. Bring your shield from the battle or be brought home upon it.—*G. R.*

Verse 37.—Moloch-worship in modern times. Children sacrificed to fashion, wealth, and loveless marriage among the higher classes. Bad example, drinking customs, etc., among the poorer sort. A needful subject.

Verses 44, 45.—Sin in God's people. I. Is very provoking to God. II. Ensures chastisement. III. Is to be sincerely mourned—" their cry." IV. Will be graciously forgiven, and its effect removed. So the covenant promises.

Verse 47.—I. An earnest Prayer: " Save us, O Lord," etc. II. A Believing Prayer: " O Lord *our* God." III. A humble Prayer: " Gather us from among the heathen." IV. A sincere Prayer: " To give thanks unto thy holy name "; to own thy justice and holiness in all thy ways. V. A confident Prayer: " To triumph in thy praise." None but bruised spices give forth such odours.—*G. R.*

Verse 48.—I. God is to be praised as the " God of Israel." 1. Of typical Israel. 2. Of the true Israel. II. He is to be praised as the God of Israel under all circumstances: for his judgments as well as for his mercies. III. At all times: " From everlasting to everlasting." IV. By all people. " Let all the people say, Amen." V. As the beginning and end of every song: " Praise ye the Lord."—*G. R.*

Verse 48.—" *Let all the people say, Amen.*"—The exhortation to universal praise. All men are indebted to the Lord, all have sinned, all hear the gospel, all his people are saved. Unanimity in praise is pleasant, and promotes unity in other matters.

HERE ENDETH THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE PSALMS.

PSALM CVII.

SUBJECT, ETC.—*This is a choice song for the redeemed of the Lord (verse* 2). *Although it celebrates providential deliverances, and therefore may be sung by any man whose life has been preserved in time of danger; yet, under cover of this, it mainly magnifies the Lord for spiritual blessings, of which temporal favours are but types and shadows. The theme is* thanksgiving, and the motives for it. *The construction of the Psalm is highly poetical, and merely as a composition it would be hard to find its compeer among human productions. The bards of the Bible hold no second place among the sons of song.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalmist commences by dedicating his poem to the redeemed who have been gathered from captivity,* 1—3; *he then likens their history to that of travellers lost in the desert,* 4—9; *to that of prisoners in iron bondage,* 10—16; *to that of sick men,* 17—22; *and to that of mariners tossed with tempest,* 23—32. *In the closing verses the judgment of God on the rebellious, and the mercies of God to his own afflicted people are made the burden of the song,* 33—42; *and then the Psalm closes with a sort of summing up, in verse* 43, *which declares that those who study the works and ways of the Lord shall be sure to see and praise his goodness.*

EXPOSITION.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so,* whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;

3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

1. "*O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good.*" It is all we can give him, and the least we can give; therefore let us diligently render to him our thanksgiving. The Psalmist is in earnest in the exhortation, hence the use of the interjection "O," to intensify his words: let us be at all times thoroughly fervent in the praises of the Lord, both with our lips and with our lives, by thanksgiving and thanks-living. JEHOVAH, for that is the name here used, is not to be worshipped with groans and cries, but with thanks, for he is good; and these thanks should be heartily rendered, for his is no common goodness: he is good by nature, and essence, and proven to be good in all the acts of his eternity. Compared with him there is none good, no, not one: but he is essentially, perpetually, superlatively, infinitely good. We are the perpetual partakers of his goodness, and therefore ought above all his creatures to magnify his name. Our praise should be increased by the fact that the divine goodness is not a transient thing, but in the attribute of mercy abides for ever the same, "*for his mercy endureth for ever.*" The word *endureth* has been properly supplied by the translators, but yet it somewhat restricts the sense, which will be better seen if we read it, "*for his mercy for ever.*" That mercy had no beginning, and shall never know an end. Our sin required that goodness should display itself to us in the form of mercy, and it has done so, and will do so evermore; let us not be slack in praising the goodness which thus adapts itself to our fallen nature.

2. "*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.*" Whatever others may think or say, the redeemed have overwhelming reasons for declaring the goodness of the Lord. Theirs is a peculiar redemption, and for it they ought to render peculiar praise. The Redeemer is so glorious, the ransom price so immense, and the redemption so complete, that they are under sevenfold obligations to give thanks unto the Lord, and to exhort others to do so. Let them not only feel so but *say* so; let them both sing and bid their fellows sing. "*Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.*" Snatched by superior power away from fierce oppressions, they are bound above all men to adore the Lord, their Liberator. Theirs is a divine redemption, "he hath redeemed" them, and no one else has done it. His own unaided arm has wrought

out their deliverance. Should not emancipated slaves be grateful to the hand which set them free? What gratitude can suffice for a deliverance from the power of sin, death, and hell? In heaven itself there is no sweeter hymn than that whose burden is, "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood."

3. "*And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.*" Gathering follows upon redeeming. The captives of old were restored to their own land from every quarter of the earth, and even from beyond the sea; for the word translated *south* is really *the sea*. No matter what divides, the Lord will gather his own into one body, and first on earth by "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism," and then in heaven by one common bliss they shall be known to be the one people of the One God. What a glorious Shepherd must he be who thus collects the blood-bought flock from the remotest regions, guides them through countless perils, and at last makes them to lie down in the green pastures of Paradise. Some have wandered one way and some another, they have all left Immanuel's land and strayed as far as they could, and great are the grace and power by which they are all collected into one flock by the Lord Jesus. With one heart and voice let the redeemed praise the Lord who gathers them into one.

4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he delivered them out of their distresses.

7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

8 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

4. "*They wandered in the wilderness.*" They *wandered*, for the track was lost, no vestige of a road remained; worse still, they wandered *in a wilderness*, where all around was burning sand. They were lost in the worst possible place, even as the sinner is who is lost in sin; they wandered up and down in vain searches and researches as a sinner does when he is awakened and sees his lost estate; but it ended in nothing, for they still continued in the wilderness, though they had hoped to escape from it. "*In a solitary way.*" No dwelling of man was near, and no other company of travellers passed within hail. Solitude is a great intensifier of misery. The loneliness of a desert has a most depressing influence upon the man who is lost in the boundless waste. The traveller's way in the wilderness is a *waste* way, and when he leaves even that poor, barren trail, to get utterly beyond the path of man, he is in a wretched plight indeed. A soul without sympathy is on the borders of hell: a solitary way is the way of despair. "*They found no city to dwell in.*" How could they? There was none. Israel in the wilderness abode under canvas, and enjoyed none of the comforts of settled life; wanderers in the Sahara find no town or village. Men when under distress of soul find nothing to rest upon, no comfort and no peace; their efforts after salvation are many, weary, and disappointing, and the dread solitude of their hearts fills them with dire distress.

5. "*Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.*" The spirits sink when the bodily frame becomes exhausted by long privations. Who can keep his courage up when he is ready to fall to the ground at every step through utter exhaustion? The supply of food is all eaten, the water is spent in the bottles, and there are neither fields nor streams in the desert, the heart therefore sinks in dire despair. Such is the condition of an awakened conscience before it knows the Lord Jesus; it is full of unsatisfied cravings, painful needs, and heavy fears. It is utterly spent and without strength, and there is nothing in the whole creation which can minister to its refreshment.

6. "*Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble.*" Not till they were in extremities did they pray, but the mercy is that they prayed *then*, and prayed in the right manner, with a *cry*, and to the right person, even *to the Lord*. Nothing else

remained for them to do; they could not help themselves, or find help in others, and therefore they cried to God. Supplications which are forced out of us by stern necessity are none the less acceptable with God; but, indeed, they have all the more prevalence, since they are evidently sincere, and make a powerful appeal to the divine pity. Some men will never pray till they are half-starved, and for their best interests it is far better for them to be empty and faint than to be full and stout-hearted. If hunger brings us to our knees it is more useful to us than feasting; if thirst drives us to the fountain it is better than the deepest draughts of worldly joy; and if fainting leads to crying it is better than the strength of the mighty. "*And he delivered them out of their distresses.*" Deliverance follows prayer most surely. The cry must have been very feeble, for they were faint, and their faith was as weak as their cry; but yet they were heard, and heard at once. A little delay would have been their death; but there was none, for the Lord was ready to save them. The Lord delights to come in when no one else can be of the slightest avail. The case was hopeless till Jehovah interposed, and then all was changed immediately; the people were shut up, straitened, and almost pressed to death, but enlargement came to them at once when they began to remember their God, and look to him in prayer. Those deserve to die of hunger who will not so much as ask for bread, and he who being lost in a desert will not beg the aid of a guide cannot be pitied even if he perish in the wilds and feed the vultures with his flesh.

7. "*And he led them forth by the right way.*" There are many wrong ways, but only one right one, and into this none can lead us but God himself. When the Lord is leader the way is sure to be right; we never need question that. Forth from the pathless mazes of the desert he conducted the lost ones; he found the way, made the way, and enabled them to walk along it, faint and hungry as they were. "*That they might go to a city of habitation.*" The end was worthy of the way: he did not lead them from one desert to another, but he gave the wanderers an abode, the weary ones a place of rest. *They* found no city to dwell in, but *he* found one readily enough. What *we* can do and what *God* can do are two very different things. What a difference it made to them to leave their solitude for a city, their trackless path for well-frequented streets, and their faintness of heart for the refreshment of a home! Far greater are the changes which divine love works in the condition of sinners when God answers their prayers and brings them to Jesus. Shall not the Lord be magnified for such special mercies? Can we who have enjoyed them sit down in ungrateful silence?

8. "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness.*" Men are not mentioned here in the original, but the word is fitly supplied by the translators; the Psalmist would have all things in existence magnify Jehovah's name. Surely *men* will do this without being exhorted to it when the deliverance is fresh in their memories. They must be horrible ingrates who will not honour such a deliverer for o happy a rescue from the most cruel death. It is well that the redeemed should be stirred up to bless the Lord again and again, for preserved life deserves life-long thankfulness. Even those who have not encountered the like peril, and obtained the like deliverance, should bless the Lord in sympathy with their fellows, sharing their joy. "*And for his wonderful works to the children of men.*" These favours are bestowed upon *our* race, upon children of the family to which we belong, and therefore we ought to join in the praise. The children of men are so insignificant, so feeble, and so undeserving, that it is a great wonder that the Lord should do anything for them; but he is not content with doing little works, he puts forth his wisdom, power, and love to perform marvels on the behalf of those who seek him. In the life of each one of the redeemed there is a world of wonders, and therefore from each there should resound a world of praises. As to the marvels of grace which the Lord has wrought for his church as a whole there is no estimating them, they are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are high above the earth. When shall the day dawn when the favoured race of man shall be as devoted to the praise of God as they are distinguished by the favour of God?

9. "*For he satisfieth the longing soul.*" This is the summary of the lost traveller's experience. He who in a natural sense has been rescued from perishing in a howling wilderness ought to bless the Lord who brings him again to eat bread among men. The spiritual sense is, however, the more rich in instruction. The Lord sets us longing and then completely satisfies us. That longing leads us into solitude, separation, thirst, faintness, and self-despair, and all these conduct us to prayer, faith, divine guidance, satisfying of the soul's thirst, and rest: the good hand of the Lord

is to be seen in the whole process and in the divine result. "*And filleth the hungry soul with goodness.*" As for thirst he gives satisfaction, so for hunger he supplies filling. In both cases the need is more than met, there is an abundance in the supply which is well worthy of notice: the Lord does nothing in a niggardly fashion; satisfying and filling are his peculiar modes of treating his guests; none who come under the Lord's providing ever complain of short commons. Nor does he fill the hungry with common fare, but with *goodness* itself. It is not so much good, as the essence of goodness which he bestows on needy suppliants. Shall man be thus royally supplied and return no praise for the largesses of love? It must not be so. We will even now give thanks with all the redeemed church, and pray for the time when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory.

10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron;

11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High:

12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was* none to help.

13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses.

14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.

15 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

10. "*Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.*" The cell is dark of itself, and the fear of execution casts a still denser gloom over the prison. Such is the cruelty of man to man that tens of thousands have been made to linger in places only fit to be tombs; unhealthy, suffocating, filthy sepulchres, where they have sickened and died of broken hearts. Meanwhile the dread of sudden death has been the most hideous part of the punishment; the prisoners have felt as if the chill shade of death himself froze them to the very marrow. The state of a soul under conviction of sin is forcibly symbolized by such a condition; persons in that state cannot see the promises which would yield them comfort, they sit still in the inactivity of despair, they fear the approach of judgment, and are thereby as much distressed as if they were at death's door. "*Being bound in affliction and iron.*" Many prisoners have been thus doubly fettered in heart and hand; or the text may mean that affliction becomes as an iron band to them, or that the iron chains caused them great affliction. None know these things but those who have felt them; we should prize our liberty more if we knew by actual experience what manacles and fetters mean. In a spiritual sense affliction frequently attends conviction of sin, and then the double grief causes a double bondage. In such cases the iron enters into the soul, the poor captives cannot stir because of their bonds, cannot rise to hope because of their grief, and have no power because of their despair. Misery is the companion of all those who are shut up and cannot come forth. O ye who are made free by Christ Jesus, remember those who are in bonds.

11. "*Because they rebelled against the words of God.*" This was the general cause of bondage among the ancient people of God, they were given over to their adversaries because they were not loyal to the Lord. God's words are not to be trifled with, and those who venture on such rebellion will bring themselves into bondage. "*And contemned the counsel of the Most High.*" They thought that they knew better than the Judge of all the earth, and therefore they left his ways and walked in their own. When men do not follow the divine counsel they give the most practical proof of their contempt for it. Those who will not be bound by God's law will, ere long, be bound by the fetters of judgment. There is too much contemning of the divine counsel, even among Christians, and hence so few of them know the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free.

12. "*Therefore he brought down their heart with labour.*" In eastern prisons men are frequently made to labour like beasts of the field. As they have no liberty,

so they have no rest. This soon subdues the stoutest heart, and makes the proud boaster sing another tune. Trouble and hard toil are enough to tame a lion. God has methods of abating the loftiness of rebellious looks: the cell and the mill make even giants tremble. "*They fell down, and there was none to help.*" Stumbling on in the dark beneath their weary task, they at last fell prone upon the ground, but no one came to pity them or to lift them up. Their fall might be fatal for aught that any man cared about them; their misery was unseen, or, if observed, no one could interfere between them and their tyrant masters. In such a wretched plight the rebellious Israelite became more lowly in mind, and thought more tenderly of his God and of his offences against him. When a soul finds all its efforts at self-salvation prove abortive, and feels that it is now utterly without strength, then the Lord is at work hiding pride from man and preparing the afflicted one to receive his mercy. The spiritual case which is here figuratively described is desperate, and therefore affords the finer field for the divine interposition; some of us remember well how brightly mercy shone in our prison, and what music the fetters made when they fell off from our hands. Nothing but the Lord's love could have delivered us; without it we must have utterly perished.

13. "*Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble.*" Not a prayer till then. While there was any to help below they would not look above. No cries till their hearts were brought down and their hopes were all dead—*then* they cried, but not before. So many a man offers what he calls prayer when he is in good ease and thinks well of himself, but in very deed the only real cry to God is that which is forced out of him by a sense of utter helplessness and misery. We pray best when we are fallen on our faces in painful helplessness. "*And he saved them out of their distresses.*" Speedily and willingly he sent relief. They were long before they cried, but he was not long before he saved. They had applied everywhere else before they came to him, but when they did address themselves to him, they were welcome at once. He who saved men in the open wilderness can also save in the close prison: bolts and bars cannot shut him out, nor long shut in his redeemed ones.

14. "*He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.*" The Lord in providence fetches out prisoners from their cells and bids them breathe the sweet fresh air again, and then he takes off their fetters and gives liberty to their aching limbs. So also he frees men from care and trouble, and especially from the misery and slavery of sin. This he does with his own hand, for in the experience of all the saints it is certified that there is no jail-delivery unless by the Judge himself. "*And brake their bands in sunder.*" Set them free by force, so liberating them that they could not be chained again, for he had broken the manacles to pieces. The Lord's deliverances are of the most complete and triumphant kind, he neither leaves the soul in darkness nor in bonds, nor does he permit the powers of evil again to enthral the liberated captive. What he does is done for ever. Glory be to his name.

15. "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*" The sight of such goodness makes a right-minded man long to see the Lord duly honoured for his amazing mercy. When dungeon doors fly open, and chains are snapped, who can refuse to adore the glorious goodness of the Lord? It makes the heart sick to think of such gracious mercies remaining unsung: we cannot but plead with men to remember their obligations and extol the Lord their God.

16. "*For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.*" This verse belongs to that which precedes it, and sums up the mercy experienced by captives. The Lord breaks the strongest gates and bars when the time comes to set free his prisoners: and spiritually the Lord Jesus has broken the most powerful of spiritual bonds and made us free indeed. Brass and iron are as tow before the flame of Jesus' love. The gates of hell shall not prevail against us, neither shall the bars of the grave detain us. Those of us who have experienced his redeeming power must and will praise the Lord for the wonders of his grace displayed on our behalf.

17 Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.

19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saveth them out of their distresses.

20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions.

21 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

17. "*Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.*" Many sicknesses are the direct result of foolish acts. Thoughtless and lustful men by drunkenness, gluttony, and the indulgence of their passions fill their bodies with diseases of the worst kind. Sin is at the bottom of all sorrow, but some sorrows are the immediate results of wickedness: men by a course of transgression afflict themselves and are fools for their pains. Worse still, even when they are in affliction they are fools still; and if they were brayed in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet would not their folly depart from them. From one transgression they go on to many iniquities, and while under the rod they add sin to sin. Alas, even the Lord's own people sometimes play the fool in this sad manner.

18. "*Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.*" Appetite departs from men when they are sick: the best of food is nauseous to them, their stomach turns against it. "*And they draw near unto the gates of death.*" From want of food, and from the destructive power of their malady, they slide gradually down till they lie at the door of the grave; neither does the skill of the physician suffice to stay their downward progress. As they cannot eat there is no support given to the system, and as the disease rages their little strength is spent in pain and misery. Thus it is with souls afflicted with a sense of sin, they cannot find comfort in the choicest promises, but turn away with loathing even from the gospel, so that they gradually decay into the grave of despair. The mercy is that though near the gates of death they are not yet inside the sepulchre.

19. "*Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble.*" They join the praying legion at last. Saul also is among the prophets. The fool lays aside his motley in prospect of the shroud, and betakes himself to his knees. What a cure for the soul sickness of body is often made to be by the Lord's grace! "*And he saveth them out of their distresses.*" Prayer is as effectual on a sick bed as in the wilderness or in prison; it may be tried in all places and circumstance with certain result. We may pray about our bodily pains and weaknesses, and we may look for answers too. When we have no appetite for meat we may have an appetite for prayer. He who cannot feed on the word of God may yet turn to God himself and find mercy.

20. "*He sent his word and healed them.*" Man is not healed by medicine alone, but by the word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God is man restored from going down to the grave. A word will do it, a word has done it thousands of times. "*And delivered them from their destructions.*" They escape though dangers had surrounded them, dangers many and deadly. The word of the Lord has a great delivering power; he has but to speak and the armies of death flee in an instant. Sin-sick souls should remember the power of *the Word*, and be much in hearing it and meditating upon it.

Spiritually considered, these verses describe a sin-sick soul: foolish but yet aroused to a sense of guilt, it refuses comfort from any and every quarter, and a lethargy of despair utterly paralyses it. To its own apprehension nothing remains but utter destruction in many forms: the gates of death stand open before it, and it is, in its own apprehension, hurried in that direction. Then is the soul driven to cry in the bitterness of its grief unto the Lord, and Christ, the eternal Word, comes with healing power in the direst extremity, saving to the uttermost.

21. "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*" It is marvellous that men can be restored from sickness and yet refuse to bless the Lord. It would seem impossible that they should forget such great mercy, for we should expect to see both themselves and the friends to whom they are restored uniting in a lifelong act of thanksgiving. Yet when ten are healed it is seldom that more than one returns to give glory to God. Alas, where are the nine? When a spiritual cure is wrought by the great Physician, praise is one of the surest signs of renewed health. A mind rescued from the disease of sin and the weary pains of conviction, must and will adore Jehovah Rophi, the healing God: yet it were well if there were a thousand times as much even of this.

22. "*And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving.*" In such a case let there be gifts and oblations as well as words. Let the good Physician have his fee of gratitude. Let life become a sacrifice to him who has prolonged it, let the deed of self-denying gratitude be repeated again and again: there must be many cheerful sacrifices to celebrate the marvellous boon. "*And declare his works with rejoicing.*" Such things are worth telling, for the personal declaration honours God, relieves ourselves, comforts others, and puts all men in possession of facts concerning the divine goodness which they will not be able to ignore.

23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;
24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.
25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.
26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.
27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.
28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.
29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.
30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.
31 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

23. "*They that go down to the sea in ships.*" Navigation was so little practised among the Israelites that mariners were invested with a high degree of mystery, and their craft was looked upon as one of singular daring and peril. Tales of the sea thrilled all hearts with awe, and he who had been to Ophir or to Tarshish and had returned alive was looked upon as a man of renown, an ancient mariner to be listened to with reverent attention. Voyages were looked on as descending to an abyss, "going down to the sea in ships;" whereas now our bolder and more accustomed sailors talk of the "high seas." "*That do business in great waters.*" If they had not had business to do, they would never have ventured on the ocean, for we never read in the Scriptures of any man taking his pleasure on the sea: so averse was the Israelitish mind to seafaring, that we do not hear of even Solomon himself keeping a pleasure boat. The Mediterranean was "the great sea" to David and his countrymen, and they viewed those who had business upon it with no small degree of admiration.

24. "*These see the works of the Lord.*" Beyond the dwellers on the land they see the Lord's greatest works, or at least such as stayers at home judge to be so when they hear the report thereof. Instead of the ocean proving to be a watery wilderness, it is full of God's creatures, and if we were to attempt to escape from his presence by flying to the uttermost parts of it, we should only rush into Jehovah's arms, and find ourselves in the very centre of his workshop. "*And his wonders in the deep.*" They see wonders in it and on it. It is in itself a wonder and it swarms with wonders. Seamen, because they have fewer objects around them, are more observant of those they have than landsmen are, and hence they are said to *see* the wonders in the deep. At the same time, the ocean really does contain many of the more striking of God's creatures, and it is the scene of many of the more tremendous of the physical phenomena by which the power and majesty of the Lord are revealed among men. The chief wonders alluded to by the Psalmist are a sudden storm and the calm which follows it.

All believers have not the same deep experience; but for wise ends, that they may do business for him, the Lord sends some of his saints to the sea of soul-trouble, and there they see, as others do not, the wonders of divine grace. Sailing over the deeps of inward depravity, the waste waters of poverty, the billows of persecu-

tion, and the rough waves of temptation, they need God above all others, and they find him.

25. "*For he commandeth:*" his word is enough for anything, he has but to will it and a tempest rages. "*And raiseth the stormy wind.*" It seemed to lie asleep before, but it knows its Master's bidding, and is up at once in all its fury. "*Which lifteth up the waves thereof.*" The glassy surface of the sea is broken, and myriads of white heads appear and rage and toss themselves to and fro as the wind blows upon them. Whereas they were lying down in quiet before, the waves rise in their might and leap towards the sky as soon as the howling of the wind awakens them.

Thus it needs but a word from God and the soul is in troubled waters, tossed to and fro with a thousand afflictions. Doubts, fears, terrors, anxieties lift their heads like so many angry waves, when once the Lord allows the storm-winds to beat upon us.

26. "*They mount up to the heaven.*" Borne aloft on the crest of the wave, the sailors and their vessels appear to climb the skies, but it is only for a moment, for very soon in the trough of the sea "*they go down again to the depths.*" As if their vessel were but a sea bird, the mariners are tossed "up and down, up and down, from the base of the wave to the billows' crown." "*Their soul is melted because of trouble.*" Weary, wet, dispirited, hopeless of escape, their heart is turned to water, and they seem to have no manhood left.

Those who have been on the spiritual deep in one of the great storms which occasionally agitate the soul know what this verse means. In these spiritual cyclones presumption alternates with despair, indifference with agony! No heart is left for anything, courage is gone, hope is almost dead. Such an experience is as real as the tossing of a literal tempest and far more painful. Some of us have weathered many such an internal hurricane, and have indeed seen the Lord's wondrous works.

27. "*They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man.*" The violent motion of the vessel prevents their keeping their legs, and their fears drive them out of all power to use their brains, and therefore they look like intoxicated men. "*And are at their wit's end.*" What more can they do? They have used every expedient known to navigation, but the ship is so strained and beaten about that they know not how to keep her afloat.

Here too the spiritual mariner's log agrees with that of the sailor on the sea. We have staggered frightfully! We could stand to nothing and hold by nothing. We knew not what to do, and could have done nothing if we had known it. We were as men distracted, and felt as if destruction itself would be better than our horrible state of suspense. As for wit and wisdom, they were clean washed out of us; we felt ourselves to be at a nonplus altogether.

28. "*Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble.*" Though at their wit's end, they had wit enough to pray; their heart was melted, and it ran out in cries for help. This was well and ended well, for it is written, "*And he brought them out of their distresses.*" Prayer is good in a storm. We may pray staggering and reeling, and pray when we are at our wit's end. God will hear us amid the thunder and answer us out of the storm. He brought their distresses upon the mariners, and therefore they did well to turn to him for the removal of them; nor did they look in vain.

29. "*He maketh the storm a calm.*" He reveals his power in the sudden and marvellous transformations which occur at his bidding. He commanded the storm and now he ordains a calm: God is in all natural phenomena, and we do well to recognise his working. "*So that the waves thereof are still.*" They bow in silence at his feet. Where huge billows leaped aloft there is scarce a ripple to be seen. When God makes peace it is peace indeed, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. He can in an instant change the condition of a man's mind, so that it shall seem an absolute miracle to him that he has passed so suddenly from hurricane to calm. O that the Lord would thus work in the reader, should his heart be storm-beaten with outward troubles or inward fears. Lord, say the word and peace will come at once.

30. "*Then are they glad because they be quiet.*" No one can appreciate this verse unless he has been in a storm at sea. No music can be sweeter than the rattling of the chain as the shipmen let down the anchor; and no place seems more desirable than the little cove, or the wide bay, in which the ship rests in peace. "*So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.*" The rougher the voyage the more the mariners long

for port, and heaven becomes more and more "a desired haven," as our trials multiply. By storms and by favourable breezes, through tempest and fair weather, the great Pilot and Ruler of the sea brings mariners to port, and his people to heaven. He must have the glory of the successful voyage of time, and when we are moored in the river of life above we shall take care that his praises are not forgotten. We should long ago have been wrecked if it had not been for his preserving hand, and our only hope of outliving the storms of the future is based upon his wisdom, faithfulness and power. Our heavenly haven shall ring with shouts of grateful joy when once we reach its blessed shore.

31. "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*" Let the sea sound forth Jehovah's praises because of his delivering grace. As the sailor touches the shore let him lift the solemn hymn to heaven, and let others who see him rescued from the jaws of death unite in his thanksgiving.

32. "*Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people.*" Thanks for such mercies should be given in public in the place where men congregate for worship. "*And praise him in the assembly of the elders.*" The praise should be presented with great solemnity in the presence of men of years, experience, and influence. High and weighty service should be rendered for great and distinguished favours, and therefore let the sacrifice be presented with due decorum and with grave seriousness. Often when men hear of a narrow escape from shipwreck they pass over the matter with a careless remark about good luck, but it should never be thus jested with.

When a heart has been in great spiritual storms and has at last found peace, there will follow as a duty and a privilege the acknowledgment of the Lord's mercy before his people, and it is well that this should be done in the presence of those who hold office in the church, and who from their riper years are better able to appreciate the testimony.

33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;

34 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.

36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

39 Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

40 He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is* no way.

41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock.

42 The righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

33. "*He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground.*" When the Lord deals with rebellious men he can soon deprive them of those blessings of which they feel most assured: their rivers and perennial springs they look upon as certain never to be taken from them, but the Lord at a word can deprive them even of these. In hot climates after long droughts streams of water utterly fail, and even springs cease to flow, and this also has happened in other parts of the world when great convulsions of the earth's surface have occurred. In providence this physical catastrophe finds its counterpart when business ceases to yield profit and sources of wealth are made to fail; as also when health and strength are taken

away, when friendly aids are withdrawn, and comfortable associations are broken up. So, too, in soul matters, the most prosperous ministries may become dry, the most delightful meditations cease to benefit us, and the most fruitful religious exercises grow void of the refreshment of grace which they formerly yielded. Since

> " 'Tis God who lifts our comforts high,
> Or sinks them in the grave,"

it behoves us to walk before him with reverential gratitude, and so to live that it may not become imperative upon him to afflict us.

34. " *A fruitful land into barrenness.*" This has been done in many instances, and notably in the case of the Psalmist's own country, which was once the glory of all lands and is now almost a desert. " *For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.*" Sin is at the bottom of sorrow. It first made the ground sterile in father Adam's day, and it continues to have a blighting effect upon all that it touches. If we have not the salt of holiness we shall soon receive the salt of barrenness, for the text in the Hebrew is—" a fruitful land into saltness." If we will not yield the Lord a harvest of obedience he may forbid the soil to yield us a harvest of bread, and what then ? If we turn good into evil can we wonder if the Lord pays us in kind, and returns our baseness into our own bosoms ? Many a barren church owes its present sad estate to its inconsistent behaviour, and many a barren Christian has come into this mournful condition by a careless, unsanctified walk before the Lord. Let not saints who are now useful run the risk of enduring the loss of their mercies, but let them be watchful that all things may go well with them.

35. " *He turneth the wilderness into a standing water.*" With another turn of his hand he more than restores that which in judgment he took away. He does his work of mercy on a royal scale, for a deep lake is seen where before there was only a sandy waste. It is not by natural laws, working by some innate force, that this wonder is wrought, but by himself—He turneth. " *And dry ground into water-springs.*" Continuance, abundance, and perpetual freshness are all implied in water-springs, and these are created where all was dry. This wonder of mercy is the precise reversal of the deed of judgment, and wrought by the selfsame hand. Even thus in the church, and in each individual saint, the mercy of the Lord soon works wonderful changes where restoring and renewing grace begin their benign work. O that we might see this verse fulfilled in all around us, and within our own hearts : then would these words serve us for an exclamation of grateful astonishment, and a song of well deserved praise.

36. " *And there he maketh the hungry to dwell,*" where none could dwell before. They will appreciate the change and prize his grace ; as the barrenness of the land caused their hunger so will its fertility banish it for ever, and they will settle down a happy and thankful people to bless God for every handful of corn which the land yields to them. None are so ready to return a revenue of praise to God for great mercies as those who have known the lack of them. Hungry souls make sweet music when the Lord fills them with his gracious gifts. Are we hungry ? Or are we satisfied with the husks of this poor, swinish world ? " *That they may prepare a city for habitation.*" When the earth is watered and men cultivate it, cities spring up and teem with inhabitants ; when grace abounds where sin formerly reigned, hearts find peace and dwell in God's love as in a strong city. The church is built up where once all was a waste when the Lord causes the broad rivers and streams of gospel grace to flow forth.

37. " *And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.*" Men work when God works. His blessing encourages the sower, cheers the planter, and rewards the labourer. Not only necessaries but luxuries are enjoyed, wine as well as corn, when the heavens are caused to yield the needed rain to fill the watercourses. Divine visitations bring great spiritual riches, foster varied works of faith and labours of love, and cause every good fruit to abound to our comfort and to God's praise. When God sends the blessing it does not supersede, but encourages and develops human exertion. Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase.

38. " *He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly ; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.*" God's blessing is everything. It not only makes men happy, but it makes men themselves, by causing men to be multiplied upon the earth. When the Lord made the first pair he blessed them and said, " be fruitful

and multiply," and here he restores the primeval blessing. Observe that beasts as well as men fare well when God favours his people: they share with men in the goodness or severity of divine providence. Plagues and pests are warded off from the flock and the herd when the Lord means well towards a people; but when chastisement is intended, the flocks and herds rot from off the face of the earth. O that nations in the day of their prosperity would but own the gracious hand of God, for it is to his blessing that they owe their all.

39. "*Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.*" As they change in character, so do their circumstances alter. Under the old dispensation, this was very clearly to be observed; Israel's ups and downs were the direct consequences of her sins and repentances. Trials are of various kinds; here we have three words for affliction, and there are numbers more: God has many rods and we have many smarts, and all because we have many sins. Nations and churches soon diminish in number when they are diminished in grace. If we are low in love to God, it is small wonder that he brings us low in other respects. God can reverse the order of our prosperity, and give us a *diminuendo* where we had a *crescendo;* therefore let us walk before him with great tenderness of spirit, conscious of our dependence upon his smile.

40, 41. In these two verses we see how the Lord at will turns the wheel of providence. Paying no respect to man's imaginary grandeur, he puts princes down and makes them wander in banishment as they had made their captives wander when they drove them from land to land: at the same time, having ever a tender regard for the poor and needy, the Lord delivers the distressed and sets them in a position of comfort and happiness. This is to be seen upon the roll of history again and again, and in spiritual experience we remark its counterpart: the selfsufficient are made to despise themselves and search in vain for help in the wilderness of their nature, while poor convicted souls are added to the Lord's family and dwell in safety as the sheep of his fold.

42. "*The righteous shall see it, and rejoice.*" Divine providence causes joy to God's true people; they see the hand of the Lord in all things, and delight to study the ways of his justice and of his grace. "*And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.*" What can she say? God's providence is often so conclusive in its arguments of fact, that there is no replying or questioning. It is not long that the impudence of ungodliness can be quiet, but when God's judgments are abroad it is driven to hold its tongue.

43 Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

Those who notice providences shall never be long without a providence to notice. It is wise to observe what the Lord doth, for he is wonderful in counsel; has given us eyes to see with, and it is foolish to close them when there is most to observe; but we must observe wisely, otherwise we may soon confuse ourselves and others with hasty reflections upon the dealings of the Lord. In a thousand ways the lovingkindness of the Lord is shown, and if we will but prudently watch, we shall come to a better understanding of it. To understand the delightful attribute of lovingkindness is an attainment as pleasant as it is profitable: those who are proficient scholars in this art will be among the sweetest singers to the glory of Jehovah.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Dr. Lowth, in his 20th prelection, remarks of this Psalm:—"No doubt the composition of this Psalm is admirable throughout; and the descriptive part of it adds at least its share of beauty to the whole; but what is most to be admired is its *conciseness*, and withal the expressiveness of the diction, which strikes the imagination with inimitable elegance. The *weary* and *bewildered traveller*, the miserable *captive* in the hideous dungeon, the sick and dying man, the *seaman foundering* in a storm, are described in so affecting a manner, that they far exceed anything of the kind, though never so much laboured." I may add that had such an Idyle appeared in Theocritus or Virgil, or had it been found as a scene in any of

the Greek tragedians, even in Æschylus himself, it would probably have been produced as their master-piece.—*Adam Clarke.*

Whole Psalm.—I do not believe that the special care of God over his own people is here rather *indirectly* than *directly* touched upon, and that therefore this Psalm is composed to illustrate the general care of God: 1, Because the subjects of the various deliverances are called *the redeemed of Jehovah*, verse 2, which is the customary title of the people of God. 2, Because among the instances given, there are those which are peculiar to the people of God, as in verse 3 the return of the dispersed out of every part of the globe, a singular blessing, promised in the prophecies to the people of God, see Ps. cvi. 47. 3, The sick of verse 17 are those who are spiritually sick even unto death, as is clear from the fact of their being healed by the *word* of God; which is not in the order of common providence. The *imprisoned* of verse 2 are those who on account of the worship of God fall into the power of their enemies, which you cannot well apply to any other than the people of God. If you understand the *wicked*, for others among the heathen cannot be said to be thrust into prison on account of the violation of the laws, then the *liberation* belongs not to them. 4, *Calling* upon God, especially upon *Jehovah*, under which name he was known only to his people, you cannot apply unless in a diluted and partial sense to those who are afflicted in the general course of providence. . . . 5, He commands those who are delivered to celebrate the divine goodness in *the congregation of the people and the assembly of the elders*, verse 32, which is the mark of the true Church and her usual description. 6, Lastly, instances of general providences are not wont to come under the name of חסד, *grace*, by which these deliverances are described, nor do they require such great and such careful attention in their consideration, as here the sacred poet enjoins upon the pious and the wise: such things are easily observed, and are of every day occurrence.—*Venema.*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm divides itself into five parts; the four first, as it should seem, describing four divisions of the returning Israelites, and recounting the particular accidents that had befallen each party on their journey, and the particular mercies for which they ought to be thankful. The fifth part describes what befalls the collected nations, or a part of them, when they arrive at the land which was the object of their journey—I think the first restoration or colonization before the general gathering. Whether the four divisions of travellers are supposed to come exactly from the four distinct quarters of the earth, perhaps is not quite certain. The first divisions are plainly described (verses 4, 5), as coming across the desert, and meeting with all the disasters usual on that route.—*John Fry.*

Whole Psalm.—Without insisting on an exclusive application of this Psalm to Israel, there may be traced, I think, not indistinctly, the leading incidents of the nation's changeful experience in the descriptive language of the narrative part.

In verses 4—7 the story of the wilderness is briefly told, to the praise of the glory of his grace who satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. The strong discipline of national affliction which visited the rebellious house, until the turning again of their captivity, when the appointed term of Babylonish exile was accomplished, appears to form the historical groundwork of verses 10—16; but in its prophetic intention this passage would demand a far wider interpretation. The resuscitation of Israel, both spiritually and politically, would alone adequately fulfil these words.

The sufferings of the "foolish nation" when, filled with Jehovah's indignation, they find a snare in that which should have fed them, and pine beneath the pressure of a more grievous famine than that of bread, until, in answer to their cry of sorrow, the word of saving health is sent them from above, seem to be indicated in the next division (verses 17—20). The language of verse 22 is in agreement with this. They who had daily gone about to establish their own righteousness are called on now to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and to declare his works with singing.

Besides the obvious force and beauty of the following verses (23—30) in their simple meaning and their general application, we have, I believe, a figure of Jacob's restless trouble when, like a vexed and frightened mariner, he wandered up and down the wide sea of nations without ease, a friendless pilgrim of the Lord's displeasure, until the long-desired rest was gained at last, under the faithful guidance of him who seeks his people in the dark and cloudy day. Accordingly we find in the hortatory remembrancer of praise which follows (verse 32), a mention of the gathered people and their elders, who are now called on to celebrate, in the quiet resting-places of Immanuel's land, his faithful goodness and his might, who had

turned their long-endured tempest of affliction to the calm sunshine of perpetual peace.—*Arthur Pridham, in "Notes and Reflections on the Psalms,"* 1869.

Verse 1.—"*O give thanks unto the Lord.*" Unto no duty are we more dull and untoward, than to the praise of God, and thanksgiving unto him; neither is there any duty whereunto there is more need that we should be stirred up, as this earnest exhortation doth import.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*For he is good,*" etc. The first words of the Psalm are abundant in thought concerning Jehovah. "*For he is good.*" Is not this the Old Testament version of "*God is love*"? 1 John iv. 8. And then, "*For his mercy endureth for ever.*" Is not this the gushing stream from the fountain of Love?—the never-failing stream, on whose banks "*the redeemed of the Lord*" *walk*, "*those whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy*" (Hengstenberg, "*hand of trouble,*" צר). Nor is the rich significance of these clauses diminished by our knowing that they were, from time to time, the burden of the *altar-song*. When the ark came to its resting-place (1 Chron. xvi. 34), they sang to the Lord—"*For he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever!*" In Solomon's temple, the singers and players on instruments were making the resplendent walls of the newly-risen temple resound with these very words, when the glory descended (2 Chron. v. 13); and these were the words that burst from the lips of the awe-struck and delighted worshippers, who saw the fire descend on the altar (2 Chron. vii. 3). And in Ezra's days (iii. 11), again, as soon as the altar rose, they sang to the Lord—"*Because he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.*" Our God is known to be "Love," by the side of the atoning sacrifice. Jeremiah (xxxiii. 11) too, shows how restored Israel shall exult in this name.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—"*His mercy endureth for ever.*" St. Paul assures us, that the covenant of grace, which is the fountain of all mercy, was made before the foundation of the world, and this he repeats in several of his epistles. The Psalmist teaches the same doctrine, and frequently calls upon us to thank God, because his mercy is for ever and ever—because his mercy is everlasting—and in the text, because "*his mercy endureth for ever*;" the word "*endureth*" is inserted by the translators, for there is no verb in the original, neither in strictness of speech could there be any; because there was no time when this mercy was not exercised, neither will there be any time when the exercise of it will fail. It was begun before all worlds, when the covenant of grace was made, and it will continue to the ages of eternity, after this world is destroyed. So that *mercy* was, and is, and will be, "*for ever,*" and sinful miserable man may always find relief in this eternal mercy, whenever the sense of his misery disposes him to seek for it. And does not this motive loudly call upon us to "*give thanks*"? because there is mercy with God—mercy to pity the miserable—and even to relieve them—although they do not deserve it: for mercy is all free grace and unmerited love. Oh! how adorable, then, and gracious is this attribute! how sweet is it and full of consolation to the guilty.—*William Romaine* (1714—1795), *in "A Practical Comment on the Hundred and Seventh Psalm."*

Verse 2.—"*Redeemed.*" Moses has given us in the law a clear and full idea of what we are to understand by the word *goel*, here rendered "*redeemed.*" If any person was either sold for a slave, or carried away for a captive, then his kinsman, who was nearest to him in blood, had the right and equity of redemption. But no other person was suffered to redeem. And such a kinsman was called "the redeemer," when he paid down the price for which his relation was sold to be a slave, or paid the ransom for which he was led captive. And there is another remarkable instance in the law, wherein it was provided, that in case any person was found murdered, then the nearest to him in blood was to prosecute the murderer, and to bring him to justice, and this nearest relation thus avenging the murder is called by the same name, a *redeemer*. And how beautifully is the office of our great Redeemer represented under these three instances! he was to us such a Redeemer in spirituals, as these were in temporals: for sin had brought all mankind into slavery and captivity, and had murdered us. . . . This most high God, who was also man, united in one Christ, came into the world to redeem us, and the same person being both God and man, must merit for us as God in what he did for us as man. Accordingly, by the merits of his obedience and sufferings, he paid the price of our redemption, and we were no longer the servants of sin; and by his most precious blood shed upon the cross, by his death and resurrection, he overcame both death, and him who had

the power of death, and by delivering us in this manner from slavery and captivity, he fulfilled the third part of the Redeemer's office: for Satan was the murderer from the beginning, who had given both body and soul a mortal wound of sin, which was certain death and eternal misery, and the Redeemer came to avenge the murder. He took our cause in hand, as being our nearest kinsman, and it cost him his own life to avenge ours.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 2.—"*From the hand of the enemy.*" From all their sins which war against their souls; from Satan their implacable adversary, who is stronger than they; from the law, which threatens and curses them with damnation and death; from death itself, the last enemy, and indeed from the hand of all their enemies, be they who they may.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"*And gathered.*" If anything can inspire us with gratitude, this motive should prevail, because we cannot but feel the force of it, as it reminds us of that misery from which we in particular were redeemed. The *Gentiles* had wandered from God, and were so lost and bewildered in the mazes of error and superstition, that nothing but the almighty love of our Lord Jesus could have gathered them together into one church.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 3.—"*Gathered them.*" The Syriac gives as the title of this Psalm: God collects the Jews out of captivity, and brings them back out of Babylon; the only begotten Son of God also, Jesus Christ, collects the nations from the four corners of the world, by calling upon man to be baptized.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 3.—"*From the west.*" The mention of the *west* leads the Psalmist's thoughts to Egypt; and the remembrance of the bondage and labours of the ancestors of the Israelites in Egypt, coupled with the description in a previous Psalm (cv. 17) of the imprisonment of Joseph.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 4.—"*They wandered,*" etc. In these words it is not easy to ascertain the persons immediately intended. But this is a circumstance not to be lamented. It is even an advantage; it constrains us to a more spiritual and evangelical interpretation of the subject. And thus the whole representation is fully and easily embodied. For the people of God are "*redeemed*"—redeemed from the curse of the law, the powers of darkness, and the bondage of corruption. They are "*gathered*"—gathered by his grace out of all the diversities of the human race; "out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues." Whatever this world is to others, they find it to be "a wilderness"; where they are often tried, but their trials urge them to prayer, and prayer brings them relief. And being divinely *conducted*, they at length reach their destination: and this is the conclusion of the whole, and it applies to each of them: "*And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.*"—*William Jay.*

Verse 4.—"*Wandered.*" Their passage through the wilderness was not a journeying, such as when men pass on in a road to some inhabited place; but a *wandering* up and down away from all path and road, and so in an endless maze of desolation. —*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 4.—"*Wandered in the wilderness,*" etc. He has *lost his way.* When he was in the world, he had no difficulties; the path was so broad that he could not mistake it. But when the work of divine grace begins in a sinner's heart, he loses his way. He cannot find his way into the world; God has driven him out of it, as he drove Lot out of Sodom. He cannot find his way to heaven; because he at present lacks those clear testimonies, those bright manifestations whereby alone he can see his path. This is his experience then, that he has lost his way; having turned his back upon the world; and yet unable to realise those enjoyments in his soul that would make heaven his home. He has so lost his way, that whether he turns to the right hand or the left, he has no plain land-marks to show him the path in which his soul longs to go.

We need not stray from the text to find where the wanderer is. "They wandered *in the wilderness.*" The wilderness is a type and figure of what this life is to the Lord's people. There is nothing that grows in it fit for their food or nourishment. In it the fiery flying serpents—sin and Satan—are perpetually biting and stinging them: and there is nothing in it that can give them any sweet and solid rest. The barren sands of carnality below, and the burning sun of temptation above, alike deny them food and shelter.

But there is a word added which throws a further light upon the character of the

wilderness. "They wandered in the wilderness, *in a solitary way;*" a way not tracked; a path in which each has to walk alone; a road where no company cheers him, and without landmarks to direct his course. This is a mark peculiar to the child of God—that the path by which he travels is, in his own feelings, "*a solitary way.*" This much increases his exercises, that they appear peculiar to himself. His perplexities are such as he cannot believe any living soul is exercised with; the fiery darts which are cast into his mind by the Wicked One are such as he thinks no child of God has ever experienced; the darkness of his soul, the unbelief and infidelity of his heart, and the workings of his powerful corruptions, are such as he supposes none ever knew but himself. It is this walking "*in a solitary way,*" that makes the path of trial and temptation so painful to God's family.—*J. C. Philpot* (1802—1869), *in a Sermon entitled "The Houseless Wanderer."*

Verse 4.—"*In a solitary way.*"—The greater part of the desert being totally destitute of water is seldom visited by any human being; unless where the trading caravans trace out their toilsome and dangerous route across it. In some parts of this extensive waste the ground is covered with low, stunted shrubs, which serve as landmarks for the caravans, and furnish the camels with a scanty forage. In other parts, the disconsolate wanderer, wherever he turns, sees nothing around him but a vast interminable expanse of sand and sky; a gloomy and barren void, where the eye finds no particular object to rest upon, and the mind is filled with painful apprehensions of perishing with thirst. Surrounded by this dreary solitude, the traveller sees the dead bodies of birds, that the violence of the wind has brought from happier regions; and, as he ruminates on the fearful length of his remaining passage, listens with horror to the driving blast, the only sound that interrupts the awful repose of the desert.*—*Mungo Park*, 1771—1806 (?).

Verse 4.—"*In a solitary way.*" See the reason why people in trouble love solitariness. They are full of sorrow; and sorrow, if it have taken deep root, is naturally reserved, and flies all conversation. Grief is a thing that is very silent and private. Those people that are very talkative and clamorous in their sorrows, are never very sorrowful. Some are apt to wonder *why melancholy people delight to be so much alone*, and I will tell you the reason of it. 1. Because the disordered humours of their bodies alter their temper, their humours, and their inclinations, *that they are no more the same that they used to be;* their very distemper is averse to what is joyous and diverting; and they that wonder at them, may as wisely wonder why they will be diseased, which they would not be, if they knew how to help it; but the *disease of melancholy* is so obstinate, and so unknown to all but those who have it, that nothing but the power of God can totally overthrow it, and I know no other cure for it. 2. *Another reason why they choose to be alone*, is, because *people do not generally mind what they say*, nor believe them, but deride them, which they do not use so cruelly to do with those that are in other distempers; and no man is to be blamed for avoiding society, when it does not afford the common credit to his words, that is due to the rest of men. But, 3. Another, and the principal reason why people in trouble and sadness choose to be alone, is, because *they generally apprehend themselves singled out to be the marks of God's peculiar displeasure*, and they are often by their sharp afflictions a terror to themselves, and a wonder to others. It even breaks their hearts to see how low they are fallen, how oppressed, that were once as easy, as pleasant, as full of hope as others are, Job vi. 21; "Ye see my casting down, and are afraid." Ps. lxxi. 7; "I am as a wonder unto many." And it is usually unpleasant to others to be with them. Ps. lxxxviii. 18; "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." And though it was not so with the friends of Job; to see a man whom they had once known happy, to be so miserable, one whom they had seen so very prosperous, to be so very poor, in such sorry, forlorn circumstances, did greatly affect them; he, poor man, was changed, they knew him not, Job ii. 12, 13: "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." As the prophet represents one under spiritual and great afflictions, that "he sitteth alone, and keepeth silence," Lam. iii. 28. *Timothy Rogers* (1660—1729) *in "Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy."*

Verse 4.—"*They found no city to dwell in*"; nor even to call at or lodge in, for

* "Proceedings of the African Association."

miles together; which is the case of travellers in some parts, particularly in the desert of Arabia. Spiritual travellers find no settlement, rest, peace, joy, and comfort, but in Christ; nor any indeed in this world, and the things of it; here they have no continuing city, Hebrews xiii. 14.—*John Gill.*

Verse 5.—"*Their soul fainted in them.*" The word here used, עָטַף, *ataph*, means properly to cover, to clothe, as with a garment, Ps. lxxiii. 6; or a field with grain, Ps. lxv. 13; then, to hide oneself, Job xxiii. 9; then, to cover with darkness, Ps. lxxvii. 3; cii. *title;* thus it denotes the state of mind when darkness seems to be in the way—a way of calamity, trouble, sorrow; of weakness, faintness, feebleness. Here it would seem from the connection to refer to the exhaustion produced by the want of food and drink.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6.—"*Then they cried,*" etc. In these words we find three things remarkable; first, the condition of God's church and people, *trouble and distress:* Secondly, the practice and the exercise of God's people in this state: "*Then they cried unto the Lord*": Thirdly, their success, and the good issue of this practice: "*And he delivered them,*" etc.—*Peter Smith, in a Sermon preached before the House of Commons,* 1644.

Verse 6.—"*Then they cried.*" The root צָעַק has here a peculiar force: it denotes a cry of that kind into which any one, when shaken with a violent tempest of emotion, in the extremity of his grief and anxiety, breaks with a *crash* and with *complainings*, as the heavens send forth thunder and lightning. The original idea of the word being a *crash*, it indicates such complaints and cries as they send forth, who are oppressed by others, or are held fast in straits, in imploring public protection and help. See Deut. xxii. 24, 1 Kings xx. 39, Is. xix. 20.—*Venema.*

Verse 6.—"*In their trouble.*" Observe the words, "Then they cried unto the Lord *in* their trouble." Not *before*, not *after*, but *in* it. When they were in the midst of it; when trouble was wrapped round their head, as the weeds were wrapped round the head of Jonah; when they were surrounded by it, and could see no way out of it; when, like a person in a mist, they saw no way of escape before or behind; when nothing but a dark cloud of trouble surrounded their souls, and they did not know that ever that cloud would be dispersed;—then it was that they cried.—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 6.—"*Trouble.*" "*Distresses.*" The condition of the Church, or its most usual lot, is to be under sorrows and afflictions. I say, most usual: "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made," Isai. lvii. 16. But as we say of the several callings and trades of life, this man professeth such a calling, and that man another; and as the poet said of Hermogenes, Though he hold his peace (peradventure being asleep) yet he's a good singer, and a musician by profession: so say I of the people of God, their trade of life is suffering and as Julian told the Christians, when they complained of his cruelty, '*Tis your profession to endure tribulation.*—*Peter Smith.*

Verse 7.—"*He led them forth.*" Forth out of the world—forth out of a profession—forth out of a name to live—forth out of every thing hateful in his holy and pure eyes.—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 7.—"*And he led them forth by the right way,*" etc. Alexander translates this verse—"*And he led them in a strait course, to go to a city of habitation*"; and adds, "No exact version can preserve or imitate the paronomasia arising from the etymological affinity of the first verb and noun, analogous to that between the English *walk* and *to walk*, though the Hebrew forms are only similar and not identical. The idea of physical rectitude or straightness necessarily suggests that of moral rectitude or honesty, commonly denoted by the Hebrew word."

Verse 7.—"*A city of habitation.*" Not a city of *inspection!* Many—(Eternal God, will it be any of this company?)—will look in; and "there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, when they shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and they themselves shut out." Not a city of *visitation.* Christians shall not only enter, but abide. They shall go no more out—it is "a city of *habitation.*" This conveys the idea of *repose.* The Christian is now a traveller; then he will be a resident: he is now on the road; he will then be at home: "there remaineth a *rest* for the people of God." It reminds us of a *social state.* It is not a solitary condition; we shall partake of it with an innumerable company of angels, with all the saved from among men, with patriarchs, prophets, apostles. martyrs,

our kindred in Christ. " These are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God." It suggests *magnificence.* It is not a village, or a town, but a *city* of habitation. A city is the highest representation of civil community. There have been famous cities; but what are they all to this!—*William Jay.*

Verse 8.—*He does wonders for the children of men;* and therefore, men should *praise the Lord.* And he is the more to be praised because these wonders, נִפְלְאוֹת, *niphlaoth*, miracles of mercy and grace, are done for the *undeserving.* There are done לִבְנֵי אָדָם, *libney Adam*, for the children of *Adam*, the corrupt descendants of a rebel father.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—" *Oh that men would praise the Lord,*" etc. Hebrew, That they would confess it to the Lord, both in secret, and in society. This is all the rent that God requireth; he is content that we have the comfort of his blessings, so he may have the honour of them. This was all the fee Christ looked for for his cures: go and tell what God hath done for thee. Words seem to be a poor and slight recompense; but Christ, saith Nazienzen, called himself the Word.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—" *To the children of men!*" We must acknowledge God's goodness to the children of men, as well as to the children of God: to others as well as to ourselves.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—" *For he satisfieth the longing soul.*" This is the reason which the Psalmist gives for the *duty* of thankfulness which he prescribes. " *The longing soul,*" נֶפֶשׁ שֹׁקֵקָה, *nephesh shokekah, the soul that pushes forward in eager desire* after salvation.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 10.—" *Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron.*" Every son of Adam in his natural state before he is redeemed is in " *darkness* " and " *the shadow of death,*" and is fast " *bound* " with the chains of *sin* and *misery*, and there is no help for him upon earth—the Almighty God and Saviour alone is able to deliver him.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 11.—" *Because they rebelled against the words of God.*" There is in the Hebrew a play upon similar sounds—*Himru Imree.* God's *words* are those spoken in the *Law* and by *the prophets.* " *And contemned the counsel of the Most High*"—another play upon like sounds in the Hebrew—*Hatzath Naatzu.*—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 12.—" *He brought down their heart.*" O believer, God may see you have many and strong lusts to be subdued, and that you need many and sore afflictions to bring them down. Your pride and obstinacy of heart may be strong, your distempers deeply rooted, and therefore the physic must be proportioned to them.—*John Willison.*

Verse 12.—" *He brought down their heart with labour.*" Those towering passions by which they vainly vaunted themselves above the law and the worship of God, he weakened and curbed, so that they began to submit themselves to God. The root כָּנַע taken from the Arabic, describes a process of *weakening* by *compressing the wings* or shrinking the fingers, and is properly applied to *birds*, which when their wings are compressed are obliged to fall to the ground, or to men, who by the shrivelling up of their fingers lose the power of working; whence it is transferred to *oppressions* or *depressions* of any kind.—*Venema.*

Verse 12.—" *They fell down, and there was none to help.*" Affliction is then come to the height and its complete measure, when the sinner is made sensible of his own weakness, and doth see there is no help for him, save in God alone.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 12.—" *They fell down.*" They threw themselves prostrate at his feet for mercy; their heart and strength failed them, as the word signifies, and is used in Ps. xxxi. 10; terrified with a sense of divine wrath, they could not stand before the Lord, nor brave it out against him. " *And there was none to help.*" They could not help themselves, nor was there any creature that could. There is salvation in no other than in Christ; when he saw there was none to help him in that work his own arm brought salvation to him; and when sinners see there is help in no other, they apply to him.—*John Gill.*

Verse 17.—" *Fools.*" There is nothing more foolish than an act of wickedness; there is no wisdom equal to that of obeying God.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 17—20.—"*Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat*" (they are so sick that they can relish, take down nothing,) and "*they draw near unto the gates of death,*" they are almost in, they were on the brink of hell; what course must be used for their cure? Truly this, "*He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*" No herb in the garden of the whole world can do these distressed creatures the least good. Friends may speak, and ministers may speak, yea, angels may speak, and all in vain; the wounds are incurable for all their words; but if God please to speak, the dying soul reviveth. This word is the only balm that can cure the wounded conscience: "he sendeth his word and healeth them." Conscience is God's prisoner, he claps it in hold, he layeth it in fetters, that the iron enters the very soul; this he doth by his word, and truly he only who shuts up can let out; all the world cannot open the iron gate, knock off the shackles, and set the poor prisoner at liberty, till God speak the word.—*George Swinnock*, 1627—1673.

Verse 18.—"*Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.*" Nor is it without emphasis that it is not the sick man who is said to spurn food, but *his soul*. . . . The Hebrew word נַפְשׁ which properly means a breath, hence a panting appetite, is applied to a *very vehement appetite* for food. When, therefore the *soul* is said *to abhor food*, it is equivalent to saying *for the vehement appetite for food abhors food:* that is, in the place of an appetite for food, they are oppressed with a loathing: when they ought to be moved with a sharp desire of food, that their exhausted powers might be refreshed, appetite itself becomes a *loathing of food*, which is a most vivid description of the utmost loathing, and utter prostration of all desire.—*Venema.*

Verse 18.—"*Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.*" The best of creature-comforts are but vain comforts. What can dainty meat do a man good, when he is sick and ready to die? Then gold and silver, lands and houses, which are the dainty meat of a covetous man, are loathsome to him. When a man is sick to death, his very riches are sapless and tasteless to him; wife and children, friends and acquaintance, can yield but little comfort in that dark hour, yea, they often prove miserable comforters: when we have most need of comfort, these things administer least or no comfort at all to us. Is it not our wisdom, then, to get a stock of such comforts, as will hold and abide fresh with us, when all worldly comforts either leave us, or become tasteless to us? Is it not good to get a store of that food, which how sick soever we are, our stomachs will never loathe? yea, the sicker we are, our stomachs will the more like, hunger after, and feed the more heartily upon. *The flesh of Christ is meat indeed* (John vi. 55). Feed upon him by faith, in health and sickness, ye will never loathe him. His flesh is the true meat of desires, such meat as will fill and fatten us, but never cloy us. A hungry craving appetite after Christ, and sweet satisfaction in him, are inseparable, and still the stronger is our appetite, the greater is our satisfaction. And (which is yet a greater happiness) our souls will have the strongest appetite, the most sharp-set stomach after Christ, when, through bodily sickness, our stomachs cannot take down, but loathe the very scent and sight of the most pleasant perishing meat, and delicious earthly dainties. Look, that ye provide somewhat to eat, that will go down upon a sick-bed; your sick-bed meat is Christ; all other dainty food may be an abhorring to you.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 18.—"*Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.*" The case is then growing desperate, and there seems to be no hope left, when it comes to the last stage here described, *viz.*, to *loathe and abhor all manner of meat.*" The stomach turns at the sight of it, and the man has this loathing and abhorrence of "*all manner of meat.*" What he most loved, and had the best appetite for, is now become so very offensive, that at the smell of it he grows sick and faints away. Nature cannot support itself long under this disorder. If this loss of appetite, and loathing even the smell of the most simple food continue, it must wear the patient out. Indeed, it is not always a mortal distemper; there may be an entire loathing of food, and even fainting away at the smell of it, and the patient may sometimes recover; but in the present case the distemper had continued so long, and was grown so inveterate that there were no hopes, for "*they draw nigh,*" the Psalmist says, "*to the gates of death.*" Those gates of brass and bars of iron with which death locks up his prisoners in the grave; and you may judge how great must be the strength of these gates and bars, since only one person was ever able to break through them, and if he had not been more

than man, he could never have broken these gates of brass, nor cut these bars of iron in sunder.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 18.—"*They draw near unto the gates of death.*" Death is a great commander, a great tyrant, and hath gates to sit in, as judges and magistrates used to 'sit in the gates.' There are three things implied in this phrase. 1. First, "*They draw near unto the gates of death,*" that is, they were "*near to death*"; as he that draws near the gates of a city is near the city, because the gates enter into the city. 2. Secondly, gates are applied to death *for authority.* They were almost in death's jurisdiction. Death is a great tyrant. He rules over all the men in the world, over kings and potentates, and over mean men; and the greatest men fear death most. He is "the king of fears," as Job calls him, Job xviii. 14; ay, and the fear of kings. . . . Therefore it is called "the gate of death." It rules and overrules all mankind. Therefore it is said "to reign," Rom. v. 21. Death and sin came in together. Sin was the gate that let in death, and ever since death reigned, and will, till Christ perfectly triumph over it, who is the King of that lord and commander, and hath "the key of hell and death," Rev. i. 18. To wicked men, I say, he is a tyrant, and hath a gate; and when they go through the "*gate of death,*" they go to a worse, to a lower place, to hell. It is the trap-door to hell. 3. Thirdly. By the "*gate of death,*" is meant not only the authority, but *the power of death;* as in the gospel, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 18: that is, the power and strength of hell. So here it implies the strength of death, which is very great, for it subdues all. It is the executioner of God's justice.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 20.—When George Wishart arrived at Dundee, where the plague was raging [1545], he caused intimation to be made that he would preach; and for that purpose chose his station upon the head of the East-gate, the infected persons standing without, and those that were whole within. His text was Psalm cvii. 20, "*He sent his word, and healed them,*" etc., wherein he treated of the profit and comfort of God's word, the punishment that comes by contempt of it, the readiness of God's mercy to such as truly turn to him, and the happiness of those whom God takes from this misery, etc. By which sermon he so raised up the hearts of those that heard him, that they regarded not death, but judged them more happy that should then depart, rather than such as should remain behind, considering that they knew not whether they should have such a comforter with them.—*Samuel Clarke* (1599—1682), *in* "*A General Martyrologie.*"

Verse 20.—"*He sent his word.*" The same expression occurs in cxlvii. 15, 18; comp. Is. lv. 11. We detect in such passages the first glimmering of St. John's doctrine of the agency of the personal Word. The Word by which the heavens were made, xxxiii. 6, is seen to be not merely the expression of God's will, but his messenger mediating between himself and his creatures. It is interesting to compare with this the language of Elihu in the parallel passage of Job xxxiii. 23, where what is here ascribed to the agency of the Word is ascribed to that of the "mediating angel, or messenger."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 20.—"*His word*" who "*healed them*" was his essential Word, even the second person in the Godhead, our Lord Jesus Christ, the word who was made flesh and dwelt among us: of this divine Word it was foretold in the Old Testament, that he should arise with the glory of the morning sun, bringing healing in his wings for all our maladies; and accordingly the New Testament relates, that Jesus went about all Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing ALL manner of sickness, and ALL manner of disease among the people. He healed the bodily disease miraculously, to prove that he was the Almighty Physician of the soul. And it is remarkable that he never rejected any person who applied to him for an outward cure, to demonstrate to us, that he would never cast out any person who should apply to him for a spiritual cure.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 20.—"*And delivered them from their destructions.*" From their pits: or, From their sepulchres. That is, from the deaths to which they were near. Others render, From their nets or snares. Others, *their destructions,* the diseases in which they were miserable prisoners.—*Franciscus Vatablus.*

Verse 20.—"*And delivered them from their destructions.*" From the destruction of the body, of the beauty and strength of it by diseases; restoring to health is a redeeming of the life from destruction; from the grave, the pit of corruption and destruction, so called because in it bodies corrupt, putrefy, and are destroyed by worms; and such who are savingly convinced of sin, and blessed with pardoning

grace and mercy, are delivered from the everlasting destruction of body and soul in hell.—*John Gill.*

Verse 22.—"*And let them sacrifice.*" For their *healing* they should bring a *sacrifice;* and they should offer the *life* of the innocent animal unto God, as he has offered their *lives;* and let them thus *confess* that God has spared *them* when they deserved to die; and let them "*declare*" also "his works with rejoicing"; for who will not rejoice when he is delivered from death?—*Adam Clarke.*

As a specimen of mediæval spiritualizing we give the following from the Hermit of Hampole:—

Verse 23.—"*They that go down to the sea in ships,*" etc. *They that* (are true prelates and preachers,) *go down* from the sublimity of contemplation, *to the sea*, that is, suiting themselves to the lowly, that they also may be saved, *in ships*, that is, in the faith, hope, and charity of the church, without which they would be drowned in the waters of pleasure, *that do business*, that is, continue preaching, *in great waters*, that is, among many people in order that they may become fishers of men.—*Richardus Hampolitanus.*

Verses 23—27.

While thus our keels still onward boldly strayed—
Now tossed by tempests, now by calms delayed;
To tell the terrors of the deep untried,
What toils we suffered, and what storms defied;
What rattling deluges the black clouds poured,
What dreary weeks of solid darkness low'red;
What mountain surges mountain surges lashed,
What sudden hurricanes the canvas dashed;
What bursting lightnings, with incessant flare,
Kindled in one wide flame the burning air;
What roaring thunders bellowed o'er our head,
And seemed to shake the reeling ocean's bed:
To tell each horror in the deep revealed,
Would ask an iron throat with tenfold vigour steeled
Those dreadful wonders of the deep I saw,
Which fill the sailor's breasts with sacred awe;
And what the sages, of their learning vain,
Esteem the phantoms of a dreamful brain.

Luiz de Camoens (1524—1579), *in "the Lusiad."*

Verses 23—31.—No language can be more sublime than the description of a storm at sea in this Psalm. It is the very soul of poetry. The utmost simplicity of diction is employed to convey the grandest thoughts. The picture is not crowded; none but the most striking circumstances are selected; and everything is natural, simple, and beyond measure interesting. The whole is an august representation of the Providence of God, ruling in what appears the most ungovernable province of nature. It is God who raises the storm; it is God who stilleth it. The wise men of this world may look no farther than the physical laws by which God acts; but the Holy Spirit, by the Psalmist, views the awful conflict of the elements as the work of God.—*Alexander Carson.*

Verses 23—32.—This last picture springs naturally from the mention in verse 3 of the sea; and here the Psalmist may have directed his imagination to the usual tempestuousness of the season at which the Psalm was sung.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 24.—"*These see the works of the Lord.*" There are sinners who, like Jonah, fleeing from the face of God, go down to the sea, to the cares and pleasures of the world, away from the solid land of humility, quiet, and grace. They occupy themselves in many waters, in needless toils and excessive pleasures, and yet even there God does not leave them, but causes them to see his works and wonders even in the deep of their sins, by giving them timely and sufficient warnings, and alarming them with fear of the abyss.—*Le Blanc in Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 25—31.

Think, O my soul, devoutly think,
How, with affrighted eyes
Thou saw'st the wide extended deep
In all its horrors rise!

Confusion dwelt in every face,
And fear in every heart;
When waves on waves, and gulfs on gulfs,
O'ercame the pilot's art.

Yet then from all my griefs, O Lord,
Thy mercy set me free,
Whilst in the confidence of prayer
My soul took hold on thee.

For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave,
I knew thou wert not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save.

The storm was laid, the winds retired,
Obedient to thy will;
The sea that roared at thy command,
At thy command was still.

In midst of dangers, fears, and death,
Thy goodness I'll adore,
And praise thee for thy mercies past;
And humbly hope for more.

My life, if thou preserv'st my life,
Thy sacrifice shall be;
And death, if death must be my doom
Shall join my soul to thee.

Joseph Addison.

Verse 26.—"*They mount up to the heaven.*" There be three heavens. 1. *Cœlum aërium.* 2. *Cœlum astriferum.* 3. *Cœlum beatorum.* It is not the latter now they go to in storms, but the two former.—*Daniel Pell, in "An Improvement of the Sea,"* 1659.

Verse 26.—"*They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths.*"

To larboard all their oars and canvas bend;
We on a ridge of waters to the sky
Are lifted, down to Erebus again
Sink with the falling wave; thrice howl'd the rocks
Within their stony caverns, thrice we saw
The splash'd-up foam upon the lights of heaven

Virgil.

Verse 28.—"*They cry unto the Lord.*" His attributes are much honoured in calling upon him, especially in times of dangers and distresses. 1. When you call upon God at sea, you honour his *sovereignty.* God says to these proud waves, "So far and no farther!" So, "the storm and hail," they fulfil his will, and when he pleases he commands a calm. 2. Prayer in time of danger honours God's *wisdom,* when we see no way open for mercies and deliverance to come in at, then to look up to him, believing. "He knows how to deliver out of temptation." O how much of the wisdom of God appears in preservation in time of danger! and is it not a good token of mercy coming in when persons pray, though all visible ways are blocked up? This honours God's *wisdom,* which we acknowledge is never at a loss as to ways of bringing in mercy and deliverance. 3. The *faithfulness* of God is much honoured in times of danger, when he is called upon. The faithfulness of a friend doth most appear in a strait: now if you can rely upon his promise, God's faithfulness is the best line men sinking at sea can lay hold on. So I might add, calling upon God honours all his other attributes. *John Ryther* (1632—1681) *in "A Plta for Mariners: or, The Seaman's Preacher,"* 1675.

Verse 28.—" *Then they cry.*" Tempestuous storms and deadly dangers have brought those upon their knees, that would never have bended in a calm: " *Then they cry.*" If any one would know at what time the sailors take up the duty of prayer, let me say it is when death stares them in the face. If ever you see the heavens veiled in sable blackness, the clouds flying, and the winds roaring under them; you may conclude that some of them (though God knows but few) are at prayer, yea, hard at it with their God. But never believe it that there is any prayer amongst them when the skies are calm, the winds down, and the seas smooth. David tells you not of their praying in good and comfortable weather, but that it is in time of storms, for I believe that neither he nor I ever saw many of them on that strain. . . .

God hears oftener from an afflicted people, than he either does or can from a people that are at ease, quiet, and out of danger. " *Then they cry.*" The prodigal son was very high, and resolved never to return till brought low by pinching and nipping afflictions, then his father had some tidings of him. Hagar was proud in Abraham's house, but humbled in the wilderness. Jonah was asleep in the ship, but awake and at prayer in the whale's belly, Jonah ii. 1. Manasses lived in Jerusalem like a libertine, but when bound in chains at Babel, his heart was turned to the Lord, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, 12. Corporal diseases forced many under the gospel to come to Christ, whereas others that enjoyed bodily health would not acknowledge him. One would think that the Lord would abhor to hear those prayers that are made only out of the fear of danger, and not out of the love, reality, and sincerity of the heart. If there had not been so many miseries of blindness, lameness, palsies, fevers, etc., in the days of Christ, there would not have been that flocking after him. —*Daniel Pell.*

Verse 28.—" *Then they cry unto the Lord.*" " *Then,*" if ever: hence that speech of one, *Qui nescit orare, discat navigare,* He that cannot pray, let him go to sea, and there he will learn.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 28.—" *Then they cry,*" etc. Gods of the sea and skies (for what resource have I but prayer?) abstain from rending asunder the joints of our shattered bar. —*Ovid.*

Verse 29.—" *He maketh the storm a calm,*" etc. The image is this. Mankind before they are redeemed are like a ship in a stormy sea, agitated with passions, tossed up and down with cares, and so blown about with various temptations, that they are never at rest. This is their calmest state in the smiling day of smooth prosperity: but afflictions will come, and afflictions of sin and Satan, and the world will raise a violent storm, which all the wit and strength of man cannot escape. He will soon be swallowed up of the devouring waves; unless that same God who created the sea speak to it, " Peace, be still." We are all in the same situation the apostles were, when they were alone in the evening in the midst of the sea, and the wind and the waves were contrary; against which they toiled rowing in vain, until Christ came to them walking upon the sea, and commanded the winds to cease and the waves to be still. Upon which there was a great calm; for they knew his voice, who had spoken them into being, and they obeyed. His word is almighty to compose and still the raging war of the most furious elements. And he is as almighty in the spiritual world, as he is in the natural. Into whatever soul he enters, he commands all the jarring passions to be still, and there is indeed a blessed calm. O may the Almighty Saviour speak thus unto you all, that you may sail on a smooth unruffled sea, until you arrive safe at the desired haven of eternal rest!—*William Romaine.*

Verse 29.—If the sailor can do nothing so wise and oftentimes indeed can do nothing else than trust in the Lord, so is it with us in the storms of life. Like the mariner, we must use lawful means for our protection; but what are means without the divine blessing?—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 30.—" *Desired haven.*" At such a time as this sweet April morning, indeed, a breakwater like this [of Portland] may seem of little value, when the waves of the ocean only just suffice to break its face into gems of changing brilliance, and to make whispering music; while vessels of all sizes, like those whose clustering masts we see yonder under the promontory, ride with perfect security in the open road. But in the fierce gales of November or March, when the shrieking blasts drive furiously up the Channel, and the huge mountain billows, green and white, open threatening graves on every side, how welcome would be a safe harbour, easy of access, and placed

at a part of the coast which else would be unsheltered for many leagues *on* either side! Blessed be God for the gift of his beloved Son, the only Harbour of Refuge for poor tempest-tossed sinners! We may think lightly of it now, but in the coming day of gloom and wrath, when "the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow," they only will escape who are sheltered there!—*Philip Henry Gosse, in "The Aquarium,"* 1856.

Verse 31.—"*Oh.*" This verse seems to include the ardent earnestness of the Psalmist's spirit, that seamen would be much in thankfulness, and much and frequent in praising of the Lord their deliverer out of all their distresses. "*Oh,*" seems he to say, that I could put men upon this duty, it would be more comfortable to me, seems the Psalmist to say, to find such a principle in the hearts of those that are employed in the great waters, than any one thing in the world again whatsoever. "*Oh*" is but a little word consisting of two letters, but no word that ever man utters with his tongue comes with that force and affection from the heart as this doth. "*Oh*" is a word of the highest expression, a word when a man can say no more. This interjection oftentimes starts out of the heart upon a sudden from some unexpected conception, or admiration, or other.—*Daniel Pell.*

Verse 33.—"*He turneth rivers into a wilderness,*" etc. God is *the father of the rain.* If he withholds that refreshment for a long time, all nature droops, and every green thing dies. The imagery is drawn from Palestine where there were but two annual rainy seasons, and if either of them was long deferred, the effect was frightful. The channels of considerable rivers were dried up.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 33.—"*Rivers*" . . . "*Watersprings.*" A church enriched with the graces of heaven is compared by the prophets to a well-watered garden (Isai. lviii. 11; Jer. xxxi. 12), to the paradise of God, watered with its four fruitful rivers: for as everything useful and ornamental in the vegetable world is raised up by water, so is everything in the spiritual world raised up by the Holy Spirit.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 34.—"*A fruitful land unto barrenness.*" Hereof Judæa is at this day a notable instance (besides many parts of Asia, and Africa, once very fruitful, now, since they become Mahometan, dry and desert). Judæa, saith one, hath now only some few parcels of rich ground found in it; that men may guess the goodness of the cloth by the fineness of the shreds.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 34.—"*For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.*" When I meet with a querulous husbandman, he tells me of a churlish soil, of a wet seed-time, of a green winter, of an unkindly spring, of a lukewarm summer, of a blustering autumn; but I tell him of a displeased God, who will be sure to contrive and fetch all seasons and elements, to his own most wise drifts and purposes.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 34.—"*For the wickedness.*" God locketh up the clouds, because we have shut up our mouths. The earth is grown hard as iron to us, because we have hardened our hearts against our miserable neighbours. The cries of the poor for bread are loud, because our cries against sin have been so low. Sicknesses run apace from house to house, and sweep away the poor unprepared inhabitants, because we sweep not out the sin that breedeth them.—*Richard Baxter,* 1615—1691.

Verse 35.—"*Dry ground into watersprings.*" If God afflict, his justice findeth the cause of it in man; but if he do good to any man, it is of his own good pleasure, without any cause in man: therefore no reason is given here of this change, as was of the former, but simply, "*He turneth dry ground into watersprings.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 40.—"*He poureth contempt upon princes.*" Mighty potentates, who have been the terror and dread of the whole world, when once denuded of their dignity and power, have become the sport even of their own dependents.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 40.—"*Princes.*" Persons of high rank are the most exempt, in ordinary times, from destitution and want, and misery must reach a great height when it invades them. No part of the world probably has witnessed so many and great reverses of this kind as the regions and countries of the East.—*William Walford.*

Verse 41.—"*He setteth the poor on high from affliction.*" How high? Above the reach of the curse, which shall never touch him; above the power of Satan, which shall never ruin him; above the reigning influence of sin, which "shall not

have dominion over him " ; above the possibility of being banished from his presence, for " Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." This is the way God sets his people on high, instructing them in the mysteries of his word, and giving them to partake the joys that are contained therein.—*Joseph Irons*, 1786—1852.

Verse 42.—" *The righteous shall see it.*" The word here rendered " *righteous* " is not what the Scripture commonly uses to signify righteous or justified persons ; but it is another word, and conveys another idea. It signifies to *direct*, to *set right ;* and the " *righteous* " here mentioned are they, who are directed in the right way, and walk, as Enoch did, with God in his way, and not in the way of the world. And these " *shall see* " the goodness and mercy of God's dealings with the fallen race of man. They shall have eyes to see the ways of his providence. The same grace which set them right, will manifest to them the reasonableness of the plan of redemption. They shall see and admire, and be thankful for the wonders of his redeeming love, which are recorded in this divine hymn.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 42.—" *All iniquity shall stop her mouth.*" " *Iniquity* " is here personified, and denotes the *iniquitous ;* but the abstract is more poetical. " *Stop her mouth.*" *Tongue-tied*, literally, *mouth-shut ;* which, perhaps, might be not improperly vernaculized.—*Alexander Geddes.*

Verse 43.—" *Whoso is wise,*" etc. Or as it may be read interrogatively, " *Who is wise ?* " as in Jer. ix. 12 ; Hosea xiv. 9 ; that is, spiritually wise, wise unto salvation ; who is made to know wisdom in the hidden part ; for not such as are possessed of natural wisdom, or worldly-wise men, much less who are wise to do evil, are here meant, " *And will observe these things ;* " the remarkable appearances of divine Providence to persons in distress ; the various changes and vicissitudes in the world ; the several afflictions of God's people, and their deliverances out of them ; the wonderful works of God in nature, providence, and grace ; these will be observed, taken notice of, laid up in the mind, and kept by such who are truly wise, who know how to make a right use and proper improvement of them. " *Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord* " ; every one of the wise men ; they will perceive the kindness of God unto men, in the several dispensations of his providence towards them, and his special love and kindness towards his own people, even in all their afflictions they will perceive this to be at the bottom of every mercy and blessing ; they will understand more of the nature and excellency of it, and know more of the love of God and Christ, which passeth knowledge. Or, *the kindnesses of the Lord shall be understood ;* that is, by wise men ; so R. Moses in Aben Ezra renders the words.—*John Gill.*

Verse 43.—" *Will observe these things,*" etc. Will carefully note and remark what is here said of the fall and recovery of mankind, of our state by nature and by grace. True wisdom consists in observing these two things, what we are in ourselves, and what we are in Christ ; in a deep sense of our misery by sin, stirring us up to seek our remedy in the Redeemer. This is wisdom. And whosoever is thus wise unto salvation " *shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord ;* " shall be able to apply what he understands of it to his own private use and benefit. The verb in the original rendered " *shall understand,*" is in the conjugation called *Hithpael*, which signifies to act upon itself. Whosoever observes those things properly finds his own interest in them. He makes the understanding of them useful to himself. He does not study them as a science or theory, but as interesting points in which he is nearly concerned, and which he therefore tries to bring home for his own private advantage. When he hears of the mercies of the Lord Jesus recorded in this Psalm he desires to partake of them. When he hears of the great deliverances vouchsafed to sinful ruined man, he studies to have his own share in them. What is said of these persons who wandered out of the way in the wilderness, and fell into the bondage of sin, and were afflicted with its diseases, and troubled like a stormy sea, with its continual tempests ; all this he knows was his own case, and therefore what follows of their flourishing state after Christ delivered them may be his also if he cry unto the Lord, as they did, for help. And he never ceases praying and seeking, until the blessed Jesus brings him to the haven of the church, where he would be. And if he find the church diminished and brought low, he is not discouraged ; but relies on the promises of his God, who will set him on high out of the reach of public calamity, when he comes to destroy an infidel church. He observes what is said on this Psalm

concerning those things; and he knows it to be true, by his own experience. And therefore the lovingkindness of the Lord here recorded is to him a subject of exceeding great joy, because he has tasted of it. Whoso is wise will bring his knowledge of this Psalm home to his own heart, and he shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord, he shall be able to apply what he understands to his own benefit, and shall therefore be continually praising the Lord for his goodness, and declaring the wonders which he hath done for the salvation of men.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 43.—"*Observe these things.*" "*To observe*, signifieth not only with our eyes to behold it; but so to stir up our minds to the consideration of a thing, that one may grow the better by it," saith a grave author. Now in this notion of it, how few are they that observe "*these things*"? . . . .

If you would by observing the providence of God understand his lovingkindness, and gain a spiritual wisdom, *let your eye affect your heart.* Mollerus telleth us, such an observation is here intended *unde ad pietatem exuscitemur, ut inde meliores evadamus*, "as will quicken us to piety, and help to make us better." There are many careless observers of providence, who indeed see *events* rather than providences; they see much that comes to pass in the world, but consider nothing of God in them. . . . They do by the book of providence, as Augustine complained of himself, that in his unregenerate state he did by the book of Scripture; he rather brought to it *discutiendi acumen*, than *discendi pietatem.* So men bring to the great works of God rather an acute eye and wit to find out the immediate causes, and reasons natural and political, than a *trembling, humble heart*, that they might learn by them more to acknowledge, *love, fear, adore*, and revere the great and mighty God whose works these are. Let not yours be such an observation; but let your eye, beholding God in his providential dispensations, affect your hearts with that adoration and veneration, that love and fear of the great and mighty God, which such works of God do call to you for.—*John Collinges* (1623—1690), *in* "*Several Discourses concerning the actual Providence of God.*"

Verse 43.—"*Observe these things.*" These mighty doings of our Saviour and our God in delivering his feeble creatures from the trackless wilderness of error,—from the noisome chain of carnal lust,—from the deadly sickness of a corrupt nature,—and from the wild tempest of earthly passion, deserve the thoughtful joy of all who would be faithful servants of their Lord. The mouth of unbelief and the excuses of iniquity are stopped by the sight of the marvels of that mercy which endureth for ever. "The accuser of the brethren" is silenced and cast down. The truly wise will ponder these things, for in the knowledge of them is true wisdom; and so pondering, there shall open before them, ever plainer, fuller, clearer, brighter, the revelation of that mighty love of their eternal Father which surpasses all understanding, and is vaster than all thought.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 43.—How great a volume might be wrote, *de observandis Providentiæ*, concerning the observable things of Divine Providence. I have seen a picture (one of those you call kitchen-pieces) concerning which it hath been proposed to me, that for so many hours I should view it as curiously as I could; yet the proposer would for any wager undertake to show me something in it which I did not observe. Truly Providence is such a thing, I can never look upon it, I can never take the motions of it into my thoughts, but some new observation tendereth itself into my thoughts. I must turn my eyes from this wonderful work, for I see they will not be satisfied with seeing, my mind will never be filled with observation.—*John Collinges.*

Verse 43.—When we speak of the love and favour of God to his people, we are prone to understand by it nothing but pleasing providences, grateful to our senses: now the "*lovingkindness*" of God is not only seen in pleasing dispensations, but in adverse providences also: "Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every child whom he receiveth": "all things are yours," saith the apostle. This knowledge must be gained by *observation.*—*John Collinges.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is like the Interpreter's house in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." Pilgrim is told that he will there see excellent and profitable things. The same promise is given in the introduction to this Psalm, where we have, I. The source of these excellent things—the goodness and all-enduring mercy of God;

mercy not exhausted by the unworthiness of its objects. II. Their acknowledgment, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Men will not own it, but the redeemed of the Lord will. It is the experience of such that is pictorially represented in this Psalm. Let every one speak of God as he finds. Is he good when he takes away as well as when he gives? "The redeemed of the Lord will say so." Is he merciful when he frowns as well as when he smiles? "The redeemed of the Lord say so." Does he make all things work together for good to them that love him? "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." III. Their end. Praise and thanksgiving: "Oh give," etc. 1, For general mercies; 2, for redemption; 3, for special deliverances.—*G. R.*

Verses 1, 2.—The duty of praise is universal, the real presentation of it remains with the redeemed. Particular redemption should lead to special praise, special testimony to truth and special faith in God: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

Verse 3.—The ingathering of the chosen. I. All wandered. II. Their ways different. III. All observed of the Lord. IV. All brought to Jesus as to one centre. Note ways, and times of gathering.

Verse 4.—Wandering Jews. Illustrate the roaming of a mind in search of truth, peace, love, purity, etc.

Verses 4—10.—The words contain a brief history of man's fall and misery and of his restoration by Jesus Christ; which are described under these particulars. I. The lost state of men by nature. II. They are brought to a right sense of it, and cry to the Lord Jesus for deliverance. III. He hears them and delivers them out of all their distresses. IV. The tribute of thanks due to him for this great deliverance.—*W. Romaine.*

Verse 5.—Spiritual hunger the cause of faintness. Necessity of feeding the soul.

Verse 7.—Divine grace stimulating our exertions. "He led them forth . . . that they might go."

Verse 8.—He who has enjoyed God's help should mark, 1, in what distress he has been; 2, how he has called to God; 3, how God has helped him; 4, what thanks he has returned; and, 5, what thanks he is yet bound to render.—*Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 9.—A great general fact. The condition, the benefactor, the blessing—"goodness," the result—"satisfieth." Then the further result of praise as seen in verse 8.

Verses 12, 13.—I. The convicted soul's abject condition—humbled, exhausted, prostrate, deserted. II. His speedy deliverance. Cried, cried while in trouble, unto the Lord, he saved, out of their distresses.

Verse 13.—Man's work and God's work. *They* cried and *he* saved.

Verse 14.—God gives light, life, liberty.

Verse 17, etc.—A Rescue from Death, with a Return of Praise.—*R. Sibbes' Works*, Vol. VI.; Nichol's edition.

Verses 17—21.—I. The distress of the sick. II. Their cure by the Great Physician. III. Their grateful behaviour to him.—*W. Romaine.*

Verses 17—22.—A Visit to Christ's Hospital. I. The names and characters of the patients—"fools"; all sinners are fools. II. The cause of their pains and afflictions—"because of their transgressions," etc. III. The progress of the disease—"their soul abhorreth all manner of meat"; and, "they draw near unto the gates of death." IV. The interposition of the physician—"then they cry," etc., ver. 19, 20. 1, Note, when the physician comes in—when "they cry," etc. 2, The kind of prayer—a cry. 3, What the physician did—"saved," "healed," "delivered." 4. How this was effected—"He sent his word," etc. V. The consequent conduct of those who were healed; they praised God for his goodness. They added sacrifice to this praise, verse 22. In addition to sacrifice the healed ones began to offer songs—"sacrifice of thanksgiving." They added a declaration of joy—"Let them declare his works with rejoicing."

Verse 18.—The sin-sick soul without appetite for invitations, encouragements, or promises, however presented. Milk too simple, strong meat too heavy, wine too heating, manna too light, etc.

Verse 18.—Teacheth us, that even appetite to our meat is a good gift of the Lord; also that when men are in greatest extremity, then is God most commonly nigh unto them.—*T. Wilcocks.*

Verse 20.—Recovery from sickness must be ascribed to the Lord, and gratitude should flow forth because of it. But the text describes spiritual and mental sickness.

Notice, I. The Patient in his extremity. 1. He is a fool: by nature inclined to evil. 2. He has played the fool (see verse 17), "transgression," "iniquities." 3. He now has lost all appetite and is past all cure. 4. He is at death's door. 5. But he has begun to pray. II. The Cure in its simplicity. 1. Christ the Word is the essential cure. He heals the guilt, habit, depression, and evil results of sin. For every form of malady Christ has healing; hence preachers should preach him much, and all meditate much upon him. 2. The word in the Book is the instrumental cure: its teachings, doctrines, precepts, promises, encouragements, invitations, examples. 3. The word of the Lord by the Holy Spirit is the applying cure. He leads us to believe. He is to be sought by the sick soul. He is to be relied upon by those who would bring others to the Great Physician.

Verse 26.—The ups and downs of a convicted sinner's experience.

Verse 27.—The awakened sinner staggered and nonplussed.

Verses 33, 34.—The scene which here opens with a landscape of beauty and fertility is suddenly changed into a dry and barren wilderness. The rivers are dried up, the springs cease to flow among the hills, and the verdant fields are scorched and bare. The reason assigned for this is "the wickedness of them that dwell therein." This picture needs no interpretation to the people of God. It is precisely what happens within them when they have fallen into sin.—*G. R.*

Verse 34.—The curse, cause, and cure of barrenness in a church.

Verse 35.—Hope for decayed churches lies in God; he can work a marvellous change, he does do it—"turneth": he will do it when the cause of barrenness is removed by repentance.

Verses 35—38. Here the scene again changes. The springs again gush forth, calm lakes again repose in the midst of foliage and flowers, the hills are clothed with luxuriant vines, and the fields are covered with corn; plenty abounds both in town and country, and men and cattle increase. This picture, too, has its counterpart in experimental godliness. "Instead of the thorn shall come up," etc., "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them," etc. The one scene precedes prayer, the other follows it. A desolate wilderness before, the garden of Eden behind. —*G. R.*

Verses 39—41.—The scene again is reversed. There is a change again from freedom to oppression; from plenty to want; from honour to contempt. Then a revival again as suddenly appears. The poor and afflicted are lifted up, and the bereaved have "families like a flock." Such are the changeful scenes through which the people of God are led; and such the experience by which they are made meet for the pure, perfect, and perpetual joys of heaven.—*G. R.*

Verses 42, 43.—Such surprising turns are of use, 1, For the solacing of saints; they observe these dispensations with pleasure: "The righteous shall see it, and rejoice," in the glorifying of God's attributes, and the manifestation of his dominion over the children of men. 2. For the silencing of sinners: "all iniquity shall stop her mouth"; *i.e.* it shall be a full conviction of the folly of those that deny the divine presence. 3. For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness: "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things"—these various dispensations of divine providence, "even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."—*M. Henry.*

Verse 43.—The best observation and the noblest understanding.

PSALM CVIII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—A Song or Psalm of David,—*To be sung jubilantly as a national hymn, or solemnly as a sacred Psalm. We cannot find it in our heart to dismiss this Psalm by merely referring the reader first to Psalm lvii. 7—11 and then to Psalm lx. 5—12, though it will be at once seen that those two portions of Scripture are almost identical with the verses before us. It is true that most of the commentators have done so, and we are not so presumptuous as to dispute their wisdom; but we hold for ourselves that the words would not have been repeated if there had not been an object for so doing, and that this object could not have been answered if every hearer of it had said, "Ah, we had that before, and therefore we need not meditate upon it again." The Holy Spirit is not so short of expressions that he needs to repeat himself, and the repetition cannot be meant merely to fill the book: there must be some intention in the arrangement of two former divine utterances in a new connection; whether we can discover that intent is another matter. It is at least ours to endeavour to do so, and we may expect divine assistance therein.*

We have before us THE WARRIOR'S MORNING SONG, *with which he adores his God and strengthens his heart before entering upon the conflicts of the day. As an old Prussian officer was wont in prayer to invoke the aid of "his Majesty's August Ally," so does David appeal to his God and set up his banner in Jehovah's name.*

DIVISION.—*First we have an utterance dictated by the spirit of praise, verses* 1—5; *then a second deliverance evoked by the spirit of believing prayer, verses* 6—12; *and then a final word of resolve (verse* 13), *as the warrior hears the war-trumpet summoning him to join battle immediately, and therefore marches with his fellow soldiers at once to the fray.*

EXPOSITION.

O GOD, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

2 Awake, psaltery and harp; I *myself* will awake early.

3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.

4 For thy mercy *is* great above the heavens: and thy truth *reacheth* unto the clouds.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;

These five verses are found in Psalm lvii. 7—11 almost verbatim: the only important alteration being the use of the great name of JEHOVAH in verse 3 instead of Adonai in lvii. 9. This the English reader will only be able to perceive by the use of capitals in the present Psalm and not in Psalm lvii. There are other inconsiderable alterations, but the chief point of difference probably lies in *the position* of the verses. In lvii. these notes of praise follow prayer and grow out of it; but in this case the Psalmist begins at once to sing and give praise, and afterwards prays to God in a remarkably confident manner, so that he seems rather to seize the blessing than to entreat for it. Sometimes we must climb to praise by the ladder of prayer, and at other times we must bless God for the past in order to be able in faith to plead for the present and the future. By the aid of God's Spirit we can both pray ourselves up to praise, or praise the Lord till we get into a fit frame for prayer. In Psalm lvii. these words are a song in the cave of Adullam, and are the result of faith which is beginning its battles amid domestic enemies of the most malicious kind: but here they express the continued resolve and praise of a man who has already weathered many a campaign, has overcome all home conflicts, and is looking forward to conquests far and wide. The passage served as a fine close for one Psalm, and it makes an equally noteworthy opening for another. We cannot too often with fixed heart resolve to magnify the Lord; nor need we ever hesitate to use the same words in drawing near to God, for the Lord who cannot endure vain repetitions is equally

weary of vain variations. Some expressions are so admirable that they ought to be used again: who would throw away a cup because he drank from it before? God should be served with the best words, and when we have them they are surely good enough to be used twice. To use the same words continually and never utter a new song would show great slothfulness, and would lead to dead formalism, but we need not regard novelty of language as at all essential to devotion, nor strain after it as an urgent necessity. It may be that our heavenly Father would here teach us that if we are unable to find a great variety of suitable expressions in devotion, we need not in the slightest degree distress ourselves, but may either pray or praise, "using the same words."

1. "*O God, my heart is fixed.*" Though I have many wars to disturb me, and many cares to toss me to and fro, yet I am settled in one mind and cannot be driven from it. My heart has taken hold and abides in one resolve. Thy grace has overcome the fickleness of nature, and I am now in a resolute and determined frame of mind. "*I will sing and give praise.*" Both with voice and music will I extol thee—"I will sing and play," as some read it. Even though I have to shout in the battle I will also sing in my soul, and if my fingers must needs be engaged with the bow, yet shall they also touch the ten-stringed instrument and show forth thy praise. "*Even with my glory*"—with my intellect, my tongue, my poetic faculty, my musical skill, or whatever else causes me to be renowned, and confers honour upon me. It is my glory to be able to speak and not to be a dumb animal, therefore my voice shall show forth thy praise; it is my glory to know God and not to be a heathen, and therefore my instructed intellect shall adore thee; it is my glory to be a saint and no more a rebel, therefore the grace I have received shall bless thee; it is my glory to be immortal and not a mere brute which perisheth, therefore my inmost life shall celebrate thy majesty. When he says *I will*, he supposes that there might be some temptation to refrain, but this he puts on one side, and with fixed heart prepares himself for the joyful engagement. He who sings with a fixed heart is likely to sing on, and all the while to sing well.

2. "*Awake, psaltery and harp.*" As if he could not be content with voice alone, but must use the well-tuned strings, and communicate to them something of his own liveliness. Strings are wonderful things when some men play upon them, they seem to become sympathetic and incorporated with the minstrel, as if his very soul were imparted to them and thrilled through them. Only when a thoroughly enraptured soul speaks in the instrument can music be acceptable with God: as mere musical sound the Lord can have no pleasure therein, he is only pleased with the thought and feeling which are thus expressed. When a man has musical gift, he should regard it as too lovely a power to be enlisted in the cause of sin. Well did Charles Wesley say:—

> "If well I know the tuneful art
> To captivate a human heart,
> The glory, Lord, be thine.
> A servant of thy blessed will,
> I here devote my utmost skill
> To sound the praise divine.
>
> "Thine own musician, Lord, inspire,
> And let my consecrated lyre
> Repeat the Psalmist's part.
> His Son and Thine reveal in me,
> And fill with sacred melody
> The fibres of my heart."

"*I myself will awake early.*" I will call up the dawn. The best and brightest hours of the day shall find me heartily aroused to bless my God. Some singers had need to awake, for they sing in drawling tones, as if they were half asleep; the tune drags wearily along, there is no feeling or sentiment in the singing, but the listener hears only a dull mechanical sound, as if the choir ground out the notes from a worn-out barrel-organ. Oh, choristers, wake up, for this is not a work for dreamers, but such as requires your best powers in their liveliest condition. In all worship this should be the personal resolve of each worshipper: "I myself will awake."

3. "*I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.*" Whoever may come to hear me, devout or profane, believer or heathen, civilized or barbarian, I shall not cease

my music. David seemed inspired to foresee that his Psalms would be sung in every land, from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand. His heart was large, he would have the whole race of man listen to his joy in God, and lo, he has his desire, for his psalmody is cosmopolitan; no poet is so universally known as he. He had but one theme, he sang Jehovah and none beside, and his work being thus made of gold, silver, and precious stones, has endured the fiery ordeal of time, and was never more prized than at this day. Happy man, to have thus made his choice to be the Lord's musician, he retains his office as the Poet Laureate of the kingdom of heaven, and shall retain it till the crack of doom. "*And I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.*" This is written, not only to complete the parallelism of the verse, but to reaffirm his fixed resolve. He would march to battle praising Jehovah, and when he had conquered he would make the captured cities ring with Jehovah's praises. He would carry his religion with him wherever he pushed his conquests, and the vanquished should not hear the praises of David, but the glories of the Lord of Hosts. Would to God that wherever professing Christians travel they would carry the praises of the Lord with them! It is to be feared that some leave their religion when they leave their homes. Nations and peoples would soon know the gospel of Jesus if every Christian traveller were as intensely devout as the Psalmist. Alas, it is to be feared that the Lord's name is profaned rather than honoured among the heathen by many who are named by the name of Christ.

4. "*For thy mercy is great above the heavens,*" and therefore there must be no limit of time, or place, or people, when that mercy is to be extolled. As the heavens over-arch the whole earth, and from above mercy pours down upon men, so shalt thou be praised everywhere beneath the sky. Mercy is greater than the mountains, though they pierce the clouds; earth cannot hold it all, it is so vast, so boundless, so exceeding high that the heavens themselves are over-topped thereby. "*And thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.*" As far as we can see we behold thy truth and faithfulness, and there is much beyond which lies shrouded in cloud, but we are sure that it is all mercy, though it be far above and out of our sight. Therefore shall the song be lifted high and the Psalm shall peal forth without stint of far-resounding music. Here is ample space for the loudest chorus, and a subject which deserves thunders of praise.

5. "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth.*" Let thy praise be according to the greatness of thy mercy. Ah, if we were to measure our devotion thus, with what ardour should we sing! The whole earth with its over-hanging dome would seem too scant an orchestra, and all the faculties of all mankind too little for the hallelujah. Angels would be called in to aid us, and surely they would come. They will come in that day when the whole earth shall be filled with the praises of Jehovah. We long for the time when God shall be universally worshipped, and his glory in the gospel shall be everywhere made known. This is a truly missionary prayer. David had none of the exclusiveness of the modern Jew or the narrow-heartedness of some nominal Christians. For God's sake, that his glory might be everywhere revealed, he longed to see heaven and earth full of the divine praise. Amen, so let it be.

6 That thy beloved may be delivered: save *with* thy right hand, and answer me.

7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

8 Gilead *is* mine; Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah *is* my lawgiver;

9 Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.

10 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

11 *Wilt* not *thou*, O God, *who* hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?

12 Give us help from trouble: for vain *is* the help of man.

Now prayer follows upon praise, and derives strength of faith and holy boldness therefrom. It is frequently best to begin worship with a hymn, and then to bring forth our vials full of odours after the harps have commenced their sweeter sounds.

6. "*That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me.*" Let my prayer avail for all the beloved ones. Sometimes a nation seems to hang upon the petitions of one man. With what ardour should such an one pour out his soul! David does so here. It is easy praying for the Lord's beloved, for we feel sure of a favourable answer, since the Lord's heart is already set upon doing them good: yet it is solemn work to plead when we feel that the condition of a whole beloved nation depends upon what the Lord means to do with us whom he has placed in a representative position. "Answer *me*, that thy many beloved ones may be delivered": it is an urgent prayer. David felt that the case demanded the *right hand* of God,—his wisest, speediest, and most efficient interposition, and he feels sure of obtaining it for himself, since his cause involved the safety of the chosen people. Will the Lord fail to use his right hand of power on behalf of those whom he has set at his right hand of favour? Shall not the beloved be delivered by him who loves them? When our suit is not a selfish one, but is bound up with the cause of God, we may be very bold about it.

7. "*God has spoken in his holiness.*" Aforetime the Lord had made large promises to David, and these his holiness had guaranteed. The divine attributes were pledged to give the son of Jesse great blessings; there was no fear that the covenant God would run back from his plighted word. "*I will rejoice.*" If God has spoken we may well be glad: the very fact of a divine revelation is a joy. If the Lord had meant to destroy us he would not have spoken to us as he has done. But what God has spoken is a still further reason for gladness, for he has declared "the sure mercies of David," and promised to establish his seed upon his throne, and to subdue all his enemies. David greatly rejoiced after the Lord had spoken to him by the mouth of Nathan. He sat before the Lord in a wonder of joy. See 1 Chronicles xvii., and note that in the next chapter David began to act vigorously against his enemies, even as in this Psalm he vows to do. "*I will divide Shechem.*" Home conquests come first. Foes must be dislodged from Israel's territory, and lands properly settled and managed. "*And mete out the valley of Succoth.*" On the other side Jordan as well as on this the land must be put in order, and secured against all wandering marauders. Some rejoicing leads to inaction, but not that which is grounded upon a lively faith in the promise of God. See how David prays, as if he had the blessing already, and could share it among his men: this comes of having sung so heartily unto the Lord his helper. See how he resolves on action, like a man whose prayers are only a part of his life, and vital portions of his action.

8. "*Gilead is mine.*" Thankful hearts dwell upon the gifts which the Lord has given them, and think it no task to mention them one by one. "*Manasseh is mine.*" I have it already, and it is to me the token and assurance that the rest of the promised heritage will also come into my possession in due time. If we gratefully acknowledge what we have we shall be in better heart for obtaining that which as yet we have not received. He who gives us Gilead and Manasseh will not fail to put the rest of the promised territory into our hands. "*Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.*" This tribe furnished David with more than twenty thousand "mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers": the faithful loyalty of this band was, no doubt, a proof that the rest of the tribe were with him, and so he regarded them as the helmet of the state, the guard of his royal crown. "*Judah is my lawgiver.*" There had he seated the government and chief courts of justice. No other tribe could lawfully govern but Judah: till Shiloh came the divine decree fixed the legal power in that state. To us also there is no lawgiver but our Lord who sprang out of Judah; and whenever Rome, or Canterbury, or any other power shall attempt to set up laws and ordinances for the church, we have but one reply—"Judah is my lawgiver." Thus the royal Psalmist rejoiced because his own land had been cleansed of intruders, and a regular government had been set up, and guarded by an ample force, and in all this he found encouragement to plead for victory over his foreign foes. Even thus do we plead with the Lord that as in one land and another Christ's holy gospel has been set up and maintained, so also in other lands the power of his sceptre of grace may be owned till the whole earth shall bow before him, and the Edom of Antichrist shall be crushed beneath his feet.

9. "*Moab is my washpot.*" This nation had shown no friendly spirit to the Israelites, but had continually viewed them as a detested rival, therefore they were to be subdued and made subject to David's throne. He claims by faith the victory, and regards his powerful enemy with contempt. Nor was he disappointed, for "the Moabites became David's servants and brought him gifts" (2 Sam. viii. 2).

As men wash their feet after a long journey, and so are revived, so vanquished difficulties serve to refresh us: we use Moab for a washpot. "*Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.*" It shall be as the floor upon which the bather throws his sandals, it shall lie beneath his foot, subject to his will and altogether his own. Edom was proud, but David throws his slipper at it; its capital was high, but he casts his sandal over it; it was strong, but he hurls his shoe at it as the gage of battle. He had not entered yet into its rock-built fortresses, but since the Lord was with him he felt sure that he would do so. Under the leadership of the Almighty, he felt so secure of conquering even fierce Edom itself that he looks upon it as a mere slave, over which he could exult with impunity. We ought never to fear those who are defending the wrong side, for since God is not with them their wisdom is folly, their strength is weakness, and their glory is their shame. We think too much of God's foes and talk of them with too much respect. Who is this Pope of Rome? His Holiness? Call him not so, but call him His Blasphemy! His Profanity! His Impudence! What are he and his cardinals, and his legates, but the image and incarnation of Antichrist, to be in due time cast with the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire? "*Over Philistia will I triumph.*" David had done so in his youth, and he is all the more sure of doing it again. We read that "David smote the Philistines and subdued them" (2 Sam. viii. 1), even as he had smitten Edom and filled it with his garrisons. The enemies with whom we battled in our youth are yet alive, and we shall have more brushes with them before we die, but, blessed be God, we are by no means dismayed at the prospect, for we expect to triumph over them even more easily than aforetime.

Thy right hand shall thy people aid;
Thy faithful promise makes us strong;
We will Philistia's land invade,
And over Edom chant the song.

Through thee we shall most valiant prove,
And tread the foe beneath our feet;
Through thee our faith shall hills remove,
And small as chaff the mountains beat.

10. Faith leads on to strong desire for the realisation of the promise, and hence the practical question, "*Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?*" The difficulty is plainly perceived. Petra is strong and hard to enter: the Psalmist warrior knows that he cannot enter the city by his own power, and he therefore asks who is to help him. He asks of the right person, even of his Lord, who has all men at his beck, and can say to this man, "show my servant the road," and he will show it, or to this band, "cut your way into the rock city," and they will assuredly do it. Of Edom it is written by Obadiah, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." David looked for his conquest to Jehovah's infinite power, and he looked not in vain.

11. "*Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off?*" This is grand faith which can trust the Lord even when he seems to have cast us off. Some can barely trust him when he pampers them, and yet David relied upon him when Israel seemed under a cloud and the Lord had hidden his face. O for more of this real and living faith. The casting off will not last long when faith so gloriously keeps her hold. None but the elect of God who have obtained "like precious faith" can sing—

"Now thou array'st thine awful face
In angry frowns, without a smile;
We, through the cloud, believe thy grace,
Secure of thy compassion still."

"*And wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?*" Canst thou for ever forsake thine own and leave thy people to be overthrown by thine enemies? The sweet singer is sure that Edom shall be captured, because he cannot and will not believe that God will refrain from going forth with the armies of his chosen people. When we ask ourselves, "Who will be the means of our obtaining a promised blessing?" we need not be discouraged if we perceive no secondary agent, for we may then

fall back upon the great Promiser himself, and believe that he himself will perform his word unto us. If no one else will lead us into Edom, the Lord himself will do it, if he has promised it. Or if there must be visible instruments he will use *our hosts*, feeble as they are. We need not that any new agency should be created, God can strengthen our present hosts and enable them to do all that is needed; all that is wanted even for the conquest of a world is that the Lord go forth with such forces as we already have. He can bring us into the strong city even by such weak weapons as we wield to-day.

12. *"Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man."* This prayer has often fallen from the lips of men who have been bitterly disappointed by their fellows, and it has also been poured out unto the Lord in the presence of some gigantic labour in which mortal power is evidently of no avail. Edom cannot be entered by any human power, yet from its fastnesses the robber bands come rushing down; therefore, O Lord, do thou interpose and give thy people deliverance. Help divine is expected because help human is of no avail. We ought to pray with all the more confidence in God when our confidence in man is altogether gone. When the help of man is vain, we shall not find it vain to seek the help of God.

13 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

13. God's help shall inspire us to help ourselves. Faith is neither a coward nor a sluggard: she knows that God is with her, and therefore she does valiantly; she knows that he will tread down her enemies, and therefore she arises to tread them down in his name. Where praise and prayer have preceded the battle, we may expect to see heroic deeds and decisive victories. *"Through God"* is our secret support; from that source we draw all our courage, wisdom, and strength. *"We shall do valiantly."* This is the public outflow from that secret source: our inward and spiritual faith proves itself by outward and valorous deeds. *"He shall tread down our enemies."* They shall fall before him, and as they lie prostrate he shall march over them, and all the hosts of his people with him. This is a prophecy. It was fulfilled to David, but it remains true to the Son of David and all who are on his side. The church shall yet arouse herself to praise her God with all her heart, and then with songs and hosannas she will advance to the great battle; her foes shall be overthrown and utterly crushed by the power of her God, and the Lord's glory shall be above all the earth. Send it in our time, we beseech thee, O Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Note the different application of the words as they are used in Psalms lvii. and lx., and as they are employed in Psalm cviii. In the former they were prophetic of prosperity yet to come, and consolatory in the expectation of approaching troubles. In the latter, they are eucharistic for mercies already received, and descriptive of the glorious things which God has prepared for his Son and for Israel his people. The Psalm, thus interpreted, announces that Messiah's travail is ended, when the troubles of Israel are brought to a close. David's Son and David's Lord has taken to himself his great power and begun to reign, and sitting upon the throne of glory, he sings this hymn, verses 1 to 6. But with the glory of the Redeemer is associated also the restoration, to favour and happiness, of Israel, his long cast off, but not forgotten people. The setting up of King Messiah upon the holy hill of Zion is graphically described, and all Jehovah's promises are realised in the amplest measure. Messiah is described as a conqueror when the battle is won, and kings and nations, prostrate at his feet, await his sentence and judgment upon them. "I will rejoice. I will divide and portion out Shechem and the valley of Succoth. Gilead it mine, and I give it to the children of Gad and Reuben. And Manasseh also is mine. Ephraim is my strength in war: my horn of defence. Judah is my king." Thus in gracious and flattering words, the victor addresses his confederates and subjects. In a different strain, a strain of sarcasm and contempt, he announces his pleasure respecting his vanquished enemies. "Moab I will use as a vessel to wash my feet in. Over proud Edom I will cast my shoe, as an angry master to a slave

ministering to him. Philistia follow my chariot, and shout forth my triumph." But what is to be understood of the next passage, verse 10, " Who will bring me into Edom ? " Edom is already treated as a vassal state, verse 9. When all the nations become the kingdoms of Messiah, what is this Edom that is to be amongst his latest triumphs ? One passage only seems to bear upon it, Isaiah lxiii. 1, and from this we learn that it is from Edom as the last scene of his vengeance, the conquering Messiah will come forth, " clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." This Edom is therefore named with anxiety, because after its overthrow, Messiah will shine out " King of kings, and Lord of lords," Rev. xix. 13—16.—*R. H. Ryland.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm hath two parts : in the former is the thanksgiving of faith, and promise of praise, in hope of obtaining all which the church is here to pray for (ver. 1—5). In the latter part is the prayer for preservation of the church, ver. 6, with confidence to be heard and helped, whatsoever impediment appear, against all who stand out against Christ's kingdom, whether within the visible church (ver. 7, 8), or whether without, such as are professed enemies unto it (ver. 9, 10, 11), which prayer is followed forth (ver. 12), and comfortably closed with assurance of the Church's victory by the assistance of God, ver. 13.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—" *O God, my heart is fixed.*" The wheels of a chariot revolve, but the axletree turns not ; the sails of a mill move with the wind, but the mill itself moves not ; the earth is carried round its orbit, but its centre is fixed. So should a Christian be able, amidst changing scenes and changing fortunes, to say, " *O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed.*"—*G. S. Bowes, in " Illustrative Gatherings,"* 1862.

Verse 1.—" *My heart is fixed.*" The prophet saith *his heart was ready*, so the old translation hath it ; the new translation, " *My heart is fixed.*" The word in the Hebrew signifies, first, *ready*, or *prepared*. Then, secondly, it signifies *fixed*. We first fit, prepare a thing, sharpen it, before we drive it into the ground, and then drive it in and fix it. So ask seriously and often, that thy heart may be ready, and may also be fixed, and this by a *habit* which brings readiness and fixedness, as in other holy duties, so in that of meditation.—*Nathanael Ranew, in " Solitude improved by Divine Meditation,"* 1670.

Verse 1.—Meditation is a fixed duty. It is not a cursory work. Man's thoughts naturally labour with a great inconsistency ; but meditation chains them, and fastens them upon some spiritual object. The soul when it meditates lays a command on itself, that the thoughts which are otherwise flitting and feathery should fix upon its object ; and so this duty is very advantageous. As we know a garden which is watered with sudden showers is more uncertain in its fruit than when it is refreshed with a constant stream ; so when our thoughts are sometimes on good things, and then run off ; when they only take a glance of a holy object, and then flit away, there is not so much fruit brought into the soul. In meditation, then, there must be a fixing of the heart upon the object, a steeping the thoughts, as holy David : " *O God, my heart is fixed.*" We must view the holy object presented by meditation, as a limner who views some curious piece, and carefully heeds every shade, every line and colour ; as the Virgin Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. Indeed, meditation is not only the busying the thoughts, but the centering of them ; not only the employing of them, but the staking them down upon some spiritual affair. When the soul, meditating upon something divine, saith as the disciples in the transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 4), " It is good to be here."—*John Wells, in the " Practical Sabbatarian,"* 1668.

Verse 1.—" *With my glory.*" The parallel passage in the Prayer-book version is, " with the best member I have." The tongue, being considered the best member, is here described as the *glory* of man—as that which tends to elevate him in the scale of creation ; and therefore the pious man resolves to employ his speech in giving utterance to the goodness of God. God is glorified by the praise of his redeemed, and the instrument whereby it is effected is man's *glory*.—*The Quiver.*

Verses 1, 2.—As a man first tuneth his instrument, and then playeth on it : so should the holy servant of God first labour to bring his spirit, heart, and affections into a solid and settled frame for worship, and then go to work ; " *My heart is fixed,*" or prepared firmly, " *I will sing and give praise.*" As the glory of man above the brute creatures, is that from a reasonable mind he can express what is his will by his tongue : so the glory of saints above other men, is to have a tongue directed by the heart, for expressing of God's praise : " *I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.*" Under typical terms we are taught to make use of all sanctified

means for stirring of us up into God's service: for this the Psalmist intendeth, when he saith, "*Awake psaltery and harp.*" We ourselves must first be stirred up to make right use of the means, before the means can be fit to stir us up: therefore saith he, "*I myself will awake right early.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verses 1—5.—After David has professed a purpose of praising God (verses 1, 2, 3) he tells you, next, the proportion that is between the attributes which he praiseth in God, and his praise of him. The greatness of the attributes "*mercy and truth*" we have in verse 4, "*Thy truth reaches unto the clouds*"; and there is an answerable greatness in his praises of God for them, verse 5: "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth.*" He wisheth and endeavoureth to exalt him as high in his praises as he is in himself; to exalt him above the earth, above the heaven, and the clouds.—*Henry Jeanes.*

Verse 2.—With reference to this passage the Talmud says, "A cithern used to hang above David's bed; and when midnight came the north wind blew among the strings, so that they sounded of themselves; and forthwith he arose and busied himself with the Tôra until the pillar of the dawn ascended." Rashi observes, "The dawn awakes the other kings; but I, said David, will awake the dawn."—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 2.—When the Hebrew captives were sitting in sorrow "by the waters of Babylon," they wept, and hung their harps on the willows, and could not be prevailed upon by the conquerors to sing "the songs of Zion in that land" (Ps. cxxxvii. 1, 4). But when "the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, then was their mouth filled with laughter and their tongue with singing" (cxxvi. 1, 2). Then the "*psaltery and harp*" of former generations "*awoke*" (v. 2). The old songs revived on their lips, and the melodies of David acquired new charms for them.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 2.—"*Awake early.*"

> "Yet never sleep the sun up; prayer should
> Dawn with the day, there are set awful hours
> 'Twixt heaven and us; the manna was not good
> After sun-rising, for day sullies flowers."
>
> *Henry Vaughan*, 1621—1695.

Verse 4.—"*For thy mercy is great,*" etc. His mercy is great—that mercy sung of lately (Ps. cvii. 1 and 43). It is "*from* above the heavens" (מֵעַל־שָׁמַיִם); *i.e.*, coming down to us as do drops of a fertilizing shower; even as the "*Peace on earth,*" of Luke ii. 14, was first "peace in heaven" (Luke xix. 38).—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 4.—The mercy of God was then great *above* the heavens, when the God-man, Christ Jesus, was raised to the highest heavens, and the truth of our salvation established on the very throne of God.—*W. Wilson.*

Verses 4, 5.—There is more stuff and substance of good in the Lord's promises than the sharpest-sighted saint did or can perceive; for when we have followed the promise, to find out all the truth which is in it, we meet with a cloud of unsearchable riches, and are forced to leave it there; for so much is included in this, "*Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.*" The height of our praising of God is to put the work of praising God upon himself, and to point him out unto others as going about the magnifying of his own name, and to be glad for it, as here; "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verses 4, 5, 6.—There is great confidence here, and, as ever, mercy to the soul which knows itself and comes before truth. But, then, for its own deliverance and blessing, it looks to the exalting of God. This shows it must be a holy, righteous exalting. "Be *thou* exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth; that thy beloved may be delivered." It is a blessed thought, and this is what faith has to lay hold of now, even in the time of trial, that our blessing and God's glory are one, only we must put his glory first.—*J. N. Darby.*

Verse 6.—"*That thy beloved may be delivered,*" etc. The church is the Lord's "*beloved,*" or the incorporation, more loved than anything else in the world, therefore here called, "*Thy beloved.*" Because the church is God's beloved, the care of it should be most in our mind, and the love of the preservation of it should draw forth our prayer most in favour of it. "*That thy beloved may be delivered: save.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 6.—God being thus exalted according to the majesty of his truth, the special plea of the Spirit of Jesus, founded on the mercy which has throned itself above the heavens, is next urged (verse 6) on behalf of the nation of his ancient love. "*That thy beloved* [*ones*] *may be delivered, save with thy right hand and answer me.*" It is the Spirit of Immanuel that thus makes intercession for his well-remembered people according to God. His land should be rid in due time of those who had burdened it with wickedness. For *God* had spoken in his holiness concerning the portion of his anointed.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 7.—"*God hath spoken*" the word of assurance. This refers to all the words in which the land of their inheritance was defined, especially Gen. xv. 18, Ex. xxiii. 31, Deut. xi. 24, and that remarkable prediction concerning the perpetuity of David's line, 2 Sam. vii., which must have made a deep impression on his mind. From these passages it is evident that Aram as well as Edom was included in the full compass of the territory designed for Israel, and that David felt himself to be in the path of destiny when he was endeavouring to extend his sway from the river of Egypt to the great river, even the Euphrates. "*In his holiness,*" in the immutable integrity of his heart, which was an infallible guarantee for the fulfilment of his promise. "*I will exult.*" This is the exclamation of the representative head of the people, when he ponders upon the divine utterance.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 7.—Faith closing with a promise, will furnish joy to the believer before he enjoys the performance of it: "*God hath spoken,*" saith he, "*I will rejoice.*"—*—David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—He, the second David, had accomplished his warfare, and had crowned himself with victory. Henceforth he would apportion the kingdoms of the world and subdue them unto himself at his own holy will. Ephraim and Judah, Moab and Philistia, the Jew first and then the Gentile, were to be brought to confess him as their Lord.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 8.—"*Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.*" As *Ephraim* was the most populous of all the tribes, he appropriately terms it *the strength of his head,* that is, of his dominions.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9.—*Moab,* who had enticed Israel to impurity, is made a vessel for its purifying. *Edom,* descendant of him who despised his birthright, is deprived of his independence;—for "flinging a shoe" was a sign of the transference of a prior claim on land. Ruth iv. 7.—*William Kay.*

Verse 9.—"*Moab is my washpot.*" The office of washing the feet was in the East commonly performed by slaves, and the meanest of the family, as appears from what Abigail said to David when he took her to wife, "Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord," 1 Sam. xxv. 41; and from the fact of our Saviour washing his disciples' feet, to give them an example of humility, John xiii. 5. The word νιπτὴρ, used in this last passage, signifies in general *a washing-pot,* and is put for the word ποδόνιπτρον, the term which the Greeks, in strict propriety of speech, applied to a vessel for washing the feet. As this office was servile, so the vessels employed for this purpose were a mean part of household stuff. Gataker and Le Clerc illustrate this text from an anecdote related by Herodotus, concerning Amasis, king of Egypt, who expressed the meanness of his own origin by comparing himself to a pot for washing the feet in (Herod, Lib. ii. c. 172). When, therefore, it is said, "*Moab is my washing-pot,*" the complete and servile subjection of Moab to David is strongly marked. This is expressed, not by comparing Moab to a slave who performs the lowest offices, as presenting to his master the basin for washing his feet, but by comparing him to the mean utensil itself. See 2 Sam. viii. 2; 1 Chron. xviii. 1, 2, 12, 13.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin on Ps. lx.*

Verse 9.—"*Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast my shoe.*" This somewhat difficult expression may be thus explained. Moab and Edom were to be reduced to a state of lowest vassalage to the people of God. The one was to be like a pot or tub fit only for washing the feet in, while the other was to be like the domestic slave standing by to receive the sandals thrown to him by the person about to perform his ablutions, that he might first put them by in a safe place, and then come and wash his master's feet.—"*Rays from the East.*"

Verse 9.—"*Over Edom will I cast my shoe.*" David overthrew their army in

the " Valley of Salt," and his general, Joab, following up the victory, destroyed nearly the whole male population (1 Kings xi. 15, 16), and placed Jewish garrisons in all the strongholds of Edom (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14). In honour of that victory the Psalmist-warrior may have penned the words in Ps. lx. 8, " *Over Edom will I cast my shoe.*"—*J. L. Porter, in " Smith's Dictionary of the Bible."*

Verse 10.—The strong city built on the rock, even man's hardened heart, stronger and more stony than the tomb, he had conquered and overcome; and in him and his might are his people to carry on his warfare, and to cast down all the strongholds of human pride, and human stubbornness, and human unrepentance.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verses 10, 11.—It is not conclusive evidence that we are not called to undertake a given work or perform a certain duty, because it is very difficult, or even impossible for us to succeed without special help from God. If God calls David to take Petra, he shall take Petra.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 11.—" *Wilt not thou, O God?*" His hand shall lead him even to Petra, which seems unapproachable by human strength. That marvellous rock-city of the Edomites is surrounded by rocks some of which are three hundred feet high, and a single path twelve in width leads to it. The city itself is partly hewn out of the cloven rocks, and its ruins, which however belong to a later period, fill travellers with amazement.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 11.—He who came victorious from Edom, and with garments dyed in the blood of his passion from Bozrah, will henceforth now go forth with the armies of the true Israel,—for what are hosts without the Lord of hosts?—to subdue their enemy.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 12.—" *Give us help from trouble,*" etc. He who would have God's help in any business, must quit confidence in man's help; and the seeing of the vanity of man's help must make the believer to trust the more unto, and expect the more confidently God's help, as here is done. " *Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.*"—*David Dickson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—Parts of two former Psalms are here united in one. I. Repetition is here sanctioned by inspiration. 1. Of what? Of hymns, of prayers, of sermons. 2. For what? For impression. " As we said before so say I now again, if any man preach," etc. For confirmation: " Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice ": they went through Syria and Cilicia again confirming the churches. For preservation: quotations authenticate originals, a writing in two copies is safer than in one. II. Rearrangement is here sanctioned by inspiration. 1. Different experiences may require it. Sometimes the heart is most fixed at the commencement of a spiritual exercise: sometimes at its close. Hence the commencement of one Psalm is the close of another. 2. Different occasions may require it. As of sorrow and joy. Two parts of two different hymns may better harmonise with a particular occasion than either one separately considered.—*G. R.*

Verse 1.—I. The best occupation: praise. Worthy—1. Of the heart in its best condition. 2. Of the best faculties of the best educated man. II. The best resolution. 1. Arising from a fixed heart. 2. Deliberately formed. 3. Solemnly expressed. 4. Joyfully executed. III. The best results. To praise God makes a man both happier and holier, stronger and bolder—as the succeeding verses show.

Verse 2.—The benefit of early rising. The sweetness of the Sabbath morning early prayer-meeting.

Verse 3.—We must not restrain praise because we are overheard by strangers, nor because the listeners are heathen, or ungodly, or are numerous, or are likely to oppose. There may be all the more reason for our outspoken praise of God when we are in such circumstances.

Verses 4, 5.—The greatness of mercy, the height of truth, and the immensity of the Divine praise.

Verse 6.—The prayer of a representative man. There are times when to answer *me* is to deliver the church—at such times I have a powerful plea.

Verse 7.—God's voice the cause of joy, the reason for action, the guarantee of success.

Verse 8.—"*Judah is my lawgiver.*" Jesus the sole and only lawmaker in the church.

Verse 11 (*first clause*).—Confidence in a frowning God.

Verse 11 (*second clause*).—Whether God will go forth with our hosts depends upon—Who they are? What is their object? What is their motive and spirit? What weapons do they use? etc.

Verse 12.—The failure of human help is often—1. The direct cause of our prayer. 2. The source of urgency in pleading. 3. A powerful argument for the pleader. 4. A distinct reason for hope to light upon.

Verse 13.—How, when, and why a believer should do valiantly.

PSALM CIX.

To the Chief Musician.—*Intended therefore to be sung, and sung in the temple service! Yet is it by no means easy to imagine the whole nation singing such dreadful imprecations. We ourselves, at any rate, under the gospel dispensation, find it very difficult to infuse into the Psalm a gospel sense, or a sense at all compatible with the Christian spirit; and therefore one would think the Jews must have found it hard to chant such strong language without feeling the spirit of revenge excited; and the arousal of that spirit could never have been the object of divine worship in any period of time—under law or under gospel. At the very outset this title shows that the Psalm has a meaning with which it is fitting for men of God to have fellowship before the throne of the Most High: but what is that meaning? This is a question of no small difficulty, and only a very childlike spirit will ever be able to answer it.*

A Psalm of David. *Not therefore the ravings of a malicious misanthrope, or the execrations of a hot, revengeful spirit. David would not smite the man who sought his blood, he frequently forgave those who treated him shamefully; and therefore these words cannot be read in a bitter, revengeful sense, for that would be foreign to the character of the son of Jesse. The imprecatory sentences before us were penned by one who with all his courage in battle was a man of music and of tender heart, and they were meant to be addressed to God in the form of a Psalm, and therefore they cannot possibly have been meant to be mere angry cursing.*

Unless it can be proved that the religion of the old dispensation was altogether hard, morose, and Draconian, and that David was of a malicious, vindictive spirit, it cannot be conceived that this Psalm contains what one author has ventured to call "a pitiless hate, a refined and insatiable malignity." To such a suggestion we cannot give place, no, not for an hour. But what else can we make of such strong language? Truly this is one of the hard places of Scripture, a passage which the soul trembles to read; yet as it is a Psalm unto God, and given by inspiration, it is not ours to sit in judgment upon it, but to bow our ear to what God the Lord would speak to us therein.

This Psalm refers to Judas, for so Peter quoted it; but to ascribe its bitter denunciations to our Lord in the hour of his sufferings is more than we dare to do. These are not consistent with the silent Lamb of God, who opened not his mouth when led to the slaughter. It may seem very pious to put such words into his mouth; we hope it is our piety which prevents our doing so. *See our first note from Perowne on page* 445.

Division.—*In the first five verses David humbly pleads with God that he may be delivered from his remorseless and false-hearted enemies. From* 6—20, *filled with a prophetic furor, which carries him entirely beyond himself, he denounces judgment upon his foes, and then from* 21—31 *he returns to his communion with God in prayer and praise. The central portion of the Psalm in which the difficulty lies must be regarded not as the personal wish of the Psalmist in cool blood, but as his prophetic denunciation of such persons as he describes, and emphatically of one special "son of perdition" whom he sees with prescient eye. We would all pray for the conversion of our worst enemy, and David would have done the same; but viewing the adversaries of the Lord, and doers of inquity,* as such, and as incorrigible, *we cannot wish them well; on the contrary, we desire their overthrow and destruction. The gentlest hearts burn with indignation when they hear of barbarities to women and children, of crafty plots for ruining the innocent, of cruel oppression of helpless orphans, and gratuitous ingratitude to the good and gentle. A curse upon the perpetrators of the atrocities in Turkey may not be less virtuous than a blessing upon the righteous. We wish well to all mankind, and for that very reason we sometimes blaze with indignation against the inhuman wretches by whom every law which protects our fellow creatures is trampled down, and every dictate of humanity is set at nought.*

EXPOSITION.

HOLD not thy peace, O God of my praise;
2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.
3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause.
4 For my love they are my adversaries: but I *give myself unto* prayer.
5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

1. "*Hold not thy peace.*" Mine enemies speak, be thou pleased to speak too. Break thy solemn silence, and silence those who slander me. It is the cry of a man whose confidence in God is deep, and whose communion with him is very close and bold. Note, that he only asks the Lord to speak: a word from God is all a believer needs. "*O God of my praise.*" Thou whom my whole soul praises, be pleased to protect my honour and guard my praise. "My heart is fixed," said he in the former Psalm, "I will sing and give praise," and now he appeals to the God whom he had praised. If we take care of God's honour he will take care of ours. We may look to him as the guardian of our character if we truly seek his glory. If we live to God's praise, he will in the long run give us praise among men.

2. "*For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me.*" Wicked men must needs say wicked things, and these we have reason to dread; but in addition they utter false and deceitful things, and these are worst of all. There is no knowing what may come out of mouths which are at once lewd and lying. The misery caused to a good man by slanderous reports no heart can imagine but that which is wounded by them: in all Satan's armoury there are no worse weapons than deceitful tongues. To have a reputation, over which we have watched with daily care, suddenly bespattered with the foulest aspersions, is painful beyond description; but when wicked and deceitful men get their mouths fully opened we can hardly expect to escape any more than others. "*They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.*" Lying tongues cannot lie still. Bad tongues are not content to vilify bad men, but choose the most gracious of saints to be the objects of their attacks. Here is reason enough for prayer. The heart sinks when assailed with slander, for we know not what may be said next, what friend may be alienated, what evil may be threatened, or what misery may be caused to us and others. The air is full of rumours, and shadows impalpable flit around; the mind is confused with dread of unseen foes and invisible arrows. What ill can be worse than to be assailed with slander,

> "Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue
> Outvenoms all the worms of Nile"?

3. "*They compassed me about also with words of hatred.*" Turn which way he would they hedged him in with falsehood, misrepresentation, accusation, and scorn. Whispers, sneers, insinuations, satires, and open charges filled his ear with a perpetual buzz, and all for no reason, but sheer hate. Each word was as full of venom as an egg is full of meat: they could not speak without showing their teeth. "*And fought against me without a cause.*" He had not provoked the quarrel or contributed to it, yet in a thousand ways they laboured to "corrode his comfort, and destroy his ease." All this tended to make the suppliant feel the more acutely the wrongs which were done to him.

4. "*For my love they are my adversaries.*" They hate me because I love them. One of our poets says of the Lord Jesus—"Found guilty of excess of love." Surely it was his only fault. Our Lord might have used all the language of this complaint most emphatically—they hated him without a cause and returned him hatred for love. What a smart this is to the soul, to be hated in proportion to the gratitude which it deserved, hated by those it loved, and hated because of its love. This was a cruel case, and the sensitive mind of the Psalmist writhed under it. "*But I give myself unto prayer.*" He did nothing else but pray. He became prayer as they became malice. This was his answer to his enemies, he appealed from men and their injustice to the Judge of all the earth, who must do right. True bravery alone can teach a man to leave his traducers unanswered, and carry the case unto the Lord.

"Men cannot help but reverence the courage that walketh amid calumnies unanswering."

"He standeth as a gallant chief unheeding shot or shell."

5. "*And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.*" Evil for good is devil-like. This is Satan's line of action, and his children upon earth follow it greedily: it is cruel, and wounds to the quick. The revenge which pays a man back in his own coin has a kind of natural justice in it; but what shall be said of that baseness which returns to goodness the very opposite of what it has a right to expect? Our Lord endured such base treatment all his days, and, alas, in his members, endures it still.

Thus we see the harmless and innocent man upon his knees pouring out his lamentation: we are now to observe him rising from the mercy-seat, inspired with prophetic energy, and pouring forth upon his foes the forewarnings of their doom. We shall hear him speak like a judge clothed with stern severity, or like the angel of doom robed in vengeance, or as the naked sword of justice when she bares her arm for execution. It is not for himself that he speaks so much as for all the slandered and the down-trodden, of whom he feels himself to be the representative and mouthpiece. He asks for justice, and as his soul is stung with cruel wrongs he asks with solemn deliberation, making no stint in his demands. To pity malice would be malice to mankind; to screen the crafty seekers of human blood would be cruelty to the oppressed. Nay, love, and truth, and pity lift their wounds to heaven, and implore vengeance on the enemies of the innocent and oppressed; those who render goodness itself a crime, and make innocence a motive for hate, deserve to find no mercy from the great Preserver of men. Vengeance is the prerogative of God, and as it would be a boundless calamity if evil were for ever to go unpunished, so it is an unspeakable blessing that the Lord will recompense the wicked and cruel man, and there are times and seasons when a good man ought to pray for that blessing. When the Judge of all threatens to punish tyrannical cruelty and falsehearted treachery, virtue gives her assent and consent. Amen, so let it be, saith every just man in his inmost soul.

6 Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.

8 Let his days be few; *and* let another take his office.

9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.

10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places.

11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour.

12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.

13 Let his posterity be cut off; *and* in the generation following let their name be blotted out.

14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.

15 Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.

17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.

18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.

19 Let it be unto him as the garment *which* covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.

20 *Let* this *be* the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

6. *"Set thou a wicked man over him."* What worse punishment could a man have? The proud man cannot endure the proud, nor the oppressor brook the rule of another like himself. The righteous in their patience find the rule of the wicked a sore bondage; but those who are full of resentful passions, and haughty aspirations, are slaves indeed when men of their own class have the whip hand of them. For Herod to be ruled by another Herod would be wretchedness enough, and yet what retribution could be more just? What unrighteous man can complain if he finds himself governed by one of like character? What can the wicked expect but that their rulers should be like themselves? Who does not admire the justice of God when he sees fierce Romans ruled by Tiberius and Nero, and Red Republicans governed by Marat and Robespierre? *"And let Satan stand at his right hand."* Should not like come to like? Should not the father of lies stand near his children? Who is a better right-hand friend for an adversary of the righteous than the great adversary himself? The curse is an awful one, but it is most natural that it should come to pass: those who serve Satan may expect to have his company, his assistance, his temptations, and at last his doom.

7. *"When he shall be judged, let him be condemned."* He judged and condemned others in the vilest manner, he suffered not the innocent to escape; and it would be a great shame if in his time of trial, being really guilty, he should be allowed to go free. Who would wish Judge Jeffries to be acquitted if he were tried for perverting justice? Who would desire Nero or Caligula to be cleared if set at the bar for cruelty? When Shylock goes into court, who wishes him to win his suit? *"And let his prayer become sin."* It is sin already, let it be so treated. To the injured it must seem terrible that the black-hearted villain should nevertheless pretend to pray, and very naturally do they beg that he may not be heard, but that his pleadings may be regarded as an addition to his guilt. He has devoured the widow's house, and yet he prays. He has put Naboth to death by false accusation and taken possession of his vineyard, and then he presents prayers to the Almighty. He has given up villages to slaughter, and his hands are red with the blood of babes and maidens, and then he pays his vows unto Allah! He must surely be accursed himself who does not wish that such abominable prayers may be loathed of heaven and written down as new sins. He who makes it a sin for others to pray will find his own praying become sin. When he at last sees his need of mercy, mercy herself shall resent his appeal as an insult. "Because that he remembered not to show mercy," he shall himself be forgotten by the God of grace, and his bitter cries for deliverance shall be regarded as mockeries of heaven.

8. *"Let his days be few."* Who would desire a persecuting tyrant to live long? As well might we wish length of days to a mad dog. If he will do nothing but mischief the shortening of his life will be the lengthening of the world's tranquillity. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days,"—this is bare justice to them, and great mercy to the poor and needy. *"And let another take his office."* Perhaps a better man may come, at any rate it is time a change were tried. So used were the Jews to look upon these verses as the doom of traitors, of cruel and deceitful mind, that Peter saw at once in the speedy death of Judas a fulfilment of this sentence, and a reason for the appointment of a successor who should take his place of oversight. A bad man does not make an office bad: another may use with benefit that which he perverted to ill uses.

9. *"Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow."* This would inevitably be the case when the man died, but the Psalmist uses the words in an emphatic sense, he would have his widow "a widow indeed," and his children so friendless as to be orphaned in the bitterest sense. He sees the result of the bad man's decease, and includes it in the punishment. The tyrant's sword makes many children fatherless, and who can lament when his barbarities come home to his own family, and they, too, weep and lament. Pity is due to all orphans and widows as such, but a father's atrocious actions may dry up the springs of pity. Who mourns that Pharaoh's children lost their father, or that Sennacherib's wife became a widow? As Agag's sword had made women childless none wept when Samuel's weapon made his mother childless among women. If Herod had been slain when he had just murdered the innocents at Bethlehem no man would have lamented it even though Herod's wife would have become a widow. These awful maledictions are not for common men to use, but for judges, such as David was, to pronounce over the enemies of God and man. A judge may sentence a man to death whatever the consequences may be to the criminal's family, and in this there will be no feeling of private revenge, but

simply the doing of justice because evil must be punished. We are aware that this may not appear to justify the full force of these expressions, but it should never be forgotten that the case supposed is a very execrable one, and the character of the culprit is beyond measure loathsome and not to be met by any common abhorrence. Those who regard a sort of effeminate benevolence to all creatures alike as the acme of virtue are very much in favour with this degenerate age; these look for the salvation of the damned, and even pray for the restoration of the devil. It is very possible that if they were less in sympathy with evil, and more in harmony with the thoughts of God, they would be of a far sterner and also of a far better mind. To us it seems better to agree with God's curses than with the devil's blessings; and when at any time our heart kicks against the terrors of the Lord we take it as a proof of our need of greater humbling, and confess our sin before our God.

10. "*Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg.*" May they have neither house nor home, settlement nor substance; and while they thus wander and beg may it ever be on their memory that their father's house lies in ruins,—"*let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.*" It has often been so: a race of tyrants has become a generation of beggars. Misused power and abused wealth have earned the family name universal detestation, and secured to the family character an entail of baseness. Justice herself would award no such doom except upon the supposition that the sin descended with the blood; but supreme providence which in the end is pure justice has written many a page of history in which the imprecation of this verse has been literally verified.

We confess that as we read some of these verses we have need of all our faith and reverence to accept them as the voice of inspiration; but the exercise is good for the soul, for it educates our sense of ignorance, and tests our teachableness. Yes, Divine Spirit, we can and do believe that even these dread words from which we shrink have a meaning consistent with the attributes of the Judge of all the earth, though his name is LOVE. How this may be we shall know hereafter.

11. "*Let the extortioner catch all that he hath.*" A doom indeed. Those who have once fallen into the hands of the usurer can tell you what this means: it were better to be a fly in the web of a spider. In the most subtle, worrying, and sweeping manner the extortioner takes away, piece by piece, his victim's estate, till not a fraction remains to form a pittance for old age. Baiting his trap, watching it carefully, and dexterously driving his victim into it, the extortioner by legal means performs unlawful deeds, *catches* his bird, strips him of every feather, and cares not if he die of starvation. He robs with law to protect him, and steals with the magistrate at his back: to fall into his clutches is worse than to be beset by professed thieves. "*And let the strangers spoil his labour,*"—so that his kindred may have none of it. What with hard creditors and pilfering strangers the estate must soon vanish! Extortion drawing one way, and spoliation the other, a known moneylender and an unknown robber both at work, the man's substance would soon disappear, and rightly so, for it was gathered by shameless means. This too has been frequently seen. Wealth amassed by oppression has seldom lasted to the third generation: it was gathered by wrong and by wrong it is scattered, and who would decree that it should be otherwise? Certainly those who suffer beneath high-handed fraud will not wish to stay the retributions of the Almighty, nor would those who see the poor robbed and trampled on desire to alter the divine arrangements by which such evils are recompensed even in this life.

12. "*Let there be none to extend mercy unto him.*" He had no mercy, but on the contrary, he crushed down all who appealed to him. Loath to smite him with his own weapon, stern justice can do no otherwise, she lifts her scales and sees that this, too, must be in the sentence. "*Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.*" We are staggered to find the children included in the father's sentence, and yet as a matter of fact children do suffer for their father's sins, and, as long as the affairs of this life are ordered as they are, it must be so. So involved are the interests of the race, that it is quite impossible in all respects to view the father and the child apart. No man among us could desire to see the fatherless suffer for their deceased father's fault, yet so it happens, and there is no injustice in the fact. They share the parent's ill-gotten gain or rank, and their aggrandizement is a part of the object at which he aimed in the perpetration of his crimes; to allow them to prosper would be an encouragement and reward of his iniquity; therefore, for these and other reasons, a man perishes not alone in his iniquity. The ban is on his race. If the man were innocent this would be a crime; if he were but commonly guilty it

would be excessive retribution; but when the offence reeks before high heaven in unutterable abomination, it is little marvel that men devote the man's whole house to perpetual infamy, and that so it happeneth.

13. "*Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.*" Both from existence and from memory let them pass away till none shall know that such a vile brood existed. Who wishes to see the family of Domitian or Julian continued upon earth? Who would mourn if the race of Tom Paine or of Voltaire should come to an utter end? It would be undesirable that the sons of the utterly villainous and bloodthirsty should rise to honour, and if they did they would only revive the memory of their father's sins.

14. This verse is, perhaps, the most terrible of all, but yet as a matter of fact children do procure punishment upon their parents' sins, and are often themselves the means of such punishment. A bad son brings to mind his father's bad points of character; people say, "Ah, he is like the old man. He takes after his father." A mother's sins also will be sure to be called to mind if her daughter becomes grossly wicked. "Ah," they will say, "there is little wonder, when you consider what her mother was." These are matters of everyday occurrence. We cannot, however, pretend to explain the righteousness of this malediction, though we fully believe in it. We leave it till our heavenly Father is pleased to give us further instruction. Yet, as a man's faults are often learned from his parents, it is not unjust that his consequent crimes should recoil upon him.

15. Again, he wishes that his father's sins may follow up the transgressor and assist to fill the measure of his own iniquities, so that for the whole accumulated load the family may be smitten with utter extinction. A king might justly wish for such an end to fall upon an incorrigible brood of rebels; and of persecutors, continuing in the same mind, the saints might well pray for their extinction; but the passage is dark; and we must leave it so. It must be right or it would not be here, but how we cannot see. Why should we expect to understand all things? Perhaps it is more for our benefit to exercise humility, and reverently worship God over a hard text, than it would be to comprehend all mysteries.

16. "*Because that he remembered not to shew mercy.*" Because he had no memory to show mercy the Judge of all will have a strong memory of his sins. So little mercy had he ever shown that he had forgotten how to do it, he was without common humanity, devoid of compassion, and therefore only worthy to be dealt with after the bare rule of justice. "*But persecuted the poor and needy man.*" He looked on poor men as a nuisance upon the earth, he ground their faces, oppressed them in their wages, and treated them as the mire of the streets. Should he not be punished, and in his turn laid low? All who know him are indignant at his brutalities, and will glory to see him overthrown. "*That he might even slay the broken in heart.*" He had malice in his heart towards one who was already sufficiently sorrowful, whom it was a superfluity of malignity to attack. Yet no grief excited sympathy in him, no poverty ever moved him to relent. No, he would kill the heart-broken and rob their orphans of their patrimony. To him groans were music, and tears were wine, and drops of blood precious rubies. Would any man spare such a monster? Will it not be serving the ends of humanity if we wish him gone, gone to the throne of God to receive his reward? If he will turn and repent, well: but if not, such a upas tree ought to be felled and cast into the fire. As men kill mad dogs if they can, and justly too, so may we lawfully wish that cruel oppressors of the poor were removed from their place and office, and, as an example to others, made to smart for their barbarities.

17. "*As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him.*" Deep down in every man's soul the justice of the *lex talionis* is established. Retaliation, not for private revenge, but as a measure of public justice, is demanded by the Psalmist and deserved by the crime. Surely the malicious man cannot complain if he is judged by his own rule, and has his corn measured with his own bushel. Let him have what he loved. They are his own chickens, and they ought to come home to roost. He made the bed, let him lie on it himself. As he brewed, so let him drink. So all men say as a matter of justice, and though the higher law of love overrides all personal anger, yet as against the base characters here described even Christian love would not wish to see the sentence mitigated. "*As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.*" He felt no joy in any man's good, nor would he lift a hand to do another a service, rather did he frown and fret when another prospered or mirth was heard under his window; what, then, can we wish him? Blessing was wasted on him, he hated

those who gently sought to lead him to a better mind; even the blessings of providence he received with murmurs and repinings, he wished for famine to raise the price of his corn, and for war to increase his trade. Evil was good to him, and good he counted evil. If he could have blasted every field of corn in the world he would have done so if he could have turned a penny by it, or if he could thereby have injured the good man whom he hated from his very soul. What can we wish for him? He hunts after evil, he hates good; he lays himself out to ruin the godly whom God has blessed, he is the devil's friend, and as fiendish as his patron; should things go well with such a being? Shall we "wish him good luck in the name of the Lord"? To invoke blessings on such a man would be to participate in his wickedness, therefore let blessing be far from him, so long as he continues what he now is.

18, 19. He was so openly in the habit of wishing ill to others that he seemed to wear robes of cursing, therefore let it be as his raiment girded and belted about him, yea, let it enter as water into his bowels, and search the very marrow of his bones like a penetrating oil. It is but common justice that he should receive a return for his malice, and receive it in kind, too.

20. This is the summing up of the entire imprecation, and fixes it upon the persons who had so maliciously assailed the inoffensive man of God. David was a man of gentle mould, and remarkably free from the spirit of revenge, and therefore we may here conceive him to be speaking as a judge or as a representative man, in whose person great principles needed to be vindicated and great injuries redressed.

Thousands of God's people are perplexed with this Psalm, and we fear we have contributed very little towards their enlightenment, and perhaps the notes we have gathered from others, since they display such a variety of view, may only increase the difficulty. What then? Is it not good for us sometimes to be made to feel that we are not yet able to understand all the word and mind of God? A thorough bewilderment, so long as it does not stagger our faith, may be useful to us by confounding our pride, arousing our faculties, and leading us to cry, "What I know not teach thou me."

21 But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy *is* good, deliver thou me.

22 For I *am* poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.

23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust.

24 My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness.

25 I became also a reproach unto them: *when* they looked upon me they shaked their heads.

26 Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy:

27 That they may know that this *is* thy hand; *that* thou, LORD, hast done it.

28 Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice.

29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.

30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude.

31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save *him* from those that condemn his soul.

21. "*But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake.*" How eagerly he turns from his enemies to his God! He sets the great THOU in opposition to all his adversaries, and you see at once that his heart is at rest. The words are very indistinct, and though our version may not precisely translate them, yet it in a remarkable manner hits upon the sense and upon the obscurity which hang over it. "Do thou for me"—what shall he do? Why, do whatever he thinks fit. He leaves himself in the Lord's hands, dictating nothing, but quite content so long as his God will but undertake for him. His plea is not his own merit, but *the name.* The saints have always felt this to be their most mighty plea. God

himself has performed his grandest deeds of grace for the honour of his name, and his people know that this is the most potent argument with him. What the Lord himself has guarded with sacred jealousy we should reverence with our whole hearts and rely upon without distrust. *"Because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me."* Not because I am good, but because thy mercy is good: see how the saints fetch their pleadings in prayer from the Lord himself. God's mercy is the star to which the Lord's people turn their eye when they are tossed with tempest and not comforted, for the peculiar bounty and goodness of that mercy have a charm for weary hearts. When man has no mercy we shall still find it in God. When man would devour we may look to God to deliver. His name and his mercy are two firm grounds for hope, and happy are those who know how to rest upon them.

22. *"For I am poor and needy."* When he does plead anything about himself he urges not his riches or his merits, but his poverty and his necessities: this is gospel supplication, such as only the Spirit of God can indite upon the heart. This lowliness does not comport with the supposed vengeful spirit of the preceding verses: there must therefore be some interpretation of them which would make them suitable in the lips of a lowly-minded man of God. *"And my heart is wounded within me."* The Lord has always a tender regard to broken-hearted ones, and such the Psalmist had become: the undeserved cruelty, the baseness, the slander of his remorseless enemies had pierced him to the soul, and this sad condition he pleads as a reason for speedy help. It is time for a friend to step in when the adversary cuts so deep. The case has become desperate without divine aid; now, therefore, is the Lord's time.

23. *"I am gone like the shadow when it declineth."* I am a mere shadow, a shadow at the vanishing point, when it stretches far, but is almost lost in the universal gloom of evening which settles over all, and so obliterates the shadows cast by the setting sun. Lord, there is next to nothing left of me, wilt thou not come in before I am quite gone? *"I am tossed up and down as the locust,"* which is the sport of the winds, and must go up or down as the breeze carries it. The Psalmist felt as powerless in his distress as a poor insect, which a child may toss up and down at its pleasure. He entreats the divine pity, because he had been brought to this forlorn and feeble condition by the long persecution which his tender heart had endured. Slander and malice are apt to produce nervous disorders and to lead on to pining diseases. Those who use these poisoned arrows are not always aware of the consequences; they scatter firebrands and death and say it is sport.

24. *"My knees are weak through fasting;"* either religious fasting, to which he resorted in the dire extremity of his grief, or else through loss of appetite occasioned by distress of mind. Who can eat when every morsel is soured by envy? This is the advantage of the slanderer, that he feels nothing himself, while his sensitive victim can scarcely eat a morsel of bread because of his sensitiveness. However, the good God knoweth all this, and will succour his afflicted. The Lord who bids *us* confirm the feeble knees will assuredly do it himself. *"And my flesh faileth of fatness."* He was wasted to a skeleton, and as his body was emaciated, so was his soul bereft of comfort: he was pining away, and all the while his enemies saw it and laughed at his distress. How pathetically he states his case; this is one of the truest forms of prayer, the setting forth of our sorrow before the Lord. Weak knees are strong with God, and failing flesh has great power in pleading.

25. *"I became also a reproach unto them."* They made him the theme of ridicule, the butt of their ribald jests: his emaciation by fasting made him a tempting subject for their caricatures and lampoons. *"When they looked upon me they shaked their heads."* Words were not a sufficient expression of their scorn, they resorted to gestures which were meant both to show their derision and to irritate his mind. Though these things break no bones, yet they do worse, for they break and bruise far tenderer parts of us. Many a man who could have answered a malicious speech, and so have relieved his mind, has felt keenly a sneer, a putting out of the tongue, or some other sign of contempt. Those, too, who are exhausted by such fasting and wasting as the last verse describes are generally in a state of morbid sensibility, and therefore feel more acutely the unkindness of others. What they would smile at during happier seasons becomes intolerable when they are in a highly nervous condition.

26. *"Help me, O Lord my God."* Laying hold of Jehovah by the appropriating word *my*, he implores his aid both to help him to bear his heavy load and to enable him to rise superior to it. He has described his own weakness, and the strength and fury of his foes, and by these two arguments he urges his appeal with double force.

This is a very rich, short, and suitable prayer for believers in any situation of peril, difficulty, or sorrow. "*O save me according to thy mercy.*" As thy mercy is, so let thy salvation be. The measure is a great one, for the mercy of God is without bound. When man has no mercy it is comforting to fall back upon God's mercy. Justice to the wicked is often mercy to the righteous, and because God is merciful he will save his people by overthrowing their adversaries.

27. "*That they may know that this is thy hand.*" Dolts as they are, let the mercy shown to me be so conspicuous that they shall be forced to see the Lord's agency in it. Ungodly men will not see God's hand in anything if they can help it, and when they see good men delivered into their power they become more confirmed than ever in their atheism; but all in good time God will arise and so effectually punish their malice and rescue the object of their spite that they will be compelled to say like the Egyptian magicians, "this is the finger of God." "*That thou, Lord, hast done it.*" There will be no mistaking the author of so thorough a vindication, so complete a turning of the tables.

28. "*Let them curse, but bless thou,*" or, "*they will curse and thou wilt bless.*" Their cursing will then be of such little consequence that it will not matter a straw. One blessing from the Lord will take the poison out of ten thousand curses of men. "*When they arise, let them be ashamed.*" They lift up themselves to deal out another blow, to utter another falsehood, and to watch for its injurious effects upon their victim, but they see their own defeat and are filled with shame. "*But let thy servant rejoice.*" Not merely as a man protected and rescued, but as God's servant in whom his master's goodness and glory are displayed when he is saved from his foes. It ought to be our greatest joy that the Lord is honoured in our experience; the mercy itself ought not so much to rejoice us as the glory which is thereby brought to him who so graciously bestows it.

29. "*Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame.*" It is a prophecy as well as a wish, and may we read both in the indicative and the imperative. Where sin is the underclothing, shame will soon be the outer vesture. He who would clothe good men with contempt shall himself be clothed with dishonour. "*And let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.*" Let their confusion be broad enough to wrap them all over from head to foot, let them bind it about them and hide themselves in it, as being utterly afraid to be seen. Now they walk abroad unblushingly and reveal their own wickedness, acting as if they either had nothing to conceal or did not care whether it was seen or no; but they will be of another mind when the great Judge deals with them, then will they entreat mountains to hide them and hills to fall upon them, that they may not be seen: but all in vain, they must be dragged to the bar with no other covering but their own confusion.

30. "*I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth.*" Enthusiastically, abundantly, and loudly will he extol the righteous Lord, who redeemed him from all evil; and that not only in his own chamber or among his own family, but in the most public manner. "*Yea, I will praise him among the multitude.*" Remarkable and public providences demand public recognition, for otherwise men of the world will judge us to be ungrateful. We do not praise God to be heard of men, but as a natural sense of justice leads every one to expect to hear a befriended person speak well of his benefactor, we therefore have regard to such natural and just expectations, and endeavour to make our praises as public as the benefit we have received. The singer in the present case is the man whose heart was wounded within him because he was the laughing-stock of remorseless enemies; yet now he praises, praises greatly, praises aloud, praises in the teeth of all gainsayers, and praises with a right joyous spirit. Never let us despair, yea, never let us cease to praise.

31. "*For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor.*" God will not be absent when his people are on their trial; he will hold a brief for them and stand in court as their advocate, prepared to plead on their behalf. How different is this from the doom of the ungodly who has Satan at his right hand (verse 6). "*To save him from those that condemn his soul.*" The court only met as a matter of form, the malicious had made up their minds to the verdict, they judged him guilty, for their hate condemned him, yea, they pronounced sentence of damnation upon the very soul of their victim: but what mattered it? The great King was in court, and their sentence was turned against themselves. Nothing can more sweetly sustain the heart of a slandered believer than the firm conviction that God is near to all who are wronged, and is sure to work out their salvation.

O Lord, save us from the severe trial of slander: deal in thy righteousness with

all those who spitefully assail the characters of holy men, and cause all who are smarting under calumny and reproach to come forth unsullied from the affliction, even as did thine only-begotten Son. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—" *Mysterious* " was the one word written opposite this Psalm in the pocket Bible of a late devout and popular writer. It represents the utter perplexity with which it is very generally regarded.—*Joseph Hammond.*

Whole Psalm.—In this Psalm David is supposed to refer to Doeg the Edomite, or to Ahithophel. It is the most imprecatory of the Psalms, and may well be termed *the Iscariot Psalm.* What David here refers to his mortal enemy, finds its accomplishment in the betrayer of the Son of David. It is from the 8th verse that Peter infers the necessity of filling up the vacancy occasioned by the death of Judas: it was, says he, predicted that another should take his office.—*Paton J. Gloag, in " A Commentary on the Acts,"* 1870.

Whole Psalm.—We may consider Judas, at the same time, as the virtual head of the Jewish nation in their daring attempt to dethrone the Son of God. The doom pronounced, and the reasons for it, apply to the Jews as a nation, as well as to the leader of the band who took Jesus.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—Is it possible that this perplexing and distressing Psalm presents us after all, not with David's maledictions upon his enemies, but with their maledictions upon him? Not only do I hold this interpretation to be quite legitimate, I hold it to be by far the more natural and reasonable interpretation.—*Joseph Hammond.*

[In Dr. Cox's *Expositor*, Vol. II. p. 225, this theory is well elaborated by Mr. Hammond, but we cannot for an instant accept it.—*C. H. S.*]

The Imprecations of the Psalm.—The language has been justified, not as the language of David, but as the language of Christ, exercising his office of Judge, or, in so far as he had laid aside that office during his earthly life, calling upon his Father to accomplish the curse. It has been alleged that this is the prophetic foreshadowing of the solemn words, " Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born " (Matt. xxvi. 24). The curse in the words of Chrysostom is, " a prophecy in the form of a curse " (*προφητεία ἐν εἴδει ἀρᾶς*).

The strain which such a view compels us to put on much of the language ought to have led long since to its abandonment. Not even the words denounced by our Lord against the Pharisees can really be compared to the anathemas which are here strung together. Much less is there any pretence for saying that those words so full of deep and holy sorrow, addressed to the traitor in the gospels, are merely another expression of the appalling denunciations of the Psalm. But terrible as these undoubtedly are, to be accounted for by the spirit of the Old Dispensation, not to be defended by that of the New, still let us learn to estimate them aright.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

The Imprecations.—These imprecations are not appropriate in the mouth of the suffering Saviour. It is not the spirit of Zion but of Sinai which here speaks out of the mouth of David; the spirit of Elias, which, according to Luke ix. 58, is not the spirit of the New Testament. This wrathful spirit is overpowered by the spirit of love. But these anathemas are still not on this account so many beatings of the air. There is in them a divine energy, as in the blessing and cursing of every man who is united to God, and more especially of a man whose temper of mind is such as David's. They possess the same power as the prophetical threatenings, and in this sense they are regarded in the New Testament as fulfilled in the son of perdition (John xvii. 12). To the generation of the time of Jesus they were a deterrent warning not to offend against the Holy One of God, and this *Psalmus Ischarioticus* (Acts i. 20) will ever be such a mirror of warning to the enemies and persecutors of Christ and his church.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

The Imprecations.—Respecting the imprecations contained in this Psalm, it will be proper to keep in mind what I have said elsewhere, that when David forms such maledictions, or expresses his desire for them, he is not instigated by any immoderate carnal propensity, nor is he actuated by zeal without knowledge, nor is he influenced by any private personal considerations. These three matters must

be carefully weighed, for in proportion to the amount of self-esteem which a man possesses, is he so enamoured with his own interests as to rush headlong upon revenge. Hence it comes to pass that the more a person is devoted to selfishness, he will be the more immoderately addicted to the advancement of his own individual interests. This desire for the promotion of personal interest gives birth to another species of vice: for no one wishes to be avenged upon his enemies because such a thing would be right and equitable, but because it is the means of gratifying his own spiteful propensity. Some, indeed, make a pretext of righteousness and equity in the matter; but the spirit of malignity, by which they are inflamed, effaces every trace of justice, and blinds their minds.

When the two vices, selfishness and carnality, are corrected, there is still another thing demanding correction: we must repress the ardour of foolish zeal, in order that we may follow the Spirit of God as our guide. Should any one, under the influence of perverse zeal, produce David as an example of it, that would not be an example in point; for to such a person may be very aptly applied the answer which Christ returned to his disciples, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of," Luke ix. 55. How detestable a piece of sacrilege is it on the part of the monks, and especially the Franciscan friars, to pervert this Psalm by employing it to countenance the most nefarious purposes! If a man harbour malice against a neighbour, it is quite a common thing for him to engage one of those wicked wretches to curse him, which he would do by daily repeating this Psalm. I know a lady in France who hired a parcel of these friars to curse her own and only son in these words. But I return to David, who, free from all inordinate passion, breathed forth his prayers under the influence of the Holy Spirit.—*John Calvin.*

The Imprecations.—It is possible, as Tholuck thinks, that in some of the utterances in what are called the *vindictive Psalms*, especially the imprecations in Psalm cix., unholy personal zeal may have been mingled with holy zeal, as was the case seemingly with the two disciples James and John, when the Lord chided their desire for vengeance (Luke ix. 54—56). But, in reality, the feeling expressed in these Psalms may well be considered as virtuous anger, such as Bishop Butler explains and justifies in his sermons on "Resentment and the Forgiveness of Injuries," and such as Paul teaches in Ephesians iv. 26, "Be ye angry, and sin not." Anger against sin and a desire that evildoers may be punished, are not opposed to the spirit of the gospel, or to that love of enemies which our Lord both enjoined and exemplified. If the emotion or its utterance were essentially sinful, how could Paul wish the enemy of Christ and the perverter of the gospel to be accursed (ἀνάθεμα, 1 Cor. xvi. 22; Gal. i. 8); and especially, how could the spirit of the martyred saints in heaven call on God for vengeance (Rev. vi. 10), and join to celebrate its final execution (Rev. xix. 1—6); Yea, resentment against the wicked is so far from being necessarily sinful that we find it manifested by the Holy and Just One himself, when in the days of his flesh he looked around on his hearers "with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mark iii. 5); and when in "the great day of his wrath" (Rev. vi. 17), he shall say to "all workers of iniquity" (Luke xiii. 27), "Depart from me, ye cursed" (Matt. xxv. 41).—*Benjamin Davies* (1814—1875), *in Kitto's Cyclopædia.*

Imprecations.—It is true that this vengeance is invoked on the head of the betrayer of Christ: and we may profit by reading even the severest of the passages when we regard them as dictated by a burning zeal for the honour of Jehovah, a righteous indignation and a jealousy of love, and generally, if not universally, as denunciations of just judgment against the obstinate enemies of Christ, and all who obey not the Gospel of God. At the same time, these passages cannot be fully accounted for without a frank recognition of the fact that the Psalter was conceived and written under the Old Covenant. That dispensation was more stern than ours. God's people had with all other peoples a conflict with sword and spear. They wanted to tread down their enemies, to crush the heathen; and thought it a grand religious triumph for a righteous man to wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, Ps. lviii. 10; lxviii. 23. Now the struggle is without carnal weapons, and the tone of the dispensation is changed.—*Donald Fraser*, 1873.

Imprecations.—Imprecations of judgment on the wicked *on the hypothesis of their continued impenitence* are not inconsistent with simultaneous efforts to bring them to repentance; and Christian charity itself can do no more than labour for the sinners' conversion. The law of holiness requires us to pray for the fires of divine retribution: the law of love to seek meanwhile to rescue the brand from the burning. The last prayer of the martyr Stephen was answered not by any general averting

of doom from a guilty nation, but by the conversion of an individual persecutor to the service of God.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Imprecations.—That explanation which regards the "enemies" as spiritual foes has a large measure of truth. It commended itself to a mind so far removed from mysticism as Arnold's. It is most valuable for devout private use of the Psalter. For, though we are come to Mount Sion, crested with the eternal calm, the opened ear can hear the thunder rolling along the peaks of Sinai. In the Gospel, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Sin is utterly hateful to God. The broad gates are flung wide open to the city that lies foursquare towards all the winds of heaven; for its ruler is divinely tolerant. But there shall in no wise enter it anything that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination; for he is divinely intolerant too. And thus when, in public or private, we read these Psalms of imprecation, there is a lesson that comes home to us. We must read them, or dishonour God's word. Reading them, we must depart from sin, or pronounce judgment upon ourselves. Drunkenness, impurity, hatred, every known sin of flesh or spirit—these, and not mistaken men, are the worst enemies of God and of his Christ. Against these we pray in our Collects for Peace at Morning and Evening Prayer—"Defend us in all assaults of our enemies, that by thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness." These were the dark hosts which swept through the Psalmist's vision when he cried, "Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed," Ps. vi. 10.—*William Alexander, in "The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity,"* 1877.

Imprecations.—I cannot forbear the following little incident that occurred the other morning at family worship. I happened to be reading one of the imprecatory Psalms, and as I paused to remark, my little boy, a lad of ten years, asked with some earnestness: "Father, do you think it right for a good man to pray for the destruction of his enemies like that?" and at the same time referred me to Christ as praying for his enemies. I paused a moment to know how to shape the reply so as to fully meet and satisfy his enquiry, and then said, "My son, if an assassin should enter the house by night, and murder your mother, and then escape, and the sheriff and citizens were all out in pursuit, trying to catch him, would you not pray to God that they might succeed and arrest him, and that he might be brought to justice?" "Oh, yes!" said he, "but I never saw it so before. I did not know that that was the meaning of these Psalms." "Yes," said I, "my son, the men against whom David prays were bloody men, men of falsehood and crime, enemies to the peace of society, seeking his own life, and unless they were arrested and their wicked devices defeated, many innocent persons must suffer." The explanation perfectly satisfied his mind.—*F. G. Hibbard, in "The Psalms chronologically arranged,"* 1856.

Title.—It is worth noting, that the superscription, "*to the chief Musician*," to the precentor (לַמְנַצֵּחַ), proves it to have been designed, such as it is, for the Tabernacle or Temple service of song.—*Joseph Hammond, in "The Expositor,"* 1875.

Title.—Syriac inscription.—The verbs of the Hebrew text through nearly the whole of the imprecatory part of this Psalm are read in the singular number, as if some particular subject were signified by the divine prophet. But our translators always change the verbs into the plural number; which is not done by the Seventy and the other translators, who adhere more closely to the Hebrew text. But without doubt this has arisen, because the Syriac Christians explain this Psalm of the sufferings of Christ, which may be understood from the Syriac inscription of this Psalm, and which in Polyglottis Angl. reads thus:—"*Of David: when they made Absolom king, he not knowing: and on account of this he was killed. But to us it sets forth the sufferings of Christ.*" For this reason all these imprecations are transferred to the enemies or murderers of Jesus Christ.—*John Augustus Dathe,* 1731—1791.

Verse 1.—"*Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise.*" All commendation or manifestation of our innocence is to be sought from God when we are assailed with calumnies on all sides. When God is silent, we should cry all the more strongly; nor should we because of such delay despair of help, nor impatiently cease from praying.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*Hold not thy peace.*" How appropriately this phrase is applied to God, with whom *to speak* is the same as *to do*; for by his word he made all things. Rightly, therefore, is he said to be silent when he seems not to notice the things which are done by the wicked, and patiently bears with their malice. The Psalmist

begs him to rise up and speak with the wicked in his wrath, and thus take deserved vengeance on them; which is as easy for him to do as for an angry man to break forth in words of rebuke and blame. This should be to us a great solace against the wickedness of this last age, which God, our praise, can restrain with one little word.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*O God.*" As the most innocent and holy servants of God are subject to heavy slanders and false calumnies raised against them, so the best remedy and relief in this case is to go to God, as here the Psalmist doth.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*God of my praise.*" Thou, who art the constant object of my praise and thanksgiving, Jer. xvii. 14.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 1.—"*O God of my praise.*" In denominating him *the God of his praise*, he intrusts to him the vindication of his innocence, in the face of the calumnies by which he was all but universally assailed.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"*The God of* MY *praise.*" Give me leave, in order to expound it the better, to expostulate. What, David, were there no saints but thyself that gave praise to God? Why dost thou then seem to appropriate and engross God unto thyself, as the God of thy praise, as if none praised him else but thee? It is because his soul had devoted all the praise he was able to bestow on any, unto the Lord alone; as whom he had set himself to praise, and praise alone. As of a beloved son we use to say, "the son of my love." And further, it is as if he had said, If I had all the ability of all the spirits of men and angels wherewith to celebrate him, I would bestow them all on him, he is the God of my praise. And as he was David's, so he should be ours.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2.—"*For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me.*" Speak, says Arnobius, to thine own conscience, O man of God, thou who art following Christ; and when the mouth of the wicked and deceitful man is opened concerning thee, rejoice and be secure; because while the mouth of the wicked is opened for thy slander in the earth, the mouth of God is opened for thy praise in heaven.—*Lorinus.*

Verses 2, 3.—Note, first, the detractor opens his mouth, that he may pour forth his poison, and that he may devour his victim. Hence, David says, "the mouth of the wicked is opened against me." Note, secondly, the detractor is talkative—"*They have spoken*," etc. The mouth of the detractor is a broken pitcher leaking all over. Note, thirdly, detraction springs from hatred, "they compassed me about also *with words of hatred.*" In Greek, ἐκύκλωσάν με, *i.e.*, as in a circle they have enclosed me. St. Climacus says, "Detraction is *odii partus*, a subtle disease, a fat but hidden leech which sucks the blood of charity and after destroys it.—*Lorinus.*

Verses 2—5.—"*The mouth of the wicked*," etc.

Vice—deformed
Itself, and ugly, and of flavour rank—
To rob fair Virtue of so sweet an incense,
And with it to anoint and salve its own
Rotten ulcers, and perfume the path that led
To death, strove daily by a thousand means:
And oft succeeded to make Virtue sour
In the world's nostrils, and its loathly self
Smell sweetly. Rumour was the messenger
Of defamation, and so swift that none
Could be the first to tell an evil tale.
. . . . . .
'Twas Slander filled her mouth with lying words
Slander, the foulest whelp of Sin. The man
In whom this spirit entered was undone.
His tongue was set on fire of hell; his heart
Was black as death; his legs were faint with haste
To propagate the lie his tongue had framed
His pillow was the peace of families
Destroyed, the sigh of innocence reproached,
Broken friendships, and the strife of brotherhoods.
Yet did he spare his sleep, and hear the clock
Number the midnight watches, on his bed
Devising mischief more; and early rose,
And made most hellish meals of good men's names.
. . . . . .

Peace fled the neighbourhood in which he made
His haunts ; and, like a moral pestilence,
Before his breath the healthy shoots and blooms
Of social joy and happiness decayed.
Fools only in his company were seen,
And those forsaken of God, and to themselves
Given up. The prudent man shunned him and his house
As one who had a deadly moral plague.

—*Robert Pollok.*

Verse 3.—Although an individual may be absent, so that he cannot corporeally be encompassed and fought with ; nevertheless, so great is the force and malice of an envenomed tongue, that an absent man may be none the less dangerously surrounded and warred against. Thus David, though absent and driven into exile, was nevertheless surrounded and assailed by the calumnies of Doeg and the other flatterers of Saul, so that at length he was also corporeally surrounded ; in which contest he would clearly have perished unless he had been divinely delivered : see 1 Sam. xxiii. And this kind of surrounding and assault is so much the more deadly as it is so much the less possible to be avoided. For who can be so innocent as to escape the snares of a back-biting and calumnious tongue ? What place can be so remote and obscure as that this evil will not intrude when David could not be safe in the mountains and caves of the rocks ?—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—None prove worse enemies than those that have received the greatest kindnesses, when once they turn unkind. As the sharpest vinegar is made of the purest wine, and pleasant meats turn to the bitterest humours in the stomach ; so the highest love bestowed upon friends, being ill digested or corrupt, turns to the most unfriendly hatred, *proximorum odia sunt acerrima.—Abraham Wright.*

Verse 4.—"*For my love they are my adversaries*" ; that's an ill requital ; but how did David requite them ? We may take his own word for it ; he tells us how, "*But I give myself unto prayer*" ; yea, he seemed a man wholly given unto prayer. The elegant conciseness of the Hebrew is, "*But I prayer*" ; we supply it thus, "*But I give myself unto prayer.*" They are sinning against me, requiting my love with hatred, "*But I give myself unto prayer.*" But for whom did he pray ? Doubtless he prayed and prayed much for himself ; he prayed also for them. We may understand these words, "*I give myself unto prayer,*" two ways. First, I pray against their plots and evil dealings with me (prayer was David's best strength always against his enemies), yet that was not all. But, secondly, "*I give myself unto prayer,*" that the Lord would pardon their sin, and turn their hearts, when they are doing me mischief ; or, though they have done me mischief, I am wishing them the best good. David (in another place) showed what a spirit of charity he was clothed with, when no reproof could hinder him from praying for others, Ps. cxli. 5.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—The translator of the Syriac version has inserted in the 4th verse ܘܨܠܝ ܠܗܘܢ ܟܕ ܡܨܠܝ ܐܢܐ "*and I have prayed for them,*" as if he had copied them from the words of our Lord in Matt. v. 44, where in the Syriac version of the New Testament we have exactly the same construction. It is in keeping with the inscription of the Psalm, which applies it directly to Christ. It would seem as if the Translator understood this verse of the crucifixion and of the Redeemer's prayer for his murderers, or as if the only way to understand the elliptical language of the Psalmist was from the teaching and example of our Lord.—*E. T. Gibson, of Crayford.*

Verse 4.—"*I prayer.*" The Messiah says in this prophetic Psalm, "*I am prayer.*" During his pilgrimage on earth, his whole life was communion with God ; and now in his glory he is constantly making intercession for us. But this does not exhaust the idea, "*I am prayer.*" He not merely prayed and is now praying, he not merely teaches and influences us to pray, but he *is* prayer, the fountain and source of all prayer, as well as the foundation and basis of all answers to our petitions. He is the Word in this sense also. From all eternity his Father heard him, heard him as interceding for that world which, created through him, he represented, and in which, through him, divine glory was to be revealed. In the same sense, therefore, in which he is light and gives light, in which he is life and resurrection, and therefore quickens, Jesus *is* prayer.—*Adolph Saphir, in Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, 1870.

Verse 4.—Persecuted saints are men of prayer, yea, they are as it were made

up all of prayer. David prayed before; but, oh, when his enemies fell a persecuting of him, then he gave himself up wholly to prayer. Oh, then he was more earnest, more fervent, more frequent, more diligent, more constant, and more abundant in the work of prayer! When Numa, king of the Romans, was told that his enemies were in arms against him, he did but laugh at it, and answered, "And I do sacrifice"; so when persecutors arm themselves against the people of God, they do but divinely smile and laugh at it, and give themselves the more up to prayer. When men arm against them, then they arm themselves with all their might to the work of prayer; and woe, woe to them that have armies of prayers marching against them.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 4.—"*I give myself unto prayer.*" The instruction to ourselves from these words is most comforting and precious. Are we bowed down with sorrow and distress? "*I give myself unto prayer.*" Are we persecuted, and reviled, and compassed about with words of hatred? "*I give myself unto prayer.*" Has death entered our dwellings? and as we gaze in heart-broken anguish on the no longer answering look of one who was our earthly stay, and we feel as if all hope as well as all help were gone, still there remains the same blessed refuge for all the Lord's sorrowing ones, "*I give myself unto prayer.*" In the allegory of the ancients, Hope was left at the bottom of the casket, as the sweetener of human life; but God, in far richer mercy, gives prayer as the balm of human trial.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 4.—A Christian is all over prayer: he prays at rising, at lying down, and as he walks: like a prime favourite at court, who has the key to the privy stairs, and can wake his prince by night.—*Augustus Montague Toplady*, 1740—1778.

Verse 6.—"*Set thou a wicked man over him,*" etc. Here commences that terrible series of maledictions, unparalleled in Holy Writ, as directed against an individual sinner, albeit it is little more than a special reduplication of the national woes denounced in Leviticus xxvi. and Deuteronomy xxviii.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 6.—"*Set thou a wicked man over him.*" The first thing that the Psalmist asks is, that his foe might be subjected to the evil of having a man placed over him like himself:—a man regardless of justice, truth, and right; a man who would respect character and propricty no more than he had himself done. It is, in fact, a prayer that he might be punished *in the line of his offences.* It cannot be wrong that a man should be treated as he treats others; and it cannot be in itself wrong to desire that a man should be treated according to his character and deserts, for this is the object of all law, and this is what all magistrates and legislators are endeavouring to secure.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6.—"*Over* HIM." Consider what would have been the effect if these denunciations had been against the *sins* of men and not, as they are in these passages, against the *sinners.* Men would have said, "My sin is denounced, not *me.*" What a license would have been given to sin! The depraved nature would have said, "if *I* am not condemned, but only my *sin*, I can do as I like; I shall not be called to account for it. I *love* sin and can go on in it." This is what men would have said. There would have been no effort to get rid of it. Why should there be, if only *sin* is condemned and not the *sinner*? But man's *sin* is identified with *himself*, and this makes him tremble. God's wrath rests on *him* because of his sin. Condemnation is awaiting *him* because of his sin. This makes him anxious to get rid of it.—*Frederick Whitfield.*

Verse 6.—"*Let Satan stand at his right hand.*" It appears to have been the custom at trials before the Jewish tribunals for a pleader to stand at the right hand of the accused: See Zech. iii. 1, where are described Joshua the High Priest, standing before the Angel of Jehovah, and the adversary (שָׂטָן, *Satan*, as here) standing at his right hand to oppose him. See also verse 31.—*John Le Clerc*, 1657—1736.

Verse 6.—"*Let Satan stand at his right hand.*" Hugo observes that the Devil is on the left hand of those whom he persecutes in temporal things: on the right of those whom he rules in spiritual things: before the face of those who are on their guard against his wiles: behind those who are not foreseeing and prudent: above those whom he treads down: below, and beneath the feet of those who tread him down. A recent Spanish author,* writing in that language, thinks that there cannot be anything worse than that man who diligently and of set purpose injures others by speaking deceitfully, by surrounding with speeches of hatred, by attacking without

* *Peter Vega* On the Penitential Psalms.

cause, by slandering, by returning evil for good, and hatred for love: therefore, in this place it is desired that a wicked man may be set over such a one, and the devil at his right hand; as if he should be doomed to take the lowest place because he is the worst.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 6.—"*At his right hand.*" The strength or force of the body shows itself principally in the right hand. Therefore, he who wishes to obstruct another, and to hinder his endeavour, stands at his right hand; and thus easily parries his stroke or attempt. This I consider to be the most simple meaning of this passage which shows that God represses and restrains the ragings of the enemies of the Church, who withstand each other by their opposing efforts, either from envy or from other causes. Thus, 2 Sam. xvii., the counsels of Ahithophel are broken by Hushai; and in one day we see that the counsels and attempts of our enemies have been frequently and wonderfully restrained by the hindrances they have given one to the other: in which matter the goodness of God is to be discerned.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 6.—He beginneth to prophesy what they should receive for their great impiety, detailing their lot in such a manner as if he wished its realisation from a desire of revenge; while he declareth what was to happen with the most absolute certainty, and what of God's justice would worthily come upon such. Some not understanding this mode of predicting the future under the appearance of wishing evil, suppose hatred to be returned for hatred, and an evil will for an evil will: since in truth it belongeth to few to distinguish in what way the punishment of the wicked pleaseth the accuser, who longeth to satiate his enmity; and in how widely different a way it pleaseth the judge, who with a righteous mind punisheth sins. For the former returneth evil for evil, but the judge when he punisheth doth not return evil for evil, since he returneth justice to the unjust; and what is just is surely good. He therefore punisheth not from delight in another's misery, which is evil for evil, but from love of justice, which is good for evil. Let not then the blind pervert the light of the Scriptures, imagining that God doth not punish sins: nor let the wicked flatter themselves, as if he rendered evil for evil. Let us therefore hear the sequel of this divine composition; and in the words of one who seemeth to wish ill, let us recognise the predictions of a prophet; and let us see God making a just retribution, raising our mind up to his eternal laws.—*Augustine.*

Verses 6—19.—These terrible curses are repeated with many words and sentences, that we may know that David has not let these words fall rashly or from any precipitate impulse of mind; but, the Holy Spirit having dictated, he employs this form of execration that it may be a perpetual prophecy or prediction of the bitter pains and destruction of the enemies of the Church of God. Nor does David imprecate these punishments so much on his own enemies and Judas the betrayer of Christ; but that similar punishments await all who fight against the kingdom of Christ.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 6—20.—I had also this consideration, that if I should now venture all for God, I engaged God to take care of my concernments; but if I forsook him and his ways for fear of any trouble that should come to me or mine, then I should not only falsify my profession, but should count also that my concernments were not so sure, if left at God's feet, while I stood to and for his name, as they would be if they were under my own tuition [or care] though with the denial of the way of God. This was a smarting consideration, and was as spurs unto my flesh. This Scripture [Ps. cix. 6—20] also greatly helped it to fasten the more upon me, where Christ prays against Judas, that God would disappoint him in all his selfish thoughts, which moved him to sell his master: pray read it soberly. I had also another consideration, and that was, the dread of the torments of hell, which I was sure they must partake of, that for fear of the cross do shrink from their profession of Christ, his words, and laws, before the sons of men. I thought also of the glory that he had prepared for those that, in faith, and love, and patience, stood to his ways before them. These things, I say, have helped me, when the thoughts of the misery that both myself and mine might for the sake of my profession be exposed to, hath lain pinching on my mind.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 7.—"*Let his prayer become sin.*" As the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" Evidently his prayer in reference to his *trial* for crime; his prayer that he might be acquitted and discharged. Let it be seen in the result that such a prayer was *wrong*; that it was, in fact, a prayer for the discharge of a bad man—a man who *ought* to be punished. Let it be seen to be what a prayer *would* be if offered for a murderer, or violator of the law,—a prayer that he might escape or not be punished. All must see that *such* a prayer would be wrong, or would be a " sin "; and so, in his own case, it would be equally true that a prayer *for his own escape* would be " sin." The Psalmist asks that, by the result of the trial, such a prayer might be *seen* to be in fact a prayer for the protection and escape of a *bad man*. A just sentence in the case would demonstrate this; and this is what the Psalmist prays for.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" Kimchi in his annotations thus explains these words: *i.e.*, " let it be without effect, so that he does not get what he asks for; let him not hit the mark at which he aims: for חָטָא sometimes has the meaning ' *to miss.*' "—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" St. Jerome says that Judas's prayer was turned into sin, by reason of his want of hope when he prayed: and thus it was that in despair he hanged himself.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" The prayer of the hypocrite is sin formally, and it is sin in the effect, that is, instead of getting any good by it, he gets hurt, and the Lord instead of helping him because he prayeth, punisheth him because of the sinfulness of his prayers. Thus his prayer becomes sin to him, because he receives no more respect from God when he prays than when he sins. And sin doth not only mingle with his prayer (as it doth with the prayers of the holiest), but his prayer is nothing else but a mixture or mingle-mangle (as we speak) of many sins.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—" *Let his prayer become sin.*" We should be watchful in prayer lest the most holy worship of God should become an abomination: Isaiah i. 15; lxvi. 3; James iv. 3; Hosea vii. 14; Amos v. 23. If the remedy be poisoned, how shall the diseased be cured?—*Martin Geier.*

Verses 7—19.—These and the following verses, although they contain terrible imprecations, will become less dreadful if we understand them as spoken concerning men pertinaciously cleaving to their vices, against whom only has God threatened punishments; not against those who repent with all their heart, and become thoroughly changed in life.—*John Le Clerc.*

Verse 8.—" *Let his days be few.*" By " *his days,*" he meant the days of his apostleship, which were few; since before the passion of our Lord, they were ended by his crime and death. And as if it were asked, What then shall become of that most sacred number twelve, within which our Lord willed, not without a meaning, to limit his twelve first apostles? he at once addeth, " *and let another take his office.*" As much as to say, let both himself be punished according to his desert, and let his number be filled up. And if any one desire to know how this was done, let him read the Acts of the Apostles.—*Augustine.*

Verse 8.—" *Let another take his office.*" So every man acts, and practically prays, who seeks to remove a bad and corrupt man from office. As such an office must be filled by some one, all the efforts which he puts forth to remove a wicked man tend to bring it about that " another should take his office," and for this it is *right* to labour and pray. The act does not of itself imply malignity or bad feeling, but is consistent with the purest benevolence, the kindest feelings, the strictest integrity, the sternest patriotism, and the highest form of piety.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—" *Let his children be fatherless.*" Helpless and shiftless. A sore vexation to many on their death-beds, and just enough upon graceless persecutors. But happy are they who, when they lie a-dying, can say as Luther did, " *Domine Deus gratias ago tibi quod velueris me esse pauperem, et mendicum,* &c. Lord God, I thank thee for my present poverty, but future hopes. I have not an house, lands, possessions, or monies to leave behind me. Thou hast given me wife and children; behold, I return them back to thee, and beseech thee to nourish them, teach them, keep them safe, as hitherto thou hast done, O thou father of the fatherless, and judge of widows.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 9, 10, 12, 13.—" *His children;* " " *his posterity.*" Though in matters of a civil or judicial character, we have it upon the highest authority that the children

are not to be made accountable for the fathers, nor the fathers for the children, but every transgressor is to bear the penalty of his own sin; yet, in a moral, and in a social and spiritual sense, it is impossible that the fathers should eat sour grapes, and yet that the children's teeth should not be set on edge. The offspring of the profligate and the prodigal may, and often do, avoid the specific vices of the parent; but rarely, if ever, do they escape the evil consequences of those vices. And this re-action cannot be prevented, until it shall please God first to unmake and then to remodel his whole intelligent creation.—*T. Dale, in a Sermon to Heads of Families*, 1839.

Verses 9—13.—Under the Old Covenant, calamity, extending from father to son, was the meed of transgression; prosperity, *vice versa*, of obedience: (see Solomon's prayer, 2 Chron. vi. 23): and these prayers of the Psalmist (cf. Pss. x. 13, xii. 1, lviii. 10, etc.) may express the wish that God's providential government of his people should be asserted in the chastisement of the enemy of God and man.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 10.—"*Let his children be continually vagabonds.*" The word used in the sentence pronounced upon *Cain*, Gen. iv. 12. Compare Ps. lix. 11, 15.—*William Kay.*

Verse 10.—"*Let them seek*," etc. Horsley renders this clause, "*Let them be driven out from the-very-ruins-of their dwellings*," and remarks that the image is that of "vagabonds seeking a miserable shelter among the ruins of decayed or demolished buildings, and not suffered to remain even in such places undisturbed."

Verses 9, 10.—When we consider of whom this Psalm is used there will be no difficulty about it. No language could be more awful than that of verses 6 to 19. It embraces almost every misery we can think of. But could any man be in a more wretched condition than Judas was? Could any words be too severe to express the depth of his misery—of him, who, for three whole years, had been the constant attendant of the Saviour of mankind; who had witnessed his miracles, and had shared his miraculous powers; who had enjoyed all the warnings, all the reproofs of his love, and then had betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver? Can we conceive a condition more miserable than that of Judas? And this Psalm is *a prophecy of the punishment* that should overtake him for his sin. S. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, quotes part of this Psalm, and applies it to Judas: he applies it as a prophecy of the punishment he should suffer on the betrayal of the Son of God.

It is probable that in this Psalm, when it uses the word children, it does not mean those who are his offspring by natural descent, but those *who resemble him*, and *who partake with him in his wickedness*. This is a common meaning of the word sons, or children, in Holy Scripture. As where our blessed Lord tells the Jews, "*Ye are of your father the devil*," he could not mean that the Jews were the natural descendants of the devil, but that they were his children because they did his works. Again, when they are called Abraham's children, it means those who do the works of Abraham. So in this Psalm, where it is foretold that fearful punishment should happen to Judas for the betrayal of his Lord, and should be extended to his children, it means *his associates, his companions, and imitators in wickedness.—F. H. Dunwell, in "A Tract on the Commination Service,"* 1853.

Verses 10, 12, 13.—It is for public ends that the Psalmist prayed that the families of the wicked might be involved in their ruin. These are very terrible petitions; but it is God, not man, who has appointed these calamities as the ordinary consequences of persistence in wickedness. It is God, not man, who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generations. It is because this is the ordinary portion of the transgressors, and *that thus in God's wonted way his abhorrence of the transgressions* of his enemies might be marked, that the Psalmist prays for these calamities. He asks God to do what he had declared he would do, and this for public ends, for he says: "I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth; yea, I will praise him *among the multitude*. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul," verses 30, 31.—*R. A. Bertram, in "The Imprecatory Psalms,"* 1867.

Verses 10—13.—Many penurious fathers are so scraping for their children, that they ravish the poor children of God; but the hand of the Lord shall be against their young lions. Nah. ii. 13. They join house to house, and field to field, but their children shall be "*vagabonds and beg*," "*seeking their bread out of their desolate places*." How many a covetous mole is now digging a house in the earth for his posterity, and never dreams of this sequel, that God should make those children

beggars, for whose sake their fathers had made so many beggars! This is a quittance which the sire will not believe, but as sure as God is just the son shall feel. Now if he had but leave to come out of hell for an hour, and see this, how should he curse his folly! Sure, if possible, it would double the pain of his infernal torture. Be moderate, then, ye that so insatiately devour, as if you had an infinite capacity: you overload your stomachs, it is fit they should be disburdened in shameful spewing. How quickly doth a worldly-minded man grow a defrauder, from a defrauder to a usurer, from a usurer to an oppressor, from an oppressor to an extortioner! if his eyes do but tell his heart of a booty, his heart will charge his hand, and he must have it, Micah ii. 2. They do but see it, like it, and take it. Observe their due payment. "*Let the extortioner catch all that he hath*": they got all by extortion, they shall lose all by extortion. They spoiled their neighbours, strangers shall spoil them. How often hath the poor widow and orphan cried, wept, groaned to them for mercy, and found none! They have taught God how to deal with themselves; "*let there be none to extend mercy to them.*" They have advanced houses for a memorial, and dedicated lands to their own names, Ps. xlix. 11; all to get them a name; and even in this they shall be crossed: "*In the next generation their name shall be quite put out.*"—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 11.—"*Let the extortioner catch all that he hath.*" Note: he is most miserable who falls into the hands of usurers; for they will flay him alive and drain his blood. The Romans, that they might deter the citizens from usury, placed a statue of Marsyas in the Forum or law-court, by which they signified that those who came into the hands of usurers would be skinned alive; and to show that usurers, as the most unjust litigants, deserved hanging, they placed a rope in the hand of the figure. —*Le Blanc.*

Verse 11.—"*Catch.*" This refers to the obligations between creditors and debtors, and he calls these snares, by which, as it were, the insolvent debtors are caught, and at last come to servitude.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 12.—"*Let there be none to extend mercy to him.*" He does not say, None who shall shew, but none who shall "*extend*" kindness to him. The extending of kindness is, when after a friend's death it is shown to his children, and true friendship is of this sort, that the kindness which friends shewed to each other while alive is maintained, not extinguished with the death of the friend.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 12.—"*Let there be none to extend mercy to him.*" Let God in his justice set off all hearts from him that had been so unreasonably merciless. Thus no man opened his mouth to intercede for Haman; Judas was shaken off by the priests, and bid *see to himself*, etc.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 15.—"*Let them be before the Lord continually.*" The fearful punishment of sinners is, to be always under the eye of an angry God: then the soul of the sinner is dismayed at its own deformity.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 15.—"*Let them be before the Lord continually.*" Lafayette, the friend and ally of Washington, was in his youth confined in a French dungeon. In the door of his cell there was cut a small hole, just big enough for a man's eye; at that hole a sentinel was placed, whose duty it was to watch, moment by moment, till he was relieved by a change of guard. All Lafayette saw was the winking eye, but the eye was always there; look when he would, it met his gaze. In his dreams, he was conscious it was staring at him. "Oh," he says, "it was horrible; there was no escape; when he lay down and when he rose up, when he ate and when he read, that eye searched him."—"*New Cyclopædia of Illustrative Anecdote,*" 1875.

Verses 15—19, 29.—Strict justice, and nothing more, breathes in every petition. Cannot you say, Amen! to all these petitions? Are you not glad when the wicked man falls into the ditch he has made for another's destruction, and when his mischief returns upon his own head? But you say, "These petitions are unquestionably just, but why did not the Psalmist ask, not for justice, but for *mercy?*" The answer is, that in his public capacity, he was bound to think first about justice.

No government could stand upon the basis of forgiveness, justice must always go before mercy. Suppose that in the course of the next session Parliament should decree that henceforth, instead of justice being shown to thieves, by sending them to prison, they should be treated charitably, and compelled to restore *one-half* of what they stole, what would honest men say about the government? The thieves would

doubtless be very complimentary, but what would honest men say? Why, they would say the government had altogether failed of its function, and it would not live to be a week older. And just so, the Psalmists were bound first of all to seek for the vindication and establishment of justice and truth. Like the magistrates of to-day, they considered first the well-being of the community. This they had in view in all the calamities they sought to bring upon wrong-doers.—*R. A. Bertram.*

Verse 16.—"*Because.*" Why, what is the crime? "*Because that he remembered not to shew mercy,*" etc. See what a long vial full of the plagues of God is poured out upon the unmerciful man!—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 16.—"*But persecuted the poor.*" If any man will practice subtraction against the poor, God will use it against him, and take his name out of the book of life. If he be damned that gives not his own, what shall become of him that takes away another man's? (*Augustine.*) If judgment without mercy shall be to him that shows no mercy (Jam. ii. 13) where shall subtraction and rapine appear? "*Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let strangers spoil his labour,*" ver. 11: there is one subtraction, his estate. "*Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out,*" ver. 13: there is another subtraction, his memory. "*Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour the fatherless children,*" ver. 12: there is another subtraction, a denial of all pity to him and his. "*Let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin,*" ver. 7: there is another subtraction, no audience from heaven. "*Let another take his office;*" there is a subtraction of his place: "*let his days be few,*" ver. 8: there is a subtraction of his life. "*Let him be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous,*" Ps. lxix. 28; there is the last, the subtraction of his soul. This is a fearful arithmetic: if the wicked add sins, God will add plagues. If they subtract from others their rights, God shall subtract from them his mercies.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 17.—*Cursing* is both good and bad. For we read in the Scriptures that holy men have often cursed. Indeed none can offer the Lord's Prayer rightly without cursing. For when he prays, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done," etc., he must include in the same outpouring of his desires all that is opposed to these, and say, cursed and execrated and dishonoured must all other names be, and all kingdoms which are opposed to thee must be destroyed and rent in pieces, and all devices and purposes formed against thee fall to the ground.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 17.—"*As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.*"

He was a wolf in clothing of the lamb,
That stole into the fold of God, and on
The blood of souls, which he did sell to death,
Grew fat; and yet, when any would have turned
Him out, he cried, "Touch not the priest of God."
And that he was anointed, fools believed;
But knew, that day, he was the devil's priest,
Anointed by the hands of Sin and Death,
And set peculiarly apart to ill—
While on him smoked the vials of perdition,
Poured measureless. Ah, me! What cursing then
Was heaped upon his head by ruined souls,
That charged him with their murder, as he stood
With eye, of all the unredeemed, most sad,
Waiting the coming of the Son of Man!

Robert Pollok.

Verses 17—19.—Possibly verses 17 and 18 describe as fact what verse 19 amplifies in a wish, or prayer. "He loved cursing, and it loved him in return, and came to him: he delighted not in blessing, and it was far from him. He clothed himself with cursing as with a garment, and it permeated his inmost parts as water, as the refreshing oil with which the body is anointed finds a way into marrow and bones." The images are familiar; the daily dress, the water that permeates daily every part of the body, the oil used daily for nourishment (Ps. civ. 15) and gladness (Ps. xxiii. 5). In the wish that follows (verse 19), the mantle, or *garment*, which is always worn, and the girdle or belt with which the accursed one is always girded, are substituted, apparently, for more general terms.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verses 17—19.—As the loss of the soul is a loss peculiar to itself, and a loss double, so it is a loss most fearful, because it is attended with the most heavy curse of God. This curse lieth in a deprivation of all good, and in a being swallowed up of all the most fearful miseries that a holy and just and eternal God can righteously inflict, or lay upon the soul of a sinful man. Now let reason here come in and exercise itself in the most exquisite manner; yea, let him now count up all, and all manner of curses and torments that a reasonable and an immortal soul is, or can be made capable of, and able to suffer, and when he has done, he shall come infinitely short of this great anathema, this master curse which God has reserved amongst his treasuries, and intends to bring out in that day of battle and war, which he proposeth to make upon damned souls in that day. And this God will do, partly as a retaliation, as the former, and partly by way of revenge. 1. By way of retaliation: "*As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.*" Again, "*As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.*" "*Let this,*" saith Christ, "*be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord,*" etc. 2. As this curse comes by way of retaliation, so it cometh by way of revenge. God will right the wrongs that sinners have done him, will repay vengeance for the despite and reproach wherewith they have affronted him, and will revenge the quarrel of his covenant. As the beginnings of revenges are terrible (Deut. xxxii. 41, 42); what, then, will the whole execution be, when he shall come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ? And, therefore, this curse is executed in wrath, in jealousy, in anger, in fury; yea, the heavens and the earth shall be burned up with the fire of that jealousy in which the great God will come when he cometh to curse the souls of sinners, and when he cometh to defy the ungodly, 2 Thess. i. 7—9.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 18.—The three figures in this verse are climatic: he has clothed himself in cursing, he has drunk it in like water (Job xv. 16, xxxiv. 7), it has penetrated to the marrow of his bones, like the oily preparations which are rubbed in and penetrate to the bones.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 18.—We must not pass this verse without remarking that there is an allusion in its tone to Num. v. 21, 22, 24—the unfaithful wife. Her curse was to penetrate into her bowels; "the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her"; and such a curse comes on unfaithful Judas, who violates his engagement to the Lord, and upon Israel at large also, who have departed from him "as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband," and have committed adultery against the Bridegroom. —*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verses 18, 19.—Peter, in Acts i. 20, applies this Psalm to Christ when the Jews cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children"; then did they put on the envenomed garment which has tormented them ever since. It is girded about their loins; the curse has penetrated like water, and entered the very bones like oil. How awful will be the state of those who crucify him afresh, and again put him to open shame.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 21.—"*For thy name's sake.*" My enemies would soon become my friends and my protectors, if I would but renounce my allegiance to thee; my refusal to disobey thee constitutes all my crime in their eyes. My cause, therefore, becomes thine, it will be to thy glory to declare thyself on my side, lest the impious should take occasion from my sufferings to blaspheme thy holy name, as if thou hadst not the power to deliver, or wert utterly indifferent to those who, renouncing all human help, have put their confidence in thee.—*Jean Baptiste Massillon.*

Verse 21.—"*For thy name's sake.*" He does not say, For *my* name, that it may be vindicated from reproach and shame: but for *Thy* name; as if he would say, whatever I may be, O Lord, and whatever may befall me, have respect to Thy name, have regard to it only. I am not worthy, that I should seek Thy help, but Thy name is worthy which thou mayest vindicate from contempt. We learn here with what passion for the glory of the divine name they ought to be animated who are peculiarly consecrated to the name of God.

He does not say, "Because my case is good," but "*because thy mercy is good.*" Note this also, he does not simply say, Because thou art good, or because thou art merciful; but because thy mercy is good. He had experienced a certain special goodness in the Divine mercy; *i.e.*, such timeliness, kind readiness in all afflictions,

and help for every kind of affliction prepared and provided. On this he rests hope and confidence, in this takes refuge. All those are truly happy who have had experience of this mercy, and can depend on it with firm hope and confidence.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 21.—Unto a truly broken, humbled sinner, the mercies that are in God, out of which he pardons, should have infinitely more of goodness and sweetness in them than the pardon itself, or all things else that are in the promises. This a soul that hath tasted how good the Lord is will instantly acknowledge. A promise of life to a condemned man is sweet, for life is sweet, as we say ; but " thy lovingkindness," said David, who had tasted how good the Lord is, " is better than life," and infinitely sweeter, Ps. lxiii. 3. And again says David, " *Because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.*" Deliverance was good ; yea, but the mercy of God apprehended therewith was infinitely more good to him, which was the greatest inducement to him to seek deliverance. And indeed God's mercy doth eminently bear the style of goodness.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verses 21—25.—The thunder and lightning are now as it were followed by a shower of tears of deep sorrowful complaint.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 22.—" *For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.*" Note here, how beautifully he unites these arguments. He had said, " *Because Thy mercy is good* ; and he adds, " *Because I am poor and needy.*" He could not have added anything more appropriate : for this is the nature of goodness and mercy, even in the human heart, much more in God, the best and most merciful of all beings, that nothing more easily moves it to give succour, than the affliction, calamity, and misery of those by whom it is invoked.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 22.—" *My heart is wounded within me.*" The hearts of the saints and pious men are not as brass or stone, that the apathy of the Stoics should have lodging in them, but are susceptible to griefs and passions.—*Musculus.*

Verse 23.—" *I am gone like the shadow when it declineth.*"—Bishop Horsley renders, " *I am just gone, like the shadow stretched to its utmost length* " ; and remarks :—" The state of the shadows of terrestrial objects at sunset, lengthening every instant, and growing faint as they lengthen ; and in the instant that they shoot to an immeasurable length disappearing."

Verse 23.—" *I am tossed up and down as the locust.*" Although the locusts have sufficient strength of flight to remain on the wing for a considerable period, and to pass over great distances, they have little or no command over the direction of their flight, always travel with the wind, in the same way as the quail. So entirely are they at the mercy of the wind, that if a sudden gust arises the locusts are tossed about in the most helpless manner ; and if they should happen to come across one of the circular air-currents that are so frequently found in the countries which they inhabit, they are whirled round and round without the least power of extricating themselves.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 23.—" *I am tossed up and down as the locust.*" This reference is to the flying locust. I have had frequent opportunities to notice how these squadrons are tossed up and down, and whirled round and round by the ever-varying currents of the mountain winds.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 28.—" *Let them curse, but bless thou.*" Fear not thou, who art a saint, their imprecations ; this is but like false fire in the pan of an uncharged gun, it gives a crack, but hurts not ; God's blessings will cover thee from their curse.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 28 (*first clause*).—Men's curses are impotent, God's blessings are omnipotent. —*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 30.—" *I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth.*" In the celebration of God's praises, there can be no question that these must issue from the heart ere they can be uttered by the lips ; at the same time, it would be an indication of great coldness, and of want of fervour, did not the tongue unite with the heart in this exercise. The reason why David makes mention of the tongue only is, that he takes it for granted that, unless there be a pouring out of the heart before God, those praises which reach no farther than the ear are vain and frivolous ; and, therefore, from the very bottom of his soul, he pours forth his heart-felt gratitude in fervent strains

of praise ; and this he does from the same motives which ought to influence all the faithful—the desire of mutual edification ; for to act otherwise would be to rob God of the honour which belongs to him.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 31.—" *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor.*" This expression implies, first, that he appears there as a *friend.* How cheering, how comforting it is to have a friend to stand by us when we are in trouble ! Such a friend is Jesus. In the hour of necessity he comes as a friend to stand by the right hand of the poor creature whose soul is condemned by guilt and accusation. But he stands in a far higher relation than that of a friend ; he stands, too, as *surety and a deliverer.* He goes, as it were, into the court ; and when the prisoner stands at the bar, he comes forward and stands at his right hand as his surety and bondsman ; he brings out of his bosom the acquittance of the debt, signed and sealed with his own blood, he produces it to the eyes of the court, and claims and demands the acquittal and absolution of the prisoner at whose right hand he stands. He stands there, then, that the prisoner may be freely pardoned, and completely justified from those accusations that " *condemn his soul.*" O sweet standing ! O blessed appearance !—*Joseph C. Philpot* (1802—1869).

Verse 31.—" *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor.*" One of the oldest Rabbinical commentaries has a very beautiful gloss on this passage. " Whenever a poor man stands at thy door, the Holy One, blessed be his Name, stands at his right hand. If thou givest him alms, know that thou shalt receive a reward from him who standeth at his right hand."—*Alfred Edersheim, in " Sketches of the Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ,"* 1876.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The silence of God. What it may mean : what it involves : how we may endeavour to break it.

Verse 1.—" *God of my praise.*" A text which may be expounded in its double meaning.

Verse 2.—Slander. Its cause—wickedness and malice. Its instruments—deceit and lies. Its frequency—Jesus and the saints slandered. Its punishment. Our resort when tried by it—prayer to God.

Verses 1—3.—I. God is for his people when the wicked are against them (verse 1) ; 1. for his people's sake ; 2. for his own sake. II. The wicked are against his people when he is for them (verses 2, 3) ; 1. from hatred to God ; 2. from hatred to his people.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—On the excellency of prayer. See Expository Notes.

Verse 4.—Our Lord's adversaries, and his resort.

Verses 4, 5.—I. David's spirit and conduct towards his enemies. 1. His spirit is love—love for hatred ; hence his denunciations are against their sins, rather than against them. 2. His conduct. He returned good for evil : he interceded for them. II. Their spirit and conduct towards him. 1. Hatred for love. 2. Evil for good.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—" *Evil for good.*" This is devil-like. Have not men been guilty of this to parents, to those who have warned them, to saints and ministers, and especially to the Lord himself ?

Verse 5.—How has the Redeemer been recompensed ? Show what he deserves and what he receives from various individuals. He feels the unkindness of those who are ungrateful.

Verse 6.—It is the law of retribution to punish the wicked by means of the wicked. —*Starke.*

Verse 7.—When may prayer become sin ? From what is sought, how sought, by whom sought, and wherefore sought.

Verse 8.—" *Let his days be few.*" Sin the great shortener of human life. After the flood the whole race lived a shorter time ; passion and avaricious care shorten life, and some sins have a peculiar power to do this, lust, drunkenness, &c.

Verses 20, 21.—I. David leaves his enemies in the hand of God (verse 20). II. He puts himself into the same hands (verse 21).—*G. R.*

Verse 21.—The plea of a believer must be drawn from his God,—his "name" and "mercy." The opposite habit of searching for arguments in self very common and very disappointing.

Verse 21.—The peculiar goodness of divine mercy.

Verse 22.—The inward sorrows of a saint. Their cause, effects, consolations, and cure.

Verses 26, 27.—I. The Prayer. II. The Believing Title: "*O Lord my God.*" III. The attribute relied upon. IV. The motive for the petition.

Verse 28.—The divine cure for human ill-will; and the saint's temper when he trusts therein—"let thy servant rejoice."

Verse 29.—I. A prayer for the repentance of David's adversaries. II. A prophecy for their confusion if they remain impenitent.—*G. R.*

Verse 29.—The sinner's last mantle.

Verse 30.—Vocal praise. Should be personal, resolute, intelligent, abundant, hearty. It should attract others, join with others, stimulate others, but never lose its personality.

Verses 30, 31.—I. David's *will* with respect to himself: "I will . . . yea, I will," etc. (verse 30). II. His *shall* with respect to God: "he shall," etc. (verse 31).—*G. R.*

Verses 30, 31.—He promiseth God that he will praise him, verse 30. He promiseth himself that he shall have cause to praise God, ver. 31.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 31.—I. The character to whom the promise is made—the poor. II. The danger to which he is exposed—those that condemn his soul. III. The deliverance which is promised to him—divine, opportune, efficient, complete, everlasting.

PSALM CX.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *Of the correctness of this title there can be no doubt, since our Lord in Matthew xxii. says, "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord." Yet some critics are so fond of finding new authors for the Psalms that they dare to fly in the face of the Lord Jesus himself. To escape from finding Jesus here, they read the title, "* Psalm of (or concerning) David," *as though it was not so much written by him as of him; but he that reads with understanding will see little enough of David here except as the writer. He is not the subject of it even in the smallest degree, but Christ is all. How much was revealed to the patriarch David! How blind are some modern wise men, even amid the present blaze of light, as compared with this poet-prophet of the darker dispensation. May the Spirit who spoke by the man after God's own heart give us eyes to see the hidden mysteries of this marvellous Psalm, in which every word has an infinity of meaning.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—*The subject is* THE PRIEST-KING. *None of the kings of Israel united these two offices, though some endeavoured to do so. Although David performed some acts which appeared to verge upon the priestly, yet he was no priest, but of the tribe of Judah, "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood"; and he was far too devout a man to thrust himself into that office uncalled. The Priest-King here spoken of is David's Lord, a mysterious personage typified by Melchizedek, and looked for by the Jews as the Messiah. He is none other than the apostle and high-priest of our profession, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. The Psalm describes the appointment of the kingly priest, his followers, his battles, and his victory. Its centre is verse* 4, *and so it may be divided, as Alexander suggests, into the introduction, verses* 1—3; *the central thought, verse* 4; *and the supplementary verses,* 5—7.

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

1. "*The Lord said unto my Lord*"—Jehovah said unto my Adonai: David in spirit heard the solemn voice of Jehovah speaking to the Messiah from of old. What wonderful intercourse there has been between the Father and the Son! From this secret and intimate communion spring the covenant of grace and all its marvellous arrangements. All the great acts of grace are brought into actual being by the word of God; had he not spoken, there had been no manifestation of Deity to us; but in the beginning was the Word, and from of old there was mysterious fellowship between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ concerning his people and the great contest on their behalf between himself and the powers of evil. How condescending on Jehovah's part to permit a mortal ear to hear, and a human pen to record his secret converse with his co-equal Son! How greatly should we prize the revelation of his private and solemn discourse with the Son, herein made public for the refreshing of his people! Lord, what is man that thou shouldst thus impart thy secrets unto him!

Though David was a firm believer in the Unity of the Godhead, he yet spiritually discerns the two persons, distinguishes between them, and perceives that in the second he has a peculiar interest, for he calls him "*my Lord.*" This was an anticipation of the exclamation of Thomas, "My Lord and my God," and it expresses the Psalmist's reverence, his obedience, his believing appropriation, and his joy in Christ. It is well to have clear views of the mutual relations of the persons of the blessed Trinity; indeed, the knowledge of these truths is essential for our comfort and growth in grace. There is a manifest distinction in the divine persons, since one speaks to another; yet the Godhead is one.

"*Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*" Away from

the shame and suffering of his earthly life, Jehovah calls the Adonai, our Lord, to the repose and honours of his celestial seat. His work is done, and he may sit; it is well done, and he may sit at his right hand; it will have grand results, and he may therefore quietly wait to see the complete victory which is certain to follow. The glorious Jehovah thus addresses the Christ as our Saviour; for, says David, he said "unto my Lord." Jesus is placed in the seat of power, dominion, and dignity, and is to sit there by divine appointment while Jehovah fights for him, and lays every rebel beneath his feet. He sits there by the Father's ordinance and call, and will sit there despite all the raging of his adversaries, till they are all brought to utter shame by his putting his foot upon their necks. In this sitting he is our representative. The mediatorial kingdom will last until the last enemy shall be destroyed, and then, according to the inspired word, "cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father." The work of subduing the nations is now in the hand of the great God, who by his Providence will accomplish it to the glory of his Son; his word is pledged to it, and the session of his Son at his right hand is the guarantee thereof; therefore let us never fear as to the future. While we see our Lord and representative sitting in quiet expectancy, we, too, may sit in the attitude of peaceful assurance, and with confidence await the grand outcome of all events. As surely as Jehovah liveth Jesus must reign, yea, even now he is reigning, though all his enemies are not yet subdued. During the present interval, through which we wait for his glorious appearing and visible millennial kingdom, he is in the place of power, and his dominion is in no jeopardy, or otherwise he would not remain quiescent. He sits because all is safe, and he sits at Jehovah's right hand because omnipotence waits to accomplish his will. Therefore there is no cause for alarm whatever may happen in this lower world; the sight of Jesus enthroned in divine glory is the sure guarantee that all things are moving onward towards ultimate victory. Those rebels who now stand high in power shall soon be in the place of contempt, they shall be his footstool. He shall with ease rule them, he shall sit and put his foot on them; not rising to tread them down as when a man puts forth force to subdue powerful foes, but retaining the attitude of rest, and still ruling them as abject vassals who have no longer spirit to rebel, but have become thoroughly tamed and subdued.

2. "*The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.*" It is in and through the church that for the present the power of the Messiah is known. Jehovah has given to Jesus all authority in the midst of his people, whom he rules with his royal sceptre, and this power goes forth with divine energy from the church for the ingathering of the elect, and the subduing of all evil. We have need to pray for the sending out of the rod of divine strength. It was by his rod that Moses smote the Egyptians, and wrought wonders for Israel, and even so whenever the Lord Jesus sends forth the rod of his strength, our spiritual enemies are overcome. There may be an allusion here to Aaron's rod which budded and so proved his power; this was laid up in the ark, but our Lord's rod is sent forth to subdue his foes. This promise began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, and it continues even to this day, and shall yet have a grander fulfilment. O God of eternal might, let the strength of our Lord Jesus be more clearly seen, and let the nations see it as coming forth out of the midst of thy feeble people, even from Zion, the place of thine abode. "*Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies;*" as he does whenever his mighty sceptre of grace is stretched forth to renew and save them. Moses' rod brought water out of the flinty rock, and the gospel of Jesus soon causes repentance to flow in rivers from the once hardened heart of man. Or the text may mean that though the church is situated in the midst of a hostile world, yet it exerts a great influence, it continues to manifest an inward majesty, and is after all the ruling power among the nations because the shout of a king is in her midst. Jesus, however hated by men, is still the King of kings. His rule is over even the most unwilling, so as to overrule their fiercest opposition to the advancement of his cause. Jesus, it appears from this text, is not inactive during his session at Jehovah's right hand, but in his own way proves the abiding nature of his kingdom both *in* Zion and *from* Zion, both among his friends and his foes. We look for the clearer manifestation of his almighty power in the latter days; but even in these waiting times we rejoice that to the Lord all power is given in heaven and in earth.

3. "*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.*" In consequence of the sending forth of the rod of strength, namely, the power of the gospel, out of

Zion, converts will come forward in great numbers to enlist under the banner of the Priest-King. Given to him of old, they are his people, and when his power is revealed, these hasten with cheerfulness to own his sway, appearing at the gospel call as it were spontaneously, even as the dew comes forth in the morning. This metaphor is further enlarged upon, for as the dew has a sparkling beauty, so these willing armies of converts have a holy excellence and charm about them; and as the dew is the lively emblem of freshness, so are these converts full of vivacity and youthful vigour, and the church is refreshed by them and made to flourish exceedingly. Let but the gospel be preached with divine unction, and the chosen of the Lord respond to it like troops in the day of the mustering of armies; they come arrayed by grace in shining uniforms of holiness, and for number, freshness, beauty, and purity, they are as the dewdrops which come mysteriously from the morning's womb. Some refer this passage to the resurrection, but even if it be so, the work of grace in regeneration is equally well described by it, for it is a spiritual resurrection. Even as the holy dead rise gladly into the lovely image of their Lord, so do quickened souls put on the glorious righteousness of Christ, and stand forth to behold their Lord and serve him. How truly beautiful is holiness! God himself admires it. How wonderful also is the eternal youth of the mystical body of Christ! As the dew is new every morning, so is there a constant succession of converts to give to the church perpetual juvenility. Her young men have a dew from the Lord upon them, and arouse in her armies an undying enthusiasm for him whose "locks are bushy and black as a raven" with unfailing youth. Since Jesus ever lives, so shall his church ever flourish. As his strength never faileth, so shall the vigour of his true people be renewed day by day. As he is a Priest-King, so are his people all priests and kings, and the beauties of holiness are their priestly dress, their garments for glory and for beauty: of these priests unto God there shall be an unbroken succession. The realisation of this day of power during the time of the Lord's tarrying is that which we should constantly pray for; and we may legitimately expect it since he ever sits in the seat of honour and power, and puts forth his strength, according to his own word, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

We have now reached the heart of the Psalm, which is also the very centre and soul of our faith. Our Lord Jesus is a Priest-King by the ancient oath of Jehovah: "he glorified not himself to be made a high priest," but was ordained thereunto from of old, and was called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. It must be a solemn and a sure matter which leads the Eternal to swear, and with him an oath fixes and settles the decree for ever; but in this case, as if to make assurance a thousand times sure, it is added, "*and will not repent.*" It is done, and done for ever and ever; Jesus is sworn in to be the priest of his people, and he must abide so even to the end, because his commission is sealed by the unchanging oath of the immutable Jehovah. If his priesthood could be revoked, and his authority removed, it would be the end of all hope and life for the people whom he loves; but this sure rock is the basis of our security—the oath of God establishes our glorious Lord both in his priesthood and in his throne. It is the Lord who has constituted him a priest for ever, he has done it by oath, that oath is without repentance, is taking effect now, and will stand throughout all ages: hence our security in him is placed beyond all question.

The declaration runs in the present tense as being the only time with the Lord, and comprehending all other times. "*Thou art,*" *i.e.*, thou wast and art, and art to come, in all ages a priestly King. The order of Melchizedek's priesthood was the most ancient and primitive, the most free from ritual and ceremony, the most natural and simple, and at the same time the most honourable. That ancient patriarch was the father of his people, and at the same time ruled and taught them; he swayed both the sceptre and the censer, reigned in righteousness, and offered sacrifice before the Lord. There has never arisen another like to him since his days, for whenever the kings of Judah attempted to seize the sacerdotal office they were driven back to their confusion: God would have no king-priest save his son. Melchizedek's office was exceptional: none preceded or succeeded him; he comes upon the page of history mysteriously; no pedigree is given, no date of birth, or mention of death; he blesses Abraham, receives tithe, and vanishes from the scene amid honours which

show that he was greater than the founder of the chosen nation. He is seen but once, and that once suffices. Aaron and his seed came and went; their imperfect sacrifice continued for many generations, because it had no finality in it, and could never make the comers thereunto perfect. Our Lord Jesus, like Melchizedek, stands forth before us as a priest of divine ordaining; not made a priest by fleshly birth, as the sons of Aaron; he mentions neither father, mother, nor descent, as his right to the sacred office; he stands upon his personal merits, by himself alone; as no man came before him in his work, so none can follow after; his order begins and ends in his own person, and in himself it is eternal, "having neither beginning of days nor end of years." The King-priest has been here and left his blessing upon the believing seed, and now he sits in glory in his complete character, atoning for us by the merit of his blood, and exercising all power on our behalf.

"O may we ever hear thy voice
In mercy to us speak,
And in our Priest we will rejoice,
Thou great Melchizedek."

5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill *the places* with the dead bodies: he shall wound the heads over many countries.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

The last verses of this Psalm we understand to refer to the future victories of the Priest-King. He shall not for ever sit in waiting posture, but shall come into the fight to end the weary war by his own victorious presence. He will lead the final charge in person; his own right hand and his holy arm shall get unto him the victory.

5. "*The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.*" Now that he has come into the field of action, the infinite Jehovah comes with him as the strength of his right hand. Eternal power attends the coming of the Lord, and earthly power dies before it as though smitten through with a sword. In the last days all the kingdoms of the earth shall be overcome by the kingdom of heaven, and those who dare oppose shall meet with swift and overwhelming ruin. What are kings when they dare oppose the Son of God? A single stroke shall suffice for their destruction. When the angel of the Lord smote Herod there was no need of a second blow; he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost. Concerning the last days, we read of the Faithful and True, who shall ride upon a white horse, and in righteousness judge and make war: "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

6. "*He shall judge among the heathen,*" or, among the nations. All nations shall feel his power, and either yield to it joyfully or be crushed before it. "*He shall fill the places with the dead bodies.*" In the terrible battles of his gospel all opponents shall fall till the field of fight is heaped high with the slain. This need not be understood literally, but as a poetical description of the overthrow of all rebellious powers and the defeat of all unholy principles. Yet should kings oppose the Lord with weapons of war, the result would be their overwhelming defeat and the entire destruction of their forces. Read in connection with this prophecy the passage which begins at the seventeenth verse of Rev. xix. and runs on to the end of the chapter. Terrible things in righteousness will be seen ere the history of this world comes to an end. "*He shall wound the heads over many countries.*" He will strike at the greatest powers which resist him, and wound not merely common men, but those who rule and reign. If the nations will not have Christ for their Head, they shall find their political heads to be powerless to protect them. Or the passage may be read, "he has smitten the head over the wide earth." The monarch of the greatest nation shall not be able to escape the sword of the Lord; nor shall that dread spiritual prince who rules over the children of disobedience be able to escape without a deadly wound. Pope and priest must fall, with Mahomet and other deceivers who are now heads of the people. Jesus must reign and they must perish.

7. " *He shall drink of the brook in the way.*" So swiftly shall he march to conquest that he shall not stay for refreshment, but drink as he hastens on. Like Gideon's men that lapped, he shall throw his heart into the fray and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make in the earth. " *Therefore shall he lift up the head.*" His own head shall be lifted high in victory, and his people, in him, shall be upraised also. When he passed this way before, he was burdened and had stern work laid upon him ; but in his second advent he will win an easy victory ; aforetime he was the man of sorrows, but when he comes a second time his head will be lifted in triumph. Let his saints rejoice with him. " Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." In the latter days we look for terrible conflicts and for a final victory. Long has Jesus borne with our rebellious race, but at length he will rise to end the warfare of long-suffering, by the blows of justice. God has fought with men's sins for their good, but he will not always by his Spirit strive with men ; he will cease from that struggle of long-suffering love, and begin another which shall soon end in the final destruction of his adversaries. O King-priest, we who are, in a minor degree, king-priests too, are full of gladness because thou reignest even now, and wilt come ere long to vindicate thy cause and establish thine empire for ever. Even so, come quickly. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The preceding Psalm is a Passion-Psalm, and it is now followed by a Psalm of Christ's Resurrection, Ascension, and Session in glory. We have seen the same connection in Ps. xxii.—xxiv., and in Ps. xlv.—xlvii. The present Psalm grows up from the former Psalm, as the Hill of Olivet, the Hill of Ascension, rises up from the Vale of Gethsemane below it.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm has been well designated the crown of all the Psalms, of which Luther saith that it is worthy to be overlaid with precious jewels. More especially does the Reformer call verse 5 a well-spring,—nay, a treasury of all Christian doctrines, understanding, wisdom, and comfort, richer and fuller than any other passage of Holy Writ. In his own peculiar manner, he styles Christ the *Sheblimini* (' Sit on my right hand '). ' Full sure, the devil must let alone my *Sheblimini*, and cannot bring him down either by his scorn or by his wrath.' Christ still liveth and reigneth, and his title is *Sheblimini*. On his stirrup is engraven, " I will make thine enemies thy footstool," and upon his diadem, " Thou art a priest for ever."—*Alfred Edersheim*, 1873.

Whole Psalm.—The ancients (by Cassiodorus' collection) term this Psalm *the sun of our faith, the treasure of holy writ* : *verbis brevis, sensu infinitus* (saith Augustine), short in words, but in sense infinite. Theodoret notes how it is connected with the Psalm going before : " there (saith he) we have his cross and sufferings, here his conquest and trophies." For he cometh forth as the *heir apparent* of the Almighty, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, graced with, 1. *Title*, " *My Lord.*" 2. *Place*, " *Sit thou on my right hand.*" 3. *Power*, " *Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*"—*John Prideaux, in a Sermon entitled*, " *The Draught of the Brooke*," 1636.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is one of the fullest and most compendious prophecies of the person and offices of Christ in the whole Old Testament, and so full of fundamental truth, that I shall not shun to call it *Symbolum Davidicum*, the prophet David's creed. And indeed there are very few, if any, of the articles of that creed which we all generally profess, which are not either plainly expressed, or by most evident implication couched in this little model. First, the *Doctrine of the Trinity* is in the first words ; " *The Lord said unto my Lord.*" There is *Jehovah the Father*, and *my Lord*, the Son, and the consecrating of him to be David's Lord, which was by the *Holy Ghost*, by whose fulness he was anointed unto the offices of king and priest ; for so our Saviour himself expounds this word " *said*," by the sealing and sanctification of him to his office, John x. 34, 35, 36. Then we have the *Incarnation of Christ*, in the words, " *my Lord*," together with his dignity and honour above David (as our Saviour himself expounds it, Matt. xxii. 42, 45). *Mine*, that is, my Son by descent and genealogy after the flesh, and yet my Lord too, in regard of his higher sonship. We have also the *Sufferings of Christ*, in that he was consecrated a *priest* (ver. 4) to offer up himself once for all, and so *to drink of the brook in the way.*

We have his *Completed Work* and conquest over all his enemies and sufferings; *his Resurrection, " he shall lift up his head" ;* his *Ascension* and *Intercession, " Sit thou on my right hand."* We have here also a *Holy Catholic Church* gathered together by the sceptre of his kingdom, and holding in the parts thereof a blessed and beautiful *Communion of Saints; " The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."* We have the *Last Judgment,* for *all his enemies must be put under his feet* (which is the Apostle's argument to prove the end of all things, 1 Cor. xv. 25); and there is the *day of his wrath,* wherein he shall accomplish that judgment over the heathen, and that victory over the kings of the earth (*who take counsel and band themselves together against him*), which he doth here in his word begin. We have the *Remission of sins,* comprised in his priesthood, for he was to offer sacrifices for the remission of sins, and " to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Eph. i. 7; Heb. ix. 26. We have the *Resurrection of the body,* because he must " subdue all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death," as the Apostle argues out of this Psalm, 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26. And lastly, we have *life everlasting,* in the everlasting merit and virtue of his priesthood, " *Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,*" and in his sitting at the right hand of God, whither he is gone as our forerunner, and to prepare a place for us, Heb. vi. 20; John xiv. 2; and therefore the apostle from his sitting there, and living ever, inferreth the perfection and certainty of our salvation, Rom. vi. 8, 11; viii. 17; Eph. ii. 16; Col. iii. 1—4; 1 Cor. xv. 49; Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Thess. iv. 14; Heb. vii. 25; 1 John iii. 2.—*Edward Reynolds,* 1599—1676.

Whole Psalm.—Although the Jews of later times have gone about to wrest it to another meaning, yet this Psalm is so approved and undoubted a prophecy of Christ, that the Pharisees durst not deny it, when being questioned by our Saviour (Matt. xxii. 42, 43) how it should be, seeing Christ is the son of David, that David notwithstanding should call him Lord, saying, " *The Lord said unto my Lord,*" they could not answer him a word, whereas the answer had been very easy and ready if they could have denied this Psalm to be meant of Christ. But they knew it could not be otherwise understood, and it was commonly taken amongst them to be a prophecy of their Messias, according to the very evidence of the text itself, which cannot be fitted to any other, but only to Christ our Saviour, the Son of God. For whereas some of them since then have construed all these things as spoken in the name of the people of Judah concerning David their king, the text itself refuseth that construction, when in those words, " *Sit thou at my right hand,*" it mentioneth an honour done to him of whom it speaketh, greater than can be fitted to the angels, and therefore much less to be applied unto David. Again, that which is spoken in the fourth verse of the priesthood, cannot be understood of David, who was indeed a king, but never had anything spoken as touching the priesthood to appertain unto him, and of whom it cannot be conceived how it should be said, " *Thou art a priest for ever,*" etc. Yea, there is nothing here spoken whereof we may see in David any more but some little shadow in comparison of that which hath come to pass in Jesus Christ.—*Robert Abbot* (1560—1617) *in " The Exaltation of the Kingdom and Priesthood of Christ."*

Whole Psalm.—The sixty-eighth Psalm hails the ascent of the Messiah, prefigured by the translation of the ark, and gives a rapid and obscure view of the glories and the blessings consequent upon that event. The twenty-fourth exhibits to us the Messiah ascending to his redemption throne upborne by the wings of angels and archangels, and hosannahed by the whole intelligent creation; it marks in the most glowing colours the triumphant entry of Messiah into the heavenly regions, and the tone of authority and power with which he commands that entrance—it sends him attended by the angelic host to his Father's throne, there to claim that pre-eminence which was his by inheritance and by conquest. At this point the Psalm before us " takes up the wondrous tale ": it exhibits to us the awful solemnities of his reception, it represents the Father bestowing on his well-beloved Son the kingdom which he had earned, exalting him to the throne, and putting all things under his feet; receiving him in his office of prophet, and promising universality and permanence to " the rod of his strength "; receiving him in the office of priesthood, his own peculiar priesthood, and confirming its efficacy and duration by an oath; thus perfecting the redemption scheme, and completing the conquest over sin and death, and him who had the power of death. Man united with God was raised to the throne of

being: man united with God perfected the sacrifice which was demanded, and the angelic host is represented by the Psalmist as taking up the strain, and hymning the future triumphs of the King of Glory—triumphs over his foes, whom he will visit in the day of his wrath, and triumphs with his willing people, whom he will assist with his Spirit, refine by his grace, and exalt into his glory. Such do I conceive to be the occasion, the object, and the tendency of this sacred song: to me it appears to be eminently an *epinicion*, or song of victory: it celebrates the triumph of the conqueror, it presents him with the rewards of victory, and it predicts future conquests as crowning his glory; while elsewhere we see the Captain of our salvation militant, here we see him triumphant; while elsewhere we see his offices inchoate, here they are perfected by the approval of the Godhead, and the promise of eternity: here we have instruction consolidating empire, and the atonement completed by the everlasting priesthood.—*J. H. Singer, in "The Irish Pulpit,"* 1839.

Verse 1.—In this one verse we have a description of Christ's person, his wars and his victory; so that we may say of it (and so indeed of the whole Psalm, which is an epitome of the Gospel), as Tully did of Brutus in his laconical epistle, *Quam multa, quam paucis!* How much in a little.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand.*" An oft-quoted passage—because it contains a memorable truth. We find it quoted by Messiah himself to lead Israel to own him as greater than David, Matt. xxii. 44. It is quoted in Heb. i. 13, to prove him higher far than angels. It is brought forward by Peter, Acts ii. 34, to show him Lord as well as Christ. It is referred to in Heb. x. 12, 13, as declaring that Jesus has satisfactorily finished what he undertook to accomplish on earth, "the one sacrifice for ever," and is henceforth on that seat of divine honour "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" in the day of his Second Coming.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord said.*" Albeit the understanding of Christ's person and office be necessary unto the church, yet none know the Son save the Father, and they to whom he will reveal him: for David knew Christ only by the Father's teaching: "*The Lord said,*" said he.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*My Lord.*" From hence we learn that though Christ was man, yet he was more than a bare man, since he is Lord to his father David. For *jure naturæ* no son is lord to his father; domination doth never ascend. There must be something above nature in him to make him his father's sovereign, as our Saviour himself argueth from these words, Matt. xxii. 42, 45.—*Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 1.—"*My Lord.*" It was a higher honour to have Christ for his son, than to be a king; yet David does not say that Christ is his son, but rejoices that Christ is his Lord, and he Christ's servant. But this joy has also been procured *for it:* see Luke i. 43; John xx. 28; Phil. iii. 3, 8. They who regard the Messiah only as the son of David, regard the lesser part of the conception of him. A dominion to which David himself is subject, shows the heavenly majesty of the King, and the heavenly character of his kingdom.—*John Albert Bengel.*

Verse 1.—"*Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*" Every word is full of weight. For though ordinarily subdivisions of holy Scripture and crumbling of the bread of life be rather a loosing than an expounding of it; yet in such parts of it as were of purpose intended for models and summaries of fundamental doctrines (of which sort this Psalm is one of the fullest and briefest in the whole Scriptures), as in little maps of large countries, there is no word whereupon some point of weighty consequence may not depend. Here then is to be considered the *term of duration* or *measure of Christ's kingdom:* "*until.*" The *author* of subduing Christ's enemies under him: "*I, the Lord.*" The *manner* thereof; *ponam*, and *ponam scabellum*, put thy foes as a stool under thy feet. Victory is a relative word, and presupposeth enemies, and they are expressed in the text. . . . Enmity shows itself against Christ in all the offices of his mediation. There is enmity against him as a *prophet.* Enmity against his *truth*,—in opinion by adulterating it with human mixtures and superinducements, teaching for doctrines the traditions of men; in affection, by wishing many divine truths were razed out of the Scriptures, as being manifestly contrary to those pleasures which they love rather than God; in conversation, by keeping down the truth in unrighteousness, and in those things which they know, as brute beasts, corrupting themselves. Enmity against his *teaching*, by quenching the motions, and resisting the evidence of his Spirit in the Word, refusing to hear his voice, and rejecting the counsel of God against themselves. There is enmity against

him as a *priest*, by undervaluing his person, sufferings, righteousness, or merits. And as a *king*; enmity to his worship, by profaneness neglecting it, by idolatry misappropriating it, by superstition corrupting it. Enmity to his ways and service, by ungrounded prejudices, misjudging them as grievous, unprofitable, or unequal ways; and by wilful disobedience forsaking them to walk in the ways of our own heart.—*Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 1.—"*Make thine enemies thy footstool.*" This expression, that the conquest of Christ's enemies shall be but as the removing of a stool into its place, noteth unto us two things: first, *the easiness of God's victory* over the enemies of Christ. They are before him as nothing, less than nothing, the drop of a bucket, the dust of the balance, a very little thing. . . . Secondly, as this putting of Christ's enemies like a stool under the feet noteth easiness, so also it noteth *order* or *beauty* too. When Christ's enemies shall be under his foot, then there shall be a right order in things; then it shall indeed appear that God is a *God of order*, and therefore the day wherein that shall be done, is called "*the times of the restitution of all things*," Acts iii. 21. The putting of Christ's enemies under his feet is an *act of justice*; and of all others, justice is the most orderly virtue, that which keepeth beauty upon the face of a people, as consisting itself in symmetry and proportion.

This putting of Christ's enemies as a stool under his feet, also denotes unto us two things in reference to Christ: first, his *rest*, and secondly, his *triumph*. *To stand*, in the Scripture phrase, denoteth *ministry*, and *to sit, rest*; and there is no posture so easy as to sit with a stool under one's feet. Till Christ's enemies then be all under his feet, he is not fully in his rest.

Furthermore, this "*footstool*" under Christ's feet, in reference to his enemies, denoteth unto us four things. First, *the extreme shame and confusion* which they shall everlastingly suffer, the utter abasing and bringing down of all that exalteth itself against Christ. Secondly, hereby is noted *the burden which wicked men must bear*: the footstool beareth the weight of the body, so must the enemies of Christ bear the weight of his heavy and everlasting wrath upon their souls. Thirdly, herein is noted *the relation which the just recompense* of God bears unto the sins of ungodly men. Thus will Christ deal with his enemies at the last day. Here they trample upon Christ in his word, in his ways, in his members; they make the saints bow down for them to go over, and make them as the pavements on the ground; they tread under foot the blood of the covenant, and the sanctuary of the Lord, and put Christ to shame; but there their own measure shall be returned into their bosoms, they shall be constrained to confess as Adonibezek, "As I have done, so God hath requited me." Lastly, herein we may note *the great power and wisdom of Christ* in turning the malice and mischief of his enemies unto his own use and advantage, and so ordering wicked men that though they intend nothing but extirpation and ruin to his kingdom, yet they shall be useful unto him, and, against their own wills, serviceable to those glorious ends, in the accomplishing whereof he shall be admired by all those that believe. As in a great house there is necessary use of vessels of dishonour, destined unto sordid and mean, but yet daily, services: so in the great house of God, wicked men are his utensils and household instruments, as footstools and staves, and vessels wherein there is no pleasure, though of them there may be good use.—*Condensed from Reynolds.*

Verse 1.—"*Thy footstool.*" As this our king has a glorious throne, so has he also a wonderful footstool; and as his royal throne imparts to us comfort in the highest degree, so his footstool also imparts to us joy. How joyful shall his poor subjects be when they hear that their prince and king has slain their enemies and delivered them out of their hands! How did their poor subjects go forward to meet Saul and Jonathan when those kings had slain the Philistines! . . . Moreover, because our King has *his* enemies under his feet, thus shall he also bring all *our* enemies under our feet, for his victory is ours, God be thanked, who has given us the victory through Christ our Lord.—*Joshua Arnd*, 1626—1685.

Verse 2.—"*The rod of thy strength*," or rather, "*The sceptre of thy might*," *i.e.*, of "Thy kingly majesty," as in Jer. xlviii. 17; Ezek. xix. 14. Chrysostom plays upon the word ῥάβδος (LXX) as a rod of strength and consolation, as in Ps. xxiii. 4; a rod of chastisement, as in Ps. ii. 9, 1. Cor. iv. 21; a symbol of kingly rule, as in Is. xi. 1, Ps. xlv. 6. It was by this rod, he says, that the disciples wrought when they subdued the world, in obedience to the command, "Go and make disciples of all nations"; a rod far more powerful than that of Moses, "for that divided rivers,

this brake in pieces the ungodliness of the world." And then with profound truth he adds, " Nor would one err who should call the Cross the rod of power ; for this rod converted sea and land, and filled them with a vast power. Armed with this rod, the Apostles went forth throughout the world, and accomplished all that they did, beginning at Jerusalem." The Cross, which to men seemed the very emblem of shame and weakness, was, in truth, the power of God.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 2.—" *The rod of thy strength.*" The power of this sceptre and word of Christ appeareth greatly in the saving of his elect. . . . So mightily hath it prevailed and overruled the minds of men against nature, and reason, and learning, and wisdom, and custom, and whatsoever else is strong to hold men in the liking of those things which they have once received and followed, as that they have been content to renounce the devotions which their forefathers had so long embraced ; to cast away the gods which themselves had devoutly served ; to stop their ears against the contrary motives and persuasions of father and mother ; to harden their hearts against the kneelings and weepings and embracings of wife and children ; to forego their honours, and inheritances, yea, and their lives also, rather than lose that peace and joy of heart which the same word of Christ had ministered unto them. Yea, how strange is it, and how greatly doth it commend the power of this word, to see weakness hereby prevailing against strength, simplicity against policy ; to see the lamb standing without fear before the lion, the gentle turtle before the devouring kite ; women and children and weaklings before the great monarchs and potentates of the world, not fearing their threatening words, nor dreading their tormenting hands, but boldly uttering the word of their testimony (Rev. xii. 11), in despite of all their fury, and never yielding to shrink from it, by anything that could be devised against them. The word of God in their hearts gave them courage and resolution and strength to go through fire and water, to bear all adventures of wind and weather, and howsoever they seemed to be beaten against the rocks, yet they escaped shipwreck, and arrived safe at the haven of their desire.—*Robert Abbot.*

Verse 2.—" *Out of Zion.*" We need not say much about how the omniscience of God is displayed in the wonderful fact, that in the very land of the covenant—in the very midst of that people who rejected and crucified the Saviour, the first church of Christ on earth was established. What would cavillers and blasphemers have said, had it been otherwise ? had the Christian community been formed in any of the heathen countries ? Would it not have been considered as a fiction of the idolatrous priests ? Israel scattered among the nations, and the Church of Christ having begun in Zion at Jerusalem, are the most wonderful and enduring monuments, and incontestable witnesses of the truth of Christianity.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 2.—From his ruling *in the midst of enemies* we learn that the kingdom of Christ in this life is the kingdom of the Cross, of persecutions, and of dangers. Enemies are never wanting, not only external adversaries, but also spiritual and eternal ; and therefore great sorrow is always awaiting the godly. In this most terrible conflict, however, their minds are lifted up by this consolation, *viz.*, that the rod of the kingdom is strong, and cannot be overcome by any force or power ; yea, more, albeit assailed with contendings and all kinds of storms, it will continue stable, firm, and perpetual : and there will always be a Church among men, which will fear and worship this King ; because the experience of all the ages teaches, that this kingdom has the more grown and increased the more it has been opposed, according to that saying of Basil, ἐν ταῖς θλιψεσι μαλλον θάλλει ἡ ἐκκλησία, the Church flourishes more by tribulation.—*Rivetus.*

Verse 2.—" *Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*" Set up thy power over them and reign in them. This is a commission to set up a kingdom *in the very midst* of those who were his enemies ; in the hearts of those who had been and were rebellious. His kingdom is set up not by destroying them, but by *subduing* them, so that they become his willing servants. They yield to him, and he rules over them. It is not here a commission to cut them off, but one much more difficult of execution,—to make them his friends, and to dispose them to submit to his authority. Mere *power* may crush men ; it requires more than that to make rebels willingly submissive, and to dispose them voluntarily to obey.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 3.—" *Thy people.*" That is, those whom thou dost receive from thy Father, and, by setting up the standard and ensign of the Gospel, gather to thyself. " *Shall be willing.*" The word is *willingnesses*, that is, a people of *great willingness*

and devotion, or (as the original word is elsewhere used, Psalm cxix. 108), shall be *freewill offerings* unto thee. The abstract being put for the concrete, and the plural for the singular, notes how exceeding forward and free they should be; as the Lord, to signify that his people were most rebellious, saith, that they were *rebellion itself*, Ezek. ii. 8. So then the meaning is, thy people shall, with most ready and forward cheerfulness, devote, consecrate, and render up themselves to thy government as a reasonable sacrifice, shall be of a most liberal, free, noble, and unconstrained spirit in thy service, and shall be *voluntaries* in the wars of thy kingdom.—*Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy people*," O Jesus Christ, which were given thee by the Father, purchased and redeemed by thee, who acknowledge thee for their Lord, and are bound to thee by a military oath, are *extremely willing*, being devoted to thy service with the greatest readiness of soul, alacrity, inclination, and voluntary obedience. Nor are they willing only, but *willingness* itself in the abstract; nay, *willingnesses* in the plural number, the highest and most excellent willingnesses, all which add an emphasis. This is seen to be so בְּיוֹם חֵילֶךָ "*in the day of thy* [*valour*] *power*," in which thy generous spirit laying hold of them, animates them to grand and bold enterprises. Then they go forth in the beauties of holiness, by which they are a terror to the devil, a delight to God and angels, and a mutual edification to one another.—*Hermann Witsius*, 1636—1708.

Verse 3.—"*Thy people shall be willing.*" Willing to do what? They shall be willing while others are unwilling. The simple term "*willing*," is very expressive. It denotes the beautiful condition of creatures who suffer themselves to be wrought upon, and moved, according to the will of God. They suffer God to work in them to will and to do. They are *willing* to die unto all sin, they are willing to crucify the old man, or self, in order that the new man, or Christ, may be formed in them. They are *willing* to be weaned from their own thoughts and purposes, that the thoughts and purposes of God may be fulfilled in them. They are *willing* to be transferred from nature's steps of human descent to God's steps of human ascent. Or, to abide by the simplicity of our text, God is Will, and they are "*willing*." God will beautify them with salvation, because there is nothing in them to hinder his working. They will be wise, they will be good, they will be lovely, they will be *like God*, for they are "*willing*"; and there proceeds from God a mighty spirit, the whole tendency of which is to make his creatures like himself.—*John Pulsford, in "Quiet Hours,"* 1857.

Verse 3.—"*Thy people shall be willing.*" They are willing in believing, loving, obeying, adhering, living piously and justly in this world; so that they do not need the constraints of laws or threats, because they are led by the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there, also, is liberty.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy people shall be willing.*" Am I one of the "willing people"—not only my obedience and allegiance secured from a conviction of the truth, but my heart inclined, and my will renewed? To *do* the will of God, to *bear* the will of God, to *coincide* with the will of God—and that with calm if not cheerful consent of the heart, as seeing him who is invisible, and holding fast my living apprehension of his person and character? All unwillingness, whether practical or lurking in the heart, springs from unbelief—from a failure to realise him or his purposes. Were Jesus, as God become incarnate, and as giving himself for me, and his counsel of grace towards me, ever or even in any measure before my heart, how could I hesitate to yield myself, absolutely and implicitly, to him and his guidance? Again, this "willingness" is the essence of holiness; it constitutes "the beauties of holiness"—the beauty of Christ cast over the soul. The cure, therefore, for all my misery and sin is more faith, more of Christ, and nearer to him. This let me seek and ask with ever increasing earnestness.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*," etc. The prophet here notes three things respecting the subjects of the kingdom of the Messiah: 1. Their prompt obedience. 2. Their attire or vesture. 3. Their abundance, or multitude. This representation admirably agrees with what precedes. He had said that the Messiah should reign in the midst of his enemies, but lest any one should think that he would reign only over enemies, unwilling and opposing, as the devils are made subject to Christ, now he lets us know that he will have a loyal people, and obedient subjects, for else there would be wanting that same glory of which Solomon speaks in Prov. xiv. 28, "In the multitude of people is the king's honour." He affirms also, that he would have his own people, who would recognise, receive, and

serve him as King, with true obedience, nor would it be a small company, but like the dew, which waters the face of the whole earth.—*Rivetus.*

Verse 3.—" *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*" It is power acted and executed *with all sweetness, mildness, and gentleness.* Here is " leading, but no force; conduct, but no compulsion," *vehemens inclinatio, non coactio :* * the will is determined, but not the least violence is done to it, to the infringing of its liberty. How spontaneously does the person led follow him that leads him! So it is here. This and all other workings of the Spirit are admirably suited to the nature of reasonable and free agents. Efficacious grace does not at all destroy natural liberty. Where the Spirit does not find sinners willing, by his sweet method he makes them willing : " *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*" A " *day of power,*" yet " *willing.*" Even the Spirit's drawing is managed with all consistency to the freedom of the will. Ελκυει ὁ Θεος, αλλα βουλομενον ἑλκυει.† " He draws; but it is one that he makes willing to follow." " Behold, I will allure her " (Hosea ii. 14): ay, there is the Spirit's leading! this being the constant and avowed doctrine of the Protestants, and particularly their explication of the Spirit's leading in the text [Rom. viii. 14]; how injurious and invidious are the Popish writers in their traducing and calumniating of them, as if they asserted the Spirit, in this or any other act, to work with compulsion, or in a way destructive to man's essential liberty! It is a vile scandal!—*Thomas Jacomb, in " The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 3.—" *In the day of thy power.*" In the day of thy *strength,* saith the *Vulgate :* of thy force and *valour,* say Tremellius and Junius : of the *assemblies,* say they of Geneva : of the *armies,* saith Munster ; " at such times as thou shalt bring thy bands and join battle," so Vatablus, Castalio, and the Chaldee Paraphrase have it. All which the original בְּיוֹם חֵילֶךָ may bear without straining.—*John Prideaux,* 1578—1650.

Verse 3.—The subjects of the Priest-King are willing soldiers. In accordance with the warlike tone of the whole Psalm, our text describes the subjects as an army. That military metaphor comes out more closely when we attach the true meaning of the words, " *in the day of thy power.*" The word rendered, and rightly rendered, " *power,*" has the same ambiguity which that word has in the English of the date of our translation, and for a century later, as you may find in Shakspeare and Milton, who both used it in the sense of " army." Singularly enough we do not employ " powers " in that meaning, but we do another word which means the same thing—and talk of " forces," meaning thereby " troops." . . . " *The day of thy power* " is not a mere synonym for " *the time of thy might,*" but means specifically " *the day of thine army,*" that is " the day when thou dost muster thy forces and set them in array for the war." The King is going forth to conquest. But he goes not alone. Behind him come his faithful followers, all pressing on with willing hearts and high courage.—*Alexander McLaren,* 1871.

Verse 3.—" *In the day of thy power.*" This refers in a general way to the gospel dispensation, and in particular to the period of conversion. To the perishing sinner the gospel comes, " not in word only, but also in *power,* and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It is an *arresting* power ; it meets the sinner, and stays his mad career, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus. It is a *convincing* power, it teaches the sinner that he is ruined in every respect, and leads him to cry out, " What shall I do to be saved ? " . . . It is a *life-giving* power ; it quickens dead souls, and will eventually bring the dead bodies from their graves ; " all that are in the graves *shall hear* the voice of the Son of God and *shall live.*" This is the style of Jehovah, " *I will, they shall* " ; none other dare speak thus. It is also *liberating* power ; " if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—*Theophilus Jones, in a Sermon preached at Surrey Chapel,* 1823.

Verse 3.—" *Thy people,*" etc. In *homage,* they shall be like a company of priests in sacred vestments, for they shall appear " *in the beauties of holiness.*" In *number,* they shall be like the countless dewdrops " *from the womb of the morning,*" sparkling in the rays of the rising sun, and reflecting his radiance. In *glory* they shall bear the likeness of Christ's resurrection in all its vernal freshness : " *Thou hast the dew of thy youth.*"—*Benjamin Wildon Carr.*

Verse 3.—" *In the beauties of holiness.*" In holy vestments as priests. They are at once warriors and priests ; meet for the service of him who was King and Priest. Neander (*Mem. of Chr. Life,* ch. iv.) remarks on the connection between

* Gorranus. † Chrysostom.

these two sides of the Christian character. God's soldiers can only *maintain their war* by priestly self-consecration. Conversely: God's priests can only *preserve their purity* by unintermitted conflict.—*William Kay.*

Verse 3.—"*In the beauties of holiness.*" This expression is usually read as if it belonged either to the words immediately preceding, or to those immediately following. But in either case the connection is somewhat difficult and obscure. It seems better regarded as a distinct and separate clause, adding a fresh trait to the description of the army. And what that is we need not find any difficulty in ascertaining. "*The beauties of holiness*" is a frequent phrase for the sacerdotal garments, the holy festal attire of the priests of the Lord. So considered, how beautifully it comes in here. The conquering King whom the Psalm hymns is a Priest for ever; and he is followed by an army of priests. The soldiers are gathered in the day of the muster, with high courage and willing devotion, ready to fling away their lives; but they are clad not in mail, but in priestly robes; like those who wait before the altar rather than like those who plunge into the fight, like those who compassed Jericho with the ark for their standard and the trumpets for all their weapons. We can scarcely fail to remember the words which echo these and interpret them. "The armies which were in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean"—a strange armour against sword-cut and spear-thrust.—*Alexander McLaren.*

Verse 3.—"*The beauties of holiness.*" Godliness is our spiritual beauty. Godliness is to the soul as the light to the world, to illustrate and adorn it. It is not greatness that sets us off in God's eye, but goodness: what is the beauty of the angels but their sanctity? Godliness is the curious embroidery and workmanship of the Holy Ghost: a soul furnished with godliness is damasked with beauty, and enamelled with purity: this is the "clothing of wrought gold" which makes the King of heaven fall in love with us. Were there not an excellency in holiness, the hypocrite would never go about to paint it. Godliness sheds a glory and lustre upon the saints: what are the graces but the golden feathers in which Christ's dove shines? Ps. lxviii. 13.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast the dew of thy youth.*" These words are often misunderstood, and taken to be a description of the fresh, youthful energy attributed by the Psalm tc the Priest-King of this nation of soldier-priests. The misunderstanding, I suppose, has led to the common phrase, "the dew of one's youth." But the reference of the expression is to the army, not to its leader. "*Youth*" here is a collective noun, equivalent to "*young men.*" The host of his soldier-subjects is described as a band of young warriors, whom he leads, in their fresh strength and countless numbers and gleaming beauty like the dew of the morning. . . . It is as a symbol of the refreshing which a weary world will receive from the conquests and presence of the King and his host, that they are likened to the glittering morning dew. Another prophetic Scripture gives us the same emblem when it speaks of Israel being "in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord." Such ought to be the effect of our presence. We are meant to gladden, to adorn, to refresh this parched, prosaic world, with a freshness brought from the chambers of the sunrise.

The dew, formed in the silence of the darkness while men sleep, falling as willingly on a bit of dead wood as anywhere, hanging its pearls on every poor spike of grass, and dressing everything on which it lies with strange beauty, each separate globule tiny and evanescent, but each flashing back the light, and each a perfect sphere: feeble one by one, but united mighty to make the pastures of the wilderness rejoice—so, created in silence by an unseen influence, feeble when taken in detail, but strong in their myriads, glad to occupy the lowliest place, and each "bright with something of celestial light," Christian men and women are to be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord.—*Alexander McLaren.*

Verse 3.—"*The dew of thy youth.*" There does not, indeed, appear to me any reason to doubt that, in this place, David extols the divine favour displayed in increasing the number of Christ's people; and hence, in consequence of their extraordinary increase, he compares the youth or race which would be born to him to the *dew.* As men are struck with astonishment at seeing the earth moistened and refreshed with dew, though its descent be imperceptible, even so, David declares that an innumerable offspring shall be born to Christ, who shall be spread over the whole earth. The youth, therefore, which, like the dew-drops, are innumerable, are here designated *the dew of childhood,* or *of youth.*—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—"*From the womb of the morning*" is, with the utmost pertinency, applied

to the conception and production of dews; agreeably to a delicate line in that great master of just description and lively painting, Mr. Thomson:

"The meek ey'd morn appears, mother of dews."

We meet with a fine expression in the book of Job, which may serve to confirm this remark; and may illustrate the propriety of the phrase used in this connection: "Hath the rain a father, or who hath begotten the drops of dew?" It seems, the oriental writers delighted to represent the dew as a kind of birth, as the offspring of the morning. And if so, surely there could be no image in the whole compass of the universe better adapted to the Psalmist's purpose, or more strongly significant of those multitudes of proselytes, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; by the powerful energy of his word and Spirit. Upon this supposition, the whole verse describes the willing subjection, the gracious accomplishments, and the vast number of Christ's converts.—*James Hervey* (1713-14—1758), in "*Meditations and Contemplations.*"

Verse 3.—"*The dew of thy youth.*" The most apparent reference is to multitude. Compare Ps. lxxii., 16, and the proverbial use of the dew together with the sand of the sea shore to express a vast number. The people of the Messiah are a great number that no man can number: Rev. vii. 9. But this is only the common enwrapping veil of a further sense. We must further note, *First*, THE ORIGIN OF THE DEW. *From what comes it?* From earthly matter, vapour and mist, as the new born soldier of Christ comes from the confused, dark substance of the old nature. *By what is it produced?* Through the influence of the heavenly warmth of the beams of the morning sun: so the people of God owe themselves to the light from above. In the vivifying light of heaven, the dewdrops are begotten, and from it they come more properly than from the earth-water. *How are they produced?* Invisibly, wonderfully, by the secret, incomprehensible influence of the divine power. We have by no means exhausted the figure, for we notice, *Secondly*, THE DESIGN OF THE DEW. It is for the *fertilizing and refreshing* of the earth. The spiritual Israel are a fructifying, quickening dew among men. It is also for the *ornament* of the earth, which the dew bestrews as with precious stones; and this beauty is caused because each little drop of dew reflects the morning sun and is an earthly reflection of the heavenly light.—*Condensed from Rudolph Stier.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—With singular beauty and propriety does the Psalmist compare the first preachers of the gospel to dew. In the first place, they may be compared to the drops of dew on account of their multitude. But, in order to judge of the correctness of the comparison in this respect, we must consider, that, in the Holy Land, the dews are remarkably abundant. A French traveller * has observed of Judea, that in the morning the ground is as much moistened by dew, as if it had rained. We are informed in the sacred history, that, when the Dayspring from on high visited the earth, many were the followers of Christ; and that very soon after his ascension into heaven, "multitudes both of men and women were added to the Lord." Justly then may those who hastened to the blessed Jesus, when the glorious light of his gospel first dawned upon the world, or immediately on the commencement of his mediatorial kingdom, be compared in number to the drops of dew, which at the dawn of day fall to the earth.

It is mentioned also in this verse, that the first subjects of the Messiah were to present themselves adorned "with the beauties of holiness"; בהדרי קדש in the splendours of holiness. In brightness, then, as well as in multitude, did they resemble the glittering drops of the morning dew. Our great poet has combined these two ideas in his beautiful comparison of an host innumerable to the

"Stars of morning, dew-drops which the sun impearls." †

The formation of the dew is represented in Scripture as the work of God, and not of man; and its descending to refresh and fertilize the earth is mentioned as his peculiar gift, and in opposition to human means of rendering the earth more fruitful. "Who," saith Job, "hath begotten the drops of dew?" (ch. xxxviii. 28). And the prophet Micah declares, that "the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for

* Eugene Rogers.
† Milton's "Paradise Lost," Book v., line 745.

man, nor waiteth for the sons of men" (ch. v. 7). Well, then, might the term be applied by the Psalmist to those whom "God of his own will begat with the word of truth"; and who were his appointed instruments, by their preaching, to cause "the desert to rejoice and to blossom abundantly"; and "the wilderness to become a fruitful field."

Let it also be remembered, that those whom the Psalmist compares to dew are described under the image of young soldiers, going forth to fight the battles of a victorious prince. Now this comparison is used in 2 Sam. xvii. 11, 12: "I counsel," said Hushai to Ahitophel, "that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth upon the ground." It is perhaps not undeserving of notice, that amongst the Romans those troops who first attacked the enemy, and who were composed of young men, were, from a supposed resemblance to dew, called Rorarii. It is not incumbent upon me to investigate the reason of their receiving that name; it is sufficient to point out its similarity with the expression of the Psalmist, which is applied to those who were first to engage in the conflict with the enemies of the Gospel of Christ.—*Richard Dixon*, 1811.

Verse 3.—

Thee, in thy power's triumphant day,
The willing nations shall obey;
And, when thy rising beams they view,
Shall all (redeem'd from error's night)
Appear as numberless and bright
As crystal drops of morning dew.

N. Brady and N. Tate.

Verse 3.—

Lord, let thy day of power be known,
Thy people be confessed;
Eager and valiant—priests each one,
In holy garments dressed.

Countless they shine, as dews from heaven
When eastern skies grow bright—
More glorious than those dews are given,
Sparkling in morning light.

George Rawson, in "Hymns, Verses, and Chants," 1876.

Verse 4.—"*The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent,*" etc. It should be diligently considered, that God has consecrated Christ priest by an oath, and that this was done for our sakes: First, That we might know how exceedingly momentous was this transaction, and the more reverently and with the stronger faith believe it. Secondly, That we might acknowledge the goodness of God, who, being most truthful in himself, and concerning whose faithfulness it is the greatest crime to doubt, nevertheless has been pleased to speak to us not only with a bare word, but also, after the manner of men, to confirm his decree by an oath.—*Rivetus.*

Verse 4.—"*Sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever.*" God might have made the levitical priest by oath, and yet he might have been changed; but if he had made him by oath to be a priest for ever, then he could not have repented, that is, changed; but he must of necessity have been a priest for ever. Therefore you must take special notice, that God did not only swear that Christ should be a priest, or that he should be a priest for a long time, but a priest "*for ever;*" so that there should never be any priest joined with him, or come after him. So that if we consider the oath, and the thing confirmed by this oath, two things will be manifest: 1. That Christ's priesthood is personal, and settled in one single person for ever; so that he can have no fellow nor co-partner, nor any successor in his priesthood. 2. That, by this oath, God did limit his own supreme and absolute power in this particular; and took away the use and exercise of it, and that for ever. For now he hath no power to make Christ no priest, or take away his priesthood at will and pleasure: and in this God discovered his unspeakable love unto Christ, in that he did so much honour him, and so highly reward him. By this he also displayed his abundant mercy to man; for by this oath known unto man, he signifies that man shall never be destitute of a powerful and effectual priest, able for ever to save; and

this doth minister unto sinful man most sweet and heavenly comfort.—*George Lawson*, 1662.

Verse 4.—The form and manner of our Saviour's investiture or consecration was most honourable and glorious, God the Father performing the rites; which were not imposition of hands, and breathing on him the Holy Ghost, but a solemn *testimony*, with a protestation, "*Thou art a priest*": ceremonies never used by any but God, nor in the investiture of any but Christ, nor in his investiture into any office but the priesthood. At his coronation we hear nothing, but the Lord said, "*Sit thou on my right hand*": the rule of the whole world is imposed upon our Saviour by command; and even in this did Christ show his obedience to his Father, that he took upon him the government of his church. But at the consecration of Christ we have a great deal more of ceremony and solemnity, God his Father taketh an oath, and particularly expresseth the nature and condition of his office, a *priesthood for ever after the order of Melchizedek*: and he confirmeth it unto him for ever, saying, "*Thou art a priest for ever.*"—*Daniel Featley, in "Clavis Mystica."* 1636.

Verse 4.—What doctrine doth the Scripture afford more comfortable to a drooping soul than this, that *God hath sworn his Son a priest for ever*, to sanctify our persons, and purge our sins, and tender all our petitions to his Father? What sin is so heinous, for which such a priest cannot satisfy by the oblation of himself? what cause so desperate, in which such an advocate, if he will plead, may not prevail? We may be sure God will not be hard to be intreated of us, who himself hath appointed us such an intercessor, to whom he can deny nothing; and to that end hath appointed him to sit at his right hand to make intercession for us.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 4.—"*And will not repent.*" The meaning of this phrase is, that the priesthood of Christ is not like that of Aaron, which was after a time to expire, and is now actually with all the ceremonial law abolished, but a priesthood never to be altered or changed.—*Daniel Featley.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou art a priest.*" The reasons which moved our Lord to take upon him the office of priest are conceived to be these. 1. Because the salvation and redemption of mankind, wrought by the sacrifice of his priesthood, being a most noble work, and not inferior to the creation, it was not fit that any should have the honour of it, but the Son of God. 2. Neither was it agreeable that any should offer him, who was the only sacrifice that could expiate the sins of the whole world, but himself: therefore by offering himself he added infinite worth to the sacrifice, and great honour to the priesthood of the Gospel. For, as the gold sanctifieth not the altar, but the altar the gold; so it may be truly said without impeachment to the dignity of that calling, that Christ was rather an honour to the priesthood, than the priesthood an addition to him. For what got he by the priesthood which cost him his life? What preferment could it be to him, to take upon him an office, whereby he was to abase himself below himself, and be put to an ignominious and accursed death? What were we vile miscreants, conceived and born in original sin, and soiled with the filth of numberless actual transgressions, that to purge and cleanse our polluted souls and defiled consciences, the second person in the Trinity should be made a Priest? It was wonderful humility in him to wash his disciples' feet; but in his divine person to wash our unclean souls, is as far above human conceit, as it seemeth below divine majesty. There is nothing so impure as a foul conscience; no matter so filthy, no corruption so rotten and unsavoury as is found in the sores of an exulcerated mind; yet the Son of God vouchsafed to wash and bathe them in his own blood. O bottomless depth of humility and mercy! Other priests were appointed by men for the service of God, but he was appointed by God for the service and salvation of men: other priests spilt the blood of beasts to save men, but he shed his own blood to save us, more like beasts than men: other priests offered sacrifice for themselves, he offered himself for a sacrifice: other priests were fed by the sacrifices which the people brought, but he feeds us with the sacrifice of his own body and blood: lastly, others were appointed priests but for a time, he was ordained a priest "*for ever.*"—*Daniel Featley.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou art a priest.*" This word, "*Thou art,*" is *verbum constitutivum*, a "constituting word," whereon the priesthood of Christ was founded. And it may be considered,—1. As *declarative* of God's eternal decree, with the covenant between the Father and the Son, whereby he was designed unto this office. 2. As *demonstrative* of his mission, or his actual sending to the discharge of his office. These words are the symbol and solemn sign of God's conferring that honour upon him, which gave him his instalment. 3. As *predictive*, for there is included in them a supposition

that God would prepare a body for him, wherein he might exercise his priesthood, and which he might offer up unto him.—*John Owen.*

Verse 4.—"*Melchizedek.*" Some heretics of old affirmed that he was the *Holy Ghost.* Others, that he was an *angel.* Others that he was *Shem,* the son of Noah. Others that he was a *Canaanite,* extraordinarily raised up by God to be a priest of the Gentiles. Others that he was *Christ himself,* manifested by a special dispensation and privilege unto Abraham in the flesh, who is said to have seen his day, and rejoiced, John viii. 56. Difference there is also about *Salem,* the place of which he was king. Some take it for *Jerusalem,* as Josephus and most of the ancients. Others for a city in the half tribe of Manasseh, within the river Jordan, where Hierom reports that some ruins of the palace of Melchizedek were in his days conceived to remain. Tedious I might be in insisting on this point who Melchizedek was. But when I find the Holy Ghost purposely concealing his name, genealogy, beginning, ending, and descent, and that to special purpose, I cannot but wonder that men should toil themselves in the dark to find out that of which they have not the least ground of solid conjecture, and the inevidence whereof is expressly recorded, to make Melchizedek thereby the fitter type of Christ's everlasting priesthood.—*Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 4.—"*Melchizedek.*" These things concerning are certain: *First, That he was a mere man, and no more;* for, 1. "Every high priest" was to be "taken from among men," Heb. v. 1;—so that the Son of God himself could not have been a priest had he not assumed our nature: 2. That if he were more than a man, there would be no mystery in his being introduced in Scripture as, "without father, without mother, without pedigree," for none but men have such: 3. Without this conception of him there is no force in the apostle's argument against the Jews. *Secondly, That he came not to his office by the right of primogeniture* (which includes a genealogy) or by any way of succession, but was raised up and immediately called of God thereunto; for in that respect Christ is said to be a priest after his order. *Thirdly, That he had no successor on the earth,* nor could have; for there was no law to constitute an order of succession, and he was a priest only after an extraordinary call. These things belong unto faith in this matter, and no more. . . . The first personal instituted type of Christ was a priest; this was Melchizedec. There were before *real* instituted types of his work, as sacrifices; and there were *moral* types of his person, as Adam, Abel, and Noah, which represented him in sundry things; but the first person who was solemnly designed to teach and represent him, by what he was and did, was a priest. And that which God taught herein was, that the foundation of all that the Lord Christ had to do in and for the church was laid in his priestly office, whereby he made atonement and reconciliation for sin. Everything else that he doth is built on the supposition of his priesthood. And we must begin in the application where God begins in the exhibition. An interest in the effects of the priestly office of Christ is that which in the first place we ought to look after. This being attained, we shall be willing to be taught and ruled by him. It may not be amiss to observe the likeness between Melchizedec and Christ. As for our Lord;

1. He was said to be, and he really was, and he only, first *the king of righteousness, and then the king of peace;* seeing he alone brought in everlasting righteousness and made peace with God for sinners. In his kingdom alone are these things to be found.

2. He was really and truly the *priest of the most high God*; and properly he was so alone. He offered that sacrifice, and made that atonement, which was signified by all the sacrifices offered by holy men from the foundation of the world.

3. He *blesseth all the faithful, as Abraham, the father of the faithful, was blessed by Melchizedec.* In him were they to be blessed, by him are they blessed,—through him delivered from the curse, and all the fruits of it; nor are they partakers of any blessing but from him.

4. He *receiveth all the homage of his people,* all their grateful acknowledgments of the love and favour of God, in the conquest of their spiritual adversaries, and deliverance from them, as Melchizedec received the tenth of the spoils from Abraham.

5. He was really *without progenitors or predecessors* in his office; nor would I exclude that mystical sense from the intention of the place, that he was without father as to his human nature, and without mother as to his divine.

6. He was a *priest without genealogy,* or derivation of his pedigree from the loins of Aaron, or any other that ever was a priest in the world, and moreover, mysteriously, was of a generation which none can declare.

7. He had, *in his divine person,* as the high priest of the church, *neither beginning*

of days nor end of life, as no such thing is reported of Melchizedec; for the death which he underwent, in the discharge of his office, being not the death of his whole person, but of his human nature only, no interruption of his endless office did ensue thereon. For although the person of the Son of God died, whence God is said to "redeem his church with his own blood," Acts xx. 28; yet he died not in his whole person: but in his divine nature was still alive. Absolutely, therefore, and in respect of his office, he had neither beginning of days nor end of life.

8. He was *really the Son of God*, as Melchizedec in many circumstances was made like to the Son of God.

9. He *alone abideth a priest for ever*; whereof we must particularly treat afterwards.—*Condensed from John Owen.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord . . . . shall strike through kings*," etc. He really threatens such great heads in an awful manner, that if they will not hear, and cannot obey, they shall be terrified to death. And assuredly he would willingly, by these means, allure them to repentance, and persuade them to turn, and to cease from raging against the Lord. But if they will not, they shall know against whom it is that they go on. . . . . This is our consolation which upholds us, and makes our heart joyful and glad against the persecution and rage of the world, that we have such a Lord, who not only delivers us from sin and eternal death, but also protects us, and delivers us in sufferings and temptations, so that we do not sink under them. And though men rage in a most savage manner against Christians, yet neither the gospel nor Christianity shall perish; but their heads shall be destroyed against it. If their persecutions were to go on unceasingly Christianity could not remain, wherefore he gives them a time, and says he will connive at them for a while, but not longer than till the hour comes which he here calls the "*day of his wrath.*" And if they will not now cease in the name of God, they must then cease in the name of the devil.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 5.—"*Shall strike through kings.*" *To strike through* notes a complete victory and full confusion of the enemy, an incurable wound, that they may stagger, and fall, and rise up no more, and that affliction may not arise a second time, Nahum i. 9; 1 Sam. xxvi. 8. The only difficulty is what is meant by "kings." For which we must note that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, and his war spiritual, and therefore his enemies for the most part spiritual.—*Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 5.—"*In the day of his wrath.*" Note that it is not simply said, he will strike through kings in his wrath, but in the *day* of his wrath. Therefore as there is a time of grace and patience, so there is also an appointed time of wrath and vengeance of God. Frequent mention is made of this in the sacred Scriptures, that we may be admonished that the wicked will not be left always unpunished, because they contemn the patience of God, aye, provoke his anger; but that there will be a time when they will experience the wrath of God. Thus, armed with patience, we should persevere in the practice of piety, nor be turned aside from it, either by the example of the wicked, or from fear of them.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verses 5, 6, 7.

> The sentenc'd heathen he shall slay,
> And fill with carcases his way,
> Till he hath struck earth's tyrants dead;
> But in the high-way brooks shall first,
> Like a poor pilgrim, slake his thirst,
> And then in triumph raise his head.
>
> *N. Brady and N. Tate.*

Verse 6.—"*He shall fill the places with the dead bodies.*" This notes *the greatness* of the victory, that none should be left to bury the dead. There shall be an universal destruction of wicked men *together* in the day of God's wrath, they shall be bound up in bundles, and heaped for damnation, Matt. xiii. 30; Psal. xxxvii. 38; Isai. i. 28; lxvi. 17. And it notes the *shame* and dishonour of the enemy, they shall be like dung upon the face of the earth, and shall be beholden to their victors for a base and dishonourable burial, as we see in the great battle with Gog and Magog, Ezekiel xxxix. 11—16.—*Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 6.—"*Dead bodies.*" Either the corpses of the vanquished enemy; or (possibly) the living bodies of men in a state of *servitude*, as in Gen. xlvii. 18; Neh. ix. 37. (The construction as in Exod. xv. 9.) In the latter case, the meaning may

be: that the bodies of those who had been enslaved by the Usurper, Death, were now claimed back by their rightful Lord. The full number is claimed back. The "last enemy" being destroyed, "*all* things" are brought beneath Christ's sway.—*William Kay.*

Verse 6.—"*The heads.*" Rather, *the head;* doubtless, the head of the Old Serpent (according to the prophecy in Gen. iii. 15), who acts in all who resist Christ. The verb *machats*, which is used here, is employed to describe the prophetical and typical act of Jael, smiting the *head* of God's enemy, Sisera (Jud. v. 26 and iv. 22); and it is used in Ps. lxviii. 21, which describes Christ's victory, "God shall *wound* the *head* of his enemies"; and also by Hab. iii. 13, "Thou *woundest* the *head* out of the house of the wicked."—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 7.—"*He shall drink of the brook*," etc. He describeth the passion of Christ and his glory. "*In the way*," saith he, that is, in his life while he is in this misery, "*he shall drink out of the brook*," that is, he shall suffer and be overcome. For to drink out of the cup is to suffer: but to drink out of the brook, is to be altogether full of trouble, to be vexed and tormented and utterly to be overwhelmed with a strong stream of troubles. Thus was it in David's mind to declare the passion of Christ. Afterward he saith, "*therefore shall he lift up the head.*" After the passion followeth the glory, with the resurrection and ascension. Paul (Philip ii.) speaketh of both, and saith: "Christ humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," etc.—*Myles Coverdale*, 1487—1568.

Verse 7.—I conceive that the "*brook*" here spoken of was not intended to give us the idea of a clear brook of refreshing water, which was to afford the Redeemer strength to endure the amazing conflict; as the drinking of the water enabled Gideon's chosen band of men to go forth to battle against the Midianites. No; in our Lord's case it was a polluted and turbid stream. Like the water of *Marah*, which the Israelites could not drink, it was bitter; for sin had made it so. It bore along with it, as it flowed, the curse of the broken law, and the vengeance of offended justice, and the wrath of the eternal God. It was pain, sorrow, suffering, death. *This* was the "*brook*" of which he drank. The "cup" which his Father gave him to drink was filled with the bitter water of this "*brook*"; and he may be said to have first put his lips to it, when he declared to his disciples, in his way to Gethsemane, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

But it is stated in the text that this "*brook*" was "*in the way.*" It is described here as running by the path in which the Redeemer was going in order to the accomplishment of his great work of man's salvation; that work which he had engaged in the everlasting covenant to perform; and by the performance of which, man could alone be accepted of God. The sin of man was the *source* from whence this water issued; and it flowed along in the Saviour's "*way*," through the wilderness of this world to his kingdom of glory in the next; as the brook *Kidron*, red with the blood of the typical sacrifices, flowed in his way to *Calvary.—Fountain Elwin*, 1842.

Verse 7.—In the expositions of most of the ancients and moderns, we are told that he drank of the brook, 1, of *mortality* by his incarnation; 2, of strictness and *hardness* in all his passage, by his voluntary wants and poverty; 3, of the *strong potion of the law*, by his exact obedience and subjection; 4, of the *Jews' malice*, by their continual indignities; 5, of the *floods of Belial*, by apparent and unknown temptations; 6, of the *heaviest wrath* of his Father, by his unspeakable agony and bloody sweat in the garden. And last of all, *of death itself* on the cross, by his sad and extreme passion.—*John Prideaux.*

Verse 7.—"*He shall drink of the brook in the way.*" These words were understood by Junius and Tremellius long ago as meaning, "He shall steadily press on to victory, as generals of energy act, who in pursuing routed foes, stay not to indulge themselves in meat or drink." Hengstenberg and others substantially approve of this view. While a few hold that allusion may be made to Samson at Ramath-Lehi (as if the words spoke of Christ having a secret spring of refreshment when needful). Most seem inclined to take *Gideon* as the type that best expresses the idea. Pressing on to victory, Messiah, like Gideon, "faint yet pursuing" as he passed over Jordan, shall not desist till all is won. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he hath set judgment in the earth." Perhaps the full idea is this:—His career was irresistibly successful like that of Gideon; for he allowed nothing to detain him, nor did he shrink in the enterprise from any fatigue, nor did he stop to indulge the flesh. If we

take it thus, there is both the Humiliation and the Exaltation of the Son of Man contained in the words ; and Phil. ii. 8, 9 supplies a commentary.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 7.—" Schnurrer," says Rosenmüller, " seems to have perceived the meaning of the verse, which he gives in the following words :—' Though fatigued with the slaughter of his enemies, yet he will not desist : but, having refreshed himself with water from the nearest stream, will exert his renovated strength in the pursuit of the routed foe.' "—*Messianic Psalms.*

Verse 7.—Christ shall " *lift up the head* " by way of triumphing and rejoicing, when he shall have taken full vengeance of his adversaries, and freed, not himself only, but the whole body of his church from the assaults and dangers of all enemies. We see now that oftentimes, though not in himself, yet in his members, he is fain to hang down the head, and to wear the badges of reproach and shame, whilst the ungodly vaunt themselves (Job xxxi. 26) and in their hearts despise the righteous, accounting more vilely of them than of the dust of their feet.—*Robert Abbot.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Here the Holy Ghost begins with the *kingdom of Christ*, which he describeth and magnifieth,—1. By his *unction* and *ordination* thereunto, by the word or decree of his Father : " *The Lord said.*" 2. By the *greatness of his person* in himself, while yet he is nearly allied in blood and nature unto us ; " *My Lord.*" 3. By the *glory*, power, and heavenliness of his kingdom, for in the administration thereof he sitteth at the right hand of his Father : " *Sit thou at my right hand.*" 4. By the *continuance* and victories thereof : " *Until I make thy foes thy footstool.*"—*Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 1.—" *My Lord.*" I. Christ's condescending nearness to us does not destroy our reverence : he was David's son, and yet he calls him Lord ; he is our brother, bridegroom, and so on, and yet our *Lord.* II. Christ's glory does not diminish his nearness to us, or familiarity with us. Sitting on the throne as Lord, he is yet " *my* Lord." III. It is under the double aspect as Lord, and yet ours, that Jehovah regards him, and speaks with him, and ordains him to the priesthood. Ever in these two lights let us regard him.

Verse 1.—" *Sit,*" etc. I. Our Lord's quiet amid passing events. II. The abundance of his present power. III. The working of all history towards the ultimate end, which will be—IV. His easy victory : putting his foot on his foes as readily as we tread on a footstool.

Verse 2.—I. What is that rod ? The gospel (Illustrated by Moses' rod). II. Who sends it ? " The Lord." III. Whence it comes ? Out of the church of God. IV. What is the result ? Jesus reigns.

Verse 3.—A willing people and an immutable Leader. I. The promise made to Christ concerning his people : " Thy people shall be willing," etc. 1. A promise of time : " In the day," etc. 2. Of persons : " Thy people." 3. Of disposition : " Shall be willing." 4. Of character : " In the beauties of holiness." 5. The majestic figure employed : " From the womb of the morning : thou hast the dew of thy youth." II. The promise made to Christ concerning himself : " Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Jesus Christ has the dew of his youth personally, doctrinally, and mystically, being surrounded by new converts, who are as the early dew.—*Spurgeon's Sermons, No.* 74.

Verse 3.—This is a prophecy of the subjects of Christ's kingdom. I. Who they are ; " Thy people." 1. A people. This denotes distinction, separation, similarity, organization. They are not a confused rabble, but a united community. 2. *His* people. By gift, by purchase, by effectual calling. II. What they are. 1. A loyal people : " willing." 2. A conquered people : " in the day of thy power." 3. A holy people : " in the beauties of holiness." 4. A numerous people : " from the womb of the morning," etc. The number of converts at the first proclamation of Christ's gospel was but the dew of his youth.—*G. R.*

Verse 3.—First, *the internal evidence of Christ's kingdom is in his people's willingness :* " Thy people shall be willingness—thy people shall be a people all willing "—all volunteers, not pressed men. Secondly, *the external evidence of it lies in his people's holiness ;* " the beauties of holiness ; " or as it may be rendered—" in the magnificence

of his sanctuary," for the ornaments of the sanctuary and the dress of the priests were very splendid. When you once give yourselves to God, you become temples of God; and sanctity must adorn that heart which is a living temple of the Holy Ghost.—*J. Bennett, in a Sermon*, 1829.

Verse 3.—All true followers of Jesus are (1) priests—beauties of holiness are their sacerdotal robes; (2) soldiers—" in the day of thine armies; " (3) volunteers; (4) benefactors—as the dew.—*Suggested by a paper in The Baptist Magazine.*

Verse 3.—Here we have a cluster of subjects:—the willingness of the Lord's people, the beauty of holiness, young converts the life and glory of the church, the mystery of conversion, and so on.

Verse 4.—The eternal priesthood of Christ. On what its perpetuity is founded and the blessed results flowing therefrom.

Verse 4.—These words offer three points of special observation. 1. The ceremony used at the consecration of our Lord: " *The Lord sware.*" 2. The office conferred upon him by this rite or ceremony: " *Thou art a priest.*" 3. The prerogatives of his office; which office is here declared to be, (1), Perpetual " *for ever.*" (2), Regular, " *after the order.*" (3), Royal, " *of Melchizedek.*"—*Daniel Featley.*

Verse 4.—Melchizedek: a fruitful subject. See notes.

Verse 5.—The certain overthrow of every power which opposes the gospel.

Verse 6.—The fearful calamities which have happened to nations through their sinful rejection of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 7.—Christ's alacrity, self-denial, and simplicity, the causes of his success. Example to be imitated.

Verse 7.—Christ's humiliation and exaltation.

HUNT, BARNARD & CO., LTD., Printers, London and Aylesbury.

THE

TREASURY OF DAVID:

CONTAINING

AN ORIGINAL EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS;

A COLLECTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS FROM THE WHOLE RANGE OF LITERATURE;

A SERIES OF HOMILETICAL HINTS UPON ALMOST EVERY VERSE;

AND LISTS OF WRITERS UPON EACH PSALM.

IN SIX VOLUMES

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

VOL. V.

PSALM CXI. TO CXIX.

33434

MARSHALL BROTHERS, LTD.

PUBLISHERS

LONDON, EDINBURGH AND NEW YORK.

"WESTWOOD." C. H. SPURGEON'S HOME ON BEULAH HILL.

Specially drawn for "The Treasury of David" by E. H. Fitchew.

PREFACE.

At length I am able to present to the Christian public another part of "The Treasury of David." It has demanded longer labour than its predecessors, but that labour has been freely given to it; and to the utmost of my ability I have kept the volume up to the level of those which have gone before. In the production of this exposition I had far rather be long than lax; for I know by experience the disappointment which comes to readers when, after a promising beginning, they see a serious declension towards the end. The general acceptance given to this Commentary has placed me under a heavy obligation to do my best even to the end. Towards that end I am still proceeding with all possible diligence, and it is with great pleasure that I look forward to the speedy issue of the last volume of the work. Many labours distract me from this favourite employment, but I hope to press on with more speed than of late, if my life be spared. It would be imprudent to make too sure of *that;* for the most fragile Venice glass is not more brittle than human life:

> "The spider's most attenuated thread
> Is cord, is cable, to the tender film
> Which holds our soul in life."

I have been all the longer over this portion of my task because I have been bewildered in the expanse of the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, which makes up the bulk of this volume. Its dimensions and its depth alike overcame me. It spread itself out before me like a vast, rolling prairie, to which I could see no bound, and this alone created a feeling of dismay. Its expanse was unbroken by a bluff or headland, and hence it threatened a monotonous task, although the fear has not been realized. This marvellous poem seemed to me a great sea of holy teaching, moving, in its many verses, wave upon wave; altogether without an island of special and remarkable statement to break it up. I confess I hesitated to launch upon it. Other Psalms have been mere lakes, but this is the main ocean. It is a continent of sacred thought, every inch of which is fertile as the garden of the Lord: it is an amazing level of abundance, a mighty stretch of harvest-fields. I have now crossed the great plain for myself, but not without persevering, and, I will add, pleasurable, toil. Several great authors have traversed this region and left their tracks behind them, and so far the journey has been all the easier for me; but yet to me and to my helpers it has been no mean feat of patient authorship and research. This great Psalm is a book in itself: instead of being one among many Psalms, it is worthy to be set forth by itself as a poem of surpassing excellence. Those who have never studied it may pronounce it commonplace, and complain of its repetitions; but to the thoughtful student it is like the great deep, full, so as never to be measured; and varied, so as never to weary the eye. Its depth is as great as its length; it is mystery, not set forth as mystery, but concealed beneath the simplest statements; may I say that it is experience allowed to prattle, to preach, to praise, and to pray like a child-prophet in his own father's house?

My venerable friend, Mr. Rogers, has been spared to help me with his admirable suggestions; but Mr. Gibson, who so industriously translated from the Latin authors, has fallen asleep, leaving behind him copious notes upon the rest of the Psalms. Aid in the homiletical department has been given me by several of the ministers who were educated at the Pastor's College, and their names are duly appended to the hints and skeletons which they have supplied. In this department the present volume is believed to be superior to the former ones. May it prove to be really useful to my brethren, and my desire is fulfilled. I know so well the use of a homiletic hint when the mind is in search for a subject, that I have felt peculiar pleasure in supplying my readers with a full measure of such helps.

In hunting up rare authors, and making extracts from them, Mr. Keys has rendered me great assistance, and I am also a debtor to others who have cheerfully rendered me service when I have sought it. Burdened with the care of many institutions, and the oversight of a singularly large church, I cannot do such justice to my theme as I could wish. Learned leisure would be far more accurate than my busy pen can ever hope to be. If I had nothing else to think of, I would have thought of nothing else, and undivided energies could have accomplished what spare strength can never perform. Hence, I am glad of help; so glad, that I am happy to acknowledge it. Not in this thing only, but in all other labours, I owe in the first place all to God, and secondarily, very, very much to those generous friends who find a delight in making my efforts successful.

Above all, I trust that the Holy Spirit has been with me in writing and compiling these volumes, and therefore I expect that he will bless them both to the conversion of the unrenewed and to the edification of believers. The writing of this book has been a means of grace to my own heart; I have enjoyed for myself what I have prepared for my readers. The Book of Psalms has been a royal banquet to me, and in feasting upon its contents I have seemed to eat angels' food. It is no wonder that old writers should call it,—the school of patience, the soul's soliloquies, the little Bible, the anatomy of conscience, the rose garden, the pearl island, and the like. It is the Paradise of devotion, the Holy Land of poesy, the heart of Scripture, the map of experience, and the tongue of saints. It is the spokesman of feelings which else had found no utterance. Does it not say just what we wished to say? Are not its prayers and praises exactly such as our hearts delight in? No man needs better company than the Psalms; therein he may read and commune with friends human and divine; friends who know the heart of man towards God and the heart of God towards man; friends who perfectly sympathize with us and our sorrows, friends who never betray or forsake. Oh, to be shut up in a cave with David, with no other occupation but to hear him sing, and to sing with him! Well might a Christian monarch lay aside his crown for such enjoyment, and a believing pauper find a crown in such felicity.

It is to be feared that the Psalms are by no means so prized as in earlier ages of the Church. Time was when the Psalms were not only rehearsed in all the churches from day to day, but they were so universally sung that the common people knew them, even if they did not know the letters in which they were written. Time was when bishops would ordain no man to the ministry unless he knew "David" from end to end, and could repeat each Psalm correctly; even Councils of the Church have decreed that none should hold ecclesiastical office unless they knew the whole Psalter by heart. Other practices of those ages had better be forgotten, but to *this* memory accords

an honourable record. Then, as Jerome tells us, the labourer, while he held the plough, sang Hallelujah; the tired reaper refreshed himself with the Psalms, and the vinedresser, while trimming the vines with his curved hook, sang something of David. He tells us that in his part of the world, Psalms were the Christian's ballads; could they have had better? They were the love-songs of the people of God; could any others be so pure and heavenly? These sacred hymns express all modes of holy feeling; they are fit both for childhood and old age; they furnish maxims for the entrance of life, and serve as watchwords at the gates of death. The battle of life, the repose of the Sabbath, the ward of the hospital, the guest-chamber of the mansion the church, the oratory, yea, even heaven itself may be entered with Psalms,

Finally, when I reach the last Psalm, it is my firm conviction that I shall find no truer closing words for myself than those of Bishop Horne, which I take liberty here to quote, using them as if they were my own, since they admirably express my present feelings and past experiences:—

"And now, could the author flatter himself that anyone would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and the noise of folly. Vanity and vexation flew for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose fresh as the morning to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every Psalm improved infinitely upon his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last; for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than those which have been spent on these meditations on the songs of Zion he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and they moved smoothly and swiftly along; for when thus engaged, he counted no time. The meditations are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet."

Reader,

I am,

Thine to serve

For Christ's sake,

C. H. Spurgeon

INDEX

OF AUTHORS QUOTED OR REFERRED TO

Adams, Thomas (1614), 92, 118, 124, 127, **152**, 246, 389, 427
Addison, Joseph (1672—1719), 228
Agellius (1532—1608), 21, 338, 372
Ainsworth, Henry (1622), 127
Alexander, J. Addison (1860), 59, 62, 117, 151, 178, 194, 201, 238, 281, 336, 361, 383
Alexander, William (1877), 133
Alleine, Richard (1611—1681), 388
Alphonsus (1385—1458), 188
Alting, Jacob (1618—1679), 121
Ambrose (340—397), 76, 167, 216, 232, **246**, 248, 308, 375, 384, 407, 437
"American Messenger, The" (1881), 346
Anderson, James (1847), 429
Andrewes, Lancelot (1555—1626), 12, **122**, 123, 124
Appolinarius (382), 365
Aquilla of Pontus (circa 100), 365
Aquinas, Thomas (1224—1274), 184
Arama, Meir-Ben-Isaac (1556), 372
Aristippus (370 B.C.), 237
Aristotle 237
Arndt, Frederic (1861), 39
Arvine, K. (1859), 60, 275
Athanasius, 24
Augustine (353—429), 61, 115, **118**, 120, 132, 234, 281, 311, 426, 442
Austin, John (1668), 30
Ayguan, M. (1416), 167, 203

Baillie, Joanna (1762—1851), 154
Baker, Sir Richard (1568—1645), 74, **75**, **77**, 80, 81, 82, 87, 93, 220
Bardsley, J. W. (1876), 283
Barnes, Albert (1798—1870), 20, 22, 39, 63, 79, 89, 98, 118, 119, 151, 154, 183, 194, 220, 231, 232, 249, 259, 278, 291, 308, 371, 409, 421, 436, 442
Barrow, Isaac (1630—1677), 24, 135, 283, 296, 428
Basil (329—379), 87, 384
Basilius, 24
Bate, James (1703—1775), 33
Baxter, Richard (1615—1691), 7, 420
Bayne, Paul (1617), 147, 148, 149, **155**, 164, 166, 197, 198, 202, 204
Becon, Thomas (1511—1567), 84
Bede, Venerable, 123
Beecher, H. W. (1872), 180, 340
Bellarmine, R. (1542—1621), 7, 58, 61, 85, 117, 118, 123, 166, 217, 235, 246, 313, **371**
Bellett (1871), 98
Bennett, J. R. (1881), 282
Berlenbürger, Bibel, 78
Bernard (1091—1157), 168
Berriman, W. (1688—1749), **25**
Bevan, W. L. (1863), 352, 409
Binney, Thomas (1798—1874), **22**
Binnie, W. (1870), 19, 22, **64**
Bogan, Z. (1625 -1659), 324
Bonar, A. A. (1859), 33, 45, 59, **133**
Bonar, Horatius (1875), 292
Boos, M. (1762—1825), 131
Bouchier, Barton (1856), 6, 34, 58, 82, 117, 148, 164, 177, 197, 260, 261, 302, 376, 410, 418, 428, 429, 442
Bourdillon, F. (1881), 294
Bowen, G. (1873), 12, 284, 339
Bowes, G. S. (1869), 268
Boys, John (1571—1625), 11, 13, **34**, **35**, 38, 39, 45, 49, 165
Brainerd, D. (1717—1747), 247
Bridge, W. (1600—1670), 268, 301
Bridges, C. (1794—1869), 152, 154, 156, 169, 176, 181, 184, 188, 201, 221, 223, 225, 233, 236, 238, 252, 264, 278, 280, 297, 314, 340, 346, 362, 364, 371, 372, 373, 376, 386, 388, 389, 405, 408, 410, 412, 420, 422, 427, 431, 439, 440
Brooks, T. (1608—1680), 84, 183, 236, **245**, 260, 262, 338, 394, 405, 420, 432
Brown, John (1722—1787), 275
Bruce, M. (1666), 387
Brucioli, Antonio (1534), 152
Bunting, W. M. (1836), 90, 91
Bunyan, J. (1628—1688), 265, 387, 430
Burder, S. (1773—1837), 119, 120, 249
Burroughs, J. (1599—1646), 347, 382, **438**

Cæsarius, Arelatensis (470—552), 300
Calamy, E. (1600—1666), 252, 261, 286, 323
Calvin, John (1509—1564), 9, 11, 20, 47, 59, 62, 63, 118, 121, 123, 133, 149, 153, 164, 165, 178, 179, 184, 186, 188, 202, 219, 235, 250, 265, 300, 309, **312**, 313, 354, 397, 399, 426, 440
Capel, R. (1586—1656), 116, 219, 335
Carlyle, Thomas (1795—1881), 442
Caryl, Joseph (1602—1673), 9, 12, 22, 25, 59, 75, 77, 84, 116, 120, 127, 178, **221**, 238, 286, 328, 340, 352, 371, 376, 441
Chalmers, Thomas (1780—1847), 22, 170, 321, 365
Charnock, S. (1628—1680), 58, 93, 237, 263, 297, 323, 348, 359, 361, 438
Chrysostom (347—407), 21
Cicero, 170
Clarke, Adam (1760—1832), 10, 60, 74, 87, 99, 114, 154, 163, 170, 198, 216, 218, **238**, 263, 297, 312, 354, 386, **398**
Clarke, S. (1599—1682), 93
Clerke, R., 263
Cobbin, I. (1839), 125
Cocceius, J. (1603—1669), **372**
Codner, E. (1860), 226
Coleman, J. N. (1863), **5**
Cook, Eliza (1817), 279
Cotton, J. (1585—1652), **427**
Cowles, H. (1872), 127, 163, **221**, **232**

Cowley, A. (1618—1667), 46, 49
Cowper, William (1566—1619), 10, 135, 147, 149, 150, 152, 155, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 176, 182, 183, 185, 187, 195, 196, 198, 201, 202, 203, 204, 216, 218, 219, 220, 224, 231, 236, 237, 244, 249, 250, 251, 252, 260, 261, 265, 267, 281, 284, 286, 291, 297, 298, 299, 309, 312, 314, 321, 322, 324, 326, 335, 336, 338, 346, 348, 350, 351, 352, 354, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 372, 373, 376, 377, 385, 393, 394, 396, 397, 405, 406, 409, 411, 417, 420, 421, 436, 438, 442
Cowper, William (Poet), 25
Cox, Michael (1748), 22, 25
Cranmer, Thomas (1489—1556), 427
Creswell, D. (1776—1884), 127
Crouch, W. (1708), 219
Cummings, A. (1859), 418
Cyprian (200—258), 313

Davies, S. (1724—1761), 11
Davis, C. A., 443
Davis, T. (1864), 269
De Burgh, W. (1860), 132
Delitzsch, Franz (1871), 32, 38, 49, 114, 115, 116, 132, 135, 155, 225, 249, 396
De Wette, W. (1850), 98
Dick, T. (1772), 7
Dickson, David (1583—1662), 6, 20, 34, 39, 81, 98, 99, 116, 119, 165, 167, 176, 182, 196, 200, 204, 231, 233, 234, 236, 246, 259, 292, 309, 348, 359, 365, 372, 417, 419, 441
Didymus, Alexandrinus (308—395), 21
Doddridge, P. (1702—1751), 347, 421, 426
Donne, John (1573—1631), 164
Dryden, J. (1631—1701), 273
Dun, J. (1790), 23
Duncan, M. B. (1825—1865), 276
Dunlop, W. (1692—1720), 262

Edersheim, A. (1873), 80
Edward Sixth (1537—1553), 382
Edwards, John (1637—1716), 363
Edwards, Jonathan (1703—1758), 85, 135, 248, 339, 341
Euthymius, Zigabenus (1125), 384
Evans, J. H. (1785—1849), 164, 411
Ewald, H. (1876), 46
" Expositor, The " (1876), 327, 346

Faber, F. W. (1815—1863), 419
Farindon, A. (1596—1658), 181
Fausset, A. R. (1866), 9, 20, 22, 24, 135, 196, 266, 398, 422, 430
Fenner, W. (1560—1640), 151, 281, 292
Fenton, T. (1732), 24, 48, 61, 123
Flavel, John (1627—1691), 164
Ford, J. (1856), 122
Foster, J. (1768—1843), 328
" Four Friends " (1867), 5, 134
Francis, P. (1773), 371
French, W. (1842), 73
Friesch, J. D. (1731), 125
Fry, J. (1842), 19
Fuller, Thomas (1608—1661), 247

Gadsby, J. (1862), 310, 312, 388
Geier, Martin (1614—1681), 6, 8, 59, 118, 120, 148, 153, 169, 199, 231, 232, 281, 373
Genebrardus, G. (1537—1597), 338
Gerhohus (1093—1169), 431
Gesenius, F. H. W. (1786—1842), 201
Gesner, S. (1559—1605), 6, 19, 21, 77, 116, 126, 137, 151, 199, 231, 232, 260, 263, 280, 323, 408
Gibbon, E. (1737—1794), 394
Gibbon, John (circa 1660), 162
Gibson, E. T., 238
Gill, John (1697—1771), 9, 35, 37, 44, 45, 62, 116, 117, 163, 248, 251, 260, 278, 292, 310 359, 371, 375, 383, 387, 393, 396
Gill, T. H. (1880), 438
Gilpin, R. (1625—1699), 207, 311
Gleig, G. (1803), 24
" Gold Dust " (1880), 282
Good, J. M. (1764—1827), 135
Goodwin, T. (1600—1679), 8, 360
Gosse, P. H. (1856), 47
Gouge, W. (1575—1653), 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 84, 88, 90, 91, 94, 98
Graham, W. (1857), 396
Grant, W. (1814—1876), 362
Green, W. (1762), 62, 238
Greenham, R. (1531—1591), 149, 150, 152, 155, 156, 167, 185, 198, 199, 200, 202, 215, 224, 225, 232, 251, 261, 275, 280, 300, 301, 312, 325, 326, 339, 351, 352, 353, 364, 395, 422, 431, 437, 440
Greenhill, W. (1591—1677), 117, 366, 388
Gregory (324—389), 123
Griffin, R. A. (1868), 457
Gurnall, William (1617—1679), 75, 87, 155, 164, 182, 222, 300, 309, 361, 384, 386, 419, 426, 429, 432, 440
Gwyther, J. (1833), 78

Haak, T. (1618—1657), 359
Hakewill, G. (1579—1649), 337
Haley, J. W. (1875), 377
Hall, J. (1574—1656), 125, 184
Halyburton, T. (1674—1712), 389
Hamilton, J. (1814—1867), 383
Hammond, H. (1605—1660), 12, 123, 149, 153, 176, 216, 237
Hardy, N. (1618—1670), 81, 83, 133, 336
Harmer, T. (1715—1788), 310
Havergal, F. R. (1836—1879), 165, 264, 302
Hawker, R. (1753—1827), 45
Hemans, F. D. (1793—1835), 30
Hengstenburg, 38, 61, 63
Henry, Matthew (1662—1714), 13, 37, 46, 49, 60, 61, 80, 124, 125, 127, 134, 137, 185, 188, 196, 199, 200, 201, 203, 216, 233, 235, 236, 244, 245, 246, 250, 252, 262, 265, 266, 281, 298, 301, 313, 314, 327, 336, 350, 361, 364, 366, 375, 388, 406, 408, 422
Henry, P. (1631—1696), 132, 263
Herbert, G. (1593—1632), 464
Hervey, J. (1714—1758), 334
Heywood, O. (1629—1702), 168, 285, 349, 430
Hieron, S. (1572—1613), 439
Hilary, 132, 148, 291
Hodges, T. (1642), 35, 36
Holdsworth, R. (1590—1649), 238, 352, 353
Hole, Matthew (1730), 33
Homer, 118
Hood, E. P. (1871), 308
Hooker, T. (1586—1647), 303, 310
Hopkins, E. (1633—1690), 279
Horace, 132, 371
Horne, George (1730—1792), 11, 22, 25, 60, 120, 176, 181, 215, 237, 244, 292, 298, 366, 381, 394, 395, 398, 411, 429, 439

Horsley, S. (1733—1806), 84, 85, 365
Horton, T. (1673), 121, 187
Hugh de St. Victor (1098—1141), 291
Hupfeld, H. (1796), 245
Hurst, H. (1690), 87, 88, 93

Irenæus (130—200), 363

Jacomb, S. (1629—1659), 169
James, J. A. (1785—1859), 375
Jameson, J. (1838), 91
Jansen, C. (1510—1576), 308
Jarchi (1104—1180), 387
Jay, Wm., 249, 386
Jebb, J. (1846), 138, 225, 284
Jenkyn, W. (1612—1685), 376
Jerome (345—420), 308
Jones, Sir W. (1746—1794), 395
Junius (1545—1602), 248
Juvenal, 59

Kay, W. (1871), 48, 61, 88, 180, 221, 237, 264, 300, 394
Keble, J. (1792—1866), 48
Kempis, Thomas à (1380—1471). 388
Ker, J. (1877), 178, 180
Kerr, J. (1880), 329
Kitto, J. (1804—1854), 49
Knapp, G. C. (1753—1825), 98
Kübler, Theodore (1880), 147, 162, 194

Lavington, S. (1728—1807), 91
Law, H. (1878), 148, 219, 232, 351, 440
Lawrence, M. (1657), 77, 222, 319
Le Blanc, T. (1599—1669), 98, 147, 153, 162, 194, 201, 219, 236, 260, 265, 309, 430
Le Clerc, J. (1657—1736), 26
Lee, S. (1625—1691), 406
Leighton, R. (1611- -1684), 23, 24, 122, 182, 206, 389
Lewis, W. G. (1872), 279
Long, J. (1881), 218
Longfellow, H. W. (1807—1882), 249
Lorinus, J. (1569—1634), 291
Love, C. (1618—1651), 336
Lowth, R. (1710—1787), 36
Lubbock, J. (1878), 277
Lucas, R. (1648—1715), 24
Luther, Martin (1483—1546), 115, 117, 420
Lynch, T. T. (1818—1871), 323

M'Call, R. S. (1834), 79, 80
M'Cheyne, R. M. (1813-1843), 179, 430
Macduff, J. R. (1862), 322
Macgregor, D. (1869), 491
Maclagan, J. (1788-1852), 381
Macmillan, H., 283
Mant, R. (1776—1848), 34, 36, 206, 440
Manton, T. (1620—1677), 9, 20, 24, 58, 61, 62, 75, 93, 118, 147, 149, 151, 153, 154, 155, 156, 162, 168, 169, 170, 177, 181, 183, 186, 188, 197, 199, 200, 201, 202, 205, 206, 215, 216, 218, 219, 221, 223, 224, 231, 233, 234, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 253, 260, 261, 262, 264, 266, 268, 275, 278, 280, 293, 295, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 319, 320, 322, 335, 337, 338, 340, 341, 346, 348, 349, 350, 360, 362, 363, 365, 366, 381, 384, 385, 387, 388, 389, 393, 395, 396, 397, 398, 400, 418, 427, 428, 440
March, D. (1880), 251
Marchant, F. G. (1879), 136, 147, 153, 162, 167, 182, 201, 206
Marloratus, A. (1506—1562), 45
Marsh, E. G. (1832), 7
Marshall, S. (1655), 329
Marshall, W. (1690), 261, 264, 429
Martin, James (1878), 429
Martin, John (1817), 293
Martyn, H. (1781—1812), 366, 383
Mason, J. (1694), 260, 263, 275, 279, 285, 309
Maudson, W. T. (1855), 6
Mayhew, R. (1679), 377
Mede, J. (1586—1638), 23
Mellor, E. (1823—1881), 374
Melvill, H. (1798—1871), 179, 205, 263, 384, 385, 408
Menander (342 B.C.), 184
Mercier (1570), 162
Mestral, Armand de (1856), 133
Milton, John (1608—1674), 8
" Mishna," The, 25
Moffatt, H. B. (1871), 205
Mollerus (1639), 10, 20, 33, 82, 98, 215, 236, 252 291, 314, 383
Morison, J. (1629), 178, 183, 204, 221, 251, 263, 265, 268, 372, 395, 406, 407, 430, 437
Morris, A. J. (1814—1869), 348
Mudge, Z. (1769), 216
Muis, Simon de (1587—1644), 252, 371
Murphy, J. G. (1875), 47, 61, 137, 165, 196, 219, 224, 397
Musculus, Wolfgang (1497—1563), 9, 20, 35, 48, 77, 94, 220, 231, 266, 278, 309, 310, 312, 323, 334, 339, 349, 353, 384

Nalson, Valentine (1641—1724), 37
Nalton, J. (1664), 252, 264
Neale, J. M. (1818—1866), 61, 120, 121, 148, 237, 263, 291, 313, 346, 359, 385, 393, 394, 417
Neil, J. (1879—1882), 278, 323
" New Dictionary of Quotations, A" (1872), 85
Newland, H. (1860), 123
Newman, J. H. (1801), 296, 347
Newton, J. (1725—1807), 70
Nickolson, W. (1671), 120, 165, 166, 225, 232, 303, 377, 389

Olin, S. (1843), 49
Olshausen, J. (1853), 45, 57
Oosterzee, J. (1817—1882), 196
Origen, 133
Orton, J. (1717—1783), 38
Owen, J. (1616—1683), 180, 436

Palenterius, J. P. (1600), 84, 132, 176, 268
Parkhurst, J. (1728—1797), 45
Pascal Blaise (1623—1662), 7
Patrick, Simon (1626—1707), 347
Paulus, Burgensis, 32
Payson, E. (1738—1827), 367, 418
Perowne, J. J. S. (1868), 21, 46, 48, 219, 245, 367, 383, 410
Phillips, G. (1846), 9, 24, 167, 373, 374
Philpot, J. (1555), 88
Philpot, J. C. (1802—1869), 126
Pierce, S. E. (1818), 62, 383
" Plain Commentary, A " (1859), 24, 47, 338, 388
Plumer, W. S. (1867), 8, 88, 118, 120, 147, 199, 201, 202, 225, 246, 251, 296, 312, 314, 341, 381, 382, 393, 418, 420
Pool, Matthew (1624—1679), 46, 216, 376, 400

Pounden, P. (1831), 89
Power, P. B. (1861), 117, 122, 127, 207
Preston, J. (1587—1628), 203
Pridham, A. (1869), 10, 63, 114
Prosper of Aquitaine (403—463), 206
Pythagoras, 303

" Quiver, The " (1880), 133

Raleigh, A. (1872), 21, 182, 184, 222
Ranew, N. (1670), 168, 169, 170, 354
Redford, G. (1828), 285
Reed, Andrew (1877), 61
Reuss (1804), 133
Reyner, E. (1600—1670), 341
Richter, H. and W. (1834—40), 9
Rivetus, A. (1572—1651), 121, 351
Robert, King of Sicily (1343), 382
Roberts, J. (1844), 26, 38, 309, 340
Robertson, F. W. (1816—1853), 235
Robinson, R. (1614—1655), 48, 361
Rogers, G., 98
Rosenmüller, E. F. K. (1768—1835), 310
Ruskin, J., 132
Rutherford, Samuel (1600—1661), 233, 308
Ryland, J. (1753—1825), 277
Ryland, R. H. (1853), 115

S. T. (1621), 19
Salter, H. G. (1840), 250, 363
Sanderson, R. (1587—1663), 295, 362
Sandys, E. (1519—1588), 335
Saunders, Isaac (1818), 10
Savallerius, 162
Savanarola (1452—1498), 352
Saxon Proverb, 235
Schweinfurth, G. (1873), 119
Scott, J., 93
Scott, T. (1747—1821), 21, 359
Scriver, C. (1629—1693), 441
Secker, W. (1660), 221, 283
Seed, J. (1747), 34
Shakespeare, 105
Sheffield, J. (1660), 148, 197
Shepard, T. (1671), 431
Sibbes, R. (1577—1635), 244, 245
Simmons, W. (1661), 132, 222
Slater, W. (1626), 74, 79, 82
Smith, H. (1560—1591), 12, 185
Smith, P. (1644), 119
" Smith's Dictionary of the Bible " (1863), 125
" Speaker's Commentary, The " (1873), 6, 61, 150, 281
Spencer, J. (1654), 23, 284, 348, 386
Spurstowe, W. (1666), 303
Stanley, A. P. (1864), 47
Starke, C. (1740), 125
Statham, W. M. (1879), 430
Stephen, J. (1861), 162, 163, 164, 165, 176, 183, 196, 203, 204, 215, 216, 219, 225, 235, 244, 251, 265, 267, 277, 298, 311, 313, 314, 349, 371, 373, 387, 394, 396, 398, 405, 418, 419, 428, 438, 439, 441
Stier, R. (1834), 75, 78
Stock, R. (1626), 180, 292
Stoughton, T. (1616), 334
Street, S. (1790), 136
Struther, W. (1633), 187, 432
Summers, S. (1837), 7
Superville, Daniel de (1657—1728), 12
Swinnock, G. (1627—1673), 124, 165, 262, 267, 328, 340, 362, 394, 407, 431
Symonds, J. (1653), 326

Tate, N. (1652—1715), 4
Taylor, Isaac (1787—1865), 130
Taylor, W. M. (1880), 187
Temoa, 135
Tenison, T. (1636—1715), 22
Theodoret (393—457), 148
Theodoricus (1417), 348
Tholuck, A. F. (1856), 79
Thrupp, J. F. (1826—1867), 99, 319
Tillotson, J. (1630—1694), 327
Torshall, S. (1649), 35, 89
Traill, R. (1642—1716), 329
Trapp, J. (1601—1669), 9, 10, 11, 13, 21, 44, 48, 60, 61, 62, 80, 84, 93, 118, 120, 121, 124, 125, 148, 153, 169, 202, 221, 246, 249, 291, 293, 313, 351, 372, 377, 430, 436
Tremellius, E. (1510—1580), 281
Trench, R. C. (1807), 335
Tucker, W. H. (1840), 74
Tuckney, A. (1599—1670), 319, 422

Usher, J. (1580—1656), 220

Vatablus, F. (1547), 261
Vaughan, H. (1621—1695), 251
Vaughan, J. (1877), 251, 364
Vaux, J. E. (1878), 203
Veal, E. (1632—1708), 154
Venema, H. (1697—1787), 7
Vianney, J. B. M. (1786—1859), 348
Vidal, J. H. (1863), 8, 9
Vincent, N. (1697), 282, 419, 431

Walford, W. (1837), 12, 48
Walker, R. (1716—1783), 439
Wallace, A. (1853), 325
Washbourne, T. (1606—1687), 279
Watson, R. (1781—1833), 36, 37
Watson, T. (1660), 203, 224, 234, 245, 246, 285, 298, 325, 352, 359, 382, 431
Watts, Isaac (1674—1748), 44
Webbe, G. (1610), 375
Weiss, B. (1858), 7
Wells, J. (1882), 347
Wermuellerus, Otto (about 1500), 279, 284, 417
Wesley, Charles (1708—1788), 106
Whitecross, J. (1858), 185
Wilberforce, W. (1759—1833), 133
Wilcocks, T. (1549—1608), 6, 291
Wilcox, D. (1676—1733), 80, 324
Willison, J. (1680-1750), 268, 280
Wilson, T. (1621), 20
Wilson, W. (1783—1873), 6, 10, 38, 60, 384
Wilson, W. (1860), 63, 216
Wisheart, W. (1657—1727), 166
Witherspoon, J. (1722—1797), 92
Wordsworth, C. (1868), 116, 136, 359
Wright, Abraham (1661), 8, 10, 47, 63, 98, 99, 116, 127, 203, 282, 286, 327, 353, 371, 377, 397, 398, 418, 428, 437, 438
Wright, W. A. (1863), 125
Wylie, J. A., 121

Young, E. (1684—1765), 90
Young, R. (1879), 303

PSALM CXI.

There is no title to this Psalm, but it is an alphabetical hymn of praise, having for its subject the works of the Lord in creation, providence, and grace. The sweet singer dwells upon the one idea that God should be known by his people, and that this knowledge when turned into practical piety is man's true wisdom, and the certain cause of lasting adoration. Many are ignorant of what their Creator has done, and hence they are foolish in heart, and silent as to the praises of God: this evil can only be removed by a remembrance of God's works, and a diligent study of them; to this, therefore, the Psalm is meant to arouse us. It may be called THE PSALM OF GOD'S WORKS *intended to excite us to the work of praise.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalmist begins with an invitation to praise, verse* 1; *and then proceeds to furnish us with matter for adoration in God's works and his dealings with his people,* 2—9. *He closes his song with a commendation of the worship of the Lord and of the men who practise it.*

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and *in* the congregation.

1. *"Praise ye the LORD,"* or, *Hallelujah!* All ye his saints unite in adoring Jehovah, who worketh so gloriously. Do it now, do it always: do it heartily, do it unanimously, do it eternally. Even if others refuse, take care that ye have always a song for your God. Put away all doubt, question, murmuring, and rebellion, and give yourselves up to the praising of Jehovah, both with your lips and in your lives. *"I will praise the LORD with my whole heart."* The sweet singer commences the song, for his heart is all on flame: whether others will follow him or not, he will at once begin and long continue. What we preach we should practise. The best way to enforce an exhortation is to set an example; but we must let that example be of the best kind, or we may lead others to do the work in a limping manner. David brought nothing less than his whole heart to the duty; all his love went out towards God, and all his zeal, his skill, and his ardour went with it. Jehovah the one and undivided God cannot be acceptably praised with a divided heart, neither should we attempt so to dishonour him; for our whole heart is little enough for his glory, and there can be no reason why it should not all be lifted up in his praise. All his works are praiseworthy, and therefore all our nature should adore him. *"In the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation"*;—whether with few or with many he would pour forth his whole heart and soul in praise, and whether the company was made up of select spirits or of the general mass of the people he would continue in the same exercise. For the choicest society there can be no better engagement than praise, and for the general assembly nothing can be more fitting. For the church and for the congregation, for the family or the community, for the private chamber of pious friendship, or the great hall of popular meeting, the praise of the Lord is suitable; and at the very least the true heart should sing hallelujah in any and every place. Why should we fear the presence of men? The best of men will join us in our song, and if the common sort, will not do so, our example will be a needed rebuke to them. In any case let us praise God, whether the hearers be a little band of saints or a mixed multitude. Come, dear reader, he who pens this comment is in his heart magnifying the Lord: will you not pause for a moment and join in the delightful exercise?

2 The works of the LORD *are* great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

3 His work *is* honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion.

5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

7 The works of his hands *are* verity and judgment; all his commandments *are* sure.

8 They stand fast for ever and ever, *and are* done in truth and uprightness.

9 He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend *is* his name.

2. *"The works of the* LORD *are great."* In design, in size, in number, in excellence, all the works of the Lord are great. Even the little things of God are great. In some point of view or other each one of the productions of his power, or the deeds of his wisdom, will appear to be great to the wise in heart. *"Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."* Those who love their Maker delight in his handiworks, they perceive that there is more in them than appears upon the surface, and therefore they bend their minds to study and understand them. The devout naturalist ransacks nature, the earnest student of history pries into hidden facts and dark stories, and the man of God digs into the mines of Scripture, and hoards up each grain of its golden truth. God's works are worthy of our researches, they yield us instruction and pleasure wonderfully blended, and they grow upon, appearing to be far greater, after investigation than before. Men's works are noble from a distance; God's works are great when sought out. Delitzsch reads the passage, "Worthy of being sought after in all their purposes," and this also is a grand truth, for the end and design which God hath in all that he makes or does is equally admirable with the work itself. The hidden wisdom of God is the most marvellous part of his works, and hence those who do not look below the surface miss the best part of what he would teach us. Because the works are great they cannot be seen all at once, but must be looked into with care, and this seeking out is of essential service to us by educating our faculties, and strengthening our spiritual eye gradually to bear the light of the divine glory. It is well for us that all things cannot be seen at a glance, for the search into their mysteries is as useful to us as the knowledge which we thereby attain. The history of the Lord's dealings with his people is especially a fit subject for the meditation of reverent minds who find therein a sweet solace, and a never failing source of delight.

3. *"His work is honourable and glorious."* His one special work, the salvation of his people, is here mentioned as distinguished from his many other *works*. This reflects honour and glory upon him. It is deservedly the theme of the highest praise, and compels those who understand it and experience it to ascribe all honour and glory unto the Lord. Its conception, its sure foundations, its gracious purpose, its wise arrangements, its gift of Jesus as Redeemer, its application of redemption by the Holy Ghost in regeneration and sanctification, and all else which make up the one glorious whole, all redound to the infinite honour of Him who contrived and carried out so astounding a method of salvation. No other work can be compared with it: it honours both the Saviour and the saved, and while it brings glory to God it also brings us to glory. There is none like the God of Jeshurun, and there is no salvation like that which he has wrought for his people. *"And his righteouesnss endureth for ever."* In the work of grace righteousness is not forgotten, nor deprived of its glory; rather, it is honoured in the eyes of the intelligent universe. The bearing of guilt by our great Substitute proved that not even to effect the purposes of his grace would the Lord forget his righteousness; no future strain upon his justice can ever be equal to that which it has already sustained in the bruising of his dear Son; it must henceforth assuredly endure for ever. Moreover, the righteousness of God in the whole plan can never now be suspected of failure, for all that it requires is already performed, its demands are satisfied by the double deed of our Lord in enduring the vengeance due, and in rendering perfect obedience to the law. Caprice does not enter into the government of the Lord, the rectitude of it is and must for ever be beyond all question. In no single deed of God can unrighteousness be found, nor shall there ever be: this is the very glory of his work, and even its adversaries cannot gainsay it. Let believers, therefore, praise him

evermore, and never blush to speak of that work which is so honourable and glorious.

4. *"He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered."* He meant them to remain in the recollection of his people, and they do so: partly because they are in themselves memorable, and because also he has taken care to record them by the pen of inspiration, and has written them upon the hearts of his people by his Holy Spirit. By the ordinances of the Mosaic law, the coming out of Egypt, the sojourn in the wilderness, and other memorabilia of Israel's history were constantly brought before the minds of the people, and their children were by such means instructed in the wonders which God had wrought in old time. Deeds such as God has wrought are not to be admired for an hour and then forgotten, they are meant to be perpetual signs and instructive tokens to all coming generations; and especially are they designed to confirm the faith of his people in the divine love, and to make them know that *"the LORD is gracious and full of compassion."* They need not fear to trust his grace for the future, for they remember it in the past. Grace is as conspicuous as righteousness in the great work of God, yea, a fulness of tender love is seen in all that he has done. He treats his people with great consideration for their weakness and infirmity; having the same pity for them as a father hath towards his children. Should we not praise him for this? A silver thread of lovingkindness runs through the entire fabric of God's work of salvation and providence, and never once is it left out in the whole piece. Let the memories of his saints bear witness to this fact with grateful joy.

5. *"He hath given meat unto them that fear him."* Or *spoil*, as some read it, for the Lord's people both in coming out of Egypt and at other times have been enriched from their enemies. Not only in the wilderness with manna, but everywhere else by his providence he has supplied the necessities of his believing people. Somewhere or other they have had food convenient for them, and that in times of great scarcity. As for spiritual meat, that has been plentifully furnished them in Christ Jesus; they have been fed with the finest of the wheat, and made to feast on royal dainties. His word is as nourishing to the soul as bread to the body, and there is such an abundance of it that no heir of heaven shall ever be famished. Truly the fear of the Lord is wisdom, since it secures to a man the supply of all that he needs for soul and body. *"He will ever be mindful of his covenant."* He could not let his people lack meat, because he was in covenant with them, and they can never want in the future, for he will continue to act upon the terms of that covenant. No promise of the Lord shall fall to the ground, nor will any part of the great compact of eternal love be revoked or allowed to sink into oblivion. The covenant of grace is the plan of the great work which the Lord works out for his people, and it will never be departed from: the Lord has set his hand and seal to it, his glory and honour are involved in it, yea, his very name hangs upon it, and he will not even in the least jot or tittle cease to be mindful of it. Of this the feeding of his people is the pledge: he would not so continually supply their needs if he meant after all to destroy them. Upon this most blessed earnest let us settle our minds; let us rest in the faithfulness of the Lord, and praise him with all our hearts every time that we eat bread or feed upon his word.

6. *"He hath shewed his people the power of his works."* They have seen what he is able to do and what force he is prepared to put forth on their behalf. This power Israel saw in physical works, and we in spiritual wonders, for we behold the matchless energy of the Holy Ghost and feel it in our own souls. In times of dire distress the Lord has put forth such energy of grace that we have been astonished at his power; and this was part of his intent in bringing us into such conditions that he might reveal to us the arm of his strength. Could we ever have known it so well if we had not been in pressing need of his help? We may well turn this verse into a prayer and ask to see more and more the power of the Lord at work among us in these latter days. O Lord, let us now see how mightily thou canst work in the saving of sinners and in preserving and delivering thine own people. *"That he may give them the heritage of the heathen."* He put forth all his power to drive out the Canaanites and bring in his people. Even thus may it please his infinite wisdom to give to his church the heathen for her inheritance in the name of Jesus. Nothing but great power can effect this, but it will surely be accomplished in due season.

7. *"The works of his hands are verity and judgment."* Truth and justice are conspicuous in all that Jehovah does. Nothing like artifice or crooked policy can ever be seen in his proceedings; he acts faithfully and righteously towards his people,

and with justice and impartiality to all mankind. This also should lead us to praise him, since it is of the utmost advantage to us to live under a sovereign whose laws, decrees, acts, and deeds are the essence of truth and justice. *"All his commandments are sure."* All that he has appointed or decreed shall surely stand, and his precepts which he has proclaimed shall be found worthy of our obedience, for surely they are founded in justice and are meant for our lasting good. He is no fickle despot, commanding one thing one day and another another, but his commands remain absolutely unaltered, their necessity equally unquestionable, their excellence permanently proven, and their reward eternally secure. Take the word *commandments* to relate either to his decrees or his precepts, and we have in each case an important sense; but it seems more in accordance with the connection to take the first sense and consider the words to refer to the ordinances, appointments, or decrees of the great King.

"Whate'er the mighty Lord decrees,
Shall stand for ever sure,
The settled purpose of his heart
To ages shall endure."

8. *"They stand fast for ever and ever."* That is to say, his purposes, commands, and courses of action. The Lord is not swayed by transient motives, or moved by the circumstances of the hour; immutable principles rule in the courts of Jehovah, and he pursues his eternal purposes without the shadow of a turning. Our works are too often as wood, hay, and stubble, but his doings are as gold, silver, and precious stones. We take up a purpose for a while and then exchange it for another, but he is of one mind, and none can turn him: he acts in eternity and for eternity, and hence what he works abides for ever. Much of this lasting character arises out of the fact which is next mentioned, namely, that they *"are done in truth and uprightness."* Nothing stands but that which is upright. Falsehood soon vanishes, for it is a mere show, but truth has salt in it which preserves it from decay. God always acts according to the glorious principles of truth and integrity, and hence there is no need of alteration or revocation; his works will endure to the end of time.

9. *"He sent redemption unto his people."* When they were in Egypt he sent not only a deliverer, but an actual deliverance; not only a redeemer, but complete redemption. He has done the like spiritually for all his people, having first by blood purchased them out of the hand of the enemy, and then by power rescued them from the bondage of their sins. Redemption we can sing of as an accomplished act: it has been wrought for us, sent to us, and enjoyed by us, and we are in very deed the Lord's redeemed. *"He hath commanded his covenant for ever."* His divine decree has made the covenant of his grace a settled and eternal institution: redemption by blood proves that the covenant cannot be altered, for it ratifies and establishes it beyond all recall. This, too, is reason for the loudest praise. Redemption is a fit theme for the heartiest music, and when it is seen to be connected with gracious engagements from which the Lord's truth cannot swerve, it becomes a subject fitted to arouse the soul to an ecstacy of gratitude. Redemption and the covenant are enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing. *"Holy and reverend is his name."* Well may he say this. The whole name or character of God is worthy of profoundest awe, for it is perfect and complete, whole or holy. It ought not to be spoken without solemn thought, and never heard without profound homage. His name is to be trembled at, it is something terrible; even those who know him best rejoice with trembling before him. How good men can endure to be called "reverend" we know not. Being unable to discover any reason why our fellow-men should reverence *us*, we half suspect that in other men there is not very much which can entitle them to be called reverend, very reverend, right reverend, and so on. It may seem a trifling matter, but for that very reason we would urge that the foolish custom should be allowed to fall into disuse.

10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments:* his praise endureth for ever.

10. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."* It is its first principle, but it is also its head and chief attainment. The word "beginning" in Scripture sometimes means the chief; and true religion is at once the first element of wisdom, and its chief fruit. To know God so as to walk aright before him is the greatest of

all the applied sciences. Holy reverence of God leads us to praise him, and this is the point which the psalm drives at, for it is a wise act on the part of a creature towards his Creator. *"A good understanding have all they that do his commandments."* Obedience to God proves that our judgment is sound. Why should he not be obeyed? Does not reason itself claim obedience for the Lord of all? Only a man void of understanding will ever justify rebellion against the holy God. Practical godliness is the test of wisdom. Men may know and be very orthodox, they may talk and be very eloquent, they may speculate and be very profound; but the best proof of their intelligence must be found in their actually doing the will of the Lord. The former part of the Psalm taught us the doctrine of God's nature and character, by describing his works: the second part supplies the practical lesson by drawing the inference that to worship and obey him is the dictate of true wisdom. We joyfully own that it is so. *"His praise endureth for ever."* The praises of God will never cease, because his works will always excite adoration, and it will always be the wisdom of men to extol their glorious Lord. Some regard this sentence as referring to those who fear the Lord—their praise shall endure for ever: and, indeed, it is true that those who lead obedient lives shall obtain honour of the Lord, and commendations which will abide for ever. A word of approbation from the mouth of God will be a mede of honour which will outshine all the decorations which kings and emperors can bestow.

Lord, help us to study thy works, and henceforth to breathe out hallelujahs as long as we live.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This is the first alphabetical Psalm which is regular throughout. The four former alphabetical Psalms, namely, ix. and x., xxxiv. and xxxvii., are irregular and defective in many particulars, for the rectification of which neither Hebrew MS. editions nor ancient versions afford sanction and authority. It is singular that not only are Psalms cxi. and cxii. perfectly regular, but, furthermore, that not one various reading of note or importance occurs in either of these Psalms.—*John Noble Coleman.*

Whole Psalm.—The following translation is given to enable the reader to realize the alphabetical character of the Psalm. It is taken from "The Psalms Chronologically Arranged. By Four Friends."

All my heart shall praise Jehovah, 1
Before the congregation of the righteous;
Deeds of goodness are the deeds of Jehovah, 2
Earnestly desired of all them that have pleasure therein;
For his righteousness endureth for ever, 3
Glorious and honourable is his work;
He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered, 4
In Jehovah is compassion and goodness;
Jehovah hath given meat to them that fear him, 5
Keeping his covenant for ever,
Learning his people the power of his works, 6
Making them to possess the heritage of the heathen;
Nought save truth and equity are the works of his hands, 7
Ordered and sure are his commands,
Planted fast for ever and ever, 8
Righteous and true are his testimonies;
Salvation hath he sent unto his people, 9
Their covenant hath he made fast for ever;
Upright and holy is his name, 10
Verily, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
Yea, a good understanding have all they that do thereafter;
Zealously shall he be praised for ever.

Whole Psalm.—The general opinion of interpreters is, that this and some of the following Psalms were usually sung at the eating of the Paschal lamb, of which

custom mention is also made, Matt. xxvi., that Christ and the disciples sang a hymn before they went out into the garden.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Whole Psalm.—The two Psalms, cxi. and cxii., resemble one another in construction, alphabetical arrangement, and general tone and manner. They are connected in this way: Ps. cxi. sets forth the greatness, mercy, and righteousness of God: Ps. cxii. the reflection of these attributes in the greatness, ver. 2, mercy, ver. 5, and righteousness, ver. 4, 9, of his chosen. The correspondence of purpose in the two Psalms is important to the right appreciation of some difficulties connected with the latter Psalm.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Whole Psalm.—The scope of this Psalm is to stir up all to praise God, and that for so many reasons as there are verses in the Psalm. The exhortation is in the first words, "*Praise ye the Lord.*" The reasons follow in order. The Psalm is composed so after the order of the Hebrew alphabet, as every sentence or half verse beginneth with a several letter of the A B C in order, and all the Psalm is of praise only. Whence we learn in general, 1. Sometimes it is expedient to set all other things apart, and employ ourselves expressly to proclaim the praises of the Lord only; for so is done in this Psalm. 2. The praises of the Lord are able to fill all the letters and words composed of letters, in all their possible junctures of composition; for so much doth the going through all the letters of the A B C point out unto us, he is Alpha and Omega, and all the middle letters of the A B C of praise. 3. The praises of the Lord are worthy to be kept in memory: for that this Psalm may be the better remembered, it is composed after the manner of the A B C, and so it insinuateth thus much to us.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise ye the* LORD," etc. The exhortation is immediately succeeded by the expression of a firm resolve; the Psalmist having commenced by urging the duty of gratitude upon others—"*Praise ye the Lord,*" forthwith announces his determination to act upon his own advice—"*I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.*" Such a conjunction of ideas is fraught with several most important lessons. 1. It teaches us, very emphatically, that our preaching, if it is to carry weight and conviction, must be backed and exemplified by our conduct; that we need never expect to persuade others by arguments which are too weak to influence ourselves. 2. Another inference is similarly suggested—that our own decision should be given without reference to the result of our appeal. The Psalmist did not wait to ascertain whether those whom he addressed would attend to his exhortation, but, before he could receive a reply, declared unhesitatingly the course he would himself adopt.—*W. T. Maudson, in a Sermon on Thanksgiving,* 1855.

Verse 1.—"*With my whole heart.*" That is, earnestly, and with a sincere affection; meaning also, that he would do it privately, and, as it were, within himself, as by the next words he noteth that he will do it openly.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 1.—"*With my whole heart.*" We see the stress here laid upon a whole heart, and the want of which is the great canker of all vital godliness. Men are ever attempting to unite what the word of God has declared to be incapable of union—the love of the world and of God—to give half their heart to the world, and the other half to God. Just see the energy, the entireness of every thought and feeling and effort which a man throws into a work in which he is deeply interested; the very phrase we use to describe such an one is, that "he gives his whole mind to it." Attempt to persuade him to divert his energies and divide his time with some other pursuit, and he would wonder at the folly and the ignorance that could suggest such a method of success. "Just take a hint from Satan," says some one; "see how he plies his powers on the individual, as if there were but that one, and as if he had nothing else to do but to ruin that one soul." It was a holy resolution of the Psalmist that he would praise God; and a wise one to add, "*with my whole heart.*" And we have the result of this determination in the following verses of the Psalm.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—Two words are used, "*assembly*" and "*congregation.*" The former implies a more private meeting of worshippers, the latter the more public. The former may apply to the family circle of those who were celebrating the passover, the latter to the public worship connected with the feast.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 2.—"*The works of the* LORD *are great.*" Their greatness is known from comparison with the works and powers of men, which, verily, die and perish quickly. We should, therefore, admire, fear, confide, obey.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*The works of the* LORD *are great,*" etc. Their greatness is equally manifest when we turn from the *immensity* to the *variety* of his works. . . . . How great are the works of him who gives to every plant its leaf and flower and fruit; to every animal its faculties and functions; to every man his understanding, affections, and will. What an accumulative idea of the magnitude of his works do we gather from the innumerable multitudes and endless diversities of being called into existence by his powers.—*Samuel Summers*, 1837.

Verse 2.—"*The works of the* LORD *are great.*" The workman who never makes a small article, an inferior article, but makes all his articles both great and valuable, deserves much praise; and any one that will study God's works, which we think so little of by reason of their being so constantly before us, cannot fail to behold God's infinite power and wisdom in every one of them, even though he cannot comprehend them.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 2.—"*Great.*" The word גדול (gadol) "*great,*" has in the Hebrew so extensive a range of meaning, that in the English there is no single substitute expressive enough to take its place. It denotes greatness and augmentation of various kinds. In this passage "the works of Jehovah" are described as greatly "*magnified or augmented*" in their influences and effects on the minds of men who behold them. The *greatness* ascribed to these works, is a greatness in number, in character, in dignity, in beauty, in variety, in riches.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verses 2, 4.—"*Great . . . sought out.*" "*Remembered.*" The works of Jehovah surpass the reach of human discovery, but are yet searched and explored with delight by all the members of his church; for if they are too great to be understood, they are also too great to be forgotten.—*Edward Garrard Marsh.*

Verse 2.—"*Sought out.*" To see God in his creatures, and to love him and converse with him, was the employment of man in his upright state. This is so far from ceasing to be our duty, that it is the work of Christ, by faith, to bring us back to it; and therefore the most holy men are the most excellent students of God's works; and none but the holy can rightly study or know them. Your studies of physics and other sciences are not worth a rush, if it be not God by them that you seek after. To see and admire, to reverence and adore, to love and delight in God appearing to us in his works, and purposely to peruse them for the knowledge of God; this is the true and only philosophy, and the contrary is mere foolery, and so called again and again by God himself.—*Richard Baxter*, 1615—1691.

Verse 2.—It does not follow, that because the study of nature is now of itself an insufficient guide to the knowledge of the Creator and the enjoyment of eternal felicity, such studies are either to be thrown aside, or considered as of no importance in a religious point of view. To overlook the astonishing scene of the universe, or to view it with indifference, is virtually to "disregard the works of Jehovah, and to refuse to consider the operations of his hands." It is a violation of Christian duty, and implies a reflection on the character of the Deity, for any one to imagine that he has nothing to do with God considered as manifested in the immensity of his works; for his word is pointed and explicit in directing the mind to such contemplations. "Hearken unto this, stand still, and consider the wonderful works of God." "Lift up thine eye on high, and behold who hath created these orbs." "Remember that thou magnify his works which men behold." "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Thy saints shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power, to make known to the sons of men thy mighty operations and the glorious majesty of thy kingdom."—*Thomas Dick* (1772—) *in* "*The Sidereal Heavens.*"

Verse 2.—"*Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*" This is a true characteristic of the upright and pious. The works of God are said to be "*sought out of them,*" when they regard them, call them to mind, and carefully, taking them one by one, investigate them; and at the same time explain them to others, and recount them: all which is included in the verb דרש; for that verb, properly is "*trivit*" [to rub, beat, or bray] hence by thrashing and grinding he has *investigated* perfectly, and has *rubbed* out the *kernel of it* for the use and profit of another: whence it is used for *concionari*, etc.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*Sought out,*" . . . . "*have pleasure therein.*" Philosophy seeks truth, Theology finds it, but Religion possesses it. Human things must be known to be loved, but divine things must be loved to be known.—*Blaise Pascal*, 1623—1662.

Verses 2—4.—"*Sought out.*" . . . "*The* LORD *is gracious and full of compassion.*" This is the grand discovery of all the searching, and therein lies the glory that is the

conclusion of all. As in searching into any experiments in nature, there is an infinite pleasure that accompanies such a study to them that are addicted thereunto ; so to him that hath pleasure in the works of God, and is addicted to spy out his kindness in them, there is nothing so pleasant as the discovery of new circumstances of mercy that render his work *"glorious and honourable."* Get, therefore, skill in his dealings with thee, and study thy friend's carriage to thee. It is the end why he raised thee up, and admitted thee into friendship with him, to show his art of love and friendship to thee ; to show, in a word, how well he could love thee.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 3.—*"His work is honourable and glorious."* The first thing that we notice is, that whereas the preceding verse spoke of the Lord's *"works"* in the *plural* number, this speaks of his *"work"* in the singular number ; it would seem as if the Psalmist, from the contemplation of the works of the Lord in general, was, as it were, irresistibly drawn away to the study of one work in particular ; his mind and whole attention, so to speak, absorbed in that one work : a work so pre-eminently glorious and divine, that it eclipses, at least in his eyes, all the other works, although he has just said of them that they are great, and sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. " The works of the Lord are great. His work is honourable and glorious." My next remark is, that the words used in the original are different, and as the former more strictly signifies *makings*, or *things made*, so the word in this verse more properly imports a *doing* or a *thing done*, and this, perhaps, is not without its significance. It leads me to the inference, that from the contemplation of the great works of creation, God's makings, wonderful, and interesting, and useful as they are, the spiritual mind of God's servant rapidly passes to some greater deed which the Lord hath done, some more marvellous act which he has accomplished, and which he designates as an honourable and a glorious deed. Now, since I consider that he spoke before of Christ, as the visible and immediate agent in creation, without whom was not anything made that was made, can we hesitate long as to this greater work, the rather as to it is immediately subjoined the suggestive sentence, " And his righteousness endureth for ever." Is not this doing, the making an end of sin, and the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness ? Is it not the great mystery, in which, as in creation, though the Eternal Father is the Fountain source, the Original Contriver, He, the co-eternal Son, is the Doer the Worker ? Is it not, in short, *salvation*, the all-absorbing subject of God's people's wonder, love, and praise ?—*James H. Vidal, in "Jesus, God and Man,"* 1863.

Verse 4.—*"He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered."* The *memorials* of the Divine benefits are always valued greatly by a grateful heart, as making present with us the things which transpired ages before : such under the Old Testament was the sacrament of the paschal Lamb ; but now the sacred Supper under the New Testament. Therefore, whatever recalls the Divine works to the *memory*, e.g. the *ministry of the church*, also the *Sacred Scriptures*, are worthy of the highest reverence.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 4.—The sweet spices of divine works must be beaten to powder by meditation, and then laid up in the cabinet of our memories. Therefore, says the Psalmist here, *"God hath made his wonderful works to be remembered"* ; he gives us the jewels of deliverance, not (because of the commonness of them) to wear them on our shoes, as the Romans did their pearls ; much less to tread them under our feet ; but rather to tie them as a chain about our necks. The impression of God's marvellous acts upon us must not be like that which the stone makes in the water, raising circles, beating one wave on another, and for a time making a noise, but soon after it sinks down, and the water returneth to its former smoothness ; and so we, while judgment is fresh, are apt to publish it from man to man, but soon after we let it sink into the depth of oblivion, and we return to our old sins.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 4.—*"Made his wonderful works to be remembered."* The most amazing perverseness in man is proven by the fact that he does not remember what God has so arranged that it would seem impossible that it should be forgotten.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 4.—

> For wonderful indeed are all his works,
> Pleasant to know and worthiest to be all
> Had in remembrance always with delight.
>
> —*John Milton.*

Verse 5.—The first hemistich is the consequence of what is stated in the second, *i.e.*, *because* God remembered his covenant, *therefore* he gave food to them who fear him.—*George Phillips.*

Verse 5.—"*He hath given meat,*" etc. The "*meat*" here mentioned is supposed to respect the paschal lamb, when they were to remember the works of God.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 5.—"*Meat.*" Literally, *booty* or *spoil:* the *spoil* (Exod. xii. 36) brought by Israel out of Egypt, as God had engaged by "covenant" to Abraham, Gen. xv. 14, "They shall come out with great *substance*" (Kimchi). Rather the *manna* and *quails*, which to the hungry people were like a booty thrown in their way. The word is used for "*meat*" in general, in Prov. xxxi. 15; Mal. iii. 10.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 5.—"*He hath given meat.*" I rather choose to render it *portion*, in which sense it is taken in Prov. xxx. 8, and xxxi. 15; as if he should say, that God has given his people all that was needful, and that, considered as a portion, it was large and liberal; for we know that the people of Israel were enriched, not in consequence of their own industry, but by the blessing of God, who, like the father of a family, bestows upon his household everything necessary for their subsistence. In the following clause of the verse, he assigns as the reason for his care and kindness his desire of effectually demonstrating that his covenant was not null and void.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—"*He will ever be mindful of his covenant.*" This clause would seem to be introduced parenthetically—a passing thought, a happy thought, presenting itself spontaneously to the Psalmist's mind, and immediately expressed with his lips. It will be observed it is in the future tense, while all the other clauses are in the past—"He *hath made* his wonderful works to be remembered"; "He *hath given* meat unto them that fear him"; "He *will ever be* mindful of his covenant"; not *he hath ever been.* Dwelling on these past favours of God to Israel, it is his joy to think that they were but partial fulfilments of a covenant promise, which still remained, and in its highest sense should remain for ever; and that covenant itself the memorial or type of the better, the spiritual covenant, the gospel. So out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh, and he celebrates God's promised truth to Israel as the memorial and pledge of his eternal faithfulness to the New Testament Israel, his blood-ransomed church.—*James H. Vidal.*

Verse 6.—"*He hath shewed his people,*" etc. The Prophet indicates the unbelief of the Jews, who murmured against God in the desert, as if he could not enable them to enter into the promised land, and possess it, because the cities were walled, and the inhabitants strong, and giants dwelt in it. "*He shewed,*" he says, *i.e.*, he placed before their eyes, "*the power of His works,*" when he gave the lands of the heathen to be inhabited by his own people.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 6.—"*He hath shewed his people the power of his works.*" So he hath showed his works of power to his people in Gospel times, as the miracles of Christ, his resurrection from the dead, redemption by him, and the work of grace on the hearts of men in all ages.—*John Gill.*

Verse 6.—"*He hath shewed his people,*" etc. To them it is given to see, but not to others who are delivered up to a judicial blindness. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Jer. xxxiii. 3.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*To give them the heritage of the heathen.*" The heathen themselves are bequeathed to God's people, and they must take possession of this inheritance to draw them to themselves.—*Richter, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 7.—The works of God expound his word, in his works his word is often made visible. That is an excellent expression, "*The works of his hands are verity and judgment.*" *The acts of God are verity*, that is, God acts his own truths. As the works of our hands ought to be the verity and judgments of God, (every action of a Christian ought to be one of Christ's truths), so it is with God himself; the works of his hands are his own verity and judgments. When we cannot find the meaning of God in his word, we may find it in his works: his works are a comment an infallible comment upon his word.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 7, 8.—God is known to be faithful and just both in his works and in his word, insomuch that the most beautiful harmony is apparent between the things

he has spoken and those he has done. This wonderfully confirms the hope and faith of the godly.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 8.—"*They stand fast for ever and ever.*" סמוכים, *semuchim*, they are *propped up, buttressed for ever.* They can never fail; for God's power supports his works, and his providence preserves the record of what he has done.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—"*They stand fast,*" are established, "*for ever and ever,*" etc. This verse seems to have reference to the works of God mentioned in the former. His doings were not the demand of an occasion, they were in unison with a great and extensive purpose, with respect to the people of Israel and the Messiah. Not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law of his mouth, till all be fulfilled.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 8.—"*They are done in truth.*" It is impossible that any better way should be directed, than that which the Lord useth in the disposal of all things here below, for all the works of the Lord are done in truth. As the word of God is a word of truth, so all his works are works of truth; for his works are nothing else but the making good of his word, and they are answerable to a threefold word of his. First, to his word of *prophecy.* Whatsoever changes God makes in the world, they hit some word of prophecy. Secondly, the works of God are answerable to his word for *threatening.* God threatens before he smites, and he never smote any man with a rod or sword, but according to his threatening. Thirdly, the works of God are answerable to his word of *promise.* All mercies are promised, and every work of mercy is the fulfilling of some promise. Now seeing all the works of God are reducible, either to prophecies, threatenings, or promises; they "*are done in truth*"; and what can be better done than that which is done in truth? The Jewish doctors observe, that the word *emeth* here used for truth, consists of *aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet, *mem*, the middle letter thereof, and *tau*, the last; to shew, that as God is *alpha* and *omega*, so the truth of God is the all in all of our comfort. Grace and truth by Christ is the sum of all the good news in the world.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 8.—"*Are done.*" Verses 7 and 8 contain a precious meaning for the soul whose rest is the finished work of Christ. Jehovah has commanded, giving it in trust to Jesus to make sure, in perfect obedience, the word of truth and holiness. The commandment therefore has been "*done.*" It has been done "*in truth and uprightness*" by him whose meat it was to do it; who willingly received it with a knowledge of its end, and in whose accomplishment of it the believing sinner finds his assurance and eternal peace. John xii. 50. Jesus held the law within his heart, to keep it there for ever. As the fulfiller in truth of the commandment, he has become its end for righteousness to every believer in his name.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 9.—"*He sent redemption to his people.*" Once out of Egypt, ever out of Satan's thraldom.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*Sent redemption*" . . . . "*commanded his covenant.*" The deliverance was the more thankworthy, as being upon a covenant account; for thus every mercy is a token of the Lord's favour to his favourite: it is this which makes common mercies to become special mercies. Carnal men, so that they enjoy mercies, they mind not which way they come in, so as they can but have them; but a child of God knows that everything that comes through the Redeemer's hands and by his covenant is the better for it, and tastes the sweeter by far.—*William Cooper, in the Morning Exercises.*

Verse 9.—"*Redemption.*" Praise our Triune Jehovah for his redemption. Write it down where you may read it. Affix it where you may see it. Engrave it on your heart that you may understand it. It is a word big with importance. In it is enfolded *your* destinies and those of the Church, to all future ages. There are heights in it you never can have scaled, and depths you never can have fathomed. You have never taken the wings of the morning, and gained the utmost parts of earth, to measure the length and breadth of it. Wear it as a seal on your arm, as a signet on your right hand, for Jesus is the author of it. O! prize it as a precious stone, more precious than rubies. . . . Let it express your best hopes while living, and dwell on your trembling lips in the moment of dissolution; for it shall form the chorus of the song of the redeemed throughout eternity.—*Isaac Saunders*, 1818.

Verse 9.—"*He hath commanded his covenant for ever.*" As he covenanted, so he looketh that his covenants should be respected, which are as binding to us, as

his covenant is to him; and, through grace, his covenant is as binding to him, as those are to us.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*Holy and reverend*, or, *terrible, is his name.*" "Holy is his name," and therefore "*terrible*" to those who, under all the means of grace, continue unholy. —*George Horne.*

Verse 9.—"*Holy and reverend is his name.*" Which therefore we should not presume on a sudden to blurt out. The Jews would not pronounce it. The Grecians (as Suidas observeth), when they would swear by their Jupiter, forbare to mention him. This should act as a check to the profaneness common amongst us. Let those that would have their *name reverend*, labour to be *holy* as God is holy.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—In this passage "*fear*" is not to be understood as referring to the first or elementary principles of piety, as in 1 John iv. 18, but is comprehensive of all true godliness, or the worship of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 10.—"*The fear of the* LORD *is the beginning of wisdom,*" etc. The text shows us the first step to true wisdom, and the test of common sense. It is so frequently repeated, that it may pass for a Scripture maxim, and we may be sure it is of singular importance. Job starts the question, "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" He searches nature through in quest of it, but cannot find it: he cannot purchase it with the gold of Ophir, and its price is above rubies. At length he recollects the primitive instruction of God to man, and there he finds it: "To man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."—Job xxviii. 28. Solomon, the wisest of men, begins his Proverbs with this maxim, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge," Prov. i. 7. And he repeats it again: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy," (the knowledge of those that may be called *saints* with a sneer), "is understanding," Prov. ix. 10. "*The fear of the* LORD" in Scripture signifies not only that pious passion or filial reverence of our adorable Father who is in heaven, but it is frequently put for the whole of practical religion; hence it is explained in the last part of the verse by "*doing his commandments.*" The fear of the Lord, in this latitude, implies all the graces and all the virtues of Christianity; in short, all that holiness of heart and life which is necessary to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness. So that the sense of the text is this: To practise religion and virtue, to take that way which leads to everlasting happiness, is *wisdom*, true wisdom, the *beginning* of wisdom, the first step towards it: unless you begin here you can never attain it; all your wisdom without this does not deserve the name; it is madness and nonsense. "*To do his commandments*" is the best test of a "*good understanding*": a "*good*" sound "*understanding*" have "*all they*" that do this, "*all*" of them without exception: however weak some of them may be in other things, they are wise in the most important respect; but without this, however cunning they are in other things, they have lost their understandings; they contradict common sense; they are beside themselves. In short, to pursue everlasting happiness as the end, in the way of holiness as the mean, this is "*wisdom,*" this is common sense, and there can be none without this.—*Samuel Davies, A.M.* (1724—1761) *President of Princeton College, New Jersey.*

Verse 10.—"*The fear of the* LORD *is the beginning of wisdom.*" Now, then, I demand of the worldling what is the most high and deep point of wisdom? Is it to get an opulent fortune, to be *so wise as fifty thousand pounds?* Behold, "godliness is great gain," saith Paul, and the Christian only rich, quoth the renowned catechist [Clement] of Alexandria. Is it to live joyfully, (or to use the gallant's phrase) jovially? Behold, there is joyful gladness for such as are true hearted, Ps. xcvii. 11. A wicked man in his mad-merry humour for a while may be *Pomponius Lætus*, but a good man only is *Hilarius;* only he which is faithful in heart is joyful in heart. Is it to get honour? *the praise of God's fear* (saith our text) *endures for ever.* Many worthies of the world are most unhappy, because they be commended where they be not, and tormented where they be; hell rings of their pains, earth of their praise; but "blessed is the man that feareth the Lord" (Ps. cxii. 1), for his commendation is both here lasting, and hereafter everlasting; in this world he is renowned among men, in the next he shall be rewarded amongst saints and angels in the kingdom of glory.—*John Boys.*

Verse 10.—"*The fear of the* LORD *is the beginning of wisdom.*" It is not only the

beginning of wisdom, but the middle and the end. It is indeed the Alpha and Omega, the essence, the body and the soul, the sum and substance. He that hath the fear of God is truly wise. . . . It is surely wisdom to love that which is most lovable, and to occupy our hearts with that which is most worthy of our attachment, and the most capable of satisfying us.—*From the French of Daniel de Superville*, 1700.

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—Fear is not all then ; no, for it is but the beginning. God will have us begin, but not end there. We have begun with *qui timet Eum*, " who fears him ; " we must end with *et operatur justitiam*, " and does justice," and then comes *acceptus est Illi*, and not before. For neither fear, if it be fear alone ; nor faith, if it be faith alone, is accepted of Him. If it be true fear, if such as God will accept, it is not *timor piger*, " a dull lazy fear " ; his fear that feared his lord and " went and digged his talent into the ground," and did nothing with it. Away with his fear and him " into outer darkness."—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 10.—Can it then be said that the non-religious world is without wisdom ? Has it no Aristotle, no Socrates, no Tacitus, no Goethe, no Gibbon ? Let us understand what wisdom is. It is not any mere amount of knowledge that constitutes wisdom. Appropriate knowledge is essential to wisdom. A man who has not the knowledge appropriate to his position, who does not know himself in his relation to God and to his fellow-men, who is misinformed as to his duties, his dangers, his necessities, though he may have written innumerable works of a most exalted character, yet is he to be set down as a man without wisdom. What is it to you that your servant is acquainted with mathematics, if he is ignorant of your will, and of the way to do it ? The genius of a Voltaire, a Spinoza, a Byron, only makes their folly the more striking. As though a man floating rapidly onwards to the falls of Niagara, should occupy himself in drawing a very admirable picture of the scenery. Men who are exceedingly great in the world's estimation have made the most signal blunders with regard to the most important things ; and it is only because these things are not considered important by the world, that the reputation of these men remains.

If you have learned to estimate things in some measure as God estimates them, to desire what he offers, to relinquish what he forbids, and to recognise the duties that he has appointed you, you are in the path of wisdom, and the great men we have been speaking about are far behind you—far from the narrow gate which you have entered. He only is wise, who can call Christ the wisdom of God.—*George Bowen.*

Verse 10.—"*The beginning of wisdom.*" That is, the principle whence it springs, and the fountain from which it flows.—*William Walford.*

Verse 10.—As there are degrees of wisdom, so of the fear of the Lord ; but there is no degree of this fear so inferior or low, but it is a beginning, at least, of wisdom ; and there is no degree of wisdom so high or perfect, but it hath its root in, or beginning, from this fear.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10.—"*Beginning of wisdom.*" The word translated *beginning* is of uncertain sense. It may signify the *first* in *time* only, and so the rudiments, first foundation, or groundwork, and so though the most necessary, yet the most imperfect part of the work. And if it should thus be understood here and in other places, the sense would be no more but this, that there were no true *wisdom*, which had not its foundation in piety and fear of God. But the word signifies the *first* in *dignity* as well as in order of time, and is frequently used for the chief or principal of any kind. . . . And thus it is to be understood here, that "*the fear of the Lord*" (which signifies all piety) *is the principal or chief of wisdom*, as *sapientia prima* in Horace is the *principal* or most excellent wisdom ; according to that of Job xxviii. 28 : " Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding," *that*, by way of eminence, the most excellent *wisdom* and understanding.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 10.—"*A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.*" They which *do* the commandments have a good understanding ; not they which speak of the commandments, nor they which write of the commandments, nor they which preach of the commandments, but they which do the commandments, have a good understanding. The rest have a false understanding, a vain understanding, an understanding like that of the scribes and pharisees, which was enough to condemn them, but not to save them.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 10.—"*A good understanding have all they that do,*" etc. So much a man

knoweth in true account, as he doth ; hence understanding is here ascribed to the will ; so Job xxviii. 28. Some render it *good success.—John Trapp.*

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—*"The praise of it endures for ever" ;* or as other translations, *"his praise" ;* referring it either to God, or else to the man who fears God. Some divines ascribe this praise to God alone, because *tehilla* properly signifieth only that kind of praise which is due to God ; and so they make this clause to contain both a precept and a promise. *Precept,* exhorting us to praise God with all our heart, both in the secret assemblies of the faithful and in the public congregation. And lest any man in executing this office should be discouraged, the prophet addeth a promise, " God's praise doth endure for ever " ; as if he should have said, " The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient ; the Lord is God, albeit the Gentiles furiously rage together, and the Jews imagine a vain thing ; the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers combine themselves against him," Ps. xcix. 1 ; xviii. 31 ; ii. 1. He that dwelleth in heaven hath all his enemies in derision, and makes them all his footstool ; his power is for ever, and so consequently his praise shall endure for ever ; in the militant church, unto the world's end ; in the triumphant, world without end.

Most interpreters have referred this unto the good man who fears the Lord, yet diversely. S. Augustine expoundeth it thus, *"his praise,"* that is, his praising of the Lord, *"shall endure for ever,"* because he shall be one of them of whom it is said (Ps. lxxxiv. 4) " Blessed are they that dwell in thy house : they will be still praising thee." Others understand by *"his praise"* the commendation of the good man, both in the life present and in that which is to come, for his righteousness shall be had in an everlasting remembrance. Ps. cxii. 6.—*John Boys.*

Verse 10 (*second clause*).—Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart, there will be a constant conscientious care to keep his commandments : not to talk them, but to do them ; and such *"have a good understanding," i.e.,* First, They are well understood, their obedience is graciously accepted as a plain indication of their mind, that they do indeed fear God. Secondly, They understand well. 1. It is a sign they do understand well : the most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent. They are wise that make God's law their rule, and are in everything ruled by it. 2. It is the way to understand better. " A good understanding are they to all that do them " ; *i.e.,* the fear of the Lord, and the laws of God give men a good understanding, and are able to make them wise unto salvation.—*Condensed from Matthew Henry.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—*"Praise ye the Lord" ;* there is an exhortation. *"I will praise the Lord ;"* there is a vow. It shall be *"with my whole heart" ;* there is experimental godliness. It shall be *"in the assembly of the upright" ;* there is a relative position occupied along with the family of God.—*Joseph Irons.*

Verse 1.—*"With my whole heart."* This includes spirituality, simplicity, and earnestness.—*Joseph Irons.*

Verse 1.—I. Who are the upright ? II. What are they doing ? Praising God. III. What shall I do if I am favoured to stand among them ? " I will praise the Lord."

Verse 1.—Where I love to be, and what I love to do.

Verse 2.—The Christian philosopher. I. His sphere : " The works of the Lord." II. His work : " Sought out." III. His qualification : " Pleasure therein." IV. His conclusion : " Praise," as in verse 1.

Verses 2—9.—The Psalmist furnishes us with matter for praise from the works of God. 1. The greatness of his works and the glory of them. 2. The righteousness of them. 3. The goodness of them. 4. The power of them. 5. The conformity of them to his word of promise. 6. The perpetuity of them.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—As an essential attribute, as revealed in providence, as vindicated in redemption, as demonstrated in punishment, as appropriated by believers.

Verse 4.—The compassion of the Lord as seen in aiding the memories of his people.

Verses 4, 5.—God's marvels ought not to be nine-day wonders. I. *It is God's design that his wonders should be remembered,* therefore, 1. He made them great. 2. He wrought them for an undeserving people. 3. He wrought them at memorable times. 4. He put them on record. 5. He instituted memorials. 6. He bade them tell their children. 7. He so dealt with them as to refresh their memories. II. *It is our wisdom to remember the Lord's wonders.* 1. To assure us of his compassion: "The Lord is gracious." 2. To make us consider his bounty: "he hath given meat." 3. To certify us of his faithfulness: "he will ever be mindful of his covenant." 4. To arouse our praise: "Praise ye the Lord."

Verse 5.—There is, I. Encouragement from the past: "He hath given meat," etc. II. Confidence for the future: "He will ever be mindful," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—The power of God an encouragement for the evangelization of the heathen.

Verse 9.—*Redemption.* Conceived, arranged, executed, and applied by God. By price and by power. From sin and death. That we may be free, the Lord's own, the Lord's glory.

Verse 9.—Redemption. I. Its author: "He sent." II. Its objects: "Unto his people." III. The pledge it gives us: "He hath commanded his covenant," etc. IV. The praise it creates in us.

Verse 9.—"*Holy and reverend.*" I. The holiness of God the object of our reverence. II. Such reverence has much useful influence over us. III. It should always accompany our faith in redemption and covenant. See preceding clauses of verse.

Verse 10.—I. The beginner in Christ's school. II. The man who has taken a degree: "a good understanding," etc. III. The Master who receives the praise.

Verse 10.—I. The beginning of wisdom: "the fear of the Lord"—God is feared. II. Its continuance: "a good understanding have all they that do his commandments"—when the fear of the Lord in the heart is developed in the life. III. Its end, praising God for ever: "his praise," etc.—*G. R.*

PSALM CXII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*There is no title to this Psalm, but it is evidently a companion to the hundred and eleventh, and, like it, it is an alphabetical Psalm. Even in the number of verses, and clauses of each verse, it coincides with its predecessor, as also in many of its words and phrases. The reader should carefully compare the two Psalms line by line. The subject of the poem before us is*—the blessedness of the righteous man, *and so it bears the same relation to the preceding which the moon does to the sun; for, while the first declares the glory of God, the second speaks of the reflection of the divine brightness in men born from above. God is here praised for the manifestation of his glory which is seen in his people, just as in the preceding Psalm he was magnified for his own personal acts. The hundred and eleventh speaks of the great Father, and this describes his children renewed after his image. The Psalm cannot be viewed as the extolling of man, for it commences with "Praise ye the Lord;" and it is intended to give to God all the honour of his grace which is manifested in the sons of God.*

DIVISION.—*The subject is stated in the first verse, and enlarged upon under several heads from* 2 *to* 9. *The blessedness of the righteous is set forth by contrast with the fate of the ungodly in verse* 10.

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Blessed *is* the man *that* feareth the LORD, *that* delighteth greatly in his commandments.

1. *"Praise ye the LORD."* This exhortation is never given too often; the Lord always deserves praise, we ought always to render it, we are frequently forgetful of it, and it is always well to be stirred up to it. The exhortation is addressed to all thoughtful persons who observe the way and manner of life of men that fear the Lord. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, the Lord should have all the glory of it, for we are his workmanship. *"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord."* According to the last verse of Psalm cxi., "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"; this man, therefore, has begun to be wise, and wisdom has brought him present happiness, and secured him eternal felicity. Jehovah is so great that he is to be feared and had in reverence of all them that are round about him, and he is at the same time so infinitely good that the fear is sweetened into filial love, and becomes a delightful emotion, by no means engendering bondage. There is a slavish fear which is accursed; but that godly fear which leads to delight in the service of God is infinitely blessed. Jehovah is to be praised both for inspiring men with godly fear and for the blessedness which they enjoy in consequence thereof. We ought to bless God for blessing any man, and especially for setting the seal of his approbation upon the godly. His favour towards the God-fearing displays his character and encourages gracious feelings in others, therefore let him be praised. *"That delighteth greatly in his commandments."* The man not only studies the divine precepts and endeavours to observe them, but rejoices to do so: holiness is his happiness, devotion is his delight, truth is his treasure. He rejoices in the precepts of godliness, yea, and delights *greatly* in them. We have known hypocrites rejoice in the doctrines, but never in the commandments. Ungodly men may in some measure obey the commandments out of fear, but only a gracious man will observe them with delight. Cheerful obedience is the only acceptable obedience; he who obeys reluctantly is disobedient at heart, but he who takes pleasure in the command is truly loyal. If through divine grace we find ourselves described in these two sentences, let us give all the praise to God, for he hath wrought all our works in us, and the dispositions out of which they spring. Let self-righteous men praise themselves, but he who has been made righteous by grace renders all the praise to the Lord.

2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed

3 Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: *he is* gracious and full of compassion, and righteous.

5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

8 His heart *is* established, he shall not be afraid, until he see *his desire* upon his enemies.

9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

2. "*His seed shall be mighty upon earth,*" that is to say, successive generations of God-fearing men shall be strong and influential in society, and in the latter days they shall have dominion. The true seed of the righteous are those who follow them in their virtues, even as believers are the seed of Abraham, because they imitate his faith; and these are the real heroes of their era, the truly great men among the sons of Adam; their lives are sublime, and their power upon their age is far greater than at first sight appears. If the promise must be regarded as alluding to natural seed, it must be understood as a general statement rather than a promise made to every individual, for the children of the godly are not all prosperous, nor all famous. Nevertheless, he who fears God, and leads a holy life, is, as a rule, doing the best he can for the future advancement of his house; no inheritance is equal to that of an unblemished name, no legacy can excel the benediction of a saint; and, taking matters for all in all, the children of the righteous man commence life with greater advantages than others, and are more likely to succeed in it, in the best and highest sense. "*The generation of the upright shall be blessed.*" The race of sincere, devout, righteous men, is kept up from age to age, and ever abides under the blessing of God. The godly may be persecuted, but they shall not be forsaken; the curses of men cannot deprive them of the blessing of God, for the words of Balaam are true, "He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." Their children also are under the special care of heaven, and as a rule it shall be found that they inherit the divine blessing. Honesty and integrity are better corner-stones for an honourable house than mere cunning and avarice, or even talent and push. To fear God and to walk uprightly is a higher nobility than blood or birth can bestow.

3. "*Wealth and riches shall be in his house.*" Understood literally this is rather a promise of the old covenant than of the new, for many of the best of the people of God are very poor; yet it has been found true that uprightness is the road to success, and, all other things being equal, the honest man is the rising man. Many are kept poor through knavery and profligacy; but godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. If we understand the passage spiritually it is abundantly true. What wealth can equal that of the love of God? What riches can rival a contented heart? It matters nothing that the roof is thatched, and the floor is of cold stone: the heart which is cheered with the favour of heaven is "rich to all the intents of bliss." "*And his righteousness endureth for ever.*" Often when gold comes in the gospel goes out; but it is not so with the blessed man. Prosperity does not destroy the holiness of his life, or the humility of his heart. His character stands the test of examination, overcomes the temptations of wealth, survives the assaults of slander, outlives the afflictions of time, and endures the trial of the last great day. The righteousness of a true saint endureth for ever, because it springs from the same root as the righteousness of God, and is, indeed, the reflection of it. So long as the Lord abideth righteous he will maintain by his grace the righteousness of his people. They shall hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger. There is also another righteousness which belongs to the Lord's chosen, which is sure to endure for ever, namely, the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, which is called "everlasting righteousness," belonging as it does to the Son of God himself, who is "the Lord our righteousness."

4. *"Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness."* He does not lean to injustice in order to ease himself, but like a pillar stands erect, and he shall be found so standing when the ungodly, who are as a bowing wall and a tottering fence, shall lie in ruins. He will have his days of darkness, he may be sick and sorry, poor and pining, as well as others; his former riches may take to themselves wings and fly away, while even his righteousness may be cruelly suspected; thus the clouds may lower around him, but his gloom shall not last for ever, the Lord will bring him light in due season, for as surely as a good man's sun goes down it shall rise again. If the darkness be caused by depression of spirit, the Holy Ghost will comfort him; if by pecuniary loss or personal bereavement, the presence of Christ shall be his solace; and if by the cruelty and malignity of men, the sympathy of his Lord shall be his support. It is as ordinary for the righteous to be comforted as for the day to dawn. Wait for the light and it will surely come; for even if our heavenly Father should in our last hours put us to bed in the dark, we shall find it morning when we awake. *"He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous."* This is spoken of God in the fourth verse of the hundred and eleventh Psalm, and now the same words are used of his servant: thus we are taught that when God makes a man upright, he makes him like himself. We are at best but humble copies of the great original; still we are copies, and because we are so we praise the Lord, who hath created us anew in Christ Jesus. The upright man is "gracious," that is, full of kindness to all around him; he is not sour and churlish, but he is courteous to friends, kind to the needy, forgiving to the erring, and earnest for the good of all. He is also "full of compassion"; that is to say, he tenderly feels for others, pities them, and as far as he can assists them in their time of trouble. He does not need to be driven to benevolence, he is brimful of humanity; it is his joy to sympathize with the sorrowing. He is also said to be "righteous": in all his transactions with his fellow men he obeys the dictates of right, and none can say that he goes beyond or defrauds his neighbour. His justice is, however, tempered with compassion, and seasoned with graciousness. Such men are to be found in our churches, and they are by no means so rare as the censorious imagine; but at the same time they are far scarcer than the breadth of profession might lead us to hope. Lord, make us all to possess these admirable qualities.

5. *"A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth."* Having passed beyond stern integrity into open-handed benevolence he looks kindly upon all around him, and finding himself in circumstances which enable him to spare a little of his wealth he lends judiciously where a loan will be of permanent service. Providence has made him able to lend, and grace makes him willing to lend. He is not a borrower, for God has lifted him above that necessity; neither is he a hoarder, for his new nature saves him from that temptation; but he wisely uses the talents committed to him. *"He will guide his affairs with discretion."* Those who neglect their worldly business must not plead religion as an excuse, for when a man is truly upright he exercises great care in managing his accounts, in order that he may remain so. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between indiscretion and dishonesty; carelessness in business may become almost as great an evil to others as actual knavery; a good man should not only *be* upright, but he should be so discreet that no one may have the slightest reason to suspect him of being otherwise. When the righteous man lends he exercises prudence, not risking his all, for fear he should not be able to lend again, and not lending so very little that the loan is of no service. He drives his affairs, and does not allow them to drive him; his accounts are straight and clear, his plans are wisely laid, and his modes of operation carefully selected. He is prudent, thrifty, economical, sensible, judicious, discreet. Men call him a fool for his religion, but they do not find him so when they come to deal with him. "The beginning of wisdom" has made him wise, the guidance of heaven has taught him to guide his affairs, and with half an eye one can see that he is a man of sound sense. Such persons greatly commend godliness. Alas, some professedly good men act as if they had taken leave of their senses; this is not religion, but stupidity. True religion is sanctified common sense. Attention to the things of heaven does not necessitate the neglect of the affairs of earth; on the contrary, he who has learned how to transact business with God ought to be best able to do business with men. The children of this world often are in their generation wiser than the children of light, but there is no reason why this proverb should continue to be true.

6. *"Surely he shall not be moved for ever."* God has rooted and established

him so that neither men nor devils shall sweep him from his place. His prosperity shall be permanent, and not like that of the gambler and the cheat, whose gains are evanescent: his reputation shall be bright and lustrous from year to year, for it is not a mere pretence; his home shall be permanent, and he shall not need to wander from place to place as a bird that wanders from her nest; and even his memory shall be abiding, for a good man is not soon forgotten, and *"the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."* They are of a most ancient family, and not mushrooms of an hour, and their grand old stock shall be found flourishing when all the proud houses of ungodly men shall have faded into nothing. The righteous are worth remembering, their actions are of the kind which record themselves, and God himself takes charge of their memorials. None of us likes the idea of being forgotten, and yet the only way to avoid it is to be righteous before God.

7. *"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings."* He shall have no dread that evil tidings will come, and he shall not be alarmed when they do come. Rumours and reports he despises; prophecies of evil, vented by fanatical mouths, he ridicules; actual and verified information of loss and distress he bears with equanimity, resigning everything into the hands of God. *"His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."* He is neither fickle nor cowardly; when he is undecided as to his course he is still fixed in heart: he may change his plan, but not the purpose of his soul. His heart being fixed in solid reliance upon God, a change in his circumstances but slightly affects him; faith has made him firm and steadfast, and therefore if the worst should come to the worst, he would remain quiet and patient, waiting for the salvation of God.

8. *"His heart is established."* His love to God is deep and true, his confidence in God is firm and unmoved; his courage has a firm foundation, and is supported by omnipotence. He has become settled by experience, and confirmed by years. He is not a rolling stone, but a pillar in the house of the Lord. *"He shall not be afraid."* He is ready to face any adversary—a holy heart gives a brave face. *"Until he see his desire upon his enemies."* All through the conflict, even till he seizes the victory, he is devoid of fear. When the battle wavers, and the result seems doubtful, he nevertheless believes in God, and is a stranger to dismay. Grace makes him desire his enemies' good: though nature leads him to wish to see justice done to his cause, he does not desire for those who injure him anything by way of private revenge.

9. *"He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor."* What he received, he distributed; and distributed to those who most needed it. He was God's reservoir, and forth from his abundance flowed streams of liberality to supply the needy. If this be one of the marks of a man who feareth the Lord, there are some who are strangely destitute of it. They are great at gathering, but very slow at dispersing; they enjoy the blessedness of receiving, but seldom taste the greater joy of giving. "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—perhaps they think that the blessing of receiving is enough for them. *"His righteousness endureth for ever."* His liberality has salted his righteousness, proved its reality, and secured its perpetuity. This is the second time that we have this remarkable sentence applied to the godly man, and it must be understood as resulting from the enduring mercy of the Lord. The character of a righteous man is not spasmodic, he is not generous by fits and starts, nor upright in a few points only; his life is the result of principle, his actions flow from settled, sure, and fixed convictions, and therefore his integrity is maintained when others fail. He is not turned about by companions, nor affected by the customs of society; he is resolute, determined, and immovable. *"His horn shall be exalted with honour."* God shall honour him, the universe of holy beings shalll honour him, and even the wicked shall feel an unconscious reverence of him. Let it be observed, in summing up the qualities of the God-fearing man, that he is described not merely as righteous, but as one bearing the character to which Paul refers in the memorable verse, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for *a good man* some would even dare to die." Kindness, benevolence, and generosity, are essential to the perfect character; to be strictly just is not enough, for God is love, and we must love our neighbour as ourselves: to give every one his due is not sufficient, we must act upon those same principles of grace which reign in the heart of God. The promises of establishment and prosperity are not to churlish Nabals, nor to niggard Labans, but to bountiful souls who have proved their fitness to be stewards of the Lord by the right way in which they use their substance.

10 The wicked shall see *it*, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

The tenth and last verse sets forth very forcibly the contrast between the righteous and the ungodly, thus making the blessedness of the godly appear all the more remarkable. Usally we see Ebal and Gerizim, the blessing and the curse, set the one over against the other, to invest both with the greater solemnity. "*The wicked shall see it, and be grieved.*" The ungodly shall first see the example of the saints to their own condemnation, and shall at last behold the happiness of the godly and to the increase of their eternal misery. The child of wrath shall be obliged to witness the blessedness of the righteous, though the sight shall make him gnaw his own heart. He shall fret and fume, lament and wax angry, but he shall not be able to prevent it, for God's blessing is sure and effectual. "*He shall gnash with his teeth.*" Being very wrathful, and exceedingly envious, he would fain grind the righteous between his teeth; but as he cannot do that, he grinds his teeth against each other. "*And melt away.*" The heat of his passion shall melt him like wax, and the sun of God's providence shall dissolve him like snow, and at the last the fire of divine vengeance shall consume him as the fat of rams. How horrible must that life be which like the snail melts as it proceeds, leaving a slimy trail behind. Those who are grieved at goodness deserve to be worn away by such an abominable sorrow. "*The desire of the wicked shall perish.*" He shall not achieve his purpose, he shall die a disappointed man. By wickedness he hoped to accomplish his purpose—that very wickedness shall be his defeat. While the righteous shall endure for ever, and their memory shall be always green; the ungodly man and his name shall rot from off the face of the earth. He desired to be the founder of a family, and to be remembered as some great one: he shall pass away and his name shall die with him. How wide is the gulf which separates the righteous from the wicked, and how different are the portions which the Lord deals out to them. O for grace to be blessed of the Lord! This will make us praise him with our whole heart.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The hundred and eleventh and the hundred and twelfth Psalms, two very short poems, dating apparently from the latest age of inspired psalmody, present such features of resemblance as to leave no doubt that they came from the same pen. In structure they are identical; and this superficial resemblance is designed to call attention to something deeper and more important. The subject of the one is the exact counterpart of the subject of the other. The first celebrates the character and works of *God;* the second, the character and felicity of *the godly man.*—*William Binnie.*

Whole Psalm.—Here are rehearsed the blessings which God is wont to bestow on the godly. And as in the previous Psalm the praises of God were directly celebrated, so in this Psalm they are indirectly declared by those gifts which are conspicuous in those who fear him.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is a banquet of heavenly wisdom; and as Basil speaketh of another part of Scripture, likening it to an apothecary's shop; so may this book of Psalms fitly be compared; in which are so many sundry sorts of medicines, that every man may have that which is convenient for his disease.—*T. S.*, 1621.

Whole Psalm.—The righteousness of the Mediator, I make no doubt, is celebrated in this Psalm; for surely that alone is worthy to be extolled in songs of praise: especially since we are taught by the Holy Ghost to say, "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." I conclude, therefore, that in this alphabetical Psalm, for such is its construction, Christ is "the Alpha and the Omega."—*John Fry.*

Verse 1.—This Psalm is a praising of God for blessing the believer, and the whole Psalm doth prove that the believer is blessed: which proposition is set down

in verse 1, and confirmed with as many reasons as there are verses following. Whence learn, 1. Albeit, in singing of certain Psalms, or parts thereof, there be nothing directly spoken of the Lord, or to the Lord, yet he is praised when his truth is our song, or when his works and doctrine are our song; as here it is said, "*Praise ye the Lord.*" and then in the following verses the blessedness of the believer taketh up all the Psalm. 2. It is the Lord's praise that his servants are the only blessed people in the world. "*Praise ye the Lord.*" Why? because "*Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.*" 3. He is not the blessed man who is most observant to catch opportunities to have pleasure, profit, and worldly preferment, and careth not how he cometh by them: but he is the blessed man who is most observant of God's will, and careful to follow it.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.*" It is not said simply, *Blessed is the man who fears:* for there is a fear which of itself produces misery and wretchedness rather than happiness. It has to do, therefore, chiefly with what is feared. To fear when it is not becoming, and not to fear when fear is proper, these are not blessedness for a man, but misery and wretchedness. The prophet, therefore, says rightly, "Blessed is the man that feareth *the Lord*": and in the 7th and 8th verses he says of this blessed one that he shall not be afraid of evil tidings. Therefore, he who fears God and, according to the exhortation of Christ, does not fear those who can kill the body, he truly may be numbered among the blessed.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*Feareth the Lord.*" Filial fear is here intended. Whereby we are both restrained from evil, Prov. iii. 7; and incited unto well doing, Eccles. xii. 13; and whereof God alone is the author, Jer. xxxii. 39, 40; A duty required of every one, Ps. xxxiii. 8; Early, 1 Kings xviii. 12; Only, Luke xii. 5; Continually, Prov. xxiii. 17; With confidence, Ps. cxv. 11; With joyfulness, Ps. cxix. 74; With thankfulness, Rev. xix. 5.—*Thomas Wilson, in "A Complete Christian Dictionary,"* 1661.

Verse 1.—"*That delighteth greatly in his commandments.*" The Hebrew word חפץ, *chaphets*, is rather emphatical, which is, as it were, to *take his pleasure*, and I have rendered it *to delight himself*. For the prophet makes a distinction between a willing and prompt endeavour to keep the law, and that which consists in mere servile and constrained obedience.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"*That delighteth greatly in his commandments*"—defining what constitutes the true "fear of the Lord," which was termed "the beginning of wisdom," Ps. cxi. 10. He who hath this true "fear" *delights* (Ps. cxi. 2) not merely in the theory, but in the practice of all "the Lord's commandments." Such fear, so far from being a "hard" service, is the only "blessed" one (Jer. xxxii. 39). Compare the Gospel commandments, 1 John iii., 23, 24: v. 3. True obedience is not task-work, as formalists regard religion, but a "delight" (Ps. i. 2). Worldly delights, which made piety irksome, are supplanted by the new-born delight in and taste for the will and ways of God (Ps. xix. 7—10).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 1.—"*In his commandments.*" When we cheerfully practise all that the Lord requireth of us, love sweeteneth all things, and it becomes our meat and drink to do his will. The thing commanded is excellent, but it is sweeter because commanded *by him*—"*his* commandments." A man is never thoroughly converted till he delighteth in God and his service, and his heart is overpowered by the sweetness of divine love. A slavish kind of religiousness, when we had rather not do than do our work, is no fruit of grace, and cannot evidence a sincere love.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 2.—"*His seed.*" If any one should desire to leave behind him a flourishing posterity, let him not think to accomplish it by accumulating heaps of gold and silver, and leaving them behind him; but by rightly recognising God and serving Him; and commending his children to the guardianship and protection of God.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 2.—"*The generation of the upright*"—the family; the children—"*shall be blessed.*" Such promises are expected to be fulfilled *in general;* it is not required by any proper rules of interpreting language that this should be universally and always true.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*The generation of the upright shall be blessed.*" Albeit, few do believe it, yet is it true, that upright dealing hath better fruits than witty projecting and cunning catching.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 2, 3.—It is probable that Lot thought of enriching his family when he

chose the fertile plains of wicked Sodom, yet the event was very different; but Abraham "feared the Lord, and delighted greatly in his commandments," and his descendants were "*mighty upon earth.*" And thus it will generally be, in every age, with the posterity of those who imitate the father of the faithful; and their disinterested and liberal conduct shall prove, in the event, a far preferable inheritance laid up for their children, than gold and silver, houses and lands, would have been.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 3.—"*Wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever.*" He is not the worse for his wealth, nor drawn aside by the deceitfulness of riches, which yet is hard and happy.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—In the lower sense, we may read these words literally of abundant wealth bestowed on the righteous by God, and used, not for pride and luxury, but for continual works of mercy, whence it is said of the person so enriched, that "*his righteousness endureth for ever.*" But the higher meaning bids us see here those true spiritual riches which are stored up for the poor in spirit, often most needy in the prosperity of the world; and we may come at the truest sense by comparing the words wherein the great apostle describes his own condition, "As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." 2 Cor. vi. 10. For who can be richer than he who is heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ?—*Agellius, Chrysostom, and Didymus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 3.—"*His righteousness endureth for ever.*" It seems a bold thing to say this of anything human, and yet it is true; for all human righteousness has its root in the righteousness of God. It is not merely man striving to copy God. It is God's gift and God's work. There is a living connexion between the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man, and therefore the imperishableness of the one appertains to the other also. Hence the same thing is affirmed here of the human righteousness which in cxi. 3 is affirmed of the Divine.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"*His righteousness endureth for ever.*" We are justified before God by faith only: Rom. iii. 4: but they are righteous before men, who live honestly, piously, humbly, as the law of God requires. Concerning this righteousness the Psalmist says that *it endureth for ever,* while the feigned and simulated uprightness of hypocrites is abominable before God, and with men speedily passes away.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 4.—"*Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.*" The arising of light out of darkness, although one of the most common, is one of the most beautiful, as it is one of the most beneficent natural phenomena. The sunrise is a daily victory of light over darkness. Every morning the darkness flees away. Heavy sleepers in the city are not apt to be very well acquainted with the rising sun. They know the tender beauties of the dawning, and the glories of sunrise by poetical description, or by the word of others. The light has fully come, and the day has long begun its work, especially if it be summer time, before ordinary citizens are awake; and, unless on some rare occasions, the millions of men who, every day, see more or less the fading of the light into the dark, never see the rising of the light out of the dark again; and, perhaps, seldom or never think with what thankfulness and joy it is hailed by those who need it—by the sailor, tempest-tossed all night, and driven too near the sand-bank or the shore; by the benighted traveller lost in the wood, or in the wild, who knows not south from north until the sun shall rise; but the night watcher in the sick room, who hears, and weeps to hear, through the weary night, the moaning of that old refrain of sorrow, "Would God it were morning!" What intensity of sorrow, fear, hope, there may be in that expression, "more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning"! Now I make no doubt that there is at least somewhat of that intenser meaning carried up into the higher region of spiritual experience, and expressed by the text, "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." . . . Sincerity: an honest desire to know the truth: readiness to make any sacrifice in order to the knowledge: obedience to the truth so far as it is known already—these will bring the light *when nothing else will bring it.*—*Alexander Raleigh, in "The Little Sanctuary and other Meditations,"* 1872.

Verse 4.—"*Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.*" The great lesson taught by this simile is the connection which obtains between integrity of purpose and clearness of perception, insomuch that a duteous conformity to what is right,

is generally followed up by a ready and luminous discernment of what is true. It tells us that if we have but grace to *do* as we ought, we shall be made to *see* as we ought. It is a lesson repeatedly affirmed in Scripture, and that in various places both of the Old and New Testament: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"; "The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them"; "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart"; or still more specifically, "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."—*Thomas Chalmers*, 1780—1847.

Verse 4.—"*Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness*": that is, comfort in affliction. He hath comforted others in affliction, and been light to them in their darkness, as is showed in the latter end of the fourth verse, and in the fifth, and therefore by way of gracious retaliation, the Lord will comfort him in his affliction, and command the light to rise upon him in his darkness.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—"*Light.*" "*Darkness.*" While we are on earth, we are subject to a threefold "*darkness*"; the darkness of error, the darkness of sorrow, and the darkness of death. To dispel these, God visiteth us, by his Word, with a threefold "light"; the light of truth, the light of comfort, and the light of life.—*George Horne.*

Verse 4.—"*Gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous*"—attributes usually applied to *God*, but here said of "*the upright.*" The children of God, knowing in their own experience that God our Father is "gracious, full of compassion, and righteous," seek themselves to be the same towards their fellow men from instinctive imitation of him (Matt. v. 45, 48; Eph. v. 8; Luke vi. 36).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 5.—"*A good man sheweth favour*," etc. Consider that power to do good is a dangerous ability, unless we use it. Remember that it is God who giveth wealth, and that he expecteth some answerable return of it. Live not in such an inhuman manner as if Nabal and Judas were come again into the world. Think frequently and warmly of the love of God and Jesus to you. You will not deny your crumbs to the miserable, when you thankfully call to mind that Christ gave for you his very flesh and blood. Consider as one great end of poverty is patience, so one great end of wealth is charity. Think how honourable it is to make a present to the great King of the world; and what a condescension it is in his all-sufficiency to do that good by us, which he could so abundantly do without us.—*Thomas Tenison*, 1636—1715.

Verse 5.—"*Lendeth.*" The original word here, לָוָה, *lavah*, means to join oneself to any one; to cleave to him; then to form the union which is constituted between debtor and creditor, borrower and lender. Here it is used in the latter sense, and it means that a good man will accommodate another—a neighbour—with money, or with articles to be used temporarily and returned again. A man who always *borrows* is not a desirable neighbour; but a man who never lends—who never is willing to accommodate—is a neighbour that no one would wish to live near—a crooked, perverse, bad man. True religion will always dispose a man to do acts of kindness in any and every way possible.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 5.—Charity though it springs in the heart should be guided by the head, that it may spread itself abroad to the best advantage. "*He will guide his affairs with discretion*," and no affairs are so properly the good man's own as the dispensation and stewardship of those blessings which God has entrusted him with, for "*it is* required in stewards that a man be found faithful."—*Michael Cox*, 1748.

Verse 5.—"*He will guide his affairs with discretion.*" Just as a steward, servant, or agent in any secular concern has to feel that his *mind* is his master's, as well as his hands, and that his attention, thought, tact, and talent, should be vigorously and faithfully given to the interests of his employer; so the Christian stewardship of money, demands on the part of God's servant, in respect to every form of its use and disposal, the exercise of reflexion; a reference to conscience; the recollection of responsibility to God; attention to the appeals of humanity is addressed to the ear of justice and love. Everything is to be weighed as in the balance of the sanctuary; a decision formed; and then energy, skill schemes, and plans wisely constructed, prudential limitations or beneficent liberality as may seem best. Spending, saving, giving, or lending, all being done so as best to meet what may be felt to be the Master's will, and what may best evince at once the wisdom and the fidelity of his servant.—*Thomas Binney, in "Money: a Popular Exposition in Rough Notes,"* 1865.

Verse 5.—"*Discretion.*" There is a story, concerning divers ancient Fathers, that they came to St. Anthony, enquiring of him, what virtue did by a direct line lead to perfection, that so a man might shun the snares of Satan. He bade every one of them speak his opinion; one said, watching and sobriety; another said, fasting and discipline; a third said, humble prayer; a fourth said, poverty and obedience; and another, piety and works of mercy; but when every one has spoken his mind, his answer was, That all these were excellent graces indeed, but discretion was the chief of them all. And so beyond doubt it is; being the very *Auriga virtutum*, the guide of all virtuous and religious actions, the moderator and orderer of all the affections; for whatsoever is done with it is virtue, and what without it is vice. An ounce of discretion is said to be worth a pound of learning. As zeal without knowledge is blind, so knowledge without discretion is lame, like a sword in a madman's hand, able to do much, apt to do nothing. *Tolle hanc et virtus vitium erit.* He that will fast must fast with discretion, he must so mortify that he does not kill his flesh; he that gives alms to the poor, must do it with discretion, *Omni petenti non omnia petenti*—to every one that doth ask, but not everything that he doth ask; so likewise pray with discretion, observing place and time; place, lest he be reputed a hypocrite; time, lest he be accounted a heretic. Thus it is that discretion is to be made the guide of all religious performances.—*Quoted by John Spencer*, 1658.

Verse 6.—What doth the text say? "*The righteous* (that is the bountiful) *shall be in everlasting remembrance.*" God remembers our good deeds, when he rewards them (as he does our prayers, when he hears them). If to remember, then, be to reward, an everlasting reward is our everlasting remembrance. . . . Now in those who are to be partakers of mercy, the divine wisdom requires this congruity, that they be such as have been ready to show mercy to others.—*Joseph Mede*, 1586—1638.

Verse 6.—"*The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.*" The stately and durable pyramids of Egypt have not transmitted to posterity even the names of those buried in them. And what has even embalming done, but tossed them about, and exposed them to all the world as spectacles to the curious, of meanness, or horror? But the piety of Abraham, of Jacob, of David and Samuel, of Hezekiah, Josiah and others, is celebrated to this very day. So when pyramids shall sink, and seas cease to roll, when sun and moon and stars shall be no more, "*the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.*"—*John Dun*, 1790

Verse 7.—"*He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.*" How can you affright him? Bring him word his estate is ruined; "yet my inheritance is safe," says he. Your wife, or child, or dear friend is dead; "yet my Father lives." You yourself must die; "well, then, I go home to my Father, and to my inheritance."

For the public troubles of the Church, doubtless it is both a most pious and generous temper, to be more deeply affected for these than for all our private ones; and to sympathise in the common calamities of any people, but especially of God's own people, hath been the character of men near unto him. Observe the pathetical strains of the prophet's bewailing, when he foretells the desolation even of foreign kingdoms, much more of the Lord's chosen people, still mindful of Sion, and mournful of her distresses. (Jer. ix. 1, and the whole Book of Lamentations.) Yet even in this, with much compassion, there is a calm in a believer's mind; he finds amidst all hard news, yet still a fixed heart, trusting, satisfied in this, that deliverance shall come in due time, Ps. cii. 13, and that in those judgments that are inflicted, men shall be humbled and God exalted, Isaiah ii. 11, and v. 15, 16; and that in all tumults and changes, and subversion of states, still the throne of God is fixed, and with that the believer's heart likewise, Ps. xciii. 2. So Ps. xxix. 10.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 7.—"*He shall not be afraid*," etc. If a man would lead a happy life, let him but seek a sure object for his trust, and he shall be safe: "*He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*" A man that puts his confidence in God, if he hears bad news of mischief coming towards him, as suppose a bad debt, a loss at sea, accidents by fire, tempests, or earthquakes, as Job had his messengers of evil tidings, which came thick and threefold upon him, yet he is not afraid, for his heart is fixed on God: he hath laid up his confidence in God, therefore his heart is kept in an equal poise; he can say, as Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," Job i. 21. His

comforts did not ebb and flow with the creature, but his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—The good man will not be alarmed by any report of danger, whilst the dishonest man, conscious of his wickedness, is always in a state of fear.—*George Phillips.*

Verse 7.—"*His heart is fixed,*" or prepared, ready, and in arms for all services; resolved not to give back, able to meet all adventures, and stand its ground. God is unchangeable; and therefore faith is invincible, for it sets the heart on him; fastens it there on the rock of eternity; then let winds blow and storms arise, it cares not.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 7.—"*His heart is fixed*"—established fearlessly. So Moses, with the Red Sea before and the Egyptian foes behind (Exod. xiv. 13); Jehoshaphat before the Ammonite horde of invaders (2 Chron. xx. 12, 15, 17); Asa before Zerah, the Ethiopian's "thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots" (2 Chron. xiv. 9—12). Contrast with the persecuted David's fearless trust, Saul's panic-stricken feeling at the Philistine invasion, inasmuch as he repaired for help to a witch. How bold were the three youths in prospect of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace! How fearless Stephen before the council! Basilius could say, in answer to the threats of Cæsar Valens, "such bug-bears should be set before children." Athanasius said of Julian, his persecutor, "He is a mist that will soon disappear."—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 7.—"*Trusting in the Lord,*" I need not prove that a man can have no other sure comfort and support. For what can he confide in? His *treasure?* This may soon be exhausted, or it may awaken the avarice or ambition of a powerful enemy, as Hezekiah's did the king of Babylon, and so instead of being a defence, prove the occasion of his ruin. Can he confide in *power?* Alas, he knows that when this is grown too big to fall by any other hands, it generally falls by its own. Can he finally confide in worldly *wisdom?* Alas, a thousand unexpected accidents, and unobserved latent circumstances, cross and frustrate this, and render the Ahithophels not only unfortunate, but often contemptible too.—*Richard Lucas,* 1648—1715.

Verse 8.—"*His heart is established.*" Happy, surely, is the man whose heart is thus established. Others may be politic, he only is wise; others may be fortunate, he only is great; others may drink deeper draughts of sensual pleasure, he only can eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. He is an image of that great Being whom he trusts . . . . and in the midst of storms, and thunders, and earthquakes sits himself serene and undisturbed, bidding the prostrate world adore the Lord of the universe.—*George Gleig,* 1803.

Verse 8.—"*Until he see his desire upon his enemies.*" His faith will not fail, nor shrink, nor change, while one by one his enemies are brought to the knowledge of the truth and the love of Christ, and he shall see his heart's desire fulfilled upon them, even that they may be saved.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 8.—"*Until he see his desire upon his enemies.*" Or, according to the original, *Until he looks upon his oppressors;* that is, till he behold them securely, and, as we say, confidently *looks in their faces;* as being now no longer under their power, but being freed from their tyranny and oppression.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 9.—When all the flashes of sensual pleasure are quite extinct, when all the flowers of secular glory are withered away; when all earthly treasures are buried in darkness; when this world, and all the fashion of it, are utterly vanished and gone, the bountiful man's state will be still firm and flourishing, and "*his righteousness shall endure for ever.*" "*His horn shall be exalted with honour.*" A horn is an emblem of *power;* for it is the beast's strength, offensive and defensive: and of *plenty,* for it hath within it a capacity apt to contain what is put into it; and of *sanctity,* for in it was put the holy oil, with which kings were consecrated; and of *dignity,* both in consequence upon the reasons mentioned (as denoting might, and influence, and sacredness accompanying sovereign dignity) and because also it is an especial beauty and ornament to the creature which hath it; so that this expression, "*his horn shall be exalted with honour,*" may be supposed to import that an abundance of high, and holy, of firm and solid honour shall attend upon the bountiful person. . . . God will thus exalt the bountiful man's horn even here in this world, and to an infinitely higher pitch he will advance it in a future state.—*Isaac Barrow,* 1630—1677.

Verse 9.—"*For ever.*" The Hebrew phrase in this text is not לְעוֹלָם, *in seculum,*

which is sometimes used of a limited eternity, but לָעַד, *in eternum*, which seems more expressive of an endless duration, and is the very same phrase whereby the duration of God's righteousness is expressed in the foregoing Psalm at the third verse.—*William Berriman*, 1688—1749.

Verses 9, 10.—These words are an enlargement of the character, begun at the first verse, of the blessed man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. The author closes that character with an amiable description of his charity, and so leaves on our minds a strong impression, that benevolence of heart when displayed in the benefaction of the hand is the surest mark and fairest accomplishment of a moral and religious mind; which, whether it rewards the worthy, or relieves the unworthy object, is the noblest imitation of the dealings of God with mankind. For he rewardeth the good if any can be called so but himself, (though the name *good* is but *God* spread out). He beareth even with the wicked and stretcheth out his hand to save even them.—*Michael Cox.*

Verse 10.—"*The wicked.*" The word רָשָׁע, *the wicked*, is used emphatically, by the Jews, to denote him who neither gives to the poor himself, nor can endure to see other people give; while he who deserves but one part of this character is only said to have *an evil eye in regard of other people's substance, or in regard of his own.*—*Mishna.*

Verse 10.—"*The wicked shall see it and be grieved,*" etc.—The sight of Christ in glory with his saints, will, in an inexpressible manner torment the crucifiers of the one, and the persecutors of the other; as it will show them the hopes and wishes of their adversaries all granted to the full, and all their own "desires" and designs for ever at an end; it will excite envy which must prey upon itself, produce a grief which can admit of no comfort, give birth to a worm which can never die, and blow up those fires which nothing can quench.—*George Horne.*

Verse 10.—"*The wicked shall see it, and be grieved,*" etc. It is the property of the Devil, not to mistake the nature of virtue, and esteem it criminal, but to hate it for this reason, because it is good, and therefore most opposite to his designs. The wicked, as his proper emissaries, resemble him in this, and grieve to have the foulness of their vices made conspicuous by being placed near the light of virtuous example. . . . They may, like the giants of ancient fable, attempt a romantic war with heaven; but all their preparations for that purpose must recoil with double force upon themselves, and cover them with shame and confusion. . . . If such be the effect of their malice in the present life, that, instead of injuring those they rage against, it usually turns to their own vexation, how much more, when the scene shall open in the life to come. . . . They shall continue then to gnash their teeth (the wretched amusement of that cursed state) as well in grief and anguish for their own torments, as in rage and envy at the abundant honour which is done the saints.—*William Berriman.*

Verse 10.—"*The wicked shall see it, and be grieved*"; that is, he shall have secret indignation in himself to see matters go so; "*he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away.*" Gnashing of teeth is caused by vexing the heart; and therefore it follows, "*he melts away*"; which notes (melting is from the heart) an extreme heat within. The sense is very suitable to that of Eliphaz (Job v. 2) "wrath slayeth the foolish," or wrath makes him melt away, it melts his grease with chafing, as we say of a man furiously vexed. Hence that deplorable condition of the damned, who are cast out of the presence of God for ever, is described by "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth"; which imports not only pain, but extreme vexing at, or in themselves. These finally impenitent ones shall be slain for ever with their own wrath, as well as with the wrath of God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10.—"*The wicked shall see it.*" The Psalm which speaks of the blessedness of the saints also bears solemn testimony to the doom of the wicked. Cowper sings as if this verse was before his eyes.

> . . . The same word, that like the polished share
> Ploughs up the roots of a believer's care,
> Kills, too, the flow'ry weeds where'er they grow,
> That bind the sinner's Bacchanalian brow.
> Oh that unwelcome voice of heavenly love,
> Sad messenger of mercy from above,
> How does it grate upon his thankless ear,
> Crippling his pleasures with the cramp of fear;

His will and judgment at continual strife,
That civil war embitters all his life;
In vain he points his pow'rs against the skies,
In vain he closes or averts his eyes;
Truth will intrude.

Verse 10.—"*He shall gnash with his teeth.*" An enraged man snaps his teeth together, as if about to bite the object of his anger. Thus in the book *Rāmyanum*, the giant Rāvanan is described as in his fury gnashing together his "thirty-two teeth!" Of angry men it is frequently said, "Look at the beast, how he gnashes his teeth!" "*Go near that fellow!* not I, indeed! he will only gnash his teeth."—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 10.—"*He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away.*" The effect of envy, which consumes the envious. Thus the poet: "Envy is most hateful, but has some good in it, for it makes the eyes and the heart of the envious to pine away."—*John Le Clerc*, 1657—1736.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"*Praise ye the* LORD." I. Who should be praised? Not man, self, wealth, etc., but God only. II. Who should praise him? All men, but specially his people, the blessed ones described in this Psalm. III. Why should they do it? For all the reasons mentioned in succeeding verses. IV. How should they do it? Chiefly by leading such a life as is here described.

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—I. Fear of the Lord; what it is. II. Its connection with the delight mentioned. III. The qualities in the commandments which excite delight in godfearing minds.

Verse 2.—The real might of the holy seed and their true blessedness.

Verse 3.—The riches of a Christian: content, peace, security, power in prayer, promises, providence, yea, God himself.

Verse 3.—The enduring character of true righteousness. 1. Based on eternal principles. 2. Growing out of an incorruptible seed. 3. Sustained by a faithful God. 4. United to the everliving Christ.

Verse 3.—Connection of the two clauses—How to be wealthy and righteous. Note the following verses, and show how liberality is needful if rich men would be righteous men.

Verse 4 (*whole verse*)—I. The upright have their dark times. II. They shall receive comfort. III. Their own character will secure this.

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—I. The character of the righteous: "upright," "gracious," etc. II. His privilege. 1. Light as well as darkness. 2. More light than darkness. 3. Light in darkness: inward light in the midst of surrounding darkness. Light seen above, when all is dark below. Even darkness itself becomes the harbinger of day.—*G. R.*

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—A Trinity of excellencies found in true Christians, in Christ, and in God: their union forms a perfect character when they are well balanced. Show how they are exemplified in daily life.

Verse 5.—I. A good man is benevolent, but a benevolent man is not always good. II. A good man is prudent, but a prudent man is not always a good man. There must first be goodness and then its fruits. "Make the tree good," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—"*Lending.*" I. It is to be done. II. It is to be done as a favour; borrowing is seeking alms. III. It should be done very discreetly. Add to this a homily on borrowing and repaying.

Verse 6.—I. In this life the Christian is, 1, Steadfast; 2, Calm; 3, Unconquerable: and II. When this life is over his memory is, 1, Beloved; 2, Influential; 3, Perpetual.

Verse 6.—I. The character of the righteous is eternal: "surely," etc. II. His influence upon others is eternal: "shall be had," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—1. "*He shall not be afraid,*" etc.: peaceful. 2. "*His heart is fixed*": restful. 3. "*Trusting in the Lord*": trustful; the cause of the former.

Verse 7.—I. The waves: "evil tidings." II. The steady ship: "he shall not be afraid." III. The anchor: "his heart is fixed, trusting." IV. The anchorage: "in the Lord."

Verse 8.—Heart establishment, the confidence which flows from it, the sight which shall be seen by him who possesses it.

Verse 8.—I. The security of the righteous: "his heart is established." II. His tranquillity: "he shall not be afraid;" and, III. His expectancy: "until," etc. —*G. R.*

Verse 9.—Benevolence: its exercise in almsgiving, its preserving influence upon character, and the honour which it wins.

Verse 10.—I. What the wicked must see, and its effect upon them. II. What they shall never see (their desire), and the result of their disappointment.

PSALM CXIII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*This Psalm is one of pure praise, and contains but little which requires exposition; a warm heart full of admiring adoration of the Most High will best of all comprehend this sacred hymn. Its subject is the greatness and condescending goodness of the God of Israel, as exhibited in lifting up the needy from their low estate. It may fitly be sung by the church during a period of revival after it has long been minished and brought low. With this Psalm begins the Hallel, or Hallelujah of the Jews, which was sung at their solemn feasts: we will therefore call it* THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE HALLEL. *Dr. Edersheim tells us that the Talmud dwells upon the peculiar suitableness of the Hallel to the Passover, "since it not only recorded the goodness of God towards Israel, but especially their deliverance from Egypt, and therefore appropriately opened with 'Praise ye Jehovah, ye servants of Jehovah,'—and no longer servants of Pharaoh." Its allusions to the poor in the dust and the needy upon the dunghill are all in keeping with Israel in Egypt, and so also is the reference to the birth of numerous children where they were least expected.*

DIVISION.—*No division need be made in the exposition of this Psalm, except it be that which is suggested by the always instructive headings supplied by the excellent authors of our common version: an exhortation to praise God, for his excellency,* 1—5; *for his mercy,* 6—9.

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.

3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name *is* to be praised.

4 The LORD *is* high above all nations, *and* his glory above the heavens.

5 Who *is* like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,

6 Who humbleth *himself* to behold *the things that are* in heaven, and in the earth!

7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;

8 That he may set *him* with princes, *even* with the princes of his people.

9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house, *and to be* a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

1. "*Praise ye the* LORD," or Hallelujah, praise to JAH Jehovah. Praise is an essential offering at all the solemn feasts of the people of God. Prayer is the myrrh, and praise is the frankincense, and both of these must be presented unto the Lord. How can we pray for mercy for the future if we do not bless God for his love in the past? The Lord hath wrought all good things for us, let us therefore adore him. All other praise is to be excluded, the entire devotion of the soul must be poured out unto Jehovah only. "*Praise, O ye servants of the* LORD." Ye above all men, for ye are bound to do so by your calling and profession. If God's own servants do not praise him, who will? Ye are a people near unto him, and should be heartiest in your loving gratitude. While they were slaves of Pharaoh, the Israelites uttered groans and sighs by reason of their hard bondage; but now that they had become servants of the Lord, they were to express themselves in songs of joy. His service is perfect freedom, and those who fully enter into it discover in that service a thousand reasons for adoration. They are sure to praise God best who serve him best; indeed, service is praise. "*Praise the name of the Lord*": extol his revealed character, magnify every sacred attribute, exult in all his doings, and reverence the very name

by which he is called. The name of Jehovah is thrice used in this verse, and may by us who understand the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity be regarded as a thinly-veiled allusion to that holy mystery. Let Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all be praised as the one, only, living, and true God. The close following of the words, "Hallelu-jah, Hallelu, Hallelu," must have had a fine effect in the public services. Dr. Edersheim describes the temple service as responsive, and says "Every first line of a Psalm was repeated by the people, while to each of the others they responded by a 'Hallelu-Jah' or 'Praise ye the Lord' thus—

The Levites began: *'Hallelujah'* (Praise ye the Lord).
The people repeated: *'Hallelu Jah.'*
The Levites: 'Praise (*Hallelu*), O ye servants of Jehovah.'
The people responded: *'Hallelu Jah.'*
The Levites: 'Praise (*Hallelu*) the name of Jehovah.'
The people responded: *'Hallelu Jah.'*"

These were not vain repetitions, for the theme is one which we ought to dwell upon; it should be deeply impressed upon the soul, and perseveringly kept prominent in the life.

2. *"Blessed be the name of the* LORD." While praising him aloud, the people were also to *bless* him in the silence of their hearts, wishing glory to his name, success to his cause, and triumph to his truth. By mentioning *the name*, the Psalmist would teach us to bless each of the attributes of the Most High, which are as it were the letters of his name; not quarrelling with his justice or his severity, nor servilely dreading his power, but accepting him as we find him revealed in the inspired word and by his own acts, and loving him and praising him as such. We must not give the Lord a new name nor invent a new nature, for that would be the setting up of a false god. Every time we think of the God of Scripture we should bless him, and his august name should never be pronounced without joyful reverence. *"From this time forth."* If we have never praised him before, let us begin now. As the Passover stood at the beginning of the year it was well to commence the new year with blessing him who wrought deliverance for his people. Every solemn feast had its own happy associations, and might be regarded as a fresh starting-place for adoration. Are there not reasons why the reader should make the present day the opening of a year of praise? When the Lord says, "From this time will I bless you," we ought to reply, "Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth."

"And for evermore": eternally. The Psalmist could not have intended that the divine praise should cease at a future date however remote. "For evermore" in reference to the praise of God must signify endless duration: are we wrong in believing that it bears the same meaning when it refers to gloomier themes? Can our hearts ever cease to praise the name of the Lord? Can we imagine a period in which the praises of Israel shall no more surround the throne of the Divine Majesty? Impossible. For ever, and more than "for ever," if more can be, let him be magnified.

3. *"From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the* LORD'S *name is to be praised."* From early morn till eve the ceaseless hymn should rise unto Jehovah's throne, and from east to west over the whole round earth pure worship should be rendered unto his glory. So ought it to be; and blessed be God, we are not without faith that so it shall be. We trust that ere the world's dread evening comes, the glorious name of the Lord will be proclaimed among all nations, and all people shall call him blessed. At the first proclamation of the gospel the name of the Lord was glorious throughout the whole earth; shall it not be much more so ere the end shall be? At any rate, this is the desire of our souls. Meanwhile, let us endeavour to sanctify every day with praise to God. At early dawn let us emulate the opening flowers and the singing birds,

> "Chanting every day their lauds,
> While the grove their song applauds;
> Wake for shame my sluggish heart,
> Wake and gladly sing thy part."

It is a marvel of mercy that the sun should rise on the rebellious sons of men, and prepare for the undeserving fruitful seasons and days of pleasantness; let us for this prodigy of goodness praise the Lord of all. From hour to hour let us renew the strain, for each moment brings its mercy; and when the sun sinks to his rest, let us not cease our music, but lift up the vesper hymn—

"Father of heaven and earth!
I bless thee for the night,
The soft still night!
The holy pause of care and mirth,
Of sound and light.
Now far in glade and dell,
Flower-cup, and bud, and bell
Have shut around the sleeping woodlark's nest,
The bee's long-murmuring toils are done,
And I, the o'erwearied one,
Bless thee, O God, O Father of the oppressed!
With my last waking thought."

4. *"The LORD is high above all nations."* Though the Gentiles knew him not, yet was Jehovah their ruler: their false gods were no gods, and their kings were puppets in his hands. The Lord is high above all the learning, judgment, and imagination of heathen sages, and far beyond the pomp and might of the monarchs of the nations. Like the great arch of the firmament, the presence of the Lord spans all the lands where dwell the varied tribes of men, for his providence is universal: this may well excite our confidence and praise. *"And his glory above the heavens:"* higher than the loftiest part of creation; the clouds are the dust of his feet, and sun, moon, and stars twinkle far below his throne. Even the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. His glory cannot be set forth by the whole visible universe, nor even by the solemn pomp of angelic armies; it is above all conception and imagination, for he is God—infinite. Let us above all adore him who is above all.

5. *"Who is like unto the LORD our God?"* The challenge will never be answered. None can be compared with him for an instant; Israel's God is without parallel; our own God in covenant stands alone, and none can be likened unto him. Even those whom he has made like himself in some respects are not like him in godhead, for his divine attributes are many of them incommunicable and inimitable. None of the metaphors and figures by which the Lord is set forth in the Scriptures can give us a complete idea of him: his full resemblance is borne by nothing in earth or in heaven. Only in Jesus is the Godhead seen, but he unhesitatingly declared "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." *"Who dwelleth on high."* In the height of his abode none can be like him. His throne, his whole character, his person, his being, everything about him, is lofty, and infinitely majestic, so that none can be likened unto him. His serene mind abides in the most elevated condition, he is never dishonoured, nor does he stoop from the pure holiness and absolute perfection of his character. His saints are said to dwell on high, and in this they are the reflection of his glory; but as for himself, the height of his dwelling-place surpasses thought, and he rises far above the most exalted of his glorified people.

"Eternal Power! whose high abode
Becomes the grandeur of a God:
Infinite lengths beyond the bounds
Where stars revolve their little rounds.

"The lowest step around thy seat
Rises too high for Gabriel's feet;
In vain the tall archangel tries
To reach thine height with wond'ring eyes.

"Lord, what shall earth and ashes do?
We would adore our Maker too;
From sin and dust to thee we cry,
The Great, the Holy, and the High!"

6. *"Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!"* He dwells so far on high that even to observe heavenly things he must humble himself. He must stoop to view the skies, and bow to see what angels do. What, then, must be his condescension, seeing that he observes the humblest of his servants upon earth, and makes them sing for joy like Mary when she said, "Thou hast regarded the low estate of thine handmaiden." How wonderful are those words of Isaiah, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the

contrite ones." Heathen philosophers could not believe that the great God was observant of the small events of human history; they pictured him as abiding in serene indifference to all the wants and woes of his creatures. "Our Rock is not as their rock"; we have a God who is high above all gods, and yet who is our Father, knowing what we have need of before we ask him; our Shepherd, who supplies our needs; our Guardian, who counts the hairs of our heads; our tender and considerate Friend, who sympathizes in all our griefs. Truly the name of our condescending God should be praised wherever it is known.

7. *"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust."* This is an instance of his gracious stoop of love: he frequently lifts the lowest of mankind out of their poverty and degradation, and places them in positions of power and honour. His good Spirit is continually visiting the down-trodden, giving beauty for ashes to those who are cast down, and elevating the hearts of his mourners till they shout for joy. These upliftings of grace are here ascribed directly to the divine hand, and truly those who have experienced them will not doubt the fact that it is the Lord alone who brings his people up from the dust of sorrow and death. When no hand but his can help he interposes, and the work is done. It is worth while to be cast down to be so divinely raised from the dust. *"And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill,"* whereon they lay like worthless refuse, cast off and cast out, left as they thought to rot into destruction and to be everlastingly forgotten. How great a stoop from the height of his throne to a dunghill! How wonderful that power which occupies itself in lifting up beggars, all befouled with the filthiness in which they lay! For he lifts them *out of* the dunghill, not disdaining to search them out from amidst the base things of the earth that he may by their means bring to nought the great ones, and pour contempt upon all human glorying. What a dunghill was that upon which we lay by nature! What a mass of corruption is our original estate! What a heap of loathsomeness we have accumulated by our sinful lives! What reeking abominations surround us in the society of our fellow men! We could never have risen out of all this by our own efforts, it was a sepulchre in which we saw corruption, and were as dead men. Almighty were the arms which lifted us, which are still lifting us, and will lift us into the perfection of heaven itself. Praise ye the Lord.

8. *"That he may set him with princes."* The Lord does nothing by halves: when he raises men from the dust he is not content till he places them among the peers of his kingdom. We are made kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever. Instead of poverty, he gives us the wealth of princes; and instead of dishonour, he gives us a more exalted rank than that of the great ones of the earth. *"Even with the princes of his people."* All his people are princes, and so the text teaches us that God places needy souls whom he favours among the princes of princes. He often enables those who have been most despairing to rise to the greatest heights of spirituality and gracious attainment, for those who once were last shall be first. Paul, though less than the least of all saints was, nevertheless, made to be not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles; and in our own times, Bunyan, the blaspheming tinker, was raised into another John, whose dream almost rivals the visions of the Apocalypse.

> "Wonders of grace to God belong,
> Repeat his mercies in your song."

Such verses as these should give great encouragement to those who are lowest in their own esteem. The Lord poureth contempt upon princes; but as for those who are in the dust and on the dunghill, he looks upon them with compassion, acts towards them in grace, and in their case displays the riches of his glory by Christ Jesus. Those who have experienced such amazing favour should sing continual hallelujahs to the God of their salvation.

9. *"He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children."* The strong desire of the easterns to have children caused the birth of offspring to be hailed as the choicest of favours, while barrenness was regarded as a curse; hence this verse is placed last as if to crown the whole, and to serve as a climax to the story of God's mercy. The glorious Lord displays his condescending grace in regarding those who are despised on account of their barrenness, whether it be of body or of soul. Sarah, Rachel, the wife of Manoah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and others were all instances of the miraculous power of God in literally fulfilling the statement of the Psalmist. Women were not supposed to have a house till they had children; but in certain cases where childless women pined in secret the Lord visited them in

mercy, and made them not only to have a house, but to keep it. The Gentile church is a spiritual example upon a large scale of the gift of fruitfulness after long years of hopeless barrenness; and the Jewish church in the latter days will be another amazing display of the same quickening power: long forsaken for her spiritual adultery, Israel shall be forgiven, and restored, and joyously shall she keep that house which now is left unto her desolate. Nor is this all, each believer in the Lord Jesus must at times have mourned his lamentable barrenness; he has appeared to be a dry tree yielding no fruit to the Lord, and yet when visited by the Holy Ghost, he has found himself suddenly to be like Aaron's rod, which budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds. Or ever we have been aware, our barren heart has kept house, and entertained the Saviour, our graces have been multiplied as if many children had come to us at a single birth, and we have exceedingly rejoiced before the Lord. Then have we marvelled greatly at the Lord who dwelleth on high, that he has deigned to visit such poor worthless things. Like Mary, we have lifted up our Magnificat, and like Hannah, we have said "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God."

"Praise ye the LORD." The music concludes upon its key-note. The Psalm is a circle, ending where it began, praising the Lord from its first syllable to its last. May our life-psalm partake of the same character, and never know a break or a conclusion. In an endless circle let us bless the Lord, whose mercies never cease. Let us praise him in youth, and all along our years of strength; and when we bow in the ripeness of abundant age, let us still praise the Lord, who doth not cast off his old servants. Let us not only praise God ourselves, but exhort others to do it; and if we meet with any of the needy who have been enriched, and with the barren who have been made fruitful, let us join with them in extolling the name of him whose mercy endureth for ever. Having been ourselves lifted from spiritual beggary and barrenness, let us never forget our former estate or the grace which has visited us, but world without end let us praise the Lord. Hallelujah.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—With this Psalm begins the *Hallel*, which is recited at the three great feasts, at the feast of the Dedication (*Chanucca*) and at the new moons, and not on New Year's day and the day of Atonement, because a cheerful song of praise does not harmonise with the mournful solemnity of these days. And they are recited only in fragments during the last days of the Passover, for "my creatures, saith the Holy One, blessed be He, were drowned in the sea, and ought ye to break out into songs of rejoicing?" In the family celebration of the Passover night it is divided into two parts, the one half, Ps. cxiii. cxiv, being sung before the repast, before the emptying of the second festal cup, and the other half, Ps. cxv.—cxviii., after the repast, after the filling of the fourth cup, to which the ὑμνήσαντες (Matt. xxvi. 30, Mark xiv. 26), or singing a hymn, after the institution of the Lord's Supper, which was connected with the fourth festal cup, may refer. Paulus Burgensis styles Ps. cxiii.—cxviii. *Alleluja Judæorum magnum.* (The great Alleluiah of the Jews). This designation is also frequently found elsewhere. But according to the prevailing custom, Ps. cxiii.—cxviii., and more particularly Ps. cxv.—cxviii., are called only *Hallel* and Ps. cxxxvi., with its "for his mercy endureth for ever" repeated twenty-six times, bears the name of *"The Great Hallel"* (הַלֵּל הַגָּדוֹל).—*Frank Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—The Jews have handed down the tradition, that this Psalm, and those that follow on to the cxviiith, were all sung at the Passover; and they are denominated *"The Great Hallel."* This tradition shows, at all events, that the ancient Jews perceived in these six Psalms some link of close connection. They all sing of God the Redeemer, in some aspect of his redeeming character; and this being so, while they suited the paschal feast, we can see how appropriate they would be in the lips of the Redeemer, in his Upper Room. Thus—

In Psalm cxiii., he sang praise to him who redeems from the lowest depth.

In Psalm cxiv., he sang praise to him who once redeemed Israel, and shall redeem Israel again.

In Psalm cxv., he uttered a song—over earth's fallen idols—to him who blesses Israel and the world.

In Psalm cxvi., he sang his resurrection-song of thanksgiving by anticipation.

In Psalm cxvii., he led the song of praise for the great congregation.

In Psalm cxviii. (just before leaving the Upper Room to go to Gethsemane), he poured forth the story of his suffering, conflict, triumph and glorification.—*A. A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—An attentive reader of the Book of Psalms will observe, that almost every one of them has a view to Christianity. Many, if not most of the Psalms, were without doubt occasioned originally by accidents of the life that befell their royal author; they were therefore at the same time both descriptive of the situation and life, the actions and sufferings, of King David, and predictive also of our Saviour, who was all along represented by King David, from whose loins he was descended according to the flesh. But *this* Psalm appears to be *wholly* written with a view to Christianity. It begins with an exhortation to all true servants and zealous worshippers of God, to *"praise his name,"* at all times, and in all places; *"from this time forth and for evermore,"* and *"from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof."* And the ground of this praise and adoration is set forth in the following verses to be,—first, the glorious majesty of his Divine nature; and next, the singular goodness of it as displayed to us in his works of providence, particularly by exalting those who are abased, and his making the barren to become fruitful. His lifting the poor out of the mire, and making the barren woman to become fruitful, may, at first sight, seem an odd mixture of ideas. But a right notion of the prophetic language will solve the difficulty; and teach us, that both the expressions are in fact very nearly related, and signify much the same thing. For by the *"poor"* are here meant those who are destitute of all heavenly knowledge (the only true and real riches) and who are sunk in the mire and filth of sin. So, again, his making *"the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children,"* is a prophetic metaphor, or allusion to the fruitfulness of the Church in bringing forth sons or professors of the true religion. My interpretation of both these expressions is warrantable from so many parallel passages of Scripture. I shall only observe that here the profession of the Christian faith throughout the whole earth is foretold; as also the particular direction or point of the compass, toward which Christianity should by the course of God's providence be steered and directed, *viz.*, from East to West, or *"from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same."*—*James Bate*, 1703—1775.

Verse 1.—*"Praise ye the* LORD." *"Praise."* The הללו is repeated. This repetition is not without significance. It is for the purpose of waking us up out of our torpor. We are all too dull and slow in considering and praising the blessings of God. There is, therefore, necessity for these stimuli. Then this repetition signifies assiduity and perseverance in sounding forth the praises of God. It is not sufficient once and again to praise God, but his praises ought to be always sung in the Church.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 1.—*"Praise ye the* LORD." This praising God rests not in the mere speculation or idle contemplation of the Divine excellence, floating only in the brain, or gliding upon the tongue, but in such quick and lively apprehensions of them as to sink down into the heart, and there beget affections suitable to them; for it will make us love him for his goodness, respect him for his greatness, fear him for his justice, dread him for his power, adore him for his wisdom, and for all his attributes make us live in constant awe and obedience to him. This is to praise God, without which all other courting and complimenting of him is but mere flattery and hypocrisy. . . . God Almighty endowed us with higher and nobler faculties than other creatures, for this end, that we should set forth his praise; for though other things were made to administer the matter and occasion, yet man alone was designed and qualified to exercise the act of glorifying God. . . . In short, God Almighty hath so closely twisted his own glory and our happiness together, that at the same time we advance the one we promote the other.—*Matthew Hole*, 1730.

Verse 1.—*"Praise, O ye servants of the* LORD." From the exhortation to praise God, and the declaration of his deserving to be praised; learn, that as it is all men's duty to praise the Lord, so in special it is the duty of his ministers, and officers of his house. First, because their office doth call for the discharge of it publicly. Next, because as they should be best acquainted with the reasons of his praise, so

also should they be the fittest instruments to declare it. And lastly, because the ungodly are deaf unto the exhortation, and dumb in the obedience of it; therefore when he hath said, "*Praise ye the Lord,*" he sub-joineth, "*Praise, O ye servants of the Lord.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*Ye servants of the* LORD."—All men owe this duty to God, as being the workmanship of his hands; Christians above other men, as being the sheep of his pasture; preachers of the word above other Christians, as being pastors of his sheep, and so consequently patterns in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in pureness. 1 Tim. iv. 12.—*John Boys.*

Verses 1—3,

Hallelujah, praise the Lord
Praise, ye servants, praise his name!
Be Jehovah's praise ador'd,
Now and evermore the same!
Where the orient sun-beams gleam,
Where they sink in ocean's stream,
Through the circuit of his rays
Be your theme Jehovah's praise.

Richard Mant.

Verse 2.—"*Blessed be the name of the* LORD." Let then, O man, thy labouring soul strive to conceive (for 'tis impossible to express) what an immense debt of gratitude thou owest to him, who, by his creating goodness called thee out of nothing to make thee a partaker of reason, and even a sharer of immortality with himself; who, by his preserving goodness, designs to conduct thee safe through the various stages of thy eternal existence; and who, by his redeeming goodness, hath prepared for thee a happiness too big for the comprehension of a human understanding. Canst thou receive such endearments of love to thee and all mankind with insensibility and coldness? . . . In the whole compass of language what word is expressive enough to paint the black ingratitude of that man, who is unaffected by, and entirely regardless of, the goodness of God his Creator, and the mercies of Christ?—*Jeremiah Seed,* 1747.

Verse 2.—"*Blessed be the name of the* LORD," etc. No doubt the disciples that sat at that paschal table, would repeat with mingled feelings of thanksgiving and sadness that ascription of praise. "*Blessed be the name of the* LORD *from this time forth and for evermore.*" But what Israelite, in all the paschal chambers at Jerusalem on that night, as he sang the Hallel or hymn, or which of the disciples at the sorrowing board of Jesus, could have understood or entered into the full meaning of the expression, "*from this time forth?*" From what time? I think St. John gives us a clue to the very hour and moment of which the Psalmist, perhaps unconsciously, spake. He tells us, that when the traitor Judas had received the sop, he immediately went out; and that when he was gone out to clench as it were and ratify his treacherous purpose, Jesus said, "*Now* is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." From that time forth, when by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, the Son of man was about to be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and crucified and slain, as Jesus looked at those around him, as sorrow had indeed filled their hearts, and as with all-seeing, prescient eye he looked onwards and beheld all those that should hereafter believe on him through their word, with what significance and emphasis of meaning may we imagine the blessed Jesus on that night of anguish to have uttered these words of the hymn, "*Blessed be the name of the* LORD *from this time forth and for evermore*"! "A few more hours and the covenant will be sealed in my own blood; the compact ratified, when I hang upon the cross." And with what calm and confident assurance of triumph does he look upon that cross of shame; with what overflowing love does he point to it and say, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me"! It is the very same here in this Paschal Psalm; and how must the Saviour's heart have rejoiced even in the contemplation of those sufferings that awaited him, as he uttered this prediction, "*From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the* LORD'S *name is to be praised*"! "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die:" and thus from that hour to the present the Lord hath added daily to the church those whom in every age and in every clime he hath chosen unto salvation, till, in his own appointed fulness of time, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, all nations shall do him service, and the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 2.—"*From this time forth and for evermore.*" The servants of the Lord are to sing his praises in this life to the world's end; and in the next life, world without end.—*John Boys.*

Verse 3.—"*From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same.*" That is everywhere, from east to west. These western parts of the world are particularly prophesied of to enjoy the worship of God after the Jews which were in the east; and these islands of ours that lie in the sea, into which the sun is said to go down, which is an expression of the old Greek poets; and the prophet here useth such a word in the Hebrew, where the west is called, according to the vulgar conceit, the sunset, or the sun's going down, or going in.—*Samuel Torshell*, 1641.

Verses 4, 5.—"*The* LORD *is high.*" . . . "*The* LORD *our God dwelleth on high.*" But how *high* is he? *Answer* I. So high, that all creatures bow before him and do homage to him according to their several aptitudes and abilities. John brings them all in, attributing to him the crown of glory, putting it from themselves, but setting it upon his head, as a royalty due only to him. (Rev. v. 13). 1. Some by way of *subjection*, stooping to him: angels and saints worship him, acknowledging his highness, by denying their own, but setting up his will as their supreme law and excellency. 2. Others acknowledge his eminency by their *consternation* upon the least shining forth of his glory; when he discovers but the emblems of his greatness, devils tremble, men quake, James ii. 19; Isai. xxxiii. 14. Thirdly, even inanimate creatures, by *compliance* with, and ready subjection to, the impressions of his power, Hab. iii. 9—11; Isai. xlviii. 13; Dan. iv. 35. . . . II. He is so high that he surmounts all created capacity to comprehend him, Job. xi. 7—9. So that indeed, in David's phrase, his greatness is "*unsearchable*," Ps. cxlv. 3. In a word, he is so high, 1. That no bodily eye hath ever, or can possibly see him. 2. Neither can the eye of the understanding perfectly reach him. He dwells in inaccessible light that no mortal eye can attain to.—*Condensed from a sermon by Thomas Hodges, entitled, "A Glimpse of God's Glory,"* 1642.

Verse 5.—"*Who is like unto the* LORD *our God?*" It is the nature of love, that the one whom we love we prefer to all others, and we ask, *Who is like my beloved?* The world has not his like. Thus love thinks ever of one, who in many things is inferior to many others; for in human affairs the judgment of love is blind. But those who love the Lord their God, though they should glow with more ardent love for him, and should ask, Who is as the Lord our God? in this matter would not be mistaken, but would think altogether most correctly. For there is no being, either in heaven or in earth, who can be in any way likened unto the Lord God. Even love itself cannot conceive, think, speak concerning God whom we love as he really is.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 5.—"*Who is like unto the Lord our God,*" etc. Among the gods of the nations as Kimchi; or among the angels of heaven, or among any of the mighty monarchs on earth; there is none like him for the perfections of his nature, for his wisdom, power, truth, and faithfulness; for his holiness, justice, goodness, grace, and mercy. Who is eternal, unchangeable, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent? Nor for the works of his hands, his works of creation, providence, and grace; none ever did the like. What makes this reflection the more delightful to truly good men is, that this God is their God; and all this is true of our Immanuel, God with us, who is God over all, and the only Saviour and Redeemer; and there is none in heaven and earth like him, or to be desired beside him.—*John Gill.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord our God who dwelleth on high.*" God is on high in respect of place or dwelling. It is true he is in the aërial and starry heaven by his essence and power; but the heaven of the blessed is his throne: not as if he were so confined to that place as to be excluded from others, for "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him"; but in respect of manifestation he is said to be there, because in that place he chiefly manifests his glory and goodness. In respect of his essence he is *high* indeed, inexpressibly high in excellency above all beings, not only in Abraham's phrase, "*The High God,*" but in David's, "*The Lord most High.*" Alas! what are all created beings in respect of him, with all their excellences, but nothing and vanity? . . . For these excellences are divers things in the creatures, but one in God; they are accidents in the creatures, but essence in God; they are in the creature with some alloy or other, they are like the moon when they shine brightest,

yet are spots of imperfection to be found in them. In respect to measure, he is infinitely above them all. Alas, they possess some small drops in respect to the fountain, some poor glimmering rays in respect to this glorious sun; in a word, he is an infinite ocean of perfection, without either brink or bottom.—*Thomas Hodges*, in a *Sermon preached before the House of Commons*, 1642.

Verse 5.—God is said not only to be on high, but to "*dwell*" on high; this intimates *calm and composed operation*, and it is proper for us to take this view of the character of God's administration. You recollect that in all ages unbelief has been in some respect rendered plausible by the delays of God in the accomplishment of his designs. So, in St. Peter's time, it would seem that because the apostles and preachers of Christianity had dwelt much on Christ's coming to judgment, they cried out, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?" What is the apostle's answer to this? His first answer, I grant, is, that all things have not continued as they were from the creation, for there was a flood of waters, and those who said, Where is the promise of his coming? in the days of Noah were at last answered by the bursting earth and the breaking heavens. . . . That was his first answer; but his second answer contains the principle that, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The Being who is from everlasting to everlasting is under no necessity to hurry his plans; therefore he hath fixed the times and the seasons—they are all with him, and *he dwelleth on high.—Richard Watson*, 1831.

Verses 5, 6.—The philosophy of the world, even in the present day, has its elevated and magnificent views of the Divine Being; yet it would seem uniform, whether among the sages of the heathen world or among the philosophers of the present day, that the loftier their views are even of the Divine nature, the more they tend to distrust and unbelief; and that, just in proportion as they have thought nobly of God, so the impression has deepened—that, with respect to individuals at least, they were not the subjects of his immediate care. The doctrine of a particular providence, and the doctrine of direct divine influence upon the heart of man, have by them always been considered absurd and fanatical. Now, when I turn to the sages of inspiration—to the holy men of old, who thought and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, I find quite a different result—that in proportion to the views they had of the glory of God, so was their confidence and hope.

That two such opposite results should spring from the same order of thoughts with respect to the Divine Being, is a singular fact, which demands and deserves some enquiry. How is it that, among the men of the world, wise as they are, in proportion as they have had high and exalted views of God, those lofty ideas tend to distrust; while just in proportion as we are enlightened on the very same subjects by the Scriptures of truth, rightly and spiritually understood, that we as well as the authors of these sacred books, in proportion as we see the glory and the grandeur of God, are excited to a filial and comforting trust? There are two propositions in the text which human reason could never unite. "*Who dwelleth on high*"—but yet he "*humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth.*" And the reason why the mere unassisted human faculties could never unite these two ideas is, that they could not, in the nature of things, be united, but by a third discovery, which must have come from God himself, and show the two in perfect harmony—the discovery that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—*Richard Watson*, 1831.

Verses 5, 6.—The structure of this passage in the original is singular, and is thus stated and commented on by Bp. Lowth, in his 19th Prælection:—

Who is like Jehovah our God?
Who dwelleth on high.
Who looketh below.
In heaven and in earth.

The latter member is to be divided, and assigned in its two divisions to the two former members; so that the sense may be, "who dwelleth on high in heaven, and looketh below on the things which are in earth."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 6.—"*Who humbleth himself.*" Whatever may be affirmed of God, may be affirmed of him infinitely, and whatever he is, he is infinitely. So the Psalmist, in this place, does not speak of God as humble, but as infinitely and superlatively so,

humble beyond all conception and comparison ; he challenges the whole universe of created nature, from the highest immortal spirit in heaven to the lowest mortal on earth, to show a being endued with so much humility, as the adorable majesty of the great God of Heaven and earth. . . . If some instances of the Divine humility surprise, the following may amaze us :—To see the great King of heaven stooping from his height, and condescending himself to offer terms of reconciliation to his rebellious creatures ! To see offended majesty courting the offenders to accept of pardon ! To see God persuading, entreating and beseeching men to return to him with such earnestness and importunity, as if his very life were bound up in them, and his own happiness depended upon theirs ! To see the adorable Spirit of God, with infinite long-suffering and gentleness, submitting to the contempt and insults of such miserable, despicable wretches as sinful mortals are ! Is not this amazing ?—*Valentine Nalson*, 1641—1724.

Verse 6.—"*Who humbleth himself to behold.*"—If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost ! Here indeed he humbled himself.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—"*He raiseth up the poor,*" etc. There is no doubt a reference in this to the respect which God pays even to the lower ranks of the race, seeing that " he raiseth up the poor, and lifteth up the needy." I have no doubt there is reference throughout the whole of this Psalm to evangelical times ; that, in this respect, it is a prophetic psalm, including a reference especially to Christianity, as it may be called by eminence and distinction the religion of the poor—its greatest glory. For when John the Baptist sent two disciples to Jesus, to know whether he was the Messiah or not, the answer of our Lord was, " The blind see, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised "—all extraordinary events—miracles, in short, which proved his divine commission. And he summed up the whole by saying, " The poor have the gospel preached unto them ; " as great a miracle as any—as great a distinction as any. There never was a religion but the true religion, in all its various dispensations, that had equal respect to all classes of society. In all others there was a privileged class, but here there is none. Perhaps one of the most interesting views of Christianity we can take is its wonderful adaptation to the character and circumstances of the poor. What an opportunity does it furnish for the manifestation of the bright and mild graces of the Holy Spirit ! What sources of comfort does it open to mollify the troubles of life ! and how often, in choosing the poor, rich in faith, to make them heirs of the kingdom, does God exalt the poor out of the dust, and the needy from the dunghill !—*Richard Watson.*

Verse 7.—"*He raiseth up the poor,*" etc. Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep ; the apostles from fishing are sent to be " fishers of men." The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and the foolish ones of the world pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the " wise and mighty " (1 Cor. i. 27, 28,) that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—"*He raiseth up the poor.*" The highest honour, which was ever done to any mere creature, was done out of regard to the lowest humility ; the Son of God had such regard to the lowliness of the blessed virgin, that he did her the honour to choose her for the mother of his holy humanity. It is an observation of S. Chrysostom, that that very hand which the humble John Baptist thought not worthy to unloose the shoe on our blessed Saviour's feet, that hand our Lord thought worthy to baptize his sacred head.—*Valentine Nalson.*

Verse 7.—"*And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill* " ; which denotes a mean condition ; so one born in a mean place, and brought up in a mean manner, is sometimes represented as taken out of a dunghill ; and also it is expressive of a filthy one ; men by sin are not only brought into a low estate, but into a loathsome one, and are justly abominable in the sight of God, and yet he lifts them out of it : the phrases of *raising up* and *lifting out* suppose them to be fallen, as men are in Adam, fallen from a state of honour and glory, in and out of which they cannot deliver themselves ; it is Christ's work, and his only, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to help or lift up his servant Israel. Isa. xlix. 6 ; Luke i. 54 ; see 1 Sam. ii. 8.—*John Gill.*

Verse 7.—*"The poor . . the needy."* Rejoice, then, in the favourable notice God taketh of you. The highest and greatest of beings vouchsafes to regard *you*. Though you are poor and mean, and men overlook you; though your brethren hate you, and your friends go far from you, yet hear! God looketh down from his majestic throne upon you. Amidst the infinite variety of his works, you are not overlooked. Amidst the nobler services of ten thousand times ten thousand saints and angels, not *one* of your fervent prayers or humble groans escapes his ear.—*Job Orton*, 1717—1783.

Verse 7.—Almighty God cannot look above himself, as having no superiors; nor about himself, as having no equals; he beholds such as are below him; and therefore the lower a man is, the nearer unto God; he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble, 1 Pet. v. 5. He pulls down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth them of low degree. The Most High hath special eye to such as are most humble; for, as it followeth in our text, *"he taketh up the simple out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the dirt."—John Boys.*

Verse 7.—*"Dunghill."* An emblem of the deepest poverty and desertion; for in Syria and Palestine the man who is shut out from society lies upon the *mezbele* (the dunghill or heap of ashes), by day calling upon the passers-by for alms, and by night hiding himself in the ashes that have been warmed by the sun.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 7.—*"Dunghill."* The passages of the Bible, in which the word occurs, all seem to refer, as Parkhurst remarks, to the stocks of cow-dung and other offal stuff, which the easterns for want of wood were obliged to lay up for fuel.—*Richard Mant.*

Verses 7, 8.—These verses are taken almost word for word from the prayer of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 8. The transition to the *"people"* is all the more natural, as Hannah, considering herself at the conclusion as the type of the church, with which every individual among the Israelites felt himself much more closely entwined than can easily be the case among ourselves, draws out of the salvation imparted to herself joyful prospects for the future.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 8.—*"Even with the princes of his people."* It is the honour that cometh from God that alone exalts. Whatever account the world may take of a poor man, he may be more precious in the eyes of God than the highest among men. The humble poor are here ranked, not with the princes of the earth, but with *"the princes of his people."* The distinctions in this world, even among those who serve the same God, are as nothing in his sight when contrasted with that honour which is grounded on the free grace of God to his own. But here, also, the fulness of this statement will only be seen in the world to come, when all the faithful will be owned as kings and priests unto God.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 9.—*"He maketh the barren woman to keep house,"* etc. Should a married woman, who has long been considered sterile, become a mother, her joy, and that of her husband and friends, will be most extravagant. "They called her *Malady*," that is, "Barren," "but she has given us good fruit." "My neighbours pointed at me, and said, *Malady*: but what will they say now?" A man who on any occasion manifests great delight, is represented to be like the barren woman who has at length borne a child. Anything which is exceedingly valuable is thus described: "This is as precious as the son of the barren woman"; that is, of her who had long been reputed barren.—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 9.—*"He maketh the barren woman to keep house,"* etc. As baseness in men, so barrenness in women is accounted a great unhappiness. But as God lifteth up the beggar out of the mire, to set him with princes, even so doth he *"make the barren woman a joyful mother of children."* He governs all things in the private family, as well as in the public weal. Children and the fruit of the womb are a gift and heritage that cometh of the Lord, Ps. cxxvii. 3; and therefore the Papists in praying to S. Anne for children, and the Gentiles in calling upon Diana, Juno, Latona, are both in error. It is God only who makes the barren women *"a mother,"* and that *"a joyful mother."* Every mother is joyful at the first, according to that of Christ, "a woman when she travaileth hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."

Divines apply this also mystically to Christ, affirming that he made the church of the Gentiles, heretofore *"barren," "a joyful mother of children,"* according to that of the prophet: "Rejoice, *O barren*, that didst not bear; break forth into joy and

rejoice, thou that didst not travail with child: for the desolate hath more children than the married wife, saith the Lord," Isai. liv. 1. Or it may be construed of true Christians: all of us are by nature barren of goodness, conceived and born in sin not able to think a good thought (2 Cor. iii. 5); but the Father of lights and mercies makes us fruitful and abundant always in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. xv. 58); he giveth us grace to be fathers and mothers of many good deeds, which are our children and best heirs, eternizing our name for ever.—*John Boys.*

Verse 9.—"*The barren woman*" is the poor, forsaken, distressed Christian church, whom the false church oppresses, defies, and persecutes, and regards as useless, miserable, barren, because she herself is greater and more populous, the greatest part of the world.—*Joshua Arndt*, 1626—1685.

Verse 9.—"*Praise ye the* LORD." We may look abroad, and see abundant occasion for praising God,—in his condescension to human affairs,—in his lifting up the poor from the humblest condition,—in his exalting those of lowly rank to places of honour, trust, wealth, and power; but, after all, if we wish to find occasions of praise that will most tenderly affect the heart, and be connected with the warmest affections of the soul, they will be most likely to be found in the domestic circle—in the mutual love—the common joy—the tender feelings—which bind together the members of a family.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—"*Praise ye the* LORD." The very hearing of the comfortable changes which the Lord can make and doth make the afflicted to find, is a matter of refreshment to all, and of praise to God from all.—*David Dickson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm contains three parts:—I. An exhortation to God's servants to praise him. II. A form set down how and where to praise him, ver. 2, 3. III. The reasons to persuade us to it. 1. By his infinite power, ver. 4, 5. 2. His providence, as displayed in heaven and earth, ver. 6.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—The repetitions show, 1. The importance of praise. 2. Our many obligations to render it. 3. Our backwardness in the duty. 4. The heartiness and frequency with which it should be rendered. 5. The need of calling upon others to join with us.

Verse 1.—I. To whom praise is due: "the Lord." II. From whom it is due: "ye servants of the Lord." III. For what is it due: his "name." 1. For all names descriptive of what he is in himself. 2. For all names descriptive of what he is to his servants.—*G. R.*

Verses 1, 9.—"Praise ye the Lord." I. Begin and end life with it, and do the same with holy service, patient suffering, and everything else. II. Fill up the interval with praise. Run over the intervening verses.

Verse 2.—I. The work of heaven begun on earth: to praise the name of the Lord. II. The work of earth continued in heaven: "and for evermore." If the praise begun on earth be continued in heaven, we must be in heaven to continue the praise.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—1. It is time to begin to praise: "from this time." Is there not special reason, from long arrears, from present duty, etc.? 2. There is no time for leaving off praise: "and for evermore." None supposable or excusable.

Verse 3.—God is to be praised. 1. All the day. 2. All the world over. 3. Publicly in the light. 4. Amidst daily duties. 5. Always—because it is always day somewhere.

Verse 3.—1. Canonical hours abolished. 2. Holy places abolished—since we cannot be always in them. 3. Every time and place consecrated.

Verses 5, 6.—The greatness of God as viewed from below, ver. 5. II. The condescension of God as viewed from above, ver. 6. 1. In creation. 2. In the Incarnation. 3. In redemption.—*G. R.*

Verses 5, 6.—The unparalleled condescension of God. 1. None are so great, and therefore able to stoop so low. 2. None are so good, and therefore so willing to stoop. 3. None are so wise, and therefore so able to "behold" or know the

needs of little things. 4. None are infinite, and therefore able to enter into minutiæ and sympathize with the smallest grief: Infinity is seen in the minute as truly as in the immense.

Verse 6.—I. The same God rules in heaven and earth. II. Both spheres are dependent for happiness upon his beholding them. III. They both enjoy his consideration. IV.—All things done in them are equally under his inspection.

Verse 7.—The gospel and its special eye to the poor.

Verses 7, 8.—I. Where men are? In the dust of sorrow and on the dunghill of sin. II. Who interferes to help them? He who dwelleth on high. III. What does he effect for them? "Raiseth, lifteth, setteth among princes, among princes of his people."

Verse 8.—Elevation to the peerage of heaven; or, the Royal Family increased.

Verse 9.—For mothers' meetings. "A joyful mother of children." I. It is a joy to be a mother. II. It is specially so to have living, healthy, obedient children. III. But best of all to have Christian children. Praise is due to the Lord who gives such blessings.

Verse 9.—I. A household God, or, God in the Household: "He maketh," etc. Have you children? It is of God. Have you lost children? It is of God. Have you been without children? It is of God. II. Household worship, or, the God of the Household: "Praise ye the Lord." 1. In the family. 2. For family mercies.—*G. R.*

PSALM CXIV.

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—*This sublime* SONG OF THE EXODUS *is one and indivisible. True poetry has here reached its climax: no human mind has ever been able to equal, much less to excel, the grandeur of this Psalm. God is spoken of as leading forth his people from Egypt to Canaan, and causing the whole earth to be moved at his coming. Things inanimate are represented as imitating the actions of living creatures when the Lord passes by. They are apostrophised and questioned with marvellous force of language, till one seems to look upon the actual scene. The God of Jacob is exalted as having command over river, sea, and mountain, and causing all nature to pay homage and tribute before his glorious majesty.*

EXPOSITION.

WHEN Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

2 Judah was his sanctuary, *and* Israel his dominion.

3 The sea saw *it*, and fled: Jordan was driven back.

4 The mountains skipped like rams, *and* the little hills like lambs.

5 What *ailed* thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, *that* thou wast driven back?

6 Ye mountains, *that* ye skipped like rams; *and* ye little hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

8 Which turned the rock *into* a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

1. *"When Israel went out of Egypt."* The song begins with a burst, as if the poetic fury could not be restrained, but overleaped all bounds. The soul elevated and filled with a sense of divine glory cannot wait to fashion a preface, but springs at once into the middle of its theme. Israel emphatically came out of Egypt, out of the population among whom they had been scattered, from under the yoke of bondage, and from under the personal grasp of the king who had made the people into national slaves. Israel came out with a high hand and a stretched-out arm, defying all the power of the empire, and making the whole of Egypt to travail with sore anguish, as the chosen nation was as it were born out of its midst. *"The house of Jacob from a people of strange language."* They had gone down into Egypt as a single family—"the house of Jacob"; and, though they had multiplied greatly, they were still so united, and were so fully regarded by God as a single unit, that they are rightly spoken of as the house of Jacob. They were as one man in their willingness to leave Goshen; numerous as they were, not a single individual stayed behind. Unanimity is a pleasing token of the divine presence, and one of its sweetest fruits. One of their inconveniences in Egypt was the difference of languages, which was very great. The Israelites appear to have regarded the Egyptians as stammerers and babblers, since they could not understand them, and they very naturally considered the Egyptians to be barbarians, as they would no doubt often beat them because they did not comprehend their orders. The language of foreign taskmasters is never musical in an exile's ear. How sweet it is to a Christian who has been compelled to hear the filthy conversation of the wicked, when at last he is brought out from their midst to dwell among his own people!

2. *"Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion."* The pronoun "his" comes in where we should have looked for the name of God; but the poet is so full of thought concerning the Lord that he forgets to mention his name, like the spouse in the Song, who begins, "Let *him* kiss me," or Magdalene when she cried, "Tell me where thou hast laid *him*." From the mention of Judah and Israel certain critics have inferred that this Psalm must have been written after the division

of the two kingdoms ; but this is only another instance of the extremely slender basis upon which an hypothesis is often built up. Before the formation of the two kingdoms David had said, "Go, number Israel and Judah," and this was common parlance, for Uriah the Hittite said, "The ark and Israel, and Judah abide in tents" ; so that nothing can be inferred from the use of the two names. No division into two kingdoms can have been intended here, for the poet is speaking of the coming out of Egypt when the people were so united that he has just before called them "the house of Judah." It would be quite as fair to prove from the first verse that the Psalm was written when the people were in union as to prove from the second that its authorship dates from their separation. Judah was the tribe which led the way in the wilderness march, and it was forseen in prophecy to be the royal tribe, hence its poetical mention in this place. The meaning of the passage is that the whole people at the coming out of Egypt were separated unto the Lord to be a peculiar people, a nation of priests whose motto should be, "Holiness unto the Lord." Judah was the Lord's "holy thing," set apart for his special use. The nation was peculiarly Jehovah's dominion, for it was governed by a theocracy in which God alone was King. It was his domain in a sense in which the rest of the world was outside his kingdom. These were the young days of Israel, the time of her espousals, when she went after the Lord into the wilderness, her God leading the way with signs and miracles. The whole people were the shrine of Deity, and their camp was one great temple. What a change there must have been for the godly amongst them from the idolatries and blasphemies of the Egyptians to the holy worship and righteous rule of the great King in Jeshurun. They lived in a world of wonders, where God was seen in the wondrous bread they ate and in the water they drank, as well as in the solemn worship of his holy place. When the Lord is manifestly present in a church, and his gracious rule obediently owned, what a golden age has come, and what honourable privileges his people enjoy! May it be so among us.

3. "*The sea saw it, and fled*" ; or rather, "The sea saw and fled"—it saw God and all his people following his lead, and it was struck with awe and fled away. A bold figure! The Red Sea mirrored the hosts which had come down to its shore, and reflected the cloud which towered high over all, as the symbol of the presence of the Lord : never had such a scene been imagined upon the surface of the Red Sea, or any other sea, before. It could not endure the unusual and astounding sight, and fleeing to the right and to the left, opened a passage for the elect people. A like miracle happened at the end of the great march of Israel, for "*Jordan was driven back.*" This was a swiftly-flowing river, pouring itself down a steep decline, and it was not merely divided, but its current was driven back so that the rapid torrent, contrary to nature, flowed up-hill. This was God's work : the poet does not sing of the suspension of natural laws, or of a singular phenomenon not readily to be explained ; but to him the presence of God with his people is everything, and in his lofty song he tells how the river was driven back because the Lord was there. In this case poetry is nothing but the literal fact, and the fiction lies on the side of the atheistic critics who will suggest any explanation of the miracle rather than admit that the Lord made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all his people. The division of the sea and the drying up of the river are placed together though forty years intervened, because they were the opening and closing scenes of one great event. We may thus unite by faith our new birth and our departure out of the world into the promised inheritance, for the God who led us out of the Egypt of our bondage under sin will also conduct us through the Jordan of death out of our wilderness wanderings in the desert of this tried and changeful life. It is all one and the same deliverance, and the beginning ensures the end.

4. "*The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.*" At the coming of the Lord to Mount Sinai, the hills moved ; either leaping for joy in the presence of their Creator like young lambs ; or, if you will, springing from their places in affright at the terrible majesty of Jehovah, and flying like a flock of sheep when alarmed. Men fear the mountains, but the mountains tremble before the Lord. Sheep and lambs move lightly in the meadows ; but the hills, which we are wont to call eternal, were as readily made to move as the most active creatures. Rams in their strength, and lambs in their play, are not more stirred than were the solid hills when Jehovah marched by. Nothing is immovable but God himself : the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his grace abideth fast for ever and ever. Even thus do mountains of sin and hills of trouble

move when the Lord comes forth to lead his people to their eternal Canaan. Let us never fear, but rather let our faith say unto this mountain, "Be thou removed hence and cast into the sea," and it shall be done.

5. *"What ailed thee, O thou sea?"* Wert thou terribly afraid? Did thy strength fail thee? Did thy very heart dry up? "What ailed thee, O thou sea, *that thou fleddest?*" Thou wert neighbour to the power of Pharaoh, but thou didst never fear his hosts; stormy wind could never prevail against thee so as to divide thee in twain; but when the way of the Lord was in thy great waters thou wast seized with affright, and thou becamest a fugitive from before him. *"Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?"* What ailed thee, O quick descending river? Thy fountains had not dried up, neither had a chasm opened to engulph thee! The near approach of Israel and her God sufficed to make thee retrace thy steps. What aileth all our enemies that they fly when the Lord is on our side? What aileth hell itself that it is utterly routed when Jesus lifts up a standard against it? "Fear took hold upon them there," for fear of HIM the stoutest hearted did quake, and became as dead men.

6. *"Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?"* What ailed ye that ye were thus moved? There is but one reply: the majesty of God made you to leap. A gracious mind will chide human nature for its strange insensibility, when the sea and the river, the mountains and the hills, are all sensitive to the presence of God. Man is endowed with reason and intelligence, and yet he sees unmoved that which the material creation beholds with fear. God has come nearer to us than ever he did to Sinai, or to Jordan, for he has assumed our nature, and yet the mass of mankind are neither driven back from their sins, nor moved in the paths of obedience.

7. *"Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob."* Or "from before the Lord, the Adonai, the Master and King." Very fitly does the Psalm call upon all nature again to feel a holy awe because its Ruler is still in its midst.

> "Quake when Jehovah walks abroad,
> Quake, earth, at sight of Israel's God."

Let the believer feel that God is near, and he will serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Awe is not cast out by faith, but the rather it becomes deeper and more profound. The Lord is most reverenced where he is most loved.

8. *"Which turned the rock into a standing water,"* causing a mere or lake to stand at its foot, making the wilderness a pool: so abundant was the supply of water from the rock that it remained like water in a reservoir. *"The flint into a fountain of waters,"* which flowed freely in streams, following the tribes in their devious marches. Behold what God can do! It seemed impossible that the flinty rock should become a fountain; but he speaks, and it is done. Not only do mountains move, but rocks yield rivers when the God of Israel wills that it should be so.

> "From stone and solid rock he brings
> The spreading lake, the gushing springs."

"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together," for he it is and he alone who doeth such wonders as these. He supplies our temporal needs from sources of the most unlikely kind, and never suffers the stream of his liberality to fail. As for our spiritual necessities they are all met by the water and the blood which gushed of old from the riven rock, Christ Jesus: therefore let us extol the Lord our God.

Our deliverance from under the yoke of sin is strikingly typified in the going up of Israel from Egypt, and so also was the victory of our Lord over the powers of death and hell. The Exodus should therefore be earnestly remembered by Christian hearts. Did not Moses on the mount of transfiguration speak to our Lord of "the exodus" which he should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem; and is it not written of the hosts above that they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb? Do we not ourselves expect another coming of the Lord, when before his face heaven and earth shall flee away and there shall be no more sea? We join then with the singers around the Passover table and make their Hallel ours, for we too have been led out of bondage and guided like a flock through a desert land, wherein the Lord supplies our wants with heavenly manna and water from the Rock of ages. Praise ye the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The cxivth Psalm appears to me to be an admirable ode, and I began to turn it into our own language. As I was describing the journey of Israel from Egypt, and added the Divine Presence amongst them, I perceived a beauty in this Psalm, which was entirely new to me, and which I was going to lose; and that is, that the poet utterly conceals the presence of God in the beginning of it, and rather lets a possessive pronoun go without a substantive, than he will so much as mention anything of divinity there. "Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion" or kingdom. The reason now seems evident, and this conduct necessary; for, if God had appeared before, there could be no wonder why the mountains should leap and the sea retire; therefore, that this convulsion of nature may be brought in with due surprise, his name is not mentioned till afterwards; and then with a very agreeable turn of thought, God is introduced at once in all his majesty. This is what I have attempted to imitate in a translation without paraphrase, and to preserve what I could of the spirit of the sacred author.

When Israel, freed from Pharaoh's hand,
Left the proud tyrant and his land,
The tribes with cheerful homage own
Their King, and Judah was his throne.

Across the deep their journey lay,
The deep divides to make them way;
The streams of Jordan saw, and fled
With backward current to their head.

The mountains shook like frightened sheep,
Like lambs the little hillocks leap;
Not Sinai on her base could stand,
Conscious of sovereign power at hand.

What power could make the deep divide?
Make Jordan backward roll his tide?
Why did ye leap, ye little hills?
And whence the fright that Sinai feels?

Let ev'ry mountain, ev'ry flood,
Retire, and know th' approaching God,
The King of Israel! see him here:
Tremble, thou earth, adore and fear.

He thunders—and all nature mourns;
The rock to standing pools he turns;
Flints spring with fountains at his word,
And fires and seas confess their Lord.

Isaac Watts, in "The Spectator," 1712.

Verse 1.—"*When Israel went out of Egypt.*" Out of the midst of that nation, that is, out of the bowels of the Egyptians, who had, as it were, devoured them; thus the Jew-doctors gloss upon this text.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*Israel went out of Egypt.*" This was an emblem of the Lord's people in effectual vocation, coming out of bondage into liberty, out of darkness into light, out of superstition, and idolatry, and profaneness, to the service of the true God in righteousness and true holiness; and *from a people of strange language* to those that speak the language of Canaan, a pure language, in which they can understand one another when they converse together, either about experience or doctrine; and the manner of their coming out is much the same, by strength of hand, by the power of divine grace, yet willingly and cheerfully, with great riches, the riches of grace, and a title to the riches of glory, and with much spiritual strength; for though weak in themselves, yet they are strong in Christ.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*The house of Jacob.*" The Israelites though they were a great number when they went forth from Egypt, nevertheless formed one house or family; thus the church at the present time dispersed throughout the whole world is called one

house : 1 Tim. iii. 15 ; Heb. iii. 6 ; 1 Pet. ii. 5 : and that because of one faith, one God, one Father, one baptism, Ephes. iv. 5.—*Marloratus.*

Verse 1.—"*A people of strange language.*" When we find in verse 1, as in Psalm lxxxi. 5, Egypt spoken of as a land where the people were of a "*strange tongue,*" it seems likely that the reference is to their being a people who could not *speak of God,* as Israel could ; even as Zeph. iii. 9 tells of the "*pure lip,*" viz. the lip that calls on the name of the Lord.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—"*A people of strange language.*" Mant translates this "*tyrant land,*" and has the following note :—" The Hebrew word here rendered " tyrant," has been supposed to signify " barbarous " ; that is, " using a barbarous or foreign language or pronunciation." But, says Parkhurst, the word seems rather to refer to the " violence " of the Egyptians towards the Israelites, or " the barbarity of their behaviour," which was more to the Psalmist's purpose than " the barbarity of their language " ; even supposing the reality of the latter in the time of Moses. The epithet " barbarous " would leave the same ambiguity as Parkhurst supposes to belong to the text. Bishop Horsley renders " a tyrannical people."

Verse 1.—"*A people of strange language.*" The strange language is evidently an annoyance. Israel could not feel at home in Egypt.—*Justus Olshausen.*

Verse 2.—"*Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.*" These people were God's *sanctification and dominion,* that is, witnesses of his holy majesty in adopting them, and of his mighty power in delivering them : or, his *sanctification,* as having his holy priests to govern them in the points of piety ; and *dominion,* as having godly magistrates ordained from above to rule them in matters of policy : or, his *sanctuary,* both actually, because sanctifying him ; and passively, because sanctified of him. . . . This one verse expounds and exemplifies two prime petitions of the Lord's Prayer. " Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come " : for *Judah* was God's sanctuary, because *hallowing his name ;* and *Israel* his dominion, as desiring his *kingdom to come.* Let every man examine himself by this pattern, whether he be truly the servant of Jesus his Saviour, or the vassal of Satan the destroyer. If any man submit himself willingly to the domineering of the devil, and suffer sin to reign in his mortal members, obeying the lusts thereof, and working all uncleanness even with greediness ; assuredly that man is yet a chapel of Satan, and a slave to sin. On the contrary, whosoever unfeignedly desires that God's kingdom may come, being ever ready to be ruled according to his holy word, acknowledging it a lantern to his feet, and a guide to his paths ; admitting obediently his laws, and submitting himself alway to the same ; what is he, but a citizen of heaven, a subject of God, a saint, a *sanctuary* ?—*John Boys.*

Verse 2.—"*Judah was his sanctuary,*" etc. Reader, do not fail to remark when Israel was brought out of Egypt the Lord set up his tabernacle among them, and manifested his presence to them. And what is it now, when the Lord Jesus brings out his people from the Egypt of the world ? Doth he not fulfil that sweet promise, " Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world " ? Is it not the privilege of his people, to live *to* him, to live *with* him, and to live *upon* him ? Doth he not in every act declare, " I will say, it is my people ; and they shall say, the Lord is my God " ? Matt. xxviii. 20 ; Zech. xiii. 9.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 2.—"*Judah was his sanctuary.*" Meaning not the tribe of Judah only, though they in many things had the pre-eminence ; the kingdom belonged to it, the chief ruler being out of it, especially the Messiah ; its standard was pitched and moved first ; it offered first to the service of the Lord ; and the Jews have a tradition, mentioned by Jarchi and Kimchi, that this tribe with its prince at the head of it, went into the Red Sea first ; the others fearing, but afterwards followed, encouraged by their example. In this place all the tribes are meant, the whole body of the people.—*John Gill.*

Verse 2.—One peculiarity of the second verse requires attention. It twice uses the word "*his,*" without naming any one. There are two theories to account for this circumstance. One is that Psalm cxiv. was always sung in immediate connection with cxiii., in which the name of God occurs no less than six times, so that the continuance of the train of thought made a fresh repetition of it here unnecessary. But this view, to be fully consistent with itself, must assume that the two Psalms are really one, with a merely arbitrary division, which does not, on the face of the matter, seem by any means probable, as the scope of thought in the two is perfectly distinct. The other, which is more satisfactory, regards the omission of the Holy

Name in this part of the Psalm as a practical artifice to heighten the effect of the answer to the sudden apostrophe in verses five and six. There would be nothing marvellous in the agitation of the sea, and river, and mountains in the presence of God, but it may well appear wonderful till that potent cause is revealed, as it is most forcibly in the dignified words of the seventh verse.—*Ewald and Perowne, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 3.—"*The sea saw it*" : to wit this glorious work of God in bringing his people out of Egypt.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 3.—"*The sea saw it.*" Saw there that " Judah " was " God's sanctuary," " and Israel his dominion," and therefore "*fled*" ; for nothing could be more awful. It was this that *drove Jordan back*, and was an invincible dam to his streams ; God was at the head of that people, and therefore they must give way to them, must make room for them, they must retire, contrary to their nature, when God speaks the word.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3.—"*The sea saw it, and fled.*"

The waves on either side
Unloose their close embraces, and divide,
And backwards press, as in some solemn show
The crowding people do,
(Though just before no space was seen,)
To let the admirèd triumph pass between.
The wondering army saw, on either hand,
The no less wondering waves like rocks of crystal stand.
They marched betwixt, and boldly trod
The secret paths of God.

Abraham Cowley, 1618—1667.

Verse 3.—"*Jordan was driven back.*" And now the glorious day was come when, by a stupendous miracle, Jehovah had determined to show how able he was to remove every obstacle in the way of his people, and to subdue every enemy before their face. By his appointment the host, amounting probably to two millions-and-a-half of persons (about the same number as had crossed the Red Sea on foot), had removed to the banks of the river three days before, and now in marching array awaited the signal to cross the stream. At any time the passage of the river by such a multitude, with their women and children, their flocks and herds, and all their baggage, would have presented formidable difficulties ; but now the channel was filled with a deep and impetuous torrent, which overflowed its banks and spread widely on each side, probably extending nearly a mile in width ; while in the very sight of the scene were the Canaanitish hosts, who might be expected to pour out from their gates, and exterminate the invading multitude before they could reach the shore. Yet these difficulties were nothing to Almighty power, and only served to heighten the effect of the stupendous miracle about to be wrought.

By the command of Jehovah, the priests, bearing the ark of the covenant, the sacred symbol of the Divine presence, marched more than half-a-mile in front of the people, who were forbidden to come any nearer to it. Thus it was manifest that Jehovah needed not protection from Israel, but was their guard and guide, since the unarmed priests feared not to separate themselves from the host, and to venture with the ark into the river in the face of their enemies. And thus the army, standing aloof, had a better opportunity of seeing the wondrous results, and of admiring the mighty power of God exerted on their behalf ; for no sooner had the feet of the priests touched the brim of the overflowing river, than the swelling waters receded from them ; and not only the broad lower valley, but even the deep bed of the stream was presently emptied of water, and its pebbly bottom became dry. The waters which had been in the channel speedily ran off, and were lost in the Dead Sea ; whilst those which would naturally have replaced them from above, were miraculuosly suspended, and accumulated in a glassy heap far above the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan. These places are supposed to have been at least forty miles above the Dead Sea, and may possibly have been much more ; so that nearly the whole channel of the Lower Jordan, from a little below the Lake of Tiberias to the Dead Sea, was dry. . . . . What a glorious termination of the long pilgrimage of Israel was this ! and how worthy of the power, wisdom, and goodness of their Divine Protector ! " The passage of this deep and

rapid river," remarks Dr. Hales, "at the most unfavourable season, was more manifestly miraculous, if possible, than that of the Red Sea; because here was no natural agency whatever employed; no mighty wind to sweep a passage, as in the former case; no reflux of the tide, on which minute philosophers might fasten to depreciate the miracle. It seems, therefore, to have been providentially designed to silence cavils respecting the former; and it was done at noon-day, in the face of the sun, and in the presence, we may be sure, of the neighbouring inhabitants, and struck terror into the kings of the Canaanites and Amorites westward of the river."—*Philip Henry Gosse, in "Sacred Streams,"* 1877.

Verse 3.—"*Jordan was driven back.*" The waters know their Maker: that Jordan which flowed with full streams when Christ went into it to be baptized, now gives way when the same God must pass through it in state: then there was use of his water, now of his sand. I hear no more news of any rod to strike the waters; the presence of the ark of the Lord God, Lord of all the world, is sign enough to these waves, which now, as if a sinew were broken, run back to their issues, and dare not so much as wet the feet of the priests that bare it. How subservient are all the creatures to the God that made them! How glorious a God do we serve; whom all the powers of the heavens and elements are willingly subject unto, and gladly take that nature which he pleaseth to give them.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 3.—"*Jordan was driven back.*" It was probably at the point near the present southern fords, crossed at the time of the Christian era by a bridge. The river was at its usual state of flood at the spring of the year, so as to fill the whole of the bed, up to the margin of the jungle with which the river banks are lined. On the broken edge of the swollen stream, the band of priests stood with the ark on their shoulders. At the distance of nearly a mile in the rear was the mass of the army. Suddenly the full bed of the Jordan was dried before them. High up the river, "far, far away," "in Adam, the city which is beside Zaretan," "as far as the parts of Kirjath-jearim" (Josh. iii. 16), that is, at a distance of thirty miles from the place of the Israelite encampment, the waters there stood which "descended" "from the heights above,"—stood and rose up, as if gathered into a waterskin; as if in a barrier or heap, as if congealed; and those that "descended" towards the sea of "the desert," the salt Sea, "failed and were cut off." Thus the scene presented is of the "descending stream" (the words employed seem to have a special reference to that peculiar and most significant name of the "Jordan"), not parted asunder, as we generally fancy, but, as the Psalm expresses it, "turned backwards"; the whole bed of the river left dry from north to south, through its long windings; the huge stones lying bare here and there, imbedded in the soft bottom; or the shingly pebbles drifted along the course of the channel.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in "The History of the Jewish Church,"* 1870.

Verse 4.—"*The mountains skipped like rams,*" etc. The figure drawn from the *lambs* and *rams* would appear to be inferior to the magnitude of the subject. But it was the prophet's intention to express in the homeliest way the incredible manner in which God, on these occasions, displayed his power. The stability of the earth being, as it were, founded on the mountains, what connection can they have with rams and lambs, that they should be agitated, skipping hither and thither? In speaking in this homely style, he does not mean to detract from the greatness of the miracle, but more forcibly to engrave these extraordinary tokens of God's power on the illiterate.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—"*Skipped.*" A poetic description of the concussion caused by the thunder and lightning that accompanied the divine presence.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 4.—At the giving of the law at Sinai, Horeb and the mountains around, both great and small, shook with a sudden and mighty earthquake, like rams leaping in a grassy plain, with the young sheep frisking round them.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verses 4—6.—When Christ descends upon the soul in the work of conversion, what strength doth he put forth! The strongholds of sin are battered down, every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ is brought into captivity to the obedience of his sceptre, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Devils are cast out of the possession which they have kept for many years without the least disturbance. Strong lusts are mortified and the very constitution of the soul is changed. "*What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams?*" etc. The prophet speaks those words of the powerful entrance of the children of Israel into Canaan. The like is done by Christ in the

conversion of a sinner. Jordan is driven back, the whole course of the soul is altered, the mountains skip like rams. There are many mountains in the soul of a sinner, as pride, unbelief, self-conceitedness, atheism, profaneness, etc. These mountains are plucked up by the roots in a moment when Christ begins the work of conversion. —*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 5.—

Fly where thou wilt, O sea!
And Jordan's current cease!
Jordan, there is no need of thee,
For at God's word, whene'er he please,
The rocks shall weep new waters forth instead of these.
Abraham Cowley.

Verses 5, 6.—A singular animation and an almost dramatic force are given to the poem by the beautiful apostrophe in verses 5, 6, and the effect of this is heightened in a remarkable degree by the use of the present tenses. The awe and the trembling of nature are a spectacle on which the poet is looking. The parted sea through which Israel walks as on dry land, the rushing Jordan arrested in its course, the granite cliffs of Sinai shaken to their base—he sees it all, and asks in wonder what it means?—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 5, 6.—This questioning teaches us that we should ourselves consider and inquire concerning the reason of those things, which we see to have been done in a wondrous way, out of the course of nature. There are signs in the sun, moon, stars, heaven, etc., concerning which Christ has spoken. Let us inquire the reason why they are, that we be not stupid and inaccurate spectators. The things which are done miraculously do speak: and they can give answer why they are done. Nay, rather, portents, signs, earthquakes, extraordinary appearances are loud-speaking, and they declare from themselves what they are: namely, that they are prophetic of the anger and future vengeance of God. Such inquiry as this is not prying curiosity, but is pious and useful, working to this end, that we become observant of the judgments of God, with which he visits this world, and yield ourselves to his grace, and so we escape the coming vengeance.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verses 5, 6.—

What ails thee, sea, to part,
Thee, Jordan, back to start?
Ye mountains, like the rams to leap,
Ye little hills, like sheep?
John Keble.

Verse 7.—"*Tremble, thou earth.*" Hebrew, *Be in pain*, as a travailing woman; for if the giving of the law had such dreadful effects, what should the breaking thereof have?—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—

"At the presence of the Lord be in pangs, O earth.'

"*Lord,*" *Adon*, the Sovereign Ruler. "Pangs," *Chuli*: Mic. iv. 10. The convulsions of nature, which accompanied the Exodus, were as the birth-throes of the Israelite people. "A nation was born in a day." But the deliverance out of Babylon saw the prelude to a far more wondrous truth;—that of him, in whom nature was to be regenerated.—*William Kay.*

Verses 7, 8.—"*Tremble,*" etc. This is an answer to the preceding question: as if he had said, It is no wonder that Sinai, and Horeb, and a few adjoining hills should tremble at the majestic presence of God; for the whole earth must do so, whenever he pleases.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 8.—"*Which turned the rock into a standing water.*" *Into a pool.* The divine poet represents the very substance of the rock as being converted into water, not literally, but poetically; thus ornamenting his sketch of the wondrous power displayed on this occasion.—*William Walford.*

Verse 8.—The remarkable rock in Sinai which tradition regards as the one which Moses smote, is at least well chosen in regard to its situation, whatever opinion we may form of the truth of that tradition, which it seems to be the disposition of late travellers to regard with more respect than was formerly entertained. It is an isolated mass of granite, nearly twenty feet square and high, with its base

concealed in the earth—we are left to conjecture to what depth. In the face of the rock are a number of horizontal fissures, at unequal distances from each other; some near the top, and others at a little distance from the surface of the ground. An American traveller* says: "The colour and whole appearance of the rock are such that, if seen elsewhere, and disconnected from all traditions, no one would hesitate to believe that they had been produced by water flowing from these fissures. I think it would be extremely difficult to form these fissures or produce these appearances by art. It is not less difficult to believe that a natural fountain should flow at the height of a dozen feet out of the face of an isolated rock. Believing, as I do, that the water was brought out of a rock belonging to this mountain, I can see nothing incredible in the opinion that this is the identical rock, and that these fissures, and the other appearances, should be regarded as evidences of the fact."—*John Kitto.*

Verse 8.—Shall *the hard rock be turned into a standing water, and the flint-stone into a springing well?* and shall not our hard and flinty hearts, in consideration of our own miseries, and God's unspeakable mercies in delivering us from evil, (if not gush forth into fountains of tears) express so much as a little *standing water* in our eyes? It is our hard heart indeed, *quod nec compunctione scinditur, nec pietate mollitur, nec movetur precibus, minis non cedit, flagellis duratur,*† *etc.* O Lord, touch thou the mountains and they shall smoke, touch our lips with a coal from thine altar, and our mouth shall show forth thy praise. Smite, Lord, our flinty hearts as hard as the nether millstone, with the hammer of thy word, and mollify them also with the drops of thy mercies and dew of thy Spirit; make them humble, fleshy, flexible, circumcised, soft, obedient, new, clean, broken, and then "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise." Ps. li. 17. "O Lord my God, give me grace from the very bottom of my heart to desire thee; in desiring, to seek thee; in seeking, to find; in finding, to love thee; in loving, utterly to loathe my former wickedness;" that living in thy fear, and dying in thy favour, when I have passed through this Egypt and wilderness of this world, I may possess the heavenly Canaan and happy land of promise, prepared for all such as love thy coming, even for every Christian one, which is thy "*dominion*" and "*sanctuary.*"‡—*John Boys.*

Verse 8.—The same almighty power that turned waters into a rock to be a wall to Israel (Exod. xiv. 22), turned the rock into waters to be a well to Israel. As they were protected, so they were provided for, by miracles, standing miracles; for such was the standing water, that fountain of waters, into which the rock, the flinty rock, was turned, "and that rock was Christ," 1 Cor. x. 4. For he is a fountain of living waters to his Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8.—"*The flint into a fountain of waters.*" The causing of water to gush forth out of the flinty rock is a practical proof of unlimited omnipotence and of the grace which converts death into life. Let the earth then tremble before the Lord, the God of Jacob. It has always trembled before him, and before him let it tremble. For that which he has been he still ever is; and as he came once he will come again. —*Franz Delitzsch*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1, 2.—The time of first delivery from sin a season notable for the peculiar presence of God.

Verses 1, 2.—The Lord was to his people—I. A deliverer. II. A priest—"his sanctuary." III. A king—"his dominion."

Verses 1, 7.—"The house of Jacob" and "the God of Jacob," the relation between the two.

Verse 2.—The church the temple of sanctity and the domain of obedience.

---

* Dr. Olin. † Bernard. ‡ Augustine.

Verse 3.—The impenitence of sinners rebuked by the inanimate creation.

Verse 3.—" Jordan was driven back," or death overcome.

Verse 4.—The movableness of things which appear to be fixed and settled. God's power of creating a stir in lethargic minds, among ancient systems, and prejudiced persons of the highest rank.

Verses 7, 8.—Holy awe. I. Should be caused by the fact of the divine presence. Should be increased by his covenant character—" the God of Jacob." III. Should culminate when we see displays of his grace towards his people—" which turned," etc. IV. Should become universal.

Verse 8.—Wonders akin to the miracle at the rock. I. Christ's death the source of life. II. Adversity a means of prosperity. III. Hard hearts made penitent. IV. Barrenness of soul turned into abundance.

Verse 8.—Divine supplies. 1. Sure—for he will fetch them even from a rock 2. Plentiful—" a mere or standing water." 3. Continual " fountain of waters.'. 4. Instructive. Should create in us holy awe at the power, etc., of the Lord.

PSALM CXV.

SUBJECT.—*In the former Psalm the past wonders which God had wrought were recounted to his honour, and in the present Psalm he is entreated to glorify himself again, because the heathen were presuming upon the absence of miracles, were altogether denying the miracles of former ages, and insulting the people of God with the question, "Where is now their God?" It grieved the heart of the godly that Jehovah should be thus dishonoured, and treating their own condition of reproach as unworthy of notice, they beseech the Lord at least to vindicate his own name. The Psalmist is evidently indignant that the worshippers of foolish idols should be able to put such a taunting question to the people who worshipped the only living and true God; and having spent his indignation in sarcasm upon the images and their makers, he proceeds to exhort the house of Israel to trust in God and bless his name. As those who were dead and gone could no longer sing Psalms unto the Lord among the sons of men, he exhorts the faithful who were then living to take care that God is not robbed of his praise, and then he closes with an exulting Hallelujah. Should not living men extol the living God?*

DIVISION.—*For the better expounding of it, the Psalm may be divided into an entreaty of God to vindicate his own honour, verses* 1, 2; *a contemptuous description of the false gods and their worshippers,* 3—8; *an exhortation to the faithful to trust in God and to expect great blessings from him,* 9—15; *an explanation of God's relationship to their present condition of things, verse* 16; *and a reminder that, not the dead, but the living, must continually praise God here below,* 17, 18.

EXPOSITION.

NOT unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.

2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God?

1. It will be well to remember that this Psalm was sung at the Passover, and therefore it bears relationship to the deliverance from Egypt. The burden of it seems to be a prayer that the living God, who had been so glorious at the Red Sea and at the Jordan, should again for his name's sake display the wonders of his power. "*Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.*" The people undoubtedly wished for relief from the contemptuous insults of idolaters, but their main desire was that Jehovah himself should no longer be the object of heathen insults. The saddest part of all their trouble was that their God was no longer feared and dreaded by their adversaries. When Israel marched into Canaan, a terror was upon all the people round about, because of Jehovah, the mighty God; but this dread the nations had shaken off since there had been of late no remarkable display of miraculous power. Therefore Israel cried unto her God that he would again make bare his arm as in the day when he cut Rahab and wounded the dragon. The prayer is evidently tinctured with a consciousness of unworthiness; because of their past unfaithfulness they hardly dared to appeal to the covenant, and to ask blessings for themselves, but they fell back upon the honour of the Lord their God—an old style of argument which their great lawgiver, Moses, had used with such effect when he pleaded, "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people." Joshua also used the like argument when he said, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" In such manner also let us pray when no other plea is available because of our sense of sin; forthe Lord is always jealous of his honour, and will work for his name's sake when no other motive will move him.

The repetition of the words, "Not unto us," would seem to indicate a very serious desire to renounce any glory which they might at any time have proudly appropriated to themselves, and it also sets forth the vehemence of their wish that God would at any cost to them magnify his own name. They loathed the idea of seeking

their own glory, and rejected the thought with the utmost detestation; again and again disclaiming any self-glorifying motive in their supplication. *"For thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."* These attributes seemed most in jeopardy. How could the heathen think Jehovah to be a merciful God if he gave his people over to the hands of their enemies? How could they believe him to be faithful and true if, after all his solemn covenant engagements, he utterly rejected his chosen nation? God is very jealous of the two glorious attributes of grace and truth, and the plea that these may not be dishonoured has great weight with him. In these times, when the first victories of the gospel are only remembered as histories of a dim and distant past, sceptics are apt to boast that the gospel has lost its youthful strength and they even presume to cast a slur upon the name of God himself. We may therefore rightly entreat the divine interposition that the apparent blot may be removed from his escutcheon, and that his own word may shine forth gloriously as in the days of old. We may not desire the triumph of our opinions, for our own sakes, or for the honour of a sect, but we may confidently pray for the triumph of truth, that God himself may be honoured.

2. *"Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?"* Or, more literally, "Where, pray, is their God?" Why should the nations be allowed with a sneer of contempt to question the existence, and mercy, and faithfulness of Jehovah? They are always ready to blaspheme; we may well pray that they may not derive a reason for so doing from the course of providence, or the decline of the church. When they see the godly down-trodden while they themselves live at ease, and act the part of persecutors, they are very apt to speak as if they had triumphed over God himself, or as if he had altogether left the field of action and deserted his saints. When the prayers and tears of the godly seem to be unregarded, and their miseries are rather increased than assuaged, then do the wicked multiply their taunts and jeers, and even argue that their own wretched irreligion is better than the faith of Christians, because for the present their condition is so much preferable to that of the afflicted saints. And, truly, this is the very sting of the trials of God's chosen when they see the veracity of the Lord questioned, and the name of God profaned because of their sufferings. If they could hope that some good result would come out of all this they would endure it with patience; but as they are unable to perceive any desirable result consequent thereon, they enquire with holy anxiety, "Wherefore should the heathen be permitted to speak thus?" It is a question to which it would be hard to reply, and yet no doubt there is an answer. Sometimes the nations are permitted thus to blaspheme, in order that they may fill up the measure of their iniquity, and in order that the subsequent interposition of God may be rendered the more illustrious in contrast with their profane boastings. Do they say, "Where is now their God?" They shall know by-and-by, for it is written, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries"; they shall know it also when the righteous shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Do they say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" That coming shall be speedy and terrible to them. In our own case, by our own lukewarmness and the neglect of faithful gospel preaching, we have permitted the uprise and spread of modern doubt, and we are bound to confess it with deep sorrow of soul; yet we may not therefore lose heart, but may still plead with God to save his own truth and grace from the contempt of men of the world. Our honour and the honour of the church are small matters, but the glory of God is the jewel of the universe, of which all else is but the setting; and we may come to the Lord and plead his jealousy for his name, being well assured that he will not suffer that name to be dishonoured. Wherefore should the pretended wise men of the period be permitted to say that they doubt the personality of God? Wherefore should they say that answers to prayer are pious delusions, and that the resurrection and the deity of our Lord Jesus are moot points? Wherefore should they be permitted to speak disparagingly of atonement by blood and by price, and reject utterly the doctrine of the wrath of God against sin, even that wrath which burneth for ever and ever? They speak exceeding proudly, and only God can stop their arrogant blusterings: let us by extraordinary intercession prevail upon him to interpose, by giving to his gospel such a triumphant vindication as shall utterly silence the perverse opposition of ungodly men.

3 But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

4 Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:
6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:
7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.
8 They that make them are like unto them; *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

3. "*But our God is in the heavens*"—where he should be; above the reach of mortal sneers, over-hearing all the vain janglings of men, but looking down with silent scorn upon the makers of the babel. Supreme above all opposing powers, the Lord reigneth upon a throne high and lifted up. Incomprehensible in essence, he rises above the loftiest thought of the wise; absolute in will and infinite in power, he is superior to the limitations which belong to earth and time. This God is *our* God, and we are not ashamed to own him, albeit he may not work miracles at the beck and call of every vain-glorious boaster who may choose to challenge him. Once they bade his Son come down from the cross and they would believe in him, now they would have God overstep the ordinary bounds of his providence and come down from heaven to convince them: but other matters occupy his august mind besides the convincement of those who wilfully shut their eyes to the super-abundant evidences of his divine power and Godhead, which are all around them. If our God be neither seen nor heard, and is not to be worshipped under any outward symbol, yet is he none the less real and true, for he is where his adversaries can never be—in the heavens, whence he stretches forth his sceptre, and rules with boundless power.

"*He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*" Up till this moment his decrees have been fulfilled, and his eternal purposes accomplished; he has not been asleep, nor oblivious of the affairs of men; he has worked, and he has worked effectually, none have been able to thwart, nor even so much as to hinder him. "Whatsoever he hath pleased": however distasteful to his enemies, the Lord has accomplished all his good pleasure without difficulty; even when his adversaries raved and raged against him they have been compelled to carry out his designs against their will. Even proud Pharoah, when most defiant of the Lord was but as clay upon the potter's wheel, and the Lord's end and design in him were fully answered. We may well endure the jeering question, "Where is now their God?" while we are perfectly sure that his providence is undisturbed, his throne unshaken, and his purposes unchanged. What he hath done he will yet do, his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, and at the end of the great drama of human history, the omnipotence of God and his immutability and faithfulness will be more than vindicated to the eternal confusion of his adversaries.

4. "*Their idols are silver and gold.*" mere dead inert matter; at the best only made of precious metal, but that metal quite as powerless as the commonest wood or clay. The value of the idol shows the folly of the maker in wasting his substance, but certainly does not increase the power of the image, since there is no more life in silver and gold than in brass or iron. "*The work of men's hands.*" Inasmuch as the maker is always greater than the thing that he has made, these idols are less to be honoured than the artificers, who fashioned them. How irrational that men should adore that which is less than themselves! How strange that a man should think that he can make a god! Can madness go further? Our God is a spirit, and his hands made the heavens and the earth: well may we worship him, and we need not be disturbed at the sneering question of those who are so insane as to refuse to adore the living God, and yet bow their knees before images of their own carving. We may make an application of all this to the times in which we are now living. The god of modern thought is the creation of the thinker himself, evolved out of his own consciousness, or fashioned according to his own notion of what a god should be. Now, it is evident that such a being is no God. It is impossible that there should be a God at all except the God of revelation. A god who can be fashioned by our own thoughts is no more a god than the image manufactured or produced by our own hands. The true God must of necessity be his own

revealer. It is clearly impossible that a being who can be excogitated and comprehended by the reason of man should be the infinite and incomprehensible God. Their idols are blinded reason and diseased thought, the product of men's muddled brains, and they will come to nought.

5. *"They have mouths, but they speak not."* The idols cannot utter even the faintest sound, they cannot communicate with their worshippers, they can neither promise nor threaten, command nor console, explain the past nor prophesy the future. If they had no mouths they might not be expected to speak, but having mouths and speaking not, they are mere dumb idols, and not worthy to be compared with the Lord God who thundered at Sinai, who in old time spake by his servants the prophets, and whose voice even now breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. *"Eyes have they, but they see not."* They cannot tell who their worshippers may be or what they offer. Certain idols have had jewels in their eyes more precious than a king's ransom, but they were as blind as the rest of the fraternity. A god who has eyes, and cannot see, is a blind deity; and blindness is a calamity, and not an attribute of godhead. He must be very blind who worships a blind god: we *pity* a blind man, it is strange to *worship* a blind image.

6. *"They have ears, but they hear not."* The Psalmist might have pointed to the monstrous ears with which some heathen deities are disfigured,—truly they *have* ears; but no prayer of their votaries, though shouted by a million voices, can ever be heard by them. How can gold and silver hear, and how can a rational being address petitions to one who cannot even hear his words? *"Noses have they, but they smell not."* The Psalmist seems to heap together these sentences with something of the grim sardonic spirit of Elijah when he said, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." In sacred scorn he mocks at those who burn sweet spices, and fill their temples with clouds of smoke, all offered to an image whose nose cannot perceive the perfume. He seems to point his finger to every part of the countenance of the image, and thus pours contempt upon the noblest part of the idol, if any part of such a thing can be noble even in the least degree.

7. *"They have hands, but they handle not."* Looking lower down upon the images, the Psalmist says, "They have hands, but they handle not," they cannot receive that which is handed to them, they cannot grasp the sceptre of power or the sword of vengeance, they can neither distribute benefits nor dispense judgments, and the most trifling act they are utterly unable to perform. An infant's hand excels them in power. *"Feet have they, but they walk not."* They must be lifted into their places or they would never reach their shrines; they must be fastened in their shrines or they would fall; they must be carried or they could never move; they cannot come to the rescue of their friends, nor escape the iconoclasm of their foes. The meanest insect has more power of locomotion than the greatest heathen god. *"Neither speak they through their throat."* They cannot even reach so far as the guttural noise of the lowest order of beasts; neither a grunt, nor a growl, nor a groan, nor so much as a mutter, can come from them. Their priests asserted that the images of the gods upon special occasions uttered hollow sounds, but it was a mere pretence, or a crafty artifice: images of gold or silver are incapable of living sounds. Thus has the Psalmist surveyed the idol from head to foot, looked in its face, and sounded its throat, and he writes it down as utterly contemptible.

8. *"They that make them are like unto them."* Those who make such things for worship are as stupid, senseless, and irrational as the figures they construct. So far as any spiritual life, thought, and judgment are concerned, they are rather the images of men than rational beings. The censure is by no means too severe. Who has not found the words leaping to his lips when he has seen the idols of the Romanists? *"So is every one that trusteth in them."* Those who have sunk so low as to be capable of confiding in idols have reached the extreme of folly, and are worthy of as much contempt as their detestable deities. Luther's hard speeches were well deserved by the Papists; they must be mere dolts to worship the rotten relics which are the objects of their veneration.

The god of modern thought exceedingly resembles the deities described in this Psalm. Pantheism is wondrously akin to Polytheism, and yet differs very little from Atheism. The god manufactured by our great thinkers is a mere abstraction: he has no eternal purposes, he does not interpose on the behalf of his people, he cares but very little as to how much man sins, for he has given to the initiated "a

larger hope" by which the most incorrigible are to be restored. He is what the last set of critics chooses to make him, he has said what they choose to say, and he will do what they please to prescribe. Let this creed and its devotees alone, and they will work out their own refutation, for as now their god is fashioned like themselves, they will by degrees fashion themselves like their god; and when the principles of justice, law, and order shall have all been effectually sapped we may possibly witness in some form of socialism, similar to that which is so sadly spreading in Germany, a repetition of the evils which have in former ages befallen nations which have refused the living God, and set up gods of their own.

9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.

11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield,

12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless *us;* he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.

13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, *both* small and great.

14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.

15 Ye *are* blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.

9. *"O Israel, trust thou in the LORD."* Whatever others do, let the elect of heaven keep fast to the God who chose them. Jehovah is the God of Jacob, let his children prove their loyalty to their God by their confidence in him. Whatever our trouble may be, and however fierce the blasphemous language of our enemies, let us not fear nor falter, but confidently rest in him who is able to vindicate his own honour, and protect his own servants. *"He is their help and their shield."* He is the friend of his servants, both actively and passively, giving them both aid in labour and defence in danger. In the use of the pronoun "their," the Psalmist may have spoken to himself, in a sort of soliloquy: he had given the exhortation, "trust in Jehovah," and then he whispers to himself, "They may well do so, for he is at all times the strength and security of his servants."

10. *"O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD."* You who are nearest to him, trust him most; your very calling is connected with his truth and is meant to declare his glory, therefore never entertain a doubt concerning him, but lead the way in holy confidence. The priests were the leaders, teachers, and exemplars of the people, and therefore above all others they should place an unreserved reliance upon Israel's God. The Psalmist is glad to add that they did so, for he says, *"He is their help and their shield."* It is good to exhort those to faith who have faith: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; . . . that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." We may stir up pure minds by way of remembrance, and exhort men to trust in the Lord because we know that they are trusting already.

11. The next verse is of the same tenor—*"Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD,"* whether belonging to Israel, or to the house of Aaron, or not, all those who reverence Jehovah are permitted and commanded to confide in him. *"He is their help and their shield."* He does aid and protect all those who worship him in filial fear, to whatever nation they may belong. No doubt these repeated exhortations were rendered necessary by the trying condition in which the children of Israel were found: the sneers of the adversary would assail all the people, they would most bitterly be felt by the priests and ministers, and those who were secret proselytes would groan in secret under the contempt forced upon their religion and their God. All this would be very staggering to faith, and therefore they were bidden again and again and again to trust in Jehovah.

This must have been a very pleasant song to households in Babylon, or far away in Persia, when they met together in the night to eat the Paschal supper in a land which knew them not, where they wept as they remembered Zion. We seem to hear them repeating the three-fold word, "Trust in Jehovah," men and women and little children singing out their scorn of the dominant idolatry, and declaring their adhesion to the one God of Israel. In the same manner in this day of blasphemy and rebuke it becomes us all to abound in testimonies to the truth of God. The sceptic is loud in his unbelief, let us be equally open in the avowal of our faith.

12. *"The LORD hath been mindful of us,"* or "Jehovah hath remembered us." His past mercies prove that we are on his heart, and though for the present he may afflict us, yet he does not forget us. We have not to put him in remembrance as though he found it hard to recollect his children, but he hath remembered us and therefore he will in future deal well with us. *"He will bless us."* The word *"us"* is supplied by the translators, and is superfluous, the passage should run, *"He will bless; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron."* The repetition of the word "bless" adds great effect to the passage. The Lord has many blessings, each one worthy to be remembered, he blesses and blesses and blesses again. Where he has once bestowed his favour he continues it; his blessing delights to visit the same house very often and to abide where it has once lodged. Blessing does not impoverish the Lord: he has multiplied his mercies in the past, and he will pour them forth thick and threefold in the future. He will have a general blessing for all who fear him, a peculiar blessing for the whole house of Israel, and a double blessing for the sons of Aaron. It is his nature to bless, it is his prerogative to bless, it is his glory to bless, it is his delight to bless; he has promised to bless, and therefore be sure of this, that he will bless and bless and bless without ceasing.

13. *"He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great."* So long as a man fears the Lord it matters nothing whether he be prince or peasant, patriarch or pauper, God will assuredly bless him. He supplies the want of every living thing, from the leviathan of the sea to the insect upon a leaf, and he will suffer none of the godly to be forgotten, however small their abilities, or mean their position. This is a sweet cordial for those who are little in faith, and own themselves to be mere babes in the family of grace. There is the same blessing for the least saint as for the greatest; yea, if anything, the "small" shall be first; for as the necessity is the more pressing, the supply shall be the more speedy.

14. *"The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children."* Just as in Egypt he multiplied the people exceedingly, so will he increase the number of his saints upon the earth; not only shall the faithful be blessed with converts, and so with a spiritual seed; but those who are their spiritual children shall become fruitful also, and thus the multitude of the elect shall be accomplished; God shall increase the people, and shall increase the joy. Even to the end of the ages the race of true believers shall be continued, and shall growingly multiply in number and in power. The first blessing upon mankind was, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"; and it is this blessing which God now pronounces upon them that fear him. Despite the idols of philosophy and sacramentarianism, the truth shall gather its disciples, and fill the land with its defenders.

15. *"Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth."* This is another form of the blessing of Melchizedek: "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth"; and upon us through our great Melchizedek this same benediction rests. It is an omnipotent blessing, conveying to us all that an Almighty God can do, whether in heaven or on earth, This fulness is infinite, and the consolation which it brings is unfailing; he that made heaven and earth can give us all things while we dwell below, and bring us safely to his palace above. Happy are the people upon whom such a blessing rests; their portion is infinitely above that of those whose only hope lies in a piece of gilded wood, or an image of sculptured stone.

16 The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

16. *"The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S."* There he specially reigns, and manifests his greatness and his glory: *"but the earth hath he given to the children of men."* He hath left the world during the present dispensation in a great measure under the power and will of men, so that things are not here below in the same perfect order as the things which are above. It is true the Lord rules over all things by his providence, but yet he allows and permits men to break his laws and persecute his people for the time being, and to set up their dumb idols in opposition to him. The free agency which he gave to his creatures necessitated that in some degree he should restrain his power and suffer the children of men to follow their own devices; yet nevertheless, since he has not vacated heaven, he is still master of earth, and can at any time gather up all the reins into his own hands. Perhaps,

however, the passage is meant to have another meaning, viz., that God will increase his people, because he has given the earth to them, and intends that they shall fill it. Man was constituted originally God's vicegerent over the world, and though so yet we see not all things put under him, we see Jesus exalted on high, and in him the children of men shall receive a loftier dominion even on earth than as yet they have known. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace": and our Lord Jesus shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously. All this will reflect the exceeding glory of him who reveals himself personally in heaven, and in the mystical body of Christ below. The earth belongs to the sons of God, and we are bound to subdue it for our Lord Jesus, for he must reign. The Lord hath given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.
18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.
Praise the LORD.

17. *"The dead praise not the LORD"*—so far as this world is concerned. They cannot unite in the Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with which the church delights to adore her Lord. The preacher cannot magnify the Lord from his coffin, nor the Christian worker further manifest the power of divine grace by daily activity while he lies in the grave. *"Neither any that go down into silence."* The tomb sends forth no voice; from mouldering bones and flesh-consuming worms there arises no sound of gospel ministry nor of gracious song. One by one the singers in the consecrated choir of saints steal away from us, and we miss their music. Thank God, they have gone above to swell the harmonies of the skies, but as far as we are concerned, we have need to sing all the more earnestly because so many songsters have left our choirs.

18. *"But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore."* We who are still living will take care that the praises of God shall not fail among the sons of men. Our afflictions and depressions of spirit shall not cause us to suspend our praises; neither shall old age, and increasing infirmities damp the celestial fires, nay, nor shall even death itself cause us to cease from the delightful occupation. The spiritually dead cannot praise God, but the life within us constrains us to do so. The ungodly may abide in silence, but we will lift up our voices to the praise of Jehovah. Even though for a time he may work no miracle, and we may see no peculiar interposition of his power, yet on the strength of what he has done in ages past we will continue to laud his name "until the day break, and the shadows flee away," when he shall once more shine forth as the sun to gladden the faces of his children. The present time is auspicious for commencing a life of praise, since to-day he bids us hear his voice of mercy. "From this time forth" is the suggestion of wisdom, for this duty ought not to be delayed; and it is the dictate of gratitude, for there are pressing reasons for prompt thankfulness. Once begin praising God and we have entered upon an endless service. Even eternity cannot exhaust the reasons why God should be glorified. *"Praise the LORD,"* or Hallelujah. Though the dead cannot, and the wicked will not, and the careless do not praise God, yet we will shout "Hallelujah" for ever and ever. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Several manuscripts and editions, also the Septuagint, the Syriac, and many of the old translators join this Psalm to the preceding, and make one of them. But the argument and the arrangement of the two Psalms do not allow of the least doubt as to their original independence of each other.—*Justus Olshausen.*

Verse 1.—*"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."* The Psalmist, by this repetition, implies our natural tendency to self-idolatry, and to magnifying of ourselves, and the difficulty of cleansing our hearts from these self-reflections. If it be angelical to refuse an undue glory stolen from God's throne,

Rev. xxii. 8, 9; it is diabolical to accept and cherish it. "To seek our own glory is not glory," Prov. xxv. 27. It is vile, and the dishonour of a creature, who, by the law of his creation, is referred to another end. So much as we sacrifice to our own credit, to the dexterity of our hands, or the sagacity of our wit, we detract from God.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 1.—"*Not unto us, but unto thy name give glory,*" etc. This is not a doxology, or form of thanksgiving, but a prayer. Not for our safety or welfare, so much as for thy glory, be pleased to deliver us. Not to satisfy our revenge upon our adversaries; not for the establishment of our own interest; but for the glory of thy grace and truth do we seek thine aid, that thou mayest be known to be a God keeping covenant; for mercy and truth are the two pillars of that covenant. It is a great dishonouring of God when anything is sought from him more than himself, or not for himself. Saith Austin, it is but a carnal affection in prayer when men seek self more than God. Self and God are the two things that come in competition. Now there are several sorts of self; there is carnal self, natural self, and glorified self; above all these God must have the pre-eminence.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 1.—There are many sweet and precious texts of Scripture which are so endeared, and have become so habituated to us, and we to them, that one cannot but think we must carry them with us to heaven, and that they will form not only the theme of our song, but a portion of our blessedness and joy even in that happy home. . . . But if there be one text which more especially belongs to all, and which must, I think, break forth from *every* redeemed one as he enters heaven, and form the unwearying theme of eternity, it is the first verse of this Psalm. I am sure that not one of the Lord's chosen ones on earth, as he reviews the way by which he has been led, as he sees enemy after enemy prostrate before his utter feebleness, and has such thorough evidence and conviction that his weakness is made perfect in the Lord's strength, but must, from the very ground of his heart, say, "*Not unto us, O* LORD, *not unto us, but unto thy name*" be the praise and the glory ascribed. And could we see heaven opened—could we hear its glad and glorious hallelujahs—could we see its innumerable company of angels, and its band of glorified saints, as they cast their crowns before the throne, we should hear as the universal chorus from every lip, "*Not unto us, O* LORD, *not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.*" I know not why this should not be as gladly and as gratefully the angel's song as the song of the redeemed: they stand not in their own might nor power,—they kept not their first estate through any inherent strength of their own, but, like their feebler brethren of the human race, are equally "kept by the power of God"; and from their ranks, I doubt not, is re-echoed the same glorious strain, "*Not unto us, O* LORD, *not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.*" Even our blessed Lord, as on that night of sorrow he sung this hymn of praise, could truly say, in that nature which had sinned, and which was to suffer, "Not unto us,"—not unto man, be ascribed the glory of this great salvation, which I am now with my own blood to purchase, but unto thy name and thy love be the praise given.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—"*Non nobis, Domine, sed tibi sit gloria.*" A part of the Latin version of this Psalm is frequently sung after grace at public dinners, but why we can hardly imagine, except it be for fear that donors should be proud of the guineas they have promised, or gourmands should be vainglorious under the influence of their mighty feeding.—*C. H. S.*

Verses 1, 2.—He, in a very short space, assigns three reasons why God should seek the glory of his name in preserving his people. First, because he is merciful; secondly, because he is true and faithful in observing his promise; thirdly, that the Gentiles may not see God's people in a state of destitution, and find cause for blaspheming him or them. He therefore says, "*for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake,*" show thy glory, or give glory to thy name, for it is then thy glory will be exhibited when thou showest mercy to thy people; and then thou wilt have carried out the truth of the promise which thou hast made to our fathers. "*Lest the Gentiles should say, Where is their God?*" lest the incredulous Gentiles should get an occasion of detracting from thy power, and, perhaps, of ignoring thy very existence.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verses 2, 3.—If God be everywhere, why doth Christ teach us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven"? And when the heathen made that scoffing demand, "*Where is now their God?*" why did David answer, "*Our God is in the heavens*"?

To these and all other texts of like import we may answer; *heaven* is not there spoken of as bounding the presence of God, but as guiding the faith and hope of man. "In the morning" (saith David, Ps. v. 3) "will I direct my prayer unto thee, amd will look up." When the eye hath no sight of any help on earth, then faith may have the clearest vision of it in heaven. And while God appears so little in any gracious dispensation for his people on earth, that the enemy begins to scoff, *"Where is now their God?"* then his people have recourse by faith to heaven, where the Lord not only is, but is glorious in his appearings. From whence as he the better seeth how it is with us, so he seems to have a position of advantage for relieving us.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 2—8.—Contrast Jehovah with any other God. Why should the heathen say, *"Where, pray,* (אי) *is your God?"* Take up Moses' brief description in Deut. iv. 28, and expand it as is done here. Idols of gold and silver have a *mouth*, but give no counsel to their worshippers; *eyes*, but see not the devotions nor the wants of those who serve them; *ears*, but hear not their cries of distress or songs of praise; *nostrils*, but smell not the fragrant incense presented to their images; *hands*, but the thunderbolt which they seem to hold (as Jupiter Tonans in after days), is a *brutum fulmen*, they cannot launch it; *feet*, but they cannot move to help the fallen. Ah! they cannot so much as whisper one syllable of response, or even mutter in their throat! And as man becomes like his God, (witness Hindoo idolaters whose cruelty is just the reflection of the cruelty of their gods,) so these gods of the heathen being "soul-less, the worshippers become soul-less themselves" (Tholuck).—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 3.—*"And our God (is) in heaven; all that he pleased he has done."* The word *"and,"* though foreign from our idiom, adds sensibly to the force of the expression. They ask thus, as if our God were absent or had no existence; and yet all the while our God is in heaven, in his exalted and glorious dwelling-place.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 3 *(first clause).*—It would be folly to assert the like concerning idols; therefore, if the heathen say, *Where is your God?* we reply, *He is in heaven*, etc.: but where are your idols? In the earth, not making the earth, but made from the earth, etc.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 3.—*"But our God is in the heavens."* When they place God in heaven, they do not confine him to a certain locality, nor set limits to his infinite essence; but on the contrary they deny the limitation of his power, its being shut up to human instrumentality only, or its being subject to fate or fortune. In short, they put the universe under his control; and teach us that, being superior to every obstruction, he does freely everything that may seem good to him. This truth is still more plainly asserted in the subsequent clause, *"he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."* God then may be said to dwell in heaven, as the world is subject to his will, and nothing can prevent his accomplishing his purposes.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—*"Their idols are silver and gold."* Can there be anything more absurd than to expect assistance from them, since neither the materials of which they are formed, nor the forms which are given them by the hand of men possess the smallest porton of divinity so as to command respect for them. At the same time, the prophet tacitly indicates that the value of the material does not invest the idols with more excellence, so that they deserve to be more highly esteemed. Hence the passage may be translated adversatively, thus, Though they are of gold and silver, yet they are not gods, because they are the work of men's hands.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—*"Their idols are silver,"* etc. They are metal, stone, and wood. They are genererally made in the form of man, but can neither see, hear, smell, feel, walk, nor speak. How brutish to trust in such! and next to them, in stupidity and inanity, must they be who form them, with the expectation of deriving any good from them. So obviously vain was the whole system of idolatry that the more serious heathens ridiculed it, and it was a butt for the jests of their freethinkers and buffoons. How keen are these words of Juvenal!

Audis,
Jupiter, hæc? nec labra moves, cum mittere vocem
Debueras, vel marmoreus vel aheneus? aut cur
In carbone tuo charta pia thura soluta
Ponimus, et sectum vituli jecur, albaque porci
Omenta? ut video, nullum discrimen habendum est
Effigies inter vestras, statuamque Bathylli. Sat. xiii., ver. 113.

"Dost thou hear, O Jupiter, these things? nor move thy lips when thou oughtest to speak out, whether thou art of marble or of bronze? Or, why do we put the sacred incense on thy altar from the opened paper, and the extracted liver of a calf, and the white caul of a hog? As far as I can discern, there is no difference between thy statue and that of Bathyllus."

This irony will appear the keener, when it is known that Bathyllus was a fiddler and player, whose image, by the order of Polycrates, was erected in the temple of Juno at Samos.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 4.—"*Idols.*" Idolators plead in behalf of their idols, that they are only intended to represent their gods, and to maintain a more abiding sense of their presence. The Spirit, however, does not allow this plea, and treats their images as the very gods they worship. The gods they profess to represent do not really exist, and therefore their worship is altogether vain and foolish. Must not the same be said of the pretended worship of many in the present day, who would encumber their worship with representative rites and ceremonies, or expressive symbols, or frame to themselves in their imaginations a god other than the God of revelation?—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 4.—"*Silver and gold*"—proper things to make money of, but not to make gods of.—*Matthew Henry,*

Verse 4.—"*The work of men's hands.*" The following advertisement is copied from a Chinese newspaper:—"Archen Tea Chinchin, sculptor, respectfully acquaints masters of ships, trading from Canton to India, that they may be furnished with figure-heads of any size, according to order, at one-fourth of the price charged in Europe. He also recommends for private venture, the following idols, brass, gold, and silver: the hawk of Vishnoo, which has reliefs of his incarnation in a fish, boar, lion, and turtle. An Egyptian apis, a golden calf and bull, as worshipped by the pious followers of Zoroaster. Two silver mammosits, with golden ear-rings; an aprimanes, for Persian worship; a ram, an alligator, a crab, a laughing hyena, with a variety of household gods on a small scale, calculated for family worship. Eighteen months' credit will be given, or a discount of fifteen per cent. for prompt payment of the sum affixed to each article. Direct, China-street, Canton, under the marble Rhinoceros and Gilt Hydra."—*Arvine's Anecdotes.*

Verse 4.—"*The work of men's hands.*" Works, and not the makers of works.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 4.—"*The work of men's hands.*" And therefore they must needs be goodly gods, when made by bunglers especially, as was the rood of *Cockram*, which if it were not good enough to make a god would make an excellent devil, as the Mayor of Doncaster merrily told the complainants.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 4—7.—A beautiful contrast is formed between the God of Israel and the heathen idols. He made everything, they are themselves made by men; he is in heaven, they are upon earth; he doeth whatsoever he pleaseth, they can do nothing; he seeth the distresses, heareth and answereth the prayers, accepteth the offerings, cometh to the assistance, and effecteth the salvation of his servants; they are blind, deaf, and dumb, senseless, motionless, and impotent. Equally slow to hear, equally impotent to save, in time of greatest need, will every worldly idol prove, on which men have set their affections, and to which they have, in effect, said, "Thou art my God."—*George Horne.*

Verses 4—7.—In Alexandria there was a most famous building called the *Serapion*, a temple of *Serapis*, who presided over the inundations of the Nile, and the fertility of Egypt. It was a vast structure of masonry, crowning a hill in the centre of the city, and was ascended by a hundred steps. It was well fortified and very handsome. The statue of the god was a colossal image, which touched with outstretched hands, both sides of the building, while the head reached the lofty roof. It was adorned with rich metals and jewels.

The Emperor Theodosius, having commanded the demolition of the heathen temple, Theophilus, the bishop, attended by the soldiers, hastened to ascend the steps and enter the fane. The sight of the image, for a moment, made even the Christian destructives pause. The bishop ordered a soldier to strike without delay. With a hatchet he smote the statue on the knee. All waited in some emotion, but there was neither sound nor sign of divine anger. The soldiers next climbed to the head and struck it off. It rolled on the ground. A large family of rats, disturbed in their tranquil abode within the sacred image, poured out from the trembling statue and raced over the temple floor. The people now began to laugh, and to destroy

with increased zeal. They dragged the fragments of the statue through the streets. Even the Pagans were disgusted with gods who did not defend themselves. The huge edifice was slowly destroyed, and a Christian church was built in its place. There was still some fear among the people that the Nile would show displeasure by refusing its usual inundation. But as the river rose with more than usual fulness and bounty, every anxiety was dispelled.—*Andrew Reed, in "The Story of Christianity,"* 1877.

Verses 4—8.—Theodoret tells us of S. Publia, the aged abbess of a company of nuns at Antioch, who used to chant, as Julian went by in idolatrous procession, the Psalm, " Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. . . . They that make them are like unto them ; so is every one that trusteth in them " ; and he narrates how the angry Emperor caused his soldiers to buffet her till she bled, unable as he was to endure the sting of the old Hebrew song.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 5.—"*Mouths, but they speak not.*" The noblest function of the mouth is to speak. Eyes, ears, and nose are the organs of certain senses. The mouth contains the organ of taste, and the hands and feet belong to the organ of touch, but speech is the glory of the mouth.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 6.—"*They have ears, but they hear not.*" But are as deaf as door-nails to the prayers of their suppliants. The Cretians pictured their Jupiter without ears, so little hearing or help they hoped for from him. Socrates, in contempt of heathen gods, swore by an oak, a goat, a dog ; as holding these better gods than those.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—"*They have hands, but they handle not.*" Even their artist therefore surpasseth them, since he had the faculty of moulding them by the motion and functions of his limbs ; though thou wouldest be ashamed to worship that artist. Even thou surpassest them, though thou hast not made these things, since thou doest what they cannot do.—*Augustine.*

Verse 7.—"*Neither speak they through their throat.*" *Yehgu ;* not so much as the low faint moaning of a dove. Isaiah xxxviii. 14.—*William Kay.*

Verse 7.—"*Speak,*" or, as the Hebrew word likewise signifies, *breathe.* They are not only irrational, but also inanimate.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 8.—"*They that make them are like unto them.*" They that make them *images* show their ingenuity, and doubtless are sensible men ; but they that make them *gods* show their stupidity, and are as senseless, blockish things as the idols themselves.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8.—"*They that make them are like unto them.*" They are like idols, because, though they hear and see, it is more in appearance than in reality ; for they neither see nor hear the things that pertain to salvation, the things that only are worth seeing, so that they may be said more to dream than to see or hear ; as St. Mark has it, " Having eyes ye see not, having ears ye hear not."—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 8.—"*Like unto them,*" etc. Every one is just what his God is ; whoever serves the Omnipotent is omnipotent with him : whoever exalts feebleness, in stupid delusion, to be his god, is feeble along with that god. This is an important preservative against fear for those who are sure that they worship the true God. —*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 8.—"*Like unto them.*" Namely, " hollowness," vanity, unprofitableness : (*tohu*). Isaiah xliv. 9, 10.—*William Kay.*

Verse 8.—They that serve a base god cannot but be of a base spirit, and so can do nothing worthily and generously. Every man's temper is as his god is.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 9.—"*He is their help.*" We should rather have expected, " Our help and our shield," etc. But the burden thrice introduced, appears to be a well-known formula of praise. "*Their,*" *i.e.,* " of all who trust in him." The verses contain a climax : (1) Israel in general is addressed ; (2) the priests or ministers of God's service ; (3) the true Israelites ; not only chosen out of all people, or out of the chosen people for outward service ; but serving God in sincerity of heart.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 10.—"*He is the help*" of his people; they are helpless in themselves, and vain is the help of man, for there is none in him; there is no help but in the Lord, and he is a present, seasonable, and sufficient help. Jehovah the Father has promised them help, and he is both able and faithful to make it good; he has laid help upon his Son for them; and has set up a throne of grace, where they may come for grace to help them in time of need. Christ has helped them out of the miserable estate they were fallen into by sin; he helps them on in their way to heaven, by his power and grace, and at last brings them thither. The Spirit of God helps them to the things of Christ; to many exceeding great and precious promises; and out of many difficulties, snares and temptations; and he helps them in prayer under all their infirmities, and makes intercession for them, according to the will of God; and therefore they should trust in the Lord, Father, Son, and Spirit.—*John Gill.*

Verse 12.—"*The* LORD *hath been mindful of us: he will bless us.*" God hath, and therefore God will, is an ordinary Scripture argument.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 13.—"*He will bless . . . . both small and great.*" Mercy, according to the covenant of grace, giveth the same grounds of faith and hope to everyone within the church; so that whatever of favour is shown to one of God's people, it is of a general use and profit to others. This Scripture sheweth that as the duty of trusting in the Lord is common to all sorts of persons, so the blessing of trust is common, and doth belong to all sorts of believers, small and great. God's Israel consists of several degrees of men. There are magistrates who have their peculiar service; there are ministers who intercede between God and man in things belonging to God, and there are the common sort of them that fear God, and are admitted to the honour of being his people. Now these have all the same privileges. If God be the help and shield of the one, he will be the help and shield of the other; if he bless the one he will bless the other. Every one that feareth God, and is in the number of the true Israelites, may expect his blessing as well as public persons; the meanest peasant as well as the greatest prince, as they have leave to trust in God, so they may expect his blessing. The reason is that they have all an equal interest in the same God, who is a God of goodness and power, able and willing to relieve all those that trust in him. He is alike affected to all his children, and beareth them the same love.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 13.—He says, "*both small and great,*" by which circumstance he magnifies God's paternal regard the more, showing that he does not overlook even the meanest and the most despised, provided they cordially seek his aid. Now as there is no acceptance of persons before God, our low and abject condition ought to be no obstruction to our drawing near to him, since he so kindly invites to approach him those who appear to be held in no reputation. The repetition of the word "*bless*" is intended to mark the uninterrupted stream of his loving-kindness.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*The* LORD *shall increase you,*" etc. This is expressive of the further and increasing blessing of Jehovah on his Israel, upon his ministers, and upon the whole church. They are to be increased in light and knowledge, in gifts and graces, in faith and utterance, in numbers and multitude.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 14.—

The Lord will heap his blessings upon you,
Upon you and your children.

—*William Green, in "A New Translation of the Psalms,"* 1762.

Verse 15.—"*Blessed are ye,*" etc. Ye are the people blessed of old in the person of your father Abraham, by Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth," Gen. xiv. 19. "*Of Jehovah,*" literally, *to Jehovah,* as an object of benediction to him. Or the Hebrew preposition, as in many other cases, may be simply equivalent to our *by.* The creative character of God is mentioned, as ensuring his ability, no less than his willingness, to bless his people.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 16.—"*The heaven, even the heavens, are the* LORD'S." He demonstrates, that, as God has his dwelling-place in the heavens, he must be independent of all worldly riches; for, assuredly, neither wine, nor corn, nor anything requisite for the support of the present life, is produced there. Consequently, God has every resource in himself. To this circumstance the repetition of the term "*heavens*" refers. *The*

heavens, the heavens are enough for God; and as he is superior to all aid, he is to himself instead of a hundred more.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 16.—"*The earth hath he given,*" etc.—This verse is full of beauty, when read in connection with what follows, as a descriptive declaration of the effect of "the regeneration" on this lower scene. For until then, man has rather been given to the earth than the earth to the sons of men. It is but a place of graves, and the day of death seems better than the day of birth, so long as men walk in no brighter light than that of the sun.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 17.—"*The dead praise not the* LORD," etc. David considers not here what men do, or do not, in the next world; but he considers only that in this world he was bound to propagate God's truth, and that he could not do so if God took him away by death. Now there is a double reason given of David's and other holy men's deprecation of death in the Old Testament; one in relation to themselves, *qui promissiones obscuræ*, because Moses had conveyed to those men all God's future blessings, all the joy and glory of heaven, only in the types of earthly things, and said little of the state of the soul after this life. And therefore the promises belonging to the godly after this life, were not so clear that in the contemplation of them they could deliver themselves confidently into the jaws of death: he that is not fully satisfied of the next world, makes shift to be content with this. The other reason was *quia operarii pauci*, because God had a great harvest in hand, and few labourers in it, they were loth to be taken from the work; and this reason was not in relation to themselves, but to God's church, since they would not be able to do God's cause any more good here. This was the other reason that made those good men so lothe to die. *Quid facies nomini tuo?* says Joshua in his prayer to God. If the Canaanites come in to destroy us, and blaspheme thee, what wilt thou do unto thy mighty name? What wilt thou do unto thy glorious church, said the saints of God under the Old Testament, if thou take those men out of the world, whom thou hast chosen, enabled, and qualified, for the edification, sustentation, and propagation of that church? Upon this account David desired to live, not for his own sake, but for God's glory, and his church's good; neither of which could be advanced by him when he was dead.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 17.—"*The dead praise not the* LORD," etc. Who are here meant by "*the dead*"? I cannot rest in the view taken by those who consider this verse simply as a plea by those who use it, that they may be saved from death. They are words provided for the church at large, as the subsequent verse proves. By "*the dead,*" then, I understand those who descend to the silence of eternal death, who have not praised God, and never can. For them the earth might seem never to have been given.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 17.—"*Into silence.*" Into the grave—the land of silence. Ps. xciv. 17. Nothing is more impressive in regard to the grave than its utter *silence*. Not a voice, not a sound, is heard there,—of birds or men—of song or conversation—of the roaring of the sea, the sighing of the breeze, the fury of the storm, the tumult of battle. Perfect stillness reigns there; and the first sound that shall be heard there will be the archangel's trump.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verses 17, 18.—The *people* of God cannot die, because the *praise* of God would die with them, which would be impossible.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verses 17, 18.—It is not to be overlooked that there do occur, in certain Psalms, words which have the appearance of excluding the hope of eternal life.* . . . Yet it is a very significant fact, that in all the Psalms in question, there is an earnest solicitude expressed for the glory of God. If death is deprecated, it is in order that the Lord may not lose the glory, nor his church the services which a life prolonged might furnish. This is well exemplified in the hundred and fifteenth, which I the rather cite because, being the sole exception to the rule, that the dark views of death are found in Psalms of contrition and deep sorrow; it is the only Psalm to which the preceding observations are inapplicable. It is a tranquil hymn of praise.

17. It is not the dead who praise Jah:
    Neither any that go down into silence.
18. But WE will bless Jah,
    From this time forth and for evermore.
    Hallelujah!

The Psalm thus closed, was one of the Songs of the Second Temple.

* Psalm vi. 5, xxx. 9, lxxxviii. 10, 12, lxxxix. 47, cxv. 17.

What we hear in it is the voice of the church, rather than of an individual soul. And this may assist us in perceiving its entire harmony with faith in the heavenly glory. It much concerns the honour of God that there be continued, on the earth, a visible church, in which his name may be recorded from generation to generation. That is a work which cannot be performed by the dead. Since, therefore, the uppermost desire of the church ought ever to be that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom advanced, and his will done in the earth ; it is her duty to pray for continued subsistence here, on the earth, to witness for God. And it is to be carefully observed, that not only in this passage, but in all the parallel texts in which the Psalmists seem to speak doubtfully or disparagingly of the state of the departed, it is in connection with the interest of God's cause on the earth. The thought that is uppermost in their hearts is, that " in death there is no commemoration " of God—no recording of his name for the salvation of men. This single circumstance might, I think, suffice to put the reader on his guard against a precipitate fastening on them of a meaning which would exclude the hope of eternal life. It goes far to show that what the Psalmist deprecates, is not death simply considered, but premature death. Their prayer is, " O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." Ps. cii. 24. And I do not hesitate to say that there are men so placed in stations of eminent usefulness, that it is their duty to make the prayer their own.—*William Binnie.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The passage may be used as, I. A powerful plea in prayer. II. An expression of the true spirit of piety. III. A safe guide in theology. IV. A practical direction in choosing our way of life. V. An acceptable spirit when surveying past or present success.

Verse 1.—I. No praise is due to man. Have we a being ? Not unto us, etc. Have we health ? Not unto us, etc. Have we outward comforts ? Not unto us, etc. Friends ? Not unto us, etc. The means of grace ? Not unto us, etc. Saving faith in Christ ? Not unto us, etc. Gifts and graces ? Not unto us, etc. The hope of glory ? Not unto us, etc. Usefulness to others ? Not unto us, etc. II. All praise is due to God. 1. Because all we have is from mercy. 2. Because all we expect is from faithfulness.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—A taunting question, to which we can give many satisfactory replies.

Verse 2.—Why do they say so ? Why doth God permit them to say so ?—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 2, 3.—I. The inquiry of heathens : ver. 2. 1. Of ignorance. They see a temple but no god. 2. Of reproach to the people of God when their God has forsaken them for a time : " While they say daily unto me, where," etc. II. The reply to their inquiry : ver. 3. Do you ask where is our God ? Ask rather where he is not ? Do you ask what he has done ? " He has done whatsoever he hath pleased."—*G. R.*

Verse 3.—I. His position betokens absolute dominion. II. His actions prove it. III. Yet he condescends to be " our God."

Verse 3 (*second clause*).—The sovereignty of God. Establish and improve the great scriptural doctrine, that the glorious God has a right to exercise dominion over all his creatures ; and to do, in all respects, as he pleases. This right naturally results from his being the *Former* and the *Possessor* of heaven and earth. Consider (1) He is infinitely wise ; he perfectly knows all his creatures, all their actions, and all their tendencies. (2) He is infinitely righteous. (3) He is infinitely good.—*George Burder.*

Verses 4—8.—I. The character of idol gods. Whether our gods are natural objects or riches or worldly pleasures, they have no eye to pity, no ear to hear petitions, no tongue to counsel, no hand to help. II. The character of the true God. He is all eye, all ear, all tongue, all hand, all feet, all mind, all heart. III. The character of the idol worshippers. All become naturally assimilated to the objects of their worship.

Verse 8.—The likeness between idolators and their idols. Work it out in the particulars mentioned.

Verse 9.—The living God claims spiritual worship; the life of such worship is faith; faith proves God to be a living reality—"He is their help," etc. Only elect Israel will ever render this living worship.

Verses 9—11.—I. The reproof. "O Israel!" "O house of Aaron!" "Ye who fear the Lord." Have you been unbelieving towards your God? II. The correction or admonition. "Trust in the Lord." Have you trusted in the true God as others have in their false gods? III. The instruction. "He is their help," etc. Let churches, ministers, and all who fear God know that at all times and under all circumstances he is their help and their shield.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—I. Those who publicly serve should specially trust. "O house of Aaron, trust." II. Those who are specially called shall be specially helped. "He is their help." III. Those who are specially helped in service may be sure of special protection in danger—"and their shield."

Verse 11.—Filial fear the foundation of fuller faith.

Verse 12.—What we have experienced. What we may expect.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 12, 13.—I. What God *has done* for his people: "He hath been mindful of us." 1. Our preservation proves this. 2. Our mercies. 3. Our trials. 4. Our guidance. 5. Our consolations. Everything, even the minutest blessing, represents a thought in the mind of God respecting us. "How precious are thy thoughts concerning me, O God, how great," etc., and those thoughts go back to an eternity before we came into being. "The Lord hath been mindful of us"; then should we not be more mindful of him? II. What he *will do* for his people—"He will bless us." 1. Greatly. His blessings are like himself, great. They are blessed whom he blesses. 2. Suitably. The house of Israel, the house of Aaron, all who fear him, according to their need, both small and great. 3. Assuredly. "He will," "he will," "he will," "he will." With one "will" he curses, with four "wills" he blesses.—*G. R.*

Verse 13.—I. The general character—"fear the Lord." II. The degrees of development—"small and great." III. The common blessing.

Verse 14.—I. Gracious increase—in knowledge, love, power, holiness, usefulness, etc. II. Growing increase—we grow faster, and advance not only more, but more and more. III. Relative increase—our children grow in grace through our examples, etc.

Verse 14.—The blessings of God are, I. *Ever-flowing*—"more and more." II. *Over-flowing*—"you and your children." Let parents seek more grace for themselves for the sake of their children. 1. That they may be more influenced by their example. 2. That their prayers may be more prevalent on their behalf. 3. That their children may be more blessed for their sakes.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—A blessing. I. Belonging to a peculiar people—"ye." II. Coming from a peculiar quarter—"of the Lord," etc. III. Bearing a peculiar date—"are." IV. Stamped with peculiar certainty—"Ye are blessed." V. Involving a peculiar duty—"Bless the Lord now and evermore."

Verse 15.—The Creator's blessing—its greatness, fulness, variety, etc.

Verse 16.—Man's lordship over the world, its limit, its abuse, its legitimate bound, its grand design.

Verses 17, 18.—I. Missing voices—"The dead praise not." II. Their stimulus upon ourselves—"But we." III. Their cry to others—"Praise ye the Lord." Let us make up for the silent voices.

Verses 17, 18.—I. They who do not praise God here will not praise him hereafter. No reprieve therefore from punishment. II. They who praise God in this life will praise him for evermore. Hallelujah for this. "Praise the Lord."—*G. R.*

Verses 17, 18.—A new year's sermon. I. A mournful memory—"the dead." II. A happy resolve—"but we will bless the Lord." III. An appropriate commencement—"from this time forth." IV. An everlasting continuance—"and for evermore."

PSALM CXVI.

SUBJECT.—*This is a continuation of the Paschal Hallel, and therefore must in some measure be interpreted in connection with the coming out of Egypt. It has all the appearance of being a personal song in which the believing soul, reminded by the Passover of its own bondage and deliverance, speaks thereof with gratitude, and praises the Lord accordingly. We can conceive the Israelite with a staff in his hand singing, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," as he remembered the going back of the house of Jacob to the land of their fathers; and then drinking the cup at the feast using the words of the thirteenth verse, "I will take the cup of salvation." The pious man evidently remembers both his own deliverance and that of his people as he sings in the language of the sixteenth verse, "Thou hast loosed my bonds"; but he rises into sympathy with his nation as he thinks of the courts of the Lord's house and of the glorious city, and pledges himself to sing "in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem." Personal love fostered by a personal experience of redemption is the theme of this Psalm, and in it we see the redeemed answered when they pray, preserved in time of trouble, resting in their God, walking at large, sensible of their obligations, conscious that they are not their own but bought with a price, and joining with all the ransomed company to sing hallelujahs unto God.*

Since our divine Master sang this hymn, we can hardly err in seeing here words to which he could set his seal,—words in a measure descriptive of his own experience; but upon this we will not enlarge, as in the notes we have indicated how the Psalm has been understood by those who love to find their Lord in every line.

DIVISION.—*David Dickson has a somewhat singular division of this Psalm, which strikes us as being exceedingly suggestive. He says, "This Psalm is a threefold engagement of the Psalmist unto thanksgiving unto God, for his mercy unto him, and in particular for some notable delivery of him from death, both bodily and spiritual. The first engagement is, that he shall out of love have recourse unto God by prayer, verses* 1 *and* 2; *the reasons and motives whereof are set down, because of his former deliverances,* 3—8; *the second engagement is to a holy conversation, verse* 9; *and the motives and reasons are given in verses* 10 *to* 13; *the third engagement is to continual praise and service, and specially to pay those vows before the church, which he had made in days of sorrow, the reasons whereof are given in verses* 14—19."

EXPOSITION.

I LOVE the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications.
2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.

3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

5 Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful.

6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling.

1. *"I love the LORD."* **A blessed declaration: every believer ought to be able to declare without the slightest hesitation, "I love the Lord." It was required under the law, but was never produced in the heart of man except by the grace of God, and upon gospel principles. It is a great thing to say "I love the Lord"; for the sweetest of all graces and the surest of all evidences of salvation is love. It is great goodness on the part of God that he condescends to be loved by such poor**

creatures as we are, and it is a sure proof that he has been at work in our heart when we can say, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." *"Because he hath heard my voice and my supplications."* The Psalmist not only knows that he loves God, but he knows why he does so. When love can justify itself with a reason, it is deep, strong, and abiding. They say that love is blind; but when we love God our affection has its eyes open and can sustain itself with the most rigid logic. We have reason, superabundant reason, for loving the Lord; and so because in this case principle and passion, reason and emotion go together, they make up an admirable state of mind. David's reason for his love was the love of God in hearing his prayers. The Psalmist had used his *"voice"* in prayer, and the habit of doing so is exceedingly helpful to devotion. If we can pray aloud without being overheard it is well to do so. Sometimes, however, when the Psalmist had lifted up his voice, his utterance had been so broken and painful that he scarcely dared to call it prayer; words failed him, he could only produce a groaning sound, but the Lord heard his moaning voice. At other times his prayers were more regular and better formed: these he calls *"supplications."* David had praised as best he could, and when one form of devotion failed him he tried another. He had gone to the Lord again and again, hence he uses the plural and says "my supplications," but as often as he had gone, so often had he been welcome. Jehovah had heard, that is to say, accepted, and answered both his broken cries and his more composed and orderly supplications; hence he loved God with all his heart. Answered prayers are silken bonds which bind our hearts to God. When a man's prayers are answered, love is the natural result. According to Alexander, both verbs may be translated in the present, and the text may run thus, "I love because Jehovah hears my voice, my supplications." This also is true in the case of every pleading believer. Continual love flows out of daily answers to prayer.

2. *"Because he hath inclined his ear unto me"*:—bowing down from his grandeur to attend to my prayer; the figure seems to be that of a tender physician or loving friend leaning over a sick man whose voice is faint and scarcely audible, so as to catch every accent and whisper. When our prayer is very feeble, so that we ourselves can scarcely hear it, and question whether we do pray or not, yet God bows a listening ear, and regards our supplications. *"Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live,"* or, "in my days." Throughout all the days of my life I will address my prayer to God alone, and to him I will unceasingly pray. It is always wise to go where we are welcome and are well treated. The word "call" may imply praise as well as prayer: calling upon the name of the Lord is an expressive name for adoration of all kinds. When prayer is heard in our feebleness, and answered in the strength and greatness of God, we are strengthened in the habit of prayer, and confirmed in the resolve to make ceaseless intercession. We should not thank a beggar who informed us that because we had granted his request he would never cease to beg of us, and yet doubtless it is acceptable to God that his petitioners should form the resolution to continue in prayer: this shows the greatness of his goodness, and the abundance of his patience. In all days let us pray and praise the Ancient of days. He promises that as our days our strength shall be; let us resolve that as our days our devotion shall be.

3. The Psalmist now goes on to describe his condition at the time when he prayed unto God. *"The sorrows of death compassed me."* As hunters surround a stag with dogs and men, so that no way of escape is left, so was David enclosed in a ring of deadly griefs. The bands of sorrow, weakness, and terror with which death is accustomed to bind men ere he drags them away to their long captivity were all around him. Nor were these things around him in a distant circle, they had come close home, for he adds, *"and the pains of hell gat hold upon me."* Horrors such as those which torment the lost seized me, grasped me, found me out, searched me through and through, and held me a prisoner. He means by the pains of hell those pangs which belong to death, those terrors which are connected with the grave; these were so closely upon him that they fixed their teeth in him as hounds seize their prey. *"I found trouble and sorrow,"* trouble was around me, and sorrow within me. His griefs were double, and as he searched into them they increased. A man rejoices when he finds a hid treasure; but what must be the anguish of a man who finds, where he least expected it, a vein of trouble and sorrow? The Psalmist was sought for by trouble and it found him out, and when he himself became a seeker he found no relief, but double distress.

4. *"Then called I upon the name of the LORD."* Prayer is never out of season, he

prayed *then*, when things were at their worst. When the good man could not run to God, he *called* to him. In his extremity his faith came to the front: it was useless to call on man, and it may have seemed almost as useless to appeal to the Lord; but yet he did with his whole soul invoke all the attributes which make up the sacred name of Jehovah, and thus he proved the truth of his confidence. We can some of us remember certain very special times of trial of which we can now say, "*then* called I upon the name of the Lord." The Psalmist appealed to the Lord's mercy, truth, power, and faithfulness, and this was his prayer,—"*O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*" This form of petition is short, comprehensive, to the point, humble, and earnest. It were well if all our prayers were moulded upon this model; perhaps they would be if we were in similar circumstances to those of the Psalmist, for real trouble produces real prayer. Here we have no multiplicity of words, and no fine arrangement of sentences; everything is simple and natural; there is not a redundant syllable, and yet there is not one lacking.

5. "*Gracious is the* LORD, *and righteous.*" In hearing prayer the grace and righteousness of Jehovah are both conspicuous. It is a great favour to hear a sinner's prayer, and yet since the Lord has promised to do so, he is not unrighteous to forget his promise and disregard the cries of his people. The combination of grace and righteousness in the dealings of God with his servants can only be explained by remembering the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the cross we see how gracious is the Lord and righteous. "*Yea, our God is merciful,*" or compassionate, tender, pitiful, full of mercy. We who have accepted him as ours have no doubt as to his mercy, for he would never have been our God if he had not been merciful. See how the attribute of righteousness seems to stand between two guards of love:—gracious, *righteous*, merciful. The sword of justice is scabbarded in a jewelled sheath of grace.

6. "*The* LORD *preserveth the simple.*" Those who have a great deal of wit may take care of themselves. Those who have no worldly craft and subtlety and guile, but simply trust in God, and do the right, may depend upon it that God's care shall be over them. The worldly-wise with all their prudence shall be taken in their own craftiness, but those who walk in their integrity with single-minded truthfulness before God shall be protected against the wiles of their enemies, and enabled to outlive their foes. Though the saints are like sheep in the midst of wolves, and comparatively defenceless, yet there are more sheep in the world than wolves, and it is highly probable that the sheep will feed in safety when not a single wolf is left upon the face of the earth: even so the meek shall inherit the earth, when the wicked shall be no more. "*I was brought low, and he helped me,*"—simple though I was, the Lord did not pass me by. Though reduced in circumstances, slandered in character, depressed in spirit, and sick in body, the Lord helped me. There are many ways in which the child of God may be brought low, but the help of God is as various as the need of his people: he supplies our necessities when impoverished, restores our character when maligned, raises up friends for us when deserted, comforts us when desponding, and heals our diseases when we are sick. There are thousands in the church of God at this time who can each one of them say for himself, "*I* was brought low, and he helped *me.*" Whenever this can be said it should be said to the praise of the glory of his grace, and for the comforting of others who may pass through the like ordeal. Note how David after stating the general doctrine that the Lord preserveth the simple, proves and illustrates it from his own personal experience. The habit of taking home a general truth and testing the power of it in our own case is an exceedingly blessed one; it is the way in which the testimony of Christ is confirmed in us, and so we become witnesses unto the Lord our God.

7. "*Return unto thy rest, O my soul.*" He calls the rest still his own, and feels full liberty to return to it. What a mercy it is that even if our soul has left its rest for a while we can tell it—"it is thy rest still." The Psalmist had evidently been somewhat disturbed in mind, his troubles had ruffled his spirit; but now with a sense of answered prayer upon him he quiets his soul. He had rested before, for he knew the blessed repose of faith, and therefore he returns to the God who had been the refuge of his soul in former days. Even as a bird flies to its nest, so does his soul fly to his God. Whenever a child of God even for a moment loses his peace of mind, he should be concerned to find it again, not by seeking it in the world or in his own experience, but in the Lord alone. When the believer prays, and the Lord inclines his ear, the road to the old rest is before him, let him not be slow to follow it. "*For the* LORD *hath dealt bountifully with thee.*" Thou hast served a good

God, and built upon a sure foundation ; go not about to find any other rest, but come back to him who in former days hath condescended to enrich thee by his love. What a text is this ! and what an exposition of it is furnished by the biography of every believing man and woman ! The Lord hath dealt bountifully with us, for he hath given us his Son, and in him he hath given us all things : he hath sent us his Spirit, and by him he conveys to us all spiritual blessings. God dealeth with us like a God ; he lays his fulness open to us, and of that fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. We have sat at no niggard's table, we have been clothed by no penurious hand, we have been equipped by no grudging provider ; let us come back to him who has treated us with such exceeding kindness. More arguments follow.

8. *"For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."* The triune God has given us a trinity of deliverances : our life has been spared from the grave, our heart has been uplifted from its griefs, and our course in life has been preserved from dishonour. We ought not to be satisfied unless we are conscious of all three of these deliverances. If our soul has been saved from death, why do we weep ? What cause for sorrow remains ? Whence those tears ? And if our tears have been wiped away, can we endure to fall again into sin ? Let us not rest unless with steady feet we pursue the path of the upright, escaping every snare and shunning every stumblingblock. Salvation, joy, and holiness must go together, and they are all provided for us in the covenant of grace. Death is vanquished, tears are dried, and fears are banished when the Lord is near.

Thus has the Psalmist explained the reasons of his resolution to call upon God as long as he lived, and none can question but that he had come to a most justifiable resolve. When from so great a depth he had been uplifted by so special an interposition of God, he was undoubtedly bound to be for ever the hearty worshipper of Jehovah, to whom he owed so much. Do we not all feel the force of the reasoning, and will we not carry out the conclusion ? May God the Holy Spirit help us so to pray without ceasing and in everything to give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us.

9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
10 I believed, therefore have I spoken : I was greatly afflicted :
11 I said in my haste, All men *are* liars.
12 What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me ?
13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

9. *"I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living."* This is the Psalmist's second resolution, to live as in the sight of God in the midst of the sons of men. By a man's walk is understood his way of life : some men live only as in the sight of their fellow men, having regard to human judgment and opinion ; but the truly gracious man considers the presence of God, and acts under the influence of his all-observing eye. " Thou God seest me " is a far better influence than " My master sees me." The life of faith, hope, holy fear, and true holiness is produced by a sense of living and walking before the Lord, and he who has been favoured with divine deliverances in answer to prayer finds his own experience the best reason for a holy life, and the best assistance to his endeavours. We know that God in a special manner is nigh unto his people : what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness ?

10. *"I believed, therefore have I spoken."* I could not have spoken thus if it had not been for my faith : I should never have spoken unto God in prayer, nor have been able now to speak to my fellow men in testimony if it had not been that faith kept me alive, and brought me a deliverance, whereof I have good reason to boast. Concerning the things of God no man should speak unless he believes ; the speech of the waverer is mischievous, but the tongue of the believer is profitable ; the most powerful speech which has ever been uttered by the lip of man has emanated from a heart fully persuaded of the truth of God. Not only the Psalmist, but such men as Luther, and Calvin, and other great witnesses for the faith, could each one most heartily say, " I believed, therefore have I spoken." *"I was greatly afflicted."* There was no mistake about that ; the affliction was as bitter and as terrible as it well could be, and since I have been delivered from it, I am sure that the deliverance is no fanatical delusion, but a self-evident fact ; therefore am I the more resolved

to speak to the honour of God. Though greatly afflicted, the Psalmist had not ceased to believe: his faith was tried but not destroyed.

11. *"I said in my haste, All men are liars."* In a modified sense the expression will bear justification, even though hastily uttered, for all men will prove to be liars if we unduly trust in them; some from want of truthfulness, and others from want of power. But from the expression, "I said in my haste," it is clear that the Psalmist did not justify his own language, but considered it as the ebullition of a hasty temper. In the sense in which he spoke his language was unjustifiable. He had no right to distrust all men, for many of them are honest, truthful, and conscientious; there are faithful friends and loyal adherents yet alive; and if sometimes they disappoint us, we ought not to call them liars for failing when the failure arises entirely from want of power, and not from lack of will. Under great affliction our temptation will be to form hasty judgments of our fellow men, and knowing this to be the case we ought carefully to watch our spirit, and to keep the door of our lips. The Psalmist had believed, and therefore he spoke; he had doubted, and therefore he spoke in haste. He believed, and therefore he rightly prayed to God; he disbelieved, and therefore he wrongfully accused mankind. Speaking is as ill in some cases as it is good in others. Speaking in haste is generally followed by bitter repentance. It is much better to be quiet when our spirit is disturbed and hasty, for it is so much easier to say than to unsay; we may repent of our words, but we cannot so recall them as to undo the mischief they have done. If even David had to eat his own words, when he spoke in a hurry, none of us can trust our tongue without a bridle.

12. *"What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?"* He wisely leaves off fretting about man's falsehood and his own ill humour, and directs himself to his God. It is of little use to be harping on the string of man's imperfection and deceitfulness; it is infinitely better to praise the perfection and faithfulness of God. The question of the verse is a very proper one: the Lord has rendered so much mercy to us that we ought to look about us, and look within us, and see what can be done by us to manifest our gratitude. We ought not only to do what is plainly before us, but also with holy ingenuity to search out various ways by which we may render fresh praises unto our God. His benefits are so many that we cannot number them, and our ways of acknowledging his bestowments ought to be varied and numerous in proportion. Each person should have his own peculiar mode of expressing gratitude. The Lord sends each one a special benefit, let each one enquire, "What shall *I* render? What form of service would be most becoming in me?"

13. *"I will take the cup of salvation."* "I will take" is a strange answer to the question, "What shall I render?" and yet it is the wisest reply that could possibly be given.

> "The best return for one like me,
> So wretched and so poor,
> Is from his gifts to draw a plea
> And ask him still for more."

To take the cup of salvation was in itself an act of worship, and it was accompanied with other forms of adoration, hence the Psalmist says, *"and call upon the name of the LORD."* He means that he will utter blessings and thanksgivings and prayers, and then drink of the cup which the Lord had filled with his saving grace. What a cup this is! Upon the table of infinite love stands the cup full of blessing; it is ours by faith to take it in our hand, make it our own, and partake of it, and then with joyful hearts to laud and magnify the gracious One who has filled it for our sakes that we may drink and be refreshed. We can do this figuratively at the sacramental table, we can do it spiritually every time we grasp the golden chalice of the covenant, realizing the fulness of blessing which it contains, and by faith receiving its divine contents into our inmost soul. Beloved reader, let us pause here and take a long and deep draught from the cup which Jesus filled, and then with devout hearts let us worship God.

14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints.

16 O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant: I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people,

19 In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

14. *"I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people."* The Psalmist has already stated his third resolution, to devote himself to the worship of God evermore, and here he commences the performance of that resolve. The vows which he had made in anguish, he now determines to fulfil: "I will pay my vows unto the Lord." He does so at once, *"now,"* and that publicly, "in the presence of all his people." Good resolutions cannot be carried out too speedily; vows become debts, and debts should be paid. It is well to have witnesses to the payment of just debts, and we need not be ashamed to have witnesses to the fulfilling of holy vows, for this will show that we are not ashamed of our Lord, and it may be a great benefit to those who look on and hear us publicly sounding forth the praises of our prayer-hearing God. How can those do this who have never with their mouth confessed their Saviour? O secret disciples, what say you to this verse! Be encouraged to come into the light and own your Redeemer. If, indeed, you have been saved, come forward and declare it in his own appointed way.

15. *"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints,"* and therefore he did not suffer the Psalmist to die, but delivered his soul from death. This seems to indicate that the song was meant to remind Jewish families of the mercies received by any one of the household, supposing him to have been sore sick and to have been restored to health, for the Lord values the lives of his saints, and often spares them where others perish. They shall not die prematurely; they shall be immortal till their work is done; and when their time shall come to die, then their deaths shall be precious. The Lord watches over their dying beds, smooths their pillows, sustains their hearts, and receives their souls. Those who are redeemed with precious blood are so dear to God that even their deaths are precious to him. The death-beds of saints are very precious to the church, she often learns much from them; they are very precious to all believers, who delight to treasure up the last words of the departed; but they are most of all precious to the Lord Jehovah himself, who view the triumphant deaths of his gracious ones with sacred delight. If we have walked before him in the land of the living, we need not fear to die before him when the hour of our departure is at hand.

16. The man of God in paying his vows re-dedicates himself unto God; the offering which he brings is himself, as he cries, *"O LORD, truly I am thy servant,"* rightfully, really, heartily, constantly, I own that I am thine, for thou hast delivered and redeemed me. *"I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid,"* a servant born in thy house, born of a servant and so born a servant, and therefore doubly thine. My mother was thine handmaid, and I, her son, confess that I am altogether thine by claims arising out of my birth. O that children of godly parents would thus judge; but, alas, there are many who are the sons of the Lord's handmaids, but they are not themselves his servants. They give sad proof that grace does not run in the blood. David's mother was evidently a gracious woman, and he is glad to remember that fact, and to see in it a fresh obligation to devote himself to God. *"Thou hast loosed my bonds,"*—freedom from bondage binds me to thy service. He who is loosed from the bonds of sin, death, and hell should rejoice to wear the easy yoke of the great Deliverer. Note how the sweet singer delights to dwell upon his belonging to the Lord; it is evidently his glory, a thing of which he is proud, a matter which causes him intense satisfaction. Verily, it ought to create rapture in our souls if we are able to call Jesus Master, and are acknowledged by him as his servants.

17. *"I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving."* Being thy servant, I am bound to sacrifice to thee, and having received spiritual blessings at thy hands I will not bring bullock or goat, but I will bring that which is more suitable, namely, the thanksgiving of my heart. My inmost soul shall adore thee in gratitude. *"And will call upon the name of the LORD,"* that is to say, I will bow before thee reverently, lift up my heart in love to thee, think upon thy character, and adore thee as thou dost reveal thyself. He is fond of this occupation, and several times in this Psalm

declares that " he will call upon the name of the Lord," while at the same time he rejoices that he had done so many a time before. Good feelings and actions bear repeating: the more of hearty callings upon God the better.

18. *"I will pay my vows unto the* LORD *now in the presence of all his people."* He repeats the declaration. A good thing is worth saying twice. He thus stirs himself up to greater heartiness, earnestness, and diligence in keeping his vow,—really paying it at the very moment that he is declaring his resolution to do so. The mercy came in secret, but the praise is rendered in public; the company was, however, select; he did not cast his pearls before swine, but delivered his testimony before those who could understand and appreciate it.

19. *"In the courts of the* LORD'S *house":* in the proper place, where God had ordained that he should be worshipped. See how he is stirred up at the remembrance of the house of the Lord, and must needs speak of the holy city with a note of joyful exclamation—*"In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem."* The very thought of the beloved Zion touched his heart, and he writes as if he were actually addressing Jerusalem, whose name was dear to him. There would he pay his vows, in the abode of fellowship, in the very heart of Judea, in the place to which the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord. There is nothing like witnessing for Jesus, where the report thereof will be carried into a thousand homes. God's praise is not to be confined to a closet, nor his name to be whispered in holes and corners, as if we were afraid that men should hear us; but in the thick of the throng, and in the very centre of assemblies, we should lift up heart and voice unto the Lord, and invite others to join with us in adoring him, saying, *"Praise ye the* LORD," or Hallelujah. This was a very fit conclusion of a song to be sung when all the people were gathered together at Jerusalem to keep the feast. God's Spirit moved the writers of these Psalms to give them a fitness and suitability which was more evident in their own day than now; but enough is perceptible to convince us that every line and word had a peculiar adaptation to the occasions for which the sacred sonnets were composed. When we worship the Lord we ought with great care to select the words of prayer and praise, and not to trust to the opening of a hymn-book, or to the unconsidered extemporizing of the moment. Let all things be done decently and in order, and let all things begin and end with Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—A Psalm of Thanksgiving in the Person of Christ. He is imagined by the prophet to have passed through the sorrows and afflictions of life. The atonement is passed. He has risen from the dead. He is on the right hand of the Majesty on High; and he proclaims to the whole world the mercies he experienced from God in the day of his incarnation, and the glories which he has received in the kingdom of his Heavenly Father. Yet, although the Psalm possesses this power, and, by its own internal evidence, proves the soundness of the interpretation, it is yet highly mystic in its mode of disclosure, and requires careful meditation in bringing out its real results. Its language, too, is not so exclusively appropriate to the Messiah, that it shall not be repeated and applied by the believer to his own trials in the world; so that while there is much that finds a ready parallel in the exaltation of Christ in heaven, there is much that would seem to be restrained to his condition upon earth. It therefore depends much on *the mind* of the individual, whether he will receive it in the higher sense of the Redeemer's glory; or restrict it *solely* to a thanksgiving for blessings amidst those sufferings in life to which all men have been subject in the same manner, though not to the same extent as Jesus. The most perfect and the most profitable reading would combine the two, taking Christ as *the exemplar* of God's mercies towards ourselves.

1. Enthroned in eternity, and triumphant over sin and death—I—Christ—am well pleased that my Heavenly Father listened to the anxious prayers that I made to him in the day of my sorrows; when I had neither strength in my own mind, nor assistance from men; therefore *"through my days"*—through the endless ages

of my eternal existence—will I call upon him in my gratitude, and praise him with my whole heart.

3. In the troublous times of my incarnation I was encircled with snares, and urged onwards towards my death. The priest and ruler; the Pharisee and the scribe; the rich and the poor, clamoured fiercely for my destruction. The whole nation conspired against me. *"The bands of the grave"* laid hold of me, and I was hurried to the cross.

4. Then, *truly* did Christ find heaviness and affliction. "His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He prayed anxiously to his Heavenly Father, that "the cup might pass from him." The fate of the whole world was in the balance; and he supplicated with agony, that his *soul* might be delivered.

5. The abrupt breaking off in this verse from the direct narrative of his own sorrows is wonderfully grand and beautiful. Nor less so, is the expression *"our* God" as applied by Christ to his own disciples and believers. "*I called*," he states, *"on the name of the* LORD." But he does not yet state the answer. He leaves that to be inferred from the assurance that God is *ever* gracious to the faithful; yea, *"our* God"—the protector of the Christian church, as well as of myself—*"our God is merciful."*

6. Instantly, however, he resumes. Mark the energy of the language, "I was afflicted; and he delivered me." And how delivered? The soul of Christ has returned freely to its tranquillity; for though the body and the frame perished on the tree, yet the soul burst through the bands of death. Again in the full stature of a perfect man Christ rose resplendent in glory to the mansions of eternity. The tears ceased; the sorrows were hushed; and henceforward, through the boundless day of immortality, doth he "walk before Jehovah, in the land of *the living.*" This last is one of those expressions in the Psalm which might, without reflection, seem adapted to the rescued believer's state on earth, rather than Christ's in heaven. But applying the language of earthly things to heavenly—which is usual, even in the most mystic writings of Scripture—nothing can be finer than the appellation of *"the land of the living,"* when assigned to the future residence of the soul. It is the noblest application of the metaphor, and is singularly appropriate to those eternal mansions where death and sorrow are alike unknown.

10. This stanza will bear an emendation.

> I felt confidence, although I said,—
> "I am sore afflicted."
> I said in my sudden terror,—
> "All mankind are false."—*French.*

It alludes to the eve of his crucifixion, when worn down with long watchfulness and fasting, his spirit almost fainted in the agony of Gethsemane. Still, oppressed and stricken as he was in soul, he yet trusted in Jehovah, for he felt assured that he would not forsake him. But, sustained by God, he was deserted by men, the disciples with whom he had lived; the multitudes whom he had taught; the afflicted whom he had healed, *"all* forsook him and fled." Not one—not even the "disciples whom he loved"—remained; and in the anguish of that desertion he could not refrain from the bitter thought, that all mankind were alike false and treacherous.

12. But that dread hour has passed. He has risen from the dead; and stands girt with truth and holiness and glory. What then is his earliest thought? Hear it, O man, and blush for thine oft ingratitude! I will lift up *"the cup of deliverance"* —the drink-offering made to God with sacrifice after any signal mercies received—and bless the Lord who has been thus gracious to me. In the sight of the whole world will I pay my past vows unto Jehovah, and bring nations from every portion of the earth, reconciled and holy through the blood of my atonement.

The language in these verses, as in the concluding part of the Psalm, is wholly drawn from earthly objects and modes of religious service, well recognized by the Jews. It is in these things that the *spiritual* sense is required to be separated from the external emblem. For instance, the sacramental cup was without a doubt drawn and instituted from the cup used in commemoration of deliverances by the Jews. It is used figuratively by Christ in heaven; but the reflective mind can scarcely fail to see the beauty of imagining it in his hand in thankfulness for his triumph, *because* "he has burst his bonds in sunder": the bonds which held him fast in death, and confined him to the tomb: the assertion that "precious in the

sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints" *specially includes* the sacrifice of Christ within its more general allusion to the blood shed, in such abundance, by prophets and martyrs to the truth. In the same manner the worship of Jehovah in the courts of his temple at Jerusalem is used in figure for the open promulgation of Christianity to the whole world. The temple services were the most solemn and most public which were offered by the Jews; and when Christ is said to "offer his sacrifices of thanksgiving" to God *in the sight of all his people*, the figure is easily separated from the grosser element; and *the conversion* of all people intimated under the form of Christ *seen* by all.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 1.—"*I love.*" The expression of the prophet's affection is in this short abrupt phrase, "*I love*," which is but one word in the original, and expressed as a full and entire sentence in itself, thus—"*I love because the Lord hath heard*," etc. Most translators so turn it, as if, by a trajection, or passing of a word from one sentence to another, this title Lord were to be joined with the first clause, thus—(אָהַבְתִּי כִּי־יִשְׁמַע יְהוָה), "*I love the* LORD, *because he hath heard*," etc. I deny not but that thus the sense is made somewhat the more perspicuous, and the words run the more roundly; yet are they not altogether so emphatical. For when a man's heart is inflamed, and his soul ravished with a deep apprehension of some great and extroardinary favour, his affection will cause interruption in the expression thereof, and make stops in his speech; and therefore this concise and abrupt clause, "*I love*," declareth a more entire and ardent affection than a more full and round phrase would do. Great is the force of true love, so that it cannot be sufficiently expressed.—*William Gouge*, 1575—1653.

Verse 1.—"*I love the* LORD." Oh that there were such hearts in us that we could every one say, as David, with David's spirit, upon his evidence, "*I love the* LORD"; that were more worth than all these, viz.; First, to know all scerets. Secondly, to prophesy. Thirdly, to move mountains, etc., 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, etc. "*I love the* LORD"; it is more than I know the Lord; for even castaways are enlightened, (Heb. vi. 4); more than I fear the Lord, for devils fear him unto trembling (James ii. 19); more than I pray to God (Isai. i. 15). What should I say? More than all services, than all virtues separate from charity: truly say the schools, charity is the form of all virtues, because it forms them all to acceptability, for nothing is accepted but what issues from charity, or, in other words, from the love of God.—*William Slater*, 1638.

Verse 1.—"*I love the* LORD, *because*," etc. How vain and foolish is the *talk*, "To love God for his benefits towards us is mercenary, and cannot be pure love!" Whether pure or impure, there is no other love that can flow from the heart of the creature to its Creator. "We love him," said the holiest of Christ's disciples, "because he first loved us;" and the increase of our love and filial evidence is in proportion to the increased sense we have of our obligation to him. We love him for the benefits bestowed on us.—*Love begets love.—Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—"*He hath heard my voice.*" But is this such a benefit to us, that God hears us? Is his hearing our voice such an argument of his love? Alas! he may hear us, and we be never the better: he may hear our voice, and yet his love to us may be but little, for he will not give a man the hearing, though he love him not at all? With men perhaps it may be so, but not with God; for his hearing is not only voluntary, but reserved; *non omnibus dormit:* his ears are not open to every one's cry; indeed, to hear us, is in God so great a favour, that he may well be counted his favourite whom he vouchsafes to hear: and the rather, for that his hearing is always operative, and with a purpose of helping; so that if he hear my voice, I may be sure he means to grant my supplication; or rather perhaps in David's manner of expressing, and in God's manner of proceeding, to hear my voice is no less in effect than to grant my supplication.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 1.—"*Hath heard.*" By hearing prayer God giveth evidence of the notice which he taketh of our estates, of the respect he beareth to our persons, of the pity he hath of our miseries, of his purpose to supply our wants, and of his mind to do us good according to our needs.—*William Gouge.*

Verses 1 and 2.—The first שָׁמַע is more of an aorist. The Lord hears always; and then, making a distinction קֹלִי תַּחֲנוּנָי. He has done it hitherto; אֶקְרָא Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live, cleaving to Him in love and faith! It should be noticed, in addition, that קרא here is not simply the prayer for help, but includes also the praising and thanksgiving, according to the twofold significa-

tion of קָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה, in verses 4, 13, and 17: therefore, Jarchi very excellently says: *In the time of my distress I will call upon Him, and in the time of my deliverance I will praise Him.—Rudolph Stier.*

Verses 1, 2.—"*I love.*" "*Therefore will I call upon him.*" It is love that doth open our mouths, that we may praise God with joyful lips; "I will love the Lord because he hath heard the voice of my supplications"; and then, ver. 2, "I will call upon him as long as I live." The proper intent of mercies is to draw us to God. When the heart is full of a sense of the goodness of the Lord, the tongue cannot hold its peace. Self-love may lead us to prayers, but love to God excites us to praises: therefore to seek and not to praise, is to be lovers of ourselves rather than of God.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 1, 12.—"*I love.*" "*What shall I render?*" Love and thankfulness are like the symbolical qualities of the elements, easily resolved into each other. David begins with, "*I love the* LORD, *because he hath heard my voice*"; and to enkindle this grace into a greater flame, he records the mercies of God in some following verses; which done, then he is in the right mood for praise; and cries, "*What shall I render unto the* LORD *for all his benefits?*" The spouse, when thoroughly awake, pondering with herself what a friend had been at her door, and how his sweet company was lost through her unkindness, shakes off her sloth, riseth, and away she goes after him; now, when by running after her beloved, she hath put her soul into a heat of love, she breaks out in praising him from top to toe. Cant. v. 10. That is the acceptable praising which comes from a warm heart; and the saint must use some holy exercise to stir up his habit of love, which like natural heat in the body, is preserved and increased by motion.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*He hath inclined his ear unto me.*" How great a blessing, is the inclining of the Divine ear, may be judged from the conduct of great men, who do not admit a wretched petitioner to audience: but, if they do anything, receive the main part of the complaint through the officer appointed for such matters, or through a servant. But God himself hears immediately, and *inclines his ear*, hearing readily, graciously, constantly, etc. Who would not pray?—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 2.—And now *because he hath inclined his ear unto me*, I will therefore *call upon him as long as I live:* that if it be expected I should call upon any other, it must be when I am dead; for as long as I live, I have vowed to call upon God. But will this be well done? May I not, in so doing, do more than I shall have thanks for? Is this the requital that God shall have for his kindness in hearing me, that now he shall have a customer of me, and never be quiet because of my continual running to him, and calling upon him? Doth God get anything by my calling upon him, that I should make it a vow, as though in calling upon him I did him a pleasure? O my soul, I would that God might indeed have a customer of me in praying: although I confess I should not be so bold to call upon him so continually, if his own commanding me did not make it a duty: for hath not God bid me call upon him when I am in trouble? and is there any time that I am not in trouble, as long as I live in this vale of misery? and then can there be any time as long as I live, that I must not call upon him? For shall God bid me, and shall I not do it? Shall God incline his ear, and stand listening to hear, and shall I hold my peace that he may have nothing to hear?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"*Therefore will I call upon him.*" If the hypocrite speed in prayer, and get what he asks, then also he throws up prayer, and will ask no more. If from a sick bed he be raised to health, he leaves prayer behind him, as it were, sick-abed; he grows weak in calling upon God, when at his call God hath given him strength. And thus it is in other instances. When he hath got what he hath a mind to in prayer, he hath no more mind to pray. Whereas a godly man prays after he hath sped, as he did before, and though he fall not into those troubles again, and so is not occasioned to urge those petitions again which he did in trouble, yet he cannot live without prayer, because he cannot live out of communion with God. The creature is as the white of an egg, tasteless to him, unless he enjoy God. David saith, "*I love the* LORD, *because he hath heard my voice and my supplications*," that is, because he hath granted me that which I supplicated to him for. But did this grant of what he had asked take him off from asking more? The next words show us what his resolution was upon that grant. "*Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live*"; as if he had said, I will never give over praying, forasmuch as I have been heard in prayer.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 2.—"*As long as I live.*" Not on some few days, but every day of my life; for to pray on certain days, and not on all, is the mark of one who loathes and not of one who loves.—*Ambrose.*

Verse 3.—Here beginneth the exemplification of God's kindness to his servant; the first branch whereof is a description of the danger wherein he was and out of which he was delivered. Now, to magnify the kindness of God the more in delivering him out of the same, he setteth it out with much variety of words and phrases.

The first word חֶבְלֵי, "*sorrows,*" is diversely translated. Some expound it snares, some cords, some sorrows. The reason of this difference is because the word itself is metaphorical. It is taken from cruel creditors, who will be sure to tie their debtors fast, as with cords, so that they shall not easily get loose and free again. The pledge which the debtor leaveth with his creditor as a pawn, hath this name in Hebrew; so also a cord wherewith things are tied fast; and the mast of a ship fast fixed, and tied on every side with cords; and bands or troops of men combined together; and the pain of a woman in travail, which is very great; and destruction with pain and anguish. Thus we see that such a word is used here as setteth out a most lamentable and inextricable case.

The next word, "*of death*" מָוֶת, sheweth that his case was deadly; death was before his eyes; death was as it were threatened. He is said to be "*compassed*" herewith in two respects: (1) To show that these sorrows were not far off, but even upon him, as waters that compass a man when he is in the midst of them, or as enemies that begird a place. (2) To show that they were not few, but many sorrows, as bees that swarm together.

The word translated "*pains,*" מְצָרֵי, in the original is put for sacks fast bound together, and flint stones, and fierce enemies, and hard straits; so that this word also aggravateth his misery.

The word translated "*hell,*" שְׁאוֹל, is usually taken in the Old Testament for the grave; it is derived from שָׁאַל, a verb that signifieth to crave, because the grave is ever craving, and never satisfied.

The words translated "*gat hold on me,*" מְצָאוּנִי, and "*I found,*" אֶמְצָא, are both the same verb; they differ only in circumstances of tense, number, and person. The former showeth that these miseries found him, and as a serjeant they seized on him; he did not seek them, he would wittingly and willingly have escaped them, if he could. The latter sheweth that indeed he found them; he felt the tartness and bitterness, the smart and pain of them.

The word translated *trouble,* צָרָה of צוּר, hath a near affinity with the former word translated pain, מְצַר of צוּר, and is used to set out as great misery as that; and yet further to aggravate the same, another word is added thereto, "*sorrow.*"

The last word, "*sorrow,*" יָגוֹן of יָגָה, importeth such a kind of calamity as maketh them that lie under it much to grieve, and also moveth others that behold it much to pity them. It is often used in the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Either of these two last words, trouble and sorrow, do declare a very perplexed and distressed estate; what then both of them joined together? For the Holy Ghost doth not multiply words in vain.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 3.—"*Gat hold upon me.*" The original word is, *found me,* as we put in the margin. They found him, as an officer or serjeant finds a person that he is sent to arrest; who no sooner finds him, but he takes hold of him, or takes him into custody. When warrants are sent out to take a man who keeps out of the way, the return is, *Non est inventus,* the man is not found, he cannot be met with, or taken hold of. David's pains quickly found him, and having found him they gat hold of him. Such finding is so certainly and suddenly followed with taking hold, and holding what is taken, that one word in the Hebrew serves to express both acts. When God sends out troubles and afflictions as officers to attack any man, they will find him, and finding him, they will take hold of him. The days of affliction will take hold; there's no striving, no struggling with them, no getting out of their hands. These divine pursuivants will neither be persuaded nor bribed to let you go, till God speak the word, till God say, Deliver him, release him. "*I found trouble and sorrow.*" I found trouble which I looked not for. I was not searching after sorrow, but I found it. There's an elegancy in the original. The Hebrew is, "*The pains of hell found me.*" They found me, I did not find them;

but no sooner had the pains of hell found me, than I found trouble and sorrow, enough, and soon enough.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—See how the saints instead of lessening the dangers and tribulations, with which they are exercised by God, magnify them in figurative phraseology: neither do they conceal their distress of soul, but clearly and willingly set it forth. Far otherwise are the minds of those who regard their own glory and not the glory of God. The saints, that they may make more illustrious the glory of the help of God, declare things concerning themselves which make but little for their own glory.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verses 3—7.—Those usually have most of heaven upon earth, that formerly have met with most of hell upon earth. *"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow:* (as Jonas crying in the belly of hell). But look upon him within two or three verses after, and you may see him in an ecstasy, as if he were in heaven; verse 7: *"Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the* LORD *hath dealt bountifully with thee."—Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 4.—*"The name of the* LORD." God's name, as it is set out in the word, is both a glorious name, full of majesty; and also a gracious name, full of mercy. His majesty worketh fear and reverence, his mercy faith and confidence. By these graces man's heart is kept within such a compass, that he will neither presume above that which is meet, nor despond more than there is cause. But where God's name is not rightly known, it cannot be avoided but that they who come before him must needs rush upon the rock of presumption, or sink into the gulf of desperation. Necessary, therefore, it is that God be known of them that pray to him, that in truth they may say, *"We have called upon the name of the* LORD." Be persuaded hereby so to offer up your spiritual sacrifice of supplication to God, that he may have respect to your persons and prayers, as he had respect to Abel and his offering. Learn to know the name of God, as in his word it is made known; and then, especially when you draw near to him, meditate on his name. Assuredly God will take good notice of them that take due notice of him, and will open his ears to them by name who rightly call upon his name.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 4.—*"O* LORD, *I beseech thee, deliver my soul."* A short prayer for so great a suit, and yet as short as it was, it prevailed. If we wondered before at the power of God, we may wonder now at the power of prayer, that can prevail with God, for obtaining of that which in nature is impossible, and to reason is incredible.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—We learn here that there is nothing better and more effectual in distressing agonies than assiduous prayer—*"Then called I upon the name of the* LORD;" but in such prayers the first care ought to be for the salvation of the soul—*"I beseech thee, deliver my soul";* for, this being done, God also either removes or mitigates the bodily disease.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 5.—*"Gracious is the* LORD," etc. He is *gracious* in hearing, he is *"righteous"* in judging, he is *"merciful"* in pardoning, and how, then, can I doubt of his will to help me? He is righteous to reward according to deserts; he is gracious to reward above deserts; yea, he is merciful to reward without deserts; and how, then, can I doubt of his will to help me? He is gracious, and this shews his bounty; he is righteous, and this shews his justice; yea, he is merciful, and this shews his love; and how, then, can I doubt of his will to help me? If he were not gracious I could not hope he would hear me; if he were not righteous, I could not depend upon his promise; if he were not merciful, I could not expect his pardon; but now that he is gracious and righteous and merciful too, how can I doubt of his will to help me?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—The first attribute, *"gracious,"* (חַנּוּן) hath especial respect to that goodness which is in God himself. The root (חָנַן) whence it cometh signifieth to do a thing gratis, freely, of one's own mind and goodwill. This is that word which is used to set out the free grace and mere goodwill of God, thus (וְחָנַנְתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אָחֹן), "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious," Exod. xxxiii. 19. There is also an adverb (חִנָּם) derived thence, which signifieth gratis, freely, as where Laban thus speaketh to Jacob, "Shouldst thou serve me for nought?" Thus is the word opposed to merit. And hereby the prophet acknowledged that the deliverance which God gave was for the Lord's own sake, upon no desert of him that was delivered.

The second attribute, *"righteous"* or just, (צַדִּיק), hath particular relation to the

promise of God. God's righteousness largely taken is the integrity or equity of all his counsels, words, and actions. . . . Particularly is God's righteousness manifested in giving reward and taking vengeance. Thus it is said to be " a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ; and to you who are troubled rest," 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. . . . But the occasion of mentioning God's righteousness here in this place being to show the ground of his calling on God, and of God's delivering him, it must needs have respect to God's word and promise, and to God's truth in performing what he hath promised.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 5.—"*The* LORD " ; *"our God."* The first title, *"Lord,"* sets out the excellency of God. Fit mention is here made thereof, to shew the blessed concurrence of greatness and goodness in God. Though he be Jehovah the Lord, yet is he gracious, and righteous, and merciful. The second title, *"our God,"* manifesteth a peculiar relation betwixt him and the faithful that believe in him, and depend on him, as this prophet did. And to them in an especial manner the Lord is gracious, which moved him thus to change the person ; for where he had said in the third person " the Lord is gracious," here, in the first person, he says, *"our God,"* yet so that he appropriateth not this privilege to himself, but acknowledgeth it to be common to all of like character by using the plural number, *"our."—William Gouge.*

Verse 5.—The " Berlenburger Bibelwerk " says, " The righteousness is very significantly placed between the grace and the mercy : for it is still necessary, that the evil should be mortified and driven out. Grace lays, as it were, the foundation for salvation, and mercy perfects the work ; but not till righteousness has finished its intermediary work."—*Rudolph Stier.*

Verse 5.—*"Our God is merciful."* Mercy is God's darling attribute ; and by his infinite wisdom he has enabled mercy to triumph over justice without in any degree violating his honour or his truth. The character of merciful is that by which our God seems to delight in being known. When he proclaimed himself amid terrific grandeur to the children of Israel, it was as " the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin." And such was the impression of this his character on the mind of Jonah that he says to him, " I knew that thou wert a merciful God." These, however, are not mere assertions—claims made to the character by God on the one hand, and extorted without evidence from man on the other ; for in whatever way we look upon God, and examine into his conduct towards his creatures, we perceive it to bear the impression of mercy. Nor can we more exalt the Lord our God than by speaking of his mercy and confiding in it ; for our " Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy."—*John Gwyther*, 1833.

Verse 6.—"*The* LORD *preserveth the simple.*" God taketh most care of them that, being otherwise least cared for, wholly depend on him. These are in a good sense simple ones ; simple in the world's account, and simple in their own eyes. Such as he that said, " I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Ps. xxii. 6. And again, " I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me." Ps. xl. 17. These are those poor ones of a contrite spirit on whom the Lord looketh. Isai. lxvi. 2. Of such fatherless is God a father ; and of such widows a judge. Read Ps. lxviii. 5, and cxlvi. 7, 8, 9. Yea, read observantly the histories of the Gospel, and well weigh who they were to whom Christ in the days of his flesh afforded succour, and you shall find them to be such simple ones as are here intended.

By such objects the free grace and merciful mind of the Lord is best manifested. Their case being most miserable, in reference to human helps, the greater doth God's mercy appear to be ; and since there is nothing in them to procure favour or succour from God, for in their own and others' eyes they are nothing, what God doth for them evidently appeareth to be freely done.

Behold here how of all others they who seem to have least cause to trust on God have most cause to trust on him. Simple persons, silly wretches, despicable fools in the world's account, who have not subtle brains, or crafty wits to search after indirect means, have, notwithstanding, enough to support them, in the grand fact that they are such as the Lord preserveth. Now, who knoweth not that " It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man ; it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes " ? Ps. cxviii. 8, 9.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 6.—"*The* LORD *preserveth the simple.*" How delightful it is to be able to reflect on the character of God as *preserving* the soul. The word properly signifies

to defend us at any season of danger. The Hebrew word which is translated "*simple*," signifies one who has no control over himself, one that cannot resist the power and influence of those around, and one, therefore, subject to the greatest peril from which he has naturally no deliverance. "The Lord preserveth": his eye is upon them, his hand is over them, and they cannot fall. The word "*simple*" signifies likewise those that are ignorant of their condition, and not watching over their foes. Delightful thought, that though we may be thus ignorant, yet we are blessed with the means of escape! We may be simple to the last extent, and our simplicity may be such as to involve our mind in the greatest doubt: the Lord preserveth us, and let us rest in him. It is delightful to reflect, that it is the simple in whom the Lord delights, whom he loves to bless. We are sometimes especially in the condition in which we may be inclined to make the inquiry, how we may be saved. We suppose there are many truths to be apprehended, many principles to be realized before we can be saved. No; "the Lord preserveth the simple." We may be able to reconcile scarcely any of the doctrines of Christianity with each other; we may find ourselves in the greatest perplexity when we examine the evidences on which they rest; we may be exposed to great difficulty when we seek to apply them to practical usefulness; but still we may adopt the language before us: "*The* LORD *preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul.*"—*R. S. M'All*, 1834.

Verse 6.—"*The* LORD *preserveth the simple.*" The term *simple* equals the "simplicity" of the New Testament, namely, that pure mind towards God, which, without looking out for help from any other quarter, and free from all dissimulation, expects salvation from him alone.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 6.—"*The simple.*" They are such as honestly keep the plain way of God's commandments, without those slights, or creeks of carnal policy, for which men are in the world esteemed wise; see Gen. xxv. 27, where Jacob is called a plain man. Simple or foolish he calls them, because they are generally so esteemed amongst the wise of the world; not that they are so silly as they are esteemed; for if the Lord can judge of wisdom or folly, the only fool is the Atheist and profane person (Ps. xiv. 1); the only wise man in the world is the plain, downright Christian (Deut. iv. 6), who keeps himself precisely in all states to that plain, honest course the Lord hath prescribed him. To such simple ones, God's fools, who in their misery and affliction keep them only to the means of deliverance and comfort which the Lord hath prescribed them, belongs this blessing of preservation from mischief, or destruction: so Solomon (Prov. xvi. 17), "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil." "He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul"; see also Prov. xix. 16, 23; for exemplification see in Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 9—12, and xvi. 7, 8, 9, read the excellent speech of Hanani the seer.—*William Slater*, 1638.

Verse 6.—"*I was brought low.*" By affliction and trial. The Hebrew literally means to hang down, to be pendulous, to swing, to waive—as a bucket in a well, or as the slender branches of the palm, the willow, etc. Then it means to be slack, feeble, weak, as in sickness, etc. It probably refers to the prostration of strength by disease. "*And he helped me.*" He gave me strength; he restored me.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6.—"*I was brought low, and he helped me.*" The word translated "*brought low,*" דַּלֹּתִי אֶ , properly signifieth to be drawn dry. The metaphor is taken from ponds, or brooks, or rivers that are clean exhausted and dried up, where water utterly faileth. Thus doth Isaiah use this word, "The brooks shall be emptied and dried up," Isai. xix. 6, דָּלְלוּ וְחָרְבוּ יְאֹרֵי. Being applied to man, it setteth out such an one as is spent, utterly wasted, or, as we use to speak, clean gone, who hath no ability to help himself, no means of help, no hope of help from others.

The other word whereby the succour which God afforded is expressed, and translated "*helped*" וְיהוֹשִׁיעַ *ab* יָשַׁע, signifieth such help as freeth out of danger. It is usually translated "to save."—*William Gouge.*

Verse 6.—"*I was brought low, and he helped me.*" Then is the time of help, when men are brought low: and therefore God who does all things in due time when I was brought low, then helped me. Wherefore, O my soul, let it never trouble thee how low soever thou be brought, for when thy state is at the lowest, then is God's assistance at the nearest. We may truly say, God's ways are not as the ways of the world, for in the world when a man is once brought low, he is commonly trampled upon, and nothing is heard then but, "down with him, down to the ground": but with God it is otherwise; for his delight is to raise up them that fall, and when

they are brought low, then to help them. Hence it is no such hard case for a man to be brought low, may I not rather say his case is happy? For is it not better to be brought low, and have God to help him, than to be set aloft and left to help himself? At least, O my body, this may be a comfort to thee: for thou art sure to be brought low, as low as the grave, which is low indeed: yet there thou mayest rest in hope; for even there the Lord will not fail to help thee.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6.—"*He helped me.*" Helped me both to bear the worst and to hope the best; helped me to pray, else desire had failed; helped me to wait, else faith had failed.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—"*Return unto thy rest, O my soul.*" The Psalmist had been at a great deal of unrest, and much *off the hooks*, as we say; now, having prayed (for prayer hath *vim pacativam*, a pacifying property), he calleth his soul to rest; and rocketh it asleep in a spiritual security. Oh, learn this holy art; acquaint thyself with God, acquiesce in him, and be at peace; so shall good be done unto thee. Job xxii. 21. *Sis Sabbathum Christi.* Luther.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—Gracious souls rest in God; they and none else. Whatever others may speak of a rest in God, only holy souls know what it means. "*Return unto thy rest, O my soul,*" to thy rest in calm and cheerful submission to God's will, delight in his service, satisfaction in his presence, and joy in communion begun with him here below, which is to be perfected above in its full fruition. Holy souls rest in God, and in his will; in his will of precept as their sovereign Lord, whose commands concerning all things are right, and in the keeping of which there is great reward; in his will of providence as their absolute owner, and who does all things well; in himself as their God, their portion, and their chief good, in whom they shall have all that they can need, or are capable of enjoying to complete their blessedness for ever.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 7.—"*Return unto thy rest.*" Return to that rest which Christ gives to the weary and heavy laden, Matt. xi. 28. Return to thy Noah, his name signifies *rest*, as the dove when she found no rest returned to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes when at night when we go to sleep, nor to close them with at death, that long sleep, than this, "*Return unto thy rest, O my soul.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—"*Return unto thy rest.*" Consider the variety of aspects of that rest which a good man seeks, and the ground upon which he will endeavour to realize it. It consists in, 1. Rest from the perplexities of ignorance, and the wanderings of error. 2. Rest from the vain efforts of self-righteousness, and the disquietude of a proud and legal spirit. 3. Rest from the alarms of conscience, and the apprehensions of punishment hereafter. 4. Rest from the fruitless struggles of our degenerate nature, and unaided conflicts with indwelling sin. 5. Rest from the fear of temporal suffering and solicitude arising from the prospect of danger and trial. 6. Rest from the distraction of uncertainty and indecision of mind, and from the fluctuations of undetermined choice.—*R. S. M'All.*

Verse 7.—"*Return,*" שׁוּבִי. This is the very word which the angel used to Hagar when she fled from her mistress, "Return," Gen. xvi. 9. As Hagar through her mistress' rough dealing with her fled from her, so the soul of this prophet by reason of affliction fell from its former quiet confidence in God. As the angel therefore biddeth Hagar "return to her mistress," so the understanding of this prophet biddeth his soul return to its rest.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 7.—"*Rest.*" The word "*rest*" is put in the plural, as indicating complete and entire rest, at all times, and under all circumstances.—*A. Edersheim.*

Verses 7, 8.—"*For the* LORD *hath dealt bountifully with thee.*" He hath dealt indeed most bountifully with thee, for where thou didst make suit but for one thing, he hath granted thee three. Thou didst ask but to have my soul delivered, and he hath delivered mine eyes and my feet besides; and with a deliverance in each of them the greatest that could be: for what greater deliverance to my soul than to be delivered from death? What greater deliverance to my eyes than to be delivered from tears? What to my feet than to be delivered from falling? That if now, O my soul, thou return not to thy rest, thou wilt show thyself to be most insatiable; seeing thou hast not only more than thou didst ask, but as much indeed as was possible to be asked.

But can my soul die? and if not, what bounty is it to deliver my soul from that to which it is not subject? The soul indeed, though immortal, hath yet her

ways of dying. It is one kind of death to the soul to be parted from the body, but the truest kind is to be parted from God; and from both these kinds of death he hath delivered my soul. From the first, by delivering me from a dangerous sickness that threatened a dissolution of my soul and body; from the other, by delivering me from the guilt of sin, which threatened a separation from the favour of God; and are not these bounties so great as to give my soul just cause of returning to her rest?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verses 7, 9.—"*Return unto thy rest, O my soul.*" . . . "*I will walk.*" How can these two stand together? *Motus et quies private opponuntur*, saith the philosopher, motion and rest are opposite; now *walking* is a *motion*, as being an act of the locomotive faculty. How then could David *return to his rest* and yet *walk?* You must know that *walking* and *rest* here mentioned, being of a *divine* nature, do not oppose each other; *spiritual rest* maketh no man *idle*, and therefore it is no enemy to walking; *spiritual walking* maketh no man *weary*, and therefore it is no enemy to rest. Indeed, they are so far from being opposite that they are subservient to each other, and it is hard to say whether that *rest* be the *cause* of this *walking*, or this *walking* a *cause* of that *rest*. Indeed, both are true, since he that *rests in God* cannot but *walk before him*, and by *walking before*, we come to *rest in God*. *Returning to rest* is an act of *confidence*, since there is no rest to be had but in God, nor in God but by believing affiance in, and reliance on him. *Walking before God* is an act of *obedience*; when we disobey we wander and go astray, only by obedience we walk. Now these two are so far from being enemies, that they are companions and ever go together; confidence being a means to quicken obedience, and obedience to strengthen confidence.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.*" Lo, here a deliverance, not from one, but many dangers, to wit, "*death,*" "*tears,*" "*falling.*" Single deliverances are as threads; but when multiplied, they become as a cord twisted of many threads, more potent to draw us to God. Any one mercy is as a link, but many favours are as a chain consisting of several links, to bind us the closer to our duty; *vis unita fortior*. Frequent droppings of the rain cannot but make an impression even on the stone, and renewed mercies may well prevail with the stony heart. Parisiensis relateth a story of a man whom (notwithstanding his notorious and vicious courses) God was pleased to accumulate favours upon, so that at last he cried out, "*Vicisti, benignissime Deus, indefatigabili sua bonitate,* Most gracious God, thy unwearied goodness hath overcome my obstinate wickedness"; and from that time devoted himself to God's service. No wonder, then, if David upon deliverance from such numerous and grievous afflictions, maketh this his resolve, to "*walk before the Lord in the land of the living.*"—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 8.—As an humble and sensible soul will pack up many troubles in one, so a thankful soul will divide one mercy into sundry particular branches, as here the Psalmist distinguisheth, the delivery of his soul from death, of his eyes from tears, and of his feet from falling.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 8.—Some distinguish the three particulars thus: "*He hath delivered my soul from death,*" by giving me a good conscience; "*mine eyes from tears,*" by giving a quiet conscience; "*my feet from falling,*" by giving an enlightened and assured conscience.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 8.—"*My feet from falling.*" Whether means he, into penal misery and mischief, or into sin? There is a *lapsus moralis*, as 1 Cor. x. 12. Err I? or would David here be understood of sinning? So Ps. lxxiii. 2: "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." And if I be not deceived, the text leans to that meaning, rising still from the less to the greater. First. It is more bounty to be kept from grief than from death, for there is a greater enlargement from misery. It is not more bounty to be kept from the sense of affliction than to be kept from death, which is the greatest of temporal evils; but it is more bounty in a gracious eye to be kept from sin than from death. Secondly. *How his eyes from tears?* If not kept from sin? That had surely cost him many a tear, as Peter (Matt. xxvi. 75). But understand it *de lapsu morali*, so the gradation still riseth to enlarge God's bounty; yea, which I count the greatest blessing, in these afflictions he kept me steady in my course of piety, and suffered not afflictions to sway my heart from him. Still, in a gracious eye, the benefit seems greater to be delivered from sinning than from the greatest outward affliction. That is the reason Paul (Rom. viii. 37) triumphs over all afflictions. 2 Cor. xi. and xii. He counts them his glory, his

crown; but speaking of the prevailing of corruption in particular, he bemoans himself as the miserablest man alive. Rom. vii. 24.—*William Slater.*

Verse 9.—"*I will walk,*" etc. It is a holy resolution which this verse records. The previous verse had mentioned among the mercies vouchsafed, "Thou hast delivered my feet from falling"; and the first use of the restored limb is, "*I will walk before the* LORD." It reminds one of the crippled beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, to whom Peter had said, "In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk"; and "immediately his ancle-bones received strength, and he leaping up stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." It is a very sure mark of a grateful heart to employ the gift to the praise of the giver, in such a manner as he would most wish it to be employed.—*Barton Bourchier.*

Verse 9.—When thou, my soul, returnest to this rest, thou shalt walk in order that thou mayest have some exercise in thy rest, that thy resting may not make thee restive. "*I will walk before the* LORD *in the land of the living.*" For now that my feet are delivered from falling, how can I better employ them than in walking? Were they delivered from falling that they should stand still and be idle? No, my soul, but to encourage me to walk: and where is so good walking as in the land of the living? Alas! what walking is it in the winter, when all things are dead, when the very grass lies buried under ground, and scarce anything that has life in it is to be seen? But then is the pleasant walking, when nature spreads her green carpet to walk upon, and then it is the land of the living, when the trees shew they live, by bringing forth, if not fruits, at least leaves; when the valleys shew they live, by bringing forth sweet flowers to delight the smell, at least fresh grass to please the eyes. But is this the walking in the land of the living that David means? O my soul, to walk in the land of the living is to walk in the paths of righteousness: for there is no such death to the soul as sin, no such cause of tears to the eyes as guiltiness of conscience, no such falling of the feet as to fall from God: and therefore, to say the truth, the soul can never return to its rest if we walk not withal in the paths of righteousness; and we cannot well say whether this rest be a cause of the walk, or the walking be a cause of the resting: but this we may say, they are certainly companions the one to the other, which is in effect but this—that justification can never be without sanctification. Peace of conscience, and godliness of life, can never be one without the other. Or is it perhaps that David means that land of the living where Enoch and Elias are living, with the living God? But if he mean so, how can he speak so confidently, and say, "*I will walk in the land of the living*"? as though he could come to walk there by his own strength, or at his own pleasure? He therefore gives his reason: "*I believed, and therefore I spake,*" for the voice of faith is strong, and speaks with confidence; and because in faith he believes that he should come to walk in the land of the living, therefore with confidence he speaks it, "*I will walk in the land of the living.*"—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 9.—"*I will walk before the* LORD *in the land of the living,*" *i.e.,* I shall pass the whole of my life under his fatherly care and protection. The prophet has regard to the custom of men, and chiefly of parents: for those who ardently love their children have them always in their thoughts and carry them there, never ceasing from care and anxiety about them, but being always attentive to their safety. *Omnis enim in natis chari stat cura parentis.* Children are, therefore, said to walk before and in the sight of their parents, because they have them as constant guardians of their health and safety. Thus also the godly in this life walk before God, that is to say, are defended by his care and protection.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 9.—"*I will walk before the* LORD." According to a different reading of the first word, "*I shall,*" and, "*I will,*" the clause puts on several senses; if read "*I shall walk,*" they are words of *confident expectation;* if "*I will,*" they are words of *obedient resolution.* According to the former, the Psalmist promiseth somewhat to himself from God; according to the latter, he promiseth somewhat of himself to God. Both these constructions are probable and profitable. "*Before God*"; that is, in his service; or, "*before God,*" that is, under his care. Let us consider both senses. 1. "*I shall walk before the* LORD *in the land of the living*"; that is, by continuing in this world, I shall have opportunity of doing God service. It was not because those holy men had less assurance of God's love than we, but because they had greater affections to God's service than we, that this life was so amiable in their eyes. To this purpose the reasonings of David and Hezekiah concerning death and the grave

are very observable. "Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth"? so David, Ps. xxx. 9. "The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee"; so Hezekiah, Isai. xxxviii. 18. They saw death would render them useless for God's honour, and therefore they prayed for life.

It lets us see why a religious man may desire life, that he may "*walk before the* LORD," and minister to him in the place wherein he hath set him. Indeed, that joy, hope, and desire of life which is founded upon this consideration is not only lawful, but commendable: and truly herein is a vast difference between the wicked and the godly. To walk in the land of the living is the wicked man's desire, yea, were it possible he would walk here for ever; but for what end? only to enjoy his lusts, have his fill of pleasure, and increase his wealth: whereas the godly man's aim in desiring to live is that he may "*walk before God*," advance his glory, and perform his service. Upon this account it is that one hath fitly taken notice how David doth not say, I shall now satiate myself with delights in my royal city, but, "*I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living.*"

2. And most suitably to this interpretation, this "*before the* LORD," means *under the Lord's careful eye.* The words according to the Hebrew may be read, *before the face of the* LORD, by which is meant his presence, and that not general, before which all men walk, but special, before which only good men walk. Indeed, in this sense *God's face* is as much as his favour; and as to be cast out of his sight is to be under his anger, so to walk before his face is to be in favour with him: so that the meaning is, as the Psalmist had said, I shall live securely and safely in this world under the careful protection of the Almighty; and this is the confidence which he here seemeth to utter with so much joy, that God's gracious providence should watch over him the remainder of his days.—*Nathanael Hardy, in a Sermon entitled "Thankfulness in Grain,"* 1654.

Verse 9.—"*In the land of the living.*" These words admit of a threefold interpretation, being understood by some, especially for *the land of Judea.* By others, erroneously for *the Jerusalem which is above.* By the most, and most probably, for this *habitable earth,* the *present world.*

1. That exposition which Cajetan, Lorinus, with others, give of the words, would not be rejected, who conceive that by "*the land of the living*" David here meaneth Judea, in which, or rather over which being constituted king, he resolveth to walk before God, and do him service. This is not improbably that "*land of the living*" in which the Psalmist when an exile "believed to see the goodness of the Lord"; this is certainly that "*land of the living*" wherein God promiseth to "set his glory"; nor was this title without just reason appropriated to that country. (1.) *Partly,* because it was a "*land*" which afforded the most plentiful supports and comforts of natural life, in regard of the wholesomeness of the climate, the goodness of the soil, the overflowing of milk and honey, with other conveniences both for food and delight. (2.) *Chiefly,* because it was the "*land*" in which the living God was worshipped, and where he vouchsafed to place his name; whereas the other parts of the world worshipped lifeless things, of which the Psalmist saith, "They have mouths, and speak not; eyes, and see not; ears, and hear not."

2. "*The land of the living*" is construed by the ancients to be that *heavenly country,* the place of the blessed. Indeed, this appellation does most fitly agree with heaven: this world is *desertum mortuorum,* a desert of dead, at least, dying men; that only is *regio vivorum,* a region of living saints. "He who is our life" is in heaven, yea, "our life is hid with him in God," and therefore we cannot be said to live till we come thither.... In this sense no doubt that devout bishop and martyr, Babilas, used the words, who being condemned by Numerianus, the emperor, to an unjust death, a little before his execution repeated this and the two preceding verses, with a loud voice. Nor is it unfit for any dying saint to comfort himself with the like application of these words, and say in a confident hope of that blessed sight, "*I shall walk before the* LORD *in the land of the living.*"

3. But doubtless the literal and proper meaning of these words is of *David's abode in the world;* during which time, wheresoever he should be, he would "*walk before God*"; for that seems to be the emphasis of the plural number, *lands,* according to the original. The world consists of many countries, several lands, and it is possible for men either by force, or unwillingly, to remove from one country to another: but a good man when he changeth his country, yet altereth not his religion, yea, wherever he is he resolveth to serve his God.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 9.—"*Land of the living.*" How unmeet, how shameful, how odious a

thing it is that dead men should be here on the face of the earth, which is *"the land of the living."* That there are such is too true. " She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," 1 Tim. v. 6; Sardis had a name that she lived, but was dead, Rev. iii. 1; " The dead bury their dead," Matt. viii. 22; all natural men are " dead in sins," Eph. ii. 1, 2 Cor. v. 14.—*William Gouge.*

Verses 9, 12, etc.—The Hebrew word that is rendered *walk*, signifies a continued action, or the reiteration of an action. David resolves that he will not only take a turn or two with God, or walk a pretty way with God, as Orpah did with Ruth, and then take his leave of God, as Orpah did of her mother, Ruth i. 10—15; but he resolves, whatever comes on it, that he will walk constantly, resolutely, and perpetually before God; or before the face of the Lord. Now, walking before the face of the Lord doth imply a very exact, circumspect, accurate, and precise walking before God; and indeed, no other walking is either suitable or pleasing to the eye of God. But is this all that he will do upon the receipt of such signal mercies? Oh, no! for he resolves to take the cup of salvation, and to call upon the name of the Lord, and to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, vers. 13, 17. But is this all that he will do? Oh, no! for he resolves that he will presently pay his vows unto the Lord in the presence of all his people, vers. 14, 18. But is this all that he will do? Oh, no! for he resolves that he will love the Lord better than ever and more than ever, vers. 1, 2. He loved God before with a real love, but having now received such rare mercies from God, he is resolved to love God with a more raised love, and with a more inflamed love, and with a more active and stirring love, and with a more growing and increasing love than ever.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 10.—*"I believed, therefore have I spoken."* It is not sufficient to believe, unless thou also openly confessest before unbelievers, tyrants, and all others. Next to believing follows confession; and therefore, those who do not make a confession ought to fear; as, on the contrary, those should hope who speak out what they have believed.—*Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 10.—*"I believed, therefore have I spoken."* That is to say, I firmly believe what I say, therefore I make no scruple of saying it. This should be connected with the preceding verse, and the full stop should be placed at " spoken."—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 10.—*"I believed,"* etc. Some translate the words thus: *I believed when I said, I am greatly afflicted:* I believed when I said in my haste, *"all men are liars"; q.d.*, Though I have had my *offs* and my *ons*, though I have passed several frames of heart and tempers of soul in my trials, yet I believed still, I never let go my hold, my grip of God, in my perturbation.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—The heart and tongue should go together. The tongue should always be the heart's interpreter, and the heart should always be the tongue's suggester; what is spoken with the tongue should be first stamped upon the heart and wrought off from it. Thus it should be in all our communications and exhortations, especially when we speak or exhort about the things of God, and dispense the mysteries of heaven. David spake from his heart when he spake from his faith. *"I believed, therefore have I spoken."* Believing is an act of the heart, " with the heart man believeth "; so that to say, *"I believed, therefore have I spoken,"* is as if he had said, I would never have spoken these things, if my heart had not been clear and upright in them. The apostle takes up that very protestation from David (2 Cor. iv. 13): " According as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak"; that is, we move others to believe nothing but what we believe, and are fully assured of ourselves.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10.—*"I was greatly afflicted."* After that our minstrel hath made mention of faith and of speaking the word of God, whereby are to be understood all good works that proceed and come forth out of faith, he now singeth of the cross, and sheweth that he was very sore troubled, grievously threatened, uncharitably blasphemed, evil reported, maliciously persecuted, cruelly troubled, and made to suffer all kinds of torments for uttering and declaring the word of God. *"I believed,"* saith he, *"therefore have I spoken; but I was very sore troubled."* Christ's word and the cross are companions inseparable. As the shadow followeth the body, so doth the cross follow the word of Christ: and as fire and heat cannot be separated, so cannot the gospel of Christ and the cross be plucked asunder.—*Thomas Becon* (1511—1567 or 1570).

Verses 10, 11.—The meaning seems to be this—I spake as I have declared (ver. 4)

because I trusted in God. I was greatly afflicted, I was in extreme distress, I was in great astonishment and trembling (as the word rendered *"haste"* signifies trembling as well as haste, as it is rendered in Deut. xx. 3;) and in these circumstances I did not trust in man; I said, *"all men are liars"—i.e.*, not fit to be trusted in; those that will fail and deceive the hopes of those who trust in them, agreeable to Psalm lxii. 8, 9.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 11.—*"I said in my haste, All men are liars,"* Rather, in an ecstacy of despair, I said, the whole race of man is a delusion.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 11.—*"All men are liars."* That is to say, every man who speaks in the ordinary manner of men concerning happiness, and sets great value on the frail and perishable things of this world, is a liar; for true and solid happiness is not to be found in the country of the living. This explanation solves the sophism proposed by St. Basil. If every man be a liar, then David was a liar; therefore he lies when he says, every man is a liar—thus contradicting himself, and destroying his own position. This is answered easily; for when David spoke he did so not as man, but from an inspiration of the Holy Ghost.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 11.—*"All men are liars."* Juvenal said, "Dare to do something worthy of transportation and imprisonment, if you mean to be of consequence. Honesty is praised, but starves." A pamphlet was published some time ago with the title, *"Whom shall we hang?"* A very appropriate one might *now* be written with a slight change in the title—*"Whom shall we trust?"—From "A New Dictionary of Quotations,"* 1872.

Verses 11—15.—It seems that to give the lie was not so heinous an offence in David's time as it is in these days; for else how durst he have spoken such words, *"That all men are liars,"* which is no less than to give the lie to the whole world? and yet no man, I think, will challenge him for saying so; no more than challenge St. John for saying that all men are sinners, and indeed how should any man avoid being a liar, seeing the very being of man is itself a lie? not only is it a vanity, and put in the balance less than vanity; but a very lie, promising great matters, and able to do just nothing, as Christ saith, "without me ye can do nothing": and so Christ seems to come in, to be David's second, and to make his word good, that *all men are liars.* And now let the world do its worst, and take the lie how it will, for David having Christ on his side, will always be able to make his part good against all the world, for Christ hath overcome the world.

But though all men may be said to be liars, yet not all men in all things; for then David himself should be a liar in this: but all men perhaps in something or other, at sometime or other, in some kind or other. Absolute truth is not found in any man, but in that man only who was not man only; for if he had been so, it had not perhaps been found in him neither, seeing absolute truth and deity are as relatives, never found to be asunder.

But in what thing is it that all men should be liars? Indeed, in this for one; to think that God regards not, and loves not them whom he suffers to be afflicted; for we may rather think he loves them most whom he suffers to be most afflicted; and we may truly say he would never have suffered his servant Job to be afflicted so exceeding cruelly, if he had not loved him exceeding tenderly; for there is nothing lost by suffering afflictions. No, my soul, they do but serve to make up the greater weight of glory, when it shall be revealed.

But let God's afflictions be what they can be, yet I will always acknowledge they can never be in any degree so great as his benefits: and oh, that *I could think of something that I might render to him for all his benefits:* for shall I receive such great, such infinite benefits from him, and shall I render nothing to him by way of gratefulness? But, alas, what have I to render? All my rendering to him will be but taking more from him: for all I can do is but to *"take the cup of salvation, and call upon his name,"* and what rendering is there in this taking? If I could take the cup of tribulation, and drink it off for his sake, this might be a rendering of some value; but this, God knows, is no work for me to do. It was his work, who said, "Can ye drink of the cup, of which I shall drink?" Indeed, he drank of the cup of tribulation, to the end that we might take the cup of salvation; but then in taking it we must call upon his name; upon his name and upon no other; for else we shall make it a cup of condemnation, seeing there is no name under heaven, in which we may be saved, but only the name of Jesus.

Yet it may be some rendering to the Lord if I pay my vows, and do, as it were,

my penance openly; *"I will therefore pay my vows to the* LORD, *in the presence of all his people."* But might he not pay his vows as well in his closet, between God and himself, as to do it publicly? No, my soul, it serves not his turn, but he must pay them in the presence of all his people; yet not to the end he should be applauded for a just prayer; for though he pay them, yet he can never pay them to the full; but to the end, that men seeing his good works, may glorify God by his example. And the rather perhaps, for that David was a king, and the king's example prevails much with the people, to make them pay their vows to God: but most of all, that by this means David's piety may not be barren, but may make a breed of piety in the people also: which may be one mystical reason why it was counted a curse in Israel to be barren; for he that pays not his vows to God in the presence of his people may well be said to be barren in Israel seeing he begets no children to God by his example. And perhaps, also, the vows which David means here was the doing of some mean things, unfit in show for the dignity of a king; as when it was thought a base thing in him to dance before the ark; he then vowed he would be baser yet: and in this case, to pay his vows before the people becomes a matter of necessity: for as there is no honour to a man whilst he is by himself alone, so there is no shame to a man but before the people: and therefore to shew that he is not ashamed to do any thing how mean soever, so it may tend to the glorifying of God; *"he will pay his vows in the presence of all his people."* And he will do it though it cost him his life, for if he die for it he knows that *"Precious in the sight of the* LORD *is the death of his saints."* But that which is precious is commonly desired: and doth God then desire the death of his saints? He desires, no doubt, that death of his saints which is to die to sin: but for any other death of his saints, it is therefore said to be precious in his sight, because he lays it up with the greater carefulness. And for this it is there are such several mansions in God's house, that to them whose death is precious in his sight he may assign the most glorious mansions. This indeed is the reward of martyrdom, and the encouragement of martyrs, though their sufferings be most insufferable, their troubles most intolerable; yet this makes amends for all; that *"Precious in the sight of the* LORD *is the death of his saints."* For if it be so great a happiness to be acceptable in his sight, how great a happiness must it be to be precious in his sight? When God, at the creation looked upon all his works, it is said he saw them to be all exceeding good: but it is not said that any of them were precious in his sight. How then comes death to be precious in his sight, that was none of his works, but is a destroyer of his works? Is it possible that a thing which destroys his creatures should have a title of more value in his sight, than his creatures themselves? O, my soul, this is one of the miracles of his saints, and perhaps one of those which Christ meant, when he said to his apostles, that greater miracles than he did they should do themselves: for what greater miracle than this, that death, which of itself is a thing most vile in the sight of God, yet once embraced by his saints, as it were by their touch only, becomes precious in his sight? To alter a thing from being vile to be precious, is it not a greater miracle than to turn water into wine? Indeed so it is; death doth not damnify his saints, but his saints do dignify death. Death takes nothing away from his saints' happiness, but his saints add lustre to death's vileness. It is happy for death that ever it met with any of God's saints; for there was no way for it else in the world, to be ever had in any account: but why say I, in the world? For it is of no account in the world for all this: it is but only in the sight of God; but indeed this only is all in all; for to be precious in God's sight is more to be prized than the world itself. For when the world shall pass away, and all the glory of it be laid in the dust; then shall trophies be erected for the death of his saints: and when all monuments of the world shall be utterly defaced, and all records quite rased out; yet the death of his saints shall stand registered still, in fair red letters in the calendar of heaven. If there be glory laid up for them that die in the Lord; much more shall they be glorified that die for the Lord.

I have wondered oftentimes, why God will suffer his saints to die; I mean not the death natural, for I know *statutum est omnibus semel mori;* but the death that is by violence, and with torture: for who could endure to see them he loves so cruelly handled? But now I see the reason of it; for, *"Precious in the sight of the* LORD *is the death of his saints."* And what marvel then if he suffer his saints to die; when by dying they are wrought, and made fit jewels to be set in his cabinet: for as God has a bottle which he fills up with the tears of his saints, so I may say he hath a cabinet which he decks up with the deaths of his saints: and, O my soul,

if thou couldst but comprehend what a glory it is to serve for a jewel in the decking up of God's cabinet, thou wouldest never wonder why he suffers his saints to be put to death, though with never so great torments, for it is but the same which Saint Paul saith: "The afflictions of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed."—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 12.—"*What shall I render unto the* LORD *?*" Rendering to the true God, in a true and right manner, is the sum of true religion. This notion is consonant to the scriptures: thus: "Render unto God the things that are God's." Matt. xxii. 21. As true loyalty is a giving to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, so true piety is the giving to God the things that are God's. And so, in that parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen, all we owe to God is expressed by the *rendering the fruit of the vineyard;* Matt. xxi. 41. Particular acts of religion are so expressed in the Scriptures Psalm lvi. 12; Hosea xiv. 2; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31. Let this, then, be the import of David's מָה־אָשִׁיב לַיהוָה, "*What shall I render unto the* LORD *?*" "In what things, and by what means, shall I promote religion in the exercise thereof? How shall I show myself duly religious towards him who hath been constantly and abundantly munificent in his benefits towards me?"—*Henry Hurst.*

Verse 12.—"*All his benefits toward me.*" What reward shall we give unto the Lord, for all the benefits he hath bestowed? From the cheerless gloom of non-existence he waked us into being; he ennobled us with understanding; he taught us arts to promote the means of life; he commanded the prolific earth to yield its nurture; he bade the animals to own us as their lords. For us the rains descend; for us the sun sheddeth abroad its creative beams; the mountains rise, the valleys bloom, affording us grateful habitation and a sheltering retreat. For us the rivers flow; for us the fountains murmur; the sea opens its bosom to admit our commerce; the earth exhausts its stores; each new object presents a new enjoyment; all nature pouring her treasures at our feet, through the bounteous grace of him who wills that all be ours.—*Basil,* 326—379.

Verse 12.—"*All his benefits.*" As partial obedience is not good, so partial thanks is worthless: not that any saint is able to keep all the commands, or reckon up all the mercies of God, much less return particular acknowledgment for every single mercy; but as he "hath respect unto all the commandments" (Ps. cxix. 6), so he desires to value highly every mercy, and to his utmost power give God the praise of all. An honest soul would not conceal any debt he owes to God, but calls upon itself to give an account for all his benefits. The skipping over one note in a lesson may spoil the grace of the music; unthankfulness for one mercy disparageth our thanks for the rest.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 13.—"*I will take the cup of salvation.*" It may probably allude to the libation offering, Numb. xxviii. 7; for the three last verses seem to intimate that the Psalmist was now at the temple, offering the meat-offering, drink-offering, and sacrifices to the Lord. "*Cup*" is often used by the Hebrews to denote plenty or abundance. So, "the cup of trembling," an abundance of *misery;* "the cup of salvation," an abundance of *happiness.*—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 13.—"*Cup of salvation.*" In holy Scripture there is mention made of drink-offerings, Gen. xxv. 14; Levit. xxiii. 13; Num. xv. 5; which were a certain quantity of wine that used to be poured out before the Lord; as the very notation of the word importeth, coming from a root נָסַךְ, *effudit,* that signifieth to pour out. As the meat-offerings, so the drink-offerings, were brought to the Lord in way of gratulation and thanksgiving. Some therefore in allusion hereunto so expound the text, as a promise and vow of the Psalmist, to testify his public gratitude by such an external and solemn rite as in the law was prescribed. This he termeth *a cup,* because that drink-offering was contained in a cup and poured out thereof; and he adds this epithet, "salvation," because that rite was an acknowledgment of salvation, preservation and deliverance from the Lord.

After their solemn gratulatory sacrifices they were wont to have a feast. When David had brought the ark of God into the tabernacle, they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, which being finished, "he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine." 1 Chron. xvi. 3. Hereby is implied that he made so bountiful a feast, as he had to give thereof to all the people there assembled. In this feast the master thereof was wont to take a great cup, and in lifting it up to declare the occasion

of that feast, and then in testimony of thankfulness to drink thereof to the guests, that they in order might pledge him. This was called a cup of salvation, or deliverance, because they acknowledged by the use thereof that God had saved and delivered them. Almost in a like sense the apostle styleth the sacramental cup, the cup of blessing. Here the prophet useth the plural number, thus, "cup of *salvations*," whereby, after the Hebrew elegancy, he meaneth many deliverances, one after another; or some great and extraordinary deliverance which was instead of many, or which comprised many under it. The word translated *take* (נשׂא *a* נשׂא) properly signifieth to lift up, and in that respect may the more fitly be applied to the forementioned taking of the festival cup and lifting it up before the guests. Most of our later expositors of this Psalm apply this phrase, "I will take the cup of salvation," to the forenamed gratulatory drink-offering, or to the taking and lifting up of the cup of blessing in the feast, after the solemn sacrifice. Both of these import one and the same thing, which is, that saints of old were wont to testify their gratefulness for great deliverances with some outward solemn rite.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 13.—"*Cup of salvation.*" *Yeshuoth:* Ps. xviii. 50, xxviii. 8, liii. 6. The *cup* of salvation, symbolized by the eucharistic cup of the Passover Supper.—Zion that had drunk of the "cup of trembling" (Isai. li. 17, 22) might now rise and drink of the cup of salvation.

To the church these words have had a yet deeper significancy added to them by St. Matt. xxvi. 27. Jesus, on that Passover night, drank of the bitter wine of God's wrath, that he might refill the cup with joy and health for his people.—*William Kay.*

Verses 13, 14, 17—19.—A fit mode of expressing our thanks to God is by solemn acts of worship, secret, social, and public. "The closet will be the first place where the heart will delight in pouring forth its lively joys; thence the feeling will extend to the family altar; and thence again it will proceed to the sanctuary of the Most High." (*J. Morison*). To every man God has sent a large supply of benefits, and nothing but perverseness can deny to him the praise of our lips.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 14.—A man that would have his credit as to the truth of his word kept up, would choose those to be witnesses of his performing who were witnesses of his promising. I think David took this heed in his rendering and paying his vows: "*I will do it*," saith he, "*now in the presence of all his people.*" The people were witnesses to his straits, prayers, and vows; and he will honour religion by performing in their sight what he sealed, signed, and delivered as his vow to the Lord. Seek not more witnesses than providence makes conscious of thy vows, lest this be interpreted ostentation and vain self-glorying: take so many, lest the good example be lost, or thou suspected of falsifying thy vow. Brifley and plainly: Didst thou on a sick bed make thy vow before thy family, and before the neighbourhood? Be careful to perform it before them; let them see thou art what thou vowedst to be. This care in thy vow will be a means to make it most to the advantage of religion, whilst all that heard or knew thy vow bear thee testimony that thou art thankful, and thus thou givest others occasion to glorify thy Father who is in heaven.—*Henry Hurst* (1690) *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 14.—"*I will pay my vows*," etc. Foxe, in his Acts and Monuments, relates the following concerning the martyr, John Philpot:—"He went with the sheriffs to the place of execution; and when he was entering into Smithfield the way was foul, and two officers took him up to bear him to the stake. Then he said merrily, What, will ye make me a pope? I am content to go to my journey's end on foot. But first coming into Smithfield, he kneeled down there, saying these words, "I will pay my vows in thee, O Smithfield."

Verse 15.—"*Precious in the sight of the* LORD *is the death of his saints.*" It is of value or importance in such respects as the following:—(1) As it is the removal of another of the redeemed to glory—the addition of one more to the happy hosts above; (2) as it is a new triumph of the work of redemption,— showing the power and the value of that work; (3) as it often furnishes a more direct proof of the reality of religion than any abstract argument could do. How much has the cause of religion been promoted by the patient deaths of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Latimer, and Ridley, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and the hosts of martyrs! What does not the world owe, and the cause of religion owe, to such scenes as occurred on the death-beds of Baxter, and Thomas Scott, and Halyburton, and Payson! What an argument for the truth of religion,—what an illustration of its sustaining power.—

what a source of comfort to those who are about to die,—to reflect that religion does not leave the believer when he most needs its support and consolation ; that it can sustain us in the severest trial of our condition here ; that it can illuminate what seems to us of all places *most* dark, cheerless, dismal, repulsive—" the valley of the shadow of death."—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 15.—"*Precious in the sight of the* LORD *is the death of his saints.*" The death of the saints is precious in the Lord's sight. First, because *he "seeth not as man seeth."* He judgeth not according to the appearance ; he sees all things as they really are, not partially : he traces the duration of his people, not upon the map of time, but upon the infinite scale of eternity ; he weighs their happiness, not in the little balance of earthly enjoyment, but in the even and equipoised balance of the sanctuary. In the next place, I think the death of the saints is precious in the Lord's sight, because *they are taken from the evil to come ;* they are delivered from the burden of the flesh ; ransomed by the blood of the Redeemer, they are his purchased possession, and now he receives them to himself. Sin and sorrow for ever cease; there is no more death, the death of Christ is their redemption; by death he overcame him that had the power of death ; therefore, they in him are enabled to say, " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? " Again, the death of the saints is precious in the Lord's sight, for in it *he often sees the very finest evidences of the work of his own Spirit upon the soul ;* he sees faith in opposition to sense, leaning upon the promises of God. Reposing upon him who is mighty to save, he sees hope even against hope, anchoring the soul secure and steadfast on him who is passed within the veil ; he sees patience acquiescing in a Father's will—humility bending beneath his sovereign hand—love issuing from a grateful heart. Again, the death of the saints is precious in the Lord's sight, *as it draws out the tendernesses of surviving Christian friends,* and is abundant in the thanksgivings of many an anxious heart ; it elicits the sympathies of Christian charity, and realises that communion of saints, of which the Apostle speaks, when he says, " if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; if one rejoice they all joy." . . . The death of saints is precious, because the sympathy of prayer is poured forth from many a kindly Christian heart. . . . Nor is this all—the death of saints is precious, for *that is their day of seeing Jesus face to face.—Patrick Pounden's Sermon in "The Irish Pulpit,"* 1831.

Verse 15.—"*Precious.*" Their death is precious (*jakar*) ; the word of the text is, *in pretio fuit, magni estimatum est.* See how the word is translated in other texts. 1. Honourable, Isai. xliii. 4 (*jakarta*) ; " thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable." 2. Much set by, 1 Sam. xviii. 30 ; " His name was much set by." 3. Dear, Jer. xxxi. 20. *An filius* (*jakkir*) *pretiosus mihi Ephraim :* " Is Ephraim my dear son ? " 4. Splendid, clear, or glorious, Job xxxi. 16. *Si vidi lunam* (*jaker*) *pretiosam et abeuntem :* " the moon walking in brightness."

Put all these expressions together, and then we have the strength of David's word, "*The death of the saints is precious*" ; that is, 1. honourable ; 2. much set by ; 3. dear ; 4. splendid and glorious in the sight of the Lord.—*Samuel Torshell, in "The House of Mourning,"* 1660.

Verse 15.—"*Precious.*" It is proper to advert, in the first place, to the apparent primary import of the phrase, namely, *Almighty God watches over, and sets a high value upon the holy and useful lives of his people,* and will not lightly allow those lives to be abbreviated or destroyed. In the second place, the words lead us to advert to *the control which he exercises over the circumstances of their death.* These are under his special arrangement. They are too important in his estimation to be left to accident. In fact, chance has no existence. In the intervention of second causes, he takes care always to overrule and control them for good. Let the weakest believer among you be quite sure, be " confident of this very thing," that he will never suffer your great enemy to take advantage of anything in the manner of your death, to do you spiritual harm. No, on the contrary, he takes all its circumstances under his immediate and especial disposal. The sentiment will admit, perhaps, of a third illustration ; *when the saints are dying, the Lord looks upon them, and is merciful unto them.* Who can say how often he answers prayer, even in the cases of dying believers ? Never does he fail to support, even where he does not see good to spare. By the whispers of his love, by the witness of his Spirit, by the assurance of his presence, by the preparatory revelation of heavenly glory, he strengthens his afflicted ones, he makes all their bed in their sickness. Ah ! and when, perhaps, they scarcely possess a bed to languish upon, when poverty or other calamitous circumstances

leave them, in the sorrow of sickness, no place of repose but the bare ground for their restless bodies, and his bosom for their spirits, do they ever find God fail them? No; many a holy man has slept the sleep of death with the missionary Martyn, in a strange and inhospitable land, or with the missionary Smith, upon the floor of a dungeon, and yet

> "Jesus has made their dying bed
> As soft as downy pillows are."

When no other eye saw, when no other heart felt, for these two never-to-be-forgotten martyrs, murdered men of God, and apostles of Jesus, then were they precious in God's sight, and he was present with them. And so it is with all his saints, who are faithful unto death. Fourthly, we are warranted by the text and the tenor of Scripture, in affirming that *the Lord attaches great importance to the death-bed itself.* This is in his estimate—whatever it may be in ours—too precious, too important, to be overlooked; and hence it is often with emphasis, though always with a practical bearing, recorded in Scripture. It is possible, certainly, to make too much of it, by substituting, as a criterion of character, that which may be professed under the excitement of dying sufferings, for the testimony of a uniform, conspicuous career of holy living. But it is equally indefensible, and even ungrateful to God, to make too little of it, to make too little account of a good end, when connected with a good beginning and with a patient continuance in well-doing.

> "The chamber where the good man meets his fate
> Is privileged beyond the common walk of virtuous life."

Its transactions are sometimes as fraught with permanent utility as with present good. The close of a Christian's career on earth, his defiance, in the strength of his Saviour, of his direst enemy, the good confession which he acknowledges when he is enabled to witness before those around his dying bed, all these are precious and important in the sight of the Lord, and ought to be so in our view, and redound, not only to his own advantage, but to the benefit of survivors, "to the praise of the glory of his grace."—*W. M. Bunting, in a Sermon at the City Road Chapel*, 1836.

Verse 15.—Why need they beforehand be afraid of death, who have the Lord to take such care about it as he doth? We may safely, without presuming, we ought securely without wavering, to rest upon this, that our blood being precious in God's eyes, either it shall not be split, or it is seasonable, and shall be profitable to us to have it spilt. On this ground "the righteous are bold as a lion," Prov. xxviii. 1. "Neither do they fear what man can do unto them." Heb. xiii. 6. Martyrs were, without question, well instructed herein, and much supported hereby. When fear of death hindereth from any duty, or draweth to any evil, then call to mind this saying, "*Precious in the sight of the* LORD *is the death of his favourites.*" For who would not valiantly, without fainting, take such a death as is precious in God's sight.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 15.—"*His saints*" imports *appropriation.* Elsewhere Jehovah asserts, "All souls are mine." But he has an especial property in—and therefore claim upon—all saints. It is he that made them such. Separate from God there could be no sanctity. And as his right, his original right, in all men, is connected with the facts of their having been created and endowed by his hand, and thence subjected to his moral government, so, and much more, do all holy beings, all holy men, who owe to his grace their very existence as such, who must cease to be saints, if they could cease to be *his* saints, whom he has created anew in Christ Jesus by the communication of his own love, his own purity, his own nature, whom he continually upholds in this exalted state, so, and much more, do such persons belong to God. They are "*his* saints" through him and in him, saints of his making, and modelling, and establishing, and therefore *his* exclusively. Let this reference to the mighty working of God by his Spirit in you, your connection, your spiritual connection, with him, and your experience of his saving power,—let this reference convert the *mystery* into the *mercy* of sanctification in your hearts.

"*His* saints" denotes, in the second place, *devotedness.* They are saints not only *through* him, but *to* him; holy unto the Lord, sanctified or set apart to his service, self-surrendered to the adorable Redeemer.

"*His* saints" may import *resemblance*—close resemblance. Such characters are emphatically *God-like*, holy and pure; children of their Father which is in heaven;

certifying to all around their filial relationship to him, by their manifest participation of his nature, by their reflection of his image and likeness.

"*His* saints" suggests associations of *endearment*, of complacency. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in all them that hope in his mercy"; "a people near unto him"; "the Lord's portion is his people"; and "Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."—*Condensed from a Sermon by W. M. Bunting*, 1836.

Verse 15.—"*Saints.*" The persons among whom implicitly he reckons himself, styled *saints*, are in the original set out by a word (חֲסִידִים) that importeth an especial respect of God towards them. The root whence that word issueth signifieth *mercy* (חסד *consecravit, benefecit*). Whereupon the Hebrews have given such a name to a stork, which kind among fowls is the most merciful; and that not only the old to their young ones, as most are, but also the young ones to the old, which they use to feed and carry when through age they are not able to help themselves.

This title is attributed to men in a double respect; 1. Passively, in regard of God's mind and affection to them; 2. Actively, in regard of their mind and affection to others. God's merciful kindness is great towards them; and their mercy and kindness are great towards their brethren. They are, therefore, by a kind of excellency and property styled "men of mercy." Isai. lvii. 1. In regard of his double acceptation of the word, some translate it, "merciful, tender, or courteous," Ps. xviii. 25. Others with a paraphrase with many words, because they have not one fit word to express the full sense, thus, "Those whom God followeth with bounty, or to whom God extendeth his bounty." This latter I take to be the most proper to this place; for the word being passively taken for such as are made partakers of God's kindness, it sheweth the reason of that high account wherein God hath them, even his own grace and favor. We have a word in English that in this passive signification fitly answereth the Hebrew, which is this, *favourite.—William Gouge.*

Verse 15.—*Death* now, as he hath done also to mine, has paid full many a visit to your house; and in very deed, he has made fell havoc among our comforts. We shall yet be avenged on this enemy—this King of Terrors. I cannot help at times clenching my fist in his face, and roaring out in my agony and anguish, "Thou shalt be swallowed up in victory!" There is even, too, in the meantime, this consolation; "O Death, where is thy sting?" "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death *for* his saints," in the first place; in the second place, and resting on the propitiatory death, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death *of* his saints." The Holy Ghost, Psalm cxvi. 15, states the first; our translators, honest men, have very fairly and truly inferred the second. We are obliged to them. The death of your lovely child, loveliest in the beauties of holiness, with all that was most afflictive and full of sore trial in it, is nevertheless, among the things in your little family which are right precious in the sight of the Lord; and this in it, is that which pleases you most; precious, because of the infinite, the abiding, and the unchanging worth of the death of God's own holy child Jesus. The calm so wonderful, the consolation so felt, yea, the joy in tribulation so great, have set before your eyes a new testimony, heart-touching indeed, that, after eighteen hundred years have passed, "*the death of his saints*" is still precious as ever in the sight of the Lord. Take your book of life, sprinkled with the blood of the covenant, and in your family record, put the death of Rosanna down among the precious things in your sight also—I should rather have said likewise.

Present my kindest regards to Miss S—. Tell her to wipe that tear away—Rosanna needs it not. I hope they are all well at L—, and that your young men take the way of the Lord in good part. My dear Brother, "Go thy way, thy child liveth," is still as fresh as ever it was, from the lips of Him that liveth for ever and ever, and rings with a loftier and sweeter sound, even than when it was first heard in the ears and heart of the parent who had brought and laid his sick and dying at the feet of Him who hath the keys of hell and of death.—*John Jameson, in "Letters; True Fame," etc.*, 1838.

Verse 16.—"*O* Lord, *truly I am thy servant.*" Thou hast made me free, and I am impatient to be bound again. Thou hast broken the bonds of sin; now, Lord, bind me with the cords of love. Thou hast delivered me from the tyranny of Satan, make me as one of thy hired servants. I owe my liberty, my life, and all that I have, or hope, to thy generous rescue: and now, O my gracious, my Divine Friend and Redeemer, I lay myself and my all at thy feet.—*Samuel Lavington*, 1728—1807.

Verse 16.—"*I am thy servant.*" The saints have ever had a holy pride in being God's servants; there cannot be a greater honour than to serve such a Master as commands heaven, earth, and hell. Do not think thou dost honour God in serving him; but this is how God honours thee, in vouchsafing thee to be his servant. David could not study to give himself a greater style than—" O Lord, or, truly I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid," and this he spake, not in the phrase of a human compliment, but in the humble confession of a believer. Yea, so doth the apostle commend this excellency, that he sets the title of servant before that of an apostle; first servant, then apostle. Great was his office in being an apostle, greater his blessing in being a servant of Jesus Christ: the one is an outward calling, the other an inward grace. There was an apostle condemned, never any servant of God.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 16.—"*I am thy servant.*" This expression of the king of Israel implies (1). *A humble sense of his distance from God and his dependence upon him.* This is the first view which a penitent hath of himself when he returns to God. It is the first view which a good man hath of himself in his approaches to, or communion with God. And, indeed, it is what ought to be inseparable from the exercise of every other pious affection. To have, as it were, high and honourable thoughts of the majesty and greatness of the living God, and a deep and awful impression of the immediate and continual presence of the heart-searching God, this naturally produces the greatest self-abasement, and the most unfeigned subjection of spirit before our Maker. It leads to a confession of him as Lord over all, and having the most absolute right, not only to the obedience, but to the disposal of all his creatures. I cannot help thinking this is conveyed to us in the language of the Psalmist, when he says, "*O* LORD, *truly I am thy servant.*" He was a prince among his subjects, and had many other honourable distinctions, both natural and acquired, among men; but he was sensible of his being a servant and subject of the King of kings; and the force of his expression, "*Truly, I am thy servant,*" not only signifies the certainty of the thing, but how deeply and strongly he felt a conviction of its truth.

This declaration of the Psalmist implies (2) *a confession of his being bound by particular covenant and consent unto God,* and a repetition of the same by a new adherence. This, as it was certainly true with regard to him, having often dedicated himself to God, so I take it to be confirmed by the reiteration of the expression here, "*O* LORD, *truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant.*" As if he had said, " O Lord, it is undeniable; it is impossible to recede from it. I am thine by many ties. I am by nature thy subject and thy creature; and I have many times confessed thy right and promised my own duty." I need not mention to you, either the example in the Psalmist's writings, or the occasions in his history, on which he solemnly surrendered himself to God. It is sufficient to say, that it was very proper that he should frequently call this to mind, and confess it before God, for though it could not make his Creator's right any stronger, it would certainly make the guilt of his own violation of it so much the greater.

This declaration of the Psalmist is (3) *an expression of his peculiar and special relation to God.* "*I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid.*" There is another passage of his writings where the same expression occurs: Ps. lxxxvi. 16. " O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid." There is some variation among interpreters in the way of illustrating this phrase. Some take it for a figurative way of affirming, that he was bound in the strongest manner to God, as those children who were born of a maid-servant, and born in his own house, were in the most absolute manner their master's property. Others take it to signify his being not only brought up in the visible church of God, but in a pious family, and educated in his fear; and others would have it to signify still more especially that the Psalmist's mother was an eminently pious woman. And indeed I do not think that was a circumstance, if true, either unworthy of him to remember, or of the Spirit of God to put upon record. —*John Witherspoon,* 1722—1797.

Verse 16.—O Lord, *I am thy servant* by a double right; (and, oh, that I could do thee double service;) as thou art the Lord of my life, and I am the son of thy handmaid: not of Hagar, but of Sarah; not of the bondwoman, but of the free; and therefore I serve thee not in fear, but in love; or therefore in fear, because in love: and then is service best done when it is done in love. In love indeed I am bound to serve thee, for, "*Thou hast loosed my bonds*"; the bonds of death which compassed me about, by delivering me from a dangerous sickness, and restoring me

to health : or in a higher kind ; thou hast loosed my bonds by freeing me from being a captive to be a servant ; and which is more, from being a servant to be a son : and more than this from being a son of thy handmaid, to be a son of thyself.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 16.—Bless God for the privilege of being the children of godly parents. Better be the child of a godly than of a wealthy parent. I hope none of you are of so vile a spirit as to contemn your parents because of their piety. Certainly it is a great privilege when you can go to God, and plead your Father's covenant : *"Lord, truly I am thy servant ; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid."* So did Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 25, 26, " Lord, make good thy word to thy servant David, my father." That you are not born of infidels, nor of papists, nor of upholders of superstition and formality, but in a strict, serious, godly family, it is a great advantage that you have. It is better to be the sons of faithful ministers than of nobles.—*Thomas Manton, in a Sermon preached before the Sons of the Clergy.*

Verse 16.—*"Thou hast loosed my bonds."* Mercies are given to encourage us in God's service, and should be remembered to that end. Rain descends upon the earth, not that it might be more barren, but more fertile. We are but stewards ; the mercies we enjoy are not our own, but to be improved for our Master's service. Great mercies should engage to great obedience. God begins the Decalogue with a memorial of his mercy in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt,—" I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." How affectionately doth the Psalmist own his relation to God as his servant, when he considers how God had loosed his bonds : *"O Lord, truly I am thy servant ; thou hast loosed my bonds !"* the remembrance of thy mercy shall make me know no relation but that of a servant to thee. When we remember what wages we have from God, we must withal remember that we owe more service, and more liveliness in service, to him. Duty is but the ingenuous consequent of mercy. It is irrational to encourage ourselves in our way to hell by a remembrance of heaven, to foster a liberty in sin by a consideration of God's bounty. When we remember that all we have or are is the gift of God's liberality, we should think ourselves obliged to honour him with all that we have, for he is to have honour from all his gifts. It is a sign we aimed at God's glory in begging mercy, when we also aim at God's glory in enjoying it. It is a sign that love breathed the remembrance of mercy into our hearts, when at the same time it breathes a resolution into us to improve it. It is not our tongues, but our lives must praise him. Mercies are not given to one member, but to the whole man.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 17.—*"The sacrifice of thanksgiving."*

" When all the heart is pure, each warm desire
Sublimed by holy love's ethereal fire,
On winged words our breathing thoughts may rise,
And soar to heaven, a grateful sacrifice."

James Scott.

Verse 18.—*"Vows."* Are well-composed vows such promoters of religion ? and are they to be made so warily ? and do they bind so strictly ? Then be sure to wait until God give you just and fit seasons for vowing. Be not over-hasty to vow : it is an inconsiderate and foolish haste of Christians to make more occasions of vowing than God doth make for them. Make your vows, and spare not, so often as God bids you ; but do not do it oftener. You would wonder I should dissuade you from vowing often, when you have such constant mercies ; and wonder well you might, if God did expect your extraordinary bond and security for every ordinary mercy : but he requires it not ; he is content with ordinary security of gratitude for ordinary mercies ; when he calls for extraordinary security and acknowledgment, by giving extraordinary mercies, then give it and do it.—*Henry Hurst.*

Verse 18.—*"Now."*—God gave an order that no part of the thankoffering should be kept till the third day, to teach us to present our praises when benefits are newly received, which else would soon wax stale and putrefy as fish doth. *"I will pay my vows now,"* saith David.—*Samuel Clarke* (1599—1682) *in "A Mirrour or Looking-glasse, both for Saints and Sinners."*

Verse 18.—*"In the presence of all his people."* For good example's sake. This also was prince-like, Ezek. xlvi. 10. The king's seat in the sanctuary was open, that all might see him there, 2 Kings xi. 14, and xxiii. 3.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 18.—"*In the presence of all his people.*" Be bold, be bold, ye servants of the Lord, in sounding forth the praises of your God. Go into presses of people; and in the midst of them praise the Lord. Wicked men are over-bold in pouring forth their blasphemies to the dishonour of God; they care not who hear them. They stick not to do it in the midst of cities. Shall they be more audacious to dishonour God, than ye zealous to honour him? Assuredly Christ will shew himself as forward to confess you, as you are, or can be to confess him. Matt. x. 32. This holy boldness is the ready way to glory.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 19 (*second clause*).—He does not simply say in the midst of Jerusalem: but, "*in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.*" He speaks to the city as one who loved it and delighted in it. We see here, how the saints were affected towards the city in which was the house of God. Thus we should be moved in spirit towards that church in which God dwells, the temple he inhabits, which is built up, not of stones, but of the souls of the faithful.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1, 2.—I. Present—"I love." II. Past—"He hath." III. Future—"I will."

Verses 1, 2.—Personal experience in reference to prayer. I. We have prayed, often, constantly, in different ways, etc. II. We have been heard. A grateful retrospect of usual answers and of special answers. III. Love to God has thus been promoted. IV. Our sense of the value of prayer has become so intense that we cannot cease praying.

Verses 1, 2, 9.—If you cast your eyes on the first verse of the Psalm, you find a *profession of love*—"*I love the* LORD"; if on the second, a *promise of prayer*—"*I will call on the* LORD"; if on the ninth, a *resolve of walking*—"*I will walk before the* LORD." There are three things should be the object of a saint's care, the devotion of the soul, profession of the mouth, and conversation of the life: that is the sweetest melody in God's ears, when not only the voice sings, but the heartstrings keep tune, and the hand keepeth time.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 2.—"He hath," and therefore "I will." Grace moving to action.

Verses 2, 4, 13, 17.—Calling upon God mentioned four times very suggestively—I will do it (verse 2), I have tried it (4), I will do it when I take (13), and when I offer (17).

Verses 2, 9, 13, 14, 17.—The "I wills" of the Psalm. I will call (verse 2), I will walk (9), I will take (13), I will pay (14), I will offer (17).

Verses 3, 4, 8.—See Spurgeon's Sermon, "To Souls in Agony," Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1216.

Verses 3—5.—The story of a tried soul. I. Where I was. Verse 3. II. What I did. Verse 4. III. What I learned. Verse 5.

Verses 3—6.—I. *The occasion.* 1. Bodily affliction. 2. Terrors of conscience. 3. Sorrow of heart. 4. Self-accusation: "I found," etc. II. *The petition.* 1. Direct: "I called," etc. 2. Immediate: "then," when the trouble came; prayer was the first remedy sought, not the last, as with many. 3. Brief—limited to the one thing needed: "deliver my soul." 4. Importunate: "O Lord, I beseech thee." III. *The restoration.* 1. Implied: "gracious," etc., v. 5. 2. Expressed, v. 6, generally: "The Lord preserveth," etc.; particularly: "I was brought low," etc.: helped me to pray, helped me out of trouble in answer to prayer, and helped me to praise him for the mercy, the faithfulness, the grace, shown in my deliverance. God is glorified through the afflictions of his people: the submissive are preserved in them, and the lowly are exalted by them.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—I. Eternal grace, or the purpose of love. II. Infinite justice, or the difficulty of holiness. III. Boundless mercy, or the outcome of atonement.

Verse 6.—I. A singular class—"simple." II. A singular fact—"the Lord preserveth the simple." III. A singular proof of the fact—"I was," etc.

Verse 7.—"*Return unto thy rest, O my soul.*" Rest in God may be said to belong

to the people of God on a fourfold account. I. By designation. The rest which the people of God have in him is the result of his own purpose, and design, taken up from his mere good pleasure and love. II. By purchase. The rest which they wanted as *creatures* they had forfeited as *sinners*. This, therefore, Christ laid down his life to procure. III. By promise. This is God's kind engagement. He has said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest," Exod. xxxiii. 14. IV. By their own choice gracious souls have a rest in God.—*D. Wilcox.*

Verse 7.—"*Return unto thy rest, O my soul.*" When, or upon what occasion a child of God should use the Psalmist's language. I. After converse with the world in the business of his calling every day. II. When going to the sanctuary on the Lord's-day. III. In and under any trouble he may meet with. IV. When departing from this world at death.—*D. Wilcox.*

Verse 7.—I. The rest of the soul: "My rest," this is in God. 1. The soul was created to find its rest in God. 2. On that account it cannot find rest elsewhere. II. Its departure from that rest. This is implied in the word "Return." III. Its return. 1. By repentance. 2. By faith, in the way provided for its return. 3. By prayer. IV. Its encouragement to return. 1. Not in itself, but in God. 2. Not in the justice, but in the goodness of God: "for the Lord," etc. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."—*G. R.*

Verse 8.—The trinity of experimental godliness. I. It is a unity—"Thou hast delivered"; all the mercies come from one source. II. It is a trinity of deliverance, *of* soul, eyes, feet; *from* punishment, sorrow, and sinning; *to* life, joy, and stability. III. It is a trinity in unity: all this was done for me and in me—"my soul, mine eyes, my feet."

Verse 9.—The effect of deliverance upon ourselves. "I will walk," etc. I. Walk by faith in him. II. Walk in love with him. III. Walk by obedience to him.—*G. R.*

Verses 10, 11.—I. The rule: "I believed," etc. In general the Psalmist spoke what he had well considered and tested by his own experience, as when he said, "I was brought low and he helped me." "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with me." II. The exception: "I was greatly afflicted, I said," etc. 1. He spoke wrongfully: he said "All men are liars," which had some truth in it, but was not the whole truth. 2. Hastily: "I said in my haste," without due reflection. 3. Angrily, under the influence of affliction, probably from the unfaithfulness of others. Nature acts before grace—the one by instinct, the other from consideration. —*G. R.*

Verse 11.—A hasty speech. I. There was much truth in it. II. It erred on the right side, for it showed faith in God rather than in the creature. III. It did err in being too sweeping, too severe, too suspicious. IV. It was soon cured. The remedy for all such hasty speeches is—Get to work in the spirit of verse 12.

Verse 12.—Overwhelming obligations. I. A sum in arithmetic—"all his benefits." II. A calculation of indebtedness—"What shall I render?" III. A problem for personal solution—"What shall *I?*" See Spurgeon's Sermon, No. 910.

Verses 12, 14.—Whether well-composed religious vows do not exceedingly promote religion. Sermon by Henry Hurst, A.M., in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 13.—Sermon on the Lord's supper. We take the cup of the Lord—I. In memory of him who is our salvation. II. In token of our trust in him. III. In evidence of our obedience to him. IV. In type of communion with him. V. In hope of drinking it new with him ere long.

Verse 13.—The various cups mentioned in Scripture would make an interesting subject.

Verse 14.—"*Now.*" Or the excellence of time present.

Verse 15.—I. *The declaration.* Not the death of the wicked, nor even the death of the righteous is in itself precious; but, 1, because their persons are precious to him. 2. Because their experience in death is precious to him. 3. Because of their conformity in death to their Covenant-Head; and 4. Because it puts an end to their sorrows, and translates them to their rest. II. *Its manifestation.* 1. In preserving them from death. 2. In supporting them in death. 3. In giving them victory over death. 4. In glorifying them after death.

Verse 15.—See Spurgeon's Sermon, "Precious Deaths," No. 1036.

Verse 16.—*Holy Service.* I. Emphatically avowed. II. Honestly rendered—"truly." III. Logically defended—"son of thine handmaid." IV. Consistent with conscious liberty.

Verse 17.—This is due to our God, good for ourselves, and encouraging to others.

Verse 17.—"*The sacrifice of thanksgiving.*" I. How it may be rendered. In secret love, in conversation, in sacred song, in public testimony, in special gifts and works. II. Why we should render it. For answered prayers (verses 1, 2), memorable deliverances (3), choice preservation (6); remarkable restoration (7, 8), and for the fact of our being his servants (16). III. When should we render it. *Now*, while the mercy is on the memory, and as often as fresh mercies come to us.

Verse 18.—I. How vows may be paid in public. By going to public worship as the first thing we do when health is restored. By uniting heartily in the song. By coming to the communion. By special thankoffering. By using fit opportunities for open testimony to the Lord's goodness. II. The special difficulty in the matter. To pay them *to the Lord*, and not in ostentation or as an empty form. III. The peculiar usefulness of the public act. It interests others, touches their hearts, reproves, encourages, etc.

Verse 19.—The Christian at home. I. In God's house. II. Among the saints. III. At his favourite work, "Praise."

PSALM CXVII.

SUBJECT.—*This Psalm, which is very little in its letter, is exceedingly large in its spirit; for, bursting beyond all bounds of race or nationality, it calls upon all mankind to praise the name of the Lord. In all probability it was frequently used as a brief hymn suitable for almost every occasion, and especially when the time for worship was short. Perhaps it was also sung at the commencement or at the close of other Psalms, just as we now use the doxology. It would have served either to open a service or to conclude it. It is both short and sweet. The same divine Spirit which expatiates in the 119th, here condenses his utterances into two short verses, but yet the same infinite fulness is present and perceptible. It may be worth noting that this is at once the shortest chapter of the Scriptures and the central portion of the whole Bible.*

EXPOSITION.

O PRAISE the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.
2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

1. *"O praise the LORD, all ye nations."* This is an exhortation to the Gentiles to glorify Jehovah, and a clear proof that the Old Testament spirit differed widely from that narrow and contracted national bigotry with which the Jews of our Lord's day became so inveterately diseased. The nations could not be expected to join in the praise of Jehovah unless they were also to be partakers of the benefits which Israel enjoyed; and hence the Psalm was an intimation to Israel that the grace and mercy of their God were not to be confined to one nation, but would in happier days be extended to all the race of man, even as Moses had prophesied when he said, "Rejoice, O ye nations, his people." (Deut. xxxii. 43), for so the Hebrew has it. The nations were to be his people. He would call them a people that were not a people, and her beloved that was not beloved. We know and believe that no one tribe of men shall be unrepresented in the universal song which shall ascend unto the Lord of all. Individuals have already been gathered out of every kindred and people and tongue by the preaching of the gospel, and these have right heartily joined in magnifying the grace which sought them out, and brought them to know the Saviour. These are but the advance-guard of a number which no man can number who will come ere long to worship the all-glorious One. *"Praise him, all ye people."* Having done it once, do it again, and do it still more fervently, daily increasing in the reverence and zeal with which you extol the Most High. Not only praise him nationally by your rulers, but popularly in your masses. The multitude of the common folk shall bless the Lord. Inasmuch as the matter is spoken of twice, its certainty is confirmed, and the Gentiles must and shall extol Jehovah—all of them, without exception. Under the gospel dispensation we worship no new god, but the God of Abraham is our God for ever and ever; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

2. *"For his merciful kindness is great toward us."* By which is meant not only his great love toward the Jewish people, but towards the whole family of man. The Lord is kind to us as his creatures, and merciful to us as sinners, hence his merciful kindness to us as sinful creatures. This mercy has been very great, or powerful. The mighty grace of God has prevailed even as the waters of the flood prevailed over the earth: breaking over all bounds, it has flowed towards all portions of the multiplied race of man. In Christ Jesus, God has shown mercy mixed with kindness, and that to the very highest degree. We can all join in this grateful acknowledgment, and in the praise which is therefore due. *"And the truth of the LORD endureth for ever."* He has kept his covenant promise that in the seed of Abraham should all nations of the earth be blessed, and he will eternally keep every single promise of that covenant to all those who put their trust in him. This should be a cause of constant and grateful praise, wherefore the Psalm concludes as it began, with another Hallelujah, *"Praise ye the LORD."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—A very short Psalm if you regard the words, but of very great compass and most excellent if you thoughtfully consider the meaning. There are here five principal points of doctrine.

First, *the calling of the Gentiles*, the Apostle being the interpreter, Rom. xv. 11; but in vain might the Prophet invite the Gentiles to praise Jehovah, unless they were to be gathered into the unity of the faith together with the children of Abraham.

Second, *The summary of the Gospel*, namely, the manifestation of grace and truth, the Holy Spirit being the interpreter, John i. 17.

Third, *The end of so great a blessing*, namely, the worship of God in spirit and in truth, as we know that the kingdom of the Messiah is spiritual.

Fourth, *the employment of the subjects of the great King* is to praise and glorify Jehovah.

Lastly, *the privilege of these servants:* that, as to the Jews, so also to the Gentiles, who know and serve God the Saviour, eternal life and blessedness are brought, assured in this life, and prepared in heaven.—*Mollerus.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm, the shortest portion of the Book of God, is quoted, and given much value to, in Rom. xv. And upon this it has been profitably observed, "It is a small portion of Scripture, and as such we might easily overlook it. But not so the Holy Ghost. He gleans up this precious little testimony which speaks of grace to the Gentiles, and presses it on our attention."—*From Bellett's Short Meditations on the Psalms, chiefly in their Prophetic character*, 1871.

Whole Psalm.—The occasion and the author of this Psalm are alike unknown. De Wette regards it as *a Temple-Psalm*, and agrees with Rosenmüller in the supposition that it was sung either at the beginning or the end of the service in the temple. Knapp supposes that it was used as an intermediate service, sung during the progress of the general service to vary the devotion, and to awaken a new interest in the service, either sung by the choir or by the whole people.—*Albert Barnes.*

Whole Psalm.—In God's worship it is not always necessary to be long; few words sometimes say what is sufficient, as this short Psalm giveth us to understand. —*David Dickson.*

Whole Psalm.—This is the shortest, and the next but one is the longest, of the Psalms. There are times for short hymns and long hymns, for short prayers and long prayers, for short sermons and long sermons, for short speeches and long speeches. It is better to be too short than too long, as it can more easily be mended. Short addresses need no formal divisions: long addresses require them, as in the next Psalm but one.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 1.—"*O praise the* LORD," etc. The praise of God is here made both the beginning and the end of the Psalm; to show, that in praising God the saints are never satisfied with their own efforts, and would infinitely magnify him, even as his perfections are infinite. Here they make a circle, the beginning, middle, and end whereof is *hallelujah.* In the last Psalm, when David had said, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord," and so in all likelihood had made an end, yet he repeats the *hallelujah* again, and cries, "Praise ye the Lord." The Psalmist had made an end and yet he had not done; to signify, that when we have said our utmost for God's praise, we must not be content, but begin anew. There is hardly any duty more pressed in the Old Testament upon us, though less practised, than this of praising God. To quicken us therefore to a duty so necessary, but so much neglected, this and many other Psalms were penned by David, purposely to excite us, that are the *nations* here meant, to consecrate our whole lives to the singing and setting forth of God's worthy praises.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 1.—"*All ye nations.*" Note: each nation of the world has some special gift bestowed on it by God, which is not given to the others, whether you have regard to nature or grace, for which it ought to praise God.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise him.*" A different word is here used for "*praise*" than in the former clause: a word which is more frequently used in the Chaldee, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic languages; and signifies the celebration of the praises of God with a high voice.—*John Gill.*

Verse 2.—"*For his merciful kindness is great toward us.*" We cannot part from this Psalm without remarking that even in the Old Testament we have more than one instance of a recognition on the part of those that were without the pale of the church that God's favour to Israel was a source of blessing to themselves. Such were probably to some extent the sentiments of Hiram and the Queen of Sheba, the contemporaries of Solomon; such the experience of Naaman; such the virtual acknowledgments of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the Mede. They beheld "his merciful *kindness*" toward his servants of the house of Israel, and they praised him accordingly.—*John Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 2.—"*For his merciful kindness is great toward us.*" Albeit there be matter of praise unto God in himself, though we should not be partakers of any benefit from him, yet the Lord doth give his people cause to praise him for favours to them in their own particular cases.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"*For his merciful kindness is great.*" גָּבַר, *gabar*, is *strong:* it is not only *great* in *bulk* or *number;* but it is *powerful;* it prevails over sin, Satan, death and hell.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*Merciful kindness . . . . and the truth of the* LORD." Here, and so in divers other Psalms, God's mercy and truth are joined together; to show that all passages and proceedings, both in ordinances and in providences, whereby he cometh and communicateth himself to his people are not only mercy, though that is very sweet, but truth also. Their blessings come to them in the way of promise from God, as bound to them by the truth of his covenant. This is soul-satisfying indeed; this turns all that a man hath to cream, when every mercy is a present sent from heaven by virtue of a promise. Upon this account, God's mercy is ordinarily in the Psalms bounded by his truth; that none may either presume him more merciful than he hath declared himself in his word; nor despair of finding mercy *gratis*, according to the truth of his promise. Therefore, though thy sins be great, believe the text, and know that God's mercy is greater than thy sins. The high heaven covereth as well tall mountains as small molehills, and mercy can cover all. The more desperate thy disease, the greater is the glory of thy physician, who hath perfectly cured thee.—*Abraham Wright.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—The universal kingdom. I. The same God. II. The same worship. III. The same reason for it.

Verse 2.—"*Merciful kindness.*" In God's kindness there is mercy, because, I. Our sin deserves the reverse of kindness. II. Our weakness requires great tenderness. III. Our fears can only be so removed.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—I. In his attribute—he is always faithful. II. In his revelation—always infallible. III. In his action—always according to promise.

PSALM CXVIII.

AUTHOR AND SUBJECT.—*In the book of Ezra,* iii. 10, 11, *we read that "when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." Now the words mentioned in Ezra are the first and last sentences of this Psalm, and we therefore conclude that the people chanted the whole of this sublime song; and, moreover, that the use of this composition on such occasions was ordained by David, whom we conceive to be its author. The next step leads us to believe that he is its subject, at least in some degree; for it is clear that the writer is speaking concerning himself in the first place, though he may not have strictly confined himself to all the details of his own personal experience. That the Psalmist had a prophetic view of our Lord Jesus is very manifest; the frequent quotations from this song in the New Testament prove this beyond all question; but at the same time it could not have been intended that every particular line and sentence should be read in reference to the Messiah, for this requires very great ingenuity, and ingenious interpretations are seldom true. Certain devout expositors have managed to twist the expression of the seventeenth verse, "I shall not die, but live," so as to make it applicable to our Lord,* who did actually die, *and whose glory it is that he died; but we cannot bring our minds to do such violence to the words of holy writ.*

The Psalm seems to us to describe either David or some other man of God who was appointed by the divine choice to a high and honourable office in Israel. This elect champion found himself rejected by his friends and fellow-countrymen, and at the same time violently opposed by his enemies. In faith in God he battles for his appointed place, and in due time he obtains it in such a way as greatly to display the power and goodness of the Lord. He then goes up to the house of the Lord to offer sacrifice, and to express his gratitude for the divine interposition, all the people blessing him, and wishing him abundant prosperity. This heroic personage, whom we cannot help thinking to be David himself, broadly typified our Lord, but not in such a manner that in all the minutiæ of his struggles and prayers we are to hunt for parallels. The suggestion of Alexander that the speaker is a typical individual representing the nation, is exceedingly well worthy of attention; but it is not inconsistent with the idea that a personal leader may be intended, since that which describes the leader will be in a great measure true of his followers. The experience of the Head is that of the members, and both may be spoken of in much the same terms. Alexander thinks that the deliverance celebrated cannot be identified with any one so exactly as with that from the Babylonian exile; but we judge it best to refer it to no one incident in particular, but to regard it as a national song, adapted alike for the rise of a chosen hero, and the building of a temple. Whether a nation is re-founded by a conquering prince, or a temple founded by the laying of its corner-stone in joyful state, the Psalm is equally applicable.

DIVISION.—*We propose to divide the Psalm thus, from verses* 1 *to* 4 *the faithful are called upon to magnify the everlasting mercy of the Lord; from* 5 *to* 18 *the Psalmist gives forth a narrative of his experience, and an expression of his faith; in verses* 19 *to* 21 *he asks admittance into the house of the Lord, and begins the acknowledgment of the divine salvation. In verses* 22 *to* 27 *the priests and people recognize their ruler, magnify the Lord for him, declare him blessed, and bid him approach the altar with his sacrifice. In the two closing verses the grateful hero himself exalts God the ever-merciful.*

EXPOSITION.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for ***he is*** good: because his mercy ***endureth*** for ever.

2 Let Israel now say, that his mercy ***endureth*** for ever.

3 Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.
4 Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

1. *"O give thanks unto the LORD."* The grateful hero feels that he cannot himself alone sufficiently express his thankfulness, and therefore he calls in the aid of others. Grateful hearts are greedy of men's tongues, and would monopolize them all for God's glory. The whole nation was concerned in David's triumphant accession, and therefore it was right that they should unite in his adoring song of praise. The thanks were to be rendered unto Jehovah alone, and not to the patience or valour of the hero himself. It is always well to trace our mercies to him who bestows them, and if we cannot give him anything else, let us at any rate give him our thanks. We must not stop short at the second agent, but rise at once to the first cause, and render all our praises *unto the Lord* himself. Have we been of a forgetful or murmuring spirit? Let us hear the lively language of the text, and allow it to speak to our hearts: "Cease your complainings, cease from all self-glorification, and give thanks unto the Lord." *"For he is good."* This is reason enough for giving him thanks; goodness is his essence and nature, and therefore he is always to be praised whether we are receiving anything from him or not. Those who only praise God because he *does* them good should rise to a higher note and give thanks to him because he *is* good. In the truest sense he alone is good, "There is none good but one, that is God"; therefore in all gratitude the Lord should have the royal portion. If others seem to be good, he *is* good. If others are good in a measure, he is good beyond measure. When others behave badly to us, it should only stir us up the more heartily to give thanks unto the Lord, because he is good; and when we ourselves are conscious that we are far from being good, we should only the more reverently bless him that "he is good." We must never tolerate an instant's unbelief as to the goodness of the Lord; whatever else may be questionable, this is absolutely certain, that Jehovah is good; his dispensations may vary, but his nature is always the same, and always good. It is not only that he was good, and will be good, but he *is* good, let his providence be what it may. Therefore let us even at this present moment, though the skies be dark with clouds, yet give thanks unto his name.

"Because his mercy endureth for ever." Mercy is a great part of his goodness, and one which more concerns us than any other, for we are sinners and have need of his mercy. Angels may say that he is good, but they need not his mercy and cannot therefore take an equal delight in it; inanimate creation declares that *he is good*, but it cannot feel his *mercy*, for it has never transgressed; but man, deeply guilty and graciously forgiven, beholds mercy as the very focus and centre of the goodness of the Lord. The endurance of the divine mercy is a special subject for song: notwithstanding our sins, our trials, our fears, his mercy *endureth for ever*. The best of earthly joys pass away, and even the world itself grows old and hastens to decay, but there is no change in the mercy of God; he was faithful to our forefathers, he is merciful to us, and will be gracious to our children and our children's children. It is to be hoped that the philosophical interpreters who endeavour to clip the word "for ever" into a mere period of time will have the goodness to let this passage alone. However, whether they do or not, we shall believe in endless mercy—mercy to eternity. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the grand incarnation of the mercy of God, calls upon us at every remembrance of him to give thanks unto the Lord, for "he is good."

2. *"Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever."* God had made a covenant with their forefathers, a covenant of mercy and love, and to that covenant he was faithful evermore. Israel sinned in Egypt, provoked the Lord in the wilderness, went astray again and again under the judges, and trangressed at all times; and yet the Lord continued to regard them as his people, to favour them with his oracles, and to forgive their sins. He speedily ceased from the chastisements which they so richly deserved, because he had a favour towards them. He put his rod away the moment they repented, because his heart was full of compassion. "His mercy endureth for ever" was Israel's national hymn, which, as a people, they had been called upon to sing upon many former occasions; and now their leader, who had at last gained the place for which Jehovah had destined him, calls upon the whole nation to join with him in extolling, in this particular instance of the divine goodness, the eternal mercy of the Lord. David's success was mercy to Israel, as well as mercy to himself. If Israel does not sing, who will? If Israel

does not sing of mercy, who can? If Israel does not sing when the Son of David ascends the throne, the very stones will cry out.

3. *"Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever."* The sons of Aaron were specially set apart to come nearest to God, and it was only because of his mercy that they were enabled to live in the presence of the thrice holy Jehovah, who is a consuming fire. Every time the morning and evening lamb was sacrificed, the priests saw the continual mercy of the Lord, and in all the holy vessels of the sanctuary, and all its services from hour to hour, they had renewed witness of the goodness of the Most High. When the high priest went in unto the holy place and came forth accepted, he might, above all men, sing of the eternal mercy. If this Psalm refers to David, the priests had special reason for thankfulness on his coming to the throne, for Saul had made a great slaughter among them, and had at various times interfered with their sacred office. A man had now come to the throne who for their Master's sake would esteem them, give them their dues, and preserve them safe from all harm. Our Lord Jesus, having made all his people priests unto God, may well call upon them in that capacity to magnify the everlasting mercy of the Most High. Can any one of the royal priesthood be silent?

4. *"Let them now that fear the* LORD *say, that his mercy endureth for ever."* If there were any throughout the world who did not belong to Israel after the flesh, but nevertheless had a holy fear and lowly reverence of God, the Psalmist calls upon them to unite with him in his thanksgiving, and to do it especially on the occasion of his exaltation to the throne; and this is no more than they would cheerfully agree to do, since every good man in the world is benefited when a true servant of God is placed in a position of honour and influence. The prosperity of Israel through the reign of David was a blessing to all who feared Jehovah. A truly God-fearing man will have his eye much upon God's mercy, because he is deeply conscious of his need of it, and because that attribute excites in him a deep feeling of reverential awe. "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared."

In the three exhortations, to Israel, to the house of Aaron, and to them that fear the Lord, there is a repetition of the exhortation to *say*, "that his mercy endureth for ever." We are not only to believe, but to declare the goodness of God; truth is not to be hushed up, but proclaimed. God would have his people act as witnesses, and not stand silent in the day when his honour is impugned. Specially is it our joy to speak out to the honour and glory of God when we think upon the exaltation of his dear Son. We should shout "Hosannah," and sing loud "Hallelujahs" when we behold the stone which the builders rejected lifted into its proper place.

In each of the three exhortations notice carefully the word *"now."* There is no time like time present for telling out the praises of God. The present exaltation of the Son of David now demands from all who are the subjects of his kingdom continual songs of thanksgiving to him who hath set him on high in the midst of Zion. *Now* with us should mean always. When would it be right to cease from praising God, whose mercy never ceases?

The fourfold testimonies to the everlasting mercy of God which are now before us speak like four evangelists, each one declaring the very pith and marrow of the gospel; and they stand like four angels at the four corners of the earth holding the winds in their hands, restraining the plagues of the latter days that the mercy and long-suffering of God may endure towards the sons of men. Here are four cords to bind the sacrifice to the four horns of the altar, and four trumpets with which to proclaim the year of jubilee to every quarter of the world. Let not the reader pass on to the consideration of the rest of the Psalm until he has with all his might lifted up both heart and voice to praise the Lord, "for his mercy endureth for ever."

"Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for he is kind;
For his mercies shall endure
Ever faithful, ever sure."

5 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, *and set me* in a large place.

6 The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.

8 *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

9 *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

10 All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.

11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

12 They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.

14 The LORD *is* my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

18 The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

5. "*I called upon the* LORD *in distress*," or, "out of anguish I invoked Jah." Nothing was left him but prayer, his agony was too great for aught beside; but having the heart and the privilege to pray he possessed all things. Prayers which come out of distress generally come out of the heart, and therefore they go to the heart of God. It is sweet to recollect our prayers, and often profitable to tell others of them after they are heard. Prayer may be bitter in the offering, but it will be sweet in the answering. The man of God had called upon the Lord when he was not in distress, and therefore he found it natural and easy to call upon him when he was in distress. He worshipped, he praised, he prayed: for all this is included in calling upon God, even when he was in a straitened condition. Some read the original "a narrow gorge"; and therefore it was the more joy to him when he could say "The Lord answered me, and set me in a large place." He passed out of the defile of distress into the well-watered plain of delight. He says, "Jah heard me in a wide place," for God is never shut up, or straitened. In God's case hearing means answering, hence the translators rightly put, "The Lord answered me," though the original word is "*heard.*" The answer was appropriate to the prayer, for he brought him out of his narrow and confined condition into a place of liberty where he could walk at large, free from obstruction and oppression. Many of us can join with the Psalmist in the declarations of this verse: deep was our distress on account of sin, and we were shut up as in a prison under the law, but in answer to the prayer of faith we obtained the liberty of full justification wherewith Christ makes men free, and we are free indeed. It was the Lord who did it, and unto his name we ascribe all the glory; we had no merits, no strength, no wisdom, all we could do was to call upon him, and even that was his gift; but the mercy which is to eternity came to our rescue, we were brought out of bondage, and we were made to delight ourselves in the length and breadth of a boundless inheritance. What a large place is that in which the great God has placed us! All things are ours, all times are ours, all places are ours, for God himself is ours; we have earth to lodge in and heaven to dwell in,—what larger place can be imagined? We need all Israel, the whole house of Aaron, and all them that fear the Lord, to assist us in the expression of our gratitude; and when they have aided us to the utmost, and we ourselves have done our best, all will fall short of the praises that are due to our gracious Lord.

6. "*The* LORD *is on my side*," or, he is "for me." Once his justice was against me, but now he is my reconciled God, and engaged on my behalf. The Psalmist naturally rejoiced in the divine help; all men turned against him, but God was his defender and advocate, accomplishing the divine purposes of his grace. The expression may also be translated "to me," that is to say, Jehovah belongs to me, and is mine. What infinite wealth is here! If we do not magnify the Lord we are of all men most brutish. "*I will not fear.*" He does not say that he should

not suffer, but that he would not fear: the favour of God infinitely outweighed the hatred of men, therefore setting the one against the other he felt that he had no reason to be afraid. He was calm and confident, though surrounded with enemies, and so let all believers be, for thus they honour God. *"What can man do unto me?"* He can do nothing more than God permits; at the very uttermost he can only kill the body, but he hath no more that he can do. God having purposed to set his servant upon the throne, the whole race of mankind could do nothing to thwart the divine decree: the settled purpose of Jehovah's heart could not be turned aside, nor its accomplishment delayed, much less prevented, by the most rancorous hostility of the most powerful of men. Saul sought to slay David, but David outlived Saul, and sat upon his throne. Scribe and Pharisee, priest and Herodian, united in opposing the Christ of God, but he is exalted on high none the less because of their enmity. The mightiest man is a puny thing when he stands in opposition to God, yea, he shrinks into utter nothingness. It were a pity to be afraid of such a pitiful, miserable, despicable object as a man opposed to the almighty God. The Psalmist here speaks like a champion throwing down the gauntlet to all comers, defying the universe in arms; a true Bayard, without fear and without reproach, he enjoys God's favour, and he defies every foe.

7. *"The LORD taketh my part with them that help me."* Jehovah condescended to be in alliance with the good man and his comrades; his God was not content to look on, but he took part in the struggle. What a consolatory fact it is that the Lord takes our part, and that when he raises up friends for us he does not leave them to fight for us alone, but he himself as our chief defender deigns to come into the battle and wage war on our behalf. David mentioned those that helped him, he was not unmindful of his followers; there is a long record of David's mighty men in the book of Chronicles, and this teaches us that we are not to disdain or think little of the generous friends who rally around us; but still our great dependence and our grand confidence must be fixed upon the Lord alone. Without him the strong helpers fail; indeed, apart from him in the sons of men there is no help; but when our gracious Jehovah is pleased to support and strengthen those who aid us, they become substantial helpers to us.

"Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me." The words, "my desire," are added by the translators; the Psalmist said, "I shall look upon my haters: I shall look them in the face, I shall make them cease from their contempt, I shall myself look down upon them instead of their looking down upon me. I shall see their defeat, I shall see the end of them." Our Lord Jesus does at this moment look down upon his adversaries, his enemies are his footstool; he shall look upon them at his second coming, and at the glance of his eyes they shall flee before him, not being able to endure that look with which he shall read them through and through.

8. *"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."* It is better in all ways, for first of all it is wiser: God is infinitely more able to help, and more likely to help, than man, and therefore prudence suggests that we put our confidence in him above all others. It is also morally better to do so, for it is the duty of the creature to trust in the Creator. God has a claim upon his creatures' faith, he deserves to be trusted; and to place our reliance upon another rather than upon himself, is a direct insult to his faithfulness. It is better in the sense of safer, since we can never be sure of our ground if we rely upon mortal man, but we are always secure in the hands of our God. It is better in its effect upon ourselves: to trust in man tends to make us mean, crouching, dependent; but confidence in God elevates, produces a sacred quiet of spirit, and sanctifies the soul. It is, moreover, much better to trust in God, as far as the result is concerned; for in many cases the human object of our trust fails from want of ability, from want of generosity, from want of affection, or from want of memory; but the Lord, so far from failing, does for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think. This verse is written out of the experience of many who have first of all found the broken reeds of the creature break under them, and have afterwards joyfully found the Lord to be a solid pillar sustaining all their weight.

9. *"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes."* These should be the noblest of men, chivalrous in character, and true to the core. The royal word should be unquestionable. They are noblest in rank and mightiest in power, and yet as a rule princes are not one whit more reliable than the rest of mankind. A gilded vane turns with the wind as readily as a meaner weathercock. Princes are

but men, and the best of men are poor creatures. In many troubles they cannot help us in the least degree; for instance, in sickness, bereavement, or death; neither can they assist us one jot in reference to our eternal state. In eternity a prince's smile goes for nothing; heaven and hell pay no homage to royal authority. The favour of princes is proverbially fickle, the testimonies of worldlings to this effect are abundant. All of us remember the words put by the world's great poet into the lips of the dying Wolsey; their power lies in their truth :—

> "O how wretched
> Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!
> There is betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
> That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
> More pangs and fears than wars or women have;
> And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
> Never to hope again.'

Yet a prince's smile has a strange witchery to many hearts, few are proof against that tuft-hunting which is the index of a weak mind. Principle has been forgotten and character has been sacrificed to maintain position at court; yea, the manliness which the meanest slave retains has been basely bartered for the stars and garters of a profligate monarch. He who puts his confidence in God, the great King, is thereby made mentally and spiritually stronger, and rises to the highest dignity of manhood; in fact, the more he trusts the more is he free, but the fawning sycophant of greatness is meaner than the dirt he treads upon. For this reason and a thousand others it is infinitely better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

10. *"All nations compassed me about."* The hero of the Psalm, while he had no earthly friend upon whom he could thoroughly rely, was surrounded by innumerable enemies, who heartily hated him. He was hemmed in by his adversaries, and scarce could find a loophole of escape from the bands which made a ring around him. As if by common consent all sorts of people set themselves against him, and yet he was more than a match for them all, because he was trusting in the name of the Lord. Therefore does he joyfully accept the battle, and grasp the victory, crying, *"but in the name of the* LORD *will I destroy them,"* or "cut them in pieces." They thought to destroy *him*, but he was sure of destroying *them;* they meant to blot out his name, but he expected to render not only his own name but the name of the Lord his God more illustrious in the hearts of men. It takes grand faith to be calm in the day of actual battle, and especially when that battle waxes hot; but our hero was as calm as if no fight was raging. Napoleon said that God was always on the side of the biggest battalions, but the Psalmist-warrior found that the Lord of hosts was with the solitary champion, and that in his name the battalions were cut to pieces. There is a grand touch of the *ego* in the last sentence, but it is so evershadowed with the name of the Lord that there is none too much of it. He recognized his own individuality, and asserted it: he did not sit still supinely and leave the work to be done by God by some mysterious means; but he resolved with his own trusty sword to set about the enterprise, and so become in God's hand the instrument of his own deliverance. He did all in the name of the Lord, but he did not ignore his own responsibility, nor screen himself from personal conflict, for he cried, *"I* will destroy them." Observe that he does not speak of merely escaping from them like a bird out of the snare of the fowler, but he vows that he will carry the war into his enemies' ranks, and overthrow them so thoroughly that there should be no fear of their rising up a second time.

11. *"They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about."* He had such a vivid recollection of his danger that his enemies seem to live again in his verses. We see their fierce array, and their cruel combination of forces. They made a double ring, they surrounded him in a circle of many ranks, they not only talked of doing so, but they actually shut him up and enclosed him as within a wall. His heart had vividly realized his position of peril at the time, and now he delights to call it again to mind in order that he may the more ardently adore the mercy which made him strong in the hour of conflict, so that he broke through a troop, yea, swept a host to destruction. *"But in the name of the* LORD *will I destroy them."* I will subdue them, get them under my feet, and break their power in pieces. He is as certain about the destruction of his enemies as he was assured of their having compassed him about. They made the circle three and four times deep, but for all that he felt confident of victory. It is grand to hear a man speak in this fashion when it is not boasting, but the calm declaration of his heartfelt trust in God.

12. *"They compassed me about like bees."* They seemed to be everywhere, like a swarm of bees, attacking him at every point; nimbly flying from place to place, stinging him meanwhile, and inflicting grievous pain. They threatened at first to baffle him: what weapon could he use against them? They were so numerous, so inveterate; so contemptible, yet so audacious; so insignificant and yet so capable of inflicting agony, that to the eye of reason there appeared no possibility of doing anything with them. Like the swarm of flies in Egypt, there was no standing against them; they threatened to sting a man to death with their incessant malice, their base insinuations, their dastardly falsehoods. He was in an evil case, but even there faith availed. All-powerful faith adapts itself to all circumstances, it can cast out devils, and it can drive out bees. Surely, if it outlives the sting of death, it will not die from the sting of a bee. *"They are quenched as the fire of thorns."* Their fierce attack soon came to an end, the bees lost their stings and the buzz of the swarm subsided: like thorns which blaze with fierce crackling and abundant flame, but die out in a handful of ashes very speedily, so did the nations which surrounded our hero soon cease their clamour and come to an inglorious end. They were soon hot and soon cold, their attack was as short as it was sharp. He had no need to crush the bees, for like crackling thorns they died out of themselves. For a third time he adds, *"for in the name of the* LORD *will I destroy them,"* or "cut them down," as men cut down thorns with a scythe or reaping-hook.

What wonders have been wrought in the name of the Lord! It is the battle-cry of faith before which its adversaries fly apace. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" brings instant terror into the midst of the foe. The name of the Lord is the one weapon which never fails in the day of battle: he who knows how to use it may chase a thousand with his single arm. Alas! we too often go to work and to conflict in our own name, and the enemy knows it not, but scornfully enquires, "Who are ye?" Let us take care never to venture into the presence of the foe without first of all arming ourselves with this impenetrable mail. If we knew this name better, and trusted it more, our life would be more fruitful and sublime.

"Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky,
Angels and men before it fall;
And devils fear and fly."

13. *"Thou hast thrust sore at me,"* "Thrusting, thou hast thrust at me." It is a vigorous apostrophe, in which the enemy is described as concentrating all his thrusting power into the thrusts which he gave to the man of God. He thrust again and again with the keenest point, even as bees thrust their stings into their victim. The foe had exhibited intense exasperation, and fearful determination, nor had he been without a measure of success; wounds had been given and received, and these smarted much, and were exceeding sore. Now, this is true of many a tried child of God who has been wounded by Satan, by the world, by temptation, by affliction; the sword has entered into his bones, and left its mark. *"That I might fall."* This was the object of the thrusting: to throw him down, to wound him in such a way that he would no longer be able to keep his place, to make him depart from his integrity, and lose his confidence in God. If our adversaries can do this they will have succeeded to their heart's content: if we fall into grievous sin they will be better pleased than even if they had sent the bullet of the assassin into our heart, for a moral death is worse than a physical one. If they can dishonour us, and God in us, their victory will be complete. "Better death than false of faith" is the motto of one of our noble houses, and it may well be ours. It is to compass our fall that they compass *us;* they fill us with their venom that they may fill us with their sin. *"But the* LORD *helped me";* a blessed "but." This is the saving clause. Other helpers were unable to chase away the angry nations, much less to destroy all the noxious swarms; but when the Lord came to the rescue the hero's single arm was strong enough to vanquish all his adversaries. How sweetly can many of us repeat in the retrospect of our past tribulations this delightful sentence, "But the Lord helped *me*." I was assailed by innumerable doubts and fears, but the Lord helped me; my natural unbelief was terribly inflamed by the insinuations of Satan, but the Lord helped me; multiplied trials were rendered more intense by the cruel assaults of men, and I knew not what to do, but the Lord helped me. Doubtless, when we land on the hither shore of Jordan, this will be one of our songs, "Flesh and heart were failing me, and the adversaries of my soul surrounded me in the swellings of Jordan, but the Lord helped me. Glory be unto his name."

14. *"The* LORD *is my strength and song,"* my strength while I was in the conflict, my song now that it is ended; my strength against the strong, and my song over their defeat. He is far from boasting of his own valour; he ascribes his victory to its real source, he has no song concerning his own exploits, but all his peans are unto *Jehovah Victor*, the Lord whose right hand and holy arm had given him the victory. *"And is become my salvation."* The poet warrior knew that he was saved, and he not only ascribed that salvation unto God, but he declared God himself to be his salvation. It is an all-comprehending expression, signifying that from beginning to end, in the whole and in the details of it, he owed his deliverance entirely to the Lord. Thus can all the Lord's redeemed say, "Salvation is of the Lord." We cannot endure any doctrine which puts the crown upon the wrong head and defrauds the glorious King of his revenue of praise. Jehovah has done it all; yea, in Christ Jesus he *is* all, and therefore in our praises let him alone be extolled. It is a happy circumstance for us when we can praise God as alike our strength, song, and salvation; for God sometimes gives a secret strength to his people, and yet they question their own salvation, and cannot, therefore, sing of it. Many are, no doubt, truly saved, but at times they have so little strength, that they are ready to faint, and therefore they cannot sing: when strength is imparted and salvation is realised then the song is clear and full.

15. *"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."* They sympathised in the delight of their leader and they abode in their tents in peace, rejoicing that one had been raised up who, in the name of the Lord, would protect them from their adversaries. The families of believers are happy, and they should take pains to give their happiness a voice by their family devotion. The dwelling-place of saved men should be the temple of praise; it is but righteous that the righteous should praise the righteous God, who is their righteousness. The struggling hero knew that the voice of woe and lamentation was heard in the tents of his adversaries, for they had suffered severe defeat at his hands; but he was delighted by the remembrance that the nation for whom he had struggled would rejoice from one end of the land to the other at the deliverance which God had wrought by his means. That hero of heroes, the conquering Saviour, gives to all the families of his people abundant reasons for incessant song now that he has led captivity captive and ascended up on high. Let none of us be silent in our households: if we have salvation let us have joy, and if we have joy let us give it a tongue wherewith it may magnify the Lord. If we hearken carefully to the music which comes from Israel's tents, we shall catch a stanza to this effect, *"the right hand of the* LORD *doeth valiantly":* Jehovah has manifested his strength, given victory to his chosen champion, and overthrown all the armies of the foe. "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name." When he comes to blows, woe to his mightiest opponent.

16. *"The right hand of the* LORD *is exalted,"* lifted up to smite the foeman, or extolled and magnified in the eyes of his people. It is the Lord's *right* hand, the hand of his skill, the hand of his greatest power, the hand which is accustomed to defend his saints. When that is lifted up, it lifts up all who trust in him, and it casts down all who resist him. *"The right hand of the* LORD *doeth valiantly."* The Psalmist speaks in triplets, for he is praising the triune God, his heart is warm and he loves to dwell upon the note; he is not content with the praise he has rendered, he endeavours to utter it each time more fervently and more jubilantly than before. He had dwelt upon the sentence, "they compassed me about," for his peril from encircling armies was fully realised; and now he dwells upon the valour of Jehovah's right hand, for he has as vivid a sense of the presence and majesty of the Lord. How seldom is this the case; the Lord's mercy is forgotten and only the trial is remembered.

17. *"I shall not die, but live."* His enemies hoped that he would die, and perhaps he himself feared he should perish at their hand: the news of his death may have been spread among his people, for the tongue of rumour is ever ready with ill news, the false intelligence would naturally cause great sorrow and despondency, but he proclaims himself as yet alive and as confident that he shall not fall by the hand of the destroyer. He is cheerfully assured that no arrow could carry death between the joints of his harness, and no weapon of any sort could end his career. His time had not yet come, he felt immortality beating within his bosom. Perhaps he had been sick, and brought to death's door, but he had a presentiment that the sickness was not unto death, but to the glory of God. At any rate, he knew that he should

not so die as to give victory to the enemies of God ; for the honour of God and the good of his people were both wrapped up in his continued success. Feeling that he would live he devoted himself to the noblest of purposes : he resolved to bear witness to the divine faithfulness, *"and declare the works of the* LORD." He determined to recount the works of Jah ; and he does so in this Psalm, wherein he dwells with love and admiration upon the splendour of Jehovah's prowess in the midst of the fight. While there is a testimony for God to be borne by us to any one, it is certain that we shall not be hurried from the land of the living. The Lord's prophets shall live on in the midst of famine, and war, and plague, and persecution, till they have uttered all the words of their prophecy ; his priests shall stand at the altar unharmed till their last sacrifice has been presented before him. No bullet will find its billet in our hearts till we have finished our allotted period of activity.

" Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till he please I cannot die :
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

18. *"The* LORD *hath chastened me sore."* This is faith's version of the former passage, " Thou hast thrust sore at me ; " for the attacks of the enemy are chastisements from the hand of God. The devil tormented Job for his own purposes, but in reality the sorrows of the patriarch were chastisements from the Lord. " Chastening, Jah hath chastened me," says our poet : as much as to say that the Lord had smitten him very severely, and made him sorrowfully to know the full weight of his rod. The Lord frequently appears to save his heaviest blows for his best-beloved ones ; if any one affliction be more painful than another it falls to the lot of those whom he most distinguishes in his service. The gardener prunes his best roses with most care. Chastisement is sent to keep successful saints humble, to make them tender towards others, and to enable them to bear the high honours which their heavenly Friend puts upon them. *"But he hath not given me over unto death."* This verse, like the thirteenth, concludes with a blessed " but," which constitutes a saving clause. The Psalmist felt as if he had been beaten within an inch of his life, but yet death did not actually ensue. There is always a merciful limit to the scourging of the sons of God. Forty stripes save one were all that an Israelite might receive, and the Lord will never allow that one, that killing stroke, to fall upon his children. They are " chastened, but not killed " ; their pains are for their instruction, not for their destruction. By these things the ungodly die, but gracious Hezekiah could say, " By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." No, blessed be the name of God, he may chastise us, but he will not condemn us ; we must feel the smarting rod, but we shall not feel the killing sword. He does not give us over unto death at any time, and we may be quite sure that he has not done so while he condescends to chasten us, for if he intended our final rejection he would not take the pains to place us under his fatherly discipline. It may seem hard to be under the afflicting rod, but it would be a far more dreadful thing if the Lord were to say, " He is given unto idols, let him alone." Even from our griefs we may distil consolation, and gather sweet flowers from the garden in which the Lord has planted salutary rue and wormwood. It is a cheering fact that if we endure chastening God dealeth with us as with sons, and we may well be satisfied with the common lot of his beloved family.

The hero, restored to health, and rescued from the dangers of battle, now lifts up his own song unto the Lord, and asks all Israel, led on by the goodly fellowship of the priests, to assist him in chanting a joyful Te Deum.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness : I will go into them, *and* I will praise the LORD :

20 This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.

21 I will praise thee : for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

19. *"Open to me the gates of righteousness."* The grateful champion having reached the entrance of the temple, asks for admission in set form, as if he felt that he could only approach the hallowed shrine by divine permission, and wished only to enter in the appointed manner. The temple of God was meant for the righteous to enter and offer the sacrifices of righteousness, hence the gates are called the gates

of righteousness. Righteous deeds were done within its walls, and righteous teachings sounded forth from its courts. The phrase "the gate" is sometimes used to signify power or empire; as, for instance, "the Sublime Porte" signifies the seat of empire of Turkey; the entrance to the temple was the true Sublime Porte, and what is better, it was the *porta justitiæ*, the gate of righteousness, the palace of the great King, who is in all things just. *"I will go into them, and I will praise the* LORD." Only let the gate be opened, and the willing worshipper will enter; and he will enter in the right spirit, and for the best of purposes, that he may render homage unto the Most High. Alas, there are multitudes who do not care whether the gates of God's house are opened or not; and although they know that they are opened wide they never care to enter, neither does the thought of praising God so much as cross their minds. The time will come for them when they shall find the gates of heaven shut against them, for those gates are peculiarly the gates of righteousness through which there shall by no means enter anything that defileth. Our champion might have praised the Lord in secret, and doubtless he did so; but he was not content without going up to the assembly, there to register his thanksgivings. Those who neglect public worship generally neglect all worship; those who praise God within their own gates are among the readiest to praise him within his temple gates. Our hero had also in all probability been sore sick, and therefore like Hezekiah he says, "The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of my life in the house of the Lord." Public praise for public mercies is every way most appropriate, most acceptable to God, and most profitable to others.

20. *"This gate of the* LORD, *into which the righteous shall enter."* The Psalmist loves the house of God so well that he admires the very gate thereof, and pauses beneath its arch to express his affection for it. He loved it because it was the gate of the Lord, he loved it because it was the gate of righteousness, because so many godly people had already entered it, and because in all future ages such persons will continue to pass through its portals. If the gate of the Lord's house on earth is so pleasant to us, how greatly shall we rejoice when we pass that gate of pearl, to which none, but the righteous shall ever approach, but through which all the just shall in due time enter to eternal felicity. The Lord Jesus has passed that way, and not only set the gate wide open, but secured an entrance for all those who are made righteous in his righteousness: all the righteous must and shall enter there, whoever may oppose them. Under another aspect our Lord is himself that gate, and through him, as the new and living Way, all the righteous delight to approach unto the Lord. Whenever we draw near to praise the Lord we must come by this gate; acceptable praise never climbs over the wall, or enters by any other way, but comes to God in Christ Jesus; as it is written, "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Blessed, for ever blessed, be this wondrous gate of the person of our Lord.

21. Having entered, the champion exclaims, *"I will praise thee,"* not "I will praise the Lord," for now he vividly realizes the divine presence, and addresses himself directly to Jehovah, whom his faith sensibly discerns. How well it is in all our songs of praise to let the heart have direct and distinct communion with God himself! The Psalmist's song was personal praise too:—*"I will* praise thee"; resolute praise, for he firmly resolved to offer it; spontaneous praise, for he voluntarily and cheerfully rendered it, and continuous praise, for he did not intend soon to have done with it. It was a life-long vow to which there would never come a close, "I will praise thee." *"For thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation."* He praises God by mentioning his favours, weaving his song out of the divine goodness which he had experienced. In these words he gives the reason for his praise,—his answered prayer, and the deliverance which he had received in consequence. How fondly he dwells upon the personal interposition of God! *"Thou* hast heard me." How heartily he ascribes the whole of his victory over his enemies to God; nay, he sees God himself to be the whole of it: *"Thou* art become my salvation." It is well to go directly to God himself, and not to stay even in his mercy, or in the acts of his grace. Answered prayers bring God very near to us; realised salvation enables us to realise the immediate presence of God. Considering the extreme distress through which the worshipper had passed, it is not at all wonderful that he should feel his heart full of gratitude at the great salvation which God had wrought for him, and should at his first entrance into the temple lift up his voice in thankful praise for personal favours so great, so needful, so perfect.

22 The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner.

23 This is the LORD's doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes.

24 This *is* the day *which* the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

26 Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

27 God *is* the LORD, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, *even* unto the horns of the altar.

This passage will appear to be a mixture of the expressions of the people and of the hero himself.

22. "*The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.*" Here the people magnify God for bringing his chosen servant into the honourable office, which had been allotted to him by divine decree. A wise king and valiant leader is a stone by which the national fabric is built up. David had been rejected by those in authority, but God had placed him in a position of the highest honour and the greatest usefulness, making him the chief corner-stone of the state. In the case of many others whose early life has been spent in conflict, the Lord has been pleased to accomplish his divine purposes in like manner; but to none is this text so applicable as to the Lord Jesus himself: he is the living stone, the tried stone, elect, precious, which God himself appointed from of old. The Jewish builders, scribe, priest, Pharisee, and Herodian, rejected him with disdain. They could see no excellence in him that they should build upon him; he could not be made to fit in with their ideal of a national church, he was a stone of another quarry from themselves, and not after their mind nor according to their taste; therefore they cast him away and poured contempt upon him, even as Peter said, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders": they reckoned him to be as nothing, though he is Lord of all. In raising him from the dead the Lord God exalted him to be the head of his church, the very pinnacle of her glory and beauty. Since then he has become the confidence of the Gentiles, even of them that are afar off upon the sea, and thus he has joined the two walls of Jew and Gentile into one stately temple, and is seen to be the binding corner-stone, making both one. This is a delightful subject for contemplation.

Jesus in all things hath the pre-eminence, he is the principal stone of the whole house of God. We are accustomed to lay some one stone of a public building with solemn ceremony, and to deposit in it any precious things which may have been selected as a memorial of the occasion: henceforth that corner-stone is looked upon as peculiarly honourable, and joyful memories are associated with it. All this is in a very emphatic sense true of our blessed Lord, "The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." God himself laid him where he is, and hid within him all the precious things of the eternal covenant; and there he shall for ever remain, the foundation of all our hopes, the glory of all our joys, the uniting bond of all our fellowship. He is "the head over all things to the church," and by him the church is fitly framed together, and groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. Still do the builders refuse him: even to this day the professional teachers of the gospel are far too apt to fly to any and every new philosophy sooner than maintain the simple gospel, which is the essence of Christ: nevertheless, he holds his true position amongst his people, and the foolish builders shall see to their utter confusion that his truth shall be exalted over all. Those who reject the chosen stone will stumble against him to their own hurt, and ere long will come his second advent, when he will fall upon them from the heights of heaven, and grind them to powder.

23. "*This is the LORD's doing.*" The exalted position of Christ in his church is not the work of man, and does not depend for its continuation upon any builders or ministers; God himself has wrought the exaltation of our Lord Jesus. Considering the opposition which comes from the wisdom, the power, and the authority of this world, it is manifest that if the kingdom of Christ be indeed set up and maintained in the world it must be by supernatural power. Indeed, it is so even in the smallest detail. Every grain of true faith in this world is a divine creation, and every hour

in which the true church subsists is a prolonged miracle. It is not the goodness of human nature, nor the force of reasoning, which exalts Christ, and builds up the church, but a power from above. This staggers the adversary, for he cannot understand what it is which baffles him: of the Holy Ghost he knows nothing. *"It is marvellous in our eyes."* We actually see it; it is not in our thoughts and hopes and prayers alone, but the astonishing work is actually before our eyes. Jesus reigns, his power is felt, and we perceive that it is so. Faith sees our great Master, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; she sees and marvels. It never ceases to astonish us, as we see, even here below, God by means of weakness defeating power, by the simplicity of his word baffling the craft of men, and by the invisible influence of his Spirit exalting his Son in human hearts in the teeth of open and determined opposition. It is indeed "marvellous in our eyes," as all God's works must be if men care to study them. In the Hebrew the passage reads, *"It is wonderfully done":* not only is the exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth itself wonderful, but the way in which it is brought about is marvellous: it is wonderfully done. The more we study the history of Christ and his church the more fully shall we agree with this declaration.

24. *"This is the day which the LORD hath made."* A new era has commenced. The day of David's enthronement was the beginning of better times for Israel; and in a far higher sense the day of our Lord's resurrection is a new day of God's own making, for it is the dawn of a blessed dispensation. No doubt the Israelitish nation celebrated the victory of its champion with a day of feasting, music and song; and surely it is but meet that we should reverently keep the feast of the triumph of the Son of David. We observe the Lord's-day as henceforth our true Sabbath, a day made and ordained of God, for the perpetual remembrance of the achievements of our Redeemer. Whenever the soft Sabbath light of the first day of the week breaks upon the earth, let us sing,

> 'This is the day the Lord hath made,
> He calls the hours his own;
> Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,
> And praise surround the throne."

We by no means wish to confine the reference of the passage to the Sabbath, for the whole gospel day is the day of God's making, and its blessings come to us through our Lord's being placed as the head of the corner. *"We will rejoice and be glad in it."* What else can we do? Having obtained so great a deliverance through our illustrious leader, and having seen the eternal mercy of God so brilliantly displayed, it would ill become us to mourn and murmur. Rather will we exhibit a double joy, rejoice in heart and be glad in face, rejoice in secret and be glad in public, for we have more than a double reason for being glad in the Lord. We ought to be specially joyous on the Sabbath: it is the queen of days, and its hours should be clad in royal apparel of delight. George Herbert says of it:—

> "Thou art a day of mirth,
> And where the week-days trail on ground,
> Thy flight is higher as thy birth."

Entering into the midst of the church of God, and beholding the Lord Jesus as all in all in the assemblies of his people, we are bound to overflow with joy. Is it not written, "then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord"? When the King makes the house of prayer to be a banqueting house, and we have grace to enjoy fellowship with him, both in his sufferings and in his triumphs, we feel an intense delight, and we are glad to express it with the rest of his people.

25. *"Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD."* Hosanna! God save our king! Let David reign! Or as we who live in these latter days interpret it,—Let the Son of David live for ever, let his saving help go forth throughout all nations. This was the peculiar shout of the feast of tabernacles; and so long as we dwell here below in these tabernacles of clay we cannot do better than use the same cry. Perpetually let us pray that our glorious King may work salvation in the midst of the earth. We plead also for ourselves that the Lord would save us, deliver us, and continue to sanctify us. This we ask with great earnestness, beseeching it of Jehovah. Prayer should always be an entreating and beseeching. *"O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity."* Let the church be built up: through the salvation of sinners may

the number of the saints be increased; through the preservation of saints may the church be strengthened, continued, beautified, perfected. Our Lord Jesus himself pleads for the salvation and the prosperity of his chosen; as our Intercessor before the throne he asks that the heavenly Father would save and keep those who were of old committed to his charge, and cause them to be one through the indwelling Spirit. Salvation had been given, and therefore it is asked for. Strange though it may seem, he who cries for salvation is already in a measure saved. None can so truly cry, "Save, I beseech thee," as those who have already participated in salvation; and the most prosperous church is that which most imploringly seeks prosperity. It may seem strange that, returning from victory, flushed with triumph, the hero should still ask for salvation; but so it is, and it could not be otherwise. When all our Saviour's work and warfare were ended, his intercession became even more prominently a feature of his life; after he had conquered all his foes he made intercession for the transgressors. What is true of him is true of his church also, for whenever she obtains the largest measure of spiritual blessing she is then most inclined to plead for more. She never pants so eagerly for prosperity as when she sees the Lord's doings in her midst, and marvels at them. Then, encouraged by the gracious visitation, she sets apart her solemn days of prayer, and cries with passionate desire, "Save now," and "Send now prosperity." She would fain take the tide at the flood, and make the most of the day of which the Lord has already made so much.

26. *"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the* LORD." The champion had done everything "in the name of the Lord": in that name he had routed all his adversaries, and had risen to the throne, and in that name he had now entered the temple to pay his vows. We know who it is that cometh in the name of the Lord beyond all others. In the Psalmist's days he was The Coming One, and he is still The Coming One, though he hath already come. We are ready with our hosannas both for his first and second advent; our inmost souls thankfully adore and bless him and invoke upon his head unspeakable joys. "Prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised." For his sake everybody is blessed to us who comes in the name of the Lord, we welcome all such to our hearts and our homes; but chiefly, and beyond all others, we welcome *himself* when he deigns to enter in and sup with us and we with him. O sacred bliss, fit antepast of heaven! Perhaps this sentence is intended to be the benediction of the priests upon the valiant servant of the Lord, and if so, it is appropriately added, *"We have blessed you out of the house of the* LORD." The priests whose business it was to bless the people, in a sevenfold degree blessed the people's deliverer, the one chosen out of the people whom the Lord had exalted. All those whose high privilege it is to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, because they are made priests unto God in Christ Jesus, can truly say that they bless the Christ who has made them what they are, and placed them where they are. Whenever we feel ourselves at home with God, and feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba Father," the first thought of our hearts should be to bless the elder Brother, through whom the privilege of sonship has descended to such unworthy ones. In looking back upon our past lives we can remember many delightful occasions in which with joy unutterable we have in the fulness of our heart blessed our Saviour and our King; and all these memorable seasons are so many foretastes and pledges of the time when in the house of our great Father above we shall for ever sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," and with rapture bless the Redeemer's name.

27. *"God is the* LORD, *which hath shewed us light,"* or "God is Jehovah," the only living and true God. There is none other God but he. The words may also be rendered, "Mighty is Jehovah." Only the power of God could have brought us such light and joy as spring from the work of our Champion and King. We have received light, by which we have known the rejected stone to be the head of the corner, and this light has led us to enlist beneath the banner of the once despised Nazarene, who is now the Prince of the kings of the earth. With the light of knowledge has come the light of joy; for we are delivered from the powers of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Our knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ came not by the light of nature, nor by reason, nor did it arise from the sparks which we ourselves had kindled, nor did we receive it of men; but the mighty God alone hath showed it to us. He made a day on purpose that he might shine upon us like the sun, and he made our faces to shine in the light of that day, according to the declaration of the twenty-fourth verse. Therefore,

unto him be all the honour of our enlightenment. Let us do our best to magnify the great Father of lights from whom our present blessedness has descended. *"Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."* Some think that by this we are taught that the king offered so many sacrifices that the whole area of the court was filled, and the sacrifices were bound even up to the altar; but we are inclined to keep to our own version, and to believe that sometimes restive bullocks were bound to the altar before they were slain, in which case Mant's verse is correct :—

"He, Jehovah, is our Lord :
He, our God, on us hath shined :
Bind the sacrifice with cord,
To the hornèd altar bind."

The word rendered "cords" carries with it the idea of wreaths and boughs, so that it was not a cord of hard, rough rope, but a decorated band; even as in our case, though we are bound to the altar of God, it is with the cords of love and the bands of a man, and not by a compulsion which destroys the freedom of the will. The sacrifice which we would present in honour of the victories of our Lord Jesus Christ is the living sacrifice of our spirit, soul, and body. We bring ourselves to his altar, and desire to offer him all that we have and are. There remains a tendency in our nature to start aside from this; it is not fond of the sacrificial knife. In the warmth of our love we come willingly to the altar, but we need constraining power to keep us there in the entirety of our being throughout the whole of life. Happily there is a cord which, twisted around the atonement, or, better still, around the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our only Altar, can hold us, and does hold us : "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died; and that he died for all, that they that live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." We are bound to the doctrine of atonement; we are bound to Christ himself, who is both altar and sacrifice; we desire to be more bound to him than ever, our soul finds her liberty in being tethered fast to the altar of the Lord. The American Board of Missions has for its seal an ox, with an altar on one side and a plough on the other, and the motto "Ready for either,"—ready to live and labour, or ready to suffer and die. We would gladly spend ourselves for the Lord actively, or be spent by him passively, whichever may be his will; but since we know the rebellion of our corrupt nature we earnestly pray that we may be kept in this consecrated mind, and that we may never, under discouragements, or through the temptations of the world, be permitted to leave the altar, to which it is our intense desire to be for ever fastened. Such consecration as this, and such desires for its perpetuity, well beseem that day of gladness which the Lord hath made so bright by the glorious triumph of his Son, our covenant head, our well-beloved.

28 Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee : *thou art* my God, I will exalt thee.

29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good : for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

Now comes the closing song of the champion, and of each one of his admirers. 28. *"Thou art my God, and I will praise thee,"* my mighty God who hath done this mighty and marvellous thing. Thou shalt be mine, and all the praise my soul is capable of shall be poured forth at thy feet. *"Thou art my God, I will exalt thee."* Thou hast exalted me, and as far as my praises can do it, I will exalt thy name. Jesus is magnified, and he magnifies the Father according to his prayer, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." God hath given us grace and promised us glory, and we are constrained to ascribe all grace to him, and all the glory of it also. The repetition indicates a double determination, and sets forth the firmness of the resolution, the heartiness of the affection, the intensity of the gratitude. Our Lord Jesus himself saith, "I will praise thee"; and well may each one of us, humbly and with confidence in divine grace add, on his own account, the same declaration, "*I* will praise thee." However others may blaspheme thee, I will exalt thee : however dull and cold I may sometimes feel myself, yet will I rouse up my nature, and determine that as long as I have any being that being shall be spent to thy praise. For ever thou art my God, and for ever I will give thee thanks.

29. "*O give thanks unto the* LORD *; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*" The Psalm concludes as it began, making a complete circle of joyful adoration. We can well suppose that the notes at the close of the loud hallelujah were more swift, more sweet, more loud than at the beginning. To the sound of trumpet and harp, Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that feared the Lord, forgetting their distinctions, joined in one common hymn, testifying again to their deep gratitude to the Lord's goodness, and to the mercy which is unto eternity. What better close could there be to this right royal song? The Psalmist would have risen to something higher, so as to end with the climax, but nothing loftier remained. He had reached the height of his grandest argument, and there he paused. The music ceased, the song was suspended, the great *hallel* was all chanted, and the people went every one to his own home, quietly and happily musing upon the goodness of the Lord, whose mercy fills eternity.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This is the last of those Psalms which form the great *Hallel*, which the Jews sang at the end of the passover.—*Adam Clarke.*

Whole Psalm.—The whole Psalm has a peculiar formation. It resembles the *Maschal* Psalms, for each verse has of itself its completed sense, its own scent and hue; one thought is joined to another as branch to branch and flower to flower.—*Franz Delitzch.*

Whole Psalm.—Nothing can surpass the force and majesty, as well as the richly varied beauty, of this Psalm. Its general burden is quite manifest. It is the prophetic expression, by the Spirit of Christ, of that exultant strain of anticipative triumph, wherein the virgin daughter of Zion will laugh to scorn, in the immediate prospect of her Deliverer's advent, the congregated armies of the Man of Sin (verses 10—13).—*Arthur Pridham.*

Whole Psalm.—The two Psalms, 117th and 118th, are placed together because, though each is a distinct portion in itself, the 117th is an exordium to that which follows it, an address and an invitation to the Gentile and heathen world to acknowledge and praise Jehovah.

We are now arrived at the concluding portion of the hymn, which Christ and his disciples sung preparatory to their going forth to the Mount of Olives. Nothing could be more appropriate or better fitted to comfort and encourage, at that awful period, than a prophecy which, overleaping the suffering to be endured, showed forth the glory that was afterwards to follow, and a song of triumph, then only recited, but in due time to be literally acted, when the cross was to be succeeded by a crown. This Psalm is not only frequently quoted in the New Testament, but it was also partially applied at one period of our Saviour's sojourn on earth, and thus we are afforded decisive testimony to the purpose for which it is originally and prophetically destined. It was partially used at the time when Messiah, in the days of his humiliation, was received with triumph and acclamation into Jerusalem; and we may conclude it will be fully enacted, when our glorified and triumphant Lord, coming with ten thousand of his saints, will again stand upon the earth and receive the promised salutation, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of Jehovah." This dramatic representation of Messiah coming in glory, to take his great power and reign among us, is apportioned to the chief character, "the King of kings and Lord of lords," to his saints following him in procession, and to priests and Levites, representing the Jewish nation.

The Conqueror and his attendants sing the 117th Psalm, an introductory hymn, inviting all, Jews and Gentiles, to share in the merciful kindness of God, and to sing his praises. It is a gathering together of all the Lord's people, to be witnesses and partakers of his glory. The first, second, and third verses of the 118th Psalm are sung by single voices. As the procession moves along, the theme of rejoicing is announced. The first voice repeats, "*O give thanks unto the* LORD *; for he is good, because his mercy endureth for ever.*" Another single voice calls on Israel to acknowledge this great truth; and a third invites the house of Aaron, the priesthood,

to acknowledge their share in Jehovah's love. The fourth verse is a chorus; the whole procession, the living, and the dead who are raised to meet Christ (1 Thess. iv. 16), shout aloud the burden of the song, verse 1. Arrived at the temple gate, or rather, the gate of Jerusalem, the Conqueror alone sings, verses 5, 6, 7. He begins by recounting the circumstances of his distress. Next, he tells of his refuge: I betook me to God, I told him my sorrows, and he heard me. The procession, in chorus, sings verses 8 and 9, taking up the substance of Messiah's chaunt, and fully echoing the sentiment, "*It is better to trust in the* LORD *than to put confidence in princes.*" The Conqueror alone again sings verses 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. He enlarges on the magnitude of his dangers, and the hopelessness of his situation. It was not a common difficulty, or a single enemy, whole nations compassed him about. The procession in chorus, verses 15, 16, attributes their Lord's great deliverance to his righteous person, and to his righteous cause. Justice and equity and truth, all demanded that Messiah should not be trodden down. "Was it not thine arm, O Jehovah, which has gotten thee the victory?" Messiah now takes up the language of a conqueror, verses 17, 18, 19. My sufferings were sore, but they were only for a season. I laid down my life, and I now take it up again: and then, with a loud voice, as when he roused Lazarus out of the grave, he cries to those within the walls, "*Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the* LORD." The priests and Levites within instantly obey his command, and while they throw open the gates, they sing, "*This is the gate of the* LORD, *into which the righteous shall enter.*" As he enters, the Conqueror alone repeats verse 21. His sorrows are ended, his victory is complete. The objects for which he lived and died, and for which his prayers were offered, are now fulfilled, and thus, in a few short words, he expresses his joy and gratitude to God. The priests and Levites sing in chorus verses 22, 23, 24. Depositaries and expounders of the prophecies as they had long been, they now for the first time, quote and apply one, Isai. xxviii. 16, which held a conspicuous place, but never before was intelligible to Jewish ears. "The man of sorrows," the stone which the builders refused, is become the headstone of the corner. The Conqueror is now within the gates, and proceeds to accomplish his good purpose, Luke i. 68. "*Hosannah, save thy people, O* LORD, *and send them now prosperity,*" verse 25. The priests and Levites are led by the Spirit to use the words foretold by our Lord, Matt. xxiii. 39. Now at length the veil is removed, and his people say, "*Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the* LORD," verse 26. The Conqueror and his train (verse 27) now praise God, who has given light and deliverance and salvation, and they offer to him the sacrifice of thanksgiving for all that they enjoy. The Conqueror alone (verse 28) next makes a solemn acknowledgment of gratitude and praise to Jehovah, and then, all being within the gates, the united body, triumphant procession, priests and Levites, end, as they commenced, "*O give thanks unto the* LORD; *for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*"—*R. H. Ryland, in "The Psalms restored to Messiah,"* 1853.

Whole Psalm.—It was Luther's favourite Psalm, his beauteous *Confitemini*, which "had helped him out of what neither emperor nor king, nor any other man on earth, could have helped him." With the exposition of this his noblest jewel, his defence and his treasure, he occupied himself in the solitude of his Patmos (Coburg).—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—This is my Psalm, my chosen Psalm. I love them all; I love all holy Scripture, which is my consolation and my life. But this Psalm is nearest my heart, and I have a peculiar right to call it mine. It has saved me from many a pressing danger, from which nor emperor, nor kings, nor sages, nor saints, could have saved me. It is my friend; dearer to me than all the honours and power of the earth. . . . But it may be objected, that this Psalm is common to all; no one has a right to call it his own. Yes; but Christ is also common to all, and yet Christ is mine. I am not jealous of my property; I would divide it with the whole world. . . . And would to God that all men would claim the Psalm as especially theirs! It would be the most touching quarrel, the most agreeable to God—a quarrel of union and perfect charity.—*Luther. From his Dedication of his Translation of Psalm CXVIII. to the Abbot Frederick of Nuremberg.*

Verse 1.—"*For he is good.*" The praise of God could not be expressed in fewer words than these, "*For he is good.*" I see not what can be more solemn than this brevity, since goodness is so peculiarly the quality of God, that the Son of God himself when addressed by some one as "Good Master," by one, namely, who

beholding his flesh, and comprehending not the fulness of his divine nature, considered him as man only, replied, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." And what is this but to say, If thou wishest to call me good, recognize me as God?—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—"*His mercy endureth for ever.*" What the close of Ps. cxvii. says of God's truth, viz., that it endureth for ever, the beginning of Ps. cxviii. says of its sister, his mercy or loving-kindness.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verses 1—4.—As the salvation of the elect is one, and the love of God to them one, so should their song be one, as here four several times it is said, "*His mercy endureth for ever.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verses 1—4.—Because we hear the sentence so frequently repeated here, that "*the mercy of the* LORD *endureth for ever,*" we are not to think that the Holy Spirit has employed empty tautology, but our great necessity demands it: for in temptations and dangers the flesh begins to doubt of the mercy of God: therefore nothing should be so frequently impressed on the mind as this, that the mercy of God does not fail, that the Eternal Father wearies not in remitting our sins.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 2.—"*Let Israel now say.*" Albeit all the elect have interest in God's praise for mercies purchased by Christ unto them, yet the elect of Israel have the first room in the song; for Christ is first promised to them, and came of them according to the flesh, and will be most marvellous about them.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"*Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.*" Let such who have had an experience of it, acknowledge and declare it to others; not only believe it with their hearts, and privately give thanks for it, but with the mouth make confession of it to the glory of divine grace.—*John Gill.*

Verses 2, 3, 4.—"*Now.*" Beware of delaying. Delays be dangerous, our hearts will cool, and our affections will fall down. It is good then to be doing while it is called *to-day*, while it is called *now*. *Now, now, now*, saith David; there be three nows, and all to teach us that for aught we know, it is *now* or never, to-day or not at all; we must praise God while the heart is hot, else our iron will cool. Satan hath little hope to prevail unless he can persuade us to omit our duties when the clock strikes, and therefore his skill is to urge us to put it off till another time as fitter or better. Do it anon, next hour, next day, next week (saith he); and why not next year? Hereafter (saith he) it will be as well as now. This he saith indeed, but his meaning (by hereafter) is never: and he that is not fit to-day, hath no promise but he shall be more unapt to-morrow. We have neither God nor our own hearts at command; and when we have lost the opportunity, God to correct us perhaps will not give us affections. The cock within shall not crow to awaken us, the sun shall not shine, and then we are in danger to give over quite; and if we come once to a total omission of one duty, why not of another, and of another, and so of all? and then farewell to us.—*Richard Capel* (1586–1656) *in* "*Tentations, their Nature, Danger, Cure.*"

Verse 4.—"*Them that fear the* LORD." Who were neither of "the house of Aaron," that is, of the priests or Levites; nor of "the house of Israel," that is, native Jews; yet might be of the Jewish religion, and "*fear the* LORD." These were called *proselytes*, and are here invited to praise the Lord.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—"*God's mercy endureth for ever.*" That is, his covenant mercy, that precious church privilege: this is perpetual to his people, and should perpetually remain as a memorial in our hearts. And therefore it is that this is the foot or burthen of these first four verses. Neither is there any idle repetition, but a notable expression of the saints' insatiableness of praising God for his never failing mercy. These heavenly birds having got a note, sing it over and over. In the last Psalm there are but six verses, yet twelve Hallelujahs.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 5.—Perhaps verse 5, which says, "*I called upon the* LORD *in distress*" (literally, out of the narrow gorge), "*and the* LORD *answered me on the open plain*"—which describes the deliverance of Israel from their captivity,—may have been sung as they defiled from a narrow ravine into the plain; and when they arrived at the gate of the temple, then they broke forth in full chorus into the words, "Open to me the gates of righteousness" (ver. 19).—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—It is said, "*I called upon the* LORD." Thou must learn to call, and

not to sit there by thyself, and lie on the bench, hang and shake thy head, and bite and devour thyself with thy thoughts; but come on, thou indolent knave, down upon thy knees, up with thy hands and eyes to heaven, take a Psalm or a prayer, and set forth thy distress with tears before God.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 5.—"*The* LORD *answered me, and set me in a large place.*" It may be rendered, *The* LORD *answered me largely;* as he did Solomon, when he gave him more than he asked for; and as he does his people, when he gives then a sufficiency and an abundance of his grace; not only above their deserts, but above their thoughts and expectations. See Eph. iii. 20.—*John Gill.*

Verse 6.—"*The* LORD *is on my side.*" The reason which the Psalmist gives here for his trusting, or for his not fearing, is the great fact, that the Lord is on his side; and the prominent idea which this brings before us is *Alliance; the making common cause,* which the great God undoubtedly does, with imperfect, yet with earnest, trusting man.

We know very well the great anxiety shown by men, in all their worldly conflicts, to secure the aid of a powerful ally; in their lawsuits, to retain the services of a powerful advocate; or, in their attempts at worldly advancement, to win the friendship and interest of those who can further the aims they have in view. When Herod was highly displeased with the armies of Tyre and Sidon, they did not venture to approach him until they had made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend. If such and such a person be on their side, men think that all must go well. Who so well off as he who is able to say, "*The* LORD *is on my side*"?—*Philip Bennet Power, in "The I Will's of the Psalms,"* 1861.

Verse 6.—God is with those he calls and employs in public service. Joshua was exhorted to be strong and of good courage, "For the Lord thy God is with thee" (Josh. i. 9). So also was Jeremiah, "Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee" (Jer. i. 8). God's presence should put life into us. When inferior natures are backed with a superior, they are full of courage: when the master is by, the dog will venture upon creatures greater than himself and fear not; at another time he will not do it when his master is absent. When God is with us, who is the supreme, it should make us fearless. It did David; "*The* LORD *is on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me.*" Let him do his worst, frown, threat, plot, arm, strike; the Lord is on my side, he hath a special care for me, he is a shield unto me, I will not fear, but hope; as it is in the next verse, "I shall see my desire on them that hate me," I shall see them changed or ruined. Our help is in the name of the Lord, but our fears are in the name of man.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 6.—"*I will not fear.*" David, (or God's people, if you will,) being taught by experience, exults in great confidence, but does not say, the Lord is my helper, and I shall suffer no more, knowing that while he is a pilgrim here below he will have much to suffer from his daily enemies; but he says, "*The* LORD *is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.*"—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 6.—"*Man*" does not here mean *a man,* but *mankind,* or man as opposed to God.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 8.—It may perhaps be considered beneath the dignity and solemnity of our subject to remark, that this 8th verse of this Psalm is the middle verse of the Bible. There are, I believe, 31,174 verses in all, and this is the 15,587th. I do not wish, nor would I advise you to occupy your time in counting for yourselves, nor should I indeed have noticed the subject at all, but that I wish to suggest one remark upon it, and that is, that though we may generally look upon such calculations as only laborious idleness,—and they certainly have been carried to the most minute dissection of every part of Scripture, such as to how many times the word "Lord," the word "God," and even the word "and," occurs,—yet I believe that the integrity of the holy volume owes a vast deal to this scruple-weighing of these calculators. I do not say, nor do I think, that they had such motives in their minds; but whatever their reasons were, I cannot but think that there was an overruling Providence in thus converting these trifling and apparently useless investigations into additional guards and fences around the sacred text.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 8.—"*It is better to trust in the* LORD," etc. Luther on this text calleth it, *artem artium, et mirificam, ac suam artem, non fidere hominibus,* that is, the art

of arts, and that which he had well studied, not to put confidence in man: as for trust in God, he calleth it *sacrificium omnium gratissimum et suavissimum, et cultum omnium pulcherrimum*, the most pleasant and sweetest of all sacrifices, the best of all services we perform to God.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—"*It is better to trust in the* LORD." All make this acknowledgment, and yet there is scarcely one among a hundred who is fully persuaded that God alone can afford him sufficient help. That man has attained a high rank among the faithful, who resting satisfied in God, never ceases to entertain a lively hope, even when he finds no help upon earth.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—It is a great cause oftentimes why God blesseth not means, because we are so apt to trust in them, and rob God of his glory, not waiting for a blessing at his hands. This causeth the Lord to cross us, and to curse his own benefits, because we seek not him, but sacrifice to our own nets, putting confidence in outward means. Therefore when we hope for help from them, God bloweth upon them, and turneth them to our hurt and destruction.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 8.—When my enemies have been brought to contempt, let not my friend present himself unto me as a good man, and bid me repose my hope in himself; for still must I trust in the Lord alone.—*Augustine.*

Verses 8, 9.—Nothing is more profitable than dwelling on familiar truths. Was there ever a good man who did not believe that it was better to trust in Jehovah than rely on any created arm? Yet David here repeats this truth, that if possible it may sink deep into every mind.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 9.—"*It is better to trust in the* LORD *than to put confidence in princes.*" David knew that by experience, for he confided in Saul his king, at another time in Achish, the Philistine, at another time in Ahithophel his own most prudent minister, besides some others; and they all failed him; but he never confided in God without feeling the benefit of it.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 9.—"*It is better*," etc. Literally, "Good is it to trust in Jehovah more than to confide in man." This is the Hebrew form of comparison, and is equivalent to what is stated in our version. "It is *better*," etc. It is better, (1) because man is weak,—but God is Almighty; (2) because man is selfish,—but God is benevolent; (3) because man is often faithless and deceitful,—God never; (4) because there are emergencies, as death, in which man cannot aid us, however faithful, kind, and friendly he may be,—but there are no circumstances in this life, and none in death, where God cannot assist us; and (5) because the ability of man to help us pertains at best only to the present life,—the power of God will be commensurate with eternity.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—"*Than to put confidence in princes.*" Great men's words, saith one, are like dead men's shoes; he may go barefoot that waiteth for them.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—They who constantly attend upon God, and depend upon him, have a much sweeter life, than those that wait upon princes with great observance and expectation. A servant of the Lord is better provided for than the greatest favourites and minions of princes.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 10.—"*All nations compassed me about.*" A multitude of enemies everywhere cannot hinder the presence of God with us. Acts xvii. 28. They are without; He is within, in our hearts; they are flesh; He is Spirit: they are frail; He is immortal and invincible.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 11.—Whether Tertullus persecute the church with his tongue, or Elymas with his hand, God hath the command of both. Indeed the wicked are the mediate causes of our troubles: the righteous are as the centre, the other the circumference; which way soever they turn, they find themselves environed; yet still the centre is fixed and immovable, being founded upon Christ. It is good for some men to have adversaries; for often they more fear to sin, lest they should despise them, than dislike it for conscience, lest God should condemn them. They speak evil of us: if true, let us amend it; if false, contemn it; whether false or true, observe it. Thus we shall learn good out of their evil; make them our tutors, and give them our pupilage. In all things let us watch them, in nothing fear them: "which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to us of salvation," Phil. i. 28. The church is that tower of David; if there be a thousand weapons to wound us, there are a thousand shields to guard us, Cant. iv. 4.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—"*They compassed me about like bees.*" Christ's enemies are so spiteful, that in fighting against his kingdom, they regard not what become of themselves, so they may hurt his people; but as the bee undoeth herself in stinging, and loseth her life or her power with her sting, so do they. All that the enemies of Christ's church can do against his people is but to trouble them externally; their wounds are like the sting of a bee, that is, unto pain and swelling, and a short trouble only, but are not deadly.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 12.—"*They compassed me about like bees.*" Now, as the north-east wind of course was adverse to any north-east progress, it was necessary that the boat should be towed by the crew. As the rope was being drawn along through the grass on the banks it happened that it disturbed a swarm of bees. In a moment, like a great cloud, they burst upon the men who were dragging; everyone of them threw himself headlong into the water and hurried to regain the boat. The swarm followed at their heels, and in a few seconds filled every nook and cranny of the deck. What a scene of confusion ensued may readily be imagined.

Without any foreboding of ill, I was arranging my plants in my cabin, when I heard all around me a scampering which I took at first to be merely the frolics of my people, as that was the order of the day. I called out to enquire the meaning of the noise, but only got excited gestures and reproachful looks in answer. The cry of "Bees! bees!" soon broke upon my ear, and I proceeded to light a pipe. My attempt was entirely in vain; in an instant bees in thousands are about me, and I am mercilessly stung all over my face and hands. To no purpose do I try to protect my face with a handkerchief, and the more violently I fling my hands about, so much the more violent becomes the impetuosity of the irritated insects. The maddening pain is now on my cheek, now in my eye, now in my hair. The dogs from under my bed burst out frantically, overturning everything in their way. Losing well nigh all control over myself, I fling myself into the river; I dive down, but all in vain, for the stings rain down still upon my head. Not heeding the warnings of my people, I creep through the reedy grass to the swampy bank. The grass lacerates my hands, and I try to gain the mainland, hoping to find shelter in the woods. All at once four powerful arms seize me and drag me back with such force that I think I must be choked in the mud. I am compelled to go back on board, and flight is not to be thought of. . . . I felt ready, in the evening, for an encounter with half a score of buffaloes or a brace of lions rather than have anything more to do with bees; and this was a sentiment in which all the ship's company heartily concurred.—*George Schweinfurth, in "The Heart of Africa,"* 1873.

Verse 12.—David said of his enemies, that they came about him like "*bees*"; he doth not say like *wasps*. For though they used their stings, yet he found honey in them too.—*Peter Smith,* 1644.

Verse 12.—"*They compassed me about like bees.*"

> As wasps, provoked by children in their play,
> Pour from their mansions by the broad highway,
> In swarms the guiltless traveller engage,
> Whet all their stings, and call forth all their rage,
> All rise in arms, and with a general cry,
> Assert their waxen domes, and buzzing progeny;
> Thus from the tents the fervent legion swarms,
> So loud their clamours, and so keen their arms.
>
> —*Homer.*

Verse 12.—"*They are quenched as the fire of thorns.*" The illustration from the "*fire of thorns*" is derived from the fact that they quickly kindle into a blaze, and then the flame soon dies away. In Eastern countries it was common to burn over their fields in the dry time of the year, and thus to clear them of thorns and briers and weeds. Of course, at such a time they would kindle quickly, and burn rapidly, and would soon be consumed. So the Psalmist says it was with his enemies. He came upon them, numerous as they were, as the fire runs over a field in a dry time, burning everything before it.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 12.—"*In the name of the* LORD." This has been understood as the *tessera*, the sentence of attack, or signal to engage, like those of Cyrus—Jupiter is our leader and ally—Jupiter our captain and preserver. Cyropæd. l. 3 and 7; and Gideon, Judges vii. 18. This interpretation being only founded on the repetition, may it not more probably be designed as suited to the musical performance?—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall.*" The apostrophe is strong, and probably directed to some particular person in the battle, who had put David in great danger.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall.*" Thou hast indeed. Thou hast done thy part, O Satan, and it has been well done. Thou hast known all my weakest parts, thou hast seen where my armour was not buckled on tightly, and thou hast attacked me at the right time and in the right way. The great Spanish poet, Calderon, tells of one who wore a heavy suit of armour for a whole year, and laid it by for one hour, and in that hour the enemy came, and the man paid for his negligence with his life. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."—*John Mason Neale.*

Verse 14.—"*The* LORD *is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.*" "*My strength,*" that I am able to resist my enemies; "*my salvation,*" that I am delivered from my enemies; "*my song,*" that I may joyfully praise him and sing of him after I am delivered.—*William Nicholson,* 1662.

Verse 14.—Good songs, good promises, good proverbs, good doctrines are none the worse for age. What was sung just after the passage of the Red Sea, is here sung by the prophet, and shall be sung to the end of the world by the saints of the Most High.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 14.—"*And is become my salvation.*" Not that he hath become anything which he was not before, but because his people, when they believed on him, became what they were not before, and then he began to be salvation unto them when turned towards him, which he was not to them when turned away from himself.—*Augustine.*

Verse 15.—"*The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.*" Every one should be careful that his dwelling is one of the *tabernacles of the righteous,* and that he himself together with his household should walk in righteousness (Luke i. 75). And he should be so diligent in hymns and sacred songs, that his rooms should resound with them.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 16.—"*The right hand of the* LORD *doeth valiantly.*" Thrice he celebrateth God's right hand, to set forth his earnest desire to say the utmost; or, in reference to the Sacred Trinity, as some will have it.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 17.—"*I shall not die, but live.*" As Christ is risen, "we shall not die, but live"; we shall not die eternally, but we shall live in this world, the life of grace, and in the world to come, the life of glory; that we may in both declare the "works" and chant the praises of God our Saviour. We are "chastened" for our sins, but "not given over to death" and destruction everlasting; nay, our being "chastened" is now a proof that we are not so given over; "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Heb. xii. 7.—*George Horne.*

Verse 17.—"*I shall not die, but live.*" To live, signifies, not barely to live, but to live comfortably, to have content with our life; to live is to prosper. Thus the word is often used in Scripture. "*I shall not die, but live.*" David did not look upon himself as immortal, or that he should never die; he knew he was subject to the statute of death: but the meaning is, I shall not die now, I shall not die by the hands of these men, I shall not die the death which they have designed me to; or when he saith, "*I shall not die, but live,*" his meaning is, I shall live comfortably and prosperously, I shall live as a king. That which we translate (1 Sam. x. 24) "God save the king," is, "Let the king *live,*" that is, let him prosper, and have good days; let him have peace with all, or victory over his enemies.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 17.—"*I shall not die,*" etc. The following incident is worth recording: "Wicliffe was now getting old, but the Reformer was worn out rather by the harassing attacks of his foes, and his incessant and ever-growing labours, than with the weight of years, for he was not yet sixty. He fell sick. With unbounded joy the friars heard that their great enemy was dying. Of course he was overwhelmed with horror and remorse for the evil he had done them, and they would hasten to his bedside and receive the expression of his penitence and sorrow. In a trice a little crowd of shaven crowns assembled round the couch of the sick man—delegates from the four orders of friars. 'They began fair,' wishing him 'health

and restoration from his distemper"; but speedily changing their tone, they exhorted him, as one on the brink of the grave, to make full confession, and express his unfeigned grief for the injuries he had inflicted on their order. Wicliffe lay silent till they should have made an end, then, making his servant raise him a little on his pillow, and fixing his keen eyes upon them, he said with a loud voice, ' I shall not die, but live, and declare the evil deeds of the friars.' The monks rushed in astonishment and confusion from the chamber.—*J. A. Wylie, in "The History of Protestantism."*

Verse 17.—"*I shall not die*," not absolutely, for see Psalm lxxxix. 48; Heb. ix. 27; but not in the midst of my days, Psalm cii. 24; nor according to the will of mine enemies, who "*thrust at me that I might fall*," verse 13. *But*, on the contrary, *I shall live*, not simply as he had hitherto lived, in the greatest distress, which would be a wretched life, a living death: but lively, joyous, happy. Of this, he says he is secure; this the word asserts. On what foundation does he rest? Verses 14, 15, "*Because God had become his salvation*," and "*the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.*" —*Jacob Alting.*

Verse 17.—"*And declare the works of the* LORD." Matter of praise abounds in all the divine works, both of the general creation and preservation and of the redemption of our souls: chiefly, that God, besides the life of nature, has given to us the life of grace, without which we could not properly praise God and declare his works.—*Rivetus.*

Verse 17.—"*And declare the works of the* LORD." In the second member of the verse, he points out the proper use of life, God does not prolong the lives of his people, that they may pamper themselves with meat and drink, sleep as much as they please, and enjoy every temporal blessing; but to magnify him for his benefits which he is daily heaping upon them.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 17.—According to Matthesius, Luther had this verse written against his study wall.

Verse 18.—"*The* LORD *hath chastened me sore.*" Strong humours require strong physic to purge them out. Where corruption is deeply rooted in the heart, a light or small matter will not serve the turn to work it out. No; but a great deal of stir and ado must be made with it.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 18.—"*But he hath not given me over unto death.*" It might have been worse, may the afflicted saint say, and it will be better; it is in mercy and in measure that God chastiseth his children. It is his care that "the spirit fail not before him, nor the souls which he hath made," Isai. lvii. 16. If his child swoons in the whipping, God lets fall the rod, and falls a kissing it, to fetch life into it again.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 19.—"*Open to me the gates of righteousness.*" The gates won by his righteousness, to whom we daily say, "Thou only art holy"; the gates which needed the "Via Dolorosa" and the cross, before they could roll back on their hinges. On a certain stormy afternoon, after the sun had been for three hours darkened, the world again heard of that Eden from which, four thousand years before, Adam had been banished. "Verily I say unto thee, this day shall thou be with me in paradise." O blessed malefactor, who thus entered into the heavenly gardens! O happy thief, that thus stole the kingdom of heaven! And see how valiantly he now enters it. "*Open to me the gates of righteousness.*" Not "God be merciful to me a sinner"; not "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." But this is what is called the suppliant omnipotency of prayer. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.—*John Mason Neale.*

Verse 21.—"*I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me.*" There is a point which we would especially notice, and that is, praise for *hearing prayer*. In this point, almost above all others, God is frequently robbed of his praise. Men pray; they receive an answer to their prayers; and then forget to praise. This happens especially in small things; we should ever remember that whatever is worth praying for, is worth praising for also. The fact is, we do not recognize God in these small things as much as we should; if we do praise, it is for the receipt of the blessing, with which we are pleased, leaving out of account the One from whom the blessing has come. This is not acceptable to God; we must see him in the blessing, if we

would really praise. The Psalmist says, *"I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me";* he praised not only because he had *received*, but also because he had *heard*—because the living God, as a hearing God, was manifested in his mercies. And when we know that God has heard us, let us not delay our praise; if we put off our thanksgiving until perhaps only the evening, we may forget to praise at all; and if we do praise, it will in all probability be with only half the warmth which would animate our song at first. God loves a quick return for his blessings; one sentence of heartfelt thanksgiving is worth all the formalism of a more laboured service. There is a freshness about immediate praise which is like the bloom upon the fruit; its being spontaneous adds ineffably to its price.

Trace, then, dear reader, a connection between your God and your blessing. Recognize his hearing ear as well as his bounteous hand, and be yours the Psalmist's words, *"I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me."—Philip Bennet Power.*

Verse 22.—*"The stone." "The head stone of the corner."* Christ Jesus is a stone: no firmness, but in him. A fundamental stone: no building, but on him. A corner stone: no piecing nor reconciliation, but in him.—*James Ford*, 1856.

Verse 22.—*"The Stone which the builders rejected,"* etc. To apply it to Christ *"The Stone"* is the ground of all. Two things befall it; two things as contrary as may be,—1. *Refused*, cast away; then, called for again, and *made head of the building.* So, two parts there are to the eye. 1. The *refusing;* 2. the *raising;* which are his two estates, his *humiliation*, and his *exaltation.* In either of these you may observe two degrees, *a quibus*, and *quosque*, by whom and how far. *By whom refused?* We weigh the word, *ædificantes:* not by men unskilful, but by workmen, professed *builders;* it is so much the worse. *How far?* We weigh the word,—*reprobaverunt; usque ad reprobari*, even to a reprobation. It is not *improbaverunt, disliked*, as not fit for some eminent place; but *reprobaverunt, utterly reprobate*, for any place at all.

Again, *exalted*, by whom? The next words are *a Domino*, by *God*, as good a *builder*, nay, better than the best of them; which makes amends for the former. And *How far?* Placed by him, not in any part of the *building;* but in the part most in the eye (*the corner*), and in the highest place of it, *the very head.*

So *rejected*, and that by the *builders*, and to the *lowest estate:* and from the *lowest estate exalted, in caput anguli*, to the chiefest place of all; and that by God himself.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 22.—*"The stone which the builders refused,"* etc. We need not wonder, that not only the powers of the world are usually enemies to Christ, and that the contrivers of policies, those builders, leave out Christ in their building, but that the pretended builders of the church of God, though they use the name of Christ, and serve their turn with that, yet reject himself, and oppose the power of his spiritual kingdom. There may be wit and learning, and much knowledge of the Scriptures, amongst those that are haters of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the power of godliness, and corrupters of the worship of God. It is the spirit of humility and obedience, and saving faith, that teach men to esteem Christ, and build upon him. The vanity and folly of these builders' opinion appears in this, that they are overpowered by the great Architect of the church: his purpose stands. Notwithstanding their rejection of Christ, he is still made the head corner stone. They cast him away by their reproaches, and by giving him up to be crucified and then cast into the grave, causing a stone to be rolled upon this *stone* which they had so rejected, that it might appear no more, and so thought themselves sure. But even from thence did he arise, and *"became the head of the corner."—Robert Leighton.*

Verse 22.—*"The stone which the builders refused,"* etc. That is to say, God sent a living, precious, chosen stone on earth; but the Jews, who then had the building of the church, rejected that stone, and said of it, "This man, who observeth not the Sabbath, is not of God"; and, "We have no king but Cæsar," and, "That seducer said, I will arise after three days"; and many similiar things beside. But this stone, so rejected by the builders as unfit for raising the spiritual edifice, *"is become the head of the corner";* has been made by God, the principal architect, the bond to connect the two walls and keep them together; that is to say, has been made the head of the whole church, composed of Jews and Gentiles; and such a head, that whoever is not under him cannot be saved; and whoever is built under him, the living stone, will certainly be saved. Now all this *"is the Lord's doing,"* done by his election and design, without any intervention on the part of

man, and therefore, *"it is wonderful in our eyes."* For who is there that must not look upon it as a wonderful thing, to find a man crucified, dead and buried, rising, after three days, from the dead, immortal, with unbounded power, and declared Prince of men and angels, and a way opened through him for mortal man, to the kingdom of heaven, to the society of the angels, to a happy immortality ?—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 22.—*"The stone which the builders refused."* Here we behold with how strong and impregnable a shield the Holy Ghost furnishes us against the empty vauntings of the Papal clergy. Be it so, that they possess the name, " chief-builders "; but if they disown Christ, does it necessarily follow that we must disown him also ? Let us rather contemn and trample under our feet all their decrees, and let us reverence this precious stone upon which our salvation rests. By the expression, *"is become the head of the corner,"* we are to understand the real foundation of the church, which sustains the whole weight of the edifice ; it being requisite that the corners should form the main strength of buildings.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 22.—*"The stone,"* etc. That is I, whom the great men and rulers of the people rejected (1 Sam. xxvi. 19), as the builders of a house reject a stone unfit to be employed in it, am now become king over Israel and Judah ; and a type of that glorious King who shall hereafter be in like manner refused (Luke xix. 14, and xx. 17), and then be by God exalted to be Lord of all the world, and the foundation of all men's happiness.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 22.—*"The stone."* The author of *Historia Scholastica* mentions it as a tradition that at the building of the second temple there was a particular *stone* of which that was literally true, which is here parabolically rehearsed, viz., that it had the hap to be often taken up by the builders, and as oft rejected, and at last was found to be perfectly fit for the most honourable place, that of the *chief corner-stone*, which coupled the sides of the walls together, the extraordinariness whereof occasioned the speech here following : *"This is the* LORD'S *doing ; it is marvellous in our eyes."—Henry Hammond.*

Verse 22.—*"The head stone of the corner."* How of the *"corner" ?* The *corner* is the place where two walls meet : and there be many twos in this *building :* the two walls of nations, *Jews* and *Gentiles ;* the two of conditions, *bond* and *free ;* the two of sex, *male* and *female :* the great two (which this [Easter] day we celebrate) of the *quick* and the *dead ;* above all, the greatest two of all, *heaven* and *earth.*—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 22.—*"Is become the head stone of the corner."*

> Higher yet and ever higher, passeth he those ranks above,
> Where the seraphs are enkindled, with the flame of endless love
> Passeth them, for not e'en seraphs ever loved so well as he
> Who hath borne for his beloved, stripes, and thorns, and shameful tree ;
> Ever further, ever onward, where no angel's foot may tread,
> Where the four-and-twenty elders prostrate fall in mystic dread :
> Where the four strange living creatures sing their hymn before the throne.
> The Despised One and rejected passeth, in his might alone ;
> Passeth through the dazzling rainbow, till upon the Father's right
> He is seated, his Co-equal, God of God, and Light of Light.
>
> *R. F. Littledale.*

Verse 22.—*"Head stone of the corner."* It is now clear to all by divine grace whom Holy Scripture calls the corner-stone. Him in truth who, taking unto himself from one side the Jewish, and from the other the Gentile people, unites, as it were, two walls in the one fabric of the Church ; them of whom it is written " He hath made both one " ; who exhibited himself as the Corner-stone, not only in things below, but in things above, because he united on earth the nations of the Gentiles to the people of Israel, and both together to angels. For at his birth the angels exclaimed, " On earth peace, good will toward men."—*Gregory, quoted by Henry Newland,* 1860.

Verse 22.—*"The corner."* By Bede it is rendered as a reason why the Jewish builders refused our Saviour Christ for the *head*-place, *Quia in uno pariete, stare amabant.* They could endure no *corner ;* they must stand alone upon their own single wall ; be of themselves, not join with Gentiles or Samaritans. And Christ they endured not, because they thought if he had been *head* he would have inclined that way. *Alias oves oportet me adducere* (John x. 16). *Alias* they could not abide. But sure, a purpose there must be, *alias oves adducendi,* of bringing in others, of joining

a *corner*, or else we do not *facere secundum exemplar*, build not according to Christ's pattern; our fashion of fabric is not like his.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verses 22—27.—By the consent of all expositors, in this Psalm is typed the coming of Christ, and his kingdom of the gospel. This is manifested by an *exaltation*, by an *exultaton*, by a *petition*, by a *benediction*. The *exaltation:* ver. 22, "*The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.*" The Jews refused this stone, but God hath built his church upon it.

The *exaltation:* ver. 24, "*This is the day which the* LORD *hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*" A more blessed day than that was wherein he made man, when he had done making the world; "*Rejoice we, and be glad in it.*"

The *petition:* ver. 25, "*Save now, I beseech thee, O* LORD: *O* LORD, *I beseech thee, send now prosperity.*" Thy justice would not suffer thee to save without the Messiah; he is come, "*Save now, O* LORD, *I beseech thee.*" Our Saviour is come, let mercy and salvation come along with him.

The *benediction* makes all clear: ver. 26, "*Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the* LORD." For what David here prophesied, the people after accomplished Matt. xxi. 9, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD." The corollary or sum is in my text: ver. 27, "*God is the* LORD, *which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.*"—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 24.—"*This is the day which the* LORD *hath made.*" 1. Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath: "*it is the day which the* LORD *hath made,*" has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished it from other days; he has made it for man; it is therefore called the Lord's day, for it bears his image and superscription. 2. The duty of the Sabbath, "*we will rejoice and be glad in it*"; not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming "*the head of the corner.*" This we ought to rejoice in, both as his honour and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven. See what a good Master we serve, who having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 24.—"*This is the day,*" etc. The "queen of days," as the Jews call the Sabbath. Arnobius interpreteth this text of the Christian Sabbath; others, of the day of salvation by Christ exalted to be the head corner-stone; in opposition to that dismal day of man's fall.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 24.—Because believers have ever cause for comfort, therefore they are commanded always to rejoice, Phil. iii. Whether their sins or sufferings come into their hearts, they must not sorrow as they that have no hope. In their saddest conditions, they have the Spirit of consolation. There is seed of joy sown within them when it is turned under the clods, and appears not above ground. But there are special times when God calls for this grain to spring up. They have some red letters, some holy days in the calendar of their lives, wherein this joy, as wine at a wedding, is most seasonable; but among all those days it never relisheth so well, it never tasteth so pleasantly, as on a Lord's-day. Joy suits no person so much as a saint, and it becomes no season so well as a Sabbath.

Joy in God on other days is like the birds chirping in winter, which is pleasing; but joy on the Lord's-day is like their warbling times and pretty notes in spring, when all other things look with a suitable delightful aspect. "*This is the day which the* LORD *hath made,*" (he that made all days, so especially this day, but what follows?) "*we will rejoice and be glad in it.*" In which words we have the church's solace, or joy, and the season, or day of it. Her solace was great: "*We will rejoice and be glad.*" Those expressions are not needless repetitions, but shew the exuberancy or high degree of their joy. The season of it: "*This is the day which the* LORD *hath made.*" Compare this place with Matt. xxi. 22, 23, and Acts iv. 11, and you will find that the precedent verses are a prophetical prediction of Christ's resurrection, and so this verse foretells the church's joy upon that memorable and glorious day. And, indeed, if "a feast be made for laughter," Eccles. x. 19, then that day wherein Christ feasteth his saints with the choicest mercies may well command their greatest spiritual mirth. A thanksgiving-day hath a double precedency of a fast-day. On a fast-day we eye God's anger; on a thanksgiving-day we look to God's favour, In the former we specially mind our corruptions; in the latter, God's compassions; —therefore a fast-day calls for sorrow, a thanksgiving-day for joy. But the Lord's-day is the highest thanksgiving-day, and deserveth much more than the Jewish Purim, to be a day of feasting and gladness, and a good day.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 24.—"*Day which the* LORD *hath made.*" As the sun in heaven makes the natural day by his light, so does Christ the Sun of Righteousness make ours a spiritual day.—*Starke.*

Verse 24.—"*Day which the* LORD *hath made.*" Adam introduced a day of sadness, but another day is made by Christ: Abraham saw his day from afar, and was glad; we will walk even now in his light.—*Johann David Friesch*, 1731.

Verse 25.—"*Save.*" With the Hebrews *salvation* is a wide word, comprising all the favours of God that may lead to preservation; and therefore the Psalmist elsewhere extends this act both to man and beast, and, as if he would comment upon himself, expounds σῶσον *save*, by εὐόδωσον *prosper*. It is so dear a title of God, that the prophet cannot have enough of it.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 25.—"*Save now, I beseech thee, O* LORD." Let him have the acclamations of the people as is usual at the inauguration of a prince; let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy, "*Save now, I beseech thee, O* LORD." This is like *vivat rex*, and speaks both a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. Hosanna signifies, "*Save now, I beseech thee.*" Lord, save me, I beseech thee; let this Saviour be my Saviour; and in order to that my Ruler; let me be taken under his protection, and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies; Lord, I beseech thee, save me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings. Ps. lxxii. 3. Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let divine grace go on in my heart, conquering and to conquer.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 25.—"*Save now,*" or, *hosanna.* Our thanksgivings on earth must always be accompanied with prayers for further mercies, and the continuance of our prosperity; our hallelujahs with hosannas.—*Ingram Cobbin.*

Verse 25.—"*Save now, I beseech thee, O* LORD," etc. Hosanna. The cry of the multitudes as they thronged in our Lord's triumphal procession into Jerusalem (Matt. xxi. 9, 18; Mar. xi. 9, 15, John xii. 13) was taken from this Psalm, from which they were accustomed to recite the 25th and 26th verses at the Feast of Tabernacles. On that occasion the great *Hallel*, consisting of Psalms cxiii.—cxviii. was chanted by one of the priests and at certain intervals the multitudes joined in the responses, waving their branches of willow and palm, and shouting as they waved them, Hallelujah, or *Hosannah*, or "*O* LORD, *I beseech thee, send now prosperity.*" This was done at the recitation of the first and last verses of Ps. cxviii.; but according to the school of Hillel, at the words "*Save now, we beseech thee.*" The school of Shammai, on the contrary, say it was at the words, "*Send now prosperity.*" Rabban Gamaliel and R. Joshua were observed by R. Akiba to wave their branches only at the words, "*Save now, we beseech thee*" (Mishna, *Succah*, iii. 9). On each of the seven days during which the feast lasted the people thronged the court of the temple, and went in procession about the altar, setting their boughs bending towards it; the trumpets sounding as they shouted *Hosanna.* But on the seventh day they marched seven times round the altar, shouting meanwhile the great Hosannah to the sound of the trumpets of the Levites (Lightfoot, *Temple Service*, xvi. 2). The very children who could wave the palm branches were expected to take part in the solemnity (Mishna, *Succah*, iii. 15; Matt iii. 15). From the custom of waving the boughs of myrtle and willow during the service the name Hosannah was ultimately transferred to the boughs themselves, so that according to Elias Levita (*Thisbi.* s. v.), "the bundles of the willows of the brook which they carry at the Feast of Tabernacles are called Hosannahs."—*William Aldis Wright, in "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible,"* 1863.

Verse 25.—"*Send now prosperity.*" God will send it, but his people must pray for it. "I came for thy prayers," Dan. x. 12.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 26.—"*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the* LORD." The difference between Christ and Antichrist is to be noticed, because Christ did not come in his own name, but in the name of the Father; of which he himself testified, John v., "*I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.*" Thus all faithful ministers of the Church must not come in their own name, or the name of Baal, or of Mammon and their own

belly, but in the name of God, with a lawful call; concerning which see Heb. v., Rom. x. and xv.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 27.—"*God is the* LORD, *which hath shewed us light.*" The Psalmist was clearly possessed of light, for he says, "*God is the* LORD, *which hath shewed us light.*" He was evidently, then, possessed of light; and this light was in him as "the light of life." This light had shone into his heart; the rays and beams of divine truth had penetrated into his conscience. He carried about with him a light which had come from God; in this light he saw light, and in this light he discerned everything which the light manifested. Thus by this internal light he knew what was good and what was evil, what was sweet and what was bitter, what was true and what was false, what was spiritual and what was natural. He did not say, This light came from creature exertion, this light was the produce of my own wisdom, this light was nature transmuted by some action of my own will, and thus gradually rose into existence from long and assiduous cultivation. But he ascribes the whole of that light which he possessed unto God the Lord, as the sole author and the only giver of it. Now, if God the Lord has ever showed you and me the same light which he showed his servant of old, we carry about with us more or less of a solemn conviction that we have received this light from him. There will indeed, be many clouds of darkness to cover it; there will often be doubts and fears, hovering like mists and fogs over our souls, whether the light which we have received be from God or not. But in solemn moments when the Lord is pleased a little to revive his work; at times and seasons when he condescends to draw forth the affections of our hearts unto himself, to bring us into his presence, to hide us in some measure in the hollow of his hand, and give us access unto himself, at such moments and seasons we carry about with us, in spite of all our unbelief, in spite of all the suggestions of the enemy, in spite of all doubts and fears and suspicions that rise from the depths of the carnal mind, in spite of all these counter-workings and underminings, we carry about with us at these times a solemn conviction that we have light, and that this light we have received from God. And why so? Because we can look back to a time when we walked in no such light, when we felt no such light, when everything spiritual and heavenly was dark to us, and we were dark to them.

Those things which the Spirit of God enables a man to do, are in Scripture sometimes called *sacrifices.* "That we may offer," we read, "spiritual *sacrifices* acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The apostle speaks of "receiving of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from the brethen at Philippi; an odour of a sweet smell; a *sacrifice* acceptable and well-pleasing to God." Phil. iv. 18. So he says to the Hebrew church: "But to do good and to communicate (that is, to the wants of God's people), forget not; for with such *sacrifices* God is well pleased." Heb. xiii. 16. Well, then, these spiritual sacrifices which a man offers unto God are bound also *to the horns of the altar.* They are not well-pleasing in the sight of God, except they are bound to the horns of the altar, so as to derive all their acceptance from the altar. Our prayers are only acceptable to God as they are offered through the cross of Jesus. Our praises and thanksgivings are only acceptable to God as they are connected with the cross of Christ, and ascend to the Father through the propitiation of his dear Son. The ordinances of God's house are only acceptable to God as spiritual sacrifices, when they are bound to the horns of the altar. Both the ordinances of the New Testament—baptism and the Lord's supper—have been bound by the hands of God himself to the horns of the altar; and no one either rightly went through the one, or rightly received the other, who had not been first spiritually bound by the same hand to the horns of the altar. Every act of liberality, every cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, every feeling of sympathy and affection, every kind word, every compassionate action shown to a brother; all and each are only acceptable to God as they ascend to him through the mediation of his dear Son. And, therefore, every sacrifice of our own comfort, or of our own advantage, of our own time, or of our own money, for the profit of God's children, is only a spiritual and acceptable sacrifice so far as it is bound to the horns of the altar, linked on to the cross of Jesus, and deriving all its fragrance and odour from its connection with the incense there offered by the Lord of life and glory.—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 27.—How comfortable is the light! 'Tis so comfortable that light and comfort are often put for the same thing: "*God is the* LORD, *which hath shewed us light,*" that is, the light of counsel what to do, and the light of comfort in what

we do, or after all our sufferings. Light is not only a candle held to us to do our work by, but it comforts and cheereth us in our work. Eccl. xi. 7.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 27.—"*Shewed us light:*" "*bind the sacrifice.*" Here is somewhat received; somewhat to be returned. God hath blessed us, and we must bless God. His grace and our gratitude, are the two lines my discourse must run upon. They are met in my text; let them as happily meet in your hearts, and they shall not leave you till they bring you to heaven.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 27.—"*Bind the sacrifice with cords,*" etc. The sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but "living sacrifices" (Rom. xii. 1) to be bound to the altar; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound "with cords to the horns of the altar."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 27.—"*Bind the sacrifice,*" etc. 'Tis a saying among the Hebrews, that the beasts that were offered in sacrifice, they were the most struggling beasts of all the rest; such is the nature of us unthankful beasts, when we should love God again, we are readier to run away from him; we must be tied to the altar with cords, to draw from us love or fear.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 27.—"*With cords.*" This word is sometimes used for thick *twisted cords*, Judges xv. 13; sometimes for *thick branches* of trees, used at some feasts, Ezek. xix. 11, Levit. xxiii. 40. Hereupon this sentence may two ways be read; *bind the feast with thick branches*, or *bind the sacrifice with cords;* both mean one thing that men should keep the festivity with joy and thanks to God, as Israel did at their solemnities.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 27.—"*Even unto the horns of the altar.*" Before these words must be understood, *lead it*: for the victims were bound to rings fixed in the floor. "*The horns*" were architectural ornaments, a kind of capitals, made of iron or of brass, somewhat in the form of the curved horns of an animal, projecting from the four angles of the altar. The officiating priest, when he prayed, placed his hands on them, and sometimes sprinkled them with the blood of the sacrifice: compare Exod. xxx. 3; Lev. iv. 7, 18. At the end of this verse the word *saying* must be supplied.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 27.—"*Unto the horns.*" That is, all the court over, until you come even to the horns of the altar, intending hereby many sacrifices or boughs.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 28.—"*God.*" The original for "*God*" gives force to this passage: Thou art my "*El*"—the Mighty One; therefore will I praise thee: my "*Eloah*"—a varied form with substantially the same sense, "and I will extol thee"—lift thee high in glory and honour.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 28.—This "extolling the Lord" will accomplish one of the great ends of praise, viz., his exaltation. It is true that God both can and will exalt himself but it is at once the duty and the privilege of his people to exalt him. His name should be upborne and magnified by them; the glory of that name is now, as it were, committed to them: what use are we making of the opportunity and the privilege?—*Philip Bennet Power.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1–4.—I. The subject of song—"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good." II. The chorus—"His mercy endureth for ever." III. The choir—"Let Israel now say," etc.; "Let the house of Aaron," etc.; "Let them that fear the Lord," etc. IV. The rehearsal—"Let them *now* say," that they may be better prepared for universal praise hereafter.

Verse 5.—I. The season for prayer—"in distress." II. The answer in season—"The Lord answered me." III. The answer beyond the request—"And set me," etc.

Verse 6.—I. When may a man know that God is on his side? II. What confidence may that man enjoy who is assured of divine aid?

Verse 7.—I. The value of true friends. II. The greater value of help from above.

Verses 8, 9.—"*Better.*" It is wiser, surer, morally more right, more ennobling, more happy in result.

Verse 10.—Take a wide range and consider what has been done, should be done, and may be done "in the name of the Lord."

Verse 12.—I. Faith's innumerable annoyances. II. Their speedy end. III. Faith's complete victory.

Verse 13.—I. Our great antagonist. II. His fierce attacks. III. His evident object: "that I might fall." IV. His failure: "but the Lord helped me."

Verse 14.—I. Strength under affliction. II. Song in hope of deliverance. III. Salvation, or actual escape out of trial.

Verse 15.—The joy of Christian households. It is joy in salvation: it is expressed,—"The voice": it abides: "the voice *is*": it is joy in the protection and honour given by the Lord's right hand.

Verses 15, 16.—I. True joy is peculiar *to* the righteous. II. *In* their tabernacles: in their pilgrimage state. III. *For* salvation: rejoicing and salvation go together. IV. *From God*: "the right hand," etc.: three right hands; both the salvation and the joy are from the hand of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost; the right hand of each doeth valiantly.—*G. R.*

Verse 17.—I. Good men are often in special danger: Joseph in the pit; Moses in the ark of bulrushes; Job on the dunghill; David's narrow escapes from the hand of Saul; Paul let down in a basket; what a fruit basket was that! How much was suspended upon that cord! The salvation of how many! II. Good men have often a presentiment of their recovery from special danger: "I shall not die, but live." III. Good men have a special desire for the preservation of their lives: "live and declare the works of the Lord."—*G. R.*

Verses 17, 19, 22.—The victory of the risen Saviour and its far-reaching consequences: (1) Death is vanquished; (2) the gates of righteousness are opened; (3) the corner-stone of the church is laid.—*Deichert, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 18.—I. The afflictions of the people of God are chastisements. "The Lord hath chastened me." II. Those chastisements are often severe: "hath chastened me *sore*." III. The severity is limited: "it is not unto death."—*G. R.*

Verse 19.—I. Access to God desired. II. Humbly requested: "Open to me." III. Boldly accepted: "I will go into them." IV. Gratefully enjoyed: "And praise the Lord."

Verse 22.—In these words we may notice the following particulars. I. The metaphorical view in which the church is here represented, namely, that of a *house* or *building*. II. The character that our Immanuel bears with respect to this building; he is *the stone* in a way of eminence, without whom there can be no building, no house for God to dwell in among the children of men. III. The character of the workmen employed in this spiritual structure; they are called *builders*. IV. A fatal error they are charged with in building the house of God; they *refuse* the stone of God's choosing; they do not allow him a place in his own house. V. Notice the place that Christ should and shall have in this building, let the builders do their worst; he *is made the head stone of the corner*. The words immediately following declare how this effected, and how the saints are affected with the views of his exaltation, notwithstanding the malice of hell and earth: "This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes."—*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verses 22, 23.—I. The mystery stated. 1. That which is least esteemed by men as a means of salvation is most esteemed by God. 2. That which is most esteemed by God when made known is least esteemed by man. II. The mystery explained. The way of salvation is the Lord's doing, therefore marvellous in our eyes.—*G. R.*

Verses 22—25.—I. Christ rejected. II. Christ exalted. III. His exaltation is due to God alone. IV. His exaltation commences a new era. V. His exaltation suggests a new prayer. See Spurgeon's Sermon, No. 1,420.

Verse 24.—I. What is spoken of. 1. The gospel day. 2. The sabbath day. II. What is said of it. 1. It is given by God. 2. To be joyfully received by man.—*G. R.*

Verse 25.—What is church prosperity? Whence must it come? How can we obtain it?

Verse 25.—I. The object of the prayer. 1. Salvation from sin. 2. Prosperity

in righteousness. II. The earnestness of the prayer: "I beseech thee, I beseech thee." III. The urgency of the prayer, "now—now"—now that the gates of righteousness are open, now that the foundation stone is laid, now that the gospel day has come—now, Lord! now!—*G. R.*

Verse 27.—"*Bind the sacrifice*," etc. Devotion is the mother, and she hath four daughters. 1. Constancy: "Bind the sacrifice." 2. Fervency: Bind it "with cords." 3. Wisdom. Bind it "to the altar." 4. Confidence. Even to the "horns" of the altar.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 27.—"*Bind the sacrifice with cords*," etc. I. What is the sacrifice? Our whole selves, every talent, all our time, property, position, mind, heart, temper, life to the last. II. Why does it need binding? It is naturally restive. Long delay, temptations, wealth, rank, discouragement, scepticism, all tend to drive it from the altar. III. To what is it bound? To the doctrine of atonement. To Jesus and his work. To Jesus and our work. IV. What are the cords? Our own vows. The need of souls. Our joy in the work. The great reward. The love of Christ working upon us by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 28.—I. The gladdest fact in all the world: "Thou art my God." II. The fittest spirit in which to enjoy it: "Praise thee."

Verse 28.—I. The effect of Christ being sacrificed for us: "Thou art my God." II. The effect of our being offered as an acceptable sacrifice to him. "I will praise thee, I will exalt thee." Or, I. The covenant blessing: "Thou art my God." II. The covenant obligation: "I will praise thee."—*G. R.*

Verse 29.—I. The beginning and the end of salvation is mercy. II. The beginning and end of its requirements is thanksgiving.—*G. R.*

PSALM CXIX.

TITLE.—*There is no title to this Psalm, neither is any author's name mentioned. It is* THE LONGEST PSALM, *and this is a sufficiently distinctive name for it. It equals in bulk twenty-two Psalms of the average length of the Songs of Degrees. Nor is it long only; for it equally excels in breadth of thought, depth of meaning, and height of fervour. It is like the celestial city which lieth four-square, and the height and the breadth of it are equal. Many superficial readers have imagined that it harps upon one string, and abounds in pious repetitions and redundancies; but this arises from the shallowness of the reader's own mind: those who have studied this divine hymn, and carefully noted each line of it, are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought. Using only a few words, the writer has produced permutations and combinations of meaning which display his holy familiarity with his subject, and the sanctified ingenuity of his mind. He never repeats himself; for if the same sentiment recurs it is placed in a fresh connection, and so exhibits another interesting shade of meaning. The more one studies it the fresher it becomes. As those who drink the Nile water like it better every time they take a draught, so does this Psalm become the more full and fascinating the oftener you turn to it. It contains no idle word; the grapes of this cluster are almost to bursting full with the new wine of the kingdom. The more you look into this mirror of a gracious heart the more you will see in it. Placid on the surface as the sea of glass before the eternal throne, it yet contains within its depths an ocean of fire, and those who devoutly gaze into it shall not only see the brightness, but feel the glow of the sacred flame. It is loaded with holy sense, and is as weighty as it is bulky. Again and again have we cried while studying it, "Oh the depths!" Yet these depths are hidden beneath an apparent simplicity, as Augustine has well and wisely said, and this makes the exposition all the more difficult. Its obscurity is hidden beneath a veil of light, and hence only those discover it who are in thorough earnest, not only to look on the word, but, like the angels, to look* into *it.*

The Psalm is alphabetical. Eight stanzas commence with one letter, and then another eight with the next letter, and so the whole Psalm proceeds by octonaries quite through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Besides which, there are multitudes of appositions of sense, and others of those structural formalities with which the oriental mind is pleased,—formalities very similar to those in which our older poets indulged. The Holy Spirit thus deigned to speak to men in forms which were attractive to the attention and helpful to the memory. He is often plain or elegant in his manner, but he does not disdain to be quaint or formal if thereby his design of instruction can be the more surely reached. He does not despise even contracted and artificial modes of speech, if by their use he can fix his teaching upon the mind. Isaac Taylor has worthily set forth the lesson of this fact:—"In the strictest sense this composition is conditioned; *nevertheless in the highest sense is it an utterance of spiritual life; and in thus finding these seemingly opposed elements, intimately commingled as they are throughout this Psalm, a lesson full of meaning is silently conveyed to those who shall receive it—that the conveyance of the things of God to the human spirit is in no way damaged or impeded, much less is it deflected or vitiated by its subjugation to those modes of utterance which most of all bespeak their adaptation to the infancy and the childlike capacity of the recipient."*

AUTHOR.—*The fashion among modern writers is, as far as possible, to take every Psalm from David. As the critics of this school are usually unsound in doctrine and unspiritual in tone, we gravitate in the opposite direction, from a natural suspicion of everything which comes from so unsatisfactory a quarter. We believe that David wrote this Psalm. It is Davidic in tone and expression, and it tallies with David's experience in many interesting points. In our youth our teacher called it "David's pocket book," and we incline to the opinion then expressed that here we have the royal diary written at various times throughout a long life. No, we cannot give up this Psalm to the enemy. "This is David's spoil." After long reading an author one gets to know his style, and a measure of discernment is acquired by which his composition is detected even if his name be concealed; we feel a kind of critical certainty that the hand of David is in this thing, yea, that it is altogether his own.*

SUBJECT.—*The one theme is the word of the Lord. The Psalmist sets his subject*

in many lights, and treats of it in divers ways, but he seldom omits to mention the word of the Lord in each verse under some one or other of the many names by which he knows it; and even if the name be not there, the subject is still heartily pursued in every stanza. He who wrote this wonderful song was saturated with those books of Scripture which he possessed. Andrew Bonar tells of a simple Christian in a farmhouse who had meditated *the Bible through three times. This is precisely what this Psalmist had done,—he had gone past reading into meditation. Like Luther, David had shaken every fruit-tree in God's garden, and gathered golden fruit therefrom. "The most," says Martin Boos, "read their Bibles like cows that stand in the thick grass, and trample under their feet the finest flowers and herbs." It is to be feared that we too often do the like. This is a miserable way of treating the pages of inspiration. May the Lord prevent us from repeating that sin while reading this precious Psalm.*

There is an evident growth in the subject matter. The earlier verses are of such a character as to lend themselves to the hypothesis that the author was a young man, while many of the later passages could only have suggested themselves to age and wisdom. In every portion, however, it is the fruit of deep experience, careful observation, and earnest meditation. If David did not write it, there must have lived another believer of exactly the same order of mind as David, and he must have addicted himself to psalmody with equal ardour, and have been an equally hearty lover of Holy Writ.

Our best improvement of this sacred composition will come through getting our minds into intense sympathy with its subject. In order to this, we might do well to commit it to memory. Philip Henry's daughter wrote in her diary, "I have of late taken some pains to learn by heart Psalm CXIX., and have made some progress therein." She was a sensible, godly woman. Having done this, we should consider the fulness, certainty, clearness, and sweetness of the word of God, since by such reflections we are likely to be stirred up to a warm affection for it. What favoured beings are those to whom the Eternal God has written a letter in his own hand and style. What ardour of devotion, what diligence of composition can produce a worthy eulogium for the divine testimonies! If ever one such has fallen from the pen of man it is this CXIX. Psalm, which might well be called the holy soul's soliloquy before an open Bible.

This sacred ode is a little Bible, the Scriptures condensed, a mass of Bibline, Holy Writ rewritten in holy emotions and actions. Blessed are they who can read and understand these saintly aphorisms; they shall find golden apples in this true Hesperides, and come to reckon that this Psalm, like the whole Scripture which it praises, is a pearl island, or, better still, a garden of sweet flowers.

NOTES RELATING TO THE PSALM AS A WHOLE.

Eulogium upon the whole Psalm.—This psalm shines and shows itself among the rest.

Velut inter ignes
*Luna minores.**

a star in the firmament of the Psalms, of the first and greatest magnitude. This will readily appear if you consider either the manner it is composed in, or the matter it is composed of. The manner it is composed in is very elegant. The matter it is composed of is very excellent. 1. The manner it is composed in is very elegant; full of art, rule, method; theological matter in a logical manner, a spiritual alphabet framed and formed according to the Hebrew alphabet. 2. The matter it is composed of is very excellent; full of rare sublimities, deep mysteries, gracious activities, yea, glorious ecstacies. The Psalm is made up of three things,—1. prayers, 2. praises, 3. protestations. Payers to God; praises of God; protestations unto God.—*Rev. W. Simmons, in a sermon in the "Morning Exercises,"* 1661.

Eulogium.—This Psalm is called the Alphabet of Divine Love, the Paradise of all the Doctrines, the Storehouse of the Holy Spirit, the School of Truth, also the deep mystery of the Scriptures, where the whole moral discipline of all the virtues shines brightly. And as all moral instruction is delightsome, therefore this Psalm because excelling in this kind of instruction, should be called delightsome, inasmuch as it surpasses the rest. The other Psalms, truly, as lesser stars shine somewhat; but this burns with the meridian heat of its full brightness, and is wholly resplendent with moral loveliness.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius,* 1600.

Eulogium.—In our German version it has the appropriate inscription, "The Christian's golden A B C of the praise, love, power, and use of the Word of God."—*Franz Delitzsch,* 1871.

Eulogium.—It is recorded of the celebrated St. Augustine, who among his voluminous works left a Comment on the Book of Psalms, that he delayed to comment on this one till he had finished the whole Psalter; and then yielded only to the long and vehemenent urgency of his friends, "because," he says, "as often as I essayed to think thereon, it always exceeded the powers of my intent thought and the utmost grasp of my faculties." While one ancient father † entitles this Psalm "the perfection of teaching and instruction"; another ‡ says that "it applies an all-containing medicine to the varied spiritual diseases of men—sufficing to perfect those who long for perfect virtue, to rouse the slothful, to refresh the dispirited, and to set in order the relaxed;" to which might be added many like testimonies of ancient and modern commentators on it.—*William De Burgh,* 1860.

Eulogium.—In proportion as this Psalm seemeth more open, so much the more deep doth it appear to me; so that I cannot show how deep it is. For in others, which are understood with difficulty, although the sense lies hid in obscurity, yet the obscurity itself appeareth; but in this, not even this is the case; since it is superficially such, that it seemeth not to need an expositor, but only a reader and listener.—*Augustine,* 354—430.

Eulogium.—In Matthew Henry's "Account of the Life and Death of his father, Philip Henry," he says: "Once, pressing the study of the Scriptures, he advised us to take a verse of this Psalm every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the Psalm twice in the year; and that, saith he, will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures. He often said, "All grace grows as love to the word of God grows."

Eulogium.—It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my child's mind most repulsive—the 119th Psalm—has now become of all the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God.—*John Ruskin, in "Fors Clavigera."*

Eulogium.—This Psalm is a prolonged meditation upon the excellence of the word of God, upon its effects, and the strength and happiness which it gives to a

---

* And like the moon, the feebler fires among,
Conspicuous shines." —*Horace.*

† St. Hilary. ‡ Theodoret.

man in every position. These reflections are interspersed with petitions, in which the Psalmist, deeply feeling his natural infirmity, implores the help of God for assistance to walk in the way mapped out for him in the divine oracles. In order to be able to understand and to enjoy this remarkable Psalm, and that we may not be repelled by its length and by its repetitions, we must have had, in some measure at least, the same experiences as its author, and, like him, have learned to love and practise the sacred word. Moreover, this Psalm is in some sort a touch-stone for the spiritual life of those who read it. The sentiments expressed in it perfectly harmonise with what the historical books and other Psalms teach concerning David's obedience and his zeal for God's glory. There are, however, within it words which breathe so elevated a piety, that they can have their full sense and perfect truthfulness only in the mouth of Him of whom the prophet-king was the type.—*From the French of Armand de Mestral,* 1856.

Eulogium.—The 119th Psalm has been spoken of by a most distinguished living rationalistic critic (Professor Reuss) as " not poetry at all, but simply a litany—a species of chaplet." Such does not seem to be the opinion of the angels of God, and of the redeemed spirits, when that very poem supplies with the language of praise—the pæan of victory, " Just and true are thy ways " (Rev. xv. 3) ; the cry of the angel of the waters, " Thou art righteous, O Lord ! " (Rev. xvi. 5) ; the voice of much people in heaven, " True and righteous are his judgments " (Rev. xix. 2) ; what is this but the exclamation of him, whoever he may have been, who wrote the Psalm—" Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments " (Psalm cxix. 137).—*William Alexander, in " The Quiver,"* 1880.

Incident.—In the midst of a London season ; in the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, 1819 ; William Wilberforce writes in his Diary—" Walked from Hyde Park Corner repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort."—*William Alexander, in " The Witness of the Psalms."* 1877.

Incident.—George Wishart, the chaplain and biographer of " the great Marquis of Montrose," as he was called, would have shared the fate of his illustrious patron but for the following singular expedient. When upon the scaffold, he availed himself of the custom of the times, which permitted the condemned to choose a Psalm to be sung. He selected the 119th Psalm, and before two-thirds of the Psalm had been sung, a pardon arrived, and his life was preserved. It may not be out of place to add that the George Wishart, Bishop of Edinburgh, above referred to, has been too often confounded with the godly martyr of the same name who lived and died a century previously. We only mention the incident because it has often been quoted as a singular instance of the providential escape of a saintly personage ; whereas it was the very ingenious device of a person who, according to Woodrow, was more renowned for shrewdness than for sanctity. The length of this Psalm was sagaciously employed as the means of gaining time, and, happily, the expedient succeeded.—*C. H. S.*

Alphabetical Arrangement.—It is observed that the 119th Psalm is disposed according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, perhaps to intimate that children, when they begin to learn their alphabet, should learn that Psalm.—*Nathanael Hardy,* 1618—1670.

Alphabetical Arrangement.—True it is that the verses indeed begin not either with the English or yet the Latin letters, but with the Hebrew, wherein David made and wrote this Psalm. The will and purpose of the Holy Ghost is to make us to feel and understand that the doctrine herein contained is not only set down for great clerks which have gone to school for ten or twenty years ; but also for the most simple ; to the end none should pretend any excuse of ignorance.—*From Calvin's Two-and-Twenty Sermons upon the cxixth Psalm,* 1580.

Alphabetical Arrangement.—There may be something more than fancy in the remark, that Christ's name, " *the Alpha and Omega* "—equivalent to declaring him all that which every letter of the alphabet could express—may have had a reference to the peculiarity of this Psalm,—a Psalm in which (with the exception of ver. 84 and 122, exceptions that make the rule more marked) every verse speaks of God's revelation of himself to man.—*Andrew A. Bonar,* 1859.

Alphabetical Arrangement.—Origen says it is alphabetical because it contains the elements or principles of all knowledge and wisdom ; and that it repeats each letter eight times, because eight is the number of perfection.

Alphabetical Arrangement.—That the unlearned reader may understand what is meant by the Psalm being alphabetical, we append the following specimen upon the section *Aleph* :—

A blessing is on them that are undefiled in the way
and walk in the law of Jehovah ;
A blessing is on them that keep his testimonies,
and seek him with their whole heart ;
Also on them that do no wickedness,
but walk in his ways.
A law hast thou given unto us,
that we should diligently keep thy commandments.
Ah ! Lord, that my ways were made so direct
that I might keep thy statutes !
And then shall I not be confounded,
while I have respect unto all thy commandments.
As for me, I will thank thee with an unfeigne heart,
when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
An eye will I have unto thy ceremonies,
O forsake me not utterly.

From " The Psalms Chronologically Arranged. By Four Friends." 1867.

Author and Subject.—This is a Psalm by itself, it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them ; more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures ; but making them for a pretence ; which intimates that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and towards the latter end of his time gathered them out of his day-book where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this Psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses ; but, like Solomon's proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn by the Psalmist's example to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion ; but we must make use of the Psalmist's words, both for the exciting and the expressing of our devout affections. Some have said of this Psalm, He that shall read it considerately, it will either warm him or shame him ; and this is true.—*Matthew Henry*, 1662—1714.

Author and Subject.—This very singular poem has descended to us without name or title ; and with some difficulty in fixing its date. It is by many critics supposed to have been written by King David ; and there is in it so much of the peculiar language and strain of feeling that distinguish his compositions, with so perpetually shifting a complication of every condition of life through the whole scale of adversity and prosperity, that seems to distinguish his own history from that of every other individual, as to afford much reason for adopting this opinion, and for inducing us to regard it as a series of poems composed originally by David, at different times under different circumstances, or collected by him, and arranged in their present form, from floating passages of antecedent bards, that were in danger of being lost or forgotten. If this view of the subject approaches to correctness, it may constitute one of the poems which Josephus tells us David gave to the public on the re-establishment of tranquillity after the discomfiture of the traitor Sheba, and the return of the ten refractory tribes to a state of loyalty.

This poem, or rather collection of poems, is designed for private devotion, alone ; and we have, here, no distinct reference to any historical or national event, to any public festival, or any place, of congregational worship ; though a few general hints are occasionally scattered upon one or two of these points. We have nothing of David or Solomon, of Moses or Aaron, of Egypt or the journey through the wilderness ; nothing of Jerusalem, or Mount Zion, or Ephrata ; of the temple, or the altar, of the priests or the people. It consists of the holy effusions of a devout soul, in a state of closet retirement, unbosoming itself in blessed communion with its God, and descanting on the holy cycle of his attributes, and the consolations of his revealed will under every trial to which man can be exposed.

The form of this Psalm is singular ; and, though alphabetical, it is without an exact parallel in any of the others. It is, in truth, a set or collection of canticles,

or smaller poems, each forming a literal octrain or range of eight couplets ; the first octrain taking the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet for the opening letter of every line ; the second, the second letter, and in the same manner proceeding through the whole extent of the twenty-two letters that constitute the alphabet of the Hebrew tongue ; and consequently extending the entire poem to twenty-two octrains or discourses of eight lines each. Poetical collections of this kind are still common in the East, and especially among the Persian poets, who distinguish their separate poems, or canticles, by the name of gazels, and the entire set of fasciculus by that of diwan. By the Arabian poet Temoa they are happily denominated strings of pearls : an idea which the Persian poets have caught hold of, and playfully illustrated in various ways.

From this peculiarity of construction the couplets of Psalm cxix. may, in the Hebrew tongue, be committed to memory with far more ease than in any modern language : for, as each versicle under every octrain commences with the same letter, and the progressive octrains follow up the order of the alphabet, the letter becomes a powerful help to the memory of the learner, and enables him to go through the whole without hesitation.—*John Mason Good*, 1764—1827.

Author and Subject.—It is at least possible that the plaited work of so long a Psalm, which, in connection with all that is artificial about it from beginning to end gives us a glimpse of the subdued, afflicted mien of a confessor, is the work of one in prison, who whiled away his time with this plaiting together of his complaints and his consolatory thoughts.—*Franz Delitzsch*, 1871.

Subject.—The 119th Psalm is the appropriate sermon, after the Hallel, on the text which is its epitome (Ps. i. 1, 2), " Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . . . but his delight is in the law of the Lord." Except in two verses (122, 132), the law is expressly extolled in every verse.—*Andrew Robert Fausset, in " Studies in the CL. Psalms,"* 1876.

Subject.—Every verse contains in it either a praise of God's word, from some excellent quality of it ; or a protestation of David his unfeigned affection towards it ; or else a prayer for grace, to conform himself unto it ; for unto one of these three, —*praises, prayers*, or *protestations*, may all the verses of this Psalm be reduced.—*William Cowper.*

Subject.—I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated as in the 119th Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design in the first verses of the Psalm, keeps his eye on it all along, and pursues it to the end. The excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste and delight. God's law —that grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature, and prescription of holiness to the creature—is all along represented as the great object of the love, the complacence, and the rejoicing of the gracious nature, which prizes God's commandments " above gold, yea, the finest gold ; " and to which they are " sweeter than honey and the honey-comb."—*Jonathan Edwards*, 1703—1758.

Subject and Connection of its parts.—This Psalm, no less excellent in virtue than large in bulk, containeth manifold reflections on the nature, the properties, the adjuncts, and effects of God's law ; many sprightly ejaculations about it, conceived in different forms of speech ; some in way of petition, some of thanksgiving, some of resolution, some of assertion or aphorism ; many useful directions, many zealous exhortations to the observance of it ; the which are not ranged in any strict order, but, like a variety of wholesome herbs in a fair field, do with a grateful confusion lie dispersed, as they freely did spring in the heart, or were suggested by the devout spirit of him who indited this Psalm, where no coherence of sentences being designed, we may consider any one of them absolutely, or by itself.—*Isaac Barrow*, 1630—1677.

Subject and Connection.—Upon considering the matter of this Psalm, it will be found that the stanzas beginning with the same letter have very little, and sometimes not the least connection with each other ; and the praises of Jehovah, the excellencies of his law, and supplications, are mingled together without order or coherence. Hence I have been led to think, that the Psalm was never intended for an ode to be performed at one time, *tout de suite*, but was a collection of stanzas of prayer and praise arranged in alphabetical order, from which the pious worshipper might select such as suited his situation and circumstances, using, as he saw fit, either one line or two lines of each stanza, and uniting them together so as to make a connected

and coherent composition proper for the occasion and the circumstances in which he was.—*Stephen Street*, 1790.

Subject and Connection.—In view of the alphabetic or acrostic arrangement of this Psalm, Dr. Adam Clarke ventures the following remark:—"All *connection*, as might naturally be expected, is sacrificed to this artificial and methodical arrangement." This is hardly probable, as Dr. Clarke himself felt when he endeavoured in his Analysis "to show the connection which the eight verses of each part have among themselves." Each group of eight verses seems to have a theme or subject common to itself, and while the peculiar structure of the Psalm has obscured this arrangement, so that it is sometimes difficult to trace, it must not be said that the connection is destroyed.—*F. G. Marchant, of Hitchin*, 1879.

Subject and Connection.—In stanza *Aleph* the blessedness of walking in the way of God's word is declared; in *Beth*, that word is pronounced to be the only safeguard of the young against sin; in *Gimel*, is a pious resolve to cleave to the word, in spite of the sneers of the world. *Daleth* expresses a longing for the consolation of God's word to fortify good resolutions; *He* declares an earnest desire for grace to obey the word; *Vau* expresses firm trust and intense delight in God's word, and an earnest desire to see its full accomplishment; *Zain* describes the blessed comfort derived from God's word in evil days; *Cheth* utters the joy which is inspired by the consciousness that God is his portion, and by communion with those that love his word, and by a persuasion that all things work for good to all who love him; *Teth* describes the blessed effects of affliction, as described in God's word, in weaning the soul from the world and drawing it nearer to him; *Jod* represents the example of the resignation and piety of the faithful, especially in affliction, as gently drawing others to God; *Caph* is an expression of intense desire for the coming of God's kingdom, and the subjection of all things to him, according to the promises of his word. *Lamed* declares that the word of God is everlasting, immutable, and infinite in perfection: and, therefore, in *Mem* it is asserted that God's word is the only treasure-house of true wisdom; and in *Nun*, that it is the only beacon-light in the darkness and storms of this world; and in *Samech*, that all sceptical attempts to undermine men's faith in that word are hateful and deadly, and will recoil with confusion on those that make them; and in *Ain*, is a prayer for steadfastness and soundness of heart and mind, amid all the impiety and unbelief of a godless world; which is followed by an assurance in *Pe*, that the word of God brings its own light and comfort with it to those who earnestly pray for them, and fills the heart with compassion for those who despise it. In *Tzaddi* is a declaration that even the youthful soul may stand strong and steadfast, if it has faith in the purity, and truth, and righteousness of God's law; and therefore in *Koph*, is an earnest prayer for the grace of faith, especially, as is expressed in *Resh*, in times of affliction, desolation, and persecution, as *Schin* adds, from the powerful of this world; but even then there is peace, joy, and exultation for those who love God's word. And therefore the Psalm concludes, in *Tau*, with an earnest prayer for the bestowal of the gifts of understanding, assistance, and grace from God, to the soul which owns its weakness, and rests on him alone for support.—*Christopher Wordsworth*, 1872.

Subject and Connection.—This Psalm has been called *Psalmus literatus*, or *alphabetites;* and the Masora calls it alpa betha rabba. The name Jehovah occurs twenty-two times in the Psalm. Its theme is the word of God, which it mentions under one of the ten terms, תּוֹרָה, *law;* דֶּרֶךְ, *way;* עֵדָה, *testimony;* פִּקּוּד, *precept;* חֹק, *statute;* מִצְוָה, *commandments;* מִשְׁפָּט, *judgment;* דָּבָר, *word;* אִמְרָה, *saying;* אֱמֶת, *truth;* in every verse except verse 122. The last of these terms is scarcely admissible as a term for the *word;* but it has to suffice only in verse 90. According to this alphabetical series of eight stanzas, the word is the source of happiness to those who walk by it (*aleph*), of holiness to those who give heed to it (*beth*), of truth to those whose eyes the Lord opens by his Spirit (*gimel*), of law to those whose heart he renews (*daleth*), begets perseverance by its promises (*he*), reveals the mercy and salvation of the Lord (*vau*), awakens the comfort of hope in God (*zayin*), presents the Lord as the portion of the trusting soul (*cheth*), makes affliction instructive and chastening (*teth*), begets a fellowship in the fear of God (*jod*), and a longing for the full peace of salvation (*kaph*), is faithful and immutable (*lamed*), commands the approval of the heart (*mem*), is a light to the path (*nun*), from which to swerve is hateful (*samek*), warrants the plea of innocence (*ayin*), is a testimony to God's character and will (*pe*), is a law of rectitude (*tsade*), warrants the cry for salvation (*qoph*), and payer for deliverance from affliction (*resh*), and from persecution without a cause (*shin*), and assures of an

answer in due time (*tau*). There is here as much order as could be expected in a long alphabetical acrostic.—*James G. Murphy, in a "Commentary on the Book of Psalms," 1875.*

Whole Psalm.—Dr. Luther and Hilary, and other excellent men, think that here a compendium of the whole of theology is briefly set forth: for the things which are said, generally, about the Scripture, and the word of God, and theology, are helpful to the examination of doctrinal questions. In the first place, it speaks of the author of that doctrine. Secondly, of its authority and certainty. Thirdly, it is declared that the doctrine, contained in the Apostolic and Prophetic books, is perfect, and contains all things which are able to give us instruction unto everlasting salvation. Fourthly, it affirms the perspicuity of the Scripture. Fifthly, its usefulness. Sixthly, its true and saving knowledge and interpretation. Lastly, it treats of practice; how, for instance, the things which we are taught in the word of God are to be manifested and reduced to practice, in piety, moderation, obedience, faith, and hope, in temptations and adversities.—*Solomon Gesner*, 1559—1605.

Names given to the Law of God.—The things contained in Scripture, and drawn from it, are here called, 1. God's *law*, because they are enacted by him as our Sovereign. 2. His *way*, because they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience. 3. His *testimonies*, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. 4. His *commandments*, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. 5. His *precepts*, because prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. 6. His *word*, or saying, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ the essential, eternal Word is all in all in it. 7. His *judgments*, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His *righteousness*, because it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. 9. His *statutes*, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. His *truth* or *faithfulness*, because the principles upon which divine law is built are eternal truths.—*Matthew Henry.*

Names given to the Law of God.—The next peculiarity to be observed in this Psalm is, the regular recurrence of nine characteristic words, at least one or other of which is found in each distich, with one solitary exception, the second distich of the 12th division. These words—*law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, saying,* and a word which only twice occurs as a characteristic—*way.*

These are, doubtless, all designations of the Divine Law; but it were doing a deep injury to the cause of revealed truth to affirm that they are mere synonyms; in other words, that the sentiments of this compendium of heavenly wisdom are little better than a string of tautologies. The fact is, as some critics, both Jewish and Christian, have observed, that each of these terms designates the same law of God, but each under a different aspect, signifying the different modes of its promulgation, and of its reception.

Each of these words will now be examined in order, and an attempt will be made to discriminate them.

1. "*Law.*" This word is formed from a verb which means to direct, to guide, to aim, to shoot forwards. Its etymological meaning, then, would be a rule of conduct, a κανὼν σαφὴς. It means God's law in general, whether it be that universal rule called the law of nature, or that which was revealed to his Church by Moses, and perfected by Christ. In strictness, the law means a plain rule of conduct, rather placed clearly in man's sight, than enforced by any command; that is to say, this word does not necessarily include its sanctions.

2. "*Testimonies*" are derived from a word which signifies to bear witness, to testify. The ark of the tabernacle is so called, as are the two tables of stone, and the tabernacle; the earnests and witnesses of God's inhabitation among his people. Testimonies are more particularly God's revealed law; the witnesses and confirmation of his promises made to his people, and earnests of his future salvation.

3. "*Precepts,*" from a word which means *to place in trust,* mean something entrusted to man, "that is committed to thee"; appointments of God, which consequently have to do with the conscience, for which man is responsible, as an intelligent being.

4. "*Statutes.*" The verb from which this word is formed means to engrave or

inscribe. The word means a definite, prescribed, written law. The term is applied to Joseph's law about the portion of the priests in Egypt, to the law about the passover, etc. But in this Psalm it has a more internal meaning;—that moral law of God which is engraven on the fleshy tables of the heart; the inmost and spiritual apprehension of his will: not so obvious as the law and testimonies, and a matter of more direct spiritual communication than his precepts; the latter being more elaborated by the efforts of the mind itself, divinely guided indeed, but perhaps more instrumentally, and less passively employed.

5. "*Commandments*," derived from a verb signifying to command or ordain. Such was God's command to Adam about the tree; to Noah about constructing the ark.

6. "*Judgments*," derived from a word signifying to govern, to judge or determine, mean judicial ordinances and decisions; legal sanctions.

7. "*Word*." There are two terms, quite distinct Hebrew, but both rendered "*word*" in each of our authorised versions. The latter of these is rendered "*saying*" in the former volume of this work. They are closely connected: since out of twenty-two passages in which "*word*" occurs, in fourteen it is parallel to it, or in connection with, "*saying*." From this very circumstance it is evident they are not synonymous.

The term here rendered "*word*" seems the Λογος, or Word of God, in its most divine sense; the announcement of God's revealed will; his command; his oracle; at times, the special communication to the prophets. The ten commandments are called by this term in Exodus; and דְּבִיר is the oracle in the temple. In this Psalm it may be considered as,—(1) God's revealed commandments in general. (2) As a revealed promise of certain blessings to the righteous. (3) As a thing committed to him as the minister of God. (4) As a rule of conduct; a channel of illumination.

8. As to the remaining word "*way*," that occurs but twice as a characteristic word, and the place in which it occurs must rather be considered as exceptions to the general rule; so that I am not disposed to consider it as intended to be a cognate expression with the above. At all events, its meaning is so direct and simple as to require no explanation; a plain rule of conduct; in its higher sense, the assisting grace of God through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
John Jebb, 1846.

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 1 TO 8.

BLESSED *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.
2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart.
3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.
4 Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.
5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!
6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.
7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

These first eight verses are taken up with a contemplation of the blessedness which comes through keeping the statutes of the Lord. The subject is treated in a devout manner rather than in a didactic style. Heart-fellowship with God is enjoyed through a love of that word which is God's way of communing with the soul by his Holy Spirit. Prayer and praise and all sorts of devotional acts and feelings gleam through the verses like beams of sunlight through an olive grove. You are not only instructed, but influenced to holy emotion, and helped to express the same.

Lovers of God's holy words are blessed, because they are preserved from defilement (verse 1), because they are made practically holy (verses 2 and 3), and are led to follow after God sincerely and intensely (verse 2). It is seen that this holy walking must be desirable because God commands it (verse 4); therefore the pious soul prays for it (verse 5), and feels that its comfort and courage must depend upon obtaining it (verse 6). In the prospect of answered prayer, yea, while the prayer is being answered the heart is full of thankfulness (verse 7), and is fixed in solemn resolve not to miss the blessing if the Lord will give enabling grace (verse 8).

The changes are rung upon the words "*way*"—"undefiled in the way," "walk in his ways," "O that my ways were directed"; "*keep*"—"keep his testimonies," "keep thy precepts diligently," "directed to keep," "I will keep"; and "*walk*"—"walk in the law," "walk in his ways." Yet there is no tautology, nor is the same thought repeated, though to the careless reader it may seem so.

The change from statements about others and about the Lord to more personal dealing with God begins in the third verse, and becomes more clear as we advance, till in the later verses the communion becomes most intense and soul moving. O that every reader may feel the glow.

1. "*Blessed.*" The Psalmist is so enraptured with the word of God that he regards it as his highest ideal of blessedness to be conformed to it. He has gazed on the beauties of the perfect law, and, as if this verse were the sum and outcome of all his emotions, he exclaims, "Blessed is the man whose life is the practical transcript of the will of God." True religion is not cold and dry; it has its exclamations and raptures. We not only judge the keeping of God's law to be a wise and proper thing, but we are warmly enamoured of its holiness, and cry out in adoring wonder, "Blessed are the undefiled!" meaning thereby, that we eagerly desire to become such ourselves, and wish for no greater happiness than to be perfectly holy. It may be that the writer laboured under a sense of his own faultiness, and therefore envied the blessedness of those whose walk had been more pure and clean; indeed, the very contemplation of the perfect law of the Lord upon which he now entered was quite enough to make him bemoan his own imperfections, and sigh for the blessedness of an undefiled walk.

True religion is always practical, for it does not permit us to delight ourselves in a perfect rule without exciting in us a longing to be conformed to it in our daily lives. A blessing belongs to those who hear and read and understand the word of the Lord; yet is it a far greater blessing to be actually obedient to it, and to carry out in our walk and conversation what we learn in our searching of the Scriptures. Purity in our way and walk is the truest blessedness.

This first verse is not only a preface to the whole Psalm, but it may also be regarded

as the text upon which the rest is a discourse. It is similar to the benediction of the first Psalm, which is set in the forefront of the entire book: there is a likeness between this 119th Psalm and the Psalter, and this is one point of it, that it begins with a benediction. In this, too, we see some foreshadowing of the Son of David, who began his great sermon as David began his great Psalm. It is well to open our mouth with blessings. When we cannot bestow them, we can show the way of obtaining them, and even if we do not yet possess them ourselves, it may be profitable to contemplate them, that our desires may be excited, and our souls moved to seek after them. Lord, if I am not yet so blessed to be among the undefiled in thy way, yet I will think much of the happiness which these enjoy, and set it before me as my life's ambition.

As David thus begins his Psalm, so should young men begin their lives, so should new converts commence their profession, so should all Christians begin every day. Settle it in your hearts as a first postulate and sure rule of practical science that holiness is happiness, and that it is our wisdom first to seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. Well begun is half done. To start with a true idea of blessedness is beyond measure important. Man began with being blessed in his innocence, and if our fallen race is ever to be blessed again, it must find it where it lost it at the beginning, namely, in conformity to the command of the Lord.

"*The undefiled in the way.*" They are in the way, the right way, the way of the Lord, and they keep that way, walking with holy carefulness and washing their feet daily, lest they be found spotted by the flesh. They enjoy great blessedness in their own souls; indeed, they have a foretaste of heaven where the blessedness lieth much in being absolutely undefiled; and could they continue utterly and altogether without defilement, doubtless they would have the days of heaven upon the earth. Outward evil would little hurt us if we were entirely rid of the evil of sin, an attainment which with the best of us lies still in the region of desire, and is not yet fully reached, though we have so clear a view of it that we see it to be blessedness itself; and therefore we eagerly press towards it.

He whose life is in a gospel sense undefiled, is blessed, because he could never have reached this point if a thousand blessings had not already been bestowed on him. By nature we are defiled and out of the way, and we must therefore have been washed in the atoning blood to remove defilement, and we must have been converted by the power of the Holy Ghost, or we should not have been turned into the way of peace, nor be undefiled in it. Nor is this all, for the continual power of grace is needed to keep a believer in the right way, and to preserve him from pollution. All the blessings of the covenant must have been in a measure poured upon those who from day to day have been enabled to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Their way is the evidence of their being the blessed of the Lord.

David speaks of a high degree of blessedness; for some are in the way, and are true servants of God, but they are as yet faulty in many ways and bring defilement upon themselves. Others who walk in the light more fully, and maintain closer communion with God, are enabled to keep themselves unspotted from the world, and these enjoy far more peace and joy than their less watchful brethren. Doubtless, the more complete our sanctification the more intense our blessedness. Christ is our way, and we are not only alive in Christ, but we are to live in Christ; the sorrow is that we bespatter his holy way with our selfishness, self-exaltation, wilfulness, and carnality, and so we miss a great measure of the blessedness which is in him as our way. A believer who errs is still saved, but the joy of his salvation is not experienced by him; he is rescued but not enriched, greatly borne with, but not greatly blessed.

How easily may defilement come upon us even in our holy things, yea, even *in the way*. We may even come from public or private worship with defilement upon the conscience gathered when we were on our knees. There was no floor to the tabernacle but the desert sand, and hence the priests at the altar were under frequent necessity to wash their feet, and by the kind foresight of their God, the laver stood ready for their cleansing, even as for us our Lord Jesus still stands ready to wash our feet, that we may be clean every whit. Thus our text sets forth the blessedness of the apostles in the upper room when Jesus had said of them, "Ye are clean."

What blessedness awaits those who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and are preserved from the evil which is in the world through lust. These shall be the envy of all mankind "in that day." Though now they despise them as precise fanatics and Puritans, the most prosperous of sinners shall then wish that they could change places with them. O my soul, seek thou thy blessedness in following

hard after thy Lord, who was holy, harmless, undefiled; for there hast thou found peace hitherto, and there wilt thou find it for ever.

"*Who walk in the law of the Lord.*" In them is found habitual holiness. Their walk, their common everyday life is obedience unto the Lord. They live by rule, that rule the command of the Lord God. Whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they do all in the name of their great Master and Exemplar. To them religion is nothing out of the way, it is their everyday walk: it moulds their common actions as well as their special devotions. This ensures blessedness. He who walks in God's law walks in God's company, and he must be blessed; he has God's smile, God's strength, God's secret with him, and how can he be otherwise than blessed?

The holy life is a walk, a steady progress, a quiet advance, a lasting continuance. Enoch walked with God. Good men always long to be better, and hence they go forward. Good men are never idle, and hence they do not lie down or loiter, but they are still walking onward to their desired end. They are not hurried, and worried, and flurried, and so they keep the even tenor of their way, walking steadily towards heaven; and they are not in perplexity as to how to conduct themselves, for they have a perfect rule, which they are happy to walk by. The law of the Lord is not irksome to them; its commandments are not grievous, and its restrictions are not slavish in their esteem. It does not appear to them to be an impossible law, theoretically admirable but practically absurd, but they walk by it and in it. They do not consult it now and then as a sort of rectifier of their wanderings, but they use it as a chart for their daily sailing, a map of the road for their life-journey. Nor do they ever regret that they have entered upon the path of obedience, else they w uld leave it, and that without difficulty, for a thousand temptations offer them opportunity to return; their continued walk in the law of the Lord is their best testimony to the blessedness of such a condition of life. Yes, they are blessed even now. The Psalmist himself bore witness to the fact: he had tried and proved it, and wrote it down, as a fact which defied all denial. Here it stands in the forefront of David's *magnum opus*, written on the topmost line of his greatest Psalm—"BLESSED ARE THEY WHO WALK IN THE LAW OF THE LORD." Rough may be the way, stern the rule, hard the discipline,—all these we know and more,—but a thousand heaped-up blessednesses are still found in godly living, for which we bless the Lord.

We have in this verse blessed persons who enjoy five blessed things, A blessed way, blessed purity, a blessed law, given by a blessed Lord, and a blessed walk therein; to which we may add the blessed testimony of the Holy Ghost given in this very passage that they are in very deed the blessed of the Lord.

The blessedness which is thus set before us we must aim at, but we must not think to obtain it without earnest effort. David has a great deal to say about it; his discourse in this Psalm is long and solemn, and it is a hint to us that the way of perfect obedience is not learned in a day; there must be precept upon precept, line upon line, and after efforts long enough to be compared with the 176 verses of this Psalm we may still have to cry, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments."

It must, however, be our plan to keep the word of the Lord much upon our minds; for this discourse upon blessedness has for its pole-star the testimony of the Lord, and only by daily communion with the Lord by his word can we hope to learn his way, to be purged from defilement, and to be made to walk in his statutes. We set out upon this exposition with blessedness before us; we see the way to it, and we know where the law of it is to be found: let us pray that as we pursue our meditation we may grow into the habit and walk of obedience, and so feel the blessedness of which we read.

2. "*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies.*" What! A second blessing? Yes, they are doubly blessed whose outward life is supported by an inward zeal for God's glory. In the first verse we had an undefiled way, and it was taken for granted that the purity in the way was not mere surface work, but was attended by the inward truth and life which comes of divine grace. Here that which was implied is expressed. Blessedness is ascribed to those who treasure up the testimonies of the Lord: in which is implied that they search the Scriptures, that they come to an understanding of them, that they love them, and then that they continue in the practice of them. We must first get a thing before we can keep it. In order to keep it well we must get a firm grip of it: we cannot keep in the heart that which we have not heartily embraced by the affections. God's word is his witness or testimony to

grand and important truths which concern himself and our relation to him: this we should desire to know; knowing it, we should believe it; believing it, we should love it; and loving it, we should hold it fast against all comers. There is a doctrinal keeping of the word when we are ready to die for its defence, and a practical keeping of it when we actually live under its power. Revealed truth is precious as diamonds, and should be kept or treasured up in the memory and in the heart as jewels in a casket, or as the law was kept in the ark; this however is not enough, for it is meant for practical use, and therefore it must be kept or followed, as men keep to a path, or to a line of business. If we keep God's testimonies they will keep us; they will keep us right in opinion, comfortable in spirit, holy in conversation, and hopeful in expectation. If they were ever worth having—and no thoughtful person will question that—then they are worth keeping; their designed effect does not come through a temporary seizure of them, but by a persevering keeping of them: "in keeping of them there is great reward."

We are bound to keep with all care the word of God, because it is *his* testimonies. He gave them to us, but they are still his own. We are to keep them as a watchman guards his master's house, as a steward husbands his lord's goods, as a shepherd keeps his employer's flock. We shall have to give an account, for we are put in trust with the gospel, and woe to us if we be found unfaithful. We cannot fight a good fight, nor finish our course, unless we keep the faith. To this end the Lord must keep us: only those who are kept by the power of God unto salvation will ever be able to keep his testimonies. What a blessedness is therefore evidenced and testified by a careful belief in God's word, and a continual obedience thereunto. God has blessed them, in blessing them, and will bless them for ever. That blessedness which David saw in others he realized for himself, for in verse 168 he says, "I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies," and in verses 54 to 56 he traces his joyful songs and happy memories to this same keeping of the law, and he confesses, "This I had because I kept thy precepts." Doctrines which we teach to others we should experience for ourselves.

"*And that seek him with the whole heart.*" Those who keep the Lord's testimonies are sure to seek after himself. If his word is precious we may be sure that he himself is still more so. Personal dealing with a personal God is the longing of all those who have allowed the word of the Lord to have its full effect upon them. If we once really know the power of the gospel we must seek the God of the gospel. "O that I knew where I might find HIM," will be our whole-hearted cry. See the growth which these sentences indicate: first, in the way, then walking in it, then finding and keeping the treasure of truth, and to crown all, seeking after the Lord of the way himself. Note also that the further a soul advances in grace the more spiritual and divine are its longings; an outward walk does not content the gracious soul, nor even the treasured testimonies; it reaches out in due time after God himself, and when it in a measure finds him, still yearns for more of him, and seeks him still.

Seeking after God signifies a desire to commune with him more closely, to follow him more fully, to enter into more perfect union with his mind and will, to promote his glory, and to realize completely all that he is to holy hearts. The blessed man has God already, and for this reason he seeks him. This may seem a contradiction: it is only a paradox.

God is not truly sought by the cold researches of the brain: we must seek him with the heart. Love reveals itself to love: God manifests his heart to the heart of his people. It is in vain that we endeavour to comprehend him by reason; we must apprehend him by affection. But the heart must not be divided with many objects if the Lord is to be sought by us. God is one, and we shall not know him till our heart is one. A broken heart need not be distressed at this, for no heart is so whole in its seekings after God as a heart which is broken, whereof every fragment sighs and cries after the great Father's face. It is the divided heart which the doctrine of the text censures, and strange to say, in scriptural phraseology, a heart may be divided and not broken, and it may be broken but not divided; and yet again it may be broken and be whole, and it never can be whole until it is broken. When our whole heart seeks the holy God in Christ Jesus it has come to him of whom it is written, "as many as touched him were made perfectly whole."

That which the Psalmist admires in this verse he claims in the tenth, where he says, "With my whole heart have I sought thee." It is well when admiration of a virtue leads to the attainment of it. Those who do not believe in the blessedness of seeking the Lord will not be likely to arouse their hearts to the pursuit, but he who

calls another blessed because of the grace which he sees in him is on the way to gaining the same grace for himself.

If those who *seek* the Lord are blessed, what shall be said of those who actually dwell with him and know that he is theirs?

"To those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek
But what to those who find? Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show!
The love of Jesus—what it is,
None but his loved ones know."

3. "*They also do no iniquity.*" Blessed indeed would those men be of whom this could be asserted without reserve and without explanation: we shall have reached the region of pure blessedness when we altogether cease from sin. Those who follow the word of God do no iniquity, the rule is perfect, and if it be constantly followed no fault will arise. Life, to the outward observer, at any rate, lies much in doing, and he who in his doings never swerves from equity, both towards God and man, has hit upon the way of perfection, and we may be sure that his heart is right. See how a whole heart leads to the avoidance of evil, for the Psalmist says, "That seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity." We fear that no man can claim to be absolutely without sin, and yet we trust there are many who do not designedly, wilfully, knowingly, and continuously do anything that is wicked, ungodly, or unjust. Grace keeps the life righteous as to act even when the Christian has to bemoan the transgressions of the heart. Judged as men should be judged by their fellows, according to such just rules as men make for men, the true people of God do no iniquity: they are honest, upright, and chaste, and touching justice and morality they are blameless. Therefore are they happy.

"*They walk in his ways.*" They attend not only to the great main highway of the law, but to the smaller paths of the particular precepts. As they will perpetrate no sin of commission, so do they labour to be free from every sin of omission. It is not enough to them to be blameless, they wish also to be actively righteous. A hermit may escape into solitude that he may do no iniquity, but a saint lives in society that he may serve his God by walking in his ways. We must be positively as well as negatively right: we shall not long keep the second unless we attend to the first, for men will be walking one way or another, and if they do not follow the path of God's law they will soon do iniquity. The surest way to abstain from evil is to be fully occupied in doing good. This verse describes believers as they exist among us: although they have their faults and infirmities, yet they hate evil, and will not permit themselves to do it; they love the ways of truth, right and true godliness, and habitually they walk therein. They do not claim to be absolutely perfect except in their desires, and there they are pure indeed, for they pant to be kept from all sin, and to be led into all holiness.

4. "*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*" So that when we have done all we are unprofitable servants, we have done only that which it was our duty to have done, seeing we have our Lord's command for it. God's precepts require *careful* obedience: there is no keeping them by accident. Some give to God a careless service, a sort of hit or miss obedience, but the Lord has not commanded such service, nor will he accept it. His law demands the love of all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and a careless religion has none of these. We are also called to *zealous* obedience. We are to keep the precepts abundantly: the vessels of obedience should be filled to the brim, and the command carried out to the full of its meaning. As a man diligent in business arouses himself to do as much trade as he can, so must we be eager to serve the Lord as much as possible. Nor must we spare pains to do so, for a diligent obedience will also be *laborious and self-denying.* Those who are diligent in business rise up early and sit up late, and deny themselves much of comfort and repose. They are not soon tired, or if they are they persevere even with aching brow and weary eyes. So should we serve the Lord. Such a Master deserves diligent servants; such service he demands, and will be content with nothing less. How seldom do men render it, and hence many through their negligence miss the double blessing spoken of in this Psalm.

Some are diligent in superstition and will worship; be it ours to be diligent in keeping God's precepts. It is no use travelling fast if we are not in the right road. Men have been diligent in a losing business, and the more they have traded the more

they have lost: this is bad enough in commerce, we cannot afford to have it so in our religion.

God has not commanded us to be diligent in *making* precepts, but in *keeping* them. Some bind yokes upon their own necks, and make bonds and rules for others: but the wise course is to be satisfied with the rules of holy Scripture, and to strive to keep them all, in all places, towards all men, and in all respects. If we do not this, we may become eminent in our own religion, but we shall not have kept the command of God, nor shall we be accepted of him.

The Psalmist began with the third person: he is now coming near home, and has already reached the first person plural, according to our version; we shall soon hear him crying out personally and for himself. As the heart glows with love to holiness, we long to have a personal interest in it. The word of God is a heart-affecting book, and when we begin to sing its praises it soon comes home to us, and sets us praying to be ourselves conformed to its teachings.

5. "*O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*" Divine commands should direct us in the subject of our prayers. We cannot of ourselves keep God's statutes as he would have them kept, and yet we long to do so: what resort have we but prayer? We must ask the Lord to work our works in us, or we shall never work out his commandments. This verse is a sigh of regret because the Psalmist feels that he has not kept the precepts diligently, it is a cry of weakness appealing for help to one who can aid, it is a request of bewilderment from one who has lost his way and would fain be directed in it, and it is a petition of faith from one who loves God and trusts in him for grace.

Our ways are by nature opposed to the way of God, and must be turned by the Lord's direction in another direction from that which they originally take or they will lead us down to destruction. God can direct the mind and will without violating our free agency, and he will do so in answer to prayer; in fact, he has begun the work already in those who are heartily praying after the fashion of this verse. It is for present holiness that the desire arises in the heart. O that it were so now with me: but future persevering holiness is also meant, for he longs for grace to keep henceforth and for ever the statutes of the Lord.

The sigh of the text is really a prayer, though it does not exactly take that form. Desires and longings are of the essence of supplication, and it little matters what shape they take. "O that" is as acceptable a prayer as "Our Father."

One would hardly have expected a prayer for direction; rather should we have looked for a petition for enabling. Can we not direct ourselves? What if we cannot row, we can steer. The Psalmist herein confesses that even for the smallest part of his duty he felt unable without grace. He longed for the Lord to influence his will, as well as to strengthen his hands. We want a rod to point out the way as much as a staff to support us in it.

The longing of the text is prompted by admiration of the blessedness of holiness, by a contemplation of the righteous man's beauty of character, and by a reverent awe of the command of God. It is a personal application to the writer's own case of the truths which he had been considering. "O that *my* ways," etc. It were well if all who hear and read the word would copy this example and turn all that they hear into prayer. We should have more keepers of the statutes if we had more who sighed and cried after the grace to do so.

6. "*Then shall I not be ashamed.*" He had known shame, and here he rejoices in the prospect of being freed from it. Sin brings shame, and when sin is gone, the reason for being ashamed is banished. What a deliverance this is, for to some men death is preferable to shame! "*When I have respect unto all thy commandments.*" When he respects God he shall respect himself and be respected. Whenever we err we prepare ourselves for confusion of face and sinking of heart: if no one else is ashamed of me I shall be ashamed of myself if I do iniquity. Our first parents never knew shame till they made the acquaintance of the old serpent, and it never left them till their gracious God had covered them with sacrificial skins. Disobedience made them naked and ashamed. We, ourselves, will always have cause for shame till every sin is vanquished, and every duty is observed. When we pay a continual and universal respect to the will of the Lord, then we shall be able to look ourselves in the face in the looking-glass of the law, and we shall not blush at the sight of men or devils, however eager their malice may be to lay somewhat to our charge.

Many suffer from excessive diffidence, and this verse suggests a cure. An abiding

sense of duty will make us bold, we shall be afraid to be afraid. No shame in the presence of man will hinder us when the fear of God has taken full possession of our minds. When we are on the king's highway by daylight, and are engaged upon royal business, we need ask no man's leave. It would be a dishonour to a king to be ashamed of his livery and his service; no such shame should ever crimson the cheek of a Christian, nor will it if he has due reverence for the Lord his God. There is nothing to be ashamed of in a holy life; a man may be ashamed of his pride, ashamed of his wealth, ashamed of his own children, but he will never be ashamed of having in all things regarded the will of the Lord his God.

It is worthy of remark that David promises himself no immunity from shame till he has carefully paid homage to all the precepts. Mind that word "*all*," and leave not one command out of your respect. Partial obedience still leaves us liable to be called to account for those commands which we have neglected. A man may have a thousand virtues, and yet a single failing may cover him with shame.

To a poor sinner who is buried in despair, it may seem a very unlikely thing that he should ever be delivered from shame. He blushes, and is confounded, and feels that he can never lift up his face again. Let him read these words: "Then shall I not be ashamed." David is not dreaming, nor picturing an impossible case. Be assured, dear friend, that the Holy Spirit can renew in you the image of God, so that you shall yet look up without fear. O for sanctification to direct us in God's way, for then shall we have boldness both towards God and his people, and shall no more crimson with confusion.

7. "*I will praise thee.*" From prayer to praise is never a long or a difficult journey. Be sure that he who prays for holiness will one day praise for happiness. Shame having vanished, silence is broken, and the formerly silent man declares, "I will praise thee." He cannot but promise praise while he seeks sanctification. Mark how well he knows upon what head to set the crown. "I will praise *thee*." He would himself be praiseworthy, but he counts God alone worthy of praise. By the sorrow and shame of sin he measures his obligations to the Lord who would teach him the art of living as that he should clean escape from his former misery.

"*With uprightness of heart,*" His heart would be upright if the Lord would teach him, and then it should praise its teacher. There is such a thing as false and feigned praise, and this the Lord abhors; but there is no music like that which comes from a pure soul which standeth in its integrity. Heart praise is required, uprightness in that heart, and teaching to make the heart upright. An upright heart is sure to bless the Lord, for grateful adoration is a part of its uprightness; no man can be right unless he is upright towards God, and this involves the rendering to him the praise which is his due.

"*When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*" We must learn to praise, learn that we may praise, and praise when we have learned. If we are ever to learn, the Lord must teach us, and especially upon such a subject as his judgments, for they are a great deep. While these are passing before our eyes, and we are learning from them, we ought to praise God, for the original is not, "when I have learned," but, "in my learning." While yet I am a scholar I will be a chorister: my upright heart shall praise thine uprightness, my purified judgment shall admire thy judgments. God's providence is a book full of teaching, and to those whose hearts are right it is a music book, out of which they chant to Jehovah's praise. God's word is full of the record of his righteous providences, and as we read it we feel compelled to burst forth into expressions of holy delight and ardent praise. When we both read of God's judgments and become joyful partakers in them, we are doubly moved to song—song in which there is neither formality, nor hypocrisy, nor lukewarmness, for the heart is upright in the presentation of its praise.

8. "*I will keep thy statutes.*" A calm resolve. When praise calms down into solid resolution it is well with the soul. Zeal which spends itself in singing, and leaves no practical residuum of holy living, is little worth: "I will praise" should be coupled with "I will keep." This firm resolve is by no means boastful, like Peter's "though I should die with thee, yet will I not forsake thee," for it is followed by a humble prayer for divine help, "*O forsake me not utterly.*" Feeling his own incapacity he trembles lest he should be left to himself, and this fear is increased by the horror which he has of falling into sin. The "I will keep" sounds rightly enough now that the humble cry is heard with it. This is a happy amalgam: resolution and dependence. We meet with those who to all appearance humbly pray, but there is no force of character, no decision in them, and consequently the pleading of the closet is not

embodied in the life: on the other hand, we meet with abundance of resolve attended with an entire absence of dependence upon God, and this makes as poor a character as the former. The Lord grant us to have such a blending of excellences that we may be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

This prayer is one which is certain to be heard, for assuredly it must be highly pleasing to God to see a man set upon obeying his will, and therefore it must be most agreeable to him to be present with such a person, and to help him in his endeavours. How can he forsake one who does not forsake his law?

The peculiar dread which tinges this prayer with a sombre hue is the fear of utter forsaking. Well may the soul cry out against such a calamity. To be left, that we may discover our weakness, is a sufficient trial: to be altogether forsaken would be ruin and death. Hiding the face in a little wrath for a moment brings us very low: an absolute desertion would land us ultimately in the lowest hell. But the Lord never has utterly forsaken his servants, and he never will, blessed be his name. If we long to keep his statutes he will keep us; yea, his grace will keep us keeping his law.

There is rather a descent from the mount of benediction with which the first verse began to the almost wail of this eighth verse, yet this is spiritually a growth, for from admiration of goodness we have come to a burning longing after God and communion with him, and an intense horror lest it should not be enjoyed. The sigh of verse 5 is now supplanted by an actual prayer from the depths of a heart conscious of its undesert, and its entire dependence upon divine love. The two "I wills" needed to be seasoned with some such lowly petition, or it might have been thought that the good man's dependence was in some degree fixed upon his own determination. He presents his resolutions like a sacrifice, but he cries to heaven for the fire.

NOTES ON THE VERSES.

The first eight verses commence with Aleph, and may be alphabetically rendered thus :—

1. All they that are undefiled in the way, walking in the law of the Lord, are blessed.
2. All they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart, are blessed.
3. Also they do no iniquity : they walk in his ways.
4. All thy precepts diligently to keep thou hast commanded us.
5. Ah, Lord ! that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes !
6. Ashamed I shall never be, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.
7. Always will I praise thee, with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
8. All thy statutes will I keep : O forsake me not utterly.

Pastor Theodore Kübler, of Islington, 1880.

Whole eight verses, 1—8.—Every line begins with Aleph, to which the Jews ascribe the meaning of *an ox*, that is, the beast of useful service, and thus of many blessings. Key of the section : " O the blessings."—*F. G. Marchant.*

Whole eight verses, 1—8.—These eight verses teach that true piety is sincere, consistent, practical, hearty, intelligent, earnest, active, stirring, diligent, humble, distrustful of itself, systematical, guileless, unspotted from the world, self-renouncing, confident in God, delighting in thankfulness, fully purposed to keep the law, and as ready to confess that without divine grace it can do nothing.

They also teach us how great is the sin of not believing God's word. As it is a law, the faithless refuse to walk by it ; as it is a testimony, they refuse to believe their Maker ; as it demands righteousness, they refuse to seek it ; as it gives precepts, they will not obey them ; as it ordains statutes, they rebel against them ; as it has excellent commandments, they stand out in opposition to them ; as it abounds with righteous judgments, they refuse to stand by them. They will not pray for grace ; they will not praise God for mercies received ; they do not feel their dependence or impotence, and they never look to the Father of lights from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.—*William S. Plumer*,—1880.

Verse 1.—" *Blessed.*" The Psalmist beginneth with a description of the way to true blessedness, as Christ began his Sermon on the Mount, and as the whole Book of Psalms is elsewhere begun. Blessedness is that which we all aim at, only we are either ignorant or reckless of the way that leadeth to it, therefore the holy Psalmist would first set us right as to the true notion of a blessed man : " *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the* LORD."—*Thomas Manton*, 1620—1677.

Verse 1.—" *Blessed.*" Here the Lord, who in the last day will pronounce some to be blessed and some to be cursed, doth now tell us who they are. What can comfort them to whom the Lord shall say, Depart from me, ye cursed ? Where away shall they go when the Lord shall command them to depart from him ? And what greater joy can come to a man, than to hear the Judge of all saying unto him, Come to me, ye blessed ? Oh that we were wise in time, to think of this, that so we might endeavour to become such men as God in his word hath blessed !—*William Cowper*, 1566—1619.

Verse 1.—The Scripture speaketh of blessedness two ways ; *casually*, in reference to that which is the cause whereby we get a right to this blessed estate ; and in this sense it is attributed to faith in Christ, to forgiveness of sin, and to justification of life which we obtain in Christ. Sometimes the Scripture speaketh *formally* of blessedness, in order to the actual execution of it ; and thus it pronounceth them blessed who are perfect in their course ; for this is a blessedness actually executed, and doth fit us to have the full execution and consummation of blessedness begun in us ; thus they are blessed who endure patiently, who are poor in spirit, who are merciful, who are peacemakers, etc. If I speak of a sick man, and say he is happy, for he hath met with a good physician ; here I pronounce him blessed because he hath found one who will restore him to health. If I say of the same man, he is a happy man, he can now digest very well what he eateth, he can sleep, and walk abroad ; I speak of him now as actually blessed with health of body.

The end of everything being the good of that thing, and the prosperity of everything being the end of it,—to attain in some latitude this perfection of action must

needs make a man actually blessed. Hence blessedness is ascribed to *walking* in God's way. If we have not the habit of doing anything, we do it with difficulty, we are ready to cease from doing it; as a horse will continually break out of the pace to which he is not perfectly broken. Thence it is that the saints find their estate miserable till they form the habit which maketh them with facility and constancy *walk* with God; there being no greater misery than to see themselves doing good duties uncheerfully, no sooner entering them than out again, and desisting from them. On the contrary, they count it of all things most blessed to have attained some degree of permanent habit in godliness. The blessedness which is here spoken of is the actual execution of that blessedness which comes to us by faith in Christ.—*Paul Bayne*, —1617.

Verse 1.—" *The undefiled.*" You ask, Why does God will that we be undefiled? I reply, because he has chosen us for himself, for servants, for spouses, for temples. These three privileges or names mean that all defilement must be shunned by us.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—" *Undefiled in the way.*" In the 1st Psalm it was " Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly"; but who could think to walk in that way, and not have his feet soiled? " Who could go upon hot coals and his feet be not burned?" Here, however, the caution is, to take heed not to get any soil or defilement " *in the way*,"—in the Lord's way. Oh! what an insight does this give us of the pit-falls and snares that beset us in the road, and of the plague and evil of our own hearts, that even in the midst of holy things, somewhat of stain, or spot, or wrinkle will stick to us!—*Barton Bouchier*, 1856.

Verse 1.—" *The undefiled in the way.*" How can our feet be undefiled? How can our garments be unsoiled? We cannot guide ourselves. Unaided, we stumble into sloughs of defilement. But all help is near. Jesus is at hand to keep us by his mighty power. Let us lean on his supporting arm at every step, and when we fall let us rise and wash our robes in his all-cleansing blood. So may we ever be among " *the undefiled in the way*"; and let the law of the Lord, lovely in purity, glorious in holiness, perfect in love, be the path in which our feet advance. Jesus is our model and our all. God's law was in his heart.—*Henry Law, in " Family Devotion,"* 1878.

Verse 1.—" *In the way.*" They are blessed who are in *the* way, not *a* way, any chance or uncertain road, but " the King's Highway"; that path which the Lord himself has declared to us, saying, " I am the way."—*Hilary and Theodoret, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—" *The way.*" There is much ado now about the way: many say, " Which is the way?" Some say, " This"; some, " That." Would you not mistake, inquire for " the old way, the way of holiness," and follow it, and thou shalt not perish. Some would go a new way; some a shorter, some an easier way. Do you go the holy way.—*John Sheffield* (*about* 1660), *in " The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 1.—" *Who walk.*" In this way there must be no standing, sitting, or reclining, but *walking*, so that all our movements may be regular, going on unto perfection: Matt. v. 48; 1 Cor. xiv. 20; James i. 4; Heb. vi. 1.—*Martin Geier*, 1614—1681.

Verse 1.—" *Who walk in the law of the* LORD." To go on with liberty in good duties is a point of blessed perfection. He is not truly able to *walk* who can only go twice or thrice about his chamber, or stir himself on some plain ground for a quarter of an hour; but he which can go strongly and freely up a hill in ways craggy and uneven: so Christians who can go while God maketh their way inoffensive, putting everything away which might hinder, but presently give over if ought disturbeth, they are not come to this free walking in which standeth a traveller's perfection. Look at those who are fat at heart, pursey (as we say), or have inward lameness, and ache of joints, or have caught a thorn from without, so that they are forced to lie by, and cannot walk; or those whose limbs are so feeble, that they cannot trip upon anything, but down they come;—all these lame folk do esteem other travellers to be happy who are able to exercise themselves in walking at will. Thus, when Christians find themselves hindered, and wearied, and stumbling, they deem others blessed who can go on constantly in their holy course, through good report and evil report, in want, in abundance, in every estate and condition. Wherefore, let us strive after this blessed walking.—*Paul Bayne.*

Verse 1.—" *Who walk in the law of the* LORD." Who walk towards heaven in heaven's way, avoiding the corruptions that are in the world through lust.—*John Trapp*, 1611—1662.

Verse 2.—The doubling of the sentence, "*Blessed*," "*Blessed*," in the first verse and second, is to let us see the certainty of the blessing belonging to the godly. The word of God is as true in itself when it is once spoken, as when it is many times repeated: the repetition of it is for confirmation of our weak faith. That which Isaac spake of Jacob,—" I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed," is the most sure decree of God upon all his children. Satan would fain curse Israel, by the mouth of such as Balaam was; but he shall not be able to curse, because God hath blessed.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 2.—" *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*" In the former verse a blessed man is described by the course of his actions, " Blessed are the undefiled in the way: " in this verse he is described by the frame of his heart.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 2.—" *Keep his testimonies.*" The careful keeping in mind of God's testimonies is blessedness; for though there is a keeping of them in conversation mentioned in the former verse, here another thing is intimated diverse from the former; he that keepeth this plant or holy seed so that the devil cannot take it out of his heart, he is happy. The word here used signifieth such a careful custody as that is wherewith we use to keep tender plants.—*Paul Bayne.*

Verse 2.—" *Testimonies.*" The notion by which the word of God is expressed is " *testimonies* "; whereby is intended the whole declaration of God's will, in doctrines, commands, examples, threatenings, promises. The whole word is the testimony which God hath deposed for the satisfaction of the world about the way of their salvation. Now because the word of God brancheth itself into two parts, the law and the gospel, this notion may be applied to both. First, *to the law*, in regard whereof the ark was called " the ark of testimony " (Exod. xxv. 16), because the two tables were laid up in it. *The gospel* is also called the testimony, " the testimony of God concerning his Son." " To the law, and to the testimony " (Isa. viii. 20); where testimony seems to be distinguished from the law. The gospel is so called, because therein God hath testified how a man shall be pardoned, reconciled to God, and obtain a right to eternal life. We need a testimony in this case, because it is more unknown to us. The law was written upon the heart, but the gospel is a stranger. Natural light will discern something of the law, and pry into matters which are of a moral strain and concernment; but evangelical truths are a mystery, and depend upon the mere testimony of God concerning his Son.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 2.—" *Testimonies.*" The word of God is called his testimony, not only because it testifies his will concerning his service, but also his favour and goodwill concerning his own in Christ Jesus. If God's word were no more than a law, yet were we bound to obey it, because we are his creatures; but since it is also a testimony of his love, wherein as a father he witnesseth his favour towards his children, we are doubly inexcusable if we do not most joyfully embrace it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 2.—" *Blessed are they . . . . that seek him with the whole heart.*" He pronounces " *blessed* " not such as are wise in their own conceit, or assume a sort of fantastical holiness, but those who dedicate themselves to the covenant of God, and yield obedience to the dictates of his law. Farther, by these words, he tells us that God is by no means satisfied with mere external service, for he demands the sincere and honest affection of the heart. And assuredly, if God be the sole Judge and Disposer of our life, the truth must occupy the principal place in our heart, because it is not sufficient to have our hands and feet only enlisted in his service.—*John Calvin*, 1509—1564.

Verse 2.—" *The whole heart.*" Whosoever would have sound happiness must have a sound heart. So much sincerity as there is, so much blessedness there will be; and according to the degree of our hypocrisy, will be the measure of our misery.—*Richard Greenham*, 1531—1591.

Verses 2, 3.—Observe the verbs *seek, do, walk*, all making up the subject to whom the blessedness belongs.—*Henry Hammond*, 1605—1660.

Verse 3.—" *They also do no iniquity.*" If it be demanded here, How is it that they who walk in God's ways work no iniquity? Is there any man who lives, and sins not? And if they be not without sin, how then are they to be blessed? The answer is, as the apostle says of our knowledge, " We know but in part: " so is it true of our felicity on earth, we are blessed but in a part. It is the happiness of angels that they never sinned; it is the happiness of triumphant saints, that albeit they have been sinners, yet now they sin no more; but the happiness of saints

militant is, that our sins are forgiven us; and that albeit sin remains in us, yet it reigns not over us; it is done in us, but not by our allowance: "I do the evil which I would not." "Not I, but sin that dwells in me," Rom. vii. 17.

To the *doing of iniquity*, these three things must concur; first, a purpose to do it; next, a delight in doing it; thirdly, a continuance in it; which three in God's children never concur; for in sins done in them by the old man, the new man makes his exceptions and protestations against them. It is not I, says he; and so far as he from delighting in them, that rather his soul is grieved with them; even as Lot, dwelling among the Sodomites, was vexed by hearing and seeing their unrighteous deeds. In a word, the children of God are rather sufferers of sin against their wills than actors of it with their wills; like men spiritually oppressed by the power of their enemy; for which they sigh and cry unto God. "Miserable man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And in this sense it is that the apostle saith, "He who is born of God sinneth not" (1 John iii. 9).—*William Cowper.*

Verse 3.—"*They also do no iniquity.*" The blessedness of those who walk in the law: they do—or have done—no wickedness: but walk—or have always walked—in his ways. Throughout the Psalm it may be noticed that sometimes the present tense is employed indicating present action: sometimes the perfect to indicate past and present time verses 10, 11, 13, 14, 21, 51—61, 101, 102, 131, 145, 147.—*The Speaker's Commentary*, 1873.

Verse 3.—"*They also do no iniquity.*" That is, they make not a trade and common practice thereof. Slip they do, through the infirmity of the flesh, and subtlety of Satan, and the allurements of the world: but they do not ordinarily and customably go forward in unlawful and sinful courses. In that the Psalmist setteth down this as a part (and not the least part neither) of blessedness, *that they work none iniquity, which walk in his ways:* the doctrine to be learned here is this, that it is a marvellous great prerogative to be freed from the bondage of sin.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 3.—"*They do no iniquity.*" All such as are renewed by grace, and reconciled to God by Christ Jesus; to these God imputeth no sin to condemnation, and in his account *they do no iniquity.* Notable is that which is said of David. "He kept my commandments, and followed me with all his heart, and did that only which was right in mine eyes" (1 Kings xiv. 8). How can that be? We may trace David by his failings, they are upon record everywhere in the word; yet here a veil is drawn upon them; God laid them not to his charge. There is a double reason why their failings are not laid to their charge. *Partly, because of their general state*, they are in Christ, taken into favour through him, and "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ" (Rom. viii. 1), therefore particular errors and escapes do not alter their condition; which is not to be understood as if a man should not be humbled, and ask God pardon for his infirmities; no, for then they prove iniquities and they will lie upon record against him. It was a gross fancy of the Valentinians, who held that they were not defiled with sin, whatsoever they committed; though base and obscene persons, yet still they were as gold in the dirt. No, no, we are to recover ourselves by repentance, to sue out the favour of God. When David humbled himself, and had repented, then, saith Nathan, "The Lord hath put away thy sin" (2 Sam. xii. 13). *Partly, too, because their bent and habitual inclination is to do otherwise.* They set themselves to comply with God's will, to seek and serve the Lord, though they are clogged with many infirmities. A wicked man sinneth with deliberation and delight, his bent is to do evil, he makes "provision for lusts" (Rom. xiii. 14), and "serves" them by a voluntary subjection (Titus iii. 3). But those that are renewed by grace are not "debtors" to the flesh, they have taken another debt and obligation, which is to serve the Lord (Rom. viii. 12).

Partly, too, because their general course and way is to do otherwise. Everything works according to its form; the constant actions of nature are according to the kind. So the new creature, his constant operations are according to grace. A man is known by his custom, and the course of his endeavours shows what is his business. If a man be constantly, easily, frequently carried away to sin, it discovers the habit of his soul, and the temper of his heart. Meadows may be overflowed, but marsh ground is drowned with every return of the tide. A child of God may be occasionally carried away, and act contrary to the inclination of the new nature; but when men are drowned and overcome by the return of every temptation, it argues a habit of sin.

And partly, because sin never carries sway completely, but it is opposed by dislikes and resistances of the new nature. The children of God make it their business to

avoid all sin, by watching, praying, mortifying: "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue" (Ps. xxxix. 1), and thus there is a resistance of the sin. God hath planted graces in their hearts, the fear of his Majesty, that works a resistance; and therefore there is not a full allowance of what they do. This resistance sometimes is more strong, then the temptation is overcome: "How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9). Sometimes it is more weak, and then sin carries it, though against the will of the holy man: "The evil which I hate, that do I" (Rom. vii. 15, 18). It is the evil which they hate; they protest against it; they are like men which are oppressed by the power of the enemy. And then there is a remorse after the sin: David's heart smote him. It grieves and shames them that they do evil. Tenderness goes with the new nature: Peter sinned foully, but he went out and wept bitterly.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 3.—They that have mortified their sins live in the contrary graces. Hence it is that the Psalmist said, that "*they work no iniquity, but walk in thy paths.*" First they crucify all their sins, "*they do no iniquity*:" secondly, as they do no iniquity, so they follow all the ways of God, contrary to that iniquity: as they *give up all* the ways of sin, so they *take up all* the ways of grace. It is a rule in divinity, that *grace takes not away nature;* that is, grace comes not to take away a man's affections, but to take them up.—*William Fenner,* 1600—1640.

Verse 3.—"*They walk in his ways.*" It reproves those that rest in negatives. As it was said of a certain emperor, he was rather *not vicious* than virtuous. Many men, all their religion runs upon *nots:* "I am *not* as this publican" (Luke xviii. 11). That ground is naught, though it brings not forth briars and thorns, if it yields not good increase. Not only the unruly servant is cast into hell, that beat his fellow-servant, that ate and drank with the drunken; but the idle servant that wrapped up his talent in a napkin. Meroz is cursed, not for opposing and fighting, but for not helping (Judges v. 23). Dives did not take away food from Lazarus, but he did not give him of his crumbs. Many will say, I set up no other gods; ay, but dost thou love, reverence, and obey the true God? For if not, thou dost fail in the first commandment. As to the second, thou sayest, I abhor idols; but dost thou delight in ordinances? I do not swear and rend the name of God by cursed oaths; ay, but dost thou glorify God, and honour him? I do not profane the Sabbath; but dost thou sanctify it? Thou dost not plough and dance; but thou art idle, and toyest away the Sabbath. Thou dost not wrong thy parents; but dost thou reverence them? Thou dost not murder; but dost thou do good to thy neighbour? Thou art no adulterer; but dost thou study temperance and a holy sobriety in all things? Thou art no slanderer; but art thou tender of thy neighbour's honour and credit, as of thy own? Usually men cut off half their bill, as the unjust steward bade his lord's debtor set down fifty when he owed a hundred. We do not think of sins of omission. If we are not drunkards, adulterers, and profane persons, we do not think what it is to omit respect to God, and reverence for his holy Majesty.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 3.—"*They walk in* his *ways.*" Not in those of his enemies, nor even in their own.—*Joseph Addison Alexander,*—1860.

Verse 3.—"*They walk in* his *ways.*" Habitually, constantly, characteristically. They are not *merely* honest, upright, and just in their dealings with men; but they walk in the ways of God; they are *religious.*—*Albert Barnes,* 1798—1870.

Verse 4.—"*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*" It is not a matter ἀδιάφορος, and left to the discretion of men, either to hear, or to neglect sacred discourses, theological readings, and expositions of the Sacred Book; but God has commanded, and not commanded cursorily when speaking of another matter, but פקד, earnestly and greatly he has commanded us to keep his precepts. There should be infixed in our mind the words found in Deut. vi. 6, "*My words shall be in thy heart;*" in Matt. xvii., "*Hear ye him:*" in John v., "*Search the Scriptures.*" Above all things, students of theology should remember the Pauline rule in 1 Tim. iii., "*Give attention to reading.*"—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou hast commanded us,*" etc. Hath God enjoined us to observe his precepts so exceeding carefully and diligently? Then let nothing draw us therefrom, no, not in the least circumstance; let us esteem nothing needless, frivolous, or superfluous, that we have a warrant for out of his word; nor count those too wise or precise that will stand resolutely upon the same: if the Lord require anything, though the world should gainsay it, and we be derided and abused

for the doing of it, yet let us proceed still in the course of our obedience.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 4.—"*Diligently.*" For three causes should we keep the commandments of the Lord with diligence: first, because our adversary that seeks to snare us by the transgression of them is diligent in tempting, for he goes about, night and day, seeking to devour us; next, because we ourselves are weak and infirm, by the greater diligence have we need to take heed to ourselves; thirdly, because of the great loss we sustain by every vantage Satan gets over us; for we find by experience, that as a wound is sooner made than it is healed, so guiltiness of conscience is easily contracted, but not so easily done away.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 4.—"*Diligently.*" In this verse he reminds the reader how well he knew that this study of the divine law must necessarily be severe (earnest), since God has commanded that it should be observed diligently; that is, with the profoundest study; as that which alone is good, and as everything is good which it commands.—*Antonio Brucioli*, 1534.

Verse 4.—The word translated "*diligently*," doth signify in the original tongue *wonderful much*, so that the words go thus: "*Thou hast commanded to keep thy precepts wonderful much.*"—*Richard Greenham.*

Verses 4, 5.—"*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently*," verse 4; this is God's imperative. "*O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*" verse 5; this should be our optative.—*Thomas Adams*, 1614.

Verses 4, 5.—It is very observable concerning David, that when he prayeth so earnestly, "*O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes*," he premiseth this as the reason, "*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy statutes diligently*," thereby intimating that the ground of his obedience to God's precepts was the stamp of divine authority enjoining him. To this purpose it is that he saith in this same Psalm, ver. 94, "*I have sought thy precepts*," thereby implying that what he sought in his obedience was the fulfilling of God's will. Indeed, that only and properly is obedience which is done *intuitu voluntatis divinæ*, with a respect to and eye upon the divine will. As that is only a divine faith which believeth a truth, not because of human reason, but divine revelation, so that only is a true obedience which conformeth to the command, not because it may consist with any selfish ends, but because it carrieth in it an impression of Christ's authority.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 5.—In tracing the connection of this verse with the preceding, we cannot forbear to remark how accurately the middle path is preserved, as keeping us at an equal distance from the idea of self-sufficiency to "*keep the Lord's statutes*," and self-justification in neglecting them. The first attempt to render spiritual obedience will quickly convince us of our utter helplessness. We might as soon create a world as create in our hearts one pulse of spiritual life. And yet our inability does not cancel our obligation. It is the weakness of a heart that "cannot be subject to the law of God," for no other reason than because it is "carnal," and therefore "enmity against God." Our inability is our sin, our guilt, our condemnation, and instead of excusing our condition, stops our mouth, and leaves us destitute of any plea of defence before God. Thus our obligation remains in full force. We are bound to obey the commands of God, whether we can or not. What, then, remains for us, but to return the mandate to heaven, accompanied with an earnest prayer, that the Lord would write upon our hearts those statutes to which he requires obedience in his word? "*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy statutes diligently.*" We acknowledge, Lord, our obligation, but we feel our impotency. Lord, help us; we look unto thee. "*O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.*"—*Charles Bridges*, 1849.

Verse 5.—"*O that*," etc. In the former verse the prophet David observes the charge which God gives, and that is, that his commandments be diligently kept: here, then, he observes his own weakness and insufficiency to discharge that great duty, and therefore, as one by the spirit desirous to discharge it, and yet by the flesh not able to discharge it, he breaketh out into these words, "*O that my ways were directed*," etc. Much like unto a child that being commanded to take up some great weight from the ground, is willing to do it, though not able to do it: or a sick patient advised to walk many turns in his chamber, finds a desire in his heart, though inability in his body to do that which he is directed unto.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 5.—"*O that my ways*," etc. It is the use and duty of the people of God

to turn precepts into prayers. That this is the practice of God's children appeareth: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God" (Jer. xxxi. 18). God had said, "Turn you, and you shall live," and they ask it of God, "Turn us," as he required it of them. It was Austin's prayer, *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis*, "Give what thou requirest, and require what thou wilt." It is the duty of the saints; for, 1st, *It suiteth with the Gospel-covenant*, where precepts and promises go hand in hand; where God giveth what he commandeth, and worketh all our works in us and for us. They are not conditions of the covenant only, but a part of it. What God hath required at our hands, that we may desire at his hands. God is no Pharaoh, to require brick where he giveth no straw. *Lex jubet, gracia juvat.* The articles of the new covenant are not only put into the form of precepts, but promises. The law giveth no strength to perform anything, but the Gospel offereth grace. 2ndly, Because, *by this means, the ends of God are fulfilled.* Why doth God require what we cannot perform by our own strength? He doth it, (1.) To keep up his right. (2.) To convince us of our impotency, and that, upon a trial, without his grace we cannot do his work. (3.) That the creature may express his readiness to obey. (4.) To bring us to lie at his feet for grace.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 5.—"*O that,*" etc. The whole life of a good Christian is *an holy desire*, saith Augustine; and this is always seconded with endeavour without the which, affection is like Rachel, beautiful, but barren.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—"*O that my ways were directed,*" etc. The original word כּן, *kun*, is sometimes rendered to *establish*, and, accordingly, it may seem as if the prophet were soliciting for himself the virtue of perseverence. I am rather inclined to understand it as signifying *to direct;* for, although God is plainly instructing us in his law, the obtuseness of our understanding and the perversity of our hearts constantly need the direction of his Spirit.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 6.—"*Then shall I not be ashamed.*" No one likes *to be ashamed* or *to blush:* therefore all things which bring shame after them must be avoided: Ezra ix. 6; Jer. iii. 25; Dan. ix. 7, 9. As the workman keeps his eye fixed on his pattern, and the scholar on the copy of his writing-master; so the godly man ever and anon turns his eyes to the word of his God.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 6.—There is a twofold shame; the shame of a guilty conscience; and the shame of a tender conscience. The one is the merit and fruit of sin; the other is an act of grace. This which is here spoken of is to be understood not of a holy self-loathing, but a confounding shame.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 6.—"*Then shall I not be ashamed,*" etc. Then shall I have confidence both towards God and man, and mine own soul, when I can pronounce of myself that my obedience is impartial, and uniform, and universal, no secret sin reserved for my favour, no least commandment knowingly or willingly neglected by me.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 6.—"*Then shall I not be ashamed,*" etc. You ask, Why is he not ashamed who has "*respect unto all the commandments of God?*" I answer, the sense is, as if he had said, The commandments of God are so pure and excellent, that though thou shouldest regard the whole and each one of them most attentively, thou wouldest not find anything that would cause thee to blush. The laws of Lycurgus are praised; but they permitted theft. The statutes of Plato are praised; but they commended the community of wives. "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul:* Ps. xix. 7. It is a mirror, reflecting the beautiful light of the stars on him who looks into it.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 6.—The blessing here spoken of is freedom from shame in looking unto *all* the commandments. If God hear prayer, and establish the soul in this habit of keeping the commandments, there will be yet this further blessing of being able to look unto every precept without shame. Many men can look at *some* commandments without shame. Turning to the ten commandments, the honest man feels no shame as he gazes on the eighth, the pure man is free from reproach as he reads the seventh, he who is reverent and hates blasphemy is not rebuked by the thought that he has violated the third, while the filial spirit rather delights in than shuns the fifth. So on with the remainder. Most men perhaps can look at some of the precepts with comparative freedom from reproof. But who can so look unto them all? Yet this, also, the godly heart aspires to. In this verse we find the Psalmist consciously anticipating the truth of a word in the New Testament: "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all."—*Frederick G. Marchant.*

Verse 6.—"*Ashamed.*"

I can bear scorpion's stings, tread fields of fire,
In frozen gulfs of cold eternal lie;
Be toss'd aloft through tracts of endless void.
But cannot live in shame.

Joanna Baillie, 1762—1851.

Verse 6.—"*When I have respect unto all thy commandments.*" Literally, "In my looking at all thy commandments." That is, in his regarding them; in his feeling that all were equally binding on him; and in his having the consciousness that he had not intentionally neglected, violated, or disregarded any of them. There can be no true piety except where a man *intends* to keep ALL the commands of God. If he makes a selection among them, keeping this one or that one, as may be most convenient for him, or as may be most for his interest, or as may be most popular, it is full proof that he knows nothing of the nature of true religion. A child has no proper respect for a parent if he obeys him only as shall suit his whim or his convenience; and no man *can* be a pious man who does not purpose, in all honesty, to keep ALL the commandments of God; to submit to his will *in everything.*—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6.—"*All thy commandments.*" There is the same reason for obedience to one command as another,—God's authority, who is the Lawgiver (James ii. 11); and therefore when men choose one duty and overlook others, they do not so much obey the will of God, as gratify their own humours and fancies, pleasing him only so far as they can please themselves too; and this is not reasonable; we never yield him a "reasonable service," but when it is universal.—*Edward Veal* (1632—1708), *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 6.—"*All thy commandments.*" A partial obedience will never satisfy a child of God. The exclusion of any commandment from its supreme regard in the heart is the brand of hypocrisy. Even Herod could "do many things," and yet one evil way cherished, and therefore unforsaken, was sufficient to show the sovereign power of sin undisturbed within. Saul slew all the Amalekites but one; and that single exception in the path of universal obedience marked the unsoundness of his profession, cost him the loss of his throne, and brought him under the awful displeasure of his God. And thus the foot, or the hand, or the right eye, the corrupt unmortified members, bring the whole body to hell. Reserves are the canker of Christian sincerity.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 6.—"*Unto all thy commandments.*" *Allow* that *any* of God's commandments *may* be transgressed, and we shall soon have the whole decalogue set aside.—*Adam Clarke*, 1760—1832.

Verse 6.—Many will do some good, but are defective in other things and usually in those which are most necessary. They cull out the easiest and cheapest parts of religion, such as do not contradict their lusts and interests. We can never have sound peace till we regard all. "*Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.*" Shame is fear of a just reproof. This reproof is either from the supreme or the deputy judge. The supreme judge of all our actions is God. This should be our principal care, that we may not be ashamed before him at his coming, nor disapproved in the judgment. But there is a deputy judge which every man has in his own bosom. Our consciences do acquit or condemn us as we are partial or sincere in our duty to God, and much dependeth on that. 1 John iii. 20, 21, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." Well, then, that our hearts may not reprove or reproach us, we should be complete in all the will of God. Alas, otherwise you will never have evidence of your sincerity.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 6.—Such is the mercy of God in Christ to his children, that he accepts their weak endeavours, joined with sincerity and perseverance in his service, as if they were a full obedience. . . . O, who would not serve such a Lord? You hear servants sometimes complain of their masters as so rigid and strict, that they can never please them; no, not when they do their utmost; but this cannot be charged upon God. Be but so faithful as to do thy best, and God is so gracious that he will pardon thy worst. David knew this gospel indulgence when he said, "*Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments,*" when my eye is to all thy commandments. The traveller hath his eye on or towards the place he is going to, though he be as yet short of it; there he would be, and he is putting on all he

can to reach it; so stands the saint's heart to all the commands of God; he presseth on to come nearer and nearer to full obedience; such a soul shall never be put to shame.—*William Gurnall*, 1617—1679.

Verse 7.—"*I will praise thee . . . . when I shall have learned*," etc. There is no way to please God entirely and sincerely until we have learned both to know and do his will. Practical praise is the praise God looks after.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 7.—"*I will praise thee.*" What is the matter for which he praises God? It is that he has been taught something of him and by him amongst men. To have learned any tongue, or science, from some school of philosophy, bindeth us to our alma mater. We praise those who can teach a dog, a horse, this or that; but for us ass-colts to learn the will of God, how to walk pleasing before him, this should be acknowledged of us as a great mercy from God.—*Paul Bayne.*

Verse 7.—"*Praise thee . . . when I shall have learned*," etc. But when doth David say that he will be thankful? Even when God shall teach him. Both the matter and the grace of thankfulness are from God. As he did with Abraham, he commanded him to worship by sacrifice, and at the same time gave him the sacrifice: so doth he with all his children; for he gives not only good things, for which they should thank him, but in like manner grace by which they are able to thank him.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 7.—"*When I shall have learned.*" By learning he means his attaining not only to the knowledge of the word, but the practice of it. It is not a speculative light, or a bare notion of things: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John vi. 45). It is such a learning as the effect will necessarily follow, such a light and illumination as doth convert the soul, and frame our hearts and ways according to the will of God. For otherwise, if we get understanding of the word, nay, if we get it imprinted in our memories, it will do us no good without practice. The best of God's servants are but scholars and students in the knowledge and obedience of his word. For saith David, "*When I shall have learned.*" The professors of the Christian religion were primitively called disciples or learners: Τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν, "the multitude of the disciples" (Acts vi. 2.)—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 7.—"*Learned thy righteous judgments.*" We see here what David especially desired to learn, namely, the word and will of God: he would ever be a scholar in this school, and sought daily to ascend to the highest form; that learning to know, he might remember; remembering, might believe; believing, might delight; delighting, might admire; admiring, might adore; adoring, might practise; and practising, might continue in the way of God's statutes. This learning is the old and true learning indeed, and he is best learned in this art, who turneth God's word into good works.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 7.—"*Judgments of thy righteousness*" are the decisions concerning right and wrong which give expression to and put in execution the righteousness of God.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 8.—This verse, being the last of this portion, is the result of his meditation concerning the utility and necessity of the keeping the law of God. Here take notice:—1. Of his resolution, "*I will keep thy statutes.*" II. Of his prayer, "*O forsake me not utterly.*" It is his purpose to keep the law; yet because he is conscious to himself of many infirmities, he prays against desertion. In the prayer more is intended than is expressed. "*O forsake me not;*" he means, strengthen me in this work; and if thou shouldst desert me, yet but for a while, Lord, not for ever; if in part, not in whole, Four points we may observe hence:—1. That it is a great advantage to come to a resolution as to a course of godliness. 2. Those that resolve upon a course of obedience have need to fly to God's help. 3. Though we fly to God's help, yet sometimes God may withdraw, and seem to forsake us. 4. Though God seem to forsake us, and really doth so in part; yet we should pray that it may not be a total and utter desertion.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 8 *with* 7.—"*I will keep thy statutes*," etc. The resolution to "*keep the Lord's statutes*" is the natural result of having "*learned his righteous judgments.*" And on this point David illustrates the inseparable and happy union of "simplicity" of dependence, and "godly sincerity" of obedience. Instantly upon forming his resolution, he recollects that the performance of it is beyond the power of human

strength, and therefore the next moment he follows it with prayer: "*I will keep thy statutes; O forsake me not utterly.*"—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 8.—"*I will.*" David setteth a personal example of holiness. If the king of Israel keep God's statutes, the people of Israel will be ashamed to neglect them. Cæsar was wont to say, Princes must not say, *Ite*, go ye, without me; but, *Venite*, come ye, along with me. So said Gideon (Jud. v. 17): "As ye see me do, so do ye."—*R. Greenham.*

Verse 8.—"*Forsake me not utterly.*" There is a total and a partial desertion. Those who are bent to obey God may for a while, and in some degree, be left to themselves. We cannot promise ourselves an utter immunity from desertion; but it is not total. We shall find for his great name's sake, "The Lord will not forsake his people" (1 Sam. xii. 22), and, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. xiii. 5). Not utterly, yet in part they may be forsaken. Elijah was forsaken, but not as Ahab: Peter was forsaken in part, but not as Judas, who was utterly forsaken, and made a prey to the Devil. David was forsaken to be humbled and bettered; but Saul was forsaken utterly to be destroyed. Saith Theophylact, God may forsake his people so as to shut out their prayers (Ps. lxxx. 4), so as to interrupt the peace and joy of their heart, and abate their strength, so that their spiritual life may be much at a stand, and sin may break out, and they may fall foully; but they are not *utterly* forsaken. One way or other, God is still present; present in light sometimes when he is not present in strength, when he manifests the evil of their present condition, so as to make them mourn under it; and present in awakening their desires, though not in giving them enjoyment. As long as there is any esteem of God, he is not yet gone; there is some light and love yet left, manifested by our desires of communion with him.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 8.—"*Forsake me not utterly.*" The desertions of God's elect are first of all *partial*, that is, such as wherein God doth not wholly forsake them, but in some part. Secondly, *temporary*, that is, for some space of time, and never beyond the compass of this present life. "For a moment (saith the Lord in Esay) in mine anger I hid my face from thee for a little season, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." And to this purpose David, well acquainted with this matter, prayeth, "*Forsake me not overlong.*" This sort of desertions, though it be but for a time, yet no part of a Christian man's life is free from them; and very often taking deep place in the heart of man, they are of long continuance. David continued in his dangerous fall about the space of a whole year before he was recovered. Luther confesseth of himself, that, after his conversion, he lay three years in desperation. Common observation in such like cases hath made record of even longer times of spiritual forsakings.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 8.—"*O forsake me not utterly.*" This prayer reads like the startled cry of one who was half afraid that he had been presumptuous in expressing the foregoing resolve. He desired to keep the divine statutes, and like Peter he vowed that he would do so; but remembering his own weakness, he recoils from his own venturesomeness, and feels that he must pray. I have made a solemn vow, but what if I have uttered it in my own strength? What if God should leave me to myself? He is filled with terror at the thought. He breaks out with an "O." He implores and beseeches the Lord not to test him by leaving him even for an instant entirely to himself. To be forsaken of God is the worst ill that the most melancholy saint ever dreams of. Thank God, it will never fall to our lot; for no promise can be more express than that which saith, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This promise does not prevent our praying, but excites us to it. Because God will not forsake his own, therefore do we cry to him in the agony of our feebleness, "O forsake me not utterly."—*C. H. S.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 9 TO 16.

WHEREWITHAL shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

12 Blessed *art* thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as *much as* in all riches.

15 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

9. "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*" How shall he become and remain practically holy? He is but a young man, full of hot passions, and poor in knowledge and experience; how shall he get right, and keep right? Never was there a more important question for any man; never was there a fitter time for asking it than at the commencement of life. It is by no means an easy task which the prudent man sets before him. He wishes to choose a clean way, to be himself clean in it, to cleanse it of any foulness which may arise in the future, and to end by showing a clear course from the first step to the last; but, alas, his way is already unclean by actual sin which he has already committed, and he himself has within his nature a tendency towards that which defileth. Here, then, is the difficulty, first of beginning aright, next of being always able to know and choose the right, and of continuing in the right till perfection is ultimately reached: this is hard for any man, how shall a youth accomplish it? The way, or life, of the man has to be cleansed from the sins of his youth behind him, and kept clear of the sins which temptation will place before him: this is the work, this is the difficulty.

No nobler ambition can lie before a youth, none to which he is called by so sure a calling; but none in which greater difficulties can be found. Let him not, however, shrink from the glorious enterprise of living a pure and gracious life; rather let him enquire the way by which all obstacles may be overcome. Let him not think that he knows the road to easy victory, nor dream that he can keep himself by his own wisdom; he will do well to follow the Psalmist, and become an earnest enquirer asking how he may cleanse his way. Let him become a practical disciple of the holy God, who alone can teach him how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, that trinity of defilers by whom many a hopeful life has been spoiled. He is young and unaccustomed to the road, let him not be ashamed often to enquire his way of him who is so ready and so able to instruct him in it.

Our "*way*" is a subject which concerns us deeply, and it is far better to enquire about it than to speculate upon mysterious themes which rather puzzle than enlighten the mind. Among all the questions which a young man asks, and they are many, let this be the first and chief: "Wherewithal shall I cleanse my way?" This is a question suggested by common sense, and pressed home by daily occurrences; but it is not to be answered by unaided reason, nor, when answered, can the directions be carried out by unsupported human power. It is ours to ask the question, it is God's to give the answer and enable us to carry it out.

"*By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*" Young man, the Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life, as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most accurate map he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it. The narrow way was never hit upon by chance, neither did any heedless man ever lead a holy life. We can sin without thought, we have only to neglect the great salvation and ruin our souls; but to obey the Lord and walk uprightly will need all our heart and soul and mind. Let the careless remember this.

Yet the "*word*" is absolutely necessary; for, otherwise, care will darken into morbid anxiety, and conscientiousness may become superstition. A captain may watch from his deck all night; but if he knows nothing of the coast, and has no

pilot on board, he may be carefully hastening on to shipwreck. It is not enough to desire to be right; for ignorance may make us think that we are doing God service when we are provoking him, and the fact of our ignorance will not reverse the character of our action, however much it may mitigate its criminality. Should a man carefully measure out what he believes to be a dose of useful medicine, he will die if it should turn out that he has taken up the wrong vial, and has poured out a deadly poison: the fact that he did it ignorantly will not alter the result. Even so, a young man may surround himself with ten thousand ills, by carefully using an unenlightened judgment, and refusing to receive instruction from the word of God. Wilful ignorance is in itself wilful sin, and the evil which comes of it is without excuse. Let each man, whether young or old, who desires to be holy have a holy watchfulness in his heart, and keep his Holy Bible before his open eye. There he will find every turn of the road marked down, every slough and miry place pointed out, with the way to go through unsoiled; and there, too, he will find light for his darkness, comfort for his weariness, and company for his loneliness, so that by its help he shall reach the benediction of the first verse of the Psalm, which suggested the Psalmist's enquiry, and awakened his desires.

Note how the first section of eight verses has for its first verse, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way," and the second section runs parallel to it, with the question "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" The blessedness which is set before us in a conditional promise should be practically sought for in the way appointed. The Lord saith, "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

10. "*With my whole heart have I sought thee.*" His heart had gone after God himself: he had not only desired to obey his laws, but to commune with his person. This is a right royal search and pursuit, and well may it be followed with the whole heart. The surest mode of cleansing the way of our life is to seek after God himself, and to endeavour to abide in fellowship with him. Up to the good hour in which he was speaking to his Lord, the Psalmist had been an eager seeker after the Lord, and if faint, he was still pursuing. Had he not sought the Lord he would never have been so anxious to cleanse his way.

It is pleasant to see how the writer's heart turns distinctly and directly to God. He had been considering an important truth in the preceding verse, but here he so powerfully feels the presence of his God that he speaks to him, and prays to him as to one who is near. A true heart cannot long live without fellowship with God.

His petition is founded on his life's purpose: he is seeking the Lord, and he prays the Lord to prevent his going astray in or from his search. It is by obedience that we follow after God, hence the prayer, "*O let me not wander from thy commandments;*" for if we leave the ways of God's appointment we certainly shall not find the God who appointed them. The more a man's whole heart is set upon holiness the more does he dread falling into sin; he is not so much fearful of deliberate transgression as of inadvertent wandering: he cannot endure a wandering look, or a rambling thought, which might stray beyond the pale of the precept. We are to be such whole-hearted seekers that we have neither time nor will to be wanderers, and yet with all our whole-heartedness we are to cultivate a jealous fear lest even then we should wander from the path of holiness.

Two things may be very like and yet altogether different: saints are "strangers"—"I am a stranger in the earth" (verse 19), but they are not wanderers: they are passing through an enemy's country, but their route is direct; they are seeking their Lord while they traverse this foreign land. Their way is hidden from men; but yet they have not lost their way.

The man of God exerts himself, but does not trust himself: his heart is in his walking with God; but he knows that even his whole strength is not enough to keep him right unless his King shall be his keeper, and he who made the commands shall make him constant in obeying them: hence the prayer, "*O let me not wander.*" Still, this sense of need, was never turned into an argument for idleness; for while he prayed to be kept in the right road he took care to run in it, with his whole heart seeking the Lord.

It is curious again to note how the second part of the Psalm keeps step with the first; for where verse 2 pronounces that man to be blessed who seeks the Lord with his whole heart, the present verse claims the blessing by pleading the character: "*With my whole heart have I sought thee.*"

11. When a godly man sues for a favour from God he should carefully use every

means for obtaining it, and accordingly, as the Psalmist had asked to be preserved from wandering, he here shows us the holy precaution which he had taken to prevent his falling into sin. "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*" His heart would be kept by the word because he kept the word in his heart. All that he had of the word written, and all that had been revealed to him by the voice of God,—all, without exception, he had stored away in his affections, as a treasure to be preserved in a casket, or as a choice seed to be buried in a fruitful soil: what soil more fruitful than a renewed heart, wholly seeking the Lord? The word was God's own, and therefore precious to God's servant. He did not wear a text *on* his heart as a charm, but he hid it *in* his heart as a rule. He laid it up in the place of love and life, and it filled the chamber with sweetness and light. We must in this imitate David, copying his heart-work as well as his outward character. First, we must mind that what we believe is truly God's word; that being done, we must hide or treasure it each man for himself; and we must see that this is done, not as a mere feat of the memory, but as the joyful act of the affections.

"*That I might not sin against thee.*" Here was the object aimed at. As one has well said,—Here is the best thing,—"thy word;" hidden in the best place,—"in my heart;" for the best of purposes,—"that I might not sin against thee." This was done by the Psalmist with personal care, as a man carefully hides away his money when he fears thieves,—in this case the thief dreaded was sin. Sinning "against God" is the believer's view of moral evil; other men care only when they offend against men. God's word is the best preventive against offending God, for it tells us his mind and will, and tends to bring our spirit into conformity with the divine Spirit. No cure for sin in the life is equal to the word in the seat of life, which is the heart. There is no hiding from sin unless we hide the truth in our souls.

A very pleasant variety of meaning is obtained by laying stress upon the words "thy" and "thee." He speaks to *God*, he loves the word because it is *God's* word, and he hates sin because it is sin against *God* himself. If he vexed others, he minded not so long as he did not offend his God. If we would not cause God displeasure we must treasure up his own word.

The personal way in which the man of God did this is also noteworthy: "With my whole heart have *I* sought thee." Whatever others might choose to do he had already made his choice and placed the Word in his innermost soul as his dearest delight, and however others might transgress, his aim was after holiness: "That *I* might not sin against thee." This was not what he purposed to do, but what he had already done; many are great at promising, but the Psalmist had been true in performing: hence he hoped to see a sure result. When the word is hidden in the heart the life shall be hidden from sin.

The parallelism between the second octave and the first is still continued. Verse 3 speaks of doing no iniquity, while this verse treats of the method of not sinning. When we form an idea of a blessedly holy man (verse 3) it becomes us to make an earnest effort to attain unto the same sacred innocence and divine happiness, and this can only be through heart-piety founded on the Scriptures.

12. "*Blessed art thou, O Lord.*" These are words of adoration arising out of an intense admiration of the divine character, which the writer is humbly aiming to imitate. He blesses God for all that he has revealed to him, and wrought in him; he praises him with warmth of reverent love, and depth of holy wonder. These are also words of perception uttered from a remembrance of the great Jehovah's infinite happiness within himself. The Lord is and must be blessed, for he is the perfection of holiness; and this is probably the reason why this is used as a plea in this place. It is as if David had said—I see that in conformity to thyself my way to happiness must lie, for thou art supremely blessed; and if I am made in my measure like to thee in holiness, I shall also partake in thy blessedness.

No sooner is the word in the heart than a desire arises to mark and learn it. When food is eaten, the next thing is to digest it; and when the word is received into the soul the first prayer is—Lord, teach me its meaning. "*Teach me thy statutes*"; for thus only can I learn the way to be blessed. Thou art so blessed that I am sure thou wilt delight in blessing others, and this boon I crave of thee that I may be instructed in thy commands. Happy men usually rejoice to make others happy, and surely the happy God will willingly impart the holiness which is the fountain of happiness. Faith prompted this prayer and based it, not upon anything in the praying man, but solely upon the perfection of the God to whom he made supplication. Lord, thou art blessed, therefore bless me by teaching me.

We need to be disciples or learners—"*teach me;*" but what an honour to have God himself for a teacher: how bold is David to beg the blessed God to teach him! Yet the Lord put the desire into his heart when the sacred word was hidden there, and so we may be sure that he was not too bold in expressing it. Who would not wish to enter the school of such a Master to learn of him the art of holy living? To this Instructor we must submit ourselves if we would practically keep the statutes of righteousness. The King who ordained the statutes knows best their meaning, and as they are the outcome of his own nature he can best inspire us with their spirit. The petition commends itself to all who wish to cleanse their way, since it is most practical, and asks for teaching, not upon recondite lore, but upon statute-law. If we know the Lord's statutes we have the most essential education.

Let us each one say, "*Teach me thy statutes.*" This is a sweet prayer for everyday use. It is a step above that of verse 10, "O let me not wander," as that was a rise beyond that of 8, "O forsake me not utterly." It finds its answer in verses 98—100: "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies," etc.; but not till it had been repeated even to the third time in the "Teach me" of verses 33 and 66, all of which I beg my reader to peruse. Even after this third pleading the prayer occurs again in so many words in verses 124 and 139, and the same longing comes out near the close of the Psalm in verse 171—"My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me thy statutes."

13. "*With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.*" The taught one of verse 12 is here a teacher himself. What we learn in secret we are to proclaim upon the housetops. So had the Psalmist done. As much as he had known he had spoken. God has revealed many of his judgments by his mouth, that is to say, by a plain and open revelation; these it is our duty to repeat, becoming, as it were, so many exact echoes of his one infallible voice. There are judgments of God which are a great deep, which he does not reveal, and with these it will be wise for us not to intermeddle. What the Lord has veiled it would be presumption for us to uncover, but, on the other hand, what the Lord has revealed it would be shameful for us to conceal. It is a great comfort to a Christian in time of trouble when in looking back upon his past life he can claim to have done his duty by the word of God. To have been, like Noah, a preacher of righteousness, is a great joy when the floods are rising, and the ungodly world is about to be destroyed. Lips which have been used in proclaiming God's statutes are sure to be acceptable when pleading God's promises. If we have had such regard to that which cometh out of God's mouth that we have published it far and wide, we may rest quite assured that God will have respect unto the prayers which come out of our mouths.

It will be an effectual method of cleansing a young man's way if he addicts himself continually to preaching the gospel. He cannot go far wrong in judgment whose whole soul is occupied in setting forth the judgments of the Lord. By teaching we learn; by training the tongue to holy speech we master the whole body; by familiarity with the divine procedure we are made to delight in righteousness; and thus in a threefold manner our way is cleansed by our proclaiming the way of the Lord.

14. "*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies.*" Delight in the word of God is a sure proof that it has taken effect upon the heart, and so is cleansing the life. The Psalmist not only says that he does rejoice, but that he has rejoiced. For years it had been his joy and bliss to give his soul to the teaching of the word. His rejoicing had not only arisen out of the word of God, but out of the practical characteristics of it. The Way was as dear to him as the Truth and the Life. There was no picking and choosing with David, or if indeed he did make a selection, he chose the most practical first. "*As much as in all riches.*" He compared his intense satisfaction with God's will with that of a man who possesses large and varied estates, and the heart to enjoy them. David knew the riches that come of sovereignty, and which grow out of conquest; he valued the wealth which proceeds from labour, or is gotten by inheritance: he knew "all riches." The gracious king had been glad to see the gold and silver poured into his treasury that he might devote vast masses of it to the building of the Temple of Jehovah upon Mount Zion. He rejoiced in all sorts of riches consecrated and laid up for the noblest uses, and yet the way of God's word had given him more pleasure than even these. Observe that his joy was personal, distinct, remembered, and abundant. Wonder not that in the previous verse he glories in having spoken much of that which he had so much enjoyed: a man may well talk of that which is his delight.

15. *"I will meditate in thy precepts."* He who has an inward delight in anything will not long withdraw his mind from it. As the miser often returns to look upon his treaure, so does the devout believer by frequent meditation turn over the priceless wealth which he has discovered in the book of the Lord. To some men meditation is a task; to the man of cleansed way it is a joy. He who has meditated will meditate; he who saith, "I have rejoiced," is the same who adds, "I will meditate." No spiritual exercise is more profitable to the soul than that of devout meditation; why are many of us so exceeding slack in it? It is worthy of observation that the preceptory part of God's word was David's special subject of meditation, and this was the more natural because the question was still upon his mind as to how a young man should cleanse his way. Practical godliness is vital godliness.

"*And have respect unto thy ways,*" that is to say, I will think much about them so as to know what thy ways are; and next, I will think much of them so as to have thy ways in great reverence and high esteem. I will see what thy ways are towards me that I may be filled with reverence, gratitude, and love; and then, I will observe what are those ways which thou hast prescribed for me, thy ways in which thou wouldest have me follow thee; these I would watch carefully that I may become obedient, and prove myself to be a true servant of such a Master.

Note how the verses grow more *inward* as they proceed; from the speech of verse 13 we advanced to the manifested joy of verse 14, and now we come to the secret meditation of the happy spirit. The richest graces are those which dwell deepest.

16. "*I will delight myself in thy statutes.*" In this verse delight follows meditation, of which it is the true flower and outgrowth. When we have no other solace, but are quite alone, it will be a glad thing for the heart to turn upon itself, and sweetly whisper, "I will delight myself. What if no minstrel sings in the hall, I will delight myself. If the time of the singing of birds has not yet arrived, and the voice of the turtle is not heard in our land, yet I will delight myself." This is the choicest and noblest of all rejoicing; in fact, it is the good part which can never be taken from us; but there is no delighting ourselves with anything below that which God intended to be the soul's eternal satisfaction. The statute-book is intended to be the joy of every loyal subject. When the believer once peruses the sacred pages his soul burns within him as he turns first to one and then to another of the royal words of the great King, words full and firm, immutable and divine.

"*I will not forget thy word.*" Men do not readily forget that which they have treasured up, that which they have meditated on (verse 15), and that which they have often spoken of (verse 13). Yet since we have treacherous memories it is well to bind them well with the knotted cord of "I will not forget."

Note how two "I wills" follow upon two "I haves." We may not promise for the future if we have altogether failed in the past; but where grace has enabled us to accomplish something, we may hopefully expect that it will enable us to do more.

It is curious to observe how this verse is moulded upon verse 8: the changes are rung on the same words, but the meaning is quite different, and there is no suspicion of a vain repetition. The same thought is never given over again in this Psalm; they are dullards who think so. Something in the position of each verse affects its meaning, so that even where its words are almost identical with those of another the sense is delightfully varied. If we do not see an infinite variety of fine shades of thought in this Psalm we may conclude that we are colour-blind; if we do not hear many sweet harmonies, we may judge our ears to be dull of hearing, but we may not suspect the Spirit of God of monotony.

NOTES ON VERSES 9 TO 16.

The eight verses alphabetically arranged :—

9. By what means shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.
10. By day and by night have I sought thee with my whole heart: O let me not wander from thy commandments.
11. By thy grace I have hid thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.
12. Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes.
13. By the words of my lips will I declare all the judgments of thy mouth.
14. By far more than in all riches I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies.
15. By thy help I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.
16. By thy grace I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Theodore Kübler.

Whole eight verses, 9—16. Every verse in the section begins with ב, *a house.* The subject of the section is, The Law of Jehovah purifying the Life. Key-word, זכה (*zacah*), *to be pure*, to make pure, to cleanse.—*F. G. Marchant.*

Verse 9.—*Whole verse.* In this passage there is, (1) A question. (2) An answer given. In the question, there is the person spoken of, "*a young man*," and his work, "*Wherewithal shall he cleanse his way?*" In this question there are several things supposed. 1. That we are from the birth, polluted with sin; for we must be cleansed. It is not *direct* "his way," but "cleanse his way." 2. That we should be very early and betimes sensible of this evil; for the question is propounded concerning the young man. 3. That we should earnestly seek for a remedy, how to dry up the issue of sin that runneth upon us. All this is to be supposed.

That which is enquired after is, What remedy there is against it? What course is to be taken? So that the sum of the question is this: How shall a man that is impure, and naturally defiled with sin, be made able, as soon as he cometh to the use of reason, to purge out that natural corruption, and live a holy and pure life to God? The answer is given: "*By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*" Where two things are to be observed. 1. The remedy. 2. The manner how it is applied and made use of.

1. The remedy is the word; by way of address to God, called "*Thy word;*" because, if God had not given direction about it, we should have been at an utter loss. 2. The manner how it is applied and made use of, "*by taking heed thereto,*" etc.; by studying and endeavouring a holy conformity to God's will.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 9.—'*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*" etc. Aristotle, that great dictator in philosophy, despaired of achieving so great an enterprise as the rendering a young man capable of his ηθικα ακροαματα, "his grave and severe lectures of morality;" for that age is light and foolish, yet headstrong and untractable. Now, take a young man all in the heat and boiling of his blood, in the highest fermentation of his youthful lusts; and, at all these disadvantages, let him enter that great school of the Holy Spirit, the divine Scriptures, and commit himself to the conduct of those blessed oracles; and he shall effectually be convinced, by his own experience, of the incredible virtue, the vast and mighty power, of God's word, in the success it hath upon him, and in his daily progressions and advances in heavenly wisdom.—*John Gibbon* (*about* 1660) *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 9.—"*A young man.*" A prominent place—one of the twenty-two parts—is assigned to young men in the 119th Psalm. It is meet that it should be so. Youth is the season of impression and improvement, young men are the future props of society, and the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, must begin in youth. The strength, the aspirations, the unmarred expectations of youth, are in requisition for the world; O that they may be consecrated to God.—*John Stephen, in* "*The Utterances of the cxix. Psalm,*" 1861.

Verse 9.—For "*young man,*" in the Hebrew the word is נער, *naar, i.e.*, "*shaken off;*" that is to say, from the milder and more tender care of his parents. Thus Mercerus and Savallerius. Secondly, *naar* may be rendered "*shaking off;*" that is to say, the yoke, for a young man begins to cast off the material, and frequently the paternal, yoke.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 9.—"*Cleanse his way.*" The expression does not absolutely convey the

impression that the given young man is in a corrupt and discreditable way which requires cleansing, though this be true of all men originally: Isaiah liii. 6. That which follows makes known that such could not be the case with this young man. The very inquiry shows that his heart is not in a corrupt state. Desire is present, direction is required. The inquiry is—How shall a young man make a clean way—a pure line of conduct—through this defiling world? It is a question, I doubt not, of great anxiety to every convert whose mind is awakened to a sense of sin—how he shall keep clear of the sin, avoid the loose company, and rid himself of the wicked pleasures and practices of this enslaving world. And as he moves on in the line of integrity—many temptations coming in his way, and much inward corruption rising up to control him—how often will the same anxious inquiry arise: Romans vii. 24. It is only in a false estimate of one's own strength that any can think otherwise, and the spirit of such false estimate will be brought low. How felt you, my young friends, who have been brought to Christ, in the day of your resolving to be his? But for all such anxiety there seems to be an answer in the text.

"*By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*" It is not that young men in our day require information: they require the inclination. In the gracious young man there are both, and the word that began feeds the proper motives. The awful threatenings and the sweet encouragements both move him in the right direction. The answer furnished to this anxious inquiry is sufficiently plain and practical. He is directed to the word of God for all direction, and we might say, for all promised assistance. Still the matter presented in this light does not appear to me to bring out the full import of the passage. The inquiry to me would seem to extend over the whole verse.* There is required the cleansing that his way be according to the Divine Word. The enquiry is of the most enlarged comprehension, and will be made only by one who can say that he has been honestly putting himself in the way, as the young man in the 10th and 11th verses; and it can be answered only by the heart that takes in all the strength provided by the blessed God, as is expressed here in the 12th verse. The Psalmist makes the inquiry, he shows how earnestly he had sought to be in the right way, and immediately he finds all his strength in God. Thus he declares how he has been enabled to do rightly, and how he will do rightly in the future.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 9.—Instead of question and answer both in this one verse, the Hebrew demands the construction with question only, leaving the answer to be inferred from the drift of the entire Psalm—thus: "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way to keep it according to thy word?*" This translation gives precisely the force of the last clause. Hebrew punctuation lacks the interrogation point, so that we have no other clue but the form of the sentence and the sense by which to decide where the question ends.—*Henry Cowles*, 1872.

Verse 9.—"*His way.*" ארח, *orach*, which we translate *way* here, signifies a *track*, a *rut*, such as is made by the wheel of a cart or chariot. A *young sinner* has no *broad beaten* path; he has his *private ways* of offence, his *secret pollutions;* and how shall he be cleansed from these? how can he be saved from what will destroy mind, body, and soul? Let him hear what follows; the description is from God.

1. He is to *consider* that his way is *impure;* and how abominable this must make him appear in the sight of God. 2. He must examine it *according to God's word*, and carefully hear what God has said concerning *him* and *it*. 3. He must *take heed* to it, לשמר, *lishmor*, to *keep, guard*, and *preserve his way*—his general course of life, from all defilement.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9.—"*By taking heed,*" etc. I think the words may be better rendered and supplied thus, *by observing* what is *according to thy word;* which shows how a sinner is to be cleansed from his sins by the blood of Christ, and justified by his righteousness, and be clean through his word; and also how and by whom the work of sanctification is wrought in the heart, even by the Spirit of God, by means of the word, and what is the rule of a man's walk and conversation: he will find the word of God to be profitable, to inform in the doctrines of justification and pardon, to acquaint him with the nature of regeneration and sanctification; and for the correction and amendment of his life and manners, and for his instruction in every branch of manners: 2 Tim. iii. 16.—*John Gill*, 1697—1771.

Verse 9.—"*By taking heed.*" There is an especial necessity for this "*Take heed,*" because of the proneness of a young man to thoughtlessness, carelessness,

* This opinion is confirmed by the quotation which follows from Cowles.

presumption, self-confidence. There is an especial necessity for "*taking heed*," because of the difficulty of the way. "Look well to thy goings;" it is a narrow path. "Look well to thy goings," it is a new path. "Look well to thy goings;" it is a slippery path. "Look well to thy goings;" it is an eventful path.—*James Harrington Evans*, 1785—1849.

Verse 9.—"*According to thy word.*" God's word is the glass which discovereth all spiritual deformity, and also the water and soap which washeth and scoureth it away.—*Paul Bayne.*

Verse 9.—"*According to thy word.*" I do not say that there are no other guides, no other fences. I do not say that conscience is worth nothing, and conscience in youth is especially sensitive and tender; I do not say that prayer is not a most valuable fence, but prayer without taking heed is only another name for presumption; prayer and carelessness can never walk hand in hand together; and I therefore say that there is no fence nor guard that can so effectually keep out every enemy as prayerful reading of the word of God, bringing every solicitation from the world or from companions, every suggestion from our own hearts and passions, to the test of God's word:—What says the Bible? The answer of the Bible, with the teaching and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, will in all the intricacies of our road be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 9.—"*Thy word.*" The word is the only weapon (like Goliath's sword, none to equal this), for the hewing down and cutting off of this stubborn enemy, our lusts. The word of God can master our lusts when they are in their greatest pride: if ever lust rageth at one time more than another, it is when youthful blood boils in our veins. Youth is giddy, and his lust is hot and impetuous: his sun is climbing higher still, and he thinks it is a great while to night; so that it must be a strong arm that brings a young man off his lusts, who hath his palate at best advantage to taste sensual pleasure. The vigour of his strength affords him more of the delights of the flesh than crippled age can expect, and he is farther from the fear of death's gun-shot, as he thinks, than old men who are upon the very brink of the grave, and carry the scent of the earth about them, into which they are suddenly to be resolved. Well, let the word of God meet this young gallant in all his bravery, with his feast of sensual delights before him, and but whisper a few syllables in his ear, give his conscience but a prick with the point of its sword, and it shall make him fly in as great haste from them all, as Absalom's brethren did from the feast when they saw Amnon their brother murdered at the table. When David would give the young man a receipt to cure him of his lusts, how he may cleanse his whole course and way, he bids him only wash in the waters of the word of God.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 9.—The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying.—*John Flavel*, 1627—1691.

Verse 10.—"*With my whole heart have I sought thee.*" There are very few of us that are able to say with the prophet David that we have sought God with our whole heart; to wit, with such integrity and pureness that we have not turned away from that mark as from the most principal thing of our salvation.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 10.—"*With my whole heart have I sought thee.*" Sincerity is in every expression; the heart is open before God. The young man can so speak to the Searcher of hearts. . . . . Let us consider the directness of this kind of converse with God. We use round-about expressions in drawing nigh to God. We say, With my whole heart would I seek thee. We are afraid to be direct. . . . . See how decided in his conscious actings is the young man before you, how open and confiding he is, and such you will find to be the characteristic of his pious mind throughout the varied expressions unfolded in this Psalm. Here he declares to the Omniscient One that he had sought him with all his heart. He desired to realize God in everything.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 10 (*first clause*).—God alone sees the heart; the heart alone sees God.—*John Donne*, 1573—1631.

Verse 10.—"*O let me not wander from thy commandments.*" David after he had protested that he sought God with his whole heart, besought God that he would not suffer him to decline from his commandments. Hereby let us see what great need we have to call upon God, to the end he may hold us with a mighty strong hand. Yea, and though he hath already mightily put to his helping hand, and we also know that he hath bestowed upon us great and manifest graces; yet this is not all: for there are so many vices and imperfections in our nature, and we are so

feeble and weak that we have very great need daily to pray unto him, yea, and that more and more, that he will not suffer us to decline from his commandments.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 10.—The more experience a man hath in the ways of God, the more sensible is he of his own readiness to wander insensibly, by ignorance and inadvertency, from the ways of God; but the young soldier dares run hazards, ride into his adversary's camp, and talk with temptation, being confident he cannot go wrong; he is not so much in fear as David who here cries, "*O let me not wander.*"—*David Dickson*, 1583—1662.

Verse 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*" There laid up in the heart the word has effect. When young men only read the letter of the Book, the word of promise and instruction is deprived of much of its power. Neither will the laying of it up in the mere memory avail. The word must be known and prized, and laid up in the heart; it must occupy the affection as well as the understanding; the whole mind requires to be impregnated with the word of God. Revealed things require to be seen. Then the word of God in the heart—the threatenings, the promises, the excellencies of God's word—and God himself realized, the young man would be inwardly fortified; the understanding enlightened, conscience quickened—he would not sin against his God.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*" In proportion as the word of the King is present in the heart, "*there* is power" against sin (Eccles. viii. 4). Let us use this means of absolute power more, and more life and more holiness will be ours.—*Frances Ridley Havergal*, 1836—1879.

Verse 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*" It is fit that the word, being "more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold," a peerless pearl, should not be laid up in the porter's lodge only—the outward ear; but even in the cabinet of the mind.—*Dean Boys, quoted by James Ford.*

Verse 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*" There is great difference between Christians and worldlings. The worldling hath his treasure in jewels without him; the Christian hath them within. Neither indeed is there any receptacle wherein to receive and keep the word of consolation but the heart only. If thou have it in thy mouth only, it shall be taken from thee; if thou have it in thy book only, thou shalt miss it when thou hast most to do with it; but if thou lay it up in thy heart, as Mary did the words of the angel, no enemy shall ever be able to take it from thee, and thou shalt find it a comfortable treasure in the time of thy need.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*" This saying, *to hide*, importeth that David studied not to be ambitious to set forth himself and to make a glorious show before men; but that he had God for a witness of that secret desire which was within him. He never looked to worldly creatures; but being content that he had so great a treasure, he knew full well that God who had given it him would so surely and safely guard it, as that it should not be laid open to Satan to be taken away. Saint Paul also declareth unto us (1 Tim. i. 19) that the chest wherein this treasure must be hid is a good conscience. For it is said, that many being void of this good conscience, have lost also their faith, and have been robbed thereof. As if a man should forsake his goods and put them in hazard, without shutting a door, it were an easy matter for thieves to come in and rob and spoil him of all; even so, if we leave at random to Satan the treasures which God hath given us in his word, without it be hidden in this good conscience, and in the very bottom of our heart as David here speaketh, we shall be spoiled thereof.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 11.—"*Thy word have I hid in mine heart.*"—Remembered, approved, delighted in it.—*William Nicholson* (—1671), *in* "*David's Harp Strung and Tuned.*"

Verse 11.—"*Thy word.*" *Thy saying*, thy oracle; any communication from God to the soul, whether promise, or command, or answer. It means a direct and distinct message, while "word" is more general, and applies to the whole revelation. This is the ninth of the ten words referring to the revelation of God in this Psalm.—*James G. Murphy*, 1875.

Verse 11.—"*In my heart.*" Bernard observes, bodily bread in the cupboard may be eaten of mice, or moulder and waste: but when it is taken down into the body, it is free from such danger. If God enable thee to take thy soul-food into thine heart, it is free from all hazards.—*George Swinnock*, 1627—1673.

Verse 11.—"*That I might not sin against thee.*" Among many excellent virtues

of the word of God, this is one; that if we keep it in our heart, it keeps us from sin, which is against God and against ourselves. We may mark it by experience, that the word is first stolen either out of the mind of man, and the remembrance of it is away; or at least out of the affection of man; so that the reverence of it is gone, before that a man can be drawn to the committing of a sin. So long as Eve kept by faith the word of the Lord, she resisted Satan; but from the time she doubted of that, which God made most certain by his word, at once she was snared.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 12.—"*Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes.*" This verse contains a prayer, with the reason of the prayer. The prayer is. "*Teach me thy statutes;*" the reason, moving him to seek this, ariseth of a consideration of that infinite good which is in God. He is a blessed God, the fountain of all felicity, without whom no welfare or happiness can be to the creature. And for this cause David earnestly desiring to be in fellowship and communion with God, which he knows none can attain unto unless he be taught of God to know God's way and walk in it; therefore, I say, he prayeth the more earnestly that the Lord would teach him his statutes. Oh that we also could wisely consider this, that our felicity stands in fellowship with God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 12.—In this verse we have two things, 1. An acknowledgment of God's blessedness, "*Blessed art thou, O Lord;*" *i.e.*, being possessed of all fulness, thou hast an infinite complacency in the enjoyment of thyself; and thou art he alone in the enjoyment of whom I can be blessed and happy; and thou art willing and ready to give out of thy fulness, so that thou art the fountain of blessedness to thy creatures. 2. A request or petition, "*Teach me thy statutes;*" *q.d.*, seeing thou hast all fulness in thyself, and art sufficient to thy own blessedness; surely thou hast enough for me. There is enough to content thyself, therefore enough to satisfy me. This encourages me in my address.

Again,—Teach me that I may know wherein to seek my blessedness and happiness, even in thy blessed self; and that I may know how to come by the enjoyment of thee, so that I may be blessed in thee. Further,—Thou art blessed originally, the Fountain of all blessing; thy blessedness is an everlasting fountain, a full fountain; always pouring out blessedness: O, let me have this blessing from thee, this drop from the fountain.—*William Wisheart, in "Theologia, or, Discourses of God,"* 1716.

Verse 12.—Since God is blessed, we cannot but desire to learn his ways. If we see any earthly being happy, we have a great desire to learn out his course, as thinking by it we might be happy also. Every one would sail with that man's wind who prospereth; though in earthly things it holdeth not alway: yet a blessed God cannot by any way of his bring to other than blessedness. Thus, he who is blessedness itself, he will be ready to communicate his ways to other: the excellentest things are most communicative.—*Paul Bayne.*

Verse 12.—"*Teach me.*" He had Nathan, he had priests to instruct him, himself was a prophet; but all their teaching was nothing without God's blessing, and therefore he prays, "*Teach me.*"—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 12.—"*Teach me.*" These words convey more than the simple imparting of knowledge, for he said before he had such, when he said he hid God's words in his heart; and in verse 7 he said he "*had learned the judgments of his justice:*" it includes grace to observe his law.—*Robert Bellarmine,* 1542—1621.

Verse 12.—"*Teach me.*" If this were practised now, to join prayer with hearing, that when we offer ourselves to be taught of men, we would therewith send up prayer to God, before preaching, in time of preaching and after preaching, we would soon prove more learned and religious than we are.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 12.—"*Teach me thy statutes.*" Whoever reads the Psalm with attention must observe in it one great characteristic, and that is, how decisive are its statements that in keeping the commandments of God nothing can be done by human strength; but that it is he who must create the will for the performance of such duty. The Psalmist entreats the Lord to open his eyes that he may behold the wondrous things of the law, to teach him his statutes, to remove from him the way of lying, to incline his heart unto his testimonies, and not to covetousness, to turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, and not to take the word of truth utterly out of his mouth. Each of these petitions shows how deeply impressed he was of his entire helplessness as regarded himself, and how completely dependent upon God he felt himself for any

advancement he could hope to make in the knowledge of the truth. All his studies in the divine law, all his aspirations after holiness of life, he was well assured could never meet with any measure of success, except by the grace of God preventing and co-operating, implanting in him a right desire, and acting as an infallible guide, whereby alone he would be enabled to arrive at the proper sense of Holy Scripture, as well as to correct principles of action in his daily walk before God and man.—*George Phillips*, 1846.

Verse 12.—"*Teach me thy statutes.*"—If it be asked why the Psalmist entreats to be taught, when he has just before been declaring his knowledge, the answer is that he seeks instruction as to the practical working of those principles which he has learnt theoretically.—*Michael Ayguan* (1416), *in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 13.—"*With my lips have I declared,*" etc. Above all, be careful to talk of that to others which you do daily learn yourself, and out of the abundance of your heart speak of good things unto men.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 13.—Having hid the purifying word in his heart, the Psalmist will *declare it with his lips;* and as it is so pure throughout, he will declare all in it, without exception. When the fountain of the heart is purified, the streams from the lips will be pure also. The declaring lips of the Psalmist are here placed in antithesis to the mouth of Jehovah, by which the judgments were originally pronounced.—*F. G. Marchant.*

Verse 13.—As the consciousness of having communicated our knowledge and our spiritual gifts is a means of encouragement to seek a greater measure, so it is an evidence of the sincerity and fruitfulness of what knowledge we have: "*Teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 13.—"*With my lips,*" etc. The tongue is a most excellent member of the body, being well used to the glory of God and the edification of others; and yet it cannot pronounce without help of the lips. The Lord hath made the body of man with such marvellous wisdom, that no member of it can say to another, I have no need of thee; but such is man's dulness, that he observes not how useful unto him is the smallest member in the body, till it be taken from him. If our lips were clasped for a time, and our tongue thus shut up, we would esteem it a great mercy to have it loosed again; as that cripple, when he found the use of his feet, leaped for joy and glorified God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 13.—"*Declared all the judgments.*" He says in another place (Ps. xxxvi. 6), "*Thy judgments are like a great deep.*" As the apostle says (Rom. xi. 33, 34), "*O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord?*" If the judgments are unsearchable, how then says the prophet, "*I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth?*" We answer, —peradventure there are judgments of God which are not the judgments of his mouth, but of his heart and hand only.

We make a distinction, for we have no fear that the sacred Scripture weakens itself by contradictions. It has not said, The judgments of his mouth are a great deep; but "*Thy judgments.*" Neither has the apostle said, The unsearchable judgments of his mouth; but "*His unsearchable judgments.*" We may regard the judgments of God, then, as those hidden ones which he has not revealed to us; but the judgments of his mouth, those which he has made known, and has spoken by the mouth of the prophets.—*Ambrose*, 340—397.

Verse 14.—"*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies,*" etc. The Psalmist saith not only, "I have rejoiced in thy testimonies," but, "in the *way* of thy testimonies." Way is one of the words by which the law is expressed. God's laws are ways that lead us to God; and so it may be taken here, "the way which thy testimonies point out, and call me unto; or else his own practice, as a man's course is called his way; his delight was not in speculation or talk, but in obedience and practice: "*in the way of thy testimonies.*" He tells us the degree of his joy, "*as much as in all riches:*" "as much," not to show the equality of these things, as if we should have the same affection for the world as for the word of God; but "as much," because we have no higher comparison. This is that which worldlings doat upon, and delight in; now as much as they rejoice in worldly possessions, so much do I rejoice in the way of thy testimonies. For I suppose David doth not compare

his own delight in wealth ; but his own choice and delight, with the delight and choice of others. If he had spoken of himself both in the one respect and in the other, the expression was very high. David, who was called to a crown, and in a capacity of enjoying much in the world, gold, silver, land, goods, largeness of territory, and a compound of all that which all men jointly, and all men severally do possess ; yet was more pleased in the holiness of God's ways, than in all the world : " For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? " (Mark viii. 36).—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 14.—" *The way of thy testimonies.*" The testimony of God is his word, for it testifies his will ; the " *way* " of his testimony is the practice of his word, and doing of that which he hath declared to be his will, and wherein he hath promised to show us his love. David found not this sweetness in hearing, reading, and professing the word only ; but in practising of it ; and in very deed, the only cause why we find not the comfort that is in the word of God is that we practise it not by walking in the way thereof. It is true, at the first it is bitter to nature, which loves carnal liberty, to render itself as captive to the word : *laboriosa virtutis via*, and much pains must be taken before the heart be subdued ; but when it is once begun, it renders such joy as abundantly recompenses all the former labour and grief.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 14.—Riches are acquired with difficulty, enjoyed with trembling, and lost with bitterness.—*Bernard*, 1091—1157.

Verse 14.—A poor, good woman said, in time of persecution, when they took away the Christian's Bibles, " I cannot part with my Bible ; I know not how to live without it." When a gracious soul has heard a profitable sermon, he says, " Methinks it does me good at heart ; it is the greatest nourishment I have : " " *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.*"—*Oliver Heywood*, 1629—1702.

Verse 15.—" *I will meditate in thy precepts*," etc. All along David had shown what he *had* done ; now, what he *will* do. Verse 10, " I have sought ; " verse 11, " I have hid ; " verse 12, " I have declared ; " verse 14, " I have rejoiced." Now in the two following verses he doth engage himself to set his mark towards God for time to come. " *I will meditate in thy precepts*," etc. We do not rest upon anything already done and past, but continue the same diligence unto the end. Here is David's hearty resolution and purpose, to go on for time to come. Many will say, Thus I have done when I was young, or had more leisure and rest ; in that I have meditated and conferred. You must continue still in a holy course. To begin to build, and leave unfinished, is an argument of folly.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 15.—" *I will meditate in thy precepts.*" Not only *of* thy precepts or concerning them, but *in* them, while engaged in doing them.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 15.—" *I will.*" See this " I will " repeated again and again (verses 48, 78). In meditation it is hard (sometimes at least) to take off our thoughts from the pre-engagements of other subjects, and apply them to the duty. But it is harder to become duly serious in acting in it, harder yet to dive and ponder ; and hardest of all to continue in an abode of thoughts, and dwell long enough, and after views to make reviews, to react the same thinkings, to taste things over and over, when the freshness and newness is past, when by long thinking the things before us seem old. We are ready to grow dead and flat in a performance except we stir up ourselves often in it. It is hard to hold on and hold up, unless we hold up a wakeful eye, a warm affection, a strong and quick repeated resolution ; yea, and without often lifting up the soul to Christ for fresh recruits of strength to hold on. David, that so excellent artist in this way, saith he *will meditate*, he often saith *he will.* Doubtless, he not only said " I will " when he was to make his entrance into this hard work ; but likewise for continuance in it, to keep up his heart from flagging, till he well ended his work. It is not the digging into the golden mine, but the digging long, that finds and fetches up the treasure. It is not the diving into the sea, but staying longer, that gets the greater quantity of pearls. To draw out the golden thread of meditation to its due length till the spiritual ends be attained, this is a rare and happy attainment.—*Nathanael Ranew*, 1670.

Verse 15.—" *I will meditate.*" How much our " *rejoicing in the testimonies* " of God would be increased by a more habitual meditation upon them ! This is, however, a resolution which the carnal mind can never be brought to make, and to which the renewed mind through remaining depravity is often sadly reluctant. But

it is a blessed employment, and will repay a thousandfold the difficulty of engaging the too backward heart in the duty.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 15.—Meditation is of that happy influence, it makes the mind wise, the affections warm, the soul fat and flourishing, and the conversation greatly fruitful.—*Nathanael Ranew.*

Verse 15.—"*Meditate in thy precepts.*" Study the Scriptures. If a famous man do but write an excellent book, O how we do long to see it! Or suppose I could tell you that there is in France or Germany a book that God himself wrote, I am confident men may draw all the money out of your purses to get that book. You have it by you: O that you would study it! When the eunuch was riding in his chariot, he was studying the prophet Isaiah. He was not angry when Philip came and, as we would have thought, asked him a bold question: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" (Acts viii. 27—30); he was glad of it. One great end of the year of release was, that the law might be read (Deut. xxxi. 9—13). It is the wisdom of God that speaks in the Scripture (Luke xi. 49); therefore, whatever else you mind, really and carefully study the Bible.—*Samuel Jacomb* (1629—1659), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 15.—"*I will have respect.*" The one is the fruit of the other: "*I will meditate;*" and then, "*I will have respect.*" Meditation is in order to practice; and if it be right, it will beget a respect to the ways of God. We do not meditate that we may rest in contemplation, but in order to obedience: "Thou shalt meditate in the book of the law day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Joshua i. 8).—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 15.—"*And have respect unto thy ways.*"—As an archer hath to his mark.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 15.—"*Respect unto thy ways.*" It is not without a peculiar pleasure, when travelling, that we *contemplate* the splendid buildings, the gardens, the fortifications, or the fine-art galleries. But what are all these sights to the *contemplation of the ways of God*, which he himself has traversed, or has maked out for man? And what practical need there is that we consider the way, for else we shall be as a sleepy coachman, not carefully observant of the road, who may soon upset himself and his passengers.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 15.—"*Thy ways.*" David's second internal action concerning the word is consideration; where mark well, how by a most proper speech he calls the word of God the *ways* of God; partly, because by it God comes near unto men, revealing himself to them, who otherways could not be known of them; for he dwells in light inaccessible; and partly, because the word is the *way* which leads men to God. So then, because by it God cometh down to men, and by it men go up unto God, and know how to get access to him, therefore is his word called his *way.*—*William Cowper.*

Verses 15, 16.—The two last verses of this section present to us a threefold internal action of David's soul toward the word of God; first, meditation; secondly, consideration; thirdly, delectation; every one of those proceeds from another, and they mutually strengthen one another. Meditation brings the word to the mind; consideration views it and looks at length into it, whereof is bred delectation. That which comes into the mind, were it never so good, if it be not considered, goes as it came, leaving neither instruction nor joy; but being once presented by meditation, if it be pondered by consideration, then it breeds delectation, which is the perfection of godliness, in regard of the internal action.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 16.—"*I will delight myself,*" etc. He protested before that he had great delight in the testimonies of God: now he saith he will still delight in them. A man truly godly, the more good he doth, the more he desireth, delighteth and resolveth to do. Temporisers, on the contrary, who have but a show of godliness, and the love of it is not rooted in their heart, how soon are they weary of well-doing! If they have done any small external duty of religion, they rest as if they were fully satisfied, and there needed no more good to be done by them. True religion is known by hungering and thirsting after righteousness, by perseverance in well-doing and an earnest desire to do more.

But to this he adds that *he will not forget the word.* The graces of the Spirit do every one fortify and strengthen another; for ye see meditation helps consideration. Who can consider of that whereof he thinks not? Consideration again breeds delectation; and as here ye see, delectation strengthens memory: because he delights in the word he will not forget the word; and memory again renews meditation. Thus

every grace of the Spirit helps another ; and by the contrary, one of them neglected, works a wonderful decay of the remnant.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 16.—" *I will delight myself.*" When righteousness, from a matter of constraint, becomes a matter of choice, it instantly changes its whole nature, and rises to a higher moral rank than before. The same God whom it is impossible to move by law's authority, moves of his own proper and original inclination in the very path of the law's righteousness. And so, we, in proportion as we are like unto God, are alive to the virtues of that same law, to the terror of whose severities we are altogether dead. We are no longer under a schoolmaster ; but obedience is changed from a thing of force into a thing of freeness. It is moulded to a higher state and character than before. We are not driven to it by the God of authority. We are drawn to it by the regards of a now willing heart to all moral and all spiritual excellence.—*Thomas Chalmers*, 1780—1847.

Verse 16.—Meditation must not be a dull, sad, and dispirited thing : not a driving like the chariots of the Egyptians when their wheels were taken off, but like the chariots of Amminadib (Cant. vi. 12) that ran swiftly. So let us pray,—Lord, in meditation make me like the chariots of Amminadib, that my swift running may evidence my delight in meditating. Holy David makes delight such an ingredient or assistant here, that sometimes he calls the exercise of meditation by the name of " *delight*," speaking in the foregoing verse of this meditation, " *I will meditate of thy precepts*," and in the 16th verse, " *I will delight myself in thy statutes ;* " which is the same with meditation, only with superadding the excellent qualification due meditation should have ; the name of delight is givn to meditation because of its noble concomitant—holy joy and satisfaction.—*Nathanael Ranew.*

Verse 16.—" *Delight myself.*" The word is very emphatical : שעשע, *eshtaasha, I will skip about and jump for joy.—Adam Clarke.*

Verse 16.—" *I will not forget.*" Delight preventeth forgetfulness : the mind will run upon that which the heart delighteth in ; and the heart is where the treasure is (Matt. vi. 21). Worldly men that are intent upon carnal interests, forget the word, because it is not their delight. If anything displeases us, we are glad if we can forget it ; it is some release from an inconvenience, to take off our thoughts from it ; but it doubleth the contentment of a thing that we are delighted in, to remember it, and call it to mind. In the outward school, if a scholar by his own averseness from learning, or by the severity and imprudence of his master, hath no delight in his book, all that he learneth is lost and forgotten, it goeth in at one ear, and out at the other : but this is the true art of memory, to cause them to delight in what they learn. Such instructions as we take in with sweetness, they stick with us, and run in our minds night and day. So saith David here, "*I will delight myself in thy statutes ; I will not forget thy word.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 16.—" *Forget.*" I never yet heard of a covetous old man, who had forgotten where he had buried his treasure.—*Cicero de Senectute.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 17 TO 24.

DEAL bountifully with thy servant, *that* I may live, and keep thy word.
18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.
19 I *am* a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.
20 My soul breaketh for the longing *that it hath* unto thy judgments at all times.
21 Thou hast rebuked the proud *that are* cursed, which do err from thy commandments.
22 Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.
23 Princes also did sit *and* speak against me: *but* thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.
24 Thy testimonies also *are* my delight *and* my counsellors.

In this section the trials of the way appear to be manifest to the Psalmist's mind, and he prays accordingly for the help which will meet his case. As in the last eight verses he prayed as a youth newly come into the world, so here he pleads as a servant and a pilgrim, who growingly finds himself to be a stranger in an enemy's country. His appeal is to God alone, and his prayer is specially direct and personal. He speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

17. "*Deal bountifully with thy servant.*" He takes pleasure in owning his duty to God, and counts it the joy of his heart to be in the service of his God. Out of his condition he makes a plea, for a servant has some hold upon a master; but in this case the wording of the plea shuts out the idea of legal claim, since he seeks bounty rather than reward. Let my wages be according to thy goodness, and not according to my merit. Reward me according to the largeness of thy liberality, and not according to the scantiness of my service. The hired servants of our Father have all of them bread enough and to spare, and he will not leave one of his household to perish with hunger. If the Lord will only treat us as he treats the least of his servants we may be well content, for all his true servants are sons, princes of the blood, heirs of life eternal. David felt that his great needs required a bountiful provision, and that his little desert would never earn such a supply; hence he must throw himself upon God's grace, and look for the great things he needed from the great goodness of the Lord. He begs for a liberality of grace, after the fashion of one who prayed. "O Lord, thou must give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn."

"*That I may live.*" Without abundant mercy he could not live. It takes great grace to keep a saint alive. Even life is a gift of divine bounty to such undeserving ones as we are. Only the Lord can keep us in being, and it is mighty grace which preserves to us the life which we have forfeited by our sin. It is right to desire to live, it is meet to pray to live, it is just to ascribe prolonged life to the favour of God. Spiritual life, without which this natural life is mere existence, is also to be sought of the Lord's bounty, for it is the noblest work of divine grace, and in it the bounty of God is gloriously displayed. The Lord's servants cannot serve him in their own strength, for they cannot even live unless his grace abounds towards them.

"*And keep thy word.*" This should be the rule, the object, and the joy of our life. We may not wish to live and sin; but we may pray to live and keep God's word. Being is a poor thing if it be not well-being. Life is only worth keeping while we can keep God's word; indeed, there is no life in the highest sense apart from holiness: life while we break the law is but a name to live.

The prayer of this verse shows that it is only through divine bounty or grace that we can live as faithful servants of God, and manifest obedience to his commands. If we give God service it must be because he gives us grace. We work *for* him because he works *in* us. Thus we may make a chain out of the opening verses of the three first octaves of this Psalm: verse 1 blesses the holy man, verse 9 asks how we can attain to such holiness, and verse 17 traces such holiness to its secret source, and shows us how to seek the blessing. The more a man prizes holiness and

the more earnestly he strives after it, the more will he be driven towards God for help therein, for he will plainly perceive that his own strength is insufficient, and that he cannot even so much as live without the bounteous assistance of the Lord his God.

18. "*Open thou mine eyes.*" This is a part of the bountiful dealing which he has asked for; no bounty is greater than that which benefits our person, our soul, our mind, and benefits it in so important an organ as the eye. It is far better to have the eyes opened than to be placed in the midst of the noblest prospects and remain blind to their beauty. "*That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*" Some men can perceive no wonders in the gospel, but David felt sure that there were glorious things in the law: he had not half the Bible, but he prized it more than some men prize the whole. He felt that God had laid up great bounties in his word, and he begs for power to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy the same. We need not so much that God should give us more benefits, as the ability to see what he has given.

The prayer implies a conscious darkness, a dimness of spiritual vision, a powerlessness to remove that defect, and a full assurance that God can remove it. It shows also that the writer knew that there were vast treasures in the word which he had not yet fully seen, marvels which he had not yet beheld, mysteries which he had scarcely believed. The Scriptures teem with marvels; the Bible is wonder-land; it not only relates miracles, but it is itself a world of wonders. Yet what are these to closed eyes? And what man can open his own eyes, since he is born blind? God himself must reveal revelation to each heart. Scripture needs opening, but not one half so much as our eyes do: the veil is not on the book, but on our hearts. What perfect precepts, what precious promises, what priceless privileges are neglected by us because we wander among them like blind men amongst the beauties of nature, and they are to us as a landscape shrouded in darkness!

The Psalmist had a measure of spiritual perception, or he would never have known that there were wondrous things to be seen, nor would he have prayed, "open thou mine eyes;" but what he had seen made him long for a clearer and wider sight. This longing proved the genuineness of what he possessed, for it is a test mark of the true knowledge of God that it causes its possessor to thirst for deeper knowledge.

David's prayer in this verse is a good sequel to verse 10, which corresponds to it in position in its octave: there he said, "O let me not wander," and who so apt to wander as a blind man? and there, too, he declared, "with my whole heart have I sought thee," and hence the desire to see the object of his search. Very singular are the interlacings of the boughs of the huge tree of this Psalm, which has many wonders even within itself if we have opened eyes to mark them.

19. "*I am a stranger in the earth.*" This is meant for a plea. By divine command men are bound to be kind to strangers, and what God commands in others he will exemplify in himself. The Psalmist was a stranger for God's sake, else had he been as much at home as worldlings are; he was not a stranger to God, but a stranger to the world, a banished man so long as he was out of heaven. Therefore he pleads, "*Hide not thy commandments from me.*" If these are gone, what have I else? Since nothing around me is mine, what can I do if I lose thy word? Since none around me know or care to know the way to thyself, what shall I do if I fail to see thy commands, by which alone I can guide my steps to the land where thou dwellest? David implies that God's commands were his solace in his exile: they reminded him of home, and they showed him the way thither, and therefore he begged that they might never be hidden from him, by his being unable either to understand them or to obey them. If spiritual light be withdrawn the command is hidden, and this a gracious heart greatly deprecates. What would be the use of opened eyes if the best object of sight were hidden from their view? While we wander here we can endure all the ills of this foreign land with patience if the word of God is applied to our hearts by the Spirit of God; but if the heavenly things which make for our peace were hid from our eyes we should be in an evil case,—in fact, we should be at sea without a compass, in a desert without a guide, in an enemy's country without a friend.

This prayer is a supplement to "open thou mine eyes," and, as the one prays to see, the other deprecates the negative of seeing, namely, the command being hidden, and so out of sight. We do well to look at both sides of the blessing we are seeking, and plead for it from every point of view. The prayers are appropriate to the characters mentioned: as he is a servant he asks for opened eyes that his eyes may

ever be towards his Lord, as the eyes of a servant should be ; as a stranger he begs that he may not be strange to the way in which he is to walk towards his home. In each case his entire dependence is upon God alone.

Note how the third of the second octave (11) has the same keyword as this third of the third octave : " Thy word have I hid," " Hide not thy commandments from me." This invites a meditation upon the different senses of hiding *in* and hiding *from*.

20. " *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.*" True godliness lies very much in desires. As we are not what we shall be, so also we are not what we would be. The desires of gracious men after holiness are intense,—they cause a wear of heart, a straining of the mind, till it feels ready to snap with the heavenly pull. A high value of the Lord's commandment leads to a pressing desire to know and to do it, and this so weighs upon the soul that it is ready to break in pieces under the crush of its own longings. What a blessing it is when all our desires are after the things of God. We may well long for such longings.

God's judgments are his decisions upon points which else had been in dispute. Every precept is a judgment of the highest court upon a point of action, an infallible and immutable decision upon a moral or spiritual question. The word of God is a code of justice from which there is no appeal.

> " This is the Judge which ends the strife
> Where wit and reason fail ;
> Our guide through devious paths of life,
> Our shield when doubts assail."

David had such reverence for the word, and such a desire to know it, and to be conformed to it, that his longings caused him a sort of heart-break, which he here pleads before God. Longing is the soul of praying, and when the soul longs till it breaks, it cannot be long before the blessing will be granted. The most intimate communion between the soul and its God is carried on by the process described in the text. God reveals his will, and our heart longs to be conformed thereto. God judges, and our heart rejoices in the verdict. This is fellowship of heart most real and thorough.

Note well that our desire after the mind of God should be constant ; we should feel holy longings " *at all times.*" Desires which can be put off and on like our garments are at best but mere wishes, and possibly they are hardly true enough to be called by that name,—they are temporary emotions born of excitement, and doomed to die when the heat which created them has cooled down. He who always longs to know and do the right is the truly right man. His judgment is sound, for he loves all God's judgments, and follows them with constancy. His times shall be good, since he longs to be good and to do good at all times.

Remark how this fourth of the third eight chimes with the fourth of the fourth eight. " My soul breaketh ; " " my soul melteth." There is surely some recondite poetic art about all this, and it is well for us to be careful in studying what the Psalmist was so careful in composing.

21. " *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed.*" This is one of God's judgments : he is sure to deal out a terrible portion to men of lofty looks. God rebuked Pharaoh with sore plagues, and at the Red Sea " the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord." In the person of the haughty Egyptian he taught all the proud that he will certainly abase them. Proud men are cursed men : nobody blesses them, and they soon become a burden to themselves. In itself, pride is a plague and torment. Even if no curse came from the law of God, there seems to be a law of nature that proud men should be unhappy men. This led David to abhor pride ; he dreaded the rebuke of God and the curse of the law. The proud sinners of his day were his enemies, and he felt happy that God was in the quarrel as well as he.

" *Which do err from thy commandments.*" Only humble hearts are obedient, for they alone will yield to rule and government. Proud men's looks are high, too high to mark their own feet and keep the Lord's way. Pride lies at the root of all sin : if men were not arrogant they would not be disobedient.

God rebukes pride even when the multitudes pay homage to it, for he sees in it rebellion against his own majesty, and the seeds of yet further rebellions. It is the sum of sin. Men talk of an honest pride ; but if they were candid they would see that it is of all sins the least honest, and the least becoming in a creature, and especially

in a fallen creature: yet so little do proud men know their own true condition under the curse of God, that they set up to censure the godly, and express contempt for them, as may be seen in the next verse. They are themselves contemptible, and yet they are contemptuous towards their betters. We may well love the judgments of God when we see them so decisively levelled against the haughty upstarts who would fain lord it over righteous men; and we may well be of good comfort under the rebukes of the ungodly since their power to hurt us is destroyed by the Lord himself. "The Lord rebuke thee" is answer enough for all the accusations of men or devils.

In the fifth of the former octave the Psalmist wrote, "I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth, and here he continues in the same strain, giving a particular instance of the Lord's judgments against haughty rebels. In the next two portions the fifth verses deal with lying and vanity, and pride is one of the most common forms of those evils.

22. "*Remove from me reproach and contempt.*" These are painful things to tender minds. David could bear them for righteousness' sake, but they were a heavy yoke, and he longed to be free from them. To be slandered, and then to be despised in consequence of the vile accusation, is a grievous affliction. No one likes to be traduced, or even to be despised. He who says, "I care nothing for my reputation," is not a wise man, for in Solomon's esteem "a good name is better than precious ointment." The best way to deal with slander is to pray about it: God will either remove it, or remove the sting from it. Our own attempts at clearing ourselves are usually failures; we are like the boy who wished to remove the blot from his copy, and by his bungling made it ten times worse. When we suffer from a libel it is better to pray about it than go to law over it, or even to demand an apology from the inventor. O ye who are reproached, take your matters before the highest court, and leave them with the Judge of all the earth. God will rebuke your proud accuser; be ye quiet and let your advocate plead your cause.

"*For I have kept thy testimonies.*" Innocence may justly ask to be cleared from reproach. If there be truth in the charges alleged against us what can we urge with God? If, however, we are wrongfully accused our appeal has a *locus standi* in the court and cannot be refused. If through fear of reproach we forsake the divine testimony we shall deserve the coward's doom; our safety lies in sticking close to the true and to the right. God will keep those who keep his testimonies. A good conscience is the best security for a good name; reproach will not abide with those who abide with Christ, neither will contempt remain upon those who remain faithful to the ways of the Lord.

This verse stands as a parallel both in sense and position to verse 6, and it has the catchword of "testimonies," by which it chimes with 14.

23. "*Princes also did sit and speak against me.*" David was high game, and the great ones of the earth went a hawking after him. Princes saw in him a greatness which they envied, and therefore they abused him. On their thrones they might have found something better to consider and speak about, but they turned the seat of judgment into the seat of the scorner. Most men covet a prince's good word, and to be spoken ill of by a great man is a great discouragement to them, but the Psalmist bore his trial with holy calmness. Many of the lordly ones were his enemies, and made it their business to speak ill of him: they held sittings for scandal, sessions for slander, parliaments of falsehood, and yet he survived all their attempts upon him.

"*But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*" This was brave indeed. He was God's servant, and therefore he attended to his Master's business; he was God's servant, and therefore felt sure that his Lord would defend him. He gave no heed to his princely slanderers, he did not even allow his thoughts to be disturbed by a knowledge of their plotting in conclave. Who were these malignants that they should rob God of his servant's attention, or deprive the Lord's chosen of a moment's devout communion. The rabble of princes were not worth five minutes' thought, if those five minutes had to be taken from holy meditation. It is very beautiful to see the two sittings: the princes sitting to reproach David, and David sitting with his God and his Bible, answering his traducers by never answering them at all. Those who feed upon the word grow strong and peaceful, and are by God's grace hidden from the strife of tongues.

Note that in the close of the former octave he had said, "I will meditate," and here he shows how he had redeemed his promise, even under great provocation to

forget it. It is a praiseworthy thing when the resolve of our happy hours is duly carried out in our seasons of affliction.

Verse 24. "*Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*" They were not only themes for meditation, but "also" sources of delight and means of guidance. While his enemies took counsel with each other the holy man took counsel with the testimonies of God. The fowlers could not drive the bird from its nest with all their noise. It was *their* delight to slander and *his* delight to meditate. The words of the Lord serve us for many purposes; in our sorrows they are our delight, and in our difficulties they are our guide; we derive joy from them and discover wisdom in them. If we desire to find comfort in the Scriptures we must submit ourselves to their counsel, and when we follow their counsel it must not be with reluctance but with delight. This is the safest way of dealing with those who plot for our ruin; let us give more heed to the true testimonies of the Lord than to the false witness of our foes. The best answer to accusing princes is the word of the justifying King.

In verse 16 David said, "I will delight in thy statutes," and here he says "they are my delight:" thus resolutions formed in God's strength come to fruit, and spiritual desires ripen into actual attainments. O that it might be so with all the readers of these lines.

NOTES ON VERSES 17 TO 24.

Verse 17.—"*Deal bountifully with thy servant,*" etc. These words might be—Render unto thy servant, or upon thy servant. A deep signification seems to be here involved. The holy man will take the responsibility of being dealt with, not certainly as a mere sinful man, but as a man placing himself in the way appointed for reconciliation. Such we find to be the actual case, as you read in the 16th verse, in the Part immediately preceding —" I will delight myself in thy statutes ; I will not forget thy word." Now, the statutes of the Lord referred pre-eminently to the sacrifice for sin, and the cleansings for purifications that were prescribed in the Law. You have to conceive of the man of God as being in the midst of the Levitical ritual, for which you find him making all preparations : 1 Chron. xxii., xxiii., xxiv. Placing himself, therefore, upon these, he woud pray the Lord to deal with him according to them ; or, as we, in New Testament language, would say,—placing himself on the great atonement, the believer would pray the Lord to deal with him acco ding to his standing in Christ, which would be in graciousness or bounty. For if the Lord be just to condemn without the atonement, he is also just to pardon through the atonement ; yea, he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 17.—"*Deal bountifully,*" etc. O Lord, I am constantly resolved to obey and adhere to thy known will all the days of my life : O make me those gracious returns which thou hast promised to all such.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 17.—"*Deal bountifully . . . that I may keep thy word,*" etc. A faithful servant should count his by-past service richly rewarded by being employed yet more in further service, as this prayer teacheth ; for David entreats that he may live and keep God's word.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 17.—"*Bountifully.*" And indeed, remembering what a poor, weak, empty, and helpless creature the most experienced believer is in himself, it is not to be conceived that anything short of a *bountiful* supply of grace can answer the emergency.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 17.—"*Thy servant.*" That he styles himself so frequently the servant of God notes the reverent estimation he had of his God, in that he accounts it more honourable to be called the servant of God who was above him than the king of a mighty, ancient, and most famous people that were under him. And indeed, since the angels are styled his ministers, shall men think it a shame to serve him ? and especially since he of his goodness hath made them our servants, " ministering spirits " to us ? Should we not joyfully serve him who hath made all his creatures to serve us, and exempted us from the service of all other, and hath only bound us to serve himself ?—*William Cowper.*

Verse 17.—"*That I may live.*" As a man must "*live*" in order to work, the first petition is, that God would "*deal with his servant,*" according to the measure of grace and mercy, enabling him to "*live*" the life of faith, and strengthening him by the Spirit of might in the inner man.—*George Horne,* 1730—1792.

Verse 17.—"*That I may live, and keep thy word.*" David joins here two together, which whosoever disjoins cannot be blessed. He desires to live ; but so to live that he may keep God's word. To a reprobate man, who lives a rebel to his Maker, it had been good (as our Saviour said of Judas) that he had never been born. The shorter his life is, the fewer are his sins and the smaller his judgments. But to an elect man, life is a great benefit ; for by it he goes from election to glorification, by the way of sanctification. The longer he lives, the more good he doth, to the glory of God, the edification of others, and confirmation of his own salvation ; making it sure to himself by wrestling and victory in temptations, and perseverance in well doing.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 18.—"*Open thou mine eyes.*" Who is able to know the secret and hidden things of the Scriptures unless Christ opens his eyes ? Certainly, no one ; for " No man knoweth the Son but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Wherefore, as suppliants, we draw near to him, saying, "*Open thou mine eyes,*" etc. The words of God cannot be kept except they be known; neither can they be known unless the eyes shall be opened,—hence it is written, "*That I may live and keep thy word ;*" and then, "*Open thou mine eyes.*"—*Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 18.—"*Open thou mine eyes.*" "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" was the gracious inquiry of the loving Jesus to a poor longing one on earth. "Lord! that I may receive my sight," was the instant answer. So here, in the same spirit, and to the same compassionate and loving Lord, does the Psalmist pray, "*Open thou mine eyes;*" and both in this and the preceding petition, "Deal bountifully with thy servant," we see at once who prompted the prayer.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 18.—"*Open thou mine eyes.*" If it be asked, seeing David was a regenerate man, and so illumined already, how is it that he prays for the opening of his eyes? The answer is easy: that our regeneration is wrought by degrees. The beginnings of light in his mind made him long for more; for no man can account of sense, but he who hath it. The light which he had caused him to see his own darkness; and therefore, feeling his wants, he sought to have them supplied by the Lord.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 18.—"*Open thou mine eyes.*" The saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law, but of their own blindness. The Psalmist doth not say, Lord make a plainer law, but, Lord, *open mine eyes:* blind men might as well complain of God, that he doth not make a sun whereby they might see. The word is "a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Pet. i. 19). There is no want of light in the Scripture, but there is a veil of darkness upon our hearts; so that if in this clear light we cannot see, the defect is not in the word, but in ourselves.

The light which they beg is not anything besides the word. When God is said to enlighten us, it is not that we should expect new revelations, but that we may see the wonders in his word, or get a clear sight of what is already revealed. Those that vent their own dreams under the name of the Spirit, and divine light, they do not give you *mysteria*, but *monstra*, portentous opinions; they do not show you the wondrous things of God's law, but the prodigies of their own brain; unhappy abortives, that die as soon as they come to light. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah viii. 20). The light which we have is not without the word, but by the word.

The Hebrew phrase signifieth "*unveil mine eyes.*" There is a double work, negative and positive. There is a taking away of the veil, and an infusion of light. Paul's cure of his natural blindness is a fit emblem of our cure of spiritual blindness: "Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith" (Acts ix. 18). First, the scales fall from our eyes, and then we receive sight.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 18.—The Psalmist asks for no new revelation. It was in God's hand to give this, and he did it in his own time to those ancient believers; but to all of them at every time there was enough given for the purposes of life. The request is not for more, but that he may employ well that which he possesses. Still better does such a form of request suit us, to whom life and immortality have been brought to light in Christ. If we do not find sufficient to exercise our thoughts with constant freshness, and our soul with the grandest and most attractive subjects, it is because we want the eyesight. It is of great importance for us to be persuaded of this truth, that there are many things in the Bible still to be found out, and that, if we come in the right spirit, we may be made discoverers of some of them. These things disclose themselves, not so much to learning, though that is not to be despised, as to spiritual sight, to a humble, loving heart.

And this at least is certain, that we shall always find things that are new to *ourselves*. However frequently we traverse the field, we shall perceive some fresh golden vein turning up its glance to us, and we shall wonder how our eyes were formerly holden that we did not see it. It was all there waiting for us, and we feel that more is waiting, if we had the vision. There is a great Spirit in it that holds deeper and even deeper converse with our souls.

This further may be observed, that the Psalmist asks for no new faculty. The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened. It is not the bestowal of a new and supernatural power which enables a man to read the Bible to profit, but the quickening of a power he already possesses. In one view it is supernatural, as God is the Author of the illumination by a direct act of his Spirit; in another it is natural, as it operates through the faculties existing in a man's soul. God gives "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of man's understanding may be enlightened." (Eph. i. 17.) It is important to remember this also, for here lies our responsibility, that we have the faculty, and here also is the point at which we must begin action with the help of God. A man

will never grow into the knowledge of God's word by idly waiting for some new gift of discernment, but by diligently using that which God has already bestowed upon him, and using at the same time all other helps that lie within his reach. There are men and books that seem, beyond others, to have the power of aiding insight. All of us have felt it in the contact of some affinity of nature which makes them our best helpers; the kindred clay upon the eyes by which the great Enlightener removes our blindness (John ix. 6). Let us seek for such, and if we find them let us employ them without leaning on them. Above all, let us give our whole mind in patient, loving study to the book itself, and where we fail, at any essential part, God will either send his evangelist Philip to our aid (Acts. viii) or instruct us himself. But it is only to patient, loving study that help is given. God could have poured all knowledge into us by easy inspiration, but it is by earnest search alone that it can become the treasure of the soul.

But if so, it may still be asked what is the meaning of this prayer, and why does the Bible itself insist so often on the indispensable need of the Spirit of God to teach? Now there is a side here as true as the other, and in no way inconsistent with it. If prayer without effort would be presumptuous, effort without prayer would be vain. The great reason why men do not feel the power and beauty of the Bible is a spiritual one. They do not realize the grand evil which the Bible has come to cure, and they have not a heart to the blessings which it offers to bestow. The film of a fallen nature, self-maintained, is upon their eyes while they read: "The eyes of their understanding are darkened, being alienated from the life of God" (Eph. iv. 18). All the natural powers will never find the true key to the Bible, till the thoughts of sin and redemption enter the heart, and are put in the centre of the Book. It is the part of the Father of lights, by the teaching of his Spirit, to give this to the soul, and he will, if it humbly approaches him with this request. Thus we shall study as one might a book with the author at hand, to set forth the height of its argument, or as one might look on a noble composition, when the artist breathes into us a portion of his soul, to let us feel the centre of its harmonies of form and colour. Those who have given to the Bible thought and prayer will own that these are not empty promises.—*John Kerr, in a Sermon entitled, "God's Word Suited to Man's Sense of Wonder,"* 1877.

Verse 18.—O let us never forget, that the wonderful things contained in the divine law can neither be discovered nor relished by the "natural man," whose powers of perception and enjoyment are limited in their range to the objects of time and sense. It is the divine Spirit alone who can lighten the darkness of our sinful state, and who can enable us to perceive the glory, the harmony, and moral loveliness which everywhere shine forth in the pages of revealed truth.—*John Morison*, 1829.

Verse 18.—"*Uncover my eyes and I will look—wonders out of thy law.*" The last clause is a kind of exclamation after his eyes have been uncovered. This figure is often used to denote inspiration or a special divine communication. "*Out of thy law,*" *i.e.*, brought out to view, as if from a place of concealment.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 18.—"*Wondrous things.*" Many were the signs and miracles which God wrought in the midst of the people of Israel, which they did not understand. What was the reason? Moses tells us expressly what it was: "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (Deut. xxix. 4). They had sensitive eyes and ears, yea, they had a rational heart or mind; but they wanted a spiritual ear to hear, a spiritual heart or mind to apprehend and improve those wonderful works of God; and these they had not, because God had not given them such eyes, ears, and hearts. Wonders without grace cannot open the eyes fully; but grace without wonders can. And as man hath not an eye to see the wonderful works of God spiritually, until it is given; so, much less hath he an eye to see the wonders of the word of God till it be given him from above; and therefore David prays, "*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*" And if the wondrous things of the law are not much seen till God give an eye then much less are the wondrous things of the Gospel. The light of nature shows us somewhat of the Law; but nothing of the Gospel was ever seen by the light of nature. Many who have seen and admired, some excellencies in the Law could never see, and therefore have derided, that which is the excellency of the Gospel, till God had opened their heart to understand.—*Joseph Caryl*, 1602—1673.

Verse 18.—"The word is very nigh" unto us; and, holding in our hand a document that teems with what is wonderful, the sole question is, "Have we an eye to

its marvels, a heart for its mercies?" Here is the precise use of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit puts nothing new into the Bible; he only so enlightens and strengthens our faculties, that we can discern and admire what is there already. It is not the telescope which draws out that rich sparkling of stars on the blue space, which to the naked eye seem points of light, and untenanted: it is not the microscope which condenses the business of a stirring population into the circumference of a drop of water, and clothes with a thousand tints the scarcely discernible wing of the ephemeral insect. The stars are shining in their glory, whether or no we have the instruments to penetrate the azure; and the tiny tenantry are carrying on their usual concerns, and a rich garniture still forms the covering of the insect, whether or no the powerful lens has turned for us the atom into a world, and transformed the almost imperceptible down into the sparkling plumage of the bird of paradise. Thus the wonderful things are already in the Bible. The Spirit who indited them at first brings them not as new revelations to the individual; but, by removing the mists of carnal prejudice, by taking away the scales of pride and self-sufficiency, and by rectifying the will, which causes the judgment to look at truth through a distorted medium,—by influencing the heart, so that the affections shall no longer blind the understanding,—by these and other modes, which might be easily enumerated, the Holy Ghost enables men to recognize what is hid, to perceive beauty and to discover splendour where all before had appeared without form and comeliness; and thus brings round the result of the Bible, in putting on the lip the wonderful prayer which he had himself inspired: "*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,*"—*Henry Melvill*, 1798—1871.

Verse 18.—The "*wondrous things*" seem to be the great things of an eternal world—he had turned his enquiring eyes upon the wonders of nature, sun, moon, and stars, mountains, trees, and rivers. He had seen many of the wonders of art; but now, he wanted to see the spiritual wonders contained in the Bible. He wanted to know about God himself in all his majesty, purity, and grace. He wanted to learn the way of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, and the glory that is to follow.

"*Open mine eyes.*"—David was not blind—his eye was not dim. He could read the Bible from end to end, and yet he felt that he needed more light. He felt that he needed to see deeper, to have the eyes of his understanding opened. He felt that if he had nothing but his own eyes and natural understanding, he would not discover the wonders which he panted to see. He wanted divine teaching—the eye-salve of the Spirit; and therefore he would not open the Bible without this prayer, "*Open thou mine eyes.*"—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, 1813—1843.

Verse 18.—"*Wondrous things.*" Wherefore useth he this word "*wondrous?*" It is as if he would have said, Although the world taketh the law of God to be but a light thing, and it seemeth to be given but as it were for simple souls and young children; yet for all that there seemeth such a wisdom to be in it, as that it surmounteth all the wisdom of the world, and that therein lie hid wonderful secrets.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 18.—"*Thy law.*" That which is the *object* of the understanding prayed for, that in the knowledge whereof the Psalmist would be illuminated, is תּוֹרָה. The word signifies instruction; and being referred unto God, it is his teaching or instruction of us by the revelation of himself, the same which we intend by the Scripture. When the books of the Old Testament were completed they were, for distinction's sake, distributed into תּוֹרָה, כְּתוּבִים and נְבִיאִים, or the "Law," the "Psalms," and the "Prophets," Luke xxiv. 44. Under that distribution *Torah* signifies the five books of Moses. But whereas these books of Moses were, as it were, the foundation of all future revelations under the Old Testament, which were given in the explication thereof, all the writings of it were usually called "the Law," Isaiah viii. 20. By the *law*, therefore, in this place, the Psalmist understands all the books that were then given unto the church by revelation for the rule of its faith and obedience. And that by the *law*, in the Psalms, the written law is intended, is evident from the first of them, wherein he is declared blessed who "meditateth therein day and night," Ps. i. 2; which hath respect unto the command of reading and meditating on the *books thereof* in that manner, Josh. i. 8. That, therefore, which is intended by this word is the entire revelation of the will of God, given unto the church for the rule of its faith and obedience—that is, the holy Scripture.

In this law there are נִפְלָאוֹת "*wonderful things*," פָּלָא signifies to be "wonderful," to be "hidden," to be "great" and "high;" that which men by the use of reason cannot attain unto or understand (hence נִפְלָאוֹת are things that have such an impression

of divine wisdom and power upon them as that they are justly the object of our admiration); that which is too hard for us; as Deut. xvii. 8, כִּי יִפָּלֵא מִמְּךָ דָבָר—"If a matter be too hard for thee," hid from thee. And it is the name whereby the miraculous works of God are expressed, Ps. lxxvii. 11, lxxviii. 11. Wherefore, these "wonderful things of the law" are those expressions and effects of divine wisdom in the Scripture which are above the natural reason and understanding of men to find out and comprehend. Such are the mysteries of divine truth in the Scripture, especially because Christ is in them, whose name is "Wonderful," Isa. ix. 6; for all the great and marvellous effects of infinite wisdom meet in him.—*John Owen*, 1616—1683.

Verse 18.—"*Wondrous things.*" There are promises in God's word that no man has ever tried to find. There are treasures of gold and silver in it that no man has taken the pains to dig for. There are medicines in it for the want of knowledge of which hundreds have died. It seems to me like some old baronial estate that has descended to a man who lives in a modern house, and thinks it scarcely worth while to go and look into the venerable mansion. Year after year passes away and he pays no attention to it, since he has no suspicion of the valuable treasures it contains, till, at last, some man says to him, "Have you been up in the country to look at that estate?" He makes up his mind that he will take a look at it. As he goes through the porch he is surprised to see the skill that has been displayed in its construction: he is more and more surprised as he goes through the halls. He enters a large room and is astonished as he beholds the wealth of pictures on the walls, among which are portraits of many of his revered ancestors. He stands in amazement before them. There is a Titians, there a Raphael, there is a Correggio, and there is a Giorgione. He says, "I never had any idea of these before." "Ah," says the steward, "there is many another thing that you know nothing about in the castle," and he takes him from room to room and shows carved plate, and wonderful statues, and the man exclaims, "Here I have been for a score of years the owner of this estate, and have never before known what things were in it." But no architect ever conceived of such an estate as God's word, and no artist, or carver, or sculptor, ever conceived of such pictures, and carved dishes, and statues as adorn its apartments. It contains treasures that silver, and gold, and precious stones are not to be mentioned with.—*Henry Ward Beecher*, 1872.

Verse 18.—"*That I may behold wondrous things.*" The great end of the Word of God in the Psalmist's time, as now, was practical; but there is a secondary use here referred to, which is worthy of consideration,—its power of meeting man's faculty of wonder. God knows our frame, for he made it, and he must have adapted the Bible to all its parts. If we can show this, it may be another token that the book comes from Him who made man . . . . That God has bestowed upon man the faculty of wonder we all know. It is one of the first and most constant emotions in our nature. We can see this in children, and in all whose feelings are still fresh and natural. It is the parent of the desire to know, and all through life it is urging men to enquire.—*John Ker.*

Verse 18.—"*Wondrous things out of thy law.*" In cxviii. we had the "wondrous" character of redemption; in cxix. we have the "wonders" (verses 18, 27, 129), of God's revelation.—*William Kay*, 1871.

Verses 18, 19.—When I cannot have Moses to tell me the meaning, saith Saint Augustine, give me that Spirit that thou gavest to Moses. And this is that which every man that will understand must pray for: this David prayed for;—"*Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wonders of the Law;*" and (verse 19) "*hide not thy commandments from me.*" And Christ saith, "If you, being evil, can give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" so that then we shall see the secrets of God.—*Richard Stock* (—1626).

Verse 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth.*" David had experience of peace and war, of riches and poverty, of pleasure and woe. He had been a private and public person; a shepherd, a painful calling; a soldier, a bloody trade; a courtier, an honourable slavery, which joineth together in one the lord and the parasite, the gentleman and the drudge; and he was a king,—a glorious name, filled up with fears and cares. All these he had passed through, and found least rest when he was at the highest, less content on the throne than in the sheepfolds. All this he had observed and laid up in his memory, and this his confession is an epitome and brief of all; and in effect he telleth us, that whatsoever he had seen in this his passage, whatsoever he had

enjoyed, yet he found nothing so certain as this,—that he had found nothing certain, nothing that he could abide with or would abide with him, but that he was still as a passenger and "*stranger in the earth.*"—*Anthony Farindon*, 1596—1658.

Verse 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth,*" etc. As a sojourner, he hath renounced the world, which is therefore become his enemy; as "*a stranger*" he is fearful of losing his way; on these accounts he requesteth that God would compensate the loss of earthly comforts by affording the light of heaven; that he would not "*hide his commandments,*" but show and teach him those steps, by which he may ascend toward heaven, rejoicing in hope of future glory.—*George Horne*, 1730—1792.

Verse 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth.*" This confession from a solitary wanderer would have had little comparative meaning; but in the mouth of one who was probably surrounded with every source of worldly enjoyment, it shows at once the vanity of "earth's best joys," and the heavenly tendency of the religion of the Bible.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth,*" etc. 1. Every man here upon earth (especially a godly man) is but a stranger and a passenger. 2. It concerns him that is a stranger to look after a better and a more durable state. Every man should do so. A man's greatest care should be for that place where he lives longest; therefore eternity should be his scope. A godly man will do so. Those whose hearts are not set upon earthly things, they must have heaven. The more their affections are estranged from the one, the more they are taken up about the other (Col. iii. 2); heaven and earth are like two scales in a balance, that which is taken from the one is put into the other. 3. There is no sufficient direction how to obtain this durable estate, but in the word of God. Without this we are but like poor pilgrims and wayfaring men in a strange country, not able to discern the way home. A blessed state is only sufficiently revealed in the word: "Life and immortality is brought to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). The heathens did but guess at it, and had some obscure sense of an estate after this life; but as it is brought to light with most clearness in the word, so the way thither is only pointed out by the word. It is the word of God makes us wise to salvation, and which is our line and rule to heavenly Canaan; and therefore it concerns those that look after this durable state to consult with the word. 4. There is no understanding God's word but by the light of the Spirit. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job xxxii. 8). Though the word have light in it, yet the spirit of man cannot move till God enlightens us with that lively light that makes way for the dominion of the truth in our hearts, and conveyeth influence into our hearts. This is the light David begs when he says, "*Hide not thy commandments from me.*" David was not ignorant of the Ten Commandments, of their sound; but he begs their spiritual sense and use. 5. If we would have the Spirit we must ask it of God in prayer; for God gives the "Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke xi. 13); and therefore we must say, as David, "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles" (Ps. xliii. 33).—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 19.—"*I am a stranger in the earth,*" etc. When a child is born, it is spoken of sometimes under the designation of "a little stranger!" Friends calling will ask if, as a privilege, they may "see the little stranger." A stranger, indeed! come from far. From the immensities. From the presence, and touch, and being of God! And going—into the immensities again—into, and through all the unreckonable ages of duration.

But the little stranger grows, and in a while begins to take vigorous root. He works, and wins, and builds, and plants, and buys, and holds, and, in his own feeling, becomes so "settled" that he would be almost amused with anyone who should describe him as a stranger now.

And still life goes on, deepening and widening in its flow, and holding in itself manifold and still multiplying elements of interest. Increasingly the man is caught by these—like a ship, from which many anchors are cast into the sea. He strives among the struggling, rejoices with the gay, feels the spur of honour, enters the race of acquisition, does some hard and many kindly things by turns; multiplies his engagements, his relationships, his friends, and then—just when after such preparations, life ought to be fully beginning, and opening itself out into a great, restful, sunny plain—lo! the shadows begin to fall, which tell, too surely, that it is drawing fast to a close. The voice, which, soon or late, everyone must hear, is calling for "the little stranger," who was born not long ago, whose first lesson is over, and who is

wanted now to enter by the door called death, into another school. And the stranger is not ready. He has thrown out so many anchors, and they have taken such a fast hold of the ground that it will be no slight matter to raise them. He is *settled*. He has no pilgrim's staff at hand ; and his eye, familiar enough with surrouding things, is not accustomed to the onward and ascending way, cannot so well measure the mountain altitude, or reckon the far distance. The progress of time has been much swifter than the progress of his thought. Alas ! he has made one long mistake. He has " looked at the things which are seen," and forgotten the things which are not seen. And " the things which are seen " are temporal, and go with time into extinction ; while " those which are not seen, are eternal." And so there is hurry, and confusion, and distress in the last hours, and in the going away. Now, all this may be obviated and escaped, thoroughly, if a man will but say—" *I am a stranger in the earth : hide not thy commandments from me.*"—*Alexander Raleigh, in " The Little Sanctuary, and other Meditations."* 1872.

Verse 19.—" *I am a stranger in the earth,*" etc. In the law, God recommends strangers to the care and compassion of his people ; now David returns the arguments to him, to persuade him to deal kindly with him.—*Robert Leighton*, 1611—1684.

Verse 19.—" *In the earth.*" He makes no exception here ; the whole earth he acknowledged a place of his pilgrimage. Not only when he was banished among the Moabites and Philistines was he a stranger; but even when he lived peaceably at home in Canaan, still he thinks himself a stranger. This consideration moved godly Basil to despise the threatening of Modestus, the deputy of Valens the emperor, when he braved him with banishment. *Ab exilii metu liber sum, unam hominum cognoscens esse patriam, paradisum omnem autem terram commune naturæ exilium.* And it shall move us to keep spiritual sobriety in the midst of pleasures, if we remember that in our houses, at our own fireside, and in our own beds, we are but strangers from which we must shortly remove, to give place to others.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 19.—" *Hide not thy commandments from me.*" The manner of David's reasoning is this. I am here a stranger and I know not the way, therefore, Lord, direct me. The similitude is taken from passengers, who coming to an uncouth country where they are ignorant of the way, seek the benefit of a guide. But the dissimilitude is here : in any country people can guide a stranger to the place where he would be ; but the dwellers of the earth cannot show the way to heaven ; and therefore David seeks no guide among them, but prays the Lord to direct him.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 19.—" *Hide not thy commandments from me.*" There is a hiding of the word of God when means to hear it explained by preachers are wanting ; and there is a hiding of the comfortable and lively light of the Spirit, who must quicken the word unto us. From both those evils we may, and we should, pray to be saved.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 20.—" *My soul breaketh,*" etc. Here is a protestation of that earnest desire he had to the obedience of the word of God ; he amplifies it two ways : first, it was no light motion, but such as being deeply rooted made his heart to *break* when he saw that he could not do in the obedience thereof what he would. Next, it was no vanishing motion, like the morning dew ; but it was permanent, *omni tempore*, he had it *at all times.—William Cowper.*

Verse 20.—" *My soul breaketh for the longing,*" as one that with straining breaks a vein.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 20.—" *My soul breaketh,*" etc. This breaking is by rubbing, chafing, or crushing. The spirit was so *fretted* with its yearning desire after the things which Jehovah had spoken, that it was broken as by heavy friction. The " *longing* " to find out and follow the hidden wonders was almost unbearable. This *longing* continued with the Psalmist " *at all times,*" or " in every season." Prosperity could not make him forget it ; adversity could not quench it. In sickness or health, in happiness or sadness, in company or alone, nothing overcame that *longing.* "*The wondrous things*" were so wonderful, and still so hidden. To see a little of " the beauty of the Lord " is to get to know how much there is which we fail to see, and thus to *long* more than ever. He who pursues ardently the wonders of the word of the Lord, will never set that *longing* at rest as long as he remains " in the earth." It is only when we shall " be like him," and " shall see him as he is," that we shall cry " Enough, Lord ! " " I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."—*F. G. Marchant.*

Verse 20.—"*My soul breaketh for the longing.*" For the earnest desire. "That it hath *unto thy judgments at all times.*" Thy law; thy commands. This was a constant feeling. It was not fitful, or spasmodic. It was the steady, habitual state of the soul on the subject. He had never seen enough of the beauty and glory of the law of God to feel that all the wants of his nature were satisfied, or that he could see and know no more; he had seen and felt enough to excite in him an ardent desire to be made fully acquainted with *all* that there is in the law of God.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 20.—"*My soul breaketh for the longing,*" etc. The desire after God's appointments becomes painfully intense. A longing—an intense longing—for the judgments of the Lord at all times. These are the particulars of his breaking soul. His whole mind is toward the things of God. He prays that he may behold the wondrous things of Jehovah's law, and that he may not hide his commandments from him; and here his soul breaks for longing towards his judgments at all times. The state of the Psalmist's mind would not lead us here to suppose that he was awaiting the manifestation of the Lord's judgments in vindicating his cause against ungodly men, or that he was longing for opportunity of fulfilling all the deeds of righteousnes towards his fellow-men; for this he was doing to the utmost. Evidently he is intent upon the ordinances of religion, which were called "*judgments*" in reference to the solemn sanctions with which they were enjoined. The man of God so longed to join with the Lord's people in these, that his heart was ready to break with desire, as he was forced from place to place in the wilderness. The renewed heart is here. Another might long to be delivered from persecution, to be at rest, to be restored to home, relations, and comfort. The man of God could not but desire those natural enjoyments; but, over all, his holy mind longed with ardour for the celebration of Jehovah's worship.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 20.—"*Thy judgments.*" God's judgments are of two sorts: first, his commands; so called because by them right is judged and discerned from wrong. Next, his plagues executed upon transgressors according to his word. David here refers to the first. Let men who have not the like of David's desire, remember, that they whose heart cannot break for transgressing God's word because they love it, shall find the plagues of God to bruise their body and break their heart also. Let us delight in the first sort of these judgments, and the second shall never come upon us.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 20.—Mark that word, "*at all times.*" Bad men have their good moods, as good men have their bad moods. A bad man may, under gripes of conscience, a smarting rod, the approaches of death, or the fears of hell, or when he is sermon sick, cry out to the Lord for grace, for righteousness, for holiness; but he is the only blessed man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness at all times.—*Thomas Brooks,* 1608—1680.

Verse 20.—"*At all times.*" Some prize the word in adversity, when they have no other comfort to live upon; then they can be content to study the word to comfort them in their distresses; but when they are well at ease, they despise it. But David made use of it "*at all times;*" in prosperity, to humble him; in adversity, to comfort him; in the one, to keep him from pride; in the other, to keep him from despair in affliction, the word was his cordial; in worldly increase, it was his antidote; and so at all times his heart was carried out to the word either for one necessity or another.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 20.—"*At all times.*" How few are there even among the servants of God who know anything of the intense feeling of devotion here expressed! O that our cold and stubborn hearts were warmed and subdued by divine grace, that we might be ready to faint by reason of the longing which he had "*at all times*" for the judgments of our God. How fitful are our best feelings! If to-day we ascend the mount of communion with God, to-morrow we are in danger of being again entangled with the things of earth. How happy are they whose hearts are "*at all times*" filled with longings after fellowship with the great and glorious object of their love!—*John Morison,* 1829.

Verse 20.—If you read the lives of good men, who have been, also, intellectually great, you will be struck, I think, even to surprise, a surprise, however, which will not be unpleasant, to find them, at the close of life, in their own estimation so ignorant, so utterly imperfect, so little the better of the long life-lesson. Dr. Chalmers, after kindling churches and arousing nations to their duties, summed up his own attainments in the word "desirousness," and took as the text that best described his inner

state, that passionate, almost painful cry of David, "*My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments.*" But how grand was the attainment! To be in old age as simple as a little child before God! To be still learning at threescore years and ten! How beautiful seem the great men in their simplicity!—*Alexander Raleigh, in "The Little Sanctuary,"* 1872.

Verse 21.—"*Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed.*" If the proud escape here, as sometimes they do, hereafter they shall not; for, "*the proud man is an abomination to the Lord;*" Prov. xvi. 5. *God cannot endure him;* Ps. ci. 5. And what of that? *Tu perdes superbos*, Thou shalt destroy the proud. The very heathens devised the proud giants struck with thunder from heaven. And *if God spared not the angels*, whom he placed in the highest heavens, *but* for their pride *threw them down headlong to the nethermost hell*, how much less shall he spare the proud dust and ashes of the sons of men, but shall cast them from the height of their earthly altitude to the bottom of that infernal dungeon! "Humility makes men angels; pride makes angels devils;" as that father said: I may well add, makes devils of men. Αλαζονείας οὐτις εκφευγει δικὴν, says the heathen poet, Menander; "Never soul escaped the revenge of pride," never shall escape it. So sure as God is just, pride shall not go unpunished. I know now we are all ready to call for a bason, with Pilate, and to wash our hands from this foul sin. Honourable and beloved, this vice is a close one; it will cleave fast to you; yea, so close that ye can hardly discern it from a piece of yourselves: this is it that aggravates the danger of it. For, as Aquinas notes well, some sins are more dangerous, *propter vehementiam impugnationis*, "for the fury of their assault;" as the sin of anger: others for their correspondence to nature; as the sins of lust: other, *propter latentiam sui*, "for their close skulking" in our bosom; as the sin of pride. Oh, let us look seriously into the corners of our false hearts, even with the lanthorn of God's law, and find out this subtle devil; and never give peace to our souls till we have dispossessed him. Down with your proud plumes, O ye glorious peacocks of the world: look upon your black legs, and your snake-like head: be ashamed of your miserable infirmities: else, God will down with them and yourselves in a fearful vengeance. There is not the holiest of us but is this way faulty: oh, let us be humbled by our repentance, that we may not be brought down to everlasting confusion: let us be cast down upon our knees, that we may not be cast down upon our faces. For God will make good his own word, one way; "A man's pride shall bring him low."—*Joseph Hall*, 1574—1656.

Verse 21.—"*Thou hast rebuked the proud.*" Let the histories of Cain, Pharaoh, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod, exhibit the proud under the rebuke and curse of God. He abhors their persons and their offerings: he "knows them afar off:" he "resisteth them:" he scattereth them in the imaginations of their hearts." Yet more especially hateful are they in his sight, when cloaking themselves under a spiritual garb,—"which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me: for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." David and Hezekiah are instructive beacons in the church, that God's people, whenever they give place to the workings of a proud heart, must not hope to escape his rebuke. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions:" Ps. xcix. 8.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 21.—"*Thou hast rebuked the proud.*" David addeth another reason whereby he is more enflamed to pray unto God and to address himself unto him to be taught in his word; to wit, when he seeth that he hath so "*rebuked the proud.*" For the chastisements and punishments which God layeth upon the faithless and rebellious should be a good instruction for us; as it is said that God hath executed judgment, and that the inhabitants of the land should learn his righteousness. It is not without cause that the prophet Isaiah also hath so said; for he signifieth unto us that God hath by divers and sundry means drawn us unto him, and that chiefly when he teacheth us to fear his majesty. For without it, alas, we shall soon become like unto brute beasts: if God lay the bridle on our necks, what license we will give unto ourselves experience very well teacheth us. Now God seeing that we are so easily brought to run at random, sendeth us examples, because he would bring us to walk in fear and carefully.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 21.—"*The proud.*" This is a style commonly given to the wicked; because as it is our oldest evil, so is it the strongest and first that strives in our corrupt nature to carry men to transgress the bounds appointed by the Lord. From the time that pride entered into Adam's heart, that he would be higher than God had made him,

he spared not to eat of the forbidden tree. And what else is the cause of all transgression, but that man's ignorant pride will have his will preferred to the will of God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 21.—"*The proud.*" Peter speaks of the proud, as if they did challenge God like champions, and provoke him like rebels, so that unless he did resist them, they would go about to deprive him of his rule, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram undermined Moses. *Num.* xvi.

For so the proud man saith, I will be like the highest, Isa. xiv., and, if he could, above the highest too. This is the creature that was taken out of the dust, Gen. ii. 7, and so soon as he was made, he opposed himself against that majesty which the angels adore, the thrones worship, the devils fear, and the heavens obey. How many sins are in this sinful world! and yet, as Solomon saith of the good wife, Prov. xxxi. 29, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou surmountest them all;" so may I say of pride, many sins have done wickedly, but thou surmountest them all; for the wrathful man, the prodigal man, the lascivious man, the surfeiting man, the slothful man, is rather an enemy to himself than to God; but the proud man sets himself against God, because he doth against his laws; he maketh himself equal with God, because he doth all without God, and craves no help of him; he exalteth himself above God, because he will have his own will though it be contrary to God's will. As the humble man saith, Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give the glory, Ps. cxv. i.; so the proud man saith, Not unto Him, not unto Him, but unto us give the glory. Like unto Herod which took the name of God, and was honoured of all but the worms, and they showed that he was not a god, but a man, Acts xii. 21. Therefore proud men may be called God's enemies, because as the covetous pull riches from men, so the proud pull honour from God. Beside, the proud man hath no cause to be proud, as other sinners have; the covetous for riches, the ambitious for honour, the voluptuous for pleasure, the envious for wrong, the slothful for ease; but the proud man hath no cause to be proud, but pride itself, which saith, like Pharaoh, "I will not obey," Exod. v. 2.—*Henry Smith*, 1560—1591.

Verse 21.—"*Proud that are cursed.*"—Proud men endure the curse of never having friends; not in prosperity, because they know nobody; not in adversity, because then nobody knows them.—*John Whitecross, in "Anecdotes illustrative of the Old Testament."*

Verse 21.—This use of God's judgments upon others must we make to ourselves; first, that we may be brought to acknowledge our deserts, and so may fear; and, next, that we may so behold his justice upon the proud that we may have assurance of his mercy to the humble. This is hard to flesh and blood; for some can be brought to rejoice at the destructon of others, and cannot fear; and others, when they are made to fear, cannot receive comfort. But those which God hath joined together let us not separate: therefore let us make these uses of God's judgments.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 22.—"*Remove from me reproach and contempt.*" Here David prays against the reproach and contempt of men; that they might be *removed*, or, as the word is, *rolled from off him.* This intimates that they lay upon him, and neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned: some despise him and endeavoured to make him mean, others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill spoken of. It intimates, that this burden lay heavy upon him. Hard words indeed and foul words break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit: therefore David prays, Lord, "*remove*" them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from any duty, or discouraged in it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 22.—"*Remove from me reproach and contempt,*" etc. In the words (as in most of the other verses) you have,—1. A request: "*Remove from me reproach and contempt.*" 2. A reason and argument to enforce the request: "*For I have kept thy testimonies.*"

First, for the request, "*Remove from me reproach and contempt;*" the word signifies, Roll from upon me, let it not come at me, or let it not stay with me. And then the argument: "*for I have kept thy testimonies.*" The reason may be either thus: (1) He pleads that he was innocent of what was charged upon him, and had not deserved those aspersions. (2) He intimates that it was for his obedience, for this very cause, that he had kept the word, therefore was reproach rolled upon him. (3) It may be conceived thus, that his respect to God's word was not abated by this

reproach, he still kept God's testimonies, how wicked soever he did appear in the eyes of the world. It is either an assertion of his innocency, or he shows the ground why this reproach came upon him, or he pleads that his respect to God and his service was not lessened, whatever reproach he met with in the performance of it.

The points from hence are many. 1. It is no strange thing that they which keep God's testimonies should be slandered and reproached. 2. As it is the usual lot of God's people to be reproached; so it is very grievous to them, and heavy to bear. 3. It being grievous, we may lawfully seek the removal of it. So doth David, and so may we, with submission to God's will. 4. In removal of it, it is best to deal with God about it; for God is the great witness of our sincerity, as knowing all things, and so to be appealed to in the case. Again, God is the most powerful asserter of our innocency; he hath the hearts and tongues of men in his own hands, and can either prevent the slanderer from uttering reproach, or the hearer from the entertainment of the reproach. He that hath such power over the consciences of men can clear up our innocency; therefore it is best to deal with God about it; and prayer many times proves a better vindication than an apology. 5. In seeking relief with God from this evil, it is a great comfort and ground of confidence when we are innocent of what is charged. In some cases we must humble ourselves, and then God will take care for our credit; we must plead guilty when, by our own fault, we have given occasion to the slanders of the wicked: so, "Turn away my reproach which I fear; for thy judgments are good" (Ps. cxix. 39). "My reproach," for it was in part deserved by himself, and therefore he feared the sad consequences of it, and humbled himself before God. But at other times we may stand upon our integrity, as David saith here: "*Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 23.—"*Princes also did sit,*" under the shadow of justice, "*and speak against me.*" Now this was a great temptation to David, that he was not only mocked and scorned at the taverns and inns, being there blazoned by dissolute jesters and scoffers, and talked of in the streets and market-place; but even in the place of justice (which ought to be holy); it could not therefore be chosen but that they also would utterly defame and slander him, and condemn him to be, as it were, a most wicked and cursed man. When David then did see that he was thus unjustly entreated and handled, he maketh his complaint unto God and sayeth, "O Lord, the princes and governors themselves do sit and speak evil against me; *and yet for all that I have kept thy testimonies.*" Here in sum we are to gather out of this place, that if it so fall out, when we have walked uprightly and in a good conscience, that we are falsely slandered, and accused of this and that whereof we never once thought; yet ought we to bear all things patiently; for let us be sure of that, that we are not better than David, whatever great protestation of our integrity and purity we may dare to make. —*John Calvin.*

Verse 23.—"*But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*" As husbandmen, when their ground is overflowed by waters, make ditches and water-furrows to carry it away; so, when our minds and thoughts are overwhelmed with trouble, it is good to divert them to some other matter. But every diversion will not become saints, it must be a holy diversion: "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul" (Psalm xciv. 19). The case was the same with that of the text, when the throne of iniquity frameth mischief by a law; as you shall see here, when he had many perplexed thoughts about the abuse of power against himself. But now where lay his ease in diversion? Would every diversion suit his purpose? No; "*Thy* comforts,"—comforts of God's allowance, of God's providing, comforts proper to saints. Wicked men in trouble run to their pot and pipe, and games and sports, and merry company, and so defeat the providence rather than improve it: but David, who was God's servant, must have God's comforts. So, elsewhere, when his thoughts were troubled about the power of the wicked: "I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (Psalm lxxiii. 17). He goeth to divert his mind by the use of God's ordinances, and so cometh to be settled against the temptation.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 23.—"*But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*"—Perceive here the armour by which David fights against his enemy. *Arma justi quibus omnes adversariorum repellit impetus,* his weapons are the word and prayer. He renders not injury for injury, reproach for reproach. It is dangerous to fight against Satan or his instruments with their own weapons; for so they shall easily overcome us. Let

us fight with the armour of God—the exercises of the word and prayer: for a man may peaceably rest in his secret chamber, and in these two see the miserable end of all those who are enemies to God's children for God's sake.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 23.—"*Thy statutes.*" It is impossible to live either *Christianly* or *comfortable* without the daily use of Scripture. It is absolutely necessary for our direction in all our ways before we begin them, and when we have ended them, for the warrant of our approbation of them, for resolving of our doubts, and comforting us in our griefs. Without it our conscience is a blind guide, and leadeth us in a mist of ignorance, error, and confusion. Therein we hear God speaking to us, declaring his good will to us concerning our salvation, and the way of our obedience to meet him in his good will. What book can we read with such profit and comfort? For matter, it is wisdom: for authority, it is divine and absolute: for majesty, God himself under common words and letters expressing an unspeakable power to stamp our heart. Where shall we find our minds so enlightened, our hearts so deeply affected, our conscience so moved, both for casting us down and raising us up? I cannot find in all the books of the world, such an one speak to me, as in Scripture, with so absolute a conquest of all the powers of my soul.

Contemners of Scripture lack food for their souls, light for their life, and weapons for their spiritual warfare; but the lovers of Scripture have all that furniture. Therein we hear the voice of our Beloved, we smell the savour of his ointments, and have daily access unto the art of propitiation. If in our knowledge we desire divinity, excellency, antiquity, and efficiency, we cannot find it, but in God's word alone. It is the extract of heavenly wisdom, which Christ the eternal Word brought out of the bosom of his Father.—*William Struther*, 1633.

Verses 23, 24.—The two last verses of this section contain two protestations of David's honest affection to the word. The first is, that albeit he was persecuted and evil spoken of, and that by great and honourable men of the world, such as Saul, and Abner, and Ahithophel; yet did he still meditate in the statutes of God. It is a hard temptation when the godly are troubled by any wicked men; but much harder when they are troubled by men of honour and authority. And that, first, by reason of their *place:* the greater *power* they have, the greater *peril* to encounter with their displeasure; therefore said Solomon, "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death." Next, because authorities and powers are ordained by God, not for the terror of the good, but of the evil: Rom. xiii. 3. And therefore it is no small grief to the godly, when they find them abused to a contrary end: that where a ruler should be to good men like rain to the fields new mown, he becomes a favourer of evil men and a persecutor of the good. Then justice is turned into wormwood; that which should bring comfort to such as fear God, is abused to oppress them. And therefore it should be accounted a great benefit of God, when he gives a people good and religious rulers.—*William Cowper.*

Verses 23, 51.—If the 119th Psalm came from the pen of David, as multitudes believe, then I do not wonder that many have connected its composition with his residence in the school of the prophets of Naioth. The calm in which he then found himself, and the studies which he then prosecuted, might well have led his musings in the direction of that alphabetic code, while there are in it not a few expressions which, to say the least, may have particular reference to the dangers out of which he had so recently escaped, and by which he was still threatened. Such, for example, are the following: "*Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*" "*The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.*"—*William M. Taylor, in "David King of Israel; his Life and its Lessons."* 1880.

Verse 24.—*Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*" His delight and his counsellors, that is, his delight *because* his counsellors; his counsellors, and therefore his delight. We know how delightful it is to any to have the advantage of good counsel, according to the perplexities and distractions in which they may be. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel," says Solomon, Prov. xxvii. 9. Now this is the sweetness of Divine communion, and of meditation on God and his word; it employs a man with *seasonable counsel*, which is a very great refreshment to us.—*T. Horton*, 1673.

Verse 24.—"*Thy testimonies also are my delight,*" etc. Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight, must take them for their counsellors and be

advised by them ; and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking, take them for their delight in comfortable walking.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 24.—" *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*" What could we want more in a time of difficulty than comfort and direction ? David hath both these blessings. As the fruit of his " meditation in the Lord's statutes," in his distress they were his " *delight ;* " in his seasons of perplexity they were his " *counsellors,*" directing his behaviour in the perfect way.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 24.—" *My counsellors.*" In the Hebrew it is, " the men of my counsel," which is fitly mentioned, for he had spoken of princes sitting in council against him. Princes do nothing without the advice of their Privy-Council ; a child of God hath also his Privy-Council, God's testimonies. On the one side there was Saul and his nobles and counsellors ; on the other side there was David and God's testimonies. Now who was better furnished, think you, they to persecute and trouble him, or David how to carry himself under this trouble ? Alphonsus, king of Arragon, being asked who were the best counsellors ? answered, " The dead (meaning books), which cannot flatter, but do without partiality declare the truth." How of all such dead counsellors, God's testimonies have the pre-eminence. A poor, godly man, even then when he is deserted of all, and hath nobody to plead for him, he hath his senate and his council of state about him, the prophets and apostles, and " other holy men of God, that spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." A man so furnished, is never less alone than when alone ; for he hath counsellors about him that tell him what is to be believd or done ; and they are such counsellors as cannot err, as will not flatter him, nor applaud him in any sin, nor discourage or dissuade him from that which is good, whatever hazard it expose him to. And truly, if we be wise, we should choose such counsellors as these : " *Thy testimonies are the men of my counsel.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 24.—" *My counsellors.*" See here a sentence worthy to be weighed of us, when David calleth the commandments of God his " *counsellors.*" For, in the first place, he meaneth that he might scorn all the wisdom of the most able and most expert men in the world, since he was conducted by the word of God, and governed thereby. In the second place, he meaneth that when he shall be so governed by the word of God, he would not only be truly wise, but that it would be as if he had all the wisdom of all the men in the world, yea, and a great deal more.—*John Calvin.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 25 TO 32.

MY soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.
26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.
27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.
28 My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.
29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.
30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me.*
31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.
32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Here, it seems to me, we have the Psalmist in trouble bewailing the bondage to earthly things in which he finds his mind to be held. His soul cleaves to the dust, melts for heaviness, and cries for enlargement from its spiritual prison. In these verses we shall see the influence of the divine word upon a heart which laments its downward tendencies, and is filled with mourning because of its deadening surroundings. The word of the Lord evidently arouses prayer (25—29), confirms choice (30), and inspires renewed resolve (32): it is in all tribulation whether of body or mind the surest source of help.

This portion has D for its alphabetical letter: it sings of Depression, in the spirit of Devotion, Determination, and Dependence.

25. "*My soul cleaveth unto the dust.*" He means in part that he was full of sorrow; for mourners in the east cast dust on their heads, and sat in ashes, and the Psalmist felt as if these ensigns of woe were glued to him, and his very soul was made to cleave to them because of his powerlessness to rise above his grief. Does he not also mean that he felt ready to die? Did he not feel his life absorbed and fast held by the grave's mould, half choked by the death-dust? It may not be straining the language if we conceive that he also felt and bemoaned his earthly-mindedness and spiritual deadness. There was a tendency in his soul to cling to earth which he greatly bewailed. Whatever was the cause of his complaint, it was no surface evil, but an affair of his inmost spirit; his *soul* cleaved to the dust; and it was not a casual and accidental falling into the dust, but a continuous and powerful tendency, or *cleaving* to the earth. But what a mercy that the good man could feel and deplore whatever there was of evil in the cleaving! The serpent's seed can find their meat in the dust, but never shall the seed of the woman be thus degraded. Many are of the earth earthy, and never lament it; only the heaven-born and heaven-soaring spirit pines at the thought of being fastened to this world, and bird-limed by its sorrows or its pleasures.

"*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" More life is the cure for all our ailments. Only the Lord can give it. He can bestow it, bestow it at once, and do it according to his word, without departing from the usual course of his grace, as we see it mapped out in the Scriptures. It is well to know what to pray for,—David seeks quickening: one would have thought that he would have asked for comfort or upraising, but he knew that these would come out of increased life, and therefore he sought that blessing which is the root of the rest. When a person is depressed in spirit, weak, and bent towards the ground, the main thing is to increase his stamina and put more life into him; then his spirit revives, and his body becomes erect. In reviving the life, the whole man is renewed. Shaking off the dust is a little thing by itself, but when it follows upon quickening, it is a blessing of the greatest value; just as good spirits which flow from established health are among the choicest of our mercies. The phrase, "according to thy word," means.—according to thy revealed way of quickening thy saints. The word of God shows us that he who first made us must keep us alive, and it tells us of the Spirit of God who through the ordinances pours fresh life into our souls; we beg the Lord to act towards us in this his own regular method

of grace. Perhaps David remembered the word of the Lord in Deut. xxxii. 39, where Jehovah claims both to kill and to make alive, and he beseeches the Lord to exercise that life-giving power upon his almost expiring servant. Certainly, the man of God had not so many rich promises to rest upon as we have, but even a single word was enough for him, and he right earnestly urges "according to thy word." It is a grand thing to see a believer in the dust and yet pleading the promise, a man at the grave's mouth crying, "quicken me," and hoping that it shall be done.

Note how his first verse of the 4th octonary tallies with the first of the third (17). —"That I may live:" . . . "Quicken me." While in a happy state he begs for bountiful dealing, and when in a forlorn condition he prays for quickening. Life is in both cases the object of pursuit: that he may have life, and have it more abundantly.

26. "*I have declared my ways.*" Open confession is good for the soul. Nothing brings more ease and more life to a man than a frank acknowledgment of the evil which has caused the sorrow and the lethargy. Such a declaration proves that the man knows his own condition, and is no longer blinded by pride. Our confessions are not meant to make God know our sins, but to make us know them. "*And thou heardest me.*" His confession had been accepted; it was not lost labour; God had drawn near to him in it. We ought never to go from a duty till we have been accepted in it. Pardon follows upon penitent confession, and David felt that he had obtained it. It is God's way to forgive our sinful way when we from our hearts confess the wrong.

"*Teach me thy statutes.*" Being truly sorry for his fault, and having obtained full forgiveness, he is anxious to avoid offending again, and hence he begs to be taught obedience. He was not willing to sin through ignorance, he wished to know all the mind of God by being taught it by the best of teachers. He pined after holiness. Justified men always long to be sanctified. When God forgives our sins we are all the more fearful of sinning again. Mercy, which pardons transgression, sets us longing for grace which prevents transgression. We may boldly ask for more when God has given us much; he who has washed out the past stain will not refuse that which will preserve us from present and future defilement. This cry for teaching is frequent in the Psalm; in verse 12 it followed a sight of God, here follows from a sight of self. Every experience should lead us thus to plead it with God.

27. "*Make me to understand the way of thy precepts.*" Give me a deep insight into the practical meaning of thy word; let me get a clear idea of the tone and tenor of thy law. Blind obedience has but small beauty; God would have us follow him with our eyes open. To obey the letter of the word is all that the ignorant can hope for; if we wish to keep God's precepts in their spirit we must come to an understanding of them, and that can be gained nowhere but at the Lord's hands. Our understanding needs enlightenment and direction: he who made our understanding must also make us understand. The last sentence was, "teach me thy statutes," and the words, "make me to understand," are an instructive enlargement and exposition of that sentence: we need to be so taught that we understand what we learn. It is to be noted that the Psalmist is not anxious to understand the prophecies, but the precepts, and he is not concerned about the subtleties of the law, but the commonplaces and everyday rules of it, which are described as "the way of thy precepts."

"*So shall I talk of thy wondrous works.*" It is ill talking of what we do not understand. We must be taught of God till we understand, and then we may hope to communicate our knowledge to others with a hope of profiting them. Talk without intelligence is mere talk, and idle talk; but the words of the instructed are as pearls which adorn the ears of them that hear. When our heart has been opened to understand, our lips should be opened to impart knowledge; and we may hope to be taught ourselves when we feel in our hearts a willingness to teach the way of the Lord to those among whom we dwell.

"*Thy wondrous works.*" Remark that the clearest understanding does not cause us to cease from wondering at the ways and works of God. The fact is that the more we know of God's doings the more we admire them, and the more ready we are to speak upon them. Half the wonder in the world is born of ignorance, but holy wonder is the child of understanding. When a man understands the way of the divine precepts he never talks of his own works, and as the tongue must have some theme to speak upon, he begins to extol the works of the all-perfect Lord.

Some in this place read " meditate " or " muse " instead of " talk ; " it is singular that the words should be so near of kin, and yet it is right that they should be, for none but foolish people will talk without thinking. If we read the passage in this sense, we take it to mean that in proportion as David understood the word of God he would meditate upon it more and more. It is usually so ; the thoughtless care not to know the inner meaning of the Scriptures, while those who know them best are the very men who strive after a greater familiarity with them, and therefore give themselves up to musing upon them.

Observe the third verse of the last eight (19), and see how the sense is akin to this. There he was a stranger in the earth, and here he prays to know his way ; there, too, he prayed that the word might not be hid from himself, and here he promises that he will not hide it from others.

28. " *My soul melteth for heaviness.*" He was dissolving away in tears. The solid strength of his constitution was turning to liquid as if molten by the furnace-heat of his afflictions. Heaviness of heart is a killing thing, and when it abounds it threatens to turn life into a long death, in which a man seems to drop away in a perpetual drip of grief. Tears are the distillation of the heart ; when a man weeps he wastes away his soul. Some of us know what great heaviness means, for we have been brought under its power again and again, and often have we felt ourselves to be poured out like water, and near to being like water spilt upon the ground, never again to be gathered up. There is one good point in this downcast state, for it is better to be melted with grief than to be hardened by impenitence.

" *Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*" He had found out an ancient promise that the saints shall be strengthened, and here he pleads it. His hope in his state of depression lies not in himself, but in his God ; if he may be strengthened from on high he will yet shake off his heaviness and rise to joy again. Observe how he pleads the promise of the word, and asks for nothing more than to be dealt with after the recorded manner of the Lord of mercy. Had not Hannah sung, " He shall give strength unto his King, and exalt the horn of his anointed ? " God strengthens us by infusing grace through his word : the word which creates can certainly sustain. Grace can enable us to bear the constant fret of an abiding sorrow, it can repair the decay caused by the perpetual tear-drip, and give to the believer the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Let us always resort to prayer in our desponding times, for it is the surest and shortest way out of the depths. In that prayer let us plead nothing but the word of God ; for there is no plea like a promise, no argument like a word from our covenant God.

Note how David records his inner soul-life. In verse 20 he says, " My soul breaketh ; " in verse 25, " My soul cleaveth to the dust ; " and here, " My soul melteth." Further on, in verse 81, he cries, " My soul fainteth ; " in 109, " My soul is continually in my hand ; " in 167, " My soul hath kept thy testimonies ; and lastly, in 175, " Let my soul live." Some people do not even know that they have a soul, and here is David all soul. What a difference there is between the spiritually living and the spiritually dead.

29. " *Remove from me the way of lying.*" This is the way of sin, error, idolatry, folly, self-righteousness, formalism, hypocrisy. David would not only be kept from that way, but have it kept from him ; he cannot endure to have it near him, he would have it swept away from his sight. He desired to be right and upright, true and in the truth ; but he feared that a measure of falsehood would cling to him unless the Lord took it away, and therefore he earnestly cried for its removal. False motives may at times sway us, and we may fall into mistaken notions of our own spiritual condition before God, which erroneous conceits may be kept up by a natural prejudice in our own favour, and so we may be confirmed in a delusion, and abide under error unless grace comes to the rescue. No true heart can rest in a false view of itself ; it finds no anchorage, but is tossed to and fro till it gets into the truth and the truth into it. The true-born child of heaven sighs out and cries against a lie, desiring to have it taken away as much as a man desires to be set at a distance from a venomous serpent or a raging lion.

" *And grant me thy law graciously.*" He is in a gracious state who looks upon the law itself as a gift of grace. David wishes to have the law opened up to his understanding, engraved upon his heart, and carried out in his life ; for this he seeks the Lord, and pleads for it as a gracious grant. No doubt he viewed this as the only mode of deliverance from the power of falsehood : if the law be not in our hearts the lie will enter. David would seem to have remembered those times when, according

to the eastern fashion, he had practised deceit for his own preservation, and he saw that he had been weak and erring on that point; therefore he was bowed down in spirit and begged to be quickened and delivered from transgressing in that manner any more. Holy men cannot review their sins without tears, nor weep over them without entreating to be saved from further offending.

There is an evident opposition between falsehood and the gracious power of God's law. The only way to expel the lie is to accept the truth. Grace also has a clear affinity to truth: no sooner do we meet with the sound of the word "graciously" than we hear the footfall of truth: "I have chosen the way of truth." Grace and truth are ever linked together, and a belief of the doctrines of grace is a grand preservative from deadly error.

In the fifth of the preceding octave (21) David cries out against pride, and here against lying—these are much the same thing. Is not pride the greatest of all lies?

30. "*I have chosen the way of truth.*" As he abhorred the way of lying, so he chose the way of truth: a man must choose one or the other, for there cannot be any neutrality in the case. Men do not drop into the right way by chance; they must choose it, and continue to choose it, or they will soon wander from it. Those whom God has chosen in due time choose his way. There is a doctrinal way of truth which we ought to choose, rejecting every dogma of man's devising; there is a ceremonial way of truth which we should follow, detesting all the forms which apostate churches have invented; and then there is a practical way of truth, the way of holiness, to which we must adhere whatever may be our temptation to forsake it. Let our election be made, and made irrevocably. Let us answer to all seducers, "I have chosen, and what I have chosen I have chosen." O Lord, by thy grace lead us with a hearty free-will to choose to do thy will; thus shall thine eternal choice of us bring forth the end which it designs.

"*Thy judgments have I laid before me.*" What he had chosen he kept in mind, laying it out before his mind's eye. Men do not become holy by a careless wish: there must be study, consideration, deliberation, and earnest enquiry, or the way of truth will be missed. The commands of God must be set before us as the mark to aim at, the model to work by, the road to walk in. If we put God's judgments into the background we shall soon find ourselves departing from them.

Here again the sixth stanzas of the third and fourth octaves ring out a similar note. "I have kept thy testimonies" (22), and "Thy judgments have I laid before me," This is a happy confession, and there is no wonder that is is repeated.

31. "*I have stuck unto thy testimonies,*"—or I have cleaved, for the word is the same as in verse 25. Though cleaving to the dust of sorrow and of death, yet he kept fast hold of the divine word. This was his comfort, and his faith stuck to it, his love and his obedience held on to it, his heart and his mind abode in meditation upon it. His choice was so heartily and deliberately made that he stuck to it for life, and could not be removed from it by the reproaches of those who despised the way of the Lord. What could he have gained by quitting the sacred testimony? Say rather, what would he not have lost if he had ceased to cleave to the divine word? It is pleasant to look back upon past perseverance and to expect grace to continue equally steadfast in the future. He who has enabled us to stick to him will surely stick to us.

"*O LORD, put me not to shame.*" This would happen if God's promises were unfulfilled, and if the heart of God's servant were suffered to fail. This we have no reason to fear, since the Lord is faithful to his word. But it might also happen through the believer's acting in an inconsistent manner, as David had himself once done, when he fell into the way of lying, and pretended to be a madman. If we are not true to our profession we may be left to reap the fruit of our folly, and that will be the bitter thing called "shame." It is evident from this that a believer ought never to be ashamed, but act the part of a brave man who has done nothing to be ashamed of in believing his God, and does not mean to adopt a craven tone in the presence of the Lord's enemies. If we beseech the Lord not to put us to shame, surely we ought not ourselves to be ashamed without cause.

The prayer of this verse is found in the parallel verse of the next section (39): "Turn away my reproach which I fear." It is evidently a petition which was often on the Psalmist's heart. A brave heart is more wounded by shame than by any weapon which a soldier's hand can wield.

32. "*I will run the way of thy commandments.*" With energy, promptitude, and zeal he would perform the will of God, but he needed more life and liberty from the

hand of God. *" When thou shalt enlarge my heart."* Yes, the heart is the master; the feet soon run when the heart is free and energetic. Let the affections be aroused and eagerly set on divine things, and our actions will be full of force, swiftness, and delight. God must work in us first, and then we shall will and do according to his good pleasure. He must change the heart, unite the heart, encourage the heart, strengthen the heart, and enlarge the heart, and then the course of the life will be gracious, sincere, happy, and earnest; so that from our lowest up to our highest state in grace we must attribute all to the free favour of our God. We must run; for grace is not an overwhelming force which compels unwilling minds to move contrary to their will: our running is the spontaneous leaping forward of a mind which has been set free by the hand of God, and delights to show its freedom by its bounding speed.

What a change from verse 25 to the present, from cleaving to the dust to running in the way. It is the excellence of holy sorrow that it works in us the quickening for which we seek, and then we show the sincerity of our grief and the reality of our revival by being zealous in the ways of the Lord.

For the third time an octave closes with, " I will." These " I wills " of the Psalms are right worthy of being each one the subject of study and discourse.

Note how the heart has been spoken of up to this point: " whole heart " (2), " uprightness of heart " (7), " hid in mine heart " (11), " enlarge my heart." There are many more allusions further on, and these all go to show what heart-work David's religion was. It is one of the great lacks of our age that heads count for more than hearts, and men are far more ready to learn than to love, though they are by no means eager in either direction.

NOTES ON VERSES 25 TO 32.

The eight verses alphabetically arranged :—

25. Depressed to the dust is my soul: quicken thou me according to thy word.
26. Declared have I (to thee) my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.
27. Declare thou to me the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.
28. Dropping (*marg.*) is my soul for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.
29. Deceitful ways remove from me; and grant me thy law graciously.
30. Determined have I upon the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me.
31. Deliberately I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.
32. Day by day I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Theodore Kübler.

Verse 25.—"*My soul cleaveth unto the dust.*" The Hebrew word for "*cleaveth*" signifies "*is joined*," "*has adhered*," "*has overtaken*," "*has taken hold*," "*has joined itself.*" Our soul is a polypus: as the polypus readily adheres to the rocks, so does the soul cleave to the earth; and hardly can it be torn from the place to which it has once strongly attached itself. Though thy soul be now more perfect, and escaping from the waters of sin has become a bird of heaven, be not careless; earthly things are birdlime and glue; if thou rubbest thy wings against these thou wilt be held, and joined to the earth.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 25.—"*My soul cleaveth unto the dust,*" etc. The word rendered "*cleaveth*" means to be glued to; to stick fast. It has the sense of adhering firmly to anything, so that it cannot easily be separated from it. The word "*dust*" here may mean either the earth, and earthly things, considered as low, base, unworthy, worldly; or it may mean the grave, as if he were near to that, and in danger of dying. De Wette understands it in the latter sense. Yet the word *cleave* would hardly suggest this idea; and the force of that word would be better represented by the idea that his soul, as it were, *adhered* to the things of earth; that it seemed to be so fastened to them—*so glued* to them that it could not be detached from them; that his affections were low, earthly, grovelling, so as to give him deep distress, and lead him to cry to God for life and strength that he might break away from them.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 25.—"*My soul cleaveth unto the dust,*" etc. The first clause seems intended to suggest two consistent but distinct ideas, that of deep degradation, as in Ps. xliv. 25, and that of death, as in Ps. xxii. 29. The first would be more obvious in itself, and in connection with the parallel referred to; but the other seems to be indicated as the prominent idea by the correlative petition for quickening in the last clause. "*Quicken*," i.e., save me alive, or restore me to life, the Hebrew word being a causative of the verb *to live.—Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 25.—"*My soul cleaveth to the dust,*" etc. In this verse, David hath a complaint; "*My soul cleaveth to the dust*;" and a prayer; "*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" The prayer, being well considered, shall teach us the meaning of the complaint; that it was not, as some think, any hard bodily estate which grieved him, but a very sore spiritual oppression (as I may call it), bearing down his soul; that where he should have mounted up toward heaven, he was pressed down to the earth, and was so clogged with earthly cogitations, or affections, or perturbations, that he could not mount up. His particular temptation he expresseth not: for the children of God many times are in that estate that they cannot tell their own griefs; and sometimes so troubled; that it is not expedient, albeit they might, to express them to others.

And hereof we learn, how that which the worldling counts wisdom, to the Christian is folly; what is joy to the one, is grief to the other. The joy of a worldling is to cleave unto the earth; when he gripes it surest, he thinks himself happiest, for it is his portion: to take heed to his worldly affairs, and have his mind upon them (in his estimation) is only wisdom. For the serpent's curse is upon him, he creeps on the earth, and licks the dust all the days of his life. This is the miserable condition of the wicked, that even their heavenly soul is become earthly. *Qui secundum corporis appetentiam vivit caro est, etiam anima eorum caro est;* as the Lord spake of those who perished in the Deluge, that they were but flesh, no spirit in them; that is, no spiritual or heavenly motion.

But the Christian, considering that his soul is from above, sets his affection

also on those things which are above : he delights to have his conversation in heaven and it is a grief to him when he finds his motions and affections drawn down and entangled with the earth. His life is to cleave to the Lord ; but it is death to him when the neck of his soul is bowed down to the yoke of the world.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 25.—"*My soul cleaveth to the dust.*" "Look up now to the heavens." So once spake the Lord to Abraham his friend, and he speaketh thus to us also. Alas ! why must it be so always that, when we come to know ourselves even but a little, we are constantly answering with the mournful sigh, "*My soul cleaveth to the dust ?*" Ah ! that is indeed the *deepest pain* of a soul which has already tasted that the Lord is merciful, when, although desiring to soar on high, it sadly feels how impossible it is to rise. There is much hidden pain in every heart of man even in the spiritual life ; but what can deeper grieve us than the perception that we are chained as with leaden weights to things concerning which we know that they may weary but cannot satisfy us ? Nay, we could never have supposed, when we first heard the Psalm of the Good Shepherd, that it could issue from a heart that panteth after God, so often and so bitterly ; we could never have imagined that it could become so cold, so dry, so dark within a heart which at an earlier period had tasted so much of the power of that which is to come. Have we not formerly, with this same Psalm, been able to vaunt, " I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches ? " But afterwards, or now perhaps. . . . Oh sad hours, when the beams of the sun within seem quenched, and nothing but a blood-red disc remains ! The fervency of the first love is cooled ; earthly cares and sins have, as it were, attached a leaden plummet to the wings of a soul which, God knows, would fain soar upwards. We would render thanks, and scarce can pray; we would pray, and scarce can sigh. Our treasure is in heaven, but our soul cleaves to the earth ; at least earth cleaves on all sides so to it, and weighs it down, that the eye merely sees the clouds, the tongue can but breathe forth complaints. Ah, so completely can the earth fetter us, that the heavens appear to be only a problem, and our old man is like the Giant of Mythology, who, cast to the ground in the exhausting combat, receives by contact with his mother earth fresh strength. Oh, were it otherwise ! Shall it not at last, at last be altered ?

Dost thou really desire it, thou who out of the depths of thy soul so complainest, and canst scarcely find more tears to bewail the sorrow of thy heart ? Well is it for thee if the pain thou sufferest teach thee to cry to God : " Quicken thou me, according to thy word." Yea, this is the *best comfort* for him who too well knows what it is to be bowed together with pain ; this is the only hope for a heart which almost sinks in still despair. There is an *atmosphere* of life, high above this dust, which streams to us from every side, and penetrates even the darkest dungeon. There is a *spring* of life by which the weary soul may be refeshed ; and the entrance to this spring stands open, in spite of all the clouds of dust which obscure this valley of shadows here. There is a *power* of life which can even so completely make an end of our dead state, that we shall walk again before the face of the Lord in the land of the living, and, instead, of uttering lamentation, we shall bear a song of praise upon our lips. Does not the Prince of life yet live in order also to repeat to us, " Awake and rejoice, thou that dwellest in the dust ; " and the Spirit, that bloweth whither he listeth, can, will, shall he not in his own good time, with his living breath, blow from our wings the dust that cleaveth to them ? But, indeed, even the gnawing pain of the soul over so much want of spirituality and dulness is ever an encouraging sign that the good work is begun in our hearts : that which is really dead shivers no more at its own cold. "*My soul cleaveth to the dust,*" sayest thou, with tears ? thus wouldest thou not speak except that already a higher hand between the soul and this dust had cleft a hollow which was unknown to it before. No one has less cause for despair than he who has lost hope in himself, and really learns to seek in God that, which he deeply feels, he least of all can give himself.

Yes, this is the *way* from the deepest pain to procure the best consolation ; the humble, earnest, persevering prayer, that he who lives would also give life to our souls, and continue to increase it, till freed from all dryness and deadness of spirit, and unrooted from the earth, we ascend to the eternal mount of light, where at last we behold all earthly clouds beneath us. This the God of life alone can work ; but he is willing—nay, we have his own word as pledge, that he promises and bestows on us true life. Only, let us not forget that he who will quicken us "*according*" to his word, also performs this *through* his word. Let us then draw from out the eternally-flowing fountain, and henceforth leave it unconditionally to him, how he will listen

to our cry, even though he lead us through dark paths! Even through means of death God can quicken us and keep us alive. . . . Lo, we are here; Lord, do with us as seemeth good to thee! Only, let our souls live, that they may praise thee, here and eternally!—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, in "The Year of Salvation,"* 1874.

Verse 25.—"*Cleaveth to the dust.*" Is weighed down by the flesh, which itself is dust.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 25.—"*The dust*" is the place of the afflicted, the wounded, and the dead. "*Quicken me*," viz., to life, peace, and joy.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 25.—"*Quicken thou me*," etc. Seeing he was alive, how prays he that God would quicken him? I answer,—The godly esteem of life, not according to that they have in their body, but in their soul. If the soul lacks the sense of mercy, and a heavenly disposition to spiritual things, they lament over it, as a dead soul: for sure it is, temporal desertions are more heavy to the godly than temporal death. "*According to thy word.*" This is a great faith, that where in respect of his present feeling he found himself dead, yet he hopes for life from God, according to his promise. Such was the faith of Abraham, who under hope, believed above hope. And truly, many times are God's children brought to this estate, that they have nothing to uphold them but the word of God; no sense of mercy, no spiritual disposition; but on the contrary, great darkness, horrible fears and terrors. Only they are sustained by looking to the promise of God, and kept in some hope that he will restore them to life again, because it is his praise to finish the work which he begins.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 25.—"*Quicken thou me.*" This phrase occurs nine times, and only in this Psalm. It is of great importance, as it expresses the spiritual change by which a child of Adam becomes a child of God. Its source is God; the instrument by which it is effected is the word, verse 50.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 25.—"*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" Where there is life there will be the endeavour to rise—the believer will not lie prone in his aspirations after God. From the lowest depths the language of faith is heard ascending to God most high, who performeth all things for the believer. The true child cannot but look towards the loving Father, who is the Almighty, All-sufficient One. Have you not found it so? But will you mark the intelligence that shines around the believer's prayer? He prays that the Lord may quicken him *according to his word.* The *word* may be regarded in the light of the standard after which he is to be fashioned; or the Psalmist may have in view the requirements contained in the word regarding the believer's progress; or he may be thinking of the promises found therein in behalf of the poor and needy when they apply. Indeed, all these significations may be wrapt up in the one expression—"*according to thy word*"—the standard of perfection, the requirements of the word, and the promises concerning it. The great exemplar of the believer is Christ,—of old it was the Christ of prophecy. Then the requirements of the Lord's will were scattered through the word. The Psalmist, however, may be dwelling upon the large promises which the Lord hath given towards the perfecting of his people. You see after what the spiritual nature aspires. It is quite enough to the natural man or the formalist that he be as the generally well-behaved and esteemed among professors—the spiritual man aspires beyond—he aspires after being quickened according to God's word. Judge of yourselves.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 25.—"*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" By thy providence put life into my affairs, by thy grace put life into my affections; cure me of my spiritual deadness, and make me lively in my devotion.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 25.—"*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*" Albeit the Lord suffer his own to lie so long low in their heavy condition of spirit, that they may seem dead; yet by faith in his word he keepeth in them so much life as doth furnish unto them prayer to God for comfort: "*Quicken thou me according to thy word.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 25.—"*Quicken thou me.*" To whom shall the godly fly when life faileth but to that Well-spring of all life? Even as to remove cold the next way is to draw near the fire, so to dispel any death, the next way is to look to him who is our root, by whom we live this natural life. All preservatives and restoratives are nothing, all colleges of physicians are vanity, if compared with him. Other things which have not life, give life as the instruments of him who is life, as fire burneth being the instrument of heat. "When heart and flesh fail, God is the strength of my heart." As a man can let a fire almost go out which had been kindled, and then blow it up,

and by application of new fuel make it blaze as much as ever: so can God deal with this flame of life which he hath kindled.—*Paul Bayne.*

Verse 25.—"*According to thy word.*" The word removes deadness of conscience and hardness. Is not this word a hammer to soften the heart, and is not this the immortal seed by which we are begotten again? Therefore David, finding his conscience in a dead frame, prayeth, "My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word." The *word* is the first thing by which conscience is purified and set right.—*John Sheffield, in "A Good Conscience the Strongest Hold,"* 1650.

Verse 25.—"*According to thy word.*" What word doth David mean? Either the general promises in the books of Moses or Job; which intimate deliverance to the faithful observers of God's law, or help to the miserable and distressed; or some particular promise given to him by Nathan, or others. Chrysostom saith, "Quicken me according to thy word: but it is not a word of command, but a word of promise." Mark here,—he doth not say *secundum meritum meum*, but, *secundum verbum tuum;* the hope, or that help which we expect from God, is founded upon his word; there is our security, in his promises, not in our deservings: *Promittendo se fecit debitorem, etc.*

When there was so little Scripture written, yet David could find out a word for his support. Alas! in our troubles and afflictions, no promise occurreth to mind. As in outward things, many that have less live better than those that have abundance; so here, now Scripture is so large, we are less diligent, and therefore, though we have so many promises, we are apt to faint, we have not a word to bear us up. This word did not help David, till he had lain so long under this heavy condition, that he seemed dead. Many, when they have a promise, think presently to enjoy the comfort of it. No, waiting and striving are first necessary. We never relish the comfort of the promises till the creatures have spent their allowance, and we have been exercised. God will keep his word, and yet we must expect to be tried.

In this his dead condition, faith in God's word kept him alive. When we have least feeling, and there is nothing left us, the word will support us: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. iv. 19, 20). One way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayer, *Chirographa tua injiciebat tibi Domine*, show him his handwriting; God is tender of his word. These arguings in prayer, are not to work upon God, but ourselves.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 25—32.—One does not wonder at the fluctuations which occur in the feelings and experience of a child of God—at one time high on the mountain, near to God and communing with God, at another in the deep and dark valley. All, more or less, know these changes, and have their sorrowing as well as their rejoicing seasons. When we parted with David last, what was he telling us of his experience? that God's testimonies were *his delight and his counsellors;* but now what a different strain! all joy is darkened, and *his soul cleaveth to the dust.* And there must have been seasons of deep depression and despondency in the heart of David—driven as a fugitive and wanderer from his home, hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, and holding, as he himself says, his life continually in his hands. Yet I think in this portion of the Psalm there is evidence of a deeper abasement and sorrow of heart than any mere worldly suffering could produce. He had indeed said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;" but, even in that moment of weak and murmuring faith, he knew that he was God's anointed one to sit on the throne of Israel. But here there is indication of sin, of grievous sin which had laid his soul low in the dust; and I think the petition in the 29th verse gives us some clue to what that sin had been: "*Remove me from the way of lying.*" Had David—you may well ask in wonder—had David ever lied? had he ever deviated from the strait and honourable path of truth? I am afraid we must own that he had at one time gone so near the confines of a falsehood, that he would be but a poor casuist and a worse moralist who should attempt to defend the Psalmist from the imputation. We cannot read the 27th chapter of the 1st of Samuel without owning into what a sad tissue of equivocation and deceit David was unhappily seduced. Well might his soul cleave to the dust as he reviewed that period of his career; and though grace did for him what it afterwards did for Peter, and he was plucked as a brand out of the burning, yet one can well imagine that, like the Apostle afterwards, when he thought thereon he wept, and that bitterly.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 26.—" *I have declared my ways,*" etc. This verse contains a prayer, with a reason after this form :—O Lord, I have oft before declared unto thee the whole state and course of my life, my wanderings, my wants, my doubts, my griefs ; I hid nothing from thee, and thou, according to my necessity, didst always hear me : therefore now, Lord, I pray thee to teach me ; by thy light illuminate me that I may know thy statutes and receive grace to walk in them. This is a good argument in dealing with the Lord,—I have gotten many mercies and favourable answers from thee ; therefore, Lord, I pray thee to give me more ; for whom he loves he loves to the end ; and where he begins to show mercy he ceaseth not till he crown his children with mercy. And so gracious is the Lord, that he esteems himself to be honoured as oft as we give him the praise that we have found comfort in him, and therefore come to seek more.

Next, it is to be marked how he saith, " *I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me :* " these two go well together, Mercy and Truth : truth in the heart of man confessing ; mercy in God, hearing and forgiving : happy is the soul wherein these two meet together. Many there are who are destitute of this comfort ; they cannot say, God hath heard me, and all because they deal not plainly and truly with the Lord in *declaring their ways* unto him.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 26.—" *I have declared my ways.*" In verse 59 he *thinketh upon his ways,* that is, his inward imperfections and outward aberrations from the strait and straight ways of God ; and here he is not ashamed to *declare them,* that is, to acknowledge and confess that all this came upon him because he was forgetful to do God's will. Note the connection between this and the previous verse : My soul clave unto the dust, because I clave not to thee.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 26.—" *I have declared my ways.*" ספרתי, *sipparti,* " I have remembered my ways ; " I have searched them out ; I have investigated them. And that he had earnestly *prayed* for pardon of what was wrong in them, is evident ; for he adds, " *Thou heardest me.*"—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 26.—" *I have declared my ways,*" etc. Him whom thou hast heard in humble confessing of his sins, him thou must teach thy statutes. The saints lay open to God what they find, both good and evil, seeking deliverance, supply, strengthening, directing : even as sick patients tell to their doctor both what good and what otherwise they perceive or as clients lay bare their case to their counsel.

" *Declared.*" As if he had read them out of a book. The saints know their ways. A man that hath light with him seeth the way, and can tell you all about it ; another is in darkness and knoweth nothing : the one taketh observation of his course, the other doth not.

" *Thou hast heard me.*" God's goodness is seen in his hearing what we lay open before him. If great ones let a poor man tell his tale at large we count it honourable patience ; but it is God's glory to hear our wants, our weakness through sin, the invincibleness of our evils, our utter impotency in ourselves even to seek redress. That mode of procedure would lose the favour of man, but it winneth favour with God. The more humbly we confess all our wants, the more confident we may be that God will hear us. *He teacheth the humble,* for the humble scholar will give to his master the honour of that he learneth.

I have rehearsed (said with myself) my ways ; and " thou hast heard my private confession." " *I have declared* " to others what my way is, and " thou hast heard me " so discoursing ; wherefore " *teach me,*" seeing I communicate what I receive. It is a plea derived from his carefulness to learn, and from the use he had made of that he had learned. The godly, like candles, light each other.—*Paul Bayne.*

Verse 26.—" *I have declared my ways.*" They that would speed with God, should learn this point of Christian ingenuity, unfeignedly to lay open their whole case to him. That is, to declare what they are about, the nature of their affairs, the state of their hearts, what of good or evil they find in themselves, their conflicts, supplies, distresses, hopes ; this is declaring our ways—the good and evil we are conscious of. As a sick patient will tell the physician how it is with him, so should we deal with God, if we would find mercy. This declaring his ways may be looked upon, 1. As an act of faith and dependence. 2. As an act of holy friendship. 3. As an act of spiritual contrition, and brokenness of heart : for this declaring must be explained according to what David meant by the expression, " *My ways.*"

First, By his " *ways* " may be meant his businesses or undertakings : I have still made them known to thee, committing them to the direction of thy providence ;

and so it is an act of faith and dependence, consulting with God, and acquainting him with all our desires.

Secondly, By his "*ways*" may be meant, all his straits, sorrows, and dangers; and so this declaration is an act of holy friendship, when a man comes as one friend to another, and acquaints God with his whole state, lays his condition before the Lord, in hope of pity and relief.

Thirdly, By "*ways*" is meant temptations and sins; and so this declaring is an act of spiritual contrition or brokenness of heart. Sins are properly our ways, as Ezek. xviii. 25.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 26, 27, 29, 30.—"*The way of thy precepts.*" "*My ways.*" "The *way of lying.*" "*The way of truth.*" Here should be noticed the two contrasts by which the Prophet teaches what must be shunned both in life and in doctrine, and what embraced. The first respects *the life* of Christians, as the Prophet sets the way of God's commandments over against his own ways, verses 26, 27; and respecting these he confesses that they have pressed him down to the dust and have greatly distressed him; but respecting those he declares that they have again raised him up. He means by his own ways a depraved nature, carnal desire, and the carnal mind which is enmity against God, Rom. viii.; but by the ways of the Lord he denotes the will of God expressed in the Word. Therefore the boastings of the papists of the perfect obedience of the renewed are empty; for David, assured by having been renewed, complains bitterly and with many tears that his soul, under the intolerable weight of sins, had been brought down to the dust of death and almost suffocated; but that God had heard his prayers and brought him back to the way of his commandments. We here, also, gather that in this life all the saints experience the wrestling and contest of the flesh and the spirit, so that they are continually compelled to mourn that their flesh turns them aside from the way of the Lord into the by-paths of sin: just as Paul cries out, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, etc. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 23, 24.

The second contrast concerneth the *doctrine;* for David opposes the way of lying to the way of truth. We are taught by this contrast that we should eschew false doctrine, and steadfastly adhere to divine truth. To this applies the precept of Paul, Eph. iv. 25, "Wherefore, having put away the lie, speak truth each one with his neighbour." Further, we learn, if we hate our own ways, *i.e.*, confess our sins to the Lord, and, trusting in the Mediator, pray for forgiveness, that God is wont to hear and mercifully to forgive our sins; as it is written, 1 John i. 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 26.—"*Thou heardest me.*" Past answers to prayer should encourage us to come the more boldly to the throne of grace.—Jacob never forgot the night he spent at Bethel.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 26.—"*Teach me thy statutes.*" The often repetition of this one thing in this Psalm argueth, 1. The necessity of this knowledge. 2. The desire he had to obtain it. 3. That such repetitions are not frivolous when they proceed from a sound heart, a zealous affection, and a consideration of the necessity of the thing prayed for. 4. That such as have most light have little in respect of what they should have. 5. As covetous men think they have never gold enough, so Christian men should think they have never knowledge enough.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 26.—"*Teach me.*" We can never do without *teaching*, even in old age. Unless the Spirit of God teaches us we learn in vain.—*Martin Geier.*

Verses 26, 27.—Here is David's earnest desire for the continuance of that intimacy that had been between him and his God; not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the Word and Spirit in an ordinary way: "*Teach me thy statutes,*" that is, "*make me to understand the way of thy precepts.*" When he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways, he doth not say, Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be; but, Now, Lord, tell me my duty, let me know what thou wouldest have me to do as the case stands. Note, Those that in all their ways acknowledge God, may pray in faith that he will direct their steps in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God is, by learning his statutes, and walking diligently in the *way of his precepts.*—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 27.—"*Make me to understand.*" Natural blindness is an obstinate disease, and hardly cured: therefore again and again we had need to pray, "Open mine

eyes ; " " Teach me thy statutes ; " " *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts.*" Our ignorance is great even when it is cured in part. The clouds of temptation and carnal affection cause it to return upon us, so that we know not what we know. Therefore he cries, " open my eyes ; cause me to understand." Yea, the more we know the more is our ignorance discovered to us : " Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy " (Prov. xxx. 2, 3). " I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes " (Job xlii. 5, 6). Alas, a poor, little, hearsay knowledge availeth not ; they abhor themselves when they have more intimate acquaintance. None so confident as a young professor that knoweth a few truths, but in a weak and imperfect manner : the more we know indeed, the more sensible we are of our ignorance, and how liable to this mistake and that, so that we dare not trust ourselves for an hour.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 27.—" *Understand the way . . . so shall I talk.*" We can talk with a better grace of God's " *wondrous works,*" the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand *the way* of God's precepts, and walk in that way.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 27.—" *The way of thy precepts.*" He desireth that God would, partly by his Spirit, partly by his ministers, partly by affliction, partly by study and labour, make him to have a right and sound understanding, not only of his *statutes*, but of the *way* of his statutes, that is, after what sort and order he may live and direct his life, according to those things which God hath commanded him in his law. Learn here how hard a thing it is for man, overweening himself in his own wisdom, to know God's will till God *make* him to know.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 27.—" *So shall I talk of thy wondrous works.*" He that is sensible of the wondrous things that are in God's word, will be talking of them. 1. It will be so. 2. It should be so.

1. *It will be so.* When the heart is deeply affected, the tongue cannot hold, but will run out in expressions of it ; " for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." When cheered and revived in their afflictions saints are transported with the thought of the excellency of God. " Come, and I will tell you what God hath done for my soul " (Ps. lxvi. 15). The woman, when she had found the lost groat, calleth her neighbours to rejoice with her. He that hath but a cold knowledge, will not be so full of good discourse.

2. *It should be so* in a threefold respect : for the honour of God ; the edification of others ; and for our own profit.

(1). For the honour of God, to whom we are so much indebted, to bring him into request with those about us. Experience deserveth praise ; when you have found the Messiah, call another to him : " Andrew calleth Peter, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias : and Philip called Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph " (John i. 41—45).

(2). For the edification of others : " And thou, being converted, strengthen thy brethren " (Luke xxii. 32). True grace is communicative as fire, etc.

(3). For our own profit. He that useth his knowledge, shall have more. Whereas on the contrary, full breasts, if not sucked, become dry. In the dividing, the loaves increased. All gifts, but much more spiritual, which are the best, are improved by exercise.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 27.—" *So shall I talk,*" etc. Desire of knowledge should not be for satisfying of curiosity, or for ostentation, or for worldly gain, but to edify ourselves and others in wisdom. . . . " *Thy wondrous works.*" The works of creation, redemption and providence, either set down in Scripture, or observed in our own experience, transcend our capacity, and cannot but draw admiration from them that see them well.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 27.—" *So shall I talk.*" It is a frequent complaint with Christians, that they are straitened in religious conversation, and often feel unable to speak " to the use of edifying, that they may minister grace to the hearers," Eph. iv. 29. Here, then, is the secret disclosed, by which we shall be kept from the danger of dealing in unfelt truths, for " out of the abundance of the heart our mouths shall speak," Matt. xii. 34. Seek to have the heart searched, cleansed, filled with the graces of the Spirit. Humility, teachableness, simplicity, will bring light unto the under-

standing, influence the heart, "open the lips," and unite every member that we have in the service and praise of God.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 27.—"*I shall talk of.*" There is a close affinity between all the duties of religion. The same word is rendered *pray, meditate,* and *talk of.* We think of God's excellent majesty; we cry to him in humble prayer; we study his word until our souls are filled with gladness and admiration; and then how can we but *talk of his wondrous works?*—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 28.—"*My soul melteth for heaviness.*" In the original the word signifies, "droppeth away." The Septuagint hath it thus: "My soul fell asleep through weariness." Probably by a fault of the transcribers, putting one word for another. My soul droppeth. It may relate (1) to the plenty of his tears, as the word is used in Scripture: "My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God" (Job xvi. 20), or droppeth to God, the same word; so it notes his deep sorrow and sense of his condition. The like allusion is in Joshua vii. 5: "The heart of the people melted, and became as water." Or (2) it relates to his languishing under the extremity of his sorrow; as an unctuous thing wasteth by dropping, so was his soul even dropping away. Such a like expression is used in Psalm cvii. 26: "Their soul is melted because of trouble;" and of Jesus Christ, whose strength was exhausted by the greatness of his sorrows, it is said, Psalm xxii. 14, "I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." Be the allusion either to the one or to the other; either to the dropping of tears, or to the melting and wasting away of what is fat or unctuous, it notes a vehement sorrow, and brokenness of heart. So much is clear, his soul was even melting away, and unless God did help, he could hold out no longer.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 28.—"*My soul melteth.*" The oldest versions make it mean *to slumber* (LXX. ἐνύσταθεν, Vulg. *dormitavit*), which would make the clause remarkably coincident with Luke xxii. 45.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 28.—"*Heaviness.*" There is nothing may comfort a natural man but David had it; yet cannot all these keep him from that heaviness whereunto, as witnesseth S. Peter, the children of God are subject in this life, through their manifold temptations. The men of the world are so far from this disposition, that if they have health and wealth, they marvel what it is should make a man heavy: they are not acquainted with the exercise of a feeling conscience; they know not the defects of the spiritual life, and are not grieved at them: being dead in sin they feel not that they want life; all their care is to eat and drink and make merry. But miserable are they; for in their best estate they are as oxen fed for the slaughter. Woe be to them who laugh now, they shall mourn; but blessed are they who mourn now, for they shall be comforted.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 28.—"*Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*" Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the burdens of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 28.—"*Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*" What is that word which David pleaded? "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," Deut. xxxiii. 25. "Will he plead against me," said Job, "with his great power? No; but he will put strength in me," Job xxiii. 6.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 28.—"*Strengthen thou me.*" Gesenius translates this, "*Keep me alive,*" Thus, קַיְּמֵנִי, in this verse, answers to חַיֵּנִי, in the first verse. This prayer for new strength, or life, is an entreaty that the waste of life through tears might be restored by the life-giving word.—*Frederick G. Marchant.*

Verse 29.—It says, "*Remove from me the way,*" and not me from the way; because that way of iniquity is within us, for we are born children of wrath, and the passions innate in us run to the lie, and make the wretched way of crimes in our souls.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 29.—"*Remove from me the way of lying.*" Here he acknowledgeth that although he were already exercised in the law of God and in his knowledge, and that although he were a prophet to teach others, nevertheless he was subject to a number of wicked thoughts and imaginations which might always wickedly lead him from the right way, except God had held him with his mighty and strong hand. And this is a point which we ought here rightly to note; for we see how men greatly abuse themselves. When any of us shall have had a good beginning, we straightway think that we are at the highest; we never bethink us to pray any more to God, when

once he hath showed us favour enough to serve our turns ; but if we have done any small deed, we by-and-by lift up ourselves and wonder at our great virtues, thinking straightway that the Devil can win no more of us. This foolish arrogancy causeth God to let us go astray, so that we fall mightily, yea, that we break both arms and legs, and are in great hazard of breaking our necks. I speak not now of our natural body, but of our soul. Let us look upon David himself ; for he it is that hath made proof hereof. It came to pass that he villainously and wickedly erred when he took Bathsheba the wife of his subject, Uriah, to play the whoremonger with her, that he was the cause of so execrable a murder, yea, and that of many; for he did as much as in him lay, to cause the whole army of the Lord and all the people of Israel to be utterly overthrown. See, then, the great negligence and security into which David fell ; and see also wherefore he saith, " Alas, my good God, I beseech thee so to guide me, that I may forsake the way of lying."—*John Calvin.*

Verse 29.—" *Lying.*" A sin that David, through diffidence, fell into frequently. See 1 Sam. xxi. 2, 8, where he roundly telleth three or four lies ; and the like he did, 1 Sam. xxvii. 8, 10 : this evil he saw by himself, and here prayeth against it.—*John Trapp*

Verse 29.—" *The way of lying,*" etc. Lying ways are all ways, except the ways of God's commandments : reason, sense, example, custom, event, deceivable lusts, these tell a man he is safe, or that he shall repent of them, and take no hurt in the end, and they promise ease and blessedness, but perform it not. Such as desire to obey God must be kept from evil ways : we are not so sanctified but that temptation will injure our graces. As a fire in kindling, not throughly alight, may be quenched by a little water, so may our holiness be damped by temptation. We find within us a proneness to false ways, as candles new blown out are soon blown in again. Therefore as burnt children dread the fire, so do we fear the way of lying. God doth not suffer temptations to come into the presence of some ; and in others God maketh the heart averse from sin when temptation is present. We must come out of the ways of sin, ere we can walk in the ways of God.—*Paul Bayne.*

Verse 29.—" *The way of lying.*" The whole life of sin is a *lie* from beginning to end. The word " *lying* " occurs *eight* times in this Psalm.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 29.—" *The way of lying.*" By *the way of lying* is to be understood all that is in man's nature, not agreeable to the word, whether it be counsels, or conclusions of the heart, or external actions ; and it is called a lying way, because nature promises a good to be gotten by sin which man shall not find in it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 29.—" *The way of lying.*" The prophet here desireth to be confirmed by God against all corruptions in doctrine, and disorder of conversation, which Satan by his witty and wily instruments doth seek to set abroach in the world. These are called " *the way of lying.*" 1. Because they are invented by Satan, the father of lies. 2. They are countenanced by man's wit, the storehouse of lies. 3. They seem to be that which they are not, which is of the nature of lies. 4. They are contrary to God and his truth, the discoverers of lies.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 29.—" *Grant me thy law graciously.*" He opposes the law of God to the way of lying. First, because it is the only rule of all truth, both in religion and manners : that which is not agreeable to it is but a lie which shall deceive man. Secondly, it destroys and shall at length utterly destroy all contrary errors. As the rod of Aaron devoured the rods of the enchanters ; so the word, which is the rod of the mouth of God, shall, in the end, eat up and consume all untruths whatsoever. Thirdly, according to the sentence of this word, so shall it be unto every man ; it deceives none. Men shall find by experience it is true : he who walks in a way condemned by the word, shall come to a miserable end. And on the contrary, it cannot but be well with them who live according to this rule.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 29.—" *Grant me thy law graciously.*" David had ever the book of the law ; for every king of Israel was to have it always by him, and the Rabbis say, written with his own hand. But, " *Grant me thy law graciously ;* " that is, he desires he might have it not only written by him, but upon him, to have it imprinted upon his heart, that he might have a heart to observe and keep it. That is the blessing he begs for, " *the law ;* " and this is begged " *graciously,*" or upon terms of grace, merely according to thine own favour, and good pleasure. Here is,—I. The sin deprecated, " *Remove from me the way of lying.*" II. The good supplicated and asked, " *Grant me thy law graciously.*" In the first clause you have his malady, David had been enticed to a course of lying. In the second we have his remedy, and that is the law of God.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 30.—" *I have chosen the way of truth.*" Here you have the working of a gracious soul. This is more than sitting and hearing the word—having no objection to what you hear. Such hearing is all that can be affirmed of the generality of gospel hearers, except we add, that none are more ready to be caught by false and easy ways of salvation, for they assent to all they hear. The man of God strikes a higher and more spiritual note—he goes into the *choice* of the thing; he chooses the way of truth; and he cannot but choose it; it is the bent of his renewed nature, the effect indeed of all he has been pleading. How act we? The way of truth is all that God has revealed concerning his Son Jesus. The willing heart chooses this way, and all of it; the bitterness of it, the self-denial of it, as well as the comfort of it; a Saviour from sin as well as a Saviour from hell; a Saviour whose Spirit can lead from prayerfulness to godliness, from idleness upon the Sabbath-day to a holy keeping of that day, from self-seeking to the seeking of Christ, from slack, inconsistent conduct to a careful observance of all the Lord's will. Where God's people meet, there such will delight to be. O for such to abound among us!—*John Stephen.*

Verse 30.—" *I have chosen the way of truth.*" Religion is not a matter of chance, but of choice. Have we weighed things in the balance, and, upon mature deliberation, made an election,—" We will have God upon any terms? " Have we sat down and reckoned the cost,—or what religion *must* cost us,—the parting with our lusts; and what it *may* cost us,—the parting with our lives? Have we resolved, through the assistance of grace, to own Christ when the swords and staves are up? and to sail with him, not only in a pleasure-boat, but in a man-of-war? This choosing God speaks him to be ours: hypocrites profess God out of worldly design, not religious choice.—*Thomas Watson, in " The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 30.—" *I have chosen the way of truth.*" The choice which David makes here of God's truth proceeds from that choice and election whereby the Lord before all time made choice of David, in Christ, to be one of his elect. For as it is true of love " Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us "—we could never have loved him, if first he had not loved us; so is it true of election; if he before time had not chosen us to be his people, we could never in time have chosen him to be our God. And this I mark in them who love the word of God, and delight in it, who can say out of a good heart, that the Lord is their portion and the joy of their soul: this is a sure seal of their election, imprinted by the finger of God in their heart.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 30.—In all our religious exercises, let deliberation precede our resolution, and consideration usher in determination. David did so; and therefore he says here, " *I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.*" Indeed, he cannot but resolve upon, and make choice of, the way of piety, who layeth before him the goodness, the rectitude and pleasantness of the way. When the prodigal considereth with himself how well his father's servants fared, he thinketh of, yea, determineth to go home; " I will arise and go to my father."—*Abraham Wright,* 1661.

Verse 30.—" *I have chosen.*" No man ever served the Lord but he first made choice of him to be his Master. Every man when he comes to years of discretion so as to be master of himself, adviseth with himself what course he shall take, whether he will serve God or the world. Now all the saints of God have made this distinct choice; we will serve the Lord, and no other. Moses when both stood before him, the pleasures of Egypt on the one hand, and God and his people with their afflictions on the other, he chose the latter before the former, Heb. xi. 25. So David saith he did, " *I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me;*" for to choose is, when a thing lies before a man, and he considers and takes it. So Joshua, " I and my house will serve the Lord."—*John Preston* (1587—1628) *in " The Golden Sceptre held forth to the Humble."* 1638.

Verse 30.—" *Truth.*" There are three kinds of truth; truth in heart, truth in word, truth in deed (2 Kings xx. 3; Zech. viii. 16; Heb. x. 22).—*Ayguan. From " The Preacher's Storehouse," by J. E. Vaux.*

Verse 30.—" *Thy judgments.*" God's word is called his judgment, because it discerns good from evil; and is not a naked sentence; but, as it points out evil, so it pronounceth plagues against it, which shall be executed according to the sentence thereof.—*William Cowper.*

Verses 30, 31.—" *I have chosen;* " " *I have stuck.*" The choosing Christian is likely to be the sticking Christian; when those that are Christians by chance tack about if the wind turn.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 30.—"*Thy judgments have I laid before me.*" The solid consideration

that God's word is God's decree or judgment may guard a believer against men terrors and allurements, and fix him in his right choice, as here.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 30.—"*Thy judgments have I laid before me.*" Men that mean to travel the right way will lay before them a map: so David, as his will had resolved upon the ways of truth, so he setteth before his eyes the map of the law, which did manifest this unto him, as the ship-man hath his card with the compass.—*Paul Bayne.*

Verse 31.—"*I have stuck unto thy testimonies.*" It is not a little remarkable, that while the Psalmist says (verse 25), "My soul *cleaveth* to the dust," he should say here, "*I have cleaved unto thy testimonies*"; for it is the same original word in both verses. The thing is altogether compatible with the experience of the believer. Without there is the body of indwelling sin, and within there is the undying principle of divine grace. There is the contest between them—"the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17), and the believer is constrained to cry out, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. vii. 24). It is the case; and all believers find it so. While the soul is many times felt cleaving to the dust, the spirit strives to cleave unto God's testimonies. So the believer prays, Cause that I be not put to shame. And keeping close to Christ, brethren, you shall not be put to shame, world without end.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 31.—"*I have stuck unto thy testimonies.*" He adhered to them when momentary interests might have dictated a different line of conduct, when unbelief would have been ready to shrink from the path of duty, when outward appearances were greatly discouraging to fidelity, when all were ready to deride his preposterous determination.—*John Morison.*

Verse 31.—"*I have stuck.*" True godliness evermore wears upon her head the garland of perseverance.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 31.—"*Put me not to shame.*" Forasmuch as David, in a good conscience, endeavoured to serve God, he craves that the Lord would not confound him. This is two ways done; either when the Lord forsakes his children, so that in their trouble they feel not his promised comforts, and great confusion of mind and perturbation is upon them; or otherwise when he leaves them as a prey to their enemies, who scorn them for their godly and sincere life, and exult over them in their time of trouble; when they see that all their prayer and other exercises of religion cannot keep them out of their enemies' hands. "He trusted in God: let him deliver him." From this shame and contempt he desires the Lord would keep him, and that he should never be like unto them, who, being disappointed of that wherein they trusted, are ashamed.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 32.—"*I will run in the way of thy commandments when,*" etc. You must remember that the speaker, the Psalmist, is not an unconverted man, but one who had long before been brought under the dominion of religion. He is not, therefore, soliciting the first entrance, but the after and multiplied workings of a principle of grace; and he states his desire in an expression which is singularly descriptive of the outgoing of an influence from the heart over the rest of the man. His wish is that his heart might be enlarged; and this wish amounted to a longing that the whole of himself might act in unison with the heart, so that he might become, as it were, all heart, and thus the heart in the strictest sense be enlarged, through the spreading of itself over the body and soul, expanding itself till it embraced all the powers of both. If there be the love of God in the heart, then gradually the heart, possessed and actuated by so noble and stirring a principle, will bring over to a lofty consecration all the energies, whether mental or corporeal, and will be practically the same as though the other departments of man were thus the result turned into heart, and he became, according to the phrase which we are accustomed to employ when describing a character of unwonted generosity and warmth, "all heart." So that the desire after an enlarged heart you may fairly consider tantamount to a desire that every faculty might be brought into thorough subjection to God, and that just as God himself is love—love being rather the Divine essence than a Divine attribute, and therefore love mingling itself with all the properties of Godhead, so the man having love in the heart might become all heart, the heart throwing itself into all his capacities, pervading but not obliterating the characteristics of his nature. And exactly in accordance with this view of the enlargement of heart which the Psalmist desired is the practical result which was to follow on its attainment. He was already walking in the way of God's commandments; but what he proposed to himself was the *running* that way: "*I will run*

the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." A quickened pace, a more rapid progress, a greater alacrity, a firmer constancy, a more resolute and unflinching obedience, these were the results which the Psalmist looked for from the enlargement of his heart. And truly if all the faculties of mind and body be dedicated to God, with a constant and vigorous step will man press on in the way that leadeth to heaven. So long as the dedication is at best only partial, the world retaining some fraction of its empire, notwithstanding the setting up of the kingdom of God, there can be nothing but a slow and impeded progress, a walking interrupted by repeated haltings, if not backslidings, by much of loitering, if not of actual retreat; but if the man be all heart, then he will be all life, all warmth, all zeal, all energy, and the consequence of this complete surrender to God will be exactly that which is prophetically announced by Isaiah: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."—*Henry Melvill*, 1798—1871.

Verse 32.—"*I will run.*" By running is meant cheerful, ready, and zealous observance of God's precepts: it is not go, or walk, but *run*. They that would come to their journey's end, must run in the way of God's commandments. It noteth a speedy or a ready obedience, without delay. We must begin with God betimes. Alas! when we should be at the goal, we have many of us scarce set forth. And it noteth earnestness; when a man's heart is set upon a thing, he thinks he can never do it soon enough. And this is running, when we are vehement and earnest upon the enjoyment of God and Christ in the way of obedience. And it notes again, that the heart freely offereth itself to God.

This running is the fruit of effectual calling. When the Lord speaks of effectual calling, the issue of it is running; when he speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles, "Nations that know not thee shall run unto thee"; and, "Draw me, and we will run after thee." When God draws there is a speedy, earnest motion of the soul.

This running, as it is the fruit of effectual calling, so it is very needful; for cold and faint motions are soon overborne by difficulty and temptation: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. xii. 1). When a man hath a mind to do a thing, though he be hindered and jostled, he takes it patiently, he goes on and cannot stay to debate the business. A slow motion is easily stopped, whereas a swift one bears down that which opposeth it; so is it when men run and are not tired in the service of God. Last of all, the prize calls for running: "So run that ye may obtain" (1 Cor. ix. 24).—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 32.—"*I will run.*" It was not the *walking* "the way of God's commandments," but the *running* "the way of God's commandments," to which David aspired. The text has no connection with the case of one who habitually pursues the opposite path; it has exclusive reference to the pace at which the line of duty is to be traversed. . . . . It may not unnaturally excite surprise, that "the sweet singer of Israel"—he who was emphatically declared to be "a man after God's own heart"—should, nevertheless, in the words of the text, seem to imply that *he* was not yet "running the way of God's commandments." But, dear brethren, the greater an individual's comparative holiness, the more intense will be his longing for absolute holiness. To others, David might appear to be speeding marvellously along the path of life; and yet he himself deemed his movements to be far less rapid. His humility was one of the evidences of his holiness.—*Hugh B. Moffat*, 1871.

Verse 32.—"*I will run the way.*" His intended course in this way he expresses by running. It is good to be in this way even in the slowest motions; love will creep where it cannot walk. But if thou art so indeed, then thou wilt long for a swifter motion; if thou do but creep, creep on, desire to be enabled to go. If thou goest, but yet haltingly and lamely, yet desire to be strengthened to walk straight; and if thou walkest, let not that satisfy thee, desire to run. So here, David did walk in this way; but he earnestly wishes to mend his pace; he would willingly run, and for that end he desires an enlarged heart.

Some dispute and descant too much whether they go or no, and childishly tell their steps, and would know at every step whether they advance or no, and how much they advance, and thus amuse themselves, and spend the time of doing and going in questioning and doubting. Thus it is with many Christians; but it were a more wise and comfortable way to be endeavouring onwards, and if thou make little progress, at least to be desiring to make more; to be praying and walking, and praying that thou mayest walk faster, and that in the end thou mayest run,

not satisfied with anything attained. Yet by that unsatisfiedness we must not be so dejected as to sit down, or to stand still, but rather we must be excited to go on.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 32.—"*Enlarged my heart,*" or dilated it, namely, with joy. It is obvious to remark the philosophical propriety with which this expression is applied: since the heart is dilated, and the pulse by consequence becomes strong and full, from the exultation of joy as well as of pride. (See Parkhurst on רחב.)—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 32.—"*Thou wilt enlarge my heart.*" God would enlarge the very seat of life, and thus give his weak servant more strength; such strength that he need no longer lie prone on the dust struggling to arise; but strength to enable him to run in the way of truth. Thus, he who prays, "*O Lord, put me not to shame,*" finds for himself the truth of an earlier song: "They looked unto him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed."—*Frederick G. Marchant.*

Verse 32.—"*Enlarge my heart.*" It is said of Solomon, that he had "a large heart (the same word that is used here), as the sand of the sea shore:" that is a vast, comprehensive spirit, that could fathom much of nature, both its greater and lesser things. Thus, I conceive, the enlargement of the heart compriseth the enlightening of the understanding. There arises a clearer light there to discern spiritual things in a more spiritual manner; to see the vast difference betwixt the vain things the world goes after, and the true, solid delight that is in the way of God's commandments; to know the false blush of the pleasures of sin, and what deformity is under that painted mask, and not be allured by it; to have enlarged apprehensions of God, his excellency, and greatness and goodness; how worthy he is to be obeyed and served; this is the great dignity and happiness of the soul; all other pretensions are low and poor in respect of this. Here then is enlargement to see the purity and beauty of his law, how just and reasonable, yea, how pleasant and amiable it is; that his commandments are not grievous, that they are beds of spices; the more we walk in them, still the more of their fragrant smell and sweetness we find.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 32.—Narrow is the way unto life, but no man can run in it save with widened heart.—*Prosper, of Aquitaine* (403—463), *quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 32.—"*Enlarged.*" Surely a temple for the great God (such as our hearts should be) should be fair and ample. If we would have God dwell in our hearts, and shed abroad his influences, we should make room for God in our souls, by a greater largeness of faith and expectation. The rich man thought of enlarging his barns, when his store was increased upon him (Luke xii.), so should we stretch out the curtains of Christ's tent and habitation, have larger expectations of God, if we would receive more from him. The vessels failed before the oil failed. We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves; by the scantiness of our thoughts, we do not make room for him, nor greaten God: "My soul doth magnify the Lord" (Luke i. 46). Faith doth greaten God. How can we make God greater than he is? As to the declarative being, we can have greater and larger apprehensions of his greatness, goodness, and truth.

1. There needs a large heart, because the command is exceedingly broad: "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Ps. cxix. 96). A broad law and a narrow heart will never suit: we need love, faith, knowledge, and all to carry us through this work, which is of such a vast extent and latitude.

2. We need enlarged heart, because of the lets and hindrances within ourselves. There is lust drawing off from God to sensual objects: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James i. 14). Therefore there needs something to draw us on, to carry us out with strength and life another way, to urge us in the service of God. Lust sits as a clog upon us, it is a weight of corruption (Heb. xii. 1), retarding us in all our flights and motions, thwarting, opposing, breaking the force of spiritual impulsions, if not hindering them altogether (Gal. v. 17). Well then, lust drawing so strongly one way, God needs to draw us more strongly the other way. When there is a weight to poise us to worldly and sensual objects, we need a strength to carry us on with vigorous and lively motions of soul towards God, an earnest bent upon our souls, which is this enlargement of heart.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 32.—"*My heart.*" The great Physician knows at once where to look for the cause, when he sees anything amiss in the outward life of his people. He well knows that all spiritual disease is heart disease, and it is the heart remedies

that he must apply. At one time, our Physician sees symptoms which are violent in their nature; at another, he sees symptoms of languor and debility; but he knows that both come from the heart; and so, it is upon the heart that he operates, when he is about to perform a cure.

The strong action of the heart in all holy things comes from the blessed operation of the Spirit upon it; then only can we "*run*" the way of God's commandments, when he has enlarged our heart.

Heartiness in action is the subject to which the reader's attention is here directed, and it is one of considerable importance.

There are many believers, who for want of enlargement of heart are occupying a poor position in the church of God. They are trusting to Jesus for life eternal, and he will doubtless not disappoint them; he will be true to his word, that "he that believeth shall be saved;" but they are still, alas! to a deplorable degree, shut up in self; they have contracted hearts; still do they take narrow views of God's claim, and their own privileges, and the position in which they are set in the world; and however much they might be said to stand, or sit, or walk in the way of God's commandments, they cannot be said to "*run*" in it. Running is a strong and healthy action of the body; it requires energy, it is an exercise that needs a sound heart; none can run in the way of God's commandments, except in strength and vigour imparted by him. The *running* Christians are comparatively few; walking and sitting Chrsitians are comparatively common; but the running Christian is so uncommon as often to be thought almost mad.

Let us, for the sake of order, classify our observations on this subject under the following heads:—

I. *What heartiness is.* The heartiness spoken of here under the term, "enlargement of the heart," is cheerfulness in doing God's will—love for that will—a drawing out of the affections towards it—an interest in it; all this it is, and a great deal more, which it is not easy to describe or define.

II. *What heartiness does.* Where there is enlargement of the heart by God, there is an outgoing beyond all the limits which fallen selfishness assigns. The heart contracted at the fall; it shrank when sin entered into it; it became unequal to containing great and generous thoughts; it became a bondaged heart. True! the responsibilities of duty could not be escaped, not could the directions of conscience; but the affections are voluntary, and the fallen heart drew in its affections from God; it felt that it had the power of withholding them from him and his commandments, and it rejoiced to shew its enmity in withholding its sympathy, where it could not withhold its obedience. . . . .

III. *Whence heartiness comes.* Now, as we have already said, where the heart is operated on by the Spirit, and all its natural evil overruled, it has outgoings which are entirely beyond the limits that fallen selfishness assigns. Love is inwrought with it: the union of sentiment, the identity of interest which love inspires, pervade it, in all belonging to God, for it has received these from God; the heart becomes unbondaged from mere rules, or perhaps to speak more correctly, it rises above them, and it feels—not merely it *knows*, but it *feels*—so much of the beauty of God's commandments, that it delights to "*run*" in them; it loves to be hearty in them; its interests, its affections are in them.—*Philip Bennet Power, in "The 'I Wills' of the Psalms,"* 1862.

Verse 32.—Disquiets of heart unfit us for duty, by hindering our activity in the prosecution of duty. The whole heart, soul, and strength should be engaged in all religious services; but these troubles are as clogs and weights to hinder motion. Joy is the dilatation of the soul, and widens it for anything which it undertakes; but grief contracts the heart, and narrows all the faculties. Hence doth David beg an "enlarged heart," as the principle of activity: "*I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart*"; for what else can be expected when the mind is so distracted with fear and sorrow, but that it should be uneven, tottering, weak, and confused? so that if it do set itself to anything, it acts troublesomely, drives on heavily, and doth a very little with a great deal ado; and yet, the unfitness were less, if that little which it can do were well done; but the mind is so interrupted in its endeavours that sometimes in prayer the man begins, and then is presently at a stand, and dares not proceed, his words are swallowed up, "he is so troubled that he cannot speak," Ps. lxxvii. 4.—*Richard Gilpin*, (1625—1699), *in "Dæmonologia Sacra."*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 33 TO 40.

TEACH me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it *unto* the end.

34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.

35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; *and* quicken thou me in thy way.

38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who *is devoted* to thy fear.

39 Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments *are* good.

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

A sense of dependence and a consciousness of extreme need pervade this section, which is all made up of prayer and plea. The former eight verses trembled with a sense of sin, quivering with a childlike sense of weakness and folly, which caused the man of God to cry out for the help by which alone his soul could be preserved from falling back into sin.

33. "*Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes.*" Child-like, blessed words, from the lips of an old, experienced believer, and he a king, and a man inspired of God. Alas, for those who will never be taught. They dote upon their own wisdom; but their folly is apparent to all who rightly judge. The Psalmist will have the Lord for his teacher; for he feels that his heart will not learn of any less effectual instructor. A sense of great slowness to learn drives us to seek a great teacher. What condescension it is on our great Jehovah's part that he deigns to teach those who seek him. The lesson which is desired is thoroughly practical; the holy man would not only learn the *statutes*, but the *way* of them, the daily use of them, their tenor, spirit, direction, habit, tendency. He would know that path of holiness which is hedged in by divine law, along which the commands of the Lord stand as sign-posts of direction and mile-stones of information, guiding and marking our progress. The very desire to learn this way is in itself an assurance that we shall be taught therein, for he who made us long to learn will be sure to gratify the desire.

"*And I shall keep it unto the end.*" Those who are taught of God never forget their lessons. When divine grace sets a man in the true way he will be true to it. Mere human wit and will have no such enduring influence: there is an end to all perfection of the flesh, but there is no end to heavenly grace except its own end, which is the perfecting of holiness in the fear of the Lord. Perseverance to the end is most certainly to be predicted of those whose beginning is in God, and with God, and by God; but those who commence without the Lord's teaching soon forget what they learn, and start aside from the way upon which they professed to have entered. No one may boast that he will hold on his way in his own strength, for that must depend upon the continual teaching of the Lord: we shall fall like Peter, if we presume on our own firmness as he did. If God keeps us we shall keep his way; and it is a great comfort to know that it is the way with God to keep the feet of his saints. Yet we are to watch as if our keeping of the way depended wholly on ourselves; for, according to this verse, our perseverance rests not on any force or compulsion, but on the teaching of the Lord, and assuredly teaching, whoever be the teacher, requires learning on the part of the taught one: no one can teach a man who refuses to learn. Earnestly, then, let us drink in divine instruction, that so we may hold fast our integrity, and to life's latest hour follow on in the path of uprightness! If we receive the living and incorruptible seed of the word of God we must live: apart from this we have no life eternal, but only a name to live.

The "*end*" of which David speaks is the end of life, or the fulness of obedience. He trusted in grace to make him faithful to the utmost, never drawing a line and

saying to obedience, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further." The end of our keeping the law will come only when we cease to breathe; no good man will think of marking a date and saying, "It is enough, I may now relax my watch, and live after the manner of men." As Christ loves us to the end, so must we serve him to the end. The end of divine teaching is that we may persevere to the end.

The portions of eight show a relationship still. GIMEL begins with prayer for life, that he may keep the word (17); DALETH cries for more life, according to that word (25); and now HE opens with a prayer for teaching, that he may keep the way of God's statutes. If a keen eye is turned upon these verses a closer affinity will be discerned.

34. *"Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law."* This is the same prayer enlarged, or rather it is a supplement which intensifies it. He not only needs teaching, but the power to learn: he requires not only to understand, but to obtain *an understanding*. How low has sin brought us; for we even lack the faculty to understand spiritual things, and are quite unable to know them till we are endowed with spiritual discernment. Will God in very deed give us understanding? This is a miracle of grace. It will, however, never be wrought upon us till we know our need of it; and we shall not even discover that need till God gives us a measure of understanding to perceive it. We are in a state of complicated ruin, from which nothing but manifold grace can deliver us. Those who feel their folly are by the example of the Psalmist encouraged to pray for understanding: let each man by faith cry, "Give *me* understanding." Others have had it, why may it not come to *me?* It was a gift to them; will not the Lord also freely bestow it upon *me?*

We are not to seek this blessing that we may be famous for wisdom, but that we may be abundant in our love to the law of God. He who has understanding will learn, remember, treasure up, and obey the commandment of the Lord. The gospel gives us grace to keep the law; the free gift leads us to holy service; there is no way of reaching to holiness but by accepting the gift of God. If God gives, we keep; but we never keep the law in order to obtaining grace. The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is a devout reverence for the law and a resolute keeping of it in the heart. The spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of his love, wisdom, holiness, and majesty; and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith.

"Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." The understanding operates upon the affections; it convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers; and then it reveals the majesty of the lawgiver, and the whole nature bows before his supreme will. An enlightened judgment heals the divisions of the heart, and bends the united affections to a strict and watchful observance of the one rule of life. He alone obeys God who can say, "My Lord, I would serve thee, and do it with all my heart"; and none can truly say this till they have received as a free grant the inward illumination of the Holy Ghost. To observe God's law with all our heart at all times is a great grace, and few there be that find it; yet it is to be had if we will consent to be taught of the Lord.

Observe the parallel of verses 2 and 10 where the *whole* heart is spoken of in reference to seeking, and in 58 in pleading for mercy; these are all second verses in their octonaries. The frequent repetition of the phrase shows the importance of undivided love: the heart is never whole or holy till it is whole or united. The heart is never one with God till it is one within itself.

35. *"Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight."* "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Thou hast made me to love the way, now make me to move in it. It is a plain path, which others are treading through thy grace; I see it and admire it; cause me to travel in it. This is the cry of a child that longs to walk, but is too feeble; of a pilgrim who is exhausted, yet pants to be on the march; of a lame man who pines to be able to run. It is a blessed thing to delight in holiness, and surely he who gave us this delight will work in us the yet higher joy of possessing and practising it. Here is our only hope; for we shall not go in the narrow path till we are made to do so by the Maker's own power. O thou who didst once make me, I pray thee make me again: thou hast made me to know; now make me to go. Certainly I shall never be happy till I do, for my sole delight lies in walking according to thy bidding.

The Psalmist does not ask the Lord to do for him what he ought to do for

himself: he wishes himself to "go" or tread in the path of the command. He asks not to be carried while he lies passive; but to be made "to go." Grace does not treat us as stocks and stones, to be dragged by horses or engines, but as creatures endowed with life, reason, will, and active powers, who are willing and able to go of themselves if once made to do so. God worketh in us, but it is that we may both will and do according to his good pleasure. The holiness we seek after is not a forced compliance with command, but the indulgence of a whole-hearted passion for goodness, such as shall conform our life to the will of the Lord. Can the reader say, "*therein do I delight*"? Is practical godliness the very jewel of your soul, the coveted prize of your mind? If so, the outward path of life, however rough will be clean, and lead the soul upward to delight ineffable. He who delights in the law should not doubt but what he will be enabled to run in its ways, for where the heart already finds its joy the feet are sure to follow.

Note that the corresponding verse in the former eight (35) was "Make me to understand," and here we have "Make me to go." Remark the order, first understanding and then going; for a clear understanding is a great assistance towards practical action.

During the last few octaves the fourth has been *the heart* verse: see 20, 28, and now 36. Indeed in all the preceeding fourths great heartiness is observable. This also marks the care with which this sacred song was composed.

36. "*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*" Does not this prayer appear to be superfluous, since it is evident that the Psalmist's heart was set upon obedience? We are sure that there is never a word to spare in Scripture. After asking for active virtue it was meet that the man of God should beg that his heart might be in all that he did. What would his goings be if his heart did not go? It may be that David felt a wandering desire, an inordinate leaning of his soul to wordly gain,—possibly it even intruded into his most devout meditations, and at once he cried out for more grace. The only way to cure a wrong leaning is to have the soul bent in the opposite direction. Holiness of heart is the cure for covetousness. What a blessing it is that we may ask the Lord even for an inclination. Our wills are free, and yet without violating their liberty, grace can incline us in the right direction. This can be done by enlightening the understanding as to the excellence of obedience, by strengthening our habits of virtue, by giving us an experience of the sweetness of piety, and by many other ways. If any one duty is irksome to us it behoves us to offer this prayer with special reference thereto: we are to love all the Lord's testimonies, and if we fail in any one point we must pay double attention to it. The leaning of the heart is the way in which the life will lean: hence the force of the petition, "*Incline my heart.*" Happy shall we be when we feel habitually inclined to all that is good. This is not the way in which a carnal heart ever leans; all its inclinations are in opposition to the divine testimonies.

"*And not to covetousness.*" This is the inclination of nature, and grace must put a negative upon it. This vice is as injurious as it is common; it is as mean as it is miserable. It is idolatry, and so it dethrones God; it is selfishness, and so it is cruel to all in its power; it is sordid greed, and so it would sell the Lord himself for pieces of silver. It is a degrading, grovelling, hardening, deadening sin, which withers everything around it that is lovely and Christlike. He who is covetous is of the race of Judas, and will in all probability turn out to be himself a son of perdition. The crime of covetousness is common, but very few will confess it; for when a man heaps up gold in his heart the dust of it blows into his eyes, and he cannot see his own fault. Our hearts must have some object of desire, and the only way to keep out worldly gain is to put in its place the testimonies of the Lord. If we are inclined or bent one way, we shall be turned *from* the other; the negative virtue is most surely attained by making sure of the positive grace which inevitably produces it.

37. "*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" He had prayed about his heart, and one would have thought that the eyes would so surely have been influenced by the heart that there was no need to make them the objects of a special petition; but our author is resolved to make assurance doubly sure. If the eyes do not see, perhaps the heart may not desire; at any rate, one door of temptation is closed when we do not even look at the painted bauble. Sin first entered man's mind by the eye, and it is still a favourite gate for the incoming of Satan's allurements; hence the need of a double watch upon that portal. The prayer is not so much that the eyes may be shut as "*turned away;*" for we need to have them open, but directed to right objects. Perhaps we are now gazing upon folly, we need to have our eyes

turned away ; and if we are beholding heavenly things we shall be wise to beg that our eyes may be kept away from vanity. Why should we look on vanity ?—it melts away as a vapour. Why not look upon things eternal ? Sin is vanity, unjust gain is vanity, self-conceit is vanity, and, indeed, all that is not of God comes under the same head. From all this we must turn away. It is a proof of the sense of weakness felt by the Psalmist and of his entire dependence upon God that he even asks to have his eyes turned for him ; he meant not to make himself passive, but he intended to set forth his own utter helplessness apart from the grace of God. For fear he should forget himself and gaze with a lingering longing upon forbidden objects, he entreats the Lord speedily to make him turn away his eyes, hurrying him off from so dangerous a parley with iniquity. If we are kept from looking on vanity we shall be preserved from loving iniquity.

" *And quicken thou me in thy way.*" Give me so much life that dead vanity may have no power over me. Enable me to travel so swiftly in the road to heaven that I may not stop long enough within sight of vanity to be fascinated thereby. The prayer indicates our greatest need—more life in our obedience. It shows the preserving power of increased life to keep us from the evils which are around us, and it, also, tells us where that increased life must come from, namely, from the Lord alone. Vitality is the cure of vanity. When the heart is full of grace the eyes will be cleansed from impurity. On the other hand, if we would be full of life as to the things of God we must keep ourselves apart from sin and folly, or the eyes will soon captivate the mind, and, like Samson, who could slay his thousands, we may ourselves be overcome through the lusts which enter by the eye.

This verse is parallel to verses 21 and 29 in the previous eights : " rebuke," " remove," " turn away ; " or " proud," " lying," " vanity."

38. " *Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*" Make me sure of thy sure word : make it sure to me and make me sure of it. If we possess the spirit of service, and yet are troubled with sceptical thoughts we cannot do better than pray to be established in the truth. Times will arise when every doctrine and promise seems to be shaken, and our mind gets no rest : then we must appeal to God for establishment in the faith, for he would have all his servants to be well instructed and confirmed in his word. But we must mind that we are the Lord's servants, for else we shall not long be sound in his truth. Practical holiness is a great help towards doctrinal certainty : if we are God's servants he will confirm his word in our experience. " If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine ; " and so know it as to be fully assured of it. Atheism in the heart is a horrible plague to a God-fearing man, it brings more torment with it than can well be described and nothing but a visitation of grace can settle the soul after it has been violently assailed thereby. Vanity or falsehood is bad for the eyes, but it is even worse when it defiles the understanding and casts a doubt upon the word of the living God.

" *Who is devoted to thy fear,*" or simply—" *to thy fear.*" That is, make good thy word to godly fear wherever it exists ; strengthen the whole body of reverent men. Stablish thy word, not only to me, but to all the godly ones under the sun. Or, again, it may mean—" Stablish thy word to thy fear," namely, that men may be led to fear thee ; since a sure faith in the divine promise is the fountain and foundation of godly fear. Men will never worship a God in whom they do not believe. More faith will lead to more godly fear. We cannot look for the fulfilment of promises in our experience unless we live under the influence of the fear of the Lord : establishment in grace is the result of holy watchfulness and prayerful energy. We shall never be rooted and grounded in our belief unless we daily practise what we profess to believe. Full assurance is the reward of obedience. Answers to prayer are given to those whose hearts answer to the Lord's command. If we are devoted to God's fear we shall be delivered from all other fear. He has no fear as to the truth of the word who is filled with fear of the Author of the word. Scepticism is both the parent and the child of impiety ; but strong faith both begets piety and is begotten of it. We commend this whole verse to any devout man whose tendency is to scepticism : it will be an admirable prayer for use in seasons of unusually strong misgivings.

39. " *Turn away my reproach which I fear.*" He feared just reproach, trembling lest he should cause the enemy to blaspheme through any glaring inconsistency. We ought to fear this, and watch that we may avoid it. Persecution in the form of calumny may also be prayed against, for it is a sore trial, perhaps the sorest of trials to men of sensitive minds. Many would sooner bear burning at the stake than the trial of cruel mockings. David was quick tempered, and he probably had all the

greater dread of slander because it raised his anger, and he could hardly tell what he might not do under great provocation. If God turns away our eyes from falsehood, we may also expect that he will turn away falsehood from injuring our good name. We shall be kept from lies if we keep from lies.

"*For thy judgments are good.*" Therefore he is anxious that none may speak evil of the ways of God through hearing an ill report about himself. We mourn when we are slandered; because the shame is cast rather upon our religion than ourselves. If men would be content to attribute evil *to us*, and go no further, we might bear it, for we are evil; but our sorrow is that they cast a slur upon the word and character of God, who is so good, that there is none good in comparison with him. When men rail at God's government of the world it is our duty and privilege to stand up for him, and openly to declare before him, "thy judgments are good;" and we should do the same when they assail the Bible, the gospel, the law, or the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we must take heed that they can bring no truthful accusation against us, or our testimony will be so much wasted breath.

This prayer against reproach is parallel to verse 31, and in general to many other of the seventh verses in the octaves, which usually imply opposition from without and a sacred satisfaction within. Observe the things which are good: "*thy judgments are good;*" "thou art good and doest good" (68); "good for me to have been afflicted" (71); "teach me good judgment" (66).

40. "*Behold, I have longed after thy precepts.*" He can at least claim sincerity. He is deeply bowed down by a sense of his weakness and need of grace; but he does desire to be in all things conformed to the divine will. Where our longings are, there are we in the sight of God. If we have not attained perfection, it is something to have hungered after it. He who has given us to desire, will also grant us to obtain. The precepts are grievous to the ungodly, and therefore when we are so changed as to long for them we have clear evidence of conversion, and we may safely conclude that he who has begun the good work will carry it on. "*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*" Give me more life wherewith to follow thy righteous law; or give me more life because thou hast promised to hear prayer, and it is according to thy righteousness to keep thy word. How often does David plead for quickening! But never once too often. We need quickening every hour of the day for we are so sadly apt to become slow and languid in the ways of God. It is the Holy Spirit who can pour new life into us; let us not cease crying to him. Let the life we already possess show itself by longing for more.

The last verses of the octaves have generally exhibited an onward look of resolve, hope, and prayer. Here past fruits of grace are made the plea for further blessing. Onward in the heavenly life is the cry of this verse.

SPECIAL NOTES ON VERSES 33 TO 40.

Upon this Octonary the Notes furnished by Mr. Marchant, one of the Tutors of the Pastors' College, are so excellent that we give them entire.

SECTION ה, HE.

SUBJECT: THE LAW OF JEHOVAH TO BE SET BEFORE THE EYES, THE MIND, THE FEET, AND THE HEART.

Key phrase: הָקֵם לְעַבְדְּךָ אִמְרָתֶךָ. *"Set up before thy servant thy word"* (ver. 38).

Verse 33.—THE WORD SET UP BEFORE THE EYES. *"Teach me;"* literally, *"point out," "indicate to me."* יָרָה, as used here, means *"to send out the hand,"* especially in the sense of pointing out. Hence "to show," "to indicate," "to teach." The Psalmist here prays for direction in its more superficial form. Many paths were before his eyes, leading down to death: one path was before him, leading unto life. He here asks to be shown *which* is Jehovah's way. If the Lord will ever show his eyes which way is the right way, then he will keep it unto the end. Here is light wanted for the eyes. As the Indian pursues his trail with unerring eye and unfaltering step, so, watching for every deviation which might take us astray, we should pursue the way which leadeth unto life.

Verse 34.—THE WORD SET BEFORE THE MIND. *"Give me understanding."* The word used here refers to mental comprehension, as distinguished from the mere direction, or pointing out, asked for in the previous verse. Here the prayer is, *"Make me to discern," "Cause me to perceive," i.e.*, with the understanding. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The outer senses must first see the way, then the mind must understand it, then, with faith and love, the heart should follow it. Thus, too, the Psalmist, if God will cause him to understand the law, will keep it with all his heart. Still, the heart is prone to lean to things earthly and sinful, and divine help has presently to be invoked for that also.

Verse 35.—THE WORD SET BEFORE THE FEET. The word הַדְרִיכֵנִי is from דָּרַךְ *"to tread with the feet," "to trample."* Hence, *"Make me to go,"* alludes here to the very act of walking in the divine way, in distinction from mere perception of the way with the eyes and with the understanding. It is in this matter of practical walking that the actual difficulties of the way seem to come more forcibly into sight; hence we no longer have דֶּרֶךְ used (as in verse 33) which may mean a broad open way, but נָתִיב, which (says Gesenius) "never denotes a public and royal road, such as was raised up and formed by art, but always a footpath." So the younger Buxtorf renders the word by *Semita.* When the feet really come to tread it, the way of truth is ever found to be "the narrow way."

Verse 36.—THE WORD SET BEFORE THE HEART. *"Incline my heart unto thy testimonies."* It is nothing for the eyes to see, for the mind to understand, nor even for the feet to be made to go in the way of truth, if the heart be not inclined thereunto also. It is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness. To be without love is, according to 1 Cor. xiii., to be without everything.

Thus the sense of these four methodical petitions in this section is as follows: Make me to see, make me to understand, make me to go in, and make me to love to go in, the beaten and narrow path of thy testimonies. So far as I gather, Luther gives almost the exact sense of the foregoing exposition; for he translates the opening words of verses 33, 34, 35, and 36 by terms signifying respectively, "Point out to me," "Explain to me," "Lead me," and "Incline (bend, slope) my heart," etc.

Verse 37.—*"Turn away mine eyes,"* etc. Literally, *"Make mine eyes to pass from seeing vanity;"* as though he would pray, Whatever is of vanity, make me to pass without seeing it. The sentiment is strikingly like that in our Lord's prayer: "Lead us not into temptation." Having prayed for what he wanted to see, the Psalmist here prays for the hiding of what he would not see.

Verse 38.—" *Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*" In view of the exposition of the previous verses of the section this would be more correctly rendered, " *Hold up thy word before thy servant ;* " *i.e.*, hold it up to my eyes, to my mind, to my steps, and to my heart. Make all that is vain to pass, so that I see it not ; but let thy word be so set up before my whole being that I shall always see it, and thus, by it, see my way to thee.

Verse 39.—" *Turn away my reproach which I fear.*" " Cause to pass my reproach which *I feared.*" This also, like the vanity spoken of in verse 37, the Psalmist prays that he may not see. He would have the gaze of his whole manhood bent only on the word. The reproach which he feared is that to which he had already referred in verses 21, 22, and perhaps again in verse 31. The proud had erred from the commandments, and had inherited rebuke ; it was the reproach and shame which were theirs that the Psalmist would have to be turned aside, so that they should not be seen. " *For thy judgments are good.*" This is given as a reason why the reproach should be thus turned aside. The proud had thought lightly and contemptuously on the divine judgments, hence their reproach ; the Psalmist held those judgments to be good, and thus hoped that he might not see reproach.

Verse 40.—" *Behold, I have longed after,*" etc. This is given as an intenser form of the statement which he had just made, that he esteemed the judgments to be good. They were so good that he longed after them. Not only so, but he desired to long after them even more. Thus he prays for even more life and vigour in pursuing the path which they pointed out—" *Quicken me in thy righteousness.*" He who really longs after divine truth, mourns that he does not long more. When the heart has no love, the mind has no light, and can only judge the precepts erroneously. " The pure in heart " see better with the mind than can the impure. " Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Love so enlarges discernment that he who really loves often finds that his judgment of the blessedness of truth has outstripped even his longing for it. Hence it is the quick who cry, " *Quicken me ;* " it is those who have living desires who pray for yet more life in the way of righteousness.

NOTES ON VERSES 33 TO 40.

Verses 33—40.—In this Octonarius, now and again, the same prayer is repeated, of which several times mention has before been made. For he prays that he may be divinely taught, governed, strengthened, and defended against the calumnies, reproaches, and threatenings of his enemies. And the prayer is full of the most ardent longings, which is manifest from the same resolve being so frequently repeated. For the more he knows the ignorance, obscurity, doubts, and the imbecility of the human mind, and sees how men are impelled by a slight momentum, so that they fall away from the truth and embrace errors repugnant to the divine word, or fall into great sins, the more ardently and strongly does he ask in prayer that he may be divinely taught, governed, and strengthened, lest he should cast away acknowledged truth, or plunge himself into wickedness. And by his example he teaches that we, also, against blindness born with us, and the imbecility of our flesh, and also against the snares and madnesses of devils should fortify ourselves with those weapons; namely, with the right study and knowledge of the divine Word, and with constant prayer. For if so great a man, who had made such pre-eminent attainments, prayed for this, how much more ought they to do so, who are but novices and ignorant beginners. This is the sum of this Octonarius.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verses 33—40.—In this part, nine times does the Psalmist send up his petition to his God, and six of these he accompanies with a reason for being heard. . . . These petitions are the utterances of a renewed heart; the man of God could not but give utterance to them—such was the new refining process that had taken place upon him. . . . . The outline runs thus:—Petitions are offered for Instruction (33) and Understanding (34), and likewise for Spiritual Ability (35) and Inclination (36). These are followed by petitions for Exemption from the Spirit of Vanity (37), and for Divine Quickening (37). The Lord is besought to make good his Word of Promise to his servant (38), and to deliver him from Feared Reproach. Last of all, the man of God places his prayer for quickening upon the ground of the Divine Righteousness (40). May the Divine Spirit teach us to compare ourselves with what we find here, as we would see the salvation of our God!—*John Stephen.*

Verses 33—40.—I observe that in this one octonary which is not to be found in any of the rest, namely, that in every several verse there is a several prayer. In the first whereof he prayeth to be taught, and then promiseth to take in that which God shall teach him. He had before resolved to run in this way; but he felt forthwith his own natural aberrations, and therefore he cometh to this guide to be taught. —*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD, *the way of thy statutes,*" etc. Instruction from above is necessary for the children of God, while they continue in this world. The more we know, the more we shall desire to know; we shall beg a daily supply of grace, as well as of bread; and a taste of "the cluster of Eshcol" will make us long after the vintage of Canaan (Numb. xiii. 23). Religion is the art of holy living, and then only known when it is practised; as he is not a master of music who can read the notes which compose it, but he who has learnt to take a lesson readily from the book, and play it on his instrument; after which the pleasure it affords will be sufficient motive for continuing so to do.—*George Horne.*

Verse 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD, *the way of thy statutes,*" etc. In the sincerity of your hearts go to God for his teaching. God is pleased with the request. "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing" (1 Kings iii. 9, 10). Oh, beg it of God, for these three reasons—1. The way of God's statutes is worthy to be found by all. 2. It is hard to be found and kept by any. 3. It is so dangerous to miss it, that this should quicken us to be earnest with God.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD," etc. "He who is his own pupil," remarks S. Bernard, "has a fool for his master." A soldier who enters on a march does not settle for himself the order of his going, nor begin the journey at his own will, nor yet choose pleasant short-cuts, lest he should fall out of rank, away from the standards, but gets the route from his general, and keeps to it; advances in a prescribed order, walks armed, and goes straight on to the end of his march, to find there the supplies provided by the commissariat. If he goes by any other road, he gets no rations, and finds no quarters ready, because the general's orders are that all things of this

kind shall be prepared for those who follow him, and turn not aside to the right hand or the left. And thus he who follows his general does not break down, and that for good reasons; for the general consults not for his own convenience, but for the capability of his whole army. And this, too, is Christ's order of march, as he leads his great host out of the spiritual Egypt to the eternal Land of Paradise.—*Ambrose, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD, *the way,*" etc. It should never be forgotten, as this fifth section teaches us, that there is a way marked out by God's own appointment for all his people to walk in, and in which to persevere. Others lay down a path each for himself, and keeping to it think they are safe. David did not trust to anything of this kind; he was only desirous of being found in the way of God's ordinance, and to be so taught of God as to keep it to the end; or as the original reads, keep it the end, the end of his profession, the salvation of his soul.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 33.—"*Teach me, O* LORD, *the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it,*" etc. If thou continue a teacher of me, saith David, I shall continue a servant to thee. Perseverance cannot be, unless continual light and grace be furnished to us from the Lord. As the tree which hath not sap at the root may flourish for a while, but cannot continue; a man, whose heart is not watered with the dew of God's grace continually, may for a time make a fair show of godliness, but in the end he will fall away. We bear not the root, but the root bears us: let us tremble and fear. If we abide not in our Lord, we become withered branches, good for nothing but the fire. Let us alway pray that he would ever abide with us, to inform us by his light, and lead us by his power, in that way which may bring us to himself.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 33.—"*Statutes,*" from a word signifying to *mark, trace out, describe* and *ordain;* because they *mark out* our way, *describe* the line of conduct we are to pursue, and *order* or *ordain* what we are to observe.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 33.—God's "*statutes*" declare his authority and power of giving us laws.—*Matthew Pool,* 1624—1679.

Verse 33.—"*Unto the end,*" or, *by way of return,* or *reward,* or *gratitude* to thee; God's mercy in *teaching* being in all reason to be *rewarded* or answered by our *observing* and taking exact care of what he teaches. Or else by analogy with Psalm xix. 11, where the *keeping* his *commandments* brings *great reward* with it: it may here be rendered עֵקֶב (understanding the preposition לְ) *for the reward,* meaning the present joy of it, verse 32, not excluding the future crown.—*H. Hammond.*

Verse 33.—"*Unto the end.*" *Quite through;* the Hebrew is, *to the heel.* The force of the words seems to be "Quite through, from head to foot."—*Zachary Mudge,* 1744.

Verses 33, 34.—"*Unto the end.*" He will be no *temporizer;* he will keep it "*to the end.*" He will be no *hypocrite;* he will keep it "*with his whole heart.*"—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 34.—"*Give me understanding.*" The Psalmist goes to the root of the matter; he is taught to do so by the Spirit of all teaching. He would not merely be taught, as a master would teach, but he would have his mind remoulded and informed as only the Creator could do. The words imply as much. "*Give me understanding*"—make me to understand. Not merely did he want to know a thing—the general nature of it; but he wished to understand the beginning, the outgoing and the end of it. He wanted to attain the power of distinction between right and wrong—spiritual discernment that so he might discern the right, and, at the same time, all that was contrary to it; he wanted understanding, that so he might know, and discern, and prize the truth, the true way of God, carefully avoiding all that would be aside from it.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 34.—"*Give me understanding.*" This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for "the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding (1 John v. 20).—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 34.—"*Understanding.*" The understanding is the pilot and guide of the whole man; that faculty which sits at the stern of the soul: but as the most expert guide may mistake in the dark, so may the understanding, when it wants the light of knowledge. "Without knowledge the mind cannot be good" (Prov. xix. 2); nor the life good; nor the external condition safe (Eph. iv. 18). "My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge" (Hosea iv. 6).

It is ordinary in Scripture to set profaneness, and all kinds of miscarriages, upon the score of ignorance. Diseases in the body have many times their rise from

distempers in the *head;* and exorbitances in practice, from errors in the judgment. And, indeed. in every sin, there is something both of ignorance and error at the bottom: for did sinners truly know what they do in sinning, we might say of every sin what the Apostle speaks concerning that great sin, " Had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory " (1 Cor. ii. 8). Did they truly know that every sin is a provoking the Lord to jealousy, a proclaiming war against heaven, a crucifying the Lord Jesus afresh, a treasuring up wrath afresh unto themselves against the day of wrath; and that if ever they be pardoned, it must be at no lower a rate than the price of his blood—*it were scarce possible* but sin, instead of alluring, should affright, and instead of tempting, scare.—*From the " Recommendatory Epistle prefixed to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms."*

Verse 34.—*" My whole heart."* The whole man is God's by every kind of right and title; and therefore, when he requireth the whole heart, he doth but require that which is his own. God gave us the whole by creation, preserveth the whole, redeemeth the whole, and promiseth to glorify the whole. If we had been mangled in creation we would have been troubled; if born without hands or feet. If God should turn us off to ourselves to keep that part to ourselves which we reserved from him, or if he should make such a division at death, take a part to heaven, or if Christ had bought part: " Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. vi. 20). If you have had any good work upon you, God sanctified the whole in a gospel-sense, that is every part: " And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 23). Not only conscience, but will and affections, appetite and body. And you have given all to him for his use: " I am my beloved's! " not a part, but the whole. He could not endure Ananias that kept back part of the price; all is his due. When the world, pleasure, ambition, pride, desire of riches. unchaste love, desire a part in us, we may remember we have no affections to dispose of without God's leave. It is all his, and it is sacrilege to rob or detain any part from God. Shall I alienate that which is God's to satisfy the world, the flesh, and the Devil?—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 34, 35.—*"Give me understanding." "Make me to go."* The understanding which he seeks leads to going, and is sought to that end. God's teaching begets obedience; he showeth us the path of life, and he maketh us to go in it. It is such instruction as giveth strength, that exciteth the sluggish will, and breaketh the force of corrupt inclinations; it removeth the darkness which corruption and sin have brought upon the mind, and maketh us pliable and ready to obey; yea, it giveth not only the will, but the deed; in short, it engageth us in a watchful, careful, uniform, and constant obedience.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 35.—*"Make me to go in the path of thy commandments."* David, in the former verses, had begged for light, now for strength to walk according to this light. We need not only light to know our way, but a heart to walk in it. Direction is necessary because of the blindness of our minds; and the effectual impulsions of grace are necessary because of the weakness of our hearts. It will not answer our duty to have a naked notion of truths, unless we embrace and pursue them. So, accordingly, we need a double assistance from God; the mind must be enlightened, the will moved and inclined. The work of a Christian lies not in depth of speculation, but in the height of practice. The excellency of Divine grace consisteth in this,—That God doth first teach what is to be done, and then make us to do what is taught: *"Make me to go in the path of thy commandments."—Thomas Manton.*

Verse 35.—*"The path of thy commandments."* They are termed *"the paths,"* because paths are narrow, short, straight, clean passages for people on foot only, and not for horses and carriages; and such is the way of the Lord, as compared with that of the flesh and of the world, all the ways of which are broad, filthy, and crooked, trodden by the brute beasts, the type of carnal, animal man. He assigns a reason for being heard when he says, *"For this same I have desired";* because, through God's grace, I have chosen this path, and desired to walk in it, and it is only meet that he who gives the will should give the grace to accomplish, as St. Paul says, " Who worketh in you both to will and to do."—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 35.—*"The path"* is *"the path of thy commandments."* Not any new way, but the old and pathed way wherein all the servants of God have walked before

him, and for which the Grecians (as Euthymius noteth) called it τριβον, *quasi viam tritam.* But howsoever this way be pathed, by the walking and treading of many in it, yet he acknowledgeth it is but one, yea, and a narrow and difficult path to keep, and therefore seeks he to be guided into it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 35.—"*The path.*" It is a "*path,*" not a public road; a path where no *beast* goes, and *men* seldom.—*Adam Clarke,*

Verses 35, 37.—"*The path.*" "*Thy way.*" The Hindus call *panth* or *way* the line of doctrine of any sect followed, in order to attain to *mukti,* or deliverance from sin. *Way* signifies the chief means to an end, and is applied to the Scriptures, Ps. cxix. 27, to God's counsels, to God's works. This spiritual way is—(1) *easy* to find, Isa. xxxv. 8; (2) *clean,* no mud of sin; (3) never out of *repair*—Christ the same as 6,000 years ago; (4) no *lion* or wild beasts on; (5) *costly,* the blood of Christ made it; (6) not *lonely,* many believers on it, Heb. xii. 1; (7) no *toll,* all may come; (8) *wide.* The way to the cities of refuge was forty-eight feet wide. The map of the Bible shows this path; (9) the *end* pleasant—Heaven.—*J. Long, in "Eastern Proverbs and Maxims illustrating old Truths,"* 1881.

Verses 35, 36.—"*Therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*" A child of God hath not the bent of his heart so perfectly fixed towards God but it is ever and anon returning to its old bent and bias again. The best may find that they cannot keep their affections as loose from the world when they have houses, and lands, and all things at their will, as they could when they are kept low and bare. The best may find that their love to heavenly things is on the wane as worldly things are on the increase. It is reported of Pius Quintus that he should say of himself that, when he first entered into orders, he had some hopes of his salvation; when he came to be a cardinal, he doubted of it; but since he came to be pope, he did even almost despair. Many may find a very great change in themselves, much decay of zeal for God's glory, and love to and relish of God's word, and mindfulness of heavenly things, as it fares better with them in the world. Now it is good to observe this before the mischief increaseth. Look, as jealousy and caution are necessary to prevent the entrance and beginning of this mischief, so observation is necessary to prevent the increase of it. When the world doth get too deep an interest in our hearts, when it begins to insinuate and entice us from God, and weaken our delight in the ways of God and zeal for his glory, then we need often to tell you how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 36.—"*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*" We must be convinced that covetousness, I mean that our covetousness, is a vice; for it holds something of a virtue, of frugality, which is not to waste that which one hath: and this makes us entertain thoughts that it is no vice; and we often say that it is good to be a little worldly; a little covetousness we like well; which shows that we do not indeed and in heart, hold it to be a sin. For if sin be naught, a little of sin cannot be good. As good say, a little poison were good, so it be not too much. And so we find, that men will rate at their children for spending, and are ready to turn them out of doors, if they be given unto waste; but if they be near and pinching then we like that too much; and I scarce know a man who doth use to call upon his children that they spare not, save not. I know youth is rather addicted the other way, and is more subject to waste and consume, by reason that the natural heat is quick and active in them; and therefore indeed there is more fear and danger that they prove prodigal and turn wasters, and therefore the more may be said and done that way to youth. But the thing I press is, that in case we see our children in their youth to begin to be covetous and worldly, we call them good husbands, and are but too glad to see it so, and are too much pleased with them for it. Little do they think that worldliness is a most guiltful sin in respect of God, and most hurtful in respect of men. Hark what the word of God saith of it, Ephesians v. 5: *It is idolatry,* and idolatry is the first sin of the first table. *It is the root of all evils,* 1 Tim. vi. 10. There is no evil but a worldly man will do it to save his purse. Thus David: "*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness*": he saith not, this or that testimony, but (as including all the laws of God) he saith "*testimonies*"; to show us that covetousness draws us away, not from some only, but from all God's commandments. So St. Paul: where covetousness is, there are "many lusts," 1 Tim. vi. 9, and "many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 10. "It drowns men in perdition and destruction," 1 Tim. vi. 9. And

the Greek word signifies such a drowning as is almost past all hope and recovery. It is the bane of all society: men cry out of it, because they would have none covetous, none rich but themselves. A hater he is of mankind; he hates all poor, because they would beg something of him; and all rich, because they have riches which he would have. A covetous man would have all that all have. Thus speaks a noble father.* Such believe not the word, they trust neither God nor man. For he that trusts not God, cannot trust man. It robs God of that confidence we should have in him, and dependence we owe unto him; it turns a man from all the commandments. Hence the prophet David prays God to turn his heart to his commandments, *"and not to covetousness."* For not only we *ought* not, but as the phrase is, "we *cannot* serve God and mammon," Luke xvi. 13.—*Richard Capel, in "Tentations: their Nature, Danger, Cure."* 1655.

Verse 36.—*"Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness."* Without a restraining hand the heart is prone to turn aside into the byeways of petty love of pelf. The remedy must be from above. Heavenly aid is therefore sought.—*Henry Law.*

Verse 36.—*"Incline my heart."* Were we naturally and spontaneously inclined to the righteousness of the law, there would be no occasion for the petition of the Psalmist, *"Incline my heart."* It remains, therefore, that our hearts are full of sinful thoughts, and wholly rebellious until God by his grace change them.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 36.—*"Incline my heart."* In the former verses David had asked understanding and direction to know the Lord's will; now he asketh an inclination of heart to do the Lord's will. The understanding needs not only to be enlightened, but the will to be moved and changed. Man's heart is of its own accord averse from God and holiness, even then when the wit is most refined, and the understanding is stocked and stored with high notions about it: therefore David doth not only say, "Give me understanding," but, *"Incline my heart."* We can be worldly of ourselves, but we cannot be holy and heavenly of ourselves; that must be asked of him who is the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. They that plead for the power of nature, shut out the use of prayer. But Austin hath said well, *Natura vera confessione non falsa defensione opus habet:* we need rather to confess our weakness, than defend our strength. Thus doth David, and so will every broken-hearted Christian that hath had an experience of the inclinations of his own soul, he will come to God, and say, *"Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness."—Thomas Manton.*

Verse 36.—*"Incline."* Then shall I not decline.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 36.—*"Unto thy testimonies."* The contrast is most striking. There are the *divine testimonies* on the one hand, and there is *"covetousness"* on the other. God stands on one side, the world on the other. The renewed man chooses between the two; he does not require long to think, and God is his choice.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 36.—*"Not to covetousness."* He prays in particular that his heart may be diverted from covetousness, which is not only an evil, but as saith the Apostle, "the root of all evil." David here opposes it as an adversary to all the righteousness of God's testimonies: it inverts the order of nature, and makes the heavenly soul earthly. It is a handmaid of all sins; for there is no sin which a covetous man will not serve for his gain. We should beware of all sins, but specially of mother-sins.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 36.—*"Covetousness,"* or rather, "gain unjustly acquired." . . . . The Hebrew word בצע can only mean *plunder, rapine, unjust gain.—J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 36.—*"Covetousness."*—S. Bonaventura, on our Psalm, says *Covetousness* must be hated, shunned, put away: must be hated, because it attacks the life of nature: must be shunned, because it hinders the life of grace: must be put away, because it obstructs the life of glory. Clemens Alexandrinus says that covetousness is the citadel of the vices, and Ambrose says that it is the loss of the soul.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 36.—*"Covetousness."* I would observe to the reader, and desire him duly and seriously to consider, that although this commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," is placed the last in number, yet it is too often the first that is broken, man's covetous heart leading the van in transgression.—*William Crouch, in "The Enormous Sin of Covetousness detected,"* 1708.

---

* Chrysostom.

Verse 36.—"*Covetousness*" is an immoderate desire of riches, in which these vices concur. *First*, An excessive love of riches, and the fixing of our hearts upon them. *Secondly*, A resolution to become rich, either by lawful or unlawful means, 1 Tim. vi. 9. *Thirdly*, Too much haste in gathering riches, joined with impatience of any delay, Prov. xxviii. 20, 22, and xx. 21. *Fourthly*, An insatiable appetite, which can never be satisfied; but when they have too much, they still desire more, and have never enough, Eccles. iv. 8. Like the horseleech, Prov. xxx. 15; the dropsy, and hell itself, Prov. xxvii. 20. *Fifthly*, Miser-like tenacity, whereby they refuse to communicate their goods, either for the use of others, or themselves. *Sixthly*, Cruelty. Prov. i. 18, 19, exercised both in their unmercifulness and oppression of the poor. Covetousness is a most heinous vice; for it is idolatry, and the root of all evil, Col. iii. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 10; a pernicious thorn, that stifles all grace and choketh the seed of the word, Matt. xiii. 22, and pierceth men through with many sorrows, 1 Tim. vi. 10, and drowneth them in destruction and perdition.—*James Usher*, 1580—1655.

Verse 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes*," etc. Having prayed for his heart, he now prayeth for his eyes also. *Omnia à Deo petit, docens illum omnia efficere.* By the eyes oftentimes, as by windows, death enters into the heart; therefore to keep the heart in a good estate three things are requisite, First, a careful study of the senses, specially of the eyes; for it is a righteous working of the Lord, *ut qui exteriori oculo negligenter utitur, interiori non injustè cæcetur;* that he who negligently useth the external eye of his body, should be punished with blindness in the internal eye of his mind. And for this cause Nazianzen, deploring the calamities of his soul, wished that a door might be set before his eyes and ears, to close them when they opened to anything that is not good; *malis autem sua sponte utrumque clauderetur.* The second thing is, a subduing of the body by discipline. And the third is, continuance in prayer.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" Notice this, that he does not say, I will turn away mine eyes; but, "*Turn away mine eyes.*" This shows that it is not possible for us sufficiently to keep our eyes by our own caution and diligence; but there must be divine keeping. For, first, wheresoever in this world you turn yourself provocations to evil are met with. Secondly, with the unwary, and with far different persons, the eyes, the servants of a corrupt heart, wander after the things which are vanities. Thirdly, before you are aware, the evil contracted through the eyes creeps in to the inmost recesses of the heart, and casts in the seeds of perdition. This the Psalmist himself had experienced, not without the greatest trouble both of heart and condition.—*Wolfgang Musculus*, 1497—1563.

Verse 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" It may seem a strange prayer of David, to say, "*Turn away mine eyes from seeing vanity;*" as though God meddled with our looking; or that we had not power in ourselves to cast our eyes upon what objects we list. But is it not, that what we delight in, we delight to look upon? and what we love, we love to be seeing? and so to pray to God, that our eyes may not see vanity, is as much as to pray for grace, that we be not in love with vanity. For, indeed, vanity hath of itself so graceful an aspect, that it is not for a natural man to leave looking upon it; unless the fairer aspect of God's grace draw our eyes from vanity, to look upon itself; which will always naturally be looking upon the fairest. And as David here makes his prayer in the particular, against temptations of prosperity, so Christ teacheth us to make our prayer in the general, against the temptations, both of prosperity and adversity, and very justly. For many can bear the temptations of one kind, who are quickly overcome by temptations of the other kind. So David could bear persecution without murmuring, but when he came to prosperity he could not turn away his eyes from vanity.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" An ugly object loses much of its deformity when we look often upon it. Sin follows this general law, and is to be avoided altogether, even in its contemplation, if we would be safe. A man should be thankful in this world that he has eyelids; and as he can close his eyes, so he should often do it.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 37.—"*Turn away*," then "*quicken*," etc. The first request is for the removing the impediments of obedience, the other for the addition of new degrees of grace. These two are fitly joined, for they have a natural influence upon one another; unless we turn away our eyes from vanity, we shall soon contract deadness

of heart. Nothing causeth it so much as an inordinate liberty in carnal vanities; when our affections are alive to other things, they are dead to God, therefore the less we let loose our hearts to these things, the more lively and cheerful in the work of obedience. On the other side, the more the vigour of grace is renewed, and the habits of it quickened into actual exercise, the more is sin mortified and subdued. Sin dieth, and our senses are restored to their proper use.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" That sin may be avoided we must avoid whatsoever leads to or occasions it. As this caused Job (ch. xxxi. 1) to covenant strongly with his eyes, so it caused David to pray earnestly about his eyes. "*Turn away mine eyes* (or as the Hebrew may be rendered, *make them to pass,*) *from beholding vanity.*" The eye is apt to make a stand, or fix itself, when we come in view of an ensnaring object; therefore it is our duty to hasten it away, or to pray that God would make it pass off from it. . . He that feareth burning must take heed of playing with fire: he that feareth drowning must keep out of deep waters. He that feareth the plague must not go into an infected house. Would they avoid sin who present themselves to the opportunities of it?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes.*" Lest looking cause liking and lusting: 1 John ii. 16. In Hebrew the same word signifieth both an *eye* and a *fountain;* to show that from the eye, as from a fountain, floweth much mischief; and by that window Satan often winds himself into the soul. This David found by experience, and therefore prays here, "*Turn away,*" transfer, make to pass "*mine eyes,*" etc. He knew the danger of irregular glancing and inordinate gazing.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" It is a most dangerous experiment for a child of God to place himself within the sphere of seductive temptations. Every feeling of duty, every recollection of his own weakness, every remembrance of the failure of others, should induce him to hasten to the greatest possible distance from the scene of unnecessary conflict and danger.—*John Morison.*

Verse 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.*" From gazing at the delusive *mirages* which tempt the pilgrim to leave the safe highway.—*William Kay.*

Verse 37.—Is it asked—"What will most effectually turn my eyes from vanity?" Not the seclusion of contemplative retirement—not the relinquishment of our lawful connexion with the world—but the transcendent beauty of Jesus unveiled to our eyes, and fixing our hearts.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 37.—"*Turn away mine eyes,*" etc. The fort-royal of your souls is in danger of a surprise while the outworks of your senses are unguarded. Your eyes, which may be floodgates to pour out tears, should not be casements to let in lusts. A careless eye is an index to a graceless heart. Remember, the whole world died by a wound in the eye. The eyes of a Christian should be like sunflowers, which are opened to no blaze but that of the sun.—*William Secker,* 1660.

Verse 37.—"*Vanity,*" in Hebrew usage, has often special reference to idols and the accompaniments of idol worship. The Psalmist prays that he may never be permitted even to see such tempting objects.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 37.—"*Quicken thou me.*" Every saint is very apt to be a sluggard in the way and work of God. "*Quicken me,*" says one of the chiefest and choicest of saints, "*in thy way*"; and it is as much as if he should say in plain terms, "Ah, Lord! I am a dull jade, and have often need of thy spur, thy Spirit." This prayer of David seems proof enough to this point; but if you desire farther confirmation, I shall produce an argument *instar omnium,* "that none shall dare to deny, nor be able to disapprove"; and that is drawn from the topic of your own experience; and this is *argumentum lugubre,* like a funeral anthem, "very sad and sorrowful." Do you not feel and find, to the grief of your own souls, that, whereas you should weep as if you wept not, rejoice as if you rejoiced not, and buy as if you were possessed not; *inverso ordine,* ["inverting this order,"] you weep for losses as if you would weep out your eyes; you rejoice in temporal comforts as if you were in heaven; and you buy as if it were for ever a day (Ps. xlix. 11). But *e contrario,* ["on the contrary,"] you pray as if you prayed not; hear as if you heard not; work for God as if you worked not. Now, we know, *experto credas,** a man that sticks fast in a ditch needs no reason to prove he is in, but remedies to pull him out. Your best course will be to propose the case how you may get rid of this unwelcome guest,

* "You may yield credence to that of which you have made trial."

spiritual sloth: it is a case we are all concerned in. *Asini aures quis non habet?** Every man and mortal hath some of the ass's dulness and sloth in him.—*Mr. Simmons in "The Morning Exercises,"* 1661.

Verse 37.—*"Quicken thou me."* Another quickening ordinance is *prayer*. How often doth David pray for quickening grace? five or six times in one Psalm. He begins many a prayer with a heavy heart, and before he hath done he is full of life. Therefore, pray much, because all life is from God, and he quickens whom he will. Only let me add this caution, before I let this pass,—Be sure thy understanding and affection go along together in every ordinance, and in every part of the ordinance, as thou wouldst have it a quickening ordinance.—*Matthew Lawrence, in "The Use and Practice of Faith,"* 1657.

Verse 37.—*"Thy way,"* by way of emphasis, in opposition to and exaltation of, above, all other ways. There is a fourfold way:—1. *Via mundi*, the way of the world; and that is *spinosa*, thorny. 2. *Via carnis*, the way of the flesh; and that is *insidiosa*, treacherous. 3. *Via Satana*, the way of the devil; and that is *tenebricosa*, darksome. 4. *Via Domini*, the way of God; and that is *gratiosa*, gracious.—*Simmons.*

Verses 37, 38.—Prayer is nothing but the promise reversed, or God's word formed into an argument, and retorted by faith upon God again. Know, Christian, thou hast law on thy side. Bills and bonds must be paid. David prays against the sins of a wanton eye and a dead heart: *"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way";* and see how he urgeth his argument in the next words,—*"Stablish thy word unto thy servant."* A good man is as good as his word, and will not a good God be so? But where finds David such a word for help against these sins? Surely in the covenant. It is in the magna charta. The first promise held forth thus much,—"The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." —*William Gurnall.*

Verse 38.—*"Stablish thy word unto thy servant,"* etc.—Well, but here is a strange thing—a man who is a true *"servant of God," "devoted to his fear,"* praying for what he surely must already have, else how could he be a servant? or be living in Jehovah's fear? He seems to assume, clearly and without any doubt, his own personal consecration, and then he prays for that which must surely be, at least in considerable measure, assumed and comprehended in the very idea of a true personal consecration. Unless God's word is made sure to a man he will never become his servant. If he *is* his servant, why should he pray, *"Stablish thy word"?* Why, too, should he say in the thirty-fifth verse, *"Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight"?* "Therein do I delight. It is the way of my choice, of my joy!" And yet, "Make me to go in it," as if I were unwilling. This apparent contradiction or discrepancy is easily solved in a true experience, and can be, in fact, solved in no other way. Is not this the very condition of many and many a one? *"Stablished,"* yet moved; *"devoted,"* yet uncertain; *"serving"* God truly, yet looking and longing for clear warrant, and higher sanction, and more inward grace, to make the service better; "believing," yet crying, sometimes, "with tears, Help thou mine unbelief!" —*Alexander Raleigh.*

Verse 38.—*"Stablish thy word unto thy servant."* Why doth David pray thus, *"Stablish thy word to me;"* since God's word is most certain and so stable in itself that it cannot be more so? (2 Pet. i. 19). "We have a more sure," or a more stable, "word of prophecy," as the word signifies. How can the word be more stable than it is? I answer, it is sure in regard of God from whom it comes, and in itself. In regard of the things propounded it cannot be more or less stable, it cannot be fast and loose: but in regard of us, it may be more or less established. And that two ways,—1. By the inward assurance of the Spirit increasing our faith. 2. By the outward performance of what is promised.

1st, By the inward assurance of the Spirit, by which our faith is increased. Great is the weakness of our faith, as appears by our fears, doubts, distrusts, so that we need to be assured more and more. We need say with tears as he doth in the gospel: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark ix. 24); and to cry out with the apostles, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke xvii. 5). There is none believeth so, but he may yet believe more. And in this sense the word is more established, when we are confirmed in the belief of it, and look upon it as sure ground for faith

* "Where is the man who hath not the ears of an ass?"

to rest upon. 2ndly, By actual performance, when the promise is made good for us. Every event which falls out according to the word is a notable testimony of the truth of it, and a seal to confirm and strengthen our faith. Three ways may this be made good.

1. The making good of some promises at one time strengthens our faith in expecting the like favour at another. Christ was angry with his disciples for not remembering the miracle of the loaves, when they fell into a like strait again. "Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves?" (Matt. xvi. 9). We are to seek upon every difficulty; whereas former experience in the same kind should be a means of establishment to us: "He hath delivered, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" (2 Cor. i. 10). In teaching a child to spell we are angry, if, when we have showed him a letter once, twice, and a third time, yet when he meets with it again still he misseth: so, God is angry with us when we have had experience of his word in this, that, and the other providence, yet still our doubts return upon us.

2. The accomplishment of one promise confirms another; for God, that keepeth touch at one time, will do so at another: "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. iv. 17, 18). In such a strait God failed not, and surely he that hath been true hitherto will not fail at last.

3. When the word is performed in part, it assureth us of the performance of the whole. It is an earnest given us of all the rest: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen" (2 Cor. i. 20). A Christian hath a great many promises, and they are being performed daily; God is delivering, comforting, protecting him, speaking peace to his conscience; but the greater part are yet to be performed. Present experiences do assure us of what is to come. Thus, "*Stablish thy word*," that is, make it good by the event, that I may learn to trust another time either for the same, or other promises or accomplishments of thy whole word.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 38.—"*Stablish thy word unto thy servant.*" Confirm it; make it *seem* firm and true; let not my mind be vacillating or sceptical in regard to thy truth. This seems to be a prayer against the influence of doubt and scepticism; a prayer that doubts might not be suffered to spring up in his mind, and that the objections and difficulties of scepticism might have no place there. There is a class of men whose minds are naturally sceptical and unbelieving, and for such men such a prayer is peculiarly appropriate. For none can it be improper to pray that the word of God may always seem to them to be true; that their minds may never be left to the influence of doubt and unbelief.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 38.—"*Who is devoted to thy fear.*" The word may be rendered either which or who; as relating either to thy word or to thy servant. 1. Thy word; for in the original Hebrew the posture of the verse is thus, "Stablish to thy servant thy word, which is to the fearing of thee," or, "which is given that thou mayest be feared;" there being in the word of God the greatest arguments and inducements to fear, to reverence, and to obey him. The word of God was appointed to plant the fear of God in our hearts, and to increase our reverence of God; not that we may play the wantons with promises, and feed our lusts with them. 2. I rather take our own translation, and it hath such a sense as that passage, "But I give myself unto prayer" (Psalm cxix. 4). In the original it is, "But I prayer." So in this place it may be read, Stablish thy word to thy servant, "Who is to thy fear." Our translators add, to make the sense more full, addicted, or "devoted to thy fear," that is, who makes it his business, care, and desire to stand in the fear of God.

Now this is added as a true note and description of God's servants, as being a main thing in religion, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm cxi. 10), it is the first in point of order, and it is the first thing when we begin to be wise, to think of God, to have awful thoughts of God, it is a chief point of wisdom, the great thing that makes us wise to salvation. And it is added as an argument of prayer, "O Lord, let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name" (Neh. i. 11). The more any are given to the fear of God, the more assurance they have of God's love, and of his readiness to hear them at the throne of grace.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 38.—"*Who is devoted to thy fear.*" He who hath received from the Lord grace to fear him may be bold to seek any necessary good thing from him; because

the fear of God hath annexed the promises of all other blessings with it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 38.—He that chooses God, devotes himself to God as the vessels of the sanctuary were consecrated and set apart from the common to holy uses, so he that has chosen God to be his God, has dedicated himself to God, and will no more be devoted to profane uses.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 39.—"*Turn away my reproach,*" etc. In these words you have,—1. A request, "*Turn away my reproach.*" 2. A reason to enforce it. "*For thy judgments are good.*"

First, for the request. "*Turn away,*" roll from upon me, so it signifies. He was clothed with reproach; now roll from me "*my reproach.*" Some think he means God's condemnatory sentence, which would turn to his reproach, or some remarkable rebuke from God, because of his sin. Rather, I think, the calumnies of his enemies; and he calls it "*my reproach,*" either as deserved by himself, or as having personally lighted upon him, the reproach which was like to be his lot and portion in the world, through the malice of his enemies: "*the reproach which I fear,*" that is, which I have cause to expect, and am sensible of the sad consequences of it.

Secondly, for the reason by which this is enforced: "*for thy judgments are good.*" There are different opinions about the form of this argument. Some take the reason thus: Let me not suffer reproach for adhering to thy word, thy word which is so good. But David doth not speak here of suffering reproach for righteousness, sake, but such reproach as was likely to befall him because of his own infirmities and failings. Reproaches for righteousness' sake are to be "rejoiced in;" but he saith, this I "*fear,*" and therefore I suppose this doth not hit the reason. Neither do I accept the other sense,—Why should I be looked upon as an evil-doer as long as I keep thy law, and observe thy statutes? Others judge badly of me, but I appeal to thy good judgment.

By "*judgments*" we may understand God's dealings. Thou dost not deal with men according to their desert. Thy dispensations are kind and gracious. Better still: by "*judgments*" are meant the ways, statutes, and ordinances of God called judgments, because all our words, works, thoughts are to be judged according to the sentence of the word: now these, it is a pity they should suffer in my reproach and ignominy. This is that I fear more than anything else that can happen to me. I think the reason will better run thus: Lord, there is in thy law, word, covenant, many promises to encourage thy people, and therefore rules to provide for the due honour and credit of thy people.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 39.—"*Turn away my reproach.*" In the Hebrew it is, "*Take away my rebuke*"; as if he should have said, O Lord, I may commit some such evil against thy good law, yea, some such notorious transgression, as may tend to my shame; I beseech thee, take it away. Or else he meaneth, I have already, O Lord, by divers sins, and by name through adultery and murder brought shame and rebuke upon myself among men; I entreat thee to remove this shame and rebuke.

Out of the first exposition we learn, First, that the godly are subject unto notorious sins. Secondly, that those sins will cause shame in them, though the wicked will not be ashamed. Thirdly, that God only can take away this shame. Fourthly, that we may pray for the removing of shame even amongst men, especially that which may bring with it some dishonour to God. Fifthly, that the godly are most jealous over themselves. Sixthly, the way to avoid sin is ever to be afraid lest we should sin.

Out of the second exposition note, that the remembrance of our former sins must draw out of us prayers unto God, that for them we may not be rebuked in displeasure in this life, nor confounded and abashed in the life to come.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 39.—"*My reproach*" is the reproach which the world casts on the God-fearing. This is dreaded as a great temptation to apostasy.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 39.—"*For thy judgments are good.*" One would have expected him to say—For thou art merciful—Cause my reproach which I fear to pass over from me, for thou art merciful. No, he does not add this as his present reason, but "*Thy judgments are good.*" We should catch the meaning at once, were the words these—For thy judgments are *awful*—" Turn away my reproach which I fear," for thy judgments are awful. But as the words are—" For thy judgments are *good*," we

find he verily takes refuge in the " judgments "—viz., that the Lord would vindicate him against all the unjust judgments of men; and as to judgment with God, since he took refuge in the atonement which the Lord had appointed, the Lord would vindicate him there also.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 39.—"*For thy judgments are good.*" The judgments of the wicked are bad judgments, but the judgments of God are good; I pray against those, I appeal to these: I fear the one, I approve the other. Now the judgments which God pronounceth in his word, be they threatenings in the law, or consolations in the Gospel, yea, and those also which he executeth in the world, whether upon the godly or godless, they must needs be good. 1. Because God is goodness itself. 2. He cannot be deceived. 3. He will not be bribed. 4. He alone is no respecter of persons, but judgeth according to every man's work.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 39.—The " *reproach* " which the poet fears in this verse is not the reproach of confessing, but of denying God.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 39.—"*For thy judgments are good.*" This reason shows he feared God's rebuke. Man's " *reproach* " comes from a corrupt judgment, he condemns where God will absolve, I pass not for it; but I know thy rebuke is always deserved, " *for thy judgments are good.*"—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 40.—"*I have longed after thy precepts.*" We are sometimes unconsciously led to " *long* " after the promises, more than " *after the precepts* " of God; forgetting that it is our privilege and safety to have an equal regard to both—to obey his precepts in dependence on his promises, and to expect the accomplishment of the promises in the way of obedience to the precepts.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 40.—"*Precepts,*" from a word which means to *place in trust,* mean something entrusted to man, " that which is committed to thee "; appointments of God, which consequently have to do with the conscience, for which man is responsible as an intelligent being. The precepts are not so obviously apprehended as the law and the testimonies. They must be sought out. "*Behold, my desire is for thy precepts* " (ver. 40). "*Thy precepts I seek* " (ver. 45). "*Thy precepts I have sought* " (ver. 94). . . . They are a law of liberty: "*And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts* " (ver. 45).—*John Jebb.*

Verse 40.—"*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*" He said before, " Quicken me in thy word," here, " in thy righteousness "; all is one; for the word of God is the righteousness of God, in which is set down the will of righteousness. In this the prophet desires to be quickened, that is, to be confirmed, that in cheerfulness and gladness of spirit he might rely upon the word of God.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 40.—"*Quicken me in thy righteousness.*" The petition is for liveliness in the knowledge and practice of holiness, according to the tenor of God's word and by its operation on the heart. If any prefer by " *righeousness* " to understand the faithfulness or justice of God, whereby he has bound himself to give grace to those who trust in him, there is no objection to such an interpretation. It is in fact implied in the others. Whoever can truly use the language of this verse is regenerate. Before renewing grace the law was a dead letter. It was more; it was a hated letter. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. A sinner desires no restraint from the divine precepts.—*William S. Plumer.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 41 TO 48.

LET thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, *even* thy salvation, according to thy word.

42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.

44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.

46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

In these verses holy fear is apparent and prominent. The man of God trembles lest in any way or degree the Lord should remove his favour from him. The eight verses are one continued pleading for the abiding of grace in his soul, and it is supported by such holy arguments as would only suggest themselves to a spirit burning with love to God.

41. "*Let thy mercies come also unto me, O* LORD." He desires *mercy* as well as teaching, for he was guilty as well as ignorant. He needed much mercy and varied mercy, hence the request is in the plural. He needed mercy from God rather than from man, and so he asks for "thy mercies." The way sometimes seemed blocked, and therefore he begs that the mercies may have their way cleared by God, and may "come" to him. He who said, "Let there be light," can also say, "Let there be mercy." It may be that under a sense of unworthiness the writer feared lest mercy should be given to others, and not to himself; he therefore cries, "Bless me, even me also, O my Father." Viewed in this light the words are tantamount to our well-known verse—

> "Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
> Thou art scattering, full and free;
> Showers, the thirsty land refreshing;
> Let some droppings fall on me,
> Even me."

Lord, thine enemies come to me to reproach me, let thy mercies come to defend me; trials and troubles abound, and labours and sufferings not a few approach me; Lord, let thy mercies in great number enter by the same gate, and at the same hour; for art thou not the God of my mercy?

"*Even thy salvation.*" This is the sum and crown of all mercies—deliverance from all evil, both now and for ever. Here is the first mention of salvation in the Psalm, and it is joined with mercy: "By grace are ye saved." Salvation is styled "thy salvation," thus ascribing it wholly to the Lord: "He that is our God is the God of salvation." What a mass of mercies are heaped together in the one salvation of our Lord Jesus! It includes the mercies which spare us before our conversion, and lead up to it. Then comes calling mercy, regenerating mercy, converting mercy, justifying mercy, pardoning mercy. Nor can we exclude from complete salvation any of those many mercies which are needed to conduct the believer safe to glory. Salvation is an aggregate of mercies incalculable in number, priceless in value, incessant in application, eternal in endurance. To the God of our mercies be glory, world without end.

"*According to thy word.*" The way of salvation is described in the word, salvation itself is promised in the word, and its inward manifestation is wrought by the word; so that in all respects the salvation which is in Christ Jesus is in accordance with the word. David loved the Scriptures, but he longed experimentally to know the salvation contained in them: he was not satisfied to read the word, he longed to experience its inner sense. He valued the field of Scripture for the sake of the

treasure which he had discovered in it. He was not to be contented with chapter and verse, he wanted mercies and salvation.

Note that in the first verse of HE (33) the Psalmist prayed to be taught to keep God's word, and here in VAU he begs the Lord to keep his word. In the first case he longed to come to the God of mercies, and here he would have the Lord's mercies come to him: there he sought grace to persevere in faith, and here he seeks the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul.

42. "*So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me.*" This is an unanswerable answer. When God, by granting us salvation, gives to our prayers an answer of peace, we are ready at once to answer the objections of the infidel, the quibbles of the sceptical, and the sneers of the contemptuous. It is most desirable that revilers should be answered, and hence we may expect the Lord to save his people in order that a weapon may be put into their hands with which to rout his adversaries. When those who reproach *us* are also reproaching God, we may ask him to help us to silence them by sure proofs of his mercy and faithfulness.

"*For I trust in thy word.*" His faith was seen by his being trustful while under trial, and he pleads it as a reason why he should be helped to beat back reproaches by a happy experience. Faith is our argument when we seek mercies and salvation; faith in the Lord who has spoken to us in his word. "I trust in thy word" is a declaration more worth the making than any other; for he who can truly make it has received power to become a child of God, and so to be the heir of unnumbered mercies. God hath more respect to a man's trust than to all else that is in him; for the Lord hath chosen faith to be the hand into which he will place his mercies and his salvation. If any reproach us for trusting in God, we reply to them with arguments the most conclusive when we show that God has kept his promises, heard our prayers, and supplied our needs. Even the most sceptical are forced to bow before the logic of facts.

In this second verse of this eight the Psalmist makes a confession of faith, and a declaration of his belief and experience. Note that he does the same in the corresponding verses of the sections which follow. See 50, "Thy word hath quickened me"; 58, "I entreated thy favour"; 66, "I have believed thy commandments"; 74, "I have hoped in thy word." A wise preacher might find in these a series of experimental discourses.

43. "*And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*" Do not prevent my pleading for thee by leaving me without deliverance; for how could I continue to proclaim thy word if I found it fail me? such would seem to be the run of the meaning. The word of truth cannot be a joy to our mouths unless we have an experience of it in our lives, and it may be wise for us to be silent if we cannot support our testimonies by the verdict of our consciousness. This prayer may also refer to other modes by which we may be disabled from speaking in the name of the Lord: as, for instance, by our falling into open sin, by our becoming depressed and despairing, by our labouring under sickness or mental aberration, by our finding no door of utterance, or meeting with no willing audience. He who has once preached the gospel from his heart is filled with horror at the idea of being put out of the ministry; he will crave to be allowed a little share in the holy testimony, and will reckon his dumb Sabbaths to be days of banishment and punishment.

"*For I have hoped in thy judgments.*" He had expected God to appear and vindicate his cause, that so he might speak with confidence concerning his faithfulness. God is the author of our hopes, and we may most fittingly entreat him to fulfil them. The judgments of his providence are the outcome of his word; what he says in the Scriptures he actually performs in his government; we may therefore look for him to show himself strong on the behalf of his own threatenings and promises, and we shall not look in vain.

God's ministers are sometimes silenced through the sins of their people, and it becomes them to plead against such a judgment; better far that they should suffer sickness or poverty than that the candle of the gospel should be put out among them, and that thus they should be left to perish without remedy. The Lord save us, who are his ministers, from being made the instruments of inflicting such a penalty. Let us exhibit a cheerful hopefulness in God, that we may plead it in prayer with him when he threatens to close our lips.

In the close of this verse there is a declaration of what the Psalmist had done in reference to the word of the Lord, and in this the thirds of the octaves are often

alike. See 35, "therein do I delight"; 43, "I have hoped in thy judgments"; 51, "yet have I not declined from thy law"; 59, "I turned my feet to thy testimonies"; and verses 67, 83, 99, etc. These verses would furnish an admirable series of meditations.

44. "*So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.*" Nothing more effectually binds a man to the way of the Lord than an experience of the truth of his word, embodied in the form of mercies and deliverances. Not only does the Lord's faithfulness open our mouths against his adversaries, but it also knits our hearts to his fear, and makes our union with him more and more intense. Great mercies lead us to feel an inexpressible gratitude which, failing to utter itself in time, promises to engross eternity with praises. To a heart on flame with thankfulness, the "always, unto eternity and perpetuity" of the text will not seem to be redundant; yea, the hyperbole of Addison in his famous verse will only appear to be solid sense:—

> "Through all eternity to thee
> A joyful song I'll raise;
> But oh! eternity's too short
> To utter all thy praise."

God's grace alone can enable us to keep his commandments without break and without end; eternal love must grant us eternal life, and out of this will come everlasting obedience. There is no other way to ensure our perseverance in holiness but by the word of truth abiding in us, as David prayed it might abide with him.

The verse begins with "So," as did verse 42. When God grants his salvation we are *so* favoured that we silence our worst enemy and glorify our best friend. Mercy answereth all things. If God doth but give us salvation we can conquer hell and commune with heaven, answering reproaches and keeping the law, and that to the end, world without end.

We may not overlook another sense which suggests itself here. David prayed that the word of truth might not be taken out of his mouth, and so would he keep God's law: that is to say, by public testimony as well as by personal life he would fulfil the divine will, and confirm the bonds which bound him to his Lord for ever. Undoubtedly the grace which enables us to bear witness with the mouth is a great help to ourselves as well as to others: we feel that the vows of the Lord are upon us, and that we cannot run back.

45. "*And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.*" Saints find no bondage in sanctity. The Spirit of holiness is a free spirit; he sets men at liberty and enables them to resist every effort to bring them under subjection. The way of holiness is not a track for slaves, but the King's highway for freemen, who are joyfully journeying from the Egypt of bondage to the Canaan of rest. God's mercies and his salvation, by teaching us to love the precepts of the word, set us at a happy rest; and the more we seek after the perfection of our obedience the more shall we enjoy complete emancipation from every form of spiritual slavery. David at one time of his life was in great bondage through having followed a crooked policy. He deceived Achish so persistently that he was driven to acts of ferocity to conceal it, and must have felt very unhappy in his unnatural position as an ally of Philistines, and captain of the body guard of their king. He must have feared lest through his falling into the crooked ways of falsehood the truth would no longer be on his tongue, and he therefore prayed God in some way to work his deliverance, and set him at liberty from such slavery. By terrible things in righteousness did the Lord answer him at Ziklag: the snare was broken, and he escaped.

The verse is united to that which goes before, for it begins with the word "And," which acts as a hook to attach it to the preceding verses. It mentions another of the benefits expected from the coming of mercies from God. The man of God had mentioned the silencing of his enemies (42), power to proceed in testimony (43), and perseverance in holiness; now he dwells upon liberty, which next to life is dearest to all brave men. He says, "I shall walk," indicating his daily progress through life; "at liberty," as one who is out of prison, unimpeded by adversaries, unencumbered by burdens, unshackled, allowed a wide range, and roaming without fear. Such liberty would be dangerous if a man were seeking himself or his own lusts; but when the one object sought after is the will of God, there can be no need to restrain the searcher. We need not circumscribe the man who can say, "I seek thy precepts." Observe, in the preceding verse he said he would keep the law;

but here he speaks of seeking it. Does he not mean that he will obey what he knows, and endeavour to know more? Is not this the way to the highest form of liberty,—to be always labouring to know the mind of God and to be conformed to it? Those who *keep* the law are sure to *seek* it, and bestir themselves to keep it more and more.

46. "*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.*" This is part of his liberty; he is free from fear of the greatest, proudest, and most tyrannical of men. David was called to stand before kings when he was an exile; and afterwards, when he was himself a monarch, he knew the tendency of men to sacrifice their religion to pomp and statecraft; but it was his resolve to do nothing of the kind. He would sanctify politics, and make cabinets know that the Lord alone is governor among the nations. As a king he would speak to kings concerning the King of kings. He says, "*I will speak*": prudence might have suggested that his life and conduct would be enough, and that it would be better not to touch upon religion in the presence of royal personages who worshipped other gods, and claimed to be right in so doing. He had already most fittingly preceded this resolve by the declaration, "I will walk," but he does not make his personal conduct an excuse for sinful silence, for he adds, "I will speak." David claimed religious liberty, and took care to use it, for he spoke out what he believed, even when he was in the highest company. In what he said he took care to keep to God's own word, for he says, "I will speak of *thy testimonies*." No theme is like this, and there is no way of handling that theme like keeping close to the book, and using its thought and language. The great hindrance to our speaking upon holy topics in all companies is shame, but the Psalmist will "*not be ashamed*"; there is nothing to be ashamed of, and there is no excuse for being ashamed, and yet many are as quiet as the dead for fear some creature like themselves should be offended. When God gives grace, cowardice soon vanishes. He who speaks for God in God's power, will not be ashamed when beginning to speak, nor while speaking, nor after speaking; for his theme is one which is fit for kings, needful to kings, and beneficial to kings. If kings object, we may well be ashamed of *them*, but never of our Master who sent us, or of his message, or of his design in sending it.

47. "*And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.*" Next to liberty and courage comes delight. When we have done our duty, we find a great reward in it. If David had not spoken for his Master before kings, he would have been afraid to think of the law which he had neglected; but after speaking up for his Lord he feels a sweet serenity of heart when musing upon the word. Obey the command, and you will love it; carry the yoke, and it will be easy, and rest will come by it. After speaking of the law the Psalmist was not wearied of his theme, but he retired to meditate upon it; he discoursed and then he delighted, he preached and then repaired to his study to renew his strength by feeding yet again upon the precious truth. Whether he delighted others or not when he was speaking, he never failed to delight himself when he was musing on the word of the Lord. He declares that he loved the Lord's commands, and by this avowal he unveils the reason for his delight in them: where our love is, there is our delight. David did not delight in the courts of kings, for there he found places of temptation to shame, but in the Scriptures he found himself at home; his heart was in them, and they yielded him supreme pleasure. No wonder that he spoke of keeping the law, which he loved; Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." No wonder that he spoke of walking at liberty, and speaking boldly, for true love is ever free and fearless. Love is the fulfilling of the law; where love to the law of God reigns in the heart the life must be full of blessedness. Lord, let thy mercies come to us that we may love thy word and way, and find our whole delight therein.

The verse is in the future, and hence it sets forth, not only what David had done, but what he would do; he would in time to come delight in his Lord's commands. He knew that they would neither alter, nor fail to yield him joy. He knew also that grace would keep him in the same condition of heart towards the precepts of the Lord, so that he should throughout his whole life take a supreme delight in holiness. His heart was so fixed in love to God's will that he was sure that grace would always hold him under its delightful influence.

All the Psalm is fragrant with love to the word, but here for the first time love is expressly spoken of. It is here coupled with delight, and in verse 165 with "great peace." All the verses in which love declares itself in so many words are worthy of note. See verses 47, 97, 113, 119, 127, 140, 159, 163, 165, 167.

48. *"My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved."* He will stretch out towards perfection as far as he can, hoping to reach it one day; when his hands hang down he will cheer himself out of languor by the prospect of glorifying God by obedience; and he will give solemn sign of his hearty assent and consent to all that his God commands. The phrase "lift up my hands" is very full of meaning, and doubtless the sweet singer meant all that we can see in it, and a great deal more. Again he declares his love; for a true heart loves to express itself; it is a kind of fire which must send forth its flames. It was natural that he should reach out towards a law which he delighted in, even as a child holds out its hands to receive a gift which it longs for. When such a lovely object as holiness is set before us, we are bound to rise towards it with our whole nature, and till that is fully accomplished we should at least lift up our hands in prayer towards it. Where holy hands and holy hearts go, the whole man will one day follow.

"And I will meditate in thy statutes." He can never have enough of meditation upon the mind of God. Loving subjects wish to be familiar with their sovereign's statutes, for they are anxious that they may not offend through ignorance. Prayer with lifted hands, and meditation with upward-glancing eyes will in happy union work out the best inward results. The prayer of verse 41 is already fulfilled in the man who is thus struggling upward and studying deeply. The whole of this verse is in the future, and may be viewed not only as a determination of David's mind, but as a result which he knew would follow from the Lord's sending him his mercies and his salvation. When mercy comes down, our hands will be lifted up; when God in favour thinks upon us, we are sure to think of him. Happy is he who stands with hands uplifted both to receive the blessing and to obey the precept; he shall not wait upon the Lord in vain.

NOTES ON VERSES 41 TO 48.

Verses 41—48.—This commences a new portion of the Psalm, in which each verse begins with the letter *Vau*, or *v*. There are almost no words in Hebrew that begin with this letter, which is properly a conjunction, and hence in each of the verses in this section the beginning of the verse is in the original a conjunction,—*vau.*—*Albert Barnes.*

Verses 41—48.—This whole section consists of petitions and promises. The petitions are two; verses 41, 43. The promises are six. This, among many, is a difference between godly men and others: all men seek good things from God, but the wicked so seek that they give him nothing back again, nor yet will promise any sort of return. Their prayers must be unprofitable, because they proceed from love of themselves, and not of the Lord. If so be they obtain that which is for their necessity, they care not to give to the Lord that which is for his glory: but the godly, as they seek good things, so they give praise to God when they have gotten them, and return the use of things received, to the glory of God who gave them. They love not themselves for themselves, but for the Lord; what they seek from him they seek it for this end, that they may be the more able to serve him. Let us take heed unto this; because it is a clear token whereby such as are truly religious are distinguished from counterfeit dissemblers.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 41.—"*Let thy mercies come also unto me.*" The way was blocked up with sins and difficulties, yet mercy could clear all, and find access to him, or make its own way: "*Let it come*," that is, let it be performed or come to pass, as it is rendered: "Now let thy words come to pass" (Judg. xiii. 12)—Hebrew, "Let it come." Here we read, let it come home *to me*, for my comfort and deliverance. David elsewhere saith, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm xxiii. 6); go after him, find him out in his wanderings. So, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits *toward me?*" (Psalm cxvi. 12). They found their way to him though shut up with sins and dangers.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 41.—"*Let thy mercies come also unto me, O* LORD." The mercies of God everywhere meet the man whom God *quickens* (verse 40). David understood that God blesses the soul, the body, the household, the ordinances, and all things else that belong to his servants; the whole of which blessing is from mercy, without merit, bestowed largely, wonderfully, etc.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 41.—"*Let thy mercies come also unto me, O* LORD," etc. Ministers of the Word and students of Theology are reminded by this prayer that they ought not only to preach to others the true way of attaining everlasting salvation, but that they should also with earnest prayers cry unto God that they might themselves be made partakers of the Divine mercies, and receive "the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls." Paul, indeed, was greatly anxious respecting this matter, and was constrained to write, that he kept his body under, and brought it into subjection, lest after preaching to others he should himself be a castaway.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 41.—"*Thy mercies.*" "*Thy word.*" We should consider here the way in which the Prophet seeks salvation from God. In this prayer he conjoins two things, as those which uphold his confidence, viz., the mercy of God and his Word. These are to the man of faith the two strongest pillars of his hope.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 41.—"*Even thy salvation*," etc. It is not any sort of delivery by any means, which the servant of God being in straits doth call for, or desire, but such a deliverance as God will allow, and be pleased to give in a holy way. "*Let thy salvation come.*" As the word of promise is the rule of our petition, so is it a pawn of the thing promised, and must be held fast till the performance come: "*Let thy mercies come also unto me, O* LORD, *even thy salvation, according to thy word*"; and this is one reason of the petition.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 42.—"*So shall I have*," etc. I shall have something by which I may reply to those who calumniate me. So the Saviour replied to the suggestions of the tempter almost wholly by passages of Scripture (Matthew iv. 4, 7, 10); and so, in many cases, the best answer that can be given to reproaches on the subject of religion will be found in the very words of Scripture. A man of little learning, except that which he has derived from the Bible, may often thus silence the cavils and reproaches

of the learned sceptic; a man of simple-hearted, pure piety, with no weapon but the word of God, may often thus be better armed than if he had all the arguments of the schools at his command. Comp. Eph. vi. 17.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 42.—"*So shall I have wherewith to answer,*" etc. When the heart realizes assured salvation, it is supplied with abundant answers to those who sneer at the delights of faith.—*Henry Law.*

Verse 42.—"*So shall I have wherewith to answer,*" etc. Hugo Cardinalis observeth that there are three sorts of blasphemers of the godly,—the devils, heretics, and slanderers. The devil must be answered by the internal word of humility; heretics by the external word of wisdom; slanderers by the active word of a good life.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 42.—"*So shall I have,*" etc. For I should give them a short answer, and a true one,—*that I trust in thy word;* I put my confidence in thee, who canst make good thy promises, because thou art omnipotent; and wilt, because thou art merciful.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 42.—"*So shall I have wherewith to answer,*" etc. This follows the phrase, "*according to thy word.*" Christians should learn from the example of David what to oppose to the reproaches and false accusations of the enemies of the truth. Nothing is done by railing; but weapons should be taken from the word of God; and these are strong through faith in God for the overturning of both the Devil himself and his instruments. For truly with weapons of this kind the Saviour himself discomfited Satan in the wilderness (Matt. iv.); and Paul (Ephes. vi.) puts on himself, and commends to the Christian soldier, the girdle of Divine truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shoes of the Gospel, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 42.—"*Wherewith to answer,*" etc. It is not forbidden to believers, modestly and fully, *to answer* those that reproach them, and to rebut the lie. See Prov. xxvi. 5, xxvii. 11. But to be able to answer them is received as a blessing from God.—*Martin Geier.*

Verses 42, 43.—In verse 42 there is a play upon the two senses of the term "*word,*" thus: "and I will answer my revilers a word, for I have trusted in thy word." Having trusted in thy word of promise, I shall have a word of reply to make to them when thou shalt graciously hear this prayer. "*Take not thy word of truth*" (*i.e.*, of promise) "*out of my mouth*"; let me have it still to speak of before my enemies and to rest upon for my own soul. If God were to fail in fulfilling his word of promise, it would, in the sense here contemplated, be quite taken out of his mouth.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 43.—"*Take not the word of truth,*" etc. It is well known that men do, when persecution threatens, either altogether deny the truth, or weakly and lukewarmly confess it; but lest this should happen to him, David therefore prays here, "*O Lord, take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,*" *i.e.*, make me, with an intrepid spirit, always to confess the avowed truth boldly and manfully. In the Hebrew text it is עַד מְאֹד, "*very,*" "*very much,*" or, as Augustine renders it, "*wholly and altogether*"; and he thinks that David prayed for this, that, if through human weakness it should happen to him to fall, and at some time or other not steadfastly to confess the word, yet that God would not allow him to continue in that sin, but again restore and establish him; and he illustrates this by the example of Peter. Further, David adds the reason which has impelled him thus to pray: "*Because I hope for,*" and even with great desire, as the Hebrew verb יִחָלְתִּי signifies, "*thy judgments,*" with which in the last day thou wilt openly pass sentence on heretics, fanatics, and all tyrants.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 43.—"*Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*" The word is taken out of the mouth, when it is said to the sinner, "*Wherefore dost thou declare my statutes?*" And eloquence itself becomes dumb if the conscience be evil. The birds of heaven come and take the word out of thy mouth, even as they took the seed of the word from off the rock lest it should bring forth fruit.—*Ambrose.*

Verse 43.—*The word is also taken out of our mouth* when in strong temptations all things, as it were, fail, neither can we discover where we may make a stand: Psalm lxix. 2.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 43.—"*Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*" Sometimes we are afraid to speak for the Saviour, lest we should incur the charge of hypocrisy. At other times we are ashamed to speak, from the absence of that only constraining

principle—" the love of Christ." And thus *"the word of truth is taken out of our mouths."* Often have we wanted a word to speak for the relief of the Lord's tempted people, and have not been able to find it ; so that the recollection of precious lost opportunities may well give utterance to the prayer—*"Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth."* Not only do not take it out of my heart ; but let it be ready in my mouth for a confession of my Master. Some of us know the painful trial of the indulgence of worldly habits and conversation, when a want of liberty of spirit has hindered us from standing up boldly for our God. We may perhaps allege the plea of bashfulness or judicious caution in excuse for silence ; which however, in many instances, we must regard as a self-deceptive covering for the real cause of restraint—the want of apprehension of the mercy of God to the soul.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 43.—*"Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth."* Oh, what service can a dumb body do in Christ's house ! Oh, I think the word of God is imprisoned also ! Oh, I am a dry tree ! Alas, I can neither plant nor water ! Oh, if my Lord would make but dung of me, to fatten and make fertile his own corn-ridges in Mount Zion ! Oh, if I might but speak to three or four herd-boys of my worthy Master, I would be satisfied to be the meanest and most obscure of all the pastors in this land, and to live in any place, in any of Christ's basest outhouses ! But he saith, " Sirrah, I will not send you ; I have no errands for you there away." My desire to serve him is sick of jealousy, lest he be unwilling to employ me. . . . I am very well every way, all praise to him in whose books I must stand for ever as his debtor ! Only my silence paineth me. I had one joy out of heaven, next to Christ my Lord, and that was to preach him to this faithless generation ; and they have taken that from me. It was to me as the poor man's one eye, and they have put out that eye.—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 43.—*"For I have hoped in thy judgments,"* the word משפט, *judgment*, signifieth either the law, or the execution of the sentence thereof.

1. The law or whole word of God ; so that, *"I have hoped in thy judgments,"* is no more, but in thy word do I hope ; as it is, " I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope " (Ps. cxxx. 5).

2. Answerable execution of the law, when the promise or threatening is fulfilled. (1) When the promise is fulfilled : that is judgment in a sense when God accomplisheth what he hath promised for our salvation and deliverance. Thus God is said to judge his people, when he righteth and saveth them according to his word : " O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong : judge thou my cause " (Lam. iii. 59). (2) But the more usual notion of judgment is the execution of the threatening on wicked men ; which being a benefit to God's faithful servants, and done in their favour, David might well be said to hope for it. Their " judgment " is our obtaining the promise.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 43, 44.—Lord, let me have the word of truth in *"my mouth "* that I may commit that sacred *depositum* to the rising generation (2 Tim. ii. 22), and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages ; so shall *"thy law "* be kept *"for ever and ever," i.e.*, from one generation to another, according to that promise (Isa. lix. 21) : " My words in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 44.—*"So shall I keep thy law continually,"* etc. The Lord's keeping our heart in faith, and our mouth and outward man in the course of confession and obedience, is the cause of our perseverance.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 44.—*"So shall I keep."* Mark, the promise of obedience is brought in by way of argument ; *"So shall I keep," "so,"* that is, this will encourage me, this will enable me.

1st. The granting of his requests would give him encouragement : when God answers our hope and expectation, gratitude should excite and quicken us to give all manner of obedience. If he will give us a heart, and a little liberty to confess his name, and serve him, we should not be backward or uncertain, but walk closely with him.

2ndly. This would give him assistance and strength. If God do daily give assistance, we shall stand ; if not, we fall and falter ; this will be a means of his perseverance, not only to engage and oblige him, but to help him to hold on to the end.

Then mark the constancy of this obedience, *"Continually, and for ever and ever."* David would not keep it for a fit, or for a few days, or a year, but always, even to

the end of his life. Here are three words to the same sense: *"continually," "for ever," "and ever."* And the Septuagint expresses it thus: " I shall keep thy law always, and for ever, and for ever, and ever;" four words there. This heaping of words is not in vain.

1. It shows the difficulty of perseverance: unless believers do strongly persist in the resistance of temptation, they will soon be turned out of the way; therefore David binds his heart firmly: we must do it now, yea, always, unto the end.

2. He expresseth his vehemence of affection: those that are deeply affected with anything are wont to express themselves as largely as they can. As Paul, who had a deep sense of God's power: " Exceeding greatness of his power, according to the working of his mighty power " (Eph. i. 19). He heaps up several words, because his sense of them was so great: so David here doth heap up words—*"continually, and for ever, and ever, and ever."*

3. Some think the words are so many, that they may express not only this life, but that which is to come. I will keep them continually, and for ever, and ever; that is, all the days of my life, and in the other world. So Chrysostom, " I will keep them continually," etc., points out the other life, where there will be pure and exact keeping of the law of God. Here we are every hour in danger, but then we shall be put out of all danger, and without fear of sinning, we shall remain in a full and perfect righteousness; we hope for that which we have not attained unto, and this doth encourage us for the present: so would he make David express himself.

4. If we must distinguish these words, I suppose they imply the continuity and perpetuity of obedience; the continuity of obedience, that he would serve God continually, without intermission; and the perpetuity of obedience, that he would serve God for ever and ever, without defection or revolt, at all times, and to the end. Constancy and perseverance in obedience is the commendation of it.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 44.—*"So shall I keep thy law continually."* That is, if thou wilt not take the word of thy truth out of my mouth, *"I will alway keep thy law." "Yea, unto age, and age of age:"* he showeth what is meant by *alway.* For sometimes by *"alway"* is meant, as long as we live here; but this is not, *"unto age, and age of age."* For it is better thus translated than as some copies have, *"to eternity, and to age of age,"* since they could not say, and to eternity of eternity. That law therefore should be understood, of which the apostle saith, " Love is the fulfilling of the law." For this will be kept by the saints, from whose mouth the word of truth is not taken, that is, by the church of Christ herself, not only during this world, that is, until this world is ended; but for another world which is styled *world without end.* For we shall not there receive the commandments of the law, as here, to keep them, but we shall keep the fulness of the law itself without any fear of sinning; for we shall love God the more fully when we shall have seen him; and our neighbour too; for " God will be all in all "; nor will there be room for any false suspicion concerning our neighbour, where no man will be hidden to any.—*Augustine.*

Verse 44.—*"Continually, for ever and ever."* The language of this verse is very emphatic. Perfect obedience will constitute a large proportion of heavenly happiness to all eternity; and the nearer we approach to it on earth, the more we anticipate the felicity of heaven.—*Note in Bagster's Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 45.—*"I will walk at liberty."* Wherever God pardons sin, he subdues it (Micah vii. 19). Then is the condemning power of sin taken away, when the commanding power of it is taken away. If a malefactor be in prison, how shall he know that his prince hath pardoned him? If a jailer come and knock off his chains and fetters, and lets him out of prison, then he may know he is pardoned: so, how shall we know God hath pardoned us? If the fetters of sin be broken off, and we walk at liberty in the ways of God, this is a blessed sign we are pardoned.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 45.—*"I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts."* As he who departs from confessing of God's truth doth cast himself in straits, in danger and bonds; so he that beareth out the confession of the truth doth walk as a free man; the truth doth set him free.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 45.—*"I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts."* When the Bible says that a man led by the Spirit is not under the law, it does not mean that he is free because he may sin without being punished for it; but it means that he is free because being taught by God's Spirit to love what his law commands he is no longer conscious of acting from restraint. The law does not drive him, because the Spirit

leads him. . . . There is a state, brethren, when we recognize God, but do not love God in Christ. It is that state when we admire what is excellent, but are not able to perform it. It is a state when the love of good comes to nothing, dying away in a mere desire. That is a state of nature, when we are under the law, and not converted to the love of Christ. And then there is another state, when God writes his law upon our hearts by love instead of fear. The one state is this, " I cannot do the things that I would ; " the other state is this, " I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy commandments."—*Frederick William Robertson*, 1816—1853.

Verse 45.—"*I will walk at liberty.*" The Psalmist's mind takes in the enlargement of his position. A little while ago, and he felt like a man straitened—hemmed in by rocks, in a narrow dangerous pass—who could not make his way out. You know the characteristics of Canaan, and you can easily conceive of the position of a traveller exploring his dreaded way through one of the mountain passes. The traveller before us has attained to tread upon secure ground. Now, all at once, favoured of the Most High, and conscious of being in his way, he finds himself in a spacious place, and he walks at large : "*And I will walk at liberty ; for I seek thy precepts.*" He had made diligent enquiry into all that the Lord had enjoined, and seeking conformity thereto, he felt that he could walk with comfort. He recreates himself in his spiritual emancipation. The secret evil-doer of fair profession cannot know this spiritual liberty at all. As long as a man finds himself to be wrong, and especially a man of a tender conscience, he feels hampered on all sides, depressed in mind, and evilly circumstanced. To what expansion of mind does a man awake when he becomes conscious of being in the appointed way of God ! And he is actually at liberty ; for the good providence of God is around him, and his grace supports him.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 45.—He who goes the beaten and right path will have no brambles hit him across the eyes.—*Saxon proverb.*

Verses 45—48.—Five things David promiseth himself here in the strength of God's grace. 1. That he should be free and easy in his duty : "*I will walk at liberty :*" freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good. 2. That he should be bold and courageous in his duty : "*I will speak of thy testimonies before kings.*" 3. That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty : "*I will delight myself in thy commandments,*" in conversing with them, in conforming to them. 4. That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty : "*I will lift up my hands unto thy commandments ;*" which notes not only a vehement desire towards them, but a close application of mind to the observance of them. 5. That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty : "*I will meditate in thy statutes.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 45—48.—In these four verses he explains, *seriatim*, in what the observance of the law consists ; a thing he promised, when he said in the fourth verse of this division, that he would observe God's law in his heart, in his words, in his mind, and in his acts ; and the prophet seems all at once, as having been heard, to have changed his mode of speaking, for he says, "*And I walked at large.*" When God's mercy visited me, I did not walk in the narrow ways of fear, but in the wide one of love ; that is to say, I observed the law willingly, joyfully, with all the affections of my heart, "*because I have sought after thy commandments*" as a thing of great value, and most important to come at ; "*and I spoke*" openly and fearlessly on the justice of his most holy law, even "*before kings, and I was not ashamed*"; and I constantly turned the law in my mind, and made its mysteries the subject of my meditation, "*and I lifted up my hands,*" to carry out his high and sublime commands ; that is, his extremely perfect and arduous commands. Finally, in all manner of ways, in heart, mind, word, and deed, "*I was exercised in thy justifications.*"—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 46.—"*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.*" In these words he seems to believe that he is in possession of that which he formerly prayed for. He had said, " Take not the word of truth out of my mouth," and now, as if he had obtained what he requested, he rises up, and maintains that he would not be dumb, even were he called upon to speak in the presence of kings. He affirms that he would willingly stand forward in vindication of the glory of God in the face of the whole world.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 46.—"*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.*" The terror of kings and of men in power is an ordinary hindrance of free confession of God's truth in

time of persecution ; but faith in the truth sustained in the heart by God is able to bring forth a confession at all hazards.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 46.—"*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.*" Before David came to the crown kings were sometimes his *judges*, as Saul and Achish ; but if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would speak of God's testimonies, and profess to build his hope upon them, and make them his council, his guard, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iii. 16, Acts iv. 20. After David came to the crown kings were sometimes his *companions*, they visited him, and he returned their visits ; but he did not, in complaisance to them, talk of everything but religion for fear of affronting them, and making his converse uneasy to them : no, God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to show that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it, and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of *God's testimonies*, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 46.—"*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.*" Men of greatest holiness have been men of greatest boldness ; witness Nehemiah, the three children, Daniel, and all the holy prophets and apostles : Prov. xxviii. 1, " The wicked flee when no man pursueth : but the righteous are bold as a lion," yea, as a young lion, as the Hebrew has it, one that is in his hot blood and fears no colours, and that is more bold than any others. Holiness made Daniel not only as bold as a lion, but also to daunt the lions with his boldness. Luther was a man of great holiness, and a man of great boldness : witness his standing out against all the world ; and when the emperor sent for him to Worms, and his friends dissuaded him from going, as sometimes Paul's did him, " Go," said he, " I will surely go, since I am sent for, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ; yea, though I knew that there were as many devils in Worms to resist me as there be tiles to cover the houses, yet I would go." And when the same author and his associates were threatened with many dangers from opposers on all hands, he lets fall this heroic and magnanimous speech : " Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm, and then let them do their worst." Latimer was a man of much holiness, counting the darkness and profaneness of those times wherein he lived, and a man of much courage and boldness ; witness his presenting to King Henry the Eighth, for a New Year's gift, a New Testament, wrapped up in a napkin, with this posie or motto about it, " Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 46.—Note that in this verse we are taught to shun four vices. First, overmuch silence : hence he says, "*I will speak.*" Secondly, useless talkativeness : "*of thy testimonies.*" The Hebrew doctors say that ten measures of speaking had descended to the earth,—that nine had been carried off by the women, but one left for all the rest of the world. Hieronymus rightly exhorts all Christians : " Consecrate thy mouth to the Gospel : be unwilling to open it with trifles or fables." Thirdly, we are taught to shun cowardice : "*before kings.*" For, as it is said (Prov. xxix. 25), "*The fear of man bringeth a snare.*" Fourthly, and lastly, we are taught to shun cowardly bashfulness : "*and will not be ashamed.*"—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 46.—"*I will not be ashamed.*" That is, I shall not be cast down from my position or my hope ; I shall not be afraid ; nor will I, from fear of danger or reproach, shun or renounce the confession ; nor shall I be overcome by terrors or threats.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verses 46, 47, 48. In these three last verses David promiseth a threefold duty of thankfulness. First, the service of his tongue. Next, the service of his affections. Thirdly, the service of his actions. A good conscience renders always great consolation ; and an honest life makes great boldness to speak without fear or shame, as ye see in David towards Saul, in Elias to Ahab, in Paul to Agrippa, to Festus, and to Felix.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 47.—"*I will delight myself in thy commandments.*" It is but poor comfort to the believer to be able to talk well to others upon the ways of God, and even to " bear the reproach " of his people, when his own heart is cold, insensible, and dull. He longs for "*delight*" in these ways ; and he shall delight in them. —*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 47.—He who would preach boldly to others must himself "*delight*" in the

practice of what he preacheth. If there be in us a new nature, it will "*love the commandments of God*" as being congenial to it; on that which we love we shall continually be "*meditating*," and our meditation will end in action; we shall "lift up the hands which hang down" (Heb. xii. 12), that they may "work the works of God whilst it is day, because the night cometh when no man can work." (John ix. 4).—*George Horne.*

Verse 47.—"*Thy commandments, which I have loved.*" On the word "*loved*," the Carmelite quotes two sayings of ancient philosophers, which he commends to the acceptance of those who have learnt the truer philosophy of the Gospel. The first is Aristotle's answer to the question of what profit he had derived from philosophy: "I have learnt to do without constraint that which others do from fear of the law." The second is a very similar saying of Aristippus: "If the laws were lost, all of us would live as we do now that they are in force." And for us the whole verse is summed up in the words of a greater Teacher than they: "If a man love me, he will keep my words": John xiv. 23.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 47, 48.—What is in the word a law of precept, is in the heart a law of love; what is in the one a law of command, is in the other a law of liberty. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," Gal. v. 14. The law of love in the heart, is the fulfilling the law of God in the Spirit. It may well be said to be written in the heart, when a man doth love it. As we say, a beloved thing is in our hearts, not physically, but morally, as Calais was said to be in Queen Mary's heart. They might have looked long enough before they could have found there the map of the town; but grief for the loss of it killed her. It is a love that is inexpressible. David delights to mention it in two verses together: "*I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved*," and often in the Psalm resumes the assertion. Before the new creation, there was no affection to the law: it was not only a dead letter, but a devilish letter in the esteem of a man: he wished it razed out of the world, and another more pleasing to the flesh enacted. He would be a law unto himself; but when this is written within him, he is so pleased with the inscription, that he would not for all the world be without that law, and the love of it; whereas what obedience he paid to it before was out of fear, now out of affection; not only because of the authority of the lawgiver, but of the purity of the law itself. He would maintain it with all his might against the power of sin within, and the powers of darkness without him. He loves to view this law; regards every lineament of it, and dwells upon every feature with delightful ravishments. If his eye be off, or his foot go away, how doth he dissolve in tears, mourn and groan, till his former affection hath recovered breath, and stands upon its feet!—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments*," etc. The duty that David promiseth God here, is the service of his actions, that he will lift up his hands to the practice of God's commandments. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power; we are the disciples of that Master, who first began to do and then to teach. But now the world is full of mutilated Christians; either they want an ear and cannot hear God's word, or a tongue and cannot speak of it; or if they have both, they want hands and cannot practise it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up.*" *To lift up the hands* is taken variously and it signifies:—1. *To pray:* as in Psalm xxviii. 2; Lam. ii. 19; Hab. iii. 10.—2. *To bless* others: as Levit. ix. 22; Ps. cxxxiv. 2.—3. *To swear:* as Gen. xiv. 22; Exod. vi. 8.—4. *To set about some important matter:* as Gen. xli. 44; "without thee shall no man lift up his hand;" *i.e.* shall attempt anything, or shall accomplish; Psalm x. 12, "lift up thine hand," viz., effectively, to bring help: Heb. xii. 12, "lift up the hands," etc.; *i.e.* strongly stimulate Christians. Perhaps all these may be accommodated to the present passage; for it is possible to be either, 1. Prayer for Divine grace for the doing of the precepts: or, 2. Blessing, *i.e.* praise of God because of them, and the advantages which have thence accrued to us: which the Syriac translator approves, who adds, "and I will glory in thy faithfulness:"—or, 3. Vow, or oath of constant obedience, etc.:—or, 4. Active and earnest undertaking of them; which, also, appears to be here chiefly meant.—*Henry Hammond in Synopsis Poli.*

Verse 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments;*" vowing obedience to them: Genesis xiv. 22.—*William Kay.*

Verse 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up.*" I will present every victim and

sacrifice which the law requires. I will make prayer and supplication before thee, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 48.—"*My hands also will I lift up.*" Aben Ezra explains, (and perhaps rightly,) that the metaphor, in this place, is taken from the action of those who receive any one whom they are glad or proud to see.—*Daniel Cresswell,* 1776—1844.

Verse 48.—" I will lift up my hands *in admiration of* thy precepts, And meditate on thy statutes."—*W. Green, in "A New Translation of the Psalms,"* 1762.

Verse 48.—To lift up the hand is a gesture importing readiness, and special intention in doing a thing. "*My hands* (saith David) *also will I lift up unto thy commandments*" ; as a man that is willing to do a thing and addresseth himself to the doing of it, lifts up his hand ; so a godly man is described as lifting up his hand to fulfil the commands of God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 48.—"*Thy commandments.*" By *commandments* he understandeth the word of God, yet it is more powerful than so ; it is not, I have loved thy *word ;* but, I have loved that part of thy word that is thy "*commandments,*" the *mandatory* part. There are some parts of the will and word of God that even ungodly men will be content to love. There is the *promissory* part ; all men gather and catch at the promises, and show love to these. The reason is clear ; there is pleasure, and profit, and gain, and advantage in the promises ; but a pious soul doth not only look to the promises, but to the *commands.* Piety looks on Christ as a *Lawgiver,* as well as a *Saviour,* and not only on him as a *Mediator,* but as a *Lord* and *Master ;* it doth not only live by *faith,* but it liveth by *rule ;* it makes indeed the *promises* the stay and *staff* of a Christian's life, but it makes the commandments of God the *level.* A pious heart knows that some command is implied in the qualification and condition of every promise ; it knows that as for the fulfilling of the promises, it belongs to God ; but the fulfilling of the commands belongs to us. Therefore it looks so, upon the enjoying of that which is promised that it will first do that which is commanded. There is no hope of attaining comfort in the promise but in keeping of the precept ; therefore he pitcheth the emphasis, " I have loved thy *word,*" that is true, and *all* thy word, and this part, the *mandatory* part : " I have loved thy *commandments.*"

Observe the number, " thy commandments " ; it is plural, that is, *all* thy commandments without exception ; otherwise even ungodly men will be content to love *some* commandments, if they may choose them for themselves.—*Richard Holdsworth* (1590—1649), *in "The Valley of Vision."*

Verse 48.—"*Which I love,*" or "*have loved,*" as in verse 47, the terms of which are studiously repeated with a fine rhetorical effect, which is further heightened by the *and* at the beginning, throwing both verses, as it were, into one sentence. As if he had said : I will derive my happiness from thy commandments, which I love and have loved, and to these commandments, which I love and have loved, I will lift up my hands and heart together.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 48.—"*I will meditate.*" It is in holy meditation on the word of God that all the graces of the Spirit are manifested. What is the principle of faith but the reliance of the soul upon the promises of the word ? What is the sensation of godly fear but the soul trembling before the threatenings of God ? What is the object of hope but the apprehended glory of God ? What is the excitement of desire or love but longing, endearing contemplations of the Saviour, and of his unspeakable blessings ? So that we can scarcely conceive of the influences of grace separated from spiritual meditation in the word.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 48.—The Syriac has an addition to verse 48, which I am surprised has not been noticed. The addition is, "*and I will glory in thy faithfulness.*" Dathe in a note says, The Seventy seem to have read some such addition, although not exactly the same.—*Edward Thomas Gibson,* 1819—1880.

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 49 TO 56.

REMEMBER the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

51 The proud have had me greatly in derision: *yet* have I not declined from thy law.

52 I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself.

53 Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

56 This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

This octrain deals with the comfort of the word. It begins by seeking the main consolation, namely, the Lord's fulfilment of his promise, and then it shows how the word sustains us under affliction, and makes us so impervious to ridicule that we are moved by the harsh conduct of the wicked rather to horror of their sin than to any submission to their temptations. We are then shown how the Scripture furnishes songs for pilgrims, and memories for night-watchers; and the Psalm concludes by the general statement that the whole of this happiness and comfort arises out of keeping the statutes of the Lord.

49. "*Remember the word unto thy servant.*" He asks for no new promise, but to have the old word fulfilled. He is grateful that he has received so good a word, he embraces it with all his heart, and now entreats the Lord to deal with him according to it. He does not say, "remember my service to thee," but "thy word to me." The words of masters to servants are not always such that servants wish their lords to remember them; for they usually observe the faults and failings of the work done, inasmuch as it does not tally with the word of command. But we who serve the best of masters are not anxious to have one of his words fall to the ground, since the Lord will so kindly remember his word of command as to give us grace wherewith we may obey, and he will couple with it a remembrance of his word of promise, so that our hearts shall be comforted. If God's word to us as his servants is so precious, what shall we say of his word to us as his sons?

The Psalmist does not fear a failure in the Lord's memory, but he makes use of the promise as a plea, and this is the form in which he speaks, after the manner of men when they plead with one another. When the Lord remembers the sins of his servant, and brings them before his conscience, the penitent cries, Lord, remember thy word of pardon, and therefore remember my sins and iniquities no more. There is a world of meaning in that word "*remember*," as it is addressed to God; it is used in Scripture in the tenderest sense, and suits the sorrowing and the depressed. The Psalmist cried, "Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions": Job also prayed that the Lord would appoint him a set time, and remember him. In the present instance the prayer is as personal as the "Remember me" of the thief, for its essence lies in the words—"unto thy servant." It would be all in vain for us if the promise were remembered to all others if it did not come true to ourselves; but there is no fear, for the Lord has never forgotten a single promise to a single believer.

"*Upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*" The argument is that God, having given grace to hope in the promise, would surely never disappoint that hope. He cannot have caused us to hope without cause. If we hope upon his word we have a sure basis: our gracious Lord would never mock us by exciting false hopes. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, hence the petition for immediate remembrance of the cheering word. Moreover, it is the hope of a servant, and it is not possible that a great and good master would disappoint his dependent; if such a master's word were not kept it could only be through an oversight, hence the anxious cry, "Remember." Our great Master will not forget his own servants, nor disappoint

the expectation which he himself has raised: because we are the Lord's, and endeavour to remember his word by obeying it, we may be sure that he will think upon his own servants, and remember his own promise by making it good.

This verse is the prayer of love fearing to be forgotten, of humility conscious of insignificance and anxious not to be overlooked, of penitence trembling lest the evil of its sin should overshadow the promise, of eager desire longing for the blessing, and of holy confidence which feels that all that is wanted is comprehended in the word. Let but the Lord remember his promise, and the promised act is as good as done.

50. *"This my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me."* He means,—Thy word is my comfort, or the fact that thy word has brought quickening to me is my comfort. Or he means that the hope which God had given him was his comfort, for God had quickened him thereby. Whatever may be the exact sense, it is clear that the Psalmist had affliction,—affliction peculiar to himself which he calls *"my* affliction"; that he had comfort in it,—comfort specially his own, for he styles it *"my* comfort"; and that he knew what the comfort was, and where it came from, for he exclaims—*"this is* my comfort." The worldling clutches his money-bag, and says, "this is my comfort"; the spendthrift points to his gaiety and shouts, "this is my comfort"; the drunkard lifts his glass and sings, "this is my comfort"; but the man whose hope comes from God feels the life-giving power of the word of the Lord, and he testifies, "this is my comfort." Paul said, "I know whom I have believed." Comfort is desirable at all times; but comfort in affliction is like a lamp in a dark place. Some are unable to find comfort at such times; but it is not so with believers, for their Saviour has said to them, "I will not leave you comfortless." Some have comfort and no affliction, others have affliction and no comfort; but the saints have comfort in their affliction.

The word frequently comforts us by increasing the force of our inner life; "this is my comfort; thy word hath quickened me." To quicken the heart is to cheer the whole man. Often the near way to consolation is sanctification and invigoration. If we cannot clear away the fog, it may be better to rise to a higher level, and so to get above it. Troubles which weigh us down while we are half dead become mere trifles when we are full of life. Thus have we often been raised in spirit by quickening grace, and the same thing will happen again, for the comforter is still with us, the Consolation of Israel ever liveth, and the very God of peace is evermore our Father. On looking back upon our past life there is one ground of comfort as to our state—the word of God has made us alive, and kept us so. We were dead, but we are dead no longer. From this we gladly infer that if the Lord had meant to destroy he would not have quickened us. If we were only hypocrites worthy of derision, as the proud ones say, he would not have revived us by his grace. An experience of quickening is a fountain of good cheer.

See how this verse is turned into a prayer in verse 107. "Quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word." Experience teaches us how to pray, and furnishes arguments in prayer.

51. *"The proud have had me greatly in derision."* Proud men never love gracious men, and as they fear them they veil their fear under a pretended contempt. In this case their hatred revealed itself in ridicule, and that ridicule was loud and long. When they wanted sport they made sport of David because he was God's servant. Men must have strange eyes to be able to see farce in faith, and a comedy in holiness; yet it is sadly the case that men who are short of wit can generally provoke a broad grin by jesting at a saint. Conceited sinners make footballs of godly men. They call it roaring fun to caricature a faithful member of "The Holy Club"; his methods of careful living are the material for their jokes about "the Methodist"; and his hatred of sin sets their tongues a-wagging at long-faced Puritanism, and strait-laced hypocrisy. If David was greatly derided, we may not expect to escape the scorn of the ungodly. There are hosts of proud men still upon the face of the earth, and if they find a believer in affliction they will be mean enough and cruel enough to make jests at his expense. It is the nature of the son of the bondwoman to mock the child of the promise.

"Yet have I not declined from thy law." Thus the deriders missed their aim: they laughed, but they did not win. The godly man, so far from turning aside from the right way, did not even slacken his pace, or in any sense fall off from his holy habits. Many would have declined, many have declined, but David did not do so. It is paying too much honour to fools to yield half a point to them. Their

unhallowed mirth will not harm us if we pay no attention to it, even as the moon suffers nothing from the dogs that bay at her. God's law is our highway of peace and safety, and those who would laugh us out of it wish us no good.

From verse 61 we note that David was not overcome by the spoiling of his goods any more than by these cruel mockings. See also verse 157, where the multitude of persecutors and enemies were baffled in their attempts to make him decline from God's ways.

52. *"I remembered thy judgments of old, O* LORD *; and have comforted myself."* He had asked the Lord to remember, and here he remembers God and his judgments. When we see no present display of the divine power it is wise to fall back upon the records of former ages, since they are just as available as if the transactions were of yesterday, seeing the Lord is always the same. Our true comfort must be found in what our God works on behalf of truth and right, and as the histories of the olden times are full of divine interpositions it is well to be thoroughly acquainted with them. Moreover, if we are advanced in years we have the providences of our early days to review, and these should by no means be forgotten or left out of our thoughts. The argument is good and solid : he who has shown himself strong on behalf of his believing people is the immutable God, and therefore we may expect deliverance at his hands. The grinning of the proud will not trouble us when we remember how the Lord dealt with their predecessors in bygone periods ; he destroyed them at the deluge, he confounded them at Babel, he drowned them at the Red Sea, he drove them out of Canaan : he has in all ages bared his arm against the haughty, and broken them as potters' vessels. While in our own hearts we humbly drink of the mercy of God in quietude, we are not without comfort in seasons of turmoil and derision ; for then we resort to God's justice, and remember how he scoffs at the scoffers : " He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh, the Lord doth have them in derision."

When he was greatly derided the Psalmist did not sit down in despair, but rallied his spirits. He knew that comfort is needful for strength in service, and for the endurance of persecution, and therefore he comforted himself. In doing this he resorted not so much to the sweet as to the stern side of the Lord's dealings, and dwelt upon his judgments. If we can find sweetness in the divine justice, how much more shall we perceive it in divine love and grace. How thoroughly must that man be at peace with God who can find comfort, not only in his promises, but in his judgments. Even the terrible things of God are cheering to believers. They know that nothing is more to the advantage of all God's creatures than to be ruled by a strong hand which will deal out justice. The righteous man has no fear of the ruler's sword, which is only a terror to evil doers. When the godly man is unjustly treated he finds comfort in the fact that there is a Judge of all the earth who will avenge his own elect, and redress the ills of these disordered times.

53. *"Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law."* He was horrified at their action, at the pride which led them to it, and at the punishment which would be sure to fall upon them for it. When he thought upon the ancient judgments of God he was filled with terror at the fate of the godless ; as well he might be. Their laughter had not distressed him, but he was distressed by a foresight of their overthrow. Truths which were amusement to them caused amazement to him. He saw them utterly turning away from the law of God, and leaving it as a path forsaken and overgrown from want of traffic, and this forsaking of the law filled him with the most painful emotions : he was astonished at their wickedness, stunned by their presumption, alarmed by the expectation of their sudden overthrow, amazed by the terror of their certain doom.

See verses 106 and 158, and note the tenderness which combined with all this. Those who are the firmest believers in the eternal punishment of the wicked are the most grieved at their doom. It is no proof of tenderness to shut one's eyes to the awful doom of the ungodly. Compassion is far better shown in trying to save sinners than in trying to make things pleasant all round. Oh that we were all more distressed as we think of the portion of the ungodly in the lake of fire ! The popular plan is to shut your eyes and forget all about it, or pretend to doubt it ; but this is not the way of the faithful servant of God.

54. *"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."* Like others of God's servants, David knew that he was not at home in this world, but a pilgrim through it, seeking a better country. He did not, however, sigh over this fact, but he sang about it. He tells us nothing about his pilgrim sighs, but

speaks of his pilgrim songs. Even the palace in which he dwelt was but "*the house of his pilgrimage*," the inn at which he rested, the station at which he halted for a little while. Men are wont to sing when they come to their inn, and so did this godly sojourner; he sang the songs of Zion, the statutes of the great King. The commands of God were as well known to him as the ballads of his country, and they were pleasant to his taste and musical to his ear. Happy is the heart which finds its joy in the commands of God, and makes obedience its recreation. When religion is set to music it goes well. When we sing in the ways of the Lord it shows that our hearts are in them. Ours are pilgrim Psalms, songs of degrees; but they are such as we may sing throughout eternity; for the statutes of the Lord are the psalmody of heaven itself.

Saints find horror in sin, and harmony in holiness. The wicked shun the law, and the righteous sing of it. In past days we have sung the Lord's statutes, and in this fact we may find comfort in present affliction. Since our songs are so very different from those of the proud, we may expect to join a very different choir at the last, and sing in a place far removed from their abode.

Note how in the sixth verses of their respective octaves we often find resolves to bless God, or records of testimony. In verse 46 it is, "I will speak," and in 62, "I will give thanks," while here he speaks of songs.

55. "*I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night.*" When others slept I woke to think of thee, thy person, thy actions, thy covenant, thy *name*, under which last term he comprehends the divine character as far as it is revealed. He was so earnest after the living God that he woke up at dead of night to think upon him. These were David's Night Thoughts. If they were not Sunny Memories they were memories of the Sun of Righteousness. It is well when our memory furnishes us with consolation, so that we can say with the Psalmist,—Having early been taught to know thee, I had only to remember the lessons of thy grace, and my heart was comforted. This verse shows not only that the man of God had remembered, but that he still remembered the Lord his God. We are to hallow the name of God, and we cannot do so if it slips from our memory.

"*And have kept thy law.*" He found sanctification through meditation; by the thoughts of the night he ruled the actions of the day. As the actions of the day often create the dreams of the night, so do the thoughts of the night produce the deeds of the day. If we do not keep the name of God in our memory we shall not keep the law of God in our conduct. Forgetfulness of minds leads up to forgetfulness of life.

When we hear the night songs of revellers we have in them sure evidence that they do not keep God's law; but the quiet musings of gracious men are proof positive that the name of the Lord is dear to them. We may judge of nations by their songs, and so we may of men; and in the case of the righteous, their singing and their thinking are both indications of their love to God: whether they lift up their voices, or sit in silence, they are still the Lord's. Blessed are the men whose "night-thoughts" are memories of the eternal light; they shall be remembered of their Lord when the night of death comes on. Reader, are your thoughts in the dark full of light, because full of God? Is his name the natural subject of your evening reflections? Then it will give a tone to your morning and noonday hours. Or do you give your whole mind to the fleeting cares and pleasures of this world? If so, it is little wonder that you do not live as you ought to do. No man is holy by chance. If we have no memory for the name of Jehovah we are not likely to remember his commandments: if we do not think of him secretly we shall not obey him openly.

56. "*This I had, because I kept thy precepts.*" He had this comfort, this remembrance of God, this power to sing, this courage to face the enemy, this hope in the promise, because he had earnestly observed the commands of God, and striven to walk in them. We are not rewarded for our works, but there is a reward *in* them. Many a comfort is obtainable only by careful living: we can surely say of such consolations, "This I had because I kept thy precepts." How can we defy ridicule if we are living inconsistently? how can we comfortably remember the name of the Lord if we live carelessly? It may be that David means that he had been enabled to keep the law because he had attended to the separate precepts: he had taken the commands in detail, and so had reached to holiness of life. Or, by keeping certain of the precepts he had gained spiritual strength to keep others: for God gives more grace to those who have some measure of it, and those who improve

their talents shall find themselves improving. It may be best to leave the passage open just as our version does ; so that we may say of a thousand priceless blessings, "these came to us in the way of obedience." All our possessions are the gifts of grace, and yet some of them come in the shape of reward ; yet even then the reward is not of debt, but of grace. God first works in us good works, and then rewards us for them.

Here we have an apt conclusion to this section of the Psalm, for this verse is a strong argument for the prayer with which the section commenced. The sweet singer had evidence of having kept God's precepts, and therefore he could the more properly beg the Lord to keep his promises. All through the passage we may find pleas, especially in the two *remembers*. "I have remembered thy judgments," and "I have remembered thy name" ; "Remember thy word unto thy servant."

NOTES ON VERSES 49 TO 56.

Verse 49.—"*Remember the word unto thy servant,*" etc. Those that make God's promises their portion, may with humble boldness make them their plea. God gave the promise in which the Psalmist hoped, and the hope by which he embraced the promise.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 49.—"*Remember the word unto thy servant,*" etc. When we hear any promise in the word of God, let us turn it into a prayer. God's promises are his bonds. Sue him on his bond. He loves that we should wrestle with him by his promises. Why, Lord, thou hast made this and that promise, thou canst not deny thyself, thou canst not deny thine own truth; thou canst not cease to be God, and thou canst as well cease to be God, as deny thy promise, that is thyself. " '*Lord, remember thy word.*' I put thee in mind of thy promise, '*whereon thou hast caused me to hope.*' If I be deceived, thou hast deceived me. Thou hast made these promises, and caused me to trust in thee, and 'thou never failest those that trust in thee, therefore keep thy word to me.' "—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 49.—"*Remember the word unto thy servant,*" etc. God promiseth salvation before he giveth it, to excite our desire of it, to exercise our faith, to prove our sincerity, to perfect our patience. For these purposes he seemeth sometimes to have forgotten his word, and to have deserted those whom he had engaged to succour and relieve; in which case he would have us, as it were, to remind him of his promise, and solicit his performance of it. The Psalmist here instructeth us to prefer our petition upon these grounds: first that God cannot prove false to his own word: "*Remember thy word;*" secondly, that he will never disappoint an expectation which himself hath raised: "*upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*" —*George Horne.*

Verses 49, 52, 55.—"*Remember.*" "*I remembered.*" As David beseecheth the Lord to remember his promise, so he protests, in verse 52, that he remembered the judgments of God, and was comforted; and in verse 55, that he remembered the name of the Lord in the night. It is but a mockery of God, to desire him to remember his promise made to us, when we make no conscience of the promise we have made to him. But alas, how often we fail in this duty, and by our own default diminish that comfort we might have of God's promises in the day of our trouble.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 49.—"*Thy servant.*" Be sure of your qualification; for David pleadeth here, partly as a servant of God, and partly as a believer. First, "Remember the word unto thy servant;" and then, "upon which thou hast caused me to hope." There is a double qualification: with respect to the precept of subjection, and the promise of dependence. The precept is before the promise. They have right to the promises, and may justly lay hold upon them, who are God's servants; they who apply themselves to obey his precepts, these only can rightly apply his promises to themselves. None can lay claim to rewarding grace but those who are partakers of sanctifying grace. Make it clear that you are God's servants, and then these promises which are generally offered are your own, no less than if your name were inserted in the promise, and written in the Bible.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 49.—"*Thou hast caused me to hope.*" Let us remember, first, that the promises made to us are of God's free mercy; that the grace to believe, which is the condition of the promise, is also of himself; for "faith is the gift of God"; thirdly, that the arguments by which he confirms our faith in the certainty of our salvation are drawn from himself, not from us.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 50.—"*This is my comfort,*" etc. The word of promise was David's comfort because the word had quickened him to receive comfort. The original is capable of another modification of thought—"*This is my consolation that thy word hath quickened me.*" He had the happy experience within him; he felt the reviving, restoring, life-giving power of the word, as he read, as he dwelt upon it, as he meditated therein, and as he gave himself up to the way of the word. The believer has all God's unfailing promises to depend upon, and as he depends he gains strength by his own happy experiences of the faithfulness of the word.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 50.—"*My comfort.*" "*Thy word.*" God hath given us his Scriptures, his word; and the comforts that are fetched from thence are strong ones, because they

are his comforts, since they come from his word. The word of a prince comforts, though he be not there to speak it. Though it be by a letter, or by a messenger, yet he whose word it is, is one that is able to make his word good. He is Lord and Master of his word. The word of God is comfortable, and all the reasons that are in it, and that are deduced from it, upon good ground and consequence, are comfortable, because it is God's word. Those comforts in God's word, and reasons from thence, are wonderful in variety. There is comfort from the liberty of a Christian, that he hath free access to the throne of grace; comfort from the prerogatives of a Christian, that he is the child of God, that he is justified, that he is the heir of heaven, and such like; comforts from the promises of grace, of the presence of God, of assistance by his presence.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 50.—"*Comfort.*" *Nechamah*, consolation; whence the name of Nehemiah was derived. The word occurs only in Job vi. 9.

Verse 50.—"*Comfort.*" The Hebrew verb rendered *to comfort* signifies, first, to repent, and then to comfort. And certainly the sweetest joy is from the surest tears. Tears are the breeders of spiritual joy. When Hannah had wept, she went away, and was no more sad. The bee gathers the best honey from the bitterest herbs. Christ made the best wine of water. . . .

Gospel comforts are, first, unutterable comforts, 1 Pet. i. 8; Philip. iv. 4. Secondly, they are real, John xiv. 27; all others are but seeming comforts, but painted comforts. Thirdly, they are holy comforts, Isa. lxiv. 5; Ps. cxxxviii. 5; they flow from a Holy Spirit, and nothing can come from the Holy Spirit but that which is holy. Fourthly, they are the greatest and strongest comforts, Eph. vi. 17. Few heads and hearts are able to bear them, as few heads are able to bear strong wines. Fifthly, they reach to the inward man, to the soul, 2 Thess. ii. 17, the noble part of man. "My soul rejoiceth in God my Saviour." Our other comforts only reach the face; they sink not so deep as the heart. Sixthly, they are the most soul-filling and soul-satisfying comforts, Ps. xvi. 11, Cant. ii. 3. Other comforts cannot reach the soul, and therefore they cannot fill nor satisfy the soul. Seventhly, they comfort in saddest distresses, in the darkest night, and in the most stormy day, Ps. xciv. 19, Hab. iii. 7, 8. Eighthly, they are everlasting, 2 Thess. ii. 16. The joy of the wicked is but as a glass, bright and brittle, and evermore in danger of breaking; but the joy of the saints is lasting.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 50.—"*Thy word hath quickened me.*" It is a reviving comfort which quickeneth the soul. Many times we seem to be dead to all spiritual operations, our affections are damped and discouraged; but the word of God puts life into the dead, and relieveth us in our greatest distresses. Sorrow worketh death, but joy is the life of the soul. Now, when dead in all sense and feeling, "the just shall live by faith" (Hab. ii. 4), and the hope wrought in us by the Scriptures is "a lively hope" (1 Pet. i. 3). Other things skin the wound, but our sore breaketh out again, and runneth; faith penetrateth into the inwards of a man, doth good to the heart; and the soul reviveth by waiting upon God, and gets life and strength.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 50.—"*Thy word hath quickened me.*" Here, as is evident from the mention of "affliction"—and indeed throughout the Psalm—the verb "*quicken*" is used not merely in an external sense of "preservation from death" (Hupfeld), but of "reviving the heart," "imparting fresh courage," etc.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 50.—"*Thy word hath quickened me.*" It made me alive when I was dead in sin; it has many a time made me lively when I was dead in duty; it has quickened me to that which is good, when I was backward and averse to it; and it has quickened me in that which is good, when I was cold and indifferent.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 50.—(*Second Clause*). Adore God's distinguishing grace, if you have felt the power and authority of the word upon your conscience; if you can say as David, "*Thy word hath quickened me.*" Christian, bless God that he has not only given thee his word to be a rule of holiness, but his grace to be a principle of holiness. Bless God that he has not only written his word, but sealed it upon thy heart, and made it effectual. Canst thou say it is of divine inspiration, because thou hast felt it to be of lively operation? Oh free grace! That God should send out his word, and heal thee; that he should heal thee and not others! That the same Scripture which to them is a dead letter, should be to thee a savour of life.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 51.—"*The proud have had me greatly in derision.*" The saints of God have complained of this in all ages: David of his busy mockers; the abjects jeered him.

Job was disdained of those children whose fathers he would have scorned to set with the dogs of his flock, Job xxx. 1. Joseph was nicknamed a dreamer, Paul a babbler, Christ himself a Samaritan, and with intent of disgrace a carpenter. . . . Michal was barren, yet she hath too many children, that scorn the habit and exercises of holiness. There cannot be a greater argument of a foul soul, than the deriding of religious services. Worldly hearts can see nothing in those actions, but folly and madness ; piety hath no relish, but is distasteful to their palates.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 51.—"*The proud,*" etc. Scoffing proceedeth from pride. Prov. iii. 34, with 1 Peter v. 5.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 51. "*Greatly.*" The word noteth " continually," the Septuagint translates it by αφόδρα, the vulgar Latin by *usque valde*, and *usque longe*. They derided him with all possible bitterness ; and day by day they had their scoffs for him, so that it was both a grievous and a perpetual temptation.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 51.—"*Derision.*" David tells that he had been jeered for his religion, but yet he had not been jeered out of his religion. They laughed at him for his praying and called it cant, for his seriousness and called it mopishness, for his strictness and called it needless preciseness.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 51.—It is a great thing in a soldier to behave well under fire ; but it is a greater thing for a soldier of the cross to be unflinching in the day of his trial. It does not hurt the Christian to have the dogs bark at him.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verses 50, 51.—The life and vigour infused into me by the promise which "*quickened me,*" caused me "*not to decline from thy law,*" even though "*the proud did iniquitously altogether*"; doing all in their power, through their jeerings at me, to deter me from its observance.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 52.—"*I remembered thy judgments of old.*" It is good to have a number of examples of God's dealings with his servants laid up in the storehouse of a sanctified memory, that thereby faith may be strengthened in the day of affliction ; for so are we here taught.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 52.—"*I remembered thy judgments.*" He remembered that at the beginning Adam, because of transgression of the divine command, was cast out from dwelling in Paradise ; and that Cain, condemned by the authority of the divine sentence, paid the price of his parricidal crime ; that Enoch, caught up to heaven because of his devotion, escaped the poison of earthly wickedness ; that Noah, because of righteousness the victor of the deluge, became the survivor of the human race ; that Abraham, because of faith, diffused the seed of his posterity through the whole earth ; that Israel, because of the patient bearing of troubles, consecrated a believing people by the sign of his own name ; that David himself, because of gentleness, having had regal honour conferred, was preferred to his elder brothers.—*Ambrose.*

Verse 52.—"*I remembered,*" etc. Jerome writes of that religious lady Paula, that she had got most of the Scriptures by heart. We are bid to have the " word dwell in " us : Col. iii. 16. The word is a jewel that adorns the hidden man ; and shall we not remember it ? " Can a maid forget her ornaments ? " Jer. ii. 32. Such as have a disease they call *lienteria*, in which the meat comes up as fast as they eat it, and stays not in the stomach, are not nourished by it. If the word stays not in the memory, it cannot profit. Some can better remember a piece of news than a line of Scripture : their memories are like those ponds, where frogs live, but fish die.—*Thomas Watson, in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 52.—"*I remembered thy judgments, and have comforted myself.*" A case of conscience may be propounded : how could David be comforted by God's judgments, for it seemeth a barbarous thing to delight in the destruction of any ? it is said, " He that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished " (Prov. xvii. 5).

1. It must be remembered that judgment implies both parts of God's righteous dispensation, the deliverance of the godly, and the punishment of the wicked. Now, in the first sense there is no ground of scruple, for it is said, " Judgment shall return unto righteousness " (Ps. xciv. 15) ; the sufferings of good men shall be turned into the greatest advantages, as the context showeth that God will not cast off his people, but judgment shall return unto righteousness. 2. Judgment, as it signifieth punishment of the wicked, may yet be a comfort, not as it importeth the calamity of any, but either,—

(1) When the wicked is punished, the snare and allurement to sin is taken away, which is the hope of impunity ; for by their punishment men see that it is dangerous to sin against God : " When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants

of the world will learn righteousness" (Isai. xxvi. 9); the snare is removed from many a soul.

(2) Their derision and mockage of godliness ceaseth, they do no longer vex and pierce the souls of the godly, saying, "Aha, aha" (Ps. xl. 15); it is as a wound to their heart when they say, "Where is thy God?" (Ps. xlii. 10). Judgment slayeth this evil.

(3) The impediments and hindrances of worshipping and serving God are taken away: when the nettles are rooted up, the corn hath the more room to grow.

(4) Opportunity of molesting God's servants is taken away, and they are prevented from afflicting the church by their oppressions; and so way is made for the enlarging of Christ's kingdom.

(5) Thereby also God's justice is manifested: When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting" (Prov. xi. 10); "The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: lo this is the man that made not God his strength" (Ps. lii. 6, 7); rejoice over Babylon, "ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. xviii. 20). When the word of God is fulfilled, surely then we may rejoice that his justice and truth are cleared.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 52.—The word *mishphatim*, "*judgments*," is used in Scripture either for laws enacted, or judgments executed according to those laws. The one may be called the judgments of his mouth, as, "Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth" (Ps. cv. 5), the other, the judgments of his hand. As both will bear the name of judgments, so both may be said to be "*of old.*" His decrees and statutes which have an eternal equity in them, and were graven upon the heart of man in innocency, may well be said to be of old: and because from the beginning of the world God hath been punishing the wicked, and delivering the godly in due time, his judiciary dispensations may be said to be so also. The matter is not much, whether we interpret it of either his statutes or decrees, for they both contain matter of comfort, and we may see the ruin of the wicked in the word, if we see it not in providence. Yet I rather interpret it of those righteous acts recorded in Scripture, which God as a just judge hath executed in all ages, according to the promises and threatenings annexed to his laws. Only in that sense I must note to you, judgments imply his mercies in the deliverance of his righteous servants, as well as his punishments on the wicked: the seasonable interpositions of his relief for the one in their greatest distresses, as well as his just vengeance on the other notwithstanding their highest prosperities.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 52, 55.—"*I remembered thy judgments*," "*thy name in the night.*" Thomas Fuller thus writes in his "David's Heartie Repentance":—

> "For sundry duties he did dayes devide,
> Making exchange of worke his recreation;
> For prayer he set the precious morne aside,
> The mid-day he bequeathed to meditation:
> Sweete sacred stories he reserved for night,
> To reade of Moses' meeknes, Sampson's might:
> These were his joy, these onely his delight."

Verse 53.—"*Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked.*" I have had clear views of *eternity;* have seen the blessedness of the *godly*, in some measure; and have longed to share their happy state; as well as been comfortably satisfied that through grace I shall do so; but, oh, what anguish is raised in my mind, to think of an *eternity* for those who are *Christless*, for those who are mistaken, and who bring their false hopes to the grave with them! The sight was so dreadful I could by no means bear it: my thoughts recoiled, and I said, (under a more affecting sense than ever before,) "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?"—*David Brainerd*, 1718—1747.

Verse 53.—"*Horror hath taken hold upon me*," etc. Oh who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable; for who knows the power of God's anger?

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be

young or old! There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the whole congregation, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember this discourse in hell!—*Jonathan Edwards, in a Sermon entitled, "Sinners in the Hands of an angry God."*

Verse 53.—*"Horror."* זלעפה, *ziláphah*, properly signifies the pestilential burning wind called by the Arabs simoon (see Ps. xi. 6); and is here used in a figurative sense for the *most horrid mental distress;* and strongly marks the idea the Psalmist had of the corrupting, pestilential, and destructive nature of sin.—*Note in Bagster's Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 53.—*"Horror."* The word for *"horror"* signifieth also a tempest or storm. Translations vary; some read it, as Junius, "a storm overtaking one"; Ainsworth, "a burning horror hath seized me," and expoundeth it a storm of terror and dismay. The Septuagint, ἀθυμία κατέχε μὲ, "faintness and dejection of mind hath possessed me"; our own translation, "I am horribly afraid"; all translations, as well as the original word, imply a great trouble of mind, and a vehement commotion; like a storm, it was matter of disquiet and trembling to David.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 53.—*"Because of the wicked that forsake thy law."* David grieved, not because he was himself attacked; but because the law of God was forsaken; and he bewailed the condemnation of those who so did, because they are lost to God. Just as a good father in the madness of his son, when he is ill-used by him, mourns not his own but the misery of the diseased; and he grieves at the contumely, not because it is cast on himself, but because the diseased person knows not what he does in his madness: so a good man, when he sees a sinner neither reverence nor honour the grey hairs of a parent, that to his face he can insult him, that he does not know in the madness of sinning what unbecoming and shameful things he does, grieves for him as one on the point of death, laments him as one despaired of by the physicians. As a good physician in the first place advises, then, even if he receive hard words, though he be beaten, nevertheless as the man is ill he bears with him; and if he be cursed he does not leave; and any medicine that may be applied he does not refuse; nor does he go away as from a stubborn fellow, but strives with all diligence to heal him as one that has deserved well from him, exercising not only the skill of science but also benignity of disposition. Even so, a righteous man, when he is treated with contempt, does not turn away, but when he is calumniated he regards it as madness, not as depravity; and desires rather to apply his own remedy to the wound, and sympathises, and grieves not for himself, but for him who labours under an incurable disease.—*Ambrose.*

Verse 53.—*"The wicked that forsake thy law";* not only transgress the law of the Lord, as every man does, more or less; but wilfully and obstinately despise it, and cast it behind their backs, and live in a continued course of disobedience to it; or who apostatize from the doctrine of the word of God; wilfully deny the truth, after they have had a speculative knowledge of it, whose punishment is very grievous (Heb. x. 26—29); and now partly because of the daring impiety of wicked men, who stretch out their hands against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty, and run upon him, even on the thick bosses of his bucklers: because of the shocking nature of their sin, the sad examples thereby set to others, the detriment they are to themselves, and the dishonour they bring to God; and partly because of the dreadful punishment that shall be inflicted on them here, and especially hereafter, when a horrible tempest of wrath will come upon them. Hence such trembling seized the Psalmist: and often so it is, that good men tremble more for the wicked than they do for themselves: see verse 120.—*John Gill.*

Verse 54.—*"Thy statutes have been my songs."* The Psalmist rejoiced, doubtless, as the good do now, 1. In law itself; law, as a rule of order; law as a guide of conduct; law, as a security for safety. 2. In *such* a law as that of God—so pure, so holy, so fitted to promote the happiness of man. 3. In the stability of that law,

as constituting his own personal security, the ground of his hope. 4. In law in its influence on the universe, preserving order and securing harmony.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 54.—"*Thy statutes have been my songs.*" In the early ages it was customary to versify the laws, that the people might learn them by heart, and sing them.—*Williams.*

Verse 54.—"*Thy statutes have been my songs.*" God's statutes are here his "*songs,*" which give him spiritual refreshing, sweeten the hardships of the pilgrimage, and measure and hasten his steps.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 54.—"*Songs.*" Travellers sing to deceive the tediousness of the way; so did David; and hereby he solaced himself under that horror which he speaks of in verse 53. Great is the comfort that cometh in by singing of Psalms with grace in our hearts.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 54.—"*Songs.*"

"Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

"And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Verse 54.—"*Songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*" Wherefore is everything like warmth in religion branded with the name of enthusiasm? Warmth is expected in the poet, in the musician, in the scholar, in the lover—and even in the tradesman it is allowed, if not commended—why then is it condemned in the concerns of the soul—a subject which, infinitely above all others, demands and deserves all the energy of the mind? Would a prisoner exult at the proclamation of deliverance, and is the redeemed sinner to walk forth from his bondage, unmoved, unaffected, without gratitude or joy? No, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Shall the condemned criminal feel I know not what emotions, when instead of the execution of the sentence he receives a pardon? and is the absolved transgressor to be senseless and silent? No. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Other travellers are accustomed to relieve the tediousness of their journey with a song. The Israelites, when they repaired from the extremities of the country three times a year to Jerusalem to worship, had songs appointed for the purpose, and travelled singing as they went. And of the righteous it is said, "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord. The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads."—*William Jay.*

Verse 54.—"*Songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*" See how the Lord in his wise dispensation attempers himself to our infirmities. Our life is subject to many changes, and God by his word hath provided for us also many instructions and remedies. Every cross hath its own remedy, and every state of life its own instruction. Sometimes our grief is so great that we cannot sing; then let us pray: sometimes our deliverance so joyful that we must break out in thanksgiving; then let us sing. "If any man among you be afflicted, let him pray; if he be merry, let him sing." Prayers for every cross, and psalms for every deliverance, hath God by his own Spirit penned for us; so that now we are more than inexcusable if we fail in this duty.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 54.—"*In the house of my pilgrimage.*" According to the original, "*the house of my pilgrimages*"; that is, whatever places I have wandered to during Saul's persecution of me.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 54.—"*In the house of my pilgrimage.*" Vatablus expounds this of his banishment amongst the Philistines; that when he was put from his native country and kindred, and all other comforts failed him, the word of the Lord furnished

matter of joy to him. And indeed, the banishment of God's servants may cast them far from their kindred and acquaintance; but it chaseth them nearer to the Lord, and the Lord nearer to them. Proof of this in Jacob, when he was banished and lay without, all night in the fields, he found a more familiar presence of God than he did when he slept in the tent with father and mother.

But we may rather, with Basil, refer it to the whole time of David's mortal life: *omnem vitam suam peregrinationem vocare arbitror.* So Jacob acknowledgeth to Pharaoh, that his life was a pilgrimage; and Abraham and Isaac dwelt in the world as strangers.

S. Peter therefore teacheth us as pilgrims to abstain from the lusts of the flesh; and S. Paul, to use this world as if we used it not; for the fashion thereof goeth away. Many ways are we taught this lesson; but slow are we to learn it. Alas, what folly is this, that a man should desire to dwell in the earth, when God calleth him to be a citizen of heaven! Yet great is the comfort we have of this, that the houses wherein we lodge upon earth are but *houses of our pilgrimage.* The faithful Israelites endured their bondage in Egypt the more patiently, because they knew they were to be delivered from it. If the houses of our servitude were eternal mansions, how lamentable were our condition! But God be thanked, they are but wayfaring cottages, and houses of our pilgrimage. Such a house was the womb of our mother: if we had been enclosed there for ever, what burden had it been to her, what bondage to ourselves! Such a house will be the grave; of the which we must all say with Job, "The grave shall be my house, and I shall make my bed in the dark." If we were there to abide for ever, how comfortless were our estate. But, God be praised, our mansion house is above; and the houses we exchange here on earth are but the houses of our pilgrimage; and happy is he who can so live in the world as esteeming himself in his own house, in his own bed, yea, in his own body, to be but a stranger, in respect of his absence from the Lord.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 54.—"*My pilgrimage.*" If men have been termed pilgrims, and life a journey, then we may add that the Christian pilgrimage far surpasses all others in the following important particulars:—in the goodness of the road, in the beauty of the prospects, in the excellence of the company, and in the vast superiority of the accommodation provided for the Christian traveller when he has finished his course.—*H. G. Salter, in "The Book of Illustrations,"* 1840.

Verse 55.—"*I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night,*" etc. As the second clause of the verse depends on the first, I consider the whole verse as setting forth one and the same truth; and, therefore, the prophet means that he was induced, by the remembrance he had of God, to keep the law. Contempt of the law originates in this, that few have any regard for God; and hence, the Scripture, in condemning the impiety of men, declares that they *have forgotten* God (Psalm l. 22; lxxviii. 11; cvi. 21) . . . .

The word "*night*" is not intended by him to mean the remembering of God merely for a short time, but a perpetual remembrance of him; he, however, refers to that season in particular, because then almost all our senses are overpowered with sleep. "When other men are sleeping, God occurs to my thoughts during my sleep." He has another reason for alluding to the night-season,—that we may be apprised, that though there was none to observe him, and none to put him in remembrance of it; yea, though he was shrouded in darkness, yet he was as solicitous to cherish the remembrance of God as if he occupied the most public and conspicuous place.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 55.—"*I have remembered thy name in the night,*" and therefore I "*have kept thy law*" all day.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 55.—"*I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night.*" This verse contains a new protestation of his honest affection toward the word of God. Wherein, first, let us mark his *sincerity;* he was religious not only in public, but in private; for private exercises are the surest trials of true religion. In public, oftentimes hypocrisy carries men to simulate that which they are not; it is not so in the private devotion; for then, either doth a man, if he make no conscience of God's worship, utterly neglect it, because there is no eye of man to see him; or otherwise, if he be indeed religious, even in private he presents his heart to God, seeking it to be approved by him; for his "praise is not of man, but of God."

Again, this argueth his *fervency* in religion: for as elsewhere he protests that

he loved the word more than his appointed food; so here he protests that he gave up his night's rest that he might meditate in the word. But now, so far is zeal decayed in professors, that they will not forego their superfluities, far less their needful refreshment, for love of the word of God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 55. *"Thy name, O Lord."* The *"name"* of the Lord is his character, his nature, his attributes, the manifestations he hath made of his holiness, his wisdom, goodness and truth.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 55.—*"In the night."* First, that is, *continually*, because he remembered God in the day also. Secondly, *sincerely*, because he avoided the applause of men. Thirdly, *cheerfully*, because the heaviness of natural sleep could not overcome him. All these show that he was *intensely* given to the word; as we see men of the world will take some part of the night for their delights. And in that he did keep God's testimonies in the night, he showeth that he was the same in secret that he was in the light; whereby he condemned all those that will cover their wickedness with the dark. Let us examine ourselves whether we have broken our sleeps to call upon God, as we have to fulfil our pleasures.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 55.—*"In the night."* Pastor Harms of Hermansburg used to preach and pray and instruct his people for nine hours on the Sabbath. And then when his mind was utterly exhausted, and his whole body was thrilling with pain, and he seemed almost dying for the want of rest, he could get no sleep. But he used to say that he loved to lie awake all night in the silence and darkness and think of Jesus. The night put away everything else from his thoughts, and left his heart free to commune with the One whom his soul most devoutly loved, and who visited and comforted his weary disciple in the night watches. And so God's children have often enjoyed rare seasons of communion with him in the solitude of exile, in the deep gloom of the dungeon, in the perpetual night of blindness, and at times when all voices and instructions from the world have been most completely cut off, and the soul has been left alone with God.—*Daniel March, in "Night unto Night."* 1880.

Verse 55.—*"In the night."* There is never a time in which it is not proper to turn to God and think on his name. In the darkness of midnight, in the darkness of mental depression, in the darkness of outward providences, God is still a fitting theme.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 55.—*"The night."*—

" Dear night! this world's defeat;
The stop to busy fools; Care's check and curb;
The day of spirits; my soul's calm retreat
Which none disturb!
Christ's progress, and his prayer time;
The hours to which high heaven doth chime.

" God's silent, searching flight;
When my Lord's head is filled with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
His still, soft call;
His knocking time; the soul's dumb watch,
When spirits their fair kindred catch."

Henry Vaughan, 1621—1695.

Verse 55.—*"And have kept thy law";* though imperfectly, yet spiritually, sincerely, heartily, and from a principle of love and gratitude, and with a view to the glory of God, and without mercenary, sinister ends.—*John Gill.*

Verse 55.—*"And have kept thy law."* Hours of secret fellowship with God must issue in the desire of increased conformity to his holy will. It is the remembrance of God that leads to the keeping of his laws, as it is forgetfulness of God that fosters every species of transgression.—*John Morison.*

Verse 55.—*"And have kept."* The verb is in the future, and perhaps is better so rendered, thus making it the expression of a solemn, deliberate purpose to continue, his obedience.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verses 55, 56.—He that delights to keep God's law, God will give him more grace to keep it, according to that remarkable text, *"I have remembered thy name, O* LORD, *in the night, and have kept thy law. This I had, because I kept thy precepts."* What had David for keeping God's precepts? He had power to keep his law; that is, to grow and increase in keeping of it. As the prophet (Hosea vi. 3) speaks of the

knowledge of God: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord"; that is, if we industriously labour to know God, we shall have this reward, to be made able to know him more. So may I say of the grace of God: he that delights to keep God's law shall have his reward,—to be enabled to keep it more perfectly. A true delight in God's word is grace increasing. Grace is the mother of all true joy (Isai. xxxii. 17), and joy is as the daughter, and the mother and daughter live and die together.—*Edmund Calamy* (1600—1666), *in "The Godly Man's Ark."*

Verse 56.—*"This I had, because I kept thy precepts."* As sin is a punishment of sin, and the wicked waxeth ever worse and worse; so godliness is the recompense of godliness. The right use of one talent increaseth more, and the beginnings of godliness are blessed with a growth of godliness. David's good exercises here held him in memory of his God, and the memory of God made him more godly and religious.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 56.—*"This I had,"* etc. The Rabbins have an analogous saying,—*The reward of a precept is a precept;* or, *A precept draws a precept.* The meaning of which is, that he who keeps one precept, to him God grants, as if by way of reward, the ability to keep another and more difficult precept. The contrary to this is that other saying of the Rabbins, that *the reward of a sin is a sin;* or, *Transgression draws transgression.—Simon de Muis,* 1587—1644.

Verse 56.—*"This I had,"* that is, this happened to me, etc. I experienced many evils and adversities; but, on the other hand, I drew sweetest consolations from the word, and I was crowned with many blessings from God.

Others thus render it, This is my business, This I care for and desire, to keep thy commandments; *i.e.,* to hold fast the doctrine incorrupt with faith and a good conscience.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verse 56.—*"This I had,"* etc. I had the comfort of keeping thy law *because I kept it.* God's work is its own wages.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 56.—*"This I had,"* etc. What is that? This comfort I had, this supportation I had in all my afflictions, this consolation I had, this sweet communion with God I had. Why? *"Because I kept thy precepts,"* I obeyed thy will. Look, how much obedience is yielded to the commands of God, so much comfort doth flow into the soul: God usually gives in comforts proportionably to our obedience. O the sweet, soul-satisfying consolation a child of God finds in the ways of God, and in doing the will of God, especially when he lies on his death-bed; then it will be sweeter to him than honey and the honeycomb; then will he say with good king Hezekiah, when he lay upon his death-bed, "Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which was good in thy sight." O the sweet satisfaction that a soul shall find in God, when he comes to appear before God!—*James Nalton,* 1664.

Verse 56.—*"This I had,"* etc. Or, "This was my *consolation,* that I kept thy precepts;" which is nearly the reading of the Syriac, and renders the sense more complete.—*Note in Bagster's Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 56.—*"This I had,"* etc. When I hear the faithful people of God telling of his love, and saying—*"This I had,"* must I not, if unable to join their cheerful acknowledgment, trace it to my unfaithful walk, and say—"This I had not"—because I have failed in obedience to thy precepts; because I have been careless and self-indulgent; because I have slighted thy love; because I have "grieved thy Holy Spirit," and forgotten to "ask for the old paths, that I might walk therein, and find rest to my soul"? Jer. vi. 16.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 56.—David saith indefinitely, *"This I had";* not telling us what good or privilege it was; only in the general, it was some benefit that accrued to him in this life. He doth not say, This I hope for; but, *"This I had;"* and therefore he doth not speak of the full reward in the life to come. In heaven we come to receive the full reward of obedience; but a close walker, that waiteth upon God in an humble and constant obedience, shall have sufficient encouragement even in this life. Not only he shall be blessed, but he is blessed; he hath something on hand as well as in hope: as David saith in this the 119th Psalm, not only he shall be blessed, but he is blessed; as they that travelled towards Zion, they met with a well by the way: "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools" (Ps. lxxxiv. 6). In a dry and barren wilderness, through which they were to pass, they were not left wholly comfortless, but met with a well or a cistern; that is, they had some comfort vouchsafed to them before they came to enjoy God's

presence in Zion; some refreshments they had by the way. As servants, that, besides their wages, have their veils; so, besides the recompense of reward hereafter, we have our present comforts and supports during our course of service, which are enough to counterbalance all worldly joys, and outweigh the greatest pleasures that men can expect in the way of sin. In the benefits that believers find by walking with God in a course of obedience every one can say, "*This I had, because I kept thy precepts.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 57 TO 64.

THOU art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.
58 I intreated thy favour with *my* whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.
59 I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.
60 I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.
61 The bands of the wicked have robbed me: *but* I have not forgotten thy law.
62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.
63 I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.
64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

In this section the Psalmist seems to take firm hold upon God himself; appropriating him (57), crying out for him (58), returning to him (59), solacing himself in him (61, 62), associating with his people (63), and sighing for personal experience of his goodness (64). Note how the first verse of this octave is linked to the last of the former one, of which indeed it is an expanded repetition. "This I had because I kept thy precepts. Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words."

57. "*Thou art my portion, O LORD.*" A broken sentence. The translators have mended it by insertions, but perhaps it had been better to have left it alone, and then it would have appeared as an exclamation,—"My portion, O Lord!" The poet is lost in wonder while he sees that the great and glorious God is all his own! Well might he be so, for there is no possession like Jehovah himself. The form of the sentence expresses joyous recognition and appropriation,—"My portion, O Jehovah!" David had often seen the prey divided, and heard the victors shouting over it; here he rejoices as one who seizes his share of the spoil; he chooses the Lord to be his part of the treasure. Like the Levites, he took God to be his portion, and left other matters to those who coveted them. This is a large and lasting heritage, for it includes all, and more than all, and it outlasts all; and yet no man chooses it for himself until God has chosen and renewed him. Who that is truly wise could hesitate for a moment when the infinitely blessed God is set before him to be the object of his choice? David leaped at the opportunity, and grasped the priceless boon. Our author here dares exhibit the title-deeds of his portion before the eye of the Lord himself, for he addresses his joyful utterance directly to God whom he boldly calls his own. With much else to choose from, for he was a king, and a man of great resources, he deliberately turns from all the treasures of the world, and declares that the Lord, even Jehovah, is his portion.

"*I have said that I would keep thy words.*" We cannot always look back with comfort upon what we have said, but in this instance David had spoken wisely and well. He had declared his choice: he preferred the word of God to the wealth of worldlings. It was his firm resolve to keep—that is, treasure up and observe—the words of his God, and as he had aforetime solemnly expressed it in the presence of the Lord himself, so here he confesses the binding obligation of his former vow. Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words," and this is a case which he might have quoted as an illustration; for the Psalmist's love to God as his portion led to his keeping the words of God. David took God to be his Prince as well as his Portion. He was confident as to his interest in God, and therefore he was resolute in his obedience to him. Full assurance is a powerful source of holiness. The very words of God are to be stored up; for whether they relate to doctrine, promise, or precept, they are most precious. When the heart is determined to keep these words, and has registered its purpose in the court of heaven, it is prepared for all the temptations and trials that may befall it; for, with God as its heritage, it is always in good case.

58. "*I intreated thy favour with my whole heart.*" A fully assured possession of God does not set aside prayer, but rather urges us to it; he who knows God to

be his God will seek his face, longing for his presence. Seeking God's presence is the idea conveyed by the marginal reading, "thy face," and this is true to the Hebrew. The presence of God is the highest form of his favour, and therefore it is the most urgent desire of gracious souls: the light of his countenance gives us an antepast of heaven. O that we always enjoyed it! The good man entreated God's smile as one who begged for his life, and the entire strength of his desire went with the entreaty. Such eager pleadings are sure of success; that which comes from our heart will certainly go to God's heart. The whole of God's favours are ready for those who seek them with their whole hearts.

"*Be merciful unto me according to thy word.*" He has entreated favour, and the form in which he most needs it is that of mercy, for he is more a sinner than anything else. He asks nothing beyond the promise, he only begs for such mercy as the word reveals. And what more could he want or wish for? God has revealed such an infinity of mercy in his word that it would be impossible to conceive of more. See how the Psalmist dwells upon favour and mercy, he never dreams of merit. He does not demand, but entreat; for he feels his own unworthiness. Note how he remains a suppliant, though he knows that he has all things in his God. God is his portion, and yet he begs for a look at his face. The idea of any other standing before God than that of an undeserving but favoured one never entered his head. Here we have his "Be merciful unto me" rising with as much intensity of humble pleading as if he still remained among the most trembling of penitents. The confidence of faith makes us bold in prayer, but it never teaches us to live without prayer, or justifies us in being other than humble beggars at mercy's gate.

59. "*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" While studying the word he was led to study his own life, and this caused a mighty revolution. He came to the word, and then he came to himself, and this made him arise and go to his father. Consideration is the commencement of conversion: first we think and then we turn. When the mind repents of ill ways the feet are soon led into good ways; but there will be no repenting until there is deep, earnest thought. Many men are averse to thought of any kind, and as to thought upon their ways, they cannot endure it, for their ways will not bear thinking of. David's ways had not been all that he could have wished them to be, and so his thoughts were sobered o'er with the pale cast of regret; but he did not end with idle lamentations, he set about a practical amendment; he turned and returned, he sought the testimonies of the Lord, and hastened to enjoy once more the conscious favour of his heavenly friend. Action without thought is folly, and thought without action is sloth: to think carefully and then to act promptly is a happy combination. He had entreated for renewed fellowship, and now he proved the genuineness of his desire by renewed obedience. If we are in the dark, and mourn an absent God, our wisest method will be not so much to think upon our sorrows as upon our ways: though we cannot turn the course of providence, we can turn the way of our walking, and this will soon mend matters. If we can get our feet right as to holy walking, we shall soon get our hearts right as to happy living. God will turn to his saints when they turn to him; yea, he has already favoured them with the light of his face when they begin to think and turn.

60. "*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*" He made all speed to get back into the royal road from which he had wandered, and to run in that road upon the King's errands. Speed in repentance and speed in obedience are two excellent things. We are too often in haste to sin; O that we may be in a greater hurry to obey. Delay in sin is increase of sin. To be slow to keep the commands is really to break them. There is much evil in a lagging pace when God's command is to be followed. A holy alacrity in service is much to be cultivated. It is wrought in us by the Spirit of God, and the preceding verses describe the method of it: we are made to perceive and mourn our errors, we are led to return to the right path, and then we are eager to make up for lost time by dashing forward to fulfil the precept.

Whatever may be the slips and wanderings of an honest heart, there remains enough of true life in it to produce ardent piety when once it is quickened by the visitations of God. The Psalmist entreated for mercy, and when he received it he became eager and vehement in the Lord's ways. He had always loved them, and hence when he was enriched with grace he displayed great vivacity and delight in them. He made double speed; for positively he "made haste," and negatively

he refused to yield to any motive which suggested procrastination,—he "delayed not." Thus he made rapid advances and accomplished much service, fulfilling thereby the vow which is recorded in the 57th verse: "I said that I would keep thy words." The commands which he was so eager to obey were not ordinances of man, but precepts of the Most High. Many are zealous to obey custom and society, and yet they are slack in serving God. It is a crying shame that men should be served post-haste, and that God's work should have the go-by, or be performed with dreamy negligence.

61. *"The bands of the wicked have robbed me."* Aforetime they derided him, and now they have defrauded him. Ungodly men grow worse, and become more and more daring, so that they go from ridicule to robbery. Much of this bold opposition arose from their being banded together: men will dare to do in company what they durst not have thought of alone. When firebrands are laid together there is no telling what a flame they will create. It seems that whole bands of men assailed this one child of God, they are cowardly enough for anything; though they could not kill him, they robbed him; the dogs of Satan will worry saints if they cannot devour them. David's enemies did their utmost: first the serpents hissed, and then they stung. Since words availed not, the wicked fell to blows. How much the ungodly have plundered the saints in all ages, and how often have the righteous borne gladly the spoiling of their goods!

"But I have not forgotten thy law." This was well. Neither his sense of injustice, nor his sorrow at his losses, nor his attempts at defence diverted him from the ways of God. He would not do wrong to prevent the suffering of wrong, nor do ill to avenge ill. He carried the law in his heart, and therefore no disturbance of mind could take him off from following it. He might have forgotten himself if he had forgotten the law: as it was, he was ready to forgive and forget the injuries done him, for his heart was taken up with the word of God. The bands of the wicked had not robbed him of his choicest treasure, since they had left him his holiness and his happiness.

Some read this passage, "The bands of the wicked environ me." They hemmed him in, they cut him off from succour, they shut up every avenue of escape, but the man of God had his protector with him; a clear conscience relied upon the promise, and a brave resolve stuck to the precept. He could not be either bribed or bullied into sin. The cordon of the ungodly could not keep God from him, nor him from God: this was because God was his portion, and none could deprive him of it either by force or fraud. That is true grace which can endure the test: some are barely gracious among the circle of their friends, but this man was holy amid a ring of foes.

62. *"At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments."* He was not afraid of the robbers; he rose, not to watch his house, but to praise his God. Midnight is the hour for burglars, and there were bands of them around David, but they did not occupy his thoughts; these were all up and away with the Lord his God. He thought not of thieves, but of thanks; not of what *they* would steal, but of what *he* would give to his God. A thankful heart is such a blessing that it drives out fear and makes room for praise. Thanksgiving turns night into day, and consecrates all hours to the worship of God. Every hour is canonical to a saint.

The Psalmist observed posture; he did not lie in bed and praise. There is not much in the position of the body, but there is something, and that something is to be observed whenever it is helpful to devotion and expressive of our diligence or humility. Many kneel without praying, some pray without kneeling; but the best is to kneel and pray: so here, it would have been no virtue to rise without giving thanks, and it would have been no sin to give thanks without rising; but to rise and give thanks is a happy combination. As for the season, it was quiet, lonely, and such as proved his zeal. At midnight he would be unobserved and undisturbed; it was his own time which he saved from his sleep, and so he would be free from the charge of sacrificing public duties to private devotions. Midnight ends one day and begins another, it was therefore meet to give the solemn moments to communion with the Lord. At the turn of the night he turned to his God. He had thanks to give for mercies which God had given: he had on his mind the truth of verse fifty-seven, "Thou art my portion," and if anything can make a man sing in the middle of the night that is it.

The *righteous* doings of the great Judge gladdened the heart of this godly man.

His *judgments* are the terrible side of God, but they have no terror to the righteous; they admire them, and adore the Lord for them: they rise at night to bless God that he will avenge his own elect. Some hate the very notion of divine justice, and in this they are wide as the poles asunder from this man of God, who was filled with joyful gratitude at the memory of the sentences of the Judge of all the earth. Doubtless in the expression, "thy righteous judgments," David refers also to the written judgments of God upon various points of moral conduct; indeed, all the divine precepts may be viewed in that light; they are all of them the legal decisions of the Supreme Arbiter of right and wrong. David was charmed with these judgments. Like Paul, he could say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." He could not find time enough by day to study the words of divine wisdom, or to bless God for them, and so he gave up his sleep that he might tell out his gratitude for such a law and such a Law-giver.

This verse is an advance upon the sense of verse fifty-two, and contains in addition the essence of fifty-five. Our author never repeats himself: though he runs up and down the same scale, his music has an infinite variety. The permutations and combinations which may be formed in connection with a few vital truths are innumerable.

63. "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" The last verse said, "I will," and this says, "I am." We can hardly hope to be right in the future unless we are right now. The holy man spent his nights with God and his days with God's people. Those who fear God love those who fear him, and they make small choice in their company so long as the men are truly God-fearing. David was a king, and yet he consorted with "*all*" who feared the Lord, whether they were obscure or famous, poor or rich. He was a fellow-commoner of the College of All-saints.

He did not select a few specially eminent saints and leave ordinary believers alone. No, he was glad of the society of those who had only the beginning of wisdom in the shape of "the fear of the Lord": he was pleased to sit with them on the lower forms of the school of faith. He looked for inward godly fear, but he also expected to see outward piety in those whom he admitted to his society; hence he adds, "*and of them that keep thy precepts.*" If they would keep the Lord's commands the Lord's servant would keep their company. David was known to be on the godly side, he was ever of the Puritanic party: the men of Belial hated him for this, and no doubt despised him for keeping such unfashionable company as that of humble men and women who were strait-laced and religious; but the man of God is by no means ashamed of his associates; so far from this, he even glories to avow his union with them, let his enemies make what they can of it. He found both pleasure and profit in saintly society; he grew better by consorting with the good, and derived honour from keeping right honourable company. What says the reader? Does he relish holy society? Is he at home among gracious people? If so, he may derive comfort from the fact. Birds of a feather flock together. A man is known by his company. Those who have no fear of God before their eyes seldom desire the society of saints; it is too slow, too dull for them. Be this our comfort, that when we are let go by death we shall go to our own company, and those who loved the saints on earth shall be numbered with them in heaven.

There is a measure of parellelism between this seventh of its octave and the seventh of Teth (71) and of Jod (79); but, as a rule, the similarities which were so manifest in earlier verses are now becoming dim. As the sense deepens, the artificial form of expression is less regarded.

64. "*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy.*" David had been exiled, but he had never been driven beyond the range of mercy, for he found the world to be everywhere filled with it. He had wandered in deserts and hidden in caves, and there he had seen and felt the lovingkindness of the Lord. He had learned that far beyond the bounds of the land of promise and the race of Israel the love of Jehovah extended, and in this verse he expressed that large-hearted idea of God which is so seldom seen in the modern Jew. How sweet it is to us to know that not only is there mercy all over the world, but there is such an abundance of it that the earth is "full" of it. It is little wonder that the Psalmist, since he knew the Lord to be his portion, hoped to obtain a measure of this mercy for himself, and so was encouraged to pray, "*teach me thy statutes.*" It was to him the *beau-ideal* of mercy to be taught of God, and taught in God's own law. He could not think of a greater mercy than this. Surely he who fills the universe with his grace will

grant such a request as this to his own child. Let us breathe the desire to the All-merciful Jehovah, and we may be assured of its fulfilment.

The first verse of this eight is fragrant with full assurance and strong resolve, and this last verse overflows with a sense of the divine fulness, and of the Psalmist's personal dependence. This is an illustration of the fact that full assurance neither damps prayer nor hinders humility. It would be no error if we said that it creates lowliness and suggests supplication. "Thou art my portion, O Lord," is well followed by "teach me"; for the heir of a great estate should be thoroughly educated, that his behaviour may comport with his fortune. What manner of disciples ought we to be whose inheritance is the Lord of hosts? Those who have God for their Portion long to have him for their Teacher. Moreover, those who have resolved to obey are the most eager to be taught. "I have said that I would keep thy words" is beautifully succeeded by "teach me thy statutes." Those who wish to keep a law are anxious to know all its clauses and provisions lest they should offend through inadvertence. He who dares not care to be instructed of the Lord has never honestly resolved to be holy.

NOTES ON VERSES 57 TO 64.

This begins a new division of the Psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Cheth*, which may be represented in English by *hh*.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verses 57—64.—In this section David laboureth to confirm his faith, and to comfort himself in the certainty of his regeneration, by eight properties of a sound believer, or eight marks of a new creature. The first whereof is his choosing of God for his portion. Whence learn, 1. Such as God hath chosen and effectually called, they get grace to make God their choice, their delight, and their portion; and such as have chosen God for their portion have an evidence of their regeneration and election also; for here David maketh this a mark of his regeneration: "*Thou art my portion.*" 2. It is another mark of regeneration, after believing in God, and choosing him for our portion, to resolve to bring forth the fruits of faith in new obedience, as David did: "*I have said that I would keep thy words.*" 3. As it is usual for God's children, now and then because of sin falling out, to be exercised with a sense of God's displeasure, so it is a mark of a new creature not to lie stupid and senseless under this exercise, but to deal with God earnestly, for restoring the sense of reconciliation, and giving new experience of his mercy, as the Psalmist did; "*I intreated thy favour with my whole heart;*" and this is the evidence of a new creature. 4. The penitent believer hath the word of grace and the covenant of God for his assurance to be heard when he seeketh mercy: "*Be merciful unto me according to thy word.*" 5. The searching in what condition we are in, and examination of our ways according to the word, and renewing of repentance, with an endeavour of amendment, is a fourth mark of a new creature: "*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" 6. When we do see our sin we are naturally slow to amend our doings; but the sooner we turn us to the way of God's obedience, we speed the better, and the more speedy the reforming of our life be, the more sound mark is it of a new creature: "*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*" 7. Enduring of persecution and spoiling of our goods, for adhering to God's word, without forsaking of his cause, is a fifth mark of a new creature: "*The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.*" 8. As it is the lot of God's children who resolve to be godly, to suffer persecution, and to be forced either to lose their temporal goods or else to lose a good cause and a good conscience; so it is the wisdom of the godly to remember what the Lord's word requireth of us and speaketh unto us, and this shall comfort our conscience more than the loss of things temporal can trouble our minds: "*The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.*" 9. A sixth mark of a new creature is, to be so far from fretting under hard exercise as to thank God in secret cheerfully for his gracious word, and for all the passages of his providence, where none seeth us, and where there is no hazard of ostentation: "*At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.*" 10. A seventh mark of a renewed creature is, to associate ourselves and keep communion with such as are truly gracious, and do fear God indeed, as we are able to discern them: "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" 11. The fear of God is evidenced by believing and obeying the doctrine and direction of the Scripture, and no other ways: "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*" 12. The eighth mark of a new creature is, not to rest in any measure of renovation, but earnestly to deal with God for the increase of saving knowledge, and fruitful obedience of it; for, "*Teach me thy statutes,*" is the prayer of the man of God, in whom all the former marks are found. 13. As the whole of the creatures are witnesses of God's bounty to man, and partakers of that bounty themselves, so are they pawns of God's pleasure to bestow upon his servants greater gifts than these, even the increase of sanctification, in further illumination of mind and reformation of life: for this the Psalmist useth for an argument to be more and more sanctified: "*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 57.—"*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." The sincerity of this claim may be gathered, because he speaks by way of address to God. He doth not say barely, "He is my portion"; but challengeth God to his face: "*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." Elsewhere it is said, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul" (Lam. iii. 24). There he doth not speak it by way of address to God, but he adds, "saith

my soul"; but here to God himself, who knows the secrets of the heart. To speak thus of God to God, argues our sincerity, when to God's face we avow our trust and choice; as Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John xxi. 17).—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 57.—"*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." Luther counsels every Christian to answer all temptations with this short saying, "*Christianus sum*," I am a Christian; and I would counsel every Christian to answer all temptations with this short saying, "The Lord is my portion." O Christian, when Satan or the world shall tempt thee with honours, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; when they shall tempt thee with riches, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; when they shall tempt thee with preferments, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; and when they shall tempt thee with the favours of great ones, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; yea, and when this persecuting world shall threaten thee with the loss of thy estate, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; and when they shall threaten thee with the loss of thy liberty, answer, "The Lord is my portion"; and when they shall threaten thee with the loss of friends, answer, "The Lord is my portion;" and when they shall threaten thee with the loss of life, answer, "The Lord is my portion." O sir, if Satan should come to thee with an apple, as once he did to Eve, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a grape, as once he did to Noah, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a change of raiment, as once he did to Gehazi, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a wedge of gold, as once he did to Achan, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a bag of money, as once he did to Judas, tell him that "the Lord is your portion"; or with a crown, a kingdom, as once he did to Moses, tell him that "the Lord is your portion."—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 57.—"*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." God is all sufficient; get him for your "*portion*," and you have all; then you have infinite wisdom to direct you, infinite knowledge to teach you, infinite mercy to pity and save you, infinite love to care and comfort you, and infinite power to protect and keep you. If God be yours; all his creatures, all his works of providence, shall do you good, as you have need of them. He is an eternal, full, satisfactory portion. He is an ever-living, ever-loving, ever-present friend; and without him you are a cursed creature in every condition, and all things will work against you.—*John Mason*—1694.

Verse 57.—"*Thou art my portion, O* LORD." If there was a moment in the life of David in which one might feel inclined to envy him, it would not be in that flush of youthful victory, when Goliath lay prostrate at his feet, nor in that hour of even greater triumph, when the damsels of Israel sang his praise in the dance, saying, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands"; it would not be on that royal day, when his undisputed claim to the throne of Israel was acknowledged on every side and by every tribe; but it would be in that moment when, with a loving and trustful heart, he looked up to God and said, "*Thou art my portion.*" In a later Psalm (cxlii.), which bears with it as its title. "A prayer of David, when he was in the cave," we have the very same expression: "I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." It adds immeasurably to such an expression, if we believe it to have been uttered at a time when every other possession and inheritance was taken from him, and the Lord alone was his portion.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 57.—He is an exceedingly covetous fellow to whom God is not sufficient; and he is an exceeding fool to whom the world is sufficient. For God is an inexhaustible treasury of all riches, sufficing innumerable men; while the world has mere trifles and fascinations to offer, and leads the soul into deep and sorrowful poverty. —*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 57.—They who are without an ample patrimony in this life, may make to themselves a portion in heavenly blessedness.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 57.—"*I have said that I would keep thy words.*" This he brings in by way of proving that which he said in the former words. Many will say with David, that God is their portion; but here is the point; how do they prove it? If God were their portion they would love him; if they loved him they would love his word; if they loved his word they would live by it and make it the rule of their life.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 57.—"*I have said that I would keep thy words.*" He was resolved to keep his commandments, lay up his promises, observe his ordinances, profess and retain a belief in his doctrines.—*John Gill.*

Verse 58.—"*I intreated thy favour,*" or ; I seek thy face. To seek the face is to come into the presence. Thus the Hebrews speak when desirous of expressing that familiar intercourse to which God admits his people when he bids them make known their requests. It is truly the same as speaking face to face with God.—*Franciscus Vatablus*, 1545.

Verse 58.—"*I intreated thy favour with my whole heart.*" I have often remarked how graciously and lovingly the Lord delights to return an answer to prayer in the very words that have gone up before him, as if to assure us that they have reached his ear, and been speeded back again from him laden with increase. "*I intreated thy favour with my whole heart.*" Hear the Lord's answer to his praying people : " I will rejoice over them to do them good, assuredly *with my whole heart and with my whole soul.*"—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 58.—"*With my whole heart.*" The Hebrew expresses great earnestness and humility in supplication.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 58.—"*With my whole heart.*" Prayer is chiefly a heart-work. God heareth the heart without the mouth, but never heareth the mouth acceptably without the heart.—*Walter Marshall.*

Verse 58.—"*Be merciful unto me,*" etc. He protested before that he sought the Lord with his whole heart, and now he prayeth that he may find mercy. So indeed it shall be ; boldly may that man look for mercy at God's hand who seeks him truly. Mercy and truth are wont to meet together, and embrace one another : where truth is in the soul to seek, there cannot but be mercy in God to embrace. If truth be in us to confess our sins and forsake them, we shall find mercy in God to pardon and forgive them.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 58.—"*According to thy word.*" He prayeth not for what he lusteth after, but for that which the Lord promised ; for St. James saith, " You pray and have not," etc., and this is the cause, that we have not the thing we pray for, because we pray not according to the word. His word must be the rule of our prayers, and then we shall receive ; as Solomon prayed and obtained. God hath promised forgiveness of sins, the knowledge of his word, and many other blessings. If we have these, let not our hearts be set on other things.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 58.—"*According to thy word.*" The Word of God may be divided into three parts ; into commandments, threatenings, and promises ; and though a Christian must not neglect the commanding and threatening word, yet if ever he would make the Word a channel for Divine comfort, he must study the promising word ; for the promises are a Christian's magna charta for heaven. All comfort must be built upon a Scripture promise, else it is presumption, not true comfort. The promises are *pabulum fidei, et anima fidei,* the food of faith, and the soul of faith. As faith is the life of a Christian, so the promises are the life of faith : faith is a dead faith if it hath no promise to quicken it. As the promises are of no use without faith to apply them, so faith is of no use without a promise to lay hold on.—*Edward Calamy.*

Verse 58.—The rule and ground of confidence is, "*according to thy word.*" God's word is the rule of our confidence ; for therein is God's stated course. If we would have favour and mercy from God, it must be upon his own terms. God will accept of us in Christ, if we repent, believe, and obey, and seek his favour diligently : he will not deny those who seek, ask, knock. Many would have mercy, but will not observe God's direction. We must ask according to God's will, not without a promise, nor against a command. God is made a voluntary debtor by his promise. These are notable props of faith, when we are encouraged to seek by the offer, and urged to apply by the promise. We thrive no more in a comfortable sense of God's love, because we take not this course.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 59.—"*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" The transition which is made in the text from the occasion of this alteration, "*I thought on my ways,*" to the change itself, is very lofty and elegant. He does not tell us that, after a review of them, he saw the folly and danger of sin, the debasedness of its pleasures, and the poison of its delights ; or that, upon a search into God's law, he was convinced that what he imagined so severe, rigid, and frightful before, was now all amiable and lovely ; no, but immediately adds, "*I turned my feet unto thy testimonies*"; than which I can conceive nothing more noble or strong ; for it emphatically says, that there was no need to express the appearance his ways had

when once he thought upon them. What must be the consequence of his deliberation was so plain, namely, that sin never prevails but where it is masked over with some false beauties, and the inconsiderate, foolish sinner credulously gives ear to its enchantments, and is not at pains and care to enquire into them ; for a deep, thorough search would soon discover that its fairest appearances are but lying vanities, and that he who is captivated with that empty show is in the same circumstances with a person in a dream, who can please himself with his fancy only while asleep, and that his awakening out of it no sooner or more certainly discovers the cheat, than a serious thinking upon the ways of iniquity and rebellion against God will manifest the fatal madness of men in ever pursuing them.—*William Dunlop*, 1692—1720.

Verse 59.—"*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" Some translate the original, I looked on both sides upon my ways, I considered them every way, " and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." I considered that I was wandering like a lost sheep, and then I returned.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 59.—"*I thought on my ways,*" etc. The Hebrew word חשב that is here used for thinking, signifies to think on a man's ways accurately, advisedly, seriously, studiously, curiously. This holy man of God thought exactly and curiously on all his purposes and practices, on all his doings and sayings, on all his words and works, and finding too many of them to be short of the rule, yea, to be against the rule, he turned his feet to God's testimonies ; having found out his errors, upon a diligent search, a strict scrutiny, he turned over a new leaf, and framed his course more exactly by rule. O Christians ! you must look as well to your spiritual wants as to your spiritual enjoyments ; you must look as well to your layings out as to your layings up ; you must look as well forward to what you should be, as backward to what you are. Certainly that Christian will never be eminent in holiness that hath many eyes to behold a little holiness, and never an eye to see his further want of holiness.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 59.—"*I thought on my ways.*" The word signifies a fixed, abiding thought. Some make it an allusion to those that work embroidery ; that are very exact and careful to cover the least flaw ; or to those that cast accounts. Reckon with yourselves, What do I owe ? what am I worth ? "*I thought*" not only on my wealth, as the covetous man, Ps. xlix. 11 ; but "*on my ways*" ; not what I have, but what I do ; because what we do will follow us into another world, when what we have must be left behind. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other people's ways that never think of their own, but " let every man prove his own work."

This account which David here gives of himself may refer either to his constant practice every day ; he reflected on his ways at night, directed his feet to God's testimonies in the morning, and what his hand found to do that was good he did it without delay : or it may refer to his first acquaintance with God and religion, when he began to throw off the vanity of childhood and youth, and to remember his Creator ; that blessed change was by the grace of God thus wrought. Note, 1. Conversion begins in serious consideration ; Ezek. xviii. 28 ; Luke xv. 17. 2. Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways, if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies ?—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 59.—"*I thought on my ways.*" Be frequent in this work of serious consideration. If daily you called yourselves to an account, all acts of grace would thrive the better. Seneca asked of Sextius, *Quod hodie malum sanasti ? cui vitio obstitisti ?* You have God's example in reviewing every day's work, and in dealing with Adam before he slept. The man that was unclean was to wash his clothes at eventide.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 59.—"*I thought on my ways,*" etc. Poisons may be made medicinable. Let the thoughts of old sins stir up a commotion of anger and hatred. We feel shiverings in our spirits, and a motion in our blood, at the very thought of a bitter potion we have formerly taken. Why may we not do that spiritually, which the very frame and constitution of our bodies doth naturally, upon the calling a loathsome thing to mind ? The Romans' sins were transient, but the shame was renewed every time they reflected on them : Rom. vi. 21, " Whereof ye are now ashamed." They reacted the detestation instead of the pleasure : so should the revivings of old sins in our memories be entertained with our sighs, rather than with joy. We should also manage the opportunity, so as to promote some further degrees of our conversion : "*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" There is not the most hellish motion, but we may strike some sparks from it, to

kindle our love to God, renew our repentance, raise our thankfulness, or quicken our obedience.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 59.—"*And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" Mentioning this passage, Philip Henry observed, that the great turn to be made in heart and life is, from all other things to the word of God. Conversion turns us to the word of God, as our touch-stone, to examine ourselves, our state, our ways, spirits, doctrines, worships, customs; as our glass, to dress by, James i.; as our rule to walk and work by, Galatians vi. 16; as our water, to wash us, Psalm cxix. 9; as our fire to warm us, Luke xxiv.; as our food to nourish us, Job xxiii. 12; as our sword to fight with, Ephesians vi.; as our counsellor, in all our doubts, Ps. cxix. 24; as our cordial, to comfort us; as our heritage, to enrich us.

Verse 59.—"*And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*" No itinerary to the heavenly city is simpler or fuller than the ready answer made by an English prelate to a scoffer who asked him the way to heaven; "First turn to the right, and keep straight on."—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 59.—"*And turned.*" Turn to God, and he will turn to you; then you are happy, though all the world turn against you.—*John Mason.*

Verse 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not,*" etc. Duty discovered should instantly be discharged. There is peril attending every step which is taken in the indulgence of any known sin, or in the neglect of any acknowledged obligation. A tender conscience will not trifle with its convictions, lest the heart should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. It is unsafe, it is unreasonable, it is highly criminal to hesitate to carry that reformation into effect which conscience dictates. He who delays when duty calls may never have it in his power to evince the sincerity of his contrition for past folly and neglect. "*I made haste,*" said the Psalmist, "*and delayed not to keep thy commandments*"; that is, being fully convinced of the necessity and excellency of obedience, I instantly resolved upon it, and immediately put it into execution.—*John Morison.*

Verse 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*" We often hear the saying, "Second thoughts are best." This does not hold in the religious life. In the context the Psalmist says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies," that is, I did not wait to think again. In religion it may be a deadly habit to take time to reflect. Make haste.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not.*" When anyone is lawfully called either to the study of theology, or to the teaching it in the church, he ought not to hesitate, as Moses, or turn away, as Jonah; but, leaving all things, he should obey God who calls him; as David says, "*I made haste, and delayed not.*" Matt. iv. 20; Luke ix. 62.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not.*" Sound faith is neither suspicious, nor curious; it believes what God says, without sight, without examining. For since it is impossible for God to lie (for how should truth lie?) it is fit his word be credited for itself's sake. It must not be examined with hows and whys. That which the Psalmist says of observing the law, that must the Christian say of receiving the gospel. לֹא הִתְמַהְמָהְתִּי, "*I disputed not,*" saith David; I argued not *with God.* The word is very elegant in the original tongue, derived in the Hebrew from the pronoun מָה, which signifieth *quid.* Faith reasons not with God, asketh no *quids,* no *quares,* no *quomodos,* no whats, no hows, no wherefores: it moveth no questions. It meekly yields assent, and humbly says *Amen* to every word of God. This is the faith at which our Saviour wondered in the centurion's story.—*Richard Clerke,*—1634.

Verse 60.—"*I made haste, and delayed not.*" The original word, which we translate "*delayed not,*" is amazingly emphatical. לֹא התמהמהתי, *velo hithmahmahti,* I did not stand *what-what-whating;* or, as we used to express the same sentiment, *shilly-shallying* with myself: I was *determined,* and so set out. The Hebrew word as well as the English, strongly marks indecision of mind, positive action being suspended, because the mind is so unfixed as not to be able to make a choice.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 60.—Take heed of delays and procrastination, of putting it off from day to day, by saying there will be time enough hereafter; it will be time enough for me to look after heaven when I have got enough of the world; if I do it in the last year of my life, in the last month of the last year, in the last week of the last month, it will serve. O take heed of delays; this putting off repentance hath ruined thousands of souls; shun that pit into which many have fallen, shun that rock

upon which many have suffered shipwreck; say with David, *"I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments."—James Nalton*, 1664.

Verse 60.—*"I made haste, and delayed not,"* etc. In the verse immediately preceding, the man of God speaks of repentance as the fruit of consideration and self-examining: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." But when did he turn? for, though we see the evil of our ways, we are naturally slow to get it redressed. Therefore David did not only turn to God, but he did it speedily: we have an account of that in this verse, *"I made haste,"* etc. This readiness in the work of obedience is doubly expressed; affirmatively and negatively. Affirmatively, *"I made haste";* negatively, *"I delayed not."* This double expression increaseth the sense according to the manner of the Hebrews; as, "I shall not die, but live" (Ps. cxviii. 17); that is, surely live; so here, *"I made haste, and delayed not;"* that is, I verily delayed not a moment; as soon as he had thought of his ways, and taken up the resolution to walk closely with God, he did put it into practice. The Septuagint read the words thus, "I was ready, and was not troubled or diverted by fear of danger." Indeed, besides our natural slowness to good, this is one usual ground of delays; we distract ourselves with fears; and, when God hath made known his will to us in many duties, we think of tarrying till the times are more quiet, and favourable to our practice, or till our affairs are in a better posture. A good improvement may be made of that translation; but the words run better, as they run more generally, with us, *"I made haste, and delayed not,"* etc.

David *delayed not.* When we dare not flatly deny, then we delay. *Non vacat*, that is the sinner's plea, "I am not at leisure"; but, *Non placet*, there is the reality. They which were invited to the wedding varnished their denial over with an excuse (Matt. xxii. 5). Delay is a denial; for, if they were willing, there would be no excuse. To be rid of importunate and troublesome creditors, we promise them payment another time: though we know our estate will be more wasted by that time, it is but to put them off: so this delay and putting off of God is but a shift. Here is the misery, God always comes unseasonably to a carnal heart. It was the devils that said, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt. viii. 29). Good things are a torment to a carnal heart; and they always come out of time. Certainly, that is the best time when the word is pressed upon thy heart with evidence, light, and power, and when God treats with thee about thine eternal peace.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 60.—*"Delayed." Hithmahmah;* the word used of Lot's lingering, in Genesis xix. 16.—*William Kay.*

Verse 60.—Delay in the Lord's errands is next to disobedience, and generally springs out of it, or issues in it. "God commanded me to make haste" (2 Chron. xxxv. 21). Let us see to it that we can say, *"I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments."—Frances Ridley Havergal.*

Verse 60.—Avoid all delay in the performance of this great work of believing in Christ. Until we have performed it we continue under the power of sin and Satan, and under the wrath of God; and there is nothing between hell and us besides the breath of our nostrils. It is dangerous for Lot to linger in Sodom, lest fire and brimstone come down from heaven upon him. The manslayer must fly with all haste to the city of refuge, lest the avenger of blood pursue him, while his heart is hot, and slay him. We should make haste, and not delay to keep God's commandments.—*Walter Marshall.*

Verse 60.—If convictions begin to work, instantly yield to their influence. If any worldly or sinful desire is touched, let this be the moment for its crucifixion. If any affection is kindled towards the Saviour, give immediate expression to its voice. If any grace is reviving, let it be called forth into instant duty. This is the best, the only, expedient to fix and detain the motion of the Spirit now striving in the heart; and who knoweth but the improvement of the present advantage may be the moment of victory over difficulties hitherto found insuperable, and may open our path to heaven with less interruption and more steady progress?—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 61.—*"The bands of the wicked have robbed me."* Two readings remain, either of which may be admitted: *The cords of the wicked have caught hold of me*, or, *The companies of the wicked have robbed me.* Whether we adopt the one or the other of these readings, what the prophet intends to declare is, that when Satan assailed the principles of piety in his soul, by grievous temptations, he continued

with undeviating steadfastness in the love and practice of God's law. *Cords* may, however, be understood in two ways; either, first, as denoting the deceptive allurements by which the wicked endeavoured to get him entangled in their society; or, secondly, the frauds which they practised to effect his ruin.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 61.—"*The bands of the wicked have robbed me.*"—Some have it, "Cords of wicked men have entwined me." Others, "Snares of wicked men surround me." The meaning is that wicked men by their plots and contrivances had beset him, as men would ensnare a wild beast in their toils. They might, indeed, hem him round about in the wilderness, but they could not enthral the free mind; he would still feel at liberty in spirit, he would not forget God's law.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 61.—"*The bands of the wicked have robbed me.*" They set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plunder in the time of war, or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul (it is likely) seized his effects; Absalom his palace; the Amalekites rifled Ziklag.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 61.—The friendship of the wicked must be shunned. First, because it binds us, as they are bound together—"*bands of the wicked.*" Every sinner is a gladiator with net and sword, going down into the arena, and endeavouring to enmesh any one who comes near him. A second reason for shunning the friendship of the wicked, which may be taken from the Hebrew word, is their cruelty and barbarity; for not only do the wicked bind their friends, but they make a spoil and a prey of them: "*have robbed me.*" They are decoying thieves, journeying with an unwary traveller, until they have led him into thick and dark woods, where they strip him of heavenly riches.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verses 61.—"*The bands of the wicked have robbed me.*" Then said *Christian* to his fellow, Now I call to remembrance that which was told me of a thing that happened to a good man hereabout. The name of the man was *Little-Faith*, but a good man, and he dwelt in the town of *Sincere*. The thing was this; at the entering in of this passage there comes down from *Broadway-gate* a lane called *Dead-man's-lane;* so called because of the murders that are commonly done there. And this *Little-Faith* going on pilgrimage, as we do now, chanced to sit down there and slept. Now there happened, at that time, to come down that lane from *Broad-way-gate* three sturdy rogues, and their names were *Faint-heart*, *Mistrust*, and *Guilt*, (three brothers,) and they espying *Little-Faith* where he was came galloping up with speed. Now the good man was just awaked from his sleep, and was getting up to go on his journey. So they came all up to him, and with threatening language bid him *stand*. At this, *Little-Faith* looked as white as a clout, and had neither power to *fight* nor *flie*. Then said *Faint-heart*, Deliver thy purse; but he making no haste to do it, (for he was loth to lose his money,) *Mistrust* ran up to him, and thrusting his hand into his pocket, pulled out thence a bag of silver. Then he cried out, Thieves! Thieves! With that *Guilt*, with a great club that was in his hand, struck *Little-Faith* on the head, and with that blow felled him flat to the ground, where he lay bleeding as one that would bleed to death.... The place where his jewels were they never ransacked, so those he kept still; but, as I was told, the good man was much afflicted for his loss. For the thieves got most of his spending money. That which they got not (as I said) were jewels, also he had a little odd money left, but scarce enough to bring him to his journey's end; nay, (if I was not misinformed,) he was forced to beg as he went, to keep himself alive (for his jewels he might not sell). But beg, and do what he could he went (as we say) with many a hungry belly, the most part of the rest of the way.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 61.—"*Bands.*" Howsoever, to strengthen themselves in an evil course, the wicked go together by bands and companies, yet shall it not avail them, nor hurt us. Babel's builders; Moab, Ammon, Edom, conspiring in one, may tell us, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not escape unpunished." The wicked are like thorns before the fire; their multitude may well embolden the flame, but cannot resist it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 61.—It is a salutary reflection to bear in mind, that thousands of spiritual adversaries are ever watching to make us their prey.—*John Morison.*

Verse 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks.*" Though we cannot enforce the particular observance upon you, yet there are many notable lessons to be drawn from David's practice.

1. The ardency of his devotion, or his earnest desire to praise God: "*at midnight,*" when sleep doth most invade men's eyes, then he would rise up. His heart was so

set upon the praising of God, and the sense of his righteous providence did so affect him, and urge and excite him to this duty, that he would not only employ himself in this work in the daytime, and so show his love to God, but he would rise out of his bed to worship God and celebrate his praise. That which hindereth the sleep of ordinary men, is either the cares of this world, the impatient resentment of injuries, or the sting of an evil conscience: these keep others waking, but David was awaked by a desire to praise God. No hour is unseasonable to a gracious heart: he is expressing his affection to God when others take their rest. Thus we read of our Lord Christ, that he spent whole nights in prayer (Luke vi. 12). It is said of the glorified saints in heaven, that they praise God continually: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Rev. vii. 15). Now, holy men, though much hindered by their bodily necessities, will come as near to continual praise as present frailty will permit. Alas, we oftentimes begin the day with some fervency of prayer and praise, but we faint ere the evening comes.

2. His sincerity, seen in his secrecy. David would profess his faith in God when he had no witness by him; "*at midnight*," when there was no hazard of ostentation. It was a secret cheerfulness and delighting in God: when alone he could have no respect to the applause of men, but only to approve himself to God who seeth in secret. See Christ's direction: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. vi. 6). Note also Christ's own practice: "Rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark i. 35): before day he went into a desert to pray; both time and place implied secrecy.

3. We learn hence the preciousness of time: it was so to David; see how he spendeth the time of his life. We read of David, when he lay down at night, he watered his couch with his tears, after the examination of his heart (Psalm vi. 6); at midnight he rose to give thanks; in the morning he prevented the morning watches; and seven times a-day he praised God: morning, noon, and night he consecrated. These are all acts of eminent piety. We should not content ourselves with so much grace as will merely serve to save us. Alas! we have much idle time hanging upon our hands: if we would give that to God, it were well.

4. The value of godly exercises above our natural refreshings. The word is sweeter than appointed food: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job xxiii. 12). David preferreth the praises of God before his sleep and rest in the night. Surely, this should shame us for our sensuality. We can dispense with other things for our vain pleasures: we have done as much for sin, for vain sports, etc.; and shall we not deny ourselves for God?

5. The great reverence to be used in secret adoration. David did not only raise up his spirits to praise God, but rise up out of his bed, to bow the knee to him. Secret duties should be performed with solemnity, not slubbered over. Praise, a special act of adoration, requireth the worship of body and soul.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks.*" He had praised God in the courts of the Lord's house, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee.*" Was he not ready also to praise God at midday? Certainly; but he says, "*at midnight*," that he may express the ardour and longing of his soul. We are wont to assure our friends of our good will by saying that we will rise at midnight to consult about their affairs.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks*," etc. In these words observe three things:—1. David's holy employment, or the duty promised, giving thanks to God. 2. His earnestness and fervency implied in the time mentioned, "At midnight I will rise"; he would rather interrupt his sleep and rest, than God should want his praise. 3. The cause or matter of his thanksgiving, "because of thy righteous judgments": whereby he meaneth the dispensations of God's providence in delivering the godly and punishing the wicked, according to his word.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 62.—"*At midnight I will rise to give thanks.*" Cares of this world, impatience of wrongs, a bad conscience, keep awake the ungodly and disturb their sleep (*Rivetus*); but what I awake for is to give thanks to thee.—*A. R. Faussett.*

Verse 63.—"*I am a companion,*" etc. He said in the first verse of this section that God was his portion; now he saith, that all the saints of God are his companions. These two go together—the love of God and the love of his saints. He that loveth not his brother, made in God's image, whom he seeth, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen? Seeing our goodness extends not to the Lord; if it be showed to his saints and excellent ones upon earth, for his sake, it shall be no small argument of our loving affection towards himself.

Godly David, when Jonathan was dead, made diligent inquisition, Is there none of Jonathan's posterity to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake? and at length he found a silly, lame Mephibosheth. So if we enquire diligently, Is there none upon earth to whom I may show kindness for Christ's sake who is in heaven? we shall ever find some, to whom whatsoever we do shall be accepted as done to himself.

His great modesty is to be marked. He saith not, I am companion of all that follow thee, but of all that fear thee. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. He places himself among novices in humility, though he excelled ancients in piety.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 63.—"*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" How weak is human nature! Verily there are times when the presence of one so great as the Almighty becomes oppressive, and we feel our need of one like ourselves to sympathize with us. . . . And there have been provided for us by the way many kind, sympathizing friends, like Jesus. As we pass on, we get the human supports which the Lord hath provided. We get them for fellowship too.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 63.—"*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" Birds of a feather will flock together. Servants of the same Lord, if faithful, will join with their fellows, and not with the servants of his enemy. When a man comes to an inn you may give a notable guess for what place he is bound by the company he enquires after. His question,—"Do you know of any travelling towards London? I should be heartily glad of their company," will speak his mind and his course. If he hear of any bound for another coast he regards them not; but if he know of any honest passengers that are to ride in the same road, and set out for the same city with himself, he sends to them, and begs the favour of their good company. This world is an inn, all men are in some sense pilgrims and strangers, they have no abiding-place here. Now the company they enquire after, and delight in, whether those that walk in the "broad way" of the flesh, or those who walk in the "narrow way" of the Spirit, will declare whether they are going towards heaven or towards hell. A wicked man will not desire the company of them who walk in a contrary way, nor a saint delight in their society who go cross to his journey. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" The young partridges hatched under a hen go for a time along with her chickens, and keep them company, scraping in the earth together; but when they are grown up, and their wings fit for the purpose, they mount up into the air, and seek for birds of their own nature. A Christian, before his conversion, is brought up under the prince of darkness, and walks in company with his cursed crew, according to the course of this world; but when the Spirit changes his disposition, he quickly changes his companions, and delights only in the saints that are on earth.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 63.—"*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" 1. The person speaking. The disparity of the persons is to be observed. David, who was a great prophet, yea, a king, yet saith, "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee.*" Christ himself called them his "fellows": "Thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Ps. xlv. 7); and therefore David might well say, "*I am a companion.*"

2. The persons spoken of. David saith of "*all them that fear thee.*" The universal particle is to be observed; not only some, but "*all*": when any lighted upon him, or he upon any of them, they were welcome to him. How well would it be for the world, if the great potentates of the earth would thus think, speak, and do, "*I am a companion of all that fear thee.*" Self-love reigneth in most men: we love the rich and despise the poor, and so have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons (James ii. 1): therefore this universality is to be regarded. Hearing of your faith and love to all the saints (Eph. i. 15), to the mean as well as the greatest. Meanness doth not take away church relations (1 Cor. xi. 20). There are many differences in worldly respects between one Christian and another; yea, in spiritual gifts, some weaker, some stronger; but we must love all; for all are children

of one Father, all owned by Christ: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11).

This, I say, is observable, the disparity of the persons: on the one side, David, on the other, all the people of God.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 63.—"*I am a companion,*" etc.: as if he would say, This is a sign to me that I belong to thy family; because "*I am the companion of all those fearing thee*" with a filial fear, and keeping "*thy precepts.*"—*Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 63.—"*A companion,*" properly is such an one as I do choose to walk and converse with ordinarily in a way of friendship; so that company keeping doth imply three things; first, it is a matter of choice, and therefore relations, as such, are not properly said to be our companions; secondly, it implies a constant walking and converse with another, and so it is expressed, Job xxxiv. 8; Prov. xiii. 20. And, thirdly, this ordinary converse or walking with another, must be in a way of friendship.—*William Bridge,* 1600—1670.

Verse 63.—Shun the company that shuns God, and keep the company that God keeps. Look on the society of the carnal or profane as infectious, but reckon serious, praying persons the excellent ones of the earth. Such will serve to quicken you when dead, and warm you when cold. Make the liveliest of God's people your greatest intimates, and see that their love and likeness to Christ be the great motive of your love to them, more than their love or likeness to you.—*John Willison,* 1680—1750.

Verse 64.—"*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy.*" The humble and devoted servant of God does not look with a jaundiced eye upon that scene through which he is passing to his eternal home. Amidst many sorrows and privations, the necessary fruits of sin, he beholds all nature and providence shining forth in the rich expression of God's paternal benignity and mercy to the children of men.—*John Morison.*

Verse 64.—"*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy.*" The molten sea, the shew-bread, the sweet incense, the smoke of the sacrifices, Aaron's breastplate, the preaching of the cross, the keys of the kingdom of heaven: do not all these proclaim mercy? Who could enter a sanctuary, search conscience, look up to heaven, pray or sacrifice, call upon God, or think of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, if there were no mercy? Do not all visions, covenants, promises, messages, mysteries, legal purifications, evangelical pacifications, confirm this? Yes, mercy is in the air which we breathe, the daily light which shines upon us, the gracious rain of God's inheritance; it is the public spring for all the thirsty, the common hospital for all the needy; all the streets of the church are paved with these stones. What would become of the children if there were not these breasts of consolation? How should the bride, the Lamb's wife, be trimmed, if her bridegroom did not deck her with these habiliments? How should Eden appear like the Garden of God, if it were not watered by these rivers? It is mercy that takes us out of the womb, feeds us in the days of our pilgrimage, furnishes us with spiritual provisions, closes our eyes in peace, and translates us to a secure resting-place. It is the first petitioner's suit, and the first believer's article, the contemplation of Enoch, the confidence of Abraham, the burden of the Prophetic Songs, the glory of all the apostles, the plea of the penitent, the ecstacies of the reconciled, the believer's hosannah, the angel's hallelujah. Ordinances, oracles, altars, pulpits, the gates of the grave, and the gates of heaven, do all depend upon mercy. It is the load-star of the wandering, the ransom of the captive, the antidote of the tempted, the prophet of the living, and the effectual comfort of the dying:—there would not be one regenerate saint upon earth, nor one glorified saint in heaven, if it were not for mercy.—*From G. S. Bowes's "Illustrative Gatherings,"* 1869.

Verse 64.—"*The earth, O* LORD, *is full of thy mercy.*"

"Why bursts such melody from tree and bush,
The overflowing of each songster's heart,
So filling mine that it can scarcely hush
Awhile to listen, but would take its part?
'Tis but one song I hear where'er I rove,
Though countless be the notes, that God is Love.

"Why leaps the streamlet down the mountain-side?
Hasting so swiftly to the vale beneath,
To cheer the shepherd's thirsty flock, or glide
Where the hot sun has left a faded wreath,
Or, rippling, aid the music of a grove?
Its own glad voice replies, that God is Love

"Is it a fallen world on which I gaze?
Am I as deeply fallen as the rest,
Yet joys partaking, past my utmost praise,
Instead of wandering forlorn, unblest?
It is as if an unseen spirit strove
To grave upon my heart, that God is Love!"

Thomas Davis, 1864.

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 65 TO 72.

THOU hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

68 Thou *art* good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

69 The proud have forged a lie against me: *but* I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.

70 Their heart is as fat as grease; *but* I delight in thy law.

71 *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

72 The law of thy mouth *is* better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

In this ninth section the verses all begin with the letter Teth. They are the witness of experience, testifying to the goodness of God, the graciousness of his dealings, and the preciousness of his word. Especially the Psalmist proclaims the excellent uses of adversity, and the goodness of God in afflicting him. The sixty-fifth verse is the text of the entire octave.

65. "*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.*" This is the summary of his life, and assuredly it is the sum of ours. The Psalmist tells the Lord the verdict of his heart; he cannot be silent, he must speak his gratitude in the presence of Jehovah, his God. From the universal goodness of God in nature, in verse 64, it is an easy and pleasant step to a confession of the Lord's uniform goodness to ourselves personally. It is something that God has *dealt* at all with such insignificant and undeserving beings as we are, and it is far more that he has dealt *well* with us, and so well, so wondrously well. He hath done all things well: the rule has no exception. In providence and in grace, in giving prosperity and sending adversity, in everything Jehovah hath dealt well with us. It is dealing well on our part to tell the Lord that we feel that he hath dealt well with us; for praise of this kind is specially fitting and comely. This kindness of the Lord is, however, no chance matter: he promised to do so, and he has done it according to his word. It is very precious to see the word of the Lord fulfilled in our happy experience; it endears the Scripture to us, and makes us love the Lord of the Scripture. The book of providence tallies with the book of promise: what we read in the page of inspiration we meet with again in the leaves of our life-story. We may not have thought that it would be so, but our unbelief is repented of now that we see the mercy of the Lord to us, and his faithfulness to his word; henceforth we are bound to display a firmer faith both in God and in his promise. He has spoken well, and he has dealt well. He is the best of Masters; for it is to a very unworthy and incapable *servant* that he has acted thus blessedly: does not this cause us to delight in his service more and more? We cannot say that we have dealt well with our Master; for when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; but as for our Lord, he has given us light work, large maintenance, loving encouragement, and liberal wages. It is a wonder that he has not long ago discharged us, or at least reduced our allowances, or handled us roughly; yet we have had no hard dealings, all has been ordered with as much consideration as if we had rendered perfect

obedience. We have had bread enough and to spare, our livery has been duly supplied, and his service has ennobled us and made us happy as kings. Complaints we have none. We lose ourselves in adoring thanksgiving, and find ourselves again in careful thanks-living.

66. *"Teach me good judgment and knowledge."* Again he begs for teaching, as in verse 64, and again he uses God's mercy as an argument. Since God had dealt well with him, he is encouraged to pray for judgment to appreciate the Lord's goodness. Good judgment is the form of goodness which the godly man most needs and most desires, and it is one which the Lord is most ready to bestow. David felt that he had frequently failed in judgment in the matter of the Lord's dealings with him: from want of knowledge he had misjudged the chastening hand of the heavenly Father, and therefore he now asks to be better instructed, since he perceives the injustice which he had done to the Lord by his hasty conclusions. He means to say—Lord, thou didst deal well with me when I thought thee hard and stern, be pleased to give me more wit, that I may not a second time think so ill of my Lord. A sight of our errors and a sense of our ignorance should make us teachable. We are not able to judge, for our knowledge is so sadly inaccurate and imperfect; if the Lord teaches us knowledge we shall attain to good judgment, but not otherwise. The Holy Ghost alone can fill us with light, and set the understanding upon a proper balance: let us ardently long for his teachings, since it is most desirable that we should be no longer mere children in knowledge and understanding.

"For I have believed thy commandments." His heart was right, and therefore he hoped his head would be made right. He had faith, and therefore he hoped to receive wisdom. His mind had been settled in the conviction that the precepts of the word were from the Lord, and were therefore just, wise, kind, and profitable; he believed in holiness, and as that belief is no mean work of grace upon the soul, he looked for yet further operations of divine grace. He who believes the commands is the man to know and understand the doctrines and the promises. If in looking back upon our mistakes and ignorances we can yet see that we heartily loved the precepts of the divine will, we have good reason to hope that we are Christ's disciples, and that he will teach us and make us men of good judgment and sound knowledge. A man who has learned discernment by experience, and has thus become a man of sound judgment, is a valuable member of a church, and the means of much edification to others. Let all who would be greatly useful offer the prayer of this verse: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge."

67. *"Before I was afflicted I went astray."* Partly, perhaps, through the absence of trial. Often our trials act as a thorn hedge to keep us in the good pasture, but our prosperity is a gap through which we go astray. If any of us remember a time in which we had no trouble, we also probably recollect that then grace was low, and temptation was strong. It may be that some believer cries, "O that it were with me as in those summer days before I was afflicted." Such a sigh is most unwise, and arises from a carnal love of ease: the spiritual man who prizes growth in grace will bless God that those dangerous days are over, and that if the weather be more stormy it is also more healthy. It is well when the mind is open and candid, as in this instance: perhaps David would never have known and confessed his own strayings if he had not smarted under the rod. Let us join in his humble acknowledgments, for doubtless we have imitated him in his strayings. Why is it that a little ease works in us so much disease? Can we never rest without rusting? Never be filled without waxing fat? Never rise as to one world without going down as to another? What weak creatures we are to be unable to bear a little pleasure! What base hearts are those which turn the abundance of God's goodness into an occasion for sin.

"But now have I kept thy word." Grace is in that heart which profits by its chastening. It is of no use to plough barren soil. When there is no spiritual life affliction works no spiritual benefit; but where the heart is sound trouble awakens conscience, wandering is confessed, the soul becomes again obedient to the command, and continues to be so. Whipping will not turn a rebel into a child; but to the true child a touch of the rod is a sure corrective. In the Psalmist's case the medicine of affliction worked a change—*"but"*; an immediate change—*"now"*; a lasting change—*"have I"*; an inward change—*"have I kept"*; a change Godward—*"thy word."* Before his trouble he wandered, but after it he kept within the hedge of the word, and found good pasture for his soul: the trial tethered him to his proper place; it kept him, and then he kept God's word. Sweet are the uses of adversity,

and this is one of them, it puts a bridle upon transgression and furnishes a spur for holiness.

68. *"Thou art good, and doest good."* Even in affliction God is good, and does good. This is the confession of experience. God is essential goodness in himself, and in every attribute of his nature he is good in the fullest sense of the term; indeed, he has a monopoly of goodness, for there is none good but one, that is God. His acts are according to his nature: from a pure source flow pure streams. God is not latent and inactive goodness; he displays himself by his doings, he is actively beneficent, he does good. How much good he does no tongue can tell! How good he is no heart can conceive! It is well to worship the Lord as the poet here does by describing him. Facts about God are the best praise of God. All the glory we can give to God is to reflect his own glory upon himself. We can say no more good of God than God is and does. We believe in his goodness, and so honour him by our faith; we admire that goodness, and so glorify him by our love; we declare that goodness, and so magnify him by our testimony.

"Teach me thy statutes." The same prayer as before, backed with the same argument. He prays, "Lord be good, and do good to me that I may both be good and do good through thy teaching." The man of God was a learner, and delighted to learn: he ascribed this to the goodness of the Lord, and hoped that for the same reason he would be allowed to remain in the school and learn on till he could perfectly practise every lesson. His chosen class-book was the royal statutes, he wanted no other. He knew the sad result of breaking those statutes, and by a painful experience he had been led back to the way of righteousness; and therefore he begged as the greatest possible instance of the divine goodness that he might be taught a perfect knowledge of the law, and a complete conformity to it. He who mourns that he has not kept the word longs to be taught it, and he who rejoices that by grace he has been taught to keep it is not less anxious for the like instruction to be continued to him.

In verse 12, which is the fourth verse of Beth, we have much the same sense as in this fourth verse of Teth.

69. *"The proud have forged a lie against me."* They first derided him (51), then defrauded him (61), and now they have defamed him. To injure his character they resorted to falsehood, for they could find nothing against him if they spoke the truth. They forged a lie as a blacksmith beats out a weapon of iron, or they counterfeited the truth as men forge false coin. The original may suggest a common expression—"They have patched up a lie against me." They were not too proud to lie. Pride is a lie, and when a proud man utters lies "he speaketh of his own." Proud men are usually the bitterest opponents of the righteous: they are envious of their good fame and are eager to ruin it. Slander is a cheap and handy weapon if the object is the destruction of a gracious reputation; and when many proud ones conspire to concoct, exaggerate, and spread abroad a malicious falsehood, they generally succeed in wounding their victim, and it is no fault of theirs if they do not kill him outright. O the venom which lies under the tongue of a liar! Many a happy life has been embittered by it, and many a good repute has been poisoned as with the deadliest drug. It is painful to the last degree to hear unscrupulous men hammering away at the devil's anvil forging a new calumny; the only help against it is the sweet promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

"But I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart." My one anxiety shall be to mind my own business and stick to the commandments of the Lord. If the mud which is thrown at us does not blind our eyes or bruise our integrity it will do us little harm. If we keep the precepts, the precepts will keep us in the day of contumely and slander. David renews his resolve—*"I will keep"*; he takes a new look at the commands, and sees them to be really the Lord's—*"thy precepts"*; and he arouses his entire nature to the work—*"with my whole heart."* When slanders drive us to more resolute and careful obedience they work our lasting good; falsehood hurled against us may be made to promote our fidelity to the truth, and the malice of men may increase our love to God. If we try to answer lies by our words we may be beaten in the battle; but a holy life is an unanswerable refutation of all calumnies. Spite is balked if we persevere in holiness despite all opposition.

70. *"Their heart is as fat as grease."* They delight in fatness, but I delight in thee. Their hearts, through sensual indulgence, have grown insensible, coarse, and grovelling; but thou hast saved me from such a fate through thy chastening hand.

Proud men grow fat through carnal luxuries, and this makes them prouder still. They riot in their prosperity, and fill their hearts therewith till they become insensible, effeminate, and self-indulgent. A greasy heart is something horrible; it is a fatness which makes a man fatuous, a fatty degeneration of the heart which leads to feebleness and death. The fat in such men is killing the life in them. Dryden wrote—

> "O souls! In whom no heavenly fire is found,
> Fat minds and ever grovelling on the ground."

In this condition men have no heart except for luxury, their very being seems to swim and stew in the fat of cookery and banqueting. Living on the fat of the land, their nature is subdued to that which they have fed upon; the muscle of their nature has gone to softness and grease.

"But I delight in thy law." How much better is it to joy in the law of the Lord than to joy in sensual indulgences! This makes the heart healthy, and keeps the mind lowly. No one who loves holiness has the slightest cause to envy the prosperity of the worldling. Delight in the law elevates and ennobles, while carnal pleasure clogs the intellect and degrades the affections. There is and always ought to be a vivid contrast between the believer and the sensualist, and that contrast is as much seen in the affections of the heart as in the actions of the life: *their* heart is as fat as grease, and our heart is delighted with the law of the Lord. Our delights are a better test of our character than anything else: as a man's heart is, so is the man. David oiled the wheels of life with his delight in God's law, and not with the fat of sensuality. He had his relishes and dainties, his festivals and delights, and all these he found in doing the will of the Lord his God. When law becomes delight, obedience is bliss. Holiness in the heart causes the soul to eat the fat of the land. To have the law for our delight will breed in our hearts the very opposite of the effects of pride; deadness, sensuality, and obstinacy will be cured, and we shall become teachable, sensitive, and spiritual. How careful should we be to live under the influence of the divine law that we fall not under the law of sin and death.

71. *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."* Even though the affliction came from bad men, it was overruled for good ends; though it was bad as it came from them it was good for David. It benefited him in many ways, and he knew it. Whatever he may have thought while under the trial, he perceived himself to be the better for it when it was over. It was not good to the proud to be prosperous, for their hearts grew sensual and insensible; but affliction was good for the Psalmist. Our worst is better for us than the sinner's best. It is bad for sinners to rejoice, and good for saints to sorrow. A thousand benefits have come to us through our pains and griefs, and among the rest is this—that we have thus been schooled in the law. *"That I might learn thy statutes."* These we have come to know and to keep by feeling the smart of the rod. We prayed the Lord to teach us (66), and now we see how he has already been doing it. Truly he has dealt well with us, for he has dealt wisely with us. We have been kept from the ignorance of the greasy-hearted by our trials, and this, if there were nothing else, is just cause for constant gratitude. To be larded by prosperity is not good for the proud; but for the truth to be learned by adversity is good for the humble. Very little is to be learned without affliction. If we would be scholars we must be sufferers. As the Latins say, *Experientia docet*, experience teaches. There is no royal road to learning the royal statutes; God's commands are best read by eyes wet with tears.

72. *"The law of thy mouth."* A sweetly expressive name for the word of God. It comes from God's own mouth with freshness and power to our souls. Things written are as dried herbs; but speech has a liveliness and dew about it. We do well to look upon the word of the Lord as though it were newly spoken into our ear; for in very truth it is not decayed by years, but is as forcible and sure as though newly uttered. Precepts are prized when it is seen that they come forth from the lips of our Father who is in heaven. The same lips which spoke us into existence have spoken the law by which we are to govern that existence. Whence could a law so sweetly proceed as from the mouth of our covenant God? Well may we prize beyond all price that which comes from such a source.

"Is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." If a poor man had said this, the world's witlings would have hinted that the grapes are sour, and that men who have no wealth are the first to despise it; but this is the verdict of a man who owned his thousands, and could judge by actual experience of the value of

money and the value of truth. He speaks of great riches, he heaps it up by thousands, he mentions the varieties of its forms,—"gold and silver"; and then he sets the word of God before it all, as better *to him*, even if others did not think it better to them. Wealth is good in some respects, but obedience is better in all respects. It is well to keep the treasures of this life; but far more commendable to keep the law of the Lord. The law is better than gold and silver, for these may be stolen from us, but not the word; these take to themselves wings, but the word of God remains; these are useless in the hour of death, but then it is that the promise is most dear. Instructed Christians recognize the value of the Lord's word, and warmly express it, not only in their testimony to their fellow-men, but in their devotions to God. It is a sure sign of a heart which has learned God's statutes when it prizes them above all earthly possessions; and it is an equally certain mark of grace when the precepts of Scripture are as precious as its promises. The Lord cause us thus to prize the law of his mouth.

See how this portion of the Psalm is flavoured with goodness. God's dealings are good (65), holy judgment is good (66), affliction is good (67), God is good (68), and here the law is not only good, but better than the best of treasure. Lord, make us good through thy good word. Amen.

NOTES ON VERSES 65 TO 72.

TETH.—In the original each stanza begins with T, and in our own version it is so in all but verses 67 and 70, which can easily be made to do so by reading, "Till I was afflicted," and "'Tis good for me that I have been afflicted."—*C. H. S.*

Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O* LORD."

1. The party dealing is God himself: all good is to be referred to God as the author of it.

2. The benefit received is generally expressed, "*Thou hast dealt well.*" Some translate it out of the Hebrew, *Bonum fecisti*, thou hast done good with thy servant; the Septuagint, *Χρηστότητα ἐποίησας μετα του δουλου σου*, thou hast made goodness to or with thy servant; out of them, the Vulgate, *Bonitatem fecisti.* Some take this cause generally, "Whatever thou dost for thy servants is good": they count it so, though it be never so contrary to the interest of the flesh: sickness is good, loss of friends is good; and so are poverty and loss of goods, to an humble and thankful mind. But surely David speaketh here of some supply and deliverance wherein God had made good some promise to him. The Jewish rabbies understand it of his return to the kingdom; but most Christian writers understand it of some spiritual benefit; that good which God had done to him. If anything may be collected from the subsequent verses, it was certainly some spiritual good. The Septuagint repeat *χρηστότητα* twice in this and the following verse, as if he acknowledged the benefit of that good judgment and knowledge of which there he beggeth an increase. It was in part given him already, and that learned by afflictions, as we see, in the third verse of this portion: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." His prayer is—Now, then, go on to increase this work, this goodness which thou hast shown to thy servant.

3. The object, "*thy servant*": it is an honourable, comfortable style; David delighted in it. God is a bountiful and a gracious master, ready to do good to his servants, rewarding them with grace here, and crowning that grace with glory hereafter: "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. xi. 6).—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well.*" If the children of God did but know what was best for them, they would perceive that God did that which was best for them. —*John Mason.*

Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.*" He knew that God's gifts are without repentance, and that he is not weary of well-doing, but will finish the thing he hath begun; and therefore he pleads past favours. Nothing is more forcible to obtain mercy than to lay God's former mercies before him. Here are two grounds, First. If he dealt well with him when he was not regenerate, how much more will he now? and Secondly, all the gifts of God shall be perfectly finished, therefore he will go on to deal well with his servant. Here is a difference between faith and an accusing conscience: the accusing conscience is afraid to ask more, because it hath abused the former mercies: but faith, assuring us that all God's benefits are tokens of his love bestowed on us according to his word, is bold to ask for more.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.*" "No doubt," said the late Rev. J. Brown, of Haddington, Scotland, "I have met with trials as well as others; yet so kind has God been to me, that I think if he were to give me as many years as I have already lived in the world, I should not desire one single circumstance in my lot changed, except that I wish I had less sin. It might be written on my coffin, 'Here lies one of the cares of Providence, who early wanted both father and mother, and yet never missed them.'"—*Arvine's Anecdotes.*

Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O* LORD, *according unto thy word.*" The expression, "*according to thy word,*" is so often repeated in this Psalm, that we are apt to overlook it, or to give it only the general meaning of "because of thy promise." But in reality it implies much more. Had God dealt "*well*" with David according to man's idea? If so, what mean such expressions as these —"O forsake me not utterly" (ver. 8)—"I am a stranger in the earth" (ver. 19)— "My soul cleaveth unto the dust" (ver. 25)—"My soul melteth for heaviness" (ver. 28)—"Turn away my reproach which I fear" (ver. 39)—"The proud have had me greatly in derision" (ver. 51)—"Horror hath taken hold upon me" (ver. 53)?

In view of such passages as these, can it be said that God "dealt *well*" with David, according to man's idea? David's experience was one of very great and very varied trial. There is not a phase of our feelings in sorrow which does not find ample expression in his Psalms. And yet he says, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, *according to thy word.*"

How, then, are we to interpret the expression, so often repeated here, in accordance with the facts of David's spiritual life?

God dealt well with him "according to his word," in the sense of dealing with him *according to what his word explained was the true good*—not delivering him from all trial, but sending him such trial as he specially required. He felt truly that God had dealt *well* with him when he could say (ver. 67), "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Again (ver. 71), "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Such dealing was hard for flesh and blood to bear, but it was indeed "*well*," in the sense of accomplishing most blessed results.

It was "according to his word" too, in the sense of being *in accordance with his revealed manner of dealing with his people*, who are chastened for their profit.

Again, God had "dealt well" with David *according to his word or covenant;* the present fulfilment (even if in itself bitter) being a sure earnest of his final perfecting of his work, and glorifying himself in the entire fulfilment of his word, in the completed salvation of his servant.

According to thy word, O Lord, thou hast dealt well with thy servant. Thy word is the light and lamp that shows things in their true aspect, and teaches us to know that all things work together for good to thy people; that thou doest all things well. "Open thou mine eyes, O Lord, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law." What can be more wonderful than such views to our eyes?

"According to thy word": not only "because of thy promise," but in such a manner and measure as thy word declares. See how such an understanding of the expression opens out the idea of "Be merciful to me according to thy word" (ver. 58). All the sweet promises and declarations of God's infinite mercy rise before us, and make it a vast request. Again, "Quicken thou me," and "strengthen thou me according to thy word"—*up to the full measure of what thou hast promised and provided for thy people.* See the fulness in this view, of ver. 76, "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, *according to thy word.*" Again, ver. 169, "Give me understanding *according to thy word*"; ver. 170, "Deliver me *according to thy word.*" In each of these we are to feel that the request includes the thought of all that the word teaches on the subject.

Let our prayer then for mercy, and strength, and comfort, and understanding, and deliverance, ever be a prayer for these, in the full measure in which they are revealed and promised in the word of God.—*Mary B. M. Duncan* (1835—1865) *in "Under the Shadow."*

Verse 66.—"*Teach me good judgment,*" etc. David, who discovered a holy taste (Ps. xix. 10; civ. 34; cxix. 103); and recommended it to others (xxxiv. 8), requests in our text to have it increased. For the word rendered "*judgment,*" properly signifies *taste*, and denotes that relish for divine truth, and for the divine goodness and holiness, which is peculiar to true saints. I propose therefore to consider the nature and objects of that spiritual taste which is possessed by every gracious soul, and which all true saints desire to possess in a still greater degree.

The original word, which is often applied to those objects of sense which are distinguished by the palate, is here used in a metaphorical sense, as the corresponding term frequently is in our own language. "Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste meat?" (Job xii. 11). Our translators in this place render it, "*judgment,*" which is nearly the same thing; yet as the terms are applied among us, there is a difference between them. Taste is that which enables a man to form a more compendious judgment. Judgment is slower in its operations than taste; it forms its decisions in a more circuitous way. So we apply the term *taste* to many objects of mental decision, to the beauty of a poem, to excellence of style, to elegance of dress or of deportment, to painting, to music, etc., in which a good taste will lead those who possess it, to decide speedily, and yet accurately, on the beauty, excellence, and propriety of the objects with which it has long been conversant without laborious examination.

Just so, true saints have a power of receiving pleasure from the beauty of holiness,

which shines forth resplendently in the word of God, in the divine character, in the law, in the gospel, in the cross of Christ, in the example of Christ, and in the conduct of all his true followers, so far as they are conformed to his lovely image. I do not mean by this that they are influenced by a blind instinct, for which they can assign no sufficient reason: the genuine feelings of a true Christian can all of them be justified by the soundest reason: but those feelings which were first produced by renewing grace, are so strengthened by daily communion with God, and by frequent contemplation of spiritual things, that they acquire a delicacy and readiness of perception, which no one can possess who has never tasted how gracious the Lord is. You cannot touch, as it were, a certain string, but the renewed heart must needs answer to it. Whatever truly tends to exalt God, to bring the soul near to him, and to insure his being glorified and enjoyed, will naturally attract the notice, excite the affections and influence the conduct of one who is born of God. "Sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb." "My meditation of thee shall be sweet." "How sweet are thy words to my taste! sweeter than honey to my mouth." "O taste and see that the Lord is good."—*John Ryland*, 1753—1825.

Verse 66.—"*Teach me good judgment and knowledge*," etc. Literally it may be rendered thus,—Teach me goodness, discernment and knowledge; for I have believed or confided in thy commandments. In our system of divine things, we might be inclined to place knowledge and discernment first, as begetting the "goodness." But it is a well ascertained fact, that the intellectual and moral powers are reciprocal—that the moral also give strength to the intellectual. Moreover, it is only the spiritual man that discerns the things of God. The state of being spiritually minded, and also conversant with divine things, gives a vigour and breadth to the intellect itself, that remarkably appears in the lives of eminent men. And if you remark that some have been eminent who were devoid of spiritual qualities, the reply might be—How much more eminent would they have been had they possessed these qualities. The petition is, "*Teach me goodness, discernment and knowledge.*" The principle of pleasing God may be within, and yet the mind may require to be enlightened in all duty; and again, though all duty be known, we may require spiritual discernment to see and feel it aright.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 66.—"*Teach me good judgment.*" In a lecture of Sir John Lubbock's [on the fertilization of flowers by the agency of insects], a striking distinction is noted in regard to this operation between beautiful and hideous plants. Bees, it would appear, delight in pleasant odours and bright colours, and invariably choose those plants which give pleasure to man. If we watch the course of these insects on their visit to a garden, we shall observe them settling upon the rose, the lavender, and all other similar agreeable flowers of brilliant hues or sweet scent. In marked contrast with this is the conduct of flies, which always show a preference for livid yellow or dingy red plants, and those which possess an unpleasant smell. The bee is a creature of fine and sensitive tastes. The fly is "a species of insectoid vulture," naturally turning to such vegetable food as resembles carrion. Let two plates be placed on a lawn, at a little distance apart, the one containing that ill-scented under-ground fungus, the Stink-horn, and the other a handful of moss roses, and this difference will be immediately discerned. The foul-odoured and unsightly fungus will soon be covered with flies, while the bees will resort to the plate of roses. To this love of bees for fine colours and fragrant perfumes we are indebted for our choicest flowers. For by taking the pollen dust of some conspicuous flower to the stigma of another, they have by this union produced the seed of a still richer variety. Thus, age after age, many blossoms have been growing increasingly beautiful. On the other hand, strange to say, through a similar process, a progress in the opposite direction has taken place in those plants which are frequented by flies, and their unwholesome and repulsive qualities have become intensified.

So is it with the two great classes into which mankind may be divided—the men of this world, and the men of the next. While the purified affections of the one centre continually on "whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," so the earthward and vile affections of the other fasten on corruption. Not more surely does the laborious bee fly from one beautiful flower to another, than does the Christian seek of set purpose all that is fairest, sweetest, and best on earth. His prayer is that of David, in Psalm cxix. 66, "*Teach me good taste*" (which is the literal translation); and "if there be any virtue, and if there be any

praise," he thinks on these things.—*James Neil, in "Rays from the Realms of Nature,"* 1879.

Verse 66.—"*Good judgment and knowledge.*" No blessings are more suitable than "*good judgment and knowledge*"—"*knowledge*" of ourselves, of our Saviour, of the way of obedience—and "*good judgment*" to direct and apply this knowledge to some valuable end. These two parts of our intellectual furniture have a most important connexion and dependence upon each other. "*Knowledge*" is the speculative perception of general truth. "*Judgment*" is the practical application of it to the heart and conduct.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 66.—"*For I have believed thy commandments.*" These words deserve a little consideration, because believing is here joined to an unusual object. Had it been, "for I have believed thy promises," or, "obeyed thy commandments," the sense of the clause had been more obvious to every vulgar apprehension. To believe commandments, sounds as harsh to a common ear, as to see with the ear, and hear with the eye; but, for all this, the commandments are the object; and of them he saith, not, "I have obeyed"; but, "*I have believed.*"

To take off the seeming asperity of the phrase, some interpreters conceive that "*commandments*" is put for the word in general; and so promises are included, yea, they think, principally intended, especially those promises which encouraged him to look to God for necessary things, such as good judgment and knowledge are. But this interpretation would divert us from the weight and force of these significant words. Therefore let us note,—

1. Certainly there is a faith in the commandments, as well as in the promises. We must believe that God is their author, and that they are the expressions of his commanding and legislative will, which we are bound to obey. Faith must discern the sovereignty and goodness of the law-maker and believe that his commands are holy, just and good; it must also teach us that God loves those who keep his law and is angry with those who transgress, and that he will see to it that his law is vindicated at the last great day.

2. Faith in the commandments is as necessary as faith in the promises; for, as the promises are not esteemed, embraced, and improved, unless they are believed to be of God, so neither are the precepts; they do not sway the conscience, nor incline the affections, except as they are believed to be divine.

3. Faith in the commands must be as lively as faith in the promises. As the promises are not believed with a lively faith, unless they draw off the heart from carnal vanities to seek that happiness which they offer to us; so the precepts are not believed rightly, unless we be fully resolved to acquiesce in them as the only rule to guide us in obtaining that happiness, and unless we are determined to adhere to them, and obey them. As the king's laws are not kept as soon as they are believed to be the king's laws, unless also, upon the consideration of his authority and power, we subject ourselves to them; so this believing noteth a ready alacrity to hear God's voice and obey it, and to govern our hearts and actions according to his counsel and direction in the word.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 66.—"*For I have believed thy commandments.*" The commandments of God are not alone; but they have promises of grace on the right hand, and threatenings of wrath on the left: upon both of these faith exercises itself, and without such faith no one will be able to render obedience to God's commands.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 67.—"*Before I was afflicted I went astray,*" etc. Not that he wilfully, wickedly, maliciously, and through contempt, departed from his God; this he denies (Ps. xviii. 21); but through the weakness of the flesh, the prevalence of corruption, and the force of temptation, and very much through a careless, heedless, and negligent frame of spirit, he got out of the right way, and wandered from it before he was well aware. The word is used of erring through ignorance (Lev. v. 18). This was in his time of prosperity, when, though he might not, like Jeshurun, wax fat and kick, and forsake and lightly esteem the Rock of his salvation; or fall into temptations and hurtful lusts, and err from the faith, and be pierced with many sorrows; yet he might become inattentive to the duties of religion, and be negligent of them, which is a common case.—*John Gill.*

Verse 67.—"*Before I was afflicted.*" The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, "Before I was humbled." The Hebrew word has the general sense of being afflicted, and may refer to any kind of trial.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 67.—"*Before I was afflicted.*" Prosperity is a more refined and severe test of character than adversity, as one hour of summer sunshine produces geater corruption than the longest winter day.—*Eliza Cook.*

Verse 67.—"*I was afflicted.*" God in wisdom deals with us as some great person would do with a disobedient son, that forsakes his house, and riots among his tenants. His father gives orders that they should treat him ill, affront, and chase him from them, and all, that he might bring him back. The same doth God: man is his wild and debauched son; he flies from the commands of his father, and cannot endure to live under his strict and severe government. He resorts to the pleasures of the world, and revels and riots among the creatures. But God resolves to recover him, and therefore commands every creature to handle him roughly. "Burn him, fire; toss him, tempests, and shipwreck his estate; forsake him, friends; designs, fail him; children, be rebellious to him, as he is to me; let his supports and dependencies sink under him, his riches melt away, leave him poor, and despised, and destitute." These are all God's servants, and must obey his will. And to what end is all this, but that, seeing himself forsaken of all, he may at length, like the beggared prodigal, return to his father?—*Ezekiel Hopkins*, 1633—1690.

Verse 67.—"*I was afflicted.*" As men clip the feathers of fowls, when they begin to fly too high or too far; even so doth God diminish our riches, etc., that we should not pass our bounds, and glory too much of such gifts.—*Otho Wermullerus.*

Verse 67.—"*But now have I kept thy word.*"

Affliction brings Man Home.

"Man like a silly sheep doth often stray,
Not knowing of his way,
Blind deserts and the wilderness of sin
He daily travels in;
There's nothing will reduce him sooner than
Afflictions to his pen.
He wanders in the sunshine, but in rain
And stormy weather hastens home again.

"Thou, the great Shepherd of my soul, O keep
Me, thy unworthy sheep
From gadding: or if fair means will not do it,
Let foul, then, bring me to it.
Rather then I should perish in my error,
Lord bring me back with terror;
Better I be chastizèd with thy rod
And Shepherd's staff, than stray from thee, my God.

"Though for the present stripes do grieve me sore,
At last they profit more,
And make me to observe thy word, which I
Neglected formerly;
Let me come home rather by weeping cross
Then still be at a loss.
For health I'd rather take a bitter pill,
Then eating sweet-meats to be always ill."

Thomas Washbourne, 1606—1687.

Verse 67.—From the countless throng before the throne of God and the Lamb, we may yet hear the words of the Psalmist, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word.*" There is many an one who will say, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth" (Job v. 17). One would tell you that his worldly undoing was the making of his heavenly prospects; and another that the loss of all things was the gain of All in All. There are multitudes whom God has afflicted with natural blindness that they might gain spiritual sight; and those who under bodily infirmities and diseases of divers sorts have pined and wasted away this earthly life, gladly laying hold on glory, honour, and immortality instead.—*William Garrett Lewis, in "Westbourne Grove Sermons,"* 1872.

Verse 67.—By affliction God separates the sin which he hates from the soul which he loves.—*John Mason.*

Verse 68.—"*Thou art good, and doest good.*" There is a good God set before us, that we may not take up with any low pattern of goodness. He is represented to us as all goodness. He is good in his nature; and his work is agreeable to his

nature; nothing is wanting to it, or defective in it. Nothing can be added to it to make it better. Philo saith, "Ὁ ὄντως ὢν το πρῶτον αγαθόν": the first being must needs be the first good. As soon as we conceive that there is a God, we presently conceive that he is good, He is good of himself, good in himself, goodness itself, and both the fountain and the pattern of all the good that is in the creatures.

1. As to his NATURE, he is originally *"good,"* good in himself, and good to others; as the sun hath light in himself, and giveth light to all other things. Essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself. Goodness in us is an accessory quality or superadded gift; but in God it is not a quality, but his essence. In a vessel that is gilded with gold the gilding or lustre is a superadded quality; but in a vessel all of gold, the lustre and the substance is the same. God is infinitely good; the creatures' good is limited, but there is nothing to limit the perfection of God, or give it any measure. He is an ocean of goodness without banks or bottom. Alas! what is our drop to this ocean! God is immutably good; his goodness can never be more or less than it is; as there can be no addition to it, so no subtraction from it. Man in his innocency was *peccabilis*, or liable to sin, afterwards *peccator*, or an actual sinner; but God ever was and is good. Now this is the pattern propounded to us, but his nature is a great deep. Therefore—

2. As to his WORK, *"he doeth good."* What hath God been acting upon the great theatre of the world but goodness for these six thousand years? Acts xiv. 17, "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." He left not himself without a witness, ἀγαθοποιῶν, not by taking vengeance of their idolatries, but by distributing benefits. This is propounded to our imitation, that our whole life may be nothing else but doing good: Matt. v. 48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Well, therefore, doth the Psalmist say, *"Teach me thy statutes."—Thomas Manton.*

Verse 68.—*"Thou art good, and doest good."* We should bless the Lord at all times, and keep up good thoughts of God on every occasion, especially in the time of affliction. Hence we are commanded to glorify God in the fires (Isai. xxiv. 15); and this the three children did in the hottest furnace. . . . . I grant, indeed, we cannot give thanks for affliction as affliction, but either as it is the means of some good to us, or as the gracious hand of God is some way remarkable therein toward us. In this respect there is no condition on this side of hell but we have reason to praise God in it, though it be the greatest of calamities. Hence it was that David, when he speaks of his affliction, adds presently, *"Thou art good, and doest good";* and he declares (ver. 65), *"Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word."* Hence Paul and Silas praised God when they were scourged and imprisoned. *—John Willison*, 1680—1750.

Verse 68.—*"Thou art good."* The blessed effects of chastisement, as a special instance of the Lord's goodness, might naturally lead to an acknowledgment of his general goodness, in his own character, and in his unwearied dispensations of love. Judging in unbelieving haste of his providential and gracious dealings, feeble sense imagines a frown, when the eye of faith discerns a smile upon his face; and therefore in proportion as faith is exercised in the review of the past, and the experience of the present, we shall be prepared with the ascription of praise—*"Thou art good."—Charles Bridges.*

Verse 69.—*"The proud have forged a lie against me."* If in the present day the enemies of the truth in their lying writings rail against the orthodox teachers in the Church, that is a very old artifice of the Devil, since David complains that in his day it happened unto him.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 69.—*"The proud have forged a lie."* They trim up lies with shadows of truth and neat language; they have mints to frame their lies curiously in, and presses to print their lies withal.—*William Greenhill*, 1591—1677.

Verse 69.—*"The proud."* Faith humbleth, and infidelity maketh proud. Faith humbleth, because it letteth us see our sins, and the punishments thereof, and that we have no dealing with God but through the mediation of Christ; and that we can do no good, nor avoid evil, but by grace. But when men know not this, then they think much of themselves, and therefore are proud. Therefore all ignorant men, all heretics, and worldlings are proud. They that are humbled under God's hands, are humble to men; but they that despise God do also persecute his servants. *—Richard Greenham.*

Verse 69.—"*Forged a lie.*" Vatablus translates it, *concinnarunt mendacia.* So Tremellius: *they have trimmed up lies.* As Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, so he can trim up his lies under coverings of truth, to make them the more plausible unto men. And indeed this is no small temptation, when lies made against the godly are trimmed up with the shadows of truth, and wicked men cover their unrighteous dealings with appearances of righteousness. Thus, not only are the godly unjustly persecuted, but simple ones are made to believe that they have most justly deserved it. In this case the godly are to sustain themselves by the testimony of a good conscience.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 69.—"*Forged*" expresses the essential meaning of the Hebrew word, but not its figurative form, which seems to be that of sewing, analogous to that of weaving, as applied to the same thing, both in Hebrew and in other languages. We may also compare our figurative phrase, *to patch up*, which, however, is not so much suggestive of artifice or skill as of the want of it. The connection of the clauses is, that all the craft and malice of his enemies should only lead him to obey God with a more undivided heart than ever.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 69.—"*Forged.*" The metaphor may be like the Greek (ῥάπτειν δόλους), from sewing or patching up: or, from *smearing*, or *daubing* (Delitzsch, Moll, etc.), a wall, so as to hide the real substance. The Psalmist remains true to God despite the faslehoods with which the proud smear and hide his true fidelity.—*The Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 69.—"*A lie.*"—Satan's two arms by which he wrestles against the godly are violence and lies: where he cannot or dare not, use violence, there be sure he will not fail to fight with lies. And herein doth the Lord greatly show his careful providence, in fencing his children against Satan's malice and the proud brags of his instruments, in such sort, that their proudest hearts are forced to forge lies; their malice being so great that they must do evil; and yet their power so bridled that they cannot do what they would.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 69.—"*I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.*" Let the word of the Lord come, let it come; and if we had six hundred necks, we would submit them all to its dictates.—*Augustine.*

Verse 70.—"*Their heart is as fat as grease.*" The word טָפַשׁ occurs nowhere else in Scripture, but with the Chaldees טפש signifies *to fatten, to make fat;* also *to make stupid and doltish*, because such the fat ofttimes are . . . . For this reason the proud, who are mentioned in the preceding verse, are described by their fixed resolve in evil, because they are almost insensible; as is to be seen in pigs, who pricked through the skin with a bodkin, and that slowly, as long as the bodkin only touches the fat, do not feel the prick until it reaches to the flesh. Thus the proud, whose great prosperity is elsewhere likened to fatness, have a heart totally insusceptible, which is insensible to the severe reproofs of the Divine word, and also to its holy delights and pleasures, by reason of the affluence of carnal things; aye, more, is altogether unfitted for good impulses; just as elsewhere is to be seen with fat animals, how slow they are and unfit for work, when, on the contrary, those are agile and quick which are not hindered by this same fatness.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 70.—"*Their heart is as fat as grease.*" This makes them—1. *Senseless* and secure; they are past feeling: thus the phrase is used (Isa. vi. 10): "Make the heart of the people fat." They are not sensible of the teaching of the word of God, or his rod. 2. *Sensual* and voluptuous: "Their eyes stand out with fatness" (Psa. lxxiii. 7): they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them: I would not change conditions with them; "*I delight in thy law.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 70.—"*Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law;*" as if he should say, My heart is a lean heart, a hungry heart, my soul loveth and rejoiceth in thy word. I have nothing else to fill it but thy word, and the comforts I have from it; but their hearts are fat hearts; fat with the world, fat with lust; they hate the word. As a full stomach loatheth meat and cannot digest it; so wicked men hate the word, it will not go down with them, it will not gratify their lusts.—*William Fenner.*

Being anxious to know the medical significance of fatty heart, I applied to an eminent gentleman who is well known as having been President of the College

of Physicians. His reply shows that the language is rather figurative than literal. He kindly replied to me as follows :—

There are two forms of so-called " fatty heart." In the one there is an excessive amount of fatty tissue covering the exterior of the organ, especially about the base. This may be observed in all cases where the body of the animal is throughout over fat, as in animals fattened for slaughter. It does not necessarily interfere with the action of the heart, and may not be of much importance in a medical point of view. The second form is, however, a much more serious condition. In this, the muscular structure of the heart, on which its all-important function, as the central propelling power, depends, undergoes a degenerative change, by which the contractile fibres of the muscles are converted into a structure having none of the properties of the natural fibres, and in which are found a number of fatty, oily globules, which can be readily seen by means of the microscope. This condition, if at all extensive, renders the action of the heart feeble and irregular, and is very perilous, not infrequently causing sudden death. It is found in connection with a general unhealthy condition of system, and is evidence of general mal-nutrition. It is brought about by an indolent, luxurious mode of living, or, at all events, by neglect of bodily exercise and those hygienic rules which are essential for healthy nutrition. It cannot, however, be said to be incompatible with mental vigour, and certainly is not necessarily associated with stupidity. But the heart, in this form of disease, is literally " greasy," and may be truly described as " fat as grease." So much for physiology and pathology. May I venture on the sacred territory of biblical exegesis without risking the charge of fatuousness ? Is not the Psalmist contrasting those who lead an animal, self-indulgent, vicious life, by which body and mind are incapacitated for their proper uses, and those who can *run* in the way of God's commandments, *delight* to do his will, and *meditate* on his precepts ? Sloth, fatness, and stupidity, *versus* activity, firm muscles, and mental vigour. Body *versus* mind. Man become as a beast *versus* man retaining the image of God.—*Sir James Risdon Bennett,* 1881.

Verse 71.—"*It is good for me,*" etc. I am mended by my sickness, enriched by my poverty, and strengthened by my weakness, and with S. Bernard desire, *Irascaris mihi Domine,* O Lord, be angry with me. For if thou chidest me not, thou considerest me not ; if I taste no bitterness, I have no physic ; if thou correct me not, I am not thy son. Thus was it with the great-grandchild of David, Manasseh, when he was in affliction, " He besought the Lord his God " : even that king's iron was more precious to him than his gold, his jail a more happy lodging than his palace, Babylon a better school than Jerusalem. What fools are we, then, to frown upon our afflictions ! These, how crabbed soever, are our best friends. They are not indeed for our pleasure, they are for our profit ; their issue makes them worthy of a welcome. What do we care how bitter that potion be that brings health.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 71.—"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" Saints are great gainers by affliction, because " godliness," which is " great gain," which is " profitable for all things," is more powerful than before. The rod of correction, by a miracle of grace, like that of Aaron's, buds and blossoms, and brings forth the fruits of righteousness, which are most excellent. A rare sight it is indeed to see a man coming out of a bed of languishing, or any other furnace of affliction, more like to angels in purity, more like to Christ who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners ; more like unto God himself, being more exactly righteous in all his ways, and more exemplarily holy in all manner of conversation.—*Nathanael Vincent,*—1697.

Verse 71.—"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" If I have no cross to bear to-day, I shall not advance heavenwards. A cross (that is anything that disturbs our peace), is the spur which stimulates, and without which we should most likely remain stationary, blinded with empty vanities, and sinking deeper into sin. A cross helps us onwards, in spite of our apathy and resistance. To lie quietly on a bed of down, may seem a very sweet existence ; but pleasant ease and rest are not the lot of a Christian : if he would mount higher and higher, it must be by a rough road. Alas ! for those who have no daily cross ! Alas ! for those who repine and fret against it !—*From "Gold Dust,"* 1880.

Verse 71.—"*It is good for me,*" etc. There are some things good but not pleasant, as *sorrow* and *affliction.* Sin is pleasant, but unprofitable ; and sorrow is profitable, but unpleasant. As waters are purest when they are in motion, so saints are generally

holiest when in affliction. Some Christians resemble those children who will learn their books no longer than while the rod is on their backs. It is well known that by the greatest affliction the Lord has sealed the sweetest instruction. Many are not bettered by the judgments they see, when they are by the judgments they have felt. The purest gold is the most pliable. That is the best blade which bends well without retaining its crooked figure.—*William Secker*, 1660.

Verse 71.—"*It is good for me*," etc. Piety hath a wondrous virtue to change all things into matter of consolation and joy. No condition in effect can be evil or sad to a pious man: his very sorrows are pleasant, his infirmities are wholesome, his wants enrich him, his disgraces adorn him, his burdens ease him; his duties are privileges, his falls are the grounds of advancement, his very sins (as breeding contrition, humility, circumspection, and vigilance), do better and profit him: whereas impiety doth spoil every condition, doth corrupt and embase all good things, doth embitter all the conveniences and comforts of life.—*Isaac Barrow*, 1630—1677.

Verse 71.—"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" In Miss E. J. Whately's very interesting Life of her Father, the celebrated Archbishop of Dublin, a fact is recorded, as told by Dr. Whately, with reference to the introduction of the larch-tree into England. When the plants were first brought, the gardener, hearing that they came from the south of Europe, and taking it for granted that they would require warmth,—forgetting that they might grow near the snow-line,—put them into a hot-house. Day by day they withered, until the gardener in disgust threw them on a dung-heap outside; there they began to revive and bud, and at last grew into trees. They needed the cold.

The great Husbandman often saves his plants by throwing them out into the cold. The nipping frosts of trial and affliction are ofttimes needed, if God's larches are to grow. It is under such discipline that new thoughts and feelings appear. The heart becomes more dead to the world and self. From the night of sorrow rises the morning of joy. Winter is the harbinger of spring. From the crucifixion of the old man comes the resurrection of the new, as in nature life is the child of death

> "The night is the mother of the day,
> And winter of the spring;
> And ever upon old decay,
> The greenest mosses spring."
>
> *James Wareing Bardsley in "Illustrated Texts and Texts Illustrated,"* 1876.

Verse 71.—"*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" It is a remarkable circumstance that the most brilliant colours of plants are to be seen on the highest mountains, in spots that are most exposed to the wildest weather. The brightest lichens and mosses, the loveliest gems of wild flowers, abound far up on the bleak, storm-scalped peak. One of the richest displays of organic colouring I ever beheld was near the summit of Mount Chenebettaz, a hill about 10,000 feet high, immediately above the great St. Bernard Hospice. The whole face of an extensive rock was covered with a most vivid yellow lichen, which shone in the sunshine like the golden battlement of an enchanted castle. There, in that lofty region, amid the most frowning desolation, exposed to the fiercest tempest of the sky, this lichen exhibited a glory of colour such as it never showed in the sheltered valley. I have two specimens of the same lichen before me while I write these lines, one from the great St. Bernard, and the other from the wall of a Scottish castle, deeply embosomed among sycamore trees; and the difference in point of form and colouring between them is most striking. The specimen nurtured amid the wild storms of the mountain peak is a lovely primrose hue, and is smooth in texture and complete in outline; while the specimen nurtured amid the soft airs and the delicate showers of the lowland valley is of a dim rusty hue, and is scurfy in texture, and broken in outline. And is it not so with the Christian who is afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted? Till the storms and vicissitudes of God's providence beat upon him again and again, his character appears marred and clouded by selfish and worldly influences. But trials clear away the obscurity, perfect the outlines of his disposition, and give brightness and blessings to his piety.

> "Amidst my list of blessings infinite
> Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled;
> For *all* I bless thee, *most* for the *severe*."
>
> —*Hugh Macmillan.*

Verse 71.—"*That I might learn thy statutes.*" He speaks not of that learning which is gotten by hearing or reading of God's word; but of the learning which he had gotten by experience; that he had felt the truth and comfort of God's word more effectual and lively in trouble than he could do without trouble; which also made him more godly, wise, and religious when the trouble was gone.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 71.—"*That I might learn.*" "I had never known," said Martin Luther's wife, "what such and such things meant, in such and such Psalms, such complaints and workings of spirit; I had never understood the practice of Christian duties, had not God brought me under some affliction." It is very true that God's rod is as the schoolmaster's pointer to the child, pointing out the letter, that he may the better take notice of it; thus he pointeth out to us many good lessons which we should never otherwise have learned.—*From John Spencer's "Things New and Old,"* 1658.

Verse 71.—"*That I might learn.*" As prosperity blindeth the eyes of men, even so doth adversity open them. Like as the salve that remedieth the disease of the eyes doth first bite and grieve the eyes, and maketh them to water, but yet afterward the eyesight is clearer than it was; even so trouble doth vex men wonderfully at the first, but afterwards it lighteneth the eyes of the mind, that it is afterward more reasonable, wise and circumspect. For trouble bringeth experience, and experience bringeth wisdom.—*Otho Wermullerus,* 1551.

Verse 71.—"*Learn thy statutes.*" The Christian has reason to thank God that things have not been accommodated to his wishes. When the mist of tears was in his eyes, he looked into the word of God and saw magnificent things. When Jonah came up from the depths of ocean, he showed that he had learned the statutes of God. One could not go too deep to get such knowledge as he obtained. Nothing now could hinder him from going to Nineveh. It is just the same as though he had brought up from the deep an army of twelve legions of the most formidable troops. The word of God, grasped by faith, was all this to him, and more. He still, however, needed further affliction; for there were some statutes not yet learned. Some gourds were to wither. He was to descend into a further vale of humiliation. Even the profoundest affliction does not, perhaps, teach us everything; a mistake we sometimes make. But why should we compel God to use harsh measures with us? Why not sit at the feet of Jesus and learn quietly what we need to learn?—*George Bowen, in "Daily Meditations,"* 1873.

Verse 71.—"*Statutes.*" The verb from which this word is formed means to engrave or inscribe. The word means a definite, prescribed, written law. The term is applied to Joseph's law about the portion of the priests in Egypt, to the law about the passover, etc. But in this Psalm it has a more internal meaning; that moral law of God which is engraven on the fleshy tables of the heart; the inmost and spiritual apprehension of his will; not so obvious as the law and the testimonies, and a matter of more direct spiritual communication than his precepts; the latter being more elaborated by the efforts of the mind itself, divinely guided indeed, but perhaps more instrumentally, and less passively, employed. They are continually spoken of as things yet to be learned, either wholly or in part, not objectively apprehended already, like God's law . . . . They are learned, not suddenly, but by experience, and through the means of trials mercifully ordained by God; lessons therefore which are deeply engraven on the heart. "Good is it for me that I have been in trouble, that I might learn thy statutes." "I have more understanding than my teachers, because thy statutes I have observed."—*John Jebb.*

Verse 72.—"*The law of thy mouth is better unto me,*" etc. Highly prize the Scriptures. Can he make a proficiency in any art, who doth slight and deprecate it? Prize this book above all other books. St. Gregory calls the Bible "the heart and soul of God." The rabbins say, that a mountain of sense hangs upon every apex and tittle of Scripture. "The law of the Lord is perfect": Ps. xix. 7. The Scripture is the library of the Holy Ghost; it is a pandect of divine knowledge, an exact model and platform of religion. The Scripture contains in it the *credenda*, "the things which we are to believe," and the *agenda*, "the things which we are to practise." It is "able to make us wise unto salvation": 2 Tim. iii. 15. The Scripture is the standard of truth, the judge of controversies; it is the pole-star to direct us to heaven: Isai. viii. 20. "The commandment is

a lamp" : Prov. vi. 23. The Scripture is the compass by which the rudder of our will is to be steered ; it is the field in which Christ, the Pearl of price, is hid ; it is a rock of diamonds ; it is a sacred collyrium, or eye-salve ; it mends their eyes that look upon it ; it is a spiritual optic-glass in which the glory of God is resplendent ; it is the panacy, or universal medicine for the soul. The leaves of Scripture are like the "leaves of the tree of life, for the healing of the nations" : Rev. xxii. 2. The Scripture is both the breeder and feeder of grace. How is the convert born, but by "the word of truth"? James i. 18. How doth he grow, but by "the sincere milk of the word"? 1 Pet. ii. 2. The word written is the book out of which our evidences for heaven are fetched ; it is the sea-mark which shows us the rocks of sin to avoid ; it is the antidote against error and apostasy, the two-edged sword which wounds the old serpent. It is our bulwark to withstand the force of lust ; like the Capitol of Rome, which was a place of strength and ammunition. The Scripture is the "tower of David," wherein the shields of our faith hang : Cant. iv. 4. "Take away the word and you deprive us of the sun," said Luther. The word written is above an angelic embassy, or voice from heaven. "This voice which came from heaven we heard. . . . We have also a more sure word" : 2 Pet. i. 18, 19. O, prize the word written ; prizing is the way to profiting. If Cæsar so valued his commentaries, that for preserving them he lost his purple robe, how should we estimate the sacred oracles of God? "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."—*Thomas Watson, in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 72.—*"The law of thy mouth is better unto me."* The sacred Scriptures are the treasures and pleasures of a gracious soul : to David they were better than thousands of gold and silver. A mountain of transparent pearls, heaped as high as heaven, is not so rich in treasure as these ; hence that good man chose these as his heritage for ever, and rejoiced in them as in all riches. A covetous miser could not take such delight in his bags, nor a young heir in a large inheritance, as holy David did in God's word.

The word *law* comes from a root that signifies to try as merchants that search and prove the wares that they buy and lay up ; hence also comes the word for gems and jewels that are tried, and found right. The sound Christian is the wise merchant, seeking goodly pearls ; he tries what he reads or hears by the standard or touchstone of Scripture, and having found genuine truths he lays them up to the great enriching of this supreme and sovereign faculty of the understanding.—*Oliver Heywood.*

Verse 72.—The word of God must be nearer to us than our friends, dearer to us than our lives, sweeter to us than our liberty, and pleasanter to us than all earthly comforts.—*John Mason.*

Verse 72.—One lesson, taught by sanctified affliction, is, the love of *God's word.* "This is my *comfort*, in my affliction : thy word hath quickened me." In reading a part of the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm to Miss Westbrook, who died, she said, "Stop, sir, I never said so much to you before—I never could ; but now I *can* say, 'The word of thy mouth is dearer to me, than *thousands* of gold and silver.' What can gold and silver do for me *now?*"—*George Redford, in "Memoirs of the late Rev. John Cooke, 1828."*

Verse 72.—*"Thousands of gold and silver."* Worldly riches are gotten with labour, kept with care, lost with grief. They are false friends, farthest from us when we have most need of comfort ; as all worldlings shall find to be true in the hour of death. For then, as Jonah's gourd was taken from him in a morning, when he had most need of it against the sun ; so is it with the comfort of worldlings. It is far otherwise with the word of God ; for if we will lay it up in our hearts, as Mary did, the comfort thereof shall sustain us, when all other comfort shall fail us.

This it is that makes us rich unto God, when our souls are storehouses, filled with the treasures of his word. Shall we think it poverty to be scant of gold and silver? *An ideo angelus pauper est, quia non habet jumenta,* etc.* Shall we esteem the angels poor, because they have not flocks of cattle? or that S. Peter was poor, because he had not gold nor silver to give unto the cripple? No, he had store of grace, by infinite degrees more excellent than it.

Let the riches of gold be left unto worldlings : these are not current in Canaan, not accounted of in our heavenly country. If we would be in any estimation

*Chrysostom.

there, let us enrich our souls with spiritual graces, which we have in abundance in the mines and treasures of the word of God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 72.—The Scripture is an ever-overflowing fountain that cannot be drawn dry, and an inexhausted treasure that cannot be emptied. To this purpose tend those resemblances of the law made use of by David in this Psalm, and no less justly applicable to the gospel; it is not only better than *"gold and silver,"* which are things of value, but *"thousands,"* which implieth abundance. In another verse he compares it to all riches and great spoil, both which contain in them *multiplex genus*, all sorts of valuable commodities, sheep, oxen, lands, houses, garments, goods, moneys, and the like: thus are all sorts of spiritual riches, yea, abundance of each sort, to be had in the gospel. And therefore the Greek fathers compare Scripture verities to precious stones, and our Saviour to a pearl of great price. A minister, in this respect, is called a merchant of invaluable jewels; for, indeed, gospel truths are choice and excellent, as much worth as our souls, as heaven, as salvation is. Nay, should I go higher, look what worth there is in the riches of God's grace, the precious blood of Christ, that may secondarily be applied to the gospel, which discovereth and offereth both to us.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verses 72, 127.—When David saw how some make void the law of God, he saith, *"Therefore I love thy commandments above gold: yea, above fine gold."* As if he had said, I love thy law all the more because I see some men esteem and reckon it as if it were dross, and throw it up as void and antiquated, or taking the boldness, as it were, to repeal and make it void, that they may set up their own lusts and vain imaginations. Because I see both profane and superstitious men thus out of love with thy law, therefore my love is more enflamed to it, *"I love it above gold,"* which leads the most of men away captives in the love of it; and I esteem it more than that which is most esteemed by men, and gains men most esteem in this world, *"fine gold"*; yea, as he said (Ps. xix. 10) *"more than much fine gold."—Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 72.—You that are gentlemen, remember what Hierom reports of Nepotianus, a young gentleman of Rome, *qui longa et assidua meditatione Scripturarum pectus suum fecerat bibliothecam Christi*, who by long and assiduous meditation of the Scriptures, made his breast the library of Christ. Remember what is said of King Alfonsus, that he read over the Bible fourteen times, together with such commentaries as those times afforded.

You that are scholars, remember Cranmer and Ridley; the former learned the New Testament by heart in his journey to Rome, the latter in Pembroke-hall walks in Cambridge. Remember what is said of Thomas-à-Kempis,—that he found rest nowhere *nisi in angulo, cum libello*, but in a corner with this Book in his hand. And what is said of Beza,—that when he was above fourscore years old he could say perfectly by heart any Greek chapter in Paul's Epistles.

You that are women, consider what Hierom saith of Paula, Eustochiam, and other ladies, who were singularly versed in the Holy Scriptures.

Let all men consider that hyperbolical speech of Luther, that he would not live in Paradise without the Word; and with it he could live well enough in hell. This speech of Luther must be understood *cum grano salis.—Edmund Calamy.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 73 TO 80.

THY hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right, and *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law *is* my delight.

78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: *but* I will meditate in thy precepts.

79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

We have now come to the tenth portion, which in each stanza begins with Jod, but it certainly does not treat of jots and titles and other trifles. Its subject would seem to be personal experience and its attractive influence upon others. The prophet is in deep sorrow, but looks to be delivered and made a blessing. Endeavouring to teach, the Psalmist first seeks to be taught (verse 73), persuades himself that he will be well received (74), and rehearses the testimony which he intends to bear (75). He prays for more experience (76, 77), for the baffling of the proud (78), for the gathering together of the godly to him (79), and for himself again that he may be fully equipped for his witness-bearing and may be sustained in it (80). This is the anxious yet hopeful cry of one who is heavily afflicted by cruel adversaries, and therefore makes his appeal to God as his only friend.

73. *"Thy hands have made me and fashioned me."* It is profitable to remember our creation, it is pleasant to see that the divine hand has had much to do with us, for it never moves apart from the divine thought. It excites reverence, gratitude, and affection towards God when we view him as our Maker, putting forth the careful skill and power of his hands in our forming and fashioning. He took a personal interest in us, making us with his own hands; he was doubly thoughtful, for he is represented both as making and moulding us. In both giving existence and arranging existence he manifested love and wisdom; and therefore we find reasons for praise, confidence, and expectation in our being and well-being. *"Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments."* As thou hast made me, teach me. Here is the vessel which thou hast fashioned; Lord, fill it. Thou hast given me both soul and body; grant me now thy grace that my soul may know thy will, and my body may join in the performance of it. The plea is very forcible; it is an enlargement of the cry, "Forsake not the work of thine own hands." Without understanding the divine law and rendering obedience to it we are imperfect and useless; but we may reasonably hope that the great Potter will complete his work and give the finishing touch to it by imparting to it sacred knowledge and holy practice. If God had roughly made us, and had not also elaborately fashioned us, this argument would lose much of its force; but surely from the delicate art and marvellous skill which the Lord has shown in the formation of the human body, we may infer that he is prepared to take equal pains with the soul till it shall perfectly bear his image.

A man without a mind is an idiot, the mere mockery of a man; and a mind without grace is wicked, the sad perversion of a mind. We pray that we may not be left without a spiritual judgment: for this the Psalmist prayed in verse 66, and he here pleads for it again; there is no true knowing and keeping of the commandments without it. Fools can sin; but only those who are taught of God can be holy. We often speak of gifted men; but he has the best gifts to whom God has given a sanctified understanding wherewith to know and prize the ways of the Lord. Note well that David's prayer for understanding is not for the sake

of speculative knowledge, and the gratification of his curiosity: he desires an enlightened judgment that he may learn God's commandments, and so become obedient and holy. This is the best of learning. A man may abide in the College where this science is taught all his days, and yet cry out for ability to learn more. The commandment of God is exceeding broad, and so it affords scope for the most vigorous and instructed mind: in fact, no man has by nature an understanding capable of compassing so wide a field, and hence the prayer, "give me understanding";—as much as to say—I can learn other things with the mind I have, but thy law is so pure, so perfect, spiritual and sublime, that I need to have my mind enlarged before I can become proficient in it. He appeals to his maker to do this, as if he felt that no power short of that which made him could make him wise unto holiness. We need a new creation, and who can grant us that but the Creator himself? He who made us to live must make us to learn; he who gave us power to stand must give us grace to understand. Let us each one breathe to heaven the prayer of this verse ere we advance a step further, for we shall be lost even in these petitions unless we pray our way through them, and cry to God for understanding.

74. "*They that fear thee will be glad when they see me: because I have hoped in thy word.*" When a man of God obtains grace for himself he becomes a blessing to others, especially if that grace has made him a man of sound understanding and holy knowledge. God-fearing men are encouraged when they meet with experienced believers. A hopeful man is a God-send when things are declining or in danger. When the hopes of one believer are fulfilled his companions are cheered and established, and led to hope also. It is good for the eyes to see a man whose witness is that the Lord is true; it is one of the joys of saints to hold converse with their more advanced brethren. The fear of God is not a left-handed grace, as some have called it; it is quite consistent with gladness; for if even the sight of a comrade gladdens the God-fearing, how glad must they be in the presence of the Lord himself! We do not only meet to share each others' burdens, but to partake in each others' joys, and some men contribute largely to the stock of mutual gladness. Hopeful men bring gladness with them. Despondent spirits spread the infection of depression, and hence few are glad to see them, while those whose hopes are grounded upon God's word carry sunshine in their faces, and are welcomed by their fellows. There are professors whose presence scatters sadness, and the godly quietly steal out of their company: may this never be the case with us.

75. "*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right.*" He who would learn most must be thankful for what he already knows, and be willing to confess it to the glory of God. The Psalmist had been sorely tried, but he had continued to hope in God under his trial, and now he avows his conviction that he had been justly and wisely chastened. This he not only thought but knew, so that he was positive about it, and spoke without a moment's hesitation. Saints are sure about the rightness of their troubles, even when they cannot see the intent of them. It made the godly glad to hear David say this, "*And that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" Because love required severity, therefore the Lord exercised it. It was not because God was unfaithful that the believer found himself in a sore strait, but for just the opposite reason: it was the faithfulness of God to his covenant which brought the chosen one under the rod. It might not be needful that others should be tried just then; but it was necessary to the Psalmist, and therefore the Lord did not withhold the blessing. Our heavenly Father is no Eli: he will not suffer his children to sin without rebuke, his love is too intense for that. The man who makes the confession of this verse is already progressing in the school of grace, and is learning the commandments. This third verse of the section corresponds to the third of Teth (67), and in a degree to several other verses which make the thirds in their octaves.

76. "*Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.*" Having confessed the righteousness of the Lord, he now appeals to his mercy, and while he does not ask that the rod may be removed, he earnestly begs for comfort under it. Righteousness and faithfulness afford us no consolation if we cannot also taste of mercy, and, blessed be God, this is promised us in the word, and therefore we may expect it. The words "merciful kindness," are a happy combination, and express exactly what we need in affliction: mercy to forgive the sin, and kindness to sustain under the sorrow. With these we can

be comfortable in the cloudy and dark day, and without them we are wretched indeed; for these, therefore, let us pray unto the Lord, whom we have grieved by our sin, and let us plead the word of his grace as our sole reason for expecting his favour. Blessed be his name, notwithstanding our faults we are still his servants, and we serve a compassionate Master. Some read the last clause, "according to thy saying unto thy servant"; some special saying of the Lord was remembered and pleaded: can we not remember some such "faithful saying," and make it the groundwork of our petitioning? That phrase, "according to thy word," is a very favourite one; it shows the motive for mercy and the manner of mercy. Our prayers are according to the mind of God when they are according to the word of God.

77. *"Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live."* He was so hard pressed that he was at death's door if God did not succour him. He needed not only mercy, but "mercies," and these must be of a very gracious and considerate kind, even "tender mercies," for he was sore with his wounds. These gentle favours must be of the Lord's giving, for nothing less would suffice; and they must "come" all the way to the sufferer's heart, for he was not able to journey after them; all he could do was to sigh out, "Oh that they would come." If deliverance did not soon come, he felt ready to expire, and yet he told us but a verse or so ago that he hoped in God's word: how true it is that hope lives on when death seems written on all besides. A heathen said, "dum spiro spero," while I breathe I hope; but the Christian can say, "dum expiro spero," even when I expire I still expect the blessing. Yet no true child of God can live without the tender mercy of the Lord; it is death to him to be under God's displeasure. Notice, again, the happy combination of the words of our English version. Was there ever a sweeter sound than this—"tender mercies"? He who has been grievously afflicted, and yet tenderly succoured is the only man who knows the meaning of such choice language.

How truly we live when tender mercy comes to us. Then we do not merely exist, but live; we are lively, full of life, vivacious, and vigorous. We know not what life is till we know God. Some are said to die by the visitation of God, but we live by it.

"For thy law is my delight." O blessed faith! He is no mean believer who rejoices in the law even when its broken precepts cause him to suffer. To delight in the word when it rebukes us, is proof that we are profiting under it. Surely this is a plea which will prevail with God, however bitter our griefs may be; if we still delight in the law of the Lord he cannot let us die, he must and will cast a tender look upon us and comfort our hearts.

78. *"Let the proud be ashamed."* He begged that the judgments of God might no longer fall upon himself, but upon his cruel adversaries. God will not suffer those who hope in his word to be put to shame, for he reserves that reward for haughty spirits: they shall yet be overtaken with confusion, and become the subjects of contempt, while God's afflicted ones shall again lift up their heads. Shame is for the proud, for it is a shameful thing to be proud. Shame is not for the holy, for there is nothing in holiness to be ashamed of.

"For they dealt perversely with me without a cause." Their malice was wanton, he had not provoked them. Falsehood was employed to forge an accusation against him; they had to bend his actions out of their true shape before they could assail his character. Evidently the Psalmist keenly felt the malice of his foes. His consciousness of innocence with regard to them created a burning sense of injustice, and he appealed to the righteous Lord to take his part and clothe his false accusers with shame. Probably he mentioned them as "the proud," because he knew that the Lord always takes vengeance on proud men, and vindicates the cause of those whom they oppress. Sometimes he mentions the proud, and sometimes the wicked, but he always means the same persons; the words are interchangeable: he who is proud is sure to be wicked, and proud persecutors are the worst of wicked men.

"But I will meditate in thy precepts." He would leave the proud in God's hands, and give himself up to holy studies and contemplations. To obey the divine precepts we have need to know them, and think much of them, hence this persecuted saint felt that meditation must be his chief employment. He would study the law of God and not the law of retaliation. The proud are not worth a thought. The worst injury they can do us is to take us away from our devotions; let us baffle them by keeping all the closer to our God when they are most malicious in their onslaughts.

In a similar position to this we have met with the proud in other octaves, and shall meet them yet again. They are evidently a great plague to the Psalmist but he rises above them.

79. *"Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies."* Perhaps the tongue of slander had alienated some of the godly, and probably the actual faults of David had grieved many more. He begs God to turn to him, and then to turn his people towards him. Those who are right with God are also anxious to be right with his children. David craved the love and sympathy of gracious men of all grades,—of those who were beginners in grace, and of those who were mature in piety—" those that fear thee," and " those that have known thy testimonies." We cannot afford to lose the love of the least of the saints, and if we have lost their esteem we may most properly pray to have it restored. David was the leader of the godly party in the nation, and it wounded him to the heart when he perceived that those who feared God were not as glad to see him as aforetime they had been. He did not bluster and say that if they could do without *him* he could very well do without *them;* but he so deeply felt the value of their sympathy, that he made it a matter of prayer that the Lord would turn their hearts to him again. Those who are dear to God, and are instructed in his word, should be very precious in our eyes, and we should do our utmost to be upon good terms with them.

David has two descriptions for the saints, they are God-fearing and God-knowing. They possess both devotion and instruction; they have both the spirit and the science of true religion. We know some believers who are gracious, but not intelligent; and, on the other hand, we also know certain professors who have all head and no heart: he is the man who combines devotion with intelligence. We neither care for devout dunces nor for intellectual icebergs. When fearing and knowing walk hand in hand they cause men to be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. If these are my choice companions I may hope that I am one of their order. Let such persons ever turn to me because they find in me congenial company.

80. *"Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed."* This is even more important than to be held in esteem by good men. This is the root of the matter. If the heart be sound in obedience to God, all is well, or will be well. If right at heart we are right in the main. If we be not sound before God, our name for piety is an empty sound. Mere profession will fail, and undeserved esteem will disappear like a bubble when it bursts; only sincerity and truth will endure in the evil day. He who is right at heart has no reason for shame, and he never shall have any; hypocrites ought to be ashamed now, and they shall one day be put to shame without end; their hearts are rotten, and their names shall rot. This eightieth verse is a variation of the prayer of the seventy-third verse; there he sought sound understanding, here he goes deeper, and begs for a sound heart. Those who have learned their own frailty by sad experience, are led to dive beneath the surface, and cry to the Lord for truth in the inward parts. In closing the consideration of these eight verses, let us join with the writer in the prayer, " Let my heart be sound in thy statutes."

NOTES ON VERSES 73 TO 80.

In this section each verse begins with the Hebrew letter *Jod*, or י, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, called in Matthew v. 18, *jot;* one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verses 73—80.—The usual account of this section, as given by the mediæval theologians, is that it is the prayer of man to be restored to his state of original innocence and wisdom by being conformed to the image of Christ. And this squares with the obvious meaning, which is partly a petition for divine grace and partly an assertion that the example of piety and resignation in trouble is attractive enough to draw men's hearts on towards God, a truth set forth at once by the Passion, and by the lives of all those saints who have tried to follow it.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 73.—"*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me,*" etc. This verse hath a petition for understanding and a reason with it: I am the workmanship of thine hands, therefore give me understanding. There is no man but favours the works of his hands. And shall not the Lord much more love his creatures, especially man, his most excellent creature? whom, if ye consider according to the fashion of his body, ye shall find nothing on earth more precious than he; but in that which is not seen, namely, his soul, he is much more beautiful. So you see, David's reasoning is very effectual; all one as if he should say as he doth elsewhere, "Forsake not, O Lord, the work of thine hands"; thou art my author and maker; thine help I seek, and the help of none other.

No man can rightly seek good things from God, if he consider not what good the Lord hath already done to him. But many are in this point so ignorant, that they know not how wonderfully God did make them; and therefore can neither bless him, nor seek from him, as from their Creator and Conserver. But this argument, drawn from our first creation, no man can rightly use, but he who is through grace partaker of the second creation; for all the privileges of our first creation we have lost by our fall. So that now by nature it is no comfort to us, nor matter of our hope, that God did make us; but rather matter of our fear and distrust, that we have mismade ourselves, have lost his image, and are not now like unto that which God created us in the beginning.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 73.—"*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me,*" etc. Mark here two things: first, that in making his prayer for holy understanding, he justly accuseth himself and all others of blindness, which proceeded not from the Creator, but from man corrupted. Secondly, that even from his creation he conceived hope that God would continue his work begun in him, because God leaveth not his work, and therefore he beggeth God to bestow new grace upon him, and to finish that which he had begun in him.—*Thomas Wilcocks,* 1586.

Verse 73.—Hugo ingeniously notices in the different verbs of this verse the particular vices to be shunned: ingratitude, when it is said, "*Thy hands have made me*"; pride, "*and fashioned me*"; confidence in his own judgment, "*give me understanding*"; prying inquisitiveness, "*that I may learn thy commandments.*"

Verse 73.—"*Thy hands.*" Hilary and Ambrose think that by the plural "*hands*" is intimated that there is a more exact and perfect workmanship in man, and as if it were with greater labour and skill he had been formed by God, because *after the image and likeness of God:* and that it is not written that any other thing but man was made by God with both hands, for he saith in Isaiah, "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth": Isa. xlviii. 13.*—*John Lorinus,* 1569—1634.

Verse 73.—"*Thy hands.*" Oh, look upon the *wounds* of thine hands, and forget not the *work* of thine hands: so Queen Elizabeth prayed.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 73.—Some refer the verb עשׂוּנִי, "*made,*" to the soul, יְצָרוּנִי, "*fashioned,*" to the body.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verse 73.—"*Made me and fashioned me: give me understanding.*" The greatness of God is no hindrance to his intercourse with us, for one special part of the divine greatness is to be able to condescend to the littleness of created beings, seeing that

* This, however, is an error, as Augustine notes; for it is written, "The heavens are the work of thine hands." Ps. cii. 25.—C. H. S.

creaturehood must, from its very nature, have this littleness; inasmuch as God must ever be God, and man must ever be man: the ocean must ever be the ocean, the drop must ever be the drop. The greatness of God compassing our littlenesses about, as the heavens the earth, and fitting into it on every side, as the air into all parts of the earth, is that which makes the intercourse so complete and blessed: "In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job xii. 10). Such is his nearness to, such is his intimacy with, the works of his hands.

It is nearness, not distance, that the name Creator implies; and the simple fact of his having *made* us is the assurance of his desire to bless us and to hold intercourse with us. Communication between the thing made and its maker is involved in the very idea of creation. *"Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments."* "Faithful Creator" is his name (1 Pet. iv. 19), and as such we appeal to him, "Forsake not the work of thine own hands" (Ps. cxxxviii. 8).—*Horatius Bonar, in "The Rent Veil,"* 1875.

Verse 73. — *"Give me understanding,"* etc. The book of God is like the apothecary's shop, there is no wound but therein is a remedy; but if a stranger come unto the apothecary's shop, though all these things be there, yet he cannot tell where they are, but the apothecary himself knoweth; so in the Scriptures, there are cures for any infirmities; there is comfort against any sorrows, and by conferring chapter with chapter, we shall understand them. The Scriptures are not wanting to us, but we to ourselves; let us be conversant in them, and we shall understand them, when great clerks who are negligent remain in darkness.—*Richard Stock.*

Verse 73.—*"Give me understanding."* Let us pray unto God that he would open our understandings; that as he hath given us consciences to guide us, so also he would give eyes to these guides that they may be able to direct us aright. The truth is, it is God only that can soundly enlighten our consciences; and therefore let us pray unto him to do it. All our studying, and hearing, and reading, and conferring will never be able to do it; it is only in the power of him who made us to do it. He who made our consciences, he only can give them this heavenly light of true knowledge and right understanding; and therefore let us seek earnestly to him for it.—*William Fenner,* 1600—1640.

Verse 73.—*"That I may learn thy commandments."* That he might *learn* them so as to know the sense and meaning of them, their purity and spirituality; and so as to do them from a principle of love, in faith, and to the glory of God: for it is not a bare learning of them by heart or committing them to memory, nor a mere theory of them, but the practice of them in faith and love, which is here meant.—*John Gill.*

Verses 73, 74.—From these verses, learn, 1. Albeit nothing can satisfy unbelief, yet true faith will make use of the most common benefit of creation to strengthen itself: *"Thine hands have made me and fashioned me."* 2. It is a good way of reasoning with God, to ask another gift, because we have received one; and because he hath given common benefits, to ask that he would give us also saving graces: *"Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments."* 3. Seeing that God is our Creator, and that the end of our creation is to serve God, we may confidently ask whatsoever grace may enable us to serve him, as the Psalmist's example doth teach us. . . . 4. It should be the joy of all believers to see one of their number sustained and borne up in his sufferings; for in the proof and example of one sufferer a pawn is given to all the rest, that God will help them in like case: *"They that fear thee will be glad when they see me."—David Dickson.*

Vese 74.—*"They that fear thee will be glad,"* etc. They who *"fear God"* are naturally *"glad when they see"* and converse with one like themselves; but more especially so, when it is one whose faith and patience have carried him through troubles, and rendered him victorious over temptations; one who hath *"hoped in God's word,"* and hath not been disappointed. Every such instance affordeth fresh encouragement to all those, who, in the course of their welfare, are to undergo like troubles, and to encounter like temptations. In all our trials let us, therefore, remember, that our brethren, as well as ourselves, are deeply interested in the event, which may either strengthen or weaken the hands of the multitudes.—*George Horne.*

Verse 74.—"*They that fear thee will be glad when they see me,*" etc. How comfortable it is for the heirs of promise to see one another, or meet together: *aspectus boni viri delectat*, the very look of a good man is delightful: it is a pleasure to converse with those that are careful to please God, and fearful to offend him. How much affected they are with one another's mercies: "*they will be glad when they see me,*" since I have obtained an event answerable to my hope. They shall come and look upon me as a monument and spectacle of the mercy and truth of God. But what mercy had he received? The context seemeth to carry it for grace to obey God's commandments; that was the prayer immediately preceding, to be instructed and taught in God's law (ver. 73). Now they will rejoice to see my holy behaviour, how I have profited and glorified God in that behalf. The Hebrew writers render the reason, "Because then I shall be able to instruct them in those statutes, when they shall see me, their king, study the law of God." It may be expounded of any other blessing or benefit God had given according to his hope; and I rather understand it thus, they will be glad to see him sustained, supported, and borne out in his troubles and sufferings. "They will be glad when they shall see in me a notable example of the fruit of hoping in thy grace."—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 74.—"*Because I have hoped in thy word.*" And have not been disappointed. The Vulgate rendereth it *supersperavi*, I have over-hoped; and then Aben-Ezra glosseth, "*I have hoped in all thy decree*"; even that of afflicting me, as in the next verse.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 75.—"*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right.*" In very early life the tree of knowledge seemed a very fine, a glorious tree in my sight; but how many mistakes have I made upon that subject! And how many are the mistakes which yet abound upon that which we are pleased to call knowledge, in common speech. He that hath read the classics; he that hath dipped into mathematical science; he that is versed in history, and grammar, and common elocution; he that is apt and ready to solve some knotty question, and versed in the ancient lore of learning, is thought to be a man of knowledge; and so he is, compared with the ignorant mass of mankind. But what is all this compared with the knowledge in my text? Knowledge of which few of the learned, as they are called, have the least acquaintance with at all.

"*I know*"—What, David? what do you know?—"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."

Fond as I may yet be of other speculations, I would rather, much rather, possess the knowledge of this man in this text, than have the largest acquaintance with the whole circle of the sciences, as it is proudly called. . . . I am apprehensive that, in the first clause, the Psalmist speaks, in general, of the ordinances, appointments, providences, and judgments of God; and the assertion is, he doth know that they are right, that they are equitable, that they are wise, that they are fair, and that they are not to be found fault with; and that though men, through folly, bring themselves into distress, and then their hearts fret against God. He was blessed with superior understanding. He excepts nothing: "I know that *all* thy judgments are right." Then, in the latter part of the text, he makes the matter personal. It might be said, it is an easy thing for you so to think when you see the revolutions of kingdoms, the tottering of thrones, the distresses of some mortals, and the pains of others, that they are all right. "Yes," saith he, "but I have the same persuasion about all my own sorrows; I do know that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted *me*."—*From a Sermon by John Martin*, 1817.

Verse 75.—"*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right,*" etc. The text is in the form of an address to God. We often find this in David, that, when he would express some deep feeling, or some point of spiritual experience, he does so in this way—addressing himself to God. Those who love God delight to hold communion with him; and there are some feelings which the spiritual mind finds peculiar comfort and pleasure in telling to God himself. "*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right.*" God orders all things, and his "*judgments*" here mean his general orderings, decisions, dealings—not afflictions only, though including them. And when the Psalmist says, "*thy judgments,*" he means especially God's judgments towards *him*, God's dealings with him, and thus all that had happened to him, or should happen to him. For in the Psalmist's creed there was no such thing as chance. God ordered all that befell him, and he loved to think so He expresses a sure

and happy confidence in all that God did, and would do, with regard to him. He trusted fully in God's wisdom, God's power, God's love. "*I know thy judgments are right*"—quite right, right in every way, without one single point that might have been better, perfectly wise and good. He shows the firmest persuasion of this. "I *know*," he says, not merely, "I think." But these very words, "I *know*," clearly show that this was a matter of faith, not of sight. For he does not say, "I can *see* that thy judgments are right," but "I *know*." The meaning plainly is, "Though I cannot see all—though there are some things in thy dealings which I cannot fully understand—yet I believe, I am persuaded, and thus I *know*, O Lord, that thy judgments are right."

"*Thy judgments.*" Not some of them, but all. He takes into view all God's dealings with him, and says of them without exception, "*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right.*" When the things that happen to us are plainly for our comfort and good, as many of them are, then we thankfully receive what God thus sends to us, and own him as the Giver of all, and bless him for his gracious dealing; and this is right. But all the faith required for this (and some faith there is in it) is to own God as dealing with us, instead of thanklessly receiving the gifts with no thought of the Giver. It is a far higher degree of faith, that says of *all* God's dealings, even when seemingly not for our happiness, "*I know that thy judgments are right.*"

Yet this is the meaning here, or certainly the chief meaning. For though the word "*judgments*" does mean God's dealings of every kind, yet *here* the words that follow make it apply especially to God's afflictive dealings, that is, to those dealings of his that do not seem to be for our happiness; "*I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" The judgments which the Psalmist chiefly had in view, and which he felt so sure were right, were not joys, but sorrows; not things bestowed, but things taken away; those blessings in disguise, those veiled mercies, those gifts clad in the garb of mourning, which God so often sends to his children. The Psalmist knew, and knew against all appearance to the contrary, that these judgments were "*right.*" Whatever they might be—losses, bereavements, disappointments, pain, sickness—they were right; as right as the more manifest blessings which went before them; quite right, perfectly right; so right that they could not have been better; just what were best; and all because they were God's judgments. That one thing satisfied the Psalmist's mind, and set every doubt at rest. The dealings in themselves he might have doubted, but not him whose dealings they were. "*Thy* judgments." That settled all. "*And that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" This means that, in appointing trouble as his lot, God had dealt with him in faithfulness to his word, faithfulness to his purposes of mercy, with a faithful, not a weak love. He had sent him just what was most for his good, though not always what was most pleasing; and in this he had shown himself faithful. Gently and lovingly does the Lord deal with his children. He gives no unnecessary pain; but that which is needful he will not withhold.—*Francis Bourdillon*, 1881.

Verse 75.—"*Thy judgments.*" There are *judicia oris*, and there are *judicia operis;* the judgments of God's mouth, and the judgments of God's hands. Of the former there is mention at verse 13: "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth." And by these "*judgments*" are meant nothing else but the holy law of God, and his whole written word; which everywhere in this Psalm are indifferently called his "statutes," his "commandments," his "precepts," his "testimonies," his "judgments." And the laws of God are therefore, amongst other reasons, called by the name of "*judgments*," because by them we come to have a right judgment whereby to discern between good and evil. We could not otherwise with any certainty judge what was meet for us to do, and what was needful for us to shun. *A lege tua intellexi*, at verse 104: "By the law have I gotten understanding." St. Paul confesseth (Rom. vii.), that he had never rightly known what sin was if it had not been for the law; and he instanceth in that of lust, *which he had not known to be a sin if the law* had not said, "thou shalt not covet." And no question but these "*judgments*," these *judicia oris*, are all "*right*" too; for it were unreasonable to think that God should make that a rule of right to us, which were itself not right. We have both the name (that of "*judgments;*") and the thing too, (that they are "*right*") in the 19th Psalm; where having highly commended the law of God, under the several appellations of the "law," testimonies, statutes and commandments, verses 7 and 8, the prophet then concludeth under

this name of "judgments," verse 9: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Besides these *judicia oris*, which are God's judgments of *direction*, there are also *judicia operis*, which are his judgments for *correction*. And these do ever include *aliquid pœnale*, something inflicted upon us by Almighty God, as it were by way of punishment; something that breedeth in us trouble or grief. The apostle saith (Heb. xii.) that every chastening is grievous; and so it is, more or less; or else it could be to us no punishment. And these, again, are of two sorts; yet not distinguished so much by the things themselves that are inflicted, as by the condition of the persons on whom they are inflicted, and especially by the affection and intention of God that inflicteth them. For all, whether public calamities that light upon whole nations, cities, or other greater or lesser societies of men (such as are pestilences, famine, war, inundations, unseasonable weather, and the like;) or private afflictions, that light upon particular families or persons, (as sickness, poverty disgrace, injuries, death of friends, and the like;) all these, and whatsoever other of either kind, may undergo a twofold consideration; in either of which they may not unfitly be termed the judgments of God, though in different respects.

Now we see the several sorts of God's judgments: which of all these may we think is here meant? If we should take them all in, the conclusion would hold them, and hold true too. *Judicia oris*, and *judicia operis;* public and private judgments; those plagues wherewith in fury he punisheth his enemies, and those rods wherewith in mercy he correcteth his children: most certain it is they are all "*right.*" But yet I conceive those *judicia oris* not to be so properly meant in this place; for the exegesis in the latter part of the verse (wherein what are here called *judgments* are there expounded by *troubles*) seemeth to exclude them, and to confine to the text in the proper intent thereof to these *judicia operis* only; but yet to all them of what sort soever; public or private, plagues or corrections. Of all which he pronounceth that they are "*right;*" which is the predicate of the conclusion: *"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right."—Robert Sanderson.*

Verse 75.—*"Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."* Mark the emphasis: he doth not barely acknowledge that God was faithful, though notwithstanding he had afflicted him, but faithful in sending the afflictions. Affliction and trouble are not only consistent with God's love plighted in the covenant of grace; but they are parts and branches of the new-covenant administration. God is not only faithful notwithstanding afflictions, but faithful in sending them. There is a difference between these two: the one is like an exception to the rule, *quæ firmat regulam in non exceptis:* the other makes it a part of the rule, God cannot be faithful without doing all things that tend to our good and eternal welfare. The conduct of his providence is one part of the covenant engagement; as to pardon our sins, and sanctify us, and give us glory at the last, so to suit his providence as our need and profit require in the way to heaven. It is an act of his sovereign mercy which he hath promised to his people, to use such discipline as conduceth to their safety. In short, the cross is not an exception to the grace of the covenant, but a part of the grace of the covenant.

The cause of all afflictions is sin, therefore justice must be acknowledged: their end is repentance, and therefore faithfulness must be acknowledged. The end is not destruction and ruin, so afflictions would be acts of justice, as upon the wicked; but that we may be fit to receive the promises, and so they are acts of faithfulness. —*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 75.—*"Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."* That is with a sincere intention of doing me good. God thoroughly knows our constitution, what is noxious to our health, and what may remedy our distempers; and therefore accordingly disposeth to us

Pro jucundis aptissima quæque*

instead of pleasant honey, he sometimes prescribes wholesome wormwood for us. We are ourselves greatly ignorant of what is conducible to our real good, and, were the choice of our condition wholly permitted to us, should make very foolish, very disadvantageous elections.

We should (be sure) all of us embrace a rich and plentiful estate; when, as God knows, that would make us slothful and luxurious, swell us with pride and

* Juv. Sat. x. 349.

haughty thoughts, encumber us with anxious cares and expose us to dangerous temptations; would render us forgetful of ourselves and neglectful of him. Therefore he wisely disposeth poverty unto us; poverty, the mother of sobriety, the nurse of industry, the mistress of wisdom; which will make us understand ourselves and our dependence on him, and force us to have recourse unto his help. And is there not reason we should be thankful for the means by which we are delivered from those desperate mischiefs, and obtain these excellent advantages?

We should all (certainly) choose the favour and applause of man: but this, God also knows, would corrupt our minds with vain conceit, would intoxicate our fancies with spurious pleasure, would tempt us to ascribe immoderately to ourselves, and sacrilegiously to deprive God of his due honour. Therefore he advisedly suffers us to incur the disgrace and displeasure, the hatred and contempt of men; that so we may place our glory only in the hopes of his favour, and may pursue more earnestly the purer delights of a good conscience. And doth not this part of divine providence highly merit our thanks?

We would all climb into high places, not considering the precipices on which they stand, nor the vertiginousness of our own brains: but God keeps us safe in the humble valleys, allotting to us employments which we are more capable to manage.

We should perhaps insolently abuse power, were it committed to us: we should employ great parts on unwieldy projects, as many do, to the disturbance of others, and their own ruin: vast knowledge would cause us to overvalue ourselves and contemn others: enjoying continual health, we should not perceive the benefit thereof, nor be mindful of him that gave it. A suitable mediocrity therefore of these things the divine goodness allotteth unto us, that we may neither starve for want, nor surfeit with plenty.

In fine, the advantages arising from afflictions are so many, and so great, that it were easy to demonstrate that we have great reason, not only to be contented with, but to rejoice in, and to be very thankful for, all the crosses and vexations we meet with; to receive them cheerfully at God's hand, as the medicines of our soul, and the condiments of our fortune; as the arguments of his goodwill, and the instruments of virtue; as solid grounds of hope, and comfortable presages of future joy unto us.—*Isaac Barrow.*

Verse 75.—"*Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" When a father disowns and banishes a child, he corrects him no more. So God may let one whom he intends to destroy go unchastened; but never one with whom he is in covenant.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 75.—"*I know, O* LORD," etc.

Yet, Lord, in memory's fondest place
I shrine those seasons sad,
When, looking up, I saw thy face
In kind austereness clad.

I would not miss one sigh or tear,
Heart-pang, or throbbing brow;
Sweet was the chastisement severe,
And sweet its memory now.

Yes! let the fragrant scars abide,
Love-tokens in thy stead,
Faint shadows of the spear-pierced side,
And thorn-encompassed head.

And such thy tender force be still,
When self would swerve or stray,
Shaping to truth the froward will
Along thy narrow way.

—*John Henry Newman*, 1829.

Verse 76.—"*Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort.*" In the former verse he acknowledged that the Lord had afflicted him; now in this he prayeth the Lord to comfort him. This is strange that a man should seek comfort at the same hand that strikes him: it is the work of faith; nature will never teach us to do it. "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath spoiled, and he will heal us: he hath wounded, and he will bind us up." Again, we see that the

crosses which God lays on his children, are not to confound, not to consume them; only to prepare them for greater consolations. With this David sustained himself against Shimei's cursing; "The Lord will look on my affliction, and do me good for this evil": with this our Saviour comforts his disciples; "Your mourning shall be turned into joy." As the last estate of Job was better than his first; so shall the Lord render more to his children at the last than now at the first he takes from them: let us therefore bear his cross, as a preparative to comfort.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 76.—"*Let thy merciful kindness be for my comfort.*" Several of the preceding verses have spoken of affliction (verses 67, 71, 75). The Psalmist now presents his petition for alleviation under it. But of what kind? He does not ask to have it removed. He does not "beseech the Lord, that it might depart from him": 2 Cor. xii. 8. No. His repeated acknowledgments of the supports vouchsafed under it, and the benefits he had derived from it, had reconciled him to commit its measure and continuance to the Lord. All that he needs, and all that he asks for, is a sense of his "*merciful kindness*" upon his soul. Thus he submits to his justice in his accumulated trials, and expects consolation under them solely upon the ground of his free favour.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 76.—"*Let thy merciful kindness,*" etc. Let me derive my comfort and happiness from a diffusion of thy love and mercy, חסדך, *chasdecha*, thy exuberant goodness through my soul.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 76.—"*According to thy word unto thy servant.*" If his promise did not please him, why did he make it? If our reliance on the promise did not please him, why did his goodness work it? It would be inconsistent with his goodness to mock his creature, and it would be the highest mockery to publish his word, and create a temper in the heart of his supplicant suited to his promise, which he never intended to satisfy. He can as little wrong his creature as wrong himself, and therefore he can never disappoint that faith which after his own methods casts itself into the arms of his kindness, and is his own workmanship, and calls him author. That goodness which imparted itself so freely to the irrational creation will not neglect those nobler creatures that put their trust in him. This renders God a fit object for trust and confidence.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 76.—"*According to thy word.*" David had a particular promise of a particular benefit; to wit, the kingdom of Israel. And this promise God performed unto him; but his comfort stood not in it; for Saul before him had the kingdom, but the promises of mercy belonged not to him, and therefore, when God forsook him, his kingdom could not sustain him. But David here depends upon the general promises of God's mercy made to his children; wherein he acknowledgeth a particular promise of mercy made to him. For the general promises of mercy and grace made in the gospel are by faith made particular to every believer.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 76.—"*Thy word unto thy servant.*" Here we may use the eunuch's question: "Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?" Of himself questionless, under the denomination of God's servant. But then the question returneth,—Is it a word of promise made to himself in particular, or to God's servants in the general? Some say the former, the promises brought to him by Nathan. I incline to the latter, and it teacheth us these three truths:—

1st. That God's servants only are capable of the sweet effects of his mercy and the comforts of his promises. Who are God's servants? (1) Such as own his right and are sensible of his interest in them: "God, whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts xxviii. 23). (2) Such as give up themselves to him, renouncing all other masters. Renounce we must, for we were once under another master (Rom. vi. 17; Matt. vi. 24; Rom. vi. 13; 1 Chron. xxx. 8). (3) Such as accordingly frame themselves to do his work sincerely: "serve with my spirit" (Rom. i. 9); and, "in newness of spirit" (Rom. vii. 6), even as becomes those who are renewed by the Spirit: diligently (Acts xxvi. 7), and universally (Luke i. 74, 75), and wait upon him for grace to do so (Heb. xii. 28). These are capable of comfort. The book of God speaketh no comfort to persons that live in sin, but to God's servants, such as do not live as if they were at their own disposal, but at God's beck. If he say go, they go. They give up themselves to be and do what God will have them to be and do.

2ndly. If we have the benefit of the promise, we must thrust in ourselves under one title or other among those to whom the promise is made; if not as God's

children, yet as God's servants. Then the promise is as sure to us as if our name were in it.

3rdly. All God's servants have common grounds of comfort: every one of God's servants may plead with God as David doth. The comforts of the word are the common portion of God's people.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 76.—"*Thy word unto thy servant.*" Our Master has passed his word to all his servants that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 77.—"*Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.*" If we mark narrowly we shall find that David here seeks another sort of mercy than he sought before. For first he sought mercy to forgive his sins; then he sought mercy to comfort him in his troubles; now he seeks mercy to live, and sin no more. Alas, many seek the first mercy, of remission; and the second mercy of consolation in trouble, who are altogether careless of the third mercy, to live well. It is a great mercy of God to amend thy life: where this is not, let no man think he hath received either of the former. It is a great mercy of God, which not only pardons evil that is done, but strengthens us also to further good that we have not done; and this is the mercy which here David seeks.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 77.—"*Let thy tender mercies come unto me,*" etc. The mercies of God are "*tender mercies,*" they are the mercies of a father to his children, nay, tender as the compassion of a mother over the son of her womb. They "*come unto*" us, when we are not able to go to them. By them alone we "*live*" the life of faith, of love, of joy and gladness. And to such as "*delight*" in his law, God will grant these mercies, and this life; he will give them pardon, and, by so doing, he will give them life from the dead.—*George Horne.*

Verse 77.—"*Let thy tender mercies,*" etc. Taking the more literal rendering, the words express high confidence—"Thy tender mercies *shall* come unto me, and I shall live; for thy law is my delight." Had the believer nothing but his own deserts to support his plea at the throne of grace, he could never rise into this high confidence. He goes upon the foundation of the divine goodness, manifested through the anointed One, and he goes surely.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 77.—"*Come.*" Coming to him noteth a personal and effectual application. 1st. A personal application, as in the 41st verse of this Psalm: "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word." David would not be forgotten, or left out or lost in the throng of mankind, when mercy was distributing the blessing to them. 2ndly. Effectual application: which signifieth, 1. The removal of obstacles and hindrances; 2. The obtaining the fruits and effects of this mercy.

First. The removing of obstacles. Till there be a way made, the mercy of God cannot come at us; for the way is barricaded and shut up by our sins: as the Lord maketh a way for his anger (Ps. lxxviii. 50), by removing the hindrances, so the Lord maketh way for his mercy, or mercy maketh way for itself, when it removeth the obstruction. Sin is the great hindrance of mercy. We ourselves raise the mists and the clouds which intercept the light of God's countenance; we build up the partition wall which separates between God and us; yet mercy finds the way.

Secondly. The obtaining the fruits of mercy . . . . It is not enough to hear somewhat of God's saving mercies; but we should beg that they may come unto us, be effectually and sensibly communicated unto us, that we may have experience of them in our own souls. A man that hath read of honey, or heard of honey, may know the sweetness of it by guess and imagination; but a man that hath tasted of honey knoweth the sweetness of it in truth: so, by reading and hearing of the grace and mercy of God in Christ, we may guess that it is a sweet thing; but he that hath had an experimental proof of the sweet effects and fruits of it in his own heart perceives that all which is spoken of God's pardoning and comforting of sinners is verified in himself.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 77.—"*Thy law is my delight.*" A child of God, though he cannot serve the Lord perfectly, yet he serves him willingly; his will is in the law of the Lord; he is not a pressed soldier, but a volunteer. By the beating of this pulse we may judge whether there be spiritual life in us or no. David professeth that God's law was his delight; he had his crown to delight in, he had his music to delight in; but the love he had to God's law did drown all other delights; as the joy of harvest and vintage exceeds the joy of gleaning.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 78.—"*Let the proud be ashamed,*" etc. Here is the just recompense of his pride. He would fain have honour and pre-eminence, but God will not give them unto him: he flies shame and contempt, but God shall pour them upon him. "*For they dealt perversely with me without a cause.*" David complains of the wicked and false dealing of his enemies against him; and his prayer is written to uphold us in the like temptation. For Satan is alway like himself, hating them whom the Lord loveth. He can scarce be worse, he can never be better; and therefore with restless malice stirs he up all his cursed instruments in whom he reigns, to persecute those who are loved and protected of the Lord. "*But I will meditate in thy precepts.*" David's enemies fought against him with the weapons of the flesh, wickedness and falsehood: he withstands them by the armour of the Spirit; not meeting wickedness with wickedness, and falsehood with falsehood. For if we fight against Satan with Satan's weapons he will soon overcome us; but if we put upon us the complete armour of God to resist him, he shall flee from us.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 78.—"*Let the proud be ashamed.*" That is, that they may not prosper or succeed in their attempts; for men are ashamed when they are disappointed. All their endeavours for the extirpation of God's people are vain and fruitless, and those things which they have subtilely devised have not that effect which they propounded unto themselves. "*For they dealt perversely with me without a cause.*" The Septuagint have it ἀδίκως, unjustly. Ainsworth readeth, "With falsehood they have depraved me." It implieth two things: first, that they pretended a cause; but, secondly, David avoucheth his innocency to God; and so, without any guilt of his, they accused, defamed, condemned his actions, as is usual in such cases. When the proud are troublesome and injurious to God's people the saints may boldly commend their cause to God. . . . The Lord may be appealed unto upon a double account; partly, as he is an enemy to the proud, and as a friend to the humble (James iv. 6; Ps. cxxxviii. 6); partly, as he is the portion of the afflicted and oppressed (Ps. cxl. 12). When Satan stirreth up his instruments to hate those whom the Lord loveth, the Lord will stir up his power to help and defend them. Is not this a revengeful prayer?

Answer, No. 1st. Because those who pray it are seeking their own deliverance, that they may more freely serve God by consequence. Indeed, by God's showing mercy to his people, the pride of wicked ones is suppressed (verse 134); but mercy is the main object of the prayer.

2ndly. As it concerneth his enemies, he expresseth it in mild terms—that they may "*be ashamed*"; that is, disappointed, in their counsels, hopes, machinations, and endeavours. And therefore it is not against the persons of his enemies, but their plots and enterprises. In such cases shame and disappointment may even do them good. They think to bring in the total suppression of God's people, but that would harden them in their sins; therefore God's people desire that he would not let their innocency be trampled upon, but disappoint their adversaries, that the proud may be ashamed in the failing of their attempts.

3rdly. The prayers of the righteous for the overthrow of the wicked, are a kind of prophecies; so that, in praying, David doth in effect foretell, that such as dealt perversely should soon be ashamed, since a good cause will not always be oppressed: "But he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (Isa. lxvi. 5).

4thly. Saints have a liberty to imprecate vengeance, but such as must be used sparingly and with great caution: "Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul" (Ps. lxxi. 13). Malicious enemies may be expressly prayed against.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 78.—"*Let the proud be ashamed.*" This suggests a word to the wicked. Take heed that by your implacable hatred to the truth and church of God you do not engage her prayers against you. These imprecatory prayers of the saints, when shot at the right mark, and duly put up, are murdering pieces, and strike dead where they light. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." Luke xviii. 7, 8. They are not empty words—as the imprecations of the wicked poured into the air, and there vanishing with their breath—but are received into heaven, and shall be sent back with thunder and lightning upon the pates of the wicked. David's prayer unravelled Ahithophel's fine-spun policy, and twisted his halter for him. The prayers of the saints are more to be feared—as once a great person said and felt—than an army of twenty thousand men in the

field. Esther's fast hastened Haman's ruin, and Hezekiah's against Sennacherib brought his huge host to the slaughter, and fetched an angel from heaven to do the execution in one night upon them.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 78.—"*The proud.*" The wicked, especially the persecutors of God's people, are usually characterized by this term in this Psalm, "*the proud*" (verses 51, 69, 122). Pride puts wicked men upon being troublesome and injurious to the people of God. But why are the persecutors and the injurious called "*the proud*"? 1. Because wicked men shake off the yoke of God, and will not be subject to their Maker, and therefore desist not from troubling his people: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go"? (Exod. v. 2). What was in his tongue, is in all men's hearts; they contemn God and his laws. Every sin hath a degree of pride, and a depreciation of God included in it, (2 Sam xii. 9). 2. Because they are drunk with worldly felicity, and never think of changes. "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud" (Ps. cxxiii. 4). When men go on prosperously, they are apt wrongfully to trouble others, and then to flout at them in their misery, and to despise the person and cause of God's people, which is a sure effect of great arrogancy and pride. They think they may do what they please: "They have no changes; therefore they fear not God," and put forth their hands against such as be at peace with them (Ps. lv. 19, 20): whilst they go on prosperously and undisturbedly, they cannot abstain from violence and oppression. 3. Because they effect a life of pomp, and ease, and carnal greatness, and so despise the affliction, and meanness, and simplicity of God's people. The false church hath usually the advantage of worldly power and external glory; and the true church is known by the Divine power, gifts and graces, and the lustre of holiness. 4. They are called "*proud*," because of their insolent carriage towards the Lord's people; partly in their laws and injunctions, requiring them to give them more honour, respect, and obedience, than in conscience can be afforded them; as Haman would have Mordecai to devote himself to him after the manner of the Persians (Esther iii. 5).—*Condensed from Manton.*

Verse 78.—"When any of you," says Cæsarius, "is singing the verse of the Psalm wherein it is said, '*Let the proud be put to shame*,' let him be earnest to avoid pride, that he may escape everlasting shame."—*William Kay.*

Verse 78.—"*But I will meditate in thy precepts.*" He repeateth the same thing often, and surely if the world could not contain the books that might be written of Christ, and yet for our infirmity the Lord hath comprised them in such a few books, and yet one thing in them is often repeated, it showeth that the matter is weighty, and of us duly and often to be considered. And again we are taught that this is a thing that none do so carefully look unto as they ought. And he showeth that as his enemies sought by evil means to hurt him; so he sought to keep a good conscience, that so they might not hurt him. Then we must not set policy against policy nor *cretizare cum Cretensibus;* but let us always tend to the word, and keep within the bounds of that, and fight with the weapons that it lendeth us. . . . . If we would give over ourselves to God and his word, and admit nothing but that which agreeth to the word, then should we be made wiser than our enemies. —*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 78.—"*I will meditate in thy precepts.*" The verb שׂיח, *asiach*, in the second clause of the verse, may be rendered, "*I will speak of*," as well as, "*I will meditate upon*"; implying that, when he had obtained the victory, he would proclaim the goodness of God, which he had experienced. *To speak of God's statutes*, is equivalent to declaring out of the law how faithfully he guards his saints, how securely he delivers them, and how righteously he avenges their wrongs.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 78.—"*Meditate.*" Truths lie hid in the heart without efficacy or power, till improved by deep, serious, and pressing thoughts . . . . A sudden carrying a candle through a room, giveth us not so full a survey of the object, as when you stand a while beholding it. A steady contemplation is a great advantage.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 79.—"*Let those that fear thee turn unto me.*" Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, they that feared God grew strange to him, and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let

them *"turn to me"* again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest but intelligent, *"that have known thy testimonies,"* have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 79.—*"Let those that fear thee turn unto me,"* etc. As he had not his own flesh to fight against only, but the world also, so he did not only himself fight, but he seeketh the help of others. When many see that religion cannot be truly professed but danger will come of it, because many set themselves against it, they flee from it, and go to the greater part, which is the wicked. If we will avoid this, let us join ourselves to God's children, and they will help us with counsel and advice; for one may be strong when we are weak, another may have counsel when we shall not know what to do; therefore by them we shall be kept from many evil things. So Paul (2 Tim. i. 16), after he had complained of the wrong that many had done unto him, he straightway giveth thanks for the family of Onesiphorus, which refreshed him more than all his enemies could discourage him; so that he durst oppose this one household to the whole rabble of the wicked.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 79.—*"Let those that fear thee,"* etc. You must go to God and beseech him to choose your company for you. Mark what David said and did; in verse 63 he saith, *"I am a companion of all them that fear the Lord";* yet in this verse he goes to God, and prayeth, saying, *Let those that fear thee, O Lord, turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies."* As if he should say, "Of a truth, Lord, I am a companion of all that do fear thee; but it is not in my power to bend their hearts unto me; the hearts of all men are in thy hands, now therefore *"let those that fear thee turn unto me."* So do you go to God, and say likewise: Lord, do thou choose my company for me; oh, do thou bow and incline their hearts to be my companions. —*William Bridge.*

Verse 79.—*"Those that fear." "Those that have known."* Fear and knowledge do make up a godly man. Knowledge without fear breedeth presumption; and fear without knowledge breedeth superstition; and blind zeal, as a blind horse, may be full of mettle, but is ever and anon stumbling. Knowledge must direct fear, and fear must season knowledge; then it is a happy mixture and composition.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 79.—One great means to restore a good understanding among God's people is prayer. David goeth to God about it: *"Lord, let them turn to me."* The Lord governeth hearts and interests, both are in his hands, and he useth their alienation or reconciliation, either for judgment or mercy. God, when he pleaseth, can divert from us the comfort of godly friends; and when he pleaseth, he can bring them back again to us. The feet of God's children are directed by God himself; if they come to us, it is a blessing of God; if not, it is for a correction. He made Jacob and Laban meet peaceably (Gen. xxx.), and in the next chapter, Jacob and Esau.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 80.—*"Let my heart be sound."* What is a sound heart? It noteth reality and solidity in grace. The Septuagint hath it, *Let my heart be without spot and blemish.* It implieth the reality of grace, opposed to the bare form of godliness, or the fair shows of hypocrites, and the sudden and vanishing motions of temporaries.

If you would have me unfold what this sound heart is, there is required these four things:—

1. An enlightened understanding; that is, the directive part of the soul; and it is sound when it is kept free from the leaven and contagion of error: "A man of understanding walketh uprightly," Prov. xv. 21. A sound mind is a good help to a sound heart.

2. There is required an awakened conscience, that warneth us of our duty, and riseth up in dislike of sin upon all occasions: "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee" (Prov. vi. 22): to have a constant monitor in our bosoms to put us in mind of God, when our reins preach to us in the night season (Ps. xvi. 7): there is a secret spy in our bosoms that observes all that we do, and think, and speak; a domestic chaplain, that is always preaching to us. His heart is his Bible.

3. There is required a rightly disposed will, or a steadfast purpose to walk with God in all conditions, and to do what is good and acceptable in his sight: "He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord," Acts xi. 23. Many have light inclinations, or wavering resolutions; but their

hearts are not fixedly, habitually bent to please God ; therein chiefly lieth this sound heart, that it doth inseparably cleave to God in all things.

4. There is required that the affections be purged and quickened : these are the vigorous motions of the will, and therefore this must be heedfully regarded ; purged they must be from that carnality and fleshliness that cleaveth to them. This is called in Scripture the circumcision of the heart (Deut. xxx. 6).—*Condensed from Manton.*

Verse 80.—"*Let my heart be sound.*" "A sound mind in a sound body," was the prayer of a heathen, and his desire was according to the extent of his knowledge ; but a heart sound in God's statutes, sound to the very core, with no speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, and like the king's daughter, "all glorious within," this is what the Psalmist prays for, this is what every child of God aims at, and prays for too,—"Even as He is pure."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 80.—"*Let my heart be sound.*"

True-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal,
King of our lives, by thy grace will we be !
Under thy standard, exalted and royal,
Strong in thy strength, we will battle for thee !

True-hearted, whole-hearted ! Fullest allegiance
Yielding henceforth to our glorious King ;
Valiant endeavour and loving obedience
Freely and joyously now would we bring.

True-hearted, Saviour, thou knowest our story ;
Weak are the hearts that we lay at thy feet,
Sinful and treacherous ! yet for thy glory,
Heal them, and cleanse them from sin and deceit

Whole-hearted ! Saviour, beloved and glorious,
Take thy great power, and reign thou alone,
Over our wills and affections victorious,
Freely surrendered, and wholly thine own.

Half-hearted ! false-hearted ! Heed we the warning !
Only the whole can be perfectly true ;
Bring the whole offering, all timid thought scorning,
True-hearted only if whole-hearted too.

Half-hearted ! Saviour, shall aught be withholden,
Giving thee part who hast given us all ?
Blessings outpouring, and promises golden
Pledging, with never reserve or recall.

Half-hearted ! Master, shall any who know thee
Grudge thee their lives, who hast laid down thine own ?
Nay ; we would offer the hearts that we owe thee,—
Live for thy love and thy glory alone.

Sisters, dear sisters, the call is resounding,
Will ye not echo the silver refrain,
Mighty and sweet, and in gladness abounding,—
"True-hearted, whole-hearted ! " ringing again ?

Jesus is with us, his rest is before us,
Brightly his standard is waving above.
Brothers, dear brothers, in gathering chorus,
Peal out the watchword of courage and love !

Peal out the watchword, and silence it never,
Song of our spirits rejoicing and free !
"True-hearted, whole-hearted, now and for ever,
King of our lives, by thy grace we will be ! "

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836—1879) *in "Loyal Responses."*

Verse 80.—"*Let my heart be sound,*" etc. This is a plain difference between a sound heart and a false heart ; in the receiving of Christ the sound heart receives him as a favourite receives a prince, he gives up all to him, and lets him have the

command of all. A mere innkeeper entertains him that comes next to him; he will take any man's money, and will give welcome to any man; if it be the worst man that comes he cares not, for he loves gain above all things. Not so the good heart; he welcomes Christ alone, and resigns up all to Christ. Whatsoever is pleasing to Christ he will do it, and whatsoever comes from Christ he will welcome.—*Thomas Hooker* (1586—1647) *in "The Soules Implantation."*

Verse 80.—*"Be sound."* Heb. *Be perfect;* as the word from the same root is rendered in Job i. 1. Dr. R. Young gives as the meaning of the word as used by the Psalmist, *whole, complete, plain.*

Verse 80.—*"Sound in thy statutes,"* etc. Though an *orthodox creed* does not constitute true religion, yet it is the basis of it, and it is a great blessing to have it.—*Nicolson, quoted by W. S. Plumer.*

Verse 80.—If you would be faithful to Christ, be sincere in your profession of him, make David's prayer and desire to be yours: *"Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed."* Religion which is begun in hypocrisy will certainly end in apostasy, and this always carries with it reproach and ignominy.—*William Spurstow* (—1666).

Verse 80.—*"Ashamed."* We may be ashamed either before God or men, ourselves or others.

1. Before God: either in our addresses to him at the throne of grace or when summoned to appear at the last day before the tribunal of his justice. (1) If you understand it of our approach to him, we cannot come into his presence with confidence if we have not a sound heart. " If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God ": 1 John iii. 21. We lose that holy familiarity and cheerfulness, when we are unbosoming ourselves to our heavenly Father, when our hearts are not sound. (2) When we are summoned to appear before the tribunal of his justice. Many, now, with a bold impudence, will obtrude themselves upon the worship of God, because they see him not, and have not a due sense of his majesty; but the time will come, when the most impudent and outbraving sinners will be astonished, even then when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open and made manifest, and hidden things brought to light (1 Cor. iv. 5); and every one is to receive his judgment from God according to what he hath done, either good or evil.

2. Before men a man may be ashamed, and so before ourselves and others. (1) Ourselves. It was a saying of Pythagoras, Reverence thyself; be not ashamed of thyself. God hath a spy and deputy within us, and taketh notice of our conformity and unconformity to his will, and, after sin committed, lasheth the soul with the sense of its own guilt and folly, as the body is lashed with stripes: " What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? " Rom. vi. 21. (2) Before others. And so our shame may be occasioned by our scandals, or our punishments; it is hard to say which is intended here.—*Condensed from Manton.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 81 TO 88.

MY soul fainteth for thy salvation: *but* I hope in thy word.

82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; *yet* do I not forget thy statutes.

84 How many *are* the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

85 The proud have digged pits for me, which *are* not after thy law.

86 All thy commandments *are* faithful: they persecute me wrongfully: help thou me.

87 They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

88 Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

This portion of the gigantic Psalm sees the Psalmist *in extremis*. His enemies have brought him to the lowest condition of anguish and depression; yet he is faithful to the law and trustful in his God. This octave is the midnight of the Psalm, and very dark and black it is. Stars, however, shine out, and the last verse gives promise of the dawn. The strain will after this become more cheerful; but meanwhile it should minister comfort to us to see so eminent a servant of God so hardly used by the ungodly: evidently in our own persecutions, no strange thing has happened unto us.

81. "*My soul fainteth for thy salvation.*" He wished for no deliverance but that which came from God: his one desire was for "thy salvation." But for that divine deliverance he was eager to the last degree,—up to the full measure of his strength, yea, and beyond it till he fainted. So strong was his desire that it produced prostration of spirit. He grew weary with waiting, faint with watching, sick with urgent need. Thus the sincerity and the eagerness of his desires were proved. Nothing else could satisfy him but deliverance wrought out by the hand of God, his inmost nature yearned and pined for salvation from the God of all grace, and he must have it or utterly fail. "*But I hope in thy word.*" Therefore he felt that salvation would come, for God cannot break his promise, nor disappoint the hope which his own word has excited: yea, the fulfilment of his word is near at hand when our hope is firm and our desire fervent. Hope alone can keep the soul from fainting by using the smelling-bottle of the promise. Yet hope does not quench desire for a speedy answer to prayer; it increases our importunity, for it both stimulates ardour and sustains the heart under delays. To faint for salvation, and to be kept from utterly failing by the hope of it, is the frequent experience of the Christian man. We are "faint yet pursuing." Hope sustains when desire exhausts. While the grace of desire throws us down, the grace of hope lifts us up again.

82. "*Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?*" His eyes gave out with eagerly gazing for the kind appearance of the Lord, while his heart in weariness cried out for speedy comfort. To read the word till the eyes can no longer see is but a small thing compared with watching for the fulfilment of the promise till the inner eyes of expectancy begin to grow dim with hope deferred. We may not set times to God, for this is to limit the Holy One of Israel; yet we may urge our suit with importunity, and make fervent enquiry as to why the promise tarries. David sought no comfort except that which comes from God; his question is, "When wilt *thou* comfort me?" If help does not come from heaven it will never come at all: all the good man's hopes look that way, he has not a glance to

dart in any other direction. This experience of waiting and fainting is well-known by full-grown saints, and it teaches them many precious lessons which they would never learn by any other means. Among the choice results is this one—that the body rises into sympathy with the soul, both heart and flesh cry out for the living God, and even the eyes find a tongue, "saying, When wilt thou comfort me?" It must be an intense longing which is not satisfied to express itself by the lips, but speaks with the eyes, by those eyes failing through intense watching. Eyes can speak right eloquently; they use both mutes and liquids, and can sometimes say more than tongues. David says in another place, "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping" (Ps. vi. 8). Specially are our eyes eloquent when they begin to fail with weariness and woe. A humble eye lifted up to heaven in silent prayer may flash such flame as shall melt the bolts which bar the entrance of vocal prayer, and so heaven shall be taken by storm with the artillery of tears. Blessed are the eyes that are strained in looking after God. The eyes of the Lord will see to it that such eyes do not actually fail. How much better to watch for the Lord with aching eyes than to have them sparkling at the glitter of vanity.

83. *"For I am become like a bottle in the smoke."* The skins used for containing wine, when emptied, were hung up in the tent, and when the place reeked with smoke the skins grew black and sooty, and in the heat they became wrinkled and worn. The Psalmist's face through sorrow had become dark and dismal, furrowed and lined; indeed, his whole body had so sympathized with his sorrowing mind as to have lost its natural moisture, and to have become like a skin dried and tanned. His character had been smoked with slander, and his mind parched with persecution; he was half afraid that he would become useless and incapable through so much mental suffering, and that men would look upon him as an old worn-out skin bottle, which could hold nothing and answer no purpose. What a metaphor for a man to use who was certainly a poet, a divine, and a master in Israel, if not a king, and a man after God's own heart! It is little wonder if we, commoner folk, are made to think very little of ourselves, and are filled with distress of mind. Some of us know the inner meaning of this simile, for we, too, have felt dingy, mean, and worthless, only fit to be cast away. Very black and hot has been the smoke which has enveloped us; it seemed to come not alone from the Egyptian furnace, but from the bottomless pit; and it had a clinging power which made the soot of it fasten upon us and blacken us with miserable thoughts.

"Yet do I not forget thy statutes." Here is the patience of the saints and the victory of faith. Blackened the man of God might be by falsehood, but the truth was in him, and he never gave it up. He was faithful to his King when he seemed deserted and left to the vilest uses. The promises came to his mind, and, what was a still better evidence of his loyalty, the statutes were there too: he stuck to his duties as well as to his comforts. The worst circumstances cannot destroy the true believer's hold upon his God. Grace is a living power which survives that which would suffocate all other forms of existence. Fire cannot consume it, and smoke cannot smother it. A man may be reduced to skin and bone, and all his comfort may be dried out of him, and yet he may hold fast his integrity and glorify his God. It is, however, no marvel that in such a case the eyes which are tormented with the smoke cry out for the Lord's delivering hand, and the heart heated and faint longs for the divine salvation.

84. *"How many are the days of thy servant?"* I cannot hope to live long in such a condition, thou must come speedily to my rescue or I shall die. Shall all my short life be consumed in such destroying sorrows? The brevity of life is a good argument against the length of an affliction. Perhaps the Psalmist means that his days seemed too many when they were spent in such distress. He half wished that they were ended, and therefore he asked in trouble, "How many are the days of thy servant?" Like a hired servant, he had a certain term to serve, and he would not complain; but still the time seemed long because his griefs were so heavy. No one knows the appointed number of our days except the Lord, and therefore to him the appeal is made that he would not prolong them beyond his servant's strength. It cannot be the Lord's mind that his own servant should always be treated so unjustly; there must be an end to it; when would it be?

"When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?" He had placed his case in the Lord's hands, and he prayed that sentence might be given and put into execution. He desired nothing but justice, that his character might be cleared and his persecutors silenced. He knew that God would certainly avenge his own

elect, but the day of rescue tarried, the hours dragged heavily along, and the persecuted one cried day and night for deliverance.

85. *"The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law."* As men who hunt wild beasts are wont to make pitfalls and snares, so did David's foes endeavour to entrap him. They went laboriously and cunningly to work to ruin him, "they digged *pits*"; not one, but many. If one would not take him, perhaps another would, and so they digged again and again. One would think that such haughty people would not have soiled their fingers with digging; but they swallowed their pride in hopes of swallowing their victim. Whereas they ought to have been ashamed of such meanness, they were conscious of no shame, but, on the contrary, were proud of their cleverness; proud of setting a trap for a godly man. *"Which are not after thy law."* Neither the men nor their pits were according to the divine law: they were cruel and crafty deceivers, and their pits were contrary to the Levitical law, and contrary to the command which bids us love our neighbour. If men would keep to the statutes of the Lord, they would lift the fallen out of the pit, or fill up the pit so that none might stumble into it; but they would never spend a moment in working injury to others. When, however, they become proud, they are sure to despise others; and for this reason they seek to circumvent them, that they may afterwards hold them up to ridicule.

It was well for David that his enemies were God's enemies, and that their attacks upon him had no sanction from the Lord. It was also much to his gain that he was not ignorant of their devices, for he was thus put upon his guard, and led to watch his ways lest he should fall into their pits. While he kept to the law of the Lord he was safe, though even then it was an uncomfortable thing to have his path made dangerous by the craft of wanton malice.

86. *"All thy commandments are faithful."* He had no fault to find with God's law, even though he had fallen into sad trouble through obedience to it. Whatever the command might cost him it was worth it; he felt that God's way might be rough, but it was right; it might make him enemies, but still it was his best friend. He believed that in the end God's command would turn out to his own profit, and that he should be no loser by obeying it.

"They persecute me wrongfully." The fault lay with his persecutors, and neither with his God nor with himself. He had done no injury to anyone, nor acted otherwise than according to truth and justice; therefore he confidently appeals to his God, and cries, *"Help thou me."* This is a golden prayer, as precious as it is short. The words are few, but the meaning is full. Help was needed that the persecuted one might avoid the snare, might bear up under reproach, and might act so prudently as to baffle his foes. God's help is our hope. Whoever may hurt us, it matters not so long as the Lord helps us; for if indeed the Lord help us, none can really hurt us. Many a time have these words been groaned out by troubled saints, for they are such as suit a thousand conditions of need, pain, distress, weakness, and sin. "Help, Lord," will be a fitting prayer for youth and age, for labour and suffering, for life and death. No other help is sufficient, but God's help is all-sufficient and we cast ourselves upon it without fear.

87. *"They had almost consumed me upon earth."* His foes had almost destroyed him so as to make him altogether fail. If they could they would have eaten him, or burned him alive; anything so that they could have made a full end of the good man. Evidently he had fallen under their power to a large extent, and they had so used that power that he was well nigh consumed. He was almost gone from off the earth; but almost is not altogether, and so he escaped by the skin of his teeth. The lions are chained: they can rage no further than our God permits. The Psalmist perceives the limit of their power: they could only touch his earthly life and earthly goods. Upon earth they almost ate him up, but he had an eternal portion which they could not even nibble at. *"But I forsook not thy precepts."* Nothing could drive him from obeying the Lord. If we stick to the precepts we shall be rescued by the promises. If ill-usage could have driven the oppressed saint from the way of right the purpose of the wicked would have been answered, and we should have heard no more of David. If we are resolved to die sooner than forsake the Lord, we may depend upon it that we shall not die, but shall live to see the overthrow of them that hate us.

88. *"Quicken me after thy lovingkindness."* Most wise, most blessed prayer! If we are revived in our own personal piety we shall be out of reach of our assailants. Our best protection from tempters and persecutors is more life. Lovingkindness

itself cannot do us greater service than by making us to have life more abundantly. When we are quickened we are able to bear affliction, to baffle cunning, and to conquer sin. We look to the lovingkindness of God as the source of spiritual revival, and we entreat the Lord to quicken us, not according to our deserts, but after the boundless energy of his grace. What a blessed word is this "lovingkindness." Take it to pieces, and admire its double force of love. "*So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.*" If quickened by the Holy Ghost we shall be sure to exhibit a holy character. We shall be faithful to sound doctrine when the Spirit visits us and makes us faithful. None keep the word of the Lord's mouth unless the word of the Lord's mouth quickens them. We ought greatly to admire the spiritual prudence of the Psalmist, who does not so much pray for freedom from trial as for renewed life that he may he supported under it. When the inner life is vigorous all is well. David prayed for a sound heart in the closing verse of the last octave, and here he seeks a revived heart; this is going to the root of the matter, by seeking that which is the most needful of all things. Lord let it be heart-work with us, and let our hearts be right with thee.

NOTES ON VERSES 81 TO 88.

The whole eight verses, 81—89.—The eleventh letter, *Caph*, signifies the *hollowed hand*. The expositors, however, looking only to the meaning *curved*, which is but half of its import, explain the section as signifying the act of bowing down in penitence or as noting that the fathers of the Old Testament were like veteran soldiers, stooping with years and toil, and bowed down yet further by the heavy weight of the law, only removable by that coming of Christ for which they prayed. Others extend the notion to the saints of the church, weighed down by the sorrows and cares of this life and therefore desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ. The true meaning is to be sought in the full interpretation of the word; for the hand is hollowed either in order to retain something which actually lies in it, or to receive something about to be placed in it by another. Thus the hand may be God's, as the giver of bounty, or man's, as the receiver of it; and the whole scope of the section, as a prayer for speedy help, is that man holds out his hand as a beggar, supplicating the mercy of God.—*Jerome, Ambrose, and others, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 81.—"*My soul fainteth for thy salvation.*" The word here rendered "*fainteth*" is the same that in Ps. lxxiii. 26 is translated "*faileth*": "My flesh and my heart *faileth*." The idea is, that his strength gave way; he had such an intense *desire* for salvation that he became weak and powerless. Any strong emotion *may* thus prostrate us; and the love of God, the desire of his favour, the longing for heaven may be so intense as to produce this result.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 81.—"*My soul fainteth.*" Fainting is proper to the body, but here it is ascribed to the soul; as also in many other places. The Apostle saith, "Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb. xii. 3); where two words are used, weariness and fainting, both taken from the body. Weariness is a lesser, fainting is a higher degree of deficiency: in weariness, the body requireth some rest or refreshment, when the active power is weakened, and the vital spirits and principles of motion are dulled; but, in fainting, the vital power is contracted, and retireth, and leaveth the outward parts lifeless and senseless. When a man is wearied, his strength is abated; when he fainteth, he is quite spent. These things, by a metaphor, are applied to the soul, or mind. A man is weary, when the fortitude of his mind, his moral or spiritual strength, is broken, or begins to abate, when his soul sits uneasy under sufferings; but when he sinketh under the burden of grievous, tedious, or long affliction, then he is said to faint, when all the reasons and grounds of his comfort are quite spent and he can hold out no longer.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 81.—"*My soul fainteth.*" What is this fainting but the lofty state of raptured contemplation in which the strength of heavenly affections weakens those of earth. Just as the ascent into the highest mountains causes a new respiration, as when Daniel had a great vision from God, he tells us "he fainted and was sick certain days."—*E. Paxton Hood*, 1871.

Verse 81.—"*My soul fainteth for thy salvation; but I hope.*" Believe under a cloud, and wait for him when there is no moonlight nor starlight. Let faith live and breathe, and lay hold of the sure salvation of God, when clouds and darkness are about you, and appearance of rotting in the prison before you. Take heed of unbelieving hearts, which can father lies upon Christ. Beware of "Doth his promise fail for evermore?" for it was a man, and not God said it. Who dreameth that a promise of God can fail, fall aswoon, or die? Who can make God sick, or his promises weak? When we are pleased to seek a plea with Christ, let us plead that we hope in him. O stout word of faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" O sweet epitaph, written upon the grave-stone of a departed believer, namely, "I died hoping, and my dust and ashes believe in life!" Faith's eyes, that can see through a mill-stone, can see through a gloom* of God, and under it read God's thoughts of love and peace. Hold fast Christ in the dark; surely ye shall see the salvation of God. Your adversaries are ripe and dry for the fire. Yet a little while, and they shall go up in a flame; the breath of the Lord, like a river of brimstone, shall kindle about them.—*Samuel Rutherford*, 1600—1661.

Verse 81.—"*For thy salvation.*" Understood in a higher sense, the holy man longs for the coming of the Saviour in the flesh.—*Cornelius Jansen.*

* Frown.

Verse 81.—"*Thy salvation.*" A believer in God, how afflicted so ever he be, seeketh not to be delivered but in a way allowed by God; "*My soul fainteth for thy salvation*"; or, till thou deliver me in thy good way.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 81.—"*I hope in thy word.*" David knew where he moored his ship. Hope without a promise is like an anchor without ground to hold by; but David's hope fixed itself upon the divine word.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 81.—"*I hope in thy word:*" *i.e.* I hope beyond anything I understand, and beyond anything I can possibly do, and beyond anything I deserve, and beyond all carnal and spiritual consolations, for I desire and look for Thee only. I seek Thee, not Thine: I long to hear "*Thy word,*" that I may obey it in patience and meekness.—*Le Blanc.*

Verses 81, 83.—It is good in all times of persecution or affliction to have an eye both on the promises and on the precepts; for the looking to the promise doth encourage to hope, and the eyeing of the precepts doth prove the hope to be sound. The Psalmist *hoped in the word* (verse 81), and (verse 83), *he forgot not the statutes.* —*David Dickson.*

Verse 82.—"*Mine eyes fail for thy word.*" Has a mother promised to visit her son or daughter? should she not be able to go, the remark of the son or daughter will be: "Alas! my mother promised to come to me: how long have I been looking for her? But a speck has grown on my eye." "I cannot see, my eyes have failed me"; that is, by looking so intensely for her coming.—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 82.—"*Mine eyes fail for thy word.*" He was continuously lifting the eyes to heaven, looking for help from God. He was so perpetually doing this, that at length the eyes themselves became dim.

"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" He was saying this in his heart; he was saying this with his mouth; he was saying the same thing with his eyes perpetually looking up to heaven.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 82.—"*For thy word.*" The children of God make more of a promise than others do; and that upon a double account: partly, because they value the blessing promised; partly, because they are satisfied with the assurance given by God's word; so that, whereas others pass by these things with a careless eye, their souls are lifted up to the constant and earnest expectation of the blessing promised. It is said of the hireling, that he must have his wages before the sun go down, because he is poor and hath set his heart upon it (Deut. xxiv. 15); or, as it is in the Hebrew, lifted up his soul to it, meaning thereby both his desire and hope. He esteemeth his wages; for it is the solace of his labours, and the maintenance of his life; and he assuredly expecteth it, upon the promise and covenant of him who setteth him awork. So it is with the children of God; they esteem the blessings promised, and God's word giveth them good assurance that they do not wait upon him in vain.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 82.—"*Saying, When.*" The same spirit of faith which teaches a man to cry earnestly, teaches him to wait patiently; for as it assures him that mercy is in the Lord's hand, so it assures him, it will come forth in the Lord's time.—*John Mason,* 1688.

Verse 82.—"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" It is a customable manner of God's working with his children, to delay the answer to their prayers, and to suspend the performance of his promises: not because he is unwilling to give, but because he will have them better prepared to receive. *Tardius dando quod petimus instantia nobis orationis indicit:*† he is slow to give that which we seek, that we should not seek slowly, but may be awakened to instancy and fervency in prayer, which he knows to be the service most acceptable unto him, and most profitable unto ourselves. —*William Cowper.*

Verse 82.—"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" Let us complain not *of* God, but *to* God. Complaints of God give a vent to murmuring; but complaints to God, to faith, hope, and patience.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 82.—The prophet, to prevent it from being supposed that he was too effeminate and faint-hearted, intimates that his fainting was not without cause. In asking God, "*When wilt thou comfort me?*" he shows, with sufficient plainness, that he was for a long time, as it were, cast off and forsaken.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 82.—"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" The people of God are sometimes

† Chrysostom.

very disconsolate, and need comforting, through the prevalence of sin, the power of Satan's temptations, the hidings of God's face, and a variety of afflictions, when they apply to God for comfort, who only can comfort them, and who has set them to do it; but they are apt to think it long, and enquire, as David here, when it will be.—*John Gill.*

Verse 82.—"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" A poor woman had been long time questioning herself, and doubting of her salvation; when at last the Lord made it good unto her soul that Christ was her own, then her minister said unto her, The Lord will not always give his children a cordial, but he hath it ready for them when they are fainting.—*Thomas Hooker.*

Verse 82.—"*When wilt thou comfort me?*" Comfort is necessary because a great part of our temptations lies in troubles, as well as allurements. Sense of pain may discompose us as well as pleasure entice us. The world is a persecuting as well as a tempting world. The flesh troubleth as well as enticeth. The Devil is a disquieting as well as an ensnaring Devil. But yet comfort, though necessary, is not so necessary as holiness: therefore, though comfort is not to be despised, yet sincere love to God is to be preferred, and, though it be not dispensed so certainly, so constantly, and in so high a degree in this world, we must be contented. The Spirit's comforting work is oftener interrupted than the work of holiness; yet so much as is necessary to enable us to serve God in this world we shall assuredly receive.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 83.—"*A bottle in the smoke.*" Sleep was out of the question, for I was . . . almost smothered with the smoke from a wood fire, for there was no chimney. I was indeed "*like a bottle in the smoke,*" turned black and dried almost to cracking; for this was something of what the Psalmist had in view. The bottles being of leather, and being hung up in rooms with large fires of wood, and without chimneys, they became smoke-dried, shrivelled, and unfit for use.—*From "My Wanderings," by John Gadsby,* 1860.

Verse 83.—"*Like a bottle in the smoke.*" The tent of a common Arab is so smoky a habitation, that I consider the expression of *a bottle in the smoke,* to be equivalent to that of *a bottle in the tent of an Arab.* There was a fire, we find, in that Arab tent to which Bishop Pococke was conducted when he was going to Jerusalem. How smoky must such an habitation be, and how black all its utensils! Le Bruyn in going from Aleppo to Scanderoon was made sufficiently sensible of this: for being obliged to pass a whole night in a hut of reeds, in the middle of which there was a fire, to boil a kettle of meat that hung over it, and to bake some bread among the ashes, he found the smoke intolerable, the door being the only place by which it could get out of the hut.

To the *blackness* of a goat-skin bottle, in a tent, but to the *meanness* also of such a drinking-vessel, the Psalmist seems to refer, and it was a most natural image for him to make use of, driven from among the vessels of silver and gold in the palace of Saul, to live as the Arabs do and did, and consequently often obliged to drink out of a smoked leather-bottle.—*Thomas Harmer,* 1719—1788.

Verse 83.—"*For I am become like a bottle in the smoke.*" A bottle in the smoke has very little inflation, fatness, moisture, beauty. Thus God wastes away, debases, and empties his people, while he exercises them with tribulations and the disquiet of hoping and waiting. The glory and eagerness of the flesh must be emptied, that the Divine gifts may find room, and the remembrance of the commandments of God may be restrained, which cannot be well kept in bottles which are swollen, inflated, and filled.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 83.—"*A bottle in the smoke.*" One object amongst the ancients of such exposure was to mellow the wine by the gradual ascent of the heat and smoke from the fire over which the skin was suspended; and thus the words teach us the uses of affliction in ripening and improving the soul.—*Rosenmüller, quoted in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 83.—"*For I am become like a bottle in the smoke,*" etc. Satan can afflict the *body* by the *mind.* For these two are so closely bound together that their good and bad estate is shared between them. If the heart be merry the countenance is cheerful, the strength is renewed, the bones do flourish like an herb. If the heart be troubled, the health is impaired, the strength is dried up, the marrow of the bones wasted, etc. Grief in the heart is like a moth in the garment, it insensibly consumeth the body and disordereth it. This advantage of weakening the body

falls into Satan's hands by necessary consequence, as the prophet's ripe figs, that fell into the mouth of the eater. And surely he is well pleased with it, as he is an enemy both to body and soul. But 'tis a greater satisfaction to him, in that as he can make the sorrows of the mind produce the weakness and sickness of the body; so can he make the distemper of the body (by a reciprocal requital) to augment the trouble of the mind. How little can a sickly body do? it disables a man for all services; he cannot oft pray, nor read, nor hear. Sickness takes away the sweetness and comfort of religious exercises; this gives occasion for them to think the worse of themselves; they think the soul is weary of the ways of God when the body cannot hold out.—*Richard Gilpin, in "A Treatise of Satan's Temptations,"* 1677.

Verse 83.—*"Like a bottle in the smoke."* In this did the afflicted Psalmist find a striking emblem of his own spiritual state. He waited for the Lord to come. In spirit he was dried up by pressure upon him; and he still waited for the Lord to come, declaring his shrivelled condition. Perhaps his outward man partook of the same sad qualities at this time. . . . The outward appearance of the man of God, to which he may be alluding, was, however, but the semblance of his spiritual nature at this period, whatever may have been the visible effects. David was exposed to the calumnious reports of evil-minded men, and to the hot persecution of relentless enemies, till the effect upon his mind was such that his whole spiritual nature resembled, in his own mind, a skin hung up in the smoke for a length of time. Not only was he shrivelled in public estimation, but also in his own mind; not indeed because at this time, and on the ground of the charges made against him, he felt that he deserved it; but because so incessant and multifarious was the bitter invasion of his spirit, that even with all his faith in God, he well-nigh literally sunk under it. The term given in our translation to the original would imply, that he bore himself well notwithstanding—*"For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes."* Whereas the words rendered more literally would convey the import that all this happened to him even while he was in the very way of duty: *"I am become like a bottle in the smoke—I do not forget thy statutes."* He was directly in the way of the Lord's appointments for all salvation; yet trouble came. It is sad when our spiritual man becomes shrivelled and dried up because of our falling into sin, or because of guilty omissions; but here seems to be a falling off of the spiritual man, and of the physical man, while the believer is conscious that he is not forgetting the statutes of his gracious God.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 83.—Observe here the difference between the beauty and strength of the body and of the soul: the beauty of the soul groweth fairer by afflictions, whereas that of the body is blasted. David was a bottle shrivelled and shrunk up; yet the holy frame of his soul was not altered; his beauty was gone, but not his grace.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 83.—*"I am become like a bottle in the frost"* (so the Seventy translate it). When spiritual desires burn, carnal desires without doubt cool: on this account followeth, *"Since I am become like a bottle in the frost I do not forget thy righteousness."* Truly he desireth this mortal flesh to be understood by the bottle, the heavenly blessing by the frost, whereby the lusts of the flesh as it were by the binding of the frost become sluggish: and hence it ariseth that the righteousnesses of God do not slip from the memory so long as we do not meditate apart from them; since what the apostle saith (Rom. xiii. 14) is brought to pass: "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Therefore when he had said, *"For I have become like a bottle in the frost,"* he added, *"and I do not forget thy righteousnesses,"* that is, I forget them not, because I have become such. For the fervour of lust had cooled, that the memory of love might glow.—*Augustine.*

Verse 84.—*"How many are the days of thy servant?"* etc. Some read the two clauses apart, as if the first were a general complaint of the brevity of human life, such as is to be met with in other Psalms, and more frequently in the book of Job; and next in their opinion, there follows a special prayer of the Psalmist that God would take vengeance upon his enemies. But I rather prefer joining the two clauses together, and limit both to David's afflictions; as it it had been said, Lord, how long hast thou determined to abandon thy servant to the will of the ungodly? when wilt thou set thyself in opposition to their cruelty and outrage, in order to take vengeance upon them? The Scriptures often use the word *"days"* in this sense. . . . By the use of the plural number is denoted a determinate portion of time, which, in other places, is compared to the "days of an hireling": Job xiv. 6;

Isaiah xvi. 14. The Psalmist does not, then, bewail in general the transitory life of man, but he complains that the time of his state of warfare in this world had been too long protracted; and, therefore, he naturally desires that it might be brought to a termination. In expostulating with God about his troubles, he does not do so obstinately, or with a murmuring spirit; but still, in asking how long it will be necessary for him to suffer, he humbly prays that God would not delay to succour him.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 84.—"*When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*" He declares that he does not doubt but that there will be at some period an end to his afflictions, and that there will be a time in which his haters and enemies will be judged and punished. He assumes the fact and therefore enquires the date. Thus in the saints their very impatience of delay does itself prove their confidence of future salvation and deliverance.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 84.—"*When wilt thou execute judgment,*" etc. This is an ordinary prayer, not against any certain persons, but rather generally against God's enemies, and their evil courses. For the Lord executeth judgment upon his children for their conversion, as Paul (Acts ix.), and upon the wicked for their confusion. He prayeth against them that belonged not to God, and yet not so much against their persons as their evil causes; and no otherwise against their persons than as they are joined with the evil causes. Thus we may pray for the confusion of God's enemies; otherwise we cannot.—*R. Greenham.*

Verse 84.—In this verse there is none of the ten words used in reference to God's law.—*Adam Clarke.* [Is not judgment one of them?—C. H. S.]

Verse 85.—"*Pits.*" Hajji said he would tell me a tale or two about crocodiles, and he would begin by telling me how they catch them sometimes. A deep pit, he said, is dug by the side of the river, and then covered with doura straw. The crocodiles fall into these pits, and cannot get out again. . . . . There can be no doubt that formerly pits were dug for the crocodiles, as Hajji described, as is the case still in some parts of the world for other animals. To this custom allusion is made in Ps. vii. 15; ix. 15; x. 2; xxxv. 8; cxli. 10; Prov. xxvi. 27; Eccles. x. 8: etc. "He made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made." Probably also this was the kind of pit referred to in Exod. xxi. 33: "If a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it"; *i.e.*, not cover it effectually; "and an ass or an ox fall therein," etc.

Prisoners were sometimes shut up in pits, and left without water, literally to die of thirst. What a dreadful death! It is said that nothing can be more terrible. How dreadful must be their groans!—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 85.—"*The proud have digged pits.*" It seems strange that a proud man should be a digger of pits; but so it is; for pride for a time can submit itself to gain a greater vantage over him whom it would tread under foot. "The wicked is so proud that he seeks not God, yet he croucheth and boweth, to cause heaps of the poor to fall by his might," Ps. x. 4, 10. So proud Absalom abased himself to meanest subjects that so he might prepare a way to usurpation over his king and father. But mark, he saith not that he had fallen into the pits which his enemies had digged. No, no: in God's righteous judgments, the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands, while the good escape free. "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." Ps. viii. 15, 16. Thus Haman hanselled the gallows which he raised for Mordecai; and Saul when he thought by subtlety to slay David with the Philistine's sword (when he sent him out to seek two hundred of their foreskins in a dowry) was disappointed of his purpose; but he himself at length was slain by the sword.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 85.—Let men beware how they *dig pits* for others. All God's word testifies against such wickedness. How many tests are invented simply for the purpose of entangling men's consciences and furnishing ground for persecution.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 85.—"*Which are not after thy law.*" Hebrew, Not after thy law. It may refer to the men or to the practice. The men walk not according to thy law, and their fraudulent practices are not agreeable to thy law. The law of God condemned pits for tame beasts: Exodus xxi. 33, 34. Though it was lawful for hunters to take wild beasts, yet they were to take heed that a tame beast fell not therein, at their peril.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 85.—"*Which are not after thy law.*" After God's law they could not be while they were doing such things. Perhaps he refers to the deed more than to the men: "The proud have digged pits for me, which is not after thy law"—which is against thy law; and they would seem to do it because it is against thy law—delighting in wickedness as they do. Such men would seem to imbibe the foul spirit which Milton ascribes to the fallen archangel: "Evil, be thou my good." Obviously, however, the words contain this sentiment,—The proud have sought to overthrow me, because they are not obedient to thy law. Hereupon he sets their conduct in the light of God's holy commandments, that the comparison may be made: "*All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully.*" Whatever the Lord did was done in truth; these men acted against his servant without cause, and in so doing they also acted in defiance of his known will.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 85.—"*The wicked have told me fables, but not as thy law*" (So the Septuagint). The special reason why he desires to be freed from the company of the wicked is, because they always tempt the pious by relating the pleasures of the world, which are nothing but fables, filthy, fleeting pleasures, more fallacious than real—nothing like the grand and solid pleasure that always flows from a pious observance of the law of the Lord.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 86.—"*All thy commandments are faithful.*" David setteth down here three points. The one is that God is true; and after that he addeth a protestation of his good conduct and guidance, and of the malice of his adversaries: thirdly, he calleth upon God in his afflictions. Now as concerning the first, he showeth us that although Satan to shake us, and in the end utterly to carry us away, subtilly and cunningly goeth about to deceive us, we must, to the contrary, learn how to know his ambushes, and to keep us from out of them. So often then as we are grieved with adversity and affliction, where must we begin? See Satan how he pitcheth his nets and layeth his ambushes to induce and persuade us to come into them, what sayeth he? Dost thou not see thyself forsaken of thy God? Where are the promises whereunto thou didst trust? Now here thou seest thyself to be a wretched, forlorn creature. So then thou right well seest that God hath deceived thee, and that the promises whereunto thou trustedst appertain nothing at all unto thee. See here the subtlety of Satan. What is now to be done? We are to conclude with David and say, yet God is true and faithful. Let us, I say, keep in mind the truth of God as a shield to beat back whatsoever Satan is able to lay unto our charge. When he shall go about to cause us to deny our faith, when he shall lie about us to make us believe that God thinketh no more of us, or else that it is in vain for us to trust unto his promises; let us know the clean contrary and believe that it is very plain and sound truth which God saith unto us. Although Satan casteth at us never so many darts, although he have never so exceeding many devices against us, although now and then by violence, sometimes with subtilty and cunning, it seemeth in very deed to us that he should overcome us; nevertheless he shall never bring it to pass, for the truth of God shall be made sure and certain in our hearts.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 86.—"*All thy commandments are faithful.*" The Hebrew is *Faithfulness;* that is to say, they are true, sure, equal, infallible. "*They have persecuted me wrongfully:*" no doubt for asserting God's truths and commands, and adhering thereto.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 86.—"*They persecute me wrongfully.*" There is a stress on the word *falsely* (or wrongfully); for that is a true saying of a martyr saint,* "The cause, not the pain, makes the martyr." Wherefore the apostle teaches us, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 86.—"*Help thou me,*" "God help me" is an excellent, comprehensive prayer; it is a pity it should ever be used lightly and as a bye-word.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 87.—"*Almost consumed.*" The lives of good men are full of narrow escapes. The righteous are scarcely saved. Many a time their feet do almost

* Cyprian.

slip. Yet he, who has redeemed them, will not let them so fall that they can rise no more. One of their greatest perils is, a temptation to use unlawful means for terminating their trials.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 87.—It should be noticed that he says *"upon the earth:"* for it shows, that even if his enemies had taken away his life on earth, he nevertheless confidently looked for another life in heaven, and that already he had by faith entered into heaven, and was living a heavenly life; so that if the life of the body should be taken away, it was not to be regarded as an evil. They who live such a life speedily recover from despair.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verse 88.—*"Quicken me after thy lovingkindness."* Finally, the man of God appears entreating to be quickened, that so he may be enabled to keep the divine testimony. . . . Here is a last resort, but it is a sure one. Let the living principles of divine grace be imparted to the soul, and the believer will be raised above dismay at the face of men. How does the spiritual mind triumph over even the infirmities of the body! We may behold this from the death-bed of the believer, and we may recall this in the lives and deaths of many eminent ones. The man of pure mind goes right to the fountain of life. He goes, with understanding, for he takes in the character in which the Lord hath spoken of himself: *"Quicken me after thy lovingkindness."* All at once he lays aside thought of his enemies; he is present with his God. His desire is to rise into higher spiritual existence, that he may hold closer communion with the Father of lights with whom there is no variableness. —*John Stephen.*

Verse 88.—*"Quicken me,"* etc. He had prayed before, "Quicken me in thy righteousness" (verse 40); but here "Quicken me after thy lovingkindness." The surest token of God's good-will towards us is his good work in us.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 88.—*"Quicken me."* Many a time in this Psalm doth David make this petition; and it seems strange that so often he should acknowledge himself a dead man, and desire God to quicken him. But so it is unto the child of God: every desertion and decay of strength is a death. So desirous are they to live unto God, that when they fail in it, and find any inability in their souls to serve God as they would, they account themselves but dead, and pray the Lord to quicken them.— *William Cowper.*

Verse 88.—*"The testimony of thy mouth."* The title here given to the directory of our duty—*"The testimony of God's mouth,"* gives increasing strength to our obligations. Thus let every word we read or hear be regarded as coming directly from the "mouth of God" (John vi. 63). What reverence! what implicit submission does it demand! May it ever find us in the posture of attention, humility, and faith! each one of us ready to say, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."—*Charles Bridges.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 89 TO 96.

FOR ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

90 Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all *are* thy servants.

92 Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

93 I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

94 I *am* thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: *but* I will consider thy testimonies.

96 I have seen an end of all perfection: *but* thy commandment *is* exceeding broad.

89. *"For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."* The strain is more joyful, for experience has given the sweet singer a comfortable knowledge of the word of the Lord, and this makes a glad theme. After tossing about on a sea of trouble the Psalmist here leaps to shore and stands upon a rock. Jehovah's word is not fickle nor uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. Man's teachings change so often that there is never time for them to be settled; but the Lord's word is from of old the same, and will remain unchanged eternally. Some men are never happier than when they are unsettling everything and everybody; but God's mind is not with them. The power and glory of heaven have confirmed each sentence which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and so confirmed it that to all eternity it must stand the same,—settled in heaven, where nothing can reach it. In the former section David's soul fainted, but here the good man looks out of self and perceives that the Lord fainteth not, neither is weary, neither is there any failure in his word.

The verse takes the form of an ascription of praise: the faithfulness and immutability of God are fit themes for holy song, and when we are tired with gazing upon the shifting scene of this life, the thought of the immutable promise fills our mouth with singing. God's purposes, promises, and precepts are all settled in his own mind, and none of them shall be disturbed. Covenant settlements will not be removed, however unsettled the thoughts of men may become; let us therefore settle it in our minds that we abide in the faith of our Jehovah as long as we have any being.

90. *"Thy faithfulness is unto all generations."* This is an additional glory: God is not affected by the lapse of ages; he is not only faithful to one man throughout his lifetime, but to his children's children after him, yea, and to all generations so long as they keep his covenant and remember his commandments to do them. The promises are ancient things, yet they are not worn out by centuries of use, for the divine faithfulness endureth for ever. He who succoured his servants thousands of years ago still shows himself strong on the behalf of all them that trust in him. *"Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth."* Nature is governed by fixed laws; the globe keeps its course by the divine command, and displays no erratic movements: the seasons observe their predestined order, the sea obeys the rule of ebb and flow, and all things else are marshalled in their appointed order. There is an analogy between the word of God and the works of God, and specially

in this, that they are both of them constant, fixed, and unchangeable. God's word which established the world is the same as that which he has embodied in the Scriptures; by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and specially by him who is emphatically THE WORD. When we see the world keeping its place and all its laws abiding the same, we have herein assurance that the Lord will be faithful to his covenant, and will not allow the faith of his people to be put to shame. If the earth abideth the spiritual creation will abide; if God's word suffices to establish the world surely it is enough for the establishment of the individual believer.

91. *"They continue this day according to thine ordinances."* Because the Lord has bid the universe abide, therefore it stands, and all its laws continue to operate with precision and power. Because the might of God is ever present to maintain them, therefore do all things continue. The word which spake all things into existence has supported them till now, and still supports them both in being and in well-being. God's ordinance is the reason for the continued existence of creation. What important forces these ordinances are! *"For all are thy servants."* Created by thy word they obey that word, thus answering the purpose of their existence, and working out the design of their Creator. Both great things and small pay homage to the Lord. No atom escapes his rule, no world avoids his government. Shall we wish to be free of the Lord's sway and become lords unto ourselves? If we were so, we should be dreadful exceptions to a law which secures the well-being of the universe. Rather while we read concerning all things else—they continue and they serve, let us continue to serve, and to serve more perfectly as our lives are continued. By that word which is settled may we be settled; by that voice which establishes the earth may we be established; and by that command which all created things obey may we be made the servants of the Lord God Almighty.

92. *"Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction."* That word which has preserved the heavens and the earth also preserves the people of God in their time of trial. With that word we are charmed; it is a mine of delight to us. We take a double and treble delight in it, and derive a multiplied delight from it, and this stands us in good stead when all other delights are taken from us. We should have felt ready to lie down and die of our griefs if the spiritual comforts of God's word had not uplifted us; but by their sustaining influence we have been borne above all the depressions and despairs which naturally grow out of severe affliction. Some of us can set our seal to this statement. Our affliction, if it had not been for divine grace, would have crushed us out of existence, so that we should have perished. In our darkest seasons nothing has kept us from desperation but the promise of the Lord: yea, at times nothing has stood between us and self-destruction save faith in the eternal word of God. When worn with pain until the brain has become dazed and the reason well-nigh extinguished, a sweet text has whispered to us its heart-cheering assurance, and our poor struggling mind has reposed upon the bosom of God. That which was our delight in prosperity has been our light in adversity; that which in the day kept us from presuming has in the night kept us from perishing. This verse contains a mournful supposition —*"unless"*; describes a horrible condition—*"perished in mine affliction"*; and implies a glorious deliverance, for he did not die, but lived to proclaim the honours of the word of God.

93.—*"I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me."* When we have felt the quickening power of a precept we never can forget it. We may read it, learn it, repeat it, and think we have it, and yet it may slip out of our minds; but if it has once given us life or renewed that life, there is no fear of its falling from our recollection. Experience teaches, and teaches effectually. How blessed a thing it is to have the precepts written on the heart with the golden pen of experience, and graven on the memory with the divine stylus of grace. Forgetfulness is a great evil in holy things; we see here the man of God fighting against it, and feeling sure of victory because he knew the life-giving energy of the word in his own soul. That which quickens the heart is sure to quicken the memory.

It seems singular that he should ascribe quickening to the precepts, and yet it lies in them and in all the words of the Lord alike. It is to be noted that when the Lord raised the dead he addressed to them the word of command. He said, "Lazarus, come forth," or, "Maid, arise." We need not fear to address gospel precepts to dead sinners, since by them the Spirit gives them life. Remark that the Psalmist does not say that the precepts quickened him, but that the Lord quickened him by their means: thus he traces the life from the channel to the

source, and places the glory where it is due. Yet at the same time he prized the instruments of the blessing, and resolved never to forget them. He had already remembered them when he likened himself to a bottle in the smoke, and now he feels that whether in the smoke or in the fire the memory of the Lord's precepts shall never depart from him.

94. *"I am thine, save me."* A comprehensive prayer with a prevailing argument. Consecration is a good plea for preservation. If we are conscious that we are the Lord's we may be confident that he will save us. We are the Lord's by creation, election, redemption, surrender, and acceptance; and hence our firm hope and assured belief that he will save us. A man will surely save his own child: Lord, save *me*. The need of salvation is better seen by the Lord's people than by any others, and hence their prayer—"save me"; they know that only God can save them, and hence they cry to him alone; and they know that no merit can be found in themselves, and hence they urge a reason fetched from the grace of God,—"I am thine." *"For I have sought thy precepts."* Thus had he proved that he was the Lord's. He might not have attained to all the holiness which he desired, but he had studiously aimed at being obedient to the Lord, and hence he begged to be saved even to the end. A man may be seeking the doctrines and the promises, and yet be unrenewed in heart; but to seek the precepts is a sure sign of grace; no one ever heard of a rebel or a hypocrite seeking the precepts. The Lord had evidently wrought a great work upon the Psalmist, and he besought him to carry it on to completion. Saving is linked with seeking, "save me, for I have sought"; and when the Lord sets us seeking he will not refuse us the saving. He who seeks holiness is already saved; if we have sought the Lord we may be sure that the Lord has sought us, and will certainly save us.

95.—*"The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies."* They were like wild beasts crouching by the way, or highwaymen waylaying a defenceless traveller; but the Psalmist went on his way without considering them, for he was considering something better, namely, the witness or testimony which God has borne to the sons of men. He did not allow the malice of the wicked to take him off from his holy study of the divine word. He was so calm that he could "consider"; so holy that he loved to consider the Lord's "testimonies"; so victorious over all their plots that he did not allow them to drive him from his pious contemplations. If the enemy cannot cause us to withdraw our thoughts from holy study, or our feet from holy walking, or our hearts from holy aspirations, he has met with poor success in his assaults. The wicked are the natural enemies of holy men and holy thoughts; if they could, they would not only damage us but destroy us, and if they cannot do this to-day they will wait for further opportunities, ever hoping that their evil designs may be compassed. They have waited hitherto in vain, and they will have to wait much longer yet; for if we are so unmoved that we do not even give them a thought their hope of destroying us must be a very poor one.

Note the double waiting,—the patience of the wicked who watch long and carefully for an opportunity to destroy the godly, and then the patience of the saint who will not quit his meditations, even to quiet his foes. See how the serpent seed lie in wait as an adder that biteth at the horse's heels; but see how the chosen of the Lord live above their venom, and take no more notice of them than if they had no existence.

96.—*"I have seen an end of all perfection."* He had seen its limit, for it went but a little way; he had seen its evaporation under the trials of life, its detection under the searching glance of truth, its exposure by the confession of the penitent. There is no perfection beneath the moon. Perfect men, in the absolute sense of the word, live only in a perfect world. Some men see no end to their own perfection, but this is because they are perfectly blind. The experienced believer has seen an end of all perfection in himself, in his brethren, in the best man's best works. It would be well if some who profess to be perfect could even see the beginning of perfection, for we fear they cannot have begun aright, or they would not talk so exceeding proudly. Is it not the beginning of perfection to lament your imperfection? There is no such thing as perfection in anything which is the work of man. *"But thy commandment is exceeding broad."* When the breadth of the law is known the notion of perfection in the flesh vanishes: that law touches every act, word, and thought, and is of such a spiritual nature that it judges the motives, desires, and emotions of the soul. It reveals a perfection which convicts us for shortcomings

as well as for transgressions, and does not allow us to make up for deficiencies in one direction by special carefulness in others. The divine ideal of holiness is far too broad for us to hope to cover all its wide arena, and yet it is no broader than it ought to be. Who would wish to have an imperfect law? Nay, its perfection is its glory; but it is the death of all glorying in our own perfection. There is a breadth about the commandment which has never been met to the full by a corresponding breadth of holiness in any mere man while here below; only in Jesus do we see it fully embodied. The law is in all respects a perfect code; each separate precept of it is far-reaching in its hallowed meaning, and the whole ten cover all, and leave no space wherein to please our passions. We may well adore the infinity of divine holiness, and then measure ourselves by its standard, and bow before the Lord in all lowliness, acknowledging how far we fall short of it.

NOTES ON VERSES 89 TO 96.

LAMED.—*Verse* 89.—Here the climax of the delineation of the suppliant's pilgrimage is reached. We have arrived at the centre of the Psalm, and the thread of the connexion is purposely broken off. The substance of the first eleven strophes has evidently been: "Hitherto hath the Lord brought me: shall it be that I now perish?" To this the eleven succeeding strophes make answer, "The Lord's word changeth not; and in spite of all evil forebodings, the Lord will perfect concerning me the work that he hath already begun."—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*, 1860.

Verse 89.—"*For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" These words are usually rendered as making but one proposition; but the accent *athnah* showeth there are two branches; the one asserting the eternity of God; the other, the constancy and permanency of his word. Thus, 1. "*For ever* [*art thou*] *O* LORD." 2. "*Thy word is settled in heaven.*" So the Syriac readeth it; and Geierus, and, after him, others prove and approve this reading. And so this verse and the following do the better correspond one with the other, if we observe beginning and ending: As thou art "for ever, O Lord," and "thy faithfulness is unto all generations," which are exactly parallel. And so also will the last clauses agree: "Thy word is settled in heaven," and, "thou hast established the earth, and it abideth."

It implieth that as God is eternal, so is his word, and that it hath a fit representation both in heaven and in earth: in heaven, in the constant motion of the heavenly bodies; in earth, in the consistency and permanency thereof; that as his word doth stand fast in heaven, so doth his faithfulness on earth, where the afflictions of the godly seem to contradict it.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 89.—"*For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" When Job considers his body turned to dust and worms (Job xix. 19, 25), yet by faith he says, "My Redeemer lives," etc. Even when patience failed in Job, yet *faith* failed not. Though God kill all other graces and comforts, and my soul too, yet he shall not kill my faith, says he. If he separate my soul from my body, yet not faith from my soul. And therefore the just lives by faith, rather than by other graces, because when all is gone, yet faith remains, and faith remains because the *promise* remains: "*For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" And this is the proper and principal meaning of this place.—*Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 89.—"*For ever, O* LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven.*" If we look at God's word of promise, as it is in our unsettled hearts, we dream that it's as ready to waver as our hearts are; as the shadow of the sun and moon in the water seems to shake as much as the water doth which it shines upon. Yet for all this seeming shaking here below, the sun and moon go on in a steadfast course in heaven. So the Psalmist tells us that however our hearts stagger at a promise through unbelief; nay, and our unbelief makes us believe that the promise often is shaken; yet *God's word is settled*, though not *in our hearts*, yet "*in heaven*"; yea, and there "*for ever*," as settled as heaven itself is; yea, more than so; for "heaven and earth may pass," but "not one jot or tittle of the law (and therefore of the gospel) shall fail": Luke xvi. 17.—*Anthony Tuckney*, 1599—1670.

Verse 89.—"*Settled.*" J. M. Good translates the verse as follows—"For ever, O Jehovah, hath thy word given array to the heavens," and observes that the Hebrew word נִצַּב is a military term, and applies to arraying and marshalling the divisions of an army in their proper stations when taking the field. The hosts of heaven are here supposed to be arrayed or marshalled with a like exact order; and to maintain for ever the relative duties imposed on them: while the earth, like the heavens, has as established a march prescribed to it, which it equally fulfils; for all are the servants of the great Creator; and hence, as they change, produce the beautiful regularity of the seasons, the rich returns of harvest, and daily declare the glory of the Lord.

Verse 89.—"*In heaven.*" Whenever you look to heaven, remember that within you have a God, who hath fixed his residence and shown his glory there, and made

it the seat both of his mercy and justice. You have also there a Saviour, who, after he had died for our sins, sat down at the right hand of Majesty, to see his promises accomplished, and by his word to subdue the whole world. There are angels that "do his commandment, hearkening to the voice of his word": Ps. ciii. 20. There are glorified saints, who see God face to face, and dwell with him for evermore, and came thither by the same covenant which is propounded to us, as the charter of our peace and hope. In the outer region of heaven we see the sun and moon, and all the heavenly bodies, move in that fixed course and order wherein God hath set them; and will God show his constancy in the course of nature, and be fickle and changeable in the covenant of grace, wherein he hath disposed the order and method of his mercies?—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 89, 91.—In these verses there is affirmed to be an analogy between the word of God and the works of God. It is said of his "*word*," that it is "*settled in heaven*," and that it sustains its faithfulness from one generation to another. It is said of his "*works*," and more especially of those that are immediately around us, even of the earth which we inhabit, that as it was established at the first so it abideth afterwards. And then, as if to perfect the assimilation between them, it is said of both in the 91st verse, "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants*"; thereby identifying the sureness of that word which proceeded from his lips, with the unfailing constancy of that Nature which was formed and is upholden by his hands.

The constancy of Nature is taught by universal experience, and even strikes the popular eye as the most characteristic of those features which have been impressed upon her. It may need the aid of philosophy to learn how unvarying Nature is in all her processes—how even the seeming anomalies can be traced to a law that is inflexible—how what appears at first to be the caprices of her waywardness, are, in fact, the evolutions of a mechanism that never changes—and that the more thoroughly she is sifted and put to the test by the interrogations of the curious, the more certainly will they find that she walks by a rule which knows no abatement, and perseveres with obedient footstep in that even course from which the eye of strictest scrutiny has never yet detected one hair-breadth of deviation. It is no longer doubted by men of science, that every remaining semblance of irregularity in the universe is due, not to the fickleness of Nature, but to the ignorance of man—that her most hidden movements are conducted with a uniformity as rigorous as *Fate*—that even the fitful agitations of the weather have their law and their principle—that the intensity of every breeze, and the number of drops in every shower, and the formation of every cloud, and all the occurring alternations of storm and sunshine, and the endless shiftings of temperature, and those tremulous varieties of the air which our instruments have enabled us to discover but have not enabled us to explain—that still, they follow each other by a method of succession, which, though greatly more intricate, is yet as absolute in itself as the order of the seasons, or the mathematical courses of astronomy. This is the impression of every philosophical mind with regard to Nature, and it is strengthened by each new accession that is made to science. . . . . But there is enough of patent and palpable regularity in Nature to give also to the popular mind the same impression of her constancy. There is a gross and general experience that teaches the same lesson, and that has lodged in every bosom a kind of secure and steadfast confidence in the uniformity of her processes. The very child knows and proceeds upon it. He is aware of an abiding character and property in the elements around him, and has already learned as much of the fire, and the water, and the food that he eats, and the firm ground that he treads upon, and even of the gravitation by which he must regulate his postures and his movements, as to prove that, infant though he be, he is fully initiated in the doctrine, that Nature has her laws and her ordinances, and that she continueth therein, and the proofs of this are ever multiplying along the journey of human observation; insomuch that when we come to manhood, we read of Nature's constancy throughout every department of the visible world. It meets us wherever we turn our eyes. . . . . God has so framed the machinery of my perceptions, as that I am led irresistibly to expect that everywhere events will follow each other in the very train in which I have ever been accustomed to observe them; and when God so sustains the uniformity of Nature, that in every instance it is rigidly so, he is just manifesting the faithfulness of his character. Were it otherwise, he would be practising a mockery on the expectation which he himself had inspired. God may be said to have promised to every human being that Nature

will be constant—if not by the whisper of an inward voice to every heart, at least by the force of an uncontrollable bias which he has impressed on every constitution. So that, when we behold Nature keeping up its constancy, we behold the God of Nature keeping up his faithfulness ; and the system of visible things with its general laws, and its successions which are invariable, instead of an opaque materialism to intercept from the view of mortals the face of the Divinity, becomes the mirror which reflects upon the truth that is unchangeable, the ordination that never fails. . . . . And so it is, that in our text there are represented together, as if there was a tie of likeness between them—that the same God who is fixed as to the ordinances of Nature, is faithful as to the declarations of his word ; and as all experience proves how firmly he may be trusted for the one, so is there an argument as strong as experience, to prove how firmly he may be trusted for the other. By his work in us he hath awakened the expectation of a constancy in Nature, which he never disappoints. By his word to us, should he awaken the expectation of a certainty in his declarations, this he will never disappoint. It is because Nature is so fixed, that we apprehend the God of Nature to be so faithful. He who never falsifies the hope that hath arisen in every bosom, from the instinct which he himself hath communicated, will never falsify the hope that shall arise in any bosom from the express utterance of his voice. Were he a God in whose hand the processes of nature were ever shifting, then might we conceive him a God from whose mouth the proclamations of grace had the like characters of variance and vacillation. But it is just because of our reliance on the one that we feel so much of repose in our dependence upon the other ; and the same God who is so unfailing in the ordinances of his creation, we hold to be equally unfailing in the ordinances of his word.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 90.—"*Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.*" As he gathered the certainty of God's word from the endurance of heaven, so now he confirms it by considering the foundation of the earth. Since the foundation of the earth, made by the word of God, abides sure, shall we not think that the foundation of our salvation, laid in Jesus Christ, is much more sure ? Though the creatures cannot teach us the way of our salvation (for that we must learn by the word), yet do they confirm that which the word saith, " Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar ; the LORD of hosts is his name : if those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever : " Jerem. xxxi. 35, 36. As there Jeremy gathers the stability of the church from the stability of the creatures ; so here David confirms the certainty of our salvation by the most certain and unchangeable course of creation ; and both of them are amplified by Christ Jesus : " Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot of God's word shall not fall to the ground." Let us therefore be strengthened in faith and give glory to God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 90.—"*Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*" Every time we set foot on the ground, we may remember the stability of God's promises, and it is also a confirmation of faith. Thus,—

1. The stability of the earth is the effect of God's word ; this is the true pillar upon which the earth standeth ; for he upholdeth all things by the word of his power ; " For he spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast " : Ps. xxxiii. 9. Now, his word of power helpeth us to depend upon his word of promise.

2. Nothing appeareth whereon the globe of the earth should lean and rest : " He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing : " Job xxvi. 7. Now, that this vast and ponderous body should lean upon the fluid air as upon a firm foundation, is matter of wonder ; the question is put in the book of Job : " Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened ? or who laid the corner-stone thereof ? " ch. xxxviii. 6. Yet firm it is, though it hang as a ball in the air. . . . Now, since his word beareth up such a weight, and all the church's weight, and our own burden leaneth on the promise of God, he can, by the power of his word, bear up all without visible means. Therefore his people may trust his providence ; he is able to support them in any distresses, when no way of help appeareth.

3. The firmness and stability offereth itself to our thoughts. The earth abideth in the same seat and condition wherein God left it, as long as the present course

and order of nature is to continue: Ps. civ. 5. God's truth is as immovable as the earth: Ps. cxvii. 2. Surely if the foundation of the earth abideth sure, the foundation of our salvation, laid by Jesus Christ, is much more sure.

4. The stability remains in the midst of changes: Eccles. i. 4. All things in the world are subject to many revolutions, but God's truth is one and the same.

5. In upholding the frame of the world, all those attributes are seen, which are a firm stay to a believer's heart, such as wisdom, power, and goodness. The covenant of grace is as sure as the covenant made after the deluge. We cannot look upon this earth without seeing therein a display of those same attributes which confirm our faith, in waiting upon God till his promises be fulfilled to us.—*Condensed from T. Manton.*

Verse 90.—"*It abideth.*" Creation is as the mother, and Providence the nurse which preserveth all the works of God. God is not like man; for man, when he hath made a work, cannot maintain it: he buildeth a ship, and cannot save it from shipwreck; he edifies a house, but cannot keep it from decay. It is otherwise with God; we daily see his conserving power, upholding his creatures; which should confirm us that he will not cast us off, nor suffer us to perish (since we are the works of his hands) if we so depend upon him, and give him glory as our Creator, Conserver, and Redeemer.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 91.—"*They continue this day according to thine ordinances,*" etc. Which of the works of God are not pervaded by a beautiful *order?* Think of the succession of day and night. Think of the revolution of the seasons. Think of the stars as they walk in their majestic courses,—one great law of harmony "binding the sweet influence of the Pleiades, ... and guiding Arcturus with his sons": Job xxxviii. 31, 32. Look upwards, amid the magnificence of night, to that crowded concave,—worlds piled on worlds—and yet see the calm grandeur of that stately march;—not a discordant note there to mar the harmony, though wheeling at an inconceivable velocity in their intricate and devious orbits! These heavenly sentinels all keep their appointed watch-towers. These Levites in the upper firmament, light their altar fires "at the time of the evening incense," and quench them again, when the sun, who is appointed to rule the day, walks forth from his chamber. "These wait all upon thee": Ps. civ. 27. "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*"—*J. R. Macduff, in "Sunsets on the Hebrew Mountains,"* 1862.

Verse 91.—"*They continue this day according to thine ordinances.*" Man may destroy a plant, but he is powerless to force it into disobedience to the laws given it by the common Creator. "If," says one, "man would employ it for his use, he must carefully pay attention to its wants and ways, and bow his own proud will to the humblest grass at his feet. Man may forcibly obstruct the path of a growing twig, but it turns quietly aside, and moves patiently and irresistibly on its appointed way." Do what he may, turf will not grow in the tropics, nor the palm bear its fruit in a cold climate. Rice refuses to thrive out of watery swamps, or cotton to form its fleece of snowy fibres where the rain can reach them. Some of the handsomest flowers in the world, and stranger still, some of the most juicy and succulent plants with which we are acquainted, adorn the arid and desolate sands of the Cape of Good Hope, and will not flourish elsewhere. If you twist the branch of a tree so as to turn the under surface of its leaves towards the sky, in a very little while all those leaves will turn down and assume their appointed position. This process will be performed sooner or later, according to the heat of the sun and the flexibility of the leaves, but none the less it will surely take place. You cannot induce the Sorrowful tree of India to bloom by day, or cause it to cease all the year round from loading the night air with the rich perfume of its orange-like flowers. The philosopher need not go far to find the secret of this. The Psalmist declares it when, speaking of universal nature, he traces the true cause of its immutable order. God he says, "hath established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass;" or, as it is in the Prayer-book version, "hath given them a law which shall not be broken": Psalm cxlviii. 6. Truly is it said in another Psalm (cxix. 91), "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*" Wilful man may dare to defy his Maker, and set at nought his wise and merciful commands; but not so all nature besides. Well, indeed, is it for us that his other works have not erred after the pattern of our rebellion; that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter,

day and night, with all their accompanying provision, have not ceased! To the precepts imposed upon vegetation when first called into being on creation's third day, it still yields implicit submission, and the tenderest plant will die rather than transgress. What an awful contrast to this is the conduct of man, God's noblest work, endowed with reason and a never-dying soul, yet too often ruining his health, wasting and destroying his mental power, defiling his immortal spirit, and, in a word, madly endeavouring to frustrate every purpose for which he was framed.—*James Neil, in "Rays from the Realms of Nature,"* 1879.

Verse 91.—All creatures punctually observe the law he hath implanted on their nature, and in their several capacities acknowledge him their sovereign; they move according to the inclinations he imprinted on them. The sea contains itself in its bounds, and the sun steps not out of his sphere; the stars march in their order: *"They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants."* If he orders things contrary to their primitive nature they obey him. When he speaks the word, the devouring fire becomes gentle, and toucheth not the hair of the children he will preserve; the hunger-starved lions suspend their ravenous nature when so good a morsel as Daniel is set before them; and the sun, which had been in perpetual motion since its creation, obeys the writ of ease God sent in Joshua's time, and stands still.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 91.—*"All are thy servants."* We should consider how great is that perversity by which man only, formed in the image of God, together with reprobate angels, has fallen away from obedience to God; so that what is said of all other creatures cannot be said of him, unless renewed by singular grace.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 91.—*"For all are thy servants."* Since all creatures must serve God, therefore we ought neither to use them for any other purpose, nor turn them to the service of sin. The creature by the sin of our first parents has been made subject to vanity, and groans and longs to be delivered, Rom. viii.: Christians, therefore, who use the creature and the world, should use as not abusing, 1 Cor. vii.; but enjoy them with praise of the divine majesty and goodness, 1 Tim. iv.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 91.—*"All are thy servants."*

Say not, my soul, " From whence
Can God relieve my care? "
Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere.

Thomas T. Lynch, 1855.

Verse 92.—*"Unless thy law had been my delights,"* etc. This text sets out the great benefit and comfort which David found in the law of God in the time of his affliction. It kept him from perishing: *"Had not thy law been my delights, I had perished in my affliction"* . . . . David speaks this (saith Musculus) of the distressful condition he was in when persecuted by Saul, forced to fly to the Philistines, and sometimes to hide himself in the rocks and caves of the earth. It is very likely (saith he) that he had the book of God's law with him, by the reading of which he mitigated and allayed his sorrows, and kept himself pure from communicating with the heathen in their superstitions. The Greek scholiasts say that David uttered these words when driven from Saul, and compelled to live among the Philistines, etc. For he would have been allured to have communicated with them in their impieties had he not carried about him the meditation of the word of God.

The word of God delighted in is the afflicted saint's antidote against ruin and destruction. The word of God is the sick saint's salve, the dying saint's cordial, a precious medicine to keep God's people from perishing in time of affliction. This upheld Jacob from sinking, when his brother Esau came furiously marching to destroy him (Gen. xxxii. 12). He pleaded, " And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good," etc. Thus the promise of God supported him. This also upheld Joshua and enabled him courageously to fight the Lord's battles, because God had said, " He would never leave him nor forsake him " (Josh. i. 5). Melancthon saith that the Landgrave of Hesse told him at Dresden that it had been impossible for him to have borne up under the manifold miseries of so long an imprisonment, *Nisi habuisset consolationem verbo divino in suo corde,* but for the comfort of the Scriptures in his heart.—*Edmund Calamy* (1600—1666), *in "The Godly Man's Ark."*

Verse 92.—Certainly the reading of most part of the Scriptures must needs be a very comfortable thing; and I think a godly heart (disposed as it ought to

be) can hardly tell how to be sad while it does it. For what a comfort is it for a man to read an earthly father's letters sent to him, though they were written long ago? With what care do we keep such letters in our chests? With how much delight do we ever and anon take them out and look upon them? and with how much sorrow do we lose them? Is my love to my *earthly* father so great, and shall my love to my *heavenly* Father be less? Can my heart choose but rejoice and my bones flourish like an herb, as oft as I look upon my Redeemer's last will and testament, whereby I know that he gave me so much, and that he doth so much for me continually, and that I shall be ever with him?

How is David ever and anon talking of his *delight in the law of God*, and in his statutes and testimonies. It was to him instead of all other delights; standing by him when all delights else left him; "*Unless thy law had been my delight* (or, *my very great delight*), *I should then have perished in mine affliction*," ver. 92. Let *princes sit and speak* against him never so much; yet will he meditate in God's statutes, ver. 23. Let him have never so many *persecutors and enemies;* yet will he not decline from God's testimonies, ver. 157. Let him be in a strange place, there shall God's statutes be his song, ver. 54. Let him be a *stranger in the earth* all his life; so that he be not a stranger to God's commandments he cares not, ver. 19. Although he should have never so much *contempt* cast upon him, yet will he not forget God's precepts, ver. 141. Although his *soul* should be *continually in his hand*, yet that should not make him forget God's law. Yea, although he became like *a bottle in the smoke*, yet will he not forget God's precepts, ver. 83. And therefore was it that he rejoiced, because he had been *afflicted* upon this account, that it made him learn God's statutes. He cared for no other *wealth*. "*Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart*," ver. 111. Neither cared he much for *life*, but only to keep God's word, ver. 17. Whatever he had said before, or meant to say next, he still cries, "*Teach me thy statutes*," and, "*I have longed for thy precepts*," etc.; or some such expression or other. He could not forbear to speak of them, for they were still before him, ver. 30. No wonder, then, that he meditated upon them so often, as he saith he did. "*O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day*," ver. 97. And "*Thy testimonies are my meditation*," ver. 99. God's commandments were to David sweeter in his mouth than honey, to talk and discourse of them, ver. 103.—*Zachary Bogan*, 1653.

Verse 92.—The persons to whose *delight* the word of God actually conduces are the children of God, and none else. None but they are prepared to take in the consolation of the word.

1. As they only are spiritually enlightened to discern the great and comfortable things contained in it, enlightened in a manner in which no others are: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14).

2. As they have the highest value for the word of God, this prepares them for receiving consolation from it.

3. As they have their hearts and ways suited to the word of God, this is another reason of the delight they fetch from it. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh," and take pleasure in them; "but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 5). The comforts of the word are spiritual; and only the spiritual heart, as it is renewed by grace, can taste and relish them. The delight which the people of God have from the word, is a privilege peculiar to themselves: and this word hath enough to give delight to all of their number.—*Daniel Wilcox*, 1676—1733.

Verse 92.—"*My delights*." The word signifieth delights in the plural number. Many were the sorrows of David's life; but against them all he found as many comforts and delectations in God's word. With such variety of holy wisdom hath God penned his word, that it hath convenient comfort for every state of life, and therefore the children of God account nothing so dear as it; they prefer it to their appointed food.—*William Cowper*.

Verse 92.—"*Thy law . . . my delights . . . in mine affliction*." I happened to be standing in a grocer's shop one day in a large manufacturing town in the west of Scotland, when a poor, old, frail widow came in to make a few purchases. There never was, perhaps, in that town a more severe time of distress. Nearly every loom was stopped. Decent and respectable tradesmen who had seen better days, were obliged to subsist on public charity. So much money per day (but a trifle

at most) was allowed to the really poor and deserving. The poor widow had received her daily pittance, and she had now come into the shop of the grocer to lay it out to the best advantage. She had but a few coppers in her withered hands. Carefully did she expend her little stock—a pennyworth of this and the other necessary of life nearly exhausted all she had. She came to the last penny, and with a singular expression of heroic contentment and cheerful resignation on her wrinkled face, she said, " Now I must buy oil with this, that I may see to read my Bible during these long dark nights, for it is my only comfort now when every other comfort has gone away."—*Alexander Wallace, in "The Bible and the Working Classes,"* 1853.

Verse 92.—This verse I may call a Perfume against the Plague ; The Sick Man's Salve ; The Afflicted Man's Consolation ; and a blessed Triumph, in and over all troubles.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 93.—"*I will never forget thy precepts,*" etc. *Forgetfulness* must be striven against in every possible way, lest it should gradually creep in, through ingratitude, old age, weakness of mind, or other overwelming cares. See verses 16, 61, 83.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 93.—"*I will never forget thy precepts,*" etc. This afflicted good man is now comforted ; his comfort came from his delight in God's law ; he thinks of it, he feels the force of it, and therefore to the end that he might ever receive the like comforts, he will bind himself by a promise to the Lord that he will never forget his precepts ; adding a reason, namely, that they were to him spirit and life.

"*With them hast thou quickened me.*" Quickened he was, as he saith, by God, but yet also by the word, soundly preached, savingly understood, and particularly applied to the conscience. Thus then doth the power of Christ's death make us to walk on in newness of life. No *aqua vitæ*, or *celestis*, like unto this, by which we have inward peace of conscience, and an outward obedience to God's commandments. David rejoiced in this blessing, so ought we : we desire to be ever quick, and cheerful to all good duties ; it is only God, by his Spirit, in the word, that can give it.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 93.—"*With them thou hast quickened me.*" The quickening Spirit delights to work by means of the word ; but though the word be the means, yet the benefit comes from God : " For with them *thou* hast quickened me." Life comes from the fountain of life. The gospel is a sovereign plaster ; but it is God's hand that must apply it, and make it stick ; make it to be peace, comfort, and quickening to our souls. There is a double quickening, when, from dead, we are made living ; or when, from cold, and sad, and heavy, we are made lively . . . . and so not only have life, but enjoy it more abundantly, according to Christ's gracious promise (John x. 10) ; that they may be living, lively, kept still in vigour. Now, this second quickening may be taken, either more largely, for the vitality of grace ; or, strictly, for actual comfort. Largely taken ; so God quickens by increasing the life of grace ; either internally, by promising the life of grace ; or morally and externally, by promising the life of glory. More strictly, his quickening may be taken for comfort and support in his affliction ; so it is likely to be taken here : he had said immediately before, " Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction" ; and now, " I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me." It was great comfort and support to him ; and therefore he should prize the word as long as he lived.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 93.—"*Thou hast quickened me.*" Leave not off reading the Bible till you find your hearts warmed. Read the word, not only as a history, but labour to be affected with it. Let it not only inform you, but inflame you. " Is not my word like a fire ? saith the Lord " : Jer. xxiii. 29. Go not from the word till you can say as those disciples, " Did not our hearts burn within us ? " Luke xxiv. 32.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 94.—"*I am thine, save me.*" David, a man after God's own heart, would be saved, but not after the manner of the men of this world, that would be saved to be their own and to enjoy themselves at their own will ; but he in being saved would be God's, and at his disposing : "*I am thine, save me.*"

There is a threefold strength in this argument.

1. The *law of nature*, which obligeth a father to be good to his child, the husband to his wife, etc., and God hath subjected himself more unto the law of nature, he

lies more under it, than any of these; and doth more perfectly, fully, and gloriously fulfil this law of nature than any; there is no father like him, no friend, no husband like him. "Can a woman forget her sucking child? yet will I not forget thee:" Isai. xlix. 15. A mother can hardly do it; nature teacheth her to have bowels, and a merciful remembrance towards her child; much more will I, saith God.

2. When we can say to God, "*I am thine*," we plead *the covenant which God hath made with us*, wherein he is become our father and friend: and this is that which was pleaded in Isai. lxiii. 16: "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not (because they are gone, and so have no cognizance of us now); yet thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." See what a conclusion here is made; doubtless thou art our Father, and therefore we call to thee for help.

3. There is this encouragement and strength that the spirit of a man receives in thus arguing with God, *that if he can say in truth, "I am thine," God much more will say to the creature, "I am thine."* If we have so much love to offer ourselves to God, to become his; much more will the love of God make him to become ours; for God loves first, and most, and surest. If mine heart rise toward God, much more is the heart of God toward me; because there love is in the fountain. Never did a spouse speak to her husband, whom her soul loved to the highest, more willingly, and say, "*I am thine*," than the spirit of an upright man saith to God, "*Lord, I am thine.*" And he loves him with a *love of thankfulness*. Hast thou given thyself to me, saith he, and shall I then withhold myself from thee? Hast thou, who art so great, done all this for me, and shall I stand out against thee? The gracious man will willingly acknowledge himself to be the Lord's. The saints often do this: David above twenty times comes with this acknowledgment in this Psalm, and in Psalm cxvi. 16: "*I am thy servant; I am thy servant.*" To say it once was not enough; he saith it again, to show the sincerity of his spirit, and to witness that his heart was fully pleased with this, that he was not his own, but the Lord's. The knowledge of our interest in God doth much further our approaches to God. When a man is once assured, and can say with a clear spirit, "*I am thine*," he will naturally cry, "*Save me.*" Such a man is a man of prayer, he is much in addresses to God, and conversing with him.—*Joseph Symonds*, 1653.

Verse 94.—"*I am thine.*" This is an excellent motive to draw from the Lord help in trouble,—"*I am thine.*" Thine by *creation*, I was made by thee; thine by *adoption*, I was assigned over to thee; thine by *donation*, I was given to thee; thine by *marriage*, I was espoused to thee; thine by *redemption*, I was purchased by thee; thine by *stipulation*, I have vowed myself unto thee.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 94.—"*For I have sought thy precepts.*" See here how David qualifies his protestation: from his earnest affection to the word of God, he proves that he was God's man and not his own servant. It is not words, but affections and actions which must prove us to be the Lord's. *Tuus sum, quia id solum quod tuum est quæsivi:* I am thine because I sought nothing but that which is thine, and how I might please thee. *Mihi in tuis justificationibus est omne patrimonium:* in the observance of thy precepts is all my patrimony.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 95.—"*The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.*" Two things again he notes in his enemies; diligence, in waiting all occasions whereby to do him evil; and cruelty without mercy, for their purpose was to destroy him: wherein, still we see how restless and insatiable is the malice of the wicked against the godly. Daniel's preservation in the lions' den was a great miracle; but it is no less a marvellous work of God, that the godly who are the flock of Christ, are daily preserved in the midst of the wicked, who are but ravening wolves, and thirst for the blood of the saints of God, having a cruel purpose in their heart if they might perform it, utterly to destroy them.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 95.—"*But I will consider thy testimonies.*" It was a grievous temptation to be sought for to be given up to slaughter, but a greater mercy to consider God's testimonies, even then when his life was sought for. Had it not been for the consideration of God's testimonies, a thousand to one he had fallen away.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 96.—"*I have seen an end of all perfection,*" etc. These words are variously rendered and understood by interpreters, who in this variety do very much conspire and agree in the same sense. The *Chaldee* Paraphrase renders

the words thus, "*I have seen an end of all things about which I have employed my care; but thy commandment is very large.*" The *Syriac* version thus, "*I have seen an end of all regions and countries*" (that is, I have found the compass of the habitable world to be finite and limited) "*but thy commandment is of a vast extent.*" Others explain it thus, "*I have seen an end of all perfection,*" that is, of all the things of this world which men value and esteem at so high a rate; of all worldly wisdom and knowledge, of wealth, and honour, and greatness, which do all perish and pass away; "*but thy law is eternal, and still abideth the same*"; or, as the Scripture elsewhere expresses it, "The word of the Lord endureth for ever."—*John Tillotson*, 1630—1694.

Verse 96.—"*I have seen an end of all perfection.*" Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David in his time had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome; Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken; Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled; Absalom, the fairest, deformed.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 96.—"*I have seen an end of all perfection,*" etc. The Psalmist's words offer us a double comfort and encouragement. We may read them in two ways: (1) "I have seen an end of all perfection; *for* thy commandment is exceeding broad"; and (2) "I have seen an end of all perfection, *but* thy commandment is exceeding broad."

Read in the first way, they suggest the animating thought, that our haunting consciousness of imperfection springs from the bright and awful perfection of the Law we are bent on obeying, of the ideal we have set before us. It is not because we are worse than those who are without law, or who are a law unto themselves, that we are restless and dissatisfied with ourselves; but because we measure both ourselves and our fellows by the lofty standard of God's commandment. It is because that commandment is so broad, that we cannot embrace it; it is because it is so high, that we cannot attain to it; it is because it is so perfect, that we cannot perfectly obey it.

But we may read the verse in another way, and still derive comfort and encouragement from it. We may say: "I have seen an end of all perfection in myself, and in the world; *but* thy commandment is exceeding broad: *that* is perfect, though *I* am imperfect, and in its perfection I find the promise of my own." For shall God give a law for human life, and that law remain for ever unfulfilled! Impossible! "The gifts of God are without repentance"—irreversible, never to be lessened or withdrawn. His purpose is not to be made of none effect by our weaknesses and sins. In the Law he has shown us what he would have us to be. And shall we never become what he would have us to be? Can the Law remain for ever without any life that corresponds to it and fulfils it? Nay, God will never take back the fair and perfect ideal of human life depicted in his Law, never retract his purpose to raise the life of man till it touches and fulfils its ideal. And so the very Law which is our despair is our comfort also; for if *that* be perfect *we* must become perfect; its perfection is the pledge of ours.—*From "The Expositor,"* 1876.

Verse 96.—"*I have seen an end of all perfection.*" David's natural eye had seen the end of many human perfections, and the eye of his understanding saw the end of them all. He had seen some actually end, and he saw that all must end. Adam did not continue in that perfection which had no imperfection in it; how then shall any of his children continue in what is at best an imperfect perfection?—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 96.—"*I have seen an end,*" etc. The laws of Lycurgus among the Grecians, and of Numa among the Romans, had somewhat of good in them, but not all; prohibited somewhat that was evil, but not all that was evil. But the Christian religion is of a larger extent, both in its precepts and prohibitions: "*I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" A man with the eye of his body may behold an end of many worldly perfections, of many fair estates, great beauties, large parts, hopeful families; but a man with the eye of his soul (or by faith) may see an end of all earthly perfections. He may see the world in a flame, and all its pomp and pride, and glory, and gallantry, and crowns and sceptres, and riches, and treasures, turned into ashes. He may see the heavens passing away like a scroll, and the elements melting with fervent heat, and the earth, with the things thereon, consumed; and all its perfections, which men doated so much on, vanished into smoke and nothing. It is easy to see to the end of all terrene perfections, but it is difficult, yea, impossible, to see to the end of divine

precepts: *"But thy commandments are exceeding broad,"* of a vast latitude, beyond our apprehension. They are so deep that none can fathom them, Ps. xxxvi. 6, so high that they are established in heaven, Ps. cxix. 48; so long that they endure for ever, 2 Pet. i.; and so broad, that none can measure them. They are not only *"broad,"* but *"exceeding* broad": "higher than heaven, longer than the earth, broader than the sea." The commands of God reach the inward parts, the most secret motions and retired recesses of the soul. They reach all the privy thoughts, they pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb. iv. 12. They reach to all our actions; to those that seem smallest and of less concernment, as well as to those that are greater and of more concernment.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 96.—*"Thy commandment is exceeding broad."* As there is more mercy in the gospel than we are able to comprehend, so there is more holiness in the law than we are able to comprehend. No man ever saw into the depths of that righteousness. There is an infinite holiness in the law. *"I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad."* He speaks not in the concrete, I have seen an end of *perfect things*, but in the abstract, "an end of *perfection*," I have come to the outside or to the very bottom of all (a man may soon travel through all the perfections that are in the world, and either see their end, or see that they end); *"but thy commandment is exceeding broad,"* that is, it is exceedingly broader than any of these perfections; I cannot see the end of it, and I know it shall never have an end. There is a vastness of purity and spiritualness in the law.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 96.—*"Thy commandment is exceeding broad."* It is so by the comprehensive applicableness of its grand, simple rules. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." It is so by the ample order of its special injunctions. Where is there a spot without a signal of the divine will? It is so by laying an authoritative hand on the first principles and origin from which any thing can proceed, in human spirit and action; then it reaches to all things that do or can proceed thence. It asserts a jurisdiction over all thought and inward affection. All language is uttered under this same jurisdiction. All that the world and each man is in action about. And even over what is not done it maintains its authority, and pronounces its dictates and judgments. It is a positive thing with respect to what is negative, omission, non-existence. Like the divine government in the material world, over the wastes, deserts, and barren sands. And from these spaces of nothing (as it were) it can raise up substantial forms of evil, of sin, in evidence against men. As at the resurrection men will rise from empty wastes, where it would not have been suspected that any were concealed. Let a man look back on all his omissions, and think what the divine law can raise from them against him. Thus the law in its exceeding breadth, is vacant nowhere; it is not stretched to this wide extent by chasms and void spaces. If a man could find one such, he might there take his position for sin with impunity, if not with innocence.—*John Foster*, 1768—1843.

Verse 96.—*"Thy commandment is exceeding broad."* In the popular religious literature of the present times, the terms "broad" and "free" are of frequent occurrence. The fascination that surrounds them is enhanced by the use, at the same time, of their opposites, "narrow" and "bigoted." By an adroit manipulation of these terms and their equivalents, the heterodoxy of the day is labouring to stamp out the doctrine and spirit of the evangelical faith, and to allure the Christian multitude within the influence of the spreading rationalistic drift. Going to the market where the heterodox wares are exhibited with labels so attractive, the unsuspecting purchaser soon discovers that "their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter." Is the time not come when the adherents of the true faith should make an effort to wrest from their opponents the monopoly in the use of these terms, which they seem desirous of establishing for themselves? Those who, in the spirit of their Master, abide most closely by, and contend most tenaciously for, the whole faith that has been delivered to the saints, must be the most liberal-minded and catholic; and those who forsake the "old paths" must, in proportion to the extent of their departures, become contracted in their mental grasp, and narrow in their soul. Is not the Bible—the whole Bible—the only manual of Broad-churchism in its truest and highest sense? Is not the revelation of God's Son in us, the great soul-expanding power? "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Must we not infer, from the words of Christ, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," that the mind which apprehends the truth is a home of mental liberty? Does not strict conformity of the life to God's law produce real breadth of character? For *"Thy commandment is exceeding broad."* Is not the gospel system the only true Broad-churchism—"the perfect law of liberty"? Is not the believer—and the more so in proportion to the strength of his faith—the only true Broad-churchman, "increasing with the increase of God," "filled with all the fulness of God"?—*James Kerr, in "The Modern Scottish Pulpit,"* 1880.

Verse 96.—*"Exceeding broad."* Notwithstanding many things do show the way of life to be narrow, yet unto the godly man it is a way of great breadth; though not for sin, yet for duty and delight. He makes haste and progress in it.—*Robert Trail,* 1642—1716.

Verse 96.—Take notice that the law, which is your mark, is *exceeding broad.* And yet not the more easy to be hit; because you must aim to hit it, in every duty of it, with a performance of equal breadth, or else you cannot hit it at all.—*Stephen Marshall.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 97 TO 104.

O HOW love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day.

98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for they testimonies *are* my meditation.

100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

97. *"O how love I thy law!"* It is a note of exclamation. He loves so much that he must express his love, and in making the attempt he perceives that it is inexpressible—and therefore cries, "O how I love!" We not only reverence but love the law, we obey it out of love, and even when it chides us for disobedience we love it none the less. The law is God's law, and therefore it is our love. We love it for its holiness, and pine to be holy; we love it for its wisdom, and study to be wise; we love it for its perfection, and long to be perfect. Those who know the power of the gospel perceive an infinite loveliness in the law as they see it fulfilled and embodied in Christ Jesus. *"It is my meditation all the day."* This was both the effect of his love and the cause of it. He meditated in God's word because he loved it, and then loved it the more because he meditated in it. He could not have enough of it, so ardently did he love it: all the day was not too long for his converse with it. His matin prayer, his noonday thought, his evensong were all out of Holy Writ; yea, in his worldly business he still kept his mind saturated with the law of the Lord. It is said of some men that the more you know them the less you admire them; but the reverse is true of God's word. Familiarity with the word of God breeds affection, and affection seeks yet greater familiarity. When "thy law," and "my meditation" are together all the day, the day grows holy, devout, and happy, and the heart lives with God. David turned away from all else; for in the preceding verse he tells us that he had seen an end of all perfection; but he turned in unto the law and tarried there the whole day of his life on earth, growing henceforth wiser and holier.

98. *"Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies."* The commands were his book, but God was his teacher. The letter can make us knowing, but only the divine Spirit can make us wise. Wisdom is knowledge put to practical use. Wisdom comes to us through obedience: "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine." We learn not only from promise, and doctrine, and sacred history, but also from precept and command; in fact, from the commandments we gather the most practical wisdom, and that which enables us best to cope with our adversaries. A holy life is the highest wisdom and the surest defence. Our enemies are renowned for subtlety, from the first father of them, the old serpent, down to the last cockatrice that has been hatched from the egg; and it would be vain for us to try to be a match with them in the craft and mystery of cunning, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. We must go to another school and learn of a different instructor, and then by uprightness we shall baffle fraud, by simple truth we shall vanquish deep-laid scheming, and by open candour we shall defeat slander. A thoroughly straightforword man, devoid of all policy, is a terrible puzzle to diplomatists; they suspect him of a subtle duplicity through which they cannot see, while he, indifferent to their suspicions, holds on the even tenor of his way, and baffles all their arts. Yes, "honesty is the best policy." He who is taught of God has a practical wisdom such as malice cannot supply to the crafty; while harmless as a dove he also exhibits more than the serpent's wisdom.

"For they are ever with me." He was always studying or obeying the commandments; they were his choice and constant companions. If we wish to become proficient we must be indefatigable. If we keep the wise law ever near us we shall become wise, and when our adversaries assail us we shall be prepared for them with that ready wit which lies in having the word of God at our fingers' ends. As a soldier in battle must never lay aside his shield, so must we never have the word of God out of our minds; it must be ever with us.

99. *"I have more understanding than all my teachers."* That which the Lord had taught him had been useful in the camp, and now he finds it equally valuable in the schools. Our teachers are not always to be trusted; in fact, we may not follow any of them implicitly, for God holds us to account for our personal judgments. It behoves us then to follow closely the chart of the Word of God, that we may be able to save the vessel when even the pilot errs. If our teachers should be in all things sound and safe, they will be right glad for us to excel them, and they will ever be ready to own that the teaching of the Lord is better than any teaching which they can give us. Disciples of Christ who sit at his feet are often better skilled in divine things than doctors of divinity. *"For thy testimonies are my meditation."* This is the best mode of acquiring understanding. We may hear the wisest teachers and remain fools, but if we meditate upon the sacred word we must become wise. There is more wisdom in the testimonies of the Lord than in all the teachings of men if they were all gathered into one vast library. The one book outweighs all the rest.

David does not hesitate to speak the truth in this place concerning himself, for he is quite innocent of self-consciousness. In speaking of his understanding he means to extol the law and the Lord, and not himself. There is not a grain of boasting in these bold expressions, but only a sincere childlike desire to set forth the excellence of the Lord's word. He who knows the truths taught in the Bible will be guilty of no egotism if he believes himself to be possessed of more important truth than all the agnostic professors buried and unburied.

100. *"I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts."* The men of old age, and the men of old time, were outdone by the holier and more youthful learner. He had been taught to observe in heart and life the precepts of the Lord, and this was more than the most venerable sinner had ever learned, more than the philosopher of antiquity had so much as aspired to know. He had the word with him, and so outstripped his foes; he meditated on it, and so outran his friends; he practised it, and so outshone his elders. The instruction derived from Holy Scripture is useful in many directions, superior from many points of view, unrivalled everywhere and in every way. As our soul may make her boast in the Lord, so may we boast in his word. "There is none like it: give it me," said David as to Goliath's sword, and we may say the same as to the word of the Lord. If men prize antiquity they have it here. The ancients are had in high repute, but what did they all know compared with that which we perceive in the divine precepts? "The old is better" says one: but the oldest of all is the best of all, and what is that but the word of the Ancient of days.

101. *"I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word."* There is no treasuring up the holy word unless there is a casting out of all unholiness: if we keep the good word we must let go the evil. David had zealously watched his steps and put a check upon his conduct,—he had refrained his feet. No one evil way could entice him, for he knew that if he went astray but in one road he had practically left the way of righteousness, therefore he avoided every false way. The by-paths were smooth and flowery, but he knew right well that they were evil, and so he turned his feet away, and held on along the straight and thorny pathway which leads to God. It is a pleasure to look back upon self-conquests,—"I have refrained," and a greater delight still to know that we did this out of no mere desire to stand well with our fellows, but with the one motive of keeping the law of the Lord. Sin avoided that obedience may be perfected is the essence of this verse; or it may be that the Psalmist would teach us that there is no real reverence for the book where there is not carefulness to avoid every transgression of its precepts. How can we keep God's word if we do not keep our own works from becoming vile?

102. *"I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me."* They are well taught whom God teaches. What we learn from the Lord we never forget. God's instruction has a practical effect,—we follow his way when he teaches us;

and it has an abiding effect,—we do not depart from holiness. Read this verse in connection with the preceding and you get the believer's "I have," and his "I have not": he is good both positively and negatively. What he did, namely, "refrained his feet," preserved him from doing that which otherwise he might have done, namely, "departed from thy judgments." He who is careful not to go an inch aside will not leave the road. He who never touches the intoxicating cup will never be drunk. He who never utters an idle word will never be profane. If we begin to depart a little we can never tell where we shall end. The Lord brings us to persevere in holiness by abstinence from the beginning of sin; but whatever be the method he is the worker of our perseverance, and to him be all the glory.

103. "*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*" He had not only heard the words of God, but fed upon them: they affected his palate as well as his ear. God's words are many and varied, and the whole of them make up what we call "the word": David loved them each one, individually, and the whole of them as a whole; he tasted an indescribable sweetness in them. He expresses the fact of their sweetness, but as he cannot express the degree of their sweetness he cries, "How sweet!" Being God's words they were divinely sweet to God's servant; he who put the sweetness into them had prepared the taste of his servant to discern and enjoy it. David makes no distinction between promises and precepts, doctrines and threatenings; they are all included in God's words, and all are precious in his esteem. Oh for a deep love to all that the Lord has revealed, whatever form it may take.

"*Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.*" When he did not only eat but also speak the word, by instructing others, he felt an increased delight in it. The sweetest of all temporal things fall short of the infinite deliciousness of the eternal word: honey itself is outstripped in sweetness by the word of the Lord. When the Psalmist fed on it he found it sweet; but when he bore witness of it it became sweeter still. How wise it will be on our part to keep the word on our palate by meditation and on our tongue by confession. It must be sweet to our taste when we think of it, or it will not be sweet to our mouth when we talk of it.

104. "*Through thy precepts I get understanding.*" God's direction is our instruction. Obedience to the divine will begets wisdom of mind and action. As God's way is always best, those who follow it are sure to be justified by the result. If the Lawgiver were foolish his law would be the same, and obedience to such a law would involve us in a thousand mistakes; but as the reverse is the case, we may count ourselves happy to have such a wise, prudent, and beneficial law to be the rule of our lives. We are wise if we obey and we grow wise by obeying!

"*Therefore I hate every false way,*" Because he had understanding, and because of the divine precepts, he detested sin and falsehood. Every sin is a falsehood; we commit sin because we believe a lie, and in the end the flattering evil turns a liar to us and we find ourselves betrayed. True hearts are not indifferent about falsehood, they grow warm in indignation; as they love the truth, so they hate the lie. Saints have a universal horror of all that is untrue, they tolerate no falsehood or folly, they set their faces against all error of doctrine or wickedness of life. He who is a lover of one sin is in league with the whole army of sins; we must have neither truce nor parley with even one of these Amalekites, for the Lord hath war with them from generation to generation, and so must we. It is well to be a good hater. And what is that? A hater of no living being, but a hater of "every false way." The way of self-will, of self-righteousness, of worldliness, of pride, of unbelief, of hypocrisy,—these are all false ways, and therefore not only to be shunned, but to be abhorred.

This final verse of the strophe marks a great advance in character, and shows that the man of God is growing stronger, bolder, and happier than aforetime. He has been taught of the Lord, so that he discerns between the precious and the vile, and while he loves the truth fervently he hates falsehood intensely. May all of us reach this state of discrimination and determination, so that we may greatly glorify God.

NOTES ON VERSES 97 TO 104.

Verse 97.—*"O how love I thy law!"* He speaketh not of his knowing, reading, hearing, speaking, or outward practising of the law, but of *love* to the law: this is more than all the former: all the former may be without this, but this cannot be without the former. We may know, read, hear, speak, yea, preach the law, and all God's word, as also outwardly perform outward works prescribed and commanded by the law, and yet not love it; but where this love is there cannot but be all the former. Love is the principal affection of all other; like a queen commanding and overruling all the rest: all the rest depend upon it; yea, sometimes also the judgment itself. As the love is set, whether rightly or wrongly, towards good or evil, so are all the affections swayed; yea, judgment itself sometimes blinded by love, erreth, as the love itself erreth; and so words and all actions are accordingly. Doth not daily experience daily teach the truth hereof? Moreover, besides this observation of this word, in respect of other, and in a kind of opposition unto other; let us observe two other things therein: 1. The first person; 2. The present tense. He saith not, O how is thy word to be loved, namely, by others; but O, how do *I myself* love thy law or thy word! Neither doth he say, O, how have I loved thy law in times past, or, how will I love it hereafter, how unfeignedly do I purpose to love it, when I shall be advanced unto and settled in my kingdom; or, how would I love it if I were so advanced and settled, or were I in this or that estate, or had this or that which I yet have not, or that others have; the prophet, I say, speaketh not in such manner; but he speaketh, as in the first person, so also in the present tense, saying, O how do I (now, such as I am) love thy law! Both these things are very worthy of our observation, and they be in the greater in respect of the person of the prophet; for albeit the name of the writer of this Psalm be not expressed in the title thereof (as in many other Psalms), yet the stream of most interpreters carrieth it to David. The matter also and style of the Psalm, compared with the matter and style of other Psalms which are David's, do both savour of David, and argue it was written by David. . . . . Whether David were now in full and quiet possession of his kingdom (though not without many adversaries), or whether he was only known to be the heir-apparent, appointed to succeed Saul (as most do think), or whether he were for a time in flight from the cruel and rebellious insurrection of his unnatural son Absalom, yet is it a great matter that here he speaketh of his great love towards the law of God. If he were in full and quiet possession of his kingdom, then had he many other things that he might have loved, and wherewith the hearts of such princes are commonly taken up, yea, also stolen away from those things that are much more worthy of love. What need I speak of the daily experience, whereby the truth hereof is manifest in far more mean persons than princes are? If David were in exile or flight, a man would think that his wife, and children, and other friends, as also his country, would have so occupied and fully possessed his heart, that there should have been little place for other things therein; but that rather he should have said, Oh, how love I those things! Oh, how is my heart troubled with thoughts of them, and care for them in my great love towards them! Moreover, that neither any troubles on the one side, wherewith David was continually exercised; nor his honours, riches, or pleasures either in possession or in hope on the other side, did extinguish, or cool, or abate his love, is it not a thing of great note?

The next word to be observed is that word *"how":* "Oh *how* love I thy law!" This noteth the manner or measure of his love. It is a word of admiration, or a note of comparison; so is it taken in divers other places . . . . . it noteth a kind of excess or excellency, even such as cannot be well expressed. The prophet seemeth to speak with a kind of sighing, as being so ravished with love towards the law of God, that he was even sick of love, as the church saith (Cant. ii. 5; v. 8), she was sick of love towards Christ: so seemeth the prophet to be sick of love towards the word of God. This word *"how,"* also importeth a comparison, and noteth a greater love in David towards the word than towards riches or any other thing; in which respect he saith afterward in this very Psalm (ver. 127), that he loveth the Lord's commandments "above gold, yea, above fine gold"; yea, as whosoever so loveth not Christ, that in respect of Christ, and for Christ's sake, he forsaketh father, and mother, and brethren, and sisters, wife and children, and his own life also (much more riches and other things not to be compared to life) is not worthy

of him; so he that doth not love the word above all other things; yea, he that hateth not all other things below here, in respect of the word, is not worthy of the word. Christ himself loved the word of God more than he loved any riches; for did he not for the performance of the word submit himself to such want, that the foxes had holes, and the birds had nests, but he had not whereon to lay his head? and that, although he were the heir of all things, yet he was ministered unto by certain women? He loved the word of God more than he loved his mother, brethren, and sisters . . . . . Yea, Christ loved the word of God more than he loved his own life; for did he not lay down his life to fulfil the word of God? . . . . If Christ Jesus himself loved the word more than all other things, yea, more than his life, which was more than the life of all angels, was there not great reason why David should love it in like manner? had not David as much need of it as Christ? . . . .

"It is my meditation." The noun *"meditation"* seemeth to be more than if he had said only that he meditated. For he seemeth to mean that though he did often think upon other matters, yet he made nothing his "meditation" but that which he here speaketh of, and that this was his only, or his chief and principal meditation and set study.

The object of David's meditation is not only to be understood of the bare letter of the word, as if he did always meditate of some text or other of the word before written; but also of the matters contained in the word; as of the justice, power, wisdom, mercy and goodness of God; of the frailty, corruption, and wickedness that is in man naturally, of the sins that God forbiddeth, and of the virtues that God commandeth in the word, and other the like. For he that meditateth of these things, though he meditate not of any one text of the word, yet he may be truly said to meditate of the word.

"All the day." We are not to imagine that the prophet did nothing else but meditate on the word; but this, first of all; that no day passed over his head wherein he did not meditate on the word; yea, that he took every occasion of meditating on the word. He was never weary of meditating. Though he had many other things wherein to employ himself, yet he forgot not the meditation of the word. His mind was not by any other employment alienated from the meditation of the word, but the more thereby provoked thereunto. As a man that hath laboured never so much one day in his calling, is not to be wearied thereby, but that he laboureth afresh the next day, and so day after day: so was it with the prophet touching this act of meditation. Secondly, when he saith he meditated on the word continually, or all the day, he meaneth that he did nothing at any time of the day without meditation on the word for doing thereof. Therefore we may safely say that continual meditation is more necessary than continual praying, as being necessary before the doing of everything, and in the very doing of everything; yea, even before the said duty of prayer, and in the very act thereof, this work of meditation of the word is always necessary; as without which, we know not either for what to pray, or in what sort and manner to pray: it is God's word only that can and must teach us both to pray for and also how to pray.—*Thomas Stoughton, in "Two Profitable Treatises,"* 1616.

Verse 97.—*"O how love I thy law!"* Who without love attempts anything in the law of God, does it coldly, and quickly gives it up. For the mind cannot give itself earnestly and perseveringly to things which are not loved. Only he who loves the law makes it his meditation all the day.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 97.—*"O how love I thy law!"* Were I to enjoy Hezekiah's grant, and to have fifteen years added to my life, I would be much more frequent in my applications to the throne of grace. Were I to renew my studies, I would take my leave of those accomplished trifles—the historians, the orators, the poets of antiquity—and devote my attention to the Scriptures of truth. I would sit with much greater assiduity at my Divine Master's feet, and desire to know nothing but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This wisdom, whose fruits are peace in life, consolation in death, and everlasting salvation after death—this I would trace—this I would seek—this I would explore through the spacious and delightful fields of the Old and New Testament.—*James Hervey,* 1713-14—1758.

Verse 97.—This most precious jewel is to be preferred above all treasures. If thou be hungry, it is meat to satisfy thee; if thou be thirsty, it is drink to refresh thee; if thou be sick, it is a present remedy; if thou be weak, it is a staff to lean unto; if thine enemy assault thee, it is a sword to fight withal; if thou be in darkness, it is a lanthorn to guide thy feet; if thou be doubtful of the way, it is a bright shining

star to direct thee; if thou be in displeasure with God, it is the message of reconciliation; if thou study to save thy soul, receive the word engrafted, for that is able to do it: it is the word of life. Whoso loveth salvation will love this word, love to read it, love to hear it; and such as will neither read nor hear it, Christ saith plainly, they are not of God. For the spouse gladly heareth the voice of the bridegroom; and "my sheep hear my voice," saith the Prince of pastors (John x. 27).—*Edwin Sandys*, 1519—1587.

Verse 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" As faith worketh by love unto God, so it worketh by love unto his word. Love me, love my word: love a king, love his laws. So it did on David; so it should do on us: "O how love I thy law!" saith David. "*O how love I thy law!*" should every one of us say; not only because it is a good law, but chiefly because it is God's law.—*Richard Capel*, 1586—1656.

Verse 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" He calls God himself to be judge of his love to the word; witnessing thereby that it was no counterfeit love, but complete and sincere love which he bore unto it. The like protestation was used by S. Peter: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love thee!"—*William Cowper.*

Verse 97.—"*Thy law.*" In every one of these eight verses the Bible is spoken of as the Lord's, as, indeed, all through the Psalm. Who is the author of Scripture? God. What is the matter of Scripture? God; it was not fit that any should write of God, but God himself. What is the end of Scripture? God. Why was the Scripture written, but that we might everlastingly enjoy the blessed God? As Cæsar wrote his own commentaries; so God, when there was none above him of whom he could write, he wrote of himself; by histories, laws, prophecies, and promises, and many other doctrines, hath he set himself forth to be the Creator, Preserver, Deliverer, and Glorifier of mankind; and all this is done in a perfect manner.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 97.—"*It is my meditation.*" Holy Scripture is not a book for the slothful; it is not a book which can be interpreted without, and apart from, and by the deniers of, that Holy Spirit by whom it came. Rather is it a field, upon the surface of which, if sometimes we gather manna easily and without labour, and given, as it were, freely to our hands, yet of which also, many portions are to be cultivated with pains and toil ere they will yield food for the use of man. This bread of life also is to be eaten in the wholesome sweat of our brow.—*Richard Chenevix French*, 1807—.

Verse 98.—"*Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies.*" Now he praiseth the word for the singular profit and fruit which he reaped by it; to wit, that he learned wisdom by it. And this he amplifies, by comparing himself with three sorts of men; his enemies, his teachers, and the ancients. And this he doth, not of vain glory (for bragging is far from him who is governed by the Spirit of grace); but to commend the word of the Lord, and to allure others to love it, by declaring to them what manifold good he found in it.

"*Wiser than mine enemies.*" But how can this be, seeing that our Saviour saith that the men of this world are wiser in their own generation than the children of God? The answer is, our Saviour doth not call worldlings wise men simply; but *wiser in their own generation;* that is, wise in things pertaining to this life. Or as Jeremy calls them, "wise to do evil"; and when they have so done, wise to conceal and cloak it. All which in very deed is but folly; and therefore David, who by the light of God's word saw that it was so, could not be moved to follow their course. Well; there is a great controversy between the godly and the wicked: either of them in their judgment accounts the other to be fools; but it is the light of God's word which must decide it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 98.—"*Wiser than mine enemies.*" They are wiser than their enemies as to security against their attempts, and that enmity and opposition that they carry on against them; they are far more safe by walking under the covert of God's protection than their enemies can possibly be, who have all manner of worldly advantages. A godly-wise man is careful to keep in with God: he is more prepared and furnished, can have a higher hope, more expectation of success, than others have; or, if not, he is well enough provided for, though all things fall out never so cross to his desires. As to success, who hath made wiser provision, think you, he that hath made God his friend, or he that is borne up with worldly props and dependences? they that are guided by the Spirit of God, or they that are guided by Satan? those that make it their business to walk with God step by step, or those

that not only forsake him, but provoke him to his face? those that break with men, and keep in with God, or those that break with God? Surely, a child of God hath more security by piety than his enemies can have by secular policy, whereby they think to overreach and ruin him. The safety of a child of God lieth in two things: 1. God is his friend. 2. As long as God hath work for him to do, he will maintain him, and bear him out in it.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 98.—"*They are ever with me.*" The meaning of the last clause is not merely, "*it is ever with me,*" but "*it is for ever to me,*" i.e., mine, my inalienable, indefeasible possession.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 98.—"*They are ever with me.*" God gives knowledge to whom he pleaseth; but those that meditate most, thrive most. This may imply also that the word should be a ready help. Such as derive their wisdom from without cannot have their counsellers always with them to give advice. But, when a man hath gotten the word in his heart, he finds a ready help: he hath a seasonable word to direct him in all difficulties, in all straits, and in all temptations, to teach him what to do against the burden of the present exigence; to teach him what to do and what to hope for.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 98.—"*They are ever with me.*" A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 98, 99, 100.—Three sorts of men he mentioneth, "*enemies,*" "*teachers,*" "*ancients*"; the enemies excel in policy, teachers in doctrine, and ancients in counsel; and yet by the word was David made wiser than all these. Malice sharpens the wit of enemies, and teacheth them the arts of opposition; teachers are furnished with learning because of their office; and ancients grow wise by experience; yet David, by the study of the word, excelled all these.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 99.—"*I have more understanding than all my teachers.*" Even where the preacher is godly, partaker of that grace himself, whereof he is an ambassador to others, it falls out oftentimes that greater measure of light and grace is communicated by his ministry to another than is given to himself; as Augustine first illuminated and converted by Ambrose did far excel, both in knowledge and spiritual grace, him that taught him. And herein God wonderfully shows his glory, that, whoever be the instrument, he is the dispenser of light and glory, giving more by the instrument than it hath in itself. And this is so far from being to a godly teacher a matter of grief, that it is rather a matter of glory.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 99.—"*I have more understanding than all my teachers.*" It is no reflection upon my teachers, but rather an honour to them, for me to improve so as to excel them, and no longer to need them. By *meditation* we preach to ourselves, and so we come to *understand more than our teachers,* for we come to understand our hearts, which they cannot.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 100.—"*I understand . . . because I keep.*" Would we know the Lord? let us keep his commandments. "By thy precepts," saith David, that is, by the observance of thy precepts, "I get understanding." "If any man do my will" (saith our blessed Saviour, John vii. 17), "he shall know my doctrine." Βούλει θεόλογος γενέσθαι? τὰς ἐντολὰς φύλασσε, saith Nazienzen: Wouldst thou be a divine? do the commandments; for action is (as it were) the basis of contemplation. It is St. Gregory's observation concerning the two disciples who, whilst Christ talked with them, knew him not; but in performing an act of hospitality towards him, to wit, breaking bread with him, they knew him, that they were enlightened, not by hearing him, but by doing divine precepts, *Quisquis ergo vult audita intelligere; festinet ea quæ jam audire potuit, opere implere,* Whosoever therefore will understand, let him first make haste to do what he heareth.—*Nathanael Hardy,* 1618—1670.

Verse 100.—"*I understand more than the ancients.*" The ordinary answer of ignorant people is, "What! must we be wiser than our forefathers?" And yet those same people would be richer than their forefathers were. The *maximum quod sic* of a Christian is this,—he must grow in grace, till his head reach up to heaven, till grace is perfected in glory.—*Christopher Love,* 1618—1651.

Verse 100.—"*More than the ancients.*" Understanding gotten by the precepts of the word is better than understanding gotten by long experience. It is better in four regards. First, It is *more exact.* Our experience reacheth but to a few things; but the word of God reacheth to all cases that concern true happiness.

The word is the result of God's wisdom, who is the Ancient of days; therefore exceeds the wisdom of the ancients, or experience of any men, or all men. Secondly, as it is more exact, so a *more sure* way of learning wisdom, whereas experience is more uncertain. Many have much experience, yet have not a heart to see and to gather wisdom from what they feel: Deut. xxix. 2—4. Thirdly, It is a *safer and cheaper* way of learning, to learn by rule, than to come home by weeping cross, and to learn wisdom by our own smart. Experience is too expensive a way; and, if we had nothing else to guide us, into how many thousand miseries should we run? Fourthly, It is *shorter*. The way by age and experience is a long way; and so, for a long time, all a man's younger age must needs be miserable and foolish. Now, here you may come betimes to be wise by studying the word of God. It concerns a man, not only to be wise at length, but to be wise betimes. The foolish virgins were wise too late; but never were any wise too soon.—*Condensed from Thomas Manton.*

Verse 100.—If this way [the Word of God] were thus perfect in David's time, what is it by the addition of so many parcels of Scripture since? If it then gave wisdom to the simple (Ps. xix. 7); if it made David, being brought up but as a shepherd, *wiser than* his enemies, than *his ancients*, than his teachers; as an angel of God in discerning right from wrong (2 Sam. xiv. 17); able to guide the people by the skilfulness of his hands (Ps. lxxviii, 72); what kind of wisdom is there which we may not now gather from thence? What depth of natural philosophy have we in Genesis and Job! what flowers of rhetoric in the prophets! what force of logic in Saint Paul's epistles! what art of poetry in the Psalms! what excellent moral precepts, not only for private life, but for the regulation of families and commonwealths in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes! to which may be added in a second rank as very useful, though apocryphal, the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. What reasonable and just laws have we in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, which moved the great Ptolemy to hire the Septuagints to translate them into Greek: what unmatchable antiquity, variety, and wonderful events, and certainty of story, in the books of Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, the Kings, and Chronicles, together with Ruth and Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah, and, since Christ, in the sacred Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. And, lastly, what profound mysteries have we in the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel, and the Revelation of Saint John. But in this it infinitely exceeds the wisdom of all human writings, that it is alone "able to make a man wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. iii. 15). Upon these considerations, Charles the Fifth of France, surnamed *The Wise*, not only caused the Bible to be translated into French, but was himself very studious in the Holy Scriptures. And Alphonsus, King of Arragon, is said to have read over the whole Bible fourteen several times, with Lyra's notes upon it; though he were otherwise excellently well learned, yet was the law of God his delight, "more desired of him than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."—*George Hakewell*, 1579—1649.

Verse 101.—"*I have refrained my feet*," etc. 1. We have David's practice: "*I have refrained my feet from every evil way.*" 2. His end or motive: "*That I might keep thy word;*" that he might be exact and punctual with God in a course of obedience.

First, In his practice. You may note the seriousness of it: "*I have refrained my feet.*" By the *feet* are meant the affections: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God," Eccl. v. 1. Our affections which are the rigorous bent of the soul, do engage us to practice; therefore fitly resembled by the feet, by which we walk to any place that we do desire: so that, "*I have refrained my feet*," the meaning is, I keep a close and strict hand over my affections, that they might not lead me to sin. Then you may note the extent of it; he doth not only say, I refrained from evil, but universally, "*from every evil way.*" But how could David say this is truth of heart, if conscious of his offence in the matter of Uriah? Answer: This was the usual frame and temper of his soul, and the course of his life; and such kind of assertions concerning the saints are to be interpreted, *voce et canatu, licet non semper eventu.* This was his errand and drift, his purpose and endeavour, his usual course, though he had his failings.

Secondly, What was his end and motive in this? "That I might keep thy word"; that I might be exact and punctual with God in a course of obedience, and adhere to his word universally, impartially.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 101.—"*I have refrained my feet,*" etc. Where there is real holiness, there is a holy hatred, detestation, and indignation against all ungodliness and wickedness, and that upon holy accounts: "*I have refrained my feet from every evil way.*" But why? "*That I may keep thy word.*" "Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way;" ver. 104. The good that he got by divine precepts stirred up his hatred against every false way: verse 128, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." His high esteem of every precept raised up in him a holy indignation against every evil way. A holy man knows that all sin strikes at the holiness of God, the glory of God, the nature of God, the being of God, and the law of God; and therefore his heart rises against all; he looks upon every sin as the Scribes and Pharisees that accused Christ; and as that Judas that betrayed Christ; and as that Pilate that condemned Christ; and as those soldiers that scourged Christ; and as those spears that pierced Christ; and therefore his heart cries out for justice upon all.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 101.—"*Refrained . . that I might keep.*" By doing what is right we come both to know right and to be better able to do it.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 101.—"*I have refrained my feet,*" etc. The word "*refrained*" warns us that we are naturally borne by our feet into the path of every kind of sin, and are hurried along it by the rush of human passions, so that even the wise and understanding need to check, recall, and retrace their steps, in order that they may keep God's word, and not become castaways. And further note that the Hebrew verb here translated "*refrained*" is even stronger in meaning, and denotes, "I *fettered,* or *imprisoned,* my feet," whereby we may learn that no light resistance is enough to prevent them from leading us astray.—*Agellius and Genebrardus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 102.—By *misphalim,* "*judgments,*" is meant God's law; for thereby he will judge the world. And the word "*departed not*" intimateth both his exactness and constancy: his exactness, that he did not go a hair's-breadth from his direction; "Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deut. v. 32); and his constancy is implied in it, for then we are said to depart from God and his law, when we fall off from him in judgment and practice. Jer. xxxii. 40.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 102.—"*Thou hast taught me.*" God teacheth two ways:—1. By common illumination. 2. By special operation.

1. By common illumination, barely enlightening the mind to know or understand what he propoundeth by his messengers: so God showed it to the heathen: Rom. i. 20.

But then, 2. By way of special operation, effectually inclining the will to embrace and prosecute duties so known: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts": Jer. xxxi. 33. This way of teaching is always effectual and persuasive. Now, in this sense they are taught of God, so that they do not only get an ear to hear, but a heart to understand, learn, and practise.

This teaching is the ground of constancy, because, (1) They that are thus taught of God see things more clearly than others do; God is the most excellent teacher. (2) They know things more surely, and with certainty of demonstration, whereas others have but dubious conjectures, and loose and wavering opinions about the things of God. (3) This teaching is so efficacious and powerful, as that the effect followeth: "Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth" (Ps. lxxxvi. 11.) (4) God reneweth this teaching, and is always at hand to guide us, and give counsel to us, which is the cause of our standing.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 102.—"*For thou hast taught me.*" Lest it should seem that David ascribed the praise of godliness to himself, or that it came from any goodness in him that he did refrain his feet from every evil way, he gives here all the glory to God, protesting, that because God did teach him, therefore he declined not. Wherefrom we learn, that if at any time we stand, or if when we have fallen we rise and repent, it is ever to be imputed to God that teacheth us; for there is no evil so abominable, but it would soon become plausible to us, if God should leave us to ourselves. David was taught by his ordinary teachers, and he did reverence them; but that he profited by them he ascribes unto God. Paul may plant, and Apollos water; God must give the increase.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 103.—"*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*" Even the words of a fellow-creature of earth, how inexpressibly sweet sometimes, how beyond all calculation precious! All gold and silver would be despised in comparison with them. They come freighted with love, and the heart is enriched with them as though the breath of God had come into it. But does not this rainbow of earthly joy die gradually out? Do not the enrapturing words sooner or later become exsiccated in the memory, and may they not meet with contemptuous treatment as remembrancers of an earthly illusion? Indeed they do; indeed they may.

Nevertheless the heart may find its happiness, its true and undying happiness, *in words*. At this moment there is nothing in the whole world so much to be desired as certain words. Words of love. Words expressive of infinite love. Treasures, pleasures, honours, of earth, what are they? My unsatisfied soul cries out, Give me words. Words whereby I may know the love that God has towards me. Words declaring the unchangeable attachment of the Saviour. Words purifying my heart. Emboldening me in prayer. Exhibiting to me the blissful future. Words that shall give life to my dead powers, and change me from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.—*George Bowen, in "Daily Meditations,"* 1873.

Verse 103.—"*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*" etc. There is given to the regenerated a new, supernatural sense, a certain divine, spiritual taste. This is in its whole nature diverse from any of the other five senses, and something is perceived by a true saint in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely different from any thing that is perceived in them by natural men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by looking on it or feeling of it. Now the beauty of holiness is that which is perceived by this spiritual sense, so diverse from all that natural men perceive in them; or, this kind of beauty is the quality that is the immediate object of this spiritual sense; this is the sweetness that is the proper object of this spiritual taste. The Scripture often represents the beauty and sweetness of holiness as the grand object of a spiritual taste and a spiritual appetite. This was the sweet food of the holy soul of Jesus Christ, John iv. 32, 34. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures where the nature and evidence of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated, as in the 119th Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design in the first verses of the Psalm, keeps his eye on it all along, and pursues it to the end. The excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste and delight. *God's law*, that grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature, and prescription of holiness to the creature, is all along represented as the great object of the love, the complacence, and rejoicing of the gracious nature, which prizes God's commandments *above gold, yea, the finest gold*, and to which they are *sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb;* and that upon account of their holiness. The same Psalmist declares that this is the sweetness that a spiritual taste relishes in God's law: Ps. xix. 7—10.—*Jonathan Edwards*, 1703—1758.

Verse 103.—"*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*" Why does he not rather say, How pleasant are thy words to my ears? than that they are sweet to his taste and his mouth? I answer: It is most meet that when God speaks by the mouth of his ministers we should be hearers, and the words of God should be the most joyous of all to our ears. But it is also the practice of the godly to converse about the words of God, and their words are so sweet to their own taste that they are more pleased and delighted than by any honey from the comb. And this is most necessary when either there is a scarcity of teachers, as with David in the wilderness or dwelling among the Philistines; or when those who hold the office of teaching, adulterate and vitiate the pure word of God.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 103.—That which is here called, "*word*," I take rather for "*judgments*," partly because in the proper tongue the word is left out, and partly because he had used this word "*judgments*" in the verse immediately going before. But some will say, How can the judgments of God be "*sweet*," which are so troublesome, fearful, and grievous? I answer, that the godly have no greater joy than when they feel either the mercies of God accomplished towards them that fear him, or his judgments showered upon the reprobates.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 103.—"*Unto my taste.*" "*To my mouth.*" That is, I take as great pleasure in talking, conferring, and persuading, thy judgments, as my mouth, or the mouth of any that loveth honey, delighteth therewith.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 103.—"*Sweeter.*" As there are always among violets some that are very much sweeter than others, so among texts there are some that are more precious to us than others.—*Henry Ward Beecher*, 1879.

Verse 103.—An affectionate wife often says, "My husband! your words are sweeter to me than honey; yea, they are sweeter than the sugar-cane." "Alas! my husband is gone," says the widow: "how sweet were his words! Honey dropped from his mouth: his words were ambrosia."—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 104.—"*Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*" In this sentence the prophet seems to invert the order set down in verse 101. He had said, "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word," where the avoiding of evil is made the means of profiting by the word; here his profiting by the word is made the cause of avoiding evil. In the one verse you have an account of his beginning with God; in the other, of his progress.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 104.—"*I hate every false way,*" David saith, "*I hate every false way*"; I hate not only the way, when I have been misled into it, but I hate to go in it; and he professeth at the 163rd verse, "*I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love.*" To abstain from and forbear lying is a sign of a gracious heart, much more to hate and abhor it. A godly man not only doth that which is good, but he delights to do it, his soul cleaves to it; he is in his element when he is doing it, nothing comes more suitably to him than the business of his duty, he loveth to do it, yea, he loveth it when he cannot do it; Rom. vii. 22. Paul complained much that his corruptions clogged, hindered and shackled him; he was in lime twigs as to the doing of good, yet (saith he) "I delight in the law of God after the inward man"; that is, the inward man delightfully moves after the law of God, when I am basely moved by my corrupt heart, and stirred by temptation against it. Now, as a godly man not only chooseth to do the holy will of God, but delights and rejoiceth to do it, and hath sweet content in doing it; so likewise a godly man not only refuseth to do the will of the flesh, or to follow the course of the world, but hates to do it, and is never so discontented with himself as when through carelessness and neglect of his watch he hath been overtaken and hath fallen. A carnal man may forbear the doing of evil, and do what is materially good, but he never abhors what is evil, nor delights in what is good. Though he abstain from acting those things which God forbids, yet he doth not say, with Job, "God forbid, I should act them." . . . . To delight in good is better than the doing of it, and to abhor evil is better than abstaining from it. And if we compare the nature of sin with the new nature of a godly man, we may see clear grounds why his abstinence from sin is joined with an abhorrence of it.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 104.—"*Through thy precepts I get understanding.*" Spiritual understanding is connected with the taste of spiritual sweetness. (Compare Proverbs ii. 10, 11.) "The sweetness of the lips"—as the wise man observes—"increaseth learning. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." Prov. xvi. 21, 23. Thus having learned "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," we are encouraged to "go on to perfection"—"growing *in grace* and in the knowledge of Christ." For the connexion between "grace and knowledge" is clearly manifested.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 104.—"*I hate every false way.*" Universality in this is a sure sign of sincerity. Herod spits out some sins, when he rolls others as sweet morsels in his mouth. A hypocrite ever leaves the devil some nest-egg to sit upon, though he take many away. Some men will not buy some commodities, because they cannot have them at their own price, but they lay out the same money on others; so hypocrites forbear some sins, yea, are displeased at them, because they cannot have them without disgrace or disease, or some other disadvantage; but they lay out the same love upon other sins which will suit better with their designs. Some affirm that what the sea loseth in one place it gaineth in another; so what ground the corruption of the unconverted loseth one way, it gaineth another. There is in him some one lust especially which is his favourite; some king sin, like Agag, which must be spared when others are destroyed. "In this the Lord be merciful to thy servant," saith Naaman. But now the regenerate laboureth to cleanse himself from all pollutions, both of flesh and spirit. 2 Cor. vii. 1.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 104.—"*I hate.*" The Scriptures place religion very much in the affection of *love;* love to God, and the Lord Jesus Christ; love to the people of God, and to

mankind. The texts in which this is manifest, both in the Old Testament and the New, are innumerable. The contrary affection of *hatred* also, as having sin for its object, is spoken of in Scripture as no inconsiderable part of true religion. It is spoken of as that by which true religion may be known and distinguished. Prov. viii. 13. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Accordingly, the saints are called upon to give evidence of their sincerity by this, Psalm xcvii. 10. "Ye that love the Lord, *hate* evil." And the Psalmist often mentions it as an evidence of his sincerity: Ps. ci. 2, 3, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; I *hate* the work of them that turn aside." So Ps. cxix., verse 128, and the present place. Again, Ps. cxxxix. 21: "Do not I *hate* them, O Lord, that hate thee?"—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 104.—"*I hate.*" Hatred is a stabbing, murdering affection, it pursues sin with a hot heart to death, as an avenger of blood, that is to say, of the blood of the soul which sin would spill, and of the blood of Christ which sin hath shed. Hate sin perfectly and perpetually and then you will not spare it but kill it presently. Till sin be hated it cannot be mortified; you will not cry against it, as the Jews did against Christ, Crucify it! Crucify it! but shew indulgence to it as David did to Absalom and say, Deal gently with the young man,—with this or that lust, for my sake. Mercy to sin is cruelty to the soul.—*Edward Reyner*, 1600—1670.

Verse 104.—"*False way.*" It is not said, "evil way," but "false way": or, as it is in the original, every path of lying and falsehood. Falsehood is either in point of opinion or practice. If you take it in the first sense, for falsehood in opinion or error in judgment, or false doctrine, or false worship, this sentence holds good. Those that get understanding by the word are established against error, and not only established against error, or against the embracing or possession of it, but they hate it.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 104.—"*False way.*" All sin is a *lie.* By it we attempt to cheat God. By it we actually cheat our souls: Prov. xiv. 12. There is no delusion like the folly of believing that a course of sin will conduce to our happiness.—*William S. Plumer.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 105 TO 112.

THY word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

106 I have sworn, and I will perform *it*, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

107 I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

109 My soul *is* continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they *are* the rejoicing of my heart.

112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, *even unto* the end.

105. *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet."* We are walkers through the city of this world, and we are often called to go out into its darkness; let us never venture there without the light-giving word, lest we slip with our feet. Each man should use the word of God personally, practically, and habitually, that he may see his way and see what lies in it. When darkness settles down upon all around me, the word of the Lord, like a flaming torch, reveals my way. Having no fixed lamps in eastern towns, in old time each passenger carried a lantern with him that he might not fall into the open sewer, or stumble over the heaps of ordure which defiled the road. This is a true picture of our path through this dark world: we should not know the way, or how to walk in it, if the Scripture, like a blazing flambeau, did not reveal it. One of the most practical benefits of Holy Writ is guidance in the acts of daily life; it is not sent to astound us with its brilliance, but to guide us by its instruction. It is true the head needs illumination, but even more the feet need direction, else head and feet may both fall into a ditch. Happy is the man who personally appropriates God's word, and practically uses it as his comfort and counsellor,—a lamp to his own feet. *"And a light unto my path."* It is a lamp by night, a light by day, and a delight at all times. David guided his own steps by it, and also saw the difficulties of his road by its beams. He who walks in darkness is sure, sooner or later, to stumble; while he who walks by the light of day, or by the lamp of night, stumbleth not, but keeps his uprightness. Ignorance is painful upon practical subjects; it breeds indecision and suspense, and these are uncomfortable: the word of God, by imparting heavenly knowledge, leads to decision, and when that is followed by determined resolution, as in this case, it brings with it great restfulness of heart.

This verse converses with God in adoring and yet familiar tones. Have we not something of like tenor to address to our heavenly Father?

Note how like this verse is to the first verse of the first octave, and the first of the second and other octaves. The seconds also are often in unison.

106. *"I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."* Under the influence of the clear light of knowledge he had firmly made up his mind and solemnly declared his resolve in the sight of God. Perhaps mistrusting his own fickle mind, he had pledged himself in sacred form to abide faithful to the determinations and decisions of his God. Whatever path might open before him, he was sworn to follow that only upon which the lamp of the word was shining. The Scriptures are God's judgments, or verdicts, upon great moral questions; these are all righteous, and hence righteous men should be resolved to keep them at all hazards, since it must always be right to do right. Experience shows that the less of covenanting and swearing men formally enter upon the better, and the genius of our Saviour's teaching is against all supererogatory pledging and swearing; and yet under the gospel we ought to feel ourselves as much bound to

obey the word of the Lord as if we had taken an oath so to do. The bonds of love are not less sacred than the fetters of law. When a man has vowed he must be careful to "perform it," and when a man has not vowed in so many words to keep the Lord's judgments, yet is he equally bound to do so by obligations which exist apart from any promise on our part,—obligations founded in the eternal fitness of things, and confirmed by the abounding goodness of the Lord our God. Will not every believer own that he is under bonds to the redeeming Lord to follow his example, and keep his words? Yes, the vows of the Lord are upon us, especially upon such as have made profession of discipleship, have been baptized into the thrice-holy name, have eaten of the consecrated memorials, and have spoken in the name of the Lord Jesus. We are enlisted, and sworn in, and are bound to be loyal soldiers all through the war. Thus having taken the word into our hearts by a firm resolve to obey it, we have a lamp within our souls as well as in the Book, and our course will be light unto the end.

107. *"I am afflicted very much."* According to the last verse he had been sworn in as a soldier of the Lord, and in this next verse he is called to suffer hardness in that capacity. Our service of the Lord does not screen us from trial, but rather secures it for us. The Psalmist was a consecrated man, and yet a chastened man; nor were his chastisements light; for it seemed as if the more he was obedient the more he was afflicted. He evidently felt the rod to be cutting deep, and this he pleads before the Lord. He speaks not by way of murmuring, but by way of pleading; from the very much affliction he argues for very much quickening.

"Quicken me, O LORD, *according unto thy word."* This is the best remedy for tribulation; the soul is raised above the thought of present distress, and is filled with that holy joy which attends all vigorous spiritual life, and so the affliction grows light. Jehovah alone can quicken: he has life in himself, and therefore can communicate it readily; he can give us life at any moment, yea, at this present instant; for it is of the nature of quickening to be quick in its operation. The Lord has promised, prepared, and provided this blessing of renewed life for all his waiting servants: it is a covenant blessing, and it is as obtainable as it is needful. Frequently the affliction is made the means of the quickening, even as the stirring of a fire promotes the heat of the flame. In their affliction some desire death, let us pray for life. Our forebodings under trial are often very gloomy, let us entreat the Lord to deal with us, not according to our fears, but according to his own word. David had but few promises to quote, and probably these were in his own Psalms, yet he pleads the word of the Lord; how much more should we do so, since to us so many holy men have spoken by the Spirit of the Lord in that wonderful library which is now our Bible. Seeing we have more promises, let us offer more prayers.

108. *"Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O* LORD." The living praise the living God, and therefore the quickened one presents his sacrifice. He offers prayer, praise, confession, and testimony—these, presented with his voice in the presence of an audience, were the tribute of his mouth unto Jehovah. He trembles lest these should be so ill uttered as to displease the Lord, and therefore he implores acceptance. He pleads that the homage of his mouth was cheerfully and spontaneously rendered; all his utterances were freewill offerings. There can be no value in extorted confessions: God's revenues are not derived from forced taxation, but from freewill donation. There can be no acceptance where there is no willingness; there is no work of free grace where there is no fruit of free will. Acceptance is a favour to be sought from the Lord with all earnestness, for without it our offerings are worse than useless. What a wonder of grace that the the Lord will accept anything of such unworthy ones as we are!

"And teach me thy judgments." When we render unto the Lord our best, we become all the more concerned to do better. If, indeed, the Lord shall accept us, we then desire to be further instructed, that we may still be more acceptable. After quickening we need teaching: life without light, or zeal without knowledge, would be but half a blessing. These repeated cries for teaching show the humility of the man of God, and also discover to us our own need of similar instruction. Our judgment needs educating till it knows, agrees with, and acts upon, the judgments of the Lord. Those judgments are not always so clear as to be seen at once; we need to be taught in them till we admire their wisdom and adore their goodness as soon as ever we perceive them.

109. *"My soul is continually in my hand."* He lived in the midst of danger. He had to be always fighting for existence—hiding in caves, or contending in

battles. This is a very uncomfortable and trying state of affairs, and men are apt to think any expedient justifiable by which they can end such a condition: but David did not turn aside to find safety in sin, for he says, "*Yet do I not forget thy law.*" They say that all things are fair in love and war; but the holy man thought not so: while he carried his life in his hand, he also carried the law in his heart. No danger of body should make us endanger our souls by forgetting that which is right. Trouble makes many a man forget his duty, and it would have had the same effect upon the Psalmist if he had not obtained quickening (verse 107) and teaching (verse 108). In his memory of the Lord's law lay his safety; he was certain not to be forgotten of God, for God was not forgotten of him. It is a special proof of grace when nothing can drive truth out of our thoughts, or holiness out of our lives. If we remember the law even when death stares us in the face, we may be well assured that the Lord is remembering us.

110. "*The wicked have laid a snare for me.*" Spiritual life is the scene of constant danger: the believer lives with his life in his hand, and meanwhile all seem plotting to take it from him, by cunning if they cannot by violence. We shall not find it an easy thing to live the life of the faithful. Wicked spirits and wicked men will leave no stone unturned for our destruction. If all other devices fail, and even hidden pits do not succeed, the wicked still persevere in their treacherous endeavours, and, becoming craftier still, they set snares for the victim of their hate. The smaller species of game are usually taken by this method, by gin, or trap, or net, or noose. Wicked men are quite indifferent as to the manner in which they can destroy the good man—they think no more of him than if he were a rabbit or a rat: cunning and treachery are always the allies of malice, and everything like a generous or chivalrous feeling is unknown among the graceless, who treat the godly as if they were vermin to be exterminated. When a man knows that he is thus assailed, he is too apt to become timorous, and rush upon some hasty device for deliverance, not without sin in the endeavour; but David calmly kept his way, and was able to write, "*Yet I erred not from thy precepts.*" He was not snared, for he kept his eyes open, and kept near his God. He was not entrapped and robbed for he followed the King's highway of holiness, where God secures safety to every traveller. He did not err from the right, and he was not deterred from following it, because he referred to the Lord for guidance, and obtained it. If we err from the precepts, we part with the promises; if we get away from God's presence, we wander into the wilds where the fowlers freely spread their nets. From this verse let us learn to be on our guard, for we, too, have enemies both crafty and wicked. Hunters set their traps in the animals' usual runs, and our worst snares are laid in our own ways. By keeping to the ways of the Lord we shall escape the snares of our adversaries, for his ways are safe and free from treachery.

111. "*Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever.*" He chose them as his lot, his portion, his estate; and what is more, he laid hold upon them and made them so,—taking them into possession and enjoyment. David's choice is our choice. If we might have our desire, we would desire to keep the commands of God perfectly. To know the doctrine, to enjoy the promise to practise the command,—be this a kingdom large enough for me. Here we have an inheritance which cannot fade and cannot be alienated; it is for ever, and ours for ever, if we have so taken it. Sometimes, like Israel at the first coming into Canaan, we have to take our heritage by hard fighting, and, if so, it is worthy of all our labour and suffering; but always it has to be taken by a decided choice of the heart and grip of the will. What God gives we must take. "*For they are the rejoicing of my heart.*" The gladness which had come to him through the word of the Lord had caused him to make an unalterable choice of it. All the parts of Scripture had been pleasing to David, and were so still, and therefore he stuck to them, and meant to stick to them for ever. That which rejoices the heart is sure to be chosen and treasured. It is not the head-knowledge but the heart-experience which brings the joy.

In this verse, which is the seventh of its octave, we have reached the same sweetness as in the last seventh (103): indeed, in several of the adjoining sevenths, delight is evident. How good a thing it is when experience ripens into joy, passing up through sorrow, prayer, conflict, hope, decision, and holy content into rejoicing! Joy fixes the spirit: when once a man's heart rejoices in the divine word, he greatly values it, and is for ever united to it.

112. "*I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.*"

He was not half inclined to virtue, but heartily inclined to it. His whole heart was bent on practical, persevering godliness. He was resolved to keep the statutes of the Lord with all his heart, throughout all his time, without erring or ending. He made it his end to keep the law unto the end, and that without end. He had by prayer, and meditation, and resolution made his whole being lean towards God's commands; or as we should say in other words—the grace of God had inclined him to incline his heart in a sanctified direction. Many are inclined to preach, but the Psalmist was inclined to practise; many are inclined to perform ceremonies, but he was inclined to perform statutes; many are inclined to obey occasionally, but David would obey alway; and, alas, many are inclined for temporary religion, but this godly man was bound for eternity, he would perform the statutes of his Lord and King even unto the end. Lord, send us such a heavenly inclination of heart as this: then shall we show that thou hast quickened and taught us. To this end create in us a clean heart, and daily renew a right spirit within us, for only so shall we incline in the right direction.

NOTES ON VERSES 105 TO 112.

Verse 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light,*" etc. David was a man of very good wit and natural understanding; but he gives to God the glory of his wisdom, and owns that his best light was but darkness when he was not lightened and ruled by the word of God. Oh that we would consider this, that in all our ways wherein the word of God shines not unto us to direct us, we do but walk in darkness, and our ways without it can lead us to none other end but utter darkness. If we hearken not to the word of God, if we walk not by the rule thereof, how is it possible we can come to the face of God?—*William Cowper.*

Verse 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*" The use of a *lamp* is by night, while the *light* of the sun shineth by day. Whether it be day or night with us, we clearly understand our duty by the Word of God. The *night* signifieth adversity, and the *day* prosperity. Hence we may learn how to behave ourselves in all conditions. The word "*path*" noteth our general choice and course of life; the word "*feet*" our particular actions. Now whether the matter, wherein we would be informed, concerneth our choice of the way that leadeth to true happiness, or our dexterous prosecution of the way, still the word of God will direct a humble and well-disposed mind.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,*" etc. Basil the Great, interpreting the "*word*" as God's will revealed in Holy Scriptures, observes that the Old Testament, and in especial the Law, was only a *lantern* (*lamp* or *candle*) because an artificial light, imperfectly illumining the darkness, whereas the Gospel, given by the Lord Jesus himself, is a *light* of the Sun of Righteousness, giving brightness to all things. Ambrose, going yet deeper, tells us that Christ is himself both *lamp* and *light*. He, the Word of God, is a great light to some, to others he is a lamp. To me he is a lamp; to angels a light, He was a light to Peter, when the angel stood by him in the prison, and the light shined about him. He was a light to Paul when the light from heaven shined round about him, and he heard Christ saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And Christ is truly a lamp to me when I speak of him with my mouth. He shineth in clay, he shineth in a potter's vessel: he is that treasure which we bear in earthen vessels.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp . . . and a light.*" Except the "*lamp*" be lighted—except the teaching of the Spirit accompany the word—all is "darkness, gross darkness" still. Did we more habitually wait to receive, and watch to improve, the light of the word, we should not so often complain of the perplexity of our path.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,*" etc. What we all want, is not to see wonders that daze us, and to be rapt in ecstatic visions and splendours, but a little light on the dark and troubled path we have to tread, a lamp that will burn steadfastly and helpfully over the work we have to do. The stars are infinitely more sublime, meteors infinitely more superb and dazzling; but the lamp shining in a dark place is infinitely closer to our practical needs.—*From "The Expositor,"* 1864.

Verse 105.—"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.*" Going two miles into a neighbourhood where very few could read, to spend an evening in reading to a company who were assembled to listen, and about to return by a narrow path through the woods where paths diverged, I was provided with a torch of light wood, or "pitch pine." I objected; it was too small, weighing not over half a pound. "*It will light you home,*" answered my host. I said, "The wind may blow it out." He said, "It will light you home." "But if it should rain?" I again objected. "It will light you home," he insisted.

Contrary to my fears, it gave abundant light to my path all the way home, furnishing an apt illustration, I often think, of the way in which doubting hearts would be led safely along the "narrow way." If they would take the Bible as their guide, it would be a lamp to their feet, leading to the heavenly home. One man had five objections to the Bible. If he would take it as a lamp to his feet, it would "light him home." Another told me he had two faults to find with the Bible. I answered him in the words of my good friend who furnished the torch, "It will light you home."—*From the American Messenger,*" 1881.

Verse 105.—"*A lamp unto my feet,*" etc. All depends on our way of using the

lamp. A man tells that when a boy he was proud to carry the lantern for his Sabbath school teacher. The way to their school led through unlit, muddy streets. The boy held the lantern far too high, and both sank in the deep mud. "Ah! you must hold the lamp lower," the teacher exclaimed, as they gained a firm footing on the farther side of the slough. The teacher then beautifully explained our text, and the man declares that he never forgot the lesson of that night. You may easily hold the lamp too high; but you can hardly hold it too low.—*James Wells, in "Bible Images,"* 1882.

Verse 105.—"*Light.*"

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on.
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead thou me on.
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

John Henry Newman (1801—).

Verses 105, 106.—"*A light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it,*" etc. I have looked upon thy word as a lamp to my own feet, as a thing nearly concerning myself, and then I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. It is a mighty means to stir up a man's spirit and quicken him to obedience, to look upon the word as written to himself, as a lamp and a light for him. When you come to hear out of God's Word, and God directs the minister so that you apprehend the truth as spoken to you, it will stir and awaken you, and you will say, "Oh methought this day every word the minister spoke was directed to me; I must take heed thereto." And so every word in the Scripture that concerns thee, God writes to thee; and if thou wilt take it so, it will be a mighty means to stir thee up to obedience.—*Jeremiah Burroughs*, 1599—1646.

Verse 106.—"*I have sworn,*" etc. Patrick's paraphrase is, "I have solemnly resolved and bound myself by the most sacred ties, which I will never break, but do now confirm."

Verse 106.—"*I have sworn.*" I would now urge you to make a solemn surrender of yourself unto the service of God. Do not only form such a purpose in your heart, but expressly declare it in the Divine presence. Such solemnity in the manner of doing it is certainly very reasonable in the nature of things; and sure it is highly expedient, for binding to the Lord such a treacherous heart, as we know our own to be. It will be pleasant to reflect upon it, as done at such and such a time, with such and such circumstances of place and method, which may serve to strike the memory and the conscience. The sense of the vows of God which are upon you will strengthen you in an hour of temptation; and the recollection may encourage your humble boldness and freedom in applying to him under the character and relation of your covenant God and Father, as future exigencies may require.

Do it therefore, but do it deliberately. Consider what it is that you are to do: and consider how reasonable it is that it should be done, and done cordially and cheerfully, "not by constraint, but willingly"; for in this sense, and every other, "God loveth a cheerful giver." . . . . . .

Let me remind you that this surrender must be perpetual. You must give yourself up to God in such a manner, as never more to pretend to be your own; for the rights of God are, like his nature, eternal and immutable; and with regard to his rational creatures, are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

I would further advise and urge, that this dedication may be made with all possible solemnity. Do it in express words. And perhaps it may be in many cases most expedient, as many pious divines have recommended, to do it in writing. Set your hand and seal to it, "that on such a day of such a month and year, and at such a place, on full consideration and serious reflection, you came to this happy resolution, that whatever others might do, you would serve the Lord."—*Philip Doddridge* (1702—1751) *in "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul."*

Verse 106.—Frequently renew settled and holy resolutions. A soldier unresolved to fight may easily be defeated. True and sharpened courage tread down those difficulties which would triumph over a cold and wavering spirit. Resolution in a weak man will perform more than strength in a coward. The weakness of our graces, the strength of our temptations, and the diligence of our spiritual

enemies, require strong resolutions. We must be "steadfast and unmoveable," and this will make us "abound in the work of the Lord": 1 Cor. xv. 58. Abundant exercise in God's work will strengthen the habit of grace, increase our skill in the contest, and make the victory more easy and pleasant to us. Let us frame believing, humble resolutions in the strength of God's grace, with a fear of ourselves, but a confidence in God. David bound himself to God with a hearty vow, depending upon his strength: *"I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."* This was not in his own strength, for, ver. 107, he desires God to quicken him, and to "accept the freewill offerings of his mouth," ver. 108, namely, the oath which proceeded from a free and resolved will. God will not slight, but strengthen the affectionate resolutions of his creature. We cannot keep ourselves from falling unless we first keep our resolutions from flagging.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 106.—*"I have sworn, and I will perform it."* Theodoricus, Archbishop of Cologne, when the Emperor Sigismund demanded of him the directest and most compendious way how to attain true happiness, made answer in brief, thus: "Perform when thou art well what thou promisedst when thou wast sick." David did so; he made vows in war, and paid them in peace; and thus should all good men do; not like the cunning devil, of whom the epigrammatist writeth:

> "The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be;
> The devil was well, the devil a monk was he."

Nor like unto many now-a-days, that, if God's hand do but lie somewhat heavy upon them, oh, what promises, what engagements are there for amendment of life! How like unto marble against rain do they seem to sweat and melt but still retain their hardness! Let but the rod be taken off their backs, or health restored, then, as their bodies live, their vows die; all is forgotten: nay, many times it so falleth out, that they are far worse than ever they were before.—*From John Spencer's "Things New and Old,"* 1658.

Verse 106.—*"Thy righteous judgments."* So David styles the word of God, because it judgeth most righteously between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. And, secondly, because according to the judgment given therein, God will act towards men. Let us take heed unto it; for the word contains God's judgment of men and hath a catalogue of such as shall not inherit the kingdom of God, and another of such as shall dwell in God's tabernacle: let us read and see in which of the two catalogues our two selves are; for according to that word will the judgment go.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 107.—*"I am afflicted very much,"* etc. Whence learn, 1. It is no strange thing for the most holy men to be acquainted with the saddest sort of affliction, bodily and spiritual: *"I am afflicted very much."* 2. From whence soever affliction doth come, faith goeth to God only for comfort, as here: *"Quicken me, O* LORD." 3. When God is pleased to make the word of promise lively, or to perform what the promise alloweth us to expect, such a consolation is a sufficient antidote to the heaviest affliction: *"Quicken me, O* LORD, *according unto thy word."—David Dickson.*

Verse 107.—*"I am afflicted very much."* We can recommend so persuasively the cheerful drinking of the cup of sorrow when in the hand of others, but what wry faces we make when it is put into our own.—*Alfred John Morris*, 1814—1869.

Verse 107.—*"I am afflicted . . . quicken me."* The Christian lives in the midst of crosses, as the fish lives in the sea.—*Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney*, 1786—1859.

Verse 107.—*"Quicken me, O* LORD." How doth God quicken us? By reviving our suffering graces, such as our hope, patience, and faith. Thus he puts life into us again, that we may go on cheerfully in our service, by infusion of new comforts. He revives the heart of his contrite ones, so the prophet saith (Isai. lvii. 15). This is very necessary, for the Psalmist saith elsewhere, "Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name" (Ps. lxxx. 18). Discomfort and discouragement weaken our hands in calling upon God. Until the Lord cheers us again we have no life in prayer. By two things especially doth God quicken us in affliction, by reviving our sense of his love, and by reviving our hope of glory.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 107.—*"According unto thy word."* David goes often over with that phrase, which imports that David lay under the sense of some promise which God had made for the quickening of his heart when it was out of frame, and acordingly he recounts

the gracious influence of God's Spirit, and professeth that he will never forget his precepts, because by them he had quickened him: ver. 93.

Thus, lay your dead hearts at Christ's feet, and plead in this manner: Lord, my heart is exceedingly dull and distracted; I feel not these enlarging, melting influences which thy saints have felt; but are they not chief material mercies of the covenant? dost thou not promise a spirit of illumination, conviction, and humiliation? is not holiness of heart and life a main branch of it? dost thou not promise therein to write thy law in my heart? to give me oneness of heart, to put thy fear within me, to subdue my corruptions, to help my infirmities in prayer? Now, Lord, these are the mercies my soul wants and waits for, fill my soul with these animating influences, revive thy work of grace in my soul, draw out my heart towards thee, increase my affection for thee, repair thine image, call forth grace into lively exercise. Doth not that gracious word intend such a mercy when thou sayest thou wilt not only give a new heart, but "put a new spirit within me" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26), to make my soul lively, active, and spiritual in duties and exercises? Dear Lord, am not I in covenant with thee? and are not these covenant mercies? why, then, my God, is my heart thus hardened from thy fear? why dost thou leave me in all this deadness and distraction? Remember thy word unto thy servant in which thou hast caused me to hope, and which thou hast helped me to plead; O quicken my dull heart, according to thy word.—*Oliver Heywood.*

Verse 107.—"*According unto thy word.*" David, when he begs for quickening, he is encouraged so to do by a promise. The question is, where this promise should be? Some think it was that general promise of the law, if thou do these things thou shalt live in them (Lev. xviii. 5), and that from thence David drew this particular conclusion, that God would give life to his people. But rather, it was some other promise, some word of God he had, to bear him out in this request. The Lord has made many promises to us of sanctifying our affliction. The fruit of all shall be the taking away of sin (Isa. xxvii. 9); of bettering and improving us by it (Heb. ii. 10), of moderating our affliction, that he will stay his rough wind in the day of the east wind (Isa. xxvii. 8); that he will lay no more upon us than he will enable us to bear (1 Cor. x. 13). He hath promised he will moderate our affliction so that we shall not be tempted above our strength. He hath promised he will deliver us from it, that the rod of the wicked shall not always rest on the lot of the righteous (Ps. cxxv. 3); that he will be with us in it, and never fail us (Heb. xiii. 5). Now, I argue thus: if the people of God could stay their hearts upon God's word, when they had but such obscure hints to work upon that we do not know where the promise lies, ah! how should our hearts be stayed upon God, when we have so many promises! When the Scriptures are enlarged for the comfort and enlarging of our faith, surely we should say now as Paul, when we got a word, "I believed God" (Acts xxvii. 25); I may expect God will do thus for me, when his word speaks it everywhere.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 108.—"*The freewill offerings of the mouth,*" may be the offerings which the mouth had promised and vowed. And who can lay claim to these as the Lord? His are all things.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 108.—"*The freewill offerings of my mouth.*" This place makes known that species of sacrifices, which neither tribulations nor poverty of means can hinder, and which does not require an external temple, but in desert places and among heathen may be offered by a godly man. And these sacrifices of the mouth God himself makes more of than if all the flocks of the whole earth had been offered to him, and all the treasures of gold, and of silver, and of precious stones.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 108.—"*Freewill offerings.*" This expression is often used in the law (Lev. xxii. 18; Numb. xxix. 39; 2 Chron. xxxi. 14; Amos iv. 5). What are these free-will offerings? They are distinguished from God's stated worship, and distinguished from that service which fell under a vow. Besides the stated peace-offerings, there were certain sacrifices performed upon certain occasions, to testify God's general goodness, and upon receipt of some special mercy; and you will find these sacrifices to be expressly distinguished from such services as men bound themselves to by vow (Lev. vii. 16) . . . . These serve to teach us two things. 1st. They are to teach us how ready we should be to take all occasions of thankfulness and spiritual worship; for, besides their vowed services and instituted sacrifices, they had their freewill offerings, offered to God in thankfulness for some special blessing received,

or for deliverance from danger. 2ndly. It shows with what voluntariness and cheerfulness we should go about God's worship in the Gospel, and what a free disposition of heart there should be, and edge upon our affections, in all things that we offer to God; in this latter sense our offerings to God—prayer and praise—should be freewill offerings, come from us not like water out of a still forced by the fire, but like water out of a fountain with native freeness, readily and freely.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 108.—"*Offerings.*" All God's people are made priests unto God; for every offering supposeth a priest: so it is said, that Christ Jesus hath made us kings and priests (Rev. i. 6). All Christians have a communion with Christ in all his offices; whatever Christ was, that certainly they are in some measure and degree.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 108.—"*Accept . . . . . the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord.*" It is a great grace that the Lord should accept anything from us, if we consider these three things: First, who the Lord is; next, what we are; thirdly, what it is we have to give unto him.

As for the Lord, he is all-sufficient, and stands in need of nothing we can give him. Our goodness extends not to the Lord (Ps. xvi).

As for us, we are poor creatures, living by his liberality; yea, begging from all the rest of his creatures; from the sun and moon; from the air, the water, and the earth; from fowls and fishes; yea, from the worms: some give us light, some meat, some clothes; and are such beggars as we meet to give to a king?

And, thirdly, if we well consider, What is it that we give? Have we anything to give but that which we have received from him? and whereof we may say with David, "O Lord, all things are of thee, and of thine own have we given thee again" (1 Chron. xxix. 14). Let this humble us, and restrain us from that vain conceit of meriting at God's hand.

David at this time, in his great necessity, having no other sacrifice to offer unto the Lord, offers him the calves of his lips; but no doubt, when he might, he offered more.

There is nothing so small, but if it come from a good heart, God will accept it: the widow's mite, a cup of cold water; yea, and the praise of our lips, although it has no other external oblation joined with it: but where men may do more, and will not, it is an argument that their heart is not sincerely affected toward him, and their praises are not welcome to him.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 108.—"*Accept . . . . the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me thy judgments.*" Two things we are here taught to pray for in reference to our religious performances.

1. Acceptance of them: this we must aim at in all we do in religion, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of the Lord. That which David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of is "*the freewill offerings*," not of his purse, but of his "*mouth*," his prayers and praises; "the calves of our lips" (Hosea xiv. 2); "the fruit of our lips" (Heb. xiii. 15); these are the spiritual offerings which all Christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God; and they must be "*freewill offerings;*" for we must offer them abundantly and cheerfully; and it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God, the more pleasing it is to him.

2. Assistance in them: "*Teach me thy judgments.*" We cannot offer anything to God which we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of; and we must be earnest for the grace of God in us as for the favour of God toward us.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 108.—"*Teach me thy judgments.*" As if the man of God should say, This is one thing whereunto I will give over myself, even to see how thou dost punish the wicked, and conduct thy children. So that we must learn, that as it is necessary to understand the law and the gospel, so is it requisite to discern God's judgments. For as we cannot learn the one without observing God's mercy; so we cannot attain to the other without marking his vengeance. We must see always by the peculiar teaching of God's Spirit, how the Lord punisheth in justice, and yet in mercy; in wrath, and yet in love; in rigour and hatred of our sin, humbling us with one hand; in pity and compassion to our salvation, comforting us with the other hand. We see then how the prophet prayeth, both to see them and to mark them: we need teach this often, because we dream so much of fatal necessity, and of the connections of natural causes, or else because we cannot discern between

the crosses of the godly and the ungodly . . . This is then a singular gift of God, to discern how by the self-same means the Lord both humbleth the good and overthroweth the wicked.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand.*" He had his soul in his hand, ready to give whenever God should take it. And this is to be observed, that there is no trouble so ready to take away the life of God's children, as they are ready to give it. As Elijah came out to the mouth of his cave to meet with the Lord; and Abraham stood in the door of his tent to speak to the angel; so the soul of the godly stands ready in the door of the tabernacle of this body to remove when the Lord shall command it; whereas the soul of the wicked lies back, hiding itself, as Adam among the bushes, and is taken out of the body perforce; as was the soul of that worldling; "This night thy soul shall be required of thee;" but they never sacrifice their souls willingly to the Lord.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand.*" If any one carry in the hand a fragile vessel, made of glass or any other similar material, filled with a precious liquor, especially if the hand be weak, or if from other causes dangers be threatening, he will scarcely be able to avoid the breaking of the vessel and the running out of the liquor. Such is the condition of my life, which I, set upon by various enemies, carry as it were in my hand; which, therefore, is exposed to such a great danger, as that I always have death present before my sight, my life hanging on the slenderest thread.—*Andreas Rivetus*, 1572—1651.

Verse 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand.*" The believer is always in the very jaws of death. He lives with wings outstretched to fly away. Paul testified, "I die daily." In the extremity of persecution, the fervent desire was to know what God would have him to do.—*Henry Law.*

Verse 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand.*" I make no more of life than a child doth of his bird which he carrieth in the palm of his hand held open.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 109.—"*My soul is continually in my hand,*" etc. Why doth David say, "My soul is in mine hand"; had he called it out of the hand of God, and taken the care of it upon himself? Nothing less. His meaning is only this,—I walk in the midst of dangers and among a thousand deaths continually; I am in deaths often, my life is exposed to perils every day, yet do I not forget thy law: I keep close to thee, and will keep close to thee whatsoever comes of it. Augustine upon that place doth ingeniously confess that he understood not what David meant, by having his soul in his hands; but Jerome, another of the ancients, teacheth us, that it is an Hebraism, signifying a state of extremest peril. The Greeks also have drawn it into a proverb speaking the same thing.

But why doth the holding or putting the life in the hand signify the exposing of the life to peril? There is a twofold reason of it.

First. Because those things which are carried openly in the hand are apt to fall out of the hand, and being carried in sight, they are apt to be snatched or wrested out of the hand. And, therefore, though to be in the hand of God signifies *safety*, because his hand is armed with irresistible power to protect us; yet for a man to carry a thing in his own hand is to carry it in danger, because his hand is weak, and there are safer ways of carrying or conveying a thing than openly in the hand. If a man be to ride a long journey with any treasure about him, he doth not carry it in his hand, but puts it in some secret and close place where it may be hidden, and so be more secure. The Chaldee paraphrast, to express the elegancy of that place forecited out of the Psalm, gives it thus, "*My life is in as much danger as if it stood upon the very superficies or outside of my hand,*" as if he had no hold of it, but it stood barely upon his hand; for that which is set upon the palm of the hand, and not grasped, is in greater danger. Things safe kept are hidden or held fast.

Secondly. There is another reason of that speech, because when a man is about to deliver a thing or to give it up, he takes it in his hand. They that put themselves upon great perils and dangers for God and his people, deliver up their lives and their all to God. Hence that counsel of the Apostle (1 Pet. iv. 19): "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." So here, the life of men in danger is said to be put in the hand, because such are, as it were, ready to deliver and commit their lives unto God, that he would take care of their lives to

preserve them from the danger, or to take them to himself if they lose them in his service.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 110.—"*The wicked.*" He calls them *wicked men;* which importeth three things. First, they work wickedness. Secondly, they love it. Thirdly, they persevere in it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 110.—"*A snare.*" One manner of catching wild animals, such as lions, bears, jackals, foxes, hart, roebuck, and fallow-deer, was by a trap (*pach*), which is the word used in this place; this was set under ground (Job xviii. 10), in the run of the animal (Prov. xxii. 5), and caught it by the leg (Job xviii. 9).—*William Latham Bevan, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible,* 1863.

Verse 110.—"*The wicked have laid a snare for me.*" In eating, he sets before us gluttony; in love he impels to lust; in labour, sluggishness; in conversing, envy; in governing, covetousness; in correcting, anger; in honour, pride; in the heart, he sets evil thoughts; in the mouth, evil words; in actions, evil works; when awake, he moves us to evil actions; when asleep, to filthy dreams.—*Girolamo Savonarola,* 1452—1498.

Verse 110.—"*Laid a snare for me: yet I erred not,*" etc. It is not the laying the bait hurts the fish, if the fish do not bite.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 111.—"*Thy testimonies have I taken,*" etc. The Scripture is called "*testimonies*" in respect to God himself, because it doth give a testimony to him, and makes God known to us: it gives a testimony of all those attributes that are himself, of his wisdom, of his power, of his justice, of his goodness, of his truth. The declaration of these, we have them all in the various books of the Scriptures: there is never a book, but there is a testification of these attributes. In the book of Genesis we have a testimony of his *power* in making the world, of his *justice* in drowning the world, and of his *goodness* in saving Noah. In the book of Exodus we have a testimony of his *providence* in leading the people of Israel through the Red Sea, in bringing them out of Egypt; we have a testimony of his *wisdom* in giving them his law. What should I name more? In the *New* Testament, in the Gospel, all is testimony. As the *Old* gave testimony to *God*, so the *New* to *Christ:* "To him gave all the prophets witness;" not only the *Old*, but the *New:* "These are they that testify of me." Everywhere there is testimony of Christ,—of his *humility*, in taking our nature; of his *power*, in working miracles; of his *wisdom*, in the parables that he spoke; of his *patience* and *love*, in the torments that he suffered for us. Both Law and Gospel—the whole book of Scripture, and every part of it in these regards is fitly called "*the testimonies of the Lord.*" And the holy Psalmist made choice of this name when he was to speak to the honour and glory of it; because it was that name from which he sucked a great deal of comfort, because it was the testimony of God's *truth* and *goodness* and *wisdom* and *power* to him; thereupon he makes so precious esteem of it as to account it his "*heritage.*"—*Richard Holdsworth* (1590—1649), *in "The Valley of Vision."*

Verse 111.—"*Thy testimonies.*" By "*testimonies*" is meant the covenant between God and his people; wherein he bindeth himself to them, and them to him. Some think that the excellency of the word is here set out by many names; but we must look to the propriety of every word: as before by "judgments," so by this word "*testimonies,*" is meant the covenant: not the commandments, because they cannot be an inheritance, for they cannot comfort us, because we cannot fulfil them, but fail in them, and cannot therefore take comfort in them. It is the gospel that bringeth peace and comfort. "*The law,*" when it is taken generally, containeth all the word, particularly the commandments; so "*the word*" generally containeth both law and gospel, but particularly the promises, as Rom. x. So likewise by the "*testimonies,*" when they are opposed to the law, is meant the promise of the covenant, as Isaiah viii., and this testimony is confirmed to us by the sacraments, as to them by sacrifices.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 111.—"*As an heritage.*" Why the divine testimonies should be called by the Psalmist an *inheritance;* why he brings them within the compass of this notion, may not so easily be understood; for the word of God points out the inheritance, but it is not the inheritance itself. Yes, there is good reason to be given for the expression, were there no more than this, that we consider the inestimable comfort, and heavenly treasure that is to be found in the word of God; it is a rich mine of all celestial treasure, it is a storehouse of all good things, of all saving knowledge.

All privileges whatsoever they are that we can expect on earth or heaven, they are all contained in the word of God: here is ground enough why it is called an *inheritance;* he hath a good *heritage* that hath all these.

Yet there is a better reason than this; for if it be so that heaven is our inheritance, then the word of God is; because it is the word that points out heaven, that gives the *assurance* of heaven: we have in the word of God all the evidences of heaven. Whatsoever *title* any saint hath to heaven, he hath it in and out of the word of God. There are the evidences in the word of God; both the evidence of *discovery,* it is the holy terrier of the celestial Canaan, and the evidence of *assurance,* it is as a sacred bond or indenture between God and his creature. St. Gregory said wittily, when he called it God's epistle that he sent to man for the declaration of his will and pleasure, he might as well have called it God's deed of gift, whereby he makes over and conveys to us all those hopes that we look for in heaven. Whatsoever interest we have in God, in Christ. whatsoever hope of bliss and glory, whatsoever comfort of the Spirit, whatsoever proportion of grace, all are made over to us in the promises of the gospel, in the word of God.

Now put this together, look as in human affairs, *evidences,* though they be not properly the inheritance itself, yet they are called the inheritance, and are the inheritance, though not actually, yet virtually so; because all the title we have to an inheritance is in the deeds and evidences; therefore evidences are precious things. Though it be but a piece of paper, or parchment full of dust and worm-eaten, yet it is as much worth sometimes as a county, as much worth as all a man's possessions besides. So likewise it is with the Scriptures; they are not actually and properly the inheritance itself, but they are *via,* the way to the kingdom. It is called the gospel of the kingdom, nay more, the kingdom itself: "The kingdom of God is come among you," or "to you." Why the kingdom? Why the inheritance? By the same reason, both, because here we have the *conveyance,* here we have the *deed,* here we have the *assurance* of whatsoever title or claim we make to heaven.—*Richard Holdsworth.*

Verse 111.—"*They are the rejoicing of my heart.*" He saith not that God's testimonies bring joy, but that they are joy, there is no other joy but the delight in the law of the Lord. For all other joy, the wise king said of laughter, "thou art mad," and of joy, "what is it that thou dost?" Eccles. ii. True joy is the earnest which we have of heaven, it is the treasure of the soul, and therefore should be laid up in a safe place; and nothing in this world is safe to place it in. And therefore with the spouse we say, "We will be glad in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine." Let others seek their joy in wine, in society, in conversation, in music; for me, thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. These indeed are the precious fruits of the earth, but they seal not up special favour; a man may have together with them, an empty, husky, and chaffy soul. And therefore these are not the joys of the saints; they must have God, or else they die for sorrow; his law is their life.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 112.—"*I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway,*" etc. In the former verse he showed his faith, and his joy which came thereof; now he showeth that here in this joy he will keep the commandments; whereby he showeth that this was a true joy, because it wrought a care to do good. For if we believe the promises truly, then we also love the commandments, otherwise faith is vain; a care to live a godly life nourisheth faith in God's promises. Here is the cause then why many regard not the word and sacraments; or if they do a little, it is to no purpose, because they labour not to keep the commandments. For unless they have care to do this, the word of God to them cannot be profitable, nor the sacraments sacred.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 112.—"*I have inclined my heart to perform,*" etc. Observe. In the 36th verse he prayed to God, saying, "*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.*" And here he speaks about himself, saying, "*I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway even unto the end.*" What need, then, was there to ask from God that which he in another place glories to have done himself? I answer: These things are not contrary the one to the other. God inclines, and the godly man inclines. Man inclines by striving; God inclines by effecting. Neither is that which the man attempts, nor that which he by striving achieves goodwards, from the man, but from God, who gives, '*both to will and to do of his good pleasure:*" Phil. ii. 13.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 112.—The sinful heart of itself will run any way; upon earthly things, upon evil things, or upon impertinent and unseasonable things; but it will not come to or keep upon that which it should mind; therefore it must be taken as by strong hand, and set upon spiritual things, set on musing and meditation of heavenly things. A carnal heart is like the loadstone, it cleaves to nothing but steel or iron, and both of them easily unite: but the heart must be of another property, and act in a higher way. And a good heart, though it thinks too much earthward, and runs often wrong, yet it will set itself in its thinkings on right objects, and make itself and them to meet and unite. David tells us how he did; he *inclined his heart to God's commandments*, both to keep them and to meditate on them. He took and *bent his heart*, as a thing bending too much to other things; set his mind on musing on it. He found his heart and the law of God too far asunder, and so would continue, unless he brought them together and made them one. If he had not brought his heart to the word, he had never meditated: the object cannot apply itself to the mind, but the mind must bring itself to the object. No holy duties will come to us, we must come to them.—*Nathanael Ranew, in "Solitude Improved by Divine Meditation,"* 1670.

Verse 112.—"*I have inclined mine heart to perform*," etc. In this work he was determined to *continue*. 1. "*I have inclined my heart.*" The counsel of the soul is like a balance; and the mind, which hath the commanding power over the affections, inclines the balance to that which it judges best. 2. It was to *perform it*, that he thus *inclined his heart*. 3. And this not for a *time*, or some *particular occasion*, but *always*, and unto *the end*. Then *the end of life* would be the *beginning of glory*.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 112.—"*I have inclined my heart.*" The prophet, in order briefly to define what it is to serve God, asserts that he applied not only his hands, eyes, or feet, to the keeping of the law, but that he began with the affection of the heart.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 112.—"*Unto the end.*" Our life on earth is a race; in vain begins he to run swiftly, that fainteth, and gives over before he come to the end. And this was signified (saith Gregory) when in the law the tail of the beast was sacrificed with the rest: perseverance crowneth all. It is good we have begun to do well; let us also strive to persevere to the end.—*William Cowper.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 113 TO 120.

I HATE *vain* thoughts: but thy law do I love.
114 Thou *art* my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.
115 Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.
116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.
117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.
118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit *is* falsehood.
119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth *like* dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.
120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Verse 113. *"I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love."* In this paragraph the Psalmist deals with thoughts and things and persons which are the opposite of God's holy thoughts and ways. He is evidently in great fear of the powers of darkness, and of their allies, and his whole soul is stirred up to stand against them with a determined opposition. Just as he began the octave, verse 97, with "O how I love thy law," so here he begins with a declaration of hatred against that which breaks the law. The opposite of the fixed and infallible law of God is the wavering, changing opinion of men: David had an utter contempt and abhorrence for this; all his reverence and regard went to the sure word of testimony. In proportion to his love to the law was his hate of men's inventions. The thoughts of men are vanity; but the thoughts of God are verity. We hear much in these days of "men of thought," "thoughtful preachers," and "modern thought": what is this but the old pride of the human heart? Vain man would be wise. The Psalmist did not glory in his thoughts; and that which was called "thought" in his day was a thing which he detested. When man thinks his best, his highest thoughts are as far below those of divine revelation as the earth is beneath the heavens. Some of our thoughts are specially vain in the sense of vain-glory, pride, conceit, and self-trust; others in the sense of bringing disappointment, such as fond ambition, sinful dreaming, and confidence in man; in the sense of emptiness and frivolity, such as the idle thoughts and vacant romancings in which so many indulge; and, yet once more, too many of our thoughts are vain in the sense of being sinful, evil, and foolish. The Psalmist is not indifferent to evil thoughts as the careless are; but upon them he looks with a hate as true as was the love with which he clung to the pure thoughts of God.

The last octave was practical, this is thoughtful; there the man of God attended to his feet, and here to his heart: the emotions of the soul are as important as the acts of the life, for they are the fountain and spring from which the actions proceed. When we love the law it becomes a law of love, and we cling to it with our whole heart.

114. *"Thou art my hiding place and my shield."* To his God he ran for shelter from vain thoughts; there he hid himself away from their tormenting intrusions, and in solemn silence of the soul he found God to be his hiding-place. When called into the world, if he could not be alone with God as his hiding-place, he could have the Lord with him as his shield, and by this means he could ward off the attacks of wicked suggestions. This is an experimental verse, and it testifies to that which the writer knew of his own personal knowledge: he could not fight with his own thoughts, or escape from them, till he flew to his God, and then he found deliverance. Observe that he does not speak of God's word as being his double defence, but he ascribes that to God himself. When we are beset by very spiritual assaults, such as those which arise out of vain thoughts, we shall do well to fly distinctly to the person of our Lord, and to cast ourselves upon his real presence. Happy is he who can truly say to the triune God, "Thou art my hiding-place." He has beheld

God under that glorious covenant aspect which ensures to the beholder the surest consolation. *"I hope in thy word."* And well he might, since he had tried and proved it: he looked for protection from all danger, and preservation from all temptation to him who had hitherto been the tower of his defence on former occasions. It is easy to exercise hope where we have experienced help. Sometimes when gloomy thoughts afflict us, the only thing we can do is to hope, and, happily, the word of God always sets before us objects of hope and reasons for hope, so that it becomes the very sphere and support of hope, and thus tiresome thoughts are overcome. Amid fret and worry a hope of heaven is an effectual quietus.

115. *"Depart from me, ye evildoers."* Those who make a conscience of their thoughts are not likely to tolerate evil company. If we fly to God from vain thoughts, much more shall we avoid vain men. Kings are all too apt to be surrounded by a class of men who flatter them, and at the same time take liberty to break the laws of God: David purged his palace of such parasites; he would not harbour them beneath his roof. No doubt they would have brought upon him an ill name, for their doings would have been imputed to him, since the acts of courtiers are generally set down as acts of the court itself; therefore the king sent them packing bag and baggage, saying,—"Depart from me." Herein he anticipated the sentence of the last great day, when the Son of David shall say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." We cannot thus send all malefactors out of our houses, but it will often become a duty to do so where there is right and reason for it. A house is all the better for being rid of liars, pilferers, lewd talkers, and slanderers. We are bound at all hazards to keep ourselves clear of such companions as come to us by our own choice if we have any reason to believe that their character is vicious. Evildoers make evil counsellors. Those who say unto God, "Depart from us," ought to hear the immediate echo of their words from the mouths of God's children, "Depart from us. We cannot eat bread with traitors."

"For I will keep the commandments of my God." Since he found it hard to keep the commandments in the company of the ungodly, he gave them their marching orders. He *must* keep the commandments, but he did not need to keep their company. What a beautiful title for the Lord this verse contains! The word *God* only occurs in this one place in all this lengthened Psalm, and then it is attended by the personal word "my"—"my God."

> "My God! how charming is the sound!
> How pleasant to repeat!
> Well may that heart with pleasure bound,
> Where God hath fix'd his seat."

Because Jehovah is our God therefore we resolve to obey him, and to chase out of our sight those who would hinder us in his service. It is a grand thing for the mind to have come to a point, and to be steadfastly fixed in the holy determination, —"I will keep the commandments." God's law is our pleasure when the God of the law is our God.

116. *"Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live."* It was so necessary that the Lord should hold up his servant, that he could not even live without it. Our soul would die if the Lord did not continually sustain it, and every grace which makes spiritual life to be truly life would decay if he withdrew his upholding hand. It is a sweet comfort that this great necessity of upholding is provided for in the word, and we have not to ask for it as for an uncovenanted mercy, but simply to plead for the fulfilment of a promise, saying, "Uphold me according to thy word." He who has given us eternal life hath in that gift secured to us all that is essential thereto, and as gracious upholding is one of the necessary things we may be sure that we shall have it. *"And let me not be ashamed of my hope."* In verse 114 he had spoken of his hope as founded on the word, and now he begs for the fulfilment of that word that his hope might be justified in the sight of all. A man would be ashamed of his hope if it turned out that it was not based upon a sure foundation; but this will never happen in our case. We may be ashamed of our thoughts, and our words, and our deeds, for they spring from ourselves; but we never shall be ashamed of our hope, for that springs from the Lord our God. Such is the frailty of our nature that unless we are continually upheld by grace, we shall fall so foully as to be ashamed of ourselves, and ashamed of all those glorious hopes which are now the crown and glory of our life. The man of God had uttered the most positive resolves, but he felt that he could not trust in his own solemn determination: hence

these prayers. It is not wrong to make resolutions, but it will be useless to do so unless we salt them well with believing cries to God. David meant to keep the law of the Lord, but he first needed the Lord of the law to keep him.

117. *"Hold thou me up":* as a nurse holds up a little child. *"And I shall be safe,"* and not else; for unless thou hold me up I shall be falling about like an infant that is weak upon its knees. We are saved by past grace, but we are not safe unless we receive present grace. The Psalmist had vowed to keep the Lord's commands, but here he pleads with the Lord to keep him: a very sensible course of procedure. Our version reads the word "uphold," and then "hold up;" and truly we need this blessing in every shape in which it can come, for in all manner of ways our adversaries seek to cast us down. To be safe is a happy condition; there is only one door to it, and that is to be held up by God himself; thank God, that door is open to the least among us. *"And I will have respect unto thy statutes continually."* In obedience is safety; in being held up is obedience. No man will outwardly keep the Lord's statutes for long together unless he has an inward respect for them, and this will never be unless the hand of the Lord perpetually upholds the heart in holy love. Perseverance to the end, obedience continually, comes only through the divine power; we start aside as a deceitful bow unless we are kept right by him that first gave us grace. Happy is the man who realizes this verse in his life; upheld through his whole life in a course of unswerving integrity, he becomes a safe and trusted man, and maintains a sacred delicacy of conscience which is unknown to others. He feels a tender respect for the statutes of the Lord, which keeps him clear of inconsistencies and conformities to the world that are so common among others, and hence he is a pillar in the house of the Lord. Alas, we know some professors who are not upright, and therefore they lean to sin till they fall over, and though they are restored they are never safe or reliable, neither have they that sweet purity of soul which is the charm of the more sanctified who have been kept from falling into the mire.

118. *"Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes."* There is no holding up for them; they are thrown down and then trodden down, for they choose to go down into the wandering ways of sin. Sooner or later God will set his foot on those who turn their foot from his commands: it has always been so, and it always will be so to the end. If the salt has lost its savour, what is it fit for but to be trodden under foot? God puts away the wicked like dross, which is only fit to be cast out as road-metal to be trodden down.

"For their deceit is falsehood." They call it far-seeing policy, but it is absolute falsehood, and it shall be treated as such. Ordinary men call it clever diplomacy, but the man of God calls a spade a spade, and declares it to be falsehood, and nothing less, for he knows that it is so in the sight of God. Men who err from the right road invent pretty excuses with which to deceive themselves and others, and so quiet their consciences and maintain their credits; but their mask of falsehood is too transparent. God treads down falsehoods; they are only fit to be spurned by his feet, and crushed into the dust. How horrified must those be who have spent all their lives in contriving a confectionery religion, and then see it all trodden upon by God as a sham which he cannot endure!

119. *"Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross."* He does not trifle with them, or handle them with kid gloves. No, he judges them to be the scum of the earth, and he treats them accordingly by putting them away. He puts them away from his church, away from their honours, away from the earth, and at last away from himself. "Depart," saith he, "ye cursed." If even a good *man* feels forced to put away the evil-doers from him, much more must the thrice holy God put away the wicked. They looked like precious metal, they were intimately mixed up with it, they were laid up in the same heap; but the Lord is a refiner, and every day he removes some of the wicked from among his people, either by making a shameful discovery of their hypocrisy or by consuming them from off the earth. They are put away as dross, never to be recalled. As the metal is the better for losing its alloy, so is the church the better for having the wicked removed. These wicked ones are "of the earth,"—"the wicked of the earth," and they have no right to be with those who are not of the world; the Lord perceives them to be out of place and injurious, and therefore he puts them away, *all* of them, leaving none of them to deteriorate his church. The process will one day be perfect; no dross will be spared, no gold will be left impure. Where shall we be when that great work is finished?

"Therefore I love thy testimonies." Even the severities of the Lord excite the

love of his people. If he allowed men to sin with impunity, he would not be so fully the object of our loving admiration; he is glorious in holiness because he thus rids his kingdom of rebels, and his temple of them that defile it. In these evil days, when God's punishment of sinners has become the butt of proud sceptical contentions, we may regard as a mark of the true man of God that he loves the Lord none the less, but a great deal the more, because of his condign judgment of the ungodly.

120. "*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee.*" Such was his awe in the presence of the Judge of all the earth, whose judgment he had just now been considering, that he did exceedingly fear and quake. Even the grosser part of his being,—his flesh felt a solemn dread at the thought of offending one so good and great, who would so effectually sever the wicked from among the just. Alas, poor flesh, this is the highest thing to which thou canst attain! "*And I am afraid of thy judgments.*" God's words of judgment are solemn, and his deeds of judgment are terrible; they may well make us afraid. At the thought of the Judge of all,—his piercing eye, his books of record, his day of assize, and the operations of his justice,—we may well cry for cleansed thoughts, and hearts, and ways, lest his judgments should light on us. When we see the great Refiner separating the precious from the vile, we may well feel a godly fear, lest we should be put away by him, and left to be trodden under his feet.

Love in the previous verse is quite consistent with fear in this verse: the fear which hath torment is cast out, but not the filial fear which leads to reverence and obedience.

NOTES ON VERSES 113 TO 120.

The fifteenth letter, SAMECH, denotes a *prop* or *pillar*, and this agrees well with the subject matter of the strophe, in which God is twice implored to uphold his servant (verses 16, 17), while the utter destruction of those who make light of his law, or encourage scepticism regarding it, may be compared to the fate of the Philistine lords, on whom Samson brought down the roof of the house where they were making merry, by overthrowing the pillars which supported it.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 112, 113.—When David had an inclination in his heart to God's statutes, the immediate effect of it was to *"hate vain thoughts."* We read, *"I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes";* and it follows, *"I hate vain thoughts."* The vanity of his heart was a burden to him. A new creature is as careful against wickedness in the head or heart, as in the life. A godly man would be purer in the sight of God than in the view of man. He knows none but God can see the wanderings of his heart or the thoughts of his head, yet he is as careful that sins should not rise up as that they should not break out.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 113.—*"I hate vain thoughts,"* or, the evil devices; or, the double-hearted imaginations; or, the intermeddling, counter-coursing thoughts: that is to say, that kind of practice of some men, that sail with every wind, and seek still to have two strings to their bow. The Hebrew word doth properly signify boughs or branches, which shoot up perplexedly or confusedly in a tree.—*Theodore Haak,* 1618—1657.

Verse 113.—*"I hate vain thoughts."* In those vacant hours which are spared from business, pleasure, company, and sleep, and which are spent in solitude, at home or abroad; unprofitable, proud, covetous, sensual, envious, or malicious imaginations, occupy the minds of ungodly men, and often infect their very dreams. These are not only sinful in themselves, indicating the state of their hearts, and as such will be brought into the account at the day of judgment; but they excite the dormant corruptions, and lead to more open and gross violations of the holy law. The carnal mind welcomes and delights to dwell upon these congenial imaginations, and to solace itself by ideal indulgences, when opportunity of other gratification is not presented, or when a man dares not commit the actual transgression. But the spiritual mind recoils at them; such thoughts will intrude from time to time, but they are unwelcome and distressing, and are immediately thrust out; while other subjects, from the word of God, are stored up in readiness to occupy the mind more profitably and pleasantly during the hours of leisure and retirement. There is no better test of our true character, than the habitual effect of *"vain thoughts"* upon our minds—whether we love and indulge them, or abhor, and watch and pray against them.—*Thomas Scott,* 1747—1821.

Verse 113.—*"I hate vain thoughts."* A godly man may have roving thoughts in duty. Sad experience proves this; the thoughts will be dancing up and down in prayer. The saints are called stars; but many times in duty they are wandering stars. The heart is like quicksilver which will not fix. It is hard to tie two good thoughts together; we cannot lock our hearts so close, but that distracting thoughts, like wind, will get in. Hierom complains of himself; "Sometimes," saith he, "when I am about God's service, I am walking in the galleries, or casting up accounts." But these wandering thoughts are not allowed: *"I hate vain thoughts,"* they come as unwelcome guests, which are no sooner spied, but turned out of doors.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 113.—*"I hate."* Every dislike of evil is not sufficient; but perfect hatred is required of us against all sorts and degrees of sin.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 113.—*"Vain thoughts."* The word is used for the *opinions* of men; and may be applied to all heterodox opinions, human doctrines, damnable heresies; such as are inconsistent with the perfections of God, derogate from his grace, and from the person and offices of Christ; and are contrary to the word, and which are therefore rejected and abhorred by good men.—*John Gill.*

Verse 113.—*"Vain thoughts."* Hebrew, *seäphim,* haltings between two opinions. See 1 Kings xviii. 21. Hence it signifies *sceptical doubts.—Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 113.—*"Vain thoughts."* Our thoughts are set upon trifles and frivolous

things, neither tending to our own profit nor the benefit of others: "The heart of the wicked is little worth;" all their debates, conceits, musings, are of no value: for all their thoughts are taken up about childish vanity and foolish conceits. "The thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. xxiv. 9); not only the thought of wickedness, but foolishness. Thoughts are the first-born of the soul, the immediate issues of the mind; yet we lavish them away upon every trifle. Follow men all the day long, and take account of their thoughts. Oh! what madness and folly are in all the musings they are conscious of: "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity" (Ps. xciv. 11). If we did judge as God judges, all the thoughts, reasonings, discourses of the mind, if they were set down in a table, we might write at the bottom, Here is the sum and total account of all,—nothing but vanity.

The sins that do most usually engross and take up our thoughts are,

1st. Uncleanness. Speculative wickedness makes way for active: "Hath committed adultery . . . . in his heart" (Matt. v. 28). There is a polluting ourselves by our thoughts, and this sin usually works that way.

2ndly. Revenge. Liquors are soured when long kept; so, when we dwell upon discontents, they turn to revenge. Purposes of revenge are most sweet and pleasant to carnal nature: "Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually" (Prov. vi. 14), that is to say, he is full of revengeful and spiteful thoughts.

3rdly. Envy. It is a sin that feeds upon the mind. Those songs of the women, that Saul had slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands, they ran in Saul's mind, therefore he hated David (1 Sam. xviii. 9). Envy is an evil disease that dwelleth in the heart, and betrays itself mostly in thoughts.

4thly. Pride. Either pride in the desires or pride in the mind, either vainglory or self-conceit; this is entertaining our hearts with whispers of vanity: therefore it is said, "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts" (Luke i. 51): proud men are full of imaginations.

5thly. Covetousness, which is nothing but vain musings and exercises of the heart: "A heart they have exercised with covetous practices" (2 Peter ii. 14). And it withdraws the heart in the very time of God's worship: "Their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ezek. xxxiii. 31).

6thly. Distrust is another thing which usually takes up our thoughts—distracting motions against God's providence.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 113.—"*Vain thoughts.*" Let us see what *vanity* is. Take it in all the acceptations of it, it is true of our thoughts that they are "*vain.*"

1. It is taken for *unprofitableness.* So, Eccles. i. 2, 3, "All is vain," because there is "no profit in them under the sun." Such are our thoughts by nature; the wisest of them will not stand us in any stead in time of need, in time of temptation, distress of conscience, day of death or judgment: 1 Cor. ii. 6, "All the wisdom of the wise comes to nought"; Prov. x. 20, "The heart of the wicked is little worth," not a penny for them all.

2. Vanity is taken for *lightness.* "Lighter than vanity" is a phrase used, Ps. lxii. 9; and whom is it spoken of? Of men; and if anything in them be lighter than other, it is their *thoughts,* which swim in the uppermost parts, float at the top, are as the scum of the heart. When all the best, and wisest, and deepest, and solidest thoughts in Belshazzar, a prince, were weighed, they were found too light, Dan. v. 27.

3. Vanity is put for *folly.* So, Prov. xii. 11, "vain men" is made all one with men "void of understanding." Such are our thoughts. Among other evils which are said to "come out of the heart" (Mark vii. 22), ἀφροσύνη is reckoned as one, "foolishness"; that is, thoughts that are such as madmen have, and fools—nothing to the purpose of which there can be made no use.

4. Vanity is put for *inconstancy* and frailty; therefore vanity and a shadow are made synonymous, Ps. cxliv. 4. Such are our thoughts, flitting and perishing, as bubbles: Ps. cxlvi. 4, "All their thoughts perish."

5. Lastly, they are *wicked and sinful.* Vanity is [Jer. iv. 14] yoked with wickedness, and vain men and sons of Belial are all one, 2 Chron. xiii. 7. And such are our thoughts by nature: Prov. xxiv. 9, "The thought of foolishness is sin." And therefore a man is to be humbled for a proud thought.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 113.—"*But thy law do I love.*" Ballast your heart with a love to God. Love will, by a pleasing violence, bind down our thoughts: if it doth not establish our minds, they will be like a cork, which, with a light breath, and a short curl of water, shall be tossed up and down from its station. Scholars that love learning

will be continually hammering upon some notion or other which may further their progress, and as greedily clasp it as the iron will its beloved loadstone. He that is "winged with a divine love" to Christ will have frequent glances and flights toward him, and will start out from his worldly business several times in a day to give him a visit. Love, in the very working, is a settling grace; it increaseth our delight in God, partly by the sight of his amiableness, which is cleared to us in the very act of loving; and partly by the recompences he gives to the affectionate carriage of his creature; both which will prevent the heart's giving entertainment to such loose companions as evil thoughts.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verses 113, 114.—When David was able to vouch his love to the command, he did not question his title to the promise. Here he asserts his sincere affection to the precepts: *"I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love."* Mark, he doth not say he is *free* from vain thoughts, but he "hates" them, he likes their company no better than one would a pack of thieves that break into his house. Neither saith he that he *fully kept* the law, but he *"loved"* the law even when he failed of exact obedience to it. Now from this testimony his conscience brought in for his love to the law, his faith acts clearly and strongly on the promise in the next words, *"Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word."*—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 114.—*"Thou art my hiding place and my shield,"* etc. From vain thoughts and vain persons the Psalmist teaches us to fly, by prayer, to God, as our Refuge and Protector. This course a believer will as naturally take, in the hour of temptation and danger, as the offspring of the hen, on perceiving a bird of prey hovering over their heads, retire to their *"hiding-place,"* under the wings of the dam; or as the warrior opposeth his *"shield"* to the darts which are aimed at him.—*George Horne.*

Verse 114.—*"Thou art my hiding place."* Christ hath all qualifications that may fit him for this work [of being a *hiding-place* to believers].

1. He hath *strength.* A hiding-place must be *locus munitissimus.* Paper houses will never be good hiding-places. Houses made of reeds or rotten timber will not be fit places for men to hide themselves in. Jesus Christ is a place of strength. He is the Rock of Ages: His name is "the Mighty God," Isaiah ix. 6.

2. He hath *height.* A hiding-place must be *locus excelsissimus.* Your low houses are soon scaled. Jesus Christ is a high place; he is as high as heaven. He is the Jacob's ladder that reacheth from earth to heaven: Gen. xxviii. 12. He is too high for men, too high for devils; no creature can scale these high walls.

3. He hath *secret places.* A hiding-place must be *locus abditissimus.* The more secret, the more safe. Now, Jesus Christ hath many secret chambers that no creatures can ever find: Cant. ii. 14, "O my dove, that art in the secret places of the stairs!" As Christ hath hidden comforts which no man knows but he that receiveth them; so he hath hidden places of secresy which none can find out but he that dwells in them. "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut the doors upon thee" (Isaiah xxvi. 20).

4. Christ is *faithful.* He that will hide others had need be very faithful. A false-hearted protector is worse than an open pursuer. "Will the men of Keilah deliver me up?" saith David; "They will deliver thee up," saith the Lord. But now Christ is faithful: Rev. iii. 14, he is "the faithful witness;" he cannot be bribed to surrender up any creature that comes to hide himself with him. Christ will die before he will betray his trust.

5. Christ is *diligent.* Diligence is as necessary in those that will hide others, as faithfulness. A sleepy guard may betray a castle or garrison as well as a faithless guard. But Jesus Christ is very diligent and watchful, he hath his intelligencers abroad; yea, his own eyes run to and fro in the earth, to see what contrivances are made and set on foot against those who are hid with him: Ps. cxxi. 3, 4, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth."—*Ralph Robinson* (1614—1655) *in "Christ All in All."*

Verse 114.—*"Hiding place."* The first word in the verse means properly a secret, or a secret place.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 114.—*"My shield."* Good people are safe under God's protection; he is their "strength and their shield"; their "shield and their great reward"; and here, their *"hiding place and their shield."*—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 114.—*"Shield."* The excellency and properties of a shield lie in these

things :—1. In the largeness and breadth of it, in that it hides and covers the person that weareth it from all darts that are flung at him, so as they cannot reach him : Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous ; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield (Ps. v. 12). 2. The excellence of a shield lies in that it is hard and impenetrable. So this answers to the invincible power of God's providence, by which he can break the assaults of all enemies ; and such a shield is God to his people : " My shield, and he in whom I trust " (Ps. cxliv. 2). 3. Shall I add one thing more ? Stones and darts flung upon a hard shield are beaten back upon him that flings them ; so God beats back the evil upon his enemies and the enemies of his people : " Bring them down, O Lord, our shield " (Ps. lix. 11).—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 114.—"*I hope in thy word.*" Of all the ingredients that sweeten the cup of human life, there is none more rich or powerful than *hope.* Its absence embitters the sweetest lot ; its presence alleviates the deepest woe. Surround me with all the joys which memory can awaken or possession bestow,—without hope it is not enough. In the absence of hope there is sadness in past and present joys—sadness in the thought that the past is past, and that the present is passing too. But though you strip me of all the joys the past or the present can confer, if the morrow shineth bright with hope, I am glad amid my woe. Of all the busy motives that stir this teeming earth, hope is the busiest. It is the sweetest balm that soothes our sorrows, the brightest beam that gilds our pleasures. Hope is the noblest offspring, the first born, the last buried child of foreseeing and forecasting man. Without it the unthinking cattle may be content amid present plenty. But without it reflecting man should not, cannot be truly happy.—*William Grant* (1814—1876), *in "Christ our Hope, and other Sermons."*

Verses 114, 115.—"*Thou art my hiding place.*" "*Depart from me, ye evil-doers.*" Safe and quiet in his hiding-place, David deprecates all attempts to disturb his peace. The society, therefore, of the ungodly is intolerable to him, and he cannot forbear frowning them from his presence. He had found them to be opposed to his best interests ; and he feared their influence in shaking his determination of obedience to his God. Indeed, when have the Lord's people failed to experience such society to be a prevailing hindrance alike to the enjoyment and to the service of God ?—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 115.—"*Depart from me, ye evildoers,*" etc. As if he had said, Talk no more of it, save your breath, I am resolved on my course, I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed to keep the commandments of my God ; with God's help, there will I hold me, and all the world shall not wrest me from it.—*Robert Sanderson,* 1587—1662–3.

Verse 115.—"*Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity,*" etc. It is common to sin for company, and that cup usually goeth round, and is handed from one to another. It is therefore wise to quit the company which is infected by sin. It can bring thee no benefit. At least evil company will abate the good in thee. The herb of grace will never thrive in such a cold soil. How poorly doth the good corn grow which is compassed about with weeds ! Cordials and restoratives will do little good to the natural body, whilst it aboundeth with ill-humours. Ordinances are little effectual to souls which are distempered with such noxious inmates. It is said of the mountain Kadish, that whatsoever vine be planted near it, it causeth it to wither and die : it is exceeding rare for saints to thrive near such pull-backs. It is difficult, even to a miracle, to keep God's commandments and evil company too ; therefore when David would marry himself to God's commands, to love them, and live with them, for better for worse, all his days, he is forced to give a bill of divorce to wicked companions, knowing that otherwise the match could never be made : "*Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I will keep the commandments of my God.*" As if he had said, Be it known unto you, O sinners, that I am striking a hearty covenant with God's commands ; I like them so well, that I am resolved to give myself up to them, and to please them well in all things, which I never do unless ye depart ; ye are like a strumpet, which will steal away the love from the true wife. I cannot, as I ought, obey my God's precepts, whilst ye abide in my presence ; therefore depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I will keep the commandments of my God.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 115.—"*Depart from me, ye evildoers.*" Woe be to the wicked man, and woe to those who adhere to him and associate with him, saith *Ben Sira.* And even the pagans of old thought that a curse went along with those who kept evil company.

To inhabit, or to travel with an impious man, and one not beloved of the gods, was held by them to be unlucky and unfortunate.

Vetabo qui Cereris sacrum
Vulgavit, sub isdem
Sit trabibus, fragilemque mecum
Solvat phaselum,

as Horace speaks.*

To dwell under the same roof, or to sail in the same yacht or pleasure-boat with profane persons was deemed unsafe and dangerous by men of Pagan principles. How much more, then, ought Christians to be thoroughly persuaded of the mischief and danger of conversing with wicked men? It can no ways be safe to hold correspondence with them. Yea, we are in great danger all the while we are with them. You have heard, I suppose, who it was that would not stay in the bath so long as an arch-heretic was there. It was St. John the Evangelist; he would not (as *Irenæus* acquaints us) remain in that place because *Cerinthus*, who denied the divinity of Christ, was then present there. That holy man thought no place was safe where such persons are.

Therefore be mindful of the Apostle's exhortation, and "Come out from among them" (2 Cor. vi. 17); listen to that voice from heaven: "Come out, that ye be not partakers of their sins, and that ye receive not of their plagues." Separate yourselves from them, lest you not only indamage your souls, but your bodies, lest some remarkable judgment arrest you here, and lest the divine vengeance more furiously assault you hereafter. The fanciful poets tell us that *Theseus* and *Perithous* (a pair of intimate friends) loved one another so well that they went down to hell together. I am sure it is no poetical fiction that many do thus; that is to say, that they perish together, and descend into the bottomless pit for company's sake.—*John Edwards* (1637—1716), *in "Theologia Reformata."*

Verse 115.—Depart from them that depart from God.—*T. Manton.*

Verse 115.—"*Of my God.*" As a man can esteem of anything which he knows is his own; so if once he know that God is his, he cannot but love him, and carefully obey him: neither is it possible that any man can give to God hearty and permanent service, who is not persuaded to say with David, *He is my God.* All the pleasures, all the terrors of the world cannot sunder that soul from God, who can truly say, *The Lord is my God.—W. Cowper.*

Verse 116.—"*Uphold me.*" A kite soaring on high is in a situation quite foreign to its nature; as much as the soul of man is when raised above this lower world to high and heavenly pursuits. A person at a distance sees not how it is kept in its exalted situation: he sees not the wind that blows it, nor the hand that holds it, nor the string by whose instrumentality it is held. But all of these powers are necessary to its preservation in that preternatural state. If the wind were to sink it would fall. It has nothing whatever in itself to uphold itself; it has the same tendency to gravitate towards the earth that it ever had; and if left for a moment to itself it would fall. Thus it is with the soul of every true believer. It has been raised by the Spirit of God to a new, a preternatural, a heavenly state; and in that state it is upheld by an invisible and Almighty hand, through the medium of faith. And upheld it shall be, but not by any power in itself. If left for a moment it would fall as much as ever. Its whole strength is in God alone; and its whole security is in the unchangeableness of his nature, and in the efficacy of his grace. In a word, "It is kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation."—*From "The Book of Illustrations," by H. G. Salter,* 1840.

Verse 116.—"*That I may live.*" The life of a Christian stands in this, to have his soul quickened by the spirit of grace. For as the presence of the soul quickens the body, and the departure thereof brings instant death; and the body without it is but a dead lump of clay: so it is the presence of God's Spirit which giveth life to the soul of man. And this life is known by these two notable effects; for first, it brings a joyful sense of God's mercy; and next, a spiritual disposition to spiritual exercises. And without this, pretend a man what he will, he is but the image of a Christian, looking somewhat like him, but not quickened by his life.—*William Cowper.*

---

* They who mysteries reveal
Beneath my roof shall never live,
Shall never hoist with me the doubtful sail.

Verse 116.—"*That I may live.*" The children of God think they have no life if they live not in God's life. For if we think we are alive, because we see, so do the brute beasts; if we think we are alive because we hear, so do the cattle; if we think we are alive because we eat and drink, or sleep, so do beasts; if we think we live because we do reason and confer, so do the heathen. The life of God's children is the death of sin; for where sin is alive, there that part is dead unto God. . . . . God's children, finding themselves dull and slow to good things, when they cannot either rejoice in the promises of God, or find their inward man delighted with the law of God, think themselves to be dead.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 117.—"*Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.*" Not only the consciousness of my weakness, but the danger of the slippery path before me, reminds me, that the safety of every moment depends upon the upholding power of my faithful God. The ways of temptation are so many and imperceptible—the influence of it so appalling—the entrance into it so deceitful, so specious, so insensible—and my own weakness and unwatchfulness are so unspeakable—that I can do nothing but go on my way, praying at every step, "*Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.*"—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 117.—"*Hold thou me up.*" Three things made David afraid. First, great temptation without; for from every air the wind of temptation blows upon a Christian. Secondly, great corruption within. Thirdly, examples of other worthy men that had fallen before him, and are written for us: not that we should learn to fall, but to fear lest we fall. These three should alway hold us humble, according to that warning, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—*William Cowper.*

Verse 117.—"*Up,*" up above the littlenesses in which I have lived too long,—above the snares which have so often caught me,—above the stumbling-blocks upon which I have so often fallen,—above the world,—above myself,—higher than I have ever reached yet,—above the level of my own mortality: worthy of thee,—worthy of the blood, with which I have been bought,—nearer to heaven,—nearer to thee,—"*hold thou me up.*"

God's methods of holding his people up are many. Sometimes it is by the preacher's word, when the word comes fitly spoken to the heart and conscience. May God, in his infinite condescension, enable his servants in this church so to hold you up. Sometimes it is by the ordained means and sacraments which his grace commanded. Sometimes it is by the efficacy of the Holy Scriptures, when some passages in your own room strikes the mind, just in season; or the stay of some sweet promise comes in sustainingly to your spirit. Sometimes by the simple inworking of the Holy Ghost in a man's own thoughts, as he will work,—"Uphold me with thy free Spirit." Sometimes by the ministration of angels,—"They shall hold thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Sometimes by putting you very low indeed, making you feel that the safe place is the valley. There is no elevation like the elevation of abasement. Sometimes by severe discipline to brace up the heart, and strengthen it, and make it independent of external things. Sometimes by heavy affliction, which is the grasp of his hand, that he may hold you tighter. Sometimes by putting into your heart to think the exact thing that you need,—to pray the very prayer which he intends at the moment to grant. Sometimes by appearing to let you go, and forsake you, while at the same time—like the Syro-Phœnician woman—he is giving you the wish to hold on that he may give you the more at the last.—*James Vaughan, of Brighton,* 1877.

Verse 117.—"*I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.*" I will employ myself, so some; I will delight myself, so others; in thy statutes. If God's right hand uphold us, we must in his strength go on in our duty, both with diligence and with pleasure.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 118.—"*Thou hast trodden down,*" etc. David here, by a new meditation, confirms himself in the course of godliness: for considering the judgments of God, executed according to his word in all ages upon the wicked, he resolves so much the more to fear God and keep his testimonies. Thus the judgments of God, executed on others, should be awe-bands to keep us from sinning after their similitude.

The Lord in chastening his own children takes them in hand like a father to correct them; but when his wrath is kindled against the wicked he tramples them under his feet, as vile creatures which are no account with him.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 118.—"*Thou hast trodden down.*" The Septuagint, ἐξουδένωσας, *ad nihil deduxisti;* thou hast brought to nothing; Aquila, *confixisti,* thou hast stricken through: Symmachus, ἀπήλεγξας, *reprobasti,* thou hast disproved; the Vulgate, *sprevisti,* thou hast contemned; Apollinarius, ἀθέριξας, *parvi pependisti,* thou hast little esteemed: all to the same purpose. The phrase of treading under foot, used by us, implies, 1. A full punishment; 2. A disgraceful one. 1. A full punishment. God will pull them down from their altitudes, even to the dust, though never so high and proudly exalting themselves against God. A full conquest of enemies is thus often expressed in Scripture. The Assyrian is said "to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets" (Isa. x. 6). 2. It implies a disgraceful punishment: "Until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. cx. 1); an expression used to show the ignominy and contempt God will put upon them. Thus Sapores, the king of Persia, trampled upon Valentinian the emperor, and Tamerlane made Bajazet his footstool. The meaning is, God will not only bring them under, but reduce them to an abject and contemptible condition. So Chrysostom on the text expoundeth this phrase, that God will make them ἐπονειδίστους καὶ καταγελάστους, ignominious and contemptible. They shall not go off honourably, but with scorn and confusion of face, miserably broken.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 118.—"*Thou hast trodden down,*" etc. There is a disposition to merge all the characterictics of the Divinity into one; and while with many of our most eminent writers, the exuberant goodness, the soft and yielding benignity, the mercy that overlooks and makes liberal allowance for the infirmities of human weakness, have been fondly and most abundantly dwelt upon—there has been what the French would call, if not a studied, at least an actually observed *reticence,* on the subject of his truth and purity and his hatred of moral evil. There can be no government without a law; and the question is little entertained—how are the violations of that law to be disposed of? Every law has its sanctions—the hopes of proffered reward on the one hand, the fears of threatened vengeance on the other. Is the vengeance to be threatened only, but never to be executed? Is guilt only to be dealt with by proclamations that go before, but never by punishments that are to follow? . . . . Take away from jurisprudence its penalties, or, what were still worse, let the penalties only be denounced but never exacted; and we reduce the whole to an unsubstantial mockery. The fabric of moral government falls to pieces; and, instead of a great presiding authority in the universe, we have a subverted throne and a degraded Sovereign. . . . . If there is only to be the parade of a judicial economy, without any of its power or its performance; if the truth is only to be kept in the promises of reward, but as constantly to be receded from in the threats of vengeance; if the judge is thus to be lost in the overweening parent—there is positively nothing of a moral government over us but the name, we are not the subjects of God's authority; we are the fondlings of his regard. Under a system like this, the whole universe would drift, as it were, into a state of anarchy; and, in the uproar of this wild misrule, the King who sitteth on high would lose his hold on the creation that he had formed.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 118.—"*For their deceit is falsehood.*" The true sense of the passage is, "for their cunning hath been fallacious," that is, it hath deceived themselves and brought on their ruin.—*Samuel Horsley,* 1733—1806.

Verse 118.—"*Their deceit is falsehood.*" He means not here of that deceit whereby the wicked deceive others, but that whereby they deceive themselves. And this is two-fold: first, in that they look for a good in sin, which sin deceitfully promiseth, but they shall never find. Next, that they flatter themselves with a vain conceit to escape judgment, which shall assuredly overtake them.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 119.—"*Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross.*" The godly and the wicked live together in the visible Church, as dross and good metal; but God, who is the purger of his church, will not fail by diversity of trials and judgments to put difference between them, and at last will make a perfect separation of them, and cast away the wicked as refuse.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 119.—God's judgments upon others may be a necessary act of love to us. They are purged out as "*dross,*" that they may not infect us by their example, or molest us by their persecutions or oppressions. Now, the more we are befriended in this kind, the more we are bound to serve God cheerfully: "That we being

delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life" : Luke i. 74, 75. The world is one of those enemies, or the wicked of the earth ; therefore we should serve him faithfully.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 119.—"*Thou puttest away all the wicked.*" Many ways are wicked men taken away ; sometime by the hand of other men, sometime by their own hand. The Philistines slew not Saul, but forced him to slay himself ; yet the eye of faith ever looks to the finger of God, and sees that the fall of the wicked is the work of God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 119.—"*The wicked of the earth.*" Why are they thus characterized ? Because here they flourish ; their names "shall be written in the earth" (Jer. xvii. 13) ; they grow great and of good reckoning and account here. Judas had the bag ; they prosper in the world : "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world" (Ps. lxxiii. 12). Here they are respected : "They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them" (1 John iv. 5). Their hearts and minds are in the world (Matt. vi. 19, 20). It is their natural frame to be worldly, they only savour the things of the world ; preferment, honour, greatness, it is their *unum magnum ;* here is their pleasure, and here is their portion, their hope, and their happiness. A child of God looketh for another inheritance, immortal and undefiled.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 119.—"*Like dross.*" The men of this world esteem God's children as the offscourings of the earth ; so Paul (a chosen vessel of God) was disesteemed of men ; but ye see here what the wicked are, in God's account, but dross indeed, which is the refuse of gold and silver. Let this confirm the godly against the contempt of men : only the Lord hath in his own hand the balance which weigheth men according as they are.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 119.—"*Dross.*" 1. The *dross* obscures the lustre and glory of the metal, yea, covers it up, so that it appears not ; rust and filth compass and hide the gold, so that neither the nature nor lustre of it can be seen. 2. *Dross* is a deceiving thing. It is like metal, but is not metal ; the dross of silver is like it, and so the dross of gold is like gold, but the dross is neither silver nor gold. 3. *Dross* is not bettered by the fire : put it into the fire time after time, it abides so still. 4. *Dross* is a worthless thing. It is of no value—base, vile, contemptible. 5. It is useless, and to be rejected. 6. *Dross* is an offensive thing : rust eats into the metal, endangers it, and makes the goldsmith to kindle the fire, to separate it from the gold and silver.—*Condensed from William Greenhill.*

Verse 119.—"*Thy testimonies.*" So, very frequently, he calleth God's word, wherein there are both commands and promises : the commandments of God appertain to all, his testimonies belong to his children only ; whereby more strictly, I understand his promises containing special declarations of his love and favour toward his own in Christ Jesus.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 120.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee.*" Instead of exulting over those who fell under God's displeasure he humbleth himself. What we read and hear of judgments of God upon wicked people should make us (1) Te reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him. Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God ? 1 Sam. vi. 20. (2) To fear lest we offend him, and become obnoxious to his wrath. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by the terrors of the Lord ; especially when judgment begins at the house of God, and hypocrites are discovered, and put away as dross.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 120.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee,*" etc. At the presence of Jehovah, when he appeareth in judgment, the earth trembled and is still. His best servants are not exempted from an awful dread, upon such occasions ; scenes of this kind, shown in vision to the prophets, cause their flesh to quiver, and all their bones to shake. Encompassed with a frail body, and a sinful world, we stand in need of every possible tie ; and the affections both of fear and love must be employed, to restrain us from transgression ; we must, at the same time, "love God's testimonies, and fear his judgments."—*George Horne.*

Verse 120.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee,*" etc. In prayer, in the evening, I had such near and terrific views of God's judgments upon sinners in hell, that my flesh trembled for fear of them. . . . . I flew trembling to Jesus Christ as if the flames were taking hold of me ! Oh ! Christ will indeed save me or else I perish. —*Henry Martyn,* 1781—1812.

Verse 120.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee.*" Familiarity with men breeds contempt; familiarity with God, not so: none reverence the Lord more than they who know him best and are most familiar with him.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 120 *with* 116.—"*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; I am afraid.*" . . . . "*Let me not be ashamed of my hope.*" True religion consists in a proper mixture of *fear* of God, and of *hope* in his mercy; and wherever either of these is entirely wanting, there can be no true religion. God has joined these things, and we ought by no means to put them asunder. He cannot take pleasure in those who fear him with a slavish fear, without hoping in his mercy, because they seem to consider him as a cruel and tyrannical being, who has not mercy or goodness in his nature; and, besides, they implictly charge him with falsehood, by refusing to believe and hope in his invitations and offers of mercy. On the other hand, he cannot be pleased with those who pretend to hope in his mercy without fearing him; for they insult him by supposing that there is nothing in him which ought to be feared; and, in addition to this, they make him a liar, by disbelieving his awful threatenings denounced against sinners, and call in question his authority, by refusing to obey him. Those only who both fear him and hope in his mercy, give him the honour that is due to his name.—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 120.—"*Trembleth*" or shuddereth, strictly used of the hair as standing erect in terror (comp. Job iv. 15).—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 121 TO 128.

I HAVE done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.
122 Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.
123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.
124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.
125 I *am* thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.
126 *It is* time for *thee*, LORD, to work: *for* they have made void thy law.
127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.
128 Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right; *and* I hate every false way.

121. *"I have done judgment and justice."* This was a great thing for an Eastern ruler to say at any time, for these despots mostly cared more for gain than justice. Some of them altogether neglected their duty, and would not even do judgment at all, preferring their pleasures to their duties; and many more of them sold their judgments to the highest bidders by taking bribes, or regarding the persons of men. Some rulers gave neither judgment nor justice, others gave judgment without justice, but David gave judgment and justice, and saw that his sentences were carried out. He could claim before the Lord that he had dealt out even-handed justice, and was doing so still. On this fact he founded a plea with which he backed the prayer—*"Leave me not to mine oppressors."* He who, as far as his power goes, has been doing right, may hope to be delivered from his superiors when attempts are made by them to do him wrong. If I will not oppress others, I may hopefully pray that others may not oppress me. A course of upright conduct is one which gives us boldness in appealing to the Great Judge for deliverance from the injustice of others. Nor is this kind of pleading to be censured as self-righteous: when we are dealing with God as to our shortcomings, we use a very different tone from that with which we face the censures of our fellow-men; when they are in the question, and we are guiltless towards them, we are justified in pleading our innocence.

122. *"Be surety for thy servant for good."* Answer for me. Do not leave thy poor servant to die by the hand of his enemy and thine. Take up my interests and weave them with thine own, and stand for me. As my Master, undertake thy servants' cause, and represent me before the faces of haughty men till they see what an august ally I have in the Lord my God.

"Let not the proud oppress me." Thine interposition will answer the purpose of my rescue: when the proud see that thou art my advocate they will hide their heads. We should have been crushed beneath our proud adversary the devil if our Lord Jesus had not stood between us and the accuser, and become a surety for us. It is by his suretiship that we escape like a bird from the snare of the fowler. What a blessing to be able to leave our matters in our Surety's hands, knowing that all will be well, since he has an answer for every accuser, a rebuke for every reviler.

Good men dread oppression, for it makes even a wise man mad, and they send up their cries to heaven for deliverance; nor shall they cry in vain, for the Lord will undertake the cause of his servants, and fight their battles against the proud. The word "servant" is wisely used as a plea for favour for himself, and the word "proud" as an argument against his enemies. It seems to be inevitable that proud men should become oppressors, and that they should take most delight in oppressing really gracious men.

123. *"Mine eyes fail for thy salvation."* He wept, waited, and watched for God's saving hand, and these exercises tried the eyes of his faith till they were almost ready to give out. He looked to God alone, he looked eagerly, he looked long, he looked till his eyes ached. The mercy is, that if our eyes fail, God does not fail, nor do *his* eyes fail. Eyes are tender things, and so are our faith, hope and expectancy: the Lord will not try them above what they are able to bear. *"And for the word of thy righteousness:"* a word that would silence the unrighteous words

of his oppressors. His eyes as well as his ears waited for the Lord's word: he looked to see the divine word come forth as a fiat for his deliverance. He was "waiting for the verdict"—the verdict of righteousness itself. How happy are we if we have righteousness on our side; for then that which is the sinners' terror is our hope, that which the proud dread is our expectation and desire. David left his reputation entirely in the Lord's hand, and was eager to be cleared by the word of the Judge rather than by any defence of his own. He knew that he had done right, and, therefore, instead of avoiding the supreme court, he begged for the sentence which he knew would work out his deliverance. He even watched with eager eyes for the judgment and the deliverance, the word of righteousness from God which meant salvation to himself.

124. "*Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy.*" Here he recollects himself: although before men he was so clear that he could challenge the word of righteousness, yet before the Lord, as his servant, he felt that he must appeal to mercy. We feel safest here. Our heart has more rest in the cry, "God be merciful to me," than in appealing to justice. It is well to be able to say, "I have done judgment and justice," and then to add in all lowliness, yet "deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy." The title of servant covers a plea; a master should clear the character of his servant if he be falsely accused, and rescue him from those who would oppress him; and, moreover, the master should show mercy to a servant, even if he deal severely with a stranger. The Lord condescendingly deals, or has communications with his servants, not spurning them, but communing with them; and this he does in a tender and merciful way, for in any other form of dealing we should be crushed into the dust. "*And teach me thy statutes.*" This will be one way of dealing with us in mercy. We may expect a master to teach his own servant the meaning of his own orders. Yet since our ignorance arises from our own sinful stupidity, it is great mercy on God's part that he condescends to instruct us in his commands. For our ruler to become our teacher is an act of great grace, for which we cannot be too grateful. Among our mercies this is one of the choicest.

125. "*I am thy servant.*" This is the third time he has repeated this title in this one section: he is evidently fond of the name, and conceives it to be a very effective plea. We who rejoice that we are sons of God are by no means the less delighted to be his servants. Did not the firstborn Son assume the servant's form and fulfil the servant's labour to the full? What higher honour can the younger brethren desire than to be made like the Heir of all things?

"*Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.*" In the previous verse he sought teaching; but here he goes much further, and craves for understanding. Usually, if the instructor supplies the teaching, the pupil finds the understanding; but in our case we are far more dependent, and must beg for understanding as well as teaching: this the ordinary teacher cannot give, and we are thrice happy that our Divine Tutor can furnish us with it. We are to confess ourselves fools, and then our Lord will make us wise, as well as give us knowledge. The best understanding is that which enables us to render perfect obedience and to exhibit intelligent faith, and it is this which David desires,—"understanding, that I may know thy testimonies." Some would rather not know these things; they prefer to be at ease in the dark rather than possess the light which leads to repentance and diligence. The servant of God longs to know in an understanding manner all that the Lord reveals of man and to man; he wishes to be so instructed that he may apprehend and comprehend that which is taught him. A servant should not be ignorant concerning his master, or his master's business; he should study the mind, will, purpose, and aim of him whom he serves, for so only can he complete his service; and as no man knows these things so well as his master himself, he should often go to him for instructions, lest his very zeal should only serve to make him the greater blunderer.

It is remarkable that the Psalmist does not pray for understanding through acquiring knowledge, but begs of the Lord first that he may have the gracious gift of understanding, and then may obtain the desired instruction. All that we know before we have understanding is apt to spoil us and breed vanity in us; but if there be first an understanding heart, then the stores of knowledge enrich the soul, and bring neither sin nor sorrow therewith. Moreover, this gift of understanding acts also in the form of discernment, and thus the good man is preserved from hoarding up that which is false and dangerous: he knows what are and what are not the testimonies of the Lord.

126. *"It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law."* David was a servant, and therefore it was always his time to work: but being oppressed by a sight of man's ungodly behaviour, he feels that his Master's hand is wanted, and therefore he appeals to him to work against the working of evil. Men make void the law of God by denying it to be his law, by promulgating commands and doctrines in opposition to it, by setting up tradition in its place, or by utterly disregarding and scorning the authority of the lawgiver. Then sin becomes fashionable, and a holy walk is regarded as a contemptible puritanism; vice is styled pleasure, and vanity bears the bell. Then the saints sigh for the presence and power of their God: Oh for an hour of the King upon the throne and the rod of iron! Oh for another Pentecost with all its wonders, to reveal the energy of God to gainsayers, and make them see that there is a God in Israel! Man's extremity, whether of need or sin, is God's opportunity. When the earth was without form and void, the Spirit came and moved upon the face of the waters; should he not come when society is returning to a like chaos? When Israel in Egypt were reduced to the lowest point, and it seemed that the covenant would be void, then Moses appeared and wrought mighty miracles; so, too, when the church of God is trampled down, and her message is derided, we may expect to see the hand of the Lord stretched out for the revival of religion, the defence of the truth, and the glorifying of the divine name. The Lord can work either by judgments which hurl down the ramparts of the foe; or by revivals which build up the walls of his own Jerusalem. How heartily may we pray the Lord to raise up new evangelists, to quicken those we already have, to set his whole church on fire, and to bring the world to his feet. God's work is ever honourable and glorious; as for our work, it is as nothing apart from him.

127. *"Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."* As it was God's time to work so it was David's time to love. So far from being swayed by the example of evil men, so as to join them in slighting the Scriptures, he was the rather led into a more vehement love of them. As he saw the commandments slighted by the ungodly, his heart was in sympathy with God, and he felt a burning affection for his holy precepts. It is the mark of a true believer that he does not depend upon others for his religion, but drinks water out of his own well, which springs up even when the cisterns of earth are all dried. Our holy poet amid a general depreciation of the law felt his own esteem of it rising so high that gold and silver sank in comparison. Wealth brings with it so many conveniences that men naturally esteem it, and gold as the symbol of it is much set by; and yet, in the judgment of the wise, God's laws are more enriching, and bring with them more comfort than all the choicest treasures. The Psalmist could not boast that he always kept the commands; but he could declare that he loved them; he was perfect in heart, and would fain have been perfect in life. He judged God's holy commands to be better than the best earthly thing, yea, better than the best sort of the best earthly thing; and this esteem was confirmed and forced into expression by those very oppositions of the world which drive hypocrites to forsake the Lord and his ways.

> "The dearer, for their rage,
> Thy words I love and own,—
> A wealthier heritage
> Than gold and precious stone"

128. *"Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right."* Because the ungodly found fault with the precepts of God, therefore David was all the more sure of their being right. The censure of the wicked is a certificate of merit; that which they sanction we may justly suspect, but that which they abominate we may ardently admire. The good man's delight in God's law is unreserved, he believes in all God's precepts concerning all things.

"And I hate every false way." Love to truth begat hatred of falsehood. This godly man was not indifferent to anything, but that which he did not love he hated. He was no chip in the porridge without flavour; he was a good lover or a good hater, but he was never a waverer. He knew what he felt, and expressed it. He was no Gallio, caring for none of the things. His detestation was as unreserved as his affection; he had not a good word for any practice which would not bear the light of truth. The fact that such large multitudes follow the broad road had no influence upon this holy man, except to make him more determined to avoid every form of error and sin. May the Holy Spirit so rule in our hearts that our affections may be in the same decided condition towards the precepts of the word.

NOTES ON VERSES 121 TO 128.

Verse 121.—This commences a new division of the Psalm indicated by the Hebrew letter *Ain*—a letter which cannot well be represented in the English alphabet, as there is, in fact, no letter in our language exactly corresponding with it. It would be best represented probably by what are called "*breathings*" in Greek. —*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 121.—"*I have done judgment*" against the wicked, " and *justice*" towards the good.—*Simon de Muis*, 1587—1644.

Verse 121.—"*I have done judgment and justice.*"—Here the view of David in his judicial capacity might present itself to us; and if so, we have David in the midst of large experiences; for the words would take in a large portion of his life. How blessed were their reflections, if, after a long reign, all sovereign rulers could thus appeal unto God. It should be so; for to him all shall be accountable at last. Even although we only conceive of David as speaking in the character of a private man, the sentiment is worthy of all consideration. . . . . For parents to say this of their dealings with their children, masters of servants, a man of his neighbours, is very excellent.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 121.—"*Judgment*" and "*justice*" are often put in Scripture for the same, and when put together, the latter is as an epithet to the former. "*I have done judgment and justice,*" that is, I have done judgment *justly*, exactly, to a hair.— *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 121.—

> Do right and be a king,
> Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
> Still to preserve thy conscious innocence,
> Nor e'er turn pale with guilt.
>
> —*Francis's Horace.*

Verse 121.—" If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence before God : " 1 John iii. 21. This " testimony of conscience " has often been " the rejoicing " of the Lord's people, when sufferenq under unmerited reproach or " proud oppression." They have been enabled to plead it without offence in the presence of their holy, heart-searching God; nay, even when, in the near prospect of the great and final account, they might well have been supposed to shrink from the strict and unerring scrutiny of their Omniscient Judge. Perhaps, however, we are not sufficiently aware of the importance of moral integrity in connexion with our spiritual comfort. Mark the boldness which it gave David in prayer: "*I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.*"—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 121.—"*Leave me not to mine oppressors.*" That is, maintain me against those who would wrong me, because I do right; interpose thyself between me and my enemies, as if thou wert my pledge. Impartial justice upon oppressors sometimes lays judges open to oppression; but yet they who run greatest hazards in zeal for God shall find God ready to be their surety, when they pray, " *be surety for thy servant,*" as in the next verse.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verses 121, 122.—"*I have done judgment and justice;*" but, that I may always do it, and never fail in doing it, " *uphold thy servant unto good,*" by directing him, so that he may always relish what is good, and then the consequence will be that " *the proud will not calumniate me;*" for he that is well established " *unto good,*" and so made up that nothing but what is good and righteous will be agreeable to him, he will so persevere that he will have no reason for fearing " *the proud that calumniate him.*"—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 122.—"*Be surety for thy servant for good.*" What David prays to God to be for him, that Christ is for all his people : Heb. vii. 22. He drew nigh to God, struck hands with him, gave his word and bond to pay the debts of his people; put himself in their law-place and stead, and became responsible to law and justice for them; engaged to make satisfaction for their sins, to bring in everlasting righteousness for their justification, and to preserve and keep them, and bring them safe to eternal glory and happiness; and this was being *a surety for them for good.* —*John Gill.*

Verse 122.—"*Be surety for thy servant for good.*" There are three expositions of this clause, as noting the end, the cause, the event. 1. Undertake for me, *ut*

sim bonus et justus, so Rabbi Arama on the place; "Be surety for me *that I may be good.*" Theodoret expounds it, "Undertake that I shall make good my resolution of keeping thy law." He that joineth, undertaketh; though we have precepts and promises, without God's undertaking we shall never be able to perform our duty. 2. Undertake for me to help me *in doing good;* so some read it: God would not take his part in an evil cause. To commend a wrong cause to God's protection, is to provoke him to hasten our punishment, to make us serve under our oppressors; but, when we have a good cause, and a good conscience, he will own us. We cannot expect he should maintain us and bear us out in the Devil's service, wherein we have entangled ourselves by our own sin.

3. *Be with me for good:* so it is often rendered: "Shew me a token for good" (Ps. lxxxvi. 17); "Pray not for this people for good" (Jer. xiv. 11); so, "Remember me, O my God, for good" (Neh. xiii. 31). So here; *"Be surety for thy servant for good."—Thomas Manton.*

Verse 122.—*"Be surety for thy servant for good."* It is the prayer of Hezekiah in his trouble, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me" (Isa. xxxviii. 14); it is the prayer of Job for a "daysman" to stand between him and God (Job ix. 33); it is the cry of the church before the Incarnation for the appearance of a Divine Mediator; it is the confidence of every faithful soul since that blessed time in the perpetual intercession of our great High Priest in heaven, which is to us the pledge of future blessedness.—*Agellius and Cocceius, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 122.—*"Be surety for thy servant for good."* His meaning is, Lord, thou knowest how unjustly I am calumniated and evil spoken of in many parts: where I am not present or where I may not answer for myself, Lord, answer thou for me.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 122.—*"Be surety for thy servant for good."* The keen eye of the world may possibly not be able to affix any blot upon my outward profession; but, "if thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?" The debt is continually accumulating, and the prospect of payment as distant as ever. I might well expect to be "left to my oppressors," until I should pay all that was due unto my Lord. But behold! "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" Isa. li. 13. The surety is found—the debt is paid—the ransom is accepted—the sinner is free. There was a voice heard in heaven—"Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. The Son of God himself became "Surety for a stranger," and "smarted for it," Prov. xi. 15. At an infinite cost—the cost of his own precious blood—he delivered me from *"mine oppressors"*—sin—Satan—the world—death—hell.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 122.—Some observe that this is the only verse throughout the whole Psalm wherein the Word is not mentioned under the name of "law," "judgments," "statutes," or the like terms, and they make this note upon it,—"Where the Law faileth, there Christ is a surety of a better testament." There are that render the words thus,—*"Dulcify, or, delight thy servant in good,"* that is, make him joyful and comfortable in the pursuit and practice of that which is good.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 123.—*"Mine eyes fail for thy salvation."* In times of great sorrow, when the heart is oppressed with care, and when danger threatens on every side, the human eye expresses with amazing accuracy the distressed and anguished emotions of the soul. The posture here described is that of an individual who perceives himself surrounded with enemies of the most formidable character, who feels his own weakness and insufficiency to enter into conflict with them, but who is eagerly looking for the arrival of a devoted and powerful friend who has promised to succour him in the hour of his calamity. As his friend delays the hour of his coming, his fears and anxieties multiply, till he finds himself in the condition of one whose eyes fail and grow dim in looking for the approach of his great deliverer. In this condition was the suppliant here described,—his enemies were ready to swallow him up, and except from heaven he had no hope of final extrication. To the promises of God he betook himself, and while waiting their accomplishment, and looking with the utmost eagerness to the word of God's righteousness, he gives utterance to the desponding sentiment, *"Mine eyes fail for thy salvation."* O for such warm and anxious desires for that great salvation, which will realize the victory over all our spiritual enemies, and enable us to shout triumphantly through all eternity in the name of our almighty Deliverer!—*John Morison.*

Verse 123.—*"Mine eyes fail . . . . . for the word of thy righteousness."* Albeit

the words of promise be neither performed, nor the like to be performed, yet faith should justify the promise, for true and faithful.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 123.—"*For the word of thy righteousness.*" This would be the word of promised salvation, which the Lord had given in righteousness. What an amazing plea—God on the ground of his own righteousness appealed to for deliverance—and yet how true! Or this might be the word of his justice, the issuing of justice, the exercising of a righteous decision between him and his oppressors. He looked for the Lord to interpose between them, and so to fulfil all he had promised on behalf of the believer. The Lord will vindicate his own. Are any in great difficulty; and are they waiting for the Lord to interpose, to whom they have committed their concerns? . . . . Wait on; he will not disappoint a gracious hope.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 123.—"*For the word of thy righteousness,*" or, "the word of thy *justice;*" that is to say, for the sentence of justice on my oppressors, as the first part of the verse teaches; for the passing this sentence will be equivalent to the granting the salvation which the Psalmist so earnestly desired.—*George Phillips.*

Verse 124.—"*Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy.*" If I am a "*servant*" of God, I can bring my services before him only upon the ground of "*mercy*"; feeling that for my best performances I need an immeasurable world of mercy—pardoning—saving—everlasting mercy; and yet I am emboldened by the blood of Jesus to plead for my soul—"*Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy.*"

But then I am ignorant as well as guilty; and yet I dare not pray for divine teaching, much and hourly as I need it, until I have afresh obtained mercy. "*Mercy*" is the first blessing, not only in point of importance, but in point of order. I must seek the Lord, and know him as a Saviour, before I can go to him with any confidence to be my teacher. But when once I have found acceptance to my petition—"*Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy*"—my way will be opened to follow on my petition—"*Teach me thy statutes. Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies*"—that I may know, walk, yea, "run in the way of thy commandments" with an enlarged heart, ver. 32. My plea is the same as I have urged with acceptance (ver. 94)—"*I am thy servant.*"—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 124.—"*Thy mercy.*" All the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us; both when we sleep and when we wake, his mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave off shining, but our God will never cease to cheer his children with his love. Like a river, his loving-kindness is always flowing, with a fulness inexhaustible as his own nature, which is its source. Like the atmosphere which always surrounds the earth, and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all his creatures; in it, as in their element, they live, and move, and have their being. Yet as the sun on summer days appears to gladden us with beams more warm and bright than at other times, and as rivers are at certain seasons swollen with the rain, and as the atmosphere itself on occasions is fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than heretofore, so is it with the mercy of God; it hath its golden hours, its days of overflow, when the Lord magnifieth his grace and lifteth high his love before the sons of men.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 124.—"*Teach me.*" David had Nathan and Gad the prophets; and beside them, the ordinary Levites to teach him. He read the word of God diligently, and did meditate in the law night and day; but he acknowledgeth all this was nothing unless God speaks to the heart: so Paul preached to Lydia, but God opened her heart. Let us pray for this grace.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 125.—"*I am thy servant; give me understanding,*" etc. I am not a stranger to thee, but thine own domestic servant; let me want no grace which may enable me to serve thee.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 125.—"*I am thy servant.*" That thou art the servant *of God*, thou shouldst regard as thy chiefest glory and blessedness.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 126.—"*It is time for thee,* LORD, *to work.*" Was ever vessel more hopelessly becalmed in mid-ocean? or did crew ever cry with more frenzy for some favouring breeze than those should cry who man the Church of the living God? If God work not, it is certain there is nothing before the Church but the prospect

of utter discomfiture and overthrow. Greater is the world than the Church if God be not in her. But if God be in her, she shall not be moved. May he help her, and that right early!

When he arises to work we know not what may be the form and fashion of his operations. He worketh according to the counsel of his own will; and who knows but that when once he awakes, and puts on his strength, it may not be confined in its results to the immediate and exclusive quickening of the spiritual life of the Church; but may be associated with providential upheavals and convulsions which will fill the heart of the world with astonishment and dismay. His spiritual kingdom does not stand in isolation. It has relations which closely involve it with the material universe, and with human society and national life. There have been times when God has worked, and the signs of his presence have been seen, in terrible shakings of the nations, in the ploughing up from their foundations of hoary injustice, in the smiting of grinding tyrannies, and in the emancipation of peoples whose life had been a long and hopeless moan. There have been times, too, and many, when he has worked through the elements of nature —through blasting and mildew, through floods and famine, through locust, caterpillar and palmer-worm; through flagging commerce, with its machinery rusting in the mill and its ships rotting in the harbour. All these things are his servants. Sometimes the sleep of the world, and the Church too, is so profound that it can be broken only by agencies like the wind, or fire, or earthquake, which made the prophet shiver at the mouth of the cave, and without which the voice that followed, so still, so small and tender, would have lost much of its melting and subduing power. When society has become drugged with the Circean cup of wordliness, and the voices that come from eternity are unheeded, if not unheard, even terror has its merciful mission. The frivolous and superficial hearts of men have to be made serious, their idols have to be broken, their nests have to be stoned, or tossed from the trees where they had been made with so much care, and they have to be taught that if this life be all, it is but a phantom and a mockery. When the day of the Lord shall come, in which he shall begin to work, let us not marvel if it " shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all the pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." But this working of God will also take other shapes. Will it not be seen in the inspiration of the Church with faith in its own creed, so far as that creed has the warrant of the Divine word? Does the Church believe its creed? It writes it, sets it forth, sings it, defends it; but does it believe it, at least with a faith which begets either enthusiasm in itself, or respect from the world? Have not the truths which form the methodized symbols of the Church become propositions instead of living powers? Do they not lie embalmed with superstitious reverence in the ark of tradition, tenderly cherished for what they have been and done? But is it not forgotten that if they be truths they are not dead and cannot die? They are true now, or they were never true; living now, or they never lived. Time cannot touch them, nor human opinion, nor the Church's sluggishness or unbelief, for they are emanations from the Divine essence, instinct with his own undecaying life. They are not machinery which may become antiquated and obsolete and displaced by better inventions; they are not methods of policy framed for conditions which are transient, and vanishing with them; they are not scaffolding within which other and higher truth is to be reared from age to age. They are like him who is the end of our conversation, " Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." There is not one of them which, if the faith it awakens were but commensurate with its intrinsic worth, would not clothe the Church with a new and wondrous power. But what would be that power if that faith were to grasp them all? It would be life from the dead.—*Enoch Mellor* (1823—1881), *in "The Hem of Christ's Garment, and other Sermons."*

Verse 126.—*"It is time for thee, Lord, to work."* עת expresses emphatically *the proper time* for the Lord to do his own work; as if the Psalmist had said, " It is not for us to prescribe the time and occasion for God to exercise his power, and to vindicate the authority of his own law; he does every thing at the proper time, and he will at the proper season punish those *' who have made void his law,'* and who have become notorious for their impiety and wickedness."—*George Phillips.*

Verse 126.—"*It is time to work,*" just as when the attack of some illness is becoming more severe, you hurry to the physician, that he may come more quickly, lest he should later be unable to do any good. So when the prophet saw in the Holy Spirit the rebellion of the people, their luxury, pleasures, deceits, frauds, avarice, drunkenness, he runs, for our help, to Christ, whom he knew to be alone able to remedy, such sins; implores him to come, and admits of no delay.—*Ambrose, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 126.—"*It is time for thee, Lord, to work.*"—Infidelity was never more subtle, more hurtful, more plausible, perhaps more successful, than in the day in which we live. It has left the low grounds of vulgarity, and coarseness and ribaldry, and entrenched itself upon the lofty heights of criticism, philology, and even science itself. It pervades to a fearful extent our popular literature; it has invested itself with the charms of poetry, to throw its spell over the public mind; it has endeavoured to enweave itself with science; and he must be little acquainted with the state of opinion in this land, who does not know that it is espoused by a large portion of the cultivated mind of this generation. "It is time for thee, Lord, to work." —*John Angell James*, 1785—1859.

Verse 126.—"*It is time for thee, Lord, to work,*" etc. To send the Messiah, to work by righteousness, to fulfil the law and vindicate the honour of it, broken by men. It was always a notion of the Jews that the time of the Messiah's coming would be when it was a time of great wickedness in the earth; and which seems to agree with the word of God, and was true in fact. See Mal. ii. 17, and iii. 1, 2, 3, 15, 16, and iv. 2.—*John Gill.*

Verse 126.—"*It is time for thee, Lord, to work,*" etc. True it is, Lord, that we are not to appoint thee thy times and limits, for thou art the Ancient of Days, Time's Creator and destinator. Neither do we presume to press in at the portal of thy privy chamber, to "know the times and seasons" which thou our Father hast reserved in thine own power; yet, Lord, thou hast taught us, as to discern the face of the sky, so to descry the signs of the times, and from the cause to expect the effect which necessarily doth ensue. "Thou art a God full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Ps. ciii. 8); and thou dost sustain many wrongs of the sons of men, being crushed with their sins as a cart is laden with sheaves: but if still they continue to load thee, thou wilt ease thyself of that burden, and cast it on the ground of confusion. Thou art "slow to anger, but great in power, and wilt not surely clear the wicked" (Nahum i. 3). Thou dost for a long space hold thy peace at men's sins, and art still, and dost restrain thyself. But if men will not turn, thou wilt whet thy sword and bend thy bow, and make it ready. Patient thou art, and for a long time dost forbear thine hand; but when the forehead of sin beginneth to lose the blush of shame, when the beadroll of transgressions doth grow in score from East to West, when the cry of them pierceth above the clouds, when the height of wickedness is come unto the top, and the fruits thereof are ripe and full, then it is time for thee, Lord, to take notice of it, to awake like a giant, and to put to thine all-revenging hand.

But our sins are already ripe, yea, rotten ripe, the measure of our iniquities is full up to the brim. Doubtless our land is sunken deep in iniquity; our tongues and works have been against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory; the trial of our countenance doth testify against us (Isaiah iii. 8, 9), yea, we declare our sins as Sodom; we hide them not, the cry of our sins is exceeding grievous, the clamours of them pierce the skies, and with a loud voice roar, saying: "How long, Lord, holy and true? How long ere thou come to avenge thyself on such a nation as this?" Rev. vi. 10; Jer. ix. 9.—*George Webbe, in "A Posie of Spiritual Flowers,"* 1610.

Verse 126.—"*It is time for thee, Lord.*" Some read it, and the original will bear it, "*It is time to work for thee, O Lord;*" it is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord's side, against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion, and after all, we must beg of God to take the work into his own hands. —*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 126.—"*They have made void thy law.*" In the second verse of this section he complained that the proud would oppress him, now he complaineth that they destroyed the law of God. Who, then, are David's enemies, who seek to oppress him? Only such as are enemies to God, and seek to destroy his law. A great comfort have we in this, that if we love the Lord, and study in a good conscience

to serve him, we can have no enemies but such as are enemies to God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 126.—"*They have made void thy law.*" As if they would not only sin against the Law, but sin away the Law, not only withdraw themselves from the obedience of it, but drive it out of the world; they would make void and repeal the holy acts of God, that their own wicked acts might not be questioned; and lest the Law should have a power to punish them, they will deny it a power to rule them; that's the force of the simple word here used, as applied to highest transgressing against the Law of God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 126, 127.—Everything betters a saint. Not only ordinances, word, sacraments, holy society, but even sinners and their very sinning. Even these draw forth their graces into exercise, and put them upon godly, broken-hearted mourning. A saint sails with every wind. As the wicked are hurt by the best things, so the godly are bettered by the worst. Because "*they have made void thy law, therefore do I love thy commandments.*" Holiness is the more owned by the godly, the more the world despiseth it. The most eminent saints were those of Cæsar's (Nero's house (Phil. iv. 22); they who kept God's name were they who lived where Satan's throne was (Rev. ii. 13). Zeal for God grows the hotter by opposition; and thereby the godly most labour to give the glory of God reparation.—*William Jenkyn* (1612—1685), *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 127.—"*Therefore I love thy commandments above gold,*" etc. Partly, because it is one evidence of their excellency, that they are disliked by the vilest of men. Partly, out of just indignation and opposition against my sworn enemies; and partly, because the great and general apostasy of others makes this duty more necessary to prevent their own and other men's relapses.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 127.—"*I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.*" The image employed brings before us the picture of the miser; his heart and his treasure are in his gold. With what delight he counts it! with what watchfulness he keeps it! hiding it in safe custody, lest he should be despoiled of that which is dearer to him than life. Such should Christians be, spiritual misers, counting their treasure which is "*above fine gold*"; and "hiding it in their hearts," in safe keeping, where the great despoiler shall not be able to reach it. Oh, Christians! how much more is your portion to you than the miser's treasure! Hide it; watch it; retain it. You need not be afraid of covetousness in spiritual things: rather "covet earnestly" to increase your store; and by living upon it and living in it, it will grow richer in extent, and more precious in value.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 127.—"*I love thy commandments.*" He professeth not that he fulfilled them, but that he *loved* them; and truly it is a great progress in godliness, if we become thus far, as from our heart to love them. The natural man hates the commandments of God; they are so contrary to his corruption; but the regenerate man, as he hates his own corruption, so he loves the word, because according to it he desires to be reformed. And here is our comfort, that, albeit we cannot do what is commanded, yet if we love to do it, it is an argument of grace received. "*Above gold,*" etc. It is lawful to love those creatures which God hath appointed for our use; with these conditions: the one is, that the first seat in our affection of love be reserved to God; and any other thing we love, that we love it in him and for him, and give it only the second room. Thus David, being a natural man, loved his natural food; but he protesteth he loved the law of the Lord more than his appointed food; and here he loves the commandments of God above all gold.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 128.—"*I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.*" It is no compromising testimony to the integrity and value of the Lord's precepts with which the Psalmist concludes, "*I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right*"—every command, however hard; every injunction, however distasteful; every precept, however severe; even cut off thy right hand, pluck out thy right eye; forget thine own people and thy father's house; take up thy cross daily; sell all that thou hast—yea, Lord, even so, "*all* thy precepts concerning ALL things are right." What a blessed truth to arrive at, and find comfort in!—*Barion Bouchier.*

Verse 128.—"*I esteem all thy precepts,*" etc. We must not only respect all God's commandments, but also respect them all alike, and give them all the like respect.

Obedience must be universal.—*R. Mayhew, in "The death of Death in the Death of Christ,"* 1679.

Verse 128.—*"All."* The many *alls* in this verse used (not unlike that in Ezekiel xliv. 30) showeth the integrity and universality of his obedience. *"All"* is but a little word, but of large extent.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 128.—*"All thy precepts concerning all things to be right."* He had a high estimate of God's precepts; he thought them just in all things; just, because they prescribe nothing but that which is exactly just; and just, because they bring a just punishment on the transgressors, and a reward to the righteous.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 128.—The upright man squares all his actions by a right rule: carnal reason cannot bias him, corrupt practice cannot sway him, but God's sacred word directs him. Hence it is that his respect is universal to all divine precepts, avoiding all evil, performing all good without exception. Thus David's upright man here *esteems God's precepts concerning all things to be right,* and therefore is careful to observe them. Hence it is, that he is the same man at all times, in all places; because at all times, and in all societies, he acts by one and the same rule. 'Tis a good saying of S. Cyprian, *ea non est religio, sed dissimulatio, quæ per omnia non constat sibi,* that is not piety, but hypocrisy, that is not in all things like itself, since the upright man measures every action by the straight line of divine prescript. —*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 128.—*"I hate every false way."* The best trial of our love to God and his word is the contrary—hatred of sin and impiety: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." He that loves a tree, hates the worm that consumes it; he that loves a garment, hates the moth that eats it; he that loveth life, abhorreth death; and he that loves the Lord hates every thing that offends him. Let men take heed to this, who are in love of their sins: how can the love of God be in them?

Religion binds us not only to hate one way of falsehood, but all the ways of it. As there is nothing good, but in some measure a godly man loves it; so there is nothing evil, but in some measure he hates it. And this is the perfection of the children of God; a perfection not of degrees; for we neither love good nor hate evil as we should; but a perfection of parts; because we love every good, and we hate every evil in some measure.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 128.—*"And I hate."* The Being who loves the good with infinite intensity must hate evil with the same intensity. So far from the incompatibility between this love and this hatred, they are the counterparts of each other,—opposite poles of the same moral emotion.—*John W. Haley, in "An Examination of the alleged Discrepancies of the Bible,"* 1875.

Verse 128.—*"I hate every false way."* If Satan get a grip of thee by any one sin, is it not enough to carry thee to damnation? As the butcher carries the beast to the slaughter, sometime bound by all the four feet, and sometime by one only; so it is with Satan. Though thou be not a slave to all sin; if thou be a slave to one, the grip he hath of thee, by that one sinful affection, is sufficient to captive thee.—*William Cowper.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 129 TO 136.

THY testimonies *are* wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

131 I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

133 Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

134 Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

129. *"Thy testimonies are wonderful."* Full of wonderful revelations, commands and promises. Wonderful in their nature, as being free from all error, and bearing within themselves overwhelming self-evidence of their truth; wonderful in their effects as instructing, elevating, strengthening, and comforting the soul. Jesus the eternal Word is called Wonderful, and all the uttered words of God are wonderful in their degree. Those who know them best wonder at them most. It is wonderful that God should have borne testimony at all to sinful men, and more wonderful still that his testimony should be of such a character, so clear, so full, so gracious, so mighty. *"Therefore doth my soul keep them."* Their wonderful character so impressed itself upon his mind that he kept them in his memory: their wonderful excellence so charmed his heart that he kept them in his life. Some men wonder at the words of God, and use them for their speculation; but David was always practical, and the more he wondered the more he obeyed. Note that his religion was soul work; not with head and hand alone did he keep the testimonies; but his soul, his truest and most real self, held fast to them.

130. *"The entrance of thy words giveth light."* No sooner do they gain admission into the soul than they enlighten it: what light may be expected from their prolonged indwelling! Their very entrance floods the mind with instruction, for they are so full, so clear; but, on the other hand, there must be such an "entrance," or there will be no illumination. The mere hearing of the word with the external ear is of small value by itself, but when the words of God enter into the chambers of the heart then light is scattered on all sides. The word finds no entrance into some minds because they are blocked up with self-conceit, or prejudice, or indifference; but where due attention is given, divine illumination must surely follow upon knowledge of the mind of God. Oh, that thy words, like the beams of the sun, may enter through the window of my understanding, and dispel the darkness of my mind! *"It giveth understanding unto the simple."* The sincere and candid are the true disciples of the word. To such it gives not only knowledge, but understanding. These simple-hearted ones are frequently despised, and their simplicity has another meaning infused into it, so as to be made the theme of ridicule; but what matters it? Those whom the world dubs as fools are among the truly wise if they are taught of God. What a divine power rests in the word of God, since it not only bestows light, but gives that very mental eye by which the light is received —"It giveth understanding." Hence the value of the words of God to the simple, who cannot receive mysterious truth unless their minds are aided to see it and prepared to grasp it.

131. *"I opened my mouth, and panted."* So animated was his desire that he looked into the animal world to find a picture of it. He was filled with an intense longing, and was not ashamed to describe it by a most expressive, natural, and yet singular symbol. Like a stag that has been hunted in the chase, and is hard pressed, and therefore pants for breath, so did the Psalmist pant for the entrance of God's word into his soul. Nothing else could content him. All that the world

could yield him left him still panting with open mouth. *"For I longed for thy commandments."* Longed to know them, longed to obey them, longed to be conformed to their spirit, longed to teach them to others. He was a servant of God, and his industrious mind longed to receive orders; he was a learner in the school of grace, and his eager spirit longed to be taught of the Lord.

132. *"Look thou upon me."* A godly man cannot long be without prayer. During the previous verses he had been expressing his love to God's word, but here he is upon his knees again. This prayer is specially short, but exceedingly sententious, "Look thou upon me." While he stood with open mouth panting for the commandments, he besought the Lord to look upon him, and let his condition and his unexpressed longings plead for him. He desires to be known of God, and daily observed by him. He wishes also to be favoured with the divine smile which is included in that word—"look." If a look from us to God has saving efficacy in it, what may we not expect from a look from God to us. *"And be merciful unto me."* Christ's look at Peter was a look of mercy, and all the looks of the heavenly Father are of the same kind. If he looked in stern justice his eyes would not endure us, but looking in mercy he spares and blesses us. If God looks and sees us panting, he will not fail to be merciful to us. *"As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name."* Look on me as thou lookest on those who love thee; be merciful to me as thou art accustomed to be towards those who truly serve thee. There is a use and wont which God observes towards them that love him, and David craved that he might experience it. He would not have the Lord deal better or worse with him than he was accustomed to deal with his saints—worse would not save him, better could not be. In effect he prays, "I am thy servant; treat me as thou treatest thy servants. I am thy child; deal with me as with a son." Especially is it clear from the context that he desired such an entering in of the word, and such a clear understanding of it as God usually gives to his own, according to the promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

Reader, do you love the name of the Lord? Is his character most honourable in your sight? most dear to your heart? This is a sure mark of grace, for no soul ever loved the Lord except as the result of love received from the Lord himself.

133. *"Order my steps in thy word."* This is one of the Lord's customary mercies to his chosen,—"He keepeth the feet of his saints." By his grace he enables us to put our feet step by step in the very place which his word ordains. This prayer seeks a very choice favour, namely, that every distinct act, every step, might be arranged and governed by the will of God. This does not stop short of perfect holiness, neither will the believer's desires be satisfied with anything beneath that blessed consummation. *"And let not any iniquity have dominion over me."* This is the negative side of the blessing. We ask to do all that is right, and to fall under the power of nothing that is wrong. God is our sovereign, and we would have every thought in subjection to his sway. Believers have no choice, darling sins to which they would be willing to bow. They pant for perfect liberty from the power of evil, and being conscious that they cannot obtain it of themselves, they cry unto God for it.

134. *"Deliver me from the oppression of man."* David had tasted all the bitterness of this great evil. It had made him an exile from his country, and banished him from the sanctuary of the Lord: therefore he pleads to be saved from it. It is said that oppression makes a wise man mad, and no doubt it has made many a righteous man sinful. Oppression is in itself wicked, and it drives men to wickedness. We little know how much of our virtue is due to our liberty; if we had been in bonds under haughty tyrants we might have yielded to them, and instead of being confessors we might now have been apostates. He who taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," will sanction this prayer, which is of much the same tenor, since to be oppressed is to be tempted. *"So will I keep thy statutes."* When the stress of oppression was taken off he would go his own way, and that way would be the way of the Lord. Although we ought not to yield to the threatenings of men, yet many do so; the wife is sometimes compelled by the oppression of her husband to act against her conscience: children and servants, and even whole nations have been brought into the same difficulty. Their sins will be largely laid at the oppressor's door, and it usually pleases God ere long to overthrow those powers and dominions which compel men to do evil. The worst of it is that some persons, when the pressure is taken off from them, follow after unrighteousness of their own accord. These give evidence of being sinners in grain. As for the righteous, it happens

to them as it did to the apostles of old, "Being let go, they went to their own company." When saints are freed from the tyrant they joyfully pay homage to their king.

135. *"Make thy face to shine upon thy servant."* Oppressors frown, but do thou smile. They darken my life, but do thou shine upon me, and all will be bright. The Psalmist again declares that he is God's servant, and he seeks for no favour from others, but only from his own Lord and Master. *"And teach me thy statutes."* This is the favour which he considers to be the shining of the face of God upon him. If the Lord will be exceeding gracious, and make him his favourite, he will ask no higher blessing than still to be taught the royal statutes. See how he craves after holiness; this is the choicest of all gems in his esteem. As we say among men that a good education is a great fortune, so to be taught of the Lord is a gift of special grace. The most favoured believer needs teaching; even when he walks in the light of God's countenance he has still to be taught the divine statutes or he will transgress.

136. *"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."* He wept in sympathy with God to see the holy law despised and broken. He wept in pity for men who were thus drawing down upon themselves the fiery wrath of God. His grief was such that he could scarcely give it vent; his tears were not mere drops of sorrow, but torrents of woe. In this he became like the Lord Jesus who beheld the city, and wept over it; and like unto Jehovah himself, who hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he turn unto him and live. The experience of this verse indicates a great advance upon anything we have had before: the Psalm and the Psalmist are both growing. That man is a ripe believer who sorrows because of the sins of others. In verse 120 his flesh trembled at the presence of God, and here it seems to melt and flow away in floods of tears. None are so affected by heavenly things as those who are much in the study of the word, and are thereby taught the truth and essence of things, Carnal men are afraid of brute force, and weep over losses and crosses; but spiritual men feel a holy fear of the Lord himself, and most of all lament when they see dishonour cast upon his holy name

> "Lord, let me weep for nought but sin,
> And after none but thee,
> And then I would, O that I might!
> A constant weeper be."

NOTES ON VERSES 129 TO 136.

All the verses of this section begin with the seventeenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet; but each verse with a different word.—*William S. Plumer.*

This seventeenth letter is the letter P. The section is precious, practical, profitable, powerful: peculiarly so.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" The Scriptures are "*wonderful,*" with respect to the matter which they contain, the manner in which they are written, and the effects which they produce. They contain the sublimest spiritual truths, veiled under external ceremonies and sacraments, figurative descriptions, typical histories, parables, similitudes, etc. When properly opened and enforced, they terrify and humble, they convert and transform, they console and strengthen. Who but must delight to study and to "observe" these "testimonies" of the will and the wisdom, the love and the power of God Most High! While we have these holy writings, let us not waste our time, mis-employ our thoughts, and prostitute our admiration, by doating on human follies, and wondering at human trifles.—*George Horne.*

Verse 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" God's testimonies are "wonderful" (1) in their *majesty* and *composure*, which striketh reverence into the hearts of those that consider; the Scripture speaketh to us at a God-like rate. (2) It is "wonderful" for the *matter* and *depth of mystery*, which cannot be found elsewhere, concerning God, and Christ, the creation of the world, the souls of men, and their immortal and everlasting condition, the fall of man, etc. (3) It is "wonderful" for *purity* and *perfection*. The Decalogue in ten words compriseth the whole duty of man, and reacheth to the very soul, and all the motions of the heart. (4) It is "wonderful" for the *harmony* and *consent* of all the parts. All religion is of a piece, and one part doth not interfere with another, but conspireth to promote the great end, of subjection of the creature to God. (5) It is "wonderful" for the *power* of it. There is a mighty power which goeth along with the word of God, and astonisheth the hearts of those that consider it and feel it. 1 Thess. i. 5.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" The Bible itself is an astonishing and standing miracle. Written fragment by fragment, through the course of fifteen centuries, under different states of society, and in different languages, by persons of the most opposite tempers, talents, and conditions, learned and unlearned, prince and peasant, bond and free; cast into every form of instructive composition and good writing; history, prophecy, poetry, allegory, emblematic representation, judicious interpretation, literal statement, precept, example, proverbs, disquisition, epistle, sermon, prayer—in short, all rational shapes of human discourse, and treating, moreover, on subjects not obvious, but most difficult; its authors are not found like other men, contradicting one another upon the most ordinary matters of fact and opinion, but are at harmony upon the whole of their sublime and momentous scheme.—*J. Maclagan*, 1853.

Verse 129.—Highly prize the Scriptures, or you will not obey them. David said, "*therefore doth my soul keep them*"; and why was this, but that he counted them to be wonderful? Can *he* make a proficiency in any art, who doth slight and deprecate it? Prize this book of God above all other books. St. Gregory calls the Bible "the heart and soul of God." The rabbins say, that there is a mountain of sense hangs upon every *apex* and tittle of Scripture. "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps. xix. 7). The Scripture is the library of the Holy Ghost; it is a pandect of divine knowledge, an exact model and platform of religion. The Scripture contains in it the *credenda*, "the things which we are to believe," and the *agenda*, "the things which we are to practise." It is "able to make us wise unto salvation" 2 Tim. iii. 15. "The Scripture is the standard of truth," the judge of controversies; it is the pole-star to direct us to heaven (Isa. viii. 20). "The commandment is a lamp": Prov. vi. 23. The Scripture is the compass by which the rudder of our will is to be steered; it is the field in which Christ, the Pearl of price, is hid; it is a rock of diamonds, it is a sacred *collyrium*, or "*eye-salve*;" it mends *their* eyes *that* look upon it; it is a spiritual optic-glass in which the glory of God is resplendent; it is the panacea or "universal medicine" for the soul. The leaves of Scripture are like the leaves of the tree of life, "for the healing of the nations": Rev. xxii. 2. The Scripture is both the breeder and feeder of grace. How is the

convert born, but by "the word of truth"? James i. 18. How doth he grow, but by "the sincere milk of the word"? 1 Pet. ii. 2. The word written is the book out of which our evidences for heaven are fetched; it is the sea-mark which shows us the rocks of sin to avoid; it is the antidote against error and apostasy, the two-edged sword which wounds the old serpent. It is our bulwark to withstand the force of lust; like the Capitol of Rome, which was a place of strength and ammunition. The Scripture is the "tower of David," whereon the shields of our faith hang: Canticles iv. 4. "Take away the word, and you deprive us of the sun," said Luther. The word written is above an angelic embassy, or voice from heaven. "This voice which came from heaven we heard. We have also," βεβαιότερον λογον "a more sure word": 2 Peter i. 18, 19. O, prize the word written; prizing is the way to profiting. If Cæsar so valued his Commentaries, that for preserving them he lost his purple robe, how should we estimate the sacred oracles of God? "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than any necessary food": Job xxiii. 12. King Edward the Sixth, on the day of his coronation, had presented before him three swords, signifying that he was monarch of three kingdoms. The king said, there was one sword wanting; being asked what that was, he answered, "The Holy Bible, which is the sword of the Spirit, and is to be preferred before these ensigns of royalty." Robert King of Sicily did so prize God's word, that, speaking to his friend Petrarcha, he said, "I protest, the Scriptures are dearer to me than my kingdom; and if I must be deprived of one of them, I had rather lose my diadem than the Scriptures."—*Thomas Watson, in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 129.—The word contains matter to exercise the greatest minds. Many men cannot endure to spend their thoughts and time about trivial matters; whereas others think it happiness enough if they can, by the meanest employments, procure subsistence. Oh, let all those of high aspirations exercise themselves in the law of God; here are objects fit for great minds, yea, objects that will elevate the greatest: and indeed none in the world are truly great but the saints, for they exercise themselves in the great counsels of God. We account those men the greatest that are employed in state affairs: now the saints are lifted up above all things in the world, and regard them all as little and mean, and are exercised in the great affairs of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Hence the Lord would have the kings and the judges to have the book of the law written, Deut. xvii. 18, 19; and it is reported of Alphonsus, king of Arragon, that in midst of all his great and manifold occupations, he read over the Scriptures fourteen times with commentaries. How many have we, men of great estates, and claiming to be of great minds, that scarce regard the law of God: they look upon his law as beneath them. Books of history and war they will peruse with diligence; but for the Scripture, it is a thing that has little in it. It is a special means to obedience to have high thoughts of God's law. That is the reason why the prophet speaks thus, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing": Hos. viii. 12. As if he should say, if they had had the things of my law in their thoughts, they would never so have acted. Ps. cxix. 129, "*Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them.*" He saith not, therefore do I keep them; but, therefore doth *my soul* keep them; my very soul is in this, in keeping thy testimonies, for I look upon them as wonderful things. It is a good sign that the spirit of the great God is in a man, when it raises him above other things, to look upon the things of his word as the only great things in the world. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever:" Isa. xl. 6, 8. There is a vanity in all things of the world; but in that which the word reveals, in that there is an eternity: we should therefore admire at nothing so as at the word, and we should greatly delight in God's commandments; an ordinary degree of admiration or delight is not sufficient, but great admiration and great delight there should be in the law of God. And all arguments drawn from God's law should powerfully prevail with you.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" Wonders will never cease. Air, earth, water, the world above, the world beneath, time, eternity, worms, birds, fishes, beasts, men, angels are all full of wonders. The more all things are studied, the more do wonders appear. It is idle, therefore, to find fault with the mysteries of Scripture, or to deny them. Inspiration glories in them. He who rejects the mysteries of love, grace, truth, power, justice and faithfulness of God's word, rejects salvation. It has marvels in itself, and marvels in its operation. They are good

cause of love, not of offence; of *keeping*, not of breaking God's precepts.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 129.—"*My soul*," not merely I, but I with all my heart and soul.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 129.—I have completed reading the whole Bible through since January last. I began it on the first day of the present year, and finished it on the the 26th of October. I have read it in that space four times, and not without real profit to myself. I always find in it something new; it being, like its Author, infinite and inexhaustible.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce*, 1841.

Verse 129.—What do I not owe to the Lord for permitting me to take a part in the translation of his word? Never did I see such wonders, and wisdom, and love, in the blessed book, as since I have been obliged to study every expression; and it is a delightful reflection, that death cannot deprive us of the pleasure of studying its mysteries.—*Henry Martyn.*

Verse 130.—"*The opening of thy words enlightens, making the simple understand.*" The common version of the first word (*entrance*) is inaccurate, and the one here given, though exact, is ambiguous. The clause does not refer to the mechanical opening of the book by the reader, but to the spiritual opening of its true sense by divine illumination, to the mind which naturally cannot discern it.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 130.—"*Entrance*," lit. *opening, i.e.* unfolding or unveiling.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 130.—"*The entrance of thy words giveth light.*" The first entrance, or vestibule: for the Psalmist wishes to point out that only the beginnings are apprehended in this life; and that these beginnings are to be preferred to all human wisdom.—*Henricus Mollerus.*

Verse 130.—"*The entrance of thy words giveth light*," etc. The beginning of them; the first three chapters in Genesis, what light do they give into the origin of all things; the creation of man, his state of innocence; his fall through the temptations of Satan, and his recovery and salvation by Christ, the seed of the woman! The first principles of the oracles of God, the rudiments of religion, the elements of the world, the rites of the ceremonial law gave great light unto the Gospel mysteries.—*John Gill.*

Verse 130.—"*The entrance of thy words giveth light.*" A profane shopman crams into his pocket a leaf of a Bible, and reads the last words of Daniel: "Go thou thy way, till the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days," and begins to think what his own lot will be when days are ended. A Göttingen Professor opens a big printed Bible to see if he has eyesight enough to read it, and alights on the passage, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not," and in reading it the eyes of his understanding are enlightened. Cromwell's soldier opens his Bible to see how far the musket-ball has pierced, and finds it stopped at the verse: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart and the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." And in a frolic the Kentish soldier opens the Bible which his broken-hearted mother had sent him, and the first sentence that turns up is the text so familiar in boyish days: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," and the weary profligate repairs for rest to Jesus Christ.—*James Hamilton*, 1814—1867.

Verse 130.—He amplifies his praise of the word of God when he saith that the entrance thereof, the first opening of the door of the word, gives light: for if the first entrance to it give light, what will the progress and continuance thereof do? This accuseth the age wherein we live, who now of a long time hath been taught by the word of God so clearly, that in regard of time they might have been teachers of others, yet are they but children in knowledge and understanding. But to whom doth the word give understanding? David saith to the "*simple*": not to such as are high-minded, or double in heart, or wise in their own eyes, who will examine the mysteries of godliness by the quickness of natural reason. No: to such as deny themselves, as captive their natural understanding, and like humble disciples submit themselves, not to ask, but to hear; not to reason, but to believe. And if for this cause, naturalists who want this humility cannot profit by the word; what marvel that Papists far less become wise by it, who have their hearts so full of prejudices concerning it, that they spare not to utter blasphemies against it, calling it not unprofitable, but pernicious to the simple and to the idiots.

And again, where they charge it with difficulty, that simple men and idiots should not be suffered to read it, because it is obscure; all these frivolous allegations of men are annulled by this one testimony of God, that *it gives light to the simple.*—*William Cowper.*

Verse 130.—"*Light.*" This "*light*" hath excellent properties. 1. It is *lux manifestans*, it manifesteth itself and all things else. How do I see the sun, but by the sun, by its own light? How do I know the Scripture to be the word of God, but by the light that shineth in it, commending itself to my conscience! So it manifests all things else; it layeth open all the frauds and impostures of Satan, the vanity of wordly things, the deceits of the heart, the odiousness of sin 2. It is *lux dirigens*, a directing light, that we may see our way and work. As the sun lighteth man to his labour, so doth this direct us in all our conditions: verse 105. It directs us how to manage ourselves in all conditions. 3. It is *lux vivificans*, a quickening light. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life": John viii. 12. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light": Eph. v. 14. That light was the life of men: so is this spiritual life; it not only discovereth the object, but helpeth the faculty, filleth the soul with life and strength. 4. It is *lux exhilarans*, a comforting, refreshing, cheering light; and that in two respects. (1) Because it presents us with excellent grounds of comfort. (2) Because it is a soul-satisfying light.—*Condensed from Manton.*

Verse 130.—"*It giveth understanding.*" If all the books in the world were assembled together, the Bible would as much take the lead in disciplining the understanding as in directing the soul. It will not make astronomers, chemists, or linguists, but there is a great difference between strengthening the mind and storing it with information.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 130.—"*It giveth understanding to the simple.*" There are none so knowing that God cannot blind; none so blind and ignorant whose mind and heart his spirit cannot open. He who, by his incubation upon the waters at the creation, hatched that rude mass into the beautiful form we now see, and out of that dark chaos made the glorious heavens, and garnished them with so many orient stars, can move upon thy dark soul and enlighten it, though it be as void of knowledge as the evening of the world's first day was of light. The schoolmaster sometimes sends home the child, and bids his father to put him to another trade, because not able, with all his art, to make a scholar of him; but if the Spirit of God be master, thou shalt learn, though a dunce: "*The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple.*" No sooner is the soul entered into the Spirit's school, than he becomes a proficient.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 130.—"*To the simple.*" He does not say, "*giveth understanding*" to the wise and prudent, to learned men, and to those skilled in letters; but to the "simple."—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 130.—"*To the simple.*" This is one great characteristic of the word of God,—however incomprehensible to the carnal mind, it is adapted to every grade of enlightened intelligence.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 130.—"*To the simple.*" The word is used sometimes in a good sense, and sometimes in a bad sense. It is used in a good sense, First, for the sincere and plain-hearted: "The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me": Ps. cxvi. 6. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward": 2 Cor. i. 12. Secondly, for those that do not oppose the presumption of carnal wisdom to the pure light of the word: so we must all be simple, or fools, that we may be wise: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1 Cor. iii. 18); that is, in simplicity of heart submitting to God's conduct, and believing what he hath revealed.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 131.—"*I opened my mouth, and panted.*" By this manner of speech, David expresses, as Basil thinks, *animi propensionem*, that the inclination of his soul was after God's word. For, this opened mouth, Ambrose thinks, is *os interioris hominis*, the mouth of the inward man, which in effect is his heart; and the speech notes *vehementem animi intensionem*, a vehement intension of his spirit, saith Euthymius. Yet shall it not be amiss to consider here how the mind of the godly

earnestly affected moves the body also. The speech may be drawn from travellers, who being very desirous to attain to their proposed ends, enforce their strength thereunto; and finding a weakness in their body to answer their will, they pant and open their mouth, seeking refreshment from the air to renew their strength: or as Vatablus thinks, from men exceeding hungry and thirsty, who open their mouth as if they would draw in the whole air, and then pant and sigh within themselves when they find no full refreshment by it. So he expresseth it: "My heart burns with so ardent a longing for thy commandments, that I am forced ever and anon to gasp by reason of my painful breathing."

However it be, it lets us see how the hearing, reading, or meditating of God's word wakened in David a most earnest affection to have the light, joy, grace, and comfort thereof communicated to his own heart. For in the godly, knowledge of good increaseth desires; and it cannot be expressed how vehemently their souls long to feel that power and comfort which they know is in the word; and how sore they are grieved and troubled when they find it not.

And happy were we, if we could meet the Lord with this like affection; that when he opens his mouth, we could also open our heart to hear, as David here doth. *Christus aperit os, ut daret aliis spiritum; David aperuit ut acciperet;* offering his heart to receive the spirit of grace, when God openeth his mouth in his word to give it. For it is his promise to us all—"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Let us turn it into a prayer, that the Lord, who opened the heart of Lydia, would open our heart to receive grace when he offers by his word to give it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 131.—"*I opened my mouth, and panted,*" etc. There are two ways in which these words may be understood. They may be considered as expressing the very earnest longing of the Psalmist for greater acquaintance with God in spiritual things; and then, in saying, "*I opened my mouth, and panted,*" he merely asserts the vehemence of his desire. Or you may separate the clauses: you may regard the first as the utterance of a man utterly dissatisfied with the earth and earthly things, and the second as the expression of a consciousness that God, and God only, could meet the longings of his soul. "*I opened my mouth, and panted.*" Out of breath, with chasing shadows, and hunting after baubles, I sit down exhausted, as far off as ever from the happiness which has been earnestly but fruitlessly sought. Whither, then, shall I turn? Thy commandments, O Lord, and these alone, can satisfy the desires of an immortal being like myself; and on these, therefore, henceforward shall my longings be turned.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 131.—"*I opened my mouth, and panted.*" A metaphor taken from men scorched and sweltered with heat, or from those that have run themselves out of breath in following the thing which they would overtake. The former metaphor expressed the vehemency of his love; the other the earnestness of his pursuit; he was like a man gasping for breath, and sucking in the cool air.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 131.—"*I longed for thy commandments.*" This is a desire which God will satisfy. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it": Ps. lxxxi. 10.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 132.—"*Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me,*" etc. "*Look upon me,*" stripped by thieves of my virtues, and then wounded with sins, and "*be merciful unto me,*" showing compassion on me, taking care of me in the inn of the Church universal, that I fall not again among thieves, nor be harmed by the wolves which howl about this fold, but dare not enter in. "*Look upon me,*" no longer worthy to be called thy son, and "*be merciful unto me,*" not as the jealous elder brother would treat me, but let me join the glad song and banquet of them that love thy name. Look upon me the publican, standing afar off in thy temple the Church, and be merciful unto me, not after the Pharisee's judgment, but "*as thou usest to do unto them that love thy name,*" which is the gracious God. Look on me as on weeping Peter, and be merciful unto me as thou wast to him, who so loved thy name as by his triple confession of love to wash out his threefold denial, saying, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." "*Look upon me,*" as on the sinful woman, penitent and weeping, and be merciful unto me, not according to the judgment of the Pharisee who murmured at her, as Judas who was indignant at her, but forgiving me as thou didst her, "because she loved much," telling me also, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 132.—"*Look thou upon me.*" Lord! since our looks to thee are often so slight, so cold, so distant, that no impression is made upon our hearts, do thou

condescend continually to look upon us with mercy and with power. Vouchsafe us such a look, as may bring us to ourselves, and touch us with tenderness and contrition in the remembrance of that sin, unbelief, and disobedience, which pierced the hands, the feet, the heart of our dearest Lord and Saviour. Comp. Luke xxii. 61. —*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 132.—"*As thou usest to do,*" etc. David would not lose any privilege that God hath by promise settled on his children. Do with me, saith he, "*as thou usest to do.*" This is no more than family fare, what thou promisest to do for all that love thee ; and let me not go worse clad than the rest of my brethren.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 132.—"*As thou usest to do unto those,*" etc. We should be content if God deals with us as he has always dealt with his people. While he could not be satisfied with anything less than their portion, David asks for nothing better ; he implores no singular dispensation in his favour, no deviation from the accustomed methods of his grace. . . . It is always a good proof that your convictions and desires are from the operation of the Spirit when you are willing to conform to God's order. What is this order ? It is to dispense his blessings connectedly. It is never to justify without sanctifying ; never to give a title to heaven without a meetness for it. Now the man that is divinely wrought upon will not expect nor desire the one without the other. Therefore he will not expect the blessing of God without obedience ; because it is always God's way to connect the comforts of the Holy Ghost with the fear of the Lord ; and if his children transgress his laws, to visit their transgressions with a rod. Therefore he will neither expect nor desire his blessing without exertion ; for it has always been God's way to crown only those that run the race that is set before them, and fight the good fight of faith. Therefore he will not expect nor desire the Divine blessing without prayer ; for it has always been God's way to make his people sensible of their wants, and to give an answer to prayer. Therefore he will not expect nor desire to reach heaven without difficulties ; for his people have always had to deny themselves, and take up their cross. If they have not been chosen in the furnace of affliction, they have been purified. God had one Son without sin, but he never had one without sorrow : " he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." " Yes," says the suppliant before us, " secure me their everlasting portion, and I am willing to drink of the cup they drank of, and to be baptized with the baptism they were baptized with. I want no new, no by-path to glory. I am content to keep the King's high road. '*Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.*' I ask no more."—*William Jay,* 1769—1853.

Verse 133.—"*Order my steps in thy word.*" As before he sought mercy, so now he seeks grace. There are many that seek mercy to forgive sin, who seek not grace to deliver them from the power of sin : this is to abuse God's mercy, and turn his grace into wantonness. He that prayeth for mercy to forgive the guilt of sin only, seeks not that by sin he should not offend God ; but that he may sin and not hurt himself : but he who craves deliverance also from the commanding power and deceit of sin, seeks not only a benefit to himself, but grace also to please and serve the Lord his God. The first is but a lover of himself ; the second is a lover of God, more than of himself. And truly he never knew what it was to seek mercy for sin past, who with it also earnestly sought not grace to keep him from sin in time to come. These benefits cannot be divided : he who hath not the second (howsoever he flatter himself) may be assured that he hath not gotten the first.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 133.—"*Order my steps in thy word.*" It is written of Boleslaus, one of the kings of Poland, that he still carries about him the picture of his father, and when he was to do any great work or set upon any design extraordinary, he would look on the picture and pray that he might do nothing unworthy of such a father's name. Thus it is that the Scriptures are the picture of God's will, therein drawn out to the very life. Before a man enter upon or engage himself in any business whatsoever, let him look there, and read there what is to be done ; what to be undone ; and what God commands, let that be done ; what he forbids, let that be undone ; let the balance of the sanctuary weigh all, the oracles of God decide all, the rule of God's word be the square of all, and his glory the ultimate of all intendments whatsoever.—*From Spencer's "Things New and Old."*

Verse 133.—"*Order my steps.*" כּוֹן *hachen,* make them *firm ;* let me not walk with a halting or unsteady step.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 133.—"*Order my steps,*" etc. The people of God would not only have their path right, but their *steps ordered;* as not their general course wrong (as those who walk in the way of everlasting perdition), so not a step awry; they would not miss the way to heaven, either in whole or in part.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 133.—"*My steps.*" Speaking of the steps of the Temple, Bunyan says, "These steps, whether cedar, gold, or stone, yet that which added to their adornment, was the wonderment of a Queen. And whatever they were made of, to be sure, they were a shadow of those steps, which we should take to, and in the house of God. 'Steps of God,' Ps. lxxxv. 13. 'Steps ordered by him,' Ps. xxxvii. 23. 'Steps ordered in his word,' Ps. cxix. 133. 'Steps of faith,' Rom. iv. 12. 'Steps of the spirit,' 2 Cor. xii. 18. 'Steps of truth,' 3 John 4. 'Steps washed with butter,' Job xxix. 6. 'Steps taken before, or in the presence of God.' Steps butted and bounded by a divine rule. These are steps indeed."—*John Bunyan, in "Solomon's Temple Spiritualized."*

Verse 133.—"*Let not any iniquity,*" etc. True obedience to God is inconsistent with the dominion of any one lust, or corrupt affection. I say, though a man out of some slender and insufficient touch of religion upon his heart, may go right for a while, and do many things gladly; yet that corruption which is indulged, and under the power of which a man lieth, will at length draw off from God; and therefore no one sin should have dominion over us. When doth sin reign, or have dominion over us? When we do not endeavour to mortify it, and to cut off the provisions that may feed that lust. Chrysostom's observation is, the apostle does not say, let it not tyrannize over you, but, let it not reign over you; that is, when you suffer it to have a quiet reign in your hearts.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 133.—"*Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.*" I had rather be a prisoner to man all my life than be a bondage to sin one day. He says not, Let not this and the other man rule over me; but "let not *sin* have dominion over me." Well said! There is hope in such a man's condition as long as it is so.—*Michael Bruce,* 1666.

Verse 134.—"*Deliver me from the oppression of man.*" 1. "*Man*" by way of *distinction.* There is the oppression and tyranny of the Devil and sin; but the Psalmist doth not mean that now: *Hominum non dæmonum,* saith Hugo. 2. "*Man*" by way of *aggravation. Homo homini lupus:* no creatures so ravenous and destructive to one another as man. It is a shame that one man should oppress another. Beasts do not usually devour those of the same kind; but, usually, a man's enemies are those of his own household: Matt. x. 36. The nearer we are in bonds of alliance, the greater the hatred. 3. "*Man*" by way of *diminution.* And to lessen the fear of this evil, this term Adam is given them, to show their weakness in comparison of God. Thou art God; but they that are so ready and forward to oppress and injure us are but men: thou canst easily overrule their power and break the yoke. I think this consideration chiefest, because of other places. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?" Isa. li. 12, 13.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 134.—"*From the oppression of man.*" Some render it, "*from the oppression of Adam;*" as Jarchi observes; and Arama interprets it of the sin of Adam, and as a prayer to be delivered or redeemed from it; as the Lord's people are by the blood of Christ.—*John Gill.*

Verse 135.—"*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*" The face of God shines upon us, when, in his providence, we are guided and upheld; also when we are made to share in the good things of his providence, and when we are placed in a position wherein we can do much good. Much more does the face of God shine upon us, when we are favoured with tokens of his gracious favour; for then we grow under the consciousness of a loving God, with rich supplies of his grace and Spirit. —*John Stephen.*

Verse 135.—"*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*" Oftentimes the wrongful dealings of men, of others, and of ourselves, like a cloud of smoke arising from the earth and obscuring the face of the sun, hide from us for a while the light of the

countenance of God: but he soon clears it all away, and looks down upon us in loving mercy as before, lighting for us the path of obedience, and brightening our way unto himself.—*"Plain Commentary,"* 1859.

Verse 135.—*"Make thy face to shine upon thy servant."* The believer's incessant cry is, Let me see "the King's face." This is a blessing worth praying for. It is his heart's desire, his present privilege, and what is infinitely better, his sure, everlasting prospect—*"They shall see his face."* Rev. xxii. 4.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 135.—*"Make thy face to shine . . . and teach me."* Blessed is the man whom eternal Truth teacheth, not by obscure figures and transient sounds, but by direct and full communication. The perceptions of our senses are narrow and dull, and our reason on those perceptions frequently misleads us. He whom the eternal Word condescendeth to teach is disengaged at once from the labyrinth of human opinions. For "of one word are all things"; and all things without voice or language speak of him alone: he is that divine principle which speaketh in our hearts, and without which there can be neither just apprehension nor rectitude of judgment.

O God, who art the truth, make me one with thee in everlasting life! I am often weary of reading, and weary of hearing; in thee alone is the sum of my desire! Let all teachers be silent, let the whole creation be dumb before thee, and do thou only speak unto my soul!

Thy ministers can pronounce the words, but cannot impart the spirit; they may entertain the fancy with the charms of eloquence, but if thou art silent they do not inflame the heart. They administer the letter, but thou openest the sense; they utter the mystery, but thou revealest its meaning; they point out the way of life, but thou bestowest strength to walk in it; they water, but thou givest the increase. Therefore do thou, O Lord my God, Eternal Truth! speak to my soul! lest, being outwardly warmed, but not inwardly quickened, I die, and be found unfruitful. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." "Thou only hast the words of eternal life."—*Thomas à Kempis,* 1380—1471.

Verse 135.—*"Make thy face to shine . . . . teach me,"* etc. God hath many ways of teaching; he teaches by book, he teaches by his fingers, he teaches by his rod; but his most comfortable and effectual teaching is by the light of his eye: *"O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill:"* Ps. xlii. 3.—*Richard Alleine* (1611—1681), *in "Heaven Opened."*

Verse 135.—*"Make thy face to shine . . . . teach me thy statutes."* God's children, when they beg comfort, also beg grace to serve him acceptably. For by teaching God's statutes is not meant barely a giving us a speculative knowledge of God's will; for so David here; *"Make thy face to shine";* and *"Teach me thy statutes."—Thomas Manton.*

Verse 136.—*"Rivers of waters run down my eyes."* Most of the easterns shed tears much more copiously than the people of Europe. The Psalmist said *rivers of waters* ran down his eyes; and though the language is beautifully figurative, I have no doubt it was also literally true. I have myself seen Arabs shed tears like streams.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 136.—*"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,"* etc. Either *because mine eyes keep not thy law,* so some. The eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it ought to be a weeping eye. Or rather, *they, i.e., those about me:* ver. 139. Note, the sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 136.—*"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,"* etc. David's afflictions drew not so many tears from him as the sins of others; not his banishment by his son, as the breach of God's law by the wicked. Nothing went so to his heart as the dishonour of God, whose glory shining in his word and ordinances, is dearer to the godly than their lives. Elijah desired to die when he saw God so dishonoured by Ahab and Jezebel. The eye is for two things, sight and tears: if we see God dishonoured, presently our eyes should be filled with tears.—*William Greenhill,* 1591—1677.

Verse 136.—*"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,"* etc. Godly men are affected with deep sorrow for the sins of the ungodly.

Let us consider the *nature* of this affection. 1. It is not a stoical apathy, and affected carelessness; much less a delightful partaking with sinful practices. 2. Not a proud setting off of their own goodness, with marking the sin of others as the

Pharisee did in the gospel. 3. Not the derision and mocking of the folly of men, with that "laughing philosopher": it comes nearer to the temper of the *other* who *wept* always for it. 4. It is not a bitter, bilious anger, breaking forth into railings and reproaches, nor an upbraiding insultation. 5. Nor is it a vindictive desire of punishment, venting itself in curses and imprecations, which is the rash temper of many, but especially of the vulgar sort. The disciples' motion to Christ was far different from that way, and yet he says to them, "Ye know not of what spirit ye are." They thought they had been of Elijah's spirit, but he told them they were mistaken, and did not know of what a spirit they were in that motion. Thus heady zeal often mistakes and flatters itself. We find not here a desire of fire to come down from heaven upon the breakers of the law, but such a grief as would rather bring water to quench it, if it were falling on them. *"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes."—Robert Leighton.*

Verse 136.—*"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,"* etc. The Lord requireth this [mourning bitterly for other men's sins] to keep our hearts the more tender and upright; it is an act God useth to make us more careful of our own souls, to be troubled at the sins of others, at sin in a third person. It keepeth us at a great distance from temptation. This is like quenching of fire in a neighbour's house: before it comes near thee, thou runnest with thy bucket. There is no way to keep us free from the infection, so much as mourning. The soul will never agree to do that which it grieved itself to see another do. And, as it keepeth us upright, so also humble, fearful of Divine judgment, tender lest we ourselves offend, and draw down the wrath of God. He that shruggeth when he seeth a snake creeping upon another, will much more be afraid when it cometh near to himself. In our own sins we have the advantage of conscience scourging the soul with remorse and shame; in bewailing the sins of others, we have only the reasons of duty and obedience. They that fight abroad out of love to valour and exploits, will certainly fight at home out of love to their own safety.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 136.—*"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,"* etc. Thus uniformly is the character of God's people represented—not merely as those who are *free from* —but as *"those that sigh and cry for—all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land":* Ezek. ix. 4. And who does not see what an enlarged sphere still presents itself on every side for the unrestrained exercise of Christian compassion? The appalling spectacle of a world apostatized from God, of multitudes sporting with everlasting destruction—as if the God of heaven were "a man that he should lie" is surely enough to force *"rivers of waters"* from the hearts of those that are concerned for his honour. What a mass of sin ascends as a cloud before the Lord, from a single heart! Add the aggregate of a village—a town—a country—a world! every day—every hour—every moment. Well might the *"rivers of waters"* rise to an overflowing tide, ready to burst its barriers.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 136.—*"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."* —The vices of the religious are the shame of religion: the sight of this hath made the stoutest champions of Christ melt into tears. David was one of those great worthies of the world, not matchable in his times; yet he weeps. Did he tear in pieces a bear like a kid? Rescue a lamb with the death of a lion? Foil a mighty giant, that had dared the whole army of God? Did he like a whirlwind, bear and beat down his enemies before him; and now, does he, like a child or a woman, fall a-weeping? Yes, he had heard the name of God blasphemed, seen his holy rites prophaned, his statutes vilipended, and violence offered to the pure chastity of that holy virgin, religion; this resolved that valiant heart into tears: *"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes."—Thomas Adams.*

Verse 136.—My soul frequently spent itself in such breathings after conformity to the law of God as the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm is filled with throughout: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! My heart breaketh through the longing it hath to thy commands at all times; incline my heart that I may keep them alway unto the end," and the like. This appeared further in a fixed dislike of the least inconformity to the law, either in myself or others. Now; albeit I was always suitably affected with my own or others' breaches, yet this was my burden; I wished always that rivers of tears might run down mine eyes, because I, or other transgressors, kept not God's law.—*Thomas Halyburton,* 1674—1712.

Verse 136.—If we grieve not for others, their sin may become ours. Ezek. ix. 8; 1 Cor. v. 2.—*William Nicholson.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 137 TO 144.

RIGHTEOUS *art* thou, O LORD, and upright *are* thy judgments.

138 Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded *are* righteous and very faithful.

139 My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

140 Thy word *is* very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

141 I *am* small and despised: *yet* do not I forget thy precepts.

142 Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, and thy law *is* the truth.

143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: *yet* thy commandments *are* my delights.

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies *is* everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

This passage deals with the perfect righteousness of Jehovah and his word, and expresses the struggles of a holy soul in reference to that righteousness. The initial letter with which every verse commences sounds like the Hebrew word for *righteousness:* our keynote is righteousness.

137. *"Righteous art thou, O LORD."* The Psalmist has not often used the name of Jehovah in this vast composition. The whole Psalm shows him to have been a deeply religious man, thoroughly familiar with the things of God; and such persons never use the holy name of God carelessly, nor do they even use it at all frequently in comparison with the thoughtless and the ungodly. Familiarity begets reverence in this case. Here he uses the sacred name in worship. He praises God by ascribing to him perfect righteousness. God is always right, and he is always actively right, that is, righteous. This quality is bound up in our very idea of God. We cannot imagine an unrighteous God. *"And upright are thy judgments."* Here he extols God's word, or recorded judgments, as being right, even as their Author is righteous. That which comes from the righteous God is itself righteous. Jehovah both saith and doth that which is right, and that alone. This is a great stay to the soul in time of trouble. When we are most sorely afflicted, and cannot see the reason for the dispensation, we may fall back upon this most sure and certain fact, that God is righteous, and his dealings with us are righteous too. It should be our glory to sing this brave confession when all things around us appear to suggest the contrary. This is the richest adoration—this which rises from the lips of faith when carnal reason mutters about undue severity, and the like.

138. *"Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful."* All that which God hath testified in his word is right and truthful. It is righteous, and may be relied upon for the present; it is faithful, and may be trusted in for the future. About every portion of the inspired testimonies there is a divine authority, they are issued and published by God's *command,* and they bear the impress of the royal style which carries omnipotence about it. Not only the precepts but the promises also are commanded of the Lord, and so are all the teachings of Scripture. It is not left to our choice whether we will accept them or no; they are issued by royal command, and are not to be questioned. Their characteristic is that they are like the Lord who has proclaimed them, they are the essence of justice and the soul of truth. God's word is righteous and cannot be impeached; it is faithful and cannot be questioned; it is true from the beginning, and it will be true unto the end.

Dwell upon that sweet word—*"very faithful."* What a mercy that we have a God to deal with who is scrupulously faithful, true to all the items and details of his promises, punctual to time, steadfast during all time. Well may we risk all upon a word which is "ever faithful, ever sure."

139. In the last two verses David spoke concerning his God and his law; here he speaks of himself, and says, *"My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words":* this was no doubt occasioned by his having so clear a sense of the admirable character of God's word. His zeal was like a fire burning

within his soul. The sight of man's forgetfulness of God acted as a fierce blast to excite the fire to a more vehement flame, and it blazed until it was ready to consume him. David could not bear that men should forget God's words. He was ready to forget himself, ay, to consume himself, because these men forgot God. The ungodly were David's enemies: his enemies because they hated him for his godliness; his enemies, because he abhorred them for their ungodliness. These men had gone so far in iniquity that they not only violated and neglected the commands of God, but they appeared actually to have forgotten them. This put David into a great heat; he burned with indignation. How dare they trample on sacred things! How could they utterly ignore the commands of God himself! He was astonished, and filled with holy anger.

140. *"Thy word is very pure."* It is truth distilled, holiness in its quintessence. In the word of God there is no admixture of error or sin. It is pure in its sense, pure in its language, pure in its spirit, pure in its influence, and all this to the very highest degree—*"very* pure." *"Therefore thy servant loveth it,"* which is a proof that he himself was pure in heart, for only those who are pure love God's word because of its purity. His heart was knit to the word because of its glorious holiness and truth. He admired it, delighted in it, sought to practise it, and longed to come under its purifying power.

141. *"I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts."* That fault of forgetfulness which he condemned in others (verse 139) could not be charged upon himself. His enemies made no account of him, regarded him as a man without power or ability, and therefore looked down upon him. He appears to accept the situation and humbly take the lowest room, but he carries God's word with him. How many a man has been driven to do some ill action in order to reply to the contempt of his enemies: to make himself conspicuous he has either spoken or acted in a manner which he could not justify. The beauty of the Psalmist's piety was that it was calm and well-balanced, and as he was not carried away by flattery, so was he not overcome by shame. If small, he the more jealously attended to the smaller duties; and if despised, he was the more in earnest to keep the despised commandments of God.

142. *"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness."* Having in a previous verse ascribed righteousness to God, he now goes on to declare that that righteousness is unchanging and endures from age to age. This is the joy and glory of the saints, that what God is he always will be, and his mode of procedure towards the sons of men is immutable: having kept his promise, and dealt out justice among his people, he will do so world without end. Both the righteousnesses and the unrighteousnesses of man come to an end, but the righteousness of God is without end. *"And thy law is the truth."* As God is love, so his law is the truth, the very essence of truth, truth applied to ethics, truth in action, truth upon the judgment-seat. We hear great disputes about, "What is truth?" The holy Scriptures are the only answer to that question. Note, that they are not only true, but the truth itself. We may not say of them that they contain the truth, but that they are the truth: "thy law is the truth." There is nothing false about the law or preceptory part of Scripture. Those who are obedient thereto shall find that they are walking in a way consistent with fact, while those who act contrary thereto are walking in a vain show.

143. *"Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me."* This affliction may have arisen from his circumstances, or from the cruelty of his enemies, or from his own internal conflicts, but certain it is that he was the subject of much distress, a distress which apprehended him, and carried him away a captive to its power. His griefs, like fierce dogs, had taken hold upon him; he felt their teeth. He had double trouble: trouble without and anguish within, as the apostle Paul put it, "without were fightings and within were fears." *"Yet thy commandments are my delights."* Thus he became a riddle; troubled, and yet delighted; in anguish, and yet in pleasure. The child of God can understand this enigma, for well he knows that while he is cast down on account of what he sees within himself he is all the more lifted up by what he sees in the word. He is delighted with the commandments, although he is troubled because he cannot perfectly obey them. He finds abundant light in the commandments, and by the influence of that light he discovers and mourns over his own darkness. Only the man who is acquainted with the struggles of the spiritual life will understand the expression before us. Let the reader herein find a balance in which to weigh himself. Does he find even when he is begirt with

sorrow that it is a delightful thing to do the will of the Lord? Does he find more joy in being sanctified than sorrow in being chastised? Then the spot of God's children is upon him.

144. *"The righteousnesss of thy testimonies is everlasting."* First he had said that God's testimonies were righteous, then that they were everlasting, and now that their righteousness is everlasting. Thus he gives us a larger and more detailed account of the word of God the longer he is engaged in writing upon it. The more we say in praise of holy writ, the more we may say and the more we can say. God's testimonies to man cannot be assailed, they are righteous from beginning to end; and though ungodly men have opposed the divine justice, especially in the plan of salvation, they have always failed to establish any charge against the Most High. Long as the earth shall stand long as there shall be a single intelligent creature in the universe it will be confessed that God's plans of mercy are in all respects marvellous proofs of his love of justice: even that he may be gracious Jehovah will not be unjust. *"Give me understanding and I shall live."* This is a prayer which he is constantly praying, that God would give him understanding. Here he evidently considers that such a gift is essential to his living. To live without understanding is not to live the life of a man, but to be dead while we live. Only as we know and apprehend the things of God can we be said to enter into life. The more the Lord teaches us to admire the eternal rightness of his word, and the more he quickens us to the love of such rightness, the happier and the better we shall be. As we love life, and seek many days that we may see good, it behoves us to seek immortality in the everlasting word which liveth and abideth for ever, and to seek good in that renewal of our entire nature which begins with the enlightenment of the understanding and passes on to the regeneration of the entire man. Here is our need of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, and the guide of all the quickened ones, who shall lead us into all truth. O for the visitations of his grace at this good hour!

NOTES ON VERSES 137 TO 144.

S. Jerome, whom most of the mediævalists follow, explains *Tsaddi* as meaning *justice* or *righteousness*, which, however, is צֶדֶק, *tsedek*. But he is so far right that there is a play in this strophe on the sound of the initial letter, as in the case of *Gemol;* for the very first word, righteous, is צַדִּיק, *tsaddik*, and the whole scope of the strophe is the strong grasp which even the young and inexperienced soul can have of righteousness amidst the troubles of the world.—*Neale and Littledale.*

All these verses begin wth *Tzaddi*, the eighteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet; 137, 142, 144, with some form of the word which we render *righteous*, or *righteousness;* each of the remainder with a wholly different word.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 137.—"*Righteous art thou, O* LORD," etc. Here David, sore troubled with grief for the wickedness of his enemies, yea, tempted greatly to impatience and distrust, by looking to their prosperous estate, notwithstanding their so gross impiety, doth now show unto us a three-fold ground of comfort, which in this dangerous temptation upheld him. The first is, a considerstion of that which God is in himself; namely, just and righteous: the second, a consideration of the equity of his word; the third, a view of his constant truth, declared in his working and doing according to his word. When we find ourselves tempted to distrust by looking to the prosperity of the wicked, let us look up to God, and consider his nature, his word, his works, and we shall find comfort.

"*Righteous art thou.*" This is the first ground of comfort—a meditation of the righteousness of God's nature; he alters not with times, he changes not with persons, he is, alway and unto all, one and the same righteous and holy God. Righteousness is essential to him, it is himself; and he can no more defraud the godly of their promised comforts, nor let the wicked go unpunished in their sins, than he can deny himself to be God, which is impossible.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 137.—"*Righteous art thou, O* LORD," etc. Essentially, originally, and of himself; naturally, immutably and universally, in all his ways and works of nature and grace; in his thoughts, purposes, counsels, and decrees; in all the dispensations of his providence; in redemption, in the justification of a sinner, in the pardon of sin, and in the gift of eternal life through Christ. "*And upright are thy judgments.*" They are according to the rules of justice and equity. He refers to the precepts of the word, the doctrines of the gospel, as well as the judgments of God inflicted on wicked men, and all the providential dealings of God with his people, and also the final judgment.—*John Gill.*

Verse 137.—"*Righteous art thou, O* LORD," etc. Here is much to keep the children of God in awe. The Lord is a righteous God: though they have found mercy and taken sanctuary in his grace, the Lord is impartial in his justice. God that did not spare the angels when they sinned, nor his Son when he was a sinner by imputation, will not spare you, though you are the dearly beloved of his soul: Prov. xi. 31. The sinful courses of God's children occasion bitterness enough; they never venture upon sin, but with great loss. If Paul give way to a little pride, God will humble him. If any give way to sin, their pilgrimage will be made uncomfortable. Eli falls into negligence and indulgence, then is the ark of God taken, his two sons are slain in battle, his daughter-in-law dies, he himself breaks his neck. Oh! the wonderful tragedies that sin works in the houses of the children of God! David, when he intermeddled with forbidden fruit, was driven from his palace, his concubines defiled, his own son slain; a great many calamities did light upon him. Therefore the children of God have cause to fear; for the Lord is a just God, and they will find it so. Here upon earth he hath reserved liberty to visit their iniquity with rods, and their transgression with scourges. I must press you to imitate God's righteousness: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him": 1 John ii. 29. You have a righteous God; and this part of his character you should copy out.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 137.—David's great care, when he was under the afflicting hand of God, was to clear the Lord of injustice. Oh! Lord, saith he, there is not the least show, spot, stain, blemish, or mixture of injustice, in all the afflictions thou hast brought upon me. I desire to take shame to myself, and to set to my seal, that the Lord is righteous, and that there is no injustice, no cruelty, nor no extremity in all that the Lord hath brought upon me. He sweetly and readily subscribes unto the righteousness of God in those sharp and smart afflictions that God exercised him

with. *"Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments."* God's judgments are always just; he never afflicts but in faithfulness. His will is the rule of justice; and therefore a gracious soul dares not cavil nor question his proceedings. —*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 137.—The hundred and thirty-seventh verse, like the twenty-fifth, is associated with the sorrows of an Imperial penitent.* When the deposed and captive Emperor Maurice was led out for execution by the usurper Phocas, his five sons were previously murdered one by one in his presence; and at each fatal blow he patiently exclaimed, *"Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments."*— *Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 138.—*"Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful."* The force of this expression is much feebler than that of the original, which literally may be rendered, "Thou hast commanded righteousness, thy testimonies, and truth exceedingly." So the Septuagint hath it. Righteousness and truth were his testimonies; the testimonies were one with his righteousness and truth. The English translation gives *the quality of the testimonies;* the Hebrew gives *that which is commanded;* as if we might say, Thou hast enjoined righteousness to be thy testimonies, and truth exceedingly.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 138.—*"Thy testimonies."* The word of God is called his *testimony*, both because it testifies his will, which he will have us to do; as also because it testifies unto men truly what shall become of them, whether good or evil. Men by nature are curious to know their end, rather than careful to mend their life; and for this cause seek answers where they never get good: but if they would know, let me go to the word and testimony; they need not to seek any other oracle. If the word of God testify good things unto them, they have cause to rejoice; if otherwise it witnesseth evil unto them, let them haste to prevent it, or else it will assuredly overtake them.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 138.—*"Righteous and very faithful."* Literally, "faithfulness exceedingly." Harsh and severe as they may seem, they are all thoroughly for man's highest good.—*William Kay.*

Verse 139.—*"My zeal hath consumed me."* *"Zeal"* is a high degree of love; and when the object of that love is ill treated, it venteth itself in a mixture of grief and indignation which are sufficient to wear and "consume" the heart. This will be the case where men rightly conceive of that dishonour which is continually done to God by creatures whom he hath made and redeemed. But never could the verse be uttered with such fulness of truth and propriety by any one as by the Son of God, who had such a sense of his Father's glory, and of man's sin, as no person else ever had. And, accordingly, when his zeal had exerted itself in purging the temple, St. John tells us, "his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." The place where it is so written is Psalm lxix. 9, and the passage is exactly parallel to this before us.— *George Horne.*

Verse 139.—*"My zeal hath consumed me,"* etc. Zeal is the heat or intension of the affections; it is a holy warmth, whereby our love and anger are drawn out to the utmost for God, and his glory. Now, our love to God and his ways, and our hatred of wickedness, should be increased, because of ungodly men. Cloudy and dark colours in a table, make those that are fresh and lively to appear more beautiful; others' sin should make God and godliness more amiable in thine eyes. Thy heart should take fire by striking on such cold flints. David by a holy antiperistasis did kindle from others' coldness; *"My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words."* Cold blasts make a fire to flame the higher, and burn the hotter.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 139.—*"My zeal hath consumed me."* The fire of zeal, like the fire which consumed Solomon's sacrifice, cometh down from heaven; and true zealots are not those salamanders that always live in the fire of hatred and contention; but seraphims, burning with the spiritual fire of divine love. And there true zeal inflames the desires and affections of the soul. If it be true zeal, then tract of time, multitude of discouragements, falseness of men deserting the cause, strength of oppositions, will not tire out a man's spirit. Zeal makes men resolute, difficulties are but whetstones to their fortitude, it steels men's spirits with an undaunted resolution.

* Gibbon. Decline and Fall; ch. xlvi.

This was the zeal that burned in the disciples (Luke xxiv.), that consumed David here, and dried up the very marrow of Christ: John ii. 17.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 139.—"*My zeal hath consumed me.*" There are divers kinds of zeal: there is a zeal of the world, there is a zeal of the flesh, there is a zeal of false religion, there is a zeal of heresy, and there is a zeal of the true word of God. First, we see the zeal of the world maketh men to labour day and night to get a transitory thing. The zeal of the flesh tormenteth men's minds early and late for a momentary pleasure. The zeal of heresy maketh men travel and compass sea and land, for the maintaining and increasing of their opinion. Thus we see every man is eaten up with some kind of zeal. The drunkard is consumed with drunkenness, the whoremonger is spent with his whoredom, the heretic is eaten with heresies. Oh, how ought this to make us ashamed, who are so little eaten, spent, and consumed with the zeal of the word! And so much the rather, because godly zeal leaveth in us an advantage and a recompence, which the worldly and carnally zealous men have not. For when they have spent all the strength of their bodies, and powers of their mind, they have no gain or comfort left, but torment of conscience; and when they are outwardly spent, they are inwardly never the better: whereas the godly being concerned for a good thing, and eaten up with the zeal of God's glory, have this notable privilege and profit, that howsoever their outward man perisheth and decayeth, yet their inward man is still refreshed and nourished to everlasting life. Oh, what a benefit it is to be eaten up with the love and zeal of a good thing!—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 139.—"*Have forgotten thy words.*" A proper phrase to set forth those in the bosom of the visible church who do not wholly deny and reject the word and rule of Scripture, but yet live on as though they had forgotten it: they do not observe it; as if God had never spoken any such thing, or given them any such rule. They that reject and condemn such things as the word enforceth, surely do not remember to do them.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 140.—"*Thy word is very pure.*" In the original, "tried, refined, purified, like gold in the furnace," absolutely perfect, without the dross of vanity and fallibility, which runs through human writings. The more we try the promises, the surer we shall find them. Pure gold is so fixed, that Boerhaave informs us of an ounce of it set in the eye of a glass furnace for two months, without losing a single grain.—*George Horne.*

Verse 140.—"*Thy word is very pure; therefore,*" etc. The word of God is not only "*pure,*" free from all base admixture, but it is a *purifier;* it cleanses from sin and guilt every heart with which it comes into contact. "Now ye are clean," said Jesus Christ to his disciples, "by the word which I have spoken unto you": John xv. 3. It is this its pure quality combined with its tendency to purify every nature that yields to its holy influence, that endears it to every child of God. Here it is that he finds views of the divine character, those promises, those precepts, those representations of the deformity of sin, of the beauty of holiness, which lead him, above all things, to seek conformity to the divine image. A child of God in his best moments does not wish the word of God brought down to a level with his own imperfect character, but desires rather that his character may be gradually raised to a conformity to that blessed word. Because it is altogether pure, and because it tends to convey to those who make it their constant study a measure of its own purity, the child of God loves it, and delights to meditate in it day and night.—*John Morison.*

Verse 140.—"*Thy word is very pure.*" Before I knew the word of God in spirit and in truth, for its great antiquity, its interesting narratives, its impartial biography, its pure morality, its sublime poetry, in a word, for its beautiful and wonderful variety, I preferred it to all other books; but since I have entered into its spirit, like the Psalmist, I love it above all things for its purity; and desire, whatever else I read, it may tend to increase my knowledge of the Bible, and strengthen my affection for its divine and holy truths.—*Sir William Jones,* 1746—1794.

Verse 140.—"*Thy word.*" Let us refresh our minds and our memories with some of the Scripture adjuncts connected with "the word," and realize, in some degree at least, the manifold relations which it bears both to God and our souls. It is called "the word of Christ," because much of it was given by him, and it all bears testimony to him . . . . It is called "the word of his grace," because the glorious theme on which it loves to expatiate is *grace,* and especially grace as it

is seen in Christ's dying love for sinful men. It is called ὁ λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ, "the word of the cross" (1 Cor. i. 18), because in the crucifixion of the divine Redeemer we see eternal mercy in its brightest lustre. It is called "the word of the gospel," because it brings glad tidings of great joy to all nations. It is called "the word of the kingdom," because it holds out to all believers the hope of an everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace. It is called "the word of salvation," because the purpose for which it was given is the salvation of sinners. It is called "the word of truth," because, as Chillingworth says, it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without mixture of error for its contents. And we will only add, it is called "the word of life," because it reveals to a sinful, perishing world the doctrines of life and immortality.—*W. Graham, in "A Commentary on the First Epistle of John,"* 1857.

Verse 140.—"*Therefore thy servant loveth it.*" Love in God is the fountain of all his benefits extended to us; and love in man is the fountain of all our service and obedience to God. He loved us first to do us good; and hereof it comes that we have grace to love him next to do him service. Love is such a duty that the want thereof cannot be excused in any; for the poorest both may and should love God: yet without it all the rest thou canst do in his service is nothing; nay, not if thou shouldst give thy goods to the poor, and offer thy body to be burned. Small sacrifices, flowing from faith and love, are welcome to him, where greater without these are but abomination to him. Proofs of both we have in the widow's mite and Cain's rich oblation; whereof the one was rejected, the other received. Happy are we though we cannot say, "We have done as God commands," if out of a good heart we can say,—"We love to do what he commands."—*William Cowper.*

Verse 140.—"*Therefore thy servant loveth it.*" Of all our grounds and reasons of love to the word of God, the most noble and excellent is to love the word for its purity. This showeth indeed that we are made partakers of the Divine nature: 2 Pet. i. 4. For I pray you mark, when we hate evil as evil, and love good as good, we have the same love and hatred that God hath. When once we come to love things because they are pure, it is a sign that we have the same love that God hath.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 140.—"*Thy servant loveth it.*" Otherwise, indeed, the Psalmist would not have been the Lord's servant at all. But he glories in the title because he delights in the pure service.—*John Stephen.*

Verses 140, 141.—God's own utterance is indeed without spot, and therefore not to be carped at; it is pure, fire-proved, noblest metal, therefore he loves it, and does not, though young and lightly esteemed, care for the remonstrances of his proud opponents who are older and more learned than himself.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 141.—"*I am small and despised,*" or, *I have been.* Some versions render it *young*; as if it had respect to the time of his anointing by Samuel, when he was overlooked and despised in his father's family (1 Sam. xvi. 11, and xvii. 28); but the word here used is not expressive of age, but of state, condition, and circumstances; and the meaning is, that he was little in his own esteem, and in the esteem of men, and was despised; and that on account of religion, in which he was a type of Christ (Ps. xxii. 6, and Isa. liii. 3), and which is the common lot of good men, who are treated by the world as the filth of it, and the offscouring of all things.—*John Gill.*

Verse 141.—"*I am small.*" They that love God may be reduced to a mean, low, and afflicted condition; the Lord seeth it meet for divers reasons: 1. That they may know their happiness is not in this world, and so the more long for heaven, and delight in heavenly things. 2. It is necessary to cut off the provisions of the flesh and the fuel of their lusts. A rank soil breedeth weeds; and when we sail with a full stream we are apt to be carried away with it. 3. That they may be more sensible of his displeasure against their sins and scandalous carriage by which they have dishonoured him, and provoked the pure eyes of his glory. 4. That they may learn to live upon the promises, and learn to exercise suffering graces; especially dependence upon God, who can support us without a temporal, visible interest. 5. That God may convince the enemies that there is a people that do sincerely serve him, and not for carnal, selfish ends: Job i. 6. That his glory may be more seen in their deliverance; and therefore, before God doth appear for his children, he bringeth them very low.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 141.—"*Small.*" This applies to David in his early days of trouble and

persecution. It is difficult to find any other individual to whom it is so suitable.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 141.—A notable example to the shame of them, that perhaps will serve and praise God in their prosperity, and when they are increased; but let affliction or want come, and then they have little heart to do it.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 141.—"*Yet do not I forget thy precepts.*" God observeth what we do in our trouble: "If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart"; Ps. xliv. 20, 21. If we slacken our service to God, or fall off to any degree of apostasy, the Judge of hearts knoweth all: God knoweth whether we would have depraved and corrupt doctrine, worship, or ordinances; or whether we will faithfully adhere to him, to his word, and worship, and ordinances, whatever it cost us.

In our poor and despicable condition we see more cause to love the word than we did before; because we experience supports and comforts which we have thereby: "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience," etc. (Rom. v. 3); "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ": 2 Cor. i. 5. God hath special consolations for his afflicted and despised people, and makes their consolation by Christ to run parallel with, and keep pace with, their sufferings for Christ.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 141.—"*Yet do not I forget thy precepts.*" We see by experience that our affection leaves anything from the time it goes out of our remembrance. We cease to love when we cease to remember; but earnest love ever renews remembrance of that which is beloved. The first step of defection is to forget what God hath commanded, and what we are obliged in duty to do to him; and upon this easily follows the offending of God by our transgression. Such beasts as did not chew their cud, under the law were accounted unclean, and not meet to be sacrificed unto God: that was but a figure, signifying unto us that a man who hath received good things from God, and doth not think upon them, cannot feel the sweetness of them, and so cannot be thankful to God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 142.—"*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.*" Here the law of God is honoured by the additional encomium, that it is everlasting righteousness and truth; as if it had been said, that all other rules of life, with whatever attractions they may appear to be recommended, are but a shadow, which quickly vanishes away. The Psalmist, no doubt, indirectly contrasts the doctrine of the law with all the human precepts which were ever delivered, that he may bring all the faithful in subjection to it, since it is the school of perfect wisdom. There may be more of plausibility in the refined and subtle disquisitions of men; but there is in them nothing firm or solid at bottom, as there is in God's law. This firmness of the divine law he proves in the following verse from one instance—the continual comfort he found in it when grievously harassed with temptations. And the true test of the profit we have reaped from it is, when we oppose to all the distresses of whatever kind which may straiten us, the consolation derived from the word of God, that thereby all sadness may be effaced from our minds. David here expresses something more than he did in the preceding verse; for there he only said that he reverently served God, although from his rough and hard treatment he might seem to lose his labour; but now when distressed and tormented, he affirms that he finds in the law of God the most soothing delight, which mitigates all griefs, and not only tempers their bitterness, but also seasons them with a certain sweetness. Assuredly when this taste does not exist to afford us delight, nothing is more natural than for us to be swallowed up of sorrow.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 142.—"*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.*" Not only righteous at the first giving out, but righteous in all ages and times; and should we slight this rule that will hold for ever? In the world new lords, new laws; men vary and change their designs and purposes; privileges granted to-day may be repealed to-morrow; but this word will hold true for ever. Our justification by Christ is irrevocable; that part of righteousness is everlasting. Be sure you are justified now upon terms of the gospel, and you shall be justified for ever: your forgiveness is an everlasting forgiveness, and your peace is an everlasting peace: "I will remember their sin no more": Jer. xxxi. 34. So the other righteousness of sanctification, it is for ever; approve yourselves to God now, and you will approve yourselves at the day of judgment.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 142.—"*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,*" etc. The original is better expressed thus, "Thy righteousness is righteousness everlastingly, and thy law is truth." So the Septuagint. The English translation expresses the *perpetuity* of the righteousness, the original expresses also the *character* of it. . . . God's righteousness is essentially and eternally righteousness. The expressions are absolute; there is only this righteousness, and only this truth.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 142.—"*Thy law is the truth.*" 1. It is the *chief* truth. There is some truth in the laws of men and the writings of men, even of heathens; but they are but sorry fragments and scraps of truth, that have escaped since the fall. 2. It is the *only* truth; that is, the only revelation of the mind of God that you can build upon. It is the rule of truth. 3. It is the *pure* truth. In it there is nothing but the truth, without the mixture of falsehood; every part is true as truth itself. It is true in the promises, threatenings, doctrines, histories, precepts, prohibitions. 4. It is *the whole* truth. It containeth all things necessary for the salvation of those that yield up themselves to be instructed by it.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 143.—"*Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.*" This is strange, that in the midst of anguish David had *delight:* but indeed the sweetness of God's word is best perceived under the bitterness of the cross. The joy of Christ and the joy of the world cannot consist together. A heart delighted with worldly joy cannot feel the consolations of the Spirit; the one of these destroys the other; but in sanctified trouble, the comforts of God's word are felt and perceived in a most sensible manner. Many a time hath David protested this delight of his in the word of God; and truly it is a great argument of godliness, when men come not only to reverence it, but to love it, and delight in it. Let this be considered by those unhappy men who hear it of custom, and count it but a weariness.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 143.—"*Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me,*" or "*found me,*" etc. We need not take pains, as many do, "to find trouble and anguish;" for they will, one day, "find us." In that day the revelations of God must be to us instead of all worldly "delights" and pleasures, which will then have forsaken us; and how forlorn and desolate will be our state if we should have no other delights, no other pleasures, to succeed them, and to accompany us into eternity! Let our study be then in the Scriptures, if we expect our comfort in them in time to come.—*George Horne.*

Verse 143.—"*Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me.*" You may conceive a bold figure here, as if Trouble and Anguish were being sent out against the helpless sons of men. These, like enemies, were going round. Instead of seizing upon the wicked, they had found the righteous man. So it was by the ordering of God. I suppose many of us have remarked, that the believer is never long at ease. He is in the world; he is in the flesh; there is indwelling sin; there are enemies around; there is the great enemy; besides all this, the Lord, for wise purposes, hides his face. Then the believer is in trouble and anguish.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 143.—"*Have taken hold on me.*" Hebrew, *found me.* Like dogs tracking out a wild beast hiding or fleeing.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 143.—"*Thy commandments are my delights.*" Delight in moral things (saith Aquinas) is the rule by which we may judge of men's goodness or badness. *Delectatio est quies voluntatis in bono.* Men are good and bad, as the objects of their delight are: they are good who delight in good things, and they are evil who delight in evil things.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 144.—"*The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting.*" Thy *moral law* was not made for one people, or for one particular time; it is as imperishable as thy nature, and of endless obligation. It is that law by which all the children of Adam shall be judged. "*Give me understanding.*" To know and practise it. "*And I shall live.*" Shall glorify thee, and live eternally; not for the *merit* of having done it, but because thou didst fulfil the work of the law in my heart, having saved me from condemnation by it.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 144.—"*Give me understanding, and I shall live.*" I read it in connection with the preceding clause; for although David desires to have his mind enlightened by God, yet he does not conceive of any other way by which he was to obtain an enlightened understanding than by his profiting aright in the study of the law. Further, he here teaches that men cannot, properly speaking, be said to live when

they are destitute of the light of heavenly wisdom; and as the end for which men are created is not that, like swine or asses, they may stuff their bellies, but that they may exercise themselves in the knowledge and service of God, when they turn away from such employment their life is worse than a thousand deaths. David therefore protests that for him to live was not merely to be fed with meat and drink, and to enjoy earthly comforts, but to aspire after a better life, which he could not do save under the guidance of faith. This is a very necessary warning; for although it is universally acknowledged that man is born with this distinction, that he excels the lower animals in intelligence, yet the great bulk of mankind, as if with deliberate purpose, stifle whatever light God pours into their understandings. I indeed admit that all men desire to be sharp-witted; but how few aspire to heaven, and consider that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Since, then, meditation upon the celestial life is buried by earthly care, men do nothing else than plunge into the grave, so that while living to the world, they die to God. Under the term life, however, the prophet denotes the utmost he could wish. Lord, as if he had said, although I am already dead, yet if thou art pleased to illumine my mind with the knowledge of heavenly truth, this grace alone will be sufficient to revive me.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 144.—"*Give me understanding, and I shall live.*" The saving knowledge of God's testimonies is the only way to live. There is a threefold life. 1. Life natural. 2. Life spiritual, and, 3. Life eternal. In all these considerations may the point be made good.

First. Life is taken for the *life of nature*, or the life of the body, or life temporal, called "this life" in Scripture: 1 Cor. xv. 19; 1 Tim. iv. 8. Life is better preserved in a way of obedience than by evil-doing; that provoketh God to cast us off, and exposes us to dangers. It is not in the power of the world to make us live or die a day sooner or longer than God pleaseth. If God will make us happy, they cannot make us miserable: therefore, "*Give me understanding, and I shall live*"; that is, lead a comfortable and happy life for the present. Prevent sin, and you prevent danger. Obedience is the best way to preserve life temporal: as great a paradox as it seems to the world, it is a Scripture truth, "Keep my commandments, and live" (Prov. iv. 4); and, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" (verse 13); and, "Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour" (Prov. iii. 16); and, "She is a tree of life" (verse 18). The knowledge and practice of the word is the only means to live comfortably and happily here, as well as for ever hereafter.

Secondly. *Life spiritual;* that is twofold, the life of justification, and the life of sanctification.

1. The life of justification: "The free gift came upon all men unto justification of life": Rom. v. 18. He is dead, not only on whom the hangman hath done his work, but also he on whom the judge hath passed sentence, and the law pronounceth him dead. In this sense we were all dead, and justification is called justification to life; there is no living in this sense without knowledge: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many": Isa. liii. 11. We live by faith, and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing doeth no good unless the Lord giveth understanding; as meats nourish not unless received and digested.

2. The life of sanctification: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins": Eph. ii. 1. And men live not properly till they live the life of grace; they live a false, counterfeit life, not a blessed, happy, certain, and true life. Now this life is begun and carried on by saving knowledge: "The new man which is renewed in knowledge": Col. iii. 10. Again, men are said to be "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them:" Eph. iv. 18. They that are ignorant are dead in sin: life spiritual cometh by knowledge. Hence beginneth the change of the inward man, and thenceforth we live. "*Give me understanding,*" *ut vere in te vivam*, that the true life begun in me may grow and increase daily, but never be quenched by sin.

Thirdly. *Life everlasting*, or our blessed estate in heaven. So it is said of the saints departed, they all live unto God: Luke xx. 38. And this is called the water of life, the tree of life, the crown of life; properly this is life. What is the present life in comparison of everlasting life? The present life, it is *mors vitalis*, a living death; or *mortalis vita*, a dying life, a kind of death; it is always *in fluxu*, like a stream: it runneth from us as fast as it cometh to us: "He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not": Job. xiv. 2. We die as fast as we live: it differeth but

as the point from the line where it terminateth. It is not one and the same, no permanent thing; it is like the shadow of a star in a flowing stream. Its contentments are base and low, called "the life of thine hand": Isa. lvii. 10. It is patched up of several creatures, fain to ransack the storehouses of nature to support a ruinous fabric. And compare it with the life of grace here, it doth not exempt us from sin, nor miseries. Our capacities are narrow. We are full of fears, and doubts, and dangers; but in the life of glory we shall neither sin nor sorrow any more. This is meant here: *"The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live"*; it is chiefly meant of the life of glory. This is the fruit of saving knowledge, when we so know God and Christ as to come to God by him.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 144.—*"I shall live."* I shall be kept from those sins which deserve and bring death.—*Matthew Pool.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 145 TO 152.

I CRIED with *my* whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

148 Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

151 Thou *art* near, O LORD; and all thy commandments *are* truth.

152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

This section is given up to memories of prayer. The Psalmist describes the time and the manner of his devotions, and pleads with God for deliverance from his troubles. He who has been with God in the closet will find God with him in the furnace. If we have cried we shall be answered. Delayed answers may drive us to importunity; but we need not fear the ultimate result, since God's promises are not uncertain, but are "founded for ever." The whole passage shows us: How he prayed (verse 145). What he prayed for (146). When he prayed (147). How long he prayed (148). What he pleaded (149). What happened (150). How he was rescued (151). What was his witness as to the whole matter (152).

145.—"*I cried with my whole heart.*" His prayer was a sincere, plaintive, painful, natural utterance, as of a creature in pain. We cannot tell whether at all times he used his voice when he thus cried; but we are informed of something which is of much greater consequence, he cried with his heart. Heart-cries are the essence of prayer. He mentions the unity of his heart in this holy engagement. His whole soul pleaded with God, his entire affections, his united desires all went out towards the living God. It is well when a man can say as much as this of his prayers: it is to be feared that many never cried to God with their whole heart in all their lives. There may be no beauty of elocution about such prayers, no length of expression, no depth of doctrine, nor accuracy of diction; but if the whole heart be in them they will find their way to the heart of God. "*Hear me, O LORD.*" He desires of Jehovah that his cries may not die upon the air, but that God may have respect to them. True supplicants are not satisfied with the exercise itself, they have an end and object in praying, and they look out for it. If God does not hear prayer we pray in vain. The term "hear" is often used in Scripture to express attention and consideration. In one sense God hears every sound that is made on earth, and every desire of every heart; but David meant much more; he desired a kindly, sympathetic hearing, such as a physician gives to his patient when he tells him his pitiful story. He asked that the Lord would draw near, and listen with friendly ear to the voice of his complaint, with the view of pitying him and helping him. Observe, that his whole-hearted prayer goes to the Lord alone; he has no second hope or help. "Hear me, O LORD," is the full range of his petition and expectation. "*I will keep thy statutes.*" He could not expect the Lord to hear him if he did not hear the Lord, neither would it be true that he prayed with his whole heart unless it was manifest that he laboured with all his might to be obedient to the divine will. His object in seeking deliverance was that he might be free to fulfil his religion and carry out every ordinance of the Lord. He would be a free man that he might be at liberty to serve the Lord. Note well that a holy

resolution goes well with an importunate supplication: David is determined to be holy, his whole heart goes with that resolve as well as with his prayers. He will keep God's statutes in his memory, in his affections, and in his actions. He will not wilfully neglect or violate any one of the divine laws.

146.—"*I cried unto thee.*" Again he mentions that his prayer was unto God alone. The sentence imports that he prayed vehemently, and very often; and that it had become one of the greatest facts of his life that he cried unto God. "*Save me.*" This was his prayer; very short, but very full. He needed saving, none but the Lord could save him, to him he cried, "Save me" from the dangers which surround me, from the enemies that pursue me, from the temptations which beset me, from the sins which accuse me. He did not multiply words, and men never do so when they are in downright earnest. He did not multiply objects, and men seldom do so when they are intent upon the one thing needful: "save me" was his one and only prayer. "*And I shall keep thy testimonies.*" This was his great object in desiring salvation, that he might be able to continue in a blameless life of obedience to God, that he might be able to believe the witness of God, and also to become himself a witness for God. It is a great thing when men seek salvation for so high an end. He did not ask to be delivered that he might sin with impunity; his cry was to be delivered from sin itself. He had vowed to keep the statutes or laws, here he resolves to keep the testimonies or doctrines, and so to be sound of head as well as clean of hand. Salvation brings all these good things in its train. David had no idea of a salvation which would allow him to live in sin, or abide in error: he knew right well that there is no saving a man while he abides in disobedience and ignorance.

147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried.*" He was up before the sun, and began his pleadings before the dew began to leave the grass. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing speedily. This is the third time that he mentions that he cried. He cried, and cried, and cried again. His supplications had become so frequent, fervent, and intense, that he might hardly be said to be doing anything else from morning to night but crying unto his God. So strong was his desire after salvation that he could not rest in his bed; so eagerly did he seek it that at the first possible moment he was on his knees. "*I hoped in thy word.*" Hope is a very powerful means of strengthening us in prayer. Who would pray if he had no hope that God would hear him? Who would not pray when he has a good hope of a blessed issue to his entreaties? His hope was fixed upon God's word, and this is a sure anchorage, because God is true, and in no case has he ever run back from his promise, or altered the thing that has gone forth from his mouth. He who is diligent in prayer will never be destitute of hope. Observe that as the early bird gets the worm, so the early prayer is soon refreshed with hope.

148.—"*Mine eyes prevent the night watches.*" Or rather, *the watches.* Before the watchman cried the hour, he was crying to God. He did not need to be informed as to how the hours were flying, for every hour his heart was flying towards heaven. He began the day with prayer, and he continued in prayer through the watches of the day, and the watches of the night. The soldiers changed guard, but David did not change his holy occupation. Specially, however, at night did he keep his eyes open, and drive away sleep, that he might maintain communion with his God. He worshipped on from watch to watch as travellers journey from stage to stage. "*That I might meditate in thy word.*" This had become meat and drink to him. Meditation was the food of his hope, and the solace of his sorrow: the one theme upon which his thoughts ran was that blessed "word" which he continually mentions, and in which his heart rejoices. He preferred study to slumber; and he learned to forego his necessary sleep for much more necessary devotion. It is instructive to find meditation so constantly connected with fervent prayer: it is the fuel which sustains the flame. How rare an article is it in these days.

149.—"*Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness.*" Men find it very helpful to use their voices in prayer; it is difficult long to maintain the intensity of devotion unless we hear ourselves speak; hence David at length broke through his silence, arose from his quiet meditations, and began crying with voice as well as heart unto the Lord his God. Note, that he does not plead his own deservings, nor for a moment appeal for payment of a debt on account of merit; he takes the free-grace way, and puts it, "according unto thy lovingkindness." When God hears prayer according to his lovingkindness he overlooks all the imperfections of the prayer, he forgets the sinfulness of the offerer, and in pitying love he grants the desire though

the suppliant be unworthy. It is according to God's lovingkindness to answer speedily, to answer frequently, to answer abundantly, yea, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think. Lovingkindness is one of the sweetest words in our language. Kindness has much in it that is most precious, but lovingkindness is doubly dear; it is the cream of kindness. *"O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment."* This is another of David's wise and ardent prayers. He first cried, "Save me;" then, "Hear me;" and now, "Quicken me." This is often the very best way of delivering us from trouble,—to give us more life that we may escape from death; and to add more strength to that life that we may not be overloaded with its burdens. Observe, that he asks to receive quickening according to God's judgment, that is, in such a way as should be consistent with infinite wisdom and prudence. God's methods of communicating greater vigour to our spiritual life are exceedingly wise; it would probably be in vain for us to attempt to understand them; and it will be our wisdom to wish to receive grace, not according to our notion of how it should come to us, but according to God's heavenly method of bestowing it. It is his prerogative to make alive as well as to kill, and that sovereign act is best left to his infallible judgment. Hath he not already given us to have life more and more abundantly? "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

150.—*"They draw nigh that follow after mischief."* He could hear their footfalls close behind him. They are not following him for his benefit, but for his hurt, and therefore the sound of their approach is to be dreaded. They are not prosecuting a good object, but persecuting a good man. As if they had not enough mischief in their own hearts, they are hunting after more. He sees them going a steeple-chase over hedge and ditch in order to bring mischief to himself, and he points them out to God, and entreats the Lord to fix his eyes upon them, and deal with them to their confusion. They were already upon him, and he was almost in their grip, and therefore he cries the more earnestly. *"They are far from thy law."* A mischievous life cannot be an obedient one. Before these men could become persecutors of David they were obliged to get away from the restraints of God's law. They could not hate a saint and yet love the law. Those who keep God's law neither do harm to themselves nor to others. Sin is the greatest mischief in the world. David mentions this to the Lord in prayer, feeling some kind of comfort in the fact that those who hated him hated God also, and found it needful to get away from God before they could be free to act their cruel parts towards himself. When we know that our enemies are God's enemies, and ours because they are his, we may well take comfort to ourselves.

151. *"Thou art near, O LORD."* Near as the enemy might be, God was nearer: this is one of the choicest comforts of the persecuted child of God. The Lord is near to hear our cries, and to speedily afford us succour. He is near to chase away our enemies, and to give us rest and peace. *"And all thy commandments are truth."* God neither commands a lie, nor lies in his commands. Virtue is truth in action, and this is what God commands. Sin is falsehood in action, and this is what God forbids. If all God's commands are truth, then the true man will be glad to keep near to them, and therein he will find the true God near him. This sentence will be the persecuted man's protection from the false hearts that seek to do him mischief: God is near and God is true, therefore his people are safe. If at any time we fall into danger through keeping the commands of God we need not suppose that we have acted unwisely: we may, on the contrary, be quite sure that we are in the right way; for God's precepts are right and true. It is for this very reason that wicked men assail us: they hate the truth, and therefore hate those who do the truth. Their opposition may be our consolation; while God's presence upon our side is our glory and delight.

152. *"Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever."* David found of old that God had founded them of old, and that they would stand firm throughout all ages. It is a very blessed thing to be so early taught of God that we know substantial doctrines even from our youth. Those who think that David was a young man when he wrote this Psalm will find it rather difficult to reconcile this verse with the theory; it is much more probable that he was now grown grey, and was looking back upon what he had known long before. He knew at the very first that the doctrines of God's word were settled before the world began, that they had never altered, and never could by any possibility be altered. He had begun by building on a rock, by seeing that God's testimonies

were "founded," that is, grounded, laid as foundations, settled and established; and that with a view to all the ages that should come, during all the changes that should intervene. It was because David knew this that he had such confidence in prayer, and was so importunate in it. It is sweet to plead immutable promises with an immutable God. It was because of this that David learned to hope: a man cannot have much expectation from a changing friend, but he may well have confidence in a God who cannot change. It was because of this that he delighted in being near the Lord, for it is a most blessed thing to keep up close intercourse with a Friend who never varies. Let those who choose follow at the heels of the modern school and look for fresh light to break forth which will put the old light out of countenance; we are satisfied with the truth which is old as the hills and as fixed as the great mountains. Let "cultured intellects" invent another god, more gentle and effeminate than the God of Abraham; we are well content to worship Jehovah, who is eternally the same. Things everlastingly established are the joy of established saints. Bubbles please boys, but men prize those things which are solid and substantial, with a foundation and a bottom to them which will bear the test of ages.

NOTES ON VERSES 145 TO 152.

Verse 145.—"*I cried with my whole heart.*" As a man cries most loudly when he cries with all his mouth opened; so a man prays most effectually when he prays with his whole heart. Neither doth this speech declare only the fervency of his affection; but it imports also that it was a great thing which he sought from God. And thou, when thou prayest, pray for great things; for things enduring, not for things perishing: pray not for silver, it is but rust; nor for gold, it is but metal; nor for possessions, they are but earth. Such prayer ascends not to God. He is a great God, and esteems himself dishonoured when great things with great affection are not sought from him.—*William Cowper*

Verse 145.—"*I cried with my whole heart.*" In all your closet duties God looks first and most to your *hearts:* "My son, give me thine heart": Prov. xxiii. 26. It is not a piece, it is not a corner of the heart, that will satisfy the Maker of the heart; the heart is a treasure, a bed of spices, a royal throne wherein he delights. God looks not at the elegancy of your prayers, to see how neat they are; nor yet at the geometry of your prayers, to see how long they are; nor yet at the arithmetic of your prayers, to see how many they are; nor yet at the music of your prayers, nor yet at the sweetness of your voice, nor yet at the logic of your prayers; but at the sincerity of your prayers, how hearty they are. There is no prayer acknowledged, approved, accepted, recorded, or rewarded by God, but that wherein the heart is sincerely and wholly. The true mother would not have the child divided. God loves a broken and a contrite heart, so he loathes a divided heart: Ps. li. 17; James i. 8. God neither loves halting nor halving; he will be served truly and totally. The royal law is, "Thou shalt love and serve the Lord thy God with all they heart, and with all thy soul." Among the heathens, when the beasts were cut up for sacrifice, the first thing the priest looked upon was the heart, and if the heart was naught, the sacrifice was rejected. Verily, God rejects all those sacrifices wherein the heart is not. Prayer without the heart is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Prayer is only lovely and weighty, as the heart is in it, and no otherwise. It is not lifting up of the voice, nor the wringing of the hands, nor the beating of the breasts, nor an affected tone, nor studied motions, nor seraphical expressions, but the strrings of the heart, that God looks at in prayer. God hears no more than the heart speaks. If the heart be dumb, God will certainly be deaf. No prayer takes with God, but that which is the travail of the heart.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 146.—"*I cried unto thee.*" The distressed soul expresses itself in strong cries and tears. Of old they cried unto the Lord, and he heard them in their distress. So Israel at the Red Sea. The men of the Reformation thus expressed themselves in earnest prayer, and found relief. Luther at the Diet of Worms, when remanded for another day, spent the long night in the loud utterance of prayer that he might appear for his Lord before an august earthly assembly. Our reading of the covenanting times will remind us of many instances of the same. We may think of John Welch, going into his garden night after night, in a night covering, and crying to the Lord to grant him Scotland. The expression of prayer, however, is manifold as the frame of the spirit. Intense feeling will beget strong cries in prayer; but prayer that is uttered under realizing views of our gracious God will be mild, and often delivered as it were in whispers. So was Alexander Peden accustomed to pray, as if he had been engaged in calm converse with a friend. . . . . But when the feeling is intense, when wrath lies heavy upon us, when danger is apprehended as near, when the Lord is conceived to be at a distance, or when there is eager desire after immediate attainment—in all these cases there will be the strong cries. Such seems to have been the state of the Psalmist's mind when he poured forth the expressive utterance of this part.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 146.—Brief as are the petitions, the whole compass of language could not make them more comprehensive. "*Hear me.*" The Soul is in earnest, *the whole heart* is engaged in the "cry." "*Save me*"—includes a sinner's whole need—pardon, acceptance, access, holiness, strength, comfort, heaven,—all in one word—Christ. The way of access *is not indeed mentioned* in these short ejaculations. But *it is always implied* in every moment's approach and address to the throne of grace. "*Hear me*" in the name of my all-prevailing Advocate. "*Save me*" through him, whose name is Jesus the Saviour.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 146.—"*I cried unto thee.*" A crying prayer pierces the depths of heaven. We read not a word that Moses spake, but God was moved by his cry. Exod. xiv. 15. It means not an obstreperous noise, but melting moans of heart. Yet sometimes the sore and pinching necessities and distresses of spirit extort even vocal cries not displeasant to the inclined ears of God. " I cried unto God with my voice," says David, " and he heard me out of his holy hill " : Ps. iii. 4. And this encourages to a fresh onset : " Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God " : Ps. v. 2. " Give ear unto my cry : hold not thy peace at my tears " : Ps. xxxix. 12. Another time he makes the cave echo with his cries. " I cried, I cried. Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low."—*Samuel Lee* (1625—1691), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 146.—"*I cried unto thee ; save me.*" In our troubles, we must have recourse to God, and sue to him by prayer and supplication for help and deliverance in due time ; because he is the author of our trouble. In mercies and affiictions, our business lieth not with men, but God ; by humble dealing with him we stop wrath at the fountain-head : he that bindeth us must loose us ; he is at the upper end of causes, and whoever be the instruments of our trouble, and how malicious soever, God is the party with whom we are to make our peace ; for he hath the absolute disposal of all creatures, and will have us to acknowledge the dominion of his providence and our dependence upon him. In treaties of peace between two warring parties, the address is not made to private soldiers, but to their chief : " The Lord hath taken away," saith Job ; " When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble ? " Job. xxxiv. 29.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 146.—"*Save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.*" The servants of God regard life itself as chiefly desirable on account of the opportunity which it affords for serving God : " *Save me that I might keep thy testimonies,*" is the prayer of the believer in the day of trouble and conflict. " To me to live," says he, " is Christ, and to die is gain." How unlike is this to the wicked ! Their whole desire in the day of trouble is expended on the wish to escape calamity ; they have no desire to be delivered from sin, no wish to be conformed to God !—*John Morison.*

Verse 146.—"*Save me.*" From my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hindrances that lie in my way, that I may "*keep thy testimonies.*" We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have the opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 146.—God hears us, that we should hear him.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning.*" The manner of speech is to be marked. He saith he prevented the morning watch, thereby declaring that he lived, as it were, in a strife with time, careful that it should nor overrun him. He knew that time posts away, and in running by wearieth man to dust and ashes. But David pressed to get before it, by doing some good in it, before that it should spur away from him. And this care which David had of every day, alas, how may it make them ashamed who have no care of a whole life ! He was afraid to lose a day ; they take no thought to lose months and years without doing good in them : yea, having spent the three ages of their life in vanity and licentiousness, scarce will they consecrate their old and decrepit age to the Lord.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning,*" etc. Those that make a business of prayer will use great vigilancy and diligence therein. I say, that make a business of prayer ; others that use it as a compliment and customary formality, will not be thus affected ; they do it as a thing by-the-by, or a work that might well be spared, and do not look upon it as a necessary duty ; but if a man's heart be in it, he will be early at work, and follow it close, morning and night : his business is to maintain communion with God, his desires will not let him sleep, and he gets up early to be calling upon God. " But unto thee have I cried, O Lord : and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee." Ps. lxxxviii. 13. Thus will good men even break their sleep to give themselves to prayer, and calling upon the name of God.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning.*" It is a grievous thing if the rays of the rising sun find thee lazy and ashamed in thy bed, and the bright light strike on eyes still weighed down with slumbering sloth. Knowest thou not, O man, that thou owest the daily first-fruits of thy heart and voice to God ? Thou hast a daily harvest, a daily revenue. The Lord Jesus remained all night in prayer,

not that he needed its help, but putting an example before thee to imitate. He spent the night in prayer for thee, that thou mightest learn how to ask for thyself. Give him again, therefore, what he paid for thee.—*Ambrose.*

Verse 147.—"*I prevented the dawning of the morning.*" David was a good husband, up early at it: at night he was late at this duty: "At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee": verse 62. This surely was his meaning when he said he should dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; he would be ever in the house of prayer. . . . . I wish that when I first open my eyes in the morning, I may then, in soul ejaculatory prayer, open my heart to my God, that at night prayer may make my bed soft, and lay my pillow easy; that in the day-time prayer may perfume my clothes, sweeten my food, oil the wheels of my particular vocation, keep me company upon all occasions, and gild over all my natural, civil, and religious actions. I wish that, after I have poured out my prayer in the name of Christ, according to the will of God, having sowed my seed, I may expect a crop, looking earnestly for the springing of it up, and believing assuredly that I shall reap in time if I faint not.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 147. "*I prevented the dawning of the morning.*" Early prayers are undisturbed by the agitating cares of life, and resemble the sweet melody of those birds which sing loudest and sweetest when fewest ears are open to listen to them. O my soul, canst thou say that thou hast thus "*prevented the dawning of the morning*" in thy approaches to God? Has the desire of communion with heaven raised thee from thy slumbers, shaken off thy sloth, and carried thee to thy knees?—*John Morison.*

Verse 147.—"*And cried.*" Here is a repetition of the same prayer, "*I cried*"; yea, again I cried, and a third time, "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried." We use to knock at a door thrice, and then depart. Our Lord Jesus "prayed the third time, saying the same words" (Matt. xxvi. 44), "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." So the apostle Paul: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me": 2 Cor. xii. 8. So, "And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again": 1 Kings xvii. 21. This, it seemeth, was the time in which they expected an answer in weighty cases; and yet I will not confine it to that number; for here we are to reiterate our petitions for one and the same thing as often as occasion requireth, till it be granted.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 147.—Poets have delighted to sing of the morning as "Mother of the Dews," "sowing the earth with orient pearl"; and many of the saints upstarting from their beds at the first blush of dawn have found the poetry of nature to be the reality of grace as they have felt the dews of heaven refreshing their spirit. Hence morning exercises have ever been dear to the enlightened, heaven-loving souls, and it has been their rule, never to see the face of man till they have first seen the face of God. The breath of morn redolent of the smell of flowers is incense offered by earth to her Creator, and living men should never let the dead earth excel them; truly living men tuning their hearts for song, like the birds, salute the radiant mercy which reveals itself in the east. The first fresh hour of every morning should be dedicated to the Lord whose mercy gladdens it with golden light. The eye of day openeth its lids, and in so doing opens the eyes of hosts of heaven-protected slumberers; it is fitting that those eyes should first look up to the great Father of Lights, the fount and source of all the good upon which the sunlight gleams. It augurs for us a day of grace when we begin betimes with God; the sanctifying influence of the season spent upon the mount operates upon each succeeding hour. Morning devotion anchors the soul so that it will not very readily drift far away from God during the day; it perfumes the heart so that it smells fragrant with piety until nightfall; it girds up the soul's garments so that it is less apt to stumble, and feeds all its powers so that it is not permitted to faint. The morning is the gate of the day, and should be well guarded with prayer. It is one end of the thread on which the day's actions are strung, and should be well knotted with devotion. If we felt more the majesty of life we should be more careful of its mornings. He who rushes from his bed to his business and waiteth not to worship, is as foolish as though he had not put on his clothes, or cleansed his face, and as unwise as though he dashed into battle without arms or armour. Be it ours to bathe in the softly flowing river of communion with God, before the heat of the wilderness and the burden of the way begin to oppress us.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 147.—"*I hoped in thy word.*" Even if there should not be actual enjoyment, at least let us honour God by the spirit of expectancy.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verses 147, 148.—The student of theology and the minister of the word should begin the day with prayer, and this chiefly to seek from God, that he may rightly understand the word of God, and be able to teach others.—*Solomon Gesner.* Brethren, note this!—*C. H. S.*

Verses 147, 148.—See here: 1. That David was an early riser, which perhaps contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, "Yet a little sleep." 2. That he began the day with God; the first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was to pray; when his mind was most fresh and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God, it will help to keep us in his fear all the day long. 3. That his mind was so full of God and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn, even in "*the night-watches*," when he awaked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray, than turn him and go to sleep again. He esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose, which we can as ill want as our food: Job xxiii. 21. 4. That he would redeem time for religious exercises; he was full of business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion; it is better to take time from sleep, as David did, than not find time for prayer. And this is our comfort when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace, if we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 148.—"*Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.*" You will all admit that this is the language of an ardent, earnest, and painstaking student. David represents himself as "rising early, and late taking rest," on purpose that he might employ himself in the study of God's word. "He *meditates* in this word," the expression implying close and patient thought; as if there were much in the word which was not to be detected by a cursory glance, and which required the strictest application both of the head and the heart.

The Bible is a book in which we may continually meditate, and yet not exhaust its contents. When David expressed himself in the language of our text, Holy Writ—the word of God—was of course a far smaller volume than it now is, though, even now, the Bible is far from a large book. Yet David could not, so to speak, get to the end of the book. He might have been studying the book for years,—nay, we are sure that he had been,—and yet, as though he were just entering on a new course of reading, with volume upon volume to peruse, he must rise before day to prosecute the study. "*Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.*"

The same remark may be made upon precepts which enjoin continued study of the Bible. Is there material for that study? Unless there be, the precepts will become out of place; the Scriptural student will have exhausted the Scriptures; and what is he to do then? He can no longer obey the precepts, and the precepts will prove that they cannot have been made for perpetuity—for the men of all ages and all conditions. . . . . .

Here is a servant of God, who, from his youth upward, has been diligent in the study of the Bible. Year after year he has devoted to that study, and yet the Bible is but a single volume, and that not a large volume. "Well, then," you might be inclined to say, "the study must surely by this time have exhausted the book! There can be nothing new for him to bring out; nothing which he has not investigated and fathomed." Ah, how you mistake the Bible! What a much larger book it must be than it seems! In place of having exhausted it, the royal student speaks as though there were more work before him than he knew how to compass. "*Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might mediate in thy word.*"—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 148.—"*Mine eyes prevent the night watches.*" The Hebrew word means *a watch*—a part of the night, so called from military watches, or a dividing of the night to keep guard. The idea of the Psalmist here is, that he *anticipated* these regular divisions of the night in order that he might engage in devotion. Instead of waiting for their return, he arose for prayer before they recurred; so much did his heart delight in the service of God. The language would seem to be that of one who was accustomed to pray in these successive "*watches*" of the night; the

early, the middle, and the dawn. This may illustrate what occurs in the life of all who love God. They will have regular seasons of devotion, but they will often *anticipate* those seasons. They will be in a state of mind which prompts them to pray; when nothing will meet their state of mind *but* prayer; and when they cannot wait for the regular and ordinary season of devotion; like a hungry man, who cannot wait for the usual and regular hour of his meals. The meaning of the phrase, "*Mine eyes* prevent," is that he awoke before the usual time for devotion.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 148.—"*Mine eyes prevent the night watches,*" etc. His former purpose is yet continued, declaring his indefatigable perseverance in prayer. Oh, that we could learn of him to use our time well! At evening he lay down with prayers and tears; at midnight he rose to give thanks; he got up before the morning light to call upon the Lord. This is to imitate the life of angels, who ever are delighted to behold the face of God, singing alway a new song without wearying. This is to begin our heaven upon earth: Oh, that we could alway remember it!—*William Cowper.*

Verse 148.—"*Night watches.*" The Jews, like the Greeks and Romans, divided the night into military watches instead of hours, each watch representing the period for which sentinels or pickets remained on duty. The proper Jewish reckoning recognised only three such watches, entitled the first, or "beginning of the watches" (Lam. ii. 19), "the middle watch" (Judg. vii. 19), and "the morning watch" (Exod. xiv. 24; 1 Sam. xi. 11). These would last respectively from sunset to 10 p.m.; from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.; and from 2 a.m. to sunrise. It has been contended by Lightfoot that the Jews really reckoned four watches, three only of which were in the dead of the night, the fourth being in the morning. This, however, is rendered improbable by the use of the term "middle," and is opposed to Rabbinical authority. Subsequently to the establishment of Roman supremacy, the number of watches was increased to four, which were described either according to their numerical order, as in the case of the "fourth watch" (Matt. xiv. 25), or by the terms "even, midnight, cock-crowing, and morning" (Mark xiii. 35), These terminated respectively at 9 p.m., midnight, 3 a.m., and 6 a.m. Conformably to this, the guard of soldiers was divided into four relays (Acts xii. 4), showing that the Roman régime was followed in Herod's army. Watchmen appear to have patrolled the streets of the Jewish towns (Cant. iii. 3; v. 7; Ps. cxxvii. 1, where for "maketh" we should substitute "watcheth"; Ps. cxxx. 6).—*William Latham Bevan, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible,* 1863.

Verse 149.—"*Quicken me.*" By *quickening* some understand restitution to happiness; for a calamitous man is as one dead and buried under deep and heavy troubles, and his recovery is a life from the dead, or a reviving from the grave: so quickening seemeth to be taken in Psalm lxxi. 20: "Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth."

Others understand by *quickening,* the renewing and increasing in him the vigour of his spiritual life. That he beggeth that God would revive, increase, and preserve that life, which he had already given, that it might be perfected and consummated in glory. That he might be ever ready to bring forth the habits of grace into acts.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 149.—"*Judgment*" is sometimes taken for the execution of God's threatenings against transgressors; and this David declares: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant": Ps. cxliii. 2. Sometime it is taken for the performance of his promises, according to his word; and this David desires as in this verse—*William Cowper.*

Verse 150.—"*They are far from thy law.*" Truly it should greatly comfort all the godly, to remember that such as are their enemies are God's enemies also. Since they are far from the obedience of God's law, what marvel they be also far from the duty of love which they owe us? It may content us to want that comfort in men which otherwise we might and would have, when we consider that God wants his glory in them. Let this sustain us when we see that godless men are enemies unto us.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 150.—If we can get a carnal pillow and bolster under our heads, we sleep and dream many a golden dream of ease and safety. Now, God, who is jealous

of our trust, will not let us alone, and therefore will put us upon sharp trials. It is not faith, but sense, we live upon before; that is faith, if we can depend upon God when "they draw near that follow after mischief:" "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about": Ps. iii. 6. A danger at a distance is but imagined, it worketh otherwise when it is at hand. Christ himself had other thoughts of approaching danger than danger at a distance: "Now is my soul troubled": John xii. 27. This vessel of pure water was troubled, though he discovered no dross.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 150, 151.—Our spiritual enemies, like David's earthly persecutors, are ever present and active. The devouring "lion," or the insinuating "serpent" is *"nigh to follow after mischief";* and so much the more dangerous, as his approaches are invisible. Nigh also is a tempting ensnaring world; and nearer still, a lurking world of sin within, separating us from communion with our God. But in turning habitually and immediately to our stronghold, we can enjoy the confidence—*"Thou art near, O Lord."* Though "the High and Lofty One, whose name is Holy"—though the just and terrible God, yet art thou made nigh to thy people, and they to thee, "by the blood of the cross." And thou dost manifest thy presence to them in "the Son of thy love."—*Charles Bridges.*

Verses 150, 151.—They are *"nigh"* to persecute and destroy me; thou art *nigh,* O Lord, to help me.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 150, 151.—*"They draw nigh."* . . . *"Thou art near."* From the meditation of his enemies' malice he returns again to the meditation of God's mercy; and so it is expedient for us to do, lest the number and greatness and maliciousness of our enemies make us to faint when we look unto them. It is good that we should cast our eyes upward to the Lord; then shall we see that they are not so near to hurt us as the Lord our God is near to help us; and that there is no evil in them which we have cause to fear, but we shall find in our God a contrary good sufficient to preserve us. Otherwise we could not endure, if when Satan and his instruments come near to pursue us, the Lord were not near to protect us.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 151.—*"Thou art near, O* LORD."—How sweetly and how often has this thought been brought home to some forsaken and forgotten one! "When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up," was the comfort of one in that deep affliction. And in the first outbreaking of the heart, how sweetly has the conviction come, like some whisper of peace, "I am with thee!" And I have no doubt that many and many a time in those hours of solitary prayer, when before the dawning of the morning, and before the night watches, or the Psalmist arose at midnight to commune with God, when no voice broke on the stillness, and every sound was hushed save the beating of his own heart, then had David heard the whisper of God's Holy Spirit, *"I am near,"* "Fear not, I am with thee."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 151.—*"Thou art near, O* LORD." This was *once* man's greatest blessing, and source of sweetest consolation. It was the fairest flower which grew in Paradise; but sin withered it, the flower faded, it drooped, it died. Gen. iii. 8; iv. 16. It must be so *once more;* the flower must once again bloom, again it must revive; even upon earth must it blossom, or in heaven it will never put forth its fragrance.

"Thou art near." Even in thy works of *creation,* in the sun in his glory, in the moon in her softness, gleaming in the firmament, I see thee. In the balm of this fragrant air, in the light of this cheerful day, in the redolence of these shrubs around me, whose flowery tops, as they drink in the soft and gentle shower as it falls, seem to breathe forth a fresh perfume in gratitude to him who sends it. In the melody of these birds which fill the air with their songs, thou, O Lord, art near. I perceive thee not with my bodily eyes, although by these I discern thy workmanship, and with the eye of the mind behold thee in thy works, *a present God.*

"Thou art near." Even in the book of thy providence, dark and mysterious though it be, I see thee. There do I read thy *wisdom,* as developed in thy world, thy church, thy saints, thy servant before thee; the wisdom that guides, the wisdom that guards, the wisdom that bestows, the wisdom that encourages, the wisdom that corrects, that kills and makes alive. There do I read thy *power,* thy *justice,* thy *faithfulness,* thy *holiness,* thy *love.*

But it is in thy *Son,* thy beloved Son, that I most clearly and distinctly see thee as near. If in creation, if in providence, thou art near, in him thou art very near, O Lord. Near as a sin-forgiving God. Rom. viii. 1. Near as a promise-

keeping God. 2 Cor. i. 20. Near as a prayer-hearing God. John xvi. 20; Ps. cxlv. 18. Near as a covenant-keeping God. Heb. viii. 10. Near as a gracious, tender Father. John xx. 17.

"Thou art near, O LORD." O that I might live in the constant sense of thy nearness to me! How often, far too often, alas, do I seem quite to forget it!

Art thou near? Then may I realizingly remember, that *by the blood of thy dear Son*, and by that alone, have I been brought nigh (Eph. ii. 13); that it required nothing less than the stoop of Deity, and the sufferings and death of his perfect humanity, to remove those hindrances which interposed between a holy God and an unholy creature. Oh, to walk before thee with a grateful spirit, and with a broken, contrite heart!

Art thou near? Then may I walk as before thee, *as seeing thee*, in holy fear, in filial love, in simple faith, in child-like confidence. Gen. xvii. 1. When *sin* would tempt and solicit indulgence, when the *world* presents some new allurement, when *Satan* would take advantage of constitution, society, circumstances, oh, that I may ever remember *"Thou art near."*

If my dearest comforts droop and die, if friends are cool, if the bonds once the firmest, the closest, the tenderest, are torn asunder, and dissevered, yet may I still remember, *"Thou* art near, O Lord," and not afar off. And when the solemn moment shall come, when heart and flesh shall fail, when all earthly things are seen with a dying eye, when I hear thee say, "Thou must die, and not live," then, oh then may I remember, with all the composedness of faith, and all the liveliness of hope, and all the ardour of love, *"Thou art near, O LORD."—James Harrington Evans*, 1785—1849.

Verse 151.—*"All thy commandments are truth."* His meaning is,—Albeit, O Lord, the evil will of wicked men follows me because I follow thee; yet I know thy commandments are true, and that it is not possible that thou canst desert or fail thy servants who stand to the maintenance of thy word. Then, ye see, David's comfort in trouble was not in any presumptuous conceit of his own wisdom or strength but in the truth of God's promises, which he was persuaded could not fail him. And here also he makes a secret opposition between the word of the Lord and the word of his enemies. Sometimes men command, but without reason; sometimes they threaten, but without effect. Herod's commanding, Rabshakeh's railing, Jezebel's proud boasting against Elijah, may prove this. But as to the Lord our God he is alway better than his word, and his servants shall find more in his performance hereafter than now they can perceive in his promise: like as his enemies should find more weight in his judgments than now they can apprehend in his threatenings. —*William Cowper.*

Verse 152.—This portion of our Psalm endeth with the triumph of faith over all dangers and temptations. *"Concerning thy testimonies,"* the revelations of thy will, thy counsels for the salvation of thy servants, *"I have known of old,"* by faith, and by my own experience, as well as that of others, *"that thou hast founded them for ever";* they are unalterable and everlasting as the attributes of their great Author, and can never fail those who rely upon them, in time or in eternity.—*George Horne.*

Verse 152.—*"I have known of old."* It was not a late persuasion, or a thing that he was now to learn; he always knew it since he knew anything of God, that God had owned his word as the constant rule of his proceedings with creatures, in that God had so often made good his word to him, not only by present and late, but by old and ancient experiences. Well, then, David's persuasion of the truth and unchangeableness of the word was not a sudden humour or a present fit, or a persuasion of a few days' standing; but he was confirmed in it by long experience. One or two experiences had been no trial of the truth of the word, they might seem but a good hit; but his word ever proveth true, not once or twice, but always; what we say "of old," the Septuagint reads κατ αρχάς, "from the beginnings"; that is, either—1. From my tender years. Timothy knew the Scriptures from a child (2 Tim. iii. 15); so David very young was acquainted with God and his truth. 2. Or, from the first time that he began to be serious, or to mind the word in good earnest, or to be a student either in God's word or works, by comparing providences and promises, he found concerning his testimonies that *"God had founded them for ever."* 3. Lastly, *"of old"* may be what I have heard of all foregoing ages, their experience as well as mine: "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou

didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded:" Ps. xxii. 4, 5.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 152.—Let us mark this eternal basis of "the testimonies of God." The whole plan of redemption was emphatically "*founded for ever*": the Saviour was "*foreordained before the foundation of the world.*" The people of God were "*chosen in Christ before the world began!*" The great Author "*declares the end from the beginning,*" and thus clears his dispensations from any charge of mutability or contingency. Every event in the church is fixed, permitted, and provided for—not in the passing moment of time, but in the counsels of eternity. When, therefore, the testimonies set forth God's faithful engagements with his people of old, the recollection that they are "*founded for ever*" gives us a present and unchangeable interest in them. And when we see that they are grounded upon the oath and promise of God—the two "immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie"—we may truly "have strong consolation" in venturing every hope for eternity upon this rock; nor need we be dismayed to see all our earthly dependencies—"the world, and the lust, and the fashion of it—passing away" before us.—*Charles Bridges.*

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 153 TO 160.

CONSIDER mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

155 Salvation *is* far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

156 Great *are* thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

157 Many *are* my persecutors and mine enemies; *yet* do I not decline from thy testimonies.

158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

159 Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.

160 Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever.

In this section the Psalmist seems to draw still nearer to God in prayer, and to state his case and to invoke the divine help with more of boldness and expectation. It is a pleading passage, and the key-word of it is, "Consider." With much boldness he pleads his intimate union with the Lord's cause as a reason why he should be aided. The special aid that he seeks is personal *quickening*, for which he cries to the Lord again and again.

153. "*Consider mine affliction, and deliver me.*" The writer has a good case, though it be a grievous one, and he is ready, yea anxious, to submit it to the divine arbitration. His matters are right, and he is ready to lay them before the supreme court. His manner is that of one who feels safe at the throne. Yet there is no impatience: he does not ask for hasty action, but for consideration. In effect he cries—"Look into my grief, and see whether I do not need to be delivered. From my sorrowful condition judge as to the proper method and time for my rescue." The Psalmist desires two things, and these two things blended: first, a full consideration of his sorrow; secondly, deliverance; and, then, that this deliverance should come with a consideration of his affliction. It should be the desire of every gracious man who is in adversity that the Lord should look upon his need, and relieve it in such a way as shall be most for the divine glory, and for his own benefit. The words, "mine affliction," are picturesque; they seem to portion off a special spot of woe as the writer's own inheritance: he possesses it as no one else had ever done, and he begs the Lord to have that special spot under his eye: even as a husbandman looking over all his fields may yet take double care of a certain selected plot. His prayer is eminently practical, for he seeks to be delivered; that is, brought out of the trouble and preserved from sustaining any serious damage by it. For God to consider is to act in due season: men consider and do nothing; but such is never the case with out God. "*For I do not forget thy law.*" His affliction was not sufficient, with all its bitterness, to drive out of his mind the memory of God's law; nor could it lead him to act contrary to the divine command. He forgot prosperity, but he did not forget obedience. This is a good plea when it can be honestly urged. If we are kept faithful to God's law we may be sure that God will remain faithful to his promise. If we do not forget his law the Lord will not forget us. He will not long leave that man in trouble whose only fear in trouble is lest he should leave the way of right.

154.—"*Plead my cause, and deliver me.*" In the last verse he had prayed, "Deliver me," and here he specifies one method in which that deliverance might be vouchsafed, namely, by the advocacy of his cause. In providence the Lord has many ways of clearing the slandered of the accusations brought against them. He can

make it manifest to all that they have been belied, and in this way he can practically plead their cause. He can, moreover, raise up friends for the godly who will leave no stone unturned till their characters are cleared; or he can smite their enemies with such fearfulness of heart that they will be forced to confess their falsehood, and thus the righteous will be delivered without the striking of a blow. Alexander reads it, "Strive my strife, and redeem me"—that is, stand in my stead, bear my burden, fight my fight, pay my price, and bring me out to liberty. When we feel ourselves dumb before the foe, here is a prayer made to our hand. What a comfort that if we sin we have an advocate, and if we do *not* sin the same pleader is engaged on our side. *"Quicken me."* We had this prayer in the last section, and we shall have it again and again in this. It is a desire which cannot be too often felt and expressed. As the soul is the centre of everything, so to be quickened is the central blessing. It means more love, more grace, more faith, more courage, more strength, and if we get these we can hold up our heads before our adversaries. God alone can give this quickening; but to the Lord and giver of life the work is easy enough, and he delights to perform it. *"According to thy word."* David had found such a blessing among the promised things, or at least he perceived that it was according to the general tenor of God's word that tried believers should be quickened and brought up again from the dust of the earth; therefore he pleads the word, and desires the Lord to act to him according to the usual run of that word. What a mighty plea is this—"according to thy word." No gun in all our arsenals can match it.

155.—*"Salvation is far from the wicked."* By their perseverance in evil they have almost put themselves out of the pale of hope. They talk about being saved, but they cannot have known anything of it or they would not remain wicked. Every step they have taken in the path of evil has removed them further from the kingdom of grace: they go from one degree of hardness to another till their hearts become as stone. When they fall into trouble it will be irremediable. Yet they talk big, as if they either needed no salvation or could save themselves whenever their fancy turned that way. *"For they seek not thy statutes."* They do not endeavour to be obedient, but quite the reverse; they seek themselves, they seek evil, and therefore they never find the way of peace and righteousness. When men have broken the statutes of the Lord their wisest course is by repentance to seek forgiveness, and by faith to seek salvation: then salvation is near them, so near them that they shall not miss it; but when the wicked continue to seek after mischief, salvation is set further and further from them. Salvation and God's statutes go together: those who are saved by the King of grace love the statutes of the King of glory.

156. This verse is exceedingly like verse one hundred and forty-nine, and yet it is no vain repetition. There is such a difference in the main idea that the one verse stands out distinct from the other. In the first case he mentions his prayer, but leaves the method of its accomplishment with the wisdom or judgment of God; while here he pleads no prayer of his own, but simply the mercies of the Lord, and begs to be quickened by judgments rather than to be left to spiritual lethargy. We may take it for granted that an inspired author is never so short of thought as to be obliged to repeat himself: where we think we have the same idea in this Psalm we are mislead by our neglect of careful study. Each verse is a distinct pearl. Each blade of grass in this field has its own drop of heavenly dew. *"Great are thy tender mercies, O* LORD." Here the Psalmist pleads the largeness of God's mercy, the immensity of his tender love; yea, he speaks of *mercies*—mercies many, mercies tender, mercies great; and with the glorious Jehovah he makes this a plea for his one leading prayer, the prayer for quickening. Quickening is a great and tender mercy; and it is many mercies in one. Shall one so greatly good permit his servant to die? Will not one so tender breathe new life into him? *"Quicken me according to thy judgments."* A measure of awakening comes with the judgments of God; they are startling and arousing; and hence the believer's quickening thereby. David would have every severe stroke sanctified to his benefit, as well as every tender mercy. The first clause of this verse may run, "Many," or, "manifold are thy compassions, O Jehovah." This he remembers in connection with the "many persecutors" of whom he will speak in the next verse. By all these many mercies he pleads for enlivening grace, and thus he has many strings to his bow. We shall never be short of arguments if we draw them from God himself, and urge both his mercies and his judgments as reasons for our quickening.

157.—"*Many are my persecutors and mine enemies.*" Those who actually assail me, or who secretly abhor me, are many. He sets this over against the many tender mercies of God. It seems a strange thing that a truly godly man, as David was, should have many enemies; but it is inevitable. The disciple cannot be loved where his Master is hated. The seed of the serpent must oppose the seed of the woman: it is their nature. "*Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.*" He did not deviate from the truth of God, but proceeded in the straight way, however many adversaries might endeavour to block up his path. Some men have been led astray by one enemy, but here is a saint who held on his way in the teeth of many persecutors. There is enough in the testimonies of God to recompense us for pushing forward against all the hosts that may combine against us. So long as they cannot drive or draw us into a spiritual decline our foes have done us no great harm, and they have accomplished nothing by their malice. If we do not decline they are defeated. If they cannot make us sin they have missed their mark. Faithfulness to the truth is victory over our enemies.

158.—"*I beheld the transgressors.*" I saw the traitors; I understood their character, their object, their way, and their end. I could not help seeing them, for they pushed themselves into my way. As I was obliged to see them I fixed my eyes on them, to learn what I could from them. "*And was grieved.*" I was sorry to see such sinners. I was sick of them, disgusted with them, I could not endure them. I found no pleasure in them, they were a sad sight to me, however fine their clothing or witty their chattering. Even when they were most mirthful a sight of them made my heart heavy; I could not tolerate either them or their doings. "*Because they kept not thy word.*" My grief was occasioned more by their sin against God than by their enmity against myself. I could bear their evil treatment of my words, but not their neglect of thy word. Thy word is so precious to me that those who will not keep it move me to indignation; I cannot keep the company of those who keep not God's word. That they should have no love for me is a trifle; but to despise the teaching of the Lord is abominable.

159.—"*Consider,*" or see, "*how I love thy precepts.*" A second time he asks for consideration. As he said before, "Consider mine affliction," so now he says, "Consider mine affection." He loved the precepts of God—loved them unspeakably—loved them so as to be grieved with those who did not love them. This is a sure test: many there are who have a warm side towards the promises, but as for the precepts, they cannot endure them. The Psalmist so loved everything that was good and excellent that he loved all God had commanded. The precepts are all of them wise and holy, therefore the man of God loved them extremely, loved to know them, to think of them, to proclaim them, and principally to practise them. He asked the Lord to remember and consider this, not upon the ground of merit, but that it should serve as an answer to the slanderous accusations which at this time were the great sting of his sorrow. "*Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.*" Here he comes back to his former prayer, "Quicken me" (v. 154), "quicken me" (v. 156). "Quicken me." He prays again the third time, using the same words. We may understand that David felt like one who was half stunned with the assaults of his foes, ready to faint under their incessant malice. What he wanted was revival, restoration, renewal; therefore he pleaded for more life, O thou who didst quicken me when I was dead, quicken me again that I may not return to the dead! Quicken me that I may outlive the blows of my enemies, the faintness of my faith, and the swooning of my sorrow. This time he does not say, "Quicken me according to thy judgments," but "Quicken me, O Lord, according to thy lovingkindness." This is the great gun which he brings up last to the conflict: it is his ultimate argument, if this succeed not he must fail. He has long been knocking at mercy's gate, and with this plea he strikes his heaviest blow. When he had fallen into great sin this was his plea, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness," and now that he is in great trouble he flies to the same effectual reasoning. Because God is love he will give us life; because he is kind he will again kindle the heavenly flame within us.

160. The sweet singer finishes up this section in the same way as the last by dwelling upon the sureness of the truth of God. It will be well for the reader to note the likeness between verses 144, 152, and the present one. "*Thy word is true.*" Whatever the transgressors may say, God is true, and his word is true. The ungodly are false, but God's word is true. They charge us with being false, but our solace is that God's true word will clear us. "*From the beginning.*" God's word has been

true from the first moment in which it was spoken, true throughout the whole of history, true to us from the instant in which we believed it, ay, true to us before we were true to it. Some read it, "Thy word is true from the head;" true as a whole, true from top to bottom. Experience had taught David this lesson, and experience is teaching us the same. The Scriptures are as true in Genesis as in Revelation, and the five books of Moses are as inspired as the four Gospels. "*And every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*" That which thou hast decided remains irreversible in every case. Against the decisions of the Lord no writ of error can be demanded, neither will there ever be a repealing of any of the acts of his sovereignty. There is not one single mistake either in the word of God or in the providential dealings of God. Neither in the book of revelation nor of providence will there be any need to put a single note of *errata*. The Lord has nothing to regret or to retract, nothing to amend or to reverse. All God's judgments, decrees, commands, and purposes are righteous, and as righteous things are lasting things, every one of them will outlive the stars. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." God's justice endureth for ever. This is a cheering thought, but there is a much sweeter one, which of old was the song of the priests in the temple; let it be ours, "His mercy endureth for ever."

NOTES ON VERSES 153 TO 160.

Verse 153.—"*Consider mine affliction, and deliver me.*" God looks upon or considers man in various ways, and for different ends. To give him light; for "as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth" (John ix. 1). To convert him; "He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me" (Matt. ix. 9). To restore him; "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke xxii. 61). To deliver him; "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt" (Exod. iii. 7). To advance him; "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" (Luke i. 48): and to reward him; "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Gen. iv. 4).—*Hugo* (*circa* 1120), *in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 153.—"*Consider mine affliction, and deliver me.*" We must pray that God will help and deliver us, not after the device of our own brains, but after such wise as seemeth best unto his tender wisdom, or else that he will mitigate our pain, that our weakness may not utterly faint. Like as a sick person, although he doubt nothing of the faithfulness and tenderness of his physician, yet, for all that, desireth him to handle his wound as tenderly as possible, even so may we call upon God, that, if it be not against his honour and glory, he will vouchsafe to give some mitigation of the pain.—*Otho Wermullerus.*

Verse 153.—"*Consider mine affliction.*" These prayers of David are penned with such heavenly wisdom that they are convenient for the state of the whole church, and every member thereof. The church is the bush that burneth with fire, but cannot be consumed; every member thereof beareth a part of the cross of Christ; they are never without some affliction, for which they have need to pray with David, "*Behold mine affliction.*"

We know that in afflictions it is some comfort to us to have our crosses known to those of whom we are assured that they love us: it mitigates our dolour when they mourn with us, albeit they be not able to help us. But the Christian hath a more solid comfort; to wit, that in all his troubles the Lord beholds him; like a king, rejoicing to see his own servant wrestle with the enemy. He looks on with a merciful eye, pitying the infirmity of his own, when he sees it; and with a powerful hand ready to help them. But because many a time the cloud of our corruption cometh between the Lord and us, and lets us not see his helping hand, nor his loving face looking upon us, we have need to pray at such times with David, "*Behold mine affliction.*"—*William Cowper.*

Verse 154.—"*Plead my cause, and deliver me,*" etc. Albeit the godly under persecution have a good cause, yet they cannot plead it except God the Redeemer show himself as Advocate for them; therefore prayeth the Psalmist, "*Plead my cause.*"

When God the Redeemer pleadeth a man's cause, he doth it to purpose and effectually: "*Plead my cause, and deliver me.*"

Except the Lord's clients shall find new influence from God from time to time in their troubles, they are but as dead men in their exercise; for, "*Quicken me*" importeth this.

Till we find lively encouragement given to us in trouble we must adhere to the word of promise: "*Quicken me according to thy word.*"

What the believer hath need of, that God hath not only a will to supply, but also an office to attend it, and power to effectuate it, as here he hath the office of an Advocate and of a powerful Redeemer also, wherein the believer may confidently give him daily employment, as he needeth: "*Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 154.—"*Plead my cause, and deliver me,*" etc. He now supposes himself to be arraigned before the tribunal of men, as he certainly was in their general charges against him; arraigned, too, in his helplessness, without a name, without state; in such way as one disowned would be arraigned. He prays the Lord to come in and plead his cause; so should he be redeemed; for this is the import of the original. As it were, he regards himself as one sold to corrupt judges, or at all events, as one that has lost his standing in society in the estimation of men. But if the Lord will come, and maintain the cause of his servant, his servant shall be redeemed indeed. There is good confidence in this prayer; the man of God is

acquainted with the way of the Lord, and he makes his believing application. O how much do we need to know the Lord's righteous character in our seasons of great distress! Now the Lord pleads the cause of his own by the power of the truth; he pleads it also in his providences of divers kinds; he acts upon the hearts, and the hopes, and the fears of men; and in many wondrous ways he pleads his people's cause. He redeems his saints from all evil; and if not altogether from all evil in this world, certainly from all evil as concerns the world to come.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 154.—"*Plead my cause, and deliver me,*" etc. In this verse are three requests, and all backed with one and the same argument. In the first, he intimateth the right of his cause, and that he was unjustly vexed by wicked men; therefore, as burdened with their calumnies, he desireth God to undertake his defence: "*Plead my cause.*" In the second, he representeth the misery and helplessness of his condition; therefore, as oppressed by violence, he saith, "*Deliver me;*" or, as the words will bear, Redeem me. In the third, his own weakness, and readiness to faint under this burden; therefore he saith, "*Quicken me.*"

Or, in short, with respect to the injustice of his adversaries, "*Plead my cause;*" with respect to the misery of his condition, "*Deliver me;*" with respect to the weakness and imbecility of his own heart, "*Quicken me.*" . . .

The reason and ground of asking, "*According to thy word.*" This last clause must be applied to all the branches of the prayer: "Plead my cause," "according to thy word;" "deliver me," "according to thy word;" "quicken me," "according to thy word:" for God in his word engageth for all: to be advocate, Redeemer, and fountain of life. The word that David buildeth upon was found either in the general promises made to them that kept the law, or in some particular promise made to himself by the prophets of that time.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 154.—"*Plead my cause, and deliver me.*" A wicked woman once brought against Dr. Payson an accusation, under circumstances which seemed to render it impossible that he should escape. She was in the same packet, in which, many months before, he had gone to Boston. For a time, it seemed almost certain that his character would be ruined. He was cut off from all resource except the throne of grace. He felt that his only hope was in God; and to him he addressed his fervent prayer. He was heard by the Defender of the innocent. A "compunctious visiting" induced the wretched woman to confess that the whole was a malicious slander.—*From Asa Cummings' Memoir of Edward Payson.*

Verse 154.—"*Plead my cause.*" I do not know that David meant, by calling upon God to plead his cause, anything more than that he should vindicate his innocence, and make it manifest to all, by delivering him out of the hand of all his enemies; but whether he had an ulterior reference or no, the word powerfully and sweetly recalls to every Christian heart him who was indeed to be the Advocate for poor sinners, even Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 154.—"*Plead my cause.*" The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of God. Which made David here pray to God that *he* would *plead his cause*, and be his Advocate against all their policies. He trusted not to the equity of his own cause, but to the Lord. From whence we gather, that the cause why our oppressors prevail oft against us is, because we trust too much in our own wits, and lean too much upon our own inventions; opposing subtilty to subtilty, one evil device to another, matching and maintaining policy by policy, and not committing our cause to God.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 154.—"*Deliver.*" Not as in verse 153, but a word meaning to *redeem* or to save by avenging. The corresponding particle is rendered redeemer, avenger, revenger, kinsman, near kinsman, next kinsman.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 154.—"*Quicken me.*" Here, again, we are called to consider the bearing of the pious mind. Ever and anon, the great desire of the man of God is to advance in the divine life. He makes spiritual gain of everything. He seeks his goodly pearls out of strange conditions; the reason is, his heart is in these things. Deliverance from temporal evil, deliverance from spiritual evil, both were sought; but along with these, ever does the man of God take up the prayer to be quickened. Certainly we may understand him as seeking life. Such is the import of the phraseology; but in a man like David, the life he seeks must be the highest. He desires spiritual life above all things; he wants to get more into a blessed assimilation to God, that so he may enjoy the highest good. So pants the heaven-born soul. . . . Give the believer this, and this will set him above all the ills of life. And

this and all good had been promised in the word. So he prays, *"Quicken me according to thy word."* He goes upon the word for everything; he cannot be self-deceived there. Judge of yourselves, my brethren, by your spiritual aspirations. Nothing less will prove you to be of the Lord's redeemed.—*John Stephen.*

Verses 154, 156, 159.—*"Quicken me."* Pray to be *quickened,* as the Psalmist often does, and look unto Jesus, who is a quickening spirit: 1 Cor. xv. 45. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." As he has given you life, so he is ready to give it more and more abundantly; this will make you to live to him, and to be unweariedly active for him.—*Nathanael Vincent, in "A Present for such as have been Sick and Recovered,"* 1693.

Verse 155.—*"Salvation is far from the wicked."* The Lord is almighty to pardon; but he will not use it for thee an impenitent sinner. Thou hast not a friend on the bench, not an attribute in all God's name will speak for thee. Mercy itself will sit and vote with the rest of its fellow-attributes for thy damnation. God is able to save and help in a time of need, but upon what acquaintance is it that thou art so bold with God, as to expect his saving arm to be stretched forth for thee? Though a man rise at midnight to let in a child that cries and knocks at his door, yet he will not take so much pains for a dog that lies howling there. This presents thy condition, sinner, sad enough, yet this is to tell thy story fairest; for that almighty power of God which is engaged for the believer's salvation, is as deeply obliged to bring thee to thy execution and damnation. What greater tie than an oath? God himself is under an oath to be the destruction of every impenitent soul. That oath which God sware in his wrath against the unbelieving Israelites, that they should not enter into his rest, concerns every unbeliever to the end of the world. In the name of God consider, were it but the oath of a man, or a company of men that, like those in the Acts, should swear to be the death of such an one, and thou wert the man, would it not fill thee with fear and trembling, night and day, and take away the quiet of thy life, till they were made thy friends? What then are their pillows stuffed with, who can sleep so soundly without any horror or amazement, though they be told that the almighty God is under an oath of damning them body and soul, without timely repentance?—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 155.—*"Salvation"!* What music is there in that word, music that never tires, but is always new, that always rouses yet always rests us! It holds in itself all that our hearts would say. It is sweet vigour to us in the morning, and in the evening it is contented peace. It is a song that is always singing itself deep down in the delighted soul. Angelic ears are ravished by it up in heaven; and our Eternal Father himself listens to it with adorable complacency. It is sweet even to him out of whose mind is the music of a thousand worlds. To be saved! What is it to be saved in the fullest and utmost meaning? Who can tell? Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. It is a rescue, and from such a shipwreck! It is a rest, and in such an unimaginable home! It is to lie down for ever in the bosom of God, in an endless rapture of insatiable contentment.—*Frederick William Faber,* 1853.

Verses 155, 156.—*"Salvation is far from the wicked." "Great are thy tender mercies, O* LORD.*"* When the godly do think and speak of the damnable condition of the wicked, they should not be senseless of their own ill deserving, nor of God's grace which hath made the difference between the wicked and them.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 156.—*"Great are thy tender mercies, O* LORD.*"* Two epithets he ascribes to God's mercies; first, he calls them *"great,"* and then he calls them *"tender"* mercies. They are great in many respects: for continuance, they endure for ever; for largeness, they reach unto the heavens, and are higher than they; yea, they are above all the works of God. And this is for the comfort of poor sinners, whose sins are many and great: let them not despair; his mercies are greater and more; for since they are greater than all his works, how much more greater than thou and all thy sinful works! . . . . . The other epithet he gives them is, that they are *"tender"* mercies; because the Lord is easy to be entreated; for he is slow unto wrath, but ready to show mercy. S. James saith that the wisdom which is from above is "gentle, peaceable, easy to be entreated." If his grace in his children make them gentle and easy to be entreated, what shall we think of himself? Since he will have such pity in us poor creatures, that seventy times seven times in the day he will have us to forgive the offences of our brethren; Oh, what pity

and compassion abound in himself! Thus we see our comfort is increased; that as his mercies are great, so are they tender; easily obtained, where they are earnestly craved.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 156.—The Psalmist, when speaking of the wretched condition of *"the wicked,"* is naturally led to adore the mercies of the Lord which had "made him to differ." For indeed to this source alone must we trace the distinction between us and them.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 157.—*"Persecutors."* A participle from the verb rendered *pursue, chase. "Enemies,"* as in verse 139, the authors of my distress. Until men are hunted and hounded by many enemies, who for the time have power, and are withal fierce and to some extent unscrupulous, they can have but a faint conception of the anguish of the prophet when he experienced the evils noted in this verse. Yet they did not move him from his constancy and integrity.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 158.—*"I beheld the trangressors, and was grieved."* Celerinus in Cyprian's Epistles, acquaints a friend with his great grief for the apostasy of a woman through fear of persecution; which afflicted him so much, that at the feast of Easter (the Queen of feasts in the primitive church) he wept night and day, and resolved never to know a moment's delight, till through the mercy of God she should be recovered. —*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 158.—*"I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved."* Oh, if you have the hearts of Christians or of men in you, let them yearn towards your poor ignorant, ungodly neighbours. Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell: many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them, and if they die unregenerate they are lost for ever. Have you hearts of rock, that cannot pity men in such a case as this? If you believe not the word of God, and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourself to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned, so you be saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves, for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace: should you not rather say, as the lepers of Samaria, Is it not a day of glad tidings, and do we sit still and hold our peace? 2 Kings vii. 9. Hath God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbours? You need not go far to find objects for your pity: look but into your streets, or into the next house to you, and you will probably find some. Have you never an ignorant, an unregenerate neighbour that sets his heart on things below, and neglecteth eternity? What blessed place do you live in, where there is none such? If there be not some of them in thine own family, it is well; and yet art thou silent? Dost thou live close by them, or meet them in the streets, or labour with them, or travel with them, or sit and talk with them, and say nothing to them of their souls, or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldst run and help them; and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell? If thou knewest but a remedy for their diseases thou wouldst tell it them, or else thou wouldst judge thyself guilty of their death.—*Richard Baxter* (1615—1691), *in "The Saints' Everlasting Rest."*

Verse 158.—*"Grieved, because they kept not thy law."* I never thought the world had been so wicked, when the Gospel began, as now I see it is; I rather hoped that every one would have leaped for joy to have found himself freed from the filth of the Pope, from his lamentable molestations of poor troubled consciences, and that through Christ they would by faith obtain the celestial treasure they sought after before with such vast cost and labour, though in vain. And especially I thought the bishops and universities would with joy of heart have received the true doctrines; but I have been lamentably deceived. Moses and Jeremiah, too, complained they had been deceived.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 158.—*"Grieved."* The word that is here translated *"grieved"* is from *katat,* that signifies to loathe, abhor, and contend. I beheld the transgressors, and I loathed them; I beheld the transgressors, and I abhorred them; I beheld the transgressors, and I contended with them; but not so much because they were mine enemies, as because they were thine.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 158.—The day when I first met Colonel Gardiner at Leicester, I happened to preach a lecture from Ps. cxix. 158: *"I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word."* I was large in describing that mixture of indignation and grief, strongly expressed by the original word there, with which a good man

looks on the varying transgressors of the divine law; and in tracing the causes of that grief, as arising from a regard to the divine honour, and the interest of a Redeemer, and a compassionate concern for the misery such offenders bring on themselves, and for the mischief they do to the world about them. I little thought how exactly I was drawing Colonel Gardiner's character under each of those heads; and I have often reflected upon it as a happy providence, which opened a much speedier way than I could have expected, to the breast of one of the most amiable and useful friends which I ever expect to find upon earth. We afterwards sung a hymn, which brought over again some of the leading thoughts in the sermon, and struck him so strongly, that on obtaining a copy of it, he committed it to his memory, and used to repeat it with so forcible an accent, as showed how much every line expressed of his very soul. In this view the reader will pardon my inserting it; especially as I know not when I may get time to publish a volume of these serious though artless compositions, which I sent him in manuscript some years ago, and to which I have since made very large additions :—

Arise, my tenderest thoughts, arise,
To torrents melt my streaming eyes;
And thou, my heart, with anguish feel
Those evils which thou canst not heal.

See human nature sunk in shame;
See scandals pour'd on Jesu's name;
The Father wounded through the Son;
The world abused, and souls undone.

See the short course of vain delight
Closing in everlasting night;
In flames that no abatement know,
Though briny tears for ever flow.

My God, I feel the mournful scene;
My bowels yearn o'er dying men,
And fain my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the firebrands from the flame.

But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves;
Thy own all-saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy.

Philip Doddridge, in "The Life of Colonel Gardiner."

Verse 159.—"*Consider how I love thy precepts.*" Search me. Behold the evidence of my attachment to thy law. This is the confident appeal of one who was conscious that he was truly attached to God; that he really loved his law. It is similar to the appeal of Peter to the Saviour (John xxi. 17), "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." A man who truly loves God *may* make this appeal without impropriety. He may be so confident, so certain, that he has true love for the character of God, that he may make a solemn appeal to him on the subject, as he might appeal to a friend, to his wife, to his son, to his daughter, with the utmost confidence that he loved them. A man *ought* to have such love for *them*, that he could affirm this without hesitation or doubt; a man *ought* to have such love for *God*, that he could affirm this with equal confidence and propriety.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 159.—"*Consider how I love thy precepts.*" He saith not, consider how I *perform* thy precepts; but how I *love* them. The comfort of a Christian militant, in this body of sin, is rather in the sincerity and fervency of his affections than in the absolute perfection of his actions. He fails many times in his obedience to God's precepts, in regard of his action; but love in his affection still remains; so that both before the temptation to sin, and after it, there is a grief in his soul, that he should find in himself any corrupt will or desire, contrary to the holy will of the Lord his God; and this proves an invincible love in him to the precepts of God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 159.—"*Consider,*" etc. Translate (the Hebrew being the same as in verse 158) "*Behold* how I love thy precepts," as is evinced in that when "I *beheld*

the transgressors I was grieved." He begs to God to behold this, not as meritorious of grace, but as a distinctive mark of a godly man.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 159.—"*I love thy precepts: quicken me.*" The love wherewith he loved God came from that love wherewith God first loved him. For by seeing the great love wherewith God loved him, he was moved and inforced to love God again. So that his meaning is thus much: Thou seest, Lord, that I am an enemy to sin in myself, for I forget not thy law; thou seest that I am an enemy to sin in others, for I am grieved to see them transgress thy law; wherefore, O Lord, "*quicken me,*" and let thy loving mercy whereby thou hast created me and redeemed me in Christ, whereby thou hast delivered me from so many troubles, and enriched me with so many and continual benefits, renew, revive, quicken, and restore me.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 159.—"*Quicken me.*" Often as the Psalmist had repeated his prayer for quickening grace,* it was not a "*vain repetition,*" or an empty sound. Each time was it enlivened with abundant faith, intense feeling of his necessity, and the vehemency of most ardent affection. If the consciousness of the faintness of our strength and the coldness of our affections should lead us to offer this petition a hundred times a day in this spirit, it would never fail of acceptance.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 159.—"*According to thy lovingkindness.*" We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's lovingkindness will quicken us.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 160.—"*Thy word is true from the beginning.*" Literally, "The beginning of thy word is truth," in antithesis to the "enduring for ever," in the future, in the next clause. Cocceius and Hengstenberg take it, "The *sum* of thy word is true," as in Numbers xxvi. 2; xxxi. 26. But the antithesis noticed above in the English version is thus lost; and the old versions support the English version. Also, if it were "*the sum,*" the plural ought to follow, viz., "of thy *words,*" not "*word.*"—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 160.—"*Thy word is true from the beginning,*" etc. As if he should say, I believe that thou wilt thus quicken me, because the very beginning of thy word is most just and true; and when thou didst enter into covenant with me, I did find that thou didst not deceive me, nor beguile me. And when by thy Spirit thou madest me believe thy covenant, thou meanedst truth; and I know that as thou didst promise, thou wilt perform, for thou art no more liberal in promising than faithful and just in performing, and thy judgment will be as righteous as thy promise is true. I know that as soon as thou speakest, truth proceedeth from thee; and even so I know thou wilt defend and preserve me, that thy judgments may shine as righteous in thee.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 160.—"*Thy word is true from the beginning,*" etc. God's commandment and promise is exceeding broad, reaching to all times. Was a word of command "the guide of thy youth"? I assure thee it will be as good a staff of thine age. A good promise is a good nurse, both to the young babe and to the decrepid old man. Your apothecaries' best cordials in time will lose their spirits, and sometimes the stronger they are, the sooner. But hath a promise cheered thee, say, twenty, thirty, forty years ago? Taste it but now afresh, and thou shalt find it as fresh, and as full of refreshment as ever. If it hath been thy greatest joy in thy joyful youth, I tell thee, it hath as much joy in it for thy sad old age. That may be said of God's word, which the prophet saith of God himself (Isa. xlvi. 4): "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." Doth not the Psalmist say as much here, "*Thy word is true from the beginning*"? It's well, it begins well. But will it last as well? Yes: he adds, "*and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*" Answerable to which is that other expression (verse 152), "*Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.*" "For ever," and "founded for ever." O sweet expression! O grounded comfort! Brethren, get acquainted with God's word and promise as soon as you can, and maintain that acquaintance everlastingly; and your knowledge of it shall not either go before, or go beyond its truth. Know it as soon and as long as you will or can, and you shall never find it tripping or failing; but you may after long experience of God say of it, "*I have known of old that thou hast founded it for ever.*"—*Anthony Tuckney,* 1599—1670.

---

* Nine times is this petition urged, verses 25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159.

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 161 TO 168.

PRINCES have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

162 I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

163 I hate and abhor lying: *but* thy law do I love.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.

168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies; for all my ways *are* before thee.

161. *"Princes have persecuted me without a cause."* Such persons ought to have known better; they should have had sympathy with one of their own rank. A man expects a fair trial at the hand of his peers: it is ignoble to be prejudiced. Moreover, if honour be banished from all other breasts it should remain in the bosom of kings, and honour forbids the persecution of the innocent. Princes are appointed to protect the innocent and avenge the oppressed, and it is a shame when they themselves become the assailants of the righteous. It was a sad case when the man of God found himself attacked by the judges of the earth, for eminent position added weight and venom to their enmity. It was well that the sufferer could truthfully assert that this persecution was without cause. He had not broken their laws, he had not injured them, he had not even desired to see them injured, he had not been an advocate of rebellion or anarchy, he had neither openly nor secretly opposed their power, and therefore, while this made their oppression the more inexcusable, it took away a part of its sting, and helped the brave-hearted servant of God to bear up. *"But my heart standeth in awe of thy word."* He might have been overcome by awe of the princes had it not been that a greater fear drove out the less, and he was swayed by awe of God's word. How little do crowns and sceptres become in the judgment of that man who perceives a more majestic royalty in the commands of his God. We are not likely to be disheartened by persecution, or driven by it into sin, if the word of God continually has supreme power over our minds.

162. *"I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil."* His awe did not prevent his joy; his fear of God was not of the kind which perfect love casts out, but of the sort which it nourishes. He trembled at the word of the Lord, and yet rejoiced at it. He compares his joy to that of one who has been long in battle, and has at last won the victory and is dividing the spoil. This usually falls to the lot of princes, and though David was not one with them in their persecutions, yet he had his victories, and his spoil was equal to their greatest gains. The profits made in searching the Scriptures were greater than the trophies of war. We too have to fight for divine truth; every doctrine costs us a battle, but when we gain a full understanding of it by personal struggles it becomes doubly precious to us. In these days godly men have a full share of battling for the word of God; may we have for our spoil a firmer hold upon the priceless word. Perhaps, however, the Psalmist may have rejoiced as one who comes upon hidden treasure for which he had not fought, in which case we find the analogy in the man of God who, while reading the Bible, makes grand and blessed discoveries of the grace of God laid up for him,—discoveries which surprise him, for he looked not to find such a prize. Whether we come by the truth as finders or as warriors fighting for it, the heavenly treasure should be equally dear to us. With what quiet joy does the ploughman steal home with his golden find! How victors shout as they share the plunder! How glad should that man be who has discovered his portion in the promises of holy writ, and is able to enjoy it for himself, knowing by the witness of the Holy Spirit that it is all his own.

163. *"I hate and abhor lying."* A double expression for an inexpressible loathing.

Falsehood in doctrine, in life, or in speech, falsehood in any form or shape, had become utterly detestable to the Psalmist. This was a remarkable state for an Oriental, for generally lying is the delight of Easterns, and the only wrong they see in it is a want of skill in its exercise so that the liar is found out. David himself had made much progress when he had come to this. He does not, however, alone refer to falsehood in conversation; he evidently intends perversity in faith and teaching. He set down all opposition to the God of truth as lying, and then he turned his whole soul against it in the intensest form of indignation. Godly men should detest false doctrine even as they abhor a lie. *"But thy law do I love,"* because it is all truth. His love was as ardent as his hate. True men love truth, and hate lying. It is well for us to know which way our hates and loves run, and we may do essential service to others by declaring what are their objects. Both love and hate are contagious, and when they are sanctified the wider their influence the better.

164. *"Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments."* He laboured perfectly to praise his perfect God, and therefore fulfilled the perfect number of songs. Seven may also intend frequency. Frequently he lifted up his heart in thanksgiving to God for his divine teachings in the word, and for his divine actions in providence. With his voice he extolled the righteousness of the Judge of all the earth. As often as ever he thought of God's ways a song leaped to his lips. At the sight of the oppressive princes, and at the hearing of the abounding falsehood around him, he felt all the more bound to adore and magnify God, who in all things is truth and righteousness. When others rob us of our praise it should be a caution to us not to fall into the same conduct towards our God, who is so much more worthy of honour. If we praise God when we are persecuted our music will be all the sweeter to him because of our constancy in suffering. If we keep clear of all lying, our song will be the more acceptable because it comes out of pure lips. If we never flatter men we shall be in the better condition for honouring the Lord. Do we praise God seven times a day? Do we praise him once in seven days?

165. *"Great peace have they which love thy law."* What a charming verse is this! It deals not with those who perfectly keep the law, for where should such men be found? but with those who love it, whose hearts and hands are made to square with its precepts and demands. These men are ever striving, with all their hearts, to walk in obedience to the law, and though they are often persecuted they have peace, yea, *great* peace; for they have learned the secret of the reconciling blood, they have felt the power of the comforting Spirit, and they stand before the Father as men accepted. The Lord has given them to feel his peace, which passed all understanding. They have many troubles, and are likely to be persecuted by the proud, but their usual condition is that of deep calm—a peace too great for this little world to break. *"And nothing shall offend them,"* or, "shall really injure them." "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It must needs be that offences come, but these lovers of the law are peacemakers, and so they neither give nor take offence. That peace which is founded upon conformity to God's will is a living and lasting one, worth writing of with enthusiasm, as the Psalmist here does.

166. *"LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments."* Here we have salvation by grace, and the fruits thereof. All David's hope was fixed upon God, he looked to him alone for salvation; and then he endeavoured most earnestly to fulfil the commands of his law. Those who place least reliance upon good works are very frequently those who have the most of them; that same divine teaching which delivers us from confidence in our own doings leads us to abound in every good work to the glory of God. In times of trouble there are two things to be done, the first is to hope in God, and the second is to do that which is right. The first without the second would be mere presumption: the second without the first mere formalism. It is well if in looking back we can claim to have acted in the way which is commanded of the Lord. If we have acted rightly towards God we are sure that he will act kindly with us.

167. *"My soul hath kept thy testimonies."* My outward life has kept thy precepts, and my inward life—my soul, has kept thy testimonies. God has borne testimony to many sacred truths, and these we hold fast as for life itself. The gracious man stores up the truth of God within his heart as a treasure exceedingly dear and precious —he keeps it. His secret soul, his inmost self, becomes the guardian of these divine teachings which are his sole authority in soul matters. *"And I love them exceedingly."* This was why he kept them, and having kept them this was the result of the keeping.

He did not merely store up revealed truth by way of duty, but because of a deep, unutterable affection for it. He felt that he could sooner die than give up any part of the revelation of God. The more we store our minds with heavenly truth, the more deeply shall we be in love with it: the more we see the exceeding riches of the Bible the more will our love exceed measure, and exceed expression.

168. *"I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies."* Both the practical and the doctrinal parts of God's word he had stored up, and preserved, and followed. It is a blessed thing to see the two forms of the divine word, equally known, equally valued, equally confessed: there should be no picking and choosing as to the mind of God. We know those who endeavour to be careful as to the precepts, but who seem to think that the doctrines of the gospel are mere matters of opinion, which they may shape for themselves. This is not a perfect condition of things. We have known others again who are very rigid as to the doctrines, and painfully lax with reference to the precepts. This also is far from right. When the two are "kept" with equal earnestness then have we the perfect man. *"For all my ways are before thee."* Probably he means to say that this was the motive of his endeavouring to be right both in head and heart, because he knew that God saw him, and under the sense of the divine presence he was afraid to err. Or else he is thus appealing to God to bear witness to the truth of what he has said. In either case it is no small consolation to feel that our heavenly Father knows all about us, and that if princes speak against us, and worldlings fill their mouths with cruel lies, yet he can vindicate us, for there is nothing secret or hidden from him.

We are struck with the contrast between this verse, which is the last of its octave, and verse 176, which is similarly placed in the next octave. This is a protest of innocence, "I have kept thy precepts," and that a confession of sin, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." Both were sincere, both accurate. Experience makes many a paradox plain, and this is one. Before God we may be clear of open fault and yet at the same time mourn over a thousand heart-wanderings which need his restoring hand.

NOTES ON VERSES 161 TO 168.

Verse 161.—"*Princes have persecuted me.*" The evil is aggravated from the consideration that it is the very persons who ought to be as bucklers to defend us, who employ their strength in hurting us. Yea, when the afflicted are stricken by those in high places, they in a manner think that the hand of God is against them. There was also this peculiarity in the case of the prophet, that he had to encounter the grandees of the chosen people—men whom God had placed in such honourable stations, to the end they might be the pillars of the Church.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 161.—"*Without a cause.*" I settle it as an established point with me, that the more diligently and faithfully I serve Christ, the greater reproach and the more injury I must expect. I have drank deep of the cup of slander and reproach of late, but I am in no wise discouraged; no, nor by, what is much harder to bear, the unsuccessfulness of my endeavours to mend this bad world.—*Philip Doddridge.*

Verse 161.—"*Without a cause.*" We know what persecutions the body of Christ, that is, the holy Church, suffered from the kings of the earth. Let us therefore here also recognize the words of the Church: "*Princes have persecuted me without a cause.*" For how had the Christians injured the kingdoms of the earth? Although their King promised them the kingdom of heaven, how, I ask, had they injured the kingdoms of earth? Did their King forbid his soldiers to pay and to render due service to the kings of the earth? Saith he not to the Jews who were striving to calumniate him, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's"? Matt. xxii. 21. Did he not even in his own person pay tribute from the mouth of a fish? Did not his forerunner, when the soldiers of this kingdom were seeking what they ought to do for their everlasting salvation, instead of replying, "Loose your belts, throw away your arms, desert your king, that ye may wage war for the Lord," answer, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages"? Luke iii. 14. Did not one of his soldiers, his most beloved companion, say to his fellow soldiers, the provincials, so to speak, of Christ, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers"? and a little lower he addeth, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Rom. xiii. 1, 7, 8. Does he not enjoin the Church to pray even for kings themselves? How, then, have the Christians offended against them? What due have they not rendered? In what have not Christians obeyed the monarchs of earth? The kings of the earth therefore have persecuted the Christians *without a cause.*—*Augustine.*

Verse 161.—"*But my heart standeth in awe of thy word.*" If there remains any qualm of fear on thy heart, fear from the wrath of bloody men threatening thee for thy profession of the truth, then to a heart inflamed with the love of truth, labour to add a heart filled with the fear of that wrath which God hath in store for all that apostatize from the truth. When you chance to burn your finger, you hold it to the fire, which being a greater fire draws out the other. Thus, when thy thoughts are scorched, and thy heart scared with the fire of man's wrath, hold them a while to hell fire, which God hath prepared for the fearful (Rev. xxi. 8), and all that run away from truth's colours (Heb. x. 39), and thou wilt lose the sense of the one for fear of the other. *Ignosce imperator*, saith the holy man, *tu carcerem, Deus gehennam minatur;* "Pardon me, O Emperor, if I obey not thy command; thou threatenest a prison, but God a hell." Observable is that of David: "Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word." He had no cause to fear them that had no cause to persecute him. One threatening out of the word, that sets the point of God's wrath to his heart, scares him more than the worst that the greatest on earth can do to him. Man's wrath, when hottest, is but a temperate climate to the wrath of the living God. They who have felt both have testified as much. Man's wrath cannot hinder the access of God's love to the creature, which hath made the saints sing in the fire, in spite of their enemies' teeth. But the creature under God's wrath is like one shut up in a close oven, no crevice is open to let any of the heat out, or any refreshing in to him.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 161.—"*My heart standeth in awe of thy word.*" There is an *awe* of the word, not that maketh us shy of it, but tender of violating it, or doing anything contrary to it. This is not the fruit of slavish fear, but of holy love; it is not afraid of the word, but delighteth in it, as it discovereth the mind of God to us; as in the next

verse it is written, " I rejoice at thy word." This awe is called by a proper name, reverence, or godly fear ; when we consider whose word it is, namely, the word of the Lord, who is our God, and hath a right to command what he pleaseth ; to whose will and word we have already yielded obedience, and devoted ourselves to walk worthy of him in all well-pleasing ; who can find us out in all our failings, as knowing our very thoughts afar off (Ps. cxxxix. 2), and having all our ways before him, and being one of whom we read,—" He is a holy God ; he is a jealous God ; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins " (Josh. xxiv. 19), that is to say, if we impenitently continue in them. Considering these things we receive the word with that trembling of heart which God so much respects.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 161.—"*In awe of thy word.*" I would advise you all, that come to the reading or hearing of this book, which is the word of God, the most precious jewel, and most holy relic that remaineth upon earth, that ye bring with you the fear of God, and that ye do it with all due reverence, and use your knowledge thereof, not to vain glory of frivolous disputation, but to the honour of God, increase of virtue, and edification both of yourselves and others.—*Thomas Cranmer,* 1489—1555.

Verse 161.—"*Awe of thy word.*" They that tremble at the convictions of the word may triumph in the consolations of it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 162.—"*I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.*" He never came to an ordinance but as a soldier to the spoil, after a great battle, as having a constant warfare with his corruptions that fought against his soul. Now he comes to see what God will say to him, and he will make himself a saver [or gainer], and get a booty out of every commandment, promise, or threatening he hears.—*John Cotton* (1585—1652), *in "The way of life."*

Verse 162.—"*I rejoice at thy word.*" " Euripides," saith the orator, " hath in his well-composed tragedies more sentiments than sayings ; " and Thucydides hath so stuffed every syllable of his history with substance, that the one runs parallel along with the other ; Lysias's works are so well couched that you cannot take out the least word but you take away the whole sense with it ; and Phocion had a special faculty of speaking much in a few words. The Cretians, in Plato's time (however degenerated in St. Paul's), were more weighty than wordy ; Timanthes was famous in this, that in his pictures more things were intended than deciphered ; and of Homer it is said that none could ever peer him for poetry. Then how much more apt and apposite are these high praises to the book of God, rightly called *the Bible* or *the book,* as if it were, as indeed it is, both for fitness of terms and fulness of truth, the only book to which (as Luther saith) all the books in the world are but waste paper. It is called *the word,* by way of eminency, because it must be the butt and boundary of all our words ; and *the scripture,* as the lord paramount above all other words or writings of men collected into volumes, there being, as the Rabbins say, a mountain of sense hanging upon every tittle of it, whence may be gathered flowers and phrases to polish our speeches with, even sound words, that have a healing property in them, far above all filed phrases of human elocution.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 162.—"*As one that findeth great spoil.*" This expressive image may remind us of the inward conflict to be endured in acquiring the spoils of this precious word. It is so contrary to our natural taste and temper, that habitual self-denial and struggle with the indisposition of the heart can alone enable us to "*find the spoil.*" But what "*great spoil*" is divided as the fruit of the conflict ! How rich and abundant is the recompense of the " good soldier of Jesus Christ," who is determined through the power of the Spirit to " endure hardness," until he overcome the reluctance of his heart to this spiritual duty. He shall "*rejoice*" in "*finding great spoil.*" Sometimes—as the spoil with which the lepers enriched themselves in the Syrian camp—it may be found unexpectedly. Sometimes we see the riches and treasures contained in a passage or doctrine, long before we can make it our own. And often when we gird ourselves to the conflict with indolence, and wanderings, under the weakness of our spiritual perceptions and the power of unbelief, many a prayer, and many a sigh is sent up for Divine aid, before we are crowned with victory, and are enabled, as the fruit of our conquest joyfully to appropriate the word to our present need and distress.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 163.—"*I hate and abhor lying,*" etc. One sees here how the light on David's soul was increasing more and more unto the perfect day. In the earlier part of this Psalm, David in the recollection of his own sin had prayed, " Remove from me the

way of lying," and the Lord had indeed answered his prayer, for he now declares his utter loathing of every false way: *"I hate and abhor lying."* And we see, in some measure, the instrument by which the Holy Spirit wrought the change: *"Thy law do I love"*; nay, as he adds in a later verse, "I love them exceedingly." And so it ever must be, the heart must have some holier object of its affection to fill up the void, or there will be no security against a relapse into sin. I might talk for ever on the sin, the disgrace, and the danger of lying, and though at the time and for a time my words might have some influence, yet, unless the heart be filled with the love of God and of God's law, the first temptation would prove too powerful. The Bible teaches us this in a variety of ways. God says to Israel, not only "cease to do evil," but, "learn to do well." And still more pointedly does the apostle, when he was warring against drunkenness, say, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess,—but be filled with the Spirit."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 163.—*"I hate and abhor lying." "Lying,"* according to Scripture usage, not only signifies speaking contrary to what one thinks, but also thinking contrary to the truth of things, and, particularly, the giving to any other of that worship and glory which are due to the true God alone. It is to think and act aside from God's truth. The men who persecuted that godly man thought of earthly prosperity and power as they should not have thought; they judged God's servant falsely, and they thought wickedly of God himself. The man of God took a view of these things; he saw the wickedness and the vileness of them, and he continued—*"Falsehood I hate and abhor: thy law do I love."* From all the false and delusive ways of men, from all the pride and pomp that surround courts, from the sinful pleasures and pursuits of worldly men, as well as from the ostentatious idolatry of heathen nations, he could turn with heart delight to the contemplation of Jehovah, in that wonderful ritual which manifested the divine mercy in vicarious sacrifices, and observances, and festivals; and to that holy law which was given as man's rule of duty and grateful obedience, and all these he loved as the manifestations of God's grace.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 163.—*"I hate and abhor lying":* not only *"hate"* it, nor simply I *"abhor"* it, but *"hate and abhor,"* to strengthen and increase the sense, and make it more vehement. Where the enmity is not great against the sin, the matter may be compounded and taken up; but David will have nothing to do with it, for he saith,—I loathe and abhor it, and hate it with a deadly hatred. Slight hatred of a sinful course is not sufficient to guard us against it.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 163.—Sin seemeth to have its name from the Hebrew word *sana, to hate,* the word here used, because it is most of all to be hated, as the greatest evil, as that which setteth us furthest from God the greatest good. None can hate it but those that love the law of God; for all hatred comes from love. A natural man may be angry with his sin, but hate it he cannot; nay, he may leave it, but not loathe it; if he did, he would loathe all sin as well as any one sin.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 163.—*"Lying."* All injustice is abominable: to do any sort of wrong is a heinous crime, but lying is that crime which, above all others, tendeth to the dissolution of society and disturbance of human life; which God therefore doth most loathe, and men have reason especially to detest. Of this the slanderer is most deeply guilty. "A witness of Belial scorneth judgment, and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity," saith the wise man: Prov. xix. 28. He is indeed, according to just estimation, guilty of all kinds of injury, breaking all the second table of commands respecting our neighbour. Most distinctly he beareth false witness against his neighbour: he doth covet his neighbour's goods, for 'tis constantly out of such an irregular desire, for his own presumed advantage, to dispossess his neighbour of some good, and transfer it on himself, that the slanderer uttereth his tale: he is also a thief and robber of his good name, a deflowerer and defiler of his reputation, an assassin and murderer of his honour. So doth he violate all the rules of justice, and perpetrateth all sorts of wrong against his neighbour.—*Isaac Barrow.*

Verse 164.—*"Seven times a day do I praise thee."* Affections of the soul cannot long be kept secret; if they be strong they will break forth in actions. The love of God is like a fire in the heart of man, which breaks forth, and manifests itself in the obedience of his commandments, and praising him for his benefits; and this is it which David now protests, that the love of God was not idle in his heart, but made him fervent and earnest in praising God, so that *"seven times a day"* he did praise God. For by this number the carefulness of holy devotion is expressed, and the

fervency of his love. In praising God he could not be satisfied, saith Basil.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 164.—"*Seven times a day do I praise thee.*" "As every grace," says Sibbes, "increaseth by exercise of itself, so doth the grace of prayer. By prayer we learn to pray." And thus it was with the Psalmist; he oftentimes anticipated the dawning of the morning for his exercise of prayer; and at midnight frequently arose to pour out his soul in prayer; now he adds that "*seven times in a day*," or as we might express it, "at every touch and turn," he finds opportunity for and delight in praise. Oh for David's spirit and David's practice!—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 164.—"*Seven times a day do I praise thee.*" A Christian ought to give himself up eminently to this duty without limits.—*Walter Marshall.*

Verse 164.—"*Seven times a day do I praise thee.*" Not as if he had seven set hours for this duty every day, as the Papists would have it, to countenance their seven canonical hours, but rather a definite number is put for an indefinite, and so amounts to this,—he did very often in a day praise God; his holy heart taking the hint of every providence to carry him to heaven on this errand of prayer and praise.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 164.—"*Seven times a day.*" Some of the Jewish Rabbis affirm that David is here to be understood literally, observing, that the devout Hebrews were accustomed to praise God twice in the morning, before reading the ten commandments, and once after; twice in the evening before reading the same portion of inspiration, and twice after; which makes up the number of seven times a day.—*James Anderson's note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 165.—"*Great peace have they which love thy law.*" Amidst the storms and tempests of the world, there is a perfect calm in the breasts of those, who not only do the will of God, but "*love*" to do it. They are at peace with God, by the blood of reconciliation; at peace with themselves, by the answer of a good conscience, and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul; at peace with all men, by the spirit of charity; and the whole creation is so at peace with them that all things work together for their good. No external troubles can rob them of this "*great peace*," no "offences" or stumbling blocks, which are thrown in their way by persecution, or temptation, by the malice of enemies, or by the apostasy of friends, by anything which they see, hear of, or feel, can detain, or divert them from their course. Heavenly love surmounts every obstacle, and runs with delight the way of God's commandments.—*George Horne.*

Verse 165.—"*Great peace have they which love thy law.*" There have been Elis trembling for the ark of God, and Uzzahs putting out their hand in fear that it was going to fall; but in the midst of the deepest troubles through which the church has passed, and the fiercest storms that have raged about it, there have been true, faithful men of God who have never despaired. In every age there have been Luthers and Latimers, who have not only held fast their confidence, but whose peace has deepened with the roaring of the waves. The more they have been forsaken of men, the closer has been their communion with God. And with strong hold of him and of his promises, and hearts that could enter into the secret place of the Most High, although there has been everything without to agitate, threaten, and alarm, they have been guided into perfect peace.—*James Martin, in "The Christian Mirror, and other Sermons,"* 1878.

Verse 165.—"*Great peace have they which love thy law.*" Clearness of conscience is a help to comfortable thoughts. Yet observe, that peace is not so much affected as preserved by a good conscience and conversation; for though joy in the Holy Ghost will make its nest nowhere but in a holy soul, yet the blood of Christ only can speak peace; "being justified by faith, we have peace:" Rom. v. 1. An exact life will not make, but keep conscience quiet; an easy shoe does not heal a sore foot, but it keeps a sound one from hurt. Walking with God according to gospel rules hath peace entailed upon it, and that peace is such a treasure, as thereby a Christian may have his rejoicing from himself. Gal. vi. 4, 16. His own heart sings him a merry tune, which the threats and reproaches of the world cannot silence. The treasure of comfort is not expended in affliction; death itself doth not exhaust but increase and advance it to an eternal triumph. O the excellency and necessity of it! Paul laid it up for a death-bed cordial: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience:" 2 Cor. i. 12. And Hezekiah dares hold it up to God, as well as cheer himself up with it on approaching death. A conscience good in point of

integrity will be good also in point of tranquillity: "The righteous are bold as a lion": they have great peace that love and keep God's commandments: Prov. xxviii. 1; Ps. cxix. 165. And saith the apostle, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God" (1 John iii. 2), and I may add also, towards men. Oh! what comfort and solace hath a clear conscience! A conscientious man hath something within to answer accusations without; he hath such a rich treasure as will not fail in greatest straits and hazards. I shall conclude this with a notable saying of Bernard:—"The pleasures of a good conscience are the Paradise of souls, the joy of angels, a garden of delights, a field of blessing, the temple of Solomon, the court of God, the habitation of the Holy Spirit."—*Oliver Heywood.*

Verse 165.—"*Great peace.*" Note that for "*peace*" the Hebrew word is שָׁלוֹם *shâlom:* it signifies not only "*peace,*" but also *perfection, wholeness, prosperity, tranquillity, healthfulness, safety,* the *completion* and *consummation* of every good thing, and so it is frequently taken by the Hebrews; hence in salutations wishing one the other well, they say, שָׁלוֹם לְךָ, *shâlom lekha, i.e.,* "peace be with thee"; as if one should say, "may all things be prosperous with thee."—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 165.—"*They which love thy law.*" To *love* a law may seem strange; but it is the only true divine life. To keep it because we are afraid of its penalties is only a form of fear or prudential consideration. To keep it to preserve a good name may be propriety and respectability. To keep it because it is best for society may be worldly self-interest. To keep it because of physical health may be the policy of epicurean philosophy. To keep it because we love it is to show that it is already part of us—has entered into the moral texture of our being. Sin then becomes distasteful, and temptations lose their power.—*W. M. Statham, quoted in "A Homiletic Commentary on the Psalms,"* 1879.

Verse 165.—"*And nothing shall offend them.*" Hebrew, "they shall have no *stumblingblock.*" 1 John ii. 10, "There is none *occasion of stumbling* in him" who abides in the *light,* which makes him to see and avoid such stumblingblocks. Wealth, tribulation, temptation, which are the occasion to many of falling (Isa. viii. 14, 15; Ezek. iii. 20; vii. 19; xiv. 3, 4, 7), are not so to him.—*A. R Faussett.*

Verse 165.—Learn the true wisdom of those of you who are new creatures, and who love God's holy law. All of you who are really brought to Christ are changed into his image, so that you love God's holy law. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart": Ps. xix. The world says: What a slave you are! you cannot have a little amusement on the Sabbath—you cannot take a Sabbath walk, or join a Sabbath tea-party; you cannot go to a dance or a theatre; you cannot enjoy the pleasures of sensual indulgence—you are a slave. I answer: Christ had none of these pleasures. He did not want them; nor do we. He knew what was truly wise, and good, and happy, and he chose God's holy law. He was the freest of all beings, and yet he knew no sin. Only make me free as Christ is free—this is all I ask. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne,* 1813—1843.

Verse 165.—"*Nothing shall offend them.*" They that have this character of God's children, will not be stumbled at God's dispensations, let them be never so cross to their desires, because they have a God to fly unto in all their troubles, and a sure covenant to rest upon. Therefore the reproaches cast upon them, and on the way of God, do not scandalize them; for they have found God in that very way which others speak evil of; they are not so offended by anything that attends the way of God, as to dislike or forsake that way. Nevertheless we must take heed that we be not offended.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 166.—"*Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation,*" etc. This is the true posture in which all the servants of God should desire to be found—hoping in his mercy, and doing his commands. How easy were it to demonstrate the connection between the mental feeling here recognized, and the obedience with which it is here associated! It is the hope of salvation which is the great and pervading motive to holiness, and it is the consciousness of obedience to the will of God which strengthens our hope of interest in the divine mercy.—*John Morison.*

Verse 166.—"*Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation.*" This saying he borrowed from good old Jacob. Gen. xlix. 18.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 166.—"*I have done thy commandments.*" Set upon the practice of what you read. A student in physic doth not satisfy himself to read over a system or

body of physic, but he falls upon practising physic: the life-blood of religion lies in the practical part. Christians should be walking Bibles. Xenophon said, "Many read Lycurgus's laws, but few observe them." The word written is not only a rule of knowledge, but a rule of obedience; it is not only to mend our sight, but to mend our pace. David calls God's word "a lamp unto his feet" (verse 105). It was not only a light to his eyes to see by, but to his feet to walk by. By practice we trade with the talent of knowledge, and turn it to profit. This is a blessed reading of Scripture, when we fly from the sins which the word forbids, and espouse the doctrines which the word commands. Reading without practice will be but a torch to light men to hell.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verses 166, 167, 168.—He that casts the commands behind his back is very presumptuous in applying the promises to himself. That hope which is not accompanied with obedience will make a man ashamed. He that has learned the word of God knows that the law is not made void by faith, but established: Rom. iii. 31. Christ the Church's Head and Prophet, in his sermon upon the mount shows the extent of the law, requiring purity in the heart and thoughts, as well as in the life and actions, and condemns them "who shall break the least of these commands and shall teach men so"; but "those that teach and do them," he owns as great in his kingdom: Matt. v. 19. The law spoken on Mount Sinai is established by the Legislator Christ in Mount Zion as a rule of righteousness. And they who are rightly instructed, "which walk according to this rule," will have both heart and conversation ordered according to his direction, and "peace and mercy will be upon them," and hereby they will show themselves to be indeed the Israel of God.—*Nathanael Vincent.*

Verse 167.—*My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.*" Should he not have said, first, I have loved thy commandments, and so have kept them? Doubtless he did so; but he ran here in a holy and most heavenly circle, I have kept them and loved them, and loved them and kept them. If we love Christ, we shall also live the life of love in our measure, and his commandments will be most dear when himself is most precious.—*Thomas Shepard, in "The Sound Believer,"* 1671.

Verse 167.—"*My soul.*" It is a usual phrase among the Hebrews, when they would express their affection to anything, to say, "*My soul*": as Ps. ciii. 1 and civ. 1, "*My soul,* praise thou the Lord," and Luke i. "*My soul* doth magnify the Lord."—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 167.—"*I love them exceedingly.*" It is only a reasonable return to God; for the Father loved me so *exceedingly* as not to spare his own Son, but to give him up for me; and the Son loved me so *exceedingly* that he gave himself to me, and gave me back to myself when I was lost in my sins, original and actual.—*Gerhohus* (1093—1169), *in Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 167, 168.—Let not our consciousness of daily failures make us shrink from this strong expression of confidence. It is alleged as an evidence of grace, not as a claim of merit, and therefore the most humble believer need not hesitate to adopt it as the expression of Christian sincerity before God. David aspired to no higher character than that of a poor sinner: but he was conscious of spirituality of obedience, "*exceeding love*" to the divine word, and an habitual walk under the eye of his God—the evidences of a heart (often mentioned in the Old Testament) "perfect with him."—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 168.—"*I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee.*" When men are some way off in a king's eye they will be comely in their carriage; but when they come into his presence-chamber to speak with him they will be most careful. Because saints are always in God's sight, their constant deportment must be pious and seemly.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 168.—"*I have kept thy precepts,* etc. The Hebrew word שָׁמַר, *shamar,* that is here rendered "*kept,*" signifies to keep carefully, diligently, studiously, exactly. It signifies to keep as men keep prisoners, and to keep as a watchman keeps the city or the garrison; yea, to keep as a man would keep his very life. But now mark what was the reason that David kept the precepts and the testimonies of the Lord so carefully, so sincerely, so diligently, so studiously, and so exactly. Why, the reason you have in the latter part of the verse, "*for all my ways are before thee.*" O sirs! it is as necessary for him that would be eminent in holiness, to set the Lord

always before him, as it is necessary for him to breathe. In that 31st of Job you have a very large narrative of that height and perfection of holiness that Job had attained to, and the great reason that he gives you, for this is in the 4th verse, " Doth not he see my way, and count all my steps ? " The eye of God had so strong an influence upon his heart and life, that it wrought him up to a very high pitch of holiness.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 168.—*"All my ways are before thee."* That God seeth the secrets of our heart, is a point terrible to the wicked but joyful to the godly. The wicked are sorry that their heart is so open : it is a boiling pot of all mischief, a furnace and forge-house for evil. It grieveth them that man should hear and see their words and actions ; but what a terror is this—that their Judge, whom they hate, seeth their thought ! If they could deny this, they would. But so many of them as are convinced and forced to acknowledge a God, are shaken betimes with this also—that he is All-seeing. Others proceed more summarily, and at once deny the Godhead in their heart, and so destroy this conscience of his All-knowledge. But it is in vain : the more they harden their heart by this godless thought, the more fear is in them ; while they choke and check their conscience that it crow not against them it checketh them with foresight of fearful vengeance, and for the present convinceth them of the omniscience of God, the more they press to suppress it. But the godly rejoice herein ; it is to them a rule to square their thoughts by ; they take no liberty of evil thinking, willing, wishing, or affecting, in their hearts. Where that candle shineth, all things are framed as worthy of him and of his sight, whom they know to be seeing their heart.—*William Struther*, 1633.

Verse 168.—*"All my ways are before thee."* Walk Christian, in the view of God's omniscience ; say to thy soul, *cave, videt Deus ;* take heed God seeth. It is under the rose, as the common phrase is, that treason is spoken, when subjects think they are far enough from their king's hearing ; but did such know the prince to be under the window, or behind the hangings, their discourse would be more loyal. This made David so upright in his walking : *"I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee."* If Alexander's empty chair, which his captains, when they met in counsel, set before them, did awe them so as to keep them in good order ; how helpful would it be to set before ourselves the fact that God is looking upon us ! The Jews covered Christ's face, and then buffeted him : Mark xiv. 65. So does the hypocrite ; he first says in his heart, God sees not, or at least forgets that he sees, and then he makes bold to sin against him ; like that foolish bird, which runs her head among the reeds, and thinks herself safe from the fowler, as if because she did not see her enemy, therefore he could not see her. *Te mihi abscondam, non me tibi* (Augustine). I may hide thee from my eye, but not myself from thine eye.—*William Gurnall.*

NOTES ON VERSES 169 TO 176.

LET my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

171 My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness.

173 Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law *is* my delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant: for I do not forget thy commandments.

The Psalmist is approaching the end of the Psalm, and his petitions gather force and fervency; he seems to break into the inner circle of divine fellowship, and to come even to the feet of the great God whose help he is imploring. This nearness creates the most lowly view of himself, and leads him to close the Psalm upon his face in deepest self-humiliation, begging to be sought out like a lost sheep.

169. *"Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD."* He is tremblingly afraid lest he should not be heard. He is conscious that his prayer is nothing better than the cry of a poor child, or the groan of a wounded beast. He dreads lest it should be shut out from the ear of the most High, but he very boldly prays that it may come before God, that it may be in his sight, under his notice, and looked upon with his acceptance; yea, he goes further, and entreats, "Let my cry come near before thee, O Lord." He wants the Lord's attention to his prayer to be very close and considerate. He uses a figure of speech and personifies his prayer. We may picture his prayer as Esther, venturing into the royal presence, entreating an audience, and begging to find favour in the sight of the blessed and only Potentate. It is a very sweet thing to a suppliant when he knows of a surety that his prayer has obtained audience, when it has trodden the sea of glass before the throne, and has come even to the footstool of the glorious seat around which heaven and earth adore. It is to Jehovah that this prayer is expressed with trembling earnestness —our translators, filled with holy reverence, translate the word, "O LORD." We crave audience of none else, for we have confidence in none beside. *"Give me understanding according to thy word."* This is the prayer about which the Psalmist is so exceedingly anxious. With all his gettings he would get understanding, and whatever he misses he is resolved not to miss this priceless boon. He desires spiritual light and understanding as it is promised in God's word, as it proceeds from God's word, and as it produces obedience to God's word. He pleads as though he had no understanding whatever of his own, and asks to have one given to him. "Give me understanding." In truth, he had an understanding according to the judgment of men, but what he sought was an understanding according to God's word, which is quite another thing. To understand spiritual things is the gift of God. To have a judgment enlightened by heavenly light and conformed to divine truth is a privilege which only grace can give. Many a man who is accounted wise after the manner of this world is a fool according to the word of the Lord. May we be among those happy children who shall all be taught of the Lord.

170. *"Let my supplication come before thee."* It is the same entreaty with a slight change of words. He humbly calls his cry a supplication, a sort of beggar's petition; and again he asks for audience and for answer. There might be hindrances in the way to an audience, and he begs for their removal—let it come. Other believers are heard—let my prayer come before thee. *"Deliver me according to thy word."* Rid me of mine adversaries, clear me of my slanderers, preserve me from my tempters, and bring me up out of all my afflictions even as thy word has led me to expect thou wilt do. It is for this that he seeks understanding. His enemies would succeed through his folly, if they succeeded at all; but if he exercised a sound discretion they would be baffled, and he would escape from them. The

Lord in answer to prayer frequently delivers his children by making them wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves.

171. *"My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes."* He will not always be pleading for himself, he will rise above all selfishness, and render thanks for the benefit received. He promises to praise God when he has obtained practical instruction in the life of godliness: this is something to praise for, no blessing is more precious. The best possible praise is that which proceeds from men who honour God, not only with their lips, but in their lives. We learn the music of heaven in the school of holy living. He whose life honours the Lord is sure to be a man of praise. David would not only be grateful in silence, but he would express that gratitude in appropriate terms: his lips would utter what his life had practised. Eminent disciples are wont to speak well of the master who instructed them, and this holy man, when taught the statutes of the Lord, promises to give all the glory to him to whom it is due.

172. *"My tongue shall speak of thy word."* When he had done singing he began preaching. God's tender mercies are such that they may be either said or sung. When the tongue speaks of God's word it has a most fruitful subject; such speaking will be as a tree of life, whose leaves shall be for the healing of the people. Men will gather together to listen to such talk, and they will treasure it up in their hearts. The worst of us is that for the most part we are full of our own words, and speak but little of God's word. Oh, that we could come to the same resolve as this godly man, and say henceforth, "My tongue shall speak of thy word." Then should we break through our sinful silence; we should no more be cowardly and half-hearted, but should be true witnesses for Jesus. It is not only of God's works that we are to speak, but of his word. We may extol its truth, its wisdom, its preciousness, its grace, its power; and then we may tell of all it has revealed, all it has promised, all it has commanded, all it has effected. The subject gives us plenty of sea-room; we may speak on for ever: the tale is for ever telling, yet untold. *"For all thy commandments are righteousness."* David appears to have been mainly enamoured of the preceptive part of the word of God, and concerning the precept his chief delight lay in its purity and excellence. When a man can speak this from his heart, his heart is indeed a temple of the Holy Ghost. He had said aforetime (verse 138), "Thy testimonies are righteous," but here he declares that they are righteousness itself. The law of God is not only the standard of right, but it is the essence of righteousness. This the Psalmist affirms of each and every one of the precepts without exception. He felt like Paul—"The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just good." When a man has so high an opinion of God's commandments it is little wonder that his lips should be ready to extol the ever-glorious One.

173. *"Let thine hand help me."* Give me practical succour. Do not entrust me to my friends or thy friends, but put thine own hand to the work. Thy hand has both skill and power, readiness and force: display all these qualities on my behalf. I am willing to do the utmost that I am able to do; but what I need is thine help, and this is so urgently required that if I have it not I shall sink. Do not refuse thy succour. Great as thy hand is, let it light on me, even me. The prayer reminds us of Peter walking on the sea and beginning to sink; he, too, cried, "Lord, help me," and the hand of his Master was stretched out for his rescue. *"For I have chosen thy precepts."* A good argument. A man may fitly ask help from God's hand when he has dedicated his own hand entirely to the obedience of the faith. "I have chosen thy precepts." His election was made, his mind was made up. In reference to all earthly rules and ways, in preference even to his own will, he had chosen to be obedient to the divine commands. Will not God help such a man in holy work and sacred service? Assureedly he will. If grace has given us the heart with which to will, it will also give us the hand with which to perform. Whenever, under the constraints of a divine call, we are engaged in any high and lofty enterprise, and feel it to be too much for our strength, we may always invoke the right hand of God in words like these.

174. *"I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD." He speaks like old Jacob on his deathbed; indeed, all saints, both in prayer and in death, appear as one, in word, and deed, and mind. He knew God's salvation, and yet he longed for it; that is to say, he had experienced a share of it, and he was therefore led to expect something yet higher and more complete. There is a salvation yet to come, when we shall be clean delivered from the body of this death, set free from all the turmoil

and trouble of this mortal life, raised above the temptations and assaults of Satan, and brought near unto our God, to be like him and with him for ever and ever. "I have longed for thy salvation, O Jehovah; *and thy law is my delight.*" The first clause tells us what the saint longs for, and this informs us what is his present satisfaction. God's law, contained in the ten commandments, gives joy to believers. God's law, that is, the entire Bible, is a well-spring of consolation and enjoyment to all who receive it. Though we have not yet reached the fulness of our salvation, yet we find in God's word so much concerning a present salvation that we are even now delighted.

175. *"Let my soul live."* Fill it full of life, preserve it from wandering into the ways of death, give it to enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, let it live to the fulness of life, to the utmost possibilities of its new-created being. *"And it shall praise thee."* It shall praise thee for life, for new life, for thou art the Lord and Giver of Life. The more it shall live, the more it shall praise, and when it shall live in perfection it shall praise thee in perfection. Spiritual life is prayer and praise. *"And let thy judgments help me."* While I read the record of what thou hast done, in terror or in love, let me be quickened and developed. While I see thy hand actually at work upon me, and upon others, chastening sin, and smiling upon righteousness, let me be helped both to live aright and to praise thee. Let all thy deeds in providence instruct me, and aid me in the struggle to overcome sin and to practise holiness. This is the second time he has asked for help in this portion; he was always in need of it, and so are we.

176. This is the *finale*, the conclusion of the whole matter: *"I have gone astray like a lost sheep"*—often, wilfully, wantonly, and even hopelessly, but for thine interposing grace. In times gone by, before I was afflicted, and before thou hadst fully taught me thy statutes, "I went astray" from the practical precepts, from the instructive doctrines, and from the heavenly experiences which thou hadst set before me. I lost my road, and I lost myself. Even now I am apt to wander, and, in fact, have roamed already; therefore, Lord, restore me. *"Seek thy servant."* He was not like a dog, that somehow or other can find its way back; but he was like a lost sheep, which goes further and further away from home; yet still he was a sheep, and the Lord's sheep, his property, and precious in his sight, and therefore he hoped to be sought in order to be restored. However far he might have wandered he was still not only a sheep, but God's "servant," and therefore he desired to be in his Master's house again, and once more honoured with commissions for his Lord. Had he been only a lost sheep he would not have prayed to be sought; but being also a "servant" he had the power to pray. He cries, "Seek thy servant," and he hopes to be not only sought, but forgiven, accepted, and taken into work again by his gracious Master.

Notice this confession; many times in the Psalm David has defended his own innocence against foul-mouthed accusers, but when he comes into the presence of the Lord his God he is ready enough to confess his transgressions. He here sums up, not only his past, but even his present life, under the image of a sheep which has broken from its pasture, forsaken the flock, left the shepherd, and brought itself into the wild wilderness, where it has become as a lost thing. The sheep bleats, and David prays, "Seek thy servant." His argument is a forcible one,—*"for I do not forget thy commandments."* I know the right, I approve and admire the right, what is more, I love the right, and long for it. I cannot be satisfied to continue in sin, I must be restored to the ways of righteousness. I have a home-sickness after my God, I pine after the ways of peace; I do not and I cannot forget thy commandments, nor cease to know that I am always happiest and safest when I scrupulously obey them, and find all my joy in doing so. Now, if the grace of God enables us to maintain in our hearts the loving memory of God's commandments it will surely yet restore us to practical holiness. That man cannot be utterly lost whose heart is still with God. If he be gone astray in many respects, yet still, if he be true in his soul's inmost desires, he will be found again, and fully restored. Yet let the reader remember the first verse of the Psalm while he reads the last: the major blessedness lies not in being restored from wandering, but in being upheld in a blameless way even to the end. Be it ours to keep the crown of the causeway, never leaving the King's highway for By-path Meadow, or any other flowery path of sin. May the Lord uphold us even to the end. Yet even then we shall not be able to boast with the Pharisee, but shall still pray with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and with the Psalmist, "Seek thy servant."

EXPOSITION OF VERSES 169 TO 176.

This commences a new division of the Psalm, indicated by the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter *Tau*, corresponding to our *t*, or *th.*—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 169.—"*Let my cry come near before thee, O* LORD." That is, as some will have it, Let this whole preceding Psalm, and all the petitions (whereof we have here a repetition) therein contained, be highly accepted in heaven.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 169.—"*Let my cry come near before thee, O* LORD." We are now come to the last section of this Psalm, wherein we see David more fervent in prayer than he was in the first, as ye shall easily observe by comparing them both together. The godly, the longer they speak to God, are the more fervent and earnest to speak to him; so that unless necessity compel them, they desire never to intermit conference with him.

Many prayers hath he made to God in this Psalm: now in the end he prays for his prayers, that the Lord would let them come before him. Some men send out prayers, but God turns them into sin, and puts them away back from him: therefore David seeks favour to his prayers.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 169.—"*Give me understanding.*" This was the prayer of Solomon (1 Kings iii. 9), and we are told that it pleased the Lord, and as a reward he added temporal prosperity, which the young king had not asked. Yet Solomon meant less by his prayer than his father David did; for we see in him little trace of the deep devotion for which his father was so remarkable. The Psalmist here prays a deep prayer which can only be answered by the Holy Ghost himself enlightening the soul. The understanding is a most important member of our spiritual frame. Conscience is the understanding exercised upon moral questions, and if that be not right, where shall we be? Our understanding of the word of God comes by teaching, but also through experience we understand hardly anything till we experience it. Such an enlightening experience is the gift of God, and to him we must look for it in prayer.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 169.—"*Give me understanding.*" The especial work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds unto the understanding of the Scripture is called "*understanding.*" The Psalmist prays "*Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law*" (verse 34). So the apostle speaks to Timothy: "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things": 2 Tim. ii. 7. Besides his own consideration of what was proposed unto him, which includes the due and diligent use of all outward means, it was moreover necessary that God *should give him understanding* by an inward effectual work of his Spirit, that he might comprehend the things wherein he was instructed. And the desire hereof, as of that without which there can be no saving knowledge of the word, nor advantage by it, the Psalmist expresseth emphatically, with great fervency of spirit in verse 144: "The righteousness of thy testimony is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live." Without this he knew that he could have no benefit by the everlasting righteousness of the testimonies of God. All understanding, indeed, however it be abused by the most, is the work and effect of the Holy Ghost, for "the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding": Job xxxii. 8. So is this spiritual understanding in an especial manner the gift of God. In this "understanding" both the ability of our mind and the due exercise of it is included. This one consideration, that the saints of God have with so much earnestness prayed that God would *give them understanding* as to his mind and will as revealed in the word, with his reiterated promises that he would so do, is of more weight with me than all the disputes of men to the contrary. No farther argument is necessary to prove that men do not understand the mind of God in the Scripture in a due manner, than their supposal and confidence that so they can do without the communication of a spiritual understanding unto them by the Holy Spirit. This self-confidence is directly contrary unto the plain, express testimonies of the word.—*John Owen.*

Verse 169.—"*Give me understanding.*" Why should the man of God here pray for *understanding?* Had he not often prayed for it before? Was he a novice in knowledge, being a prophet? Doth not our Saviour Christ reprehend repetitions and babbling in prayer? True it is our Saviour Christ doth reprehend that babbling which is without faith and knowledge and a feeling of our wants; but he speaketh not against those serious repetitions which proceed from a plentiful knowledge,

abundant faith, and lively feeling of our necessities. Again, although it cannot be denied but he was a man of God, and had received great grace, yet God giveth knowledge to his dearest saints in this life but in part, and the most which we see and know is but little. Besides, when we have knowledge, and knowledge must be brought into practice, we shall find such difficulties, such waywardness, such forgetfulness, such wants, that although we have had with the prophet a very good direction in the general things of the word, which are universal and few, yet we shall find many distractions in our practices, which must be particular and many; and we shall either fail in memory by forgetfulness, or in judgment by blindness, or in affection by dulness. So easily may we slip when we think we may hold our journey on. Wherefore the man of God, through that examination which he took of his heart and affections, seeing those manifold straits and difficulties, prayeth in the verse following, not for the renewing of men in general in their troubles, but for the considering of his own particular condition.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 169.—"*According to thy word.*" David here seeks understanding not carnally, for the wisdom of the flesh is death: but he seeks understanding *according to God's word.* Without this the wisdom of man is foolishness; and the more subtil he seems to be in his ways, the more deeply he involves himself in the snare of the devil. "They have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" Jer. viii. 9. But seeing he was an excellent prophet, and protested before that he had more understanding than the ancients, yea, than his teachers; how is it that he still prays for understanding? In answer to this we are to know, that there is a great difference between the gifts of nature and grace. Nature ofttimes gives to man very excellent gifts, as rare memory, knowledge, quick wit, strength, external beauty; but therewithal it teacheth not man to consider that in which he is wanting; whereof it comes to pass, that he waxeth proud of that which he hath. This is a common thing to men in the state of nature, that of small gifts they conceive a great pride: but grace, as it gives to man more excellent gifts than nature can afford, so it teacheth him to look unto that which he wants, that he be not puffed up by considering that which he hath, but carried in all humility of heart to pray for that which he wants.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 170.—"*Let my supplication come before thee,*" etc. The sincere worshipper cannot be contented with anything short of actual intercourse with God. The round of duty cannot please where the spirit of grace and supplication has not been vouchsafed. A filial disposition will pour itself forth in earnest longings after communion with God. Nor will the hope of gracious audience be founded on any other plea save that of the sure word of Jehovah's promise. It is in accordance with that word, and not in opposition to it, that the child of God expects to be heard. All his deliverance he feels to be from the Lord, and all that he looks for from heaven he anticipates in answer to prayer. O for more of that faith which makes its appeal to the divine veracity, and which looks with steadfast eye to the promise of a covenant-keeping God.—*John Morison.*

Verse 170.—"*Let my supplication come before thee.*" Observe the order of the words here and in the preceding verse. First we had, "Let my cry come near;" then "Give me understanding," and that "according to thy word," and now we have "*Let my prayer enter in* (LXX., Syr., Arb., Vulg.,) *before thee.*" Just so, if you wish for an interview with a man of very high rank, first you come near his house, then you ask for information and instruction as to his intentions, then you ask permission to enter, lest you should be driven away and refused admittance. Knock therefore at the door of the heavenly palace: knock, not with your bodily hand, but with the right hand of prayer. For the voice can knock as well as the hand, as it is written, "It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh": Cant. v. 2. And when you have knocked, see how you go in, lest after entering you should not get the sight of the King. For there are many who make their way into palaces, and do not at once get an audience of an earthly sovereign, but have to watch constantly to obtain an interview at last. Nor have they the choice of the opportunity, they come when they are sent for, and then present their petition, if they wish to be favourably received.—*Ambrose, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 171.—"*My lips shall utter praise.*" You have stood at the fountain head of a stream of water, and admired while it bubbled up, and ran down in a clear rivulet, till at length it swelled the mighty river. Such is the allusion here.

The heart taught of God cannot contain itself, but breaks out in praise and singing. This would be the effect of divine illumination, and this would be felt to be a privilege, yea, and a high duty. Have you not found so, believers, specially on communion occasions? Be assured, such utterances are the sign of a renewed heart; yea, of a heart filled with all gratitude of right feeling.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 171.—"*My lips shall utter praise,*" etc.

O make me, Lord, thy statutes learn!
  Keep in thy ways my feet,
Then shall my lips divinely burn;
  Then shall my songs be sweet.

Each sin I cast away shall make
  My soul more strong to soar;
Each deed of holiness shall wake
  A strain divine the more.

My voice shall more delight thine ear
  The more I wait on thee;
Thy service bring my song more near
  The angelic harmony.

T. H. Gill, in "Breathings of the Better Life" [1881].

Verse 172.—"*My tongue shall speak of thy word.*" One duty of thankfulness promised by David is, *to speak of God's words* for the edification of others. Every Christian man, as he is a priest to offer sacrifice unto God, so is he a prophet to teach his brethren; for unto us all stands that commandment, "Edify one another in their most holy faith." But, alas, ye shall see many Christians now, who at their tables, and in their companies, can speak freely upon any subject; only for spiritual matters, which concern the soul, there they are dumb, and cannot say with David, "*My tongue shall speak of thy word.*"—*William Cowper.*

Verse 173.—"*Let thine hand help me.*" David having before made promises of thankfulness, seeks now help from God, that he may perform them. Our sufficiency is not of ourselves, but of God; to will and to do are both from him. In temporal things men ofttimes take great pains with small profit; first, because they seek not to make their conscience good; next, because they seek not help from God: therefore they speed no better than Peter, who fished all night and got nothing till he cast his net in the name of the Lord. But in spiritual things we may far less look to prosper, if we call not for God's assistance: the means will not profit us unless God's blessing accompany them. There is preaching, but for the most part without profit; there is prayer, but it prevails not; there is hearing of the word, but without edifying; and all because in spiritual exercises instant prayer is not made unto God, that his hand may be with us to help us.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 173.—"*I have chosen thy precepts.*" Hath God given you a heart to make choice of his ways? O bless God! There was a time when you went on in giving pleasure to the flesh, and you saw then no better thing than such a kind of life, and the Lord hath been pleased to discover better things to you, so as to make you renounce your former ways, and to make choice of another way, in which your souls have found other manner of comforts, and satisfactions, and contentments than ever you did before. Bless God as David did: "Blessed be the Lord who hath given me counsel" . . . . Seeing God hath thus inclined your heart to himself, be for ever established in your *choice:* seeing God hath shown to you his ways, as Pilate said in another case, "That I have written I have written": so say you, "That I have chosen I have chosen."—*Jeremiah Burroughs, in "Moses his Choice."*

Verses 173, 174.—"*I have chosen.*" "*My delight.*" Cheerfulness accompanies election of a thing. Lumpishness is a sign we never chose it, but were forced to it. Such cheerfulness in service procures cheerfulness in mercies: Isa. lxiv. 5, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." He puts to his hand to help such an one. Christ loves not melancholy and phlegmatic service; such a temper in acts of obedience is a disgrace to God and to religion: to God, it betrays us to have jealous thoughts of God, as though he were a hard master; to religion it makes others think duties are drudgeries, and not privileges.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD," etc. The thing which we learn hence out of David's joining these two together, *I long for salvation*, and *thy law is my delight*, is this, that it is not enough for a man to say, he longs and desires to be saved, unless he makes a conscience to use the appointed means to bring him thereunto. It had been but hypocrisy in David to say he longed for salvation, if his conscience had not been able to witness with him that *the law was his delight*. It is mere mockery for a man to say he longeth for bread, and prayeth to God every day to give him his daily bread, if he yet walk in no calling, or else seek to get it by fraud and rapine, not staying himself at all upon God's providence. Who will imagine that a man wisheth for health, who either despiseth or neglecteth the means of his recovery? God hath in his own wisdom appointed a lawful means for every lawful thing; this means, being obediently used, the comfortable obtaining of the end may be confidently looked for; the means being not observed, to think to attain to the end is mere presumption. God will deliver Noah from the flood, but Noah must be "*moved with reverence*," and "*prepare the ark*" (Heb. xi. 7), or else he could not have escaped. He would save Lot from Sodom, but yet Lot must hie him out quickly, and not look behind him till he have entered Zoar: Gen. xix. 17. He was pleased to cure Hezekiah of the plague, but yet Hezekiah must take "a lump of figs, and lay it upon his boil:" Isa. xxxviii. 21. He vouchsafed to preserve Paul and company at sea, yet the sailors must "abide in the ship," else ye cannot be saved, saith Paul: Acts xxvii. 31.—*Samuel Hieron*, 1572—1617.

Verse 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation.*" It is God's salvation proper that he must desire—"*thy salvation*"—for nothing else could satisfy his pure mind—perfect peace with God, perfect purity and perfect hope. Now if you ask what was God's way of delivering, and what was his way of salvation, the answer is, it was set forth in his word, and was what the Psalmist calls his "*law.*" God's salvation and his law were discerned to be one. "*I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD; *and thy law is my delight.*"—*John Stephen.*

Verse 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord.*" "*Salvation*," by the "hand," or arm of Jehovah (which is often in scripture a title of Messiah), hath been the object of the hopes, the desires, and "longing" expectations of the faithful, from Adam to this hour, and will continue so to be until he, who hath already visited us in great humility, shall come again in glorious majesty to complete our redemption and take us to himself.—*George Horne.*

Verse 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation, O* LORD." For a present salvation from the guilt and power of sin, and for future salvation, in the full and everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven. David had the happiness to be a partaker, both of pardoning mercy and of sanctifying grace; yet still he longed for more of this salvation, that is, for a more assured faith of pardoning mercy, and larger measures of sanctifying grace. A gracious soul is insatiable; the more it hath received, the more it desires to receive. Enjoyment, instead of surfeiting, sharpens the appetite. Nay, so sweet is the relishing of spiritual things, that every renewed taste of them quenches the thirst for other things.

"*Thy law is my delight.*" Here David chooses the term "*law*" for denoting the whole revelation of God's will, to remind us of the inseparable connexion between privilege and duty, faith and obedience, holiness and comfort; and to teach us that we ought to be thankful to God for the direction he hath given us in the road to heaven no less than for the promises by which we are assured of the possession of it.—*Robert Walker*, 1716—1783.

Verse 174.—"*Thy law is my delight.*" Religion will decay or flourish as it is our *duty* or our *delight*. The mind is incapable of continued exertion *for duty;* but it readily falls in *with* "*delight.*" Thus our duties become our privileges, while Christ is their source and life. Every step of progress is progress in happiness. This verse (of which experience is the best interpreter) is the believer's language in his lively, as well as in his fainting state. For the more he knows and enjoys of the Divine presence, the more he longs to know and enjoy it.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 174.—"*Delight*," in the plural, "*delights*," as in verses 24, 77, 92, 143. God's word is an abundant source of pleasure to his people.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 175.—"*Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*," etc. This verse containeth three things, 1st. David's petition for life: "*Let my soul live.*" "*My soul;*" that is, myself: the soul is put for the whole man. The contrary: "Let me die with the Philistines," said Samson (Judges xxi. 30); Hebrew, margin, "Let my soul

die." His life was sought after by the cruelty of his enemies; and he desireth God to keep him alive.

2ndly. His argument from the aim of his life; *"And it shall praise thee."* The glorifying of God was his aim. The fruit of all God's benefits is to profit us, and praise God. David professeth that all the days of his life he would live in the sense and acknowledgment of such a benefit.

3rdly. The ground of his hope and confidence in the last clause: *"And let thy judgments help me."* Our hopes of help are grounded on God's judgments, whereby is meant his word. There are judgments decreed, and judgments executed; doctrinal judgments, and providential judgments. That place intimateth the distinction: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil:" Eccl. viii. 11. There is *sententia lata et dilata.* Here God's judgments are put for the sentence pronounced; and chiefly for one part of them, the promises of grace. As also, "I have hoped in thy judgments:" Ps. cxix. 43. Promises are the objects of hope.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 175.—*"Let my soul live."* What is the life that the Psalmist is now praying for, but the salvation for which he had just expressed his longing? The taste that he has received makes him hunger for a higher and more continued enjoyment—not for selfish gratification, but that he might employ himself in the praise of his God. Indeed, as we have drawn towards the close of this Psalm, we cannot but have observed that character of praise to pervade his experience, which has been generally remarked in the concluding Psalms of this sacred book. Much do we lose of spiritual strength for want of occupying ourselves more in the exercise of praise.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 175.—*"Live and praise."* The saint improves his earthly things for an heavenly end. Where layest thou up thy treasure? Dost thou bestow it on thy voluptuous appetite, thy hawks and thy hounds; or lockest thou it up in the bosom of Christ's poor members? What use makest thou of thy honour and greatness? To strengthen the hands of the godly or the wicked? And so of all thy other temporal enjoyments. A gracious heart improves them for God; when a saint prays for these things, he hath an eye to some heavenly end. If David prays for life, it is not that he may live, but *"live and praise God."* When he was driven from his regal throne by the rebellious arms of Absalom, see what his desire and hope were, 2 Sam. xv. 25: "The king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation." Mark, not shew me my crown, my palace, but the ark, the house of God.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 175.—*"Live and praise."* Liveliness of soul is the Spirit's gift, and it will show itself in abounding praises.—*Henry Law.*

Verse 175.—*"Let thy judgments help me."* In the second clause it would be harsh to understand the word *"judgments"* of the commandments, to which it does not properly belong to give help. It seems, then, that the prophet, perceiving himself liable to numberless calamities—even as the faithful, by reason of the unbridled license of the wicked, dwell in this world as sheep among wolves,—calls upon God to protect him in the way of restraining, by his secret providence, the wicked from doing him harm. It is a very profitable doctrine, when things in the world are in a state of great confusion, and when our safety is in danger amidst so many and varied storms, to lift up our eyes to the judgments of God, and to seek a remedy in them.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 175, 176—

> Though like a sheep estranged I stray,
> Yet have I not renounced thy way.
> Thine hand extend; thine own reclaim;
> Grant me to live, and praise thy name.
>
> *Richard Mant.*

Verse 176.—*"I have gone astray like a lost sheep."* Though a sheep go astray, yet it is soon called back by the voice of the shepherd: "My sheep hear my voice." Thus David when he went against Nabal was called back by the Lord's voice in a woman; and when he had slain Uriah he was brought again by Nathan. And therefore if we will be sheep, then though we sometimes go astray, yet we must be easily reclaimed.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 176.—"*I have gone astray like a lost sheep,*" driven out by storm, or dark day, or by the hunting of the dogs chased out from the rest of the flock.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 176.—"*I have gone astray like a lost sheep,*" etc. And this is all the conclusion—"*a lost sheep*"! This long Psalm of ascriptions, praises, avowals, resolves, high hopes, ends in this, that he is a perishing sheep. But, stay, there is hope—"*Seek thy servant.*" "*I have gone astray like a lost sheep.*" The original is of the most extensive range, comprehending all time past, and also the habitual tendencies of the man. The believer feels that he had gone astray when the grace of God found him; that he had gone astray many times, had not the grace of God prevented it. He feels that he went astray on such and such unhappy occasions. He also feels that he hath gone astray in all that he hath done; and indeed that he is astray now. But the word expresses the habitual tendency likewise—I go astray like a lost sheep, and this rendering is in keeping with the prayer, "*Seek thy servant.*" The third member is also properly rendered in keeping with it: "I go astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." All this is descriptive of the remaining corruption that is in the believer. He is not unmindful of the Lord; he has the root of the matter in him, the seed of divine life; yet he does go astray; whence the necessity of the prayer: "*Seek thy servant.*" Isaiah's description of men, although conveyed in the same terms, is evidently more sweeping as the context words show: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This would seem to apply to the race of man. Rather is the experience of the Psalmist similar to that described by the apostle Paul: "I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." And the Psalmist had the same remedy at the early period, as had the apostle in the later times; for God's salvation is one. The Psalmist's remedy was, "*Seek thy servant;*" the apostle's, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—*John Stephen.*

Verse 176.—"*I have gone astray.*" The original word signifies either the turning of the foot, or the turning of the heart, or both, out of the way. "*I have gone astray like a lost sheep;*" that is, I have been deceived, and so have gone out of the way of thy holy commandments. Satan is an ill guide, and our hearts are no better: he that follows either, quickly loseth himself; and until God seeketh us (as David prays in the next words), we cannot find our way when we are once out of it.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 176.—"*I have gone astray.*" Gotthold one day saw a farmer carefully counting his sheep as they came from the field. Happening at the time to be in an anxious and sorrowful mood, he gave vent to his feelings and said: Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why disquieted with vexing thoughts? Surely thou must be dear to the Most High as his lambs are to this farmer. Art thou not better than many sheep? Is not Jesus Christ thy shepherd? Has not he risked his blood and life for thee? Hast thou no interest in his words: "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand"? John x. 28. This man is numbering his flock; and thinkest thou that God does not also count and care for his believing children and elect, especially as his beloved Son has averred, that the very hairs of our head are all numbered? Matt. x. 30. During the day, I may perhaps have gone out of the way, and heedlessly followed my own devices; still, at the approach of evening, when the faithful Shepherd counts his lambs, he will mark my absence, and graciously seek and bring me back. Lord Jesus, "*I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.*"—*Christian Scriver* (1629—1693), *in Gotthold's Emblems.*

Verse 176.—"*I have gone astray,*" etc. Who is called "the man after God's own heart"? David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes—there was no want of sin. And, therefore, unbelievers sneer, and ask, "Is this your man after God's own heart?" The sneer, it seems to me, is but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, the often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? . . . . David's life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given us of a man's moral progress and warfare here

below. All earnest souls will ever discover in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled—sore baffled—driven as into entire wreck ; yet a struggle never ended, ever with tears, repentance, true unconquerable purpose begun anew.—*Thomas Carlyle* (1795—1881), *in "Heroes and Hero-Worship."*

Verse 176.—*"For I do not forget thy commandments."* In all my wandering ; with my consciousness of error ; with my sense of guilt ; I still *do* feel that I love thy law, thy service, thy commandments. They are the joy of my heart, and I desire to be recalled from all my wanderings, that I may find perfect happiness in thee and in thy service evermore. Such is the earnest wish of every regenerated heart. For as such a one may have wandered from God, yet he is conscious of true attachment to him and his service ; he desires and earnestly prays that he may be " sought out," brought back, and kept from wandering any more.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verses 176.—*"For I do not forget thy commandments."* The godly never so fall but there remains in them some grace, which reserves a hope of medicine to cure them : so David here. Albeit he transgressed some of God's commandments, yet he fell not into any full oblivion of them.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 176.—I do not think that there could possibly be a more appropriate conclusion of such a Psalm as this, so full of the varied experience and the ever-changing frames and feelings even of a child of God, in the sunshine and the cloud, in the calm and in the storm, than this ever-clinging sense of his propensity to wander, and the expression of his utter inability to find his way back without the Lord's guiding hand to restore him ; and at the same time with it all, his fixed and abiding determination never to forget the Lord's commandments. What an insight into our poor wayward hearts does this verse give us—not merely liable to wander, but ever wandering, ever losing our way, ever stumbling on the dark mountains, even while cleaving to God's commandments ! But at the same time what a prayer does it put into our mouths, *"Seek thy servant,"*—" I am thine, save me." Yes, blessed be God ! there is One mighty to save. " Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."—*Barton Bouchier.*

As far as I have been able, as far as I have been aided by the Lord, I have treated throughout, and expounded, this great Psalm. A task which more able and learned expositors have performed, or will perform better ; nevertheless, my services were not to be withheld from it on that account, when my brethren earnestly required it of me.—*Augustine.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Outlines upon Keywords of the Psalm, by Pastor C. A. Davis.

A good memory.—I. What it should retain: God's *"name"* (ver. 55); God's *"word"* (ver. 16); God's *"law"* (ver. 109). The law is dilated upon under various names, *"statutes"* (ver. 83); *"precepts"* (ver. 141); *"commandments"* (ver. 176); *"judgments"* (ver. 52). II. How its retentive power may be fostered. By effort of will (ver. 16; 93). By delight in the theme (ver. 16). By a consideration of blessings received (ver. 93). III. Hindrances that must be overcome. Such as arise from severe affliction (ver. 83); from personal danger (ver. 109); and from insignificance and relative contempt (ver. 141). IV. Reasons for its cultivation. Former blessings derived (ver. 93). It furnishes ground of appeal to God (ver. 153; 176). V. The good that will spring from it. Consistent fidelity (ver. 55); or, if necessary, restoration from backsliding (ver. 176). Divine consideration (ver. 153); comfort (ver. 52); delight (ver. 16). And now the believer may appeal to the remembrance of God (ver. 49).

The believer in affliction.—I. His distress (ver. 92). II. His support (ver. 92). III. His submission (ver. 75). IV. His prayer (ver. 107; 153). V. Its answer (ver. 50). VI. His review (ver. 71).

Spiritual understanding.—I. Is the gift of God. Jehovah (the only wise), 169. Creator (who has endowed us with our other faculties, therefore with this), 73. Master (who allots our service and therefore our qualification), 125. II. Must be sought from God. With deep sense of need, 169. With faith, 169. With perseverance and importunity, 27, 34, 73, 125, 144, 169. III. Pleas to be used in the prayer for understanding. That I may *learn*, 73, and *know* thy commandments, 125. That thus I may live, 144. Hating every false way, 104. Rendering whole-hearted obedience, 34, and engaging in godly conversation, 27. IV. When obtained it must be improved by exercise in the Word of God. The entrance of the word into the heart is its dawn, 130. It increases by meditation in the word, 99. Is brought to perfection by faithful observance of the precepts of the word, 100. John vii. 17.

The Ten Titles of the Word of God.—"Way" (ver. 1, etc.). "Law" (ver. 1). "Testimonies" (ver. 2). "Precepts" (ver. 4). "Statutes" (ver. 5). "Commandments" (ver. 6). "Judgments" (ver. 7). "Word" (ver. 9). "Truth" (ver. 30). "Righteousness" (ver. 40).

Show the particular shade of meaning in each of these titles, and the light they cast on the divine law and on the duty of the believer.

Holy meditation.—I. Its theme: The revealed will of God in its varied aspects; *i.e.* "precepts"; "statutes"; "law"; "testimonies"; "word." II. The spirit which prompts it: Love (vers. 48 and 97). Love to God will induce meditation. Neglect of meditation argues want of love. III. Its times: By "day" (ver. 97). By "night" (ver. 148); when maltreated by the world (ver. 78); when falsely accused (ver. 23). IV. Its results: A holy walk (ver. 15). Proficiency in understanding (ver. 99). Support in trial (ver. 23, 78).

If you would gladden your nights and days and your times of trial, if you would excel in heavenly wisdom, and hallow your life, abundantly occupy yourself with sacred meditation.

The Psalm treated in its Sections, by C. A. Davis.

The subject of each portion is indicated in its first verse. Each section may serve as the subject for a discourse.

Verses 1—8.—*The undefiled;* described, in vers. 1—3. Such a life commanded by God is prayed for in ver. 5, and with its attendant happiness is anticipated in ver. 6—7, and resolved upon in ver. 8.

Verses 9—16.—*Sanctification by the word,* declared generally (ver. 9); sought personally (ver. 10—12); published to others (ver. 13); personally rejoiced in (ver. 14—16).

Verses 17—24.—*Divine bounties desired.* Life, for godly service (ver. 17). Illumination (ver. 18). Guidance homeward for the stranger (" thy commandments ") (ver. 19—20), and, glancing at the proud who err from this guidance (ver. 21), the Psalmist prays for removal of the " reproach " entailed by fidelity to God (ver. 22—24).

Verses 25—32.—*Quickening.* Prayed for with confession (ver. 25, 26). When obtained shall be talked of (ver. 27). Desired for the sake of strength (ver. 28), of truthfulness (ver. 29—31), and of activity (ver. 32).

Verses 33—40.—*Faithfulness secured by divine inworking.* Prayer for divine teaching, understanding, constraint, and control of heart and eyes, to ensure persevering and whole-hearted faithfulness (ver. 33—37). The Psalmist, thus established in the word, prays for the establishment of the word to himself (ver. 38); deprecates the reproach of unfaithfulness (ver. 39); and enforces the whole prayer by the vehemence of the desire which prompts it (ver. 40).

Verses 41—48.—*Promised mercies.* Desired (ver. 41), as an answer to " him that reproacheth " (ver. 42, 43); as a means of faithfulness (ver. 44); liberty (ver. 45); boldness (ver. 46); delight (ver. 47), and eager longing (ver. 48).

Verses 49—56.—*Hope in affliction.* It arises from God's word (ver. 49). It produces comfort (ver. 50), even in trouble caused by the wicked (ver. 51—53). It gladdens the believer's pilgrimage and his holy night-seasons (ver. 54—56).

Verses 57—64.—*The believer's portion.* The Lord is the believer's portion (ver. 57); heartily sought (ver. 58—60); remaining though all else be taken away (ver. 61); causing joy even at midnight (ver. 62), and the selection of congenial company (ver. 63, 64).

Verses 65—72.—*The Lord's dealings.* Gratefully acknowledged (ver. 65), and their instructiveness still desired (ver. 66), even affliction from him is " good " (ver. 67, 68), and with its beneficial result is preferred to the prosperity of the wicked (ver. 69—72).

Verses 73—80.—*Natural and spiritual creation.* The Psalmist prays to the Creator for spiritual life or " understanding " (ver. 73), he will then be welcomed by the spiritual (ver. 74). He submissively receives affliction for spiritual training (vers. 75—77), deprecates the hostility of the proud (ver. 78), craves the company of the spiritual (ver. 79), and prays for heart-soundness (ver. 80).

Verses 81—88.—*Hope in depression.* In the depression arising from mortal frailness (ver. 81—84), and from unjust persecution (ver. 85—87), the word of God is the source of joy and comfort.

Verses 89—96.—*The immutable word of God.* Is enthroned in heaven (ver. 89), and on earth (ver. 90, 91), is the salvation of the believer in affliction (ver. 92—94), his resource in danger (ver. 95), and the embodiment of perfection (ver. 96).

Verses 97—104.—*The profitableness of holy meditation.* Its theme—" thy law " (ver. 97), its effect—" wisdom " (ver. 98—100), practically shown in daily life (ver. 101, 102), its sweetness (ver. 103), and hallowing influence (ver. 104).

Verses 105—112.—*The word a lamp.* For guidance (ver. 105, 106). For life in affliction (ver. 107). For preservation in peril of enemies (ver. 109, 110). For joy of heart (ver. 111, 112).

Verses 113—120.—*Vain thoughts contrasted with God's law.* The believer takes sides (ver. 113—115); prays for upholding in the law (ver. 116, 117); contemplates the fate of the followers of vain thoughts (ver. 118, 119); and expresses the godly fear thereby inspired (ver. 120).

Verses 121—128.—*The just man's prayer against injustice.* Out of the prison of oppression he appeals to God to be his surety (ver. 121, 122); utters his weary longing for deliverance (ver. 123—125); points to the " time " (ver. 126); and professes his supreme love for God's law in contrast to the oppressors' contempt of it (ver. 127, 128).

Verses 129—136.—*The wonderfulness of God's testimonies.* Declared (ver. 129), instanced as light-giving (ver. 130), pantingly longed for (ver. 131). An appeal for divine ordering in the word (ver. 132—135). Grief at its rejection by others (ver. 136).

Verses 137—144.—*The righteousness of God and his word.* Declared (ver. 137, 138). Indignation at the forgetfulness of the enemies (ver. 139). The purity of the word

(ver. 140, 141). This righteousness of God and of his testimonies is everlasting (ver. 142—144).

Verses 145—152.—*The believer's cry.* The reiterated cry (ver. 145—148). An appeal for audience (ver. 149). The nearness of the enemy perceived (ver. 150). But, in response to the cry, God is also near (ver. 151).

Verses 153—160.—*Divine consideration besought.* "Consider my affliction" (ver. 153); my cause (ver. 154); "for thy mercies' sake" (ver. 156). Consider my persecutors (ver. 157—158), and my love to thy precepts (ver. 160), and act accordingly.

Verses 161—168.—*What the word is to the believer.* The object of awe (ver. 161), joy (ver. 162), love (ver. 163), praise (ver. 164), the producer of peace (ver. 165), and hope (166); therefore exceedingly loved (ver. 167), and faithfully kept (ver. 168).

Verses 169—176.—*The concluding cry.* Bespeaking audience for his cry, the Psalmist asks for understanding and deliverance (ver. 169, 170); promises to praise God (ver. 171), and to speak of God (ver. 172), and again cries for help (ver. 173), salvation (ver. 174), life (ver. 175), and restoration (ver. 176).

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"*Blessed.*" True blessedness lies in—I. Defilement avoided by the word. II. Delight experienced in the word.

Verse 1.—Spiritual pedestrians are often mentioned in this Psalm. Model travellers are described in this passage. Observe,—I. *Their Character:* "Undefiled." They are so (1) *in Christ:* found in him; complete; accepted. They are so (2) *by Christ:* His spirit, truth, and grace are in them. "Chosen generation," "peculiar people." II. *Their path:* "the law of the Lord." This path is (1) *Conspicuous*—high, visible, distinguished from every other. (2) *Ancient.* The old path. Holiness is older than sin, wisdom than folly, life than death, joy than sorrow. (3) *Safe.* Christ has repaired it. Apart from his work none can pass safely over. He has brought down mountains, raised up valleys, made crooked places straight, and rough places smooth. He has driven away the lion. (4) *Narrow.* It has a fence of commands on one side, and of prohibitions on the other. It is entered by a strait gate, which renders it necessary for the great to become as little children. III. *Their progress:* "walk." Not only talk, but step in the footprints of Jesus. Follow the law-fulfiller. They proceed in the exercise of his graces, in the exhibition of his virtues, in the fulfilment of his injunctions, and in the enjoyment of his favours. IV. *Their happiness:* "Blessed." They have unfailing help, suitable company, animating prospects on the way.—*W. Jackson*, 1882.

Verses 1, 2, 3.—I. Positive and Negative Beatitudes of Being.—II. Six Conditions of Peace with God. 1. Purity. 2. Obedience. 3. Fidelity. 4. Seeking. 5. Integrity. 6. Following.—*William Durban*, 1882.

Verse 2.—"*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*" I. *The sacred Quest:* "Seek him." He has been sought among the trees, the hills, the planets, the stars. He has been sought in his own defaced image, man. He has been sought amid the mysterious wheels of Providence. But these quests have often been prompted simply by intellect, or compelled by conscience, and have therefore resulted but in a cold, faint light. He has been sought in the word which this Psalm so highly extols, when it has led up the smoke-covered and gleaming peaks of Sinai. It has been followed, when it has led beneath the olives of Gethsemane to witness a mysterious struggle in blood-sweating and anguish; to Calvary, where, in the place of a skull, life and immortality are brought to light. The sacred quest but there begins. II. *The Conduct of the Quest.* Seekers might be mistakenly dejected by so literal an interpretation of the "whole heart." We do not hesitate to say a stream is in its whole volume flowing toward sea while there are little side creeks in which the water eddies backward; or to say the tide is coming despite receding waves; or that spring is upon us despite hail-storm and biting wind. Indication of, 1. Unity. 2. Intensity. 3. Determination. No one conducts this quest aright who is not prompted to or sustained in it by the gracious Spirit. III. *Blessedness both in the pursuit and issue.* 1. Blessedness in the bitterness of penitence. The door-handle touched by him drops of myrrh. The rising sun sends kindling beams upon the highest peaks. 2. Blessedness in the gladsome findings of salvation and adoption. 3. Blessedness in the perpetual pursuit.—*William Anderson*, 1882.

Verse 2.—The double blessing. I. On keeping the testimonies. II. On seeking the Lord.

Verse 2.—"*That seek him with the whole heart.*" I. Seek what? God himself. No peace until he is found. II. Seek where? In his testimonies. 1. By studying them. 2. By keeping to them. III. Seek how? With the whole heart.—*George Rogers.*

Verse 2. — *Seeking for God.* I. The Psalmist's way of seeking God. 1. He sought God *with the heart.* Only the heart can find God. Sight fails. "The scientific method" fails. All reason fails. Only love and trust can succeed. Love sees much where all other perception finds nothing. Faith generally goes with discovery, and nowhere so much as in finding God. 2. He sought God *with all his heart.* (1) Half-heartedness seldom finds anything worth having. (2) Half-heartedness shows contempt for God. (3) God will not reveal himself to half-heartedness. It would be putting the highest premium possible upon indifference. II. The Psalmist's plea in seeking God: "Let me not wander from thy commandments." 1. God's commandments lead, presently, into his own presence. If we take even the moral law,

every one of the ten commandments leads away from the world, and sin, into that seclusion of holiness in which he hides. It is thus with all the commandments of the Scriptures. 2. The earnestness of the soul's search for God becomes, in itself, a plea with God that he will be found of us. God, who loves importunity in prayer, loves it no less when it takes the form of searching with all the heart. He who seeks with all the heart finds special encouragement to pray: "Let me not wander from thy commandments."—*F. G. Marchant.*

Verse 2.—"*That seek him.*" We must remember six conditions required in them who would seek the Lord rightly. I. We must seek him in Christ the Mediator. John xiv. 6. II. We must seek him in truth. Jer. x. 10; John iv. 24; Ps. vii. 6. III. We must seek him in holiness. 2 Tim. ii. 19; Heb. xii. 14; 1 John iii. IV. We must seek him above all things and for himself. V. We must seek him by the light of his own word. VI. We must seek him diligently and with perseverance, never resting till we find him, with the spouse in the Canticles.—*William Cowper.*

Verses 2, 4, 5, 8.—"Blessed are they that *keep.*" "Thou hast commanded us to *keep.*" "O that my ways were directed to *keep.*" "I will *keep.*" The blessedness of *keeping* God's precepts—displayed (2), commanded (4), prayed for (5), resolved upon (8).—*C. A. D.*

Verse 3.—"*They also do no iniquity.*" They work no iniquity with—1. Purpose of heart; 2. Delight; 3. Perseverance; 4. Nor at all when the heart is fully sanctified unto God; Christ dwelling in it by faith, and casting out sin.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—The relation between negative and positive virtue. Or walking with God the best preventive of iniquity.

Verse 4.—I. Take notice of the law-giver: "Thou." Not thy equal, or one that will be baffled, but the great God. II. He hath interposed his authority: "hast commanded." III. The nature of this obedience, or the thing commanded: "To keep thy precepts."—*T. Manton.*

Verse 4.—*The supplementary commandment.* God having ordained the moral law, supplements it with a commandment prescribing the manner of keeping it. Hence: I. God is not indifferent to men's treatment of his law—whether they observe, neglect, or defy it. II. When observed, God discriminates the spirit of its observance, whether slavish, partial, careless, or diligent. III. There is but one spirit of obedience, whether slavish, partial, careless, or diligent. III. There is but one spirit of obedience which satisfies God's requirements. "Diligently" implies an obedience which is,—careful to ascertain the law—prompt to fulfil it (ver. 60)—unreserved—love-inspired ("diligently," old meaning, through the Latin, "lovingly," ver. 47, 97, 113). IV. Does our obedience come up to this standard?—*C. A. D.*

Verse 4.—Not only is service commanded, but the manner of it. Heartiness, care, perseverance required, because without these it will not be true, uniform, or victorious over difficulty.

Verse 4.—How to obey: "*Diligently.*" 1. Not partially, but fully. 2. Not doubtfully, but confidently. 3. Not reluctantly, but readily. 4. Not slovenly, but carefully. 5. Not coldly, but earnestly. 6. Not fitfully, but regularly.—*W. J.*

Verses 4, 5, 6.—A willing recognition (ver. 4). An ardent aspiration (ver. 5). A happy consequence (ver. 6).—*W. D.*

Verse 5.—The prayer of the gracious. I. Suggested by each preceding clause of blessing. II. By a consciousness of failure. III. By a loving clinging to the Lord.

Verse 5.—I. The end desired: "To keep thy statutes." Not to be safe merely, or happy, but holy. II. The help implored. 1. To understand the divine precepts. 2. To keep them.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—Longing to obey. 1. *It is a noble aspiration.* There is nothing grander than the desire to do this except the doing of it. 2. *It is a spiritual aspiration.* Not the offspring of our carnal nature. It is the heart of God in the new creature. 3. *It is a practicable aspiration.* We sometimes sigh for the impossible. But this may be attained by divine grace. 4. *It is an intense aspiration.* It is the "Oh!" of a burning wish. 5. *It is an influential aspiration.* It does not evaporate in sighs. It is a mighty incentive implanted by grace which will not let us rest without holiness.—*W. J.*

Verse 6.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1443: "A Clear Conscience."

Verse 6.—Holy confidence the offspring of universal obedience.

Verse 6.—*The armour of proof.* I. Universal obedience will give unabashed confidence—1. Before the criticising world. 2. In the court of conscience. 3. At the throne of grace. 4. In the day of judgment. II. But our obedience is far from

universal, and leaves us open to—1. The world's shafts. 2. The rebukes of conscience. 3. It paralyses our prayers, and, 4. It dares not appear for us at the bar of God. III. Then let us by faith wrap ourselves in the perfect righteousness of Christ. Our answer to the world's cavil. We are not faultless, and for salvation we rest wholly on another. This righteousness is—1. The salve of our wounded conscience. 2. Our mighty plea in prayer. 3. Our triumphant vindication in the judgment day.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 6.—Topic :—Self-respect depends on respect for one greater than self.—*W. D.*

Verse 7.—The best of praise, the best of learning, the best of blendings, viz., praise and holiness.

Verse 7.—I. The professor of sacred music : " I will praise." II. The subject of his song : " Thee." III. The instrument : " Heart." IV. The instrument tuned ; " Uprightness of heart." V. The musician's training academy : " Judgments."—*W. D.*

Verse 7.—Learning and praising. I. They are *two spiritual exercises.* It is possible for learners and singers to be carnal and sensual ; but in this case they are employed about the righteous ends, works, and ways of the Lord. II. They are *two appropriate exercises.* What can be more seemly than to learn of God and to praise him? III. They are *two profitable exercises.* The expectations of the most utilitarian are surpassed. The pleasure and the profit yield abundant reward. Heart, head, life are all benefited. IV. They are *two mutually-assisting exercises.* In the one we are receptive, and in the other communicative. By the one we are fitted to do the other. By the former we are stimulated to do the latter. How wonderfully the lesson is turned into a song, and the learner into a singer.—*W. J.*

Verse 7.—I. Deficiency confessed : " When I shall have learned." This is essential to growth. It is an admission all can truly make. II. Progress anticipated. He gave his heart to the work of learning. He sought divine help. III. Praise promised. He promised it to God alone. He vowed it should be sincere : " with upright heart."—*W. Williams*, 1882.

Verse 8.—I. A hopeful resolve for life. II. A dreadful fear. III. A series of considerations removing the fear.

Verse 8.—I. The resolution : " I will keep," etc. II. The petition : " O forsake me not utterly." 1. Filial submission. I deserve it occasionally. 2. Filial confidence. " Not utterly." III. The connection between the two. Obedience without prayer and prayer without obedience are equally in vain. To make headway both oars must be applied. God cannot abide lazy beggars, who while they can get anything by asking will not work.—*G. R.*

Verse 8.—*"O forsake me not utterly."* Divine desertion deprecated. I. The anguished prayer. 1. Sovereign forsakings. Sovereignty is not arbitrariness or capriciousness ; perhaps its right definition is mysterious kingly love ; unknown now, but justified when revealed. 2. Vicarious forsakings. 3. Forsakings on account of sin. David, Jonah, and Peter. The seven churches of Asia ; the Jews. But to know what *"utter"* both in regard to degree and time means, we must go to hell. Like one trembling on the very verge of hell, he prays. Like belated traveller, in vast wood and surrounded by beasts of prey, sighs at day's departure. Like the watch on the raft, seeing the sail that he has shouted himself hoarse to stop fading away in the sky line. II. Its doctrinal foundation. Where he condescendeth to dwell, his abode is perpetual. He can only utterly forsake us because he was deceived in us. He can only utterly forsake because baffled. Both imply blasphemy. Thou who hatest putting away, thou who hast never yet *utterly* forsaken any saint, make not me the solitary exception. III. Historical certainty of answer. The saint and the church in all time delivered. It may tarry till " eventide," as in Cowper's case. His face bore after death an expression of delighted suprprise.—*W. A.*

Verse 9.—I. The young man's question. II. The wise man's reply.

Verse 9.—In the word of God, when applied to the heart by the Spirit of God, there is, I. A sufficiency of light to discover to men the need of cleansing their way. II. Sufficiency of energy for the cleansing their way. III. A sufficiency of pleasure to encourage them to choose to cleanse their way. IV. A sufficiency of support to sustain them in their cleansed way.—*Theophilus Jones, in a "Sermon to the Young,"* 1829.

Verse 9.—The word of God provides for the cleansing of the way, I. By pointing out to the young man the evil of the way. II. By discovering an infallible remedy

for the disorders of his nature—the salvation that is by Jesus Christ. III. By becoming a directory in all the paths of duty to which he may be called.—*Daniel Wilson*, 1828.

Verse 9.—The Psalmist's rules for the attainment of holiness deduced from his own experience. 1. Seek God with thy "whole heart" (ver. 2). Be truly sensible of your wants. 2. Keep and remember what God says (ver. 11): "Thy word have I hidden," etc. 3. Reduce all this to practice (ver. 11): "That I might not sin against thee." 4. Bless God for what he has given (ver. 12): "Blessed art thou," etc. 5. Ask more (ver. 12): "Teach me thy statutes." 6. Be ready to communicate his knowledge to others (ver. 13): "With my lips have I declared." 7. Let it have a due effect on thy own heart (ver. 14): "I have rejoiced," etc. 8. Meditate frequently upon them (ver. 15): "I will meditate," etc. 9. Deeply reflect on them (ver. 16): "I will have respect," etc. As food undigested will not nourish the body, so the word of God not considered with deep meditation and reflection will not feed the soul. 10. Having pursued the above course he should continue in it, and then his happiness would be secured (ver. 16): "I will not forget thy word: I will (in consequence) delight myself in thy statutes."—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9.—A question and answer for the young. The Bible is a book for young people. Here it intimates, I. That the young man's way *needs to be cleansed.* His way of thinking, feeling, speaking, acting. II. That *he must take an active part in the work.* The efficient cause in the operation is God. Other good influences are also at work. But the young man must be in hearty and practical sympathy with the work. III. That *he must use the Bible for the purpose.* This records facts, presents incitations, enjoins precepts, utters promises, and sets up examples, all which are adapted to make a young man holy. By reading, studying, and imitating the Scriptures in a lowly and prayerful spirit the young shall escape pollution and ornament society.—*W. J.*

Verse 9.—A word to the young. I. Show how the young man is in special danger of defiling his way. Through, 1. His strong passions. 2. His immature judgment. 3. His inexperience. 4. His rash self-sufficiency. 5. His light companions, and, 6. His general heedlessness. II. The circumspection he should use to cleanse his way. *"Taking heed,"* 1. Of his evil propensities. 2. Of his companions. 3. Of his pursuits. 4. Of the tendencies of all he does. III. The infallible guide by which his circumspection is to be regulated: *"according to thy word"*—that is to say, 1. Its precepts. 2. Its examples. 3. Its motives. 4. Its warnings. 5. Its allurements.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 10.—I. A grateful review. II. An anxious forecast. III. A commendable prayer.

Verse 10.—The believer's two great solicitudes. 1. What he is anxious to find: "I have sought thee." 2. What he is afraid of losing: "Thy commandments."—*W. D.*

Verse 10.—*Sincerity not self-sufficiency.* I. The believer must be conscious of whole-heartedness in seeking God. II. But consciousness of sincerity does not warrant self-sufficiency. III. The most whole-hearted seeker must still look to divine grace to keep him from wandering.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 11.—The best thing, in the best place, for the best of purposes.

Verse 12.—The blessedness of God, and the mode of entering into it.

Verse 12.—I. David gives glory to God: *"Blessed art thou, O LORD."* II. He asks grace from God.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12.—I. What it is, or how God doth teach us. 1. God doth teach us outwardly; by his ordinances, by the ministry of men. 2. Inwardly; by the inspiration and work of the Holy Ghost. II. The necessity of his teaching. III. The benefit and utility of it.—*T. Manton.*

Verse 12.—*Desire for Divine Teaching excited by the Recognition of Divine Blessedness.* I. Unveil in some inadequate degree the happiness of the ever blessed God, arising from his purity, benevolence, love. II. Show the way in which man may become partaker of that blessedness by conformity to his precepts. III. Utter the prayer of the text.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 13.—Speech fitly employed. It is occupied with a choice subject, a full subject, a subject profitable to men, and glorifying to God.

Verse 14.—Practical religion, the source of a comfort surpassing riches. It gives a man ease of mind, independence of carriage, weight of influence, and other matters supposed to arise out of wealth.

Verse 14.—I. The subject of rejoicing. Not the "testimonies" merely, but their observances, "the way of," etc. II. The rejoicing in that subject. 1. In its inward peace. 2. In its external consequences. III. The degree of the rejoicing: "as much as," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—*The two scales of the balance.* Whatever riches are good for, God's testimonies are good for. I. Riches are desirable as the means of procuring the necessaries of life; but God's testimonies supply the necessities of the soul. II. Riches are desirable as a means of procuring personal enjoyment; but God's testimonies produce the highest joy. III. Riches are desirable as a means of attaining personal improvement; but God's testimonies are the highest educators. IV. Riches are desirable as a means of doing good; but God's testimonies work the highest good.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 15.—The contemplative and active life; their common food, object, and reward.

Verse 16.—I. What there is to be delighted in. II. What comes of such delight: 'I will never forget." III. What comes of such memory—more delight.

Verse 17.—I. A bountiful master. II. A needy servant—begging for very life. III. A suitable recompense: "and keep thy word."

Verse 17.—We are here taught, I. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. II. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 18.—I. The precious casket: "thy law." II. The invisible treasure: "wondrous things." III. The miraculous eyesight: "that I may behold." IV. The divine oculist: "Open thou mine eyes."

Verse 18.—*The hidden wonders of the gospel.* There are many hidden things in nature; many in our fellow men; so there are many in the Bible. The things of the Bible are hidden because of the blindness of man. I. *The blind man's sorrow:* "Open mine eyes." I cannot see. I have eyes and see not. The pain of this conscious blindness when a man really feels it. II. *The blind man's conviction:* "That I may behold wondrous," etc. There are wondrous things there to be seen. I am sure of it. There is a wonderful view,—(1) of sin; (2) of hell, as its desert; (3) of One ready to save; (4) of perfect pardon; (5) of God's love; (6) of all-sufficient grace; (7) of heaven. III. *The blind man's wisdom.* The fault is in my eyes, not in thy word. "Open my eyes," and all will be well. The reason for not seeing is because the eyes are blinded by sin. There is nothing wanting in the Bible. IV. *The blind man's prayer:* "Open *thou* mine eyes." 1. I cannot open them. 2. My dearest friends cannot. 3. Only thou canst. "Lord, I pray thee, now open them." Many seek to stop such praying. Be like Bartimeus who *"cried so much the more."* V. *The blind man's anticipation:* "That I may behold." 1. The joy of a cured blind man when he is about to behold, for the first time, the beauties of nature. 2. The joy of the spiritually healed when they begin "looking unto Jesus." 3. The personal character of the joy: "Open thou *mine* eyes, that I may behold." I have hitherto had to see through the eyes of others. I would depend on other eyes no longer. The glad anticipation of Job: "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."—*Frederick G. Marchant,* 1882.

Verse 18.—God's word suited to man's sense of wonder. I. We shall make some remarks on the sense of wonder in man, and what generally excites it. One of the first causes of wonder is the *new or unexpected.* The second source is to be found in things *beautiful and grand.* A third source is the *mysterious* which surrounds man—there are things *unknowable.* II. God has made provision for this sense of wonder in his revealed word. The Bible addresses our sense of wonder by constantly presenting the *new and unexpected* to us; it sets before us things *beautiful and grand.* If we come to the third source of wonder, that which raises it to *awe,* it is the peculiar province of the Bible to deal with this. III. The means we are to use in order to have God's word thus unfolded—the prayer of the Psalmist may be our guide—"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."—*John Ker, of Glasgow,* 1877.

Verse 18.—*Wondrous sights for opened eyes.* I. The wondrous things in God's law. A wondrous rule of life. A wondrous curse against transgression. A wondrous redemption from the curse shadowed forth in the ceremonial law. II. Special eyesight needed to behold them. They are spiritual things. Men are spiritually blind. 1 Cor. ii. 14. III. Personal prayer to the Great Opener of eyes.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 19.—An insight into the divine will, the best assistance in our journey

through the earth. Or, what I am; where I am; where I am going; how am I to get there?

Verse 19 (*first clause*).—The stranger in the earth. I. A short exposition. The text means,—1. That the saint is not born of the earth. 2. That the saint is not known on earth. 3. The saint's portion is not upon the earth. 4. The saint is compassed with sorrows and trials upon earth. 5. The saint is soon to leave the earth. II. A short application. 1. Do not be like the world. 2. Be prepared to be a sufferer on the earth. 3. Sit loose to the world. 4. Correspond with home. 5. Cherish brotherly love for your fellow-strangers on the earth. 6. Hasten home. 7. Press others to come with you.—*Duncan Macgregor's Sermon in "The Shepherd in Israel,"* 1869.

Verse 19.—*The stranger's prayer.* I. How he came to be a stranger in the earth. He was born again. He learned the manners of his foreign home. He spoke the language of his Fatherland; and so was misunderstood and rejected on earth. II. How he longed after everything homelike. Home rules: "thy commandments." Home teaching: "hide not." Specially his Father's voice. III. How in his loneliness he solaced himself by communication with his Father. IV. Would you not like to be a stranger?—*C. A. D.*

Verse 20.—I. The word sought, and sought at all times. II. The word sought, and sought with intense desire. III. The word sought, and sought the more intensely the more it is found. It was because he had found so much in the word of the Lord already, that the soul of the Psalmist was breaking to find more. Those who have been once admitted to "the secret of the Lord" find their highest joy in knowing that secret still more fully. It is to those who know that secret that the promise is given: "He will shew them his covenant:" Ps. xxv. 14.—*F. G. M.*

Verse 20.—One of the best tests of character and prophecies of what a man will be, are his longings. I. The saint's absorbing object: "Thy judgments." The word here is synonymous with the "word" of God. 1. The Psalmist greatly reverenced the word. 2. He intensely desired to know its contents. 3. He wishes to feed upon God's word. 4. He longed to obey it. 5. He longed to feel the power of God's judgments in his own heart. II. The saint's ardent longings. 1. They constitute a living experience. 2. The expression used in the text represents a humble sense of imperfection. 3. It indicates an advanced experience. 4. It is an experience which we may term a bitter sweet. 5. These longings may become very wearying to a man's soul. III. Cheering reflections. 1. God is at work in your soul. 2. The result of God's work is very precious. 3. It is leading on to something more precious. 4. The desire itself is doing you good. 5. It makes Christ precious. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1586: "Holy Longings."

Verse 21.—I. The character of the proud. II. God's dealings with them. III. Our own relation to them.

Verse 21.—I. The sin; "Err from the commandments." 1. By neglect; or, 2. By abuse of them. II. Its origin—pride: pride of reason, of heart, of life. III. Its punishment. 1. Rebuke. 2. Condemnation.—*G. R.*

Verse 23.—Meditation. I. Our best employment while others slander. II. Our best comfort under their falsehood. III. Our best preservative from a spirit of revenge. IV. Our best mode of showing our superiority to their attacks.

Verse 24.—I. He reverenced them as God's testimonies. II. He revelled in them as his delight. III. He referred to them as his counsellors.

Verse 25.—I. Nature and its tendency. II. Grace and its mode of operation. III. Both truths in their personal application.

Verse 25.—"*Quicken thou me,*" etc. I. There are many reasons why we should seek quickening. 1. Because of the deadening influence of the world. "My soul cleaveth," etc. 2. The influence of vanity (see ver. 37). 3. Because we are surrounded by deceivers (see ver. 87, 88). 4. Because of the effect of seasons of affliction upon us (see ver. 7). II. Some of the motives for seeking quickening. 1. Because of what you are—a Christian; life seeks more life. 2. Because of what you ought to be. 3. Because of what we shall be. 4. In order to obedience (see ver. 88). 5. For your comfort (ver. 107 and 50). 6. As the best security against the attacks of enemies (ver. 87 and 88). 7. To invigorate our memories (ver. 93). 8. Consider (as a motive to seek this quickening) the terrible consequences of losing spiritual life or, in other words, lacking it in its manifest display. III. Some of the ways in which the quickening may be brought to us. 1. It must be by the Lord himself.

" Quicken me, O Lord." 2. By the turning of the eyes (ver. 37). 3. By the word (ver. 50). 4. By the precepts (ver. 93). 5. By affliction (ver. 107). 6. By divine comforts. IV. Enquire where are our pleas when we come before God to ask for quickening. 1. Our necessity (ver. 107, etc.). 2. Our earnest desire (ver. 40). 3. Appeal to God's righteousness (ver. 40). 4. To his lovingkindness (ver. 88, 149, 156). 5. The plea in the text: " according to thy word " (ver. 28 and 107). See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1350: " Enlivening and Invigorating."

Verse 26.—Confession. Absolution. Instruction.

Verse 26.—I. The duty: " I have declared my ways "—made known my experience of thy word to others. II. Its notice by God: " Thou heardest me." III. Its reward. More knowledge will be given: " Teach me," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 27.—I. A student's prayer. 1. It deals with the main subject of the conversation which is to be that student's occupation—" the way of God's precepts." 2. A confession is implied: " Make me," etc. 3. A great boon is asked—to understand, to know, thy statutes. 4. The Fountain of all wisdom is applied to. II. The occupation of the instructed man. 1. He testifies of God's works—his wondrous works—Christ's work for us; the Holy Spirit's work in us. The wonderful character of these works of God, a wide field for devout study. 2. He speaks very plainly: " I will talk," etc. 3. He will speak very frequently: " I will talk." 4. He will speak to the point: " So "—*i.e.*, according to understanding. III. The intimate relation between the prayer of the student and the pursuit that he subsequently followed. See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1344: " The Student's Prayer."

Verse 27.—Education for the ministry. I. The student at college: " Make me to understand." His lesson. His instructor. His application. II. The preacher at his work: " So shall I talk," etc. His qualification. His theme. His manner.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 28.—Heaviness, its cause, curse, and cure.

Verse 29.—The way of lying. I. Describe the way of lying. Various paths, *e.g.*, erroneous views of doctrine: false grounds of faith: looseness of practice: shrinking from the daily cross. II. Show why it is thus named. It does not furnish its promised pleasures. It does not lead to its professed goal. It lies through the territory of the father of lies. III. Notice the peculiarity in the prayer against it. Not remove me from, but remove from me: for the way of lying is within us. IV. Our deliverance from the way of lying lies with God.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 29, 30.—I. The way of lying, our wish to have it removed, and the method of answer. II. The way of truth, our choice, and the method of carrying it out.

Verse 31.—Reasons for sticking to the Divine testimonies.

Verse 31.—A wholesome mixture. I. Sturdy fidelity. II. Self-distrust, and, III. Importunate prayer.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 32.—The Fettered Racer set free. I. The course that invited him. II. The shackles that bound him. III. The impatience that prompted him. IV. The Lord that freed him. V. Now let him go.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 32.—I. Liberty desired. II. Liberty rightly used. Or, the effect of the heart upon the feet.

Verse 32.—The text will give us occasion to speak, 1. Of the benefit of an enlarged heart. The necessary precedency of this work on God's part, before there can be any serious bent or motion of heart towards God on our part. 3. The subsequent resolution of the saints to engage their hearts to live to God. 4. With what earnestness, alacrity and vigour of spirit this work is to be carried on: " I will run."—*T. Manton.*

Verse 32.—I. The way of obedience: " Thy commandments." II. The duty of obedience: " I will run "—not stand still—not loiter—not creep—not walk, but run. III. The life of obedience. 1. Where it lies—in the heart. 2. Whence it comes: " When thou shalt," etc. 3. What it does—enlarges the heart.—*G. R.*

Verse 33.—In this prayer for grace observe, 1. The person to whom he prays: "*O Lord.*" 2. The person for whom: " teach *me.*" 3. The grace for which he prayeth: to be taught. 4. The object of this teaching: " The way of thy statutes." The teaching which he beggeth, is not speculative, but practical, to learn how to walk in the way of God.—*T. Manton.*

Verse 33.—The superior efficacy of divine teaching: it secures holy practice and insures its perpetuity.

Verses 33, 34.—*Light from above.* I. The blinding power of sin. " Teach me," *i.e.*, " point out to me." " Give me understanding." Whatever may have been

the original amount of light which came from eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that light has long been insufficient. 1. Men need light to discern the right way from the wrong. 2. Men need light to understand the beauties of the right way. Such beauties line the way of truth on either hand, but only the God-taught mind appreciates them. Even Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, is as a root out of a dry ground, till the mind is taught of the Lord. Sin is the cause of this blindness. The farther any man walks in the way of sin, the less can he see of the beauties of holiness. II. The enlightening grace of the Lord. "Teach me." "Give me understanding." This grace, 1. May be boldly asked: "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." 2. Will be freely given. "Who giveth to all men liberally." "Ask, and it shall be given." 3. Will be amply sufficient. "I shall keep it unto the end." "I shall keep Thy law." To see is to follow. III. The stimulating power of clearly revealed truth. "I shall observe it with my whole heart." To see is not only to follow, but to follow with love and gladness. It is written of the light which will come before the throne, "We shall be like him, *for* we shall see him as he is." "O thou, that dwellest between the Cherubim, shine forth," even here, on the way that leads to thy presence.—*F. G. M.*

Verses 33—35.—*Alpha and Omega.* I. God, the giver of spiritual instruction: ver. 33. II. Of spiritual understanding, without which this instruction is in vain: ver. 34. III. Of grace for practical obedience when thus instructed: ver. 35. IV. For whole-hearted obedience: ver. 34. V. For final perseverance: ver. 33.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 33—36.—*Human Dependence on Divine help.* I. There can be no steady keeping in the way of the Lord without the Lord's guidance: ver. 33. II. There can be no observing of the way with the heart without Divine light for the mind: ver. 34. III. There can be no diligent pursuit of the way till divine energy be given to the will: ver. 35. IV. There can be no true love of the way unless the heart be constrained by the love of God: ver. 36. He who said, "Without me ye can do nothing," is necessary for us to see the way, to understand the way, to walk in the way, and to love the way.—*F. G. M.*

Verse 34.—The influence of the understanding upon the heart, and the united power of understanding and heart over the life.

Verse 34.—*Seeing and loving.* I. When men see they love (the whole verse). II. When men love they see. Only the loving heart would have seen enough to write such a verse.—*F. G. M.*

Verse 35.—The prayer of a child, and the delight of a child. Or, Our pleasure in holiness a plea for grace.

Verse 35.—I. Delight avowed. II. Disinclination implied. III. Constraint implored.—*W. W.*

Verse 36.—Holiness a cure for covetousness.

Verses 36, 112.—*The Co-operation of the Divine and the Human in Salvation.* I. It is God that worketh in you: ver. 36. II. Therefore work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: ver. 112.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 37.—"*Quicken thou me in thy way.*" This brief prayer—1. Deals with the believer's frequent need. II It directs us to the sole worker of quickening: "Thou." III. It describes the sphere of renewed vigour: "in thy way." IV. It denotes that there may be special reasons and special seasons for this prayer—times of temptation: ver. 37; seasons of affliction: ver. 107; when called to some extraordinary service. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1073: "A Honeycomb."

Verse 37.—Here is, I. Conversion *from*—"vanity." II. Conversion *to*—"thy way. III. Conversion *by*—"Quicken thou me."—*G. R.*

Verse 37.—David prays, (1) for *restraining* grace that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." He prays (2) for *constraining* grace, that he might not only be kept from everything that would obstruct his progress heaven-ward, but that he might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress: "Quicken thou me in thy way."—*M. Henry.*

Verse 38.—Confirmation. What? "Thy word established." To whom? "Unto thy servant." Why? "Who is devoted," etc.

Verse 38.—Fear of God evidences itself, 1. By a dread of his displeasure. 2. Desire of his favour. 3. Regard for his excellencies. 4. Submission to his will. 5. Gratitude for his benefits. 6. Conscientious obedience to his commands.—*Charles Buck.*

Verse 38.—The four kinds of fear. 1. The fear of man, by which we are led rather to do wrong than to suffer evil. 2. Servile fear, through which we are induced to avoid sin only from the dread of hell. 3. Initial fear, in which we avoid sin partly from the fear of hell, but partly also from the love of God, which is the fear of ordinary Christians. 4. Filial fear, when we are afraid to disobey God only and altogether from the love we bear him. Jer. xxxii. 40.—*Ayguan, in J. Edward Vaux's "Preacher's Storehouse,"* 1878.

Verse 39.—I. Man's judgment dreaded. II. God's judgment approved.

Verse 39.—*The reproach of inconsistency.* I. The dishonour caused by it (2 Sam. xii. 14). II. The danger of incurring it. III. The prayer against it.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 40.—I. Gracious longings experienced. II. Great necessity felt—more life needed. III. Wise petition offered.

Verse 41.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1524: "Your Personal Salvation."

Verse 41.—I. God's mercies come to us unsought continually. His sparing mercies, temporal mercies, etc. II. The chief outcome of God's mercies is his salvation. It is our greatest need; it is his greatest gift. III. We should have a personal interest in this salvation: "Let thy mercies come also unto me." IV. When we seek God's salvation, we may plead his promise: "according to thy word."—*Horatio Wilkins,* 1882.

Verse 41.—"Even me." I. In me there is need of mercy. II. To me mercy can come. III. Thy salvation suits me. IV. Special difficulties would daunt me. V. Thy word encourages me.

Verse 41.—I. Salvation is all of mercy. II. All mercies are in salvation. III. All men should be anxious for salvation to come to them. IV. It can only come according to God's word.—*W. W.*

Verses 41—43.—*A Comprehensive Prayer.* I. The possession of salvation, ver. 41. II. Is the power for defence: ver. 42. III. And the qualification for usefulness: ver. 43.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 42.—Faith's answer to reproach found in the fact that she trusts God's word.

Verses 42, 43, 47.—Faith, hope, and love. "I trust." "I have hoped." "I have loved." Faith warring, hope testifying, love obeying.

Verse 43.—How the true preacher could be silenced, and his plea that he may not be so.

Verse 44.—The perpetuity of gracious living. On what it is conditioned: "So." How entirely it is consistent with free agency: "I keep." How continuous it is, and how eternal.

Verse 44.—*Heaven begun below.* I. The present life of the believer—keeping God's law. II. The continual care of the believer—to keep God's law. III. The eternal prospect of the believer—keeping God's law for ever and ever.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 45—47.—Liberty of walk. Liberty of speech. Liberty of heart.

Verses 45—48.—The true freeman enjoys—1. *Free walk* with God. 2. *Free talk* about God. 3. *Free love* unto God. 4. *Free exercise* of soul, (1) in holy practice; (2) in heavenly meditation.—*W. Durban.*

Verses 45—48.—Five things the Psalmist promiseth himself here in the strength of God's grace. 1. That he should be free and easy in his duty: "I will walk at liberty." 2. That he should be bold and courageous in his duty: "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings." 3. That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty: "I will delight myself in thy commandments." 4. That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty: "I will delight myself in thy commandments." 5. That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty: "I will meditate in thy statutes."—*M. Henry.*

Verses 46—48.—*Lips, heart, and hands.* I. Public profession of God's word ("I will speak," ver. 46) must be warranted by—II. Private delight in God's word ("I will delight myself," ver. 47), which must result in—III. Practical obedience to God's word ("I will lift up my hands," ver. 48).

Verse 46.—I. The truly earnest must speak. II. They are at no loss for good subjects: "Thy testimonies." The range is boundless—the variety endless. III. They never fear any audience: "before kings."—*W. W.*

Verse 48.—I. Love renewing its activity. II. Love refreshing itself with spiritual food.

Verse 48.—I. Scripture in the hand for reading. Often in the hand. II. In

the mind for meditation: "I will meditate," etc. III. In the heart for love: "Which I have loved."—*G. R.*

Verse 48.—Religion engaged the whole manhood of David: hands, heart, head. I. The uplifted hands. 1. *Taking an oath of allegiance to God's word.* Gen. xiv. 22; Ezek. xx. 28. To receive its doctrines, obey its precepts, regard its warnings, uphold its honour. 2. *Imploring a blessing upon God's word.* Gen. xlviii. 14; Lev. ix. 22; Luke xxiv. 50. That its light might spread: "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel;" that its influence may become universal. II. The loyal heart. 1. *This accounts for uplifted hands.* He had loved the word himself. Religion is inward first, then outward. We must love it before we are anxious to spread it. 2. *But what accounts for the loyal heart?* The word had brought him salvation, yielded him sustenance, afforded him guidance. We love the word for its joyous effects upon ourselves. III. The studious mind. 1. Devout meditation the best employment. 2. The word of God affords a grand field for it. 3. To meditate in it learn to love it: "have loved," "will meditate."—*W. W.*

Verse 48.—I. God's commandments loved. We love the law when we love the Lawgiver. We love his will only when our hearts are reconciled and renewed. Hence the need of spiritual renewal. II. God's commandments the subject of prayer: "My hands also will I lift up." Perowne says, "The expression denotes the act of prayer." We may pray for a fuller knowledge, a deeper experience, a readier and more perfect obedience. III. A theme for meditation. Amidst the hurry of outward activities we must not forget the need of quiet meditation. —*H. W.*

Verse 49.—I. The personality of the word: "the word unto thy servant." II. The application of the word: "upon which thou hast caused me to hope." III. The pleading of the word: "Remember the word," etc.

Verse 49.—*The word of hope.* I. God's word the foundation of human hope. (The fact of a revelation. The substance of the revelation.) II. Particular words of God which have been found peculiarly hope-enkindling. III. The pleading of such words at the throne of grace.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 50.—Each man has his own affliction and his own consolation. Quickened piety the best comfort. The word the means of it.

Verse 50.—I. The need of consolation. II. The consolation needed.—*G. R.*

Verse 51.—The proud man's contumely, and the gracious man's constancy.

Verse 51.—*Fidelity in the face of contempt.* I. The proud deride the believer's subjection to God's law. II. They ridicule the believer's delight in God's service. III. They are met by the believer's resolution to cleave to God. 2 Sam. vi. 20, 22. —*C. A. D.*

Verse 52.—Comfort derived from a review of the ancient doings of the Lord towards the wicked and his people.

Verse 52.—I. The dead speaking to the living. II. The living listening to the dead.—*G. R.*

Verse 52.—*Sweet water from a dark well.* I. God's judgments are calculated to inspire terror. II. But they prove God's superintending care over the world. III. They are ever against sin, and for holiness. IV. In all times of judgment God delivers his people. Noah, Lot, etc. V. Therefore God's judgments are a source of comfort to the believer.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 53.—The sensations of godly men at the sight of sinners: horror at their crime, their perseverance in it, their rejection of grace, and their end.

Verse 53.—*Horror-stricken.* I. The guilt and danger of impenitent sinners. II. The horror and concern of godly spectators. III. The prayer and labour which such concern should dictate.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 54.—Here is—I. Light in darkness. II. Companionship in solitude. III. Activity in rest: "house of pilgrimage."—*G. R.*

Verse 54.—The cheerful pilgrim. I. A good man views his residence in this world as only the house of his pilgrimage. II. The situation, however disadvantageous, admits of cheerfulness. III. The sources of his joy are derived from the Scriptures.—*W. Jay.*

Verse 54.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1652: "The Singing Pilgrim."

Verse 55 with 49.—"Remember." "I have remembered."

Verse 55.—Night memories. Day duties. How they act and react upon each other.

Verse 55.—Dark nights. Bright memories. Right results.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 55.—I. Happy though restless night. II. Happy though busy day.—*W. D.*

Verse 56.—The gains of godliness; or, what a man gets through holy living.

Verse 56.—I. The duty: "I kept thy precepts." II. Its reward: "This I had," etc. Protection: "this I had." Guidance: "this I had." Prosperity: "this I had." Consolation: "this I had."—*G. R.*

Verse 57.—I. The infinite possession: "Thou art my portion, O LORD." Notice—1. A clear distinction made by the Psalmist between his portion and that of the ungodly here and hereafter: See Ps. lxxiii. 2. A positive claim: "Thou art my portion, O LORD." This "portion" is boundless, abiding, appropriate, satisfying, elevating, all of grace. II. The appropriate resolution: "I have said that I would keep thy words." 1. Notice the preface: "I have said." 2. The link between the portion possessed and the resolution made. 3. The work of keeping God's words. Keep him who is the *Word*—Christ Jesus. Keep the word of the gospel—doctrines, precepts, promises (kept in the heart to comfort the believer). This blessed subject suggests a solemn contrast. See the portion of that servant who did not keep his Lord's word: Matt. xxix. 48—51. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1372: "God our Portion, and his Word our Treasure."

Verse 57 (*first clause*).—The believer's portion. I. Show the validity of his claim: "my." 1. A gift by covenant: Heb. viii. 10—13. 2. Involved in joint heirship with Christ: Rom. viii. 17. 3. Confirmed by the experience of faith. II. Survey. the superlative value of his possession: "The Lord." 1. Absolutely good. 2. Infinitely precious. 3. Inexhaustibly full. 4. Everlastingly sure. III. Suggest a method of deriving the greatest *present* advantage from it. 1. Meditate much upon God, under the conviction that he is your portion. 2. Carry all cares to him, and cast every burden on him. 3. Refer every temptation to the word of his law, and every doubt to the word of his promise. 4. Draw largely upon his riches to meet every need as it arises.—*John Field*, 1882.

Verses 57, 58.—The believer's estate, profession, and petition.

Verse 58.—*The soul's sunshine.* I. God's favour the one thing needful. II. Whole-heartedness the one mode of entreating it. III. Covenant mercy the one plea for obtaining it.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 58.—We may learn how a seeker may come to enjoy saving favour, by a careful study of—I. The Profession: "I intreated thy favour with my whole heart." 1. What he did: "I intreated." *Heb.* "I painfully sought thy face." Earnest desire. Importunate supplication. Painful sorrow for sin. 2. How he did it: "With my whole heart." The intellect, affections, will, all engaged and concentrating effort. Otherwise, seeking is solemn trifling. This only worthy of our purpose, pleasing to God, and successful. 3. The evidence that we are doing it. Frequent prayer, searching the word, often enquiring. The first and main business—Giving up for Christ. II. The Petition: "Be merciful unto me." 1. God's favour to be expected on the terms of mercy only. 2. Happily, this is a prayer every sinner can and should use. 3. Blessedly true it is, that it never fails. III. The Plea: "According to thy word." 1. A plea that cannot be gainsaid is a great thing in an entreaty. 2. The promise of God is just such a plea. 3. Seek it out, lay hold of it, and urge it.—*J. F.*

Verse 59.—I. Self-examination: "I thought on" my private "ways"—my social ways—my sacred ways—my public ways. II. Its advantages: "And turned my feet," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 59.—I. Unthinking and straying. II. Thinking and turning.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 59.—I. Conviction. II. Conversion.—*W. D.*

Verse 59.—*Thinking on our own ways.* Enquire, I. Why so generally neglected? 1. Want of courage. 2. Occupied too much. 3. Unpleasant, and therefore the chief care of many is to banish it. II. When is it wisely conducted? 1. When honestly engaged in. 2. When thoroughly carried out. 3. When Scripture is made the referee and standard. 4. When Divine help is sought. III. What end will it serve? 1. Turn us from our own ways with shame and penitence. 2. Turn us to God's testimonies with earnestness, reverence, and hopefulness.—*J. F.*

Verse 59.—I. Right thinking: "I thought on my ways." 1. That this thought upon his ways caused the Psalmist dissatisfaction is evident. 2. Right thinking upon our ways will suggest a practical change. 3. The retrospect we take of our life should suggest that any turn we make should be Godward: "Unto thy testimonies." 4. Right thinking also suggests that such a turning is possible. II. Right turning. The turn was—1. Complete. 2. Practical. 3. Spiritual.

4. Immediate. 5. It must be a divine work. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1181: "Thinking and Turning."

Verse 60.—The dangers of delay. The reasons for prompt action.

Verse 60.—*A sermon to loiterers.* I. Reflection. Keeping God's commandments is my duty; is my welfare. Commandments delayed may be never kept. Delay is in itself disobedience. Alacrity is the soul of obedience. II. Resolve. I will make haste and delay not.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 60.—I. Quick. II. Sure.—*W. D.*

Verse 60.—Procrastination considered in its most important application; that is, to religion. I. This procrastination is irrational. II. It is unpleasant, disagreeable, painful. II. It is disgraceful. IV. It is sinful, and that is the highest degree. V. It is dangerous.—*John Angell James.*

Verse 61.—I. Spiritual highway-robbery. II. The traveller keeping his road. Or, what enemies can do, and what they cannot do.

Verse 62.—I. The duty of gratitude: "give thanks." II. The subject for gratitude: "thy righteous judgments." III. The season for gratitude: at night as well as in the day.—*G. R.*

Verse 62.—Up in the night. Singing in the night. Reasons for such singular conduct.

Verse 62.—*The nightingale.* I. A natural association of thought: "midnight" and "judgments." Exod. xii., etc. II. An incongruous association of feeling: "thanks" and "judgments." III. A full justification of this apparent incongruity: "*thanks* because of thy *righteous* judgments." IV. A vigorous performance of an incumbent duty: "at midnight I will rise to give thanks."—*C. A. D.*

Verse 63.—I. True religion is friendly. II. Our friendliness should be catholic. II. Our friendliness should be discriminating. IV. Such friendliness is most useful.

Verse 63.—Of good and bad company. How to avoid the one, and improve the other. See W. Bridge's Sermon, in his works, vol. v., p. 90. Tegg's edition, 1845.

Verse 63.—The believer's choice of companions. I. Ought to be decided by their piety: "Them that fear thee." II. Is directed by their conduct: "Them that keep thy precepts." III. Should be extended as far as possible: "All." IV. Involves reciprocal obligation: "I am a companion."—*J. F.*

Verse 64.—The sum and substance of this verse will be comprised in these five propositions:—I. That saving knowledge is a benefit that must be asked of God. II. That this benefit cannot be too often or sufficiently enough asked: it is his continual request. III. In asking, we are encouraged by the bounty or mercy of God. IV. That God is merciful all his creatures declare. V. That his goodness to all his creatures should confirm us in hoping for saving grace or spiritual good things—*T. Manton.*

Verse 64.—I. Observations in the school of nature. II. Supplications to enter the school of grace.

Verse 64.—The mercy of God in nature and his mercy as revealed in the word. I. The one excellent; the other super-excellent. II. The one easily given; the other coming through a great sacrifice. III. The one may be enjoyed, and even increase condemnation; the other, if enjoyed, is sure salvation. IV. The one should lead to repentance; the other is specially adapted for the penitent's restoration to holiness.—*J. F.*

Verse 65.—The servant giving his master a character; or, experience tallying with Scripture: two fruitful themes.

Verse 65.—I. Experience confirmed by the word. II. The word confirmed by experience.—*G. R.*

Verse 65.—A servant's story. I. Although he knew my faults he engaged me. II. Although I am so far beneath him, yet he familiarly teaches me. III. Although I am always ailing, he is very kind to me in my afflictions. IV. Although I am one of the meanest of his servants, he permits me to feast at his own table. V. Although I do little work, he will pay me good wages. VI. Although I am to have such great wages, I have very many perquisites. VII. Although my Master is all this to me (can you believe it?) I murmur and repine at him if he crosses me in anything. Application:—1. Does not the word "servant" sound like a misnomer?—"not servants. . . . . but I have called you friends." 2. Though he calls me "friend," I shall never cease to call him "Master."—*Richard Andrew Griffin, in "Stems and Twigs."*

Verse 66.—I. Singular faith: "I have believed thy commandments." II. Special petition based upon it: "Teach me."

Verse 66.—The value of a good judgment to sound knowledge. I. It carefully discriminates between truth and error. II. It puts each truth in its proper relation to other truths. III. It holds every truth firmly, but has the greater care for the more important. IV. It rather avoids the curious and the speculative, but really loves the plain and useful. V. Knowing that truths are rightly held only, when applied, it turns all to practical account. VI. Knowing also, that good food may, under some circumstances, become poisonous, it is careful in its selection and use of truths.—*J. F.*

Verse 67.—I. The dangers of prosperity. II. The benefits of adversity. —*G. R.*

Verse 67.—The restraining power of affliction.

Verses 67, 71, 75.—*Affliction thrice viewed and thrice blessed.* I. Before affliction: straying. II. In affliction: learning. III. After affliction: knowing.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 68.—The double plea for a choice blessing. The goodness of God the hope of our ignorance.

Verse 68.—"*Thou art good and doest good.*" The nature and work of God are manifest in nature, providence, grace, and glory. They are morally good; beneficially good; perfectly good; immeasurably good; immutably good; experimentally good; satisfactorily good.—*W. J.*

Verse 68 (*first clause*).—A sermon on God's goodness. I. The perfectness of it. II. The proofs of it. III. The power it should have over us.—*J. F.*

Verse 69.—Whole-hearted obedience the best solace under slander; the best answer to it; and the best way of converting the slanderers.

Verse 70.—I. Fatty degeneration of the heart. II. Thorough regeneration of the heart.

Verse 70.—*A fatty heart.* I. The diagnosis of the disease. II. Its symptoms. Pride; no delight in God, nor in his law; dislike to his people; readiness to lie: ver. 69. III. Its fatal character. IV. Its only cure. Psa. li. 10; Ezek. xxxvi. 26. —*C. A. D.*

Verse 71.—I. David knew what was good for him. II. David learned what is good essentially. Active obedience is learned by passive obedience.

Verse 71.—Affliction an instructor. I. Never welcomed: "Have been." II. Often impatiently endured. III. Always gratefully remembered: "It is good," etc. IV. Efficient for a perverse scholar: "That I might learn." V. Indispensable in the education of all.—*J. F.*

Verse 71.—*The school of affliction.* I. The reluctant scholar sent to school. II. The scholar's hard lesson. III. The scholar's blessed learning. IV. The scholar's sweet reflection.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 72.—The advantages of riches far excelled by the blessings of the word.

Verse 72.—*A valuation.* I. The saints' high estimate of God's law. II. Show when it was formed: in affliction: ver. 71. III. Vindicate its truth—by illustrating the hollowness of riches, and the satisfaction found in godliness.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 72.—The word, better than gold and silver. I. It gives what gold and silver cannot purchase. II. Without what it gives, gold and silver may be a curse. III. Without gold and silver, it may yield its treasure more freely and fully than with them. IV. The word and what it gives shall rejoice the heart when gold and silver shall be useless to their disappointed worshippers.—*J. F.*

Verse 72.—"*The law of thy mouth is better,*" etc. I. It is more refining, and makes me a better man. II. It is more enriching, and makes me a wealthier man. III. It is more distinguishing, and makes me a greater man. IV. It is more sustaining, and makes me a stronger man. V. It is more preserving, and makes me a safer man. VI. It is more satisfying and makes me a happier man. VII. It is more lasting, and better suited to me as an immortal man.—*W. J.*

Verse 73.—I. Consider the Lord's great care in our creation. II. See in it a reason for his perfecting the new creation within us. III. Observe the method of this perfecting.

Verse 74.—I. The encouraging influence of good men upon others. II. The instructive influence of others upon them.—*G. R.*

Verse 74.—Converse with a tried but steadfast believer is a source of gladness to the children of God. I. He has a thrilling tale of experience to tell. II. He has valuable counsels and cautions to give. III. He is a monument of God's

faithfulness, confirming the hope of others. IV. He is an epistle of Christ, written expressly to illustrate the preciousness and the power of the gospel.—*J. F.*

Verse 75.—Experimental knowledge: positive, personal, glorifying to God, consoling to the saints.

Verse 76.—Comfort. I. May be a matter of prayer. II. Is provided for in the Lord. III. Is promised in the word. IV. Is of great value to the believer.

Verse 76.—I. The need of comfort. II. The source of comfort: "Thy merciful kindness" III. The rule of comfort: "According to thy word."—*G. R.*

Verse 77.—I. Visitors invited. II. Boon expected. III. Welcome guaranteed: "for thy law," etc.

Verse 77.—*Divine life*—it is born, sustained, increased, by God's tender mercies. —*W. W.*

Verse 78.—I. A hard thing—to make the proud ashamed. II. A cruel thing—"they dealt perversely with me," etc. III. A wise thing—"but I will meditate," etc.

Verse 79.—Restoration to church fellowship. I. Good men may be in such a case as to need to be restored. II. They should not be ashamed to seek it. III. They should pray about it.

Verse 79.—*Select society.* I. Sociableness is an instinct of human nature. II. Sociableness is helpful to a wholesome Christian life. III. The choice of society should be a subject of prayer.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 80.—I. David's prayer for sincerity—that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be sound in them, not rotten or deceitful. II. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy: "that I be not ashamed." Shame is the portion of hypocrites, here or hereafter.—*M. Henry.*

Verse 80.—I. The heart in religion. II. The necessity of its being sound in it. III. The result of such sound-heartedness.

Verse 81.—Text suitable for a missionary sermon. I. The condition of the heathen world, enough to make the Christian faint for the salvation of God to visit it. 1. The grossness of its darkness. 2. Its wide area. 3. Its long continuance. 4. The limited character and effort of mission labour. 5. The opposing influences. II. This condition, though exceedingly sad, is not hopeless. Because—1. Of the intention, adaptation, and universal call of the gospel. 2. Of Christ's commission to his church. 3. Of the compassionate character of the spiritually enlightened, produced by their faith in the word. 4. Of the prophecies and promises. Thus, there is hope in the word. III. If Christians are fainting for the salvation, but hoping in the word, their interest in mission work will be intense, and will show itself. 1. In earnest prayer for more labourers, and greater results. 2. In devoting themselves, if possible, to the work. 3. In free and generous giving, to help on the work.—*J. F.*

Verse 81.—"*My soul fainteth,*" etc. Men faint for health, provision, rest, promotion, success, and in some instances for salvation. David fainted. I. For his own salvation. 1. From guilt: "Deliver me from all my transgressions;" "from bloodguiltiness." 2. From defilement: "Create in me a clean heart." "Wash me." 3. From formality: "Let the words of my mouth," etc. 4. From darkness: "Why hidest thou thyself?" "Lift up," etc. "Say unto my soul," etc. 5. From unhappiness: "Out of the depths," etc. II. For the salvation of others. 1. He talked about it: "Time for thee to work, Lord." 2. He prayed for it: "Oh that the salvation," etc. "Let thy work," etc. "God be merciful unto us:" "Save now, I beseech thee." 3. He laboured for it: "I will make mention of thy righteousness:" "I will teach transgressors thy ways."—*W. J.*

Verse 81.—I. Eagerness of expectation. II. Energy of hope. III. Establishment of promise: "in thy word."

Verse 81.—"*Salvation,*" in Scripture, hath divers acceptations: it is put—1. For that temporal deliverance which God giveth, or hath promised to give to his people: so it is taken. Exod. xiv. 13. 2. For the exhibition of Christ in the flesh. Ps. xcviii. 2, 3; Luke ii. 29, 30. 3. For the benefits which we have by Christ on this side of heaven; as the pardon of sin, and the renovation of our natures. Matt. i. 21; Titus iii. 5; Ps. li. 12. 4. For everlasting life: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. i. 9); meaning thereby our final reward.—*T. Manton.*

Verse 81.—I. Faint. II. Pursuing.—*W. D.*

Verse 82.—Answer to the enquiry—"When wilt thou comfort me?" 1. When

your grief has answered its purpose. 2. When you believe. 3. When you leave sin. 4. When you obey. 5. When you submit to my will. 6. When you seek my glory.

Verse 82.—I. How longingly the believer turns to God for comfort in his affliction: "When wilt thou comfort me?" II. How intently he gazes upon the Divine promises: "My eyes fail for thy word." III. How the weariness of waiting cannot wear out his patience, while hope increases his importunity: "When wilt thou?" —*J. F.*

Verse 82.—*The pleading of the eyes.* I. How the eyes speak. By "expression" of the moods of the soul, as—longing, Isa. viii. 17; faith, Isa. xlv. 22; Heb. xii. 2; expectation, Ps. v. 3; Phil. iii. 20; Tit. ii. 13; love, 2 Cor. iii. 18; John i. 14. II. What the eyes say. "When wilt *thou* comfort me? Brushing aside all other comforters, thou art my sun: my life: my love: my all." III. How the pleading eyes shall meet the responsive Eye of the Lord: Heb. ix. 18. In the look of the recognition of grief, Ex. ii. 25; in the look of pardon, Luke xxiii. 61; of strength-giving, Jud. vi. 14; of complacent love, Isa. lxvi. 2.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 83.—I. The outward man in ill case. II. Character blackened. III. Constantly exposed to discomfort. IV. Contents maturing.

Verse 83.—"*A bottle in the smoke.*" I. God's people have their trials. 1. From the poverty of their condition. 2. Our trials frequently result from our comforts. 3. The ministry hath made much smoke with it. 4. The poor bottle in the smoke keeps there for a long time, till it gets black. II. Christian men feel their troubles; they are like "bottles" in the smoke. 1. The trial that we do not feel is no trial at all. 2. Trials which are not felt are unprofitable trials. A bottle in the smoke gets very black, becomes very useless, is an empty bottle. III. Christians do not, in their troubles, forget God's statutes of command, the statutes of promise. Why was it that David still held fast by God's statutes? 1. He was not a bottle in the fire, or he would have forgotten them. 2. Jesus Christ was in the smoke with him, and the statutes were in the smoke with him too. 3. The statutes were in the soul, where the smoke does not enter.—*From "Spurgeon's Sermons,"* No. 71.

Verse 84.—A solemn question pointing to the shortness of life, the severity of sorrow, the necessity of industry, the nearness of the reward.

Verse 85.—Pits; or, the secret schemes of wicked men against the godly.

Verse 86 (*last clause*).—A prayer for all occasions. See the many cases in which it is used in Scripture.

Verse 87.—I. What the good man loses by gaining. II. What he gains by losing.—*G. R.*

Verse 87.—I. "Almost," but not altogether. II. The saving clause: "I forsook not thy precepts."

Verse 87.—Passing through fires, and the asbestos covering.

Verse 88.—I. New life is the cause of new obedience. II. New obedience is the effect of new life.—*G. R.*

Verse 88.—Quickening. I. Our greatest need. II. God's most gracious boon. III. The guarantee of our steadfastness; and so, IV. The promotor of God's glory.

Verse 88.—1. He closes with a frequent petition: "*Quicken thou me*—make me alive." All true religion consists in the LIFE *of God* in the SOUL *of man.* 2. The *manner* in which he wishes to be quickened: "*After thy lovingkindness.*" He wishes not to be raised from the *death of sin by God's thunder*, but by the *loving voice* of a *tender Father.* 3. The *effect* it should have upon him: "*So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.*" Whatever thou *speakest* I will *hear, receive, love, and obey.*—*Adam Clarke.*

Verses 89—92.—The Psalmist here tells us the prescription which soothed his pains and sustained his spirits. Here we have strong consolation. I. In certain facts which he remembered. 1. The eternal existence of God. 2. The immutability of his word. 3. The faithfulness of the fulfilment of that word. 4. The perpetuity of the word in nature. 5. The perpetuity of the word in experience. II. The delights which he experienced in the time of his trouble. In bereavements; when everything seemed shifting and inconstant; when his own faith failed him; when all helpers failed him; he fell back upon the eternal settlements: "O Lord, thy word is settled," etc. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1656: "My Solace in my Affliction."

***Verse* 89.—Eternal settlements, or, heavenly certainties.**

Verse 89.—God's eternal calm (in contrast with earth's mutations) imaged in the starry heavens.—*William Bickle Haynes*, 1882.

Verse 89.—Consider, I. The term, "thy word." 1. A word is a revealed thought. The Scriptures are just this: the thoughts and purposes of God made intelligible to man. 2. But a "word" also marks specially unity (it is one word) and wholeness or completeness, a word, not a syllable. The Scriptures are one and complete. II. The statement, "for ever settled in heaven." 1. "Settled in heaven" before it came to earth; therefore it could come as a continuous unfolding, through various dispensations, without the shadow of hesitation or contradiction manifest in it. 2. Abides "settled in heaven," for its central revelation; the atonement is a completed fact, and Christ is now in heaven a perfected Saviour; thus the word is unalterable. 3. "For ever settled in heaven." Not only because God in heaven is of one mind and cannot be turned; but because righteousness itself, the righteousness of heaven, demands that an atonement by suffering shall be fully and everlastingly answered by its due reward. III. The lessons. 1. If settled in heaven, men on earth can never unsettle it. 2. The wicked may not indulge a future hope arising from any new dispensation beyond the grave; God's present word to us cannot then be unsettled. 3. The godly may rely on a settled word amidst the unsettled experiences and feelings incident to earth.—*J. F.*

Verse 90.—The stability of the earth a present picture of everlasting faithfulness.

Verses 90, 91.—Consider, I. The steadfastness of nature as dependent upon the divine decree: "according to thy ordinances." II. The subserviency of nature to the divine will: "for all are thy servants." III. The fixedness of nature's laws, together with their subserviency to God's purposes, as a confirmation of the Christian's faith in the written word, in the care of a divine providence, and in the sureness of spiritual and heavenly things. "Thy faithfulness is," etc.—*J. F.*

Verse 91.—Our starry monitors. They teach us, I. To serve: though we cannot shine with their brightness. II. To do all with strict regard to God's will. III. To "continue"—"according to thine ordinances."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 91.—The service of nature. I. Universal: "all are thy servants." II. Obedient: "according to thy ordinances." III. Perpetual: "they continue." IV. Derived: "thou hast established the earth."

Verse 92.—The sustaining power of joy in God.

Verse 92.—The word of God as a sustaining power amid the greater sorrows of life. I. Its necessity. 1. For want of it, men have become drunkards to drown their sorrows, have become suicides because life was unbearable, have become broken and hopeless because they had no strength to struggle against misfortune, have become atheists in creed as, alas, they were before in practice; all, in fact, become subject to sorrow's worst bitterness and calamity's worst effects. 2. Nothing can supply the place of God's word. Nature throws no light on the mystery of suffering. Human philosophy is at best cold comfort, and when most needed most fails. II. Its efficiency. Proved—1. In the experience of those who have tried it. 2. By the character of its promises. 3. By the discovery it makes of a beneficent providence working through calamity and sorrow. 4. By the revelation it gives of the pity of God and the sympathy of Christ. 5. By its record of the "Man of sorrows," who through suffering wrought out man's salvation, and entered into glory. 6. By its teaching concerning the Incarnate Word; thus showing a suffering God, which may well be a solace to suffering men. 7. By displaying the glory of heaven and the eternal felicity awaiting those who overcome through the blood of the Lamb.—*J. F.*

Verse 92.—The Godly Man's Ark; or, City of Refuge in the day of his Distress. Discovered in divers (five) Sermons . . . . By Edmund Calamy, B. D. . . . . Eighteenth edition. 1709. 12mo.

Verse 92.—We have here set before us by the Psalmist, I. The case which he had been in, and which he now refers to—one sad and sinking. He was under such affliction that he was ready to perish; which seems to include inward and outward trouble at once; trials without and pressure within. II. What it was that gave him relief, and this when nothing else could, etc., the law of God. III. How he looked back upon this relief received, namely, with thankfulness to God, to whom he speaks, and records it for the encouragement and direction of others: "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction."—*Daniel Wilcox*, 1676—1733.

Verse 92.—*The life-buoy.* Under the form of the narrative of a shipwrecked

mariner, describe the experience of the soul struggling in the sea of affliction; almost overwhelmed: yet buoyed up over each successive billow: and finally saved by clinging to the Word of God.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 92.—The Psalmist's shudder at recollected danger. I. Sore peril: affliction tending to despair and ruin. II. Fearful crisis: "then." III. Many-handed help: "thy law my delights."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 93.—Experience fixes the word upon the memory.

Verse 93.—I. A good resolve: "I will never forget thy precepts." 1. The precepts are worth remembering. 2. Safety lies in remembering them. 3. Fidelity to God cannot be without remembering them. 4. Not to remember them is shameful ingratitude. II. An excellent reason for making it: "For with them thou hast quickened me." 1. A reason founded upon personal experience: "me." 2. A reason appreciative of the benefit received: "quickened." 3. A reason indicative of gratitude to God: "thou."—*J. F.*

Verse 93.—"Never forget"; an often-uttered phrase. Here golden. I. Something that *could* not be forgotten: life and pardon received. How could it? II. Something that *should* not be forgotten: the precious instrumentality.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 93.—I. The instrumental power of truth. 1. Used by God in our regeneration: James i. 18; Ps. xix. 7. 2. Used in our liberation: John viii. 32. 3. Used in our sanctification: John xvii. 7. II. Our consequent affection for it. We cannot forget. 1. Our past obligations to it. 2. Our present dependence upon it. 3. Our future needs of it.—*W. W.*

Verse 94.—1. David claims relation to God: "I am thine"—devoted to thee, and owned by thee, thine in covenant. 2. He proves his claim: "I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts"; *i.e.*, I have carefully enquired concerning my duty, and diligently endeavoured to do it. 3. He improves his claim: "I am thine, save me." Save me from sin, save me from ruin.—*M. Henry.*

Verse 94.—I. A great prayer: "Save me." II. A grand prayer: "I am thine." III. A gracious experience: "I have sought," etc.

Verse 94.—I. Relation: "I am thine." II. Preservation: "save me." III. Obligation: "I have sought," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 94.—God's child humbly points out to him his responsibility: "I am thine." II. Ventures to urge his own sincerity: he has at least "sought." III. With these two hands extended, he utters a sharp cry for help: "save me."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 94.—*Multum in parvo.* I. A profession. II. A prayer. III. A plea.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 94.—I. God's interest in us. II. Our interest in God.—*W. D.*

Verse 94.—The characteristics of personal religion. I. Personal devotedness to God: "I am thine." II. Personal obedience rendered: "I have sought thy precepts." III. Personal expectation cherished; "save me."—*J. F.*

Verse 94.—The courage obedience gives. I. It emboldens us to a firm assurance: "I am thine, for I have," etc. 1. We become God's by faith alone. 2. But the assurance of being his cannot exist without obedience; obedience proves the faith to ourselves; satisfies us concerning grace received. 3. Poor obedience always interferes with assurance. II. It emboldens us to pray, and in prayer: "Save me." 1. The Christian's prayers are only of faith and offered in faith. 2. Yet disobedience makes him shrink from approaching God in prayer, and renders him feeble in petitioning. 3. Obedience is humble but bold. The middle clause of the text applies equally to the first and third clauses.—*J. F.*

Verse 95.—Wicked men patient in carrying out their evil designs. Good men patient in considering the ways of the Lord.

Verse 95.—The hatred of the wicked towards the righteous. I. Show that it ever has been, and still is. 1. Select Scriptural instances, beginning with Abel. 2. Notice the persecutions of the church. 3. Treatment in the workshop. 4. Often in the home. 5. The contemptuous manner the "saints" are spoken of, etc. II. Enquire as to why it is so. 1. The enmity of the carnal heart to God. 2. The jealousy excited by the Christian's assurance of eternal blessedness. 3. The consciousness of being rebuked by a holy life. 4. Excited to it by Satan. 5. The restless mischievousness of sin which, if it cannot hinder holiness, will maliciously hurt its advocates. III. Direct how to act when exposed to it: "I will consider thy testimonies." That means—1. Be the more obedient to God. 2. Have the more watchful control over words and feelings. 3. Love your enemies. 4. Pray

for those who hate you. 5. Do good to them on every opportunity. 6. Be thankful that you are among the hated and not the haters. 7. Especially consider the holy testimony of Christ's forbearing patience.—*J. F.*

Verse 95.—Waiting counterwrought by waiting. I. Temptations in ambush. II. The saint with his Lord.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 95.—*Immunity.* I. I am in danger. II. I will attend to my duty. III. I will trust thee to deliver me.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 96.—I. An end:—"seen"; seen by one man where it should not have been; seen where there was no end of boasting; seen in *all* perfection. II. No end:—to the extent, spirituality, perpetuity, and perfectness of the law.

Verse 96.—I. The Finite explored. II. The Infinite unexplored.—*W. D.*

Verse 96.—Perfectionism disproved by experience and inspiration.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 96.—*Perfection—perfect and imperfect.* I. Loud professions of perfection arise from ignorance (of self, or of God's requirements). II. Are peculiarly liable to collapse: "I have seen an end." III. Are best corrected by a survey of the breadth of the divine law.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 97.—I. Unusual Exclamation. II. Unusual Application.—*W. D.*

Verse 97.—Indescribable love and insatiable thought. The action and reaction of affection and meditation.

Verse 97.—I. The object of love: "thy law." II. The degree of that love: "oh, how love I," etc. III. The evidence of that love: "it is my meditation," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 97.—*Love to the law.* I. An ardent confession of love. II. An unanswerable evidence of love.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 97 (*first clause*).—Vehemency of love for God's word. I. Its recognisable marks. 1. Profound reverence for the authority of the word. 2. Admiration for its holiness. 3. Jealousy for its honour; God's servant feels acute pain when men show it any slight. 4. Respect for its wholeness; he would not divorce precepts from promises, nor ignore a single statement in it. 5. Indefatigability in its study. 6. Eager desire to obey it. 7. Forwardness in praising it. 8. Activity in spreading it abroad. II. Its reasonableness. 1. The word well deserves it. 2. It is a proof of true intelligence. 3. It is not less than a regard for our own interest demands. III. Its requisiteness to the true worship of God. Men sneeringly call such an affection bibliolatry, as though it were the worship of a book. In truth, it is an essential element in the due worship of God. For—1. Without it there cannot be the faith which honours God. 2. It is involved in that love to God which constitutes the very essence of worship. 3. It is itself an act of homage that a worshipper dare not withhold.—*J. F.*

Verses 97—100.—*Spiritual wisdom.* I. God's word the source of surpassing wisdom—excelling that of "mine enemies," "my teachers," "the ancients." II. The three methods of acquiring this wisdom—love, meditation, practice. III. The one Giver of this wisdom: "Thou:" ver. 98.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 98.—Constant communion with truth the student's road to proficiency.

Verses 98, 99, 100.—The truly wise man. 1. *The source of his wisdom.* The word of "the only wise God," here described as (1) Thy commandments. (2) Thy testimonies. (3) Thy precepts. 2. *The increase of his wisdom.* It arises from (1) The abiding indwelling of the word: "ever with me," ver. 98. (2) Meditation upon the word, ver. 99. (3) Obedience to the word, ver. 100. 3. *The measure of his wisdom.* (1) Wiser than his enemies, whose wisdom was "not from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish." (2) Wiser than his teachers, whose wisdom was "of this world." (3) Wiser than the ancients, whose wisdom was that of unsanctified age and experience.—*W. H. J. Page*, 1882.

Verse 99.—The surest way to excellence. I. A good subject: "thy testimonies." II. A good method: "are my meditations."

Verse 100.—Antiquity no security for truth as contrasted with revelation: old age no proof of wisdom as contrasted with holy living: open confession no evidence of boasting as contrasted with sullen pride.

Verse 100.—Obedience the high road to understanding.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 100.—Obedience the key of knowledge. John vii. 17.

Verse 100.—Self-restraint needful to piety.

Verse 102.—Divine teaching necessary to secure perseverance, and effectual to that end.

Verse 102.—Consider,—I. The path appointed for men to walk in: "Thy

judgments." 1. Right path. 2. Clean path. 3. Pleasant path. 4. Safe path. 5. The end—eternal glory. II. The persistent pursuit of it: "I have not departed." 1. Persecution would drive from it. 2. Pleasures would allure from it. 3. The flesh would weary in it. 4. But the true believer determines to hold on his way to the end. 5. And carefully watches his steps lest they depart. III. The preserving power that holds the traveller to it: "For thou hast taught me." 1. The traveller walks with God, and receives instruction by the special illumination of the Holy Spirit. 2. The choice property of this teaching is, not only that it makes wise, but that it captivates the soul, strengthens it, and holds it to a holy obedience.—*J. F.*

Verse 103.—Experience in religion the source of enjoyment in it; or, I. Tasting the word: its sweetness. II. Declaring the word with the mouth: its greater sweetness.

Verse 103.—I. The word is positively sweet: "sweet to my taste." II. Comparatively sweet: "sweeter than honey." III. Superlatively sweet: "how sweet," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 103.—The comparison, setting forth the precious property of sweetness in the word: "Sweeter than honey." "Better than honey," would not do as well. It is—1. The purest sweetness; even precepts and rebukes. 2. Uncloying sweetness. 3. Always a beneficial sweetness. 4. A specially grateful sweetness—in affliction, in the hour of death.—*J. F.*

Verse 103.—*Spiritual delicacy.* I. The taste needed to relish it. II. The life that alone is nourished by it. III. The rare enjoyment derived from it.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 103.—I. It is sweet. II. Let us enjoy it. III. The best effects will follow. George Herbert says:—

> "O Book! infinite sweetness! let my heart
> Suck every letter, and a honey gain,
> Precious for any grief in any part;
> To clear the breast, to mollify all pain."

Verse 103.—If we would taste the honey of God, we must have the palate of faith.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 104.—The influence of the precepts. I. Upon the understanding. II. Upon the affections. III. Upon the life.

Verse 104.—I. The intellectual effect of the Scriptures: "I get understanding." II. Their moral effect: "I hate," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 104.—The understanding derived from God's precepts begets holy hatred, I. To the false ways of conventional morality. II. To the false ways of a formal religiousness. III. To the false ways of an erring theology. IV. To the false ways of hypocritical practice. V. To the false ways of sinful suggestions. VI. To the false ways of one's own deceitful heart.—*J. F.*

Verses 105—108.—I. Illumination (ver. 105). II. Decision (ver. 106). III. Testing: "I am afflicted" (ver. 107). IV. Consecration (ver. 108). V. Education: "teach me," etc. (ver. 108).

Verse 105.—The practical, personal, everyday use of the word of God.

Verse 105.—*Lamp-light.* I. The believer's dangerous night-journey through the world. II. The lamp that illumines his path. III. The eternal day towards which he travels (when the lamp will be laid aside: Rev. xxii. 5).—*C. A. D.*

Verse 106.—Decision for God, and fit modes of expressing it.

Verse 106.—I. Veneration for the word. II. Consecration to the word. III. Fidelity to the word.—*G. R.*

Verse 106.—*Swearing and performing.* I. The usefulness of religious vows. To quicken perception; to rouse conscience; (seen in Jewish nation: Ex. xxiv. 37; 2 Chr. xv. 12—15; Neh. x. 28, 29; in Scottish nation—Solemn League and Covenant). II. The danger of religious vows. A vow unfulfilled, or receded from, is a moral injury: Eccl. v. 4—7. III. The safeguard of religious vows: dependence on the Spirit of God: Ezek. xi. 19, 20; 2 Cor. iv. 5.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 107.—I. A good man greatly afflicted. II. A sure cure for the ills of affliction: "Quicken me." III. A safe rule to pray by when afflicted: "according unto thy word."

Verse 107.—I. The "very much" afflicted. 1. The world has such—widows, orphans, etc, etc. 2. Most take their turn. II. But there is "very much" grace. 1. God's word promises the needed quickening. 2. Himself very much greater than all our needs. 3. Christ tried "in all points" has all help. III. Therefore

bring "very much" faith, as the Psalmist here. 1. Keen-eyed for promises 2. Fervent in pleading them. 3. Strong in expectation.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 108.—Consider,—I. The instructive title given to prayer and praise: "The free-will offerings of my mouth." 1. It shows the believer to be a priest: "offerings." 2. It shows the peculiarity of his service: "free-will." 3. It implies whole-hearted consecration. II. The humility portrayed in the prayer: "Accept, I beseech thee." 1. Here is no pharisaic boasting. 2. Even the free-will offering is felt to need an "I beseech thee." III. The longing desire for further instruction in order to a more perfect obedience: "Teach me thy judgments."—*J. F.*

Verse 108.—Free will seeking free grace.—*W. D.*

Verse 108.—Work for Free-willers. I. Offerings of Prayer—for each of the blessings of salvation. II. Offerings of Repudiation—of all claim to unassisted good. III. Offerings of Praise—for sovereign grace.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 109.—The soul's life in jeopardy. The life of the soul secured.

Verses 109, 110.—Here is—I. David in danger of losing his life. There is but a step between him and death; for "the wicked have laid a snare" for him. Wherever he was he found some design or other laid against him; which made him say, "My soul is continually in my hand." It was not so only as a man—it is true of us all that we are exposed to the strokes of death—but as a man of war, and especially as "a man after God's own heart." II. David in no danger of losing his religion through this peril; for, 1. He "doth not forget the law," and therefore is likely to persevere. 2. He hath not yet erred from God's precepts, and therefore it is to be hoped he will not.—*M. Henry.*

Verse 110.—Various kinds of snares, and the one way of escaping them.

Verse 110.—Consider,—I. Some of the snares set for saints by sinners. 1. Doctrinal snares, by intellectual sinners. 2. False accusations, by malignant sinners. 3. False flatteries, by deceitful sinners. 4. False charity, by a large number of sinners nowadays. II. The secure safeguard for a saint's safety: "I erred not from thy precepts." Obedience to God gives security, because—1. The snares are then suspected and watched against. 2. The feet cannot become entangled by them. 3. God keeps him who keeps his word.—*J. F.*

Verse 111.—I. Estate. II. Entering upon it. III. Entail upon it. IV. Enjoyment of it.

Verse 111.—Notice,—I. How rich the Psalmist was determined to be: "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage." Rich,—1. In knowledge. 2. In holiness. 3. In comfort. 4. In companionship, for God's company goes with his word. 5. In hope. II. How he clung to his wealth: "For ever." 1. He hurt none by so doing; he could give generously his portion, and yet not waste. 2. He was right; for he had the only wealth of which an everlasting possession is possible. 3. He was wise. III. How he rejoiced in his wealth: "They are the rejoicing of my heart." 1. Here is internal and deep joy; not always possible to the possession of wealth. 2. Pure, unalloyed joy; it is never so with other wealth. 3. Safe joy; other joy is dangerous. 4. Unlosable joy.—*J. F.*

Verse 112.—Heart-leanings. Personality, pressure, inclination, performance, constancy, perpetuity.

Verse 112.—The godly man's obedience. I. Its reality. 1. "To perform"; not words or feelings merely; but deeds. 2. "Thy statutes"; not human inventions, nor self conceits, nor conventional maxims. II. Its cordiality: "inclined my heart." 1. Heart inclination is requisite for pleasing a heart-searching God. 2. And to make obedience easy and even delightful. 3. "I have," he says; was it therefore his doing? Yes. Was it his work alone? No. See verse 36. 4. The proofs. (1) Universality: "statutes," the whole of them. (2) Uniformity: "alway." III. Its constancy: "even unto the end." 1. Though a man should be cautious when planning for the future, yet this life-long purpose is right, wise, and safe. 2. Nor can he purpose less, if holy fervency fill the heart. 3. It is no more than what God and consistency demand.—*J. F.*

Verse 113.—The thought of the age, and the truth of all ages.

Verse 113.—I. The object of hatred. II. The object of love. Or—I. Love the cause of hatred. II. Hatred the effect of love.—*G. R.*

Verse 113.—"*Vain thoughts.*" What they are. Whence they arise. The mischief they cause. How they should be treated.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 113.—How the believer—1. Is troubled by vain thoughts. A frequent and painful experience. 2. Does not tolerate vain thoughts. Some suffer them to

lodge within; he is anxious to expel them. 3. Triumphs over vain thoughts. By his love to the law of God. His prayer is—

> "With thoughts of Christ and things divine,
> Fill up this foolish heart of mine."

W. H. J. P.

Verse 114. — Our protection *from* danger—"hiding-place"; *in* danger — "shield"; *before* danger—"I hope."

Verse 114.—"*Hiding-place.*" Secrecy to conceal us. Capacity to hold us. Safety. Comfort.—*T. Manton.*

Verse 114.—*Hiding and hoping.* I. A hiding-place needed. II. A hiding-place provided (Isa. xxv. 14; xxxii. 2). III. A hiding-place used.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 114.—I. The refuge provided: "Thou art," etc. II. The refuge revealed: "In thy word." III. The refuge found: "I hope," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 114.—"*Thou art my hiding place.*" I. In thy grace, from condemnation. II. In thy compassion, from sorrow. III. In thy succour, from temptation. IV. In thy power, from opposition. V. In thy fulness, from want.—*W. J.*

Verse 115.—I. Ill company hinders piety. II. Piety quits ill company. III. Piety, in compelling this departure, acts as God will do at the last.

Verse 115.—Evil companionships incompatible with genuine righteousness. I. They necessitate concealment and compromise. II. They destroy the capability of communion with God, and the relish for spiritual things. III. They blunt the sensitiveness of conscience. IV. They involve deliberate disobedience to God.—*J. F.*

Verse 116.—I. Upholding promised. II. Needful for holy living. III. The preventive of shameful acts.

Verse 116.—"*Uphold me according unto thy word,*" etc. 1. The Psalmist pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it: "*Uphold me according unto thy word,*" which word I hope in, and if it be not performed I shall be "ashamed of my hope." 2. He pleads the great need he had of God's grace, and the great advantage it would be to him: "Uphold me, that I may live"; intimating that he could not live without the grace of God.—*M. Henry.*

Verse 117.—I. Upholding—God's holding us up. It implies a danger, and that danger takes many forms. The believer's life may be described as walking in uprightness; he is a pilgrim. He needs upholding, for—1. The way is slippery. 2. Our feet make the danger as well as the way. 3. Cunning foes seek to trip us up. 4. Sometimes the difficulty is not caused by the way, but by the height to which God may elevate us. 5. The prayer is all the more needful because the most of people do not keep upright. II. Two blessed things that come out of this holding up. 1. We shall be safe for ourselves, as examples, and as pillars of the church. 2. We shall be watchful and sensitive: "I will have respect unto thy statutes continually." Without this no man is safe. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1657: "My Hourly Prayer."

Verse 117.—"*Hold thou me up,*" etc. I. The good man is up. II. The good man wishes to keep up. III. The good man prays to be held up. IV. The good man knows that divine support is abundantly sufficient.—*W. J.*

Verse 117.—I. Dependence for the future: "Hold," etc. II. Resolution for the future: "I will have," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 118.—Sin and falsehood: their connection, punishment, and cure.

Verse 118.—I. Hearken to the tramp of God's armies. In nature; providence; angelic hosts of last day. II. The mangled victims. Cunning deceivers specially obnoxious to God. Examples: Balaam, Pharaoh, Rome, the deceiver of the nations. III. The warnings to us of this Aceldama. Repent. Avoid deceit. Mind God's landmarks. Hide in Christ.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 118.—God's punishment of the wicked though awfully severe is just and necessary. I. It is due as the merited wages of iniquity. II. It is demanded by the position of God as moral governor, and by his character as righteous. III. It is necessary to mark the real worth of righteousness and its reward. If the wicked are not punished, the full worth of righteousness cannot appear. IV. In the nature of the case, it is absolutely unavoidable, except upon one condition, namely, the gift of genuine repentance and holiness after death; *that* no man has any right to expect, nor has God given the slightest intimation that he will bestow it. V. Hell

lies in the bosom of sin ; and if the wicked were taken to heaven, they would carry hell thither. Heaven supplies not the things in which the wicked delight while it abounds in those they can neither understand nor sympathise with.—*J. F.*

Verse 118 (*second clause*).—The deceits of the wicked are all falsehoods. I. The world they embrace is a false Delilah. II. The pleasure they enjoy is a Satanic snare. III. Their formal religiousness is a vain delusion. IV. Their conceits of God are self-invented lies.—*J. F.*

Verses 118—120.—*Saved by fear.* I. The wrath of God revealed against sin. II. The judgment of God executed upon sinners. III. The fear of God created in the heart.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 119.—The saint's acquiescence in God's judgments.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 119.—I. Comparison of the wicked to dross. II. Comparison of their doom to the putting away of dross. III. The saint's admiration of divine justice as seen in the rejection of the wicked.

Verse 119.—God's putting away the wicked like dross. I. God's judgments are a searching and separating fire. II. The final judgment of the great day will complete the separating process. III. The great result will be, the true metal and the dross, each gathered to its *own* place.—*J. F.*

Verse 120.—The judgments of God on the wicked cause in the righteous, I. Love. II. Awe. III. Fear.

Verse 120.—I. Describe the true character of the fear. 1. It is the fear of reverence for God's authority and power. 2. It is the fear of horror against sin as meriting judgment. II. Show its compatibility with filial love. 1. The more we love God the more firmly we believe in the certainty and awfulness of his judgments. 2. The more we love God the more will we fear to arouse his chastising rod against ourselves. 3. In fact, if we love not God, we shall have no fear lest sin should involve us in judgment. III. Commend it. 1. As it proves a just sense of sin's desert. 2. As it shows a true appreciation of God's righteousness. 3. As it is not a fear that hath torment, but a fear which increases watchfulness, and walks hand in hand with perfect confidence in saving grace.—*J. F.*

Verses 121, 122.—*The double appeal.* I. Of conscious integrity : " I have done judgment," etc. II. Of conscious deficiency : " Be surety for thy servant for good."—*C. A. D.*

Verse 122.—I. Suretyship entreated. II. Good expected. III. Obligation acknowledged : " thy servant."

Verse 122 (*first clause*).—After explaining the Psalmist's meaning as shown in the preceding verse, this sentence may be used for a sermon upon the Suretyship of Christ, by a reference to Heb. vii. 22. I. A Surety for good wanted—the deeply felt, though, perhaps, undefined want of a sin-burdened soul. 1. The mere statement of a gratuitous pardon on the part of God is not thoroughly believable to such a soul, nor, if it could be believed in, would it give peace to the conscience. For, on the one hand, the pardon could not be perceived as just, nor as consistent with God's necessary hatred of sin, yet the conscience demands this perception ; on the other hand, mere pardon does not show how the obligation to a perfect fulfilment of God's law, as righteousness, can be met, yet the conscience demands to see this before it can be satisfied to realize peace. Luther's experience. 2. Now the Scriptures tell us that God " justifies the ungodly," and that his " righteousness " is declared in his justifying sinners : Rom. iii. 25. He can forgive sins with justice. He can treat sinners as righteous persons, and yet be righteous in doing so. How ? By a Surety. Therefore, a Surety is the real want. II. A Surety existent. Jesus is the Surety. 1. He undertook to bear our obligation to the law's penalty, and fulfilled it in death. Thus pardon, though mercy to us, is an act of justice to Christ. 2. He undertook our obligation to a perfect obedience, and satisfied for that in his fulfilment of the law ; thus for God to treat us as righteous is only just to Christ. 3. God has shown his satisfaction with the office of Christ, and with his work, by the resurrection and glorification of Christ. Hence a well-accredited and efficient Surety exists. III. A Surety nigh at hand. 1. In the gospel, Christ as Surety comes to the sinner as truly as though he himself left his throne and came in his own person. 2. Thus, he is so close that a sinner has but to receive the gospel into his heart and he receives Christ. 3. Christ received as a Surety is the Surety for whosoever receives him.—*J. F.*

Verse 123.—Holy expectation—long maintained, in danger of failing ; this fact pleaded ; reasons for never renouncing it.

Verses 124, 125.—*The servant of God.* I. Making profession: "I am thy servant." II. Making confession—of guilt, dulness, ignorance. III. Making petition—for mercy, understanding, and teaching.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 124.—Heavenly instruction a great mercy.

Verse 124.—I. His confidence in divine mercy. II. His submission to divine authority. III. His prayer for divine teaching.—*G. R.*

Verse 124.—A Perfect Prayer, I. As to the matter of it. 1. Here is nothing superfluous; no petition for wealth, nor for honours, nor for anything the worldling covets. 2. Here is nothing wanting; "Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy" comprehends everything the guilty soul needs; "Teach me thy statutes" comprehends all a saint needs to be anxious for. II. As to the manner of it. 1. It is direct and definite. 2. It is simple and fervent. 3. It is reverent yet bold. III. As to the spirit of it. 1. "Deal with thy *servant*"; a sense of obligation; a feeling of devotedness; a spirit of consecration to holy work. 2. "Deal . . . . according to thy mercy"; a sense of unworthiness; becoming humility; submissiveness to the divine will as to what form the mercy shall take; great faith in the mercy, its freeness and sufficiency. 3. "Teach me thy statutes." Longing for holiness, sense of ignorance, of weakness, of dependence upon special divine spiritual influence.—*J. F.*

Verse 125.—I. An office accepted. II. Fitness requested. III. Discernment desired.

Verse 125.—I. A cheerful acknowledgment: "I am thy servant." II. A desire implied—to serve more perfectly. III. A need recognized—Divine instruction in holy service. IV. A plea urged: "I am thy servant," therefore "Teach me," etc.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verses 126—128.—I. A terrible fact: "They have made void thy law": ver. 126. II. Two blessed inferences: "Therefore," "Therefore," etc: verses 127, 128.

Verses 126.—They make void the law, by denying inspiration, by exalting tradition, by antinomianism, by scepticism, by indifference, etc.

Verse 126.—1. There are times when sin is specially active and dominant. 2. Such times reveal the dependence of the church upon God. 3. Such times awaken the desires of the church for the intervention of God. 4. Such times are the times when God does arise to plead his own cause.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 126.—I. The work anticipated—the vindication of the divine law. II. The work delayed. III. The work executed: "It is time," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 127.—The world's assault upon the truth a reason for our loving it.

Verse 127.—I. The object of love: "Thy commandments." II. The degree of love: "above gold," etc. III. The reason of this love: "therefore," etc., because its object must ultimately prevail.—*G. R.*

Verse 127.—God's will *versus* the golden idol. I. God's commandments are better than gold. II. The love of them is proportionably nobler. III. The unmeasurable superiority of character they produce.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 128 (*first clause*).—This view should be taken of all divine precepts in their bearing, I. Christ-ward. II. Self-ward. III. World-ward. IV. Church-ward. V. Heaven-ward.—*W. J.*

Verse 128.—The Bible right. I. Its science is correct. II. Its history is true. III. Its promises are genuine. IV. Its morality is perfect. V. Its doctrines are divine.—*W. W.*

Verse 128.—Learn four lessons,—I. It is a good thing when wicked men do not praise the truth they cannot love. II. It is a suspicious circumstance when they are found speaking well of any part of it; it is a Judas' kiss in order to betray its interests. III. It must be right to accept and love what the wicked oppose. IV. It is always safe to be on the opposite side to them.—*J. F.*

Verses 129—136.—In this division the Psalmist—I. Praises God's word. II. Shows his affection to it. III. Prays for grace to keep it. IV. Mourns for those who do not.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 129.—The wonderful character of the word a reason for obedience. So wonderfully pure, just, balanced, elevating. So much for our own benefit, for the good of society, and for the divine glory.

Verse 129.—I. What is wonderful in God's word should be believed. II. What is believed should be obeyed.—*G. R.*

Verse 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" 1. The *facts* which they record

are wonderful—so wonderful, that if the book recording them were now published for the first time, there would be no bounds to the avidity and curiosity with which it would be sought and perused. 2. The *morality* which they inculcate is wonderful. 3. If you turn from the morality to the *doctrines* of the Bible, your admiration will rather increase than diminish at the contents of the singular book. 4. These testimonies are wonderful for *the style* in which they are written. 5. They are wonderful for *their preservation* in the world. 6. They are wonderful for the *effects* which they have produced.—*Hugh Hughes*, 1838.

Verse 129.—"*Thy testimonies are wonderful.*" The *ceremonial law* is wonderful, because the mystery of our redemption by the blood of Christ is pointed out in it. 2. The *prophecies* are wonderful, as predicting things, humanly speaking, so uncertain, and at such great distance of time, with so much accuracy. 3. The *decalogue* is wonderful, as containing in a very few words all the principles of justice and charity. 4. Were we to go to the *New Testament*, here wonders rise on wonders! All is astonishing; but the Psalmist could not have had this in view.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 129 (*first clause*).—I. Let us look at five of the wonders of the Bible. 1. Its authority. It prefaces every statement with a "Thus saith the Lord." 2. Its light. 3. Its power—it has a convincing, awakening, drawing, life-giving power. 4. Its depth. 5. Its universal adaptation. II. Indicate three practical uses. 1. Study the Bible daily. 2. Pray for the Spirit to grave it on your heart with a pen of iron. 3. Practise it daily.—*D. Macgregor.*

Verse 129.—To whom and in what respects are God's testimonies wonderful? I. To whom? To those, and those only, who through grace do know, believe, and experience the truth and power of them for themselves. II. In what respects wonderful, *i.e.*, astonishingly pleasing, delightful, and profitable (see ver. 174). 1. In respect of the Author and origin of them, whose they are and from whence they come. 2. In respect of the subject matter of them, which they contain and reveal. 3. In respect of the manner of language in which they are revealed and declared. 4. In respect of the multitude and variety of them suited to every case. 5. In respect of the usefulness of them, and the great benefit and advantage he received from them. 6. In the respect of the pleasure and delight he finds in them (see ver. 111). 7. In respect of the final design, intent, and end of them: viz., eternal life, salvation, and glory.—*Samuel Medley*, 1738—1799.

Verse 130.—I. The essential light of the word. II. The dawn of it in the soul. III. The great benefit of its advancing day.

Verse 130.—I. The source of divine light to man: "Thy words." II. Its force. It forces an entrance into the heart. III. Its direction: "unto the simple." IV. Its effect: "it giveth understanding."—*G. R.*

Verse 130.—*A Bible Society Sermon.* I. Evidence from history and from personal experience that God's word has imparted the light of civilization, liberty, holiness. II. Argument drawn from hence for the further spread of the word of God.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 130.—The Self-evidencing Virtue of God's Word. I. Prove it. "The entrance of thy word giveth light." If this be true, God's word is light; for only light can give light. But light is self-evidencing; it needs nothing to show its presence and its value but itself; so the word of God, to show its own truth and divinity to the believer. I. His conscience proves it; in its conviction of sin; in its peace through the atoning blood. 2. His heart proves it; in its outgoings of love to the God, the Christ, and the righteousness revealed. 3. His experience in affliction and temptation proves it; in the solace and in the strength given by the word. II. Answer an objection. "If God's word were self-evidencing as light is, then everyone would acknowledge it to be truth." Answer, No; for the law holds good in universal experience, that the "entrance" only of light gives light. Light cannot enter a blind man. 1. The Scriptures teach that men by nature are blind. 2. If all men did perceive, by merely reading and hearing the word, that it was light and truth, paradoxical as it may seem, the word would not be truth. 3. Hence the want of universal acknowledgment is not an objection, but a confirmation. III. Show its importance. 1. It makes the believer independent of church authority for his faith. 2. He need not trouble to examine books of evidence; his faith is valid enough without them. 3. He who receives the word into his soul shall be satisfied of its truth and value.—*J. F.*

Verse 131.—Panting for holiness. A rare hunger; the evidence of much grace, and the pledge of glory.

Verse 132.—I. Look. II. Love. III. Use and wont.

Verse 132.—Fellowship with the righteous. I. There are some who love God's name. II. His mercy is the source of all the goodness they experience. III. The Lord has been always accustomed to deal mercifully with them. IV. His mercy towards them should encourage us to implore mercy for ourselves. V. We should be anxious to secure the mercy that is peculiar to them. VI. We should be content if God deals with us as he has always dealt with his people.—*W. Jay.*

Verse 132.—*Divine use and wont.* I. God is accustomed to look upon and be merciful toward his people. II. We are stirred up to specially desire such merciful dealings in time of affliction. III. Love to God qualifies us for these loving looks and merciful dealings.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 132.—Notice,—I. The mark of true believers: "Those that love thy name." II. God's custom of dealing with them: "Be merciful as thou usest to do." III. Their individual and earnest solicitude: "Look thou upon me." —*J. F.*

Verse 133.—I. A holy life is no work of chance, it is a masterpiece of *order*—the order of conformity to the prescribed rule; there is arithmetical and geometrical order: the proportional order; the order of relation; an order of period: holiness, as to the order, is seasonable, suitable. II. The rule of this order: "in thy word." III. The director chosen. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 878: "A Well-ordered Life."

Verse 133.—I. Order in outward life desired. II. Order according to the divine idea. III. Order in the government within.

Verse 133.—I. Help needed. 1. To avoid sin. 2. To be holy. II. Help sought. 1. From below: "thy word." 2. From above: "order," etc., and "let not," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 133.—Sin's sway in the soul. I. Fervently deprecated. 1. Realization of the horrors of its rule. 2. Recognition of the better power. 3. Thorough exclusion sought. II. Wisely combated. 1. Practicalness as well as prayerfulness. 2. Regard had to little "steps." 3. Steps to be governed by divine rule. 4. System not trusted apart from God.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 133.—Notice,—I. The right path for human feet: "In thy word." II. The needed help to control the steps: "Order my steps." III. The perverting power of a dominant sin: "Let not any," etc.—*J. F.*

Verse 134.—What sins may be produced by oppression. What obedience ought to come from those who are set free.

Verse 134.—I. The course to be pursued: "thy precepts." II. The opposition to that course: "the oppression of men." 1. Human opinions. 2. Human examples. 3. Human sympathies. 4. Interests. 5. Persecutions. III. The resistance to that opposition: "Deliver me, so will I," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 134.—*Hindrances removed.* I. The impeding influence of persecution. II. The prayer of the persecuted one. III. The conduct of the delivered one (Luke i. 74, 75).—*C. A. D.*

Verse 134.—I. How some men oppress their fellows. By the laws they make—as statesmen. By the books they write—as authors. By the tyranny they exercise—as masters. By the lives they live—as professors. By the sermons they deliver—as *ministers!* II. How the prayer of the oppressed may be answered. By the gift of wise and good statesmen. By increase of sound literature. By the conversion or removal of hard masters. By a baptism of the Spirit on the church.—*W. W.*

Verse 135.—I. A choice position: "thy servant." II. A choice delight: "thy face to shine." III. A choice privilege: "teach me thy statutes."

Verse 135.—I. God *in* the word: "Thy word." II. God *for* the word: "Teach me," etc. III. God *with* the word: "Make thy face," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 135—*Sunshine.* I. The light in which we can best learn our lessons—God's favour shown in pardon, justification, adoption, assurance, etc. II. The lessons we should learn in the light—grace is productive of holiness.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 135.—I. A rich historic promise (Num. vi. 25). Its sublime origin and associations. II. The *new* prayer born of it. 1. Looks up for the face Divine; the same in its majestic sweetness that has watched generations decay since the word was first spoken. 2. Asks to know its shinings. Light of fatherhood, etc. III. The *old* prayer repeated: "Teach me thy statutes." Last time in the Psalm. 1. Our need of teaching—oft-repeated prayer. 2. The intimate connection between obedience and the shinings of God's face.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 136.—Abundant sorrow for abounding sin. Other men's sins the saint's own sorrows. He thinks of the good God provoked, of the sinners themselves debased, of their death, and their perdition.

Verse 136.—I. Occasion of his grief: "they keep not thy law." II. Extent of his grief: "rivers," etc. See examples in Jeremiah, Ezra, Paul, Christ himself. III. Effect of his grief. To warn, teach, invite, and exhort them—as in his Psalms. —*G. R.*

Verse 136.—*Sacred tears.* I. The world sinning. II. The church weeping. III. It is time the world began to weep for itself.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 136.—I weep, because, 1. Of the dishonour done to the Law-giver. 2. Of the injury done to the law-breaker. 3. Of the wrong done to the law-abiding.

"That kingly prophet, that wept so plentifully for his own offences (Psalm vi. 6), had yet floods of tears left to bewail his people's" (Psalm cxix. 136).—*Thomas Adams.* "Bendetti, a Franciscan monk, author of the *Stabat Mater*, one day was found weeping, and when asked the reason of his tears, he exclaimed, 'I weep because Love goes about unloved.'"—*W. H. J. P.*

Verses 137, 138.—*Solemn contemplation.* I. The contemplation of the deep and awful display of the divine character is good for the soul. II. It will lead to a conviction of the righteousness of God's character and administration. III. It will result in loyal submission.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 137.—A consideration of divine righteousness. Convinces us of sin, reconciles us to trying providences, excites a desire to imitate, arouses to reverent adoration.

Verse 137.—God is righteous. I. In his commands. II. In his threatenings. III. In his chastisements. IV. In his judgments. V. In his promises.—*G. R.*

Verse 138.—"*Very faithful.*" Based on a faithful covenant; confirmed by faithful promises; carried out by a faithful Redeemer; enjoyed hitherto; relied on for the future. "Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful."

Verse 139.—"*Zeal.*" I. Consuming self. II. Inflamed by that which would naturally quench it. III. Fed upon God's words.

Verse 139.—"*Zeal.*" I. Flourishing in an uncompromising atmosphere. II. Attaining an astonishing growth. III. Accomplishing a blessed work—the consumption of self.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 139.—I. The object of his zeal: "Thy words." II. The occasion of his zeal: "Mine enemies," etc. III. The fervour of his zeal: "My zeal hath consumed me."—*G. R.*

Verse 140.—I. An awakened sinner adoring the holy law. II. A saint loving it because the pure love the pure. III. A saint among sinners loving the law all the more for its contrast.

Verse 140.—I. The crystal stream. 1. Flows from under the throne. 2. Mirrors heaven. 3. Undefiled through the ages. 4. Nourishes holiness as it flows. II. The enraptured pilgrim. 1. Keeping by its brink. 2. Delighted with its lucid depths. 3. Pleased with its mirrored revelations—self, heaven, God. 4. Cleansed and refreshed by its waters.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 140.—I. *The purity of God's word.* 1. It proceeds from a perfectly pure source: "*Thy* word." 2. It reveals a purity otherwise unknown. 3. It treats impure subjects with absolute purity. 4. It inculcates the most perfect purity. 5. It produces such purity in those who are subject to its power. II. *The love which its purity inspires in gracious souls.* 1. They love it because, while it reveals their natural impurity, it shows them how to escape from it. 2. They love it because it conforms them to its own purity. 3. They love it because to a pure heart the purity of the word is one of its chief commendations. III. *The evidences of this love to the pure word.* 1. Desire to possess it in its purity. 2. Subjection to its spirit and teachings. 3. Zeal for its honour and diffusion.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verses 141—144.—*A mournful song and a joyful refrain.* Stanza I. "I am small and despised." Refrain. The everlasting righteousness of God. Stanza II. "Trouble and anguish have seized me." Refrain. The everlasting righteousness of God.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 141.—Here is—1. David pious, and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, and yet "small and despised" in his own account and in account of many others. 2. David poor and yet pious; "small and despised" for his strict and serious godliness; yet his conscience can witness for him, that he "did not forget God's precepts."—*M. Henry.*

Verse 141.—I. The source of man's littleness is in himself. II. The source of his greatness is in the Divine word. Hence the greatest philosopher is a small man compared with the most uneducated whose delight is in the law of God, and who meditates, etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 141.—I. A little scholar. II. A quick learner. III. A firm remembrancer.

Verse 141.—"*Unknown, yet well known.*" I. The estimate formed of the believer by the world. II. The estimate formed of the believer by himself. III. The profession made by the believer to God. IV. On a review, a revised estimate of the believer: 1 Cor. i. 27; James ii. 5.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 142.—Righteousness, immutability, and truth combined in the revelation of God.

Verse 143.—Mingled emotions.

Verse 143.—I. The dark cloud. Trouble, etc. II. His silver lining. Yet, etc.

Verse 143.—I. The saint cast into prison. 1. The jailers: "Trouble and anguish." 2. Their proceeding: "take hold" and make him fast. II. Songs in the night. 1. Blessed theme: "thy commandments." 2. Ecstatic melodies: "delights." III. Let the prisoners hear them. 1. Pain-held, sin-held, despair held. 2. It is matter and melody to open prisons.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 143.—Consider,—I. The excellency of the word, in that it gives delight when trouble and anguish oppress. II. The great kindness of God in so framing his word that it can give delight at such a time, and under such circumstances. III. The disposition of the believer to resort to the word for delight, when others give themselves over to vain grief and despondency. IV. The blessed position of the believer, in that he need never be without joy.—*J. F.*

Verse 144.—Everlasting righteousness revealed in the word, and producing everlasting life in believers.

Verse 144.—I. Eternal truths. II. Eternal life dependent upon them. III. A cry from amid these everlasting hills.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 144 (*last clause*).—I. Consider the prayer in its simplicity. 1. It is suitable for the awakened sinner. 2. For the Christian struggling against temptation. 3. For the suffering believer. 4. For the worker. 5. For aspiring minds in the church of God. 6. For expiring saints. II. The prayer more fully opened up. 1. Here is want confessed. 2. The prayer is evidently put upon the footing of free grace: "Give." III. Lay bare the argument in the prayer. 1. The word of God, when practically and experimentally understood, is a pledge of life. 2. The word of God is the incorruptible "seed" which liveth and abideth for ever. 3. It is the food of life. 4. It is the very flower and crown and glory of true life. 5. It is righteous. 6. It is everlasting. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1572: "Alive."

Verses 145—148.—*The cry.* I. Whence it came: from my heart. II. Whither it went: to the Lord. III. When it was heard: at dawn and dark. IV. What it sought: hearing, salvation. V. What it promised: obedience. VI. How it was sustained: by hope in God's word.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 145, 146.—The soul's cry. I. The depth from which it rose. II. The height it reached.

Verses 145, 146.—*Childlike prayer.* I. In its ring: "I cried." II. In its directness: "to thee." III. In its outburst: "whole heart." IV. In its outcries: "hear me"; "save me." V. In its promise of better behaviour: "I *will* keep thy statutes."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 145.—I. The model of prayer: "I cried with my whole heart." II. The object of prayer: "Hear me, O Lord." III. The accompaniment of prayer: "I will keep thy statutes."

Verse 146.—I. Prayer remembered. II. Prayer continued: "Save me." III. Prayer yielding fruit: "I shall keep," etc.

Verse 146.—*Salvation.* I. A likely path to it—prayer: cry on. II. The proper place for it: "unto thee"; not man, not the heart. III. A sound view of it: "keep thy testimonies." Not to escape hell, or gain heaven, but to please and love God.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 147, 148.—I. The heavenly companions: prayer and meditation. Inseparable. Mutually helpful. II. Their favourite seasons: times of stillness; night; the hour before day. III. Their volume and night-lamp: "Thy word;" "Hope." Or—I. A grand plea: "Thy lovingkindness." Who can match it?

Who can measure it? Who can mar it? II. An insignificant pleader: "my voice." What can "my voice" ever say to keep step with "thy lovingkindness"? Asking too much out of the question. III. A clever petition ("according to thy judgment"); requesting life; stolen from God's mouth. God's lovingkindness is matched by God's own promise.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 147.—Observe in this David's diligence. I. That it was a personal, closet, or secret prayer; "I cried"; I alone, with thee in secret. II. That it was an early morning prayer: "I prevented the dawning of the morning." III. That it was a vehement and earnest prayer; for it is expressed by crying.—*T. Manton.*

Verse 147.—*Early rising commended.* I. A fit time for prayer. II. For reading the word. III. For indulging the emotions excited by it: "I hoped in thy word."

Verse 148.—"The Inexhaustibleness of the Bible." A sermon by Harry Melvill, at "The Golden Lecture." 1850.

Verse 148.—*Meditation.* Appropriate time, and fruitful subject.

Verse 148.—Meditation in the word well worth self-denial and care on the part of the Christian. I. Without meditation reading is a waste of time and an indignity offered to the word. II. Meditation with prayer, but not prayer without meditation, will discover the sense of the word, when all other means fail; and it has this advantage, that the meaning sinks into the mind. III. Meditation extracts sweetness from the promises, and nourishment from the whole truth. IV. Meditation makes a wise teacher and an efficient worker of one who has little natural skill or learning. V. Meditation subjects the soul to the sanctifying power of the word. VI. Meditation is an invitation to the Holy Spirit to bless the soul, for he is closely associated with the truth, and delights to see the truth honoured. —*J. F.*

Verse 149.—Prayer—hearing the result of love; prayer—answering ruled by wisdom.

Verse 149.—*Quickening.* I. A prayer of unquestionable necessity: "quicken me." II. Twin pleas of irresistible power: "thy lovingkindness:" "thy judgment."—*C. A. D.*

Verse 149.—The two accordings. I. The "according," to which a believer hopes to be heard by God: "Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness." 1. The believer is fully aware of his own unworthiness, and the imperfections of his prayers, therefore he would have God to accept him and interpret them after the rule of his own lovingkindness. 2. Nor does he hope in vain; God's lovingkindness overlooks the imperfections, and supplies the omissions. 3. What a blessed thing it is, that while the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, the groanings that cannot be uttered are read in their true meaning by divine lovingkindness! II. The "according" to which he expects to be answered by God: "Quicken me according to thy judgment." "Judgment" here may mean the revealed word. Then—1. He expects to be answered certainly. 2. He expects to be answered wisely. 3. He expects to be answered fully, as all his needs require. 4. He expects that every answer should quicken spiritual life, making him holy.—*J. F.*

Verses 150, 151.—*Against mischief-makers.* I. They press as near as they can to harm us. II. They get far from right to get more liberty to injure us. III. The Lord is nearer than they. IV. God's truth is our shield and sword.

Verses 150, 151.—*Foes near: the Friend nearer.* I. The believer viewing with alarm the *approach* of his foes: "They draw near." II. The believer viewing with comfort the *presence* of his friend: "Thou art near:" Gen. xv. 1; 2 Kings vi. 14—17.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 150, 151.—Two beleaguering hosts. I. The host of evil: NEAR—1. Demons, godless men, spiritual foes of world and heart. 2. Mischief in their van. 3. Law and truth left far behind. 4. Seeking to narrow their lines. 5. Thus are all saints beset. II. The host of God: NEARER—Jehovah, his angels, and battalions of truths holy and immortal: "Thou and all thy commandments. 1. Entrenched in the reason: "are truth." 2. Camped in the heart's pavilion: "near." 3. Forming impregnable lines within those of the foe.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 150.—Consider—I. Whether the description here given does not apply, more or less, to all believers in Christ: "They that follow after mischief." 1. Some men undoubtedly and of set purpose do follow after mischief; they make themselves the tempters of others, and delight in it. 2. Others, who do not delight in it, yet cannot help the mischievous effect of their example. 3. The very morality

of many unbelievers enables them to carry the pernicious influence of their unbelief where the immorally wicked cannot come. 4. Even regular attendants at public worship may by their indecision encourage others in delay. II. The dangerous position of all to whom the description, in any measure, belongs: "They are far from thy law." 1. They are so, in that they are unbelievers; for "this is his commandment, that we shall believe," etc. 2. They are so, in that they are a cause of evil to others; for we are commanded to love and do good. 3. To be far from God's law is to be nigh unto God's righteous wrath. 4. For the sake of others, as well as their own, men should believe in Christ, and through faith become sanctified.—*J. F.*

Verse 151 (*last clause*).—The commandments of the Lord are true in principle; they lead to true living, if carried out; they truly reward the obedient; they never lead to falsehood, nor cause to be deluded.

Verse 152.—Knowledge of the word. I. It is well to know it as God's own word. II. As founded in truth. III. As founded for ever. IV. The earlier we know this the better.

Verses 153—159.—The two considers. The subjects, the prayers, the arguments.

Verses 153, 154—Here—I. David prays for succour in distress. "Is any afflicted? let him pray"; let him pray as David doth here. 1. He hath an eye to God's pity and prays, *"Consider mine affliction"*; take it unto thy thoughts, and all the circumstances, and sit not by as one unconcerned. God is never unmindful of his people's afflictions, but he will have us to "put him in remembrance" (Isa. xliii. 26), to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit, in his own time and way. 2. He has an eye to God's power, and prays, *"Deliver me,"* and again, *"Deliver me."* Consider my troubles and bring me out of them. God has promised deliverance (Ps. l. 15), and we may pray for it with submission to his will, and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better. 3. He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays, *"Plead my cause"*: be thou my patron and advocate, and take me for thy client. David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them: he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity, and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually: Isa. li. 22; Jer. i. 34. 4. He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, *"Quicken me."* Lord, I am weak, and unable to bear my troubles; my spirit is apt to droop and sink: Oh, that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought! II. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God, and his devotedness to his conduct. *"Quicken"* and *"deliver me according to thy word"* of promise; *"for I do not forget thy precepts."* The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time.—*M. Henry.*

Verse 153.—*The sick man's prayer.* I. The medicine remembered. II. The physician sent for. III. The physician considering the case. IV. The healing wrought.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 153.—I. Lord, do not forget my sorrow. II. I do not forget thy law.

Verses 154, 156, 159.—The threefold quickening. A capital subject, if the contexts are carefully considered.

Verse 154.—Intercession, deliverance, quickening, and all in faithfulness to the word.

Verse 154.—A prayer. I. For promisd defence. II. For promised deliverance. III. For promised revival.—*G. R.*

Verse 154.—*The advocate.* I. The soul hard-pressed by the accuser—in the conscience (1 John iii. 20); before the world; at the throne of grace (Zech. iii.); at the bar of judgment. II. The accused soul commiting its case to the Advocate: 1 John ii. 2; 2 Tim. i. 12. III. How the case will go. He never lost one yet. —*C. A. D.*

Verse 155.—I. An awful distance. II. A distance never decreased by seeking. III. A distance increased by sinning.

Verse 155.—I. When salvation is far off. II. When it is near. Or—I. When the word is far off salvation is far off. II. When the word is near salvation is near.—*G. R.*

Verse 155.—*How to avoid salvation.* I. Salvation is inseparable from conformity

to God's law: Lev. xviii. 5; Luke x. 25—28; Matt. xix. 17. II. Salvation is brought to law-breakers by the Law-giver condescending to become the Law-keeper and the Law-victim. Salvation is avoided by those who refuse to be conformed to the eternal law or will of God. They perish themselves: their own sin punishes them: necessity punishes them.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 155.—A syllogism on salvation. I. Salvation and obedience go together. 1. Have a common centre—God, his *arm* and his *lips*. 2. A mutual relation: we are saved in order to obedience. In obeying we are being saved. Without obedience there is no salvation. 3. An identical aim—our good and God's glory. 4. Obedience and salvation are inseparable for ever. II. The godless are far from obedience. 1. Commands avoided. 2. Submission excluded. III. Therefore they are far from salvation. They *will* not have the one; they *cannot* have the other.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 156.—I. A great need. II. Laid before a great Lord. III. Great favours pleaded. IV. A great mercy sought: "Quicken me."

Verse 156.—*Just, and the Quickener.* I. Spiritual life is the gift of God's mercy. II. Its continuance depends on the exercise of God's power. III. We may therefore plead for quickening on the ground of God's justice.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 156.—The saint, I. Lost in admiration. 1. Of God's tender mercies. 2. He cries out at their greatness. They are numerous. Greatly tender. Great *and* tender; (exquisite combination!). II. Filled with animation. The child of his admiration. 1. The arrow-like prayer: "Quicken me." To be like, to be true to, such a God. 2. The bow in the hand: "according to thy judgments."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 156.—I. The tenderness of God's greatness. II. The greatness of God's tenderness. III. The stimulus to life found in his great and tender presence.

Verse 157.—I. A word of multitude: "many." II. A tendency of dread, viz., a tendency to decline. III. A note of consolation: "yet do I not decline."

Verse 158.—*A grievous sight.* I. Transgressors beyond God's bounds. II. Bounds so kindly set: "thy word." III. Transgressions so wantonly ungrateful, so terribly dangerous, so fatal.

Verse 158.—*Sorrow over sinners.* I. A sight we cannot avoid seeing. II. A sorrow we ought not to avoid feeling. (See Lot: 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Moses: Deut. ix. 18, 19. Samuel: 1 Sam. xv. 11; Jeremiah ix. 1. Paul: Phil. iii. 18. Christ: Luke xix. 41.) III. A reason we will not avoid endorsing.

Verse 158.—A righteous man cannot but be grieved at the sins of the wicked. He sees in them,—I. The violation of the divine law which he loves. II. Ungrateful rebellion against the God he worships. III. Contempt for the gospel of salvation and the blood of Christ. IV. The dominion of Satan, the enemy of his God. V. The degradation of souls which might have been sacred temples. VI. Prophetic signs of an awful, everlasting retribution.—*J. F.*

Verse 159.—I. His own love avowed. II. God's love pleaded. III. Renewed life implored.

Verse 159.—I. Attention invited: "Consider how." II. Profession made: "I love thy precepts." III. Petition offered: "Quicken me," etc. IV. Plea suggested: "according to," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 159.—*My love and thy lovingkindness.* The saint's love. I. Avowed. "Thou knowest all things," etc. II. Submitted. In humble insistance on its sincerity. In sense of its insufficiency. In prayer to God not to overlook it. III. Lost sight of in the sudden glory of God's lovingkindness. Where is my love now? IV. Recovered and humbly brought for quickening. Lord, I'll say no more about it: "Quicken me."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 159.—*Quicken me for love's sake.* I. A prayer for quickened life. II. Awakened by love to the divine rule of life. III. Enforced by the plea of that love. IV. Addressed to the God of love.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 159.—Consider,—I. The holy unsatisfiedness of the believer: "Quicken me" etc. 1. A prayer frequently occurring in the Psalm, and always urged with great earnestness. 2. Its importunity proves the possession of spiritual life; in fact, none but the living ones crave quickening. 3. The most earnest feel the most acutely their indwelling sin, and appreciate most highly thorough sanctification. 4. Thus, this is, perhaps, the only unsatisfiedness perfectly pure in its character. II. The assuring Divine attribute to which he can appeal: "According to thy lovingkindness." 1. An attribute, not only made known in the word, but made

manifest to us in our experience of its gentle dealing. 2. An attribute that covers sin, and is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. 3. An attribute that must be affected with the cry for quickening grace. III. The consideration he ought to be able to lay before God: "Consider how I love thy precepts." 1. Because from the word he learnt of the lovingkindness, and through it received life. 2. Without it the prayer cannot be genuine. 3. It is a good reason for expecting more grace; for "whosoever hath, to him shall be given," etc.—*J. F.*

Verse 160.—I. Early: "true from the beginning." II. Late: "endureth for ever." Or, Truth and immutability the believer's Jachin and Boaz.

Verses 161, 162.—God's word, the object of godly fear and godly joy. 1. It makes the heart quake by its purity and power. 2. It makes the heart rejoice by its grace and truth.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 161.—I. Wrong without cause. II. Right with abundant cause.

Verse 161 (*second clause*).—Awe of God's word—its propriety, its hallowed influence, the evil of its absence.

Verse 161.—*Restrained by awe.* I. The causelessness of persecution. II. The temptations to evil occasioned thereby—to revenge: to apostasy. III. The safeguard against falling: awe of God's word. 1 Sam. xxiv. 6; Dan. iii. 16—18; Acts iv. 19; v. 29.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 162.—I. The treasure hid: "great spoil" hidden in the divine word. II. The treasure found: "as one that findeth," etc. 1. By reading. 2. By meditation. 3. By prayer. III. The treasure enjoyed: "I rejoice," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 162.—David's joy over God's word he compares to the joy of the warrior when he finds great spoil. I. This great joy is sometimes aroused by the fact that there is a word of God. 1. The Scriptures are a revealing of God. 2. The guide of our life. 3. A sure pledge of mercy. 4. The beginning of communion with God. 5. The instrument of usefulness. II. Frequently the joy of the believer in the word arises out of his having had to battle to obtain a grasp of it. 1. We have had to fight over certain doctrines before we could really come at them. 2. The same may be said of the promises. 3. Of the precepts. 4. Of the threatenings. 5. Even about the word which reveals Christ. III. At times the joy of the believer lies in enjoying God's word without any fighting at all: "One that findeth." IV. There is a joy arising out of the very fact that Holy Scripture may be considered to be a spoil. 1. A spoil is the end of uncertainty. 2. It is the weakening of the adversary for any future attacks. 3. It gives a sense of victory. 4. There is, in dividing the spoil, profit, pleasure, and honour. 5. The spoiling of the enemy is a prophecy of rest. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1641: "Great Spoil."

Verse 163.—*Opposite poles of the Christian character.* I. Why I hate lying, because it comes from the devil (Pro. viii. 44, Acts v. 3): it leads to the devil (Rev. xxi. 8, xxii. 15): it is base, dangerous, degrading (Prov. xix. 5, 1 Tim. iv. 2, 2 Tim. iii. 13): it is hated by the Lord (Prov. vi. 16, 17, xii. 22). II. Why I love the law. Because it emanates from God; is the reflection of his character; is the ideal of my character. III. How I came thus to hate and love. By the grace of God: ver. 29.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 163.—I. Opposite things. II. Opposite feelings.

Verse 164.—Praise rendered. Frequently, statedly, heartily, intelligently.

Verse 164.—*Perpetual praise.* I. True praise is ever warranted. II. True praise is ever welcome. III. True praise is never weary.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 164.—1. Some never praise thee; but, "seven times a day," etc.; for I delight to do so. "Thy righteous judgments" are a terror to them, a joy to me. 2. Some feebly and coldly praise thee, while, "seven times," etc. My warm devotion must frequently express itself in praise. 3. Some are content with occasionally praising thee, but, "seven times," etc. They think it enough to begin and end the day with praise, while all the day long I am in the spirit of praise. 4. Some soon cease to praise thee, but, "seven times," etc. Not seven times only, but "unto seventy times seven." Even without ceasing, will I praise thee.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 165.—I. Great love to a great law. II. Great peace under great disquietude. III. Great upholding from all stumbling blocks.

Verse 165.—*Perfect peace.* I. The law of God should be regarded with love. II. Love to the law is productive of great peace. Peace with God through the blood of reconciliation: peace with self by good conscience and suppression of evil desires: peace with men by charity. III. The peace which springs from love to the law is a security against stumbling: "nothing shall offend them;" neither

the daily cross (Mark x. 21, 22); nor the fiery trial (Mark iv. 7); nor the humbling doctrine (John vi. 60, 66, etc.).—*C. A. D.*

Verse 165.—I. The characters described: "they which love thy law." II. The blessing they enjoy: "great peace." III. The evils they escape: "nothing shall offend them."—*G. R.*

Verse 165.—The peace and security of the godly. I. *Their peace.* It arises from—1. Freedom from an accusing conscience. 2. Conformity to the requirements of the law. 3. Enjoyment of the privileges revealed in the law. 4. Assurance of divine approval and benediction. II. *Their security.* 1. They are prepared for every duty. 2. They are proof against every temptation. 3. They are pledged to final perseverance. 4. They have the promise of divine protection.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 165.—I. An honourable title: "They which love thy law." II. A good possession: "Great peace have they." III. A blessed immunity: "Nothing shall offend them."—*J. F.*

Verse 166.—I. A hope which is not ashamed. II. A life which is not ashamed. III. A God of whom he is not ashamed.

Verse 166.—*A good hope through grace.* I. Salvation is God's gift: "thy salvation." II. Is apprehended by hope: "I have hoped." III. Is accompanied by obedience: "and done thy commandments." Heb. vi. 9.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 167.—Past and present.

Verse 167.—I. The more we keep God's testimonies the more we shall love them. II. The more we love them the more we shall keep them.—*G. R.*

Verse 167.—I. The jewels: "Thy testimonies." 1. Rare; none like them. 2. Rich; surpassing valuation. 3. Beautifying those who wear them. 4. Glittering with an internal and essential splendour, in the darkness of this world. 5. Realising in truth the old superstitions regarding precious stones having medicinal and magic virtues. II. The cabinet: "My soul." 1. Exactly made to receive the jewels. 2. A wonderful piece of divine workmanship; but all ruined and marred unless applied to the use designed. 3. The only receptacle out of which the genuine beauty of God's testimonies can so shine as to excite the admiration of beholders. III. The lock that keeps all safe: "I love them exceedingly." 1. Love is the strongest holdfast in the universe. 2. It is needed, for ten thousand thieves prowl around to steal from us the treasure. 3. A love "exceedingly" is a heavenly patent; no ingenuity can pick it; it is fire-proof and burglar-proof against hell itself.—*J. F.*

Verse 168.—I. The claim of God's word upon our utmost obedience. "I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies." He does not mean that he had kept them perfectly; for that were to contradict other expressions in the Psalm. He means that he kept them sincerely and strove to keep them perfectly, as one who realized their claim upon him. 1. The whole word is divine: an equal authority pervades every precept; no distinction should be made of more or less obligation. 2. The whole word is pure and right; expediency, or making the measure and manner of obedience suitable to our own purpose, is a false principle; to be carefully distinguished from righteous expediency, which is the foregoing of a personal right in consideration of another's benefit. 3. The moral code of the word is a unity; obedience is like a connected chain, a wilful flaw in one link renders all useless. II. The consciousness which greatly helps obedience: "For all my ways are before thee." 1. "Are before thee," as plainly seen by thee. 2. "Are before thee," constantly observed. 3. "Are before thee;" deliberately placed before thee by me, that they may be corrected and directed.—*J. F.*

Verse 168.—"*All my ways are before thee.*" I. The saint's delight. II. The sinner's distress.—*W. W.*

Verse 168 (*second clause*).—1. *Necessarily so:* for thou art the omniscient God: Psalm cxxxix. 3. 2. *Voluntarily so:* for I choose to walk in thy sight. See Psalm cxvi. 9. 3. *Consciously and blessedly so:* for the light of thy countenance inspires and gladdens me. See Psalm lxxxix. 15.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 168 (*second clause*).—Living in the sight of God. Actually the case with all; designedly the case of the godly; happily the case of the favoured; pre-eminently the case of those who abide in fellowship.

Verse 168.—I. The practical and doctrinal teachings of God before us. II. All our ways before him. III. The sort of conduct which these two causes will produce.

Verses 169, 170.—I. The singular dignity of prayer. We are on earth, but our prayers pass the seraphim and "come near before God." II. The powerful right

of prayer—to urge with God his own word: "according to thy word." III. The triumphant possibilities of prayer. Blessing us in mind and estate. For time and eternity. "Give me understanding." "Deliver me." IV. The amazing license accorded to prayer. To double and reiterate its requests (as here).—*W. B. H.*

Verse 169.—I. Admission to the royal court. II. Instruction from the royal throne. III. Reliance on the royal word.

Verses 170—174.—The pleader: ver. 170. The singer: ver. 171. The preacher: ver. 172. The worker: ver. 173. The waiter: ver. 174.

Verse 170.—I. Access sought. II. Answer entreated. III. Argument employed.

Verse 171.—Taught; taught to praise; praising; praising for being taught.

Verse 171.—Learning to sing by learning to obey.

Verse 171.—*The Happy Scholar.* I. He rejoices in the lesson he has learnt. II. In the Teacher who has taught him. III. Looks forward to the end of his lesson as the time for the full singing of his song.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 171.—Lessons in Praise.—I. It is saints' work. II. It is sacred work, not to be hurriedly rushed into. III. It needs Spirit-instructed singers.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 172.—I. The orator: "My tongue shall speak." II. His chosen theme: "of thy word." III. His inward impulse: "for all thy commandments are righteousness."

Verse 172.—*Savoury Speech.* I. A resolution all believers should make. II. The qualification all believers should seek (Psalm xlv. 1; Mat. xii. 34, 35). III. The edification believers would thus secure.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 173.—I. "To will is present with me." II. "How to perform that which I would, I find not." III. "Help, Lord."

Verse 173.—I. Help needed to keep the divine precepts. II. Help sought: "Let thy hand," etc. We should choose nothing and do nothing in which we cannot ask help from God.—*G. R.*

Verse 173.—I. God's Hand. 1. Its warm hold (John x. 29). 2. Its wealth of contents (Ps. civ. 28). 3. Its heavy blow (Ps. xxxix. 10). 4. Its weight (1 Sam. v. 11). 5. Its saving reach (Isa. lix. 1). 6. Its sweet shadow (Isa. xlix. 2), etc. II. The saint plucks him by the sleeve: "Let thy hand help me." 1. His humble representation. 2. His down-drawing of the hand of God.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 173.—"*Let thy hand help me.*" I. Thy reconciling hand: "stretched out." II. Thy comforting hand; like that which touched Daniel and John. III. Thy supplying hand. "Thou openest thy hand," etc. IV. Thy protecting hand: "all his saints are in thy hand": Deut. xxxiii. 3. "Great Shepherd of the sheep." V. Thy supporting hand: "I will uphold thee." VI. Thy governing hand: "all my times are in thy hand." VII. Thy chastening hand: "thy hand was heavy upon me." VIII. Thy prospering hand: "the hand of the Lord was with," etc.—*W. J.*

Verse 174.—I. Jacob's longings. II. Moses' choice.

Verse 174.—God's servant drinking at salvation's well, but unsated. I. Longing yielding to delight. 1. At God's salvation. 2. At the rich Scripture inventory. II. Delight bringing forth further longing. 1. For deeper discoveries in the word. 2. Richer experiences in the life. 3. Heaven's consummation.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 174.—I. Sighings for heaven. Holiness, happiness, God. II. Sips by the way. The word of God, the will of God, service of God, the God in all.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 174.—"*I have longed for thy salvation.*" Thy holy salvation. Thy full salvation. Thy free salvation. Thy present salvation. Thy permanent salvation.—*W. J.*

Verse 174.—"*I have longed,*" etc. This longing arises, 1. From a painful consciousness of the need of salvation. 2. From a perception of the glories of God's salvation. 3. From the promises which give assurance of the possibility of obtaining this salvation. 4. From the gracious promptings of the Holy Ghost.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 175.—I. The highest life. II. The highest occupation. III. Both dependent on the highest aid.

Verse 175.—*Praise.* I. The noblest employment of life—to praise God. II. The noblest presentation of praise—the holy life. III. The noblest application of divine judgments—to inspire praise.

Verse 176.—I. My confession: "I have gone astray." II. My profession: "thy servant." III. My petition: "seek thy servant." IV. My plea: "for I do not forget," etc.

Verse 176.—I. The confession: "I have gone astray." II. The petition: "Seek thy servant." III. The plea: "For I do not," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 176.—The last verse *as such*. *The closing minor cadence.* I. The highest flights of human devotion must end in confession of sin: "I have gone astray." II. The sincerest professions of human fidelity must give place to the acknowledgment of helplessness: "seek thy servant." III. The loftiest human declarations of love to God's law must come down to the mournful acknowledgment that we have only not forgotten it.—*C. A. D.*

HUNT, BARNARD AND CO., LTD.

PRINTERS,

LONDON AND AYLESBURY.

THE

TREASURY OF DAVID:

CONTAINING

AN ORIGINAL EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS;

A COLLECTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS FROM THE WHOLE RANGE OF LITERATURE;

A SERIES OF HOMILETICAL HINTS UPON ALMOST EVERY VERSE;

AND LISTS OF WRITERS UPON EACH PSALM.

IN SIX VOLUMES

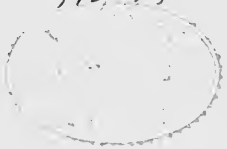
BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

VOL. VI.

PSALM CXX. TO CL.

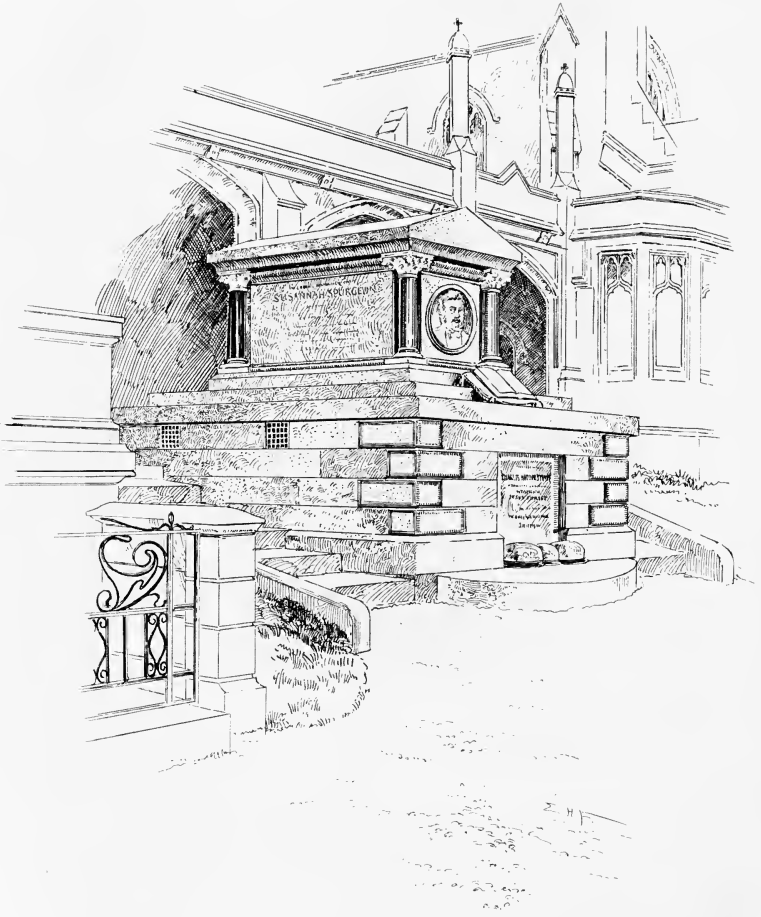
334.35



MARSHALL BROTHERS, LTD.

PUBLISHERS

LONDON, EDINBURGH AND NEW YORK.



THE RESTING-PLACE OF C. H. SPURGEON IN NORWOOD CEMETERY.

Specially drawn for "The Treasury of David" by E. H. Fitchew.

PREFACE.

At the end of all these years the last page of this Commentary is printed, and the final preface is requested. The demand sounds strangely in my ears. A preface when the work is done? It can be only nominally a preface, for it is really a farewell. I beg to introduce my closing volume, and then to retire with many apologies for having trespassed so much upon my reader's patience.

A tinge of sadness is on my spirit as I quit "The Treasury of David," never to find on this earth a richer storehouse, though the whole palace of revelation is open to me. Blessed have been the days spent in meditating, mourning, hoping, believing, and exulting with David! Can I hope to spend hours more joyous on this side of the golden gate. Perhaps not; for the seasons have been very choice in which the harp of the great poet of the sanctuary has charmed my ears. Yet the training which has come of these heavenly contemplations may haply go far to create and sustain a peaceful spirit which will never be without its own happy psalmody, and never without aspirations after something higher than it yet has known. The Book of Psalms instructs us in the use of wings as well as words: it sets us both mounting and singing. Ofter have I ceased my commenting upon the text, that I might rise with the Psalm, and gaze upon visions of God. If I may only hope that these volumes will be as useful to other hearts in the reading as to mine in the writing, I shall be well rewarded by the prospect.

The former volumes have enjoyed a singular popularity. It may be questioned if in any age a commentary so large, upon a single book of the Bible, has enjoyed a circulation within measurable distance of that which has been obtained by this work. Among all orders of Christians "The Treasury" has found its way unrestrained by sectarian prejudice—another proof of the unity of the spiritual life, and the oneness of the food upon which it delights to feed. The author may not dare to be proud of the generous acknowledgments which he has received from men of all sections of the church; but, on the other hand, he cannot pass over them in ungrateful silence. Conscious as he is of his many literary sins of omission and of commission in these volumes, he is yet glad to have been permitted to do his best, and to have received abundant encouragement in the doing of it. Of all its good the glory is the Lord's; of all its weakness the unworthy author must bear the blame.

This last portion of the Psalms has not been the easiest part of my gigantic task. On the contrary, with the exception of *The Songs of Degrees*, and one or two other Psalms, these later hymns and hallelujahs have not been largely expounded, nor frequently referred to, by our great divines. Failing the English, a larger use has been made of the Latin authors; and my esteemed friend, W. Durban, B.A., has rendered me great service in their translation. It would astonish our readers if they could see what tomes have been read,

what folios have been covered with translations, and in the end what tiny morsels have been culled from the vast mass for incorporation with this Treasury. Heaps of earth have been sifted and washed, and have yielded only here and there a little "dust of gold." No labour has been spared; no difficulty has been shirked. May the good Lord accept my service, and enrich his church by it this day, and when I am gathered to my fathers!

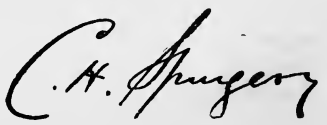
My friend and amanuensis, Mr. J. L. KEYS, has continued to search the British Museum and public Libraries for me; and to him and many other kind friends I owe many a quotation which else might have been overlooked. Of the extracts I am editor in chief, and not much more; for brethren such as Mr. HENSON, of Kingsgate Street, have at sundry times, of their own accord, sent me material more or less useful. In the homiletical department my obligations are exceedingly great, and are duly acknowledged under initials. My venerable friend, the Rev. GEORGE ROGERS, leads the way; but several other brethren, hailing from the Pastors' College, follow with almost equal steps. Thanks are hereby tendered to them all, and to the multitude of authors from whom I have gathered flowers and fruits, fragrant and nourishing.

And now the colossal work is done! To God be all glory. More than twenty years have glided away while this pleasant labour has been in the doing; but the wealth of mercy which has been lavished upon me during that time my grateful heart is unable to measure. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all those years, and made my heart to sing new Psalms for new mercies. There is none like the God of Jeshurun. To him be all glory for ever and ever.

In these busy days, it would be greatly to the spiritual profit of Christian men if they were more familiar with the Book of Psalms, in which they would find a complete armoury for life's battles, and a perfect supply for life's needs. Here we have both delight and usefulness, consolation and instruction. For every condition there is a Psalm, suitable and elevating. The Book supplies the babe in grace with penitent cries, and the perfected saint with triumphant songs. Its breadth of experience stretches from the jaws of hell to the gate of heaven. He who is acquainted with the marches of the Psalm-country knows that the land floweth with milk and honey, and he delights to travel therein. To such I have aspired to be a helpful companion.

Reader, I beseech David's God to bless thee; and I pray thee, when it is well with thee, breathe a like prayer for

Thine heartily,



INDEX

OF AUTHORS QUOTED OR REFERRED TO.

Abbot, W. (1870), 348
Aben-Ezra, 20, 162
Adam, T. (1701—1784), 313
Adams Thomas (1614), 55, 63, 64, 78, 104, 127, 172, 193, 239, 274, 277, 282, 431
Addison, J. (1672—1719), 231, 289
Agellius, (1532—1608), 320
Aglen, A. S. (1884), 328, 340, 364, 371, 387, 397, 434, 444, 446
Ainsworth Henry, (1622), 142, 272, 290
Alexander, J. W. (1804), 274
Alexander, J. A. (1809—1860), 65, 72, 80, 94, 140, 156, 158, 161, 163, 169, 180, 192, 198, 200, 212, 247, 253, 268, 269, 273, 276, 282, 285, 304, 311, 313, 316, 319, 320, 329, 330, 362, 367, 368, 369, 382, 407, 469
Alexander, W. L. (1808—1884), 276
Alleine, J. (1633—1668), 435
Allon Henry (1852), 386
Alsop, V. (1703), 350
"American Sunday School Times, The," (1878), 413
Anderson, J. (1849), 3, 22, 152, 248, 311, 329, 441, 467
Andrewes, L. (1555—1626), 72, 74, 285, 383, 389
Angus, J. (1862), 152
Annesley, S. (1620—1696), 266, 268
Aristophanes, 432
Armfield, H. T., 2, 8, 11, 52, 60, 71, 80, 86, 93, 111, 121, 152, 154, 155
Arnold, T. (1795—1842), 197
Arnot, W. (1808—1875), 287
Arrowsmith, J. (1602—1659), 274
Attersoll, W. (1618), 197
Augustine (354—430), 124, 191, 193, 215, 231, 255, 286, 311, 329, 383, 405, 442, 455
Aveling, T. W. B. (1879), 131
Ayguan, M. (1340—1416), 221, 327, 361, 410

B. S. (1865), 214
Baker, Sir Richard (1568—1645), 122, 125, 127, 130, 131, 132, 327, 340, 342, 343, 346, 349, 351
Balcanqual, W. (1642), 79, 231
Bapa Padmanji, 459
"Baptist Handbook, The" (1875), 94
"Baptist Magazine, The" (1831), 22
"Baptist Messenger, The" (1870), 348
Bardsley, J. W. (1883), 362
Barlow, G. (1879), 55
Barlow, J. (1632), 221
Barnes, Albert (1798—1870), 21, 35, 36, 45, 88, 159, 197, 220, 249, 275, 277, 285, 312, 319, 327, 362, 365, 392, 406, 412
Barth, T. C. (1885), 299
Bate, J. (1865), 391, 428
Bates, W. (1625—1699), 434
Baxter, R. (1615—1691), 317
Bede Venerable, 42, 86
Beecher, H. Ward (1813), 131, 271, 387, 388, 422
Bellarmine, R. (1542—1621), 52, 155, 179, 189, 236, 284, 304, 332, 365, 391, 412, 459
Bennett, J. (1774—1862), 352
"Ben-Tehillim" (1883), 80
Bernard (1091—1153), 341
Beveridge, W. (1636—1708), 191, 341
"Bible, The Annotated Paragraph," 252, 429
"Bible Educator, The" (1875), 429
"Biblical Museum, The" (1879), 131, 154
"Biblical Treasury, The" (1873), 21, 22, 23
"Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review, The" (1848), 230, 239
Binney, T. (1798—1874), 404, 409
Binnie, W. (1870), 449
Blackley, T. (1826), 425
Blake, W. (1757—1828), 331
Bloys, W. (1632), 459
Bonar Andrew (1859), 51, 74, 158, 213, 215 216, 219, 222, 223, 237, 299, 302, 351, 383, 420, 468
Bonar, Horatius (1875), 447
Boothroyd, Benjamin (1768—1836), 95
Boston, T. (1676—1732), 330, 331
Boëthius (455—526), 213
Bouchier, B. (1794—1865), 19, 55, 71, 153, 193, 221, 238, 269, 299, 311, 368, 422, 442, 466
Bovet, F. (1824), 412
Bowdler, J. (1814), 18
Bowen, G. (1873), 128
Bowes, G. S. (1869), 66, 94, 274, 430
Bradley, C. (1788—1871), 142
Bridge, W. (1600—1670), 73, 170
Brightman, T. (1557—1607), 190
Brooks, T. (1608—1680), 90, 192, 372, 395
Browne, M. (1703—1787), 94
Browning, E. B. (1809—1861), 92
Bruce, A. B. (1882), 159, 171
Bruno of Aste (1123), 303, 311
Bryant, W. C. (1794—1878), 443
Buck, C. (1771—1815), 404
Bunyan, J. (1628—1688), 65, 127, 236
Burckhardt, J. L. (1784—1817), 11
Burder, S. (1839), 283, 320, 388, 432
Burgon, J. W. (1859), 9, 42, 75, 162, 232, 255 339, 345, 443
Burroughs, J. (1599—1646), 252
Buxtorf, J. (1564—1629), 302

Byrom, J. (1691—1763), 200, 290
Bythner, V. (1670), 382

Calamy, Edward, 56
Calcott, Lady M. (1788—1842), 116, 234
Callimachus, 371
Calmet, A. (1672—1757), 421
Calvert, T. (1647), 345, 347
Calvin, J. (1509—1564), 4, 11, 20, 23, 45, 90, 102, 105, 106, 112, 113, 156, 173, 179, 191, 196, 197, 215, 219, 224, 237, 271, 272, 273, 274, 280, 300, 311, 362, 366, 369, 393, 395, 411, 447, 458
Carpenter, G. (1527), 404
Carlyle, T. 455
Carne, J. (1789—1844), 22
Caryl, J. (1602—1673), 10, 19, 22, 53, 64, 65, 76, 93, 125, 129, 163, 169, 171, 254, 255, 275, 279, 282, 289, 300, 304, 316, 319, 330, 364, 365, 366, 384, 391, 405, 410, 430, 432, 434, 467
Case, T. (1598—1682), 283
Cassiodorus (470—560), 153, 327
Cecil, R. (1748—1810), 105
Chalmers, T. (1780—1847), 236, 252, 449
Chandler, S. (1693—1766), 326
Chardin, Sir J. (1643—1713), 344
Charnock, S. (1628—1680), 130, 190, 199, 271, 275, 284, 286, 422, 426, 444
Cheever, G. B. (1807), 348
Cheshire, T. (1641), 447
" Christian, The " (1876), 393
" Christian Treasury, The " (1865), 214, 318
Chrysostom, 231, 235
Cicero, 272, 273, 285, 366
Clarke, Adam 61, 87, 93, 143, 220, 240, 280, 384, 392, 466
Clarke, E. D. (1769—1822), 31
Clarkson, D. (1622—1686), 21, 216, 286, 389
Clay, W. K. (1839), 235, 397
Clerke, R. (1634), 35, 214
Cobbin, Ingram (1837), 113, 303
Cocceius, J. (1603—1669), 235
Coleman, J. N. (1863), 240
Conant, J. (1608—1693), 427
Conder, C. R. (1878—80), 61
Conder, J. (1789—1855), 417
Congleton, Baron (1805—1883), 372
Cook, J. (1878), 115
Cooper, E. (1826), 458
Cope, Sir A. (1547), 17
Cowles, H. (1872), 73, 76, 159, 192, 272, 386
Cowper, W. (1566—1619), 24
Cowper, William (1731—1800), 234, 307, 376
Cox, S. (1874), 8, 32, 36, 42, 43, 87, 139, 154
Crashaw, W. (1618), 301
Cresswell, D. (1776—1844), 53, 95, 214, 320, 341, 367

Dale, T. (1853), 396
Darby, J. N. (1800—1882), 466
Deems, C. F. (1820), 89
De Burgh, W. (1860), 215, 237, 281, 304, 449
De Dieu, Louis, (1590—1642), 90
Delitzsch, Franz (1871), 4, 22, 46, 64, 100, 121, 126, 138, 172, 178, 180, 197, 201, 213, 214, 230, 253, 268, 277, 320, 329, 455
De Vere, 273
Dick, T. (1774—1857). 218, 219, 426
Dickson, D. (1583—1662), 22, 33, 36, 55, 56, 75, 113, 115, 139, 157, 160, 179, 180, 192, 200, 201, 213, 216, 220, 248, 269, 273, 284, 311, 315, 387, 388, 396, 426, 445, 468 469
" Dictionary of Illustrations, The " (1873), 20
Digby, Wm., 72
Diodati, J. (1576—1649), 432
Dionysius, 410
Disraeli, Benjamin (1880), 103
Donne, J. (1573—1631), 371
Drummond, Henry (1884), 344
Duncan, H. (1774—1846), 273
Duns, J. (1868), 196
Du Halde, J. B. (1674—1743), 94
Dyke, D. (1614), 53

Edersheim, A. (1877), 17, 19, 52, 86, 172, 235
Edlin, P. (1656), 412
Edwards, B. B. (1802—1852), 267
Edwards, Jonathan (1703—1758), 365, 397
Elliot, Charlotte (1871), 328
Emerson, R. W. (1803—1882), 115
Erskine, E. (1680—1754), 163, 252, 254
Euripides, 104
" Evangelical Magazine, The " 427
Evelyn, J. (1620—1706), 234
Everard, J. (1653), 444
Eustathius (1198), 432

Fairbairn, A. M. (1881), 36
Fairbairn, P. (1845), 312
Fairclough, S. (1650), 460, 467
Farindon, A. (1596—1658), 18, 31, 156, 313, 406
Faussett, A. R. (1866), 125, 200, 250, 254, 269, 282, 299, 329, 332, 339, 342, 351, 366
Fawcett, J. (1769—1851), 339, 343, 346
Featley, D. (1582—1645), 238
Fenner, C. G. (1846), 124
Fenner, W. (1560—1640), 397, 424
Fenton, T. (1732), 24, 36, 303, 304, 342
Field, J. (1883), 158
Finn, E. A. (1866), 116
Flavel, J. (1627—1691), 291
Fletcher, P. (1584—1650), 88
Fleury, C. (1640—1723), 266
Ford, J. (1871), 289
" Francis " Viscount Dillon, 390
Frank, M. (1613—1664), 461
Franklin, B. (1706—1790), 88
French, W. (1787—1849), 215, 285
Frisch, J. D. (1731), 271
Fuller, Andrew (1754—1815), 278, 395, 397
Fuller, Thomas (1608—1661), 18, 79, 461

G. G. (1662), 445
Gadsby, J. (1860), 104
Geier, M. (1614—1681), 44, 55, 179, 270, 272, 383, 385, 386, 392, 394, 404, 427, 431, 442 445, 466
Geikie, C. (1881), 156, 198, 351
Gennebrard, G. (1537—1597), 235, 434
Gerlach, Otto Von (1801—1849), 197
German Proverb, 94
Gesner, S. (1559—1605), 63, 104, 121, 127, 141
Gibson, E. T., 52
Gilfillan, G. (1813—1878), 267, 382
Gill, John (1697—1771), 4, 52, 61, 63, 80, 115, 141, 155, 161, 172, 190, 193, 199, 201, 212, 220, 266, 271, 319, 332, 349, 393, 466

Gill, William, 36
Gilmour, James (1883), 199
Godet, F. (1875), 163
Gogerly, G. (1870), 162
Good, J. M. (1764—1827), 51, 178, 195
Goodwin, J. (1593—1665), 252
Goodwin, P. (1658), 91
Goodwin, T. (1600—1679), 65, 93, 173, 201, 224, 348, 350, 383, 446, 455
Goold, W. H. (1851), 122
Gore, J. (1635), 317, 318
Gosson, T. (1554-1623), 461
Gough, J. B. (1881), 341
Graham, W. (1847), 163
Gray, A. (1805—1861), 341
Gray, J. C. (1879), 341
Greenham, R. (1531—1591), 9
Greenhill, W. (1591—1677), 238, 248, 271
Gregory (342—389), 390
Grove, G. (1863), 198
Gurnall, W. (1617—1679), 34, 76, 79, 128, 222, 250, 253, 283, 304, 317, 341, 343
Guthrie, T. (1803—1873), 94
Guyon, Madame (1648—1717), 88

Hale, S. J. (1800), 422
Haley, J. W. (1875), 409
Hall, J. (1574—1656), 95, 216, 364, 391
Hall, Robert (1764—1831), 398
Halley, E. (1656—1742), 194
Hammond, H. (1605—1660), 154, 179, 249, 411, 429
Hammond, J. (1876), 239
Hardy, N. (1618—1670) 408, 409
Hardwick, H. (1644), 79
Hare, A. W. (1792—1834), 105
Hare, J. C. (1795—1855), 367
Harmer, T. (1715—1788)' 44, 105, 196, 344
Harris, M. (1639), 75
Harris, R. (1578—1658), 214, 215
Hart, J. (1712—1768), 22
Havergal, F. R. (1836—1879), 19
Hawker, R. (1735—1827), 456
Hayward, Sir John (1560—1627), 132
Hengstenberg, E. W. (1848), 17, 19, 30, 201, 230, 237, 247, 248, 361, 369, 391, 469
Hemholtz, Prof. 195
Henderson, A. (1583—1646), 44, 78, 80, 106, 111, 113, 114
Henry, Matthew (1662—1714), 12, 21, 34, 52, 55, 60, 61, 74, 75, 79, 80, 94, 105, 114, 140, 143, 152, 164, 199, 213, 230, 269, 271, 273, 302, 315, 319, 326, 327, 332, 341, 342, 350, 361, 367, 384, 385, 390, 405, 406, 411, 431, 455, 456, 458, 465, 466
Henry, P. (1631—1696), 223
Herbert, George (1593—1633), 158
Herodotus, 283
Herrick, Robert (1591—1674), 54
Heywood, O. (1629—1702), 140
Hinton, J. Howard (1791—1873), 94
Hitchcock, E. (1793—1864), 276
Hodges, T. (1660), 75
Holdsworth, R. (1590—1649), 42, 43, 45, 368, 370, 371
Homer, 240, 361
Homes, N. (1678), 372
" Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Psalms, A " (1879), 55, 290
Hope, Lady (1884), 270
Hopkins, E. (1633—1690), 274, 275
Horne, George (1730—1792), 9, 31, 143, 179, 196, 217, 238, 239, 285, 300, 303, 320, 351, 422
Horsley, S. (1733—1806), 410
Horton, T. (1673), 170, 171, 283
Houghton, W. (1873), 429
Howels, W. (1778—1832), 288
Hubbard, F. G. 428
Humboldt, F. H. A. Von (1769—1859), 217
Hume, J. (1628), 72, 73, 74, 80
Hurst, H. (1629—1690), 153
Hutcheson, G. (1678), 125
Hutton, J. (1857), 302

" Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography, The " (1868), 405
Irons, Joseph (1786—1852), 36

Jackson, A. (1593—1666), 154, 189, 196
Jackson, J. (1661), 10
Jackson, T. (1579—1640), 411
Jameson, J. (1838), 426
Janeway, J. (1637—1674), 404
Janeway, John (1633—1657), 162
Jay, W. (1769—1853), 34, 141, 234, 315
Jeanes, H. (1649), 387
Jebb, J. (1846), 2, 139, 268, 311, 315
Jewish Proverb, 35
Jones, W. (1879), 275
Joule, J. P. (1818), 194
Jowett, W. (1787—1855), 116
Judson, Dr. (1788—1850), 24

Kay, W. (1871), 4, 11, 73, 113, 152, 230, 235, 238
Keble, J. (1792—1866), 321
Kelly, T. (1806), 152
Ken, T. (1637—1711), 181
Kennedy, B. H. (1860), 136
Kent, J. (1766—1843), 98
Kimchi, D. (1240), 2
King, J. (1601), 406
Kingsley, C. (1819—1875), 395
Kinns, S. (1882). 194
Kirby, M. and E. (1873), 235
Kitto, J. (1804—1854), 104, 114, 189, 237, 302 456, 468, 469

Lake, A. (1550—1626), 159, 160
Lamartine (1790), 465
Lange, J. P. (1802—1884), 89, 271 410
Larkham, T. (1656), 426
Law, H. (1796—1882), 64, 152, 156
Lawrence, M. (1657), 332
Lawson, G. (1749—1820), 448
Le Blanc, T. (1599—1669), 43, 66, 92, 102, 115, 270, 271, 273, 383, 385, 387, 397, 405, 406, 412, 430, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 459, 467
Le Clerc, J. (1657—1736), 73
Lee, S. (1625—1691), 327, 386
Leighton, R. (1613—1684), 101 126
Lightfoot, John (1602—1675), 4
Lillie, J. (1812—1867), 201, 252
Littledale, R. F. (See Neale, J. M.)
Livingstone, J. (1603—1672), 248
Longfellow, 68
Lorinus, J. (1569—1634), 300, 384, 386, 387, 392, 410, 411, 421, 427, 442, 443
Lowth, R. (1710—1787), 281
Lucian, 315

Luther, Martin (1483—1546), 2, 11, 30, 33, 42, 44, 52, 54, 61, 63, 74, 76, 103, 116, 154, 160, 172
Lye, T. (1621—1684), 341
Lyte, H. F. (1793—1847), 212

McCheyne, R. M. (1813—1843), 140, 233
MacCosh, J. (1811), 445
Macdonald, R. (1879), 340
MacKellar, T. (1883), 394
Maclaren, A. (1879), 255
Maclaren, D. (1883), 281
Maclaurin, J. (1693—1754), 388
MacMaster, R. P. (1878), 103
McMichael, N. (1860), 11, 12, 20, 23, 31, 51, 54, 55, 64, 65, 102, 106, 113, 126, 140, 180
Macmillan, H. (1871), 103, 172, 314, 428, 433, 446
Manning, H. E. (1850), 385
Mant, R. (1776—1848), 303, 443
Manton, Thomas (1620—1677), 43, 46, 56, 89, 130, 139, 141, 192, 201, 215, 223, 235, 279, 315, 327, 350, 390, 427, 430, 434
Marbury, E. (1649), 238
Marshall, W. (1690), 456
Martial, 432
Martin, Samuel (1817—1878), 31, 178, 180, 367
Mason, J. (1763), 274
Mayer, J. (1653), 179, 303, 338
Mayhew, R. (1679), 9, 162, 192
Mede, J. (1586—1638), 157
Melville, H. (1798—1871), 92, 288, 290, 391, 392, 393, 394
Merrick, J. (1720—1769), 94, 234
Michaëlis, J. H. (1668—1738), 466
Millington, T. S. (1873), 196
Milman, H. H. (1791—1868), 232
Milton, John, 205, 211, 212
Mitchell, S. S. (1884), 445
Mollerus, D. H. (1639), 63, 101, 126
Momerie, A. W. (1881), 343
Montaigne, 45
Montgomery, J. (1771—1854), 103, 217, 268
Moore, T. (1779—1852), 424
More, Hannah (1745—1833), 392
Morison, J. (1829), 160, 216, 253, 300, 304, 362, 366, 405, 444, 467
Mudge, Z. (1769), 220
Muis, S. de (1587—1644), 385, 397, 407, 410, 427, 456, 458
Murphy, J. G. (1875), 19, 43, 46, 189, 213, 388, 445
Musculus, W. (1497—1563), 45, 87, 88, 115
Muston, A. (1852), 111

Nalton, J. (1664), 250, 253
Neale, J. M. (1818—1866), 3, 20, 42, 56, 86, 102, 124, 153, 171, 200, 212, 235, 302, 311, 361, 367, 383, 392, 410, 443
Neil, J. (1882), 20, 61, 63, 76, 276
" New Cyclopædia of Illustrations, The " (1870), 201
" New Cyclopædia of Illustrative Anecdote, The " (1875), 200
Newman, J. H. (1801), 279
Newton, John (1725—1807), 328, 363
Nicholson, W. (1671), 95, 385, 421, 431
Nisbet, R. (1863), 3, 8, 10, 33, 42, 46, 61, 94, 101, 112, 130, 178

" Old Testament Commentary for English Readers, The " (1884), 328, 340
Oosterzee, J. Van (1817—1882), 434
" Orbs of Heaven, The " (1859), 216
Ormiston, W. (1874), 230
Orton, J. (1717—1783), 56
Osburn, W. (1856), 219, 220
Ovid, 392
Owen, J. (1616—1683), 62, 124, 126, 312, 313, 316, 340

Page, W. H. J., 61
Palanterius, J. P. (1600), 31, 385, 397, 410 412, 431, 455, 459
Patrick, S. (1646—1707), 468
Paxton, G. (1762—1837), 369
Payne, G. (1850), 195
Payson, E. (1783—1827), 32
Pearson, J. N. (1830), 434
Pennefather, C. (1881), 362
Perkins, W. (1558—1602), 285
Perowne, J. J. S., 9, 20, 23, 44, 46, 61, 63, 104, 116, 132, 179, 180, 230, 282, 342, 409, 411, 426, 441, 449
Peters, C. (1777), 313, 320
Pett, Peter (1599), 446
Phillips, G. (1846), 11
Philpot, J. C. (1802—1869), 133, 248, 251, 272, 321
Pierce, S. E. (1746—1829), 12, 17, 23, 80, 89, 114, 179
Pierson, T. (1570—1633), 343
Pigot, J. (1643), 32
Pindar, 283
Pirie, A. (1804), 164
Pitcairne, A. (1664), 392
Plato, 274
Playfere, T. (1633), 161, 162, 164
Pliny, 300
Plumer, W. S. (1802—1880), 32, 53, 94, 157, 158, 216, 224, 299, 302, 456, 465
Plutarch, 271
Pope, A. (1688—1744), 218
Pool, M. (1624—1679), 200, 222, 272, 303, 383
Potter, R. (1721—1804), 95
Power, P. B. (1862), 249, 383, 386
Pressensé, E. De (1869), 328, 365
Prideaux, H. (1648—1724), 234, 239, 404
Pridham, A. (1869), 79, 238, 300
Prior, M. (1664—1721), 237
Propertius, 231
" Pulpit Commentary, The " (1881), 198, 222
Pulsford, J. (1857), 422, 441, 465
Punshon, W. Morley (1824—1881), 384
Pusey, E. B. (1800—1882), 46, 396

Quesnel, P. (1634—1719), 155, 160

Raffles, T. (1788—1863), 365
Rayment, (1630), 449
" Religious Tract Society's Commentary The " 272
Reyner, E. (1600—1670), 9
Reynolds, E. (1599—1676), 420
Roberts, A. (1610), 121
Roberts, J. (1835), 300, 318
Robertson, F. W. (1816—1853), 9, 274, 300, 449
Robinson, E. J. (1878), 18, 65, 102

Robinson, R. (1614—1655), 350, 367, 397, 432
Robinson, T. (1876), 427
Rogers, G. (1883), 156, 266
Rolle, R. of Hampole (1340), 56, 254
Rollock, R. (1555—1598), 121, 128, 230
Rothe, R. (1799—1867), 388
Ruffner, H. (1788—1861), 12
Russel, A. (1770), 195

Sanderson, R. (1587—1662), 469
Scott, T. (1747—1821), 65, 213
Scott, Sir W. (1771—1832), 220
Scriver, C. (1629—1693), 192
Secker, W. (1660), 254, 276, 318, 363. 392
Serle, A. (1890), 21, 193
Seymour, W. D. (1882), 173, 365
Shakespere, 22, 405
Shaw, T. (1692—1751), 12
Shepard, T. (1671), 350
Shepherd, T. (1692), 120
Sidney, E. (1840—1866), 80, 195
Sidney, Sir Philip (1554—1586), 270
Simeon, C. (1759—1836), 63, 251
Simms, E. (1882), 157
Simpson, S. (1658), 73
Singleton, J. (1706), 140
Slater, W. (1704), 193
Smith, G. (1850), 219
Smith, H. (1560—1591), 34, 94, 170, 213, 276, 316, 422, 461
Smith, J. (1802—1862), 131, 132, 349, 450
Smith, J. P. (1775—1851), 369
"Smith's Dictionary of the Bible" (1863), 198
Sophocles, 95
South, R. (1633—1716), 240, 272
Southey, R. (1774—1843), 239
"Speaker's Commentary, The" (1871—1881), 4, 64, 121, 216, 218, 248, 302, 319, 321, 351, 360, 361, 369, 397, 410
"Spectator, The" 280
Spencer, J. (1654), 45
Stainer, J. (1882), 366, 456, 467, 469
Stanford, Charles (1876), 65
Stanhope, G. (1660—1728), 393
Stanley, A. P. (1815—1881), 18, 32, 34, 62, 173, 222
Starke, C. (1740), 152, 201, 248
Steele, R. (1692), 104
Stier, R. (1859), 421
Stint, T. (1621), 53, 56, 57, 71
Stoughton, J. (1639), 35, 431
Street, S. (1790), 42
"Sunday at Home, The," 44
Swinnock, G. (1627—1673), 94, 106, 127, 173, 317, 329, 364
Symson, A. (1631), 123, 126, 130, 339, 340, 344, 346, 349, 350, 351

Tasso, T. (1544—1595), 32
Taube, E. H. (1858), 329
Taylor, F. (1650), 282
Taylor, J. (1868), 405
Taylor, Jeremy, (1613—1667), 114
Taylor, T. (1576—1632), 75
Taylor, W. (1873), 459
Tennyson, A. (1809), 230
Theodoret, 153
Tholuck, F. A. (1799—1877), 71, 101, 159
Thomson, J. (1700—1748), 276, 429
Thomson, W. M. (1881), 3, 62, 77, 116, 327
Toplady, A. M. (1740—1778), 247
Trapp, John (1601—1669), 8, 9, 30, 42, 43, 54, 61, 64, 100, 112, 162, 179, 191, 192, 199, 201, 220, 221, 223, 224, 237, 255, 273, 274, 304, 311, 315, 320, 341, 343, 351, 362, 365, 366, 369, 392, 404, 405, 434, 442
Tremellius, E. (1510—1580), 255
Tristram, H. B. (1867), 173
Tucker, W. H. (1840), 303
Tyndall, John (1872), 433

Uhlhorn, G. (1883), 412
"United Presbyterian Selection of Hymns" (1858), 206

Van de Velde, C. W. M. (1854), 172
Vaughan, C. J. (1817), 230, 236
Vaughan, J. (1878), 121, 124, 126, 129, 131, 142, 288
Venema, H. (1697—1787), 87, 114, 153, 385, 386, 387, 404, 426, 442, 443, 445, 456
Venning, R. (1620—1673), 223
Virgil, Polydore, (1555), 237
Volney, C. Comte de (1755—1820), 411

Walford, W. (1773—1850), 155, 316, 365
Walker, G. (1581—1651), 194
Wallace, T. (1879), 290
Warner, R. (1828), 279
Watson, T. (1690), 78, 171, 231, 253, 254, 255, 320, 352, 389, 405, 409, 431, 435
Weiss, B. (1858), 303
Wesley, C. (1708—1788), 18
Wesley, J. (1703—1791), 103
Whewell, W. (1795—1866), 195
Whincop, J. (1645), 231
White, F. H. (1877), 157
White, G. (1720—1793), 429
White, H. K. (1785—1806), 269
Wilcocks, T. (1549—1602), 200, 217, 304, 329
Willett, A. (1562—1621), 35
Williamson, T. (1630), 407
Wilson, G. (1862), 219
Wilson, J. (1847), 11, 163
Wilson, W. (1783—1873), 116, 198, 238, 320
Winslow, Octavius (1874), 129, 133
Winterbotham, R. (1881), 198
Wood, J. G. (1827), 163, 302, 321, 429
Wordsworth, Charles (1846), 280
Wordsworth, Christopher (1807—1885), 4, 64, 90, 128, 156, 189, 213, 237, 247, 328, 360, 383, 410, 434, 465, 468
Wordsworth, William (1770—1805), 387
Wright, A. (1611—1690), 111, 153, 180, 215, 220, 281, 282, 327

Young, E. (1684—1765), 277

Zigabenus, E. (1125), 248
Zollikofer, G. J. (1730—1788), 388

THE

SONGS OF DEGREES,

OR,

THE GRADUAL PSALMS.

PSALM CXX. TO CXXXIV.

THE SONGS OF DEGREES AS A WHOLE.

This little Psalter within the Psalter consists of fifteen brief songs. Why they are grouped together and what is meant by their generic name it would be hard to tell. The conjectures are very many, but they are mere suppositions. Out of them all the conjecture of Dr. Jebb best commends itself to my own mind, though it would be quite consistent with this suggestion to believe that the series of songs arranged by David became the Pilgrim Psalms of after ages, and were chanted by the Lord's people as they went up to the temple. They are " Songs of the Goings Up ; " so some read the word. Those who delight to spiritualize everything find here Ascents of the Soul, or language fitted to describe the rising of the heart from the deepest grief to the highest delight. I have thought it well to indicate the methods by which learned men have tried to explain the term " Songs of Degrees," but the reader must select his own interpretation.—*C. H. S.*

In the thirteenth chapter of the First Book of Chronicles, it is related, that David brought up the Ark from Kirjath-jearim to the house of Obed-edom. The word (עלה) used in the seventh verse, for " bringing up " the Ark, is of the same etymology with, and cognate to that which is translated *"degrees."* And upon this occasion the great event was celebrated by the accompaniment of sacred music. " And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." Again, in the fifteenth chapter of the same book, in the fourteenth verse, the same term is employed for bringing up the Ark to Jerusalem ; and the choral services of the Levites are mentioned in immediate connection. And in the fifth chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles (fifth verse), we are told that Solomon assembled the people at the dedication of the Temple, to bring up the Ark from Sion to the Temple of the Lord.—*John Jebb.*

I abide in the simple and plain sense as much as I may, and judge that these Psalms are called The Psalms of Degrees because the Levites or priests were wont to sing them upon the stairs or some high place ; even as with us he that beginneth the Psalms or preacheth, standeth in a place above the rest, that he may be the better seen and heard. For it seemeth not that these Psalms were sung of the multitude which were in the Temple, or of the rest of the choir, but of certain which were appointed to sing them, or at least to begin them on the stairs to the rest, and so have their name ; like as some other of the Psalms have their name and title from the singer. But how should a man know all their rites and ceremonies, especially after so long a time, whereby they are now clean worn out of the memory of all men ? Seeing therefore among such a multitude of Psalms, when the law was yet in his full force and power, some were wont to be sung with one manner of ceremony, and some with another, according to the time and place, as the use and custom then was, let this suffice us to think that this title pertaineth to no point of doctrine, but only to the ceremony of the singers, what manner of ceremony soever it was.—*Martin Luther, in "A Commentarie upon the Psalmes of Degrees,"* 1577.

There were *fifteen steps* by which the priests ascended into the Temple, on each of which they sang one of these *fifteen* Psalms.—*David Kimchi.*

Whatever view of the *Songs of Degrees* you may take besides, you cannot leave out some association of them with the steps, without ignoring the unanimous belief about them handed down from time immemorial amongst the people who gave them to us ; without, in fact, implying that at some epoch or other this strange association of the steps with the Psalms was gratuitously invented, and, being invented, secured general acceptance in the sacred literature of the Hebrew nation. It is quite impossible to believe such a thing, when we are dealing with a people so jealous of precedent and authority in religion as the Hebrews have always been. I see, in fact, no sufficient reason why we should not follow the leading of the Mischna and feel that Songs of Degrees, Songs of the Steps, is as much as to say Songs in the sacred Orchestra.—*H. T. Armfield, in "The Gradual Psalms,"* 1874.

The great Carmelite expositor, Michael Ayguan, alleges that the fifteen Psalms were divided by the Jews into three portions of five, with prayers intercalated, much as the Gregorian division of matins into three nocturns ; and that each of the three grades of advance in the spiritual life is betokened by each quinary ; the beginners,

the progressors, and the perfect ; or, in other terms, those who are severally in the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive way. And thus it will be noticed that in Psalms cxx.—cxxiv. there is constant reference to trouble and danger ; in cxxv.—cxxix. to confidence in God ; in cxxx.—cxxxiv. to direct communion with him in his house. And Genebrardus, a later commentator, defines the fifteen degrees of going up out of the valley of weeping to the presence of God to be (1) affliction, (2) looking to God, (3) joy in communion, (4) invocation, (5) thanksgiving, (6) confidence, (7) patient waiting for deliverance, (8) God's grace and favour, (9) fear of the Lord, (10) martyrdom, (11) hatred of sins, (12) humility, (13) desire for the coming of Christ, (14) concord and charity, (15) constant blessing of God.—*Neale and Littledale.*

No trace in history, or authentic tradition, can be found of these *steps*, which owe their construction solely to the accommodating fancy of the Rabbins, who, as usual, imagined facts, in order to support their preconceived theories.—*John Jebb.*

It is an additional objection to this Rabbinical conceit, that David, whose name several of these Psalms bear—and others of which have evident reference to his time and circumstances—lived in the time of the tabernacle which had no steps.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc.*

In the version of Theodotian, executed in the early part of the second century, with the express view of correcting the errors of the Septuagint, as well as in the translations by Aquila and by Symmachus, these Psalms are rightly described as songs for the journeys up, and are thus at once referred to the stated pilgrimages to the Temple. The expressions, " Thou shalt *go up* to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year " (Exod. xxxiv. 24), " If this people *go up* to do sacrifice " (1 Kings xii. 27)—a form of expression constantly employed as often as these sacred journeys are mentioned—is precisely that which the Psalms themselves exhibit : " I was glad when it was said unto me, Go up unto the house of the Lord " ; and while we may well adopt this view, for the additional reason that it is in harmony with the whole spirit and sentiment which they breathe throughout, we shall find these Psalms to form at the same time one of the most admirable and instructive manuals of devotion with which the love of our heavenly Father, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, has been pleased to bless us.—*Robert Nisbet, in "The Songs of the Temple Pilgrims,"* 1863.

If the traditionary interpretation of the title, Song of Degrees, be accepted, that they were sung by devout pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to keep the great feasts of the Lord, we may suppose that companies toiling up this long ascent would relieve the tedium of the way by chanting some of them.

From the customs of Orientals still prevalent, I think it highly probable that such an explanation of the title may be substantially correct. Nothing is more common than to hear individuals and parties of natives, travelling together through the open country and along mountain-paths, especially during the night, break out into singing some of their favourite songs. Once, descending from the top of Sunnîn, above Beirût, with a large company of natives, they spontaneously began to sing in concert. The moon was shining brightly in the clear sky, and they kept up their chanting for a long time. I shall not soon forget the impression made by that moonlight concert, as we wound our way down the eastern side of Lebanon to the Bukâ'a, on the way to Ba'albek. Through the still midnight air of that lofty region the rough edge of their stentorian voices, softened into melody, rang out full and strong, waking the sleeping echoes far and wide down the rocky defiles of the mountain. Something like this may have often rendered vocal this dreary ascent to Jerusalem. It is common in this country to travel in the night during the summer, and we know that the Hebrew pilgrims journeyed in large companies. On his ascent along this road from Jericho to the Holy City, Jesus was attended not only by the twelve apostles, but by others, both men and women ; and it would be strange indeed if sometimes they did not seek relief from this oppressive solitude by singing the beautiful songs of Zion.—*William M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book,"* 1881.

When we consider the place in the Psalter which these *"Songs of Degrees*, or *of the goings up"* occupy, we see good reason to accept the statement (of the Syriac version, and of S. Chrysostom, Theodoret, Euthymius, and other Fathers, and also of Symmachus, Aquila, and of Hammond, Ewald, and many moderns), that these Psalms describe the feelings of those Israelites who *went up* with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and afterwards with Ezra, and still later with Nehemiah, from the land of

their captivity and dispersion at Babylon, Susa, and other regions of the East, to the home of their fathers, Jerusalem. Hence, in some of the foregoing Psalms, we have seen a reference to the dedication of the Second Temple (Ps. cxviii.), and of the walls of Jerusalem (Ps. cii.), and to the building up of the nation itself on the old foundation of the law of God, given to their fathers at Sinai (Ps. cxix.)—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Gesenius has the merit of having first discerned the true meaning of the questioned inscription, inasmuch as first in 1812, and frequently since that time, he has taught that the fifteen songs have their name from the step-like progressive rhythm of their thoughts, and that consequently the name, like the triolet (roundelay) in Western poetry, does not refer to the liturgical usage, but to the technical structure. The correctness of this view has been duly appraised more particularly by De Wette, who adduces this rhythm of steps or degrees, too, among the more artificial rhythms. The songs are called Songs of Degrees or Gradual Psalms as being songs that move onward towards a climax, and that by means of πλοκή (ἐπιπλοκή), *i.e.*, a taking up again of the immediately preceding word by way of giving intensity to the expression; and they are placed together on account of this common characteristic, just like the *Michtammim*, which bear that name from a similar characteristic.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

" Go up, go up, my soul ! " must be the motto of one who would enter into the meaning of these Psalms. They are a Jacob's ladder whose foot is fixed on the earth, but the top reaches up to the " heavenly Jerusalem."

The rhythmical structure of these Psalms (in which one line is built up upon another stair-wise) is a suitable outward accompaniment of the interior character of the Psalms. Short, pointed lines fall in well with the flow of mystico-allegorical thought :—as in " Nearer, my God, to thee," or, " Jerusalem the golden."—*William Kay.*

We may notice the following characteristics of nearly all these Psalms : sweetness and tenderness ; a sad pathetic tone ; brevity ; an absence generally of the ordinary parallelism ; and something of a quick, trochaic rhythm.—*"The Speaker's Commentary."*

Though it may be they are so called because of their excellency ; a song of degrees being an *excellent* song, as an excellent man is called a man of high degree (1 Chron. xvii. 17) ; these being excellent ones for the matter of them, their manner of composure, and the brevity of them.—*John Gill.*

This being a matter of small moment, I am not disposed to make it the subject of elaborate investigation ; but the probable conjecture is, that this title was given to these Psalms because they were sung on a higher key than others. The Hebrew word for *degrees* being derived from the word, עלה, *tsalah, to ascend* or *go up*, I agree with those who are of opinion that it denotes the different musical notes rising in succession.—*John Calvin.*

Hezekiah liveth, these fifteen years, in safety and prosperity, having humbled himself before the Lord for his pride to the ambassadors of Babel. The degrees of the sun's reversing, and the fifteen years of Hezekiah's life prolonging, may call to our minds the fifteen Psalms of Degrees ; viz. from Psalm cxx. and forward. There were Hezekiah's songs that were sung to the stringed instruments in the house of the Lord (Isa. xxxviii. 20) : whether these were picked out by him for that purpose may be left to conjecture.—*John Lightfoot*, 1602—1675.

PSALM CXX.

Suddenly we have left the continent of the vast Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm for the islands and islets of the Songs of Degrees. It may be well to engage in protracted devotion upon a special occasion, but this must cast no slur upon the sacred brevities which sanctify the godly life day by day. He who inspired the longest Psalm was equally the author of the short compositions which follow it.

TITLE.—A SONG OF DEGREES.—*We have already devoted a sufficient space to the consideration of this title in its application to this Psalm and the fourteen compositions which succeed it. These appear to us to be Pilgrim Psalms, but we are not sure that they were always sung in company; for many of them are in the first person singular. No doubt there were solitary pilgrims as well as troops who went to the house of God in company, and for these lonely ones hymns were prepared.*

SUBJECT.—*A certain author supposes that this hymn was sung by an Israelite upon leaving his house to go up to Jerusalem. He thinks that the good man had suffered from the slander of his neighbours, and was glad to get away from their gossip, and spend his time in the happier engagements of the holy feasts. It may be so, but we hope that pious people were not so foolish as to sing about their bad neighbours when they were leaving them for a few days. If they wished to leave their houses in safety, and to come home to kind surroundings, it would have been the height of folly to provoke those whom they were leaving behind by singing aloud a Psalm of complaint against them. We do not know why this ode is placed first among the Psalms of Degrees, and we had rather hazard no conjecture of our own. We prefer the old summary of the translators—*" David prayeth against Doeg "*—to any far-fetched supposition: and if this be the scope of the Psalm, we see at once why it suggested itself to David at the station where the ark abode, and from which he had come to remove it. He came to fetch away the ark, and at the place where he found it he thought of Doeg, and poured out his plaint concerning him. The author had been grievously calumniated, and had been tortured into bitterness by the false charges of his persecutors, and here is his appeal to the great Arbiter of right and wrong, before whose judgment-seat no man shall suffer from slanderous tongues.*

EXPOSITION.

IN my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.

2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, *and* from a deceitful tongue.

3 What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?

4 Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, *that* I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.

7 I *am for* peace: but when I speak, they *are* for war.

1. *"In my distress."* Slander occasions distress of the most grievous kind. Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword. Calumny rouses our indignation by a sense of injustice, and yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own defence. We could ward off the strokes of a cutlass, but we have no shield against a liar's tongue. We do not know who was the father of the falsehood, nor where it was born, nor where it has gone, nor how to follow it, nor how to stay its withering influence. We are perplexed, and know not which way to turn. Like the plague of flies in Egypt, it baffles opposition, and few can stand before it. Detraction touches us in the tenderest point, cuts to the quick, and leaves a venom behind which it is difficult to extract. In all ways it is a sore distress to come under the power of " slander, the foulest whelp of sin." Even in such distress we need not hesitate to cry unto the Lord. Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander.

"I cried unto the LORD" (or Jehovah). The wisest course that he could follow. It is of little use to appeal to our fellows on the matter of slander, for the more we

stir in it the more it spreads ; it is of no avail to appeal to the honour of the slanderers, for they have none, and the most piteous demands for justice will only increase their malignity and encourage them to fresh insult. As well plead with panthers and wolves as with black-hearted traducers. However, when cries to man would be our weakness, cries to God will be our strength. To whom should children cry but to their father ? Does not some good come even out of that vile thing, falsehood, when it drives us to our knees and to our God ? *"And he heard me."* Yes, Jehovah hears. He is the living God, and hence prayer to him is reasonable and profitable. The Psalmist remembered and recorded this instance of prayer-hearing, for it had evidently much affected him ; and now he rehearses it for the glory of God and the good of his brethren. " The righteous cry and the Lord heareth them." The ear of our God is not deaf, nor even heavy. He listens attentively, he catches the first accent of supplication ; he makes each of his children confess,—" he heard *me.*" When we are slandered it is a joy that the Lord knows us, and cannot be made to doubt our uprightness : he will not hear the lie against us, but he will hear our prayer against the lie.

If these Psalms were sung at the ascent of the ark to Mount Zion, and then afterwards by the pilgrims to Jerusalem at the annual festivals and at the return from Babylon, we shall find in the life of David a reason for this being made the first of them. Did not this servant of God meet with Doeg the Edomite when he enquired of the oracle by Abiathar, and did not that wretched creature belie him and betray him to Saul ? This made a very painful and permanent impression upon David's memory, and therefore in commencing the ark-journey he poured out his lament before the Lord, concerning the great and monstrous wrong of " that dog of a Doeg," as Trapp wittily calls him. The poet, like the preacher, may find it to his advantage to " begin low," for then he has the more room to rise : the next Psalm is a full octave above the present mournful hymn. Whenever we are abused it may console us to see that we are not alone in our misery : we are traversing a road upon which David left his footprints.

2. *"Deliver my soul, O* LORD, *from lying lips."* It will need divine power to save a man from these deadly instruments. Lips are soft ; but when they are *lying* lips they suck away the life of character and are as murderous as razors. Lips should never be red with the blood of honest men's reputes, nor salved with malicious falsehoods. David says, " Deliver my soul " : the soul, the life of the man, is endangered by lying lips ; cobras are not more venomous, nor devils themselves more pitiless. Some seem to lie for lying sake, it is their sport and spirit : their lips deserve to be kissed with a hot iron ; but it is not for the friends of Jesus to render to men according to their deserts. Oh for a dumb generation rather than a lying one ! The faculty of speech becomes a curse when it is degraded into a mean weapon for smiting men behind their backs. We need to be delivered from slander by the Lord's restraint upon wicked tongues, or else to be delivered out of it by having our good name cleared from the liar's calumny. *"And from a deceitful tongue."* This is rather worse than downright falsehood. Those who fawn and flatter, and all the while have enmity in their hearts, are horrible beings ; they are the seed of the devil, and he worketh in them after his own deceptive nature. Better to meet wild beasts and serpents than deceivers : these are a kind of monster whose birth is from beneath, and whose end lies far below. It should be a warning to liars and deceivers when they see that all good men pray against them, and that even bad men are afraid of them. Here is to the believer good cause for prayer. " Deliver us from evil," may be used with emphasis concerning this business. From gossips, talebearers, writers of anonymous letters, forgers of newspaper paragraphs, and all sorts of liemongers, good Lord deliver us !

3. *"What shall be given unto thee ?"* What is the expected guerdon of slander ? It ought to be something great to make it worth while to work in so foul an atmosphere and to ruin one's soul. Could a thousand worlds be bribe enough for such villainous deeds ? The liar shall have no welcome recompense : he shall meet with his deserts ; but what shall they be ? What punishment can equal his crime ? The Psalmist seems lost to suggest a fitting punishment. It is the worst of offences—this detraction, calumny, and slander. Judgment sharp and crushing would be measured out to it if men were visited for their transgressions. But what punishment could be heavy enough ? What form shall the chastisement take ? O liar, " what shall be given unto thee ? "

"Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue ?" How shalt thou be visited ?

The law of retaliation can hardly meet the case, since none can slander the slanderer, he is too black to be blackened; neither would any of us blacken him if we could. Wretched being! He fights with weapons which true men cannot touch. Like the cuttlefish, he surrounds himself with an inky blackness into which honest men cannot penetrate. Like the foul skunk, he emits an odour of falsehood which cannot be endured by the true; and therefore he often escapes, unchastised by those whom he has most injured. His crime, in a certain sense, becomes his shield; men do not care to encounter so base a foe. But what will God do with lying tongues? He has uttered his most terrible threats against them, and he will terribly execute them in due time.

4. *"Sharp arrows of the mighty."* Swift, sure, and sharp shall be the judgment Their words were as arrows, and so shall their punishment be. God will see to it that their punishment shall be comparable to an arrow keen in itself, and driven home with all the force with which a mighty man shoots it from his bow of steel,—"sharp arrows of the mighty." Nor shall one form of judgment suffice to avenge this complicated sin. The slanderer shall feel woes comparable to *coals of juniper*, which are quick in flaming, fierce in blazing, and long in burning. He shall feel sharp arrows and sharper fires. Awful doom! All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Juniper-coals long retain their heat, but hell burneth ever, and the deceitful tongue may not deceive itself with the hope of escape from the fire which it has kindled. What a crime is this to which the All-merciful allots a doom so dreadful! Let us hate it with perfect hatred. It is better to be the victim of slander than to be the author of it. The shafts of calumny will miss the mark, but not so the arrows of God: the coals of malice will cool, but not the fire of justice. Shun slander as you would avoid hell.

5. *"Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!"* Gracious men are vexed with the conversation of the wicked. Our poet felt himself to be as ill-at-ease among lying neighbours as if he had lived among savages and cannibals. The traitors around him were as bad as the unspeakable Turk. He cries "Woe is me!" Their sin appalled him, their enmity galled him. He had some hope from the fact that he was only a sojourner in Mesech; but as years rolled on the time dragged heavily, and he feared that he might call himself a dweller in Kedar. The wandering tribes to whom he refers were constantly at war with one another; it was their habit to travel armed to the teeth; they were a kind of plundering gipsies, with their hand against every man and every man's hand against them; and to these he compared the false-hearted ones who had assailed his character. Those who defame the righteous are worse than cannibals; for savages only eat men after they are dead, but these wretches eat them up alive.

"Woe's me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long;
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.

My soul with him that hateth peace
Hath long a dweller been;
I am for peace; but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.

My soul distracted mourns and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troublers vex no more."

6. *"My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace."* Long, long enough, too long had he been an exile among such barbarians. A peace-maker is a blessing, but a peace-hater is a curse. To lodge with such for a night is dangerous, but to dwell with them is horrible. The verse may apply to any one of the Psalmist's detractors: he had seen enough of him and pined to quit such company. Perhaps the sweet singer did not at first detect the nature of the man, for he was a deceiver; and when he did discover him he found himself unable to shake him off, and so was compelled to abide with him. Thoughts of Doeg, Saul, Ahithophel, and the sons of Zeruiah come to our mind,—these last, not as enemies, but as hot-blooded soldiers who were often too strong for David. What a change for the man of God from the quietude

of the sheepfold to the turmoil of court and the tumult of combat! How he must have longed to lay aside his sceptre, and to resume his crook. He felt the time of his dwelling with quarrelsome spirits to be long, too long; and he only endured it because, as the Prayer-book version has it, he was *constrained* so to abide.

7. "*I am for peace.*" Properly, "I am peace"; desirous of peace, peaceful., forbearing,—in fact, peace itself. "*But when I speak, they are for war.*" My kindest words appear to provoke them, and they are at daggers drawn at once. Nothing pleases them; if I am silent they count me morose, and if I open my mouth they cavil and controvert. Let those who dwell with such pugilistic company console themselves with the remembrance that both David and David's Lord endured the same trial. It is the lot of the saints to find foes even in their own households. Others besides David dwelt in the place of dragons. Others besides Daniel have been cast into a den of lions. Meanwhile, let those who are in quiet resting-places and peaceful habitations be greatly grateful for such ease. *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit:* God has given us this tranquillity. Be it ours never to inflict upon others that from which we have been screened ourselves.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*A Song of Degrees.*" A most excellent song, Tremellius rendereth it; and so indeed this and the fourteen following are, both for the matter, and for the form or manner of expression, which is wondrous short and sweet, as the very epigrams of the Holy Ghost himself, wherein each verse may well stand for an oracle. And in this sense, *adam hammahalah*, or, a man of degrees, is put for an eminent or excellent man: 1 Chron. xvii. 17. Others understand it otherwise; wherein they have good leave to abound in their own sense; an error here is not dangerous.—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm.—In the interpretation of these Psalms, which sees in them the "degrees" of Christian virtues, this Psalm aptly describes the first of such steps—the renunciation of the evil and vanity of the world. It thus divides itself into two parts. 1. The Psalmist, in the person of one beginning the grades of virtue, finds many opponents in the shape of slanderers and ill advisers. 2. He laments the admixture of evil—"Woe is me."—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm.—It is a painful but useful lesson which is taught by this first of the Pilgrim Psalms, that all who manifest a resolution to obey the commands and seek the favour of God, may expect to encounter opposition and reproach in such a course. . . . This these worshippers of old found when preparing to seek the Lord in his Temple. They were watched in their preparation by malignant eyes; they were followed to the house of prayer by the contempt and insinuations of bitter tongues. But their refuge is in him they worship; and, firmly convinced that he never can forsake his servants, they look up through the cloud of obloquy to his throne, and implore the succour which they know that his children shall ever find there. "*O Lord, in this my trouble deliver my soul.*"—*Robert Nisbet.*

Whole Psalm.—The pilgrims were leaving home; and lying lips commonly attack the absent. They were about to join the pilgrim caravan; and in the excitements of social intercourse their own lips might easily deviate from truth. The Psalm, moreover, breathes an intense longing for peace; and in this world of strife and confusion, when is that longing inappropriate? Is it any marvel that a Hebrew, with a deep spiritual longing for peace, should cry as he started for the Temple, "Let me get out of all *that*, at least for a time. Let me be quit of this fever and strain, free from the vain turbulence and conflicting noises of the world. Let me rest and recreate myself a while in the sacred asylum and sanctuary of the God of peace. God of peace, grant me thy peace as I worship in thy presence; and let me find a bettered world when I come back to it, or at least bring a bettered and more patient heart to its duties and strifes."—*Samuel Cox.*

Verse 1.—"*In my distress I cried unto the Lord,*" etc. See the wondrous advantage of trouble,—that it makes us call upon God; and again see the wondrous readiness of mercy, that when we call he heareth us! Very blessed are they that mourn while

they are travelling the long upward journey from the Galilee of the Gentiles of this lower world to the heavenly Jerusalem, the high and holy city of the saints of God.—*J. W. Burgon, in "A Plain Commentary."*

Verse 1.—*"In my distress."* God's help is seasonable; it comes when we need it. Christ is a seasonable good.... For the soul to be dark, and for Christ to enlighten it; for the soul to be dead, and Christ to enliven it; for the soul to be doubting, and for Christ to resolve it; and for the soul to be distressed, and for Christ to relieve it; is not this in season? For a soul to be hard, and for Christ to soften it; for a soul to be haughty, and for Christ to humble it; for a soul to be tempted, and for Christ to succour it; and for a soul to be wounded, and for Christ to heal it? Is not this in season?—*R. Mayhew,* 1679.

Verse 1.—*"Cried." "Heard."* The verbs are in the past tense, but do not refer merely to a past occasion. Past experience and present are here combined. From the past he draws encouragement for the present.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 1.—*"And he heard me."* The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much: James v. 16; Zech. xiii. 9. He that prayeth ardently, speedeth assuredly (Ps. xci. 15); and the unmiscarrying return of prayer should be carefully observed and thankfully improved: Ps. lxvi. 20.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—*"Deliver my soul, O* LORD, *from lying lips,"* etc. An unbridled tongue is *vehiculum Diaboli,* the chariot of the Devil, wherein he rides in triumph. Mr. Greenham doth describe the tongue prettily by contraries, or diversities: "It is a little piece of flesh, small in quantity, but mighty in quality; it is soft, but slippery; it goeth lightly, but falleth heavily; it striketh soft, but woundeth sore; it goeth out quickly, but burneth vehemently; it pierceth deep, and therefore not healed speedily; it hath liberty granted easily to go forth, but it will find no means easily to return home; and being once inflamed with Satan's bellows, it is like the fire of hell." The course of an unruly tongue is to proceed from evil to worse, to begin with foolishness, and go on with bitterness, and to end in mischief and madness. See Eccles. x. 13. The Jew's conference with our Saviour began with arguments: "We be Abraham's seed," said they, etc.; but proceeded to blasphemies: "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" and ended in cruelty: "Then took they up stones to cast at him." John viii. 33, 48, 59. This also is the base disposition of a bad tongue to hate those whom it afflicts: Prov. xxvi. 28.

The mischief of the tongue may further appear by the mercy of being delivered from it, for, 1. So God hath promised it (Job v. 15, 21). "God saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty," and "thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue," or from being betongued, as some render it, that is, from being, as it were, caned or cudgelled with the tongues of others. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" (Ps. xxxi. 20); that is, from all calumnies, reproaches, evil speakings of all kinds. God will preserve the good names of his people from the blots and bespatterings of malicious men, as kings protect their favourites against slanders and clamours. 2. So the saints have prayed for it, as David: *"Deliver my soul, O* LORD, *from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue."—Edward Reyner.*

Verse 2.—*"Deliver my soul, O* LORD, *from lying lips,"* etc. In the drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect, or the spike of the nettle-leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope cannot distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert day and night into restless misery; so it is sometimes with the words of the slanderer.—*Frederick William Robertson.*

Verse 2.—*"Lying lips"* bore false witness against him, or with a *"deceitful tongue"* tried to ensnare him, and to draw something from him, on which they might ground an accusation.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—*"What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?"* What dost thou expect, *"thou false tongue,"* in pleading a bad cause? What fee or reward hast thou for being an accuser instead of an advocate? What shall it profit thee (as we put it in the margin); what shalt thou gain by thy deceitful tongue? or (as our margin hath it again), *"What shall the deceitful tongue give unto thee,"* that thou goest about slandering thy brother, and tearing his good name? Hath thy deceitful tongue houses or lands to give thee? hath it any

treasures of gold and silver to bestow upon thee? Surely, as itself is, so it gives only *"Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper,"* as the next verse intimates.... The tongue indeed will speak often in these cases *gratis*, or without a fee; but it never doth without danger and damage to the speaker. As such speakers shoot arrows, like the arrows of the mighty, and as they scatter coals, like the coals of juniper, so they usually get an arrow in their own sides, and not only burn their fingers, but heap coals of fire upon their own heads. Ungodly men will do mischief to other men purely for mischief's sake: yet when once mischief is done it proves most mischievous to the doers of it; and while they hold their brethren's heaviness a profit, though they are never the better, they shall feel and find themselves in a short time much the worse.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 3, 4.—*"What shall be given?"* Intimating that his enemy expected some great reward for his malice against David; but, saith the Psalmist, he shall have *"sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper";* as if he had said, "Whatever reward he have from men, this shall be his reward from God."—*John Jackson, in "The Morning Exercises,"* 1661.

Verses 3, 4.—The victim of slander, in these heavy complaints he has just uttered, may be indulging in excess, which pious friends are represented as coming forward to reprove by reminding him how little a true servant of God can be really injured by slander. Hence, as in the margin of our Bibles, the Psalm assumes the dramatic form, and represents his fellow-worshippers as asking the complainer: What evil, O servant of God, *can the false tongue give to thee!* Nursling of Omnipotence, *what can it do to thee!*.... The answer of suffering nature and bleeding peace still returns: *"It is like the sharp arrows of the mighty, like coals of juniper."* An arrow from the bow of a mighty warrior, that flies unseen and unsuspected to its mark, and whose presence is only known when it quivers in the victim's heart, not unaptly represents the silent and deadly flight of slander; while the fire which the desert pilgrim kindles on the sand, from the dry roots of the juniper, a wood which, of all that are known to him, throws out the fiercest and most continued heat, is not less powerfully descriptive of the intense pain and the lasting injury of a false and malicious tongue.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verses 3, 4.—*"Coals of juniper,"* these *"shall be given unto thee."* As if he had said, thou shalt have the hottest coals, such coals as will maintain heat longest, implying that the hottest and most lasting wrath of God should be their portion. Some naturalists say that coals of juniper raked up in the ashes will keep fire a whole year; but I stay not upon this.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—*"Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper."* The world's sin is the world's punishment. A correspondence is frequently observed between the transgression and the retribution.... This law of correspondence seems to be here indicated. Similar figures are employed to express the offence and the punishment of the wicked. *"They bend their tongue like a bow for lies."* *"Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot in secret at the perfect."* But let the slanderer be upon his guard. There is another bow besides that in his possession. The arrows are sharp and burning; and when they are sent from the bow by the arm of Omnipotence, nothing can resist their force, and in mortal agony his enemies bite the dust. "He hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death: he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." "God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded; so shall they make their own tongue fall upon themselves." This train of thought is also pursued in the illustration of fire. James compares the tongue of slander to fire. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among the members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Such is the tongue, and here is the punishment: *"Coals of juniper,"* remarkable for their long retention of heat. And yet what a feeble illustration of the wrath of God, which burns down to the lowest hell! "His lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire." Liars are excluded from heaven by a special enactment of the Sovereign; and all of them "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" With what solemn awe should we not cry out to the Lord,

" Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men ! "—*N. McMichael, in "The Pilgrim Psalms,"* 1860.

Verse 4.—*"Sharp arrows of the mighty."* He compareth wicked doctrine to an *arrow* which is not blunt, but *sharp ;* and moreover which is cast, not of him that is weak and feeble, but that is strong and *mighty ;* so that there is danger on both sides, as well of the arrow which is sharp and able to pierce, as also of him which with great violence hurleth the same.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 4.—*"Arrows." "Coals of juniper."* When the *tongue* is compared to *"arrows,"* there is a reference (according to the Midrash), to the irrevocableness of the tongue's work. Even the lifted sword may be stayed, but the shot arrow may not. The special point to be drawn out in the mention of " coals of *juniper,"* is the unextinguishableness of such fuel. There is a marvellous story in the Midrash which illustrates this very well. Two men in the desert sat down under a juniper tree, and gathered sticks of it wherewith they cooked their food. After a year they passed over the same spot where was the dust of what they had burned ; and remarking that it was now twelve months since they had the fire, they walked fearlessly upon the dust, and their feet were burned by the " coals " beneath it, which were still unextinguished.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Verse 4.—*"Coals of juniper."* The fire of the *rothem* burns for a very long time covered with its ashes ; like malignant slander. But the secret malignity becomes its own terrible punishment.—*William Kay.*

Verse 4.—*"Coals of juniper."* We here [at Wádí Kinnah] found several Bedouins occupied in collecting brushwood, which they burn into charcoal for the Cairo market ; they prefer for this purpose the thick roots of the shrub Retham, *Genista rætam* of Forskal, which grows here in abundance.—*Johann Ludwig Burckhardt,* 1784—1817.

Verse 4.—*"Coals of juniper."* At this time we spoke four " ships of the desert," bound for Cairo, and loaded with *"coals of juniper,"* or, in other words, with charcoal made from the roots or branches of the *ratam,* or white broom of the desert, the identical bush referred to by the sacred writer.—*John Wilson, in "The Lands of the Bible visited and described,"* 1847.

Verse 4.—By *"coals of juniper,"* we understand arrows made of this wood, which when heated possesses the property of retaining the heat for a long time : and consequently, arrows of this kind, after having been placed in the fire, would in the hands of the warrior do terrible execution.

Some persons think that this verse is not to be understood as a figurative description of calumny, but rather of the punishment which God will inflict upon the calumniator. They therefore regard this as an answer to the question in the preceding verse : *"What shall he give ? "* etc.—*George Phillips.*

Verse 5.—*"Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar ! "* Mesech was a son of Japheth ; and the name here signifies his descendants, the Mosques, who occupied that wild mountain region which lies between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Kedar, again, was a son of Ishmael ; and the name here signifies his descendants, the wandering tribes, whose " hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them." There is no geographical connection between those two nations : the former being upon the north of Palestine, and the latter upon the south. The connection is a moral one. They are mentioned together, because they were fierce and warlike barbarians. David had never lived on the shores of the Caspian Sea, or in the Arabian wilderness ; and he means no more than this, that the persons with whom he now dwelt were as savage and quarrelsome as Mesech and Kedar. After a similar fashion, we call rude and troublesome persons Turks, Tartars, and Hottentots. David exclaims, I am just as miserable among these haters of peace, as if I had taken up my abode with those savage and treacherous tribes.—*N. McMichael.*

Verse 5.—*"Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech,"* etc. David exclaims, *Alas for me !* because, dwelling amongst false brethren and a bastard race of Abraham, he was wrongfully molested and tormented by them, although he had behaved himself towards them in good conscience. Since then, at the present day, in the church of Rome, religion is dishonoured by all manner of disgraceful imputations, faith torn in pieces, light turned into darkness, and the majesty of God exposed to the grossest mockeries, it will certainly be impossible for those who have any feeling of true piety within them to lie in the midst of such pollutions without great anguish of spirit.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 6.—The Arabs are naturally thievish and treacherous; and it sometimes happens, that those very persons are overtaken and pillaged in the morning who were entertained the night before with all the instances of friendship and hospitality. Neither are they to be accused for plundering strangers only, and attacking almost every person whom they find unarmed and defenceless, but for those many implacable and hereditary animosities which continually subsist among them; literally fulfilling the prophecy of Hagar, that "Ishmael should be a wild man; his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him."—*Thomas Shaw*, 1692—1751.

Verse 6.—Our Lord was with the wild beasts in the wilderness. There are not a few who would rather face even these than the angry spirits which, alas, are still to be found even in Christian Churches.—*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1879.

Verses 6, 7.—What holy and gentle delight is associated with the very name of *peace!* Peace resting upon our bosom, and soothing all its cares: peace resting upon our households, and folding all the members in one loving embrace: peace resting upon our country, and pouring abundance from her golden horn: peace resting upon all nations, and binding them together with the threefold cord of a common humanity, a common interest, and a common religion! The man who hates peace is a dishonour to the race, an enemy to his brother, and a traitor to his God. He hates Christ, who is the Prince of peace. He hates Christians, who are men of peace.—*N. McMichael.*

Verse 7.—"*I am for peace,*" etc. Jesus was a man of peace; he came into our world, and was worshipped at his nativity as the Prince of peace: there was universal peace throughout the world at the time of his birth; he lived to make peace "by the blood of his cross:" he died to complete it. When he was going out of the world, he said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid": John xiv. 27. When he was risen from the dead, and made his first appearance to his disciples, he said unto them, "Peace be unto you": he is the peace-maker: the Holy Ghost is the peace-maker: his gospel is the gospel of peace; it contains the peace of God which passeth all understanding. "*I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.*" The bulk of the Jewish nation abhorred Christ, they were for putting him to death; to avenge which, the Lord brought the Roman army against them, and many of them were utterly destroyed. So David literally was for peace with Saul; yet, when opportunities made way for any negotiations, it was soon discovered Saul was for war, instead of peace, with him.

May we see how this, which is the introductory Psalm to those fourteen which follow, styled *Songs of Degrees*, hath a concern with our Lord Jesus Christ; and that David the son of Jesse was in many cases a type of him, and several of his enemies, sorrows, and griefs, forerunning figures of what would befall Messiah, and come upon him. Amen.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 7.—"*I am for peace.*" Good men love peace, pray for it, seek it, pursue it, will give anything but a good conscience for it. Compare Matt. v. 9; Heb. xii. 14: *W. S. Plumer.* "It is a mark of a pious man, as far as in him is, to seek peace": *Amesius.* "I would not give one hour of brotherly love for a whole eternity of contention."—*Dr. Ruffner.*

Verse 7.—"*When I speak, they are for war.*" He spoke with all respect and kindness that could be; proposed methods of accommodation; spoke reason, spoke love; but they would not so much as hear him patiently; but cried out, To arms! To arms! so fierce and implacable were they, and so bent on mischief. Such were Christ's enemies: for his love they were his adversaries; and for his good words and good works they stoned him; and if we meet with such enemies we must not think it strange, nor love peace the less for our seeking it in vain. "Be not overcome of evil," no, not of such evil as this; "but," even when thus tried, still try to "overcome evil with good."—*Matthew Henry.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—*A reminiscence.* I. It is threefold; distress, prayer, deliverance. II. It has a threefold bearing: it excites my hope, stimulates my petitions, and arouses my gratitude.

Verse 1.—I. Special trouble: "In my distress." II. Special prayer: "I cried unto the Lord." III. Special favour: "He heard me."—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The unjustly slandered have, besides the avenging majesty of their God to protect them, many other consolations, as—1. The consciousness of innocence to sustain them. 2. The promise of divine favour to support them: "I will hide thee from the scourge of the tongue." 3. There is the consideration to soothe: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you," etc. 4. That a lie has not usually a long life. 5. There is, lastly, for comfort, the repairing influence of time.—*R. Nisbet.*

Verse 2.—*A prayer against slander.* We are liable to it; it would do us great injury and cause us great pain; yet none but the Lord can protect us from it, or deliver us out of it.

Verse 3.—*The rewards of calumny.* What can they be? What ought they to be? What have they been?.

Verse 3.—I. What the reviler does for others. II. What he does to himself. III. What God will do with him.

Verse 4.—The nature of slander and the punishment of slander.

Verse 4.—I. The tongue is sharper than an arrow. 1. It is shot in private. 2. It is tipped with poison. 3. It is polished with seeming kindness. 4. It is aimed at the tenderest part. II. The tongue is more destructive than fire. Its scandals spread with greater rapidity. They consume that which other fires cannot touch, and they are less easily quenched. "The tongue," says an Apostle, "is a fire . . . and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." A fiery dart of the wicked one.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—*Bad lodgings.* Only the wicked can be at home with the wicked. Our dwelling with them is trying, and yet it may be useful (1) to them, (2) to us: it tries our graces, reveals our character, abates our pride, drives us to prayer, and makes us long to be home.

Verse 5.—I. None but the wicked enjoy the company of the wicked. II. None but the worldly enjoy the company of worldlings. III. None but the righteous enjoy the company of the righteous.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—I. Trying company. II. Admirable behaviour. III. Undesirable consequences: "When I speak they are for war."

Verse 7.—*The character of the man of God.* He is at peace. He is for peace. He is peace. He shall have peace.

Verse 7.—I. Piety and peace are united. II. So are wickedness and war.—*G. R.*

PSALM CXXI.

TITLE, ETC.—*This bears no other title than "A song of degrees." It is several steps in advance of its predecessor, for it tells of the peace of God's house, and the guardian care of the Lord, while Psalm cxx. bemoans the departure of peace from the goodman's abode, and his exposure to the venomous assaults of slanderous tongues. In the first instance his eyes looked around with anguish, but here they look up with hope. From the constant recurrence of the word* keep, *we are led to name this song "* a Psalm to the keeper of Israel." *Were it not placed among the Pilgrim Psalms we should regard it is a martial hymn, fitted for the evensong of one who slept upon the tented field. It is a soldier's song as well as a traveller's hymn. There is an ascent in the Psalm itself which rises to the greatest elevation of restful confidence.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
2 My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.
3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.
4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
5 The LORD *is* thy keeper: the LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand.
6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.
7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.
8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

1. *"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."* It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Dwellers in valleys are subject to many disorders for which there is no cure but a sojourn in the uplands, and it is well when they shake off their lethargy and resolve upon a climb. Down below they are the prey of marauders, and to escape from them the surest method is to fly to the strongholds upon the mountains. Often before the actual ascent the sick and plundered people looked towards the hills and longed to be upon their summits. The holy man who here sings a choice sonnet looked away from the slanderers by whom he was tormented to the Lord who saw all from his high places, and was ready to pour down succour for his injured servant. Help comes to saints only from above, they look elsewhere in vain: let us lift up our eyes with hope, expectancy, desire and confidence. Satan will endeavour to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged; be it ours firmly to resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes, and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also. The purposes of God; the divine attributes; the immutable promises; the covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord—these are the hills to which we must lift our eyes, for from these our help must come. It is our resolve that we will not be bandaged and blindfolded, but will lift up our eyes.

Or is the text in the interrogative? Dose he ask, "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?" Does he feel that the highest places of the earth can afford him no shelter? Or does he renounce the idea of recruits hastening to his standard from the hardy mountaineers? and hence does he again enquire, "Whence cometh my help?" If so, the next verse answers the question, and shows whence all help must come.

2. *"My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."* What we need is help,—help powerful, efficient, constant: we need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God. Our hope is in Jehovah, for our help comes from him. Help is on the road, and will not fail to reach us in due time, for he who sends it to us was never known to be too late. Jehovah who created all things is equal to every emergency; heaven and earth are at the disposal of him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our infinite helper. He

will sooner destroy heaven and earth than permit his people to be dstroyed, and the perpetual hills themselves shall bow rather than he shall fail whose ways are everlasting. We are bound to look beyond heaven and earth to him who made them both: it is vain to trust the creatures: it is wise to trust the Creator.

3. *"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved."* Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide; and if he will not suffer it we shall not suffer it. If our foot will be thus kept we may be sure that our head and heart will be preserved also. In the original the words express a wish or prayer,—"May he not suffer thy foot to be moved." Promised preservation should be the subject of perpetual prayer; and we may pray believingly; for those who have God for their keeper shall be safe from all perils of the way. Among the hills and ravines of Palestine the literal keeping of the feet is a great mercy; but in the slippery ways of a tried and afflicted life, the boon of upholding is of priceless value, for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. To stand erect and pursue the even tenor of our way is a blessing which only God can give, which is worthy of the divine hand, and worthy also of perennial gratitude. Our feet shall move in progress, but they shall not be moved to their overthrow. *"He that keepeth thee will not slumber,"*—or "thy keeper shall not slumber." We should not stand a moment if our keeper were to sleep; we need him by day and by night; not a single step can be safely taken except under his guardian eye. This is a choice stanza in a pilgrim song. God is the convoy and body-guard of his saints. When dangers are awake around us we are safe, for our Preserver is awake also, and will not permit us to be taken unawares. No fatigue or exhaustion can cast our God into sleep; his watchful eyes are never closed.

4. *"Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."* The consoling truth must be repeated: it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It were well if we always imitated the sweet singer, and would dwell a little upon a choice doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew—*"The keeper of Israel,"* and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. He will never suffer the house to be broken up by the silent thief; he is ever on the watch, and speedily perceives every intruder. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word *"Behold"* is set up as a waymark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor body-guard around him; but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not, and therefore the defenceless man was safe as in a castle. In after days he mentioned God under this enchanting name—"The God that led me all my life long": perhaps David alludes to that passage in this expression. The word *"keepeth"* is also full of meaning: he keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasures, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard keeps his monarch's head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it; it affirms the matter thus, "Lo, he shall not slumber nor sleep—the Keeper of Israel." It may also be worthy of mention that in verse three the Lord is spoken of as the personal keeper of one individual, and here of all those who are in his chosen nation, described as Israel: mercy to one saint is the pledge of blessing to them all, Happy are the pilgrims to whom this Psalm is a safe-conduct; they may journey all the way to the celestial city without fear.

5. *"The Lord is thy keeper."* Here the preserving One, who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named—Jehovah is thy keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here: the sentence is a mass of bullion, and when coined and stamped with the king's name it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven. Here is a glorious person—*Jehovah*, assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in person,—Jehovah is thy *keeper*, in behalf of a favoured individual—*thy* and a firm assurance of revelation that it is even so at this hour—Jehovah *is* thy keeper. Can we appropriate the divine declaration? If so, we may journey onward to Jerusalem and know no fear; yea, we may journey through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil. *"The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand."* A shade gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing even divine goodness, which is a right-hand dispensation, must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this the Lord will do for us. He will bear a shield before us, and guard the right arm with which we fight the foe. That member which

has the most of labour shall have the most of protection. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads the Lord Jehovah himself will interpose to shade us, and that in the most honourable manner, acting as our right-hand attendant, and placing us in comfort and safety. "The Lord at thy right hand shall smite through kings." How different this from the portion of the ungodly ones who have Satan standing at their right hand, and of those of whom Moses said "their defence has departed from them." God is as near us as our shadow, and we are as safe as angels.

6. *"The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night."* None but the Lord could shelter us from these tremendous forces. These two great lights rule the day and the night, and under the lordship of both we shall labour or rest in equal safety. Doubtless there are dangers of the light and of the dark, but in both and from both we shall be preserved—literally from excessive heat and from baneful chills; mystically from any injurious effects which might follow from doctrine bright or dim; spiritually from the evils of prosperity and adversity; eternally from the strain of overpowering glory and from the pressure of terrible events, such as judgment and the burning of the world. Day and night make up all time: thus the ever-present protection never ceases. All evil may be ranked as under the sun or the moon, and if neither of these can smite us we are indeed secure. God has not made a new sun or a fresh moon for his chosen, they exist under the same outward circumstances as others, but the power to *smite* is in their case removed from temporal agencies; saints are enriched, and not injured, by the powers which govern the earth's condition; to them has the Lord given "the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon," while at the same moment he has removed from them all bale and curse of heat or damp, of glare or chill.

7. *"The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil,"* or *keep* thee from all evil. It is a great pity that our admirable translation did not keep to the word *keep* all through the Psalm, for all along it is one. God not only keeps his own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yea, from evils themselves. This is a far-reaching word of covering: it includes everything and excludes nothing: the wings of Jehovah amply guard his own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. There is a most delightful double personality in this verse: Jehovah keeps the believer, not by agent, but by himself; and the person protected is definitely pointed out by the word *thee*,—it is not our estate or name which is shielded, but the proper personal man. To make this even more intensely real and personal another sentence is added, *"The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul,"*—or Jehovah will keep thy soul. Soul-keeping is the soul of keeping. If the soul be kept all is kept. The preservation of the greater includes that of the less so far as it is essential to the main design: the kernel shall be preserved, and in order thereto the shell shall be preserved also. God is the sole keeper of the soul. Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride; kept from the world, the flesh and the devil; kept for holier and greater things; kept in the love of God; kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory. What can harm a soul that is kept of the Lord?

8. *"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."* When we go out in the morning to labour, and come home at eventide to rest, Jehovah shall keep us. When we go out in youth to begin life, and come in at the end to die, we shall experience the same keeping. Our exits and our entrances are under one protection. Three times have we the phrase, "Jehovah shall keep," as if the sacred Trinity thus sealed the word to make it sure: ought not all our fears to be slain by such a threefold flight of arrows? What anxiety can survive this triple promise? This keeping is eternal; continuing from this time forth, even for evermore. The whole church is thus assured of everlasting security: the final perseverance of the saints is thus ensured, and the glorious immortality of believers is guaranteed. Under the ægis of such a promise we may go on pilgrimage without trembling, and venture into battle without dread. None are so safe as those whom God keeps; none so much in danger as the self-secure. To goings out and comings in belong peculiar dangers, since every change of position turns a fresh quarter to the foe, and it is for these weak points that an especial security is provided: Jehovah will keep the door when it opens and closes, and this he will perseveringly continue to do so long as there is left a single man that trusteth in him, as long as a danger survives, and, in fact, as long as time

endures. Glory be unto the Keeper of Israel, who is endeared to us under that title, since our growing sense of weakness makes us feel more deeply than ever our need of being kept. Over the reader we would breathe a benediction, couched in the verse of Keble.

" God keep thee safe from harm and sin,
Thy spirit keep; the Lord watch o'er
Thy going out, thy coming in,
From this time, evermore."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title, "A song of degrees."—It has been ingeniously pointed out that these "*degrees*" or "*steps*" consist in the reiteration of a word or thought occurring in one clause, verse, or stanza, which in the next verse or stanza is used, as it were, as a *step* (or degree) by which to ascend to another and higher truth. Thus in our Psalm, the idea of "*my help*," expressed in verse 1, is repeated in verse 2. This has now become a step by which in verse 3 we reach the higher truth or explanation of "*my help*," as: "*He that keepeth thee will not slumber*," the same idea being with slight modification re-embodied in verse 4. Another "degree" is then reached in verse 5, when "He who *slumbers* not" is designated as *Jehovah*, the same idea once more enlarged upon being (the *word* occurring twice in verse 5) in verse 6. The last and highest degree of this song is attained in verse 7, when the truth implied in the word *Jehovah* unfolds itself in its application to our *preservation*, which, with further enlargement, is once more repeated in verse 8. *Perhaps* some internal connexion might be traced between all the fifteen Psalms of Degrees. At any rate, it will not be difficult to trace the same structure in each of the Psalms "of Degrees," making allowance for occasional devotions and modifications.—*Alfred Edersheim, in "The Golden Diary,"* 1877.

Whole Psalm.—According to verse 1 this Psalm was designed to be sung in view of the mountains of Jerusalem, and is manifestly an evening song for the sacred band of pilgrims, to be sung in the last night-watch, the figures of which are also peculiarly suitable for a pilgrim song; and with Ps. cxxii. which, according to the express announcement in the introduction, was sung, when the sacred pilgrim trains had reached the gates of Jerusalem, and halted for the purpose of forming in order, for the solemn procession into the Sanctuary, Ps. cxxxiv. . . . .

The idea is a very probable one, that the Psalm was the evening song of the sacred pilgrim band, sung on retiring to rest upon the last evening, when the long wished-for termination of their wandering, the mountains of Jerusalem, had come into view in the distance. In this we obtain a suitable connection with the following Psalm, which would be sung *one* station further on when the pilgrims were at the gates of Jerusalem. In this case we find an explanation of the fact, that in the middle point of the Psalm there stands the Lord as the "*keeper*" of Israel, with reference to the declaration, "I keep thee," which was addressed to the patriarch as he slept on his pilgrimage: and in this case also "he neither slumbereth nor sleepeth" is seen in its true light.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

It has been said Mr. Romaine read this Psalm every day; and sure it is, that every word in it is calculated to encourage and strengthen our faith and hope in God.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 1.—"*I will lift up mine eyes*," etc. Since we, being burthened with the effects of worldly pleasures, and also with other cares and troubles, can by no means ascend to thee that art on the top of so high a mountain, accompanied with so many legions of angels that still attend upon thee, we have no remedy, but with thy prophet David now to lift up the eyes of our hearts and minds toward thee, and to cry for help to come down from thee to us, thy poor and wretched servants.—*Sir Anthony Cope, in "Meditations on Twenty Select Psalms,"* 1547.

Verse 1.—"*I will lift up mine eyes*," etc. In thy agony of a troubled conscience always look upwards unto a gracious God to keep thy soul steady; for looking downward on thyself thou shalt find nothing but what will increase thy fear, infinite

sins, good deeds few, and imperfect: it is not thy faith, but God's faithfulness thou must rely upon; casting thine eyes downwards on thyself, to behold the great distance betwixt what thou deservest and what thou desirest, is enough to make thee giddy, stagger, and reel into despair. Ever therefore *lift up thine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh thy help*, never viewing the deep dale of thy own unworthiness, but to abate thy pride when tempted to presumption.—*Thomas Fuller* (1608—1661), *in "The cause and Cure of a Wounded Conscience."*

Verse 1.—*"The hills."* There can be no doubt that in Palestine we are in the "Highlands" of Asia. This was the more remarkable in connection with the Israelites, because they were the only civilized nation then existing in the world, which dwelt in a mountainous country. . . . . The Hebrew people was raised above the other ancient states, equally in its moral and in its physical relations. From the Desert of Arabia to Hebron is a continual ascent, and from that ascent there is no descent of any importance, except to the plains of the Jordan, Esdraelon, and the coast. From a mountain sanctuary, as it were, Israel looked over the world. . . . . It was to the "mountains" of Israel that the exile lifted up his eyes, as the place *from whencee his help came.—Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.*

Verse 1.—*"The hills, from whence cometh my help."* See no riches but in grace, no health but in piety, no beauty but in holiness, no treasure but in heaven, no delight but in "the things above."—*Anthony Farindon.*

Verse 1.—*"From whence cometh my help."* The natives of India used to say that when Sir Henry Lawrence looked twice to heaven and then to earth he knew what to do.

To Heaven I lift mine eye,
To Heaven, Jehovah's throne,
For there my Saviour sits on high,
And thence shall strength and aid supply
To all He calls His own.

He will not faint nor fail,
Nor cause thy feet to stray:
For him no weary hours assail,
Nor evening darkness spreads her veil
O'er his eternal day.

Beneath that light divine
Securely shalt thou move;
The sun with milder beams shall shine,
And eve's still queen her lamp incline
Benignant from above.

For he, thy God and Friend,
Shall keep thy soul from harm,
In each sad scene of doubt attend,
And guide thy life, and bless thy end,
With his almighty arm.

John Bowdler, 1814.

Verses 1, 2.—Faint at the close of life's journey, a Christian pilgrim repeated the line,—

"Will he not his help afford?"

She quoted it several times, trying to recall the song in which it occurs, and asked that the once familiar hymn, part of the voice of which she caught, might be all fetched home to her mind again; and she was greatly refreshed and comforted when we read at her bedside Charles Wesley's spirited paraphrase, beginning,—

"To the hills I lift mine eyes,
The everlasting hills;
Streaming thence in fresh supplies,
My soul the Spirit feels.

Will he not his help afford?
Help, while yet I ask, is given:
God comes down; the God and Lord
That made both earth and heaven."

Edward Jewitt Robinson, in "The Caravan and the Temple," 1878.

Verses 1—3.—

Look away to Jesus,
Look away from all!
Then we need not stumble,
Then we shall not fall.
From each snare that lureth,
Foe or phantom grim,
Safety this ensureth,
Look away to him!

Frances Ridley Havergal.

Verse 2.—"*My help cometh from the Lord.*" I require to remember that *my help cometh from the Lord*, not only when seemingly there is no *outward* help from men or otherwise, but also and especially when all seems to go well with me,—when abundance of friends and help are at hand. For then, surely, I am most in danger of making an arm of flesh my trust, and thus reaping its curse; or else of saying to my soul, "Take thine ease," and finding the destruction which attends such folly.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 2.—"*Maker of heaven and earth,*" and therefore mighty to help.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 3.—"*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*" The sliding of the foot is a frequent description of misfortune, for example, Ps. xxxviii. 16, lxvi. 9, and a very natural one in mountainous Canaan, where a single slip of the foot was often attended with great danger. The language here naturally refers to complete, lasting misfortune.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 3.—"*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*" A man cannot go without moving his feet; and a man cannot stand whose feet are moved. The foot by a *synechdoche* is put for the whole body, and the body for the whole outward estate; so that, "*he will not suffer thy foot to be moved,*" is, he will not suffer thee or thine to be moved or violently cast down. The power of thine opposers shall not prevail over thee, for the power of God sustains thee. Many are striking at thy heels, but they cannot strike them up while God holds thee up. If the will of thine enemies might stand, thou shouldst quickly fall; but God "*will not suffer thy foot to be moved.*" —*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 3—8.—There is something very striking in the assurance that the Lord will not suffer the foot even of the most faint and wearied one to be moved. The everlasting mountains stand fast, and we feel as if, like Mount Zion, they could not be removed for ever; but the step of man—how feeble in itself, how liable to stumble or trip even against a pebble in the way! Yet that foot is as firm and immoveable in God's protection as the hills themselves. It is one of his own sweet promises, that he will give his angels charge over every child of his, that he come to no harm by the way. But, oh, how immeasurably beyond even the untiring wings of angels is the love promised here! that love which engages to protect from every danger, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. In the hours of occupation and hurry, in the conflicts and perils of the day, in the helplessness of sleep, in the glare and heat of the noon-day, amid the damps and dews of night, that unslumbering eye is still over every child for his good. Man, indeed, goeth forth to his work and to his labour till the evening; but alike as he goes forth in the morning, and as he returns in the evening, the Lord still holds him up in all his goings forth and his comings in; no manner of evil shall befall him. And oh! what a sweet addition is it to the promise. "He shall preserve *thy soul.*" It is the very argument of the apostle, and the very inference he draws, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry,"—"He neither slumbereth nor sleepeth,"—and then he asks, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" From the very dawn of life to its latest close, even for evermore, "He will preserve thee from all evil; he will preserve thy soul."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verses 3, 4, 5.—A great practical difficulty is to find a "keeper" who will remain *awake during the whole night.* The weariness of those who keep a faithful watch, and their longing for day during the tedious lonely hours of darkness, is alluded to in a graphic and beautiful figure of the Psalmist—

"My soul waiteth for the Lord
More than keepers for the morning,
More than keepers for the morning."

The usual method adopted to secure due vigilance is to require the man to call out loudly, or to blow a whistle, every quarter of an hour. . . . . Yet, notwithstanding all precautions, as soon as sleep falls on the tired camp, it is too often the case that the hireling keeper lies down on the ground, wraps around him his thick *abaiyeh*, or cloak, and, careless of his charge, or overcome with weariness, yields himself up to his drowsy propensities.

Viewed in the light of these facts, how full of condescension and cheer is the assurance of God's never-ceasing care—

> " He who keepeth thee will not slumber.
> Behold, he who keepeth Israel
> Doth not slumber or sleep.
> Jehovah is thy keeper."

While the services of the keeper constitute at all times a marked feature of life in Palestine, they are perhaps more needed when travelling through the country than at any other time. Then, when the moving camp is nightly pitched in strange fields, it becomes absolutely necessary to apply to the nearest authorities for a nocturnal guardian, before one can safely lie down to rest. Now this Psalm cxxi. being one of " the Songs of Degrees," was probably composed to be sung on the way to Jerusalem, as a pilgrim hymn, when the Israelites were coming up annually to keep the three great feasts. As a journeying Psalm, it would therefore have peculiar significance in its allusion to *the keeper by night.—James Neil, in "Palestine Explored,"* 1882.

Verses 3, 4.—When one asked Alexander how he could sleep so soundly and securely in the midst of danger, he told him that Parmenio watched. Oh, how securely may they sleep over whom *he* watcheth that never slumbers nor sleeps !—*From "The Dictionary of Illustrations,"* 1873.

Verses 3, 4.—A poor woman, as the Eastern story has it, came to the Sultan one day, and asked compensation for the loss of some property. " How did you lose it ? " said the monarch. " I fell asleep," was the reply, " and a robber entered my dwelling." " Why did you fall asleep ? " " I fell asleep because I believed that you were awake." The Sultan was so much delighted with the answer of the woman, that he ordered her loss to be made up. But what is true, only by a legal fiction, of human governments, that they never sleep, is true in the most absolute sense with reference to the divine government. We can sleep in safety because our God is ever awake. We are safe because he never slumbers. Jacob had a beautiful picture of the ceaseless care of Divine Providence on the night when he fled from his father's house. The lonely traveller slept on the ground, with the stones for his pillow, and the sky for his canopy. He had a wondrous vision of a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, and on which angels were seen ascending and descending. And he heard Jehovah saying to him, " Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."—*N. McMichael.*

Verse 4.—It is necessary, observes S. Bernard, that *"he who keepeth Israel"* should *"neither slumber nor sleep,"* for he who assails Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. And as the One is anxious about us, so is the other to slay and destroy us, and his one care is that he who has once been turned aside may never come back.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 4.—*"Slumber." "Sleep."* There is no climax in these words, as some have supposed. Etymologically, the first is the stronger word, and it occurs in Ps. lxxvi. 5 [6] of the sleep of death. In this instance there is no real distinction between the two. Possibly there may be an allusion to the nightly encampment, and the sentries of the caravan.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 4.—*"He . . . shall neither slumber nor sleep."* This form of expression, *he will not slumber nor sleep,* would be improper in other languages, according to the idiom of which it should rather be, *He will not sleep, yea, he will not slumber :* but when the Hebrews invert this order, they argue from the greater to the less. The sense then is, that as God never slumbers even in the smallest degree, we need not be afraid of any harm befalling us while he is asleep.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—*"He that keepeth Israel."* With an allusion to Jacob, who slept at Bethel, and to whom the promise of God took this form, " And, behold, I am with thee, and will *keep* thee in all places whither thou goest " : Gen. xxviii. 15.—*Aben Ezra, quoted by H. T Armfield.*

Verse 4.—"*Shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" Man sleeps; a sentinel *may* slumber on his post by inattention, by long-continued wakefulness, or by weariness; a pilot *may* slumber at the helm; even a mother *may* fall asleep by the side of the sick child; but God is never exhausted, is never weary, is never inattentive. He never closes his eyes on the condition of his people, on the wants of the world.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 4.—A number of years ago Captain D. commanded a vessel sailing from Liverpool to New York, and on one voyage he had all his family with him on board the ship.

One night, when all were quietly asleep, there arose a sudden squall of wind, which came sweeping over the waters until it struck the vessel, and instantly threw her on her side, tumbling and crashing everything that was moveable, and awaking the passengers to a consciousness that they were in imminent peril.

Everyone on board was alarmed and uneasy, and some sprang from their berths and began to dress, that they might be ready for the worst.

Captain D. had a little girl on board, just eight years old, who, of course, awoke with the rest.

"What's the matter?" said the frightened child.

They told her a squall had struck the ship.

"Is father on deck?" said she.

"Yes; father's on deck."

The little thing dropped herself on her pillow again without a fear, and in a few moments was sleeping sweetly in spite of winds or waves.

Fear not the windy tempests wild,
Thy bark they shall not wreck;
Lie down and sleep, O helpless child!
Thy Father's on the deck.

"*The Biblical Treasury,*" 1873.

Verses 4, 5.—The same that is the protector of the church in general, is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer; the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. "*He that keepeth Israel*" (verse 4), "*is thy keeper*" (verse 5). The Shepherd of the flock is the Shepherd of every sheep, and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord is thy keeper.*" Two principal points are asserted in these previous words. 1. Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, the omnipotent and self-existent God, is the Keeper, and Preserver of his people. 2. The people of God are kept, at all times and in all circumstances, by his mighty power unto everlasting salvation; they are preserved even "for evermore." In the first particular, the divinity of the great Keeper is declared; and, in the second, the eternal security of his people through his omnipotence and faithfulness. This was the Psalmist's gospel. He preached it to others, and he felt it himself. He did not speculate upon what he did not understand; but he had a clear evidence, and a sweet perception, of these two glorious doctrines, which he delivered to the people. . . . This character, under the name of Jehovah, is the character of Christ. Just such a one is Jesus, the Shepherd of Israel. He says of himself to the Father, "Those that thou gavest me *I have kept,* and *none of them is lost,* but the Son of Perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." . . . . From what has been premised, it seems evident, that the keeper of the faithful is no other than Jehovah. This the Psalmist has proved. It appears equally evident that Christ is their Keeper and Preserver. This he hath declared himself; and his apostles have repeatedly declared it of him. It follows, therefore, that Christ is truly and essentially Jehovah. All the sophistry in the world cannot elude this conclusion; nor all the heretics in the world destroy the premises. And, if Christ be Jehovah, he is all that supreme, eternal, omnipotent being, which Arians, Socinians, and others deny him to be.—*Ambrose Serle, in "Horæ Solitariæ,"* 1815.

Verse 5.—"*Keeper.*" "*Shade.*" The titles of God are virtually promises—when he is called a sun, a shield, a strong tower, a hiding-place, a portion. The titles of Christ, light of the world, bread of life, the way, the truth, and life; the titles of the Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of glory, of grace, and supplication, the sealing, witnessing Spirit; faith may conclude as much out of these as out of promises. Is the Lord a sun? then he will influence me, etc. Is Christ life? then he will enliven me, etc.—*David Clarkson,* 1621—1686.

Verse 5.—"*Thy shade upon thy right hand.*" That is, always present with thee; or, as the Jewish Arab renders it, "Nigher than thy shadow at, or from thy right hand."—*Thomas Fenton, in "Annotations on the Book of Job and the Psalms,"* 1732.

Verse 5.—"*Thy shade.*" In eastern countries the sun's burning rays are often arrows by which premature death is inflicted; and when the Psalmist speaks of Jehovah as a shady covert for the righteous, that imagery suggests the idea of the "coup de soleil" or sunstroke as the evil avoided.—*J. F., in "The Baptist Magazine,"* 1831.

Verse 5.—"*Shade.*" The Hebrew word is צֵל, *tsel*, "a shadow," and hence it has been supposed that the words, "thy shadow at thy right hand," are a figurative expression, referring to the protection afforded by the shade of a tree against the scorching rays of the sun or to the custom which prevails in tropical climates especially, of keeping off the intense heat of the sun by a portable screen, such as an umbrella or parasol. The word is often put for *defence* in general. Compare Num. xiv. 9; Isaiah xxx. 2; Jer. xlviii. 45.—*James Anderson.*

Verses 5—8.—How large a writ or patent of protection is granted here! No time shall be hurtful, neither "*day nor night,*" which includes all times. Nothing shall hurt, neither *sun nor moon*, nor heat nor cold. These should include all annoyances. Nothing shall be hurt, "*Thy soul shall be preserved, thy outgoings and thy comings in shall be preserved.*" These include the whole person of man, and him in all his just affairs and actions. Nothing of man is safe without a guard, and nothing of man can be unsafe which is thus guarded. They should be kept who can say, "The Lord is our keeper"; and they cannot be kept, no, not by legions of angels, who have not the Lord for their keeper. None can keep us but he, and he hath promised to keep us "for evermore."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*The sun shall not smite thee.*" הִכָּה of the sun signifies to smite injuriously (Isa. xlix. 10), plants, so that they wither (Ps. cii. 5), and the head (Jonah iv. 8), so that symptoms of sunstroke (2 Kings iv. 19; Judith viii. 2 seq.) appear. The transferring of the word to the moon is not zeugmatic. Even the moon's rays may become insupportable, may affect the eyes injuriously, and (more particularly in the equatorial regions) produce fatal inflammation of the brain. From the hurtful influences of nature that are round about him the promise extends in verses 7, 8 in every direction. Jahve, says the poet to himself, will keep (guard) thee against all evil, of whatever kind it may be and whencesoever it may threaten; he will keep thy soul, and thereafter thy life both inwardly and outwardly; he will keep thy going out and coming in, *i.e.*, all thy business and intercourse of life . . . . . everywhere and at all times; and that from this time forth even for ever.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 6.—"*The sun shall not smite thee by day,*" etc. A promise made with allusion unto, and application of that care which God had over his people, when he brought them out of Egypt through the wilderness, when he guarded them from the heat of the sun by a cloud by day, and from the cold and moistness of the night and moon by a pillar of fire by night.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 6.—"*Nor the moon by night.*"

> The moon, the governess of floods,
> Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
> That rheumatic diseases do abound.

William Shakespeare (1564—1616), *in "The Midsummer Night's Dream."*

Verse 6.—Joseph Hart in one of his hymns speaks of some who "travel much by night." To such this promise is precious.—"*Biblical Treasury.*"

Verse 6.—"*Nor the moon by night.*" The effect of the moonlight on the eyes in this country is singularly injurious. . . . The moon here really strikes and affects the sight, when you sleep exposed to it, much more than the sun, a fact of which I had a very unpleasant proof one night, and took care to guard against it afterwards; indeed, the sight of a person who should sleep with his face exposed at night would soon be utterly impaired or destroyed.—*John Carne, in "Letters from the East,"* 1826.

Verse 6.—"*Nor the moon by night.*" In the cloudless skies of the East, where the moon shines with such exceeding clearness, its effects upon the human frame have been found most injurious. The inhabitants of these countries are most

careful in taking precautionary measures before exposing themselves to its influence. Sleeping much in the open air, they are careful to cover well their heads and faces. It has been proved beyond a doubt that the moon smites as well as the sun, causing blindness for a time, and even distortion of the features.

Sailors are well aware of this fact; and a naval officer relates that he has often, when sailing between the tropics, seen the commanders of vessels waken up young men who have fallen asleep in the moonlight. Indeed, he witnessed more than once the effects of a moonstroke, when the mouth was drawn on one side and the sight injured for a time. He was of opinion that, with long exposure, the mind might become seriously affected. It is supposed that patients suffering under fever and other illnesses are affected by this planet, and the natives of India constantly affirm that they will either get better or worse, according to her changes.—*C. W., in "The Biblical Treasury."*

Verse 7.—*"The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil."* Lawyers, when they are drawing up important documents, frequently conclude with some general terms to meet any emergency which may possibly occur. They do this on the principle, that what is not in may be supposed to be intentionally left out. In order to guard against this inference, they are not content with inserting a number of particular cases; they conclude with a general statement, which includes everything, whether expressed or not. A similar formula is inserted here. It is of great importance that the feet of travellers be kept from sliding, as they pursue their journey. It is of great importance that they be preserved from heat by day, and from cold by night. But other dangers await them, from which they require protection; and lest the suspicion be entertained, that no provision is made for these being surmounted, they are all introduced in the saving and comprehensive clause. No matter what may be their character, no matter from what quarter they may appear, no matter when they may come, and no matter how long they may continue, the declaration covers them all. Divine grace changes the nature of everything it handles, and transforms everything it touches into gold. Afflictions are overruled for good; and the virtues of the Christian life are developed with unusual lustre. *"The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil."—N. McMichael.*

Verse 7.—*"The* LORD *shall preserve thee from all evil,"* etc. It is an absolute promise, there are no conditions annexed; it honours God for us simply to believe it, and rest on the Lord for the performance of it. As we view it, what have we to fear? The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, his word is immutable. Jesus preserves body and soul, he is the Saviour of the body as well as of the soul.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verses 7, 8.—The threefold expression, "shall keep *thee . . . thy soul . . . thy going out* and *thy coming in,*" marks the completeness of the protection vouchsafed, extending to all that the man is and that he does.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 7, 8.—It is of importance to mark the reason why the prophet repeats so often what he had so briefly and in one word expressed with sufficient plainness. Such repetition seems at first sight superfluous; but when we consider how difficult it is to correct our distrust, it will be easily perceived that he does not improperly dwell upon the commendation of the divine providence. How few are to be found who yield to God the honour of being a *"keeper,"* in order to their being thence assured of their safety, and led to call upon him in the midst of their perils! On the contrary, even when we seem to have largely experienced what this protection of God implies, we yet instantly tremble at the noise of a leaf falling from a tree, as if God had quite forgotten us. Being then entangled in so many unholy misgivings, and so much inclined to distrust, we are taught from the passage that if a sentence couched in a few words does not suffice us, we should gather together whatever may be found throughout the whole Scriptures concerning the providence of God, until this doctrine—"That God always keeps watch for us"—is deeply rooted in our hearts; so that, depending upon his guardianship alone, we may bid adieu to all the vain confidences of the world.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—*"The* LORD *shall preserve."* The word *shamar* imports a most tender preservation; from it comes *shemuroth,* signifying the eyelids, because they are the keepers of the eye, as the Lord is called in the verse preceding—*shomer Ishrael, "the keeper of Israel."* If the lids of the eye open, it is to let the eye see; if they close, it is to let it rest, at least to defend it; all their motion is for the good of

the eye. O, what a comfort is here! The Lord calleth his Church "the apple of his eye": "he that toucheth you, touches the apple of mine eye." The Church is the apple of God's eye, and the Lord is the covering of it. O, how well are they kept whom "the keeper of Israel" keepeth! The Lord was a buckler to Abraham, none of his enemies could harm him; for his buckler covered him throughly. The Lord was a hedge unto Job; Satan himself confessed he could not get through it, howsoever many a time he assayed it, to have done evil unto Job. . . . . .

But seeing this same promise of preservation was made before (for from the third verse to the end of the Psalm, six sundry times, is the word of keeping or preserving repeated), why is it now made over again? Not without cause; for this doubling and redoubling serves, first, for a remedy of our ignorance. Men, if they be in any good estate, are ready to "sacrifice to their own net," or "to cause their mouth to kiss their own hand," as if their own hand had helped them: thus to impute their "deliverance" to their "calf," and therefore often is this resounded, "The Lord," "The Lord." Is thy estate advanced? The Lord hath done it. Hast thou been preserved from desperate dangers? Look up to the Lord, thy help is from on high, and to him let the praise be returned. Secondly, it is for a remedy for our natural diffidence: the word of the Lord in itself is as sure when it is spoken, as when it is sworn; as sure spoken once, as when it is oftener repeated; yet is not the Lord content to speak only, but to swear also; nor to speak once, but often, one and the selfsame thing. The reason is showed us by the apostle, that hereby he may "declare to the heirs of promise the stability of his counsel." Heb. vi.; Gen. xxi. 32. As Joseph spake of Pharaoh his vision, "It was doubled, because the thing is established by God, and God hasteth to perform it"; so is it with every word of the Lord, when it is repeated; it is because it is established, and God hastens to perform it.—*From a Sermon by Bishop Cowper, entitled "His Majesties Comming in,"* 1623.

Verse 8.—*"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in."* All actions being comprehended under one of these two sorts, *"going out"* to more public, and *"coming in"* to more private affairs; or again, *"going out"* to begin, and *"coming in"* at the end of the work. But by this expression may here perhaps be more particularly signified that God would protect David, even to the end of his days, whenever he marched out with his armies, or brought them home.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 8.—*"From this time forth and even for evermore."* He has not led me so tenderly thus far to forsake me at the very gate of heaven.—*Adoniram Judson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The window opened towards Jerusalem. I. The hills we look to. II. The help we look for. III. The eyes we look with.

Verse 1.—*"Whence cometh my help?"* A grave question; for, I. I need it, greatly, in varied forms, constantly, and now. II. In few directions can I look for it, for men are feeble, changeable, hostile, etc. III. I must look above. To Providence, to Grace, to my God.

Verse 2.—The Creator the creature's helper.

Verse 2.—I. God is his people's "help." II. He helps them in proportion as they feel their need of his help. III. His help is never in vain. "My help cometh," not from the earth merely, or the skies, but "from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Isa. xl. 26—31.—*G. R.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—The preservation of saintly character the care of the Creator.

Verse 3.—Comfort for a pilgrim along the *mauvais pas* of life. We have a Guide omniscient, omnipotent, unsleeping, unchanging.

Verse 3.—*"He that keepeth thee will not slumber."* I. The Lord's care is personal in its objects. The keeper of Israel is the keeper of the individual. God deals with us individually. 1. This is implied in his care of the church, which is composed of individuals. 2. It is involved in the nature of our religion, which is a personal

thing. 3. It is affirmed in Scripture. Examples; promises; experiences. "He loved *me*," etc., etc. 4. It is confirmed by experience. II. The Lord's care is unwearied in its exercise: "Will not slumber." 1. He is never unacquainted with our condition. 2. He is never indifferent to it. 3. He is never weary of helping us. We sometimes think he sleeps, but this is our folly.—*Frederick J. Benskin*, 1882.

Verse 4.—I. The suspicion—that God sleeps. II. The denial. III. The implied opposite—he is ever on the watch to bless.

Verse 4.—He keepeth Israel, 1. As his chief treasure, most watchfully. 2. As his dearest spouse, most tenderly. 3. As the apple of his eye, most charily and warily.—*Daniel Featly*, 1582—1645.

Verse 5.—The Lord Keeper. I. Blessings included in this title. II. Necessities which demand it. III. Offices which imply it,—Shepherd, King, Husband, Father, etc. IV. Conduct suggested by it.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—God as near us, and as indivisible from us as our shadow.

Verse 5.—"*The Lord is thy keeper*," not angels. I. He is *able* to keep thee. He has infinite knowledge, power, etc. II. He has *engaged* to keep thee. III. He *has* kept thee. IV. He *will* keep thee. In his love; in his covenant, etc., as his sheep, his children, his treasures, as the apple of his eye, etc.—*F. J. B.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord is thy keeper.*" I. Wakeful: "Will not slumber." II. Universal: "Thy going out and thy coming in:" "From all evil." III. Perpetual: "Day:" "night:" "evermore." IV. Special: "Thy:" "Israel."—*W. J.*

Verse 6.—The highest powers, under God, prevented from hurting believers, and even made to serve them.

Verse 6.—Our Horoscope. I. Superstitious fears removed. II. Sacred assurances supplied.

Verse 7.—I. Personal agency of God in providence. II. Personal regard of providence to the favoured individual. III. Special care over the centre of the personality—"thy soul."

Verse 8.—Who? "The Lord." What? "Shall preserve thee." When? "Going out and coming in from this time forth." How long? "For evermore." What then? "I will lift up mine eyes."

Verse 8.—I. Changing—going out and coming in. II. Unchanging—"The Lord shall preserve," etc.

PSALM CXXII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*This brief but spirited Psalm is entitled* "A Song of Degrees of David," *and thus we are informed as to its author, and the occasion for which it was designed: David wrote it for the people to sing at the time of their goings up to the holy feasts at Jerusalem. It comes third in the series, and appears to be suitable to be sung when the people had entered the gates, and their feet stood within the city. It was most natural that they should sing of Jerusalem itself, and invoke peace and prosperity upon the Holy City, for it was the centre of their worship, and the place where the Lord revealed himself above the mercy-seat. Possibly the city was not all built in David's day, but he wrote under the spirit of prophecy, and spoke of it as it would be in the age of Solomon: a poet has license to speak of things, not only as they are, but as they will be when they come to their perfection. Jerusalem, or the Habitation of Peace, is used as the key-word of this Psalm, wherein we have in the original many happy allusions to the salem, or peace, which they implored upon Jerusalem. When they stood within the triple walls, all things around the pilgrims helped to explain the words which they sang within her ramparts of strength. One voice led the Psalm with its personal "I," but ten thousand brethren and companions united with the first musician and swelled the chorus of the strain.*

EXPOSITION.

I WAS glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:

4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.

5 For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

7 Peace be within thy walls, *and* prosperity within thy palaces.

8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace *be* within thee.

9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.

1. "*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the* LORD." Good children are pleased to go home, and glad to hear their brothers and sisters call them thither. David's heart was in the worship of God, and he was delighted when he found others inviting him to go where his desires had already gone: it helps the ardour of the most ardent to hear others inviting them to a holy duty. The word was not "go," but "let us go"; hence the ear of the Psalmist found a double joy in it. He was glad *for the sake of others:* glad that they wished to go themselves, glad that they had the courage and liberality to invite others. He knew that it would do them good; nothing better can happen to men and their friends than to love the place where God's honour dwelleth. What a glorious day shall that be when many people shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." But David was glad *for his own sake:* he loved the invitation to the holy place, he delighted in being called to go to worship in company, and, moreover, he rejoiced that good people thought enough of him to extend their invitation to him. Some men would have been offended, and would have said, "Mind your own business. Let my religion alone;" but not so King David, though he had more dignity than any of us, and less need to be reminded of his duty. He was not teased but pleased by being pressed to attend holy services. He was glad to go into the house of the Lord, glad to go in holy company, glad

to find good men and women willing to have him in their society. He may have been sad before, but this happy suggestion cheered him up: he pricked up his ears, as the proverb puts it, at the very mention of his Father's house. Is it so with us? Are we glad when others invite us to public worship, or to church fellowship? Then we shall be glad when the spirits above shall call us to the house of the Lord not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"Hark! they whisper: angels say,
Sister spirit, come away."

If we are glad to be called by others to our Father's house, how much more glad shall we be actually to go there. We love our Lord, and therefore we love his house, and pangs of strong desire are upon us that we may soon reach the eternal abode of his glory. An aged saint, when dying, cheered herself with this evidence of grace, for she cried, "I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth," and therefore she begged that she might join the holy congregation of those who for ever behold the King in his beauty. Our gladness at the bare thought of being in God's house is detective as to our character, and prophetic of our being one day happy in the Father's house on high. What a sweet Sabbath Psalm is this! In prospect of the Lord's day, and all its hallowed associations, our soul rejoices. How well, also, may it refer to the church! We are happy when we see numerous bands ready to unite themselves with the people of God. The pastor is specially glad when many come forward and ask of him assistance in entering into fellowship with the church. No language is more cheering to him than the humble request, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

2. "*Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem;*" or, better, "our feet are standing." The words imply present and joyous standing within the walls of the city of peace; or perhaps the pilgrims felt so sure of getting there that they antedated the joy, and spoke as if they were already there, though they were as yet only on the road. If we are within the church we may well triumph in the fact. While our feet are standing in Jerusalem our lips may well be singing. Outside the gates all is danger, and one day all will be destruction; but within the gates all is safety, seclusion, serenity, salvation, and glory. The gates are opened that we may pass in, and they are only shut that our enemies may not follow us. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, and so do we when we are enclosed within them. What a choice favour, to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem! Why are *we* so greatly favoured? Many feet are running the downward road, or kicking against the pricks, or held by snares, or sliding to an awful fall; but our feet, through grace divine, are "standing"—an honourable posture, "within thy gates, O Jerusalem"—an honourable position, and there shall they stand for ever—an honourable future.

3. "*Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.*" David saw in vision the city built; no more a waste, or a mere collection of tents, or a city upon paper, commenced but not completed. God's mercy to the Israelitish nation allowed of peace and plenty, sufficient for the uprise and perfecting of its capital: that city flourished in happy times, even as the church is only built up when all the people of God are prospering. Thanks be to God, Jerusalem is builded: the Lord by his glorious appearing has built up Zion. Furthermore, it is not erected as a set of booths, or a conglomeration of hovels, but as a city, substantial, architectural, designed, arranged, and defended. The church is a permanent and important institution, founded on a rock, builded with art, and arranged with wisdom. The city of God had this peculiarity about it, that it was not a long, straggling street, or a city of magnificent distances (as some mere skeleton places have been styled), but the allotted space was filled, the buildings were a solid block, a massive unity: this struck the dwellers in villages, and conveyed to them the idea of close neighbourhood, sure standing, and strong defence. No quarter could be surprised and sacked while other portions of the town were unaware of the assault: the ramparts surrounded every part of the metropolis, which was singularly one and indivisible. There was no flaw in this diamond of the world, this pearl of cities. In a church one of the most delightful conditions is the compactness of unity: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." A church should be one in creed and one in heart, one in testimony and one in service, one in aspiration and one in sympathy. They greatly injure our Jerusalem who would build dividing walls within her; she needs compacting, not dividing. There is no joy in going up to a church which is rent with internal dissension: the gladness of holy men is aroused by the adhesiveness

of love, the unity of life; it would be their sadness if they saw the church to be a house divided against itself. Some bodies of Christians appear to be periodically blown to fragments, and no gracious man is glad to be in the way when the explosions take place: thither the tribes do not go up, for strife and contention are not attractive forces.

4. *"Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the* LORD." When there is unity within there will be gatherings from without: the tribes go up to a compact centre. Note that Israel was one people, but yet it was in a sense divided by the mere surface distinction of tribes; and this may be a lesson to us that all Christendom is essentially one, though from various causes we are divided into tribes. Let us as much as possible sink the tribal individuality in the national unity, so that the church may be many waves, but one sea; many branches, but one tree; many members, but one body. Observe that the tribes were all of them the Lord's; whether Judah or Benjamin, Manasseh or Ephraim, they were all the Lord's. Oh that all the regiments of the Christian army may be all and equally the Lord's own, alike chosen, redeemed, accepted, and upheld by Jehovah. *"Unto the testimony of Israel."* They went up to the holy city to hear and to bear testimony. Everything in the temple was a testimony unto the Lord, and the annual journeys of the tribes to the hallowed shrine partook of the same testifying character, for these journeys were Israel's open avowal that Jehovah was their God, and that he was the one only living and true God. When we assemble on the Sabbath a large part of our business is giving out and receiving testimony: we are God's witnesses; all the tribes of the one church of Jesus Christ bear witness unto the Lord. *"To give thanks unto the name of the* LORD." Another part of our delightful duty is to praise the Lord. Sacred praise is a chief design of the assembling of ourselves together. All Israel had been fed by the fruit of the field, and they went up to give thanks unto the name of their great Husbandman: we, too, have countless mercies, and it becomes us unitedly in our solemn gatherings to magnify the name of our loving Lord. Testimony should be mingled with thanks, and thanks with testimony, for in combination they bless both God and man, and tend to spread themselves over the hearts of our companions; who, seeing our joyful gratitude, are the more inclined to hearken to our witness-bearing.

Here, then, was part of the cause of the gladness of the pious Israelite when he had an invitation to join the caravan which was going to Zion: he would there meet with representatives of all the clans of his nation, and aid them in the double object of their holy assemblies, namely, testimony and thanksgiving. The very anticipation of such delightful engagements filled him to overflowing with sacred gladness.

5. *"For there are set thrones of judgment."* If discontented with the petty judgments of their village lords, the people could bring their hard matters to the royal seat, and the beloved King would be sure to decide aright; for the judgment-thrones were *"The thrones of the house of David."* We who come to the church and its public worship are charmed to come to the throne of God, and to the throne of the reigning Saviour.

> "He reigns! Ye saints, exalt your strains:
> Your God is King, your Father reigns:
> And he is at the Father's side,
> The Man of love, the Crucified."

To a true saint the throne is never more amiable than in its judicial capacity: righteous men love judgment, and are glad that right will be rewarded and iniquity will be punished. To see God reigning in the Son of David and evermore avenging the just cause is a thing which is good for weeping eyes, and cheering for disconsolate hearts. They sang of old as they went towards the throne, and so do we. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." The throne of judgment is not removed, but firmly *"set,"* and there it shall remain till the work of justice is accomplished, and truth and right are set on the throne with their King. Happy people to be under so glorious a rule.

6. *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."* Peace was her name, pray that her condition may verify her title. Abode of Peace, peace be to thee. Here was a most sufficient reason for rejoicing at the thought of going up to the house of the Lord, since that sacred shrine stood in the centre of an area of peace: well might Israel pray that such peace should be continued. In a church peace is to be desired,

expected, promoted, and enjoyed. If we may not say "Peace at any price," yet we may certainly cry "Peace at the highest price." Those who are daily fluttered by rude alarms are charmed to reach their nest in a holy fellowship, and abide in it. In a church one of the main ingredients of success is internal peace: strife, suspicion, party-spirit, division,—these are deadly things. Those who break the peace of the church deserve to suffer, and those who sustain it win a great blessing. Peace in the church should be our daily prayer, and in so praying we shall bring down peace upon ourselves; for the Psalmist goes on to say, "*They shall prosper that love thee.*" Whether the passage be regarded as a promise or as a prayer matters not, for prayer pleads the promise, and the promise is the ground of prayer. Prosperity of soul is already enjoyed by those who take a deep interest in the church and cause of God: they are men of peace, and find peace in their holy endeavours: God's people pray for them, and God himself delights in them. Prosperity of worldly condition often comes to the lovers of the church if they are able to bear it: many a time the house of Obed-edom is blessed because of the ark of the Lord. Because the Egyptian midwives feared the Lord, therefore the Lord made them houses. No man shall ever be a permanent loser by the house of the Lord: in peace of heart alone, if in nothing else, we find recompense enough for all that we can do in promoting the interests of Zion.

7. "*Peace be within thy walls.*" See how the poet personifies the church, and speaks to it; his heart is with Zion, and therefore his conversation runs in that direction. A second time is the sweet favour of peace earnestly sought after: "There is none like it, give it me." Walls were needed to keep out the foe, but it was asked of the Lord that those walls might prove sufficient for her security. May the munitions of rock so securely defend the city of God that no intruder may ever enter within her enclosure. May her ramparts repose in safety. Three walls environed her, and thus she had a trinity of security. "*And prosperity within thy palaces,*" or "Repose within thy palaces." Peace is prosperity; there can be no prosperity which is not based on peace, nor can there long be peace if prosperity be gone, for decline of grace breeds decay of love. We wish for the church rest from internal dissension and external assault: war is not her element, but we read of old, "Then had the churches rest; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." The bird of Paradise is not a stormy petrel: her element is not the hurricane of debate, but the calm of communion.

Observe that our Jerusalem is a city of palaces: kings dwell within her walls, and God himself is there. The smallest church is worthy of higher honour than the greatest confederacies of nobles. The order of the New Jerusalem is of more repute in heaven than the knights of the Golden Fleece. For the sake of all the saintly spirits which inhabit the city of God we may well entreat for her the boons of lasting peace and abounding prosperity.

8. "*For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.*" It is to the advantage of all Israel that there should be peace in Jerusalem. It is for the good of every Christian, yea, of every man, that there should be peace and prosperity in the church. Here our humanity and our common philanthropy assist our religious prayer. By a flourishing church our children, our neighbours, our fellow-countrymen are likely to be blest. Moreover, we cannot but pray for a cause with which our dearest relatives and choicest friends are associated: if they labour for it, we must and will pray for it. Here peace is mentioned for the third time. Are not these frequent threes some hint of the Trinity? It would be hard to believe that the triple form of so many parts of the Old Testament is merely accidental. At least, the repetition of the desire displays the writer's high valuation of the blessing mentioned; he would not again and again have invoked peace had he not perceived its extreme desirableness.

9. "*Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.*" He prays for Jerusalem because of Zion. How the church salts and savours all around it. The presence of Jehovah, our God, endears to us every place wherein he reveals his glory. Well may we seek her good within whose walls there dwells God who alone is good. We are to live for God's cause, and to be ready to die for it. First we love it (verse 6) and then we labour for it, as in this passage: we see its good, and then seek its good. If we can do nothing else we can intercede for it. Our covenant relation to Jehovah as our God binds us to pray for his people,—they are "the house of the Lord our God." If we honour our God we desire the prosperity of the church which he has chosen for his indwelling.

Thus is the poet glad of an invitation to join with others in the Lord's service. He goes with them and rejoices, and then he turns his delight into devotion, and intercedes for the city of the great King. O church of the living God, we hail thine assemblies, and on bended knee we pray that thou mayest have peace and felicity. May our Jehovah so send it. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Foxe, in his "Acts and Monuments," relates of Wolfgang Schuch, the martyr, of Lothareng in Germany, that upon hearing the sentence that he was to be burned pronounced upon him, he began to sing the hundred and twenty-second Psalm, *Lætus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi*, etc.

Whole Psalm.—An introduction of two verses stands instead of a *Title*, announcing the object of the Psalm. The preceding Psalm was intended to be sung in sight of Jerusalem, and this one at the gates of the city, where the pilgrim train had halted for the purpose of arranging the solemn procession to the sanctuary.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—"*I was glad when they said unto me,*" etc. Gregory Nazianzen writeth that his father being a heathen, and often besought by his wife to become a Christian, had this verse suggested unto him in a dream, and was much wrought upon thereby. —*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*I was glad when they said,*" etc. These words seem to be very simple, and to contain in them no great matter; but if you look into the same with spiritual eyes, there appeareth a wonderful great majesty in them; which because our Papists cannot see, they do so coldly and negligently pray, read, and sing this Psalm and others, that a man would think there were no tale so foolish or vain, which they would not either recite or hear with more courage and delight. These words, therefore, must be unfolded and laid before the eyes of the faithful: for when he saith, "*We will go into the house of the* LORD," what notable thing can we see in these words, if we only behold the stones, timber, gold, and other ornaments of the material temple? But to go into the house of the Lord signifieth another manner of thing; namely, to come together where we may have God present with us, hear his word, call upon his holy name, and receive help and succour in our necessity. Therefore it is a false definition of the temple which the Papists make; that it is a house built with stones and timber to the honour of God. What this temple is they themselves know not; for the temple of Solomon was not therefore beautiful because it was adorned with gold and silver, and other precious ornaments; but the true beauty of the temple was, because in that place the people heard the word of the Lord, called upon his name, found him merciful, giving peace and remission of sins, etc. This is rightly to behold the temple, and not as the visored bishops behold their idolatrous temple when they consecrate it.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—"*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us* (*or, We will*) *go,*" etc. You have here, I. David's delight. II. The object or reason of it. I. In the object there are circumstances enough to raise his joy to the highest note. First, *A company*, either a tribe or many of, or all, the people: "They said unto me." So, in another place, he speaketh of "walking to the house of God in company:" Ps. lv. 14. A glorious sight, a representation of heaven itself, of all the angels crying aloud, the Seraphim to the Cherubim, and the Cherubim echoing back again to the Seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." Secondly, *Their resolution* to serve the Lord: *Dixerunt*, "They said it:" and "to say" in Scripture is to resolve. "We will go," is either a lie, or a resolution. Thirdly, *Their agreement* and joint consent: "We." This is as a circle, and taketh in all within its compass. If there be any dissenting, unwilling person, he is not within this circumference, he is none of the "We." A Turk, a Jew, and a Christian cannot say, "We will serve the Lord;" and the schismatic or separatist shutteth himself out of the house of the Lord. "We" is a bond of peace, keepeth us at unity, and maketh many as one. Fourthly, *Their cheerfulness* and alacrity. They speak like men going out of a

dungeon into the light, as those who had been long absent from what they loved, and were now approaching unto it, and in fair hope to enjoy what they most earnestly desired: "We will go;" we will make haste, and delay no longer. *Ipsa festinatio tarda est;* "Speed itself is but slow paced." We cannot be there soon enough. Fifthly and lastly: *The place where they will serve God:* not one of their own choosing; not the groves, or hills, or high places; no oratory which pride, or malice, or faction had erected; but a place appointed and set apart by God himself. *Servient Domino in domo suâ:* "They will serve the Lord in his own house." They said unto me, "We will go into the house of the Lord."—*Anthony Farindon.*

Verse 1.—"*Let us go into the house of the* LORD." "*Let us go,*" spoken by one hundred men in any city to those over whom they have influence, would raise a monster meeting. . . . But who among those who thus single out the working classes, have gone to them and said, "Let us go—let us go together into the house of the Lord"? The religious adviser, standing at a distance from the multitude, has advised, and warned, and pleaded, saying "Go, or you will not escape perdition;" "Why don't you go?" The Christian visitor has likewise used this kind of influence; but how few have taken the working man by the hand, and said, "Let us go together"? You can *bring* multitudes whom you never can send. Many who would never come alone would come most willingly under the shadow of your company. Then, brethren, to your non-attending neighbours say, "Let us go"; to reluctant members of your own family say, "Let us go"; to those who once went to the house of God in your company, but who have backslidden from worship say, "Let us go"; to all whose ear, and mind, and heart, you can command for such a purpose say, "Let us go—let us go together into the house of the Lord."—*Samuel Martin* (1817—1878), *in a Sermon entitled "Gladness in the Prospect of Public Worship."*

Verse 1.—"*I was glad when they said unto me,*" etc. Such in kind, but far greater in degree, is the gladness, which the pious soul experiences when she is called hence; when descending angels say unto her, Thy labour and sorrow are at an end, and the hour of thy enlargement is come; put off immortality and misery at once; quit thy house of bondage, and the land of thy captivity; fly forth, and "let us go together into the house of the Lord, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—*George Horne.*

Verses 1, 2.—This is a mutual exhortation. The members of the church invite each other: "Let us go into the house of the Lord." It is not enough to say, Go you to church, and I shall stop at home. That will never do. We must invite by example as well as by precept. Mark the plural forms: "Let *us* go into the house of God. *Our* feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." We are to speak as Moses did to Hobab, his brother-in-law, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." The same duty is binding upon us, with regard to those who make no profession of religion, and whose feet never stand in the house of God. Zechariah, in an animated picture of the future glories of the church, describes the new-born zeal of the converts as taking this direction. They cannot but speak of what they have seen and heard, and others must share in their joy. "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also."—*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 2.—With what a blessed hope do they, while they are here in this mortal life, lift up their affections, desires, and thoughts to the heavenly country, because they are able to say with the prophet, "*Our feet stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*" Like those who haste to any place, they are said to be always thinking as if they were already there, and in reality they are there in mind though not in body, and are able greatly to comfort others. What wonder, if a righteous man, wishing to comfort others, should thus speak, "*Our feet stand,*" *i.e.*, our desires, our contemplations, shall be fixed and stable in thy courts, O Jerusalem; *i.e.*, in the mansions of the heavenly kingdom, so that our conversation shall be in heaven, and all our works be done in relation to eternal life, for which we long with greatest intensity of desire. This is not that Jerusalem which killed the prophets and stoned those that were sent unto her, but that where the perfect vision of peace reigns.—*Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 2.—"*Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*" Dr. Clarke, in his travels, speaking of the companies that were travelling from the East to Jerusalem,

represents the procession as being very long, and, after climbing over the extended and heavy ranges of hills that bounded the way, some of the foremost at length reached the top of the last hill, and, stretching up their hands in gestures of joy, cried out, "The Holy City! The Holy City!"—and fell down and worshipped; while those who were behind pressed forward to see. So the dying Christian, when he gets on the last summit of life, and stretches his vision to catch a glimpse of the heavenly city, may cry out of its glories, and incite those who are behind to press forward to the sight.—*Edward Payson*, 1783—1827.

Verse 2.—"*O Jerusalem.*" The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached, and now he fills the whole hemisphere; pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun; exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm.—*Edward Payson's dying experience.*

Verse 2.—"*O Jerusalem*"—

> Lo, towered Jerusalem salutes the eyes!
> A thousand pointing fingers tell the tale;
> "Jerusalem!" a thousand voices cry,
> "All hail, Jerusalem!" hill, down, and dale
> Catch the glad sounds, and shout "Jerusalem, all hail."
>
> *Torquato Tasso*, 1544—1595.

Verse 3.—"*Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.*" The deep depressions which secured the city must have always acted as its natural defence. But they also determined its natural boundaries. The city, wherever else it spread, could never overleap the valley of the Kedron or of Hinnom; and those two fosses, so to speak, became accordingly, as in the analogous case of the ancient towns of Etruria, the Necropolis of Jerusalem. . . . The compression between these valleys probably occasioned the words of the Psalmist: "*Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself.*" It is an expression not inapplicable even to the modern city, as seen from the east. But it was still more appropriate to the original city, if, as seems probable, the valley of Tyropœon formed in earlier times a fosse within a fosse, shutting in Zion and Moriah into one compact mass not more than half a mile in breadth.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley* (1815—1881), *in "Sinai and Palestine."*

Verse 3.—"*Jerusalem.*" It matters not how wicked or degraded a place may have been in former times, when it is sanctified to the use and service of God it becomes honourable. Jerusalem was formerly Jebus—a place where the Jebusites committed their abominations, and where were all the miseries of those who hasten after another God. But now, since it is devoted to God's service, it is a city—"*compact together,*" "*the joy of the whole earth.*"—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Compact.*" Jerusalem was compactly built; every rood of ground, every foot of frontage, was valuable; house was joined to house; those who had gardens had them beyond the city walls, among the "paradises" of the valley of Jehoshaphat.—*Samuel Cox.*

Verse 3.—"*Compact together.*" Methinks Philadelphia, the name of one of the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. i.), is a very proper fitting name for a church, which signifies brotherly love; and every congregation ought to be in a good sense the family of love. Breaches and divisions, distractions and heart-burnings, may happen in other kingdoms which are without God in the world and strangers to the covenant of grace; yet let Jerusalem, the Church of God, be always like a city which is at unity within itself.—*John Pigot*, 1643.

Verse 3.—"*As a city that is compact together.*" Can we say of the great universal church throughout the world, what the pilgrims said of Jerusalem when gazing on its splendour, from the surrounding hills, that it is built "*as a city that is compact together*"? A stately capital, throned on a base of rock, its spacious streets and noble edifices, beautiful in themselves, deriving added splendour from the taste and regularity of their arrangement, appears, both to the scoffing unbeliever and

grieving Christian, a singularly inappropriate emblem of the divided and distracted, the jarring and warring church. If the church may be compared to a city in respect of magnitude, it is one in which every one builds on his own plan; in which the various masses which should embellish and support each other are studiously kept apart, suggesting less the idea of a compact and united capital than of detached and isolated forts, held by persons who keep themselves jealously aloof from each other, save when mutual hatred and heart-burnings bring them together for conflict. There is some truth in the picture; alas! for the proud, foolish builders who give occasion to it, and who, instead of praying for and seeking the peace of Jerusalem, rejoice in exhibiting, perpetuating, and fomenting strife! But, blessed be God, there is yet more of falsehood than truth in it. With all our divisions the Christian Jerusalem *is compact in itself together.* What occupies the hearts and tongues of the myriads of worshippers that assemble themselves weekly in the sanctuaries of our beloved land, and of the millions that assemble beyond the Atlantic billows, but the one glorious gospel of the grace of God? Leave out from the computation the priest with his mass-book, the cold Socinian without his Saviour, and the deluded orthodox professor who holds the truth in unrighteousness; still yonder and yonder and yonder, whatever their name, their place, or their outward worship, are myriads of true hearts, beating with one pulse, gazing on one hope, possessed of one conviction, and praying and pressing forward to one blessed home.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verses 3, 4.—He commendeth Jerusalem, the figure of the church of God and of the corporation of his people. First, as a city for a community. Secondly, as the place of God's public assemblies for religious worship. Thirdly, as the place of public judicature, for governing the Lord's people under David, the type of Christ. Wh nce learn, 1. The church of God is not without cause compared to a city, and especially to Jerusalem, because of the union, concord, community of laws, mutual commodities, and conjunction of strength which should be among God's people: "*Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.*" 2. That which commendeth a place most of anything is the erecting of the Lord's banner of love in it, and making it a place for his people to meet together for his worship: "*Jerusalem is a city whither the tribes go up.*" 3. Whatsoever civil distinction God's children have among themselves, and howsoever they dwell scattered in several places of the earth, yet as they are the Lord's people, they should entertain a communion and conjunction among themselves as members of one universal church, as the signification of the peoples meeting thrice in the year at Jerusalem did reach: "*Whither the tribes did go up, the tribes of the Lord.*" 4. As the tribes, so all particular churches, how far soever scattered, have one Lord, one covenant, one law and Scripture, signified by the tribes going up to "*the testimony of Israel,*" or to the Ark of the Covenant or testimony where the whole ordinances of God were to be exercised. 5. The end of the ordinances of God, of holy covenanting and communion, and joining in public worship, is to acknowledge the grace and goodness of God, and to glorify him; for the tribes did go up "*to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*The tribes*" are "the tribes of the Lord," as being the keepers of his commandments.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Verse 4.—"*Unto the testimony of Israel, and to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.*" These two mean nothing else than that in Jerusalem was the appointed place where the word was to be taught and prayer offered. But these ought to be written in golden letters, because David says nothing about the other services, but only of these two. He does not say that the Temple was divinely appointed, that there the victims should be sacrificed; that there incense should be offered; that oblations and sacrifices should be brought; that each one should by his gifts show his gratitude. He says nothing about these things, although only in the Temple were they commanded to be done. He makes mention only of prayer and of thanksgiving.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 4.—"*The testimony of Israel.*" The object which is represented in the Psalm as having power to attract all hearts, and command the ready attendance of the tribes, is "*the testimony of Israel,*" the revelation, in other words, which God made to that people of his character, feelings, and purposes, as most holy, yet ready to forgive, a just God and the Saviour. This discovery of the nature of that great Being before whom all must appear, is justly regarded as a ground of joy.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verses 4, 5.—Observe what a goodly sight it was to see "*the testimony of Israel*"

and the *"thrones of judgment"* such near neighbours; and they are good neighbours, which may greatly befriend one another. Let *"the testimony of Israel"* direct the *"thrones of judgment,"* and the *"thrones of judgment"* protect *"the testimony of Israel."* —*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—*"Thrones of judgment."* On a throne of ivory, brought from Africa or India, the throne of many an Arabian legend, the kings of Judah were solemnly seated on the day of their accession. From its lofty seat, and under that high gateway, Solomon and his successors after him delivered their solemn judgments. That "porch" or "gate of justice," still kept alive the likeness of the old patriarchal custom of sitting in judgment at the gate; exactly as the Gate of Justice still recalls it to us at Granada, and the Sublime Porte—"the Lofty Gate" at Constantinople. He sate on the back of a golden bull, its head turned over its shoulder, probably the ox or bull of Ephraim; under his feet, on each side of the steps, were six golden lions, probably the lions of Judah. This was "the seat of judgment." This was the throne of the house of David.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church."*

Verse 5.—It was a worthy commendation that David uttered in the praise of Jerusalem when he said, *"There is the seat for judgment;"* the which appointing of that seat for judgment was an argument that they loved justice. And first, the place wherein it was set assureth us hereof, for it was set in the gate, where-through men might have passage to and from the judgment seat. Secondly, the manner of framing the seat in the gate, namely, that the judges of force must sit with their faces towards the rising of the sun, in token that then judgment should be as pure from corruption, as the sun was clear in his chiefest brightness. Oh happy house of David, whose seat was set so conveniently, whose causes were heard so carefully, and matters judged so justly!—*Henry Smith,* 1560—1591.

Verse 6.—*"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."* By praying for Jerusalem's peace is meant such serene times wherein the people of God might enjoy his pure worship without disturbance. The Church has always had her vicissitudes, sometimes fair, and sometimes foul weather; but her winter commonly longer than her summer; yea, at the same time that the Sun of peace brings day to one part of it, another is wrapped up in the night of persecution. Universal peace over all the churches is a great rarity.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 6.—*"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."* When the Wesleyan Methodists opened a chapel at Painswick, near his own meeting, the late excellent Cornelius Winter prayed three times publicly the preceding Sabbath for their encouragement and success. When Mr. Hoskins, of Bristol, the Independent minister of Castle-green, opened a meeting in Temple Street; what did the incomparable Easterbrooke, the Vicar of the parish? The morning it was opened, he was almost the first that entered it. He seated himself near the pulpit. When the service was over, he met the preacher at the foot of the stairs, and shaking him with both hands, said aloud: "I thank you cordially, my dear brother, for coming to my help—here is room enough for us both; and work enough for us both; and much more than we can both accomplish: and I hope the Lord will bless our co-operation in this good cause."—*William Jay.*

Verse 6.—*"Pray* (with this princely prophet) *for the peace of Jerusalem."* I wish I could express the incomparable sweetness of this little *hemistichium.* I guess, the Holy Ghost was pleased to let the Psalmist play the poet here: the Psalms are holy poetry. The original words have such elegancy here, as (I think) all the Scripture cannot parallel this verse. It is in English unexpressible. For the point in hand only, he bids us pray for the peace of *Jerusalem. Peace* denominates *Jerusalem,* 'tis the etymon of the word, it means *the vision of peace.* David by that term most sweetly alludes to the name of the city, yet conceals his wit; which could have been made more open: he said, שְׁאֲלוּ שְׁלוֹם שָׁלֵם, *"Pray for the peace of Salem."* For so it was called too, called first so, called still so (Ps. lxxvi.): "At Salem is his tabernacle." That word merely sounds *peace:* God would have his Church the house of peace; and his temple there David might not build because he was a man of war; but Solomon his son, who had his name of peace, must build it. Christ, whose the church is, she his spouse, would not be born in Julius Cæsar's reign; he was a warrior too: but in Augustus's days, who reigned in peace. And this may be a reason too,

if you please, why David bids pray but for peace only, an earthly blessing. That word most fitted his art here, and sounded best. But under that word, by poetical *synecdoche*, lie couched all heavenly blessings.—*Richard Clerke*, 1634.

Verse 6.—"*Pray*," etc. Our praying for the church giveth us a share in all the church's prayers; we have a venture in every ship of prayer that maketh a voyage for heaven, if our hearts be willing to pray for the church; and if not, we have no share in it.

Let no man flatter himself: they that *pray not* for the church of God *love not* the church of God. "*Let them prosper that love thee*"; that is, that *pray* for thee, the one is the counterpart of the other. If we do not love it, we will not pray for it; and if we do not pray for it, we do not love it. Yea, if we pray not for the church, *we lose* our share in the prayers of the church. You will say that man hath a great estate that hath a part in every ship at sea; and yet to have an adventure in all the prayers that are made to heaven is better than all the world. All the church's prayers are for all the living members of it, viz.—the blessings will be to them, for a man to have a venture in every ship of prayer of all the churches throughout all the world. I would not (for my part) leave my share in it for all the world; and that man hath no share in it that will not afford a prayer for the church.—*John Stoughton*, 1640.

Verse 6.—"*They shall prosper that love thee.*" The word "*prosper*" conveys an idea which is not in the original. The Hebrew word means *to be secure, tranquil, at rest*, spoken especially of one who enjoys quiet prosperity: Job iii. 26; xii. 6. The essential idea is that of quietness or rest; and the meaning here is, that those who love Zion *will* have peace; or, that the tendency of that love is to produce peace. See Rom. v. 1. The prayer was for "peace"; the thought in connexion with that was naturally that those who loved Zion *would* have peace. It is indeed true, in general, that they who love Zion, or who serve God, *will* "prosper"; but that is not the truth taught here. The idea is that they will have *peace*:—peace with God; peace in their own consciences; peace in the prospect of death and of the future world; peace amidst the storms and tempests of life; peace in death, in the grave, and for ever.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 6.—"*They shall prosper that love thee.*" Seeing they prosper that love and bear affection to Jerusalem, let men learn to show good will unto Christ's church, though as yet they be no ripe scholars themselves in Christ's school: though they be not grown to perfection let them express a good affection. A good will and inclination, where strength yet faileth, is accepted, and a ready disposition is not rejected: though thou be not yet of the saints, yet love the saints. If thou likest and lovest that thou wouldst be, thou must be that hereafter which yet thou art not. The little bird before she flieth fluttereth with her wings in the nest: the child creepeth before he goeth: so religion beginneth with affection, and devotion proceedeth from desire. A man must first love that he would be, before he can be that which he loveth. It is a good sign when a man affecteth that which he expecteth, and doth favour that which he would more fully favour. He that loveth Sion shall prosper: he that loveth virtue shall increase and prosper in it. The day of small things shall not be despised (Zech. iv. 10), neither shall the smoking flax be quenched (Matt. xii. 20); but the smoke shall bring forth fire, and fire shall break forth into a flame.—*Andrew Willett* (1562—1621), *in "Certaine Fruitfull Meditations upon the* 122. *Psalme."*

Verse 6.—"*They shall prosper that love thee.*" The reverse is also true. "None ever took a stone out of the Temple, but the dust did fly into his eyes."—*Jewish Proverb*.

Verses 6—9.—In this cordial and even impassioned invocation, it is curious to find one of those puns, or plays on words, which are characteristic of Hebrew poetry. The leading words of the strophe are "*peace*" and "*prosperity*." Now the Hebrew word for "*peace*" is *shâlōm*, and the Hebrew word for "*prosperity*" is *shalvah*, while the Hebrew form of "Jerusalem," which means "City of Peace," is Yeru-*shalaim*. So that, in effect, the poet wishes *shâlōm* and *shalvah* on *shalaim*—"peace" and "prosperity" on "the City of Peace." Such an use of words may not strike us as indicating any very subtle or profound sense of humour, or any remarkable artistic skill. But we must always remember that it is always difficult for one race to appreciate the humour, or wit, of another race. We must also remember that this art of playing on words and the sound of words—an art of which we are growing weary—was very novel and surprising to men not surfeited with it as we are, and

who were themselves for the most part quite incapable of the simplest dexterities of speech.—*Samuel Cox*

Verse 7.—"*Peace be within thy walls.*" The Church is a war-town, and a walled-town, which is situated among enemies, and may not trust them who are without, but must be upon its keeping, as the type thereof, Jerusalem, with her walls and towers, did shadow forth.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—"*Within thy walls.*" Or, *To thy outward wall.* Josephus tells us (Book V.) that there were at Jerusalem three ranges or rows of walls. The sense here is, Let no enemy approach so much as to thy out-works to disturb thee.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 8.—"*For my brethren and companions' sakes.*" Because they dwell there or, because they go up there to worship ; or, because they love thee, and find their happiness in thee ; or, because they are unconverted, and all my hope of their salvation is to be derived from thee,—from the church, from the influence of religion.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 8.—"*My brethren.*" On another occasion, an elderly native, formerly a cannibal, addressing the Church members, said, " Brethren ! " and, pausing for a moment, continued, " Ah ! that is a new name ; we did not know the true meaning of that word in our heathenism. It is the ' Evangelia a Jesu ' that has taught us the meaning of ' brethren.' "—*William Gill, in "Gems from the Coral Islands,"* 1869.

Verse 9.—"*Because of the house of the Lord.*" The city that was the scene of so immense assemblies had necessarily a peculiar character of its own. It existed for them, it lived by them. There were priests needed for the conduct of the worship, twenty-four courses of them and 20,000 men. There were Levites, their servants, in immense numbers, needed to watch, maintain, clean the temple—to do the menial and ministering work necessary to its elaborate service and stupendous acts of worship. There were scribes needed for the interpretation of the law, men skilled in the Scriptures and tradition, with names like Gamaliel, so famed for wisdom as to draw young men like Saul from distant Tarsus, or Apollos from rich Alexandria. There were synagogues, 480 of them at least, where the rabbis read and the people heard the word which God had in past times spoken unto the fathers by the prophets. The city was indeed in a sense the religion of Israel, incorporated and localized, and the man who loved the one turned daily his face toward the other, saying, " My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jahveh."—*A. M. Fairbairn, in "Studies in the Life of Christ,"* 1881.

Verse 9.—"*I will seek thy good.*" It is not a cold wish ; it is not a careless, loose seeking after it, that is the phrase in my text—"*I will seek thy good.*" It is not a careless, loose seeking after it, almost as indifferently as a woman seeks after a pin which she has dropped ; no, no ; effort is implied. "*I will seek*" ; I will throw my energies into it ; my powers, my faculties, my property, my time, my influence, my connections, my family, my house, all that I have under my command shall, as far as I have power to command, and as far as God gives me ability to turn them to such a use, be employed in an effort to promote the interests of Zion.—*Joseph Irons,* 1786—1852.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—Observe, I. The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem : verses 1, 2. II. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem : verses 3—5. III. The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare.—*M. Henry.*

Verse 1.—I. David was glad to go to the house of the Lord. It was the house of the Lord, therefore he desired to go. He preferred it to his own house. II. He was glad when others said to him, " Let us go." The distance may be great, the weather may be rough, still, " Let us go." III. He was glad to say it to others, " Let us go," and to persuade others to accompany him.—*G. R.*

Verse 1.—I. Joy in prospect of religious worship. 1. Because of the instruction we receive. 2. Because of the exercises in which we engage. 3. Because of the society in which we mingle. 4. Because of the sacred interests we promote. II. Joy in the invitation to religious worship. 1. Because it shows others are interested in the service of God. 2. Because it shows their interest in us. 3. Because it furthers the interests of Zion.—*F. J. B.*

Verse 1.—Gladness of God's house. Are you "glad when," etc.? Why glad? I. That I have a house of the Lord to which I may go. II. That any feel enough interest in me to say, "Let us go," etc. III. That I am able to go to God's house. IV. That I am disposed to go.—*J. G. Butler, in "The Preacher's Monthly,"* 1882.

Verse 1.—"*I was glad,*" etc. So says, I. *The devout worshipper,* who is glad to be invited *to God's earthly house.* It is his home, his school, his hospital, his bank. II. *The adhesive Christian, who is glad to be invited to God's spiritual house.* Church is builded together, etc. There would he find a settled rest. Has no sympathies with religious gipsies, or no-church people. III. *The dying saint, who is glad to be invited to God's heavenly house.* Simeon—Stephen—Peter—Paul.—*W. J.*

Verse 1.—1. The duty of attending the services of God's house. 2. The duty of exciting one another to go. 3. The benefit of being thus excited.—*F. J. B.*

Verse 2. — Here is, I. Personal attendance: "*My* feet shall stand," etc. II. Personal security: "My feet shall *stand.*" III. Personal fellowship: "O Jerusalem."—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The inside of the church. The honour, privilege, joy, and fellowship of standing there.

Verse 3. — I. A type of the New Jerusalem. 1. As chosen by God. 2. As founded upon a rock. 3. As taken from an enemy. II. A type of its prosperity: "Builded as a city." III. A type of its perfection: "Compact together."—*G. R.*

Verse 3.—The unity of the church. 1. Implied in all covenant dealings. 2. Suggested by all Scriptural metaphors. 3. Prayed for by our Lord. 4. Promoted by the gifts of the Spirit. 5. To be maintained by us all.

Verses 3, 4.—The united church the growing church.

Verse 4.—I. The duty of public worship. 1. In one place: "*Whither* the tribes go up." 2. In one company, though of many tribes: "Whither the *tribes* go up." II. The design. 1. For instruction: "Unto the testimony of Israel." 2. For praise: "To give thanks unto the name of the Lord."—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—I. There are thrones of judgment in the sanctuary. Men are judged there. 1. By the law. 2. By their own consciences. 3. By the gospel. II. There are thrones of grace: "Of the house of David." 1. Of David's Son in the hearts of his people. 2. Of his people in David's Son.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—I. The prayer. 1. "For Jerusalem:" not for ourselves merely, or for the world; but for the church. For the babes in grace; for the young men, and for the fathers. For the pastors, with the deacons and elders. 2. For the "peace" of Jerusalem. Inward peace and outward peace. II. The promise. 1. To whom given: "They that love thee." 2. The promise itself: "They shall prosper"—individually and collectively. Or, I. Love to Jerusalem is the effect of true piety. II. Prayer for Jerusalem is the effect of that love. III. The peace of Jerusalem is the effect of that prayer; and, IV. The prosperity of Jerusalem is the effect of that peace.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—God has connected giving and receiving, scattering and increasing, sowing and reaping, praying and prospering. I. What we must do if we would prosper—"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." 1. Comprehensively: "Peace"—spiritual, social, ecclesiastical, national. 2. Supremely: "Prefer Jerusalem above," etc. 3. Practically: "Let peace rule in your hearts." "Seek peace and pursue it." II. What we shall gain if we pray thus—"Prosperity." 1. Temporal prosperity may thus come. God turned again the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. 2. Spiritual prosperity shall thus come. Affairs of soul—holy exercises and services. 3. Numerical prosperity will thus come. "Increased with men as a flock."—*W. J.*

Verses 6—9.—I. The blessings desired for the church. 1. Peace. 2. Prosperity. Notice the order and connection of these two. II. The way to secure them. 1. Prayer: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." 2. Delight in the service of God: "I was glad," etc. 3. Practical effort: "I will seek thy good." III. Reasons for seeking them. 1. For our own sake: "They shall prosper," etc. 2. For our "companions'" sake. 3. For the sake of the "house of the Lord."—*F. J. B.*

Verse 7.—I. Where peace is most desirable: "Within thy walls." Within town walls, within house walls, but principally within temple walls. II. Where prosperity is most desirable. 1. In the closet. 2. In the church. These are the palaces of the Great King; "The ivory palaces whereby they have made thee glad."—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—The connection between peace and prosperity.

Verse 7.—"*Thy walls.*" 1. Enquire why the church needs walls. 2. Enquire what are the walls of a church. 3. Enquire on which side of them we are.

Verse 7.—The church a palace. 1. Intended for the great King. 2. Inhabited by the royal family. 3. Adorned with regal splendour. 4. Guarded by special power. 5. Known as the court of the blessed and only potentate.

Verses 8, 9.—Two great principles are here laid down why we should pray for the church,—I. Love to the brethren: "For my brethren and companions' sakes." II. Love to God: "Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good."—*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 9.—"*I will seek thy good.*" 1. By prayer for the church. 2. By service in the church. 3. By bringing others to attend. 4. By keeping the peace. 5. By living so as to commend religion.

PSALM CXXIII.

TITLE.—A Song of degrees. *We are climbing. The first step (Ps. cxx.) saw us lamenting our troublesome surroundings, and the next saw us lifting our eyes to the hills and resting in assured security; from this we rose to delight in the house of the Lord; but here we look to the Lord himself, and this is the highest ascent of all by many degrees. The eyes are now looking above the hills, and above Jehovah's footstool on earth, to his throne in the heavens. Let us know it as* " the Psalm of the eyes." *Old authors call it* Oculus Sperans, *or the eye of hope. It is a short Psalm, written with singular art, containing one thought, and expressing it in a most engaging manner. Doubtless it would be a favourite song among the people of God. It has been conjectured that this brief song, or rather sigh, may have first been heard in the days of Nehemiah, or under the persecutions of Antiochus. It may be so, but there is no evidence of it; it seems to us quite as probable that afflicted ones in all periods after David's time found this Psalm ready to their hand. If it appears to describe days remote from David, it is all the more evident that the Psalmist was also a prophet, and sang what he saw in vision.*

UNTO thee will I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters, *and* as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, *and* with the contempt of the proud.

EXPOSITION.

1. *"Unto thee lift I up mine eyes."* It is good to have some one to look up to. The Psalmist looked so high that he could look no higher. Not to the hills, but to the God of the hills he looked. He believed in a personal God, and knew nothing of that modern pantheism which is nothing more than atheism wearing a figleaf. The uplifted eyes naturally and instinctively represent the state of heart which fixes desire, hope, confidence, and expectation upon the Lord. God is everywhere, and yet it is most natural to think of him as being above us, in that glory-land which lies beyond the skies. *"O thou that dwellest in the heavens,"* just sets forth the unsophisticated idea of a child of God in distress; God is, God is in heaven, God resides in one place, and God is evermore the same, therefore will I look to him. When we cannot look to any helper on a level with us it is greatly wise to look above us; in fact, if we have a thousand helpers, our eyes should still be toward the Lord. The higher the Lord is the better for our faith, since that height represents power, glory, and excellence, and these will be all engaged on our behalf. We ought to be very thankful for spiritual eyes; the blind men of this world, however much of human learning they may possess, cannot behold our God, for in heavenly matters they are devoid of sight. Yet we must use our eyes with resolution, for they will not go upward to the Lord of themselves, but they incline to look downward, or inward, or anywhere but to the Lord: let it be our firm resolve that the heavenward glance shall not be lacking. If we cannot see God, at least we will look towards him. God is in heaven as a king in his palace; he is there revealed, adored, and glorified: thence he looks down on the world and sends succours to his saints as their needs demand; hence we look up, even when our sorrow is so great that we can do no

more. It is a blessed condescension on God's part that he permits us to lift up our eyes to his glorious high throne; yea, more, that he invites and even commands us so to do. When we are looking to the Lord in hope, it is well to tell him so in prayer: the Psalmist uses his voice as well as his eye. We need not speak in prayer: a glance of the eye will do it all; for—

> "Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
> The falling of a tear,
> The upward glancing of an eye
> When none but God is near."

Still, it is helpful to the heart to use the tongue, and we do well to address ourselves in words and sentences to the God who heareth his people. It is no small joy that our God is always at home: he is not on a journey, like Baal, but he dwells in the heavens. Let us think no hour of the day inopportune for waiting upon the Lord; no watch of the night too dark for us to look to him.

2. *"Behold"*—for it is worthy of regard among men, and O that the Majesty of heaven would also note it, and speedily send the mercy which our waiting spirits seek. See, O Lord, how we look to thee, and in thy mercy look on us. This *Behold* has, however, a call to us to observe and consider. Whenever saints of God have waited upon the Lord their example has been worthy of earnest consideration. Sanctification is a miracle of grace; therefore let us behold it. For God to have wrought in men the spirit of service is a great marvel, and as such let all men turn aside and see this great sight. *"As the eyes of servants* (or slaves) *look unto the hand of their masters."* They stand at the end of the room with their hands folded watching their lord's movements. Orientals speak less than we do, and prefer to direct their slaves by movements of their hands; hence, the domestic must fix his eyes on his master, or he might miss a sign, and so fail to obey it: even so, the sanctified man lifts his eyes unto God, and endeavours to learn the divine will from every one of the signs which the Lord is pleased to use. Creation, providence, grace; these are all motions of Jehovah's hand, and from each of them a portion of our duty is to be learned; therefore should we carefully study them, to discover the divine will. *"And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress;"* this second comparison may be used because Eastern women are even more thorough than the men in the training of their servants. It is usually thought that women issue more commands, and are more sensitive of disobedience, than the sterner sex. Among the Roman matrons female slaves had a sorry time of it, and no doubt it was the same among the generality of Eastern ladies. *"Even so our eyes wait upon the* LORD *our God."* Believers desire to be attentive to each and all of the directions of the Lord; even those which concern apparently little things are not little to us, for we know that even for idle words we shall be called to account, and we are anxious to give in that account with joy, and not with grief. True saints, like obedient servants, look to the Lord their God *reverentially:* they have a holy awe and inward fear of the great and glorious One. They watch, *obediently*, doing his commandments, guided by his eye. Their constant gaze is fixed *attentively* on all that comes from the Most High; they give earnest heed, and fear lest they should let anything slip through inadvertence or drowsiness. They look *continuously*, for there never is a time when they are off duty; at all times they delight to serve in all things. Upon the Lord they fix their eyes *expectantly*, looking for supply, succour, and safety from his hands, waiting that he may have mercy upon them. To him they look *singly*, they have no other confidence, and they learn to look *submissively*, waiting patiently for the Lord, seeking both in activity and suffering to glorify his name. When they are smitten with the rod they turn their eyes *imploringly* to the hand which chastens, hoping that mercy will soon abate the rigour of the affliction. There is much more in the figure than we can display in this brief comment; perhaps it will be most profitable to suggest the question—Are we thus trained to service? Though we are sons, have we learned the full obedience of servants? Have we surrendered self, and bowed our will before the heavenly Majesty? Do we desire in all things to be at the Lord's disposal? If so, happy are we. Though we are made joint-heirs with Christ, yet for the present we differ little from servants, and may be well content to take them for our model.

Observe the covenant name, *"Jehovah our God":* it is sweet to wait upon a covenant God. Because of that covenant he will show mercy to us; but we may have to wait for it. *"Until that he have mercy upon us:"* God hath his time and

season, and we must wait *until* it cometh. For the trial of our faith our blessed Lord may for awhile delay, but in the end the vision will be fulfilled. Mercy is that which we need, that which we look for, that which our Lord will manifest to us. Even those who look to the Lord, with that holy look which is here described, still need mercy, and as they cannot claim it by right they wait for it till sovereign grace chooses to vouchsafe it. Blessed are those servants whom their Master shall find so doing. Waiting upon the Lord is a posture suitable both for earth and heaven: it is, indeed, in every place the right and fitting condition for a servant of the Lord. Nor may we leave the posture so long as we are by grace dwellers in the realm of mercy. It is a great mercy to be enabled to wait for mercy.

3. "*Have mercy upon us, O* LORD, *have mercy upon us.*" He hangs upon the word "mercy," and embodies it in a vehement prayer: the very word seems to hold him, and he harps upon it. It is well for us to pray about everything, and turn everything into prayer; and especially when we are reminded of a great necessity we should catch at it as a keynote, and pitch our tune to it. The reduplication of the prayer before us is meant to express the eagerness of the Psalmist's spirit and his urgent need: what he needed speedily he begs for importunately. Note that he has left the first person singular for the plural. All the saints need mercy; they all seek it; they shall all have it, therefore we pray—"have mercy upon *us*." A slave when corrected looks to his master's hand that the punishment may cease, and even so we look to the Lord for mercy, and entreat for it with all our hearts. Our contemptuous opponents will have no mercy upon us; let us not ask it at their hands, but turn to the God of mercy, and seek his aid alone.

"*For we are exceedingly filled with contempt,*" and this is an acid which eats into the soul. Observe the emphatic words. *Contempt* is bitterness, wormwood mingled with gall; he that feels it may well cry for mercy to his God. *Filled* with contempt, as if the bitter wine had been poured in till it was up to the brim. This had become the chief thought of their minds, the peculiar sorrow of their hearts. Excluding all other feelings, a sense of scorn monopolized the soul and made it unutterably wretched. Another word is added adverbially—*exceedingly* filled. Filled even to running over, as if pressed down and then heaped up. A little contempt they could bear, but now they were satiated with it, and weary of it. Do we wonder at the threefold mention of mercy when this master evil was in the ascendant? Nothing is more wounding, embittering, festering than disdain. When our companions make little of us we are far too apt to make little of ourselves and of the consolations prepared for us. Oh to be filled with communion, and then contempt will run off from us, and never be able to fill us with its biting vinegar.

4. "*Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease.*" Knowing no troubles of their own, the easy ones grow cruel and deride the people of the Lord. Having the godly already in secret contempt, they show it by openly scorning them. Note those who do this: they are not the poor, the humble, the troubled, but those who have a merry life of it and are self-content. They are in easy circumstances; they are easy in heart through a deadened conscience and so they easily come to mock at holiness; they are easy from needing nothing, and from having no severe toil exacted from them; they are easy as to any anxiety to improve, for their conceit of themselves is boundless. Such men take things easily, and therefore they scorn the holy carefulness of those who watch the hand of the Lord. They say, Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice? and then they turn round with a contemptuous look and sneer at those who fear the Lord. Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion; their contempt of the godly shall hasten and increase their misery. The injurious effect of freedom from affliction is singularly evident here. Place a man perfectly at ease and he derides the suffering godly, and becomes himself proud in heart and conduct. "*And with the contempt of the proud.*" The proud think so much of themselves that they must needs think all the less of those who are better than themselves. Pride is both contemptible and contemptuous. The contempt of the great ones of the earth is often peculiarly acrid: some of them, like a well-known statesman, are "masters of gibes and flouts and sneers," and never do they seem so much at home in their acrimony as when a servant of the Lord is the victim of their venom. It is easy enough to write upon this subject, but to be selected as the target of contempt is quite another matter. Great hearts have been broken and brave spirits have been withered beneath the accursed power of falsehood, and the horrible blight of contempt. For our comfort we may remember that our divine Lord was despised and rejected of men, yet he ceased not from his perfect service

till he was exalted to dwell in the heavens. Let us bear our share of this evil which still rages under the sun, and let us firmly believe that the contempt of the ungodly shall turn to our honour in the world to come: even now it serves as a certificate that we are not of the world, for if we were of the world the world would love us as its own.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm (as ye see) is but short, and therefore a very fit example to show the force of prayer not to consist in many words, but in fervency of spirit. For great and weighty matters may be comprised in a few words, if they proceed from the spirit and the unspeakable groanings of the heart, especially when our necessity is such as will not suffer any long prayer. Every prayer is long enough if it be fervent and proceed from a heart that understandeth the necessity of the saints.—*Martin Luther.*

Whole Psalm.—The change of performers in this Psalm is very evident; the pronoun in the first distich is in the first person *singular*, in the rest of Psalm the first *plural* is used.—*Stephen Street.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm has one distinction which is to be found in "scarcely any other piece in the Old Testament." In the Hebrew it has many rhymes. But these rhymes are purely accidental. They result simply from the fact that many words are used in it with the same inflexions, and therefore with the same or similar terminations. Regularly recurring and intentional rhymes are not a characteristic of Hebrew poetry, any more than they were of Greek or Latin poetry.—*Samuel Cox.*

Verse 1.—"*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.*" He who previously lifted his eyes unto the hills, now hath raised his heart's eyes to the Lord himself.—*The Venerable Bede* (672—735), *in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes,*" etc. This is the sigh of the pilgrim who ascendeth and loveth, and ascendeth because he loveth. He is ascending from earth to heaven, and while he is ascending, unto whom shall he lift his eyes, but unto him that dwelleth in heaven? We ascend to heaven each time we think of God. In that ascent lies all goodness: if we would repent, we must look not on ourselves, but on him; if we would be humble, we must look not on ourselves, but on him; if we would truly love, we must look not on ourselves, but on him who dwelleth in the heavens. If we would have him turn his eyes from our sins, we must turn our eyes unto his mercy and truth.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 1.—"*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.*" Praying by the glances of the eye rather than by words; mine afflictions having swollen my heart too big for my mouth.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*Unto* THEE *do* I *lift up mine eyes.*" You feel the greatness of the contrast these words imply. Earth and heaven, dust and deity; the poor, weeping, sinful children of mortality, the holy, ever-blessed, eternal God: how wide is the interval of separation between them! But over the awful chasm, broader than ocean though it be, love and wisdom in the person of Jesus Christ, have thrown a passage, by which the most sinful may repair unterrified to his presence, and find the shame and the fears of guilt exchanged for the peace of forgiveness and the hope that is full of immortality.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verse 1.—There are many testimonies in *the lifting up of the eyes to heaven.* 1. It is the testimony of a *believing*, humble heart. *Infidelity* will never carry a man above the earth. *Pride* can carry a man no higher than the earth either. 2. It is the testimony of an *obedient* heart. A man that lifts up his eye to God, he acknowledgeth thus much,—Lord, I am thy servant. 3. It is the testimony of a *thankful* heart; acknowledging that every good blessing, every perfect gift, is from the hand of God. 4. It is the testimony of a *heavenly* heart. He that lifts up his eyes to heaven acknowledgeth that he is weary of the earth; his heart is not there; his hope and desire is above. 5. It is the testimony of a *devout* heart: there is no part of the body besides the tongue that is so great an agent in prayer as the *eye.*—*Condensed from Richard Holdsworth.*

Verse 1.—*"O thou that dwellest in the heavens." "That sittest."* The Lord is here contemplated as enthroned in heaven, where he administers the affairs of the universe executes judgment, and hears prayer.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verses 1, 2.—The lifting up the eyes, implies faith and confident persuasion that God is ready and willing to help us. The very lifting up of the bodily eyes towards heaven is an expression of this inward trust: so David in effect saith, From thee, Lord, I expect relief, and the fulfilling of thy promises. So that there is faith in it, that faith which is the evidence of things not seen. How great soever the darkness of our calamities be, though the clouds of present troubles thicken about us, and hide the Lord's care and loving-kindness from us, yet faith must look through all to his power and constancy of truth and love. The eye of faith is a clear, piercing, eagle eye: Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible:" Heb. xi. 27. . . . Faith seeth things afar off in the promises (Heb. xi. 13), at a greater distance than the eye of nature can reach to. Take it either for the eye of the body, or the mind, faith will draw comfort not only from that which is invisible, but also from that which is future as well as invisible; its supports lie in the other world, and in things which are yet to come.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 1, 2.—In the first strophe the poet places himself before us as standing in the presence of the Majesty of Heaven, with his eyes fixed on the hand of God, absorbed in watchful expectation of some sign or gesture, however slight, which may indicate the Divine will. He is like a slave standing silent but alert, in the presence of the Oriental "lord," with hands folded on his breast, and eyes fixed on his master, seeking to read, and to anticipate, if possible, his every wish. He is like a maiden in attendance on her mistress, anxiously striving to see her mind in her looks, to discover and administer to her moods and wants. The grave, reserved Orientals, as we know, seldom speak to their attendants, at least on public occasions. They intimate their wishes and commands by a wave of the hand, by a glance of the eye, by slight movements and gestures which might escape notice were they not watched for with eager attention. Their slaves *"hang* upon their faces;" they *"fasten* their eyes" on the eyes of their master; they watch and obey every turn of his hand, every movement of his finger. Thus the Psalmist conceives of himself as waiting on God, looking to him alone, watching for the faintest signal bent on catching and obeying it.—*Samuel Cox.*

Verse 2.—*"Behold."* An ordinary word, but here it hath an extraordinary position. Ordinarily it is a term of *attention*, used for the awakening of man, to stir up their admiration and audience; but here it is a word not only prefixed for the exciting of men, but of God himself. David is speaking to God in his meditations. "Behold," saith he. As we take it with respect to God, so it is a *precatory* particle: he beseecheth God to look *down* upon him, while he looks *up* unto God: Look on us, as we look to thee; *"Behold, Lord, as the eyes of servants,"* etc. If we take it as it hath respect to *man*, so it is an *exemplary* particle, to stir them up to do the like. *"Behold"* what we do, and do likewise; let your eyes be like ours. "Behold, as the eyes of servants are to the hand of their masters, so are our eyes to the Lord our God." Let yours have the same fixing. So it is a word that draws all eyes after it to imitation.—*Richard Holdsworth.*

Verse 2.—*"Behold, as the eyes of servants look,"* etc. For direction, defence, maintenance, mercy in time of correction, help when the service is over-hard, etc., *"so do our eyes wait upon the Lord our God,"* viz., for direction and benediction. —*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—*"Eyes of servants unto the hand,"* etc. Our eyes ought to be to the hand of the Lord our God:—First, that we may admire his works. Secondly, that we may show that our service is pleasant to us; and to show our dependence on such a benign, mighty, and bountiful hand. Thirdly, that we may evince to him our love, and devoted willingness to do all things which he shall command by the slightest movement of a finger. Fourthly, that from him we may receive food, and all things necessary for sustenance. Fifthly, that he may be a defence for us against the enemies that molest us, either by smiting them with the sword, or by shooting of arrows; or by repelling others by the movement of a finger; or, at least, by covering us with the shield of his good-will. Sixthly and lastly, that, moved by mercy, he would cease from chastisement.—*Condensed from Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—*"As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters,"* etc. A traveller says, "I have seen a fine illustration of this passage in a gentleman's house

at Damascus. The people of the East do not speak so much or so quick as those in the West, and a sign of the hand is frequently the only instructions given to the servants in waiting. As soon as we were introduced and seated on the divan, a wave of the master's hand indicated that sherbet was to be served. Another wave brought coffee and pipes; another brought sweetmeats. At another signal dinner was made ready. The attendants watched their master's eye and hand, to know his will and do it instantly." Such is the attention with which we ought to wait upon the Lord, anxious to fulfil his holy pleasure,—our great desire being, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" An equally pointed and more homely illustration may be seen any day, on our own river Thames, or in any of our large seaport towns, where the call-boy watches attentively the hand of the captain of the boat, and conveys his will to the engine-men.—"*The Sunday at Home.*"

Verse 2.—"*As the eyes of slaves,*" watching anxiously the least movement, the smallest sign of their master's will. The image expresses complete and absolute dependence. Savary (in his *Letters on Egypt*, p. 135), says, "The slaves stand silent at the bottom of the rooms with their hands crossed over their breasts. *With their eyes fixed upon their master* they seek to anticipate every one of his wishes." . . . . In the Psalm the eye directed to the hand of God is the *oculus sperans*, the eye which waits, and hopes, and is patient, looking only to him and none other for help.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 2.—"*As the eyes of servants,*" etc. The true explanation, I should apprehend, is this: As a slave, ordered by a master or mistress to be chastised for a fault, turns his or her imploring eyes to that superior, till that motion of the hand appears that puts an end to the bitterness that is felt; so our eyes are up to thee, our God, till thy hand shall give the signal for putting an end to our sorrows: for our enemies, O Lord, we are sensible, are only executing thy orders, and chastening us according to thy pleasure.—*Thomas Harmer.*

Verse 2.—"*Servants.*" Note how humbly the faithful think of themselves in the sight of God. They are called and chosen to this dignity, to be the heirs and children of God, and are exalted above the angels, and yet, notwithstanding, they count themselves no better in God's sight than "*servants.*" They say not here, Behold, like as children look to the hand of their fathers, but "as servants" to the hand of their masters. This is the humility and modesty of the godly, and it is so far off that hereby they lose the dignity of God's children, to the which they are called, that by this means it is made to them more sure and certain.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—From the everyday conduct of domestic servants we should learn our duty Godwards. Not without cause did our Saviour take his parables from common, everyday things, from fields, vines, trees, marriages, etc., that thus we might have everywhere apt reminders.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*Servants.*" "*A maiden.*" Consider that there be two sorts of servants set down here, man-servants and maid-servants; and this is to let us know that both sexes may be confident in God. Not only may men be confident in the power of God, but even women also, who are more frail and feeble. Not only may women mourn to God for wrongs done to them, and have repentance for sin, but they may be confident in God also. And therefore see, in that rehearsal of believers and cloud of witnesses, not only is the faith of men noted and commended by the Spirit of God, but also the faith of women: and among the judges, Deborah, Jael, etc., are commended as worthies, and courageous in God. And the women also in the New Testament are noted for their following of Christ—even when all fled from him, then they followed him.—*From a sermon by Alexander Henderson*, 1583—1646.

Verse 2.—"*Servants.*" "*A maiden.*" We know how shamefully servants were treated in ancient times, and what reproaches must be cast upon them, whilst yet they durst not move a finger to repel the outrage. Being therefore deprived of all means of defending themselves, the only thing which remained for them to do was, what is here stated, to crave the protection of their masters. The same explanation is equally applicable to the case of *handmaids.* Their condition was indeed shameful and degrading; but there is no reason why we should be ashamed of, or offended at, being compared to slaves, provided God is our defender, and takes our lives under his guardianship; God, I say, who purposely disarms us and strips us of all worldly aid, that we may learn to rely upon his grace, and to be contented with it alone. It having been anciently a capital crime for bondmen to carry

a sword or any other weapon about them, and as they were exposed to injuries of every description, their masters were wont to defend them with so much the more spirit, when anyone causelessly did them violence. Nor can it be doubted that God, when he sees us placing an exclusive dependence upon his protection, and renouncing all confidence in our own resources, will, as our defender, encounter and shield us from all the molestation that shall be offered to us.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—"*Hand.*" With the *hand* we demand, we promise, we call, dismiss, threaten, entreat, supplicate, deny, refuse, interrogate, admire, reckon, confess, repent; express fear, express shame, express doubt; we instruct, command, unite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, acquit, insult, despise, defy, disdain, flatter, applaud, bless, abase, ridicule, reconcile, recommend, exalt, regale, gladden, complain, afflict, discomfort, discourage, astonish; exclaim, indicate silence, and what not? with a variety and a multiplication that keep pace with the tongue.—*Michael de Montaigne,* 1533—1592.

Verse 2.—"*Masters.*" It is said of Mr. George Herbert, that divine poet, that, to satisfy his independency upon all others, and to quicken his diligence in God's service, he used in his ordinary speech, when he made mention of the blessed name of Jesus, to add, "my Master." And, without any doubt, if men were unfeignedly of his mind, their respects would be more to Christ's command, to Christ's will, to Christ's pleasure.—*From Spencer's "Things New and Old."*

Verse 2.—"*Our eyes wait.*" Here the Psalmist uses another word: it is the eye *waiting.* What is the reason of the second word? Now he leaves the similitude in the first line; for in the first line it is thus,—"As the eyes of servants *look,* and the eyes of a maiden *look*"; here it is the eye *waits.* There is good reason: to *wait* is more than to *look:* to *wait* is to look constantly, with patience and submission, by subjecting our affections and wills and desires to God's will; that is to *wait.* David in the second part, in the second line, gives a *better* word, he betters his copy. There is the duty of a Christian, to better his example; the eyes of servants *look,* David's eyes shall *wait: "So our eyes wait."* It is true indeed this word is not in the original, therefore you may observe it is in a small letter in your Bibles, to note that it is a word of necessity, added for the supply of the sense, because the Holy Ghost left it not imperfect, but more perfect, that he put not in the verb; because it is left to every man's heart to supply a verb to his own comfort, and a better he cannot than this. And that this word must be added appears by the next words: "*until that he have mercy upon us.*" To look till he have mercy on us is to *wait;* so there is good reason why this word is added. If we look to the thing begged—"*mercy*"—it is so precious that we may *wait* for it. It was "servants" that he mentioned, and it is their duty to *wait* upon their masters; they wait upon their trenchers at meat; they wait when they go to bed and when they rise; they wait in every place. Therefore, because he had mentioned the first word, he takes the proper duty; there is nothing more proper to servants than waiting, and if we are the servants of God we must *wait.* There is good reason in that respect, because it is a word so significant, therefore the Spirit of God varies it; he keeps not exactly to the line, "So do our eyes *look,*" but he puts it, "So do our eyes *wait.*" —*Richard Holdsworth.*

Verse 3.—"*Have mercy upon us, O* Lord, *have mercy upon us!*" Note how a godly man speaks. He does not say, "*Have mercy upon me, O* Lord, *have mercy upon me!* because I am disgraced;" but, "*Have mercy upon us, O* Lord, *for we are filled with contempt!*" The godly man is not so grieved for his own and individual contempt as he is for the general contempt of the good and faithful. There is an accord of the godly, not only in the cross, but also in groanings, and in the invocation of divine grace.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 3.—"*For we are exceedingly filled.*" The Hebrew word here used means "*to be saturated*"; to have the appetite fully satisfied—as applied to one who is hungry or thirsty. Then it comes to mean to be entirely full, and the idea here is, that as much contempt had been thrown upon them as could be; they could experience no more.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 3.—"*We are exceedingly filled with contempt.*" Men of the world regard the Temple Pilgrims and their religion with the quiet smile of disdain, wondering that those who have so much to engage them in a present life should be weak enough to concern themselves about frames and feelings, about an unseen God, and unknown eternity; and this is a trial they find hard to bear. *Their soul, too, is filled exceedingly*

with the scorning of those that are at ease. The prosperous of their neighbours declare that they have found the world a generous and happy scene to all who deserve its gifts. Poverty and sorrow they attribute to unworthiness alone. "Let them exert themselves," is the unfeeling cry; "let them bestir themselves instead of praying, and with them as with us it will soon be well;" and these words of harsh and unfeeling ignorance are like poison to the wounds of the bleeding heart. They have further "*the contempt of the proud*" to mourn; of those who give expression to their fierce disdain by assailing them with words of contumely, and who seek to draw them by reproaches both from peace and from piety. These are still the trials of Zion's worshippers: silent contempt, open misrepresentation, fierce opposition. Religion, their last comfort, is despised; peace, their first desire, is denied. Anxious to devote themselves in the spirit of humble and earnest piety to the duties of their appointed sphere, they find enemies in open outcry and array against them. But God is their refuge, and to him they go.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verses 3, 4.—The second strophe takes up the "have mercy upon us," as it were in echo. It begins with a *Kyrie eleison*, which is confirmed in a *crescendo* manner after the form of steps.—*Franz Delitszch.*

Verse 4.—"*Exceedingly filled,*" or perhaps, "*has long been filled.*" (Compare cxx. 6). This expression, together with the earnestness of the repeated prayer, "Be gracious unto us," shows that the "scorn" and "contempt" have long pressed upon the people, and their faith has accordingly been exposed to a severe trial. The more remarkable is the entire absence of anything like impatience in the language of the Psalm.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 4.—"*The scorning of those that are at ease.*" When men go on prosperously, they are apt wrongfully to trouble others, and then to shout at them in their misery, and to despise the person and cause of God's people. This is the sure effect of great arrogancy and pride. They think they may do what they please; they have no changes, therefore they fear not God, but put forth their hands against such as be at peace with them (Ps. lv. 19, 20); whilst they go on prosperously and undisturbedly, they cannot abstain from violence and oppression. This is certainly pride, for it is a lifting up of the heart above God and against God and without God. And they do not consider his providence, which alternately lifts up and casts down, that adversity may not be without a cordial, nor prosperity without a curb and bridle. When men sit fast, and are well at ease, they are apt to be insolent and scornful. Riches and worldly greatness make men insolent and despisers of others, and not to care what burdens they impose upon them; they are intrenched within a mass of wealth and power and greatness, and so think none can call them to an account.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 4.—"*Those that are at ease.*" The word always means such as are recklessly at their ease, *the careless ones*, such as those whom Isaiah bids, "rise up, tremble, be troubled;" for "many days and years shall ye be troubled" (ch. xxxii. 9—11). It is that luxury and ease which sensualize the soul, and make it dull, stupid, hard-hearted.—*Edward Bouverie Pusey* (1800—), *in "The Minor Prophets."*

Verse 4.—"*Those that are at ease,*" who are regardless of the troubles of others, and expect none of their own.—*James G. Murphy.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—We have here, I. The prayer of *dependence*, verse 2. II. The prayer of *apprehension:* "Unto *thee*," etc. III. The spirit of *obedience:* "As the eyes of servants," etc. IV. The *patience* of the saints: "*Until* he have mercy upon us."—*R. Nisbet.*

Whole Psalm.—Eyes and no eyes. I. EYES. 1. *Upward*, in confidence, in prayer, in thought. 2. "*Unto*," in reverence, watchfulness, obedience. 3. *Inward*, producing a cry for mercy. II. NO EYES. 1. No sight of the excellence of the godly. 2. No sense of their own danger: "at ease." 3. No humility before God: "proud." 4. No uplifted eyes in hope, prayer, expectation.

Verse 1.—*The eyes of faith.* I. Need uplifting. II. See best upward. III. Have always something to see upward. IV. Let us look up, and so turn our eyes from too much introspection and retrospection.

Verse 1.—I. The language of Adoration: "Thou that dwellest in the heavens." II. The language of Confession. 1. Of need. 2. Of helplessness. III. The language of Supplication: "Unto thee," etc. IV. The language of Expectation; as shown in verse 2.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—(Psalm cxxi. 4 with this verse.) Two beholds. I. God's watchful eye over us. II. The saint's watchful eye upon God.

Verse 2.—"*Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.*" I. What it is to wait with the eye. II. What peculiar aspect of the Lord suggests such waiting: "Jehovah our God." The covenant God is the trusted God. III. What comes of such waiting —"mercy."

Verse 2.—The guiding hand. I. A beckoning hand—to go near. II. A directing hand—to go here and there. III. A quiescent hand—to remain where we are. —*G. R.*

Verse 2.—Homely metaphors, or what may be learned from maids and their mistresses.

Verse 3 (*first portion*).—The Sinner's Litany. The Saint's Entreaty.

Verse 3 (*second portion*).—The world's contempt, the abundance of it, the reason of it, the bitterness of it, the comfort under it.

Verses 3, 4.—I. The occasion of the prayer: the contempt of men. This is often the most difficult to bear. 1. Because it is most unreasonable. Why ridicule men for yielding to their own convictions of what is right? 2. Most undeserved. True religion injures no man, but seeks the good of all. 3. Most profane. To reproach the people of God because they are his people is to reproach God himself. II. The subject of the prayer. 1. The prayer: is not for justice, which might be desired, but for mercy. 2. The plea: "For we are," etc. The reproaches of men are an encouragement to look for special help from God. The harp hung upon the willows sends forth its sweetest tones. The less it is in human hands the more freely it is played upon by the Spirit of God.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—"*Those that are at ease.*" I. Explain their state: "at ease." II. Show their ordinary state of mind: "proud." III. Denounce their frequent sin: scorn of the godly. IV. Exhibit their terrible danger.

PSALM CXXIV.

TITLE.—A Song of degrees of David. *Of course the superfine critics have pounced upon this title as inaccurate, but we are at liberty to believe as much or as little of their assertions as we may please. They declare that there are certain ornaments of language in this little ode which were unknown in the Davidic period. It may be so; but in their superlative wisdom they have ventured upon so many other questionable statements that we are not bound to receive this dictum. Assuredly the manner of the song is very like to David's, and we are unable to see why he should be excluded from the authorship. Whether it be his composition or no, it breathes the same spirit as that which animates the unchallenged songs of the royal composer.*

DIVISION.—*This short Psalm contains an acknowledgment of favour received by way of special deliverance* (1—5), *then a grateful act of worship in blessing Jehovah* (6, 7), *and, lastly, a declaration of confidence in the Lord for all future time of trial. May our experience lead us to the same conclusion as the saints of David's time. From all confidence in man may we be rescued by a holy reliance upon our God.*

EXPOSITION.

IF *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;

2 If *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:

3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:

4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:

5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

1. *"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say."* The opening sentence is abrupt, and remains a fragment. By such a commencement attention was aroused as well as feeling expressed: and this is ever the way of poetic fire—to break forth in uncontrollable flame. The many words in italics in our authorized version will show the reader that the translators did their best to patch up the passage, which, perhaps, had better have been left in its broken grandeur, and it would then have run thus:—

> "Had it not been Jehovah! He was for us, oh let Israel say!
> Had it not been Jehovah! He who was for us when men rose against us.

The glorious Lord became our ally; he took our part, and entered into treaty with us. If Jehovah were not our protector where should we be? Nothing but his power and wisdom could have guarded us from the cunning and malice of our adversaries; therefore, let all his people say so, and openly give him the honour of his preserving goodness. Here are two "ifs," and yet there is no "if" in the matter. The Lord was on our side, and is still our defender, and will be so from henceforth, even for ever. Let us with holy confidence exult in this joyful fact. We are far too slow in declaring our gratitude, hence the exclamation which should be rendered, "O let Israel say." We murmur without being stirred up to it, but our thanksgiving needs a spur, and it is well when some warm-hearted friend bids us say what we feel. Imagine what would have happened if the Lord had left us, and then see what has happened because he has been faithful to us. Are not all the materials of a song spread before us? Let us sing unto the Lord.

2. *"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us."* When all men combined, and the whole race of men seemed set upon stamping out the house of Israel, what must have happened if the covenant Lord had not interposed? When they stirred themselves, and combined to make an assault upon our quietude and safety, what should we have done in their rising if the Lord had not also risen? No one who could or would help was near, but the bare arm

of the Lord sufficed to preserve his own against all the leagued hosts of adversaries. There is no doubt as to our deliverer, we cannot ascribe our salvation to any second cause, for it would not have been equal to the emergency; nothing less than omnipotence and omniscience could have wrought our rescue. We set every other claimant on one side, and rejoice because the Lord was on our side.

3. *"Then they had swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled against us."* They were so eager for our destruction that they would have made only one morsel of us, and have swallowed us up alive and whole in a single instant. The fury of the enemies of the church is raised to the highest pitch, nothing will content them but the total annihilation of God's chosen. Their wrath is like a fire which is kindled, and has taken such firm hold upon the fuel that there is no quenching it. Anger is never more fiery than when the people of God are its objects. Sparks become flames, and the furnace is heated seven times hotter when God's elect are to be thrust into the blaze. The cruel world would make a full end of the godly seed were it not that Jehovah bars the way. When the Lord appears, the cruel throats cannot swallow, and the consuming fires cannot destroy. Ah, if it were not Jehovah, if our help came from all the creatures united, there would be no way of escape for us: it is only because the Lord liveth that his people are alive.

4. *"Then the waters had overwhelmed us."* Rising irresistibly, like the Nile, the flood of opposition would soon have rolled over our heads. Across the mighty waste of waters we should have cast an anxious eye, but looked in vain for escape. The motto of a royal house is, "Tossed about but not submerged": we should have needed an epitaph rather than an epigram, for we should have been driven by the torrent and sunken, never to rise again. *"The stream had gone over our soul."* The rushing torrent would have drowned our soul, our hope, our life. The figures seem to be the steadily-rising flood, and the hurriedly-rushing stream. Who can stand against two such mighty powers? Everything is destroyed by these unconquerable forces, either by being submerged or swept away. When the world's enmity obtains a vent it both rises and rushes, it rages and rolls along, and spares nothing. In the great water-floods of persecution and affliction who can help but Jehovah? But for him where would we be at this very hour? We have experienced seasons in which the combined forces of earth and hell must have made an end of us had not omnipotent grace interfered for our rescue.

5. *"Then the proud waters had gone over our soul."* The figure represents the waves as proud, and so they seem to be when they overleap the bulwarks of a frail bark, and threaten every moment to sink her. The opposition of men is usually embittered by a haughty scorn which derides all our godly efforts as mere fanaticism or obstinate ignorance. In all the persecutions of the church a cruel contempt has largely mingled with the oppression, and this is overpowering to the soul. Had not God been with us our disdainful enemies would have made nothing of us, and dashed over us as a mountain torrent sweeps down the side of a hill, driving everything before it. Not only would our goods and possessions have been carried off, but our soul, our courage, our hope would have been borne away by the impetuous assault, and buried beneath the insults of our antagonists. Let us pause here, and as we see what might have been, let us adore the guardian power which has kept us in the flood, and yet above the flood. In our hours of dire peril we must have perished had not our Preserver prevailed for our safe keeping.

6 Blessed *be* the LORD, who hath not given us *as* a prey to their teeth.

7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

6. *"Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth."* Leaving the metaphor of a boiling flood, he compares the adversaries of Israel to wild beasts who desired to make the godly their prey. Their teeth are prepared to tear, and they regard the godly as their victims. The Lord is heartily praised for not permitting his servants to be devoured when they were between the jaws of the raging ones. It implies that none can harm us till the Lord permits: we cannot be their prey unless the Lord gives us up to them, and that our loving Lord will never do. Hitherto he has refused permission to any foe to destroy us, blessed be his name. The more imminent the danger the more eminent the mercy which would not permit the soul to perish in it. God be blessed for ever for keeping us from the curse. Jehovah be praised for checking the fury of the foe, and saving his own. The

verse reads like a merely negative blessing, but no boon can be more positively precious. He has given us to his Son Jesus, and he will never give us to our enemies.

7. *"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers."* Our soul is like a bird for many reasons; but in this case the point of likeness is weakness, folly, and the ease with which it is enticed into the snare. Fowlers have many methods of taking small birds, and Satan has many methods of entrapping souls. Some are decoyed by evil companions, others are enticed by the love of dainties; hunger drives many into the trap, and fright impels numbers to fly into the net. Fowlers know their birds, and how to take them; but the birds see not the snare so as to avoid it, and they cannot break it so as to escape from it. Happy is the bird that hath a deliverer strong, and mighty, and ready in the moment of peril; happier still is the soul over which the Lord watches day and night to pluck its feet out of the net. What joy there is in this song, "our soul is escaped." How the emancipated one sings and soars, and soars and sings again. Blessed be God many of us can make joyous music with these notes, "our soul is escaped." Escaped from our natural slavery; escaped from the guilt, the degradation, the habit, the dominion of sin; escaped from the vain deceits and fascinations of Satan; escaped from all that can destroy; we do indeed experience delight. What a wonder of grace it is! What a miraculous escape that we who are so easily misled should not have been permitted to die by the dread fowler's hand. The Lord has heard the prayer which he taught us to pray, and he hath delivered us from evil. *"The snare is broken, and we are escaped."* The song is worth repeating; it is well to dwell upon so great a mercy. The snare may be false doctrine, pride, lust, or a temptation to indulge in policy, or to despair, or to presume; what a high favour it is to have it broken before our eyes, so that it has no more power over us. We see not the mercy while we are in the snare; perhaps we are so foolish as to deplore the breaking of the Satanic charm; the gratitude comes when the escape is seen, and when we perceive what we have escaped from, and by what hand we have been set free. Then our Lord has a song from our mouths and hearts as we make heaven and earth ring with the notes, "the snare is broken, and we are escaped." We have been tempted, but not taken; cast down, but not destroyed; perplexed, but not in despair; in deaths oft, but still alive: blessed be Jehovah!

This song might well have suited our whole nation at the time of the Spanish Armada, the church in the days of the Jesuits, and each believer among us in seasons of strong personal temptation.

8 Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

8. *"Our help,"* our hope for the future, our ground of confidence in all trials present and to come. *"Is in the name of the LORD."* Jehovah's revealed character is our foundation of confidence, his person is our sure fountain of strength. *"Who made heaven and earth."* Our Creator is our preserver. He is immensely great in his creating work; he has not fashioned a few little things alone, but all heaven and the whole round earth are the works of his hands. When we worship the Creator let us increase our trust in our Comforter. Did he create all that we see, and can he not preserve us from evils which we cannot see? Blessed be his name, he that has fashioned us will watch over us; yea, he has done so, and rendered us help in the moment of jeopardy. He is our help and our shield, even he alone. He will to the end break every snare. He made heaven for us, and he will keep us for heaven; he made the earth, and he will succour us upon it until the hour cometh for our departure. Every work of his hand preaches to us the duty and the delight of reposing upon him only. All nature cries, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The following versification of the sense rather than the words of this Psalm is presented to the reader with much diffidence:—

Had not the Lord, my soul may cry,
Had not the Lord been on my side;
Had he not brought deliverance nigh,
Then must my helpless soul have died.

Had not the Lord been on my side,
My soul had been by Satan slain;
And Tophet, opening large and wide,
Would not have gaped for me in vain.

Lo, floods of wrath, and floods of hell,
In fierce impetuous torrents roll;
Had not the Lord defended well,
The waters had o'erwhelm'd my soul.

As when the fowler's snare is broke,
The bird escapes on cheerful wings;
My soul, set free from Satan's yoke,
With joy bursts forth, and mounts, and sings.

She sings the Lord her Saviour's praise;
Sings forth his praise with joy and mirth;
To him her song in heaven she'll raise,
To him that made both heaven and earth

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The title informs us that this sacred march was composed by king David; and we learn very clearly from the subject, that the progression referred to was the triumphant return of the king and his loyal army to Jerusalem, upon the overthrow of the dangerous rebellion to which the great mass of the people had been excited by Absalom and his powerful band of confederates.—*John Mason Good.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is ascribed to David. No reference is made to any specific danger and deliverance. There is a delightful universality in the language which suits it admirably for an anthem of the redeemed, in every age and in every clime. The people of God still live in a hostile territory. Traitors are in the camp, and there are numerous foes without. And the church would soon be exterminated, if the malice and might of her adversaries were not restrained and defeated by a higher power. Hence this ode of praise has never become obsolete. How frequently have its strains of adoring gratitude floated on the breeze! What land is there, in which its outbursting gladness has not been heard! It has been sung upon the banks of the Jordan and the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris. It has been sung upon the banks of the Tiber and the Rhine, the Thames and the Forth. It has been sung upon the banks of the Ganges and the Indus, the Mississippi and the Irrawady. And we anticipate a period when the church, surmounting all her difficulties, and victory waving over her banners, shall sing this Psalm of praise in every island and continent of our globe. The year of God's redeemed must come. The salvation of Christ shall extend to the utmost extremities of earth. And when this final emancipation takes place, the nations will shout for joy, and praise their Deliverer in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.—*N. McMichael.*

Whole Psalm.—In the year 1582, this Psalm was sung on a remarkable occasion in Edinburgh. An imprisoned minister, John Durie, had been set free, and was met and welcomed on entering the town by two hundred of his friends. The number increased till he found himself in the midst of a company of two thousand, who began to sing, as they moved up the long High Street, "*Now Israel may say,*" etc. They sang in four parts with deep solemnity, all joining in the well-known tune and Psalm. They were much moved themselves, and so were all who heard; and one of the chief persecutors is said to have been more alarmed at this sight and song than at anything he had seen in Scotland.—*Andrew A. Bonar, in "Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms,"* 1859.

Verse 1. "*The* LORD . . . *on our side.*" Jehovah is on the side of his people in a spiritual sense, or otherwise it would be bad for them. God the Father is on their side; his love and relation to them engage him to be so; hence all those good things that are provided for them and bestowed on them; nor will he suffer any to do them hurt, they being as dear to him as the apple of his eye; hence he grants them his gracious presence, supports them under all their trials and exercises, supplies all their wants, and keeps them by his power, and preserves them from all their enemies; so that they have nothing to fear from any quarter. Christ is on their

side; he is the Surety for them, the Saviour of them; has taken their part against all their spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, the world, and death; has engaged with them and conquered them; he is the Captain of their salvation, their King at the head of them, that protects and defends them here, and is their friend in the court of heaven; their Advocate and interceding High-priest there, who pleads their cause against Satan, and obtains every blessing for them. The Spirit of Jehovah is on their side, to carry on his work in them; to assist them in their prayers and supplications; to secure them from Satan's temptations; to set up a standard for them when the enemy comes in like a flood upon them; and to comfort them in all their castings down; and to work them up for, and bring them safe to heaven: but were this not the case, what would become of them?—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*Israel.*" The "*Israel*" spoken of in this Psalm may be Israel in the house of Laban, in whose person the Midrash Tehillim imagines the Psalm to be said. There are certainly some of its phrases which acquire an appropriate meaning from being interpreted in this connection.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Verses 1—4.—Such abrupt and unfinished expressions in the beginning of the Psalm indicate the great joy and exultation that will not suffer the speaker to finish his sentences.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verses 1, 2.—The somewhat paraphrastic rendering of these verses (with the unnecessary interpolation of the words in italics in the Authorised Version) greatly weaken their force and obscure their meaning. There is far more meant and expressed than simply that God gave the Israelites the victory over their enemies. The Psalm is typico-prophetic. It sets forth the condition of the church in this world, surrounded by enemies, implacable in their hatred, maddened by rage, and bent on her destruction. It gives assurance of her preservation, and continuous triumph, because Jehovah is her God. It foretells the future, full, and final destruction of all her enemies. It re-echoes the song sung on the shores of the Red Sea. In it are heard the notes of the New Song before the great white throne. The praise and thanksgiving are to יְהוָה, the revealed אֱלֹהִים, whose "*eternal power and Godhead are understood by the things that are made:*"—*to* יְהוָה, the revealed אֵל שַׁדַּי, whom the fathers knew as the Almighty, from the great things which he did for them:—to יְהוָה, the God who has made a covenant with his people, the Redeemer. It is יִשְׂרָאֵל, the chosen people of God, the holy nation, the peculiar treasure to him above all peoples, and thus become as the Rabbins say, "*Odium generis humani,*" against whom אָדָם (not *men*, but *man* collectively) rose up, and sought to destroy. It is יִשְׂרָאֵל, God's chosen, the people of the covenant, that with the "full delight of a personal 'my,'" joys in God and sings, "*But that Jehovah* was לָנוּ, ours!" Tame and frigid is the rendering—"*was on our side.*" Jehovah was theirs: *that*, their safety: *that*, their blessedness: *that*, their joy.—*Edward Thomas Gibson*, 1818—1880.

Verses 1, 2.—1. God was on our side; he took our part, espoused our cause and appeared for us. He was our helper, and a very present help, a help on our side, nigh at hand. He was with us; not only for us, but among us, and commander-in-chief of our forces. 2. That God was Jehovah; there the emphasis lies. "If it had not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, that had undertaken our deliverance, our enemies would have overpowered us. Happy the people therefore whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient. Let Israel say this to his honour, and resolve never to forsake him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 1, 2, 8.—These three things will I bear on my heart, O Lord: "The Lord *was* on our side," this for the *past;* "The snare is broken," for the *present;* "Our help is in the name of the Lord," this for the *future.* I will not and I cannot be fainthearted, whether in my contest with Satan, in my intercourse with the world, or in the upheavings of my wicked heart, so long as I hold this "threefold cord" in my hand, or rather, am held by it.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 2.—"*If it had not been the* LORD," etc. This repetition is not in vain. For whilst we are in danger, our fear is without measure; but when it is once past, we imagine it to have been less than it was indeed. And this is the delusion of Satan, to diminish and obscure the grace of God. David therefore with this repetition stirreth up the people to more thankfulness unto God for his gracious deliverance, and amplifieth the dangers which they had passed. Whereby we are taught how to think of our troubles and afflictions past, lest the sense and feeling of God's grace vanish out of our minds.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—"*Men rose up against us.*" It may seem strange that these wicked

and wretched enemies, monsters rather than men, should be thus moderately spoken of, and have no other name than this of *men* given them, which of all others they least deserved, as having in them nothing of man but outward show and shape, being rather beasts, yea, devils in the form and fashion of men, than right men. But hereby the church would show that she did leave the further censuring of them unto God their righteous Judge; and would also further amplify their wickedness, who being men, did yet in their desires and dispositions bewray a more than beastly immanity and inhumanity.—*Daniel Dyke* (—1614 ?) *in "Comfortable Sermons upon the cxxiiii. Psalme,"* 1617.

Verse 3.—*"Then they had swallowed us up quick."* The metaphor may be taken from famished wild beasts attacking and devouring men (comp. v. 5); or the reference may be to the case of a man shut up alive in a sepulchre (Prov. i. 12) and left there to perish, or (Numb. xvi. 30) swallowed up by an earthquake.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 3.—*"Then they had swallowed us up."* The word implieth eating with insatiable appetite; every man that eateth must also swallow; but a glutton is rather a swallower than an eater. He throws his meat whole down his throat, and eats (as we may say) without chewing. The rod of Moses, turned into a serpent, "swallowed up" the rods of the Egyptian sorcerers. The word is often applied to express oppression (Ps. xxxv. 25): "Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up": that is, we have made clear riddance of him; he is now a gone man for ever. The ravenous rage of the adversary is described in this language.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—*"Quick."* Not an adverb, *"quickly,"* but an adjective, *alive.* As greedy monsters, both of the land and of the deep, sometimes swallow their food before the life is out of it, so would the enemies of the Church have destroyed her as in a moment, but for divine interposition.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—Objection. But what may the reason thereof be? May a man say, thus the godly shall always prevail and be never overthrown by their enemies, but overcome them rather? Experience doth teach us that they are fewer in number than the wicked are, that they are weaker for power and strength, that they are more simple for wit and policy, and that they are more careless for diligence and watchfulness than their adversaries be: how, then, comes it to pass that they have the upper hand?

Answer. The Prophet Esay doth declare it unto us in the 8th chapter of his prophecy, and the 10th verse thereof, it is in few words "because the Lord is with them and for them."

For, first, he is stronger than all, being able to resist all power that is devised against him and his, and to do whatsoever he will both in heaven and in earth.

2. He is wiser than all, knowing how to prevent them in all their ways, and also how to bring matters to pass for the good of his people.

3. He is diligenter than all, to stand, as it were, upon the watch, and to take his advantage when it is offered him, for "He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep."

4. Lastly, he is happier than all to have good success in all his enterprizes, for he doth prosper still in all things which he doth take in hand and none can resist a thought of his; yea, the very "word which goeth out of his mouth doth accomplish that which he wills, and prosper in the thing whereunto he doth send it." In war, all these four things are respected in a captain that will still overcome: first, that he be strong; secondly, that he be wise; thirdly, that he be diligent; and, lastly, that he be fortunate; for the victory goeth not always with the strong, nor always with the wise, nor always with the diligent, nor always with the fortunate; but sometimes with the one of them, and sometimes with the other: but look, where all four do concur together there is always the victory, and therefore seeing all of them are in God, it is no marvel though those whose battles he doth fight, do always overcome and get the victory.—*Thomas Stint,* 1621.

Verses 4, 5.—A familiar, but exceedingly apt and most significant figure. Horrible is the sight of a raging conflagration; but far more destructive is a river overflowing its banks and rushing violently on: for it is not possible to restrain it by any strength or power. As, then, he says, a river is carried along with great impetuosity, and carries away and destroys whatever it meets with in its course;

thus also is the rage of the enemies of the church, not to be withstood by human strength. Hence, we should learn to avail ourselves of the protection and help of God. For what else is the church but a little boat fastened to the bank, which is carried away by the force of the waters? or a shrub growing on the bank, which without effort the flood roots up? Such was the people of Israel in the days of David compared with the surrounding nations. Such in the present day is the church compared with her enemies. Such is each one of us compared with the power of the malignant spirit. We are as a little shrub, of recent growth and having no firm hold: but he is like the Elbe, overflowing, and with great force overthrowing all things far and wide. We are like a withered leaf, lightly holding to the tree; he is like the north wind, with great force rooting up and throwing down the trees. How, then, can we withstand or defend ourselves by our own power?—*Martin Luther.*

Verses 4, 5.—First the *"waters"*; then *"the stream"* or *torrent;* then *"the proud waters,"* lifting up their heads on high. First the waters overwhelm us; then the torrent goes over our soul; and then the proud waters go over our soul. What power can resist the rapid floods of waters, when they overspread their boundaries, and rush over a country? Onward they sweep with resistless force, and men and cattle, and crops and houses, are destroyed. Let the impetuous waters break loose, and, in a few minutes, the scene of life, and industry, and happiness, is made a scene of desolation and woe. Perhaps, there is an allusion here to the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. The floods fell upon them, the depths covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Had God not stretched forth his hand to rescue the Israelites, their enemies would have overwhelmed them. Happy they who, in seasons of danger, have Jehovah for a hiding-place.—*N. McMichael.*

Verse 5.—*"Then the proud waters had gone over our soul."* The same again, to note the greatness both of the danger and of the deliverance. And it may teach us not lightly to pass over God's great blessings, but to make the most of them.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—

" When winds and seas do rage,
And threaten to undo me,
Thou dost their wrath assuage,
If I but call unto thee.

A mighty storm last night
Did seek my soul to swallow
But by the peep of light
A gentle calm did follow.

What need I then despair
Though ills stand round about me;
Since mischiefs neither dare
To bark or bite without thee?"

Robert Herrick, 1591—1674.

Verses 6, 7.—Two figures are again employed, in order to show how imminent was the destruction, had there been no divine interposition. The first is that of a savage beast, which was formerly used. But an addition is made, to describe the urgency of the danger. The wild beast was not only lying in wait for them; he was not merely ready to spring upon his prey, he had already leaped upon it: he had actually seized it: it was even now between his teeth. What a graphic description! A moment's delay, and all help would have been in vain. But Jehovah appears on the ground. He goes up to the ferocious beast, and takes out the trembling prey from between his bloody jaws. The danger is imminent; but nothing is too hard for the Lord. " My soul is among lions." " What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." " He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up." The second figure is that of a fowler. The fowler has prepared his snare in a skilful manner. The bird enters it, unconscious of danger: the net is thrown over it; and in an instant its liberty is lost. There it lies, the poor bird, its little heart throbbing wildly, and its little wings beating vainly against the net. It is completely at the mercy of the fowler,

and escape is impossible. But again the Lord appears, and his presence is safety. He goes up to the net, lifts it from the ground; the bird flies out, lights on a neighbouring tree, and sings among the branches. "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler." God rescues his people from the craft and subtlety of their enemies, as he does from their open violence.—*N. McMichael.*

Verses 6, 7.—We were delivered, 1. Like a *lamb* out of the very jaws of a beast of prey: God *"hath not given us as a prey to their teeth";* intimating that they had no power against God's people, but what was given them from above. They could not be a prey to their teeth unless God gave them up, and therefore they were rescued, because God would not suffer them to be ruined. 2. Like *"a bird,"* a *little* bird, the word signifies a sparrow, *"out of the snare of the fowler."* The enemies are very subtle and spiteful, they lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed so far as to gain their point, the children of God are taken in the snare, and are as unable to help themselves out as any weak and silly bird is; and then is God's time to appear for their relief; when all other friends fail, then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness: *"The snare is broken, and so we are delivered."—Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—*"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers,"* etc. Various snares are placed for birds, by traps, bird-lime, guns, etc.: who can enumerate all the dangers of the godly, threatening them from Satan, and from the world? Psalm xci. 3: Hosea v. 1.—*"We are delivered,"* not by our own skill or cunning, but by the grace and power of God only: so that every device is made vain, and freedom is preserved.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 7.—*"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers,"* etc. I am quite sure that there is not a day of our lives in which Satan does not lay some snare for our souls, the more perilous because unseen; and if seen, because perhaps unheeded and despised. And of this, too, I am equally sure, that if any one brings home with him at night a conscience void of offence towards God and man, it is in no might nor strength of his own, and that if the Lord had not been his guide and preserver he would have been given over, nay, he would have given himself over, as a prey to the devourer's teeth. I believe there are few even of God's saints who have not had occasion, in some season of sore temptation, when Satan has let loose all his malice and might, and poured in suggestion upon suggestion and trial upon trial, as he did on Job, and they have been ready to faint, if not to fall by the way—then, perhaps, in a moment when they looked not for it, Satan has departed, foiled and discomfited, and with his prey snatched out of his hands, and they, too, have had gratefully to own, *"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped."* Yes! depend upon it, our best and only hope *"is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."—Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 7.—*"Our soul is escaped as a bird."* The snare of the fowler was the lime-twigs of this world; our soul was caught in them by the feathers, our affections: now, indeed, we are escaped; but the Lord delivered us.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 7.—*"As a bird out of the snare of the fowlers."* The soul is surrounded by many dangers. 1. *It is ensnared by worldliness.* One of the most gigantic dangers against which God's people have specially to guard—an enemy to all spirituality of thought and feeling. 2. *It is ensnared by selfishness*—a foe to all simple-hearted charity, to all expansive generosity and Christian philanthropy. 3. *It is ensnared by unbelief*—the enemy of prayer, of ingenuous confidence, of all personal Christian effort. These are not imaginary dangers. We meet them in everyday life. They threaten us at every point, and often have we to lament over the havoc they make in our hearts.—*George Barlow, in a "Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Psalms,"* 1879.

Verse 7.—*"The snare is broken."* It is as easy for God to deliver his people out of their enemies' hands, even when they have the godly in their power, as to break a net made of thread or yarn, wherewith birds are taken.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—*"The snare is broken, and we are escaped."* Our life lieth open always to the snares of Satan, and we as silly birds are like at every moment to be carried away, notwithstanding the Lord maketh a way for us to escape; yea, when Satan seemeth to be most sure of us, by the mighty power of God the snares are broken and we are delivered. Experience we have hereof in those who are inwardly

afflicted and with heaviness of spirit grievously oppressed, that when they seem to be in utter despair, and ready now, as you would say, to perish, yet even at the last pinch, and in the uttermost extremity cometh the sweet comfort of God's Holy Spirit and raiseth them up again. When we are most ready to perish, then is God most ready to help. "Except the Lord had holpen me," saith David, "my soul had almost dwelt in silence." And this again do we mark for the comfort of the weak conscience. It is Satan's subtlety whereby commonly he disquiets many, that because carnal corruption is in them he would therefore bear them in hand that they are none of Christ's. In this he plays the deceiver; he tries us by the wrong rule of perfect sanctification; this is the square that ought to be laid to Christ's members triumphant in heaven, and not to those who are militant on earth. Sin remaining in me will not prove that therefore I am not in Christ, otherwise Christ should have no members upon earth; but grace working that new disposition which nature could never effect proves undoubtedly that we are in Christ Jesus.—*Thomas Stint.*

Verse 8.—"*Our help is in the name of the* LORD, *who made heaven and earth.*" He hath made *the earth* where the snare lies, so that he can rightfully destroy the snare as laid unlawfully in his domain; he hath made the *heaven*, the true sphere of the soaring wings of those souls which he has delivered, so that they may fly upwards from their late prison, rejoicing. He came down to earth himself, the Lord Jesus in whose name is our help, that he might break the snare; he returned to heaven, that we might fly "as the doves to their windows" (Isa. lx. 8), following where he showed the way.—*Richard Rolle, of Hampole* (1340), *in "Neale and Littledale."*

Verse 8.—"*Our help is in the name of the* LORD." The fairest fruits of our by-past experience is to glorify God by confidence in him for time to come, as here.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 8.—"*The* LORD *who made heaven and earth.*" As if the Pslamist had said, As long as I see heaven and earth I will never distrust. I hope in that God which made all these things out of nothing; and therefore as long as I see those two great standing monuments of his power before me, heaven and earth, I will never be discouraged. So the apostle: 1 Peter iv. 19, "Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." O Christian! remember when you trust God you trust an almighty Creator, who is able to help, let your case be never so desperate. God could create when he had nothing to work *upon*, which made one wonder; and he could create when he had nothing to work *with*, which is another wonder. What is become of the tools wherewith he made the world? Where is the trowel wherewith he arched the heaven? and the spade wherewith he digged the sea? What had God to work upon, or work withal when he made the world? He made it out of nothing. Now you commit your souls to the same faithful Creator.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 8.—The Romans in a great distress were put so hard to it, that they were fain to take the weapons out of the temples of their gods to fight with them; and so they overcame. And this ought to be the course of every good Christian, in times of public distress, to fly to the weapons of the church, prayers and tears. The Spartans' walls were their spears, the Christians' walls are his prayers. His help standeth in the name of the Lord who hath made both heaven and earth.—*Edmund Calamy.*

Verse 8.—The French Protestants always begin their public worship with the last verse of this Psalm, and there is no thought more encouraging and comfortable. —*Job Orton*, 1717—1783.

Verse 8.—"*Our help is in the name of the* LORD," etc. These are the words of a triumphing and victorious faith, "*Our help standeth in the name of the* LORD, *which made heaven and earth*": as if he said, the Maker of heaven and earth is my God and my helper. Ye see whither he flieth in his great distress. He despaireth not, but crieth unto the Lord, as one yet hoping assuredly to find relief and comfort. Rest thou also in this hope, and do as he did. David was not tempted to the end he should despair; think not thou, therefore, that thy temptations are sent unto thee that thou shouldest be swallowed up with sorrow and desperation: if thou be brought down to the very gates of hell, believe that the Lord will surely raise thee up again. If so thou be bruised and broken, know it is the Lord that will help thee again. If thy heart be full of sorrow and heaviness, look for comfort from

him, who said, that a troubled spirit is a sacrifice unto him: (Ps. li. 17.) Thus he setteth the eternal God, the Maker of heaven and earth, against all troubles and dangers, against the floods and overflowings of all temptations, and swalloweth up, as it were, with one breath all the raging furies of the whole world, and of hell itself, even as a little drop of water is swallowed up by a mighty flaming fire: and what is the world with all its force and power, in respect of him that made heaven and earth!—*Thomas Stint.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *who was on our side.*" Who is he? Why on our side? How does he prove it? What are we bound to do?

Verses 1—3.—Regard the text, I. From the life of Jacob or Israel. II. From the history of the nation. III. From the annals of the church. IV. From our personal biography.

Verses 1—5.—I. What might have been. II. Why it has not been.

Verses 1—5.—I. What the people of God would have been if the Lord had not been on our side. 1. What if left to their enemies? verses 2, 3. Israel left to Pharaoh and his host in the time of Moses: left to the Canaanites in the time of Joshua: to the Midianites in the time of Gideon: Judah to the Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah: "Then they had swallowed us up," etc. 2. What if left to themselves? "The stream had gone over our soul": verses 4, 5. II. What the people of God are with the Lord on their side. 1. All the designs of their enemies against them are frustrated. 2. Their inward sorrow is turned into joy. 3. Both their inward and their outward troubles work together for their good.—*G. R.*

Verses 2, 3.—I. To swallow us alive—the desire of our wrathful enemies. II. To save us alive—the work of our faithful God.

Verses 4, 5.—Perils of waters: a number of thoughts may be worked out from the likeness between afflictions and torrents.

Verse 6.—I. The Lamb. II. The Lion. III. The Lord.

Verse 6.—I. They would gladly devour us. II. They cannot devour unless the Lord will. III. God is to be praised since he does not permit them to injure us.

Verse 6.—I. The ill-will of men against the righteous. 1. For their spoliation. 2. For their destruction: "As a prey to their teeth." II. The goodwill of God. "Blessed be the Lord," etc. 1. What it supposes—that good men, in a measure and for a time, may be given into the hands of the wicked. 2. What it affirms—that they are not given entirely into their hands—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—I. The soul ensnared. 1. By whom? Wicked men are fowlers. By Satan.

> "Satan, the fowler, who betrays
> Unguarded souls a thousand ways."

2. How? By temptations—to pride, worldliness, drunkenness, error, or lust, according to the tastes and habits of the individual. II. The soul escaped: "Our soul is escaped," etc. "The snare is broken," not by ourselves, but by the hand of God.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—I. A bird. II. A snare. III. A capture. IV. An escape.

Verse 8.—Our Creator, our Helper. Special comfort to be drawn from creation in this matter.

Verse 8.—I. The Helper: "The LORD, who made heaven and earth," who in his works has given ample proofs of what he can do. II. The helped. "Our help" is, 1. Promised in his name. 2. Sought in his name: these make it ours. —*G. R.*

Verse 8.—I. We have help. As troubled sinners, as dull scholars, as trembling professors, as inexperienced travellers, as feeble workers. II. We have help in God's name. In his perfections—"They shall put my name upon the children of Israel." In his gospel—"A chosen vessel to bear my name." In his authority —"In the name of Jesus Christ rise up," etc. III. Therefore we exert ourselves. —*W. J.*

PSALM CXXV.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees. *Another step is taken in the ascent, another station in the pilgrimage is reached: certainly a rise in the sense is here perceptible, since full assurance concerning years to come is a higher form of faith than the ascription of former escapes to the Lord. Faith has praised Jehovah for past deliverances, and here she rises to a confident joy in the present and future safety of believers. She asserts that they shall for ever be secure who trust themselves with the Lord. We can magine the pilgrims chanting this song when perambulating the city walls.*

We do not assert that David wrote this Psalm, but we have as much ground for doing so as others have for declaring that it was written after the captivity. It would seem probable that all the Pilgrim Psalms were composed, or, at least, compiled by the same writer, and as some of them are certainly by David, there is no conclusive reason for taking away the rest from him.

DIVISION.—*First we have a* song *of holy confidence* (1, 2); *then* a promise, 3; *followed by* a prayer. 4; *and* a note of warning.

EXPOSITION.

THEY that trust in the LORD *shall be* as mount Zion, *which* cannot be removed, *but* abideth for ever.

2 *As* the mountains *are* round about Jerusalem, so the LORD *is* round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

3 For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

4 Do good, O LORD, unto *those that be* good, and to *them that are* upright in their hearts.

5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: *but* peace *shall be* upon Israel.

1. "*They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion.*" The emphasis lies upon the object of their trust, namely, Jehovah the Lord. What a privilege to be allowed to repose in God! How condescending is Jehovah to become the confidence of his people! To trust elsewhere is vanity; and the more implicit such misplaced trust becomes the more bitter will be the ensuing disappointment; but to trust in the living God is sanctified common sense which needs no excuse, its result shall be its best vindication. There is no conceivable reason why we should not trust in Jehovah, and there is every possible argument for so doing; but, apart from all argument, the end will prove the wisdom of the confidence. The result of faith is not occasional and accidental; its blessing comes, not to some who trust, but to all who trust in the Lord. Trusters in Jehovah shall be as fixed, firm, and stable as the mount where David dwelt, and where the ark abode. To move mount Zion was impossible: the mere supposition was absurd. "*Which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.*" Zion was the image of eternal steadfastness,—this hill which, according to the Hebrew, "sits to eternity," neither bowing down nor moving to and fro. Thus doth the trusting worshipper of Jehovah enjoy a restfulness which is the mirror of tranquillity; and this not without cause, for his hope is sure, and of his confidence he can never be ashamed. As the Lord sitteth King for ever, so do his people sit enthroned in perfect peace when their trust in him is firm. This is, and is to be our portion; we are, we have been, we shall be as steadfast as the hill of God. Zion cannot be removed, and does not remove; so the people of God can neither be moved passively nor actively, by force from without or fickleness from within. Faith in God is a settling and establishing virtue; he who by his strength setteth fast the mountains, by that same power stays the hearts of them that trust in him. This steadfastness will endure "for ever," and we may be assured

therefore that no believer shall perish either in life or in death, in time or in eternity. We trust in an eternal God, and our safety shall be eternal.

2. *"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the* LORD *is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."* The hill of Zion is the type of the believer's constancy, and the surrounding mountains are made emblems of the all-surrounding presence of the Lord. The mountains around the holy city, though they do not make a circular wall, are, nevertheless, set like sentinels to guard her gates. God doth not enclose his people within ramparts and bulwarks, making their city to be a prison; but yet he so orders the arrangements of his providence that his saints are as safe as if they dwelt behind the strongest fortifications. What a double security the two verses set before us! First, we are established, and then entrenched: settled, and then sentinelled: made like a mount, and then protected as if by mountains. This is no matter of poetry, it is so in fact; and it is no matter of temporary privilege, but it shall be so for ever. Date when we please, "from henceforth" Jehovah encircles his people: look on us as far as we please, the protection extends "even for ever." Note, it is not said that Jehovah's power or wisdom defends believers, but he himself is round about them: they have his personality for their protection, his Godhead for their guard. We are here taught that the Lord's people are those who trust him, for they are thus described in the first verses: the line of faith is the line of grace, those who trust in the Lord are chosen of the Lord. The two verses together prove the eternal safety of the saints: they must abide where God has placed them, and God must for ever protect them from all evil. It would be difficult to imagine greater safety than is here set forth.

3. *"For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous."* The people of God are not to expect immunity from trial because the Lord surrounds them, for they may feel the power and persecution of the ungodly. Isaac, even in Abraham's family, was mocked by Ishmael. Assyria laid its sceptre even upon Zion itself. The graceless often bear rule and wield the rod; and when they do so they are pretty sure to make it fall heavily upon the Lord's believing people, so that the godly cry out by reason of their oppressors. Egypt's rod was exceeding heavy upon Israel, but the time came for it to be broken. God has set a limit to the woes of his chosen: the rod may light on their portion, but it shall not *rest* upon it. The righteous have a lot which none can take from them, for God has appointed them heirs of it by gracious entail: on that lot the rod of the wicked may fall, but over that lot it cannot have lasting sway. The saints abide for ever, but their troubles will not. Here is a good argument in prayer for all righteous ones who are in the hands of the wicked.

"Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity." The tendency of oppression is to drive the best of men into some hasty deed for self-deliverance or vengeance. If the rack be too long used the patient sufferer may at last give way; and therefore the Lord puts a limit to the tyranny of the wicked. He ordained that an Israelite who deserved punishment should not be beaten without measure: forty stripes save one was the appointed limit. We may therefore expect that he will set a bound to the suffering of the innocent, and will not allow them to be pushed to the uttermost extreme. Especially in point of time he will limit the domination of the persecutor, for length adds strength to oppression, and makes it intolerable: hence the Lord himself said of a certain tribulation, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

It seems that even righteous men are in peril of sinning in evil days, and that it is not the will of the Lord that they should yield to the stress of the times in order to escape from suffering. The power and influence of wicked men when they are uppermost are used to lead or drive the righteous astray; but the godly must not accept this as an excuse, and yield to the evil pressure; far rather must they resist with all their might till it shall please God to stay the violence of the persecutor, and give his children rest. This the Lord here promises to do in due time.

4. *"Do good, O* LORD, *unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts."* Men to be good at all must be good at heart. Those who trust in the Lord are good; for faith is the root of righteousness, and the evidence of uprightness. Faith in God is a good and upright thing, and its influence makes the rest of the man good and upright. To such God will do good: the prayer of the text is but another form of promise, for that which the Lord prompts us to ask he virtually promises to give. Jehovah will take off evil from his people, and in the place thereof

will enrich them with all manner of good. When the rod of the wicked is gone his own rod and staff shall comfort us. Meanwhile it is for us to pray that it may be well with all the upright who are now among men. God bless them, and do them good in every possible form. We wish well to those who do well. We are so plagued by the crooked that we would pour benedictions upon the upright.

5. *"As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the* LORD *shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."* Two kinds of men are always to be found, the upright and the men of crooked ways. Alas, there are some who pass from one class to another, not by a happy conversion, turning from the twisting lanes of deceit into the highway of truth, but by an unhappy declension leaving the main road of honesty and holiness for the bypaths of wickedness. Such apostates have been seen in all ages, and David knew enough of them; he could never forget Saul, and Ahithophel, and others. How sad that men who once walked in the right way should turn aside from it! Observe the course of the falsehearted: first, they look out for crooked ways; next, they choose them and make them *"their* crooked ways"; and then they turn aside into them. They never intend to go back unto perdition, but only to make a curve and drop into the right road again. The straight way becomes a little difficult, and so they make a circumbendibus, which all along aims at coming out right, though it may a little deviate from precision. These people are neither upright in heart, nor good, nor trusters in Jehovah, and therefore the Lord will deal otherwise with them than with his own people: when execution day comes these hypocrites and time-servers shall be led out to the same gallows as the openly wicked. All sin will one day be expelled the universe, even as criminals condemned to die are led out of the city; then shall secret traitors find themselves ejected with open rebels. Divine truth will unveil their hidden pursuits, and lead them forth, and to the surprise of many they shall be set in the same rank with those who avowedly wrought iniquity.

"But peace shall be upon Israel." In fact the execution of the deceivers shall tend to give the true Israel peace. When God is smiting the unfaithful not a blow shall fall upon the faithful. The chosen of the Lord shall not only be like Salem, but they shall have salem, or peace. Like a prince, Israel has prevailed with God, and therefore he need not fear the face of man; his wrestlings are over, the blessing of peace has been pronounced upon him. He who has peace with God may enjoy peace concerning all things. Bind the first and last verses together: Israel trusts in the Lord (verse 1), and Israel has peace (verse 5).

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—In the degrees of Christian virtue, this Psalm represents the sixth step—the confidence which the Christian places in the Lord. "It teacheth us, while we ascend and raise our minds unto the Lord our God in loving charity and piety, not to fix our gaze upon men who are prosperous in the world with a false happiness."*—*H. T. Armfield, in "The Gradual Psalms,"* 1874.

Whole Psalm.—This short Psalm may be summed up in those words of the prophet (Isaiah iii. 10, 11), "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him." Thus are life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us often in the Psalms, as well as in the law and in the prophets.—*Matthew Henry,* 1662—1714.

Verse 1.—*"They that trust in the* LORD." Note how he commandeth no work here to be done, but only speaketh of trust. In popery in the time of trouble men were taught to enter into some kind of religion, to fast, to go on pilgrimage, and to do such other foolish works of devotion, which they devised as an high service unto God, and thereby thought to make condign satisfaction for sin and to merit eternal life. But here the Psalmist leadeth us the plain way unto God, pronouncing this to be the chiefest anchor of our salvation,—only to hope and trust in the Lord;

* Augustine

and declaring that the greatest service that we can do unto God is to trust him. For this is the nature of God—to create all things of nothing. Therefore he createth and bringeth forth in death, life; in darkness, light. Now to believe this is the essential nature and most special property of faith. When God then seeth such a one as agreeth with his own nature, that is, which believeth to find in danger help, in poverty riches, in sin righteousness, and that for God's own mercy's sake in Christ alone, him can God neither hate nor forsake.—*Martin Luther* (1483—1546), *in "A Commentary on the Psalms of Degrees."*

Verse 1.—*"They that trust in the* LORD." All that deal with God must deal upon trust, and he will give comfort to those only that give credit to him, and make it appear they do so by quitting other confidences, and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are confined to God, the higher our expectations may be raised.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—*"They that trust,"* etc. Trust, therefore, in the Lord, *always, altogether, and for all things.—Robert Nisbet, in "The Songs of the Temple Pilgrims,"* 1863.

Verse 1.—*"Shall be as mount Zion."* Some persons are like the sand—ever shifting and treacherous. See Matthew vii. 26. Some are like the sea—restless and unsettled. See Isaiah lvii. 20; James i. 6. Some are like the wind—uncertain and inconstant. See Ephesians iv. 14. Believers are like a mountain—strong, stable, and secure. To every soul that trusts him the Lord says, "Thou art Peter."—*W. H. J. Page,* 1883.

Verse 1.—*"As mount Zion,"* etc.—Great is the stability of a believer's felicity.—*John Trapp,* 1601—1669.

Verse 1.—*"Mount Zion, which cannot be removed,"* etc. Lieutenant Conder, reviewing Mr. Maudslay's important exploration, says, "It is especially valuable as showing that, however the masonry may have been destroyed and lost, we may yet hope to find indications of the ancient enceinte *in the rock scarps which are imperishable."* This is very true; for, while man can destroy what man has made, the everlasting hills smile at his rage. Yet who can hear of it without perceiving the force and sublimity of that glorious description of the immobility of believers.

> "They that trust in Jehovah are as mount Zion,
> Which shall not be moved, it abideth for ever."
>
> *James Neil, in "Palestine Explored,"* 1882.

Verse 1.—*"Cannot be removed,"* etc. They can never be removed from the Lord, though they may be removed from his house and ordinances, as sometimes David was; and from his gracious presence, and sensible communion with him; and out of the world by death: yet never from his heart's love, nor out of the covenant of his grace, which is sure and everlasting; nor out of his family, into which they are taken; nor from the Lord Jesus Christ, nor out of his hands and arms, nor from off his heart; nor from off him, as the foundation on which they are laid; nor out of a state of grace, either regeneration or justification; but such abide in the love of God, in the covenant of his grace, in the hands of his Son, in the grace wherein they stand, and in the house of God for evermore.—*John Gill,* 1697—1771.

Verse 1.—*"Abideth for ever."* So surely as *"Mount Zion"* shall never be *"removed,"* so surely shall the church of God be preserved. Is it not strange that wicked and idolatrous powers have not joined together, dug down this mount, and carried it into the sea, that they might nullify a promise in which the people of God exult! Till ye can carry Mount Zion into the Mediterranean Sea, the church of Christ shall grow and prevail. Hear this, ye murderous Mohammedans!—*Adam Clarke,* 1760—1832.

Verse 1.—*"Abideth."* Literally, *sitteth;* as spoken of a mountain, "lieth" or "is situated"; but here with the following *"for ever,"* used in a still stronger sense.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne,* 1868.

Verses 1, 2.—That which is here promised the saints is a perpetual preservation of them in that condition wherein they are; both on the part of God, "he is round about them from henceforth even for ever"; and on their parts, *"they shall not be removed,"*—that is, from the condition of acceptation with God wherein they are supposed to be,—but they shall abide for ever, and continue therein immovable unto the end. This is a plain promise of their continuance in that condition wherein they are, with their safety from thence, and not a promise of some other good thing provided that they continue in that condition. Their being compared to mountains,

and their stability, which consists in their being and continuing so, will admit no other sense. As mount Zion abides in its condition, so shall they; and as the mountains about Jerusalem continue, so doth the Lord continue his presence unto them.

That expression which is used, verse 2, is weighty and full to this purpose, "*The* LORD *is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.*" What can be spoken more fully, more pathetically? Can any expression of men so set forth the safety of the saints? The Lord is round about them, not to save them from this or that incursion, but from all; not from one or two evils, but from every one whereby they are or may be assaulted. He is with them, and round about them on every side that no evil shall come nigh them. It is a most full expression of universal preservation, or of God's keeping his saints in his love and favour, upon all accounts whatsoever; and that not for a season only, but it is "*henceforth*," from his giving this promise unto their souls in particular, and their receiving of it, throughout all generations, "*even for ever.*"—*John Owen*, 1616—1683.

Verse 2.—"*As the mountains are round about Jerusalem.*" This image is not realised, as most persons familiar with our European scenery would wish and expect it to be realised. Jerusalem is not literally shut in by mountains, except on the eastern side, where it may be said to be enclosed by the arms of Olivet, with its outlying ridges on the north-east and south-west. Anyone facing Jerusalem westward, northward, or southward, will always see the city itself on an elevation higher than the hills in its immediate neighbourhood, its towers and walls standing out against the sky, and not against any high back-ground such as that which encloses the mountain towns and villages of our own Cumbrian or Westmoreland valleys. Nor, again, is the plain on which it stands enclosed by a continuous though distant circle of mountains, like that which gives its peculiar charm to Athens and Innspruck. The mountains in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem are of unequal height, and only in two or three instances—Neby-Samwil, Er-Rain, and Tuleil el-Ful—rising to any considerable elevation. Even Olivet is only a hundred and eighty feet above the top of Mount Zion. Still they act as a shelter: they must be surmounted before the traveller can see, or the invader attack, the Holy City; and the distant line of Moab would always seem to rise as a wall against invaders from the remote east. It is these mountains, expressly including those beyond the Jordan, which are mentioned as "standing round about Jerusalem," in another and more terrible sense, when, on the night of the assault of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, they "echoed back" the screams of the inhabitants of the captured city, and the victorious shouts of the soldiers of Titus.*—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley* (1815—1881), *in "Sinai and Palestine."*

Verse 2.—"*As the mountains are round about Jerusalem.*" Jerusalem is situated in the centre of a mountainous region, whose valleys have drawn around it in all directions a perfect net-work of deep ravines, the perpendicular walls of which constitute a very efficient system of defence.—*William M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book,"* 1881.

Verse 2.—"*As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,*" etc. The mountains most emphatically stand "*round about Jerusalem,*" and in doing so must have greatly safeguarded it in ancient times. We are specially told that when Titus besieged the city, he found it impossible to invest it completely until he had built a wall round the entire sides of these mountains, nearly five miles long, with thirteen places at intervals in which he stationed garrisons, which added another mile and a quarter to these vast earthworks. "The whole was completed," says the Jewish historian, "in three days; so that what would naturally have required some months was done in so short an interval as is incredible."† Assaults upon the city, even then, could only be delivered effectively upon its level corner to the north-west, whence every hostile advance was necessarily directed in all its various sieges. To those familiar with these facts, beautifully bold, graphic, and forceful is the Psalmist's figure of the security of the Lord's people—

> "The mountains are round about Jerusalem;
> And Jehovah is round about his people,
> Henceforth, even for evermore."

---

* Josephus. Bell. Jud. vi. 5, 1.
† Josephus. Wars of the Jews. Book v. chap xii. section 2.

These words must have been in Hebrew ears as sublime as they were comforting, and, when sung on the heights of Zion, inspiring in the last degree.—*James Neil.*

Verse 2.—"*The* LORD *is round about his people.*" It is not enough that we are compassed about with fiery walls, that is, with the sure custody, the continual watch and ward of the angels; but the Lord himself is our wall: so that every way we are defended by the Lord against all dangers. Above us is his heaven, on both sides he is as a wall, under us he is as a strong rock whereupon we stand: so are we everywhere sure and safe. Now if Satan through these munitions casts his darts at us, it must needs be that the Lord himself shall be hurt before we take harm. Great is our incredulity if we hear all these things in vain.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—"*From henceforth, even for ever.*" This amplification of the promise, taken from time or duration, should be carefully noted; for it shows that the promises made to the people of Israel pertain generally to the Church in every age, and are not to expire with that polity. Thus it expressly declares, that the Church will continuously endure in this life; which is most sweet consolation for pious minds, especially in great dangers and public calamities, when everything appears to threaten ruin and destruction.—*D. H. Mollerus*, 1639.

Verse 3.—"*The rod of the wicked.*" It is *their* rod, made for them; if God scourge his children a little with it, he doth but borrow it from the immediate and natural use for which it was ordained; their rod, their judgment. So it is called their cup: "This is the portion" and potion "of their cup." Ps. xi. 6.—*Thomas Adams, in "An Exposition of the Second Epistle of Peter,"* 1633.

Verse 3.—"*For the rod of the wicked,*" etc. According to Gussetius, this is to be understood of a measuring rod; laid not on persons, but on lands and estates; and best agrees with the lot, inheritance, and estate of the righteous; and may signify that though wicked men unjustly seize upon and retain the farms, possessions, and estates of good men, as if they were assigned to them by the measuring line; yet they shall not hold them long, or always.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"*For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.*" No tyranny, although it appear firm and stable, is of long continuance: inasmuch as God does not relinquish the sceptre. This is manifest from the example of Pharaoh, of Saul, of Sennacherib, of Herod, and of others. Rightly, therefore, says Athanasius of Julian the Apostate, "That little cloud has quickly passed away." And how quickly beyond all human expectation the foundations of the ungodly are overthrown is fully declared in Psalm xxxvii.—*Solomon Gesner*, 1559—1605.

Verse 3.—"*Shall not rest,*" that is to say, "lie heavy," so as to oppress, as in Isa. xxv. 10, with a further sense of *continuance* of the oppression.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"*Shall not rest,*" etc. The wrath of man, like water turned upon a mill, shall come on them with no more force than shall be sufficient for accomplishing God's gracious purposes on their souls: the rest, however menacing its power may be, shall be made to pass off by an opened sluice. Nevertheless the trouble shall be sufficient to try every man, and to prove the truth and measure of his integrity.—*Charles Simeon* (1759—1836) *in "Horæ Homileticæ."*

Verse 3.—"*The lot of the righteous.*" There is a fourfold lot belonging to the faithful. 1. The lot of the saints is the sufferings of the saints. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution:" 2 Tim. iii. 12. 2. The lot of the saints is also that light and happiness they have in this world. The lot is "fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage:" Ps. xvi. 6. When David sat at the sheepfold, which was his lot, he was thus prepared for the kingdom of Israel which was given him by lot from God. 3. But more specially faith, grace, and sanctification; which give them just right and title to the inheritance of glory. Heaven is theirs now; though not in possession, yet in succession. They have the earnest of it; let them grow up to stature and perfection, and take it. 4. Lastly, they have the lot of heaven. Hell is the lot of the wicked: "Behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us"; Isa. xvii. 14. Therefore it is said of Judas, that he went "to his own place": Acts i. 25. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup": Ps. xi. 6. But the lot of the righteous is faith, and the end of their faith the salvation of their souls. God gives them heaven, not for any foreseen worthiness in the receivers, for no worthiness of our own can make us our father's

heirs ; but for his own mercy and favour in Christ, preparing heaven for us, and us for heaven. So that upon his decree it is allotted to us ; and unless heaven could lose God, we cannot lose heaven.

Here, then, consider how the lottery of Canaan may shadow out to us that blessed land of promise whereof the other was a type.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 3.—"*Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.*" Lest overcome by impatiency, or drawn aside by the world's *allurements* or *affrightments*, they should yield and comply with the desires of the wicked, or seek to help themselves out of trouble by sinister practices. God (saith Chrysostom) acts like a lutanist, who will not let the strings of his lute be too slack, lest it mar the music, nor suffer them to be too hard stretched or screwed up, lest they break.—*John Trapp*, 1601—1669.

Verse 3.—"*Lest the righteous put forth their hands*," etc. The trial is to prove faith, not to endanger it by too sharp a pressure ; *lest*, overcome by this, even the faithful put forth a hand (as in Gen. iii. 22), to forbidden pleasure ; or (as in Exod. xxii. 8), to contamination : through force of custom gradually persuading to sinful compliance, or through despair of good, as the Psalmist (see Ps. xxxvii. and lxxiii.) describes some in his day who witnessed the prosperity of wicked men.—*The Speaker's Commentary*, 1871—1881.

Verse 4.—"*Do good, O* LORD, *unto those that be good.*" The Midrash here calls to mind a Talmudic riddle :—There came a good one (Moses, Ex. ii. 2) and received a good thing (the Tôra, or Law, Prov. iv. 2) from the good One (God, Ps. cxlv. 9) for the good ones (Israel, Ps. cxxv. 4).—*Franz Delitzsch*, 1871.

Verse 4.—"*Do good, O* LORD, *unto those that be good.*" A favourite thought with Nehemiah. See Nehemiah ii. 8, 18 ; v. 19 ; xiii. 14, 31 : " Remember me, O my God, for *good*," the concluding words of his book.—*Christopher Wordsworth*, 1872.

Verse 4.—"*Do good, O* LORD, *unto those that be good.*" They consult their own good best, who do most good. I may say these three things of *those who do good* (and what is serving God but doing of good ? or what is doing good but serving God ?). First, they shall receive true good. Secondly, they shall for ever hold the best good, the chief good ; they shall not only spend their days and years in good ; but when their days and years are spent, they shall have good, and a greater good than any they had, in spending the days and years of this life. They shall have good in death, they shall come to a fuller enjoyment of God, *the chief good*, when they have left and let fall the possession of all earthly goods. Thirdly, they that do good shall find all things working together for their good ; if they have a loss they shall receive good by it ; if they bear a cross, that cross shall bear good to them.—*Joseph Caryl*, 1602—1673.

Verse 4.—"*Do good, O* LORD, *unto those that be good*," etc. Perhaps it may not prove unprofitable to enquire, with some minuteness, who are the persons for whom prayer is presented, and who have an interest in the Divine promises. They are brought before us under different denominations. In the first verse, they are described as trusting in the Lord : in the second verse, they are described as the Lord's people : in the third verse, they are called the righteous : in the fourth verse, they are called good and upright in heart : and in the fifth verse, they are called Israel. Let us collect these terms together, and endeavour to ascertain from them, what is their true condition and character, for whose security the Divine perfections are pledged. And while a rapid sketch is thus drawn, let each breathe the silent prayer, " Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—*N. M'Michael, in "The Pilgrim Psalms,"* 1860.

Verse 4.—" *Do good, O* LORD, *unto those that be good.*" Believers are described as "*good.*" The name is explained by the Spirit as implying the indwelling of the Holy Ghost and of faith. It is proof that no guile is harboured in their hearts. Prayer is made that God would visit them with goodness. This prayer indited by the Spirit amounts to a heavenly promise that they shall receive such honour.—*Henry Law, in "Family Devotion,"* 1878.

Verse 4.—"*Them that be good.*" Oh, brethren, the good in us is God in us. The inwardness makes the outwardness, the godliness the beauty. It is indisputable that it is Christ in us that makes all our Christianity. Oh, Christians who have no Christ in them—such Christians are poor, cheap imitations, and hollow shams—

and Christ will, with infinite impatience, even infinite love, fling them away.—*Charles Stanford, in a Sermon preached before the Baptist Union,* 1876.

Verse 4.—"*Upright in their hearts.*" All true excellence has its seat here. It is not the good action which makes the good man: it is the good man who does the good action. The merit of an action depends entirely upon the motives which have prompted its performance; and, tried by this simple test, how many deeds, which have wrung from the world its admiration and its glory, might well be described in old words, as nothing better than splendid sins. When the heart is wrong, all is wrong. When the heart is right, all is right.—*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 4.—"*Upright.*" Literally, *straight,* straightforward, as opposed to all moral obliquity whatever.—*Joseph Addison Alexander* (1809—1860), *in "The Psalms Translated and Explained."*

Verse 5.—"*Such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.*" This is the anxiety of the pastor in this pilgrim song. The shepherd would keep his sheep from straggling. His distress is that all in Israel are not true Israelites. Two sorts of people, described by the poet, have ever been in the church. The second class, instead of being at the trouble to "withstand in the evil day," will "put forth their hands unto iniquity." Rather than feel, they will follow the rod of the wicked. They will "turn aside unto their crooked ways," sooner than risk temporal and material interests.—*Edward Jewitt Robinson, in "The Caravan and the Temple,"* 1878.

Verse 5.—"*Such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.*" All the ways of sin are called "*crooked ways,*" and they are our own ways. The Psalmist calls them "*their* crooked ways"; that is, the ways of their own devising; whereas the way of holiness is the Lord's way. To exceed or do more; to be deficient or do less, than God requires, both these are "*crooked ways.*" The way of the Lord lies straight forward, right before us. "Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved; but he that is perverse (or *crooked*) in his ways shall fall at once": Prov. xxviii. 18. The motion of a godly man is like that of the kine that carried the ark: "Who took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left": 1 Sam. vi. 12.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*Crooked ways.*" The ways of sinners are "*crooked*"; they shift from one pursuit to another, and turn hither and thither to deceive; they wind about a thousand ways to conceal their base intentions, to accomplish their iniquitous projects, or to escape the punishment of their crimes; yet disappointment, detection, confusion, and misery, are their inevitable portion.—*Thomas Scott,* 1747—1821.

Verse 5.—*The* LORD *shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.*" They walked according to the prince of the air, and they shall go where the prince of the air is. God will bring forth men from their hiding-places. Though they walk among the drove of his children, in procession now, yet if they also walk in by-lanes of sin, God will rank them at the latter day, yea, often in this world, with the workers of iniquity. They walk after workers of iniquity here before God, and God will make manifest that it is so before he hath done with them. The reason, my brethren, why they are to be reckoned among workers of iniquity, and as walkers among them, though they sever themselves from them in respect of external conversation, is, because they agree in the same internal principle of sin. They walk in their lusts: every unregenerate man doth so. Refine him how you will, it is certain he doth in heart pursue "*crooked ways.*"—*Thomas Goodwin,* 1600—1679.

Verse 5.—Sometimes God takes away a barren professor by permitting him to fall into open profaneness. There is one that hath taken up a profession of the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but this profession is only a cloak; he secretly practiseth wickedness; he is a glutton, or a drunkard, or covetous, or unclean. Well, saith God, I will loose the reins of this professor, I will give him up to his vile affections. I will loose the reins of his sins before him, he shall be entangled with his filthy lusts, he shall be overcome of ungodly company. Thus they that turn aside to their own crooked ways, "*the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.*"—*John Bunyan,* 1628—1688.

Verse 5.—"*But peace shall be upon Israel.*" Do you ask, What is the peace upon Israel? I answer:—First, the peace of Israel, that is, of a believing and holy soul, is *from above,* and is higher than all the disturbances of the world; it rests upon him, and makes him calm and peaceful, and lifts him above the world: for upon him rests the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter; who is essential love and uncreated peace. Secondly, the peace of a believing and holy soul is *internal;* for it is sent

down from heaven upon his head, flows into his heart, and dwells there, and stills all agitations of mind. Thirdly, the peace of a believing and holy soul, is also *external.* It is a fountain of Paradise watering all the face of the earth; Gen. ii. 6: you see it in the man's face and life. Fourthly, the peace of a believing and holy soul is *divine:* for chiefly, it maintains peace with God. Fifthly, the peace of a believing and holy soul is *universal:* to wit, with neighbours, with God, with himself: in the body, in the eyes, in the ears, in tasting, smelling, feeling, in all the members, and in all the appetites. This peace is not disturbed by devils, the world, and the flesh, setting forth their honours, riches, pleasures. Sixthly, the peace of a believing and holy soul is peace *eternal* and never interrupted; for it flows from an eternal and exhaustless fountain, even from God himself.—*Condensed from Le Blanc,* 1599—1669.

Verse 5.—"*Israel.*" The Israelites derived their joint names from the two chief parts of religion: Israelites, from Israel, whose prayer was his "strength" (Hosea xii. 3), and Jews, from Judah, whose name means "praise."—*George Seaton Bowes, in "Illustrative Gatherings,"* 1869.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—I. The mark of the covenant: "They that trust." II. The security of the covenant (verses 1, 2). III. The rod of the covenant (verse 3). IV. The tenor of the covenant (verse 4). V. The spirit of the covenant,—"peace."

Verse 1.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1,450: "The Immortality of the Believer."

Verses 1, 2.—I. The believer's singularity: he trusts in Jehovah. II. The believer's stability: "abideth for ever." III. The believer's safety: "As the mountains," etc.

Verse 2.—The all-surrounding presence of Jehovah the glory, safety, and eternal blessedness of his people. Yet this to the wicked would be hell.

Verse 2.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," Nos. 161-2: "The Security of the Church."

Verse 2.—The endurance of mercy: "From henceforth even for ever."

Verse 2.—Saints hemmed-in by infinite love. I. *The City and the Girdle,* or *the symbols separated.* 1. Jerusalem imaging God's people. Anciently chosen; singularly honoured; much beloved; the shrine of Deity. 2. The Mountain Girdle setting forth Jehovah: Strength; All-sidedness; Sentinel through day and night. II. *The City within the Girdle,* or *the symbols related.* 1. Delightful Entanglement. The view from the windows! (Jehovah "round about.") To be lost must *break through God!* Sound sleep and safe labour. 2. Omnipotent Circumvallation, suggesting—God's determination; Satan's dismay. This mountain ring immutable. —*W. B. Haynes.*

Verse 3.—Observe, I. The Permission implied. The rod of the wicked may come upon the lot of the righteous. Why? 1. That wickedness may be free to manifest itself. 2. That the righteous may be made to hate sin. 3. That the righteousness of God's retribution may be seen. 4. That the consolations of the righteous may abound. 2 Cor. i. 5. II. The Permanency denied: "The rod . . . shall *not rest,*" etc. Illustrate by history of Job, Joseph, David, Daniel, Christ, martyrs, etc. III. The Probity tried and preserved: "Lest the righteous put forth," etc., by rebelling, sinful compromise, etc. 1. God will have it tried, to prove its worth, beauty, etc. 2. But no more than sufficiently tried.—*John Field.*

Verses 3, 4.—I. The good defined: "The upright in heart;" such as do not "turn aside," and are not "workers of iniquity." II. The good distressed: by "the rod of the wicked." III. The good delivered: "Do good"; fulfil thy promise (verse 3).—*W. H. J. Page.*

Verse 4.—I. What it is to be good. II. What it is for God to do us good.

Verse 5.—Temporary Professors. I. The crucial test: "They turn aside." II. The crooked policy: they make crooked ways their own. III. The crushing doom: "led forth with workers of iniquity."

Verse 5.—Hypocrites. I. Their ways: "crooked." 1. Like the way of a winding stream, seeking out the fair level, or the easy descent. 2. Like the course of a tacking ship, which skilfully makes every wind to drive her forward. 3. Ways constructed upon no principle but that of pure selfishness. II. Their conduct under trial. They "turn aside." 1. From their religious profession. 2. From their former companions. 3. To become the worst scorners of spiritual things, and the most violent calumniators of spiritually-minded men. III. Their doom: "The Lord shall," etc. 1. In the judgment they shall be classed with the most flagrant sinners; "with the workers of iniquity." 2. They shall be exposed by an irresistible power: "The Lord shall lead them forth." 3. They shall meet with terrible execution with the wicked in hell.—*J. Field.*

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—To whom peace belongs. To "Israel"; the chosen, the once wrestler, the now prevailing prince. Consider Jacob's life after he obtained the name of Israel; note his trials, and his security under them as illustrating this text. Then take the text as a sure promise.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—Enquire, I. Who are the Israel? 1. Covenanted ones. 2. Circumcised in heart. 3. True worshippers. II. What is the peace? 1. Peace of conscience. 2. Of friendship with God. 3. Of a settled and satisfied heart. 4. Of eternal glory, in reversion. III. Why the certainty ("shall be")? 1. Christ has made peace for them. 2. The Holy Spirit brings peace to them. 3. They walk in the way of peace.—*J. Field.*

PSALM CXXVI.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees. *This is the seventh step, and we may therefore expect to meet with some special perfection of joy in it; nor shall we look in vain. We see here not only that Zion abides, but that her joy returns after sorrow. Abiding is not enough, fruitfulness is added. The pilgrims went from blessing to blessing in their Psalmody as they proceeded on their holy way. Happy people to whom every ascent was a song, every halt a hymn. Here the truster becomes a sower: faith works by love, obtains a present bliss, and secures a harvest of delight.*

There is nothing in this Psalm by which we can decide its date, further than this,—that it is a song after a great deliverance from oppression. "Turning captivity" by no means requires an actual removal into banishment to fill out the idea; rescue from any dire affliction or crushing tyranny would be fitly described as "captivity turned." Indeed, the passage is not applicable to captives in Babylon, for it is Zion itself which is in captivity, and not a part of her citizens: the holy city was in sorrow and distress; though it could not be removed, the prosperity could be diminished. Some dark cloud lowered over the beloved capital, and its citizens prayed "Turn again our captivity, O Lord."

This Psalm is in its right place and most fittingly follows its predecessor, for as in Psalm cxxv. we read that the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, we here see it removed from them to their great joy. The word "turn" would seem to be the key-note of the song; it is a Psalm of conversion—conversion from captivity; and it may well be used to set forth the rapture of a pardoned soul when the anger of the Lord is turned away from it. We will call it, "Leading captivity captive."

The Psalm divides itself into a narrative (1, 2), *a song* (3), *a prayer* (4), *and a promise* (5 *and* 6).

EXPOSITION.

WHEN the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.

3 The LORD hath done great things for us; *whereof* we are glad.

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him.*

1. *"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."* Being in trouble, the gracious pilgrims remember for their comfort times of national woe which were succeeded by remarkable deliverances. Then sorrow was gone like a dream, and the joy which followed was so great that it seemed too good to be true, and they feared that it must be the vision of an idle brain. So sudden and so overwhelming was their joy that they felt like men out of themselves, ecstatic, or in a trance. The captivity had been great, and great was the deliverance; for the great God himself had wrought it: it seemed too good to be actually true: each man said to himself,—

> "Is this a dream? O if it be a dream,
> Let me sleep on, and do not wake me yet."

It was not the freedom of an individual which the Lord in mercy had wrought, but of all Zion, of the whole nation; and this was reason enough for overflowing gladness. We need not instance the histories which illustrate this verse in connection with literal Israel; but it is well to remember how often it has been true to ourselves. Let us look to the prison-houses from which we have been set free. Ah, me, what captives we have been! At our first conversion what a turning again of

captivity we experienced. Never shall that hour be forgotten. Joy! Joy! Joy! Since then, from multiplied troubles, from depression of spirit, from miserable backsliding, from grievous doubt, we have been emancipated, and we are not able to describe the bliss which followed each emancipation.

" When God reveal'd his gracious name
And changed our mournful state,
Our rapture seem'd a pleasing dream,
The grace appeared so great."

This verse will have a higher fulfilment in the day of the final overthrow of the powers of darkness when the Lord shall come forth for the salvation and glorification of his redeemed. Then in a fuller sense than even at Pentecost our old men shall see visions, and our young men shall dream dreams: yea, all things shall be so wonderful, so far beyond all expectation, that those who behold them shall ask themselves whether it be not all a dream. The past is ever a sure prognostic of the future; the thing which has been is the thing that shall be: we shall again and again find ourselves amazed at the wonderful goodness of the Lord. Let our hearts gratefully remember the former lovingkindnesses of the Lord: we were sadly low, sorely distressed, and completely past hope, but when Jehovah appeared he did not merely lift us out of despondency, he raised us into wondering happiness. The Lord who alone turns our captivity does nothing by halves: those whom he saves from hell he brings to heaven. He turns exile into ecstasy, and banishment into bliss.

2. *"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."* So full were they of joy that they could not contain themselves. They must express their joy and yet they could not find expression for it. Irrepressible mirth could do no other than laugh, for speech was far too dull a thing for it. The mercy was so unexpected, so amazing, so singular that they could not do less than laugh; and they laughed much, so that their mouths were full of it, and that because their hearts were full too. When at last the tongue could move articulately, it could not be content simply to talk, but it must needs sing; and sing heartily too, for it was full of singing. Doubtless the former pain added to the zest of the pleasure: the captivity threw a brighter colour into the emancipation. The people remembered this joy-flood for years after, and here is the record of it turned into a song. Note the *when* and the *then*. God's *when* is our *then*. At the moment when he turns our captivity, the heart turns from its sorrow; when he fills us with grace we are filled with gratitude. We were made to be as them that dream, but we both laughed and sang in our sleep. We are wide awake now, and though we can scarcely realize the blessing, yet we rejoice in it exceedingly.

"Then said they among the heathen, The LORD *hath done great things for them."* The heathen heard the songs of Israel, and the better sort among them soon guessed the cause of their joy. Jehovah was known to be their God, and to him the other nations ascribed the emancipation of his people, reckoning it to be no small thing which the Lord had thus done; for those who carried away the nations had never in any other instance restored a people to their ancient dwelling-place. These foreigners were no dreamers; though they were only lookers-on, and not partakers in the surprising mercy, they plainly saw what had been done, and rightly ascribed it to the great Giver of all good. It is a blessed thing when saints set sinners talking about the lovingkindness of the Lord: and it is equally blessed when the saints who are hidden away in the world hear of what the Lord has done for his church, and themselves resolve to come out from their captivity and unite with the Lord's people. Ah, dear reader, Jehovah has indeed done marvellous things for his chosen, and these " great things " shall be themes for eternal praise among all intelligent creatures.

3. *"The* LORD *hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."* They did not deny the statement which reflected so much glory upon Jehovah: with exultation they admitted and repeated the statement of Jehovah's notable dealings with them. To themselves they appropriated the joyful assertion; they said " The Lord hath done great things *for us*," and they declared their gladness at the fact. It is a poor modesty which is ashamed to own its joy in the Lord. Call it rather a robbery of God. There is so little of happiness abroad that if we possess a full share of it we ought not to hide our light under a bushel, but let it shine on all that are in the house. Let us avow our joy, and the reason of it, stating the " whereof " as

well as the fact. None are so happy as those who are newly turned and returned from captivity; none can more promptly and satisfactorily give a reason for the gladness that is in them. The Lord himself has blessed us, blessed us greatly, blessed us individually, blessed us assuredly; and because of this we sing unto his name. I heard one say the other day in prayer "whereof we desire to be glad." Strange dilution and defilement of Scriptural language! Surely if God has done great things for us we are glad, and cannot be otherwise. No doubt such language is meant to be lowly, but in truth it is loathsome.

4. "*Turn again our captivity, O* LORD." Remembering the former joy of a past rescue they cry to Jehovah for a repetition of it. When we pray for the turning of our captivity, it is wise to recall former instances thereof: nothing strengthens faith more effectually than the memory of a previous experience. "The Lord hath done" harmonizes well with the prayer, "Turn again." The text shows us how wise it is to resort anew to the Lord who in former times has been so good to us. Where else should we go but to him who has done such great things for us? Who can turn again our captivity but he who turned it before?

"*As the streams in the south.*" Even as the Lord sends floods adown the dry beds of southern torrents after long droughts, so can he fill our wasted and wearied spirits with floods of holy delight. This the Lord can do for any of us, and he can do it at once, for nothing is too hard for the Lord. It is well for us thus to pray, and to bring our suit before him who is able to bless us exceeding abundantly. Do not let us forget the past, but in the presence of our present difficulty let us resort unto the Lord, and beseech him to do that for us which we cannot possibly do for ourselves,—that which no other power can perform on our behalf. Israel did return from the captivity in Babylon, and it was even as though a flood of people hastened to Zion. Suddenly and plenteously the people filled again the temple courts. In streams they shall also in the latter days return to their own land, and replenish it yet again. Like mighty torrents shall the nations flow unto the Lord in the day of his grace. May the Lord hasten it in his own time.

5. "*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*" Hence, present distress must not be viewed as if it would last for ever: it is not the end, by any means, but only a means to the end. Sorrow is our sowing, rejoicing shall be our reaping. If there were no sowing in tears there would be no reaping in joy. If we were never captives we could never lead our captivity captive. Our mouth had never been filled with holy laughter if it had not been first filled with the bitterness of grief. We must sow: we may have to sow in the wet weather of sorrow; but we shall reap, and reap in the bright summer season of joy. Let us keep to the work of this present sowing time, and find strength in the promise which is here so positively given us. Here is one of the Lord's shalls and wills; it is freely given both to workers, waiters, and weepers, and they may rest assured that it will not fail: "in due season they *shall* reap."

This sentence may well pass current in the church as an inspired proverb. It is not every sowing which is thus insured against all danger, and guaranteed a harvest; but the promise specially belongs to sowing *in tears*. When a man's heart is so stirred that he weeps over the sins of others, he is elect to usefulness. Winners of souls are first weepers for souls. As there is no birth without travail, so is there no spiritual harvest without painful tillage. When our own hearts are broken with grief at man's transgression we shall break other men's hearts: tears of earnestness beget tears of repentance: "deep calleth unto deep."

6. "*He.*" The general assurance is applied to each one in particular. That which is spoken in the previous verse in the plural—"they," is here repeated in the singular—"he." "*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*" He leaves his couch to go forth into the frosty air and tread the heavy soil; and as he goes he weeps because of past failures, or because the ground is so sterile, or the weather so unseasonable, or his corn so scarce, and his enemies so plentiful and so eager to rob him of his reward. He drops a seed and a tear, a seed and a tear, and so goes on his way. In his basket he has seed which is precious to him, for he has little of it, and it is his hope for the next year. Each grain leaves his hand with anxious prayer that it may not be lost: he thinks little of himself, but much of his seed, and he eagerly asks, "Will it prosper? shall I receive a reward for my labour?" Yes, good husbandman, *doubtless* you will gather sheaves from your sowing. Because the Lord has written *doubtless*, take heed that you do not doubt. No

reason for doubt can remain after the Lord has spoken. You will return to this field—not to sow, but to reap; not to weep, but to rejoice; and after awhile you will go home again with nimbler step than to-day, though with a heavier load, for you shall have sheaves to bear with you. Your handful shall be so greatly multiplied that many sheaves shall spring from it; and you shall have the pleasure of reaping them and bringing them home to the place from which you went out weeping.

This is a figurative description of that which was literally described in the first three verses. It is the turning of the worker's captivity, when, instead of seed buried beneath black earth, he sees the waving crops inviting him to a golden harvest.

It is somewhat singular to find this promise of fruitfulness in close contact with return from captivity; and yet it is so in our own experience, for when our own soul is revived the souls of others are blessed by our labours. If any of us, having been once lonesome and lingering captives, have now returned home, and have become longing and labouring sowers, may the Lord, who has already delivered us, soon transform us into glad-hearted reapers, and to him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—Augustine interprets the title, "A Song of Degrees, i.e. a Song of drawing upwards," of the drawing (going) up to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is right, inasmuch as the deliverance from the captivity of sin and death should in an increased measure excite those feelings of gratitude which Israel must have felt on being delivered from their corporeal captivity; in this respect again is the history of the outward theocracy a type of the history of the church.—*Augustus F. Tholuck*, 1856.

Whole Psalm.—In its Christian aspect the Psalm represents the seventh of the "degrees" in our ascent to the Jerusalem that is above. The Christian's exultation at his deliverance from the spiritual captivity of sin.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm.—In mine opinion they go near to the sense and true meaning of the Psalm who do refer it to that great and general captivity of mankind under sin, death and the devil, and to the redemption purchased by the death and blood-shedding of Christ, and published in the Gospel. For this kind of speech which the Prophet useth here is of greater importance than that it may be applied only to Jewish particular captivities. For what great matter was it for these people of the Jews, being, as it were, a little handful, to be delivered out of temporal captivity, in comparison of the exceeding and incomparable deliverance whereby mankind was set at liberty from the power of their enemies, not temporal but eternal, even from death, Satan and hell itself? Wherefore we take this Psalm to be a prophecy of the redemption that should come by Jesus Christ, and the publishing of the gospel, whereby the kingdom of Christ is advanced, and death and the devil with all the powers of darkness are vanquished.—*Thomas Stint, in An Exposition on Psalms cxxiv—cxxvi*, 1621.

Whole Psalm.—I believe this Psalm is yet once more to be sung in still more joyous strain; once more will the glad tidings of Israel's restoration break upon her scattered tribes, like the unreal shadow of a dream; once more will the inhabitants of the various lands from among whom they come forth exclaim in adoring wonder, "The Lord hath done great things for them," when they see Israelite after Israelite and Jew after Jew, as on that wondrous night of Egypt, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, hasting to obey the summons that recalls them to their own loved land!—*Barton Bouchier* (1794—1865), *in "Manna in the Heart."*

Whole Psalm.—

When, her sons from bonds redeeming,
God to Zion led the way,
We were like to people dreaming
Thoughts of bliss too bright to stay.

Fill'd with laughter, stood we gazing,
Loud our tongues in rapture sang;
Quickly with the news amazing
All the startled nations rang.

"See Jehovah's works of glory!
Mark what love for them he had!"
"Yes, FOR US! Go tell the story.
This was done, and we are glad."

Lord! thy work of grace completing
All our exiled hosts restore,
As in thirsty channels meeting
Southern streams refreshing pour.

They that now in sorrow weeping
Tears and seed commingled sow,
Soon, the fruitful harvest reaping,
Shall with joyful bosoms glow.

Tho' the sower's heart is breaking,
Bearing forth the seed to shed,
He shall come, the echoes waking,
Laden with his sheaves instead.

William Digby, in "The Hebrew Psalter. A New Metrical Translation," 1882.

Verse 1.—"*When the Lord turned again the captivity.*" As by the Lord's permission they were led into captivity, so only by his power they were set at liberty. When the Israelites had served in a strange land four hundred years, it was not Moses, but Jehovah, that brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. In like manner it was he and not Deborah that freed them from Jabin after they had been vexed twenty years under the Canaanites. It was he and not Gideon that brought them out of the hands of the Midianites, after seven years' servitude. It was he and not Jephthah that delivered them from the Philistines and Amorites after eighteen years' oppression. Although in all these he did employ Moses and Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah, as instruments for their deliverance; and so it was not Cyrus's valour, but the Lord's power; not his policy, but God's wisdom, that, overthrowing the enemies, gave to Cyrus the victory, and put it into his heart to set his people at liberty; for he upheld his hands to subdue nations. He did weaken the loins of kings, and did open the doors before him, he did go before him and made the crooked places straight; and he did break the brazen doors, and burst the iron bars. Isaiah xlv. 1, 2.—*John Hume, in "The Jewes Deliverance,"* 1628.

Verse 1.—"*In Jehovah's turning (to) the turning of Zion.*" Meaning to return to the return, or meet those returning, as it were, half way. The Hebrew noun denotes *conversion*, in its spiritual sense, and the verb God's gracious condescension in accepting or responding to it.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"*The captivity of Zion.*" I ask, first, Why of *Zion?* why not the captivity of Jerusalem, Judah, Israel? Jerusalem, Judah, Israel, were led away captives, no less than Zion. They, the greater and more general; why not *the captivity* of them, but of *Zion?* It should seem there is more in Zion's captivity than in the rest, that choice is made of it before the rest. Why? what was Zion? We know it was but a hill in Jerusalem, on the north side. Why is that hill so honoured? No reason in the world but this,—that upon it the Temple was built; and so, that Zion is much spoken of, and much made of, it is only for the Temple's sake. For whose sake it is (even for his church), that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. lxxxvii. 2); loveth her more, and so her captivity goeth nearer him, and her deliverance better pleaseth him, than all Jacob besides. This maketh *Zion's captivity* to be mentioned chiefly, as chiefly regarded by God, and to be regarded by his people. As we see it was: when they sat by the waters of Babylon, that which made them weep was, "When we remembered thee, O Zion"; that was their greatest grief. That their greatest grief, and this their greatest joy; *Lætati sumus*, when news came (not, saith the Psalm, *in domos nostras*, We shall go everyone to his own house, but) in *domum Domini ibimus*, "We shall go to the house of the Lord, we shall appear before the God of gods in Zion."—*Lancelot Andrewes*, 1555—1626.

Verse 1.—"*We were like them that dream.*" That is, they thought it was but mere fantasy and imagination.—*Sydrach Simpson*, 1658.

Verse 1.—"*We were like them that dream.*" Here you may observe that God doth often send succour and deliverance to the godly in the time of their affliction, distress, and adversity; that many times they themselves do doubt of the truth thereof, and think that in very deed they are not delivered, but rather that they have dreamed. Peter, being imprisoned by Herod, when he was delivered by an angel, for all the light that did shine in the prison; though the angel did smite him on the side and raised him up; though he caused the chains to fall off his hands; though he spake to him three several times, *Surge, cinge, circunda;* "Arise quickly, gird thyself, and cast thy garment about thee"; though he conducted him safely by the watches; and though he caused the iron gates to open willingly; yet for all this he was like unto them that dream. "For he wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision": Acts xii. 9. When old Jacob was told by his sons that his son Joseph was alive, his heart failed, and he believed them not; but when he had heard all that Joseph had said, and when he saw the chariots that Joseph had sent, then, as it were, raised from a sleep, and awakened from a dream, his spirit revived, and, rejoicing, he cried out, "I have enough; Joseph my son is yet alive."

Lorinus seems to excuse this their distrust, because they were so over-ravished with joy, that they misdoubted the true cause of their joy: like the Apostles, who having Christ after his resurrection standing before them, they were so exceedingly joyed, that rejoicing they wondered and doubted; and like the two Marys, when the angel told them of our Saviour Christ's resurrection, they returned from the sepulchre rejoicing, and yet withal fearing. It may be they feared the truth of so glad news, and doubted lest they were deceived by some apparition.—*John Hume.*

Verse 1.—"*We were like them that dream.*" We thought that we were dreaming; we could hardly believe our eyes, when at the command of Cyrus, king of the Persians, we had returned to our own land. The same thing happened to the Greeks, when they heard that their country, being conquered by the Romans, had been made free by the Roman consul, P. Quinctius Flaminius. Livy says that when the herald had finished there was more good news than the people could receive all at once. They could scarcely believe that they had heard aright. They were looking on each other wonderingly, like sleepers on an empty dream.—*John Le Clerc* [*Clericus*], 1657—1736.

Verse 1.—"*We were like them that dream,*" etc. In the lapse of seventy years the hope of restoration to their land, so long deferred, had mostly gone out in despair, save as it rested (in some minds) on their faith in God's promise. The policy of those great powers in the East had long been settled, viz., to break up the old tribes and kingdoms of Western Asia; take the people into far eastern countries, and *never let them return.* No nation known to history, except the Jews, ever did return to rebuild their ancient cities and homes. Hence this joyous surprise.—*Henry Cowles, in "The Psalms; with Notes."* 1872.

Verse 1.—"*Like them that dream.*" It was no dream; it was Jacob's dream become a reality. It was the promise, "I will bring thee back into this land" (Gen. xxviii. 15), fulfilled beyond all their hope.—*William Kay, in "The Psalms, with Notes, chiefly exegetical,"* 1871.

Verse 1.—"*We were like them that dream.*" The words should rather be translated, "*We are like unto those that are restored to health.*" The Hebrew word signifies to recover, or, to be restored to health. And so the same word is translated in Isa. xxxviii., when Hezekiah recovered, he made a Psalm of praise, and said, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live." It is the same word that is used here. Thus Cajetan, Shindler, and others would have it translated here; and it suits best with the following words, "Then were our mouths filled with laughter, and our tongues with praise." When a man is in a good dream, his mouth is not filled with laughter, nor his tongue with praise: if a man be in a bad dream, his mouth is not filled with laughter, nor his tongue with praise; but when a man is restored to health after a great sickness, it is so.—*William Bridge*, 1600—1670.

Verse 2.—"*Then was our mouth filled with laughter,*" etc. We must earnestly endeavour to learn this practice, or at least to attain to some knowledge thereof; and we must raise up ourselves with this consideration—that the gospel is nothing

else but laughter and joy. This joy properly pertaineth to captives, that is, to those that feel the captivity of sin and death; to the fleshy and tender hearts, terrified with the feeling of the wrath and judgment of God. These are the disciples in whose hearts should be planted laughter and joy, and that by the authority of the Holy Ghost, which this verse setteth forth. This people was in Zion, and, after the outward show of the kingdom and priesthood, did mightily flourish; but if a man consider them according to the spirit, he shall see them to be in miserable captivity, and that their tongue is full of heaviness and mourning, because their heart is terrified with the sense of sin and death. This is Moses' tongue or Moses' mouth, full of wormwood and of bitterness of death; wherewith he designs to kill none but those which are too lively and full of security. But they who feel their captivity shall have their mouths filled with laughter and joy: that is, redemption and deliverance from sin and death shall be preached unto them. This is the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost, that the mouth of such shall be filled with laughter, that is, their mouth shall show forth nothing else but great gladness through the inestimable consolations of the gospel, with voices of triumph and victory by Christ, overcoming Satan, destroying death, and taking away sins. This was first spoken unto the Jews; for this laughter was first offered to that people, then having the promises. Now he turneth to the Gentiles, whom he calleth to the partaking of this laughter.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—"*Then was our mouth filled with laughter,*" etc. It was thus in the valley of Elah, where Goliath fell, and Philistia fled. It was thus at Baal-Perazim. It was thus when one morning, after many nights of gloom, Jerusalem arose at dawn of day, and found Sennacherib's thousands a camp of the dead. And it has all along been the manner of our God.

> "The Lord has wrought mightily
> In what he has done for us;
> And we have been made glad."

Ever do this till conflict is over! Just as thou dost with the streams of the south, year by year, so do with us—with all, with each. And we are confident thou wilt; we are sure that we make no vain boast when we sing this Psalm as descriptive of the experience of all thy pilgrims and worshippers.—*Andrew A. Bonar, in "Christ and his Church in the Book of Psalms,"* 1859.

Verse 2.—"*Then was our mouth filled with laughter.*"—They that were laughed at, now laugh, and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*Mouth*"; "*tongue.*" Lorinus, the Jesuit, hath observed that the Psalmist nominates the *mouth* and *tongue* in the singular, not *mouths* and *tongues* in the plural; because all the faithful and the whole congregation of the Jews *univocè*, with one voice, with one consent, and, as it were, with one mouth, did praise and glorify the Lord.—*John Hume.*

Verse 2.—"*And our tongue with singing.*" Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and if the heart be glad the tongue is glib. Joy cannot be suppressed in the heart, but it must be expressed with the tongue.—*John Hume.*

Verse 2.—"*Then said they among the heathen.*" And what is it they said? It is to the purpose. In this (as in many others) the heathens' saying cannot be mended. This they say: 1. That they were no quotidian, or common things; but "*great.*" 2. Then, these great things they ascribe not to *chance;* that they *happened* not, but were "*done.*" 3. Then, "done" *by God himself:* they see God in them. 4. Then, not done by God at random, without any particular aim; but *purposely* done *for them.* 5. And yet, there is more in *magnificavit facere* (if we look well). For, *magna fecit* would have served all this; but in saying *magnificavit facere,* they say *magnifecit illos, ut magna faceret pro illis.* He magnified them, or set greatly by them. for whom he would bring to pass so great a work. This said they among the "heathen."

And it is a pity the "*heathen*" said it, and that the Jews themselves spake not these words first. But now, finding the "*heathen*" so saying; and finding it was all true that they said, they must needs find themselves bound to say at least as much; and more they could not say; for more cannot be said. So much then, and no less than they. And this addeth a degree to the *dicebant,*—that the sound of it was so great among *the heathen* that it made an *echo* even in Jewry itself.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 2.—"*The* LORD *hath done great things.*" *He multiplied to do great things;*

so the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic versions render it; and the history of this deliverance makes it good.—*Thomas Hodges, in a Sermon entitled "Sion's Hallelujah,"* 1660.

Verses 2, 3.—There is this great difference between the praise which the heathen are forced to give to God, and that which the Lord's people heartily offer unto him: the one doth speak as having no interest nor share in the mercy; the other do speak as they to whom the mercy is intended, and wherein they have their portion with others: *"He hath done great things for them,"* say the heathen: but, *"he hath done great things for us,"* say the Lord's people.—*David Dickson*, 1583—1662.

Verse 3.—*"The* LORD *hath done great things for us,"* etc. This verse is the marrow of the whole Psalm, occasioned by the return of God's people out of Babel's captivity into their own country. Their deliverance was so great and incredible that when God brought it to pass they were *as men in a dream*, thinking it rather a dream, and a vain imagination, than a real truth. 1. Because it was so great a deliverance from so great and lasting a bondage, it seemed too good to be true. 2. It was sudden and unexpected, when they little thought or hoped for it. . . . . 3. All things seemed desperate, nothing more unlikely, or impossible rather. 4. The manner was so admirable (without the counsel, help, or strength of man: nay, it was beyond and against all human means); that they doubt whether these things be not the dreams of men that are awake.—*Thomas Taylor* (1576—1632) *in "A Mappe of Rome."*

Verse 3.—*"For us."* What were we, might Sion say (who were glad to lick the dust of the feet of our enemies), that the Lord of heaven and earth should look so graciously upon us? The meanness of the receiver argueth the magnificence of the giver. "Who am I, that the mother of my Lord should visit me?" this was a true and religious compliment of devout Elizabeth. The best of men are but the children of dust, and grand-children of nothing. And yet for the Lord to do *"great things"* for us! this yet *greatens* those *"great things."* Was it because *we were his church?* It was his superabounding grace to select us out of others, as it was our greater gracelessness, above all others, so to provoke him, as to force him to throw us into captivity. Or was it because *our humiliation*, in that disconsolate condition, did move him to so great compassion? Alas! there was a choice of nations whom he might have taken in our room, that might have proved far more faithful than we have been for the one half of those favours we have enjoyed.

Or was it for *his covenant's sake* with our forefathers? Alas! we had forfeited that long since, again and again, we know not how often. Wherefore, when we remember ourselves, we cannot but make this an aggravation of God's *"great things,"* that he should do them *for us*, FOR US, so very, very unworthy.—*Malachiah* [*or Matthew*] *Harris, in a Sermon entitled "Brittaines Hallelujah,"* 1639.

Verse 4.—*"Turn again our captivity, O* LORD." A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance. Let those that are returned to their own land be eased of their burdens which they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon have their hearts stirred up, as ours were, to take the benefit of the liberty granted. The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the completing of it. While we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even when we are most furnished with matter for praise. When we are free, and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—*"Turn again our captivity."* As Israel of old prayed that he would bring all their brethren scattered abroad in captivity back to their own land in one full stream, multitudinous, joyous, mighty, like the waters of Nile or Euphrates pouring over the parching fields of the south in the hot, dry summer-tide; so now should the members of Christ's church ever pray "that all that profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."—*J. W. Burgon, in "A Plain Commentary,"* 1859.

Verse 4.—The Psalmist cries—

> "Turn our captivity, O Jehovah,
> As aqueducts in the Negeb."

This Negeb, or South Country, the region stretching below Hebron, being comparatively dry and waterless, was doubtless irrigated by a system of small

artificial channels. The words of the Psalmist imply that it is as easy for God to turn Israel back from Babylonian bondage to their own land, as for the horticulturist to direct the waters of the spring to any part of the land he chooses along the channels of the aqueducts.—*James Neil.*

Verse 4.—"*As the streams in the south.*" Then shall our captivity be perfectly changed even as *the rivers* or *waters in the south*, which by the mighty work of God were dried up and utterly consumed. Whether ye understand here the Red Sea, or else the river of Jordan, it mattereth little. The similitude is this: Like as by thy mighty hand thou broughtest to pass miraculously that the waters were dried up and consumed, so dry up, O Lord, and bring to nothing all our captivity. Some do interpret this verse otherwise; that is, Turn our captivity, O Lord, as the rivers in the south, which in the summer are dried up in the desert places by the heat of the sun, but in the winter are filled up again with plenty of water.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 4.—"*Streams.*" The Hebrew word for "*streams*" means strictly a river's bed, the channel which holds water when water is there, but is often dry. Naturally there is joy for the husbandmen when those valley-beds are filled again with flowing waters. So, the prayer is, let thy people return joyfully to their father-land.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 4.—"*As the streams in the south.*" Some render it, *As the mighty waters in the south.* Why would they have their captivity turned like those mighty floods in the south? The reason is this, because the south is a dry country, where there are few springs, scarce a fountain to be found in a whole desert. What, then, are the waters they have in the south, in those parched countries? They are these mighty strong torrents, which are caused by the showers of heaven: so the meaning of that prayer in the Psalm is, that God would suddenly turn their captivity. Rivers come suddenly in the south: where no spring appears, nor any sign of a river, yet in an hour the water is up and the streams overflow. As when Elijah sent his servant toward the sea, in the time of Ahab, he went and looked, and said, "there is nothing"; that is, no show of rain, not the least cloud to be seen; yet presently the heavens grew black, and there was a great rain: 1 Kings xviii. 44. Thus let our captivity be turned thus speedily and suddenly, though there be no appearance of salvation, no more than there is of a fountain in the sandy desert, or of rain in the clearest of heavens, yet bring salvation for us. We used to say of things beyond our supply, Have we a spring of them? or can we fetch them out of the clouds? So though no ground appears whence such rivers should flow, yet let our salvation be as rivers in the south, as rivers fetched out of the clouds, and dropped in an instant immediately from the heavens.—*Joseph Caryl*, 1602—1673.

Verses 4, 5, 6.—The saints are oft feeding their hopes on the carcases of their slain fears. The time which God chose and the instrument he used to give the captive Jews their gaol delivery and liberty to return home were so incredible to them when it came to pass (like Peter whom the angel had carried out of prison, Acts xii.), it was some time before they could come to themselves and resolve whether it was real truth, or but a pleasing dream. Now see, what effect this strange disappointment of their fears had upon their hope for afterward. It sends them to the throne of grace for the accomplishment of what was so marvellously begun. "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord": verses 3, 4. They have got a hand-hold by this experiment of his power and mercy, and they will not now let him go till they have more; yea, their hope is raised to such a pitch of confidence, that they draw a general conclusion from this particular experience for the comfort of themselves or others in any future distress: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," etc., verses 5, 6.—*William Gurnall*, 1617—1679.

Verse 5.—"*They that sow in tears.*" I never saw people sowing in tears exactly, but have often known them to do it in fear and distress sufficient to draw them from any eye. In seasons of great scarcity, the poor peasants part in sorrow with every measure of precious seed cast into the ground. It is like taking bread out of the mouths of their children; and in such times many bitter tears are actually shed over it. The distress is frequently so great that government is obliged to furnish seed, or none would be sown. Ibrahim Pasha did this more than once within my remembrance, copying the example, perhaps, of his great predecessor in Egypt when the seven years' famine was ended.

The thoughts of this Psalm may likewise have been suggested by the extreme danger which frequently attends the farmer in his ploughing and sowing. The calamity which fell upon the husbandmen of Job when the oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword (Job i. 14, 15), is often repeated in our day. To understand this you must remember what I have just told you about the situation of the arable lands in the open country; and here again we meet that verbal accuracy: the sower *"goes forth"*—that is, from the village. The people of Ibel and Khiem, in Merj' Aiyûn, for example, have their best grain-growing fields down in the 'Ard Hûleh, six or eight miles from their homes, and just that much nearer the lawless border of the desert. When the country is disturbed, or the government weak, they cannot sow these lands except at the risk of their lives. Indeed, they always *go forth* in large companies, and completely armed, ready to drop the plough and seize the musket at a moment's warning; and yet, with all this care, many sad and fatal calamities overtake the men who must thus sow in tears. And still another origin may be found for the thoughts of the Psalm in the extreme difficulty of the work itself in many places. The soil is rocky, impracticable, overgrown with sharp thorns; and it costs much painful toil to break up and gather out the rock, cut and burn the briars, and to subdue the stubborn soil, especially with their feeble oxen and insignificant ploughs. Join all these together, and the sentiment is very forcibly brought out, that he who labours hard, in cold and rain, in fear and danger, in poverty and in want, casting his precious seed into the ground, will surely come again, at harvest-time, with rejoicing, and bearing his sheaves with him.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 5.—*"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,"* etc. This promise is conveyed under images borrowed from the instructive scenes of agriculture. In the sweat of his brow the husbandman tills his land, and casts the seed into the ground, where for a time it lies dead and buried. A dark and dreary winter succeeds, and all seems to be lost; but at the return of spring universal nature revives, and the once desolate fields are covered with corn which, when matured by the sun's heat, the cheerful reapers cut down, and it is brought home with triumphant shouts of joy. Here, O disciple of Jesus, behold an emblem of thy present labour and thy future reward! Thou "sowest," perhaps, in "tears"; thou doest thy duty amidst persecution, and affliction, sickness, pain, and sorrow; thou labourest in the Church, and no account is made of thy labours, no profit seems likely to arise from them. Nay, thou must thyself drop into the dust of death, and all the storms of that winter must pass over thee, until thy form shall be perished, and thou shalt see corruption. Yet the day is coming when thou shalt "reap in joy," and plentiful shall be thy harvest. For thus thy blessed Master "went forth weeping," a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, "bearing precious seed" and sowing it around him, till at length his own body was buried, like a grain of wheat, in the furrow of the grave. But he arose, and is now in heaven, from whence he shall "doubtless come again with rejoicing," with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, "bringing his sheaves with him." Then shall every man receive the fruit of his works, and have praise of God.—*George Horne* (1730—1792), *in "A Commentary on the Psalms."*

Verse 5.—*"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."* They sow *in faith;* and God will bless that seed: it shall grow up to heaven, for it is sown in the side of Jesus Christ who is in heaven. "He that believeth on God," this is the seed; "shall have everlasting life" (John v. 24); this is the harvest. *Qui credit quod non videt, videbit quod credit,*—he that believes what he doth not see; this is the seed: shall one day see what he hath believed; this is the harvest.

They sow *in obedience:* this is also a blessed seed, that will not fail to prosper wheresoever it is cast. "If ye keep my commandments"; this is the seed: "ye shall abide in my love" (John xv. 10); this is the harvest. (Rom. vi. 22), "Ye are become servants to God, and have your fruit unto holiness"; this is the sowing: "and the end everlasting life"; this is the reaping. *Obedientia in terris, regnabit in cælis,*—he that serves God on earth, and sows the seed of obedience, shall in heaven reap the harvest of a kingdom.

They sow *in repentance;* and this seed must needs grow up to blessedness. . . . Many saints have now reaped their crop in heaven, that sowed their seed in tears. David, Mary Magdalene, Peter; as if they had made good the proverb, "No coming to heaven with dry eyes." Thus nature and God differ in their proceedings. To have a good crop on earth, we desire a fair seedtime; but here a wet time of sowing

shall bring the best harvest in the barn of heaven. " Blessed are they that mourn " ; this is the seeding : " for they shall be comforted " (Matt. v. 4) ; this is the harvest.

They sow *in renouncing the world,* and adherence to Christ ; and they reap a great harvest. " Behold," saith Peter to Christ, " we have forsaken all, and followed thee " (Matt. xix. 27) ; this is the seeding. " What shall we have therefore ? " What ? " You shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel " (verses 28, 29) ; all that you have lost shall be centupled to you : " and you shall inherit everlasting life " ; this is the harvest. " Sow to yourselves in righteousness and reap in mercy " : Hos. x. 12.

They sow *in charity.* He that sows this seed shall be sure of a plentiful crop. " Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only "— a little refreshing—" in the name of a disciple ; verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward : " Matt. x. 42. But if he that giveth a little shall be thus recompensed, then " he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully " : 2 Cor. ix. 6. Therefore sparse abroad with a full hand, like a seedsman in a broad field, without fear. Doth any think he shall lose by his charity ? No worldling, when he sows his seed, thinks he shall lose his seed ; he hopes for increase at harvest. Darest thou trust the ground and not God ? Sure God is a better paymaster than the earth : grace doth give a larger recompense than nature. Below thou mayest receive forty grains for one ; but in heaven, (by the promise of Christ,) a hundredfold : a " measure heapen, and shaken, and thrust together, and yet running over." " Blessed is he that considereth the poor " ; this is the seeding : " the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble " (Ps. xli. 1) ; this is the harvest.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 5.—"*They that sow in tears,*" etc. Observe two things here. I. That the afflictions of God's people are as sowing in tears. 1. In sowing ye know there is great pains. The land must be first tilled and dressed ; and there is pains in casting the seed into it ; and then it takes a great dressing all the year, before it be set in the barn-yard. 2. It requires great charges, too, and therefore it is called " precious seed." For ye know that seed corn is aye dearest. 3. There is also great hazard ; for corn, after it is sown, is subject to many dangers. And so it is with the children of God in a good cause. II. Then after the seed-time follows the harvest, and that comes with joy. There be three degrees of the happiness of God's children, in reaping of fruits. 1. In the first-fruits. Even when they are enduring anything for the Gospel of Christ, it carries contentment and fruit with it. 2. After the first-fruits, then come sheaves to refresh the husbandman, and to assure him that the full harvest is coming. The Lord now and then gives testimony of a full deliverance to his own people, especially of the deliverance of Sion, and lets them taste of the sheaves which they have reaped. 3. And lastly, they get the full harvest ; and that is gotten at the great and last day. Then we get peace without trouble, joy without grief, profit without loss, pleasure without pain ; and then we have a full sight of the face of God.—*Alexander Henderson.*

Verse 5.—"*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*" Gospel tears are not lost ; they are seeds of comfort : while the penitent doth pour out tears, God pours in joy. If thou wouldst be cheerful, saith Chrysostom, be sad. It was the end of Christ's anointing and coming into the world, that he might comfort them that mourn : Isaiah lxi. 3. Christ had the oil of gladness poured on him, as Chrysostom saith, that he might pour it on the mourner ; well then might the apostle call it " a repentance not to be repented of " : 2 Cor. vii. 10. . . . Here is sweet fruit from a bitter stock : Christ caused the earthen vessels to be filled with water, and then turned the water into wine : John ii. 9. So when the eye, that earthen vessel, hath been filled with water brim full, then Christ will turn the water of tears into the wine of joy. Holy mourning, saith St. Basil, is the seed out of which the flower of eternal joy doth grow.—*Thomas Watson* (—1690 ?), *in "The Beatitudes."*

Verse 5.—"*They that sow in tears shall reap.*" We must take notice of the reapers : "*They* shall reap." Which *they ?* They that did sow ; they shall, and none but they shall. They shall ; and good reason they should, because it was they that did sow. And though some that have sown in tears do complain of the lateness or thinness of the harvest, that they have not reaped in joy, as is here promised ; know that some grounds are later than others, and in some years the harvest falleth later than in others, and that God, who is the Lord of the harvest, in his good time will ripen thy joy, and thou shalt reap it : and in the meantime, if we try it narrowly, we shall find the cause in ourselves, both of the lateness of our joy, because we were too late in sowing our tears ; and of the thinness of our joy, because we did

sow our tears too thin. And if after our sowing of tears we find no harvest of joy at all, we may be well assured that either our seed was not good, or else some of the mischances are come upon them, which came upon the seed that came to no good in the thirteenth of Matthew.—*Walter Balcanqual, in "a Sermon preached at St. Maries Spittle,"* 1623.

Verse 5.—"*They that sow in tears,*" etc. I saw in seedtime a husbandman at plough in a very rainy day. Asking him the reason why he would not rather leave off than labour in such foul weather, his answer was returned me in their country rhythm :—

" Sow beans in the mud,
And they'll come up like a wood.'

This could not but remind me of David's expression, "*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,*" etc.—*Thomas Fuller* (1608—1661), *in "Good Thoughts in Worse Times."*

Verse 5.—"*Sow in tears.*" There are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow ; tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others' ; tears of sympathy with the afflicted church ; and tears of tenderness in prayer and under the word.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"*Shall reap in joy.*" This spiritual harvest comes not alike soon to all, no more than the other which is outward doth. But here's the comfort, whoever hath a seed-time of grace pass over his soul shall have his harvest-time also of joy : this law God hath bound himself to as strongly as to the other, which " is not to cease while the earth remaineth " (Gen. viii. 22) ; yea, more strongly ; for that was to the world in general, not to every country, town, or field in particular, for some of these may want a harvest, and yet God may keep his word : but God cannot perform his promise if any one particular saint should everlastingly go without his reaping time. And therefore you who think so basely of the gospel and the professors of it, because at present their peace and comfort are not come, should know that it is on the way to them, and comes to stay everlastingly with them ; whereas your peace is going from you every moment, and is sure to leave you without any hope of returning to you again. Look not how the Christian begins, but ends. The Spirit of God by his convictions comes into the soul with some terrors, but it closeth with peace and joy. As we say of the month of March, it enters like a lion, but goes out like a lamb. " Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright : for the end of that man is peace " : Psalm xxxvii. 37.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 5, 6.—In my little reading and small experience, I have found that corn sown in dear years and times of scarcity hath yielded much more increase than at other times ; so that presently after much want, there hath followed great plenty of grain, even beyond expectation.—*Humphrey Hardwick, in a Sermon entitled "The Difficulty of Sion's Deliverance and Reformation,"* 1644.

Verses 5, 6.—Mind we the undoubted certainty of our harvest verified by divers absolute positive asseverations in the text : "*he shall reap*" ; "*he shall come again*" ; "*he shall bring his sheaves with him.*" Here's no item of contingency or possibility, but all absolute affirmations ; and you know heaven and earth shall pass away, but a jot of God's word shall not fail. Nothing shall prevent the harvest of a labourer in Sion's vineyard.—*Humphrey Hardwick.*

Verses 5, 6.—In a fuller, deeper sense, the sower in tears is the Man of sorrows himself. Believers know him thus. He has accomplished, in the sore travail of his soul, the seed time of affliction which is to bear its satisfying harvest when he shall again appear as the reaper of his own reward. He will fill his bosom with sheaves in that day of joy. The garner of his gladness will be filled to overflowing. By how much his affliction surpassed the natural measure of human grief, when he underwent for our sakes the dread realities of death and judgment ; by so much shall the fulness of his pure delight as the eternal blesser of his people excel their joy (yet what a measure, too, is there !) whose sum of blessedness is to be for ever with the Lord.—*Arthur Pridham, in "Notes and Reflections on the Psalms,"* 1869.

Verse 6.—"*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,*" etc. This is very expressive of a gospel minister's life ; he goeth forth with the everlasting gospel which he preaches ; he sows it as precious seed in the church of God ; he waters it with tears and prayers ; the Lord's blessing accompanies it ; the Lord crowns his labours with success ; he has seals to his ministry ; and at the last day he shall doubtless come again with joy from the grave of death "*bringing his sheaves with*

him"; and will, in the new Jerusalem state, be addressed by his Lord with, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—*Samuel Eyles Pierce* (1746—1829 ?), *in "The Book of Psalms, an Epitome of the Old Testament Scripture."*

Verse 6.—*"He may go forth, he may go forth, and weep, bearing (his) load of seed. He shall come, he shall come with singing, bearing sheaves."* The emphatic combination of the finite tense with the infinitive is altogether foreign from our idiom, and very imperfectly represented, in the ancient and some modern versions, by the active participle (*venientes venient,* coming they shall come), which conveys neither the peculiar form nor the precise sense of the Hebrew phrase. The best approximation to the force of the original is Luther's repetition of the finite tense, *he shall come, he shall come,* because in all such cases the infinitive is really defined or determined by the term which follows, and in sense, though not in form, assimilated to it.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 6.—

"Though he go, though he go, and be weeping,
While bearing some handfuls of seed;
He shall come, he shall come with bright singing,
While bearing his plentiful sheaves."

Ben-Tehillim, in "The Book of Psalms, in English Blank Verse," 1883.

Verse 6.—*"Goeth forth."* The church must not only keep this seed in the store-house, for such as come to enquire for it; but must send her sowers forth to cast it among those who are ignorant of its value, or too indifferent to ask it at her hands. She must not sit weeping because men will not apply to her, but must go forth and bear the precious seed to the unwilling, the careless, the prejudiced, and the profligate. —*Edwin Sidney, in "The Pulpit,"* 1840.

Verse 6.—*Weeping* must not hinder sowing: when we suffer ill we must be doing well.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 6.—*"Precious seed."* Seed-corn is always dearest; and when other corn is dear, then it is very dear; yet though never so dear, the husbandman resolves that he must have it; and he will deprive his own belly, and his wife and children of it, and will sow it, going out *"weeping"* with it. There is also great hazard; for corn, after it is sown, is subject to many dangers. And so is it, indeed, with the children of God in a good cause. Ye must resolve to undergo hazards also, in life, lands, moveables, or whatsoever else ye have in this world: rather hazard all these before either religion be in hazard, or your own souls.—*Alexander Henderson.*

Verse 6.—*"Precious seed."* Aben Ezra, by the words rendered *precious seed,* or, as they may be, *a draught of seed,* understands the vessel in which the sower carries his seed, the seed basket, from whence he draws and takes out the seed, and scatters it; see Amos ix. 13: so the Targum, "bearing a tray of sowing corn."—*John Gill.*

Verse 6.—*"Precious seed."* Faith is called *"precious seed": quod rarum est charum est.* Seed was accounted precious when all countries came unto Egypt to buy corn of Joseph, and truly faith must needs be precious, seeing that when Christ comes he shall hardly "find faith upon the earth": Luke xviii. 8. The necessity of faith is such, that therefore it must need be precious; for as the material seed is the only instrumental means to preserve the life of man; for all the spices, honey, myrrh, nuts, and almonds, gold and silver, that were in Canaan, were not sufficient for Jacob and his children's sustenance; but they were forced to repair unto Egypt for corn, that they might live and not die; even so, without faith the soul is starved; it is the food of it; for, "the just man liveth by his faith": Gal. iii. 11.—*John Hume.*

Verse 6.—*"Sheaves."* The Psalm which begins with "dream" and ends with "sheaves" invites us to think of Joseph; Joseph, "in whom," according to S. Ambrose's beautiful application, "there was revealed the future resurrection of the Lord Jesus, to whom both his eleven disciples did obeisance when they saw him gone into Galilee, and to whom all the saints shall on their resurrection do obeisance, bringing forth the fruit of good works, as it is written, 'He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'"—*H. T. Armfield.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Sunny memories of what the Lord did, "he turned again the captivity," etc. II. Singular impressions,—we could not believe it to be true. III. Special discoveries—it was true, abiding, etc.

Verse 1.—A comparison and a contrast. I. The saved like them that dream. 1. In the strangeness of their experience. 2. In the ecstasy of their joy. II. The saved unlike them that dream. 1. In the reality of their experience. Dreams are unsubstantial things, but "the Lord turned"—an actual fact. 2. In their freedom from disappointment. No awakening to find it "but a dream": see Isaiah xxix. 8. 3. In the endurance of their joy. The joy of dreams is soon forgotten, but this is "everlasting joy."—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 2.—Saintly laughter. What creates it, and how it is justified.

Verse 2.—*Recipe for holy laughter.*—1. Lie in prison a few weeks. 2. Hear the Lord turning the key. 3. Follow him into the high-road. 4. Your sky will burst with sunshine, and your heart with song and laughter. 5. If this recipe is thought too expensive, try *keeping in the high-road.*—*W. B. H.*

Verses 2, 3.—I. Reports of God's doings. II. Experience of God's doings.

Verses 2, 3.—I. The Lord does great things for his people. II. These great things command the attention of the world. III. They inspire the joyful devotion of the saints.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 3.—"*The* Lord *hath done great things for us.*" In this acknowledgment and confession there are three noteworthy points of thankfulness. I. That they were "*great things*" which were done. II. Who it was who did them: "*the Lord.*" III. That they are done, not *against* us, but "*for* us."—*Alexander Henderson*, 1583—1646.

Verse 4.—Believers, rejoicing in their own deliverance, solicitous for a flood of prosperity to overflow the church. See the connection, verses 1—3. Remark, I. The doubting and despondent are too concerned about themselves, and too busy seeking comfort, to have either solicitude or energy to spare for the church's welfare; but the joyful heart is free to be earnest for the church's good. II. Joyful believers, other things being equal, know more of the constraining power of Christ's love, which makes them anxious for his glory and the success of his cause. III. The joyful can appreciate more fully the contrast of their condition to that of the undelivered, and for their sake cannot fail to be anxious for the church through whose ministry their deliverance comes. IV. The joyful are, in general, the most believing and the most hopeful; their expectation of success leads them to prayer, and impels them to effort.—*J. F.*

Verse 4.—I. The dried-up Christian. II. His unhappy condition. III. His one hope. IV. Result when realized.

Verse 5.—*The Christian Husbandman.* I. Illustrate the metaphor. The husbandman has a great variety of work before him; every season and every day brings its proper business. So the Christian has duties in the closet, in the family, in the church, in the world, etc., etc. II. Whence it is that many Christians sow in tears. 1. It may be owing to the badness of the soil. 2. The inclemency of the season. 3. The malice and opposition of enemies. 4. Past disappointments. III. What connection there is between sowing in tears and reaping in joy. 1. A joyful harvest, by God's blessing, is the natural consequence of a dripping seed-time. 2. God, who cannot lie, hath promised it. IV. When this joyful harvest may be expected. It must not be expected in our wintry world, for there is not sun enough to ripen it. Heaven is the Christian's summer. When you come to reap the fruits of your present trials, you will bless God who made you sow in tears. *Improvement.* 1. How greatly are they to blame who in this busy time stand all the day idle! 2. How greatly have Christians the advantage of the rest of the world! 3. Let the hope and prospect of this joyful harvest support us under all the glooms and distresses of this vale of tears.—*Outline of a Sermon by Samuel Lavington*, 1726—1807.

Verse 5.—Two pictures. The connecting "*shall.*"

Verse 5.—I. There must be sowing before reaping. II. What men sow they will reap. If they sow precious seed, they will reap precious seed. III. In proportion as they sow they will reap. "He that soweth sparingly," etc. IV. The sowing may be with sorrow, but the reaping will be with joy. V. In proportion to the sorrow of sowing will be the joy of reaping.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—In the two parts of this verse we may behold a threefold antithesis or opposition; in the *progress*, 1. A sojourning: "He that now goeth on his way." 2. A sorrowing: "weeping." 3. A sowing: "and beareth forth good seed." In the *regress* there are three opposites unto these. 1. Returning: "He shall doubtless come again." 2. A Rejoicing: "with joy." 3. A Reaping: "and bring his sheaves with him."—*John Hume.*

Verse 6.—"*Doubtless.*" Or the reasons why our labour cannot be in vain in the Lord.

Verse 6.—"*Bringing his sheaves with him.*" The faithful sower's return to his Lord. Successful, knowing it, personally honoured, abundantly recompensed.

Verse 6.—See "Spurgeon's Sermon," No. 867: "Tearful Sowing and Joyful Reaping."

Verse 6.—I. The sorrowful sower. 1. His activity—"he goeth forth." 2. His humility—"and weepeth." 3. His fidelity—"bearing precious seed." II. The joyful reaper. 1. His certain harvest-time—"shall doubtless come again." 2. His abundant joy—"with rejoicing." 3. His rich rewards—"bringing his sheaves with him."—*W. H. J. P.*

PSALM CXXVII.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees for Solomon. *It was meet that the builder of the holy house should be remembered by the pilgrims to its sacred shrine. The title probably indicates that David wrote it for his wise son, in whom he so greatly rejoiced, and whose name Jedidiah, or "beloved of the Lord," is introduced into the second verse. The spirit of his name, "Solomon, or peaceable," breathes through the whole of this most charming song. If Solomon himself was the author, it comes fitly from him who reared the house of the Lord. Observe how in each of these songs the heart is fixed upon Jehovah only. Read the first verses of these Psalms, from Psalm cxx. to the present song, and they run thus: "I cried unto the Lord," "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills," "Let us go unto the house of the Lord," "Unto thee will I lift up mine eyes," "If it had not been the Lord," "They that trust in the Lord," "When the Lord turned again the captivity." The Lord and the Lord alone is thus lauded at each step of these songs of the ascents. O for a life whose every halting-place shall suggest a new song unto the Lord!*

SUBJECT.—*God's blessing on his people as their one great necessity and privilege is here spoken of. We are here taught that builders of houses and cities, systems and fortunes, empires and churches all labour in vain without the Lord; but under the divine favour they enjoy perfect rest. Sons, who are in the Hebrew called "builders," are set forth as building up families under the same divine blessing, to the great honour and happiness of their parents. It is* THE BUILDER'S PSALM. *"Every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God," and unto God be praise.*

EXPOSITION.

EXCEPT the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain.

2 *It is* vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: *for* so he giveth his beloved sleep.

3 Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.

4 As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth.

5 Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

1. *"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it."* The word *vain* is the key-note here, and we hear it ring out clearly three times. Men desiring to build know that they must labour, and accordingly they put forth all their skill and strength; but let them remember that if Jehovah is not with them their designs will prove failures. So was it with the Babel builders; they said, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower"; and the Lord returned their words into their own bosoms, saying, "Go to, let us go down and there confound their language." In vain they toiled, for the Lord's face was against them. When Solomon resolved to build a house for the Lord, matters were very different, for all things united under God to aid him in his great undertaking: even the heathen were at his beck and call that he might erect a temple for the Lord his God. In the same manner God blessed him in the erection of his own palace; for this verse evidently refers to all sorts of house-building. Without God we are nothing. Great houses have been erected by ambitious men; but like the baseless fabric of a vision they have passed away, and scarce a stone remains to tell where once they stood. The wealthy builder of a Non-such Palace, could he revisit the glimpses of the moon, would be perplexed to find a relic of his former pride: he laboured in vain, for the place of his travail knows not a trace of his handiwork. The like may be said of the builders of castles and abbeys: when the mode of life indicated by these piles ceased to be

endurable by the Lord, the massive walls of ancient architects crumbled into ruins, and their toil melted like the froth of vanity. Not only do we now spend our strength for nought without Jehovah, but all who have ever laboured apart from him come under the same sentence. Trowel and hammer, saw and plane are instruments of vanity unless the Lord be the Master-builder.

"Except the LORD *keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."* Around the wall the sentinels pace with constant step; but yet the city is betrayed unless the unsleeping Watcher is with them. We are not safe because of watchmen if Jehovah refuses to watch over us. Even if the guards are wakeful, and do their duty, still the place may be surprised if God be not there. "I, the Lord, do keep it," is better than an army of sleepless guards. Note that the Psalmist does not bid the builder cease from labouring, nor suggest that watchmen should neglect their duty, nor that men should show their trust in God by doing nothing: nay, he supposes that they will do all that they can do, and then he forbids their fixing their trust in what they have done, and assures them that all creature effort will be in vain unless the Creator puts forth his power, to render second causes effectual. Holy Scripture endorses the order of Cromwell—"Trust in God, and keep your powder dry": only here the sense is varied, and we are told that the dried powder will not win the victory unless we trust in God. Happy is the man who hits the golden mean by so working as to believe in God, and so believing in God as to work without fear.

In Scriptural phrase a dispensation or system is called a house. Moses was faithful as a servant over all his house; and as long as the Lord was with that house it stood and prospered; but when he left it, the builders of it became foolish and their labour was lost. They sought to maintain the walls of Judaism, but sought in vain: they watched around every ceremony and tradition, but their care was idle. Of every church, and every system of religious thought, this is equally true: unless the Lord is in it, and is honoured by it, the whole structure must sooner or later fall in hopeless ruin. Much can be done by man; he can both labour and watch; but without the Lord he has accomplished nothing, and his wakefulness has not warded off evil.

2. *"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows."* Because the Lord is mainly to be rested in, all carking care is mere vanity and vexation of spirit. We are bound to be diligent, for this the Lord blesses; we ought not to be anxious, for that dishonours the Lord, and can never secure his favour. Some deny themselves needful rest; the morning sees them rise before they are rested, the evening sees them toiling long after the curfew has tolled the knell of parting day. They threaten to bring themselves into the sleep of death by neglect of the sleep which refreshes life. Nor is their sleeplessness the only index of their daily fret; they stint themselves in their meals, they eat the commonest food, and the smallest possible quantity of it, and what they do swallow is washed down with the salt tears of grief, for they fear that daily bread will fail them. Hard earned is their food, scantily rationed, and scarcely ever sweetened, but perpetually smeared with sorrow; and all because they have no faith in God, and find no joy except in hoarding up the gold which is their only trust. Not thus, not thus, would the Lord have his children live. He would have them, as princes of the blood, lead a happy and restful life. Let them take a fair measure of rest and a due portion of food, for it is for their health. Of course the true believer will never be lazy or extravagant; if he should be he will have to suffer for it; but he will not think it needful or right to be worried and miserly. Faith brings calm with it, and banishes the disturbers who both by day and by night murder peace.

"For so he giveth his beloved sleep." Through faith the Lord makes his chosen ones to rest in him in happy freedom from care. The text may mean that God gives blessings to his beloved in sleep, even as he gave Solomon the desire of his heart while he slept. The meaning is much the same: those whom the Lord loves are delivered from the fret and fume of life, and take a sweet repose upon the bosom of their Lord. He rests them; blesses them while resting; blesses them more in resting than others in their moiling and toiling. God is sure to give the best thing to his beloved, and we here see that he gives them sleep—that is a laying aside of care, a forgetfulness of need, a quiet leaving of matters with God: this kind of sleep is better than riches and honour. Note how Jesus slept amid the hurly-burly of a storm at sea. He knew that he was in his Father's hands, and

therefore he was so quiet in spirit that the billows rocked him to sleep: it would be much oftener the same with us if we were more like HIM.

It is to be hoped that those who built Solomon's temple were allowed to work at it steadily and joyfully. Surely such a house was not built by unwilling labourers. One would hope that the workmen were not called upon to hurry up in the morning nor to protract their labours far into the night; but we would fain believe that they went on steadily, resting duly, and eating their bread with joy. So, at least, should the spiritual temple be erected; though, truth to tell, the workers upon its walls are all too apt to grow cumbered with much serving, all too ready to forget their Lord, and to dream that the building is to be done by themselves alone. How much happier might we be if we would but trust the Lord's house to the Lord of the house! What is far more important, how much better would our building and watching be done if we would but confide in the Lord who both builds and keeps his own church!

3. *"Lo, children are an heritage of the* LORD." This points to another mode of building up a house, namely, by leaving descendants to keep our name and family alive upon the earth. Without this what is a man's purpose in accumulating wealth? To what purpose does he build a house if he has none in his household to hold the house after him? What boots it that he is the possessor of broad acres if he has no heir? Yet in this matter a man is powerless without the Lord. The great Napoleon, with all his sinful care on this point, could not create a dynasty. Hundreds of wealthy persons would give half their estates if they could hear the cry of a babe born of their own bodies. Children are a heritage which Jehovah himself must give, or a man will die childless, and thus his house will be unbuilt.

"And the fruit of the womb is his reward," or a reward from God. He gives children, not as a penalty nor as a burden, but as a favour. They are a token for good if men know how to receive them, and educate them. They are "doubtful blessings" only because we are doubtful persons. Where society is rightly ordered children are regarded, not as an incumbrance, but as an inheritance; and they are received, not with regret, but as a reward. If we are over-crowded in England, and so seem to be embarrassed with too large an increase, we must remember that the Lord does not order us to remain in this narrow island, but would have us fill those boundless regions which wait for the axe and the plough. Yet even here, with all the straits of limited incomes, our best possessions are our own dear offspring, for whom we bless God every day.

4. *"As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth."* Children born to men in their early days, by God's blessing become the comfort of their riper years. A man of war is glad of weapons which may fly where he cannot: good sons are their father's arrows speeding to hit the mark which their sires aim at. What wonders a good man can accomplish if he has affectionate children to second his desires, and lend themselves to his designs! To this end we must have our children in hand while they are yet children, or they are never likely to be so when they are grown up; and we must try to point them and straighten them, so as to make arrows of them in their youth, lest they should prove crooked and unserviceable in after life. Let the Lord favour us with loyal, obedient, affectionate offspring, and we shall find in them our best helpers. We shall see them shot forth into life to our comfort and delight, if we take care from the very beginning that they are directed to the right point.

5. *"Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them."* Those who have no children bewail the fact; those who have few children see them soon gone, and the house is silent, and their life has lost a charm; those who have many gracious children are upon the whole the happiest. Of course a large number of children means a large number of trials; but when these are met by faith in the Lord it also means a mass of love, and a multitude of joys. The writer of this comment gives it as his own observation, that he has seen the most frequent unhappiness in marriages which are unfruitful; that he has himself been most grateful for two of the best of sons; but as they have both grown up, and he has no child at home, he has without a tinge of murmuring, or even wishing that he were otherwise circumstanced, felt that it might have been a blessing to have had a more numerous family: he therefore heartily agrees with the Psalmist's verdict herein expressed. He has known a family in which there were some twelve daughters and three sons, and he never expects to witness upon earth greater domestic felicity than fell to the lot of their parents, who rejoiced in all their children, as the children also rejoiced

in their parents and in one another. When sons and daughters are arrows, it is well to have a quiver full of them; but if they are only sticks, knotty and useless, the fewer of them the better. While those are blessed whose quiver is full, there is no reason to doubt that many are blessed who have no quiver at all; for a quiet life may not need such a warlike weapon. Moreover, a quiver may be small and yet full; and then the blessing is obtained. In any case we may be sure that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of children that he possesseth.

"They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." They can meet foes both in law and in fight. Nobody cares to meddle with a man who can gather a clan of brave sons about him. He speaks to purpose whose own sons make his words emphatic by the resolve to carry out their father's wishes. This is the blessing of Abraham, the old covenant benediction, "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies"; and it is sure to all the beloved of the Lord in some sense or other. Doth not the Lord Jesus thus triumph in his seed? Looked at literally, this favour cometh of the Lord: without his will there would be no children to build up the house, and without his grace there would be no good children to be their parent's strength. If this must be left with the Lord, let us leave every other thing in the same hands. He will undertake for us and prosper our trustful endeavours, and we shall enjoy a tranquil life, and prove ourselves to be our Lord's beloved by the calm and quiet of our spirit. We need not doubt that if God gives us children as a reward he will also send us the food and raiment which he knows they need.

He who is the father of a host of spiritual children is unquestionably happy. He can answer all opponents by pointing to souls who have been saved by his means. Converts are emphatically the heritage of the Lord, and the reward of the preacher's soul travail. By these, under the power of the Holy Ghost, the city of the church is both built up and watched, and the Lord has the glory of it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—*"A Song of Degrees for Solomon."* This Psalm has Solomon's name prefixed to the title, for the purpose that the very builder of the Temple may teach us that he availed nothing to build it without the help of the Lord.—*The Venerable Bede* (672–3—735), *in Neale and Littledale.*

Whole Psalm.—Viewed as one of the "Degrees" in Christian virtue, the ninth, the Psalm is directed against self-reliance.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm.—The steps or degrees in this Psalm, though distinctly marked, are not so regular as in some others.

The twice repeated *"in vain"* of verse 1 may be regarded as the motto or "degree" for verse 2. The correspondence between the two clauses in verse 1 is also very striking. It is as if, on entering on some spiritual undertaking, or even in referring to the present state of matters, the Psalmist emphatically disclaimed as *vain* every other interposition or help than that of Jehovah. And of this *"in vain"* it is well constantly to remind ourselves, especially in seasons of activity and in times of peace; for then we are most liable to fall into the snare of this *vanity.*

The next "degree" is that of success and prosperity (verses 3, 4), which is ascribed to the same Jehovah whose help and protection constituted the commencement and continuance, as now the completion of our well-being. Hence also verse 5 goes not beyond this, but contemplates the highest symbol of full security, influence, and power, in the figurative language of the Old Testament, which St. Augustine refers to "spiritual children, shot forth like arrows into all the world."—*Alfred Edersheim, in "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms,"* 1877.

Whole Psalm.—Solomon, the wisest and richest of kings, after having proved, both from experience and careful observation, that there was nothing but vanity in the life and labours of man, comes to this conclusion, that there is nothing better for a man in this life than that he should moderate his cares and labours, enjoy

what he has, and fear God and keep his commandments: to this end he directs all that is debated in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Very similar are the argument and intention of the Psalm; the authorship of which is ascribed to Solomon in the Inscription, and which there is no reason to doubt. Nor would it be safe, either to call in doubt any inscription without an urgent reason, or to give any other sense to the letter ל than that of *authorship*, unless it be meant that all the inscriptions are uncertain. Again, if the collectors of the Psalms added *titles* according to their own opinion and judgment, there would be no reason why they should have left so many Psalms without any title. This Psalm, therefore, is *Solomon's*, with whose genius and condition it well agrees, as is clear from *Ecclesiastes*, with which it may be compared, and from many *proverbs* on the same subject. . . . The design is, to drawn men away from excessive labours and anxious cares; and to excite godliness and faith in Jehovah. To this the Psalm manifestly tends: for since men, desirous of the happiness and stability of their houses, are unable to secure this by their own endeavours, but need the blessing of God, who gives prosperity with even lighter labours to those that fear him; it is their duty to put a limit to their labours and cares, and to seek the favour of God, by conforming their life and conduct to his will, and confiding in him.—*Herman Venema*, 1697—1787.

Verse 1.—"*Except the* LORD *build.*" It is a fact that בן, *ben, a son*, and בת, *bath, a daughter*, and בית, *beith, a house*, come from the same root, בנה, *banah, to build;* because sons and daughters build up a household, or constitute a *family*, as much and as really as stones and timber constitute a *building.* Now it is true that unless the good hand of God be upon us we cannot prosperously build a place of worship for his name. Unless we have his blessing, a dwelling-house cannot be comfortably erected. And if his blessing be not on our children, the house (the family) may be built up; but instead of its being the house of God, it will be the synagogue of Satan. All marriages that are not under God's blessing will be a private and public curse.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—"*Except the* LORD *build the house,*" etc. He does not say, Unless the Lord consents and is willing that the house should be built and the city kept: but, "Unless the Lord *build;* unless he *keep.*" Hence, in order that the building and keeping may be prosperous and successful, there is necessary, not only the consent of God, but also his working is required: and that working without which nothing can be accomplished, that may be attempted by man. He does not say, Unless the Lord help; but unless the Lord build, unless he keep; *i.e.*, Unless he do all himself. He does not say, To little purpose he labours and watches; but to no purpose he labours, both the builder and the keeper. Therefore, all the efficacy of labours and cares is dependent on the operation and providence of God; and all human strength, care, and industry is in itself vain.

It should be noticed, that he does not say, Because the Lord builds the house he labours in vain who builds it, and, because the Lord keeps the city the watchman waketh in vain: but, If the Lord do not build the house, if he do not keep the city; he labours in vain who builds the house, he waketh in vain who keeps the city. He is far from thinking that the care and human labour, which is employed in the building of houses and keeping of cities, is to be regarded as useless, because the Lord builds and keeps; since it is then the more especially useful and effectual when the Lord himself is the builder and keeper. The Holy Spirit is not the patron of lazy and inert men; but he directs the minds of those who labour to the providence and power of God.—*Wolfgang Musculus*, 1497—1563.

Verse 1.—"*Except the* LORD *build the house.*" On the lintel of the door in many an old English house, we may still read the words, *Nisi Dominus frustra*—the Latin version of the opening words of the Psalm. Let us also trust in him, and inscribe these words over the portal of "the house of our pilgrimage"; and beyond a doubt all *will* be well with us, both in this world and in that which is to come.—*Samuel Cox, in "The Pilgrim Psalms,"* 1874.

Verse 1.—"*Except the* LORD *build the house,*" etc. In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favour. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend?

or do we imagine we no longer need his assistance? I have lived for a long time [81 years]; and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel: we shall be divided by our little, partial, local interests; our prospects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a by-word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing government by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, or conquest. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business; and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.—*Benjamin Franklin: Speech in Convention for forming a Constitution for the United States*, 1787.

Verse 1.—Note, how he puts first the building of the house, and then subjoins the keeping of the city. He advances from the part to the whole; for the city consists of houses.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*Except the LORD keep the city,*" etc. Fires may break out in spite of the watchmen; a tempest may sweep over it; bands of armed men may assail it; or the pestilence may suddenly come into it, and spread desolation through its dwellings.—*Albert Barnes* (1798—1870), *in "Notes on the Psalms."*

Verse 1.—One important lesson which Madame Guyon learned from her temptations and follies was that of her entire dependence on Divine grace. "I became," she says, "deeply assured of what the prophet hath said, '*Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.*' When I looked to thee, O my Lord! thou wast my faithful keeper; thou didst continually defend my heart against all kinds of enemies. But, alas! when left to myself, I was all weakness. How easily did my enemies prevail over me! Let others ascribe their victories to their own fidelity: as for myself, I shall never attribute them to anything else than thy paternal care. I have too often experienced, to my cost, what I should be without thee, to presume in the least on any wisdom or efforts of my own. It is to thee, O God, my Deliverer, that I owe everything! And it is a source of infinite satisfaction, that I am thus indebted to thee."—*From the Life of Jeanne Bouvier de la Mothe Guyon*, 1648—1717.

Verse 1.—

If God build not the house, and lay
  The groundwork sure—whoever build,
It cannot stand one stormy day.
  If God be not the city's shield,
If he be not their bars and wall,
In vain is watch-tower, men, and all.

Though then thou wak'st when others rest,
  Though rising thou prevent'st the sun,
Though with lean care thou daily feast,
  Thy labour's lost, and thou undone;
But God his child will feed and keep,
And draw the curtains to his sleep.

Phineas Fletcher, 1584—1650.

Verse 2.—"*It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late,*" etc. The Psalmist is exhorting to give over undue and anxious labour to accomplish our designs. The phrases in the Hebrew are "making early to rise" and "making late to sit"—not "up," but *down*. This means an artificial lengthening of the day. The law of work is in our nature. The limitations of effort are set forth in nature. In order that all may be accomplished by the human race which is necessary to be done for human progress, all men must work. But no man should work beyond his physical and intellectual ability, nor beyond the hours which nature allots. No net result of good to the individual or to the race comes of any artificial prolonging of the day at either end. Early rising, eating one's breakfast by candlelight, and prolonged vigils, the scholar's "midnight oil," are a delusion and

a snare. Work while it is day. When the night comes, rest. The other animals do this, and, as races, fare as well as this anxious human race.

"The bread of sorrows" means the bread of toil, of wearisome effort. Do what you ought to do, and the Lord will take care of that which you cannot do. Compare Prov. x. 22: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it," which means, "The blessing of Jehovah maketh rich, and toil can add nothing thereto." Compare also Matt. vi. 25: "Take no thought [be not anxious] for your life," etc.

"For so he giveth his beloved sleep." The *"for"* is not in the original. *"So"* means "with just the same result" or "all the same," or "without more trouble." That is the signification of the Hebrew word as it occurs. *"His beloved"* may work and sleep; and what is needed will be provided just as certainly as if they laboured unduly, with anxiety. It has been suggested that the translation should be *"in sleep."* While they are sleeping, the Heavenly Father is carrying forward his work for them. Or, while they wake and work, the Lord giveth to them, and so he does when they rest and sleep.—*Charles F. Deems, in "The Study,"* 1879.

Verse 2.—The Lord's Temple was built without any looking unto or dependence on man; all human wisdom and confidence was rejected on the whole; the plan was given by the Lord God himself; the model of it was in Solomon's possession; nothing was left to the wit or wisdom of men; there was no reason to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, whilst engaged in the good work; no, I should conceive it was a season of grace to such as were employed in the building; somewhat like what it was with you and me when engaged in God's holy ordinances. I should conceive the minds of the workmen at perfect peace, their conversation together much on the grand subject of the Temple, and its intention as referring to the glorious Messiah, its grand and glorious antitype. I should conceive their minds were wholly disencumbered from all carking cares. They did not rise early without being refreshed in body and mind; they did not sit up late as though they wanted; they were not careful how they should provide for their families; they were, as the beloved of the Lord, perfectly contented; they enjoyed sweet sleep and refreshment by it, this was from the Lord; he giveth his beloved ones sleep.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 2.—*"It is vain,"* etc. Some take this place in a more particular and restrained sense; as if David would intimate that all their agitations to oppose the reign of Solomon, though backed with much care and industry, should be fruitless; though Absalom and Adonijah were tortured with the care of their own ambitious designs, yet God would give Jedidiah, or his beloved, rest; that is, the kingdom should safely be devolved upon Solomon, who took no such pains to court the people, and to raise himself up into their esteem as Absalom and Adonijah did. The meaning is, that though worldly men fare never so hardly, beat their brains, tire their spirits, rack their consciences, yet many times all is for nothing; either God doth not give them an estate, or not the comfort of it. But his beloved, without any of these racking cares, enjoy contentment; if they have not the world, they have sleep and rest; with silence submitting to the will of God, and with quietness waiting for the blessing of God. Well, then, acknowledge the providence that you may come under the blessing of it: labour *without God* cannot prosper; *against God* and against his will in his word, will surely miscarry.—*Thomas Manton,* 1620—1677.

Verse 2.—*"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."* No prayer without work, no work without prayer.—

By caring and fretting,
By agony and fear,
There is of God no getting,
But prayer he will hear.

From J. P. Lange's Commentary on James, 1862.

Verse 2.—*"Eat the bread of sorrows."* Living a life of misery and labours, fretting at their own disappointments, eaten up with envy at the advancement of others, afflicted overmuch with losses and wrongs. There is no end of all their labours. Some have died of it, others been distracted and put out of their wits; so that you are never like to see good days as long as you cherish the love of the world, but will still lie under self-tormenting care and trouble of mind, by which a man grateth on his own flesh.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 2.—"*So he giveth his beloved sleep.*" כֵּן יִתֵּן לִידִידוֹ שֵׁנָה. These latter words are variously rendered, and sufficiently obscurely, because all take this כֵּן as a particle of comparison, which does not seem to be in place here: some even omit it altogether. But כֵּן also signifies "*well*," "*rightly*": 2 Kings vii. 9; Num. xxvii. 7. Why should we not render it here, "*He giveth to His beloved to sleep well*": *i.e.*, While those who, mistrusting God, attribute all things to their own labour, do not sleep well; for truly they "*rise early and sit up late*"; he gives to his beloved this grace, that reposing in his fatherly care and goodness, they fully enjoy their sleep, as those who know that such anxious labour is not necessary for them: or, "*Truly, he giveth to his beloved sleep;*" *as* כֵּן may be the same as אָכֵן. But שֵׁנָה may be taken for בִּשְׁנָה, and rendered, "*Truly, he giveth to his beloved in sleep;*" viz., that he should be refreshed by this means.—*Louis De Dieu*, 1590—1642.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The sentence may be read either, *he will give sleep to his beloved*, or, *he will give in sleeping;* that is, he will give them those things which unbelievers labour to acquire by their own industry. The particle כֵּן, *ken, thus*, is put to express certainty; for with the view of producing a more undoubted persuasion of the truth—that God gives food to his people without any great care on their part—which seems incredible and a fiction, Solomon points to the thing as it were with the finger. He indeed speaks as if God nourished the slothfulness of his servants by his gentle treatment; but as we know that men are created with the design of their being occupied, and as in the subsequent Psalm we shall find that the servants of God are accounted happy when they eat the labour of their hands, it is certain that the word *sleep* is not to be understood as implying slothfulness, but a placid labour, to which true believers subject themselves by the obedience of faith. Whence proceeds this so great ardour in the unbelieving, that they move not a finger without a tumult or bustle, in other words, without tormenting themselves with superfluous cares, but because they attribute nothing to the providence of God! The faithful, on the other hand, although they lead a laborious life, yet follow their vocations with composed and tranquil minds. Thus their hands are not idle, but their minds repose in the stillness of faith, as if they were asleep.—*John Calvin*, 1509—1564.

Verse 2.—"*He giveth his beloved sleep.*" It is *a peculiar rest*, it is a rest peculiar to sons, to saints, to heirs, to beloved ones. "So he gives *his beloved* rest," or as the Hebrew hath it, dearling, or dear beloved, quiet rest, without care or sorrow. The Hebrew word שׁנא, *shena*, is written with א, a quiet, dumb letter, which is not usual, to denote the more quietness and rest. This rest is a crown that God sets only upon the head of saints; it is a gold chain that he only puts about his children's necks; it is a jewel that he only hangs between his beloved's breasts; it is a flower that he only sticks in his darlings' bosoms. This rest is a tree of life that is proper and peculiar to the inhabitants of that heavenly country; it is children's bread, and shall never be given to dogs.—*Thomas Brooks*, 1608—1680.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—As the Lord *gave* a precious gift to his *beloved*, the first Adam, while he *slept*, by taking a rib from his side, and by *building* therefrom a woman, Eve his bride, the Mother of all living; so, while Christ, the Second Adam, the true Jedidiah, the Well-beloved Son of God, was sleeping in death on the cross, God formed for him, in his death, and by his death,—even by the life-giving streams flowing from his own precious side,—the Church, the spiritual Eve, the Mother of all living; and gave her to him as his bride. Thus he *built* for him in his *sleep* the spiritual Temple of his Church.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 2.—Quiet sleep is the gift of God, and it is the love of God to give quiet sleep.

1. *'Tis God's gift* when we have it: quiet sleep does revive nature as the dew or small rain does refresh the grass. Now, as the prophet speaks (Jer. xiv. 22), "Are there any of the gods of the heathen can cause rain, or can the heavens give showers?" so it may be said: Are there any of the creatures in earth or heaven that can give sleep? That God which gives showers of rain must give hours of rest: peaceable repose is God's peculiar *gift*.

2. *'Tis God's love* when he gives it, "*for so he giveth his beloved sleep*"; that is, sleep with quietness: yea, the Hebrew word, *shena*, being with *aleph*, a quiet or resting letter, otherwise than is usual, it signifies the greater quietness in time of sleep. And whereas some apply the peace only to Solomon, who was called Jedidiah, the beloved of the Lord, to whom God gave sleep; the Septuagint turns the Hebrew word plurally, "*so God giveth his beloved ones sleep*"; to his saints in general God

gives quiet sleep as a token of his love ; yea, in the times of their greatest peril. Thus Peter in prison when he was bound with chains, beset with soldiers, and to die the next day, yet see how fast he was found asleep (Acts xii. 6, 7) : " The same night Peter was sleeping, and behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison," yet Peter slept till the angel smote him on the side and raised him up : so God " gives his beloved sleep," and let his beloved give him the honour ; and the rather because *herein God answers our prayer, herein God fulfils his promise.*

Is it not *our prayer* that God would prevent affrighting, and afford refreshing sleep ? and is it not God's answer when in sleep he doth sustain us ? " I cried (says David) unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept, for the Lord sustained me " : Ps. iii. 4, 5.

Is it not *God's promise* to vouchsafe sleep free from frights ? " When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid : yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet " : Prov. iii. 24. Hence God's servants while they are in the wilderness and woods of this world, they sleep safely, and devils as wild beasts can do them no harm. Ezek. xxxiv. 25. Have we through God's blessing this benefit, let us abundantly give praise and live praise unto God hereupon. Yea, large praise belongs to the Lord for quiet sleep from men of all sorts.—*Philip Goodwin, in "The Mystery of Dreams,"* 1658.

Verse 2.—*"So he giveth his beloved sleep."* The world would give its favourites power, wealth, distinction ; God gives *"sleep."* Could he give anything better? To give sleep when the storm is raging ; to give sleep when conscience is arraying a long catalogue of sins ; to give sleep when evil angels are trying to overturn our confidence in Christ ; to give sleep when death is approaching, when judgment is at hand—oh ! what gift could be more suitable ? what more worthy of God ? or what more precious to the soul ?

But we do not mean to enlarge upon the various senses which might thus be assigned to the gift. You will see for yourselves that sleep, as denoting repose and refreshment, may be regarded as symbolising " the rest which remaineth for the righteous," which is the gift of God to his chosen. " Surely he giveth his beloved sleep," may be taken as parallel to what is promised in Isaiah—" Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." Whatever you can understand by the " peace " in the one case, you may also understand by the *"sleep "* in the other. But throughout the Old and New Testaments, and especially the latter, sleep, as you know, is often put for death. " He slept with his fathers " is a common expression in the Jewish Scriptures. To " sleep in Jesus " is a common way of speaking of those who die in the faith of the Redeemer.

Suppose, then, we take the *"sleep "* in our text as denoting death, and confine our discourse to an illustration of the passage under this one point of view. *"Surely he giveth his beloved sleep."* What an aspect will this confer on death—to regard it as God's gift—a gift which he vouchsafes to those whom he loves !

It is not " he *sendeth* his beloved sleep," which might be true whilst God himself remained at a distance ; it is " he *giveth* his beloved sleep " ; as though God himself brought the sleep, and laid it on the eyes of the weary Christian warrior. And if God himself have to do with the dissolution, can we not trust him that he will loosen gently the silver cord, and use all kindness and tenderness in " taking down the earthly house of this tabernacle " ? I know not more comforting words than those of our text, whether for the being uttered in the sick-room of the righteous, or breathed over their graves. They might almost take the pain from disease, as they certainly do the dishonour from death. What is bestowed by God as a " gift on his beloved " will assuredly occupy his care, his watchfulness, his solicitude ; and I conclude, therefore, that he is present, in some special and extraordinary sense when the righteous lie dying ; ay, and that he sets his seal, and plants his guardianship where the righteous lie dead. "O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? " Let the saint be but constant in the profession of godliness, and his last hours shall be those in which Deity himself shall stand almost visibly at his side, and his last resting-place that which he shall shadow with his wings. Sickness may be protracted and distressing ; " earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," may be plaintively breathed over the unconscious dead ; but nothing in all this lengthened struggle, nothing in all this apparent defeat, can harm the righteous man—nay, nothing can be other than for his present good and his eternal glory, seeing that death with all its accompaniments is but joy—God's

gift to his beloved. Dry your tears, ye that stand around the bed of the dying believer, the parting moment is almost at hand—a cold damp is on the forehead—the eye is fixed—the pulse too feeble to be felt—are you staggered at such a spectacle? Nay! let faith do its part! The chamber is crowded with glorious forms; angels are waiting there to take charge of the disembodied soul; a hand gentler than any human is closing those eyes; and a voice sweeter than any human is whispering—*"Surely the Lord giveth his beloved sleep."—Henry Melvill* (1798—1871), *in a Sermon entitled "Death the Gift of God."*

Verse 2.—*"For so he giveth his beloved sleep."* One night I could not rest, and in the wild wanderings of my thoughts I met this text, and communed with it: *"So he giveth his beloved sleep."* In my reverie, as I was on the border of the land of dreams, methought I was in a castle. Around its massive walls there ran a deep moat. Watchmen paced the walls both day and night. It was a fine old fortress, bidding defiance to the foe; but I was not happy in it. I thought I lay upon a couch; but scarcely had I closed my eyes, ere a trumpet blew, "To arms! To arms!" and when the danger was overpast, I lay me down again. "To arms! To arms!" once more resounded, and again I started up. Never could I rest. I thought I had my armour on, and moved about perpetually clad in mail, rushing each hour to the castle top, aroused by some fresh alarm. At one time a foe was coming from the west; at another from the east. I thought I had a treasure somewhere down in some deep part of the castle, and all my care was to guard it. I dreaded, I feared, I trembled lest it should be taken from me. I awoke, and I thought I would not live in such a tower as that for all its grandeur. It was the castle of discontent, the castle of ambition, in which man never rests. It is ever, "To arms! To arms!" There is a foe here, or a foe there. His dear-loved treasure must be guarded. Sleep never crossed the drawbridge of the castle of discontent. Then I thought I would supplement it by another reverie. I was in a cottage. It was in what poets call a beautiful and pleasant place, but I cared not for that. I had no treasure in the world, save one sparkling jewel on my breast: and I thought I put my hand on that and went to sleep, nor did I wake till morning light. That treasure was a quiet conscience and the love of God—"the peace that passeth all understanding." I slept, because I slept in the house of content, satisfied with what I had. Go, ye overreaching misers! Go, ye grasping, ambitious men! I envy not your life of inquietude. The sleep of statesmen is often broken; the dream of the miser is always evil; the sleep of the man who loves gain is never hearty; but God *"giveth,"* by contentment, *"his beloved sleep."—C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—*"He giveth his beloved sleep."*

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace surpassing this—
"He giveth his beloved sleep."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1809—1861.

Verse 3.—*"Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord."* There is no reason, therefore, why you should be apprehensive for your families and country; there is no reason why you should weary yourselves with such great and such restless labour. God will be with you and your children, since they are his heritage.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—*"Lo, children are an heritage of the* LORD." That is, to many God gives children in place of temporal good. To many others he gives houses, lands, and thousands of gold and silver, and with them the womb that beareth not; and these are their inheritance. The poor man has from God a number of children, without lands or money; these are his inheritance; and God shows himself their father, feeding and supporting them by a chain of miraculous providences. Where is the *poor man* who would give up his *six children* with the prospect of having *more*, for the *thousands* or *millions* of him who is the *centre* of his *own existence*, and has neither *root* nor *branch* but his forlorn solitary self upon the face of the earth? Let the fruitful family, however poor, lay this to heart· *"Children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."* And he who gave them will feed them; for it is a fact, and the *maxim* formed on it has never failed, "Wherever God sends mouths, he sends meat." "Murmur not," said an Arab to his friend,

" because thy family is large ; know that it is for *their sakes* that God feeds *thee.*"—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—"*Children are an heritage of the Lord.*" The Hebrew seems to imply that children are an heritage belonging to the Lord, and not an heritage given by the Lord, as most English readers appear to take it. The Targum likewise bears this out.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Verse 3.—"*Children are an heritage of the* LORD," etc. The Psalmist speaks of what children are unto godly and holy parents, for unto such only is any blessing given by God as a reward, and the Psalmist expressly speaks of blessings which God gives his beloved ones, and this blessing of children he makes to be the last and greatest. It is also as certain that he speaks of children as supposed to be holy and godly ; for otherwise they are not a reward, but a curse, and a sorrow to him that begat them. The Psalm was made, as appears by the title of it, "*of* or *for Solomon,*" and therefore, as it is more than probable, was penned, as that other Psalm, the 72nd, which bears the same title, by David the father, of and for Solomon his son, who was, for his father's sake, " the beloved of God " (2 Sam. xii. 24, 25), and upon whom the sure covenant and mercies of David were entailed, together with his kingdom. And what is said in this Psalm, in the verse before, fitly agrees to him, for he it was who was to build God's house, to keep, and preserve Jerusalem the city, and the kingdom in peace, and to have rest, or as the Psalmist calls it (verse 3), quiet sleep given him by God, from all his enemies round about him. And for this, compare the prophecy of him (1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10) with the instructions here given him in the three first verses of this Psalm, and ye will see how fitly this Psalm concerns him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 3.—"*Children are an heritage of the Lord.*" Hence note, 'tis one of the greatest outward blessings to have a family full of dutiful children. To have many children is the next blessing to much grace. To have many children about us is better than to have much wealth about us. To have store of these olive plants (as the Psalmist calls them) round about our table is better than to have store of oil and wine upon our table. We know the worth of dead, or rather lifeless treasures, but who knows the worth of living treasures ? Every man who hath children hath not a blessing in them, yet children are a blessing, and some have many blessings in one child. Children are chiefly a blessing to the children of God. "*Lo, children are an heritage of the* LORD *: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*" But are not houses and lands, gold and silver, an heritage bestowed by the Lord upon his people ? Doubtless they are, for the earth is his, and the fulness of it, and he gives it to the children of men. But though all things are of God, yet all things are not alike of him : children are more of God than houses and lands.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—Children !—might one say as the word was uttered—I left mine in my distant home, in poverty, their wants and numbers increasing, with the means of providing for their comfort daily narrowing. Even should my life be prolonged, they will be children of want, but with sickness and warnings of death upon me, they will soon be helpless and friendless orphans. Yes ! but will God be neglectful of his own heritage ? will he turn a gift into a sorrow ? Poor as thou art, repine not at the number of thy children. Though lions lack thou shalt not, if thou seekest him ; and know that it may be even for their sakes that he feedeth thee. If even thou wouldst not part with one of them for thousands of gold and silver, believe that he who is the fountain of all tenderness regards them with yet deeper love, and will make them now, in thy hour of trial, a means of increasing thy dependence on him, and soon thy support and pride.

Children !—might another say, as the Psalm referred to them—on their opening promise the breath of the destroyer has been poured. They are ripening visibly for the grave, and their very smile and caress cause my wounded heart to bleed anew. Yes, mourner ; but *God's heritage !* may he not claim his own ? They are in safe keeping when in his, and will soon be restored to thee in the better land, where death will make them ministering angels at his throne ; nay, they will be the first to welcome thee to its glories, to love and worship with thee throughout eternity.

Children ! this word to a third, of an even sadder and more anxious spirit, might seem like the planting of a dagger in his heart. His children have forsaken their father's God. Their associates were the vain and vicious ; their pleasures were the pleasures of folly and shame ; their lives barren of all promise, their souls destitute of all purpose, and steeled against all reproof. True, but *the heritage of the Lord still.* Hast thou, sorrowing parent, asked him for wisdom to keep it for him ?

Have due thought, prayer, watchful and holy living been expended on that heritage of God? No culture, no harvest in the soil; no prayer, no blessing from the soul. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," is a promise that though sometimes, yet but seldom has missed fulfilment. Bring them to Jesus, and, unchanged in his tenderness, he will still lay his hands upon them and bless them.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verse 3.—"*The fruit of the womb is his reward.*" John Howard Hinton's daughter said to him as she knelt by his death-bed:—"There is no greater blessing than for children to have godly parents." "And the next," said the dying father, with a beam of gratitude, "for parents to have godly children."—*Memoir in Baptist Handbook,* 1875.

Verse 4.—"*As arrows.*" Well doth David call children "*arrows*"; for if they be well bred, they shoot at their parents' enemies; and if they be evil bred, they shoot at their parents.—*Henry Smith,* 1560—1591.

Verse 4.—"*As arrows.*" Children are compared to "*arrows.*" Now, we know that sticks are not by nature arrows; they do not grow so, but they are made so; by nature they are knotty and rugged, but by art they are made smooth and handsome. So children by nature are rugged and untoward, but by education are refined and reformed, made pliable to the divine will and pleasure.—*George Swinnock,* 1627—1673.

Verse 4.—"*As arrows.*" "Our children are what we make them. They are represented '*As arrows in the hand of a mighty man,*' and *arrows* go the way we aim them."

Verse 4.—"*As arrows.*" In a collection of *Chinese Proverbs and Apophthegms,* subjoined to *Hau Kiou Choaan,* or, *The Pleasing History,* I find a proverb cited from *Du Halde,* which seems full to our purpose. It is this:—"When a son is born into a family, a bow and arrow are hung before the gate." To which the following note is added: "As no such custom appears to be literally observed, this should seem to be a metaphorical expression, signifying that a new protector is added to the family," equivalent to that of the Psalms,—"*as arrows,*" etc.—*James Merrick* (1720—1769), *in "Annotations on the Psalms."*

Verse 4.—"*Children of the youth*" are "*arrows in the hand,*" which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory, and the service of their generation; but afterwards, when they are gone abroad in the world, they are arrows out of the hand; it is too late to bend them then. But these "*arrows in the hand*" too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose grey hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*Children of the youth.*" *Sons of youth, i.e.,* born while their parents are still young. See Gen. xxxvii. 2; Isa. liv. 6. The allusion is not only to their vigour (Gen. xlix. 3), but the value of their aid to the parent in declining age.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 4.—"*Children of the youth.*" If the right interpretation is commonly given to this phrase, this Psalm greatly encourages early marriages. It is a growing evil of modern times that marriages are so often deferred till it is highly improbable that in the course of nature the father can live to mould his offspring to habits of honour and virtue.—*William Swan Plumer* (1802—1880), *in "Studies in the Book of Psalms."*

Verse 5.—"*Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.*" Dr. Guthrie used to say, "I am rich in nothing but children." They were eleven in number.

Verse 5.—"*Quiver full.*" Many children make many prayers, and many prayers bring much blessing.—*German Proverb.*

Verse 5.—The Rev. Moses Browne had twelve children. On one remarking to him, "Sir, you have just as many children as Jacob," he replied, "Yes, and I have Jacob's God to provide for them."—*G. S. Bowes.*

Verse 5.—I remember a great man coming into my house, at Waltham, and seeing all my children standing in the order of their age and stature, said, "These are they that make rich men poor." But he straight received this answer, "Nay, my lord, these are they that make a poor man rich; for there is not one of these whom we would part with for all your wealth." It is easy to observe that none are so gripple and hardfisted as the childless; whereas those, who, for the maintenance of large families, are inured to frequent disbursements, find such experience

of Divine providence in the faithful management of their affairs, as that they lay out with more cheerfulness what they receive. Wherein their care must be abated when God takes it off from them to himself; and, if they be not wanting to themselves, their faith gives them ease in casting their burden upon him, who hath more power and more right to it, since our children are more his than our own. He that feedeth the young ravens, can he fail the best of his creatures?—*Joseph Hall*, 1574—1656.

Verse 5.—"*They shall not be ashamed*," etc. Able enough he shall be to defend himself, and keep off all injuries, being fortified by his children; and if it happen that he hath a cause depending in the gate, and to be tried before the judges, he shall have the patronage of his children, and not suffer in his plea for want of advocates; his sons will stand up in a just cause for him.—*William Nicholson* (——1671), *in "David's Harp Strung and Tuned."*

Verse 5.—"*But they shall speak.*" "*But destroy*" is the marginal version, and is here much more emphatical than the rendering "*speak.*" For this sense see 2 Chron. xxii. 10. Others refer it to litigation, when they shall successfully defend the cause of their parents. But as I do not see how their number or vigour could add weight to their evidence in a judicial cause, I prefer the sense given.—*Benjamin Boothroyd*, 1768—1836.

Verse 5.—"*With the enemies in the gate.*" Probably the Psalmist alludes here to the defence of a besieged city; the gate was very commonly the point of attack, and the taking of it rendered the conquest of the place easy: compare Gen. xxii. 17; xxiv. 60.—*Daniel Cresswell* (1776—1844), *in "The Psalms . . . . with Critical and Explanatory Notes,"* 1843.

Verse 5.—

> This is the pride, the glory of a man,
> To train obedient children in his house,
> Prompt on his enemies t' avenge his wrongs,
> And with the father's zeal in honour high
> To hold his friends.
>
> *Sophocles' "Antigone." R. Potter's Translation.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. The human hand without the hand of God is in vain. II. The human eye without the eye of God is in vain. Or, I. God is to be acknowledged in all our works. 1. By seeking his direction before them. 2. By depending upon his help in them. 3. By giving him the glory of them. II. In all our cares. 1. By owning our short sight. 2. By trusting to his foresight.—*G. R.*

Verse 1 (*first part*).—Illustrate the principles: I. In building up character. II. In constructing plans of life and of work. III. In framing schemes of happiness. IV. In rearing a hope of eternal life. V. In raising and enlarging the church.—*J. F.*

Verses 1, 2.—I. What we may not expect: namely, God to work without our building, watching, etc. II. What we may expect: Failure if we are without God. III. What we should not do: Fret, worry, etc. IV. What we may do: So trust as to rest in peace.

Verse 2 (*with Psalm* cxxvi. 2).—The labour of the law contrasted with the laughter of the gospel.

Verse 2.—"*The bread of sorrows.*" I. When God sends it, it is good to eat it. II. When we bake it ourselves, it is vain to eat it. III. When the devil brings it, it is deadly meat.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—Blessings that come to us in sleep. 1. Renewed health and vigour of body. 2. Mental repose and refreshment. 3. Sweeter thoughts and holier purposes. 4. Providential gifts. The rains fall, the fruits of the earth grow and ripen, the mill wheel goes round, the ship pursues her voyage, etc., while we slumber. Often when we are doing nothing for ourselves God is doing most.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 12: "The Peculiar Sleep of the Beloved."

Verse 3.—Sermon by Thomas Manton. Works: vol. xviii. pp. 84—95. [Nichol's Edition.]

Verses 3—5.—Children. Consider: I. The effects of receiving them as a heritage from the Lord. 1. Parents will trust in the Lord for their provision and safety. 2. Will regard them as a sacred trust from the Lord of whose care they must render an account. 3. Will train them up in the fear of the Lord. 4. Will often consult God concerning them. 5. Will render them up uncomplainingly when the Lord calls them to himself by death. II. The effects of their right training. 1. They become the parents' joy. 2. The permanent record of the parents' wisdom. 3. The support and solace of the parents' old age. 4. The transmitters of their parents' virtues to another generation; for well-trained children become, in their turn, wise parents.—*J. F.*

Verse 4.—The spiritual uses of children. I. When they die in infancy, awakening parents. II. When they go home from Sunday-school carrying holy influences. III. When they become converted. IV. When they grow up and become useful men and women.

Verses 4, 5.—I. The dependence of children upon parents. 1. For safety. They are in their quiver. 2. For direction. They are sent forth by them. 3. For support. They are in the hands of the mighty. II. The dependence of parents upon children. 1. For defence. Who will hear a parent spoken against? 2. For happiness. "A wise son maketh," etc. Children elicit some of the noblest and tenderest emotions of human nature. Happy is the Christian minister who with a full quiver can say, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me."—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—"The Reward of Well-doing Sure." Sermon by Henry Melvill, in "The Pulpit," 1856.

PSALM CXXVIII.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees. *There is an evident ascent from the last Psalm: that did but hint at the way in which a house may be built up, but this draws a picture of that house built, and adorned with domestic bliss through the Lord's own benediction. There is clearly an advance in age, for here we go beyond children to children's children; and also a progress in happiness, for children which in the last Psalm were arrows are here olive plants, and instead of speaking "with the enemies in the gate" we close with "peace upon Israel." Thus we rise step by step, and sing as we ascend.*

SUBJECT.—*It is a family hymn,—a song for a marriage, or a birth, or for any day in which a happy household has met to praise the Lord. Like all the songs of degrees, it has an eye to Zion and Jerusalem, which are both expressly mentioned, and it closes like Psalms cxxv, cxxx., and cxxxi., with an allusion to Israel. It is a short Psalm, but exceedingly full and suggestive. Its poetry is of the highest order. Perhaps in no country can it be better understood than in our own, for we above all nations delight to sing of "Home, sweet home."*

EXPOSITION.

BLESSED *is* everyone that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.
2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy *shalt* thou *be*, and *it shall be* well with thee.
3 Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.
4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.
5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, *and* peace upon Israel.

1. *"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD."* The last Psalm ended with a blessing,—for the word there translated "happy" is the same as that which is here rendered "blessed": thus the two songs are joined by a catch-word. There is also in them a close community of subject. The fear of God is the corner-stone of all blessedness. We must reverence the ever-blessed God before we can be blessed ourselves. Some think that this life is an evil, an infliction, a thing upon which rests a curse; but it is not so; the God-fearing man has a present blessing resting upon him. It is not true that it would be to him "something better not to be." He is happy now, for he is the child of the happy God, the ever-living Jehovah; and he is even here a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, whose heritage is not misery, but joy. This is true of every one of the God-fearing, of all conditions, in all ages: each one and every one is blessed. Their blessedness may not always be seen by carnal reason, but it is always a fact, for God himself declares that it is so; and we know that those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. Let us cultivate that holy filial fear of Jehovah which is the essence of all true religion;—the fear of reverence, of dread to offend, of anxiety to please, and of entire submission and obedience. This fear of the Lord is the fit fountain of holy living: we look in vain for holiness apart from it: none but those who fear the Lord will ever walk in his ways.

"That walketh in his ways." The religious life, which God declares to be blessed, must be practical as well as emotional. It is idle to talk of fearing the Lord if we act like those who have no care whether there be a God or no. God's ways will be our ways if we have a sincere reverence for him: if the heart is joined unto God, the feet will follow hard after him. A man's heart will be seen in his walk, and the blessing will come where heart and walk are both with God. Note that the first Psalm links the benediction with the walk in a negative way, "Blessed is the man that walketh *not*," etc.; but here we find it in connection with the positive form of our conversation. To enjoy the divine blessing we must be active, and walk;

we must be methodical, and walk in certain ways; and we must be godly, and walk in the Lord's ways. God's ways are blessed ways; they were cast up by the Blessed One, they were trodden by him in whom we are blessed, they are frequented by the blessed, they are provided with means of blessing, they are paved with present blessings, and they lead to eternal blessedness: who would not desire to walk in them?

2. "*For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.*" The general doctrine of the first verse here receives a personal application: note the change to the second person: "*thou* shalt eat," etc. This is the portion of God's saints,—to work, and to find a reward in so doing. God is the God of labourers. We are not to leave our worldly callings because the Lord has called us by grace: we are not promised a blessing upon romantic idleness or unreasonable dreaming, but upon hard work and honest industry. Though we are in God's hands we are to be supported by our own hands. He will give us daily bread, but it must be made our own by labour. All kinds of labour are here included; for if one toils by the sweat of his brow, and another does so by the sweat of his brain, there is no difference in the blessing; save that it is generally more healthy to work with the body than with the mind only. Without God it would be vain to labour; but when we are labourers together with God a promise is set before us. The promise is that labour shall be fruitful, and that he who performs it shall himself enjoy the recompense of it. It is a grievous ill for a man to slave his life away and receive no fair remuneration for his toil: as a rule, God's servants rise out of such bondage and claim their own, and receive it: at any rate, this verse may encourage them to do so. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." Under the Theocracy the chosen people could see this promise literally fulfilled; but when evil rulers oppressed them their earnings were withheld by churls, and their harvests were snatched away from them by marauders. Had they walked in the fear of the Lord they would never have known such great evils. Some men never enjoy their labour, for they give themselves no time for rest. Eagerness to get takes from them the ability to enjoy. Surely, if it is worth while to labour, it is worth while to eat of that labour. "*Happy shalt thou be,*" or, *Oh, thy happiness.* Heaped up happinesses in the plural belong to that man who fears the Lord. He is happy, and he shall be happy in a thousand ways. The context leads us to expect family happiness. Our God is our household God. The Romans had their Lares and Penates, but we have far more than they in the one only living and true God. "*And it shall be well with thee,*" or *good for thee.* Yes, good is for the good; and it shall be well with those who do well.

> "What cheering words are these!
> Their sweetness who can tell?
> In time, and to eternal days,
> 'Tis with the righteous well."

If we fear God we may dismiss all other fear. In walking in God's ways we shall be under his protection, provision, and approval; danger and destruction shall be far from us: all things shall work our good. In God's view it would not be a blessed thing for us to live without exertion, nor to eat the unearned bread of dependence: the happiest state on earth is one in which we have something to do, strength to do it with, and a fair return for what we have done. This, with the divine blessing, is all that we ought to desire, and it is sufficient for any man who fears the Lord and abhors covetousness. Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.

3. "*Thy wife.*" To reach the full of earthly felicity a man must not be alone. A helpmeet was needed in Paradise, and assuredly she is not less necessary out of it. He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing. It is not every man that feareth the Lord who has a wife; but if he has, she shall share in his blessedness and increase it.

"*Shall be as a fruitful vine.*" To complete domestic bliss children are sent. They come as the lawful fruit of marriage, even as clusters appear upon the vine. For the grapes the vine was planted; for children was the wife provided. It is generally well with any creature when it fulfills its purpose, and it is so far well with married people when the great design of their union is brought about. They must not look upon fruitfulness as a burden, but as a blessing. Good wives are also fruitful in kindness, thrift, helpfulness, and affection: if they bear no children, they are by no means barren if they yield us the wine of consolation and the clusters

of comfort. Truly blessed is the man whose wife is fruitful in those good works which are suitable to her near and dear position.

"By the sides of thine house." She keeps to the house: she is a home bird. Some imagine that she is like a vine which is nailed up to the house wall; but they have no such custom in Palestine, neither is it pleasant to think of a wife as growing up by a wall, and as bound to the very bricks and mortar of her husband's dwelling. No, she is a fruitful vine, and a faithful house-keeper; if you wish to find her, she is within the house: she is to be found both inside and outside the home, but her chief fruitfulness is in the inner side of the dwelling, which she adorns. Eastern houses usually have an open square in the centre, and the various rooms are ranged around the sides,—there shall the wife be found, busy in one room or another, as the hour of the day demands. She keeps at home, and so keeps the home. It is her husband's house, and she is her husband's; as the text puts it—"thy wife," and "thy house"; but by her loving care her husband is made so happy that he is glad to own her as an equal proprietor with himself. for he is hers, and the house is hers too.

"Thy children like olive plants round about thy table." Hundreds of times have I seen the young olive plants springing up around the parent stem, and it has always made me think of this verse. The Psalmist never intended to suggest the idea of olive plants round a table, but of young people springing up around their parents, even as olive plants surround the fine, well-rooted tree. The figure is very striking, and would be sure to present itself to the mind of every observer in the olive country. How beautiful to see the gnarled olive, still bearing abundant fruit, surrounded with a little band of sturdy successors, any one of which would be able to take its place should the central olive be blown down, or removed in any other way. The notion of a table in a bower may suit a cockney in a tea-garden, but would never occur to an oriental poet; it is not the olive plants, but the children, that are round about the table. Moreover, note that it is not olive *branches*, but *plants*,—a very different thing. Our children gather around our table to be fed, and this involves expenses: how much better is this than to see them pining upon beds of sickness, unable to come for their meals! What a blessing to have sufficient to put upon the table! Let us for this benefit praise the bounty of the Lord. The wife is busy all over the house, but the youngsters are busiest at meal-times; and if the blessing of the Lord rest upon the family, no sight can be more delightful. Here we have the vine and the olive blended—joy from the fruitful wife, and solid comfort from the growing family; these are the choicest products earth can yield: our families are gardens of the Lord. It may help us to value the privileges of our home if we consider where we should be if they were withdrawn. What if the dear partner of our life were removed from the sides of our house to the recesses of the sepulchre? What is the trouble of children compared with the sorrow of their loss? Think, dear father, what would be your grief if you had to cry with Job, "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when my children were about me."

4. *"Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the* LORD." Mark this. Put a *Nota Bene* against it, for it is worthy of observation. It is not to be inferred that all blessed men are married, and are fathers; but that this is the way in which the Lord favours godly people who are placed in domestic life. He makes their relationships happy and profitable. In this fashion does Jehovah bless God-fearing households, for he is the God of all the families of Israel. We have seen this blessing scores of times, and we have never ceased to admire in domestic peace the sweetest of human felicity. Family blessedness comes from the Lord, and is a part of his plan for the preservation of a godly race, and for the maintence of his worship in the land. To the Lord alone we must look for it. The possession of riches will not ensure it; the choice of a healthy and beautiful bride will not ensure it; the birth of numerous comely children will not ensure it: there must be the blessing of God, the influence of piety, the result of holy living.

Verse 5. *"The* LORD *shall bless thee out of Zion."* A spiritual blessing shall be received by the gracious man, and this shall crown all his temporal mercies. He is one among the many who make up God's inheritance; his tent is part and parcel of the encampment around the tabernacle; and therefore when the benediction is pronounced at the centre it shall radiate to him in his place. The blessing of the house of God shall be upon his house. The priestly benediction which is recorded in Numbers vi. 24—26, runs thus: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the

Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." This is it which shall come upon the head of the God-fearing man. Zion was the centre of blessing, and to it the people looked when they sought for mercy: from the altar of sacrifice, from the mercy-seat, from the Shekinah-light, yea, from Jehovah himself, the blessing shall come to each one of his holy people. *"And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life."* He shall have a patriot's joy as well as a patriarch's peace. God shall give him to see his country prosper, and its metropolitan city flourish. When tent-mercies are followed by temple-mercies, and these are attended by national mercies,—the man, the worshipper, the patriot is trebly favoured of the Lord. This favour is to be permanent throughout the good man's life, and that life is to be a long one, for he is to see his sons' sons. Many a time does true religion bring such blessings to men; and when these good things are denied them, they have a greater reward as a compensation.

6. *"Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children."* This is a great pleasure. Men live their young lives over again in their grandchildren. Does not Solomon say that "children's children are the crown of old men"? So they are. The good man is glad that a pious stock is likely to be continued; he rejoices in the belief that other homes as happy as his own will be built up wherein altars to the glory of God shall smoke with the morning and evening sacrifice. This promise implies long life, and that life rendered happy by its being continued in our offspring. It is one token of the immortality of man that he derives joy from extending his life in the lives of his descendants.

"And peace upon Israel." With this sweet word Psalm cxxv. was closed. It is a favourite formula. Let God's own heritage be at peace, and we are all glad of it. We count it our own prosperity for the chosen of the Lord to find rest and quiet. Jacob was sorely tossed about; his life knew little of peace; but yet the Lord delivered him out of all his tribulations, and brought him to a place of rest in Goshen for a while, and afterwards to sleep with his fathers in the cave of Machpelah. His glorious Seed was grievously afflicted and at last crucified; but he has risen to eternal peace, and in his peace we dwell. Israel's spiritual descendants still share his chequered conditions, but there remains a rest for them also, and they shall have peace from the God of peace. Israel was a praying petitioner in the days of his wrestling, but he became a prevailing prince, and therein his soul found peace. Yes, all around it is true—"Peace upon Israel! Peace upon Israel."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Psalm cxxviii. follows Psalm cxxvii. for the same reason as Psalm ii. follows Psalm i. In both instances they are Psalms placed together, of which one begins with *ashrè* (happy, very happy), and the other ends with *ashrê*. In other respects Psalms cxxviii. and cxxvii. supplement one another. They are related to one another much as the New Testament parables of the treasure in the field and the one pearl are related. That which makes man happy is represented in Psalm cxxvii. as a gift coming as a blessing, and in Psalm cxxviii. as a reward coming as a blessing, that which is briefly indicated in the word שָׂכָר, *sakar*, *reward*, in cxxvii. 3 being here expanded and unfolded. There it appears as a gift of grace in contrast to the God-estranged self-activity of man; here as a fruit of the *ora et labora.*—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—It is to be observed, that here all men are spoken to as wedded; because this is the ordinary estate of most people. See 1 Cor. vii. 1, 2. At this day every Jew is bound to marry at about eighteen years of age, or before twenty; else he is accounted as one that liveth in sin.—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is an ἐπιθαλαμιος λογος, written for the commendation, instruction, and consolation of those who are either already married or are about to enter on that kind of life. It enumerates, therefore, at the commencement, as is usual in songs of this kind, all those things which are regarded as burdens in the married life, such as the labours in seeking to provide for the whole family;

the spouse, and that marriage bond, which, as it were, binds a man and seems to make him a slave, just as that character says in the comedy, " I have taken a wife ; I have sold my liberty : " lastly, the education of the children, which certainly is most laborious, and requires the largest expenditure. To lighten the burden of all these things, there is added to each a blessing, or a promise, so that they might appear slight. And at the close, it subjoins in general, a spiritual promise, which easily makes light of all the labours and disquiets of the married life ; even if they should be the very heaviest. The blessing comes from Zion or the Church : for there is nothing so burdensome and difficult, but what it can be easily borne by those who are members of the true Church, and know the sources of true consolation.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is every one that feareth the* LORD," *etc.* Here we have the living fountain of the blessing which rests upon the conjugal and domestic state. When worldly prudence attempts to choose a wife and form a household, it can apply its hand only to so much of the work as has its seat upon earth, and is visible to the eye of sense. It builds, so to speak, the first and the second story, adds cornice and pediment, and the fabric presents a fair appearance—but it has no foundation. Whenever you see the household of a married pair continuing to defy every storm, you may be sure that it rests upon a sure foundation, lying beyond the reach of human sense, and that that foundation is *the fear of the Lord.* To the fear of the Lord, therefore, the holy Psalmist has wisely given a place in front of this beautiful Psalm. which celebrates the blessing that descends upon conjugal and domestic life.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, in "Hours of Christian Devotion,"* 1870.

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is every one that feareth the* LORD." There is a fear of the Lord which hath terror in it and not blessedness. The apprehension with which a warring rebel regards his triumphant and offended soverign, or the feelings of a fraudulent bankrupt towards a stern creditor, or, a conscience-striken criminal to a righteous judge, are frequently types of men's feelings in regard to God. This evidently cannot be the fear which the "*blessed*" of this Psalm feel. Nor can theirs, on the other hand, be the tormenting fear of self-reproach.

Their fear is that which the believed revelations given of him in his Word produce. It is the fear which a child feels towards an honoured parent,—a fear to offend : it is that which they who have been rescued from destruction feel to the benefactor who nobly and at the vastest sacrifice interposed for their safety,—a fear to act unworthily of his kindness : it is that which fills the breast of a pardoned and grateful rebel in the presence of a venerated sovereign at whose throne he is permitted to stand in honour,—a fear lest he should ever forget his goodness, and give him cause to regret it. Such is the fear of the Christian now : a fear which reverence for majesty, gratitude for mercies, dread of displeasure, desire of approval, and longing for the fellowship of heaven, inspire ; the fear of angels and the blessed Son ; the fear not of sorrow but of love, which shrinks with instinctive recoil from doing aught that would tend to grieve, or from denying aught that would tend to honour. Religion is the grand and the only wisdom ; and since the beginning, the middle, and the end of it, is the fear of the Lord, blessed is every man that is swayed by it.—*Robert Nisbet, in "The Songs of the Temple Pilgrims,"* 1863.

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is every one that feareth the* LORD." Let us take a little of the character of the blessed man. Who is it that is undaunted ? "*The man that feareth God.*" Fear sounds rather contrary to blessedness ; hath an air of misery ; but add whom. He that feareth *the* LORD"; that touch turns it into gold. He that so fears, fears not : he shall not be afraid ; all petty fears are swallowed up in this great fear ; and this great fear is as sweet and pleasing as little fears are anxious and vexing. Secure of other things, he can say—" If my God be pleased, no matter who is displeased ; no matter who despise me, if he account me his. Though all forsake me, though my dearest friends grow estranged, if he reject me not, that is my only fear ; and for that I am not perplexed, I know he will not." A believer hath no fear but of the displeasure of heaven, the anger of God to fall upon him ; he accounts that only terrible ; but yet he doth not fear it, doth not apprehend it will fall on him, is better persuaded of the goodness of God. So this fear is still joined with trust :—" Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy " ; Ps. xxxiii. 18.—*Robert Leighton,* 1611—1684.

Verse 1.—"*Blessed is every one,*" etc. There is a stress on *all* (" *every one* "), teaching that no disparity of sex or condition, of rank or wealth, affects the degree

of happiness granted by God to every one of his true servants in their several stations. It is to be observed, further, that whenever the fear of the Lord is mentioned in Holy Writ, it is never set by itself, as though sufficient for the consummation of our faith, but always has something added or prefixed, by which to estimate its due proportion of perfection, according as it is stated by Solomon in the Proverbs (ii. 3—5).—*J. M. Neale and R. F. Littledale, in "A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Mediæval Writers,"* 1860.

Verse 1.—*"Blessed is every one"* etc. It is a precious promise, but perhaps thou art tempted to say in thy heart, not meant for everyone. Wilt thou answer against the Lord? Hear him speak in the song. He says, *" every one." "Blessed is every one that feareth the* LORD." None are excluded but those who will not walk in his ways.—*Edward Jewitt Robinson.*

Verse 1.—*"Blessed,"* etc. The adage, " That it is best not to be born at all, or to die as soon as possible," has certainly been long since received by the common consent of almost all men. Carnal reason judges either that all mankind without exception are miserable, or that fortune is more favourable to ungodly and wicked men than to the good. To the sentiment that those are blessed who fear the Lord, it has an entire aversion. So much the more requisite, then, is it to dwell upon the consideration of this truth. Farther, as this blessedness is not apparent to the eye, it is of importance, in order to our being able to apprehend it, first to attend to the definition which will be given of it by-and-bye; and secondly, to know that it depends chiefly upon the protection of God. Although we collect together all the circumstances which seem to contribute to a happy life, surely nothing will be found more desirable than to be kept hidden under the guardianship of God. If this blessing is, in our estimation, to be preferred, as it deserves, to all other good things, whoever is persuaded that the care of God is exercised about the world and human affairs, will at the same time unquestionably acknowledge that what is here laid down is the chief point of happiness.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—*"That feareth the* LORD *; that walketh in his ways."* The fear of the Lord is the internal principle; but unless there be a corresponding expression in the outward life, what reason is there to suppose that it has any existence at all?

Observe also, that there is no walking in the ways of the Lord, until his fear be established in the heart. There can be no genuine morality apart from the fear of God. How can a man obey God while his affections are alienated from him? —*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 1.—*"That walketh in his ways."* God makes blessed those that walk in his ways, because he himself walks with them. This is said concerning David, and it is explained how that companionship blessed him, 2 Sam. v. 10: " And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him": where the " and" may be taken as the causal particle " because." That God does indeed join himself to those who walk in his ways as companion and leader we have in 2 Chron. xvii. 3, 4: " And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father."—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—*"For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands,"* etc. There is a fourfold literal sense here: Thou shalt live by honest, peaceful labour, not by rapine and violence on that produced by the toil of others, nor yet indolently and luxuriously; thou shalt *"eat,"* and not penuriously stint thyself and others; thy crops shall not be blighted, but shall bring forth abundantly; and no enemy shall destroy or carry off thy harvest. And these two latter interpretations accord best with the converse punishments threatened to the disobedient by Moses. *"Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands."* But he who hates labour does not eat of it, nor can he say, " My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work": John iv. 34. On the other hand, he to whom such labour is a delight, does not merely look forward in hope to the future fruits or rewards of labour, but even here and now finds sustenance and pleasure in toiling for God; so that it is *"well"* with him in the world, even amidst all its cares and troubles, and he *"shall be happy"* in that which is to come, whence sorrow is banished for ever, as it is written in the gospel: " Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God": Luke xiv. 15.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 2.—*"Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands,"* etc. This must they learn also which are married, that they must labour. For the law of nature requireth

that the husband should sustain and nourish his wife and his children. For after that man and wife do know that they ought to fear God their Creator, who not only made them, but gave his blessing also unto his creature; this secondly must they know, that something they must do that they consume not their days in ease and idleness. Hesiod, the poet, giveth his counsel, that first thou shouldst get thee a house, then a wife, and also an ox to till the ground. . . . For albeit that our diligence, care, and travail is not able to maintain our family, yet God useth such as a means by the which he will bless us.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.*" Men have dreamed fascinating dreams of removing the disabilities and limitations of the world and the evils of life, without sorrow. Poets have pictured earthly paradises, where life would be one long festival,—

"Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea."

But vain are all such dreams and longings. They are of human, not of Divine origin, and spring from a root of selfishness and not of holiness. They cannot be realized in a fallen world, full of sorrow because full of sin. All blessings in man's economy are got from pains. Happiness is the flower that grows from a thorn of sorrow transformed by man's cultivation. The beautiful myth which placed the golden apples of the Hesperides in a garden guarded by dragons, is an allegory illustrative of the great human fact, that not till we have slain the dragons of selfishness and sloth can we obtain any of the golden successes of life. Supposing it were possible that we could obtain the objects of our desire without any toil or trouble, we should not enjoy them. To benefit us really, they must be the growths of our own self-denial and labour. And this is the great lesson which the miracles of our Lord, wrought in the manner in which they were, unfolded. They teach us that, in both temporal and spiritual things, we should not so throw ourselves upon the providence or grace of God as to neglect the part we have ourselves to act,—that God crowns every honest and faithful effort of man with success: "*Blessed is every one that feareth the* LORD; *that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.*"—*Hugh Macmillan, in "The Ministry of Nature,"* 1871.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—

Labour, the symbol of man's punishment;
Labour, the secret of man's happiness.

James Montgomery, 1771—1854.

Verse 2.—"*Happy shalt thou be.*" Oh trust in the Lord for happiness as well as for help! All the springs of happiness are in him. Trust "in him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy"; who, of his own rich and free mercy, holds them out to us, as in his own hand, that, receiving them as his gifts, and as pledges of his love, we may enjoy all that we possess. It is his love gives a relish to all we taste, puts life and sweetness into all; while every creature leads us up to the great Creator, and all earth is a scale to heaven. He transfuses the joys that are at his own right hand into all that he bestows on his thankful children, who, having fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, enjoy him in all and above all.—*John Wesley,* 1703—1791.

Verse 2.—"*Happy shalt thou be.*" Mr. Disraeli puts these remarkable words into the mouth of one of his characters:—"Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret." A sad and cheerless view of life's progress that! It may be true, in measure, of a life separated from godliness; it certainly is not true of a life allied with godliness. Let there be "life and godliness," and then youth is not a blunder, but a wise purpose and a glowing hope; manhood is not a struggle only, but a conquest and a joy; old age is not a regret, but a rich memory and a glorious prospect.—*R. P. Macmaster, in "The Baptist Magazine,"* 1878.

Verse 3.—"*Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine,*" etc. The comparison would perhaps be brought out more clearly by arranging the verse as follows:—

"Thy wife shall be in the inner part of thy house
Like a fruitful vine;
Thy children round about thy table
Like the shoots of the olive."

In the inner part, literally, *"the sides of thy house,"* as in Amos vi. 10, *i.e.*, the women's apartments, as marking the proper sphere of the wife engaged in her domestic duties, and also to some extent her seclusion, though this was far less amongst the Jews than amongst other Orientals.

The *"vine"* is an emblem chiefly of *fruitfulness*, but perhaps also of dependence, as needing support; the *"olive,"* of vigorous, healthy, joyous life. The same figure is employed by Euripides, *Herc. Fur.*, 839. *Med.* 1098.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—*"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine,"* etc. We do not remember to have met with a single instance, in the East, of vines trained *against the walls of a house*, or of olives near or about a house. Neither have we read of such instances. The passage doubtless derives its figures from the fertility of the vine, and from the appearance of the olive, or the order in which olive trees are planted. The construction would then be: "Thy wife, in the sides (interior apartments) of thy house, shall be as the fruitful vine, and thy children round about thy table, like olive plants."—*John Kitto* (1804—1854), *in "The Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 3.—*"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house."* The wife is likened not to thorns or briers, nor even to oaks or to other fruits and trees, but to the vine; and also to a vine neither in a vineyard nor in a garden, but set by the walls of the house; also not barren, but fertile and fruit-bearing. This admonishes husbands as well as wives of their duties. For as the walls support the vine, and defend it against the force of winds and tempests, so ought husbands, as far as is in their power, to defend their wives by their godly conversation and wholesome teachings and institutions against the pestilential wind of the old serpent; also against the injuries of evil-disposed men. "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church": Ephes. v. 28, 29.

Further, the vine is exceedingly fragile wood, and not meet for any work, Ezek. xv. 4. Husbands, therefore, should remember that they ought to behave towards their wives patiently and prudently, as with the weaker vessel; not keeping in mind the fragility of the wood, but the abundance and sweetness of the fruit. If husbands observe this, that will happen to them which Scripture says concerning the peaceful time of Solomon, "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree": 1 Kings iv. 25. Such was the married life of Abraham with Sarah, Isaac with Rebecca, Jacob with Leah and Rachel.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 3.—*"A fruitful vine by the sides of thine house."* It does not say *on* the sides of the house, but *by* the sides. The passage probably refers to the trellissed bowers which often lead up to the houses, and are covered with vines, the grapes hanging over head. Sitting in these bowers is sitting under our own vines: Micah iv. 4. I have seen in Constantinople grapes hanging over the people's heads in the principal streets, the vines being trained from one side of the street to the other.—*John Gadsby, in "My Wanderings,"* 1860.

Verse 3.—*"By the sides of thine house."* Not on the roof, nor on the floor; the one is too high, she is no ruler; the other too low, she is no slave: but in the sides, an equal place between both.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 3.—*"By the sides of thine house."* The house is her proper place; for she is "the beauty of the house"; there her business lies, there she is safe. The ancients painting them with a snail under their feet, and the Egyptians denying their women shoes, and the Scythians burning the bride's chariot axle-tree at her door, when she was brought to her husband's house, and the angel's asking Abraham where Sarah was (though he knew well enough), that it might be observed, she was "in the tent," do all intimate, that, by the law of nature, and by the rules of religion, the wife ought to keep at home, unless urgent necessity do call her abroad.—*Richard Steele* (—1692), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 3.—As it is visible that the good man's sons being *"like olive plants round about his table,"* means not that they should be like the olive plants which grew round his table, it being, I presume, a thought in Bishop Patrick that will not be defended, that the Psalmist refers to a table spread in an arbour composed of young olive trees, for we find no such arbours in the Levant, nor is the tree very proper for such a purpose; so in like manner the first clause must signify, thy wife *shall be in the sides*, or private apartments, *of thy house, fruitful as a thriving vine:* the place here mentioned (the sides of the house) referring to the wife, not to the vine; as

the other (the table) refers to the children, not to the olives. Nor is this a new thought, it is a remark that Musculus and other interpreters have made.

The Hebrew word, translated *sides*, is very well known to signify the more *private apartments* of a house, as they have also remarked; and he that reads Dr. Shaw's description of an Eastern house, must immediately see the propriety of calling the private apartments *its sides*. Such a house consists of a square court, which the doctor observes, is called *the midst* of the house: and private apartments round it, which may as properly be called *its sides* in consequence: into this middle of the house, or this quadrangle, company, he tells us, are sometimes received, in which *other authors* tell us their *wives* remain concealed at such times.—*Thomas Harmer*, 1719—1788.

Verse 3.—"*Thy children like olive plants*," etc. Follow me into the grove, and I will show you what may have suggested the comparison. Here we have hit upon a beautiful illustration. This aged and decayed tree is surrounded, as you see, by several young and thrifty shoots, which spring from the root of the venerable parent. They seem to uphold, protect, and embrace it, we may even fancy that they now bear that load of fruit which would otherwise be demanded of the feeble parent. Thus do good and affectionate children gather round the table of the righteous. Each contributes something to the common wealth and welfare of the whole—a beautiful sight, with which may God refresh the eyes of every friend of mine.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 3.—Man by nature, uninfluenced by grace, is "a wild olive tree"; and the object of most parents is merely to cultivate this wild olive tree. What anxiety is there about accomplishments which, how attractive soever, are but the dying blossoms of this wild olive tree!—*Richard Cecil*, 1748—1810.

Verse 3.—Although the world is carried away by irregular desires after various objects, between which it is perpetually fluctuating in its choice, God gives us in this Psalm a description of what he considers to be a blessing beyond all riches, and therefore we ought to hold it in high estimation. If a man has a wife of amiable manners as the companion of his life, let him set no less value upon this blessing than Solomon did, who, in Prov. xix. 14, affirms that it is God alone who gives a good wife. In like manner, if a man be a father of a numerous offspring, let him receive that goodly boon with a thankful heart.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—Before the fall Paradise was man's home; since the fall home has been his Paradise.—*Augustus William Hare* (1792—1834), *and Julius Charles Hare* (1795—1855), *in "Guesses at Truth."*

Verse 4.—As Haman caused it to be proclaimed (Esther vi. 9), "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour"; so here, "*Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the* LORD." He shall be blessed in his wife, and blessed in his children; so blessed in both that the Psalmist calls all to behold it, as a rare, beautiful, yea, wonderful sight: "*Behold, thus shall the man be blessed.*" And yet the man fearing God shall be blessed more than *thus:* his blessing shall come in the best way (verse 5): "*The* LORD *shall bless thee out of Zion*"; his temporal mercies shall come in a spiritual way, yea, he shall have spiritual blessings: "*He shall bless thee out of Zion*"; and he shall have blessings beyond his own walls: "*Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.*" Sometimes a good man can take no content in his family mercies because of the church's afflictions; he "prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy" (Ps. cxxxvii. 6), and while that is mourning he cannot but be sorrowing, though his own house be full of joy. Sometimes a man's own family is so afflicted, and his house so full of sorrow, that he cannot but mourn, even when Jerusalem rejoiceth and Zion is glad. But when a good man looks home to his own house and sees good there; when also he looks abroad to Jerusalem and sees good there too, how full is his joy! how complete is his blessedness! and, "*Behold, thus the man is blessed that feareth the* LORD."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—"*Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed*," etc. It is asserted with a note commanding attention: *behold* it by faith in the promise; *behold* it by observation in the performance of the promise; *behold* it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful; and with admiration that it should be so; for we merit no favour, no blessing from him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem*," etc. What is added concerning "*the good of Jerusalem*" is to be regarded as enjoining upon the godly the duty not

only of seeking their own individual welfare, or of being devoted to their own peculiar interests; but rather of having it as their chief desire to see the church of God in a flourishing condition. It would be a very unreasonable thing for each member to desire what may be profitable for itself, while in the meantime the body was neglected. From our extreme proneness to err in this respect, the prophet, with good reason, recommends solicitude about the public welfare; and he mingles together domestic blessings and the common benefits of the church in such a way as to show us that they are things joined together, and which it is unlawful to put asunder.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 6.—Lord, let thy blessing so accompany my endeavours in their breedings, that all my sons may be Benaiahs, the Lord's building, and then they will all be Abners, their father's light; and that all my daughters may be Bethias, the Lord's daughters, and then they will all be Abigails, their father's joy.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 6.—Religion is as favourable for long life as for happiness. She promotes long life by destroying those evils, the tendency of which is to limit the duration of human existence. War sweeps millions into a premature grave. Men live longer in Christian than in heathen countries. They live longer in Protestant than in Roman Catholic countries. The direct effect of true religion is to increase the period of human life. "Length of days is in her right hand."—*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 6.—Connecting this with the next Psalm we find the following in a famous Scotch divine:—"*'Peace upon Israel.'* The great blessing of peace, which the Lord hath promised to his people even in this life, (for where the Lord gives mercy to any, he gives them peace also, peace and grace are inseparably joined together,) this peace, I say, does not consist in this, that the people of God shall have no enemies; no, for there is an immortal and endless enmity against them. Neither does their peace consist in this, that their enemies shall not assault them; neither does it consist in this, that their enemies shall not molest or afflict them. We do but deceive ourselves if so be that we imagine, so long as we are in this our pilgrimage, and in our warfare here, if we promise to ourselves a peace of this kind; for while we live in this world, we shall still have enemies, and these enemies shall assault us, and persecute and afflict us."—*Alexander Henderson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The universality of the blessedness of God-fearing men. Circumstances, personal or relative, cannot alter the blessing; nor age, nor public opinion, nor even their own sense of unworthiness.

Verse 1.—Consider: I. The union of a right fear with a right walk. 1. There is a wrong fear, because slavish; this never can lead to genuine obedience, which must be willingly and cheerfully rendered. 2. But the fear of reverence and filial love will surely turn the feet to God's ways, keep them steadfast therein, and wing them with speed. II. The blessedness of him in whom they are united. 1. It is blessedness of life; for that is prospered. 2. It is blessedness of domestic happiness; for where the head of a family is holy, the family is the home of peace. 3. It is the blessedness of a holy influence in every sphere of his activity. 4. It is deep-felt heart-blessedness in walking with God. 5. And all is but a prelude to the everlasting blessedness of heaven.—*J. F.*

Verse 2.—The blessednesses of the righteous are first generalized, then particularized. Here they are divided into three particulars. I. The fruit of past labours. II. Present enjoyment. III. Future welfare: "It shall be well with thee." Well in time; well in death; well at the last judgment; well for ever.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—I. Labour a blessing to him who fears God. II. The fruits of labour the result of God's blessing. III. The enjoyment of the fruits of labour a further blessing from God.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—Success in life. I. Its source—God's blessing. II. Its channel—our own labour. III. The measure in which it is promised—as much

as we can eat. More is above the promise. IV. The enjoyment. We are permitted to eat or enjoy our labour.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—Godly happiness. I. Follows upon God's blessing. II. Grows out of character: "feareth the Lord." III. Follows labour: see preceding sentence. IV. It is supported by well-being: see following sentence.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—I. It shall be well with thee while thou livest. II. It shall be better with thee when thou diest. III. It shall be best of all with thee in eternity.—*Adapted from Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3.—The blessing of children. I. They are round our table—expense, anxiety, responsibility, pleasure. II. They are like olive plants—strong, planted in order, coming on to succeed us, fruitful for God—as the olive provided oil for the lamp.

Verse 3.—A complete family picture. Here are the husband, the wife, the children, the house, the rooms in the side, the table. We should ask a blessing upon each, bless God for each, and use each in a blessed manner.

Verse 4.—Domestic happiness the peculiar blessing of piety. Show how it produces and maintains it.

Verse 5.—The blessing out of Zion. See Numbers vi. 24—26.

Verse 5.—Two priceless mercies. I. The house of God a blessing to our house. It is connected with our own salvation, edification, consolation, etc. It is our hope for the conversion of our children and servants, etc. It is the place of their education, and for the formation of helpful friendship, etc. II. Our house a blessing to God's house. Personal interest in the church, hospitality, generosity, service, etc. Children aiding holy work. Wife useful, etc.

Verse 6.—Old age blessed when—I. Life has been spent in the fear of God. II. When it is surrounded to its close by human affection. III. When it maintains its interest in the cause of God.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—Church peace—its excellence, its enemies, its friends, its fruits.

PSALM CXXIX.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees. *I fail to see how this is a step beyond the previous Psalm; and yet it is clearly the song of an older and more tried individual, who looks back upon a life of affliction in which he suffered all along, even from his youth. Inasmuch as patience is a higher, or at least more difficult, grace than domestic love, the ascent or progress may perhaps be seen in that direction. Probably if we knew more of the stations on the road to the Temple we should see a reason for the order of these Psalms; but as that information cannot be obtained, we must take the songs as we find them, and remember that, as we do not now go on pilgrimages to Zion, it is our curiosity and not our necessity which is a loser by our not knowing the cause of the arrangement of the songs in this Pilgrim Psalter.*

AUTHOR, ETC.—*It does not seem to us at all needful to ascribe this Psalm to a period subsequent to the captivity: indeed, it is more suitable to a time when as yet the enemy had not so far prevailed as to have carried the people into a distant land. It is a mingled hymn of sorrow and of strong resolve. Though sorely smitten, the afflicted one is heart-whole, and scorns to yield in the least degree to the enemy. The poet sings the trials of Israel, verses* 1—3; *the interposition of the Lord, verse* 4; *and the unblessed condition of Israel's foes, verses* 5—8. *It is a rustic song, full of allusions to husbandry. It reminds us of the books of Ruth and Amos.*

EXPOSITION.

MANY a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say:

2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.

3 The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.

4 The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

5 Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.

6 Let them be as the grass *upon* the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up:

7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.

8 Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD *be* upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.

1. *"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say."* In her present hour of trial, she may remember her former afflictions and speak of them for her comfort, drawing from them the assurance that he who has been with her for so long will not desert her in the end. The song begins abruptly. The poet has been musing, and the fire burns, therefore speaks he with his tongue: he cannot help it, he feels that he must speak, and therefore "may now say" what he has to say. The trials of the church have been repeated again and again, times beyond all count: the same afflictions are fulfilled in us as in our fathers. Jacob of old found his days full of trouble; each Israelite is often harassed; and Israel as a whole has proceeded from tribulation to tribulation. "Many a time," Israel says, because she could not say how many times. She speaks of her assailants as "they," because it would be impossible to write or even to know all their names. They had straitened, harassed, and fought against her from the earliest days of her history—from her youth; and they had continued their assaults right on without ceasing. Persecution is the heirloom of the church, and the ensign of the elect. Israel among the nations was peculiar, and this peculiarity brought against her many restless foes, who could never be easy unless they were warring against the people of God. When in Canaan, at the first, the chosen household was often severely tried; in

Egypt it was heavily oppressed; in the wilderness it was fiercely assailed; and in the promised land it was often surrounded by deadly enemies. It was something for the afflicted nation, that it survived to *say*, "Many a time have they afflicted me." The affliction began early—"from my youth"; and it continued late. The earliest years of Israel and of the church of God were spent in trial. Babes in grace are cradled in opposition. No sooner is the man-child born than the dragon is after it. "It is," however, "good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," and he shall see it to be so when in after days he tells the tale.

2. "*Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.*" Israel repeats her statement of her repeated afflictions. The fact was uppermost in her thoughts, and she could not help soliloquizing upon it again and again. These repetitions are after the manner of poetry: thus she makes a sonnet out of her sorrows, music out of her miseries. "*Yet they have not prevailed against me.*" We seem to hear the beat of timbrels and the clash of cymbals here: the foe is derided; his malice has failed. That "*yet*" breaks in like the blast of trumpets, or the roll of kettledrums. "Cast down, but not destroyed," is the shout of a victor. Israel has wrestled, and has overcome in the struggle. Who wonders? If Israel overcame the angel of the covenant, what man or devil shall vanquish him? The fight was oft renewed and long protracted: the champion severely felt the conflict, and was at times fearful of the issue; but at length he takes breath, and cries, "Yet they have not prevailed against me." "Many a time;" yes, "many a time," the enemy has had his opportunity and his vantage, but not so much as once has he gained the victory.

3. "*The plowers plowed upon my back.*" The scourgers tore the flesh as ploughmen furrow a field. The people were maltreated like a criminal given over to the lictors with their cruel whips; the back of the nation was scored and furrowed by oppression. It is a grand piece of imagery condensed into few words. A writer says the metaphor is muddled, but he is mistaken: there are several figures, like wheel within wheel, but there is no confusion. The afflicted nation was, as it were, lashed by her adversaries so cruelly that each blow left a long red mark, or perhaps a bleeding wound, upon her back and shoulders, comparable to a furrow which tears up the ground from one end of the field to the other. Many a heart has been in like case; smitten and sore wounded by them that use the scourge of the tongue; so smitten that their whole character has been cut up and scored by calumny. The true church has in every age had fellowship with her Lord under his cruel flagellations: his sufferings were a prophecy of what she would be called hereafter to endure, and the foreshadowing has been fulfilled. Zion has in this sense been ploughed as a field.

"*They made long their furrows:*"—as if delighting in their cruel labour. They missed not an inch, but went from end to end of the field, meaning to make thorough work of their congenial engagement. Those who laid on the scourge did it with a thoroughness which showed how hearty was their hate. Assuredly the enemies of Christ's church never spare pains to inflict the utmost injury: they never do the work of the devil deceitfully, or hold back their hand from blood. They smite so as to plough into the man; they plough the quivering flesh as if it were clods of clay; they plough deep and long with countless furrows; until they leave no portion of the church unfurrowed or unassailed. Ah me! Well did Latimer say that there was no busier ploughman in all the world than the devil: whoever makes short furrows, he does not. Whoever baulks and shirks, he is thorough in all that he does. Whoever stops work at sundown, he never does. He and his children plough like practised ploughmen; but they prefer to carry on their pernicious work upon the saints behind their backs, for they are as cowardly as they are cruel.

4. "*The* LORD *is righteous.*" Whatever men may be, Jehovah remains just, and will therefore keep covenant with his people and deal out justice to their oppressors. Here is the hinge of the condition: this makes the turning point of Israel's distress. The Lord bears with the long furrows of the wicked, but he will surely make them cease from their ploughing before he has done with them. "*He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.*" The rope which binds the oxen to the plough is cut; the cord which bound the victim is broken; the bond which held the enemies in cruel unity has snapped. As in Psalm cxxiv. 7 we read, "the snare is broken; we are escaped," so here the breaking of the enemies' instrument of oppression is Israel's release. Sooner or later a righteous God will interpose, and when he does so, his action will be most effectual; he does not unfasten, but cuts asunder, the harness which the ungodly use in their labour of hate. Never has

God used a nation to chastise his Israel without destroying that nation when the chastisement has come to a close: he hates those who hurt his people even though he permits their hate to triumph for a while for his own purpose. If any man would have his harness cut, let him begin to plough one of the Lord's fields with the plough of persecution. The shortest way to ruin is to meddle with a saint: the divine warning is, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

5. *"Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion."* And so say we right heartily: and in this case *vox populi* is *vox Dei*, for so it shall be. If this be an imprecation, let it stand; for our heart says "Amen" to it. It is but justice that those who hate, harass, and hurt the good should be brought to naught. Those who confound right and wrong ought to be confounded, and those who turn back from God ought to be turned back. Loyal subjects wish ill to those who plot against their king.

> "Confound their politics,
> Frustrate their knavish tricks,"

is but a proper wish, and contains within it no trace of personal ill-will. We desire their welfare as men, their downfall as traitors. Let their conspiracies be confounded, their policies be turned back. How can we wish prosperity to those who would destroy that which is dearest to our hearts? This present age is so flippant that if a man loves the Saviour he is styled a fanatic, and if he hates the powers of evil he is named a bigot. As for ourselves, despite all objectors, we join heartily in this commination; and would revive in our heart the old practice of Ebal and Gerizim, where those were blessed who bless God, and those were cursed who make themselves a curse to the righteous. We have heard men desire a thousand times that the gallows might be the reward of the assassins who murdered two inoffensive men in Dublin, and we would never censure the wish; for justice ought to be rendered to the evil as well as to the good. Besides, the church of God is so useful, so beautiful, so innocent of harm, so fraught with good, that those who do her wrong are wronging all mankind and deserve to be treated as the enemies of the human race. Study a chapter from the "Book of Martyrs," and see if you do not feel inclined to read an imprecatory Psalm over Bishop Bonner and Bloody Mary. It may be that some wretched nineteenth century sentimentalist will blame you: if so, read another *over him*.

6. *"Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up."* Grass on the housetop is soon up and soon down. It sprouts in the heat, finds enough nutriment to send up a green blade, and then it dies away before it reaches maturity, because it has neither earth nor moisture sufficient for its proper development. Before it grows up it dies; it needs not to be plucked up, for it hastens to decay of itself. Such is and such ought to be the lot of the enemies of God's people. Transient is their prosperity; speedy is their destruction. The height of their position, as it hastens their progress, so it hurries their doom. Had they been lower in station they had perhaps been longer in being. "Soon ripe, soon rotten," is an old proverb. Soon plotting and soon rotting, is a version of the old adage which will suit in this place. We have seen grass on the rustic thatch of our own country cottages which will serve for an illustration almost as well as that which comes up so readily on the flat roofs and domes of eastern habitations. The idea is—they make speed to success, and equal speed to failure. Persecutors are all sound and fury, flash and flame; but they speedily vanish—more speedily than is common to men. Grass in the field withers, but not as speedily as grass on the housetops. Without a mower the tufts of verdure perish from the roofs, and so do opposers pass away by other deaths than fall to the common lot of men; they are gone, and none is the worse. If they are missed at all, their absence is never regretted. Grass on the housetop is a nonentity in the world: the house is not improverished when the last blade is dried up: and, even so, the opposers of Christ pass away, and none lament them. One of the fathers said of the apostate emperor Julian, "That little cloud will soon be gone"; and so it was. Every sceptical system of philosophy has much the same history; and the like may be said of each heresy. Poor, rootless things, they are and are not: they come and go, even though no one rises against them. Evil carries the seeds of dissolution within itself. So let it be.

7. *"Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom."* When with his sickle the husbandman would cut down the tufts, he found

nothing to lay hold upon: the grass promised fairly enough, but there was no fulfilment, there was nothing to cut or to carry, nothing for the hand to grasp, nothing for the lap to gather. Easterns carry their corn in their bosoms, but in this case there was nothing to bear home. Thus do the wicked come to nothing. By God's just appointment they prove a disappointment. Their fire ends in smoke: their verdure turns to vanity; their flourishing is but a form of withering. No one profits by them, least of all are they profitable to themselves. Their aim is bad, their work is worse, their end is worst of all.

8. "*Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the* LORD *be upon you: we bless you in the name of the* LORD." In harvest times men bless each other in the name of the Lord; but there is nothing in the course and conduct of the ungodly man to suggest the giving or receiving of a benediction. Upon a survey of the sinner's life from beginning to end, we feel more inclined to weep than to rejoice, and we feel bound rather to wish him failure than success. We dare not use pious expressions as mere compliments, and hence we dare not wish God-speed to evil men lest we be partakers of their evil deeds. When persecutors are worrying the saints, we cannot say, "The blessing of the Lord be upon you." When they slander the godly and oppose the doctrine of the cross, we dare not bless them in the name of the Lord. It would be infamous to compromise the name of the righteous Jehovah by pronouncing his blessing upon unrighteous deeds.

See how godly men are roughly ploughed by their adversaries, and yet a harvest comes of it which endures and produces blessing; while the ungodly, though they flourish for a while and enjoy a complete immunity, dwelling, as they think, quite above the reach of harm, are found in a short time to have gone their way and to have left no trace behind. Lord, number me with thy saints. Let me share their grief if I may also partake of their glory. Thus would I make this Psalm my own, and magnify thy name, because thine afflicted ones are not destroyed, and thy persecuted ones are not forsaken.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—In the "degrees" of Christian virtue the Psalm corresponds to the tenth step, which is patience in adversity.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm.—The following incident in connection with the glorious return of the Vaudois under Henri Arnaud is related in Muston's "Israel of the Alps":—"After these successes the gallant patriots took an oath of fidelity to each other, and celebrated divine service in one of their own churches, for the first time since their banishment. The enthusiasm of the moment was irrepressible; they chanted the seventy-fourth Psalm to the clash of arms; and Henri Arnaud, mounting the pulpit with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other, preached from the Hundred and twenty-ninth Psalm, and once more declared, in the face of heaven, that he would never resume his pastoral office in patience and peace, until he should witness the restoration of his brethren to their ancient and rightful settlements."

Verse 1.—"*Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.*" 1. How *old* these afflictions are: "*From my youth.*" Ay, from my infancy, birth and conception. 2. There is the *frequency* and *iteration* of these afflictions. They were *oft* and *many*: "*many a time.*" 3. There is the *grievousness* of these afflictions, expressed by a comparison. "The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows." So these were *old* afflictions—*from her youth.* They were *many a time*: more times than can be numbered. And then they were *grievous*, even like iron ploughs, drawing deep and long furrows on their back.—*Alexander Henderson.*

Verse 1.—"*Many a time have they afflicted me,*" etc. God had one Son, and but one Son, without sin; but never any without sorrow. We may be God's children, and yet still under persecution: his Israel, and afflicted from our youth up. We may feel God's hand as a Father upon us when he strikes us as well as when he strokes us. When he strokes us, it is lest we faint under his hand; and when he strikes us, it is that we should know his hand.—*Abraham Wright* (1611—1690), *in "A Practical Commentary upon the Psalms."*

Verse 1.—"*They.*" The persecutors deserve not a name. The rich man is not named (as Lazarus is) because not worthy: Luke xvi. "They shall be written in the earth": Jeremiah xvii. 13.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*They.*" In speaking of the enemies of Israel simply by the pronoun "*they,*" without being more specific, the Psalmist aggravates the greatness of the evil more than if he had expressly named the Assyrians or the Egyptians. By not specifying any particular class of foes, he tacitly intimates that the world is filled with innumerable bands of enemies, whom Satan easily arms for the destruction of good men, his object being that new wars may arise continually on every side. History certainly bears ample testimony that the people of God had not to deal with a few enemies, but that they were assaulted by almost the whole world; and further, that they were molested not only by external foes, but also by those of an internal kind, by such as professed to belong to the Church.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"'*They afflicted me.*" Why are these afflictions of the righteous? Whence is it that he who has given up his Son to death for them, should deny them earthly blessings? Why is faith a mourner so frequently here below, and with all that heroic firmness in her aspect, and hope of glory in her eye, why needs she to be painted with so deep a sorrow on her countenance, and the trace of continual tears on her cheek? First, we reply, *for her own safety.* Place religion out of the reach of sorrow, and soon she would pine and perish. God is said to choose his people in the furnace, because they oftenest choose him there.

It is ever from the cross that the most earnest "My God" proceeds, and never is the cry heard but he speeds forth at its utterance, who once hung there, to support, to comfort, and to save.

As it is only in affliction God is *sought,* so by many it is only in affliction God is *known.* This, one of the kings of these worshippers of the Temple found. "When Manasseh was brought to affliction, *then* he knew that the Lord he was God": 2 Chronicles xxxiii. 12, 13.

But, further, it is only by affliction *we ourselves are known.* What is the source of that profound and obstinate indifference to divine truth which prevails among men of the world, except the proud conviction that they may dispense with it? It is only when they are crushed as the worm they are made to feel that the dust is their source; only when earthly props are withdrawn will they take hold of that arm of omnipotence which Jesus offers, and which he has offered so long in vain.

While men know themselves, they *know their sin* also in affliction. What is the natural course and experience of the unbelieving of mankind? Transgression, remorse, and then forgetfulness; new transgression, new sorrow, and again forgetfulness. How shall this carelessness be broken? How convince them that they stand in need of a Saviour as the first and deepest want of their being, and that they can only secure deliverance from wrath eternal by a prompt and urgent application to him? By nothing so effectually as by affliction. God's children, who had forgotten him, arise and go to their Father when thus smitten by the scourge of sorrow; and no sooner is the penitent "*Father, I have sinned*" spoken, than they are clasped in his arms, and safe and happy in his love.

It is, further, by affliction that the *world* is known to God's children. God's great rival is the world. The lust of the flesh, pleasure; the lust of the eye, desire; the pride of life, the longing to be deemed superior to those about us,—comprise everything man naturally covets. Give us ease, honour, distinction, and all life's good will seem obtained. *But what wilt thou do, when he shall judge thee?* This is a question fitted to alarm the happiest of the children of prosperity.

What so frequently and effectually shows the necessity of piety as the sharp teachings of affliction? They show what moralists and preachers never could, that riches profit not in the day of death, that pleasures most fully enjoyed bring no soothing to the terrors which nearness to eternity presents, and that friends, however affectionate, cannot plead for and save us at the bar of God. "Miserable comforters are they all," and it is for the very purpose of inspiring this conviction, along with a belief that it is Jesus alone who can comfort in the hour of need, that affliction is sent to God's children.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verse 1.—"*From my youth.*" The first that ever died, died for religion; so early came martyrdom into the world.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 1, 2.—1. The visible Church from the beginning of the world is one body, and, as it were, one man, growing up from infancy to riper age; for so speaketh the church here: "*Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.*" 2. The

wicked enemies of the church, they also are one body, one adverse army, from the beginning of the world continuing war against the church: *"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth."* 3. As the former injuries done to the church are owned by the church, in after-ages, as done against the same body, so also the persecution of former enemies is imputed and put upon the score of present persecutors: *"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say."* 4. New experience of persecution, when they call to mind the exercise of the church in former ages, serves much for encouragement and consolation in troubles: *"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say."* 5. Albeit this hath been the endeavour of the wicked in all ages to destroy the church, yet God hath still preserved her from age to age: *"Yet they have not prevailed."—David Dickson.*

Verses 1, 2.—When the prophet says twice, *"They have afflicted me," "they have afflicted me,"* the repetition is not superfluous, it being intended to teach us that the people of God had not merely once or twice to enter the conflict, but that their patience had been tried by continual exercises.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—*"Many a time,"* etc. The Christian Church may adopt the language of the Hebrew Church: "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me." What afflictions were endured by the Christian Church from her youth up! How feeble was that youth! How small the number of the apostles to whom our Lord gave his gospel in charge! How destitute were they of human learning, of worldly influence, of secular power! To effect their destruction, and to frustrate their object—the glory of God and the salvation of men—the dungeon and the mine, the rack and the gibbet, were all successively employed. The ploughers ploughed their back, and made long their furrows. Their property was confiscated; their persons were imprisoned; their civil rights were taken from them; their heads rolled on the scaffold; their bodies were consumed at the burning pile; they were thrown, amidst the ringing shouts of the multitude, to the wild beasts of the amphitheatre. Despite, however, of every opposition, our holy religion took root and grew upward. Not all the fury of ten persecutions could exterminate it from the earth. The teeth of wild beasts could not grind it to powder; the fire could not burn it; the waters could not drown it; the dungeon could not confine it. Truth is eternal, like the great God from whose bosom it springs, and therefore it cannot be destroyed. And because Christianity is the truth, and no lie, her enemies have never prevailed against her.—*M. M'Michael.*

Verse 2.—*"Yet they have not prevailed against me."* The words are the same as in Gen. xxxii. 28. The blessing won by Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel, remained on his descendants. During the long night of the Captivity the faithful had wrestled in faithful prayer; now the morning had appeared, and Israel was raised to a higher stage of privilege.—*W. Kay.*

Verse 2.—*"Yet they have not prevailed against me."* Israel prevailed with God in wrestling with him, and therefore it is that he prevails with men also. If so be that we will wrestle with God for a blessing, and prevail with him, then we need not to fear but we shall wrestle the enemies out of it also. If we be the people of God, and persist in wrestling against his enemies, we need not fear but that we shall be victorious.—*Alexander Henderson.*

Verse 3.—*"The plowers plowed,"* etc. There does not seem to be any need to look for an interpretation of this in scourging or any other bodily infliction of pain; it seems to be "a figurative mode of expressing severe oppression." Roberts informs us that when, in the East, a man is in much trouble through oppressors, he says, "How they plough me and turn me up."—*Ingram Cobbin*, 1839.

Verse 3.—*"The plowers plowed,"* etc. The great Husbandman who owns this plough (at least by whose permission this plough goes), is God. Not only is it God who makes your common ploughs to gang, and sends the gospel into a land, but it is God also who disposes and overrules this same plough of persecution. For without his licence the plough cannot be yoked; and being yoked, cannot enter to gang till he direct; and he tempers the irons, so that they cannot go one inch deeper than he thinks meet. When he thinks it time to quit work, then presently he cuts their cords, so that they cannot go once about after he thinks it time to quit work. Albeit when they yoke, they resolve to have all the land upside down, yet he will

let them plough no more of it than he sees meet. Now for the ploughmen of this plough, they are Satan and the evil angels; they hold the plough, and are goad-men to it; and they yoke in the oxen into the plough, and drive them up with their goads. And they have a sort of music also, which they whistle into their ears, to make them go the faster; and that is the allurements and provocations of the world. And for the oxen who draw into this plough, it may be princes when they turn persecutors of the kirk; it may be prelates; it may be politicians in the world: these are the oxen, Satan and the ill spirits inciting them, and stirring them up to go forward in their intended course. Then consider here that the plough and the ploughmen and oxen go about as God thinks meet; but what is it that they are doing in the meantime? Nothing else but preparing the ground for seed, and so the Lord employs them to prepare his people better to receive the seed of his word and of his Spirit.—*Alexander Henderson.*

Verse 3.—God fails not to sow blessings in the furrows, which the plowers plow upon the back of the church.—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1613—1667.

Verse 3.—"*The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.*" When the Lord Jesus Christ was in his suffering state, and during his passion, these words here predicted of him were most expressly realized. Whilst he remained in the hands of the Roman soldiers they stript him of his raiment; they bound him with cords to a pillar; they flogged him. This was so performed by them, that they made ridges in his back and sides; they tore skin and flesh, and made him bare even to the bone, so that his body was like a ploughed field; the gashes made in it were like ridges made in a ploughed field; these were on his back. "*The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.*" Whilst every part of our Lord's sorrows and sufferings is most minutely set forth in the sacred hymns, Psalms, and songs, contained in what we style the Book of Psalms, yet we shall never comprehend what our most blessed Lord, in every part of his life, and in his passion and death, underwent for us: may the Lord the Spirit imprint this fresh expression used on this subject effectually upon us. Our Lord's words here are very expressive of the violence of his tormentors and their rage against him, and of the wounds and torments they had inflicted on him.

What must the feelings of our Lord have been when they made such furrows on his back, that it was all furrowed and welted with such long wounds, that it was more like a ploughed field than anything else. Blessings on him for his grace and patience, it is "with his stripes we are healed."—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 3.—"*They made long their furrows.*" The apparent harshness of this figure will disappear if it be considered to refer to severe public scourgings. To those who have been so unhappy as to witness such scourgings this allusion will then appear most expressive. The long weals or wounds which the scourge leaves at each stroke may most aptly be compared either to *furrows* or (as the original admits) to the *ridges between the furrows.* The *furrows* made by the plough in the East are very superficial, and (although straight) are usually carried to a great length, the fields not being enclosed as in this country.—*John Kitto, in "The Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 4.—"*The* LORD *is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked;*" *i.e.*, he has put an end to their domination and tyranny over us. In the Hebrew word which is rendered "*cords*" there is a reference to the *harness* with which the oxen were fastened to the plough; and so to the *involved machinations* and *cruelties* of the enemy. The Hebrew word properly denotes thick *twisted cords;* figuratively, intertwined wickedness; Micah vii. 3. "*The cords of the wicked,*" therefore, signify their *power, dominion, tyranny,* wickedness, and violence. These cords God is said "*to have cut,*" so that *he should have made an end;* and, therefore, "*to have cut*" *for ever,* so that they should never be reunited.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—"*He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.*" The enemies' power has been broken; *God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked,* has cut their gears, their traces, and so spoiled their ploughing; has cut their scourges, and so spoiled their lashing; has cut the bands of union, by which they were combined together; he has cut the bands of captivity, in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling wicked men to do the mischief they design against his church, and shaming their counsels.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.*" He repeateth the same praise of God in delivering his church from oppression of the enemy, under the

similitude of cutting the cords of the plough, which tilleth up another man's field. Whence learn, 1. The enemies of the church do no more regard her than they do the earth under their feet, and do seek to make their own advantage of her, as usurpers use to do in possessing and labouring of another man's field. *"The plowers plowed upon my back."* 2. The Lord useth to suffer his enemies to break up the fallow ground of his people's proud and stiff hearts with the plough of persecution, and to draw deep and long furrows on them: *"They made long their furrows."* 3. What the enemies do against the church the Lord maketh use of for manuring the church, which is his field, albeit they intend no good to God's church, yet they serve in God's wisdom to prepare the Lord's people for receiving the seed of God's word; for the similitude speaketh of their tilling of the church, but nothing of their sowing, for that is reserved for the Lord himself, who is owner of the field. 4. When the wicked have performed so much of God's husbandry as he thinketh good to suffer them, then he stoppeth their design, and looseth their plough. *"He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked."—David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—If any one be desirous to accept these words, *"Let them be confounded and turned backward,"* as they sound, he will devoutly explain the imprecation: that is to say, it may be an imprecation of good confusion, which leads to repentance, and of turning to God from sin; thus Bellarmine. There is a confounding by bringing grace, glory, and turning from the evil way. Thus some enemies and persecutors of the Christians have been holily confounded and turned to the faith of Christ; as St. Paul, who full of wrath and slaughter was going to Damascus that he might afflict the believers, but was graciously confounded on the road.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 5.—*"Let them all be confounded."* Mr. Emerson told a convention of rationalists once, in this city, that the morality of the New Testament is scientific and perfect. But the morality of the New Testament is that of the Old. "Yes," you say; "but what of the imprecatory Psalms?" A renowned professor, who, as Germany thinks, has done more for New England theology than any man since Jonathan Edwards, was once walking in this city with a clergyman of a radical faith, who objected to the doctrine that the Bible is inspired, and did so on the ground of the imprecatory Psalms. The replies of the usual kind were made; and it was presumed that David expressed the Diviue purpose in praying that his enemies might be destroyed, and that he gave utterance only to the natural, righteous indignation of conscience against unspeakable iniquity. But the doubter would not be satisfied. The two came at last to a newspaper bulletin, on which the words were written,—"Baltimore to be shelled at twelve o'clock." "I am glad of it," said the radical preacher; "I am glad of it." "And so am I," said his companion, "but I hardly dare say so, for fear you should say that I am uttering an imprecatory Psalm."—*Joseph Cook, in Boston Monday Lectures. "Transcendentalism."*

Verse 5.—*"And turned back;"* from pursuing their designs and accomplishing them; as the Assyrian monarch was, who had a hook put into his nose, and a bridle in his lips, and was turned back by the way he came: Isaiah xxxvii. 29. —*John Gill.*

Verse 5.—*"All those who hate Zion."* Note that he does not say, All who hate *me;* but *"all who hate Zion."* Thus the saints are not led to this from the desire of revenge, but from zeal for the people of God, so that they pray for the confusion and repression of the ungodly.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 6.—*"Let them be as the grass upon the housetops."* They are rightly compared to *"grass on the housetops;"* for more contemptuously the Holy Ghost could not speak of them. For this grass is such, that it soon withereth away before the sickle be put into it. Yea, no man thinketh it worthy to be cut down, no man regardeth it, every man suffereth it to brag for a while, and to show itself unto men from the housetops as though it were something when it is nothing. So the wicked persecutors in the world, which are taken to be mighty and terrible according to the outward show, are of all men most contemptible. For Christians do not once think of plucking them up or cutting them down; they persecute them not, they revenge not their own injuries, but suffer them to increase, to brag and glory as much as they list. For they know that they cannot abide the violence of a vehement wind. Yea, though all things be in quietness, yet as grass upon the housetops, by little and little, withereth away through the heat of the sun, so

tyrannies upon small occasions do perish and soon vanish away. The faithful, therefore, in suffering do prevail and overcome; but the wicked in doing are overthrown, and miserably perish, as all the histories of all times and ages do plainly witness.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 6.—"*Like grass upon the housetops.*" The flat roofs of the Eastern houses "are plastered with a composition of mortar, tar, ashes, and sand," in the crevices of which grass often springs. The houses of the poor in the country were formed of a plaster of mud and straw, where the grass would grow still more freely: as all the images are taken from country life, it is doubtless to country dwellings that the poet refers.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 6.—"*Like grass upon the housetops.*" The enemies of Zion may have an elevated position in the nation, they may seem to promise growth, but having no root in themselves, like the hearers on the stony ground, give no promise of fruit. Their profession dies away and leaves no benefit to the church, as it claims no blessing from others.—*William Wilson* (1783—1873), *in "The Book of Psalms, with an Exposition."*

Verse 6.—"*Grass upon the housetops.*" In the morning the master of the house laid in a stock of earth, which was carried up, and spread evenly on the top of the house, which is flat. The whole roof is thus formed of mere earth, laid on and rolled hard and flat. On the top of every house is a large stone roller, for the purpose of hardening and flattening this layer of rude soil, so that the rain may not penetrate; but upon this surface, as may be supposed, grass and weeds grow freely, but never come to maturity. It is to such grass the Psalmist alludes as useless and bad.—*William Jowett, in "Christian Researches in Syria and the Holy Land,"* 1825.

Verse 7.—"*The mower filleth not his hand,*" etc. The grain was rather pulled than cut, and as each handful was taken the reaper gave it a flourishing swing up into his bosom.—*Mrs. Finn, in "Home in the Holy Land,"* 1866.

Verse 7.—"*He that bindeth sheaves his bosom.*" A practice prevails in hot climates of sending out persons into the woods and other wild places to collect the grass, which would otherwise be wasted; and it is no uncommon thing in the evening to see groups of grass-cutters in the market, waiting to dispose of their bundles or sheaves, which are often so large that one is disposed to wonder how they could have been conveyed from the woods upon one man's shoulders.—*Maria Calcott, in "A Scripture Herbal,"* 1842.

Verse 8.—The latter expressions are most refreshingly Arabic. Nothing is more natural than for them, when passing by a fruit-tree or corn-field loaded with a rich crop to exclaim, "*Barak Allah!*" God bless you! We bless you in the name of the *Lord!*—*W. M. Thomson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Affliction as it comes to saints from men of the world. I. Reason for it—enmity of the serpent's seed. II. Modes of its display—persecution, ridicule, slander, disdain, etc. III. Comfort under it: So persecuted they the prophets: so the Master. It is their nature. They cannot kill the soul. It is but for a time, etc.

Verses 1 and 2.—I. How far persecution for righteousness' sake may go. 1. It may be great: "afflicted" "afflicted." 2. It may be frequent: "Many a time." 3. It may be early: "From my youth." II. How far it cannot go. 1. It may seem to prevail. 2. It may prevail in some degree. 3. It cannot ultimately prevail. 4. It shall cause that to which it is opposed increasingly to prevail.—*G. R.*

Verses 1—4.—Israel persecuted but not forsaken. Persecution. I. Whence it came: "they." II. How it came: "Many a time," "from my youth," severely: "afflicted," "ploughed." III. Why it came. Human and Satanic hatred, and Divine permission. IV. What came of it: "not prevailed"—to destroy, to drive to despair, to lead to sin. God's righteousness manifested in upholding his people, baffling their foes, etc.

Verses 1—4. The enemies of God's church. I. Their violence: "The plowers plowed," etc. II. Their persistency: "Many a time . . . . from my youth." III. Their failure: "Yet they have not prevailed." IV. Their great opponent: "The Lord . . . . hath cut asunder."—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—I. Literally fulfilled. 1. In Christ. Matt. xxvii. 26; xx. 19; Mark xv. 15; Luke xviii. 33; John xix. 1. 2. In his followers. Matt. x. 17; Acts xvi. 23; 2 Cor. vi. 5; xi. 23, 24; Heb. xi. 36. And frequently in subsequent persecutions. II. Figuratively. In secret calumnies both in Christ and his followers.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—Israel's song of triumph. I. The Lord is righteous in permitting these afflictions to come upon his people. II. He is righteous in keeping his promise of deliverance to his people. III. He is righteous in visiting the enemies of his people with judgment.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 5.—I. An inexcusable hatred described: "hate Zion," God's church and cause. For, 1. Her people are righteous. 2. Her faith is a gospel. 3. Her mission is peace. 4. Her very existence is the world's preservation. II. An inveterate sinfulness indicated: "Them that hate Zion." For, whatever moral virtues they may boast of, they must be, 1. Enemies to the human race. 2. In defiant opposition to God. 3. Perversely blind, as Saul, or radically vile. 4. Devil-like. III. An instinctive feeling of a good man expressed: "Let them all be," etc. Prompted by, 1. His love to God. 2. Love to man. 3. Love to righteousness. Hence, its existence is in itself a pledge that the righteous God will respect and comply with it.—*J. F.*

Verses 5—8.—I. The characters described. 1. They do not love Zion. They say not, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine house," etc. 2. They hate Zion—both its King and its subjects. II. Their prosperity: "As the grass," etc. III. Their end. 1. Shame: "Let them be confounded." 2. Loss: "Turned back." 3. Disappointment. No mowing; no reaping. 4. Dishonour. Unblessed by others as well as in themselves.—*G. R.*

Verses 6—9.—The wicked flourishing and perishing. I. Eminent in position. II. Envied in prosperity. III. Evanescent in duration. IV. Empty as to solidity. V. Excepted from blessing.

PSALM CXXX.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees. *It would be hard to see any upward step from the preceding to the present Psalm, and therefore it is possible that the steps or ascents are in the song itself: certainly it does rise rapidly out of the depths of anguish to the heights of assurance. It follows well upon cxxix.: when we have overcome the trials which arise from man we are the better prepared to meet those sharper sorrows which arise out of our matters towards God. He who has borne the scourges of the wicked is trained in all patience to wait the dealings of the Holy Lord. We name this the* DE PROFUNDIS PSALM: *"Out of the depths" is the leading word of it: out of those depths we cry, wait, watch, and hope. In this Psalm we hear of the pearl of* redemption, *verses* 7 *and* 8*: perhaps the sweet singer would never have found that precious thing had he not been cast into the depths. "Pearls lie deep."*

DIVISION.—*The first two verses reveal an intense desire; and the next two are a humble confession of repentance and faith, verses* 3 *and* 4. *In verses* 5 *and* 6 *waiting watchfulness is declared and resolved upon; and in the last two verses joyful expectation, both for himself and all Israel, finds expression.*

EXPOSITION.

OUT of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

2 Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

4 But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

6 My soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: *I say, more than* they that watch for the morning.

7 Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with him *is* plenteous redemption.

8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

1. *"Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD."* This is the Psalmist's statement and plea: he had never ceased to pray even when brought into the lowest state. The depths usually silence all they engulf, but they could not close the mouth of this servant of the Lord; on the contrary, it was in the abyss itself that he cried unto Jehovah. Beneath the floods prayer lived and struggled; yea, above the roar of the billows rose the cry of faith. It little matters where we are if we can pray; but prayer is never more real and acceptable than when it rises out of the worst places. Deep places beget deep devotion. Depths of earnestness are stirred by depths of tribulation. Diamonds sparkle most amid the darkness. Prayer *de profundis* gives to God *gloria in excelsis*. The more distressed we are, the more excellent is the faith which trusts bravely in the Lord, and therefore appeals to him, and to him alone. Good men may be in the depths of temporal and spiritual trouble; but good men in such cases look only to their God, and they stir themselves up to be more instant and earnest in prayer than at other times. The depth of their distress moves the depths of their being; and from the bottom of their hearts an exceeding great and bitter cry rises unto the one living and true God. David had often been in the deep, and as often had he pleaded with Jehovah, his God, in whose hand are all deep places. He prayed, and remembered that he had prayed, and pleaded that he had prayed; hoping ere long to receive an answer. It would be dreadful to look back on trouble and feel forced to own that we did not cry unto the Lord in it; but it is most comforting to know that whatever we did not do, or could not do, yet we did pray, even in our worst times. He that prays in the depth will not sink out of his depth. He that cries out of the depths shall soon sing in the heights.

2. *"Lord, hear my voice."* It is all we ask; but nothing less will content us. If the Lord will but hear us we will leave it to his superior wisdom to decide whether he will answer us or no. It is better for our prayer to be heard than answered. If the Lord were to make an absolute promise to answer all our requests it might be rather a curse than a blessing, for it would be casting the responsibility of our lives upon ourselves, and we should be placed in a very anxious position: but now the Lord hears our desires, and that is enough; we only wish him to grant them if his infinite wisdom sees that it would be for our good and for his glory. Note that the Psalmist spoke audibly in prayer: this is not at all needful, but it is exceedingly helpful; for the use of the voice assists the thoughts. Still, there is a voice in silent supplication, a voice in our weeping, a voice in that sorrow which cannot find a tongue: that voice the Lord will hear if its cry is meant for his ear. *"Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication."* The Psalmist's cry is a beggar's petition; he begs the great King and Lord to lend an ear to it. He has supplicated many times, but always with one voice, or for one purpose; and he begs to be noticed in the one matter which he has pressed with so much importunity. He would have the King hearken, consider, remember, and weigh his request. He is confused, and his prayer may therefore be broken, and difficult to understand; he begs therefore that his Lord will give the more earnest and compassionate heed to the voice of his many and painful pleadings. When we have already prayed over our troubles it is well to pray over our prayers. If we can find no more words, let us entreat the Lord to hear those petitions which we have already presented. If we have faithfully obeyed the precept by praying without ceasing, we may be confident that the Lord will faithfully fulfil the promise by helping us without fail. Though the Psalmist was under a painful sense of sin, and so was in the depth, his faith pleaded in the teeth of conscious unworthiness; for well he knew that the Lord's keeping his promise depends upon his own character and not upon that of his erring creatures.

3. *"If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"* If JAH, the all-seeing, should in strict justice call every man to account for every want of conformity to righteousness, where would any one of us be? Truly, he does record all our transgressions; but as yet he does not act upon the record, but lays it aside till another day. If men were to be judged upon no system but that of works, who among us could answer for himself at the Lord's bar, and hope to stand clear and accepted? This verse shows that the Psalmist was under a sense of sin, and felt it imperative upon him not only to cry as a suppliant but to confess as a sinner. Here he owns that he cannot stand before the great King in his own righteousness, and he is so struck with a sense of the holiness of God, and the rectitude of the law, that he is convinced that no man of mortal race can answer for himself before a Judge so perfect, concerning a law so divine. Well does he cry, "O Lord, who shall stand?" None can do so: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Iniquities are matters which are not according to equity: what a multitude we have of these! Jehovah, who sees all, and is also our *Adonai*, or Lord, will assuredly bring us into judgment concerning those thoughts, and words, and works which are not in exact conformity to his law. Were it not for the Lord Jesus, could we hope to stand? Dare we meet him in the dread day of account on the footing of law and equity? What a mercy it is that we need not do so, for the next verse sets forth another way of acceptance to which we flee.

4. *"But there is forgiveness with thee."* Blessed *but*. Free, full, sovereign pardon is in the hand of the great King: it is his prerogative to forgive, and he delights to exercise it. Because his nature is mercy, and because he has provided a sacrifice for sin, therefore forgiveness is with him for all that come to him confessing their sins. The power of pardon is permanently resident with God: he has forgiveness ready to his hand at this instant. *"That thou mayest be feared."* This is the fruitful root of piety. None fear the Lord like those who have experienced his forgiving love. Gratitude for pardon produces far more fear and reverence of God than all the dread which is inspired by punishment. If the Lord were to execute justice upon all, there would be none left to fear him; if all were under apprehension of his deserved wrath, despair would harden them against fearing him: it is grace which leads the way to a holy regard of God, and a fear of grieving him.

5. *"I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait."* Expecting him to come to me in love, I quietly wait for his appearing; I wait *upon* him in service, and *for* him in faith. For God I wait and for him only: if he will manifest himself I shall have nothing more to wait for; but until he shall appear for my help I must wait on,

hoping even in the depths. This waiting of mine is no mere formal act, my very soul is in it,—"my soul doth wait." I wait and I wait—mark the repetition! "My soul waits," and then again, "My soul waits"; to make sure work of the waiting. It is well to deal with the Lord intensely. Such repetitions are the reverse of vain repetitions. If the Lord Jehovah makes us wait, let us do so with our whole hearts; for blessed are all they that wait for him. He is worth waiting for. The waiting itself is beneficial to us: it tries faith, exercises patience, trains submission, and endears the blessing when it comes. The Lord's people have always been a waiting people: they waited for the First Advent, and now they wait for the Second. They waited for a sense of pardon, and now they wait for perfect sanctification. They waited in the depths, and they are not now wearied with waiting in a happier condition. They have cried and they do wait; probably their past prayer sustains their present patience.

"And in his word do I hope." This is the source, strength, and sweetness of waiting. Those who do not hope cannot wait; but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. God's word is a true word, but at times it tarries; if ours is true faith it will wait the Lord's time. A word from the Lord is as bread to the soul of the believer; and, refreshed thereby, it holds out through the night of sorrow expecting the dawn of deliverance and delight. Waiting, we study the word, believe the word, hope in the word, and live on the word; and all because it is *"his* word,"—the word of him who never speaks in vain. Jehovah's word is a firm ground for a waiting soul to rest upon.

6. *"My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."* Men who guard a city, and women who wait by the sick, long for daylight. Worshippers tarrying for the morning sacrifice, the kindling of the incense and the lighting of the lamps, mingle fervent prayers with their holy vigils, and pine for the hour when the lamb shall smoke upon the altar. David, however, waited more than these, waited longer, waited more longingly, waited more expectantly. He was not afraid of the great Adonai before whom none can stand in their own righteousness, for he had put on the righteousness of faith, and therefore longed for gracious audience with the Holy One. God was no more dreaded by him than light is dreaded by those engaged in a lawful calling. He pined and yearned after his God. *"I say, more than they that watch for the morning."* The figure was not strong enough, though one can hardly think of anything more vigorous: he felt that his own eagerness was unique and unrivalled. Oh to be thus hungry and thirsty after God! Our version spoils the abruptness of the language; the original runs thus—"My soul for the Lord more than those watching for the morning—watching for the morning." This is a fine poetical repeat. We long for the favour of the Lord more than weary sentinels long for the morning light which will release them from their tedious watch. Indeed this is true. He that has once rejoiced in communion with God is sore tried by the hidings of his face, and grows faint with strong desire for the Lord's appearing,

> "When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?
> Until thou dost appear,
> I count each moment for a day,
> Each minute for a year."

7. *"Let Israel hope in the* LORD." Or, "Hope thou, Israel, in Jehovah." Jehovah is Israel's God; therefore, let Israel hope in him. What one Israelite does he wishes all Israel to do. That man has a just right to exhort others who is himself setting the example. Israel of old waited upon Jehovah and wrestled all the night long, and at last he went his way succoured by the Hope of Israel: the like shall happen to all his seed. God has great things in store for his people; they ought to have large expectations. *"For with the* LORD *there is mercy."* This is in his very nature, and by the light of nature it may be seen. But we have also the light of grace, and therefore we see still more of his mercy. With us there is sin; but hope is ours, because "with the Lord there is mercy." Our comfort lies not in that which is with us, but in that which is with our God. Let us look out of self and its poverty to Jehovah and his riches of mercy. *"And with him is plenteous redemption."* He can and will redeem all his people out of their many and great troubles; nay, their redemption is already wrought out and laid up with him, so that he can at any time give his waiting ones the full benefit thereof. The attribute of mercy, and the fact of redemption, are two most sufficient reasons for hoping in Jehovah; and the fact that there is no mercy or deliverance elsewhere should effectually wean the

soul from all idolatry. Are not these deep things of God a grand comfort for those who are crying out of the depths? Is it not better to be in the deeps with David, hoping in God's mercy, than up on the mountain-tops, boasting in our own fancied righteousness?

8. "*And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*" Our iniquities are our worst dangers: if saved from these, we are saved altogether; but there is no salvation from them except by redemption. What a blessing that this is here promised in terms which remove it out of the region of question: the Lord shall certainly redeem his believing people from all their sins. Well may the redemption be plenteous since it concerns all Israel and all iniquities! Truly, our Psalm has ascended to a great height in this verse: this is no cry out of the depths, but a chorale in the heights. Redemption is the top of covenant blessings. When it shall be experienced by all Israel, the latter-day glory shall have come, and the Lord's people shall say, "Now, Lord, what wait we for?" Is not this a clear prophecy of the coming of our Lord Jesus the first time? and may we not now regard it as the promise of his second and more glorious coming for the redemption of the body? For this our soul doth wait: yea, our heart and our flesh cry out for it with joyful expectation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm is the eleventh in the order of the gradual Psalms, and treats of the eleventh step in the spiritual ascent, viz., penitential prayer.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm.—Of the Psalms which are called Penitential this is the chiefest. But, as it is the most excellent, so it has been perverted to the most disgraceful abuse in the Popedom: *e.g.*, that it should be mumbled in the lowest voice by slow bellies, in the sepulchral vigils for their liberation of souls from purgatory: as if David were here treating of the dead, when he has not even spoken a word about them; but says that he himself, a living man, was calling upon God; and exhorts the Israelites, living men also, to do the same. But leaving the buffooneries of the Papists we will rather consider the true meaning and use of the Psalm. It contains the most ardent prayer of a man grievously distressed by a sense of the Divine anger against sin: by earnest turning to God and penitence, he is seeking the forgiveness of his iniquities.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Whole Psalm.—The Holy Ghost layeth out here two opposite passions most plainly—*fear*, in respect of evil-deserving sins, and *hope*, in regard of undeserved mercies.—*Alexander Roberts*, 1610.

Whole Psalm.—The passionate earnestness of the Psalm is enhanced by the repetition eight times in it of the Divine Name.—*The Speaker's Commentary*, 1873.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm, perhaps more than any other, is marked by its mountings: depth; prayer; conviction; light; hope; waiting; watching; longing; confidence; assurance; universal happiness and joy. . . . Just as the barometer marks the rising of the weather, so does this Psalm, sentence by sentence, record the progress of the soul. And you may test yourself by it, as by a rule or measure, and ask yourself at each line, "Have I reached to this? Have I reached to this?" and so take your spiritual gauge.—*James Vaughan, in "Steps to Heaven,"* 1878.

Whole Psalm.—Whosoever he was that wrote this Psalm, he maketh mention and rehearsal of that prayer that he made to his God in the time of his great danger, and this he doth to the fifth verse; then finding in experience a comfortable answer, and how good a thing it was to pray to God, and to wait on him, he professeth, that, as before, he had awaited on him, so still in time coming he would await on him, and this he doeth to the seventh verse. In the third and last part, he turneth him to Israel, to the church, and exhorteth them to await on God, as he had done, promising them mercy and redemption from all their iniquities if they would await on him.—*Robert Rollock*, 1555—1599.

Whole Psalm.—Luther being once asked which were the best Psalms, replied, *Psalmi Paulini;* and when his companions at table pressed him to say which these were, he answered: Psalms xxxii., li., cxxx., and cxliii.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—Luther, when he was buffeted by the devil at Coburg, and in

great affliction, said to those about him, *Venite, in contemptum Diaboli, Psalmum, De Profundis, quatuor vocibus cantemus;* "Come, let us sing that Psalm, 'Out of the depths,' etc., in derision of the devil."—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm.—The circumstances in which Dr. John Owen's Exposition of Psalm cxxx. originated are peculiarly interesting. Dr. Owen himself, in a statement made to Mr. Richard Davis, who ultimately became pastor of a church in Rowel, Northamptonshire, explains the occasion which led him to a very careful examination of the fourth verse in the Psalm. Mr. Davis, being under religious impressions, had sought a conference with Owen. In the course of the conversation, Dr. Owen put the question, "Young man, pray in what manner do you think to go to God?" "Through the Mediator, sir," answered Mr. Davis. "That is easily said," replied the doctor, "but I assure you it is another thing to go to God through the Mediator than many who make use of the expression are aware of. I myself preached Christ," he continued, "some years, when I had but very little, if any, experimental acquaintance with access to God through Christ; until the Lord was pleased to visit me with sore affliction, whereby I was brought to the mouth of the grave, and under which my soul was oppressed with horror and darkness; but God graciously relieved my spirit by a powerful application of Psalm cxxx. 4, *'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,'* from whence I received special instruction, peace and comfort, in drawing near to God through the Mediator, and preached thereupon immediately after my recovery."—*William H. Goold, editor of Owen's Collected Works*, 1851.

Verse 1.—*"Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O* LORD." Is there not a depth of sin, and a depth of misery by reason of sin, and a depth of sorrow by reason of misery? In all which, both David was, and I, God help me, am deeply plunged; and are not these depths enough out of which to cry? And yet, perhaps, none of these depths is that which David means; but there are depths of danger—a danger of body and a danger of soul, and out of these it seems that David cried; for the danger of his body was so deep that it had brought him to death's door, and the danger of his soul so deep that it had almost brought him to the gates of despair; and had he not just cause then to say, *"Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O God"?* And yet there is a depth besides these that must help to lift us out of these—a depth of devotion, without which depth our crying out of other depths will never be heard. For devotion is a fire that puts a heat into our crying, and carries it up into *cœlum empyræum*—the heaven of fire, where God himself is. And now join all these depths together—the depth of sin, of misery, of sorrow, the depth of danger, and the depth of devotion,—and then tell me if David had not, if I have not, as just cause as ever Jonah had to say, "Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O God." Indeed, to cry out of the depths hath many considerable circumstances to move God to hear: it acknowledgeth his infinite power when no distance can hinder his assistance; it presents our own faith when no extremity can weaken our hope; it magnifies God's goodness when he, the Most High, regards the most low; it expresseth our own earnestness, seeing crying out of depths must needs be a deep cry; and if each of these singly, and by itself, be motive sufficient to move God to hear, how strong must the motive needs be when they are all united? and united they are all in crying out of the depths; and therefore now that I cry to thee out of the depths, be moved, O God, in thy great mercy to *"hear my voice."*

It is cause enough for God not to hear some because they do not cry—cause enough not to hear some that cry because not out of the depths; but when crying and out of the depths are joined together, it was never known that ever God refused to hear; and therefore now that I cry to thee out of the depths, be pleased, O God, in thy great mercy to hear my voice.—*Sir Richard Baker, in "Meditations and Disquisitions upon the Three last Psalmes of David,"* 1639.

Verse 1.—*"Out of the depths."* By the deep places (as all the ancients consent) is meant the deep places of afflictions, and the deep places of the heart troubled for sin. Afflictions are compared to deep waters. Ps. xviii. 16: "He drew me out of many waters." "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul." And surely God's children are often cast into very desperate cases, and plunged into deep miseries, to the end that they may send out of a contrite and feeling heart such prayers as may mount aloft and pierce the heavens. When we are in prosperity our prayers come from our lips; and therefore the Lord is forced to cast us down, that our prayers may come from our hearts, and that our senses may be wakened

from the security in which they are lying. Albeit the throne of God be most high, yet he delighteth to hear the petition of hearts that are most low, that are most cast down by the sight of sin. There is no affliction, neither any place so low (yea, if as low as the belly of the whale wherein Jonah lay) which can separate us from the love of the Lord, or stay our prayers from coming before him. Those that are farthest cast down, are not farthest from God, but are nearest unto him. God is near to a contrite heart, and it is the proper seat where his Spirit dwelleth: Isai. lxvi. 2. And thus God dealeth with us, as men do with such houses that they are minded to build sumptuously and on high; for then they dig deep grounds for the foundation. Thus God purposing to make a fair show of Daniel, and the three children in Babel; of Joseph in Egypt; of David in Israel; he first threw them into the deep waters of afflictions. Daniel is cast into the den of lions; the three children are thrown into the fiery furnace; Joseph is imprisoned; David exiled. Yet all those he exalted and made glorious temples to himself. Mark hereby the dulness of our nature, that is such, that God is forced to use sharp remedies to awaken us. Jonah lay sleeping in the ship, when the tempest of God's wrath was pursuing him: God therefore threw him into the belly of the whale, and the bottom of the deep, that from those deep places he might cry to him.

When, therefore, we are troubled by heavy sickness, or poverty, or oppressed by the tyranny of men, let us make profit and use thereof, considering that God hath cast his best children into such dangers for their profit; and that it is better to be in deep dangers praying, than on high mountains of vanity playing.—*Archibald Symson, in "A Sacred Septenarie."* 1638.

Verse 1.—*"Out of the depths."* "Depths!" oh! into what "*depths*" men can sink! How far from happiness, glory, and goodness men can fall.

There is the depth of *poverty*. A man can become utterly stripped of all earthly possessions and worldly friends! Sometimes we come upon a man, still living, but in such abject circumstances, that it strikes us as a marvel that a human being can sink lower than the beasts of the field.

Then there is the depth of *sorrow*. Billow after billow breaks over the man, friend after friend departs, lover and friend are put into darkness. All the fountains of his nature are broken up. He is like a water-logged ship, from the top waves plunging down as if into the bottom of the sea. So often in such depths, sometimes like Jonah in the whale's belly, the monster carrying him down, down, down, into darkness.

There are depths after depths of *mental darkness*, when the soul becomes more and more sorrowful, down to that very depth which is just this side of *despair*. Earth hollow, heaven empty, the air heavy, every form a deformity, all sounds discord, the past a gloom, the present a puzzle, the future a horror. One more step down, and the man will stand in the chamber of despair, the floor of which is blisteringly hot, while the air is biting cold as the polar atmosphere. To what depths the spirit of a man may fall!

But the most horrible depth into which a man's soul can descend is *sin*. Sometimes we begin on gradual slopes, and slide so swiftly that we soon reach great depths; depths in which there are horrors that are neither in poverty, nor sorrow, nor mental depression. It is sin, it is an outrage against God and ourselves. We feel that there is no bottom. Each opening depth reveals a greater deep. This is really the bottomless pit, with everlasting accumulations of speed, and perpetual lacerations as we descend. Oh, depths below depths! Oh, falls from light to gloom, from gloom to darkness! Oh, the hell of sin!

What can we do? We can simply *cry*, CRY, CRY! But, let us cry to God. Useless, injurious are other cries. They are mere expressions of impotency, or protests against imaginary fate. But the cry of the spirit to the Most High is a manful cry. Out of the depths of all poverty, all sorrow, all mental depression, all sin, *cry unto God!—From "The Study and the Pulpit,"* 1877.

Verse 1.—*"Out of the depths have I cried."*

Up from the deeps, O God, I cry to thee!
Hear my soul's prayer, hear thou her litany,
O thou who sayest, "Come, wanderer, home to me."

Up from the deeps of sorrow, wherein lie
Dark secrets veil'd from earth's unpitying eye,
My prayers, like star-crown'd angels, Godward fly.

From the calm bosom when in quiet hour
God's Holy Spirit reigns with largest power,
Then shall each thought in prayer's white blossom flower.

Not from life's shallows, where the waters sleep,
A dull, low marsh where stagnant vapours creep,
But ocean-voiced, deep calling unto deep.

As he of old, King David, call'd to thee,
As cries the heart of poor humanity,
" Clamavi, Domine, exaudi me ! "

C. S. Fenner.

Verse 1.—But when he crieth from the deep, he riseth from the deep, and his very cry suffereth him not to be long at the bottom.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—It has been well said that the verse puts before us six conditions of true prayer: it is lowly, "*out of the deep*"; fervent, "*have I called*"; direct to God himself, "*unto thee*"; reverent, "*O Lord*"; awed, "*Lord*," a solemn title, is again used; one's very own, "hear *my voice*."—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"*Have I cried.*" There are many kinds and degrees of prayer in the world; from the coldest form to the intensest agony. Every one prays; but very few "cry." But of those who do "cry to God," the majority would say,—"*I owe it to the depths.* I learnt it there. I often prayed before; but never—till I was carried down very deep— did I *cry*." "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." It is well worth while to go down into any "depth" to be taught to "cry."

It is not too much to say that we do not know what prayer may be till we have "*cried.*" And we seldom rise till we have gone very deep. "I die! I perish! I am lost! Help, Lord! Help me! Save me now! Do it *now*, Lord, or I am lost. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God!"

In mid-day, if you are taken from the bright and sunny scenes of light, and go down into the bottom of a pit, you may see the stars, which were invisible to you in the upper air. And how many could say that things they knew not in life's noon, they have found in life's midnight, and that they owe their glimpses of glory, and their best avenues of thought, and the importunacy of prayer, and the victories of faith, to seasons when they walked in very dark places. "*Out of the depths* have I cried unto thee, O Lord."—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 1.—"*Have I cried unto thee, Jehovah.*" God gave out that name Jehovah to his people to confirm their faith in the stability of his promises: Exod. iii. He who is Being himself will assuredly give being and subsistence to his promises. Being to deal with God about the promises of grace, he makes his application to him under this name: "*I call upon thee, Jehovah.*"—*John Owen, in "A practical Exposition upon Psalm cxxx."*

Verse 2.—"*Lord, hear my voice,*" etc. Every prayer should have its reverent invocation, as every temple its porch. The two greatest prayers in the Old Testament—Solomon's prayer and Daniel's prayer—both have it very emphatically. And it is a very distinct part of our own perfect model: "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." On our part it is deferential, and puts the mind into its proper form; while it places the great God, whom it addresses, where he ought to be,—in the awe of his glory; in the magnitude of his power; in the infinitude of his wisdom and love.

Never think little of that part of your prayer: never omit, never hurry over the opening address. Do not go into his presence without a pause, or some devout ascription. "*Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.*" True, he is always listening and waiting for his children's "cry," —far more prepared to answer, than we are to ask. And the very fact that we are praying is a proof of his attention,—for who but he put it into our hearts to make that prayer? Nevertheless, it becomes us, and honours him, to establish, at the outset, the right relationship between a creature and his Creator; between a child and his father: "Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication."—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 2.—"*Lord.*" Hebrew, *Adonai.* As *Jehovah* marks his unchangeable faithfulness to his promises of delivering his people, so *Adonai* his *Lordship* over

all hindrances in the way of his delivering them.—*Andrew Robert Fausset, in "A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical,"* 1866.

Verse 2.—*"Lord, hear my voice,"* etc. The expressions are metaphorical, and borrowed from the carriage of a parent to a child, and upon the matter his suit is this,—Lord, notice me when I pray, as a parent will notice his distressed child's cry when he is like to ruin. *"Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications;"* that goes a little further; that as a parent knowing a child to be in hazard, he will listen and hearken attentively if he can here him cry, and notice and ponder that cry, and what he cries for; so he pleaded with God, that he would be waiting on and attentive, to see and hear if a cry should come from him, and that he would affectionately ponder and notice it when he hears it.—*George Hutcheson,*—1678.

Verse 3.—*"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,"* etc. But doth not the Lord mark iniquity? Doth not he take notice of every sin acted by any of the children of men, especially by his own children? Why, then, doth the Psalmist put it upon an *if? "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity."* 'Tis true, the Lord marks all iniquity to know it, but he doth not mark any iniquity in his children to condemn them for it: so the meaning of the Psalm is, that if the Lord should mark sin with a strict and severe eye, as a judge, to charge it upon the person sinning, no man could bear it.

The word rendered *to mark* notes, first, to watch, or to observe with strictest diligence, and is therefore in the noun rendered *a watch-tower*, upon which a man is placed to take observation of all things that are done, and of all persons that pass by, or approach and come near. A watchman placed upon a high tower is bound industriously and critically to observe all passengers and passages, all that his eye can reach. So saith the text, —If thou shouldst mark as a watchman, and eye with rigour everything that passeth from us, *"who will stand?"* that is, make good his cause in the day of his judgment and trial before thee?

Secondly, the word signifieth to keep in mind, to lay up, to have, as it were, a store and stock, a memorial or record, of such and such things by us. In that sense it is said (Gen. xxxvii. 11), "Joseph's brethen envied him; but his father observed the saying": he marked what Joseph spake about his dreams, he laid it up, and did not let it pass away as a dream, or as a vision of the night. Thus, by *"If the Lord should mark iniquity."* we understand—if he should treasure up our sins in his memory, and keep them by him, *"who were able to stand when accounted with?"* The Lord, in a way of grace, seeth as if he saw not, and winks at us oftentimes when we do amiss.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication, but let not thine eyes be intentive to the stains of my sin; for *"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"* or who shall be able to abide it? Did not the angels fall when thou markedst their follies? Can flesh, which is but dust, be clean before thee, when the stars, which are of a far purer substance, are not? Can anything be clean in thy sight which is not as clean as thy sight? and can any cleanness be equal to thine? Alas! O Lord, we are neither angels nor stars, and how then can we stand when those fell? how can we be clean when these be impure? If thou shouldest mark what is done amiss, there would be marking-work enough for thee as long as the world lasts; for what action of man is free from stain of sin, or from defect of righteousness? Therefore, mark not anything in me, O God, that I have done, but mark that only in me which thou hast done thyself. Mark in me thine own image; and then thou mayest look upon me, and yet say still, as once thou saidst, *Et erant omnia valde bona* ["And all things were very good"].—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3 (*whole verse*).—We are introduced at once into all the solemnities of a criminal court. The judge is seated on the bench: the culprit is standing at the bar, charged with a capital offence: the witnesses are giving their evidence against him. The judge is listening attentively to everything which is said; and in order to assist his memory, he takes notes of the more important parts. If the Lord were to try us after this fashion, what would be the result? Suppose him seated on his throne of inflexible righteousness, taking notes, with a pen in his hand, of the transgressions which are proven against us. Nothing is omitted. Every sin is marked down with its peculiar aggravations. There is no possibility of escape from the deserved condemnation. The evidence against us is clear, and copious, and overwhelming. A thousandth part of it is sufficient to determine our doom.

The judge has no alternative but to pronounce the awful sentence. We must die a felon's death. *"If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"* —*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 3.—*"If thou, LORD, shouldest mark."* If thou shouldst inquire and scrutinize, and then shouldst retain and impute: (for the Hebrew word imports both:) if thou shouldst inquire, thou wouldst find something of iniquity in the most righteous of mankind: and when thou hast found it, if thou shouldst retain it, and call him to an account for it, he could by no means free himself of the charge, or expiate the crime. Inquiring, thou wouldst easily find iniquity; but the sinner by the most diligent inquiry will not be able to discover a ransom, and therefore will be unable to stand, will have no place on which to rest his foot, but will fall by the irresistible judgments of thy law, and the sentence of thy justice.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 3.—*"If thou, LORD."* He here fixes on another name of God, which is Jah: a name, though from the same root as the former, yet seldom used but to intimate and express the terrible majesty of God: "He rideth on the heavens, and is extolled by his name JAH:" Ps. lxviii. 4. He is to deal now with God about the guilt of sin: and God is represented to the soul as great and terrible, that he may know what to expect and look for, if the matter must be tried out according to the demerit of sin,—*John Owen.*

Verse 3.—*"If thou, LORD . . . O Lord."* Mark here that in this third verse he two times nameth God by *the Lord* (as he doth also in the ninth verse), showing to us hereby his earnest desire to take hold of God with both his hands. He nameth not only *Adonai*, but also *Jah* (which two signify his nature and power); all the qualities of God must be conjoined and concur together for us: although he be *Adonai*, yet if he be not also *Jah* we are undone.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 3.—*"LORD . . . Lord."* If God should show himself as JAH, no creature would be able to stand before him, who is *Adonai*, and can therefore carry out his judicial will or purpose.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 3.—*"Iniquities."* The literal meaning of the word *"iniquity"* is "a thing which is not equal," or "not fair." Whatever breaks a command of God is "not equal," It does not match with what man is, nor with what God is. It does not keep the high level of the law. It is altogether out of proportion to all that God has done. It destroys the harmony of creation. It does not rise even to the height of conscience. Still more, it mars and makes a flaw in the divine government. Therefore sin is an unequal thing, fitting nothing, disarranging everything. And it is *not fair*. It is not fair to that God upon whose empire it is a tresspass. It is not fair to your fellow-creatures, to whom it may be a very great injury. It is not fair to yourself, for your happiness lies in obedience. Therefore we call sin *"iniquity"* Or, as the Prayer-Book Version expresses the same idea, "a thing amiss," missing its proper mark. "If thou shouldest be extreme to mark what is *done amiss*."—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 3.—*"O Lord, who shall stand?"* As soon as God manifests signs of anger, even those who appear to be the most holy adopt this language. If God should determine to deal with them according to justice, and call them to his tribunal, not one would be able to stand; but would be compelled to fly for refuge to the mercy of God. See the confessions of Moses, Job, David, Nehemiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, and others of the apostles. Hear Christ teaching his disciples to cry to the Father who is in heaven, *"Forgive us our trespasses!"* If before God the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, although possessing unusual holiness, nevertheless fell down, and as suppliants prayed for forgiveness, what shall be done with those who add sin to sin?—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verses 3, 4.—These two verses contain the sum of all the Scriptures. In the third is the form of repentance, and in the fourth the mercies of the Lord. These are the two mountains, Gerizim and Ebal, mentioned in Deut. xxvii. 12, 13. These are the pillars in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings vii. 21), called Jachin and Boaz. We must, with Paul, persuade ourselves that we are come from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion, where mercy is, although some sour grapes must be eaten by the way. Jeremy tasted in his vision first a bitter fig out of one basket, then a sweet fig out of the other. In the days of Moses the waters were first bitter, then sweetened by the sweet wood. And Elisha cast in salt into the pottage of the sons of the prophets, then it became wholesome.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verses 3, 4.—As I was thus in musing and in my studies, considering how to

love the Lord, and to express my love to him, that saying came in upon me: *"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."* These were good words to me, especially the latter part thereof; to wit, that there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared; that is, as then I understood it, that he might be loved and had in reverence; for it was thus made out to me, that the great God did set so high an esteem upon the love of his poor creatures, that rather than he would go without their love he would pardon their transgressions.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 4.—*"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."* One would think that punishment should procure fear, and forgiveness love; but *nemo majus diligit, quam qui maxime veretur offendere*—no man more truly loves God than he that is most fearful to offend him. "Thy mercy reacheth to the heavens, and thy faithfulness to the clouds"—that is, above all sublimities. God is glorious in all his works, but most glorious in his works of mercy; and this may be one reason why St. Paul calls the gospel of Christ a "glorious gospel": 1 Tim. i. 11. Solomon tells us, "It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence." Herein is God most glorious, in that he passeth by all the offences of his children. Lord, who can know thee and not love thee, know thee and not fear thee? We fear thee for thy justice, and love thee for thy mercy; yea, fear thee for thy mercy, and love thee for thy justice; for thou art infinitely good in both.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4.—*"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."* But is this not a mistaking in David to say, There is mercy with God, that he may be feared; all as one to say, There is severity with him, that he may be loved? for if we cannot love one for being severe, how should we fear him for being merciful? Should it not, therefore, have been rather said, There is justice with thee, that thou mayest be feared? seeing it is justice that strikes a terror and keeps in awe; mercy breeds a boldness, and boldness cannot stand with fear, and therefore not fear with mercy. But is there not, I may say, an active fear, not to offend God, as well as a passive fear for having offended him? and with God's mercy may well stand the active fear, though not so well, perhaps, the passive fear which is incident properly to his justice.

There is a common error in the world, to think we may be the bolder to sin because God is merciful; but, O my soul, take heed of this error, for God's mercy is to no such purpose; it is not to make us bold, but to make us fear: the greater his mercy is, the greater ought our fear to be, for there is mercy with him that he may be feared. Unless we fear, he may choose whether he will be merciful or no; or rather, we may be sure he will not be merciful, seeing he hath mercy for none but for them that fear him; and there is great reason for this, for to whom should mercy show itself but to them that need it? and if we think we need it we will certainly fear. Oh, therefore, most gracious God, make me to fear thee; for as thou wilt not be merciful to me unless I fear thee, so I cannot fear thee unless thou first be merciful unto me.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—*"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."* Even Saul himself will lift up his voice and weep when he seeth a clear testimony of the love and undeserved kindness of David. Hast thou never beheld a condemned prisoner dissolved in tears upon the unexpected and unmerited receipt of a pardon, who all the time before was as hard as a flint? The hammer of the law may break the icy heart of man with terrors and horrors, and yet it may remain ice still, unchanged; but when the fire of love kindly thaweth its ice, it is changed and dissolved into water—it is no longer ice, but of another nature.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 4.—*"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."* The Evangelical doctrine of the gratuitous forgiveness of sins does not of itself beget carelessness, as the Papists falsely allege; but rather a true and genuine fear of God; like as the Psalmist here shows that this is the final cause and effect of the doctrine.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 4.—*"But there is forgiveness with thee,"* etc. His judgments and his wrath may make us astonished and stupefied; but, if there be no more, they will never make us to come to God. Then if this be not sufficient, what more is requisite? Even a sight of the Lord's mercy, for that is most forcible to allure, as the prophet saith here, and as the church of God sayeth (Cant. i. 3), "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, therefore the virgins love thee." This only is forcible to allure the sinner: for all the judgments of God, and curses of the law, will never allure

him. What was the chief thing that moved the prodigal son to return home to his father? Was it chiefly the distress, the disgrace and poverty wherewith he was burdened, or the famine that almost caused him to starve? No, but the chief thing was this, he remembered that he had a loving father. That maketh him to resolve with an humble confession to go home. Luke xv. Even so it is with the sinner; it is not terrors and threatenings that chiefly will move him to come to God, but the consideration of his manifold and great mercies.—*Robert Rollock.*

Verse 4.—"*But.*" How significant is that word "*but!*" As if you heard justice clamouring, "Let the sinner die," and the fiends in hell howling, "Cast, him down into the fires," and conscience shrieking, "Let him perish," and nature itself groaning beneath his weight, the earth weary with carrying him, and the sun tired with shining upon the traitor, the very air sick with finding breath for one who only spends it in disobedience to God. The man is about to be destroyed, to be swallowed up quick, when suddenly there comes this thrice-blessed "*but,*" which stops the reckless course of ruin, puts forth its strong arm bearing a golden shield between the sinner and destruction, and pronounces these words, "*But there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared.*"—*C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—"*There is a propitiation with thee,*" so some read it: Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, the ransom which God has found; he is ever with him, as advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*Forgiveness,*" Hebrew, *selichah,* a word used only here and by Daniel once (ix. 9), and by Nehemiah (ix. 17).—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 4.—"*That thou mayest be feared.*" This forgiveness, this smile of God, binds the soul to God with a beautiful fear. Fear to lose one glance of love. Fear to lose one word of kindness. Fear to be carried away from the heaven of his presence by an insidious current of wordliness. Fear of slumber. Fear of error. Fear of not enough pleasing him. Our duty, then, is to drink deep of God's forgiving love. To be filled with it is to be filled with purity, fervency, and faith. Our sins have to hide their diminished heads, and slink away through crevices, when forgiveness—when Christ—enters the soul.—*George Bowen, in "Daily Meditations,"* 1873.

Verses 4, 5, 7, 8.—David puts his soul out of all fear of God's taking this course [reckoning strictly] with poor penitent souls, by laying down this comfortable conclusion, as an indubitable truth: "*But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*" That is, there is forgiveness in thy nature, thou carriest a pardoning heart in thy bosom; yea, there is forgiveness in thy promise; thy merciful heart doth not only incline thee to thoughts of forgiving; but thy faithful promise binds thee to draw forth the same unto all that humbly and seasonably lay claim thereunto. Now, this foundation laid, see what superstructure this holy man raiseth (verse 5): "*I wait for the* LORD, *my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*" As if he had said, Lord, I take thee at thy word, and am resolved by thy grace to wait at the door of thy promise, never to stir thence till I have my promised dole (forgiveness of my sins) sent out unto me. And this is so sweet a morsel, that he is loth to eat it alone, and therefore he sends down the dish, even to the lower end of the table, that every godly person may taste with him of it (verses 7, 8): "*Let Israel hope in the* LORD: *for with the* LORD *there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*" As if he had said, That which is a ground of hope to me, notwithstanding the clamour of my sins, affords as solid and firm a bottom to any true Israelites or sincere soul in the world, did he but rightly understand himself, and the mind of God in his promise. Yea, I have as strong a faith for such as [for] my own soul, and I durst pawn the eternity of my happiness upon this principle,—that God should redeem every sincere Israelite from all his iniquities.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 5.—"*I wait for the* LORD," etc. We pronounce this a most blessed posture of the believer. It runs counter to everything that is natural, and, therefore, it is all the more a supernatural grace of the gracious soul. In the first place it is *the posture of faith.* Here is the gracious soul hanging in faith upon God in Christ Jesus; upon the veracity of God to fulfil his promise, upon the power of God to help him in difficulty, upon the wisdom of God to counsel him in perplexity, upon the omniscience of God to guide him with his eye, and upon the omnipresence of God to cheer him with his presence, at all times and in all places, his sun and shield. Oh, have faith in God.

It is also a *prayerful posture.* The soul waiting *for* God, is the soul waiting *upon* God. The Lord often shuts us up to this waiting for his interposition on our behalf, that he may keep us waiting and watching at the foot of his cross, in earnest, believing, importunate prayer. Oh, it is the waiting *for* the Lord that keeps the soul waiting *upon* the Lord!

It is also *the posture of a patient waiting* for the Lord. There is not a more God-honouring grace of the Christian character than *patience*—a patient waiting on and for the Lord. It is that Christian grace, the fruit of the Spirit which will enable you to bear with dignity, calmness, and submission the afflictive dealings of your Heavenly Father, the rebuke of the world, and the wounding of the saints.

It is *the posture of rest.* A soul-waiting for the Lord is a soul-resting in the Lord. Waiting and resting! Wearied with traversing in vain the wide circle of human expedients; coming to the end of all your own wisdom, strength, and resources; your uneasy, jaded spirit is brought into this resting posture of waiting on, and waiting for, the Lord; and thus folds its drooping wings upon the very bosom of God. Oh, how real and instant is the rest found in Jesus! Reposing in him, however profound the depth of the soul, however dark the clouds that drape it, or surging the waters that overwhelm it, all is sunshine and serenity within.—*Condensed from "Soul-Depths and soul-heights," by Octavius Winslow,* 1874.

Verse 5.—"*I wait for the* LORD." *Waiting* is a great part of life's discipline, and therefore God often exercises the grace of waiting. *Waiting* has four purposes. It practises the patience of faith. It gives time for preparation for the coming gift. It makes the blessing the sweeter when it arrives. And it shows the sovereignty of God,—to give just *when* and just *as* he pleases. It may be difficult to define exactly what the Psalmist had in his mind when he said, "I wait *for the Lord,* my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth *for the Lord* more than they that watch for the morning." It may have been the Messiah, whose coming was a thing close at hand to the mind of the ancient Jews, just as the Second Advent is to us.

It may have been some special interposition of divine Providence. But more probably, looking at the place which it occupies, and at the whole tenor of the Psalm, and its line of thought, "The Lord" he waited for so intently was that full sense of safety, peace, and love which God's felt presence gives, and which is, indeed, nothing else but the coming of the Lord most sensibly and palpably into an anxious and longing heart.

The picture of *the waiting man* is a striking one. It is as one on the ridge of a journey, looking onward on his way, standing on tiptoe, and therefore needing something to lean on, and to support him. "*I wait for the Lord,*"—spiritually, with my deepest thoughts—in the very centre of my being—"*I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait.*" And I rest, I stay myself on what thou, O Lord, hast said, "My soul doth wait, and *in his word* do I hope."

In all your *waitings* remember two things: Let it not be so much the event which you wait for, as the Lord *of* the event; the Lord *in* the event. And take care that you have a promise underneath you.—"In his word do I hope,"—else "waiting" will be too much for you, and after all it may be in vain.—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 5.—"*I wait . . . I hope.*" Waiting and hoping ever attend the same thing. No man will wait at all for that which he hath no hope of, and he who hath hope will wait always. He gives not over waiting, till he gives over hoping. The object of hope is some future good, but the act of hoping is a present good, and that is present pay to bear our charges in waiting. The word implies both a patient waiting and a hopeful trusting. So Christ expounds it (Matt. xii. 21), rendering that of the prophet (Isa. xlii. 4), "The isles shall wait for his law," thus, "In his name shall the Gentiles trust."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 5, 6.—In these two verses he doth four times make mention of his hope, and attendance upon God and his word, to let us see how sure a hold we should take on God, and with how many temptations our faith is assaulted, when we can see no reason thereof. Nothing will bear us up but hope. *Spero meliora.* What encourageth husbandmen and mariners against the surges and waves of the sea, and evil weather, but hope of better times? What comforteth a sick man in time of sickness, but hope of health? or a poor man in his distress, but hope of riches? or a prisoner, but hope of liberty? or a banished man, but hope to come home? All these hopes may fail, as oftentimes wanting a warrant. Albeit a physician may

encourage a sick man by his fair words, yet he cannot give him an assurance of his recovery, for his health dependeth on God: friends and courtiers may promise poor men relief, but all men are liars; only God is faithful who hath promised. Therefore let us fix our faith on God, and our hope in God; for he will stand by his promise. No man hath hoped in him in vain, neither was ever any disappointed of his hope.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verses 5, 7.—Faith doth ultimately centre in the Deity. God himself in his glorious nature, is the ultimate object whereunto our faith is resolved. The promise, simply considered, is not the object of trust, but God in the promise; and from the consideration of that we ascend to the Deity, and cast our anchor there. "Hope in the word" is the first act, but succeeded by hoping in the Lord: "*In his word do I hope*": that is not all; but, "*Let Israel hope in the Lord.*" That is the ultimate object of faith, wherein the essence of our happiness consists, and that is God. God himself is the true and full portion of the soul.—*Stephen Charnock*, 1628—1680.

Verse 6.—"*My soul waiteth for the* LORD." And now, my soul, what do I live for but only to wait upon God, and to wait for God? To wait upon him, to do him service, to wait for him, to be enabled to do him better service; to wait upon him, as being Lord of all; and to wait for him, as being the rewarder of all; to wait upon him whose service is better than any other command, and to wait for him whose expectation is better than any other possession. Let, others, therefore, wait upon the world, wait for the world; I, O God, will wait upon thee, for thee, seeing I find more true contentment in this waiting than all the world can give me in enjoying; for how can I doubt of receiving reward by my waiting for thee when my waiting for thee is itself the reward of my waiting upon thee? And therefore my soul waiteth; for if my soul did not wait, what were my waiting worth? no more than I were worth myself, if I had not a soul; but my soul puts a life into my waiting, and makes it become a living sacrifice. Alas, my frail body is very unfit to make a waiter: it rather needs to be waited upon itself: it must have so much resting, so often leave to be excused from waiting, that if God should have no other waiters than bodies, he would be left oftentimes to wait upon himself; but my soul is *Divinæ particula auræ* [a portion of the Divine breath], endued with all qualities fit for a waiter; and hath it not received its abilities, O God, from thee? And therefore my soul waiteth, and is so intentive in the service that it waits "*more than they that watch for the morning.*"—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6.—*Hammond* thus renders the verse:—"My soul hasteneth to the Lord from the guards in the morning, the guards in the morning."

Verse 6.—"*More than they that watch for the morning.*" Look, as the weary sentinel that is wet and stiff with cold and the dews of the night, or as the porters that watched in the Temple, the Levites, were waiting for the daylight, so "more than they that watch for the morning" was he waiting for some glimpse of God's favour. Though he do not presently ease us of our smart or gratify our desires, yet we are to wait upon God. In time we shall have a good answer. God's delays are not denials. Day will come at length, though the weary sentinel or watchman counts it long first; so God will come at length; he will not be at our beck. We have deserved nothing, but must wait for him in the diligent use of means; as Benhadad's servants watched for the word "brother," or anything of kindness to drop from the king of Israel.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 6.—"*More than they that watch for the morning.*" How many in the hallowed precincts of the Temple turned with anxious eye to the east, for the first red streak over Moab's mountains that gave intimation of approaching day; yet it was not for deliverance they waited, but for the accustomed hour when the morning sacrifice could be offered, and the soul be relieved of its gratitude in the hymn of thanksgiving, and of the burden of its sorrows and sins by prayer, and could draw that strength from renewed intercourse with heaven, that would enable it in this world to breathe the spirit and engage in the beneficent and holy deeds of a better.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verse 6.—"*I say, more than they that watch for the morning,*" for must there not be a proportion between the cause and effect? If my cause of watching be more than theirs, should not my watching be more than theirs? They that watch for the morning have good cause, no doubt, to watch for it, that it may bring them the light of day; but have not I more cause to watch, who wait for the light that lighteth every one that comes into the world? They that watch for the morning wait but for the rising of the sun to free them from darkness, that hinders their sight; but I

wait for the rising of the Sun of righteousness to dispel the horrors of darkness that affright my soul. They watch for the morning that they may have light to walk by; but I wait for the Dayspring from on High to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. But though there may be question made of the intentiveness of our watching, yet of the extensiveness there can be none, for they that watch for the morning watch at most but a piece of the night; but I have watched whole days and whole nights, and may I not then justly say, I wait *more* than they that watch for the morning?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6.—Holy men like Simeon, and devout priests like Zacharias, there were, amidst this seething people, who, brooding, longing, waiting, chanted to themselves day by day the words of the Psalmist, "*My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.*" As lovers that watch for the appointed coming, and start at the quivering of a leaf, the flight of a bird, or the humming of a bee, and grow weary of the tense strain, so did the Jews watch for their Deliverer. It is one of the most piteous sights of history, especially when we reflect that he came,—and they knew him not.—*Henry Ward Beecher, in his "Life of Jesus the Christ."*

Verse 6.—"*Watch.*" We do injustice to that good and happy word, "*watch,*" when we take it as watching against; against a danger; against a coming evil. It will bear that interpretation; but it is a far higher, and better, and more filial thing to watch *for* a coming good than to watch *against* an approaching evil.

So, "*watching for,*" we send up our arrows of prayer, and then look trustingly to see where they are coming down again. So, "*watching for,*" we listen, in silence, for the familiar voice we love. So, "*watching for,*" we expect the Bridegroom!

Take care, that as one always standing on the eve,—not of danger, but of happiness,—your "*watch*" be the "*watch*" of love, and confidence, and cheerful hope.—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 6.—In the year 1830, on the night preceding the 1st of August, the day the slaves in our West Indian Colonies were to come into possession of the freedom promised them, many of them, we are told, never went to bed at all. Thousands, and tens of thousands of them, assembled in their places of worship, engaging in devotional duties, and singing praises to God, waiting for the first streak of the light of the morning of that day on which they were to be made free. Some of their number were sent to the hills, from which they might obtain the first view of the coming day, and, by a signal, intimate to their brethren down in the valley the dawn of the day that was to make them men, and no longer, as they had hitherto been, mere goods and chattels,—men with souls that God had created to live for ever. How eagerly must these men have watched for the morning.—*T. W. Aveling, in "The Biblical Museum,"* 1872.

Verse 7.—"*Let Israel hope in the* LORD." This title is applied to all the Lord's people; it sets forth *their dignity*—they are PRINCES; it refers to *their experience*—they wrestle with God in prayer, and they prevail. Despondency does not become a prince, much less a Christian. Our God is "THE GOD OF HOPE"; and we should hope in him. Israel should hope in his mercy, in his patience, in his provision, in his plenteous redemption. They should hope for light in darkness; for strength in weakness; for direction in perplexity; for deliverance in danger; for victory in conflict; and for triumph in death.

They should hope in God confidently, because he hath promised; prayerfully, for he loves to hear from us; obediently, for his precepts are to be observed by us; and constantly, for he is always the same.—*James Smith* (1802—1862), *in "The Believer's Daily Remembrancer."*

Verse 7.—"*Let Israel hope in the* LORD." Whereas, in all preceding verses of the Psalm, the thoughts, the sorrows, the prayer, the penitence, the awe, the waiting, the watching, were all personal and confined to himself; here a great change has taken place, and it is no longer "*I,*" but "*Israel*"; all Israel. "Let *Israel* hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem *Israel* from all his iniquities." This is as it always ought to be. . . . It is the genius of our religion to go forth to multitudes.—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 7.—"*For with the* LORD *there is mercy.*" Mercy has been shown to us, but it dwells in God. It is one of his perfections. The exercise of it is his delight. There is mercy with the Lord in all its *fulness;* he never was more merciful than now, neither will he ever be. There is mercy with the Lord in all its *tenderness,* he

is full of compassion, his bowels are troubled for us, his tender mercies are over us. There is mercy with him in all its *variety*, it suits every case.

Here is mercy that receives sinners, mercy that restores backsliders, mercy that keeps believers. Here is the mercy that pardons sin, that introduces to the enjoyment of all gospel privileges, and that blesses the praying soul far beyond its expectations. With the Lord there is mercy, and he loves to display it, he is ready to impart it, he has determined to exalt and glorify it.

There is mercy with the Lord; this should encourage the miserable to approach him; this informs the fearful that they need bring nothing to induce him to bless them; this calls upon backsliders to return to him; and this is calculated to cheer the tried Christian, under all his troubles and distresses. Remember, mercy is like God, it is infinite and eternal. Mercy is always on the throne. Mercy may be obtained by any sinner.—*James Smith.*

Verse 7.—"*With him is plenteous redemption.*" This plenteous redemption leaves behind it no more relics of sin than Moses left hoofs of beasts behind him in Egypt. It redeems not only from the fault, but from the punishment; not only *a tanto*, but *a toto* [not only from such, but also from all sin and penalty]; not only from the sense but from the fear of pain; and in the fault, not only from the guilt, but from the stain; not only from being censured, but from being questioned. Or is it meant by a plenteous redemption that not only he leads captivity captive, but gives gifts unto men? For what good is it to a prisoner to have his pardon, if he be kept in prison still for not paying his fees? but if the prince, together with the pardon, sends also a largess that may maintain him when he is set at liberty, this, indeed, is a plenteous redemption; and such is the redemption that God's mercy procures unto us. It not only delivers us from a dungeon, but puts us in possession of a palace; it not only frees us from eating bread in the sweat of our brows, but it restores us to Paradise, where all fruits are growing of their own accord; it not only clears us from being captives, but endears us to be children; and not only children, but heirs; and not only heirs, but co-heirs with Christ; and who can deny this to be a plenteous redemption? Or is it said a plenteous redemption in regard of the price that was paid to redeem us? for we are redeemed with a price, not of gold or precious stones, but with the precious blood of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to be a ransom for us; and this I am sure is a plenteous redemption.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 7.—"*Plenteous redemption,*" or more literally, "redemption plenteously." He calls it plenteous, as Luther says, because such is the straitness of our heart, the slenderness of our hopes, the weakness of our faith, that it far exceeds all our capacity, all our petitions and all our desires.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 7, 8.—This Psalm containeth an evident prophecy of the Messias; in setting forth his plentiful redemption, and that he should redeem Israel, that is, the Church, from all their sins. Which words in their full sense were used by an angel to Joseph, in telling him that the child's name should be Jesus, "because he should save his people from their sins": Matt. i. 21.—*Sir John Hayward* (1560—1627), *in "David's Tears."* 1623.

Verse 8.—"*He will redeem.*" He emphatic, He alone, for none other can.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 8.—"*From his iniquities.*" Not only from the punishment (as Ewald and Hupfeld). The redemption includes the forgiveness of sins, the breaking of the power and dominion of sin, and the setting free from all the consequences of sin.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 8.—"*Iniquities.*" Iniquities of *eye*—has conscience no voice there? Is no iniquity ever practised by your eye? Let conscience speak. Iniquity of *ear*—is there no iniquity that enters into your heart through the ear? You cannot listen to a conversation in the street without iniquity entering into your heart through what Bunyan calls "Ear-gate." Iniquity of *lip*—do you always keep your tongue as with a bridle? Do your lips never drop anything unbecoming the gospel? Is there no carnal conversation, no angry word at home, no expression that you would not like the saints of God to hear? What! your lips always kept so strictly that there is never a single expression dropped from them which you would be ashamed to utter before an assembly of God's people? Iniquity of *thought*—if your eyes, ears, and lips are clean, is there no iniquity of thought? What! in that workshop

within, no iniquitous suggestions, no evil workings? Oh, how ignorant must we be of ourselves, if we feel that we have no iniquity of thought! Iniquity of *imagination*—does not fancy sometimes bring before you scenes of sensuality in which your carnal nature is vile enough to revel? Iniquity of *memory*—does not memory sometimes bring back sins you formerly committed, and your evil nature is perhaps base enough to desire they had been greater? Iniquity of *feeling*—no enmity against God's people ever working? no pride of heart? no covetousness? no hypocrisy? no self-righteousness? no sensuality? no base thought that you cannot disclose even to your bosom friend? But here is the blessed promise—a promise only suited to Israel: for all but Israel lose sight of their iniquities, and justify themselves in self-righteousness. None but Israel feel and confess their iniquities, and therefore to Israel is the promise of redemption limited: "He shall redeem *Israel* from all his iniquities." What! *all?* Yes. Not *one* left? No, not a trace, not a shade, not the shadow of a shade; all buried, all gone, all swallowed up, all blotted out, all freely pardoned, all cast behind God's back.—*Joseph C. Philpot*, 1802—1869.

Verse 8.—What a graceful and appropriate conclusion of this comprehensive and instructive Psalm! Like the sun, it dawns veiled in cloud, it sets bathed in splendour; it opens with soul-depth, it closes with soul-height. Redemption from all iniquity! It baffles the most descriptive language, and distances the highest measurement. The most vivid imagination faints in conceiving it, the most glowing image fails in portraying it, and faith droops her wing in the bold attempt to scale its summit. "*He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*" The verse is a word-painting of man restored, and of Paradise regained.—*Octavius Winslow.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS

Verse 1.—The assertion of an experienced believer. I. I have cried—that is, I have earnestly, constantly, truthfully prayed. II. I have cried only unto thee. Nothing could draw me to other confidences, or make me despair of thee. III. I have cried in distress. At my worst, temporally or spiritually, I have cried out of the depths. IV. I therefore infer—that I am thy child, no hypocrite, no apostate; and that thou hast heard and wilt hear me evermore.

Verse 1.—I. What we are to understand by "the depths." Great misery and distress. II. How men get into "the depths." By sin and unbelief. III. What gracious souls do when in "the depths." Cry unto the Lord. IV. How the Lord lifts praying souls out of "the depths": "He shall redeem," etc., verse 8.—*W. H. J. P*

Verse 1.—I. In the pit. II. The morning-star seen: "Thee, O Lord." III. Prayer flutters up "out of the depths."—*W. B. H.*

Verses 1, 2.—I. The depths from which prayer may rise. 1. Of affliction. 2. Of conviction. 3. Of desertion. II. The height to which it may ascend. 1. To the hearing of God. 2. To a patient hearing. "Hear my voice." 3. To an attentive hearing.

Or, I. We should pray at all times. II. We should pray that our prayers may be heard. III. We should pray until we know we are heard. IV. We should pray in faith that when heard we have the thing we have asked. "That which thou hast prayed to me against the King of Assyria I have heard." God had heard. That was enough. It was the death of Sennacherib and the overthrow of his host.—*G. R.*

Verses 1, 2.—Consider, I. The Psalmist's condition in the light of a warning. Evidently, through sin, he came into the depths; see verses 3 and 4. Learn, 1. The need of watchfulness on the part of all. 2. That backsliding will, sooner or later, bring great trouble of soul. II. His sometime continuance in that condition, in the light of a Divine judgment: "I *have* cried." Certainly his first cry had not brought deliverance. 1. The realization of pardon is a Divine work, dependent upon God's pleasure. Ps. lxxxv. 8. 2. But he will not always nor often speak pardon at the first asking; for He will make His people reverence his holiness, feel

the bitterness of sinning, learn caution, etc. III. His conduct while in that condition in the light of a direction. He, 1. Seeks deliverance only of God. 2. Is intensely earnest in his application: "I cried." 3. Is importunate in his pleading: "Hear my voice," etc.—*J. F.*

Verse 2.—Attention from God to us—how to gain it. I. Let us plead the name which commands attention. II. Let us ourselves pay attention to God's word. III. Let us give earnest attention to what we ask, and how we ask. IV. Let us attentively watch for a reply.

Verse 2.—"*Lord, hear my voice.*" I. Though it be faint by reason of distance—hear it. II. Though it be broken because of my distress—hear it. III. Though it be unworthy on account of my iniquities—hear it.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 3.—I. The supposition: "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities." 1. It is scriptural. 2. It is reasonable. If God is not indifferent towards men, he must observe their sins. If he is holy, he must manifest indignation against sin. If he is the Creator of conscience, he must certainly uphold its verdict against sin. If he is not wholly on the side of sin, how can he fail to avenge the mischiefs and miseries sin has caused? II. The question it suggests: "Who shall stand?" A question, 1. Not difficult to answer. 2. Of solemn import to all. 3. Which ought to be seriously pondered without delay. III. The possibility it hints at. "If thou, Lord." The "if" hints at the possibility that God may not mark sin. The possibility, 1. Is reasonable, providing it can be without damage to God's righteousness; for the Creator and Preserver of men cannot delight in condemning and punishing. 2. Is a God-honouring reality, through the blood of Christ, Rom. iii. 21—26. 3. Becomes a glorious certainty in the experience of penitent and believing souls.—*J. F.*

Verses 3, 4.—I. The Confession. He could not stand. II. The Confidence. "There is forgiveness." III. The Consequence. "That thou mayest be feared."

Verses 3, 4.—I. The fearful supposition. II. The solemn interrogation. III. The Divine consolation.—*W. J.*

Verse 4. — *Forgiveness with God.* I. The proofs of it. 1. Divine declarations. 2. Invitations and promises, Isa. i. 18. 3. The bestowment of pardon so effectually as to give assurance and joy. 2 Sam. xii. 13. Ps. xxxii. 5. Luke vii. 47-8. 1 John ii. 12. II. The reason of it. 1. In God's nature there is the desire to forgive; the gift of Christ is sufficient evidence for it. 2. But, the text speaks not so much of a desire as it asserts the existence of a forgiveness being "with" God, therefore ready to be dispensed. The blood of Christ is the reason (Col. i. 14); by it the disposition to forgive righteously manifests itself in the forgiving act: Rom. iii. 25, 26. 3. Hence, forgiveness for all who believe is sure: Rom. iii. 25; 1 John ii. 1, 2. III. The result of its realization: "That thou mayest be feared": with a reverential fear, and spiritual worship. 1. The possibility of forgiveness begets in an anxious soul true penitence, as opposed to terror and despair. 2. The hope of receiving it begets earnest seeking and prayerfulness. 3. A believing reception of it gives peace and rest, and, exciting grateful love, leads to spiritual worship and filial service.—*J. F.*

Verse 4.—"*There is forgiveness.*" I. It is needed. II. God alone can give it. III. It may be had. IV. We may know that we have it.

Verse 4.—I. A most cheering announcement: "There is forgiveness with thee." 1. A fact certain. 2. A fact in the present tense. 3. A fact which arises out of God himself. 4. A fact stated in general terms. 5. A fact to be meditated upon with delight. II. A most admirable design: "That thou mayest be feared." 1. Very contrary to the abuse made of it by rebels, triflers, and procrastinators. 2. Very different from the pretended fears of legalists. 3. No pardon, no fear of God—devils, reprobates. 4. No pardon, none survive to fear him. 5. But the means of pardon encourage faith, repentance, prayer; and the receipt of pardon creates love, suggests obedience, inflames zeal.

Verse 4.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 351: "Plenteous Redemption."

Verse 4.—Tender Light. I. The Angel by the Throne: "Forgiveness with Thee." II. The shadow that enhances his sweet majesty: "If," "But." III. The homage resultant from his ministry; universal from highest to least.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 5, 6.—Three postures: Waiting, Hoping, Watching.

Verses 5, 6.—1. The seeking sinner. 2. The Christian mourner. 3. The loving intercessor. 4. The spiritual labourer. 5. The dying believer.—*W. J.*

Verses 5, 6.—I. We are to wait on God. 1. By faith: "In his word do I hope."

2. By prayer. Prayer can wait when it has a promise to rest upon. II. We are to wait for God: "I wait for the Lord." "My soul waiteth for the Lord more," etc. 1. Because he has his own time for giving. 2. Because what he gives is worth waiting for.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—"*More than they.*" I. For the darker sorrow his absence causes. II. For the richer splendour his coming must bring. III. For the greater might of our indwelling love.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 6.—I. A long, dark night: The Lord absent. II. An eager, hopeful watcher: Waiting the Lord's return. III. A bright, blessed morning: The time of the Lord's appearing.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 7.—Redeeming grace the sole hope of the holiest.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 7.—I. A divine exhortation: "Let Israel hope in the LORD." II. A spiritual reason: "For with the LORD there is mercy," etc. III. A gracious promise: "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verses 7, 8.—It is our wisdom to have personal dealings with God. I. The first exercise of faith must be upon the Lord himself. This is the natural order, the necessary order, easiest, wisest, and most profitable order. Begin where all begins. II. Exercises of faith about other things must still be in connection with the Lord. Mercy—"with the Lord." Plenteous redemption "with him." III. Exercises of faith, whatever their object, must *all* settle on him. "HE shall redeem," etc.

Verse 8.—I. The Redemption: "From all iniquities." II. The Redeemer: "The Lord." See Titus ii. 14. III. The Redeemed: "Israel."—*W. H. J. P.*

PSALM CXXXI.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees of David. *It is both by David and of David: he is the author and the subject of it, and many incidents of his life may be employed to illustrate it. Comparing all the Psalms to gems, we should liken this to a pearl: how beautifully it will adorn the neck of patience. It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn. It speaks of a young child, but it contains the experience of a man in Christ. Lowliness and humility are here seen in connection with a sanctified heart, a will subdued to the mind of God, and a hope looking to the Lord alone. Happy is the man who can without falsehood use these words as his own; for he wears about him the likeness of his Lord, who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." The Psalm is in advance of all the Songs of Degrees which have preceded it; for lowliness is one of the highest attainments in the divine life. There are also steps in this Song of Degrees: it is a short ladder, if we count the words; but yet it rises to a great height, reaching from deep humility to fixed confidence. Le Blanc thinks that this is a song of the Israelites who returned from Babylon with humbled hearts, weaned from their idols. At any rate, after any spiritual captivity let it be the expression of our hearts.*

EXPOSITION.

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul *is* even as a weaned child.

3 Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.

1. *"LORD, my heart is not haughty."* The Psalm deals with the Lord, and is a solitary colloquy with him, not a discourse before men. We have a sufficient audience when we speak with the Lord, and we may say to him many things which were not proper for the ears of men. The holy man makes his appeal to Jehovah, who alone knows the heart: a man should be slow to do this upon any matter, for the Lord is not to be trifled with; and when anyone ventures on such an appeal he should be sure of his case. He begins with his heart, for that is the centre of our nature, and if pride be there it defiles everything; just as mire in the spring causes mud in all the streams. It is a grand thing for a man to know his own heart so as to be able to speak before the Lord about it. It is beyond all things deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it? Who can know it unless taught by the Spirit of God? It is a still greater thing if, upon searching himself thoroughly, a man can solemnly protest unto the Omniscient One that his heart is not haughty: that is to say, neither proud in his opinion of himself, contemptuous to others, nor self-righteous before the Lord; neither boastful of the past, proud of the present, nor ambitious for the future. *"Nor mine eyes lofty."* What the heart desires the eyes look for. Where the desires run the glances usually follow. This holy man felt that he did not seek after elevated places where he might gratify his self-esteem, neither did he look down upon others as being his inferiors. A proud look the Lord hates; and in this all men are agreed with him; yea, even the proud themselves hate haughtiness in the gestures of others. Lofty eyes are so generally hateful that haughty men have been known to avoid the manners natural to the proud in order to escape the ill-will of their fellows. The pride which apes humility always takes care to cast its eyes downward, since every man's consciousness tells him that contemptuous glances are the sure ensigns of a boastful spirit. In Psalm cxxi. David lifted up his eyes to the hills; but here he declares that they were not lifted up in any other sense. When the heart is right, and the eyes are right, the whole man is on the road to a healthy and happy condition. Let us take care that we do not use the language of this Psalm unless, indeed, it be true as to ourselves; for there is no worse pride than that which claims humility when it does not possess it.

"Neither do I exercise myself in great matters." As a private man he did not usurp the power of the king or devise plots against him : he minded his own business, and left others to mind theirs. As a thoughtful man he did not pry into things unrevealed ; he was not speculative, self-conceited or opinionated. As a secular person he did not thrust himself into the priesthood as Saul had done before him, and as Uzziah did after him. It is well so to exercise ourselves unto godliness that we know our true sphere, and diligently keep to it. Many through wishing to be great have failed to be good : they were not content to adorn the lowly stations which the Lord appointed them, and so they have rushed at grandeur and power, and found destruction where they looked for honour. *"Or in things too high for me."* High things may suit others who are of greater stature, and yet they may be quite unfit for us. A man does well to know his own size. Ascertaining his own capacity, he will be foolish if he aims at that which is beyond his reach, straining himself, and thus injuring himself. Such is the vanity of many men that if a work be within their range they despise it, and think it beneath them : the only service which they are willing to undertake is that to which they have never been called, and for which they are by no means qualified. What a haughty heart must he have who will not serve God at all unless he may be trusted with five talents at the least ! His looks are indeed lofty who disdains to be a light among his poor friends and neighbours here below, but demands to be created a star of the first magnitude to shine among the upper ranks, and to be admired by gazing crowds. It is just on God's part that those who wish to be everything should end in being nothing. It is a righteous retribution from God when every matter turns out to be too great for the man who would only handle great matters, and every thing proves to be too high for the man who exercised himself in things too high for him. Lord, make us lowly, keep us lowly, fix us for ever in lowliness. Help us to be in such a case that the confession of this verse may come from our lips as a truthful utterance which we dare make before the Judge of all the earth.

2. *"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself."* The original bears somewhat of the form of an oath, and therefore our translators exhibited great judgment in introducing the word " surely " ; it is not a literal version, but it correctly gives the meaning. The Psalmist had been upon his best behaviour, and had smoothed down the roughnesses of his self-will ; by holy effort he had mastered his own spirit, so that towards God he was not rebellious, even as towards man he was not haughty. It is no easy thing to quiet yourself : sooner may a man calm the sea, or rule the wind, or tame a tiger, than quiet himself. We are clamorous, uneasy, petulant ; and nothing but grace can make us quiet under afflictions, irritations, and disappointments. *"As a child that is weaned of his mother."* He had become as subdued and content as a child whose weaning is fully accomplished. The Easterns put off the time of weaning far later than we do, and we may conclude that the process grows none the easier by being postponed. At last there must be an end to the suckling period, and then a battle begins : the child is denied his comfort, and therefore frets and worries, flies into pets, or sinks into sulks. It is facing its first great sorrow, and it is in sore distress. Yet time brings not only alleviations, but the ending of the conflict ; the boy ere long is quite content to find his nourishment at the table with his brothers, and he feels no lingering wish to return to those dear fountains from which he once sustained his life. He is no longer angry with his mother, but buries his head in that very bosom after which he pined so grievously : he is weaned *on* his mother rather than *from* her.

> " My soul doth like a weanling rest,
> I cease to weep ;
> So mother's lap, though dried her breast,
> Can lull to sleep."

To the weaned child his mother is his comfort though she has denied him comfort. It is a blessed mark of growth out of spiritual infancy when we can forego the joys which once appeared to be essential, and can find our solace in him who denies them to us : then we behave manfully, and every childish complaint is hushed. If the Lord removes our dearest delight we bow to his will without a murmuring thought ; in fact, we find a delight in giving up our delight. This is no spontaneous fruit of nature, but a well-tended product of divine grace : it grows out of humility and lowliness, and it is the stem upon which peace blooms as a fair flower. *"My soul is even as a weaned child" ;* or it may be read, " as a weaned child on me my

soul," as if his soul leaned upon him in mute submission, neither boasting nor complaining. It is not every child of God who arrives at this weanedness speedily. Some are sucklings when they ought to be fathers; others are hard to wean, and cry, and fight, and rage against their heavenly parent's discipline. When we think ourselves safely through the weaning, we sadly discover that the old appetites are rather wounded than slain, and we begin crying again for the breasts which we had given up, It is easy to begin shouting before we are out of the wood, and no doubt hundreds have sung this Psalm long before they have understood it. Blessed are those afflictions which subdue our affections, which wean us from self-sufficiency, which educate us into Christian manliness, which teach us to love God not merely when he comforts us, but even when he tries us. Well might the sacred poet repeat his figure of the weaned child; it is worthy of admiration and imitation; it is doubly desirable and difficult of attainment. Such weanedness from self springs from the gentle humility declared in the former verse, and partly accounts for its existence. If pride is gone, submission will be sure to follow; and, on the other hand, if pride is to be driven out, self must also be vanquished.

3. *"Let Israel hope in the* LORD *from henceforth and for ever."* See how lovingly a man who is weaned from self thinks of others! David thinks of his people, and loses himself in his care for Israel. How he prizes the grace of hope! He has given up the things which are seen, and therefore he values the treasures which are not seen except by the eyes of hope. There is room for the largest hope when self is gone, ground for eternal hope when transient things no longer hold the mastery of our spirits. This verse is the lesson of experience: a man of God who had been taught to renounce the world and live upon the Lord alone, here exhorts all his friends and companions to do the same. He found it a blessed thing to live by hope, and therefore he would have all his kinsmen do the same. Let all the nation hope, let all their hope be in Jehovah, let them at once begin hoping "from henceforth," and let them continue hoping "for ever." Weaning takes the child out of a temporary condition into a state in which he will continue for the rest of his life: to rise above the world is to enter upon a heavenly existence which can never end. When we cease to hanker for the world we begin hoping in the Lord. O Lord, as a parent weans a child, so do thou wean me, and then shall I fix all my hope on thee alone.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This little song is inscribed לְדָוִד because it is like an echo of the answer (2 Sam. vi. 21 sq.) with which David repelled the mocking observation of Michal when he danced before the Ark in a linen ephod, and therefore not in kingly attire, but in the common raiment of the priests. *I esteem myself still less than I now show it, and I appear base in mine own eyes.* In general David is the model of the state of mind which the poet expresses here. He did not push himself forward, but suffered himself to be drawn forth out of seclusion. He did not take possession of the throne violently; but after Samuel has anointed him, he willingly and patiently traverses the long, thorny, circuitous way of deep abasement, until he receives from God's hand that which God's promise had assured to him. The persecution by Saul lasted about ten years, and his kingship in Hebron, at first only incipient, seven years and a half. He left it entirely to God to remove Saul and Ishbosheth. He let Shimei curse. He left Jerusalem before Absalom. Submission to God's guidance, resignation to his dispensations, contentment with that which was allotted to him, are the distinguishing traits of his noble character. —*Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—Psalm cxxx. is a Song of Forgiveness; Psalm cxxxi. is a Song of Humility: the former celebrates the blessedness of the man whose transgressions are pardoned; the latter celebrates the blessedness of the man who is of a meek and lowly spirit. Forgiveness *should* humble us. Forgiveness implies sin; and should not the sinner clothe himself with humility? and when not for any desert of his, but simply by the free grace of Heaven, his sins have been pardoned, should he not bind the garments of humility still more closely about him? The man who

is of a nature at once sincere and sweet, will be even more humbled by the sense of an undeserved forgiveness than by the memory of the sins from which it has cleansed him. Very fitly, therefore, does the Psalm of humility follow the Psalm which sings of the Divine lovingkindness and tender mercy.—*Samuel Cox.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm, which records the meek and humble spirit of those who are the true worshippers of the Temple, doubtless belongs, as its title announces, to the time of David. It is exactly in the spirit of that humble thanksgiving made by him, after the divine revelation by Nathan of the future blessings of his posterity (1 Chron. xxii. 9—11); and forms a most appropriate introduction to the following Psalm, the theme of which is evidently the dedication of the Temple.—*John Jebb.*

Verse 1.—"*Lord, my heart is not haughty.*" For the truth of his plea he appealeth to God; and from all those who are affected like David, God will accept of the appeal.

Firstly. He could in truth of heart appeal to God: "*Lord, my heart is not haughty.*" He appealeth to him who knoweth all things. "Lord, from whom nothing is hid, thou knowest that this is the very disposition of my soul. If I have anything, it is from thee; it is thy providence which brought me from following the ewes great with young to feed and govern thy people." Such a holy man would not rashly invoke God, and take his holy name in vain; but knowing his integrity, durst call God to witness. The saints are wont to do so upon like occasions; as Peter (John xxi. 17); "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." They know they have a God that will not be deceived with any shows, and that he knoweth and approveth them for such as he findeth them to be.

Secondly. From those that are affected like David, God will accept the appeal; for in the account of God we are that which we sincerely desire and endeavour to be, and that which is the general course and tenor of our lives, though there be some intermixture of failing. David saith, "*Lord, my heart is not haughty*"; and yet he was not altogether free from pride. His profession respecteth his sincere purpose and constant endeavour, and the predominant disposition of his soul. God himself confirmeth such appeals by his own testimony: 1 Kings xv. 5, "My servant David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, neither departed from all that which he had commanded him, save only in the matter of Uriah" . . . . . By all this it is shown that the plea of sincerity is allowed by God, though there be some mixture of failings and weaknesses.

Thirdly. Is not this boasting like the Pharisee? Luke xviii. 9, "God, I thank thee, I am not like other men." If David were thus humble, why doth he speak of it? Is he not guilty of pride while he seemeth to speak against pride?

This is spoken either as, (1) A necessary vindication; or (2) A necessary instruction. 1. As a necessary vindication against the censures and calumnies of his adversaries. Saul's courtiers accused him as aspiring after the kingdom; yea, his own brother taxed him with pride when he came first abroad: 1 Sam. xvii. 28, "I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle." If his brother would calumniate his actions, much more might others. Now it is for the honour of God that his children, as they would not commit a fault, so they should not be under the suspicion of it; therefore he appealeth to God. 2. A necessary instruction; for whatsoever David said or wrote here, he said or wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that Israel may learn how to hope in God. Herein David is a notable pattern of duty both to superiors and inferiors.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 1.—"*My heart is not haughty.*" Albeit pride is a common vice, which attendeth vain man in every degree of excellency and supposed worth in him, yet the grace of God is able to keep humble a wise, rich, and potent man, yea, to keep humble a king and conqueror; for it is no less a person than David who saith here, "*Lord, my heart is not haughty.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*Nor mine eyes lofty.*" Pride has its seat in the heart; but its principal expression is in the eye. The eye is the mirror of the soul; and from it mental and moral characteristics may be ascertained, with no small degree of precision. What a world of meaning is sometimes concentrated in a single glance! But of all the passions, pride is most clearly revealed in the eyes. There can scarcely be a mistake here. We are all familiar with a class of phrases, which run in pairs. We speak of sin and misery; holiness and happiness; peace and prosperity; war and desolation. Among these may be numbered, the proud heart and the haughty

look. "There is a generation, Oh, how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up." "Him that hath an high look and a proud heart I will not suffer." . . . A proud look is one of the seven things which are an abomination unto the Lord. It is said of him, "Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks." And hence David makes the acknowledgment: Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that pride has no existence in my heart. Thou knowest that no pride flashes forth from mine eyes.—*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 1.—"*Nor mine eyes lofty.*" He had neither a scornful nor an aspiring look. "*My eyes are not lofty,*" either to look with envy upon those that are above me, or to look with disdain upon those that are below me. Where there is a proud heart, there is commonly a proud look (Prov. vi. 17); but the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*Neither have I occupied myself,*" etc. One cannot admire enough the prayer of Anselm, a profound divine of our own country, in the eleventh century. "I do not seek, O Lord, to penetrate thy depths. I by no means think my intellect equal to them: but I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe; but I believe, that I may understand."—*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 1.—"*Great matters . . . things too high for me.*" The great and wonderful things meant are God's secret purposes, and sovereign means for their accomplishment, in which man is not called to co-operate, but to acquiesce. As David practised this forbearance by the patient expectation of the kingdom, both before and after the death of Saul, so he here describes it as a characteristic of the chosen people.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verses 1, 2.—Our Father is our superior; it is fit therefore that we be resigned to his will. "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exod. xx. 12); how much more our heavenly Father! (Heb. xii. 9). See David's spirit in the case: "*Lord, my heart is not haughty,*" etc.: Ps. cxxxi. 1, 2. As if he had said, "I will keep within my own sphere; I will not stretch beyond my line, in prescribing to God; but submit to his will, '*as a weaned child,*' taken from its dear breasts": intimating that he would wean himself from whatever God removed from him. How patiently did Isaac permit himself to be bound and sacrificed by Abraham! Gen. xxii. 9. And yet he was of age and strength sufficient to have struggled for his life, being twenty-five years old; but that holy young man abhorred the thought of striving with his father. And shall not we resign ourselves to our God and Father in Christ Jesus?—*John Singleton* (—1706), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verses 1, 2.—It has always been my aim, and it is my prayer, to have no plan as regards myself; well assured as I am that the place where the Saviour sees meet to place me must ever be the best place for me.—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne,* 1813—1843.

Verse 2.—"*Surely I have behaved and quieted myself,*" etc. Oh, how sapless and insipid doth the world grow to the soul that is making meet for heaven! "I am crucified to the world, and this world to me." Gal. vi. 14. In vain doth this harlot think to allure me by her attractions of profit and pleasure. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." There is no more relish in these gaudy things to my palate, than in the white of an egg; everything grows a burden to me, were it not my duty to follow my calling, and be thankful for my enjoyments. Methinks I have my wife, husband, and dearest relations, as if I had none; I weep for outward losses, as if I wept not; rejoice in comforts below as if I rejoiced not (1 Cor. vii. 29, 30); my thoughts are taken up with other objects. The men of the world slight me, many seem to be weary of me, and I am as weary of them. It is none of these earthly things that my heart is set upon; my soul is set on things above, my treasure is in heaven, and I would have my heart there also: I have sent before me all my goods into another country, and am shortly for removing; and when I look about me, I see a bare, empty house, and am ready to say with Monica, What do I here? my father, husband, mother (Jerusalem above), my brethren, sisters, best friends are above. Methinks, I grudge the world any portion of my heart, and think not these temporal visible things worth a cast of my eye compared with things invisible and eternal: 2 Cor. iv. 18.—*Oliver Heywood,* 1629—1702.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—"*If I have not restrained,*" or quieted, and compelled to silence, "*my soul.*" It is a Hebrew phrase of asseveration and of swearing: as

if he would say, I have thoroughly imposed silence on my soul, that it should be tranquil, and should bear patiently the divinely imposed cross. Just as in the following Psalm we hear a like form of asseveration: "If I will come into the tabernacle of my house," meaning "I will not come," etc.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 2.—"*I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned.*" Weaned from what? Self-sufficiency, self-will, self-seeking. From creatures and the things of the world—not, indeed, as to their use, but as to any dependence upon them for his happiness and portion. . . . . Yet this experience is no easy attainment. The very form of expression—"I have behaved and *quieted* myself," reminds us of some risings which were with difficulty subdued. There is a difference here between Christ and Christians. In him the exercise of grace encountered no adverse principles; but in them it meets with constant opposition. The flesh lusteth against the spirit; and when we would do good, evil is present with us; hence the warfare within. So it is with "the child that is weaned." The task to the mother is trying and troublesome. The infant cries, and seems to sob out his heart. He thinks it very hard in her, and knows not what she means by her seeming cruelty, and the mother's fondness renders all her firmness necessary to keep her at the process; and sometimes she also weeps at the importunity of his dear looks, and big tears, and stretched-out hands. But it must be done, and therefore, though she pities, she perseveres; and after a while he is soothed and satisfied, forgets the breast, and no longer feels even a hankering after his former pleasure. But how is the weaning of the child accomplished? By embittering the member to his lips; by the removal of the object in the absence and concealment of the mother; by the substitution of other food; by the influence of time. So it is with us. We love the world, and it deceives us. We depend on creatures, and they fail us, and pierce us through with many sorrows. We enter forbidden paths, and follow after our lovers; and our way is hedged up with thorns; and we then say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; and now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee." The enjoyment of a greater good subdues the relish of a less. What are the indulgences of sin, or the dissipations of the world to one who is abundantly satisfied with the goodness of God's house, and is made to drink of the river of his pleasures? —*William Jay* (1769—1853), *in "Evening Exercises for the Closet."*

Verse 2.—"*As a child that is weaned of his mother.*" Though the weaned child has not what it would have, or what it naturally most desireth, the milk of the breast—yet it is contented with what the mother giveth—it rests upon her love and provision. So are we to be content with what providence alloweth us: Heb. xiii. 5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have"; and Phil. iv. 11, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Whatever pleaseth our heavenly Father should please us. The child that is put from the breast to a harder diet is yet contented at last. The child doth not prescribe what it will eat, drink or put on. Children are in no care for enlarging possessions, heaping up riches, aspiring after dignities and honours; but meekly take what is provided for them. The child, when it has lost the food which nature provideth for it, is not solicitous, but wholly referreth itself to the mother, hangeth upon the mother. So for everything whatsoever should we depend upon God, refer ourselves to God, and expect all things from him: Ps. lxii. 5, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." With such a simplicity of submission should we rest and depend upon God. Let us take heed of being over wise and provident for ourselves, but let us trust our Father which is in heaven, and refer ourselves to his wise and holy government.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 2.—"*As a child that is weaned of his mother.*" Weaned from the world, the riches, honours, pleasures, and profits of it; as well as from nature, from self, from his own righteousness, and all dependence upon it; and as a child that is weaned from the breast wholly depends on its nurse for sustenance, so did he wholly depend upon God, his providence, grace, and strength; and as to the kingdom, he had no more covetous desires after it than a weaned child has to the breast, and was very willing to wait the due time for the enjoyment of it. The Targum has it, "as one weaned on the breasts of its mother, I am strengthened in the law." This is to be understood not of a child whilst weaning, when it is usually peevish, fretful, and froward, but when it is weaned, and is quiet and easy in its mother's arms without the breast.—*John Gill.*

Verse 2.—"*My soul is even as a weaned child.*" In its *nature*, weanedness of

soul differs essentially from that disgust with the world, to which its ill-usage and meanness sometimes give rise. It is one thing to be angry with the world, or ashamed of it, and another to be weaned from it. Alter the world, ennoble it, and many a proud mind that now despises, would court it. It is different also from that weariness of spirit which generally follows a free indulgence in earthly enjoyments. There is such a thing as wearing out the affections. Solomon appears to have done this at one period of his life. "I have not a wish left," said a well-known sensualist of our own country, who had drunk as deeply as he could drink of the world's cup. "Were all the earth contains spread out before me, I do not know a thing I would take the trouble of putting out my hand to reach."

This weanedness of soul presupposes a power left in the soul of loving and desiring. It is not the destruction of its appetite, but the controlling and changing of it. A weaned child still hungers, but it hungers no more after the food that once delighted it; it is quiet without it; it can feed on other things: so a soul weaned from the world, still pants as much as ever for food and happiness, but it no longer seeks them in worldly things, or desires to do so. There is nothing in the world that it feels necessary for its happiness. This thing in it it loves, and that thing it values; but it knows that it can do without them, and it is ready to do without them whenever God pleases.

Let us inquire now into *the sources of this frame of mind*—how we get it. One thing is certain—it is not our work. We do not bring ourselves to it. No infant weans itself. The truth is, it is God that must wean us from the world. We shall never leave it of our own accord. It is God's own right hand that must draw us from it. And how? The figure in the text will partly tell us. 1. *By embittering the world to us.* 2. At other times *the Lord removes from us the thing we love.* 3. But he weans us most from the earth *by giving us better food.*—*Condensed from a Sermon by Charles Bradley, entitled "Weanedness of Soul,"* 1836.

Verse 2.—*"As a weaned child."* That is, meek, modest, humble, submissive, simple, etc. See Matt. xviii. 1, 2, 3, 4.—*Henry Ainsworth*, —1622.

Verse 2.—Here is David's picture of himself . . . Observe, the *"child"*—which is drawn for us to copy—is *"weaned":* the process is complete; it has been truly disciplined; the lesson is learned; and now it rests in its "weaning." The whole image expresses a repose which follows a struggle. *"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother";* or, more literally, *"on* his mother"; now content to lie still on the very place of its privation,—"as a child that is weaned on his mother."

That obedience would be a tame and valueless thing, which was not the consequence of quiet control. A mere apathetic state is the very opposite of obedience that may be truly so called. But this is the point of the similitude,—there has been a distress, and a battle, and a self-victory; and now the stilled will is hushed into submission and contentment; ready to forego what is most liked, and to take just whatever is given it—*"a weaned child."*

I do not believe that it was ever the intention of God that any man should so merge and lose his will in the Divine, that he should have no distinct will of his own. There have been many who have tried to attain this annihilation of will; and they have made it the great aim and end of life. But the character of the dispensation does not allow it. I do not believe it to be a possible thing; and if it were possible, I do not believe that it would be after the mind of God. It is not man's present relation to his Maker. None of the saints in the Bible did more than submit a strong existing will. The Lord Jesus Christ himself did no more. "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Not my will, but thine be done." Evidently two things—"My will," "Thy will." It was an instantly and perfectly subjugated will,—nevertheless, a will.

And this is what is required of us; and what the nature of our manhood, and the provisions of our religion have to assume. A will, decidedly a will: the more decided the will, the stronger the character, and the greater the man. But a will that is always being given up, separated, conformed, constantly, increasingly conformed. The unity of the two wills is heaven.—*Condensed from a Sermon by James Vaughan.*

Verse 3.—*"Let Israel hope in the* LORD." After the example, therefore, of the King of Israel, who thus demeaned himself in his afflictions, lowly, contented, and

resigned, casting all his care upon the Father who cared for him, and patiently waiting his time for deliverance and salvation; after this their example and pattern, let his faithful people hope and trust, not in themselves, their wisdom, or their power, but in Jehovah alone, who will not fail to exalt them, as he hath already exalted their Redeemer, if they do but follow his steps.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—"*Let Israel hope in the* LORD." Though David could himself wait patiently and quietly for the crown designed him, yet perhaps Israel, the people whose darling he was, would be ready to attempt something in favour of him before the time; he therefore endeavours to quiet them too, and bids them "*hope in the* LORD" that *they* should see a happy change of the face of affairs in due time. Thus "it is good to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3.—"*Let Israel hope in the* LORD," etc. Remember that he is *Jehovah.* 1. Wise to plan. 2. Good to purpose. 3. Strong to execute, and that he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. 4. Trust "*from henceforth.*" If you have not begun before, begin now. 5. And do not be weary; trust "*for ever.*" Your case can never be out of the reach of God's power and mercy.—*Adam Clarke.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—*Humility.* I. A profession which ought to befit every child of God. II. A profession which nevertheless many children of God cannot truthfully make. Point out the prevalence of pride and ambition even in the church. III. A profession which can only be justified through the possession of the spirit of Christ (Matt. xi. 29, 30; xviii. 1—5).—*C. A. D.*

Verse 2.—The soul is as a weaned child: I. In conversion. II. In sanctification, which is a continual weaning from the world and sin. III. In bereavement. IV. In affliction of every kind. V. In death.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—I. The soul has to be weaned as well as the body. 1. It is first nourished by others. 2. It is afterwards thrown upon its own resources. II. The soul is weaned from one thing by giving its attention to another. 1. From worldly things by heavenly. 2. From self-righteousness by the righteousness of another. 3. From sin to holiness. 4. From the world to Christ. 5. From self to God.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—I. A desirable condition: "As a weaned child." II. A difficult task—to subdue and quiet self. III. A delightful result: "Surely . . . . my soul is as a weaned child."—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 2.—I. Soul-fretfulness: weak, dishonourable, rebellious. II. Soul-government; throne often abdicated; God gives each the sceptre of self-rule; necessary to successful life. III. Soul-quiet; its sweetness; its power. Come, Holy Spirit, breathe it upon us!—*W. B. H.*

Verse 2.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1,210: "The Weaned Child."

Verses 2, 3.—The weaned child hoping in the Lord: I. The first weaning of the soul, the grand event of a man's history. II. The joy in the Lord that springs up in every weaned soul: "My soul is even as a weaned child; let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever." III. The daily weaning of the soul through life. IV. The earnest desires and the fruitful work of every weaned soul.—*A. Moody Stuart.*

Verse 3.—I. The encouragement to hope in God. 1. As a covenant God, "the God of Israel." 2. As a covenant-keeping God: "From henceforth," etc. II. The effect of this hope. 1. The humility and dependence in the first verse. 2. The contentment and weaning in the second verse. Would Israel be thus humble and obedient as a little child? "Let Israel hope," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 3.—*The Voice of Hope heard in the Calm.* I. Calmed souls appreciate God. Quiet favours contemplation. God's majesty, perfection, and praise so discovered. II. Calmed souls confide in God; seen to be so worthy of trust. III. Calmed souls look fearlessly into eternity; "from henceforth and for ever."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 3.—*Hope on, hope ever.* I. For the past warrants such confidence. II. For the present demands such confidence. III. For the future will justify such confidence.—*W. H. J. P.*

PSALM CXXXII.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees. *A joyful song indeed: let all pilgrims to the New Jerusalem sing it often. The degrees or ascents are very visible; the theme ascends step by step from "afflictions" to a "crown," from "remember David," to "I will make the horn of David to bud." The latter half is like the over-arching sky bending above "the fields of the wood" which are found in the resolves and prayers of the former portion.*

DIVISION.—*Our translators have rightly divided this Psalm. It contains a statement of David's anxious care to build a house for the Lord (verses 1 to 7); a prayer at the removal of the ark (verses 8 to 10); and a pleading of the divine covenant and its promises (verses 11 to 18).*

EXPOSITION.

LORD, remember David, *and* all his afflictions:
2 How he sware unto the LORD, *and* vowed unto the mighty *God* of Jacob;
3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;
4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes, *or* slumber to mine eyelids,
5 Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty *God* of Jacob.
6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah; we found it in the fields of the wood.
7 We will go into his tabernacles; we will worship at his footstool.

1. *"LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions."* With David the covenant was made, and therefore his name is pleaded on behalf of his descendants, and the people who would be blessed by his dynasty. Jehovah, who changes not, will never forget one of his servants, or fail to keep his covenant; yet for this thing he is to be entreated. That which we are assured the Lord will do must, nevertheless, be made a matter of prayer. The request is that the Lord would *remember*, and this is a word full of meaning. We know that the Lord remembered Noah, and assuaged the flood; he remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of Sodom; he remembered Rachel, and Hannah, and gave them children; he remembered his mercy to the house of Israel, and delivered his people. That is a choice song wherein we sing, "He *remembered us* in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever"; and that is a notable prayer, "Lord, remember me." The plea is urged with God that he would bless the family of David for the sake of their progenitor; how much stronger is our master-argument in prayer that God would deal well with us for Jesus' sake! David had no personal merit; the plea is based upon the covenant graciously made with him: but Jesus has deserts which are his own, and of boundless merit—these we may urge without hesitation. When the Lord was angry with the reigning prince, the people cried, "Lord, remember David"; and when they needed any special blessing, again they sang, "Lord, remember David." This was good pleading, but it was not so good as ours, which runs on this wise, "Lord, remember *Jesus*, and all his afflictions."

The *afflictions* of David here meant were those which came upon him as a godly man in his endeavours to maintain the worship of Jehovah, and to provide for its decent and suitable celebration. There was always an ungodly party in the nation, and these persons were never slow to slander, hinder, and molest the servant of the Lord. Whatever were David's faults, he kept true to the one, only, living, and true God; and for this he was a speckled bird among monarchs. Since he zealously delighted in the worship of Jehovah, his God, he was despised and ridiculed by those who could not understand his enthusiasm. God will never forget what his people suffer for his sake. No doubt innumerable blessings descend upon families

and nations through the godly lives and patient sufferings of the saints. We cannot be saved by the merits of others, but beyond all question we are benefited by their virtues. Paul saith, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name." Under the New Testament dispensation, as well as under the Old, there is a full reward for the righteous. That reward frequently comes upon their descendants rather than upon themselves: they sow, and their successors reap. We may at this day pray—Lord, remember the martyrs and confessors of our race, who suffered for thy name's sake, and bless our people and nation with gospel grace for our fathers' sakes.

2. *"How he sware unto the* LORD, *and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob."* Moved by intense devotion, David expressed his resolve in the form of a solemn vow, which was sealed with an oath. The fewer of such vows the better under a dispensation whose great Representative has said, "swear not at all." Perhaps even in this case it had been wiser to have left the pious resolve in the hands of God in the form of a prayer; for the vow was not actually fulfilled as intended, since the Lord forbade David to build him a temple. We had better not swear to do anything before we know the Lord's mind about it, and then we shall not need to swear. The instance of David's vow shows that vows are allowable, but it does not prove that they are desirable. Probably David went too far in his words, and it is well that the Lord did not hold him to the letter of his bond, but accepted the will for the deed, and the meaning of his promise instead of the literal sense of it. David imitated Jacob, that great maker of vows at Bethel, and upon him rested the blessing pronounced on Jacob by Isaac, "God Almighty bless thee" (Gen. xxviii. 3), which was remembered by the patriarch on his death-bed, when he spoke of "the mighty God of Jacob." God is mighty to hear us, and to help us in performing our vow. We should be full of awe at the idea of making any promise to the Mighty God: to dare to trifle with him would be grievous indeed. It is observable that affliction led both David and Jacob into covenant dealings with the Lord: many vows are made in anguish of soul. We may also remark that if the votive obligations of David are to be remembered of the Lord, much more are the suretiship engagements of the Lord Jesus before the mind of the great Lord, to whom our soul turns in the hour of our distress.

Note, upon this verse, that Jehovah was the God of Jacob, the same God evermore; that he had this for his attribute, that he is mighty—mighty to succour his Jacobs who put their trust in him, though their afflictions be many. He is, moreover, specially *the Mighty One* of his people; he is the God of Jacob in a sense in which he is not the God of unbelievers. So here we have three points concerning our God:—*name*, Jehovah; *attribute*, mighty; *special relationship*, "mighty God of Jacob." He it is who is asked to remember David and his trials, and there is a plea for that blessing in each one of the three points.

3. *"Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed."* Our translators give the meaning though not the literal form, of David's vow, which ran thus, "If I go"—"If I go up," etc. This was an elliptical form of imprecation, implying more than it expressed, and having therefore about it a mystery which made it all the more solemn. David would not take his ease in his house, nor his rest in his bed, till he had determined upon a place for the worship of Jehovah. The ark had been neglected, the Tabernacle had fallen into disrespect; he would find the ark, and build for it a suitable house; he felt that he could not take pleasure in his own palace till this was done. David meant well, but he spake more than he could carry out. His language was hyperbolical, and the Lord knew what he meant: zeal does not always measure its terms, for it is not thoughtful of the criticisms of men, but is carried away with love to the Lord, who reads the hearts of his people. David would not think himself housed till he had built a house for the Lord, nor would he reckon himself rested till he had said, "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest." Alas, we have many around us who will never carry their care for the Lord's worship too far! No fear of their being indiscreet! They are housed and bedded, and as for the Lord, his people may meet in a barn, or never meet at all, it will be all the same to them. Observe that Jacob in his vow spoke of the stone being God's house, and David's vow also deals with a house for God.

4. *"I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids."* He could not enjoy sleep till he had done his best to provide a place for the ark. It is a strong expression, and it is not to be coolly discussed by us. Remember that the man was all on fire, and he was writing poetry also, and therefore his language is not

that which we should employ in cold blood. Everybody can see what he means, and how intensely he means it. Oh, that many more were seized with sleeplessness because the house of the Lord lies waste! They can slumber fast enough and not even disturb themselves with a dream, though the cause of God should be brought to the lowest ebb by their covetousness. What is to become of those who have no care about divine things, and never give a thought to the claims of their God?

5. "*Until I find out a place for the* LORD, *an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.*" He resolved to find a place where Jehovah would allow his worship to be celebrated, a house where God would fix the symbol of his presence, and commune with his people. At that time, in all David's land, there was no proper place for that ark whereon the Lord had placed the mercy-seat, where prayer could be offered, and where the manifested glory shone forth. All things had fallen into decay, and the outward forms of public worship were too much disregarded; hence the King resolves to be first and foremost in establishing a better order of things.

Yet one cannot help remembering that the holy resolve of David gave to a place and a house much more importance than the Lord himself ever attached to such matters. This is indicated in Nathan's message from the Lord to the king—"Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?" Stephen in his inspired speech puts the matter plainly: "Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." It is a striking fact that true religion never flourished more in Israel than before the temple was built, and that from the day of the erection of that magnificent house the spirit of godliness declined. Good men may have on their hearts matters which seem to them of chief importance, and it may be acceptable with God that they should seek to carry them out; and yet in his infinite wisdom he may judge it best to prevent their executing their designs. God does not measure his people's actions by their wisdom or want of wisdom, but by the sincere desire for his glory which has led up to them. David's resolution, though he was not allowed to fulfil it, brought a blessing upon him: the Lord promised to build the house of David, because he had desired to build the house of the Lord. Moreover, the King was allowed to prepare the treasure for the erection of the glorious edifice which was built by his son and successor. The Lord shows the acceptance of what we desire to do by permitting us to do something else which his infinite mind judges to be fitter for us, and more honourable to himself.

6. Meanwhile, where was the habitation of God among men? He was wont to shine forth from between the cherubim, but where was the ark? It was like a hidden thing, a stranger in its own land. "*Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah.*" Rumours came that it was somewhere in the land of Ephraim, in a temporary lodging; rather an object of dread than of delight. Is it not wonderful that so renowned a symbol of the presence of the Lord should be lingering in neglect—a neglect so great that it was remarkable that we should have heard of its whereabouts at all? When a man begins to think upon God and his service it is comforting that the gospel is heard of. Considering the opposition which it has encountered it is marvellous that it should be heard of, and heard of in a place remote from the central city; but yet we are sorrowful that it is only in connection with some poor despised place that we do hear of it. What is Ephratah? Who at this time knows where it was? How could the ark have remained there so long?

David instituted a search for the ark. It had to be hunted for high and low; and at last at Kirjath-jearim, the forest-city, he came upon it. How often do souls find Christ and his salvation in out-of-the-way places! What matters where we meet with him so long as we do behold him, and find life in him? That is a blessed Eureka which is embedded in our text—"*we found it.*" The matter began with hearing, led on to a search, and concluded in a joyful find. "*We found it in the fields of the wood.*" Alas that there should be no room for the Lord in the palaces of kings, so that he must needs take to the woods. If Christ be in a wood he will yet be found of those who seek for him. He is as near in the rustic home, embowered among the trees, as in the open streets of the city; yea, he will answer prayer offered from the heart of the black forest where the lone traveller seems out of all hope

of hearing. The text presents us with an instance of one whose heart was set upon finding the place where God would meet with him; this made him quick of hearing, and so the cheering news soon reached him. The tidings renewed his ardour, and led him to stick at no difficulties in his search; and so it came to pass that, where he could hardly have expected it, he lighted upon the treasure which he so much prized.

7. "*We will go into his tabernacles.*" Having found the place where he dwells we will hasten thereto. He has many dwellings in one in the various courts of his house, and each of these shall receive the reverence due: in each the priest shall offer for us the appointed service; and our hearts shall go where our bodies may not enter. David is not alone, he is represented as having sought for the ark with others, for so the word "*we*" implies; and now they are glad to attend him in his pilgrimage to the chosen shrine, saying, "*We* found it, *we* will go." Because these are the Lord's courts we will resort to them. "*We will worship at his footstool.*" The best ordered earthly house can be no more than the footstool of so great a King. His ark can only reveal the glories of his feet, according to his promise that he will make the place of his feet glorious: yet thither will we hasten with joy, in glad companionship, and there will we adore him. Where Jehovah is, there shall he be worshipped. It is well not only to go to the Lord's house, but to *worship* there: we do but profane his tabernacles if we enter them for any other purpose.

Before leaving this verse let us note the ascent of this Psalm of degrees—"we heard. . . . we found . . . we will go . . . we will worship."

8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.

9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

10 For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.

8. In these three verses we see the finders of the ark removing it to its appointed place, using a formula somewhat like to that used by Moses when he said, "Rise up, Lord," and again, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." The ark had been long upon the move, and no fit place had been found for it in Canaan, but now devout men have prepared a temple, and they sing, "*Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.*" They hoped that now the covenant symbol had found a permanent abode—a rest, and they trusted that Jehovah would now abide with it for ever. Vain would it be for the ark to be settled if the Lord did not continue with it, and perpetually shine forth from between the cherubim. Unless the Lord shall rest with us there is no rest for us; unless the ark of his strength abide with us we are ourselves without strength. The ark of the covenant is here mentioned by a name which it well deserved; for in its captivity it smote its captors, and broke their gods, and when it was brought back it guarded its own honour by the death of those who dared to treat it with disrespect. The power of God was thus connected with the sacred chest. Reverently, therefore did Solomon pray concerning it as he besought the living God to consecrate the temple by his presence. It is the Lord and the covenant, or rather say the covenant Jehovah whose presence we desire in our assemblies, and this presence is the strength of his people. Oh that the Lord would indeed abide in all the churches, and cause his power to be revealed in Zion.

9. "*Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.*" No garment is so resplendent as that of a holy character. In this glorious robe our great High-priest is evermore arrayed, and he would have all his people adorned in the same manner. Then only are priests fit to appear before the Lord, and to minister for the profit of the people, when their lives are dignified with goodness. They must ever remember that they are God's priests, and should therefore wear the livery of their Lord, which is holiness: they are not only to have righteousness, but to be clothed with it, so that upon every part of them righteousness shall be conspicuous. Whoever looks upon God's servants should see holiness if they see nothing else. Now, this righteousness of the ministers of the temple is prayed for in connection with the presence of the Lord; and this instructs us that holiness is only to be found among those who commune with God, and only comes to them through his visitation of their spirits. God will dwell among a holy people: and on the other hand, where God is the people become holy.

"*And let thy saints shout for joy.*" Holiness and happiness go together; where the one is found, the other ought never to be far away. Holy persons have a right

to great and demonstrative joy: they may shout because of it. Since they are saints, and thy saints, and thou hast come to dwell with them, O Lord, thou hast made it their duty to rejoice, and to let others know of their joy. The sentence, while it may read as a permit, is also a precept: saints are commanded to rejoice in the Lord. Happy religion which makes it a duty to be glad! Where righteousness is the clothing, joy may well be the occupation.

10. *"For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed."* King Solomon was praying, and here the people pray for him that his face may not be turned away, or that he may not be refused an audience. It is a dreadful thing to have our face turned away from God, or to have his face turned away from us. If we are anointed of the Spirit the Lord will look upon us with favour. Specially is this true of HIM who represents us, and is on our behalf the *Christ*—the truly anointed of the Lord. Jesus is both our David and God's anointed; in him is found in fulness that which David received in measure. For his sake all those who are anointed in him are accepted. God blessed Solomon and succeeding-kings, for David's sake; and he will bless us for Jesus' sake. How condescending was the Son of the Highest to take upon himself the form of a *servant*, to be anointed for us, and to go in before the mercy-seat to plead on our behalf! The Psalm sings of the ark, and it may well remind us of the going in of the anointed priest within the veil: all depended upon his acceptance, and therefore well do the people pray, "Turn not away the face of thine anointed."

Thus, in these three verses, we have a prayer for the temple, the ark, the priests, the Levites, the people, and the king: in each petition there is a fulness of meaning well worthy of careful thought. We cannot plead too much in detail; the fault of most prayers is their indefiniteness. In God's house and worship everything needs a blessing, and every person connected therewith needs it continually. As David vowed and prayed when he was minded to house the ark, so now the prayer is continued when the temple is consecrated, and the Lord deigns to fill it with his glory. We shall never have done praying till we have done needing.

11 The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

12 If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired *it* for his habitation.

14 This *is* my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

15 I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.

16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

17 There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

18 His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

11. Here we come to a grand covenant pleading of the kind which is always prevalent with the Lord. *"The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David."* We cannot urge anything with God which is equal to his own word and oath. Jehovah swears that our faith may have strong confidence in it: he cannot forswear himself. He swears *in truth*, for he means every word that he utters; men may be perjured, but none will be so profane as to imagine this of the God of truth. By Nathan this covenant of Jehovah was conveyed to David, and there was no delusion in it. *"He will not turn from it."* Jehovah is not a changeable being. He never turns from his purpose, much less from his promise solemnly ratified by oath. He turneth never. He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. What a rock they stand upon who have an immutable oath of God for their foundation! We know that this covenant was really made with Christ, the spiritual seed of David, for Peter quotes it at Pentecost, saying, "Men and brethen, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his

loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ." Christ therefore sits on a sure throne for ever and ever, seeing that he has kept the covenant, and through him the blessing comes upon Zion, whose poor are blessed in him. *"Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne."* Jesus sprang from the race of David, as the evangelists are careful to record; he was "of the house and lineage of David": at this day he is the King of the Jews, and the Lord has also given him the heathen for his inheritance. He must reign, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. God himself has set him on the throne and no rebellion of men or devils can shake his dominion. The honour of Jehovah is concerned in his reign, and therefore it is never in danger; for the Lord will not suffer his oath to be dishonoured.

12. *"If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them."* There is a condition to the covenant so far as it concerned kings of David's line before the coming of the true Seed; but *he* has fulfilled that condition, and made the covenant indefeasible henceforth and for ever as to himself and the spiritual seed in him. Considered as it related to temporal things it was no small blessing for David's dynasty to be secured the throne upon good behaviour. These monarchs held their crowns from God upon the terms of loyalty to their superior Sovereign, the Lord who had elevated them to their high position. They were to be faithful to the covenant by obedience to the divine law, and by belief of divine truth. They were to accept Jehovah as their Lord and their Teacher, regarding him in both relations as in covenant with him. What a condescension on God's part to be their teacher! How gladly ought they to render intelligent obedience! What a proper, righteous, and needful stipulation for God to make that they should be true to him when the reward was the promise, *"Their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore."* If they will sit at his feet God will make them sit on a throne; if they will keep the covenant they shall keep the crown from generation to generation.

The kingdom of Judah might have stood to this day had its kings been faithful to the Lord. No internal revolt or external attack could have overthrown the royal house of David: it fell by its own sin, and by nothing else. The Lord was continually provoked, but he was amazingly long-suffering, for long after seceding Israel had gone into captivity, Judah still remained. Miracles of mercy were shown to her. Divine patience exceeded all limits, for the Lord's regard for David was exceeding great. The princes of David's house seemed set on ruining themselves, and nothing could save them; justice waited long, but it was bound at last to unsheathe the sword and strike. Still, if in the letter man's breach of promise caused the covenant to fail, yet in spirit and essence the Lord has been true to it, for Jesus reigns, and holds the throne for ever. David's seed is still royal, for he was the progenitor according to the flesh of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

This verse shows us the need of family piety. Parents must see to it that their children know the fear of the Lord, and they must beg the Lord himself to teach them his truth. We have no hereditary right to the divine favour: the Lord keeps up his friendship to families from generation to generation, for he is loth to leave the descendants of his servants, and never does so except under grievous and long-continued provocation. As believers we are all in a measure under some such covenant as that of David: certain of us can look backward for four generations of saintly ancestors, and we are now glad to look forward to see our children, and our children's children, walking in the truth. Yet we know that grace does not run in the blood, and we are filled with holy fear lest in any of our seed there should be an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

13. *"For the* LORD *hath chosen Zion."* It was no more than any other Canaanite town till God chose it, David captured it, Solomon built it, and the Lord dwelt in it. So was the church a mere Jebusite stronghold till grace chose it, conquered it, rebuilt it, and dwelt in it. Jehovah has chosen his people, and hence they are his people. He has chosen the church, and hence it is what it is. Thus in the covenant David and Zion, Christ and his people, go together. David is for Zion, and Zion for David: the interests of Christ and his people are mutual. *"He hath desired it for his habitation."* David's question is answered. The Lord has spoken: the site of the temple is fixed: the place of the divine manifestation is determined. Indwelling follows upon election, and arises out of it: Zion is chosen, chosen for a habitation of God. The desire of God to dwell among the people whom he has

chosen for himself is very gracious and yet very natural: his love will not rest apart from those upon whom he has placed it. God desires to abide with those whom he has loved with an everlasting love; and we do not wonder that it should be so, for we also desire the company of our beloved ones. It is a double marvel, that the Lord should choose and desire such poor creatures as we are: the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in believers is a wonder of grace parallel to the incarnation of the Son of God. God in the church is the wonder of heaven, the miracle of eternity, the glory of infinite love.

14. *"This is my rest for ever."* Oh, glorious words! It is God himself who here speaks. Think of rest for God! A Sabbath for the Eternal and a place of abiding for the Infinite. He calls Zion *my rest.* Here his love remains and displays itself with delight. "He shall rest in his love." And this *for ever.* He will not seek another place of repose, nor grow weary of his saints. In Christ the heart of Deity is filled with content, and for his sake he is satisfied with his people, and will be so world without end. These august words declare a distinctive choice—*this* and no other; a certain choice—*this* which is well known to me; a present choice—*this* which is here at this moment. God has made his election of old, he has not changed it, and he never will repent of it: his church was his rest and *is* his rest still. As he will not turn from his oath, so he will never turn from his choice. Oh, that we may enter into *his* rest, may be part and parcel of his church, and yield by our loving faith a delight to the mind of him who taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy. *"Here will I dwell; for I have desired it."* Again are we filled with wonder that he who fills all things should dwell in Zion—should dwell in his church. God does not unwillingly visit his chosen; he desires to dwell with them; he desires them. He is already in Zion, for he says *here,* as one upon the spot. Not only will he occasionally come to his church, but he will dwell in it, as his fixed abode. He cared not for the magnificence of Solomon's temple, but he determined that at the mercy-seat he would be found by suppliants, and that thence he would shine forth in brightness of grace among the favoured nation. All this, however, was but a type of the spiritual house, of which Jesus is foundation and cornerstone, upon which all the living stones are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Oh, the sweetness of the thought that God *desires* to dwell in his people and rest among them! Surely if it be his desire he will cause it to be so. If the desire of the righteous shall be granted much more shall the desire of the righteous God be accomplished. This is the joy of our souls, for surely we shall rest in God, and certainly our desire is to dwell in him. This also is the end of our fears for the church of God; for if the Lord dwell in her, she shall not be moved; if the Lord desire her, the devil cannot destroy her.

15. *"I will abundantly bless her provision."* It must be so. How can we be without a blessing when the Lord is among us? We live upon his word, we are clothed by his charity, we are armed by his power: all sorts of provision are in him, and how can they be otherwise than blessed? The provision is to be *abundantly blessed;* then it will be abundant and blessed. Daily provision, royal provision, satisfying provision, overflowingly joyful provision the church shall receive; and the divine benediction shall cause us to receive it with faith, to feed upon it by experience, to grow upon it by sanctification, to be strengthened by it to labour, cheered by it to patience, and built up by it to perfection. *"I will satisfy her poor with bread."* The citizens of Zion are poor in themselves, poor in spirit, and often poor in pocket, but their hearts and souls shall dwell in such abundance that they shall neither need more nor desire more. Satisfaction is the crown of experience. Where God rests his people shall be satisfied. They are to be satisfied with what the Lord himself calls "*bread,*" and we may be sure that he knows what is really bread for souls. He will not give us a stone. The Lord's poor shall "have food convenient for them": that which will suit their palate, remove their hunger, fill their desire, build up their frame, and perfect their growth. The bread of earth is "the bread that perisheth," but the bread of God endureth to life eternal. In the church where God rests his people shall not starve; the Lord would never rest if they did. He did not take rest for six days till he had prepared the world for the first man to live in; he would not stay his hand till all things were ready; therefore, we may be sure if the Lord rests it is because "it is finished," and the Lord hath prepared of his goodness for the poor. Where God finds his desire his people shall find theirs; if he is satisfied, they shall be.

Taking the two clauses together, we see that nothing but an abundant blessing in the church will satisfy the Lord's poor people: they are naked and miserable till that comes. All the provision that Solomon himself could make would not have satisfied the saints of his day: they looked higher, and longed for the Lord's own boundless blessing, and hungered for the bread which came down from heaven. Blessed be the Lord, they had in this verse two of the " I wills " of God to rest upon, and nothing could be a better support to their faith.

16. More is promised than was prayed for. See how the ninth verse asks for the priests to be clad in righteousness, and the answer is, *"I will also clothe her priests with salvation."* God is wont to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or even think. Righteousness is but one feature of blessing, salvation is the whole of it. What cloth of gold is this! What more than regal array! Garments of salvation! we know who has woven them, who has dyed them, and who has given them to his people. These are the best robes for priests and preachers, for princes and people; there is none like them; give them me. Not every priest shall be thus clothed, but only *her* priests, those who truly belong to Zion, by faith which is in Christ Jesus, who hath made them priests unto God. These are clothed by the Lord himself, and none can clothe as he does. If even the grass of the field is so clothed by the Creator as to outvie Solomon in all his glory, how must his own children be clad? Truly he shall be admired in his saints; the liveries of his servants shall be the wonder of heaven. *"And her saints shall shout aloud for joy."* Again we have a golden answer to a silver prayer. The Psalmist would have the " saints shout for joy." " That they shall do," saith the Lord, " and *aloud* too "; they shall be exceedingly full of delight; their songs and shouts shall be so hearty that they shall sound as the noise of many waters, and as great thunders. These joyful ones are not, however, the mimic saints of superstition, but *her* saints, saints of the Most High, " sanctified in Christ Jesus." These shall be so abundantly blessed and so satisfied, and so apparelled that they can do no otherwise than shout to show their astonishment, their triumph, their gratitude, their exultation, their enthusiasm, their joy in the Lord. Zion has no dumb saints. The sight of God at rest among his chosen is enough to make the most silent shout. If the morning stars sang together when the earth and heavens were made, much more will all the sons of God shout for joy when the new heavens and the new earth are finished, and the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride for her husband. Meanwhile, even now the dwelling of the Lord among us is a perennial fountain of sparkling delight to all holy minds. This shouting for joy is guaranteed to Zion's holy ones: God says they *shall* shout aloud, and depend upon it they will: who shall stop them of this glorying? The Lord hath said by his Spirit, " let them shout," and then he has promised that " they shall shout aloud ": who is he that shall make them hold their peace? The Bridegroom is with them, and shall the children of the bride-chamber fast? Nay, verily, we rejoice, yea and will rejoice.

17. *"There will I make the horn of David to bud."* In Zion David's dynasty shall develop power and glory. In our notes from other authors we have included a description of the growth of the horns of stags, which is the natural fact from which we conceive the expression in the text to be borrowed. As the stag is made noble and strong by the development of his horns, so the house of David shall advance from strength to strength. This was to be by the work of the Lord—" there will I make," and therefore it would be sure and solid growth. When God makes us to bud none can cause us to fade. When David's descendants left the Lord and the worship of his house, they declined in all respects, for it was only through the Lord, and in connection with his worship that their horn would bud.

"I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed." David's name was to be illustrious, and brilliant as a lamp; it was to continue shining like a lamp in the sanctuary; it was thus to be a comfort to the people, and an enlightenment to the nations. God would not suffer the light of David to go out by the extinction of his race: his holy ordinances had decreed that the house of his servant should remain in the midst of Israel. What a lamp is our Lord Jesus! A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. As the anointed—the true Christ, he shall be the light of heaven itself. Oh for grace to receive our illumination and our consolation from Jesus Christ alone.

18. *"His enemies will I clothe with shame."* They shall be utterly defeated, they shall loathe their evil design, they shall be despised for having hated the Ever Blessed One. Their shame they will be unable to hide, it shall cover them: God

will array them in it for ever, and it shall be their convict dress to all eternity. "*But upon himself shall his crown flourish.*" Green shall be his laurels of victory. He shall win and wear the crown of honour, and his inherited diadem shall increase in splendour. Is it not so to this hour with Jesus? His kingdom cannot fail, his imperial glories cannot fade. It is *himself* that we delight to honour; it is to himself that the honour comes, and upon himself that it flourishes. If others snatch at his crown their traitorous aims are defeated; but he in his own person reigns with ever growing splendour.

"Crown him, crown him,
Crowns become the victor's brow."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Lightfoot ascribes this Psalm to David, and supposes it to have been composed on the second removal of the ark from the house of Obed-edom: 1 Chron. xv. 4, etc. But the mention of David's name in the tenth verse in the third person, and the terms there employed, militate against his being the author. Others ascribe it to Solomon, who, they think, wrote it about the time of the removing of the ark into the Temple which he had built for it: 2 Chron. v. 2, etc. Others are of opinion, that it was composed by Solomon for the solemn services that were celebrated at the dedication of the Temple.—*James Anderson's note to Calvin in loc.*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm is divided into four stanzas of ten lines, each of which contains the name of David. The first part begins with speaking of David's vow to the Lord; the third with the Lord's promise to David.—*William Kay.*

Whole Psalm.—The parallelisms need to be traced with some care. Verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 are answered by verse 12; verse 7 by verse 13; verse 8 by verse 14; verse 9 by verses 15, 16; verse 10 by verses 17, 18.

An attention to these parallelisms is often necessary to bring out the meaning of Scripture.—*Joseph Angus, in "The Bible Handbook,"* 1862.

Verse 1.—"LORD, *remember.*" It is a gracious privilege to be permitted to be God's remembrancers. Faith is encouraged to remind him of his covenant, and of his precious promises. There is, indeed, no forgetfulness with him. The past, as also the future, is a present page before his eye. But by this exercise we impress on our own minds invaluable lessons.—*Henry Law.*

Verse 1.—"*Remember David, and all his afflictions.*" Solomon was a wise man, yet pleads not any merit of his own;—I am not worthy, for whom thou shouldst do this, but, "LORD, *remember David,*" with whom thou madest the covenant; as Moses prayed (Exod. xxxii. 13), "*Remember Abraham,*" the first trustee of the covenant; remember "*all his afflictions,*" all the troubles of his life, which his being anointed was the occasion of; or his care and concern about the ark, and what an uneasiness it was to him that the ark was in curtains (2 Sam. vii. 2). *Remember all his humility and weakness,* so some read it; all that pious and devout affection with which he had made the following vow.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*Remember . . . all his afflictions.*" The sufferings of believers for the cause of truth are not meritorious, but neither are they in vain; they are not forgotten by God. Matt. v. 11, 12.—*Christopher Starke,* 1740.

Verse 1.—"*Afflictions.*" The Hebrew word for "*afflictions*" is akin to the word for "trouble" in 1 Chron. xxii. 14: "Now, behold, in my *trouble* I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold."—*H. T. Armfield.*

Verses 1, 2.—If the Jew could rightly appeal to God to show mercy to his church and nation for the sake of that shepherd youth whom he had advanced to the kingdom, much more shall we justly plead our cause in the name of David's son (called *David* four times in the prophets), and of *all his trouble,* all the sorrows of his birth and infancy, his ministry and passion and death, which he bore as a consequence of his self-dedication to his Father's will, when his priesthood, foreordained from all eternity, was confirmed with an oath, "for those [Levitical] priests were made without [swearing] an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The

Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek": Heb. vii. 21; Ps. cx. 4.—*Theodoret and Cassiodorus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 2.—"*And vowed.*" The history does not record the time nor the occasion of this vow; but history does record how it was ever in David's thoughts and on David's heart. David, indeed, in the first verse, asks of God to remember his afflictions, and then records his vow; and you may, perhaps, think that the vow was the consequence of his afflictions, and that he made it contingent on his deliverance. . . . It is far more consistent with the character of David to look upon the affliction to which he alludes as resulting from the Lord's not permitting him to carry out his purpose of erecting an earthly habitation for the God of heaven, inasmuch as he had shed blood abundantly. And if, as is more than probable, amid that blood which he had shed, David's conscience recalled the blood of Uriah as swelling the measure, he could not but be deeply afflicted, even while he acknowledged the righteousness of the sentence.

But though not permitted of God to execute his purpose, we cannot but feel and own that it was a noble resolution which David here makes; and though recorded in all the amplification of Oriental imagery, it expresses the holy determination of the Psalmist to forego every occupation and pursuit, and not to allow a single day to elapse till he had at least fixed on the site of the future temple.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 2.—"*He vowed.*" He who is ready to vow on every occasion will break his vow on every occasion. It is a necessary rule, that "we be as sparing in making our vows as may be"; there being many great inconveniences attending frequent and multiplied vows. It is very observable, that the Scripture mentioneth very few examples of vows, compared with the many instances of very great and wonderful providences; as if it would give us some instances, that we might know what we have to do, and yet would give us but few, that we might know we are not to do it often. You read Jacob lived seven score and seven years (Gen. xlvii. 28); but you read, I think, but of one vow that he made. Our extraordinary exigencies are not many; and, I say, our vows should not be more. Let this, then, be the first necessary ingredient of a well-ordered vow. Let it be no oftener made than the pressing greatness of an evil to be removed, or the alluring excellency of a blessing extraordinary to be obtained, will well warrant. Jephthah's vow was so far right; he had just occasion; there was a great and pressing danger to be removed; there was an excellent blessing to be obtained: the danger was, lest Israel should be enslaved; the blessing was victory over their enemies. This warranted his vow, though his rashness marred it. It was in David's troubles that David sware, and vowed a vow to the Most High; and Jacob forbare to vow until his more than ordinary case bade him vow, and warranted him in so doing: Gen. xxviii. 20. Let us do as he did,—spare to vow, until such case puts us on it.—*Henry Hurst* (1629?—1690), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 2.—"*Vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob.*" The first holy votary that ever we read of was Jacob here mentioned in this text, who is therefore called the father of vows: and upon this account some think David mentions God here under the title of "*the mighty God of Jacob,*" rather than any other, because of his vow.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 2.—"*The mighty God of Jacob.*" The title *strong one of Jacob*, by which God is here designated, first used by Jacob himself, Gen. xlix. 24, and thence more generally used as is clear from Isaiah i. 24, xlix. 26, and other places, here sets forth God both as the *most mighty* who is able most severely to punish perjury, and with whom no one may dare to contend, and also as the *defender* and most mighty vindicator of Israel, such as Jacob had proved him, and all his descendants, in particular David, who frequently rejoiced and gloried in this mighty one and defender. Such a mighty one of Jacob was worthy to have a temple built for him, and was so great that he would not suffer perjury.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—Where the interpreters have translated, "*the God of Jacob,*" it is in the Hebrew, "*the mighty* in Jacob." Which name is sometimes attributed unto the angels, and sometimes it is also applied to other things wherein are great strength and fortitude; as to a lion, an ox, and such like. But here it is a singular word of faith, signifying that God is the power and strength of his people; for only faith ascribeth this unto God. Reason and the flesh do attribute more to riches, and such other worldly helps as man seeth and knoweth. All such carnal helps are very

idols, which deceive men, and draw them to perdition; but this is the strength and fortitude of the people, to have God present with them. . . . So the Scripture saith in another place: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord." Likewise Paul saith: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." For this power is eternal, and deceiveth not. All other powers are not only deceitful, but they are transitory, and continue but for a moment.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3.—"*Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,*" etc. To avoid the absurdity of thinking that David should make such a rash and unwarrantable vow as this might seem to be, that till he had his desire satisfied in that which is afterwards expressed he would abide in the open air, and never go within his doors, nor ever take any rest, either by day or by night, some say that David spake this with reference to his purpose of taking the fort of Zion from the Jebusites (2 Sam. v. 6), where by revelation he knew that God meant to have the ark settled, and which he might probably think would be accomplished within some short time. And then others again say, that he meant it only of that stately cedar house, which he had lately built for himself at Jerusalem (2 Sam. vii. 1, 2), to wit, that he would not go into that house; and so also that he would not go up unto his bed, nor (verse 4) give any sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, to wit, in that house. But neither of these expositions give me any satisfaction. I rather take these to be hyperbolical expressions of the continual, exceeding great care wherewith he was perplexed about providing a settled place for the ark to rest in, like that in Prov. vi. 4, 5: "Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids; deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter," etc. Neither is it any more in effect than if he had said, I will never lay by this care to mind myself in anything whatsoever: I shall never with any content abide in mine own house, nor with any quiet rest in my bed, until, etc.—*Arthur Jackson*, 1593—1666.

Verse 3.—"*Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,*" etc. When he had built himself a palace (1 Chron. xv. 1), it appears by the context, that he did not *bless* it (ch. xvi. 43), nor consequently live in it (for that he might not do till it were blest) until he had first prepared a place, and brought up the ark to it.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 3.—"*Surely I will not come,*" etc. Our translation of the verse is justified by Aben Ezra, who remarks that אם is here to be translated not in its usual sense of "if,"—"if I shall come"—but as introducing a vow, "I will not come." This idiom, it may be observed, is more or less missed by our existing translation of Hebrews iv. 5: "And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest"—a translation which is the more curious from the fact that the idiom in the present Psalm is hit off exactly in the preceding chapter, Hebrews iii. 11: "So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest."—*H. T. Armfield.*

Verse 3.—"*I will not come into the tent which is my house.*" What does this singular form of expression denote? Is it "an instance of the way in which the associations of the old patriarchal tent life fixed themselves in the language of the people," as Perowne suggests? or does David deliberately select it to imply that even his palace is but a tent as compared with the house that he will rear for God?—*Samuel Cox.*

Verse 3.—"*Nor go up into my bed.*" From the expression of the Psalmist it would seem that a lofty bed was not only a necessary luxury, but a sign of superior rank. This idea was very prevalent in the period of the revival of the arts on the Continent, where the state bed, often six feet high, always stood on a dais in an alcove, richly curtained off from the saloon. In the East the same custom still continues, and a verse in the Koran declares it to be one of the delights of the faithful in paradise that "they shall repose themselves on lofty beds" (Cap. 56, "The Inevitable"). Frequently these state beds were composed of the most costly and magnificent materials. The prophet Amos speaks of ivory beds (Amos vi. 4); Nero had a golden one; that of the Mogul Aurungzeebe was jewelled; and, lastly, in the privy purse expenses of our own profligate Charles II., we read of a "silver bedstead for Mrs. Gwynn." And to this day the state bedsteads in the viceregal palace at Cairo are executed in the same metal, and are supposed to have cost upwards of £3,000 each.—*From "The Biblical Museum,"* 1879.

Verses 3—5.—"*Surely I will not come,*" etc. These were all types and figures of Christ, the true David, who, in his desire of raising a living temple, and an

everlasting tabernacle to God, spent whole nights in prayer, and truly, neither entered his house, nor went up into his bed, nor gave slumber to his eyelids, nor rest to his temples, and presented to himself " a glorious church, not having spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing," nor built " with corruptible gold or silver," but with his own precious sweat and more precious blood; it was with them he built that city in heaven that was seen by St. John in the Apocalypse, and " was ornamented with all manner of precious stones." Hence, we can all understand the amount of care, cost, and labour we need to erect a becoming temple in our hearts to God.—*Robert Bellarmine* (1542—1621), *in "A Commentary on the Book of Psalms."*

Verses 3—5.—This admirable zeal of this pious king condemns the indifference of those who leave the sacred places which are dependent upon their care in a condition of shameful neglect, while they lavish all their care to make for themselves sumptuous houses.—*Pasquier Quesnel* (1634—1719), *dans "Les Pseaumes, avec des Reflexions,"* 1700.

Verse 5.—*"An habitation for the mighty God of Jacob."* Jacob " vowed a vow," when he declared, " this . . . shall be God's house " : Gen. xxviii. 20—22. David accordingly preserved a reminiscence of the fact, when he vowed a vow in connection with a similar object.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Verse 6.—*"We heard of it at Ephratah."* This is commonly understood of Bethlehem, as that place had this name. But the ark never was at Bethlehem, at least we read of no such thing. There was a district called by this name, or one closely resembling it, where Elkanah, Samuel's father, lived, and whence Jeroboam came, both of whom are called Ephrathites. 1 Sam. i. 1 ; 1 Kings xi. 26. This was in the tribe of Ephraim, and is probably the place meant by the Psalmist. Now the ark had been for a long series of years at Shiloh, which is in Ephraim, when it was taken to be present at the battle with the Philistines, in which Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were slain, and when thirty thousand of the Israelites lost their lives, together with the capture of the ark. The frightful report of this calamity was brought to Eli, and occasioned his instant death. This appears to be the event referred to in the words, *"We heard of it at Ephratah";* and a grievous report it was, not likely to be soon forgotten.

"We found it in the fields of Jaar." After the ark had been for some time in the land of the Philistines, they sent it away, and it came to Bethshemesh, in the tribe of Judah. 1 Sam. vi. 12. In the immediate vicinity of this place was also Kirjath-jearim, i.e. the city of Jaar, to which the ark was removed ; for the Bethshemites were afraid to retain it, as many thousands of them had lost their lives, for the violation of the sanctity of the ark, by looking into it. As this slaughter took place close by, if not in the fields of Jaar, the Psalmist, with reference to it, says, *"We found it in the fields of Jaar."* Having glanced at these two afflictive and memorable events, he goes on with his direct design, of encouraging the people to perform due honour to the ark, and to the temple, by contrasting with the sad occurrences to which he had adverted their present joy and prosperity.—*William Walford, in "The Book of Psalms. A New Translation, with Notes."* 1837.

Verse 6.—*"We heard of it at Ephratah,"* etc. Either of the ark which David and others had heard of, that it formerly was at Shiloh (Josh. xviii. 1), here called Ephratah, as some think ; so the Ephraimites are called Ephrathites (Jud. xii. 5) ; and Elkanah of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, is said to be an Ephrathite (1 Sam. i. 1) ; but this tribe the Lord chose not, but the tribe of Judah, for his habitation ; and rejected the tabernacle of Shiloh, and removed it from thence (Ps. lxxviii. 60, 67, 68). *"We found it in the fields of the wood ;"* at Kirjath-jearim, which signifies *the city of woods ;* being built among woods, and surrounded with them : here the ark was twenty years, and here David found it ; and from hence he brought it to the house of Obed-edom, and from thence to Zion.

Christ has been *found in the fields of the wood ;* in a low, mean, abject state, as this phrase signifies : Ezek. xvi. 5. The shepherds found him rejected from being in the inn, there being no room for him, and lying in a manger (Luke ii. 7, 16) ; the angels found him in the wilderness, among the wild beasts of the field (Mark i. 13) ; nor had he the convenience even of foxes and birds of the air ; he had no habitation or place where to lay his head : Matt. viii. 20. And he is to be found in the field of the Scriptures, where this rich treasure and pearl of great price lies hid : Matt. xiii. 44.—*John Gill.*

Verse 6.—"*We heard of it at Ephratah.*" The only explanation, equally agreeable to usage and the context, is that which makes Ephratah the ancient name of Bethlehem (Gen. xlviii. 7), here mentioned as the place where David spent his youth, and where he used to hear of the ark, although he never saw it till long afterwards, when he found it in the fields of the wood, in the neighbourhood of *Kirjath-jearim*, which name means Forest-town, or City of the Woods. Compare 1 Sam vii. 1 with 2 Sam. vi. 3, 4.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 6.—"*We heard of it at Ephratah*," etc. Having prepared a sumptuous tabernacle, or tent, for the ark on Mount Zion, in the "City of David," a great national assembly was summoned, at which all the tribes were invited to attend its removal to this new sanctuary. The excitement spread over all Israel. "We heard men say at Ephratah [Bethlehem], in the south of the land, and we found them repeat it in the woody Lebanon," sings the writer of the 132nd Psalm, according to Ewald's rendering. "Let us go into his tabernacle; let us worship at his footstool." The very words of the summons were fitted to rouse the deepest feelings of the nation, for they were to gather at Baalah, of Judah, another name for Kirjath-jearim, to "bring up thence" to the mountain capital "the Ark of God, called by the name, the name of Jehovah of Hosts that dwelleth between the cherubim": 2 Sam. vi. 2. It "had not been enquired at in the days of Saul": but, when restored, the nation would have their great palladium once more in their midst, and could "appear before God in Zion," and be instructed and taught in the way they should go.—*Cunningham Geikie, in "Hours with the Bible,"* 1881.

Verse 6.—"*Ephratah.*" The Psalmist says, that David himself, even when a youth in Bethlehem-Ephratah, heard of the sojourn of the ark in Kirjath-jearim, and that it was a fond dream of David's boyhood to be permitted to bring up the ark to some settled habitation, which he desired *to find* (verse 5).—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 6.—"*We found it.*" The church can never long be hid. The sun reappears after a short eclipse.—*Henry Law.*

Verse 6.—It is not always where we first seek God that he is to be found. "We *heard* of it at Ephratah: we *found* it in the fields of the wood." We must not be governed by hearsay in seeking for God in Christ; but seek for ourselves until we find. It is not in every house of prayer that God in Christ can be found: after seeking him in gorgeous temples we may find him "in the fields of the woods." "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there; believe it not" upon his own testimony, but seek him for yourselves.—*George Rogers*, 1883.

Verse 7.—"*We will go . . . we will worship.*" Note their agreement and joint consent, which is visible in the pronoun "*we*": "*We will go.*" "*We*" taketh in a whole nation, a whole people, the whole world, and maketh them one. "*We*" maketh a commonwealth; and "*we*" maketh a church. We go up to the house of the Lord together, and we hope to go to heaven together. Note their alacrity and cheerfulness in going. Their long absence rendered the object more glorious. For, what we love and want, we love the more and desire the more earnestly. When Hezekiah, having been "sick unto death," had a longer lease of life granted him, he asketh the question, "What is the sign" (not, *that I shall live*, but) "that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?" Isaiah xxxviii. 1—22. Love is on the wing, cheerful to meet its object; yea, it reacheth it at a distance, and is united to it while it is afar off. . . . "*We will go.*" We long to be there. We will hasten our pace. We will break through all difficulties in the way.—*Condensed from Anthony Farindon.*

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—"*Tabernacles*" are spoken of in the plural number, and this it may be (though we may doubt whether the Psalmist had such minute distinctions in his eye) because there was in the Temple an inner sanctuary, a middle apartment, and then the court. It is of more importance to attend to the epithet which follows, where the Psalmist calls the Ark of the Covenant *God's footstool*, to intimate that the sanctuary could never contain the immensity of God's essence, as men were apt absurdly to imagine. The mere outward Temple with all its majesty being no more than his footstool, his people were called upon to look upwards to the heavens, and fix their contemplations with due reverence upon God himself.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—The Lord's "*footstool*" here mentioned was either *the Ark of the Testimony* itself, or the place at least where it stood, called *Debir*, or the *Holy of*

Holies, towards which the Jews in their temple used to worship. The very next words argue so much: "*Arise, O* LORD, *into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength*"; and it is plain out of 1 Chron. xxviii. 2, where David saith concerning his purpose to have built God an house, "I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the *footstool* of our God," where the conjunction *and* is exegetical, and the same with *that is*. According to this expression the prophet Jeremy also, in the beginning of the second of his Lamentations, bewaileth that "the Lord had cast down the beauty of Israel" (that is, his glorious Temple), "and remembered not his *footstool*" (that is, the Ark of the Covenant), "in the day of his wrath"; as Isaiah lx. 7, and lxiv. 11; Ps. xcvi. 6.

That this is the true and genuine meaning of this phrase of *worshipping the Lord towards his footstool*, besides the confessed custom of the time, is evidently confirmed by a parallel expression of this worshipping posture (Ps. xxviii. 2): "Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry unto thee, when I lift up mine hands אֶל־דְּבִיר קָדְשֶׁךָ towards thy *holy oracle*"; that is, towards the Most Holy place where the ark stood, and from whence God gave his answers. For that דביר *Debir*, which is here translated "*oracle*," was the *Sanctum Sanctorum* or Most Holy place, is clear out of the sixth and eighth chapters of the First Book of Kings; where in the former we read (verse 19) that "Solomon prepared the *oracle* or *Debir*, to set the ark of the covenant of the Lord there": in the latter (verse 6), that "the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims." Wherefore the authors of the translation used in our Liturgy rendered this passage of the Psalm, "When I hold up my hands toward the mercy seat of thy holy temple"; namely, having respect to the meaning thereof. Thus you see that one of the two must needs be this *scabellum pedum*, or "*footstool*" of God, either *the ark* or *mercy-seat* itself, or the *adytum Templi*, the Most Holy place, where it stood. For that it is not the whole Temple at large (though it might be so called), but some thing or part of those that are within it, the first words of my text ("*We will go into his tabernacles*") do argue. If, then, it be *the ark* (whose *cover* was that which we call the *mercy-seat*), it seems to have been so called in respect of God's sitting upon the cherubims, under which the ark lay, as it were his footstool: whence sometimes it is described, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts, which sitteth upon the cherubims": 1 Sam iv. 4. If the *ark*, with the *cover* thereof (*the mercy-seat*), be considered as God's *throne*, then the place thereof, the *Debir*, may not unfitly be termed his "*footstool*." Or, lastly, if we consider heaven to be the throne of God, as indeed it is, then whatsoever place or monument of presence he hath here on earth is in true esteem no more than his "*footstool*."—*Joseph Mede*, 1586—1638.

Verse 8.—"*Arise, O* LORD, *into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.*" Whenever the camp was about to move, Moses used the language found in the first part of this verse. "*Arise* (or rise up), *O Jehovah.*"—*William Swan Plumer.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou, and the ark of thy strength.*" "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one": Heb. ii. 11. Now Christ, our Great High Priest, is gone up into the holy resting-place. Of him it is said, "Arise": for he arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. And to his "*ark*," the church, it is said, "Arise": because he lives, all in him shall live also.—*Edward Simms, in "A Spiritual Commentary on the Book of Psalms,"* 1882.

Verse 8.—"*The ark of thy strength.*" The historical records of the ark are numerous, and deeply interesting. Miracles were often wrought at its presence. At the passage of the Jordan, no sooner were the feet of the priests which bare this holy vessel dipped in the brim of the river, than the waters rose up upon an heap, and the people of God passed over on dry ground—"clean over Jordan": Joshua iii. 14—17. At the siege of Jericho, the ark occupied a most prominent position in the daily procession of the tribes around the doomed city. . . . It was, however, captured by the Philistines, and Hophni and Phineas, Eli's wicked sons, in whose care it was placed, slain. Thus the Lord "delivered his strength into captivity and his glory into the enemy's hand": Ps. lxxviii. 61.—*Frank H. White, in "Christ in the Tabernacle,"* 1877.

Verse 9 (*first clause*).—The chief badge and cognizance of the Lord's minister is the true doctrine of justification and obedience of faith in a holy conversation: "*Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 9.—"*Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.*"

Holiness on the head,
Light and perfections on the breast,
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead
To lead them unto life and rest.
Thus are true *Aarons* drest, etc.

George Herbert, 1593—1633.

Verse 9.—"*Saints.*" If the very names given by God's prophets to his people are such as *saints, gracious ones, merciful ones*, surely his professed people ought to see to it that they are not cruel, untender, or *unholy.*—*William Swan Plumer.*

Verses 9, 16.—Let us notice the prayer, verse 9, with the answer, verse 16. The prayer asks in behalf of the priests "*righteousness*": the answer is, "I will clothe her priests with *salvation*," *i.e.*, with what shows forth God's *gracious character.* Caring for the interest of God, the worshipper finds his own interest fully cared for. And now, after spreading the Lord's pledged word (verses 11, 12) before him, the worshipper hears the Lord himself utter the reply, *q.d.*, "I will do all that has been sought."—*A. A. Bonar.*

Verse 10.—"*For thy servant David's sake.*" Solomon's plea for the divine blessing to rest upon him as king, "*For thy servant David's sake*," was justified in its use by God: Is. xxxvii. 35. It gives no countenance to the idea of intercession on the part of deceased saints; for it is not a prayer to David, but a pleading with God for the sake of David. Nor does it support the idea of works of supererogation on the part of David; it only implies a special divine delight in David, on account of which God was pleased to honour David's name during succeeding generations; and if the delight itself is pure grace, the expression of it, in any way, must be grace. Nor does it even give countenance to the idea that God's converting and saving grace may be expected by any man because his parents or ancestors were delighted in by God; for a plea of this character is in Scripture strictly confined to two instances, Abraham and David, with both of whom a special covenant was made, including their descendants, and it was just this covenant that authorised the use of the plea by those who by promise were specially interested, and by none others, and for the ends contemplated by the covenant. But it did prefigure the great Christian plea, "For Christ Jesus' sake"; just as God's selection of individual men and making them centres of revelation and religion, in the old time, prefigured "The man Christ Jesus" as the centre and basis of religion for all time. Hence in the plea, "For Christ's sake," the old pleas referred to are abolished, as the Jewish ritual is abolished. Christ bids us use His name: John xiv. 13, 14; xvi. 26, etc. To believe the false notions mentioned above, or to trust in any other name for divine, gracious favour, is to dishonour the name of Christ. "For Christ's sake" is effective on account of the great covenant, the merits of Christ, and his session in heaven.—*John Field*, 1883.

Verse 10.—"*For thy servant David's sake.*" The frequency with which God is urged to hear and answer prayer *for David's sake* (1 Kings xi. 12, 13; xv. 4; 2 Kings viii. 19, etc.), is not to be explained by making *David* mean the promise to David, nor from the personal favour of which he was the object, but for his historical position as the great theocratical model, in whom it pleased God that the old economy should reach its culminating point, and who is always held up as the type and representative of the Messiah, so that all the intervening kings are mere connecting links, and their reigns mere repetitions and continuations of the reign of David, with more or less resemblance as they happened to be good or bad. Hence the frequency with which his name appears in the later Scriptures, compared with even the last of his successors, and the otherwise inexplicable transfer of that name to the Messiah himself.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 10.—"*For thy servant David's sake.*" When Sennacherib's army lay around Jerusalem besieging it, God wrought deliverance for Israel partly out of regard to the prayer of the devout Hezekiah, but partly also out of respect for the pious memory of David, the hero-king, the man after God's own heart. The message sent through Isaiah to the king concluded thus: "Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, not come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant

David's sake" : 2 Kings xix. 32—4. What a respect is shown to David's name by its being thus put on a level with God! *Mine own sake, and David's sake.—Alexander Balmain Bruce, in "The Galilean Gospel,"* 1882.

Verse 10.—"*Turn not away the face,*" etc. As if in displeasure, or in forgetfulness.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 10.—"*Thine anointed.*" What is meant by "*thine anointed*"? Is it David himself; or some definite king among his merely human descendants; or does it apply to each or any of them as they come into office to bear the responsibilities of this line of anointed kings? I incline to the latter construction, under which the petition is applicable to any one or to all the anointed successors of David. For David's sake let every one of them be admitted to free audience before thee, and his prayer be evermore availing. The context contemplates a long line of kings descended from David. It was pertinent to make them all the subjects of this prayer.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 11.—"*The* LORD *hath sworn.*" The most potent weapon with God is his own word. They remind him, therefore, as did Ethan in Psalm lxxxix. 20, etc., of the solemn words which he had spoken by Nathan, and which must at that time have been still fresh in the memory of all. Solomon, too, made mention of those glorious words of comfort in his prayer at the dedication of the temple.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verses 11, 12.—This Psalm is one of those fifteen which are called Psalms of Degrees; of which title whatsoever reason can be given fitting the rest, surely if we consider the argument of this, it may well import the excellency thereof, and why? It is nothing else but a sacred emulation, wherein God and a king contend; the king in piety, God in bounty. The king declares himself to be a most eminent pattern of zeal, and God himself to be a most magnificent rewarder of his servants. The king debarreth himself of all worldly content, while he is busily providing to entertain God; and God, who filleth heaven and earth, vouchsafeth to lodge in that place which was provided by the king. The king presents his supplication not only for himself, but also for his charge, the priests, the people; and God restraineth not his blessing to the king, but also at his suit enlargeth it to church and commonweal. Finally, the king bindeth himself to make good his duty with a votive oath, and God restipulateth with an oath that which he promised both to king and kingdom: to the kingdom in the words that follow; but to the king in those that I have now read to you.

This speech, then, is directed unto the king, unto David; but it containeth a blessing which redounds unto his issue, "*the fruit of his body.*" This blessing is no less than a royal succession in the throne of David: David's sons shall inherit it, but it is God that states them in it. They shall sit, but *I will set* them, yea, so set them that they shall never fall; they shall sit for ever; the succession shall be perpetual. And hitherto the promise runs absolute: it is qualified in that which followeth.

The king was busy to build God's house; and see how God answers him, promising the building of the king's house! God requites a building with a building. There is a very apt allusion in the word, upon which the son of Syrach also plays, when he saith, that children and the building of a city make a perpetual name; how much more if they be a royal offspring, that are destined to sit upon a throne? And God promiseth David sons for this honourable end—"*to sit upon his throne.*"—*Arthur Lake,* —1626.

Verse 12.—"*If thy children will keep my covenant,*" etc. Lest David's sons, if they be left without law, should live without care, they must know that the succession shall be perpetual; but the promise is conditional; if David's sons conform themselves to God, "*if thou keep my covenant,*" whereof they cannot pretend ignorance. And they have an authentical record: the record, "*my testimonies*"; authentical, "*I myself will teach them.*" You see the king's blessing, it is very great; but lest the promise thereof be thought too good to be true, God secures the king with a most unchangeable warrant. The warrant is his oath, "*The Lord sware*"; and this warrant is, 1. Unchangeable, because sincere; he swore in truth. 2. Stable, *he will not turn from it.* And what could king David desire more for his own house than a promise of such a blessing, and such a warrant of that promise? Yes, he might, and no doubt he did desire [more]; and God also intended to him more than the

letter of this promise doth express, even the accomplishment of the truth whereof this was but a type. And what is that? The establishment of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.—*Arthur Lake.*

Verse 12.—"*That I shall teach them.*" Here is to be noted that he addeth, "*which I will teach them*"; for he will be the teacher and will be heard. He wills not that church councils should be heard, or such as teach that which he hath not taught. . . . God giveth no authority unto man above the word. So should he set man, that is to say, dust and dung, above himself; for what is the word, but God himself? This word they that honour, obey, and keep, are the true church indeed, be they never so contemptible in the world: but they which do not, are the church of Satan, and accursed of God. And this is the cause why it is expressly set down in the text, "*The testimonies which I will teach them.*" For so will God use the ministry of teachers and pastors in the church, that he notwithstanding will be their chief Pastor, and all other ministers and pastors whatsoever, yea, the church itself, shall be ruled and governed by the word.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 12.—"*Their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.*" As if he had said, this promise as touching Christ will I accomplish, and will undoubtedly establish the throne unto my servant David; but do not ye, which in the meantime sit on this throne, and govern this kingdom, presume upon the promise, and think that you cannot err, or that I will wink at your errors, and not rather condemn and severely punish them. Therefore either govern your kingdom according to my word, or else I will root you out and destroy you for ever. This promise he now amplifieth, and setteth forth more at large.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 13.—"*For the* LORD *hath chosen Zion,*" etc. The Lord's pitching upon any place to dwell there cometh not of the worthiness of the place, or persons, but from God's good pleasure alone. The Lord having chosen his church, resteth in his love to her: he smelleth a sweet savour of Christ, and this maketh his seat among his people steadfast.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 13.—"*For the* LORD *hath chosen Zion.*" Here, of a singular purpose, he useth the same word which Moses used (Deut. xvi. 6): "As the place which the Lord thy God *shall choose* to place his name in." For at the beginning there was no certain place appointed wherein the tabernacle should remain; but it wandered, not only from place to place, but also from tribe to tribe, as Ephraim, Manasseh, Dan, etc.

Moreover, by the word, "*hath chosen,*" he overthroweth all kinds of worship and religion of men's own devising and choosing, whereof there was an infinite number among the Jews. Election or choice belongeth not unto us; but we must yield obedience to the voice of the Lord. Else shall that happen unto us which Jeremiah threatheneth: "That they have chosen will I reject." These things destroy and confound the inventions, the devices and devotions, the false and counterfeit religions, which we have seen in the papacy. . . . God is not served but when that is done which he hath commanded. Wherefore election or choice pertaineth not to us, so that what God hath commanded, that we must do.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 14.—"*This is my rest for ever.*" Of the Christian church we may affirm with undoubted certainty, that it is *God's rest for ever:* after this dispensation of his will, there will never succeed another; Christianity closes and completes the Divine communication from God to man; nothing greater, nothing better can or will be imparted to him on this side eternity; and even in heaven itself we shall, through an everlasting duration, be employed in contemplating and adoring the riches of that grace, the brightest glories of which have been realized in the consummations of Calvary, the ascension of the Messiah, the breaking down of all national peculiarity, and the gift and mission of the Divine Spirit. Let the argument of the apostle to the Hebrews be fully weighed, and the conclusion of every mind must be, that God has "removed those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain:" Heb. xii. 27.—*John Morison, in "An Exposition of the Book of Psalms,"* 1829.

Verse 14.—"*This is my rest for ever.*" The heart of the saints is the dwelling-place of God. He rests in those who rest in him. He rests when he causes us to rest.—*Pasquier Quesnel.*

Verse 14.—"*Dwell.*" The word translated "*dwell*" means originally to *sit*, and

especially to sit enthroned, so that this idea would be necessarily suggested with the other to a Hebrew reader.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verses 14—18.—Now that he might apparently see how near the Lord is to all them that call upon him in faithfulness and truth, he waiteth not long for an answer, but carries it away with him before he departs. For to David's petition, "*Return, O* LORD, *unto thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength*"; God's answer is this,—" This shall be my resting-place, here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein. I will bless her victuals with increase, and will satisfy her poor with bread." To David's petition, "*Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints sing with joyfulness,*" God's answer is this : " I will clothe her priests with salvation : and her saints shall rejoice and sing." Lastly, to David's petition, "*For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed,*" God's answer is this : " There will I make the horn of David to flourish : I have ordained a light for mine anointed. As for his enemies, I will clothe them with shame ; but upon himself shall his crown flourish." As if he should have said,—Turn away the face of mine anointed ? Nay, that will I never do ; I will indeed turn away the face of the enemies of mine anointed ; their face shall be covered with confusion, and clothed with shame. But contrariwise, I have ordained a light for mine anointed. He shall even have a light in his face and a crown upon his head. " As for his enemies, I will clothe them with shame ; but upon himself shall his crown flourish."—*Thomas Playfere,* 1633.

Verse 15.—"*I will abundantly bless her provision,*" etc. The *provision* of Zion, the church of God, the word and ordinances, of which Christ is the sum and substance ; the gospel is milk for babes, and meat for strong men ; the ordinances are a feast of fat things ; Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed ; the whole provision is spiritual, savoury, salutary, strengthening, satisfying, and nourishing, when the Lord blesses it ; as he does to those who hunger and thirst after it, and feed upon it by faith ; so that their souls grow thereby, and they become fat and flourishing ; grace increases in them, and they are fruitful in every good work ; and this the Lord promises to do *abundantly,* in a very large way and manner ; or *certainly,* for it is, in the original text, " in blessing I will bless," that is, will surely bless, as this phrase is sometimes rendered.

"*I will satisfy her poor with bread.*" Zion has her poor ; persons may be poor and yet belong to Zion, belong to Zion and yet be poor ; there are poor in all the churches of Christ ; our Lord told his disciples that they had the poor, and might expect to have them, always with them ; and particular directions are given to take care of Zion's poor under the gospel dispensation, that they may not want bread in a literal sense : though by the *poor* are chiefly designed the Lord's afflicted and distressed ones ; or those who in a spiritual sense are poor, sensible of their spiritual poverty, and seeking after the true riches ; or are poor in spirit, to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs ; these the Lord promises to satisfy, to fill them to the full with the bread of the gospel, made of the finest of the wheat, of which there is enough and to spare in his house ; and with Christ the bread of life, of which those that eat shall never die, but live for ever.—*John Gill.*

Verse 15.—"*Her provision I will bless, I will bless.*" The repetition of the verb may express either certainty or fulness. *I will surely bless,* or *I will bless abundantly.* —*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 15.—"*I will abundantly bless her provision.*" Believe it, a saint hath rare fare, gallant cheer, and rich diet, and all at free cost. He is feasted all the day long ; he is brought oft into the banqueting-house, and hath the rarest, the costliest, the wholesomest diet, that which is most hearty and strengthening, that which is most dainty and pleasant, and the greatest variety, and nothing is wanting, that may make his state happy, except a full enjoyment of glory itself. The Lord gives him all the experiences of his power and goodness to his Church in former ages to feed his hopes upon ; nay, many choice providences, many answers of prayer, many foretastes of glory, many ordinances, especially that great one of the Lord's Supper, at which Christ and all his benefits are served up in a royal dish to refresh and feast the faith, hope, and love of the saints. And that which sweetens all this—he knows that all this is but a little to what he shall shortly live upon when he comes to the marriage-supper ; then he shall always be feasted and never surfeited. And beside all this, he hath the sweet and refreshing incomes of the Spirit, filling him with such true pleasure, that he can easily spare the most sumptuous banquet, the noblest feast, and highest worldly delights, as infinitely short of one hour's treatment in his

Friend's chamber. And, if this be his entertainment in the inn, what shall he have at the court? If this heavenly manna be his food in the wilderness, at what rate is he like to live when he comes into Canaan? If this be the provision of the way, what is that of the country?—*John Janeway, about* 1670.

Verse 15.—"*I will satisfy her poor with bread.*" Christ is a satisfying good. A wooden loaf, a silver loaf, a golden loaf will not satisfy a hungry man; the man must have bread. The dainties and dignities of the world, the grandeur and glory of the world, the plenty and prosperity of the world, the puff and popularity of the world, will not satisfy a soul sailing by the gates of hell, and crying out of the depths; it must be a Christ. "Children, or I die," was the cry of the woman; a Christ, or I die—a Christ, or I am damned, is the doleful ditty and doleful dialect of a despairing or desponding soul. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied therewith; nor he that loveth abundance with increase:" Eccles. v. 10. It is a good observation that the world is round, but the heart of man is triangular. Now, all the globe of the world will not fill the triangular heart of man. What of the world and in the world can give quietness, when Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, goes down upon the soul? The heart is a three-square, and nothing but a trinity in unity and a unity in trinity will satisfy this. Not riches, nor relations, nor barns, nor bags, will satisfy a convinced and deserted soul. This person can say concerning his bags as a great person upon a sick, if not a dying, bed, did concerning his bags,—Away, and away for ever. Though there be bag upon bag, yet they are altogether insignificant in a dying hour; these bags, they are but as so many ciphers before a figure. This is the cry of despairing and desponding souls: "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days:" Ps. xc. 14.—*Richard Mayhew,* 1679.

Verse 15.—"*I will satisfy her poor with bread.*" Dainties I will not promise them; a *sufficiency,* but not a *superfluity:* poor they may be, but not destitute; bread they shall have, and of that *God's plenty,* as they say; enough to bring them to their Father's house, "where there is bread enough." Let not, therefore, the poor Israelite fear to bring his offerings, or to disfurnish himself for God's worship, etc.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 16.—"*I will clothe her priests with salvation.*" Their salvation shall be evident and conspicuous, just as a garment is.—*Aben-Ezra.*

Verse 16.—God's presence is an earnest of all good; for all this follows upon "here will I dwell." By it he giveth meat to the hungry, and comfort to the poor, even the Bread of Life to the believing and repenting soul; by it he himself is the sanctification of his priests, and his righteousness and salvation is their most glorious vesture; and by his presence he maketh his elect ever glad, filling their hearts with joy and their mouths with songs.—*J. W. Burgon.*

Verse 16.—"*Her saints shall shout aloud for joy.*" It would astonish and amuse a European stranger to hear these natives sing. They have not the least idea either of harmony or melody; noise is what they best understand, and he that sings the loudest is considered to sing the best. I have occasionally remonstrated with them on the subject; but the reply I once received silenced me for ever after. "Sing softly, brother," I said to one of the principal members. "Sing softly!" he replied, "is it you, our father, who tells us to sing softly? Did you ever hear us sing the praises of our Hindoo gods? how we threw our heads backward, and with all our might shouted out the praises of those who are no gods! And now do you tell us to *whisper* the praises of Jesus? No, sir, we cannot—we must express in loud tones our gratitude to him who loved us, and died for us!" And so they continued to sing with all their might, and without further remonstrance.—*G. Gogerly, in "The Pioneers: a Narrative of the Bengal Mission,"* 1870.

Verse 17.—"*There will I make the horn of David to bud,*" etc. A metaphor taken from those goodly creatures, as stags, and such like; whose chiefest beauty and strength consisteth in their horns, especially when they bud and branch abroad.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verse 17.—"*The horn of David.*" This image of *a horn* is frequent in the Old Testament. . . The explanation must be found neither in the horns of the altar on which criminals sought to lay hold, nor in the horns with which they ornamented their helmets; the figure is taken from the horns of the bull, in which the power of this animal resides. It is a natural image among an agricultural people. . . .

Just as the strength of the animal is concentrated in its horn, so all the delivering power granted to the family of David for the advantage of the people will be concentrated in the Messiah.—*F. Godet, in "A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke,"* 1875.

Verse 17.—*"Make the horn to bud."* In the beginning of the month of March the common stag, or red deer, is lurking in the sequestered spots of his forest home, harmless as his mate, and as timorous. Soon a pair of prominences make their appearance on his forehead, covered with a velvety skin. In a few days these little prominences have attained some length, and give the first indication of their true form. Grasp one of these in the hand and it will be found burning hot to the touch, for the blood runs fiercely through the velvety skin, depositing at every touch a minute portion of bony matter. More and more rapidly grow the horns, the carotid arteries enlarging in order to supply a sufficiency of nourishment, and in the short period of ten weeks the enormous mass of bony matter has been completed. Such a process is almost, if not entirely, without parallel in the history of the animal kingdom.—*J. G. Wood, in "The Illustrated Natural History,"* 1861.

Verse 17.—*"The horn."* My friend, Mr. Graham, of Damascus, says, concerning the horns worn by eastern women, "This head-dress is of dough, tin, silver, or gold, according to the wealth of the different classes. The rank is also indicated by the length of it. The nobler the lady, the longer the horn. Some of them are more than an English yard." I procured at Damascus an ancient gem, representing a *man* wearing the horn. In the present day, its use is confined to the women.—*John Wilson, in "The Lands of the Bible,"* 1847.

Verse 17.—*"I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed."* This clause contains an allusion to the law, which cannot be preserved in any version. The word translated *"lamp"* is used to designate the several burners of the golden candlesticks (Ex. xxv. 37; xxxv. 14; xxxvii. 23; xxxix. 37), and the verb here joined with it is the one applied to the ordering or tending of the sacred lights by the priests (Ex. xxvii. 21; Lev. xxvii. 3). The meaning of the whole verse is, that the promise of old made to David and to Zion should be yet fulfilled, however dark and inauspicious present appearances.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 17.—*"I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed."* We here remark, 1. The designation given unto Christ by God his Father; he is *"mine anointed."* Though he be despised and rejected of men; though an unbelieving world see no form or comeliness in him, why he should be desired, yet I own him, and challenge him as mine Anointed, the Prophet, Priest, and King of my church. "I have found David my servant: with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him": Ps. lxxxix. 20, 21.

2. The great means of God's appointment for manifesting the glory of Christ to a lost world; he has provided *"a lamp"* for his Anointed. The use of a lamp is to give light to people in the darkness of the night; so the word of God, particularly the gospel, is a light shining in a dark place, until the day of glory dawn, when the Lord God and the Lamb will be the light of the ransomed for endless evermore.

3. The authority by which this lamp is lighted and carried through this dark world; it is *"ordained"* of God; and by his commandment it is that we preach and spread the light of the gospel (Mark xvi. 15, 20).—*Ebenezer Erskine,* 1680—.

Verse 17.—*"I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed."* That is, I have ordained prosperity and blessings for him; blessings upon his person, and especially the blessing of posterity. Children are as a *lamp* or *candle* in their father's house, making the name of their ancestors conspicuous; hence in Scripture a child given to succeed his father is called a *lamp.* When God by Ahijah the prophet told Jeroboam that God would take the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon's son, and give it unto him, even ten tribes; he yet adds (1 Kings xi. 36), "And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light (*lamp* or *candle*) alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there." And again (1 Kings xv. 4), when Abijam the son of Rehoboam proved wicked, the text saith, "Nevertheless for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a *lamp* (or *candle*) in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him."—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 17, 18.—God having chosen David's family, he here promiseth to bless that also with suitable blessings.

1. Growing power: *"There* (in Zion) *will I make the horn of David to bud."* The royal dignity should increase more and more, and constant additions be made to the lustre of it. Christ is the "horn of salvation," noting a plentiful and powerful

salvation, which God hath raised up and made to bud " in the house of his servant David." David had promised to use his power for God's glory, to cut off the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the horns of the righteous (Ps. lxxv. 10); and in recompense for it, God here promises to make his horn to bud; for to them that have power and use it well, more shall be given.

2. Lasting honour: *"I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed."* Thou wilt "light my candle" (Ps. xviii. 28): that lamp is likely to burn brightly which God ordains. A lamp is a successor; for when a lamp is almost out, another may be lighted by it: it is a succession; for by this means David shall not want a man to stand before God. Christ is the lamp and the light of the world.

3. Complete victory. *"His enemies,"* that have formed designs against him, *"will I clothe with shame,"* when they shall see their designs baffled. Let the enemies of all good governors expect to be clothed with shame, and especially the enemies of the Lord Jesus and his government, who shall rise in the last great day " to everlasting shame and contempt."

4. Universal prosperity: *"Upon himself shall his crown flourish," i.e.*, his government shall be more and more his honour. This was to have its full accomplishment in Christ Jesus, whose crown of honour and power shall never fade, nor the flowers of it wither. The crowns of earthly princes " endure not to all generations " (Prov. xxvii. 24); but Christ's crown shall endure to all eternity, and the crowns reserved for his faithful subjects are such as " fade not away."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 18.—*"His enemies will I clothe with shame."* That is, *shame* shall so inseparably cover them, that as wheresoever a man goeth, he carrieth his clothes with him; so wheresoever they go they shall carry their *shame* with them. And that which is strangest of all, they which are ashamed use to clothe or cover their shame, and then think themselves well enough; but David's enemies shall be so ashamed, that even the very covering of their shame shall be a discovering of it; and the clothing or cloaking of their ignominy shall be nothing else but a girding of it more closely and more inseparably unto them.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verse 18.—*"Upon himself shall the crown flourish."* This idea seems to be taken from the nature of the ancient crowns bestowed upon conquerors. From the earliest periods of history, the laurel, olive, ivy, etc., furnished crowns to adorn the heads of heroes, who had conquered in the field of battle, gained the prize in the race or performed some other important service to the public. These were the dear bought rewards of the most heroic exploits of antiquity. This sets the propriety of the phrase in full view. The idea of a crown of gold and jewels flourishing, is at least unnatural; whereas, flourishing is natural to laurels, oaks, etc. These were put upon the heads of the victors in full verdure, and their merit seemed to make them flourish on their heads, in fresher green. The literal crown which Jesus wore was also of the vegetable kind, and the thorn of sorrow never flourished in such vigour as on his head. Now he has got the crown of life, which shall not fade away, like the perishing verdure of the crowns of other heroes. It shall flourish for ever, with all the vigour of immortality, and bring forth all the olive-fruits of peace for his people. Its branches shall spread, and furnish crowns for all the victors in the spiritual warfare.—*Alexander Pirie,* —1804.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. The Lord remembers Jesus, our David: he loves him, he delights in him, he is with him. II. In that memory his griefs have a prominent place—" all his afflictions." III. Yet the Lord would be put in remembrance by his people.

Verses 1, 2.—Concerning his people, I. The Lord remembers, 1. Their persons. 2. Their afflictions. 3. Their vows. II. The Lord remembers them, 1. To accept them. 2. To sympathise with them. 3. To assist them.

Verses 1, 2.—I. God remembers his people, each one: " Remember David."

The Spirit maketh intercession within us according to the will of God. II. He remembers their afflictions: "David and all his afflictions." "I know thy works and thy tribulation." III. He remembers their vows, especially, 1. Those which relate to his service. 2. Those which are solemnly made. 3. Those which are faithfully performed.—*G. R.*

Verses 1—5.—Notice, I. How painfully David felt what he conceived to be a dishonouring of God, which he thought he might be able to remedy. Consider "his afflictions,"—because the ark dwelt within curtains, while he himself dwelt in a house of cedar: 2 Sam. vii. 2. Consider, 1. Its singularity. Most find affliction in personal losses; very few suffer from a cause like this. 2. The little sympathy such a feeling meets with from the most of men. "If God means to convert the heathen, he can do it without you, young man," was said to Dr., then Mr. Carey, when heathenism was an affliction to him. 3. Its fittingness to a really God-fearing man. 4. Its pleasingness to God: 1 Sam. ii. 30. II. How earnestly he set himself to remedy the evil he deplored: "He sware," etc. There cannot be the least doubt that he would have foregone the enjoyment of temporal luxuries until he had accomplished the work dear to his heart, if he had been permitted of God. Remark, 1. There is little zeal for God's honour when self-denial is not exercised for the sake of his cause. 2. Were a like zeal generally shown by God's people, there would be more givers and more liberal gifts; more workers, and the work more heartily and better done. 3. It would be well to astonish the world, and deserve the commendations of the righteous by becoming enthusiasts for the honour of God.—*J. F.*

Verses 3—5.—I. We should desire a habitation for God more than for ourselves. God should have the best of everything. "See, now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." II. We should be guided by the house of God in seeking a house for ourselves: "Surely I will not come," etc. III. We should labour for the prosperity of God's house even more than of our own. Nothing should make sleep more sweet to us than when the church of God prospers; nothing keep us more awake then when it declines: "I will not give sleep," etc. (verse 4); "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?"—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—Something to live for—to find fresh habitations for God. I. The Condescension implied: God *with us.* II. The Districts explored: hearts, homes, "dark places of the earth." III. The Royalty of the Work. It makes King David busy, and is labour worthy of a king.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 5.—"*A place for the* LORD." In the heart, the home, the assembly, the life. Everywhere we must find or make a place for the Lord.

Verse 5.—"*The mighty God of Jacob.*" I. Mighty, and therefore he joined heaven and earth at Bethel. II. Mighty, and therefore brought Jacob back from Mesopotamia. III. Mighty, and yet wrestled with him at Jabbok. IV. Mighty, and yet allowed him to be afflicted. V. Mighty and therefore gave him full deliverance.

Verses 6, 7.—We shall use this for practical purposes. A soul longing to meet with God. God has appointed a meeting place. I. *We know what it is.* A mercy-seat, a throne of grace, a place of revealed glory. Within it the law preserved. Heavenly food—pot of manna. Holy rule—Aaron's rod. II. *We desire to find it.* Intensely. Immediately. Reverently. Longing to receive it. III. *We heard of it.* In our young days. We almost forget where. From ministers, from holy men, from those who loved us. IV. *We found it.* Where we least expected it. In a despised place. In a lonely place. Where we lost ourselves. Very near us—where we hid like Adam among the trees. V. *We will go.* To God in Christ. For all he gives. To dwell with him. To learn of him. VI. *We will worship.* Humbly. Solemnly. Gratefully. Preparing for heaven.

Verse 7.—I. The Place: "His tabernacles." 1. Built for God. 2. Accepted by God: present everywhere, he is especially present here. II. The Attendance: "We will go," etc. There God is present to meet us, and there we should be present to meet him. III. The Design: 1. For adoration. 2. For self-consecration: "We will worship at his footstool."—*G. R.*

Verses 8, 9.—I. The Presence of God desired—1. That it may be signally manifested: "Arise" and enter. 2. That it may be gracious: "Thou and the ark"—that he may be present on the mercy-seat. 3. That it may be felt: accompanied with power: "The ark of thy strength." 4. That it may be abiding:

"Arise into thy rest." II. The reasons for this desire. 1. With respect to the priests or ministers: "Let thy priests," etc.: not their own righteousness, but as a clothing: let them speak of "garments of salvation" and "robes of righteousness." 2. With respect to the worshippers: "And let thy saints," etc. Let ministers preach the gift of righteousness; not that which grows out of man's nature, but that which is "unto all and upon all them that believe," and saints will shout for joy.—*G. R.*

Verse 9.—Consider, I. The importance of a righteous ministry in the church. II. The connection between such a ministry and a joyous people. III. The dependence of both on the gracious working of God.—*J. F.*

Verse 9 (*second clause*).—I. Saints. II. Shouting. III. Explaining—"for joy." IV. Encouraging—"Let thy saints shout."

Verse 9 (*second clause*).—The connection between holiness and joy.

Verses 9, 16.—*The Spiritual Vestry.* I. The Vestments: 1. Righteousness; for which the costliest stole is a poor substitute. 2. Salvation: learning, oratory, etc., of small account in comparison. II. The Procuring of the vestments: 1. Must be from God. 2. Earnest prayer should constantly arise from all saints. III. The Robing: 1. By God's own hand! 2. Their beauty and power who are so invested. 3. The persons are "thy priests."—*W. B. H.*

Verses 9, 16.—I. Priests and Saints. II. Vestments. III. "Hymns Ancient and Modern." IV. The Real Presence: God giving the garments and the joy.

Verse 10.—I. An evil to be deprecated: "Turn not away the face"—so that he cannot see thee, or be seen of thee, or accepted, or allowed to hope. II. A plea to be employed, "for thy servant David's sake"—thy covenant with him, his zeal, his consecration, his afflictions, his service. Good gospel pleading, such as may be used on many occasions.

Verse 11.—I. The divine oath. II. Its eternal stability. III. The everlasting Kingship.

Verse 11 (*middle clause*).—Our confidence: "He will not turn from it." He is not a changing God. He foreknew everything. He is able to carry out his purpose. His honour is bound up in it. His oath can never be broken.

Verse 12.—Family favour may be perpetual, but the conditions must be observed.

Verse 13.—I. Sovereign choice. II. Condescending indwelling. III. Eternal rest. IV. Gracious reason—"I have desired it."

Verse 14.—I. *God finding rest in his church.* 1. The three persons honoured. 2. The divine nature exercised. 3. Eternal purposes fulfilled. 4. Almighty energies rewarded. 5. Tremendous sacrifices remembered. 6. Glorious attributes extolled. 7. Dearest relationships indulged. II. *This rest enduring for ever.* 1. There will always be a church. 2. That church will always be such as God can rest in. 3. That church will therefore be secure on earth. 4. That church will be glorified eternally in heaven.

Verse 15.—I. Blessed provision. II. Satisfied people—"satisfy her poor." III. Glorified God—"I will." IV. Happy place—Zion.

Verses 16, 18.—Two forms of clothing: salvation and shame, prepared for his priests and his enemies. Which will you wear?

Verse 17.—A Lamp ordained for God's Anointed. Being the Substance of Two Sermons, by Ebenezer Erskine. [Works, Vol. 3, pp. 3—41.]

Verses 17, 18.—I. The budding horn of growing power. II. The perpetual lamp of constant brightness. III. The sordid array of defeated foes. IV. The unfading wreath of glorious sovereignty.

Verse 18.—I. *His enemies clothed.* 1. Who are they? The openly profane. The moral but irreligious. The self-righteous. The hypocritical. 2. How clothed with shame? In repentance, in disappointment, in remorse, in destruction. Sin detected. Self defeated. Hopes scattered. 3. Who clothes them? The Lord. He will shame them thoroughly. II. *Himself crowned.* 1. His crown: his dominion and glory. 2. Its flourishing. Glory extending. Subjects increasing. Wealth growing. Foes fearing, etc.

Verse 18 (*last clause*).—The Lord Jesus himself the source, sustenance, and centre of the prosperity of his kingdom.

PSALM CXXXIII.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees of David. *We see no reason for depriving David of the authorship of this sparkling sonnet. He knew by experience the bitterness occasioned by divisions in families, and was well prepared to celebrate in choicest psalmody the blessing of unity for which he sighed, Among the "songs of degrees," this hymn has certainly attained unto a good degree, and even in common literature it is frequently quoted for its perfume and dew. In this Psalm there is no wry word, all is "sweetness and light,"—a notable ascent from Psalm cxx. with which the pilgrims set out. That is full of war and lamentation, but this sings of peace and pleasantness. The visitors to Zion were about to return, and this may have been their hymn of joy because they had seen such union among the tribes who had gathered at the common altar. The previous Psalm, which sings of the covenant, had also revealed the centre of Israel's unity in the Lord's anointed and the promises made to him. No wonder that brethren dwell in unity when God dwells among them, and finds his rest in them. Our translators have given to this Psalm an admirable explanatory heading,* "The benefit of the communion of saints." *These good men often hit off the meaning of a passage in a few words.*

EXPOSITION.

BEHOLD, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

3 As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore.

1. *"Behold."* It is a wonder seldom seen, therefore behold it! It may be seen, for it is the characteristic of real saints,—therefore fail not to inspect it! It is well worthy of admiration; pause and gaze upon it! It will charm you into imitation, therefore note it well! God looks on with approval, therefore consider it with attention. *"How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"* No one can tell the exceeding excellence of such a condition; and so the Psalmist uses the word "how" twice;—Behold how good! and how pleasant! He does not attempt to measure either the good or the pleasure, but invites us to behold for ourselves. The combination of the two adjectives "good" and "pleasant," is more remarkable than the conjunction of two stars of the first magnitude: for a thing to be "good" is good, but for it also to be pleasant is better. All men love pleasant things, and yet it frequently happens that the pleasure is evil; but here the condition is as good as it is pleasant, as pleasant as it is good, for the same *"how"* is set before each qualifying word.

For *brethren* according to the flesh to dwell together is not always wise; for experience teaches that they are better a little apart, and it is shameful for them to dwell together in disunion. They had much better part in peace like Abraham and Lot, than dwell together in envy like Joseph's brothers. When brethren can and do dwell together *in unity*, then is their communion worthy to be gazed upon and sung of in holy psalmody. Such sights ought often to be seen among those who are near of kin, for they are brethren, and therefore should be united in heart and aim; they dwell together, and it is for their mutual comfort that there should be no strife; and yet how many families are rent by fierce feuds, and exhibit a spectacle which is neither good nor pleasant!

As to brethren in spirit, they ought to dwell together in church fellowship, and in that fellowship one essential matter is unity. We can dispense with uniformity if we possess unity: oneness of life, truth, and way; oneness in Christ Jesus; oneness of object and spirit—these we must have, or our assemblies will be synagogues

of contention rather than churches of Christ. The closer the unity the better; for the more of the good and the pleasant there will be. Since we are imperfect beings, somewhat of the evil and the unpleasant is sure to intrude; but this will readily be neutralized and easily ejected by the true love of the saints, if it really exists. Christian unity is good in itself, good for ourselves, good for the brethren, good for our converts, good for the outside world; and for certain it is pleasant; for a loving heart must have pleasure and give pleasure in associating with others of like nature. A church united for years in earnest service of the Lord is a well of goodness and joy to all those who dwell round about it.

2. *"It is like the precious ointment upon the head."* In order that we may the better behold brotherly unity David gives us a resemblance, so that as in a glass we may perceive its blessedness. It has a *sweet perfume* about it, comparable to that precious ointment with which the first High Priest was anointed at his ordination. It is *a holy thing*, and so again is like the oil of consecration which was to be used only in the Lord's service. What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high-priest alone! It is a *diffusive* thing: being poured on his head the fragrant oil flowed down upon Aaron's head, and thence dropped upon his garments till the utmost hem was anointed therewith; and even so doth brotherly love extend its benign power and bless all who are beneath its influence. Hearty concord brings a benediction upon all concerned; its goodness and pleasure are shared in by the lowliest members of the household; even the servants are the better and the happier because of the lovely unity among the members of the family. *It has a special use* about it; for as by the anointing oil Aaron was set apart for the special service of Jehovah, even so those who dwell in love are the better fitted to glorify God in his church. The Lord is not likely to use for his glory those who are devoid of love; they lack the anointing needful to make them priests unto the Lord. *"That ran bown upon the beard, even Aaron's beard."* This is a chief point of comparison, that as the oil did not remain confined to the place where it first fell, but flowed down the High Priest's hair and bedewed his beard, even so brotherly love descending from the head distils and descends, anointing as it runs, and perfuming all it lights upon. *"That went down to the skirts of his garments."* Once set in motion it would not cease from flowing. It might seem as if it were better not to smear his garments with oil, but the sacred unguent could not be restrained, it flowed over his holy robes; even thus does brotherly love not only flow over the hearts upon which it was first poured out, and descend to those who are an inferior part of the mystical body of Christ, but it runs where it is not sought for, asking neither leave nor license to make its way. Christian affection knows no limits of parish, nation, sect or age. Is the man a believer in Christ? Then he is in the one body, and I must yield him an abiding love. Is he one of the poorest, one of the least spiritual, one of the least lovable? Then he is as the skirts of the garment, and my heart's love must fall even upon him. Brotherly love comes from the head, but falls to the feet. Its way is downward. It "ran down," and it "went down": love for the brethren condescends to men of low estate, it is not puffed up, but is lowly and meek. This is no small part of its excellence: oil would not anoint if it did not flow down, neither would brotherly love diffuse its blessing if it did not descend.

3. *"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion."* From the loftier mountains the moisture appears to be wafted to the lesser hills: the dews of Hermon fall on Zion. The Alpine Lebanon ministers to the minor elevation of the city of David; and so does brotherly love descend from higher to the lower, refreshing and enlivening in its course. Holy concord is as dew, mysteriously blessed, full of life and growth for all plants of grace. It brings with it so much benediction that it is as no common dew, but as that of Hermon which is specially copious, and far-reaching. The proper rendering is, "As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion," and this tallies with the figure which has been already used; and sets forth by a second simile the sweet descending diffusiveness of brotherly unity. *"For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."* That is, in Zion, or better still, in the place where brotherly love abounds. Where love reigns God reigns. Where love wishes blessing, there God commands the blessing. God has but to command, and it is done. He is so pleased to see his dear children happy in one another that he fails not to make them happy in himself. He gives especially his best blessing of eternal life, for love is life; dwelling together in love we have begun the enjoyments of eternity.

and these shall not be taken from us. Let us love for evermore, and we shall live for evermore. This makes Christian brotherhood so good and pleasant; it has Jehovah's blessing resting upon it, and it cannot be otherwise than sacred like "the precious ointment," and heavenly like "the dew of Hermon."

O for more of this rare virtue! Not the love which comes and goes, but that which dwells; not that spirit which separates and secludes, but that which dwells together; not that mind which is all for debate and difference, but that which dwells together in unity. Never shall we know the full power of the anointing till we are of one heart and of one spirit; never will the sacred dew of the spirit descend in all its fulness till we are perfectly joined together in the same mind; never will the covenanted and commanded blessing come forth from the Lord our God till once again we shall have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Lord, lead us into this most precious spiritual unity, for thy Son's sake. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is an effusion of holy joy occasioned by the sight of the gathering of Israel as one great household at the yearly feasts. . . . There might likewise be an allusion to the previous jealousies and alienations in the family of Israel, which seemed to be exchanged for mutual concord and affection, on David's accession to the throne of the whole nation.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"*Behold how good and how pleasant it is,*" etc. There are three things wherein it is very pleasant to behold the people of God joining in one.

1. When they join or are *one in opinion* and judgment, when they all think the same thing, and are of one mind in the truth.

2. When they join together and are *one in affection*, when they are all of one heart, though possibly they are not all of one mind; or, when they meet in affection, though not in opinion. When David had spoken admiringly of this goodly sight, he spoke declaratively concerning the goodness of it (verse 2): "*It is like the precious ointment upon the head.*" 'Tis so, first, for the sweetness of it; 'tis so, secondly for the diffusiveness of it (as followeth), "*that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.*"

3. It is a blessed thing to see them joining *together in duty*, either as duty is considered—First, *in doing that which is good;* or, when, as the apostle's word is (2 Cor. vi. 1), they are, among themselves, "workers together" in any good work: we say (to fill up the text), "workers together with God." That's a blessed sight indeed, when we join with God, and God joineth with us in his work. It is also a blessed sight when all the ministers of Jesus Christ, and many as members of Jesus Christ, join in any good work, in this especially, to beseech all we have to do with "that they receive not the grace of God in vain." Secondly, *in turning from evil*, and putting iniquity far from them; in praying for the pardon of sin, and making their peace with God. 'Tis a good work to turn away from evil, especially when all who are concerned in it join in it . . . . As to join in sin, and to be brethren in iniquity, is the worst of unions, indeed, a combination against God; so to join as brethren in mourning for sin and repenting of our iniquities is a blessed union, and highly pleasing to God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1.—"*How good and how pleasant it is,*" etc. The terms of this praise and commendation, or the particulars whereof it consists, is taken from a twofold qualification.

1. Brotherly concord and the improvement of it in all occasional expressions is a very great good. This is, and will appear to be so in sundry considerations.

As, *First*, in regard of the *Author* and *owner* of it, which is *God Himself*, who lays special claim hereunto. Therefore in Scripture we find him to be from hence denominated and intitled. 1 Cor. xiv. 33. "God is not the author of confusion (or of unquietness), but the author of peace. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. "The God of peace and love." Peace is called "the peace of God:" Phil. iv. 7. And God is called

the "God of peace;" each of which expressions does refer it and reduce it to him, and does thereby advance it. Look, then, how far forth God himself is said to be good, so far forth is this dwelling in unity good also, as it is commanded and owned by him, as it appears thus to be.

Secondly. It is good in the *nature* of it; it is good, as any grace is good. It is good morally. Love is a fruit of the Spirit: Gal. v. 22. And so to dwell in love and unity one with another is a goodness reducible thereunto. It is good spiritually; it is not only such a good as is taught by moral philosophy, and practised by the students thereof, but it is taught by the *Holy Ghost himself*, and is a part of the work of regeneration and of the new creature in us, especially if we take it in the full latitude and extent of it, as it becomes us to do.

Thirdly. It is good in the *effects* and *consequences* and *concomitants* of it: it has much good. It is *bonum utile*. A great deal of advantage comes by brethren's dwelling together in unity, especially *spiritual advantage*, and for the doing and receiving of good.

2. The second qualification is, the sweetness of it, because it is *"pleasant:"* it is not only *bonum utile*, and *bonum honestum*, but it is also *bonum jucundum;* it has a great deal of pleasure in it. Pleasure is such a kind of goodness, especially to some kind of persons, as that they care not almost what they do or part with to obtain it, and all other good besides is nothing to them, if it be devoid of this. Therefore for the further commendation of this fraternal unity to us, there is this also to be considered, that it is *"pleasant."* Thus it is with respect to all sorts of persons whatsoever, that are made sensible of it.

First. It is *pleasant to God*, it is such as is very acceptable to him; it is that which he much delights in, wheresoever he observes it; being himself a God of peace, he does therefore so much the more delight in peaceable Christians, and such as do relate to himself. How much do natural parents rejoice in the agreement of their children, to see them loving and friendly and kind and courteous to one another, oh, it pleases them and joys them at their very heart! and so it is likewise with God to those who are truly his.

Secondly. This brotherly unity is also *pleasant to ourselves*, who accordingly shall have so much the greater pleasure in it and from it.

Thirdly. It is also *pleasing to others*, indeed to all men else besides, that are standers-by and spectators of it. *"Behold, how pleasant it is,"* etc. It is pleasant to all beholders: "He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men," says the apostle: Rom. xiv. 18.—*Thomas Horton*,—1673.

Verse 1.—*"Pleasant."* It is a pleasant thing for the saints and people of God to agree together; for the same word which is used here for *"pleasant,"* is used also in the Hebrew for a harmony of music, such as when they rise to the highest strains of the viol, when the strings are all put in order to make up a harmony; so pleasant is it, such pleasantness is there in the saints' agreement. The same word is used also in the Hebrew for the pleasantness of a corn field. When a field is clothed with corn, though it be cut down, yet it is very pleasant, oh, how pleasant is it; and such is the saints' agreement. The same word in the Psalmist is used also for the sweetness of honey, and of sweet things in oppostion to bitter things. And thus you see the pleasantness of it, by its being compared to the harmony of music, to the corn field, to the sweetness of honey, to the precious ointment that ran down Aaron's beard, and to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion: and all this to discover the pleasantness, profitableness, and sweetness of the saints' agreement. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, but it is much more pleasant to behold the saints' agreement and unity among themselves.—*William Bridge.*

Verse 1.—*"Brethren."* Abraham made this name, *"brethren,"* a mediator to keep peace between Lot and him: "Are we not brethren?" saith Abraham. As if he should say, Shall brethren fall out for trifles, like infidels? This was enough to pacify Lot, for Abraham to put him in mind that they were brethren; when he heard the name of brethren, straight his heart yielded, and the strife was ended. So this should be the lawyer to end quarrels between Christians, to call to mind that they are brethren. And they which have spent all at law have wished that they had taken this lawyer, to think, with Lot, whether it were meet for brethren to strive like enemies.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 1.—*"Brethren."* Some critics observe that the Hebrew word for a *brother* is of near brotherhood or alliance with two other words, whereof the first signifies *one*, and the other *alike* or *together*, to show that *"brethren"* ought to be as *one*,

and *alike*, or *together;* which latter is by an elegant *paranomasia* joined with it: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for *brethren to dwell together in unity*," or, as we put it in the margin, *"to dwell even together."* So then, the very word whereby "*brethren*" are expressed notes that there ought to be a *nearness*, a *similitude*, yea, a *oneness* (if I may so speak) between them in their affections and actions.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1.—*To dwell* is a word of residence, and abode, and continuation. There is also pertaining to the love and concord of brethren a perseverance and persistency in it; not only to be together, or to come together, or to meet together for some certain time; but *to dwell* together in unity, this is which is here so extolled and commended unto us. It seems to be no such great matter, nor to carry any such great difficulty in it, for men to command themselves to some expresions of peace and friendship for some short space of time (though there are many now and then who are hardly able to do that); but to hold out in it, and to continue so long, this endurance is almost impossible to them. Yet this is that which is required of them as *Christians* and as *"brethren"* one to another, even to *"dwell together in unity;"* to follow peace, and love, and concord, and mutual agreement, not only upon some occasional meetings, but all along the whole course of their lives, whilst they converse and live together.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 1.—*"Together in unity."* If there be but one God, as God is one, so let them that serve him be one. This is what Christ prayed so heartily for. "That they may be one": John xvii. 21. Christians should be one, 1. *In judgment.* The apostle exhorts to be all of one mind. 1 Cor. i. 10. How sad is it to see religion wearing a coat of divers colours; to see Christians of so many opinions, and going so many different ways! It is Satan that has sown these tares of division. Matt. xiii. 39. He first divided men from God, and then one man from another. 2. One *in affection.* They should have one heart. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul": Acts iv. 32. As in music, though there be several strings of a viol, yet all make one sweet harmony; so, though there are several Christians, yet there should be one sweet harmony of affection among them. There is but one God, and they that serve him should be one. There is nothing that would render the true religion more lovely, or make more proselytes to it, than to see the professors of it tied together with the heart-strings of love. If God be one, let all that profess him be of one mind, and one heart, and thus fulfil Christ's prayer, "that they all may be one."—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—*"Precious ointment upon the head."* Though every priest was anointed, yet only the high priest was anointed on the *head*, and there is a tradition that this rite was omitted after the Captivity, so that there is a special stress on the name of Aaron.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 2.—*"The precious ointment . . . that ran down upon the beard . . . that went down to the skirts of his garments."* Magnificence, misnamed by churls extravagance and waste, is the invariable attribute of all true love. David recognised this truth when he selected the profuse anointing of Aaron with the oil of consecration at his installation into the office of High Priest as a fit emblem of brotherly love. There was waste in that anointing, too, as well as in the one which took place at Bethany. For the oil was not *sprinkled* on the head of Aaron, though that might have been sufficient for the purpose of a mere ceremony. The vessel was emptied on the High Priest's person, so that its contents flowed down from the head upon the beard, and even to the skirts of the sacerdotal robes. In that very waste lay the point of the resemblance for David. It was a feature that was very likely to strike his mind, for he, too, was a wasteful man in his way. He had loved God in a manner which exposed him to the charge of extravagance. He had danced before the Lord, for example, when the ark was brought up from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem, forgetful of his dignity, exceeding the bounds of decorum, and, as it might seem, without excuse, as a much less hearty demonstration would have served the purpose of a religious solemnity.—*Alexander Balmain Bruce, in "The Training of the Twelve,"* 1877.

Verse 2.—*"The precious ointment . . . that ran down."* Of the Hebrew perfumes an immense quantity was annually manufactured and consumed, of which we have a very significant indication in the fact that the holy anointing oil of the tabernacle and temple was never made in smaller quantities than 750 ounces of solids compounded with five quarts of oil, and was so profusely employed that when

applied to Aaron's head it flowed down over his beard and breast, to the very skirts of his garments.—*Hugh Macmillan, in "The Ministry of Nature,"* 1871.

Verse 2.—*"That ran down . . . . that went down,"* etc. Christ's grace is so diffusive of itself, that it conveys holiness to us, "running down from the head to the skirts," to all his members. He was not only anointed himself, but he is our anointer. Therefore it is called "the oil of gladness," because it rejoiceth our hearts, by giving us spiritual gladness, and peace of conscience.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 2.—*"Down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments."* Not the extremity of them, as our version inclines to; for not so great a quantity of oil was poured upon him; nor would it have been decent to have his clothes thus greased from top to bottom; but the upper part of his garment, the top of his coat, on which the beard lay, as Zarchi; the neck or collar of it, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; the hole in which the head went through when it was put on, about which there was a band, that it might not be rent: Exod. xxviii. 32, and xxxix. 23; where the Septuagint use the same word as here.—*John Gill.*

Verses 2, 3.—In this prayer and song of the unity of the church, it is noteworthy how, commencing with the fundamental idea of *"brethren,"* we rise to the realization of the Elder Brother, who is our common anointed High Priest. It is the bond of his priesthood which joins us together as brethren. It is the common anointing which flows down even to the skirts of the garment of our High Priest which marks our being brethren. Whether we dwell north or south, meeting in Zion, and sharing in the blessings of that eternal Priesthood of Christ, we form in reality, and before our Father, but one family—"the whole family in earth and heaven." Our real bond of union consists in the "flowing down," the "running down," or "descending" of the common blessing, which marks the steps in this Psalm of Degrees (verses 2, 3). And if "the dew of Hermon" has descended upon "the mountains of Zion," long after the sun has risen shall gladsome fruit appear—in some twenty, in some thirty, and in some a hundredfold.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 3.—*"As the dew of Hermon,"* etc. "What we read in the 133rd Psalm of the dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion," says Van de Velde in his "Travels" (Bd. i. S. 97), "is now become quite clear to me. Here as I sat at the foot of Hermon, I understood how the water-drops which rose from its forest-mantled heights, and out of the highest ravines, which are filled the whole year round with snow, after the sun's rays have attenuated them and moistened the atmosphere with them, descend at evening-time as a heavy dew upon the lower mountains which lie round about as its spurs. One sought to have seen Hermon with its white-golden crown glistening aloft in the blue sky, in order to be able rightly to understand the figure. Nowhere in the whole country is so heavy a dew perceptible as in the districts near to Hermon." To this dew the poet likens brotherly love. This is *"as the dew of Hermon":* of such pristine freshness and thus refreshing, possessing such pristine power and thus quickening, thus born from above (cx. 3), and in fact like the dew of Hermon which comes down upon the mountains of Zion—a feature in the picture which is taken from the natural reality; for an abundant dew, when warm days have preceded, might very well be diverted to Jerusalem by the operation of the cold current of air sweeping down from the north over Hermon. We know, indeed, from our own experience how far off a cold air coming from the Alps is perceptible, and produces its effects. The figure of the poet is therefore as true to nature as it is beautiful. When brethren bound together in love also meet together in one place, and, in fact, when brethren of the north unite with brethren in the south in Jerusalem, the city which is the mother of all, at the great Feasts, it is as when the dew of Mount Hermon, which is covered with deep, almost eternal snow, descends upon the bare, unfruitful—and therefore longing for such quickening—mountains round about Zion. In Jerusalem must love and all that is good meet.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 3.—*"As the dew of Hermon,"* etc. As touching this similitude, I think the prophet useth the common manner of speaking. For whereas the mountains oftentimes seem to those that behold them afar off, to reach up even unto heaven, the dew which cometh from heaven seemeth to fall from the high mountains unto the hills which are under them. Therefore he saith that the dew descendeth from Hermon unto the mount Sion, because it so seemeth unto those that do behold it afar off.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3.—*"As the dew of Hermon."* The dews of the mists that rose from the

watery ravines, or of the clouds that rested on the summit of Hermon, were perpetual witnesses of freshness and coolness—the sources, as it seemed, of all the moisture, which was to the land of Palestine what the fragrant oil was to the garments of the High Priest; what the influence of brotherly love was to the whole community.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley* (1815–1881), *in "Sinai and Palestine."*

Verse 3.—*"Dew of Hermon."* We had sensibly proof at Rasheiya of the copiousness of the *"dew of Hermon,"* spoken of in Ps. cxxxiii. 3, where "Zion" is only another name for the same mountain. Unlike most other mountains which gradually rise from lofty table-lands and often at a distance from the sea, Hermon starts at once to the height of nearly ten thousand feet, from a platform scarcely above the sea level. This platform, too—the upper Jordan valley, and marshes of Merom—is for the most part an impenetrable swamp of unknown depth, whence the seething vapour, under the rays of an almost tropical sun, is constantly ascending into the upper atmosphere during the day. The vapour, coming in contact with the snowy sides of the mountain, is rapidly congealed, and is precipitated in the evening in the form of a dew, the most copious we ever experienced. It penetrated everywhere, and saturated everything. The floor of our tent was soaked, our bed was covered with it, our guns were dripping, and dewdrops hung about everywhere. No wonder that the foot of Hermon is clad with orchards and gardens of such marvellous fertility in this land of droughts.—*Henry Baker Tristram*, 1867.

Verse 3.—*"As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountain of Zion."*—

So the dews on Hermon's hill
Which the summer clouds distil,
Floating southward in the night,
Pearly gems on Zion light.

William Digby Seymour.

Verse 3.—*"There the* LORD *commanded the blessing."* God commands his blessing where peace is cultivated; by which is meant, that he testifies how much he is pleased with concord amongst men, by showering down blessings upon them. The same sentiment is expressed by Paul in other words, (2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. iv. 9) "Live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you."—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—*"The* LORD *commanded the blessing."* By a bare word of command he blesseth: *"there he commands the blessing,"* that blessing of blessings, *"even life for evermore";* like as it is said, "he commanded, and they were created": Ps. cxlviii. 5. So he commands and we are blessed."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 3.—*"The* LORD *commanded the blessing."* It is an allusion possibly to great persons, to a general, or an emperor: "Where the word of a king is, there is power." The centurion said, "I say to one soldier, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; to a third, Do this, and he doth it." So God commandeth one ordinance, "Go and build up such a saint," and it goeth; he saith to another ordinance, "Come, and call home such a sinner," and it doth it; God's words and work go together. Men cannot enable others, or give them power to obey them; they may bid a lame man walk, or a blind man see; but they cannot enable them to walk or see: God with his word giveth strength to do the thing commanded; as in the old, so in the new creation, "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast:" Ps. xxxiii. 9. But there the Lord commands his blessing, *"even life for evermore."* The stream of regeneration, or a spiritual life, which shall never cease, but still go forward and increase, till it swell to, and be swallowed up in the ocean of eternal life, *"even life for evermore."—George Swinnock.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Christian unity. I. Its admirable excellences. II. The signs of its existence. III. The causes of its decay. IV. The means of its renewal.

Verse 1.—The saints are here contemplated, I. In their brotherhood. II. In their concord. III. In their felicity.—*W. J.*

Verses 1—3.—Six blessings which dwell with unity. 1. Goodness. 2. Pleasure. 3. Anointing. 4. Dew. 5. God's blessing. 6. Eternal life.

Verses 1—3.—I. The contemplation: brethren dwelling together in unity. 1. In a family. 2. In a Christian church. 3. Brethren of the same denomination. 4. Of different denominations. II. Its commendation. 1. Literally: "good and pleasant." 2. Figuratively: fragrant as the priestly anointing; fruitful as the dew on Hermon. 3. Spiritually, it has a blessing from God, that gives life, and continues for evermore!—*G. R.*

Verses 1—3.—On Christians dwelling together in unity as a church. 1. *Its propriety*, on account of fraternal relationship: *"For brethren."* The Christian brotherhood is so unique, sacred and lasting, that a lack of unity is a disgrace. They are brethren, 1. Because born of God, who is "the God of peace." Their claim to the brotherhood is dependent upon likeness to Him: Matt. v. 9. 2. Because united to Christ, who as elder brother desires unity: John xvii. 20, 21. Not to seek it is virtually to disown Him. 3. Because "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 13), wherein unity must be kept: Eph. iv. 3. 4. Because destined to "dwell together in unity," for ever in heaven; therefore we should aim at it here. II. *Its peculiar excellency:* both "good and pleasant." 1. Good, in respect of church work and influence; of mutual edification and growth in grace (2 Cor. xiii. 11); of the success of prayer (Mat. xviii. 19); of recommending the gospel to others. 2. Pleasant, as productive of happiness: as pleasing to God. III. *Its promotion* and maintenance. 1. Seeking the glory of God unites; in opposition to self-honour which divides. 2. Love to Christ as a constraining power unites each to the other as it binds all closely to Christ. 3. Activity in ministering to others, rather than desiring to be ministered unto, binds heart to heart.—*J. F.*

Verse 2.—There must have been special reasons why a priestly anointing should be selected for the comparison, and why that of Aaron, rather than of any other of the high priests. They are these—I. *The ointment was "holy,"* prepared in accordance with the Divine prescription: Ex. xxx. 23—25. Church union is sacred. It must spring from the love commanded by God; be based on the principles laid down by God; and exist for the ends appointed of God. II. *The anointing was from God through Moses*, who acted on behalf of God in the matter. Church unity is of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xiii. 13), through Jesus as Mediator. Therefore it should be prayed for, and thankfully acknowledged. III. *By the anointing, Aaron became consecrated*, and officially qualified to act as priest. By unity the Church, as a whole, lives its life of consecration, and effectively ministers in the priesthood assigned it. IV. *The oil was diffusive;* it rested not on Aaron's head, but flowed down to the skirts of his garments. Unity will, in time, make its way from a few to the whole, especially from the leaders in a church to the rest of its members. Hence, it is a personal matter. Each should realize it, and by love and wise conduct diffuse it.—*J. F.*

Verses 2, 3.—Christian love scatters blessing by the way of down-coming: "ran down," "went down," "descended." I. God to his saints. II. Saint to saint. III. Saint to sinner.

Verse 3.—The chosen place for blessing. A church; a church united, a church bedewed of the Spirit. What a blessing for the world that there is a commanded place of blessing!

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—This should be rendered, "As the dew of Hermon, that cometh down on the mountains of Zion." From the snows upon the lofty Hermon, the moisture raised by the sun is carried in the form of vapour, by the wind towards the lesser elevations of Zion, upon which it falls as a copious dew. Thus, Christian concord in church-fellowship—I. Despises not the little ones, *i.e.* the mean, poor, and less gifted. It, 1. Recognises that God is the Father, and Christ is the Redeemer of all believers alike. 2. Acknowledges oneness of faith as the true basis of fellowship; not wealth, social position or talent. 3. Believes that the least member is essential to the completeness of Christ's body. 4. Realises that everything which renders

one in any way superior to another is the gift of God. II. Distributes of its abundance to the needy: Acts iv. 32—37. 1. The wealthy to the poor: 1 John iii. 17. 2. The learned to the ignorant. 3. The joyful to the sorrowing. 4. The steadfast to the erring: Jas. v. 19. III. Displays its value more by loving generosity, than by a conspicuous appearance before the world. As Hermon was more valuable to Zion for its dew than for its adornment of the landscape. 1. A generous activity exhibits and requires more real grace than showy architecture or ornate worship does. 2. Through it, godliness flourishes more than by a vaunted respectability. Zion was fertilized by the dew, not by the grandeur of Hermon. 3. By it the heart of Christ is touched and his reward secured: Mark ix. 40, 42.—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—*Commanded Mercy.* Elsewhere goodness is bestowed, but in Zion it is commanded. I. Commanded mercy implies that it must necessarily be given. II. Commanded mercy attends commanded unity. III. Commanded mercy secures life more abundantly, "life for evermore."—*W. B. H.*

PSALM CXXXIV.

TITLE.—**A Song of Degrees.** *We have now reached the last of the Gradual Psalms. The Pilgrims are going home, and are singing the last song in their Psalter. They leave early in the morning, before the day has fully commenced, for the journey is long for many of them. While yet the night lingers they are on the move. As soon as they are outside the gates they see the guards upon the temple wall, and the lamps shining from the windows of the chambers which surround the sanctuary; therefore, moved by the sight, they chant a farewell to the perpetual attendants upon the holy shrine. Their parting exhortation arouses the priests to pronounce upon them a blessing out of the holy place: this benediction is contained in the third verse. The priests as good as say, "You have desired us to bless the Lord, and now we pray the Lord to bless you."*

The Psalm teaches us to pray for those who are continually ministering before the Lord, and it invites all ministers to pronounce benedictions upon their loving and prayerful people.

EXPOSITION.

BEHOLD, bless ye the LORD, all *ye* servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

2 Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

3 The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.

1. *"Behold."* By this call the pilgrims bespeak the attention of the night-watch. They shout to them—Behold! The retiring pilgrims stir up the holy brotherhood of those who are appointed to keep the watch of the house of the Lord. Let them look around them upon the holy place, and everywhere "behold" reasons for sacred praise. Let them look above them at night and magnify him that made heaven and earth, and lighted the one with stars and the other with his love. Let them see to it that their hallelujahs never come to an end. Their departing brethren arouse them with the shrill cry of "Behold!" Behold!—see, take care, be on the watch, diligently mind your work, and incessantly adore and bless Jehovah's name.

"Bless ye the LORD." Think well of Jehovah, and speak well of him. Adore him with reverence, draw near to him with love, delight in him with exultation. Be not content with praise, such as all his works render to him; but, as his saints, see that ye "bless" him. He blesses you; therefore, be zealous to bless him. The word "bless" is the characteristic word of the Psalm. The first two verses stir us up to bless Jehovah, and in the last verse Jehovah's blessing is invoked upon the people. Oh to abound in blessing! May *blessed* and *blessing* be the two words which describe our lives. Let others flatter their fellows, or bless their stars, or praise themselves; as for us, we will bless Jehovah, from whom all blessings flow.

"All ye servants of the LORD." It is your office to bless him; take care that you lead the way therein. Servants should speak well of their masters. Not one of you should serve him as of compulsion, but all should bless him while you serve him; yea, bless him for permitting you to serve him, fitting you to serve him, and accepting your service. To be a servant of Jehovah is an incalculable honour, a blessing beyond all estimate. To be a servant in his temple, a domestic in his house, is even more a delight and a glory: if those who are ever with the Lord, and dwell in his own temple, do not bless the Lord, who will? *"Which by night stand in the house of the LORD."* We can well understand how the holy pilgrims half envied those consecrated ones who guarded the temple, and attended to the necessary offices thereof through the hours of night. To the silence and solemnity of night there was added the awful glory of the place where Jehovah had ordained that his worship should be celebrated; blessed were the priests and Levites who were ordained to a service so sublime. That these should bless the Lord throughout

their nightly vigils was most fitting: the people would have them mark this, and never fail in the duty. They were not to move about like so many machines, but to put their hearts into all their duties, and worship spiritually in the whole course of their duty. It would be well to watch, but better still to be "watching unto prayer" and praise.

When night settles down on a church the Lord has his watchers and holy ones still guarding his truth, and these must not be discouraged, but must bless the Lord even when the darkest hours draw on. Be it ours to cheer them, and lay upon them this charge—to bless the Lord at all times, and let his praise be continually in their mouths.

2. *"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary."* In the holy place they must be busy, full of strength, wide-awake, energetic, and moved with holy ardour. Hands, heart, and every other part of their manhood must be upraised, elevated, and consecrated to the adoring service of the Lord. As the angels praise God day without night, so must the angels of the churches be instant in season and out of season. *"And bless the* LORD." This is their main business. They are to bless men by their teaching, but they must yet more bless Jehovah with their worship. Too often men look at public worship only from the side of its usefulness to the people; but the other matter is of even higher importance: we must see to it that the Lord God is adored, extolled, and had in reverence. For a second time the word "bless" is used, and applied to Jehovah. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let every other soul bless him. There will be no drowsiness about even midnight devotion if the heart is set upon blessing God in Christ Jesus, which is the gospel translation of God in the sanctuary.

3. This last verse is the answer from the temple of the pilgrims preparing to depart as the day breaks. It is the ancient blessing of the high-priest condensed, and poured forth upon each individual pilgrim. *"The* LORD *that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion."* Ye are scattering and going to your homes one by one; may the benediction come upon you one by one. You have been up to Jehovah's city and temple at his bidding; return each one with such a benediction as only he can give—divine, infinite, effectual, eternal. You are not going away from Jehovah's works or glories, for he made the heaven above you and the earth on which you dwell. He is your Creator, and he can bless you with untold mercies; he can create joy and peace in your hearts, and make for you a new heaven and a new earth. May the Maker of all things make you to abound in blessings.

The benediction comes from the City of the Great King, from his appointed ministers, by virtue of his covenant, and so it is said to be "out of Zion." To this day the Lord blesses each one of his people through his church, his gospel, and the ordinances of his house. It is in communion with the saints that we receive untold benisons. May each one of us obtain yet more of the blessing which cometh from the Lord alone. Zion cannot bless us; the holiest ministers can only wish us a blessing; but Jehovah can and will bless each one of his waiting people. So may it be at this good hour. Do we desire it? Let us then bless the Lord ourselves. Let us do it a second time. Then we may confidently hope that the third time we think of blessing we shall find ourselves conscious receivers of it from the Ever-blessed One. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—It is a beautiful little ode, equally full of sublimity and simplicity. It is commonly supposed to be the work of David. With what admiration should we contemplate the man whose zeal in the cause of religion thus urged him to embrace every opportunity that could occur to him, among the lowest as well as the highest ranks of life, of promoting the praise and glory of his Creator; now composing penitential hymns for his own closet; now leading the temple service in national eulogies of the sublimest pitch to which human language can reach; and now descending to the class of the watchman and patrol of the temple and the city, and tuning their lips to a reverential utterance of the name and the

service of God!—*John Mason Good* (1764—1827), *in "An Historical Outline of the Book of Psalms."*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm consists of a greeting, verses 1, 2, and the reply thereto. The greeting is addressed to those priests and Levites who have the night-watch in the Temple; and this antiphon is purposely placed at the end of the collection of Songs of Degrees in order to take the place of a final beracha.* In this sense Luther styles the Psalm *epiphonema superiorum.*† It is also in other respects an appropriate finale.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—The last cloud of smoke from the evening sacrifice has mixed with the blue sky, the last note of the evening hymn has died away on the ear. The watch is being set for the night. The twenty-four Levites, the three priests, and the captain of the guard, whose duty it was to keep ward from sunset to sunrise over the hallowed precincts, are already at their several posts, and the multitude are retiring through the gates, which will soon be shut, to many of them to open no more. But they cannot depart without one last expression of the piety that fills their hearts; and turning to the watchers on tower and battlement, they address them in holy song, in what was at once a brotherly admonition and a touching prayer: *"Behold, bless ye the* LORD, *all ye servants of the* LORD, *which by night stand in the house of the* LORD. *Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the* LORD." The pious guard are not unprepared for the appeal, and from their lofty heights, in words that float over the peopled city and down into the quiet valley of the Kedron, like the melody of angels, they respond to each worshipper who thus addressed them with a benedictory farewell: *"The* LORD *bless thee out of Zion, even he who made heaven and earth."—Robert Nisbet.*

Whole Psalm.—The tabernacle and temple were served by priests during the *night* as well as the day. Those priests renewed the altar fire, fed the lamps, and guarded the sacred structure from intrusion and from plunder. The Psalm before us was prepared for the priests who served the sacred place by night. They were in danger of slumbering; and they were in danger of idle reverie. Oh, how much time is wasted in mere reverie—in letting thought wander, and wander, and wander! The priests were in danger, we say, of slumbering, of idle reverie, of vain thoughts, of useless meditation, and of profitless talk; and therefore it is written,—*"Behold, bless ye the* LORD, *all ye servants of the* LORD, *which by night stand in the house of the* LORD." Is it your duty to spend the night in watching? then spend the night in worship. Do not let the time of watching be idle, wasted time; but when others are slumbering and sleeping, and you are necessarily watchful, sustain the praises of God's house; let there be praise in Zion—still praise by night as well as by day! *"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the* LORD."

We may suppose these words to be addressed to the sacred sentinels, by the head of their course, or by the captain of the guard, or even by the high priest. We can imagine the captain of the guard coming in during the night watches, and saying to the priests who were guarding the temple, *"Behold, bless ye the* LORD, *all ye servants of the* LORD, *which by night stand in the house of the* LORD." Or we could imagine the high priests, when the watch was set for the first part of the night, going to the priests who were under his control, and addressing to them these same soul-stirring words. Now our text is the response of these sacred sentinels. As they listened to the captain of the guard, or to the high priest, telling them to worship by night in the courts of the Lord—to lift up their hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord—they answered him, *"The* LORD *that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion."* So that here you have brought before you the interesting and instructive subject of mutual benediction—the saints blessing each other.—*Samuel Martin*, 1817—1878.

Verse 1.—The Targum explains the first verse of the Temple watch. "The custom in the Second Temple appears to have been this. After midnight the chief of the door-keepers took the key of the inner Temple, and went with some of the priests through the small postern of the Fire Gate. In the inner court this watch divided itself into two companies, each carrying a burning torch; one company turned west, the other east, and so they compassed the court to see whether all

* Blessing.

† "I take this Psalm to be a conclusion of those things which were spoken of before."—*Luther.*

were in readiness for the Temple service on the following morning. In the bake-house, where the *Mincha* (' meat-offering ') of the High Priest was baked, they met with the cry, ' All well.' Meanwhile the rest of the priests arose, bathed themselves, and put on their garments. They then went into the stone chamber (one half of which was the hall of session of the Sanhedrim), and there, under the superintendence of the officer who gave the watchword, and one of the Sanhedrim, surrounded by the priests clad in their robes of office, their several duties for the coming day were assigned to each of the priests by lot. Luke i. 9."—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 1.—"*Behold.*" The Psalm begins with the demonstrative adverb *Behold!* setting the matter of their duty before their eyes, for they were to be stimulated to devotion by looking constantly to the Temple. We are to notice the Psalmist's design in urging the duty of praise so earnestly upon them. Many of the Levites, through the tendency which there is in all men to abuse ceremonies, considered that nothing more was necessary than standing idly in the Temple, and thus overlooked the principal part of their duty. The Psalmist would show that merely to keep nightly watch over the Temple, kindle the lamps, and superintend the sacrifices, was of no importance, unless they served God spiritually, and referred all outward ceremonies to that which must be considered the main sacrifice—the celebration of God's praises. You may think it a very laborious service, as if he had said, to stand at watch in the Temple, while others sleep in their own houses; but the worship which God requires is something more excellent than this, and demands of you to sing his praises before all the people.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"*Behold.*" The first word in this verse, "*Behold,*" seemeth to point at the reasons which the priests in the Temple had to bless Jehovah; as if it had been said, Behold, the house of God is built, the holy services are appointed, and the Lord hath given you rest from your enemies, that you may serve him acceptably; set about it, therefore, with gratitude and alacrity. We read (1 Chron. ix. 33) that the Levitical singers were " employed in their work day and night "; to the end, doubtless, that the earthly sanctuary might bear some resemblance to that above, where St. John tells us, the redeemed " are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple ": Rev. vii. 15.—*George Horne.*

Verse 1.—"*Behold, bless ye the* LORD, *all ye servants of the* LORD." From the exhortation to the Lord's ministers, learn, that the public worship of God is to be carefully looked unto; and all men, but especially ministers, had need to be stirred up to take heed to themselves, and to the work of God's public worship, when they go about it; for so much doth "*behold*" in this place import.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*By night.*" Even by night the Lord is to be remembered, and his praises are to be rehearsed.—*Martin Geier,* 1614—1681.

Verse 1.—"*Stand in the house of the* LORD." The Rabbins say, that the high priest only sat in the sanctuary (as did Eli, 1 Sam. i. 9); the rest stood, as ready pressed to do their office.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*Which stand in the house of the* LORD." You who have now a permanent house, and no longer, like pilgrims, have to dwell in tents.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 1.—"*Which stand in the house of the* LORD." Let not this your frequent being in his presence breed in you contempt; as the saying is, " Too much familiarity breedeth contempt;" but bless him always, acknowledge, and with reverence praise his excelllency.—*John Mayer,* 1653.

Verse 2.—"*Lift up your hands,*" etc. The lifting up of the hands was a gesture in prayer, it was an intimation of their expectation of receiving blessings from the Lord, and it was also an acknowledgment of their having received the same.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 2.—"*In the sanctuary.*" The Hebrew word signifying *holiness* as well as the *holy place* may here be taken in the former sense, the latter having been sufficiently expressed (verse 1) by "the house of the Lord" . . . . The priests (which are here spoken to) before their officiating, which is here expressed by *lifting up* their *hands,* were obliged to wash their hands.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 3.—"*The* LORD *that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.*" He doth not say, the Lord that made the earth bless thee out of heaven; nor, the Lord that made heaven bless thee out of heaven; but "*bless thee out of Zion.*" As

if he would teach us that all blessings come as immediately and primarily from heaven, so mediately and secondarily from *Zion*, where the Temple stood. If ever, therefore, we would have blessings outward, inward, private, public, secular, spiritual; if ever we would have blessing in our estate, blessing in our land, blessing in our souls, we must pray for it, and pray for it here, in *Zion*, in God's house: for from the piety there exercised all blessings flow, as from a fountain that can never be drawn dry.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 3.—"*The* LORD *that made heaven and earth*," etc. The priestly benediction brings God before us in a twofold character. He is described first as the Creator of the universe. He is described, in the second place, as dwelling "in Zion." In the first aspect, he is represented as the God of nature; in the second, as the God of grace. When I contemplate him as the Creator of the universe, there is abundant proof that he *can* bless me. When I contemplate him as dwelling in the Church, there is abundant proof that he *will* bless me. Both of these elements are essential to our faith.—*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 3.—"*The* LORD *that made heaven and earth*," etc. As the priests were called upon to bless God in behalf of the people, so here they bless the people in behalf of God. Between the verses we may suppose the previous request to be complied with. The priests, having blessed God, turn and bless the people. The obvious allusion to the sacerdotal blessing (Num. vi. 23—27), favours the optative construction of this verse, which really includes a prediction—the Lord will bless thee. —*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 3.—"*The* LORD *bless thee.*" All men lie under the curse, till God brings them into the fellowship of his church, and pronounce them blessed by his word, as "*The* LORD *bless thee*" doth import.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*The* LORD *bless thee out of Zion.*" The Church is the conservator of Divine revelation; the Church is the offerer on earth of true worship; it consists of a company of priests, a royal priesthood, part of whose mission is "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The Church is the heritor of the covenants. God's covenants are made with his Church, and his promises are addressed chiefly to his Church. The Church is the scene of special Divine ministrations, God shows himself to his Church as he does not to that which is called the world. It is also the scene of special heavenly influences: and in a sense next to that in which God is said to reside in heaven, the Church is the dwelling-place of the Most High. Now, what is it to be *blessed out of Zion?* It is surely to be blessed with Zion's blessings, and to have Zion's endowments and gifts rendered sources of advantage and profit to us.—*Samuel Martin.*

Verse 3.—"*Bless thee.*" The singular instead of the plural "bless *you*," because the words are taken from the form used by the High Priest in blessing the people. Num. vi. 24.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"*Bless thee.*" It is addressed to the church as one person, and to each individual in this united, unit-like church.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—There are two things in this Psalm. I. Our blessing God: verses 1, 2. 1. How? By gratitude, by love, by obedience, by prayer, by praise. 2. Where? "In the house of the Lord," "in the sanctuary." 3. When? Not in the day merely, but at night. Some of old spent the whole night, others part of the night, in the temple, praising God. As Christ spent whole nights in prayer for his people, they should not think it too much occasionally to spend whole nights in praise of him. Evening services should not be neglected on the Sabbath, nor on other days of the week.

II. God blessing us: verse 3. 1. The persons blessed: "bless thee"—every one who blesses him. 2. The condition: "out of Zion." In the fulfilment of religious duties, not in the neglect of them. 3. The blessing itself: of the Lord. They are blessed whom he blesses.—*G. R.*

Whole Psalm.—I. God—Jehovah—the fountain of blessing. II. The heavens

and the earth, evidence of divine capacity to bless. III. The church, a channel of blessing. IV. The saints, the means of spreading blessing, through the spirit of blessing. V. The riches involved in the divine benediction.—*Samuel Martin.*

Whole Psalm.—I. Unique service: temple watching, night-sentinelship. II. Sublime society: the awful things of the sanctuary. III. Holy uplifting: hands, hearts, eyes. IV. Praise in the darkness heard far up in the light. V. Response from the stars fulfilling the prayer: "The Creator Lord bless *thee.*"—*W. B. H.*

Verse 1.—I. Night settles on the holy place: dark periods of church story. II. But God has his guards: Wycliffe and his band watching for the Reformation; Waldenses, etc. Never a night so dark but God is praised and served. III. Be it night or day, let the Levites fulfil their courses.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 1.—The Lord's servants exhorted to be, 1. Devout and joyful in their service. Sing at your work, though it be in the dark. 2. Zealous to employ every season of service aright. "By night," as by day, "bless the Lord." 3. Careful to avoid all hindrances to devotion in their service. When tempted to indolence and drowsiness, say—

> "Wake, and lift up thyself, my heart,
> And with the angels bear thy part,
> Who all night long, unwearied, sing
> High praise to the Eternal King."

W. H. J. P.

Verse 1.—Directions for worship. I. It should be with great care: "Behold." II. With grateful joy: "Bless ye the Lord." III. Unanimously: "all ye." IV. With holy reverence, as by "servants of the Lord." V. With unflagging constancy: "stand by night."

Verse 1.—"Ye that stand by night." The night-watchman of the Lord's house, their value, their obscurity, their danger-slumber, their consolation, their dignity, their reward.

Verse 2.—Ingredients of worship. I. Uplifted hands. Energy, courage, prayer, aspiration. II. Uplifted hearts. Thank, praise, adore, and love the Lord.

Verse 3.—The Divine Benediction. I. From the Creator: ample, new, varied, boundless, enduring—all illustrated by his making heaven and earth. II. From the Redeemer: blessings most needful, rich, effectual, abiding,—all illustrated and guaranteed by his dwelling among men, purchasing a church, building an abode, revealing his glory, reigning on his throne

PSALM CXXXV.

GENERAL REMARKS.—*This Psalm has no title. It is mainly made up of selections from other Scriptures. It has been called a mosaic, and compared to a tessellated pavement. At the outset, its first two verses are taken from Ps. cxxxiv; while the latter part of verse* 2 *and the commencement of verse* 3 *put us in mind of Ps. cxvi.* 19; *and verse* 4 *suggests Deut. vii.* 6. *Does not verse* 5 *remind us of Ps. xcv.* 3? *As for verse* 7, *it is almost identical with Jer. x.* 13, *which may have been taken from it. The passage contained in verse* 13 *is to be found in Ex. iii.* 15, *and verse* 14 *in Deut. xxxii.* 36. *The closing verses,* 8 *to* 12, *are in Ps. cxxxvi. From verse* 15 *to the end the strain is a repetition of Ps. cxv. This process of tracing the expressions to other sources might be pushed further without straining the quotations; the whole Psalm is a compound of many choice extracts, and yet it has all the continuity and freshness of an original poem. The Holy Spirit occasionally repeats himself; not because he has any lack of thoughts or words, but because it is expedient for us that we hear the same things in the same form. Yet, when our great Teacher uses repetition, it is usually with instructive variations, which deserve our careful attention.*

DIVISION.—*The first fourteen verses contain an exhortation to praise Jehovah for his goodness (verse* 3), *for his electing love (verse* 4), *his greatness* (5—7), *his judgments* (8—12), *his unchanging character* (13), *and his love towards his people. This is followed by a denunciation of idols (verses* 15 *to* 18), *and a further exhortation to bless the name of the Lord. It is a song full of life, vigour, variety, and devotion.*

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD.

2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God,

3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD *is* good: sing praises unto his name; for *it is* pleasant.

4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, *and* Israel for his peculiar treasure.

5 For I know that the LORD *is* great, and *that* our Lord *is* above all gods.

6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.

8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.

9 *Who* sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.

10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;

11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan;

12 And gave their land *for* an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people.

13 Thy name, O LORD, *endureth* for ever; *and* thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.

14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

1. "*Praise ye the* LORD," or, *Hallelujah.* Let those who are themselves full of holy praise labour to excite the like spirit in others. It is not enough for us

to praise God ourselves, we are quite unequal to such a work; let us call in all our friends and neighbours, and if they have been slack in such service, let us stir them up to it with loving exhortations. "*Praise ye the name of the* LORD." Let his character be extolled by you, and let all that he has revealed concerning himself be the subject of your song; for this is truly his *name*. Specially let his holy and incommunicable name of "Jehovah" be the object of your adoration. By that name he sets forth his self-existence, and his immutability; let these arouse your praises of his Godhead. Think of him with love, admire him with heartiness, and then extol him with ardour. Do not only magnify the Lord because he is God; but study his character and his doings, and thus render intelligent, appreciative praise. "*Praise him, O ye servants of the* LORD." If others are silent, you must not be; you must be the first to celebrate his praises. You are "servants," and this is part of your service; his "name" is named upon you, therefore celebrate his name with praises; you know what a blessed Master he is, therefore speak well of him. Those who shun his service are sure to neglect his praise; but as grace has made you his own personal servants, let your hearts make you his court-musicians. Here we see the servant of the Lord arousing his fellow-servants by three times calling upon them to praise. Are we then, so slow in such a sweet employ? Or is it that when we do our utmost it is all too little for such a Lord? Both are true. We do not praise enough; we cannot praise too much. We ought to be always at it; answering to the command here given—Praise, Praise, Praise. Let the three-in-one have the praises of our spirit, soul, and body. For the past, the present, and the future, let us render three-fold hallelujahs.

2. "*Ye that stand in the house of the* LORD, *in the courts of the house of our God.*" You are highly favoured; you are the domestics of the palace, nearest to the Father of the heavenly family, privileged to find your home in his house; therefore you must, beyond all others, abound in thanksgiving. You "stand," or abide in the temple; you are constant occupants of its various courts; and therefore from you we expect unceasing praise. Should not ministers be celebrated for celebrating the praises of Jehovah? Should not church-officers and church-members excel all others in the excellent duty of adoration? Should not all of every degree who wait even in his outer courts unite in his worship? Ought not the least and feeblest of his people to proclaim his praises, in company with those who live nearest to him? Is it not a proper thing to remind them of their obligations? Is not the Psalmist wise when he does so in this case and in many others? Those who can call Jehovah "*our* God" are highly blessed, and therefore should abound in the work of blessing him. Perhaps this is the sweetest word in these two verses. "This God is our God for ever and ever." "Our God" signifies possession, communion in possession, assurance of possession, delight in possession. Oh the unutterable joy of calling God our own!

3. "*Praise the* LORD." Do it again; continue to do it; do it better and more heartily; do it in growing numbers; do it at once. There are good reasons for praising the Lord, and among the first is this—"*for the* LORD *is good.*" He is so good that there is none good in the same sense or degree. He is so good that all good is found in him, flows from him, and is rewarded by him. The word God is brief for good; and truly God is the essence of goodness. Should not his goodness be well spoken of? Yea, with our best thoughts, and words, and hymns let us glorify his name. "*Sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.*" The adjective may apply to the singing and to the name—they are both pleasant. The vocal expression of praise by sacred song is one of our greatest delights. We were created for this purpose, and hence it is a joy to us. It is a charming duty to praise the lovely name of our God. All pleasure is to be found in the joyful worship of Jehovah; all joys are in his sacred name as perfumes lie slumbering in a garden of flowers. The mind expands, the soul is lifted up, the heart warms, the whole being is filled with delight when we are engaged in singing the high praises of our Father, Redeemer, Comforter. When in any occupation goodness and pleasure unite, we do well to follow it up without stint: yet it is to be feared that few of us sing to the Lord at all in proportion as we talk to men.

4. "*For the* LORD *hath chosen Jacob unto himself.*" Jehovah hath chosen Jacob. Should not the sons of Jacob praise him who has so singularly favoured them? Election is one of the most forcible arguments for adoring love. Chosen! chosen unto himself!—who can be grateful enough for being concerned in this privilege? "Jacob have I loved," said Jehovah, and he gave no reason for his love except that

he chose to love. Jacob had then done neither good nor evil, yet thus the Lord determined, and thus he spake. If it be said that the choice was made upon foresight of Jacob's character, it is, perhaps, even more remarkable; for there was little enough about Jacob that could deserve special choice. By nature Jacob was by no means the most lovable of men. No, it was sovereign grace which dictated the choice. But, mark, it was not a choice whose main result was the personal welfare of Jacob's seed: the nation was chosen by God *unto himself*, to answer the divine ends and purposes in blessing all mankind. Jacob's race was chosen to be the Lord's own, to be the trustees of his truth, the maintainers of his worship, the mirrors of his mercy. Chosen they were; but mainly for this end, that they might be a peculiar people, set apart unto the service of the true God.

"*And Israel for his peculiar treasure.*" God's choice exalts; for here the name is changed from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, the prince. The love of God gives a new name and imparts a new value; for the comparison to a royal treasure is a most honourable one. As kings have a special regalia, and a selection of the rarest jewels, so the Lord deigns to reckon his chosen nation as his wealth, his delight, his glory. What an honour to the spiritual Israel that they are all this to the Lord their God! We are a people near and dear unto him; precious and honourable in his sight. How can we refuse our loudest, heartiest, sweetest music? If *we* did not extol him, the stones in the street would cry out against us.

5. "*For I know that the* LORD *is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.*" The greatness of God is as much a reason for adoration as his goodness, when we are once reconciled to him. God is great positively, great comparatively, and great superlatively—"above all gods." Of this the Psalmist had an assured personal persuasion. He says positively, "I know." It is knowledge worth possessing. He knew by observation, inspiration, and realization; he was no agnostic, he was certain and clear upon the matter. He not only knows the greatness of Jehovah, but that as the Adonai, or Ruler, "our Lord" is infinitely superior to all the imaginary deities of the heathen, and to all great ones besides.

> "Let princes hear, let angels know,
> How mean their natures seem;
> Those gods on high, and gods below,
> When once compared with him."

Many have thought to worship Jehovah, and other gods with him; but this holy man tolerated no such notion. Others have thought to combine their religion with obedience to the unrighteous laws of tyrannical princes; this, also, the sweet singer of Israel denounced; for he regarded the living God as altogether above all men, who as magistrates and princes have been called gods. Observe here the fourth of the five "fors." Verses 3, 4, 5, and 14 contain reasons for praise, each set forth with "for." A fruitful meditation might be suggested by this.

6. "*Whatsoever the* LORD *pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.*" His will is carried out throughout all space. The king's warrant runs in every portion of the universe. The heathen divided the great domain; but Jupiter does not rule in heaven, nor Neptune on the sea, nor Pluto in the lower regions; Jehovah rules over all. His decree is not defeated, his purpose is not frustrated: in no one point is his good pleasure set aside. The word "whatsoever" is of the widest range and includes all things, and the four words of peace which are mentioned comprehend all space; therefore the declaration of the text knows neither limit nor exception. Jehovah works his will: he pleases to do, and he performs the deed. None can stay his hand. How different this from the gods whom the heathen fabled to be subject to all the disappointments, failures, and passions of men! How contrary even to those so-called Christian conceptions of God which subordinate him to the will of man, and make his eternal purposes the football of human caprice. Our theology teaches us no such degrading notions of the Eternal as that he can be baffled by man. "His purpose shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." No region is too high, no abyss too deep, no land too distant, no sea too wide for his omnipotence: his divine pleasure travels post over all the realm of nature, and his behests are obeyed.

7. "*He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth.*" Here we are taught the power of God in creation. The process of evaporation is passed by unnoticed by the many, because they see it going on all around them; the usual ceases to be wonderful to the thoughtless, but it remains a marvel to the instructed.

When we consider upon what an immense scale evaporation is continually going on, and how needful it is for the existence of all life, we may well admire the wisdom and the power which are displayed therein. All around us from every point of the horizon the vapour rises, condenses into clouds, and ultimately descends as rain. Whence the vapours originally ascended from which our showers are formed it would be impossible to tell; most probably the main part of them comes from the tropical regions, and other remote places at "the ends of the earth." It is the Lord who causes them to rise, and not a mere law. What is law without a force at the back of it? *"He maketh lightnings for the rain."* There is an intimate connection between lightning and rain, and this would seem to be more apparent in Palestine than even with ourselves; for we constantly read of thunderstorms in that country as attending heavy down-pours of rain. Lightning is not to be regarded as a lawless force, but as a part of that wonderful machinery by which the earth is kept in a fit condition: a force as much under the control of God as any other, a force most essential to our existence. The ever-changing waters, rains, winds, and electric currents circulate as if they were the life-blood and vital spirits of the universe. *"He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries."* This great force which seems left to its own wild will is really under the supreme and careful government of the Lord. As a monarch is specially master of the contents of his own treasure, so is our God the Lord of the tempest and hurricane; and as princes do not spend their treasure without taking note and count of it, so the Lord does not permit the wind to be wasted, or squandered without purpose. Everything in the material world is under the immediate direction and control of the Lord of all. Observe how the Psalmist brings before us the personal action of Jehovah: "he causeth," "he maketh," "he bringeth." Everywhere the Lord worketh all things, and there is no power which escapes his supremacy. It is well for us that it is so: one bandit force wandering through the Lord's domains defying his control would cast fear and trembling over all the provinces of providence. Let us praise Jehovah for the power and wisdom with which he rules clouds, and lightnings, and winds, and all other mighty and mysterious agencies.

8. *"Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast."* Herein the Lord is to be praised; for this deadly smiting was an act of justice against Egypt, and of love to Israel. But what a blow it was! All the firstborn slain in a moment! How it must have horrified the nation, and cowed the boldest enemies of Israel! Beasts because of their relationship to man as domestic animals are in many ways made to suffer with him. The firstborn of beasts must die as well as the firstborn of their owners, for the blow was meant to astound and overwhelm, and it accomplished its purpose. The firstborn of God had been sorely smitten, and they were set free by the Lord's meting out to their oppressors the like treatment.

9. *"Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants."* The Lord is still seen by the Psalmist as sending judgments upon rebellious men; he keeps before us the personal action of God, "who sent tokens, etc." The more distinctly God is seen the better. Even in plagues he is to be seen, as truly as in mercies. The plagues were not only terrible wonders which astounded men, but forcible tokens or signs by which they were instructed. No doubt the plagues were aimed at the various deities of the Egyptians, and were a grand exposure of their impotence: each one had its own special significance. The judgments of the Lord were no side blows, they struck the nation at the heart; he sent his bolts "into the midst of thee, O Egypt!" These marvels happened in the centre of the proud and exclusive nation of Egypt, which thought itself far superior to other lands; and many of these plagues touched the nation in points upon which it prided itself. The Psalmist addresses that haughty nation, saying, "O Egypt," as though reminding it of the lessons which it had been taught by the Lord's right hand. Imperious Pharaoh had been the ringleader in defying Jehovah, and he was made personally to smart for it; nor did his flattering courtiers escape, upon each one of them the scourge fell heavily. God's servants are far better off than Pharaoh's servants: those who stand in the courts of Jehovah are delivered, but the courtiers of Pharaoh are smitten all of them, for they were all partakers in his evil deeds. The Lord is to be praised for thus rescuing his own people, and causing their cruel adversaries to bite the dust. Let no true Israelite forget the song of the Red Sea, but anew let us hear a voice summoning us to exulting praise: "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously."

10. *"Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings."* The nations of Canaan

joined in the desperate resistance offered by their monarchs, and so they were smitten; while their kings, the ringleaders of the fight, were slain. Those who resist the divine purpose will find it hard to kick against the pricks. The greatness of the nations and the might of the kings availed nothing against the Lord. He is prepared to mete out vengeance to those who oppose his designs: those who dream of him as too tender to come to blows have mistaken the God of Israel. He intended to bless the work through his chosen people, and he would not be turned from his purpose: cost what it might, he would preserve the candle of truth which he had lighted, even though the blood of nations should be spilt in its defence. The wars against the Canaanite races were a price paid for the setting up of a nation which was to preserve for the whole world the lively oracles of God.

11. *"Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan."* These two kings were the first to oppose, and they were among the most notable of the adversaries: their being smitten is therefore a special object of song for loyal Israelites. The enmity of these two kings was wanton and unprovoked, and hence their overthrow was the more welcome to Israel. Sihon had been victorious in his war with Moab, and thought to make short work with Israel, but he was speedily overthrown: Og was of the race of the giants, and by his huge size inspired the tribes with dread; but they were encouraged by the previous overthrow of Sihon, and soon the giant king fell beneath their sword. *"And all the kingdoms of Canaan."* Many were these petty principalities, and some of them were populous and valiant; but they all fell beneath the conquering hand of Joshua, for the Lord was with him. Even so shall all the foes of the Lord's believing people in these days be put to the rout: Satan and the world shall be overthrown, and all the hosts of sin shall be destroyed, for our greater Joshua leads forth our armies, conquering and to conquer.

Note that in this verse we have the details of matters which were mentioned in the bulk in the previous stanza: it is well when we have sung of mercies in the gross to consider them one by one, and give to each individual blessing a share in our song. It is well to preserve abundant memorials of the Lord's deliverance, so that we not only sing of mighty kings as a class, but also of "Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan" as distinct persons.

12. *"And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people."* Jehovah is Lord Paramount, and permits men to hold their lands upon lease, terminable at his pleasure. The nations of Canaan had become loathsome with abominable vices, and they were condemned by the great Judge of all the earth to be cut off from the face of the country which they defiled. The twelve tribes were charged to act as their executioners, and as their fee they were to receive Canaan as a possession. Of old the Lord had given this land to Abraham and his seed by a covenant of salt, but he allowed the Amorites and other tribes to sojourn in it till their iniquity was full, and then he bade his people come and take their own out of the holders' hands. Canaan was their heritage because they were the Lord's heritage, and he gave it to them actually because he had long before given it to them by promise.

The Lord's chosen still have a heritage from which none can keep them back. Covenant blessings of inestimable value are secured to them; and, as surely as God has a people, his people shall have a heritage. To them it comes by gift, though they have to fight for it. Often does it happen when they slay a sin or conquer a difficulty that they are enriched by the spoil: to them even evils work for good, and trials ensure triumphs. No enemy shall prevail so as to really injure them, for they shall find a heritage where once they were opposed by "all the kingdoms of Canaan."

13. *"Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever."* God's name is eternal, and will never be changed. His character is immutable; his fame and honour also shall remain to all eternity. There shall always be life in the name of Jesus, and sweetness and consolation. Those upon whom the Lord's name is named in verity and truth shall be preserved by it, and kept from all evil, world without end. JEHOVAH is a name which shall outlive the ages, and retain the fulness of its glory and might for ever. *"And thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations."* Never shall men forget thee, O Lord. The ordinances of thine house shall keep thee in men's memories, and thine everlasting gospel and the grace which goes therewith shall be abiding remembrancers of thee. Grateful hearts will for ever beat to thy praise, and enlightened minds shall continue to marvel at all thy wondrous works. Men's memorials decay, but the memorial of the Lord abideth evermore. What a comfort

to desponding minds, trembling for the ark of the Lord! No, precious Name, thou shalt never perish! Fame of the Eternal, thou shalt never grow dim!

This verse must be construed in its connection, and it teaches us that the honour and glory gained by the Lord in the overthrow of the mighty kings would never die out. Israel for long ages reaped the benefit of the *prestige* which the divine victories had brought to the nation. Moreover, the Lord in thus keeping his covenant which he made with Abraham, when he promised to give the land to his seed, was making it clear that his memorial contained in promises and covenant would never be out of his sight. His name endures in all its truthfulness, for those who occupied Israel's land were driven out that the true heirs might dwell therein in peace.

14. *"For the* LORD *will judge his people."* He will exercise personal discipline over them, and not leave it to their foes to maltreat them at pleasure. When the correction is ended he will arise and avenge them of their oppressors, who for a while were used by him as his rod. He may seem to forget his people, but it is not so; he will undertake their cause and deliver them. The judges of Israel were also her deliverers, and such is the Lord of hosts: in this sense—as ruling, preserving, and delivering his chosen—Jehovah will judge his people. *"And he will repent himself concerning his servants."* When he has smitten them, and they lie low before him, he will pity them as a father pitieth his children, for he doth not afflict willingly. The Psalm speaks after the manner of men: the nearest description that words can give of the Lord's feeling towards his suffering servants is that he repents the evil which he inflicted upon them. He acts as if he had changed his mind and regretted smiting them. It goes to the heart of God to see his beloved ones oppressed by their enemies: though they deserve all they suffer, and more than all, yet the Lord cannot see them smart without a pang. It is remarkable that the nations by which God has afflicted Israel have all been destroyed as if the tender Father hated the instruments of his children's correction. The chosen nation is here called, first, "his people," and then "his servants:" as his people he judges them, as his servants he finds comfort in them, for so the word may be read. He is most tender to them when he sees their service; hence the Scripture saith, "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Should not the "servants" of God praise him? He plagued Pharaoh's servants; but as for his own he has mercy upon them, and returns to them in love after he has in the truest affection smitten them for their iniquities. "Praise him, O ye servants of the Lord."

Now we come to the Psalmist's denunciation of idols, which follows most naturally upon his celebration of the one only living and true God.

15 The idols of the heathen *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
16 They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;
17 They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there *any* breath in their mouths.
18 They that make them are like unto them: *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

15. *"The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands."* Their essential material is dead metal, their attributes are but the qualities of senseless substances, and what of form and fashion they exhibit they derive from the skill and labour of those who worship them. It is the height of insanity to worship metallic manufactures. Though silver and gold are useful to us when we rightly employ them, there is nothing about them which can entitle them to reverence and worship. If we did not know the sorrowful fact to be indisputable, it would seem to be impossible that intelligent beings could bow down before substances which they must themselves refine from the ore, and fashion into form. One would think it less absurd to worship one's own hands than to adore that which those hands have made. What great works can these mock deities perform for man when they are themselves the works of man? Idols are fitter to be played with, like dolls by babes, than to be adored by grown-up men. Hands are better used in breaking than in making objects which can be put to such an idiotic use. Yet the heathen love their abominable deities better than silver and gold: it were well if we could say that some professed believers in the Lord had as much love for *him*.

16. *"They have mouths."* For their makers fashioned them like themselves. An opening is made where the mouth should be, and yet it is no mouth, for they eat not, *they speak not.* They cannot communicate with their worshippers; they are dumb as death. If they cannot even speak, they are not even so worthy of worship as our children at school. Jehovah speaks, and it is done; but these images utter never a word. Surely, if they could speak, they would rebuke their votaries. Is not their silence a still more powerful rebuke? When our philosophical teachers deny that God has made any verbal revelation of himself they also confess that their god is dumb.

"Eyes have they, but they see not." Who would adore a blind man—how can the heathen be so mad as to bow themselves before a blind image? The eyes of idols have frequently been very costly; diamonds have been used for that purpose; but of what avail is the expense, since they see nothing? If they cannot even see us, how can they know our wants, appreciate our sacrifices, or spy out for us the means of help? What a wretched thing, that a man who can see should bow down before an image which is blind! The worshipper is certainly physically in advance of his god, and yet mentally he is on a level with it; for assuredly his foolish heart is darkened, or he would not so absurdly play the fool.

17. *"They have ears,"* and very large ones too, if we remember certain of the Hindoo idols. *"But they hear not."* Useless are their ears; in fact, they are mere counterfeits and deceits. Ears which men make are always deaf: the secret of hearing is wrapped up with the mystery of life, and both are in the unsearchable mind of the Lord. It seems that these heathen gods are dumb, and blind, and deaf—a pretty bundle of infirmities to be found in a deity! *"Neither is there any breath in their mouths;"* they are dead, no sign of life is perceptible; and breathing, which is of the essence of animal life, they never know. Shall a man waste his breath in crying to an idol which has no breath? Shall life offer up petitions to death? Verily, this is a turning of things upside down.

18. *"They that make them are like unto them:"* they are as blockish, as senseless, as stupid as the gods they have made, and, like them they are the objects of divine abhorrence, and shall be broken in pieces in due time. *"So is every one that trusteth in them."* The idol-worshippers are as bad as the idol-makers; for if there were none to worship, there would be no market for the degrading manufacture. Idolaters are spiritually dead, they are the mere images of men, their best being is gone, they are not what they seem. Their mouths do not really pray, their eyes see not the truth, their ears hear not the voice of the Lord, and the life of God is not in them. Those who believe in their own inventions in religion betray great folly, and an utter absence of the quickening Spirit. Gracious men can see the absurdity of forsaking the true God and setting up rivals in his place; but those who perpetrate this crime think not so: on the contrary, they pride themselves upon their great wisdom, and boast of "advanced thought" and "modern culture." Others there are who believe in a baptismal regeneration which does not renew the nature, and they make members of Christ and children of God who have none of the spirit of Christ, or the signs of adoption. May we be saved from such mimicry of divine work lest we also become like our idols.

19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:
20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.
21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

19. *"Bless the LORD, O house of Israel."* All of you, in all your tribes, praise the one Jehovah. Each tribe, from Reuben to Benjamin, has its own special cause for blessing the Lord, and the nation as a whole has substantial reasons for pouring out benedictions upon his name. Those whom God has named "the house of Israel," a family of prevailing princes, ought to show their loyalty by thankfully bowing before their sovereign Lord. *"Bless the LORD, O house of Aaron."* These were elected to high office and permitted to draw very near to the divine presence; therefore they beyond all others were bound to bless the Lord. Those who are favoured to be leaders in the church should be foremost in adoration. In God's house the house of Aaron should feel bound to speak well of his name before all the house of Israel.

20. *"Bless the* LORD, *O house of Levi."* These helped the priests in other things, let them aid them in this also. The house of Israel comprehends all the chosen seed; then we come down to the smaller but more central ring of the house of Aaron, and now we widen out to the whole tribe of Levi. Let reverence and adoration spread from man to man until the whole lump of humanity shall be leavened. The house of Levi had choice reasons for blessing God: read the Levite story and see. Remember that the whole of the Levites were set apart for holy service, and supported by the tribes allotted to them; therefore they were in honour bound above all others to worship Jehovah with cheerfulness.

"Ye that fear the LORD, *bless the* LORD." These are the choicer spirits, the truly spiritual: they are not the Lord's in name only, but in heart and spirit. The Father seeketh such to worship him. If Aaron and Levi both forget and fail, these will not. It may be that this verse is intended to bring in God-fearing men who were not included under Israel, Aaron, and Levi. They were Gentile proselytes, and this verse opens the door and bids them enter. Those who fear God need not wait for any other qualification for sacred service; godly fear proves us to be in the covenant with Israel, in the priesthood with Aaron, and in the service of the Lord with Levi. Filial fear, such as saints feel towards the Lord, does not hinder their praise; nay, it is the main source and fountain of their adoration.

21. *"Blessed be the* LORD *out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem."* Let him be most praised at home. Where he blesses most, let him be blessed most. Let the beloved mount of Zion, and the chosen city of Jerusalem echo his praises. He remains among his people: he is their dwelling-place, and they are his dwelling-place: let this intimate communion ensure intense gratitude on the part of his chosen. The temple of holy solemnities which is Christ, and the city of the Great King, which is the church, may fitly be regarded as the head-quarters of the praises of Jehovah, the God of Israel. *"Praise ye the* LORD." Hallelujah. Amen, and Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This glorious Psalm of universal praise, placed at the end of the "Songs of Up-goings," which flow into it, and find their response in it, may be likened to a large and beautiful lake, into which rivers discharge their waters, and lose themselves in its calm expanse.—*Chr. Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm differs from that which went before. Its drift is not only to stir up the priests and Levites, as it was in the former, to this duty of praising God, but *the people* also: and that, 1. Because the arguments which here he brings to press this duty, did in common concern both priests and people; and, 2. Because that clause, which is here added, *"in the courts of the house of our God,"* may be extended to the people, as well as to the priests, seeing there were some courts in the Temple which were for the people to worship God in.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Whole Psalm.—This is a song of praise to the Lord for his goodness as the Lord of creation, in seven verses; for his grace as the deliverer of his people, in seven more: and for his unity as the only true and living God, in seven more.—*James G. Murphy.*

Whole Psalm.—This seems to have been the morning hymn which the Levites were called upon to sing at the opening of the gates of the Temple; and, as some think, the one before was used at shutting them in the evening.—*John Kitto, in "The Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 1.—This verse and the following are word for word with the first verse of the last Psalm, and are now repeated, with the view of keeping up the praise then and there commenced.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 1.—*"Praise ye the* LORD." *Hallelujah* is the Hebrew word. It signifies *"Praise ye the* LORD." By this the faithful do provoke one another to give thanks unto God, and they cheer up their hearts and tune their spirits to perform this duty in the best manner, by making this preface as it were thereunto. True joy of the

Holy Ghost will not endure to be kept and cooped up in any one man's breast and bosom, but it striveth to get companions both for the pouring out and imparting of itself unto them, that they may be filled and refreshed out of this spring of joy; as also that itself may be the more increased and inflamed by the united rejoicing of many good hearts together, that are all baptized in one spirit, and are thereby made able to inflame and to edify one another.—*Thomas Brightman* (1557—1607), *in "The Revelation of St. John Illustrated."*

Verse 1.—*"Praise ye* the name *of the* LORD." That is, the Lord himself, and the perfections of his nature; his greatness, goodness, grace, and mercy; his holiness, justice, power, truth, and faithfulness. Also his word, by which he makes known himself: this is a distinguishing blessing to his people, for which he is to be praised: see Ps. xlviii. 1, and Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—*"The name of* the LORD."—The first discovery of the name I AM, which signifies the Divine eternity, as well as immutability, was for the comfort of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt: Exodus iii. 14, 15. It was then published from the secret place of the Almighty, as the only strong cordial to refresh them. It hath not yet, it shall not ever, lose its virtue in any of the miseries that have or shall successively befall the church. 'Tis as durable as the God whose name it is: he is still I AM and the same to the church as he was then to his Israel. His spiritual Israel have a greater right to the glories of it than the carnal Israel could have. No oppression can be greater than theirs; what was a comfort suited to that distress hath the same suitableness to every other oppression. It was not a temporary name, but a name for ever, his "memorial to all generations" (verse 15), and reacheth to the church of the Gentiles, with whom he treats as the God of Abraham, ratifying that covenant by the Messiah, which he made with Abraham the father of the faithful.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 1.—*"The name of* the LORD." Jehovah is called *"the name"* as far exceeding all other names, and as being proper and peculiar only to the true God. Other things are sometimes called gods, but nothing is or can be called Jehovah but only the Almighty Creator of the world. "That men may know," saith David, "that thou, whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth": Ps. lxxxiii. 18. From his calling himself JEHOVAH the LORD, we may easily gather what kind of thoughts he would have us, his creatures, entertain in our minds concerning him. When we think of him, we must raise our thoughts above all things else, and think of him as the Universal Being of the world, that gives essence and existence to all things in it: as Jehovah, the Being in whom we particularly, as well as other things, live and move, and have our being: as Jehovah, the Lord paramount over the whole world, to whom all angels and archangels in heaven, with all the kings and kingdoms upon earth, are entirely subject: as Jehovah, in whom all perfections are so perfectly united that they are all but one infinite perfection: as Jehovah, knowledge itself, always actually knowing all things that ever were, or are, or will be, or can be known: as Jehovah, wisdom itself, always contriving, ordering, and disposing of all, and everything, in the best order, after the best manner, and to the best possible end: as Jehovah, power, omnipotence itself, continually doing what he wills, only by willing it should be done, and always working either with means or without means, as he himself sees good: as Jehovah, light and glory itself, shining forth in and by and through everything that is made or done in the whole world. as Jehovah, holiness, purity, simplicity, greatness, majesty, eminency, super-eminency itself, infinitely exalted above all things else, existing in, and of himself, and having all things else continually subsisting in him: as Jehovah, goodness itself, doing and making all things good, and so communicating his goodness to all his creatures as to be the only fountain of all the goodness that is in any of them: as Jehovah, justice and righteousness itself, giving to all their due, and exacting no more of any man than what is absolutely due to him: as Jehovah, mercy itself, pardoning and forgiving all the sins that mankind commit against him, as soon as they repent and turn to him: as Jehovah, patience and longsuffering itself, bearing a long time, even with those who continue in their rebellions against him, waiting for their coming to a due sense of their folly and madness, that he may be gracious and merciful to them; as Jehovah, love and kindness, and bounty itself, freely distributing his blessings among all his creatures, both good and bad, just and unjust, those that love him, and those that love him not: as Jehovah, truth and faithfulness itself, always performing what he promiseth to his people: as Jehovah, infinitude, immensity itself, in all things, to all things,

beyond all things, everywhere, wholly, essentially, continually present: as Jehovah, constancy, immutability, eternity itself, without any variableness, or shadow of change; yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same. In a word, when we think of the Most High God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we should think of him as Jehovah, Unity in Trinity, Trinity in Unity, Three Persons, One Being, One Essence, One Lord, One Jehovah, blessed for ever. This is that glorious, that Almighty being, which the Psalmist here means when he saith, *"Praise ye the name of the* LORD."—*William Beveridge*, 1636—1708.

Verse 1.—*"Praise him, O ye servants of the* LORD." For ye will do nothing out of place by praising your Lord *as servants*. And if ye were to be for ever only servants, ye ought to praise the Lord; how much more ought those servants to praise the Lord who have obtained the privilege of sons?—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—*"Praise," "praise," "praise."* When duties are thus inculcated, it noteth the necessity and excellency thereof; together with our dulness and backwardness thereunto.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 1, 2, 21.—*"Praise."* To prevent any feeling of weariness which might arise from the very frequent repetition of this exhortation to praise God, it is only necessary to remember that there is no sacrifice in which he takes greater delight than in the expression of praise. Thus (Ps. l. 14), " Sacrifice unto the Lord thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High;" and (Ps. cxvi. 12, 13), " What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD." Particular attention is to be paid to those passages of Scripture which speak in such high terms of that worship of God which is spiritual; otherwise we may be led, in the exercise of a misguided zeal, to spend our labour upon trifles, and in this respect imitate the example of too many who have wearied themselves with ridiculous attempts to invent additions to the service of God, while they have neglected what is of all other things most important. That is the reason why the Holy Spirit so repeatedly inculcates the duty of praise. It is that we may not undervalue, or grow careless in this devotional exercise. It implies, too, an indirect censure of our tardiness in proceeding to the duty; for he would not reiterate the admonition were we ready and active in the discharge of it.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 1, 2, 3.—As *Gotthold* was one day passing a tradesman's house, he heard the notes of a Psalm, with which the family were concluding their morning meal. He was deeply affected, and, with a full heart, said to himself: O my God, how pleasing to my ears is the sound of thy praise, and how comforting to my soul the thought that there are still a few who bless thee for thy goodness. Alas, the great bulk of mankind have become brutalized, and resemble the swine, which in harvest gather and fatten upon the acorns beneath the oak, but show to the tree, which bore them, no other thanks than rubbing off its bark, and tearing up the sod around it. In former times, it was the law in certain monasteries, that the chanting of the praise of God should know no interruption, and that one choir of monks should, at stated intervals, relieve another in the holy employment. To the superstition and trust in human works, of which there may have been here a mixture, we justly assign a place among the wood, hay, and stubble (1 Cor. iii. 12). At the same time it is undeniably right that thy praise should never cease; and were men to be silent, the very stones would cry out. We must begin eternal life here below, not only in our conscience, but also with our praise. Our soul ought to be like a flower, not merely receiving the gentle influence of heaven, but, in its turn, and as if in gratitude, exhaling also a sweet and pleasant perfume. It should be our desire, as it once was that of a pious man, that our hearts should melt and dissolve like incense in the fire of love, and yield the sweet fragrance of praise; or we should be like the holy martyr who professed himself willing to be consumed, if from his ashes a little flower might spring and blossom to the glory of God. We should be ready to give our very blood to fertilize the garden of the church, and render it more productive of the fruit of praise.

Well, then, my God, I will praise and extol thee with heart and mouth to the utmost of my power. Oh, that without the interruptions which eating, and drinking, and sleep require, I could apply myself to this heavenly calling! Every mouthful of air which I inhale is mixed with the goodness which preserves my life; let every breath which I exhale be mingled at least with a hearty desire for thy honour and praise.

Hallelujah! Ye holy angels, ye children of men, and all ye creatures, praise

the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.—*Christian Scriver* [*Gotthold*], 1629—1693.

Verse 3.—"*Praise the* LORD." *Hallelujah* (praise to Jah!) *for good* (*is*) *Jehovah, Make music to his name, for it is lovely.* The last words may also be translated, *he is lovely*, i.e. an object worthy of supreme attachment.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 3.—"*Praise the* LORD *; for the* LORD *is good.*" That is, originally, transcendently, effectively; he is good, and doeth good (Ps. cxix. 68), and is therefore to be praised with mind, mouth, and practice.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*Sing praises unto his name ; for it is pleasant.*" The work of praising God hath a sort of reward joined with it. When we praise God most we get much benefit by so doing: it is so comely in itself, so pleasant unto God, and profitable to the person that offereth praises, so fit to cheer up his spirit, and strengthen his faith in God, whose praises are the pillars of the believer's confidence and comfort, that a man should be allured thereunto: "*Sing praises unto his name ; for it is pleasant ;*" and this is the second motive or reason to praise God [the first being that "the Lord is good"].—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*For the* LORD *hath chosen,*" etc. God's distinguishing grace should make his elect lift up many a humble, joyful, and thankful heart to him.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Jacob,*" "*Israel.*" Praise the Lord for enrolling you in this company. To quicken you in this work of praise, consider what you were; you were not a people, God raised you up from the very dunghill to this preferment; remember your past estate. Look, as old Jacob considered what he had been when God preferred him (Gen. xxxii. 10); "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands;" so do you say, I am a worthless creature, it is God that hath taken me into his grace, praised be the Lord that hath chosen me. Then consider how many are left to perish in the wide world. Some live out of the church's pale that never heard of Christ, and many others have only a loose general form of Christianity. Oh! blessed be God that hath chosen me to be of the number of his peculiar people. It is said (Zech. xiii. 8), "And it shall come to pass in all the land, saith the Lord, that two parts shall be cut off and die, but the third shall be left therein." We pass through many bolters before we come to be God's peculiar people, as the corn is ground, bolted, searched before it comes to be fine flour. Many have not the knowledge of God, and others live in the church but are carnal; and for me to be one of his peculiar people, a member of Christ's mystical body, oh! what a privilege is this! And then what moved him to all this? Nothing but his own free grace. Therefore praise the Lord.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 4.—"*His peculiar treasure.*" The Hebrew word *segullah* signifieth God's special jewels, God's proper ones, or God's secret ones, that he keeps in store for himself, and for his own special service and use. Princes lock up with their own hands in secret their most precious and costly jewels; and so doth God his: "*For the* LORD *hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure,*" or for his secret gain.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 4.—"*His peculiar treasure.*" Will not a man that is not defective in his prudentials secure his jewels? "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a father his son that serveth him:" Malachi iii. 17. If a house be on fire, the owner of it will first take care of his wife and children, then of his jewels, and last of all, of his lumber and rubbish. Christ secures first his people, for they are his jewels; the world is but lumber and rubbish.—*Richard Mayhew.*

Verse 5. -"*For I know.*" The word "*I*" is made emphatic in the original. Whatever may be the case with others, I have had personal and precious experience of the greatness of Jehovah's power, and of his infinite supremacy above all other gods. The author of the Psalm may either speak for all Israel as a unit, or he may have framed his song so that every worshipper might say this for himself as his own testimony.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 5.—"*For I know that the* LORD *is great,*" etc. On what a firm foundation does the Psalmist plant his foot—"*I know!*" One loves to hear men of God speaking in this calm, undoubting, and assured confidence, whether it be of the Lord's goodness or of the Lord's greatness. You may perhaps say, that it required

no great stretch of faith or knowledge, or any amount of bravery, to declare that God was great; but I think that not many wise nor mighty had in the Psalmist's days attained unto his knowledge or made his confession, that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was *"above all gods."* Baal and Chemosh, and Milcom and Dagon, claimed the fealty of the nations round about; and David, in the Court of Achish, would have found his declaration as unwelcome, as it would have been rejected as untrue. Moses once carried a message from Jehovah to the king of Egypt, and his reply was, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord;" and even of Jehovah's peculiar treasure, all were not Israel that were of Israel.

There is a knowledge that plays round the head, like lightning on a mountain's summit, that leaves no trace behind; and there is a knowledge that, like the fertilizing stream, penetrates into the very recesses of the heart, and issues forth in all the fruits of holiness, of love, and peace, and joy for evermore.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 6.—*"Whatsoever the* LORD *pleased, that did he,"* etc. He was not forced to make all that he made, but *all that he willed he made.* His will was the cause of all things which he made. Thou makest a house, because if thou didst not make it thou wouldest be left without a habitation: necessity compels thee to make a home, not free-will. Thou makest a garment, because thou wouldest go about naked if thou didst not make it; thou art therefore led to making a garment by necessity, not by free-will. Thou plantest a mountain with vines, thou sowest seed, because if thou didst not do so, thou wouldest not have food; all such things thou doest of necessity. God has made all things of his goodness. He needed nothing that he made; and therefore he hath made all things that he willed.

He did whatsoever he willed in the heaven and earth: dost thou do all that thou willest even in thy field? Thou willest many things, but canst not do all thou wishest in thy own house. Thy wife, perchance, gainsays thee, thy children gainsay thee, sometimes even thy servant contumaciously gainsays thee, and thou doest not what thou willest. But thou sayest, I do what I will, because I punish the disobedient and gainsayer. Even this thou doest not when thou willest.—*Augustine.*

Verse 6.—*"Whatsoever the* LORD *pleased, that did he,"* etc. God's will obtains and hath the upper hand everywhere. Down man, down pope, down devil; you must yield; things shall not be as you will, but as God will! We may well say, "Who hath resisted his will?" Rom. ix. 19. Many, indeed, disobey, and sin against the will of his precept; but none ever did, none ever shall, frustrate or obstruct the will of his purpose; for he will do all his pleasure, and in his way mountains shall become a plain.—*William Slater* (—1704), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 6.—Upon the Arminian's plan (if absurdity can deserve the name of a plan), the glorious work of God's salvation, and the eternal redemption of Jesus Christ, are not complete, unless a dying mortal lends his arm; that is, unless he, who of himself can do nothing, vouchsafe to begin and accomplish that which all the angels in heaven cannot do; namely, to convert the soul from Satan to God. How contrary is all this to the language of Scripture—how repugnant to the oracles of truth! "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth."—*Ambrose Serle* (—1815), *in "Horæ Solitariæ."*

Verse 6.—*"In heaven and in the earth,"* etc. His power is infinite. He can do what he will do everywhere; all places are there named but purgatory; perhaps he can do nothing there, but leaves all that work for the Pope.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 6.—*"In the seas, and all deep places."* He did wonders in the mighty waters: more than once he made the boisterous sea a calm, and walked upon the surface of it; and as of old he broke up the fountains of the great deep, and drowned the world; and at another time dried up the sea, and led his people through the depths, as through a wilderness; so he will hereafter bind the old serpent, the devil, and cast him into the abyss, into the great deep, the bottomless pit, where he will continue during the thousand years' reign of Christ with his saints.—*John Gill.*

Verse 6.—The word *"pleaseth"* limits the general note or particle *"all"* unto all works which in themselves are good, or else serve for good use, and so are pleasing to the Lord for the use sake. He doth not say that the Lord doth all things which are done, but all things which he pleaseth, that is, he doth not make men sinful and wicked, neither doth he work rebellion in men, which is displeasing unto him;

but he doth whatsoever is pleasing, that is, all things which are agreeable to his nature. And whatsoever is according to his will and good pleasure, that he doth, for none can hinder it. This is the true sense and meaning of the words.—*George Walker, in "God made visible in his Works,"* 1641.

Verse 6.—*"Whatsover the* LORD *pleased, that did he,"* etc. With reference to the government of Providence, it is said of God, that " he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Even insensible matter is under his control. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy wind, fulfil his word: and with reference to intelligent agents, we are told that he maketh the most refractory, even the wrath of man, to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains. The whole Bible exhibits Jehovah as so ordering the affairs of individuals, and of nations, as to secure the grand purpose he had in view in creating the world,—viz., the promotion of his own glory, in the salvation of a multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues. One of the most prominent distinctions between divine revelation and ordinary history is, that when the same general events are narrated, the latter exhibits—(it is its province so to do—it is not able indeed to do more,) the agency of man, the former, the agency of God. Profane history exhibits the instruments by which Jehovah works; the finger of divine revelation points to the unseen but almighty hand which wields and guides the instrument, and causes even Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the Jews and the people of Israel, to do what the hand and the counsel of God determined before to be done.—*George Payne, in "Lectures on Christian Theology,"* 1850.

Verse 7.—*"He causeth the vapours to ascend,"* etc. Dr. Halley made a number of experiments at St. Helena as to the quantity of water that is daily evaporated from the sea, and he found that ten square inches of the ocean's surface yielded one cubic inch of water in twelve hours—a square mile therefore yields 401,448,960 cubic inches, or 6,914 tons of water. From the surface of the Mediterranean Sea during a summer's day there would pass off in invisible vapour five thousand millions of tons of water. This being only for one day, the quantity evaporated in a year would be 365 times greater, and in two thousand years it would amount to four thousand billions of tons, which evaporation would in time empty the Mediterranean Sea; but we have good reason for believing that there is as much water there now as in the time of the Romans, therefore the balance is kept up by the downpour of rain, the influx of the rivers, and the currents from the Atlantic.

Now let us consider the amount of power required for all this evaporation. Mr. Joule, whose experiments have given to the world so much valuable information, says that if we had a pool of water one square mile and six inches in depth to be evaporated by artificial heat, it would require the combustion of 30,000 tons of coal to effect it; therefore to evaporate all the water that ascends from the earth it would take 6,000,000,000,000 (six billion) tons, or more than all the coal that could be stowed away in half-a-dozen such worlds as this; and yet silently and surely has the process of evaporation been going on for millions of years.—*Samuel Kinns, in "Moses and Geology,"* 1882.

Verse 7.—*"He causeth the vapours to ascend,"* etc. There is no physical necessity that the boiling-point of water should occur at two hundred and twelve degrees of the Fahrenheit scale. As far as we know, it might have been the same with the boiling-points of oil of turpentine, alcohol or ether. We shall see the benevolence of the present adjustment by noticing some of the consequences which would follow if any change were made.

The amount of vapour given off at ordinary temperatures by any liquid depends on the temperature at which it boils. If the boiling-point of water were the same as that of alcohol, the vapour given off by the ocean would be two and a half times as much as at present. Such an excess of aqueous vapour would produce continual rains and inundations, and would make the air too damp for animal, and too cloudy for vegetable life. If water boiled at the same temperature as ether, the vapour rising from the ocean would be more than twenty-five times as much as at present. In such a state of things no man could see the sun on account of the clouds; the rain would be so excessive as to tear up the soil and wash away plants; inundations would be constant, and navigation would be impossible in the inland torrents which would take the place of our rivers. In winter the snow of one day might bury the houses. If, on the other hand, water boiled at the same temperature with

oil of turpentine, the vapour given off by the ocean would be less than one-fourth of its present amount. In this case rain would be a rarity, like an eclipse of the sun, the dryness of the desert of Sahara would be equalled in a large part of the globe, which would, therefore, be bare of vegetation, and incapable of sustaining animal life. Plants would be scorched by unclouded sunshine, springs and rivulets would be dry, and inland navigation would cease; for nearly all the rain would be absorbed by the porous earth.

We see, then, that the boiling-point of water has been adjusted to various relations. It is adjusted to the capacity of space to contain aqueous vapour in a transparent state; if it were higher than two hundred and twelve degrees, the earth would be scorched by an unclouded sun; if it were lower, it would droop under continual shade. It is suited to the demand of plants for water; if it were higher, they would suffer from drought; if it were lower, they would be torn up by floods. It is in harmony with the texture of the soil; if it were higher, the earth would absorb all the rain which falls; if it were lower, the soil would often be washed away by the surface torrents after a shower. It is adapted to the elevation of the continents above the sea; if it were higher, rivers with their present inclination would be so shallow as to be often dry; if it were lower, most rivers would be so deep as to be torrents, while the land would be covered with floods.—*Professor Hemholtz.*

Verse 7.—"*To ascend from the ends of the earth.*" Rains in England are often introduced by a south-east wind. "Vapour brought to us by such a wind must have been generated in countries to the south and east of our island. It is therefore, probably, in the extensive valleys watered by the Meuse, the Moselle, and the Rhine, if not from the more distant Elbe, with the Oder and the Weser, that the water rises, in the midst of sunshine, which is soon afterwards to form *our* clouds, and pour down *our* thunder-showers." "Drought and sunshine in one part of Europe may be necessary to the production of a wet season in another."*—*William Whewell* (1795—1866), *in "The Bridgwater Treatise"* [*Astronomy and General Physics*], 1839.

Verse 7.—"*From the surface of the earth raising the vapours.*" The whole description is beautifully exact and picturesque. Not "the ends," or even "the summits" or "extreme mountains," for the original is in the singular number (קצה), but from the whole of the *extreme layer*, the *superficies* or *surface* of the earth; from every point of which the great process of exhalation is perpetually going on to supply the firmament with refreshing and fruitful clouds.—*John Mason Good.*

Verse 7.—"*He maketh lightnings for the rain.*" When the electrical clouds are much agitated, the rain generally falls heavily, and if the agitation is excessive, it hails. As the electricity is dissipated by the frequent discharges the cloud condenses and there comes a sudden and heavy rain; but the greater the accumulation of electricity, the longer is the rain delayed. Thus connected as the electrical phenomena of the atmosphere are with clouds, vapour, and rain, how forcibly are we struck with these appropriate words in the Scriptures.—*Edwin Sidney, in "Conversations on the Bible and Science,"* 1866.

Verse 7.—"*He maketh lightnings for the rain.*" Dr. Russell, in his description of the weather at Aleppo, in September, tells us, that seldom a night passes without much *lightning* in the north-west quarter, but not attended with *thunder;* and that when this *lightning* appears in the west or south-west points, it is a *sure sign* of the approaching rain, which *is often followed* with thunder. This last clause, which is not perfectly clear, is afterwards explained in his more enlarged account of the weather of the year 1746, when he tells us that though it began to be cloudy on the 4th of September, and continued so for a few days, and *even thundered*, yet no rain fell till the 11th, which shows that his meaning was, that the *lightning* in the west or south-west points, which is often followed with thunder, is a sure sign of the approach of rain. I have before mentioned that a squall of wind and clouds of dust are the usual forerunners of these first rains. Most of these things are taken notice of in Ps. cxxxv. 7; Jer. x. 13; li. 16; and serve to illustrate them. Russell's account determines, I think, that the Nesiim, which our translators render *vapours*, must mean, as they elsewhere translate the word, *clouds.* It shows that God "*maketh lightnings for the rain,*" they, in the west and south-west points, being at Aleppo the sure *prognostics* of rain. The squalls of wind bring on these refreshing

* Howard on the Climate of London.

showers, and are therefore " precious things " of the " treasuries " of God.—*Thomas Harmer.*

Verse 7.—"*He maketh lightnings for the rain.*" The Psalmist mentions it as another circumstance calling for our wonder, that *lightnings are mixed with rain*, things quite opposite in their nature one from another. Did not custom make us familiar with the spectacle, we would pronounce this mixture of fire and water to be a phenomenon altogether incredible. The same may be said of the phenomena of the winds. Natural causes can be assigned for them, and philosophers have pointed them out; but the winds, with their various currents, are a wonderful work of God. He does not merely assert the power of God, be it observed, in the sense in which philosophers themselves grant it, but he maintains that not a drop of rain falls from heaven without a divine commission or dispensation to that effect. All readily allow that God is the author of rain, thunder, and wind, in so far as he originally established the order of things in nature; but the Psalmist goes farther than this, holding that when it rains, this is not effected by a blind instinct of nature, but is the consequence of the decree of God, who is pleased at one time to darken the sky with clouds, and at another to brighten it again with sunshine.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—"*He maketh lightnings for the rain.*" It is a great instance of the divine wisdom and goodness, that lightning should be accompanied by rain, to soften its rage, and prevent its mischievous effects. Thus, in the midst of judgment, does God remember mercy. The threatenings in his word against sinners are like lightning; they would blast and scorch us up, were it not for his promises made in the same word to penitents, which, as a gracious rain, turn aside their fury, refreshing and comforting our affrighted spirits.—*George Horne.*

Verse 7.—"*He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.*" That is, say some, out of the caves and hollow places of the earth; but I rather conceive that because the wind riseth many times on a sudden, and as our Saviour saith (John iii. 8), "we cannot tell whence it cometh," therefore God is said here to bring it forth, as if he had it locked up in readiness in some secret and hidden treasuries or storehouses.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 7.—"*He bringeth the wind.*" The winds are with great beauty, represented as laid up by him as jewels in a treasure house. Indeed, few verses better express creative control, than those in which the winds, which make sport of man's efforts and defy his power, are represented as thus ready to spring forth at God's bidding from the quarters where they quietly sleep. The occasion comes, the thoughts of Jehovah find expression in his providence, and his ready servants leap suddenly forth: "*He bringeth the winds out of his treasuries.*" But this bringing forth is not for physical purposes only; it is for great moral and spiritual ends also. Take one illustration out of many. His people were on the edge of deepest and most brutish idolatry. They were ready to fall into a most degraded form of idol worship, when he offered to them that ever yearning heart of Fatherly love: " Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen." Their God is only " the tree cut out of the forest," silvered over, or decked with gold; " upright as the palm tree, but speaks not; the stock is a doctrine of vanities; but the Lord is the true God; he maketh lightnings with rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures." Jer. x. 2—16. Thus, too, the words of Agur to Ithiel and Ucal, " He hath gathered the wind in his fists." Prov. xxx. 4.—*John Duns, in "Science and Christian Thought,"* 1868.

Verse 8.—"*Who smote the firstborn of Egypt.*" The firstborn only were smitten; these were singled out in every family with unerring precision, the houses of the Israelites, wherever the blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the door-posts, being passed over. The death of all those thousands, both of man and beast, took place at the same instant—" at midnight."

Is God unrighteous, then, that taketh vengeance? No; this is an act of retribution. The Egyptians had slain the children of the Israelites, casting their infants into the river. Now the affliction is turned upon themselves; the delight of their eyes is taken from them; all their firstborn are dead, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat upon his throne, unto the the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon.—*Thomas S. Millington, in "Signs and Wonders in the Land of Ham,"* 1873.

Verse 8.—"*And beast.*" The Egyptians worshipped many animals, and when the firstborn of the sacred animals died the circumstance greatly increased the

impressiveness of the plague as an assault upon the gods of Egypt.—*C. H. S. Suggested by Otto Von Gerlach.*

Verses 8, 9, 10—12.—Worthy is Jahve to be praised, for he is the Redeemer out of Egypt. Worthy is he to be praised, for he is the Conqueror of the Land of Promise.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 9.—"*Who sent tokens and wonders.*"—"*Tokens,*" that is, signs or evidences of the Divine power. "*Wonders,*" things fitted to impress the mind with awe; things outside of the ordinary course of events; things not produced by natural laws, but by the direct power of God. The allusion here is, of course, to the plagues of Egypt, as recorded in Exodus.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 10.—"*Who smote great nations,*" etc. It is better that the wicked should be destroyed a hundred times over than that they should tempt those who are as yet innocent to join their company. Let us but think what might have been our fate, and the fate of every other nation under heaven at this hour, had the sword of the Israelites done its work more sparingly. Even as it was, the small portions of the Canaanites who were left, and the nations around them, so tempted the Israelites by their idolatrous practices that we read continually of the whole people of God turning away from his service. But, had the heathen lived in the land in equal numbers, and, still more, had they intermarried largely with the Israelites, how was it possible humanly speaking, that any sparks of the light of God's truth should have survived to the coming of Christ? Would not the Israelites have lost all their peculiar character; and if they had retained the name of Jehovah as of their God, would they not have formed as unworthy notions of his attributes, and worship him with a worship as abominable as that which the Moabites paid to Chemosh or the Philistines to Dagon?

But this was not to be, and therefore the nations of Canaan were to be cut off utterly. The Israelites, sword, in its bloodiest executions, wrought a work of mercy for all the countries of the earth to the very end of the world. They seem of very small importance to us now, these perpetual contests with the Canaanites, and the Midianites, and the Ammonites, and the Philistines, with which the Books of Joshua and Judges and Samuel are almost filled. We may half wonder that God should have interferred in such quarrels, or have changed the course of nature, in order to give one of the nations of Palestine the victory over another. But in these contests, on the fate of one of these nations of Palestine the happiness of the human race depended. The Israelites fought not for themselves only, but for us. It might follow that they should thus be accounted the enemies of all mankind, —it might be that they were tempted by their very distinctness to despise other nations; still they did God's work,—still they preserved unhurt the seed of eternal life, and were the ministers of blessing to all other nations, even though they themselves failed to enjoy it.—*Thomas Arnold,* 1795—1842.

Verse 10.—"*Who smote great nations,*" etc. Let us not stand in fear of any enemies that rise up against us, and conspire to hinder the peace of the church, and stop the passage of the gospel; when God beginneth to take the cause of his people into his own hand, and smitteth any of his enemies on the jaw-bone, the rest are reserved to the like destruction. For wherefore doth God punish his adversaries, and enter into judgment with them? Wherefore doth he visit them, and strike them down with his right hand! Is it only to take vengeance, and to show his justice in their confusion? No, it serveth for the comfort and consolation of his servants, that howsoever God be patient, yet in the end they shall not escape.—*William Attersoll,* 1618.

Verse 11.—"*Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og.*" Notice is taken of two kings, Sihon and Og, not as being more powerful than the rest, but because shutting up the entrance to the land in front they were the most formidable enemies met with, and the people, besides, were not as yet habituated to war.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 11.—"*Sihon king of the Amorites.*" When Israel arrived on the borders of the promised Land they encountered Sihon. (Numb. xxi. 21.) He was evidently a man of very great courage and audacity. Shortly before the time of Israel's arrival he had dispossessed the Moabites of a splendid territory, driving them south of the natural bulwark of the Arnon with great slaughter and the loss of a great number of captives (xxi. 26—29). When the Israelite host appears, he does not

hesitate or temporize like Balak, but at once gathers his people together and attacks them. But the battle was his last. He and all his host were destroyed, and their district from Arnon to Jabbok became at once the possession of the conqueror.

Josephus (Ant. iv. 5, § 2) has preserved some singular details of the battle, which have not survived in the text either of the Hebrew or LXX. He represents the Amorite army as containing every man in the nation fit to bear arms. He states that they were unable to fight when away from the shelter of their cities, and that being especially galled by the slings and arrows of the Hebrews, and at last suffering severely from thirst, they rushed to the stream and to the recesses of the ravine of the Arnon. Into these recesses they were pursued by their active enemy and slaughtered in vast numbers.

Whether we accept these details or not, it is plain, from the manner in which the name of Sihon fixed itself in the national mind, and the space which his image occupies in the official records, and in the later poetry of Israel, that he was a truly formidable chieftain.—*George Grove, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1863.

Verse 11.—*Sihon*, although conqueror of Moab, and much more formidable than the Canaanites whom Israel had feared at Kadesh, fell easily because Israel fought in faith. There is no adversary that can really offer any effectual opposition to our onward march if assailed in the strength of Christ with a cheerful courage.

Og the king of Bashan was much more formidable even than *Sihon*, but he seems to have fallen yet more easily, judging from the brief notice of the conquest. Even so, when once we have overcome a difficulty or conquered an evil habit in the strength of faith, other conquests open out before us readily and naturally which we should not have dared to contemplate before. It is most true in religion that "nothing succeeds like success."—*R. Winterbotham, in "The Pulpit Commentary,"* 1881.

Verse 11.—"*Og king of Bashan.*" The task was not an easy one, for Edrei—"*the strong*"—Og's capital, was in ordinary circumstances almost unassailable, since it was, strange to say, built in a hollow artificially scooped out of the top of a hill, which the deep gorge of the Hieromax isolates from the country round. Its streets may be still seen running in all directions beneath the present town of Adraha. But Kenath, in the district called Argob—"*the stony*"—was still stronger, for it was built in the crevices of a great island of lava which has split, in cooling, into innumerable fissures, through whose labyrinth no enemy could safely penetrate. In these were its streets and houses, some of which, of a later date, with stone doors, turning on hinges of stone, remain till this day. . . . . Nor were these the only fastnesses. No fewer than sixty cities "fenced with high walls, gates, and bars" (Deut. iii. 5), had to be taken; but they all fell, sooner or later, before the vigorous assaults of the invaders, and, long afterwards, there might be seen, in the capital of their allies, the Ammonites, one of the trophies of the campaign—the gigantic iron bedstead of King Og, or as some think, the huge sarcophagus he had prepared for himself, as was the custom with Canaanite kings.—*Cunningham Geikie, in "Hours with the Bible,"* 1881.

Verse 12.—"*Their land for an heritage.*" The land was given to them to be transmitted from father to son, by hereditary right and succession.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 13.—"*Thy name, O* LORD, *endureth for ever,*" etc. Immutability is a glory belonging to all the attributes of God. It is not a single perfection of the Divine nature, nor is it limited to particular objects thus and thus disposed. Mercy and justice have their distinct objects and distinct acts: mercy is conversant about a penitent, justice about an obstinate sinner. In our conceptions of the Divine perfections, his perfections are different. The wisdom of God is not his power, nor his power his holiness; but immutability is the centre wherein they all unite. There is not one perfection which may not be said to be, and truly is, immutable; none of them will appear so glorious about this beam, the sun of immutability, which renders them highly excellent, without the least shadow of imperfection. How cloudy would his blessedness be, if it were changeable; how dim his wisdom, if it might be obscured; how feeble his power, if it were capable of becoming sickly and languishing; how would mercy lose much of its lustre, if it could change into wrath, and justice much of its dread, if it could be turned into mercy; while the object of justice remains unfit for mercy, and one that hath need of mercy continues

only fit for the Divine fury? But unchangeableness is the thread that runs through the whole web; it is the enamel of all the rest; none of them without it could look with a triumphant aspect.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 13.—"*Thy name, O* LORD, *endureth for ever.*" God is, and will be always the same to his church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God; and his church is, and will be the same to him, a thankful, praising people; and thus his name *endures for ever.*—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 13.—"*Thy memorial, O* LORD, *throughout all generations;*" or, *the remembrance of them to generation and generation;* to every age. The love of Christ is remembered by his people in every age, as they enjoy the blessings of his grace in redemption, justification, pardon, etc. It cannot be forgotten as long as the gospel is preached, the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper administered, and the Lord has a people in the world; all which will be as long as the sun and moon endure, and there will therefore always be a memorial of him.—*John Gill.*

Verse 14.—"*For the* LORD *will judge his people,*" etc. Is it so, that all providence is for the good of the church? This is comfort in the low estate of the church at any time. God's eye is upon his people even whilst he seems to have forsaken them. If he seems to be departed, it is but in some other part of the earth, to show himself strong for them; wherever his eye is fixed in any part of the world, his church hath his heart, and his church's relief is his end. Though the church may sometimes lie among the pots in a dirty condition, yet there is a time of resurrection, when God will restore it to its true glory, and make it as white as a dove with its silver wings: Ps. lxviii. 13. The sun is not always obscured by a thick cloud, but it will be freed from the darkness of it. "*God will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants*" [the original is, *Comfort himself*]. It is a comfort to God to deliver his people, and he will do it when it shall be most comfortable to his glory and to their hearts.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 14.—"*He will repent himself.*" The original word "*repent himself*" here has a very extensive signification, which cannot be expressed by any one English rendering. It implies taking compassion upon them, with the intention of being comforted in their future, and of taking vengeance on their oppressors. Such are the several meanings in which the word is used. Language fails to express the mind of God toward his faithful people. How dear ought his counsels to be to us, and the consideration of all his ways! This reflection was continually urged upon the nation of Israel, so liable as they were to fall away to idolatory.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 15.—"*The idols of the heathen.*" The shrines on the hill-tops were very rude affairs, enclosures formed by rough stone walls, and containing ragamuffin gods—stocks of weather-beaten wood, blocks of battered stone, and lumps of rusty old iron. The carved wooden gods were so much the worse for the weather, that their features, if they ever had any, were altogether defaced. One, not made of a single piece, like the rest, but built together by joiner work, had fared worse than its more humble neighbours. His arms were gone, and his breast, heart, and stomach had all fallen out; strange to say, his head remained, and it was laughable to see such a hollow mockery stare at you with a solemn face. The stone images were sadly battered by tumbling about among the rubbish, and the cast-metal gods mostly had their heads broken off and set carefully on again, to stand there till the next storm would send them rolling. Thus God is not only robbed in the valley, but men climb up as near to heaven as they can, and insult him to his face. —*James Gilmour, in "Among the Mongols,"* 1883.

Verse 15.—"*The idols,*" etc. Herodotus telleth us that Amasis had a large laver of gold, wherein both he and his guests used to wash their feet. This vessel he brake and made a god of it, which the Egyptians devoutly worshipped. And the like idolomania is at this day found among Papists, what distinction soever they would fain make betwixt an *idol* and an *image*, which indeed (as they use them) are all one.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 15.—"*Silver and gold.*" By singling out these metals, the most precious materials of which the idols were framed, and pouring contempt upon even these costly images, the Psalmist heightens the scorn which he implies for such as were of inferior price, and which had not the one element of costliness in their favour. And when we bear in mind the Apostles saying that covetousness is idolatry we shall be warned that we, too, may need this lesson against worshipping silver and

gold, or the worldly wisdom and specious eloquence which may be compared to these metals.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 15.—"*The work of men's hands.*" Therefore they should rather, if it were possible, worship man, as their creator and lord, than be worshipped by him.—*Matthew Pool,* 1624—1679.

Verses 15, 16, 17.—The Rev. John Thomas, a missionary in India, was one day travelling alone through the country, when he saw a great number of people waiting near an idol temple. He went up to them, and as soon as the doors were opened, he walked into the temple. Seeing an idol raised above the people, he walked boldly up to it, held up his hand, and asked for silence. He then put his fingers on its eyes, and said, "It has eyes, but it cannot see! It has ears, but it cannot hear! It has a nose, but it cannot smell! It has hands, but it cannot handle! It has a mouth, but it cannot speak! Neither is there any breath in it!" Instead of doing injury to him for affronting their god and themselves, the natives were all surprised; and an old Brahmin was so convinced of his folly by what Mr. Thomas said, that he also cried out, "It has feet, but cannot run away!" The people raised a shout, and being ashamed of their stupidity, they left the temple, and went to their homes—*From "The New Cyclopædia of Illustrative Anecdote,"* 1875.

Verses 16, 17.—"*Mouths,*" "*eyes,*" "*ears.*" So many members as the images have, serving to represent perfections ascribed to them, so many are the lies.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 16—17.—They can neither *speak* in answer to your prayers and enquiries, nor *see* what you do or what you want, nor *hear* your petitions, nor *smell* your incenses and sacrifices, nor use their *hands* either to take anything from you, or to give anything to you; nor so much as *mutter,* nor give the least sign of apprehending your condition or concerns.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verses 16—17.—"*Mouths, but they speak not:*" "*ears, but they hear not.*"

A heated fancy or imagination
May be mistaken for an inspiration.
True; but is this conclusion fair to make
That inspiration must be all mistake?
A pebble-stone is not a diamond: true;
But must a diamond be a pebble too?
To own a God who does not speak to men,
Is first to own, and then disown again;
Of all idolatry the total sum
Is having gods that are both deaf and dumb.

John Byrom, 1691—1763.

Verse 18.—"*Like them shall be those making them, every one who* (*is*) *trusting in them.*" If the meaning had been simply, those who make them *are* like them, Hebrew usage would have required the verb to be suppressed. Its insertion, therefore, in the future form (יִהְיוּ) requires it to be rendered strictly *shall be,* i.e., in fate as well as character. Idolaters shall perish with their perishable idols. See Isa. i. 31.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 18.—People never rise above the level of their gods, which are to them their better nature.—*Andrew Robert Faussett.*

Verse 18.—"*They that make them are like unto them.*" Idolatry is a benumbing sin, which bereaveth the idolater of the right use of his senses.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 18.—"*They that make them,*" etc. Teacheth us, that the idol, the idol-maker, and all such also as serve idols, are not only beastly and blockish before men, but shall before God, in good time, come to shame and confusion.—*Thomas Wilcocks,* 1549—1608.

Verse 18.—"*Like unto them.*" A singular phenomenon, known as the Spectre of the Brocken, is seen on a certain mountain in Germany. The traveller who at dawn stands on the topmost ridge beholds a colossal shadowy spectre. But in fact it is only his own shadow projected upon the morning mists by the rising sun; and it imitates, of course, every movement of its creator. So heathen nations have mistaken their own image for Deity. Their gods display human frailties and passions and scanty virtues, projected and magnified upon the heavens, just as the small figures on the slide of a magic-lantern are projected, magnified, and

illuminated upon a white sheet.—*From Elan Foster's New Cyclopædia of Illustrations*, 1870.

Verse 18.—"*Like unto them.*" How many are like idol-images, when they have eyes, ears, and mouths as though they had none: that is, when they do not use them when and how they should!—*Christoph Starke.*

Verse 19.—"*Bless the* LORD." Blessing of God is to wish well to, and speak well of God, out of good-will to God himself, and a sense of his goodness to ourselves. God loves your good word, that is, to be spoken of well by you; he rejoiceth in your well-wishes, and to hear from you expressions of rejoicings in his own independent blessedness. Though God hath an infinite ocean of all blessedness, to which we can add nothing, and he is therefore called by way of eminency, "The Blessed One" (Mark xiv. 61), a title solely proper and peculiar to him, yet he delights to hear the *amen* of the saints, his creatures, resounding thereto; he delights to hear us utter our "so be it."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 19.—"*Bless the* LORD." And not an idol (Isa. lxvi. 3), as the Philistines, did their Dagon and as Papists still do their he-saints and she-saints.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 20.—"*Bless the* LORD, *O house of Levi.*" In Ps. cxv. the exhortation given is to *trust* or *hope* in the Lord; here, to *bless* him. The *Levites* are mentioned in addition to the house of Aaron, there being two orders of priesthood. Everything else in the two Psalms is the same, except that, in the last verse, the Psalmist here joins himself, along with the rest of the Lord's people, in blessing God.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 20.—"*Ye that fear the* LORD, *bless the* LORD." These are distinct from the Israelites, priests, and Levites, and design the proselytes among them of other nations that truly feared God, as Jarchi notes; and all such persons, whoever and wherever they are, have reason to bless the Lord for the fear of him they have, which is not from nature but from grace; and for the favours shown them, the blessings bestowed upon them, the good things laid up for them, and the guard that is about them, which the Sriptures abundantly declare, and experience confirms.—*John Gill.*

Verse 20.—"*Ye that fear the* LORD, *bless the* LORD." In Scripture it is quite common to find this "*fear*" put for holiness itself, or the sum of true religion. It is not, therefore, such a fear as seized the hearts of our first parents when, hearing the voice of the Lord God, they hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden; nor such as suddenly quenched the noise of royal revelry in the night of Babylon's overthrow; nor such as, on some day yet future, shall drive desparing sinners to the unavailing shelter of the mountains and rocks. It is not the fear of guilty distrust, or of hatred, or of bondage—that fear which hath torment, and which perfect love casteth out; but a fear compatible with the highest privileges, attainments, and hopes of the Christian life. It is the fear of deep humility and reverence, and filial subjection, and adoring gratitude; the fear which "blesseth the Lord," saying, "*His mercy endureth for ever.*"—*John Lillie* (1812—1867), *in "Lectures on the Epistles of Peter."*

Verse 21.—The conclusion, verse 21, alludes to the conclusion of the preceding Psalm. There, the Lord blesses thee out of Zion; here, let him be blessed out of Zion. The praise proceeds from the same place from which the blessing issues. For Zion is the place where the community dwells with God.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 21.—"*Praise ye the* LORD." When the song of praise is sung unto God, the work of his praise is not ended, but must be continued, renewed, and followed still: "*Praise ye the* LORD."—*David Dickson.*

Verse 21.—"*Bless,*" "*Praise.*" We are not only to bless God, but to praise him: "All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee." Blessing relateth to his benefits, praise to his excellencies. We bless him for what he is to us, we praise him for what he is in himself. Now, whether we bless him, or praise him; it is still to increase our love to him, and delight in him; for God is not affected with the flattery of empty praises; yet this is an especial duty, which is of use to you, as all other duties are. It doth you good to consider him as an infinite and eternal Being, and of glorious and incomprehensible majesty. It is pleasant and profitable to us.—*Thomas Manton.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1—4.—I. The Employment. Praise three times commended, and in three respects. 1. With respect to God: not his works merely, but himself. 2. With respect to ourselves: it is pleasant and profitable. 3. With respect to others: it best recommends our religion to all who hear it. All others are religions of fear, ours of joy and praise. II. The Persons: servants in attendance at his house, who stand there by appointment, ready to hear, ready to obey. III. The Motives. 1. In general. It is due to God, because he is good; and it is pleasant to us: verse 3. 2. In particular. Those who are specially privileged by God should specially praise him: verse 4. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise."—*G. R.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise ye the* LORD." I. The Lord ought to be praised. II. He ought to be praised *by you.* III. He ought to be praised *now:* let us remember his present favours. IV. He ought to be praised in everything for ever.

Verse 1.—"*Praise him, O ye servants of the* LORD." I. Praise him for the privilege of serving him. II. Praise him for the power to serve him. III. Praise him for the acceptance of your service. IV. Praise him as the chief part of your service. V. Praise him that others may be induced to engage in his service.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 2.—What is at this day "the house of the Lord"? Who may be said to stand in it? What special reasons have they for praise?

Verse 2.—The nearer to God, the dearer to God; and the better our place, the sweeter our praise.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 2—5.—"*Our* God," "*Our* Lord." Sweet subject. See our Exposition.

Verse 3.—Praise the Lord, I. For the excellence of his nature. II. For the revelation of his name. III. For the pleasantness of his worship.

Verse 4.—It is a song of praise, and therefore election is mentioned because it is a motive for song. I. *The Choice*—"The Lord hath chosen." Divine. Sovereign. Gracious. Immutable. II. *The Consecration*—"Chosen Jacob to himself." To know him. To preserve his truth. To maintain his worship. To manifest his grace. To keep alive the hope of the Coming One. III. *The Separation* —implied in the special choice. By being taken into covenant: Abraham and his seed. By receiving the covenant inheritance: Canaan. By redemption. By power and by blood out of Egypt. Wilderness separation. Settled establishment in their own land. IV. *The Elevation.* In name—from Jacob to Israel. In value—from worthless to precious. In purpose and use—crown jewels. In preservation—kept as treasures. In delight—God rejoices in his people as his heritage.

Verse 5.—"*I know that the* LORD *is great.*" I. By observing nature and providence. II. By reading his word. III. By my own conversion, comfort, and regeneration. IV. By my after-experience. V. By my overpowering communion with him.

Verse 5.—Delicious dogmatism. "*I know,*" etc. I. What I know. 1. The Lord. 2. That he is great. 3. That he is above all. II. Why I know it. 1. Because he is "our Lord." 2. By his operations in nature, providence, and grace (vers. 6—13) III. My incorrigible obstinacy in this regard is proof against worshippers of all other gods: which gods are effeminate; without sovereignty; no god, or any god.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 6.—"*Whatsoever the* LORD *pleased, that did he.*" *God's good pleasure in the work of grace.* Seen, *not* in the death of the wicked, Ezek. xxxiii. 11; but in the election of his people, 1 Sam. xii. 22; in the infliction of suffering on the substitute, Isa. liii. 10; in the provision of all fulness for his people in Christ, Col. i. 19, in the arrangement of salvation by faith in Christ, John vi. 39; in instituting preaching as the means of salvation, 1 Cor. i. 21; in the adoption of believers as his children, Eph. i. 5; in their sanctification, 1 Thess. iv. 3; in their ultimate triumph and reign, Luke xii. 32.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 6 (*last words*).—The power of God in places of trouble, change, and danger —*seas;* and in conditions of sin, weakness, despair, perplexity—in all *deep places.*

Verses 6—12.—The Resistless Pleasure of Jehovah. I. Behold it as here exemplified: 1. Ruling all nature. 2. Overturning a rebellious nation. 3. Making sport of kings and crowns. 4. Laying a fertile country at the feet of the chosen. II. Be wise in view thereof. 1. Submit to it: it sweeps the seas, and lays hands on earth and heaven. 2. Think not to hide from it: the "ends of the earth"

and " all deep places " are open to it ; it is swifter than its own lightnings. 3. Be awed by its majesty : God's way is strewn with crowns and the bones of kings. 4. Seek its protection : its mightiest efforts are in defence of those it favours. 5. Let the Lord's people fear not with so great a God, and so exhaustless an armoury.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 13.—"*Thy name, O* LORD, *endureth for ever.*" I. As *the embodiment of perfection :* God's attributes and glory. II. As *the object of veneration :* " Holy and reverend is his name." III. As *the cause of salvation :* " For my name's sake," etc. IV. As *the centre of attraction :* " In his name shall the Gentiles trust." " Our desire is to the remembrance of thy name." " Where two or three are gathered in my name," etc. V. As *a plea in supplication :* " For thy name's sake, pardon," etc. " Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name." VI. As *a warrant for action :* " Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name," etc. VII. As *a refuge in tribulation :* " The name of the Lord is a strong tower : the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." " I have kept them in thy name." VIII. As *a mark of glorification :* " I will write upon him the name of my God." IX. As *a terror to transgressors :* " My name is dreadful among the heathen."—*W. J.*

Verse 14.—"*The* LORD *will judge his people.*" Others would like to do it, but must not. The world has seven judgment-days in every week, but shall not be able to condemn the saints. He himself will judge. How will he judge them ? 1. Their persons, as to whether they are in or out of Christ. 2. Their principles, as to whether they are genuine or spurious. 3. Their prayers, as to whether they are availing or useless. 4. Their profession, as to whether it is true or false. 5. Their procedure, as to whether it is good or bad.—*W. J.*

Verse 14.—I. The position of believers—" his people," " his servants." II. The discipline of God's family. III. The tenderness of the Lord to them. IV. The safety of believers : they are still the Lord's.

Verse 15.—"*Silver and gold.*" These are idols in our own land, among worldlings, and with some professors. Show the folly and wickedness of loving riches, and the evils which come of it.

Verses 16, 17.—The Portrait of many. I. "*Mouths, but they speak not.*" No prayer, praise, confession. II. "*Eyes, but they see not.*" Discern not, understand not, take no warning ; do not look to Christ. III. "*Ears, but they hear not.*' Attend no ministry, or are present but unaffected ; hear not God. IV. "*Neither is there any breath in their mouths.*" No life, no tokens of life, no prayer and praise which are the breath of spiritual life.

Verse 18.—I. Men make idols like themselves. II. The idols make their makers like themselves. Describe both processes.

Verse 19.—"*House of Israel.*" The Lord's great goodness to all his people, perceived and proclaimed, and the Lord praised for it.

Verse 19.—"*House of Aaron.*" God's blessing on Aaron's house typical of his grace to those who are priests unto God.

Verses 19—21.—I. The Exhortation. 1. To bless the Lord. 2. To bless him in his own house. II. To whom it is addressed. 1. To the house of Israel, or the whole church. 2. To the house of Aaron, or ministers of the sanctuary. 3. To the house of Levi, or the attendants upon ministers, and assistants in the services. 4. To all who fear God, wherever they may be. Even they who fear God are invited to praise him, which is a sure sign that he delighteth in mercy.—*G. R.*

Verse 20.—The Levites, their history, duties, rewards, and obligations to bless God.

Verse 20 (*second clause*).—I. The fear of God includes all religion. II. The fear of the Lord suggests praise. III. The fear of the Lord renders praise acceptable.

Verse 21.—I. The double fact. 1. Blessing perpetually ascending from Zion to God. 2. God perpetually blessing his people by dwelling with them in Zion. II. The double reason for praise, which is found in the double fact, and concerns every member of the church.

PSALM CXXXVI.

We know not by whom this Psalm was written, but we do know that it was sung in Solomon's temple (2 *Chron. vii.* 3, 6), *and by the armies of Jehoshaphat when they sang themselves into victory in the wilderness of Tekoa. From the striking form of it we should infer that it was a popular hymn among the Lord's ancient people. Most hymns with a solid, simple chorus become favourites with congregations, and this is sure to have been one of the best beloved. It contains nothing but praise. It is tuned to rapture, and can only be fully enjoyed by a devoutly grateful heart.*

It commences with a three-fold praise to the Triune Lord (1—3), *then it gives us six notes of praise to the Creator* (4—9), *six more upon deliverance from Egypt* (10—15), *and seven upon the journey through the wilderness and the entrance into Canaan. Then we have two happy verses of personal gratitude for present mercy* (23 *and* 24), *one* (*verse* 25) *to tell of the Lord's universal providence, and a closing verse to excite to never-ending praise.*

EXPOSITION.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

1. *"O give thanks unto the LORD."* The exhortation is intensely earnest: the Psalmist pleads with the Lord's people with an "O," three times repeated. Thanks are the least that we can offer, and these we ought freely to give. The inspired writer calls us to praise Jehovah for all his goodness to us, and all the greatness of his power in blessing his chosen. We thank our parents, let us praise our heavenly Father; we are grateful to our benefactors, let us give thanks unto the Giver of all good. *"For he is good."* Essentially he is goodness itself, practically all that he does is good, relatively he is good to his creatures. Let us thank him that we have seen, proved, and tasted that he is good. He is good beyond all others; indeed, he alone is good in the highest sense; he is the source of good, the good of all good, the sustainer of good, the perfecter of good, and the rewarder of good. For this he deserves the constant gratitude of his people. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* We shall have this repeated in every verse of this song, but not once too often. It is the sweetest stanza that a man can sing. What joy that there is mercy, mercy with Jehovah, enduring mercy, mercy enduring for ever. We are ever needing it, trying it, praying for it, receiving it: therefore let us for ever sing of it.

> "When all else is changing within and around,
> In God and his mercy no change can be found."

2. *"O give thanks unto the God of gods,"* If there be powers in heaven or on earth worthy of the name of gods he is the God of them; from him their dominion comes, their authority is derived from him, and their very existence is dependent upon his will. Moreover, for the moment assuming that the deities of the heathen were gods, yet none of them could be compared with our Elohim, who is infinitely beyond what they are fabled to be. Jehovah is our God, to be worshipped and adored, and he is worthy of our reverence to the highest degree. If the heathen cultivate the worship of their gods with zeal, how much more intently should we seek the glory of the God of gods—the only true and real God. Foolish persons have gathered from this verse that the Israelites believed in the existence of many gods, at the same time believing that their Jehovah was the chief among them; but this is an absurd inference, since gods who have a God over them cannot possibly be gods themselves. The words are to be understood after the usual manner of human speech, in which things are often spoken of not as they really are, but as they profess to be. God as God is worthy of our warmest thanks, *"for his mercy endureth*

for ever." Imagine supreme Godhead without everlasting mercy! It would then have been as fruitful a source of terror as it is now a fountain of thanksgiving. Let the Highest be praised in the highest style, for right well do his nature and his acts deserve the gratitude of all his creatures.

Praise your God with right good will,
For his love endureth still.

3. "*O give thanks to the Lord of lords.*" There are lords many, but Jehovah is the Lord of them. All lordship is vested in the Eternal. He makes and administers law, he rules and governs mind and matter, he possesses in himself all sovereignty and power. All lords in the plural are summed up in this Lord in the singular: he is more lordly than all emperors and kings condensed into one. For this we may well be thankful, for we know the superior Sovereign will rectify the abuses of the underlings who now lord it over mankind. He will call these lords to his bar, and reckon with them for every oppression and injustice. He is as truly the Lord of lords as he is Lord over the meanest of the land, and he rules with a strict impartiality, for which every just man should give heartiest thanks. "*For his mercy endureth for ever.*" Yes, he mingles mercy with his justice, and reigns for the benefit of his subjects. He pities the sorrowful, protects the helpless, provides for the needy, and pardons the guilty; and this he does from generation to generation, never wearying of his grace, "because he delighteth in mercy." Let us arouse ourselves to laud our glorious Lord! A third time let us thank him who is our Jehovah, our God, and our Lord; and let this one reason suffice us for three thanksgivings, or for three thousand—

For his mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

4 To him who alone doth great wonders: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

8 The sun to rule by day: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4. "*To him who alone doeth great wonders.*" Jehovah is the great Thaumaturge, the unrivalled Wonderworker. None can be likened unto him, he is alone in wonderland, the Creator and Worker of true marvels, compared with which all other remarkable things are as child's play. His works are all great in wonder even when they are not great in size; in fact, in the minute objects of the microscope we behold as great wonders as even the telescope can reveal. All the works of his unrivalled skill are wrought by him alone and unaided, and to him, therefore, must be undivided honour. None of the gods or the lords helped Jehovah in creation, or in the redemption of his people: his own right hand and his holy arm wrought for him these great deeds. What have the gods of the heathen done? If the question be settled by doings, Jehovah is indeed "alone." It is exceedingly wonderful that men should worship gods who can do nothing, and forget the Lord who alone doeth great wonders. Even when the Lord uses men as his instruments, yet the wonder of the work is his alone; therefore let us not trust in men, or idolize them, or tremble before them. Praise is to be rendered to Jehovah, "*for his mercy endureth for ever.*" The mercy of the wonder is the wonder of the mercy; and the enduring nature of that mercy is the central wonder of that wonder. The Lord causes us often to sit down in amazement as we see what his mercy has wrought out and prepared for us: "wonders of grace to God belong," yea, great wonders and unsearchable. Oh the depth! Glory be to his name world without end!

Doing wondrous deeds alone,
Mercy sits upon his throne.

5. "*To him that by wisdom made the heavens.*" His goodness appears in creating the upper regions. He set his wisdom to the task of fashioning a firmament, or

an atmosphere suitable for a world upon which mortal men should dwell. What a mass of wisdom lies hidden in this one creating act! The discoveries of our keenest observers have never searched out all the evidences of design which are crowded together in this work of God's hands. The lives of plants, animals, and men are dependent upon the fashioning of our heavens: had the skies been other than they are we had not been here to praise God. Divine foresight planned the air and the clouds, with a view to the human race. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* The Psalmist's details of mercy begin in the loftiest regions, and gradually descend from the heavens to "our low estate" (verse 23); and this is an ascent, for mercy becomes greater as its objects become less worthy. Mercy is far-reaching, long-enduring, all-encompassing. Nothing is too high for its reach, as nothing is beneath its stoop.

High as heaven his wisdom reigns,
Mercy on the throne remains.

6. *"To him that stretched out the earth above the waters."* Lifting it up from the mingled mass, the dank morass, the bottomless bog, of mixed land and sea; and so fitting it to be the abode of man. Who but the Lord could have wrought this marvel? Few even think of the divine wisdom and power which performed all this of old; yet, if a continent can be proved to have risen or fallen an inch within historic memory, the fact is recorded in the "transactions" of learned societies, and discussed at every gathering of philosophers. *"For his mercy endureth for ever,"* as is seen in the original upheaval and perpetual upstanding of the habitable land, so that no deluge drowns the race. By his strength he sets fast the mountains and consolidates the land upon which we sojourn.

From the flood he lifts the land:
Firm his mercies ever stand.

7. *"To him that made great lights."* This also is a creating miracle worthy of our loudest thanks. What could men have done without light? Though they had the heavens above them, and dry land to move upon, yet what could they see, and where could they go without light? Thanks be to the Lord, who has not consigned us to darkness. In great mercy he has not left us to an uncertain, indistinct light, floating about fitfully, and without order; but he has concentrated light upon two grand luminaries, which, as far as we are concerned, are to us "great lights." The Psalmist is making a song for common people, not for your critical savans,—and so he sings of the sun and moon as they appear to us,—the greatest of lights. These the Lord created in the beginning; and for the present age of man made or constituted them light-bearers for the world. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Mercy gleams in every ray of light, and it is most clearly seen in the arrangement by which it is distributed with order and regularity from the sun and moon.

Lamps he lit in heaven's heights,
For in mercy he delights.

8. *"The sun to rule by day."* We cannot be too specific in our praises; after mentioning great lights, we may sing of each of them, and yet not outwear our theme. The influences of the sun are too many for us to enumerate them all, but untold benefits come to all orders of beings by its light, warmth, and other operations. Whenever we sit in the sunshine, our gratitude should be kindled. The sun is a great ruler, and his government is pure beneficence, because by God's mercy it is moderated to our feebleness; let all who rule take lessons from the sun which rules to bless. By day we may well give thanks, for God gives cheer. The sun rules because God rules; it is not the sun which we should worship, like the Parsees; but the Creator of the sun, as he did who wrote this sacred song. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Day unto day uttereth speech concerning the mercy of the Lord; every sunbeam is a mercy, for it falls on undeserving sinners who else would sit in doleful darkness, and find earth a hell. Milton puts it well:

He, the golden tressèd sun
Caused all day his course to run;
For his mercy shall endure
Ever faithful, ever sure.

9. *"The moon and stars to rule by night."* No hour is left without rule. Blessed be God, he leaves us never to the doom of anarchy. The rule is one of light and

benediction. The moon with her charming changes, and the stars in their fixed spheres gladden the night. When the season would be dark and dreary because of the absence of the sun, forth come the many minor comforters. The sun is enough alone; but when he is gone a numerous band cannot suffice to give more than a humble imitation of his radiance. Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, alone, can do more for us than all his servants put together. He makes our day. When he is hidden, it is night, and remains night, let our human comforters shine at their full. What mercy is seen in the lamps of heaven gladdening our landscape at night! What equal mercy in all the influences of the moon upon the tides, those life-floods of the earth! The Lord is the Maker of every star, be the stars what they may; he calleth them all by their names, and at his bidding each messenger with his torch enlightens our darkness. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Let our thanks be as many as the stars, and let our lives reflect the goodness of the Lord, even as the moon reflects the light of the sun. The nightly guides and illuminators of men on land and sea are not for now and then, but for all time. They shone on Adam, and they shine on us. Thus they are tokens and pledges of undying grace to men; and we may sing with our Scotch friends—

For certainly
His mercies dure
Most firm and sure
Eternally.

10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

10. We have heard of the glory of the world's creation, we are now to praise the Lord for the creation of his favoured nation by their Exodus from Egypt. Because the monarch of Egypt stood in the way of the Lord's gracious purposes it became needful for the Lord to deal with him in justice; but the great design was mercy to Israel, and through Israel mercy to succeeding ages, to all the world. *"To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn."* The last and greatest of the plagues struck all Egypt to the heart. The sorrow and the terror which it caused throughout the nation it is hardly possible to exaggerate. From king to slave each one was wounded in the tenderest point. The joy and hope of every household was struck down in one moment, and each family had its own wailing. The former blows had missed their aim compared with the last; but that "smote Egypt." The Lord's firstborn had been oppressed by Egypt, and at last the Lord fulfilled his threatening, "I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." Justice lingered but it struck home at last. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Yes, even to the extremity of vengeance upon a whole nation the Lord's mercy to his people endured. He is slow to anger, and judgment is his strange work; but when mercy to men demands severe punishments he will not hold back his hand from the needful surgery. What were all the firstborn of Egypt compared with those divine purposes of mercy to all generations of men which were wrapt up in the deliverance of the elect people? Let us even when the Lord's judgments are abroad in the earth continue to sing of his unfailing grace.

For evermore his love shall last
For ever sure, for ever fast.

11. *"And brought out Israel from among them."* Scattered as the tribes were up and down the country, and apparently held in a grasp which would never be

relaxed, the Lord wrought their deliverance, and severed them from their idolatrous task-masters. None of them remained in bondage. The Lord brought them out; brought them out at the very hour when his promise was due; brought them out brought them all out; despite their being mingled among the Egyptians; brought them out never to return. Unto his name let us give thanks for this further proof of his favour to the chosen ones, "*For his mercy endureth for ever.*" Once the Israelites did not care to go out, but preferred to bear the ills they had rather than risk they knew not what; but the Lord's mercy endured that test also, and ceased not to stir up the nest till the birds were glad to take to their wings. He turned the land of plenty into a house of bondage, and the persecuted nation was glad to escape from slavery. The unfailing mercy of the Lord is gloriously seen in his separating his elect from the world. He brings out his redeemed, and they are henceforth a people who show forth his praise.

For God doth prove
Our constant friend;
His boundless love
Shall never end.

12. "*With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm.*" Not only the matter but the manner of the Lord's mighty acts should be the cause of our praise. We ought to bless the Lord for adverbs as well as adjectives. In the Exodus the great power and glory of Jehovah were seen. He dashed in pieces the enemy with his right hand. He led forth his people in no mean or clandestine manner. "He brought them forth also with silver and gold, and there was not one feeble person in all their tribes." Egypt was glad when they departed. God worked with great display of force, and with exceeding majesty; he stretched out his arm like a workman intent on his labour, he lifted up his hand as one who is not ashamed to be seen. Even thus was it in the deliverance of each one of us from the thraldom of sin: "according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." "*For his mercy endureth for ever*"—therefore his power is put forth for the rescue of his own. If one plague will not set them free there shall be ten; but free they shall all be at the appointed hour; not one Israelite shall remain under Pharaoh's power. God will not only use his hand but his arm—his extraordinary power shall be put to the work sooner than his purpose of mercy shall fail.

See he lifts his strong right hand,
For his mercies steadfast stand.

13. "*To him which divided the Red sea into parts.*" He made a road across the sea-bottom, causing the divided waters to stand like walls on either side. Men deny miracles; but, granted that there is a God, they become easy of belief. Since it requires me to be an atheist that I may logically reject miracles, I prefer the far smaller difficulty of believing in the infinite power of God. He who causes the waters of the sea ordinarily to remain as one mass can with equal readiness divide them. He who can throw a stone in one direction can with the same force throw it another way: the Lord can do precisely what he wills, and he wills to do anything which is for the deliverance of his people. "*For his mercy endureth for ever,*" and therefore it endures through the sea as well as over the dry land. He will do a new thing to keep his old promise. His way is in the sea, and he will make a way for his people in the same pathless region.

Lo, the Red Sea he divides
For his mercy sure abides.

14. "*And made Israel to pass through the midst of it.*" He gave the people courage to follow the predestined track through the yawning abyss, which might well have terrified a veteran host. It needed no little generalship to conduct so vast and motley a company along a way so novel and apparently so dangerous. He made them to pass, by the untrodden road; he led them down into the deep and up again on the further shore in perfect order, keeping their enemies back by the thick darkness of the cloudy pillar. Herein is the glory of God set forth, as all his people see it in their own deliverance from sin. By faith we also give up all reliance upon works and trust ourselves to pass by a way which we have not known, even by the way of reliance upon the atoning blood: thus are we effectually sundered from

the Egypt of our former estate, and our sins themselves are drowned. The people marched dry shod through the heart of the sea. Hallelujah! *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Mercy cleared the road, mercy cheered the host, mercy led them down, and mercy brought them up again. Even to the depth of the sea mercy reaches,—there is no end to it, no obstacle in the way of it, no danger to believers in it, while Jehovah is all around. "Forward!" be *our* watchword as it was that of Israel of old, for mercy doth compass us about.

Through the fire or through the sea
Still his mercy guardeth thee.

15. *"But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea."* Here comes the thunder-clap. Though we hear them sounding peal upon peal, yet the judgments of the Lord were only loud-mouthed mercies speaking confusion to the foe, that the chosen might tremble before him no longer. The chariots were thrown over, the horses were overthrown. The King and his warriors were alike overwhelmed; they were hurled from their chariots as locusts are tossed to and fro in the wind. Broken was the power and conquered was the pride of Egypt. Jehovah had vanquished the enemy. "Art thou not it which cut Rahab and wounded the crocodile?" None are too great for the Lord to subdue, none too high for the Lord to abase. The enemy in his fury drove after Israel into the sea, but there his wrath found a terrible recompense beneath the waves. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Yes, mercy continued to protect its children, and therefore called in the aid of justice to fulfil the capital sentence on their foes. Taken red-handed, in the very act of rebellion against their sovereign Lord, the audacious adversaries met the fate which they had themselves invited. He that goes down into the midst of the sea asks to be drowned. Sin is self-damnation. The sinner goes downward of his own choice, and if he finds out too late that he cannot return, is not his blood upon his own head? The finally impenitent, however terrible their doom, will not be witnesses against mercy; but rather this shall aggravate their misery, that they went on in defiance of mercy, and would not yield themselves to him whose mercy endureth for ever. To the Israelites as they sung this song their one thought would be of the rescue of their fathers from the fierce oppressor. Taken like a lamb from between the teeth of the lion, Israel justly praises her Deliverer and chants aloud:

Evermore his love shall reign;
Pharaoh and his host are slain.

16 To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

18 And slew famous kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

21 And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

22 *Even* an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

16. *"To him which led his people through the wilderness."* He led them into it, and therefore he was pledged to lead them through it. They were "his people," and yet they must go into the wilderness, and the wilderness must remain as barren as ever it was; but in the end they must come out of it into the promised land. God's dealings are mysterious, but they must be right, simply because they are his. The people knew nothing of the way, but they were led; they were a vast host, yet they were all led; there were neither roads nor tracks, but being led by unerring wisdom they never lost their way. He who brought them out of Egypt, also led them through the wilderness. By Moses, and Aaron, and Jethro, and the pillar of cloud he led them. What a multitude of mercies are comprehended in the conduct of such an enormous host through a region wherein there was no provision even for single travellers; yet the Lord by his infinite power and wisdom conducted a whole nation for forty years through a desert land, and their feet did not swell, neither did their garments wax old in all the journey. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Their conduct in the wilderness tested his mercy most severely, but it bore the

strain; many a time he forgave them; and though he smote them for their transgressions, yet he waited to be gracious and speedily turned to them in compassion. *Their* faithfulness soon failed, but *his* did not: the fiery, cloudy pillar which never ceased to lead the van was the visible proof of his immutable love—

For his mercy, changing never,
Still endureth, sure for ever.

17. *"To him which smote great kings."* Within sight of their inheritance Israel had to face powerful enemies. Kings judged to be great because of the armies at their back blocked up their road. This difficulty soon disappeared, for the Lord smote their adversaries, and a single stroke sufficed for their destruction. He who had subdued the really mighty ruler of Egypt made short work of these petty sovereigns, great though they were in the esteem of neighbouring princes. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Mercy, which had brought the chosen tribes so far, would not be baulked by the opposition of boastful foes. The Lord who smote Pharaoh at the beginning of the wilderness march, smote Sihon and Og at the close of it. How could these kings hope to succeed when even mercy itself was in arms against them.

Evermore his mercy stands
Saving from the foeman's hands.

18. *"And slew famous kings."* What good was their fame to them? As they opposed God they became infamous rather than famous. Their deaths made the Lord's fame to increase among the nations while their fame ended in disgraceful defeat. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Israelitish patriots felt that they could never have too much of this music; God had protected their nation, and they chanted his praises with unwearied iteration.

Kings he smote despite their fame,
For his mercy's still the same.

19. *"Sihon king of the Amorites."* Let the name be mentioned that the mercy may be the better remembered. Sihon smote Moab, but he could not smite Israel, for the Lord smote *him*. He was valiant and powerful, so as to be both great and famous; but as he wilfully refused to give a peaceful passage to the Israelites, and fought against them in malice, there was no choice for it but to let him run into that destruction which he courted. His fall was speedy and final, and the chosen people were so struck with it that they sung of his overthrow in their national songs. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* His mercy is no respecter of persons, and neither the greatness nor the fame of Sihon could protect him after he had dared to attack Israel. The Lord will not forsake his people because Sihon blusters.

Come what may
By night or day,
Still most sure,
His love shall dure.

20. *"And Og the king of Bashan."* He was of the race of the giants, but he was routed like a pigmy when he entered the lists with Israel's God. The Lord's people were called upon to fight against him, but it was God who won the victory. The fastnesses of Bashan were no defence against Jehovah. Og was soon ousted from his stronghold when the captain of the Lord's host led the war against him. He had to exchange his bedstead of iron for a bed in the dust, for he fell on the battlefield. Glory be to the divine conqueror, *"for his mercy endureth for ever."*

Giant kings before him yield,
Mercy ever holds the field.

If Sihon could not turn the Lord from his purpose we may be sure that Og could not. He who delivers us out of one trouble will rescue us out of another, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his grace in us.

21. *"And gave their land for an heritage."* As Lord of the whole earth he transferred his estate from one tenant to another. The land did not become the property of the Israelites by their own sword and bow, but by a grant from the throne. This was the great end which all along had been aimed at from Egypt to Jordan. He who brought his people out also brought them in. He who had promised the and

to the seed of Abraham also saw to it that the deed of gift did not remain a dead letter. Both our temporal and our spiritual estates come to us by royal charter. What God gives us is ours by the best of titles. Inheritance by God's gift is a tenure which even Satan cannot dispute. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Faithful love endures without end, and secures its own end. " Thou wilt surely bring them in," said the prophet poet ; and here we see the deed complete.

Till they reach the promised land
Mercy still the same must stand.

22. *"Even an heritage unto Israel his servant."* Repetitions are effective in poetry, and the more so if there be some little variation in them, bringing out into fuller light some point which else had not been noticed. The lands of the heathen kings were given to " Israel," the name by which the chosen seed is here mentioned for the third time in the Psalm, with the addition of the words, " his servant." The leasehold of Canaan to Israel after the flesh was made dependent upon suit and service rendered to the Lord-of-the-manor by whom the lease was granted. It was a country worth singing about, richly justifying the two stanzas devoted to it. The division of the country by lot, and the laws by which the portions of ground were reserved to the owners and their descendants for a perpetual inheritance were fit subjects for song. Had other nations enjoyed land-laws which ensured to every family a plot of ground for cultivation, much of the present discontent would never have arisen, beggary would soon have become uncommon, and poverty itself would have been rare. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Yes, mercy fights for the land, mercy divides the spoil among its favoured ones, and mercy secures each man in his inheritance. Glory be to God the faithful One.

For his mercy full and free,
Wins us full felicity.

23 Who remembered us in our low estate : for his mercy *endureth* for ever :

24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies : for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

23. *"Who remembered us in our low estate."* Personal mercies awake the sweetest song—" he remembered *us*." Our prayer is, " Lord remember me," and this is our encouragement—he has remembered us. For the Lord even to think of us is a wealth of mercy. Ours was a sorry estate,—an estate of bankruptcy and mendicancy. Israel rested in its heritage, but we were still in bondage, groaning in captivity : the Lord seemed to have forgotten us, and left us in our sorrow ; but it was not so for long : he turned again in his compassion, bethinking himself of his afflicted children. Our state was once so low as to be at hell's mouth ; since then it has been low in poverty, bereavement, despondency, sickness, and heart-sorrow, and we fear, also, sinfully low in faith, and love, and every other grace ; and yet the Lord has not forgotten us as a dead thing out of mind ; but he has tenderly remembered us still. We thought ourselves too small and too worthless for his memory to burden itself about us, yet he remembered us. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Yes, this is one of the best proofs of the immutability of his mercy, for if he could have changed towards any, it would certainly have been towards us who have brought ourselves low, kept ourselves low, and prepared ourselves to sink yet lower. It is memorable mercy to remember us in our low estate : in our highest joys we will exalt Jehovah's name, since of this we are sure,—he will not now desert us—

For his mercy full and free
Lasteth to eternity.

24. *"And hath redeemed us from our enemies."* Israel's enemies brought the people low ; but the Lord intervened, and turned the tables by a great redemption. The expression implies that they had become like slaves, and were not set free without price and power ; for they needed to be " *redeemed*." In our case the redemption which is in Christ Jesus is an eminent reason for giving thanks unto the Lord. Sin is our enemy, and we are redeemed from it by the atoning blood ; Satan is our enemy, and we are redeemed from him by the Redeemer's power ; the world is our

enemy, and we are redeemed from it by the Holy Spirit. We are ransomed, let us enjoy our liberty; Christ has wrought our redemption, let us praise his name.

"For his mercy endureth for ever." Even to redemption by the death of his Son did divine mercy stretch itself. What more can be desired? What more can be imagined? Many waters could not quench love, neither could the floods drown it.

E'en to death upon the tree
Mercy dureth faithfully.

25 Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

25. *"Who giveth food to all flesh."* Common providence, which cares for all living things, deserves our devoutest thanks. If we think of heavenly food, by which all saints are supplied, our praises rise to a still greater height; but meanwhile the universal goodness of God in feeding all his creatures is as worthy of praise as his special favours to the elect nation. Because the Lord feeds all life therefore we expect him to take special care of his own family. *"For his mercy endureth for ever."* Reaching downward even to beasts and reptiles, it is, indeed, a boundless mercy, which knows no limit because of the meanness of its object.

All things living he doth feed,
His full hand supplies their need;
For his mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth for* ever.

26. *"O give thanks unto the God of heaven."* The title is full of honour. The Lord is God in the highest realms, and among celestial beings. His throne is set in glory, above all, out of reach of foes, in the place of universal oversight. He who feeds ravens and sparrows is yet the glorious God of the highest realms. Angels count it their glory to proclaim his glory in every heavenly street. See herein the greatness of his nature, the depth of his condescension, and the range of his love. Mark the one sole cause of his bounty—*"For his mercy endureth for ever."* He hath done all things from this motive; and because his mercy never ceases, he will continue to multiply deeds of love world without end. Let us with all our powers of heart and tongue give thanks unto the holy name of Jehovah for ever and ever.

Change and decay in all around I see,
O thou who changest not, abide with me.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm was very probably composed by David, and given to the Levites to sing every day: 1 Chron. xvi. 41. Solomon his son followed his example, and made use of it in singing at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. vii. 3—6); as Jehoshaphat seems to have done when he went out to war against his enemies (2 Chron. xx. 21).—*John Gill.*

Whole Psalm.—The grand peculiarity of form in this Psalm . . . . is the regular recurrence, at the close of every verse, of a burden or *refrain*. . . . It has been a favourite idea with interpreters that such repetitions necessarily imply alternate or responsive choirs. But the other indications of this usage in the Psalter are extremely doubtful, and every exegetical condition may be satisfied by simply supposing that the singers, in some cases, answered their own questions, and that in others, as in that before us, the people united in the burden or chorus, as they were wont to do in the Amen.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm is called by the Greek church *Polyeleos*, from its continual mention of the mercy of God.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Whole Psalm.—In the liturgical language this Psalm is called *par excellence* the

great Hallel, for according to its broadest compass the great Hallel comprehends Ps. cxx. to cxxxvi., whilst the Hallel which is absolutely so called extends from Ps. cxiii. to cxviii.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—"*Praise ye* (הללו) *Jehovah*"; not as in Ps. cxxxv. 1, "Hallelujah," but varying the words,—"Be ye *Judahs* to the Lord!"

Praise him for what he is (ver. 1—3).
Praise him for what he is able to do (ver. 4).
Praise him for what he has done in creation (ver. 5—9).
Praise him for what he did in redeeming Israel from bondage (ver. 10—15).
Praise him for what he did in his providence toward them (ver. 16—22).
Praise him for his grace in times of calamity (ver. 23, 24).
Praise him for his grace to the world at large (ver. 25).
Praise him at the remembrance that this God is the God of heaven (ver. 26).—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—When, in the time of the Emperor Constantius, S. Athanasius was assaulted by night in his church at Alexandria by Syrianus and his troops, and many were wounded and murdered, the Bishop of Alexandria sat still in his chair, and ordered the deacon to begin this Psalm, and the people answered in prompt alternation, "*For his mercy endureth for ever.*"—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*O give thanks unto the* LORD." When we have praised God for reasons offered unto us in one Psalm, we must begin again, and praise him for other reasons; and even when we have done this, we have not overtaken our task, the duty lieth still at our door, to be discharged afresh, as this Psalm doth show.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*For he is good.*" Observe what we must give thanks for: not as the Pharisee that made all his thanksgivings terminate in his own goodness—"God, I thank thee" that I am so and so—but directing them all to God's glory: "*for he is good.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*His mercy endureth for ever.*" This appears four times in Ps. cxviii. 1—4. This sentence is the wonder of Moses, the sum of revelation, and the hope of man.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 1.—"*His mercy.*" Many sweet things are in the word of God, but the name of mercy is the sweetest word in all the Scriptures, which made David harp upon it twenty-six times in this Psalm: "*For his mercy endureth for ever.*" It was such a cheerful note in his ears when he struck upon mercy, that, like a bird that is taught to pipe, when he had sung it, he sang it again, and when he had sung it again, he recorded it again, and made it the burden of his song: "*For his mercy endureth for ever.*" Like a nightingale which, when she is in a pleasant vein, quavers and capers, and trebles upon it, so did David upon his mercy: "*For his mercy endureth for ever.*"—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 1.—"*Mercy.*" By "*mercy*" we understand the Lord's disposition to compassionate and relieve those whom sin has rendered miserable and base; his readiness to forgive and to be reconciled to the most provoking of transgressors, and to bestow all blessings upon them; together with all the provision which he has made for the honour of his name, in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 1.—"*His mercy endureth for ever.*" It is everlasting. Everlastingness, or eternity, is a perfect possession, all at once, of an endless life (saith Boëthius). Everlasting mercy, then, is perfect mercy, which shuts out all the imperfections of time, beginning, end, succession, and such is God's mercy. First, his *essential mercy* is everlastingness itself; for it is himself, and God hath not, but *is*, things. He is beginning, end, being; and that which is of himself and even himself is eternity itself. Secondly, his *relative mercy* (which respects us, and makes impression on us), is everlasting, too, in a sense; for the creatures, ever since they had being in him, or existence in their natural causes, ever did and ever will need mercy, either preserving or conserving. Preventing or continuing mercy in the first sense is *negatively endless*, that is, incapable of end, because unboundable for being: in the second sense, it is *privatively endless*, it shall never actually take end, though in itself it may be, and in some ways is, bounded; the first is included in the latter, but the latter is chiefly here intended; and therefore the point arises to be this,—*God's mercy (chiefly to his church) is an endless mercy;* it knows no end, receives no interruption. Reasons hereof from the word are these (for as touching testimony this Psalm shall be our security), first, from *God's nature*, "*he is good.*" Mercy pleaseth him. It is

no trouble for him to exercise mercy. It is his delight: we are never weary of receiving, therefore he cannot be of giving; for it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive; so God takes more content in the one than we in the other.—*Robert Harris*, 1578—1658.

Verse 1.—"*His mercy endureth for ever.*" God's goodness is a fountain; it is never dry. As grace is from the world's beginning (Ps. xxv. 6), so it is to the world's end, *à seculo in seculum*, from one generation to another. Salvation is no termer; grace ties not itself to times. Noah as well as Abel, Moses as well as Jacob, Jeremy as well as David, Paul as well as Simeon hath part in this salvation. God's gracious purpose the Flood drowned not, the smoke of Sinai smothered not, the Captivity ended not, the ends of the world (Saint Paul calls them so) determined not. For Christ, by whom it is, was slain from the beginning,—Saint John saith so. He was before Abraham, he himself saith so. And *Clemens Alexandrinus* [tom. v. page 233] doth Marcion wrong, though otherwise an heretic, in blaming him for holding that Christ saved those also that believed in him before his incarnation. The blood of the beasts under the law was a type of his. And the scars of his wounds appear yet still, and will for ever, till he cometh to judgment. The Apostle shall end this: he is *heri*, and *hodi*, and *semper idem:* Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.—*Richard Clerke*,—1634.

Verses 1—3.—The three first verses of this Psalm contain the three several names of the Deity, which are commonly rendered *Jehovah*, *God*, and *Lord*, respectively; the first having reference to his essence as *self-existent*, and being his proper name; the second designating him under the character of *a judge* or of an all-powerful being, if Aleim be derived from *Al;* and the third, *Adondi*, representing him as *exercising rule.—Daniel Cresswell.*

Verses 1—3.—"*O give thanks.*"

What! give God thanks for everything,
  Whatever may befall—
Whatever the dark clouds may bring?
  Yes, give God thanks for all;
For safe he leads thee, hand in hand,
To thy blessèd Fatherland.

What! thank him for the lonely way
  He to me hath given—
For the path which, day by day
  Seems farther off from heaven?
Yes, thank him, for he holds thy hand
And leads thee to thy Fatherland.

Close, close he shields thee from all harm;
  And if the road be steep,
Thou know'st his everlasting arm
  In safety doth thee keep,
Although thou canst not understand
The windings to thy Fatherland.

What blessing, thinkest thou, will he,
  Who knows the good and ill,
Keep back, if it is good for thee,
  While climbing up the hill?
Then trust him, and keep fast his hand,
He leads thee to thy Fatherland.

B. S., in "The Christian Treasury," 1865.

Verses 1—9.—Like the preceding Psalm, this Psalm allies itself to the Book of Deuteronomy. The first clauses of verses 2 and 3 (*"God of gods"* and *"Lord of lords"*) are taken from Deut. x. 17; verse 12, first clause (*"with a strong hand and stretched out arm"*) from Deut. iv. 34, and v. 15. Verse 16, first clause, is like Deut. viii. 15 (cf. Jer. ii. 6).—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verses 1—26.—All repetitions are not vain, nor is all length in prayer to be accounted babbling. For repetitions may be used, 1. When they express *fervency* and *zeal:* and so we read, Christ prayed over the same prayer thrice (Matt. xxvi. 44); "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And another evangelist showeth that he did this out of special fervency of spirit (Luke xxii. 44); "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." 2. This repetition is not to be disapproved

when there is *a special emphasis*, and spiritual elegancy in it, as in Psalm cxxxvi. you have it twenty-six times repeated, *"For his mercy endureth for ever,"* because there was a special reason in it, the Psalmist's purpose there being to show the unweariedness, and the unexhausted riches of God's free grace ; that notwithstanding all the former experiences they had had, God is where he was at first. We waste by giving, our drop is soon spent ; but God is not wasted by bestowing, but hath the same mercy to do good to his creatures, as before. Though he had done all those wonders for them, yet his mercy was as ready to do good to them still. All along God saved and blessed his people, *"For his mercy endureth for ever."—Thomas Manton.*

Verse 2.—*"The God of gods."* *"God of gods"* is an Hebrew superlative, because he is far above all gods, whether they be so reputed or deputed.—*Robert Harris.*

Verse 2.—*"The God of gods."* One, as being Creator, infinitely higher than all others, his creatures, who have at any time been regarded as gods.—*French and Skinner*, 1842.

Verses 2, 3.—Before proceeding to recite God's works, the Psalmist declares his supreme Deity, and dominion : not that such comparative language implies that there is anything approaching Deity besides him, but there is a disposition in men, whenever they see any part of his glory displayed, to conceive of a God separate from him, thus impiously dividing the Godhead into parts, and even proceeding so far as to frame gods of wood and stone. There is a depraved tendency in all to take delight in a multiplicity of gods. For this reason, apparently, the Psalmist uses the plural number not only in the word *Elohim* but in the word *Adonim*, so that it reads literally, *Praise ye the Lords of lords :* he would intimate, that the fullest perfection of all dominion is to be found in the one God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—*"The Lord of lords."* The meaning of the title *"Lord,"* as distinct from " Jehovah " and " God," is " GOVERNOR." And in this view also he is eminently entitled to praise and thanksgiving, in that his rule and government of the world are also eminently marked by *"mercy"* and *"goodness :"* not the display of power only, but of power declared chiefly in showing mercy and pity : as again all subject to that rule are witnesses. Such is God *in himself*. Nor is it without intention that the doxology is threefold, indicating, doubtless, like the threefold invocation of the Name of the Lord in the blessing of the people (Num. vi. 24—26)—God in Trinity, " Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," as now fully revealed.—*William De Burgh.*

Verse 4.—*"To him who alone doeth great wonders."* God hath preserved to himself the power of miracles, as his prerogative : for the devil does no miracles ; the devil and his instruments do but hasten nature or hinder nature, antedate nature or postdate nature, bring things sooner to pass or retard them ; and however they pretend to oppose nature, yet still it is but upon nature and by natural means that they work. Only God shakes the whole frame of nature in pieces, and in a miracle proceeds so, as if there were no creation yet accomplished, no course of nature yet established. *Facit mirabilia magna solus*, says David here. There are *mirabilia parva*, some lesser wonders, that the devil and his instruments, Pharaoh's sorcerers, can do ; but when it comes to *mirabilia magna*, great wonders, so great that they amount to the nature of a miracle, *facit solus*, God and God only does them.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 4.—*"To him who alone doeth great wonders."* Does he *"alone"* do great wonders ? that means, he does so by himself, unaided, needing nothing from others, asking no help from his creatures. As the Nile from Nubia to the Mediterranean rolls on 1,300 miles in solitary grandeur, receiving not one tributary, but itself alone dispensing fertility and fatness wherever it comes ; so our God " alone " does wonders. (See Deut. xxxii. 12 ; Ps. lxxii. 18, etc.) No prompter, no helper ; spontaneously he goes forth to work, and all he works is worthy of God. Then we have no need of any other ; we are independent of all others ; all our springs are in him.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 4.—*"Who alone doeth great wonders."* There are three things here declared of God ; that he doeth *wonders*, that the wonders he doeth are *great ;* that he *only* doeth them.—*Augustine, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 4.—*"Who alone doeth great wonders."* Whatsoever instruments the Lord

is pleased to use in any of his wonderful works, he alone is the worker, and will not share the glory of the work with any creature.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—It becomes the great God to grant great things. *"To him who alone doeth great wonders."* When you ask great things, you ask such as it becomes God to give, " whose mercy is great above the heavens ! " Nothing under heaven can be too great for him to give. The greater things he bestows, the greater glory redounds to his Name.—*David Clarkson,* 1622—1686.

Verse 4.—Christians should not be ashamed of the mysteries and *miracles* of their religion. Sometimes of late years there has been manifested a disposition to recede from the defence of the supernatural in religion. This is a great mistake. Give up all that is miraculous in true religion and there is nothing left of power sufficient to move any heart to worship or adore ; and without worship there is no piety.—*William Swan Plumer.*

Verse 4.—The longer I live, O my God, the more do I wonder at all the works of thy hands. I see such admirable artifice in the very least and most despicable of all thy creatures, as doth every day more and more astonish my observation. I need not look so far as heaven for matter of marvel, though therein thou art infinitely glorious ; while I have but a spider in my window, or a bee in my garden, or a worm under my feet : every one of these overcomes me with a just amazement : yet can I see no more than their very outsides ; their inward form, which gives their being and operations, I cannot pierce into. The less I can know, O Lord, the more let me wonder ; and the less I can satisfy myself with marvelling at thy works, the more let me adore the majesty and omnipotence of thee, that wroughtest them.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 5.—*"To him that by wisdom made the heavens."* We find that God has built the heavens in wisdom, to declare his glory, and to show forth his handiwork. There are no iron tracks, with bars and bolts, to hold the planets in their orbits. Freely in space they move, ever changing, but never changed ; poised and balancing ; swaying and swayed ; disturbing and disturbed, onward they fly, fulfilling with unerring certainty their mighty cycles. The entire system forms one grand complicated piece of celestial machinery ; circle within circle, wheel within wheel, cycle within cycle ; revolutions so swift as to be completed in a few hours ; movements so slow, that their mighty periods are only counted by millions of years.—*From "The Orbs of Heaven,"* 1859.

Verse 5.—*"To him that by wisdom made the heavens."* Not only the firmament, but the third heavens, too, where all is felicity, where is the throne of glory. Then, I infer, that if the *mercy* which visits earth is from the same Jehovah who built that heaven and filled it with glory, there must be in his *mercy* something of the same *"understanding"* or *"wisdom."* It is wise, prudent mercy ; not rashly given forth ; and it is the mercy of him whose love has filled that heaven with bliss. The same architect, the same skill, the same love !—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 6.—*"Stretched out the earth above the waters."* The waters of the great deep (Gen. vii. 11) are meant ; above which the crust of the earth is outspread. In Prov. viii. 27 the great deep encircles the earth.—*"Speaker's Commentary."*

Verse 7.—*"Great lights."* The luminaries of heaven are unspeakable blessings to the children of men. The sun, in the greatness of his strength, measures their day, and exerts an influence over animal and vegetable life, which surrounds them with innumerable comforts ; and the moon and stars walking forth in their brightness, give direction to them amidst the sable hours of night, and both by land and sea proclaim the wisdom, and benignity, and gracious arrangement of the adorable Creator. By these luminaries, day and night, heat and cold, summer and winter are continually regulated ; so that God's covenant with the earth is maintained through their medium. How truly, then, may we exclaim, " His mercy endureth for ever ! "—*John Morison.*

Verse 7.—*"To him that made great lights."* Light is the life and soul of the universe, the noblest emblem of the power and glory of God, who, in the night season, leaves not himself without witness, but gives us some portion of that light reflected, which by day we behold flowing from its great fountain in the heart of heaven. Thy church and thy saints, O Lord, " are the moon and the stars," which, by the communication of doctrine, and the splendour of example, guide our feet, while we

travel on in the night that hath overtaken us, waiting for the dawn of everlasting day. Then we shall behold thy glory, and see thee as thou art.—*George Horne.*

Verse 8.—"*The sun to rule by day.*" This verse showeth that the sun shineth in the day, by the order which God hath set, and not for any natural cause alone, as some imagine and conjecture.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 8.—"*The Sun.*" The *lantern of the world* (*lucerna Mundi*), as Copernicus names the sun, enthroned in the centre—according to Theon of Smyrna, the all-vivifying, pulsating *heart of the universe*, is the primary source of light and of radiating heat, and the generator of numerous terrestrial, electro-magnetic processes, and indeed of the greater part of the organic vital activity upon our planet, more especially that of the vegetable kingdom. In considering the expression of solar force, in its widest generality, we find that it gives rise to alterations on the surface of the earth, —partly by gravitative attraction,—as in the ebb and flow of the ocean (if we except the share taken in the phenomenon by lunar attraction), partly by light and heat-generating transverse vibrations of ether, as in the fructifying admixture of the aerial and aqueous envelopes of our planet, from the contact of the atmosphere with the vaporizing fluid element in seas, lakes, and rivers. The solar action operates, moreover, by differences of heat, in exciting atmospheric and oceanic currents; the latter of which have continued for thousands of years (though in an inconsiderable degree) to accumulate or waste away alluvial strata, and thus change the surface of the inundated land; it operates in the generation and maintenance of the electro-magnetic activity of the earth's crust, and that of the oxygen contained in the atmosphere; at one time calling forth calm and gentle forces of chemical attraction, and variously determining organic life in the endosmose of cell-walls and in tissue of muscular and nervous fibres; at another time evoking light processes in the atmosphere, such as the coloured coruscations of the polar light, thunder and lightning, hurricanes and waterspouts.

Our object in endeavouring to compress in one picture the *influences of solar action*, in as far as they are independent of the orbit and the position of the axis of our globe, has been clearly to demonstrate, by an exposition of the connection existing between great, and at first sight heterogeneous, phenomena, how physical nature may be depicted in the *History of the Cosmos* as a whole, moved and animated by internal and frequently self-adjusting forces. But the waves of light not only exert a decomposing and combining action on the corporeal world; they not only call forth the tender germs of plants from the earth, generate the green colouring matter (chlorophyll) within the leaf, and give colour to the fragrant blossom—they not only produce myriads of reflected images of the Sun in the graceful play of the waves, as in the moving grass of the field—but the rays of celestial light, in the varied gradations of their intensity and duration, are also mysteriously connected with the inner life of man, his intellectual susceptibilities, and the melancholy or cheerful tone of his feelings. This is what Pliny the elder referred to in these words, "*Cæli tristram discutit sol, et humani nubila animi serenat.*" ["The sun chases sadness from the sky, and dissipates the clouds which darken the human heart."]—*F. H. Alexander Von Humboldt* (1769—1859), *in "Cosmos."*

Verse 8.—"*The sun.*"

> O sun! what makes thy beams so bright?
> The word that said, "Let there be light."
>
> *James Montgomery.*

Verse 9.—"*The moon and stars to rule by night.*" While the apparent revolution of the sun marks out the year and the course of the seasons, the revolution of the moon round the heavens marks out our months; and by regularly changing its figure at the four quarters of its course, subdivides the months into two periods of weeks, and thus exhibits to all the nations of the earth a "watch-light," or signal, which every seven days presents a form entirely new, for marking out the shorter periods of duration. By its nearness to the earth, and the consequent increase of its gravitating power, it produces currents in the atmosphere, which direct the course of the winds, and purify the aerial fluid from noxious exhalations; it raises the waters of the ocean, and perpetuates the regular returns of ebb and flow, by which the liquid element is preserved from filth and putrefaction. It extends its sway even over the human frame, and our health and disorders are sometimes partially

dependent on its influence. Even its eclipses, and those it produces of the sun, are not without their use. They tend to arouse mankind to the study of astronomy, and the wonders of the firmament; they serve to confirm the deductions of chronology, to direct the navigator, and to settle the geographical position of towns and countries; they assist the astronomer in his celestial investigations, and exhibit an agreeable variety of phenomena in the scenery of the heavens. In short, there are terrestrial scenes presented in moon-light, which, in point of solemnity, grandeur, and picturesque beauty, far surpass in interest, to a poetic imagination, all the brilliancy and splendours of noon-day. Hence, in all ages, a moonlight scene has been regarded, by all ranks of men, with feelings of joy and sentiments of admiration. The following description of Homer, translated into English verse by Pope, has been esteemed one of the finest night-pieces in poetry :—

" Behold the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er Heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light,
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumbered gild the glowing pole;
O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
And tip with silver every mountain's head;
Then shine the vales; the rocks in prospect rise;
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light."

Without the light of the moon, the inhabitants of the polar regions would be for weeks and months immersed in darkness. But the moon, like a kindly visitant, returns at short intervals, in the absence of the sun, and cheers them with her beams for days and weeks together. So that, in this nocturnal luminary, as in all the other arrangements of nature, we behold a display of the paternal care and beneficence of that Almighty Being who ordained " the moon and the stars to rule by night," as an evidence of his superabundant goodness, and of " his mercy which endureth for ever."—*Thomas Dick* (1774—1857), *in "Celestial Scenery."*

Verse 9.—*"Stars to rule by night."* The purpose of the sacred narrative being to describe the adaptation of the earth to the use of man, no account is taken of the nature of the stars, as suns or planets, but merely as signs in the heavens.—*"Speaker's Commentary."*

Verse 9.—*"Stars."* The stars not only adorn the roof of our sublunary mansion, they are also in many respects *useful* to man. Their influences are placid and gentle. Their rays, being dispersed through spaces so vast and immense, are entirely destitute of heat by the time they arrive at our abode; so that we enjoy the view of a numerous assemblage of luminous globes without any danger of their destroying the coolness of the night or the quiet of our repose. They serve to guide the traveller both by sea and land; they direct the navigator in tracing his course from one continent to another through the pathless ocean. They serve " for signs and for seasons, and for days and years." They direct the labours of the husbandman, and determine the return and conclusion of the seasons. They serve as a magnificent " time piece," to determine the true length of the day and of the year, and to mark with accuracy all their subordinate divisions. They assist us in our commerce, and in endeavouring to propagate religion among the nations, by showing us our path to every region of the earth. They have enabled us to measure the circumference of the globe, to ascertain the *density* of the materials of which it is composed, and to determine the exact position of all places upon its surface. They cheer the long nights of several months in the polar regions, which would otherwise be overspread with impenetrable darkness. Above all, they open a prospect into the regions of other worlds, and tend to amplify our views of the Almighty Being who brought them into existence by his power, and " whose kingdom ruleth over all." In these arrangements of the stars in reference to our globe, the Divine wisdom and goodness may be clearly perceived. We enjoy all the advantages to which we have alluded as much as if the stars had been created solely for the use of our world, while, at the same time, they serve to diversify the nocturnal sky of other planets, and to diffuse their light and influence over ten thousands of other worlds with which they are more immediately connected, so that, in this respect, as well as in every other, the Almighty produces the most sublime and diversified effects by means the most simple and

economical, and renders every part of the universe subservient to another, and to the good of the whole.—*Thomas Dick.*

Verse 9.—"*Stars.*" When the First Consul crossed the Mediterranean on his Egyptian expedition, he carried with him a cohort of *savans*, who ultimately did good service in many ways. Among them, however, as might be expected at that era, were not a few philosophers of the Voltaire-Diderot school. Napoleon, for his own instruction and amusement on shipboard, encouraged disputation among these gentlemen; and on one occasion they undertook to show, and, according to their own account, *did* demonstrate, by infallible logic and metaphysic, that there is no God. Bonaparte, who hated all idealogists, abstract reasoners, and logical demonstrators, no matter what they were demonstrating, would not fence with these subtle dialecticians, but had them immediately on deck, and, pointing to the stars in the clear sky, replied, by way of counter-argument, "Very good, messieurs! but who made all these?"—*George Wilson, in "Religio Chemici,"* 1862.

Verse 10.—"*To him that smote Egypt in their first-born.*" The Egyptians are well said to have been *smitten in their first-born;* because they continued in their outrageous obstinacy under the other plagues, though occasionally terrified by them, but were broken and subdued by this last plague, and submitted.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 10.—"*To him that smote Egypt in their first-born, for his mercy,*" etc. Remember his sovereign grace, when righteousness would show itself upon the guilty. There was mercy even then to Israel—drops of that mercy that for ever endureth—at the very time when judgment fell on others. Should not this give emphasis to our praises? The dark background makes the figures in the foreground more prominent.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 11.—"*And brought out Israel from among them.*" Such an emigration as this the world never saw. On the lowest computation, the entire multitude must have been above two millions, and in all probability the number exceeded three millions. Is the magnitude of this movement usually apprehended? Do we think of the emigration of the Israelites from Egypt as of the emigration of a number of families twice as numerous as the population of the principality of Wales, or considerably more than the whole population of the British Metropolis (in 1841), with all their goods, property, and cattle? The collecting together of so immense a multitude—the arranging the order of their march—the provision of the requisite food even for a few days, must, under the circumstances, have been utterly impossible, unless a very special and overruling Providence had graciously interfered to obviate the difficulties of the case. To the most superficial observer it must be evident, that no man, or number of men, having nothing but human resources, could have ventured to undertake this journey. Scarcely any wonder, wrought by Divine power in Egypt, appears greater than this emigration of a nation, when fairly and fully considered.—*George Smith, in "Sacred Annals,"* 1850.

Verse 12.—"*With a stretched out arm.*" The figure of *an outstretched arm* is appropriate, for we stretch out the arm when any great effort is required; so that this implies that God put forth an extraordinary and not a common or slight display of his power in redeeming his people.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 13.—"*Divided the Red Sea into parts.*" The entire space between the mountains of Ataka and Abon Deradj was dry. At the former point the gulf is eight miles across, at the latter more than double that distance. The waters that had filled this broad and deep chasm stood in two huge mounds on the right hand and on the left. The light of God shone brightly on the astonished multitude. The word was given, they advanced abreast; awe-stricken, but quiet and confident. . . . "Then the Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, even his chariots and his fleet horses": Exod. xiv. 23.—*William Osburn, in "Israel in Egypt,"* 1856.

Verse 14.—"*And made Israel to pass through the midst of it,*" etc. Willingly, without reluctance; with great spirit and courage, fearless of danger, and with the utmost safety, so that not one was lost in the passage; see Ps. lxxviii. 53; and thus the Lord makes his people willing to pass through afflictions, he being with them;

and able to bear them, he putting underneath the everlasting arms, even when in the valley of the shadow of death. He carries them safely through them, so that they are not hurt by them ; the waters do not overflow them, nor the flames kindle upon them ; nor are any suffered to be lost : but all come safe to land.—*John Gill.*

Verse 14.—"*And made Israel to pass through the midst of it.*" It is a work of no less mercy and power to give his people grace to make use of an offered means of delivery, than to prepare the deliverance for them ; but the constancy of God's mercy doth not only provide the means, but also giveth his people grace to make use thereof in all ages.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 14.—"*And made Israel to pass through the midst of it.*" It is many times *hail* with the saints, when *ill* with the wicked. Abraham from the hill seeth Sodom on fire.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 15.—"*But overthrew Pharaoh,*" etc. Thus fell Sethos II. It was his terrible destiny to leave to after-times the strongest exemplification of daring wickedness and mad impiety in his life, and of the vengeance of God in his death, that ever was enacted on the earth. Never had such a judgment befallen any nation, as his reign in Egypt. Accordingly the memory of this fearful event has never departed from among men. The gulf in which he perished is named Bahr-Kolzoum, " the sea of destruction," to this day.

The memory and name of Sethos II. were infamous in Egypt. His tomb was desecrated, and his sarcophagus publicly and judicially broken. The vault seems to have been used as a burying-place for slaves. The distinctive title of his name, *Sethos*, has been mutilated on all the monuments of Egypt. In Lower Egypt the mutilation has even been extended to the same title in the rings of his great-grandfather (Sethos I.), such was the deep abhorrence in which the name had fallen, after it had been borne by this wicked king. His is the only one in the whole range of the kings of Egypt which has suffered this mark of public infamy.—*William Osburn.*

Verse 15.—"*But overthrew Pharaoh,*" etc. Margin, as in Hebrew, *shaked off.* The word is applicable to a tree shaking off its foliage, Isa. xxxiii. 9. The same word is used in Ex. xiv. 27 : " And the Lord overthrew (Margin, *shook off*) the Egyptians in the midst of the sea." He shook them off as if he would no longer protect them. He left them to perish.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 15.—"*But shook off Pharaoh.*" This translation gives an image of locusts. They fell into the sea like a swarm of locusts.—*Zachary Mudge*—1769.

Verse 15.—"*But overthrew Pharaoh,*" etc. I know that the Gospel is a book of mercy ; I know likewise that in the prophets there are many expressions of mercy ; I know likewise that in the ten commandments, which are the ministration of death, there is made express mention of mercy, " I will have mercy on thousands ": yet, notwithstanding all this, if every leaf, and every line, and every word in the Bible were nothing but mercy, it would nothing avail the presumptuous sinner. Our God is not an impotent God with one arm ; but as he is slow to anger, so is he great in power. And therefore though in this Psalm there is nothing but "*his mercy endureth for ever,*" which is twenty-six times in twenty-six verses : yet mark what a rattling thunder-clap is here in this verse. In our addresses therefore unto God, let us so look upon him as a just God as well as a merciful ; and not either despair of or presume upon his mercy.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 16.—"*Led his people through the wilderness.*"

When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out of the land of bondage came,
Her father's God before her moved,
An awful guide, in smoke and flame.
By day, along the astonished lands,
The cloudy pillar glided slow ;
By night Arabia's crimsoned sands
Returned the fiery column's glow.

Sir Walter Scott, 1711—1832.

Verse 16.—"*He led his people through the wilderness.*" It was an astonishing miracle of God to support so many hundreds of thousands of people in a wilderness totally deprived of all necessaries for the life of man, and that for the space of forty years.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 16.—"*He led his people through the wilderness,*" etc. It is a very sweet

truth which is enunciated in this verse, and one which I think we need very much to realize. His own people, his peculiar people, his chosen, loved, and favoured ones, whom he cherished as the apple of his eye, who were graven on the palms of his hands, and loved with an everlasting love, even these he led through the wilderness; and all this *because* "His mercy endureth for ever." In another Psalm it is said, "He leadeth them beside the still waters, he maketh them to lie down in green pastures"; but the barren wilderness has no green pastures, the parched and arid desert has no still waters. And yet "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert, and an highway shall be there; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" It is one of the Lord's sweet truths that so perplex those that are without, but which are so full of consolation to his own children, that the wilderness and mercy are linked together of God in indissoluble union here. "I will allure her," saith the Lord, "and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 16.—"*Who led his people.*" Note that in what precedes this, in this verse itself, and in what follows, God's three ways of leading are set forth. He leads *out*, he leads *through*, and he leads *into;* out of sin, through the world, into heaven; out by faith, through by hope, into by love.—*Michael Ayguan* (1416), *in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 17.—"*Great kings.*" *Great*, as those times accounted them, when every small city almost had her king. Canaan had thirty and more of them. *Great* also in regard of their stature and strength; for they were of the giants' race. Deut. iii.; Amos ii.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 18, 20.—The profane of our times may hence learn to take heed how they wrong the faithful. God is "wise in heart and mighty in strength:" Job ix. 4. Who ever waxed fierce against his people and hath prospered? For their sakes he hath destroyed great kings and mighty, "*Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan.*" He can pluck off thy chariot wheels, strike thee in the hinder parts, cause thy heart to fail thee for fear, and in a moment fetch thy soul from thee: better were it for thee to have a millstone hanged about thy neck, and thou to be cast into the bottom of the sea, than to offend the least of these faithful ones; they are dear in his sight, tender to him, as the apple of his eye.—*John Barlow*, 1632.

Verse 19.—"*Sihon*" occupied the whole district between the Arnon and Jabbok, through which the approach to the Jordan lay. He had wrested it from the predecessor of Balak, and had established himself, not in the ancient capital of Moab-Ar, but in the city still conspicuous to the modern traveller from its wide prospect and its cluster of stone pines—Heshbon. The recollection of his victory survived in a savage war-song, which passed into a kind of proverb in after-times:—

> "Come home to Heshbon;
> Let the city of Sihon be built and prepared,
> For there is gone out a fire from Heshbon,
> A flame from the city of Sihon.
> It hath consumed Ar of Moab,
> And the lords of the high places of Arnon:
> Woe to thee, Moab; thou art undone, thou people of Chemosh!
> He hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity
> To the king of the Amorites, Sihon."*

The decisive battle between Sihon and his new foes took place at Jahaz, probably on the confines of the rich pastures of Moab and the desert whence the Israelites emerged. It was the first engagement in which they were confronted with the future enemies of their nation. The slingers and archers of Israel, afterwards so renowned, now first showed their skill. Sihon fell; the army fled † (so ran the later tradition), and devoured by thirst, like the Athenians in the Assinarus on their flight from Syracuse, were slaughtered in the bed of one of the mountain streams. The memory of this battle was cherished in triumphant strains, in which, after reciting, in bitter

* Num. xxi. 27–29, repeated, as is well known, in Jer. xlviii. 45, 46.
† Joseph. Ant. iv. 5, § 2.

irony, the song just quoted of the Amorites' triumph, they broke out into an exulting contrast of the past greatness of the defeated chief and his present fall :—

> " We have shot at them : Heshbon is perished :
> We have laid them waste : even unto Nophah :
> With fire : even unto Medeba."*
>
> *Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in "The History of the Jewish Church."*

Verse 20.—*"Og the king of Bashan."* There is continued victory. The second hindrance disappears after the first. *"Og, king of Bashan,"* last of the giants (Deut. iii. 11), fared no better for all his strength than *Sihon.* It was not some peculiar weakness of Sihon that overthrew him. All enemies of God, however different in resource they may appear when they measure themselves among themselves, are alike to those who march in the strength of God. The power by which the Christian conquers one foe will enable him to conquer all. And yet because *Og* did *look* more formidable than Sihon, God gave his people special encouragement in meeting him : Numb. xxi. 34. God remembers that even the most faithful and ardent of his people cannot get entirely above the deceitfulness of outward appearances.—*Pulpit Commentary.*

Verse 20.—When *"Og king of Bashan"* took the field—a giant, a new and more terrific foe—he, too, fell. And the *mercy* that thus dealt with enemies so great, enemies so strong, one after another, *"endureth for ever."* When Antichrist raises up his hosts in the latter days, one after another—when the great, the famous, the mighty, the noble, the gigantic men, in succession assail the Church, they shall perish : " For his *mercy* endureth for ever.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 22.—*"Israel his servant."* He speaks of all that people as of one man, because they were united together in one body, in the worship of one and the same God. Thus God calleth them all his " first-born " : Exod. iv. 22.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 23.—*"Who remembered us."* We should echo in our thankfulness the first intimation that God gives in his providence of an approaching mercy. If you do but hear when the king is on his road towards your town you raise your bells to ring him in, and stay not till he be entered the gates. The birds rise betimes in the morning, and are saluting the rising sun with their sweet notes in the air. Thus should we strike up our harps in praising God at the first appearance of a mercy.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 23.—*"Who remembered us."* The word *" remembered "* is a pregnant word, it bears twins twice told, it is big of a six-fold sense, as so many degrees of mercy in it. 1. *To remember* signifies to think upon, in opposition to forgetfulness. We may dwell in man's thoughts and not be the better for it, but we cannot be in God's remembering thoughts but we shall be the better for it. 2. To remember (as the second degree of the mercy) signifies to take notice of a thing, in opposition to neglect ; so it is used in Exod. xx. 8 : *"Remember* the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy : " take notice, that is, neglect it not, " remember " to keep holy the Sabbath-day. So God *" remembered "* us in our low estates : how ? Why, he did not barely think upon us, but he did observe and take notice of us, and considered what our case was. But, 3. It signifies (as the third degree of mercy), to lay to heart, to pity and compassionate persons in such a case. What am I better for anybody's thinking of me, if he do not take notice of me, so as to pity me in my low estate ? So God doth, as in Jer. xxxi. 20. 4. *To remember,* signifies yet more (as the fourth degree of mercy) to be well pleased with a person in such a case, to accept of a person in such a case ; so the word is used in Ps. xx. 3 : " The Lord *remember* all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice " ; remember, that is accept. 5. *To remember* signifies (as the fifth degree of mercy) to hear and to grant a request ; so it is used in 1 Sam. i. 19, 20, 27 : " God *remembered* Hannah," and the next word is, " He gave her what she asked." 6. *To remember* signifies (as the sixth degree of mercy) to help and succour, or to redeem and deliver from that which we were appointed to, from the low estate ; and so it is in Gal. ii. 10 : " Only they would that we should *remember* the poor." Remembering the poor is not barely a thought, but a relieving thought ; therefore saith the Psalmist in the following verse, " who hath redeemed us from our enemies : " this was the *remembrance* of God, *redemption* from enemies.

* Numb. xxi. 30.

I might draw considerations [for thanksgiving] from the *Author* of the mercy, *God;* a God that was offended by us, a God that needed us not, and a God that gains nothing by us ; and yet this God remembered us in our low estate; that should engage us. I might also draw obligations from *the objects*, and that is *us* that were not only an undeserving but an ill-deserving, and are not a suitable returning people. I might draw arguments from *the mercy*, itself,—that God *remembered* us. . . . and I might draw arguments from *the season*, " in our low estate," and from *the excellency of the duty* of thanksgiving ; 'tis a comely thing ; it makes us like the angels, whose whole employment and liturgy is to give and live praise to God. And from this also I might enlarge the discoveries of the obligation, that " *his mercy endureth* for ever."

"*For his mercy endureth for ever.*" There is no reason to be given for grace but grace ; there is no reason to be given for mercy but mercy ; who remembered us : " *for his mercy endureth for ever.*"—*Ralph Venning* (1620—1673), *in "Mercies Memorial."*

Verse 24.—"*And.*" If the end of one mercy were not the beginning of another, we were undone.—*Philip Henry*, 1631—1696.

Verse 24.—"*And hath redeemed us.*" Or, *broken us off*, pulled us away, as by violence ; for they would never else have loosed us.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 25.—"*Who giveth food to all flesh,*" etc. The very air we breathe in, the bread we eat, our common blessings, be they never so mean, we have them all from grace, and all from the tender mercy of the Lord. Ps. cxxxvi. 25, you have there the story of the notable effects of God's mercy, and he concludes it thus : "*Who giveth food to all flesh : for his mercy endureth for ever.*" Mark, the Psalmist doth not only ascribe those mighty victories, those glorious instances of his love and power, to his unchangeable mercy, but he traces our daily bread to the same cause. In eminent deliverances of the church we will acknowledge mercy ; yea, but we should do it in every bit of meat we eat ; for the same reason is rendered all along. What is the reason his people smote Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan, and that they were rescued so often out of danger ? " For his mercy endureth for ever." And what is the reason he giveth food to all flesh ? " For his mercy endureth for ever." It is not only mercy which gives us Christ, and salvation by Christ, and all those glorious deliverances and triumphs over the enemies of the church ; but it is mercy which furnisheth our tables, it is mercy that we taste with our mouths and wear at our backs. It is notable, our Lord Jesus, when there were but five barley loaves and two fishes (John vi. 11), " He lift up his eyes and gave thanks." Though our provision be never so homely and slender, yet God's grace and mercy must be acknowledged.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 25.—"*Who giveth food to all flesh.*" We might fancy that they who have so much to sing of in regard to themselves, so much done for their own souls, would have little care for others. We might fear that they would be found selfish. But not so ; the love of God felt by a man makes the man feel as God does toward men ; and as God's love is ever going forth to others, so is the heart of the man of God. We see how it is even as to patriotism—a man's intensest patriotic feelings do not necessarily make him indifferent to the good of other countries, but rather make him wish all countries to be like his own ; so it is, much more certainly and truly, with the Lord's people in their enjoyment of blessing. Their heart expands towards others ; they would fain have all men share in what they enjoy. They therefore cannot close their song without having this other clause—Praise him who is " *the giver of bread to all flesh.*" Not to Israel only does he give blessing. Israel had their manna ; but, at the same time, the earth at large has its food. So in spiritual things. Israel's God is he who giveth himself as the Bread of Life to the world. Perhaps at this point the Psalmist's eye may be supposed to see *earth in its state of blessedness*, after Israel is for the last time redeemed from all enemies, and become " life from the dead " to the world—when Christ reigns and dispenses the bread of life to the New Earth, as widely as he gave common food—" the feast of fat things to all nations," (Isa. xxv. 6.) ; for his mercy will not rest till this is accomplished.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 25.—"*Who giveth food to all flesh.*" In the close the Psalmist speaks of the paternal providence of God as extending not only to all mankind, but to every living creature, suggesting that we have no reason to feel surprise at his sustaining

the character of a kind and provident father to his own people, when he condescends to care for the cattle, and the asses of the field, and the crow, and the sparrow. Men are much better than brute beasts, and there is a great difference between some men and others, though not in merit, yet as regards the privilege of the divine adoption, and the Psalmist is to be considered as reasoning from the less to the greater and enhancing the incomparably superior mercy which God shows to his own children.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 25.—"*Who giveth food to all flesh.*" Of Edward Taylor, better known as "Father Taylor," the Sailor Preacher of Boston, it is said that his prayers were more like the utterances of an Oriental, abounding in imagery, than a son of these colder western climes. The Sunday before he was to sail for Europe, he was entreating the Lord to care well for his church during his absence. All at once he stopped and ejaculated, "What have I done? Distrust the providence of heaven! A God that gives a whale a ton of herrings for a breakfast, will he not care for my children?" and then went on, closing his prayer in a more confiding strain.—*C. H. Spurgeon, in "Eccentric Preachers,"* 1880.

Verse 26.—"*The God of heaven.*" The phrase "*God of heaven*" is not found in the earlier Scriptures. We meet it nowhere else in the Psalms; but we meet it in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23; Ezra i. 2; v. 11, 12; vi. 9; vii. 12, 23; Neh. i. 4; ii. 4; Dan. ii. 18, 19, 44; Jonah i. 9. It is twice found in the Apocalypse, Rev. xi. 13; xvi. 11. It is a sublime and appropriate designation of the true God, expressive of his glorious elevation above the passions and perturbations of earth. To him all flesh should give thanks, for all receive his mercy in many forms and ways. His favours come down on generation after generation, and to his willing, obedient people they shall flow on during eternal ages.—*William Swan Plumer.*

Verse 26.—My brethen, God's mercies are from everlasting; and it is a treasure that can never be spent, never exhausted, unto eternity. In Isa. lxiv. 5, we read, "In thy mercy is continuance." If God will but continue to be merciful to me, will a poor soul say, I have enough. Why, saith he, "in his mercies is continuance, and we shall be saved." Hath God pardoned thee hitherto? but hast thou sinned again? Can he stretch his goodness and mercy a little further? Why, he will stretch them out unto eternity, unto everlasting; and if one *everlasting* be not enough, there are twenty-six everlastings in this one Psalm. In Isa. liv. 8, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 26.—"*O give thanks unto the God of heaven.*" His mercy in providing heaven for his people is more than all the rest.—*John Trapp.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Consider his name—"Jehovah." II. Carry out your joyful duty: "O give thanks." III. Contemplate the two reasons given—goodness and enduring mercy.

Verse 1.—I. Many subjects for praise. 1. For the goodness of God: "He is good" (verse 1). 2. For his supremacy: "God of gods; Lord of lords" (verses 2, 3). 3. For his works in general (verse 4). 4. For his works of creation in particular (verses 5—9). 5. For his works of Providence (verses 10—26). II. The chief subject for praise:—"For his mercy endureth for ever." 1. For mercy. This is the sinner's principal need. 2. For mercy in God. This is the sinner's attribute, and is as essential to God as justice. 3. For mercy enduring for ever. If they who have sinned need mercy for ever, they must exist for ever; and their guilt must be for ever.—*G. R.*

Verse 1.—"*The Lord is good.*" God is originally good—good of himself. He is infinitely good. He is perfectly good, because infinitely good. He is immutably good.—*Charnock.*

Verses 1—3.—I. The triplet of names: "Jehovah," "the God of gods," "the Lord of lords." II. The threefold adjuration, "O give thanks." III. The irrepressible attribute and argument—"for his mercy," etc.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 1—26.—" For his mercy endureth for ever." See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 787: " A Song, a Solace, a Sermon, and a Summons."

Verse 4.—I. The Lord does great wonders of mercy. II. He does them unaided. III. He does them as none else can do. IV. He should have unique praise.

Verse 4.—*The great lone Wonderworker.* I. God was alone in the wonderwork of Creation: Gen. i. II. Alone in the wonderwork of redemption: Isa. lxiii. 5. III. Is alone in the wonderwork of Providence: Ps. civ. 27, 28. IV. Alone in the wonderwork of Sanctification: 1 Thess. v. 23, 24. V. Will be alone in the wonderwork of Universal Triumph: 1 Cor. xv. 25.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 4.—The merciful in the wonderful. The wonderful in the merciful.

Verse 7.—The mercy which dwells in the creation and distribution of light.

Verses 7—9.—I. The constancy of rule. II. The association of light with rule. III. The perpetuity of mercy in this matter.

Verses 8, 9.—I. The glory of the day of joy. II. The comforts of the night of sorrow. III. The hand of God in each.

Verse 10.—Mercy and judgment. In the stroke that filled Egypt with anguish there was conspicuous mercy.—I. Even to Egypt; the sharp stroke should have wrought repentance. So God still strives with men. II. Evidently to Israel; they being thus delivered; their firstborn saved. III. Emphatically to the whole world: power made known, Christ foreshadowed, an important link in the chain of redemption.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 11.—The bringing out of God's people from their natural state, from their misery, and from association with the ungodly, a great marvel of everlasting mercy.

Verse 11.—Effectual calling; the intervention at the determined moment of the mercy of infinite ages.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 12.—Displays of divine power in the history of the saints a reason for song.

Verses 13, 14.—God to be praised not only, I. For clearing our way; but also, II. For giving faith to traverse it. The last as great a mercy as the first.

Verses 13—15.—Mercy queen of the Exodus. I. Her sceptre upon the sea. What cannot Love divine conquer for its chosen! II. Her standard in the van. Whither shall saints fear to follow her? III. Her frown upon the pursuers; life to the beloved, fatal to the foe. IV. To her let there be brought the chaplet of our praises.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 15.—Final victory. I. Battalions of evil annihilated. II. Love unharmed mounting immortal above the wave: " for his mercy endureth for ever." III. Heaven resonant with the song of Moses and the Lamb, to him give thanks. —*W. B. H.*

Verse 16.—I. Personal care: " To him which led." II. Peculiar interest: " His people." III. Persevering goodness: " Through the wilderness."

Verse 16.—*Led through the wilderness.* I. God's people must enter the wilderness for trial, for self knowledge, for development of graces, for preparation for Canaan. II. God leads his people while in the wilderness. Their route, their provision, their discipline, their protection. III. God will bring his people out of the wilderness.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 17—22.—See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1285: " Sihon and Og; or, Mercies in Detail."

Verse 21.—I. Our portion, a heritage. II. Our title-deed, a royal grant: " And gave." III. Our praise, due to enduring mercy.

Verse 23.—Prayer of the dying thief turned into a song.

Verses 23, 24.—The gracious remembrance and the glorious redemption.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 24.—Our enemies, our accomplished redemption, the author of it, and his reason for effecting it.

Verse 24.—The multiplied redemptions of the Christian life, and their inexhaustible spring.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 25.—Divine housekeeping. I. The Royal Commissariat. II. Its spiritual counterpart: God's august provisioning for our immortal nature. III. The queenly grace that hath the keeping of the keys: " for his mercy," etc.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 26.—Consider, I. How he rules in heaven. II. How he rules earth from heaven. III. How mercy is the eternal element of that rule, and therefore he is the eternal object of praise.

PSALM CXXXVII.

This plaintive ode is one of the most charming compositions in the whole Book of Psalms for its poetic power. If it were not inspired it would nevertheless occupy a high place in poesy, especially the former portion of it, which is tender and patriotic to the highest degree. In the later verses (7, 8, 9), *we have utterances of burning indignation against the chief adversaries of Israel,—an indignation as righteous as it was fervent. Let those find fault with it who have never seen their temple burned, their city ruined, their wives ravished, and their children slain; they might not, perhaps, be quite so velvet-mouthed if they had suffered after this fashion. It is one thing to talk of the bitter feeling which moved captive Israelites in Babylon, and quite another thing to be captives ourselves under a savage and remorseless power, which knew not how to show mercy, but delighted in barbarities to the defenceless. The song is such as might fitly be sung in the Jews' wailing-place. It is a fruit of the Captivity in Babylon, and often has it furnished expression for sorrows which else had been unutterable. It is an opalesque Psalm within whose mild radiance there glows a fire which strikes the beholder with wonder.*

EXPOSITION.

BY the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us *required of us* mirth, *saying*, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion.

4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning*.

6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

1. "*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down.*" Water-courses were abundant in Babylon, wherein were not only natural streams but artificial canals: it was a place of broad rivers and streams. Glad to be away from the noisy streets, the captives sought the river side, where the flow of the waters seemed to be in sympathy with their tears. It was some slight comfort to be out of the crowd, and to have a little breathing room, and therefore they sat down, as if to rest a while and solace themselves in their sorrow. In little groups they sat down and made common lamentation, mingling their memories and their tears. The rivers were well enough, but, alas, they were the rivers of Babylon, and the ground whereon the sons of Israel sat was foreign soil, and therefore they wept. Those who came to interrupt their quiet were citizens of the destroying city, and their company was not desired. Everything reminded Israel of her banishment from the holy city, her servitude beneath the shadow of the temple of Bel, her helplessness under a cruel enemy; and therefore her sons and daughters sat down in sorrow.

"*Yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.*" Nothing else could have subdued their brave spirits; but the remembrance of the temple of their God, the palace of their king, and the centre of their national life, quite broke them down. Destruction had swept down all their delights, and therefore they wept—the strong men wept, the sweet singers wept! They did not weep when they remembered the cruelties of Babylon; the memory of fierce oppression dried their tears and made their hearts burn with wrath: but when the beloved city of their solemnities came into their minds they could not refrain from floods of tears. Even thus do true believers mourn when they see the church despoiled, and find themselves unable to succour her: we could bear anything better than this. In these our times the

Babylon of error ravages the city of God, and the hearts of the faithful are grievously wounded as they see truth fallen in the streets, and unbelief rampant among the professed servants of the Lord. We bear our protests, but they appear to be in vain; the multitude are mad upon their idols. Be it ours to weep in secret for the hurt of our Zion: it is the least thing we can do; perhaps in its result it may prove to be the best thing we can do. Be it ours also to sit down and deeply consider what is to be done. Be it ours, in any case, to keep upon our mind and heart the memory of the church of God which is so dear to us. The frivolous may forget, but Zion is graven on our hearts, and her prosperity is our chief desire.

2. *"We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof."* The drooping branches appeared to weep as we did, and so we gave to them our instruments of music; the willows could as well make melody as we, for we had no mind for minstrelsy. In the midst of the willows, or in the midst of the rivers, or in the midst of Babylon, it matters little which, they hung their harps aloft—those harps which once in Zion's halls the soul of music shed. Better to hang them up than to dash them down: better to hang them on willows than profane them to the service of idols. Sad indeed is the child of sorrow when he grows weary of his harp, from which in better days he had been able to draw sweet solaces. Music hath charms to give unquiet spirits rest; but when the heart is sorely sad it only mocks the grief which flies to it. Men put away their instruments of mirth when a heavy cloud darkens their souls.

3. *"For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song."* It was ill to be a singer at all when it was demanded that this talent should go into bondage to an oppressor's will. Better be dumb than be forced to please an enemy with forced song. What cruelty to make a people sigh, and then require them to sing! Shall men be carried away from home and all that is dear to them, and yet chant merrily for the pleasure of their unfeeling captors? This is studied torture: the iron enters into the soul. It is indeed "woe to the conquered" when they are forced to sing to increase the triumph of their conquerors. Cruelty herein reached a refinement seldom thought of. We do not wonder that the captives sat them down to weep when thus insulted. *"And they that wasted us required of us mirth."* The captives must not only sing but smile, and add merriment to their music. Blind Samson in former days must be brought forth to make sport for Philistines, and now the Babylonians prove themselves to be loaves of the same leaven. Plundered, wounded, fettered, carried into captivity and poverty, yet must the people laugh as if it were all a play, and they must sport as if they felt no sorrow. This was wormwood and gall to the true lovers of God and his chosen land. *"Saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion."* Nothing would serve their turn but a holy hymn, and a tune sacred to the worship of Jehovah. Nothing will content the Babylonian mockers but one of Israel's Psalms when in her happiest days she sang unto the Lord whose mercy endureth for ever: this would make rare fun for their persecutors, who would deride their worship and ridicule their faith in Jehovah. In this demand there was an insult to their God, as well as a mockery of themselves, and this made it the more intensely cruel. Nothing could have been more malicious, nothing more productive of grief. These wanton persecutors had followed the captives into their retirement, and had remarked upon their sorrowful appearance, and "there" and then they bade the mourners make mirth for them. Could they not let the sufferers alone? Were the exiles to have no rest? The daughter of Babylon seemed determined to fill up her cup of iniquity, by torturing the Lord's people. Those who had been the most active agents of Israel's undoing must needs follow up their ferocities by mockeries. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Worse than the Egyptians, they asked not labour which their victims could have rendered, but they demanded mirth which they could not give, and holy songs which they dared not profane to such a purpose.

4. *"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"* How shall they sing at all? sing in a strange land? sing Jehovah's song among the uncircumcised? No, that must not be; it shall not be. With one voice they refuse, but the refusal is humbly worded by being put in the form of a question. If the men of Babylon were wicked enough to suggest the defiling of holy things for the gratification of curiosity, or for the creation of amusement, the men of Zion had not so hardened their hearts as to be willing to please them at such a fearful cost. There are many things which the ungodly could do, and think nothing of the doing thereof, which gracious men cannot venture upon. The question "How can I?" or "How shall

we ? " comes of a tender conscience and denotes an inability to sin which is greatly to be cultivated.

5. *"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."* To sing Zion's songs for the pleasure of Zion's foes, would be to forget the Holy City. Each Jew declares for himself that he will not do this ; for the pronoun alters from " we " to " I." Individually the captives pledge themselves to fidelity to Jerusalem, and each one asserts that he had sooner forget the art which drew music from his harp-strings than use it for Babel's delectation. Better far that the right hand should forget its usual handicraft, and lose all its dexterity, than that it should fetch music for rebels out of the Lord's instruments, or accompany with sweet skill a holy Psalm desecrated into a common song for fools to laugh at. Not one of them will thus dishonour Jehovah to glorify Belus and gratify his votaries. Solemnly they imprecate vengeance upon themselves should they so false, so faithless prove.

6. *"If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."* Thus the singers imprecate eternal silence upon their mouths if they forget Jerusalem to gratify Babylon. The players on instruments and the sweet songsters are of one mind : the enemies of the Lord will get no mirthful tune or song from them. *"If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."* The sacred city must ever be first in their thoughts, the queen of their souls ; they had sooner be dumb than dishonour her sacred hymns, and give occasion to the oppressor to ridicule her worship. If such the attachment of a banished Jew to his native land, how much more should we love the church of God of which we are children and citizens. How jealous should we be of her honour, how zealous for her prosperity. Never let us find jests in the words of Scripture, or make amusement out of holy things, lest we be guilty of forgetting the Lord and his cause. It is to be feared that many tongues have lost all power to charm the congregations of the saints because they have forgotten the gospel, and God has forgotten *them.*

7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase *it,* rase *it, even* to the foundation thereof.

8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed ; happy *shall he be,* that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

9 Happy *shall he be,* that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

7. *"Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem."* The case is left in Jehovah's hands. He is a God of recompenses, and will deal out justice with impartiality. The Edomites ought to have been friendly with the Israelites, from kinship ; but there was a deep hatred and cruel spite displayed by them. The elder loved not to serve the younger, and so when Jacob's day of tribulation came, Esau was ready to take advantage of it. The captive Israelites being moved by grief to lodge their plaints with God, also added a prayer for his visitation of the nation which meanly sided with their enemies, and even urged the invaders to more than their usual cruelty. *"Who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof."* They wished to see the last of Jerusalem and the Jewish state ; they would have no stone left standing, they desired to see a clean sweep of temple, palace, wall, and habitation. It is horrible for neighbours to be enemies, worse for them to show their enmity in times of great affliction, worst of all for neighbours to egg others on to malicious deeds. Those are responsible for other men's sins who would use them as the tools of their own enmity. It is a shame for men to incite the wicked to deeds which they are not able to perform themselves. The Chaldeans were ferocious enough without being excited to greater fury ; but Edom's hate was insatiable. Those deserve to be remembered by vengeance who in evil times do not remember mercy ; how much more those who take advantage of calamities to wreak revenge upon sufferers. When Jerusalem's day of restoration comes Edom will be remembered and wiped out of existence.

8. *"O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed."* Or the destroyer, let us accept the word either way, or both ways : the destroyer would be destroyed, and the Psalmist in vision saw her as already destroyed. It is usual to speak of a city as a virgin daughter. Babylon was in her prime and beauty, but she was already doomed for her crimes. *"Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us."* The avenger would be fulfilling an honourable calling in overthrowing a power so brutal, so inhuman. Assyrian and Chaldean armies had been boastfully

brutal in their conquests; it was meet that their conduct should be measured back into their own bosoms. No awards of punishment can be more unanswerably just than those which closely follow the *lex talionis*, even to the letter. Babylon must fall, as she caused Jerusalem to fall; and her sack and slaughter must be such as she appointed for other cities. The patriot-poet sitting sorrowfully in his exile, finds a solace in the prospect of the overthrow of the empress city which holds him in bondage, and he accounts Cyrus right happy to be ordained to such a righteous work. The whole earth would bless the conqueror for ridding the nations of a tyrant; future generations would call him blessed for enabling men to breathe again, and for once more making liberty possible upon the earth.

We may rest assured that every unrighteous power is doomed to destruction, and that from the throne of God justice will be measured out to all whose law is force, whose rule is selfishness, and whose policy is oppression. Happy is the man who shall help in the overthrow of the spiritual Babylon, which, despite its riches and power, is "to be destroyed." Happier still shall he be who shall see it sink like a millstone in the flood, never to rise again. What that spiritual Babylon is none need enquire. There is but one city upon earth which can answer to the name.

9. *"Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."* Fierce was the heart of the Jew who had seen his beloved city the scene of such terrific butchery. His heart pronounced like sentence upon Babylon. She should be scourged with her own whip of wire. The desire for righteous retribution is rather the spirit of the law than of the gospel; and yet in moments of righteous wrath the old fire will burn; and while justice survives in the human breast it will not lack for fuel among the various tyrannies which still survive. We shall be wise to view this passage as a prophecy. History informs us that it was literally fulfilled: the Babylonian people in their terror agreed to destroy their own offspring, and men thought themselves happy when they had put their own wives and children to the sword. Horrible as was the whole transaction, it is a thing to be glad of if we take a broad view of the world's welfare; for Babylon, the gigantic robber, had for many a year slaughtered nations without mercy, and her fall was the rising of many people to a freer and safer state. The murder of innocent infants can never be sufficiently deplored, but it was an incident of ancient warfare which the Babylonians had not omitted in their massacres, and, therefore, they were not spared it themselves. The revenges of providence may be slow, but they are ever sure; neither can they be received with regret by those who see God's righteous hand in them. It is a wretched thing that a nation should need an executioner; but yet if men will commit murder tears are more fitly shed over their victims than over the assassins themselves. A feeling of universal love is admirable, but it must not be divorced from a keen sense of justice.

The captives in Babylon did not make music, but they poured forth their righteous maledictions, and these were far more in harmony with their surroundings than songs and laughter could have been. Those who mock the Lord's people will receive more than they desire, to their own confusion: they shall have little enough to make mirth for them, and more than enough to fill them with misery. The execrations of good men are terrible things, for they are not lightly uttered, and they are heard in heaven. "The curse causeless shall not come;" but is there not a cause? Shall despots crush virtue beneath their iron heel and never be punished? Time will show.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Observe that this very Psalm in which the question is asked, "How can we sing?" is itself a song, one of the Lord's songs, still. Nothing can be more sad, more desponding. It speaks of weeping in the remembrance of Zion; it speaks of harps hung upon the willows by exiles who have no heart to use them; and yet the very telling of these sorrows, of this incapacity for song, is a song still.

We chant it in our congregations now, hundreds and thousands of years after its composition, as one of the Church's melodies, as one of the Lord's songs. It gives us a striking example of the variety, of the versatility of worship, even in that department which might seem to be all joyous, all praise. The very refusal to sing may be itself a song. Any real utterance of good thoughts, whether they be thoughts of gladness or thoughts of sorrow, may be a true hymn, a true melody for the congregation, even though it may not breathe at every moment the very thought of all the worshippers. "How shall we sing?" is itself a permanent hymn, an inspired song, for all the churches.—*C. J. Vaughan.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is composed of two parts. The first is, an heavy complaint of the church, unto verse 7. The other is an heavy imprecation and a prophetical denunciation against the enemies of the church, unto the end of the Psalm.—*Robert Rollock.*

Whole Psalm.—What a wonderful mixture is the Psalm of soft melancholy and fiery patriotism! The hand which wrote it must have known how to smite sharply with the sword, as well as how to tune the harp. The words are burning words of a heart breathing undying love to his country, undying hate to his foe. The poet is indeed

> "Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love."

J. J. Stewart Perowne.

Whole Psalm.—Several of the Psalms obviously refer to the time of the Babylonian captivity . . . . The captives' mournful sentiments of pensive melancholy and weary longing during its long and weary continuance constitute the burden of the hundred and thirty-seventh. It was probably written by some gifted captive Levite at the time. Some suppose it to have been composed by Jeremiah, the prophet of tears, and sent to his countrymen in the land of their exile, in order to awaken fond memories of the past and sustain a lively hope for the future; and certainly the ode is worthy even of his pen, for it is one of the sweetest, most plaintive, and exquisitely beautiful elegies in any language. It is full of heart-melting, tear-bringing pathos. The moaning of the captive, the wailing of the exile, and the sighing of the saints are heard in every line.—*W. Ormiston, in "The Study,"* 1874.

Whole Psalm.—Here, I. The melancholy captives cannot enjoy themselves, verses 1, 2. II. They cannot humour their proud oppressors, verses 3, 4. III. They cannot forget Jerusalem, verses 5, 6. IV. They cannot forget Edom and Babylon, verses 7, 8, 9.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—*"By the rivers of Babylon."* The canals of Babylon itself, probably (comp. verse 2).—*William Kay.*

Verse 1.—*"By the rivers."* Euphrates, Tigris, Chaboras, etc., and the canals which intersected the country. The exiles would naturally resort to the banks of the streams as shady, cool and retired spots, where they could indulge in their sorrowful remembrances. The prophets of the exile saw their visions by the river. Ezek. i. 1; Dan. viii. 2; x. 4.—*"Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review,"* 1848.

Verse 1.—*"By the rivers."* The bank of a river, like the seashore, is a favourite place of sojourn of those whom deep grief drives forth from the bustle of men into solitude. The boundary line of the river gives to solitude a safe back; the monotonous splashing of the waves keeps up the dull, melancholy alternation of thoughts and feelings; and at the same time the sight of the cool, fresh water exercises a soothing influence upon the consuming fever within the heart.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 1.—*"By the rivers."* The peculiar reason for the children of Israel being represented as sitting at the streams is the *weeping.* An internal reference of the weeping to the streams, must therefore have been what gave rise to the representation of the sitting. Nor is this reference difficult to be discovered. All languages know of brooks, or streams of tears, compare in Scripture, Lam. ii. 18; "Let tears run down like a river day and night"; iii. 48; also Job xxviii. 11, where inversely the gushing of the floods is called *weeping* (Marg.). The children of Israel placed themselves beside the streams of Babel because they saw in them the image and symbol of their floods of tears.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—*"We sat down."* Among the poets, sitting on the ground is a mark of misery or captivity.

Multos illa dies incomtis mœsta capillis
Sederat.—*Propertius.*
With locks unkempt, mournful, for many days
She sat.

O utinam ante tuos sedeam captiva penates.—*Propertius*
O might I sit a captive at thy gate!

You have the same posture in an old coin that celebrates a victory of Lucius Verus over the Parthians.

We find Judea on several coins of Vespasian and Titus in the posture that denotes sorrow and captivity.—*From Joseph Addison's Dialogues on Medals.*

Verse 1.—"*Sat down*" implies that the burst of grief was a long one, and also that it was looked on by the captives as some relaxation and repose.—*Chrysostom.*

Verse 1.—"*We wept when we remembered Zion.*" A godly man lays to heart the miseries of the church. I have read of certain trees, whose leaves if cut or touched, the other leaves contract and shrink up themselves, and for a space hang down their heads; such a spiritual sympathy is there among Christians; when other parts of God's church suffer, they feel themselves, as it were, touched in their own persons. Ambrose reports, that when Theodosius was sick unto death, he was more troubled about the church of God than about his own sickness. When Æneas would have saved Anchises' life, saith he, "Far be it from me that I should desire to live when Troy is buried in its ruins." There are in music two unisons; if you strike one, you shall perceive the other to stir, as if it were affected: when the Lord strikes others a godly heart is deeply affected, Isa. xv. 11: "My bowels shall sound like an harp." Though it be well with a child of God in his own particular, and he dwells in an house of cedar, yet he grieves to see it go ill with the public. Queen Esther enjoyed the king's favour, and all the delights of the court, yet when a bloody warrant was signed for the death of the Jews she mourns and fasts, and ventures her own life to save theirs.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 1.—For *Sion* only they wept, unlike many who weep with the weeping and rejoice with the joy of Babylon, because their whole interests and affections are bound up in the things of this world.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—Let us weep, because in this life we are forced to sit by the waters of Babylon, and are yet strangers and as it were banished and barred from being satisfied with the pleasures of that river which gladdeth the city of God. Alas, if we did consider that our country were heaven, and did apprehend this place here below to be our prison, or place of banishment, the least absence from our country would draw tears from our eyes and sighs from our hearts, with David (Ps. cxx. 5): "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, and am constrained to dwell in the tents of Kedar."

Do you remember how the Jews behaved themselves in the time of their exile and captivity, while they sat by the rivers and waters of Babylon? They wept, would not be comforted; hanged up their harps and instruments. What are the waters of Babylon but the pleasures and delights of the world, the waters of confusion, as the word signifies? Now when the people of God sit by them, that is to say, do not carelessly, but deliberately, with a settled consideration, see them slide by and pass away, and compare them with Sion, that is to say, with the inconceivable rivers of pleasure, which are permanent in the heavenly Jerusalem; how can they choose but weep, when they see themselves sitting by the one, and sojourning from the other? And it is worthy your observing, that notwithstanding the Jews had many causes of tears, the Chaldeans had robbed them of their goods, honours, countries, liberty, parents, children, friends: the chief thing, for all this, that they mourn for is their absence from Sion,—"*We wept when we remembered thee, O Sion*"—for their absence from Jerusalem. What should we then do for our absence from another manner of Jerusalem? Theirs was an earthly, old, robbed, spoiled, burned, sacked Jerusalem; ours a heavenly, new one, into which no arrow can be shot, no noise of the drum heard, nor sound of the trumpet, nor calling unto battle: who would not then weep, to be absent from hence?"—*Walter Balcanqual, in "A Sermon Preached at St. Maries Spittle,"* 1623.

Verse 1.—"*We remembered Zion.*" It necessarily implies they had *forgot*, else how could they now remember? In their peace and plenty they had but little regard of Zion then.—*John Whincop, in a Sermon entitled, "Israel's Tears for Distressed Zion,"* 1645.

Verse 1.—Nothing could present a more striking contrast to their native country than the region into which the Hebrews were transplanted. Instead of their irregular and picturesque mountain city, crowning its unequal heights, and looking down into its deep and precipitous ravines, through one of which a scanty stream wound along, they entered the vast, square, and level city of Babylon, occupying both sides of the broad Euphrates; while all around spread immense plains, which were intersected by long, straight canals, bordered by rows of willows. How unlike their national temple—a small but highly finished and richly adorned fabric, standing in the midst of its courts on the brow of a lofty precipice—the colossal temple of the Chaldean Bel, rising from the plain, with its eight stupendous stories or towers, one above the other, to the perpendicular height of a furlong: The palace of the Babylonian kings was more than twice the size of their whole city; it covered eight miles, with its hanging gardens built on arched terraces, each rising above the other, and rich in all the luxuriance of artificial cultivation. How different from the sunny cliffs of their own land, where the olive and the vine grew spontaneously, and the cool, shady, and secluded valleys, where they could always find shelter from the heat of the burning noon! No wonder then that, in the pathetic words of their own hymn, *"by the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept, when they remembered thee, O Zion."* Of their general treatment as captives we know little. The Psalm above quoted seems to intimate that the Babylonians had taste enough to appreciate the poetical and musical talent of the exiles, and that they were summoned occasionally to amuse the banquets of their masters, though it was much against their will that they sang the songs of Zion in a strange land. In general it seems that the Jewish exiles were allowed to dwell together in considerable bodies, not sold as household or personal or prædial slaves, at least not those of the better order of whom the Captivity chiefly consisted. They were colonists rather than captives, and became by degrees possessed of considerable property. They had taken the advice of the prophet Jeremiah (who gave them no hopes of speedy return to their homes): they had built houses, planted gardens, married and brought up children, submitted themselves as peaceful subjects to the local authorities: all which implies a certain freedom, a certain degree of prosperity and comfort. They had free enjoyment of their religion, such at least as adhered faithfully to their belief in Jehovah. We hear of no special and general religious persecution.—*Henry Hart Milman* (1791—1868), *in "The History of the Jews."*

Verse 1.—They sat in silence; they remembered in silence; they wept in silence. —*J. W. Burgon.*

Verses 1—6.—Israel was a typical people. 1. They were typical of God's church in all ages of the world. And, 2. They were typical of the soul of every individual believer.

This Psalm is composed for Israel in her captivity. Let us go over it, taking its typical meaning.

I. *When a believer is in captivity he has a sorrowful remembrance of Zion.* So it was with God's ancient people: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion" (verse 1). In the last chapter of 2 Chron. (14—20,) we find the melancholy tale of Judah's captivity. Many of their friends had been slain by the sword—the house of God was burned—the walls of Jerusalem were broken down—and they themselves were captives in a foreign land. No wonder that they sat down and wept when they remembered Zion.

So it is often with the believer when led captive by sin—he sits down and weeps when he remembers Zion. Zion is the place where God makes himself known. When a poor awakened sinner is brought to know the Saviour, and to enter through the rent veil into the holiest of all, then he becomes one of the people of Zion: "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." He dwells in Zion; and the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity. But when a believer falls into sin he falls into darkness—he is carried a captive away from Zion. No more does he find entrance within the veil; no more is he glad when they say to him, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord." He sits down and weeps when he remembers Zion.

II. *The world derides the believer in his captivity.* So it was with ancient Israel. The Chaldeans were cruel conquerors. God says by his prophet,—"I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction." Not only did they carry them away from their temple, their country, and their homes, but they made a

mock of their sorrows. When they saw them sit down to shed bitter tears by the rivers of Babylon, they demanded mirth and a song, saying, " Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

So is it with the world and the captive Christian. There are times when the world does not mock at the Christian. Often the Christian is filled with so strange a joy that the world wonders in silence. Often there is a meek and quiet spirit in the Christian, which disarms opposition. The soft answer turneth away wrath; and his very enemies are forced to be at peace with him. But stop till the Christian's day of darkness comes—stop till sin and unbelief have brought him into captivity—stop till he is shut out from Zion, and carried afar off, and sits and weeps; then will the cruel world help forward the affliction—then will they ask for mirth and song; and when they see the bitter tear trickling down the cheek, they will ask with savage mockery, " Where is your Psalm-singing now? " " Sing us one of the songs of Zion." Even Christ felt this bitterness when he hung upon the cross.

III. *The Christian cannot sing in captivity.* So it was with ancient Israel. They were peculiarly attached to the sweet songs of Zion. They reminded them of the times of David and Solomon—when the temple was built, and Israel was in its greatest glory. They reminded them, above all, of their God, of their temple, and the services of the sanctuary. Three times a year they came up from the country in companies, singing these sweet songs of Zion—lifting their eyes to the hills whence came their help. But now, when they were in captivity, they hanged their harps upon the willows; and when their cruel spoilers demanded mirth and a song, they said: " How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? " So is it with the believer in darkness. He hangs his harp upon the willows, and cannot sing the song of the Lord. Every believer has got a harp. Every heart that has been made new is turned into a harp of praise. The mouth is filled with laughter—the tongue with divinest melody. Every true Christian loves praise—the holiest Christians love it most. But when the believer falls into sin and darkness, his harp is on the willows, and he cannot sing the Lord's song, for he is in a strange land.

1. *He loses all sense of pardon.* It is the sense of pardon that gives its sweetest tones to the song of the Christian. But when a believer is in captivity he loses this sweet sense of forgiveness, and therefore cannot sing.

2. *He loses all sense of the presence of God.* It is the sweet presence of God with the soul that makes the believer sing. But when that presence is away, the Lord's house is but a howling wilderness; and you say, " How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? "

3. *He loses sight of the heavenly Canaan.* The sight of the everlasting hills draws forth the heavenly melodies of the believing soul. But when a believer sins, and is carried away captive, he loses this hope of glory. He sits and weeps—he hangs his harp upon the willows, and cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

4. *The believer in darkness still remembers Zion, and prefers it above his chief joy.* He often finds, when he has fallen into sin and captivity, that he has fallen among worldly delights and worldly friends. A thousand pleasures tempt him to take up his rest here; but if he be a true child of Zion he will never settle down in a strange land. He will look over all the pleasures of the world and the pleasures of sin, and say, " A day in thy courts is better than a thousand "—" If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."—*Condensed from Robert Murray M'Chayne,* 1813—1843.

Verses 1, 2.—The Psalm is universally admired. Indeed, nothing can be more exquisitely beautiful. It is written in a strain of sensibility that must touch every soul that is capable of feeling. It is remarkable that Dr. Watts, in his excellent versification, has omitted it. He has indeed some verses upon it in his Lyrics; and many others have written on this ode. We have seen more than ten productions of this kind; the last, and perhaps the best, of which is Lord Byron's. But who is satisfied with any of these attempts? Thus it begins: " By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." These rivers were probably some of the streams branching off from the Euphrates and Tigris. Here it is commonly supposed these captive Jews were placed by their task-masters, to preserve or repair the water-works. But is it improper to conjecture that the Psalmist refers to their being here; not constantly, but occasionally; not by compulsion, but choice? Hither I imagine their retiring, to unbend their oppressed minds in solitude. " Come," said one of these pious Jews to another, " come, let us for a while go forth, from this vanity and vileness. Let us assemble together

by ourselves under the refreshing shade of the willows by the watercourses. And let us take our harps with us, and solace ourselves with some of the songs of Zion." But as soon as they arrive, and begin to touch the chords, the notes—such is the power of association—awaken the memory of their former privileges and pleasures. And, overwhelmed with grief, they sit down on the grass; and weep when they remember Zion; their dejected looks, averted from each other, seeming to say, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." But what do they with their harps? The voice of mirth is heard no more, and all the daughters of music are brought low. Melody is not in season to a distressed spirit. "Is any afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms." "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart." They did not, however, break them to pieces, or throw them into the stream—but *hanged* them up only. They hoped that what they could not use at present they might be able to resume at some happier period. To be cast down is not to be destroyed. Distress is not despondency.

> "Beware of desperate steps: the darkest day,
> Live till to-morrow, will have passed away."

"*We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.*" Let us pass from the Jew to the Christian; and let us survey the Christian in his SPIRITUAL SORROWS. He who would preach well, says Luther, must distinguish well. It is peculiarly necessary to discriminate, when we enter upon the present subject. For all the sorrows of the Christian are not of the same kind or descent. Let us consider four sources of his moral sadness.

I. The first will be *physical.* II. The second will be *criminal.* III. The third will be *intellectual.* IV. The fourth will be *pious.*—*William Jay, in "The Christian Contemplated."*

Verse 2.—"*Our harps.*" Many singers were carried captives: Ezra ii. 41. These would of course carry their instruments with them, and be insulted, as here. Their songs were sacred, and unfit to be sung before idolaters.—*From "Anonymous Notes" in James Merrick's Annotations,* 1768.

Verse 2.—"*Willows.*" All the flat, whereon Babylon stood, being by reason of so many rivers and canals running through it made in many places marshy, especially near the said rivers and canals, this caused it to abound much in *willows,* and therefore it is called in Scripture the "Valley of Willows"; for so the words in Isaiah xv. 7, which we translate "the brook of the willows," ought to be rendered. —*Humphrey Prideaux* (1648—1724), *in "The Old and New Testament Connected,"* etc.

Verse 2.—"*Willows.*" The *Weeping Willow* of Babylon will grow to be a large tree; its branches being long, slender, and pendulous, makes it proper to be planted upon the banks of rivers, ponds, and over springs; the leaves, also, are long and narrow; and when any mist or dew falls, a drop of water is seen hanging at their extremities, which, together with their hanging branches, cause a most lugubrious appearance. Lovers' garlands are said to have been made of a species of this willow, the branches of which are very slender and pliable; and the plant itself has always been sought after for ornamental plantations, either to mix with others of the like growth in the largest quarters, or to be planted out singly over springs, or in large opens, for the peculiar variety occasioned by its mournful look.—*John Evelyn* (1620—1706), *in "Silva; or, A Discourse of Forest-Trees."*

Verse 2.—"*Willows.*" It is a curious fact, that during the Commonwealth of England, when Cromwell, like a wise politician, allowed them to settle in London and to have synagogues, the Jews came hither in sufficient numbers to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles in booths, among the *Willows* on the borders of the Thames. The disturbance of their comfort from the innumerable spectators, chiefly London apprentices, called for some protection from the local magistrates. Not that any insult was offered to their persons, but a natural curiosity, excited by so new and extraordinary a spectacle, induced many to press too closely round their camp, and perhaps intrude upon their privacy.—*Maria Callcott* (1788–1842), *in "A Scripture Herbal,"* 1842.

Verse 2.—"*Willows.*" There is a pretty story told about the way in which the

Weeping Willow was introduced into England.* Many years ago, the well-known poet, Alexander Pope, who resided at Twickenham, received a basket of figs as a present from Turkey. The basket was made of the supple branches of the Weeping Willow, the very same species under which the captive Jews sat when they wept by the waters of Babylon. *"We hanged our harps upon the willows."* The poet valued highly the small slender twigs as associated with so much that was interesting, and he untwisted the basket, and planted one of the branches on the ground. It had some tiny buds upon it, and he hoped he might be able to rear it, as none of this species of willow was known in England. Happily the willow is very quick to take root and grow. The little branch soon became a tree, and drooped gracefully over the river, in the same manner that its race had done over the waters of Babylon. From that one branch all the Weeping Willows in England are descended.—*Mary and Elizabeth Kirby, in "Chapters on Trees,"* 1873.

Verse 2.—*"In the midst thereof."* This is most naturally understood of the *city* of Babylon; which was nearly as large as Middlesex, and had parks and gardens inside it.—*William Kay.*

Verse 3.—*"They that carried us away captive required of us a song"*; or rather, as it should be rendered, *"the words* of a song." They see no inconsistency in a religion which freely mixes with the world. In their ignorance they only require *"the words* of a song"; its heavenly strain they have never caught. "They that *wasted us* required of us mirth." Remember, it is this worldly element which wasteth, or lays on heaps, whether so far as our own hearts or the church of God is concerned. But, true to his spiritual instincts, the child of God replies, "How shall we sing *Jehovah's* song in the land of a *stranger?*" and then, so far from being utterly cast down or overcome, rises with fresh outburst of resolution and intenseness of new vigour, to utter the vows of verses 5 and 6. For, after having passed through such a spiritual conflict, we come forth, not wearied, but refreshed; not weaker, but stronger. It is one of the seeming contradictions of the gospel, that the cure of weariness, and the relief of heavy-ladenness, lies in this—*to take the cross upon ourselves.* After the night-long conflict of Israel, "as he passed over Peniel, *the sun rose upon him,*" and that though "he halted upon his thigh."—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 3.—*"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."* It is variously set down as simple curiosity to hear something of the famous melodies of the Hebrew people; as well-meaning counsel to the exiles to reconcile themsleves to their inevitable situation, and to resume their former habits in social harmony with the inhabitants of the land; or, most generally as a fresh aggravation of their misery, in requiring them to make sport for their new masters.—*Genebrardus, Chrysostom, and Cocceius, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 3.—*"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."* No music will serve the epicures in the prophet but temple music: Amos. vi. 5, "They invent to themselves instruments of music like David." As choice and excellent as David was in the service of the temple, so would they be in their private feasts. Belshazzar's draughts are not half so sweet in other vessels as in the utensils of the temple: Dan. v. 2, "He commanded to bring forth the golden and silver vessels that were taken out of the house of God." So the Babylonian humour is pleased with nothing so much as with "*one of the songs of Zion;*" not an ordinary song, but "Sing us *one of your songs of Zion.*" No jest relisheth with a profane spirit so well as when Scripture is abused, and made to lackey to their sportive jollity. Vain man thinketh he can never put honour enough upon his pleasures, and scorn enough upon God and holy things.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 3.—*"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."* The insulting nature of the demand will become the more conspicuous, if we consider, that the usual subjects of these songs were the omnipotence of Jehovah, and his love towards his chosen people.—*William Keatinge Clay,* 1839.

Verse 3.—The Babylonians asked them in derision for one of the songs of Zion. They loaded with ridicule their pure and venerable religion, and aggravated the sufferings of the weary and oppressed exiles by their mirth and their indecency. We are sorry to say that the resemblance still holds betwixt the Jews in a state of captivity and the Christians in the state of their pilgrimage. We have also

* The two preceding extracts would seem to prove that this story is not true; at least Evelyn's willow is evidently the weeping willow, and would seem to have long been known.

to sustain the mockery of the profane and the unthinking. Ridicule and disdain are often the fate of sincere piety in this world. Fashion and frivolity and false philosophy have made a formidable combination against us; and the same truth, the same honesty, the same integrity of principle, which in any other cause would be esteemed as manly and respectable, is despised and laughed at when attached to the cause of the gospel and its sublime interests.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verses 3, 4.—St. John Chrysostom observes the improvement such tribulation effected in the Jews, who previously derided, nay, even put to death, some of the prophets; but now that they were captives in a foreign land, they would not attempt to expose their sacred hymns to the ridicule of the Gentiles.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 4.—"*How shall we sing the* LORD'S *song in a strange land?*" Now, is it not true that, in many senses, we, like the Jewish exiles, have to sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If not a land strange to *us*, then, all the more strange to *it*—a land foreign, so to say, and alien to the Lord's song. The very life which we live here in the body is a life of sight and sense. Naturally we walk by sight; and to sing the Lord's song is possible only to faith. Faith is the soul's sight: faith is seeing the Invisible: this comes not of nature, and without this we cannot sing the Lord's song, because we are in a land strange to it.

Again, the feelings of the present life are often adverse to praise. The exiles in Babylon could not sing because they were in heaviness. God's hand was heavy upon them. He had a controversy with them for their sins. Now the feelings of many of us are in like manner adverse to the Lord's song. Some of us are in great sorrow. We have lost a friend; we are in anxiety about one who is all to us; we know not which way to turn for to-morrow's bread or for this day's comfort. How can we sing the Lord's song?

And there is another kind of sorrow, still more fatal, if it be possible, to the lively exercise of adoration. And that is, a weight and burden of unforgiven sin. Songs may be heard from the prison-cell of Philippi; songs may be heard from the calm death-bed, or by the open grave; but songs cannot be drawn forth from the soul on which the load of God's displeasure, real or imagined, is lying, or which is still powerless to apprehend the grace and the life for sinners which is in Christ Jesus. That, we imagine, was *the* difficulty which pressed upon the exile Israelite; that certainly is an impediment now, in many, to the outburst of Christian praise. And again, there is a land yet more strange and foreign to the Lord's song even than the land of unforgiven guilt—and that is the land of unforsaken sin.—*Condensed from C. J. Vaughan.*

Verse 4.—"*The Lord's song—in a strange land.*" It was the contrast, it was the incongruity which perplexed them. The captives in Babylon—that huge, unwieldy city, with its temple of the Chaldean Bel towering aloft on its eight stupendous stories to the height of a furlong into the sky—the Israelite exiles, bidden there to an idolatrous feast, that they might make sport for the company by singing to them one of the far-famed Hebrew melodies, for the gratification of curiosity or the amusement of the ear—how could it be done? *The Lord's song*—one of those inspired compositions of Moses or David, in which the saintly soul of the king or the prophet poured itself forth in lowliest, loftiest adoration, before the one Divine Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—how *could* it be sung, they ask, in a scene so incongruous? The words would languish upon the tongue, the notes would refuse to sound upon the disused harp. Such Psalmody requires its accompaniment and its adaptation—if not actually in the Temple-courts of Zion, yet at least in the balmy gales of Palestine and the believing atmosphere of Israel.—*C. J. Vaughan, in "The Family Prayer and Sermon Book."*

Verse 4.—"*The Lord's song.*" These songs of old, to distinguish them from heathenish songs, were called God's songs, the Lord's songs; because taught by him, learned of him, and commanded by him to be sung to his praise.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 4.—Many were the sad thoughts which the remembrance of Zion would call up: the privileges they had there enjoyed; the solemn feasts and happy meetings of their tribes to worship there before the Lord; the Temple—"the beautiful house where their fathers had worshipped"—now laid waste.

But the one embittering thought that made them indeed heavy at heart, silenced their voices, and unstrung their harps, was the cause of this calamity—their sin. Paul and Silas could sing in a dungeon, but it was not their sin brought them there:

and so the saints suffering for the name of Christ could say, "we are exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." There is no real sorrow in any circumstances into which God brings us, or where he leads and goes with us; but where sin is, and suffering is felt to be—not persecution, but—judgment, there is and can be no joy; the soul refuses to be comforted. Israel cannot sing beside the waters of Babylon.—*William De Burgh.*

Verse 4.—There is a distinction between us and God's ancient people; for at that time the worship of God was confined to one place; but now he has his temple wherever two or three are met together in Christ's name, if they separate themselves from all idolatrous profession, and maintain purity of Divine worship.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—It is one of the pathetic touches about the English captivity of King John II. of France, that once sitting as a guest to see a great tournament held in his honour, he looked on sorrowfully, and being urged by some of those about him to be cheerful and enjoy the splendid pageant, he answered with a mournful smile, "*How shall we sing the* LORD'S *song in a strange land?*"—*Polydore Virgil,* —1555.

Verse 5.—"*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem.*" Calvary, Mount of Olives, Siloam, how fragrant are ye with the Name that is above every name! "*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem!*" Can I forget where he walked so often, where he spake such gracious words, where he died? Can I forget that his feet shall stand on that "Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem, on the east?" Can I forget that there stood the Upper Room, and there fell the showers of Pentecost?—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 5.—"*Let my right hand forget her cunning.*" There is a striking and appropriate point in this, which has been overlooked. It is, that, as it is customary for people in the East to swear by their professions, so one who has no profession —who is poor and destitute, and has nothing of recognized value in the world—swears by his right hand, which is his sole stake in society, and by the "*cunning*" of which he earns his daily bread. Hence the common Arabic proverb (given by Burckhardt) reflecting on the change of demeanour produced by improved circumstances:—"He was wont to swear 'by the cutting off of his right hand!' He now swears 'by the giving of money to the poor.'" The words, "*her cunning,*" are supplied by the translators, in whose time *cunning* (from the Saxon *cannan,* Dutch *konnen,* "to know") meant "skill;" and a cunning man was what we should now call a skilful man. In the present case the skill indicated is doubtless that of playing on the harp, in which particular sense it occurs so late as Prior:—

> "When Pedro does the lute command,
> She guides the cunning artist's hand."

Modern translators substitute "skill;" but perhaps a term still more general would be better—such as, "May my right hand lose its power."—*John Kitto, in "The Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 5.—"*Let my right hand forget.*" Something must be supplied from the context . . . . the playing on the stringed instrument, verse 2, whether the right hand should be applied to the purpose or not, was the point in question. Then, the punishment also perfectly accords with the misdeed, as in Job xxxi. 22: If I, misapplying my right hand to the playing of joyful strains on my instrument, forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand, as a punishment, forget the noble art; and then also verse 6 fits admirably to what goes before: May my misemployed hand lose its capacity to play, and my tongue, misemployed in singing cheerful songs, its capacity to sing.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—"*If I do not remember thee.*" Either our beds are soft, or our hearts hard, that can rest when the church is at unrest, that feel not our brethren's hard cords through our soft beds.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*" Literally, "*if I advance not Jerusalem above the head of my joy.*" If I set not Jerusalem as a diadem on the head of my rejoicing, and crown all my happiness with it.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 7.—"*Remember, O* LORD, *the children of Edom,*" etc. The Jews were their brethren: Obad. 10; Amos i. 11. They were their neighbours, Idumea and Judea bordered upon one another: Mark iii. 8. They were confederates with

the Jews (Jer. xxvii. 3 : an Edomitish ambassador was at Jerusalem), who, together with the ambassadors of the other kings there mentioned, were strengthening themselves with Zedekiah against Nebuchadnezzar ; see Obad. 7. For them, therefore, to revenge themselves for former wrongs done them upon the Jews, and that in the day of their calamity, this made their sin exceeding sinful.—*William Greenhill*, 1591—1677.

Verse 7.—"*Remember, O* LORD, *the children of Edom*," etc. Of all kinds of evil speaking against our brother, this sin of Edom, to sharpen an enemy against our brother in the day of his sorrow and distress, this opening of the mouth wide against him, to insult over him in his calamity, is most barbarous and unchristian. . . . Observe how the cruelty of the Edomites is aggravated by the time ; the wofullest time that ever Jerusalem had, called therefore "*the day of Jerusalem.*" When all things conspired to make their sorrow full, then, in the anguish and fit of their mortal disease, then did Edom arm his eye, his tongue, his heart, his hand, and join all those with the enemy against his brother. Learn, that God taketh notice not only *what* we do against another, but *when ;* for he will set these things in order before us ; for the God of mercy cannot abide cruelty.—*Edward Marbury*, 1649.

Verse 7.—"*Remember, O* LORD, *the children of Edom.*" Edom shall be remembered for the mischievous counsel he gave ; and the daughter of Babylon shall be for ever razed out of memory for razing Jerusalem to the ground. And let all the secret and open enemies of God's church take heed how they employ their tongues and hands against God's secret ones : they that presume to do either may here read their fatal doom written in the *dust* of Edom, and in the *ashes* of Babylon.—*Daniel Featley* (1582—1645), *in "Clavis Mystica."*

Verse 7.—In Herod, the Idumean, Edom's hatred found its concentrated expression. *His* attempt was to destroy him whom God had laid in Zion as the " sure foundation."—*William Kay.*

Verse 7.—It may be observed that the Jews afterward acted the same part toward the Christian church which the Edomites had acted toward them, encouraging and stirring up the Gentiles to persecute and destroy it from off the face of the earth. And God " remembered " them for the Christians' sakes, as they prayed him to " remember Edom " for their sakes. Learn we hence, what a crime it is, for Christians to assist the common enemy, or call in the common enemy to assist them, against their brethren.—*George Horne.*

Verse 7.—We are not to regard the imprecations of this Psalm in any other light than as prophetical. They are grounded on the many prophecies which had already gone forth on the subject of the destruction of Babylon, if, as we may admit, the Psalm before us was written after the desolation of Jerusalem. But these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled in every particular, and remain to be accomplished in mystic Babylon, when the dominion of Antichrist shall be for ever swept away, and the true church introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, at the appearing of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in his own kingdom.—*William Wilson.*

Veres 7.—Edom's hatred was the hatred with which the carnal mind in its natural enmity against God always regards whatever is the elect object of his favour. Jerusalem was the city of *God.* " Rase it, rase it even to the ground," is the mischievous desire of every unregenerate mind against every building that rests on the elect Stone of Divine foundation. For God's election never pleases man until, through grace, his own heart has become an adoring receiver of that mercy which while in his natural state he angrily resented and refused to own in its effects on other men. From Cain to Antichrist this solemn truth holds always good.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 7—9.—I do not know if the same feeling has occurred to others, but I have often wished the latter verses of this Psalm had been disjoined from this sweet and touching beginning. It sounds as if one of the strings on their well-tuned harps was out of melody, as if it struck a jarring note of discord. And yet I know the feeling is wrong, for it is no more than what the Lord himself had foretold and declared should be the final desolation of proud Babylon itself : yet one longs more intensely for the period when the nations of the earth shall learn war no more ; and every harp and every voice, even those of the martyred ones beneath God's altar loudest and sweetest of all, shall sing the Lord's songs, the song of Moses, and the Lamb, in that pleasant land, where no sighing and no tears are seen.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 8.—*"O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed."* In the beginning of the fifth year of Darius happened the revolt of the Babylonians which cost him the trouble of a tedious siege again to reduce them . . . . he besieged the city with all his forces . . . . As soon as the Babylonians saw themselves begirt by such an army as they could not cope with in the field, they turned their thoughts wholly to the supporting of themselves in the siege; in order whereto they took a resolution, the most desperate and barbarous that ever any nation practised. For to make their provisions last the longer, they agreed to cut off all unnecessary mouths among them, and therefore drawing together all the women and children, they strangled them all, whether wives, sisters, daughters, or young children useless for the wars, excepting only that every man was allowed to save one of his wives, which he best loved, and a maid-servant to do the work of the house.—*Humphrey Prideaux.*

Verse 8.—*"Who art to be destroyed."* הַשְּׁדוּדָה has been explained in a variety of ways. Seventy: ἡ ταλαίπωρος; Vulg. *misera:* others, *destroyer, powerful, violent,* or *fierce.* Perhaps it best suits the context to regard it as expressing what is already accomplished: it is so certain, in the view of the Psalmist, that the ruin will come, that he uses the past participle, as if the work were now completed. "O daughter of Babylon, the destroyed!"—*"Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review."*

Verse 8.—He that sows evil shall reap evil; he that soweth the evil of sin, shall reap the evil of punishment. So Eliphaz told Job that he had seen (Job iv. 8), "they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." And that either in kind or quality, proportion or quantity. In kind, the very same that he did to others shall be done to him; or in proportion, a measure answerable to it. So he shall reap what he hath sown, in quality or in quantity; either in portion the same, or in proportion the like. The prophet cursing Edom and Babel saith thus, "O daughter of Zion, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us." The original is, "that recompenseth to thee thy deed which thou didst to us." . . . Thus is wickedness recompensed *suo genere,* in its own kind. So often the transgressor is against the transgressor, the thief robs the thief, *proditoris proditor;* as in Rome many unchristened emperors, and many christened popes, by blood and treason got the sovereignty, and by blood and treason lost it. Evil men drink of their own brewing, are scourged with their own rod, drowned in the pit which they digged for others, as Haman was hanged on his own gallows, Perillus tormented in his own engine!—*Thomas Adams.*

Verses 8, 9.—The subject of these two verses is the same with that of many chapters in Isaiah and Jeremiah; namely, the vengeance of heaven executed upon Babylon by Cyrus, raised up to be king of the Medes and Persians, united under him for that purpose. The meaning of the words, *"Happy shall he be,"* is, He shall go on and prosper, for the Lord of hosts shall go with him, and fight his battles against the enemy and oppressor of his people, empowering him to recompense upon the Chaldeans the works of their hands, and to reward them as they served Israel.—*George Horne.*

Verses 8, 9.—It needs no record to tell us that, in the siege and carrying away of Jerusalem, great atrocities were committed by the conquerors. We may be quite sure that

> "Many a childing mother then
> And new-born baby died."

for the wars of the old world were always attended by such barbarous cruelties. The apostrophe of verses 8, 9, consequently merely proclaims the certainty of a just retribution—of the same retribution that the prophets had foretold (Isa. xiii. 16; xlvii.; Jer. l.; compare, "who art to be destroyed, verse 8), and the happiness of those who should be its ministers; who should mete out to her what she had measured to the conquered Jew. It was the decree of Heaven that their "children" should "be dashed to pieces before their eyes." The Psalmist simply recognizes the decree as just and salutary; he pronounces the terrible vengeance to have been deserved. To charge him with vindictiveness, therefore, is to impugn the justice and mercy of the Most High. And there is nothing to sustain the charge, for his words are simply a prediction, like that of the prophet, "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy reward shall return upon thine own head:" Obad. 15. —*Joseph Hammond, in "The Expositor,"* 1876.

Verse 9.—"*Happy shall he be that taketh,*" etc. That is, so oppressive hast thou been to all under thy domination, as to become universally hated and detested; so that those who may have the last hand in thy destruction, and the total extermination of thy inhabitants, shall be reputed "*happy*"—shall be *celebrated* and *extolled* as those who have rid the world of a curse so grievous. These prophetic declarations contain no excitement to any person or persons to commit acts of cruelty and barbarity; but are simply *declarative* of what would take place in the order of the retributive providence and justice of God, and the general opinion that should in consequence be expressed on the subject; therefore *praying for the destruction of our enemies* is totally out of the question.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9.—"*Happy shall he be,*" etc. With all possible might and speed oppose the very first risings and movings of the heart to sin; for these are the buds that produce the bitter fruit; and if sin be not nipped in the very bud, it is not imaginable how quickly it will shoot forth. . . . Now these sins, though they may seem small in themselves, yet are exceedingly pernicious in their effects. These little foxes destroy the grapes as much or more than the greater, and therefore are to be diligently sought out, hunted, and killed by us, if we would keep our hearts fruitful. We should deal with these first streamings out of sin as the Psalmist would have the people of God deal with the brats of Babylon: "*Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.*" And without doubt most happy and successful will that man prove in his spiritual welfare, who puts on no bowels of pity even to his infant corruptions, but slays the small as well as the great; and so not only conquers his enemies by opposing their present force, but also by extinguishing their future race. The smallest children, if they live, will be grown men; and the first motions of sin, if they are let alone, will spread into great, open, and audacious presumptions.—*Robert South*, 1633—1716.

Verse 9.—"*Against the stones.*" That סלע signifies *a rock*, is undubitable, from the concurrent testimony of all the best Hebrew lexicographers Hence it follows, because there is no rock, nor mountain, nor hill, either in the city or in the province of ancient Babylonia, that the locality, against which the malediction of this Psalm is hurled, cannot be the metropolis of the ancient Assyrian empire, but must be apocalyptic Babylon, or Papal Rome, built upon seven hills, one of which is the celebrated Tarpeian Rock. But the eighth verse emphatically declares that the retributive justice of God will visit upon apocalyptic Babylon, the same infliction which Assyrian Babylon, and also Pagan Rome, inflicted upon Jerusalem. As therefore Nebuchadnezzar as well as Titus "burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire" (2 Kings xxv. 9) so "the ten horns shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire; and she shall be utterly burned with fire" (Rev. xvii. 16; xviii. 8). When the Canaanites had filled up the measure of their iniquity, Israel received a divine commission to exterminate the guilty nation. When Papal Rome shall have filled up the measure of her iniquity, then "a mighty angel will take up a stone, like a great millstone, and will cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down": "For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double" (Rev. xviii. 5, 6). Then shall issue the divine proclamation: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. xviii. 20).—*John Noble Coleman, in "The Book of Psalms, with Notes,"* 1863.

Verse 9.—"*He that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.*"

> My heroes slain, my bridal bed o'erturned,
> My daughters ravish'd, and my city burn'd,
> My bleeding infants dash'd against the floor;
> These have I yet to see, perhaps yet more.
>
> *Homer's Iliad, Pope's Translation, Book xxii.* 89—91.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. A duty once the source of joy: "remember Zion." II. Circumstances which make the remembrances sorrowful. III. Peculiar persons who feel this joy or sorrow: "we."

Verse 1.—I. Zion forsaken in prosperity. Its services neglected; its priests demoralized; the worship of Baal and of Ashtaroth preferred to the worship of the true God. II. Zion remembered in adversity. In Babylon more than in Jerusalem; on the banks of the Euphrates more than on the banks of Jordan; with tears when they might have remembered it with joy. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear." "Lord, in trouble they have visited thee. They poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them."—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—I. Harps—or capacities for praise. II. Harps on willows, or song suspended. III. Harps retuned, or joys to come.

Verse 2.—I. A confession of joy being turned into sorrow: "we hanged," etc. The moaning of their harps upon weeping willows better harmonized with their feelings than any tunes which they had been accustomed to play. II. A hope of sorrow being turned into joy. They took their harps with them into captivity, and hung them up for future use.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—"*We hanged our harps*," etc. I. In remembrance of lost joys. Their harps were associated with a glorious past. They could not afford to forget that past. They kept up the good old custom. There are always means of remembrance at hand. II. In manifestation of present sorrow. They could not play on account of, 1. Their sinfulness. 2. Their circumstances. 3. Their home. III. In anticipation of future blessing. They did not dash their harps to pieces. Term of exile limited. Return expressly foretold. We shall want our harps in the good times coming. Sinners play their harps now, but must soon lay them aside for ever.—*W. J.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—Taken away from the text this is a very pleasant and praiseworthy request. Why do we wish for such a song? 1. It is sure to be pure. 2. It will certainly be elevating. 3. It will probably be gladsome. 4. It will comfort and enliven us. 5. It will help to express our gratitude.

Verses 3, 4.—I. The cruel demand. 1. A song when we are captives. 2. A song to please our adversaries. 3. A holy song for unholy purposes. II. The motive for it. Sometimes mere ridicule; at others, mistaken kindness seeking by sharpness to arouse us from despondency; often mere levity. III. The answer to it, "How can?" etc.

Verses 3, 4.—I. When God calls for joy we ought not to sorrow. The songs of Zion should be sung in Zion. II. When God calls for sorrow we ought not to rejoice. "How shall we sing?" etc. See Is. v. 12.—*G. R.*

Verses 3, 4.—I. The unreasonable request: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." This was—1. A striking testimony to the joyful character of Jehovah's worship. Even the heathen had heard of "the songs of Zion." 2. A severe trial of the fidelity of captive Israel. It might have been to their present advantage to have complied with the request. 3. A cruel taunt of the sad and desponding condition of the captives. II. The indignant refusal. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" There is no singing this song by true Israelites—1. When the heart is out of tune, as it must necessarily be when in "a strange land." 2. In uncongenial society—amongst unsympathetic strangers. 3. For unsanctified purposes—to make mirth for the heathen. Many so-called sacred concerts pain devout Christians as much as the demand to sing the Lord's song did the devout Israelites. The Lord's song must be sung only "to the Lord;"—*W. H. J. P.*

Verses 3, 4.—The burlesque of holy things. I. The servants of God are in an unsympathetic world. II. The demand to be amused and entertained. Temple songs to pass an idle hour! Such the popular demand to-day. Men would have us burlesque religion to tickle them. III. The justly indignant reply of all true men, "How shall we?" Christian workers have more serious if less popular business on hand.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 5.—The person who remembers; the thing remembered; the solemn imprecation.

Verse 5.—No harp but for Jesus.

I. The harp consecrated. At conversion.

"One sword, at least, thy rights shall guard,
One faithful harp shall praise thee."

II. The harp silent:

"Thy songs were made for the brave and free,
They shall never sound in slavery."

III. The harp re-strung above:

"And I heard the voice of harpers
Harping with their harps."

W. B. H.

Verses 5, 6.—I. To rejoice with the world is to forget the church. II. To love the church we must prefer her above everything. III. To serve the church we must be prepared to suffer anything.

Verse 7.—The hatred of the ungodly to true religion. I. Its cause. II. Its extent. "Rase it," etc. III. Its season for display: "in the day of Jerusalem" —trouble, etc. IV. Its reward: "Remember, O Lord."

PSALM CXXXVIII.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *This Psalm is wisely placed. Whoever edited and arranged these sacred poems, he had an eye to apposition and contrast; for if in Ps. cxxxvii. we see the need of silence before revilers, here we see the excellence of a brave confession. There is a time to be silent, lest we cast pearls before swine; and there is a time to speak openly, lest we be found guilty of cowardly non-confession. The Psalm is evidently of a Davidic character, exhibiting all the fidelity, courage, and decision of that King of Israel and Prince of Psalmists. Of course the critics have tried to rend the authorship from David on account of the mention of the temple, though it so happens that in one of the Psalms which is allowed to be David's the same word occurs. Many modern critics are to the word of God what blow-flies are to the food of men: they cannot do any good, and unless relentlessly driven away they do great harm.*

DIVISION.—*In full confidence David is prepared to own his God before the gods of the heathen, or before angels or rulers* (1—3); *he declares that he will instruct and convert kings and nations, till on every highway men shall sing the praises of the Lord* (4 *and* 5). *Having thus spoken, he utters his personal confidence in Jehovah, who will help his lowly servant, and preserve him from all the malice of wrathful foes.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, *and* strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul.

1. *"I will praise thee with my whole heart."* His mind is so taken up with God that he does not mention his name: to him there is no other God, and Jehovah is so perfectly realized and so intimately known, that the Psalmist, in addressing him, no more thinks of mentioning his name than we should do if we were speaking to a father or a friend. He sees God with his mind's eye, and simply addresses him with the pronoun "thee." He is resolved to praise the Lord, and to do it with the whole force of his life, even with his whole heart. He would not submit to act as one under restraint, because of the opinions of others; but in the presence of the opponents of the living God he would be as hearty in worship as if all were friends and would cheerfully unite with him. If others do not praise the Lord, there is all the more reason why we should do so, and should do so with enthusiastic eagerness. We need a broken heart to mourn our own sins, but a whole heart to praise the Lord's perfections. If ever our heart is whole and wholly occupied with one thing, it should be when we are praising the Lord. *"Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee."* Why should these idols rob Jehovah of his praises? The Psalmist will not for a moment suspend his songs because there are images before him, and their foolish worshippers might not approve of his music. I believe David referred to the false gods of the neighbouring nations, and the deities of the surviving Canaanites. He was not pleased that such gods were set up; but he intended to express at once his contempt of *them*, and his own absorption in the worship of the living Jehovah by continuing most earnestly to sing wherever he might be. It would be paying these dead idols too much respect to cease singing because they were perched aloft. In these days when new religions are daily excogitated, and

new gods are set up, it is well to know how to act. Bitterness is forbidden, and controversy is apt to advertise the heresy ; the very best method is to go on personally worshipping the Lord with unvarying zeal, singing with heart and voice his royal praises. Do they deny the Divinity of our Lord ? Let us the more fervently adore him. Do they despise the atonement ? Let us the more constantly proclaim it. Had half the time spent in councils and controversies been given to praising the Lord, the church would have been far sounder and stronger than she is at this day. The Hallelujah Legion will win the day. Praising and singing are our armour against the idolatries of heresy, our comfort under the depression caused by insolent attacks upon the truth, and our weapons for defending the gospel. Faith when displayed in cheerful courage, has about it a sacred contagion : others learn to believe in the Most High when they see his servant

" Calm 'mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory."

2. *"I will worship toward thy holy temple,"* or the place of God's dwelling, where the ark abode. He would worship God in God's own way. The Lord had ordained a centre of unity, a place of sacrifice, a house of his indwelling; and David accepted the way of worship enjoined by revelation. Even so, the true-hearted believer of these days must not fall into the will-worship of superstition, or the wild worship of scepticism, but reverently worship as the Lord himself prescribes. The idol gods had their temples; but David averts his glance from them, and looks earnestly to the spot chosen of the Lord for his own sanctuary. We are not only to adore the true God, but to do so in his own appointed way : the Jew looked to the temple, we are to look to Jesus, the living temple of the Godhead. *"And praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth."* Praise would be the main part of David's worship ; the name or character of God the great object of his song ; and the special point of his praise the grace and truth which shone so conspicuously in that name. The person of Jesus is the temple of the Godhead, and therein we behold the glory of the Father, " full of grace and truth." It is upon these two points that the name of Jehovah is at this time assailed—his grace and his truth. He is said to be too stern, too terrible, and therefore " modern thought " displaces the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and sets up an effeminate deity of its own making. As for us, we firmly believe that God is love, and that in the summing up of all things it will be seen that hell itself is not inconsistent with the beneficence of Jehovah, but is, indeed, a necessary part of his moral government now that sin has intruded into the universe. True believers hear the thunders of his justice, and yet they do not doubt his lovingkindness. Especially do we delight in God's great love to his own elect, such as he showed to Israel as a race, and more especially to David and his seed when he entered into covenant with him. Concerning this there is abundant room for praise. But not only do men attack the lovingkindness of God, but the truth of God is at this time assailed on all sides ; some doubt the truth of the inspired record as to its histories, others challenge the doctrines, many sneer at the prophecies ; in fact, the infallible word of the Lord is at this time treated as if it were the writing of imposters, and only worthy to be carped at. The swine are trampling on the pearls at this time, and nothing restrains them ; nevertheless, the pearls are pearls still, and shall yet shine about our Monarch's brow. We sing the lovingkindness and truth of the God of the Old Testament,—" the God of the whole earth shall he be called." David before the false gods first sang, then worshipped, and then proclaimed the grace and truth of Jehovah ; let us do the same before the idols of the New Theology.

"For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." The word of promise made to David was in his eyes more glorious than all else that he had seen of the Most High. Revelation excels creation in the clearness, definiteness, and fulness of its teaching. The name of the Lord in nature is not so easily read as in the Scriptures, which are a revelation in human language, specially adapted to the human mind, treating of human need, and of a Saviour who appeared in human nature to redeem humanity. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the divine word will not pass away, and in this respect especially it has a pre-eminence over every other form of manifestation. Moreover, the Lord lays all the rest of his name under tribute to his word : his wisdom, power, love, and all his other attributes combine to carry out his word. It is his word which creates, sustains, quickens, enlightens, and comforts. As a word of command it is supreme ; and in the person of the

incarnate Word it is set above all the works of God's hands. The sentence in the text is wonderfully full of meaning. We have collected a vast mass of literature upon it, but space will not allow us to put it all into our notes. Let us adore the Lord who has spoken to us by his word, and by his Son; and in the presence of unbelievers let us both praise his holy name and extol his holy word.

3. *"In the day when I cried thou answeredst me."* No proof is so convincing as that of experience. No man doubts the power of prayer after he has received an answer of peace to his supplication. It is the distinguishing mark of the true and living God that he hears the pleadings of his people, and answers them; the gods hear not and answer not, but Jehovah's memorial is—"the God that heareth prayer." There was some special day in which David cried more vehemently than usual; he was weak, wounded, worried, and his heart was wearied; then like a child he "cried,"—cried unto his Father. It was a bitter, earnest, eager prayer, as natural and as plaintive as the cry of a babe. The Lord answered it; but what answer can there be to a cry?—to a mere inarticulate wail of grief? Our heavenly Father is able to interpret tears, and cries, and he replies to their inner sense in such a way as fully meets the case. The answer came in the same day as the cry ascended: so speedily does prayer rise to heaven, so quickly does mercy return to earth. The statement of this sentence is one which all believers can make, and as they can substantiate it with many facts, they ought boldly to publish it, for it is greatly to God's glory. Well might the Psalmist say, "I will worship" when he felt bound to say "thou answeredst me." Well might he glory before the idols and their worshippers when he had answers to prayer to look back upon. This also is our defence against modern heresies: we cannot forsake the Lord, for he has heard our prayers.

"And strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." This was a true answer to his prayer. If the burden was not removed, yet strength was given wherewith to bear it, and this is an equally effective method of help. It may not be best for us that the trial should come to an end; it may be far more to our advantage that by its pressure we should learn patience. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and our prudent Father in heaven will not deprive us of those benefits. Strength imparted to the soul is an inestimable boon; it means courage, fortitude, assurance, heroism. By his word and Spirit the Lord can make the trembler brave, the sick whole, the weary bright. This soul-might will continue: the man having been strengthened for one emergency remains vigorous for life, and is prepared for all future labours and sufferings; unless, indeed, he throw away his force by unbelief, or pride, or some other sin. When God strengthens, none can weaken. Then is our soul strong indeed when the Lord infuses might into us.

4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.

5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great *is* the glory of the LORD.

4. *"All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth."* Kings have usually small care to hear the word of the Lord; but King David feels assured that if they do hear it they will feel its power. A little piety goes a long way in courts; but brighter days are coming, in which rulers will become hearers and worshippers: may the advent of such happy times be hastened. What an assembly!—"all the kings of the earth!" What a purpose! Gathered to hear the words of Jehovah's mouth. What a preacher! David himself rehearses the words of Jehovah. What praise! when they all in happy union lift up their songs unto the Lord. Kings are as gods below, and they do well when they worship the God above. The way of conversion for kings is the same as for ourselves: faith to them also cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Happy are those who can cause the word of the Lord to penetrate palaces; for the occupants of thrones are usually the last to know the joyful sounds of the gospel. David, the king, cared for kings' souls, and it will be wise for each man to look first after those who are of his own order. He went to his work of testimony with full assurance of success: he meant to speak only the words of Jehovah's mouth, and he felt sure that the kings would hear and praise Jehovah.

5. *"Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD."* Here is a double wonder—kings in God's ways, and kings singing there. Let a man once know the ways of

Jehovah, and he will find therein abundant reason for song; but the difficulty is to bring the great ones of the earth into ways so little attractive to the carnal mind. Perhaps when the Lord sends us a King David to preach, we shall yet see monarchs converted and hear their voices raised in devout adoration. *"For great is the glory of the* LORD." This glory shall overshadow all the greatness and glory of all kings: they shall be stirred by a sight of it to obey and adore. O that Jehovah's glory were revealed even now! O that the blind eyes of men could once behold it, then their hearts would be subdued to joyful reverence. David, under a sense of Jehovah's glory, exclaimed, "I will sing" (verse 1), and here he represents the kings as doing the same thing.

6 Though the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

8 The LORD will perfect *that which* concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, *endureth* for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

6. *"Though the* LORD *be high."* In greatness, dignity, and power, Jehovah is higher than the highest. His nature is high above the comprehension of his creatures, and his glory even exceeds the loftiest soarings of imagination. *"Yet hath he respect unto the lowly."* He views them with pleasure, thinks of them with care, listens to their prayers, and protects them from evil. Because they think little of themselves he thinks much of them. They reverence him, and he respects them. They are low in their own esteem, and he makes them high in his esteem. *"But the proud he knoweth afar off."* He does not need to come near them in order to discover their utter vanity: a glance from afar reveals to him their emptiness and offensiveness. He has no fellowship with them, but views them from a distance; he is not deceived, but knows the truth about them, despite their blustering; he has no respect unto them, but utterly abhors them. To a Cain's sacrifice, a Pharaoh's promise, a Rabshakeh's threat, and a Pharisee's prayer, the Lord has no respect. Nebuchadnezzar, when far off from God, cried, "Behold this great Babylon which I have builded;" but the Lord knew him, and sent him grazing with cattle. Proud men boast loudly of their culture and "the freedom of thought," and even dare to criticize their Maker: but he knows them from afar, and will keep them at arm's length in this life, and shut them up in hell in the next.

7. *"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me."* If I am walking there now, or shall be doing so in years to come, I have no cause for fear; for God is with me, and will give me new life. When we are somewhat in trouble it is bad enough, but it is worse to penetrate into the centre of that dark continent and traverse its midst: yet in such a case the believer makes progress, for he walks; he keeps to a quiet pace, for he does no more than walk; and he is not without the best of company, for his God is near to pour fresh life into him. It is a happy circumstance that, if God be away at any other time, yet he is pledged to be with us in trying hours: "when thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee." He is in a blessed condition who can confidently use the language of David,—"thou wilt revive me." He shall not make his boast of God in vain: he shall be kept alive, and made more alive than ever. How often has the Lord quickened us by our sorrows! Are they not his readiest means of exciting to fulness of energy the holy life which dwells within us? If we receive reviving, we need not regret affliction. When God revives us, trouble will never harm us. *"Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me."* This is the fact which would revive fainting David. Our foes fall when the Lord comes to deal with them; he makes short work of the enemies of his people,—with one hand he routs them. His wrath soon quenches their wrath; his hand stays their hand. Adversaries may be many, and malicious, and mighty; but our glorious Defender has only to stretch out his arm and their armies vanish. The sweet singer rehearses his assurance of salvation, and sings of it in the ears of the Lord, addressing him with this confident language. He will be saved,—saved dexterously, decidedly, divinely; he has no doubt about it. God's right hand cannot forget its cunning; Jerusalem is his chief joy, and he will defend his own elect.

8. *"The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me."* All my interests are safe in Jehovah's hands.

" The work which his goodness began,
The arm of his strength will complete;
His promise is yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet."

God is concerned in all that concerns his servants. He will see to it that none of their precious things shall fail of completion; their life, their strength, their hopes, their graces, their pilgrimage, shall each and all be perfected. Jehovah himself will see to this; and therefore it is most sure. *"Thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever."* The refrain of the former Psalm is in his ears, and he repeats it as his own personal conviction and consolation. The first clause of the verse is the assurance of faith, and this second one reaches to the full assurance of understanding. God's work in us will abide unto perfection because God's mercy towards us thus abideth. *"Forsake not the works of thine own hands."* Our confidence does not cause us to live without prayer, but encourages us to pray all the more. Since we have it written upon our hearts that God will perfect his work in us, and we see it also written in Scripture that his mercy changeth not, we with holy earnestness entreat that we may not be forsaken. If there be anything good in us, it is the work of God's own hands: will he leave it? Why has he wrought so much in us if he means to give us up?—it will be a sheer waste of effort. He who has gone so far will surely persevere with us to the end. Our hope for the final perseverance of the believer lies in the final perseverance of the believer's God. If the Lord begins to build, and does not finish, it will not be to his honour. He will have a desire to the work of his hands, for he knows what it has cost him already, and he will not throw away a vessel upon which he has expended so much of labour and skill. Therefore do we praise him with our whole heart, even in the presence of those who depart from his Holy Word, and set up another God and another gospel; which are not another, but there be some that trouble us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Psalms cxxxviii.—cxlv.—These eight Psalms are composed in the *first* person, and they follow very happily after the fifteen " Songs of Up-goings," and the three Psalms of praise uttered by the chorus of those who have *gone up* to Sion. Those Psalms were the united utterances of national devotion. These eight Psalms are the devout Israelite's Manual of *private* prayer and praise.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—This is the first of a series of eight Psalms (cxxxviii.—cxlv.), probably the last composed by David, a kind of commentary on the great Messianic promise in 2 Sam. vii. They are found in this part of the Psalter, in consequence of having been made the basis, or rather the body, of a system or series (cxxxv.—cxlvi.) by a later writer.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Whole Psalm.—If this Psalm refers to the promise in 2 Sam. vii., there can be no doubt of the correctness of the superscription, which ascribes it to David. For he, on whom the promise has been conferred, himself stands forth as the speaker. Proof also of David's authorship is found in the union, so characteristic of him, of bold courage, see especially verse 3, and deep humility, see verse 6. And in proof of the same comes, finally, the near relationship in which it stands with the other Psalms of David, especially those which likewise refer to the promise of the everlasting kingdom; and with David's thanksgiving in 2 Sam. vii., the conclusion of which remarkably agrees with the conclusion of our Psalm: " And now, Lord God, the word which thou hast spoken upon thy servant and upon his house, that fulfil even to eternity, and do as thou hast spoken."—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—"*I* will praise *thee with my whole heart.*" It is a part of our thankfulness to engage our heart to praise God in time to come, since we find that all the thanks we can give for the present are short of our duty or desire to praise him: *"I will praise thee,"* saith David. Sometimes the believer will find his heart set at liberty

in God's worship, which at another time he will find to be in bands, and then he should take the opportunity of an enlarged heart to run in the way of God's service, as David doth here: *"I will praise thee with my whole heart."—David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—*"I will praise thee."* Up, dear soul! What though thou hast once complained like Israel of thy captivity in Babylon, Ps. cxxxvii. 1, yet now sing once more a song of joy to the Lord. Thou hast been pressed like a cluster of grapes, now give forth thy ripe juice.—*Christoph Starke.*

Verse 1.—*"I will praise thee."* Alas, for that capital crime of the Lord's people—barrenness in praises! Oh, how fully I am persuaded that a line of praises is worth a leaf of prayer, and an hour of praises is worth a day of fasting and mourning!—*John Livingstone*, 1603—1672.

Verse 1.—*"With my whole heart."* This expression, as in Ps. ix. 1, points to the surpassing greatness of the benefit received, which filled the whole heart with thankfulness, and did not proceed, as it were, from some particular corner of it. It corresponds also to the greatness of the benefaction, in the expression, *"before the gods,"*—demanding of these, whether they would verify their godhead by pointing to any such boon conferred by them on their servants. The benefit which could afford such a demonstration, and give occasion and ground for raillery, must have been a surpassingly great one.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—*"Before the gods."* There is much diversity in the meaning assigned to *"gods"* in this verse. It may mean literally in an idolatrous country, in the very temples of false gods, as so many Christian martyrs bore testimony to the faith. The LXX., Vulgate, Ethiopic, and Arabic translate *angels.* The Chaldee has *judges*, the Syriac *kings*, and the earlier Greek fathers explain it as a reference to the choirs of *Priests and Levites* in the Temple.—*Zigabenus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—*"Before the gods."* Some (LXX., Luther, Calvin, etc.) interpret these words of the angels, and compare Ps. xxix. 1; but it is doubtful if the Hebrew word Elohim, used nakedly and without any explanation, can have this meaning: it is also, as it would seem, in this connection, pointless: others (Rabbins, Flamin., Delitzsch, etc.) interpret "the great ones of the earth," and compare verse 4 below, and Pss. lxxxii. 1, cxix. 46, etc.; but this interpretation, too, seems to give no special force to the passage. Probably (Aq., Symm., Jer., etc.) the meaning is, "Before, or in the presence of, the gods of the heathen, *i.e.*, in scorn of, in sight of, the idols, who can do nothing, I will praise Jehovah, who does miracles for me and his people." For a similar expression, see Ps. xxiii. 5, Heb.: see also Pss. xcv. 3, xcvi. 5, for places in which the Hebrew word *"gods"* is used probably for idols.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 1.—*"Before the gods,"* etc. The Vulgate hath, *in conspectu angelorum*, "before the angels"; their presence should awe men and women, and keep them from all dishonesty, evil words, acts, gestures, secret grudging, all discontents and distempers. For as they are rejoiced to discern a good frame of spirit in you, to see you keep that order God hath set in the church and state, to walk as Christians to the honour of God; so they are grieved to see the contrary, and you must answer for your sins against these great officers in the great family of heaven and earth.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 2.—*"I will worship toward thy holy temple."* The holy temple was a type and figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we find Daniel opening his windows toward the temple, where he prayed three times a day; and we find Jonah saying, "Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." So looking to Jesus, he is our temple. There is no acceptable worship except through him; but we can offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Then, set the Lord Jesus Christ before your eyes, that you may worship God and draw near to the footstool of mercy through him, that you may offer an acceptable sacrifice, and praise his name for his lovingkindness and for his truth.—*Joseph C. Philpot*, 1802—1869.

Verse 2.—*"Thy holy temple."* This Psalm is entitled "a Psalm of David," and Calvin considers him to be its author agreeably to the title; but the mention of "the temple" in this verse seems to render such an opinion doubtful. If, however, we translate this word by "mansion," which is the proper rendering of the original—*"the mansion of thy sanctity,"*—this objection to its composition by David falls to the ground.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 2.—*"I will . . . . praise thy name for thy lovingkindness."* There are two

beautiful thoughts brought out here; one is, "God's condescension in thought;" the other, "his tenderness in action." These are both included in "*lovingkindness*." And both of these are shown by God to his own people. He humbleth himself to behold the things of the children of men; he condescends to men of low estate. Of the blessed Jesus it is said, that "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich:" 2 Cor. viii. 9. Who can tell the depths to which God condescends in loving thought? We are told that the very hairs of our head are all numbered; and if the hairs of our head, then surely all else beside. God, as the Heavenly Father, takes an interest in everything about his people; he takes this interest in matters which they think beneath his notice, or of which they, from their ignorance, do not know the importance. The mother may draw whole stores of comfort from a realization of the *condescending thoughtfulness of God*. He will be interested about her babe; if she commit it to him, he who made the universe will, with his infinite mind, think upon her cradle and the helpless creature that is rocked to sleep therein. The sick man may draw whole stores of comfort from the same source, for he can believe the ONE by whom the body was fearfully and wonderfully made will think over the sufferings of that body, and alleviate them, or give strength for the endurance of them if they must be borne. Condescension of thought marks all the dealings of God with his people. And hard following upon it comes *tenderness in action*. Now this "tenderness in action" is a great part of the lovingkindness of God; it is meet that a thoughtful mind and tender hand should go together in the perfection of love. God is not only energetic, but tender also in action; he is the God of the dew-drops, as well as the God of the thunder showers; the God of the tender grass blade, as much as of the mountain oak. We read of great machines, which are able to crush iron bars, and yet they can touch so gently as not to break the shell of the smallest egg; as it is with them, so is it with the hand of the Most High; he can crush a world, and yet bind up a wound. And great need have we of tenderness in our low estate; a little thing would crush us: we have such bruised and feeble souls, that unless we had One who would deal tenderly with us we must soon be destroyed.—*Philip Bennett Power, in "The 'I Wills' of the Psalms,"* 1861.

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" His "*word*" being here annexed to "*lovingkindness* and *truth*," must needs be that part of his word to which these two are applicable, *i.e.*, his promise, the matter whereof is *mercy* or *lovingkindness*, and in the performance of which is *truth* or *fidelity*. And then to "magnify" this "word" of promise seems to signify two things; 1, the making very great and excellent promises, and then, 2, the performing them most punctually; and the doing it *above all his name* is promising and performing most superlative mercies above all that is famed or spoken or believed of God. Then thus it will run; *I will worship*, etc., *and praise thy name above thy lovingkindness and above thy truth;* i.e., it will be too low, too short a compellation, to call thee merciful or veracious, or style thee after any other of thy attributes; thou art all these, and more than so, "*thou hast magnified thy word*," given and performed most glorious promises, "*above all thy name*," above all that men have apprehended or spoken of thee.

This verse and Psalm may easily be interpreted of God's mercies in Christ, so far above what could be famed, or said, or believed, or apprehended of him.—*Condensed from H. Hammond.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" Beyond all question there are higher and clearer manifestations of himself, of his being, of his perfection, of his purposes in the volume of revelation, than any which his works have disclosed or can disclose. There are very many points in relation to God, of the highest interest to mankind, on which the disclosures of science shed no light; there are many things which it is desirable for man to know, which cannot be learned in the schools of philosophy; there are consolations which man needs in a world of trouble which cannot be found in nature; there is especially a knowledge of the method by which sin may be pardoned, and the soul saved, which can never be disclosed by the blow-pipe, the telescope, or the microscope. These things, if learned at all, must be learned from revelation, and these are of more importance to man as a traveller to another world than all the learning which can be acquired in the schools of philosophy—valuable as that learning is.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name,*" etc. This is a dark sentence at the first view, but as a judicious expositor upon the place well

observes, the words may be thus read, and will better agree with the Hebrew; "*thou hast magnified thy name above all things, in thy word,*" that is, in fulfilling thy word thou hast magnified thy name above all things, in that thou hast fulfilled thy word. What thou freely promisedst, thou hast faithfully performed; what thou hast spoken with thy mouth thou hast fulfilled with thy hand; for which thy name is wonderfully to be magnified.—*James Nalton*, 1664.

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" Every creature bears the name of God; but in his word and truth therein contained it is written at length, and therefore he is more choice of this than of all his other works; he cares not much what becomes of the world and all in it, so that he keeps his word, and saves his truth. Ere long we shall see the world in flames; the heavens and earth shall pass away, "but the word of the Lord endures for ever." When God will, he can make more such worlds as this; but he cannot make another truth, and therefore he will not lose one jot thereof. Satan, knowing this, sets all his wits on work to deface this and disfigure it by unsound doctrine. The word is the glass in which we see God, and seeing him are changed into his likeness by his Spirit. If this glass be cracked, then the conceptions we have of God will misrepresent him unto us; whereas the word, in its native clearness, sets him out in all his glory unto our eye.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" Thou hast bestowed the promise of perpetuity to my house and to my kingdom, which rises in grandeur and goodness above all thy past manifestations of thyself in behalf of thy people (2 Sam. vii. 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 21, 22, 24—26, 29: ver. 21 especially, "For thy *Word's* sake . . . hast thou done all these *great* things"; ver. 26, "And let thy name be *magnified* for ever"—an undesigned coincidence of language between the history and the Psalm). In the Messiah alone the greatness of the promise finds, and shall hereafter more fully find, its realization for Israel and the whole world.—*Andrew Robert Fausset.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" God has sent his word to us,

1. As *a mirror*, to reflect his glory. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work"; from them may his eternal power and Godhead be clearly seen. Ps. xix. 1, 3, 4. In his providential dealings, also, is much of his wisdom and goodness exhibited. But of his perfections, generally, we can form no idea from these things; of his purposes we can know nothing. The state of the Heathen world clearly attests this; for they behold the wonders of Creation and Providence, as well as we: "There is no speech nor language where *their* voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world": Ps. xix. 3, 4. But in the sacred volume all the glory of the Godhead shines: there we are admitted, so to speak, even to the council-chamber of the Most High; to hear the covenant entered into between the Father and the Son; the Father engaging to give to him a seed, whom he should have for his inheritance, if he, on his part, would "make his soul an offering for their sins," and in their nature, expiate the guilt of their iniquities. This mysterious transaction having taken place in the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold all the perfections of God united and harmonizing in a way that they never did, or could, by any other means: we see justice more inexorable, than if it had executed vengeance on the whole human race; and mercy more abundant, than if it had spared the whole human race without any such atonement. There, as it is well expressed, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other": Ps. lxxxv. 10. Of this great mystery we find not a trace in the whole creation besides: but in the word it is reflected, as in a mirror (2 Cor. iii. 18); and it shines so brightly, that the very angels around the throne are made wiser by the revelation of it to the Church: Eph. iii. 10.

2. As *a standard*, to which everything may be referred. Of God's will we know nothing, but from the word: "we know neither good nor evil from all that is before us." What God requires of us, nothing in Creation or Providence can inform us: what he will do for us, we cannot ascertain: how he will deal with us, we cannot ascertain. But, in the sacred volume, all is written as with a sunbeam. There is nothing which God expects us to do for him, which is not there most explicitly declared: nothing which he engages to do for us, that does not form the subject of a distinct promise. The whole of his procedure in the day of judgment is there laid open: the laws by which we shall be judged; the manner in which the testimony,

whether against us or in our favour, shall be produced; the grounds on which the sentence of condemnation or acquittal shall be passed; yea, the very state to which every person, either as acquitted or condemned, shall be consigned; all is so clearly made known, that every person, who will judge himself with candour now, may assuredly anticipate his fate. There is nothing left to conjecture. Every man has a standard to which he may refer, for the rectifying of his judgment in every particular: so that nothing can be added for the instruction of our minds, or the regulation of our future expectations.

3. As *a fountain*, from whence all his blessings emanate. Great blessings, beyond all doubt, flow down to us through the works of Creation and Providence: in fact, they are incessantly administering to our welfare; for "God opens his hands, and fills all things living with plenteousness." Still, however, the benefits derived from them are only temporal; whereas those which the inspired volume imparts are spiritual and eternal; from whence we derive all our knowledge of Divine truth, and all our hopes of everlasting salvation. Nor is it the knowledge only of truth that we obtain, but the operation and efficacy of it on our souls. There is in Divine truth, when applied by the Holy Spirit, a power to wound, to sanctify, to save: Ps. xix. 7—11. When it comes to the soul with power, the stoutest heart in the universe is made to tremble: when it is poured out as balm, the most afflicted creature under heaven is made to leap for joy. Look over the face of the globe, and see how many, who were once under the unrestrained dominion of sin, are now transformed into the image of their God. And then ascend to heaven, and behold the myriads of the redeemed around the throne of God, uniting their hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb; to this state were they all brought by that blessed word, which alone could ever prevail for so great a work. Thus it is that God has magnified his word; and thus it is that he *will* magnify it, to the end of time; yea, through eternity will it be acknowledged as the one source of all blessings that shall ever be enjoyed.—*Charles Simeon, in Horæ Homileticæ.*

Verse 2.—"*For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" This is one of those expressions of Scripture that seem so comprehensive, and yet so amazing. To my mind it is one of the most remarkable expressions in the whole book of God. "*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" The *name* of God includes all the perfections of God; everything that God is, and which God has revealed himself as having—his justice, majesty, holiness, greatness, and glory, and whatever he is in himself, that is God's name. And yet he has "*magnified*" something "*above his name*"—his *word*—his *truth*. This may refer to the Incarnate Word, the Son of God, who was called "*the Word.*" "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the *Word*, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one" 1 John v. 7, "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God": John i. 1. You may take the words either as meaning that God has magnified his *Word*, his eternal Son—above all his great name, that is, he has set Jesus on high above all the other perfections of his majesty; or take it as meaning his written word, which is written in the sacred Scriptures. So, in that case, not only the Incarnate *Word* in the person of Jesus; but also the written word in the Scriptures of truth. He has magnified it above all his name in the fulfilment of it: God's faithfulness being so dear to him, he has exalted his faithfulness above all his other perfections. We see this in nature. Here is a man so to be depended upon, so faithful to his word, that he will sacrifice anything sooner than depart from it: that man will give up his property, or life itself, rather than forfeit his word. So God has spoken of magnifying his word above all his name. He would sooner allow all his other perfections to come to naught, than for his faithfulness to fail. He has so magnified his faithfulness, that his love, his mercy, his grace, would all sooner fail than his faithfulness—the word of his mouth and what he has revealed in the Scripture. What a firm salvation, then, is ours, which rests upon his word, when God has magnified that word above all his name! What volumes of blessedness and truth are contained therein! so that, if God has revealed his truth to your soul, and given you faith to anchor in the word of promise, sooner than that should fail, he would suffer the loss of all; for, he has magnified his word above all his name.—*Joseph C. Philpot.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" God has a *greater* regard unto the words of his mouth, than to the works of his hand: heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of what he hath spoken shall never fall to the ground. Some do understand this of Christ the essential Word, in whom

he has set his name, and whom he has so highly exalted, that he has given him " a name above every name."—*Ebenezer Erskine*, 1680—1754.

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" Meaning that his word or promise shall have, as it were, and exercise a kind of sovereignty over all his prerogatives and attributes, wisdom, justice, power, etc. So that men need not fear that any of them shall at any time, or in any case whatsoever, move in the least contrariety thereunto.—*John Goodwin*, 1593—1665.

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" It may be when there are some extraordinary works of God in the world, thunder and lightning, etc., we are ready to be afraid, and oh ! the great God that doth appear in these great works ! Were our hearts as they ought to be when we read the *Word*, we would tremble at that more than at any manifestation of God since the world began in all his works ; and if so be thou dost not see more of the glory of God in his *Word* than in his works, it is because thou hast little light in thee.—*Jeremiah Burroughs*, 1599—1646.

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" " By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." But mightier far is the word by which a lost world is redeemed. This is the "*word*" that he hath "*magnified above all his name*," as displaying at once the exceeding greatness of his power, the resources of his manifold wisdom, and the blended glories of holiness and love.—*John Lillie.*

Verse 2.—It is not with the truth merely excogitated, but with the truth expressed, that we have any concern ; not with the truth as seen by our inspired teacher, but with the truth as by him spoken to us. It is not enough that the Spirit hath made him to see it aright—this is not enough if he have not also made him to speak it aright. A pure influx into the mind of an apostle is no sufficient guarantee for the instruction of the world, unless there be a pure efflux also ; for not the doctrine that has flowed in, but the doctrine that has flowed out, is truly all that we have to do with. Accordingly, it is to the doctrine in efflux, that is to the *word*, that we are bidden to yield ourselves. It is the word that is a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path ; it is his word that God hath exalted above all his name ; it is the word that he hath settled fast in heaven, and given to it a stability surer and more lasting than to the ordinances of nature. We can take no cognizance of the doctrine that is conveyed from heaven to earth, when it has only come the length of excogitation in the mind of an apostle ; and it is not till brought the farther length of expression, either by speech or by writing, that it comes into contact with us. In short our immediate concern is with, not what apostles conceive inwardly, but what they bring forth outwardly not with the schemes or the systems which they have been made to apprehend, but with the books which they have written ; and had the whole force and effect of this observation been sufficiently pondered, we feel persuaded that the advocates of a mitigated inspiration would not have dissevered, as they have done, the inspiration of sentiment from the inspiration of language.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy word*," or "*Thy promise.*" So great are God's promises, and so faithful and complete is his performance of them, as even to surpass the expectations which the greatness of his name has excited.—*Annotated Paragraph Bible.*

Verse 3.—"*In the day when I cried*," etc. God granted him a speedy answer : for it was in the very day that he cried that he was heard : and it was a spiritual answer ; he was *strengthened with strength in his soul.* Would you have soul strength for the work you have in view ? then cry unto him who is the " strength of Israel " for it ; for " he giveth power to the faint, and he increaseth strength to them that have no might."—*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 3.—"*In the day when I cried thou answeredst me*," etc. That part of an army which is upon action in the field is sure to have their pay, if their masters have any money in their purse, or care of them ; yea, sometimes when their fellows left in their quarters are made to wait. I am sure there is more gold and silver (spiritual joy, I mean, and comfort) to be found in Christ's camp, among his suffering ones, than their brethren at home in peace and prosperity ordinarily can show. What are the promises but vessels of cordial wine, tunned on purpose against a groaning hour, when God usually broacheth them ! " Call upon me," saith God, " in the day of trouble." Ps. l. 15. And may we not do so in the day of peace ? Yes ; but he would have us most bold with him in the day of trouble. None find

such quick despatch at the throne of grace as suffering saints. "*In the day that I cried*," said David, "*thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*" He was now in a strait, and God comes in haste to him. Though we may keep a well friend waiting should he send for us, yet we will give a sick friend leave to call us up at midnight. In such extremities we usually go with the messenger that comes for us; and so doth God with the prayer. Peter knocked at their gate, who were assembled to seek God for him, almost as soon as their prayer knocked at heaven gate in his behalf. And truly it is no more than needs, if we consider the temptations of our afflicted condition; we are prone then to be suspicious that our best friends forget us, and to think every stay a delay, and neglect of us; therefore God chooseth to show himself most kind at such a time. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ:" 2 Cor. i. 5. As man laid on trouble, so Christ laid in consolation: both tides rose and fell together; when it was spring-tide with him in affliction, it was so with him in his joy. We relieve the poor as their need increaseth; so Christ comforts his people as their troubles multiply. And now, Christian, tell me, doth not thy dear Lord deserve a ready spirit in thee to meet any suffering with, for, or from him, who gives his sweetest comforts where his people are put to bear their saddest sorrows? Well may the servant do his work, cheerfully when his master is so careful of him as with his own hands to bring him his breakfast into the fields. The Christian stays not till he comes to heaven for all his comfort. There indeed shall be the full supper, but there is a breakfast, Christian, of previous joys, more or less, which Christ brings to thee into the field, to be eaten on the place where thou endurest thy hardship.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*" It is one gracious way of answering our prayers when God doth bestow upon us spiritual strength in our souls; if he do not give the things we desire, yet if he gives us strength in our souls, he graciously answers our prayers. What is this spiritual strength? I answer, it is a work of the Spirit of God, enabling a man to do and suffer what God would have him without fainting or backsliding.—*James Nalton.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*" Other masters cut out work for their servants, but do not help them in their work; but our Master in heaven doth not only give us work, but strength. God bids us serve him, and he will enable us to serve him, Ezek. xxxvi. 27: "I will cause you to walk in my statutes." The Lord doth not only fit work for us, but fits us for our work; with his command he gives power.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou makest me brave in my soul* (*with*) *strength.*" The common version of this clause ("*strengthenedst me with strength in my soul*") contains a paronomasia not in the original, where the verb and noun have not even a letter in common. The verb is by some translated *made me proud, i.e.*, elated me, not with a vain or selfish pride, but with a lofty and exhilarating hope.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 4.—"*All the kings of the earth shall praise thee.*" In a sense sufficiently striking this promise was fulfilled to David, and to the nation of Israel, as surrounding monarchs beheld the wonderful dispensations of divine providence which attended their steps (2 Sam. v. 11; viii. 10); but in its completest sense, it shall realize its accomplishment in the future conquests of Messiah, when the princes and potentates of the earth receive his word, learn by divine grace to celebrate the glorious methods of his love, and see in the light of faith the greatness of Jehovah's glory as the God of salvation. "*All the kings of the earth*" shall yet praise the Lord, and shall hasten with their numerous subjects to hail the triumphs of his grace.—*John Morison.*

Verse 5.—"*Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the* LORD." There will come a time when the praise of Jahve, which according to cxxxvii. 4 was obliged to be dumb in the presence of the heathen, will be sung by the kings of the heathen themselves.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 5.—"*Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the* LORD." Walking with God is a pleasant walk: the ways of wisdom are called "ways of pleasantness": Prov. iii. 17. Is not the light pleasant? Ps. lxxxix. 15: "They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance." Walking with God is like walking among beds of spices, which send forth a fragrant perfume. This is it which brings peace,

Acts ix. 31: "Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." While we walk with God, what sweet music doth the bird of conscience make in our breast! *"They shall sing in the ways of the Lord."—Thomas Watson.*

Verse 6.—*"Though the* LORD *be high."* We have here God's transcendent greatness; he is the *high Lord*, or Jehovah: he is "the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, and who dwells in the high and lofty place, to which no man can approach." Who can think or speak of his highness in a suitable manner? It dazzles the eyes of sinful mortal worms to behold "the place where his honour dwells." Oh how infinite is the distance between him and us! "There are none of the sons of the mighty that can be compared unto him;" yea, "the inhabitants of the earth are before him but as the drop in the bucket, and the small dust in the balance." He is not only *"high"* above men, but above angels: cherubims and seraphims are his ministering spirits. He is *"high"* above the heavens; for "the heaven, yea, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him"; and he "humbleth himself" when "he beholds things that are in heaven." Oh, sirs, study to entertain high and admiring thoughts and apprehensions of the glorious majesty of God; for "honour and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." —*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 6.—*"The* LORD *hath respect unto the lowly."* God has such a respect unto the lowly, not as if this frame of soul were meritorious of any good at his hand, but because,—

1. This is a disposition that best serves God's great design of lifting up and glorifying his free grace. What think you, sirs, was God's design in election, in redemption, in the whole of the gospel dispensation, and in all the ordinances thereof? His grand design in all was to rear up a glorious high throne, from which he might display the riches of his free and sovereign grace; this is that which he will have magnified through eternity above all his other name. Now, this lowliness and humility of spirit suits best unto God's design of exalting the freedom of his grace. It is not the legalist, or proud Pharisee, but the poor humble publican, who is smiting on his breast, and crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," that submits to the revelation of grace.

2. God has such respect unto the humble soul because it is a fruit of the Spirit inhabiting the soul, and an evidence of the soul's union with the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone we are accepted.

3. This is a disposition that makes the soul like Christ; and the like that a person is to Christ, God loves him ay the better. We are told that Christ was "meek and lowly"; "he did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets"; though he was "the brightness of his Father's glory," yet he was content to appear "in the form of a servant"; though he was rich, yet he was content to become poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. Now, the humble soul, being the image of Christ, who is the express image of his Father, God cannot but have a regard unto him.—*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 6.—*"He hath respect unto the lowly."* Give me the homely vessel of humility, which God shall preserve, and fill with the wine of his grace; rather than the varnished cup of pride, which he will dash in pieces, like a potter's vessel. Where humility is the corner stone, there glory shall be the topstone.—*William Secker, in "The Nonsuch Professor in his Meridian Splendour,"* 1660.

Verse 6.—*"The proud he knoweth afar off."* He that meets a spectacle or person which he cannot endure to look upon, avoids it, or turns from it while he is yet afar off; whereas, if the object be delightful, he draweth near and comes as close as he can. When therefore it is said, *the Lord knoweth a proud man afar off*, it shows his disdain of him: he will scarce touch him with a pair of tongs (as we say); he cannot abide to come near him. He knows well enough how vile he is even at the greatest distance.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—*"The proud he knoweth afar off."* By punishing them in hell.—*Richard Rolle,* 1340.

Verse 7.—*"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me."* So as to the three youths in the fiery furnace, their persecutor, Nebuchadnezzar, said, "Lo, I see four men loose, *walking in the midst of the fire*, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."—*Andrew Robert Fausset.*

Verse 7.—*"In the midst of trouble thou wilt revive me."* The wisdom of God

is seen in helping in desperate cases. God loves to show his wisdom when human help and wisdom fail. Exquisite lawyers love to wrestle with niceties and difficulties in the law, to show their skill the more. God's wisdom is never at a loss; but when providences are darkest, then the morning star of deliverance appears. Sometimes God melts away the spirits of his enemies. Josh. ii. 24. Sometimes he finds them other work to do, and sounds a retreat to them, as he did to Saul when he was pursuing David. "The Philistines are in the land." "In the mount God will be seen." When the church seems to be upon the altar, her peace and liberty ready to be sacrificed, then the angel comes.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 7.—"*Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand,*" etc. Thou shalt interpose thine help betwixt me and them, and save me harmless; as the poets feign their gods did those whom they favoured. *Thou shalt strike them with thy left hand, and save me with thy right;* so Tremellius senseth it.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—"*The* LORD *will perfect,*" etc. God's work is perfect, man's is clumsy and incomplete. God does not leave off till he has finished. When he rests, it is because, looking on his work, he sees it all "very good." His Sabbath is the Sabbath of an achieved purpose, of a fulfilled counsel. The palaces which we build are ever like that in the story, where one window remains dark and unjewelled, while the rest blaze in beauty. But when God builds none can say, "He was not able to finish." In his great palace he makes her "windows of agates," and *all* her "borders of pleasant stones."

I suppose that if the mediæval dream had ever come true, and an alchemist had ever turned a grain of lead into gold, he could have turned all the lead in the world, in time, and with crucibles and furnaces enough. The first step is all the difficulty, and if you and I have been changed from enemies into sons, and had one spark of love to God kindled in our hearts, that is a mightier change than any that yet remains to be effected in order to make us perfect. One grain has been changed, the whole mass will be in due time.—*Alexander Maclaren, Sermon in "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine,"* 1879.

Verse 8.—"*Forsake not the works of thine own hands.*" When we are under such afflictions as threaten to ruin us, 'tis seasonable to tell the Lord he made us. David strengthens prayer upon this argument: "*Forsake not the works of thine own hands.*" All men love their own works, many dote upon them: shall we think God will forsake his? See how the people of God plead with God in greatest distress. (Isa. lxiv. 8): "But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we are all the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O LORD." —*Joseph Cary.*

Verse 8.—"*Forsake not the works of thine own hands.*" Look upon the wounds of thine hands, and forsake not the works of thine hands, prayed Queen Elizabeth. And Luther's usual prayer was, Confirm, O God, in us that thou hast wrought, and perfect the work that thou hast begun in us, to thy glory. So be it.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—"*Forsake not the works of thine own hands.*" Behold in me thy work, not mine: for mine, if thou seest, thou condemnest; thine, if thou seest, thou crownest. For whatever good works there be of mine, from thee are they to me; and so they are more thine than mine. For I hear from thine apostle, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus:" Eph. ii. 8—10.—*Augustine.*

Verse 8.—"*Thine own hands.*" His creating hands formed our souls at the beginning; his nail-pierced hands redeemed them on Calvary; his glorified hands will hold our souls fast and not let them go for ever. Unto his hands let us commend our spirits, sure that even though the works of our hands have made void the works of his hands, yet his hands will again make perfect all that our hands have unmade. —*J. W. Burgon.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1, 2, 3.—David vexed with rival gods, as we are with rival gospels. How will he act? I. *Sing with whole-hearted praise.* 1. It would generously show his contempt of the false. 2. It would evince his strong faith in the true. 3. It would declare his joyful zeal for God. 4. It would shield him from evil from those about him. II. *Worship by the despised rule.* 1. Quietly ignoring all will-worship. 2. Looking to the person of Christ, which was typified by the temple. 3. Trusting in sacrifice. 4. Realizing God himself, for it is to God he speaks. III. *Praise the questioned attributes.* 1. Lovingkindness in its universality, in its speciality. Grace in everything. 2. Truth. Historic accuracy. Certainty of promises. Correctness of prophecies. Assured of the love of God and the truth of his word, let us cling the closer to these. IV. *Reverence the honoured word.* It is beyond all revelation by creation and providence, for it is—1. More clear. 2. More sure. 3. More sovereign. 4. More complete, unique. 5. More lasting. 6. More glorifying to God. V. *Prove it by experience.* 1. By offering prayer. 2. By narrating the answer. 3. By exhibiting the strength in soul which was given in answer to prayer.

Verse 2.—The Christward position. I. Worship and praise are to be blended. II. They are to be presented with an eye to God in Christ, for he is the temple: the place of divine indwelling, sacrifice, intercession, priesthood, oracle, and manifestation.

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—I. The soul's noblest attitude: "Toward thy holy temple." II. The soul's noblest exercise: "worship," "praise."—*W. W.*

Verse 2.—I. *The worshipper's contemplation.* Gaze fixed on Holy Temple. Material temple not yet built. Christ the sanctuary. Heb. viii. 2. All worship through him. Eye of worshippers fixed on him. II. *The worshipper's song.* Love and truth. Note the combination. Truth by Moses. Grace and truth by Jesus Christ. III. *The worshipper's argument.* Because Christ "The Word" is the embodiment and most glorious manifestation of God. Heb. i. 2, 3.—*Archibald G. Brown.*

Verse 3.—I. Prayer answered *in* the day. II. Prayer answered by giving strength *for* the day. See 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.—*A. G. B.*

Verse 3.—I. Answers to prayer should be noted and acknowledged: "Thou answeredst me." II. Speedy answers should have special praise: "In the day when I cried, thou," etc. III. A strengthened soul is sometimes the best answer to prayer: "Strengthened me with strength."—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—Remarkable answer to prayer. I. The prayer: feeble, earnest, sorrowful, inarticulate. II. The answer: prompt, divine, effectual, certain. III. The praise deserved by such grace. See preceding verses.

Verse 3.—I. A special day. II. A specific form of prayer: "I cried." III. A special method of response.—*W. W.*

Verse 4.—I. A royal audience. II. A royal orchestra.

Verses 4, 5.—I. They who hear the words of God will know God. II. They who know God will praise him, however exalted they may be amongst men: "All the kings," etc. III. They who praise God will walk in his ways. IV. They who walk in the ways of the Lord will glorify him, and he will be glorified in them.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1615: "Singing in the Ways of the Lord."

Verse 5.—This is spoken of kings, but it is true of the humblest pilgrims. The Lord hath respect unto the lowly, and will make them sing. I. *They shall sing in the ways.* 1. They take pleasure in them. 2. They do not go out of them to find pleasure. 3. They sing as they proceed in service, in worship, in holiness, in suffering. 4. They are in a case for singing. They have strength, safety, guidance, provision, comfort. II. *They sing of the ways of the Lord.* 1. Of God's ways to them. 2. Of their way to God. They know whence they came out. They know where they are going. It is a good road; prophets went by it, and the Lord of the prophets. Therein we have good company, good accommodation, good prospects, good daylight. III. *They sing of the Lord of the way.* His lovingkindness. His truth. Answers to prayer. His condescension. His reviving us in trouble. His delivering us. His perfecting us. His everlasting mercy. IV. *They shall sing to the Lord of the way.* 1. To his honour. 2. To the extending of that honour. 3. As a preparation to eternally honouring him.

Verse 6.—Divine inversions. I. Lowliness honoured to its great surprise. II. Pride passed by to its eternal mortification.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 7 (*first clause*).—I. The Psalmist's dismal excursion: walking "in the midst of trouble;" this is not a spectator, but one assailed. Troubles—personal, social, ecclesiastical, national. II. His cheering anticipation—of revival, defence, deliverance.—*W. J.*

Verse 7.—I. Good men are sometimes in the midst of troubles: these are many, and continue long. II. They interfere not with their progress. They "walk in the midst" of them; faint, yet pursuing; sometimes they "run with patience," etc. III. They have comfort in them: "Though I walk," etc., "thou wilt revive me." IV. They are benefited by them. 1. Their enemies are overthrown. 2. Their deliverance is complete.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—The child of God often revived *out* of trouble; more frequently *in* trouble; not seldom *through* trouble. Delivered from, sustained in, sanctified through, trouble.—*A. G. B.*

Verse 7.—An incident of the road to the city. I. Pilgrim beset by thieves and struck down. II. The arrival of Greatheart and flight of the enemy. III. The flask to the lips: "thou wilt revive me." Sweet awakening to know the beauty of his face and strength of his hand!—*W. B. H.*

Verse 7 (*third clause*).—Right-hand salvation. I. It shall be wrought of God. II. He shall throw his strength into the deed. III. His utmost dexterity shall be displayed.

Verse 8 (*first clause*).—I. A wide subject—"That which concerneth me." Not necessarily that which gives me concern. II. A promise that covers it: "the Lord will perfect."—*A. G. B.*

Verse 8 (*first and last clauses*).—Faith in divine purpose no hindrance to prayer, but rather an encouragement in it: "The Lord will perfect." "Forsake not."—*A. G. B.*

Verse 8.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," Nos. 231 and 1506: "Faith in Perfection," and, "Choice Comfort for a Young Believer."

Verse 8.—The grace of God makes a man thoughtful, and leads him to concern about himself, his life, his future, and the completeness of the work of grace. This might lead us to sadness and despair, but the Lord worketh in us for other ends. I. *He fills us with assurance.* 1. That the Lord will work for us. 2. That he will complete his work. 3. That he will do this in providence; if it be properly a concern of ours. 4. That he will do this within us. Our graces shall grow. Our soul shall become Christly. Our whole nature perfect. 5. That he will do this with our work for him. II. *He gives us rest in his mercy.* 1. Thou wilt forgive my sins. 2. Thou wilt bear with my nature. 3. Thou wilt support me in suffering. 4. Thou wilt supply me in need. 5. Thou wilt succour me in death. III. *He puts prayer into our hearts.* 1. That he will not forsake me. 2. That he will not leave his own work in me undone. 3. Nor his work by me unfinished. Why did he begin? Why carry so far? Why not complete?

Verse 8.—I. Faith's full assurance: "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." II. Faith's firm foundation: "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever." III. Faith's fervent prayer: "Forsake not the works of thine own hands."—*W. H. J. P.*

PSALM CXXXIX.

One of the most notable of the sacred hymns. It sings the omniscience and omnipresence of God, inferring from these the overthrow of the powers of wickedness, since he who sees and hears the abominable deeds and words of the rebellious will surely deal with them according to his justice. The brightness of this Psalm is like unto a sapphire stone, or Ezekiel's "terrible crystal"; it flames out with such flashes of light as to turn night into day. Like a Pharos, this holy song casts a clear light even to the uttermost parts of the sea, and warns us against that practical atheism which ignores the presence of God, and so makes shipwreck of the soul.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician. *The last time this title occurred was in Psalm cix. This sacred song is worthy of the most excellent of the singers, and is fitly dedicated to the leader of the Temple psalmody, that he might set it to music, and see that it was devoutly sung in the solemn worship of the Most High.* A Psalm of David. *It bears the image and superscription of King David, and could have come from no other mint than that of the son of Jesse. Of course the critics take this composition away from David, on account of certain Aramaic expressions in it. We believe that upon the principles of criticism now in vogue it would be extremely easy to prove that Milton did not write Paradise Lost. We have yet to learn that David could not have used expressions belonging to "the language of the patriarchal ancestral house." Who knows how much of the antique speech may have been purposely retained among those nobler minds who rejoiced in remembering the descent of their race? Knowing to what wild inferences the critics have run in other matters, we have lost nearly all faith in them, and prefer to believe David to be the author of this Psalm, from internal evidences of style and matter, rather than to accept the determination of men whose modes of judgment are manifestly unreliable.*

EXPOSITION.

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways.

4 For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6 *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it.

1. *"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me."* He invokes in adoration Jehovah the all-knowing God, and he proceeds to adore him by proclaiming one of his peculiar attributes. If we would praise God aright we must draw the matter of our praise from himself—"O Jehovah, thou hast." No pretended god knows aught of us; but the true God, Jehovah, understands us, and is most intimately acquainted with our persons, nature, and character. How well it is for us to know the God who knows us! The divine knowledge is extremely thorough and searching; it is as if he had searched us, as officers search a man for contraband goods, or as pillagers ransack a house for plunder. Yet we must not let the figure run upon all fours, and lead us further than it is meant to do: the Lord knows all things naturally and as a matter of course, and not by any effort on his part. Searching ordinarily implies a measure of ignorance which is removed by observation; of course this is not the case with the Lord; but the meaning of the Psalmist is, that the Lord knows us as thoroughly as if he had examined us minutely, and had pried into the most secret corners of our being. This infallible knowledge has always existed—"Thou hast searched me"; and it continues unto this day, since God

cannot forget that which he has once known. There never was a time in which we were unknown to God, and there never will be a moment in which we shall be beyond his observation. Note how the Psalmist makes his doctrine personal: he saith not, "O God, thou knowest all things"; but, "thou hast known *me*." It is ever our wisdom to lay truth home to ourselves. How wonderful the contrast between the observer and the observed! Jehovah and me! Yet this most intimate connection exists, and therein lies our hope. Let the reader sit still a while and try to realize the two poles of this statement,—the Lord and poor puny man—and he will see much to admire and wonder at.

2. "*Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising.*" *Me* thou knowest, and all that comes of me. I am observed when I quietly sit down, and marked when I resolutely rise up. My most common and casual acts, my most needful and necessary movements, are noted by thee, and thou knowest the inward thoughts which regulate them. Whether I sink in lowly self-renunciation, or ascend in pride, thou seest the motions of my mind, as well as those of my body. This is a fact to be remembered every moment: sitting down to consider, or rising up to act, we are still seen, known, and read by Jehovah our Lord. "*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*" Before it is my own it is foreknown and comprehended by thee. Though my thought be invisible to the sight, though as yet I be not myself cognizant of the shape it is assuming, yet thou hast it under thy consideration, and thou perceivest its nature, its source, its drift, its result. Never dost thou misjudge or wrongly interpret me: my inmost thought is perfectly understood by thine impartial mind. Though thou shouldst give but a glance at my heart, and see me as one sees a passing meteor moving afar, yet thou wouldst by that glimpse sum up all the meanings of my soul, so transparent is everything to thy piercing glance.

3. "*Thou compassest my path and my lying down.*" My path and my pallet, my running and my resting, are alike within the circle of thine observation. Thou dost surround me even as the air continually surrounds all creatures that live. I am shut up within the wall of thy being; I am encircled within the bounds of thy knowledge. Waking or sleeping I am still observed of thee. I may leave thy path, but thou never leavest mine. I may sleep and forget thee, but thou dost never slumber, nor fall into oblivion concerning thy creature. The original signifies not only surrounding, but winnowing and sifting. The Lord judges our active life and our quiet life; he discriminates our action and our repose, and marks that in them which is good and also that which is evil. There is chaff in all our wheat, and the Lord divides them with unerring precision. "*And art acquainted with all my ways.*" Thou art familiar with all I do; nothing is concealed from thee, nor surprising to thee, nor misunderstood by thee. Our paths may be habitual or accidental, open or secret, but with them all the Most Holy One is well acquainted. This should fill us with awe, so that we sin not; with courage, so that we fear not; with delight, so that we mourn not.

4. "*For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O* LORD, *thou knowest it altogether.*" The unformed word, which lies within the tongue like a seed in the soil, is certainly and completely known to the Great Searcher of hearts. A negative expression is used to make the positive statement all the stronger: not a word is unknown is a forcible way of saying that every word is well known. Divine knowledge is perfect, since not a single word is unknown, nay, not even an unspoken word, and each one is "altogether" or wholly known. What hope of concealment can remain when the speech with which too many conceal their thoughts is itself transparent before the Lord? O Jehovah, how great art thou! If thine eye hath such power, what must be the united force of thine whole nature!

5. "*Thou hast beset me behind and before.*" As though we were caught in an ambush, or besieged by an army which has wholly beleaguered the city walls, we are surrounded by the Lord. God has set us where we be, and beset us wherever we be. Behind us there is God recording our sins, or in grace blotting out the remembrance of them; and before us there is God foreknowing all our deeds, and providing for all our wants. We cannot turn back and so escape him, for he is behind; we cannot go forward and outmarch him, for he is before. He not only beholds us, but he besets us; and lest there should seem any chance of escape, or lest we should imagine that the surrounding presence is yet a distant one, it is added,—"*And laid thine hand upon me.*" The prisoner marches along surrounded by a guard, and gripped by an officer. God is very near; we are wholly in his power; from that power there is no escape. It is not said that God *will* thus beset

us and arrest us, but it is done—"Thou hast beset me." Shall we not alter the figure, and say that our heavenly Father has folded his arms around us, and caressed us with his hand? It is even so with those who are by faith the children of the Most High.

6. *"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me."* I cannot grasp it. I can hardly endure to think of it. The theme overwhelms me. I am amazed and astounded at it. Such knowledge not only surpasses my comprehension, but even my imagination. *"It is high, I cannot attain unto it."* Mount as I may, this truth is too lofty for my mind. It seems to be always above me, even when I soar into the loftiest regions of spiritual thought. Is it not so with every attribute of God? Can we attain to any idea of his power, his wisdom, his holiness? Our mind has no line with which to measure the Infinite. Do we therefore question? Say, rather, that we therefore believe and adore. We are not surprised that the Most Glorious God should in his knowledge be high above all the knowledge to which we can attain: it must of necessity be so, since we are such poor limited beings; and when we stand a-tip-toe we cannot reach to the lowest step of the throne of the Eternal.

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there.*

9 *If* I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee.*

Here omnipresence is the theme,—a truth to which omniscience naturally leads up. *"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?"* Not that the Psalmist wished to go from God, or to avoid the power of the divine life; but he asks this question to set forth the fact that no one can escape from the all-pervading being and observation of the Great Invisible Spirit. Observe how the writer makes the matter personal to himself—"Whither shall *I* go?" It were well if we all thus applied truth to our own cases. It were wise for each one to say—The spirit of the Lord is ever around *me:* Jehovah is omnipresent *to me.* *"Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"* If, full of dread, I hastened to escape from that nearness of God which had become my terror, which way could I turn? "Whither?" "Whither?" He repeats his cry. No answer comes back to him. The reply to his first "Whither?" is its echo,—a second "Whither?" From the sight of God he cannot be hidden, but that is not all,—from the immediate, actual, constant presence of God he cannot be withdrawn. We must be, whether we will it or not, as near to God as our soul is to our body. This makes it dreadful work to sin; for we offend the Almighty to his face, and commit acts of treason at the very foot of his throne. *Go* from him, or *flee* from him we cannot: neither by patient travel nor by hasty flight can we withdraw from the all-surrounding Deity. His mind is in our mind; himself within ourselves. His spirit is over our spirit; our presence is ever in his presence.

8. *"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there."* Filling the loftiest region with his yet loftier presence, Jehovah is in the heavenly place, at home, upon his throne. The ascent, if it were possible, would be unavailing for purposes of escape; it would, in fact, be a flying into the centre of the fire to avoid the heat. There would he be immediately confronted by the terrible personality of God. Note the abrupt words—"THOU, THERE." *"If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."* Descending into the lowest imaginable depths among the dead, there should we find the Lord. THOU! says the Psalmist, as if he felt that God was the one great Existence in all places. Whatever Hades may be, or whoever may be there, one thing is certain, *Thou, O* Jehovah, art there. Two regions, the one of glory and the other of darkness, are set in contrast, and this one fact is asserted of both —"thou art there." Whether we rise up or lie down, take our wing or make our

bed, we shall find God near us. A *"behold"* is added to the second clause, since it seems more a wonder to meet with God in hell than in heaven, in Hades than in Paradise. Of course the presence of God produces very different effects in these places, but it is unquestionably in each; the bliss of one, the terror of the other. What an awful thought, that some men seem resolved to take up their night's abode in hell, a night which shall know no morning.

9. *"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea."*—If I could fly with all swiftness, and find a habitation where the mariner has not yet ploughed the deep, yet I could not reach the boundaries of the divine presence. Light flies with inconceivable rapidity, and it flashes far afield beyond all human ken; it illuminates the great and wide sea, and sets its waves gleaming afar; but its speed would utterly fail if employed in flying from the Lord. Were we to speed on the wings of the morning breeze, and break into oceans unknown to chart and map, yet there we should find the Lord already present. He who saves to the uttermost would be with us in the uttermost parts of the sea.

10. *"Even there shall thy hand lead me."* We could only fly from God by his own power. The Lord would be leading, covering, preserving, sustaining us even when we were fugitives from him. *"And thy right hand shall hold me."* In the uttermost parts of the sea my arrest would be as certain as at home: God's right hand would there seize and detain the runaway. Should we be commanded on the most distant errand, we may assuredly depend upon the upholding right hand of God as with us in all mercy, wisdom, and power. The exploring missionary in his lonely wanderings is led, in his solitary feebleness he is held. Both the hands of God are with his own servants to sustain them, and against rebels to overthrow them; and in this respect it matters not to what realms they resort, the active energy of God is around them still.

11. *"If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me."* Dense darkness may oppress me, but it cannot shut me out from thee, or thee from me. Thou seest as well without the light as with it, since thou art not dependent upon light, which is thine own creature, for the full exercise of thy perceptions. Moreover, thou art present with me whatever may be the hour; and being present thou discoverest all that I think, or feel, or do. Men are still so foolish as to prefer night and darkness for their evil deeds; but so impossible is it for anything to be hidden from the Lord that they might just as well transgress in broad daylight.

> Darkness and light in this agree;
> Great God, they're both alike to thee.
> Thine hand can pierce thy foes as soon
> Through midnight shades as blazing noon.

A good man will not wish to be hidden by the darkness, a wise man will not expect any such thing. If we were so foolish as to make sure of concealment because the place was shrouded in midnight, we might well be alarmed out of our security by the fact that, as far as God is concerned, we always dwell in the light; for even the night itself glows with a revealing force,—*"even the night shall be light about me."* Let us think of this if ever we are tempted to take license from the dark—it is light about us. If the darkness be light, how great is that light in which we dwell! Note well how David keeps his song in the first person; let us mind that we do the same as we cry with Hagar, "Thou God seest *me*."

12. *"Yea,"* of a surety, beyond all denial. *"The darkness hideth not from thee;"* it veils nothing, it is not the medium of concealment in any degree whatever. It hides from men, but not from God. *"But the night shineth as the day:"* it is but another form of day: it shines, revealing all; it "shineth as the day,"—quite as clearly and distinctly manifesting all that is done. *"The darkness and the light are both alike to thee."* This sentence seems to sum up all that went before, and most emphatically puts the negative upon the faintest idea of hiding under the cover of night. Men cling to this notion, because it is easier and less expensive to hide under darkness than to journey to remote places; and therefore the foolish thought is here beaten to pieces by statements which in their varied forms effectually batter it. Yet the ungodly are still duped by their grovelling notions of God, and enquire, "How doth God know?" They must fancy that he is as limited in his powers of observation as they are, and yet if they would but consider for a moment they would conclude that he who could not see in the dark could not be God, and he who is not present everywhere could not be the Almighty Creator. Assuredly

God is in all places, at all times, and nothing can by any possibility be kept away from his all-observing, all-comprehending mind. The Great Spirit comprehends within himself all time and space, and yet he is infinitely greater than these, or aught else that he has made.

13 For thou hast possessed my reins : thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise thee ; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made : marvellous *are* thy works ; and *that* my soul knoweth right well.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect ; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them !

18 *If* I should count them, they are more in number than the sand : when I awake, I am still with thee.

13. *"For thou hast possessed my reins."* Thou art the owner of my inmost parts and passions : not the indweller and observer only, but the acknowledged lord and possessor of my most secret self. The word " reins " signifies the kidneys, which by the Hebrews were supposed to be the seat of the desires and longings ; but perhaps it indicates here the most hidden and vital portion of the man ; this God doth not only inspect, and visit, but it is his own ; he is as much at home there as a landlord on his own estate, or a proprietor in his own house. *"Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."* There I lay hidden—covered by thee. Before I could know thee, or aught else, thou hadst a care for me, and didst hide me away as a treasure till thou shouldst see fit to bring me to the light. Thus the Psalmist describes the intimacy which God had with him. In his most secret part—his reins, and in his most secret condition—yet unborn, he was under the control and guardianship of God.

14. *"I will praise thee :"* a good resolve, and one which he was even now carrying out. Those who are praising God are the very men who *will* praise him. Those who wish to praise have subjects for adoration ready to hand. We too seldom remember our creation, and all the skill and kindness bestowed upon our frame : but the sweet singer of Israel was better instructed, and therefore he prepares for the chief musician a song concerning our nativity and all the fashioning which precedes it. We cannot begin too soon to bless our Maker, who began so soon to bless us : even in the act of creation he created reasons for our praising his name. *"For I am fearfully and wonderfully made."* Who can gaze even upon a model of our anatomy without wonder and awe ? Who could dissect a portion of the human frame without marvelling at its delicacy, and trembling at its frailty ? The Psalmist had scarcely peered within the veil which hides the nerves, sinews, and blood-vessels from common inspection ; the science of anatomy was quite unknown to him ; and yet he had seen enough to arouse his admiration of the work and his reverence for the Worker. *"Marvellous are thy works."* These parts of my frame are all *thy* works ; and though they be home works, close under my own eye, yet are they wonderful to the last degree. They are works within my own self, yet are they beyond my understanding, and appear to me as so many miracles of skill and power. We need not go to the ends of the earth for marvels, nor even across our own threshold ; they abound in our own bodies.

"And that my soul knoweth right well." He was no agnostic—he knew ; he was no doubter—his soul knew ; he was no dupe—his soul knew right well. Those know indeed and of a truth who first know the Lord, and then know all things in him. He was made to know the marvellous nature of God's work with assurance and accuracy, for he had found by experience that the Lord is a master-worker, performing inimitable wonders when accomplishing his kind designs. If we are marvellously wrought upon even before we are born, what shall we say of the Lord's dealings with us after we quit his secret workshop, and he directs our pathway through the pilgrimage of life ? What shall we not say of that new birth which

is even more mysterious than the first, and exhibits even more the love and wisdom of the Lord.

15. *"My substance was not hid from thee."* The substantial part of my being was before thine all-seeing eye ; the bones which make my frame were put together by thine hand. The essential materials of my being before they were arranged were all within the range of thine eye. I was hidden from all human knowledge, but not from thee : thou hast ever been intimately acquainted with me. *"When I was made in secret."* Most chastely and beautifully is here described the formation of our being before the time of our birth. A great artist will often labour alone in his studio, and not suffer his work to be seen until it is finished ; even so did the Lord fashion us where no eye beheld us, and the veil was not lifted till every member was complete. Much of the formation of our inner man still proceeds in secret ; hence the more of solitude the better for us. The true church also is being fashioned in secret, so that none may cry, " Lo, here ! " or " Lo, there ! " as if that which is visible could ever be identical with the invisibly growing body of Christ. *"And curiously wrought it in the lowest parts of the earth."* "Embroidered with great skill," is an accurate poetical description of the creation of veins, sinews, muscles, nerves, etc. What tapestry can equal the human fabric ? This work is wrought as much in private as if it had been accomplished in the grave, or in the darkness of the abyss. The expressions are poetical, beautifully veiling, though not absolutely concealing, the real meaning. God's intimate knowledge of us from the beginning, and even before it, is here most charmingly set forth. Cannot he who made us thus wondrously when we were not, still carry on his work of power till he has perfected us, though we feel unable to aid in the process, and are lying in great sorrow and self-loathing, as though cast into the lowest parts of the earth ?

16. *"Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect."* While as yet the vessel was upon the wheel the Potter saw it all. The Lord knows not only our shape, but our substance : this is substantial knowledge indeed. The Lord's observation of us is intent and intentional,—" Thine eyes did see." Moreover, the divine mind discerns all things as clearly and certainly as men perceive by actual eye-sight. His is not hearsay acquaintance, but the knowledge which comes of sight. *"And in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."* An architect draws his plans, and makes out his specifications ; even so did the great Maker of our frame write down all our members in the book of his purposes. That we have eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, is all due to the wise and gracious purpose of heaven : it was so ordered in the secret decree by which all things are as they are. God's purposes concern our limbs and faculties. Their form, and shape, and everything about them were appointed of God long before they had any existence. God saw us when we could not be seen, and he wrote about us when there was nothing of us to write about. When as yet there were none of our members in existence, all those members were before the eye of God in the sketch-book of his foreknowledge and predestination.

This verse is an exceedingly difficult one to translate, but we do not think that any of the proposed amendments are better than the rendering afforded us by the Authorized Version. The large number of words in italics will warn the English reader that the sense is hard to come at, and difficult to express, and that it would be unwise to found any doctrine upon the *English* words ; happily there is no temptation to do so.

The great truth expressed in these lines has by many been referred to the formation of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus. Of course, what is true of man, as man, is emphatically true of Him who is the representative man. The great Lord knows who belong to Christ ; his eye perceives the chosen members who shall yet be made one with the living person of the mystical Christ. Those of the elect who are as yet unborn, or unrenewed, are nevertheless written in the Lord's book. As the form of Eve grew up in silence and secrecy under the fashioning hand of the Maker, so at this hour is the Bride being fashioned for the Lord Jesus ; or, to change the figure,—a body is being prepared in which the life and glory of the indwelling Lord shall for ever be displayed. The Lord knoweth them that are his : he has a specially familiar acquaintance with the members of the body of Christ ; he sees their substance, unperfect though they be.

17. *"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! "* He is not alarmed at the fact that God knows all about him ; on the contrary, he is comforted, and even feels himself to be enriched, as with a casket of precious jewels. That God

should think upon him is the believer's treasure and pleasure. He cries, "How costly, how valued are thy thoughts, how dear to me is thy perpetual attention!" He thinks upon God's thoughts with delight; the more of them the better he is pleased. It is a joy worth worlds that the Lord should think upon us who are so poor and needy: it is a joy which fills our whole nature to think upon God; returning love for love, thought for thought, after our poor fashion. *"How great is the sum of them!"* When we remember that God thought upon us from old eternity, continues to think upon us every moment, and will think of us when time shall be no more, we may well exclaim, "How great is the sum!" Thoughts such as are natural to the Creator, the Preserver, the Redeemer, the Father, the Friend, are evermore flowing from the heart of the Lord. Thoughts of our pardon, renewal, upholding, supplying, educating, perfecting, and a thousand more kinds perpetually well up in the mind of the Most High. It should fill us with adoring wonder and reverent surprise that the infinite mind of God should turn so many thoughts towards us who are so insignificant and so unworthy! What a contrast is all this to the notion of those who deny the existence of a personal, conscious God! Imagine a world without a thinking, personal God! Conceive of a grim providence of machinery!—a fatherhood of law! Such philosophy is hard and cold. As well might a man pillow his head upon a razor edge as seek rest in such a fancy. But a God always thinking of us makes a happy world, a rich life, a heavenly hereafter.

18. *"If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand."* This figure shows the thoughts of God to be altogether innumerable; for nothing can surpass in number the grains of sand which belt the main ocean and all the minor seas. The task of counting God's thoughts of love would be a never-ending one. If we should attempt the reckoning we must necessarily fail, for the infinite falls not within the line of our feeble intellect. Even could we count the sands on the sea-shore, we should not then be able to number God's thoughts, for they are "more in number than the sand." This is not the hyperbole of poetry, but the solid fact of inspired statement: God thinks upon us infinitely: there is a limit to the act of creation, but not to the might of divine love.

"When I am awake I am still with thee." Thy thoughts of love are so many that my mind never gets away from them, they surround me at all hours. I go to my bed, and God is my last thought; and when I wake I find my mind still hovering about his palace-gates; God is ever with me, and I am ever with him. This is life indeed. If during sleep my mind wanders away into dreams, yet it only wanders upon holy ground, and the moment I wake my heart is back with its Lord. The Psalmist does not say, "When I awake, I return to thee," but, "I am still with thee"; as if his meditations were continuous, and his communion unbroken. Soon we shall lie down to sleep for the last time: God grant that when the trumpet of the archangel shall waken us we may find ourselves still with him.

19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

20 For they speak against thee wickedly, *and* thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.

21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.

24 And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

19. *"Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God."* There can be no doubt upon that head, for thou hast seen all their transgressions, which indeed have been done in thy presence; and thou hast long enough endured their provocations, which have been so openly manifest before thee. Crimes committed before the face of the Judge are not likely to go unpunished. If the eye of God is grieved with the presence of evil, it is but natural to expect that he will remove the offending object. God who sees all evil will slay all evil. With earthly sovereigns sin may go unpunished for lack of evidence, or the law may be left without execution from lack of vigour in the judge; but this cannot happen in the case of God, the living God. He beareth not the sword in vain. Such is his love of holiness and hatred of wrong,

that he will carry on war to the death with those whose hearts and lives are wicked. God will not always suffer his lovely creation to be defaced and defiled by the presence of wickedness : if anything is sure, this is sure, that he will ease him of his adversaries. *"Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men."* Men who delight in cruelty and war are not fit companions for those who walk with God. David chases the men of blood from his court, for he is weary of those of whom God is weary. He seems to say—If God will not let you live with him I will not have you live with me. You would destroy others, and therefore I want you not in my society. You will be destroyed yourselves, I desire you not in my service. Depart from me, for you depart from God. As we delight to have the holy God always near us, so would we eagerly desire to have wicked men removed as far as possible from us. We tremble in the society of the ungodly lest their doom should fall upon them suddenly, and we should see them lie dead at our feet. We do not wish to have our place of intercourse turned into gallows of execution, therefore let the condemned be removed out of our company.

20. *"For they speak against thee wickedly."* Why should I bear their company when their talk sickens me ? They vent their treasons and blasphemies as often as they please, doing so without the slighest excuse or provocation ; let them therefore begone, where they may find a more congenial associate than I can be. When men speak against God they will be sure to speak against us, if they find it serve their turn ; hence godless men are not the stuff out of which true friends can ever be made. God gave these men their tongues, and they turn against their Benefactor, wickedly, from sheer malice, and with great perverseness. *"And thine enemies take thy name in vain."* This is their sport : to insult Jehovah's glorious name is their amusement. To blaspheme the name of the Lord is a gratuitous wickedness in which there can be no pleasure, and from which there can be no profit. This is a sure mark of the " enemies " of the Lord, that they have the impudence to assail his honour, and treat his glory with irreverence. How can God do other than slay them ? How can we do other than withdraw from every sort of association with them ? What a wonder of sin it is that men should rail against so good a Being as the Lord our God ! The impudence of those who talk wickedly is a singular fact, and it is the more singular when we reflect that the Lord against whom they speak is all around them, and lays to heart every dishonour which they render to his holy name. We ought not to wonder that men slander and deride us, for they do the same with the Most High God.

21. *"Do not I hate them, O* LORD, *that hate thee ? "* He was a good hater, for he hated only those who hated good. Of this hatred he is not ashamed, but he sets it forth as a virtue to which he would have the Lord bear testimony. To love all men with benevolence is our duty ; but to love any wicked man with complacency would be a crime. To hate a man for his own sake, or for any evil done to us, would be wrong ; but to hate a man because he is the foe of all goodness and the enemy of all righteousness, is nothing more nor less than an obligation. The more we love God the more indignant shall we grow with those who refuse him their affection. " If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha." Truly, " jealousy is cruel as the grave." The loyal subject must not be friendly to the traitor. *"And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee ? "* He appeals to heaven that he took no pleasure in those who rebelled against the Lord ; but, on the contrary, he was made to mourn by a sight of their ill behaviour. Since God is everywhere, he knows our feelings towards the profane and ungodly, and he knows that so far from approving such characters the very sight of them is grievous to our eyes.

22. *"I hate them with perfect hatred."* He does not leave it a matter of question. He does not occupy a neutral position. His hatred to bad, vicious, blasphemous men is intense, complete, energetic. He is as whole-hearted in his hate of wickedness as in his love of goodness. *"I count them mine enemies."* He makes a personal matter of it. They may have done him no ill, but if they are doing despite to God, to his laws, and to the great principles of truth and righteousness, David proclaims war against them. Wickedness passes men into favour with unrighteous spirits ; but it excludes them from the communion of the just. We pull up the drawbridge and man the walls when a man of Belial goes by our castle. His character is a *casus belli ;* we cannot do otherwise than contend with those who contend with God.

23. *"Search me, O God, and know my heart."* David is no accomplice with traitors. He has disowned them in set form, and now he appeals to God that he

does not harbour a trace of fellowship with them. He will have God himself search him, and search him thoroughly, till every point of his being is known, and read, and understood; for he is sure that even by such an investigation there will be found in him no complicity with wicked men. He challenges the fullest investigation, the innermost search: he had need be a true man who can put himself deliberately into such a crucible. Yet we may each one desire such searching; for it would be a terrible calamity to us for sin to remain in our hearts unknown and undiscovered. *"Try me, and know my thoughts."* Exercise any and every test upon me. By fire and by water let me be examined. Read not alone the desires of my heart, but the fugitive thoughts of my head. Know with all-penetrating knowledge all that is or has been in the chambers of my mind. What a mercy that there is one being who can know us to perfection! He is intimately at home with us. He is graciously inclined towards us, and is willing to bend his omniscience to serve the end of our sanctification. Let us pray as David did, and let us be as honest as he. We cannot hide our sin: salvation lies the other way, in a plain discovery of evil, and an effectual severance from it.

24. *"And see if there be any wicked way in me."* See whether there be in my heart, or in my life, any evil habit unknown to myself. If there be such an evil way, take me from it, take it from me. No matter how dear the wrong may have become, nor how deeply prejudiced I may have been in its favour, be pleased to deliver me therefrom altogether, effectually, and at once, that I may tolerate nothing which is contrary to thy mind. As I hate the wicked in their way, so would I hate every wicked way in myself. *"And lead me in the way everlasting."* If thou hast introduced me already to the good old way, be pleased to keep me in it, and conduct me further and further along it. It is a way which thou hast set up of old, it is based upon everlasting principles, and it is the way in which immortal spirits will gladly run for ever and ever. There will be no end to it world without end. It lasts for ever, and they who are in it last for ever. Conduct me into it, O Lord, and conduct me throughout the whole length of it. By thy providence, by thy word, by thy grace, and by thy Spirit, lead me evermore.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Aben Ezra observes, that this is the most glorious and excellent Psalm in all the book: a very excellent one it is; but whether the most excellent, it is hard to say.—*John Gill.*

Whole Psalm.—There is one Psalm which it were well if Christians would do by it as Pythagoras by his Golden Precepts,—every morning and evening repeat it. It is David's appeal of a good conscience unto God, against the malicious suspicions and calumnies of men, in Psalm cxxxix.—*Samuel Annesley* (1620—1696), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is one of the sublimest compositions in the world. How came a shepherd boy to conceive so sublime a theme, and to write in so sublime a strain? Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. What themes are more sublime than the Divine attributes? And which of these attributes is more sublime than Omnipresence? Omniscience, spirituality, infinity, immutability and eternity are necessarily included in it.—*George Rogers.*

Whole Psalm.—Let the modern wits, after this, look upon the honest shepherds of Palestine as a company of *rude and unpolished clowns;* let them, if they can, produce from profane authors thoughts that are more sublime, more delicate, or better turned; not to mention the sound divinity and solid piety which are apparent under these expressions.—*Claude Fleury,* 1640—1723.

Whole Psalm.—Here the poet inverts his gaze, from the blaze of suns, to the strange atoms composing his own frame. He stands shuddering over the precipice of himself. Above is the All-encompassing Spirit, from whom the morning wings cannot save; and below, at a deep distance, appears amid the branching forest of his animal frame, so fearfully and wonderfully made, the abyss of his spiritual existence, lying like a dark lake in the midst. How, between mystery and mystery his mind, his wonder, his very reason, seem to rock like a little boat between the

sea and sky. But speedily does he regain his serenity; when he throws himself, with childlike haste and confidence, into the arms of that Fatherly Spirit, and murmurs in his bosom, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto *me*, O God; how great is the sum of them"; and looking up at last in his face, cries—"Search me, O Lord. I cannot search thee; I cannot search myself; I am overwhelmed by those dreadful depths; but search me as thou only canst; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—*George Gilfillan* (1813—1878), *in "The Bards of the Bible."*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm has an immediately practical aim, which is unfolded near the close. It is not an abstract description of the Divine attributes, with a mere indirect purpose in view. If God is such a being, if his vital agency reaches over all his creation, pervades all objects, illumines the deepest and darkest recesses; if his knowledge has no limits, piercing into the mysterious processes of creation, into the smallest and most elemental germs of life; if his eye can discern the still more subtle and recondite processes of mind, comprehending the half-formed conception, the germinating desire "afar off"; if, anterior to all finite existence, his predetermining decree went forth; if in those ancient records of eternity man's framework, with all its countless elements and organs, in all the ages of his duration, were inscribed—then for his servant, his worshipper on earth, two consequences follow, most practical and momentous: *first*, the ceasing to have or feel any complacency with the wicked, any sympathy with their evil ways, any communion with them as such; and, *secondly*, the earnest desire that God would search the Psalmist's soul, lest in its unsounded depths there might be some lurking iniquity, lest there might be, beyond the present jurisdiction of his conscience, some dark realm which the Omniscient eye only could explore.—*Bela B. Edwards* (1802–1852), *in H. C. Fish's "Masterpieces of Pulpit Eloquence."*

Whole Psalm.—

Searcher of hearts! to thee are known
  The inmost secrets of my breast;
At home, abroad, in crowds, alone,
  Thou mark'st my rising and my rest,
My thoughts far off, through every maze,
Source, stream, and issue—all my ways.

How from thy presence should I go,
  Or whither from thy Spirit flee,
Since all above, around, below,
  Exist in thine immensity?
If up to heaven I take my way,
I meet thee in eternal day.

If in the grave I make my bed
  With worms and dust, lo! thou art there!
If, on the wings of morning sped,
  Beyond the ocean I repair,
I feel thine all-controlling will,
And thy right hand upholds me still.

"Let darkness hide me," if I say,
  Darkness can no concealment be;
Night, on thy rising, shines like day;
  Darkness and light are one with thee:
For thou mine embryo-form didst view,
Ere her own babe my mother knew.

In me thy workmanship display'd,
  A miracle of power I stand:
Fearfully, wonderfully made,
  And framed in secret by thine hand;
I lived, ere into being brought,
Through thine eternity of thought.

How precious are thy thoughts of peace,
  O God, to me! how great the sum!
New every morn, they never cease;
  They were, they are, and yet shall come,
In number and in compass more
Than ocean's sands or ocean's shore.

Search me, O God! and know my heart,
Try me, my inmost soul survey;
And warn thy servant to depart
From every false and evil way:
So shall thy truth my guidance be
To life and immortality.
James Montgomery.

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm may be thus summarized. Verse 1. *"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me."*—As though he said, "O LORD, thou art the heart-searching God, who perfectly knowest all the thoughts, counsels, studies, endeavours, and actions of all men, and therefore mine." Verse 2. *"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off."*—As if he had said, "Thou knowest my rest and motion, and my plodding thoughts of both." Verse 3. *"Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways."*—As if he had said, "Thou fannest and winnowest me," that is, "Thou discussest and triest me to the utmost." Verse 4. *"For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether."*—As if he had said, "I cannot speak a word, though never so secret, obscure, or subtle, but thou knowest what, and why, and with what mind it was uttered." Verse 5. *"Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me."*—As if he had said, "Thou keepest me within the compass of thy knowledge, like a man that will not let his servant go out of his sight. I cannot break away from thee." Verse 6. *"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."*—As if he had said, "The knowledge of thy great and glorious majesty and infiniteness is utterly past all human comprehension." Verse 7. *"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"* —As if he had said, "Whither can I flee from thee, whose essence, presence, and power is everywhere?" Verse 8. *"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."*—As if he had said, "There is no height above thee, there is no depth below thee." Verse 9. *"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea."*—As if he had said, "If I had wings to fly as swift as the morning light, from the east to the west, that I could in a moment get to the furthest parts of the world." Verse 10. *"Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."*—As if he had said, "Thence shall thy hand lead me back, and hold me fast like a fugitive." Verse 11. *"If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me."*—As if he had said, "Though darkness hinders man's sight, it doth not thine." In a word, look which way you will, there is no hiding-place from God. "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves": Job xxxiv. 21, 22. Therefore, Christians, do nothing but what you are willing God should take notice of; and judge in yourselves whether this be not the way to have a good and quiet conscience.—*Samuel Annesley.*

Whole Psalm.—In this Aramaizing Psalm what the preceding Psalm says in verse 6 comes to be carried into effect, viz.: *"For Jahve is exalted and he seeth the lowly, and the proud he knoweth from afar."* This Psalm has manifold points of contact with its predecessor.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

"To the Chief Musician."—As a later writer could have no motive for prefixing the title, *"To the Chief Musician,"* it affords an incidental proof of antiquity and genuineness.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

"A Psalm of David."—How any critic can assign this Psalm to other than David I cannot understand. Every line, every thought, every turn of expression and transition, is his, and his only. As for the arguments drawn from the two Chaldaisms which occur, this is really nugatory. These Chaldaisms consist merely in the substitution of one letter for another, very like it in shape, and easily to be mistaken by a transcriber, particularly by one who had been used to the Chaldee idiom; but the moral arguments for David's authorship are so strong as to overwhelm any such verbal, or rather *literal* criticism, were even the objections more formidable than they actually are.—*John Jebb.*

Verse 1.—*"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known (me)."* There is no *"me"* after *"known"* in the Hebrew; therefore it is better to take the object after "known" in a wider sense. The omission is intentional, that the believing heart of all who use this Psalm may supply the ellipsis. Thou hast known and knowest *all that concerns the matter in question,* as well whether I and mine are guilty or innocent

(Ps. xliv. 21); also my exact circumstances, my needs, my sorrows, and the precise time when to relieve me.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 1.—"*O* LORD, *thou hast searched me, and known me.*" The godly may sometimes be so overclouded with calumnies and reproaches as not to be able to find a way to clear themselves before men, but must content and comfort themselves with the testimony of a good conscience and with God's approbation of their integrity, as here David doth.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*O* LORD, *thou hast searched me, and known me.*" David here lays down the great doctrine, that God has a perfect knowledge of us, First, *in the way of an address to God:* he saith it to him, acknowledging it to him, and giving him the glory of it. Divine truths look full as well when they are prayed over as when they are preached over: and much better than when they are disputed over. When we speak of God to him himself, we find ourselves concerned to speak with the utmost degree both of sincerity and reverence, which will be likely to make the impressions the deeper. Secondly, he lays it down *in a way of application to himself:* not thou hast known all, but "thou hast known *me*"; that is it which I am most concerned to believe, and which it will be most profitable for me to consider. Then we know things for our good when we know them for ourselves. Job v. 27. . . . David was a king, and "the hearts of kings are unsearchable" to their subjects (Prov. xxv. 3), but they are not so to their sovereign.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*O* LORD, *thou hast searched me.*" I would have you observe how thoroughly in the very first verse he brings home the truth to his own heart and his own conscience: "O LORD, thou hast searched *me.*" He does not slur it over as a general truth, in which such numbers shared that he might hope to escape or evade its solemn appeal to himself; but it is, "Thou hast searched *me.*"—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—"*Searched.*" The Hebrew word originally means *to dig*, and is applied to the search for precious metals (Job xxviii. 3), but metaphorically to a moral inquisition into guilt.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verses 1—5.—God knows everything that passes in our inmost souls better than we do ourselves: he reads our most secret thoughts: all the cogitations of our hearts pass in review before him; and he is as perfectly and entirely employed in the scrutiny of the thoughts and actions of an individual, as in the regulation of the most important concerns of the universe. This is what we cannot comprehend; but it is what, according to the light of reason, must be true, and, according to revelation, is indeed true. God can do nothing imperfectly; and we may form some idea of his superintending knowledge, by conceiving what is indeed the truth, that all the powers of the Godhead are employed, and solely employed, in the observation and examination of the conduct of one individual. I say, this is indeed the case, because all the powers of the Godhead are employed upon the least as well as upon the greatest concerns of the universe; and the whole mind and power of the Creator are as exclusively employed upon the formation of a grub as of a world. God knows everything perfectly, and he knows everything perfectly at once. This, to a human understanding, would breed confusion; but there can be no confusion in the Divine understanding, because confusion arises from imperfection. Thus God, without confusion, beholds as distinctly the actions of every man, as if that man were the only created being, and the Godhead were solely employed in observing him. Let this thought fill your mind with awe and with remorse.—*Henry Kirke White*, 1785—1806.

Verses 1—12.—

O Lord, in me there lieth nought
But to thy search revealed lies;
For when I sit
Thou markest it;
No less thou notest when I rise;
Yea, closest closet of my thought
Hath open windows to thine eyes.

Thou walkest with me when I walk,
When to my bed for rest I go,
I find thee there,
And everywhere:
Not youngest thought in me doth grow,
No, not one word I cast to talk
But, yet unuttered, thou dost know.

If forth I march, thou goest before;
If back I turn, thou com'st behind:
So forth nor back
Thy guard I lack;
Nay, on me, too, thy hand I find.
Well, I thy wisdom may adore,
But never reach with earthy mind.

To shun thy notice, leave thine eye,
O whither might I take my way?
To starry sphere?
Thy throne is there.
To dead men's undelightsome stay?
There is thy walk, and there to lie
Unknown, in vain I should assay.

O sun, whom light nor flight can match!
Suppose thy lightful flightful wings
Thou lend to me,
And I could flee
As far as thee the evening brings:
Ev'n led to west he would me catch,
Nor should I lurk with western things.

Do thou thy best, O secret night,
In sable veil to cover me:
Thy sable veil
Shall vainly fail:
With day unmasked my night shall be;
For night is day, and darkness light,
O Father of all lights, to thee.

Sir Philip Sidney, 1554—1586.

Verse 2.—"*Thou.*" David makes the personal pronoun the very frontispiece of the verse, and so says expressly and distinctively to Jehovah, "*Thou* knowest;" thus marking the difference between God and all others, as though he said, "Thou, and thou alone, O God, in all the universe, knowest altogether all that can be known concerning me, even to my inmost thought, as well as outward act."—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising.*" *Does* God care? *Is* he our Friend? Even in such little matters as these, does he watch over us "to do us good"? . . . When we "sit down" he sees; when we rise up he is there. Not an action is lost or a thought overlooked. No wonder that, as these tiny miracles of care are related by David, he adds the words, "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*" We get accustomed to the thought that God made the sun and sky, the "moon and stars which he hath ordained," and we bow to the fact that they are "the work of his fingers." Let us go further! The "*coming in*" and "*going out*" of the Christian is mentioned several times in Scripture as though it were very important. So much hinges on these little words. "David went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him": 1 Sam. xviii. 13, 14. "The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore": Ps. cxxi. 8. David was given both *preservation* and *wisdom* in his "goings out" and "comings in." Perhaps the latter was both cause and effect of the first. It was needed, for many eyes were upon him, and many eyes are upon us: are they not? Perhaps more than we think.—*Lady Hope, in "Between Times,"* 1884.

Verse 2.—"*Downsitting and uprising.*" "*Uprising*" following "*downsitting*" is in the order of right sequence; for action ought to follow meditation. Jacob saw the angels ascending to God before they descended to service among mortals. Hence we are taught first to join ourselves to God by meditation, and afterwards to repair to the aid of our fellows.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"*Uprising*" may respect either rising *from bed*, when the Lord knows whether the heart is still with him (ver. 18); what sense is had of the Divine protection and sustentation, and what thankfulness there is for the mercies of the night past; and whether the voice of prayer and praise is directed to him in the morning, as it should be (Ps. iii. 5; v. 3); or else rising *from the table*, when the Lord knows whether a man's table has been his snare, and with what thankfulness he rises from

it for the favours he has received. The Targum interprets this of rising up to go to war; which David did, in the name and strength, and by the direction of the Lord.—*John Gill.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*" "*My thought:*" that is, every thought, though innumerable thoughts pass through me in a day. The divine knowledge reaches to their source and fountain, before they are our thoughts. If the Lord knows them before their existence, before they can be properly called ours, much more doth he know them when they actually spring up in us; he knows the tendency of them, where the bird will alight when it is in flight; he knows them exactly; he is therefore called a "discerner" or criticiser of the heart: Heb. iv. 2.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*" Not that God is at a distance from our thoughts; but he understands them while they are far off from us, from our knowledge, while they are potential, as gardeners know what weeds such ground will bring forth, when nothing appears. Deut. xxxi. 21. "I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware": God knew their thoughts before they came into Canaan, what they would be there. And how can it be, but that God should know all our thoughts, seeing he made the heart, and it is in his hand (Prov. xxi. 1), seeing, "we live, and move, and have our being" in God (Acts xvii. 28); seeing he is through us all, and in us all (Eph. iv. 6). Look well to your hearts, thoughts, risings, whatever comes into your mind; let no secret sins, or corruptions, lodge there; think not to conceal anything from the eye of God.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*" Though my thoughts be never so foreign and distant from one another, thou understandest the chain of them, and canst make out their connexion, when so many of them slip my notice that I myself cannot.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*My thought.*" The רֵעַ, *rea*, which we have rendered "*thought*," signifies also a *friend* or *companion*, on which account some read—*thou knowest what is nearest me afar off*, a meaning more to the point than any other, if it could be supported by example. The reference would then be very appropriately to the fact that the most distant objects are contemplated as near by God. Some for "*afar off*" read *beforehand*, in which signification the Hebrew word is elsewhere taken; as if he had said, O Lord, every thought which I conceive in my heart is already known to thee beforehand.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—"*Thought.*" In all affliction, in all business, a man's best comfort is this, that all he does and even all he thinks, God knows. In the Septuagint we read διαλογισμοὺς, that is, "reasonings." God knows all our inner ratiocination, all the dialogues, all the colloquies of the soul with itself.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou understandest my thought.*" Before men we stand as opaque bee-hives. They can see the thoughts go in and out of us, but what work they do inside of a man they cannot tell. Before God we are as glass bee-hives, and all that our thoughts are doing within us he perfectly sees and understands.—*Henry Ward Beecher.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou understandest my thought afar off.*"

> Man may not see thee do an impious deed;
> But God thy very inmost thought can read."
>
> *Plutarch.*

Verse 2.—"*Afar off.*" This expression is, as in Ps. cxxxviii. 6, to be understood as contradicting the delusion (Job xxii. 12—14) that God's dwelling in heaven prevents him from observing mundane things.—*Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 2.—"*Afar off.*" Both in distance, however far off a man may seek to hide his thoughts from God; and in time, for God knows the human thought before man conceives it in his heart, in his eternal prescience. The Egyptians called God the "eye of the world."—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verses 2—4.—Do not fancy that your demeanour, posture, dress, or deportment are not under God's providence. You deceive yourself. Do not think that your thoughts pass free from inspection. The Lord understands them afar off. Think not that your words are dissipated in the air before God can hear. Oh, no! He knows them even when still upon your tongue. Do not think that your ways are so private and concealed that there is none to know or censure them. You mistake. God knows all your ways.—*Johann David Frisch*, 1731.

Verse 3.—"*Thou compassest my path and my lying down,*" etc. The words that I have read unto you, seem to be a metaphor, taken from soldiers surrounding the ways with an ambush, or placing scouts and spies in every corner, to discover the enemy in his march; "*Thou compassest my path*": thou hast (as it were) thy spies over me, wheresoever I go. By "*path*" is meant the outward actions and carriage of his ordinary conversation. By "*lying down*" is signified to us the private and close actions of his life; such as were attended only by darkness and solitude. In Ps. xxxvi. verse 4, it is said of the wicked that "he deviseth mischief upon his bed," to denote not only his perverse diligence, but also his secresy in it: and God is said to "hide his children in the secret of his pavilion," so that these places of rest and lying down are designed for secresy and withdrawing. When a man retires into his chamber, he does in a manner, for a while, shut himself out of the world. And that this is the fine sense of that expression of *lying down* appears from the next words, "*Thou art acquainted with all my ways*"; where he collects in one word what he had before said in two; or, it may come in by way of entrance and deduction, from the former. As if he should say, Thou knowest what I do in my ordinary converse with men, and also how I behave myself when I am retired from them; therefore thou knowest *all* my actions, since a man's actions may be reduced either to his public or private deportment. By the other expression of "*my ways*" is here meant the total of a man's behaviour before God, whether in thoughts, words, or deeds, as is manifest by comparing this with other verses.—*Robert South.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou compassest my path.*" This is a metaphor either from huntsmen watching all the motions and lurking-places of wild beasts, that they may catch them; or from soldiers besieging their enemies in a city, and setting round about them.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou compassest,*" or *fannest*, or *winnowest*, "*my path*"; that is, discussest or triest out to the utmost, even tracing the footsteps, as the Greek signifieth. Compare Job xxxi. 4.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou art acquainted with all my ways.*" God takes notice of every step we take, every right step, and every by-step. He knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk toward, what company we walk with.—*Religious Tract Society's Commentary.*

Verse 3.—"*Art acquainted,*" as by most familiar intercourse, as if thou hadst always lived with me [Hebrew] and thus become entirely familiar with my ways.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 3.—The Psalmist mentions four modes of human existence; *stationis, sessionis, itionis, cubationis;* because man never stayeth long in one mood, but in every change the eyes of the Lord cease not to watch him.—*Geier.*

Verse 4.—"*For there is not a word in my tongue,*" etc. The words admit a double meaning. Accordingly some understand them to imply that God knows what we are about to say before the words are formed on our tongue; others, that though we speak not a word, and try by silence to conceal our secret intentions, we cannot elude his notice. Either rendering amounts to the same thing, and it is of no consequence which we adopt. The idea meant to be conveyed is, that while the tongue is the index of thought to man, being the great medium of communication, God, who knows the heart, is independent of words. And use is made of the demonstrative particle *lo!* to indicate emphatically that the innermost recesses of our spirit stand present to his view.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—"*For there is not a word in my tongue,*" etc. How needful it is to set a watch before the doors of our mouth, to hold that unruly member of ours, the tongue, as with bit and bridle. Some of you feel at times that you can scarcely say a word, and the less you say the better. Well, it may be as well; for great talkers are almost sure to make slips with their tongue. It may be a good thing that you cannot speak much; for in the multitude of words there lacketh not sin. Wherever you go, what light, vain, and foolish conversations you hear! I am glad not to be thrown into circumstances where I can hear it. But with you it may be different. You may often repent of speaking, you will rarely repent of silence. How soon angry words are spoken! How soon foolish expressions drop from the mouth! The Lord knows it all, marks it all, and did you carry about with you a more solemn recollection of it you would be more watchful than you are.—*Joseph C. Philpot.*

Verse 4.—"*When there is not a word in my tongue, O* LORD, *thou knowest all;*" so some read it; for thoughts are words to God.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou knowest it.*" The gods know what passes in our minds without the aid of eyes, ears, or tongues; on which divine omniscience is founded the feeling of men that, when they wish in silence, or offer up a prayer for anything, the gods hear them.—*Cicero.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou hast beset me behind and before,*" etc. There is here an insensible transition from God's omniscience to his omnipresence, out of which the Scriptures represent it as arising. "*Behind and before,*" i.e. on all sides. The idea of *above* and *below* is suggested by the last clause. "*Beset,*" besiege, hem in, or closely surround. "*Thy hand,*" or the palm of thy hand, as the Hebrew word strictly denotes.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou hast beset me behind and before.*" What would you say if, wherever you turned, whatever you were doing, whatever thinking, whether in public or private, with a confidential friend telling your secrets, or alone planning them—if, I say, you saw an eye constantly fixed on you, from whose watching, though you strove ever so much, you could never escape. . . . that could perceive your every thought? The supposition is awful enough. There is such an Eye.—*De Vere.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou hast beset me behind and before.*" One who finds the way blocked up turns back; but David found himself hedged in *behind* as well as *before.* —*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou hast . . . . laid thine hand upon me.*" As by an arrest; so that I am thy prisoner, and cannot stir a foot from thee.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—"*And laid thine hand upon me.*" To make of me one acceptable to thyself. To rule me, to lead me, to uphold me, to protect me; to restore me; in my growth, in my walk, in my failures, in my affliction, in my despair.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 6.—"*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,*" etc. When we are about to look upon God's perfections, we should observe our own imperfections, and thereby learn to be the more modest in our searching of God's unsearchable perfection: "*Such knowledge,*" saith David, "*is too high for me, I cannot attain unto it.*" Then do we see most of God, when we see him incomprehensible, and do see ourselves swallowed up in the thoughts of his perfection, and are forced to fall in admiration of God, as here. "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 6.—"*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.*" Compared with our stinted knowledge, how amazing is the knowledge of God! As he made all things, he must be intimately acquainted, not only with their properties, but with their every essence. His eye, at the same instant, surveys all the works of his immeasurable creation. He observes, not only the complicated system of the universe, but the slightest motion of the most microscopic insect;—not only the sublimest conception of angels, but the meanest propensity of the most worthless of his creatures. At this moment he is listening to the praises breathed by grateful hearts in distant worlds, and reading every grovelling thought which passes through the polluted minds of the fallen race of Adam. . . . At one view, he surveys the past, the present, and the future. No inattention prevents him from observing; no defect of memory or of judgment obscures his comprehension. In his remembrance are stored not only the transactions of this world, but of all the worlds in the universe; not only the events of the six thousand years which have passed since the earth was created, but of a duration without beginning. Nay, things to come, extending to a duration without end, are also before him. An eternity past and an eternity to come are, at the same moment, in his eye; and with that eternal eye he surveys infinity. How amazing! How inconceivable!—*Henry Duncan* (1774—1846), *in "Sacred Philosophy of the Seasons."*

Verse 6.—"*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.*" There is a mystery about the Divine Omnipresence, which we do not learn to solve, after years of meditation. As God is a simple spirit, without dimensions, parts, or susceptibility of division, he is equally, that is, fully, present at all times in all places. At any given moment he is not present partly here and partly in the utmost skirt of the furthest system which revolves about the dimmest telescopic star, as if like a galaxy of perfection he stretched a sublime magnificence through universal space, which admitted of

separation and partition; but he is present, with the totality of his glorious properties in every point of space. This results undeniably from the simple spirituality of the Great Supreme. All that God is in one place he is in all places. All there is of God is in every place. Indeed, his presence has no dependence on space or matter. His attribute of essential presence were the same if universal matter were blotted out. Only by a figure can God be said to be in the universe; for the universe is comprehended by him. All the boundless glory of the Godhead is essentially present at every spot in his creation, however various may be the manifestations of this glory at different times and places.

Here we have a case which ought to instruct and sober those, who, in their shallow philosophy, demand a religion without mystery. It would be a religion without God; for "who by searching can find out God?"—*James W. Alexander, in "The [American] National Preacher,"* 1860.

Verse 7.—*"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?"* By the *"spirit of God"* we are not here, as in several other parts of Scripture, to conceive of his power merely, but his understanding and knowledge. In man the spirit is the seat of intelligence, and so it is here in reference to God, as is plain from the second part of the sentence, where by *"the face of God"* is meant his knowledge or inspection.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—*"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?"* That is, either from thee, who art a spirit, and so canst pierce and penetrate me; be as truly and essentially in the very bowels and marrow of my soul, as my soul is intimately and essentially in my body: *"from thy spirit;"* that is, from thy knowledge and thy power; thy knowledge to detect and observe me, thy power to uphold or crush me.—*Ezekiel Hopkins,* 1633—1690.

Verse 7.—We may elude the vigilance of a human enemy and place ourselves beyond his reach. God fills all space—there is not a spot in which his piercing eye is not on us, and his uplifted hand cannot find us out. Man must strike soon if he would strike at all; for opportunities pass away from him, and his victim may escape his vengeance by death. There is no passing of opportunity with God, and it is this which makes his longsuffering a solemn thing. God can wait, for he has a whole eternity before him in which he may strike. "All things are open and naked to him with whom we have to do."—*Frederick William Robertson,* 1816—1853.

Verse 7.—*"Whither shall I go,"* etc. A heathen philosopher once asked, "Where is God?" The Christian answered, "Let me first ask you, Where is he not?"—*John Arrowsmith,* 1602—1659.

Verse 7.—*"Whither shall I flee from thy presence?"* That exile would be strange that could separate us from God. I speak not of those poor and common comforts, that in all lands and coasts it is his sun that shines, his elements of earth or water that bear us, his air we breathe; but of that special privilege, that his gracious presence is ever with us; that no sea is so broad as to divide us from his favour; that wheresoever we feed, he is our host; wheresoever we rest, the wings of his blessed providence are stretched over us. Let my soul be sure of this, though the whole world be traitors to me.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 7.—*"Whither shall I flee?"* etc. Surely no whither: they that attempt it, do but as the fish which swimmeth to the length of the line, with a hook in the mouth.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—*"Thy presence."* The presence of God's glory is in heaven; the presence of his power on earth; the presence of his justice in hell; and the presence of his grace with his people. If he deny us his powerful presence, we fall into nothing; if he deny us his gracious presence, we fall into sin; if he deny us his merciful presence, we fall into hell.—*John Mason.*

Verse 7.—*"Thy presence."* The celebrated Linnæus testified in his conversation, writings, and actions, the greatest sense of God's presence. So strongly indeed was he impressed with the idea, that he wrote over the door of his library: *"Innocuè vivite, Numen adest—Live innocently: God is present."—George Seaton Bowes, in "Information and Illustration,"* 1884.

Verses 7—11.—You will never be neglected by the Deity, though you were so small as to sink into the depths of the earth, or so lofty as to fly up to heaven; but you will suffer from the gods the punishment due to you, whether you abide here, or depart to Hades, or are carried to a place still more wild than these.—*Plato.*

Verses 7—12.—The Psalm was not written by a Pantheist. The Psalmist speaks of God as a Person everywhere present in creation, yet distinct from creation. In these verses he says, "*Thy spirit* . . . *thy* presence . . . *thou* art there . . . *thy* hand . . . *thy* right hand . . . darkness hideth not from *thee.*" God is everywhere, but he is not everything.—*William Jones, in "A Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Psalms,"* 1879.

Verse 8.—"*If I make my bed.*" Properly, " If I strew or spread my couch." If I should seek that as a place to lie down.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 8.—"*Hell*" in some places in Scripture signifies the lower parts of the earth, without relation to punishment: "*If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.*" By "*heaven*" he means the upper region of the world, without any respect to the state of blessedness; and "*hell*" is the most opposite and remote in distance, without respect to misery. As if he had said, Let me go whither I will, thy presence finds me out.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou art there.*" Or, more emphatically and impressively in the original, "*Thou!*" That is, the Psalmist imagines himself in the highest heaven, or in the deepest abodes of the dead,—and lo! God is there also; he has not gone from *him!* he is still in the presence of the same God!—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou art there.*" This is not meant of his knowledge, for that the Psalmist had spoken of before: verses 2, 3, " Thou understandest my thought afar off: thou art acquainted with all my ways." Besides, " thou art there" not thy wisdom or knowledge, but *thou*, thy essence, not only thy virtue. For having before spoken of his omniscience, he proves that such knowledge could not be in God unless he were present in his essence in all places, so as to be excluded from none. He fills the depths of hell, the extension of the earth, and the heights of the heavens. When the Scripture mentions the power of God only, it expresseth it by hand or arm; but when it mentions the spirit of God, and doth not intend the third person of the Trinity, it signifies the nature and essence of God; and so here, when he saith, "*Whither shall I go from thy spirit?*" he adds exegetically, "*whither shall I flee from thy presence?*" or Hebrew, "*face*"; and the face of God in Scripture signifies the essence of God: Exod. xxxiii. 20, 23, " Thou canst not see my face," and " my face shall not be seen"; the effects of his power, wisdom, providence, are seen, which are his back-parts, but not his face. The effects of his power and wisdom are seen in the world, but his essence is invisible, and this the Psalmist elegantly expresseth.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 9.—"*The wings of the morning,*" is an elegant metaphor; and by them we may conjecture is meant the sunbeams, called "*wings*" because of their swift and speedy motion, making their passage so sudden and instantaneous, as that they do prevent the observation of the eye; called "*the wings of the morning*" because the dawn of the morning comes flying in upon these wings of the sun, and brings light along with it; and, by beating and fanning of these wings, scatters the darkness before it. " Now," saith the Psalmist, " if I could pluck these wings of the morning," the sunbeams, if I could imp [graft] my own shoulders with them, if I should fly as far and as swift as light, even in an instant, to the uttermost parts of the sea; yea, if in my flight I should spy out some solitary rock, so formidable and dismal as if we might almost call in question whether ever a Providence had been there, if I could pitch there on the top of it, where never anything had made its abode, but coldness, thunders, and tempests; yet there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."—*Ezekiel Hopkins.*

Verse 9.—"*The wings of the morning.*" This figure to a Western is not a little obscure. For my part, I cannot doubt that we are to understand certain beautiful light clouds as thus poetically described. I have observed invariably, that in the late spring-time, in summer, and yet more especially in the autumn, white clouds are to be seen in Palestine. They only occur at the earliest hours of morning, just previous to and at the time of sunrise. It is the total absence of clouds at all other parts of the day, except during the short period of the winter rains, that lends such striking solemnity and force to those descriptions of the Second Advent where our Lord is represented as coming in the clouds. This feature of his majesty loses all its meaning in lands like ours, in which clouds are of such common occurrence that they are rarely absent from the sky. The morning clouds of summer and autumn are always of a brilliant silvery white, save at such times as they are

dyed with the delicate opal tints of dawn. They hang low upon the mountains of Judah, and produce effects of undescribable beauty, as they float far down in the valleys, or rise to wrap themselves around the summit of the hills. In almost every instance, by about seven o'clock the heat has dissipated these fleecy clouds, and to the vivid Eastern imagination morn has folded her outstretched wings.—*James Neil.*

Verse 9.—"*If I take the wings of the morning.*" The point of comparison appears to be the incalculable velocity of light.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verses 9, 10.—When we think that we fly from God, in running out of one place into another, we do but run from one hand to the other; for there is no place where God is not, and whithersoever a rebellious sinner doth run, the hand of God will meet with him to cross him, and hinder his hoped-for good success, although he securely prophesieth never so much good unto himself in his journey. What! had Jonah offended the winds or the waters, that they bear him such enmity? The winds and the waters and all God's creatures are wont to take God's part against Jonah, or any rebellious sinner. For though God in the beginning gave power to man over all creatures to rule them, yet when man sins, God giveth power and strength to his creatures to rule and bridle man. Therefore even he that now was lord over the waters, now the waters are lord over him.—*Henry Smith.*

Verses 9, 10.—

> Should fate command me to the farthest verge
> Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,
> Rivers unknown to song; where first the sun
> Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
> Flames on the Atlantic isles; 'tis nought to me:
> Since God is ever present, ever felt,
> In the void waste as in the city full;
> And where he vital breathes, there must be joy,
> When e'en at last the solemn hour shall come,
> And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,
> I cheerful will obey; there with new powers,
> Will rising wonders sing: I cannot go
> Where universal love smiles not around,
> Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their sons:
> From seeming evil still deducing good,
> And better thence again, and better still,
> In infinite progression.
>
> *James Thomson*, 1700—1748.

Verse 11.—"*If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me,*" etc. The foulest enormities of human conduct have always striven to cover themselves with the shroud of night. The thief, the counterfeiter, the assassin, the robber, the murderer, and the seducer, feel comparatively safe in the midnight darkness, because no human eye can scrutinize their actions. But what if it should turn out that sable night, to speak paradoxically, is an unerring photographist! What if wicked men, as they open their eyes from the sleep of death, in another world, should find the universe hung round with faithful pictures of their earthly enormities, which they had supposed for ever lost in the oblivion of night! What scenes for them to gaze at for ever! They may now, indeed, smile incredulously at such a suggestion; but the disclosures of chemistry may well make them tremble. Analogy does make it a scientific probability that every action of man, however deep the darkness in which it was performed, has imprinted its image on nature, and that there may be tests which shall draw it into daylight, and make it permanent so long as materialism endures.—*Edward Hitchcock, in "The Religion of Geology,"* 1851.

Verse 12.—"*The darkness hideth not from thee.*" Though the place where we sin be to men as dark as Egypt, yet to God it is as light as Goshen.—*William Secker.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou hast possessed my reins.*" From the sensitiveness to pain of this part of the body, it was regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of sensation and feeling, as also of desire and longing (Ps. lxxii. 21; Job xvi. 13; xix. 27). It is sometimes used of the inner nature generally (Ps. xvi. 7; Jer. xx. 12), and specially of the judgment or direction of reason (Jer. xi. 20; xii. 2).—*William Lindsay Alexander, in Kitto's Cyclopædia.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou hast possessed my reins.*" The *reins* are made specially prominent in order to mark them, the seat of the tenderest, most secret emotions, as the work of him who trieth the heart and the reins.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.*" The word here rendered *cover* means properly to interweave; to weave; to knit together, and the literal translation would be, "Thou hast *woven* me in my mother's womb," meaning that God had put his parts together, as one who weaves cloth, or who makes a basket. So it is rendered by De Wette and by Gesenius (*Lex.*). The original word has however, also the idea of protecting, as in a booth or hut, woven or knit together, —to wit, of boughs and branches. The former signification best suits the connection; and then the sense would be, that as God had made him—as he had formed his members, and united them in a bodily frame and form before he was born—he must be able to understand all his thoughts and feelings. As he was not concealed from God before he saw the light, so he could not be anywhere.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 14.—"*I will praise thee,*" etc. All God's works are admirable, man wonderfully wonderful. "Marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." What infers he on all this? Therefore "*I will praise thee.*" If we will not praise him that made us, will he not repent that he made us? Oh that we knew what the saints do in heaven, and how the sweetness of that doth swallow up all earthly pleasures! They sing honour and glory to the Lord. Why? Because he hath created all things: Rev. iv. 11. When we behold an exquisite piece of work, we presently enquire after him that made it, purposely to commend his skill: and there is no greater disgrace to an artist, than having perfected a famous work, to find it neglected, no man minding it, or so much as casting an eye upon it. All the works of God are considerable, and man is bound to this contemplation. "When I consider the heavens," etc., I say, "What is man?" Ps. viii. 3, 4. He admires the heavens, but his admiration reflects upon man. *Quis homo?* There is no workman but would have his instruments used, and used to that purpose for which they were made . . . . Man is set like a little world in the midst of the great, to glorify God; this is the scope and end of his creation.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 14.—"*I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*" The term "*fearful*" is sometimes to be taken subjectively, for our being possessed of fear. In this sense it signifies the same as timid. Thus the prophet was directed to say to them that were of a "fearful heart, be strong." At other times it is taken objectively, for that property in an object the contemplation of which excites fear in the beholder. Thus it is said of God that he is "fearful in praises," and that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." In this sense it is manifestly to be understood in the passage now under consideration. The human frame is so admirably constructed, so delicately combined, and so much in danger of being dissolved by innumerable causes, that the more we think of it the more we tremble, and wonder at our own continued existence.

> "How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
> How complicate, how wonderful is man!
> How passing wonder he who made him such,
> Who mingled in our make such strange extremes
> Of different natures, marvellously mixed!
> Helpless immortal, insect infinite,
> A worm, a god—I tremble at myself!"

To do justice to the subject, it would be ncessary to be well acquainted with anatomy. I have no doubt that a thorough examination of that "substance which God hath curiously wrought" (verse 15), would furnish abundant evidence of the justness of the Psalmist's words; but even those things which are manifest to common observation may be sufficient for this purpose. In general it is observable that the human frame abounds with avenues at which enter every thing conducive to preservation and comfort, and every thing that can excite alarm. Perhaps there is not one of these avenues but what may become an inlet to death, nor one of the blessings of life but what may be the means of accomplishing it. We live by inhalation, but we also die by it. Diseases and death in innumerable forms are conveyed by the very air we breathe. God hath given us a relish for divers

aliments, and rendered them necessary to our subsistence: yet, from the abuse of them, what a train of disorders and premature deaths are found amongst men! And, when there is no abuse, a single delicious morsel may, by the evil design of another, or even by mere accident, convey poison through all our veins, and in one hour reduce the most athletic form to a corpse.

The elements of fire and water, without which we could not subsist, contain properties which in a few moments would be able to destroy us; nor can the utmost circumspection at all times preserve us from their destructive power. A single stroke on the head may divest us of reason or of life. A wound or a bruise of the spine may instantly deprive the lower extremities of all sensation. If the vital parts be injured, so as to suspend the performance of their mysterious functions, how soon is the constitution broken up! By means of the circulation of the blood, how easily and suddenly are deadly substances diffused throughout the frame! The putridity of a morbid subject has been imparted to the very hand stretched out to save it. The poisoned arrow, the envenomed fang, the hydrophobic saliva, derive from hence their fearful efficacy. Even the pores of the skin, necessary as they are to life, may be the means of death. Not only are poisonous substances hereby admitted, but, when obstructed by surrounding damps, the noxious humours of the body, instead of being emitted, are retained in the system, and become productive of numerous diseases, always afflictive, and often fatal to life.

Instead of wondering at the number of premature deaths that are constantly witnessed, there is far greater reason to wonder that there are no more, and that any of us survive to seventy or eighty years of age.

> "Our life contains a thousand springs,
> And dies if one be gone:
> Strange that a harp of thousand strings
> Should keep in tune so long."

Nor is this all. If we are *"fearfully made"* as to our animal frame, it will be found that we are much more so considered as moral and accountable beings. In what relates to our animal nature, we are in most instances constructed like other animals; but, in what relates to us as moral agents, we stand distinguished from all the lower creation. We are made for eternity. The present life is only the introductory part of our existence. It is that, however, which stamps a character on all that follows. How fearful is our situation! What innumerable influences is the mind exposed to from the temptations which surround us! Not more dangerous to the body is the pestilence that walketh in darkness than these are to the soul. Such is the construction of our nature that the very word of life, if heard without regard, becomes a savour of death unto death. What consequences hang upon the small and apparently trifling beginning of evils! A wicked thought may issue in a wicked purpose, this purpose in a wicked action, this action in a course of conduct, this course may draw into its vortex millions of our fellow-creatures, and terminate in perdition, both to ourselves and them. The whole of this process was exemplified in the case of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. When placed over the ten tribes, he first *said in his heart*, "If this people go up to sacrifice at Jerusalem, their hearts will turn to Rehoboam; and thus shall the kingdom return to the house of David." 1 Kings xii. 26—30. On this he took counsel, and made the calves of Dan and Bethel. This engaged him in a course of wickedness, from which no remonstrances could reclaim him. Nor was it confined to himself; for he "made all Israel to sin." The issue was, not only their destruction as a nation, but, to all appearance, the eternal ruin of himself, and great numbers of his followers. Such were the fruits of an evil thought!

Oh, my soul, tremble at thyself! Tremble at the fearfulness of thy situation; and commit thine immortal all into his hands "who is able to keep thee from falling, and to present thee faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 14.—*"I am fearfully and wonderfully made."* Never was so terse and expressive a description of the physical conformation of man given by any human being. So *"fearfully"* are we made, that there is not an action or gesture of our bodies, which does not, apparently, endanger some muscle, vein, or sinew, the rupture of which would destroy either life or health. We are so *"wonderfully"* made, that our organization infinitely surpasses, in skill, contrivance, design, and adaptation of means to ends, the most curious and complicated piece of mechanism,

not only ever executed " by art and man's device," but ever conceived by human imagination.—*Richard Warner*, 1828.

Verse 14.—"*I am wonderfully made.*" Take notice of the curious frame of the body. David saith, "*I am wonderfully made*"; *acu pictus sum*, so the Vulgate rendereth it, " painted as with a needle," like a garment of needlework, of divers colours, richly embroidered with nerves and veins. What shall I speak of the eye, wherein there is such curious workmanship, that many upon the first sight of it have been driven to acknowledge God? Of the hand made to open and shut, and to serve the labours and ministries of nature without wasting and decay for many years? If they should be of marble or iron, with such constant use they would soon wear out; and yet now they are of flesh they last so long as life lasteth. Of the head? fitly placed to be the seat of the senses, to command and direct the rest of the members. Of the lungs? a frail piece of flesh, yet, though in continual action, of a long use. It were easy to enlarge upon this occasion; but I am to preach a sermon, not to read an anatomy lecture. In short, therefore, every part is so placed and framed, as if God had employed his whole wisdom about it.

But as yet we have spoken but of the casket wherein the jewel lieth. The soul, that divine spark of blast, how quick, nimble, various, and indefatigable in its motions! how comprehensive in its capacities! how it animateth the body, and is like God himself, all in every part! Who can trace the flights of reason? What a value hath God set upon the soul! He made it after his image, he redeemed it with Christ's blood.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 14.—What is meant by saying that the soul is *in* the body, any more than saying that a thought or a hope is in a stone or a tree? *How* is it joined to the body? what keeps it one with the body? what keeps it in the body? what prevents it any moment from separating from the body? When two things which we see are united, they are united by some connexion which we can understand. A chain or cable keeps a ship in its place; we lay the foundation of a building in the earth, and the building endures. But what is it which unites soul and body? how do they touch? how do they keep together? how is it we do not wander to the stars or the depths of the sea, or to and fro as chance may carry us, while our body remains where it was on earth? So far from its being wonderful that the body one day dies, how is it that it is made to live and move at all? how is it that it keeps from dying a single hour? Certainly it is as uncomprehensible as anything can be, how soul and body can make up one man; and, unless we had the instance before our eyes, we should seem in saying so to be using words without meaning. For instance, would it not be extravagant and idle to speak of time as deep or high, or of space as quick or slow? Not less idle, surely, it perhaps seems to some races of spirits to say that thought and mind have a body, which in the case of man they have, according to God's marvellous will.—*John Henry Newman, in Parochial Sermons*, 1839.

Verse 14.—Moses describes the creation of man (Gen. ii. 7): " The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Now what God did then immediately, he doth still by means. Do not think that God made man at first, and that ever since men have made one another. No (saith Job), " he that made me in the womb made him: " ch. xxxi. 15. David will inform us: "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works*," etc. As if he had said, Lord, I am wonderfully made, and thou hast made me. I am a part or parcel of thy marvellous works, yea, the breviate or compendium of them all. The frame of the body (much more the frame of the soul, most of all the frame of the new creature in the soul) is God's work, and it is a wonderful work of God. And therefore David could not satisfy himself in the bare affirmation of this, but enlargeth in the explication of it in verses 15 and 16. David took no notice of father or mother, but ascribed the whole efficiency of himself to God. And indeed David was as much made by God as Adam; and so is every son of Adam. Though we are begotten and born of our earthly parents, yet God is the chief parent and the only fashioner of us all. Thus graciously spake Jacob to his brother Esau, demanding, " Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant": Gen. xxxiii. 5. Therefore, as the Spirit of God warns, " Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves " (Ps. c. 3); which as it is true especially of our spiritual making, so 'tis true also of our natural.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—Those who were skilful in Anatomy among the ancients, concluded, from the outward and inward make of a human body, that it was the work of a Being transcendently wise and powerful. As the world grew more enlightened in this art, their discoveries gave them fresh opportunities of admiring the conduct of Providence in the formation of a human body. Galen was converted by his dissections, and could not but own a Supreme Being upon a survey of this his handiwork. There are, indeed, many parts, of which the old anatomists did not know the certain use; but as they saw that most of those which they examined were adapted with admirable art to their several functions, they did not question but those whose uses they could not determine, were contrived with the same wisdom for respective ends and purposes. Since the circulation of the blood has been found out, and many other great discoveries have been made by our modern anatomists, we see new wonders in the human frame, and discern several important uses for those parts, which uses the ancients knew nothing of. In short, the body of man is such a subject as stands the utmost test of examination. Though it appears formed with the nicest wisdom upon the most superficial survey of it, it still mends upon the search, and produces our surprise and amazement in proportion as we pry into it.—*The Spectator.*

Verses 14—16.—The subject, from the 14th verse to the 16th inclusive, might have been much more particularly illustrated; but we are taught, by the peculiar delicacy of expression in the Sacred Writings, to avoid, as in this case, the entering too minutely into *anatomical* details.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 15.—"*My substance was not hid from thee,*" etc. What deeper solitude, what state of concealment more complete, than that of the babe as yet unborn? Yet the Psalmist represents the Almighty as present even there. "*My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*" The whole image and train of thought is one of striking beauty. We see the wonderful work of the human body, with all its complex tissue of bones, and joints, and nerves, and veins, and arteries growing up, and fashioned, as it had been a piece of rich and curious embroidery under the hand of the manufacturer. But it is not the work itself that we are now called on to admire. The contexture is indeed fearful and wonderful; but how much more when we reflect that the divine Artificer wrought within the dark and narrow confines of the womb. Surely the darkness is no darkness with him who could thus work. Surely the blackest night, the closest and most artificial recess, the subtlest disguises and hypocrisies are all seen through, are all naked and bare before him whose "*eyes did see our substance yet being imperfect.*" The night is as clear as the day; and secret sins are set in the light of his countenance, no less than those which are open and scandalous, committed before the sun or on the house-top. And if " in his book all our members are written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them," surely the actions of these members, now that they are grown, or growing, to maturity, and called upon to fulfil the functions for which they were created, shall be all noted down; and none be contrived so secretly, but that when the books are opened at the last day, it shall be found written therein to justify or to condemn us. Such is the main lesson which David himself would teach us in this Psalm,—the *omnipresence* and *omniscience* of Almighty God. My brethren, let us reflect for a little upon this deep mystery; that he, " the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways; that go whither we will he is there; that say what we will, there is not a word on our tongue but he knoweth it altogether. The reflection is, indeed, mysterious, but it is also most profitable.—*Charles Wordsworth, in "Christian Boyhood,"* 1846.

Verse 15.—"*My substance was not hid from thee.*" Should an artizan intend commencing a work in some dark cave where there was no light to assist him, how would he set his hand to it? in what way would he proceed? and what kind of workmanship would it prove? But God makes the most perfect work of all in the dark, for he fashions man in the mother's womb.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 15.—"*When I was made in secret,*" etc. The author uses a metaphor derived from the most subtle art of the Phrygian workman:

> " When I was formed in the secret place,
> *When* I was wrought with a needle in the depths of the earth.

Whoever observes this (in truth he will not be able to observe it in the common translations), and at the same time reflects upon the wonderful mechanism of the human body; the various implications of the veins, arteries, fibres, and membranes; the "undescribable texture" of the whole fabric—may, indeed, feel the beauty and gracefulness of this well-adapted metaphor, but will miss much of its force and sublimity, unless he be apprised that the art of designing in needlework was wholly dedicated to the use of the sanctuary, and, by a direct precept of the divine law, chiefly employed in furnishing a part of the sacerdotal habit, and the vails for the entrance of the Tabernacle. Exod. xxviii. 39; xxvi. 36; xxvii. 16. Thus the poet compares the wisdom of the divine Artificer with the most estimable of human arts—that art which was dignified by being consecrated altogether to the use of religion; and the workmanship of which was so exquisite, that even the sacred writings seem to attribute it to a supernatural guidance. See Exod. xxxv. 30—35.—*Robert Lowth* (1710—1787), *in "Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews."*

Verse 15.—*"Curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth,"* that is, in the womb: as curious workmen, when they have some choice piece in hand, they perfect it in private, and then bring it forth to light for men to gaze at. What a wonderful piece of work is man's head (God's masterpiece in this little world), the chief seat of the soul, that *cura Divini ingenii*, as Favorinus calls it. Many locks and keys argue the value of the jewel that they keep, and many papers wrapping the token within them, the price of the token. The tables of the testament, first laid up in the ark, secondly, the ark bound about with pure gold; thirdly, overshadowed with cherubim's wings; fourthly, enclosed within the vail of the Tabernacle; fifthly, with the compass of the Tabernacle; sixthly, with a court about all; seventhly, with a treble covering of goats' rams', and badgers' skins above all; they must needs be precious tables. So when the Almighty made man's head (the seat of the reasonable soul) and overlaid it with hair, skin, and flesh, like the threefold covering of the Tabernacle, and encompassed it with a skull and bones like boards of cedar, and afterwards with divers skins like silken curtains; and lastly, enclosed it with the yellow skin that covers the brain (like the purple veil), he would doubtless have us to know it was made for some great treasure to be put therein. How and when the reasonable soul is put into this curious cabinet philosophers dispute many things, but can affirm nothing of certainty.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 15.—*"In the lowest parts of the earth."* From this remarkable expression which, in the original, and as elsewhere used, denotes the region of the dead—*Sheol*, or *Hades*—it would appear that it is not only his formation in the womb the Psalmist here contemplates, but also—regarding the region of the dead as the womb of resurrection life—the refashioning of the body hereafter, and its new birth to the life immortal, which will be no less "marvellous" a work, but rather more so, than the first fashioning of man's "substance." Confirmed by the words of verse 18—"When I awake, I am still with thee"—the same language before employed to express the resurrection hope, Ps. xvii. 15: when there shall be a further illustration of God's mindfulness of his purposes and "precious counsels" with respect to his redeemed, in anticipation of which they may repeat this Psalm with renewed feelings of wonder and admiration.—*William De Burgh.*

Verses 15, 16.—The word *"substance"* represents different words in these verses. In verse 15 it is "my strength," or "my bones;" in verse 16 the word is usually rendered "embryo": but "clew" (life a ball yet to be unwound) finds favour with great scholars.

"In the lowest parts of the earth" denotes no subterranean limbo or workshop; but is a poetical parallel to "in secret."

"Which in continuance were fashioned" is wrong. The margin, though also wrong, indicates the right way: "my days were determined before one of them was."—*David M'Laren, in "The Book of Psalms in Metre,"* 1883.

Verse 16.—*"Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect,"* etc. From whence we may learn, first, not to be proud of what we are; all's the work of God. How beautiful or comely, how wise or holy soever you are, 'tis not of yourselves. What hath any man, either in naturals or supernaturals, which he hath not received? Secondly, despise not what others are or have, though they are not such exact pieces, though they have not such excellent endowments as yourselves; yet they

are what God hath made them. Thirdly, despise not what yourselves are. Many are ashamed to be seen as God made them; few are ashamed to be seen what the devil hath made them. Many are troubled at small defects in the outward man; few are troubled at the greatest deformities of the inward man: many buy artificial beauty to supply the natural; few spiritual, to supply the defects of the supernatural beauty of the soul.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 16.—"*My substance yet being unperfect.*" One word in the original, which means strictly anything *rolled together* as a ball, and hence is generally supposed to mean here the fœtus or embryo. Hupfeld, however, prefers to understand it of the ball of life, as consisting of a number of different threads (" the days " of verse 16—see margin) which are first a compact mass as it were, and which are then unwound as life runs on.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 16.—A skilful architect before he builds draws a model, or gives a draught of the building in his book, or upon a table; there he will show you every room and contrivance: in his book are all the parts of the building written, while as yet there are none of them, or before any of them are framed and set up. In allusion to architects and other artisans, David speaks of God, "*In thy book all my members were written*"; that is, Thou hast made me as exactly as if thou hadst drawn my several members and my whole proportion with a pen or pencil in a book, before thou wouldst adventure to form me up. The Lord uses no book, no pen to decipher his work. He had the perfect idea of all things in himself from everlasting; but he may well be said to work as by pattern, whose work is the most perfect pattern. —*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 17.—"*How precious also are thy thoughts unto me,*" etc. So far from thinking it a hardship to be subject to this scrutiny, he counts it a most valuable privilege. However others may regard this truth, "*to me,*" my judgment and my feelings, "*how costly,*" valuable "*are thy thoughts,*" i.e. thy perpetual attention to me.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 17.—"*How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!*" How cold and poor are *our* warmest thoughts towards God! How unspeakably loving and gloriously rich are *his* thoughts towards us! Compare Eph. i. 18: " The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 17.—"*How precious . . . how great is the sum of them!*" Our comforts vie with the number of our sorrows, and win the game. The mercies of God passed over in a gross sum breed no admiration; but cast up the particulars, and then arithmetic is too dull an art to number them. As many dusts as a man's hands can hold, is but his handful of so many dusts; but tell them one by one, and they exceed all numeration. It was but a crown which king Solomon wore; but weigh the gold, tell the precious stones, value the richness of them, and what was it then? —*Thomas Adams.*

Verses 17, 18.—Behold David's love to God; sleeping and waking his mind runs upon him. There needs no arguments to bring those to our remembrance whom we love. We neglect ourselves to think upon them. A man in love wastes his spirits, vexes his mind, neglects his meat, regards not his business, his mind still feeds on that he loves. When men love that they should not, there is more need of a bridle to keep them from thinking of it, than of spurs to keep them to it. Try thy love of God by this. If thou thinkest not often of God, thou lovest him not. If thou canst not satisfy thyself with profits, pleasures, friends, and other worldly objects, but thou must turn other businesses aside, that thou mayest daily think of God, then thou lovest him.—*Francis Taylor, in "God's Glory in Man's Happiness,"* 1654.

Verses 17, 18.—Mercies are either ordinary or extraordinary—our common necessaries, or the remarkable supplies which we receive now and then at the hand of God. Thou must not only praise him for some extraordinary mercy, that comes with such pomp and observation that all thy neighbours take notice of it with thee, as the mercy which Zacharias and Elizabeth had in their son, that was noised about all the country (Luke i. 65); but also for ordinary, every-day mercies: for first, we are unworthy of the least mercy (Gen. xxxii. 10), and therefore God is worthy of praise for the least, because it is more than he owes us. Secondly, these common, ordinary mercies are many. Thus David enhanceth the mercies of this kind,— "*O God, how great is the sum of them!* If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I wake I am still with thee." As if he had said,

There is not a point of time wherein thou art not doing me good; as soon as I open my eyes in the morning I have a new theme, in some fresh mercies given since I closed them over-night, to employ my praiseful meditations. Many little items make together a great sum. What is lighter than a grain of sand, yet what is heavier than the sand upon the sea-shore? As little sins (such as vain thoughts and idle words), because of their multitude, arise to a great guilt, and will bring in a long bill, a heavy reckoning at last; so, ordinary mercies, what they want in their size of some other great mercies, have compensated it in their number. Who will not say that a man shows greater kindness in maintaining one at his table with ordinary fare all the year than in entertaining him at a great feast twice or thrice in the same time?—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 18.—"*They are more in number than the sand.*" Pindar says, that sand flies number (*Olymp. Ode* 2). The Pythian oracle indeed boastingly said, I know the number of the sand, and the measure of the sea (*Herodot. Clio.* l. i. c. 47). It is to this that Lucan may refer when he says, measure is not wanting to the ocean, or number to the sand (*Pharsal.* l. 5, v. 182).—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 18.—"*If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.*"

> If all his glorious deeds my song would tell,
> The shore's unnumbered stones I might recount as well.
>
> *Pindar*, B.C. 518—442.

Verse 18.—"*When I awake, I am still with thee.*" It is the great advantage of a Christian, which he has above other men, that he has his friends always about him, and (if the fault be not his own) need never to be absent from them. In the friendship and converse of the world, we use to say, "Friends must part," and those who have delight and satisfaction in one another's society must be content to leave it, and to be taken off from it. But this is the privilege of a believer that undertakes communion with God, that it is possible for him always to be with him. Again, in human converse and society we know it is ordinary for friends to dream that they are in company with one another; but when they awake they are a great way off. But a Christian that converses with God, and has his thoughts fastened upon him, when he awakes he is still with him, which is that which is here exhibited to us in the example of the prophet David.

A godly soul should fall asleep in God's arms, like a child in the mother's lap; it should be sung and lulled to sleep with "songs of the night." And this will make him the fitter for converse with God the next day after. This is the happiness of a Christian that is careful to lie down with God, that he finds his work still as he left it, and is in the same disposition when he rises as he was at night when he lay down to rest. As a man that winds up his watch over night, he finds it going the next morning; so is it also, as I may say, with a Christian that winds up his heart. This is a good observation to be remembered, especially in the evening afore the Sabbath.—*Thomas Horton*, —1673.

Verse 18.—"*When I awake, I am still with thee.*" It is no small advantage to the holy life to "begin the day with God." The saints are wont to leave their hearts with him over night, that they may find them with him in the morning. Before earthly things break in upon us, and we receive impressions from abroad, it is good to season the heart with thoughts of God, and to consecrate the early and virgin operations of the mind before they are prostituted to baser objects. When the world gets the start of religion in the morning, it can hardly overtake it all the day; and so the heart is habituated to vanity all the day long. But when we begin with God, we take him along with us to all the business and comforts of the day; which, being seasoned with his love and fear, are the more sweet and savoury to us.—*Thomas Case* (1598—1682), *in the Epistle Dedicatory to "The Morning Exercise."*

Verse 18.—"*When I awake.*" Accustom yourself to a serious meditation every morning. Fresh airing our souls in heaven will engender in us a purer spirit and nobler thoughts. A morning seasoning will secure us for all the day. Though other necessary thoughts about our calling will and must come in, yet when we have dispatched them, let us attend to our morning theme as our chief companion. As a man that is going with another about some considerable business, suppose to Westminster, though he meets with several friends on the way, and salutes some, and with others with whom he has some affairs he spends some little time, yet he quickly returns to his companion, and both together go to their intended stage.

Do thus in the present case. Our minds are active and will be doing something, though to little purpose; and if they be not fixed upon some noble object, they will, like madmen and fools, be mightily pleased in playing with straws. The thoughts of God were the first visitors David had in the morning. God and his heart met together as soon as he was awake, and kept company all the day after.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 19.—"*Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.*" The expression, "*bloody men,*" or "*men of blood,*" includes not only homicides, who shed human blood, but all other wicked and evil doers, who injure, or seek to injure others, or who slay their own souls by sin, or the souls of others by scandal; all of whom may be truly called homicides; for hatred may be called the mainspring of homicide, and thus St. John says, "Whoso hateth his brother is a homicide."—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 19.—"*Therefore.*" When we have a controversy with the wicked we should take heed that private spleen do not rule us, but that only our interest in God's quarrel with them doth move us, as the Psalmist doth here.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 20.—"*Thine enemies take thy name in vain.*" In every action three things are considerable,—the *end*, the *agent*, the *work*. These three duly weighed, we shall soon see what it is to take God's name in vain.

I. That which hath no end proposed, or is done to no end, may truly be said to be done in vain. As the sowing of seed without reaping the fruit, the planting a vineyard without a vintage, or feeding a flock without eating the milk of it. These are labours in vain. So he that taketh the name of God to no end, neither to God's glory, nor the private or public good, taketh it in vain. *Cui bono?* is a question in all undertakings. If to no good, as good and better not undertaken at all; it is to no end, it is in vain. If a man have well-fashioned legs, and they be lame, *frustra pulchras habet tibia claudus*, the lame man hath them in vain. The chief end, therefore, in taking this name must be, 1. The glory of God, otherwise we open our mouths in vain, as it is in Job. God is willing to impart all his blessings to us, and requires nothing of us again but glory, which if we return not, he may say, as David did of Nabal, for whom he had done many good turns, in securing his shepherds and flocks, etc.; and when he desired nothing but a little meat for the young men he denied it: All that I have done for this fellow is in vain; in vain have I kept all he hath. So, God having done so much for us, and expecting nothing but the glory of his name, if we be defective herein, he may well say all that he hath done for us is in vain.

2. Next to God's glory is the good of ourselves and others; and so to take God's name without reference to this end, if we neither promote our own good nor the good of others, it is in vain, *ex privatione finis*, because it wants a right end; therefore Saint Paul rejoiced, having by his preaching laboured for the saving of souls, I rejoice, saith he, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

II. In the *agent* the heart and soul is to be considered, which in the person acting is the chief mover. If the soul be *Rachah*, vain and light, as when we take God's name without due advice and reverence, though we propound a right end, yet we take his name in vain. Therefore the wise man advises "not to be rash with our mouth" (Eccl. v. 2); and the Psalmist professeth that his heart was fixed when he praised God (Ps. lvii. 7): the heart ought to be fixed and stablished by a due consideration of God's greatness when we speak of him. This is opposed to rashness, inconstancy, and lightness, such as are in chaff and smoke, which are apt to be carried away with every blast, and such as are so qualified do take God's name in vain.

III. In the *work* itself may be a twofold vanity, which must be avoided. Firstly, Falsehood. Secondly, Injustice.

1. If it be *false*, then is it also vain, as theirs in Isaiah (ch. xxviii. 15): "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." And this is that *actio erroris*, work of error, of which Jeremiah speaketh. *Vanitas opponitur veritati*, vanity is opposed to verity and truth; therefore a thing is said to be vain when it is false or erroneous. "They are vanity, the work of errors," saith the prophet (Jer. x. 15); and as there is truth in natural things, so is there a truth in moral things, which if it be wanting, our speech is vain.

2. If *unjust* it is vain too. "If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain?" saith holy Job (ch. ix. 29); "The very hope of unjust men perisheth," saith the wise man (Prov. xi. 7); and, "They walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain" (Ps. xxxix. 6). If justice be wanting in our actions, or truth in our assertions and promises, they are vain; and to use God's name in either is to take his name in vain. So that if either we take the name of God to no end, but make it common, and take it up as a custom till it come to a habit, not for any good end; or if our hearts be not stable or fixed, but light and inconstant when we take it; or if we take it to colour or bolster up any falsehood or any unjust act, we take it in vain, and break the commandment.—*Lancelot Andrews.*

Verse 21.—"*Do not I hate them, O* LORD, *that hate thee?*" The simple future in the first clause comprehends several distinct shades of meaning. Do I not, may I not, must I not, hate those hating thee? Hate them, not as man hates, but as God hates.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 21.—"*Do not I hate them, O* LORD, *that hate thee?*" Can he who thinks good faith the holiest thing in life, avoid being an enemy to that man who, as quæstor, dared to despoil, desert, and betray? Can he who wishes to pay due honours to the immortal gods, by any means avoid being an enemy to that man who has plundered all their temples?—*Cicero.*

Verse 21.—"*And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?*" The expression here—"*grieved*"—explains the meaning of the word "*hate*" in the former member of the verse. It is not that hatred which is followed by malignity or ill-will; it is that which is accompanied with grief, pain of heart, pity, sorrow. So the Saviour looked on men: Mark iii. 5: "And when he had looked round about on them with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts." The Hebrew word used here, however, contains *also* the idea of being disgusted with; of loathing; of nauseating. The feeling referred to is anger—conscious disgust—at such conduct; grief, pain, sorrow, that men should evince such feelings towards their Maker.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 21.—"*Am not I grieved?*" etc. Acted upon by mingled feelings of sorrow for them, and loathing at their evil practices. Thus our Lord "looked round about on them with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts": Mark iii. 5.—*French and Skinner.*

Verse 21.—It is said that Adam Smith disliked nothing more than that moral apathy—that obtuseness of moral perception—which prevents man from not only seeing clearly, but feeling strongly, the broad distinction between virtue and vice, and which, under the pretext of liberality, is all indulgent even to the blackest crimes. At a party at Dalkeith Palace, where Mr. ——, in his mawkish way, was finding palliations for some villainous transactions, the doctor waited in patient silence until he was gone, then exclaimed: "Now I can breathe more freely. I cannot bear that man; he has no indignation in him."

Verses 21, 22.—A faithful servant hath the same interests, the same friends, the same enemies, with his master, whose cause and honour he is, upon all occasions, in duty bound to support and maintain. A good man hates, as God himself doth; he hates not the persons of men, but their sins; not what God made them, but what they have made themselves. We are neither to hate the men, on account of the vices they practise; nor to love the vices, for the sake of the men who practise them. He who observeth invariably this distinction, fulfilleth the perfect law of charity, and hath the love of God and of his neighbour abiding in him.—*George Horne.*

Verses 21, 22.—First, we must hate the company and society of manifest and obstinate sinners, who will not be reclaimed. Secondly, all their sins, not communicating with any man in his sin, we must have no fellowship (as with the workers so) with the unfruitful works of darkness. Thirdly, all occasions and inducements unto these sins. Fourthly, all appearances of wickedness (1 Thess. v. 22), that is, which men in common judgment account evil; and all this must proceed from a good ground, even from a good heart hating sin perfectly, that is all sin, as David, "*I hate them with perfect hatred;*" and not as some, who can hate some sin, but cleave to some other: as many can hate pride, but love covetousness or some other darling sin: but we must attain to the hatred of all, before we can come to the practice of this precept [Jude 23]; besides that, all sins are hateful even in themselves.—*William Perkins*, 1558—1602.

Verses 21, 24.—The temper of mourning for public sins, for the sins of others, is the greatest note of sincerity. When all other signs of righteousness may have their exceptions, this temper is the utmost term, which we cannot go beyond in our self-examination. The utmost prospect David had of his sincerity, when he was upon a diligent enquiry after it, was his anger and grief for the sin of others. When he had reached so far, he was at a stand, and knew not what more to add: "Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me." If there be anything that better can evidence my sincerity than this, Lord, acquaint me with it; "know my heart," *i.e.*, make me to know it. He whose sorrow is only for matter confined within his own breast, or streams with it in his life, has reason many times to question the truth of it; but when a man cannot behold sin as sin in another without sensible regret, it is a sign he hath savingly felt the bitterness of it in his own soul. It is a high pitch and growth, and a consent between the Spirit of God and the soul of a Christian, when he can lament those sins in others whereby the Spirit is grieved; when he can rejoice with the Spirit rejoicing, and mourn with the Spirit mourning. This is a clear testimony that we have not self-ends in the service of God; that we take not up religion to serve a turn; that God is our aim, and Christ our beloved.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 22.—"*I hate them with perfect hatred.*" What is "*with a perfect hatred*"? I hated in them their iniquities, I loved thy creation. This it is to hate with a perfect hatred, that neither on account of the vices thou hate the men, nor on account of the men love the vices. For see what he addeth, "*They became my enemies.*" Not only as God's enemies, but as his own too doth he now describe them. How then will he fulfil in them both his own saying, "*Have not I hated those that hated thee, Lord,*" and the Lord's command, "*Love your enemies*"? How will he fulfil this, save with that perfect hatred, that he hate in them that they are wicked, and love that they are men? For in the time even of the Old Testament, when the carnal people was restrained by visible punishments, how did Moses, the servant of God, who by understanding belonged to the New Testament, how did he hate sinners when he prayed for them, or how did he not hate them when he slew them, save that he "*hated them with a perfect hatred*"? For with such perfection did he hate the iniquity which he punished, as to love the manhood for which he prayed.—*Augustine.*

Verse 23.—"*Try me.*" True faith is precious; it is like gold, it will endure a trial. Presumption is but a counterfeit, and cannot abide to be tried: 1 Pet. i. 7. A true believer fears no trial. He is willing to be tried by God. He is willing to have his faith tried by others, he shuns not the touchstone. He is much in testing himself. He would not take anything upon trust, especially that which is of such moment. He is willing to hear the worst as well as the best. That preaching pleases him best which is most searching and distinguishing: Heb. iv. 12. He is loath to be deluded with vain hopes. He would not be flattered into a false conceit of his spiritual state. When trials are offered, he complies with the apostle's advice, 2 Cor. xiii. 5.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 23.—What fearful dilemma have we here? The Holiest changeth not when he comes a visitant to a human heart. He is the same there that he is in the highest heaven. He cannot look upon sin; and how can a human heart welcome him into its secret chambers? How can the blazing fire welcome the quenching water? It is easy to commit to memory the seemly prayer of an ancient penitent, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.*" The dead letters, worn smooth by frequent use, may drop freely from callous lips, leaving no sense of scalding on the conscience; and yet, truth of God, though they are, they may be turned into a lie in the act of utterance. The prayer is not true, although it is borrowed from the Bible, if the suppliant invite the All-seeing in, and yet would give a thousand worlds, if he had them, to keep him out for ever.

Christ has declared the difficulty, and solved it: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." When the Son has made the sinner free, he is free indeed. The dear child, pardoned and reconciled, loves and longs for the Father's presence. What! is there neither spot nor wrinkle now upon the man, that he dares to challenge inspection by the Omniscient, and to offer

his heart as Jehovah's dwelling-place? He is not yet so pure; and well he knows it. The groan is bursting yet from his broken heart: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Many stains defile him yet; but he loathes them now, and longs to be free. The difference between an unconverted and a converted man is not that the one has sins, and the other has none; but that the one takes part with his cherished sins against a dreaded God, and the other takes part with a reconciled God against his hated sins. He is out with his former friends, and in with his former adversary. Conversion is a turning, and it is one turning only; but it produces simultaneously and necessarily two distinct efforts. Whereas his face was formerly turned away from God, and toward his own sins; it is now turned away from his own sins, and toward God. This one turning, with its twofold result, is in Christ the Mediator, and through the work of the Spirit.

As long as God is my enemy, I am his. I have no more power to change that condition than the polished surface has to refrain from reflecting the sunshine that falls upon it. It is God's love, from the face of Jesus shining into my dark heart, that makes my heart open to him, and delight to be his dwelling-place. The eyes of the just Avenger I cannot endure to be in this place of sin; but the eye of the compassionate Physician I shall gladly admit into this place of disease; for he comes from heaven to earth that he may heal such sin-sick souls as mine. When a disciple desires to be searched by the living God, he does not thereby intimate that there are no sins in him to be discovered: he intimates rather that his foes are so many and so lively, that nothing can subdue them except the presence and power of God.—*William Arnot* (—1875), *in "Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth."*

Verses 23, 24.—There are several things worthy of notice in the Psalmist's appeal, in the words before us. First, notice *the Psalmist's intrepidity.* Here is a man determined to explore the recesses of his own heart. Did Buonaparte, did Nelson, did Wellington, ever propose to do this? Were all the renowned heroes of antiquity present, I would ask them all if they ever had courage to enter into their own hearts. David was a man of courage. When he slew a lion in the way, when he successfully encountered a bear, when he went out to meet the giant Goliath, he gave undoubted proofs of courage; but never did he display such signal intrepidity as when he determined to look into his own heart. If you stood upon some eminence, and saw all the ravenous and venomous creatures that ever lived collected before you, it would not require such courage to combat them as to combat with your own heart. Every sin is a devil, and each may say, "My name is Legion, for we are many." Who knows what it is to face himself? And yet, if we would be saved, this must be done.

Secondly, notice *the Psalmist's integrity.* He wished to know all his sins, that he might be delivered from them. As every individual must know his sins at some period, a wise man will seek to know them here, because the present is the only time in which to glorify God, by confessing, by renouncing, by overcoming them. One of the attributes of sin is to hide man from himself, to conceal his deformity, to prevent him from forming a just conception of his true condition. It is a solemn fact, that there is not an evil principle in the bosom of the devil himself which does not exist in ours, at the present moment, unless we are fully renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. That these evil principles do not continually develop themselves, in all their hideous deformity, is entirely owing to the restraining and forbearing mercy of God.

Thirdly, notice *the Psalmist's wisdom.* He presents his prayer to God himself. God is the only Being in the universe that knows himself—that peruses himself in his own light. In the same light he sees all other beings; and hence it follows that, if other beings see themselves truly, it must be in the light of God. If the sun were an intelligent being, I would ask him, "How do you see yourself? In your own light?" And he would reply, "Yes." "And how do you see the planets that are continually revolving around you?" "In my own light also, for all the light that is in them is borrowed from me."

You will observe that the Psalmist begins with his principles: his desire is to have these tried by a competent judge, and to have every thing that is evil removed from them. This is an evidence of his wisdom. The heart and its thoughts must be made right, before the actions of the life can be set right. Those who are most eminent for piety are most conversant with God; and, for this reason, they become most conversant with themselves. David says, elsewhere, "Who can understand

his errors ? Cleanse THOU me from *secret* faults." And Job says, " If I wash myself with snow water, and make me never so clean, yet shalt THOU plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." When these holy men perused themselves in God's light, they saw their sins of omission and commission, and prayed earnestly to be delivered from all.—*William Howels*, 1832.

Verses 23, 24.—The text is a prayer, and it indicates, as we think, three great facts in regard to the suppliant : the first, that David thoroughly wished to become acquainted with himself ; the second, that he felt conscious that God could see through all disguises ; and the third, that he desired to discover, in order that by Divine help he might correct, whatsoever was wrong in his conduct.

Now, the first inference which we draw from the text, when considered as indicating the feelings of the petitioner is, that he was thoroughly honest, that it was really his wish to become acquainted with his own heart. And is there, you may say, anything rare or remarkable in this ? Indeed we think there is. It would need, we believe, a very high degree of piety to be able to put up with sincerity the prayers of our text. For, will you tell me that it does not often happen, that even whilst men are carrying on a process of self-examination, there is a secret wish to remain ignorant of certain points, a desire not to be proved wrong when interest and inclination combine in demanding an opposite verdict ? . . . In searching into yourselves, you know where the tender points are, and those points you will be apt to avoid, so as not to put yourselves to pain, nor make it evident how much you need the caustic and the knife. Indeed, we may be sure that we state nothing but what experience will prove, when we declare it a high attainment in religion to be ready to know how bad we are. . . . And this had evidently been reached by the Psalmist, for he pleads very earnestly with God that he would leave no recess of his spirit unexplored, that he would bring the heart and all its thoughts, the life and all its ways, under a most searching examination, so that no form and no degree of evil might fail to be detected.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verses 23, 24.—Self-examination is not the simple thing which, at first sight, it might appear. No Christian who has ever really practised it has found it easy. Is there any exercise of the soul which any one of us has found so unsatisfactory, so almost impossible, as self-examination ? The fact is this, that the heart is so exceedingly complicated and intricate, and it is so very near the eye which has to investigate it, and both it and the eye are so restless and so shifting, that its deep anatomy baffles our research. Just a few things, here and there, broad and open, and floating upon the surface, a man discovers ; but there are chambers receding within chambers, in that deepest of all deep things, a sinner's heart, which no mere human investigation ever will reach, . . . it is the prerogative of God alone to *"search"* the human heart.

To the child of God—the most intimate with himself in all the earth—I do not hesitate to say—" There are sins latent at this moment in you, of which you have no idea ; but it only requires a larger measure of spiritual illumination to impress and unfold them. You have no idea of the wickedness that is now in you." But while I say this, let every Christian count well the cost before he ventures on the bold act of asking God to " search " him. For be sure of this, if you do really and earnestly ask God to *"search"* you, he will do it. And he will search you most searchingly ; and if you ask him to *"try"* you, he will try you,—and the trial will be no light matter !

I am persuaded that we often little calculate what we are doing—what we are asking God to do—when we implore him to give us some spiritual attainment, some growth in grace, some increase in holiness, or peace. To all these things there is a condition, and that condition lies in a discipline, and that discipline is generally proportionate to the strength and the measure of the gift that we ask.

I do not know what may have been the state of the Psalmist at the period when he indited this Psalm ; but I should think either one of Saul's most cruel persecutions, or the rebellion of his son Absalom, followed quick upon the traces of that prayer,—*"Search me, O God, and know my heart : try me, and know my thoughts,"* etc.

Still, whatever his attainment, every child of God will desire, at any sacrifice, to know his own exact state before God ; for, as he desires in all things to have a mind conformed to the mind of God, so he is especially jealous lest he should, by any means, be taking a different view, or estimate, of his own soul from that which God sees it.—*Condensed from James Vaughan.*

Verses 23, 24.—Hypocrisy at the fashionable end of the town is very different

from hypocrisy in the city. The modish hypocrite endeavours to appear more vicious than he really is, the other kind of hypocrite more virtuous. The former is afraid of everything that has the show of religion in it, and would be thought engaged in many criminal gallantries and amours which he is not guilty of. The latter assumes a face of sanctity, and covers a multitude of vices under a seeming religious deportment.

But there is another kind of hypocrisy, which differs from both these ; I mean that hypocrisy by which a man does not only deceive the world, but very often imposes on himself ; that hypocrisy which conceals his own heart from him, and makes him believe he is more virtuous than he really is, and either not attend to his vices, or mistake even his vices for virtues. It is this fatal hypocrisy and self-deceit which is taken notice of in those words, " Who can understand his errors ? cleanse thou me from secret faults."

These two kinds of hypocrisy, namely, that of deceiving the world, and that of imposing on ourselves, are touched with wonderful beauty in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm. The folly of the first kind of hypocrisy is there set forth by reflections on God's omniscience and omnipresence, which are celebrated in as noble strains of poetry as any other I ever met with, either sacred or profane. The other kind of hypocrisy, whereby a man deceives himself, is intimated in the two last verses, where the Psalmist addresses himself to the great Searcher of hearts in that emphatical petition ; " Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart : prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—*Joseph Addison* (1672—1719), *in "The Spectator."*

Verses 23, 24.—How beautiful is the humility of David ! He cannot speak of the wicked but in terms of righteous indignation ; he cannot but hate the haters of his God ; yet, he seems immediately to recollect, and to check himself—" Try *me*, O Lord, and seek the ground of *my* heart." Precisely in the same spirit of inward humility and self-recollection, Abraham, when pleading before God in prayer for guilty depraved Sodom, fails not to speak of *himself*, as being dust and ashes : Gen. xviii. 27.—*James Ford*, 1871.

Verses 23, 24.—Why did David pray thus to God, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart,"* having said before, in the first verse, *"Thou hast searched me, and known me" ?* Seeing David knew that God had searched him, what needed he to pray that God would search him ? why did he beg God to do that which he had done already ? The answer is at hand. David was a diligent self-searcher, and therefore he was so willing to be searched, yea, he delighted to be searched by God ; and that not (as was said) because himself had done it already, but also because he knew God could do it better. He knew by his own search that he did not live in any way of wickedness against his knowledge, and yet he knew there might be some way of wickedness in him that he knew not of. And therefore he doth not only say, *"Search me, O God, and know my thoughts"*; but he adds, *"See if there be any wicked way* (or *any way of pain and grief*) *in me"*; (the same word signifies both, because wicked ways lead in the end to pain and grief); *" and lead me in the way everlasting."* As if he had said, Lord, I have searched myself, and can see no wicked way in me ; but, Lord, thy sight is infinitely clearer than mine, and if thou wilt but search me thou mayest see some wicked way in me which I could not see, and I would fain see and know the worst of myself, that I might amend and grow better ; therefore, Lord, if there be any such way in me, cause me to know it also. O take that way out of me, and take me out of that way ; *"lead me in the way everlasting."* David had tried himself, and he would again be tried by God, that he, being better tried, might become yet better. He found himself gold upon his own trial, and yet he feared there might be some dross in him that he had not found ; and now he would be re-tried that he might come forth purest gold. Pure gold fears neither the furnace nor the fire, neither the test nor the touchstone ; nor is weighty gold afraid of the balance. He that is weight will be weight, how often soever he is weighed ; he that is gold will be gold, how often soever he is tried, and the oftener he is tried the purer gold he will be ; what he is he will be, and he would be better than he is.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 24.—*"See if there be any wicked way in me."* This is a beautiful and impressive *prayer* for the commencement of every day. It is, also, a great sentiment to *admonish* us at the beginning of each day.

There is the way of *unbelief* within, to which we are very prone. There is the way of *vanity* and pride, to which we often accustom ourselves. There is the way of *selfishness* in which we frequently walk. There is the way of *worldliness* we often pursue—empty pleasures, shadowy honours, etc. There is the way of *sluggishness*. What apathy in prayer, in the examination and application of God's Word, we manifest! There is the way of *self-dependence*, by which we often dishonour God and injure ourselves. There is, unhappily, the way of *disobedience*, in which we often walk. At any rate, our obedience is cold, reluctant, uncertain—not simple, entire, fervent.

How necessary is it, then, to go to God at once, and earnestly to prefer the petition, "*Lord, see if there be any wicked way in me.*" Let nothing that is wrong, that is opposed to thy character, repugnant to thy word, or injurious and debasing to ourselves, remain, or be harboured within us.—*Condensed from T. Wallace, in "Homiletic Commentary."*

Verse 24.—"*See if there be any wicked way in me.*" To what a holiness must David have attained ere he could need, if we may so speak, Divine scrutiny, in order to his being informed of errors and defects! Is there one of us who can say that he has corrected his conduct up to the measure of his knowledge, and that now he must wait the being better informed before he can do more towards improving his life? I do not know how to define a higher point in religious attainment than supposing a man warranted in offering up the prayer of our text. I call upon you to be cautious in using this prayer. It is easy to mock God, by asking him to search you whilst you have made but little effort to search yourselves, and perhaps still less to act upon the result of the scrutiny.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 24.—"*See if there be any wicked way in me,*" etc.—

> Think and be careful what thou art within,
> For there is sin in the desire of sin:
> Think and be thankful, in a different case,
> For there is grace in the desire of grace.
>
> *John Byrom*, 1691—1763.

Verse 24.—"*The way everlasting.*" *Way of eternity*, or *of antiquity, the old way*, as Jer. vi. 16; meaning the way of faith and godliness, which God taught from the beginning, and which continueth for ever; contrary to "the way of the wicked," which perisheth: Ps. i. 6.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1 and 23.—A matter of fact made a matter of prayer.

Verse 1.—1. A cheering thought for sinners. If God knew them not perfectly, how could he have prepared a perfect salvation for them? 2. A comfortable truth for saints. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."—*G. R.*

Verses 1—5.—In these verses we have God's Omniscience, I. Described. 1. As observing minute and comparatively unimportant actions: "My downsitting and uprising." 2. As taking note of our thoughts and the motives behind them: "Understandest my thought." 3. As investigating all our ways: "Thou compassest," etc.; better rendered, "Thou triest my walking and lying down," *i.e.*, my activities and restings. 4. Accurately estimating every word at the instant of its utterance: "For there is not a word," etc. 5. As being "behind" men, remembering their past, and "before" men, acquainted with their future: "Thou hast beset me," etc. 6. As every instant holding men under watchful scrutiny: "And laid," etc. II. Personally realized and pondered: "Thou hast searched *me*." *Me* and *my* run through the whole set of statements. Thus felt and used, the fact of God's omniscience. 1. Begets reverence. 2. Inspires confidence. 3. Produces carefulness of conduct.—*J. F.*

Verses 2—4.—The knowledge of God extends, I. To our movements, our "downsitting and uprising"—when we sit down to read, write, or converse, and when we rise up to active service. II. To our thoughts: "Thou understandest my thoughts

afar off." What they have been, what they now are, what they will be, what under all circumstances they would have been. He who made minds knows what their thoughts will be at all times, or he could not predict future events, or govern the world. He can know our thoughts without being the Author of them. III. To our actions: verse 3. Every step we take by day, and all we purpose to do in wakeful hours of the night: all our private, social, and public ways, are compassed or sifted by him, to distinguish the good from the bad, as wheat from the chaff. IV. To our words: verse 4. It has been said that the words of all men and from all time are registered in the atmosphere, and may be faithfully recalled. Whether it be so or not, they are phonographed in the mind of God.—*G. R.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—The importance of the commonest acts of life.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—The serious nature of thoughts. Known to God; seen through, their drift perceived; and attention given to them while as yet in the distance.

Verse 3.—The encircling Presence, in our activities, meditations, secrecies, and movements.

Verse 4.—I. Words on the tongue first *in* it, and in that stage known to God. II. Words on the tongue very numerous, yet all known. III. Words on the tongue have wide meaning, yet known "altogether." Lesson: Take heed of your words not yet spoken.

Verse 5.—A soul captured. Stopped, overtaken, arrested. What has it done? What shall it do?

Verse 6.—I. God imperfectly known to man. II. Man perfectly known to God. It has been said that wise men never wonder; to us it appears they are always wondering.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—Theme: the facts of our religion, too wonderful to understand, are just those in which we have most reason to rejoice. I. Prove it. 1. The incomprehensible attributes of God give unspeakable value to his promises. 2. The Incarnation is at once the most complete and most endearing manifestation of God we possess, yet it is the most inexplicable. 3. Redemption by the death of Christ is the highest guarantee of salvation we can conceive; but who can explain it? 4. Inspiration makes the Bible the word of God, though none can give an account of its mode of operation in the minds of those "moved by the Holy Ghost." 5. The resurrection of the body, and its glorification, satisfy the deepest yearning of our soul (Rom. viii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 2—4); but none can conceive the how. II. Apply its lessons. 1. Let us not stumble at doctrines simply because they are mysterious. 2. Let us be thankful God has not kept back the great mysteries of our religion simply because there would be some offended at them. 3. Let us readily receive all the joy which the mysteries bring, and calmly wait the light of heaven to make them better understood.—*J. F.*

Verses 7—10.—I. God is wherever I am. I fill but a small part of space; he fills all space. II. He is wherever I shall be. He does not move with me, but I move in him. "In him we live, and move," etc. III. God is wherever I could be. "If I ascend to heaven," etc. "If I descend to Sheol," etc. If I travel with the sunbeams to the most distant part of the earth, or heavens, or the sea, I shall be in thy hand. No mention is here made of annihilation, as though that were possible; which would be the only escape from the Divine Presence; for he is not the God of the dead, of the annihilated, in the Sadducean meaning of the word, but of the living. Man is always somewhere, and God is always everywhere.—*G. R.*

Verse 8.—The glory of heaven and the terror of hell: "THOU."

Verses 9, 10.—I. The greatest security and encouragement to a sinner supposed. 1. The place—the remotest part of the sea; by which you are to understand the most obscure nook in the creation. 2. His swift and speedy flight after the commission of sin, to this supposed refuge and sanctuary: "If I take the wings of the morning." II. This supposed security and encouragement is utterly destroyed (verse 10).—*See Flavel's "Seaman's Preservative in Foreign Countries."*

Verses 11, 12.—Darkness and light are both alike to God. I. Naturally. "I form the light, and I create the darkness." II. Providentially. Providential dispensations that are dark to us are light to him. We change with respect to him, not he to us. III. Spiritually. "Let him that walketh in darkness," etc. "Yea, though I walk," etc. He went before them in a pillar of cloud to guide them by day, and a pillar of fire to guide them by night. It was the same God in the day-cloud and in the night-light.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—" I am fearfully and wonderfully made." This is true of man in his fourfold state. I. In his primitive integrity. II. In his deplorable depravity. III. In his regeneration. IV. In his fixed state in hell or heaven.—*W. W.*

Verses 17, 18.—The Psalm dilates upon the omniscience of God. In no mournful manner, but the reverse. I. *God's thoughts of us.* 1. How certain. 2. How numerous. 3. How condescending. 4. How tender. 5. How wise. 6. How practical. 7. How constant. II. *Our thoughts upon his thoughts.* 1. How rare and yet how due to the subject. 2. How delightful. 3. How consoling. 4. How strengthening to faith. 5. How arousing to love. III. *Our thoughts upon God himself.* 1. They place us near God. 2. They keep us near God. 3. They restore us to him. We are with God when we awake from sleep, from lethargy, from death.

Verses 17, 18.—I. The saint precious to God. He thinks of him tenderly; in countless ways; perpetually. II. God precious to the saints. Noting God's loving-kindnesses, numbering them, newly awakening to them. III. The mingling of these loves: " I am still with thee."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 18.—"*When I awake I am still with thee.*" Awaking is sometimes, yea, most commonly, taken in the *natural signification*, for the recovery from bodily sleep. 2. *Morally*, for recovery from sin. 3. *Mystically;* " when I shall awake," that is, from the sleep of death.—*T. Horton.*

Verse 18.—" A Christian on Earth still in Heaven " [an Appendix to " A Christian on the Mount; or, A Treatise concerning Meditation "], by *Thomas Watson*, 1660.

Verse 18.—"*I am still with thee.*" 1. By way of meditation. 2. In respect to communion. 3. In regard of action, and the businesses which are done by us.—*T. Horton.*

Verse 19.—I. The doctrine of punishment the necessary outcome of omniscience. II. Inevitable judgment an argument for separation from sinners.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 20.—Two scandalous offences against God. I. To speak slanderously of him. II. To speak irreverently of him. These are committed only by his enemies.

Verses 21, 22.—I. Such hatred one need not be ashamed of. II. Such hatred one should be able to define: " grieved." III. Such hatred one must labour to keep right. " Perfect hatred " is a form of hate consistent with all the virtues.

Verses 23, 24.—The language, I. Of self-examination. 1. As in the sight of God. 2. With a desire for the help of God: verse 23. Look me through and through, and tell me what thou thinkest of me. II. Of self-renunciation: " See if," etc. (verse 24); any sin unpardoned, any evil disposition unsubdued, any evil habit unrestrained, that I may renounce it. III. Of self-dedication: " Lead me," etc.: a submission entirely to divine guidance in the future.—*G. R.*

Verse 24.—I. The evil way. Naturally in us; may be of different kinds; must be removed; removal needs Divine help. II. The everlasting way. There is but one, we need leading in it. It is the good old way, it does not come to an end; it leads to blessedness without end.

Verse 24 (*last clause*).—See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 903: " The Way Everlasting."

PSALM CXL.

This Psalm is in its proper place, and so fitly follows cxxxix. that you might almost read right on, and make no break between the two. Serious injury would follow to the whole Book of Psalms if the order should be interferred with as certain wiseacres propose. It is THE CRY OF A HUNTED SOUL, *the supplication of a believer incessantly persecuted and beset by cunning enemies, who hungered for his destruction. David was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, and seldom obtained a moment's rest. This is his pathetic appeal to Jehovah for protection, an appeal which gradually intensifies into a denunciation of his bitter foes. With this sacrifice of prayer he offers the salt of faith; for in a very marked and emphatic manner he expresses his personal confidence in the Lord as the protector of the oppressed, and as his own God and Defender. Few short Psalms are so rich in the jewelry of precious faith.*

" To the Chief Musician."—*The writer wished this experimental hymn to be under the care of the chief master of song, that it might neither be left unsung, nor chanted in a slovenly manner. Such trials and such rescues deserved to be had in remembrance, and to be set up among the choicest memorials of the Lord's goodness. We too, have our songs which are of no ordinary kind, and these must be sung with our best powers of heart and tongue. We will offer them to the Lord by no other hand than that of " the Chief Musician."*

" A Psalm of David."—*The life of David wherein he comes in contact with Saul and Doeg is the best explanation of this Psalm; and surely there can be no reasonable doubt that David wrote it, and wrote it in the time of his exile and peril. The tremendous outburst at the end has in it the warmth which was so natural to David, who was never lukewarm in anything; yet it is to be noticed that concerning his enemies he was often hot in language through indignation, and yet he was cool in action, for he was not revengeful. His was no petty malice, but a righteous anger: he foresaw, foretold, and even desired the just vengeance of God upon the proud and wicked, and yet he would not avail himself of opportunities to revenge himself upon those who had done him wrong. It may be that his appeals to the great King cooled his anger, and enabled him to leave his wrongs unredressed by any personal act of violence. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"; and David when most wounded by undeserved persecution and wicked falsehood was glad to leave his matters at the foot of the throne, where they would be safe with the King of kings.*

EXPOSITION.

DELIVER me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man;

2 Which imagine mischiefs in *their* heart; continually are they gathered together *for* war.

3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison *is* under their lips. Selah.

1. *"Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man."* It reads like a clause of the Lord's prayer, " Deliver us from evil." David does not so much plead against an individual as against the species represented by him, namely, the being whose best description is— " the evil man." There are many such abroad; indeed we we shall not find an unregenerate man who is not in some sense an evil man, and yet all are not alike evil. It is well for us that our enemies are evil: it would be a horrible thing to have the good against us. When " the evil man " bestirs himself against the godly he is as terrible a being as a wolf, or a serpent, or even a devil. Fierce, implacable, unpitying, unrelenting, unscrupulous, he cares for nothing but the indulgence of his malice. The persecuted man turns to God in prayer; he could not do a wiser thing. Who can meet the evil man and defeat him save Jehovah himself, whose infinite goodness is more than a match for all the evil in

the universe? We cannot of ourselves baffle the craft of the enemy, but the Lord knoweth how to deliver his saints. He can keep us out of the enemy's reach, he can sustain us when under his power, he can rescue us when our doom seems fixed, he can give us the victory when defeat seems certain; and in any and every case, if he do not save us from the man he can keep us from the evil. Should we be at this moment oppressed in any measure by ungodly men, it will be better to leave our defence with God than to attempt it ourselves.

"Preserve me from the violent man." Evil in the heart simmers in malice, and at last boils in passion. Evil is a raging thing when it getteth liberty to manifest itself; and so "the evil man" soon develops into "the violent man." What watchfulness, strength, or valour can preserve the child of God from deceit and violence? There is but one sure Preserver, and it is our wisdom to hide under the shadow of his wings. It is a common thing for good men to be assailed by enemies: David was attacked by Saul, Doeg, Ahithophel, Shimei, and others; even Mordecai sitting humbly in the gate had his Haman; and our Lord, the Perfect One, was surrounded by those who thirsted for his blood. We may not, therefore, hope to pass through the world without enemies, but we may hope to be delivered out of their hands, and preserved from their rage, so that no real harm shall come of their malignity. This blessing is to be sought by prayer, and expected by faith.

2. *"Which imagine mischiefs in their heart."* They cannot be happy unless they are plotting and planning, conspiring and contriving. They seem to have but one heart, for they are completely agreed in their malice; and with all their heart and soul they pursue their victim. One piece of mischief is not enough for them; they work in the plural, and prepare many arrows for their bow. What they cannot actually do they nevertheless like to think over, and to rehearse on the stage of their cruel fancy. It is an awful thing to have such a heart-disease as this. When the imagination gloats over doing harm to others, it is a sure sign that the entire nature is far gone in wickedness. *"Continually are they gathered together for war."* They are a committee of opposition in permanent session: they never adjourn, but perpetually consider the all-absorbing question of how to do the most harm to the man of God. They are a standing army always ready for the fray: they not only go to the wars, but dwell in them. Though they are the worst of company, yet they put up with one another, and are continually in each other's society, confederate for fight. David's enemies were as violent as they were evil, as crafty as they were violent, and as persistent as they were crafty. It is hard dealing with persons who are only in their element when they are at daggers-drawn with you. Such a case calls for prayer, and prayer calls on God.

3. *"They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent."* The rapid motion of a viper's tongue gives you the idea of its sharpening it; even thus do the malicious move their tongues at such a rate that one might suppose them to be in the very act of wearing them to a point, or rubbing them to a keen edge. It was a common notion that serpents inserted their poison by their tongues, and the poets used the idea as a poetical expression, although it is certain that the serpent wounds by his fangs and not by his tongue. We are not to suppose that all authors who used such language were mistaken in their natural history any more than a writer can be charged with ignorance of astronomy because he speaks of the sun's travelling from east to west. How else can poets speak but according to the appearance of things to an imaginative eye. The world's great poet puts it in "King Lear":

> "She struck me with her tongue,
> Most serpent-like, upon the very heart."

In the case of slanderers, they so literally sting with their tongues, which are so nimble in malice, and withal so piercing and cutting, that it is by no means unjust to speak of them as sharpened. *"Adders' poison is under their lips."* The deadliest of all venom is the slander of the unscrupulous. Some men care not what they say so long as they can vex and injure. Our text, however, must not be confined in its reference to some few individuals, for in the inspired epistle to the Romans it is quoted by the apostle as being true of us all. So depraved are we by nature that the most venomous creatures are our fit types. The old serpent has not only inoculated us with his venom, but he has caused us to be ourselves producers of the like poison: it lies under our lips, ready for use, and, alas, it is all too freely used when we grow angry, and desire to take vengeance upon any who have caused us vexation. It is sadly wonderful what hard things even good men will say when

provoked; yea, even such as call themselves "perfect" in cool blood are not quite as gentle as doves when their claims to sinlessness are bluntly questioned. This poison of evil-speaking would never fall from our lips, however much we might be provoked, if it were not there at other times; but by nature we have as great a store of venomous words as a cobra has of poison. O Lord, take the poison-bags away, and cause our lips to drop nothing but honey. *"Selah."* This is heavy work. Go up, go up, my heart! Sink not too low. Fall not into the lowest key. Lift up thyself to God.

4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings.

5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah.

4. *"Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked."* To fall into their hands would be a calamity indeed. David in his most pitiable plight chose to fall into the hand of a chastising God rather than to be left in the power of men. No creature among the wild beasts of the wood is so terrible an enemy to man as man himself when guided by evil, and impelled by violence. The Lord by providence and grace can keep us out of the power of the wicked. He alone can do this, for neither our own watchfulness nor the faithfulness of friends can secure us against the serpentine assaults of the foe. We have need to be preserved from the smooth as well as the rough hands of the ungodly, for their flatteries may harm us as much as their calumnies. The hands of their example may pollute us, and so do us more harm than the hands of their oppression. Jehovah must be our keeper, or evil hands will do what evil hearts have imagined and evil lips have threatened. *"Preserve me from the violent man."* His intense passion makes him terribly dangerous. He will strike anyhow, use any weapon, smite from any quarter: he is so furious that he is reckless of his own life if he may accomplish his detestable design. Lord, preserve us by thine omnipotence when men attack us with their violence. This prayer is a wise and suitable one. *"Who have purposed to overthrow my goings."* They resolve to turn the good man from his resolve, they would defeat his designs, injure his integrity, and blast his character. Their own goings are wicked, and therefore they hate those of the righteous, seeing they are a standing rebuke to them. This is a forcible argument to use in prayer with God: he is the patron of holiness, and when the pure lives of his people are in danger of overthrow, he may be expected to interpose. Never let the pious forget to pray, for this is a weapon against which the most determined enemy cannot stand.

5. *"The proud have hid a snare for me."* Proud as they are, they stoop to this mean action: they use a snare, and they hide it away, that their victim may be taken like a poor hare who is killed without warning—killed in its usual run, by a snare which it could not see. David's enemies wished to snare him in his path of service, the usual way of his life. Saul laid many snares for David, but the Lord preserved him. All around us there are snares of one sort or another, and he will be well kept, ay, divinely kept, who never falls into one of them. *"And cords."* With these they pull the net together and with these they bind their captive. Thus fowlers do, and trappers of certain large animals. The cords of love are pleasant, but the cords of hate are cruel as death itself. *"They have spread a net by the wayside."* Where it will be near their prey; where the slightest divergence from the path will bring the victim into it. Surely the common wayside ought to be safe: men who go out of the way may well be taken in a net, but the path of duty is proverbially the path of safety; yet it is safe nowhere when malicious persons are abroad. Birds are taken in nets, and men are taken by deceit. Satan instructs his children in the art of fowling, and they right speedily learn how to spread nets: perhaps they have been doing that for us already; let us make our appeal to God concerning it. *"They have set gins for me."* One instrument of destruction is not enough; they are so afraid of missing their prey that they multiply their traps, using differing devices, so that one way or another they may take their victim. Those who avoid the snare and the net may yet be caught in a gin, and accordingly gins are placed in all likely places. If a godly man can be cajoled, or bribed, or cowed, or made angry, the wicked will make the attempt. Ready are they to twist his words, misread his intentions, and misdirect his efforts; ready to fawn, and lie, and make themselves mean to the last degree so that they

may accomplish their abominable purpose. *"Selah."* The harp needs tuning after such a strain, and the heart needs lifting up towards God.

6 I said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.

7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; *lest* they exalt themselves. Selah.

6. *"I said unto the LORD, thou art my God."* Here was David's stay and hope. He was assured that Jehovah was his God, he expressed that assurance, and he expressed it before Jehovah himself. That had need be a good and full assurance which a man dares to lay before the face of the heart-searching Lord. The Psalmist when hunted by man, addressed himself to God. Often the less we say to our foes, and the more we say to our best Friend the better it will fare with us: if we say anything, let it be said unto the Lord. David rejoiced in the fact that he had already said that Jehovah was his God: he was content to have committed himself, he had no wish to draw back. The Lord was David's own by deliberate choice, to which he again sets his seal with delight. The wicked reject God, but the righteous receive him as their own, their treasure, their pleasure, their light and delight. *"Hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD."* Since thou art mine, I pray thee hear my cries. We cannot ask this favour of another man's god, but we may seek it from our own God. The prayers of saints have a voice in them; they are expressive pleadings even when they sound like inarticulate moanings. The Lord can discern a voice in our wailings, and he can and will hearken thereto. Because he is God he can hear us; because he is *our* God he will hear us. So long as the Lord doth but hear us we are content: the answer may be according to his own will, but we do entreat to be heard: a soul in distress is grateful to any one who will be kind and patient enough to hearken to its tale, but specially is it thankful for an audience with Jehovah. The more we consider his greatness and our insignificance, his wisdom and our folly, the more shall we be filled with praise when the Lord attends unto our cry.

7. *"O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."* When he looked back upon past dangers and deliverances, the good man felt that he should have perished had not the Lord held a shield over his head. In the day of the clash of arms, or of putting on of armour (as some read it), the glorious Lord had been his constant protector. Goliath had his armour-bearer, and so had Saul, and these each one guarded his master; yet the giant and the king both perished, while David, without armour or shield, slew the giant and baffled the tyrant. The shield of the Eternal is better protection than a helmet of brass. When arrows fly thick and the battle-axe crashes right and left, there is no covering for the head like the power of the Almighty. See how the child of providence glorifies his Preserver! He calls him not only his salvation, but the strength of it, by whose unrivalled force he had been enabled to outlive the cunning and cruelty of his adversaries. He had obtained a deliverance in which the strength of the Omnipotent was clearly to be seen. This is a grand utterance of praise, a gracious ground of comfort, a prevalent argument in prayer. He that has covered our head aforetime will not now desert us. Wherefore let us fight a good fight, and fear no deadly wound: the Lord God is our shield, and our exceeding great reward.

8. *"Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked."* Even they are dependent upon thee; they can do no more than thou dost permit. Thou dost restrain them; not a dog of them can move his tongue without thy leave and license. Therefore I entreat thee not to let them have their way. Even though they dare to pray to thee, do not hear their prayers against innocent men. Assuredly the Lord Jehovah will be no accomplice with the malevolent; their desires shall never be his desires; if they thirst for blood he will not gratify their cruelty. *"Further not his wicked device."* They are so united as to be like one man in their wishes; but do not hear their prayers. Though hand join in hand, and they desire and design as one man, yet do not thou lend them the aid of thy providence. Do not permit their malicious schemes to succeed. The Lord may allow success to attend the policy of the wicked

for a time for wise reasons unknown to us, but we are permitted to pray that it be not so. The petition " Deliver us from evil " includes and allows such supplication. *"Lest they exalt themselves."* If successful, the wicked are sure to grow proud, and insult the righteous over whom they have triumphed, and this is so great an evil, and so dishonouring to God, that the Psalmist uses it in his pleading as an argument against their being allowed to prosper. The glory of the wicked is opposed to the glory of God. If God seems to favour them they grow too high for this world, and their heads strike against the heavens. Let us hope that the Lord will not suffer this to be. *"Selah."* Here let us exalt our thoughts and praises high over the heads of self-exalting sinners. The more they rise in conceit the higher let us rise in confidence.

9 *As for* the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.

10 Let burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.

11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow *him.*

9. *"As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them."* To the Lord who had covered his head amid the din of arms the Psalmist appeals against his foes, that their heads may be covered in quite another sense—covered with the reward of their own malice. David's foes were so many that they hemmed him in, encircling him as hunters do their prey. It is little wonder that he turns to the Lord in his dire need. The poet represents his adversaries as so united as to have but one head; for there is often a unanimity among evil spirits which makes them the more strong and terrible for their vile purposes. The *lex talionis*, or law of retaliation, often brings down upon violent men the evil which they planned and spoke of for others: their arrows fall upon themselves. When a man's lips vent curses they will probably, like chickens, come home to roost. A stone hurled upward into the air is apt to fall upon the thrower's head.

David's words may be read in the future as a prophecy; but in this verse, at any rate, there is no need to do so in order to soften their tone. It is so just that the mischief which men plot and the slander which they speak should recoil upon themselves that every righteous man must desire it: he who does not desire it may wish to be considered humane and Christlike, but the chances are that he has a sneaking agreement with the wicked, or is deficient in a manly sense of right and wrong. When evil men fall into pits which they have digged for the innocent we believe that even the angels are glad; certainly the most gentle and tender of philanthropists, however much they pity the sufferers, must also approve the justice which makes them suffer. We suspect that some of our excessively soft-spoken critics only need to be put into David's place, and they would become a vast deal more bitter than he ever was.

10. *"Let burning coals fall upon them."* Then will they know that the scattering of the firebrands is not the sport they thought it to be. When hailstones and coals of fire descend upon them, how will they escape? Even the skies above the wicked are able to deal out vengeance upon them. *"Let them be cast into the fire."* They have kindled the flames of strife, and it is fair that they should be cast therein. They have heated the furnace of slander seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated, and they shall be devoured therein. Who would have pitied Nebuchadnezzar if he had been thrown into his own burning fiery furnace? *"Into deep pits, that they rise not up again."* They made those ditches or fosses for the godly, and it is meet that they should themselves fall into them and never escape. When a righteous man falls he rises again; but when the wicked man goes down " he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again." The Psalmist in this passage graphically depicts the Sodom of the wicked persecutor: fire falls upon him from heaven; the city blazes, and he is cast into the conflagration; the vale of Siddim is full of slime-pits, and into these he is buried. Extraordinary judgment overtakes the extraordinary offender: above, around, beneath, all is destruction. He would have consumed the righteous, and now he is consumed himself. So shall it be: so let it be.

11. *"Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth."* For that would be an established plague, a perpetual curse. Men of false and cruel tongues are of most use when they go to fatten the soil in which they rot as carcasses: while they are alive they are the terror of the good, and the torment of the poor. God will not allow the specious orators of falsehood to retain the power they temporarily obtain by their deceitful speaking. They may become prominent, but they cannot become permanent. They shall be disendowed and disestablished in spite of all that they can say to the contrary. All evil bears the element of decay within itself; for what is it but corruption? Hence the utmost powers of oratory are insufficient to settle upon a sure foundation the cause which bears a lie within it. *"Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him."* He hunted the good, and now his own evil shall hunt him. He tried to overthrow the goings of the righteous, and now his own unrighteousness shall prove his overthrow. As he was violent, so shall he be violently assaulted and hunted down. Sin is its own punishment; a violent man will need no direr doom than to reap what he has sown. It is horrible for a huntsman to be devoured by his own hounds; yet this is the sure fate of the persecutor.

12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, *and* the right of the poor.

13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

12. *"I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor."* All through the Psalm the writer is bravely confident, and speaks of things about which he had no doubt: in fact, no Psalm can be more grandly positive than this protest against slander. The slandered saint knew Jehovah's care for the afflicted, for he had received actual proofs of it himself. "I will maintain it" is the motto of the great Defender of the rights of the needy. What confidence this should create within the bosoms of the persecuted and poverty-stricken! The prosperous and wealthy can maintain their own cause, but those who are otherwise shall find that God helps those who cannot help themselves. Many talk as if the poor had no rights worth noticing, but they will sooner or later find out their mistake when the judge of all the earth begins to plead with them.

13. *"Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name."* The former Psalm had its "surely," but this is a more pleasing one. As surely as God will slay the wicked he will save the oppressed, and fill their hearts and mouths with praises. Whoever else may be silent, the righteous will give thanks; and whatever they may suffer, the matter will end in their living through the trial, and magnifying the Lord for his delivering grace. On earth ere long, and in heaven for ever, the pure heart shall sing unto the Lord. How loud and sweet will be the songs of the redeemed in the millennial age, when the meek shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace!

"The upright shall dwell in thy presence." Thus shall they give thanks in the truest and fullest manner. This abiding before the Lord shall render to him "songs without words," and therefore all the more spiritual and true. Their living and walking with their God shall be their practical form of gratitude. Sitting down in holy peace, like children at their father's table, their joyful looks and language shall speak their high esteem and fervent love to him who has become their dwelling-place. How high have we climbed in this Psalm—from being hunted by the evil man to dwelling in the divine presence; so doth faith upraise the saint from the lowest depths to heights of peaceful repose. Well might the song be studded with Selahs, or uplifters.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Another Psalm "*of David*," to be sung by all saints, even as it was used by their Head, David's Son. In it we have (verses 1—3) the *picture of the wicked*, with a "*Selah*," that bids us pause over its dark colours. Then we have (verses 4, 5) *a view of the snares spread by the wicked*, with another "Selah"-pause. Thereafter, we see a soul in *the attitude of faith* (verses 6—8). They are laying the snares, but calm as Elisha beholding the Syrian host assembling (2 Kings v. 15), the stayed soul sings—

"I have said to the Lord, My God art thou;"

and then he prays, putting a "*Selah*" at the close, that we may again pause and survey the scene.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—There is no doubt that this Psalm expresses the feelings of David on the first intelligence of Saul's setting out *anew* in pursuit of him (comp. verse 2). And then, in Psalm cxli. we have his supplication at the time when this danger was ever approaching nearer. Various things are said in this Psalm (according to the Hebrew) primarily of a single person, (Saul:) thus *e.g.*, verses 1, 4; and the numerous tongues of which David complains (verse 3) are just the tongues of traitors who again informed Saul of this new place of residence in the wilderness of Engedi, where he might have imagined himself so secure. The laying of snares (verse 5) agrees perfectly in part with this treachery, and in part with the search after David by Saul and his numerous army, mentioned in 1 Sam. xxiv. 2. In the same way might the burning coals, spoken of in verse 10, and likewise the deep pits (German, floods) mentioned there, have suggested themselves most naturally to David upon the rocks of Engedi, where he had the Dead Sea just before him. Verse 10 seems also to allude to the events which happened on the night before the destruction of Sodom.—*T. C. Barth, in "The Bible Manual."*

Whole Psalm.—As in Psalm cxxxviii. David set before his seed God's promise as the anchor of hope (2 Sam. vii.); and in Psalm cxxxix., God's omniscience as our consolation in danger and motive for shunning evil; so in this Psalm he sets forth the danger from calumnious enemies, and our only safety in Jehovah, our strength.—*Andrew Robert Fausset.*

Verses 1, 4, 6, 8.—Good men live by prayer. He who gets to the throne of grace is covered by the cloud of glory, through which no sun can smite by day, nor moon by night.—*William Swan Plumer.*

Verses 1, 7—11.—On the first reading of this Psalm one is inclined to think that there is somewhat of fierceness and bitterness in it, which is hardly consistent with the character of a child of God, and therefore unbecoming in David . . . . And yet I really think that a little more examination of the language of this Psalm will lead us to believe that we are doing David wrong in affixing anything like a meaning or desire of vindictiveness to his words.

Assuredly we can find no fault with one who takes his wrongs in prayer to God; who, like Hezekiah, takes the roll of his cares, and sorrows, and trials, and spreads it before the Lord. And this is what David does in the very first verse: "*Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man; preserve me from the violent man.*" I do not think a person who does this, who, when smarting under a sense of injury and wrong, goes at once to God and lays open his heart to him, is likely to go very far wrong; for even though he may have begun in somewhat of an unkindly spirit, yet prayer opens before us such a sight and sense of our own guiltiness and wrongs towards God, and thereby exercises such an abasing, as well as healing and soothing, influence over our feelings towards others, that we might almost be assured that he whose prayer might begin even with a vehement enumeration of his own wrongs, would end with something very like a determination to bless them that cursed, and to do good to them that hated him.

You will observe, too, how, from first to last, David leaves his cause in God's hands; it is not "my sword and my bow that shall help me;" he counted them vain things to help a man; and therefore, as he had so often said in other Psalms; "The Lord was his shield and his defence," and as God had already shielded his head in the day of battle, so he prays for the same protection against his enemies now.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verses 1, 11.—Three special forms of Satanic energy are individualized. The *evil* or wicked man, the *violent* man, and the *man of tongue* are severally appealed from by the suppliant speaker of the prayer of faith.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 2.—"*Continually are they gathered together for war.*" Literally, this clause reads, " *who gather wars,*" and so some understand it. But it is well known that the prepositions are often omitted in the Hebrew, and no doubt he means that they stirred up general enmity by their false information which acted as a trumpet sounding to battle.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 2, 3.—The wicked assault the righteous with three weapons—with the heart, by conspiracy; with the tongue, by lying; and with the hand, by violence. —*John Lorinus,* 1569—1634.

Verse 3.—*They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent.*" To sharpen or whet the tongue imports the keenest and extremest kind of talkativeness, much more to sharpen the tongue " *like a serpent.*" Naturalists tell us that no living creature stirs his tongue so swiftly as a serpent, and serpents are therefore said to have a treble tongue, because, moving their tongues so fast, they seem to have three tongues. The Psalmist means—the wicked speak thick and threefold, they sting and poison me with their tongues.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—"*They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent.*" This is an exact description of the way in which a serpent darts out his tongue before he inflicts the wound. See him: his head is erect, and his piercing eye is wildly and fiercely fixed on the object; the tongue rapidly appears and disappears, as if by that process it would be sharpened for the contest. Thus were the enemies of David making sharp their tongues for his destruction.—*Joseph Roberts, in "Oriental Illustrations of the Sacred Scriptures,"* 1835.

Verse 3.—"*They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent,*" etc. Is it not a fact, that there are many men, the very existence of whom is a baneful poison, as it were? They dart their livid tongue like the tongue of a serpent; and the venom of their disposition corrodes every object upon which it concentrates itself; ever vilifying and maligning, like the ill-omened bird of night.—*Pliny.*

Verse 3.—"*They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent.*" As the adder skilfully prepares herself for her work of death, so do the unhappy children of slander and falsehood prepare themselves, by every possible effort, for injuring their unoffending victims.—*John Morison.*

Verse 3.—In St. James's day, as now, it would appear that there were idle men and idle women, who went about from house to house, dropping slander as they went, and yet you could not take up that slander and detect the falsehood there. You could not evaporate the truth in the slow process of the crucible, and then show the residuum of falsehood glittering and visible. You could not fasten upon any word or sentence, and say that it was calumny; for in order to constitute slander, it is not necessary that the word spoken should be false—half-truths are often more calumnious than whole falsehoods. It is not even neccessary that a word should be distinctly uttered; a dropped lip, an arched eyebrow, a shrugged shoulder, a significant look, an incredulous expression of countenance, nay, even an emphatic silence, may do the work; and when the light and trifling thing which has done the mischief has fluttered off, the venom is left behind, to work and rankle, to inflame hearts, to fever human existence, and to poison human society at the fountain springs of life. Very emphatically was it said by one whose whole being had smarted under such affliction, "*Adders' poison is under their lips.*" —*Frederick William Robertson.*

Verse 3.—Slander and calumny must always precede and accompany persecution, because malice itself cannot excite people against a good man, as such; to do this, he must first be represented as a bad man. What can be said of those who are busied in this manner, but that they are a " generation of vipers," the brood of the old " Serpent," that grand accuser and calumniator of the brethren, having under their tongues a bag of " poison." conveying instant death to the reputation on which they fasten. Thus David was hunted as a rebel, Christ was crucified as a blasphemer, and the primitive Christians were tortured as guilty of incest and murder.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—Man consists of soul and body; the body is but the shadow, or at best but the bearer of the soul: it's the soul that bears God's image; it's the soul

especially for which Christ died. Now, by how much the soul is more precious than the body, by so much are the helps more excellent, and the enemies more dangerous than the body's. The body is fed with meat; but it is perishing meat (1 Cor. vi. 13); but the food of the soul is the heavenly manna (John vi. 27). Answerably, the enemies are more hurtful, for that that hurts or kills the body toucheth not the soul; but what hurts or kills the soul kills the body with it, and destroys the whole man. The conclusion is, that therefore the bane or poison of the soul is much more hideous, horrible and hateful than that of the body; and of that poison speaks the present Scripture: "*adders' poison is under their lips.*"

A strange text some may say, and 'tis true; but it is the fitter for these strange times, wherein the poison both of soul and body so far prevails. The words do describe in part the malignant and malicious nature of the unregenerate and sinful man; and to that purpose are they cited by the apostle to the Romans (ch. iii. 13). The *asp* is but a little creature; but not a little poisonful. So little a creature hath been the bane and death of many a great person; let one suffice for all. That royal and renowned Cleopatra, queen of Egpyt, chose rather to die by the biting of two asps than to be carried in triumph at Rome by Augustus. The manner of their poisoning is this,—he that is bitten by the asp falls forthwith into a gentle sweat and a sweet sleep, and his strength and vital spirits decay and weaken by little till he die; thus the present pain is little, but the stroke is deadly. And even such stings are the tongues, and such swords the words of wicked men. And no marvel; for what can come but poisonful words and actions from them whose very inward nature is all poison within!

The poison of the soul is only *sin*, and this is like to poison in many respects. Poison, wherever it enters, stays not there, but diffuseth itself all over the body, and never ceaseth till it has infected all. Such is the nature of sin; enter where it will it creeps from one member of the body to another, and from the body to the soul, till it has infected the whole man; and then from man to man, till the whole family; and stays not there, but runs like a wildfire, from family to family, till it has poisoned a whole town, and so a whole country, and a whole kingdom. Woeful experience proves this true, both for Popish opinions, idle fashions, vain customs, and ill-examples of all sorts, which once set on foot, spread themselves over the politic body of church and commonwealth, like a gangrene or a leprosy over the natural body or like a poison through all the blood. Poison, having entered anywhere, as it seeks to creep presently over all, so desires it especially to seize upon the heart; such a malice and pride lies in the malignant nature of it, that it aspires to the heart; and such a craft and cunning lurks in it, that having once entered, it creeps closely and unfelt till it gets to the heart; but having possessed itself of that sovereign part of man, then like a tyrant it reigns and rages, and infecting first the vital blood and noble parts, it diffuseth itself over all and every part. And such is the nature of sin, the spiritual poison of the soul; enter where it will, it is the heart it aims at, and it will never stay till it come there. The truth of this is so clear that proofs are needless; for who knows not that the senses are but the doors or windows, but the heart is the throne, and the soul itself the seat of sin: and hence it is that Solomon adviseth,—"My son, keep thy heart with all diligence": Prov. iv. 23. —*William Crashaw, in "The Parable of Poyson,"* 1618.

Verse 3.—"*Adders' poison is under their lips.*" The word rendered "*adder,*" עַכְשׁוּב, *achsub,* occurs here only; and it is perhaps impossible to determine what species is intended. As the word, in its proper signification, seems to express coiling, or bending back—an act common to most serpents—the name has perhaps no determinate reference; or it may be another name for the *pethen,* mentioned under Job xx.; which seems also to have been the opinion of the Seventy, as they render both words by ἀσπίς, and are followed by the Vulgate (*aspis*).

As to the *poison,* it will be observed, that in the venomous serpents there is a gland under the eye secreting the poisonous matter, which is conveyed, in a small tube or canal, to the end of a fang which lies concealed at the roof of the mouth. This fang is moveable at the pleasure of the serpent, and is protruded when it is about to strike at an antagonist. The situation of this poison, which is, in a manner, behind the upper lip, gives great propriety to the expression, "*adders' poison is under their lips.*" The usage of the Hebrew language renders it by no means improbable that the fang itself is called לָשׁוֹן *lashon,* a tongue, in the present text; and a serpent might then be said to sharpen its tongue, when, in preparing to strike, it protruded its fangs. We do not see any explanation by which a more consistent

meaning may be extracted from the expression here employed.—*John Kitto, in the "Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 3.—Often the tongue of the serpent is spoken of as the seat of its venom. This is popular, not scientific language.—*William Swan Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Adder.*" The word *acshub* (pronounced ăk-shoob), only occurs in this one passage. The precise species represented by this word, is unknown. Buxtorf, however, explains the word as the Spitter, "illud genus quod venenum procul exspuit." Now, if we accept this derivation, we must take the word *acshub* as a synonym for *pethen.* We have already identified the Pethen with the Naja haje, a snake which has the power of expelling the poison to some distance, when it is out of reach of its enemy. Whether the snake really intends to eject the poison, or whether it is merely flung from the hollow fangs by the force of the sudenly-checked stroke, is uncertain. That the Haje cobra can expel its poison is an acknowledged fact, and the Dutch colonists of the Cape have been so familiarly acquainted with this habit, that they have called this reptile by the name of Spuugh-Slange, or Spitting-Snake, a name which, if we accept Buxtorf's etymology, is precisely equivalent to the word *acshub.*—*J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."*

Verses 3, 5, 8.—"*Selah.*" We meet with *Selah* here for the first time since Psalm lxxxix. From Psalm xc. to Psalm cxl. no *Selah* occurs. Why omitted in these fifty we cannot tell any more than why so often recurring in others. However, there are only about forty Psalms in all in which it is used.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 4.—"*Keep me,*" etc. From doing as they do, or as they would have me do, or as they promise themselves I will do.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*Preserve me from the violent man.*" The second clause of the first versicle of this verse is the same as the second versicle of verse 1, which seems the burden of the song.—"*Speaker's Commentary.*"

Verse 4.—"*To overthrow my goings.*" To take my feet from under me, to destroy the basis of belief, the power of advance in good works, that we may turn back from the way of salvation, or fall upon it, or, at any rate, may go very slowly along it.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 5.—"*The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords.*" The following story illustrates how *cords* have been used by thieves so lately as the year 1822:—"Two skilful leaders of Dacoits, having collected some forty followers, and distributed among them ten matchlocks, ten swords, and twenty-five spears, waylaid a treasure going from the native Collector's treasury at Budrauna to Goruckpore. The prize consisted of £1,200, and was guarded by a Naik, or corporal, with four sepoys and five troopers. It had to pass through a dense jungle, and it was settled—said one of them in after years—'that the attack should take place there; that we should have strong ropes tied across the road in front and festooned to trees on both sides, and, at a certain distance behind, similar ropes festooned to trees on one side, and ready to be fastened on the other, as soon as the escort of horse and foot should get well in between them.' Having completed these preparations the gang laid down on either side of the road patiently awaiting their prey. 'About five in the morning,' continued the narrator, 'we heard a voice as if calling upon the name of God (Allah), and one of the gang started up at the sound and said, "Here comes the treasure!" We put five men in front with their matchlocks loaded—not with ball but shot, that we might, if possible, avoid killing anybody. When we got the troopers, infantry, and treasure all within the space, the hind ropes were run across the road, and made fast to the trees on the opposite side, and we opened a fire in upon the party from all sides. The foot soldiers got into the jungle at the sides of the road, and the troopers tried to get over the ropes at both ends, but in vain.' The corporal and a horse were killed; two troopers wounded, and the treasure carried off in spite of a hot pursuit."—*From James Hutton's "Popular Account of the Thugs and Dacoits of India,"* 1857.

Verse 5.—"*The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords.*" There was "a trap hidden for him with cords;" a trap being sunk into some frequented path, and always covered over with grass or brushwood, and having long cords attached to each side, by which the hunter, lurking at a little distance, might close it whenever he saw the game stepping on the spot. But the net spread for him by his enemies extended to the very "side of the encampment," which indicates, that even among the soldiers lying around him, there were some who had been bribed and

persuaded to watch and betray him.—*Benjamin Weiss, in "A New Translation of the Psalms, with Notes,"* 1858.

Verse 5.—*"Snare." "Net." "Gins."* The several uses to which the contrivances denoted by the Hebrew words thus rendered were respectively applied, do not appear to be well ascertained. In general the Psalmist alludes to the artifices employed for capturing birds or beasts. It is, however, a curious circumstance, as noticed by Thevenot, that artifices of this kind are literally employed against men as well as other animals by some of the Orientals. " The cunningest robbers in the world," says he, " are in this country. They use a certain slip with a running noose, which they cast with so much sleight about a man's neck when they are within reach of him, that they never fail, so that they strangle him in a trice."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 6.—*"The voice of my supplications."* The one safety for simple and unlearned people when assailed by the crafty arguments of heretics and infidels is not controversy, but prayer, a weapon their adversaries seldom use, and cannot understand—*Bruno of Aste,* 1123.

Verse 7.—*"Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."* Hebrew, *of armour.* For David had never indeed any battle with Saul, but declined it; but Saul often armed against him; but then God's providence covered him as a shield: but the *head* is only spoken of to set forth his whole body, because that is chiefly aimed at by the enemy, as where the life principally lieth.—*John Meyer.*

Verse 7.—*"Thou hast covered my head,"* etc. That is, I had no other helmet or armour but thy Almighty power in the day when I fought with Goliath. 1 Sam. xvii. 39, 40. 50.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 7.—*"Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."* A captain or prince had always beside him in battle an armour-bearer, whose duty it was " to cover his master's head," that is, to ward off with the shield the blows aimed at his head, and which, in the heat of the fight, had escaped his own notice.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 8.—*"His wicked device";* which is to destroy me. *"Exalt themselves";* not only against me, but against thee also, as if by their power and policy they had frustrated thy design and promise made to me.—*M. Pool.*

Verse 9.—*"As for the head of those that compass me about,"* etc. God, he saith, had covered his head in the day of battle: now contrariwise he showeth what should cover the head of his enemies, viz., it should come to them as with their lips they had maliciously spoken against him; for it may be thus rendered—"The head of my besieger, let the trouble of his lips cover it": for cursing, let him be covered with cursing as with a cloak.—*John Mayer.*

Vere 9.—*"Those that compass me about."* For an explanation of this expression we would refer the reader to "The Treasury of David," vol. i., p. 343—344, where he will find two very pertinent extracts from J. Stevenson and Dr. Shaw.

Verse 9.—*"The mischief of their own lips."* The pride and hauteur of the Jews in our Lord's day brought the Roman arms upon them, and caused them to fall into irremediable ruin. They evoked their own fate by exposing themselves to an invasion from Rome at all; but they did it still more in that terrific cry—" His blood be upon us and on our children."—*William Hill Tucker, in "The Psalms, with Notes, shewing their Prophetic and Christian Character,"* 1840.

Verses 9, 10.—Such passages admit of translation in the future, and are rather predictions than imprecations.—*Ingram Cobbin,* 1839.

Verses 9—11.—The prophet, in these three verses, predicted those just judgments which heaven will inflict on the slanderers and persecutors of the righteous. Their lips, which uttered mischief against others, shall be the means of covering themselves with confusion, when out of their own mouths they shall be judged. Those tongues which have contributed to set the world on fire, shall be tormented with the hot burning coals of eternal vengeance: and they, who, with so much eagerness and diligence have prepared pits for the destruction of their brethren, shall be cast into a deep and bottomless pit, out of which they will not rise up again any more for ever. Evil speakers and false accusers shall gain no lasting establishment, but punishment shall hunt sin through all its doubles, and seize it at last as its legal prey. Let these great truths be firmly rooted in our hearts, and they will keep us steady in the worst of times.—*George Horne.*

Verse 10.—"*Let burning coals fall upon them,*" etc. The Psalmist seems here to allude to the destruction of the Sodomites. In these imprecations he considered his enemies as the enemies of God, rather than as his own ; and he thus cursed them, as knowing, in the quality of a prophet, that God himself had cursed them : and therefore these sorts of imprecations do not authorize other persons to curse their enemies.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 10.—"*Let burning coals fall upon them,*" etc. An imprecation which (with the similar previous one, Psalm ix. 6, etc.), is a prophecy ; and one which, while it has had no fulfilment in the case of David's enemies, or any persecutors of the church in times past, brings again vividly before the mind the fiery judgment of the Lord's coming, and the awful sentence already pronounced against "the beast and false prophet," the leaders of the confederation of the kings of the earth and their armies, then "gathered together to make war against him"—"these were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone"; Rev. xix. 19, 20. So before, Psalm lv. 15 ; lxiii. 9.—*William De Burgh.*

Verse 11.—"*Let not an evil speaker* [*a man full of tongue*] *be established,*" etc. The man given to talk, the liar, the flatterer, the detractor, the scold, the brawler, "*shall not be established in the earth,*" for such people are abhorred by the wicked as well as by the good.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 11.—"*Let not an evil speaker be established,*" etc. The positions laid down in this verse will find abundant illustration in every age of the church. "*An evil speaker,*" who takes delight in wounding the reputation of others, is seldom established or prospered in the earth. Providence fights against such an unhappy wretch. "*The violent man,*" the Ishmaelite whose hand is against every man, is in general overthrown by the very same weapons which he wields against others.—*John Morison.*

Verse 11.—"*An evil speaker.*" By "a man of the tongue," as the original has it, the Hebrews express a *detractor* or *sycophant ;* one who gives his tongue the liberty to vent what mischief he pleases. The Chaldee here expresses it by *a delator* or vile informer with a *threefold* or *three-forked tongue ;* because such a man wounds *three* at once ; the receiver, the sufferer, and himself.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 11.—"*Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.*" 'Tis an allusion to hounds that are of a quick scent, and pursue the game with pleasure ; they do not see the deer or the hare, yet they follow upon the scent ; and though they have sometimes a very cold and dead scent, yet they will follow and work it out. Thus "*evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him*"; and though sometimes he hath, as it were, got out of the view or sight of evil, and thinks himself under covert, yet these evils, like a company of greedy hounds, will pursue till they have overtaken and overthrown him.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—"*I know.*" For I have a promise of it, and that's infallible.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 12, 13.—"*I know that the* LORD *will maintain the cause,*" etc. Why, how comes the Psalmist so confident ? "*Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name*" : as if he had said, Thou hast a name for a gracious and faithful God in thy promise, and this thou wilt never suffer to be blotted by failing in thy word. Christian, thou mayest venture all thou art worth on the public faith of Heaven : "His words are pure, as silver tried seven times in a furnace." He that will not suffer a liar or covenant-breaker to set foot on his holy hill, will much less suffer any one thought of falseness or unfaithfulness to enter into his own most holy heart.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 13.—"*Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name,*" etc. Teacheth us two things, first, that it becometh the godly to show themselves continually thankful, because God is continually merciful to them ; secondly, what is the excellent estate and condition of God's children, which, though it do not yet appear, yet shall it in the end break forth with fulness of glory."—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 13.—"*The upright shall dwell in thy presence.*" "*Sit in thy presence,*" as thy friends or guests or favoured servants. Perhaps it may mean *sit* (*enthroned*) *before thee.* Compare Matt. xix. 28. Some understand the sense to be *shall dwell* (in the land) *before thee,* i.e., under thy protection and inspection.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1—5.—I. The particular source of David's affliction: it was from men. In this he was a type of Christ. 1. Their wickedness: "the evil man." 2. Their violence: "the violent man." 3. Their malicious designs: "which imagine mischiefs in their heart." 4. Their confederacy: "continually are they gathered together for war." 5. Their false accusations: "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent," etc. (verse 3). 6. Their avowed design: "they have purposed to overthrow my goings" (verse 4). 7. Their intrigues (verse 5). II. His universal remedy: "Deliver me, O LORD"; "preserve" and help me. His defence is, 1. In God. 2. In prayer to God.—*G. R.*

Verses 1—5.—In our position, age, and country, we are not in danger of violence from men, as was David; still, no man is absolutely safe from the danger. I. Mention some cases not yet impossible. 1. A Christian workman, because he cannot comply with unrighteous customs, excites the animosity of his fellow workers. They will do him mischief, spoil his work, steal his tools, speak evil of him, until his employer discharges him to restore peace in the factory. 2. A Christian clerk or shop assistant, because his presence is a check upon his sinful companions, may have snares laid for him, etc. II. Suggest advice, useful, should such a case arise. 1. Resort to God with a "Deliver me," and a "Preserve me." 2. Maintain integrity and uprightness. 3. Should the mischievous ones succeed, still trust in God, who can make their mischief lead to your profit, and make his goodness outwit their devices.—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—The depraved state of the natural man as to his speech.

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—A wise prayer. The wicked will slander, and oppress, or mislead, flatter and defile. No one can keep us but the Lord.

Verse 5.—The Dangers of Society. I. The secrecy of the attacks of the ungodly: "hid a snare." II. The variety of their weapons: "and cords." III. The cunning choice of position: "by the wayside." IV. The object of their designs: "for me": they desire to destroy the man himself.

Verse 5.—"The Net by the Wayside," or, covert temptations; temptations brought near, and made applicable to daily life.

Verse 6.—I. The language of assurance. II. The plea for acceptance in prayer.

Verses 6, 7.—David comforted himself, 1. In his interest in God: "I said . . . thou art my God." 2. In his access to God: he had leave to speak to him, and might expect an answer of peace: "Hear," etc. 3. In the assurance he had of help from God, and happiness in him (verse 7). 4. In the experience he had formerly of God's care of him: "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 6—8.—Three arguments to be pleaded in a prayer for protection. I. The believer's covenanted property in God. "I said . . . thou art my God." II. The past mercies of God. "Thou hast covered," etc. III. The impropriety of the wicked being encouraged in their wickedness, ver. 8.—*J. F.*

Verses 6, 7—12.—The Consolations of the Believer in Time of Trouble. I. What he can say. II. What he can remember. III. What he is assured of.

Verses 6, 7, 12, 13.—Times of Assault, Slander, and Temptation should be special times of Prayer and Faith. David here makes prominent five things. I. *Possession asserted.* 1. The Possession: "My God." Opposed to idols. Beloved by self. 2. The Claim published. 3. The Witness selected. Secret. Sacred. Searching. 4. The Occasion chosen. II. *Petition presented.* 1. His prayers were frequent. 2. His prayers were full of meaning. 3. His prayers were meant for God. 4. His prayers needed divine attention. III. *Preservation experienced.* 1. God had been his Armour-bearer. 2. God had guarded his most vital part. 3. God had saved him. 4. God's strength had been displayed. IV. *Protection expected.* 1. God is a righteous Judge. 2. God is a compassionate Friend. 3. God is a well-known Guardian. V. *Praise predicted.* 1. Praise assured by gratitude. 2. Praise expressed by words. 3. Praise implied in confidence. 4. Praise practised by communion.

Verse 9.—How the sin of evil-speakers comes home to them.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 11 (*first clause*).—I. Notice a few varieties of evil speakers, 1. Liars the common liar, the trade liar, the stock-exchange liar, the political liar, etc. 2. Scandal-mongers. 3. Blasphemers and swearers. 4. Libertines and seducers.

5. Sceptics and new theology inventors. II. The propriety of the prayer. 1. Because evil speaking is intrinsically an evil thing. 2. It is an extensively injurious thing. 3. He who would have God's truth established must needs desire that evil speaking must fail. III. The limitation of the prayer: "In the earth." 1. It is certain an evil speaker cannot be established in heaven, nor in hell. 2. The earth is the only sphere of his influence; but, alas! men on the earth are too prone to be influenced by him. 3. Then, become righteous and true, by faith in the Righteous One and the "Truth."—*J. F.*

Verse 11 (*second clause*).—The Cruel Hunter pursued by his own Dogs.

Verse 11 (*second clause*).—Theme—Sins committed, and not repented of, pursue men to their ruin. I. Illustrate. 1. They may raise a force of opposition from men. Tarquin, Napoleon, etc. 2. They may precipitate ruin, as Haman was hunted by his own sin to the gallows. 3. They may arouse destructive remorse, as in Judas. 4. Certainly they will pursue to the judgment-seat, and hunt the soul into hell. II. Apply. 1. How fearful a thing must sin be. 2. The more terrible because self-created. 3. Flee from the avenging pursuers to Christ, the only and safe refuge.—*J. F.*

Verse 11 (*second clause*).—The hunt and pursuit of the violent sinner. I. The progress of the chase. 1. At first the victim is ignorant of it. 2. But ere long he finds Scripture, conscience, God, Death, at his heels. 3. His own sins cry loudest after him. II. The issue of the hunt. Hemmed in, overthrown, lost for ever, unless he repent. III. Another Huntsman. "The Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 12.—I. The known fact. II. The reasons for being so assured of it. III. The conduct arising out of the knowledge.

Verse 12.—Something worth knowing. I. By the afflicted and the poor who trust in the Lord. II. By the oppressors who afflict and do the wrong. III. By all men, that they may trust in the Lord, and praise him for his compassion towards the needy, and for his even-handed justice.—*J. F.*

Verses 12, 13.—I. Trust under all circumstances (verse 12). II. Gratitude for all things: "The righteous shall give thanks unto thy name." III. Safety at all times: "The upright shall dwell in thy presence."—*G. R.*

Verse 13.—One of the noblest forms of praise,—dwelling in the presence of God. Or, reverent regard to God's presence, holy communion with the Lord, confiding rest in God's dealings, obedient doing of the heavenly will—the best way of giving thanks to God.

Verse 13.—Two assertions beyond contradiction. I. The righteous are sure to give thanks to God, let others be as thankless as they will. For, 1. They recognise all their good as coming from God. 2. They realise themselves as unworthy of the good they receive. 3. They are anxious to do right, because they are righteous; and that involves thanksgiving. 4. Thankfulness is a part of the joy derived from what they enjoy. II. The upright are sure to dwell in God's presence. 1. In the sense of setting the Lord before them. 2. In the sense of an abiding, present fellowship with God. 3. In the sense of enjoying God's approval. 4. In the sense of dwelling in heaven for ever.—*J. F.*

PSALM CXLI.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *Yes, David under suspicion, half afraid to speak lest he should speak unadvisedly while trying to clear himself; David slandered and beset by enemies; David censured even by saints, and taking it kindly; David deploring the condition of the godly party of whom he was the acknowledged head; David waiting upon God with confident expectation. The Psalm is one of a group of four, and it bears a striking likeness to the other three. Its meaning lies so deep as to be in places exceedingly obscure, yet even upon its surface it has dust of gold. In its commencement the Psalm is lighted up with the evening glow as the incense rises to heaven; then comes a night of language whose meaning we cannot see; and this gives place to morning light in which our eyes are unto the Lord.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalmist cries for acceptance in prayer (verses* 1, 2)*; then he begs to be kept as to his speech, preserved in heart and deed, and delivered from every sort of fellowship with the ungodly. He prefers to be rebuked by the gracious rather than to be flattered by the wicked, and consoles himself with the confident assurance that he will one day be understood by the godly party, and made to be a comfort to them (verses* 3—6). *In the last verses the slandered saint represents the condition of the persecuted church, looks away to God and pleads for rescue from his cruel enemies, and for the punishment of his oppressors.*

EXPOSITION.

LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense; *and* the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.

1. "*LORD, I cry unto thee.*" This is my last resort: prayer never fails me. My prayer is painful and feeble, and worthy only to be called a cry; but it is a cry unto Jehovah, and this ennobles it. I have cried unto thee, I still cry to thee, and I always mean to cry to thee. To whom else could I go? What else can I do? Others trust to themselves, but I cry unto thee. The weapon of all prayer is one which the believer may always carry with him, and use in every time of need. "*Make haste unto me.*" His case was urgent, and he pleaded that urgency. God's time is the best time, but when we are sorely pressed we may with holy importunity quicken the movements of mercy. In many cases, if help should come late, it would come too late; and we are permitted to pray against such a calamity. "*Give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.*" See how a second time he talks of crying: prayer had become his frequent, yea, his constant exercise: twice in a few words he says, "I cry; I cry." How he longs to be heard, and to be heard at once! There is a voice to the great Father in every cry, and groan, and tear of his children: he can understand what they mean when they are quite unable to express it. It troubles the spirit of the saints when they fear that no favourable ear is turned to their doleful cries: they cannot rest unless their "unto thee" is answered by an "unto me." When prayer is a man's only refuge, he is deeply distressed at the bare idea of his failing therein.

> "That were a grief I could not bear,
> Didst thou not hear and answer prayer;
> But a prayer-hearing, answering God
> Supports me under every load."

2. "*Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense.*" As incense is carefully prepared, kindled with holy fire, and devoutly presented unto God, so let my prayer

be. We are not to look upon prayer as easy work requiring no thought, it needs to be "set forth"; what is more, it must be set forth "before the Lord," by a sense of his presence and a holy reverence for his name: neither may we regard all supplication as certain of divine acceptance, it needs to be set forth before the Lord "as incense," concerning the offering of which there were rules to be observed, otherwise it would be rejected of God. *"And the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."* Whatever form his prayer might take his one desire was that it might be accepted of God. Prayer is sometimes presented without words by the very motions of our bodies: bended knees and lifted hands are the tokens of earnest, expectant prayer. Certainly work, or the lifting up of the hands in labour, is prayer if it be done in dependence upon God and for his glory: there is a hand-prayer as well as a heart-prayer, and our desire is that this may be sweet unto the Lord as the sacrifice of eventide. Holy hope, the lifting up of hands that hang down, is also a kind of worship: may it ever be acceptable with God. The Psalmist makes a bold request: he would have his humble cries and prayers to be as much regarded of the Lord as the appointed morning and evening sacrifices of the holy place. Yet the prayer is by no means too bold, for, after all, the spiritual is in the Lord's esteem higher than the ceremonial, and the calves of the lips are a truer sacrifice than the calves of the stall.

So far we have a prayer about prayer; we have a distinct supplication in the two following verses.

3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

4 Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

5 Let the righteous smite me; *it shall be* a kindness: and let him reprove me; *it shall be* an excellent oil, *which* shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also *shall be* in their calamities.

6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.

3. *"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth."* That mouth had been used in prayer, it would be a pity it should ever be defiled with untruth, or pride, or wrath; yet so it will become unless carefully watched, for these intruders are ever lurking about the door. David feels that with all his own watchfulness he may be surprised into sin, and so he begs the Lord himself to keep him. When Jehovah sets the watch the city is well guarded: when the Lord becomes the guard of our mouth the whole man is well garrisoned. *"Keep the door of my lips."* God has made our lips the door of the mouth, but we cannot keep that door of ourselves, therefore do we entreat the Lord to take the rule of it. O that the Lord would both open and shut our lips, for we can do neither the one nor the other aright if left to ourselves. In times of persecution by ungodly men we are peculiarly liable to speak hastily, or evasively, and therefore we should be specially anxious to be preserved in that direction from every form of sin. How condescending is the Lord! We are ennobled by being door-keepers for him, and yet he deigns to be a door-keeper for us.

4. *"Incline not my heart to any evil thing."* It is equivalent to the petition, "Lead us not into temptation." O that nothing may arise in providence which would excite our desires in a wrong direction. The Psalmist is here careful of his heart. He who holds the heart is lord of the man; but if the tongue and the heart are under God's care all is safe. Let us pray that he may never leave us to our own inclinings, or we shall soon decline from the right.

"To practise wicked works with men that work iniquity." The way the heart inclines the life soon tends: evil things desired bring forth wicked things practised. Unless the fountain of life is kept pure the streams of life will soon be polluted. Alas, there is great power in company: even good men are apt to be swayed by association; hence the fear that we may practise wicked works when we are with wicked workers. We must endeavour not to be with them lest we sin with them. It is bad when the heart goes the wrong way alone, worse when the life runs in the evil road alone; but it is apt to increase unto a high degree of ungodliness when the backslider runs the downward path with a whole horde of sinners around him. Our practice will be our perdition if it be evil; it is an aggravation of sin rather than an excuse for it to say that it is our custom and our habit. It is God's practice to

punish all who make a practice of iniquity. Good men are horrified at the thought of sinning as others do; the fear of it drives them to their knees. Iniquity, which, being interpreted, is a want of equity, is a thing to be shunned as we would avoid an infectious disease. *"And let me not eat of their dainties."* If we work with them we shall soon eat with them. They will bring out their sweet morsels, and delicate dishes, in the hope of binding us to their service by the means of our palates. The trap is baited with delicious meats that we may be captured and become meat for their malice. If we would not sin with men we had better not sit with them, and if we would not share their wickedness we must not share their wantonness.

5. *"Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness."* He prefers the bitters of gracious company to the dainties of the ungodly. He would rather be smitten by the righteous than feasted by the wicked. He gives a permit to faithful admonition, he even invites it—"let the righteous smite me." When the ungodly smile upon us their flattery is cruel; when the righteous smite us their faithfulness is kind. Sometimes godly men rap hard; they do not merely hint at evil, but hammer at it; and even then we are to receive the blows in love, and be thankful to the hand which smites so heavily. Fools resent reproof; wise men endeavour to profit by it. *"And let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."* Oil breaks no heads, and rebuke does no man any harm; rather, as oil refreshes and perfumes, so does reproof when fitly taken sweeten and renew the heart. My friend must love me well if he will tell me of my faults: there is an unction about him if he is honest enough to point out my errors. Many a man has had his head broken at the feasts of the wicked, but none at the table of a true-hearted reprover. The oil of flattery is not excellent; the oil so lavishly used at the banquet of the reveller is not excellent; head-breaking and heart-breaking attend the anointings of the riotous; but it is otherwise with the severest censures of the godly: they are not always sweet, but they are always excellent; they may for the moment bruise the heart, but they never break either it or the head. *"For yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."* Gracious men never grow wrathful with candid friends so as to harbour an ill-feeling against them; if so, when they saw them in affliction, they would turn round upon them and taunt them with their rebukes. Far from it; these wisely grateful souls are greatly concerned to see their instructors in trouble, and they bring forth their best prayers for their assistance. They do not merely pray for them, but they so closely and heartily sympathize that their prayers are "in their calamities," down in the dungeon with them. So true is Christian brotherhood that we are with our friends in sickness or persecution, suffering their griefs; so that our heart's prayer is in their sorrows. When we can give good men nothing more, let us give them our prayers, and let us do this doubly to those who have given us their rebukes.

6. This is a verse of which the meaning seems far to seek. Does it refer to the righteous among the Israelites? We think so. David surely means that when their leaders fell never to rise again, they would then turn to him and take delight in listening to his voice. *"When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet."* And so they did: the death of Saul made all the best of the nation look to the son of Jesse as the Lord's anointed; his words became sweet to them. Many of those good men who had spoken severely of David's quitting his country, and going over to the Philistines, were nevertheless dear to his heart for their fidelity, and to them he returned nothing but good-will, loving prayers, and sweet speeches, knowing that by-and-by they would overlook his faults, and select him to be their leader. They smote him when he erred, but they recognized his excellences. He, on his part, bore no resentment, but loved them for their honesty. He would pray for them when their land lay bleeding at the feet of their foreign enemies; he would come to their rescue when their former leaders were slain; and his words of courageous hopefulness would be sweet in their ears. This seems to me to be a good sense, consistent with the context. At the same time, other and more laboured interpretations have their learned admirers, and to these we will refer in our notes from other authors.

7 Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth *wood* upon the earth.

8 But mine eyes *are* unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.

9 Keep me from the snares *which* they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.

10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

7. David's case seemed hopeless: the cause of God in Israel was as a dead thing, even as a skeleton broken, and rotten, and shovelled out of the grave, to return as dust to its dust. *"Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth."* There seemed to be no life, no cohesion, no form, order, or headship among the godly party in Israel: Saul had demolished it, and scattered all its parts, so that it did not exist as an organized whole. David himself was like one of these dried bones, and the rest of the godly were in much the same condition. There seemed to be no vitality or union among the holy seed; but their cause lay at death's door. *"As when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth."* They were like wood divided and thrown apart: not as one piece of timber, nor even as a bundle, but all cut to pieces, and thoroughly divided. Leaving out the word "wood," which is supplied by the translators, the figure relates to cleaving upon the earth, which probably means ploughing, but may signify any other form of chopping and splitting, such as felling a forest, tearing up bushes, or otherwise causing confusion and division. How often have good men thought thus of the cause of God! Wherever they have looked, death, division, and destruction have stared them in the face. Cut and cloven, hopelessly sundered! Scattered, yea, scattered at the grave's mouth! Split up and split for the fire! Such the cause of God and truth has seemed to be. "Upon the earth" the prospect was wretched; the field of the church was ploughed, harrowed, and scarified: it had become like a wood-chopper's yard, where everything was doomed to be broken up. We have seen churches in such a state, and have been heart-broken. What a mercy that there is always a place above the earth to which we can look! There lives One who will give a resurrection to his cause, and a reunion to his divided people. He will bring up the dead bones from the grave's mouth, and make the dried faggots live again. Let us imitate the Psalmist in the next verse, and look up to the living God.

8. *"But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord."* He looked upward and kept his eyes fixed there. He regarded duty more than circumstances; he considered the promise rather than the external providence; and he expected from God rather than from men. He did not shut his eyes in indifference or despair, neither did he turn them to the creature in vain confidence, but he gave his eyes to his God, and saw nothing to fear. Jehovah his Lord is also his hope. Thomas called Jesus Lord and God, and David here speaks of his God and Lord. Saints delight to dwell upon the divine names when they are adoring or appealing. *"In thee is my trust."* Not alone in thine attributes or in thy promises, but in thyself. Others might confide where they chose, but David kept to his God: in him he trusted always, only, confidently, and unreservedly. *"Leave not my soul destitute";* as it would be if the Lord did not remember and fulfil his promise. To be destitute in circumstances is bad, but to be destitute in soul is far worse; to be left of friends is a calamity, but to be left of God would be destruction. Destitute of God is destitution with a vengeance. The comfort is that God hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

9. *"Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me."* He had before asked, in verse 3, that the door of his mouth might be kept; but his prayer now grows into "Keep *me*." He seems more in trouble about covert temptation than concerning open attacks. Brave men do not dread battle, but they hate secret plots. We cannot endure to be entrapped like unsuspecting animals; therefore we cry to the God of wisdom for protection. *"And the gins of the workers of iniquity."* These evil workers sought to catch David in his speech or acts. This was in itself a piece of in-equity, and so of a piece with the rest of their conduct. They were bad themselves, and they wished either to make him like themselves, or to cause him to seem so. If they could not catch the good man in one way, they would try another; snares and gins should be multiplied, for anyhow they were determined to work his ruin. Nobody could preserve David but the Omniscient and Omnipotent One: he also will preserve us. It is hard to keep out of snares which you cannot see, and to escape gins which you cannot discover. Well might the much-hunted Psalmist cry, "Keep me."

10. *"Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape."* It may not be a Christian prayer, but it is a very just one, and it takes a great deal of grace

to refrain from crying *Amen* to it; in fact, grace does not work towards making us wish otherwise concerning the enemies of holy men. Do we not all wish the innocent to be delivered, and the guilty to reap the result of their own malice? Of course we do, if we are just men. There can be no wrong in desiring that to happen in our own case which we wish for all good men. Yet is there a more excellent way.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm, like the one before it, is distinguished by a pregnant brevity and the use of rare expressions, while at the same time it is full of verbal and real coincidences with the other Psalms of David. These indications are so clear and undeniable, that a sceptical critic of great eminence (De Wette) pronounces it one of the oldest Psalms in the collection.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Whole Psalm.—Few Psalms in so small a compass crowd together so many gems of precious and holy truth.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Whole Psalm.—Many commentators are strongly of opinion that this Psalm was written as a memorial of that very interesting scene in the life of David recorded in 1 Sam. xxiv., relating to his generous treatment of Saul. Though he had an opportunity of putting his cruel persecutor to death in the cave of Engedi, yet he spared his life, only cutting off his skirt, and not suffering his followers to touch him; and when Saul had gone out of the cave, David, going out after him, remonstrated with him from some distance in the gentlest and most respectful language in regard to the injustice of his conduct towards him. It is thought that the sixth verse contains so express a reference to this very remarkable occurrence in David's history, as to leave little doubt that it was the occasion on which the Psalm was composed.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin, in loc.*

Whole Psalm.—The imagery and allusions of the Psalm are in keeping; viz., the oil which had lately anointed him; and the watch before his mouth, etc., suggested by the watching at the mouth of the cave, though ultimately referring to the tabernacle service.—*John Jebb.*

Verse 1.—"*Lord, I cry unto thee.*" Misbelief doth seek many ways for delivery from trouble; but faith hath but one way,—to go to God, to wit, by prayer, for whatsoever is needful.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*Lord, I cry unto thee.*" No distress or danger, how great soever, shall stifle my faith or stop my mouth, but it shall make me more earnest, and my prayers, like strong streams in narrow straits, shall bear down all before them.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*Unto thee . . . . unto me.*" Our prayer and God's mercy are like two buckets in a well; while the one ascends, the other descends.—*Ezekiel Hopkins.*

Verse 1.—Note that the difference of tense, "*I have cried*" (Heb., LXX., and Vulgate) followed by "*when I cry,*" signifies the earnest perseverance of the saint in prayer, never ceasing, so long as trouble lasts. And trouble does last so long as we are in the world; wherefore the apostle teaches us to "Pray without ceasing."—*Augustine and Bruno, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 1—5.—That the Psalmist was now in some distress, whereof he was deeply sensible, is evident from the vehemency of his spirit, which he expresseth in the reiteration of his request or supplication (verse 1); and by his desire that his "prayer might come before the Lord like incense, and the lifting up of his hands as the evening sacrifice" (verse 2). The Jewish expositors guess, not improbably, that in that allusion he had regard unto his present exclusion from the holy services of the tabernacle, which in other places he deeply complains of.

For the matter of his prayer in this beginning of the Psalm, it respecteth himself, and his deportment under his present condition, which he desireth may be harmless and holy, becoming himself, and useful to others. And whereas he was two ways liable to miscarry; first, by too high an exasperation of spirit against his oppressors and persecutors; and, secondly, by a fraudulent and pusillanimous compliance

with them in their wicked courses;—which are the two extremes which men are apt sinfully to run into in such conditions: he prays earnestly to be delivered from them both. The first he hath respect unto in verse 3, *"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips"*: namely, that he might not, under those great provocations which were given him, break forth into an unseemly intemperance of speech against his unjust oppressors, which sometimes fierce and unreasonable cruelties will wrest from the most sedate and moderate spirits. But it was the desire of this holy Psalmist, as in like cases it should be ours, that his heart might be always preserved in such a frame, under the conduct of the Spirit of God, as not to be surprised into an expression of distempered passion in any of his words or sayings. The other he regards in his earnest supplication to be delivered from it, verse 4: *"Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties."* There are two parts of his request unto the purpose intended. 1. That by the power of God's grace influencing his mind and soul, his heart might not be inclined unto any communion or society with his wicked adversaries in their wickedness. 2. That he might be preserved from a liking of, or a longing after those things, which are the baits and allurements whereby men are apt to be drawn into societies and conspiracies with the workers of iniquity; *"And let me not eat of their dainties."* See Prov. i. 10—14. For he here describeth the condition of men prospering for a season in a course of wickedness; they firstly give up themselves unto the practice of iniquity, and then together solace themselves in those satisfactions of their lusts, with which their power and interest in the world do furnish them.

These are the *"dainties,"* for which an impotent longing and desire do betray the minds of unstable persons unto a compliance with ways of sin and folly: for I look on these *"dainties"* as comprising whatever the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life can afford. All these David prays to be delivered from any inclination unto; especially when they are made the allurements of a course of sin. In the enjoyment of these *"dainties,"* it is the common practice of wicked men to soothe up, and mutually encourage one another in the way and course wherein they are engaged. And this completes that poor felicity which in this world so many aspire unto, and whereof alone they are capable. The whole of it is but a society in perishing sensual enjoyments, without control, and with mutual applauses from one another. This the Psalmist had a special regard unto when casting his eye towards another communion and society which he longed after (verse 5). He saw there not dainties but rebukes: he discerned that which is most opposite unto those mutual applauses and rejoicings in one another, which is the salt and cement of all evil societies, for he noticed rebukes and reproofs for the least miscarriages that shall be observed. Now whereas the dainties which some enjoy in a course of prosperous wickedness, are that alone which seems to have anything in it amongst them that is desirable, and on the other side rebukes and reproofs are those alone which seem to have any sharpness, or matter of uneasiness and dislike in the society of the godly, David balanceth that which seemeth to be sharpest in the one society, against that which seems to be sweetest in the other, and, without respect unto other advantages, prefers the one above the other. Hence, some read the beginning of the words, "Let the righteous *rather* smite me," meaning, "rather than that I should eat of the dainties of the ungodly." —*John Owen.*

Verse 2.—*"Let my prayer be set forth before thee."* Margin, *directed.* The Hebrew word means to fit; to establish; to make firm. The Psalmist desires that his prayer should not be like that which is feeble, languishing, easily dissipated; but that it should be like that which is firm and secure.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—*"Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense."* Literally, Let my prayer, incense, be set in order before Thee,—implying that prayer was in the reality what incense was in the symbol. . . . Passing to New Testament Scripture, though still only to that portion which refers to Old Testament times, we are told of the people without being engaged in prayer, while Zacharias was offering incense within the Sanctuary (Luke i. 10); they were in spirit going along with the priestly service. And in the book of Revelation the prayers of saints are once and again identified with the offering of incense on the golden altar before the throne. Rev. v. 8; viii. 3, 4.—*Patrick Fairbairn, in "The Typology of Scripture."*

Verse 2.—*"Set forth."* Prayer is knowing work, believing work, thinking work,

searching work, humbling work, and nothing worth if heart and hand do not join in it.—*Thomas Adam*, 1701—1784.

Verse 2.—"*Set forth before thee as incense*," whose fragrant smoke still ascends upwards. But many times in the very ascent, whilst it strives up higher and higher, *infimo phantasmate verberatur*, saith Gregory, "it is beaten back again by earthly imaginations which intervene," and then is extenuated by degrees, and vanisheth to nothing. Therefore the prophet prays *ut dirigatur oratio*, "that his prayer may be set before God," *ut stabiliatur;* so some render it out of the Hebrew, "that it may be established," that it may neither evaporate itself nor be whiffed about with the wind of vain and contrary imaginations, which come *ab extrinseco* [from without], and may corrupt it.—*Anthony Farindon.*

Verse 2.—"*As incense.*" That in general by *incense* prayer is signified, the Scripture expressly testifieth. And there is a fourfold resemblance between them: 1. In that *it was beaten and pounded* before it was used. So doth acceptable prayer proceed from a broken and contrite heart: Ps. li. 17. 2. *It was of no use until fire was put under it*, and that taken from the altar. Nor is that prayer of any virtue or efficacy which is not kindled by the fire from above, the Holy Spirit of God, which we have from our altar, Christ Jesus. 3. *It naturally ascended upwards towards heaven*, as all offerings in the Hebrew are called מַעֲלוֹת, "ascensions," risings up. And this is the design of prayer, to ascend unto the throne of God: "I will direct unto thee, and will look up"; that is, pray: Ps. v. 3. 4. *It yielded a sweet savour;* which was one end of it in temple services, wherein there was so much burning of flesh and blood. So doth prayer yield a sweet savour unto God; a savour of rest, wherein he is well pleased.—*John Owen.*

Verse 2.—"*As incense . . . . as the evening sacrifice.*" Though this address of mine must necessarily want all that solemnity of preparation required in the service of thy holy Tabernacle, the cloud of incense and perfume, etc., the mincha or oblation of fine flour, etc., yet let the purity and fervour of my heart, and the innocency of my hands, now lifted up to thee in this sad hour of my distress, be accepted instead of all these, and prevail for deliverance and a safe retreat to me and my companions.—*Charles Peters* (—1777), *in "A Critical Dissertation on the Book of Job,"* 1751.

Verse 2.—"*As the evening sacrifice.*" This should be our daily service, as a lamb was offered up morning and evening for a sacrifice. But, alas! how dull and dead are our devotions! Like Pharaoh's chariots, they drive on heavily. Some, like Balaam's ass, scarce ever open their mouths twice.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 2.—"*My hands.*" Spreading forth our hands in believing and fervent prayer is the only way of grasping mercy.—*F. E., in "The Saints Ebenezer,"* 1667.

Verse 2.—In the gorgeous ceremonial worship of the Hebrews, none of the senses were excluded from taking part in the service. . . . . The sense of smell occupied, perhaps, the most prominent place; for the acceptance of the worship was always indicated by a symbol borrowed from this sense: "The Lord smelled a sweet savour." The prayer of the people ascended as incense, and the lifting up of their hands as the evening sacrifice. The offering of incense formed an essential part of the religious service. The altar of incense occupied one of the most conspicuous and honoured positions in the tabernacle and temple. . . . On this altar a censer full of incense poured forth its fragrant clouds every morning and evening; and yearly, as the day of atonement came round, when the high priest entered the holy of holies, he filled a censer with live coals from the sacred fire on the altar of burnt-offerings, and bore it into the sanctuary, where he threw upon the burning coals the "sweet incense beaten small," which he had brought in his hand. Without this smoking censer he was forbidden, on pain of death, to enter into the awful shrine of Jehovah. Notwithstanding the washing of his flesh, and the linen garments with which he was clothed, he dare not enter the holiest of all with the blood of atonement, unless he could personally shelter himself under a cloud of incense.

It has been supposed by some writers that incense was invented for the purpose of concealing or neutralizing the noxious effluvia caused by the number of beasts slaughtered every day in the sanctuary. Other writers have attached a mystical import to it, and believed that it was a symbol of the breath of the world arising in praise to the Creator, the four ingredients of which it was composed representing the four elements. While a third class, looking upon the tabernacle as the palace of God, the theocratic King of Israel, and the ark of the covenant as his throne, regarded the incense as merely corresponding to the perfume so lavishly employed

about the person and appointments of an Oriental monarch. It may doubtless have been intended primarily to serve these purposes and convey these meanings, but it derived its chief importance in connection with the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic ritual from the fact of its being the great symbol of prayer. It was offered at the time when the people were in the posture and act of devotion; and their prayers were supposed to be presented to God by the priest, and to ascend to him in the smoke and odour of that fragrant offering. Scripture is full of allusions to it, understood in this beautiful symbolical sense. Acceptable, prevailing prayer was a sweet-smelling savour to the Lord; and prayer that was unlawful, or hypocritical, or unprofitable, was rejected with disgust by the organ of smell.

Doubtless the Jews felt, when they saw the soft white clouds of fragrant smoke rising slowly from the altar of incense, as if the voice of the priest were silently but eloquently pleading in that expressive emblem in their behalf. The association of sound was lost in that of smell, and the two senses were blended in one. And this symbolical mode of supplication, as Dr. George Wilson has remarked, has this one advantage over spoken or written prayer, that it appealed to those who were both blind and deaf, a class that are usually shut out from social worship by their affliction. Those who could not hear the prayers of the priest could join in devotional exercises symbolized by incense, through the medium of their sense of smell; and the hallowed impressions shut out by one avenue were admitted to the mind and heart by another.

The altar of incense stood in the closest connection with the altar of burnt-offerings. The blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled on the horns of both on the great day of annual atonement. Morning and evening, as soon as the sacrifice was offered, the censer poured forth its fragrant contents, so that the perpetual incense within ascended simultaneously with the perpetual burnt-offering outside. Without the live coals from off the sacrificial altar, the sacred incense could not be kindled; and without the incense previously filling the holy place, the blood of atonement from the altar of burnt-offering could not be sprinkled on the mercy-seat. Beautiful and expressive type of the perfect sacrifice and the all-prevailing intercession of Jesus—of intercession founded upon atonement, of atonement preceded and followed by intercession! Beautiful and expressive type, too, of the prayers of believers kindled by the altar-fire of Christ's sacrifice, and perfumed by his merits!—*Hugh Macmillan, in "The Ministry of Nature,"* 1871.

Verse 3.—"*Set a watch, O* LORD, *before my mouth,*" etc. 1. A man would never use this language without a conviction of *the importance of the subject.* . . . Everything is transacted by speech, in natural, civil, and religious concerns: how much, therefore, depends on the good or evil management of the tongue! What an ardour of holy love and friendship, or of anger and malice, may a few words fan into a flame! The tongue is the principal instrument in the cause of God; and it is the chief engine of the devil; give him this, and he asks no more—there is no mischief or misery he will not accomplish by it. The use, the influence of it, therefore, is inexpressible; and words are never to be considered only as *effects*, but as *causes*, the operation of which can never be fully imagined. Let us suppose a case, I fear, but too common. You drop, in the thoughtlessness of conversation, or for the sake of argument or wit, some irreligious, sceptical expression—it lodges in the memory of a child, or a servant—it takes root in a soil favourable to such seed—it gradually springs up, and brings forth fruit, in the profanation of the Sabbath; the neglect of the means of grace; in the reading of improper books; in the choice of dangerous companions;—who can tell where it will end? But there is a Being who knows where it began. It will be acknowledged that some have it in their power, by reason of their office, talents, and influence, to do much more injury than others; but none are so insignificant as to be harmless.

2. A man would never use this language without a conviction that *he is in danger of transgression.* And if David was conscious of a liableness to err, shall we ever presume on our safety? Our danger arises from the depravity of our nature. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"; and "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Our danger arises from the contagion of example. There is nothing in which mankind are more universally culpable than in the disorders of speech. Yet with these we are constantly surrounded; and to these we have been accustomed from our impressible infancy. We are in danger from the frequency of speech. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin."

We must of necessity speak often ; but we often speak without necessity. Duty calls us to intermingle much with our fellow-creatures ; but we are too little in the closet, and too much in the crowd—and when we are in company we forget the admonition, " Let every man be swift to hear, and slow to speak."

3. A man would never use this language without a conviction of *inability to preserve himself.* The Bible teaches us this truth, not only doctrinally, but historically. The examples of good men, and men eminent in godliness, confirm it in the very article before us. Moses, the meekest man in the earth, " spake unadvisedly with his lips." You have heard of the patience of Job, but he " cursed the day of his birth " ; and Jeremiah, the prophet of the Lord, did the same. Peter said, " Though all men should be offended because of thee, I will never be offended ; though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." But how did he use his tongue a few hours after ? Then " began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man ! "

4. A man would never use this language without a conviction of *the wisdom of applying to God for the assistance he needs.* Prayer is the effect of our weakness, and the expression of our dependence. It confesses the agency of God. 1. In the first place—God is equal to our preservation. 2. His succours are not to be obtained without prayer. 3. Prayer always brings the assistance it implores.—*Condensed from W. Jay's Sermon on "The Regulation of the Tongue."*

Verse 3.—"*Set a watch, O* LORD, *before my mouth.*" etc. Watching and prayer are often joined together. We are best kept when recommended into God's hand. I do observe here, First, That unadvised and passionate speeches do easily drop from us in our troubles, especially in our persecution. Secondly, That a godly, conscientious man is very tender of these, as of all evil. He that would live in communion with God for the present, and hope to appear with comfort before him hereafter, is sensible of the least thing that tends to God's displeasure, and God's dishonour : this is the true spirit of one that will be owned by Christ at the last day. Thirdly, There is no way to prevent being provoked to impatience and rashness of speech, or any evil, but by keeping a watch, and renewing our obligations to God. Fourthly, Whoever would keep a watch must call in the aid and assistance of God's grace ; "*Lord, set a watch before my mouth.*"—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 3.—"*Set a watch, O* LORD, *before my mouth,*" etc. Thus holy men have kept the sessions at home, and made their hearts the foremen of the jury, and examined themselves as we examine others. The fear of the Lord stood at the door of their souls, to examine every thought before it went in, and at the door of their lips, to examine every word before it went out, whereby they escaped a thousand sins which we commit, as though we had no other work.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 3.—"*Set a watch, O* LORD, *before my mouth.*" Nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out which may any way tend to the dishonour of God, or the hurt of others.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3.—"*Set a watch,*" etc. Let a seal for words not to be spoken lie on the tongue. A watch over words is better than over wealth.—*Lucian.*

Verse 3.—"*Keep the door of my lips.*" That it move not creaking and complaining, as on rusty hinges, for want of the oil of joy and gladness. David had somewhat to do with his tongue, as we see (Ps. xxxix. 1, 3) ; and when he had carted the ark, how untowardly he spake, as if the fault were more in God than himself, that there was such a breach made in Uzzah (1 Chron. xiii. 12). It was but need thus to pray. —*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Incline not my heart to any evil thing,*" etc. The present pleasure and commodity of sin is in high estimation with the sinner, and much sweeter to him than what he may lawfully enjoy ; the pleasures of sin are his delicates. No man can keep himself from being taken with the allurements of a sinful course, except the Lord preserve him : "*Let me not eat of their dainties.*" The holiest men in Scripture have been most sensible of the impotency of their own free will, and of their inability to resist temptations, or to bring the principles of grace into action ; most diffident of themselves, most dependent upon God, most careful to make use of means, and conscientious in following of ordinances, as their prayers do testify : "*Incline not my heart to any evil thing,*" etc.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*Incline not my heart.*" Heb. Let not be inclined my heart.—*John Jebb.*

Verse 4.—"*My heart.*" That man is like Esau which had an inheritance, which

had a heart but now he hath not possession of his own; therefore, give God thy heart, that he may keep it; and not a piece of thy heart, not a room in thy heart, but thy heart. The heart divided, dyeth. God is not like the mother which would have the child divided, but like the natural mother, which said, rather than it should be divided, let her take all. Let the devil have all, if he which gave it be not worthy of it. God hath no cope-mate, therefore he will have no parting of stakes, but all or none; and therefore he which asks here thy heart, in the sixth of Deuteronomy and the fifth verse, asketh "all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy strength"; thrice he requireth *all*, lest we should keep a thought behind. Yet it is *thy* heart, that is, a vain heart, a barren heart, a sinful heart, until thou give it unto God, and then it is the spouse of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the image of God, so changed, and formed, and refined, that God calls it a new heart.

There is such strife for the heart as there was for Moses's body. "Give it me," saith the Lord; "give it me," saith the tempter; "give it me," saith the pope; "give it me," saith riches; "give it me," saith pleasure; as though thou must needs give it to some one. Now here is the choice, whether thou wilt give it to God or the devil; God's heart or the devil's heart; whose wilt thou be?—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 4.—"*Let me not eat of their dainties.*" Sin is not only meat, but sweet meat; not only bread, but pleasant bread to an evil heart. Daniel for some weeks ate no pleasant bread; he ate bread to keep life and soul together, but he forbare feasting or good cheer. Sin is a feast to a carnal man, it is his good cheer, yea, it is "*dainties*" to him. David, speaking of wicked men says, "*Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.*" These "*dainties*" may be expounded either for the prosperity that comes in by wicked practices (some by wicked ways get not only their ordinary food but "*dainties*"); or those "*dainties*" are sin itself: they feasted themselves in doing evil: "*Lord, let me not eat of their dainties.*" If that be their food I had rather starve than eat with them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—"*Their dainties.*" The enemies of David were sensual and luxurious; and they would have gladly admitted him to share in their banquets, if his character had resembled their own. He entreats to be preserved from inducement so to do.—*William Walford.*

Verse 5.—"*Let the righteous smite me,*" etc. This verse is so obscure as to be almost unintelligible. According to the English versions, it expresses his willingness to be rebuked by good men for his benefit. But this sense is not only hard to be extracted from the words, but foreign from the context. Of the many contradictory interpretations which have been proposed the most probable is that which makes the sentence mean, that the sufferings endured by the good man, even at the hand of the wicked, are chastisements inflicted by a righteous God in justice and with mercy, and as such may be likened to a festive ointment, which the head of the sufferer should not refuse, as he will still have need of consolation and occasion to invoke God, in the midst of trials and of mischiefs yet to be experienced.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*Let the righteous smite me.*" The word נכה is seldom used in Scripture but to signify a severe stroke which shakes the subject smitten, and causeth it to tremble; see Prov. xxiii. 35; 1 Sam. xiv. 16; Ps. lxxiv. 6; and it is used for the stroke of the hammer on the anvil in fashioning of the iron (Isa. xli. 7). Wherefore the word חסד following may be taken adverbially, as a lenitive of that severity which this word importeth: "Let him smite me, but" *leniter, benignè, misericorditer,* "gently, kindly, friendly, mercifully:" and so some translations read the words, "Let the righteous smite me friendly, or kindly."—*John Owen.*

Verse 5.—"*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness,*" etc. Grace will teach a Christian to take those potions which are wholesome, though they be not toothsome. Faithful reproof is a token of love, and therefore may well be esteemed a kindness. Such wounding of a friend is healing, and so David might well call it "*an excellent oil.*" And he did not only say so, which is easy and ordinary, but acted accordingly. He did not as the papists, who highly commend holy water, but turn away their faces when it comes to be sprinkled on them. When he had by sin, and continuance in it, so gangrened his flesh, and corrupted himself, that he was in danger of death, he suffered his sores to be thoroughly searched without regret. Nathan was the chirurgeon whom God employed to search that wound

which had divers mouths for festering in his soul; and truly he did not dally with his patient, though he were a prince, but thrust his instrument to the bottom; yet whatever pain it put him to, he took it patiently, and was so far from being angry with the prophet, that he made him one of his privy council. It is a sign of a polluted nature for a man, like a serpent, if he be but touched, to gather poison and vomit it up at the party. "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee": Prov. ix. 8. —*George Swinnock.*

Verse 5.—"*Let the righteous smite me,*" etc. If the righteous smite us by reproofs, it must be taken as a kindness, and as a precious balsam, which doth not break our head, but heal us. Not that we are bound to belie ourselves in compliance with every man's censorious humour that will accuse us; but we must be readier to censure ourselves than others, and readier to confess a fault than to expect a confession from others whom we reprove. Sincerity and serious repentance will be honourable in that person who is most careful to avoid sin, and most ready penitently to confess it when he hath been overcome, and truly thankful to those that call him to repentance; as being more desirous that God and his laws and religion should have the glory of their holiness, than that he himself should have the undue glory of innocency, and escape the deserved shame of sin.

It is one of the most dangerous diseases of professors, and one of the greatest scandals of this age, that persons taken for eminently religious are more impatient of pain, though just, reproof than many a drunkard, swearer, or fornicator; and when they have spent hours or days in the seeming earnest confession of their sin, and lament before God and man that they cannot do it with more grief and tears, yet they take it for a heinous injury in another that will say half so much against them, and take him for a malignant enemy of the godly who will call them as they call themselves.—*Richard Baxter* (1615—1691), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 5.—"*Let the righteous smite me.*" If a righteous or a right-wise man smite and reprove, he will do it, 1. *Sine felle*, without gall, without bitterness. 2. *Sine publicatione*, without publishing, divulging, or telling it to the world. 3. *Sine contumelia*, without disgrace—to reform his friend, not to disgrace him. 4. *Sine adulatione*, without flattery. 5. *Non sine Deo*, not without God.—*John Gore, in a Sermon entitled "Unknowne Kindnesse,"* 1635.

Verse 5.—"*The righteous,*" etc. The minister cannot be always preaching; two or three hours, may be, in a week, he spends among his people in the pulpit, holding the glass of the gospel before their faces; but the lives of professors, these preach all the week long: if they were but holy and exemplary, they would be as a repetition of the preacher's sermon to their families and neighbours among whom they converse, and keep the sound of his doctrine continually ringing in their ears. This would give Christians an amiable advantage in doing good to their carnal neighbours by counsel and reproof, which now is seldom done, and when done it proves to little purpose, because not backed with their own exemplary walking. "It behoves him," saith Tertullian, "that would counsel or reprove another, to guard his speech with the authority of his own conversation, lest, wanting that, what he says puts himself to the blush." We do not love one that hath a stinking breath to come very near us; such, therefore, had need have a sweet-scented life.

Reproofs are a good physic, but they have an unpleasant reception; it is hard for men not to throw them back on the face of them that gives them. Now nothing is more powerful to keep a reproof from thus coming back than the holiness of the person that reproves. "*Let the righteous smite me.*" saith David, "*it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.*" See how well it is taken from such a hand, from the authority that holiness carries with it. None but a vile wretch will smite a righteous man with reproach for smiting him with a reproof, if softly laid on, and like oil fomented, and wrought into him, as it should, with compassion and love to his soul! Thus we see how influential the power of holiness would be unto the wicked, neither would it be less upon our brethren and fellow-Christians. Holy David professed he would take it as a kindness for the righteous to smite him; yea, as kindly as if he broke a box of precious oil upon his head, which was amongst the Jews a high expression of love.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 5.—"*It shall be a kindness*" 1. It is a kindness *reducere erratum*, to bring back the wandering. 2. *Sanare ægrotum*, to recover the sick. 3. *Suscitare lethargum*, to awake, to stir up the lethargic, the sleepy. 4. *Ligare insanum*, to bind a mad-

man. 5. *Liberare perditum*, to save a lost man, one in imminent danger.—*John Gore.*

Verse 5.—"*It shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.*" Some persons pride themselves on being blunt, or, as they call it, "honest"; but very blunt people do little good to others, and get little love to themselves. The Scriptures recommend gentleness and kindness. Reproof should fall like the dew, and not like the rushing hail-storm. The "*oil*" insinuates itself; the stone wounds and then rebounds. Christians should take heed of getting fond of the work of "rebuking." Such "spiritual constables" do a great deal of mischief without intending it. They are in a church what a very witty and sarcastic person is in society, or what a tell-tale is in school; and approximate very closely to that class which the apostle terms "busybodies in other men's matters." Our manner must be tender and winning. The nail of reproof, says an old writer, must be well oiled in kindness before it is driven home. Meddling with the faults of others is like attempting to move a person afflicted with the rheumatic gout: it must be done slowly and tenderly, nor must we be frightened by an outcry or two. The great thing is to show the person that you really love him; and if you manifest this in the sight of God, he will bless your efforts, and give you favour in the sight of an erring brother.—*Christian Treasury.*

Verse 5.—"*It shall be an excellent oil.*" Certain oils are said to have a most salutary effect on the head; hence in fevers, or any other complaints which effect the head, the medical men always recommend oil. I have known people who were deranged, cured in a very short time by nothing more than the application of a peculiar kind of oil to the head. There are, however, other kinds which are believed, when thus applied, to produce delirium. Thus the reproofs of the righteous were compared to "*excellent oil*," which produced a most salutary effect on the head. So common is this practice of anointing the head, that all who can afford it do it every week.

But, strange as it may appear, the crown of their heads is the place selected for the chastisement; thus owners of slaves, or husbands, or schoolmasters, beat the heads of the offenders with their knuckles. Should an urchin come late to school, or forget his lesson, the pedagogue says to some of the other boys, "Go, beat his head!" "Begone, fellow! or I will beat thy head." Should a man be thus chastised by an inferior, he quotes the old proverb: "If my head is to be beaten, let it be done with the fingers that have rings on"; meaning a man of rank. "Yes, yes; let a holy man smite my head! and what of that? it is an excellent oil." "My master has been beating my head, but it has been good oil for me."—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 5.—"*Oil, which shall not break my head.*" When I first took this text in hand, this seemed unto me a very strange and uncouth expression. If the Psalmist had said, It shall be a stone that shall not break my head, etc., we had easily understood him; but to speak of an oil, or a balm, which we know to be so soft, so supple, so lithe and gentle an ointment, that he should speak of breaking his head with oil, it is strange. I confess it troubled me a while, till at length I conceived it might be spoken by contraries; as when a physician gives a patient some pectoral, or cordial, and saith, Take this, it will not hurt you; his meaning is, it will help and do him good. So this oil *shall not break my head;* that is, it shall heal it, being broken by my own corruption, by Satan's temptations, and by the evil influence of such as flatter me in my sins.—*John Gore.*

Verse 5.—If David could say of his enemy that cursed him, "Let him alone, for God hath bidden him to curse"; much more safely mayest thou say of thy friend that reproves thee, "Let him alone, for God hath bidden him to smite." And as the apostle saith of ministers, that God "doth entreat you by us"; so persuade yourselves that God doth reprove you by them.—*John Gore.*

Verse 5.—It was the saying of a heathen, though no heathenish saying, "That he who would be good, must either have a faithful friend to instruct him, or a watchful enemy to correct him." Should we murder a physician because he comes to cure us; or like him worse, because he would make us better? The flaming sword of *reprehension* is but to keep us from the forbidden fruit of *transgression.* "*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.*" Let him smite me as with a *hammer*, for so the word signifies. A Boanerges is as necessary as a Barnabas. —*William Secker.*

Verse 5.—"*Yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.*" That is, if ever they who are my reprovers fall into calamity, though they may think they provoked me so by reproving me, that they have lost my love, and have cast themselves out of my prayers, or that I will never speak well of them or for them again; yetI will pray for them with all my heart, as their matter shall require. I will pray for them when they have most need of prayer, even "*in their calamities.*" Some heighten the sense thus,—The more they sharpen their reproof, the more I think myself bound to pray for them. It shows an excellent spirit, not to be hindered from doing good to others by anything they do or speak against us, nor their sharpest (though perhaps mistaken) reproofs of us. Thus it was that that good man Job "*prayed for his friends,*" who had spoken much against him, and not only reproved him without cause, but reproached him without charity.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*When their judges are overthrown,*" etc. When the judgments in reserve for the leaders of my enemies shall come upon them, they will perceive too late how reasonble are my words, and wish that they had hearkened to them sooner. —*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 6.—"*Overthrown.*" The verb rendered "*overthrown*" is used of Jezebel in 2 Kings ix. 33; "Throw her down. So they threw her down."—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 6.—"*They shall hear my words; for they are sweet.*" This is especially true of all the words which David spake by inspiration, or the Spirit of God spake to him; particularly in his book of Psalms, concerming the Messiah, the covenant of grace, and the blessings of it; of the rich experiences of grace he had, and the several doctrines of the gospel declared by him; which were sweet, delightful, and entertaining to those who have ears to hear such things; or those ears are opened to hear them, so as to understand them and distinguish them, but to others not. —*John Gill.*

Verse 6.—"*They shall hear my words; for they are sweet.*" Those that slighted the word of God before, will relish it and be glad of it when they are in affliction; for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter the word is sweet. Oppressed innocency cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure; but when they come to be overthrown themselves, they will have more compassionate thoughts of the afflicted.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 6.—"*For they are sweet.*" They shall be pleasant; mild; gentle; equitable; just. After the harsh and severe enactments of Saul, after enduring his acts of tyranny, the people will be glad to welcome me, and to live under the laws of a just and equal administration. The passage, therefore, expresses confidence that Saul and his hosts would be overthrown, and that the people of the land would gladly hail the accession to the throne of one who had been anointed to reign over them.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verses 6, 7.—The mild and dutiful behaviour of David towards Saul and his friends are set together by way of contrast, in the strongest light, from the instances of each sort here produced. The first is, David's humanity towards Saul, in giving him his life at two several times, when he had it in his power to destroy him as he pleased. "*Their judges have been dismissed in the rocky places; and have heard my words that they are sweet*"; that is, "Their princes have been dismissed in safety, when I had them at an advantage in those rocky deserts; and only heard me expostulate with them in the gentlest words."

The other is, Saul's barbarity and cruelty towards David (or his friends, which is much the same) in the horrid massacre of Ahimelech and the priests, by the hand of Doeg the Edomite, done in such a savage manner, that he compares it to the chopping and cleaving wood; "*Like as when one cutteth and cleaveth, so have our bones been scattered on the earth at the command of Saul*"; for so I read the Hebrew words, *le-pi Saul, at the mouth*, that is, the command *of Saul.*

Should we suppose this passage to refer to the first time of David's sparing Saul, viz., when he had him in his power in the cave of *Engedi* (here called *jedé selay*), the sides of the rock, or the rocky places, the speech he made on this occasion when he called after Saul (and which is recorded in 1 Sam. xxiv., from the eighth to the sixteenth verse) might well be called *sweet* or *pleasant words.* For they set his own innocence and the king's unjust behaviour to him in so strong a light, and with all that gentleness and mildness, and even this hard-hearted prince could not

forbear being greatly affected with it for the present; and we are told (verses 16, 17) that "he lifted up his voice and wept."—*Charles Peters.*

Verse 7.—"*Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth,*" etc. The primary reference may be to the slaughter of the priests by the command of Saul, 1 Sam. xxii. 16—19. The language, however, may be illustrative of the many massacres like that on the eve of St. Bartholomew, so numerous as to be scattered on the face of the earth, marking the passage of pious martyrs from this world to a better, and testifying where the blood of the slain shall be disclosed for the judgment of their murderers.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 7.—"*Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth,*" etc. Assuming the very extreme, it is a look of hope into the future: should his bones and the bones of his followers be even scattered about the mouth of Sheôl (cf. the Syrian picture of Sheôl: "the dust upon its threshold, *'al-escûfteh,*" *Deutsche Morgenländ. Zeitschrift,* xx. 513), their soul below, their bones above—it would nevertheless be only as when one in ploughing cleaves the earth; *i.e.*, they do not lie there in order that they may continue lying, but that they may rise up anew, as the seed that is sown sprouts up out of the upturned earth.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 7.—"*Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth.*" That is to say, I and my company are in a dying condition, free among the dead; yea, if taken we should be put to most cruel deaths, hewn in pieces, or pulled limbmeal, and left unburied; and our dead bodies mangled by a barbarous inhumanity, as wood-cleavers make the shivers fly hither and thither. This is the perilous case of me and my partisans. —*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—"*Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth.*"—This seems to be strong eastern painting, and almost figurative language; but that it may be strictly true, the following extract demonstrates: "At five o'clock we left Garigana, our journey being still to the eastward of north; and, at a quarter past six in the evening, arrived at the village of that name, whose inhabitants had all perished with hunger the year before; their wretched bones being all unburied, and scattered upon the surface of the ground, where the village formerly stood. We encamped among the bones of the dead, as no space could be found free from them; and on the 23rd, at six in the morning, full of horror at this miserable spectacle, we set out for Teawa." —(*James Bruce's Travels.*) To the Jews such a spectacle must have been very dreadful, as the want of burial was esteemed one of the greatest calamities which could befall them.—*Burder's "Oriental Customs."*

Verse 7.—"*Like one ploughing and cleaving in the earth.*" This clause may be explained not of cleaving wood but ploughing, to which the first verb is applied in Arabic. *Like* (*one*) *ploughing and cleaving* (making furrows) *in the earth,* not for the sake of mangling its surface, but to make it fruitful and productive, (so) *our bones are scattered at the mouth of hell,* as the necessary means of a glorious resurrection.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 7.—Who can attend the digging of a grave, and view the ruins then disclosed, without exclaiming, "*Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth*"?—*George Horne.*

Verse 8.—"*Mine eyes are unto thee, O* GOD *the Lord.*" If you would keep your mind fixed in prayer, keep your *eye* fixed. Much vanity comes in at the eye. When the eyes wander in prayer the heart wanders. To think to keep the heart fixed in prayer, and yet let the eyes gaze abroad, is as if one should think to keep his house safe, yet let the windows be open.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 8.—"*Leave not my soul destitute.*" The literal Hebrew is, *Pour not out my soul,* but keep it in thy cup of salvation.—*Agellius.* [Compare Isa. liii. 12: "He hath poured out his soul unto death."]

Verse 8.—"*Leave not my soul destitute,*" or, "*Cast not out my soul.*" That is, cast not my life away, as water, which is of no account, is cast out of a vessel containing it.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 8.—"*Leave not my soul destitute.*" His soul knew what it was to be "*destitute*"; he had known the misery of spiritual beggary and soul poverty. It was not with him as natural poverty is with the rich, a matter of speculation, a mere matter of theory; but a matter of personal and painful experience. . . . It is in the margin "*Make not my soul bare*"; Strip me not of every hope; leave me not completely naked; abandon me not to nature's beggary and misery; let me not

go down into the pit with all my sins upon my head; leave not my soul destitute of pardon and peace.—*Joseph C. Philpot.*

Verses 8—10.—

O pour not out my soul, I pray,
From the dark snare preserve my way,
The chambers of the blind entangling net,
Which by my path the powers of evil set.

Behold them laid, the godless crew,
Low in the toils they darkly drew:
The while, with gathering heart and watchful eye,
I wait mine hour to pass victorious by.

John Keble.

Verse 9. 10.—"*Snares,*" "*Gins,*" "*Nets.*" The usual method of capturing or killing the lion in Palestine was by pitfalls or nets, to both of which there are many references in the Scriptures. The mode of hunting the lion with the nets was identical with that which is practised in India at the present time. The precise locality of the lion's dwelling-place having been discovered, a circular wall of net is arranged round it, or if only a few nets can be obtained, they are set in a curved form, the concave side being towards the lion. They then send dogs into the thicket, hurl stones and sticks at the den, shoot arrows into it, fling burning torches at it, and so irritate and alarm the animal that it rushes against the net, which is so made that it falls down and envelops the animal in its folds. If the nets be few, the drivers go to the opposite side of the den, and induce the lion to escape in the direction where he sees no foes, but where he is sure to run against the treacherous net. Other large and dangerous animals were also captured by the same means. Another and more common, because an easier and a cheaper method, was, by digging a deep pit, covering the mouth with a slight covering of sticks and earth, and driving the animal upon the treacherous covering. It is an easier method than the net, because after the pit is once dug, the only trouble lies in throwing the covering over its mouth. But it is not so well adapted for taking beasts alive, as they are likely to be damaged, either by the fall into the pit, or by the means used in getting them out again. Animals, therefore, that are caught in pits are generally, though not always, killed before they are taken out. The net, however, envelops the animal so perfectly, and renders it so helpless, that it can be easily bound and taken away, The hunting net is very expensive, and requires a large staff of men to work it, so that none but a rich man could use the net in hunting.

Besides the net, several other modes of bird-catching were used by the ancient Jews, just as is the case at the present day. Boys, for example, who catch birds for their own consumption, and not for the market, can do so by means of various traps, most of which are made on the principle of the noose, or snare. Sometimes a great number of hair-nooses are set in places to which the birds are decoyed, so that in hopping about, many of them are sure to be entangled in the snares. Sometimes the noose is ingeniously suspended in a narrow passage which the birds are likely to traverse, and sometimes a simple fall-trap is employed.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 10.—"*Into their own nets.*" The word rendered "*nets*" occurs only in this place, as the closely corresponding word in Ps.cxl. 10, which is rendered "*deep pits,*" occurs there only.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. The Perpetuity of Prayer: "I cry, I cry." II. The Personality: "unto thee," "unto me." II. The Practicalness: "Make haste; give ear."

Verse 1.—Holy haste. I. The saint hasting to God. II. The saint hastening God. III. God's sure hastening to his help.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 1, 2.—I. Prayer put forth: 1. With urgency: "Make haste unto me." 2. With fervency: "Give ear," etc. II. Prayer set forth: "Let my prayer be set forth," etc. When hearing is obtained there is composure and order in prayer.

When the fire is kindled the incense rises. III. Prayer held forth: "The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice," as constant and accepted.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—True prayer acceptable as incense and as the evening sacrifice. It is spiritual, solemn, ordained of God, brings Christ to remembrance.

Verse 3.—I. The mouth a door. II. A watchman needed. III. The Lord fulfilling that office.

Verse 4.—Total abstinence from evil desires, practices, and delights.

Verse 4.—A prayer, I. For the repression of every evil tendency in the heart: "Incline not my heart," etc. II. For the prevention of any association with the wicked in their sinful works: "To practise," etc. III. For a holy contempt of the temporal pleasure or profit placed in our way through the sin of others: "Let me not eat," etc. Note, many who will not engage in a wicked act do not object to participate in its gains.—*J. F.*

Verse 4.—Deprecation of, I. Devil's desires. II. Devil's deeds. III. Devil's dainties.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 5.—Rebukes of good men. I. Invited. II. Appreciated: "it shall be a kindness." III. Utilized: "an excellent oil." IV. Cheerfully endured: "not break my head." V. Repaid, by our prayers for them in time of trouble.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—"Intercessory Prayer." See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1,049,

Verse 6.—I. Times of trouble will come to the careless. II. Then they will be more ready to hear the gospel. III. Then they will find sweetness in that which they formerly refused.

Verse 6.—A Desert Oasis. I. The world is a stony place, hard, barren. II. Often pride and self-trust suffer overthrowing there. III. Then words of God by his sent servant make an oasis in the desert.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 7, 8.—A cemetery scene. I. Dry bones of the dead about the grave. II. Weary bones of the aged and sick around the grave. III. all bones being from day to day made ready for the grave. IV. Bones finding rest in God: "mine eyes are unto thee, O God," etc.

Verse 8.—Expectation. Supplication.

Verse 9.—The snares. Who lay them? Why? Who so many? How are we to escape? "Keep me."

Verses 9, 10.—David prays, 1. That he may see God in his deliverance from his enemies, and 2. That they may see God in the frustration of their designs.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—Great pains to little purpose. I. The making of nets, etc. II. The taking of God's antagonists in their own nets. III. The invariable escape of God's friends. Lesson: Nothing can prosper sin, or hurt godliness.—*W. B. H.*

PSALM CXLII

TITLE.—Maschil of David. *This* Maschil *is written for our instruction. It teaches us principally by example how to order our prayer in times of distress. Such instruction is among the most needful, practical, and effectual parts of our spiritual education. He who has learned how to pray has been taught the most useful of the arts and sciences. The disciples said unto the Son of David, "Lord, teach us to pray" ; and here David gives us a valuable lesson by recording his own experience as to supplication from beneath a cloud.*

A Prayer when he was in the cave. *He was in one of his many lurking places, either Engedi, Adullam, or some other lone cavern wherein he could conceal himself from Saul and his bloodhounds. Caves make good closets for prayer ; their gloom and solitude are helpful to the exercise of devotion. Had David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he might never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his later days.*

SUBJECT.—*There can be little doubt that this song dates from the days when Saul was sorely persecuting David, and David himself was in soul-trouble, probably produced by that weakness of faith which led him to associate with heathen princes. His fortunes were evidently at their lowest, and, what was worse, his repute had fearfully fallen ; yet he displayed a true faith in God, to whom he made known his pressing sorrows. The gloom of the cave is over the Psalm, and yet as if standing at the mouth of it the prophet-poet sees a bright light a little beyond.*

EXPOSITION.

I CRIED unto the LORD with my voice ; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

2 I poured out my complaint before him ; I shewed before him my trouble.

3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

4 I looked on *my* right hand, and beheld, but *there was* no man that would know me : refuge failed me ; no man cared for my soul.

5 I cried unto thee, O LORD : I said, Thou *art* my refuge *and* my portion in the land of the living.

6 Attend unto my cry ; for I am brought very low : deliver me from my persecutors ; for they are stronger than I.

7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name : the righteous shall compass me about ; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

1. *"I cried unto the LORD with my voice."* It was a cry of such anguish that he remembers it long after, and makes a record of it. In the loneliness of the cave he could use his voice as much as he pleased ; and therefore he made its gloomy vaults echo with his appeals to heaven. When there was no soul in the cavern seeking his blood, David with all his soul was engaged in seeking his God. He felt it a relief to his heart to use his voice in his pleadings with Jehovah. There was a voice *in* his prayer when he used his voice *for* prayer : it was not *vox et præterea nihil.* It was a prayer *vivo corde* as well as *vivâ voce. "With my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication."* He dwells upon the fact that he spoke aloud in prayer ; it was evidently well impressed upon his memory, hence he doubles the word and says, " with my voice ; with my voice." It is well when our supplications are such that we find pleasure in looking back upon them. He that is cheered by the memory of his prayers will pray again. See how the good man's appeal was to Jehovah only : he did not go round about to men, but he ran straight forward to Jehovah, his God. What true wisdom is here ! Consider how the Psalmist's prayer grew into shape as he proceeded with it. He first poured out his natural longings,—

"I cried;" and then he gathered up all his wits and arranged his thoughts,—"I made supplication." True prayers may differ in their diction, but not in their direction: an impromptu cry and a preconceived supplication must alike ascend towards the one prayer-hearing God, and he will accept each of them with equal readiness. The intense personality of the prayer is noteworthy: no doubt the Psalmist was glad of the prayers of others, but he was not content to be silent himself. See how everything is in the first person,—"*I* cried with *my* voice; with *my* voice did *I* make *my* supplication." It is good to pray in the plural—"Our Father," but in times of trouble we shall feel forced to change our note into "Let this cup pass from *me*."

2. "*I poured out my complaint before him.*" His inward meditation filled his soul: the bitter water rose up to the brim; what was to be done? He must pour out the wormwood and the gall, he could not keep it in; he lets it run away as best it can, that so his heart may be emptied of the fermenting mixture. But he took care *where* he outpoured his complaint, lest he should do mischief, or receive an ill return. If he poured it out before man he might only receive contempt from the proud, hard-heartedness from the careless, or pretended sympathy from the false; and therefore he resolved upon an outpouring before God alone, since *he* would pity and relieve. The word is scarcely "complaint"; but even if it be so we may learn from this text that our complaint must never be of a kind that we dare not bring before God. We may complain *to* God, but not *of* God. When we complain it should not be before men, but before God alone. "*I shewed before him my trouble.*" He exhibited his griefs to one who could assuage them: he did not fall into the mistaken plan of so many who publish their sorrows to those who cannot help them. This verse is parallel with the first; David first pours out his complaint, letting it flow forth in a natural, spontaneous manner, and then afterwards he makes a more elaborate show of his affliction; just as in the former verse he began with crying, and went on to "make supplication." Praying men pray better as they proceed. Note that we do not show our trouble before the Lord that *he* may see *it*, but that *we* may see *him*. It is for *our* relief, and not for his information that we make plain statements concerning our woes: it does us much good to set out our sorrow in order, for much of it vanishes in the process, like a ghost which will not abide the light of day; and the rest loses much of its terror, because the veil of mystery is removed by a clear and deliberate stating of the trying facts. Pour out your thoughts and you will see what they are; show your trouble and the extent of it will be known to you: let all be done before the Lord, for in comparison with his great majesty of love the trouble will seem to be as nothing.

3. "*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path.*" The bravest spirit is sometimes sorely put to it. A heavy fog settles down upon the mind, and the man seems drowned and smothered in it; covered with a cloud, crushed with a load, confused with difficulties, conquered by impossibilities. David was a hero, and yet his spirit sank: he could smite a giant down, but he could not keep himself up. He did not know his own path, nor feel able to bear his own burden. Observe his comfort: he looked away from his own condition to the ever-observant, all-knowing God; and solaced himself with the fact that all was known to his heavenly Friend. Truly it is well for us to know that God knows what we do not know. We lose our heads, but God never closes his eyes: our judgments lose their balance, but the eternal mind is always clear.

"*In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.*" This the Lord knew at the time, and gave his servant warning of it. Looking back, the sweet singer is rejoiced that he had so gracious a Guardian, who kept him from unseen dangers. Nothing is hidden from God; no secret snare can hurt the man who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, for he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. The use of concealed traps is disgraceful to our enemies, but they care little to what tricks they resort for their evil purposes. Wicked men must find some exercise for their malice, and therefore when they dare not openly assail they will privately ensnare. They watch the gracious man to see where his haunt is, and there they set their trap; but they do it with great caution, avoiding all observation, lest their victim being forewarned should escape their toils. This is a great trial, but the Lord is greater still, and makes us to walk safely in the midst of danger, for he knows us and our enemies, our way and the snare which is laid in it. Blessed be his name.

4. "*I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know*

me." He did not miss a friend for want of looking for him, nor for want of looking in a likely place. Surely some helper would be found in the place of honour; some one would stand at his right hand to undertake his defence. He looked steadily, and saw all that could be seen, for he "beheld"; but his anxious gaze was not met by an answering smile. Strange to say, all were strange to David. He had known many, but none would know him. When a person is in ill odour it is wonderful how weak the memories of his former friends become: they quite forget, they refuse to know. This is a dire calamity. It is better to be opposed by foes than to be forsaken by friends. When friends look for us they affect to have known us from our birth, but when we look for friends it is wonderful how little we can make them remember: the fact is that in times of desertion it is not true that no man did know us, but no man *would* know us. Their ignorance is wilful. "*Refuge failed me.*" Where in happier days I found a ready harbour I now discovered none at all. My place of flight had taken to flight. My refuge gave me a refusal. "*No man cared for my soul.*" Whether I lived or died was no concern of anybody's. I was cast out as an outcast. No soul cared for my soul. I dwelt in No-man's land, where none cared to have me, and none cared about me. This is an ill-plight—no place where to lay our head, and no head willing to find us a place. How pleased were his enemies to see the friend of God without a friend! How sad was he to be utterly deserted in his utmost need! Can we not picture David in the cave, complaining that even the cave was not a refuge for him, for Saul had come even there? Hopeless was his looking out, we shall soon see him looking up.

5. "*I cried unto thee, O* LORD." As man would not regard him, David was driven to Jehovah, his God. Was not this a gain made out of a loss? wealth gained by a failure? Anything which leads us to cry unto God is a blessing to us. This is the second time that in this short Psalm we find the same record, "I cried unto thee, O LORD": the saintly man is evidently glad to remember his cry and its results. We hear often of the bitter cry of outcast London, here is another bitter cry, and it comes from an outcast, in wretched lodgings, forgotten by those who should have helped him. "*I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.*" There is a sort of progressive repetition all through this sacred song; he *cried* first, but he *said* afterwards: his cry was bitter, but his saying was sweet; his cry was sharp and short, but his saying was fresh and full. It gives a believer great pleasure to remember his own believing speeches: he may well desire to bury his unbelieving murmurings in oblivion, but the triumphs of grace in working in him a living faith, he will not dream of forgetting. What a grand confession of faith was this! David spoke to God, and of God—"THOU art my refuge." Not thou hast provided me a refuge, but thou, thyself, art my refuge. He fled to God alone; he hid himself beneath the wings of the Eternal. He not only believed this, but said it, and practised it. Nor was this all; for David, when banished from his portion in the promised land, and cut off from the portion of goods which he by right inherited, found his portion in God, yea, God *was* his portion. This was so not only in reference to a future state, but here among living men. It is sometimes easier to believe in a portion in heaven than in a portion upon earth: we could die more easily than live, at least we think so. But there is no living in the land of the living like living upon the living God. For the man of God to say these precious things in the hour of his dire distress was a grand attainment. It is easy to prate bravely when we dwell at ease, but to speak confidently in affliction is quite another matter.

Even in this one sentence we have two parts, the second rising far above the first. It is something to have Jehovah for our refuge, but it is everything to have him for our portion. If David had not *cried* he would not have *said;* and if the Lord had not been his *refuge* he would never have been his *portion.* The lower step is as needful as the higher; but it is not necessary always to stop on the first round of the ladder.

6. "*Attend unto my cry.*" Men of God look upon prayer as a reality, and they are not content without having an audience with God; moreover, they have such confidence in the Lord's condescending grace, that they hope he will even attend to that poor broken prayer which can only be described as a cry. "*For I am brought very low,*" and therefore all the prayer I can raise is a mournful cry. This is his argument with God: he is reduced to such a sad condition that if he be not rescued he will be ruined. Gracious men may not only be low, but very low; and this should not be a reason for their doubting the efficacy of their prayers, but rather a plea

with the Lord why they should have special attention. *"Deliver me from my persecutors."* If he did not get out of their hands, they would soon kill him out of hand, and as he could not himself effect an escape, he cried to God, "deliver me." *"For they are stronger than I."* As he before found a plea in his sadness, so now in his feebleness: Saul and his courtiers were in power, and could command the aid of all who sought royal favour; but poor David was in the cave, and every Nabal girded at him. Saul was a monarch, and David a fugitive; Saul had all the forms of law on his side, while David was an outlaw: so that the prayer before us comes from the weak, who proverbially go to the wall,—a good place to go to if they turn their faces to it in prayer, as Hezekiah did in his sickness. The Lord is wont to take the side of the oppressed, and to show his power by baffling tyrants; David's supplication was therefore sure to speed. In these sentences we see how explicitly the man of God described his case in his private communings with his Lord: in real earnest he poured out his complaint before him, and showed before him his trouble.

7. *"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name."* That God may be glorified is another notable plea for a suppliant. Escaped prisoners are sure to speak well of those who give them liberty. Soul-emancipation is the noblest form of liberation, and calls for the loudest praise: he who is delivered from the dungeons of despair is sure to magnify the name of the Lord. We are in such a prison that only God himself can bring us out of it, and when he does so he will put a new song into our mouths. The cave was not half such a dungeon to David's body as persecution and temptation made for his soul. To be exiled from the godly is worse than imprisonment, hence David makes it one point of his release that he would be restored to church fellowship—*"The righteous shall compass me about."* Saints gather around a child of God when his Father smiles upon him; they come to hear his joyful testimony, to rejoice with him, and to have their own faith encouraged. All the true believers in the twelve tribes were glad to rally to David's banner when the Lord enlarged his spirit; they glorified God for him and with him and through him. They congratulated him, consorted with him, crowned him, and championed him. This was a sweet experience for righteous David, who had for awhile come under the censure of the upright. He bore their smiting with patience, and now he welcomes their sanction with gratitude. *"For thou shalt deal bountifully with me."* God's bountiful dealing is sure to bring with it the sympathy and alliance of all the favourites of the Great King. What a change from looking for a friend and finding none to this enthusiastic concourse of allies around the man after God's own heart! When we can begin a Psalm with crying, we may hope to close it with singing. The voice of prayer soon awakens the voice of praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—He calls this prayer *Maschil*, "a Psalm of instruction," because of the good lessons he had himself learned in the cave, learned on his knees, and so learned that he desired to teach others.—*Matthew Henry.*

Title.—*"A prayer when he was in the cave."* Every part of this Psalm shows the propriety of its inscription or title. He expressly mentions his being in a place where he was entirely shut up, where he saw no possible method of escaping, as having no friends that dared to own him and appear for his deliverance, and when every one seemed to desert him, and to have abandoned all care of his safety and life. This he pathetically describes, and in such terms as cannot fail to move the tender affections of every one who considers them. On the first sense of his danger, shut up in a cave, surrounded by three thousand chosen soldiers, closely observed by a watchful enemy who would spare no art or pains to apprehend him, he seems almost to have despaired of himself, and declares that his spirit is quite overwhelmed with the greatness of his distress. At length, recollecting his principles, and the promises that God had made him, he earnestly supplicates the protection of God, and assures himself that he should yet praise God for his deliverance, and that good men should share his joy, and encompass the altar of God with thanksgiving for the mercy that he had shown him.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Title.—*"The cave."* Leaving our horses in charge of some Arabs, and taking

one for our guide, we started for the cave now known as Mughâret Khureitûn, which is believed to be the cave Adullam, having a fearful gorge below, gigantic cliffs above, and the path winding along a narrow shelf of the rock. At length, from a great rock hanging on the edge of the shelf, we entered by a long leap a low window which opened into the perpendicular face of the cliff. We were then within the traditional hold of David, and, creeping half doubled through a narrow crevice for a few rods, we stood beneath the dark vault of the first grand chamber of this mysterious and oppressive cavern, 1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2; 2 Sam. xxiii. 13—17. Our whole collection of lights did little more than make the damp darkness visible. After groping about as long as we had time to spare, we returned to the light of day, fully convinced that, with David and his lion-hearted followers inside, all the strength of Israel under Saul could not have forced an entrance—would not have even attempted it.—*William M. Thompson.*

Verse 1.—"*I cried unto the* LORD." Thou hast posted me over to no deputy for the hearing of my prayer, neither dost thou require that I should bring a spokesman for the presenting of it; but thou hast commanded me to come myself, and to come to thee thyself.—*Sir Richard Baker on the Lord's Prayer.*

Verse 1.—"*With my voice.*" The Lord needs not the tongue to be an interpreter between him and the hearts of his children. He that hears without ears can interpret prayers though not uttered by the tongue. Our desires are cries in the ears of the Lord of hosts. The vehemency of the affections may sometimes cause the outcrying of the voice; but alas! without this it is but a tinkling cymbal . . . . There is a use of words in prayer, to excite, and convey, and give vent to, affection: Hosea xiv. 2, "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." The prophet doth not only prescribe that they should take affections, but take with them words.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 2.—"*I poured out my complaint before him.*" Literally, my meditation; that is—what so much occupied my thoughts at the time I expressed aloud. The word "*complaint*" does not express the idea. The meaning is, not that he *complained* of God or of man; but that his mind *meditated* on his condition.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*I poured out,*" etc. I did it fully, and fervently, and confidently.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*Poured out . . . before him.*" Those words teach us that in prayer we should not try to keep anything back from God, but should show him all that is in our hearts, and that in his presence in our closet, with the door shut, but not before men. The Carmelite adds that there is much force in the words "*with my voice,*" twice repeated (as in Heb., A.V., Vulgate, etc.) to show us that we ought to pray to God directly for ourselves, and in person, and not to be contented with an *Ora pro me* addressed to some one else.—*Cassiodorus and Ayguan, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 2.—"*I shewed before him my trouble.*" Be very particular in secret prayer, both as to sins, wants, and mercies . . . Be not ashamed to open out all thy necessities. David argues because he is "poor and needy;" four several times he presses his wants and exigencies before God, like an earnest but holy beggar (Ps. xl. 17; lxx. 5; lxxxvi. 1; cix. 22). He "*shewed before him*" his trouble. He presents "*before*" God his ragged condition, and spreads open his secret wounds; as Job said, he "would order" his "cause before him": Job xxiii. 4. . . . Before God we may speak out our minds fully, and name the persons that afflict, affront, and trouble us; and woe to them that a child of God upon a mature judgment names in prayer! I find not that such a prayer in Scripture ever returned empty . . . A great reason why we reap so little benefit in prayer, is because we rest too much in generals; and if we have success, it is but dark, so that often we cannot tell what to make of the issues of prayer. Besides, to be particular in our petitions would keep the spirit much from wandering when we are intent upon a weighty cause, and the progress of the soul in grace would manifest its gradual success in prayer.—*Samuel Lee* (1625—1691), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 2.—The committing of our cause to God is at once our duty, our safety, and our ease.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 3.—"*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me.*" "*When even my spirit* (the higher faculty) is *wrapped* in *darkness upon me;*" that is, when even my spirit

(*ruach*), which ought to elevate my *soul* (*nephesh*) falls heavily upon me, as in a swoon.

" When heavy, like a veil of woe,
My spirit on me lay."

What is here said of the *spirit*, is oftener predicated of the *soul*, the seat of the passions. See Psalms xlii. 6; xliii. 5; cxxxi. 2. The dejection of the *spirit* represents a still more sorrowful and downcast condition, than the fainting of the *soul*. See Psalm cxliii. 3, 4, and compare our Lord's words, " My *soul* is troubled " (John xii. 27) with the Evangelist's statement, " Jesus was troubled in spirit " (John xiii. 21; xi. 33).—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 3.—"*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me.*" Literally, *in the muffling upon me of my spirit.* When my spirit was so wrapped in trouble and gloom, so " muffled round with woe," that I could not see the path before me, was distracted and unable to choose a line of conduct, "*Thou* (emphatic) knewest my path."—*A. S. Aglen, in "An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers,"* 1884.

Verse 3.—I wish you much comfort from David's thought: "*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path.*" The Lord is not withdrawn to a great distance, but his eye is upon you. He sees you not with the indifference of a mere spectator; but he observes with attention, he knows, he considers your path: yea, he appoints it, and every circumstance about it is under his direction. Your trouble began at the hour he saw best,—it could not come before; and he has marked the degree of it to a hair's breadth, and its duration to a minute. He knows likewise how your spirit is affected; and such supplies of grace and strength, and in such seasons as he sees needful, he will afford in due season. So that when things appear darkest, you shall still be able to say, Though chastened, not killed. Therefore hope in God, for you shall yet praise him.—*John Newton* (1725—1807), *in "Cardiphonia."*

Verse 3.—"*Thou knewest.*"

From human eyes 'tis better to conceal
Much that I suffer, much I hourly feel;
But, oh, this thought can tranquillize and heal,
All, all is known to thee.

Nay, all by thee is ordered, chosen, planned,
Each drop that fills my daily cup, thy hand
Prescribes for ills, none else can understand,
All, all is known to thee.

Charlotte Elliott.

Verse 3.—Although we as Christians possess the full solution of the problem of suffering, yet we frequently find ourselves in the position of Job, in regard to this or that particular affliction. There are sorrows so far reaching, so universal; there are losses so absolute, and blows so terrible and inexplicable, that it seems for a time as if we were wrapped in thickest gloom, and as if the secret of the Lord had not been revealed. Why was this man stricken, and that man spared? Why was such and such a being, in whom so many hopes centred, or who had already realised so many pleasant expectations, why was he withdrawn? Why was that other person left, a useless encumbrance to earth? Why was that voice, which found echo in so many hearts, suddenly silenced? Why have I been smitten? Why have I lost that which rendered my moral life beautiful and useful? Oftentimes the soul seems lost for awhile in thoughts which overwhelm it, it loses its foothold, it tumbles about helplessly amid the deep waters of affliction. It seems as if all were over. Do not believe it. Remember Job; you cannot go to greater lengths of despair than he, and yet God had pity on him. There is much comfort for you in this example of indescribable suffering, exasperated to the highest degree, and yet pardoned and consoled. Cling to the memory of this blessed fact as to a cable of deliverance, a board or a plank amidst the shipwreck. And then remember that affliction forms part of God's plan, and that he also asks you to manifest ready and absolute confidence in him.—*E. De Pressensé, D.D., in "The Mystery of Suffering,"* 1869.

Verse 3.—"*They have privily laid a snare for me.*" Snares on the right hand, and snares on the left: snares on the right hand, worldly prosperity; snares on the left hand, worldly adversity; snares on the right hand, flattery; snares on

the left hand, alarm. Do thou walk in the midst of the snares: depart not from the way: let neither flattery ensnare thee, nor alarm drive thee off it.—*Augustine.*

Verse 4.—"*I looked on my right hand, and beheld.*" The first two verbs must be translated as imperatives, as in the margin of the English Bible. ["Look on the right hand, and see."] The right hand is mentioned as the post of a protector.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 4.—"*I looked on my right hand.*" The allusion here, it is supposed, is to the observance of the ancient Jewish courts of judicature, in which the advocate, as well as the accuser, stood on the *right hand* of the accused (Psalm cx. 5). The Psalmist felt himself in the condition of one who had nobody to plead his cause, and to protect him in the dangerous circumstances in which he was placed.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 4.—"*There was no man that would know me.*" The fact that David, although surrounded by a band of loyal subjects, confesses to having no true friend, is to be understood similarly to the language of Paul when he says in Phil. ii. 20: "I have no man like-minded." All human love, since sin has taken possession of humanity, is more or less selfish, and all fellowship of faith and of love imperfect; and there are circumstances in life in which these dark sides make themselves felt overpoweringly, so that a man seems to himself to be perfectly isolated, and turns all the more urgently to God, who alone is able to supply the soul's want of some object to love, whose love is absolutely unselfish, and unchangeable, and unbeclouded, to whom the soul can confide without reserve whatever burdens it, and who not only honestly desires its good, but is able also to compass it in spite of every obstacle. Surrounded by bloodthirsty enemies, and misunderstood, or at least not thoroughly understood by his friends, David feels himself broken off from all created beings.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 4.—"*There was no man that would know me.*" Teacheth us of what little estimation God's children be, with the world and worldly men.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 4.—"*There was no man that would know me.*" Persecution from the side of our enemies presses sorely, but abandonment by our friends, who should have stood by one's side as helpers and defenders, presses more sorely still.—*Taube, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 4.—Observe the beautiful opposition between "Thou knewest" (verse 3) and "no man would know me." "*Refuge failed me,*"—literally "*perished*" from me (Jer. xxv. 35; Amos ii. 14). But "thou hast been my *refuge* in the day of my trouble"; Ps. lix. 16.—*Andrew Robert Fausset.*

Verses 4, 5.—"*Refuge failed me. . . Thou art my refuge.*" Travellers tell us that they who are at the top of the Alps can see great showers of rain fall under them, but not one drop of it falls on them. They who have God for their portion are in a high tower, and thereby safe from all troubles and showers. A drift-rain of evil will beat in at the creature's windows, be they never so well pointed; all the garments this world can make up cannot keep them that travel in such weather from being wet to the skin. No creature is able to bear the weight of its fellow-creature; but as reeds, they break under the pressure, and as thorns, they run into the sides of those who lean on them. The bow drawn beyond its compass breaks in sunder, and the string wound above its strength snaps in pieces. Such are outward helps to all that trust to them in hardships.—*George Swinnock.*

Verses 4, 5.—"*Refuge failed me. . . Thou art my refuge.*" Are there any among us to whom the world's face is quite changed, and the brooks of comfort in it are dried up, and they are so tossed, chased, and harassed in it that they have forgotten their resting-place? Are any of you "become a stranger unto your brethren and an alien unto your mother's children"? Ps. lxix. 8. Is it grown such a strange world, that even "your own familiar friend, in whom you trusted, which did eat of your bread, hath lifted up his heel against you"? (Ps. xli. 9); and that wherever you turn yourselves in it, to find rest and refuge, the door is shut in your face? Here is refuge for you; here is one open door; come in, thou blessed of the Lord: "the Lord gathereth the outcasts of Israel": Ps. cxlvii. 2. It seems the Lord minds to have you in: he is doing with you as a father with a stubborn son who ran away from his father's house, thinking to shift for himself among his friends, and not come back: the father sends peremptory word through them all, saying, "In whosesoever house my son is skulking, presently turn him out of doors, and let none of you take him in; and if he come to you give him not one night's lodging,

nay, let him not eat in your house." Wherefore is all this but just to get him back again to his father's house?—*Thomas Boston*, 1676—1732.

Verses 4, 5.—When all slighted him, when none took care of him; what doth David in this case? The words in verse 5 tell us what. "*I cried unto thee, O* LORD: *I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.*" As if he had said, Upon these unkindnesses, disrespects, and slightings which I found in the world, I took occasion, yea, I was stirred in my spirit to cry unto thee, O Lord, and to say, "*Thou art my refuge*," that is, then I made thee my refuge more than ever. Having made thee my choice in my best times, when men honoured and embraced me, I am much encouraged in these evil times when men regard me not, to shelter my weather-beaten self in thy name and power. When we have most friends in the world, then God is our best friend, but when the world hates us, and frowns upon us, especially when (as the prophet speaks of some, Isa. lxvi. 5) " our brethren hate us, and cast us out for the name's sake of God himself," saying, " Let the Lord be glorified," when 'tis thus with us (I say) our souls are even forced into the presence of God, to renew our interests in his love, and to assure our souls that we are accepted with him.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*I have cried unto thee, Jehovah, I have said,*" etc. I have cried and still cry; I have said and still say.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*I said.*" This imports, I. A REMEMBRANCE OF THE SOLEMN TRANSACTION, Ps. ciii. 18. This is a deed never to be forgotten, but always to be kept in remembrance. But, O ye who have said this, remember, 1. *What* you said. You said that God in Christ should be your refuge, that under the shade of his wings you hid yourselves, and that, renouncing all other refuges, as refuges of lies, you did betake yourselves to the covert of Christ's righteousness, and that there ye would abide for your portion; which was a formal acceptance of and laying hold on the covenant. 2. *To whom* you said it. To God in Christ speaking to you in the gospel-offer, and inviting you into the refuge. What men say to their superiors, they think themselves specially concerned to mind. And surely what ye have said to God, ye ought in a peculiar manner to remember, and awe your hearts with the consideration of the majesty of the party to whom ye said it, Ps. xvi. 2: " O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord"; for he is not one with whom we may deal falsely. 3. *How* ye said it. Did ye not say it in your hearts, while God in Christ was held out as a refuge for you? And the language of the heart is plain language with a heart-searching God. Did not some of you say it with your mouths? and did not all communicants say it solemnly before the world, angels, and men, by their receiving the elements of bread and wine? 4. *Upon what grounds* you said it. Did you not see a necessity of a refuge for you, and a necessity of taking God in Christ for your refuge? Ye had rational grounds for it, and lasting grounds that can never fail; so that ye can never have ground to retract, nor shift about for another refuge. Jer. ii. 31. 5. *Where* ye said it. Remember the spot of ground where ye said it in prayer, where ye said it at the communion-table. Ps. xlii. 6. The stones of the place will be witnesses of your saying it. Josh. xxiv. 27.

II. A STANDING TO IT, without regretting that we said it, remembering what is said, John vi. 66—69; " From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Men often repent what they have said, and therefore will not own that they have said it. But gracious souls will not repent their saying this, but will abide by it. If they were to make their choice a thousand times, having chosen God in Christ for their refuge and portion, they would not alter; Jer. iii. 19: " I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me." Many alterations may be in men's circumstances in the world, but there can never be one that will afford ground for retracting this saying.

III. AN OWNING OF THE OBLIGATION OF IT: "*I said,*" and am obliged thereby to stand to it, " For I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back," Judg. xi. 35. God in Christ is yours, and ye are his by his own consent; ye are no more your own; ye have said the word, and must own that it is binding on you; and ye must beware that after vows ye make not enquiry. Whoever may pretend they have their choice yet to make of a refuge and portion to themselves, ye cannot:

ye are engaged already, and ye are not at liberty to hearken to any other proposals, any more than a woman who has already signed her contract with one man.

IV. A PROFESSING OF IT CONFIDENTLY without being ashamed of it: as though you should say, "I own it before all men, and am not ashamed of my choice." Antichrist allows some of his vassals to carry his mark in their right hand. Rev. xiii. 16. But all the followers of the Lamb have their mark on their foreheads, where it will not hide, Rev. xiv. 1. The world would put the people of God to shame on the head of their refuge and portion, as if they had made a foolish bargain of it, Psa. xiv. 6: "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge." But sincerity will make men despise that shame as David said, "And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight."

V. A SATISFACTION OF HEART IN IT: as though you should say, "I said it, and, Oh, but I am well pleased that ever I said it; it was the best saying I could ever say. Ps. xvi. 2, 5, 6, 7. And this is in effect to say it over again. And good reason there is for them who have sincerely said it to be well satisfied in their refuge, and to rejoice in their portion. The reflecting upon it may afford solid delight and content of heart. Ye who have taken the Lord for your refuge may with much satisfaction reflect upon what you have done.—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 6.—"*Attend unto my cry.*"—

Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrow's share?
Can a father see his child
Weep, nor be with sorrow filled?

Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan, an infant fear?
No, no; never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

And can he, who smiles on all,
Hear the wren, with sorrows small—
Hear the small bird's grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear,

And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity in its breast?
And not sit the cradle near,
Weeping tear on infant's tear?

And not sit both night and day
Wiping all our tears away?
Oh, no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

He doth give his joy to all;
He becomes an infant small;
He becomes a man of woe;
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by;
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

Oh! he gives to us his joy,
That our grief he may destroy:
Till our grief is fled and gone,
He doth sit by us and moan.

William Blake (1757—1828), *in "Songs of Innocence,"* 1789.

Verse 6.—"*I am brought very low,*" etc. However true this may have been David lurking in a cave, while his enemy, Saul, was at the head of a powerful

army, it is more literally true of Christ, who could truly say, "*I am brought very low*," because "he himself became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." He was also "*brought very low*," when he, that had the right of sitting on the cherubim, hung between two robbers. Truly also were his enemies "*stronger than he*" when "their hour came," and "power was given to darkness," so as to appear, for awhile, to eclipse the sun of justice itself.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 6.—"*For they are stronger than I.*" But they are not stronger than THOU. Thou canst make us "stronger than our enemies": Ps. cv. 24. He who is stronger than the strong man armed (Luke xi. 22), Israel's oppressor, and whose very "weakness is stronger than men" (1 Cor. i. 25), shall "ransom" her "from him that was stronger than" she: Jer. xxxi. 11; Ps. xviii. 17.—*Andrew Robert Fausset.*

Verse 7.—"*Bring my soul out of prison*," etc. As if he should say, O Lord, I confess I am a poor prisoner to sin and Satan, I would fain be set at liberty to believe thy word, and to do thy will; but, alas, I cannot. I find many a door fast shut upon me in this prison, and many a lock upon the doors, many lets and impediments which I am never able to remove; and therefore, gracious Lord, do that for me, which neither I myself nor all the friends I can make are ever able to do for me; pay the debts of thy poor prisoner in my blessed Surety, and set open the prison doors: "*Bring my soul out of prison, O LORD, that I may praise thy name!*"—*Matthew Lawrence, in "The Use and Practice of Faith,"* 1657.

Verse 7.—"*The righteous shall compass me about.*" In a circle, like a crown, as the word signifies; when delivered they should flock to him and come about him to see him and look at him, as a miracle of mercy, whose deliverance was marvellous; and to congratulate him upon it, and to join with him in praise unto God for it. The Targum is, "For my sake the righteous will make to thee a crown of praise."—*John Gill.*

Verse 7.—"*For thou shalt deal bountifully with me.*" Others' mercies ought to be the matter of our praises to God; and others' praises to God on our behalf ought to be both desired and rejoiced in by us.—*Matthew Henry.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. A vivid memory—of what he did, and how, and when. II. A public declaration; from which we infer that his prayer cheered him, brought him succour in trouble, and deliverance out of it. III. A reasonable inference: he prays again.

Verses 1, 2.—I. Special seasons for prayer: times of complaint and trouble. II. Special prayer on such occasions; "I cried," "I make my supplication." "I poured out my complaint," "I showed before him my trouble." Spread the whole case before God, as Hezekiah did the letter from Sennacherib.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—I. The true place for prayer—"before him." II. The freedom of prayer—"poured out." III. The unveiling of the heart in prayer—"shewed before him my trouble."

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—I. When. II. Then.

Verse 3 (*latter clause*).—Temptations. I. What form they take?—"snares." II. Who lay them?—"they." III. How do they lay them? Secretly, craftily —"in the way," frequently. IV. What becomes of the tempted believer? He lives to tell the tale, to warn others to glorify God.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—The soul considered of no value. I. Consider the worth of the soul. 1. The soul will continue for ever. 2. The righteous will grow more happy, and the wicked more miserable. 3. A great price has been paid for it. II. Contrast the care we take of our souls, and our anxiety about worldly objects. 1. The solicitude we manifest for riches. 2. Our care in educating the intellects of our children. 3. Eagerness in pursuit of business, honour—even trifles. 4. How anxious about a human life! Describe the search for a lost child. 5. Contrast our care for souls and our Saviour's care for them: Paul's, Luther's, Whitefield's. III. Remember some things which show that this care does not exist. 1. If you do

not statedly observe secret prayer. 2. If your soul is not burdened with the souls of others. 3. If you neglect family prayer, or observe it as a mere form. 4. If you do not regularly go to prayer-meetings. Remark: The great responsibility resting upon every Christian.—*Jacob Knapp, in "The Homiletic Monthly,"* 1882.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—The burden of souls. I. What is meant by care for souls? 1. To have a firm conviction of their value 2. To cherish tender solicitude for their welfare. 3. To feel alarming apprehensions of their danger. 4. To make zealous exertions for their salvation. II. Who ought specially to exercise this care? 1. Parents. 2. Teachers. 3. Ministers. 4. Members. III. The criminality of neglect. 1. It is ungrateful. 2. It is cruel. 3. It is fatal.—*W. W. Wythe, in "The Pulpit Analyst,"* 1870.

Verses 4, 5.—I. A terrible plight; no friend, no helper, no pitying heart. II. A touching prayer. A cry and a saying.

Verses 4, 5.—I. Human help fails most when most needed. 1. In outward troubles: "I looked," etc. 2. In soul troubles: "No man cared for my soul." II. Divine help is most given when most needed. A refuge and a portion when all others fail. Man has many friends in prosperity, one only in adversity.—*G. R.*

Verses 4, 5.—I. Why the saints make God their refuge, and the object of their faith and hope in their greatest afflictions. 1. God has given himself to the saints, in the covenant of grace, to be their God, and has promised that they shall be his people. 2. God stands in a most near relation to the saints, and condescends to sustain many endearing characters of love, which he fulfils to their advantage. 3. The saints, through the power of God's grace upon their souls, have chosen him for their portion, and their highest felicity. II. What perfections there are in God that render him a safe refuge for the saints, and a proper object of their confidence. 1. God is infinite in mercy. 2. God is infallible in wisdom. 3. God is boundless in power. 4. God is omniscient and omnipresent. 5. God is a Being whose love never changes. 6. God is an independent Being, and the Governor and Director of all things. III. The many sweet advantages, arising to the saints, from this practice of making God their refuge, in their greatest troubles. 1. They have been preserved from fainting under their heavy burdens. 2. They have derived from God new and seasonable supplies of divine grace and strength for service. 3. God has refreshed his saints with divine consolations for the future.—*John Farmer,* 1744.

Verse 5.—The soul choosing God. I. Deliberately: "I cried unto thee, I said." II. For all in all: "refuge," "portion." III. Before every other "in the land of the living."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 5.—"How we may bring our Hearts to bear Reproofs." See John Owen's Sermon in "The Morning Exercises," vol. ii. page 600, etc.; and in his "Works," vol. xvi. p. 23, etc.

Verse 6.—Two petitions and two arguments.

Verses 6, 7.—I. The language of Despondency. "I am brought very low." "My enemies are stronger than I." "My soul is in prison." II. Of Prayer. "Attend unto me." "Deliver me." "Bring me out of prison." III. Of Praise. 1. For the congratulation of others. 2. For his own deliverance and prosperity. —*G. R.*

Verse 6.—Low and Lowly. Here is David, I. In a low place; the depth of a cave. II. In a low way: "very low"; "stronger than I." III. But see,— "with the lowly is wisdom" (Prov. xi. 2); he prays. IV. The Lord "hath respect to the lowly," Ps. cxxxviii. 6. He will not pray in vain.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 7.—A prisoner. A freed-man. A singer. A centre. A wonder.

Verse 7.—Prison Dreams. I. What we image in our fetters. 1. Christ's brow girt about with rare praise. 2. Christ's people compassing and companying us in costliest service. 3. A new life of bounty and blessing when we get out. II. How far do our dreamings come true? Before peril and after; under conviction, and after conversion; sick room, and active service. III. The duty of fidelity to prison vows and lessons.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 7 (*middle clause*).—A Queen Bee. An under-shepherd. A warm hearth. A Museum of wonders. Or, they shall surround me, interested in my story—"out of prison"; drawn by my song—"praise thy name"; attracted by likeness of character, and admiring the goodness of the Lord."

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—Take this with Ps. cxvi. 7. "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Infer the future from the past.

PSALM CXLIII.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *It is so much like other Davidic Psalms that we accept the title without a moment's hesitation. David's history illustrates it, and his spirit breathes in it. Why it has been set down as one of the seven Penitential Psalms we can hardly tell; for it is rather a vindication of his own integrity, and an indignant prayer against his slanderers, than a confession of fault. It is true the second verse proves that he never dreamed of justifying himself before the Lord; but even in it there is scarcely the brokenness of penitence. It seems to us rather martial than penitential, rather a supplication for deliverance from trouble than a weeping acknowledgment of transgression. We suppose that seven penitentials were needed by ecclesiastical rabbis, and therefore this was impressed into the service. In truth, it is a mingled strain, a box of ointment composed of divers ingredients, sweet and bitter, pungent and precious. It is* the outcry of an overwhelmed spirit, *unable to abide in the highest state of spiritual prayer, again and again descending to bewail its deep temporal distress; yet evermore struggling to rise to the best things. The singer moans at intervals; the petitioner for mercy cannot withhold his cries for vindication. His hands are outstretched to heaven, but at his girdle hangs a sharp sword, which rattles in its scabbard as he closes his Psalm.*

DIVISION.—*This Psalm is divided by the Selah. We prefer to follow the natural cleavage, and therefore have made no other dissection of it. May the holy Spirit lead us into its inner meaning.*

EXPOSITION.

HEAR my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness.

2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.

4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.

5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.

6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

1. "*Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplication.*" In the preceding Psalm he began by declaring that he had cried unto the Lord; here he begs to be favourably regarded by Jehovah the living God, whose memorial is that he heareth prayer. He knew that Jehovah did hear prayer, and therefore he entreated him to hear his supplication, however feeble and broken it might be. In two forms he implores the one blessing of gracious audience:—"hear" and "give ear." Gracious men are so eager to be heard in prayer that they double their entreaties for that boon. The Psalmist desires to be heard and to be considered; hence he cries, "hear," and then "give ear." Our case is difficult, and we plead for special attention. Here it is probable that David wished his suit against his adversaries to be heard by the righteous Judge; confident that if he had a hearing in the matter whereof he was slanderously accused, he would be triumphantly acquitted. Yet while somewhat inclined thus to lay his case before the Court of King's Bench, he prefers rather to turn it all into a petition, and present it before the Court of Requests, hence he cries rather "hear my prayer" than "hear my suit." Indeed David is specially earnest that he himself, and the whole of his life, may not become the

subject of trial, for in that event he could not hope for acquittal. Observe that he offered so much pleading that his life became one continual *prayer;* but that petitioning was so varied in form that it broke out in many *supplications.*

"*In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.*" Saints desire to be answered as well as heard: they long to find the Lord faithful to his promise and righteous in defending the cause of justice. It is a happy thing when we dare appeal even to righteousness for our deliverance; and this we can do upon gospel principles, for "if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Even the sterner attributes of God are upon the side of the man who humbly trusts, and turns his trust into prayer. It is a sign of our safety when our interests and those of righteousness are blended. With God's faithfulness and righteousness upon our side we are guarded on the right hand and on the left. These are active attributes, and fully equal to the answering of any prayer which it would be right to answer. Requests which do not appeal to either of these attributes it would not be for he glory of God to hear, for they must contain desires for things unpromised, and unrighteous.

2. "*And enter not into judgment with thy servant.*" He had entreated for audience at the mercy-seat, but he has no wish to appear before the judgment-seat. Though clear before men, he could not claim innocence before God. Even though he knew himself to be the Lord's servant, yet he did not claim perfection, or plead merit; for even as a servant he was unprofitable. If such be the humble cry of a servant, what ought to be the pleading of a sinner? "*For in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*" None can stand before God upon the footing of the law. God's sight is piercing and discriminating; the slightest flaw is seen and judged; and therefore pretence and profession cannot avail where that glance reads all the secrets of the soul. In this verse David told out the doctrine of universal condemnation by the law long before Paul had taken his pen to write the same truth. To this day it stands true even to the same extent as in David's day: no man living even at this moment may dare to present himself for trial before the throne of the Great King on the footing of the law. This foolish age has produced specimens of a pride so rank that men have dared to claim perfection in the flesh; but these vain-glorious boasters are no exception to the rule here laid down: they are but men, and poor specimens of men. When their lives are examined they are frequently found to be more faulty than the humble penitents before whom they vaunt their superiority.

3. "*For the enemy hath persecuted my soul.*" He has followed me up with perseverance, and has worried me as often as I have been within his reach. The attack was upon the soul or life of the Psalmist: our adversaries mean us the worst possible evil, their attacks are no child's play, they hunt for the precious life. "*He hath smitten my life down to the ground.*" The existence of David was made bitter by the cruelty of his enemy; he was as one who was hurled down and made to lie upon the ground, where he could be trampled on by his assailant. Slander has a very depressing effect upon the spirits; it is a blow which overthrows the mind as though it were knocked down with the fist. "*He hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.*" The enemy was not content with felling his life to the ground—he would lay him lower still, even in the grave; and lower than that if possible, for the enemy would shut up the saint in the darkness of hell if he could. David was driven by Saul's animosity to haunt caverns and holes, like an unquiet ghost; he wandered out by night, and lay hid by day like an uneasy spirit which had long been denied the repose of the grave. Good men began to forget him, as though he had been long dead; and bad men made ridicule of his rueful visage, as though it belonged not to a living man, but was dark with the shadow of the sepulchre. Poor David! He was qualified to bless the house of the living, but he was driven to consort with the dead! Such may be our case, and yet we may be very dear to the Lord. One thing is certain, the Lord who permits us to dwell in darkness among the dead, will surely bring us into light, and cause us to dwell with those who enjoy life eternal,

4. "*Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.*" David was no stoic: he felt his banishment, and smarted under the cruel assaults which were made upon his character. He felt perplexed and overturned, lonely and afflicted. He was a man of thought and feeling, and suffered both in spirit and in heart from the undeserved and unprovoked hostility of his persecutors. Moreover, he laboured under the sense of fearful loneliness; he was for a while forsaken of his God, and his soul was exceeding heavy, even unto death. Such

words our Lord Jesus might have used: In this the Head is like the members, and the members are as the Head.

5. *"I remember the days of old."* When we see nothing new which can cheer us, let us think upon old things. We once had merry days, days of deliverance, and joy and thanksgiving; why not again? Jehovah rescued his people in the ages which lie back, centuries ago; why should he not do the like again? We ourselves have a rich past to look back upon; we have sunny memories, sacred memories, satisfactory memories, and these are as flowers for the bees of faith to visit, from whence they may make honey for present use. *"I meditate on all thy works."* When my own works reproach me, thy works refresh me. If at the first view the deeds of the Lord do not encourage us, let us think them over again, ruminating and considering the histories of divine providence. We ought to take a wide and large view of *all* God's works; for as a whole they work together for good, and in each part they are worthy of reverent study. *"I muse on the work of thy hands."* This he had done in former days, even in his most trying hours. Creation had been the book in which he read of the wisdom and goodness of the Lord. He repeats his perusal of the page of nature, and counts it a balm for his wounds, a cordial for his cares, to see what the Lord has made by his skilful hands. When the work of our own hand grieves us, let us look to the work of God's hands. Memory, meditation, and musing are here set together as the three graces, ministering grace to a mind depressed and likely to be diseased. As David with his harp played away the evil spirit from Saul, so does he here chase away gloom from his own soul by holy communion with God.

6. *"I stretch forth my hands unto thee."* He was eager for his God. His thoughts of God kindled in him burning desires, and these led to energetic expressions of his inward longings. As a prisoner whose feet are bound extends his hands in supplication when there is hope of liberty, so does David. *"My soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land."* As the soil cracks, and yawns, and thus opens its mouth in dumb pleadings, so did the Psalmist's soul break with longings. No heavenly shower had refreshed him from the sanctuary: banished from the means of grace, his soul felt parched and dry, and he cried out, "My soul to thee"; nothing would content him but the presence of his God. Not alone did he extend his hands, but his heart was stretched out towards the Lord. He was athirst for the Lord. If he could but feel the presence of his God he would no longer be overwhelmed or dwell in darkness; nay, everything would turn to peace and joy.

Selah.—It was time to pause, for the supplication had risen to agony point. Both harp-strings and heart-strings were strained, and needed a little rest to get them right again for the second half of the song.

7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.

10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou *art* my God: thy spirit *is* good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I *am* thy servant.

7. *"Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth."* If long delayed, the deliverance would come too late. The afflicted suppliant faints, and is ready to die. His life is ebbing out; each moment is of importance; it will soon be all over with him. No argument for speed can be more powerful than this. Who will not run to help a suppliant when his life is in jeopardy? Mercy has wings to its heels when misery is in extremity. God will not fail when our spirit fails, but the rather he will hasten his course and come to us on the wings of the wind. *"Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit."* Communion with God is so dear to a true heart that the withdrawal of it makes the man

feel as though he were ready to die and perish utterly. God's withdrawals reduce the heart to despair, and take away all strength from the mind. Moreover, his absence enables adversaries to work their will without restraint; and thus, in a second way, the persecuted one is like to perish. If we have God's countenance we live, but if he turns his back upon us we die. When the Lord looks with favour upon our efforts we prosper, but if he refuses to countenance them we labour in vain.

8. *"Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust."* Lord, my sorrow makes me deaf,—cause me to hear: there is but one voice that can cheer me—cause me to hear thy lovingkindness; that music I would fain enjoy at once—cause me to hear it in the morning, at the first dawning hour. A sense of divine love is to the soul both dawn and dew; the end of the night of weeping, the beginning of the morning of joy. Only God can take away from our weary ears the din of our care, and charm them with the sweet notes of his love. Our plea with the Lord is our faith; if we are relying upon him, he cannot disappoint us: "in thee do I trust" is a sound and solid argument with God. He who made the ear will cause us to hear: he who is love itself will have the kindness to bring his lovingkindness before our minds. *"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee."* The Great First Cause must cause us to hear and to know. Spiritual senses are dependent upon God, and heavenly knowledge comes from him alone. To know the way we ought to take is exceedingly needful, for how can we be exact in obedience to a law with which we are not acquainted? or how can there be an ignorant holiness? If we know not the way, how shall we keep in it? If we know not wherein we should walk, how shall we be likely to follow the right path? The Psalmist lifts up his soul; faith is good at a dead lift: the soul that trusts will rise. We will not allow our hope to sink, but we will strive to get up and rise out of our daily griefs. This is wise. When David was in any difficulty as to his way he lifted his soul towards God himself, and then he knew that he could not go very far wrong. If the soul will not rise of itself we must lift it, lift it up unto God. This is good argument in prayer: surely the God to whom we endeavour to lift up our soul will condescend to show us what he would have us to do. Let us attend to David's example, and when our heart is low, let us heartily endeavour to lift it up, not so much to comfort as to the Lord himself.

9. *"Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies."* Many foes beset us, we cannot overcome them, we cannot even escape from them; but Jehovah can and will rescue us if we pray to him. The weapon of all-prayer will stand us in better stead than sword and shield. *"I flee unto thee to hide me."* This was a good result from his persecutions. That which makes us flee to our God may be an ill wind, but it blows us good. There is no cowardice in such flight, but much holy courage. God can hide us out of reach of harm, and even out of sight of it. He is our hiding-place; Jesus has made himself the refuge of his people: the sooner, and the more entirely we flee to him the better for us. Beneath the crimson canopy of our Lord's atonement believers are completely hidden; let us abide there and be at rest. In the seventh verse our poet cried, "Hide not thy face," and here he prays, "Hide me." Note also how often he uses the words "unto thee"; he is after his God; he must travel in that direction by some means, even though he may seem to be beating a retreat; his whole being longs to be near the Lord. It is possible that such thirstings for God will be left unsupplied? Never, while the Lord is love.

10. *"Teach me to do thy will."* How childlike—"teach me"! How practical—"Teach me to do"! How undivided in obedience—"to do thy will"! To do all of it, let it be what it may. This is the best form of instruction, for its source is God, its object is holiness, its spirit is that of hearty loyalty. The man is hidden in the Lord, and spends his peaceful life in learning the will of his Preserver. A heart cannot long be desolate which is thus docile. *"For thou art my God."* Who else can teach me as thou canst? Who else will care to do it but my God? Thou hast given me thyself, thou wilt surely give me thy teaching. If I have thee, may I not ask to have thy perfect mind? When the heart can sincerely call Jehovah "my God," the understanding is ready to learn of him, the will is prepared to obey him, the whole man is eager to please him. *"Thy spirit is good."* God is all spirit and all good. His essence is goodness, kindness, holiness: it is his nature to do good, and what greater good can he do to us than to hear such a prayer as that which follows—*"Lead me into the land of uprightness"?* David would fain be among

the godly, in a land of another sort from that which had cast him out. He sighed for the upland meadows of grace, the table-lands of peace, the fertile plains of communion. He could not reach them of himself; he must be led there. God, who is good, can best conduct us to the goodly land. There is no inheritance like a portion in the land of promise, the land of precept, the land of perfectness. He who teaches us must put us into leading-strings, and guide and conduct us to his own dwelling-place in the country of holiness. The way is long, and steep, and he who goes without a divine leader will faint on the journey; but with Jehovah to lead, it is delightful to follow, and there is neither stumbling nor wandering.

11. *"Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake."* Oh for more life as well as more light! Teaching and leading call for invigoration, or we shall be dull scholars and slow pilgrims. Jehovah, the Lord and giver of life, is the only one from whom life can come to renew and revive us;—hence, the prayer is to him only. Perchance a servant might teach and lead, but only the Master can enliven. We are often near to death, and hence each one may fitly cry, "Quicken *me*"; but what is there in us which we can plead as a reason for such a favour? Nothing, literally nothing. We must beg it for his name's sake. He must quicken us because he is the living God, the loving God, the Lord who delighteth in mercy. What blessed arguments lie clustered together in his glorious name! We need never cease praying for want of acceptable pleas; and we may always fall back upon the one before us —"thy name's sake." It will render the name of Jehovah the more glorious in the eyes of men if he creates a high degree of spiritual life in his servants; and this is a reason for his doing so, which we may urge with much confidence.

"For thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble." Let men see that thou art on the side of the right, and that thou wilt not allow the wicked to ride rough-shod over those who trust in thee. Thou hast promised to succour thy people; thou art not unrighteous to forget their work of faith; thou art, on the contrary, righteous in answering sincere prayer, and in comforting thy people. David was heavily afflicted. Not only was there trouble in his soul, but his soul was in trouble; plunged in it as in a sea, shut up in it as in a prison. God could bring him out of it, and especially he could at once lift up his soul or spirit out of the ditch. The prayer is an eager one, and the appeal a bold one. We may be sure that trouble was soon over when the Lord heard such supplications.

12. *"And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul."* He believes that it will be so, and thus prophesies the event; for the words may be read as a declaration, and it is better so to understand them. We could not *pray* just so with our Christian light; but under Old Testament arrangements the spirit of it was congruous to the law. It is a petition which justice sanctions, but the spirit of love is not at home in presenting it. *We*, as Christians, turn the petition to spiritual use only. Yet David was of so generous a mind, and dealt so tenderly with Saul, that he could hardly have meant all that his words are made in our version to say. *"For I am thy servant;"* and therefore I hope that my Master will protect me in his service, and grant me victory while I fight his battles. It is a warrior's prayer, and smells of the dust and smoke of battle. It was heard, and therefore it was not asking amiss. Still there is a more excellent way.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm of David most aptly answereth to that Psalm which precedeth it; for in Ps. cxlii. he showeth that he prayed, repeating it twice (verse 1); and here he twice saith, "Hear my prayer, give ear to my supplication." In Psalm cxlii. (verse 3) he saith, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me"; here (verse 4), "My spirit is overwhelmed within me."—*John Mayer.*

Whole Psalm.—The promise referred to throughout this octave of Psalms [cxxxviii—cxlv.] is that recorded in 2 Sam. vii. 12, etc., "When thy days be fulfilled . . . . . I will set up thy seed after thee . . . . . and I will establish his kingdom . . . . . If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him . . . . . But my mercy shall not depart away from him; and thine house and thy kingdom shall

be established for ever." What fixes the connection of the Psalm with the history is the frequent application of the term *"Thy* (Jehovah's) *servant,"* by David to himself in the latter, as in verses 2 and 12 of the former. Jehovah had first used it of David, " Tell to my servant, to David ; " David therefore fastens on it as his plea again and again (2 Sam. vii. 5, 9—21, 25—29). David's plea, " For I am thy servant," is no boast of his service, but a magnifying of God's electing grace : " Who am I, O Lord God ? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto ? " 2 Sam. vii. 18.

The cry (verse 6) *"My soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land,"* answers to David's own words in Psalm lxiii. 1, when he was fleeing from Absalom, and still in the wilderness of Judah (title, Ps. lxiii.) on the near side of Jordan : " My soul *thirsteth* for thee." The history here again is an undesigned agreement with the Psalm : (2 Sam. xvi. 2, 14,) " The King, and all the people with him, came *weary,* and refreshed themselves " with Ziba's fruits ; also xvii. 2. The Hebrew for *"thirsty"* in Psalm cxliii. is the same as for *"weary"* in lxiii. 1, and in 2 Sam. xvi. 14, and means " panting," " weary," " thirsting."—*Andrew Robert Fausset, in "Studies in the CL. Psalms,"* 1876.

Whole Psalm.—At the making of this Psalm (as it plainly appeareth) David was cast into some desperate danger ; whether by Saul when he was forced to flee into the cave, as in the former Psalm, or by Absalom his son, or by any other, it is uncertain. Howsoever, in this he complaineth grievously to God of the malice of his enemies, and desireth God to hear his prayers, he acknowledgeth that he suffereth those things by God's just judgment, most humbly craving mercy for his sins ; desiring not only to be restored, but also to be governed by God's Spirit, that he may dedicate and consecrate the rest of his life to God's service. This worthy Psalm, then, containeth these three things. First, a confession of his sins. Secondly, a lamentation over his injuries. Thirdly, a supplication for temporal deliverance and spiritual graces.—*Archibald Symson.*

Whole Psalm.—It is not without some use to observe in this Psalm how the heart of its devout composer turned alternately from spiritual to temporal, and again from temporal to spiritual subjects. He first complains of *his sins,* and begs for *mercy ;* then of *his enemies,* and prays for *deliverance.* Then he laments his darkness and pleads for the light of God's countenance, and for wisdom, and understanding. After this, the thought of his enemies rushes in again upon his soul, and he flees to God for protection. Lastly, he again puts up his prayer for wisdom and holiness : " Teach me to do thy will ; for thou art my God : thy spirit is good ; lead me into the land of uprightness." This is a peculiarly important petition : before he had prayed to know the way in which he should walk, he now prays that he may walk in it.—*John Fawcett,* 1769—1851.

Whole Psalm.—This is appointed by the Church for Ash-Wednesday, and is the seventh and last of the Penitential Psalms. These seven Penitential Psalms are also sometimes called " the Special Psalms," and have long been used in the Church as the completest and most spiritual acts of repentance which she possesses. They have sometimes been considered as directed against the seven deadly sins ; as, for instance, Psalm vi. against Wrath ; Ps. xxxii. against Pride ; Ps. xxxviii. against Gluttony ; Ps. li. against Impurity ; Ps. cii. against Covetousness ; Ps. cxxx. against Envy ; and the present Psalm against Indifference, or Carelessness.—*J. W. Burgon.*

Verse 1.—*"Hear my prayer, O* LORD," etc. Alas, O Lord, if thou hear not my prayer, I were as good not pray at all ; and if thou hear it, and give not ear unto it, it were as good thou didst not hear it at all. O, therefore, *"hear my prayer, O God, and give ear to my supplications";* that neither my praying may be lost for want of thy hearing it, nor thy hearing it be lost for want of thy attending it. When I only make a prayer to God, it seems enough that he hear it ; but when I make a supplication, it requires that he give ear unto it ; for seeing a supplication hath a greater intention in the setting out, it cannot without a greater attention be entertained.

But what niceness of words is this ? as though it were not all one *" to hear "* and *" to give ear "* ? or as though there were any difference between a prayer and a supplication ? Is it not perhaps so indeed ? for hearing sometimes may be only passive, where giving ear is always active ; and seeing Christ, we doubt not, heard the woman of Canaan's first cry, while it was a prayer ; but gave no ear till her

second cry, when it was grown to a supplication. However it be, as thy hearing, O God, without giving ear would be to no purpose, so thy giving ear without giving answer would do me no good; O, therefore, *"answer me,"* O God; for if thou answer not my prayer, how canst thou answer my expectation? My prayer is but the seed; it is thy answer that makes the harvest. If thou shouldst not answer me at all, I could not hope for any harvest at all; and if thou shouldst answer me, and not *"in thy righteousness,"* that would be a harvest indeed, but nothing but of blasted corn. Therefore, answer me, O God, but "in thy righteousness"; for thy righteousness never made an unpleasing answer. It was an answer in thy righteousness which thou madest to Noah: "My spirit shall not always strive with man; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his infancy." It was an answer in thy righteousness which thou madest to Abraham: "Fear not; I will be thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." It was an answer in thy righteousness which thou madest to the thief upon the cross: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." Oh, then, answer me also in thy righteousness, O God, and then the harvest of my hope will be as plentiful as the seven years of plenty foretold by Joseph.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 1.—*"Hear my prayer," . . . "give ear to my supplications," . . . "answer me."* He doth here three times repeat his earnest desire to be heard, as in the fifth Psalm four times he doubleth and ingeminateth this same suit to be heard. . . . When he doubleth his request of hearing, he would have God hear him with both his ears, that is, most attentively and readily: so instant is a troubled mind that he desireth the prayer he putteth up to be remembered, as was said by the angel to the centurion: "Thy prayer and almsdeeds are come up before God": Acts x. 4. —*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 1.—*"In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness."* It was thy righteousness that thou didst make the promise, but it is thy faithfulness that thou wilt keep thy promise: and seeing I am certain of thy making it, how can I be doubtful of thy keeping it? If thou shouldst not answer me in thy righteousness, yet thou shouldst be righteous still; but if thou shouldst not answer me in thy faithfulness, thou shouldst not be faithful still.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 1.—*"Answer me in thy righteousness."* Forgiveness is not inconsistent with the truth or righteousness, and the pardon which in mercy God bestows upon the sinner is bestowed in justice to the well-beloved Son who accepted and discharged the sinner's obligations. This is an infinitely precious truth, and the hearts of thousands in every age have been sustained and gladdened by it. A good old Christian woman in humble life so fully realized this, that when a revered servant of God asked her, as she lay on her dying pillow, the ground of her hope for eternity, she replied, with great composure, "I rely on the justice of God"; adding, however, when the reply excited surprise, "justice, not to me, but to my Substitute, *in whom I trust.—Robert Macdonald, in "From Day to Day; or, Helpful Words for Christian Life,"* 1879.

Verse 2.—*"Enter not into judgment with thy servant."* The Divine justice has just been invoked in the first verse; and now the appellant suddenly seems to deprecate it. These verses really sum up the apparent paradox of the Book of Job (See Job iv. 17, ix. 2, 32, xiv. 3, *seq.*, xv. 14, xxii. 4, etc.) In one breath Job frequently pours forth pathetic protestations of his innocence, and a dread lest God should take him at his word, and arraign him for trial. The godly man, in his desire to have his character vindicated before man, appeals to the just Judge, but instantly falls back with a guilty sense that before his tribunal none can stand:

> "For merit lives from man to man,
> And not from man, O Lord, to thee."
>
> *A. S. Aglen.*

Verse 2.—He doth not pray absolutely that God "would not enter into judgment with him," for this were to forego his government of the world; but that he would not do so on account of his own duties and obedience. But if so be these duties and obedience did answer, in any sense or way, what is required of us as a righteousness unto justification, there was no reason why he should deprecate a trial by them, or upon them.—*John Owen.*

Verse 2.—He doth not say, "with an enemy, a rebel, a traitor, an impenitent sinner;" but *"with thy servant,"* one that is devoted to thy fear, one that is

consecrated to thy service, one that is really and indeed "wholly thine, as much and as fully as he can be." As if he had said, "Lord, if the holiest, purest, best of men should come and stand before thee in judgment, or plead with thee, they must needs be cast in their cause. 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,' alas! 'O Lord, who shall stand?'" Psalm cxxx. 3.—*Thomas Lye* (1621—1684), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 2.—*"Enter not into judgment with thy servant,"* for thou hast already entered into judgment with thy Son, and laid upon him the iniquity of us all. *"Enter not into judgment with thy servant,"* for thy servant enters into judgment with himself; and "if we will judge ourselves we shall not be judged."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—Not the proudest philosopher among the Gentiles, nor the most precise Pharisee among the Jews; we may go yet further and say, not the holiest saint that ever lived, can stand righteous before that bar. God hath nailed that door up, that none can for ever enter by a law-righteousness into life and happiness. This way to heaven is like the northern passage to the Indies, whoever attempts it is sure to be frozen up before he gets half way thither.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—*"Enter not into judgment,"* &c. Some years ago I visited a poor young woman dying with consumption. She was a stranger in our town, and had been there a few weeks before, some time in her girlhood, and had attended my Sabbath-school class. What did I find was her only stay, and hope, and comfort in the view of the dark valley of the shadow of death, which was drawing down upon her? One verse of a Psalm she had learned at the class, and never forgot. She repeated it with clasped hands, piercing eyes, and thin voice trembling from her white lips:

"Thy servant also bring thou not
In judgment to be tried:
Because no living man can be
In thy sight justify'd."

No—no sinner can endure sight of thee, O God, if he tries to be self-justified. —*James Comper Gray, in "The Biblical Museum,"* 1879.

Verse 2.—*"Enter not into judgment with thy servant."* We read of a certain Dutch divine, who being to die, was full of fears and doubts. And when some said to him, "You have been so active and faithful, why should you fear?" Oh, said he, the judgment of man and the judgment of God are different.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—*"Enter not into judgment."* A metaphor taken from the course pursued by those who seek to recover the very utmost to which they are entitled by strict legal process. Compare Job xxii. 4, 5. In a similar sense we are commanded to pray to God that he will forgive us our debts.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 2.—There is probably here a tacit reference to the great transgression, the consequences of which followed David all his days.—*William Walford.*

Verse 2.—*"Thy servant."* A servant is one who obeys the will of another. . . . . There were these four ways in which one might come to be a servant,—by birth, by purchase, by conquest, and by voluntary engagement. Some were servants in one of the ways, and some in another. There were servants who were born in the master's house, servants who were bought with the master's money, servants who were the captives of his sword and bow, and servants who had freely engaged themselves to do his work. . . . In the case of the believer there is something that is peculiar and remarkable. He is God's servant by birth. But he is more—he is God's servant by purchase. And that is not all: he is God's servant by conquest. Yes, and by voluntary engagement too. He is the servant of God, not in some one of the four ways, but in all of them together.—*Andrew Gray* (1805—1861), *in "Gospel Contrasts and Parallels."*

Verse 2.—Not only the worst of my sins, but the best of my duties speak me a child of Adam.—*William Beveridge.*

Verse 2.—So far from being able to answer for my sins, I cannot answer even for my righteousness.—*Bernard of Clairvaux,* 1091—1153.

Verse 2.—A young man once said to me: "I do not think I am a sinner." I asked him if he would be willing his mother or sister should know all he had done, or said, or thought,—all his motions and all his desires. After a moment he said: "No, indeed, I should not like to have them know; no, not for the world." "Then can you dare to say, in the presence of a holy God, who knows every thought of your heart, 'I do not commit sin'?"—*John B. Gough, in "Sunlight and Shadow,"* 1881.

Verse 3.—"*For the enemy,*" etc. If ever trouble be just cause for calling upon thee, how can mine but be most just, when "*the enemy hath persecuted my soul, hath smitten my life down to the ground, and hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead*"? All this "*the enemy*" hath done unto me: but what enemy? Is it not the enemy of all mankind, who hath singled me out, as it were to a duel? And can *I* resist him myself alone, whom the whole army of mankind cannot? But it is not the enemy of thyself, O God, who is but my enemy because I am thy servant? And wilt thou see thy servants persecuted—in thy cause persecuted—and not protect them? Shall I suffer, grievously suffer, for thy sake, and wilt thou forsake me? Alas, O Lord; if they were but some light evils that are inflicted upon me I would bear them without complaining, and never make my moan to thee about them; but they are the three greatest miseries that can be thought of; the greatest persecution, the greatest overthrow, and the greatest captivity. For what persecution so grievous as to be persecuted in my soul? for he plays no less a game than for souls: he casts indeed at the body sometimes, and sometimes at goods, yet these are but the bye; the main of his aim is at the soul; for if he can otherwise win the soul he cares not much for either body or goods, but rather makes use of them to keep men in security; for whatsoever he doth, whatsoever he leaves undone, it is all done but in persecution of the soul; and he can persecute as well with prosperity as with adversity, and knows how to fit their several application. It seems as if he takes me for another Job; he sees he can do no good upon me with fawning and clawing, and therefore falls now to quarrelling and striking; and he strikes no light blows; for "*he hath stricken my life down to the ground*"; and lower would have struck it, if thou, God, hadst not broken his blow. He strikes me downward, to keep me from heaven, as much as he can: and now that he sees me down, he lets not me rest so neither; but seizeth upon me, and being himself the prince of darkness, hath kept me in darkness; not for a night or two, as men stay at their inn, but for a much longer time, as at their dwelling: and it is no ordinary darkness that he hath made me to dwell in, but even the darkness of dead men; and that in the highest degree, as those that have been long dead. They that have been dead but a while are yet remembered sometimes, and sometimes talked of; but they that have been long dead are as quite forgotten as if they had never been; and such, alas, am I. So long have I been made to dwell in darkness, as if I had been dead many years ago, that he that would seek to find me out must be fain to look for me amongst the tombs and monuments. Indeed, to dwell in darkness is no better than the house of death: for as long as we are in life, if we want sometimes the light of the sun, yet the light of a candle will serve to supply it; but I, alas, am kept in such darkness that neither the sunshine of thy gospel nor the lantern of thy law gives any light unto me. I cannot with confidence say, as once I did, "Thou, O Lord, shalt light my candle for me"; and as a body being dead grows cold and stiff, and is not to be bowed, so my soul with continuance in sinning is grown hardened, and, as it were, stiff in sin; that it is as hard a matter to make me flexible to any goodness as to bring a body long dead to life again.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*To dwell in darkness.*" To seek my safety in holes and obscure places in the wilderness. See 2 Sam. xvii. 16. "*As those that have been long dead.*" That is, where I seem to be buried alive, and to have no more hopes of being restored to a happy condition in this world than those that have been long dead have of living again in it.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 4.—"*Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed,*" etc. David was not only a great saint, but a great soldier, and yet even he was sometimes ready to faint in the day of adversity. "Howl, fir trees, if the cedars be shaken."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4 (*second clause*). —"*Within me*" — literally, "*in the midst of me*"; implying how *deeply* the feeling had penetrated. "*Is desolate,*" or rather, "*is stupefied,*" in a similar sense to that of the Hebrew (Isa. lix. 16; lxiii. 5; Dan. viii. 27). So the Chaldaic, The LXX., Vulgate, Arabic, and Syriac, "*is agitated.*" —*Andrew Robert Fausset.*

Verse 4.—"*Is desolate.*" Or rather, "is full of amazement," literally, "astonies itself"; seeks to comprehend the mystery of its sufferings, and is ever beaten back upon itself in its perplexity: such is the full force of the reflexive conjugation here employed.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 4, 5.—How poor a man's judgment can be formed of a man's state from

the considerations of comfort only. A holy man, we clearly see, may be void of comfort; his spirit may be overwhelmed, and his heart desolate. Nay, was it not so even with the holy Jesus himself? was he not very heavy, and his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death? But never did the Saviour's faith and submission to his Father's will shine more brightly than in that hour of darkness. And David's faith also rises to meet the occasion. His trial is great, and his faith is great also. Hardly when he is on the mount of praise, and singing his songs of Zion in the most triumphant strain, does he appear more admirable than when struggling through this painful conflict. He is troubled on every side, yet not removed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. He has no arm of flesh to trust to, and nothing within himself to support his hope; but with what simplicity, and energy of trust, does he betake himself to God, revolving in his memory past seasons of deliverance, and staying his mind on the power and truth of Jehovah! "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands."—*John Fawcett.*

Verse 5.—"*I remember the days of old; I meditate,*" etc. This meditation gives an ease to the overwhelming of my spirits, a comfort to the desolateness of my heart; for I am thinking sometimes upon Jonah, how he was overwhelmed with waters and swallowed up of a whale, and yet at last delivered; sometimes I am thinking of Joseph, how he was bound and left desolate in a pit, and yet at last relieved; and then I meditate thus with myself,—Is God's power confined to persons? could he deliver them in their extremities, and can he not deliver me in mine?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—"*I meditate on all thy works.*" Let us look for God in the future more earnestly than we have done in the past,—look for him in vineyards and orchards and harvest fields,—in the bright plumage of birds, and the delicate bloom of fruit, and the sweet gracefulness of flowers,—in the dense foliage of the forest, and the sparse heather of the moor,—in the rich luxuriance of fertile valleys, and the rugged grandeur of the everlasting hills,—in the merry dance of the rivulet, and the majestic tides of the ocean,—in the gay colours of the rainbow, and the splendour of the starry heavens,—in the gentle radiance of the moon, and the gorgeous light of setting suns,—in the clear azure sky, and the weird pageantry of clouds,—in the snow-mantled wintry landscape, and the brilliant effulgence of a summer's noon,—in the virgin loveliness of spring, and in the pensive fading beauty of autumn,—let us look for him with an earnest, eager, and unwearied gaze, till we see him to be a God of wisdom as well as power, of love as well as sovereignty, of beauty as well as glory.—*A. W. Momerie, in "The Origin of Evil, and other Sermons,"* 1881.

Verses 5, 6.—"*I meditate.*" "*I stretch forth my hands.*" Meditation is prayer's handmaid to wait on it, both before and after the performance of supplication. It is as the plough before the sower, to prepare the heart for the duty of prayer; and as the harrow after the sower, to cover the seed, when 'tis sown. As the hopper feeds the mill with grist, so does meditation supply the heart with matter for prayer. —*William Gurnall.*

Verse 6.—"*I stretch forth my hands unto thee.*" As a poor beggar for an alms. Beggary here is not the easiest and poorest trade, but the hardest and richest of all other.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*I stretch forth my hands unto thee,*" as if I were in hope thou wouldst take me by the hand and draw me to thee.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6.—"*My soul thirsteth after thee,*" etc. Alas! this thirst is rare to be found. Worldly thirsts there are in many: the drunkard's thirst, Deut. xxix. 19; the worldling's thirst, Hab. ii. 5; the epicure's thirst, whose belly is his god, Phil. iii. 19; the ambitious man's thirst—Diotrephes, 3 John 9; and the malicious man's thirst, the blood thirsty, Ps. v. 6. Thirst after these things doth keep away that thirst after grace without which we shall never escape Dives' thirst in hell, Luke xvi. 24. If we have a godly thirst, it will appear by diligence in frequenting the place and means of grace, Prov. viii. 34; brute beasts for want of water will break through hedges, and grace-thirsty souls will make their ways through all encumbrances to come where they may have satisfaction.—*Thomas Pierson,* 1570—1633.

Verse 6.—"*My soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.*" He declareth his vehement affection to God by a very pretty similitude, taken from the ground

which is thirsty by the long drought of summer, wherein the earth, rent in pieces, as it were, and with open mouth through long thirst, seeketh drink from heaven. By which he showeth that he came to God as destitute of natural substance, and therefore seeketh from above that which he lacked. So in all his extremities he looked ever upward; from above he seeketh help and comfort. Albeit we be in extremity, and as it were rent asunder, yet here is comfort,—there are waters in heaven which will refresh us, if we gape after them. Here is a blessing—those that thirst shall be satisfied. If we thirst for mercy, for deliverance, for spiritual or temporal comfort, we shall be satisfied therewith; for if God heard the prayers of Hagar and Ishmael being athirst in the wilderness, and opened unto them a fountain (Gen. xxi. 17, 19), will he forsake Isaac, the child of promise? If he heard Samson in the bitterness of his heart, when he said, "I die from thirst," and opened a spring out of the jawbone of an ass (Jud. xv. 19), will he forsake us in time of our distress, if we thirst aright?—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 6.—"*My soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.*" Sir John Chardin, in his MSS. says:—"The lands of the East, which the great dryness there causes to crack, are the ground of this figure, which is certainly extremely beautiful; for these dry lands have chinks too deep for a person to see the bottom of: this may be observed in the Indies more than anywhere, a little before the rains fall, and wherever the lands are rich and hard."—*Harmer's Observations.*

Verse 6.—"*I stretch forth my hands unto thee,*" etc. It is not a strange thing, then, for the soul to find its life in God. This is its native air: God as the Environment of the soul has been from the remotest age the doctrine of all the deepest thinkers in religion. How profoundly Hebrew poetry is saturated with this high thought will appear when we try to conceive of it with this left out. True poetry is only science in another form. And long before it was possible for religion to give scientific expression to its greatest truths, men of insight uttered themselves in Psalms which could not have been truer to Nature had the most modern light controlled the inspiration. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." What fine sense of the natural analogy of the natural and spiritual does not underlie these words. As the hart after its environment, so man after his; as the water-brooks are fitly designed to meet the natural wants, so fitly does God implement the spiritual need of man. It will be noticed that in the Hebrew poets the longing for God never strikes one as morbid, or unnatural to the men who uttered it. It is as natural for them to long for God as for the swallow to seek her nest. Throughout all their images no suspicion rises within us that they are exaggerating. We feel how truly they are reading themselves, their deepest selves. No false note occurs in all their aspiration. There is no weariness even in their ceaseless sighing, except the lover's weariness for the absent—if they would fly away, it is only to be at rest. Men who have no soul can only wonder at this. Men who have a soul, but with little faith, can only envy it. How joyous a thing it was to the Hebrews to seek their God! How artlessly they call upon him to entertain them in his pavilion, to cover them with his feathers, to hide them in his secret place, to hold them in the hollow of his hand, or stretch around them the everlasting arms! These men were true children of nature. As the humming-bird among its own palm-trees, as the ephemera in the sunshine of a summer evening, so they lived their joyous lives. And even the full share of the sadder experiences of life which came to all of them but drove them the further into the secret place, and led them with more consecration to make, as they expressed it, "*the Lord their portion.*" All that has been said since from Marcus Aurelius to Swedenborg, from Augustine to Schleiermacher, of a besetting God as the full complement of humanity is but a repetition of the Hebrew poets' faith. And even the New Testament has nothing higher to offer man than this. The Psalmist's "God is our refuge and strength" is only the earlier form, less defined, less practicable, but not less noble, of Christ's "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."—*Henry Drummond, in "Natural Law in the Spiritual World,"* 1884.

Verses 6, 7.—"*I stretch forth my hands. . . . . Hear me,*" etc. So will the weary hands be raised yet again, through faith in him who stretched forth his hands upon the cross. So will the fainting soul wait and long for the outpouring of his grace, who upon the cross said, "I thirst." We shall thirst for our salvation, even as the parched-up fields and dying herbs seem to gasp and pant like living things for the sweet and cheering showers in the fierce heat of summer. So will the soul cry to be heard, and that soon, lest its faith grow faint with delay; and the hiding

of God's face, the denying of his smile of pardon, will press on the spirit like sickness, and weigh it down like the heaviness of death.—*J. W. Burgon.*

Verse 7.—"*Hear me speedily.*" David is in trouble, and he betakes himself to prayer. Prayer is the sovereign remedy the godly fly to in all their extremities. The saints in sorrows have fled for comfort and healing unto prayers and supplications. Heaven is a shop full of all good things—there are stored up blessings and mercies; this the children of God know who fly to this shop in their troubles, begging for help from this holy sanctuary. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord": Ps. lxxvii. 2. When any vexation makes our life grievous unto us, what should we seek but help? of whom should we seek, but of the Lord? how should we seek, but by prayer? . . . . "*Speedily.*" His request is not only for hearing, but for speedy hearing: "*Hear me, and hear me speedily;*" answer, and answer quickly. This is the tone and tune of men in distress. Man in misery earnestly sues for speedy delivery. In our afflictions and troubles, deliverance, though it should come with wings, we never think it comes soon enough. Weak man cannot content himself to know he shall have help, unless it be present help.—*Thomas Calvert*, 1647.

Verse 7.—"*My spirit faileth.*" This is David's first reason to move the Lord; he is at the last cast and even giving up the ghost with long waiting for help: from his low condition we may see what is often the condition of God's children,—and the best of God's servants have waited for comfort and the feelings of his Spirit, to the very failing of their own spirit. David, a man after God's own heart, is yet brought low with the faintness and failing of his heart, in waiting for help from God. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. iii. 19); this lies upon the sons of men. But here, not sweat of face only, that were but small; but sighs and fainting of the heart lie upon the sons of God, in seeking and hungering after a taste of God's bread of life, inward comfort, assurance, and joy of the Holy Ghost. Thus the Church was brought to this sick bed ere her comfort came: "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me:" Lam. i. 16. The disciples' spirits were even failing in the tempest, when Christ slept and seemed to neglect them, as if he cared not though they perished. How should our spirits do other but fail, when our Comforter sleeps, when our only friend seems to be our enemy?

Failing of spirit is both a motive which God means to yield unto and to be won by withal; and it is also his opportunity, when he usually helps. It is a strong motive in our prayers to move him, for he is pitiful, and will not let his children utterly fail and perish; he is a pitiful Spirit to failing spirits. "I will not contend (saith the Lord) for ever, neither will I be always wroth;" why? we deserve his wrath should last and take fire for ever against us; yea, but (saith the Lord) this is the reason, "The spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made" (Isaiah lvii. 16): I love and pity the fainting souls and spirits of men; I will help my children; how can I see my creatures whom I made and do love, to perish for want of my help? David knew the Lord's nature, and that this was a speeding argument in prayer, which made him here and elsewhere so often use it. A pitiful father will not see the spirit of his children utterly fail. It is his opportunity; he usually helps when all other helps fail, that we may the more strongly cleave to him, and ground ourselves upon him, as knowing how infirm we are, if he confirm us not. When man's cruse of oil is dry, and fails, and can drop no more, then is God's time to prepare his. Thus helped he the Israelites at the Red Sea, when all man's strength and wisdom was at a stand. He loves to be seen in the mount, in extremities.—*Condensed from Thomas Calvert.*

Verse 7.—The prayer of David becomes, as he proceeds, both more spiritual and more fervent. In the sixth verse we find him thirsting after God; and now that thirst is become so intense that it admits of no delay. In the beginning of the Psalm he was content to say, "Hear my prayer;" but now he cries, "Hear me *speedily.*" This is not the language of sinful impatience: it is, indeed, good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God; yet a man may desire, not only an answer, but also a speedy answer, without incurring the charge of impatience. Whatever a man desires to have he desires to have soon; nor can be be otherwise than grieved at anything which delays the accomplishment of his wishes. In such desire or grief there is nothing sinful, provided it do not lead to murmuring or distrust of God. Hence this petition for *speedy* relief, and manifestation of God's presence and favour is very frequent with the Psalmist. He often

prays, "Make haste, O Lord, to deliver; make haste to help me, O Lord." Nay, if a man does not desire the light of God's countenance soon, it is a certain proof that he does not desire it at all. If the natural language of his heart be not, "hear me speedily," delay is to him no exercise of patience. The very idea of patience implies that something is contrary to our wish; and the stronger the desire is, the more difficult will that exercise of patience become.

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" and therefore David adds, "my spirit faileth." He believed verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; yet so intense was his desire, that faith could hardly keep his spirit from fainting, while the blessing, which he so eagerly pursued, seemed still distant, and fled before him. He is afraid lest if God should long delay, and withdraw himself, faith and hope could hold out no longer. He therefore pleads, "hide not thy face from me, lest I become like them that go down into the pit;" and urges the failing of his spirit before him who "will not contend for ever, lest the spirit should fail before him."—*John Fawcett.*

Verses 7, 8, 10, 11.—Observe how David mixes together prayers for joy, for guidance, and for sanctification—"Hide not thy face from me." "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk." "Teach me to do thy will." "Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning." "Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake." Now this is exactly right: our prayers, as well as our other obedience, must be without partiality; nay, we should desire comfort for the sake of holiness, rather than holiness for the sake of comfort.—*John Fawcett.*

Verse 8.—"*Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness.*" Here he craveth God's favour and kindness, as he doth in many other Psalms. Because in his favour is life, wealth, and grace, all good things, and pleasure for evermore, so that if he look kindly to us we need be afraid of nothing. But how shall he be assured of his favour? Even by *hearing* it, as he saith in the fifty-first Psalm: "Make me to hear joy and gladness." The voice which is heard is the word of God, which, being apprehended by faith, is able to comfort our souls in whatsoever temptation. It is no marvel that such atheists and papists who altogether refuse the word of God, live comfortless and die without comfort, because they refuse that instrument which should carry joy to them. Good reason they die athirst, since they reject that vessel, the word of God, by which they might be refreshed. Therefore since faith cometh by hearing of God's word, and all our comfort cometh by it, let us pray God to bore our ears and our hearts, that we may receive the glad tidings of reconciliation from God.

"*Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk.*" The second petition ariseth very well from the first. For when we have obtained an assurance of God's favour, as he is reconciled to us in Jesus Christ, it followeth next that we should desire to conform our lives to the obedience of his commandments. For no man will frame himself to walk in God's ways till he be assured of God's favour. Therefore faith in God's promises is the most effectual cause to bring forth good works; and an assurance of justification the surest means to produce sanctification.

"*For I lift up my soul unto thee.*" Behold what a wonderful effect God worketh by afflictions: they depress and cast down the outward man, and our inward man by them is elevated and raised aloft; yea, the more we are afflicted, the more we are stirred up. The oftener the messenger of Satan is sent to buffet us, the more earnestly (with Paul) we cry unto the Lord to be delivered (2 Cor. xii. 8). So if we be cast down to hell in our feelings, what the worse are we if by that we be raised up to heaven?—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 8.—"*Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning,*" etc. To hear thy lovingkindness in the morning makes my waking to be saluted, as it were, with music; makes my troubles seem as if they were but dreams; makes me find it true that though "weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning:" Ps. xxx. 5. . . . It may well be said we hear this lovingkindness in the morning, seeing it makes it morning to us whensoever we hear it.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 8.—"*Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning.*" If evil fall upon us in the night, we would have it removed ere the morning; if in the morning, we would not have it our bed-fellow in the evening. We would have the Lord's promise run thus,—Your sorrows shall not endure the whole night, your joy shall come long before the morning. The luxurious Emperor (? Smyndirides the Sybarite) and his drunken mates sat and drank all the night, and slept all the day, insomuch that it was said of them, they never saw sun-set nor sun-rise. Such would we

have the evils we suffer—of so short continuance that neither sun-set nor sun-rise might see us in our misery. This makes me wonder at that strange Egyptian beast called Pharaoh, who being demanded of Moses when he would have God's plague of the frogs removed, answered, "*To-morrow.*" Surely, here he spake not as a man, to whom one hour's trouble is accounted a day, a day a month, a month a year. For in leaving of two things we change our desires, and are much different.

1. In leaving of sin, then we procrastinate and put off; and when God says, "To-day hear my voice," we answer, "To-morrow," and are like the Levite's wife's father (Judg. xix. 6), too kind hosts to such bad guests: saying to our sins "tarry till the morning." Our pace to repentance is slow, we are far from haste in that matter.

2. But for afflictions to leave us, then we wish they had feet like hinds' feet, to run away from us, or we the wings of a dove to fly away from them, and be at rest. . . . . What prisoner desires not to be presently set free, and that liberty's soft hand may loose his iron knots? What mariner wishes a long storm? What servant sighs not over his hard apprenticeship? Yea, who is he, that if there were an appearance of an offering to take the cup of calamity from his mouth, saying, "Thou shalt drink no more," would answer, "This cup shall not yet pass from me, I delight to carouse and drink deeply of these bitter waters"? Yea, this desire extends so far that it comes to the Son of Man, the blessed Seed of the woman, who was so clad with human weakness that he earnestly prayed for speedy help from his heavy anguish; and that not once, but often,—"Oh, my Father, if it be possible," etc.; and when his Father answers not, he cries like one ready to fall under the burden, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The reason for Christ's thus complaining is to be fetched from thence, whence his flesh came; even from us. It was our human flesh, not his Divine spirit, which was so weary of suffering; his spirit was willing, it was our flesh that was so weak.—*Thomas Calvert.*

Verse 8.—"*Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning.*" This is a short and sweet morning prayer. God hears early prayer, and lovingly responds to it. The smiles of his face, the sweetness of his voice, the gifts of his hand, bless the morning, bless all the day. Do we write and read experimentally? Then we know the blessedness of divine love. The subject is truly pleasant and precious. "*Lovingkindness*" is a favourite expression, is a choice theme of David's. It is used more in the Book of Psalms than in any other book in the Scriptures. Lovingkindness is love showing kindness; it is the sun of love shining with rays of kindness; the river of love sending forth streams of kindness; it is the heart of love uttering itself by words of kindness, doing deeds, and giving gifts of kindness.

Here it is the *voice* of the lovingkindness of the Lord that David desires to hear. This voice is the music of heaven, the joyful sound of the gospel, and it makes a jubilee in the Christian's heart. To him there is beauty, sweetness, fulness in the theme; it is his joy and rejoicing. This is the voice that speaks *pardon.* Pardon is through Jesus the medium of this kindness. Apart from this there is no hope of forgiveness. We plead this and realize pardon. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions": Ps. li. 1. It is the Lord's lovingkindness that pardons me. This voice speaks *peace:* "The Lord will speak peace unto his people." Precious peace is the result of pardoning kindness. This voice also speaks *joy.* This is the alone and all-sufficient source of joy. It is sought elsewhere, but found only here. It sweetens every bitter, and makes sweeter every sweet. It is a balsam for every wound, a cordial for every fear. The present is but a taste, but a drop of the future fulness of joy. How sweetly refreshing is the joy of the Lord's lovingkindness. This voice speaks *hope.* With the sweet music of this voice falling upon our ears, the night of hopelessness passes away, and the morning of expectation opens upon us. It assures us of supplies for our wants, of safety in danger, of endurance to the end, and of a glorious portion in eternity.

"*The morning*" is the season in which David desires to hear the voice of the lovingkindness of the Lord. The morning is a season often mentioned by him, and as a time of devotion is much prized by him. "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up": Ps. v. 3. "*Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning*": let it engage my thoughts and affections. It is well to have a subject like this to occupy our waking thoughts, and to take hold of our first desires. If other thoughts get

into our hearts in the morning, we may not be able to turn them out all the day. Prayer and praise, reading and meditation, will be sweet with such a subject occupying and influencing our minds. They will be exercises of cheerfulness, freedom, and blessedness.

"Cause me to hear" this voice. It speaks every morning, but many ears are deaf to it. But while others are indifferent to it, cause me to hear it; let me not lose the opportunity: waken my ear morning by morning, so that I may hail the season and enjoy the privilege. And when the morning of eternity shall come, "cause me to hear the voice of thy lovingkindness" welcoming me to its joys.—*W. Abbot, in "The Baptist Messenger,"* 1870.

Verse 8.—*"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk."* The whole valley is surrounded by ranges of regal crags; but the mountain of the Gemmi, apparently absolutely inaccessible, is the last point to which you would turn for an outlet. A side gorge that sweeps up to the glaciers and snowy pyramids flashing upon you in the opposite direction is the route which you suppose your guide is going to take; and visions of pedestrians perilously scaling icy precipices, or struggling up to the middle through ridges of snow, begin to surround you, as the prospect of your own experience in this day's expedition. So convinced was I that the path *must* go in that direction, that I took a short cut, which I conceived would bring me again into the mule path at a point under the glaciers; but after scaling precipices and getting lost in a wood of firs in the valley, I was glad to rejoin my friend with the guide, and to clamber on in pure ignorance and wonder. . . . Now what a striking symbol is this of things that sometimes take place in our spiritual pilgrimage. We are often brought to a stand, hedged up and hemmed in by the providence of God so that there seems no way out. A man is sometimes thrown into difficulties in which he sits down beginning to despair, and says to himself, "Well, this time it is all over with me"; like Sterne's starling, or, worse, like Bunyan's man in the cage, he says, "I cannot get out." Then when God has drawn him from all self-confidence and self-resource, a door opens in the wall and he rises up, and walks at liberty, praising God.—*George Barrell Cheever,* 1807—.

Verses 8—10.—After thou hast prayed, observe what God doth towards thee; especially how he doth guide thy feet and heart after prayer; there is much in that. That which was the spirit of supplication in a man when he prayed, rests upon him as the spirit of obedience in his course. That dependence which he hath upon God for the mercy he seeks for is a special motive and means to keep him fearful of offending, and diligent in duty. He looks to his paths, and endeavours to behave himself as becomes a suitor, as well as to pray as a suitor. David walked by this principle when he said (Ps. lxvi. 18), "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"; that consideration still came in as a curb unto sin. Therefore David, in these verses, when he was to pray, even as for his life, for deliverance from his enemies, he specially prays God to direct him and keep him, that he might not sin against him; for he knew that by sinning he should enervate and spoil all his prayers. He cries not only *"Hear me speedily,"* but also, *"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; teach me to do thy will."* This he especially prays for, more than for deliverance, for else he knew God would not hear him. Therefore when thou art in treaty with God for any mercy, observe, doth God still after praying keep thee in a more obedient frame of spirit? If so, it is a sign he intends to answer thee. The same is true when he keeps thee from using ill means, etc. When he meant to give David the kingdom, he kept him innocent, and made his heart tender, so that it smote him but for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 9.—*"Deliver me, O* LORD, *from mine enemies."* In the former verse he desireth God's mercy and lovingkindness, and that he might be showed the way wherein he should walk: now he desireth to be free of temporal danger. This is a good method in prayer, first to seek the kingdom of God and spiritual graces, for then all other things shall be added to us. We seek in vain temporal deliverances of God if we neglect to seek spiritual graces, which are most necessary for us.

As for *enemies*, the church and her members neither have wanted nor shall want innumerable foes, against whom we can only oppose God's protection. In number, in power, in policy and subtilty they are ever above us. There is no help for us against them all but our gracious God. Esau came with four hundred against Jacob, a naked man, with his wife, children, and droves of cattle. But

Mahanaim was with him; he was guarded by God's angels. And, therefore, since the church of God in France, Germany, and elsewhere is in danger of the Leviathan and the sons of Anak, let us run to the Lord, and cry unto him,—O God Jehovah, who art one against all, deliver thy church from her enemies, who likewise are thy enemies.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 9.—"*I flee unto thee to hide me.*" Is David's valour come to this, that he is come now to be glad to fly? Had he not done better to have died valiantly than to fly basely? O my soul, to fly is not always a sign of baseness; it is not always a point of valour to stand to it; but then to fly when we feel our own weakness, and to him to fly, in whom is our strength—this is, if not valour, at least wisdom, but it is, to say true, both wisdom and true valour. And now, O God, seeing I find my own weakness, and know thy strength, what should I do but fly, and whither fly but only to thee?—to thee, a strong fortress to all that build upon thee; to thee, a safe sanctuary to all that fly unto thee.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 9.—"*I flee unto thee to hide me.*" This implies, 1. *Danger:* the Christian may be in danger from sin, self, foes. 2. *Fear:* his fears may be groundless, but they are often very painful. 3. *Inability*—to defend himself or overcome his opposers. 4. *Foresight:* he sees the storm in the distance, and looks out for the covert. 5. *Prudence:* he hides before the storm, ere the enemy comes upon him. 6. A laudable *concern* for safety and comfort. The believer, if wise, will at all times flee to Jehovah. Jacob flies to Laban; the manslayer to the refuge; the bird to his mountain; and the Christian to his God. Asa may seek to physicians; Ephraim to king Jareb; and Saul to the witch; but the believer looks to his God. The Lord receives, befriends, and secures him. Let us flee to him by prayer, in faith, with hope, for salvation; and he will receive us, shelter us, and be our refuge and strength. Flee from sin, from self, from the world; but flee to Jesus. His heart is ever toward us, his ear is open to us, and his hand is ready to help, protect, and deliver us. His throne is our asylum. His promise is our comfort, and his omnipotence is our guard.

Happy soul, that, free from harms
Rests within his Shepherd's arms!
Who his quiet shall molest?
Who shall violate his rest?
He who found the wandering sheep,
Loves, and still delights to keep.

James Smith, in "The Believer's Daily Remembrancer."

Verse 9.—"*I flee unto thee to hide me.*" The Lord hid the prophets so that Ahab could not find them out: 1 Kings xviii. 13. If we will creep under his wings he will surely keep us.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 9.—"*I flee unto thee to hide me.*" It may be rendered, "*With thee have I hid*"; that is, myself: so Arama gives the sense. "*I have hid myself with thee.*" Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Kimchi interpret it to this purpose, "I have hid my affairs, my straits and troubles, my difficulties and necessities, from men, and have revealed them unto thee, who alone can save." The Targum is, "I have appointed thy Word to be (my) Redeemer.—*John Gill.*

Verses 9, 10.—Be persuaded actually to hide yourselves with Jesus Christ. To have a hiding-place and not to use it is as bad as to want one: fly to Christ; run into the holes of this rock. Three things must be done by all those that would hide themselves with Christ.

1. You must put away sin by repentance. Jesus Christ will not be a sanctuary for rebels, he will not protect evil-doers. Christ will never hide the devil, nor any of his servants. Isa. lv. 6, 7: "Let the ungodly forsake his ways," etc. David knew this, therefore he prays that God would teach him to do his will: "*Deliver me, etc. I flee unto thee to hide me. Teach me to do thy will.*" He that will not do the will of Christ shall receive no protection from Christ. *Protectio sequitur allegiantiam.* You must be his liege people if you will have him to defend you. Job xxii. 23, 25.

2. You must pray that he would hide you. The promise is made to prayer: Isa. lxv. 10, "Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me." He that prays most fervently is like to be hid most securely. And then,

3. You must believe in him. Faith is the key that opens the door of this

hiding-place, and locks it again. One word in the Hebrew signifies to trust and to make a refuge. Ps. lvii. 1. He that doth not make Christ his trust shall not have Christ for his hiding-place; he will hide none but those that commit themselves to him: "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name": Ps. xci. 9, 14. —*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 10.—"*Teach me to do thy will.*" He saith not, Teach me to *know* thy will, but to *do* thy will. God teaches us in three ways. First, by his word. Secondly, he illuminateth our minds by the Spirit. Thirdly, he imprinteth it in our hearts, and maketh us obedient to the same; for the servant who knoweth the will of his master, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes: Luke xii. 47.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 10.—"*Teach me to do thy will.*" We are to pray that God would teach us to know, and then teach us to do, his will. Knowledge without obedience is lame, obedience without knowledge is blind; and we must never hope for acceptance if we offer the blind and the lame to God.—*Vincent Alsop* (—1703), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 10.—"*Teach me to do thy will.*" The Lord doth no sooner call his people to himself, but as soon as ever he hath thus crowned them with these glorious privileges, and given them any sense and feeling of them, then they immediately cry out, O Lord, what shall I now do for thee? How shall I now live to thee? They know now that they are no more their own, but his; and therefore should now live to him.

It is true indeed, obedience to the law is not required of us now as it was of Adam; it was required of him as a condition antecedent to life, but of those that be in Christ it is required only as a duty consequent to life, or as a rule of life, that seeing he hath purchased our lives in redemption, and actually given us life in vocation and sanctification, we should now live unto him, in all thankful and fruitful obedience, according to his will revealed in the moral law. It is a vain thing to imagine that our obedience is to have no other rule but the Spirit, without an attendance to the law: the Spirit is indeed the efficient cause of our obedience, and hence we are said to be "led by the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 14); but it is not properly the rule of our obedience, but the will of God revealed in his word, especially in the law, is the rule; the Spirit is the wind that drives us in our obedience; the law is our compass, according to which it steers our course for us: the Spirit and the law, the wind and the compass, can stand well together. "*Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God*" (there is David's rule, viz., God's will revealed); "*Thy Spirit is good*" (there is David's wind, that enabled him to steer his course according to it). The Spirit of life doth free us from the law of sin and death; but not from the holy, and pure, and good, and righteous law of God. Rom. viii. 1—3.—*Thomas Shepard, in "The Sound Believer,"* 1671.

Verse 10.—"*Teach me to do thy will,*" etc. We are inclined and enabled [to good] by the sanctifying Spirit. In the Christian religion, not only the precepts are good, but there goeth along with them the power of God to make us good. "*Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good.*" The Spirit's direction hath strength joined with it. And he is a good Spirit, as he doth incline us to good. The Spirit is the only fountain of all goodness and holiness: Neh. ix. 20, "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them." Why is he so often called the good Spirit, but that all his operations tend to make men good and holy? Eph. v. 9, "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 10.—"*Thy Spirit is good; lead me,*" says the Psalmist. And therefore it is a usual phrase in Rom. viii. and Gal. iv., our being *led* by the Spirit.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 10.—"*Lead me into the land of uprightness,*" into the communion of saints, the pleasant land of the upright; or into a settled course of holy living, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness, where holiness will be in perfection, and he that is holy will be holy still. We should desire to be led and kept safe to heaven, not only because it is a land of blessedness, but because it is a land of uprightness; it is the perfection of grace.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—"*Lead me.*" Man by nature is as a cripple and blind, he cannot go upright unless he be led by a superior spirit; yea, he must be carried as an eagle carrieth her little ones, or as a mother her tender child. Think not that we can

step one right step to heaven but by the conduct and convoy of God's Holy Spirit. Miserable are those who go without his conduction.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 10.—"*The land of uprightness.*" *Mishor* is the name for the smooth upland downs of Moab (Deut. iii. 10; Josh. xiii. 17; xx. 8; Jer. xlviii. 8, 21). Derived from the root *yashar*, "even, level plain," it naturally came to be used figuratively for equity, right, righteous, and uprightness. Mal. ii. 6; Isa. xi. 4; Ps. xlv. 7; lxvii. 5; cxliii. 10.—*Cunningham Geikie, in "Hours with the Bible,"* 1884.

Verse 10.—"*The land of uprightness.*" The land of plainness, a land where no wickedness of men, and malice of Satan, vex the soul from day to day; a land where no rough paths and crooked turns lengthen out the traveller's weary journey (see verse 5); but where all is like the smooth pasture-lands of Reuben (Deut. iii. 10; Josh. xiii. 9), a fit place for flocks to lie down.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 11.—"*Quicken me, O* LORD, *for thy name's sake.*" For the sake of thine own glory, that thou mayest show thyself to be the God of lovingkindness and power which thou art esteemed to be.—*Andrew Robert Fausset.*

Verse 11.—"*For thy righteousness' sake.*" It is worthy of observation that the Psalmist pleads God's righteousness as the foundation on which he bases his supplication for the deliverance of his soul from trouble, and God's lovingkindness or mercy as that on which he grounds his prayer, or his conviction, that God will destroy his enemies. This is not the language of a revengeful and bloodthirsty spirit.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 11.—"*Bring my soul out of trouble.*" I can bring it in, but thou only canst bring it out.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 11, 12.—"*Thy name's sake . . . thy righteousness' sake . . . And of thy mercy.*" Mark here, my soul, with what three cords David seeks to draw God to grant him his suits: for his name's sake, for his righteousness' sake, and for his mercy's sake,—three such motives, that it must be a very hard suit that God will deny, if either of them be used. But though all the three strong motives, yet as David riseth in his suits, so he may seem also to rise in his motives; and by this account; for his righteousness' sake will prove a motive of a higher degree than for his name's sake, and for his mercy's sake the highest of them all—as indeed his mercy-seat is the highest part of all his ark, if it be not rather that as the attributes of God, so these motives, that are drawn from the attributes, are of equal pre-eminence. But if the three notives be all of them so strong, being each of them single, how strong would they be if they were all united, and twisted, I may say, into one cord? And united they are all, indeed, into a motive, which God hath more clearly revealed to us than he did to David (although it be strange, seeing it was his Lord; and yet not strange, seeing it was his son); and this is the motive: for thy Son Christ Jesus' sake; for he is the *verbum abbreviatum* [the Word in brief], in whom are included all the motives—all the powerful motives—that can be used to God for obtaining our suits.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verses 11, 12.—The verbs in these two last verses, as Dr. Hammond hath noted, should be rendered in the future; "*Thou shalt quicken,*" etc., and then the Psalm will end, as usual, with an act of faith and assurance, that all those mercies, which have been asked, shall be obtained; that God, for the sake of his "*name,*" and his "*righteousness,*" of his glory, and his faithfulness in the performance of his promises, will not fail to be favourable and gracious to his servants, "*quickening*" them, even when dead in trespasses and sins, and bringing them, by degrees, "*out of all their troubles*": going forth with them to the battle against their spiritual "*enemies,*" and enabling them to vanquish the authors of their "*affliction*" and misery, to mortify the flesh, and to overcome the world; that so they may triumph with their Redeemer, in the day when he shall likewise quicken their mortal bodies, and put all enemies under their feet.—*George Horne.*

Verse 12.—"*Of thy mercy cut off mine enemies.*" He desireth God to slay his enemies in his mercy, when rather their destruction was a work of his justice? I answer that the destruction of the wicked is a mercy to the church. As God showed great mercy and kindness to his church by the death of Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Herod, and other troublers thereof.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verse 12.—"*Cut off mine enemies,*" etc. When you find these imprecations to be prophecies of events which the Psalmist himself could not understand; but

were to be fulfilled in persons whom the Psalmist could not know, as they were to live in distant future ages,—for instance, Judas, and the Romans, and leaders of the Jewish nation,—who would make these imprecations proofs of a revengeful spirit ?—*James Bennett* (1774—1862), *in "Lectures on the Acts of the Apostles,"* 1847.

Verse 12.—*"I am thy servant."* David the king professeth himself one of God's pensioners. Paul, when he would blaze his coat of arms, and set forth his best heraldry, he doth not call himself Paul, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, or Paul of the tribe of Benjamin, but Paul " a servant of Christ " : Rom. i. 1. Theodosius thought it a greater dignity to be God's servant than to be an emperor. Christ himself, who is equal with his Father, yet is not ashamed of the title *servant :* Isa. liii. 11. Every servant of God is a son, every subject a prince : it is more honour to serve God than to have kings to serve us : the angels in heaven are servitors to the saints.—*Thomas Watson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Three threes. I. As to his devotions,—prayers, supplications, requests. II. As to his success,—hear, give ear, answer me. III. As to his argument,—because thou art Jehovah, faithful, righteous.

Verses 1, 2.—A suitable prayer for a believer who has reason to suppose that he is suffering chastening for sin. I. Here is earnest importunity, as of one depending entirely upon divine favour for a hearing. II. Here is believing fervency laying hold of divine faithfulness and justice ; see 1 John i. 9. III. Here is a deep consciousness of the vanity of self-justification pleading for pure mercy, ver. 2. —*J. F.*

Verse 2.—I. Who he is. " Thy servant." II. What he knows. " In thy sight shall no man living be justified." III. What he asks. " Enter not into judgment."

Verses 3—6.—Consider, I. The great lengths God may sometimes permit the enemy to go, ver 3. The case of Job a good illustration. II. The deep depression of spirit he may even permit his saints to experience, ver. 4. III. The good things he has provided for their meditation when even at their worst, ver. 5. IV. The two things his grace will never suffer to die, whose existence is a pledge of near approaching joy,—1. The thirsting after himself. 2. The practice of prayer. The whole is a good text for a lecture on the life and experience of Job.—*J. F.*

Verses 4, 5, 6.—I. Down in Despondency. II. Deep in Meditation. III. Determined in Supplication.

Verses 5, 6.—*"I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee."* Hand in hand : or the child of God admiring the work of God's hands, and praying with uplifted hands to be wrought upon by the like power.

Verse 5.—David's method. I. He gathered materials ; facts and evidence concerning God : " I remember." II. He thought out his subject and arranged his matter : " I meditate." III. He discoursed thereon, and was brought nearer to God : " I muse "—discourse. IV. Let us close by viewing all this as an example for preachers and others.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 6.—God alone the desire of his people.

Verse 6.—Deep calling to deep. I. The insatiable craving of the heart. II. The vast riches in glory. III. The rushing together of these as : " My soul is to thee." —*W. B. H.*

Verse 7.—Reasons for speedy answers.

Verse 7.—Never despair. I. Because you have the Lord to plead with. Because you may freely tell him the desperateness of your case. III. Because you may be urgent with him for deliverance.—*J. F.*

Verse 7.—Cordial for the swooning heart. I. God's beloved fainting. II. The best restorative ; her Lord's face. III. She has the presence of mind to call him as she falls.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 8.—The two prayers—*"Cause me to hear,"* and *"Cause me to know."* The two pleas—*"In thee do I trust,"* and *"I lift up my soul unto thee."*

Verse 8, Ps. cxlii. 3.—*"Thou knewest my path."* Ps. cxliii. 8.—*"Cause me to*

know the way." I. Trusting Omniscience in everything. II. Following conscience in everything.

Verse 8.—On fixing a time for the answering of our prayer. I. By whom it may be done. Not by all believers, but by those who through dwelling with God have attained to a holy boldness. II. When it may be done. 1. When the case is specially urgent. 2. When God's honour is concerned. III. What renders it pleasing to God when done. Great faith. "For in thee do I trust."—*J. F.*

Verse 8.—Listening for Lovingkindness. I. Where to listen. At the gates of Scripture; in the halls of meditation; nigh the footsteps of Jesus. II. When to listen. "In the morning;" as early and as often as possible. III. How to listen. In trustful dependence: "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust." IV. Why to listen. To "know the way wherein I should walk."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 9.—Admirable points in this prayer to be imitated by us. There is, I. A sense of danger. II. A confession of weakness. III. A prudent foresight. IV. A solid confidence:—he expects to be hidden from his foes.

Verse 9.—I. Looking up. II. Lying close.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 10.—Two childlike requests—"Teach me. . . . lead me."

Verse 10.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1519, "At School,"

Verse 10 (*first half*).—I. The best instructions: "Teach me to do thy will." Not merely to know, but "to do." II. The only efficient Instructor. III. The best reason for asking and expecting instruction: "For thou art my God."—*J. F.*

Verse 10.—"*Teach me to do thy will.*" We may call this sentence a description of David's school; and it is a very complete one; at least, it hath in it the three best things that belong to a school. I. The best teacher. II. The best scholar. III. The best lesson; for who so good a teacher as God? who so good a scholar as David? what so good a lesson as to do God's will?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 10 (*latter half*).—I. Utopia—"the land of uprightness." Describe it, and declare its glories. II. The difficult paths to that upland country. III. The divine Guide,—"thy Spirit is good."

Verse 11 (*first clause*).—I. What is this blessing? "Quicken me." II. In what way will it glorify God, so that we may plead for the sake of his name?

Verse 11 (*second clause*).—How is the righteousness of God concerned in our deliverance from trouble?

Verse 12.—I. To the Master: "I am thy servant." II. For the servant: he seeks protection because he belongs to his master.

PSALM CXLIV.

Albeit that this Psalm is in some measure very similar to Psalm xviii., yet it is a new song, and in its latter portion it is strikingly so. Let the reader accept it as a new Psalm, and not as a mere variation of an old one, or as two compositions roughly joined together. It is true that it would be a complete composition if the passage from verse 12 *to the close were dropped; but there are other parts of David's poems which might be equally self-contained if certain verses were omitted; and the same might be said of many uninspired sonnets. It does not, therefore, follow that the latter part was added by another hand, nor even that the latter part was a fragment by the same author, appended to the first song merely with the view of preserving it. It seems to us to be highly probable that the Psalmist, remembering that he had trodden some of the same ground before, felt his mind moved to fresh thought, and that the Holy Spirit used this mood for his own high purposes. Assuredly the addendum is worthy of the greatest Hebrew poet, and it is so admirable in language, and so full of beautiful imagery, that persons of taste who were by no means overloaded with reverence have quoted it times without number, thus confessing its singular poetical excellence. To us the whole Psalm appears to be perfect as it stands, and to exhibit such unity throughout that it would be a literary Vandalism, as well as a spiritual crime, to rend away one part from the other.*

TITLE.—*Its title is "* Of David," *and its language is of David, if ever language can belong to any man. As surely as we could say of any poem, This is of Tennyson, or of Longfellow, we may say, This is* of David. *Nothing but the disease which closes the eye to manifest fact and opens it to fancy, could have led learned critics to ascribe this song to anybody but David. Alexander well says, "The Davidic origin of this Psalm is as marked as that of any in the Psalter."*

It is to God the devout warrior sings when he extols him as his strength and stay (verses 1 *and* 2). *Man he holds in small account, and wonders at the Lord's regard for him (verses* 3 *and* 4); *but he turns in his hour of conflict to the Lord, who is declared to be "a man of war," whose triumphant interposition he implores (verses* 5 *to* 8). *He again extols and entreats in verses* 9, 10, *and* 11; *and then closes with a delightful picture of the Lord's work for his chosen people, who are congratulated upon having such a God to be their God.*

EXPOSITION.

BLESSED *be* the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, *and* my fingers to fight:

2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and *he* in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.

1. *"Blessed be the* LORD *my strength."* He cannot delay the utterance of his gratitude, he bursts at once into a loud note of praise. His best word is given to his best friend—"Blessed be Jehovah." When the heart is in a right state it must praise God, it cannot be restrained; its utterances leap forth as waters forcing their way from a living spring. With all his strength David blesses the God of his strength. We ought not to receive so great a boon as strength to resist evil, to defend truth, and to conquer error, without knowing who gave it to us, and rendering to him the glory of it. Not only does Jehovah give strength to his saints, but he is their strength. The strength is made theirs because God is theirs. God is full of power, and he becomes the power of those who trust him. In him our great strength lieth, and to him be blessings more than we are able to utter. It may be read, *"My Rock,"* but this hardly so well consorts with the following words: *"Which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight."* The word *rock* is the Hebrew way of expressing strength: the grand old language is full of such suggestive symbols. The Psalmist in the second part of the verse sets forth the Lord as teacher in the arts of war. If we have strength we are not much the better unless we have skill also. Untrained force is often an injury to the man who possesses it, and it even becomes a danger to those who are round about him; and therefore the

Psalmist blesses the Lord as much for teaching as for strength. Let us also bless Jehovah if he has in anything made us efficient. The tuition mentioned was very practical, it was not so much of the brain as of the hands and fingers; for these were the members most needful for conflict. Men with little scholastic education should be grateful for deftness and skill in their handicrafts. To a fighting man the education of the hands is of far more value than mere book-learning could ever be; he who has to use a sling or a bow needs suitable training, quite as much as a scientific man or a classical professor. Men are too apt to fancy that an artisan's efficiency is to be ascribed to himself; but this is a popular fallacy. A clergyman may be supposed to be taught of God, but people do not allow this to be true of weavers or workers in brass; yet these callings are specially mentioned in the Bible as having been taught to holy women and earnest men when the tabernacle was set up at the first. All wisdom and skill are from the Lord, and for them he deserves to be gratefully extolled. This teaching extends to the smallest members of our frame: the Lord teaches fingers as well as hands; indeed, it sometimes happens that if the finger is not well trained the whole hand is incapable.

David was called to be a man of war, and he was eminently successful in his battles; he does not trace this to his good generalship or valour, but to his being taught and strengthened for the war and the fight. If the Lord deigns to have a hand in such unspiritual work as fighting, surely he will help us to proclaim the gospel and win souls; and then we will bless his name with even greater intensity of heart. We will be pupils, and he shall be our Master, and if we ever accomplish anything we will give our instructor hearty blessing.

This verse is full of personality; it is mercy shown to David himself which is the subject of grateful song. It has also a presentness about it; for Jehovah is now his strength, and is still teaching him; we ought to make a point of presenting praise while yet the blessing is on the wing. The verse is also pre-eminently practical, and full of the actual life of every day; for David's days were spent in camps and conflicts. Some of us who are grievously tormented with rheumatism might cry, "Blessed be the Lord, my Comforter, who teacheth my knees to bear in patience, and my feet to endure in resignation"; others who are on the look out to help young converts might say, "Blessed be God who teaches my eyes to see wounded souls, and my lips to cheer them"; but David has his own peculiar help from God, and praises him accordingly. This tends to make the harmony of heaven perfect when all the singers take their parts; if we all followed the same score, the music would not be so full and rich.

2. Now our royal poet multiplies metaphors to extol his God. "*My goodness, and my fortress.*" The word for *goodness* signifies *mercy*. Whoever we may be, and wherever we may be, we need mercy such as can only be found in the infinite God. It is all of mercy that he is any of the other good things to us, so that this is a highly comprehensive title. O how truly has the Lord been mercy to many of us in a thousand ways! He is goodness itself, and he has been unbounded goodness to us. We have no goodness of our own, but the Lord has become goodness to us. So is he himself also our *fortress* and safe abode: in him we dwell as behind impregnable ramparts and immovable bastions. We cannot be driven out, or starved out; for our fortress is prepared for a siege; it is stored with abundance of food, and a well of living water is within it. Kings usually think much of their fenced cities, but King David relies upon his God, who is more to him than fortresses could have been. "*My high tower, and my deliverer.*" As from a lofty watch-tower the believer, trusting in the Lord, looks down upon his enemies. They cannot reach him in his elevated position; he is out of bow-shot; he is beyond their scaling ladders; he dwells on high. Nor is this all; for Jehovah is our Deliverer as well as our Defender. These different figures set forth the varied benefits which come to us from our Lord. He is every good thing which we can need for this world or the next. He not only places us out of harm's way full often, but when we must be exposed, he comes to our rescue, he raises the siege, routs the foe, and sets us in joyous liberty. "*My shield, and he in whom I trust.*" When the warrior rushes on his adversary, he bears his targe upon his arm, and thrusts death aside; thus doth the believer oppose the Lord to the blows of the enemy, and finds himself secure from harm. For this and a thousand other reasons our trust rests in our God for everything; he never fails us, and we feel boundless confidence in him. '*Who subdueth my people under me.*" He keeps my natural subjects subject, and my conquered subjects peaceful under my sway. Men who rule others should

thank God if they succeed in the task. Such strange creatures are human beings, that if a number of them are kept in peaceful association under the leadership of any one of the Lord's servants, he is bound to bless God every day for the wonderful fact. The victories of peace are as much worthy of joyful gratitude as the victories of war. Leaders in the Christian church cannot maintain their position except as the Lord preserves to them the mighty influence which ensures obedience and evokes enthusiastic loyalty. For every particle of influence for good which we may possess let us magnify the name of the Lord.

Thus has David blessed Jehovah for blessing him. How many times he has appropriated the Lord by that little word *My!* Each time he grasps the Lord, he adores and blesses him; for the one word *Blessed* runs through all the passage like a golden thread. He began by acknowledging that his strength for fighting foreign enemies was of the Lord, and he concluded by ascribing his domestic peace to the same source. All round as a king he saw himself to be surrounded by the King of kings, to whom he bowed in lowly homage, doing suit and service on bended knee, with grateful heart admitting that he owned everything to the Rock of his salvation.

3 LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him! *or* the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

4 Man is like to vanity: his days *are* as a shadow that passeth away.

3. *"LORD what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him!"* What a contrast between Jehovah and man! The Psalmist turns from the glorious all-sufficiency of God to the insignificance and nothingness of man. He sees Jehovah to be everything, and then cries, "Lord, what is man!" What is man in the presence of the Infinite God? What can he be compared to? He is too little to be described at all: only God, who knows the most minute object, can tell what man is. Certainly he is not fit to be the rock of our confidence: he is at once too feeble and too fickle to be relied upon. The Psalmist's wonder is that God should stoop to know him, and indeed it is more remarkable than if the greatest archangel should make a study of emmets, or become the friend of mites. God knows his people with a tender intimacy, a constant, careful observation: he foreknew them in love, he knows them by care, he will know them is acceptance at last. Why and wherefore is this? What has man done? What has he been? What is he now that God should know him, and make himself known to him as his goodness, fortress, and high tower? This is an unanswerable question. Infinite condescension can alone account for the Lord stooping to be the friend of man. That he should make man the subject of election, the object of redemption, the child of eternal love, the darling of infallible providence, the next of kin to Deity, is indeed a matter requiring more than the two notes of exclamation found in this verse.

"Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!" The son of man is a weaker being still,—so the original word implies. He is not so much *man* as God made him, but man as his mother bore him; and how can the Lord think of him, and write down such a cipher in his accounts? The Lord thinks much of man, and in connection with redeeming love makes a great figure of him: this can be believed, but it cannot be explained. Adoring wonder makes us each one cry out, Why dost thou take knowledge of me? We know by experience how little man is to be reckoned upon, and we know by observation how greatly he can vaunt himself, it is therefore meet for us to be humble and to distrust ourselves; but all this should make us the more grateful to the Lord, who knows man better than we do, and yet communes with him, and even dwells in him. Every trace of the misanthrope should be hateful to the believer; for if God makes account of man it is not for us to despise our own kind.

4. *"Man is like to vanity."* Adam is like to Abel. He is like that which is nothing at all. He is actually vain, and he resembles that unsubstantial empty thing which is nothing but a blown-up nothing,—a puff, a bubble. Yet he is not vanity, but only like it. He is not so substantial as that unreal thing; he is only the likeness of it. Lord, what is a man? It is wonderful that God should think of such a pretentious insignificance. *"His days are as a shadow that passeth away."* He is so short-lived that he scarcely attains to years, but exists by the day, like the ephemera, whose birth and death are both seen by the self-same sun. His life is only like to a shadow, which is in itself a vague resemblance, an absence of something

rather than in itself an existence. Observe that human life is not only as a shade, but as a shade which is about to depart. It is a mere mirage, the image of a thing which is not, a phantasm which melts back into nothing. How is it that the Eternal should make so much of mortal man, who begins to die as soon as he begins to live?

The connection of the two verses before us with the rest of the Psalm is not far to seek: David trusts in God and finds him everything; he looks to man and sees him to be nothing; and then he wonders how it is that the great Lord can condescend to take notice of such a piece of folly and deceit as man.

5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

7 Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;

8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood.

5. *"Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down."* The heavens are the Lord's own, and he who exalted them can bow them. His servant is struggling against bitter foes, and he finds no help in men, therefore he entreats Jehovah to come down to his rescue. It is, indeed, a coming down for Jehovah to interfere in the conflicts of his tried people. Earth cries to heaven to stoop; nay, the cry is to the Lord of heaven to bow the heaven, and appear among the sons of earth. The Lord has often done this, and never more fully than when in Bethlehem the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: now doth he know the way, and he never refuses to come down to defend his beloved ones. David would have the real presence of God to counterbalance the mocking appearance of boastful man: eternal verity could alone relieve him of human vanity. *"Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke."* It was so when the Lord appeared on Sinai; the strongest pillars of earth cannot bear the weight of the finger of God. He is a consuming fire, and his touch kindles the peaks of the Alps, and makes them smoke. If Jehovah would appear, nothing could stand before him; if the mighty mountains smoke at his touch, then all mortal power which is opposed to the Lord must end in smoke. How long-suffering he is to his adversaries, whom he could so readily consume. A touch would do it; God's finger of flame would set the hills on fire, and consume opposition of every kind.

6. *"Cast forth lightning, and scatter them."* The Eternal can hurl his lightnings wheresoever he pleases, and effect his purpose instantaneously. The artillery of heaven soon puts the enemy to flight: a single bolt sets the armies running hither and thither in utter rout. *"Shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them."* Jehovah never misses the mark; his arrows are fatal to his foes when he goes forth to war. It was no common faith which led the poet-king to expect the Lord to use his thunderbolts on behalf of a single member of that race which he had just now described as "like to vanity." A believer in God may without presumption expect the Almighty Lord to use on his behalf all the stores of his wisdom and power: even the terrible forces of tempest shall be marshalled to the fight, for the defence of the Lord's chosen. When we have once mastered the greater difficulty of the Lord's taking any interest in us, it is but a small thing that we should expect him to exert his great power on our behalf. This is far from being the only time in which this believing warrior had thus prayed: the eighteenth Psalm is specially like the present; the good man was not abashed at his former boldness, but here repeats himself without fear.

7. *"Send thine hand from above."* Let thy long and strong arm be stretched out till thine hand seizes my foes, and delivers me from them. *"Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters."* Make a Moses of me,—one drawn out of the waters. My foes pour in upon me like torrents, they threaten to overwhelm me; save me from their force and fury; take them from me, and me from them. *"From the hand of strange children."* From foreigners of every race; men strange to me and thee, who therefore must work evil to me, and rebellion against thyself. Those against whom he pleaded were out of covenant with God; they were Philistines and Edomites; or else they were men of his own nation of black heart and traitorous

spirit, who were real strangers, though they bore the name of Israel. Oh to be rid of those infidel, blaspheming beings who pollute society with their false teachings and hard speeches! Oh to be delivered from slanderous tongues, deceptive lips, and false hearts! No wonder these words are repeated, for they are the frequent cry of many a tried child of God;—"*Rid me and deliver me.*" The devil's children are strange to us: we can never agree with them, and they will never understand us, they are aliens to us, and we are despised by them. O Lord, deliver us from the evil one, and from all who are of his race.

8. "*Whose mouth speaketh vanity.*" No wonder that men who are vanity speak vanity. "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own." They cannot be depended upon, let them promise as fairly as they may: their solemn declarations are light as the foam of the sea, in no wise to be depended upon. Good men desire to be rid of such characters: of all men deceivers and liars are among the most disgusting to true hearts. "*And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.*" So far their hands and their tongues agree, for they are vanity and falsehood. These men act as falsely as they speak, and prove themselves to be all of a piece. Their falsehood is right-handed, they lie with dexterity, they deceive with all their might. It is a dreadful thing when a man's expertness lies more in lies than in truth; when he can neither speak nor act without proving himself to be false. God save us from lying mouths, and hands of falsehood.

9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

10 *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood:

9. "*I will sing a new song unto thee, O God.*" Weary of the false, I will adore the true. Fired with fresh enthusiasm, my gratitude shall make a new channel for itself. I will sing as others have done; but it shall be a new song, such as no others have sung. That song shall be all and altogether for my God: I will extol none but the Lord, from whom my deliverance has come. "*Upon a Psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.*" His hand should aid his tongue, not as in the case of the wicked, co-operating in deceit; but his hand should unite with his mouth in truthful praise. David intended to tune his best instruments as well as to use his best vocal music: the best is all too poor for so great a God, and therefore we must not fall short of our utmost. He meant to use many instruments of music, that by all means he might express his great joy in God. The Old Testament dispensation abounded in types, and figures, and outward ritual, and therefore music dropped naturally into its place in the "worldly sanctuary"; but, after all, it can do no more than represent praise, and assist our expression of it; the real praise is in the heart, the true music is that of the soul. When music drowns the voice, and artistic skill takes a higher place than hearty singing, it is time that instruments were banished from public worship; but when they are subordinate to the song, as here, it is not for us to prohibit them, or condemn those who use them, though we ourselves greatly prefer to do without them, since it seems to us that the utmost simplicity of praise is far more congruous with the spirit of the gospel than pomp of organs. The private worshipper, singing his solo unto the Lord, has often found it helpful to accompany himself on some familiar instrument, and of this David in the present Psalm is an instance, for he says, "I will sing praise unto thee,"—that is, not so much in the company of others as by himself alone. He saith not "we," but "I."

10. "*It is he that giveth salvation unto kings.*" Those whom the Lord sets up he will keep up. Kings, from their conspicuous position, are exposed to special danger, and when their lives and their thrones are preserved to them they should give the Lord the glory of it. In his many battles David would have perished had not almighty care preserved him. He had by his valour wrought salvation for Israel, but he lays his laurels at the feet of his Lord and Preserver. If any men need salvation kings do, and if they get it the fact is so astonishing that it deserves a verse to itself in the Psalm of praise. "*Who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.*" He traces his escape from death to the delivering hand of God. Note, he speaks in the present tense—*delivereth*, for this was an act which covered

his whole life. He puts his name to the confession of his indebtness : it is David who owns without demur to mercy given to himself. He styles himself the Lord's servant, accepting this as the highest title he had attained or desired.

11. Because of what the Lord had done, David returns to his pleading. He begs deliverance from him who is ever delivering him. *"Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children."* This is in measure the refrain of the song, and the burden of the prayer. He desired to be delivered from his open and foreign adversaries, who had broken compacts, and treated treaties as vain things. *"Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood."* He would not strike hands with those who carried a lie in their right hand : he would be quit of such at once, if possible. Those who are surrounded by such serpents know not how to deal with them, and the only available method seems to be payer to God for a riddance and deliverance. David in the seventh verse, according to the original, had sought the help of both the Lord's hands, and well he might for his deceitful enemies with remarkable unanimity, were with one mouth and one hand seeking his destruction.

12 That our sons *may be* as plants grown up in their youth ; *that* our daughters *may be* as corner stones, polished *after* the similitude of a palace :

13 *That* our garners *may be* full, affording all manner of store : *that* our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets :

14 *That* our oxen *may be* strong to labour ; *that there be* no breaking in, nor going out ; that *there be* no complaining in our streets.

15 Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case : *yea,* happy *is that* people, whose God *is the* LORD.

Riddance from the wicked and the gracious presence of the Lord are sought with a special eye to the peace and prosperity which will follow thereupon. The sparing of David's life would mean the peace and happiness of a whole nation. We can scarcely judge how much of happiness may hang upon the Lord's favour to one man.

12. God's blessing works wonders for a people. *" That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth."* Our sons are of first importance to the state, since men take a leading part in its affairs ; and what the young men are the older men will be. He desires that they may be like strong, well rooted, young trees, which promise great things. If they do not grow in their youth, when will they grow ? If in their opening manhood they are dwarfed, they will never get over it. O the joys which we may have through our sons ! And, on the other hand, what misery they may cause us ! Plants may grow crooked, or in some other way disappoint the planter, and so may our sons. But when we see them developed in holiness, what joy we have of them ! *"That our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."* We desire a blessing for our whole family, daughters as well as sons. For the girls to be left out of the circle of blessing would be unhappy indeed. Daughters unite families as corner stones join walls together, and at the same time they adorn them as polished stones garnish the structure into which they are builded. Home becomes a palace when the daughters are maids of honour, and the sons are nobles in spirit ; then the father is a king, and the mother a queen, and royal residences are more than outdone. A city built up of such dwellings is a city of palaces, and a state composed of such cities is a republic of princes.

13. *"That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store."* A household must exercise thrift and forethought : it must have its granary as well as its nursery. Husbands should husband their resources ; and should not only furnish their tables but fill their garners. Where there are happy households. there must needs be plentiful provision for them, for famine brings misery even where love abounds. It is well when there is plenty, and that plenty consists of " all manner of store." We have occasionally heard murmurs concerning the abundance of grain, and the cheapness of the poor man's loaf. A novel calamity ! We dare not pray against it. David would have prayed for it, and blessed the Lord when he saw his heart's desire. When all the fruits of the earth are plentiful, the fruits of our lips should be joyful worship and thanksgiving. Plenteous and varied may our products be, that every form of want may be readily supplied. *"That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets,"* or rather in the open places, the fields, and

sheep-walks where lambs should be born. A teeming increase is here described. Adam tilled the ground to fill the garner, but Abel kept sheep, and watched the lambs. Each occupation needs the divine blessing. The second man who was born into this world was a shepherd, and that trade has ever held an important part in the economy of nations. Food and clothing come from the flock, and both are of first consideration.

14. *"That our oxen may be strong to labour;"* so that the ploughing and cartage of the farm may be duly performed, and the husbandman's work may be accomplished without unduly taxing the cattle, or working them cruelly. *"That there be no breaking in, nor going out;"* no irruption of marauders, and no forced emigration; no burglaries and no evictions. *"That there be no complaining in our streets;"* no secret dissatisfaction, no public riot; no fainting of poverty, no clamour for rights denied, nor concerning wrongs unredressed. The state of things here pictured is very delightful: all is peaceful and prosperous; the throne is occupied efficiently, and even the beasts in their stalls are the better for it. This has been the condition of our own country, and if it should now be changed, who can wonder? for our ingratitude well deserves to be deprived of blessings which it has despised.

These verses may with a little accommodation be applied to a prosperous church, where the converts are growing and beautiful, the gospel stores abundant, and the spiritual increase most cheering. There ministers and workers are in full vigour, and the people are happy and united. The Lord make it so in all our churches evermore.

15. *"Happy is that people, that is in such a case."* Such things are not to be overlooked. Temporal blessings are not trifles, for the miss of them would be a dire calamity. It is a great happiness to belong to a people so highly favoured. *"Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the* LORD." This comes in as an explanation of their prosperity. Under the Old Testament Israel had present earthly rewards for obedience; when Jehovah was their God they were a nation enriched and flourishing. This sentence is also a sort of correction of all that had gone before; as if the poet would say—all these temporal gifts are a part of happiness, but still the heart and soul of happiness lies in the people being right with God, and having a full possession of him. Those who worship the happy God become a happy people. Then if we have not temporal mercies literally we have something better: if we have not the silver of earth we have the gold of heaven, which is better still.

In this Psalm David ascribes his own power over the people, and the prosperity which attended his reign, to the Lord himself. Happy was the nation which he ruled; happy in its king, in its families, in its prosperity, and in the possession of peace; but yet more in enjoying true religion and worshipping Jehovah, the only living and true God.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm, in its mingled tones of prayer and praise, is a fit connecting link between the supplicatory Psalms which go before, and the strains of thanksgiving which follow it.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Whole Psalm.—After six Psalms of sorrowful prayer in distress, we have now a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving for God's gracious answer to supplications; and also a Psalm of intercession. The present Psalm bears a strong resemblance to David's last song in 2 Sam. xxii. and to Ps. xviii. Here we have a vision of Christ rejoicing;—after his passion—risen in glory, and having ascended in triumph, and pleading for us at the right hand of God.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is ruled by the numbers ten and seven. Ten verses complete the first part of the Psalm, which falls into two divisions. The first portion contains, in verses 1 and 2, ten attributes of God,—three and seven, the seven divided into four and three. In like manner it contains ten requests to God in verses 5—7, divided precisely as the attributes. To this significance of the number ten for the first part, allusion is pointedly made in verse 9. Seven blessings are prayed for in the second part, four in verses 12, 13 (valiant sons, beautiful daughters, full store-houses, numerous flocks), and three in verse 14 (labouring oxen, no breach and

diminution, no cry). The whole contains, apart from the closing epiphonem, which, as usual, stands outside the formal arrangement, seven strophes, each of two verses.

An objection has been brought against the Davidic authorship from the "traces of reading" it contains. But one would require to consider more exactly, what sort of reading is here to be thought of. It is only the Psalms of David which form the ground-work of this new Psalm. But that it is one of David's peculiarities to derive from his earlier productions a foundation for new ones, is evident from a variety of facts, which, if any doubt must still be entertained on the subject, would obtain a firm ground to stand upon in this Psalm, which *can* only have been composed by David. The way and manner of the use made of such materials is to be kept in view. This is always of a spirited and feeling nature, and no trace anywhere exists of a dead borrowing. That we cannot think here of such a borrowing; that the appropriation of the earlier language did not proceed from spiritual impotence, but rested upon deeper grounds, is manifest from the consideration of the second part, where the dependence entirely ceases, and where even the opponents of the Davidic authorship have not been able to overlook the strong poetical spirit of the time of David. They betake themselves to the miserable shift of affirming that the Psalmist borrowed this part of the Psalm from a much older poem now lost.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—"*Blessed be the* LORD." A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should stir up ourselves to bless him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *my strength*," etc. Agamemnon says to Achilles—

> If thou hast strength, 'twas heaven that strength bestowed;
> For know, vain man! thy valour is from God.
>
> *Homer.*

Verse 1.—"*My strength*" [Heb. "*my rock*"]. The climax should be noted; the rock, or cliff, comes first as the place of refuge, then the fortress or *fastness*, as a place carefully fortified, then the personal deliverer, without whose intervention escape would have been impossible.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD . . . *teacheth*": and not as man teacheth. Thus he taught Gideon to fight with the innumerable host of Midian by sending to their homes two-and-twenty thousand, and retaining but ten thousand of his soldiers: and then again by reducing that remnant to the little band of three hundred who lapped when brought down to the water. Thus he taught Samson by abstaining from strong drink, and by suffering no razor to pass over his head. Thus he taught the three kings in the wilderness to war against their enemies, not by any strength of their armies, but by making ditches in the desert. Thus he taught David himself by waiting for the sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry trees. And so he taught the arms of the True David to fight when stretched on the cross: nailed, to human sight, to the tree of suffering, but, in reality, winning for themselves the crown of glory: helpless in the eyes of scribes and Pharisees; in those of archangels, laying hold of the two pillars, sin and death, whereon the house of Satan rested, and heaving them up from their foundation.—*Ayguan, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *my strength, which teacheth my hands to war.*" There were three qualities of a valiant soldier found in Christ, the Captain of our salvation, in his war against Satan, which his followers are bound to emulate: boldness in attack, skill in defence, steadiness in conflict, all which he teaches by his example (Matt. iv. 1, 4, 7, 10, 11). He was *bold in attack*, for he began the combat by going up into the wilderness to defy the enemy. So we, too, should be always beforehand with Satan: ought to fast, even if not tempted to gluttony, and be humble, though not assailed by pride, and so forth. He was *skilful in defence*, parrying every attack with Holy Writ; where we, too, in the examples of the saints, may find lessons for the combat. He was *steadfast in conflict*, for he persevered to the end, till the devil left him, and angels came and ministered unto him; and we, too, should not be content with repelling the first attack, but persevere in our resistance until evil thoughts are put to flight, and heavenly resolutions take their place.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"*Teacheth my hands.*" Used to the hook and harp, and not to the sword and spear; but God hath apted and abled them to feats of arms and warlike exploits. It is God that giveth skill and success, saith Solomon (Prov. viii.); wisdom

and ability, saith Daniel (chap. ii.). And as in the spiritual warfare, so here; our weapons are "mighty through God" (2 Cor. x. 4), who promiseth that no weapon formed against his people shall prosper (Isa. liv. 17).—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*To war, . . . to fight.*" I want to speak of a great defect among us, which often prevents the realization of going "from strength to strength"; viz., the *not using, not trading with*, the strength given. We should not think of going to God for money only to keep it in the bank. But are we not doing this with regard to strength? We are constantly asking for strength for service; but if we are not putting this out in hearty effort, it is of no use to us. Nothing comes of hoarded strength.

"Blessed be the Lord my strength, *which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.*" David, you see, was looking for strength for a purpose. Some people seem to expect strength, but never attempt to put forth their hands to war, and their fingers to fight—there is so little venturing upon God, so little use of grace given, partly from fear of man, partly from indolence and worldly-mindedness . . . It is not for us to be merely luxuriating in the power which God supplies. Action strengthens, and before we have a right to ask for an increase, we must use that already given.—*Catherine Pennefather, in "Service,"* 1881.

Verse 1.—Is not the spiritual victory of every believer achieved by God? Truly it is he who teaches his *hands to war and his fingers to fight:* and when the final triumph shall be sung in heaven, the victor's song will be, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."—*John Morison.*

Verse 1.—"*My hands for fight, my fingers for war.*" *Fight* and *war* are both verbs and nouns in English, but the Hebrew words are nouns with the article prefixed. —*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"*My fingers to fight.*" Probably the immediate reference here is to the use of the bow,—placing the arrow, and drawing the string.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*My goodness,*" etc. This way of using the word in a passive sense, as in the Hebrew, sounds harshly; just as elsewhere (Ps. xviii. 50) he calls himself "God's king," not in the sense of his having dominion over God, but being made and appointed king by him. Having experienced God's kindness in so many ways, he calls him "*his goodness,*" meaning that whatever good he possessed flowed from him. The accumulation of terms, one upon another, which follows, may appear unnecessary, yet it tends greatly to strengthen faith. We know how unstable men's minds are, and especially how soon faith wavers, when they are assailed by some trial of more than usual severity.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2.—"*My fortress.*" David calls God by names connected with the chief deliverances of his life. The Psalms abound in local references and descriptive expressions, *e.g.* Ps. xviii. 2 [and in this place]. The word translated "*fortress*" is *metzudah* or *masada.* From 1 Sam. xxiii. 29, I have no doubt that he is speaking of Masada, an isolated peak 1,500 feet high, on which was a stronghold.—*James Wareing Bardsley, in "Glimpses through the Veil,"* 1883.

Verse 2.—"*My high tower.*" Such *towers* were erected on mountains, on rocks, or on the walls of a city, and were regarded as safe places mainly because they were inaccessible. So the old castles in Europe,—as that at Heidelberg, and generally those along the Rhine,—were built on lofty places, and in such positions as not to be easily accessible.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*My shield.*" The Hebrew word signifies, not the huge shield which was carried by an armour-bearer, but the handy target with which heroes entered into hand-to-hand conflicts. A warrior took it with him when he used his bow or his sword. It was often made of metal, but still was portable, and useful, and was made to serve as an ornament, being brightened or anointed with oil. David had made abundant use of the Lord, his God, from day to day, in battles many and murderous.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—"*Who subdueth my people under me.*" David, accordingly, having ascribed the victories he had gained over foreign enemies to God, thanks him at the same time for the settled state of the kingdom. Raised indeed as he was from an obscure station, and exposed to hatred from calumnious charges, it was scarcely to have been believed that he would ever obtain a peaceable reign. The people had suddenly, and beyond expectation, submitted to him; and so surprising a change was eminently God's work.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—"*Lord, what is man,*" etc.

Now what is man, when grace reveals
The virtues of a Saviour's blood?
Again a life divine he feels,
Despises earth, and walks with God.

And what in yonder realms above,
Is ransomed man ordained to be?
With honour, holiness, and love,
No seraph more adorned than he.

Nearest the throne, and first in song,
Man shall his hallelujahs raise,
While wondering angels round him throng,
And swell the chorus of his praise.

John Newton, in Olney Hymns.

Verse 3.—"*Lord, what is man?*" Take him in his four elements, of earth, air, fire, and water. In the *earth*, he is as fleeting dust; in the *air*, he is as disappearing vapour; in the *water*, he is as a breaking bubble; and in the *fire*, he is as consuming smoke.—*William Secker, in "The Nonsuch Professor."*

Verses 3, 4.—"*Lord, what is man,*" etc. There is no book so well worthy reading as this living one. Even now David spake as a king of men, of *people subdued under him!* now he speaks as a humble vassal to God: "*Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him?*" In one breath is both sovereignty and subjugation: an absolute sovereignty over his people; "*My people are subdued under me*"; an humble subjection to the God of kings; "*Lord, what is man?*" Yea, in the very same word wherein is the profession of that sovereignty, there is an acknowledgment of subjection: "*Thou hast subdued my people.*" In that he had a people, he was a king: that they might be his people, a subjection was requisite; and that subjugation was God's and not his own: "*Thou* hast subdued." Lo, David, had not subdued his people, if God had not subdued them for him. He was a great king, but they were a stiff people: the God that made them swayed them to a due subjection. The great conquerors of worlds could not conquer hearts, if he, that moulded hearts, did not temper them. "By me kings reign," saith the Eternal Wisdom; and he that had courage enough to encounter a bear, a lion, Goliath, yet can say, "*Thou hast subdued my people.*"

Contrarily, in the lowliest subjection of himself, there is an acknowledgment of greatness. Though he abused himself with, "*What is man?*" yet, withal he adds, "*Thou takest knowledge of him, thou makest account of him*": and this knowledge, this account of God, doth more exalt man than his own vanity can depress him. My text, then, ye see, is David's rapture, expressed in an ecstatical question of sudden wonder; a wonder at God and at man: MAN'S VILENESS; "*What is man?*" GOD'S MERCY AND FAVOUR, in his knowledge, in his estimation of man. Lo, there are but two lessons that we need to take out here, in the world, God and man; man, in the notion of his wretchedness; God, in the notion of his bounty.

Let us, if you please, take a short view of both; and, in the one, see cause of our humiliation; of our joy and thankfulness in the other: and if, in the former, there be a sad Lent of mortification; there is, in the latter, a cheerful Easter of our raising and exaltation.

Many a one besides David wonders at himself: one wonders at his own honour; and, though he will not say so, yet thinks, "What a great man am I! Is not this great Babel, which I have built?" This is Nebuchadnezzar's wonder. Another wonders at his person, and finds, either a good face, or a fair eye, or an exquisite hand, or a well-shaped leg, or some gay fleece, to admire in himself: this was Absalom's wonder. Another wonders at his wit and learning: "How came I by all this? *Turba hæc!* This vulgar, that knows not the law, is accursed": this was the Pharisee's wonder. Another wonders at his wealth; "Soul, take thine ease"; as the epicure in the gospel. David's wonder is as much above, as against all these: he wonders at his *vileness:* like as the Chosen Vessel would boast of nothing but his infirmities: "*Lord, what is man?*"

How well this hangs together! No sooner had he said, "*Thou hast subdued my people under me,*" then he adds, "*Lord, what is man?*" Some vain heart would have been lifted up with a conceit of his own eminence; "Who am I? I am not as other men. I have people under me; and people of my own, and people subdued

to me;" this is to be more than a man. I know who hath said, "I said ye are gods."—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 3.—Dr. Hammond refers this Psalm to the slaying of Goliath, and thus understands the appellation *"son of man,"*—"David was but a young stripling, the youngest and most inconsiderable of all the sons of Jesse, who also was himself an ordinary man."

Verse 3.—*"Thou takest knowledge of him."* It is a great word. Alas! what knowledge do we take of the gnats that play in the sun; or the ants, or worms, that are crawling in our grounds? Yet the disproportion betwixt us and them is but finite; infinite betwixt God and us. Thou, the Great God of Heaven, to take knowledge of such a thing as man! If a mighty prince shall vouchsafe to spy and single out a plain homely swain in a throng, as the Great Sultan did lately a tankard-bearer; and take special notice of him, and call him but to a kiss of his hand and nearness to his person; he boasts of it as a great favour: for thee, then, O God, who abasest thyself to behold the things in heaven itself, to cast thine eye upon so poor a worm as man, it must needs be a wonderful mercy.—*Exigua pauperibus magna;* as Nazianzen to his Amphilochius.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 4.—*"Man is like to vanity."* As he that goeth to a fair, with a purse full of money, is devising and debating with himself how to lay it out—possibly thinking that such and such commodities will be most profitable, and bring him in the greatest gain—when on a sudden a cut-purse comes and easeth him both of his money and how to dispose of it. Surely thou mightst have taken notice how some of thy neighbours or countrymen, when they have been busy in their contrivances, and big with many plots and projects how to raise their estate and names and families, were arrested by death in a moment, returned to their earth, and in that day all their gay, their great thoughts perished, and came to nothing. The heathen historian could not but observe how Alexander the Great, when he had to carry on his great designs, summoned a parliament before him of the whole world, he was himself summond by death to appear in the other world. The Dutch, therefore, very wittily to express the world's vanity, picture at Amsterdam a man with a full-blown bladder on his shoulders, and another standing by pricking the bladder with a pin, with this motto, QUAM SUBITO, How soon is all blown down! —*George Swinnock.*

Verse 4.—*"Man is like to vanity."* When Cain was born, there was much ado about his birth; "I have gotten a man-child from God," saith his mother; she looked upon him as a great possession, and therefore called his name *Cain*, which signifies "a possession." But the second man that was born unto the world bare the title of the world, *"vanity"*; his name was *Abel*, that is, *"vanity."* A premonition was given in the name of the second man what would or should be the condition of all men. In Psalm cxliv. 4 there is an allusion unto those two names. We translate it, *"Man is like to vanity"*; the Hebrew is, *"Adam is as Abel"*; *Adam*, you know, was the name of the first man, the name of Abel's faither; but as Adam was the proper name of the first, so it is an appellative, or common to all men, now *Adam*, that is, man or all men, are *Abel*, vain, and walking in a vain show. —*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—*"Man is like to vanity,"* etc. The occasion of the introduction of these sentiments here is not quite clear. It may be the humility of the warrior who ascribes all success to God instead of to human prowess, or it may be a reflection uttered over the corpses of comrades, or, perhaps a blending of the two.—*A. S. Aglen.*

Verse 4.—*"Man is like to vanity,"* etc. With what idle dreams, what foolish plans, what vain pursuits, are men for the most part occupied! They undertake dangerous expeditions and difficult enterprises in foreign countries, and they acquire fame; but what is it?—*Vanity!* They pursue deep and abstruse speculations, and give themselves to that "much study which is a weariness to the flesh," and they attain to literary renown, and survive in their writings; but what is it?—*Vanity!* They rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of anxiety and care, and thus they amass wealth; but what is it?—*Vanity!* They frame and execute plans and schemes of ambition—they are loaded with honours and adorned with titles—they afford employment for the herald, and form a subject for the historian; but what is it?—*Vanity!* In fact, all occupations and pursuits are worthy of no other epithet, if they are not preceded by, and connected with, a deep and

paramount regard to the salvation of the soul, the honour of God, and the interests of eternity. . . . . Oh, then, what phantoms, what airy nothings are those things that wholly absorb the powers and occupy the days of the great mass of mankind around us! Their most substantial good perishes in the using, and their most enduring realities are but "the fashion of this world that passeth away."—*Thomas Raffles*, 1788—1863.

Verse 4.—"*A shadow that passeth away.*" The shadows of the mountains are constanly shifting their position during the day, and ultimately disappear altogether on the approach of night: so is it with man, who is every day advancing to the moment of his final departure from this world.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 5.—"*Bow thy heavens.*" This expression is derived from the appearance of the clouds during a tempest: they hang low, so as to obscure the hills and mountains, and seem to mingle earth and heaven together, Such an appearance is figuratively used to depict the coming of God, to execute vengeance upon the enemies of his people. See Ps. xviii. 10, and other instances.—*William Walford.*

Verse 5.—"*Bow thy heavens, O* LORD, *and come down,*" etc. This was never so remarkably fulfilled as in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, when heaven and earth were, as it were, brought together. Heaven itself was, as it were, made to bow that it might be united to the earth. God did, as it were, come down and bring heaven with him. He not only came down to the earth, but he brought heaven down with him to men and for men. It was a most strange and wonderful thing. But this will be more remarkably fulfilled still by Christ's second coming, when he will indeed bring all heaven down with him—viz., all the inhabitants of heaven. Heaven shall be left empty of its inhabitants to come down to the earth; and then the mountains shall smoke, and shall indeed flow down at his presence, as in Isa. lxiv. 1.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 5.—"*Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.*" The meaning is, when God doth but lay his hand upon great men, upon the mightiest of the world, he makes them smoke or fume, which some understand of their anger; they are presently in a passion, if God do but touch them. Or we may understand it of their consumption. A *smoking* mountain will soon be a *burnt* mountain. In our language, to make a man smoke is a proverbial expression for destroying or subduing.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 5, 6.—

Bow thy heavens, Jehovah,
  Come down in thy might;
Let the rays of thy glory
  The mountain-tops light.

With the bolts of thy thunder
  Discomfit my foe,
With the flash of thine arrows
  Their force overthrow.

William Digby Seymour.

Verse 6.—"*Cast forth lightning.*" The Hebrew here is, "Lighten lightning;" that is, Send forth lightning. The word is used as a verb nowhere else.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 7.—"*Send thine hand from above.*" Hebrew, *hands*, both hands, all thy whole power, for I need it.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—"*Rid me, and deliver me.*" Away, you who theorize about suffering, and can do no more than descant upon it, away! for in the time of weeping we cannot endure your reasonings. If you have no means of delivering us, if you have nothing but sententious phrases to offer, put your hands on you mouths; enwarp yourselves in silence! It is enough to suffer; but to suffer and listen to you is more than we can bear. If Job's mouth was nigh unto blasphemy, the blame is yours, ye miserable comforters, who talked instead of weeping. If I must suffer, than I pray for suffering without fine talk!—*E. De Pressensé.*

Verse 7.—"*Rid me, and deliver me . . . from the hand of strange children.*" We must remember that as the Grecians (conceiting themselves the best bred people in the world) called all other nations "barbarians;" so the people of Israel, the stock of Abraham (being God's peculiar covenant people), called all other nations

"aliens" or "*strangers;*" and because they were hated and maligned by all other nations, therefore they called all professed strangers *enemies;* so the word is used (Isa. i. 7), "Your land strangers shall devour"; that is, enemies shall invade and prevail over you. "*Deliver me out of the hand of strange children,*" or out of the hand of strangers; that is, out of the hand of mine enemies. The Latin word *alienus* is often put for *hostis*, and the Roman orator [Cicero] telleth us that "he who is now called a stranger was called an enemy by our ancestors." The reason was because strangers proved unkind to, yea, turned enemies against those that entertained them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—"*Strange children.*" He calls them *strangers*, not in respect of generic origin, but character and disposition.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—The "*strange children,*" now the enemies of David, shall be either won to willing subjection, or else shall be crushed under the triumphant Messiah (Ps. ii.). The Spirit by David spake things the deep significance of which reached further than even he understood (1 Pet. i. 11, 12).—*Andrew Robert Fausset.*

Verse 8.—"*Whose mouth speaketh vanity,*" etc. Two things go naturally together in the verse—the lying tongue and deceitful hand. The meaning is that upon the matter in hand nothing was to be looked for from any of their promises, since it was only to deceive that they flattered with their mouth and gave the hand.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—"*Their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.*" The pledge of the right hand, which used to be a witness of good faith, was violated by treachery and wickedness.—*Cicero. Philip. xi. c.* 2.

Verse 9.—"*Psaltery—an instrument of ten strings.*" *Nebel-azor.* We are led to the conclusion that the *nebel* was the veritable *harp* of the Hebrews. It could not have been large, because it is so frequently mentioned in the Bible as being carried in processions. . . . . The English translators render *nebel* (apparently without any special reason) by no less than four words; (1) Psaltery, (2) Psalm, (3) lute, (4) viol. The first of these is by far the most common in the Authorised Version, and is no doubt the most correct translation if the word be understood in its true sense as a *portable harp. Nebels* were made of fir-wood, and afterwards of almug, or algum, which was, perhaps, the red sandal-wood of India. . . . . With *nebel* is often associated the word *azor*, which is traced to a root signifying *ten*, and which has therefore been rendered in the Septuagint by ἐν δεκαχόρδῳ or as ψαλτηριον δεκάχορδον (*psalterium decem chordarum*), or *in dechachordo psalterio* in the Vulgate. In the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic versions also are found words implying the existence of ten strings in the *nebel-azor.* The word *azor* may therefore be considered as qualifying or describing the special kind of *nebel* to be used, much in the same way as we now speak of a *trichord* pianoforte. It is in our English version always rendered by the words "*ten-stringed.*"—*John Stainer in "The Music of the Bible,"* 1882.

Verse 10.—"*It is he that giveth salvation unto kings.*" Ferdinand, king of Aragon, sending his son against the Florentines, thus bespake him: Believe me, son, victories are not gotten by art or subtlety, but given of God.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—"*It is he that giveth salvation unto kings.*" What a doctrine this for the kings and great men of the earth to remember! Could they be brought to feel and acknowledge it, they would not trust to the sagacity of their own councils, nor to the strength of their own arm; but would ever remember that the Most High is the ruler among the nations, and that he putteth down one and raiseth up another according to the dictates of his own all-perfect will. Such remembrances as this would stain the pride of all human glory, and would lead men to feel that the Lord alone is to be exalted.—*John Morison.*

Verse 11.—This Psalm is the language of a prince who wished his people's prosperity: that their "garners might be full of all manner of stores"; that their "sheep might bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets"; that their "oxen" might be fat for slaughter, or "strong for labour"; that there might be neither robbery nor beggary in their streets: no oppressive magistrates, nor complaining people: and as if all these blessings were to be derived from the

character of the people, and the character of the people from the education they had received, our text is a prayer for the youth of Judea.—*Robert Robinson* (1735—1790), *in "The Nature and Necessity of Early Piety."*

Verse 12.—The reminiscences or imitations of Ps. xvii. suddenly cease here, and are followed by a series of original, peculiar, and for the most part no doubt antique expressions. On the supposition that the title is correct in making David the author, this is natural enough. On any other supposition, it is unaccountable, unless by the gratuitous assumption, that this is a fragment of an older composition, a mode of reasoning by which anything may be either proved or disproved.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 12.—*"That our sons may be as plants,"* etc. They who have ever been employed in the cultivation of plants of any kind, are continually tempted to wish that the human objects of their care and culture would grow up as rapidly, as straight, as flourishingly, would as uniformly fulfil their specific idea and purpose, as abundantly reward the labour bestowed on them. . . . . If our sons are indeed to grow up as young plants, like our English oaks, which according to the analogies of Nature, furnish no inappropriate type of our national character, they must not be stunted or dwarfed or pollarded, for the sake of being kept under the shade of a stranger. They should grow up straight toward heaven, as God had ordained them to grow. . . . There is something so palpable and striking in this type, that five-and-twenty years ago, in speaking of the gentlemanly character, I was led to say, " If a gentleman is to grow up he must grow like a tree : there must be nothing between him and heaven."—*Julius Charles Hare, in a Sermon entitled "Education the Necessity of Mankind,"* 1851.

Verse 12.—*"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth,"* etc. Thus David prays for the rising generation. Metaphors seem generally unsuitable to prayer, but they do not wear this aspect in the prayers recorded in the Scriptures. The language of the text is tropical, but the metaphors are suitable and seasonable. *Roots* of vegetables are necessarily invisible. *Tender* plants are insignificant. A plant *grown up*, having height in its stem, width in its branches, abundance in its foliage, and fulness in its bloom, is conspicuous. David prays that the sons of that generation might be in their youth *"as plants grown up,"* that is, that their piety might not only live, but that their godliness might be fully expressed. The stones of a *foundation* are concealed. The stones in the *mid-wall* of a building are also necessarily hid. The stones on the *surface* of a wall are visible, but they are not distinguished. The *corner-stone* of buildings in that day was prominent and eminent. Placed at the angle of the structure, where two walls met, on the top of the walls, and being richly ornamented and polished, it attracted attention. David prays that the daughters of that day might make an open and lovely profession of religion—that both sons and daughters might not only *have* piety but *show* it.—*Samuel Martin, in "Cares of Youth."*

Verse 12.—*"Plants grown up." "Corner-stones polished."* These processes of growth and polish can be carried on in one place only, the church of Christ.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 12.—*"That our daughters may be as corner stones,"* etc. *"The polished corners of the temple,"* rather *" the sculptured angles, the ornament, of a palace."* Great care and much ornament were bestowed by the ancients upon the angles of their splendid palaces. It is remarkable that the Greeks made use of pilasters, called Caryatides (carved after the figure of a woman dressed in long robes), to support the entablatures of their buildings.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 12.—*"That our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace" or temple.* By daughters families are united and connected to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones ; and when they are graceful and beautiful both in body and mind, they are then polished after the similitude of a nice and curious structure. When we see our daughters well established, and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastened in the building ; when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and " become women professing godliness " ; when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12.—*"That our daughters may be as corner stones,"* etc. One might perhaps

at the first glance have expected that the *daughters* of a household would be as the graceful ornament of the clustering foliage or the fruit-bearing tree, and the *sons* as the corner-stones upholding the weight and burden of the building, and yet it is the reverse here. And I think one may read the love and tenderness of the Lord in this apparently casual but intended expression, and that he meant the nations of the earth to know and understand how much of their happiness, their strength, and their security was dependent on the female children of a family. It has not been so considered in many a nation that knew not God: in polished Greece in times of old, and in some heathen nations even to this day, the female children of a family have been cruelly destroyed, as adding to the burdens and diminishing the resources of a household; and alas! too, even in Christian countries, if not destroyed, they are with equal pitiless and remorseless cruelty cut off from all the solace and ties and endearments of life, and immured in that living mockery of a grave, the cloister, that they may not prove incumbrances and hindrances to others! How contrary all this to the loving purpose of our loving God! whose Holy Spirit has written for our learning that sons and daughters are alike intended to be the ornament and grace, the happiness and blessing of every household.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 12.—"*After the similitude of a palace.*" Most interpreters give the last word the vague sense of "*a palace.*" There is something, however, far more striking in the translation *temple*, found in the Prayer Book and the ancient versions. The omission of the article is a poetic license of perpetual occurrence. The temple was the great architectural model and standard of comparison, and particularly remarkable for the great size and skilful elaboration of its foundation-stones, some of which, there is reason to believe, have remained undisturbed since the time of Solomon.— *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verses 12—15.—In the former part of the Psalm he speaks of such things as concern *his own* happiness: "Blessed be the Lord my strength" (verse 1); "Send thine hand from above; and deliver me out of great waters" (verse 7); "Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children" (verse 11). And he might as easily have continued the same strain in the clauses following: "That *my* sons may grow up as plants, *my* daughters may be as the polished corners of the temple, *my* sheep fruitful, *my* oxen strong, *my* garners full and plenteous"; and accordingly he might have concluded it also—"Happy shall *I* be, if *I* be in such a case." This, I say, he might have done; nay, this he would have done, if his desires had reflected only upon himself. But being of a diffusive heart, and knowing what belonged to the neighbourhoods of piety, as loth to enjoy this happiness alone, he alters his style, and (being in the height of well-wishes to himself) he turns the singular into a plural—*our sheep, our oxen, our garners, our sons and daughters*, that he might compendiate all in this,—"*Happy are the people.*" Here is a true testimony both of a religious and generous mind, who knew in his most retired thoughts to look out of himself, and to be mindful of the public welfare in his privatest meditations. S. Ambrose observes it as a clear character of a noble spirit, to do what tends to the public good, though to his own disadvantage.—*Richard Holdsworth* (1590—1649), *in "The Valley of Vision."*

Verses 12—15.—These words contain a striking picture of a prosperous and happy nation. We are presented with a view of the *masculine youth* of the nation by the oaks of the forest, become great in the early period of the vigour and excellency of the soil. They are represented in the distinguishing character of their sex, standing abroad the strength of the nation, whence its resources for action must be derived. On the other hand, the *young females* of a nation are exhibited under an equally just and proper representation of their position and distinguishing character. They are not exhibited by a metaphor derived from the hardier tenants of the forest, but they are shown to us by a representation taken from the perpetual accompaniments of the dwelling; they are the supports and the ornaments of domestic life. *Plenty* of every kind is represented to us in possession and in reasonable expectation. "*No breaking in,*" no invasion by a furious foe, oppresses the inhabitants of this happy country with terror; neither is there any "*going out.*" The barbarous practice employed by Sennacherib, and other ancient conquerors, of transporting the inhabitants of a vanquished country to some distant, unfriendly, and hated land, —the practice at this moment employed, to the scandal of the name and the sorrow of Europe—they dread not: they fear no "*going out.*" Under circumstances of such a nature causes of distress or complaint exist not; or, if they do, they are capable of being so modified, and alleviated, and remedied, that *there is no*

complaining in the streets. "Happy, then, is that people, that is in such a case."—*John Pye Smith*, 1775—1851.

Verse 13.—"*That our sheep may bring forth thousands,*" etc. The surprising fecundity of the sheep has been celebrated by writers of every class. It has not escaped the notice of the royal Psalmist, who, in a beautiful ascription of praise to the living and the true God, entreats that the sheep of his chosen people might "*bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.*" In another song of Zion, he represents, by a very elegant metaphor, the numerous flocks covering like a garment the face of the field:—"The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing": Ps. lxv. 13. The bold figure is fully warranted by the prodigious numbers of sheep which whitened the extensive pastures of Syria and Canaan. In that part of Arabia which borders on Judea, the patriarch Job possessed at first seven thousand, and after the return of his prosperity, fourteen thousand sheep; and Mesha, the king of Moab, paid the king of Israel "a yearly tribute of a hundred thousand lambs, and an equal number of rams with the wool": 2 Kings iii. 4. In the war which the tribe of Reuben waged with the Hagarites, the former drove away "two hundred and fifty thousand sheep": 1 Chron. v. 21. At the dedication of the temple, Solomon offered in sacrifice "an hundred and twenty thousand sheep." At the feast of the passover, Josiah, the king of Judah, "gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these were of the king's substance": 2 Chron. xxxv. 7. The ewe brings forth her young commonly once a year, and in more ungenial climes, seldom more than one lamb at a time. But twin lambs are as frequent in the oriental regions, as they are rare in other places; which accounts in a satisfactory manner for the prodigious numbers which the Syrian shepherd led to the mountains. This uncommon fruitfulness seems to be intimated by Solomon in his address to the spouse:—"Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them": Cant. iv. 2.—*George Paxton* (1762—1837), *in "Illustrations of Scripture."*

Verses 13, 14.—"*Streets,*" though not incorrect, is an inadequate translation of the Hebrew word, which means external spaces, streets as opposed to the inside of houses, fields or country as opposed to a whole town. Here it includes not only roads but fields.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 14.—"*That our oxen may be strong to labour.*" [Margin: "*able to bear burdens,*" or, *loaded* with flesh]. As in the verse before he had ascribed the fruitfulness of the herds and flocks to God's goodness, so now the fattening of their oxen, to show that there is nothing relating to us here which he overlooks.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*That our oxen may be strong to labour.*" Oxen were not only used for ploughing, thrashing, and drawing, but also for bearing burdens; compare 1 Chron. xii. 40, which passage is peculiarly fitted to throw light on the verse before us. Laden oxen presuppose a rich abundance of produce.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 14.—"*That there be no complaining in our streets,*" etc. Rather, "and no cry of sorrow" (comp. Isaiah xxiv. 11; Jer. xiv. 2; xlvi. 12) "in our open places," *i.e.*, the places where the people commonly assembled near the gate of the city (comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 6; Neh. viii. 1). The word rendered "*complaining*" does not occur elsewhere in the Psalter.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 14.—"*No complaining.*" No outcries but "Harvest-homes."—*John Trapp.*

Verse 15.—"*Happy is that people,*" etc. We have in the text happiness with an echo, or ingemination; "*happy*" and "*happy.*" From this ingemination arise the parts of my text; the same which are the parts both of the greater world and the less. As the heaven and earth in the one, and the body and soul in the other; so are the passages of this Scripture in the two veins of happiness. We may range them as Isaac does the two parts of his blessing (Gen. xxvii. 28); the vein of civil happiness, in "the fatness of the earth;" and the vein of Divine happiness, in "the fatness of heaven." Or (if you will have it out of the gospel), here's Martha's portion in the "many things" of the body; and Mary's better part in the *unum*

necessarium of the soul. To give it yet more concisely, here's the path of *prosperity* in outward comforts, "*Happy is that people that is in such a case*"; and the path of *piety* in comforts spiritual: "*Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the* LORD."

In the handling of the first, without any further subdivision, I will only show what it is the Psalmist treats of; and that shall be by way of gradation, in these three particulars. It is *De* FELICITATE; *De Felicitate* POPULI; *De* HAC *Felicitate Populi*: of *happiness*; of the *people's* happiness; of the people's happiness, as *in such a case*.

Happiness is the general, and the first: a noble argument, and worthy of an inspired pen, especially the Psalmist's. Of all other there can be none better to speak of *popular* happiness than such a *king*; nor of *celestial*, than such a *prophet*. Yet I mean not to discourse of it in the full latitude, but only as it hath a peculiar positure in this Psalm, very various and different from the order of other Psalms. In this Psalm it is reserved to the *end*, as the close of the foregoing meditations. In other Psalms it is set in the *front*, or first place of all; as in the xxxii., in the cxii., in the cxix., and in the cxxviii. Again, in this the Psalmist ends with *our* happiness and begins with God's. "Blessed be the LORD my strength." In the 41st Psalm, contrary, he makes his *exordium* from *man's*; "Blessed is he that considereth the poor"; his *conclusion* with *God's*; "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel." I therefore observe these variations, because they are helpful to the understanding both of the *essence* and *splendour* of true happiness. To the knowledge of the *essence* they help, because they demonstrate how our own happiness is enfolded in the glory of God, and subordinate unto it. As we cannot begin with *beatus* unless we end with *benedictus*: so we must begin with *benedictus* that we may end with *beatus*. The reason is this,—because the glory of God is as well the *consummation* as the *introduction* to a Christian's happiness. Therefore as in the other Psalm he begins below and ends upwards; so in this, having begun from above with that which is principal, "Blessed be the LORD"; he fixeth his second thoughts upon the subordinate, "Blessed, or happy, are the people." He could not proceed in a better order: he first looks up to *God's* kingdom, then reflects upon his own, as not meaning to *take* blessedness before he had *given* it.—*Richard Holdsworth.*

Verse 15.—"*Happy is that people, that is in such a case,*" etc. The first part of this text hath relation to temporal blessings, "*Blessed is the people that be so*": the second to spiritual, "*Yea, blessed is the people whose God is the* LORD." "His left hand is under my head," saith the spouse (Cant. ii. 6); that sustains me from falling into murmuring, or diffidence of his providence, because out of his left hand he hath given me a competency of his temporal blessings; "But his right hand doth embrace me," saith the spouse there; his spiritual blessings fill me, possess me so that no rebellious fire breaks out within me, no outward temptation breaks in upon me. So also Solomon says again, "In her left hand is riches and glory," (temporal blessings) "and in her right hand length of days" (Prov. iii. 16), all that accomplishes and fulfils the eternal joys of the saints of heaven. The person to whom Solomon attributes this right and left hand is Wisdom; and a wise man may reach out his right and left hand, to receive the blessings of both sorts. And the person whom Solomon represents by Wisdom there, is Christ himself. So that not only a wordly wiseman, but a Christian wiseman may reach out both hands, to both kinds of blessings, right and left, spiritual and temporal.

Now, for this blessedness, as no philosophers could ever tell us amongst the Gentiles what true blessedness was, so no grammarian amongst the Jews, amongst the Hebrews, could ever tell us what the right signification of this word is, in which David expresses blessedness here; whether *asherei*, which is the word, be a plural noun, and signify *beatitudines*, blessednesses in the plural, and intimate thus much, that blessedness consists not in any one thing, but in a harmony and consent of many; or whether this *asherei* be an adverb, and signify *beate*, and so be an acclamation, O how happily, how blessedly are such men provided for that are so; they cannot tell. Whatsoever it be, it is the very first word with which David begins his Book of Psalms; *beatus vir*; as the last word of that book is *laudate Dominum*; to show that all that passes between God and man, from first to last, is blessings from God to man, and praises from man to God; and that the first degree of blessedness is to find the print of the hand of God even in his temporal blessednesses, and to praise and glorify him for them in the right use of them. A man that hath no land to hold by it, nor title to recover by it, is never the better for finding, or buying, or having a fair piece of evidence, a fair instrument, fairly written, duly sealed,

authentically testified ; a man that hath not the grace of God, and spiritual blessings too, is never the nearer happiness, for all his abundances of temporal blessedness. Evidences are evidences to them who have title. Temporal blessings are evidences to them who have a testimony of God's spiritual blessings in the temporal. Otherwise, as in his hands who hath no title, it is a suspicious thing to find evidences, and he will be thought to have embezzled and purloined them, he will be thought to have forged and counterfeited them, and he will be called to an account for them, how he came by them, and what he meant to do with them : so to them who have temporal blessings without spiritual, they are but useless blessings, they are but counterfeit blessings, they shall not purchase a minute's peace here, nor a minute's refreshing to the soul hereafter ; and there must be a heavy account made for them, both how they were got, and how they were employed.—*John Donne.*

Verse 15.—"*Happy is that people,*" etc. It is only a narrow and one-sided religion that can see anything out of place in this beatitude of plenty and peace. If we could rejoice with the Psalms fully and without misgiving, in the temporal blessings bestowed by heaven, we should the more readily and sincerely enter into the depths of their spiritual experience. And the secret of this lies in the full comprehension and contemplation of the beautiful and pleasant as the gift of God.—*A. S. Aglen.*

Verse 15.—" *Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the* LORD." " *Yea, happy.*" This is the best wine, kept to the last, though all men be not of this opinion. You shall hardly bring a worldly man to think so. The world is willing enough to misconstrue the order of the words, and to give the priority to civil happiness, as if it were first in dignity, because 'tis first named : they like better to hear of the *cui sic* than the *cui Dominus.* To prevent this folly, the Psalmist interposeth a caution in this corrective particle, " *yea, happy.*" It hath the force of a revocation, whereby he seems to retract what went before, not simply and absolutely, but in a certain degree, lest worldly men should wrest it to a misinterpretation. It is not an *absolute* revocation, but a *comparative ;* it does not simply deny that there is some part of popular happiness in these outward things, but it prefers the spirituals before them : "*Yea,*" that is, *Yea more,* or, *Yea rather ;* like that of Christ in the Gospel, when one in the company blessed the womb that bare him, he presently replies, " Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it : " Luke xi. 28. In like manner, the prophet David, having first premised the inferior part and outside of a happy condition ; fearing lest they should of purpose mistake his meaning, and, hearing the first proposition, should either there set up their rest, and not at all take up the second ; or if they take it in, do it preposterously, and give it the precedence before the second, according to the world's order, *Virtus post nummos.* In this respect he puts in the clause of revocation, whereby he shows that these outward things, though *named* first, yet they are not to be *reputed* first. The particle "*Yea*" removes them to the second place ; it tacitly transposeth the order ; and the path of piety, which was *locally* after, it placeth *virtually* before. 'Tis as if he said, Did I call them *happy* who are in such a case ? Nay, miserable are they if they be only in such a case : the temporal part cannot make them so without the spiritual. Admit the windows of the visible heaven were opened, and all outward blessings poured down upon us ; admit we did perfectly enjoy whatsoever the vastness of the earth contains in it ; tell me, What will it profit to gain all and lose God ? If the earth be bestowed upon us, and not heaven ; or the material heaven be opened, and not the beatifical ; or the whole world made ours, and God not ours ; we do not arrive at happiness. All that is in the first proposition is nothing unless this be added, "*Yea, happy are the people which have the Lord for their God.*"—*Richard Holdsworth.*

Verse 15.—

Thrice happy nations, where with look benign
Thine aspect bends ; beneath thy smile divine
The fields are with increasing harvests crown'd,
The flocks grow fast, and plenty reigns around,
Nor sire, nor infant son, black death shall crave,
Till ripe with age they drop into the grave ;
Nor fell suspicion, nor relentless care,
Nor peace-destroying discord enter there,
But friends and brothers, wives and sisters, join
The feast in concord and in love divine.

Callimachus.

Verse 15.—David having prayed for many temporal blessings in the behalf of the people from verse 12 to verse 15, at last concludes, "*Blessed are the people that are in such a case*"; but presently he checks and corrects himself, and eats, as it were, his own words, but rather, "*happy is that people whose God is the Lord.*" The Syriac rendereth it question wise, "Is not the people [happy] that is in such a case?" The answer is, "*No*," except they have God to boot: Ps. cxlvi. 5. Nothing can make that man truly miserable that hath God for his portion, and nothing can make that man truly happy that wants God for his portion. God is the author of all true happiness; he is the donor of all true happiness; he is the maintainer of all true happiness, and he is the centre of all true happiness; and, therefore, he that hath him for his God, and for his portion, is the only happy man in the world.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 15.—"*Whose God is* JEHOVAH." A word or name well-known to us English, by our translators now often retaining that name in the mention of God in our English Bibles, and therefore we do well to retain it. *Lord* was a lower word, in common acceptation, than *God*. But JEHOVAH is a higher name than either, and more peculiar, incommunicable, and comprehensive. Exod. vi. 3: "I appeared" (saith the Lord) "unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name *God Almighty*, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them."

To have God to be our *Jehovah* is the insurance of happiness to us. For of many, observe but these two things in the name *Jehovah:* First, God's absolute *independency*—that he is of himself omnipotent, Exod. iii. 14: "And God said, I AM THAT I AM." Secondly, God's *faithfulness*, that he cannot but be as good as his word, Exod. vi. 2, 3, 4, 6: "And I have also established my covenant with them; wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am JEHOVAH (so in the Hebrew), and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." So that this name is our *security* of God's performance. Examine we therefore our bonds, and bills, that is, his promises to us; behold, they are all the promises of Jehovah; they must stand good, for they bear his name; they must reflect his name, and promote both our good and God's grand design.—*Nathanael Homes*, 1678.

With this prayer of Jehovah's anointed One end the prayers of the Book of Psalms. The remaining six Psalms consist exclusively of praise and high Hallelujahs.—*Lord Congleton, in "The Psalms: a new Version, with Notes,"* 1875.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Two things needful in our holy war—strength and skill; for the hands and the fingers, for the difficult and the delicate. II. In what way God supplies us with both. He is the one, and teaches the other. Impartation and Instruction. The teaching comes by illumination, experience, distinct guidance.

Verse 1.—Things not to be forgotten by the Christian Soldier. I. The true source of his strength: "The Lord my strength." If remembered, 1. He will not be found trusting in self. 2. He will never be wanting in courage. 3. He will always anticipate victory. 4. He will never be worsted in the conflict. II. His constant need of instruction, and the Teacher who never forgets him: "Which teacheth my hands," etc. If remembered, 1. He will gird on the armour provided and commended by God. 2. He will select for his weapon the sword of the Spirit. 3. He will study the divinely-given text-book of military tactics and discipline, that he may learn (1) the devices of the enemy; (2) methods of attack and defence; (3) how to bear himself in the thick of the fight. 4. He will wait upon God for understanding. III. The praise due to God, both for victories won and skill displayed: "Blessed be," etc. If remembered, 1. He will wear his honours humbly. 2. Glorify the honour of his King. 3. Twice taste the sweets of victory in the happiness of gratitude.—*J. F.*

Verse 2.—Double flowers. I. Good preserved from evil: "goodness" and "fortress." II. Safety enlarged into liberty: "tower," "deliverer." III. Security attended with rest: "shield, in whom I trust." IV. Sufficiency to maintain superiority: "subdueth my people under me." View God as working all.

Verse 2.—A Group of Titles. Notice, I. Which comes first. "Goodness." *Heb.* "Mercy." 1. It is right and natural that a saved sinner should make the most of "mercy," and place it in the foreground. 2. Mercy is the ground and reason of the other titles named. For whatever God is to us, it is a special manifestation of his mercy. 3. It is a good thing to see a believer ripe in experience making mercy the leading note in his song of praise. II. Which comes last: "He in whom I trust." It suggests, 1. That what God is makes him worthy of trust. 2. That meditation upon what he is strengthens our trust. III. What peculiar force the word "my" gives to each. It makes, 1. A record of experience. 2. An ascription of praise. 3. A blessed boasting. 4. An incentive, enough to set others longing.—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—A note of interrogation, exclamation, and admiration.

Verse 3.—The question, I. Denies any right in man to claim the regard of God. II. Asserts the great honour God has nevertheless put upon him. III. Suggests that the true reason of God's generous dealings is the graciousness of his own heart. IV. Implies the becomingness of gratitude and humility. V. Encourages the most unworthy to put their confidence in God.—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—I. What was man as he came from the hands of his Creator? 1. Rational. 2. Responsible. 3. Immortal. 4. Holy and happy. II. What is man in his present condition? 1. Fallen. 2. Guilty. 3. Sinful. 4. Miserable, and helpless in his misery. III. What is man when he has believed in Christ? 1. Restored to a right relation to God. 2. Restored to a right disposition toward God. 3. He enjoys the influences of the Holy Spirit. 4. He is in process of preparation for the heavenly world. IV. What shall man be when he is admitted into heaven? 1. Free from sin and sorrow. 2. Advanced to the perfection of his nature. 3. Associated with angels. 4. Near to his Saviour and his God.—*George Brooks, in "The Homiletic Commentary,"* 1879.

Verse 3.—Worthless man much regarded by the mighty God. Sermon by Ebenezer Erskine. Works iii., pp. 141—162.

Verse 3.—It is a wonder above all wonders, that ever the great God should make such account of such a thing as man. I. It will appear if you consider what a great God the Lord is. II. What a poor thing man is. III. What a great account the great God hath of this poor thing, man.—*Joseph Alleine.*

Verse 4.—He is nothing, he pretends to be something, he is soon gone, he ends in nothing as to this life; yet there is a light somewhere.

Verse 4.—The Shadow-World. I. Our lives are like shadows. II. But God's light casts these shadows. Our being is of God. The brevity and mystery of life are a part of providence. III. The destiny of the shadows; eternal night; or eternal light.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 4.—The brevity of our earthly life. 1. A profitable subject for meditation. II. A rebuke to those who provide for this life alone. III. A trumpet-call to prepare for eternity. IV. An incentive to the Christian to make the best of this life for the glory of God.—*J. F.*

Verse 5.—Condescension, visitation, contact, and conflagration.

Verses 7, 8, 11.—Repetitions, not vain. Repetitions in prayer are vain when they result from form, thoughtlessness, or superstition; but not, *e.g.*, I. When they are the utterance of genuine fervour. II. When the danger prayed against is imminent. III. When the fear which prompts the prayer is urgent. IV. When the repetition is prompted by a new motive, verses 7, 8; by God's condescension, verses 3, 11; by God's former deliverance, verse 10; and by the results which will flow from the answer, verses 12—14.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 8.—What is "a right hand of falsehood"? Ask the hypocrite, the schemer, the man of false doctrine, the boaster, the slanderer, the man who forgets his promise, the apostate.

Verse 9.—For God's Ear. I. The Singer. A grateful heart. II. The Song. Praiseful. New. III. The Accompaniment: "Psaltery." Helps to devotion. Give God the best. IV. The Auditor and Object of the eulogium: "Thee, O God."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 11.—Persons from whom it is a mercy to escape: those alien to God, vain in conversation, false in deed.

Verses 11, 12.—The Nature and Necessity of early Piety. A Sermon preached to a Society of Young People, at Willingham, Cambridgeshire, on the First Day of the Year M.DCC.LXXII.—*Robert Robinson.*

Verse 12.—Youth attended with development, stability, usefulness, and spiritual health.

Verse 12 (*first clause*).—To Young Men. Consider, 1. What is desired on your behalf: "Sons may be as plants," etc. 1. That you may be respected and valued. 2. That you may have settled principles and virtues. Plants are not blown hither and thither. 3. That you may be vigorous and strong in moral power. II. What is requisite on your part to the accomplishment of this desire. 1. A good rootage in Christ. 2. Constant nourishment from the word of God. 3. The dews of divine grace obtained by prayer. 4. A resolute tendency within to answer the God-appointed purpose of your existence.—*J. F.*

Verse 12 (*second clause*).—To Young Women. Consider, 1. The important position you may occupy in the social fabric: "As corner-stones." 1. The moral and religious tone of society is determined more by your character and influence than by those of men. 2. The complexion of home life will be a reflex of your conduct and character, either as daughters, sisters, or wives. 3. The moulding of the character of the next generation, remember, begins with the mother's influence. 4. Let these facts weigh with you as a motive in seeking the grace of God, without which you can never fulfil your mission worthily. II. The beauty which ought to belong to you in your position. "Polished after," etc. The beauty of, 1. Heart purity: "The King's daughter is all glorious within." 2. A noble and modest conduct: "wrought gold," no imitation; real gold. 3. Gracious and gentle demeanour. III. How both the right position and right beauty are obtained. 1. By yielding yourselves to God. 2. By Christ dwelling in your heart. 3. By becoming living stones and polished stones under the workmanship of the Holy Spirit.—*J. F.*

Verse 14.—A prayer for our ministers, and for the security, unity, and happiness of the church.

Verse 14.—The prosperous Church. There—I. Labour is cheerfully performed. II. The enemy is kept without the gate. III. There are few or no departures. IV. Faith and content silence complaint. V. Pray that such may be our case as a church.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 15.—The peculiar happiness of those whose God is the Lord.

PSALM CXLV.

This is one of the alphabetical Psalms, composed with much art, and, doubtless, so arranged that the memory might be aided. The Holy Spirit condescends to use even the more artificial methods of the poet, to secure attention, and impress the heart.

TITLE.—DAVID'S PSALM OF PRAISE. *It is David's, David's very own, David's favourite. It is David's Praise just as another (Psalm lxxxvi.) is David's Prayer. It is altogether praise, and praise pitched in a high key. David had blessed God many a time in other Psalms, but this he regarded as his peculiar, his crown jewel of praise. Certainly David's praise is the best of praise, for it is that of a man of experience, of sincerity, of calm deliberation, and of intense warmth of heart. It is not for any one of us to render David's praise, for David only could do that; but we may take David's Psalm as a model, and aim at making our own personal adoration as much like it as possible: we shall be long before we equal our model. Let each Christian reader present his own praise unto the Lord, and call it by his own name. What a wealth of varied praise will thus be presented through Christ Jesus!*

DIVISION.—*The Psalm does not fall into any marked divisions, but is one and indivisible. Our own translators have mapped out this song with considerable discernment. It is not a perfect arrangement, but it will suit our convenience in exposition. David praiseth God for his fame or glory* (1—7), *for his goodness* (8—10), *for his kingdom* (11—13), *for his providence* (14—16), *for his saving mercy* (17—21).

EXPOSITION.

I WILL extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

3 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness *is* unsearchable.

4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

6 And *men* shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts; and I will declare thy greatness.

7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

1. *"I will extol thee, my God, O king."* David as God's king adores God as his king. It is well when the Lord's royalty arouses our loyalty, and our spirit is moved to magnify his majesty. The Psalmist has extolled his Lord many a time before, he is doing so still, and he will do so in the future: praise is for all tenses. When we cannot express all our praise just now, it is wise to register our resolution to continue in the blessed work, and write it down as a bond, "I will extol thee." See how David testifies his devotion and adherence to his God by the pronoun "my," how he owns his allegiance by the title "king," and how he goes on to declare his determination to make much of him in his song.

"And I will bless thy name for ever and ever." David determined that his praise should rise to blessing, should intelligently spend itself upon the name or character of God, and should be continued world without end. He uses the word "bless" not merely for variation of sound, but also for the deepening and sweetening of the sense. To bless God is to praise him with a personal affection for him, and a wishing well to him; this is a growingly easy exercise as we advance in experience and grow in grace. David declares that he will offer every form of praise, through every

form of existence. His notion of duration is a full one—"for ever" has no end, but when he adds another "ever" to it he forbids all idea of a close. Our praise of God shall be as eternal as the God we praise.

2. *"Every day will I bless thee."* Whatever the character of the day, or of my circumstances and conditions during that day, I will continue to glorify God. Were we well to consider the matter we should see abundant cause in each day for rendering special blessing unto the Lord. All before the day, all in the day, all following the day should constrain us to magnify our God every day, all the year round. Our love to God is not a matter of holy days: every day is alike holy to holy men. David here comes closer to God than when he said, "I will bless thy name": it is now, "I will bless *thee*." This is the centre and kernel of true devotion: we do not only admire the Lord's words and works, but himself. Without realizing the personality of God, praise is well-nigh impossible; you cannot extol an abstraction. *"And I will praise thy name for ever and ever."* He said he would bless that name, and now he vows to praise it; he will extol the Lord in every sense and way. Eternal worship shall not be without its variations; it will never become monotonous. Heavenly music is not harping upon one string, but all strings shall be tuned to one praise. Observe the personal pronouns here: four times he says "*I* will": praise is not to be discharged by proxy: there must be your very self in it, or there is nothing in it.

3. *"Great is the* LORD, *and greatly to be praised."* Worship should be somewhat like its object—great praise for a great God. There is no part of Jehovah's greatness which is not worthy of great praise. In some beings greatness is but vastness of evil: in him it is magnificence of goodness. Praise may be said to be great when the song contains great matter, when the hearts producing it are intensely fervent, and when large numbers unite in the grand acclaim. No chorus is too loud, no orchestra too large, no Psalm too lofty for the lauding of the Lord of Hosts.

"And his greatness is unsearchable."

> "Still his worth your praise exceeds,
> Excellent are all his deeds."

Song should be founded upon search; hymns composed without thought are of no worth, and tunes upon which no pains have been spent are beneath the dignity of divine adoration. Yet when we meditate most, and search most studiously, we shall still find ourselves surrounded with unknowable wonders, which will baffle all attempts to sing them worthily. The best adoration of the Unsearchable is to own him to be so, and close the eyes in reverence before the excessive light of his glory. Not all the minds of all the centuries shall suffice to search out the unsearchable riches of God: he is past finding out; and, therefore, his deserved praise is still above and beyond all that we can render to him.

4. *"One generation shall praise thy works to another."* There shall be a tradition of praise: men shall hand on the service, they shall make it a point to instruct their descendants in this hallowed exercise. We look back upon the experience of our fathers, and sing of it; even thus shall our sons learn praise from the Lord's works among ourselves. Let us see to it that we praise God before our children, and never make them think that his service is an unhappy one. *"And shall declare thy mighty acts."* The generations shall herein unite: together they shall make up an extraordinary history. Each generation shall contribute its chapter, and all the generations together shall compose a volume of matchless character. David began with "I," but he has in this verse soon reached to an inconceivable multitude, comprehending all the myriads of our race of every age. The praise of the Lord enlarges the heart, and as it grows upon us our minds grow with it. God's works of goodness and acts of power make up a subject which all the eras of human story can never exhaust. A praiseful heart seems to live in all the centuries in delightful companionship with all the good. We are not afraid that the incense will ever cease to burn upon the altars of Jehovah: the priests die, but the adoration lives on. All glory be unto him who remains the same Lord throughout all generations.

5. *"I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty."* 'Tis fit a king should speak of the majesty of the King of kings. David cannot give over the worship of God into the hands of others, even though all generations should undertake to perpetuate it: he must have his own individual share in it, and so he saith, "I will speak." What a speaker! for he no sooner begins than he heaps up words of honour—"the glorious honour of thy majesty," or "the beauty of the honour

of thy majesty." His language labours to express his meaning; he multiplies the terms by which he would extol Jehovah, his King. Everything which has to do with the Great King is majestic, honourable, glorious. His least is greater than man's greatest, his lowest is higher than man's highest. There is nothing about the infinite Lord which is unworthy of his royalty; and, on the other hand, nothing is wanting to the splendour of his reign: his majesty is honourable, and his honour is glorious: he is altogether wonderful.

"*And of thy wondrous works.*" All the works of God among men are Godlike, but certain of them are specially calculated to create surprise. Many works of power, of justice, of wisdom, are wonderful; and his work of grace is wondrous above all. This specially, and all the rest proportionately, should be spoken of by holy men, by experienced men, and by men who have the ability to speak with power. These things must not be permitted to pass away in silence; if others do not remember them, representative men like David must make a point of conversing upon them in private, and speaking of them in public. Let it be the delight of each one of us according to our position to speak lovingly of our Lord.

6. "*And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts.*" If unobservant of other matters these acts of judgment shall seize their attention and impress their minds so that they must talk about them. Did not men in our Saviour's day speak of the falling tower of Siloam and the slaughtered Galileans? Are there not rumours of wars, when there are not even whispers of other things? Horrible news is sure to spread: under mercies men may be dumb, but concerning miseries they raise a great outcry. The force of dread is a power which loosens the tongue of the multitude: they are sure to talk of that which makes the ear to tingle and the hair to stand upright.

While they are thus occupied with "fearsome facts," such as the drowning of a world, the destruction of the cities of the plain, the plagues of Egypt, the destruction at the Red Sea, and so forth, David would look at these affairs in another light, and sing another tune. "*And I will declare thy greatness.*" Those acts which were terrible deeds to most men were mighty deeds, or *greatnesses* to our holy poet: these he would publish like a herald, who mentions the titles and honours of his royal master. It is the occupation of every true believer to rehearse the great doings of his great God. We are not to leave this to the common converse of the crowd, but we are personally to make a declaration of what we have seen and known. We are even bound in deep solemnity of manner to warn men of the Lord's greatness in his terrible acts of justice: thus will they be admonished to abstain from provoking him. To fulfil this duty we are already bound by solemn obligations, and we shall do well to bind ourselves further by resolutions, "I will—God helping me, I will."

7. "*They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness.*" They shall pour forth grateful memories even as springs gush with water, plenteously, spontaneously, constantly, joyously. The Lord's redeemed people having been filled with his great goodness, shall retain the happy recollection of it, and shall be moved often and often to utter those recollections. Not content with a scanty mention of such amazing love, they shall go on to an abundant utterance of such abundant favour. It shall be their delight to speak with one another of God's dealings with them, and to compare notes of their experiences. God has done nothing stintedly; all his goodness is great goodness, all worthy to be remembered, all suggestive of holy discourse. Upon this subject there is no scarcity of matter, and when the heart is right there is no need to stop from want of facts to tell. Oh, that there were more of these memories and utterances, for it is not meet that the goodness of the living God should be buried in the cemetery of silence, in the grave of ingratitude.

"*And shall sing of thy righteouness.*" They shall say and then sing. And what is the theme which impels them to leave the pulpit for the orchestra? What do they sing of? They sing of that righteousness which is the sinner's terror, which even good men mention with deep solemnity. Righteousness received by gospel light is in reality the secret foundation of the believer's hope. God's covenant of grace is our strong consolation, because he who made it is righteous, and will not run back from it. Since Jesus died as our substitute, righteousness requires and secures the salvation of all the redeemed. This attribute is our best friend, and therefore we sing of it.

Modern thinkers would fain expunge the idea of righteousness from their notion of God; but converted men would not. It is a sign of growth in sanctification

when we rejoice in the justice, rectitude, and holiness of our God. Even a rebel may rejoice in mercy, which he looks upon as laxity; but a loyal subject rejoices when he learns that God is so just that not even to save his own elect would he consent to violate the righteousness of his moral government. Few men will shout for joy at the righteousness of Jehovah, but those who do so are his chosen, in whom his soul delighteth.

8 The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

9 The LORD *is* good to all: and his tender mercies *are* over all his works.

10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

8. "*The LORD is gracious.*" Was it not in some such terms that the Lord revealed himself to Moses? Is not this Jehovah's glory? To all living men this is his aspect: he is gracious, or full of goodness and generosity. He treats his creatures with kindness, his subjects with consideration, and his saints with favour. His words and ways, his promises and his gifts, his plans and his purposes all manifest his grace, or free favour. There is nothing suspicious, prejudiced, morose, tyrannical, or unapproachable in Jehovah,—he is condescending and kind. "*And full of compassion.*" To the suffering, the weak, the foolish, the despondent, he is very pitiful: he feels for them, he feels with them: he does this heartily, and in a practical manner. Of this pitifulness he is full, so that he compassionates freely, constantly, deeply, divinely, and effectually. In God is fulness in a sense not known among men, and this fulness is all fragrant with sympathy for human misery. If the Lord be full of compassion there is no room in him for forgetfulness or harshness, and none should suspect him thereof. What an ocean of compassion there must be since the Infinite God is full of it. "*Slow to anger.*" Even those who refuse his grace yet share in long-suffering. When men do not repent, but, on the contrary, go from bad to worse, he is still averse to let his wrath flame forth against them. Greatly patient and extremely anxious that the sinner may live, he "lets the lifted thunder drop," and still forbears. "Love suffereth long and is kind," and God is love. "*And of great mercy.*" This is his attitude towards the guilty. When men at last repent, they find pardon awaiting them. Great is their sin, and great is God's mercy. They need great help, and they have it though they deserve it not; for he is greatly good to the greatly guilty.

9. "*The LORD is good to all.*" No one, not even his fiercest enemy, can deny this; for the falsehood would be too barefaced, since the very existence of the lips which slander him is a proof that it is slander. He allows his enemies to live, he even supplies them with food, and smooths their way with many comforts; for them the sun shines as brightly as if they were saints, and the rain waters their fields as plentifully as if they were perfect men. Is not this goodness to all? In our own land the gospel sounds in the ears of all who care to listen; and the Scriptures are within reach of the poorest child. It would be a wanton wresting of Scripture to limit this expression to the elect, as some have tried to do: we rejoice in electing love, but none the less we welcome the glorious truth, "Jehovah is good to all."

"*And his tender mercies are over all his works.*" Not "his new-covenant works," as one read it the other day who was wise above that which is written, yea, contrary to that which is written. Kindness is a law of God's universe: the world was planned for happiness; even now that sin has so sadly marred God's handiwork, and introduced elements which were not from the beginning, the Lord has so arranged matters that the fall is broken, the curse is met by an antidote, and the inevitable pain is softened with mitigations. Even in this sin-stricken world, under its disordered economy, there are abundant traces of a hand skilful to soothe distress and heal disease. That which makes life bearable is the tenderness of the great Father. This is seen in the creation of an insect as well as in the ruling of nations. The Creator is never rough, the Provider is never forgetful, the Ruler is never cruel. Nothing is done to create disease, no organs are arranged to promote misery; the incoming of sickness and pain is not according to the original design, but a result of our disordered state. Man's body as it left the Maker's hand was neither framed for disease, decay, nor death, neither was the purpose of it discomfort and anguish; far otherwise, it was framed for a joyful activity, and a peaceful enjoyment of God. Jehovah has in great consideration laid up in the world cures for our ailments, and

helps for our feebleness, and if many of these have been long in their discovery, it is because it was more for man's benefit to find them out himself, than to have them labelled and placed in order before his eyes. We may be sure of this, that Jehovah has never taken delight in the ills of his creatures, but has sought their good, and laid himself out to alleviate the distresses into which they have guiltily plunged themselves.

The duty of kindness to animals may logically be argued from this verse. Should not the children of God be like their Father in kindness?

10. "*All thy works shall praise thee, O* LORD." There is a something about every creature which redounds to the honour of God. The skill, kindness, and power manifested in the formation of each living thing is in itself to the praise of God, and when observed by an intelligent mind the Lord is honoured thereby. Some works praise him by their being, and others by their well-being; some by their mere existence, and others by their hearty volition. "*And thy saints shall bless thee.*" These holy ones come nearer, and render sweeter adoration. Men have been known to praise those whom they hated, as we may admire the prowess of a warrior who is our foe; but saints lovingly praise, and therefore are said to "bless." They wish well to God; they would make him more blessed, if such a thing were possible; they desire blessings upon his cause and his children, and invoke success upon his work and warfare. None but blessed men will bless the Lord. Only saints or holy ones will bless the thrice holy God. If we praise Jehovah because of his works around us, we must go on to bless him for his works within us. Let the two "shalls" of this verse be fulfilled, especially the latter one.

11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;
12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.
13 Thy kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations.

11. "*They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom.*" Excellent themes for saintly minds. Those who bless God from their hearts rejoice to see him enthroned, glorified, and magnified in power. No subject is more profitable for humility obedience, hope, and joy than that of the reigning power of the Lord our God. His works praise him, but they cannot crown him: this remains for holy hands and hearts. It is their high pleasure to tell of the glory of his kingdom in its justice, kindness, eternity, and so forth. Kingdoms of earth are glorious for riches, for extent of territory, for victories, for liberty, for commerce, and other matters; but in all true glories the kingdom of Jehovah excels them. We have seen a palace dedicated "to all the glories of France"; but time, eternity, and all space are filled with the glories of God: on these we love to speak. "*And talk of thy power.*" This power supports the kingdom and displays the glory, and we are sure to talk of it when the glory of the divine kingdom is under discussion. God's power to create or to destroy, to bless or to punish, to strengthen or to crush, is matter for frequent rehearsal. All power comes from God. Apart from him the laws of nature would be inoperative. His power is the one source of force—mechanical, vital, mental, spiritual. Beyond the power of God which has been put forth, infinite force lies latent in himself. Who can calculate the reserve forces of the Infinite? How, then, can his kingdom fail? We hear talk of the five great powers, but what are they to the One Great Power? The Lord is "the blessed and only Potentate." Let us accustom ourselves to think more deeply and speak more largely of th' power which ever makes for righteousness and works for mercy.

12. "*To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts.*" These glorious deeds ought to be known to all mankind; but yet few reckon such knowledge to be an essential part of education. As the State cannot teach these holy histories the people of God must take care to do it themselves. The work must be done for every age, for men have short memories in reference to their God, and the doings of his power. They inscribe the deeds of their heroes upon brass, but the glorious acts of Jehovah are written upon the sand, and the tide of time washes them from present memory; therefore we must repeat the lesson, and yet again repeat it. The saints are the religious instructors of the race; they ought to be not only the historians of the past, but the bards of the present, whose duty it is to keep the sons of men in memory of the great deeds which the Lord did in the days of their fathers

and in the old time before them. Note the contrast between the great deeds of God and the puny sons of Adam, who have even degenerated from their father, though he was as nothing compared with his Maker.

"*And the glorious majesty of his kingdom.*" What a grand subject! Yet this we are to make known; the publication of it is left to us who bless the Lord. "The glory of the majesty of his reign." What a theme! Jehovah's reign as sovereign Lord of all, his majesty in that dominion, and the glory of that majesty! The threefold subject baffles the most willing mind. How shall we make this known to the sons of men? Let us first labour to know it ourselves, and then let us make it a frequent subject of discourse, so shall men know it from us, the Holy Spirit attending our word.

13. "*Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.*" His meditation has brought him near to God, and God near to him: he speaks to him in adoration, changing the pronoun from "his" to "thy." He sees the great King, and prostrates himself before him. It is well when our devotion opens the gate of heaven, and enters within the portal to speak with God face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend. The point upon which the Psalmist's mind rests is the eternity of the divine throne, —"thy reign is a reign of all eternities." The Lord's kingdom is without beginning, without break, without bound, and without end. He never abdicates his throne, neither does he call in a second to share his empire. None can overthrow his power, or break away from his rule. Neither this age, nor the age to come, nor ages of ages shall cause his sovereignty to fail. Herein is rest for faith. "The Lord sitteth King for ever." "*And thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.*" Men come and go like shadows on the wall, but God reigneth eternally. We distinguish kings as they succeed each other by calling them first and second; but this King is Jehovah, the First and the Last. Adam in his generation knew his Creator to be King, and the last of his race shall know the same. All hail, Great God! Thou art ever Lord of lords!

These three verses are a reverent hymn concerning "the kingdom of God": they will be best appreciated by those who are in that kingdom in the fullest sense, and are most truly loyal to the Lord. It is, according to these verses, a kingdom of glory and power; a kingdom of light which men are to know, and of might which men are to feel; it is full of majesty and eternity; it is the benediction of every generation. We are to speak of it, talk of it, and make it known, and then we are to acknowledge it in the homage directed distinctly to the Lord himself—as in verse thirteen.

14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all *those that be* bowed down.

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

In these three verses Jehovah is adored for his gracious providence towards men and all other creatures; this fitly follows the proclamation of his royalty, for we here see how he rules his kingdom, and provides for his subjects.

14. "*The LORD upholdeth all that fall.*" Read this verse in connection with the preceding and admire the unexpected contrast: he who reigns in glorious majesty, yet condescends to lift up and hold up those who are apt to fall. The form of the verb shows that he is always doing this; he is Jehovah upholding. His choice of the fallen, and the falling, as the subjects of his gracious help is specially to be noted. The fallen of our race, especially fallen women, are shunned by us, and it is peculiar tenderness on the Lord's part that such he looks upon, even those who are at once the chief of sinners and the least regarded of mankind. The falling ones among us are too apt to be pushed down by the strong: their timidity and dependence make them the victims of the proud and domineering. To them also the Lord gives his upholding help. The Lord loves to reverse things,—he puts down the lofty, and lifts up the lowly.

"*And raiseth up all those that be bowed down.*" Another deed of condescension. Many are despondent, and cannot lift up their heads in courage, or their hearts with comfort; but these he cheers. Some are bent with their daily load, and these he strengthens. Jesus loosed a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had so bound that she was bowed down, and could by no means lift up herself. In this he proved

himself to be the true Son of the Highest. Think of the Infinite bowing to lift up the bowed, and stooping to be leaned upon by those who are ready to fall. The two "alls" should not be overlooked: the Lord has a kindly heart towards the whole company of the afflicted.

15. *"The eyes of all wait upon thee."* They have learned to look to thee: it has become their nature to turn to thee for all they want. As children look to a father for all they need, so do the creatures look to God, the all-sufficient Provider. It were well if all men had the eye of faith, and if all waited therewith upon the Lord. *"And thou givest them their meat in due season."* They wait, and God gives. The thought of this brings God so near to our poet-prophet that he is again speaking with God after the style of thee and thou. Is it to be wondered at when the Lord is feeding the hungry all around us,—giving food to all creatures, and to ourselves among them? Like a flock of sheep the creatures stand around the Lord as their great Shepherd; all eyes are to his hand expecting to receive their food; nor are they disappointed, for when the hour comes suitable provender is ready for each creature. Observe the punctuality of the Lord in giving food at meal-time,—in the season when it is due. This he does for all, and each living thing has its own season, so that the Lord of heaven is feeding his great flock both by day and by night, during every moment of time.

16. *"Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."* Thou alone providest, O Jehovah! Thou doest it liberally, with open hand; thou doest it easily, as if it were only to open thine hand; thou doest this at once as promptly as if all supplies were ready to hand. Living things have needs, and these create desires; the living God has suitable supplies at hand, and these he gives till inward satisfaction is produced, and the creature sighs no longer. In spiritual things, when God has raised a desire, he always gratifies it; hence the longing is prophetic of the blessing. In no case is the desire of the living thing excited to produce distress, but in order that it may seek and find satisfaction.

These verses refer to natural providence; but they may equally well apply to the stores of grace, since the same God is king in both spheres. If we will but wait upon the Lord for pardon, renewing, or whatever else we need, we shall not wait in vain. The hand of grace is never closed while the sinner lives.

17 The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

18 The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.

21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

In these verses we behold our God in the realm of his free grace dealing well with his believing people.

17. *"The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."* His ways and works are both worthy to be praised. Jehovah cannot be unjust or impure. Let his doings be what they may, they are in every case righteous and holy. This is the confession of the godly who follow his ways, and of the gracious who study his works. Whatever God is or does must be right. In the salvation of his people he is as righteous and holy as in any other of his ways and works: he has not manifested mercy at the expense of justice, but the rather he has magnified his righteousness by the death of his Son.

18. *"The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him."* Not only near by his omnipresence, but to sympathize and favour. He does not leave praying men, and men who confess his name, to battle with the world alone, but he is ever at their side. This favour is not for a few of those who invoke him; but for each one of the pious company. "All" who place themselves beneath the shield of his glorious name by calling themselves by it, and by calling upon it in supplication, shall find him to be a very present help in trouble. *"To all that call upon him in truth:"* for there are many whose formal prayers and false professions will never bring them into communion with the Lord. To pray in truth, we must have a true

heart, and the truth in our heart; and then we must be humble, for pride is a falsehood; and be earnest, or else prayer is a lie. A God of truth cannot be nigh to the spirit of hypocrisy; this he knows and hates; neither can he be far removed from a sincere spirit, since it is his work, and he forsakes not the work of his own hands.

19. *"He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him:"* that is, those who reverence his name and his law. Inasmuch as they have respect unto his will, he will have respect unto their will. They shall have their way for they have his way in their hearts. A holy heart only desires what a holy God can give, and so its desire is filled full out of the fulness of the Lord. *"He also will hear their cry, and will save them."* Divinely practical shall his nearness be, for he will work their deliverance. He will listen to their piteous cry, and then will send salvation from every ill. This he will do himself personally; he will not trust them to angels or saints.

20. *"The LORD preserveth all them that love him."* They keep him in their love, and he keeps them by his love. See how these favoured ones have advanced from fearing the Lord and crying to him, even to loving him, and in that love they are secure from all danger. Mark the number of "alls" in these later verses of the Psalm. In each of these God is all in all. *"But all the wicked will he destroy."* Wickedness is an offence to all holy beings, and therefore those who are determined to continue in it must be weeded out. As good sanitary laws remove all creators of pest and plague, so does the moral government of God mark every evil thing for destruction; it cannot be tolerated in the presence of a perfectly holy God. What ruins wicked men frequently become in this life! What monuments of wrath will they be in the world to come! Like Nineveh and Babylon, and other destroyed places, they shall only exist to declare how thoroughly God fulfils his threatenings.

21. *"My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD."* Whatever others may do, I will not be silent in the praise of the Lord: whatever others may speak upon, my topic is fixed once for all: I will speak the praise of Jehovah. I am doing it, and I will do it as long as I breathe. *"And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever."* Praise is no monopoly for one, even though he be a David; others are debtors, let them also be songsters. All men of every race, condition, or generation should unite to glorify God. No man need think that he will be rejected when he comes with his personal note of praise; all are permitted, invited, and exhorted to magnify the Lord. Specially should his holiness be adored: this is the crown, and in a certain sense the sum, of all his attributes. Only holy hearts will praise the holy name, or character of the Lord; oh, that all flesh were sanctified, then would the sanctity of God be the delight of all. Once let the song begin and there will be no end to it. It shall go on for ever and a day, as the old folks used to say. If there were two for-evers, or twenty for-evers, they ought all to be spent in the praises of the ever-living, ever-blessing, ever-blessed JEHOVAH. Blessed be the Lord for ever for having revealed to us his name, and blessed be that name as he has revealed it; yea, blessed be he above all that we can know, or think, or say. Our hearts revel in the delight of praising him. Our mouth, our mind, our lip, our life shall be our Lord's throughout this mortal existence, and when time shall be no more

---

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

This has been happily characterized as the "new song" promised in Ps. cxliv. 9. In other words, it is the song of praise, corresponding to the didactic, penitential, and supplicatory Psalms of this series.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

The ancient Hebrews declare him happy whoever, in after times, utters this Psalm thrice each day with the mouth, heart, and tongue.—*Victorinus Bythner,*—1670.

The last six or seven Psalms are the Beulah of the book, where the sun shineth night and day, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land. Coming at the close after all the mournful, plaintive, penitential, prayerful, varying notes, they unconsciously typify the joy and rest of glory.—*George Gilfillan.*

Title.—The Praise of David. Psalms are the praises of God accompanied with song; Psalms are songs containing the praise of God. If there be praise, but not of God, it is not a Psalm. If there be praise, and praise of God, if it is not sung, it is not a Psalm. To make a Psalm there go these three—praise, God's praise, and song.—*Augustine.*

Title.—It is observable concerning David's entitling the Psalm *"The Praise of David,"* that in the original no Psalm else beareth such a title. It is appropriated to it, because this wholly consists of praise; he was elevated therein to a frame of spirit made up of the pure praise of God, without any touch of what was particular to himself. It was not thanks, but altogether praise, and wholly praise.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Title.—This Psalm, which is designated a *Tehillah*, or a Psalm of *praise*,—a name which has passed from this Psalm to the whole Psalter, which is commonly called *Sepher Tehillim*, or *"Book of Praises,"*—is the last of the Psalms ascribed to David.

It is remarkable, that although that is the name given to the Psalter (which is entitled in Hebrew *Sepher Tehillim*, or *Book of Praises*), this is the only Psalm in the whole number which is designated in the title as a *Tehillah*—a word derived from the same root as *Hallelujah*. It seems as if this name *Tehillah* had been studiously reserved for the *last* of David's Psalms, in order to mark more emphatically that all his utterances are consummated in *praise*. And this view is more clearly manifested by the circumstance that the word *Tehillah* is introduced into the *last verse* of this Psalm, "My soul shall speak the *praise*" (*tehillah*) "of the Lord," (observe this preparation for Hallelujah, *Praise ye* the Lord); "and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever." As much as to say, that though David's voice was now about to be hushed in this life, yet it would never be silent in the world to come, and would ever "praise the Lord"; and as much, also, as to say that his last exhortation should be to all nations to praise him, "Let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever."—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Title.—This Psalm is entitled *"David's praise."* For howsoever the prayers and the praises (all) in this book, are (for the most part) of David's penning: yet two there are he hath singled out from the rest, and set his own mark on them as proper to himself: the lxxxvi. Psalm, his *Tephilla, David's* own *Prayer;* and there is here his *Tehilla*, his own *Praise* or thanksgiving. As if he had made the rest for all in common, but reserved these peculiarly for himself.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Whole Psalm.—In regard to its alphabetic structure, it has one peculiarity, *viz.*, the *nun* is omitted; the reason of which may be, that (as we have seen in some others Psalms of this structure) by means of that or some other such omission, we might be kept from putting stress on the mere form of the composition.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—Cassiodorus quaintly remarks that the Psalms in which the alphabetital order is complete, are especially fitted for the righteous in the Church Triumphant, but those in which one letter is missing, are for the Church Militant here on earth, as still imperfect, and needing to be purified from defect.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—*"I will extol thee, my God, O King."* To extol is to set pre-eminently on high; to exalt above all others; it is the expression of the greatest possible admiration; it is letting others know our high opinion of a person, and endeavouring to win them over to it. The man who has such a high opinion of another as to induce him to extol him, will not be likely to rest without bringing forth into prominent observation the object of his praise.—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 1.—*"O King";* or *the King*, by way of eminency; the King of kings, the God by whom kings reign, and to whom I and all other kings owe subjection and obedience.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 1.—*"O king."* The Psalmist in rapt ecstasy seems as though he saw God incarnate in Christ present to inspire his praise. Christ is our God and King, to be extolled in the heart, with the mouth, and by the life.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—*"King."* God is King in verity; others are called kings in vanity.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—*"I will bless thy name for ever and ever."* The name of God in Scripture

is taken, first, for *God himself*. The name of a thing is put for the thing named, Ps. xliv. 5: "Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us." "Through thy *name*," that is, through *thee*. Secondly, the name of God is often in Scripture put for *the attributes of God*. Thirdly, the name of God is put for *his ordinances or worship*. "Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first" (Jer. vii. 12), that is, where I first set up my public worship; because, as a man is known by his proper name, so is God by his proper worship. Fourthly, the name of God is *that reverence, esteem and honour which angels and men give unto God*. As we know amongst us, the report and reputation that a man hath among men is a man's name; what men speak of him, that is his name; such an one hath a good name, we say; such an one hath an ill name, that is, men speak or think well or ill of such persons. So Gen. vi. 4. When Moses describes the giants, he saith, "They were men of renown"; the Hebrew is, "They were men of *name*," because the name of a man is the character he hath amongst men; as a man is esteemed, so his name is carried, and himself is accepted in the world. So the name of God is that high esteem, those honourable apprehensions, which angels and men have of God; such as the thoughts and speeches of men are for the celebration of God's glory and praise, such is his name in the world.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1.—"*For ever and ever.*" לְעֹלָם וָעֶד, *leolam vaed, for ever and onward*, in this and the coming world. Expressions of this sort are very difficult to be translated, but they are, on the whole, well interpreted by those words of Mr. Addison:—

"Through all eternity to thee,
A joyful song I'll raise;
But oh, eternity's too short
To utter all thy praise!"

Adam Clarke.

Verse 1.—"*For ever and ever.*" Praise is the only part of duty in which we at present engage, which is lasting. We pray, but there shall be a time when prayer shall offer its last litany; we believe, but there shall be a time when faith shall be lost in sight; we hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, but there shall be a time when hope lies down and dies, lost in the splendour of the fruition that God shall reveal. But praise goes singing into heaven, and is ready without a teacher to strike the harp that is waiting for it, to transmit along the echoes of eternity the song of the Lamb. In the party-coloured world in which we live, there are days of various sorts and experiences, making up the aggregate of the Christian's life. There are waiting days, in which, because Providence fences us round, and it seems as if we cannot march, we cannot move, as though we must just wait to see what the Lord is about to do in us and for us; and there are watching days, when it behoves us never to slumber, but to be always ready for the attacks of our spiritual enemy; and there are warring days, when with nodding plume, and with ample armour, we must go forth to do battle for the truth; and there are weeping days, when it seems as if the fountains of the great deep within us were broken up; and as though, through much tribulation, we had to pass to heaven in tears. But these days shall all pass away by-and-by—waiting days all be passed, warring days all be passed, watching days all be passed; but

"Our days of praise shall ne'er be past
While life, and thought, and being last,
And immortality endures."

William Morley Punshon, 1824—1881.

Verse 1.—"*For ever and ever.*" To praise God now does not satisfy devout aspiration, for in this age the worshipper's devotion is interrupted by sin, fear, sickness, etc.; but in eternity praise will proceed in unbroken procession.—*John Lorinus.*

Verses 1, 2.—"*I will bless thee for ever and ever*," and again, verse 2. This intimates, 1. That he resolved to continue in this work *to the end of his life*, throughout his "for ever" in this world. 2. That the Psalms he penned should be made use of in praising God by the church *to the end of time*. 2 Chron. xxix. 30. 3. That he hoped to be praising God *to all eternity* in the other world: they that make it their constant work on earth, shall have it their everlasting bliss in heaven.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*Every day.*" Then God is to be blessed and praised in dark as well as bright days.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius*, 1600.

Verse 2.—"*Every day* (*in the week*) *will I bless thee*," the Psalmist seems to signify. As there are "seven spirits" peculiarly existing in nearness to God, David holds the seven days of the week like seven stars in his hand, or like a seven-branched candlestick of gold, burning every day with his devotion. He calls the seven days to be as seven angels with trumpets.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"*I will bless thee: I will praise thy name.*" The repetition intimates the fervency of his affection to this work, the fixedness of his purpose to abound in it, and the frequency of his performances therein.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*Praise.*" If we are to define it in words, we may say that *praise* is thankful, lowly, loving worship of the goodness and majesty of God. And therefore we often find the word "praise" joined with "blessing" and "thanksgiving": but though all three are akin to each other, they are not all alike. They are steps in a gradual scale—a song of degrees. Thanksgiving runs up into blessing, and blessing ascends into praise; for praise comprehends both, and is the highest and most perfect work of all living spirits.—*Henry Edward Manning*, 1850.

Verse 3.—"*Great is the Lord.*" If "*great*" here be referred to God as a king, then a *great* king he is in respect of the breadth of his empire, for all creatures, from the highest angel to the poorest worm, are under him. "Great" for length; for "his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." "Great" for depth; for he rules even in the hearts of kings, of all men, overrules their thoughts, affections, nothing is hid from him. And "great" again for height; being "a great King above all gods," ruling by his own absolute power and authority; whereas all other kings have their sword from him, and rule by a delegated and vicarious power.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 3.—"*His greatness is unsearchable.*" God is so great, that till Christ revealed the Father, Deity was lost in its own infinity to the perception of men. He who attempts to navigate an infinite ocean must come back to his starting point, never being able to cross. So the ancient philosophers, disputing as to the Divine Nature, were baffled by their own ingenuity, they had to confess that they comprehended nothing of God except that he was incomprehensible. Without Christ, men can only find out about God that they can never find him.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—The Vulgate renders thus, "Of his greatness no *end*." The Hebrew is, "Of his greatness no investigation." As the classic Greeks would say, ἀνεξιχνίαστος, *not to be traced out.*—*Simon de Muis*, 1587—1644.

Verse 3.—God had searched David through and through (Ps. cxxxix. 1), but David proved he could not search God's greatness.—*Martin Geier.*

Verses 3—6.—Verses 3 and 4 contain the material of praise, and verses 5 and 6 the praise itself. Verse 3 states a proposition, and verse 4 gives the amplification. —*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—"*One generation shall praise thy works to another*," etc. Deut. iv. 9, and vi. 7. Fathers teaching their sons the goodness and glory of God. This was a legal ordinance. The church and its worshippers are *collecting praises* of successive generations for the final Hallelujah celebration.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 4.—"*One generation shall praise thy works to another.*" Singular is exchanged for plural in the Hebrew, "One generation shall praise (sing) thy works to another, and shall declare (plural) thy mighty acts." Here is melody first, the antiphony of the choirs responding to each other; then harmony; all generations will burst into chorus together.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—"*One generation to another.*" The *tradition* of praise! Each generation catches the strains from the last, echoes it, and passes it along to the next. One generation declares what it has seen, and passes on the praise to the generation which has not seen as yet the wonders celebrated.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 4.—"*One generation shall praise thy works to another*," etc. Thus God provides for his Church. When Elijah is carried into heaven, Elisha must follow in the power and spirit of Elias. When one stream is slid and shed into the ocean, another circulates from the same ocean through the bowels of the earth into the springs under the mountains, and refreshes the scorched plains. When one star sets, another rises to guide the wandering traveller, and at length the bright morning

lamp glitters in the east, and then the glorious Sun of Righteousness. While the Church sits fainting under a juniper-tree in the wilderness, there shall fly prophets to feed her till the blessed resurrection of the witnesses. It's our high duty to study present work, and prize present help, and greatly rejoice when the Lord sends forth, as once he did, both Boanerges and Barnabas together. Pray for the mantle, girdle, and blessing of Elijah, for the love of John, and the zeal of Paul, to twine hands together to draw souls to heaven; till the Beloved comes like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices; till the shadows flee away; till the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in your hearts.—*Samuel Lee, in his Preface to Row's "Emmanuel,"* 1679.

Verse 4.—*"One generation shall praise thy works to another."* There is no phenomenon of human life more solemn than its succession of generations. "One generation passeth away, another generation cometh." And, as if to put this in a light as affecting and indelible as possible, the Psalmist immediately adds, "but the earth abideth for ever." A thought that gleams like a lightning flash across this panorama of life, burning it into the beholder's brain for ever. Even the rude, gross, material earth, which we were created to subdue, and upon which we so proudly tread, is represented as having to the palpable sense this advantage over us. The abiding earth constitutes a little eternity, compared with the duration of its changing inhabitants. We come into it, and pass over it, obliterating, perhaps, some footprints in its dust by the impress of our own, to be in their turn effaced, and then leave it with amazing rapidity, as a hireling man accomplishes his days.—*Henry Allon,* 1852.

Verse 5.—*"I will speak of the glorious honour,"* etc. The word which we here translate *"speak,"* is considered by Hebrew critics to include also the idea of "expatiating," "speaking at large"; not merely "alluding to incidentally," but "entering into particulars"; as though one took delight in speaking upon the matter in hand. Now there is something very satisfactory in entering into particulars; we can often gather light upon a great truth by having had set before us some of the particulars connected with it; we can often understand what is too high for us, *in* itself and *by* itself, by some examples which bring it within reach of our dull understandings. We are like men who want to attain a height, who have not wings to fly up to it, but who can reach it by going up a ladder step by step. Particulars are often like the rounds of a ladder, little, it may be, in themselves, but very helpful to us; and to dwell upon particulars is often of use to ourselves; it certainly is to many with whom we converse.

Let us remember, that circumstanced as we are in our present state, we have no faculties for grasping in its simple grandeur the glorious honour of the majesty of God. We know most of God from what we know of his doings amongst the children of men. Hereafter, the Lord's people shall, no doubt, have much revealed to them of the glorious honour of the majesty of God, which they could now neither bear nor understand; meanwhile they have to know him chiefly by what he has said and done; and if only our eyes be open, we shall be at no loss to recognise in these the glorious honour of his majesty.—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 5.—*"I will speak,"* etc. "I will *muse*" is better than "speak," as being the primary and more usual sense of the Hebrew word. It suggests that these glorious qualities of God's character and deeds should be not merely talked about and extolled in song, but be deeply pondered, laid close upon our very heart, so that the legitimate impression may be wrought into our very soul, and may mould our whole spirit and character into God's own moral image.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 5.—With what a cumulus of glowing terms does Holy Writ seek to display the excellence of Deity! By these descriptions, those attributes which are feebly imitated or reflected in what we call *good* among created things are declared to exist in God, infinitely, immutably, ineffably.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 5.—*"Thy wonderful works."*—Heb.: *"the words of thy wonderful works."* Thus the Psalmist declares that the records left of God's olden doings in the history of Israel are very precious. He has heard them. Moses and Aaron and others spoke them. He delights in them; he will sing them again on his own harp.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verses 5 *and* 6.—Verse 5 speaks of God's *opera mirabilia;* verse 6 of his *opera terribilia.* The former delight his saints; the latter terrify the wicked.—*John Lorinus.*

Verse 6.—"*And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts.*" When men do not mark his works of mercy and bounty, the Lord will show unto them works of justice, that is, terrible works, and give them matter of talking upon this account. —*David Dickson.*

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—To "*declare*" here means either in speech or song; not merely to *predicate* as a fact, but to *proclaim* in praise. The Hebrew word has this width of meaning; not merely to declare in cold utterance, concerning mere history.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 6.—"*Thy greatness.*" All men are enamoured of greatness. Then they must seek it *in* God, and get it *from* God. David did both. All history shows the creature aspiring after this glory. Ahasuerus, Astyages, Cyrus, Cambyses, Nebuchadnezzar, were all called *the great.* Alexander the Great, when he came to the Ganges, ordered his statue to be made of more than life size, that posterity might believe him to have been of nobler stature. In Christ alone does man attain the greatness his heart yearns for—the glory of perfect goodness.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 6.—"*Thy greatness.*" Or, according to the written text, *greatnesses.* So Aquila and Jerome. The parallelism is decidedly in favour of the plural.—*A. S. Aglen.*

Verse 7.—There is an extensive and an intensive greatness, and both must be found in our praises of God. First, an extensive greatness in regard of their number; we must be frequent and plentiful in the duty: we must "*Abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness.*" Secondly, there must be an intensive greatness in our praises, in regard of the degree, fervour and heat of them. They must be high, and vehement, fervent, flaming, zealous and affectionate, full of life and vigour; our spirits must be raised, our hearts and tongues enlarged in the performance of this duty. God's glorious name, as it is in Nehem. ix. 5, "is exalted above all blessing and praise," above our devoutest and most zealous praises; and therefore surely faint, heartless, and lifeless praises are so far from reaching him, as that they may seem to be meant of another, and a lower object. God then is not praised at all if he be not greatly praised. Weak and dull praises are dispraises; for a person or thing is not honoured or praised, unless there be some proportion between the honour and praise and the worthiness of the person or thing honoured and praised.—*Henry Jeanes, in "The Works of Heaven upon Earth,"* 1649.

Verse 7.—"*Abundantly utter.*" The word contains the idea of boiling or bubbling-up like a fountain. It signifies, a holy fluency about the mercy of God. We have quite enough fluent people about, but they are many of them idlers for whom Satan finds abundant work to do. The Lord deliver us from the noise of fluent women; but it matters not how fluent men and women are if they will be fluent on the topic now before us. Open your mouths; let the praise pour forth let it come, rivers of it. Stream away! Gush away, all that you possibly can. "*They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness.*" Do not stop the joyful speakers, let them go on for ever. They do not exaggerate, they cannot. You say they are enthusiastic, but they are not half up to the pitch yet; bid them become more excited and speak yet more fervently. Go on, brother, go on; pile it up; say something greater, grander, and more fiery still! You cannot exceed the truth. You have come to a theme where your most fluent powers will fail in utterance. The text calls for a sacred fluency, and I would exhort you liberally to exercise it when you are speaking on the goodness of God.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 7.—Too many witnesses of God's goodness are silent witnesses. Men do not enough speak out the testimonies that they might bear in this matter. The reason that I love the Methodists—good ones—is, that they have a tongue to their piety. They fulfil the command of God,—to be fervent in spirit.—*Henry Ward Beecher.*

Verse 7.—

> The thought of our past years in me doth breed
> Perpetual benedictions.
>
> *William Wordsworth,* 1770—1805.

Verse 7.—"*They shall sing of thy righteousness,*" or *justice.* To sing of goodness, mercy, forgiveness, is natural; but a *song of justice* is singular. Here is the beauty of David's praise, that he sees subject of delight as much in the righteousness of God as in his mercy.—*John Lorinus.*

Verse 7.—"*They shall sing of thy righteousness.*" The righteousness of God, whereby he justifieth sinners, and sanctifieth the justified, and execu eth judgment for his reconciled people, is the sweetest object of the church's joy.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—"*Thy righteousness*" (read in connection with next verse). It is an easy thing to conceive the glory of the Creator, manifested in the good of an innocent creature; but the glory of the righteous Judge, manifested in the good of the guilty criminal, is the peculiar, mysterious wisdom of the Cross. It is easy to perceive God's righteousness declared in the punishment of sins; the Cross alone declares "His righteousness for the remission of sins." It magnifies justice in the way of pardoning sin, and mercy in the way of punishing it.—*John M'Laurin*, 1693—1754.

Verse 8.—"*The* LORD *is gracious*," etc. The proclamation of the Lord to Moses (Exod. xxxiv. 6) is the fountain-head of these epithets.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 8.—In God there is no passion, only compassion.—*Richard Rothe*, 1799—1867.

Verse 8.—"*Of great mercy.*" Mercy hath misery for its object, and is that attribute towards which the eyes of a fallen world must necessarily be turned. The Psalmist hath, accordingly, introduced her last with great pomp and splendour, seated in her triumphal chariot, and invested with a supremacy over all the works of God. She is above the heavens, and over all the earth, so that the whole creation findeth that refuge under the shadow of her wings of which, by reason of man's transgression, it standeth in need.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 9.—"*The* LORD *is good to all*," etc. According to the doctrine of Christianity, we are not the creatures of a God who takes no care of his beings, and leaves them to themselves; not the offspring of a father who disowns his children, who does not concern himself about them, and is indifferent to their happiness and their misery. No; never has God, according to that comfortable doctrine, left himself unwitnessed to man; never withdrawn from him his fatherly providence and love; never abandoned the fortunes of his feeble, helpless, untutored children, to blind chance or to their own ignorance. No; from their first progenitor, to his latest posterity, he has himself provided for their support, their instruction, their guidance, their progress to higher attainments. He has constantly revealed himself to them in various ways; constantly shed innumerable benefits on them; sometimes lovingly correcting, and sometimes bountifully blessing them; has constantly been nigh to them, and has left them in want of no means for becoming wiser and better.—*George Joachim Zollikofer*, 1730—1788.

Verse 9.—"*The* LORD *is good to all*," etc. God's pity is not as some sweet cordial, poured in dainty drops from a golden phial. It is not like the musical water-drops of some slender rill, murmuring down the dark side of Mount Sinai. It is wide as the whole scope of heaven. It is abundant as all the air. If one had art to gather up all the golden sunlight that to-day falls wide over the continent, falling through every silent hour; and all that is dispersed over the whole ocean, floating from every wave; and all that is poured refulgent over the northern wastes of ice, and along the whole continent of Europe, and the vast outlying Asia and torrid Africa—if we could in any wise gather up this immense and incalculable outflow and treasure that falls down through the bright hours, and runs in liquid ether about the mountains, and fills all the plains, and sends innumerable rays through every secret place, pouring over and filling every flower, shining down the sides of every blade of grass, resting in glorious humility upon the humblest things—on sticks, and stones, and pebbles—on the spider's web, the sparrow's nest, the threshold of the young foxes' hole, where they play and warm themselves—that rests on the prisoner's window, that strikes radiant beams through the slave's tear, and puts gold upon the widow's weeds, that plates and roofs the city with burnished gold, and goes on in its wild abundance up and down the earth, shining everywhere and always, since the day of primal creation, without faltering, without stint, without waste or diminution; as full, as fresh, as overflowing to-day as if it were the very first day of its outlay—if one might gather up this boundless, endless, infinite treasure, to measure it, then might he tell the height, and depth, and unending glory of the pity of God! That light, and the sun, its source, are God's own figure of the immensity and copiousness of his mercy and compassion.—*Henry Ward Beecher*, 1873.

Verse 9.—Even the worst taste of God's mercy; such as fight against God's mercy taste of it; the wicked have some crumbs from mercy's table. "*The Lord*

is good to all." Sweet dewdrops are on the thistle as well as on the rose. The diocese where mercy visits is very large. Pharaoh's head was crowned though his heart was hardened.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 9.—"*His tender Mercies are over all his works.*" When the sensible sinner is seeking faith of God, he may plead the *largeness* of mercy. God's mercy is like the firmament spread over all this lower world; and every infirm creature partakes more or less of its influence, according to its exigence and capacity. True, may he say, I have made myself, by sin, the vilest of all creatures; I am become worse than the beasts that perish; as vile as a worm, as loathsome as a toad, by reason of the venomous corruption that is in my heart, and my woeful contrariety to the nature of a holy God. But there is "*mercy over all,*" even over such vile and loathsome creatures as these; there may be some over me, though wrath do now abide on me. Oh, let that mercy, whose glory it is to stretch itself over all, reach my soul also! Oh, that the blessed and powerful influence thereof would beget faith in my heart!—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 9.—"*His tender mercies.*" The nature and force of the word רחמים, is properly the *bowels;* that is, there are *tender mercies in God* (so we term it in the *Benedictus*). Not of the ordinary sort, slight, and such as pierce not deep, come not far; but such as come *de profundis*, from the very *bowels* themselves, that affect that part, make the *bowels* relent. And what *bowels?* Not the *bowels* of the common man (for then מעים had been the right word,) but רחמים are the *bowels* of a *parent* (so, we said, the word signifies), and this adds much; adds to *mercy* στοργή, *natural love;* to one strong affection another as strong or stronger than it.

And what *parent?* the more pitiful of the twain, the *mother.* For רחם (the singular of this word) is Hebrew for the *womb.* So as this, to the two former addeth the sex; the sex holden to be the more compassionate. Of all mercies, those of the *bowels;* and of the bowels, the bowels of a *parent;* and of the two parents, those of the *mother:* such pity as the mother takes of the children of her womb. *Mercies* are in God; *such mercies* are in God.

"*Over all.*" It is good news for us that these mercies are in God; but, better yet, that they are in him with a *super*—"over." But, best of all, that that *super* is a *super omnia*—"over all." Much is said in few words to mercy's praise when 'tis said, *super omnia. Nihil supra* were much, none above it: but it is written *super omnia, above all.* He that saith this, leaves no more to say: there is no higher degree; *super omnia* is the superlative.

All that are *above* are not *over.* It is not *above* only, as an obelisk or Maypole, higher than all about them, but have neither shadow nor shelter; no good they do! Mercy hath a broad top, spreading itself *over* all. It is so *above* all, as it is *over* them, too. As the vault of this chapel is *over* us, and the great vault of the firmament *over* that; the *super* of latitude and expansion, no less than of altitude and elevation. And this to the end that all may retire to it, and take covert: it *over* them, and they *under* it. Under it, under the *shadow* of it, as of Esay's "great rock in the wilderness," from the *heat:* under the *shelter* of it as of Daniel's "great tree," from the tempest. (Isa. xxxii. 2; Dan. iv, 11, 12).—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 10.—"*All thy works shall praise thee, O* LORD." It is a poor philosophy and a narrow religion which does not recognise God as all in all. Every moment of our lives, we breathe, stand, or move in the temple of the Most High; for the universe is that temple. Wherever we go, the testimony to his power, the impress of his hand, are there. Ask of the bright worlds around us, as they roll in the everlasting harmony of their circles, and they shall tell you of him whose power launched them on their courses; ask of the mountains, that lift their heads among and above the clouds, and the bleak summit of one shall seem to call aloud to the snow-clad top of another, in proclaiming their testimony to the Agency which has laid their deep foundations. Ask of ocean's waters; and the roar of their boundless waves shall chant from shore to shore a hymn of ascription to that Being, who hath said, "Hitherto shall ye come and no further." Ask of the rivers; and, as they roll onward to the sea, do they not bear along their ceaseless tribute to the ever-working Energy, which struck open their fountains and poured them down through the valleys? Ask of every region of the earth, from the burning equator to the icy pole, from the rock-bound coast to the plain covered with its luxuriant vegetation; and will you not find on them all the record of the Creator's presence? Ask of the countless tribes of plants and animals: and shall they not testify to the action

of the great Source of Life? Yes, from every portion, from every department of nature, comes the same voice; everywhere we hear thy name, O God! everywhere we see thy love! Creation, in all its length and breadth, in all its depth and height, is the manifestation of thy Spirit, and without thee the worlds were dark and dead. The universe is to us as the burning bush which the Hebrew leader saw: God is ever present in it, for it burns with his glory, and the ground on which we stand is always holy.—*"Francis"* (*Viscount Dillon*).

Verse 10.—Marvellous is it that man is not always praising, since everything amidst which he dwells is continually inviting praise.—*Gregory the Great.*

Verse 10.—*"All thy works shall praise thee, O* LORD," etc. *"All"* God's *"works"* do *"praise"* him, as the beautiful building praiseth the builder, or the well-drawn picture praiseth the painter: but his *"saints bless"* him, as the children of prudent and tender parents rise up and call them blessed. Of all God's works, his saints, the workmanship of his grace, the first-fruits of his creatures, have most reason to bless him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—*"All thy works shall praise thee, O* LORD," etc. There are two words by which our thankfulness to God is expressed, *praising* and *blessing.* What is the difference? Praise respecteth God's excellences, and blessing respecteth God's benefits. We may praise a man that never hath done us good, if he be excellent and praiseworthy; but blessing respecteth God's bounty and benefits; yet they are often used promiscuously.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 10.—*"And thy saints shall bless thee."* The lily lifts itself upon its slender stem, and displays its golden petals and its glittering ivory leaves; and by its very existence it praises God. Yonder deep and booming sea rolls up in storm and tempest, sweeping everything before it; and every dash of its waves praises God. The birds in the morning, and some of them all through the night, can never cease from praising; uniting with the ten thousand other voices which make ceaseless concert before the throne. But observe, neither the flower, nor the sea, nor the bird, praises with intent to praise. To them it is no exercise of intellect, for they do not know God, and cannot understand his worthiness; nor do they even know that they are praising him. They exhibit his skill, and his goodness, and so forth, and in so doing they do much; but we must learn to do more. When you and I praise God, there is the element of will, of intelligence, of desire, of intent; and in the saints of God there is another element, namely, that love to him, of reverent gratitude towards him, and this turns the praise into blessing. A man is an eminent painter, and you exclaim, "His pencil is instinct with life." Still, the man is no friend of yours, you pronounce no blessings on his name. It may be that your feeling towards him is that of deep regret that such abilities should be united with so ill a character. A certain person is exceedingly skilful in his profession, but he treats you unjustly, and therefore, though you often praise him for his extraordinary performances, you cannot bless him, for you have no cause to do so. I am afraid that there might be such a feeling as that of admiration of God for his great skill, his wonderful power, his extraordinary justness, and yet no warmth of love in the heart towards him: but in the saints the praise is sweetened with love, and is full of blessing.—*C. H. S.*

Verses 10, 11.—If not only irrational, but inanimate creatures praise God by giving occasion for his praise; then how much more should men set forth his praise, who are not only living, but reasonable creatures! And if creatures without life and reason should provoke mankind in general, as having life and reason, to praise God; how much more should godly men be provoked by them to sing his praise, they having not only life, which stars have not; and reason, which birds and beasts have not; but grace, which the most of men have not! Among visible creatures, men have most reason (because they have reason) to praise God; and among men gracious men have most reason to praise God, because they have grace. And therefore as soon as ever David had said, *"All thy works shall praise thee, O* LORD," he adds in the next words, *"and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power."* As if he had said, As all thy works, O Lord, praise thee, so saints (who are the choicest pieces of thy workmanship) have cause to do it above all: they cannot but be speaking and talking of thy kingdom and power, which are very glorious.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—*"They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,"* etc. The glory of a kingdom is synonymous with its power. The power of a kingdom consists in

the number of its subjects, and the sufficiency of its revenues to maintain them. Now, the glory, or the power of God's kingdom, may be inferred from the difference between it and that of man. There are four points of difference. First, the kings of this world have but *few subjects*, with but little wealth,—not more than the population and riches of one kingdom, or one province, while God reigns over all angels, all men, all demons ; and all wealth on land, in the sea, or in the air, belongs to him. There is another difference, that while the kings of this world rule their subjects, they are still ruled by them, they are *dependent on them*, could do nothing without them ; and, however abundant their revenues may be, they are generally in want, nay, even in debt, and, consequently, always calling for fresh tributes and taxes ; but God, while he governs all, is subject to none, because he needs nobody's help or assistance. Instead of being in want, he abounds in everything, because he could, in one moment, bring from nothing much more than he now beholds or enjoys. The third difference is a consequence of the second, while the kings of this world seem so to enjoy their honours and dignities, they are, at the same time, *suffering acutely from interior fears*, doubts, and cares, which have sometimes been so burdensome, as to cause them to abdicate altogether. God never suffers such pressure, is subject to no fear, no misgivings, but reigns absolutely in perfect tranquillity. The fourth difference, an essential one, is, that the kings of the world *reign but for a time ;* but God reigneth for ever.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 11.—*"They shall speak . . . and talk."* Joy and sorrow are hard to conceal ; as from the countenance, so from the tongue. There is so much correspondence betwixt the heart and tongue that they will move at once : every man therefore speaks of his own pleasure and care ; the hunter and falconer of his game ; the ploughman of his team ; the soldier of his march and colours. If the heart were as full of God, the tongue could not refrain from talking of him : the rareness of Christian communication argues the common poverty of grace. If Christ be not in our hearts, we are godless ; if he be there without our joy, we are senseless ; if we rejoice in him and speak not of him, we are shamefully unthankful. Every man taketh, yea, raiseth occasion, to bring in speech of what he liketh. As I will think of thee always, O Lord, so it shall be my joy to speak of thee often ; and if I find not opportunity, I will make it,—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 13.—The Kingdom of God is his government of the world. The glory of it becomes especially conspicuous in this, that he raises the dominion of his anointed over all the kingdoms of the world : comp. Ps. lxxxix. 27. *"Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all eternities"* (verse 13), and so must also the kingdom of thine anointed be an eternal one, and will survive all the transitory kingdoms of this world, however highly they may puff themselves up.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 13.—On the door of the old mosque in Damascus, which was once a Christian church, but for twelve centuries has ranked among the holiest of the Mahomedan sancturies, are inscribed these memorable words : " Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." Though the name of Christ has been regularly blasphemed, and the disciples of Christ regularly cursed for twelve hundred years within it, the inscription has, nevertheless, remained unimpaired by time, and undisturbed by man. It was unknown during the long reign of Mahomedan intolerance and oppression ; but when religious liberty was partially restored, and the missionaries were enabled to establish a Christian church in that city, it was again brought to light, encouraging them in their work of faith and labour of love.—*From John Bate's "Cyclopædia of Illustrations,"* 1865.

Verses 13, 14.—What we admire in these verses, is their combining the magnificence of unlimited power with assiduity of unlimited tenderness. It is this combination which men are apt to regard as well-nigh incredible, supposing that a Being so great as God can never concern himself with beings so inconsiderable as themselves. Tell them that God lifteth up those that be bowed down, and they cannot imagine that his kingdom and dominion are unbounded ; or tell them, on the other hand, of the greatness of his empire, and they think it impossible that he should uphold all that fall.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 14.—*"The Lord upholdeth all that fall,"* etc. It is noteworthy how the Psalmist proceeds to exhibit the mightiness of God's kingdom, not by its power " to break in pieces and bruise," like the iron legs of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's

vision (Dan. ii. 40), but by the King's readiness to aid the weak. Even a heathen could see that this was the noblest use of power.

> Regia (crede mihi) res est succurrere lapsis.
> Ovid., Ep. de Panto, ii. 9, 11.
> It is a kingly thing to help the fallen.
>
> *Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 14.—"*The* LORD *upholdeth all that fall,*" etc. נֹפְלִים, *nophelim*, the *falling*, or those who are not able to keep their feet; the weak. He *shores* them up; he is their *prop*. No man falls through his own weakness merely; if he rely on God, the strongest foe cannot shake him.—*Adam* Clarke.

Verse 14.—"*And raiseth up all those that be bowed down,*" *incurvatos*. Many who do not actually fall are reduced to distress that may be even more painful; for the struggling are greater sufferers than the actually passive. Men are *bowed down* physically by infirmity; mentally, by care; spiritually, by remorse; some are even crushed by all three burdens. For all such there is help in a Mighty One. But none can help themselves alone: none are raised but by supernatural interposition—*non nisi opitulante Domino.—Martin Geier.*

Verse 14.—"*The* LORD *upholdeth all that fall.*" The word here used is a participle, literally, "*The Lord sustaining*"; that is, the Lord *is* a Sustainer or Upholder of all that fall.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 14.—"*And raiseth up all those that he bowed down.*" Alphonsus, King of Arragon, is famous for helping with his own hand one of his subjects out of a ditch. Of Queen Elizabeth it is recorded, to her eternal praise, that she hated (no less than did Mithridates) such as sought to crush virtue forsaken of fortune. Christ bruiseth not the broken reed, but upholdeth it, he quencheth not the smoking wick, but cherisheth it.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 14—19.—The Psalmist sets up a splendid argument. Having praised the kingdom, he goes on to display *seven glories* peculiar to kings, and shows that in Jehovah these shine supremely. Verses 14 to 19 contain each a royal virtue.—*John Lorinus.*

Verse 15.—"*The eyes of all wait upon thee.*" God cannot be overmastered by what is great and enormous, so neither can he overlook what is small and insignificant. God is that being to whom the only great thing is himself; and, therefore, when "the eyes of all wait upon him," the seraph gains not attention by his gaze of fire, and the insect loses it not through the feebleness of vision. Archangels, and angels, and men, and beasts of the field, and fowls of the air, and fish of the sea, draw equally the regard of him, who, counting nothing great but himself, the Creator, can pass over as small no fraction of the creature.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 15.—Doth not nature teach you to pray? Ask the brutes, the ravens, lions, etc. (Job xxxviii. 41; Ps. cxlvii. 9; civ. 27; cxlv. 15); not as if these unreasonable creatures could know and worship God, but because nature hath taught them so much of this duty as they are capable of and can bear; they have some sense of their burdens and wants, they groan and cry, and desire to be eased; and the Lord hearkeneth to this voice and saith, "Now the poor creature is crying to me, and I will pity it." Ah! shall the beasts in their own way cry to God, and wilt thou be silent? Hath the Lord elevated thee so far above these inferior creatures, and fitted thee for the immediate acts of his worship, and for a higher communion with himself, and wilt thou not serve him accordingly? Hath he given thee a heart and a spiritual soul, as he hath given the brutes a sensitive appetite and natural desires, and shall they cry to God with the one, and not thou with the other?—*Alexander Pitcairne*, 1664.

Verse 15.—"*Eyes . . . wait upon thee.*" Many dumb beggars have been relieved at Christ's gate by making signs.—*William Secker.*

Verse 15.—In agony nature is no atheist, the mind which knows not where to fly, flies to God.—*Hannah More*, 1745—1833.

Verse 15.—The creatures are his, and therefore to be received with thanksgiving; this our Saviour performed with great vigour and zeal; thus teaching us, when "looking up to heaven," that "*the eyes of all*" ought, in the most literal sense, "*to wait*" upon that Lord "*who gives them their meat in due season.*" . . . A secret sense of God's goodness is by no means enough. Men should make solemn and outward expressions of it, when they receive his creatures for their support;

a service and homage not only due to him, but profitable to themselves.—*George Stanhope*, 1660—1728.

Verse 15.—While atheism, in its strict signification, namely, that of total denial of God's existence, is scarcely, if at all, to be found on earth; atheism, as regards the denial of God's providence, is the espoused creed of hundreds amongst us. . . . Providence, which is confessed in great things, is rejected in small things; and even if you can work up men to an easy confession that God presideth over national concerns, you will find them withdrawing individuals from his scrutiny. We bring against this paring down of God's providence a distinct charge of atheism. If we confess the existence of a God at all, we read it in the workmanship of the tiniest leaf, as well as the magnificent pinnacles of Andes and Alps; if we believe in the providence of God at all, we must confess that he numbers the hairs of our heads, as well as marshals the stars of the firmament; and that providence is not universal, and therefore cannot be godlike, if a sparrow, any more than a seraph, flit away unregarded.

Now, the words before us set themselves most strenuously against this popular atheism. The whole creation is represented as fastening its gaze on the universal Parent, and as drawing from his fulness the supply of every necessity. "*The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.*" There is made, you observe, no exception whatever; the exhibition is simply that of every rank and order of beings looking to the Almighty, confessing dependence upon him, and standing environed by his guardianship. So that, in place of anything which approximates to the abandonment of our creation, the Psalmist asserts a ceaseless attention to its wants, the suspension of which for an instant would cause chill and darkness throughout the whole universe.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 15.—"*Thou givest them their meat in due season.*" The meat which endures to everlasting life; the flesh of Christ, which is meat indeed; the doctrines of the gospel, which, as some of them are milk for babes, others are meat for strong men, or strong meat for experienced believers; and these are given forth under Christ's direction, by his ministering servants, who are his wise and faithful stewards, that give to everyone of the family their portion of meat in due season, which is the word fitly spoken; and, when it is so, how good it is! Luke xii. 42; Prov. xv. 23. This is food convenient for them, given out *in his time*, as in the original; either in the Lord's time, when he sees best, or in *their* time, as the Syriac version, when they most need it, and it will do them most good.—*John Gill.*

Verse 15.—(*second clause.*) It is said that God gives them "*their food*," and "*in its season*," for the very variety of it serves more to illustrate the providence of God. Each has its own way of feeding, and the different kinds of aliment are designed and adapted for different uses. David therefore speaks of the food which is particular to them. The pronoun is not in the plural, and we are not to read *in their* season, as if it applied to the animals. The food he notices as given in its season; for here also we are to notice the admirable arrangements of divine providence, that there is a certain time appointed for harvest, vintage, and hay crop, and that the year is so divided into intervals, that the cattle are fed at one time on grass, at another on hay, or straw, or acorns, or other products of the earth. Were the whole supply poured forth at one and the same moment, it could not be gathered together so conveniently; and we have no small reason to admire the seasonableness with which the different kinds of fruit and aliment are yearly produced.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 15.—Mr. Robertson told of a poor child who was accustomed to see unexpected provision for his mother's wants arrive in answer to prayer. The meal-barrel in Scotland is everything to a hungry boy: so he said, "Mither, I think God aye hears when we're scraping the bottom o' the barrel."—"*The Christian.*"

Verses 15—17.—Who can fear that, because God's ways are unsearchable, they may not be all tending to the final good of his creatures, when he knows that with the tenderness of a most affectionate parent this Creator and Governor ministers to the meanest living thing? Who can be disquieted by the mysteriousness of the Divine dealings when he remembers that they are those of one who never ceases for a solitary moment to consult the happiness of whatsoever he hath formed? Who, in short, can distrust God because clouds and darkness are round about him, when there is light enough to show that he is the vigilant guardian of every tenant of this earth, that his hand upholds, and his breath animates, and his bounty nourishes, the teeming hordes of the city, and the desert, and the ocean? It seems

that there is thus a beautiful, though tacit process of reasoning in our text, and that the seventeenth verse is set in its proper connection. It is as though David had said, " Come, let us muse on the righteousness of God. He would not be God if he were not righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works; and therefore we may be sure that whatsoever he does is the best that could be done, whether or not we can discover its excellence."

Yes, this may be true, but when we look on the divine dealings what an abyss of dark waters there is! How unsearchable, how unfathomable are God's judgments! We admit it; but being previously convinced of God's righteousness, we ought not to be staggered by what is dark in his dispensations.

" True," you reply, " but the mind does not seem satisfied by this reasoning; it may be convincing to the intellect, but it does not address itself to the feelings." Well, then, pass from what is dark in God's dealing to what is clear. He is about your path and about your bed; he " preserveth man and beast "; " his tender mercies are over all his works." Is this a God of whom to be suspicious? Is this a God to mistrust? Oh! surely if you will fortify yourselves by such facts as these—" Thou, O Lord, satisfiest the desire of every living thing," *"The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season"*—if, I say, you will fortify your minds by such facts as these, you will be able at all times and in all circumstances to join heartily in the acknowledgment of the Psalmist—*"The Lord is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works."—Henry Melvill.*

Verse 16.—

Thou openest thy hand of grace
And thou dost satisfy
The wants of all in every place
Who for thy presence cry.

Thomas MacKellar, 1883.

Verse 16.—*"Thou openest thy hand."* This seems as if depicted from a housekeeper's habit of feeding a brood of chickens and other creatures. She flings abroad with full and open hand a large supply, not measuring to a grain just what might be enough.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 16.—*"Thou openest thy hand."* What an idea does this convey of the *paternal goodness* of the great Father of his creation! How opposite to the conduct of many of his creatures one to another, whose hands and hearts are *shut!* What an idea also does it convey of the *ease* with which the wants of the whole creation are supplied! Let me pause a moment and think of their wants. What a quantity of vegetable and animal food is daily consumed in one town: what a quantity in a large city like London: what a quantity in a nation: in the whole world! But *men* do not compose a hundredth part of "every living thing"! What innumerable wants throughout all animate nature; in the earth, in the air, in the waters! Whence comes their supply? " Thou openest thy hand," and all are satisfied. And can all these wants be supplied by only *the opening of his hand?* What then must sin be, and salvation from it? That is a work of wonderful expense. God openeth his hand and satisfieth all creation, but he must purchase the Church *with his blood.* . . . . In what a *variety of ways* are our wants supplied. The earth is fruitful, the air is full of life, the clouds empty themselves upon the earth, the sun pours forth its genial rays; but the operation of all these second causes is only *the opening of his hand!* Nay further: look we to *instruments* as well as means? Parents feed us in our childhood, and supply our youthful wants; ways are opened for our future subsistence; connexions are formed, which prove sources of comfort; friends are kind in seasons of extremity; supplies are presented from quarters that we never expected. What are all these but *the opening of his hand?* If his hand were shut, what a world would this be! The heavens brass, the earth iron; famine, pestilence, and death must follow. See Ps. civ. 27—29.

Consider next the term *"hand."* There is a difference between the *hand* and the *heart.* God opens his hand, in the way of providence, towards his worst enemies. He gave Nebuchadnezzar all the kingdoms of the earth. But he opens his *heart* in the gospel of his Son. This is the better portion of the two. While we are thankful for the one, let us not rest satisfied in it: it is merely a *hand* portion. Rather let us pray with Jabez to be blessed *indeed;* and that we might have a Joseph's portion; not only the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof, but " the good will of him that dwelt in the bush! "

"Thou satisfiest the desire," etc. God does not give grudgingly. It seems to be a characteristic of the divine nature, both in the natural and moral world, to raise desires, not with a view to disappoint, but to satisfy them. O what a consoling thought is this! If there be any desires in us which are not satisfied, it is through their being self-created ones, which is our own fault; or through artificial scarcity from men's luxury, which is the fault of our species. God raises no desires as our Creator, but he gives enough to satisfy them; and none as our Redeemer and Sanctifier but what shall be actually satisfied. O the wonderful munificence of God! "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!"—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 16 (*second clause*).—The word רצון, *ratson*, some render *"desire,"* as though he meant that God supplies each kind of animal with food according to its wish. And a little afterwards we do indeed find it used in that sense. Others, however, refer it rather to God's feeding them of his mere good pleasure and kindness; it is not enough to say that our food is given us by God, unless we add, as in the second clause of the verse, that his kindness is gratuitous, and that there is no extrinsic cause whatever moving him to provide so liberally for every living creature. In that case the cause is put for the effect; the various kinds of provision being effects of his good pleasure—χαρισματα της χαριτος.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 17.—*"The* LORD *is righteous in all his ways,"* etc. The ground upon which praise is here ascribed to God may seem a common one, being in every one's mouth; but in nothing is wisdom shown more than in holding fast the truth, that God is just in all his ways, so as to retain in our hearts an unabated sense of it amidst all troubles and confusions. Though all acknowledge God to be just, most men are no sooner overtaken by affliction than they quarrel with his severity: unless their wishes are immediately complied with, they are impatient, and nothing is more common than to hear his justice impeached. As it is everywhere abused by the wicked imputations men cast upon it, here it is very properly vindicated from such ungrateful treatment, and asserted to be constant and unfailing, however loudly the world may disparage it. It is expressly added, *"in all his ways and works"*; for we fail to give God due honour unless we recognise a constant tenor of righteousness in the whole progress of his operation. Nothing is more difficult in the time of trouble, when God has apparently forsaken us, or afflicts us without cause, than to restrain our corrupt feelings from breaking out against his judgments; as we are told of the Emperor Mauricius in a memorable passage of history, that seeing his sons murdered by the wicked and perfidious traitor Phocas, and being about to be carried out himself to death, he cried out—"Thou art righteous, O God, and just are thy judgments."—*John Calvin.*

Verse 17.—*"Holy in all his works."* God is good, the absolute and perfect; and from good nothing can come but good: and therefore all which God has made is good, as he is; and therefore if anything in the world seems to be bad, one of two things must be true of it.

Either it is *not* bad, though it seems so to us; and God will bring good out of it in his good time, and justify himself to men, and show us that he is holy in all his works, and righteous in all his ways. Or else—

If the thing be really bad, then God did not make it. It must be a disease, a mistake, a failure, a man's making, or some person's making, but not of God's making. For all that he has made he sees eternally; and behold, it is very good.—*Charles Kingsley, in "The Good News of God,"* 1878.

Verse 18.—*"The* LORD *is nigh."* The nearness or remoteness of a friend is very material and considerable in our troubles, distresses, wants, dangers, etc. I have such a friend and he would help me, but he lives so far off; and I have another friend that has a great love for me, that is able to counsel me, and to speak a word in season to me, and that in my distress would stand close to me, but he is so remote. I have a special friend, that did he know how things stand with me would make my burdens his, and my wants his, and my sorrows his; but he is in a far country, he is at the Indies, and I may be undone before I can hear from him. But it is not thus with you, O Christians! who have a God so nigh unto you, who have the signal presence of God in the midst of you, yea, who have a God always standing by you, "The Lord stood by me," etc.: 2 Tim. iv. 17.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 18.—*"Them that call upon him."* *To call upon the name of the Lord* implies *right faith*, to call upon him as he *is*: *right trust* in him, leaning upon him, *right*

devotion, calling upon him as he has appointed; *right life*, ourselves who call upon him being, or becoming by his grace, what he wills. They *"call"* not *"upon the Lord,"* but upon some idol of their own imagining, who call upon him as other than he has revealed himself, or remaining themselves other than those whom he has declared that he will hear. For such *deny* the very primary attribute of God, his truth. *Their* God is not a God of truth.—*Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 1800—1882.

Verse 18.—*"To all that call upon him in truth."* Because there is a counterfeit and false sort of worshipping, and calling upon God, which is debarred from the benefit of this promise, to wit, when the party suppliant is not reconciled, nor seeking reconciliation through Christ the Mediator, or is seeking something not promised, or something for a carnal end, that he may bestow it on his lusts; therefore he who hath right unto this promise must be a worshipper of God in faith, and sincere intention; and to such the Lord will show himself *"nigh."—David Dickson.*

Verse 18.—To call upon God in truth is, first, to repose an implicit confidence in the faithfulness of his promise, and to look for unlimited answers to prayer from the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus. But it is also, in the next place, to feel our own urgent need of the things for which we supplicate, and to realize an earnest and unfeigned concern to obtain them. "What things ye desire when ye pray," said the Lord, "believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them;" and hence we gather, that the hearty desire, arising out of the consciousness of need, is an integral and inseparable part of genuine and effectual prayer.—*Thomas Dale*, 1853.

Verses 18, 19.—God's people are a praying people, a generation of seekers, and such commonly are speeders. God never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. They seek his face, righteousness and strength, and he is found of them. . . . The saints alone betake themselves to God and his help, run to him as their sanctuary; others fly from God's presence, run to the rocks, and the tops of the ragged rocks, call to the hills and the mountains; but a child of God goes only and tells his Father, and before him lays open his cause; as good Hezekiah did, when Rabshakeh came out against him; "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me"; or the Church (Isa. xxxiii. 2), "Be thou our arm every morning, and our salvation in time of trouble." They only sensibly need, and so alone crave and implore divine succour; and God will not suffer his people to lose the precious treasure of their prayers. *"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him; he will fulfil their desire, he will hear their cry,"* etc. That God who prepares his people's heart to pray, prepares also his own ear to hear; and he that promiseth to hear before we call, will never deny to hearken when we cry unto him. As Calvin saith: "Oppressions and afflictions make man cry, and cries and supplications make God hear."—*F. E., in "The Saint's Ebenezer,"* 1667.

Verse 19.—*"He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him."* This is for comfort for all poor broken hearts in whom God hath ingendered the true desire of grace. Let such know that the first step to grace is to see they have no grace; and the first degree of grace is the *desire* of grace. It is not with the body as with the soul, if you will be healed you shall be healed. A man may desire to be healed corporally, and yet his disease continue upon him; but it is not so with the soul: if thou wilt say, "Christ heal me," thou shalt be made whole. If a man have but the true desire of grace it shall be given him: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble" (Ps. x. 17): when the poor soul is humbled before God in the sense of the want of grace, and breathes and desires after it, the Lord will grant such desires: *"He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them."* One said, "The greatest part of Christianity is to desire to be a Christian." And another said, "The total sum of a man's religion in this life consists in the true desires of saving grace." This was the perfection Saint Paul attained unto (Rom. vii. 18): "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Saint Paul we know was the child of God, and one dearly beloved of God; yet that was the pitch of his godliness; it consisted more in desire than accomplishment. Canst thou approve by evident and sound arguments that thou hast the true desires of grace? Then know for thy comfort that the Lord's spirit of grace hath been moving and stirring in thee: "It is God that worketh in you both the will and the deed" (Phil. ii. 13), and that of his good pleasure, not only of his bounty, from whence he hath bestowed many graces, even upon such as he will damn afterwards for their accursed abuse of them, with the neglect of the power thereof. But if God hath set thy will, and the stream of thy affections

and desires, to himself and to grace, it is an evidence of God's good pleasure from which he did at first elect thee, and gave his Son to redeem thee.—*William Fenner* (1560—1640), *in "The Riches of Grace."*

Verse 19.—*"He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him."* God will not grant us every desire, that is our mercy; for, 1. Some of them are *sinful.* David desired to be revenged on Nabal and his innocent family. Jonah desired Nineveh's ruin. 2. Others would *not be for our good.* David desired the life of the child he had by Bathsheba; David also desired the life of Jonathan; neither of which would have been for his good. Nay, not every *righteous* desire. It is a righteous desire for a minister to desire the salvation of those that hear him. So Paul declared, " I would to God that all that are here present were altogether such as I am"; Acts xxvi. 29. So again, " I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh ": Rom. ix. 1. David *desired* to build a house for God, and it was a righteous desire, for God took it well at his hands; yet he did not grant it. Kings and prophets desired to see the Lord Messiah, and yet did not see him. How then are we to understand it? Answer. The sum or substance of their desires shall be fulfilled. What is the main desire of a seaman? that he may arrive at the haven. So saints will be brought to their desired haven. What of a pilgrim? See Heb. xi. 16. So all the desires of a Christian are summed up in this, *That he may eternally enjoy God and be like him.* Doubtless there is great mystery in these things. However I think it is certain that, when God raises a spiritual desire in a person, it is *often,* though not *always,* with an intention to bestow the object desired.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 19 (*first clause*).—God will fulfil the will of those who fear to disobey *his* will.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 19.—*"Desire"* is the largest and most comprehensive word that can be used; it contains all things in it . . . . Nothing good, nothing necessary, nothing profitable, but comes under this word *"desire."* When God promises to *"fulfil the desires of them that fear him,"* he doth promise all good things; desire comprehends all that can be desired.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 19.—*"He will hear their cry,"* etc. A mark of a great king—he gives willing audience to suppliants.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 19.—*"He will hear and save."* How true a description of Christ in his constant office. He heard Mary Magdalene and saved her. He heard the Canaanitish woman, and saved her daughter. He heard the cry of the two blind men and enlightened them. He heard the lepers and cleansed them. He heard the cry of the dying thief and promised him Paradise. Never has one yet cried to King Jesus who has not been heard and delivered.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 20.—*"The Lord preserveth,"* etc. God's mercy and God's justice; he preserves and he destroys. Philip IV. of France, surnamed the Beautiful, on his escutcheon emblazoned a sword and an olive branch, with the motto, *Utrumque,* i.e. " one or the other." A truly great king is master of either art—war and peace. —*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 20.—Those who were called " them that *fear* him " are now denominated " them that *love* him."—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 20. — *"All the wicked will he destroy."* God has so many different, unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world, and sending them to hell, that there is nothing to make it appear that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or go out of the ordinary course of his providence, to destroy any wicked man at any moment.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 20.—*"All the wicked will he destroy."* It must not be overlooked that this declaration occurs in a song of praise. The whole of the context is utterly inconsistent with the expression of emotions of anger or revenge.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 20.—*"All the wicked will he destroy."* [Prayer-Book Version, *"scattereth abroad."*] Like the ruins of a demolished building; or rather, like an army, which the enemy has completely routed.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 20.—*"Preserveth" . . . " destroy."* Notice this recurrent thought, that the guardianship of the good implies the destruction of the wicked.—*A. S. Aglen.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1, 2.—Praise. 1. Personal Praise. 2. Daily praise. 3. Enthusiastic praise. 4. Perpetual praise. Or: I. The attractive theme of the song. II. The increasing fulness of the song. III. The unending life of the singer.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 1 & 2.—The four "I wills" of praise. Praise to the King; praise to the divine character; praise for all time; praise for all eternity.

Verse 2.—*Every day; for ever.* I. Day by day for ever God and I will endure. II. Day by day for ever our present relations will continue. He the God, I the creature; he the Father, I the child; he the blessing, I the blest. III. Day by day for ever he shall have my homage.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 3.—I. The dignity of man is here implied in his capacity for praising God greatly. II. His immortality in his capacity for praising his unsearchable greatness.—*G. R.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—The unsearchable greatness of God. Consider it, I. As a fact amply demonstrated. II. As a rebuke to despondency: see Isaiah xl. 28. III. As the stay of a soul oppressed by mysteries. IV. As indicating a subject for our everlasting study.—*J. F.*

Verse 4.—I. Our obligation to past generations. II. Our duty to generations to come.—*G. R.*

Verses 5—7.—The Antiphon. I. To praise God is a personal duty: "I will." II. Its right performance will excite others to engage in it; "And men shall." III. The accompaniment of others in praise will re-act upon ourselves. "And I will"; "And they shall abundantly," etc. IV. Such praise widens and expands as it rolls along. Beginning with God's majesty and works, it extends to his acts, greatness, goodness, and righteousness.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 5—7.—I. Subjects for praise. 1. Divine majesty. 2. Divine works. 3. Divine judgments. 4. Divine greatness. 5. Divine goodness. 6. Divine righteousness. II. Of whom is it required. 1. Personal; "I will speak." 2. Universal; "men shall speak."—*G. R.*

Verses 6, 7.—I. *The awe-struck talk.* Silent as to mercies and promises, men must speak when God's terrible acts are among them. II. *The bold avowal.* One individual declares God's greatness in power, wisdom, truth and grace. This leads others to the same conclusion, and hence—III. *The grateful outpouring.* Many bless the Lord's great goodness in a song fresh, free, constant, joyous, refreshing, abundant, like the gush of a spring. IV. *The select song.* They *utter* goodness but *sing* of righteousness. This is a noteworthy topic for a discourse.

Verse 7.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1468: "The Philosophy and Propriety of Abundant Praise."

Verse 8.—I. Grace to the unworthy. II. Compassion to the afflicted. II. Forbearance to the guilty. IV. Mercy to the penitent.—*G. R.*

Verse 9.—The universal goodness of God in no degree a contradiction to the special election of grace.

Verse 10.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1796: "Concerning Saints."

Verse 11.—The glory of Christ's kingdom. The glory of this kingdom is manifested,—I. In its origin. II. In the manner and spirit of its administration. III. In the character of its subjects. IV. In the privileges that are attached to it.—*Robert Hall,*

Verses 11, 12.—Talk transfigured. I. The faculty of talk is extensively possessed II. Is commonly misused. III. May be nobly employed. IV. Will then be gloriously useful.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 11—13.—To show the greatness of God's kingdom, David observes, 1. *The pomp of it.* Would we by faith look within the veil, we should "speak of the glory of his kingdom" (verse 11); "and the glorious majesty of it" (verse 12). 2. *The power of it.* When "they speak of the glory of God's kingdom," they must "talk of his power," the extent of it, the efficacy of it. 3. *The perpetuity of it* (verse 13). The thrones of earthly princes totter, and the flowers of their crowns wither, monarchs come to an end; but, Lord, "thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—The grace of God in his kindness to the undeserving and the miserable, who look to him for help. I. He "upholdeth all that fall." 1. A description, embracing (1) Sinners who have fallen lowest: (2) Backsliders who have tripped

most foully. 2. An act implying (1) Pity which draws nigh; (2) Power which places the fallen upon their feet; (3) Preservation which keeps them standing. II. He "raiseth up all those that are bowed down." Consolation for those who are —1. Bowed down with shame and penitence. 2. Oppressed with perplexities and cares. 3. Weighed with a sense of weakness in the presence of onerous duties. 4. Depressed because of prevailing error and sin around them.—*J. F.*

Verse 14.—Help for the fallible. I. Whatever our present position we are liable to fall. Sickness. Loss. Friendlessness. Sin. II. However low we fall we are not below the reach of God's hand. III. Within the reach of God's hand we shall experience the action of God's love. "Upholdeth." "Raiseth up."—*C. A. D.*

Verses 15, 16.—Universal dependence and divine support. The Psalmist here teaches—I. The Universality of Dependence amongst creatures: "The eyes of all wait upon thee." We depend upon God for "life, and breath, and all things." Entire dependence should beget deep humility. II. The Infinitude of the Divine Resources: "And thou givest them their meat." His resources must be, 1. Infinitely vast. 2. Infinitely various. Both sufficient and adapted for all. III. The Timeliness of the Divine Communications: "In due season." A reason for patience if his gifts seem delayed. IV. The Sublime Ease of the Divine Communications: "Thou openest thine hand," and the countless needs of the universe are satisfied. An encouragement to believing prayer. V. The Sufficiency of the Divine Communications: "And satisfiest the desire of every living thing." "God giveth to all liberally." Our subject urges all men to, 1. Gratitude. Constant provision should lead to constant thankfulness and consecration. 2. Trust. (1) For temporal supplies. "Grace to help in time of need" will surely be given to all who look to him.—*William Jones, in "The Homiletic Quarterly,"* 1878.

Verse 17.—I. What God declares himself to be. II. What his people find him to be. III. What all creatures will ultimately acknowledge him to be.—*G. R.*

Verses 18—20.—Gather from these verses the character of God's people. I. They call upon God. II. They fear God. III. They have desires towards God. IV. They have answers from God. V. They love God.

Verse 18 (last clause).—True prayer, in what it differs essentially from mere formalism.

Verse 18.—At the palace gates. I. Directions to callers. 1. "Call upon *him*"; let the repetition suggest pertinacity. 2. Call "in truth"; sincerely, with promises, in appointed way. II. Encouragement for callers. Jehovah is nigh, with his ready ear, sympathizing heart, and helpful hand.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 18, 19.—The blessedness of prayer. I. Definition of prayer: "calling upon God." II. Variety in prayer: "call, desire, cry." III. Essential characteristic of prayer: "truth." IV. God's nearness in prayer. V. Assured success of prayer. "He will fulfil, hear, save."—*C. A. D.*

Verse 20.—Those who love God are preserved *from* excessive temptation, falling into sin, despair, apostasy, remorse, famishing; preserved *in* trial, persecution, depression, death; preserved *to* activity, holiness, victory, glory.

Verse 20.—Solemn Contrasts. 1. Between human characters. "Them that love him." "The wicked." 2. Between human destinies. "Preserveth." "Destroy."—*C. A. D.*

Verse 20.—How the love of God is the opposite of wickedness, and wickedness inconsistent with the love of God.

Verse 21.—Individual praise suggests the desire for universal praise. We like company in a good deed; we perceive the inadequacy of our own song; we desire others to be happy; we long to see that done which is right and good.

PSALM CXLVI.

DIVISION, ETC.—*We are now among the Hallelujahs. The rest of our journey lies through the Delectable Mountains. All is praise to the close of the book. The key is high-pitched: the music is upon the high-sounding cymbals. O for a heart full of joyful gratitude, that we may run, and leap, and glorify God, even as these Psalms do.*

Alexander thinks that this song may be regarded as composed of two equal parts; in the first we see the happiness of those who trust in God, and not in man (1—5), *while the second gives the reason drawn from the Divine perfections* (5—10). *This might suffice for our purpose; but as there is really no break at all, we will keep it entire. It is "one pearl," a sacred censer of holy incense, pouring forth one sweet perfume.*

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

3 Put not your trust in princes, *nor* in the son of man, in whom *there is* no help.

4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

5 Happy *is he* that *hath* the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope *is* in the LORD his God:

6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein *is*: which keepeth truth for ever:

7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners:

8 The LORD openeth *the eyes of* the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:

9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

10 The LORD shall reign for ever, *even* thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

1. "*Praise ye the LORD,*" or, Hallelujah. It is saddening to remember how this majestic word has been trailed in the mire of late. Its irreverent use is an aggravated instance of taking the name of Jehovah our God in vain. Let us hope that it has been done in ignorance by the ruder sort; but great responsibility lies with leaders who countenance and even copy this blasphemy. With holy awe let us pronounce the word HALLELUJAH, and by it summon ourselves and all others to adore the God of the whole earth. Men need to be called to praise; it is important that they should praise; and there are many reasons why they should do it at once. Let all who hear the word *Hallelujah* unite immediately in holy praise.

"*Praise the LORD, O my soul.*" He would practise what he had preached. He would be the leader of the choir which he had summoned. It is a poor business if we solely exhort others, and do not stir up our own soul. It is an evil thing to say, "Praise ye," and never to add, "Praise, O my soul." When we praise God let us arouse our innermost self, our central life: we have but one soul, and if it be saved from eternal wrath, it is bound to praise its Saviour. Come heart, mind, thought! Come my whole being, my soul, my all, be all on flame with joyful adoration! Up, my brethren! Lift up the song! "Praise ye the Lord." But what am I at? How dare I call upon others, and be negligent myself? If ever man was under bonds to bless the Lord I am that man, wherefore let me put my

soul into the centre of the choir, and then let my better nature excite my whole manhood to the utmost height of loving praise. "O for a well-tuned harp!" Nay, rather, O for a sanctified heart. Then if my voice should be of the poorer sort, and somewhat lacking in melody, yet my soul without my voice shall accomplish my resolve to magnify the Lord.

2. *"While I live I will praise the* LORD." I shall not live here for ever. This mortal life will find a finis in death; but while it lasts I will laud the Lord my God. I cannot tell how long or short my life may be; but every hour of it shall be given to the praises of my God. While I live I'll love; and while I breathe I'll bless. It is but for a while, and I will not wile that time away in idleness, but consecrate it to that same service which shall occupy eternity. As our life is the gift of God's mercy, it should be used for his glory. *"I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being."* When I am no longer in being on earth, I hope to have a higher being in heaven, and there I will not only praise, but *sing* praises. Here I have to sigh and praise, but there I shall only sing and praise. This "while I have any being" will be a great while, but the whole of it shall be filled up with adoration; for the glorious Jehovah is my God, my own God by covenant, and by blood relationship in Christ Jesus. I have no being apart from my God, therefore, I will not attempt to enjoy my being otherwise than by singing to his honour. Twice the Psalmist says "I will"; here first thoughts and second thoughts are alike good. We cannot be too firm in the holy resolve to praise God, for it is the chief end of our living and being that we should glorify God and enjoy him for ever.

3. *"Put not your trust in princes."* If David be the author this warning comes from a prince. In any case it comes from the Spirit of the living God. Men are always far too apt to depend upon the great ones of earth, and forget the Great One above; and this habit is the fruitful source of disappointment. Princes are only men, and men with greater needs than others; why, then, should we look to them for aid? They are in greater danger, are burdened with greater cares, and are more likely to be misled than other men; therefore, it is folly to select them for our confidence. Probably no order of men have been so false to their promises and treaties as men of royal blood. So live as to deserve *their* trust, but not burden them with your trust. *"Nor the son of man, in whom there is no help."* Though you should select one son of man out of the many, and should imagine that he differs from the rest and may be safely depended on, you will be mistaken. There is none to be trusted, no, not one. Adam fell; therefore lean not on his sons. Man is a helpless creature without God; therefore, look not for help in that direction. All men are like the few men who are made into princes, they are more in appearance than in reality, more in promising than in performing, more apt to help themselves than to help others. How many have turned away heart-sick from men on whom they once relied! Never was this the case with a believer in the Lord. He is a very present help in time of trouble. In man there is no help in times of mental depression, in the day of sore bereavement, in the night of conviction of sin, or in the hour of death. What a horror when most in need of help to read those black words, NO HELP!

4. *"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth."* His breath goes from his body, and his body goes to the grave. His spirit goes one way, and his body another. High as he stood, the want of a little air brings him down to the ground, and lays him under it. Man who comes from the earth returns to the earth: it is the mother and sister of his body, and he must needs lie among his kindred as soon as the spirit which was his life has made its exit. There is a spirit in man, and when that goes the man goes. The spirit returns to God who gave it, and the flesh to the dust out of which it was fashioned. This is a poor creature to trust in: a dying creature, a corrupting creature. Those hopes will surely fall to the ground which are built upon men who so soon lie under ground.

"In that very day his thoughts perish." Whatever he may have proposed to do, the proposal ends in smoke. He cannot think, and what he had thought of cannot effect itself, and therefore it dies. Now that he has gone, men are ready enough to let his thoughts go with him into oblivion; another thinker comes, and turns the thoughts of his predecessor to ridicule. It is a pitiful thing to be waiting upon princes or upon any other men, in the hope that they will think of us. In an hour they are gone, and where are their schemes for our promotion? A day has ended their thoughts by ending *them;* and our trusts have perished, for

their thoughts have perished. Men's ambitions, expectations, declarations, and boastings all vanish into thin air when the breath of life vanishes from their bodies. This is the narrow estate of man: his breath, his earth, and his thoughts; and this is his threefold climax therein,—his breath goeth forth, to his earth he returns, and his thoughts perish. Is this a being to be relied upon? Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. To trust it would be a still greater vanity.

5. *"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help."* Heaped up is his happiness. He has happiness indeed: the true and the real delight is with him. The God of Jacob is the God of the covenant, the God of wrestling prayer, the God of the tried believer; he is the only living and true God. The God of Jacob is Jehovah, who appeared unto Moses, and led the tribes of Jacob out of Egypt, and through the wilderness. Those are happy who trust him, for they shall never be ashamed or confounded. The Lord never dies, neither do his thoughts perish: his purpose of mercy, like himself, endures throughout all generations. Hallelujah! *"Whose hope is in the* LORD *his God."* He is happy in help for the present and in hope for the future, who has placed all his confidence in Jehovah, who is his God by a covenant of salt. Happy is he when others are despairing! Happiest shall he be in that very hour when others are discovering the depths of agony. We have here a statement which we have personally tried and proved: resting in the Lord, we know a happiness which is beyond description, beyond comparison, beyond conception. O how blessed a thing it is to know that God is our present help, and our eternal hope. Full assurance is more than heaven in the bud, the flower has begun to open. We would not exchange with Cæsar; his sceptre is a bauble, but our bliss is true treasure.

In each of the two titles here given, namely, " the God of Jacob," and " Jehovah his God," there is a peculiar sweetness. Either one of them has a fountain of joy in it; but the first will not cheer us without the second. Unless Jehovah be his God no man can find confidence in the fact that he was Jacob's God. But when by faith we know the Lord to be ours, then we are " rich to all the intents of bliss."

6. *"Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is."* Wisely may we trust our Creator: justly may we expect to be happy in so doing. He who made heaven can make a heaven for us, and make us fit for heaven. He who made the earth can preserve us while we are on earth, and help us to make good use of it while we sojourn upon it. He who made the sea and all its mysteries can steer us across the pathless deeps of a troubled life, and make it a way for his redeemed to pass over. This God who still makes the world by keeping it in existence is assuredly able to keep us to his eternal kingdom and glory. The making of the worlds is the standing proof of the power and wisdom of that great God in whom we trust. It is our joy that he not only made heaven but the sea; not only things which are bright and blessed, but things which are deep and dark. Concerning all our circumstances, we may say the Lord is there. In storms and hurricanes the Lord reigneth as truly as in that great calm which rules the firmament above. *"Which keepeth truth for ever."* This is a second and most forcible justification of our trust the Lord will never permit his promise to fail. He is true to his own nature, true to the relationships which he has assumed, true to his covenant, true to his Word, true to his Son. He keeps true, and is the keeper of all that is true. Immutable fidelity is the character of Jehovah's procedure. None can charge him with falsehood or vacillation.

7. *"Which executeth judgment for the oppressed."* He is a swift and impartial administrator of justice. Our king surpasses all earthly princes because he pays no deference to rank or wealth, and is never the respecter of persons. He is the friend of the down-trodden, the avenger of the persecuted, the champion of the helpless. Safely may we trust our cause with such a Judge if it be a just one: happy are we to be under such a Ruler. Are we " evil entreated "? Are our rights denied us? Are we slandered? Let this console us, that he who occupies the throne will not only think upon our case, but bestir himself to execute judgment on our behalf. *"Which giveth food to the hungry."* Glorious King art thou, O Jehovah! Thou dost not only mete out justice but thou dost dispense bounty! All food comes from God; but when we are reduced to hunger, and providence supplies our necessity, we are peculiarly struck with the fact. Let every hungry man lay hold on this statement, and plead it before the mercy-seat, whether he suffer bodily-hunger or heart-hunger. See how our God finds his special clients

among the lowest of mankind: the oppressed and the starving find help in the God of Jacob "*The* LORD *looseth the prisoners.*" Thus he completes the triple blessing: justice, bread, and liberty. Jehovah loves not to see man pining in dungeons, or fretting in fetters; he brought up Joseph from the round-house, and Israel from the house of bondage. Jesus is the Emancipator, spiritually, providentially, and nationally. Thy chains, O Africa! were broken by his hand. As faith in Jehovah shall become common among men freedom will advance in every form, especially will mental, moral, and spiritual bonds be loosed, and the slaves of error, sin, and death shall be set free. Well might the Psalmist praise Jehovah, who is so kind to men in bonds! Well may the loosened ones be loudest in the song!

8. "*The* LORD *openeth the eyes of the blind.*" Jesus did this very frequently, and hereby proved himself to be Jehovah. He who made the eye can open it, and when he does so it is to his glory. How often is the mental eye closed in moral night! And who can remove this dreary effect of the fall but the Almighty God? This miracle of grace he has performed in myriads of cases, and it is in each case a theme for loftiest praise. "*The* LORD *raiseth them that are bowed down.*" This also Jesus did literally, thus doing the work peculiar to God. Jehovah consoles the bereaved, cheers the defeated, solaces the despondent, comforts the despairing. Let those who are bowed to the ground appeal to him, and he will speedily upraise them. "*The* LORD *loveth the righteous.*" He gives to them the love of complacency, communion, and reward. Bad kings affect the licentious, but Jehovah makes the upright to be his favoured ones. This is greatly to his glory. Let those who enjoy the inestimable privilege of his love magnify his name with enthusiastic delight. Loved ones, you must never be absent from the choir! You must never pause from his praise whose infinite love has made you what you are.

9. "*The* LORD *preserveth the strangers.*" Many monarchs hunted aliens down, or transported them from place to place, or left them as outlaws unworthy of the rights of man; but Jehovah made special laws for their shelter within his domain. In this country the stranger was, a little while ago, looked upon as a vagabond, —a kind of wild beast to be avoided if not to be assaulted; and even to this day there are prejudices against foreigners which are contrary to our holy religion. Our God and King is never strange to any of his creatures, and if any are left in a solitary and forlorn condition he has a special eye to their preservation. "*He relieveth the fatherless and widow.*" These excite his compassion, and he shows it in a practical way by upraising them from their forlorn condition. The Mosaic law made provision for these destitute persons. When the secondary fatherhood is gone the child falls back upon the primary fatherhood of the Creator; when the husband of earth is removed the godly widow casts herself upon the care of her Maker. "*But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.*" He fills it with crooked places; he reverses it, sets it down, or upsets it. That which the man aimed at he misses, and he secures that for himself which he would gladly have avoided. The wicked man's way is in itself a turning of things upside down morally, and the Lord makes it so to him providentially: everything goes wrong with him who goes wrong.

10. "*The* LORD *shall reign for ever.*" Jehovah is King, and his kingdom can never come to an end. Neither does he die, nor abdicate, nor lose his crown by force. Glory be to his name, his throne is never in jeopardy. As the Lord ever liveth, so he ever reigneth. "*Even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.*" Zion's God, the God of his worshipping people, is he who in every age shall reign. There will always be a Zion; Zion will always have Jehovah for her King; for her he will always prove himself to be reigning in great power. What should we do in the presence of so great a King, but enter into his courts with praise, and pay to him our joyful homage? "*Praise ye the* LORD." Again they said Hallelujah. Again the sweet perfume arose from the golden vials full of sweet odours. Are we not prepared for an outburst of holy song? Do not we also say—Hallelujah? Here endeth this gladsome Psalm. Here endeth *not* the praise of the Lord, which shall ascend for ever and ever. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Psalms cxlvi.—cxlviii.—At the dedication of the second Temple, in the beginning of the seventh year of Darius, Psalms cxlvii., cxlvi. and cxlviii., seem to have been sung; for in the Septuagint Version they are styled the Psalms of Haggai and Zechariah, as if they had been composed by them for this occasion. This, no doubt, was from some ancient tradition; but in the original Hebrew these Psalms have no such title prefixed to them, neither have they any other to contradict it.—*Humphrey Prideaux.*

Psalms cxlvi.—cl.—We do not know who put together these different sacred compositions, or whether they were arranged on any particular principle. This, however, is obvious,—that the last series, those that close the whole, are full of praise. Though we meet frequently with grief and shame and tears in the former part, a great deal that presses upon the spirit,—and in the centre a great many references to the various vicissitudes and fortunes through which the church or the individual has passed,—yet, as we get towards the end, and as the book closes, it is *Hallelujah—praise.* As the ancient church ceases to speak to us, as she lays down her lyre, and ceases to touch it, the last tones are tones of heaven; as if the warfare were done, the conflict accomplished, and she were anticipating either the revelations which are to make her glorious here, the "new thing" which God is about to "create" when he places her under another dispensation, or as you and I (I trust) shall do when we come to die, anticipating the praise and occupation of that eternity and rest for which we hope in the bosom of God.—*Thomas Binney,* 1798—1874.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm gives in brief the Gospel of Confidence. It inculcates the elements of Faith, Hope, and Thanksgiving.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise ye the* LORD." The word here used is *Alleluia,* and this is very proper to be constantly used by us who are dependent creatures, and under such great obligations to the Father of mercies. We have often heard of prayer doing great wonders; but instances also are not wanting of praise being accompanied with signal events. The ancient Britons, in the year 420, obtained a victory over the army of the Picts and Saxons, near Mold, in Flintshire, The Britons, unarmed, having Germanicus and Lupus at their head, when the Picts and Saxons came to the attack, the two commanders, Gideon-like, ordered their little army to shout *Alleluia* three times over, at the sound of which the enemy, being suddenly struck with terror, ran away in the greatest confusion, and left the Britons masters of the field. A stone monument to perpetuate the remembrance of this Alleluia victory, I believe, remains to this day, in a field near Mold.—*Charles Buck,* 1771—1815.

Verse 1.—"*Praise the* LORD, *O my soul.*" The Psalmist calls upon the noblest element of his being to exercise its noblest function.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*While I live will I praise the* LORD." Mr. John Janeway on his death-bed cried out thus,—"Come, help me with praises, yet all is too little. Come, help me, all ye mighty and glorious angels, who are so well skilled in the heavenly work of praise! Praise him, all ye creatures upon earth; let every thing that hath being help me to praise God. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Praise is now my work, and I shall be engaged in this sweet work now and for ever. Bring the Bible; turn to David's Psalms, and let us sing a Psalm of praise. Come, let us lift up our voices in the praises of the Most High. I will sing with you as long as my breath doth last, and when I have none, I shall do it better."

Verse 2.—"*While I live will I praise the* LORD."—George Carpenter, the Bavarian martyr, being desired by some godly brethren, that when he was burning in the fire he would give them some sign of his constancy, answered, "Let this be a sure sign unto you of my faith and perseverance in the truth, that so long as I am able to hold open my mouth, or to whisper, I will never cease to praise God, and to profess his truth"; the which also he did, saith mine author; and so did many other martyrs besides.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*I will sing praises unto my God while I have my being.*" He had

consecrated his entire earthly existence to the exercise of praise. And not only so, but he adds, "*I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.*" In which expression we may fairly conclude that the Psalmist stretches his thoughts beyond the limits of time, and contemplates that scene of eternal praise which shall succeed the less perfect songs of the church below.—*John Morison.*

Verse 2.—"*Unto my God.*" Then praise is most pleasant, when in praising God we have an eye to him as ours, whom we have an interest in, and stand in relation to.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*While I have any being.*" Praise God for deliverance constantly. Some will be thankful while the memory of a deliverance is fresh, and then leave off. The Carthaginians used, at first, to send the tenth of their yearly revenues to Hercules; and then by degrees they grew weary, and left off sending; but we must be constant in our eucharistic sacrifice, or thankoffering. The motion of our praise must be like the motion of our pulse, which beats as long as life lasts.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—"*Put not your trust in princes,*" etc. Through some kind of weakness, the soul of man, whensoever it is in tribulation here, despaireth of God, and chooseth to rely on man. Let it be said to one when set in some affliction, "There is a great man by whom thou mayest be set free;" he smileth, he rejoiceth, he is lifted up. But if it is said to him, "God freeth thee," he is chilled, so to speak, by despair. The aid of the mortal is promised, and thou rejoicest; the aid of the Immortal is promised, and art thou sad? It is promised thee that thou shalt be freed by one who needeth to be freed with thee, and thou exultest as at some great aid: thou art promised that great Liberator, who needeth none to free him, and thou despairest, as though it were but a fable. Woe to such thoughts: they wander far; truly there is sad and great death in them.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—"*Put not your trust in princes.*" The word rendered "princes" signifieth liberal, bountiful ones, ἐυεργέται, so princes would be accounted; but there's no trusting to them without God, or against him.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*Put not your trust in princes.*" King Charles had given the Earl of Strafford a solemn pledge, on the word of a king, that he should not suffer in "life, honour, or fortune," yet with singular baseness and ingratitude, as well as short-sighted policy, gave his assent to the bill of attainder, On learning that this had been done, Strafford, laying his hand on his heart, and raising his eyes to heaven, uttered the memorable words, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, for in them there is no salvation."—*James Taylor, in the "Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography,"* 1868.

Verse 3.—"*Put not your trust in princes.*" Shakespeare puts this sentiment into Wolsey's mouth:—

> "O how wretched
> Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favour!
> There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
> That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
> More pangs and fears than wars and women have:
> And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
> Never to hope again."

Verse 3.—"*Put not your trust in princes,*" etc. True, may some say, it were a folly to trust in weak princes, to trust in them for help who have no power to help; but we will apply to mighty princes; we hope there is help in them. No; those words, "*in whom there is no help,*" are not a distinction of weak princes from strong, but a conclusion that there is no help in the strongest. That's strange. What? No help in strong princes! If he had said, no help in mean men, carnal reason would have consented; but when he saith, "*Trust not in princes, nor in any son of man,*" one or other, who can believe this? Yet this is divine truth; we may write *insufficiency, insufficiency,* and a third time, *insufficiency,* upon them all; the close of this verse may be their motto, "*There is no help in them.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—"*Princes.*" Earthly princes offer baubles to allure the soul from the pursuit of an eternal prize. Princes themselves have pronounced their principality to be their own greatest peril. Pope Pius V. said, "When I was a monk I had hope of my salvation; when I became Cardinal I began to fear; when I was made Pope I all but despaired of eternity."—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—"*Nor in the son of man.*" All sons of man are like the man they are sprung of, who, being in honour, did not abide.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3.—For one man to put confidence in another, is as if one beggar should ask an alms of another, or one cripple should carry another, or the blind lead the blind.—*Anthony Farindon.*

Verses 3, 4.—You see the first and the last, highest and lowest, of all the sons of Adam, they may be made honourable "*princes,*" but they are born sinful, "*the sons of men*"; born weak, "*there is no help in them*"; born mortal, "*their breath departeth;*" born corruptible, "*they return to their earth*"; and lastly, the mortality and corruption is not only in their flesh, but in some part or remnant of their spirits, for "*their thoughts perish.*" The prophet (if you mark it) climbeth up by degrees to the disabling of the best men amongst us, and in them of all the rest. For if princes deserve not confidence, the argument must needs hold by comparison, much less do meaner men deserve it. The order of the words is so set that the members following are evermore either the reason or some confirmation to that which went before. "*Trust not in princes.*" Why? Because they are "*the sons of men.*" Why not in "*the sons of men*"? Because there is *no help in them.* Why is there no help in them? Because when "*their breath goeth forth, they turn again to their earth.*" What if their flesh be corrupted? Nay, "*their thoughts*" also "*come to nothing.*"

For, first, this first order and rank which the prophet hath here placed, the princes and gods of the earth, are by birth *men;* secondly, *weak* men, and such in whom *no help is;* thirdly, not only weak, but *dying,* their breath goeth out; fourthly, not only dying, but subject to dissolution, *they turn to the earth;* fifthly, if their bodies only were dissolved, and their intentions and actions might stand, there were less cause to distrust them; but their *thoughts* are as transitory as their bodies.—*John King* (1559?—1621), *in a Funeral Sermon.*

Verses 3, 4.—The Psalmist inscribes an antithesis. Princes, though masters of armies, possessors of riches, loaded with honours, revelling in pleasures, are at the mercy of a ruthless Black Prince. Death is tyrant over prince and peasant alike. The very pleasures which are envied are often ministers of death to voluptuous princes.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 4.—"*He returneth to his earth.*" The earth—the dust—*is* "*his.*" 1. It is "*his*" as that from which he was made: he turns back to what he was, Genesis iii. 19. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." 2. The earth—the dust—the grave is "*his,*" and it is his home—the place where he will abide. 3. It is "*his*" as it is the only property which he has in reversion. All that a man—a prince, a nobleman, a monarch, a millionaire—will soon have will be his grave, his few feet of earth. *That* will be his by right of possession, by the fact that for the time being he will occupy it, and not another man! But that, too, may soon become another man's grave, so that even there he is a tenant only for a time; he has no permanent possession *even of a grave.*—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 4.—"*His breath goeth forth.*" There is the death's-head, the mortality of man indeed, that a breath is as much as his being is worth. Our soul, that *spiraculum vitarum* (breath of lives), the Lord inspired it, not into Adam's eye, or ear, or mouth, but into his nostrils, which may show to man his imbecility, *cujus anima in naribus,* whose soul is in his nostrils, and dependeth upon a breath, as it were; for the very soul must away if but breath expires; soul and breath go forth together.

Now hear this, all ye people, ponder it high and low; your castle is built upon the very air, the subsistence is in your nostrils, in a breath that is gone in the twinkling of an eye. Wherefore David maketh a question, saying, "Lord, what is man?" He answereth himself also: "Man is a vanishing shadow" (Ps. cxliv. 3, 4), a shadow of smoke, or the dream of a shadow rather, as the poet speaketh. Blessed therefore are the poor in spirit; this advantage have all afflicted ones, that they have checks enough to call them home, and make them see they be but men. The curtain of honour, profit, or pleasure, hard it is and rare to draw aside when it is spread over us: "man in honour understandeth not" (Ps. xlix. 20). To great ones therefore be it spoken; the Psalm intendeth it of very princes: "*His breath goeth forth.*"

See we now the continuedness, *exit,* "*it goeth*"; as if it were now presently in its passage: showing this, that *Homo vivens continuè moritur,* that life is a

continued death; our candle lightens, consumes, and dies: as in the passing of an hour-glass, every minute some sand falleth, and the glass once turned, no creature can intreat the sands to stay, but they continue to fall till all are gone: so is our life, it shortens and dies every minute, and we cannot beg a minute of time back, and that which we call death is but the termination, or consummation of it.—*Thomas Williamson; in a Sermon, entitled, "A Comfortable Meditation of Humane Frailtie and Divine Mercie,"* 1630.

Verse 4.—The primary idea of *breath* and the secondary one of *spirit* run into each other in the usage of the Hebrew word רוּחַ, so that either may be expressed in the translation without entirely excluding the other.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 4.—*"His breath* (or spirit) *goeth forth."* Now I come to the liberty of the spirit, that it recedes inviolate; 1. In Act; *"it goeth:"* 2. In Essence; *"it goeth forth."*

1. Our spirit is *free in the act;* it is not snatched out, as it were; *"it goeth."* A soul in life sealed to eternity by the first fruits of the Spirit hath its good issue, its free passing, its hopes even in death; for let this breath fade, *fidelis Deus,* God who cannot lie, will stand nigh us in that exigency, and begin to help where man leaveth. The Holy Spirit, whose name is the Comforter, will not omit and leave off his own act or office in the great needs of death. Hence good Hilarion, having served the Lord Christ seventy years, checks his soul that it was so loth at the last to go forth, saying, *Egredere, O anima mea, egredere,* "Go forth, my soul, go forth." Devout Simeon sueth for a manumission: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." The spirit goeth forth; it passes freely; because it taketh up or embraceth the cross of Christ, as he commandeth us to do. But is the act at our will and liberty? Not simply. We may not *projicere animam,* thrust or cast forth our breath or spirit; *spiritus exit,* it goeth forth. Strive, we must, to cast the world out of us; we may not cast ourselves out of the world. Saint Paul dareth not dissolve himself, though he could wish to be dissolved: God must part that which he joins; God giveth, and God taketh away; and if God say, as he doth to Lazarus, *Exi foras,* Come forth; with faithful Stephen we must resign our spirit and all into his hands. When God biddeth us yoke, he is the wisest man that yieldeth his neck most willingly. When our great Captain recalls us, we must take the retreat in good part. But it is heathenish to force out the soul; for when the misdeeming flesh, amidst our disasters, will not listen with patience for God's call, but rather shake off the thought of divine providence quite, then are we ready to curse God, and die, and that is probably to leap *e fumo in flammam,* out of the sin of self-murder into hell. No, but God will have our spirits to pass forth upon good terms. *Spiritus exit, "the spirit goeth forth."*

2. Secondly, the spirit goeth *free or inviolate in essence;* death is not the end, but the outgoing of the soul, a transmigration or journey from one place to another. *"It goeth forth;"* so the character of our weakness we see in the issue; it is an argument of our eternity; for man indeed is perishing, but so is not his spirit. The phœnix goes forth or out of his ashes, "the spirit returneth to God who gave it" (Eccl. xii. 7); that is, it abides still; and as in the body it pleased God to inclose the soul for a season, so it may as well exist elsewhere without it, if God will; for it hath no rise at all from the clay, yea, it bears in it immortality, an image of that breast whence it is breathed. The separate and very abstract acts of the spirit, even while it is in the body, the wondrous visions of the Lord to his prophets, usually when their bodies were bound up in sleep; Saint Paul's rapture when he knew not whether he was in the body or out of it; the admirable inventions and arts of men, manifest the soul's self-consisting. Not Socrates, and Cato, and the civilised heathen only, but the very savages believe this, and so entertain death, *ut exitum, non ut exitium,* as a dissolution, not as a destruction: *spiritus exit, "his spirit goeth forth."* —*Thomas Williamson.*

Verse 4.—*"His breath goeth forth,"* etc. The Hebrew gives the idea not that the *spirit,* but the mortal part of man will return to the dust. "His *soul* (fem. רוּחַ) goeth forth," *i.e.,* returneth to God: "returneth *he* (masc. שׁב) to his earth." As in Eccl. xii. 7: *"He"* is the mortal man of clay, but "his *breath"* (*soul*) is the real immortal man.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 4.—*"He returneth to his earth."* Returning, in its proper notion, is a-going back to that place from whence we came, so that in this clause here is a threefold truth, implied, expressed, inferred.

1. That which is *implied* in this phrase of returning is, that man in respect of his body came from the earth; and as it is here implied, so it is expressed concerning the first man by Moses (Gen. ii. 7). "The Lord God formed man" (that is, the *body* of man) "of the dust"; or according to the Hebrew, "dust of the ground"; and by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 47), where he saith, "The first man is of the earth, earthy." True it is, we are formed in our mother's womb; but yet inasmuch as we all came from the first man, we are truly said to come from *the earth;* only with this difference, that he immediately, we mediately are framed out of the earth. This truth was engraven in full characters upon the name of the first man, who is called *Adam*, from a word that signifieth *red earth*, and that very word is here used, perhaps to mind us of that earth whereof man was first made; yea, according to the usual etymology, the name *homo*, which in the Latin is a common name to both sexes, is derived *ab humo*, from *the ground*. For this reason it is that the earth is called by the poet *magna parens*, the great parent of all mankind, and in the answer of the Oracle, *our mother;* and in this respect we are said by Eliphaz "to dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust," Job iv. 19.

2. That which is *expressed* is, that man (when he dieth) returneth to the earth, πάντες λυόμενοι κόνις ἐσμέν, saith the poet, "We are all dust when dissolved." As the white snow when melted is black water; so flesh and blood when bereaved of the soul become dust and ashes: in which respect St. Paul giveth this epithet of "vile" to our bodies. Phil. iii. 21. Indeed, man's original being from the earth, he had a natural propensity to earth; according to the maxim, *Omne principiatum sequitur naturam principiorum*, "Everything hath an aptitude of returning to the principle whence it cometh"; but yet had he not *turned away* from God he had never actually *returned* thither. It is sin which hath brought upon man a necessity of dying, and that dying brings a necessity of returning to the earth: in which respect it is observable, that the threat, "thou shalt die the death" (Gen. ii. 17), which was denounced against man before his fall, being afterwards renewed (iii. 19), is explained (as to temporal death) by these words, "to dust thou shalt return"; so that now the motion of the little world man is like that of the great, *Circulare ab eodem puncto ad idem*, from the same to the same; and that as in his *soul* from God to God, so in his *body* from the earth to the earth. The rivers come from the sea, and they return thither. The sun ariseth out of the east, and thither it returneth. Man is formed of the earth, and into earth he is again transformed: with which agreeth that of the poet Lucretius:

Cedit item retro de terra quod fuit ante.

3. That which is *inferred* in the emphatical pronoun *"his,"* which is annexed to the noun *"earth,"* is that the earth to which man returneth is *his;* this being that which ariseth out of both the former conclusions; since it is therefore *his earth* because he cometh from and returneth to it. Earth is man's Genesis and Analysis, his composition and resolution, his Alpha and Omega, his first and last; *Ortus pulvis, finis cinis;* earth is his both originally and finally. So that our bodies can challenge no alliance with, or property in any thing so much as earth. For if we call those things *ours* which had only an external relation to us, as our friends, our horses, our goods, our lands; much more may we call that *our earth* whereof we are made and into which we shall moulder; no wonder it is here said to be *"his";* so elsewhere he is said to *be earth*, as being called by that name.—*Nathanael Hardy, in a Funeral Sermon entitled, "Man's Last Journey to His Long Home,"* 1659.

Verse 4.—*"In that very day his thoughts perish."* The thoughts which the Psalmist here, no doubt, especially intends are those *purposes* which are in the minds of great men of doing good to those who are under, and depend upon them. The Hebrew word here used is derived from a verb that signifieth *to be bright: cogitationes serenæ*, those candid, serene, benign, benevolent thoughts which they have of advancing their allies, friends and followers. These thoughts are said to *"perish"* in *"that day"* wherein they are conceived; so Tremellius glosseth. In which sense the instability of great men's favour is asserted, whose smiles are quickly changed into frowns, love into hatred, and so in a moment their mind being changed, their well-wishing thoughts vanish. But more rationally, "their thoughts perish in that day" wherein their *persons die*, because there is no opportunity of putting their purposes into execution. They perish like the child which comes to the birth, and there is no strength to bring forth; or like the fruit which is plucked off before it be ripe. Whilst they live we may be deceived in our expectations by the alteration of their

minds; but, however, their condition is mortal, and when that great change by death comes, their designs (how well soever meant) must want success.

From hence it followeth, which is by some looked upon as a part of the meaning of the words, that the *"thoughts"* or *hopes of them who trust in them perish.* It is a true apothegm, *Major pars hominum expectando moritur;* the greatest part of men perish by expectation. And good reason, inasmuch as their expectation, being misplaced, perisheth. How strongly this argument serveth to press the Psalmist's caution against confidence in man, though never so great, is obvious. It is true, princes and nobles being invested with honour, wealth and authority, have power in their hands, and perhaps they may have thoughts in their hearts to do thee good; but, alas, how uncertain is the execution of those intentions, and therefore how foolish is it to depend upon them. "Trust in the Lord Jehovah" (saith the prophet), "for with him is everlasting strength." Ay, and with him is unchangeable goodness. It is safe building upon the rock, trusting upon God, whose thoughts of mercy are (like himself) from everlasting to everlasting; but nothing is more foolish than to build on the sand, trust to men, whose persons, together with their thoughts, perish in a moment. Therefore let our resolution be that of David: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes," Psalm cxviii. 8, 9.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 4.—*"In that very day his thoughts perish."* At death a man sees all those thoughts which were not spent upon God to be fruitless. All worldly, vain thoughts, in the day of death perish and come to nothing. What good will the whole globe of the world do at such a time? Those who have revelled out their thoughts in impertinences will but be the more disquieted; it will cut them to the heart to think how they have spun a fool's thread. A Scythian captain having, for a draught of water, yielded up a city, cried out: "What have I lost? What have I betrayed?" So will it be with that man when he comes to die, who hath spent all his meditations upon the world; he will say, What have I lost? What have I betrayed? I have lost heaven, I have betrayed my soul. Should not the consideration of this fix our minds upon the thoughts of God and glory? All other meditations are fruitless; like a piece of ground which hath much cost laid out upon it, but it yields no crop.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 4.—I would have you take this passage and illustrate it as applying to purposes, projects, and intentions. That, I think now, is precisely the idea intended to be conveyed. *"In that very day his thoughts perish";* his purposes, his projects—what he intended to do. These cherished thoughts are gone. My dear brethren, there is something here for us. You find many beautiful passages and instances in Scripture in which this idea is embodied and realised, sometimes with great beauty and poetic effect, in relation to the enemies of the church. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my hand shall destroy them; thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters." In that very day their thoughts perished. "Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey? to every man a damsel or two? to Sisera a prey of divers colours of needlework? So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." The sacred poet does not even suggest that they had perished; but feeling that it was a fact, only lifts up her heart to God. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." And so you will find in many parts of Scripture beautiful ideas like this concerning the purposes and intentions that were in men's hearts utterly "perishing" by God's just laying his hand upon them—the purposes that were in their hearts against the church.—*Thomas Binney.*

Verse 4.—*"In that very day his thoughts perish."* In the case of the rich fool (Luke xii. 16, 20), his "thoughts" of building larger barns, and of many years of ease and prosperity,—all his selfish and worldly schemes,—"perished" in that self-same night.—*John W. Haley, in "An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible,"* 1875.

Verse 4.—*"His thoughts perish."* The science, the philosophy, the statesmanship of one age is exploded in the next. The men who are the masters of the world's intellect to-day are discrowned to-morrow. In this age of restless and rapid change they may survive their own thoughts; their thoughts do not survive them.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 4.—*"His thoughts perish."* As the purposes of all about worldly things perish in the approaches of death, so do the purposes of some about spiritual and heavenly things. How many have had purposes to repent, to amend their lives

and turn to God, which have been prevented and totally broken off by the extremity of pain and sickness, but chiefly by the stroke of death when they have (as they thought) "been about to repent," and (as we say) "turn over a new leaf" in their lives; they have been turned into the grave by death, and into hell by the just wrath of God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—"*His thoughts.*" Rather, "his false, deceitful show"; literally, "his glitterings."—*Samuel Horsley*, 1733—1806.

Verse 4.—To trust man is to lean not on a pillar but on a little heap of dust. The proudest element in man is his thought. In the thoughts of his heart he is lifted up if nowhere else; but, behold, even his proudest thoughts, says the Psalmist, will be degraded and perish in that dust to which he will return. Poor, perishing pride! Who should trust it?—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 5.—"*Happy is he.*" This is the last of the twenty-five places (or twenty-six, if Psalm cxxviii. 2 be included) in which the word *ashre*, with which the Psalter begins, is found.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 5.—Alas, how often do we trust when we should be afraid, and become afraid when we should trust!—*Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 5.—"*The God of Jacob.*" A famous and significant description of God; and that, First, *in respect of his nature*, or the verity and reality of his being and excellence. He is styled here by way of elegancy or emphasis, "*The God of Jacob*," saith Mollerus, to discern and distinguish the true God of Israel from all Heathenish deities, and to explode all fictitious gods and all worships thereof. As the true God is the God of Jacob, so the God of Jacob is the true God. He is God alone, and there is no other besides him. . . . Secondly. This title or appellation serves also to describe him *in his special relation to his people.* We find him called by our Psalmist, "The mighty God of Jacob": Ps. cxxxii. 5. He is indeed the God of the whole earth, but in a peculiar manner "the God of *Israel*": Matt. xv. 31. . . . It is observable in Scripture that he styles not himself so frequently, in his revelations of himself to them, "the God of heaven and earth" (though that also is a title full of encouragement), but "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"; as if he had borne such choice goodwill, and had such a peculiar care for these three men, as to overlook all the world besides them. So near and intimate relation have God's people to him, that their interests are mutually involved, and twisted in a reciprocal and covenant bond. They are his, he is their portion; their Beloved is theirs and they are his: they are called by his name, the saints are styled his "holy ones," and the Church is termed expressly "Christ." Yea, he condescends to be called by their name; he assumes the name of *Jacob*, Ps. xxiv. 6: "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, *O Jacob.*"—*From "The Saints' Ebenezer," by F. E.*, 1667.

Verse 5.—"*The God of Jacob.*" This verse aptly warrants us to apply to all believers all the illustrations of *help* and *hope* furnished by Jacob in his exile when none but God could help him.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verses 5, 6.—"*The God of Jacob . . . . which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is.*" It is a characteristic of these Psalms, to proclaim to all nations which worshipped idols that "the God of Jacob," "the God of Zion," is the Creator and Governor of all things; and to make an appeal to all nations to turn to him. All these Psalms have a *missionary character* and an *evangelical function.* We may compare here the apostolic prayer at Jerusalem, after the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost; "They lifted up their voices to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, *that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is*" (where the words are the same as in the Septuagint in this place): "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why do the heathen rage?" Acts iv. 24, 25. The office of these Psalms is to declare to the universe, that Jehovah, and he alone, is *Elohim;* and to invite all to worship him as such, by their oft repeated *Hallelujah.*—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 6.—"*Which keepeth truth for ever.*" Stored in his inexhaustible treasury as the most costly jewel ever there. And that because the *truth* which he so keeps, and which is the sustaining power which preserves the fabric of creation, is the Eternal Word, his only begotton Son, Jesus Christ.—*Dionysius the Carthusian, and Ayguan, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 6.—"*Which keepeth truth for ever.*" God does indeed keep the truth from age to age—how else would the Book of God have lived?—*John Lorinus.*

Verses 6—9.—The LORD, is an *Almighty* God, as the Creator of the universe; next, he is a *faithful* God "who keepeth truth for ever"; further, he is a *righteous* God (verse 7), a *bountiful* God (*ib.*) a *gracious* God (verses 7—9).—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 7.—"*Giveth food to the hungry.*" We learn from this that he is not always so indulgent to his own as to load them with abundance, but occasionally withdraws his blessing, that he may succour them when reduced to hunger. Had the Psalmist said that God fed his people with abundance, and pampered them, would not any of those under want or in famine have immediately desponded? The goodness of God is therefore properly extended farther to the feeding of the hungry.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—"*Giveth food to the hungry.*" Now, that Jesus was that Lord of whom the Psalmist in this place, and in Ps. cxlv. 16, speaketh, was fully testified by the miracles which he wrought, in feeding many thousands with some few loaves and two small fishes, and in filling so many baskets with the fragments or relics of that provision wherewith he had filled thousands. From these miracles, the people which had seen him do them, and tasted of his bounty, did rightly infer that he was the prophet which was to come into the world, as you may read, John vi. 14; and being supposed to be the prophet, they consequently presumed that he was likewise to be the King of Israel; and out of this concert or presumption they would have enforced him to be their king, verse 15.—*Thomas Jackson*, 1579—1640.

Verse 7.—"*The LORD looseth the prisoners.*" As in that place of Isaiah (lxi. 1) the phrase of "opening the prison to them that are bound," is by the learned thought to be a prophetic elegance, to signify the cure of those that are deaf and dumb, whose souls consequently were shut up from being able to express themselves, as language enables others to do; so here also it may be used poetically, and then it will be directly parallel to that part of Christ's answer, "the deaf hear" (Matt. xi. 5). At the curing of such, Christ's form of speech was, Ephphatha, "be opened," as to the door of a prison, when those which were under restraint therein were to be let loose out of it, their fetters being shaken off from them. But then, 'tis further manifest, that those that were under any sore disease or lameness, etc., are said to be "bound by Satan" (Luke xiii. 16), and be "loosed" by Christ, when they were cured by him. So saith Christ (verse 12), "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity: and immediately she was made straight." Her being "made straight" was her being loosed out of her restraint, or bonds, or prison. And in this latitude of the poetic or prophetic expression, the Lord's *loosing the prisoners* here will comprehend the walking of the lame, the lepers being cleansed, the hearing of the deaf, yea, and the raising up of the dead; for those of all others are fastest bound, and so when they were raised, the style is as proper as to Lazarus in respect of the graveclothes, "loose them, and let him go."—*Henry Hammond.*

Verses 7, 8.—It ought not to pass without remark that the name Jehovah is repeated here five times in five lines, to intimate that it is an almighty power, that of Jehovah, that is engaged and exerted for the relief of the oppressed; and that it is as much to the glory of God to succour them that are in misery, as it is to ride on the heavens by his name JAH, Ps. lxviii. 4.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8.—"*Openeth the eyes of the blind.*" Literally, "*openeth the blind*"—*i.e.*, maketh them to see. The expression may be used figuratively, as a remedy applied either to physical helplessness, as Deut. xxviii. 29; Isa. lix. 9, 10; Job xii. 25; or to spiritual want of discernment, as Isa. xxix. 18; xlii. 7, 18; xliii. 8. Here the context favours the former.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 8.—"*The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind.*" The Hebrew does not mention *the eyes* of the blind. Hilary renders it *sapientificat.* The Arabic version follows the same. Jehovah by his *wisdom illumines dark minds.* It is *mental* blindness which is the common affliction of men.—*John Lorinus.*

Verse 8.—"*The blind.*" The large number of blind persons to be seen feeling their way along the streets in Cairo and Alexandria has been noticed by Volney. "Walking in the streets of Cairo," he says, "out of a hundred persons whom I met, there were often twenty blind, eighteen one eyed, and twenty others with eyes red, purulent, or spotted. Almost every one wears bandages, indicating that they either have or are recovering from ophthalmia." Ophthalmia is, in fact, one of the scourges of Egypt, as all physicians know. Its prevalence must be attributed in a great degree to the sand which the wind blows into the eyes; but one can

understand how in Oriental countries in general the excessive heat of the sun must make blindness much commoner than it is with us.

It is not therefore surprising to any one who knows the East to find the blind so often mentioned in the gospel history, and to meet in Scripture with so many allusions to this infirmity. Of the twelve maledictions of the Levites there is one against him "who maketh the blind to go out of the way": Deut. xxvii. 18. "The spirit of God hath anointed me," said Jesus, quoting from Isaiah, "to preach the gospel to the poor, and recovery of sight to the blind": Luke iv. 19. "The Lord," says David, "setteth at liberty them that are bound; the Lord giveth sight to the blind."—*Felix Bovet* (1824—), *in "Egypt, Palestine, and Phœnicia,"* 1882.

Verse 9.—*"The* LORD *preserveth the strangers."* God has peculiar love for wanderers and pilgrims (Deut. x. 18), and Jacob was a stranger in a strange land when God showed himself to be the God of Jacob as his elect servant.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 9.—*"The* LORD *preserveth the strangers."* They who do not belong to Babylon, nor to this world, but the true pilgrims in a strange land.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 9.—*"He relieveth the fatherless and widow."* The olive tree is not to be twice shaken, the vineyard is not to be twice gathered, nor are the sheaves of corn left in the fields to be gleaned; all that belongs to the poor, to the widow and the orphan. It was allowable to pluck with the hand the ears of corn while passing through a neighbour's field (Deut. xxiii. 25), though a sickle might not be used. The law cares most anxiously for widows and orphans, for "God is a father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows" (Ps. lxviii. 5). A widow's raiment might not be taken in pledge, and both widows and orphans were to be invited to their feasts. An institution specially designed for the protection and relief of the poor was the second tithe, the so-called poor's-tithe. The first tithe belonged to the Levites. What remained over was again tithed, and the produce of this second tithe, devoted in the first two years to a feast in the sanctuary at the offering of first-fruits, was devoted in the third year to a feast in the dwelling-house, to which the Levites and the strangers, the widows and the orphans, were invited (Deut. xiv. 28, 29; xxvi. 12, 13.)—*G. Uhlhorn, in "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church,"* 1883.

Verse 9.—*"The way of the wicked he turneth upside down."* He overturns their plans, defeats their schemes; makes their purposes accomplish what they did not intend they should accomplish. The Hebrew word here means to bend, to curve, to make crooked, to distort; then, to overturn, to turn upside down. The same word is applied to the conduct of the wicked, in Ps. cxix. 78: "They dealt perversely with me." The idea here is that the path is not a straight path; that God makes it a crooked way; that they are diverted from their design; that through them he accomplishes purposes which they did not intend; that he prevents their accomplishing their own designs; and that he will make their plans subservient to a higher and better purpose than their own. This is the eleventh reason why those who put their trust in God are happy. It is that God is worthy of confidence and love, because he has all the plans of wicked men entirely under his control.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—*"The way of the wicked he turneth upside down."* As the potter's clay, when the potter hath spent some time and pains in tempering and forming it upon the wheel, and now the vessel is even almost brought to its shape, a man that stands by may, with the least push, put it clean out of shape, and mar all on a sudden that he hath been so long a-making: so is it that all the plots and contrivances of wicked men, all their turning of things upside down shall be but as the potter's clay; for when they think they have brought all to maturity, ripeness, and perfection, when they look upon their business as good as done, all on a sudden all their labour is lost; for God, who stands by all the while and looks on, will, with one small touch, with the least breath of his wrath, blast and break all in pieces.—*Edlin,* 1656.

Verse 9.—*"The way of the wicked he turneth upside down."* All the ten clauses preceding lift up the poor saint step by step, higher and higher. At one word suddenly, like Satan falling as lightning from heaven, the wicked are shown dashed down the whole way from the summit of pride to the depths of hell.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 9.—*"The way of the wicked he turneth upside down."* A striking illustration of the folly of counting God out of one's plans for life, is given in the course of William M. Tweed, whose death is recently announced. Here was a man who sought wealth and power, and who for a time seemed successful in their pursuit. Apparently

he did not propose to obey God or to live for a life to come. What he wanted was worldly prosperity. He thought he had it. He went to congress. He gathered his millions. He controlled the material interests of the metropolis of his country. He openly defied public sentiment and courts of justice in the prosecution of his plans. He was a brilliant and therefore a dangerous example of successful villainy. But the promise of prosperity for the life which now is, is only to the godly. As William M. Tweed lay dying in a prison-house in the city he once ruled, his confession of bitter disappointment was, " My life has been a failure in everything. There is nothing I am proud of." If any young man wants to come to an end like this, the way to it is simple and plain. " The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors." *"The way of the wicked he turneth upside down."—American Sunday School Times,* 1878.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. An exhortation: it is addressed to ourselves: " Praise ye the Lord." II. An example: the Psalmist cries to himself, " Praise the Lord." III. An echo: " Praise the Lord, O my soul." Let us say this to our own souls.

Verse 1.—Whom should I praise? And why? And when? And how?

Verse 1.—Public worship. I. Should be with a sense of fellowship: " Praise *ye* ": pleasures of communion in praise. II. Should never lose its individuality: " O my soul." God is only praised by individual hearts. Temptations to wandering in public services. III. Should be full of Jehovah's felt presence: each and all should worship *him* alone.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 2.—Work for here and hereafter. I. " While I live "; or a period of uncertainty and mystery. II. " I will praise the Lord "; or a service definite, determined, due, and delightful. Certainty amid uncertainty. III. " While I have any being "; or an enthusiastic pre-engagement of eternity.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 3.—I. It dishonours God. II. It degrades you. III. It disappoints in every case.

Verse 4.—Decease, Decay, Defeat.

Verse 4 (*second clause*). The failure of man's projects, the disappearance of his philosophies, the disproving of his boastings.

Verse 5.—The secret of true happiness. I. *What it is not.* The man here mentioned has his work and warfare, for he needs help; and he has not all he desires, for he is a man of hope. II. *What it is.* It lies in the *hath*, the *help*, and the *hope*, and these are all in God.

Verses 6, 7.—The God of our hope is, I. Creator. II. Truth-keeper. III. Vindicator. IV. Provider. V. Deliverer.

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 484: " The Lord—the Liberator."

Verse 7.—The People's Rights. I. Three rights of humanity. Justice, Bread, Freedom. II. God's interventions in their behalf. Revolutions, Reforms, Regenerations. Christ's war with Satan. III. The magnificent supply of the three blessings in Christ's kingdom. IV. The men who are fashioned and trained under this *régime.*—*W. B. H.*

Verse 8 (*first clause*).—Spiritual blindness, its curse, cause, and cure.

Verse 8 (*second clause*).—Who are the people? Who raises them? How he does it. And what then?

Verse 8 (*third clause*).—God's love to the righteous. I. He made them righteous. II. They are like him. III. They love him. IV. Their purposes are one with his own.

Verse 9.—Observe the provision made in the Jewish law for the stranger. The way in which strangers were received by God. The truth that his chosen are strangers in the world. His design to gather in strangers in the latter days.

Verse 9 (*centre clause*).—The claims of orphans and widows upon the people of God.

Verse 9 (*last clause*).—Illustrated by Joseph's brethren, Haman, and others.

Verse 10.—I. A cause for praise—" The Lord shall reign for ever." II. A centre of praise: " O Zion." III. A cycle of praise: " all generations." IV. A call to praise: " Praise ye the Lord."

PSALM CXLVII.

SUBJECT.—*This is a specially remarkable song. In it the greatness and the condescending goodness of the Lord are celebrated. The God of Israel is set forth in his peculiarity of glory as caring for the sorrowing, the insignificant, and forgotten. The poet finds a singular joy in extolling one who is so singularly gracious. It is a* **Psalm** *of the city and of the field, of the first and the second creations, of the commonwealth and of the church. It is good and pleasant throughout.*

DIVISION.—*The song appears to divide itself into three portions. From* 1 *to* 6, *Jehovah is extolled for building up Zion, and blessing his mourners; from* 7 *to* 11, *the like praise is given because of his provision for the lowly, and his pleasure in them; and then, from* 12 *to* 20, *he is magnified for his work on behalf of his people, and the power of his word in nature and in grace. Let it be studied with joyful gratitude.*

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD: for *it is* good to sing praises unto our God; for *it is* pleasant; *and* praise is comely.

2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by *their* names.

5 Great *is* our Lord, and of great power: his understanding *is* infinite.

6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

1. *"Praise ye the LORD,"* or Hallelujah. The flow of the broad river of the Book of Psalms ends in a cataract of praise. The present Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah. Jehovah and happy praise should ever be associated in the mind of a believer. Jove was dreaded, but Jehovah is beloved. To one and all of the true seed of Israel the Psalmist acts as choir-master, and cries, "Praise *ye* the Lord." Such an exhortation may fitly be addressed to all those who owe anything to the favour of God; and which of us does not? Pay him we cannot, but praise him we will, not only now, but for ever. *"For it is good to sing praises unto our God."* It is good because it is right; good because it is acceptable with God, beneficial to ourselves, and stimulating to our fellows. The goodness of an exercise is good argument with good men for its continual practice. Singing the divine praises is the best possible use of speech: it speaks of God, for God, and to God, and it does this in a joyful and reverent manner. Singing in the heart is good, but singing with heart and voice is better, for it allows others to join with us. Jehovah is *our* God, our covenant God, therefore let him have the homage of our praise; and he is so gracious and happy a God that our praise may best be expressed in joyful song.

"For it is pleasant; and praise is comely." It is pleasant and proper, sweet and suitable to laud the Lord Most High. It is refreshing to the taste of the truly refined mind, and it is agreeable to the eye of the pure in heart: it is delightful both to hear and to see a whole assembly praising the Lord. These are arguments for song-service which men who love true piety, real pleasure, and strict propriety will not despise. Please to praise, for praise is pleasant: praise the Lord in the beauty of holiness, for praise is comely. Where duty and delight, benefit and beauty unite, we ought not to be backward. Let each reader feel that he and his family ought to constitute a choir for the daily celebration of the praises of the Lord.

2. *"The LORD doth build up Jerusalem."* God appears both in the material and spiritual world as a Builder and Maker, and therein he is to be praised. His grace, wisdom, and power are all seen in the formation and establishment of the chosen seat of his worship; once a city with material walls, but now a church

composed of spiritual stones. The Jews rejoiced in the uprising of their capital from its ruins, and we triumph in the growth of the church from among a godless world. *"He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel";* and thus he repairs the waste places, and causes the former desolations to be inhabited. This sentence may relate to Nehemiah and those who returned with him; but there is no reason why it should not with equal fitness be referred to David, who, with his friends, was once an outcast, but ere long became the means of building up Jerusalem. In any case, the Psalmist ascribes to Jehovah all the blessings enjoyed; the restoration of the city and the restoration of the banished he equally traces to the divine hand. How clearly these ancient believers saw the Lord present, working among them and for them! Spiritually we see the hand of God in the edification of the church, and in the ingathering of sinners. What are men under conviction of sin but outcasts from God, from holiness, from heaven, and even from hope? Who could gather them from their dispersions, and make citizens of them in Christ Jesus save the Lord our God? This deed of love and power he is constantly performing. Therefore let the song begin at Jerusalem our home, and let every living stone in the spiritual city echo the strain; for it is the Lord who has brought again his banished ones, and builded them together in Zion.

3. *"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."* This the Holy Spirit mentions as a part of the glory of God, and a reason for our declaring his praise: the Lord is not only a Builder, but a Healer; he restores broken hearts as well as broken walls. The kings of the earth think to be great through their loftiness; but Jehovah becomes really so by his condescension. Behold, the Most High has to do with the sick and the sorry, with the wretched and the wounded! He walks the hospitals as the good Physician! His deep sympathy with mourners is a special mark of his goodness. Few will associate with the despondent, but Jehovah chooses their company, and abides with them till he has healed them by his comforts. He deigns to handle and heal broken hearts: he himself lays on the ointment of grace, and the soft bandages of love, and thus binds up the bleeding wounds of those convinced of sin. This is compassion like a God. Well may those praise him to whom he has acted so gracious a part. The Lord is always healing and binding: this is no new work to him, he has done it of old; and it is not a thing of the past of which he is now weary, for he is still healing and still binding, as the original hath it. Come, broken hearts, come to the Physician who never fails to heal: uncover your wounds to him who so tenderly binds them up!

4. *"He telleth the number of the stars."* None but he can count the mighty host, but as he made them and sustains them he can number them. To Jehovah stars are as mere coins, which the merchant tells as he puts them into his bag. *"He calleth them all by their names."* He has an intimate acquaintance with each separate orb, so as to know its name or character. Indeed, he gives to each its appropriate title, because he knows its constitution and nature. Vast as these stars are, they are perfectly obedient to his bidding; even as soldiers to a captain who calls their names, and allots them their stations. Do they not rise, and set, and move, or stand, precisely according to his order? What a change is here from the preceding verse! Read the two without a break, and feel the full force of the contrast. From stars to sighs is a deep descent! From worlds to wounds is a distance which only infinite compassion can bridge. Yet he who acts a surgeon's part with wounded hearts, marshals the heavenly host, and reads the muster-roll of suns and their majestic systems. O Lord, it is good to praise thee as ruling the stars, but it is pleasant to adore thee as healing the broken in heart!

5. *"Great is our Lord."* Our Lord and King is great—magnanimous, infinite, inconceivably glorious. None can describe his majesty, or reckon up the number of his excellences. *"And of great power."* Doing as he wills, and willing to do mighty deeds. His acts reveal something of his might, but the mass of his power is hidden, for all things are possible with God, even the things impossible with men. *"His understanding is infinite."* There is no fathoming his wisdom, or measuring his knowledge. He is infinite in existence, in power, and in knowledge, as these three phrases plainly teach us. The gods of the heathen are nothing, but our God filleth all things. And yet how condescending! For this is he who so tenderly nurses the sick souls, and waits to be gracious to sinful men. He brings his boundless power and infinite understanding to bear upon human distress for its assuagement and sanctification. For all these reasons let his praise be great: even could it be infinite, it would not exceed his due. In the building of his church and the salvation of

souls, his greatness, power, and wisdom are all displayed : let him be extolled because of each of these attributes.

6. "*The* LORD *lifteth up the meek : he casteth the wicked down to the ground.*" He reverses the evil order of things. The meek are down, and he lifts them up ; the wicked are exalted, and he hurls them down to the dust. The Lord loves those who are reverent to himself, humble in their own eyes, and gentle to their fellow-men : these he lifts up to hope, to peace, to power, to eternal honour. When God lifts a man, it is a lift indeed. Proud men are, in their own esteem, high enough already ; only those who are low will care to be lifted up, and only such will Jehovah upraise. As for the wicked, they must come down from their seats of vain glory. God is accustomed to overthrow such ; it is his way and habit. None of the wicked shall in the end escape. To the earth they must go ; for from the earth they came, and for the earth they live. It is one of the glories of our God for which his saints praise him, that he hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree. Well may the righteous be lifted up in spirit and the wicked be downcast as they think of the judgments of the Lord God.

In this verse we see the practical outcome of that character of Jehovah, which leads him to count and call the stars as if they were little things, while he deals tenderly with sorrowful men, as if they were precious in his esteem. He is so great that nothing is great to him, and he is so condescending that nothing is little to him : his infinite majesty thus naturally brings low the lofty and exalts the lowly.

7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving ; sing praise upon the harp unto our God :

8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

9 He giveth to the beast his food, *and* to the young ravens which cry.

10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse : he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.

11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

7. In this paragraph the contrast announced in the former section is enlarged upon from another point of view, namely, as it is seen in nature and in providence.

"*Sing unto the* LORD *with thanksgiving ;*" or rather, "respond to Jehovah." He speaks to us in his works, let us answer him with our thanks. All that he does is gracious, every movement of his hand is goodness ; therefore let our hearts reply with gratitude, and our lips with song. Our lives should be responses to divine love. Jehovah is ever engaged in giving, let us respond with thanksgiving.

"*Sing praise upon the harp unto our God.*" Blend music with song. Under a dispensation of ritual the use of music was most commendable, and suitable in the great congregation : those of us who judge it to be less desirable for public worship, under a spiritual economy, because it has led to so many abuses, nevertheless rejoice in it in our privacy, and are by no means insensible to its charms. It seems a profanation that choice minstrelsy should so often be devoted to unworthy themes : the sweetest harmonies should be consecrated to the honour of the Lord. He is *our* God, and this fact is one choice joy of the song. We have chosen him because he has chosen us ; and we see in him peculiarities which distinguish him from all the pretended deities of those among whom we dwell. He is *our* God in covenant relationship for ever and ever, and to him be praise in every possible form.

8. "*Who covereth the heaven with clouds.*" He works in all things, above as well as below. Clouds are not caused by accident, but produced by God himself, and made to assume degrees of density by which the blue firmament is hidden. A sky-scape might seem to be a mere fortuitous concourse of vapours, but it is not so : the Great Artist's hand thus covers the canvas of the heavens. "*Who prepareth rain for the earth.*" The Lord prepares clouds with a view to rain, and rain with an eye to the fields below. By many concurrent circumstances all things are made ready for the production of a shower ; there is more of art in the formation of a rain-cloud and in the fashioning of a rain-drop, than appears to superficial observers. God is in the vapour, and in the pearly drop which is born of it. "*Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.*" By the far-reaching shower he produces vegetation where the hand of man is all unknown. He cares not only for Goshen's fertile plains,

but for Carmel's steep ascents. God makes the heavens the servants of the earth, and the clouds the irrigators of the mountain meadows. This is a kind of evolution about which there can be no dispute. Nor does the Lord forget the waste and desolate places, but causes the lone hills to be the first partakers of his refreshing visitations. This is after the manner of our God. He not only causes rain to descend from the heavens to water the grass, and thus unites the skies and the herbs by a ministry of mercy; but he also thinks of the rocky ledges among the hills, and forgets not the pastures of the wilderness. What a God is this!

" Passing by the rich and great,
For the poor and desolate."

9. *"He giveth to the beast his food."* By causing the grass to grow on the hills the Lord feeds the cattle. God careth for the brute creation. Men tread grass under foot as though it were nothing, but God causeth it to grow; too often men treat their cattle with cruelty, but the Lord himself feedeth them. The great God is too good, and, indeed, too great to overlook things that are despised. Say not, " Doth God care for oxen ? " Indeed he does, and he permits himself to be here described as giving them their food as husbandmen are wont to do. *"And to the young ravens which cry."* These wild creatures, which seem to be of no use to man; are they therefore worthless ? By no means; they fill their place in the economy of nature. When they are mere fledgelings, and can only clamour to the parent birds for food, the Lord does not suffer them to starve, but supplies their needs. Is it not wonderful how such numbers of little birds are fed! A bird in a cage under human care is in more danger of lacking seed and water than any one of the myriads that fly in the open heavens, with no owner but their Creator, and no provider but the Lord. Greatness occupied with little things makes up a chief feature of this Psalm. Ought we not all to feel special joy in praising One who is so specially remarkable for his care of the needy and the forgotten ? Ought we not also to trust in the Lord ? for he who feeds the sons of the raven will surely nourish the sons of God! Hallelujah to him who both feeds the ravens and rules the stars! What a God art thou, O Jehovah!

10. *"He delighteth not in the strength of the horse."* Not to great and strong animals doth the Creator in any measure direct his special thought; but in lesser living things he has equal pleasure. If man could act the Creator's part, he would take peculiar delight in producing noble quadrupeds like horses, whose strength and speed would reflect honour upon their maker; but Jehovah has no such feeling; he cares as much for helpless birds in the nest as for the war-horse in the pride of its power. *"He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man."* These are the athlete's glory, but God hath no pleasure in them. Not the capacities of the creature, but rather its weakness and necessity, win the regard of our God. Monarchs trust in their cavalry and infantry; but the King of kings exults not in the hosts of his creatures as though they could lend power to him. Physical or material greatness and power are of no account with Jehovah; he has respect to other and more precious qualities. Men who boast in fight the valour of gigantic might, will not find themselves the favourites of God: though earthly princes may feast their eyes upon their Joabs and their Abners, their Abishais and Asahels, the Lord of hosts has no pleasure in mere bone and muscle. Sinews and thews are of small account, either in horses or in men, with Him who is a spirit, and delights most in spiritual things. The expression of the text may be viewed as including all creature power, even of a mental or moral kind. God does not take pleasure in us because of our attainments, or potentialities: he respects character rather than capacity.

11. *"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."* While the bodily powers give no content to God, spiritual qualities are his delight. He cares most for those emotions which centre in himself: the fear which he approves is fear *of him*, and the hope which he accepts is hope *in his mercy*. It is a striking thought that God should not only be at peace with some kinds of men, but even find a solace and a joy in their company. Oh! the matchless condescension of the Lord, that his greatness should take pleasure in the insignificant creatures of his hand. Who are these favoured men in whom Jehovah takes pleasure ? Some of them are the least in his family, who have never risen beyond hoping and fearing. Others of them are more fully developed, but still they exhibit a blended character composed of fear and hope: they fear God with holy awe and filial reverence, and they also hope for forgiveness and blessedness because of the divine mercy. As a father takes pleasure in his own children, so doth the Lord solace himself in his own

beloved ones, whose marks of new birth are fear and hope. They fear, for they are sinners ; they hope, for God is merciful. They fear him, for he is great ; they hope in him, for he is good. Their fear sobers their hope ; their hope brightens their fear : God takes pleasure in them both in their trembling and in their rejoicing.

Is there not rich cause for praise in this special feature of the divine character ? After all, it is a poor nature which is delighted with brute force ; it is a diviner thing to take pleasure in the holy character of those around us. As men may be known by the nature of the things which give them pleasure, so is the Lord known by the blessed fact that he taketh pleasure in the righteous, even though that righteousness is as yet in its initial stage of fear and hope.

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem ; praise thy God, O Zion.

13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates ; he hath blessed thy children within thee.

14 He maketh peace *in* thy borders, *and* filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.

15 He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth : his word runneth very swiftly.

16 He giveth snow like wool : he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.

17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels : who can stand before his cold ?

18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them : he causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.

19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

20 He hath not dealt so with any nation : and *as for his* judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

12. *"Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem ; praise thy God, O Zion."* How the poet insists upon praise ; he cries *praise, praise,* as if it were the most important of all duties. A peculiar people should render peculiar praise. The city of peace should be the city of praise ; and the temple of the covenant God should resound with his glories. If nowhere else, yet certainly in Zion there should be joyful adoration of Zion's God. Note, that we are to praise the Lord in our own houses in Jerusalem as well as in his own house in Zion. The holy city surrounds the holy hill, and both are dedicated to the holy God, therefore both should ring with hallelujahs.

13. *"For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates."* Her fortifications were finished, even to the fastenings of the gates, and God had made all sound and strong, even to her bolts and bars : thus her security against invading foes was guaranteed. This is no small mercy. Oh, that our churches were thus preserved from all false doctrine and unholy living ! This must be the Lord's doing ; and where he has wrought it his name is greatly to be praised. Modern libertines would tear down all gates and abolish all bars ; but so do not we, because of the fear of the Lord. *"He hath blessed thy children within thee."* Internal happiness is as truly the Lord's gift as external security. When the Lord blesses " thy sons in the midst of thee," thou art, O Zion, filled with a happy, united, zealous, prosperous, holy people, who dwell in communion with God, and enter into the joy of their Lord. When God makes thy walls salvation thy gates must be praise. It would little avail to fortify a wretched, starving city ; but when the walls are strengthened, it is a still greater joy to see that the inhabitants are blessed with all good gifts. How much our churches need a present and abiding benediction.

14. *"He maketh peace in thy borders."* Even to the boundaries quiet extends ; no enemies are wrangling with the borderers. If there is peace there, we may be sure that peace is everywhere. " When a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Peace is from the God of peace. Considering the differing constitutions, conditions, tastes, and opinions of men, it is a work of God when in large churches unbroken peace is found year after year ; and it is an equal wonder if wordlings, instead of persecuting the godly, treat them with marked respect. He who builds Zion is also her Peace-maker, the Lord and Giver of peace. *"And filleth thee with the finest of the wheat."* Peace is attended with plenty,—plenty of the best food, and of the best sort of that food. It is a great reason for thanksgiving when men's wants are so supplied that they are filled :

it takes much to fill some men: perhaps none ever are filled but the inhabitants of Zion; and they are only to be filled by the Lord himself. Gospel truth is the finest of the wheat, and those are indeed blessed who are content to be filled therewith, and are not hungering after the husks of the world. Let those who are filled with heavenly food fill their mouths with heavenly praise.

15. *"He sendeth forth his commandment upon the earth."* His messages fly throughout his dominions: upon earth his warrants are executed as well as in heaven. From his church his word goes forth; from Zion he missions the nations with the word of life. *"His word runneth very swiftly":* his purposes of love are speedily accomplished. Oriental monarchs laboured hard to establish rapid postal communication; the desire, will, and command of the Lord flash in an instant from pole to pole, yea, from heaven to earth. We who dwell in the centre of the Lord's dominions may exceedingly rejoice that to the utmost extremity of the realm the divine commandment speeds with sure result, and is not hindered by distance or time. The Lord can deliver his people right speedily, or send them supplies immediately from his courts above. God's commands in nature and providence are fiats against which no opposition is ever raised; say, rather, to effect which all things rush onward with alacrity. The expressions in the text are so distinctly in the present that they are meant to teach us the present mission and efficiency of the word of the Lord, and thus to prompt us to present praise.

16. Here follow instances of the power of God upon the elements. *"He giveth snow like wool."* As a gift he scatters the snow, which falls in flakes like fleecy wool. Snow falls softly, covers universally, and clothes warmly, even as wool covers the sheep. The most evident resemblance lies in the whiteness of the two substances; but many other likenesses are to be seen by the observant eye. It is wise to see God in winter and in distress as well as in summer and prosperity. He who one day feeds us with the finest of the wheat, at another time robes us in snow: he is the same God in each case, and each form of his operation bestows a gift on men. *"He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes."* Here again the Psalmist sees God directly and personally at work. As ashes powder the earth when men are burning up the rank herbage; and as when men cast ashes into the air they cause a singular sort of whiteness in the places where they fall, so also does the frost. The country people talk of a black frost and a white frost, and the same thing may be said of ashes, for they are both black and white. Moreover, excessive cold burns as effectually as great heat, and hence there is an inner as well as an outer likeness between hoarfrost and ashes. Let us praise the Lord who condescends to wing each flake of snow and scatter each particle of rime. Ours is no absent or inactive deity: he worketh all things, and is everywhere at home.

17. *"He casteth forth his ice like morsels."* Such are the crumbs of hail which he casts forth, or the crusts of ice which he creates upon the waters. These morsels are *his* ice, and *he* casts them abroad. The two expressions indicate a very real presence of God in the phenomena of nature. *"Who can stand before his cold?"* None can resist the utmost rigours of cold any more than they can bear the vehemence of heat. God's withdrawals of light are a darkness that may be felt, and his withdrawals of heat are a cold which is absolutely omnipotent. If the Lord, instead of revealing himself as a fire, should adopt the opposite manifestation of cold, he would, in either case, consume us should he put forth all his power. It is ours to submit to deprivations with patience, seeing the cold is *his* cold. That which God sends, whether it be heat or cold, no man can defy with impunity, but he is happy who bows before it with child-like submission. When we cannot stand before God we will gladly lie at his feet, or nestle under his wings.

18. *"He sendeth out his word, and melteth them."* When the frost is sharpest, and the ice is hardest, the Lord intervenes; and though he doth no more than send his word, yet the rocks of ice are dissolved at once, and the huge bergs begin to float into the southern seas. The phenomena of winter are not so abundant in Palestine as with us, yet they are witnessed sufficiently to cause the devout to bless God for the return of spring. At the will of God snow, hoar-frost, and ice disappear, and the time of the opening bud and the singing of birds has come. For this let us praise the Lord as we sun ourselves amid the spring flowers. *"He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow."* The Lord is the great first cause of everything; even the fickle, wandering winds are caused by him. Natural laws are in themselves mere inoperative rules, but the power emanates directly from the Ever-potent One. The soft gales from the south, which bring a general thaw, are from the Lord, as

were those wintry blasts which bound the streams in icy bonds. Simple but effectual are the methods of Jehovah in the natural world; equally so are those which he employs in the spiritual kingdom; for the breath of his Holy Spirit breathes upon frozen hearts, and streams of penitence and love gush forth at once.

Observe how these two sentences the word and the wind go together in nature. They attend each other in grace; the gospel and the Holy Spirit co-operate in salvation. The truth which the Spirit breathed into prophets and apostles he breathes into dead souls, and they are quickened into spiritual life.

19. *"He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel."* He who is the Creator is also the Revealer. We are to praise the Lord above all things for his manifesting himself to us as he does not unto the world. Whatever part of his mind he discloses to us, whether it be a word of instruction, a statute of direction, or a judgment of government, we are bound to bless the Lord for it. He who causes summer to come in the place of winter has also removed the coldness and death from our hearts by the power of his word, and this is abundant cause for singing unto his name. As Jacob's seed of old were made to know the Lord, even so are we in these latter days; wherefore, let his name be magnified among us. By that knowledge Jacob is ennobled into Israel, and therefore let him who is made a prevailing prince in prayer be also a chief musician in praise. The elect people were bound to sing hallelujahs to their own God. Why were they so specially favoured if they did not, above all others, tell forth the glory of their God?

20. *"He hath not dealt so with any nation."* Israel had clear and exclusive knowledge of God, while others were left in ignorance. Election is the loudest call for grateful adoration. *"And as for his judgments, they have not known them";* or, "and judgments, they had not known them," as if not knowing the laws of God, they might be looked upon as having no laws at all worth mentioning. The nations were covered with darkness, and only Israel sat in the light. This was sovereign grace in its fullest noontide of power. *"Praise ye the Lord."* When we have mentioned electing, distinguishing love, our praise can rise no higher, and therefore we close with one more hallelujah.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The whole Psalm is an invitation unto praising of God. Arguments therein are drawn, First, from God's *general goodness* to the world (verses 4, 8, 9, 16—18): Secondly, from his *special mercy to his Church.* 1. In *restoring* it out of a sad and broken condition (verses 2, 3). 2. In *confirming* it in a happy and prosperous estate, both temporal, in regard of strength, peace, and plenty (verses 12—14); and spiritual, in regard of his word, statutes, and judgments, made known unto them (verses 19, 20). Lastly, these mercies are all commended by the *manner* of bestowing them—*powerfully* and *swiftly.* He doth it by a word of command, and by a word of speed: "He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly" (verse 15).

The temporal part of this happy estate, together with the manner of bestowing it, is herein described, but we must by no means exclude the spiritual meaning. And what can be wanting to a nation which is "strengthened" with walls, "blessed" with multitudes, hath "peace" in the border, "plenty" in the field, and, what is all in all, God in the sanctuary: God the bar of the "gate," the Father of the children, the crown of the "peace," the staff of the "plenty"? They have a "gate" restored, a" city" blessed, a "border" quieted, a "field" crowned, a "sanctuary" beautified with the oracles of God. What can be wanting to such a people, but a mouth filled, a heart enlarged, a spirit exalted in the praises of the Lord? "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion," etc. (verse 12).—*Edward Reynolds, in a Sermon entitled "Sion's Praises,"* 1657.

Whole Psalm.—The God of Israel, what he has done, what he does, what he can do—this is the *"Hallelujah"* note of his song. So gladsome is the theme, that in verse 1 we find a contribution for it levied on Ps. xxxiii. 1, xcii. 1, and cxxxv. 3; each must furnish its quota of testimony to the desirableness of giving praise to such a God.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise ye the Lord.*" *Alleluia.* An expression in sound very similar to this seems to have been used by many nations, who can hardly be supposed to have borrowed it from the Jews. Is it impossible that this is one of the most ancient expressions of devotion? From the Greeks using ἐλελεῦ ἰὴ, as a solemn beginning and ending of their hymns to Apollo, it should seem that they knew it; it is said to have been heard among the Indians in America, and *Alla, Alla,* as the name of God, is used in great part of the East: also in composition. What might be the primitive stock which has furnished such spreading branches?—*Augustine Calmet,* 1672—1757.

Verse 1.—"*It is good to sing praises unto our God.*" Singing is necessarily included and recognised in the praise of the Psalms. That the joyful should sing is as natural as that the afflicted should pray—rather more natural. Song as the expression of cheerfulness is something universal in human nature; there were always, both in Israel and among all other nations, songs of joy. Hence it is constantly mentioned in the prophets, by whom joyous singing is used as a frequent figure, even as they threaten that God will take away the song of the bridegroom and the bride, and so forth. The *singing* of men is in itself good and noble. The same God who furnished the birds of heaven with the notes wherein they unconsciously praise their Creator, gave to man the power to sing. We all know how highly Luther, for example, estimated the gift and the art of song. Let him to whom it is granted rejoice therein; let him who lacks it seek, if possible, to excite it; for it is a good gift of the Creator. Let our children learn to sing in the schools, even as they learn to read. Our fathers sang more in all the affairs of life than we do; our tunes are in this respect less fresh, and artless, and joyous. There are many among us who never sing, except when adding their voices to the voice of the church, —and therefore they sing so badly there. Not that a harsh song from a good heart is unacceptable to God; but he should have our best. As David in his day took care that there should be practised singers for the sanctuary, we should also make provision for the church's service of song, that God may have in all respects a perfect offering. How gracious and lovely is the congregation singing with the heart acceptable songs!—*Rudolf Stier, in "The Epistle of James Expounded,"* 1859.

Verse 1.—The translation here is doubtful. It may either be rendered, "Praise the Lord for *he* is good," or, "for *it* (*praise*) is good." Why is it declared to be "*pleasant*" and "*comely*" to praise the Deity? Not only because if we glorify him he will also glorify us, but because he is so infinitely glorious that we are infinitely honoured simply in being reckoned worthy to worship One so great.—*John Lorinus.*

Verse 1.—"*It is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.*" These points are worthy of careful consideration.

I. To praise God is "*good*" for divers reasons. 1. That is good which God commands (Mic. vi. 8). So that thanksgiving is no indifferent action, no will-worship, but it is *cultus institutus,* not to be neglected. 2. It raiseth the heart from earth to heaven; and being the work of angels and saints in heaven, joins us with that choir above. 3. It is good, again, because by it we pay, or at least acknowledge, a debt, and this is common justice. 4. Good, because for it we are like to receive a good and a great reward; for if he that prays to God is like to be rewarded (Matt. vi, 6), much more that man who sings praises to him; for in prayer we consult with our own necessities, in our praises we honour God, and bless him for his gifts.

II. To praise God is "*pleasant.*" 1. Because it proceeds out of love; for nothing is more pleasant to him that loves, than to make sonnets in the praise of that party he loves. 2. Because it must needs please a man to perform that duty for which he was created; for to that end God created men and angels, that they should praise him. 3. Because God is delighted with it, as the sweetest sacrifice (Ps. l. 23). 4. It is pleasant to God, because he is delighted with those virtues which are in us,—faith, hope, charity, religion, devotion, humility, etc., of all which our praises are a manifestation and exercise.

III. To praise God is "*comely*"; for there is no greater stain than ingratitude; it is made up of a lie and injustice. There is, then, all the decency in the world in praise, and it is comely that a man be thankful to his God, who freely gives him all things,—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 1.—David, to persuade all men to thankfulness, saith, "*It is a good and pleasant thing*" to be thankful. If he had said no more but "*good,*" all which

love goodness are bound to be thankful; but when he saith not only "*good*," but "*pleasant*" too, all which love pleasure are bound to be thankful; and therefore, as Peter's mother-in-law, so soon as Christ healed her of a fever, rose up immediately to minister unto him (Matt. viii. 15), so we, so soon as Christ hath done anything for us, should rise up immediately to serve him.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 1.—There is no heaven, either in this world, or the world to come, for people who do not praise God. If you do not enter into the spirit and worship of heaven, how should the spirit and joy of heaven enter into you? Selfishness makes long prayers, but love makes short prayers, that it may continue longer in praise.—*John Pulsford*, 1857.

Verse 1.—"*Praise.*" There is one other thing which is a serious embarrassment to praising through the song-service of the Church, and that is, that we have so few hymns of praise. You will be surprised to hear me say so; but you will be more surprised if you take a real specimen of praising and search for hymns of praise. You shall find any number of hymns that talk about praise, and exhort you to praise. There is no lack of hymns that say that God ought to be praised. But of hymns that praise, and say nothing about it, there are very few indeed. And for what there are we are almost wholly indebted to the old churches. Most of them came down to us from the Latin and Greek Churches . . . . There is no place in human literature where you can find such praise as there is in the Psalms of David. —*Henry Ward Beecher.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord doth build up Jerusalem,*" etc. If this Psalm were written on occasion of the return from Babylon, and the rebuilding of the earthly city, the ideas are to be transferred, as in other Psalms of the same kind, to a more important restoration from a much worse captivity, and to the building up of the church under the gospel, when Christ "gathered together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John xi. 52); that is, in the words of our Psalm, he "*gathered together the outcasts of Israel.*" So shall he again, at the resurrection, "gather together his elect from the four winds" (Matt. xxiv. 31), and "build up a Jerusalem," in which they shall serve and praise him for ever.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord doth build up Jerusalem,*" etc.

> Jerusalem! Jerusalem! the blessing lingers yet
> On the city of the chosen, where the Sabbath seal was set
> And though her sons are scattered, and her daughters weep apart,
> While desolation, like a pall, weighs down each faithful heart;
> As the plain beside the waters, as the cedar on the hills,
> She shall rise in strength and beauty when the Lord Jehovah wills:
> He has promised her protection, and the holy pledge is good,
> 'Tis whispered through the olive groves, and murmured by the flood,
> As in the Sabbath stillness the Jordan's flow is heard,
> And by the Sabbath breezes the hoary trees are stirred.
>
> *Mrs. Hale, in "The Rhyme of Life."*

Verse 2.—"*He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.*" Wonder not that God calls together "*the outcasts,*" and singles them out from every corner for a return; why can he not do this, as well as "tell the number of the stars, and call them all by their names"? There are none of his people so despicable in the eye of man, but they are known and regarded by God. Though they are clouded in the world, yet they are the stars of the world; and shall God number the inanimate stars in the heavens, and make no account of his living stars on the earth? No; wherever they are dispersed, he will not forget them: however they are afflicted, he will not despise them. The stars are so numerous that they are innumerable by man; some are visible and known by men, others lie more hid and undiscovered in a confused light, as those in the milky way; a man cannot see one of them distinctly. God knows all his people. As he can do what is above the power of man to perform, so he understands what is above the skill of man to discover.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 2.—"*He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.*" David might well have written feelingly about the "*outcasts,*" for he had himself been one; and even from Jerusalem, in his age, when driven forth from thence by his unnatural son, he went up by the ascent of Olivet, weeping and barefooted, and other "*outcasts*" with him weeping also as they went.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 3.—"*He healeth the broken in heart,*" etc. Here are two things contained in this text; the *patients* and the *physician.* The patients are the broken in heart. The physician is Christ; it is he who bindeth up their wounds.

The patients here are felt and discerned to have two wounds or maladies; brokenness of heart, and woundedness: he binds up such. Brokenness of heart presupposeth a former wholeness of heart. Wholeness of heart is twofold; either wholeness of heart *in sin,* or wholeness of heart *from sin.* First, wholeness of heart *from sin* is when the heart is *without sin;* and so the blessed angels have whole hearts, and so Adam and Eve, and we in them, before the fall, had whole hearts. Secondly, wholeness of heart *in sin;* so the devils have whole hearts, and all men since the fall, from their conception till their conversion, have whole hearts; and these are they that our Saviour intends,—"The whole need not the physician, but they that are sick."

Brokenness of heart may be considered two ways; first, *in relation to wholeness of heart in sin:* so brokenness of heart is not a malady, but the commencement of the cure of a desperate disease. Secondly, *in relation to wholeness of heart from sin;* and so it is a malady or sickness, and yet peculiar to one blood alone, namely, God's elect; for though the heart be made whole in its desire towards God, yet it is broken for its sins. As a man that hath a barbed arrow shot into his side, and the arrow is plucked out of the flesh, yet the wound is not presently healed; so sin may be plucked out of the heart, but the scar that was made with plucking it out is not yet cured. The wounds that are yet under cure are the plagues and troubles of conscience, the sighs and groans of a hungering soul after grace, the stinging poison that the serpent's fang hath left behind it; these are the wounds.

Now the heart is broken three ways. First, *by the law;* as it breaks the heart of a thief to hear the sentence of the law, that he must be hanged for his robbery; so it breaks the heart of the soul, sensibly to understand the sentence of the law,—Thou shalt not sin; if thou do, thou shalt be damned. If ever the heart come to be sensible of this sentence,—"Thou art a damned man," it is impossible to stand out under it, but it must break. "Is not my word like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. xxiii. 29). Can any rock-heart hold out and not be broken with the blows of it? Indeed, thus far a man may be broken, and yet be a reprobate; for they shall all be thus broken in hell, and therefore this breaking is not enough.

Secondly, *by the Gospel;* for if ever the heart come to be sensible of the love of the Gospel, it will break all to shatters. "Rend your heart; for the Lord is gracious," etc.: Joel ii. 13. When all the shakes of God's mercy come, they all cry "Rend." Indeed, the heart cannot stand out against them, if it once feel them. Beat thy soul upon the gospel: if any way under heaven can break it, this is the way.

Thirdly, the heart is broken *by the skill of the minister* in the handling of these two, the law and the gospel: God furnisheth him with skill to press the law home, and gives him understanding how to put the gospel, and by this means doth God break the heart: for, alas, though the law be never so good a hammer, and although the gospel be never so fit an anvil, yet if the minister lay not the soul upon it the heart will not break: he must fetch a full stroke with the law, and he must set the full power of the gospel at the back of the soul, or else the heart will not break.

"*He healeth the broken in heart.*" Hence observe, that *Christ justifies and sanctifies;* for that is the meaning.

1. First, because *God hath given Christ grace to practise for the sake of the broken in heart;* and therefore if this be his grace, to heal the broken-hearted, certainly he will heal them. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," etc. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted," etc.: Luke iv. 18. If he be *created* master of this art, even for this purpose, to heal the broken in heart, he will verily heal them, and none but them. He is not like Hosander and Hippocrates, whose father appointed them both to be physicians: he appointed his son Hippocrates to be a physician of horses, yet he proved a physician for men; he appointed Hosander to be a physician for men, and he proved a physician for horses. Jesus is not like these; no, no; he will heal those whom he was appointed to heal.

2. Because *Christ hath undertaken to do it.* When a skilful physician hath undertaken a cure, he will surely do it: indeed, sometimes a good physician may fail, as Trajan's physician did, for he died under his hands; on whose tomb this was written, "Here lies Trajan the emperor, that may thank his physician that he died." But if Christ undertake it, thou mayest be sure of it; for he tells thee that art broken in heart that he hath undertaken it, he hath felt thy pulse already. Isa. lvii. 15. He

doth not only undertake it, but he saith he will go *visit* his sick patient, he will come to thy bedside, yea, he will come and dwell with thee all the time of thy sickness; thou shalt never want anything, but he will be ready to help thee: thou needest not complain and say, "Oh, the physician is too far off, he will not come at me." I dwell in the high places indeed, saith God, but yet I will come and dwell with thee that art of an humble spirit. Thou needest not fear, saying, "Will a man cure his enemies? I have been an enemy to God's glory, and will he yet cure me?" Yea, saith Christ, if thou be *broken in heart* I will bind thee up.

3. Thirdly, because *this is Christ's charge*, and he will look to his own calling: "The Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted" (Isa. lxi. 1). . . . Neither needest thou fear thine own poverty, because thou hast not a fee to give him; for thou mayest come to him by way of begging; he will look to thee for nothing for, "To him will I look that is poor," etc.: Isa. lxvi. 2.

4. Fourthly, *none but the broken in heart will take physic of Christ.* Now this is a physician's desire, that his patient would cast himself upon him; if he will not, the physician hath no desire to meddle with him. Now none but the broken in heart will take such physic as Christ gives, and therefore he saith, "To him will I look that is of a broken heart, and trembles at my words": Isa. lxv. 2. When I bid him take such a purge, saith God, he trembles, and he takes it.—*William Fenner, in a Sermon entitled "The Sovereign Virtue of the Gospel,"* 1647.

Verse 3.—

O thou who dry'st the mourner's tear,
How dark this world would be,
If, when deceived and wounded here,
We could not fly to Thee!
The friends, who in our sunshine live,
When winter comes are flown;
And he who has but tears to give
Must weep those tears alone.
But Thou wilt heal that broken heart,
Which, like the plants that throw
Their fragrance from the wounded part,
Breathes sweetness out of woe.

When joy no longer soothes or cheers,
And e'en the hope that threw
A moment's sparkle o'er our tears
Is dimmed and vanished too;
Oh! who would bear life's stormy doom,
Did not thy wing of love
Come, brightly wafting through the gloom
Our peace-branch from above?
Then sorrow, touched by Thee, grows bright
With more than rapture's ray;
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day!

Thomas Moore, 1779—1852.

Verse 3.—*"He healeth the broken in heart."* The broken in heart is one whose heart is affected with the evil of sin, and weeps bitter tears on account of it; one who feels sorrow, shame, and anguish, on the review of his past sinful life, and his base rebellion against a righteous God. Such a one has a broken heart. His heart is broken at the sight of his own ingratitude—the despite done by him to the strivings of the Holy Spirit. His heart is broken when he considers the numberless invitations made to him in the Scriptures, all of which he has wickedly slighted and despised. His heart is broken at the recollection of a thousand kind providences to him and to his family, by day and by night, all sent by God, and intended for his moral, spiritual, and eternal benefit, but by him basely and wantonly abused. His heart is broken at the consideration of the love and compassion of the adorable Redeemer; the humiliation of his birth; the devotedness of his life; the reproach, the indignity of his sufferings; the ignominy and anguish of his death. His heart is broken when his conscience assures him that all this humiliation, this suffering, this death, was for him, who had so deliberately and repeatedly refused the grace which the blood and righteousness of Christ has purchased. It is the sight of Calvary that fills him with anguish of spirit, that overwhelms him with confusion and self-abasement. While he contemplates the amazing scene, he stands, he weeps, he

prays, he smites upon his breast, he exclaims, " God be merciful to me a sinner ! " And adds, " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? "

The broken in heart must further be understood as one who seeks help from God alone, and will not be comforted till he speaks peace to his soul.

The act of God, in the scripture before us, is the moral and spiritual health of man—of man, who had brought disease on himself—of man, by his own rebellion against his Creator—of man, who had, in ten thousand ways, provoked the justice of heaven, and deserved only indignation and eternal wrath—the health of man, whom, in an instant, he could hurl to utter destruction. The saving health here proposed is the removal of all guilt, however contracted, and of all pollution, however rooted. It is the communication of God's favour, the riches of his grace, the implantation of his righteousness.

To effect the healing of the broken heart, God has, moreover, appointed a Physician, whose skill is infallible, whose goodness and care are equal to his skill. That Physician is none other than the Son of God. In that character he has been made known to us. " They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick." The prophet Isaiah introduces his advent in the most sublime language : " He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

The health, the moral and spiritual soundness of the soul, my brethen, is derived from the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The grace of God flows to the broken in heart through his manhood, his godhead, his righteousness, his truth ; through his patience, his humility, his death and passion ; through his victory over sin, his resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Here, thou broken in heart, thou sorrowing, watching penitent ; here is the medicine, here the Physician, here the cure, here the health thou art seeking.

The healing of the broken in heart must be further understood as effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is done by the Spirit of God, that it may be done, and that it may be well done ; and that all the praise, the glory of that which is done, may be ascribed to the plenitude, the freeness, the sovereignty of his grace. The Spirit of God, however, uses means. The means of grace are appointed expressly for this purpose ; the blessing of health is there applied. There, under the sound of the everlasting gospel, while looking by faith to Christ, and appropriating his merits, he healeth the broken in heart. There, while commemorating the dying love of Christ, and applying its benefits by faith to the soul, he healeth the broken in heart. There, while the soul, sensible of his goodness, is offering up the song of praise, and trusting alone in his mercy, he healeth the broken in heart. There, while prostrate at his footstool, supplicating his grace, resting on his finished redemption, he healeth the broken in heart. In the private acts of devotion the Spirit of God also is near to bless and save. There, while reading and believing his holy Word, while meditating on its meaning ; there, while in secret, solemn prayer, the soul takes hold on God in Christ Jesus ; he healeth the broken in heart. —*Condensed from a Sermon by Thomas Blackley*, 1826.

Verse 3.—"*He healeth the broken in heart.*" I do indeed most sincerely sympathise with you in this fresh sorrow. " Thy breaking waves pass over me." The trial, so much the heavier that it is not the first breaking in, but the waters continuing still, and continuing to rise, until deep calleth unto deep at the noise of God's water-spouts, " Yea, and thy billows all." In such circumstances we are greatly tempted to wonder if it be true, of the Holy One in the midst of us, that a bruised reed he will not break, that the smoking flax he will not quench. We may not, however, doubt it, nor even in the day of our grief and our desperate sorrow, are we at liberty to call it in question. Our God is the God of the broken heart. The deeper such a heart is smitten, and the more it bleeds, the more precious it is in his sight, the nearer he draws to it, the longer he stays there. " I dwell with him who is of a contrite heart." The more abundantly will he manifest the kindness and the glory of his power, in tenderly carrying it in his bosom, and at last binding up its painful wounds. " He healeth the broken in heart." " O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires." Weeping Naomi said, " Call me Mara, for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me." Afterwards, happy Naomi took the child of her own Ruth, and laid it in her bosom, and sweetly found that the days of her mourning were ended.

My dear friend, this new gash of deep sorrow was prepared for you by the Ancient of Days. His Son—and that Son is love—watched over the counsels of old, to keep and to perform them to the minutest circumstance.—*John Jameson*, 1838.

Verse 4.—"*He telleth the number of the stars,*" etc. In which similitude he showeth, that albeit Abraham could not comprehend the multitude of the children, either of his faith or of his flesh, more than he could count the number of the stars ; yet the Lord knoweth every believer by name, as he knoweth every star and can call everyone by its name.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*He telleth the number of the stars,*" etc. Among the heathen every constellation represented some God. But the Scriptures show Jehovah, not as one of many starry gods, but as the one God of all the stars. He is, too, as he taught his people by Abraham, the God of a firmament of nobler stars. His people are scattered and trodden as the sands of the sea-shore. But he turns dust and dirt to stars of glory. He will make of every saint a star, and Heaven is his people's sky, where broken-hearted sufferers of earth are glorified into glittering galaxies. —*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—"*He calleth them all by their names.*" Literally, " calleth names to all of them," an expression marking not only God's power in marshalling them all as a host (Isa. xl. 26), but also the most intimate knowledge and watchful care, as that of a shepherd for his flock. John x. 3.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 4.—"*He calleth them all by their names.*" They render a due obedience to him, as servants to their master. When he singles them out and calls them by name to do some official service, he calls them out to their several offices, as the general of an army appoints the station of every regiment in a battalion ; or, " *he calls them by name,*" *i.e.* he imposeth names upon them, a sign of dominion, the giving names to the inferior creatures being the first act of Adam's derivative dominion over them. These are under the sovereignty of God. The stars by their influences fight against Sisera (Jud. v. 20) ; and the sun holds in its reins, and stands stone-still to light Joshua to a complete victory : Josh. x. 12. They are all marshalled in their ranks to receive his word of command, and fight in close order, as being desirous to have a share in the ruin of the enemies of their sovereign. —*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—The immense distance at which the nearest stars are known to be placed, proves that they are bodies of a prodigious size, not inferior to our own sun, and that they shine, not by reflected rays, but by their own native light. But bodies encircled with such refulgent splendour, would be of little use in Jehovah's enpire, unless surrounding worlds were cheered by their benign influence, and enlightened by their beams. Every star is therefore concluded to be a sun surrounded by planetary globes. Nearly a thousand of these luminaries may be seen in a clear winter's night by the naked eye. But these do not form the eighty-thousandth part of what may be descried by the help of telescopes. While Dr. Herschel was exploring the most crowded part of the milky way, in one quarter of an hour's time no less than 116,000 stars passed through the field of view of his telescope. It has been computed, that nearly one hundred millions of stars might be perceived by our most perfect instruments, if all the regions of the sky were thoroughly explored. But immeasurable regions of space lie beyond the utmost boundaries of human vision, even thus assisted, into which imagination itself can scarcely penetrate, but which are doubtless filled with operations of divine wisdom and divine omnipotence.—*Thomas Dick, in "The Christian Philosopher."*

Verse 5.—"*His understanding is infinite.*" Hebrew : "*Of his understanding there is no number.*" God is incomprehensible. In *place ;* in *time ;* in *understanding ;* in *love.* First, in *place ;* because no place, no space, can be imagined so great, but God exceeds it, and may be found beyond it. Secondly, in *time ;* because he exceeds all time : for he was before all time that can be conceived, and shall be after all time. Time is a created thing, to attend upon the creation and continuance of all things created and continued by God. Thirdly, in *understanding ;* because no created understanding can comprehend him so that nothing of God may be hid from it. Fourthly, in *love ;* because God doth exceed all love : no creature can love God according to his worth. All these ways of incomprehensibleness follow upon his infiniteness.—*Thomas Larkham in "The Attributes of God Unfolded, and Applied,"* —1656.

Verse 5.—"*His understanding is infinite.*" The Divine wisdom is said to be "*without number*"; that is, the objects of which this wisdom of God can take cognisance are innumerable.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 5.—In this verse we have three of God's attributes, his greatness, his power, and his knowledge; and though only the last of these be expressly said to be *infinite*, yet is the same implied also of the two former; for all the perfections of God being essential to him, must need be infinite as he himself is; and therefore what is affirmed of one must, by a parity of reason, be extended to the rest.—*John Conant*, 1608—1693.

Verse 6.—"*The* LORD *lifteth up the meek*," etc. The meek need not envy the lofty who sweep the earth with their gay robes, any more than real royalty is jealous of the kingly hero who struts his hour upon the stage. They shall be princes and rulers long after these actors have laid aside their tinselled crowns.

How wonderful shall be the reversal when God shall place the last first and the first last! Moralists have often pointed us to the ruler of a hundred broad kingdoms lying down at last in six feet of imprisoning clay; but God shall show us the wayside cottager lifted into the inheritance of the universe.—*Evangelical Magazine.*

Verses 7—9.—God creates, and then fails not to supply. Analogically, the Lord buildeth Jerusalem, and provides for the wants of the inhabitants: by spiritual inference, the saints argue that Christ establishes his church and gives all the gracious gifts which are needed in that institution.—*John Lorinus.*

Verses 8, 9.—"*Mountains . . . ravens.*" Wonderful Providence which takes cognisance of the mountainous and the minute alike. The All-Provider descends from august and sublime heights to save the meanest creature from starvation—extending constant care to the wants of even those abject little objects, the young ravens, Heb. "the sons of the raven."—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 8.—"*Clouds . . . rain . . . grass.*" There is a mutual dependence and subordination between all second causes. The creatures are serviceable to one another by mutual ministries and supplies; the earth is cherished by the heat of the heavens, moistened by the water, and by the temperament of both made fruitful; and so sendeth forth innumerable plants for the comfort and use of living creatures, and living creatures are for the supply of man. It is wonderful to consider the subordination of all causes, and the proportion they bear to one another. The heavens work upon the elements, the elements upon the earth, and the earth yieldeth fruits for the use of man. The prophet taketh notice of this admirable gradation: "I will hear the heavens, and the heavens shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and the corn, and the wine, and the oil, shall hear Jezreel" (Hosea ii. 21, 22). We look to the fields for the supplies of corn, wine, and oil; but they can do nothing without clouds, and the clouds can do nothing without God. The creatures are beholden to one another, and all to God. In the order of the world there is an excellent chain of causes, by which all things hang together, that so they may lead up the soul to the Lord.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 8.—"*Who prepareth rain?*" The rain-cloud parts with its contents only when God commands it, and *as* he commands, whether in the soft gentle shower or in the drenching downpour that floods the fields and obstructs the labours of the husbandman.—*Thomas Robinson, in "Homiletical Commentary on the Book of Job,"* 1876.

Verse 8.—"*Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.*" The wild grasses are taken, as it were, under the special providence of God. In the perennial verdure in regions above the zone of man's cultivation, we have a perpetual proof of God's care of the lower animals that neither sow nor reap. The mountain grasses grow spontaneously; they require no culture but such as the rain and the sunshine of heaven supply. They obtain their nourishment directly from the inorganic soil, and are independent of organic materials. Nowhere is the grass so green and vigorous as on the beautiful slopes of lawn-like pasture high up in the Alps, radiant with the glory of wild flowers, and ever musical with the hum of grasshoppers, and the tinkling of cattle-bells. Innumerable cows and goats browse upon them; the peasants spend their summer months in making cheese and hay from them for winter

consumption in the valleys. This exhausting system of husbandry has been carried on during untold centuries; no one thinks of manuring the Alpine pastures; and yet no deficiency has been observed in their fertility, though the soil is but a thin covering spread over the naked rocks. It may be regarded as a part of the same wise and gracious arrangement of Providence, that the insects which devour the grasses on the *Kuh* and *Schaf Alpen*, the pasturages of the cows and sheep, are kept in check by a predominance of carnivorous insects. In all the mountain meadows it has been ascertained that the species of carnivorous are at least four times as numerous as the species of herb-eating insects. Thus, in the absence of birds, which are rare in Switzerland, the pastures are preserved from a terrible scourge. To one not aware of this check, it may seem surprising how the verdure of the Alpine pastures should be so rich and luxuriant considering the immense development of insect life. The grass, whenever the sun shines, is literally covered with them—butterflies of gayest hues, and beetles of brightest iridescence; and the air is filled with their loud murmurs. I remember well the vivid feeling of God's gracious providence, which possessed me when passing over the beautiful Wengern Alp at the foot of the Jungfrau, and seeing, wherever I rested on the green turf, alive with its tiny inhabitants, the balance of nature so wonderfully preserved between the herb which is for man's food and the moth before which he is crushed. Were the herbivorous insects allowed to multiply to their full extent, in such favourable circumstances as the warmth of the air and the verdure of the earth in Switzerland produce, the rich pastures which now yield abundant food for upwards of a million and a half of cattle would speedily become bare and leafless deserts. Nor only in their power of growing without cultivation, but also in the peculiarities of their structure, the mountain grasses proclaim the hand of God. Many of them are viviparous. Instead of producing flowers and seed, as the grasses in the tranquil valleys do, the young plants spring from them perfectly formed. They cling round the stem and form a kind of blossom. In this state they remain until the parent stalk withers and falls prostrate on the ground, when they immediately strike root and form independent grasses. This is a remarkable adaptation to circumstances; for it is manifest that were seeds instead of living plants developed in the ears of the mountain grasses, they would be useless in the stormy regions where they grow. They would be blown away far from the places they were intended to clothe, to spots foreign to their nature and habits, and thus the species would speedily perish.

The more we think of it, the more we are struck with the wise foresight which suggested the creative fiat, "Let the earth bring forth grass." It is the most abundant and the most generally diffused of all vegetation. It suits almost every soil and climate.—*Hugh Macmillan, in "Bible Teachings in Nature,"* 1868.

Verses 8, 9.—The Hebrews had no notion of what we denominate "secondary laws," but believed that God acted directly upon matter, and was the immediate, efficient cause of the solemn order, and the varied and wonderful phenomena of nature. Dispensing thus with the whole machinery of cause and effect, as we employ those terms in philosophical language, their minds were brought into immediate contact with God in his manifold works, and this gave, both to devotion and the spirit of poetry, the liveliest inspiration and the freest scope of action. Heaven and earth were governed by his commands; the thunder was his "voice," the lightning his "arrows." It is he who "causeth the vapour to ascend from the ends of the earth." When the famished city should call upon the corn, the wine, and the oil, and those should call upon the earth for nourishment, and the parched earth should call upon the heavens for moisture, and the heavens should call upon the Lord for permission to refresh the earth, then Jehovah would hear and supply. He gave the rain, and he sent the drought and famine. The clouds were not looked upon merely as sustained by a law of specific gravity, but God spread them out in the sky; these clouds were God's chariot, the curtains of his pavilion, the dust of his feet. Snow and hail were fearful manifestations of God, often sent as the messengers of his wrath.—*F. G. Hubbard, in "Bate's Encyclopædia,"* 1865.

Verses 8, 9.—God by his special providence prepares *"food"* for those who have no other care taken for them. *"Beasts"* that live among men are by men taken care of; they enrich the ground with manure, and till the ground; and that brings forth corn for the use of these cattle as well as men. But the *wild beasts* that live upon the *mountains*, and in woods and desert places, are fed only from the heavens: the *"rain"* that from thence distils enricheth those dry hills and *"maketh grass to grow"* there, which else would not, and so God giveth to these *wild beasts* their

food after the same manner of Divine Providence as in the end of the verse he is said to provide for the *"young ravens."—Henry Hammond.*

Verse 9.—*"The young ravens cry."* The strange stories told by Jewish and Arabian writers, on the raven's cruelty to its young, in driving them out of their nests before they are quite able to provide for themselves, are entirely without foundation, as no bird is more careful of its young ones than the raven. To its habit of flying restlessly about in search of food to satisfy its own appetite and that of its young ones, may perhaps be traced the reason of its being selected by the sacred writers as an especial object of God's protecting care.—*W. Houghton, in "The Bible Educator."*

Verse 9.—*"The young ravens cry."* While still unfledged the young ravens have a strange habit of falling out of their nests, and flapping their wings heavily to the ground. Next morning they are found by the shepherds sitting croaking on the ground beneath their former homes, and are then captured and taken away with comparative ease.—*J. G. Wood, in "The Illustrated Natural History,"* 1869.

Verse 9.—*"The young ravens cry."* The evening proceedings and manœuvres of the rooks are curious and amusing in the autumn. Just before dusk they return in long strings from the foraging of the day, and rendezvous by thousands over Selbourne-down, where they wheel round in the air, and sport and dive in a playful manner, all the while exerting their voices, and making a loud cawing, which, being blended and softened by the distance that we at the village are below them, becomes a confused noise or chiding; or rather a pleasing murmur, very engaging to the imagination, and not unlike the cry of a pack of hounds in hollow, echoing woods, or the rushing of the wind in tall trees, or the tumbling of the tide upon a pebbly shore. When this ceremony is over, with the last gleam of day, they retire for the night to the deep beechen woods of Tisted and Ropley. We remember a little girl, who, as she was going to bed used to remark on such an occurrence, in the true spirit of physico-theology, that the rooks were saying their prayers, and yet this child was much too young to be aware that the Scriptures had said of the Deity that "He feedeth the ravens that call upon him."—*Gilbert White* (1720—1793), *in "The Natural History of Selbourne."*

Verse 9.—

Behold, and look away your low despair;
See the light tenants of the barren air:
To them, nor stores, nor granaries belong,
Nought but the woodlands and the pleasing song;
Yet, your kind heavenly Father bends his eye
On the least wing that flits along the sky.
To him they sing when Spring renews the plain;
To him they cry in Winter's pinching reign;
Nor is the music, nor their plaint, in vain.
He hears the gay, and the distressful call,
And with unsparing bounty fills them all.
Will he not care for you, ye faithless, say?
Is he unwise? Or, are ye less than they?

James Thomson, 1700—1748.

Verse 9.—It is related of Edward Taylor, the sailor-preacher of Boston, that on the Sunday before he was to sail for Europe, he was entreating the Lord to care well for his church during his absence. All at once he stopped, and ejaculated, "What have I done? Distrust the Providence of heaven! A God that gives a whale a ton of herrings for a breakfast, will he not care for my children?" and then went on, closing his prayer in a more confiding manner.—*From "Eccentric Preachers," by C. H. S.*

Verse 10.—The two clauses of this verse are probably intended to describe *cavalry* and *infantry*, as forming the military strength of nations. It is not to those who trust in such resources that Jehovah shows favour, but to those who rely on his protection (verse 11).—*Annotated Paragraph Bible.*

Verses 10, 11.—When a sinner is brought upon his knees, and becomes a suppliant, when as he is laid low by affliction, so he lieth low in prayer and supplication, then the Lord will be favourable to him, and show his delight in him. *"The Lord delighteth not in the strength of the horse; he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man."* No man

is favoured by God because of his outward favour, because he hath a beautiful face, or strong, clean limbs; yea, not only hath the Lord no pleasure in any man's legs, but not in any man's brains, how reaching soever, nor in any man's wit how quick soever, nor in any man's judgment how deep soever, nor in any man's tongue how eloquent or well spoken soever; but *"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy," in* those that walk humbly with him, and call upon him. . . All the beauties and rarities both of persons and things are dull and flat, yea, wearisome and loathsome to God, in comparison of a gracious, honest, humble soul. Princes have their favourites (Job. xxxiii. 26): they are favourable to some above many, either because they are beautiful and goodly persons, or because they are men of excellent speech, prudence and deportment. All godly men are God's favourites; he is favourable to them not only above many men in the world, but above all the men of this world, who have their portion in this life; and he therefore favours them, because they are the purchase of his Son and the workmanship of his Spirit, convincing them of, and humbling them for, their sins, as also creating them after God in righteousness and true holiness. Such shall be his favourites. —*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—*"Them that fear him, those that hope in his mercy."* Patience and fear are the fences of hope. There is a beautiful relation between hope and fear. The two are linked in this verse. They are like the cork in a fisherman's net, which keeps it from sinking, and the lead, which prevents it from floating. Hope without fear is in danger of being too sanguine; fear without hope would soon become desponding.—*George Seaton Bowes, in "In Prospect of Sunday,"* 1880.

Verse 11.—*"Them that fear him, those that hope in his mercy."* A sincere Christian is known by both these; a fear of God, or a constant obedience to his commands, and an affiance, trust, and dependence upon his mercies. Oh, how sweetly are both these coupled, a uniform, sincere obedience to him, and an unshaken, constant reliance on his mercy and goodness! The whole perfection of the Christian life is comprised in these two—believing God and fearing him, trusting in his mercy and fearing his name; the one maketh us careful in avoiding sin, the other diligent to follow after righteousness; the one is a bridle from sin and temptations, the other a spur to our duties. Fear is our curb, and hope our motive and encouragement; the one respects our duty, the other our comfort; the one allayeth the other. God is so to be feared, as also to be trusted; so to be trusted, as also to be feared; and as we must not suffer our fear to degenerate into legal bondage, but hope in his mercy, so our trust must not degenerate into carnal sloth and wantonness, but so hope in his word as to fear his name. Well, then, such as both believe in God and fear to offend him are the only men who are acceptable to God and his people. God will take pleasure in them, and they take pleasure in one another.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 11.—*"Fear"* and *"Hope"* are the great *vincula* of Old Testament theology, bracketing and including in their meaning all its ideas.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 11.—*Fear* and *hope* are passions of the mind so contrary the one to the other, that with regard to the same object, it is strange they should meet in the same laudable character; yet here we see they do so, and it is the praise of the same persons, that they both fear God, and hope in him. Whence we may gather this doctrine: That in every concern that lies upon our hearts, we should still endeavour to keep the balance even between hope and fear.

We know how much the health of the body depends upon a due temperament of the humours, such as preserves any one from being predominant above the rest; and how much the safety and peace of the nations result from a due balance of trade and power, that no one grow too great for its neighbours; and so necessary is it to the health and welfare of our souls, that there be a due proportion maintained between their powers and passions, and that the one may always be a check upon the other, to keep it from running into extremes; as in these affections mentioned in the text. A holy fear of God must be check upon our hope, to keep that from swelling into presumption; and a pious hope in God must be a check upon our fear, to keep that from sinking into despondency. This balance must, I say, by a wise and steady hand, be kept even in every concern that lies upon our hearts, and that we have thoughts about. I shall enumerate those that are of the greatest importance. We must keep up both hope and fear. 1. As to the concerns of our souls, and our spiritual and eternal state. 2. As to our outward concerns, relating

to the body and the life that now is. 3. As to the public concerns of the church of God, and our own land and nation.

In reference to each of these, we must always study and strive to support that affection, whether it be hope or fear, which the present temper of our minds and circumstances of our case make necessary to preserve us from an extreme.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12.—That all Creation must involuntarily praise the Lord, and that the primary duty of conscious intelligence is the willing praise of the same Deity, are the two *axioms* of the Psalmist's theology. He has in the first part of this Psalm been stating the first, and now he is about to announce the second.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 13.—*"He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates."*—Blessed is the city whose gates God barreth up with his power, and openeth again with his mercy. There is nothing can defend where his justice will strike; and there is nothing can offend where his goodness will preserve.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verses 13, 14.—The Psalmist recites four arguments from which he would have Zion sing praises. 1. Security and defence. 2. Benediction. 3. Peace. 4. Sustenance or provision.

1. *Security.* Jerusalem is a city secure, being defended by God: *"For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates."* Gates and bars do well to a city, but then only is the city secure when God makes them strong. The true munition of a city is God's defence of it. Arms, laws, wealth, etc., are the bars, but God must put strength into them.

2. *Benediction.* Jerusalem is a happy city, for *"he hath blessed thy children within thee,"* thy kings, princes, magistrates, etc., with wisdom, piety, etc.

3. *Peace.* Jerusalem is a peaceable city. *"He maketh peace in thy borders,"* the very name intimates so much; for Jerusalem interpreted is *visio pacis*—Vision of peace.

4. *Abundance.* Jerusalem is a city provided by God with necessary food and provision; for *"He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat."*—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 14.—*"He maketh peace in thy borders,"* etc. There is a political peace—peace in city and country; this is the fairest flower of a Prince's crown; peace is the best blessing of a nation. It is well with bees when there is a noise; but it is best with Christians when, as in the building of the Temple, there is no noise of hammer heard. Peace brings plenty along with it; how many miles would some go on pilgrimage to purchase this peace! Therefore the Greeks made Peace to be the nurse of Pluto, the God of wealth. Political plants thrive best in the sunshine of peace. *"He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat."* The ancients made the harp the emblem of peace: how sweet would the sounding of this harp be after the roaring of the cannon! All should study to promote this political peace. The godly man, when he dies, "enters into peace" (Isa. lvii. 2); but while he lives, peace must enter into him.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 14.—*"He maketh peace."* The Hebrews observe that all the letters in the name of God are *literæ quiescentes*, letters of rest. God only is the centre were the soul may find rest: God only can speak peace to the conscience.—*John Stoughton*, —1639.

Verse 14.—*"Finest of the wheat."* If men give much it is in cheap and coarse commodity. Quantity and quality are only possible with human production *in inverse ratio;* but the Lord gives the *most* and *best* of all supplies to his pensioners. How truly the believer under the gospel knows the inner spirit of the meaning here! The Lord Jesus Christ says, "My peace I give unto you." And when he sets us at rest and all is reconciliation and peace, then he feeds us with *himself*—his body, the finest wheat, and his blood, the richest wine.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 15.—*"His word runneth very swiftly."* There is not a moment between the shooting out of the arrow and the fastening of it in the mark; both are done in the very same atom and point of time. Therefore we read in the Scripture of the immediate effects of the word of Christ. Saith he to the leprous man, "Be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed": Matt. viii. 3. And to the blind man, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight": Mark x. 52. No arrow makes so immediate an impression

in the mark aimed at as the arrow of Christ's word. No sooner doth Christ say to the soul, Be enlightened, be quickened, be comforted, but the work is done.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 16.—"*He giveth snow like wool.*" There are three things considerable in snow, for which it is compared to wool. First, for the *whiteness* of it. Snow is white as wool; snow is so exceeding white that the whiteness of a soul cleansed by pardoning grace, in the blood of Christ, is likened unto it (Isa. i. 18); and the latter part of the same verse intimates that the whiteness of snow bears resemblance to that of wool. The whiteness of snow is caused by the abundance of air and spirits that are in that pellucid body, as the naturalists speak. Any thing that is of a watery substance, being frozen or much wrought upon by cold, appears more white; and hence it is that all persons inhabiting cold climates or countries, are of a whiter complexion than they who inhabit hot. Secondly, snow is like wool for *softness*, 'tis pliable to the hand as a lock or fleece of wool. Thirdly, snow is like wool (which may seem strange) with respect to the *warmness* of it. Though snow be cold in itself, yet it is to the earth as wool, or as a woollen cloth or blanket that keeps the body warm. Snow is not warm formally, yet it is warm effectively and virtually; and therefore is it compared to wool.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16.—"*Like wool.*" Namely, curled and tufted, and as white as the snow in those countries. Isa. i. 18, Rev. i. 14.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 16.—"*Snow like wool.*" The ancients used to call *snow* εριωδες υδωρ, *woolly water* (Eustathius, in Dionys. Perieget. p. 91). Martial gives it the name of *densum vellus aquarum, a thick fleece of waters* (Epigram. l. iv. Ep. 3). Aristophanes calls clouds, *flying fleeces of wool* (Nubes, p. 146). Pliny calls it *the froth of the celestial waters* (Nat. His. lib. xvii. cap. 2).—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 16.—"*He giveth snow like wool.*" In Palestine snow is not the characteristic feature of winter as it is in northern latitudes. It is merely an occasional phenomenon. Showers of it fall now and then in severer seasons on the loftier parts of the land, and whiten for a day or two the vineyards and cornfields: but it melts from the green earth as rapidly as its sister vapours vanish from the blue sky. . . . . But the Psalmist seized the occasional snow, as he seized the fleeting vapour, and made it a text of his spiritual meditations. Let us follow his example.

"*He giveth snow like wool,*" says the Psalmist. This comparison expressly indicates one of the most important purposes which the snow serves in the economy of nature. It covers the earth like a blanket during that period of winter sleep which is necessary to recruit its exhausted energies, and prepare it for fresh efforts in the spring; and being, like wool, a bad conductor, it conserves the latent heat of the soil, and protects the dormant life of plant and animal hid under it from the frosty rigour of the outside air. Winter-sown wheat, when defended by this covering, whose under surface seldom falls much below 32° Fahr., can thrive even though the temperature of the air above may be many degrees below the freezing-point. Our country, enjoying an equable climate, seldom requires this protection; but in northern climates, where the winter is severe and prolonged, its beneficial effects are most marked. The scanty vegetation which blooms with such sudden and marvellous loveliness in the height of summer, in the Arctic regions and on mountain summits, would perish utterly were it not for the protection of the snow that lies on it for three quarters of a year.

But it is not only to Alpine plants and hybernating animals that God gives snow like wool. The Esquimaux take advantage of its curious protective property, and ingeniously build their winter huts of blocks of hardened snow; thus, strangely enough, by a homœopathic law, protecting themselves against cold by the effects of cold. The Arctic navigator has been often indebted to walls of snow banked up around his ship for the comparative comfort of his winter quarters, when the temperature without has fallen so low that even chloric ether became solid. And many a precious life has been saved by the timely shelter which the snow-storm itself has provided against its own violence. But while snow thus warms in cold regions, it also cools in warm regions. It sends down from the white summits of equatorial mountains its cool breath to revive and brace the drooping life of lands sweltering under a tropic sun; and from its lofty, inexhaustible reservoirs it feeds perennial rivers that water the plains when all the wells and streams are white and silent in the baking heat. Without the perpetual snow of mountain regions the earth would be reduced to a lifeless desert.

And not only does the Alpine snow thus keep always full rivers that water the plains, but, by its grinding force as it presses down the mountains, it removes particles from the rocks, which are carried off by the rivers and spread over the plains. Such is the origin of a large part of the level land of Europe. It has been formed out of the ruins of the mountains by the action of snow. It was by the snow of far-off ages that our valleys and lake-basins were scooped out, the form of our landscapes sculptured and rounded, and the soil formed in which we grow our harvests. Who would think of such a connection? And yet it is true! Just as each season we owe the bloom and brightness of our summer fields to the gloom and blight of winter, so do we owe the present summer beauty of the world to the great secular winter of the glacial period. And does not God bring about results as striking by agencies apparently as contradictory in the human world? He who warms the tender latent life of the flowers by the snow, and moulds the quiet beauty of the summer landscape, by the desolating glacier, makes the cold of adversity to cherish the life of the soul, and to round into spiritual loveliness the harshness and roughness of a carnal, selfish nature. Many a profitable Christian life owes its fairness and fruitfulness to causes which wrecked and wasted it for a time. God giveth snow like wool; and chill and blighting as is the touch of sorrow, it has a protective influence which guards against greater evils; it sculptures the spiritual landscape within into forms of beauty and grace, and deepens and fertilises the soil of the heart, so that in it may grow from God's own planting the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

And now let us look at the Giver of the snow. "*He* giveth snow like wool." "The snow-flake," as Professor Tyndall strikingly says, "leads back to the sun"—so intimately related are all things to each other in this wonderful universe. It leads further and higher still—even to him who is our sun and shield, the light and heat of all creation. The whole vast realm of winter, with its strange phenomena, is but the breath of God—the Creative Word—as it were, congealed against the blue transparency of space, like the marvellous frost-work on a window-pane. The Psalmist had not the shadow of a doubt that God formed and sent the annual miracle of snow, as he had formed and sent the daily miracle of manna in the desert. It was a common-place thing; it was a natural, ordinary occurrence; but it had the Divine sign upon it, and it showed forth the glory and goodness of God as strikingly as the most wonderful supernatural event in his nation's history. When God would impress Job with a sense of his power, it was not to some of his miraculous, but to some of his ordinary works that he appealed. And when the Psalmist would praise God for the preservation of Israel and the restoration of Jerusalem—as he does in the Psalm from which my subject is taken—it is not to the wonderful, miraculous events with which the history of Israel abounded that he directs attention, but to the common events of Providence and the ordinary appearances and processes of nature. He cannot think enough of the Omnipotent Creator and Ruler of the Universe entering into familiar relations with his people, and condescending to their humblest wants. It is the same God that "giveth snow like wool," who "shows his word unto Jacob, and his statutes and commandments unto Israel." And the wonder of the peculiarity is enhanced by thoughts borrowed from the wonders of nature. We know a thousand times more of the nature, formation, and purpose of the snow than the Psalmist did. But that knowledge is dearly earned if our science destroys our faith. What amount or precision of scientific knowledge can compensate us for the loss of the spiritual sensibility, which in all the wonders and beauties of the Creation brings us into personal contact with an infinitely wise mind and an infinitely loving heart?—*Hugh Macmillan, in "Two Worlds are Ours,"* 1880.

Verse 16.—"*Snow.*" It is worth pausing to think what wonderful work is going on in the atmosphere during the formation and descent of every snow shower; what building power is brought into play! and how imperfect seem the productions of human minds and hands when compared with those formed by the blind forces of nature! But who ventures to call the forces of nature blind? In reality, when we speak thus, we are describing our own condition. The blindness is ours; and what we really ought to say, and to confess, is that our powers are absolutely unable to comprehend either the origin or the end of the operations of nature.—*John Tyndall, in "The Forms of Water,"* 1872.

Verses 16, 17.—The Lord takes the ice and frost and cold to be his; it is not only *his sun*, but *his ice*, and *his frost:* "he scattereth *his hoar frost* like ashes." The frost is compared to ashes in a threefold respect. First, because the hoar frost

gives a little interruption to the sight. If you scatter ashes into the air, it darkens the light, so doth the hoar frost. Secondly, the hoary frost is like ashes because near in colour to ashes. Thirdly, 'tis like, because there is a kind of burning in it: frost burns the tender buds and blossoms, it nips them and dries them up. The hoar frost hath its denomination in the Latin tongue from *burning*, and it differs but very little from that word which is commonly used in Latin for a coal of fire. The cold frost hath a kind of scorching in it, as well as the hot sun. Unseasonable frosts in the spring scorch the tender fruits, which bad effect of frost is usually expressed by *carbunculation* or blasting.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 17.—"*He casteth forth his ice like morsels.*" Or, *shivers of bread.* It is a worthy saying of one from this text,—The ice is bread, the rain is drink, the snow is wool, the frost a fire to the earth, causing it inwardly to glow with heat; teaching us what to do for God's poor.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 17.—"*He casteth forth his ice like morsels.*" The word here translated "*morsels*," means, in most of the places where it occurs in the Bible, *pieces of bread*, exactly the LXX. ψωμούς; for this very ice, this wintry cold, is profitable to the earth, to fit it for bearing future harvests, and thus it matures the *morsels of bread* which man will yet win from the soil in due season.—*Genebrardus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 17.—"*Morsels.*" *Or, crumbs.* Gen. xviii. 5; Judges xix. 5. Doubtless the allusion is to hail.—*A. S. Aglen.*

Verse 17.—" It is extremely severe," said his sister to Archbishop Leighton one day, speaking of the season. The good man only said in reply, " But thou, O God, hast made summer and winter."—*From J. N. Pearson's Life of Archbishop Leighton*, 1830.

Verse 18.—"*He sendeth out his word, and melteth them.*" Israel in the captivity had been ice-bound, like ships of Arctic voyagers in the Polar Sea; but God sent forth the vernal breeze of his love, and the water flowed, the ice melted, and they were released. God turned their captivity, and, their icy chains being melted by the solar beams of God's mercy, they flowed in fresh and buoyant streams, like " rivers of the south," shining in the sun. See Ps. cxxvi. 4.

So it was on the day of Pentecost. The winter of spiritual captivity was thawed and dissolved by the soft breath of the Holy Ghost, and the earth laughed and bloomed with spring-tide flowers of faith, love, and joy.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 19.—Here we see God in compassion bending down, in order to communicate to the deeply fallen son of man something of a blessed secret, of which without his special enlightment, the eye would never have seen anything, nor the ear ever have heard.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, on "The Image of Christ."*

Verses 19, 20.—If the publication of the law by the ministry of angels to the Israelites were such a privilege that it is reckoned their peculiar treasure—"*He hath shewed his statutes unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation*"—what is the revelation of the gosel by the Son of God himself? For although the law is obscured and defaced since the fall, yet there are some ingrafted notions of it in human nature; but there is not the least suspicion of the gospel. The law discovers our misery, but the gospel alone shows the way to be delivered from it. If an advantage so great and so precious doth not touch our hearts; and, in possessing it with joy, if we are not sensible of the engagements the Father of mercies hath laid upon us; we shall be the ungratefulest wretches in the world.—*William Bates.*

Verses 19, 20.—That some should have more means of knowing the Creator, others less, it is all from the mercy and will of God. His church hath a privilege and an advantage above other nations in the world; the Jews had this favour above the heathens, and Christians above the Jews; and no other reason can be assigned but his eternal love.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 20.—"*He hath not dealt so with any nation . . . . Praise ye the Lord.*" The sweet Psalmist of Israel, a man skilful in praises, doth begin and end this Psalm with *Hallelujah*. In the body of the Psalm he doth set forth the mercy of God, both towards all *creatures* in general in his common providence, and towards his *church* in particular. So in this close of the Psalm: " He sheweth his word unto Jacob, and his statutes to Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation." In the original 'tis, " He hath not dealt so with *every nation:*" that is, with *any* nation.

In the text you may observe *a position* and *a conclusion*. *A position;* and that is, that God deals in a singular way of mercy with his people above all other people. And then the *conclusion: "Praise ye the Lord."* Doctrine. That God deals in a singular way of mercy with his people, and therefore expects singular praises from his people.—*Joseph Alleine* (1663—1668), *in "A Thanksgiving Sermon."*

Verse 20.—See the wonderful goodness of God, who besides the light of nature, has committed to us the sacred Scriptures. The heathen are enveloped in ignorance. *"As for his judgments, they have not known them."* They have the oracles of the Sybils, but not the writings of Moses and the apostles. How many live in the region of death, where the bright star of Scripture has never appeared! We have the blessed Book of God to resolve all our doubts, and to point out a way of life to us. " Lord, how is it thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? "—John xiv. 22.—*Thomas Watson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Praise. Its profit, pleasure, and propriety.—*J. F.*

Verse 1.—The Reasonable Service. I. The methods of praise: by word, song, life; individually, socially. II. The offerers of praise: "ye." III. The object of praise: " the Lord, our God." IV. The reasons for praise: it is " good," " pleasant," " becoming."—*C. A. D.*

Verses 1—3.—I. The Privilege of Praising God. 1. It is good. 2. Pleasant. 3. Becoming. II. The Duty of Praising God. 1. For gathering a church for himself among men: " The Lord doth build up Jerusalem." 2. For the materials of which it is composed: " The outcasts," etc. 3. For the preparation of those materials for his purpose: " He healeth," etc., verse 3.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The Lord is Architect, Builder, Sustainer, Restorer, and Owner of the Church. In each relation let him be praised.

Verse 2.—The Great Gatherer. I. Strange persons sought for. II. Special search and means made use of. III. Selected centre to which he brings them. IV. Singular exhibition of them for ever and ever in heaven.

Verse 2.—First the church built and then the sinners gathered into it. A prosperous state of the church within necessary to her increase from without.

Verse 2.—See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1302: " Good Cheer for Outcasts."

Verse 2.—Upbuilding and In gathering. I. The church may be in a fallen condition. II. Its upbuilding is the Lord's work. III. He accomplishes it by gathering together its outcast citizens.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 3.—See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 53: " Healing for the Wounded."

Verse 3.—God a true physician, and a tender nurse.—*J. F.*

Verses 3, 4.—Heaven's Brilliants, and Earth's Broken Hearts. I. The Proprietor of the Stars with the Wounded. The stars left kingless for broken hearts. Jehovah! with lint and liniment and a woman's hand. Who binds together the stars, shall bind firmly grieved hearts. II. The Gentle Heart-healer with the Stars. Be all power entrusted to such tenderness. Its comely splendour. God guides the stars with an eye on wounded hearts. The hopefulness of prayer. III. Hearts, Stars, and Eternity. Some hearts shall " shine as the stars." Some stars shall expire in "blackness of darkness." God's hand and eye are everywhere making justice certain. Trust and sing.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 3, 4.—God's Compassion and Power. I. Striking diversity of God's cares: " hearts " and " stars." II. Wonderful variety of God's operations. Gently caring for human hearts. Preserving the order, regularity, and stability of creation. III. Blessed results of God's work. Broken hearts healed; wounds bound up. Light, harmony, and beauty in the heavens. IV. Mighty encouragement to trust in God. God takes care of the universe; may I not entrust my life, my soul, to him? Where he rules unquestioned there is light and harmony; let me not resist his will in my life.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 5.—A contemplation of God's greatness. I. Great in his essential nature. II. Great in power. III. Great in wisdom. Let us draw inferences concerning the insignificance of man, &c.

Verse 6.—Reversal. I. In the estimate of the world the meek are cast down

and the wicked lifted up. II. In the judgment of heaven the meek are lifted up and the wicked cast down. III. The judgment of heaven will, in the end, be found the true one.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 7.—The use and benefit of singing.

Verse 8.—God in all. The unity of his plan ; the co-operation of divine forces ; the condescending mercy of the result.

Verse 9.—See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 672 : " The Ravens' Cry."

Verse 11.—The singularity of our God, and of his favour. For which he is to be praised. I. *The objects of that favour distinguished.* 1. From physical strength. 2. From mental vigour. 3. From self-reliance. 4. From mere capacity for service. II. *The objects of that favour described.* 1. By emotions relating to God. 2. By the weakest forms of spiritual life. 3. By the highest degrees of it ; for the maturest saint fears and hopes. 4. By the sacred blend of it. Fear of our guilt, hope of his mercy. Fear of self, confidence in God. Hope of perseverance, fear of sinning. Hope of heaven, fear of coming short. Hope of perfection, mourning defects. III. *The blessing of that favour implied.* 1. God loves to think of them. 2. To be with them. 3. To minister to them. 4. To meet them in their fears and their hopes. 5. To reward them for ever.

Verse 11.—He takes pleasure in their persons, emotions, desires, devotions, hopes, and characters.—*W. W.*

Verse 12.—I. The Lord whom we praise. II. His praise in our houses—Jerusalem. III. Our praise in his house—Zion.

Verse 13.—A Strong Church. I. The utility and value of a strong church. II. The marks which distinguish it. 1. Gates well kept. 2. Increase of membership. 3. The converts blessed to others. III. The important care of a strong church : to trace all blessing to Zion's God.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 14, 15.—See " Spurgeon's Sermons,'" No. 425 : " Peace at Home, and Prosperity Abroad."

Verses 14, 15.—Church blessings. I. Peace. II. Food. III. Missionary energy. IV. The presence of God : the source of all blessing.

Verse 15 (*second clause*).—See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1607 : " The Swiftly Running Word."

Verse 16.—The unexpected results of adversity : snow acting as wool.

Verses 16—18.—See " Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 670 : " Frost and Thaw."

Verse 19.—I. God's people. II. God's Word. III. God's revelation to the soul. IV. God's praise for this special revelation.

Verse 20.—Electing Grace inspires the Heart with Praise. I. God's love has chosen us. Hallelujah. II. God has entrusted us with his truth. Hallelujah. III. God has made us almoners of his bounty. Hallelujah. IV. God through us is to save the world. Hallelujah.—*W. B. H.*

PSALM CXLVIII.

The song is one and indivisible. It seems almost impossible to expound it in detail, for a living poem is not to be dissected verse by verse. It is a song of nature and of grace. As a flash of lightning flames through space, and enwraps both heaven and earth in one vestment of glory, so doth the adoration of the Lord in this Psalm light up all the universe and cause it to glow with a radiance of praise. The song begins in the heavens, sweeps downward to dragons and all deeps, and then ascends again, till the people near unto Jehovah take up the strain. For its exposition the chief requisite is a heart on fire with reverent love to the Lord over all, who is to be blessed for ever.

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that *be* above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:

8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:

10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory *is* above the earth and heaven.

14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; *even* of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

1. *"Praise ye the LORD."* Whoever ye may be that hear this word, ye are invited, entreated, commanded, to magnify Jehovah. Assuredly he has made you, and, if for nothing else, ye are bound, upon the ground of creatureship, to adore your Maker. This exhortation can never be out of place, speak it where we may; and never out of time, speak it when we may. *"Praise ye the LORD from the heavens."* Since ye are nearest to the High and lofty One, be ye sure to lead the song. Ye angels, ye cherubim and seraphim, and all others who dwell in the precincts of his courts, praise ye Jehovah. Do this as from a starting-point from which the praise is to pass on to other realms. Keep not your worship to yourselves, but let it fall like a golden shower from the heavens on men beneath. *"Praise him in the heights."* This is no vain repetition; but after the manner of attractive poesy the truth is emphasized by reiteration in other words. Moreover, God is not only to be praised *from* the heights, but *in* them: the adoration is to be perfected in the heavens from which it takes its rise. No place is too high for the praises of the most High. On the summit of creation the glory of the Lord is to be revealed, even as the tops of the highest Alps are tipped with the golden light of the same sun which glads the valleys. Heavens and heights become the higher and the more heavenly as they are made to resound with the praises

of Jehovah. See how the Psalmist trumpets out the word "PRAISE." It sounds forth some nine times in the first five verses of this song. Like minute-guns, exultant exhortations are sounded forth in tremendous force—*Praise! Praise! Praise! Praise! Praise! Praise!* "Again they said, Hallelujah." All this praise is distinctly and personally for Jehovah. Praise not his servants nor his works; but praise HIM. Is he not worthy of all possible praise? Pour it forth before HIM in full volume; pour it only there!

2. "*Praise ye him all his angels.*" Living intelligences, perfect in character and in bliss, lift up your loudest music to your Lord, each one of you. Not one bright spirit is exempted from this consecrated service. However many ye be, O angels, ye are all *his* angels, and therefore ye are bound, all of you, to render service to your Lord. Ye have all seen enough of him to be able to praise him, and ye have all abundant reasons for so doing. Whether ye be named Gabriel, or Michael, or by whatever other titles ye are known, praise ye the Lord. Whether ye bow before him, or fly on his errands, or desire to look into his covenant, or behold his Son, cease not, ye messengers of Jehovah, to sound forth his praise while ye move at his bidding. "*Praise ye him, all his hosts.*" This includes angelic armies, but groups with them all the heavenly bodies. Though they be inanimate, the stars, the clouds, the lightnings, have their ways of praising Jehovah. Let each one of the countless legions of the Lord of hosts show forth his glory; for the countless armies are all *his*, his by creation, and preservation, and consequent obligation. Both these sentences claim unanimity of praise from those in the upper regions who are called upon to commence the strain—"*all* his angels, *all* his hosts." That same hearty oneness must pervade the whole orchestra of praising ones; hence, further on, we read of all stars of light, all deeps, all hills, all cedars, and all people. How well the concert begins when all angels, and all the heavenly host, strike the first joyful notes! In that concert our souls would at once take their part.

3. "*Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.*" The Psalmist enters into detail as to the heavenly hosts. As all, so each, must praise the God of each and all. The sun and moon, as joint rulers of day and night, are paired in praise: the one is the complement of the other, and so they are closely associated in the summons to worship. The sun has his peculiar mode of glorifying the Great Father of lights, and the moon has her own special method of reflecting his brightness. There is a perpetual adoration of the Lord in the skies: it varies with night and day, but it ever continues while sun and moon endure. There is ever a lamp burning before the high altar of the Lord. Nor are the greater luminaries allowed to drown with their floods of light the glory of the lesser brilliants, for all the stars are bidden to the banquet of praise. Stars are many, so many that no one can count the host included under the words, "all ye stars"; yet no one of them refuses to praise its Maker. From their extreme brilliance they are fitly named "stars of light"; and this light is praise in a visible form twinkling to true music. Light is song glittering before the eye instead of resounding in the ear. Stars without light would render no praise, and Christians without light rob the Lord of his glory. However small our beam, we must not hide it: if we cannot be sun or moon we must aim to be one of the "stars of light," and our every twinkling must be to the honour of our Lord.

4. "*Praise him, ye heavens of heavens.*" By these are meant those regions which are heavens to those who dwell in our heavens; or those most heavenly of abodes where the most choice of spirits dwell. As the highest of the highest, so the best of the best are to praise the Lord. If we could climb as much above the heavens as the heavens are above the earth, we could still cry out to all around us, "Praise ye the Lord." There can be none so great and high as to be above praising Jehovah. "*And ye waters that be above the heavens.*" Let the clouds roll up volumes of adoration. Let the sea above roar, and the fulness thereof, at the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel. There is something of mystery about these supposed reservoirs of water; but let them be what they may, and as they may, they shall give glory to the Lord our God. Let the most unknown and perplexing phenomena take up their parts in the universal praise.

5. "*Let them praise the name of the LORD; for he commanded, and they were created.*" Here is good argument: The Maker should have honour from his works, they should tell forth *his* praise; and thus they should praise his *name*—by which his character is intended. The name of JEHOVAH is written legibly upon his works,

so that his power, wisdom, goodness, and other attributes are there made manifest to thoughtful men, and thus his name is praised. The highest praise of God is to declare what he is. We can invent nothing which would magnify the Lord: we can never extol him better than by repeating his name, or describing his character. The Lord is to be extolled as creating all things that exist, and as doing so by the simple agency of his word. He cretead by a command; what a power is this! Well may he expect those to praise him who owe their being to him. Evolution may be atheistic; but the doctrine of creation logically demands worship; and hence, as the tree is known by its fruit, it proves itself to be true. Those who were created by command are under command to adore their Creator. The voice which said "Let them be," now saith "Let them praise."

6. *"He hath also stablished them for ever and ever."* The continued existence of celestial beings is due to the supporting might of Jehovah, and to that alone. They do not fail because the Lord does not fail them. Without his will these things cannot alter; he has impressed upon them laws which only he himself can change. Eternally his ordinances are binding upon them. Therefore ought the Lord to be praised because he is Preserver as well as Creator, Ruler as well as Maker. *"He hath made a decree which shall not pass."* The heavenly bodies are ruled by Jehovah's decree: they cannot pass his limit, or trespass against his law. His rule and ordination can never be changed except by himself, and in this sense his decree "shall not pass": moreover, the highest and most wonderful of creatures are perfectly obedient to the statutes of the Great King, and thus his decree is not passed over. This submission to law is praise. Obedience is homage; order is harmony. In this respect the praise rendered to Jehovah from the "bodies celestial" is absolutely perfect. His almighty power upholds all things in their spheres, securing the march of stars and the flight of seraphs; and thus the music of the upper regions is never marred by discord, nor interrupted by destruction. The eternal hymn is for ever chanted; even the solemn silence of the spheres is a perpetual psalm.

7. *"Praise the* LORD *from the earth."* The song descends to our abode, and so comes nearer home to us. We who are "bodies terrestial," are to pour out our portion of praise from the golden globe of this favoured planet. Jehovah is to be praised not only *in* the earth but *from* the earth, as if the adoration ran over from this planet into the general accumulation of worship. In the first verse the song was "from the heavens"; here it is going "from the earth"; songs coming down from heaven are to blend with those going up from earth. The "earth" here meant is our entire globe of land and water: it is to be made vocal everywhere with praise. *"Ye dragons, and all deeps."* It would be idle to enquire what special sea-monsters are here meant; but we believe all of them are intended, and the places where they abide are indicated by "all deeps." Terrible beasts or fishes, whether they roam the earth or swim the seas, are bidden to the feast of praise. Whether they float amid the teeming waves of the tropics, or wend their way among the floes and bergs of polar waters, they are commanded by our sacred poet to yield their tribute to the creating Jehovah. They pay no service to man; let them the more heartily confess their allegiance to the Lord. About "dragons" and "deeps" there is somewhat of dread, but this may the more fitly become the bass of the music of the Psalm. If there be aught grim in mythology, or fantastic in heraldry, let it praise the incomprehensible Lord.

8. *"Fire and hail."* Lightning and hailstones go together. In the plagues of Egypt they co-operated in making Jehovah known in all the terrors of his power. Fire and ice-morsels are a contrast in nature, but they are combined in magnifying the Lord. *"Snow and vapours."* Offsprings of cold, or creations of heat, be ye equally consecrated to his praise. Congealed or expanded vapours, falling flakes or rising clouds, should, rising or falling, still reveal the praises of the Lord. *"Stormy winds fulfilling his word."* Though rushing with incalculable fury, the storm-wind is still under law, and moves in order due, to carry out the designs of God. It is a grand orchestra which contains such wind-instruments as these! He is a great leader who can keep all these musicians in concert, and direct both time and tune.

9. *"Mountains and all hills."* Towering steeps and swelling knolls alike declare their Creator. "All hills" are to be consecrated; we have no longer Ebal and Gerizim, the hill of the curse and the hill of the blessing, but all our Ebals are turned to Gerizims. Tabor and Hermon, Lebanon and Carmel, rejoice in the name of the Lord. The greater and the lesser mounts are one in their adoration. Not

only the Alps and the mountains of the Jura thunder out his praise; but our own Cotswolds and Grampians are vocal with songs in his honour. *"Fruitful trees and all cedars."* Fruit trees and forest trees, trees deciduous or evergreen, are equally full of benevolent design, and alike subserve some purpose of love; therefore for all and by all let the great Designer be praised. There are many species of cedar, but they all reveal the wisdom of their Maker. When kings fell them, that they may make beams for their palaces, they do but confess their obligation to the King of trees, and to the King of kings, whose trees they are. Varieties in the landscape are produced by the rising and falling of the soil, and by the many kinds of trees which adorn the land: let all, and all alike, glorify their one Lord. When the trees clap their hands in the wind, or their leaves rustle in the gentle breath of Zephyr, they do to their best ability sing out unto the Lord.

10. *"Beasts, and all cattle."* Animals fierce or tame; wild beasts and domestic cattle; let all these show forth the praises of Jehovah. Those are worse than beasts who do not praise our God. More than brutish are those who are wilfully dumb concerning their Maker. *"Creeping things, and flying fowl."* The multitudes that throng the earth and the air; insects of every form and birds of every wing are called upon to join the universal worship. No one can become familiar with insect and bird life without feeling that they constitute a wonderful chapter in the history of divine wisdom. The minute insect marvellously proclaims the Lord's handiwork: when placed under the microscope it tells a wondrous tale. So, too, the bird which soars aloft displays in its adaptation for an aerial life an amount of skill which our balloonists have in vain attempted to emulate. True devotion not only hears the praises of God in the sweet song of feathered ministrels, but even discovers it in the croaking from the marsh or in the buzz of "the bluefly which singeth in the window-pane." More base than reptiles, more insignificant than insects, are songless men.

11. *"Kings of the earth, and all people: princes, and all judges of the earth."* Now the poet has reached our own race, and very justly he would have rulers and subjects, chieftains and magistrates, unite in worshipping the sovereign Lord of all. Monarchs must not disdain to sing, nor must their people refrain from uniting with them. Those who lead in battle and those who decide in courts must neither of them allow their vocations to keep them from reverently adoring the Chief and Judge of all. All people, and all judges, must praise the Lord of all. What a happy day it will be when it is universally acknowledged that through our Lord Jesus, the incarnate Wisdom, "kings reign and princes decree justice"! Alas, it is not so as yet! kings have been patrons of vice, and princes ringleaders in folly. Let us pray that the song of the Psalmist may be realized in fact.

12. *"Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children."* Both sexes and all ages are summoned to the blessed service of song. Those who usually make merry together are to be devoutly joyful together: those who make up the ends of families, that is to say, the elders and the juveniles, should make the Lord their one and only end. Old men should by their experience teach children to praise; and children by their cheerfulness should excite old men to song. There is room for every voice at this concert: fruitful trees and maidens, cedars and young men, angels and children, old men and judges—all may unite in this oratorio. None, indeed, can be dispensed with: for perfect Psalmody we must have the whole universe aroused to worship, and all parts of creation must take their parts in devotion.

13. *"Let them praise the name of the* LORD." All that is contained in the name or character of Jehovah is worthy of praise, and all the objects of his creating care will be too few to set it forth in its completeness. *"For his name alone is excellent."* It alone deserves to be exalted in praise, for alone it is exalted in worth. There is none like unto the Lord, none that for a moment can be compared unto him. His unique name should have a monopoly of praise. *"His glory is above the earth and heaven:"* it is therefore alone because it surpasses all others. His royal splendour exceeds all that earth and heaven can express. He is himself the crown of all things, the excellency of the creation. There is more glory in him personally than in all his works united. It is not possible for us to exceed and become extravagant in the Lord's praise: his own natural glory is infinitely greater than any glory which we can render to him.

14. *"He also exalteth the horn of his people."* He hath made them strong, famous, and victorious. His goodness to all his creatures does not prevent his having a

special favour to his chosen nation: he is good to all, but he is God to his people. He lifts up the down-trodden, but he in a peculiar manner lifts up his people. When they are brought low he raises up a horn for them by sending them a deliverer; when they are in conflict he gives them courage and strength, so that they lift up their horn amid the fray; and when all is peaceful around them, he fills their horn with plenty, and they lift it up with delight. *"The praise of all his saints."* He is their glory: to him they render praise; and he by his mercy to them evermore gives them further reasons for praise, and higher motives for adoration. He lifts up their horn, and they lift up his praise. He exalts them, and they exalt him. The Holy One is praised by holy ones. He is their God, and they are his saints; he makes them blessed, and they bless him in return. *"Even of the children of Israel."* The Lord knoweth them that are his. He knows the name of him with whom he made a covenant, and how he came by that name, and who his children are, and where they are. All nations are bidden in verse 11 to praise the Lord; but here the call is specially addressed to his elect people, who know him beyond all others. Those who are children of privilege should be children of praise. *"A people near unto him,"* near by kin, and near by care; near as to manifestation and near as to affection. This is a highly honourable description of the beloved race; and it is true even more emphatically of the spiritual Israel, the believing seed. This nearness should prompt us to perpetual adoration. The Lord's elect are the children of his love, the courtiers of his palace, the priests of his temple, and therefore they are bound beyond all others to be filled with reverence for him, and delight in him. *"Praise ye the* LORD," or, *Hallelujah.* This should be the Alpha and Omega of a good man's life. Let us praise God to the end, world without end. The field of praise which lies before us in this Psalm is bounded at beginning and end by landmarks in the form of Hallelujahs, and all that lieth between them is every word of it to the Lord's honour. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Psalms cxlviii.—cl.—The last three Psalms are *a triad of wondrous praise*, ascending from praise to higher praise, until it becomes "joy unspeakable and full of glory"—exultation which knows no bounds. The joy overflows the soul, and spreads throughout the universe; every creature is magnetized by it, and drawn into the chorus. Heaven is full of praise, the earth is full of praise, praises rise from under the earth, "every thing that hath breath" joins in the rapture. God is encompassed by a loving, praising creation. Man, the last in creation, but the first in song, knows not how to contain himself. He dances, he sings, he commands all the heavens, with all their angels, to help him, "beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl" must do likewise, even "dragons" must not be silent, and "all deeps" must yield contributions. He presses even dead things into his service, timbrels, trumpets, harps, organs, cymbals, high-sounding cymbals, if by any means, and by all means, he may give utterance to his love and joy.—*John Pulsford.*

Whole Psalm.—In this splendid anthem the Psalmist calls upon the whole creation, in its two great divisions (according to the Hebrew conception) of heaven and earth, to praise Jehovah: things with and things without life, beings rational and irrational, are summoned to join the mighty chorus. This Psalm is the expression of the loftiest devotion, and it embraces at the same time the most comprehensive view of the relation of the creature to the Creator. Whether it is exclusively the utterance of a heart filled to the full with the thought of the infinite majesty of God, or whether it is also an anticipation, a prophetic forecast, of the final glory of creation, when at the manifestation of the sons of God, the creation itself also shall be redeemed from the bondage of corruption (Rom. viii. 18—23), and the homage of praise shall indeed be rendered by all things that are in heaven and earth and under the earth, is a question into which we need not enter.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—Milton, in his Paradise Lost (Book V., line 153, etc.), has elegantly imitated this Psalm, and put it into the mouth of Adam and Eve as their morning hymn in a state of innocency.—*James Anderson.*

Whole Psalm.—Is this universal praise never to be realized? is it only the longing, intense desire of the Psalmist's heart, which will never be heard on earth, and can only be perfected in heaven? Is there to be no jubilee in which the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands? If there is to be no such day, then is the word of God of none effect; if no such universal anthem is to swell the chorus of heaven, and to be re-echoed by all that is on earth, then is God's promise void. It is true, in this Psalm our translation presents it to us as a call or summons for everything that hath or hath not breath to praise the Lord—or as a petition that they may praise; but it is in reality a prediction that they *shall* praise. . . . This Psalm is neither more nor less than a glorious prophecy of that coming day, when not only shall the knowledge of the Lord be spread over the whole earth, as the waters cover the sea, but from every created object in heaven and in earth, animate and inanimate, from the highest archangel through every grade and phase of being, down to the tiniest atom—young men and maidens, old men and children, and all kings and princes, and judges of the earth, shall unite in this millennial anthem to the Redeemer's praise.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise ye the* LORD," etc. All things praise, and yet he says, "*Praise ye.*" Wherefore doth he say, "*Praise ye,*" when they are praising? Because he delighteth in their praising, and therefore it pleaseth him to add, as it were, his own encouragement. Just as, when you come to men who are doing any good work with pleasure in their vineyard or in their harvest-field, or in some other matter of husbandry, you are pleased at what they are doing, and say, "Work on," "Go on"; not that they may begin to work, when you say this, but, because you are pleased at finding them working, you add your approbation and encouragement. For by saying, "Work on," and encouraging those who are working, you, so to speak, work with them in wish. In this sort of encouragement, then, the Psalmist, filled with the Holy Ghost, saith this.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—The thrice-repeated exhortation, "*Praise . . Praise . . Praise,*" in this first verse is not merely imperative, nor only hortative, but it is an exultant hallelujah.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*From the heavens: praise him in the heights.*" Or, high places. As God in framing the world begun above, and wrought downward, so doth the Psalmist proceed in this his exhortation to all creatures to praise the Lord.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise him in the heights.*" The principle applied in this verse is this, that those who have been exalted to the highest honours of the created universe, should proportionately excel in their tribute of honour to him who has exalted them. —*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1.—Bernard, in his sermon on the death of his brother Gerard, relates that in the middle of his last night on earth his brother, to the astonishment of all present, with a voice and countenance of exultation, broke forth in the words of the Psalmist—"*Praise the Lord of heaven, praise him in the heights!*"

Verse 2.—"*Praise ye him, all his angels.*" Angels are first invoked, because they can praise God with humility, reverence, and purity. The highest are the humblest, the leaders of all created hosts are the most ready themselves to obey.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"*Praise ye him, all his angels.*" The angels of God were his first creatures; it has even been thought that they existed prior to the inanimate universe. They were already praising their Maker before the light of day, and they have never ceased their holy song. Angels praise God best in their holy service. They praised Christ as God when they sang their *Gloria in Excelsis* at the Incarnation, and they praised him as man when they ministered to him after his temptation and before his crucifixion. So also now angels praise the Lord by their alacrity in ministering to his saints.—*John Lorinus.*

Verse 2.—"*Praise ye him, all his hosts.*" That is, his creatures (those above especially which are as his *cavalry*) called his "hosts," for, 1, Their number; 2, their order; 3, their obedience.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*Praise ye him, sun and moon,*" etc. How does the *sun* specially praise Jehovah? 1. By its beauty. Jesus son of Sirach calls it the "globe of beauty." 2. By its fulness. Dion calls it "the image of the Divine capacity."

3. By its exaltation. Pliny calls it *cæli rector*, "the ruler of heaven." 4. By its perfect brightness. Pliny adds that it is "the mind and soul of the whole universe." 5. By its velocity and constancy of motion. Martian calls it "the Guide of Nature."

God the Supreme was depicted by the ancients holding in his hand a wreath of stars, to show the double conception, that they both obey and adorn him.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verses 3, 4.—Let the sun, the fount of light, and warmth, and gladness, the greater light which rules the day, the visible emblem of the Uncreated Wisdom, the Light which lighteth every man, the centre round whom all our hopes and fears, our wants and prayers, our faith and love, are ever moving,—let the moon, the lesser light which rules the night, the type of the Church, which giveth to the world the light she gains from the Sun of Righteousness,—let the stars, so vast in their number, so lovely in their arrangement and their brightness, which God hath appointed in the heavens, even as he hath appointed his elect to shine for ever and ever,—let all the heavens with all their wonders and their worlds, the depths of space above, and the waters which are above the firmament, the images of God's Holy Scripture and of the glories and the mysteries contained therein,—let these ever praise him who made and blessed them in the beginning of the creation.—*J. W. Burgon.*

Verses 3, 4.—

Praise him, thou golden-tressèd sun;
Praise him, thou fair and silver moon,
And ye bright orbs of streaming light;
Ye floods that float above the skies,
Ye heav'ns, that vault o'er vault arise,
Praise him, who sits above all height.

Richard Mant.

Verse 4.—"*Praise him, ye heavens of heavens*," etc. From the heavenly inhabitants the poetic strain passes in transition to the *heavens* themselves. There are orders of heavens, ranks and heights supreme, and stages and degrees of lower altitude. This verse sublimely traverses the immensities which are the home of the most exalted dignities who wait on Deity, and then it descends to the firmament where the meteors flash forth, and where the heavens stoop to lift the clouds that aspire from earth. And the idea sustained is that all these vast realms, higher and lower, are one temple of unceasing praise.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—The ancients thought there was an ethereal and lofty ocean in which the worlds floated like ships in a sea.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verses 5, 6.—This is the account of creation in a word—He spake; it was done. When Jesus came, he went everywhere showing his Divinity by this evidence, that his word was omnipotent. These verses declare two miracles of God's Will and Word, viz., the creation and consolidation of the earth. Jehovah first produced matter, then he ordered and established it.—*John Lorinus.*

Verse 6.—"*He hath also stablished them for ever and ever*," etc. Here two things are set before us, the permanence and the cosmic order of creation. Each created thing is not only formed to endure, in the type or the development, if not in the individual, but has its place in the universe fixed by Gods decree, that it may fulfil its appointed share of working out his will. They raise a question as to the words "*for ever and ever*," how they can be reconciled with the prophecy, Isaiah lxv. 17: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind"; a prophecy confirmed by the Lord himself, saying, "Heaven and earth shall pass away," and seen fulfilled in vision by the beloved disciple. Matt. v. 18; Rev. xxi. 1. And they answer that just as man dies and rises again to incorruption, having the same personality in a glorified body, so will it be with heaven and earth. Their qualities will be changed, not their identity, in that new birth of all things.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 6.—"*For ever and ever.*"

My heart is awed within me, when I think
Of the great miracle which still goes on,
In silence, round me—the perpetual work
Of thy creation, finished, yet renewed,
For ever.

William Cullen Bryant, 1794—1878.

Verse 6.—"*He hath made a decree,*" etc. Rather, *He hath made an ordinance, and will not trangress it.* This is more obvious and natural than to supply a new subject to the second verb, " and none of them transgress it." This anticipates, but only in form, the modern scientific doctrine of the inviolability of natural order. It is the imperishable faithfulness of God that renders the law invariable.—*A. S. Aglen.*

Verse 7.—"*Dragons.*" The word *tanninim,* rendered "*dragons,*" is a word which may denote whales, sharks, serpents, or sea-monsters of any kind (Job vii. 1 ; Ezek. xxix. 3).—*John Morison.*

Verse 7.—"*Sea-monsters,*" in Revised Version. Fishes constrain our admiration, as a created wonder, by the perfection of their form, their magnitude, their adaptation to the element they inhabit, and their multitude. Thus their very nature praises the Creator.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verses 7, 8.—He calls to the *deeps, fire, hail, snow, mountains, and hills,* to bear a part in this work of praise. Not that they are able to do it actively, but to show that man is to call in the whole creation to assist him passively, and should have so much charity to all creatures as to receive what they offer, and so much affection to God as to present to him what he receives from him. *Snow* and *hail* cannot bless and praise God, but man ought to bless God for those things, wherein there is a mixture of trouble and inconvenience, something to molest our sense, as well as something that improves the earth for fruit.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verses 7—10.—Here be many things easy to be understood, they are clear to every eye ; as when David doth exhort " kings " and " princes," " old men " and " babes " to praise God ; that is easy to be done, and we know the meaning as soon as we look on it ; but here are some things again that are hard to be understood, dark and obscure, and they are two :—

First, in that David doth exhort *dumb, unreasonable, and senseless creatures* to praise God, such as cannot hear, at least cannot understand. Doth the Holy Ghost in the gospel bid us avoid impertinent speeches, and vain repetitions, and shall we think he will use them himself ? No, no. But,

Secondly, not only doth he call upon these creatures, but also he calls upon the "*deeps*" and the "*seas*" to praise God ; these two things are hard to be conceived. But to give you some reasons.

The first reason may be this, why David calls upon the unreasonable creatures to perform this duty,—*He doth his duty like a faithful preacher,* whether they will hear or no that he preaches to, yet he will discharge his soul : a true preacher, he speaks forth the truth, and calls upon them to hear, though his auditors sleep, are careless, and regard it not. So likewise doth David, in this sense, with these creatures ; he doth his duty, and calls upon them to do it, though they understand not, though they comprehend it not. And likewise he doth it to show his vehement desire for all creatures to praise God.

The second reason may be this : *he doth it craftily,* by way of policy, to incite others to perform this duty, that if such creatures as they ought to do this, then those that are above them in degree have more cause, and may be ashamed to neglect it ; as an ill-governed master, though he stay himself at home, yet he will send his servants to church : so David, being conscious of his own neglect, yet he calls upon others not to be slack and negligent : though he came infinitely short of that he should do, yet he shows his own desire for all creatures to perform this duty.

But if these reasons will not satisfy you, though they have done many others, a third reason may be this : *to set forth the sweet harmony that is among all God's creatures ;* to show how that all the creatures being God's family, do with one consent speak and preach aloud God's praise ; and therefore he calls upon some above him, some below him, on both sides, everywhere, to speak God's praise ; for every one in their place, degree, and calling, show forth, though it be in a dumb sense and way, their Creator's praise.

Or, fourthly, and lastly, which I think to be a good reason : *zeal makes men speak and utter things impossible ;* the fire of zeal will so transport him that it will make him speak things unreasonable, impossible, as Moses in his zeal desired God, for the safety of Israel, " to blot his name out of his book " ; and Paul wished himself " anathema," accursed or separate from Christ, for his brethren's salvation, which was a thing impossible, it could not be.—*John Everard, in "Some Gospel Treasures,"* 1653.

Verses 7—10.—The ox and the ass acknowledge their master. The winds and the sea obey him. It should seem that as there is a religion above man, the religion of angels, so there may be a religion beneath man, the religion of dumb creatures. For wheresoever there is a service of God, in effect it is a religion. Thus according to the several degrees and difference of states—the state of nature, grace, and glory—religion may likewise admit of degrees.—*G. G., in a sermon entitled "The Creatures Praysing God,"* 1662.

Verse 8.—This verse arrays in striking order three elements that are ever full of movement and power—*ignea, aquea, aërea ;* fire (or caloric), water (or vapour), and air (or wind). The first includes meteors, lightnings and thunders ; the second, snow, hoar-frost, dew, mist and rain; the third breezes, tempests and hurricanes. —*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 8.—*"Fire and hail."* These are contrasted with one another. *"Snow and mist."* The mist is the vapour raised by the heat of the sun, and therefore suitably contrasted with the snow, which is the effect of cold. *"Stormy wind"* (Ps. cvii. 25), which accompanies the changes of temperature in the air.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 8.—*"Snow."* As sure as every falling flake of winter's snow has a part in the great economy of nature, so surely has every Word of God which falls within the sanctuary its end to accomplish in the moral sphere. I have stood on a winter's day, and seen the tiny flakes in little clouds lose themselves one by one in the rushing river. They seemed to die to no purpose—to be swallowed up by an enemy which ignored both their power and their existence. And so have I seen the Word of God fall upon human hearts. Sent of God, from day to day and from year to year, I have seen it dropping apparently all resultless into the fierce current of unbelief—into the fiercer gulf-stream of worldliness which was sweeping through the minds and the lives of the hearers. But as I stood upon the river's bank and looked upon what seemed to be the death of the little fluttering crystal, a second thought assured me that it was but death into life, and that every tiny flake which wept its life away in the rushing waters, became incorporate with the river's being. So when I have seen the Word of God fall apparently fruitless upon the restless, seething, rushing current of human life, a recovered faith in the immutable declaration of God has assured me that what I looked upon was not a chance or idle death, but rather the falling of the soldier, after that he had wrought his life-force into the destiny of a nation and into the history of a world. And so it must ever be. The Word of God ever reaches unto its end.—*S. S. Mitchell, in a Sermon entitled "The Coming of the Snow and the Coming of the Word,"* 1884.

Verse 8.—The *"stormy wind"* is the swift messenger of God, Ps. cxlvii. 15. The hurricane fulfils the divine command. See Matt. viii. 27. "Even the winds and the sea obey him." The *"wind"* is the minister of judgment. See Ezek. xiii. 13. The words of this verse have special use ; for men are exceedingly apt to ascribe the violence of tempests to blind chance.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 8.—The half-learned man is apt to laugh at the simple faith of the clown or savage, who tells us that rain comes from God. The former, it seems, has discovered that it is the product of certain laws of air, water, and electricity. But truly the peasant is the more enlightened of the two, for he has discovered the main cause, and the real Actor, while the other has found only the second cause, and the mere instrument. It is as if a friend were to send us a gift of ingenious and beautiful workmanship, and just as our gratitude was beginning to rise to the donor, some bystanders were to endeavour to damp it all, by telling us that the gift is the product of certain machinery he had seen.—*James MacCosh,* 1811.

Verse 9.—*"Mountains and all hills,"* etc.—The diversifying of the face of the earth with higher and lower parts, with mountains, hills, and valleys, and the adorning of the face thereof with trees of varied sorts, contributeth much to the praise of God. —*David Dickson.*

Verse 9.—*"Mountains and all hills."* What voices have the hills ! How solemn the sounds of the mountains from their sublime solitudes ! The mountains thunder, and the hills re-echo ; but they speak peace and send down plenty to the vales in running rivulets.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 9.—*"Fruitful trees and all cedars."* The praise of God is in the rustling voices of the trees. They fulfil his purpose in giving fruit to refresh, and shelter and

shadow for a covert, and their murmur is the soft cadence that chants mercy and grace. In India, the ancients reported that the trees were worshipped as divine, and death was a penalty awarded to those who cut them down. In classic mythology the groves were the homes of gods. Jehovah decreed that an ark of safety for man, and also a temple for himself, should be constructed of wood. Thus more than any other created things, the trees of the wood have redounded to his glory.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 9.—"*Fruitful trees.*" Rather *fruit trees;* the fruit-bearing tree being representative of one division of the vegetable world, planted and reared by man; the "cedars" of the other, which are (Ps. civ. 16) of God's own plantation. So in verse 10 we have *wild* animals and *domesticated* animals.—*A. S. Aglen.*

Verse 9.—"*Trees.*"

> All creatures of the eternal God but man,
> In several sorts do glorify his name;
> Each tree doth seem ten thousand tongues to have,
> With them to laud the Lord omnipotent;
> Each leaf that with wind's gentle breath doth wave,
> Seems as a tongue to speak to that intent,
> In language admirably excellent.
> The sundry sorts of fragrant flowers do seem
> Sundry discourses God to glorify,
> And sweetest volumes may we them esteem;
> For all these creatures in their several sort
> Praise God, and man unto the same exhort.
>
> *Peter Pett*, 1599.

Verse 9.—"*All cedars.*" Beautiful indeed is the pine forest in all seasons: in the freshness of spring, when the gnarled boughs are penetrated and mollified by the soft wind and the warm sun, and, thrilled with new life, burst out into fringes and tassels of the richest green, and cones of the tenderest purple; beautiful in the sultry summer, when among its cool, dim shadows the heated hours all day sing vespers, while the open landscape is palpitating in the scorching heat; beautiful in the sadness of autumn, when its unfading verdure stands out in striking relief amid changing scenes, that have no sympathy with anything earthly save sorrow and decay, and directs the thoughts to the imperishableness of the heavenly Paradise; beautiful exceedingly in the depth of winter, when the tiers of branches are covered with pure, unsullied wreaths of snow, sculptured by the wind into curves of exquisite grace. It is beautiful in calm, when the tree-tops scarce whisper to each other, and the twitter of the golden wren sounds loud in the expectant hush; it is more than beautiful in storm, when the wild fingers of the wind play the most mournful music on its great harp-strings, and its full diapason is sublime as the roar of the ocean on a rock-bound shore. I do not wonder that the northern imagination in heathen times should have invested it with awe and fear as the favourite haunt of Odin and Thor; or that, in after times, its long rows of trunks, vanishing in the dim perspective, should have furnished designs for the aisles of Christian temples, and the sunset, burning among its fretted branches, should have suggested the gorgeous painted window of the cathedral. It looks like a place made for worship, all its sentiments and associations seem of a sacred and solemn character. Nature, with folded hands, as Longfellow says, seems kneeling there in prayer. It certainly reminds us in various ways of the power, wisdom, and goodness of him who thus spake by the mouth of his prophet: "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."—*Hugh Macmillan, in "Bible Teachings in Nature,"* 1867.

Verse 10.—"*Creeping things.*" In public worship all should join. The little strings go to make up a concert, as well as the great.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 10.—"*Flying fowl.*" Thus the air is vocal. It has a hallelujah of its own. The "*flying fowl*" praise him; whether it be "the stork that knoweth her appointed time" (Jer. viii. 7), or "the sparrow alone upon the housetop" (Ps. cii. 7), or "the raven of the valley" (Prov. xxx. 17), or the eagle "stirring up her nest, and fluttering over her young" (Deut. xxxii. 11), or the turtle making its voice to be heard in the land (Song. ii. 12), or the dove winging its way to the wilderness (Ps. lv. 6). This is creation's harp (truer and sweeter than Memnon's), which each sunrise

awakens, "turning all the air to music."—*Horatius Bonar, in "Earth's Morning; or, Thoughts on Genesis,"* 1875.

Verse 11.—"*Kings of the earth, and all people; princes.*" As kings and princes are blinded by the dazzling influence of their station, so as to think the world was made for them, and to despise God in the pride of their hearts, he particularly calls them to this duty; and, by mentioning them first, he reproves their ingratitude in withholding their tribute of praise when they are under greater obligations than others. As all men originally stand upon a level as to condition, the higher persons have risen, and the nearer they have been brought to God, the more sacredly are they bound to proclaim his goodness. The more intolerable is the wickedness of kings and princes who claim exemption from the common rule, when they ought rather to inculcate it upon others, and lead the way. He could have addressed his exhortation at once summarily to all men, as indeed he mentions *people* in general terms; but by thrice specifying *princes* he suggests that they are slow to discharge the duty, and need to be urged to it.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 11.—"*Kings of the earth*"; "*judges of the earth*"; these are not proud but humiliating titles; for *earthly* kings and *earthly* judges will not be kings and judges long.

Verse 12.—"*Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children.*" The parties are mentioned by couples, being tied two and two together. "*Young men and maidens; old men and children.*" And here is a double *caveat;* first, against presumption; and secondly, against despair. First, that the younger sort might desire to praise God, they are exhorted to address themselves to the service of God, to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Secondly, for aged men, that they might not doubt of the acceptation of their service, our Prophet exhorts them also. For the first, you know, David calls upon the sun and the moon to praise God. Should the sun reply, I will not do it in the morning, or at noon time, but when I am about to set? or the moon reply, I will not in the full, but in the wane? or the tree, not in the spring time, or in the summer, but at the fall of the leaf? So likewise, thou young man, defer not the time of praising God: take the swing of thy youth, and do not defer to apply thyself to the service of God till thy old age; but remember that for all these things thou shalt come to judgment. He that styles himself by the title *I AM,* cares not for I will be, or I have been, but he that is at this present: take heed, therefore, thou strong and lusty young man: the Devil that holds thee now will every day tie a new cord about thee. Consider this, you that are yet young, whom the morning sun of light adorns with his glorious rays: everyone doth not live to be old. Let us not procrastinate in God's service; for the longer we defer to serve God, the farther God's grace is distant from us, and the dominion of Satan is more strengthened in our hearts; the more we delay, the more is our debt, the greater our sin, and the less our grace. I will commend this lesson unto all. He that doth not repent to-day hath a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in. I shall conclude with a hearty exhortation for us all, of what sex, age, and degree soever; I could wish that all our lives might end like this book of Psalms, in blessing and praising Almighty God.—*Thomas Cheshire, in "A Sermon preached in Saint Paule's Church,"* 1641.

Verse 12.—"*Old men.*" Think not, ye who are now near the end of life, that your tongues may without blame be silent in the praises of the Lord, because you are come to those years in which men say, they "have no pleasure in them." Were you not frequently praising God when you were children and young men? Have you less, or have you not greater, reason now to praise God than in those early days of life?

Old men ought to be better qualified than young persons to show forth the glory both of the perfections and works of God, because they have enjoyed more time, and more abundant opportunities than their juniors, for attaining the knowledge of God, and of those glorious perfections and works which furnish us with endless materials for praise. "Days should speak, and the multitude of years should teach wisdom."

The heavens are constantly declaring "the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Have you, then, lived twenty thousand days and twenty thousand nights? What deep impressions ought to be made upon your spirits,

of those wonders which have been preached in your ears or eyes, ever since you could use your bodily senses as ministers to your intellectual powers! All the works of God praise him, by showing forth how wonderful in power, and goodness, and wisdom, the Creator is. Your tongues are indeed inexcusable, if they are silent in the praises of him whose glory is proclaimed by every object above or around them, and even by every member of their own bodies, and every faculty of their souls. But old men are doubly inexcusable, if they are inattentive to those precious instructions which are given them by all the works of God which they have seen, or of which they have been informed, every day since the powers of their rational natures began to operate.

But old men in this highly favoured land have been blessed with more excellent instructions than those which are given them by the mountains and fruitful valleys, by the dragons of the desert or the deep, or by the fowls of heaven and the beasts of the earth, or by the sun and stars of heaven. For many more years than young men or maidens you have been learners, or you are very blamable if you have not been at the school of Christ. You were early taught to read the Word of God. In the course of fifty or sixty years, you have probably heard six thousand religious discourses from the ministers of Christ, not to mention other excellent means you have enjoyed for increasing in the knowledge of God. "For the time," says Paul to the Hebrew Christians, "ye might have been teachers." May I not say the same to all aged Christians, who have had the Bible in their possession, and have enjoyed opportunities of frequenting the holy assemblies from their earliest days? May it not be expected that your hearts and your mouths will be filled with the praises of God, not only as your Maker, but as your Redeemer?

But there are many things more especially relating to themselves, which should induce the aged to abound in this duty of praise to God.

Consider how long you have lived. Is not every day of life, and even every hour, and every moment, an undeserved mercy? You might have been cut off from the breast and the womb, for you were conceived in iniquity and born in sin. How many of your race have been cut off before they could distinguish between their right hand and their left, before they could do good or evil! Since you were moral agents, not a day has passed in which you were not chargeable with many sins. What riches of long-suffering is manifested in a life of sixty or seventy years! If you have lived in a state of sin all that time, have you not reason to be astonished, that you are not already in a condition which would for ever render it impossible for you to utter the voice of praise? Give glory, therefore, to that God who has still preserved you alive.

Consider with what mercies your days have been filled up. God's mercies have been new to you every morning, although every day you have sinned against him.

Reflections on your own conduct through life will suggest to you many reasons for praise and thanksgiving. But on this part of the subject it is proper to put you in mind of the two great classes into which men are divided: saints and sinners. If you belong to the former class, who is it that has made you to differ from others? Give thanks to him who delivered you from the power of darkness, and translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son. Have you been enabled to do some good works in the course of your lives? For every one of them bless God, who wrought "in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Have any of your endeavours been successful to bring about the reformation of any of your fellow-men, or to promote their spiritual welfare? What sufficient thanks can you render to God for making you the humble ministers of his grace?

But there are too many of the old who have no reason to think that they have yet passed from death to life. These, certainly, are very unfit to praise God, and will not be able to praise him with their hearts, unless that change pass upon them, without which no man shall ever enter into the kingdom of heaven. Yet, surely, they have great reason to praise the Lord; and they may see good reason for it, although they cannot carry their knowledge into practice. You have, indeed, greater reason to praise God that you are in the land of the living than those who are in a better state; because, if you were deprived of your present life, nothing is left for you but the terrors of eternal death. Bless God, ye who have lived fifty or sixty years in sin, and have been all along spared in a world so full of mercy. You are still called by the gospel to receive that salvation which you have long treated with contempt.—*Condensed from a Sermon by George Lawson* (1749—1820), *entitled, "The Duty of the Old to praise God."*

Verse 12.—"*Old men and children.*" It is interesting always to see a friendship between the old and the young. It is striking to see the aged one retaining so much of freshness and simplicity as not to repel the sympathies of boyhood. It is surprising to see the younger one so advanced and thoughtful, as not to find dull the society of one who has outlived excitability and passion.—*Frederick William Robertson.*

Verses 12, 13.—The Psalms are church songs, and all who belong to the church are to sing them. "*Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children; let th m praise the name of the* LORD." The ripe believer who can triumph in the steadfast hope of God's glory, is to lend his voice to swell the song of the church when she cries to God out of the depths; and the penitent, who is still sitting in darkness, is not to refrain his voice when the church pours out in song her sense of God's love. The whole church has fellowship in the Psalms.—*William Binnie, in "The Psalms, their History, Teachings, and Use,"* 1870.

Verses 12, 13.—"*Old men . . . Let them praise the name of the* LORD." It is a favourite speculation of mine that if spared to sixty we then enter on the seventh decade of human life, and that this, if possible, should be turned into the Sabbath of our earthly pilgrimage and spent sabbatically, as if on the shores of an eternal world, or in the outer courts, as it were, of the temple that is above, the tabernacle in heaven.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 13.—"*Let them praise.*" Exactly as at the close of the first great division of the anthem (verse 5), and, in the same way as there, the reason for the exhortation follows in the next clause. But it is a different reason. It is no longer because he has given them a decree, bound them as passive, unconscious creatures by a law which they cannot transgress. (It is the fearful mystery of the reasonable will that it can transgress the law.) It is because his name is exalted, so that the eyes of men can see, and the hearts and tongues of men confess it; it is because he has graciously revealed himself to, and mightily succoured, the people whom he loves, the nation who are near to him. If it be said that what was designed to be a Universal Anthem is thus narrowed at its close, it must be remembered that, however largely the glory of God was written on the visible creation, it was only to the Jew that any direct revelation of his character had been made.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 13.—"*The name of Jehovah.*" Jehovah is a name of great power and efficacy, a name that hath in it five vowels, without which no language can be expressed; a name that hath in it also three syllables, to signify the Trinity of Persons, the eternity of God, One in Three, and Three in One; a name of such dread and reverence amongst the Jews, that they tremble to name it, and therefore they use the name *Adonai* (Lord) in all their devotions. And thus ought every one to stand in awe, and sin not by taking the name of God in vain; but to sing praises, to honour, to remember, to declare, to exalt, and bless it; for holy and reverend, only worthy and excellent is his name.—*Rayment,* 1630.

Verse 14.—"*His people, the praise of all his saints.*" But among all, one class in particular is called on to praise him, for they have an additional motive for so doing, namely, "*his people,*" and "*his saints.*" As man above all the creatures, so among men his elect or chosen, who are the objects of his special grace, and, above all, of his redeeming love. "*He also exalteth the horn of his people*"—exalts them, one and all, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and consequent on this, from the dust of earth to the glory of heaven. "*The praise of all his saints*"; and, yet again, among them, of one people in particular—"*even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.*" "*Near to him*" of old, and yet again to be—yea, nearest of all the peoples of the earth—when he recalls them from their dispersion, and again places his name and his throne among them. HALLELUJAH—PRAISE YE THE LORD.—*William De Burgh.*

Verse 14.—"*A people near unto him.*" Jesus took our nature, and became one with us; thus he is "*near*" unto us; he gives us his Holy Spirit, brings us into union with himself, and thus we are near to him. This is our highest honour, an unfailing source of happiness and peace. We are near to him in point of *relation,* being his children; near to him in point of *affection,* being loved with an everlasting love; we are near to him in point of *union,* being members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; we are near to him in point of *fellowship,* walking with him as a man walketh with his friend; we are near to him in point of *attention,* being the objects of his daily, hourly, tender care; we shall soon be near to him in point of *locality,*

when our mansion is prepared, for we shall depart to be with Christ, which is far better. We are near to him when poor, and when deeply tried; and if ever nearer at one time than another, we shall be nearest to him in death. If we are near unto him, he will sympathize with us in all our sorrows, assist us in all our trials, protect us in all our dangers, hold intercourse with us in all our lonely hours, provide for us in all seasons of necessity, and honourably introduce us to glory. Let us realize this fact daily—we are near and dear to our God.—*James Smith.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—I. What is implied in the invitation to the natural creation to praise God. 1. That praise is due to God on its account. 2. That it is due from those for whose benefit it was created. 3. That it is a reproof to those who do not praise God who are actually capable of it. "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." II. What is implied in the invitation to innocent beings to praise God. "Praise ye the Lord from the heavens. Praise ye him all his angels, praise ye him all his hosts:" verses 1, 2.—1. That they owe their creation in innocence to God. 2. That they owe their preservation in innocence to him. 3. That they owe the reward of their innocence to him. III. What is implied in the invitation to fallen beings to praise God: "Kings of the earth and all people," etc.: verses 11—13.—1. That God is merciful and ready to forgive. "Not willing that any should perish," etc. They would not be called upon to praise God if they were irrecoverably lost. Our Lord would not when on earth accept praise from an evil spirit. 2. That means of restoration from the fall are provided by God for men. Without this they would have no hope, and could offer no praise. IV. What is implied in the invitation to the redeemed to praise God: verse 14.—1. That God is their God. 2. That all his perfections are engaged for their present and eternal welfare.—*G. R.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise ye the Lord.*" I. The Voice—of Scripture. of nature, of grace, of duty. II. The Ear on which it rightly falls—of saints and sinners, old and young, healthy and sick. It falls on our ear. III. The Time when it is heard. Now, ever, yet also at special times. IV. The Response which we will give. Let us now praise with heart, life, lip.

Verse 1 (*second and third clauses*).—I. The character of the praises of heaven. II. How far they influence us who are here below. III. The hope which we have of uniting in them.

Verse 2.—I. The angels as praiseful servants. II. The other hosts of God, and how they praise him. III. The rule without exception: "*all—all.*" Imagine one heavenly being living without praising the Lord!

Verse 3.—I. God's praise continual both day and night. II. Light the leading fountain of this praise. III. Life behind all, calling for the praise.

Verses 5, 6.—Creation and conversation, two chief reasons for praise.

Verse 7.—God's praise from dark, deep, and mysterious things.

Verse 8.—Canon Liddon preached in St. Paul's on Sunday afternoon, December 23, 1883, and took for his text Ps. cxlviii. 8, "*Wind and storm fulfilling his word.*" He spoke of the divine use of destructive forces. I. In the physical world we see wind and storm fulfilling God's word. 1. The Bible occasionally lifts the veil, and shows us how destructive forces of Nature have been the servants of God. 2. Modern history illustrates this vividly. II. In the human, spiritual, and moral world, we find new and rich application of the words of the text. 1. In the State we see the storm of invasion and the storm of revolution fulfilling God's word. 2. In the Church we see the storm of persecution and the storm of controversy fulfilling God's word. 3. In the experience of individual life we see outward troubles, and inward storms of religious doubts fulfilling God's word.—*The Contemporary Pulpit*, 1884.

Verse 9.—"*Trees.*" The glory of God as seen in trees.

Verse 10.—The wildest, the quietest, the most depressed, and the most aspiring should each have its song.

Verses 11—13.—I. The universal King. Alone in excelling. Supreme in glory.

II. The universal summons. Of all nations, ranks, classes and ages. Foreshadowing the Judgment. III. The universal duty: praise,—constant, emphatic, growing. —*W. B. H.*

Verse 12.—God to be served by strength and beauty, experience and expectation.

Verse 12.—"*And children.*" A Children's Address. I. Where the children are found (verses 11 and 12). In royal and distinguished society: yet not lost or overlooked. II. What they are called to. "Praise the Lord." Even they have abundant reason. III. What are the lessons of the subject? 1. Children should come up with their parents on the Sabbath. 2. Children should unite in heart and voice in God's praises. 3. Children should seek fitness for this praise by believing in Christ.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 14.—The Favoured People and their God. I. What he does for them. II. What he makes them: "Saints." III. Who they are: "Children of Israel." IV. Where they are: "Near unto him." V. What they do for him: "Praise ye the Lord."

PSALM CXLIX.

We are almost at the last Psalm, and still among the Hallelujahs. This is "a new song," evidently intended for the new creation, and the men who are of new heart. It is such a song as may be sung at the coming of the Lord, when the new dispensation shall bring overthrow to the wicked and honour to all the saints. The tone is exceedingly jubilant and exultant. All through one hears the beat of the feet of dancing maidens, keeping time to the timbrel and harp.

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, *and* his praise in the congregation of saints.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

6 *Let* the high *praises* of God *be* in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;

7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, *and* punishments upon the people;

8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

1. *"Praise ye the LORD."* Specially you, ye chosen people, whom he has made to be his saints. You have praised him aforetime, praise him yet again; yea, for ever praise him. With renewed zeal and fresh delight lift up your song unto Jehovah. *"Sing unto the Lord a new song."* Sing, for it is the fittest method for expressing reverent praise. Sing a hymn newly composed, for you have now a new knowledge of God. He is ever new in his manifestations; his mercies are new every morning; his deliverances are new in every night of sorrow; let your gratitude and thanksgivings be new also. It is well to repeat the old; it is more useful to invent the new. Novelty goes well with heartiness. Our singing should be "unto the Lord"; the songs we sing should be of him and to him, "for of him, and to him, and through him are all things." Among our novelties there should be new songs: alas! men are fonder of making new complaints than new Psalms. Our new songs should be devised in Jehovah's honour; indeed all our newest thoughts should run towards him. Never can we find a nobler subject for a song than the Lord, nor one more full of fresh matter for a new song, nor one which we are personally so much bound to sing as a new song "unto the Lord." *"And his praise in the congregation of saints."* Saints are precious, and a congregation of saints is a treasure house of jewels. God is in the midst of saints, and because of this we may well long to be among them. They are so full of his praise that we feel at home among them when we are ourselves full of praise. The sanctuary is the house of praise as well as the house of prayer. All saints praise God: they would not be saints if they did not. Their praise is sincere, suitable, seasonable, and acceptable. Personal praise is sweet unto God, but congregated praise has a multiplicity of sweetnesses in it. When holy ones meet, they adore the Holy One. Saints do not gather to amuse themselves with music, nor to extol one another, but to sing his praise whose

saints they are. A congregation of saints is heaven upon earth: should not Jehovah, the Lord of saints, have all the praise that can come from such an assembly? Yet at times even saintly conclaves need to be stirred up to thanksgiving; for saints may be sad and apprehensive, and then their spirits require to be raised to a higher key, and stimulated to happier worship.

2. *"Let Israel rejoice in him that made him."* Here is that new creation which calls for the new song. It was Jehovah who made Israel to be Israel, and the tribes to become a great nation: therefore let the Founder of the nation be had in perpetual honour. Joy and rejoicing are evidently to be the special characteristics of the new song. The religion of the dead in sin is more apt to chant dirges than to sing hallelujahs; but when we are made new in the spirit of our minds we joy and rejoice in him that made us. Our joy is in our God and King: we choose no lower delight. *"Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."* Those who had seen the tribes formed into a settled kingdom as well as into a united nation should rejoice. Israel is the nation, Zion is the capital of the kingdom: Israel rejoices in her Maker, Zion in her King. In the case of our God we who believe in him are as glad of his Government as we are of his Creation: his reign is as truly the making of us as was his divine power. The children of Israel are happy to be made a people; the children of Zion are equally happy to be ruled as a people. In every character our God is the source of joy to us: this verse issues a permit to our joy, yea it lays an injunction upon us to be glad in the Lord.

3. *"Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp."* Thus let them repeat the triumph of the Red Sea, which was ever the typical glory of Israel. Miriam led the daughters of Israel in the dance when the Lord had triumphed gloriously; was it not most fit that she should? The sacred dance of devout joy is no example, nor even excuse, for frivolous dances, much less for lewd ones. Who could help dancing when Egypt was vanquished, and the tribes were free? Every mode of expressing delight was bound to be employed on so memorable an occasion. Dancing, singing, and playing on instruments were all called into requisition, and most fitly so. There are unusual seasons which call for unusual expressions of joy. When the Lord saves a soul its holy joy overflows, and it cannot find channels enough for its exceeding gratitude: if the man does not leap, or play, or sing, at any rate he praises God, and wishes for a thousand tongues with which to magnify his Saviour. Who would wish it to be otherwise? Young converts are not to be restrained in their joy. Let them sing and dance while they can. How can they mourn now that their Bridegroom is with them? Let us give the utmost liberty to joy. Let us never attempt its suppression, but issue in the terms of this verse a double license for exultation. If any ought to be glad it is the children of Zion; rejoicing is more fit for Israel than for any other people: it is their own folly and fault that they are not oftener brimming with joy in God, for the very thought of him is delight.

4. *"For the* LORD *taketh pleasure in his people;"* and therefore they should take pleasure in him. If our joy be pleasing to him let us make it full. What condescension is this on Jehovah's part, to notice, to love, and to delight in his chosen! Surely there is nothing in our persons, or our actions, which could cause pleasure to the Ever-blessed One, were it not that he condescends to men of low estate. The thought of the Lord's taking pleasure in us is a mine of joy never to be exhausted. *"He will beautify the meek with salvation."* They are humble, and feel their need of salvation; he is gracious, and bestows it upon them. They lament their deformity and he puts a beauty upon them of the choicest sort. He saves them by sanctifying them, and thus they wear the beauty of holiness, and the beauty of a joy which springs out of full salvation. He makes his people meek, and then makes the meek beautiful. Herein is grand argument for worshipping the Lord with the utmost exultation: he who takes such a pleasure in us must be approached with every token of exceeding joy.

God taketh pleasure in all his children as Jacob loved all his sons; but the meek are his Josephs, and upon these he puts the coat of many colours, beautifying them with peace, content, joy, holiness, and influence. A meek and quiet spirit is called "an ornament," and certainly it is "the beauty of holiness." When God himself beautifies a man, he becomes beautiful indeed and beautiful for ever.

The verse may be read, "He shall beautify the meek with salvation," or "He shall beautify the afflicted with deliverance," or, "He shall beautify the meek with victory"; and each of these readings gives a new shade of meaning, well

worthy of quiet consideration. Each reading also suggests new cause for joyful adoration. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord."

5. *"Let the saints be joyful in glory."* God has honoured them, and put a rare glory upon them; therefore let them exult therein. Shall those to whom God is their glory be cast down and troubled? Nay, let their joy proclaim their honourable estate. *"Let them sing aloud upon their beds."* Their exultation should express itself in shouts and songs, for it is not a feeling of which they have any need to be ashamed. That which is so fully justified by fact, may well be loudly proclaimed. Even in their quietest retreats let them burst into song; when no one hears them, let them sing aloud unto God. If confined by sickness let them joy in God. In the night watches let them not lie awake and weep, but like nightingales let them charm the midnight hours. Their shouts are not now for the battlefield, but for the places of their rest: they can peacefully lie down and yet enjoy the victory with which the Lord has beautified them. Without fighting, faith wins and sings the victory. What a blessing to have our beds made into thrones, and our retirements turned into triumphs!

6. *"Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand."* It seems they are not always on their beds, but are ready for deeds of prowess. When called to fight, the meek are very hard to overcome; they are just as steady in conflict as they are steadfast in patience. Besides, their way of fighting is of an extraordinary sort, for they sing to God but keep their swords in their hands. They can do two things at a time: if they do not wield the trowel and the sword, at least they sing and strike. In this Israel was not an example, but a type: we will not copy the chosen people in making literal war, but we will fulfil the emblem by carrying on spiritual war. We praise God and contend with our corruptions; we sing joyfully and war earnestly with evil of every kind. Our weapons are not carnal, but they are mighty, and wound with both back and edge. The word of God is all edge; whichever way we turn it, it strikes deadly blows at falsehood and wickedness. If we do not praise we shall grow sad in our conflict; and if we do not fight we shall become presumptuous in our song. The verse indicates a happy blending of the chorister and the crusader.

Note how each thing in the believer is emphatic: if he sings, it is high praises, and praises deep down in his throat, as the original hath it; and if he fights, it is with the sword, and the sword is two-edged. The living God imparts vigorous life to those who trust him. They are not of a neutral tint: men both hear them and feel them. Quiet is their spirit, but in that very quietude abides the thunder of an irresistible force. When godly men give battle to the powers of evil each conflict is high praise unto the God of goodness. Even the tumult of our holy war is a part of the music of our lives.

7. *"To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people."* This was once literally the duty of Israel: when they came into Canaan they fulfilled the righteous sentence of the Lord upon guilty nations. At this hour, under the gentler dispensation of grace, we wrestle not with flesh and blood; yet is our warfare none the less stern, and our victory none the less sure. All evil shall eventually be overthrown: the Lord shall display his justice against evil-doers, and in that warfare his servants shall play their parts. The saints shall judge the world. Both the conflict and the victory at the end of it shall cause glory to God, and honour to his holy ones.

8. *"To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron."* Thus are the greatest enemies of Jehovah and his people reduced to shame, rendered helpless, and themselves punished. This was Israel's boast in actual fact, it is ours spiritually. The chief powers of evil shall be restrained and ultimately destroyed. Those who made captives of the godly shall themselves be made captive. The powers of evil cannot bind *our* King, but by his power *their* king shall be bound with a great chain, and shut up in the bottomless pit, that he may at length be trodden under the feet of saints.

9. *"To execute upon them the judgment written."* Israel as a nation had this to do, and did it, and then they rejoiced in the God who gave success to their arms. *We* praise our God after another fashion; we are not executioners of justice, but heralds of mercy. It would be a sad thing for any one to misuse this text: lest any warlike believer should be led to do so, we would remind him that the execution must not go beyond the sentence and warrant; and we have received no warrant of execution against our fellow men. Christians have no commission of vengeance;

it is theirs to execute the command of mercy, and that alone. *"This honour have all his saints."* All the godly shared in the triumphs of the Lord when he smote Israel's foes. *We* have like honour, but it is shown in victories of another sort. All the holy ones are sent upon errands by their holy Lord. The honours described in this Psalm are common to all the family of grace; and such service as the Lord appoints is to be undertaken by every one of them, without exception. The Lord honours all his chosen here, and he will glorify them all hereafter: this rule is without exception. Surely in this we have the best argument for glorifying the Lord, wherefore we close our new song with another Hallelujah, *"Praise ye the Lord."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The foregoing Psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator; this is a hymn to the Redeemer.—*Matthew Henry.*

Whole Psalm.—The New Testament spiritual church cannot pray as the Old Testament national church here prays. Under the illusion that it must be used as a prayer without any spiritual transmutation, Psalm cxlix. has become the watchword of the most horrible errors. It was by means of this Psalm that Caspar Scloppius, in his *Classicum Belli Sacri*, which, as Bakius says, is written, not with ink, but with blood, inflamed the Roman Catholic princes to the Thirty Years' Religious War. And in the Protestant church Thomas Müntzer stirred up the War of the Peasants by means of this Psalm. We see that the Christian cannot make such a Psalm directly his own, without disavowing the apostolic warning, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. x. 4). The praying Christian must therefore transpose the letter of this Psalm into the spirit of the New Covenant.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 1.—*"A new song";* for this Psalm is a song of renovation. If Israel when restored and renewed had new cause for rejoicing, much more should the New Covenant Israel feel constrained to strike the new note of triumph. Infidels blaspheme, the ungrateful murmur, the thoughtless are silent, the mournful weep, all acting according to their old nature; but new men take up a new mode, which is the divinely-inspired song of peace, charity, and joy in the Lord.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 1.—*"A new song."*—The old man hath an old song, the new man a new song. The Old Testament is an old song, the New Testament is a new song. . . . . Whoso loveth earthly things singeth an old song: let him that desireth to sing a new song love the things of eternity. Love itself is new and eternal; therefore is it ever new, because it never groweth old.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—*"Saints."*—A title not to be restricted to the godly of the first times, but common to all that are saved in all after-times also, as Eph. iv. 12. This name putteth mere morality and formal profession out of countenance, as the sun doth a glow-worm. Saintship is a matter of Divine workmanship, and therefore it is far more remarkable than human excellence. We should keep up the name of "saints," that the reality of the true religion be not lowered by avoiding this title; for in these times it is to be feared that the name is out of use, because holiness itself is out of fashion.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2.—*"Let Israel rejoice,"* etc. Give us, oh, give us the man who sings at his work! Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time—he will do it better—he will persevere longer. One is scarcely sensible of fatigue whilst he marches to music. The very stars are said to make harmony as they revolve in their spheres. Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its powers of endurance. Efforts to be permanently useful must be uniformly joyous—a spiritual sunshine—graceful from very gladness—beautiful because bright.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

Verse 2.—*"Rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful."*

You are never right until you can be heartily merry in the Lord, nor until you can enjoy mirth in connection with holiness.—*Walter Marshall.*

Verse 2.—"*Him that made him.*" Jehovah is called *Maker*, as one who formed Israel as a nation, and constituted the people a kingdom, though they had been a race of slaves. This is more than a general creation of men.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—Literally the Hebrew here brings forward the mystic doctrine of the Trinity, for it reads, " Let Israel rejoice in God *his Makers.*"—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 2.—"*Joyful in their King.*" I beg the reader to remark with me, here is nothing said of Israel being joyful in what their king had done for them. These things in their proper place, became sweet subjects of praise. But the subject of praise in which Israel is now to be engaged is Jesus himself. Reader, pause over this apparently small, but most important, distinction. The Lord is gracious in his gifts, gracious in his love, gracious in his salvation. Every thing he gives, it is from his mercy, and ever to be so acknowledged. But Jesus' gifts are not himself: I cannot be satisfied with his gifts, while I know that to others he gives his *Person.* It is JESUS himself I want. Though he give me all things that I need, yet if he be to me himself all things that I need, in him I have all things. Hence, therefore, let us see that Jesus not only gives us all, but that he is our all.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 3.—"*The dance*" was in early times one of the modes of expressing religious joy (Ex. xv. 20 ; 2 Sam. vi. 16). When from any cause men's ideas shall undergo such a revolution as to lead them to do the same thing for the same purpose, it will be time enough to discuss that matter. In our time, dancing has no such use, and cannot, therefore, in any wise be justified by pleading the practice of pious Jews of old.—*William Swan Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.*" They who from hence urge the use of music in religious worship, must, by the same rule, introduce dancing, for they went together, as in David's dancing before the ark (Judges xxi. 21). But whereas many Scriptures in the New Testament keep up singing as a gospel ordinance, none provide for the keeping up of music and dancing; the gospel canon for Psalmody is to " sing with the spirit and with the understanding." —*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*Timbrel.*" The *toph* was employed by David in all the festivities of religion (2 Sam. vi. 5). The occasions on which it was used were mostly joyful, and those who played upon it were generally females (Psalm lxviii. 25), as was the case among most ancient nations, and is so at the present day in the East. The usages of the modern East might adequately illustrate all the scriptural allusions to this instrument, but happily we have more ancient and very valuable illustration from the monuments of Egypt. In these we find that the tambourine was a favourite instrument, both on sacred and festive occasions. There were three kinds, differing, no doubt, in sound as well as in form ; one was circular, another square or oblong, and the third consisted of two squares separated by a bar. They were all beaten by the hand, and often used as an accomplishment to the harp and other instruments. The tambourine was usually played by females, who are represented as dancing to its sound without the accompaniment of any other instrument.—*John Kitto.*

Verse 3.—"*Harp.*" Of the *kinnor* the Scripture affords little further information than that it was composed of the sounding parts of good wood, and furnished with strings. Josephus asserts that it was furnished with ten strings, and played with a *plectrum ;* which, however, is not understood to imply that it never had any other number of strings, or was always played with the *plectrum.* David certainly played it with the hand (1 Sam. xvi. 23 ; xviii. 10 ; xix. 9) ; and it was probably used in both ways, according to its size. That this instrument was really a *harp* is now very generally denied (*Kitto*). The reader will, by this time, have balanced the probabilities as to the nature and construction of the *kinnor ;* and most likely he will be led to think that it was either a *guitar* or *lyre*, a belief which seems to be gaining ground, on account of the aptitude of such instruments for the uses to which the *kinnor* was devoted.—*J. Stainer.*

Verse 4.—"*For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people.*" In the text there are two causes assigned why the saints should be excited to praise the Lord, and to be joyful in their King.

I.—THE DELIGHT WHICH THE LORD HAS IN THE SAINTS. " He taketh pleasure

in his people." In this statement there are three subjects for inquiry, namely: 1. *Who* are the Lord's people? 2. *Why* he takes pleasure in them? 3. *In what respects* he takes pleasure in them?

1. *Who are the Lord's people?* Many are the names and titles given to them in Scripture. We find one in the second clause of the text; but it equally belongs to the first. "He will beautify *the meek*." The scriptural term "*meekness*" is one which singularly characterizes and distinguishes the true Christian. It, in fact, contains in itself a combination of graces, which are most evidently the fruit of the Spirit, and can grow on no other tree than on the Christian vine. *Meekness*, as a Christian grace, may be considered as it respects both God and man. As it respects God, it implies poverty of spirit; humiliation of heart arising from a sense of guilt and a feeling of corruption; submission to God's will; silence and patience under his rod; acquiescence with his dispensations; and a surrender of our own natural desires and inclinations to his overruling appointments. As it respects man, meekness comprehends lowliness of mind, and a readiness to prefer others before ourselves; gentleness of disposition and behaviour; forbearance under provocations; forgiveness of injuries; quietness of spirit, and moderation in pushing forward our own interest and benefit. These are the qualities which distinguish "*the meek*." Are not these, my brethen, the graces and tempers and dispositions which characterize and adorn true Christians? *They* are, in an especial manner, "*the meek* upon earth." In fact, there are, and can be, no others to whom this title really belongs. No man in his natural state can be *meek*, in the Scriptural sense of the word.

2. But *why* does the Lord "take pleasure" in them? Is there anything in them of *their own*, which he can regard with complacency and delight? No: they know and feel that they have no pretensions of this kind. It is not for their sake, but for his own sake; for his name's, his truth's, and his mercy's sake, that he has now a favour unto them. The Lord "taketh pleasure in his people," because they are his people; those whom he has purchased by his blood, renewed by his Spirit, and redeemed by his power. He "taketh pleasure in them," because in them he is himself honoured and glorified; because he sees in them the travail of his soul, the fruit of his suffering and mediation; because of the work which he has already begun in them; because they already exhibit some traces of his own image, some transcript of that mind which was in him, who was "meek and lowly in heart."

3. *In what respects* the Lord takes pleasure in his people. First: the Lord takes pleasure in them, inasmuch as he delights in *the exercise of their graces towards him*. They all believe in him, and have faith in his word and promises; they rely on his truth and power; they hope in his mercy; they fear his displeasure; they love his person and name. Secondly: the Lord hath pleasure in *the services* of his people. It is true, that they can do but little for him, and that little is nothing worth. At the best they can but render to him of his own again. But he regards their services, not with an eye to their intrinsic value in themselves, but for the sake of the willing mind from which they flow. He takes pleasure in their poor attempts to please him, because they are attempts. He weighs not the worth or merit of the action, but the principle and motive from which it springs. Thirdly: the Lord hath pleasure in the *prosperity* of his people. His name is love; his nature is goodness; and can we doubt but that he loves to see his people happy? Nay, we are expressly told that "he rejoiceth over them with joy"; that "he rejoiceth over them to do them good." Even in those dispensations which in themselves are grievous and painful he is seeking their good, and in the end promoting their happiness. What consolations do these reflections furnish to the *meek* and suffering servants of the Lord!

II.—Let us now consider THE LORD'S GRACIOUS DESIGNS concerning his people: "*He will beautify them with salvation.*" He designs not only to save, but to adorn and honour his people. Those "whom he justifies, them he also glorifies." He "will *beautify* them with salvation"; a promise relating both to the present life and to the future one.

1. *To the present life.* It is the purpose of God to beautify his people with salvation in this world. There are many passages in the Scripture which intimate this purpose, and lead us to this view of the happy effects of religion, even in the present life. When the prodigal returned home to his father's house, contrite, penitent, and reformed, he was not only received with kindness, assured of forgiveness,

and welcomed as a son, but he was *adorned* and *beautified* (Luke xv. 22). So in the forty-fifth Psalm, the Church, the bride of Christ, is thus described: "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework." "So shall he greatly desire thy *beauty.*" See also Eph. v. 25—27.

But what is the glory, the beauty, which is here meant in these passages, with which Christ will adorn and beautify his people? It is "the beauty of holiness." We have already seen that the meek and quiet spirit by which the Christian is distinguished is an "ornament" to him; and we read in another place that he is "adorned" with good works. It is the great object of the gospel to sanctify all who embrace it, to restore them to the image of God which they have lost through sin.

2. We may now consider this promise as it relates *to the future world.* Lovely and glorious as are the saints on earth, their beauty falls far short of the perfection to which it will attain hereafter. They are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son"; and when they awake up in another world, it will be after his likeness, without any remaining blemish, defect or spot. Carry forward your thoughts to the morning of the resurrection, when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, this mortal immortality; when the body, raised in honour and glory, shall be clothed in its beauteous apparel, and being made like unto Christ's glorious body, shall shine as the sun in the firmament; when now, once more united to its kindred and sanctified spirit, it shall no longer be a weight, and a clog, and a hindrance, but become a furtherer of its joy, and a sharer and a helper in its spiritual happiness. This is the meaning of the text, this is the *beauty* which he has designed for his people, and for which he is now preparing them. In the contemplation of these, with reason may it be said to them, "Praise ye the Lord." —*Condensed from a Sermon by Edward Cooper*, 1826.

Verse 4.—Here in *ratio propositionis*, the important reason of the proposed praising of the Lord. Those who know that they are objects of Divine complacency are likely to act on the principle of reciprocity. God takes pleasure in sanctifying, justifying and glorifying them; they must surely take pleasure in extolling him as Friend, Protector, Law-giver, Leader, King, God!—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse4.—"*He will beautify the meek with salvation.*" Meekness not only gives great peace of mind, but often adds a lustre to the countenance. We only read of three in Scripture whose faces shone remarkably —viz., Christ, Moses, and Stephen —and they were eminent for meekness.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*The meek.*" In the Hebrew עֲנִיִּים, *anavim*, means *poor and afflicted ones;* but the term came afterwards to be applied to *merciful persons*, as bodily afflictions have a tendency to subdue pride, while abundance begets cruelty.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—"*Let the saints be joyful,*" etc. Here begins a beautiful exegesis of the former passage. A protected people may rejoice with confidence. An anxious and fearful people could not sing aloud on their couches of repose.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 5.—"*Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.*" At what time soever God is pleased to inspire his grace and comfort into us, we ought to rejoice therein, and by night on the bed to seek him whom our soul loveth; abridging that time of rest and ease, that it may become as beneficial unto us as the day itself. David was not satisfied by offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving in the courts of the Lord's house, and paying his vows in the presence of all the people; but in the night also he would continue his song of God's mercy. Like that excellent bird, the nightingale, which is never weary nor spent by continuing her delightful notes, so this sweet singer of Israel was incessant in praising the Lord; not giving sleep to his eyes until he had blessed his holy name. In time of affliction he made his bed to swim, praying unto the Lord to return and deliver his soul. Now in prosperity he gives thanks for the blessings he doth receive. When our bones are vexed, and our sleep departeth from us, we pray unto God to deal mercifully with us; but when our diseases are healed, we do not return thanks, being soon overtaken with heaviness and security. And yet David did endeavour to watch in the night, that he might sing praise unto the Lord. He did not then only meditate in the law of God, when he could not take any rest (as Ahasuerus had the book of the records of the Chronicles read before him, when he could not sleep); for now he might lie down in peace, and sleep, when God made him to dwell in safety.

Much less did he intend to procure sleep by a sinister performance of any good duty, like those who, by singing, or reading, or hearing, or meditating will have an unworthy aim to bring themselves asleep. David saith, *"Let the saints sing aloud upon their beds" :* thereby to testify their cheerful devotion, and also to chase away the spirit of slumber.—*William Bloys, in "Meditations upon the xlii. Psalm,"* 1632.

Verse 5.—*"The saints in glory"* shall rest from their labours, but not from their praises.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 5.—*"Upon their beds,"* where before in the loneliness of night they consumed themselves with grief for their shame. Comp. Hosea vii. 14.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5.—The saints of God know most of domestic joy and peace. As the word of Jesus in John xiv. records, they have sorrows in plenty, but the more of these, the greater will be their joy, because their sorrows are to be transmuted into joys. They are to sing aloud *" on their beds,"* or rather couches, for on these the Orientals not only sleep, but also dine, and feast. So this verse calls on the saints to hold a banquet, a feast of fat things. They are, as David sings in Ps. xxiii., to sit at the table prepared by the Lord in the presence of their enemies. —*Johannes Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 5.—This verse has been fulfilled in solemn crises of saintly life. On beds of death, and at the scaffold and the stake, joy and glory have been kindled in the hearts of Christ's faithful witnesses.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 5.—How I long for my bed! Not that I may sleep—I lie awake often and long! but to hold sweet communion with my God. What shall I render unto him for all his revelations and gifts to me? Were there no historical evidence of the truth of Christianity, were there no well-established miracles, still I should believe that the religion propagated by the fishermen of Galilee is divine. The holy joys it brings to me must be from heaven Do I write this boastingly, brother? Nay, it is with tears of humble gratitude that I tell of the goodness of the Lord. —*From a private letter from Bapa Padmanji, in "Feathers for Arrows,"* 1870.

Verse 6.—*"Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand."* Praise and power go ever hand in hand. The two things act and react upon each other. An era of spiritual force in the Church is always one of praise; and when there comes some grand outburst of sacred song, we may expect that the people of God are entering upon some new crusade for Christ. Cromwell's Ironsides were sneeringly called Psalm-singers; but God's Psalm-singers are always Ironsides. He who has a " new song in his mouth " is ever stronger, both to suffer " and to labour, than the man who has a dumb spirit and a hymnless heart. When he sings at his work, he will both do more and do it better than he would without his song. Hence, we need not be surprised that all through its history the Church of God has travelled " along the line of music "—*William Taylor, in "The Study,"* 1873.

Verse 6.—*"The high praises of God."* This expression needs a little explication, because so variously rendered by most interpreters; some rendering it only, exaltations of God; others, praisings exalting God; others, sublime praises of God; others, prasies highly uttered unto God: the reason whereof is, because the word *romemoth* in the text signifies sometimes actively, and then it notes the height, exaltation, and lifting up of anything to the observation of others; and sometimes passively, and then it notes the height, worth, excellency of the thing that is exalted, or lifted up, in itself. But the scope and nature of the duty prescribed in the text necessarily comprehends both—as well the high acts for which God is to be praised, as the high praises to be given unto God for those high acts; but especially the latter, namely, the height and excellency of the duty of praise to be performed for those high acts of God. This appears from the whole argument of the Psalm, which is entirely laudatory, as also from the instrument wherewith these high praises are to be performed, namely, the " mouth," *" the high praises of God in their mouth";* showing that the height herein mentioned is a property of man's work in praising God, and not only for the work of God, for which he is to be praised. In my observations I shall comprehend both, and all the particulars in the duty prescribed besides, which is this—

The duty of praising God is a high duty, which must exalt and lift up the high God in it.

This truth I shall labour to demonstrate, 1. From the Object. 2. The Effect.

3. Their Price. 4. Their Performance; or, to use the School terms, they are "*high*": 1. Objectivè. 2. Effectivè. 3. Appreciativè. 4. Perfectivè.

1. The praises of God are "*high*" in relation to their *Object*, which is none other but the Most High God, and that in the consideration of his transcendent height and sublimity over and above all other things or persons: so the Psalmist's resolution intimates (Ps. vii. 17), "I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness," which he expresseth in the following words, "To sing praise to the name of the Lord most high"; and Ps. xcii. 1: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High." In which places, and very many more in the Scriptures, it is evident that the Lord, considered in his highest sublimity, is the object of high praise, and that by most special and peculiar appropriation of it unto himself, and none other (Isa. xlii. 8).

2. In the second place, the praises of God will appear to be of a high, sublime nature, from the high *effect*, the genuine and proper fruit they produce, viz., that although their object to whom they are peculiarly appropriate (I mean the Lord himself) be in his own nature, and of himself, most infinitely high and transcendent, yet by the attribution and performance of praise unto him, doth he account his name, his power, his wisdom, and justice, and himself to be exalted thereby. What else do those expressions in Scripture imply wherein it is asserted, that by this high duty of praise the high Jehovah is exalted (Ps. cviii. 32); His sublime perfections are extolled and lifted up (Ps. lxviii. 4): His great Name is magnified (Luke i. 64); His infinite majesty is glorified (Ps. l. 23)? Oh how high must be that duty, that adds height to the high God, that magnifies the great God, and glorifies the God of glory, and makes him higher, greater, and more glorious than he was before!

3. Thirdly, the praises of God are of a high nature, *appreciativè*, in respect of *the high estimation the Lord himself hath of them*, which appears two ways: (1) By the high price wherewith he purchaseth them; (2) By the high delight he takes in them, after he hath procured them.

First. The *price* wherewith God is willing to purchase them is very high, for not only the expense of all his wisdom, power, and goodness, put forth in creation, not only the layings out of all his counsel, care, love, and faithfulness in providence and preservation; but also the rich treasure of his promises, covenant, grace, yea, the precious blood of his own Son, in our redemption, is given freely, absolutely, intentionally, and ultimately, for no other thing but the purchase of high praises to God (Eph. i. 5, 6). All that God doth and giveth; all that Christ doth and suffereth, is for the praise of the glory of his grace. I confess, consider men's highest praises of God, as they are man's performance, they are poor and inconsiderable things; but consider them as they are the testimonies and expressions of a believing heart, declaring and making known the unspeakable wisdom, faithfulness, bounty, and excellencies of God, exercised in his works; in this notion the Scripture declares the heart of God to be so taken with the desire of them, that he is willing to give heaven, earth, Himself, and Son to poor men for the praises of their hearts, hands, and tongues; and accounts himself abundantly satisfied. Therefore, when his people will speak good of his name, they speak of him in the dialect of angels' notes, "*the high praises of God.*"

Secondly. The high value that God hath of "high praises" will be evident by the *high delight and pleasure* God takes in them thus purchased; for skilful artists, and high-principled, elevated understandings, never take pleasure or delight in any thing or work which is not answerable to their highest principles, and proportionable to their uttermost skill and desire. Now the Lord, who is of the most perfect understanding, and deepest skill and knowledge, declares himself to take infinite delight in his people's praises. It is his solace and pleasure to be attended with them, either in earth or in heaven, by men or angels; and his soul is ravished with the thoughts and contemplation of them.

4. In the fourth place, the praises of God are high, and of a high nature *perfectivè*, that is, in respect of the high measure of grace they are to be attended withal in *their performance:* the Lord requiring the duty of high praise to be performed with a great measure of Scripture-light, with a high degree of effectual faith, and with a more ample proportion of practical holiness than any other of the most solemn exercises of his public worship.—*Condensed from a Sermon by Samuel Fairclough, entitled "The Prisoner's Praise,"* 1650.

Verse 8.—"*To bind their kings with chains,*" etc. Agrippa was captive to Paul.

The word had him in bands like a prisoner, and made him confess against himself before Festus that he was "almost persuaded to be a Christian." Then it was verified which before was prophesied, *"They shall bind kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron."* Oh, the majesty and force of the word!—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 8.—It was once the saying of Pompey, that with one stamp of his foot he could raise all Italy up in arms; and the mighty men of the world may have nations, kingdoms, and commonwealths at their command, but yet God is more powerful than they all. If he do but arise, they shall all of them fly before him. If he once fall to fettering of princes, it shall be done so sure, that no flesh shall be able to knock off their bolts again.—*Stephen Gosson,* 1554—1623.

Verse 9.—*"This honour have all his saints."* All other glories and honours are but feminine, weak, poor things to it. God is their glory; honoured they are with his blessed presence, honoured with his sight, with his embraces; they see him and enjoy him. This is the very glory of their honour, the height and pitch of all, for "in thy presence is joy, and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore," honour advanced into eternal glory; and *"this honour"* also *"have all his saints"*; some *in spe*, and some *in re*, some *in hope*, and some *in deed*; all either in promise or in possession.—*Mark Frank.*

Verse 9.—*"This honour have all his saints."* *"His* saints" emphatically; Divine providence foreseeing that in after ages some would usurp the title of saintship to whom it did not belong. "His saints" exclusively; casting out saint traitors, as Beckett and Garnet; saint hypocrites, and many others; who, in the same sense as *auri sacra fames*, may be termed *sacri*, or *sancti*, saints. But, what honour have all his saints? Mark what went before—"as it is written"; but by whom, and where? Though chapters and verses be of later date, the Holy Spirit might have cited the book. O no! He, to quicken our industry, refers us to the Word at large. However, "search the Scriptures," and therein we shall meet with many honours afforded to the saints; both whilst they were living, and when they were dead.

Honour to their memories is sometimes paid them very abundantly, even by those who formerly were so niggardly and covetous as not to afford them a good word in their lifetime.

Many are made converts by the godly ends of good men; as the centurion himself, who attended and ordered the crucifying of Christ, after his expiring broke forth into that testimony of him,—"Verily, this was the Son of God." So, such as rail at, revile, curse, condemn, persecute, execute pious people, speak other language of them when such men have passed the purgation of death, and confess them faithful and sincere servants of God.

The last *"honour"* is imitation of their virtuous examples. The Papists brag that Stapleton, their great controversial divine, was born on that very day whereon Sir Thomas More was put to death; but Providence so ordereth it that out of the ashes of dead saints many living ones do spring and sprout, by following the pious precedents of such godly persons deceased.—*Thomas Fuller, in "Abel Redivivus."*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—*"Praise ye the Lord."* I. The one work of a life. II. The work of the truly living of all degrees. III. Their work in many and various forms. IV. A work for which there is abundant cause, reason, and argument.

Verse 1.—I. A wonderful gift—to be a saint. II. A wonderful people—who are saints. III. A wonderful assembly—a congregation of saints. IV. A wonderful God—the object of their song.

Verses 1, 2.—*The new song of the saints.* I. The saints are God's children by the new birth. II. The new birth has given them a new heart. III. The new heart utters itself in a new song.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 1, 5.—I. We must praise God in public, "in the congregation of the saints": the more the better; it is like to heaven. II. We must praise him in

private. "Let the saints" be so transported with their joy in God as to "sing aloud upon their beds," when they awake in the night, as David; Ps. cxix. 62. —*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—The duty, reasonableness, and benefit of holy joy.

Verse 2.—A peculiar people, their peculiar God, and their peculiar joy in him.

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—Christ's people may well rejoice:—I. In the majesty of his person. II. In the righteousness of his rule. III. In the extent of his conquests. IV. In the protection they enjoy under him. V. In the glory to which he will raise them.—*From "The Homiletical Library,"* 1882.

Verses 2, 4.—The cause given to God's Israel for Praise. Consider, I. God's doings for them. They have reason to rejoice in God, and employ themselves in his service; for it is he that "made" them. II. God's dominion over them. This follows upon the former: if he made them he is their King. III. God's delight in them. He is a King that rules by love, and therefore to be praised. IV. God's designs concerning them. Besides the present complacency he hath in them, he hath prepared for their future glory. "He will beautify the meek," etc.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—The text bears other renderings. Read as in Authorized Version. I. *The character to be aimed at—"the meek."* 1. Submissive to God. To his truth. To his dealings. 2. Gentle towards men. Bearing with patience. Forgiving with heartiness. Loving with perseverance. 3. Lowly in ourselves. II. *The favour to be enjoyed—"beautify."* 1. The beauty of gentleness. 2. The beauty of peace. 3. The beauty of content. 4. The beauty of joy. 5. The beauty of holiness. 6. The beauty of respect and influence. III. *The good results to be expected.* 1. God will be glorified and Christ manifested. 2. Men will be attracted. 3. Heaven will be anticipated.

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—The Lord's taking pleasure in his people is, I. A wonderful evidence of his grace. II. The highest honour they can desire. III. Their security for time and eternity.—*J. F.*

Verse 5.—*Saintly joy.* I. The state to which God has lifted the saints: "glory," in contrast with sin, reproach, affliction. II. The emotion which accordingly befits the saints: "be joyful." III. The utterance of that emotion incumbent on the saints: "sing aloud."—*C. A. D.*

Verse 5 (*second clause*).—Let them praise God—I. Upon their beds of *rest*, upon their *nightly* couch. 1. Because of what God has done for them during the day. 2. Because sleep is the gift of God. 3. Because they have a bed to lie upon. 4. Because the Lord is their keeper (Psalm iv. 5, 8). II. Upon their beds of *sickness.* 1. Because it is God's will they should suffer. 2. Because affliction is often a proof of God's love. 3. Because, if sanctified, sickness is a great blessing. 4. Because praise offered upon a bed of sickness is a testimony to the power of religion. III. Upon their beds of *death.* 1. Because the sting of death is removed. 2. Because their Lord has passed through death. 3. Because Christ is with them while they suffer. 4. Because of what awaits them. 5. Because they have the glorious hope of resurrection.—*C. W. Townsend.*

Verse 6.—I. The Christian life a combination of adoration and conflict. II. In each case it should be at its best: "high praises," "two-edged sword." III. In each case holiness should be conspicuous: it is of saints that the text speaks.

Verse 8.—The restraining and subduing power of the gospel.

Verse 9.—The honour common to all saints.

PSALM CL.

We have now reached the last summit of the mountain chain of Psalms. It rises high into the clear azure, and its brow is bathed in the sunlight of the eternal world of worship. It is a rapture. The poet-prophet is full of inspiration and enthusiasm. He stays not to argue, to teach, to explain: but cries with burning words, "Praise him, Praise him, Praise ye the LORD.*"*

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

6 Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

1. *"Praise ye the* LORD." Hallelujah! The exhortation is to all things in earth or in heaven. Should they not all declare the glory of him for whose glory they are, and were created? Jehovah, the one God, should be the one object of adoration. To give the least particle of his honour to another is shameful treason; to refuse to render it to him is heartless robbery. *"Praise God in his sanctuary."* Praise El, or the strong one, in his holy place. See how power is mentioned with holiness in this change of names. Praise begins at home. "In God's own house pronounce his praise." The holy place should be filled with praise, even as of old the high-priest filled the *sanctum sanctorum* with the smoke of sweet-smelling incense. In his church below and in his courts above hallelujahs should be continually presented. In the person of Jesus God finds a holy dwelling or sanctuary, and there he is greatly to be praised. He may also be said to dwell in holiness, for all his ways are right and good; for this we ought to extol him with heart and with voice. Whenever we assemble for holy purposes our main work should be to present praises unto the Lord our God. *"Praise him in the firmament of his power."* It is a blessed thing that in our God holiness and power are united. Power without righteousness would be oppression, and righteousness without power would be too weak for usefulness; but put the two together in an infinite degree and we have God. What an expanse we have in the boundless firmament of divine power! Let it all be filled with praise. Let the heavens, so great and strong, echo with the praise of the thrice holy Jehovah, while the sanctuaries of earth magnify the Almighty One.

2. *"Praise him for his mighty acts."* Here is a reason for praise. In these deeds of power we see himself. These doings of his omnipotence are always on behalf of truth and righteousness. His works of creation, providence, and redemption all call for praise; they are his acts, and his acts of might, therefore let him be praised for them. *"Praise him according to his excellent greatness."* His being is unlimited, and his praise should correspond therewith. He possesses a multitude or a plenitude of greatness, and therefore he should be greatly praised. There is nothing little about God, and there is nothing great apart from him. If we were always careful to make our worship fit and appropriate for our great Lord how much better should we sing! How much more reverently should we adore! Such excellent deeds should have excellent praise.

3. *"Praise him with the sound of the trumpet."* With the loudest, clearest note

call the people together. Make all men to know that we are not ashamed to worship. Summon them with unmistakable sound to bow before their God. The sound of trumpet is associated with the grandest and most solemn events, such as the giving of the law, the proclamation of jubilee, the coronation of Jewish kings, and the raging of war. It is to be thought of in reference to the coming of our Lord in his second advent and the raising of the dead. If we cannot give voice to this martial instrument, at least let our praise be as decided and bold as if we could give a blast upon the horn. Let us never sound a trumpet before us to our own honour, but reserve all our trumpeting for God's glory. When the people have been gathered by blast of trumpet, then proceed to *"praise him with the psaltery and harp."* Stringed instruments are to be used as well as those which are rendered vocal by wind. Dulcet notes are to be consecrated as well as more startling sounds. The gospel meaning is that all powers and faculties should praise the Lord—all sorts of persons, under all circumstances, and with differing constitutions, should do honour unto the Lord of all. If there be any virtue, if there be any talent, if there be any influence, let all be consecrated to the service of the universal Benefactor. Harp and lyre—the choicest, the sweetest, must be all our Lord's.

4. *"Praise him with the timbrel and dance."* Associated with the deliverance at the Red Sea, this form of worship set forth the most jubilant and exultant of worship. The hands, and the feet were both employed, and the entire body moved in sympathy with the members. Are there not periods of life when we feel so glad that we would fain dance for joy? Let not such exhilaration be spent upon common themes, but let the name of God stir us to ecstasy. Let us exult as we cry,—

> "In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am,
> And my heart it doth dance at the sound of his name."

There is enough in our holy faith to create and to justify the utmost degree of rapturous delight. If men are dull in the worship of the Lord our God they are not acting consistently with the character of their religion. *"Praise him with stringed instruments and organs."* We have here the three kinds of musical instruments: timbrels, which are struck, and strings, and pipes: let all be educated to praise the Lord. Nothing is common and unclean: all may be sanctified to highest uses. Many men, many minds, and these as different as strings and pipes; but there is only one God, and that one God all should worship. The word translated "organs" signifies pipe—a simpler form of wind instrument than the more modern and more elaborate organ. Doubtless many a pious shepherd has poured out gracious pastorals from a reed or oaten pipe, and so has magnified his God.

5. *"Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals."* Let the clash of the loudest music be the Lord's: let the joyful clang of the loftiest notes be all for him. Praise has beaten the timbrel, swept the harp, and sounded the trumpet, and now for a last effort, awakening the most heavy of slumberers, and startling the most indifferent of onlookers, she dashes together the disks of brass, and with sounds both loud and high proclaims the glories of the Lord.

6. *"Let everything that hath breath praise the* LORD." "Let all breath praise him": that is to say, all living beings. He gave them breath, let them breathe his praise. His name is in the Hebrew composed rather of breathings than of letters, to show that all breath comes from him: therefore let it be used for him. Join all ye living things in the eternal song. Be ye least or greatest, withhold not your praises. What a day will it be when all things in all places unite to glorify the one only living and true God! This will be the final triumph of the church of God.

"Praise ye the LORD." Once more, Hallelujah! Thus is the Psalm rounded with the note of praise; and thus is the Book of Psalms ended by a glowing word of adoration. Reader, wilt not thou at this moment pause a while, and worship the Lord thy God? Hallelujah!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Each of the last five Psalms begins and ends with *Hallelujah!* —"*Praise ye the Lord.*" And each Psalm increases in praise, love, and joy, unto the last, which is praise celebrating its ecstasy. The elect soul, the heir of God, becomes "eaten up" with the love of God. He begins every sentence with *Hallelujah;* and his sentences are very short, for he is in haste to utter his next *Hallelujah,* and his next, and his next. He is as one out of breath with enthusiasm, or as one on tiptoe, in the act of rising from earth to heaven. The greatest number of words between any two Hallelujahs is four, and that only once: in every other instance, between one Hallelujah and another there are but two words. It is as though the soul gave utterance to its whole life and feeling in the one word, *Hallelujah!* The words, "Praise ye the Lord!" or, "Praise him!" "Praise him!" "Praise him!" are reiterated no fewer than twelve times in a short Psalm of six short verses.—*John Pulsford, in "Quiet Hours,"* 1857.

Whole Psalm.—And now, in the last Psalm of all, we see an echo to the first Psalm. The first Psalm began with "Blessed," and it ended with "Blessed," —"Blessed are all they that meditate on God's law and do it." Such was the theme of the first Psalm; and now the fruit of that blessedness is shown in this Psalm, which begins and ends with Hallelujah.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—In his *Cours de Littérature,* the celebrated Lamartine, probably regarding the last four Psalms (the Hallelujah Psalms) as one whole (as Hengstenberg also does), thus speaks:—"The last Psalm ends with a chorus to the praise of God, in which the poet calls on all people, all instruments of sacred music, all the elements, and all the stars to join. Sublime finale of that opera of sixty years sung by the shepherd, the hero, the king, and the old man! In this closing Psalm we see the almost inarticulate enthusiasm of the lyric poet; so rapidly do the words press to his lips, floating upwards towards God, their source, like the smoke of a great fire of the soul wafted by the tempest! Here we see David, or rather the human heart itself with all its God-given notes of grief, joy, tears, and adoration—poetry sanctified to its highest expression; a vase of perfume broken on the step of the temple, and shedding abroad its odours from the heart of David to the heart of all humanity! Hebrew, Christian, or even Mohammedan, every religion, every complaint, every prayer has taken from this vase, shed on the heights of Jerusalem, wherewith to give forth their accents. The little shepherd has become the master of the sacred choir of the Universe. There is not a worship on earth which prays not with his words, or sings not with his voice. A chord of his harp is to be found in all choirs, resounding everywhere and for ever in unison with the echoes of Horeb and Engedi! David is the Psalmist of eternity; what a destiny—what a power hath poetry when inspired by God! As for myself, when my spirit is excited, or devotional, or sad, and seeks for an echo to its enthusiasm, its devotion, or its melancholy, I do not open Pindar or Horace, or Hafiz, those purely Academic poets; neither do I find within myself murmurings to express my emotion. I open the Book of Psalms, and there I find words which seem to issue from the soul of the ages, and which penetrate even to the heart of all generations. Happy the bard who has thus become the eternal hymn, the personified prayer and complaint of all humanity! If we look back to that remote age when such songs resounded over the world; if we consider that while the lyric poetry of all the most cultivated nations only sang of wine, love, blood, and the victories of coursers at the games of Elidus, we are seized with profound astonishment at the mystic accents of the shepherd prophet, who speaks to God the Creator as one friend to another, who understands and praises his great works, admires his justice, implores his mercy, and becomes, as it were, an anticipative echo of the evangelic poetry, speaking the soft words of Christ before his coming. Prophet or not, as he may be considered by Christian or sceptic, none can deny in the poet-king an inspiration granted to no other man. Read Greek or Latin poetry after a Psalm, and see how pale it looks."—*William Swan Plumer.*

Whole Psalm.—The first and last of the Psalms have both the same number of verses, are both short and very memorable; but the scope of them is very different; the first Psalm is an elaborate instruction in our duty, to prepare us for the comforts of our devotion; this is all rapture and transport, and perhaps was penned on purpose to be the conclusion of those sacred songs, to show what is the design of them all, and that is, to assist us in praising God.—*Matthew Henry.*

Whole Psalm.—Thirteen hallelujahs, according to the number of the tribes (Levi, Ephraim and Manasseh making three), one for each.—*John Henry Michaëlis*, 1668—1738.

Whole Psalm.—Some say this Psalm was sung by the Israelites, when they came with the first fruits into the sanctuary, with the baskets on their shoulders. *Thirteen* times in this short Psalm is the word *praise* used; not on account of thirteen perfections or properties in God, as Kimchi thinks; but it is so frequently, and in every clause used, to show the vehement desire of the Psalmist that the Lord might be praised; and to express his sense of things, how worthy he is of praise; and that all ways and means to praise him should be made use of, all being little enough to set forth his honour and glory.—*John Gill.*

Whole Psalm.—There is an interesting association connected with this Psalm which deserves to be recorded: that in former times, when the casting of church bells was more of a religious ceremony, this Psalm was chanted by the brethren of the guild as they stood ranged around the furnace, and while the molten metal was prepared to be let off into the mould ready to receive it. One may picture these swarthy sons of the furnace with the ruddy glow of the fire upon their faces as they stand around, while their deep voices rung forth this Hymn of Praise.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise ye the* LORD." Praise God with a strong faith; praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with an earnest desire towards him, and a full satisfaction in him; praise him by a universal respect to all his commands; praise him by a cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love, and solacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*In his sanctuary.*" בְּקָדְשׁוֹ. Many have been the notions of the commentators as to the shade of meaning here; for the word differs from the form in Ps. xx. 2. מִקּוֹדֶשׁ (*from the sanctuary*). The Vulgate adopts the plural rendering, *in sanctis ejus*, "in his holy places." Campensis renders it, *ob insignem sanctitatem ipsius*, "because of his excellent holiness." Some see under the word an allusion to the holy tabernacle of Deity, the flesh of Christ. Luther, in his German version, translates thus *in seinem Heiligthum*, "in his holiness." The same harmony of comparative thought appears in the two clauses of this verse as in such passages as 1 Kings viii. 13, 49; Isa. lvii. 15. The place of worship where God specially hears prayer and accepts praise, and the firmament where angels fly at his command, and veil their faces in adoration, are each a sanctuary. The sanctuary is manifestly here looked at as the temple of grace, the firmament as the temple of power. So the verse proclaims both grace and glory.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise God in his sanctuary.*" The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and the eastern versions, render it, "*in his holy ones*"; among his saints, in the assembly of them, where he is to be feared and praised: it may be translated, "*in his holy One*," and be understood of Christ, as it is by Cocceius. . . . Some render it, "*for*" or "*because of his holiness.*" The perfection of holiness in him; in which he is glorious and fearful in the praises of, and which appears in all his works of providence and grace.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*Praise God.*" In many places we have the compound word, הַלְלוּיָהּ, *halelujah*, praise ye Jehovah; but this is the first place in which we find, הַלְלוּ־אֵל, *halelu-el*, praise God, or the strong God. Praise him who is Jehovah, the infinite and self-existent Being; and praise him who is God, *El*, or *Elohim*, the great God in covenant with mankind, to bless and save them unto eternal life.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—Psalm cl. gives the full praise to Jehovah in a double character, *the sanctuary and the firmament of his power*, for his ways which come from the firmament of his power were always according to the sanctuary in which he governed Israel, and made good the revelation of himself there.—*John Nelson Darby*, 1800—1882.

Verse 2.—"*Praise him for his mighty acts,*" etc. The reasons of that praise which it becomes all intelligent creatures, and especially redeemed men, to render to Jehovah, are here assigned. We are to praise Jehovah "in his sanctuary," in the place where his glory dwells, where his holiness shines forth with ineffable splendour; we are to praise him in the wide expanse over which he has spread the

tokens of his power, whether in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath; we are to praise him for those omnipotent acts whereby he hath shown himself to be above all gods; we are to praise him in a manner suited to the excellent majesty of a Being whom all the heavens adore, and who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. His holiness, the infinity of his operations, the miraculous power which he has displayed, the unspotted excellence of his administration, call for loudest songs of praise from all whose reason enables them to rise to the contemplation of the great Supreme.—*John Morison.*

Verse 2.—"*Praise him according to his excellent greatness.*" There is required special understanding and knowledge of the nature and worth of the mercy for which the duty of praise is undertaken; for God will not be praised confusedly, but distinctly and proportionably to his dispensation: "*Praise him according to his wondrous works*"; which is to be the prime and proper matter of their high praises, even his more proper and peculiar high acts, then to be remembered, as is largely expressed in Moses' praise for the particular mercy of coming safe through the Red Sea (Exod. xv.); and Deborah's high praise for deliverance from the host of Sisera (Judges v.); where the chiefest and highest part of the celebration and exaltation of God in his praise consists in the declaration and commemoration of the particulars of God's special goodness in their present deliverance. Thus, you see, the first thing that God looks for is proportionable praise, great praise for a great God, doing great things, and high praises for a high God, doing high things. —*Samuel Fairclough.*

Verse 2.—"*Praise him according to his excellent greatness,*" or, as the words may bear, "according to his *muchness of greatness*"; for when the Scripture saith "God is great," this positive is to be taken as a superlative. "God is great," that is, he is greatest, he is greater than all; so great that all persons and all things are little, yea, nothing before him. Isaiah xl. 15: "Behold, the nations are (to him but) as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." How great is God, in comparison of whom the greatest things are little things, yea, the greatest things are nothing!—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—*Trumpets* and *horns* are the only instruments concerning which any directions are given in the law.—*James Anderson.*

Verse 3.—"*Trumpet.*" Of natural horns and of instruments in the shape of horns the antiquity and general use are evinced by every extensive collection of antiquities. . . . The Hebrew word *shophar*, rendered "trumpet," seems, first to denote horns of the straighter kind, including, probably, those of neat-cattle, and all the instruments which were eventually made in imitation of and in improvement upon such horns. The name *shophar* means *bright* or *clear*, and the instrument may be conceived to have been so called from its clear and shrill sound, just as we call an instrument a "clarion," and speak of a musical tone as "brilliant" or "clear." In the service of God this *shophar* or *trumpet*, was only employed in making announcements, and for calling the people together in the time of the holy solemnities, of war, of rebellion, or of any other great occasion. The strong sound of the instrument would have confounded a choir of singers, rather than have elevated their music. (*John Kitto.*) The *shophar* is especially interesting to us as being the only Hebrew instrument whose use on certain solemn occasions seems to be retained to this day. Engel, with his usual trustworthy research, has traced out and examined some of those in modern synagogues. Of those shown in our engraving, one is from the synagogue of Spanish and Portugese Jews, Bevis Marks, and is, he says, one foot in length; the other is one used in the Great Synagogue, St. James's place, Aldgate, twenty-one inches in length. Both are made of horn.—*James Stainer.*

Verse 3.— The "*Psaltery*" was a ten-stringed instrument. It is constantly mentioned with the "*harp.*" The *Psaltery* was struck with a plectrum, the *harp* more gently with the fingers. "*Psaltery and harp*" speak to us in figure of "law and gospel."—*Thomas Le Blanc*

Verse 3.—On "*Psaltery*" (*nebel*) see Note on Ps. cxliv. 9, and on "*harp*" see Note on Ps. cxlix. 3.

Verses 3, 4, 5.—As St. Augustine says here, "No kind of faculty is here omitted.

All are enlisted in praising God." The breath is employed in blowing the trumpet; the fingers are used in striking the strings of the psaltery and the harp; the whole hand is exerted in beating the timbrel; the feet move in the dance; there are stringed instruments (literally *strings*); there is the organ (the *'ugab, syrinx*) composed of many pipes, implying *combination*, and the cymbals clang one upon another.—*C. Wordsworth.*

Verses 3, 4, 5.—The variety of musical instruments, some of them made use of in the camp, as trumpets; some of them more suitable to a peaceable condition, as psalteries and harps; some of them sounding by blowing wind in them; some of them sounding by lighter touching of them, as stringed instruments; some of them by beating on them more sharply, as tabrets, drums and cymbals; some of them sounding by touching and blowing also, as organs: all of them giving some certain sound, some more quiet, and some making more noise: some of them having a harmony by themselves; some of them making a concert with other instruments, or with the motions of the body in dancings, some of them serving for one use, some of them serving for another, and all of them serving to set forth God's glory, and to shadow forth the duty of worshippers, and the privileges of the saints. The plurality and variety (I say) of these instruments were fit to represent divers conditions of the spiritual man, and of the greatness of his joy to be found in God, and to teach what stirring up should be of the affections and powers of our soul, and of one another, unto God's worship; what harmony should be among the worshippers of God, what melody each should make in himself, singing to God with grace in his heart, and to show the excellency of God's praise, which no means nor instrument, nor any expression of the body joined thereunto, could sufficiently set forth in these exhortations to praise God with trumpet, psaltery, etc.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 3, 4, 5.—Patrick has an interesting note on the many instruments of music in Psalm cxlix., which we quote here: "The ancient inhabitants of Etruria used the trumpet; the Arcadians, the whistle; the Sicilians, the pectid; the Cretians, the harp; the Thracians, the cornet; the Lacedemonians, the pipe; the Egyptians, the drum; the Arabians, the cymbal. (Clem. Pædag. ii. 4.) May we not say that in this Psalm's enumeration of musical instruments, there is a reference to the variety which exists among men in the mode of expressing joy, and exciting to feeling?—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 4.—"*Stringed instruments.*" *Minnim* [which is derived from a root signifying "division," or "distribution," hence *strings*] occurs in Ps. xlv. 8, and cl. 4, and is supposed by some to denote a stringed instrument, but it seems merely a poetical allusion to the *strings* of any instrument. Thus, in Ps. xlv. 8, we would read, "Out of the ivory palaces *the strings* (*i.e.* concerts of music) have made thee glad"; and so in Ps.cl. 4, "Praise him with *strings* (stringed instruments), and *'ugabs.*"—*John Kitto.*

Verse 4.—"*Organs.*" עוגב, *'ugab* is the word rendered "*organ*" in our version. The Targum renders the word simply by אבובא, *a pipe;* the Septuagint varies, it has κιθάρα in Genesis, ψάλμος in Job, and ὄργανον in the Psalms. The last is the sense which the Arabic, Syriac, Latin, English, and most other versions have adopted. The *organon* simply denotes a double or manifold pipe, and hence, in particular, the Pandæan or shepherd's pipe, which is at this day called a "mouth organ," among ourselves. (*Kitto.*) A collection of tubes of different sizes, stopped at one end and blown at the other, forms the musical instrument, known as Pan's pipes, in the Greek *syrinx*, σῦριγξ . . . . Was the *'ugab* a *syrinx* or an organ? As the former seems to have been the more ancient of the two, and as *'ugab* is included in the very first allusion to musical instruments in the Bible, it would seem reasonable to say at once that it was *syrinx*, especially as this instrument was, and is to this day, commonly met with in various parts of Asia. Yet it would, indeed, be strange if such an instrument were selected for use in divine worship; and that the *ugab* was so used is proved beyond a doubt by its mention in Ps. cl.: "Praise him with the *minnim* and *'ugab.* "Its mention here in antithesis to a collective name for stringed instruments, surely points to the fact of its being a more important instrument than a few river-reeds fixed together with wax. Let us not forget that we have but one and the same name for the single row of about fifty pipes, placed, perhaps, in a little room, and the mighty instrument of five thousand pipes, occupying as much space as an ordinary dwelling-house. . . . Each is an organ. May it not have been the case that the *'ugab*, which in Gen. iv. 21 is mentioned

as the simply-constructed *wind*-instrument, in contrast to the simple *stringed*-instrument, the *kinnor*, was a greatly inferior instrument to that which in Ps. cl. is thought worthy of mention by the side of a term for the whole string power ?—*J. Stainer.*

Verse 5.—"*Loud cymbals . . . . high-sounding cymbals.*" This important passage clearly points to two instruments under the same name, and leaves us to conclude that the Hebrews had both hand-cymbals and finger-cymbals (or castanets), although it may not in all cases be easy to say which of the two is intended in particular texts.—*John Kitto.*

Verse 5. (Prayer Book Version).—"*Praise him upon the well-tuned cymbals: praise him upon the loud cymbals.*" As I have heard these words read monthly in our churches, it has often come into my thoughts that when we intend to glorify God with our cymbals, it should not be our only care to have them loud enough, but our first care should be to have them well tuned, else the louder the worse. Zeal does very well—there is great, yea, necessary use for it in every part of God's service. The cymbal will be flat, it will have no life or spirit in it, it will not be loud enough without it. But if meekness, peaceableness, and moderation do not first put the cymbal into good tune, the loudness will but make it the more ungrateful in the player, the more ungrateful to the hearer.—*Robert Sanderson,* 1587—1662.

Verse 6.—"*Praise ye the* LORD." As the life of the faithful, and the history of the church, so also the Psalter, with all its cries from the depths, runs out into a Hallelujah.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—"*Praise ye the* LORD." When we have said all we are able to say for God's praise, we are but to begin anew; for this are we taught by the renewing of the exhortation, in the close of sundry Psalms, and here also at the end of all the Psalms: "*Praise ye the* LORD."—*David Dickson.*

Verse 6.—"*Let all breath praise Jah! Hallelujah.*" The very ambiguity of "*all breath*" gives extraordinary richness of meaning to this closing sentence. From the simple idea of wind instruments, mentioned in the context, it leads us, by a beautiful transition, to that of vocal, articulate, intelligent praise, uttered by the breath of living men, as distinguished from mere lifeless instruments. Then, lastly, by a natural association, we ascend to the idea expressed in the common version, "*everything that hath breath,*" not merely all that lives, but all that has a voice to praise God. There is nothing in the Psalter more majestic or more beautiful than this brief but most significant *finale*, in which solemnity of tone predominates, without however in the least disturbing the exhilaration which the close of the Psalter seems intended to produce, as if in emblematical allusion to the triumph which awaits the church and all its members, when through much tribulation they shall enter into rest.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"*Praise God in his sanctuary.*" I. In his personal holiness. II. In the person of his Son. III. In heaven. IV. In the assembly of saints. V. In the silence of the heart.

Verses 1—6.—God should be praised. Where ? (*verse* 1). Wherefore ? (*verse* 2). Wherewith ? (*verses* 3—5). By whom ? (*verse* 6).—*C. A. D.*

Verse 2.—"*His excellent greatness.*" Wherein the greatness of God is specially excellent, and where it is best seen.

Verse 2.—"*Praise him for his mighty acts.*" I. For us. Election. Redemption. Inspiration. II. In us. The work of enlightenment in the understanding; purification in the heart; quickening in the conscience, subjugation in the will. III. By us. Thought through us; felt through us, spoken through us; worked through us. To him be all the glory !—*W. J.*

Verse 2.—"*Praise him according to his excellent greatness.*" I. Reverently

according to the greatness of his being. II. Gratefully, according to the greatness of his love. III. Retrospectively, according to the greatness of his gifts. IV. Prospectively, according to the greatness of his promises—*W. J.*

Verse 2.—What the exhortation requires. I. That men should study God's works, and observe the glory of God in them. II. That they should meditate on his greatness till they realize its excellence. III. That they should openly proclaim the honour due to him. IV. That they should not contradict in their life the praise they speak.—*J. F.*

Verse 3.—"*Praise him with the sound of the trumpet.*" I. When you fight. II. When you conquer. III. When you assemble. IV. When you proclaim his Word. V. When you welcome Jubilee.

Verses 3—6.—I. The variety of the ancient service of worship necessitating serious expenditure; consecration of high talent; hard and constant toil. II. The lessons of such service. 1. God should be worshipped loyally. 2. The efforts of the best genius are his rightful tribute. 3. All human ability cannot place a worthy offering at his feet. III. The soul and essential of true worship. IV. God's requirements as to worship in these present times.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 6.—I. The august Giver of "life, and breath, and all things." II. The due and true use of the gifts of life. III. The resultant swathing of earth in consecrated atmosphere, and millennial hallelujahs.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 6.—A fitting close to the Psalter, considered as a desire, a prayer, or an exhortation. I. As a desire, it realizes the glory due to God, the worship ennobling to man, the disposition of heart which would make all the world into a holy brotherhood. II. As a prayer, it seeks the downfall of every superstition, the universal spread of the truth, the conversion of every soul. III. As an exhortation it is plain, pertinent, pure in its piety, perfect in its charity.—*J. F.*

HALLELUJAH!

HUNT, BARNARD & CO., LTD., Printers, London and Aylesbury.